



INNOVATIVE: Journal Of Social Science Research

Volume 5 Nomor 4 Tahun 2025 Page 4427-4439

E-ISSN 2807-4238 and P-ISSN 2807-4246

Website: <https://j-innovative.org/index.php/Innovative>

An Analysis of Independent Clauses and Dependent Clauses in the Lyrics of One Last Time by Ariana Grande

Hery Reynaldi Tarigan^{1✉}, Rahel Satri Purba², Riby Astri Siboro³, Rani Puspa Sari⁴, Monika

Nalalian Silaban⁵, Anita Sitanggang⁶

Universitas HKBP Nommensen Pematangsiantar

Email: anitasitanggang2019@gmail.com^{1✉}

Abstrak

Penelitian ini menganalisis struktur sintaksis lagu "One Last Time" oleh Ariana Grande dengan mengkaji klausa independen dan dependen yang digunakan dalam lirik. Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk mengidentifikasi jenis klausa dan fungsinya dalam menyampaikan makna emosional. Dengan menggunakan metode deskriptif kualitatif, ditemukan 71 klausa yang terdiri dari 45 klausa independen dan 26 klausa dependen. Klausa independen menyampaikan emosi, niat, dan kesadaran secara langsung, sedangkan klausa dependen memberikan alasan, penjelasan, dan kedalaman emosional. Pola sintaksis yang berulang, seperti klausa nomina dan adverbial, memperkuat narasi emosional dalam lagu. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa struktur gramatikal memiliki peran penting dalam memperkuat intensitas emosional dan koherensi lirik. Studi ini menekankan pentingnya tipe klausa dalam membentuk makna dan ekspresi gaya bahasa dalam lirik lagu.

Kata Kunci: *Klausa Independen, Klausa Dependen, Lirik, Musik*

Abstract

This study examines the syntactic structure of Ariana Grande's song "One Last Time" by analyzing independent and dependent clauses used throughout the lyrics. The research aims to identify the types of clauses and their functions in conveying emotional meaning. Using a qualitative descriptive method, 71 clauses were identified, including 45 independent clauses and 26 dependent clauses. The independent clauses express direct emotions, intentions, and realizations, while the dependent clauses provide reasoning, elaboration, and emotional depth. Recurrent syntactic patterns, such as noun and adverbial clauses, support the emotional narrative of the song. The findings reveal how grammatical structures enhance the emotional intensity and coherence of the lyrics. This study highlights the significant role of clause types in shaping lyrical meaning and stylistic expression.

Keywords: *Independent Clauses, Dependent Clauses, Lyrics, Music*

INTRODUCTION

Language functions as a powerful medium for expressing emotions, thoughts, and intentions—especially in artistic forms like music (Uduak & Akpan, 2020). Song lyrics often employ a mixture of syntactic structures that mirror the speaker's inner voice and emotional conflict, (Silalahi et al, 2024; Simatupang, 2022; Goyak et al, 2021). One of the key grammatical elements in constructing meaning is the clause. Clauses, whether independent or dependent, play a crucial role in shaping how a message is delivered and understood within a text.

According to Halliday and Matthiessen (2014) cited in (Fitriana, 2021; Hyrsky, 2020; Andersen & Holsting, 2018), clauses are not only structural units but also functional components that serve experiential, interpersonal, and textual purposes in communication. Independent clauses are typically used to state main ideas, while dependent clauses often elaborate, justify, or support those ideas. In the context of songwriting, these structures enhance the narrative by balancing clarity with emotional complexity.

Previous studies have explored how popular song lyrics rely on grammatical features such as clause types, verb tenses, and pronoun use to reflect personal identity and emotional experience. Taggart (2016) found that pop lyrics frequently utilize simple clause structures and repetition to create rhythm and relatability, while also incorporating dependent clauses to express emotional reasoning and inner turmoil. Similarly, Simpson (2004) emphasizes that stylistic choices in grammar—such as the use of subordinate clauses—can intensify meaning and draw attention to personal expression, particularly in first-person narratives.

While many of these studies contribute valuable insights, most focus on the frequency or form of grammatical elements without fully analyzing how these features function within the emotional and thematic structure of a song. Moreover, prior analyses tend to examine clauses in isolation, overlooking their stylistic and expressive interactions throughout an entire piece. This leaves a gap in understanding how the combination and recurrence of clause types contribute to the overall meaning and narrative flow of a song.

