

## **Functional Syntactic Analysis of Nominal Phrases in Song Lyrics of NIKI's Nicole Album**

Kamiliya Zahra Alamsyah<sup>1)</sup>, Ayendi<sup>2)</sup>, Rumbardi<sup>3)</sup>

<sup>1)</sup>University of Andalas, <sup>2)</sup>University of Andalas, <sup>3)</sup>University of Andalas

Corresponding Author, email [ayendisasingunand@gmail.com](mailto:ayendisasingunand@gmail.com)

Received: October 20, 2024, Revised: November 1, 2024, Accepted: November 5, 2024

### **Abstract**

Functional syntax realizes the systems of language and the functional role of the unit from the structure based on the situational context of the text. This study aimed to identify the typical systems of functional role elements of nominal phrases realized in the twelve songs from Nicole's album by NIKI and interpret the potential meaning from the dominant pattern. The analysis was done by using the simple linear method with a descriptive explanation. The study showed there are 173 nominal phrases with three classifications. First, the functional structure with typical types; 1) determiner – headword structure with 86 data, 2) determiner – modifier – headword structure with 23 data, and 3) determiner – headword – qualifier structure with 22 data. Second, the systems of the functional element of the nominal phrase filled by the grammatical class category with typical systems; 1) article as determiner with 73 data, 2) possessive pronoun as determiner with 52 data, and 3) prepositional phrase as qualifier with 30 data. Last, the system of functional element structure filled by its grammatical class category with typical systems; 1) article–headword structure with 35 data, 2) possessive pronoun–headword structure with 32 data, and 3) article–headword–prepositional phrase structure with 11 data. This classification shows the simplicity of patterns and word choices in song lyrics from Nicole's album by NIKI to make the listeners to understand and recall easily the themes and the song lyrics.

**Keywords:** *functional syntactic analysis, nominal phrase, functional element structure, register*

### **1. Introduction**

Functional grammar or it is named functional syntax by Fawcett (2010) handles how sentences are structured in terms of smaller functional elements (Morley, 2000). Functional syntax is the theory based on Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG). This theory is concerned with the systems related to the networks of choices available to the speaker (Banks 2019). SFG thus can be used to analyse text sentences to reveal the common systemic selections and make interpretations of selections from different texts (Matthiessen and Teruya 2024).

Halliday (2004) argues that it is natural that the systems of sound and of writing through which these meanings are expressed should reflect the structural arrangement of the grammar. Furthermore, he argues that grammar, in the field of functional approach, is concerned not only about the patterns or structure of wording but also about the systems or meanings and contexts. So, in SFG, there are both forms and functions because there are no functions without forms, and they are influenced by contexts.

To strengthen its arguments, Fawcett (2010) stated that grammar now includes a level of meaning system or choice as well as the level of form. Eggins (2004) claims that language is functional and its function is to make meaning. Then, meanings in a language are influenced by the situational context (register) that consists of field, tenor, and mode in which they are exchanged.

A field engaged with what is the subject of a text about. It covers the specification of the general topic area and the details of the topic regarding what is going on or what is being spoken or written about. The tenor is concerned with the relationship of the participant. In detail, it focuses on the role and

social status of the participants in the speech event and even the relationship between their roles. Lastly, Mode is related to the medium that is used for the text to be expressed (Morley, 2004).

When we return to functional syntax, it indicates a functional element of the syntactic role that a unit is playing in lexicogrammatical structure. The units are sorted from the bigger units to the smaller units, which are clause complex, clause, phrase, and word. A phrase as one unit, also consists of smaller units divided based on the class of words that is used and functions as the headword. One of the main classes is nominal phrases.

The writers assume one of the kinds of text where nominal phrases are often styled to convey messages is in song lyrics. Song lyrics refer to words that are delivered along with music in a song. In song lyrics, the songwriter tends to share their emotions in sentences. The nicer and more beautiful sentences created and sung, the more listeners will engage with the song. That is why song lyrics play a big role in songs. Every songwriter has their uniqueness in writing song lyrics. Just like a poet or a novel writer writes, there is 'something' that differentiates lyrics from one to another.

