

## A Syntactic Analysis of Verb Phrases in Taylor Swift's *Never Grow Up* Song

Saneh Meilani<sup>1</sup>, Lutfia Hanifah<sup>2</sup>, Zulfa Latifah Hanum<sup>3</sup>, Dini Fitriani<sup>4</sup>, Fadilla Oktaviana<sup>5</sup>,  
Miftah Komala Putri<sup>6</sup>

<sup>123</sup>English Education Department, UIN Sultan Maulana Hasanuddin Banten

<sup>45</sup>Magister Tadris Bahasa Inggris, UIN Sultan Maulana Hasanuddin Banten

<sup>6</sup>Prodi PGSD, Universitas Primagraha, Serang

### Submission Track:

Received: March 1, 2025

Final Revision: July 20, 2025

Available Online: July 31, 2025

### Keywords:

Verb phrases, song lyrics,  
grammatical structures

### \*Corresponding Author:

[fadilla.oktaviana@uinbanten.ac.id](mailto:fadilla.oktaviana@uinbanten.ac.id)

Copyright©2025 (Saneh et al)

**Abstract:** This study analyzes the verb phrase in Taylor Swift's *Never Grow Up* song. The research aims to identify and understand the structure of verb phrases used in the song, as well as their role in conveying meaning and emotion. The study employs a qualitative descriptive analysis method, with data extracted from the song lyrics. The findings reveal that the verb phrases in the song include key syntactic structures such as passive voice, phrasal verbs, causative verbs, infinitive phrases, and hypothetical structures. These results indicate that verb phrases in song lyrics function not only grammatically but also enhance the emotional message and theme of the song. This research suggests further exploration of other grammatical structures in song lyrics to enrich linguistic understanding of music.



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License

## INTRODUCTION

In today's world, English has become the foremost way of communication across the globe. Beyond connecting countries and facilitating international communication, it is widely applied in diverse fields, such as mass media, education, and entertainment.

Language enables individuals to convey feelings and ideas and allows them to communicate through writing and speaking. It serves various functions, such as conveying ideas, opinions, and feelings. Furthermore, language can be used to express meaning, reflect a speaker's identity, or provide entertainment through songs, poems, and stories.

Music is an essential part of entertainment. It is a universal language that enables individuals to express emotions, share experiences, convey concerns, and foster connections among people through its powerful lyrics. Song lyrics are particularly powerful tools for storytelling, where linguistic elements and poetic devices are combined to craft beautiful tales (Maulidiyah et al., 2024, pp. 11717).

Taylor Swift, a globally well-known singer-songwriter, showcases exceptional narrative skills in her song lyrics. Her *Speak Now* album shines as evidence of her artistic independence and linguistic talent, with every song written solely by her. One such track, *Never Grow Up*, the eighth song on the album, beautifully captures the innocence of childhood and the challenges that come with growing up. She later shared how her perspective on the song evolved after becoming a godmother to her friend Jaime King's baby. Reflecting on this experience, she said, "I wrote it when I was like 18 or 19, but my friend just had a baby and she made me godmother of it. I was holding this little baby the other night, and I was just thinking differently. When you're holding onto something so

innocent and so perfect, and has no idea what's coming for it in the world. The world is going to throw so many things at you as we grow up." This perspective adds depth to the song's message, making it a heartfelt reminder of the fleeting nature of childhood and the challenges that come with growing older.

Songs are not limited to entertainment; they also serve as an excellent tool for learning and enriching knowledge. With their structured composition, lyrics frequently feature sentences, phrases, idioms, and clauses, making them a valuable resource for linguistic studies. Additionally, learning English, often seen as challenging due to its book-based theoretical approach, can become more enjoyable through songs. By listening to and analyzing songs, individuals can strengthen their grasp of grammar, enrich their vocabulary, and sharpen their pronunciation skills. However, it should be noted that grammar in songs may not always be fully accurate, as it is often adjusted to match the melody. Beyond language learning, songs also convey deep emotions and meaningful messages that resonate with listeners. For example, Taylor Swift's *Never Grow Up* serves as a heartfelt reminder of the fleeting nature of childhood and the challenges of growing older. This emotional connection allows listeners to not only appreciate the music but also reflect on their own experiences, making songs a powerful medium for both learning and personal growth.

