A Small-Scale Corpus Study of Metal Songs:
Metallica's 'The Black Album'

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Abstract: Music is an integral part of our lives, resonating with nearly everyone, and its unique qualities have garnered the interest of English Language Teaching (ELT) scholars, particularly in vocabulary acquisition. Numerous studies have investigated the educational potential of various genres, however metal music remains largely underexplored. This corpus study seeks to address this gap by analyzing the educational value of metal songs in ELT. It analyzes the CEFR levels of words and idioms, as well as the prominent lexico-grammatical structures in a corpus of approximately 3,000 words, employing a combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches. The findings show that about 80% of the words fall within the A1, A2, and B1 levels, though a significant portion at the A1 level are function words. In contrast, most idioms are classified at the C2 level, followed by C1 and B2 levels. The study also identifies five frequent lexico-grammatical patterns, such as personal pronouns, determiners, imperatives, modal verbs, and metaphors/similes. These patterns contribute to a conversational tone in metal lyrics while fostering critical thinking and creative language use among learners.

Keywords: English language teaching, vocabulary learning, metal music, CEFR levels, lexico-grammatical structures

Metal Şarkılar Üzerine Küçük Ölçekli Bir Derlem Çalışması:
Metallica'nın 'The Black Albüm'ü

Öz: Müzik, hayatımızın ayrılmaz bir parçasıdır ve neredeyse herkesin ruhuna dokunur. Bu eşsiz özellikleri, özellikle kelime öğrenimi bağlamında, İngiliz Dili Eğitimi (ELT) alanındaki akademisyenlerin ilgisini çekmektedir. Çeşitli müzik türlerinin eğitsel potansiyelini araştıran çok sayıda çalışma yapılmış olsa da metal müzik büyük ölçüde göz ardı edilmiştir. Bu derlem çalışması, ELT' de metal şarkılarının eğitsel değerini analiz ederek bu boşluğu doldurmayı amaçlamaktadır. Çalışmada, yaklaşık 3.000 kelimeden oluşan bir derlemdeki sözcüklerin ve deyimlerin CEFR seviyeleri, ayrıca öne çıkan sözcük-dilbilgisel yapıları hem nicel hem de nitel yöntemlerle incelemektedir. Bulgular, kelimelerin yaklaşık %80'inin A1, A2 ve B1 seviyelerinde olduğunu, ancak A1 seviyesindeki kelimelerin önemli bir kısmının yapısal sözcükler olduğunu göstermektedir. Buna karşılık, deyimlerin çoğunluğu C2 seviyesinde sınıflandırılırken, bunu C1 ve B2 seviyeleri takip etmektedir. Çalışma ayrıca beş sık kullanılan sözcük-dilbilgisel yapıyı tespit etmiştir: kişi zamirleri, belirteçler, emir kipleri, modal fiiller ve eğretilemeler/benzetmeler. Bu yapılar, metal şarkı sözlerinde konuşma tarzı bir ton oluştururken, öğrenenlerin eleştirel düşünme ve yaratıcı dil kullanımı becerilerini geliştirmelerine katkı sağlamaktadır.

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Anahtar kelimeler: İngiliz Dili Eğitimi, kelime öğrenimi, metal müzik, CEFR seviyeleri, sözcük-dilbilgisel yapılar

Introduction

Wilkins (1972) highlighted that while grammar is essential for conveying meaning, vocabulary is even more crucial because, without it, communication becomes significantly impaired. This assertion underscores that, for an English learner, the ability to communicate—widely regarded as the primary goal of learning English—depends significantly on acquiring and mastering a sufficient number of vocabulary items. As Thornbury (2002) describes the emergence of the communicative approach in the 1970s brought about a new perspective on vocabulary teaching and learning, recognizing vocabulary as the essential component for effective communication. Before the rise of communicative approach, grammatical structures were considered the cornerstone of ELT.

However, as Richards and Rodgers (2001) elaborate, the advocates of communicative approach such as Halliday (1970) and Hymes (1972), redefined the role of language, emphasizing words as units for creating meanings with rather than merely components within grammatical structures. In other words, vocabulary was no longer subordinate to grammatical rules; instead, it was seen as an independent teaching and learning goal, often introduced as language functions or lexico-grammatical structures. Consequently, a significant number of studies began to focus on how humans learn words and the most effective strategies for vocabulary instruction and acquisition. Researchers have explored how words are learned, which techniques can be employed to teach vocabulary effectively, and what types of tasks and practices should be utilized to provide learners with opportunities to use new vocabulary.

Vocabulary items are found in various inputs, ranging from readings to videos, as vocabulary alongside grammar, forms the basis of language. So, English teachers can use a variety of texts to introduce new words, phrases, and idiomatic expressions to their students. Rivers (1976) considers language teachers fortunate, as they can incorporate any subject matter that aligns with learners' interests. One of the valuable sources of words and idiomatic expressions is songs. According to Murphey (2013), songs offer a valuable resource for vocabulary learning given their prevalence in our lives. Additionally, incorporating music into the classroom can transform a tedious task into a more enjoyable and engaging experience for students.

As Abbott (2002) explains, another feature that makes songs suitable for vocabulary learning is that they are not easily forgotten due to their rhythm, relatability, and the fun experience they create for learners. While language lessons may fade from memory, the songs introduced during those lessons often remain with learners for years. This idea is supported by the observation that cultural music reflects a long tradition of using rhythmic means to convey ideas, emotions, and values. Moreover, the repetitive nature of songs enhances memory retention, as illustrated by Canadian artist Glenn Gould, who famously used music to memorize his essays and program notes. Research further supports these claims, with studies by Salakka et al. (2021) and Leeuw et al. (2021) highlighting that listening to music elicits emotional responses and autobiographical memories, fostering a deep sense of connection with the songs.

Theoretical Background

Research investigating how songs influence vocabulary acquisition has been conducted in various contexts, including teaching English to young learners and in second language acquisition for adults across different countries. Li and Brand (2009) demonstrated that music positively influences the vocabulary development, language proficiency, and comprehension of Mainland Chinese ESL learners. Their findings revealed a clear correlation between song-centered activities and improved vocabulary outcomes, as well as more positive attitudes toward English learning. Similarly, Phisutthangkoon and Panich (2016) discovered that incorporating song-based activities significantly enhanced vocabulary learning and retention among first-year students in Thailand. They found that post-test results showed a marked improvement compared to pretest scores. The minimal decline in scores over two weeks suggests the long-term effectiveness of these activities. Moreover, students reported positive attitudes toward learning vocabulary through song activities.

