



Ellipsis in Michael Jackson's Song Lyrics

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Abstract. This research deals with ellipsis found in Michael Jackson's song lyrics, especially in Thriller album. The objectives of this study are to investigate the types of ellipsis, to determine the dominant types in Michael Jackson's song lyrics and to provide reason the use of ellipsis in the song lyrics. This research was conducted by using descriptive qualitative method. The data was taken from song lyrics in Thriller, Michael Jackson's album. The result found that there are three types of ellipsis found in Michael Jackson's song lyrics and they are: Nominal Ellipsis (50%), Clause Ellipsis (45%) and Verbal Ellipsis (6%). Nominal Ellipsis is the dominant type of ellipsis. The ellipsis types used in song lyrics are in order to make an effective sentence and to avoid misunderstanding of giving information. It also can make the sentence in the lyrics more interesting.

Keywords: Ellipsis · Song lyrics · Michael Jackson

1 Introduction

No one can deny language has a great role in human life. Language is a purely human and instinctive way of communicating ideas, emotions, and desires through a system of spontaneous symbols [1]. Yule [2] pointed out that one of major functions of language is transactional function, whereby humans use their linguistic abilities to communicate knowledge, skills and information.

A song is a kind of universal written language. A song is a piece of music that contains a voice that is played by singing, and usually contains words (lyrics) with an instrument. Many songwriters used different words to express their feelings and thoughts in the lyrics. Singing is one of the means of communication that enables humans to communicate [3]. Song lyrics are a kind of a text.

Text is the unit of language used. Not defined by size, not grammatical units like clauses and sentences [4]. It means a text may of any length. One word may become a text; two words may become a text. So, there is no certain limit to a text. The text provides information to the people who need it. To get information from the text, the reader must know about the relation between one word with another, one sentence with another or even one paragraph to another paragraph. Therefore, in writing the idea, the writer should be concerned with using the right diction to make his/her writing easy to understand and cannot be separated from the use of cohesion, because cohesion is grammatical encoding in language that can be realized from the text.

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Halliday and Matthiessen states that there are several ways cohesion is emerged in English, they are ellipsis, reference, substitution, conjunction and lexical organization [5].

References are considered a significant thing to give a contribution in writing a better long text because it refers to pronoun, demonstrative and comparative [6]. A research on reference in *The Bear* act by Anton Chekhov has been conducted and the findings showed that reference was used in order to create humor [7]. Mubenga [8] has done research on conjunction in *Au Revoir les Enfants* and the findings showed that the translation of the film from French into English some conjunctive cohesive markers are omitted because of time and space constraints. Kafes [9] has shown that repetition of the same lexical items was by far the most frequently used type of lexical cohesion.

Ellipsis is the omission of factors usually required via way of means of the grammar that is the speaker/creator assumes are apparent from the context and consequently want now no longer be raised [10]. In ellipsis, one can omit one or more words, but this does not change the meaning of the text.

This study analyzes the song lyrics of Michael Jackson's *Thriller* album. Michael Jackson was an American singer, songwriter, and dancer who was the most popular entertainer in the world and known as The King of Pop. There is not much research in Michael Jackson's song lyrics, especially from ellipsis point of view. The previous studies of Michael Jackson's song lyrics have been conducted by some researchers, one of them was done by Sri [11] in their research entitled "An Analysis of Figurative Language in Michael Jackson Song Lyric". This paper explained which ellipsis types are used in Michael Jackson's song lyrics, what the most dominant type of ellipsis used in Michael Jackson's song lyrics is, and why the type of ellipsis is used in the song lyrics.

2 Research Method

Research design is the way of collecting and analyzing data to get answer to the research questions. Descriptive qualitative method was applied to analyze the data.

2.1 Sources of Data

In this study, the sources of data were taken from Michael Jackson's song lyrics. There are many albums created by him, but the data is limited to into *Thriller* album as it is Michael Jackson's most popular album. There are 9 songs in this album as the data to be analyzed, they are: (1) *Wanna Be Starting Somebody*, (2) *Baby Be Mine*, (3) *The Girl is Mine*, (4) *Thriller*, (5) *Beat It*, (6) *Billy Jean*, (7) *Human Nature*, (8) *Pretty Young Thin*, and (9) *The Lady in My Life*.

2.2 Data Collection Technique

The data in this research were collected by applying documentary technique. Documentary technique means that the data were found from reading, studying, and analyzing the references related to the subject matter.

2.3 Data Analyzing Technique

The data are analyzed in the following procedures by Sitorus [1]:

1. To identify ellipsis in the lyrics.
2. To categorize ellipsis into their own types.
3. To count the occurrences of each type of ellipsis by using the percentage formula:

$$X = \frac{F}{N} \times 100\%$$

X = the percentage of the obtained items

F = Frequency

N = the total number of the items

4. To find out the most dominant types of ellipsis used in the songs.
5. To find out the reason for using ellipsis in the song lyrics.