Nicole Zefanya widely known as NIKI is a singer-songwriter from Indonesia. She was born on January 24th, 1999, raised in Jakarta and now she is currently based in the United States. She started to post covers and originals of her singing videos on YouTube and gained popularity after winning a contest as the opening act of Taylor Swift's The Red Tour at fifteen years old (Havens, 2022). In 2018, she signed to an Asian-American label called 88rising. Then, she started to release EPs and several singles and in 2020 her first album, MOONCHILD, was released. At the age of 20, she was included on Forbes 30 under 30 because of her success as one of the first Indonesian solo artists to perform at the Coachella music festival (Forbes, 2020). This became a big achievement of NIKI as an Indonesian singer since Coachella is one of the most critically acclaimed music festivals in the world based on Golden Voice, a California concert and music festival promoter. She also contributed four songs to the soundtrack of Shang-Chi and the Legend of the Ten Rings from Marvel Studios which was released on September 3rd, 2021, and became a famous movie that gained \$200 million domestic box office barrier and became the first film on 2021 that break it (Movio, 2021). In 2022, she was nominated at the MTV Europe Music Awards, the biggest music awards in Europe, as Best Asia Act and became the only representative of Indonesia that year (Fadillah, 2022).

Nicole is her sophomore full-length album which was released on August 12th, 2022. It contains twelve songs, half of the songs in this album are written by her which has been posted on her YouTube around her teenage age, and half of them are the result of her growing process. Since it was released, the music video of her song "*High School in Jakarta*" has gained more than 30 million views on YouTube and become her second most viewed music video, after "*Everytime Summertime*" with 45 million views. On the other streaming application, Spotify, one of her songs from this album, "*Take A Chance with Me*", has gained more than 150 million streams. As appeared on Spotify, NIKI has around 11 million monthly listeners with five songs from this album included in her top 10 popular songs on Spotify. This number is surprising the other Indonesian woman singer under the same label as her, Stephanie Poetri with only around one million monthly listeners. Thus, Nicole by NIKI has shown a big popularity since it was released. This album explores heartache since it was written by a teenager NIKI. This becomes the reason why this album gained a lot of attention from her listeners. As it was written by NIKI herself, she has the uniqueness of conveying her lyrics with a story-telling method, which has become one of her marks as a solo singer and songwriter.

Before the writers come to the research gap and the purposes of conducting this research, some research studies need to be reviewed. The writers seem there are still very few researches using functional syntax approach. First, Hussein (2011) did a functional analysis of the Nominal Group Structures in "*There Was a Saviour*". This research aims to describe a particular linguistic feature that

occurs in a particular literary text which will help the reader to understand and appreciate the literary significance of the text depending on its linguistic features. Hussein believes that the nominal group structure from the data contributes to the general meaning that the poet tries to convey. It uses the theory of the nominal group from Thompson where the basic parts of the functional structure of the nominal group are the premodifier, head, and postmodifier. Furthermore, the nominal group structure is analyzed into five elements which are head, deictic, numerative, epithet, and qualifier. It resulted that the poem relies on qualifiers and epithets to increase the structural complexity of the nominal groups in the poems.

The next Cahyani (2020) used the theory of functional Syntax from David G. Morley in line with its aim to identify the function of English active sentence elements and describe the structure of English's simple sentences. The result shows that a simple sentence can have a syntactic function structure of *S-P-O*, *S-P-C*, or *S-P-A* *CIRC* and its functional role is composed of semantic roles in the form of participant-process/entity/thing; participant-process-quality or participant-process-feature/quality.

