

“YOU GIVE LOVE A BAD NAME” Using Popular Song Titles to Teach Direct and Indirect Objects in English

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Abstract – The use of elements of popular culture for L2 language instruction has long been a topic of interest for instructors of English. This pilot study examines the use of popular song titles to help teach L2 students to distinguish between indirect and direct objects in English. Titles are used instead of lyrics because they cannot be copyrighted. A pre-test and post-test methodology was utilized. Each test contained four popular song titles and four generic sentences, all of which contained both indirect and direct objects in English. Three international students whose native languages were not English and who were enrolled at an undergraduate college in the US were asked to identify the indirect and direct objects in the texts. A total of 24 aggregate responses were generated for each test. None of the students (0/24, 0%) were able to distinguish indirect objects from direct objects in the pre-test. After a teaching intervention, the results improved to 19/24. Students performed better on the popular song titles (11/12) than on the generic sentences (8/12). The results suggest that popular song titles can be used effectively in English language learning.

Keywords: English language; pedagogy; indirect objects; direct objects; popular music.

1. Introduction

L2 instructors have long been intrigued by the potential of using language from popular culture to help students learn a target language. The hypothesis under consideration is that students will be more invested and eager to learn if the instruction makes use of language that is important to them and that they use often in their everyday lives (Toffoli and Sockett 2014). Along with texts from film, television, and literature, lyrics from popular music have been integrated in L2 classes. Recent research has focused on the potential of popular music lyrics to connect formal L2 learning in class with informal L2 learning outside of the academic environment, the motivational potential of L2 learning with the use of popular music lyrics, the integration of popular music lyrics with many of the types of technology on which students place a high value, and the use of popular music lyrics to help teach and learn vocabulary, listening skills, and pronunciation (Akbari *et al.* 2018; Ludke

and Morgan 2022; Werner 2019). Additionally, research by Hua and Li (2015) and by Ludke (2018) demonstrates that the use of popular music lyrics can have a positive impact on L2 students' understanding of grammar in the target language.

1.1. Literature Review

Recent work on the effectiveness of using music in second-language learning reinforces cautious optimism about the pedagogical potential of music in the L2 classroom (Degrave 2019; Sun *et al.* 2024). Lee and Schreibeis (2021) report that “it is possible to argue that music has great potential as a valuable subject for cognitive, emotional, and language development. Music can be used to teach unfamiliar vocabulary, pronunciation, or prosody in both first and second language” (241). Lee and Schreibeis build on earlier work such as that by Lems (2005), who used song titles and lyrics successfully with an adult English-language-learning class and concluded that “There are few texts better than song lyrics for capturing a student’s interest. The enormous popularity of lyrics Web sites is testament to this” (19). Fernández de Cañete García *et al.* (2022) compared music-based English-language instruction with instruction based on gamification and found that music worked better. These researchers also considered the variable of past musical training (instrumental, not vocal) and determined that it did not have an impact on students’ success with learning English with song titles and lyrics.

The use of song titles and lyrics is, at first glance, a pedagogical strategy to provide students with a sense of ownership in the target language: in this case, students are likely to be familiar with, and perhaps even devoted to, a number of popular songs in English given that language’s role as a worldwide *lingua franca* (Jenkins 2017). The idea is that students will be more motivated to learn the target language if they see texts in that language that are important to them. Students are also more likely to retain the knowledge if texts that are potentially meaningful to them, such as popular song titles and lyrics, are used (Medina 2002). Students have been found to be less anxious about learning a second language when music is incorporated into a class (Chou 2012; Dolean 2016). Beyond these advantages of motivation, improved memory, and less stress, though, music has been found to be associated with additional cognitive benefits such as a temporary boost in spatial reasoning ability—the so-called Mozart effect of popular acclaim (Rauscher *et al.* 1998). Lee (2014) has demonstrated the advantages of allowing students to help choose the music used in L2 learning, as the students would be more motivated to pay close attention in class and even perhaps listen to the music outside of class. Lorenzutti (2014) developed a technique called “double gap fill” in which the instructor guides students in a discussion of the topic of a popular English-language song in an effort to

generate vocabulary and phrasing related to the topic before the audio of the song is played. The students are thus better prepared to listen to a song and correctly place a missing word into the song's lyrics that the instructor is showing in written form.

