Ellipsis as A Cause of Ambiguity in Translation

Lect. Layth N. Muhammed*

1.1 Introduction:

Ellipsis is a term used in grammar to refer to a sentence where for reasons of economy, emphasis or style, a part of the structure is omitted and which can be recovered from the scrutiny of the context. Ellipsis is used to avoid redundancy and to achieve a cohesive style in both forms of language: spoken and written (Crystal, 1980: 159). Biber (2002:230) defines ellipsis as the omission of elements which are recoverable from the linguistic context or situation. It takes place when we leave out items which we would normally expect to use in a sentence if we follow the grammatical rules (ibid.). Ellipsis is the economy of the language, enabling us to avoid the unnecessary repetition of words. For example,

(1) I was to take the east path and Steve Δ, the west Δ. (= I was to take the east path and Steve was to take the west path.)

De Beaugrande (1981: 49), states that ellipsis is repeating a structure and its content but omitting some of the surface expressions, or the omission of one or more elements from a construction, especially when they are supplied by the context. As for Halliday and Hasan (1976:142-144) ellipsis was defined as 'substitution by zero'. They refer to it as SOMETHING UNDERSTOOD where understood is used in the special sense of 'going without saying'. Like all cohesive agencies, ellipsis contributes to the semantic structure of the discourse. But unlike reference, which is itself a semantic relation, ellipsis sets up a relationship that is not semantic but lexicogrammatical: a relationship in the wording rather than directly in the meaning (Halliday, 2004: 562). Ellipsis marks the textual status of the continuous information within a certain grammatical structure.

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I.2 Criteria for Ellipsis

To distinguish ellipsis from other kinds of omission, it is important to emphasize the principle of verbatim recoverability that applies to ellipsis, that is, the actual word(s) whose meaning is understood or implied must be recoverable. (Quirk et al., 1985: 884). An element to be ellipted must satisfy all the following criteria:

(a) The ellipted words are precisely recoverable.
This means that in a context where no ambiguity of reference arises, there is no doubt as what words are to be supplied. For example,

(2). She can't sing tonight, so she won't  Δ. (= She can't sing tonight, so she won't sing)

It is clear that in example (2) the word sing is ellipted. However, the expression "precisely recoverable" does not necessarily mean "un ambiguously recoverable" (ibid.). Consider the following examples:

(3). The suspect admits stealing a car from a garage, but he can't remember which Δ. (ibid.: 885)

The anaphoric which in this example is ambiguous, it could mean either which car or which garage. That is, we are left with an ambiguity in determining which element is referred to by the anaphoric which in this example (ibid).

b) The elliptical construction is grammatically defective.
Some structures are, in some sense, syntactically defective: the verb or adjective lacks its normal obligatory complementation. Consider the following example:

(4). Must a name mean something? Of course it must. [ mean something] (Halliday, 1989: 298)

The missing complementation of the modal must in the reply of the question above is the lexical verb mean and the pronoun something which can be understood through the context of the sentence. That is, the reply can be understood as: Of course it must mean something.

(c) The insertion of the missing words results in a grammatical sentence (with the same meaning as the original sentence)
This third condition of ellipsis is met by the examples we have so far considered. However, it distinguishes between the following constructions:
(5). While (I was) writing, the phone rang.

(6). (*Since I was) knowing no French, I could not express my thanks.

The insertion is not possible in (6) because the verb know belongs to a category of verbs of stative meaning which lack progressive forms (Quirk, 1973: 45-47). Thus, while example (5) can by this criterion be classified as ellipsis, (6) is not.

(d) The missing words are textually recoverable, and are present in the text in exactly the same form.

It may be held that textual recoverability is the surest guarantee of ellipsis, since without it, there would be a room for disagreement on what particular word or expression has been ellipted. Within this criterion there is an even stronger criterion, which distinguishes example (7) from (8) below:

(7) She might sing tonight, but I don’t think she will (sing tonight).
(8) She rarely sings, so I don’t think she will (sing) tonight. (Quirk et al., 1985: 887).

The ellipted expression in (7) is an exact copy of the antecedent (sing tonight), while in (8) the ellipted verb is morphologically different from its antecedent (sings). However, both illustrate what, for most grammatical purposes, is the same kind of ellipsis. That is, it remains true, in particular that the ellipsis of sing is precisely recoverable (ibid.).