2.4 Methodology

The term ellipsis has been applied for centuries to a range of phenomena, from the seemingly missing word (by St Isidore's definition) to the much narrower range of a particular structure [12]. Ellipsis is something left unsaid [13]. It means that nevertheless, something is lacking in building a text that is understood by the reader or listener. In other words, ellipsis has a meaningless meaning [14].

Although ellipsis can save sentence space, authors must ensure that the abbreviated words are grammatically compatible and do not change their meaning. For example:

Bobby: How much Upin bought his car?

Raji: I don't know []. You can ask him []

The later clause can be understood as in:

Raji: I don't know how much Upin bought his car. You can ask him how much he bought the car.

Some elements of the conversation are missing, but the listener still understands the answer. Ellipse is a term used in grammatical analysis to refer to sentences where style emphasis is part of the structure for economic reasons [15].

The ellipsis occurs when a significant structural element is omitted from a sentence or phrase and can only be recovered by referencing the element in the previous text. For example:

Tina is beautiful. Tina is clever.

→ Tina is beautiful and clever.

2.4.1 Types of Ellipsis

Ellipsis is divided into three main contexts, they are nominal ellipsis, verbal ellipsis, and clause ellipsis [5].

2.4.2 Nominal Ellipsis

Nominal ellipsis is the ellipsis that occurs within a noun or noun group with nouns removed [16]. In this case, the nominal group can consist of headers and qualifiers.

2.4.3 Verbal Ellipsis

An elliptical verbal group implies words from a preceding verbal group. The omitted verbal group can be either the one which without a lexical verb or the subject and all the auxiliaries, except the lexical verb [16].

2.4.4 Clause Ellipsis

Clausal ellipsis occurs if either the model element or propositional element is omitted [13].

3 Data Analysis

After analyzing and marking the data, they were classified based on the types of ellipsis in each song. The followings are the examples of how the identification and classification were done.

3.1 Wanna Be Starting Something

The first song lyric to be analyzed is Wanna Be Starting Something. This song contains 6 stanzas. The stanzas that have ellipsis on it are the first to sixth stanza.

I took my baby to the doctor with a fever
but nothing he found []
 By the time this hit the street
 They said she had a breakdown
 Someone's always tryin' to start my baby cryin'.
[] Talkin', [] squealin', [] lyin'
[] Sayin' you just wanna be startin' somethin'

The data above is the first stanza in Wanna Be Starting Something song lyrics. In the second line, a nominal ellipsis is found. The deleted phrase is “in my baby”. It is called nominal ellipsis because it is a nominal group. In the sixth line, there is a clause ellipsis. The clause that has been deleted is “someone's always trying to start my baby talking, someone's always trying to start my baby squealing, someone's always trying to start my baby lying.” The deleted phrases consist of subject and predicate, so it's called clause

ellipsis. In the seventh line, there is clause ellipsis, and the deleted clause is “someone is”. “Someone is” consist of subject and predicate, hence they are called clause ellipsis. After analyzing the first stanza, there are one nominal and four clause ellipses found.

It's too high to get over
[] Too low to get under
 You're stuck in the middle
 And the pain is thunder

The data above is the second stanza. The deleted ellipsis is “it is” which consist of subject and predicate. Hence, it's a clause ellipsis. After analyzing the second stanza, there is 1 clause ellipsis found.

“You love to pretend that you're good
 When you're always up to no good
 You really can't make him hate her
 So, your tongue became a razor
 Someone's always trying to keep my baby
 crying treacherous, [] cunnin', [] declinin'
 You got my baby cryin'.”

The data above is the third stanza in the song. In the sixth line, there is clause ellipsis. The deleted clause is “someone's always trying to keep my baby cunning, someone's always trying to keep my baby declining.” It contains subject and predicate, so it is a clause ellipsis. After analyzing the third stanza, there are two clause ellipses found.

“Billie Jean is always talkin' when nobody else is talkin'
[] Tellin' lies and [] rubbin' shoulders
 So, they called her mouth a motor
 Someone's always tryin' to start my baby cryin'
[] Talkin', [] squealin', [] spyin'
[] Sayin' you just wanna be startin' somethin'”

The data above is the fourth stanza. In the second line, clause ellipsis is found. The deleted clause is “when nobody else is”. In the fifth line there is also a clause ellipsis is, and the deleted phrase is “someone's always trying to start my baby talking, someone's always trying to start my baby squealing, someone's always trying to start my baby spying.” It's called clause ellipsis as it contains subject and predicate. After analyzing the fourth stanza, six clause ellipses are found.