A caveat is in order: it is important to note that the emphasis for L2 learning is on the song titles and lyrics as texts and not on musical components such as notes, chords, rhythms, instrumentation, time signature, key signature, tempo, dynamics, vocal technique, and the like. Although as mentioned above many students do seem to enjoy classrooms that feature music, it is not wholly necessary that students actually listen to the music that the song titles and lyrics derive from (Bennett 2019). It is generally enough that the song titles and lyrics are familiar to and valued by the students. Nevertheless, Lee and Schreibeis (2012) found that students learned synforms such as "sensitive" and "sensible" more effectively if they are a part of an ascending seven-step melody in a major key versus learning the synforms as part of a three-step melody in the same key and without melody at all. Other researchers have found song titles and lyrics useful in the sense that features such as pitch, rhythm, prosody, and duration contained in the titles and lyrics are also important parts of spoken text. Thus, the song titles and lyrics can help with learning these features (Chobert and Besson 2013; Heffner and Slevac 2015; Patel 2008). Overall, then, it is as yet unclear to what extent, if any, the musical components of the songs the titles and lyrics are taken from impact the L2 learning.

It is also important to acknowledge that not all students will know the specific song titles and lyrics used by an L2 instructor even when the titles and lyrics come from the realm of popular music. An enormous spectrum of genres and styles comprises popular music. These genres and styles date from the present all the way back to the 1950s, when rock-'n'-roll got its start, growing out of earlier musical styles such as the blues and gospel, among others. Certainly popular music existed before this time period: 1920s jazz, 19th-century folk music, and 16th- and 17th-century madrigals in Italy and England are examples of genres and styles that had widespread appeal. But the rapid expansion of radio and television and the ability to purchase inexpensive recordings, in the form of vinyl at first but eventually many other formats and media as well, enabled popular music to reach audiences worldwide for the first time. Music streaming and its system of enabling students to become music users rather than music collectors has accelerated this trend of increasing access to popular music, as has the decreasing cost of purchasing popular music (Brennan and Devine 2020). Another important consideration is the sheer volume of popular music that is now being created and released: in 2024, more music was released on any single day than in the entire year of 1989 (Price 2024). English-language music has attracted a great deal of interest as the use of English as a *de facto* world language has

evolved, and it has become an informal but valuable method of L2 learning. Perhaps sensing an opportunity, a British musician, teacher, and entrepreneur launched a company called Languages Through Music in 2024. This company's website lists 12 languages that customers are able to learn (the website claims) with the help of music containing lyrics in the target language. Overall, then, the use of song titles and lyrics as an L2 learning tool has started to gain a great deal of attention. Thus, while not every student will know every song title or lyric used by an instructor, there is a reasonable chance that a number of students will be familiar with it. If a title or lyric from an international hit (Hunter-Tilney 2017) such as Bon Jovi's "You Give Love a Bad Name"¹ is used, the chances are even greater.

Indirect objects are something of an enigma for many students. They are not common in English. Often, a semantically equivalent expression that uses a prepositional phrase is used instead. For example, "You give love a bad name" is a sentence that contains an indirect object, "love," but this utterance would frequently be written or voiced in English as "You give a bad name to love." In this latter sentence, the indirect object drops out, and "love" is an object of the preposition "to." Nonetheless, indirect objects do appear from time to time. Verbs that are used with indirect objects are called ditransitive verbs because they can have both direct and indirect objects. Indeed, an indirect object cannot be present unless there is also a direct object in the sentence. The opposite case is different, though: direct objects do not need to be accompanied by an indirect object, and in fact, most of them are not.

As with any structural and/or functional part of speech, indirect objects can be characterized in a number of different ways and from a number of different grammatical perspectives (Reichl 1990). Herriman and Seppänen (1996) lament that indirect objects suffer from a "bewildering variety of interpretations... derived from the grammarians' practice of extending the scope of the indirect object by subsuming different types of further structures under the concept" (484). Despite the unmistakable complexity, a simple, relatively straightforward clausal structure that contains an indirect object can be useful for English-language pedagogy.

