Analisis Linguistik terhadap Sintaksis dan Gaya Bahasa dalam Lagu "Perfect" karya Ed Sheeran

Amelia Faddya Wildhani[1], Annajmi Mastari Maryam[2], Raihani[3], Siti Ismahani[4]

[1,2,3,4] Universitas Islam Negeri Sumatera Utara

Email : ameliafaddya@gmail.com[1] , annajmimastari@gmail.com[2] , raihanihani93@gmail.com[3] , sitiismahani@uinsu.ac.id[4]

Abstrak

Penelitian ini mengkaji aspek sintaktis dan stilistika dalam lagu Perfect (2017) karya Ed Sheeran untuk mengungkap bagaimana struktur gramatikal berkontribusi terhadap makna emosional dan artistik. Dengan menggunakan metode deskriptif kualitatif, penelitian ini menganalisis lirik lagu berdasarkan teori struktur frasa dan kerangka tata bahasa. Analisis difokuskan pada jenis kalimat, pola frasa, dan hubungan antarklausa. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa kalimat deklaratif mendominasi lirik lagu, yang merepresentasikan ketulusan dan kejelasan emosi, sementara bentuk imperatif dan interogatif memberikan variasi serta menciptakan kesan keintiman. Frasa nomina, verba, dan preposisional secara kolektif membangun citra yang hidup dan alur narasi yang mengalir dengan baik. Kombinasi klausa independen dan dependen mencerminkan kepastian sekaligus kerentanan, yang menjadi inti tema romantis lagu tersebut. Perangkat stilistika seperti elipsis dan repetisi meningkatkan ritme serta kedalaman emosional. Secara keseluruhan, penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa sintaksis dalam lirik lagu berfungsi lebih dari sekadar struktur, tetapi juga membentuk gaya dan makna. Temuan ini juga menunjukkan potensi lirik lagu sebagai bahan autentik dalam pembelajaran bahasa Inggris.

Kata Kunci: Sintaksis, Lirik Lagu, Analisis Stilistika, Linguistik

A Linguistics Analysis of Syntax and Style in Ed Sheeran's "Perfect"

Abstract

This study explores the syntactic and stylistic aspects of Ed Sheeran's song Perfect (2017) to reveal how grammatical structures contribute to emotional and artistic meaning. Using a descriptive qualitative method, the research analyzes the song's lyrics based on phrase structure theory and grammatical framework. The analysis focuses on sentence types, phrase patterns, and clause relations. The findings show that declarative sentences dominate the lyrics, expressing sincerity and emotional clarity, while imperative and interrogative forms add variation and intimacy. Noun, verb, and prepositional phrases collectively create vivid imagery and smooth narrative flow. The combination of independent and dependent clauses reflects both certainty and vulnerability, central to the song's romantic theme. Stylistic devices such as ellipsis and repetition enhance rhythm and emotional depth. Overall, the study concludes that syntax in song lyrics functions beyond structure, shaping style and meaning. The findings also demonstrate the potential of song lyrics as authentic materials for English language teaching.

Keywords: Syntax; Song Lyrics; Stylistic Analysis; Linguistics

INTRODUCTION

Language and music are two universal forms of human expression that have long been recognized as interconnected. The linguistic dimension of music, particularly song lyrics, demonstrates the use of language that is structured and worthy of scientific study, even though music is often viewed primarily as an aesthetic and emotional art form. Lyrics are not merely poetic additions to melodies, but linguistic texts that create meaning and evoke emotions through the use of grammar, semantics, and stylistic devices. Simpson (2004) explains that song lyrics share a variety of similarities with poetry, such as rhythm, parallelism, and figurative language, but differ in their use of repetition, conversational tone, and hybrid structures that combine the spontaneity of speech with poetic density. This makes song lyrics a unique object of linguistic study, particularly from a syntactic and stylistic perspective.

In the study of linguistics, syntax refers to the principles and rules that govern how words are arranged into phrases, clauses, and sentences (Radford, 2009). Although traditional syntactic research often focuses on artificial examples or literary texts, applying syntactic frameworks to song lyrics opens up opportunities to observe grammar as it naturally appears in creative discourse. According to Carter & Mccarthy (2006), the study of authentic language use in artistic contexts allows for a richer understanding of how grammar functions in real communication. However, even though popular songs have great cultural significance, syntactic analysis of song lyrics is still rarely done compared to semantic, pragmatic, or sociocultural approaches.