Some research has focused on the effects of integrating English songs into vocabulary teaching for young learners. For instance, Shehadeh and Farrah (2016) investigated how children's songs can improve elementary students' vocabulary knowledge and pronunciation skills. The study involved 123 Arabic-speaking 4th graders learning English, and songs were selected based on the curriculum. The experimental group exhibited a slight vocabulary gain (1.5 points higher) and a more substantial improvement in pronunciation (5 points higher) than the control group, showing that songs can be beneficial in improving pronunciation for young learners. Similarly, Putri and Rustipa (2023) conducted a study with kindergarten learners in Indonesia, where songs were the primary method of teaching vocabulary. Observations revealed that children were motivated and actively engaged in the song activities. Additionally, interviews with teachers offered insights into their methods and strategies for using songs. This study further highlights the positive impact of songs on vocabulary learning and student engagement among young learners.

Although songs are effective for teaching and learning English vocabulary, they do not always present learners with correct word forms. Kuzembayeva et al. (2022) conducted research focusing on linguistic inaccuracies in song lyrics. This study involved a survey of forty-four adolescents to gain insights into their music preferences and their awareness of language errors in songs. The survey results indicated that lyrics are significant to 54.4% of the participants, and a further 43% expressed frustration with mistakes in song lyrics. To identify common inaccuracies, the researchers analyzed thirty popular American and British songs. While most errors were grammatical, nearly half of the errors pertained to abbreviations and partial word omissions, which are vocabulary-related inaccuracies.

Research on learners' attitudes toward using songs for vocabulary learning consistently shows positivity and interest. Isnaini and Aminatun (2021) investigated students' opinions on improving vocabulary through English songs using a descriptive qualitative approach. The data, collected via questionnaires and interviews, revealed strong interest, with all participants listening to English songs and 80.6% doing so daily. Additionally, 96.8% of students expressed a positive attitude toward studying vocabulary through songs and believed that English songs help them understand the meanings of words. Similarly, Batluk (2015) conducted a case study with 15 Swedish upper-secondary students to explore whether listening to English songs could motivate them to learn English outside the classroom. The interviews revealed that all students viewed listening to music as valuable extracurricular English practice, and most expressed enthusiasm about discussing it. English songs were the preferred choice for all participants when listening to non-native music, with some learners exclusively listening to songs in their first language and

English. This finding aligns with Isnaini and Aminatun (2021), highlighting the popularity of English songs among learners and their effectiveness in supporting English language acquisition.

Despite the positive reputation of songs among learners, they face some challenges in using them as a tool for learning English. Muhamad and Rahmat (2020) conducted an investigation into the challenges learners face while utilizing songs for educational purposes. The study examined how pronunciation and meaning influence the listening of songs among ESL learners. It was found that 60% of students reported sometimes having issues pronouncing fricatives, especially the /ð/ and /θ/ sounds, which are not present in Malay. Additionally, 55% of students reported occasional struggles with pronouncing the '-ed' form, which can impact their understanding of English songs. It was also revealed that 45% of students occasionally invented lyrics based on their understanding, influenced by difficulties in vocabulary comprehension, poor pronunciation of singers, and fast-paced songs. Such challenges are not unique to Malaysian learners but can also be experienced by ESL learners from other linguistic backgrounds, who may struggle with unfamiliar sounds, words, and rapid lyrics in English songs.

The positive impact of English songs on learners is also recognized by teachers. Nguyen and Nguyen (2020) explored teachers' perspectives on the use of songs in vocabulary instruction, involving 75 instructors from an English language center. The data were gathered using a questionnaire and supplemented by follow-up interviews. The findings indicated that 98.6% of the teachers regarded songs as a valuable tool for teaching vocabulary to young learners, while 94.7% highlighted their importance in keeping students engaged. Additionally, teachers acknowledged the importance of songs in supporting vocabulary review and retention. Similarly, Barros (2022) examined teachers' views regarding the integration of songs into English vocabulary acquisition at a Federal University. The study found that all teachers used songs in their classes, albeit with varying frequency, and recognized their value in enhancing vocabulary learning. Teachers primarily used songs to teach grammar and vocabulary, with some also noting their importance in improving pronunciation.

Although teachers generally have positive attitudes, there are still some concerns about incorporating English songs into their classrooms. Murphey (2013) outlines 20 concerns raised by teachers during a workshop centered on incorporating songs into English lessons. Among the most prevalent concerns was the perception that music and songs are not essential educational tools, a viewpoint shared by principals, teachers, and students. Furthermore, the integration of music and songs was reported to potentially disrupt the standard curriculum, resulting in a loss of instructional time. Additionally, effectively utilizing such materials requires careful planning and the establishment of clear objectives and pedagogical goals, which can present significant challenges.

Additionally, Murphey presents two lists: one detailing what we typically do with songs outside of class and another suggesting how they might be used in class. He suggests that comparing these lists could generate numerous ideas for incorporating songs into English lessons. In other words, a song activity does not have to come from the second list to be effective, nor is an activity from the first list of lesser educational value. The key is to balance these activities and avoid overusing songs to the point where they lose their enjoyment.

The following are some examples from Murphey's lists (2013, p. 5-6):

List A: Typical activities with songs outside class

1. Listening to music

2. Discussion of the lyrics
3. Talking about the singer/group
4. Discussion of music videos
5. Use of songs to set or change the mood or atmosphere

List B: Suggested activies with songs in class

1. Study of grammar
2. Translation of songs
3. Use of songs for gap-fill, cloze, or correction activities
4. Writing of dialogues using the words of a song
5. Teaching culture through songs

Millington (2011) identifies several limitations and challenges that teachers need to consider. He asserts that teachers must carefully select suitable songs, because the language and sentence structure in songs often differ from spoken English. Additionally, teachers should maintain a varied repertoire to prevent students from losing interest. Millington also emphasizes that simply singing songs does not enable learners to communicate in another language. However, using songs as tasks and adapting existing children's songs can help maximize their potential as teaching and learning tools.