“If you can't feed your baby
Then [] don't have a baby
And [] don't think maybe
 If you can't feed your baby
 You'll be always tryin' to stop that child from cryin'.
[] Hustlin', [] stealin', [] lyin', now baby's slowly dyin'”

The data above is the fifth stanza. In the second line, the deleted noun group is “you”. Hence, it is a nominal ellipsis. In the third line, there is nominal ellipsis, too, as the omitted noun group is “you”. In the sixth line, there is a clause ellipsis, as the deleted phrase consists of subject and predicate is “you’ll always be trying to stop that child from hustling, you’ll always be trying to stop that child from stealing, you’ll always be trying to stop that child from lying.” After analyzing the fifth stanza, there are two nominal ellipses and three clause ellipsis.

“[] Lift your head up high and [] scream out to the world
I know I am someone, and [] let the truth unfurl
No one can hurt you now because you know what’s true
Yes, I believe in me, so do believe in you”

The data above is the sixth stanza of Wanna Be Starting Something song lyrics. In the first line, there are two omitted noun group, they are “you” and “you”. Hence, it is nominal ellipsis. In the second line, there is nominal group, too. The deleted noun group is “I”. After analyzing the sixth stanza, there are three nominal ellipses found.

Based on the analysis of Wanna Be Starting Something song lyrics above, there are 6 (37.5%) nominal ellipses and 16 (62.5%) clause ellipses found.

3.2 The Girl is Mine

The next song is The Girl is Mine which contains 6 stanzas. The stanzas that contain ellipsis are the second, third, fourth, and sixth stanza.

In the second, third, and fourth line of second stanza, clause ellipses are found. In the second and third line, clause “you are” is omitted. In the third line, clause “it is” is omitted. Meanwhile, in the fourth line, nominal ellipsis of “you” is found. After analyzing the second stanza, three clause ellipses and one nominal ellipsis are found.

In the third stanza, ellipses are found in the first, third, fifth, and seventh line. In the first line, the omitted verbal ellipsis of “loves you” is found. In the third line, there are two nominal ellipses that have been deleted, they are “you” and “you”. In the fifth and seventh line, the ellipses that have been omitted are clause ellipses, they are “it’s” and “she’s my girl!”. After analyzing the third stanza, there are 2 nominal ellipses, 1 verbal ellipsis, and 2 clause ellipses found.

In the fourth stanza, there is only “you” nominal ellipsis deleted. On the other hand, in sixth stanza, the omitted clause ellipsis is “that I’m her forever love” is found.

Based on the analysis of The Girl is Mine song lyrics above, there are 4 (36.36%) nominal ellipses, 1 (9.09%) verbal ellipsis, and 6 (54.54%) clause ellipses found.

After analyzing all the song lyrics, the result can be tabulated as in the following Table 1.

Table 1. Data tabulation

Song Title	Ellipsis Types			Total
	Nominal	Verbal	Clause	
Wanna Be Starting Something	6	0	16	22
Baby Be Mine	1	0	7	8
The Girl is Mine	4	1	6	9
Thriller	7	1	3	11
Beat It	17	4	2	23
Billy Jean	4	0	1	5
Human Nature	3	0	7	10
PYT (Pretty Young Thing)	3	0	3	6
The Lady in My Life	7	0	2	9
Total	52	6	47	105
Percentage	(50%)	(6%)	(45%)	(100%)

3.3 Research Findings

After analyzing the ellipsis in Michael Jackson's song lyrics in Thriller album, the findings can be presented as followed:

1. The three types of ellipsis are used in Michael Jackson's song lyrics, they are Nominal Ellipsis (50%), Verbal Ellipsis (6%), and Clause Ellipsis (45%).
2. The total number of Ellipsis is 105 ellipses, and the most dominant type is Nominal Ellipsis with the percentage of 50%. The Nominal Ellipsis is used in order to avoid repetition of noun as it has been stated before. The most dominant word is "you", because in the songs direct speech is used.

4 Conclusions

This study has attempted to explore the various ellipsis types in the Thriller album. Three types of ellipsis are used in Michael Jackson's song lyrics, they are Nominal Ellipsis (50%), Verbal Ellipsis (6%), and Clause Ellipsis (45%). Hence the most dominant type of ellipsis used is Nominal Ellipsis which is 50%. Nominal ellipsis is used to avoid repeating nouns, as already stated. The most dominant word is "you" because direct speech is used in the song lyrics. The objectives of the usage of types of ellipsis used in song lyrics are to create effective text and to avoid misunderstandings when providing information. It can also make the sentence in the lyrics more interesting and ear-catching.

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