Previous study has tended to focus more on the interpretation of meaning or cultural impact rather than grammatical structure. As Frith (1996) noted, popular music shapes identity and emotional expression. While Tagg (2013) discussed the semiotic aspects of verbal and musical signs in popular culture. In the applied linguistics field, a variety of studies also highlight the pedagogical value of songs for vocabulary learning, pronunciation, and cultural awareness (Al-Hoorie & Maclntyre, 2020). Although this approach is valuable, it still ignores how syntactic features, such as sentence type, clause relationships, or phrase patterns, contribute to the artistic and emotional resonance of a song.

Several studies have examined syntactic aspects in song lyrics, although most have been conducted within a limited scope. Nasution, Setia, & Deliana (2024) analyzed noun phrases in Justin Bieber's song lyrics and found that the determiner and head structure was the most dominant form, indicating that noun phrases play an important role in shaping the meaning and clarity of lyrics. Similarly, Al Bahy & Darmawan (2025) examined sentence structures in Indonesian pop songs and found that declarative sentences were the most frequently used type, while imperative sentences were used to convey emotional intensity. These findings show that syntactic features can meaningfully reflect how language functions in musical expression.

Although previous studies have made valuable contributions to the study of syntax in song lyrics, most are still descriptive in nature and focus on identifying grammatical patterns without interpreting their stylistic or emotional functions. Only a few studies combine

syntactic and stylistic analysis to explore how grammatical choices contribute to the artistic and expressive effects of a song.

Based on this research gap, this study focuses on Ed Sheeran's *Perfect* (2017), a romantic ballad that has gained global recognition. This song narrates a story of love and devotion through simple but carefully crafted sentences. The lyrics utilize declarative clauses, subordinate constructions, prepositional phrases, and stylistic devices such as ellipsis and parallelism. These elements not only function as sentence builders, but also shape the emotional tone and stylistic texture of the song. As an example, the repeated use of declarative sentences emphasizes the sincerity of the narrator's voice, while the ellipsis in lines such as *"Baby, I'm dancing in the dark"* creates a sense of intimacy and emotional closeness through the imitation of spoken language.

Despite the song's cultural popularity, there have been few academic studies that systematically examine how its syntactic structure contributes to its stylistic power. Therefore, this study aims to analyze the syntactic and stylistic dimensions of the lyrics of Ed Sheeran's *Perfect*. This study seeks to identify the types of sentences used in the lyrics, describe how phrases and clauses are constructed, and explain how these syntactic features contribute to the song's stylistic and emotional effects. By integrating grammatical description and stylistic interpretation, this study follows the views of Carter (2004) and Wales (2014), who assert that stylistic analysis cannot be separated from syntactic observation when examining creative language use.

Theoretically, this study expands the scope of syntactic and stylistic studies by applying them to non-traditional types of text, namely popular song lyrics, and shows that grammar is not merely a mechanical structure, but a key element in the formation of artistic meaning. In practical terms, this study highlights the pedagogical potential of song lyrics in English language teaching (ELT), as syntactic analysis of songs can increase students' awareness of sentence types, clause relationships, and stylistic devices in an authentic and engaging context (Murphey, 1992).

Through an in-depth analysis of *Perfect*, this study attempts to show that grammatical patterns not only shape meaning, but also create emotional expression and stylistic identity. This approach confirms that even in the simple language of a pop song, syntax remains the primary instrument in producing artistic beauty.

METHOD

This study employed a descriptive qualitative approach because it aimed to describe and interpret linguistic phenomena without using numerical data. As explained by Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña (2014), qualitative research focuses on understanding meaning in context. Therefore, this approach was chosen to explore how syntactic and stylistic elements interact in the lyrics of Ed Sheeran's *Perfect*.

The data in this study comes from Ed Sheeran's song *Perfect*, released in 2017 on the album ÷ (Divide). The official lyrics were taken from Ed Sheeran's official website and cross-checked with trusted lyric databases such as Genius to ensure their accuracy. This song was

chosen because of its linguistic richness and expressive grammatical structure, making it suitable for syntactic and stylistic analysis. In this study, the lyrics are treated as authentic texts that contain grammatical and stylistic elements that contribute to meaning and emotional resonance.