Some researchers have focused on corpus-based analyses of song lyrics rather than on their effectiveness or learners' and teachers' perceptions. For instance, Goyak et al. (2021) aimed to determine the frequency patterns of lexical verbs, mental verbs, and to analyze the use of mental verbs in the Diachronic Corpus of English Song Lyrics (DCOESL). The corpus was built by compiling 5000 song lyrics from 1960s to the 2000s, with 25 songs from each year, across four genres: country, pop, rock, and rhythm and blues (R & B). The findings indicate that English songs commonly feature mental verbs, pronouns, simple present tense, simple sentences, and contractions. The lyrics share characteristics with conversational English, making them valuable for learners looking to improve their speaking skills.

Similarly, Bonsu (2023) conducted a corpus-based analysis of songs by Black Sherif, a Ghanaian singer and rapper. Given that rap music often tackles social, economic, and political themes, analyzing its lyrics can provide valuable understanding of how language is utilized in social contexts. Bonsu's analysis identified three key linguistic strategies in the rapper's songs: the use of pronouns, Ghanaian student Pidgin, and metaphors related to youth empowerment and life's challenges. These findings suggest that English songs can be used not only for teaching vocabulary and grammar but also for facilitating deeper discussions on topics such as overcoming hardships and achieving goals. Like the findings of Goyak et al. (2021), Bonsu's study reinforces the idea that song lyrics share features with conversational language, further highlighting their potential as educational tools in ESL classrooms.

Building on the focus of corpus-based analysis in song lyrics, Tegge (2017) examined the number and difficulty of vocabulary items in pop songs by analyzing two pop song corpora to determine their lexical coverage. The first corpus included 408 songs from the US Billboard charts, while the second consisted of 635 songs chosen by English teachers for instructional purposes. The analysis revealed that the second corpus featured vocabulary that was less demanding but more closely aligned with spoken English. Although the pop song lyrics in this analysis contained less challenging vocabulary, they remained valuable for teaching essential everyday vocabulary and reinforced the utility of songs in language instruction. These findings align with those of Goyak et

al. (2021) and Bonsu (2023), further highlighting the relevance of song lyrics in teaching conversational English.

Another example of corpus-based research is the study by Akbary et al. (2016), which examined the frequency of phrasal verbs in a collection of 400 song lyrics spanning various genres, such as pop, rock, hip-hop, and metal. The Phrasal Verb Pedagogical List developed by Garnier and Schmitt (2015) was utilized to evaluate the effectiveness of these genres in teaching phrasal verbs. The study concluded that English songs are a valuable resource for exposure to and learning phrasal verbs. Moreover, the type-token ratio used to rank the music genres revealed that, while pop songs exhibit the lowest type-token ratio, the phrasal verbs in their lyrics are among the most frequent and useful according to the PHaVE List. According to Akbary et al. (2016), this characteristic renders pop songs particularly suitable for learners at the elementary level. In contrast, hip-hop songs, with the highest type-token ratio, are more suitable for advanced learners due to their complexity and the inclusion of phrasal verbs appropriate for higher English proficiency levels. As for metal music, similar to hip-hop, it tends to have a higher type-token ratio, suggesting a more complex and varied use of language. This characteristic makes metal songs, much like hip-hop, more suitable for higher-level learners who are capable of handling more intricate language structures.

Significance of the Study

While several corpus-based analyses have extensively focused on pop song lyrics, there is a noticeable lack of research dedicated to other music genres, particularly metal. This genre, known for its complex and often rich lyrical content, has been largely overlooked in the field of English Language Teaching (ELT). The scarcity of studies exploring the educational potential of metal music highlights a significant gap in the literature, which this research aims to address. By examining the linguistic features and educational applications of metal song lyrics, this study not only seeks to fill this gap but also contributes to a broader and more nuanced understanding of how different music genres can serve as valuable resources in language learning.

This research underscores the importance of diversifying teaching materials to include genres that may resonate differently with learners, thereby enhancing engagement, critical thinking, and the practical use of language. Through this exploration, we aim to demonstrate that metal music, like its more commonly studied counterparts, has the potential to serve as an effective resource in the language classroom, particularly for fostering conversational skills and deepening linguistic comprehension.

Metal is one of the genres that has been largely overlooked in corpus analyses, despite the assumption that its song lyrics could expand learners' vocabulary by introducing more demanding lexical items. This study seeks to explore the educational value of metal songs by addressing the following research questions:

1. What levels of words and idioms (according to CEFR) are prevalent in metal songs?
2. What lexico-grammatical structures commonly appear in metal songs?

Methodology

To address the research questions, a small-sized corpus of metal song lyrics was compiled to represent a range of metal subgenres, including heavy metal, thrash metal, and hard rock. For this purpose, Metallica's *The Black Album* was selected due to its significant influence and

popularity within the genre. According to Rolling Stone (2016), this album achieved notable commercial success, selling over 650,000 copies in its first week and becoming one of the best-selling albums of the late 20th century. This indicates that the album enjoys considerable popularity, increasing the likelihood of selecting songs that appeal to a broad range of learners. Furthermore, compared to other albums in the metal genre, the lyrics of this album contain relatively little derogatory or offensive language, making it a more appropriate choice for classroom activities. Table 1 displays the songs included in this album.

Table 1

The Songs of 'The Black Album', Metallica, 1991

Song Number	Song Name	Number of Words
1	Enter Sandman	242
2	Sad But True	337
3	Holier Than Thou	180
4	The Unforgiven	326
5	Wherever I May Roam	303
6	Don't Tread on Me	230
7	Through the Never	183
8	Nothing Else Matters	227
9	Of Wolf and Man	217
10	The God That Failed	264
11	My Friend of Misery	214
12	The Struggle Within	211

Data Collection

The album comprises twelve songs, totaling approximately 63 minutes. Lyrics were sourced from the band's official website. The average word count per song was 244.5, with the shortest song containing 180 words and the longest 337, resulting in a total of 2,934 words. Contracted forms were expanded to full forms (e.g., auxiliary verbs such as "have" and "has") to ensure accurate word-level analysis.

Data Analysis

The vocabulary levels in the data were determined using the English Profile, which is aligned with the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). The English Profile is a research program funded by Cambridge University Press and Cambridge English Language Assessment, providing a robust framework for assessing language proficiency levels. It aims to describe the English language based on a corpus collected from real learners rather than language specialists. Its English Vocabulary Profile section provides detailed information about word meanings, collocations, phrases, and proficiency levels.