Yet, Eckersley and Eckersley (1960: 318) argue that the missing words could not always be present in the text and their recoverability may depend on the context. Consider the following example,

(9) What if I refuse to answer? (ibid.)

What are the missing words in this question? Does it mean: what happens if I refuse to answer? or what will you do if I refuse to answer? That is, the listener is left with an ambiguity as to determine which elements are referred to in this question.

1.3 Types of Ellipsis

In terms of recoverability, Quirk et al. (1985: 895 – 900) classify ellipsis into three types: textual, situational and structural.
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1. **Textual ellipsis:**

Textual ellipsis makes a distinction between anaphoric ellipsis (antecedent precedes) and cataphoric ellipsis (antecedent follows). In anaphoric ellipsis the antecedent must have precedence over the elliptical construction, by taking either an earlier position in the sentence, or higher position. Cataphoric ellipsis occurs in a clause which is subordinate in relation to the clause in which the antecedent occurs. The following examples are illustrative:

(10) Mary can beat Ann more easily than Δ Phyllis (= Mary can beat Ann more easily than Mary can beat Phyllis) Anaphoric ellipsis.

(11) If you want me to Δ, I'll lend you my pen .(= If you want me to lend you my pen, I'll lend you my pen) Cataphoric ellipsis (ibid.: 895)

2. **Situational ellipsis:**

Situational ellipsis are mostly found in conversation where the omission and interpretation are dependent upon the situational context (Biber et al., 1999:156). This is frequently found in declarative and interrogative sentences:

(a) **Ellipsis in declarative sentences:**

ellipsis of the subject alone:

(12). (He) just thinks too much and smokes too much.

(13). (I) saw Susan and her friend in Alder weeks ago. (ibid.:158) In example (12), the subject he is omitted and in (13) the subject I is omitted. Both of which can be recovered from the context in which the two sentences are uttered.

ellipsis of subject plus operator:

If the main verb 'be' is ellipted, the elliptical sentence begins with what would be a subject complement in the full form:

(14) (It's) no wonder that people had begun to watch him rather uneasily .(ibid.)

The underlined words in example (14) represent the subject complement of the sentence which is still understood despite the omission of the anticipatory subject it and the verb to be.

b. **Ellipsis in the interrogative sentences:**

Ellipsis of the subject plus operator:

In conversational interrogative clauses the ellipsis of the subject and operator is normal. It usually occurs at the beginning of the interrogative clause (Pujiati, 2017:67)
In example (15), the operator *do* and the subject *you* are omitted, while in (16) the operator *have* and the subject *you* are omitted. In both cases the ellipted words are recoverable from the context.

Ellipsis of the operator alone:
There are also elliptical yes – no questions in which, although the operator is omitted, the subject is pronounced, e.g.,

(17). (Are) you serious?

(18). (Did) Your Granny Iris get here? (ibid.)

Example (17) shows the omission of the verb 'be' as main verb, while example (18) shows the omission of the auxiliary *do* which functions as an operator, too.

**3. Structural ellipsis**

There is no clear dividing line between situational ellipsis and structural ellipsis. In both cases the ellipted word(s) can be identified on the basis of grammatical knowledge. However, structural ellipsis can be shown by citing the zero conjunction *that*, and ellipted preposition (Leech, 1994:383) as in the following examples:

(19). I hope *(that)* the department will cooperate on this.

(20). The club meets *(on)* Monday evenings. (ibid.)

Further, structural ellipsis can also be seen in block language: in headlines, book titles, notices, etc., where the omission extends to include determiners, pronouns, operators, and other closed class words (Quirk, 1973:205) as in the following example:

(21) *(The)* Changes of Middle –East peace *(are)* improving (ibid.). In example (21), the determiner *the* and the verb *to be* are omitted.

**1.4 Ellipsis in Arabic**

Arab linguists also refer to ellipsis in different ways. The term *al-hathf* (deletion) is the most common term used by the traditional grammarians to denote the omission of an element of a sentence which could be a noun, verb, a clause or even one of the letters (sounds) constituting a word (Althunibat, 2016:1). Another term that is used by the Arab grammarians to denote the omission is *Idmar* (concealment). However, some Arab grammarians assume that *Idmar* (concealment) is restricted to the absence of the
The phenomenon of ellipsis is one of the important linguistic phenomena in the Arabic language. It stamps the Arabic language in both written and spoken forms with two important characteristics that are said to be the underlying principles of leaving out linguistic items; they are the principle of the economy of language and the principle of *al-takhfīf* or damping, whereby a lot of information is supplied in few words (Ouissem, 2007: 53). Ellipsis is the economy and concision of language, in that there is the aesthetic feature of ellipsis which is associated with rhetoric. At the same time, ellipsis is unique because by leaving out an item the meaning will be clearer (Al-Jurjānī, 2004:121).