The data were collected by downloading and transcribing the lyrics, then segmenting each line into phrases, clauses, and sentences as the units of analysis. Each syntactic element was identified and classified using the grammatical framework of phrase structure rules (Chomsky, 2015) and the sentence classification system proposed by Nelson & Greenbaum (2016). The analysis included identifying the types of phrases—noun phrases (NP), verb phrases (VP), prepositional phrases (PP), adjective phrases (AdjP), and adverb phrases (AdvP)—as well as classifying sentences into simple, compound, and complex types. Clause relations were also examined to determine how meaning and rhythm were constructed across the lyrics.

After the syntactic structure has been identified, stylistic analysis is conducted to interpret how grammatical patterns contribute to the expressive and aesthetic quality of the song. This stylistic study focuses on linguistic devices such as ellipsis, repetition, and parallelism, referring to the theoretical framework of Simpson (2004)and Leech & Short (2013). These devices are analyzed to reveal how grammar interacts with emotion and tone, and reinforces stylistic effects on the overall song.

By combining syntactic and stylistic approaches, this analysis follows Carter (2004) view that grammar and style are inseparable in creative language use. Through a study of the lyrics of *Perfect* from a structural and stylistic perspective, this study attempts to show that syntactic choices not only create grammatical organization, but also build emotional expression and artistic impact.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Sentence Types and Their Stylistic Function

The analysis of sentence types in Ed Sheeran's *Perfect* (2017) reveals how grammatical choices contribute to the narrative coherence and emotional depth of the song. Consistent with the findings of Al Bahy & Darmawan (2025), who observed that declarative sentences dominate modern song lyrics due to their role in conveying clarity and sincerity, *Perfect* exhibits similar syntactic tendencies. The song primarily uses declarative sentences, while imperative and interrogative constructions appear less frequently but have notable stylistic and affective significance.

Declarative sentences form the structural and emotional basis of the *Perfect*. These sentences are used to express certainty, affection, and self-reflection elements that form the core of the song's romantic narrative. For instance, lines such as *"I found a love for me"* and *"I have faith in what I see"* exemplify the speaker's confidence and emotional steadfastness. Declarative structures, as emphasized by Rizkiyah, Arifin, & Sudirman (2023), are very important in building the narrative flow and emotional sincerity of song lyrics because they mimic the storytelling patterns in spoken language. In *Perfect*, the repetition of declarative

forms creates rhythmic balance and reinforces the sincerity of the narrator's emotions. This pattern is in line with Nelson & Greenbaum (2016) view that the choice of sentence type directly influences communicative intent and listener perception.

Imperative sentences, although not dominant, provide meaningful stylistic variation and convey a sense of intimacy. The line *"Follow my lead"* serves as a gentle invitation, not a firm command. Nelson & Greenbaum (2016) explain that imperative sentences in English vary in strength, from direct instructions to subtle suggestions depending on tone and context. In this case, the imperative sentences in Sheeran's song convey warmth and togetherness, not authority. Supporting this, Danial, Zafira, Tarihoran, & Dewi (2025) found that imperative sentences in Sia's song *Everyday* Is are often used to convey emotional invitations rather than commands, indicating that imperative sentences in song lyrics generally serve to express empathy and closeness, not power. Therefore, the use of the imperative form in *Perfect* reflects emotional leadership and gentleness, enriching the interpersonal relationship between the speaker and the listener.

Interrogative sentences, although rarely used, provide stylistic contrast and reflective depth. Even rhetorical questions or interrogative fragments can momentarily disrupt the declarative rhythm of a song to introduce contemplation or uncertainty. Leech & Short (2013) state that interrogative sentences in literary discourse often function expressively rather than informatively, revealing inner conflict or doubt. In *Perfect*, such nuances of questioning though subtle depict emotional vulnerability and tension in love, thereby balancing the confident statements that dominate the other sections.

The interplay among these three types of sentences reflects what Simpson (2004) refers to as *foregrounded syntax*, a condition in which grammatical variation creates stylistic emphasis. In *Perfect*, declarative sentences express sincerity and devotion, imperative sentences build emotional closeness, and interrogative sentences invite reflection. Together, they form what Wales (2014) terms *syntactic rhythm*, a pattern of grammatical form alternation that reflects emotional development. Through this variation, syntax functions not only as a linguistic structure, but also as a tool for emotional expression and artistic rhythm.