¹ "You Give Love a Bad Name" is the lead single on Bon Jovi's third album *Slippery When Wet*, released in 1986. It was Bon Jovi's first number one hit on the US Billboard Hot 100. The song returned to the charts in 2007 when it was performed by a contestant on the American television program *American Idol*. In 2009, the American cable television network VH1 included "You Give Love a Bad Name" in their list of the Greatest Hard Rock Songs of All Time. With the 2024 release of the Bon Jovi docuseries *Thank You, Goodnight: The Bon Jovi Story* on the streaming service Hulu, the song once again surged in popularity, nearly 40 years after its initial release (McIntyre 2024).

1.2. Research Question

The current study examines the use of popular song titles to teach L2 English students the differences between direct and indirect objects. In doing so, this study answers a call from Zeromskaite (2014) to move research on the use of popular song titles and lyrics from English phonology instruction to other topics such as structure and semantics. Direct and indirect objects are easily confused (Halim 2023), even by many native speakers of English, but the use of popular song titles may help students distinguish between the two types of objects more readily.

2. Methods

2.1. Research Paradigm

The primary investigator researched popular English-language music that had been released between 1960 and 2023 with the purpose of identifying song titles that were grammatically complete sentences and that contained both direct objects and indirect objects. The 1960 to 2023 time period was chosen because it represents an era when popular music became increasingly globally accessible. Titles were prioritized instead of lyrics more generally because titles cannot be copyrighted in many countries and are thus easier to use without risk of running afoul of intellectual property laws. Titles also have the advantage of generally being short and thus easier to analyze. The song titles used for this study ranged between four and seven words. This research was part of a larger project that resulted in the publication of a book on the use of popular song titles to help teach English grammar and style. This project required the use of titles rather than lyrics because of the copyright implications. The current research was undertaken as a pilot study in an effort to empirically test the approach of using popular song titles as a method of grammar instruction.

Institutional Review Board approval was obtained for the study. A list of currently enrolled international students (*i.e.*, those holding a current United States student visa) at the institution where the primary investigator works was obtained from the Assistant Director for International Student Life. This list indicated each student's first language. The target population for this study was students whose first language was not English. Of the 28 international students listed, 22 had first languages other than English. An email invitation was sent to these 22 students to participate in the study. After a reminder sent a week later, five students volunteered to take part in the study. A Doodle poll was sent to these students to find a day and time that would work for everyone. A mutually agreeable day and time could not be

established for all five students, but four of the students indicated that they were able to attend the research session that was eventually scheduled. An email reminder was sent the day before the research session, and three students attended. The students were incentivized with pizza and beverages. The study was not a part of any course and did not have an impact on any student grades.

All of the students were undergraduates enrolled full-time at a small, comprehensive college in the Mid-Atlantic region of the United States. The students' first languages were Spanish, Cebuano, and Pangasinense. Both of the latter languages are regional languages in the Philippines.

2.2. Instruments of Analysis

A pre- and post-test methodology was employed for the study. The primary investigator welcomed the students and thanked them for their participation. No initial information about direct or indirect objects, or grammar more generally, was provided before the pre-test. Both the pre-test and the post-test were identical in format: each consisted of eight sentences that contained direct objects and indirect objects. The first four sentences on each test were titles of well-known popular songs. The name of the singer or band that performed each song, along with the year of its release, was listed after the title. The remaining four sentences on each test were generic and had no known connection with popular music. These generic sentences were of a similar length to the song title sentences, ranging from four to eight words.

The primary investigator distributed the pre-test, which was on paper, to the students. At the top of the pre-test was an Informed Consent statement that the primary investigator asked the students to sign. The students complied and then proceeded to complete the pre-test, which asked the students to identify the direct object ("DO") and indirect object ("IO") in each sentence. Upon completion, the students turned in their pre-tests to the primary investigator. The pre-test is shown below:

In each of the following sentences, circle the direct object, labeling it as "DO," and the indirect object, labeling it as "IO."