To address this gap, the present study aims to analyze the independent and dependent clauses in the lyrics of Ariana Grande's song "One Last Time." The analysis not only identifies and classifies these clauses but also interprets their syntactic functions and stylistic effects in shaping the emotional message of the lyrics. As noted by Huddleston and Pullum (2005), understanding clause types and their syntactic roles provides a foundation for analyzing how grammar interacts with meaning. Therefore, this study offers both a linguistic and stylistic perspective on how emotional expression is achieved through grammar.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study applies a qualitative descriptive method to analyze the independent and dependent clauses found in the lyrics of "One Last Time" by Ariana Grande. The following steps outline the research procedure:

1. Data Collection

The primary data source is the official lyrics of "One Last Time" by Ariana Grande obtained from verified lyrics website Genius.com. The lyrics are collected and formatted into sentence by sentence segments for syntactic analysis.

2. Data Reduction

Each line is examined to identify clauses. Complex and compound sentences are broken down into individual clauses. The study focuses only on finite clauses (those with a subject and predicate)

3. Clause Identification

Every clause classified into one of the two primary categories according to established grammar rule:

- Independent Clause: a clause capable of existing as a complete sentence on its own.
- Dependent Clause: a clause that cannot function independently and starts with a subordinating conjunction (e.g., because, when, if) or a relative pronoun (e.g., that, which, who)

4. Classification and Tabulation

All identified clauses are tabulated in a table. Each clause is labeled as:

- IC = Independent Clause
- DC = Dependent Clause

The function of each clause is also briefly noted (e.g., main idea, reason, time, condition, etc.).

5. Data Analysis

The data analysis of the clauses found in the lyrics of "One Last Time" by Ariana Grande. The analysis focuses on three main steps:

- Breaking down the lyrics into individual clauses
- Classifying each clause as either independent or dependent
- Interpreting the syntactic function of each clause

Each line of the lyrics was carefully segmented into clauses. These clauses were then analyzed based on their grammatical structure and syntactic role. The classification was made using the following criteria:

- Independent Clause (IC): A clause that can stand alone as a complete sentence and expresses a complete thought.
- Dependent Clause (DC): A clause that cannot stand alone and functions as a part of a sentence (e.g., as an adverbial, adjectival, or noun clause).

Table 1. Classification of Independent and Dependent Clauses.

No	Line (Lyrics)	Clause	Type	Function
1	I was a liar	I was a liar	IC	Statement of Identity
2	I gave in to the fire	I gave in to the fire	IC	Confession/action
3	I know I shouldn't/should've fought it	I know	IC	Mental state
4	I know I shouldn't/should've fought it	I should've fought it	DC (noun clause)	Reported thought
5	at least I'm bein' honest	I'm bein' honest	IC	Confession
6	Feel like a failure	(I) feel like a failure	IC elliptical	Emotion
7	'cause I know that I failed you	'cause I know	DC (noun clause)	Reason
8	'cause I know that I failed you	that I failed you	DC (noun clause)	Reported content

9	I should've done you better	I should've done you better	IC	Regret
10	'cause you don't want a liar	'cause you don't want a liar	DC (noun clause)	Reason
11	And I know, and I know, and I know	I know	IC (repetition)	Emphasise on realization
12	she gives you everything	she gives you everything	IC	Statement
13	But, boy, I couldn't give it to you	I couldn't give it to you	IC	Contrast
14	And I know, and I know, and I know	I know	IC (repetition)	Emphasise on realization
15	that you got everything	that you got everything	DC (noun clause)	Reported statement
16	But I got nothin' here without you	I got nothin' here without you	IC	Emotive Emphasis
17	I need to be the one who takes you home	I need to be the one	IC	Desire
18	I need to be the one who takes you home	who takes you home	DC (relative clause)	Description of subject
19	I promise after that, I'll let you go	I promise	IC	Promise
20	I promise after that, I'll let you go	after that	DC (Adverbial clause)	Time reference
21	I promise after that, I'll let you go	I'll let you go	IC	Result of promise
22	Baby, I don't care if you got her in your heart	I don't care	IC	Emotion
23	Baby, I don't care if you got her in your heart	if you got her in your heart	DC (noun clause)	Condition
24	All I really care is you wake up in my arms	I really care	IC	Emotion emphasis
25	All I really care is you wake up in my arms	you wake up in my arms	DC (noun clause)	Desired situation