From a broader linguistic perspective, this syntactic balance shows how grammatical choices go beyond structural function to create artistic effects. Chomsky (2015) phrase structure theory states that sentence formation reflects hierarchical organization, but in creative discourse such as song lyrics, that hierarchy takes on additional aesthetic and emotional value. The song *Perfect* illustrates what Carter (2004) calls *the grammar of creativity*, in which everyday syntactic constructions achieve poetic resonance through rhythm, repetition, and variation. The dominance of declarative sentences affirms stability and sincerity, while the insertion of imperative and interrogative forms adds nuance, intimacy, and reflection.

Ultimately, the syntactic composition of *Perfect* proves that grammatical simplicity does not imply stylistic limitations. On the contrary, deliberate manipulation of sentence structure results in expressive richness and emotional authenticity. This supports the linguistic view that syntax, when applied to creative texts such as song lyrics, functions not only as a linguistic

framework, but also as an artistic design tool. Through the harmony between declarative, imperative, and interrogative forms, Perfect transforms everyday grammar into an instrument of emotional storytelling and stylistic beauty.

Analysis of Phrase Structure

In the song Perfect by Ed Sheeran, various types of phrases appear throughout the lyrics, each serving a specific syntactic and stylistic function. A phrase is a group of words that works together as a single unit within a sentence but does not form a complete clause with both a subject and a predicate(Nelson & Greenbaum, 2016). The most common phrase types found in the lyrics are noun phrases (NP), verb phrases (VP), and prepositional phrases (PP). There are also some adjective and adverb phrases that help build the emotional tone of the lyrics.

The first and most dominant type is the **Noun Phrase (NP)**. A noun phrase consists of a noun as the head, which may be accompanied by determiners, adjectives, or post-modifiers (Rahmawati, Gaol, Hutabarat, & Pandiangan, 2022). For example, in the line *"I found a love for me,"* the phrase *"a love for me"* functions as an NP. It contains the determiner *a*, the head noun *love*, and the prepositional phrase for me that specifies the object of affection. Similarly, in *"Follow my lead,"* the phrase *"my lead"* is an NP where my acts as a determiner modifying the head noun *lead*. These NPs express the people, feelings, and objects that the singer emotionally refers to. Consistent with findings by Alamsyah, Ayendi, & Rumbardi (2024), who analyzed NIKI's *Nicole* album, noun phrases often serve a symbolic role by constructing emotional intimacy and lyrical cohesion. In *Perfect*, the frequent use of simple and emotive noun phrases reinforces the song's romantic narrative.

The second major type is the **Verb Phrase (VP)**. Verb phrases usually contain a main verb and sometimes an object or complement. They serve as the predicate of a sentence, showing what the subject does. As Dachi (2023) notes, verb phrases in song lyrics not only describe actions but also carry emotional weight through tense and aspect choices. For example, *"found a love"* in *"I found a love for me"* is a VP because the main verb *found* takes the NP *a love* as its object. Other examples include *"follow my lead"*, *"look so beautiful"*, and *"dive right in."* These VPs often describe actions and emotions, making the song's storytelling feel alive. The verbs are mostly in the past tense, which reflects the singer's memories and experiences. This observation aligns with (Rahmawati, Gaol, Hutabarat, & Pandiangan, 2022), who emphasize that VP usage in songs often mirrors emotional progress or temporal shifts within the narrative.

Next is the **Prepositional Phrase (PP)**, which usually starts with a preposition followed by a noun phrase. Prepositional phrases give more details about time, place, or situation. For example, *"in the dark"* and *"under the light of a thousand stars"* are PPs. In both examples, the prepositions (*in, under*) are followed by NPs (*the dark, the light of a thousand stars*). According to Alamsyah, Ayendi, & Rumbardi (2024), prepositional phrases play a functional role in expressing relational meaning and creating lyrical imagery. In *Perfect*, these PPs enhance the visualization of romantic scenes, contributing to the song's aesthetic depth.

There are also Adjective Phrases (AdjP) and Adverb Phrases (AdvP), although they appear less frequently. For instance, *"so beautiful"* in *"When I saw you in that dress, looking so beautiful"* is an adjective phrase. It describes the subject's appearance and conveys admiration. Meanwhile, *"right in"* in *"dive right in"* is an adverb phrase that emphasizes how the action is done, directly and confidently. As Rahmawati, Gaol, Hutabarat, & Pandiangan (2022) explain, adjective and adverb phrases in lyrics often serve stylistic functions that evoke sensory experience and emotional immediacy.