1. You give love a bad name. (Bon Jovi, 1986)
2. I give you power. (Arcade Fire featuring Mavis Staples, 2017)
3. [You] sing me Spanish techno. (New Pornographers, 2005)
4. You don't bring me flowers. (Barbra Streisand and Neil Diamond, 1978)
5. The professor taught the students a new theory.
6. [You] text them the address.
7. Casey bought Skyler some ramen.

8. The insurance company sent Devon a bill.

The two titles that contain "[You]" indicate that the title was originally written in imperative mood. As such, in English, the word "You" is not actually in the title; instead, the subject of an imperative mood sentence is called "'You' understood" by linguists. The primary investigator included "[You]" to provide students with more typical grammatically complete sentences in which the direct and indirect objects might be more readily recognized.

The primary investigator next initiated the teaching intervention and explained the differences between direct and indirect objects. The first song title, "You give love a bad name," was used as a representative example. The primary investigator wrote this song title on a white board that the students were able to see clearly. The primary investigator used the white board for other notes as needed. The information conveyed to the students was as follows:

1. Both direct object and indirect objects are nouns.
2. Indirect objects are not common in English, unlike direct objects.
3. More common in English are sentences that contain the same information as a sentence with an indirect object but instead use a prepositional phrase, as with "You give a bad name to love."
4. In English, sentences with indirect objects are generally shorter than their semantically equivalent counterparts with a prepositional phrase because the preposition is dropped.
5. Direct objects receive the action of the verb, while indirect objects signify to whom or what, or for whom or what, an action is performed.
6. Indirect objects are typically used with a limited group of action verbs that include give, provide, send, make, bring, show, tell, ask, teach, loan, ask, and write.
7. Simple sentences that have both direct and indirect objects generally have three nouns that are in the following sequence: subject, indirect object, direct object.

The primary investigator wrote a number of the other song titles from the pre-test on the white board to clarify some of the above points.

Following the teaching intervention, students asked a few questions for clarification, which the primary investigator answered. The primary investigator then reviewed a number of the above points from the teaching intervention, emphasizing the common grammatical sequence of subject, indirect object, and direct object, and distributed the post-test. The post-test is shown below:

In each of the following sentences, circle the direct object, labeling it as "DO," and the indirect object, labeling it as "IO."

- 1.1. She brings me love. (Bad Company, 1979)
2. Burning airlines give you so much more. (Brian Eno, 1974)
3. [You] just give me a reason. (Pink featuring Nate Ruess, 2014)
4. [You] cry me a river. (Justin Timberlake, 2002)
5. Jordan read the kids a story.
6. The professor wrote the students an email.
7. Dakota loaned Blair \$50.
8. Cameron handed me the wrench.

As with the pre-test, the two titles that contain “[You]” indicate that the title was originally written in imperative mood.

After the students completed their post-test, they handed it in to the primary instructor. The primary instructor thanked the students for their participation in the study.

3. Results

Results will first be reported in aggregate form for both the pre-test and post-test. Three students who answered eight questions each yields a total of 24 responses for each test.

Results for the pre-test were 0/24. None of the students was able to distinguish direct objects from indirect objects in any of the sentences. Two of the students distinguished subjects from objects but confused direct and indirect objects. The third student also was able to distinguish subjects from objects but only labeled one of the objects in the sentences. This student labeled two of the direct objects correctly but did not identify the indirect objects in those sentences. In the remaining sentences, the student identified indirect objects that actually were direct objects.

Results from the post-test were 19/24. All three students were better able to correctly identify direct and indirect objects after the teaching intervention. For sentences that were song titles, students correctly distinguished the two kinds of objects in 11/12 of them. In the one incorrect answer, a student identified the indirect object correctly but labeled the direct object as an object of the preposition. For the generic sentences, students correctly distinguished direct and indirect objects in 8/12 of them. In the four incorrect sentences, one of the students labeled direct objects as indirect objects and did not label the other object. A comparison of pre- and post-test results is shown in Figure 1.

