



Linguistics

An Analysis of Idiomatic Expression Presented in the New Songs of the Album *Positions* by Ariana Grande

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ABSTRACT

The idiomatic expressions is a common phenomenon in language use as a communication tool between humans. The use of idiomatic expressions can be presented in the dialogue and expressed in a literary work, such as in a song. It led the researcher to study further 1) the types of idiomatic expressions and 2) the meanings presented in the idiomatic expressions of 6 songs in “Positions” album by Ariana Grande. The researcher used qualitative research techniques combined with observation methods. Meanwhile, to analyze the data, the researcher used McCarthy & O’Dell’s (2010) theory to specify the type of expression and Leech’s (1981) theory to describe the meaning presented in the idiomatic expressions. The result discovered 18 data that belong to idiom expressions, with details: fixed statements (14), trinomials (3), and prepositional phrases (1). Each idiom expression has its specific meaning, which aims to enable the audience to understand the true meaning. According to Leech (1981), all the meaning presented in the idiom expressions belongs to thematic meaning.

I. INTRODUCTION

A language is a tool used by humans to communicate with one another that tends to convey thoughts, ideas, or opinions from speakers to listeners. Related to this, the speaker used different vocabularies and language styles to emphasize the purpose or meaning of the utterances. (Rabiah, 2018) mentioned that language as a human communication tool uses open language and can be distinguished based on sentences, words, morphemes, and phonemes to create specific meanings. It also results in differences in the use of language in a particular community or group.

Regarding this, humans will use different language styles to form and emphasize specific meanings in the utterances they want to convey to the hearer or audience, for example, by using idioms packed with figurative words. Idioms are expressions that cannot be explained logically or literally, yet it has implied meaning. Idioms have an important role because most native speakers use idioms in daily conversation. (McCarthy & O’Dell,

2010) explain idioms as permanent combinations of words whose meaning is confusing when considering the meaning of every word presented. (Rechsteiner et al., 2019) defines idioms as the use of a language to express specific meanings, which sometimes involve the use of metaphors and will be compared to their use in source and target languages. It is in contrast to (Floranti & Mubarak, 2020) focusing on the idioms, in one of Indonesian best seller fiction story, Bumi Manusia which was translated into English as This Earth of Mankind. The study identified the types of the translation strategies by the translators to reproduce the idioms from SL in TL and the accuracy level of their latest meanings in TL. Qualitative research method in the design of content analysis was employed. The result portrayed that the most dominant strategy employed by the translator was paraphrasing. The translator reproduced the original meaning of the idioms by selecting common vocabularies in TL (non-idiom forms, who defines idiomatic expressions as part of a language that is presented in

a different form, cannot be translated literally, and has an implicit meaning in its underlying structure. It is because idioms are usually influenced by the cultural or social aspects of the source language that may produce different meanings if translated into a target language with different cultural and social aspects. For example, the phrase “*break the ice*,” which interpreted as “*memecahkan es*” however, “*break the ice*” means “*make others feel comfortable*.” And the most used example is “*a piece of cake*” which means “*very easy*” not “*sepotong kue*”.

It can be concluded that the use of idiom expressions is often related to two different languages with different cultural and social backgrounds. Therefore, a translator must usually understand the differences in cultural connotations and examine the suitable word with similar meanings between the source and target language (Floranti & Mubarak, 2020) focusing on the idioms, in one of Indonesian best seller fiction story, Bumi Manusia which was translated into English as This Earth of Mankind. The study identified the types of the translation strategies by the translators to reproduce the idioms from SL in TL and the accuracy level of their latest meanings in TL. Qualitative research method in the design of content analysis was employed. The result portrayed that the most dominant strategy employed by the translator was paraphrasing. The translator reproduced the original meaning of the idioms by selecting common vocabularies in TL (non-idiom forms. In addition, to make it easier for translators to understand idiomatic expressions, (McCarthy & O’Dell, 2010) divides the types into eight: 1) Similes, 2) Binomials, 3) Trinomials, 4) Proverbs, 5) Euphemisms, 6) Clichés, 7) Fixed Statements, and 8) Other Languages.