Clause Types and Their Stylistic Contribution

In the lyrics of "*Perfect*" by Ed Sheeran, clauses are used to tell a story in a clear and emotional way. A clause is a group of words that contains both a subject and a predicate. Clauses can stand alone as complete ideas or depend on other clauses to form complex sentences. In this song, both independent and dependent clauses appear, and together they create smooth, natural storytelling.

The independent clauses are the main parts of the sentences. They can stand alone and express a full thought. For example, in the line *"I found a love for me,"* the clause has a subject (*I*) and a predicate (*found a love for me*). It can stand by itself and already gives a clear message. Another example is *"We were just kids when we fell in love"*, this independent clause also expresses a complete idea that tells us what happened in the past. These independent clauses help deliver the main points of the song about love, memory, and happiness.

The dependent clauses, on the other hand, cannot stand alone. They need to connect to an independent clause to make sense. For example, in the line *"When you said you looked a mess,"* the clause starts with the subordinating conjunction *when*. Because of that, it depends on another clause to complete the meaning. This dependent clause gives extra information about time, it tells us when something happened. Another example is *"When I saw you in that dress,"* which introduces a situation that explains the feeling expressed later in the sentence.

Some sentences in the song combine both independent and dependent clauses. These are called **complex sentences**. One example is:

"When I saw you in that dress, looking so beautiful, I don't deserve this."

The first part (When I saw you in that dress, looking so beautiful) is a dependent clause because it begins with *when*, while the second part (I don't deserve this) is an independent clause. Together, they make the meaning deeper, showing both the action and the emotion behind it.

There are also cases where two independent clauses appear together, forming compound sentences. For example: *"I found a girl, beautiful and sweet, I never knew you were the someone waiting for me."*

This sentence joins two independent ideas, one about finding a girl, and another about realizing she was the someone. The use of commas instead of conjunctions makes the lines flow smoothly like natural speech, which fits the rhythm of the song.

Through these different clause types, Ed Sheeran creates a mix of narration and reflection. Independent clauses deliver strong, direct statements about love, while dependent

clauses add emotional context and background. The frequent use of dependent clauses beginning with *when*, *that*, or *who* makes the lyrics sound more intimate and personal, as if the singer is reliving moments in his memory.

Overall, the song *Perfect* uses clauses not only to build grammatical structure but also to express feelings. The balance between independent and dependent clauses reflects both certainty and vulnerability, the same emotions that define a love story. By combining simple sentence structures with meaningful details, Ed Sheeran manages to turn ordinary grammar into something poetic and heartfelt.

This observation aligns with previous syntactic analyses by Dachi (2023) and Rahmawati, Gaol, Hutabarat, & Pandiangan (2022), who found that variation in clause structures enhances the narrative flow and emotional quality of song lyrics. Alamsyah, Ayendi, & Rumbardi (2024) also emphasized that syntactic organization, particularly the use of dependent clauses plays a vital role in linking linguistic form with expressive function in modern English songs. These findings suggest that the use of clauses in *Perfect* reflects not only grammatical accuracy but also stylistic artistry in the construction of meaning.

Sentence Structures Analysis

This section analyzes the syntactic structures found in Ed Sheeran's *Perfect*, focusing on how sentence forms contribute to the lyrical and emotional texture of the song. The analysis reveals that Sheeran employs a mixture of simple, compound, and complex sentences to convey a gradual emotional progression from innocence and nostalgia to romantic intimacy and self-reflection. Each sentence type serves a particular expressive purpose, combining grammatical simplicity with stylistic precision.

According to Leech & Short (2013) and Nelson & Greenbaum (2016) in A Comprehensive Grammar of the English Language, simple, compound, and complex sentence types are foundational units for expressing different degrees of causal, temporal, and coordinative relations between clauses. This matches with the usage in *Perfect* where simple sentences evoke innocence, compounds build sensory coordination, and complex sentences carry reflection.

The first example, *"We were just kids when we fell in love,"* exemplifies a simple sentence. It consists of a single independent clause with the structure Subject + Predicate + Complement. Despite its grammatical simplicity, the line carries emotional depth. The past tense verb "*were*" and the adverb "*just*" evoke a sense of tender recollection, situating the speaker's love story in the past while maintaining emotional immediacy. The simplicity mirrors the purity of youthful love, suggesting that complex emotions can be expressed through grammatically simple forms. This stylistic choice reflects one of Sheeran's signature traits: balancing linguistic accessibility with emotive resonance.

