

## PHRASE AND CLAUSE USAGE IN MICHAEL JACKSON'S SONG LYRICS

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### Abstract

This research aims to find out the usage of phrase and clause types that are found in Michael Jackson song-lyrics such as *Billie Jean*, *Beat It*, *Black or White*, *Dirty Diana*, *Earth Song*, *Heal the World*, *Man in the Mirror*, *Smooth Criminal*, *They Don't Really Care About Us*, and *Thriller*. The phrase and clause types are based on Eastwood's categories. The phrase is divided into five types: (1) verb phrase, (2) noun phrase, (3) adjective phrase, (4) adverb phrase and (5) prepositional phrase, while the clause is divided into two types, namely main clause and sub clause. There are also four types of sub clause: (1) adverbial clause, (2) conditional clause, (3) noun clause, (4) and relative clause. This categorization can find out the usage of grammatical pattern in the sentence. In the analysis, the findings of phrases and clauses show that the most dominant number are noun phrase (51.94%) and main clause (63.74%).

**Keywords:** syntax, phrase, clause, song-lyric

### Intisari

*Skripsi ini bertujuan untuk mencari tahu jenis-jenis frasa dan klausa yang ditemukan pada lirik-lirik lagu Michael Jackson seperti Beat It, Billie Jean, Black or White, Dirty Diana, Earth Song, Heal the World, Man in the Mirror, Smooth Criminal, They Don't Care About Us, dan Thriller. Tipe-tipe frasa dan klausa berdasarkan kategori Eastwood. Frasa dibagi menjadi lima tipe: (1) frasa kata kerja, (2) frasa benda, (3) frasa ajektif, (4) frasa adverbial, dan (5) frasa preposisional, sedangkan klausa dibagi menjadi dua tipe, yaitu klausa utama dan subklausa. Terdapat juga empat tipe subklausa: (1) klausa adverbial, (2) klausa kondisional, (3) klausa benda, dan (4) klausa relatif. Kategori ini bisa mengetahui penggunaan pola gramatikal dalam kalimat. Pada analisis, temuan-temuan frasa-frasa dan klausa-klausa menunjukkan bahwa jumlah yang paling dominan adalah frasa benda (51,94%) dan klausa utama (63,74%).*

**Kata kunci:** sintaksis, frasa, klausa, lirik lagu

## INTRODUCTION

Michael Jackson's song-lyrics are constructed by various kinds of linguistic structures such as phrases and clauses. Both of them are defined and classified by one of the linguists, Eastwood (2002).

## OBJECTIVE

Based on the introduction above, the objectives of this research are:

- a. to identify the phrases and clauses in each line of the lyrics syntactically;
- b. to classify the phrases and clauses that have been identified based on Eastwood's categorization (2002); and
- c. to determine the most dominant syntactic structure found in these chosen lyrics.

The data source is the lyrics of ten Michael Jackson's songs. The titles of these songs are *Billie Jean*, *Smooth Criminal*, *Beat It*, *Thriller*, *Man in the Mirror*, *Earth Song*, *They Don't Care About Us*, *Black or White*, *Heal The World*, and *Dirty Diana*.

Firstly, the researcher collected the song-titles from the website *www.thetoptens.com*. It displayed ten song-titles that are listed as the best Michael Jackson's songs according to the fan's opinions.

The researcher accesses *www.metrolyrics.com* to find a website that provided the complete lyrics of the chosen songs. Originally, the lyrics were written in lines. This form was not changed in order to keep their authenticity. Nevertheless, the repeated expressions of phrases and clauses are not written. All types of phrases and clauses that were found in those lines were considered the data of this research, excluding the song-titles.

The method of the analysis is that the data were listed in the alphabetical order first. Then, the observation was carried out to identify the phrases and clauses. After that, the phrases and clauses were classified according to Eastwood's classification of the types of phrases and clauses. The exact same line was not repeated, either in the listing or analysis. Finally, after being classified, they were put in tables so as to make it easier to understand the results of the classification and to determine the most dominant syntactic structure found.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

There are quite many researches applying syntactical analysis carried on to investigate song-lyrics and other kinds of texts. Some of them are described below.

Ana Ma Rierola Puigderajols (2001) wrote a thesis to investigate the "linguistic magic" found in forty-seven song-lyrics of Disney cartoons. She defines the "linguistic magic" as 'the view that sees that there is an attitude to language in which meaning and fascination emerge from words themselves' (p. 21). She used syntactic analysis to see how in some Disney songs, syntax is maintained. The main conclusion is that the lyrics could produce magical effects for captivating the audiences.

