

PHRASAL VERBS IN TAYLOR SWIFT'S 1989 SONG LYRICS AS AUTHENTIC MATERIALS FOR EFL VOCABULARY LEARNING

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Abstract

Song lyrics are widely recognized as authentic materials that expose EFL learners to natural language use. One linguistic feature that often challenges learners is phrasal verbs, which frequently appear in everyday communication yet are difficult to interpret due to their semantic complexity. This study aims to analyze phrasal verbs in the song lyrics of Taylor Swift's album 1989. Specifically, the study identifies various types of phrasal verbs and their meanings in context. Using content analysis, phrasal verbs found in four selected songs were identified and analyzed in terms of their syntactic characteristics and contextual meanings. The results show that phrasal verbs in the lyrics are used not only as grammatical constructions but also as expressive resources to represent emotional states, interpersonal conflict, and relational dynamics. These uses show that song lyrics can support learners in understanding phrasal verbs through meaningful contextual use. Therefore, the study highlights the pedagogical potential of popular song lyrics as authentic materials for facilitating EFL vocabulary learning, particularly in helping learners comprehend and use phrasal verbs more naturally.

Keywords: authentic materials, EFL, phrasal verbs, song lyrics, vocabulary learning

INTRODUCTION

Language is one of the most significant aspects of human life as it functions as a medium for expressing thoughts, emotions, and ideas, and plays an essential role in developing communication skills. In Indonesia, English is regarded as a foreign language (EFL) and is considered an essential subject, particularly for learners seeking scholarships. However, many learners struggle to master English due to grammatical and structural differences between English and their native language, often leading to first language interference in areas such as pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar. Vocabulary is one of the micro skills of English which is challenging to master especially for EFL learners at, particularly adolescents and young adult learners at intermediate level. One notable linguistic challenge for English learners in learning vocabulary is learning phrasal verbs (Al Nasarat, 2018; Thao & Bon, 2023; Spring & Takeda, 2024).

Phrasal verbs are pervasive in everyday language, including literary works, conversations, and song lyrics that native speakers often use them in daily basis. Therefore, language learners can take advantage to learn it as well in order to interact very well (more natural and native-like) in the global communication and to increase their English proficiency (Abid Thyab, 2019). In other words, the understanding and use of phrasal verbs should be

encouraged. Rather than only using single-word alternative, EFL learners can use phrasal verbs to vary their language in a particular form of communication. For example, learners can try to use train themselves to use the phrasal verb “give up” to express the word “quit” like in “He gave up smoking.” or the phrasal verb “set up” to express the word “establish” like in “I set up a small business.” Fletcher (2005) states that phrasal verbs are used in various contexts, including both formal and informal situations, to create natural communication. Although phrasal verbs are often assumed to be limited to spoken and informal language, this assumption is inaccurate. Phrasal verbs are also frequently used in written communication, including academic contexts (Tu & Thao, 2019; Thao & Bon, 2023). Therefore, it is vital for learners to study phrasal verbs because it will equip them to participate effectively in a wide range of communication contexts, including spoken and written form of communication, informal and formal situations as well as academic and non-academic settings.

Learning phrasal verbs means learning its syntactic structure and semantic aspect. Syntactically, phrasal verb can be divided into transitive, and intransitive, separable and inseparable phrasal verbs (Celce-Murcia & Larsen-Freeman, 1999). When a phrasal verb is transitive, it means that it can take a direct object. An example of transitive phrasal verb can be seen in this sentence: “We will *set up* a tent”. Other phrasal verbs are considered intransitive which means it does not take an object, for example in the sentence “The plane will *take off* in five minutes”. Another characteristic is related to whether it is separable or inseparable. Separable phrasal verbs mean phrasal verbs which can be separated in form, for example phrasal verb *turn off* as in “They *turn* the light *off*”, or the phrasal verb *put on* as in “She *puts* her jacket *on*”. Inseparable phrasal verbs mean phrasal verbs which cannot be separated in form, for example phrasal verb *look after* as in “He can *look after* the children.”, or the phrasal verb *run into* as in “I run into my old friend on campus”.

Semantically, phrasal verbs can be classified into literal, aspectual and idiomatic meaning (Celce-Murcia & Larsen-Freeman, 1999). A phrasal verb is considered literal when the meaning can be directly interpreted from its component parts. For example, *come in* in the sentence “She comes in to the living room.” means *to move into an interior space*. In this case, the overall meaning of the phrasal verb can be fully explained by the combined meanings of the verb and the particle. Literal phrasal verb is also considered as non-idiomatic phrasal verb. Meanwhile, aspectual phrasal verb retains the core lexical meaning of the main verb, while the particle contributes additional aspectual information. In other words, the meaning is partially transparent and can still be inferred from their components, although it is not strictly literal. For example, *carry on* in the sentence “Please *carry on* with your presentation.” means *to continue the activity*. In this case the activity is the presentation. The particle *on* gives a signal to show that the action continues. It also applies in other phrasal verbs such as *keep on*, *hang on*, *go on*, and *move on*. Some researchers often called aspectual phrasal verb as semi-idiomatic phrasal verb. Lastly, the meaning of phrasal verbs is idiomatic when the meaning is not fully compositional. For instance, *give up* in the sentence “She *gave up* after several failed attempts.” does not refer to physically giving something away but metaphorically means “to stop trying”. Different from literal phrasal verbs, the meaning of idiomatic phrasal verbs cannot be predicted from the meanings of individual components.