During the analysis, some words and idiomatic expressions were not found within this framework. To address this, the Oxford Learner's Dictionaries and the Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English (LDOC) were used as supplementary resources.

Initially, a word list was created by compiling all the song lyrics using WordSmith Tools 6.0 to provide information about word frequencies. However, this approach was not entirely effective, as the list separated all words individually, failing to capture idiomatic expressions or phrases that require contextual analysis. Consequently, a manual analysis was conducted using an interpretive approach to accurately determine the most contextually appropriate meanings, as well as to identify idiomatic expressions and phrases. Each CEFR level was color-coded to facilitate the analysis. Words, idioms, and phrases were matched with the primary framework and, if necessary, with secondary or tertiary frameworks, before being color-coded according to their levels. Frequencies were calculated, and charts and tables were generated. For the list of common lexico-grammatical structures, repetitive patterns in each song were identified, categorized, and highlighted with distinct colors. The categorized structures were then compiled and compared to identify those that appeared frequently across all songs. The analysis focused on structures that were consistently present in nearly every song and frequently used.

Findings and Discussion

CEFR Levels of Words and Idioms

To address the first research question, all words, phrases, and idioms were color-coded according to their CEFR levels, counted, and their frequencies calculated both for each song and across the entire corpus (as shown in Table 2). The analysis revealed that many lower-level words, particularly at the A1 level, are function words. Given that B2, C1, and C2-level words consist entirely of content words, the A1, A2, and B1-level words were further categorized into function and content words. The results in Table 2 indicate that although 53.49% of the corpus consists of A1-level words, the majority (37.24%) are function words, which have limited impact on advanced vocabulary learning. By excluding the percentage of function words at these levels, a more balanced comparison can be made among the groups of content words across different levels. A high percentage of function words is a well-documented phenomenon in song lyric analysis. Gumelar (2018), analyzing a corpus of 646 Heavy Metal songs, similarly highlighted the predominance of function words such as articles, prepositions, and conjunctions. This observation aligns with the findings of the present study, suggesting that function words are a characteristic feature of song lyrics across genres. While essential for grammatical cohesion, these words contribute less significantly to advanced vocabulary development, emphasizing the need for a focus on content words and idiomatic expressions in educational contexts.

Notably, the total count of words, phrases, and expressions in the song lyrics does not precisely align with the corpus size, as words were analyzed within their context. Idiomatic expressions like "Why don't you…?", phrases such as "keep… free from…", and collocations like "break a promise" were treated as single entries in the English Profile framework, as their components work together to convey specific meanings. As a result, idiomatic expressions, phrases, and collocations similar to these examples were counted as one unit in the analysis. Additionally, the analysis was context-dependent, with certain words assigned different CEFR levels based on their contextual meanings. For example, the word "man" appears in Songs 4, 9, and 11 with distinct meanings: "male adult" in Song 4 (A1 level) and "people in general" in Songs

9 and 11 (B2 level). The following lyrics illustrate different contextual meanings of the word "man" in Metallica's songs from *The Black Album* (1991):

> The young <u>man</u> struggles on and on, he's known ("The Unforgiven," song 4).
> … back to the meaning of wolf and <u>man</u> ("Of Wolf and Man," song 9).
> One <u>man</u>'s fun is another's hell ("My Friend of Misery," song 11).

Similarly, the verb "enter" in the phrase "enter night" in Song 1 has four meanings at three different levels in the framework: one at A2, two at B1, and one at C1. In this context, the intended meaning is at the C1 level, referring to entering a period of time.

> Exit light
> Enter night
> Take my hand
> We are off to never-never land, yeah

> ("Enter Sandman," *Metallica*, 1991)

When examining the results of each song individually, it becomes evident that, starting from Song 5 (with the exception of Song 8), the lexical demand of the lyrics increases. This is reflected in the fact that the combined total of B2, C1, and C2-level content words is either greater than or nearly equal to the combined total of A1, A2, and B1-level content words. For instance, in Song 12, 36.11% of the lyrics consist of B2, C1, and C2-level words, compared to 27.73% at A1, A2, and B1 levels. Similarly, in Song 5, C2-level words make up 12.27% of the lyrics, which can be attributed to both the higher number of C2-level words and their repetition throughout the song.

The detailed information in Table 2 can guide the selection of appropriate songs for vocabulary instruction based on learners' proficiency levels and needs. For example, Song 1 appears well-suited for elementary learners, as the majority of its content words (26.65%) are at the A1 level, with only 12.66% at the B2, C1, and C2 levels. Conversely, songs like 5, 6, or 12 may be more appropriate for intermediate or advanced learners due to the higher proportion of B2, C1, and C2-level words and idioms. For instance, Song 5 contains three idioms, including one at C1 level and two at the C2 levels: *take one's time*, *speak one's mind*, and *off the beaten path*.

Table 2

*The Percentage of Words by their CEFR Levels in Metal Songs*

CEFR Levels	A1 Content	A1 Function	A2 Content	A2 Function	B1 Content	B1 Function	B2	C1	C2
1	26.65%	34.74%	15.02%	1.40%	14.55%	0.93%	5.63%	4.69%	2.34%
2	15.33%	53.68%	15.63%	2.35%	6.48%	0%	2.94%	1.47%	2.06%
3	17.76%	42.76%	10.53%	7.24%	9.21%	0%	4.61%	5.92%	1.97%
4	19.18%	28.08%	2.05%	15.41%	16.10%	0%	10.27%	3.42%	5.48%
5	4.09%	34.94%	18.59%	9.67%	9.29%	0.74%	6.69%	3.72%	12.27%
6	17.37%	37.55%	5.63%	3.28%	10.32%	0.46%	15.02%	2.34%	7.98%
7	17.41%	33.14%	12.35%	3.37%	13.48%	0%	12.35%	1.68%	6.17%
8	22.32%	37.67%	14.41%	2.79%	15.34%	1.39%	5.11%	0%	0.93%

9	15.96%	36.15%	3.75%	4.22%	15.96%	0%	13.14%	7.98%	2.81%
10	14.83%	34.32%	7.62%	4.66%	12.28%	0.84%	16.96%	2.11%	6.35%
11	16.66%	39.21%	12.25%	4.90%	11.76%	0%	12.25%	1.96%	0.98%
12	12.56%	31.41%	7.32%	3.66%	7.85%	1.04%	19.89%	8.90%	7.32%
Total	16.25%	37.24%	10.53%	5.46%	11.74%	0.44%	10.01%	3.48%	4.80%

