

A LINGUISTIC STUDY OF ELLIPSIS IN DRAMA AND NOVEL

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Abstract: This research project deals with the use of *Ellipsis* as a cohesive device in written texts. One of the important aspects of a language is that the variety of amount of use ellipsis. Ellipsis is most remarkable linguistic strategy which greatly participates in the process of creating cohesion. Ellipsis is used to avoid tedious redundancy and achieve cohesive ; its use is valid and licensed as long as the shorthand is understood by readers/listeners. It usually refers to an intentional omission of a word, phrase or clause from a text, often because the omitted items have already been referred to earlier and thus not necessary to be mentioned more. There are real differences in amount of utilizing ellipsis which must be taken in consideration as arguable.

Key words: term, knowledge, context, Linguistic, consideration, Ellipsis style

Ellipsis can be generally defined by Crystal as where "for reasons of economy, emphasis or style, a part of the structure has been omitted, which is recoverable from a scrutiny of the context". Crystal's definition claims that ellipsis is a term which covers the omission of any part of the sentence. Likewise, Longman dictionary defines of ellipsis as, " the leaving out of words or phrases from sentences where they are unnecessary because they have already been referred to or mentioned. For example, when the subject of the verb in two co-ordinated clauses is the same, it may be omitted to avoid repetition". Linguistic context plays important role within ellipsis, Crymes affirms that ellipsis implies syntagmatic relations when a construction is repetitive of another and this repetitive construction may under certain conditions be deleted if it is recoverable from

the linguistic context. The suitable explanation is afforded by Grant-Davie which is better understanding of what ellipsis means, "readers recognize ellipses in text when they notice that ideas have been implied or invoked but not stated, and they notice ellipses in their own knowledge when they are unable to fill the ellipses in the text" (ibid, 1995: 4). That means the information or meaning of ellipted items can be recoverable from background knowledge of subject matters and such knowledge may vary among the readers. Tallerman contends that "Ellipsis means missing out part of sentence, but the portion we miss out must always be constituent." That means any omitted string of words must be constituent of sentence. But according to Halliday and Hasan, ellipsis is like substitution, is also a presupposition at the level of words and structures. In fact, one can think of substitution and ellipsis as being alike; ellipsis can be thought of as "substitution by zero" or it is "something left unsaid" normally substitution may be regarded as a kind of "explicit ellipsis." Moreover, ellipsis is thought to be "something left unsaid." In fact that it is unsaid does not mean that it is not understood, however, for quite the opposite is true. The ellipted item is characterized as one that leaves specific slots to be filled from elsewhere. This is similar to the presupposition by substitution except that substitution replaces the certain items by another, whereas in ellipsis nothing is inserted into the slot. That is why ellipsis can be described as substitution by zero. The above example shows one type of ellipsis where the verb of the second clause is omitted, but can be recovered from the previous clause. It may at first sight seem paradoxical that the omission of part of the message should serve to achieve textual cohesion, because ellipsis is one of cohesive devices. In fact, there is virtually agreement about the definition of ellipsis by all grammarians, the absence of linguistic items from the surface or overt constituents of sentence. In most of the definitions, the context obviously appears that one may come across. In fact different linguists have looked at ellipsis from different angles. For example, McCarthy states "Ellipsis is the omission of elements normally required by the grammar which the speaker/writer assumes is obvious from the context and therefore need not be raised". Ellipsis is defined by Biber, et al. as "the omission of elements which

are precisely recoverable from the linguistic or situational context" .With reference to McCarthy`s definition, this could be noticeable as more comprehensive and precise because it refers to ellipsis which is not concerned only with written but also spoken language. From these two definitions, there is agreement about which part has been ellipted and context on which ellipsis completely depends. Moreover, Quirk et al. view that "the normal understanding of the term ellipsis is that words are omitted where understanding can be achieved without word repetition." To sum up, ellipsis is the omission of items which are often obvious to depend on linguistic structure, context, or situation. This is not to say that every utterance/sentence which is not fully explicit is ellipted, but most messages require some input to make sense of them. It can be concluded from the linguists` perspectives mentioned above that ellipsis is an omission of word, phrase, or sentence and employed to avoid repetition usually presupposed, which must be recaptured structurally, contextually, or situationally.

Types of Ellipsis

According to Halliday and Hasan (1976), ellipsis of word(s) is an emptiness that substitutes the word(s) instead of repetition. So their classification of ellipsis or the "substitution by zero" (ibid: 145), is three major types, **nominal**, **verbal** and **clausal** ellipses, which are further sub-categorized with detailed elaboration. Halliday and Hasan (1976) handle ellipsis in term of textual cohesion or cohesive device since their focus is text level, and ellipsis that can occur within alone sentence is excluded because they are not concerning with sentence level.

Nominal ellipsis

Nominal ellipsis is the first type of classification; according to Halliday and Hasan, it refers to omission of item/s within the nominal group, usually a noun headword and modifying elements. The function of ellipted items are captured by elements originally operating as determiners or other pre-modifiers. Accordingly, "nominal group having the function of Head filled by a word that normally functions within the Modifier is an elliptical one." "When noun phrases consist of only proper nouns as head, it is impossible

to be ellipted because proper nouns are not affected by nominal ellipsis, so they "designate individuals, and are therefore not capable of further specification" It is worthy to say that, proper nouns and pronouns function as the head of noun phrase which are not related to ellipsis because they do not take defining modifiers, and they are not normally preceded by determiners. While the common nouns are completely related to nominal ellipsis. Unlike proper nouns, the common nouns identify classes as well as they can often be further specified which in fact indicates the function of the elements. Usually Nominal group consists of elements those are: *Deictic*, *Numerative*, *Epithet* and *Classifier*. By going in deep elaboration of what the terms are substantially meant. Generally, these terms are characterized as instruments which play important role in nominal ellipsis; so the Deictic is normally a determiner, the Epithet an adjective, the Numerative a numeral or other quantifier and the Classifier is a noun. Significantly, common nouns elaborated as in "under certain circumstances the common noun may be omitted and the function of the Head taken on by one of these other elements. This is what is meant by nominal ellipsis".