Patrick & Fletcher (2004) describe phrasal verbs as constructions in which a one-word verb plus a particle (prepositional or adverbial) functions together to express a distinct meaning. Celce-Murcia et al. (1983) also note that phrasal verbs traditionally involve a verb and an adverbial element that together carry idiomatic meaning. Therefore, frequently phrasal verbs are not easily understood through literal interpretation alone, which often leads to difficulties in comprehension and production for EFL learners.

Moreover, many phrasal verbs are polysemous, meaning that a single phrasal verb may have multiple meanings depending on context, such as “*take off*” which may refer to “an

airplane leaving the ground" or "removing clothing." It is also in line with Nivika et al. (2023) which states that learning phrasal verbs is sometimes difficult for learners because some phrasal verbs' meaning depends on the context. Moreover, McCarthy & O'dell (2017) stated that phrasal verbs are so many; therefore, to be able to master phrasal verbs, a learner needs to learn from context.

One way to provide context in learning English as a foreign language (EFL) is by providing learners with authentic materials. Authentic materials are texts or media originally created for real communication rather than those created purposively for language teaching. Harmer (1991) stated that authentic materials are meant for native speakers; they are real texts, designed not for language students, but speakers of the language. Among these, songs are highly valued because they contain natural language use, idiomatic expressions, and emotional contents that reflect real-world usage. In addition, songs can provide authentic source in learning pronunciation including stress, rhythm, and intonation (Gafforova, 2025). Furthermore, songs are especially memorable and engaging for learners, making them effective in teaching vocabulary and grammar structures (Maulana et al., 2024; Hidayati, 2017; De Roxas et al., 2024). In utilizing songs for English teaching, teacher can use the song lyrics to stimulate students to notice some grammatical points, including phrasal verbs.

According to previous research, song lyrics can serve as valuable sources for exposing learners to phrasal verbs: Nivika et al. (2023) found that phrasal verbs in Coldplay's album provided significant vocabulary learning opportunities; Budiono & Lodong (2025) identified phrasal verbs in Lana Del Rey's lyrics and argued that such material could enrich learners' vocabulary; Mendoza & Yastanti (2025) analyzed phrasal verbs from the album of Celine Dion and found that Celine Dion's song lyrics contains some phrasal verbs which convey both literal and figurative meanings in contextual and natural setting providing the alternative learning resource for improving learner's language competence. Additionally, a study from Akbari et al. (2018) shows that music genres differ in their phrasal verb density and potential usefulness in instruction, suggesting songs as an innovative context for teaching phrasal verbs.

Nevertheless, there are still lack of research analyzing the lyrics of songs in Taylor Swift's album 1989. The researchers select Taylor Swift's songs because it is included in pop genre of music which is considered as having high interest from most of young adults and adolescents in Indonesia. According to a Jakpat survey conducted in August 2025, pop music is the most popular music genre among millennials and Generation Z in Indonesia, with a preference rate of 71% (Jakpat, 2025). This survey data supports the relevance of pop songs such as those by Taylor Swift, as they align closely with the musical preferences of contemporary young audiences.

Taylor Swift album 1989 was released in 2014. The term 1989 in the Album name refers to the songwriter's year of birth. Despite its release date, Taylor Swift songs remain relevant as they continue to be reintroduced to the audiences via social media and digital streaming platforms such as Spotify and Apple Music. It can be inferred that the songs continue to attract interest among young people in the current era. Young people, in this case, refer to young adults and adolescents, including Millennials born between 1981 and 1996 and Generation Z born between 1997 and 2012 (Syafranto et al., 2023).

Given this background, the present study focuses on phrasal verbs in the song lyrics of Taylor Swift's album 1989, which is known for its storytelling richness and emotional depth. Specifically, the study addresses the following research questions: (1) What types of phrasal verbs appear in the selected song lyrics based on the syntactic characteristics? and (2) What are the meanings of these phrasal verbs in context?

This study is limited to Indonesian EFL learners at the intermediate level, particularly adolescents and young adults, and focuses on the analysis of phrasal verbs found in four selected songs from Taylor Swift's album 1989. The study does not measure learning

outcomes, but rather examines the pedagogical potential of song lyrics as authentic materials for vocabulary learning.