Aziz (1996:96) states that in Arabic, like English, ellipsis may involve: the clause, the verb phrase and the noun phrase:

(a) **Clause ellipsis:**

In clausal ellipsis the whole clause may be ellipted in polarity questions, with the exception of the polar marker, as in:

(22) هل تعرف هذا الرجل؟ نعم / لا (اعرف هذا الرجل)

(Do you know this man? Yes / No (I know this man / I don't know this man)

However, the polar markers (نعم و لا) may be followed by the pro-form فعل which is a full verb in Arabic functioning as a substitute, the following example is illustrative:

(23) هل كافأت هذا الرجل? نعم فعلت / كلا لم فعل

(Did you reward this man? Yes, I did / No I didn't)

In (23) the verb فعل is basically different from the operator *do* because the verbفعل, as stated above, is a full verb showing a case of substitution, while the corresponding English verb *do* ushers an elliptical construction (ibid.: 97).

In information questions, however, the whole clause, except the question word, may be ellipted, as in:

(24) لن أن كنت الحفلة. لماذا؟

(Will not attend the party. --- Why?)

(25) أوصِل وفد الأمم المتحدة إلى القاهرة. متى وصل؟

(The UN delegation has arrived in Cairo. --- When did it arrive?)
In both examples the whole clause is ellipted and what is left is only the question words لماذا and متى.

(b) **Noun phrase ellipsis**

Probably the main difference between English and Arabic in the field of ellipsis is that Arabic frequently uses epithets in place of the head in elliptical construction. This is mainly attributed to the fact that an Arabic adjective has most of the characteristics of a noun: namely gender, number, case and definiteness. Thus adjectives in Arabic are a productive source of ellipsis; almost any adjective can replace a noun head (Elshourafa and Muhsen, 2010: 8). The following examples are illustrative:

(26) ولد ابن خلدون في تونس ثم هاجر العلامة الى مصر

(Ibin Khaldon was born in Tonisia and then the scholar migrated to Egypt)

Another example taken from Aziz (1996: 101):

(27) واقتربت الامرأتان من السيارة . وكانت الطويلة تحمل على كتفها طفلاً

(The two women came near the car. The tall (one) was carrying a child on her shoulder)

In example (26), the adjective العلامة replaces the proper noun Ibin Khaldon in the second clause. In example (27), the adjective الطويلة is also used instead of the noun head امرأتان. In both cases the adjective is used anaphorically or what is called "lexical cohesion." Beside epithets, numeratives and demonstratives can also be used to compensate the ellipted noun head in the structure of the noun phrase (ibid.). Consider the following examples:

(28) لا أ ريد تلك الساعة بل

(I don't want that watch. I want this)

(29) كنت قد التقيت ثلاثة من اصدقائي . ثم مضت اعوام طويلة . فرأيت الثلاثة

(I met three of my old friends in a small café in Paris. Then many years passed before I met the three again. They had become rich merchants.)

In example (28), the demonstrative هذه substitutes the head noun الساعة and in example (29) the numerative الثلاثة replaces the head noun أصدقائي. As with the adjectives in the previous examples, the
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demonstrative هذه and the demonstrative الثلاثة in these examples acting as anaphors.

To make a structure more cohesive, Arabic frequently uses elliptical noun phrases especially in answers to questions and in negation to a preceding statement or situation by the use of the negative particle لا (Cantarino, 1974: 32, 113, vol, 1). Consider the following examples:

أ بن امك يا فؤاد؟ قال مريضة في البيت.
(Where is your mother, Fu'ad? He answered, ill at home)

لا شأن لي ولا لك معه.
(I haven't anything to do with him, nor have you.)

In example (30), the noun أمي (my mother) is omitted from the structure of the answer. In example (31), the noun شأن is also elided from the structure of the statement, which could be لا شأن لي ولا شأن لك معه.