The third was Daulay, et al., in 2021 who used tree diagram theory from Bornstein with the aim of the research being to find the types of phrases and the sentence patterns that are used in Josh Groban's song lyrics entitled "*You Raised Me Up*". With the method of qualitative analysis, they found that there are three types of phrases with three kinds of sentence patterns from the data.

The next research was done by Fandana & Rohiyatussakinah in 2023. The writers use the theory from David G. Morley to analyze the noun phrases and verb phrases of the song lyrics. The research has found that there are sixteen noun phrases and verb phrases in the song lyrics, with three patterns of noun phrases and five patterns of verb phrases.

The last research is by Arsad, et al., in 2022. This research analyzes the forms and functions of noun phrases in The English Translation of Surah Al-Mulk the objectives of the research are to classify the forms of noun phrases and to explain the functions of noun phrases in the English translation of Surah Al-Mulk. The result of this research shows that there are nine forms of noun phrases from 133 data. The data was classified and explained based on Eastwood's theory (1994).

As the five previous studies are broken down and after doing a comparison between them, the writers find out that functional syntactic analysis has been done with the different kinds of analysis and theories. However, none of the previous studies analysed NIKI's Nicole album with the theory of functional syntax from David G. Morley. For that reason, the writers tried to analyse the systemic patterns of Nominal phrases in NIKI's Nicole album with the theory of functional syntax and made the interpretation of the highest selections to differentiate it from other texts

## 2. Methods

The data used for this research is NIKI's second album, Nicole. It was released in 2022 and contains twelve songs, and all of the songs will be analyzed in this research. The twelve songs are "*Before*", "*High School in Jakarta*", "*Backburner*", "*Keeping Tabs*", "*The Apartment We Won't Share*", "*Facebook Friends*", "*Anaheim*", "*Milk Teeth*", "*Autumn*", "*Ocean and Engines*", "*On The Drive Home*", and "*Take A Chance with Me*". There are 3.726 words from the twelve songs that have been analyzed. The research focuses on finding and analyzing the nominal phrases found in the lyrics of the songs. The analysis was qualitative by means of manual.

The writers conducted the research by performing principal components analysis and observation. Content analysis was used as a powerful research tool to determine the content of a message or text (Wilkinson & Birmingham, 2003). Observation was also done to fully understand the song lyrics as the data. The data for this research was collected from Genius.com, a website that serves as an online music

encyclopedia. As a digital media company, Genius is a lyrics database and editorial publisher. For the procedures of the research, after reading the lyrics of the songs, the writers marked every lyric that contains a nominal phrase and analysed them manually using simple linear marking based on Morley (2000). The writers were also the instruments of this research since they conducted the analysis and research by themselves. The data, twelve songs from the Nicole album that had been analysed were presented using the descriptive method

#### 4. Results and Discussion

This section contains the results and discussion of this research regarding the functional syntax of nominal phrases in the lyrics of the twelve songs from Nicole's album by NIKI. From twelve songs, within 3.726 words of the lyrics, the study examines the 173 identified nominal phrases. The results of this research were:

1. There are 12 types of functional elements structure of nominal phrases in the 12 songs of Nicole's album,

Table 1. Types of nominal phrases based on the functional element structure

No	Functional Element Structure	Total Nominal Phrases
1	determiner - determiner - headword (d - d - h)	11
2	modifier - headword (m - h)	6
3	determiner - headword (d - h)	72
4	determiner - headword - qualifier (d - h - q)	25
5	headword - qualifier (h - q)	8
6	determiner - modifier - headword (d - m - h)	23
7	modifier - headword - qualifier (m - h - q)	6
8	determiner - headword (d - h)	9
9	determiner - modifier - modifier - headword (d - m - m - h)	7
10	determiner - modifier - headword - qualifier (d - m - h - q)	2
11	determiner - determiner - headword - qualifier (d - d - h - q)	2
12	determiner - determiner - modifier - headword (d - d - m - h)	2

This table shows the dominant functional element structure of the nominal phrase used in Nicole's album's song lyrics is the determiner–headword (d – h) structure, with a total of 72 data.