METHOD

This research employs content analysis design. Content analysis is a technique to interpret textual meanings by relating texts to the context in which they are used (Krippendorff, 2004). In addition, content analysis is “a detailed and systematic examination of the contents of a particular body of material for the purpose of identifying patterns, themes, or biases” (Leedy & Ormrod, 2015). In the later publication, Krippendorff (2013) also stated that content analysis is a systematic examination of text, images, and symbolic materials and it does not necessarily rely on the perspective or authors or audience. Miles et al. (2014) stated that content analysis pays attention to details of meaning in a single word. In summary, content analysis focuses on interpreting meaning in texts in relation to context, enabling the identification of patterns without relying on the perspectives of authors or audiences.

The data source in content analysis is artifacts of social communication, including song lyrics (Lune & Berg, 2017). Song lyrics from Taylor Swift's album 1989 are used in this study. The data were obtained from four song titles: *"Shake It Off,"* *"Blank Space,"* *"All You Had to Do Was Stay,"* and *"Out of the Woods.* The term 1989 refers to the writer's year of birth. It is used as an artistic concept and identity of the musical era. In fact, this album is released in 2014. Although released in 2014, the selected songs from Taylor Swift's album 1989 remain relevant to contemporary EFL learners, particularly Gen Z, due to their continued circulation on digital streaming platforms and their thematic closeness to young adults' experiences. The four selected-song-lyrics portray psychological and emotional processes commonly experienced by young people, especially in relation to romantic relationships, emotional conflict, and recovery after breakups. Explicitly or implicitly, the songs depict how young adults attempt to move on from failed relationships, cope with emotional distress, and reconstruct self-identity. Such experiences often occupy a significant part of young people's emotional and cognitive attention, making the themes highly relatable.

From a pedagogical perspective, the songs in Taylor Swift's album 1989 are suitable for EFL learning because they present phrasal verbs within familiar emotional and interpersonal contexts. The lyrics reflect everyday experiences such as relationships, conflict, and self-expression, allowing learners to encounter phrasal verbs in meaningful situations rather than isolated examples. This contextualized exposure supports vocabulary learning by helping learners infer meaning and understand usage naturally.

To begin this research, the lyrics of the album 1989 were obtained from Taylor Swift's official Spotify account, and the sections containing phrasal verbs were highlighted. A table containing phrasal verbs, meaning, frequency and categories, such as transitive, intransitive, separable, or inseparable, was prepared. Next, the phrasal verbs were checked according to their type, and a paragraph was created to explain the phrasal verbs based on their category. Finally, the narration from the table was written. Finally, interpreting data and drawing conclusions were taken.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In this part, the findings of the research are presented based on the two research questions then followed by discussion of the themes related to the findings. The main research finding is the syntactic characteristics or the types of phrasal verbs and the meaning or functions of the phrasal verbs found in the four songs of Taylor Swift 1989 Album.

Based on the results of the data analysis, 22 phrasal verbs were found in the four songs from Taylor Swift's album 1989, namely *Shake It Off*, *Blank Space*, *All You Had to Do Was Stay*, and *Out of the Woods*. The findings indicate that each song contains a different number

and distribution of phrasal verbs. The table below shows the occurrence of each syntactical form of phrasal verbs found in the four songs.

Table 1. The Number of Phrasal Verbs found in Each Song

No	Song Title	Frequency
1	Shake It Off	5
2	Blank Space	3
3	All You Had to Do Was Stay	9
4	Out of the Woods	5
	Total	22

Syntactic Characteristics of Phrasal Verbs in the Four Songs of Taylor Swift's Album 1989

Structurally, the phrasal verbs identified in the songs fall into several grammatical patterns that also contribute to meaning construction. In the song Shake it Off, five phrasal verbs are found. Each phrasal verb exhibits distinct grammatical features.

Table 2. Five Phrasal Verbs in Shake it Off Song Lyric

Phrasal Verbs	Lyrics	Occurrence	Transitive / Intransitive	Separable / Inseparable
stay out	I stay out too late.	1	Intransitive	Inseparable
go on	I go on too many dates.	1	Intransitive	Inseparable
shake off	I shake it off	36	Transitive	Separable
get down	You could've been gettin' down to this sick beat.	1	Intransitive	Inseparable
come over	Won't you come on over, baby?	1	Intransitive	Inseparable

In the next song, Shake it Off, there are five phrasal verbs found. Each phrasal verb exhibits distinct grammatical features. The first phrasal verb, *stay out*, occurred in the first line of the song is an intransitive and inseparable phrasal verb. The second phrasal verb is *go on*. It also appears once and is as an intransitive and inseparable phrasal verb. The third and the most frequently used phrasal verb in the song is *shake off*. In the song, it occurs thirty-six times. This phrasal verb is transitive and separable. The work “shake” can sometimes be separated from the word “off” like in “shake it off”. The meaning is to get rid of negative feelings or comments. The phrasal verb *get down* appears in the lyrics. Get down is an intransitive and inseparable phrasal verb. Lastly, *come over* occurs only once and is used as an intransitive and inseparable phrasal verb. Overall, the Shake it Off song has relatively various phrasal verbs with different grammatical characteristics.

The second song is Blank Space. The findings are arranged in the table below.