Another research was carried out by Robin John Sowards (2006). He described in his dissertation the metaphysics of syntax in the lyrics of six poems created in the nineteenth century. To reach his goal, one of the things he did was to explain the kinds of syntactic structure that can be found in each line of the poems then explaining the meaning syntactically. Thus, he presented grammatical suggestions to the ungrammatical findings in order to clarify the interpretation of the poems.

Meanwhile, Behl and Choudhury (2011) worked on a corpus study of Bollywood song-lyrics. They compared the Bollywood song-lyric corpus, archiving non-standard Romanized of Hindi words with the standard text corpus of Hindi using Complex Network Theory (CNT) whose functions are to explore and explain the various unique characteristics of the language. One of the things that they did was to analyze the two corpus syntactically. They concluded that the finding was contrary to the common view that the registers of song-lyrics tended to be more flexible than the registers of syntax study rules.

Quite similar to those researchers, the present research employs the syntactic analysis as well. What makes it different from them is that it is going to analyze the types of phrases and clauses in Michael Jackson's song-lyrics.

## SYNTAX

Eastwood (2002, p. vii-1) states that the words assembly of syntax can find out the usage of grammatical pattern in a sentence. The kinds of grammatical patterns can be learned from what grammatical units are.

### Grammatical Units

There are four grammatical units of English: words, phrases, clauses, and sentences (Eastwood, 2002, p. 1-359).

## Types of Phrase

There are five types of phrase: verb phrase, noun phrase, adjective phrase, adverb phrase, and prepositional phrase (Eastwood, 2002, p. 3). They are explained below.

### Verb Phrase

A verb phrase can consist of a verb as its head and possibly modified by an auxiliary (Eastwood, 2002, p. 3). Below is the example.

Example:

“They had gone to the airport.”  
 auxiliary verb (head)  
 verb phrase

(There is an auxiliary of “had” that modifies the verb of “gone” which is as the head of the verb phrase).

### Noun Phrase

A noun phrase can consist of a noun as its head and possibly modified by determiner, adjective, and/or other noun. Moreover, a pronoun is also categorized as a noun phrase (Eastwood, 2002, p. 3). Below is one of the examples of noun phrase in clause.

Example:

“The Australian college students pass the exam.”  
 determiner adjective noun noun (head)  
 noun phrase

(There are a determiner of “The”, an adjective of “Australian”, and a noun of “college” that modify the noun of “students” which is as the head of the noun phrase).

### Adjective Phrase

An adjective phrase can consist of an adjective as its head and possibly modified by an adverb (Eastwood, 2002, p. 3). Below is one of the examples of determiner in clause.

Example:

“The taste of this food is very bad.”  
 adverb adjective (head)  
 adjective phrase

(There is an adverb of “very” that modifies the adjective of “bad” which is as the head of the adjective phrase).

### Adverb Phrase

An adverb phrase can consist of an adverb as its head and possibly modified by other adverb (2002, p. 3). Below is an example of adverb phrase in clause.

Example:

“She will almost certainly be disqualified.”  
 adverb adverb (head)  
 adverb phrase

(There is an adverb of “almost” that modifies the other adverb of “certainly” which is as the head of the adverb phrase).

### Prepositional Phrase

A prepositional phrase has a pattern of a preposition that precedes the noun phrase (2002, p. 3). Below is an example of prepositional phrase in clause.

Example:

“My brother is sleeping in the living room.”  
 preposition noun phrase  
 prepositional phrase

(The preposition of “in” precedes the noun phrase of “the living room”. This phrase functions to connect the information of place).

## Types of Clause

A clause is divided into main and sub clause. Moreover, a sub clause has four clause types that are adverbial clause, conditional clause, noun clause, and relative clause. A main clause itself can be combined by other main clauses and one or more sub clauses (Eastwood, 2002, p. 317-366). Below are the explanations along with the examples.

### Main Clause

A main clause can have the same meaning as a sentence. Below is one of the examples (Eastwood, 2002, p. 318-323).

Example:

“The woman went the church and (she) prayed.”  
 subject verb object subject verb  
 main clause main clause

(There are two main clauses that are “The woman went to the church” and “she prayed”. The subject of “The woman” in the first main clause has the same role with the second subject of “she”. That is why the second

subject is presented in parentheses because it can be possibly omitted).