This analysis aims to analyze the verb phrase used in selected song lyrics and their role in contributing to meaning and emotional expression. By focusing on how phrases are formed and used in lyrics, this research highlights the importance of syntax in creating compelling stories.

The theoretical basis for this study is rooted in syntax, a branch of linguistics that studies the internal structure of sentences and the interrelationships among the internal parts (Prayoga, 2016).

## METHOD

This research uses a qualitative descriptive method because it aims to describe and analyze the use of verb phrases in Taylor Swift's *Never Grow Up* song. The qualitative approach is used because the data analyzed are words, phrases, and syntactic structures, not numbers.

This type of research is included in the study of linguistics, especially in the branch of syntax, which is the study of the internal structure of the sentence and the relationship between the elements in it. The focus of this analysis is the verb phrase, which is one of the important elements in the formation of meaning in the sentence.

The data source in this research is the lyrics of the song *Never Grow Up* written and sung by Taylor Swift. The data studied are all verb phrases contained in the lyrics, which are then analyzed based on their structure and function.

The research instrument used is document analysis. The researchers collect data by reading and identifying verb phrases that appear in the song lyrics, then analyzing them based on syntactic theories from various literatures.

The data collection technique was done through documentation, by recording the song lyrics thoroughly and identifying each use of verb phrases. The data obtained is then classified based on the type and structure of the verb phrase used.

The data analysis technique uses syntactic analysis, where each verb phrase found is analyzed for its grammatical structure as well as its semantic function in the sentence. This analysis refers to syntactic theories from relevant literature to strengthen the interpretation.

To maintain the validity of the data, the researchers use theoretical triangulation techniques, namely by comparing the results of the analysis using several theories or literature sources, so that the research results are more objective and can be scientifically accounted for.

## RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In *Never Grow Up*, verb phrases express actions, states, emotions, and hypothetical situations, strengthening the themes of nostalgia, childhood, and growing up.

**Table: Breakdown of Key Verb Phrases**

| Phrases                                        | Breakdown                                                                         | Explanation                                                                         |
|------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| "Your little hand's wrapped around my finger." | <i>is wrapped</i><br>(auxiliary + past participle)                                | Using stative passive voice, indicating a state rather than an action.              |
| "I tuck you in."                               | <i>tuck you in</i><br>(main verb + object + particle)                             | Using a transitive phrasal verb, meaning to cover someone in bed for warmth/safety. |
| "Won't let no one break your heart."           | <i>won't let break</i><br>(modal + causative verb + bare infinitive)              | Using a causative structure, meaning allowing or preventing an action.              |
| "You can't wait to move out someday."          | <i>can't wait to move out</i><br>(modal + verb + infinitive)                      | "To move out" is an infinitive phrase acting as the direct object of "can't wait".  |
| "I wish I'd never grown up."                   | <i>wish had never grown up</i><br>(verb + auxiliary + negation + past participle) | Using a hypothetical wish which is about the past (unreal condition).               |

### Key Linguistic Concepts

To enhance comprehension of the verb phrases in *Never Grow Up*, it is essential to start by defining the key grammatical concepts involved in the analysis.

#### 1. Passive Voice

Passive voice is a grammatical structure where the subject of a sentence receives the action of the verb, rather than performing it. In English, passive voice is formed using

transitive verbs, which have both active and passive forms, shifting the focus to the receiver of the action rather than the doer.

Some verbs that show a state of existence are often used in the passive voice, and these verbs are called stative verbs.

When the passive voice includes a past participle, it follows the structure “be (auxiliary verb) + past participle”, indicating that the action has been completed or describing a state (stative passive). For example, in "Your little hand is wrapped around my finger," the phrase "is wrapped" (be + past participle) expresses a state rather than an ongoing action.

## 2. Phrasal Verb

According to the Cambridge Dictionary, a phrasal verb is a phrase that consists of a verb with a preposition, an adverb, or both, where the meaning differs from the sum of its parts.

In the phrase "tuck in", the structure follows the form main verb ("tuck") + particle ("in"), making it a transitive phrasal verb. It refers to covering someone with blankets to make them comfortable, symbolizing parental love and warmth. This strengthens the theme of care and protection in childhood, which is central to the song's message.

## 3. Causative Verb

Causative verbs indicate that a person or thing causes an action to happen, meaning someone is causing another person to do something instead of doing it themselves. The most common causative verbs include let, make, have, get, allow, force, and permit. Among these, "let" is specifically used to express permitting someone to do something. The usual structure is “let/make/have + object + bare infinitive” (e.g., let him go, make her cry) or “get + object + to-infinitive” (e.g., get him to help).