Table 3. Three Phrasal Verbs in Blank Space Song Lyric

Phrasal Verbs	Excerpt	Occurrence	Transitive / Intransitive	Separable / Inseparable
go down	Or it's gonna go down in flames	3	Intransitive	Inseparable
come back	But you'll come back each time you leave	1	Intransitive	Inseparable
find out	Find out what you want	1	Transitive	Inseparable

There are three phrasal verbs in the “Blank Space” song lyric. Those phrasal verbs namely *go down*, *come back* and *find out*. The number of phrasal verbs occurred in this song is less than that of the previous song (Shake it Off). However, the three phrasal verbs in this song can still provide examples of phrasal verb use with the contextual meaning. The most frequent phrasal verbs from those of three is *go down*. It is an intransitive and inseparable form of phrasal verb. The next phrasal verb is *come back*. It occurs only once and classified as an intransitive and inseparable form of phrasal verb. The last phrasal verb found in this song is *find out*. It appears once in the song. It is a transitive and inseparable phrasal verb. Overall, the song Blank Space contains a relatively limited number of phrasal verbs. However, they are easy or familiar phrasal verbs related to everyday use. The grammatical characteristics of the phrasal verbs in this song is mostly intransitive and inseparable.

To further examine the use of phrasal verbs across other songs in the album 1989, the section now moves to the next song, All You Had to Do Was Stay. The phrasal verbs identified in this song are presented in the following table.

Table 4. Nine Phrasal Verbs in “All You Had to Do Was Stay” Song Lyric

Phrasal Verbs	Excerpt	Occurrence	Transitive / Intransitive	Separable / Inseparable
give away	People like you always want back the love they gave away	1	Transitive	Separable
want back	• People like you always want back the love they pushed aside. • Hey, now you say you want it back .	2	Transitive	Separable
think about	The more I think about it now, the less I know	1	Transitive	Inseparable
drive off	All I know is that you drove us off the road	1	Transitive	Inseparable
pick up	I've been picking up the pieces of the mess you made	1	Transitive	Separable
push aside	They pushed aside	1	Transitive	Separable
call up	Here you are now, calling me up	1	Transitive	Separable
lock out	Then why'd you have to go and lock me out	2	Transitive	Separable
let in	when I let you in	2	Transitive	Separable

From the song All You Had to Do was Stay, nine phrasal verbs with distinct grammatical characteristics were found. Those phrasal verbs are *give away*, *want back*, *think about*, *drive off*, *pick up*, *push aside*, *call up*, *lock out*, and *let in*. The phrasal verbs found in this song are richer than that of the previous song lyrics (Shake it Off and Blank Space). The first phrasal verb that occur is *give away*. It appears once and it is a transitive and separable phrasal verb. The second phrasal verb is *want back* which occurs twice in the song. It is classified as a transitive and separable phrasal verb. The third phrasal verb is *think about* which appears once in the song. It is a transitive and inseparable phrasal verb. The fourth phrasal verb is *drive off*. It occurs once in the song. It belongs to transitive and inseparable phrasal verb. The fifth phrasal verb is *pick up*. It appears once in the song. It is classified as a transitive and separable phrasal verb. The sixth phrasal verb is *push aside* which occurs once in the song. It is a transitive and separable phrasal verb. The seventh phrasal verb is *call up* which occurs once. It is a transitive separable phrasal verb. The two last phrasal verbs listed above are *lock out* and *let in*. Each of them occurs twice and functions as transitive and separable phrasal

verbs. Overall, the phrasal verbs in All You Had to Do Was Stay are predominantly transitive and separable, with only a small number of inseparable forms identified.

To further examine the use of phrasal verbs across other songs in the album 1989, the part now moves to the next song, Out of the Woods. The phrasal verbs identified in this song are presented in the following table.

Table 5. Five Phrasal Verbs in Out of the Woods Song Lyric

Phrasal Verbs	Lyric (Excerpt)	Occurrence	Transitive / Intransitive	Separable / Inseparable
fall apart	We were built to fall apart .	1	Intransitive	Inseparable
fall back	Then fall back together.	1	Intransitive	Inseparable
walk out	I walked out.	1	Intransitive	Inseparable
set free	I walked out, I said, "I'm setting you free "	1	Transitive	Separable
turn out	But the monsters turned out to be just trees	1	Intransitive	Inseparable

The analysis of phrasal verbs in the song Out of the Woods identifies five phrasal verbs with distinct grammatical characteristics. These phrasal verbs are *fall apart*, *fall back*, *walk out*, *set free*, and *turn out*. Overall, the phrasal verbs found in this song predominantly function as intransitive and inseparable, with only one transitive and separable phrasal verb identified. The phrasal verb *fall apart* appears once and functions as an intransitive and inseparable phrasal verb. Closely related to this is *fall back*, which also appears once and functions as an intransitive and inseparable phrasal verb. The phrasal verb *walk out* appears once and functions as an intransitive and inseparable phrasal verb. In contrast to the other phrasal verbs identified, *set free* appears once and functions as a transitive and separable phrasal verb. Finally, the phrasal verb *turn out* occurs once and is classified as an intransitive and inseparable phrasal verb. Overall, the phrasal verbs in Out of the Woods predominantly intransitive and inseparable nature.