26	I don't deserve it, I know I don't deserve it	I don't deserve it	IC	Regret
27	I don't deserve it, I know I don't deserve it	I know	IC	Mental state
28	But stay with me a minute	stay with me a minute	IC (imperative)	Request
29	I swear I'll make it worth it	I swear	IC	Commitment
30	I swear I'll make it worth it	I'll make it worth it	DC (noun clause)	Content of promise
31	Can't you forgive me?	Can't you forgive me?	IC (interrogative)	Plea
32	I know that this is my fault	I know	IC	Realization
33	I know that this is my fault	that this is my fault	DC (noun clause)	Self blame
34	I should've been more careful	I should've been more careful	IC	Regret
35	And I know, and I know, and I know	I know	IC (repetition)	Emphasise on realization
36	she gives you everything	she gives you everything	IC	Statement
37	But, boy, I couldn't give it to you	I couldn't give it to you	IC	Contrast
38	And I know, and I know, and I know	I know	IC (repetition)	Emphasise on realization
39	that you got everything	that you got everything	DC (noun clause)	Reported statement
40	But I got nothin' here without you, baby	I got nothin' here without you, baby	IC	Emotive emphasis
41	I need to be the one who takes you home	I need to be the one	IC	Desire

42	I need to be the one who takes you home	who takes you home	DC (relative clause)	Description of subject
43	I promise after that, I'll let you go	I promise	IC	Promise
44	I promise after that, I'll let you go	after that	DC (adverbial clause)	Time reference
45	I promise after that, I'll let you go	I'll let you go	IC	Result of promise
46	Baby, I don't care if you got her in your heart	I don't care	IC	Emotion
47	Baby, I don't care if you got her in your heart	If you got her in your heart	DC (noun clause)	Condition
48	All I really care is you wake up in my arms	I really care	IC	Emotion emphasis
49	All I really care is you wake up in my arms	you wake up in my arms	DC (noun clause)	Desired situation
50	I need to be the one who takes you home	I need to be the one	IC	Desire
51	I need to be the one who takes you home	who takes you home	DC (relative clause)	Description of subject
52	I know I should've fought it	I know	IC	Realization
53	I know I should've fought it	I should've fought it	DC (noun clause)	Reported content
54	at least I'm bein' honest	I'm bein' honest	IC	Confession
55	But stay with me a minute	stay with me a minute	IC (imperative)	Plea
56	I swear I'll make it worth it, babe	I swear	IC	Promise
57	I swear I'll make it worth it, babe	I'll make it worth it	DC (noun clause)	Content
58	Cause I don't wanna be without you	Cause I don't wanna be without you	DC (adverbial clause)	Reason

59	I need to be the one who takes you home	I need to be the one	IC	Desire
60	I need to be the one who takes you home	who takes you home	DC (relative clause)	Description of subject
61	I promise after that, I'll let you go	I promise	IC	Promise
62	I promise after that, I'll let you go	after that	DC (adverbial clause)	Time reference
63	I promise after that, I'll let you go	I'll let you go	IC	Result of promise
64	Baby, I don't care if you got her in your heart, babe	I don't care	IC	Emotion
65	Baby, I don't care if you got her in your heart, babe	if you got her in your heart	DC (noun clause)	Condition
66	All I really care is you wake up in my arms	I really care	IC	Emotion emphasis
67	All I really care is you wake up in my arms	you wake up in my arms	DC (noun clause)	Desired situation
68	I need to be the one who takes you home, yeah	I need to be the one	IC	Desire
69	I need to be the one who takes you home, yeah	who takes you home	DC (relative clause)	Description of subject
70	I need to be the one who takes you home	I need to be the one	IC	Desire
71	I need to be the one who takes you home	who takes you home	DC (relative clause)	Description of subject

FINDINGS

This research focused on analyzing the syntactic structure of the lyrics in Ariana Grande's song "One Last Time", specifically identifying and classifying independent and dependent clauses. The objective was to explore how the use of various clause types contributes to the delivery of meaning, emotion, and expression within the song.

After a systematic and detailed analysis, a total of 71 clauses were identified throughout the lyrics. These were categorized into 45 independent clauses and 26 dependent clauses. The results are presented in the tables and discussion below.

a. Distribution of Independent and Dependent Clauses

The following table shows the overall frequency and percentage of each clause type found in the lyrics.

Table 2. Distribution of Independent and Dependent Clauses

No	Clause Type	Frequency	Percentage %
1	Independent Clause	45	63,38%
2	Dependent Clause	26	36,62%
	Total	71	100%

The data indicate that independent clauses are more prominent, making up over 60% of the total clauses. This suggests that the artist often employs straightforward and direct expressions to communicate the main ideas and emotions in the song. Meanwhile, dependent clauses, although fewer, serve important functions such as supporting, modifying, or elaborating on the main clauses.

b. Classification of Dependent Clauses

To better understand the role of dependent clauses, they were categorized into three major subtypes: noun clauses, adverbial clauses, and relative clauses. The table below summarizes this classification.