(30)

(31)

(c) The verb phrase ellipsis

Since the Arabic verb phrase is basically simple and has no auxiliary element functioning as an operator, as in English, it is not possible in Arabic to keep part of the verb and omit the rest with the predication. The verb has to be repeated, or ellipted completely (Aziz, 1996: 97). Consider the following examples:

(32) Will the governor attend the meeting tonight? ---- Yes, he will.

هل سيحضر الاجتماع الحاكم هذه الليلة؟
نعم سوف يحضر.

(33)

هل سيحضر الاجتماع الحاكم هذه الليلة؟
نعم (سيحضر) ، كلا (لن يحضر) (ibid.)

Rhetoricians, however, mention that in ellipting a word or words from a sentence, the speaker has to leave evidence that refers to the ellipted part. The evidence is either verbal or circumstantial (Hassan and Taqi, 2011: 644).

Verbal evidence takes place when some words have been ellipted, then the syntax and the pattern of the entire sentence make us infer what the missing words are. Consider the following example which is taken from the Glorious Qur'an verse 30 Chapter Al Nahl.
"To the righteous (when) it is said " What is it that your Lord has revealed ?" they say " All that is good. "

The assumed ellipted word in this example is the verb انزل (has revealed ). That is, the verse can be understood as " قالوا انزل خيرا " (they say : He has revealed all that is good).

Circumstantial evidence is achieved when the listener is aware from the context of the ellipted word. The following example which is also taken from Glorious Qur'an verse 69 of Chapter Hud illustrates this:

قالوا "سلا ما ".

They said : salam (greetings and peace)

The assumed elided word is the verb "نسلم " (We greet) after the verb "said". That is, the verse can be understood as " قالو نسلم سلاما " (ibid.).

1.5 Translation Ambiguity

Translation, by definition, consists of changing from one state or form to another, to turn into one's own or another's language. Translation is basically a change of form.

When we speak of the form of a language, we are referring to the actual words, phrases clauses, sentences, paragraphs, etc., which are spoken or written (Larson,1998 :3 ).

Ambiguity is the property of words, terms, notations, signs, symbols, and concepts (with a particular context) as being undefined, indefinable, multi-defined, or without an obvious definition and thus having a misleading, or unclear meaning (Al-Shercasy. 2010: 3) A word, phrase, sentence, or a text is said to be ambiguous if it can be interpreted in more than one way. For example, Perto knows a richer man than Trump. It has two meanings: that Perto knows a man who is richer than Trump and that Perto knows a man who is richer than any man Trump knows (ibid.: 12,13). Ambiguity which does not arise from the grammatical analysis of a sentence, but is due solely to the alternative meanings of an individual lexical item, is referred to lexical ambiguity as in I found the table fascinating. The word
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fascinating means either object of furniture or table of figures (Crystal, 2003:22). Thus, the intended meaning of a single word can vary greatly depending on the linguistic context in which it appears. However, Psycholinguistic studies of monolingual language processing have demonstrated that, in most cases, both meanings of ambiguous words are accessed, and that the cognitive system overcomes this obstacle mostly by relying on linguistic context (Prior and Winter, 2009:94). Moreover, the effect of translation ambiguity on translation production should not be surprising, because of the need to select only one option for production. That is, when multiple alternatives are available and the translator has to choose one from among several choices for the production, there could be a space for him to reach to an accurate translation (ibid.:172).

1.6 Text Analysis

Our analysis in this section will be restricted to ten texts which have been randomly chosen from Shakespeare’s Macbeth. The model used in this analysis is that the assessment of the translation will depend on the recoverability of the elliptical structure. If the elliptical structure is recovered, the translation will be appropriate if not the translation will be inappropriate. The tables listed below show the ratios of success and failure. Where the sign (+) means that the elliptical structure is recovered and the sign (¬) means that the elliptical structure is not recovered.

(ELS = Elliptical Structure) (Sub = Subject)

**SL Text (1)**
The witches:
Where hast thou been, sister?” p.8

-Killingswine.
Interpretation:

One of the witches asks her sister where she has been and her sister replies that she has been killing swine.

**TL texts**

اين كنت يا اختاه ؟ أقتل الخنازير.

Sub1: 

أين كنت يا اختاه ؟ أقتل خنازير.