Based on the results of the data analysis, 22 phrasal verbs were found in four songs from Taylor Swift's album entitled 1989, namely Shake It Off, Blank Space, All You Had to Do Was Stay, and Out of the Woods.

Table 6. Findings of Phrasal Verb in the Four Songs of Taylor Swift's Album 1989

No	Syntactic Characteristics	Occurrence	Phrasal verbs
1	Intransitive Inseparable	10	stay out, go on, get down, come over, go down, come back, fall apart, fall back, walk out, turn out
2	Transitive Separable	9	shake off, give away, want back, pick up, push aside, call up, lock out, let in, set free
3	Transitive Inseparable	3	find out, think about, drive off

The most frequent phrasal verbs found from the four songs is intransitive inseparable form with 10 data, and it is followed by transitive separable form of phrasal verbs with 9 data. The least phrasal verbs form found in the four songs is transitive inseparable form with only three data. From the findings, it can be inferred that the use of phrasal verbs in the song is very common. Taylor Swift often uses verb phrases to express emotions and strengthen the figurative meaning of her lyrics.

The Contextual Meaning of Phrasal Verbs in the Four Songs of Taylor Swift's Album 1989

Semantically, it is found from the four songs that the meaning of phrasal verbs can be categorized into literal, aspectual and idiomatic. The meaning of phrasal verbs from the four songs will be described as follows.

Table 7. The Meaning of Phrasal Verbs in Shake it Off

Phrasal Verbs	Meaning	Lyrics	Category
stay out	remain out late at night	I stay out too late.	Aspectual (semi-idiomatic)
go on	continue being involved in	I go on too many dates.	Aspectual (semi-idiomatic)
shake off	get rid of negative feelings	I shake it off	Idiomatic
get down	to dance/to enjoy energetically	You could've been gettin' down to this sick beat.	Aspectual (semi-idiomatic)
come over	come closer / approach	Won't you come on over , baby?	Aspectual (semi-idiomatic)

Based on the semantic analysis presented in Table 7, the phrasal verbs found in Shake It Off can be categorized into aspectual (semi-idiomatic) and idiomatic meanings. Most of the phrasal verbs in the song function as aspectual phrasal verbs, indicating continuation (*stay out*, *go on*), intensity (*get down*), or involvement in an activity (*come over*) rather than expressing a fully literal meaning.

The phrasal verbs *stay out*, *go on*, *get down*, and *come over* are classified as aspectual (semi-idiomatic) because their meanings remain partially compositional. For example, *stay out* in "I *stay out* too late" expresses the continuation of being outside for an extended period, while *go on* in "I *go on* too many dates" highlights continuation in an activity of dating. Similarly, *get down* refers to engaging in dancing or enjoying the music, emphasizing the intensity of the action rather than a physical downward movement. The phrasal verb *come over* suggests movement toward someone in a social or interpersonal context, where the spatial meaning of come is extended to convey invitation and closeness. In contrast, *shake off* is categorized as an idiomatic phrasal verb because its meaning cannot be directly derived from the literal meanings of its components. In "I *shake it off*," the phrasal verb does not describe a physical shaking action but metaphorically refers to the act of dismissing or freeing oneself from negative feelings or criticism. This meaning is highly dependent on context.

Overall, the findings of the song lyrics indicate that the song predominantly employs aspectual phrasal verbs, which retain partial semantic transparency, alongside an idiomatic phrasal verb that conveys a more figurative and context-dependent meaning.

The next song is Blank Space. The following table shows the meaning of the phrasal verbs in the Blank Space song lyric.

Table 8. The Meaning of Phrasal Verbs in Blank Space

Phrasal Verbs	Meaning	Excerpt	Category
go down	to fail dramatically	Or it's gonna go down in flames	Aspectual (Semi-idiomatic)
come back	to return (emotionally) to a relationship	But you'll come back each time you leave	Literal
find out	to discover (feeling)	Find out what you want	Aspectual (Semi-idiomatic)

Based on the semantic analysis presented in Table 8, the phrasal verbs found in the selected Taylor Swift lyrics can be categorized into literal and aspectual meanings. Among the three phrasal verbs analyzed, *go down* and *find out* are classified as aspectual, while *come back* is classified as literal.

The phrasal verbs *go down* and *find out* are categorized as aspectual because their meanings highlight a change of state or completion of an action. For example, *go down* in “Or it's gonna *go down* in flames” emphasizes the total and dramatic failure of a plan or event, where the particle “down” signals that the action is fully carried out and reaches its final state. Similarly, *find out* in “*Find out* what you want” indicates a transition in the subject's knowledge, from not knowing to knowing, emphasizing the process of discovery. In contrast, the phrasal verb *come back* is classified as literal because its meaning can be directly inferred from its components. In “But you'll *come back* each time you leave”, *come* retains its literal sense of moving toward a place or state, and *back* indicates return, making the meaning transparent and compositional despite occurring in an emotional context.