In contrast, *"Baby, I'm dancing in the dark, with you between my arms, barefoot on the grass, listening to our favorite song"* represents a compound structure with multiple coordinated elements. While it may appear as a single flowing line, the syntax contains several phrases connected through commas that function *paratactically*, giving a sense of rhythm and continuity. The coordination of verb phrases ("*dancing*," "*listening*") and prepositional phrases

("in the dark," "on the grass") reflects the fluid movement of the scene. Each clause-like segment adds imagery and sensory detail, simulating the rhythm of a dance. The repetition of "with you" and the sequential listing create a cumulative effect, intensifying the intimacy between the speaker and the addressee. Thus, the compound sentence structure contributes not only to syntactic variety but also to the song's narrative pacing.

The third example, *"When I saw you in that dress, looking so beautiful, I don't deserve this,"* illustrates a complex sentence, consisting of a dependent clause introduced by "*when*" and an independent clause that follows. The dependent clause situates the emotional moment in time, creating a cause-and-effect relationship between perception *("I saw you")* and emotional response *("I don't deserve this")*. The use of the participial phrase *"looking so beautiful"* adds a descriptive dimension that enhances the visual and emotional intensity. The juxtaposition between admiration and humility *"looking so beautiful"* versus *"I don't deserve this"* reveals the speaker's vulnerability. The structure mirrors this emotional duality: the subordinate clause carries admiration, while the main clause delivers self-effacement. This complexity of form mirrors the inner complexity of the narrator's emotions.

Through these varied structures, Sheeran maintains syntactic fluidity that parallels the thematic movement of the song. Simple sentences convey clarity and innocence, compound sentences evoke rhythm and togetherness, and complex sentences reveal reflection and depth. The alternation among these forms also prevents monotony, ensuring that the listener's attention remains engaged throughout the narrative progression. The flow from simple to complex structures across the song can be seen as a metaphorical journey, from the uncomplicated purity of early love to the mature acknowledgment of emotional vulnerability.

Moreover, the syntactic structures contribute to the musicality of meaning. Sheeran's syntax aligns closely with the melody and phrasing, allowing natural pauses to coincide with emotional beats. The frequent use of coordinated and appositive elements generates a lyrical rhythm that resembles spoken intimacy rather than formal prose. This alignment between grammar and melody is one of the defining features of Sheeran's lyrical craft, demonstrating how sentence form can shape emotional tone.

The analysis of sentence structures in *Perfect* reveals that Sheeran's syntactic choices are not arbitrary but strategically designed to enhance narrative and emotional coherence. The simplicity of early lines establishes emotional accessibility, the compound forms enrich sensory engagement, and the complex sentences deepen introspection. Through this syntactic progression, Sheeran constructs a linguistic architecture that mirrors the emotional architecture of love itself simple at its beginning, layered in its development, and profound in its realization.

Stylistic Analysis of Syntactic Features

This section explores the stylistic dimension of syntax in Ed Sheeran's *Perfect*, focusing on how grammatical and structural elements contribute to tone, intimacy, and aesthetic effect. The song's stylistic character is rooted not in ornate vocabulary, but in its careful manipulation

of syntax to evoke emotion. Repetition, ellipsis, parallelism, and imagery through syntax are central to this style, producing a sense of rhythm, familiarity, and romantic visualization.

The first notable device is **repetition**, particularly in the recurring address "*Baby…*". The repeated vocative serves as both a syntactic and emotional anchor, establishing direct intimacy between the speaker and the addressee. Each recurrence reinforces affection, creating an echo of tenderness that pervades the song. Repetition here functions beyond linguistic redundancy, it mimics the rhythm of endearment in spoken language, strengthening the emotional connection. The repeated term "*baby*" transforms the listener's perception of the text from narrative to dialogue, blurring the line between storytelling and direct confession. In stylistic terms, this repetition generates cohesion and musical continuity, mirroring the cyclical nature of romantic emotion.