Sub2: 

أين كنت يا اختاه ؟ كنت اصطاد الخنازير.

Sub3: 

أين كنت يا اختاه ؟ كنت اصطاد الخنازير.

Sub4: 

من اين جئتي يا اختاه ؟ كنت اقتل حيوانا مفترساً.

Sub5: 

أين كنت يا اختاه ؟ أقتل خنازير.

Discussion

In SL text (1), seemingly, subjects (1) and (2) and (5) rendered the text literally, the three subjects used the verb "اقتل" instead of اصطاد which is the intended meaning of the verb kill in this context. That is, they were literal and kept the ambiguity of the SL text. Subject (3), however, could provide the appropriate translation of the text by using the verb اصطاد. In other words, subject (3) gave the exact explanation of the SL text. As for subject (4), he failed in translating the text where he rendered it into: كنت اقتل حيوانا مفترساً which is very far from the intended meaning of the text. Our proposed translation is:

أين كنت يا اختاه ؟ اصطاد الخنازير.

ELS Analysis

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**SLtext (2)**

Banquo to the witches

You don't say anything to me. If you can look into the future and tell who will prosper and who won't, speak to me then. p.9
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**Interpretation:**
Banquo is speaking to the witches and asking them to tell him about his future with Macbeth.

**TL texts**

1. أ ما معى فلا تتكلمن. أ ن يكن بمقدوركن التمعن في بذور المستقبل

   *Sub1:* فتعرن ايه سينمو، وأيه لا، حدثني أ ذ ن.

2. لن تتكلمنى. إذا قدرتن على معرفة بذور ما تؤول اليه الامور وأيه بذرة

   *Sub2:* ستتمو، وأيه بذرة لن تتم، فتكلم معنى أ ذ ن.

3. أ ما أنا فلم تخاطبدي، فن كن تعرفن ما يحبه ا لغيب، وتلعن البذر

   *Sub3:* الذي ينمو والبذر الذي يبقى عقيماً، فأجين سوال رجل لا يرجو منكن احساناً.

4. أ ما أنا فلم تخاطبدي، فن كن تستشرفن ما يحبه ا لغيب، وتلعن البذر

   *Sub4:* الذي ينمو من البذر الذي لايئمو، فأجين عن سوال رجل لايرجو منكن الاحسان، ولا يخشى منكن الإساءة.

5. غير انكن لم توجهن ا لي حديثاً. فن كان بوسعكن استطاع الغيب وبذور المستقبل

   *Sub5:* ، ومعرفة أي البذور ستتمو وأيه لا ينمو فلتتحدثن الي رجل لا يرجو منكن فضلاً ولا يخشى منكن عداوة.

**Discussion:**
In SL text (2), only subject (1) kept the elliptical structure "who won’t" by providing its Arabic literal equivalent وأيه لا. However, the ellipted element can be recovered from the context of the sentence. That is, the elliptical structure can be interpreted as وأيه لا ينمو. Subjects (2) and (4) and (5), however, could fill this gap by recovering the ellipted words. This is obvious in their renderings in which subject(2) rendered the elliptical structure into البذرة لن تنمو وايه وفلم تخاطبدي and subject (4) rendered it into البذر الذي ينمو من البذر الذي لايئمو and (5) ومعرفة أي البذور سينمو وأيه لا ينمو which could serve as the ellipted words. However, subject (3) provided ambiguous translation when he rendered the elliptical structure into البذر الذي يبقى عقيماً That is, he
was inappropriate in his translation. We choose the translation of subject (1) as our proposed translation.

**ELS Analysis**

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**SL text (3)**

The third witch to Banquo:

The third witch pointed at him: 'Thou shalt get kings, though thou be none'. p.10

**Interpretation:**

The third witch is pointing at Banquo and telling him that his sons will be kings but he will not be a king.

**TL texts**

- **Sub3**: ستلد ملوكاً ولن تكون أنت ملكاً
- **Sub2**: ستبتل ملوكاً، وإن يفتك أنت الملك
- **Sub3**: ستبتل ملوكاً ولن تكون أنت ملكاً
- **Sub4**: ستبتل ملوكاً ولن تكون أنت ملكاً
- **Sub5**: ستبتل ملوكاً دون أن تكون ملكاً

**Discussion**:

In SL text(3), as the three renderings show, the five subjects attempted to explain the ambiguity represented by the pronoun *none* by providing different renderings. Subject (1) who translated the text into *يَفْتَكَ اَنَّكَ ٱلْمَلِك* provided an ambiguous translation. That is he failed to provide the appropriate translation.