In the song, the phrase "Won't let no one break your heart" uses the causative "let", where the subject is preventing harm by not allowing anyone to hurt another person emotionally. This shows protection and care, supporting the song's theme of protecting childhood innocence and highlighting the emotional warmth and security of youth.

## 4. Infinitive Phrase

An infinitive phrase is a group of words that begins with an infinitive (to + base verb) and functions as a noun, adjective, or adverb in a sentence. In the song, the phrase "You can't wait to move out someday" uses this structure, with "to move out" as the direct object of "can't wait", expressing a future goal or desire. This highlights the impatience of growing up, contrasting with the song's overall theme of cherishing childhood and longing for its simplicity.

## 5. Hypothetical Structure

The third type of conditional sentence is used to describe hypothetical past scenarios and their possible outcomes, focusing on imaginary situations that did not happen. It follows the structure “if + past perfect, would have + past participle”, as in "If she had known about the party, she would have attended." Similarly, hypothetical statements can also be formed with "wish" + past perfect (had + past participle) to express regret about the past. In the song, the line "I wish I had never grown up" follows this structure, showing nostalgia and regret about growing up. This highlights the emotional depth of the song, emphasizing the longing for the innocence and simplicity of childhood.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the research findings, it was found that there are several structures of verb phrases in the song *Never Grow Up*, which contribute to the expression of actions, emotions, and hypothetical situations. These structures include:

1. Passive Voice (e.g., "is wrapped")
2. Phrasal Verbs (e.g., "tuck you in")
3. Causative Verbs (e.g., "won't let")
4. Infinitive Phrases (e.g., "can't wait to move out")
5. Hypothetical Structures (e.g., "I wish I'd never grown up")

According to the findings, it can be concluded that verb phrases are essential for conveying specific meanings in song lyrics, offering detailed descriptions of actions, emotional states, and desires. These verb phrases not only enhance the song's theme but also enrich emotional expression.

## SUGGESTION

This research suggests that future research needs to explore other grammatical structures in song lyrics so that there can be a more comprehensive understanding of how various linguistic elements contribute to the emotional and thematic messages in music. Furthermore, language students should deepen their knowledge of verb phrases, as this will help them better read and interpret written and spoken texts. Additionally, understanding these structures can help songwriters and lyricists in crafting more impactful and cohesive songs.

## REFERENCE

Laia, M. (2023). A Syntactic Analysis of Noun Phrase Found in Justin Bieber S Song Lyrics: Purpose Album. *Research on English Language Education*, 5(2), 49-64.

Zesifah, M., Fauzi, S., & Noviana, L. (2024). An Analysis of Types of Phrases Used in Taylor Swift's Song Lyrics from "The Tortured Poets Department" Album. *Jurnal Review Pendidikan dan Pengajaran*, 7(3), P-2655-710X. <http://journal.universitaspahlawan.ac.id/index.php/jrpp>

EnglishSentences.com. (n.d.). Causative Verbs. *EnglishSentences.com*. <https://englishsentences.com/causative-verbs/>

Hi Café. (n.d.). Stative Verbs Passive Voice with Examples. *HiCafe.app*. <https://hicafe.app/learn-english/grammar/level4/english-grammar-stative-passive-verbs-with-examples/>

My English Pages. (n.d.). The Passive Voice in English (Definition, Form, And Examples). *MyEnglishPages.com*. <https://www.myenglishpages.com/grammar-lesson-passive-voice/>

Woodward English. (n.d.). Transitive and Intransitive Phrasal Verbs. *WoodwardEnglish.com*. <https://www.woodwardenglish.com/lesson/transitive-intransitive-phrasal-verbs/>

Writing Explained. (n.d.). What is an Infinitive Phrase? Definition, Examples of Infinitives and Infinitive Phrases. *WritingExplained.org*. <https://writingexplained.org/grammar-dictionary/infinitive-phrase>

5 Minutes English. (n.d.). Handling Complex Grammar-Hypotheticals in English. *5MinuteEnglish.com*. <https://5minuteenglish.com/handling-complex-grammar-hypotheticals-in-english/>

Cambridge University Press & Assessment. (n.d.). Phrasal Verb. Dalam *Cambridge Dictionary*.

<https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/phrasal-verb>