2. Based on its grammatical class categories, there are 6 systems of determiners. It is also founded on three systems of modifiers and 4 systems of qualifiers.

Table 2. The systems of the functional element of the nominal phrase are filled by the grammatical class category

Type	No	Functional Element of Nominal Phrase Filled by Grammatical Class Category	Total Nominal Phrases
Determiner	1	Numeral as Determiner	15
	2	Article as Determiner	88
	3	Quantifier as Determiner	9
	4	Possessive as Determiner	51
	5	Demonstrative as Determiner	11
	6	General phrase as Determiner	2
Modifier	1	Noun as Modifier	12
	2	Adjective as Modifier	33
	3	Adverb as Modifier	3
Qualifier	1	Prepositional phrase as Qualifier	28
	2	Adverb as Qualifier	6
	3	Rel. Sub. Clause as Qualifier	5
	4	Exclamation as Qualifier	2

These grammatical class categories function on different elements of nominal phrases. The article and possessive pronoun functioned as the determiners, with a total of 88 and 51 data, respectively, and the adjective functioned as the modifier, with a total of 33 data.

The last subsequent of this research involves classifying nominal phrases based on the system of functional element structure filled by its grammatical class category. The lyrics of twelve songs on Nicole album reveal 38 types of functional phrase structures based on it.

Table 3. The system of functional element structure is filled by its grammatical class category

No	Functional Element Structure Filled by Its Grammatical Class Category	total nominal phrases
1	num – num – noun	3
2	noun – noun	4
3	art – noun	35
4	art – noun – prepositional phrase	10
5	quant – poss – noun	2
6	noun – prepositional phrase	7
7	art – adj – noun	10
8	art – noun – adj	1
9	art – quant – noun	1
10	adj – noun – prepositional phrase	7
11	quant – noun	2
12	poss – noun	32
13	art – noun – noun	3
14	adj – noun	2
15	art – noun – adv	1
16	art – noun – noun – noun	2
17	noun – adv	1
18	poss – adj – noun	8
19	poss – noun – rel. sub. clause	1
20	num – noun – adv	3
21	num – noun – prepo. Phrase	1
22	poss – adj – noun – prepo. phrase	1
23	art – noun – rel. sub. clause	4
24	quant – noun	2
25	demons – noun	8
26	art – num – noun – exc	2
27	quant – poss – noun – noun	2
28	poss – noun – prepo. phrase	1
29	poss – adv – adj – noun	1
30	demons – noun – prepo	1
31	poss – noun – adv	1
32	num – noun	2
33	art – num – noun	3
34	poss – gen. phrase – noun	2
35	demons – adv – adj – noun	2
36	num – adj – noun	1
37	art – adj – adj – noun	2
38	poss – noun – noun	1
39	art – adj – noun – prepositional phrase	1

With the several systems of functional element structure filled by its grammatical class category, it resulted that the most dominant system of functional element structure used in the song lyrics from Nicole album is 1) article – noun (*art – noun*) structure with a total of 35 data, 2) possessive pronoun – noun (*poss – noun*) structure with a total of 32 data, and 3) article – noun – prepositional phrase (*art – noun – prepositional phrase*) with a total of 10 data.

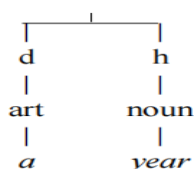
The representative from the dominant functional element structures is explained below. Below is the analysis of the nominal phrases found in Nicole album based on its functional element structure.

*determiner – headword (d – h)*

Determiner – headword is the most dominant functional element structure among the 12 types. This is a nominal phrase's simplest functional element structure since it only consists of a determiner and a headword.