Table 3. Classification of Dependent Clauses

No	Subtype of Dependent Clause	Frequency	Example	Function
1	Noun Clause	16	<i>that I failed you, I'll let you go</i>	Complements verbs of thought or feeling
2	Adverbial Clause	7	<i>'cause I don't wanna be without you, if you got her in your heart</i>	Provides reason or condition
3	Relative Clause	3	<i>who takes you home</i>	Modifies a noun to add specific meaning

Noun clauses are the most frequently used subtype. These clauses often function as the object of verbs such as know, promise, care, and swear, which are frequently used in emotionally driven statements throughout the song. Adverbial clauses serve to explain causes, consequences, or conditions, helping to clarify the speaker's emotional motivations.

Relative clauses, while limited in number, contribute to specificity in description, typically modifying nouns like “the one.”

Discussion

The syntactic choices made in “One Last Time” reveal how language structure can enhance emotional expression in songwriting. The interplay between independent and dependent clauses contributes significantly to the lyrical depth and rhythm of the piece. The discussion below elaborates on the function of each clause type and their stylistic contributions to the overall message.

a. Use of Independent Clauses: Directness and Emotional Clarity

With 45 independent clauses, the song relies heavily on direct, grammatically complete thoughts. These clauses typically begin with the first-person pronoun “I”, underscoring the personal nature of the lyrics. Examples include:

- “I was a liar”
- “I know I should’ve fought it”
- “I don’t care”
- “I need to be the one”

These independent clauses deliver clear emotional statements and confessions. Their use reflects a sense of urgency, vulnerability, and self-awareness. The repetition of independent clauses such as “I know” throughout the song adds emphasis and reflects a process of realization or pleading. This repetition also mimics spoken language, enhancing the song’s conversational and relatable tone.

b. Use of Dependent Clauses: Emotional Reasoning and Reflection

While independent clauses establish the core message, dependent clauses add emotional depth, reasoning, and introspection. The most commonly used are noun clauses, which function as objects of verbs expressing belief, regret, or intention. For example:

- “I know that I failed you”
- “I promise I’ll let you go”
- “I care that you wake up in my arms”

These clauses highlight the inner turmoil of the speaker, giving the listener insight into their internal emotional struggle. The use of adverbial clauses, such as:

- “‘Cause I don’t wanna be without you”
- “If you got her in your heart”

Serves to justify the speaker’s behavior or explain the conditions under which her emotions are expressed. These clauses often appear after or alongside independent clauses,

forming compound-complex structures that mirror the complexity of real emotional experiences.

The relative clause “who takes you home” appears in the line “I need to be the one who takes you home”. Here, the relative clause serves to clarify and specify the object of desire—the speaker wants to be that person, which adds personal and narrative depth.

c. Recurring Syntactic Patterns and Their Stylistic Effects

Certain syntactic structures recur throughout the song, creating a rhythmic and emotional pattern. These include:

Table 4. Recurring Syntactic Patterns and Their Stylistic Effects

No	Repeated Pattern	Example	Effect
1	I know + [Noun Clause]	<i>I know that I failed you</i>	Expresses recognition, remorse, or realization
2	I promise / I swear + [Noun Clause]	<i>I promise I'll let you go</i>	Signals commitment and emotional sincerity
3	[IC] + 'cause + [DC]	<i>I feel like a failure 'cause I know...</i>	Provides reasoning or emotional explanation
4	I need to be the one + [Relative Clause]	<i>who takes you home</i>	Clarifies and specifies the speaker's intention

These recurring syntactic patterns contribute to the cohesive narrative of the song and reinforce its emotional themes of regret, longing, and resolution.

d. Overall Impact on Meaning and Emotion

The syntactic structure of the song plays a crucial role in building its emotional tone. The high number of independent clauses emphasizes certainty, confession, and direct emotion, while the use of dependent clauses introduces nuance, depth, and reflection. This balance allows the lyrics to unfold as both a confession and a plea, reflecting the internal conflict of the speaker who seeks forgiveness and one final chance.

Furthermore, the use of simple clause patterns makes the song relatable and accessible, while the emotional intensity is sustained through the thoughtful use of dependent clauses that justify or elaborate on feelings. The song's structure, therefore, is not only grammatically rich but also emotionally resonant.