Regarding of this, many idiom expressions can be found in movies, novels, talk shows, podcasts, songs, and others. However, idiom expressions are primarily presented in the song, which conveys the meaning implicitly to the audience. A song is a work of varying tones or rhythmic sounds which are usually accompanied by musical instruments. Many people like to listen to music and spontaneously know and understand the song. But not everyone can enjoy the song because at this moment the song is experiencing a big change in terms of the music and even the lyrics with some of them having difficulty understanding the message of the song. Regarding to this, the researcher is interested in analyzing further the use of idioms and

expressions in Ariana Grande’s songs, primarily on the “Positions” album, which was released in 2020 and also won the BreakTudo Awards 2021 in the Album of the Year category.

Ariana Grande was an American singer and actress and began her music career by releasing her first album “Yours Truly” in 2013. Ariana has received many awards throughout her career and each album is always breaking records every week. Ariana Grande currently has six studio albums, the songs are “Yours Truly” (2013), “My Everything” (2014), “Dangerous Woman” (2016), “Sweetener” (2018), “Thank U Next” (2019), and “Positions” (2020). In this regard, the researcher also used the types of meaning introduced by (Leech, 1981), which are divided into seven types: a) Conceptual, b) Connotative, c) Social, d) Affective, e) Reflected, f) Collocative, and g) Thematic. Furthermore, this research focuses on finding the types of idiomatic expressions and the meaning of idiomatic expressions used in the lyrics of the songs in the album “Positions” by Ariana Grande.

Idiomatic Expression

According to (Poole, 1999), idiomatic expressions are phrases that have different meanings from the word’s individual meanings. A component of meaning varies from an idiom to a morpheme. Idioms can be interpreted as a phrase with a literal meaning from its basic words. Meanwhile, a morpheme can be comprehended as the tiniest component of the meaning, of which one word can consist of several. Regarding this, the “*blue joke*” can be considered to be an example. “*Blue joke*” belongs to idiom expressions in which the meaning resulting is formed only when the word “*blue*” and “*joke*” are combined. If the word is paired with other words or used as a single word, it will form a different meaning. In one component, “*blue joke*” cannot be interpreted as a joke with the color blue but as a term used to refer to a smutty and dirty joke.

The Types of Idiomatic Expressions

Towards meaning and idiomatic types, two theories are discussed about it. The first is (Leech, 1981), and the second is (McCarthy & O’Dell, 2010). (Leech, 1981) is concerned with the meaning presented, while (McCarthy & O’Dell, 2010) focused on the types of idiom expressions. Meanwhile, (Cambridge Advanced Learner’s Dictionary, 1995) has two different meanings for

“type”: 1) as a separate set of individuals or things that has identical features and create a smaller unit of a larger set, and 2) as the elements of a group of individuals or things that positioned them separately from other. Regarding this, here are the types of idiom expressions proposed by (McCarthy & O’Dell, 2010), which are divided into:

Similes

Similes can be interpreted as expressions contrasting two things involving similar words or using “as” or “like.”

“Pilar is as bright as a button.”

“*Bright as a button*” means ‘quite clever.’

Binomials

Binomials can be interpreted as an idiom in which two words are merged by conjunction or connecting word, such as: “and.”

“Even though the elder and younger sister look identical, when I speak to them, I recognize they are like chalk and cheese.”

In this case, the “*chalk and cheese*” can be understood as “completely different,” which is used informally.

Trinomials

Trinomials can be interpreted as idioms consisting of a combination of three words.

“She had blood, sweat, and tears to achieve her dreams.”

The phrase “*blood, sweat, tears*” means “hard work.”

Proverbs

Proverbs can be learned as short, brief sentences that refer to something most individuals experience and aim to provide suggestions or cautions.

“If you want to earn much money, work hard because of no pain, no gain.”

The phrase “*no pain, no gain*” means “individuals should experience suffering and give their best effort to achieve success.”

Euphemisms

Euphemisms can be idioms that aim to avoid an offending word that may cause the audience or hearer to feel displeased. In short, it can be used to convey impolite words or sentences politely.

“Wait a minute! I will powder my nose.”

“*Powder my nose*” is an idiom used to convey that the speaker wants to use or go to the toilet.

Clichés

Cliché can be described as an idiom often

used as a statement or critique of specific typical, daily concerns.