Subject(2) who rendered the text into *وَلَوْ أَنَّكَ لَمْ تَسْتَمِحُنَّ* also failed in recovering the missing words of the elliptical *none* and thus kept the ambiguity of SL text. However, subjects (3), (4) and (5) succeeded in recovering the missing words of the elliptical *none* and provided appropriate translations:

- **Sub3**: ستبتل ملوكاً ولن تكون أنت ملكاً
- **Sub4**: ستبتل ملوكاً ولن تكون أنت ملكاً
- **Sub5**: ستبتل ملوكاً دون أن تكون ملكاً

We choose the translation of subject (4) to be our proposed translation.
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SLtext (4)

King Duncan:
Has Cawdor been executed yet?’ . ‘Haven't those I sent to do it returned?’
‘My Liege, they haven't,’ said Malcolm. p.12

Interpretation:
The king asks his court whether the governor of Cawdor has been executed or not yet. Malcolm, his son, replies him that those whom were sent in that mission have not returned yet.

TLtexts

هل نفذ الاعدام بكودر؟  أم ان المكلفين با لأمر لم يعودوا بعد؟ مولا ي, لم يعودوا بعد.

Sub1:
هل نفذ الاعدام بكودر؟ الم يعد هؤلاء الذين اوكلت اليهم المهمة؟ سيدي; لم يعودوا بعد.

Sub2:

Sub3:

Sub4:

Discussion:
In SL text(4) , obviously , subjects (1) and (2) and (5) successfully rendered the elliptical structure they haven't into Arabic by providing the rendering : لم يعودوا بعد which could be the equivalents of the omitted words of the SL text. That is , the three translators disambiguated the elliptical structure that resulted from the omission of the complement returned which is the lexical verb and which supposed to occur after the operator have (they haven't returned ) . As for translator (3) and (4) , they didn't translate the text . Our suggested translation , though with slight modification , is:
هل نفذ حكم الإعدام بأمير كودر المكلف بالأمر؟ لم يعد المكلفين بعد، يا مولاي.

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**SLtext (5)**

King Duncan to Macbeth and Banquo:

Welcome,’ said Duncan. He turned to Banquo. ‘Noble Banquo, you've deserved no less and no one should think you have. p.12

**Interpretation:**

The king is speaking to Macbeth and Banquo and telling Banquo that his position is the same as Macbeth's and no one should think that he has a less position.

**TLtexts**

Sub1: بانكو النبيل ، ليس استحقاًك بأقل، ولن يكون أقل ذيوعاً.
Sub2: لا تقل استحقاًك، ولن يكون استحقاًك أقل ذيوعاً.
Sub3: أما أنت ، ايها النبيل بانكو، ولست أقل قدراً من مكبث.
Sub4: أما أنت ايها الشريف بنكو - ولا تقل قدراً عن مكبث.
Sub5: وانت أي بنكو النبيل ، ما اراك أقل جدارة من مكبث، وما ينبغي ان

**Discussion**

In SL text (5), as the renderings above show, subjects (1) and (2) who rendered the elliptical structure of you have into ولن يكون استحقاًك بأقل ذيوعاً and ولن يكون استحقاًك أقل ذيوعاً their renderings are not understood. That is, they translated the text improperly, particularly the second part of the text which lacks the complement verb of the auxiliary have (have deserved). Although subjects (3), (4) and (5) gave different translations for the elliptical structure such as ما اراك أقل جدارة من مكبث، ولا تقل قدراً عن مكبث. ولست أقل قدراً من مكبث: they were appropriate in their translations. However, our suggested translation for this text is:

أ ما انت يا بانكو النبيل ، فلست أقل منزلةً من مكبث.
Ellipsis as A Cause of Ambiguity in Translation

Lect Layth N. Muhammed

ELS Analysis

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SLtext (6)

Macbeth to his wife

Has he asked for me? Of course he has. p.17

Interpretation:

Macbeth enquires from his wife whether the king has asked about him during his absence. Lady Macbeth replies her husband that the king has asked about him.