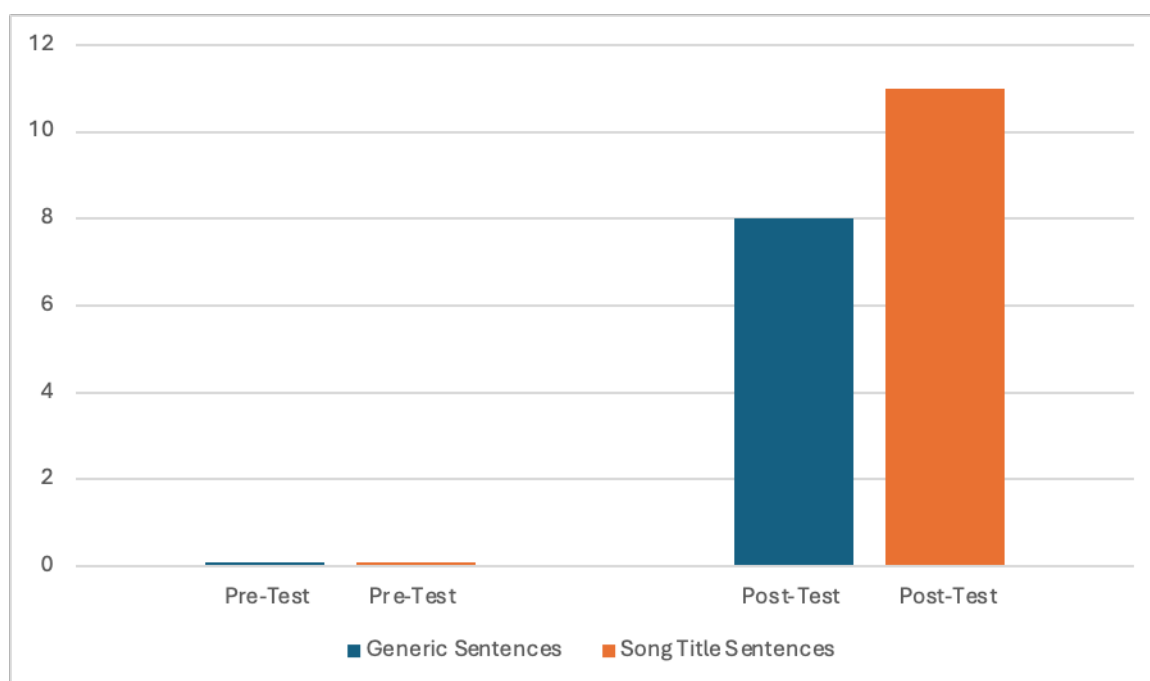


Figure 1

Pre- and post-test results for generic sentences and song title sentences used in an effort to teach the differences between indirect and direct objects in English.

4. Discussion

This discussion will focus on the use of song titles, rather than lyrics, to help teach a specific aspect of English grammar. The reason for this choice is that this study follows a book project that used only titles because of copyright concerns. In a classroom setting where copyright is not as much of a concern, though, all of the points that are brought up in this discussion are equally applicable to lyrics. Indeed, the instructor would have access to a much greater range of popular music texts if lyrics are included.

Song titles from popular music are numerous enough in English that they can be used as examples for almost any aspect of grammar or prose style (see Annex). It should also be noted that these titles are not being used as negative examples. Some language enthusiasts seem to take pleasure from pointing out mistakes in formal grammar in popular song titles and lyrics. A Google search resulted in dozens of websites that take this approach. For example, one grammarian faulted Gwen Stefani for singing “If I was a rich girl” instead of the more formally correct subjunctive mood dependent clause “If I were a rich girl” (Savva). However, students may react negatively to criticism of music that they find important and that become a part of their identity. Thus, L2 instructors are better served by using popular song titles and lyrics as positive examples. The negative critique of song titles is also

counterproductive because it reinforces a generally false binary between correct and incorrect language use.