### Adverbial Clause

An adverbial clause has the same functions as an adverb. Below is one of the examples (Eastwood, 2002, p. 327-332).

Example:

**“As far as I can do**, this wood is hardly cut.”

(The adverbial clause of “As far as I can do” adds the comment to the main clause of “this wood is hardly cut”).

### Conditional Clause

A conditional clause generally uses a conjunction of “if” to express a condition that can be open or unreal. Below is one of the examples (Eastwood, 2002, p. 333).

Example:

**“If the weather is still cold tomorrow**, I will not go to the party.”

(The conditional clause of “If the weather is still cold tomorrow” describes the main clause of “I will not go to the party” as an open condition, which means it could happen or not).

### Noun Clause

A noun clause has the same functions as a noun. Below are examples of a noun clause that are combined by main clauses to know the different possible forms (Eastwood, 2002, p. 341-345).

Example:

**“That she cannot understand** does not matter.”

(The noun clause of “That she cannot understand” describes the subject of the main clause of “...does not matter”).

### Relative Clause

A relative clause functions to identify, classify, add, and connect the other clause. Below are examples of a relative clause that are combined by main clauses to know the differences of each function (Eastwood, 2002, p. 357-359).

Example:

**“The girl who is playing the violin** is my girlfriend.”

(The relative clause of “who is playing the violin” identifies who the subject of the main clause of “She is my girlfriend” was).

## PHRASES AND CLAUSES IN MICHAEL JACKSON’S SONG LYRICS

The analysis is divided into two parts. The first part presents the analysis of phrase types which include verb phrase, noun phrase, adjective phrase, adverb phrase and prepositional phrase. The second part presents the analysis of clause types which includes main clause, adverbial clause, conditional clause, noun clause, and relative clause. Each part shows the numbers of various phrases and clauses with the percentage that is presented in the table below. Then, under each table, several examples are given and explained in the question marks. To make it clearer, each finding is printed in bold. The explanations, if it is necessary, also describe how they can be determined into particular phrase and clause type.

### 1. Phrase Type Analysis

Number	Song-Lyrics	VP	NP	Adj. P	Adv. P	PP
1.	<i>Beat It</i>	123	119	37	30	1
2.	<i>Billie Jean</i>	96	157	11	18	17
3.	<i>Black or White</i>	61	101	25	6	7
4.	<i>Dirty Diana</i>	76	136	25	20	8
5.	<i>Earth Song</i>	41	168	16	12	2
6.	<i>Heal The World</i>	96	171	41	26	40
7.	<i>Man In The Mirror</i>	108	209	24	15	15
8.	<i>Smoob Criminal</i>	106	220	43	12	12
9.	<i>They Don't Care About Us</i>	119	171	16	20	12
10.	<i>Thriller</i>	88	156	13	24	26
	Total	914	1608	251	183	140
	%	29.52	51.94	8.11	5.91	4.52

Notes:

VP = Verb Phrase

NP = Noun Phrase

Adj. P = Adjective Phrase

Adv. P = Adverb Phrase

PP = Prepositional Phrase

% = Percentage

From the table above, it is seen that all types of the phrases can be found in each song-lyric. The total calculation is 3,096 phrases. Based on the percentage, the numbers show that the most dominant is noun phrase. Then it is always followed by the numbers of verb phrase as the second order.

### 1.1. One Word Verb as the Head of the Verb Phrase

As it has been mentioned before, the data examples are printed in bold. Below are several of one word verb as the head of the verb phrase examples. Each of them is presented in the same clause structure that consists of a subject followed by a verb and object or complement.

Subject	Verb	Object or Complement	Song Number
Verb Phrase			
"I	<b>am</b>	the one"	2
"I	<b>know</b>	your every move"	4
"I	<b>see</b>	the kids"	7

### 1.2. Adding Auxiliary to the Head of the Verb Phrase

Below are several examples of adding auxiliary to the head of the verb phrase. The auxiliaries that are found are located before the heads of the verb phrases. They are also presented in the same clause structure that consists of a subject followed by a verb and object.