The analysis of idiomatic expressions revealed that a quarter of all idioms in the corpus are at the C2 level, with C1 and B2 levels each comprising 20%. This finding indicates that lyrics with a higher proportion of upper-intermediate to advanced-level words also contain a significant number of idioms. The remaining 35% of idioms are distributed across B1 (15%), A2 (5%), and non-classified idioms (15%), as shown in Figure 1. Several corpus studies have explored idiomatic expressions in song lyrics, primarily focusing on identifying and classifying different types. For instance, Patmawati and Jayantini (2024) used Makkai's (1972) theory to analyze a Taylor Swift songs, finding that Tournure Idioms were the most prevalent, while Phrasal Verb Idioms and Binomial Idioms were the least frequent. Similarly, Ristanti et al. (2023) applied Palmer's (1976) theory to categorize idioms in an Ariana Grande album, discovering that Phrasal Verbs, with 22 occurrences, were the most common idiomatic expressions. Given the absence of corpus studies examining the proficiency levels of idiomatic expressions in song lyrics, this study provides valuable insights into this underexplored area.

Figure 1

The Percentage of Idioms by their CEFR Levels
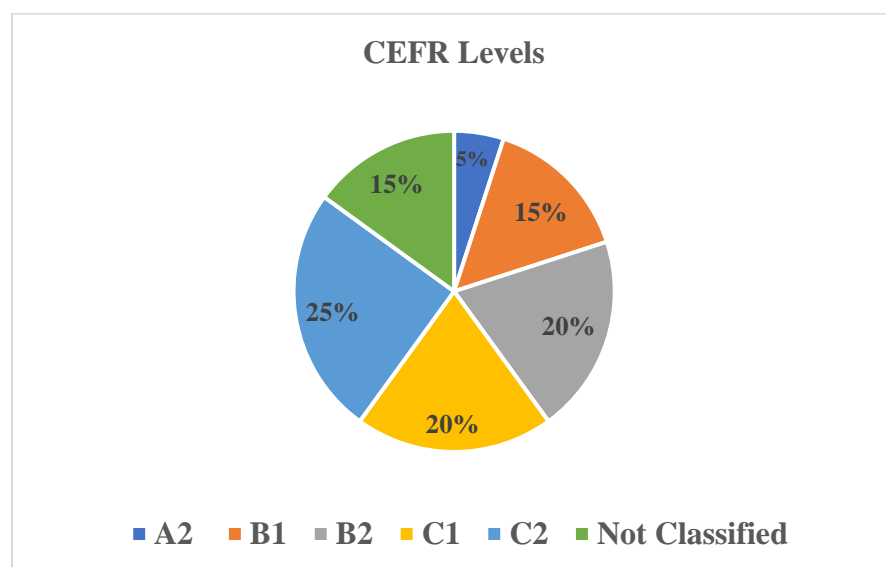
As mentioned earlier in the data analysis, some words and idiomatic expressions were not found in the primary framework or labeled according to their CEFR levels in the supplementary resources. These words, phrases, and idioms are listed in Table 3. Approximately 50% of the words listed are less relevant to educational objectives: sixteen instances represent archaic forms (e.g., *lest, thou, thee, thyself*), and the term *unforgiven*, which appears seven times, is a neologism created

by the artists. Similarly, Kuzembayeva et al. (2022) identified neologisms as the least frequent lexical inaccuracies in song lyrics, with less than 1% occurrence in their corpus of 30 popular British and American songs. Notably, the first, third, and fourth songs contain the majority of these words, with Song 1 including thirteen occurrences, Song 3 nine, and Song 4 fifteen occurrences.

Table 3

List of Words, Phrases, and Idioms with Unspecified CEFR Levels

Words and Phrases	Occurrence	Idioms	Occurrence
Never-never land	6	Burn your bridges	1
Snow white	7	Leave you cold	2
Crap	1	Misery loves company	1
Lest	2		
Thou	6		
Draw in	1		
Thee	7		
Unforgiven	7		
Evermore	3		
Forked	1		
Pending	1		
Thyself	1		
Total	43		4

Compared to Tegge's (2017) corpus study on the range of vocabulary and demands of pop chart songs, metal song lyrics appear to be lexically more challenging. Tegge's findings indicate that understanding 95% of pop song lyrics requires knowledge of approximately 3000 word families, corresponding to the B1 level. In contrast, comprehending 95% of metal song lyrics necessitates a lexical range extending up to the C1 level. Similarly, a corpus study by Ozturk (2017) on the lexical load of pop and rock song lyrics reveals that nearly 95% of the words are at the A2 level, while words at the B2, C1, and C2 levels each account for less than 0.5%. This starkly contrasts with metal song lyrics, where B2, C1, and C2 words comprise 18.29% of the corpus, highlighting their significantly higher lexical load. Despite these findings, little research has been conducted to analyze word levels, phrases, expressions, and idioms, as well as the distribution of word levels throughout song lyrics. Consequently, this study provides a new perspective on the corpus analysis of song lyrics.

To address the second research question, we analyzed the lexico-grammatical structures prevalent in metal song lyrics. The findings reveal that certain structures are consistently repeated across different songs. Specifically, five lexico-grammatical structures are predominant in metal songs: personal pronouns, determiners, imperatives, modal verbs, and metaphors/similes. As illustrated in Figure 2, the most frequent structure, with nearly 400 occurrences in the corpus, is

personal pronouns. The consistent use of pronouns such as *I* and *you* contributes to a conversational tone in the lyrics, allowing listeners to identify with the content. Murphey (1992) suggests that listeners often perceive themselves as the anonymous *I* and imagine engaging in a conversation with the addressee *you* in the song. This conversational aspect is evident in the extract from Song 6, where the persona addresses the listener directly, commanding them not to engage in a specific action.

> Don't tread on me
> I said, don't tread on me
> Liberty or death, what we so proudly hail
> Once you provoke her, rattling of her tail

("Don't Tread on Me," *Metallica*, 1991)

In another extract from Song 3, the persona poses some questions directed at the unknown *'you'*:

> Why don't you worry about yourself instead?
> Who are you? Where ya been? Where ya from?