As English became more widely used around the world during the latter half of the twentieth century, bands began releasing songs in English even if English was not the native language of the band's home country. Thus, L2 learners who wanted to gain fluency in English no longer needed to listen to singers and bands exclusively from English-speaking countries. For example, the Swedish band ABBA recorded dozens of popular hits in English in the 1970s. The Dutch band Golden Earring was also successfully recording in English at this time. The Norwegian band A-ha and the German band The Scorpions continued this trend in the 1980s, while the Swedish band Ace of Bass and Icelandic singer Björk gained notoriety with English-language songs in the 1990s. The Colombian singer Shakira met with success recording in English in the 2000s. A less common approach was to mix English and a singer's native language. The most prominent example of this type of combination was likely the Austrian singer Falco's "Der Kommissar," released in 1982 with a mix of German and English lyrics. English may, ever so slowly, be starting to lose its lock on popular music lyrics, though. Korean-language albums by the Korean band BTS began charting in the United States in 2016; the band didn't record their first song in English until 2020. Even so, English remains a dominant language in popular music and thus an important source of English-language learning.

The indirect and direct objects used in the current study were a part of song titles, and it is thus perhaps unsurprising that the sentences were short. Almost all popular song titles are short.² During the teaching intervention between the pre-test and the post-test, students appeared to recognize the typical noun sequence of subject / indirect object / direct object in these short sentences quite quickly. Although writers of song titles and lyrics do experiment with word order on occasion, often to positive effect, changing the order of nouns in an English sentence with an indirect object is challenging and rare. Thus, in the post-test, it is possible that the students were more successful in distinguishing indirect and direct objects from each other because of pattern recognition rather than a clear understanding of their grammatical differences. Nonetheless, the grammar of nearly any language is replete with patterns, and learning to recognize these patterns is an important first step toward deeper understanding.

The use of popular song titles in this study appears to have helped students distinguish indirect objects from direct objects, as well as subjects. Thus, this study may reinforce the notion that song lyrics can be used

² A notable exception is Paul Simon's 1983 song "René and Georgette Magritte with Their Dog after the War".

effectively to teach parts of speech in English, as Akbary *et al.* (2018) have demonstrated with phrasal verbs. Even so, other factors such as pattern recognition and/or prior English grammar instruction, may be in play. In the post-test, students scored better on the popular song titles than on the generic sentences. It is not clear that all of the students knew all of the songs, or even any of them. However, just the fact that the students were informed that the sentences were popular song titles seemed to spur an increased ability to recognize indirect objects. It is possible that the use of popular song titles, some of which are likely familiar to students, reduced student stress levels and thus facilitated learning, as found by Dolean (2016) and Chou (2012). Past musical training such as that studied by Fernández de Cañete García *et al.* (2022) was judged not to be a factor in the current study, as nearly all students listen to popular music regardless of whether or not they have engaged in any formal music study. Indeed, Fernández de Cañete García *et al.* (2022) found that prior training in music had no impact on learning (see also Chobert and Besson 2013). Thus, the current study appears to confirm and reinforce results of other recent studies (Lee and Schreibeis 2021; Ludke and Morgan 2022; Sun *et al.* 2024) that have found the use of music, specifically popular song titles and/or lyrics, beneficial for L2 instruction. The current study may be one of the first to use popular song titles in L2 learning specifically for functions of nouns such as indirect and direct objects. It also demonstrates the greater potential effectiveness of popular song titles as compared with generic text that has no intrinsic value to students.

This study is limited by a small sample size and a number of uncontrolled variables such as how much prior instruction in English grammar the students had received, though all of the students were fluent enough in English to attend a university in the United States. Because of the limitations of this pilot study, the results cannot be generalized. Future studies should strive for larger sample sizes and better control of variables. Researchers may also want to determine the students' level of familiarity with song titles that are used and, to get beyond possible grammatical pattern recognition by the students, their level of understanding of the different functionality of indirect and direct objects. Student understanding of this latter concept could, for example, be assessed by asking students to explain the different functions of the indirect and direct objects in a song title such as "You give love a bad name" or "[You] sing me Spanish techno."

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Annex

Song titles can easily be used as examples in the grammar and style topics listed below, each of which includes an example title. A simple sentence is listed first because students seem to gain a better understanding of parts of speech if they are seen in an actual context of use rather than in isolation. Countries of origin are listed for singers or bands whose native language is not English.