Overall, the analysis shows that these lyrics predominantly employ aspectual phrasal verbs, which emphasize processes, changes of state, or completion of actions, alongside a literal phrasal verb that maintains compositional meaning.

The next song is All You Had to Do Was Stay. The following table shows the meaning of the phrasal verbs in the All You Had to Do Was Stay song lyric.

Table 9. The Meaning of Phrasal Verbs in All You Had to Do Was Stay

Phrasal Verbs	Meaning	Excerpt	Category
give away	to give something wholeheartedly	People like you always want back the love they gave away	Literal
want back	to desire to have something (love) returned	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People like you always want back the love they pushed aside. • Hey, now you say you want it back. 	Literal
think about	to consider or reflect on something	The more I think about it now, the less I know	Literal
drive off	to force a relationship off its path	All I know is that you drove us off the road	Aspectual (Semi-idiomatic)
pick up	to gather/collect pieces	I've been picking up the pieces of the mess you made	Literal
push aside	to ignore or disregard	They pushed aside	Aspectual (Semi-idiomatic)
call up	to contact (emotionally) someone	Here you are now, calling me up	Aspectual (Semi-idiomatic)
lock out	to prevent someone from entering	Then why'd you have to go and lock me out	Literal
let in	to allow someone to enter	when I let you in	Literal

Based on the semantic analysis presented in Table 9, the phrasal verbs can be categorized into literal and aspectual meanings. Among the nine phrasal verbs analyzed, *drive off*, *push aside*, and *call up* are classified as aspectual (semi-idiomatic), while *give away*, *want back*, *think about*, *pick up*, *lock out*, and *let in* are classified as literal.

The phrasal verbs *drive off*, *push aside*, and *call up* are categorized as aspectual because their meanings emphasize a change of state or a process that is metaphorically extended beyond the literal sense of the verbs. For instance, *drive off* in “All I know is that you *drove us off* the road” highlights the disruption or deviation of a relationship, where the particle “off” signals a movement away from stability. Similarly, *push aside* in “They *pushed aside*” indicates ignoring or disregarding something emotionally significant, and *call up* in “Here you are now, *calling*

“me up” conveys contacting someone while invoking emotional response, showing a meaning that goes beyond literal physical action. In contrast, the phrasal verbs *give away*, *want back*, *think about*, *pick up*, *lock out*, and *let in* are classified as literal because their meanings can be directly inferred from the combination of their components. For example, *pick up* in “I’ve been *picking up* the pieces of the mess you made” retains the literal sense of gathering, and *lock out* in “Then why’d you have to go and *lock me out*” maintains its basic meaning of preventing entry, even if applied metaphorically in an emotional context.

Overall, the analysis shows that these lyrics predominantly employ literal phrasal verbs, which maintain compositional meaning and clarity, alongside a smaller number of aspectual (semi-idiomatic) phrasal verbs, which emphasize processes, emotional transitions, or changes of state in relationships. The last song is Out of the Woods. The following table shows the meaning of the phrasal verbs in Out of the Woods song lyric.

Table 10. The Meaning of Phrasal Verbs in Out of the Woods

Phrasal Verbs	Meaning	Lyric (Excerpt)	Category
fall apart	to break down (emotionally)	We were built to fall apart .	Aspectual (Semi-Idiomatic)
fall back	to reconnect emotionally (after breaking up)	Then fall back together.	Idiomatic
walk out	to leave abruptly	I walked out .	Aspectual (Semi-Idiomatic)
set free	to release from emotional burden	I walked out, I said, "I'm setting you free "	Literal
turn out	to result in a particular way	But the monsters turned out to be just trees	Idiomatic

Based on the semantic analysis presented in Table 10, the phrasal verbs can be categorized into literal, aspectual, and idiomatic meanings. Among the five phrasal verbs analyzed, *set free* is classified as literal, *fall apart* and *walk out* are classified as aspectual, and *fall back* and *turn out* are classified as idiomatic.

The phrasal verbs *fall apart* and *walk out* are categorized as aspectual because their meanings emphasize a process or change of state that goes beyond the literal action. For example, “We were built to *fall apart*” uses *fall apart* to describe an emotional breakdown or disruption in the relationship, highlighting the progression of conflict rather than a purely physical action. Similarly, the phrasal verb *walk out* in “I *walked out*” indicates leaving abruptly, but in the context of a relationship, it reflects an emotional and relational shift rather than merely a physical movement. In contrast, the phrasal verb *set free* is classified as literal because its meaning can be directly inferred from its components. In “I’m *setting you free*”, the word “set” retains its basic meaning of making or causing, and “free” denotes unbound or released, resulting in a transparent compositional meaning: to release someone from emotional burden. Meanwhile, *fall back* and *turn out* are classified as idiomatic. *Fall back* in “Then *fall back* together” conveys reconnecting emotionally after a disruption, a meaning that cannot be deduced solely from the literal meanings of “fall” and “back”, making it idiomatic. Similarly, *turn out* in “But the monsters *turned out* to be just trees” expresses an outcome or realization that differs from initial expectations, a figurative use extending beyond the literal sense of the words.