“*Ignorance is bliss.*”

The phrases can be interpreted as individuals may feel pleased occasionally when they do not understand all the realities regarding a condition.

Fixed Statements

Fixed statements can be identified as idioms usually used or heard in daily conversation or communication.

“Just, take it easy, girl!”

The phrase “*take it easy*” can be interpreted as the utterance to ask the interlocutor or hearer to feel more peaceful or relaxed.

Other Languages

Other languages can be defined as idioms, primarily derived from Latin or French language.

“This study group was formed *ad hoc*.”

“*Ad hoc*” is derived from Latin, which means “for this;” however, in English, “*ad hoc*” is often used to state that “the things are not intended but positioned or accomplished when required.”

The Meaning of Idiomatic Expressions

The type of idiom expressions used in communication is often aimed to convey a specific meaning. The study of meaning is related to semantics. Semantics is one of the disciplines that focuses on exploring the real intention of meanings used in the specific language. These disciplines covered the analysis of meaning in various languages to convey how it all conforms to the combined impact of linguistic communication. Regarding semantics, one of the theories broadly used to interpret the meanings is proposed by (Leech, 1981), who divided the types of meaning into:

Conceptual Meaning

Conceptual meaning can be defined as the “denotative” or “psychological” meaning, which is widely considered the central aspect of linguistic communication.

Connotative Meaning

Connotative meaning can be described as conveying the communicative value of a statement because of what it refers to, above and beyond its thoroughly conceptual content.

Social Meaning

Social meaning can be understood as what a part of language expresses about the social occurrences of its use.

Affective Meaning

Affective meaning is learned primarily as a symbiotic classification representing an individual's emotions that depend upon moderating other classifications of meaning.

Reflected Meaning

Reflected meaning emerges in cases of numerous conceptual meanings when one meaning of a word constructs an aspect of our reaction to another.

Collocative Meaning

Collocative meaning is constructed from the organization of a word that develops on the interpretation of the words' meanings that manage to emerge in its conditions.

Thematic Meaning

Thematic meaning is the meanings created and arranged by the speaker or songwriter to arrange, emphasize, and assert something.

II. METHOD

In this study, the researcher used qualitative research techniques that aim to describe the data and research results in more detail. According to (Creswell, 2014), qualitative research techniques are ways or strategies to understand related social or human issues to form a detailed result and holistic conceptions that are formed using words to inform the research results that are finalized in natural requirements without being manufactured. In supporting qualitative research techniques, the researcher also used observation methods that can analyze data more thoroughly and reveal the actual conditions in the data used in a structured manner (Bardon et al., 2020).

The data used in this study are lyrics of 6 songs on the album "Positions" by Ariana Grande: 34 +35, Motive, Off the Table, Safety Net, Positions, and POV. First, the researchers downloaded all the songs on the album "Positions" by Ariana Grande. Second, the researcher searched for the lyrics of all songs from www.azlyrics.com. Third, the researcher listened to the songs while matching the lyrics. Fourth, the researcher analyzed the use of idiomatic expressions based on (McCarthy & O'Dell, 2010) theory. Next, the researcher discovered the meaning of idiomatic expressions found using (Leech, 1981) types of meaning. Finally, concluded the data and carried out the results of the analysis.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the data that has been collected and analyzed, the researchers discovered 18 idiom expressions presented in the six songs in the album.

The Type of Idiom Expressions

Below are details of the data found on the six songs, 34 +35, Motive, Off the Table, Safety Net, Positions, and POV.

Table 1. The Type of the Idiom Expressions

Song	Idioms Expressions	Type
34+35	Keep it up	Fixed statement
	Stay up	Fixed statement
	Put it down	Fixed statement
	Dream comes true	Fixed statement
Motive	Like gold	Fixed statement
	Turn on	Fixed statement
	Lead on	Fixed statement
	Come back	Fixed statement
Off the Table	Off the table	Trinomial
	Calm down	Fixed statement
Safety Net	Off track	Fixed statement
	Safety net	Fixed statement
	At the end of the day	Prepositional phrases
	Run away	Fixed statement
Positions	Too good to be true	Fixed statement
	I am down	Fixed statement
POV	Point of view	Trinomial
	Get used to	Trinomial

Based on the table above, it can be seen that among the 18 idiom expressions found, the six songs in the album "Positions," which are used as data sources, are dominated by idiom expressions of fixed statements (14), trinomial (3), and prepositional phrases (1).