Datum 3 (Track 1 – Before)

“Had a year to grow into the girl you always wanted”



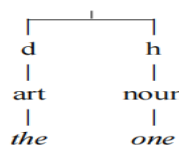
Coming from the first track of this album, entitled Before, this lyric contains the nominal phrase “a year”. The word “a” stands as the determiner since it describes “year” and is positioned before the headword meanwhile the word “year” is the headword because it is a noun and is described or referred to by the word “year”.

In this lyric, the speaker said that it takes a year for them to become the person their partner wants. Thus, the field context of this lyric is a self-change to reach someone's expectation. The tenor context of this lyric is an intimate relationship between the speaker and their partner. This is indicated by how the speaker tries to tell their effort to their partner. The mode context is a written text to be sung type.

The typical system of the functional elements of the nominal phrase based on the grammatical class category that has been identified are 1) Article as Determiner in 73 total data found, Below is the description analysis:

Datum 42 (Track 3 – Backburner)

“But I’m the one you think to call”



“The one” is a nominal phrase that has the word “one” as the headword. It is considered a headword since “the” is identified as the determiner of the phrase. The field context of this lyric is the significance

of the person being chosen. In this lyric, the speaker blatantly says that they are the ones being considered to be contacted even if their partner does not have feelings for them. The tenor of this

lyric is the personal and intimate relationship between the speaker and their partner-to-be. This lyric mode is a written text with a non-spontaneous language.

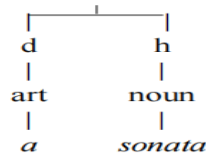
The most typical system of functional element structures found is functional element structure built by the article,

article – noun

This pattern structure is the most dominant used in the Nicole album song lyrics. It is found that the use of the article “*a*” and “*the*” functions as the determiner is the most in the nominal phrases from the Nicole album song lyrics.

Datum 15 (Track 2 – High School in Jakarta)

“We were **a sonata**, thanks to tight-lipped fathers”



The nominal phrase found in this lyric is “*a sonata*”, where the article “*a*” functions as the determiner and the noun “*sonata*” functions as the headword. In this lyric, the speaker shares their emotion through the phrase “*a sonata*” indicating their complex relationship, since a sonata is a harmonious and structured musical composition. The next phrase from this lyric indicates the disappearance of the father’s figure, which affects them in facing their relationship. Thus, the field context of this lyric is a complex relationship caused by father issues. The tenor context of this lyric is an intimate relationship between the speaker and their partner. It is also an informal relationship between the speaker and the listener of the song, where the speaker descriptively explains the condition of their relationship to the listener. The mode context of this lyric is written text with nonspontaneous language.

The result of this research on song lyrics by NIKI is very much different with the poem analysed by Hussein (2011) realising on qualifiers and epithets to increase the structural complexity of the nominal groups in the poems. This research on song lyrics has more patterns compared with the song lyrics studied by Fandana & Rohiyatussakinah (2023) and Arsad, et al., in 2022 on *The English Translation of Surah Al-Mulk*

## 5. Conclusion

Nominal phrases can be differentiated into three classifications. The first classification is the types of nominal phrases based on the functional element structure. The typical types of the first



classification are 1) determiner – headword structure, 2) determiner–headword–qualifier structure, and 3) determiner – modifier – headword structure. The second classification is the system of the functional element of the nominal phrase filled by the grammatical class category. It is found that the typical types of this classification are 1) article as the determiner, 2) possessive pronoun as the determiner, and 3) adjective as the qualifier. The last classification of nominal phrases in Nicole's album is the system of functional element structure filled by its grammatical class category. This classification shows three typical systems of nominal phrases, they are; 1) article–noun structure, 2)

possessive pronoun–noun structure, and 3) article–noun–prepositional phrase structure.

In connection with the register, there will always be context in every language used authentically. The functional syntactic analysis is not only used to analyse the syntactic structures of the nominal phrase in Nicole's album but also is used to understand the register of the song lyrics. To conclude, the systemic patterns of nominal phrases in song lyrics from twelve songs in Nicole's album by NIKI are simple, descriptive and understandable. The listeners feel like listening to a diary with a beautifully written melody. Nicole by NIKI becomes a warm welcome where her listeners feel like they are NIKI's old friends through her relatable high school lyrics.