The analysis of the song Out of the Woods shows that the lyrics employ a mix of literal, aspectual, and idiomatic phrasal verbs, reflecting both emotional processes and relational dynamics. The presence of idiomatic and aspectual phrasal verbs emphasizes the complexity of emotional experiences in relationships, while literal phrasal verbs maintain clarity and compositional meaning.

To sum up, the analyses of the four songs show that phrasal verbs express distinct functions in conveying actions, emotional states and relational dynamics. The four songs use phrasal verbs to achieve both clarity and expressive depth of meaning. The category of phrasal verbs meaning are various, including aspectual, idiomatic and literal. Aspectual phrasal verbs emphasize processes, changes of state, and involvement; idiomatic phrasal verbs convey figurative or context-dependent meanings; and literal phrasal verbs maintain compositional transparency.

In general, aspectual phrasal verbs are prevalent in songs that emphasize movement, action, or change of state. For example, in *Shake It Off* and *Blank Space*, many phrasal verbs highlight continuation, intensity, or involvement in activities, such as *stay out*, *go on*, *get down*, *come over*, *go down*, and *find out*. These verbs, while retaining some compositional meaning, extend their semantic range to express ongoing or changing experiences, demonstrating partial figurative usage.

On the other hand, literal phrasal verbs dominate songs that focus on clarity and compositional meaning, such as *All You Had to Do Was Stay*. Phrasal verbs like *give away*, *want back*, *think about*, *pick up*, *lock out*, and *let in* convey actions that are easily interpreted from their components, maintaining semantic transparency. Even when applied in emotional contexts, these verbs primarily describe observable or concrete actions, with only a few (*drive off*, *push aside*, *call up*) reflecting aspectual or metaphorical nuances.

Meanwhile, idiomatic phrasal verbs are strategically employed to convey figurative or emotional meanings, particularly in songs that explore complex relational dynamics. In *Shake It Off*, *shake off* metaphorically expresses dismissing negative feelings. In *Out of the Woods*, *fall back* and *turn out* illustrate emotional reconnection and realizations that cannot be deduced solely from their literal components. This mixture of idiomatic and aspectual verbs allows the lyrics to capture nuanced emotional processes and the unpredictability of relationships.

Overall, the phrasal verbs found are mostly aspectual (semi-idiomatic). They function as metaphors to express emotional states and internal conflicts. In addition, the researchers also found that some phrasal verbs in the four songs show relationship processes including emotional attachment (*give away*), separation (*walk out*, *break down*), reconciliation (*call up*, *come over*), and emotional boundary-setting (*lock out*, *let in*). The theme of the phrasal verbs here are relatively close to young adults and adolescents' life especially about love and relationship. The closeness of the theme to everyday life make the meaning of phrasal verbs easier to remember.

Pedagogical Implications of Using Song Lyrics as Authentic Materials in Teaching Phrasal Verbs

The results of this study are consistent with Nivika et al. (2023), who argue that song lyrics provide a rich source of phrasal verbs and can function as authentic learning materials. Similar to their analysis of Coldplay's songs, this study confirms that English songs contain a high density of idiomatic phrasal verbs. The dominance of inseparable phrasal verbs and transitive phrasal verbs in this study also aligns with Duha (2024) who found that inseparable form as well as transitive form appears more frequently in the album "Justice" by Justin Bieber.

The findings, based on pedagogical perspective, suggest that song lyrics containing phrasal verbs offer considerable benefits for English language teaching. It serves as authentic materials for learners to learn phrasal verbs. One effective way to learn phrasal verb is through context, and the context can be found in authentic materials (Trigulova & Fayzullayeva, 2024). When learning English through songs, the teacher can make activity in the classroom for example by singing the song together while looking at the lyrics. It can be followed with another activity to grab the students' attention on the phrasal verbs containing in the lyrics. Such pedagogical design can provide students with fun and enjoyable environment in learning

vocabulary especially phrasal verbs. This is in line with Zamin et al. (2020) who found that the use of song can increase vocabulary acquisition by providing fun way of picking up new words. Action research conducted by Khalisa et al. (2024) shows that song lyrics can assist learners improve their vocabulary achievement. In addition, Nation (2001) stated that repeated exposure of vocabulary especially through listening to music/song, moreover if the input is engaging and comprehensible, it can strengthen the learners' ability to acquire and retain new words. Krashen (2013) stated that language learners can learn more effectively if provided with meaningful and comprehensible input. Taylor Swift's songs can be an alternative to help learners in studying English, especially English phrasal verbs in authentic and meaningful contexts. It can be given to the students for their extensive reading or listening materials. Because phrasal verbs are embedded within emotional and narrative frameworks, learners are better able to infer meaning through context, supporting both reading and listening comprehension.