Subject	Verb		Object or Complement	Song Number
Verb Phrase				
	Auxiliary	Verb (Head)		
"I	<b>'ve</b>	<b>seen</b>	the bright"	3
"We	<b>'ll</b>	<b>cry</b>	happy tears"	6
"I	<b>can</b>	<b>thrill</b>	you"	10

### 1.3. One Word Noun as the Head of the Noun Phrase

Word nouns as the heads of the noun phrases are found in the data. They can be found as the subject and object or complement in a clause. Below are several examples of the findings that are presented in the same clause structure, which consists of a subject followed by a verb and object or complement.

Subject	Verb	Object or Complement	Song Number
Noun Phrase		Noun Phrase	
"They	told	<b>him"</b>	1
"We	are	<b>one"</b>	3
"You	won't seduce	<b>me"</b>	4

### 1.4. Adding Determiner and Adjective to the Head of the Noun Phrase

There are also the findings of adding determiner and adjective to the head of the noun phrase. In the

examples of the subject, they can be only found as adding determiner before the noun that is as the head of the noun phrase, while in the examples of the object, they can be sequentially found as adding determiner, adjective, or even both of them that stand before the noun as the head of the noun phrase. The examples below are presented in the same clause structure, which consists of a subject followed by a verb and object or complement.

Subject	Verb	Object or Complement	Song Number
Noun Phrase			
Determiner	Noun (Head)		
"The	<b>lie</b>	becomes the truth"	2
"The	<b>nations</b>	turn their swords"	6
"Your	<b>proclamation</b>	promised me"	9

Below are several examples of noun phrase findings as the object or complement in clauses.

Subject	Verb	Object		Song Number	
Noun Phrase					
		Determiner	Adjective	Noun (Head)	
"I	took	<b>my</b>		<b>baby"</b>	3
"You	seduce	<b>every</b>		<b>man"</b>	4
"I	have	<b>a</b>		<b>wife"</b>	9

Subject	Verb	Complement		Song Number	
Noun Phrase					
		Determiner	Adjective	Noun (Head)	
"She	was more like	<b>a</b>	<b>beauty</b>	<b>queen"</b>	2
"I	am	<b>the</b>		<b>one"</b>	2
"I	am	<b>the</b>		<b>victim"</b>	9

### 1.5. One Word Adjective as the Head of the Adjective Phrase

The findings of one word adjective as the head of the adjective phrase are found in the data. Below are several examples that are presented in the same clause structure, which consists of a subject followed by a verb and adjective phrase as complement.

Subject	Verb	Complement	Song Number
Adjective Phrase			
"You	want to be	<b>tough"</b>	1
"You	're	<b>right"</b>	3
"Love	is	<b>strong"</b>	6

### 1.6. Adding Adverb to the Head of the Adjective Phrase

There are also examples of adjective as the head of the adjective phrase that are modified by adverbs. In the findings, the adverbs stand before the adjectives. They are presented in the same clause structure that consists of a subject followed by a verb and adjective phrase as complement. Below are several of them.

Subject	Verb	Complement		Song Number
		Adjective Phrase		
		Adverb	Adjective (Head)	
“Their words	are	really	clear”	1
“That	’s	so	carefree”	3
“No message	could have been	any	clearer”	7

### 1.7. One Word Adverb as the Head of the Adverb Phrase

Below are several examples of one word adverb as the head of the adverb phrase. They are presented in the same clause structure consisting of a subject followed by a verb, object, and adverbial, which the adverb phrases stand before the verbs or after the verbs as adverbials that are with or without any object.

Subject	Verb	Object	Adverbial	Song Number
“You	better	disappear”		1
“A miracle	has happened		tonight”	3
“Horror	looks	you	right”	10

### 1.8. Adding the Other Adverb to the Head of the Adverb Phrase

The findings of adverb phrase are also found as adding the other adverb to the head of the adverb phrase. Below are several examples that are presented in the same clause structure which consists of a subject followed by a verb and adverb phrase as adverbial. In these findings, the other adverbs precede the heads of the adverb phrase.

Subject	Verb	Adverbial		Song Number
		Adverb Phrase		
		Adverb	Adjective (Head)	
“I	want to go	too	far”	4
“We	could fly	so	high”	6
“It	’s gonna feel	real	good”	7

### 1.9. Prepositional Phrase

The findings of prepositional phrase are found in the data. Several of these examples are presented below in the same clause structure that consists of a subject followed by a verb, object, and prepositional phrase as adverbial.