("Holier Than Thou," *Metallica*, 1991)

Another example of the high frequency of the personal pronouns '*I*' and '*you*' is found in Song 2, where the persona engages in a dialogue with the interlocutor, attributing specific qualities to both themselves and the other person. Furthermore, this song prominently features metaphors, which will be analyzed in greater detail later in this article.

> Hey, I am your life
> I am the one who takes you there
> Hey, I am your life
> I am the one who cares
> You, you are my mask
> You are my cover, my shelter
> You, you are my mask
> You are the one who is blamed

("Sad but True," *Metallica,* 1991)

Similarly, Goyak et al. (2021) and Bonsu (2023) highlighted the frequent use of personal pronouns in their studies. Goyak et al. (2021) found that the personal pronouns "*I*" and "*You*" are often paired with the three most common mental verbs in their corpus: "*know*," "*want*," and "*love*." The study concludes that these mental or emotive verbs typically occur alongside the pronouns "*I*" and "*You*" to convey emotions and values to the audience. Building on this, Bonsu's (2023) study also emphasized the significance of personal pronouns, identifying them as the most common linguistic feature in rap songs.

In addition to the use of *personal pronouns*, the frequent occurrence of *imperative structures* (71 instances) further enhances the dialogic nature of the lyrics, making them more engaging and relatable for learners. For instance, this extract from Song 2 illustrates their use:

> Do, <u>do my work</u>
> <u>Do my dirty work</u>, scapegoat
> Do, <u>do my deeds</u>
> Pay, <u>pay the price</u>
> <u>Pay for nothing's fair</u>

("Sad but True," *Metallica*, 1991)

Another example of this combination can be observed in excerpts from Songs 3 and 10:

> Before <u>you</u> judge me, <u>take a look</u> at <u>you</u>
> <u>Point the finger</u>, slow to understand
> <u>Burn your bridges</u> and <u>build them</u> back with wealth
> <u>Judge not</u>, lest ye be judged yourself

("Holier Than Thou," *Metallica*, 1991)

> <u>Follow</u> the god that failed
> <u>Find</u> your peace
> <u>Find</u> your say
> <u>Find</u> the smooth road in your way

("The God That Failed," *Metallica*, 1991)

Table 4

Common Lexico-grammatical Structures in Song Lyrics

Lexico-grammatical Structure	Frequency	Percentage
Personal Pronouns	386	45.35%
Determiners	288	33.84%
Imperatives	71	8.34%
Modal Verbs	62	7.28%
Metaphors/Similes	44	5.17%

The frequent occurrence of *determiners* and *modal verbs* is expected, considering that function words constitute slightly more than 40% of the corpus. This category includes articles, possessive determiners, quantifiers, and various modal verbs. The following extract from Song 12 illustrates examples of different types of determiners:

> Kicking at <u>a</u> dead horse pleases you (article)
> No way of showing <u>your</u> gratitude (possessive determiner)
> S-s-s-s-so <u>many</u> things you don't wanna do (quantifier)

("The Struggle Within," *Metallica*, 1991)

As previously discussed, modal verbs perform various functions, including expressing ability, obligation, and future intentions. These functions are exemplified in the following extracts from Song 2:

> They, they'<u>ll</u> betray (future)
> I'm your eyes when you <u>must</u> steal (obligation)
> I'm your pain when you <u>can't</u> feel (ability)

("Sad but True," *Metallica*, 1991)

In the following extracts from Song 8, a different type of modal verb is highlighted:

> So close, no matter how far
> <u>Couldn't</u> be much more from the heart (speculation and deduction)

("Nothing Else Matters," *Metallica*, 1991)

The educational significance of the prevalence of this lexico-grammatical structure lies in the multifunctionality of modal verbs. As Palmer (1990) explains, modal verbs convey various semantic and pragmatic meanings, establishing a complex relationship between form and meaning. Given that metal song lyrics not only demonstrate a high frequency of modal verbs but also showcase a diverse range, they can be effectively utilized for teaching or practicing these meanings and functions.

In contrast to the corpus compiled by Aras et al. (2024) of the hit songs from 2023, this study demonstrates the lowest frequency of metaphoric expressions. Aras et al. (2024) analyzed 30 hit songs from 2023 on Spotify to examine the types and frequencies of figurative language in the lyrics. Their findings reveal that metaphors constitute up to 38% of the 200 figures of speech identified in these songs. Given that none of the songs in this corpus belong to the metal genre, it can be inferred that metal music contains fewer metaphors compared to other genres. However, as the examined metal corpus in this study is relatively small, the results cannot be generalized. Although *metaphors* and *similes* appear less frequently, they offer significant benefits to learners. As Semino and Demjen (2017) argue, metaphors are fundamental to human language and cognition, providing a creative way to draw parallels between seemingly unrelated concepts. Studying metaphors can be highly educational, enabling learners to deepen their understanding of English while challenging their linguistic abilities by creating similes and metaphors.

Song 2 contains the highest concentration of metaphors, with frequent repetition of this structure. The following extracts, including the song's chorus, feature a total of six metaphors:

> <u>I'm your dream</u>, make you real
> <u>I'm your eyes</u> when you must steal
> <u>I'm your pain</u> when you can't feel
> You, <u>you're my mask</u>
> <u>You're my cover</u>, <u>my shelter</u>
> You, <u>you're my mask</u>

("Sad but True," *Metallica*, 1991)

Other examples of metaphors and similes can be found in songs such as Songs 3, 5, and 9:

> Haven't changed, <u>your brain is still gelatin</u>
> Little whispers circle around your head

("Holier Than Thou," *Metallica*, 1991)

> And the road becomes my bride
> I have stripped of all but pride

("Wherever I May Roam", *Metallica*, 1991)

> Bright is the moon, high in starlight
> Chill in the air <u>cold as steel</u> tonight

("Of Wolf and Man," *Metallica*, 1991)

The findings presented here align with those of Bértoli's (2018) study, which analyzed a substantial corpus of approximately 6,300 songs spanning 16 genres, including pop, alternative rock, pop rock, country, and heavy metal. The study examined the linguistic features of English songs and, utilizing Biber's (1988) multidimensional analysis approach, identified infinitives, gerunds, imperatives, modals, multi-word units, personal pronouns, and possessives as frequently occurring elements within the corpus.