In English language teaching, phrasal verbs can be taught not only as a receptive skill but also can be encouraged to develop students' productive skills. It is potential for the learners to use phrasal verbs in the daily basis provided that the phrasal verbs choice is close to their theme (young adults and adolescents usually prefer a theme related to love) and they understand the meanings of those phrasal verbs. It is the teacher's task to make learners not only enjoy the music or song in an English classroom but also to make them notice the usage of vocabulary in the songs they listen to. In teaching phrasal verbs using song lyrics, a number of learning activities can be implemented to put the findings into reality. Teachers might start with a pre-listening exercise in which they introduce a few phrasal verbs from the song and ask students to guess their meanings based on context. During the while-listening stage, students can be given song lyrics with blanks where phrasal verbs are missing. This will encourage them to fill in the blanks as they listen. This exercise is intended to enhance the awareness of form-meaning connection. In the post-listening stage, students can discuss the meanings of the phrasal verbs and their syntactic characteristics (separable or inseparable). Teachers may also follow up with an exercise asking the students to use the learned phrasal verbs in new sentences. Through these exercises, may help students not only identify phrasal verbs receptively but also use them productively in meaningful contexts.

A simple activity like completing the missing phrasal verbs on the song lyrics then discussing its meaning and syntactic characteristics can be a good idea to make them notice some phrasal verbs in the song lyrics. This is in line with the concept of Noticing Hypothesis proposed by Schmidt (1990), i.e. noticing is necessary condition for learning. Noticing means conscious awareness of a certain language feature (Schmidt, 1990). By making the students pay attention to phrasal verbs in the lyric after or while listening to the song, the teacher can then stimulate the students to understand the meaning and to discuss the context. Through this method, learners get both entertainment and English mastery from the song.

Based on the explanation above, song lyrics such as those found in Taylor Swift's album 1989 can serve as a medium to support students' English learning. The use of song lyrics can also increase learners' interest and engagement in learning English, especially among adolescent and young adult learners at the intermediate level. Because these pop songs are easily accessible through digital platforms and are already familiar to many learners, they can help reduce learning anxiety and create a more relaxed classroom atmosphere. Moreover, learners in this age group are generally familiar with pop songs that they frequently access via digital media, which further supports their engagement in language learning. This is consistent with Rahmania et al. (2025) who found that the use of English songs as instructional media can enhance students' motivation and engagement in the language classroom.

Despite these advantages, the use of songs in the classroom also presents certain challenges, particularly in the Indonesian EFL setting. One notable item to consider in using English songs is learners' level of English, age and characteristics of the lessons (Adara, 2020).

Not all song lyrics are linguistically appropriate for all proficiency levels, as some may contain idiomatic expressions, cultural references, or fast-paced delivery that can hinder comprehension. Additionally, learners may focus more on the melody than on the language content if instructional guidance is insufficient. Cultural sensitivity should also be considered, as some song themes may not fully align with local values. Tasnim (2022) states that one of the challenges in using song is selecting the content of the song in which teachers must find the songs which are meaningful, authentic and culturally appropriate. Therefore, teachers need to carefully select songs, adapt activities to learners' proficiency levels, and provide clear instructional scaffolding to ensure that songs function as effective learning tools rather than mere entertainment.

It is also worth mentioning that this research is limited in the number of songs which are analyzed. Future researchers may consider to use more songs in analyzing phrasal verbs to contribute more to providing alternative of learning resources for teachers in teaching vocabulary for EFL learners. Next researchers may also try to analyze phrasal verbs in other kinds of authentic materials. In addition, the upcoming research can be done with different research design to analyze the effectiveness of songs as authentic materials in English language teaching.

CONCLUSION

Based on an analysis of four songs in Taylor Swift's 1989, 22 phrasal verbs were obtained, which were then classified based on their types: transitive-separable, transitive-inseparable, and intransitive-inseparable. The findings of this study indicate that the songs in Taylor Swift album rich of phrasal verbs. These phrasal verbs reinforce the song's theme and suggest escaping a difficult emotional situation. Meanwhile, phrasal verbs like *fall apart*, *walk out*, and *go on* serve to emphasize the emotional and mood swings depicted in the lyrics. This research reinforces previous theories that phrasal verbs typically carry meanings that are idiomatic in nature, cannot be understood solely from their constituent words.

Phrasal verbs have semantic and syntactic functions, indicating that songs are an authentic source rich in idiomatic expressions and can be utilized as a language learning medium. From a learning perspective, the research findings suggest that song lyrics can be an effective authentic material for introducing and deepening understanding of phrasal verbs. Phrasal verbs in song lyrics tend to be easier to understand because the context of the story is close to everyday life. This can help English learners grasp the structure, meaning, and usage of phrasal verbs more naturally. By learning using phrasal verbs in song lyrics, learners can improve their ability to understand idioms, increase their vocabulary, grammar and see how language is used creatively in popular media.

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