Fixed Statements

According to (McCarthy & O'Dell, 2010), fixed statements are commonly used in everyday verbal communication. Regarding the use of fixed statements in Ariana Grande's songs, the author assumes that these idioms are commonly used in everyday conversation, and its occurrences in the song can be related to daily life that is relevant to the life experiences of the audience. The idiom expression "*keep it up*" itself cannot be categorized in the trinomial form because this idiom only consists of two phrases that are used by inserting objects in it. In fact, the use of the idiom "*keep it up*" itself comes from "*keep + ... + up*," which can be used to encourage someone to continue doing an

activity that is being done.

Trinomial

At the same time, the use of trinomial itself is an idiom that combines three syllables. The use of trinomial also indicates to convey a specific meaning in communication. The use of trinomial idiom expressions will give a specific meaning if it is used in the three words patent arrangements, and if one word or other words are not used together, it will produce a different meaning. In the 18 data found, only three idiom expressions are included in the trinomial category. One of them is the “*off the table*” idiom expression used in the song “Off the Table.” This one idiom expression is usually used to withdraw an offer given to the audience or interlocutor.

Prepositional Phrases

While the least types of idiom expressions are found in Ariana Grande’s songs, only one is found in the song “Safety Net.” In the song, prepositional phrases are used in the phrase “*at the end of the day*”. This one phrase is commonly used as a time marker and is also used to conclude something.

The Meaning of the Idiom Expressions

Meanwhile, from the 18 data, the researcher discovered the meaning of each idiom expression, as presented in Table 2 below:

Table 2. The Meaning of the Idiom Expressions

No.	Idiom Ex-pressions	Meaning
1	Keep it up	To continue doing something in the same manner or to the same level of proficiency.
2	Stay up	To remain awake beyond one’s normal bedtime.
3	Put it down	To place someone or something down on or into something
4	D r e a m comes true	A dream, desire, or goal that has been achieved or has become a reality after a long time.
5	Like gold	Very valuable and, as a result, difficult to find or attain
6	Turn on	Something increases one’s sexual interest or excitement.
7	Lead on	To escort one somewhere
8	Come back	To return to someone or something
9	Off the table	To be withdrawn or no longer available, as for consideration, acceptance, discussion, etc.

10	Calm down	To relax or become less intense
11		Not faithful to or distracted from a central principle, goal, mission, etc.
12	Safety net	A collection of resources available for use in case of problems.
13	At the end of the day	When everything else has been taken into consideration.
14	Run away	To flee or escape.
15	Too good to be true	Almost unbelievable; so good as to be unbelievable.
16	I am down	Okay or on good terms with someone.
17	Point of view	A particular perspective on or way of thinking about something.
18	Get used to	Accustomed to someone or something; familiar and comfortable with someone or something.

Based on the data in Table 2., the researcher describes some of the meanings of the idiom expressions used in the six Ariana Grande songs in the album “Positions” as follows:

1. “*Keep it up*”

These idiom expressions appear in the lyrics of the song titled “34+35”. Idiom expressions that fall into the fixed statement category have the original form “*keep + ... + up*.” “*Keep it up*” can mean to continue doing something in the same manner or to the same level of proficiency. While in the song “34+35,” which is presented as:

*“So, what you doing tonight?
Better say, “Doin’ you right” (yeah)
Watchin’ movies, but we ain’t seen a thing tonight (yeah)
I don’t wanna keep you up (you up)
But show me, can you keep it up?”
(34+35, Ariana Grande)*

In this case, Ariana seems to ask the audience or her interlocutor to keep doing what Ariana has asked for in the same way or rhythm. In this case, the song “34+35” is widely assumed by the audiences to be a song that describes one of the references to sexual position, 69, which is also presented as the result of 34 plus 35. It is also supported by the lyrics in the last verse of the song “34+35”, which states, “*Means I wanna 69 wit’ ya’, no shit.*” So it can be concluded that the word “*it*” in “*keep it up*” refers to the genital organ or dick. In other words, “*keep it up*” indicates that Ariana asks her partner or the person referred to in the song to keep his genitals or dick hard or tense in order to give Ariana sexual

satisfaction because, in the previous line, Ariana wrote, “*I don’t wanna keep you up.*”