Conclusion

This study examined the CEFR levels of words and idioms in metal songs, revealing that slightly more than 80% of the words fall within the A1 to B1 levels, predominantly comprising function words. In contrast, the majority of idioms are situated at higher levels, with 20% at the B2 level, 20% at the C1 level, and 25% at the C2 level. Additionally, personal pronouns, determiners, imperatives, modal verbs, and metaphors/similes were identified as the most prevalent lexico-grammatical structures in metal songs. The findins suggest that a vocabulary range beyond the B1 level is required to comprehend more than half of the lyrics, excluding function words. These results highlight the potential of metal music as a resource for language learners, particularly for those at advanced proficiency levels. The complexity of language in metal songs, including the frequent use of C2-level idioms and advanced lexico-grammatical structures, presents a challenge that can help learners expand their vocabulary and deepen their understanding of nuanced language. Moreover, the conversational tone created by personal pronouns, imperatives, and modal verbs enables learners to engage with the material in a more personal and meaningful way.

Metal music, with its rich and complex language structures, offers an effective tool for advanced English language learners. Teachers can leverage these songs to introduce and practice advanced vocabulary, idiomatic expressions, and intricate sentence structures. Due to the demanding nature of metal lyrics, they can serve as a valuable resource for pushing learners toward higher proficiency levels. When integrating metal music into the classroom, teachers should carefully select songs that align with the learners' proficiency levels and educational goals. Analyzing the lyrics beforehand to identify challenging vocabulary and structures allows educators to highlight these elements effectively during lessons. Furthermore, considering the thematic content of the songs is essential to ensure appropriateness for the classroom setting while resonating with the learners' interests.

Metal music, often characterized by its emotional intensity and thematic depth, can serve as a powerful motivator for learners who are fans of the genre. Incorporating songs that students already enjoy can significantly enhance engagement and make language learning a more enjoyable. Experience. Additionally, the use of metal music in the classroom can foster a sense of community among learners with shared musical interests, further boosting their motivation. The frequent use of metaphors and similes in metal lyrics provides learners with opportunities to explore and develop

creative language skills. Teachers can encourage students to analyze these figurative expressions and create their own metaphors and similes, enhancing their ability to think creatively in English. Furthermore, metal music often addresses themes of cultural and social significance, offering learners insights into diverse cultural perspectives. These themes can serve as a foundation for discussions on a wide range of topics, fostering both language skills and critical thinking abilities. By implementing these pedagogical strategies, teachers can leverage the unique linguistic features of metal music to create a dynamic and engaging learning environment. This approach not only supports advanced language acquisition but also deepens learners'connection to the material, broadens their cultural awareness, and enhances their critical thinking skills.

The corpus analyzed in this study is limited in size, which imposes certain constraints on the findings. Expanding the quantity and diversity of song lyrics analyzed could lead to the identification of more commonly occurring lexico-grammatical structures and a more comprehensive categorization of words by their respective CEFR levels, thereby enhancing the reliability of the results. Future corpus studies on metal song lyrics should consider analyzing larger datasets, including songs from a wider range of artists and time periods. Moreover, future research could investigate the effectiveness of using song-based activities, derived from this study's findings to expand learners' vocabulary and linguistic skills.

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Geniş Özet

Giriş

Pop ve rock gibi müzik türleri, yabancı dil öğretimi bağlamında kapsamlı bir şekilde araştırılırken, karmaşık dil yapıları ve yoğun duygusal temalarıyla tanınan metal müzik genellikle göz ardı edilmektedir. Ancak, metal müzik, ileri düzeydeki öğrencilerin daha karmaşık dil girdileriyle etkileşim kurması için eşsiz bir fırsat sunmaktadır. Bu çalışma, Avrupa Ortak Dil Referans Çerçevesi (CEFR) tarafından belirlenen dil seviyelerine göre şarkı sözlerindeki sözcükleri ve deyimleri sınıflandırmayı ve sıklıkla kullanılan sözcük-dilbilgisel yapıları belirlemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Metal şarkı sözlerinin eğitsel potansiyelini ortaya koymayı hedefleyen bu araştırma, özellikle ileri seviye dil öğrenenler için bu türün nasıl etkili bir öğrenme aracı olabileceğini tartışmaktadır.

Yöntem

Araştırma, dilsel çeşitliliği ve tematik derinliğiyle tanınan metal müzik türünün etkileyici bir örneği olan Metallica'nın *The Black Album*'üne odaklanmaktadır. Çalışmada kullanılan derlem, albümde yer alan 12 şarkıdan ve toplamda yaklaşık 3.000 kelimeden oluşmaktadır. Bu çalışmanın temel hedeflerinden biri, şarkı sözlerindeki kelimeleri Avrupa Ortak Dil Referans Çerçevesi'ne (CEFR) göre A1 ile C2 seviyeleri arasında sınıflandırmaktır. Buna ek olarak şarkı sözlerinde yinelenen sözcük-dilbilgisel yapıları incelemektir.

Bulgular

Analiz sonuçları, derlemdeki kelimelerin %80'inden fazlasının A1 ile B1 seviyeleri arasında yer aldığını, ancak bu kelimelerin büyük ölçüde artikel, edat ve bağlaç gibi işlev sözcüklerinden oluştuğunu göstermiştir. İşlev sözcükleri temel iletişim için gerekli olmakla birlikte, öğrencinin ileri düzey kelime gelişimine sınırlı katkıda bulunur. Bununla birlikte, kelime dağarcığının özellikle deyimsel ifadeler açısından daha yüksek seviyelerde yoğunlaştığı görülmüştür. Şarkı sözlerindeki deyimlerin %20'si B2, %20'si C1 ve %25'i C2 seviyesinde

kategorize edilmiştir. Bu bulgular, metal müziğin ileri düzey dil öğrenenler için hem zorlayıcı hem de zenginleştirici bir kaynak olarak hizmet edebileceğini göstermektedir. Metal şarkı sözleri, öğrencilere daha karmaşık ve nadir kullanılan dil yapılarıyla tanışma fırsatı sunarak dil öğrenme sürecini destekleme potansiyeline sahiptir.