Subject	Verb	Adverbial	Prepositional Phrase	Song Number
“I	took	my baby	on Saturday bang”	3
“She	trapped	me	in her heart”	4
“You	change	that number	on your dial”	10

## 2. Clause Types Analysis

Number	Lyrics	MC	AC	CC	NC	RC
1.	<i>Beat It</i>	30	2	0	2	0
2.	<i>Billie Jean</i>	46	5	0	13	15
3.	<i>Black or White</i>	29	3	5	8	2
4.	<i>Dirty Diana</i>	33	6	0	10	8
5.	<i>Earth Song</i>	9	0	0	3	4
6.	<i>Heal The World</i>	27	3	9	5	4
7.	<i>Man In The Mirror</i>	36	8	5	5	3
8.	<i>Smooth Criminal</i>	44	2	0	9	0
9.	<i>They Don't Care About Us</i>	31	2	2	16	2
10.	<i>Thriller</i>	42	12	1	6	6
Total		327	43	22	77	44
%		63.74	8.38	4.29	15.01	8.58

Notes:

MC = Main Clause

AC = Adverbial Clause

CC = Conditional Clause

NC = Noun Clause

RC = Relative Clause

% = Percentage

Based on the table above, it is seen that the total calculation of all clause type numbers is 513 clauses. According to the percentage, the numbers indicate that the most dominant one is main clause. One of the interesting things in the data is that there are several sub clauses which stand in one line, which its main clauses stand in the previous or next line. It probably happens because they consist of many words or phrases. Another is that there are several sub clauses which stand by itself without its existed main clause. It also happens to several main clauses which have no sub clause. Still another one is that there is one line

which consists of a main clause with more than one sub clause.

### 2.1. Main Clause

Like the finding examples of various phrase types, the findings of main clause are also printed in bold. Several of them are presented below in the same clause structure that consists of a subject followed by a verb, and object.

Subject	Verb	Object	Song Number
"I	took	my baby"	3
"I	need	you"	5
"You	see	a sight"	10

### 2.2. Adverbial Clause

Below are several of adverbial clause examples. They are presented in the same clause structure that the adverbial clauses stand after the main clauses.

Main Clause	Adverbial Clause	Song Number
"They're out	to get you"	1
"There are ways	to get there"	6
"I want everybody	to clear the area right now"	8

### 2.3. Conditional Clause

The findings of conditional clause stand before or after the other clauses. Below are several examples of conditional clause that precede the other clauses.

Conditional Clause	Other Clause	Song Number
"If you're thinking about my baby,	it don't matter"	3
"If you really try	you'll find"	6
"If Roosevelt was livin',	he wouldn't let this be"	9

Below are the other examples of conditional clause that stand after the main clauses.

Main Clause	Conditional Clause	Song Number
"I'll be your everything	if you make me a star"	4
"They will possess you	unless you change that number"	10

### 2.4. Noun Clause

Below are several examples of noun clause that stand after the main clauses.

Main Clause	Noun Clause	Song Number
"You better do	what you can"	1
"He could see	she was unable"	8
"You know	it's thriller"	10

### 2.5. Relative Clause

Below are several examples of relative clause that stand after the main clauses.

Main Clause	Relative Clause	Song Number
"I am the one	who will dance on the floor"	2
"I have the stuff	that you want"	4
"There's a love	that cannot lie"	6

Furthermore, the other findings of relative clause that stand before and after separated main clauses are found and presented below.

Main Clause	Relative Clause	Song Number
"The dream	we would conceived in will reveal a joyful face"	6
"Those	whoever shall be found without the soul for getting down must stand and face the hounds of hell"	10

These three examples which are printed in bold are the relative clauses and the three separated main clauses are sequentially "The dream will reveal a joyful face", "The world will shine again in grace", and "Those must stand and face the hounds of hell".

## CONCLUSION

This research results in the classification of phrases and clauses based on Eastwood's categorization. All types of phrases and clauses can be found in Michael Jackson's song-lyrics, even though several of the clause types are not found in certain song-lyrics.

Moreover, it can be seen that the most dominant phrase and clause types are noun phrase and main clause. They are approximately a half number of the total numbers. Both noun phrase and main clause are always the most dominant in each song-lyric with noun phrase as the one almost always found in each line of the lyrics. However, with the exception of the verb phrase that is sometimes found after or before the noun phrase, the other phrase and clause types which are occasionally found are adjective phrase, adverb phrase, prepositional phrase, adverbial clause, conditional clause, noun clause, and relative clause.

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