Verbal ellipsis

Absolutely this type of ellipsis involves omission within the verbal group, which consists of a lexical verb, as well as the operator which precedes it. Halliday and Hasan note that verbal ellipsis is a "characteristic of all texts, spoken and written, and provides an extremely subtle and flexible means of creating varied and intricate discourse." According to a technical point of view, the operators in verbal group express systemic selections or choices, such as finiteness, polarity, voice and tense of the verbal group. These selections must be stated in every verbal group and must be referred to throughout the process of ellipsis by means of presupposition. An elliptical verbal group, however, is technically defined as a verbal group whose structure carries over certain systemic feature. So, the elliptical verbal group whose structure fully represents its systemic feature is not elliptical. In comparison with nominal ellipsis, to sum up, in the verb group, the simplest way to explain ellipsis is highly dependent on grammatical systems, while in the

nominal group ellipsis is not described in this way, it would be more complex to describe nominal ellipsis in terms of systems. Thus, it is presented in structural terms instead; this may be the main distinction between nominal ellipsis and verbal ellipsis. Verbal ellipsis, then, can be described under two headings: *lexical ellipsis* and *operator ellipsis*.

Lexical Ellipsis

Basically, Lexical ellipsis involves the omission of the lexical verb of the verbal group. It is characterized as omission from the right in that it always involves ellipsis of the last word of the verbal group, which is the lexical verb. In fact, there is another term for lexical ellipsis, "ellipsis from the right". It is significantly to be mentioned that, lexical ellipsis involved not only the omission of lexical verb, but it also may be included preceding elements as well as lexical verb, and it does not comprise the initial operator. This type of ellipsis may extend leftward to leave only the initial operator, which carries the polarity and tense of the sentence. In a verbal group, it is significant to be mentioned, with lexical ellipsis, the finiteness and polarity are always expressed because these systems are closely associated with the first position in the verbal group.

Operator Ellipsis

According to elaboration of verbal ellipsis that presented by Halliday and Hasan "Operator ellipsis is characteristic of responses which are closely tied to a preceding question or statement, and which have the specific function of supplying, confirming, or repudiating a lexical verb." In this type of ellipsis, the operator is missing from the verbal group. Logically, it is opposite to the type of lexical ellipsis, because the term *ellipsis from the left* is used to operator ellipsis. It is the omission directed from the left in which the initial element in the verbal group is omitted whereby the following elements may be omitted too, all but not lexical verb. This type of ellipsis, then, is a characteristic of those contexts in which the mood is taken over from the previous clause. Furthermore, another characteristic of operator ellipsis is that, the absence of the subject which wherefore has to be presupposed from the previous construction; this is also obvious. The finiteness and polarity selections must also be presupposed. These systemic selections of verbal group,

in Halliday and Hasan`s perspective, are: firstly, finiteness whether it is finite or non-finite, so, if it is finite, then it must be indicative or imperative, nevertheless, if it is indicative then it is modal or non-modal. Secondly polarity whether it is positive or negative and marked or unmarked; thirdly, voice whether it is active or passive and finally, tense whether it is past, or non-past. These selections must be stated in every verbal group and must be referred to throughout the process of ellipsis by means of presupposition.

Ellipsis in Literature

The use of ellipsis is related to the description of formal features of texts on one hand, and the functional significance of these features in relation to the interpretation of the text on the other hand. Though ellipsis is commonly used in all forms of literature, it varies in different degrees among other cohesive devices. The fact that ellipsis is widely used in drama can be ascribed to two reasons: first, it is evidently clear that stage directions facilitate the occurrence of ellipsis throughout the play. Second, plays primarily comprise long dialogues which require frequency of ellipsis. However, it is less than drama used in novels since this genre relies on amplification and narration rather than on brevity or compression. This is quite obvious from mere observation for readers of novels. Yet in poetry, ellipsis seems more powerful than in other literary genres because of the most compressed nature of the poetic language and the limited space allowed for a poem.

Conclusions

According to the analysis conducted, the numbers of occurrence of most of the *Ellipsis* employed in the dramatic text differ paradoxically from narrative text. Ellipsis is found primarily many in the *Dramatic text* which is typical for its dialogue on the stage pattern. As this pattern is not typical for a *Narrative text* in general, the occurrence of ellipsis is expected to be much lower. Although the two analyzed texts belong to literary discipline, there are differences between them from viewpoint of style. Ellipsis is considered to be a dramatic technique used for speeding up action. On the other hand, due to the frequent question-answer pattern in the conversation and due to the existing of stage

in which the action took place, there is expectation of *Ellipsis* to play important role within dramatic text. Moreover, the importance of *clausal ellipsis* to the cohesiveness of the text is also evident in the fact that they form cohesive ties not only across clause and sentence boundaries, but also across paragraphs. Clausal ellipsis records the highest amount of the use in both dramatic and narrative texts because it usually occurs within complex sentence. The use of informality in dramatic texts highlights the utilization of ellipsis as it is known fact that in conversations, speakers tend to be short and concise in their speech; that is they tend to use ellipsis in order to avoid tedious repetition and boring redundancy. On the other hand, in narrative texts, formality seems to be the common feature; therefore, less use of ellipsis is a characteristic trait in novels.

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