Ellipsis operates as another distinctive stylistic feature, as seen in the fragment "*Dancing in the dark…*" where the subject "*I am*" is omitted. The omission does not hinder comprehension; rather, it enhances fluency and emotional immediacy. Ellipsis compresses the syntax, creating a lyrical economy that aligns with musical rhythm. The incomplete clause invites the listener's participation in completing the meaning, thus generating intimacy. It also mirrors the unspoken communication often found between lovers, what is left unsaid becomes more powerful than what is stated. Ellipsis, therefore, reflects both syntactic minimalism and emotional resonance, demonstrating how linguistic absence can signify presence.

The third stylistic aspect is **parallelism**, evident in the repeated syntactic patterning across lines, such as *"barefoot on the grass, listening to our favourite song"*. The alignment of similar grammatical structures creates a musical symmetry, producing balance and harmony. Parallelism in *Perfect* does not merely repeat form; it builds cumulative imagery. Each phrase layers sensory experiences, touch, sound, movement, inviting the listener into a synesthetic space where grammar and sensation converge. The repetition of structural rhythm mirrors the song's melodic rhythm, exemplifying how syntax can operate as a form of musical composition.

Another significant stylistic technique is *imagery through syntax*, particularly in the line *"Under the light of a thousand stars"*. The prepositional phrase introduces spatial imagery that situates the couple in a romantic, almost cinematic scene. The syntax emphasizes location and atmosphere, functioning as a linguistic frame for emotion. The use of "*under*" as a preposition of position suggests protection and unity, while "*a thousand stars*" extends the image toward infinity. The syntactic arrangement allows the image to unfold rhythmically, supporting both visual and emotional appeal. This line demonstrates how grammatical structure can guide imagery, transforming description into experience.

Collectively, these stylistic devices reveal that Sheeran's syntax functions as an expressive tool that transcends grammatical correctness. His use of repetition and parallelism creates lyrical rhythm, while ellipsis and imagery foster intimacy and visualization. Syntax becomes inseparable from sound and feeling, reinforcing the song's romantic identity. Rather than relying on complex lexis, Sheeran achieves stylistic richness through structural simplicity,

a hallmark of effective song writing. His manipulation of syntax mirrors the natural flow of human thought and speech, allowing emotion to surface organically through form.

From a broader stylistic perspective, the interplay between syntax and meaning in *Perfect* aligns with what Halliday & Matthiessen (2004) calls *the interpersonal function of language*, where structure mediates relationships and attitudes. The song's syntactic patterns construct a discourse of tenderness and vulnerability, situating the speaker as emotionally exposed yet sincere. Moreover, the stylistic repetition across verses creates a sense of unity and closure, enhancing memorability and emotional persistence in the listener's mind.

Similar findings are observed in Al Bahy & Darmawan (2025) in their syntactic analysis of "*To The Bone*" and "*Lathi*", where simple declarative sentences are most frequent in conveying clarity and emotional accessibility in lyrical content.

The stylistic analysis of syntax in Perfect demonstrates that Sheeran's artistry lies in the fusion of grammatical form and emotional content. Through repetition, ellipsis, parallelism, and imagery, syntax becomes a vehicle for intimacy and beauty. These features not only shape the song's linguistic identity but also exemplify how simplicity in syntax can yield profound stylistic sophistication. In *Perfect*, structure and style intertwine seamlessly, turning everyday language into poetic expression that resonates deeply with universal experiences of love.

Comparative Discussion and Theoretical Implications

The syntactic analysis of *Perfect* highlights several key features, namely the dominance of simple declarative sentences, emotionally charged noun phrases, prepositional phrases that describe images, and the use of subordinate clauses and ellipsis to convey intimacy. These findings are consistent with the patterns found in previous studies of popular song lyrics. In general, these studies show that syntactic simplicity (*simple declaratives, clear NP/VP structures*) serves as an effective means of expressing emotions directly, while **syntactic variation** and **stylistic devices** such as *ellipsis*, *parataxis*, and *repetition* reinforce the affective impact. Empirical evidence from these various studies supports the argument that syntax is not merely a container for sentence structure, but also the **stylistic resource** that materializes emotional meaning.

Several previous studies indicate similar results despite using different objects. For example, Daulay, Dalimunte, & Ningrum (2021) analyzed Josh Groban's *song You Raise Me Up* and found three dominant phrase types (*noun*, *verb*, and *adverbial phrases*) as well as the dominance of *simple and compound sentences* that form an emotional flow. The emphasis on noun phrases shows how personified references (such as *a love, my girl*) are often placed in simple structures to facilitate emotional connection with the listener. This pattern is also found in *Perfect*, where repeated noun phrases reinforce affective expression.