Grammar & Style Feature	Example
Simple sentences	"Lightning Crashes" (Live, 1995)
Parts of speech: proper nouns	"Rasputin" (Boney M, 1978, Germany)
Parts of speech: nouns	"Violin" (Amos Lee, 2011)
Parts of speech: pronouns	"Us" (Regina Spektor, 2004, originally Russian)
Parts of speech: pronouns (demonstrative in bold)	" This Is Why We Fight" (Decemberists, 2011)
Parts of speech: pronouns (indefinite in bold)	" Everything Fades To Gray" (Sonata Arctica, 2009, Finland)
Parts of speech: pronouns (possessive in bold)	"A Rush And A Push And The Land Is Ours " (The Smiths, 1987)
Parts of speech: pronouns (relative in bold)	"The Calendar Hung Itself " (Bright Eyes, 2000)
Parts of speech: pronouns (interrogative in bold)	" Who Knew?" (Pink, 2006)
Parts of speech: pronouns (relative in bold)	"The Girl Who Destroys" (Amber Pacific, 2010)
Parts of speech: verbs	"Come" (Jain, 2015, France)
Parts of speech: adjectives (in bold)	" Strange Magic" (Electric Light Orchestra, 1975)
Parts of speech: adjectives (definite articles in bold)	" The Winner Takes It All" (ABBA, 1981, Sweden)
Parts of speech: adjectives (indefinite articles in bold)	"Tell Me A Tale" (Michael Kiwanuka, 2012)
Parts of speech: adjectives (possessive in bold)	"Tears Dry On Their Own" (Amy Winehouse, 2006)
Parts of speech: adjectives (comparatives in bold)	"Love Is Thicker Than Water" (Andy Gibb, 1978)
Parts of speech: adjectives (superlatives in bold)	"The Blackest Lily" (Corinne Bailey Rae, 2010)
Parts of speech: adverbs	"Naturally" (Selena Gomez and the Scene, 2010)
Parts of speech: prepositions (in bold)	" On Broadway" (George Benson, 1978)
Parts of speech: coordinating conjunctions (in bold)	"Life Is A Rock, But The Radio Rolled Me" (Reunion, 1974)
Parts of speech: subordinating conjunctions (in bold)	" If You Leave" (Orchestral Manoeuvres in the Dark, 1986)
Parts of speech: interjections	"Hallelujah" (Leonard Cohen, 1984)
Singular vs. plural	"Royals" (Lorde, 2013)
Noun phrases	"Freedom Fighter" (Aerosmith, 2012)