TL texts

Sub1: هل سأل عنني؟ الا تعلم أنه سأل؟ هل سأل عنني؟ الا تعلم أنه سأل؟
Sub2: هل سأل عنني؟ الا تعلم أنه سأل؟ هل سأل عنني؟ الا تعلم أنه سأل؟
Sub3: .
Sub4: .
Sub5: هل سأل عنني؟ الا تدري انه قد سأل؟

Discussion:

In SLtext (6), subjects (1), (2) and (5) only moved the ambiguity from the English text into Arabic. That is, their renderings are still ambiguous and not understood, for they did not take into consideration the context of the text to explain to whom, for example, the pronoun he in the question has he asked for me? refers to. Further, they changed the reply of Lady Macbeth in the English text (of course he has) from statement into question in Arabic: هل تعلم أنه سأل؟. In other words, the three subjects provided inappropriate translations. As for subjects (3) and (4) they did not translate the English text. We suggest the following translation:

هل سأل عنني الملك؟ بالطبع سأل عنك.

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Lennox to Macbeth

‘Is the King leaving today?’ 'He is. Or so he intends.’

Interpretation:

Lennox asks Macbeth whether the king will be leaving today and Macbeth replies yes he will or he intends to leave.

TL texts

Sub1: أيرحل الملك اليوم ؟ أجل لقد عين ذلك.
Sub2: هل سيغادر الملك اليوم ؟ أجل لقد اتخذ الترتيبات لذلك.
Sub3: أسافر الملك اليوم ؟ هذا ما نواه بالأمس.
Sub4: يعتزم الملك الرحيل اليوم ؟ نعم كان هذا قراره.
Sub5: أسافر الملك اليوم؟ نعم أو هذا ما ينوي فعله.

Discussion:

In SL text (7), although the five subjects rendered the first part of the text, which is a question, properly and provided different proper translations أيرحل الملك اليوم ؟ هل سيغادر الملك اليوم ؟ يعتزم الملك الرحيل اليوم ؟, subjects (1),(2),(4) and (5) were inaccurate in their translations of the elliptical structure of the text (He is. Or so he intends). The four subjects had to recover the missing complement of the verb to be and that of the verb intend, which is the same lexical verb leaving available in the structure of the question in the SL and thus failed to provide its proper Arabic equivalent. Besides, the four subjects had to be aware of the tense of the SL text. Where the four subjects used the past tense instead of the present which is the tense of the text. Unfortunately, none of these notes was taken into consideration by the four subjects and consequently lead to the failure in rendering the elliptical structure of the text. As for subject (3), he translated the text properly. Our proposed translation is:

هل سيغادر الملك اليوم ؟ أجل هذا ما ينوي فعله.

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Ellipsis as A Cause of Ambiguity in Translation
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Lady Macbeth to the king Duncan
Your servants ever, have theirs, themselves, and what is theirs, in compt. To make their audit at your highness, pleasure, still to return your own. P41

Interpretation:
Lady Macbeth is talking to king Duncan telling him that they will remain his servants forever and keep themselves accountable and grateful to him and they will be ready for everything he asks.

TLtexts
Sub1: خدمكم دائماً، هم وما يملكون وسيكشفون حسابهم منى شنتم كل خدمة منا ولو ادناها في كل جزء منها مرتين، ثم مرتين اخرين تبقى امراً بسيطاً.

Sub2:
لو جعلنا خدمتنا لجلالكم اضعافاً مضاعفة لكانن ادئنشيشيامامه، هذا الشرف العظيم الذي منحتوه لنا.

Sub3:
لو كانت خدمتنا لجلالكم اضعافاً مضاعفة لكانن ادئنشيشي بجانب الشرف العظيم الذي حملتموه اياه.

Sub4:
خدمك ياسيدي وخدم خدمك وكل ما يملكون، ولا هدف لهم غير مرضاكم.

Sub5:
Discussion:
In SL text (8), seemingly the elliptical structures were behind the ambiguity in the translations given by the five subjects. Although the subjects provided different translations, only subject (1) could recover the missing words of the elliptical structures properly. The rest of the subjects, as their translations show, overlooked the elliptical structures and translated the text communicatively. However, their translations appear unclear and redundant, particularly that of subject (5):

As for subject (2), he was utterly ambiguous in his translation. Our suggested translation is:

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30
Lady Macbeth

He that's coming must be provided for; and you shall put this night's great business into my despatch. P37

Interpretation:
Lady Macbeth is talking to her husband about the king who is coming to night, and telling him that they should prepare for the murder which will be committed tonight and she asks him to leave the great matters of that night to her.