CONCLUSION

This study investigated the syntactic structure of Ariana Grande’s song “One Last Time” by analyzing the use and function of independent and dependent clauses in the lyrics. A total of 71 clauses were identified, consisting of 45 independent clauses (63.38%) and 26

dependent clauses (36.62%). The findings reveal that independent clauses are used more frequently, primarily serving to express direct thoughts, emotions, and actions of the speaker. These include admissions of guilt, realizations, desires, and promises.

In contrast, dependent clauses add emotional depth and syntactic complexity to the lyrics. Most of these are noun clauses functioning as complements to verbs expressing thought or emotion, such as *"I know that I failed you"* or *"I promise I'll let you go."* Adverbial and relative clauses further contribute by clarifying reasons, conditions, or providing additional information about the speaker's intentions.

The interaction between independent and dependent clauses creates a rhythmically and emotionally compelling lyrical narrative. Repetition of certain structures—like *"I know..."* or *"I need to be the one who..."*—enhances the speaker's vulnerability and emotional plea, reflecting the inner turmoil and longing central to the song's message. This analysis shows that syntactic elements are not only grammatical tools but also stylistic devices that shape meaning and evoke emotional responses in song lyrics.

SUGGESTIONS

Based on the findings of this research, several suggestions can be made:

1. For Linguistic and Stylistic Researchers

Further studies can expand this type of syntactic analysis to a wider range of songs, genres, or artists to explore how different musical styles employ clause structures for emotional or narrative effect. Comparative studies between songs with varying emotional tones may also provide insight into how grammar reflects mood and message.

2. For Educators and Students

Teachers of syntax, stylistics, or applied linguistics can use popular song lyrics—such as those by Ariana Grande—as engaging materials to teach clause analysis. This can help students better understand abstract grammatical concepts through authentic, relatable texts.

3. For Songwriters and Lyricists

Awareness of syntactic variation can support more impactful songwriting. Balancing independent and dependent clauses helps to convey emotions more effectively and can deepen listener engagement through both clarity and nuance.

4. For Curriculum Developers

Integrating modern media, such as music, into grammar or stylistics curricula could make language analysis more accessible and interesting for learners. Songs offer rich examples of real-world grammar use that go beyond traditional textbook examples.

Overall, this study not only demonstrates the syntactic richness in contemporary lyrics but also highlights the pedagogical and creative potential of grammar analysis in music.

REFERENCES

- Andersen, T. H., & Holsting, A. E. M. (2018). Clause complexing in systemic functional linguistics—towards an alternative description. *Functional Linguistics*, 5(1), 10.
- Fitriana, W. (2021). An Analysis of Student's Literary Response Text Using SFL. *Indonesian Journal of Functional Linguistics*, 1(2), 99-108.
- Goyak, F., Muhammad, M. M., Mohd Khaja, F. N., Zaini, M. F., & Mohammad, G. (2021). Conversational mental verbs in english song lyrics: a corpus-driven analysis. *Asian Journal of University Education (AJUE)*, 7(1), 222-239.
- Halliday, M. A. K., & Matthiessen, C. M. I. M. (2014). *Halliday's introduction to functional grammar* (4th ed.). Routledge.
- Huddleston, R., & Pullum, G. K. (2005). *A student's introduction to English grammar*. Cambridge University Press.
- Hyrsky, L. (2020). Exploring interpersonal patterns of language switches in English/Spanish dialogue—a Systemic Functional Grammar approach to the study of codeswitching.
- Silalahi, T. F., Purba, R., Manurung, S. M., Purba, I. P., Butar, L. B., Herman, H., ... & Tannuary, A. (2024). Learning the Meaning of Song Lyrics through the Elements of Ideational Metafunction: A Case on Systemic Functional Linguistics. *Anglophile Journal*, 4(1), 61-76.
- Simatupang, E. C. (2022). The Analysis Meaning of Metallica Album "And Justice for All. *Budapest International Research and Critics Institute-Journal (BIRCI-Journal)*, 5(3), 18861-18868.
- Simpson, P. (2004). *Stylistics: A resource book for students*. Routledge.
- Taggart, C. C. (2016). The grammatical features of pop lyrics: A study of clause types and verb tenses in selected songs. *Journal of Language and Music*, 3(2), 45–58.
- Uduak, P., & Akpan, R. W. (2020). An overview of the arts as a language of communication, expression and experience: A discourse. *Serbian Research Journal of Education, Humanities and Developmental Studies (SRJEHDS)*, 10 (1), 28–46.