2. “*Off the table*”

“*Off the table*” is an idiom expression used in the song of the same name, “*Off the Table*”. This idiom expression belongs to the trinomial category because it uses or combines three words at once to form a specific meaning. This idiom has the meaning, to be withdrawn or no longer available, as for consideration, acceptance, discussion, etc.” However, if it looks at it as a whole, the use of “*off the table*” in the song refers to Ariana’s feeling of love that no longer existed or her fear towards she is unable to love someone else. As presented in the lines:

“Will I ever love the same way again? (Way again)

Will I ever love somebody like the way I did you?

Never thought you’d be so damn hard to replace

I swear I don’t mean to be this way

*If I can’t have you, is love completely **off the table**”*

(Off the Table, Ariana Grande)

It is also supported by the lines before the last line, which show that Ariana seems to doubt whether she can feel love like she felt with her former lover. At the same time, the idiom “*off the table*” refers to Ariana’s doubt about her love for the new lover and her ex-lover.

3. “*At the end of the day*”

This idiom expression belongs to prepositional phrases because it consists of a phrase, not a complete sentence. Literally, “*at the end of the day*” is used as a time marker or when the sun has set. However, this idiom expression can also express “When everything else has been taken into consideration.” This idiom expression is used in the song “*Safety Net*,” especially in the second verse by Ty Dolla \$ign as presented below:

“Girl, you’re mine, it’s safe to say

***At the end of the day**”*

(Safety Net, Ariana Grande ft. Ty Dolla \$ign)

The use of this idiom expression in the song “*Safety Net*” shows that Ty Dolla \$ign or the songwriter wants to emphasize what has been done

by these two people who are in love in the end and believe that they are destined to have each other. In this song, it can be concluded that the consideration in the idiom expression refers to the feelings of love experienced by the two people in the song, which is used to state that finally, the songwriter succeeds in owning the love of his/her lover.

Based on the data above, it can be concluded that most of the idiom expressions used in Ariana Grande’s songs in the album “*Positions*” aimed to convey the particular meaning of Ariana or the songwriter to the audience, especially those related to romantic relationships that are correlated and experienced by the audience. Thus, all the meanings of the idiom expressions above belong to the thematic meaning, which by (Leech, 1981) is defined as meanings created and arranged by the speaker or songwriter to arrange, emphasize, and assert something.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

The research was conducted using the six Ariana Grande songs in the album “*Positions*,” such as 34 +35, Motive, Off the Table, Safety Net, Positions, and POV, using idiom expressions. The use of idiom expressions aims to convey the meaning of each song and to strengthen the emotional message in the songs. It also relates to the background of creating the album “*Positions*,” which Ariana Grande or the songwriter used to accentuate her beautiful vocals and show emotional healing that presents various love stories.

The data collected and analyzed reveals that the most widely used idiom expressions in the song lyrics on the album “*Positions*” are fixed statements, which are 14. The use of fixed statements enables the audience to understand better what is conveyed through the songs. Moreover, since fixed statements are often used in daily communication, it also enables the audience to obtain the song’s real meaning. Meanwhile, the second most widely used type of idiom expression is trinomials, which are three. The trinomials are characterized by combining three words at once that form a specific meaning. The meaning will change if one word is missing or the order is changed. The use of trinomials is also intended to enable the audiences to discover and capture the special meanings that the songwriter wants to convey or emphasize in each song verse. In addition, only one prepositional phrase was found, emphasizing the statement on the final or the ending of the love story.

Furthermore, each idiom expression found in the six songs on the album “Positions” has a specific meaning. It is mainly associated with the full lyrics, which will create meaning related to the song’s content. In other words, the use of idiom expressions in the six songs on the album “Positions” aims to emphasize specific messages that help audiences understand and find out the meaning of the message the songwriter wants to convey. In addition, the meanings of the idiom expressions presented in the six songs on the album “Positions” are categorized into thematic meaning types.

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