Bu çalışmada beş temel yapının sıklıkla tekrarlandığı görülmüştür: şahıs zamirleri, belirteçler, emir kipleri, modal fiiller ve metaforlar. Özellikle şahıs zamirleri, derlem genelinde yaklaşık 400 örnekle en yaygın kullanılan yapı olarak öne çıkmıştır. "I" ve "you" gibi şahıs zamirlerinin yoğun kullanımı, şarkı sözlerine konuşma tonu katarak dinleyicilerin içerikle kişisel bir bağ kurmasını sağlamaktadır. Şarkıcı ile dinleyici arasındaki bu diyalojik bağ, öğrenenlerin dili anlamasını kolaylaştırır ve katılımlarını arttırır.

Emir kipleri ve modal fiiller, metal şarkı sözlerinde önemli bir rol oynayarak diyalog tarzı etkileşime katkıda bulunmaktadır. Emir kipleri, komut veya istekleri ifade etmek için kullanılan yapılar olup, metal şarkı sözlerindeki sık kullanımları, öğrencilere gereklilik, tavsiye ve isteklerin İngilizcede nasıl ifade edildiğine dair pratik örnekler sunmaktadır. Benzer şekilde, modal fiiller ("can", "should" ve "must" gibi) çok işlevli yapılar olup, yetenek, yükümlülük, izin ve olasılık gibi çeşitli anlamlar taşımaktadır. Bu çalışma, metal şarkı sözlerinin yalnızca modal fiillerin yüksek bir kullanım sıklığını göstermekle kalmadığını, aynı zamanda bu fiillerin büyük bir çeşitliliğe sahip olduğunu ortaya koymuştur. Bu durum, öğrenenlere modal fiilleri farklı bağlamlarda kullanma ve pratik etme fırsatı sunmaktadır.

Metaforlar ve benzetmeler, diğer yapılara kıyasla daha az sıklıkla görülmesine rağmen, ileri düzey dil öğrenenler için önemli pedagojik faydalar sunmaktadır. Metaforlar, insan dilinde ve düşünce süreçlerinde önemli bir rol oynar; görünürde farklı olan varlıklar arasında yaratıcı bağlar kurarak anlamlı ilişkilendirmeler sağlar. Metal şarkı sözlerindeki metaforların analizi, öğrencilerin İngilizce anlama becerilerini geliştirmelerine olanak tanırken, kendi metafor ve benzetmelerini yaratma süreci, dil kullanımlarını hem zorlar hem de zenginleştirir. Bu yaratıcı dil kullanımı, öğrencilere metinle daha derin bir bilişsel etkileşim kurma imkânı sunar ve aynı zamanda eleştirel düşünme becerilerini geliştirerek kendilerini daha etkili bir şekilde ifade etmelerine katkıda bulunur.

Sonuç ve Tartışma

Bu çalışmanın bulguları, özellikle ileri seviyedeki dil öğrenenler için önemli pedagojik çıkarımlar sunmaktadır. Metal müziğin zengin ve karmaşık dilsel özellikleri, üst düzey dil becerilerinin geliştirilmesinde etkili bir araç olarak değerlendirilebilir. Öğretmenler, öğrencileri zorlu kelime dağarcığı ve karmaşık cümle yapılarına maruz bırakmak amacıyla metal şarkı sözlerini müfredatlarına dahil ederek, daha ilgi çekici ve dinamik bir öğrenme ortamı oluşturabilirler. Bunula birlikte, öğretmenlerin şarkı seçiminde, öğrencilerin dil seviyeleri ve öğrenme hedefleriyle uyumlu materyaller seçmeleri önem taşımaktadır. Sınıf içi etkinliklerde şarkı sözü analizleri, modal fiiller, deyimsel ifadeler ve metaforlar gibi sözcük-dilbilgisel yapıların incelenmesine yönelik tartışmalar ve etkileşimli etkinlikler yoluyla öğrencilerin dil farkındalığı artırılabilir.

Ayrıca, metal müziğin duygusal yoğunluğu ve kültürel derinliği, öğrenci motivasyonunu artırmada önemli bir rol oynayabilir. Birçok öğrenci için müzik, güçlü bir tutku kaynağıdır ve bu ilginin sınıf ortamına entegre edilmesi, dil öğrenim sürecini hem daha keyifli hem de daha anlamlı hale getirebilir. Özellikle metal müzik, enerjik ve duygusal açıdan yoğun içeriğiyle öğrencilerin dikkatini çekme ve onları sınıf etkinliklerine daha aktif katılmaya teşvik etme potansiyeline

sahiptir. Öğrencilerin sınıf içi katılımının artması, öğrenilen bilgilerin kalıcılığını desteklerken, aynı zamanda dil öğrenimine yönelik daha olumlu bir tutum geliştirilmesine de katkı sağlayabilir. Bu durum, öğrencilerin dil öğrenme sürecine daha bağlı ve istekli olmalarını sağlayarak genel başarılarını artırabilir.

Sonuç olarak, bu çalışma metal müziğin İngilizce öğretiminde, özellikle ileri düzey dil öğrenenler için sunduğu önemli pedagojik değeri vurgulamaktadır. Metal şarkı sözlerinde yer alan karmaşık dil yapıları ve zengin mecazi ifadeler, öğrencilerin kelime dağarcığını geliştirme, anlama becerilerini derinleştirme ve eleştirel düşünme yeteneklerini teşvik etme açısından eşsiz fırsatlar sunmaktadır. Öğretmenler, metal şarkıları dikkatlice seçip sınıf ortamına uyarlayarak, öğrencilere geleneksel dil öğrenme materyallerinin ötesine geçen değerli dil girdileri sağlayabilirler. Gelecek araştırmalar, metal müziğin dil eğitiminde kullanımının, özellikle kelime edinimi, anlama becerileri ve öğrenci motivasyonu üzerindeki uzun vadeli etkilerini incelemeye odaklanmalıdır. Ayrıca, farklı alt türlerden ve dönemlerden seçilerek daha geniş bir metal şarkı yelpazesini içeren bir derlemin oluşturulması, bu müzik türünün pedagojik potansiyelini daha kapsamlı bir şekilde aydınlatabilir. Metal müzik yalnızca dil yeterliliğini geliştirmekle kalmaz, aynı zamanda İngilizce dilindeki kültürel ve sanatsal ifadelerin daha iyi anlaşılmasını sağlar. Bu yaklaşım, öğrencilerin dil öğrenme deneyimini daha ilgi çekici, dinamik ve kültürel açıdan zengin bir hale dönüştürme potansiyeline sahiptir.