### Acknowledgements

We, the writers, want to express our much thanks for those not mentioned the names in here to have given the contribution to this research article.

### References

- Arsad, M., Asridayani, & Magria, V. (2022). A Syntactic Analysis of Noun Phrase on The English Translation of Surah Al-Mulk - Tree Diagram. *Krinok: Jurnal Linguistik Budaya*, 6(2).
- Banks, D. (2019). *A Systemic Functional Grammar of English*. Routledge.
- Cahyani, I. (2021). Analysis of Simple Sentence Structure in English: Functional Syntax Approach. *CLLiENT (Culture, Literature, Linguistics, and English Teaching)*, 2(02), 117–127. <https://doi.org/10.32699/cllient.v2i02.1956>
- Daulay, S. H., Dalimunte, M., & Ningrum, D. W. (2021). A Syntactical Analysis of Phrases Used in J osh Groban Song Lyrics. *CaLLs72 (Journal of Culture, Arts, Literature, and Linguistics)*, 7(2), 161. <https://doi.org/10.30872/calls.v7i2.6235>
- Eggins, S. (2004). *An introduction to systemic functional linguistics*. Bloomsbury.
- Fadillah, R. (2022, October 22). *NIKI Masuk Nominasi di MTV Europe Music Awards 2022*. [www.cosmopolitan.co.id](http://www.cosmopolitan.co.id). <https://www.cosmopolitan.co.id/article/read/10/2022/29747/niki-masuk-nominasi-di-mtv-europe-music-awards-2022>
- Fandana, R., & Rohiyatussakinah, I. (2023). An Analysis of The Noun Phrase and The Verb Phrase Produced in “Love Me Like You Do” Song. *Journal of English Language Teaching and Literature (JELTL)*, 6(2).
- Fawcett, R. P. (2010). *A theory of syntax for systemic functional linguistics*. John Benjamins.
- Forbes (Ed.). (2020). *30 Under 30 Asia 2020: Entertainment & Sports*. Forbes. <https://www.forbes.com/30-under-30/2020/asia/entertainment-sports/#a989de4636a8>
- G. D. Morley. (2000). *Syntax in functional grammar : An introduction to lexicogrammar in systemic linguistics*. Continuum.
- G. D. Morley. (2004). *Explorations in functional syntax : a new framework for lexicogrammatical analysis*. Equinox.73
- Genius.com. (n.d.). *Nicole by NIKI*. Genius. Retrieved December 13, 2023, from <https://genius.com/albums/Niki/Nicole>
- Halliday, M. A. K. (2004). *An introduction to functional grammar*. Arnold ; New York.
- Havens, L. (2022, August 5). *88rising's NIKI Is Owning Her Past — And Taking a Cue From Taylor Swift*. Billboard. <https://www.billboard.com/music/features/88rising-niki-new-album>

- nicole-2022-interview-1235122439/  
Hussein, K. (2011). A Functional Analysis of The Nominal Group Structures in “There Was A Saviour.” *Iraqi Academic Scientific Journal*, 1(6).  
<https://doi.org/10.36317/kaj/2010/v1.i6.6107>
- Matthiessen, Christian M.I.M. and Teruya, Kazuhiro. (2024) *Systemic Functional Linguistics: a complete guide*. Taylor & Francis
- Movio. (2021, October 18). *Shang-Chi And The Audience That Made It Legendary*. [Vistagroup.co.nz](https://vistagroup.co.nz).  
<https://vistagroup.co.nz/blog/shang-chiand-the-audience-that-made-it-legendary>
- Wilkinson, D., & Birmingham, P. (2003). *Using research instruments : a guide for researchers*. Routledgefalmer.