A similar distribution between independent and dependent clauses was also found by Rizkiyah, Arifin, & Sudirman (2023), who reported that subordinate clauses introduced by conjunctions such as *when*, *that*, and *who* function as temporal frames or narrative contexts. In *Perfect*, subordinate clauses provide a temporal context (*When I saw you...*) that makes the main

clause an emotional response, so that the clause structure contributes directly to the affective dynamics of the song.

Syntactic stylistic devices including ellipsis, parataxis, and repetition also consistently appear as shapers of tone, rhythm, and intimacy. A study conducted by Ismahani, Anisah, Nuraisyah, & Havid (2024) shows that ellipsis or fragmentary constructions reinforce the impression of natural conversation, making listeners feel involved. Repeated *paratactic listings*, such as a series of prepositional phrases, create cumulative imagery that enriches the romantic atmosphere, as seen in *Perfect*.

Cross-study comparisons further reveal stylistic variation across genres and artists. Some songs foreground syntactic deviation, fragmentation or non-standard word order, as a stylistic signature (common in indie or experimental works), whereas mainstream pop ballads like *Perfect* favor syntactic transparency for emotional accessibility. Corpus analyses of popular albums suggest a continuum of syntactic styles ranging from clarity-oriented (emphasizing simple declaratives and straightforward NP constructions) to deviation-oriented (favoring ellipsis and fragmentation). A song's position along this spectrum often corresponds to its rhetorical purpose and target audience. *Perfect* exemplifies a clarity-oriented profile consistent with its universal romantic discourse.

From a stylistic theory perspective, these empirical findings reinforce Halliday & Matthiessen (2004) concept of the interpersonal metafunction, which posits that syntactic choices, particularly mood and clause relations, mediate the speaker–listener relationship. In lyrical contexts, frequent *declarative choices* project sincerity and confidence, while *subordination* and *ellipsis* introduce shades of humility, hesitation, and intimacy (Simpson, 2004). Studies employing structural and stylistic frameworks have similarly shown that grammatical form interacts dynamically with narrative strategy. For example, subordinate frames allow for reflective, emotionally layered storytelling.

From a stylistic theory perspective, these findings support Halliday & Matthiessen (2004) concept of interpersonal metafunction, which explains that syntactic choices, particularly mood and inter-clause relationships shape the relationship between speaker and listener. In the context of songs, declarative sentences reflect sincerity and conviction, while *subordination* and *ellipsis* add nuances of humility and intimacy (Simpson, 2004).

Further evidence also comes from *computational stylistic studies*, which found a correlation between syntactic features (such as the frequency of subordination and clause length) and emotion scores (valence and arousal) (Hoa & Giang, 2016). The syntactic patterns in the *Perfect* tense correspond to a profile that radiates warm and nostalgic emotions, proving that grammar can encode emotional tone.

These comparative results confirm that syntax plays a dual role as a structure and style that shapes both meaning and emotion. Repetition in declarative sentences provides emotional stability, while variation through subordination and ellipsis creates depth and dynamism. In *Perfect*, grammatical clarity is combined with stylistic subtlety to produce a powerful and lasting emotional effect.

CONLUSION

The syntactic analysis of Ed Sheeran's *Perfect* reveals that grammar operates as both a structural and stylistic medium of expression. The song primarily employs declarative sentences to express confidence and affection, while imperative and interrogative sentences introduce variation and intimacy. Noun, verb, and prepositional phrases serve as key elements that construct imagery and emotional context. Independent and dependent clauses together build narrative flow, illustrating how grammatical structure reflects emotional depth. Stylistic features such as repetition, ellipsis, and parallelism further enhance rhythm, cohesion, and intimacy.

Perfect demonstrates that syntactic simplicity can yield stylistic sophistication. The interplay between form and emotion shows that grammar in song lyrics is not mechanical but expressive, shaping the listener's perception through linguistic rhythm and structure.

Future research should expand this syntactic-stylistic framework to other musical genres or multilingual lyrics to compare how grammatical variation interacts with cultural and emotional expression. Additionally, the findings may be integrated into English language teaching, encouraging students to analyze authentic texts such as songs to develop awareness of sentence structures, phrase patterns, and stylistic devices in real communication contexts.

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