Verb phrases (in bold)	“ I Can’t Stand The Rain” (Tina Turner, 1984)
Functions of nouns: subjects (in bold)	“ Love Hurts” (Nazareth, 1975)
Functions of nouns: complements (in bold)	“I Am Woman ” (Helen Reddy, 1972)
Functions of nouns: direct objects (in bold)	“I Spit Roses ” (Peter Murphy, 2011)
Functions of nouns: indirect objects (in bold)	“You Give Love a Bad Name” (Bon Jovi, 1986)
Functions of nouns: objects of preposition (in bold)	“After The Storm ” (Mumford & Sons, 2009)
Pronoun case (objective, in bold)	“On Whom The Moon Doth Shine” (Theatre of Tragedy, 2009, Norway)
Sentence function: declarative	“Rumour Has It.” (Adele, 2012, period added)
Sentence function: interrogative	“Why Can’t We Be Friends?” (War, 1975)
Sentence function: exclamatory	“Hello, Dolly!” (Louis Armstrong, 1964)
Punctuation: serial commas	“Beg, Borrow, Or Steal” (Ray Lamontagne, 2010)
Punctuation: introductory commas	“Hello, I Love You” (The Doors, 1968)
Punctuation: apostrophes (possession)	“Rapper’s Delight” (Sugarhill Gang, 1979)
Punctuation: apostrophes (contractions)	“That’s All” (Genesis, 1983)
Punctuation: hyphen	“Heart-Shaped Box” (Nirvana, 1993)
Mechanics: italics	“Wreck Of The Edmund Fitzgerald” (Gordon Lightfoot, 1976)
Agreement: pronoun/antecedent (in bold)	“If You Love Somebody Set Them Free” (Sting, 1985)
Agreement: subject/verb (in bold)	“ Yoshimi Battles The Pink Robots” (The Flaming Lips, 2002)
Verb mood: indicative	“Dog Days Are Over” (Florence + The Machine, 2009)
Verb mood: imperative	“Shut Up And Drive” (Rihanna, 2007)
Verb mood: subjunctive	“If I Were A Boy” (Beyoncé, 2008)
Verbs: infinitives (in bold)	“Something To Talk About” (Bonnie Raitt, 1991)
Functions of nouns: object of infinitive (in bold)	“I Want To Hold Your Hand ” (The Beatles, 1963)
Verbs: gerunds (in bold)	“Constant Craving ” (K. D. Lang, 1992)
Functions of nouns: object of gerund (in bold)	“Stop Draggin’ My Heart Around” (Stevie Nicks with Tom Petty, 1981)
Verbs: present participles (in bold)	“Beds Are Burning ” (Midnight Oil, 1987)
Verbs: past participles (in bold)	“I Drove All Night” (Céline Dion, 1993)
Verb tense: simple present (in bold)	“I Refuse To Lose” (Jarekus Singleton, 2014)
Verb tense: simple past (in bold)	“I Learned The Hard Way” (Sharon Jones & The Dap Kings, 2010)
Verb tense: simple future (in bold)	“I Will Remember You” (Sarah McLachlan, 1999)
Verb tense: present perfect (in bold)	“Success Has Made A Failure Of Our Home”

bold)	(Sinéad O'Connor, 1992)
Verb tense: past perfect (in bold)	"We Had Lost Our Minds" (Smoke Fairies, 2010)
Verb tense: future perfect (in bold)	"I Will Have Lived " (Carole King, 2001)
Verb tense: present continuous (in bold)	"New Orleans Is Sinking " (The Tragically Hip, 1990)
Verb tense: past continuous (in bold)	"I Was Hoping " (Alanis Morissette, 1998)
Verb tense: future continuous (in bold)	"We Will Be Singing " (The Hype Theory, 2011)
Verbs: conditional verbs (in bold)	"Anything Could Happen " (Ellie Goulding, 2012)
Verb voice: active (in bold)	"I Kissed A Girl" (Katy Perry, 2008)
Verb voice: passive (in bold)	"Once I Was Loved " (Melody Gardot, 2015)
Point of view: 1st, 2nd, and 3rd person	"You, Me, and He" (Mtume, 1984)
Figures of speech: metaphor	"Love Is Noise" (The Verve, 2008)
Figures of speech: simile	"Love Is Like Oxygen" (Sweet, 1978)
Figures of speech: onomatopoeia	"Cars Hiss By My Window" (The Doors, 1971)
Figures of speech: alliteration	"You Never Need Nobody" (The Lone Bellow, 2013)
Figures of speech: assonance	"Abandoned And Alone" (Bad Company, 1995)
Figures of speech: irony	"This Song Has No Title" (Elton John, 1973)
Figures of speech: personification	"The Wind Cries Mary" (Jimi Hendrix, 1967)
Figures of speech: rhetorical question	"Who Do You Think You Are?" (Spice Girls, 1996)
Figures of speech: synecdoche	"Would You Give Me A Hand" (Sasha Boole, 2014, Ukraine)
Figures of speech: asyndeton	"Roots, Rock, Reggae" (Bob Marley, 1976)
Figures of speech: polysyndeton	"Deep And Wide And Tall" (Aztec Camera, 1987)
Figures of speech: repetition	"Gone Baby Gone" (James, 2014)
Style: word order	"Jump They Say" (David Bowie, 1993)

The above list is not exhaustive. Other topics, such as using participles as adjectives, perfect continuous verb tenses, most passive voice verb tenses, and additional figures of speech can also be introduced with song titles.