Discussion:
In SL text (9), as the underlined renderings exhibit, subjects (1), (2) and (5) failed to recover the exact missing words of the elliptical structure and hence provided inappropriate translation. This may be due either to the subjects' unawareness of the text or to the ambiguity which may arise from the elliptical structure. Subjects (3) and (4), however, were proper in their translation of the text, i.e., they provided accurate translations of the elliptical structure when they rendered it into يجب أن يُهيأ له، وعليك ان تضع امر هذه الليلة العظيم في امرتي.

Therefore, we choose translation (4) to be our proposed one.

ELS Analysis

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SLtexts (10)
Macbeth to Banquo
Ellipsis as A Cause of Ambiguity in Translation

Lect Layth N. Muhammed

If you shall cleave to my consent, when it is, it shall make honour for you. P.53

Interpretation

Macbeth is speaking to Banquo and telling him that he would be honoured if he kept on his side.

TLtexts

Sub1: 

فإن كنت توافقني، فسيكون لك جاه وتشريف ومجد عظيم. 

Sub2:

لو انضمت إلى جانبي، حينما يحين الوقت، لنلت شرفاً عظيماً.

Sub3:

أنت التزمت بالاتفاق معي، في حينه، اصابك شرف كبير.

Sub4:

فإن كنت توافقتني عندئذ، كان لك من ذلك جاه وتشريف.

Sub5:

فإن كنت توافقتني عندئذ، كان لك من ذلك جاه وتشريف.

Discussion:

In SL text (10), the parenthetical elliptical clause when it is is still ambiguous even in the Arabic texts. That is, none of the five subjects could disambiguate or explain exactly what did that elliptical structure lack? This may be due to fact that when Macbeth was talking to Banquo his mind was busy with the prophesies of the witches who prophesied that he would be a king. Therefore, all the renderings given the subjects such as في حينه، عندما تسنح الفرصة، كان لك من ذلك جاه وتشريف, were ambiguous and not clear. Our proposed translations are:

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1.7 Conclusions:

Our analysis of the ten texts revealed that ellipsis was one of the main causes behind translation ambiguity and the linguistic context was, mostly, of no use in translating the SL texts. Although our subjects adopted the two translation approaches in their renderings in an attempt to disambiguate the texts: the semantic and the communicative translation, both of which were to some extent...
unable to convey the intended meaning. This may be attributed to the ambiguity which arises from the elliptical structures and the difficulty in recovering the ellipted words. Where the ratio of failure amounted to 3.2% and the success never exceeded 1.7% in the rendering of the texts. The analysis also revealed that the failure in the interpretation of the elliptical structures might result from different factors other than the omission of one certain element. For example, in SL texts: 5, 6, 7, the omission of the verb caused the failure in the translation, while in SL texts: 8, 9, 10 and other texts the fuzzy elliptical structures and the unawareness of the subjects with the text were behind the failure of the subjects in translating the texts. Whatever an elliptical structure is, it is ambiguous if it cannot be easily disambiguated or explained. Therefore, we recommend translators (students or teachers) to be careful in dealing with the elliptical structures, especially the fuzzy ones, for such structures could be a slippery area for a translator.

References
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استخراج

الحذف هو عملية ترك، أو اسقاط كلمات، أو الفاظ من النص، أو اته م عملية
ترك أحد أجزاء الكلام أو الفاظ أو اغفالها.

وتهدف هذه الدراسة إلى تسليط الضوء على الحذف في المعنى الذي ينتج عن حذف لغوي. كما تهدف إلى التحري عن أسباب الاخفاقات عند ترجمة بعض التراكيب التي حذفت بعض أجزائها. وقد افترضت الدراسة أن الحذف في المعنى غالباً ما ينتج عن وجود تراكيب لغوية فيها حذف، وأن السياق اللغوي قد لا يكون دائماً الملاذ الأخير في حل مشكلة الحذف. واختبرت بطريقة عشوائية عشرة عينات مترجمة من مسرحية ماكبث للكاتب الانكليزي وليم شكسبير ترجمها خمسة من المترجمين المعروفين وهم: جبرا إبراهيم جبرا وصلاح نيازي وحسين أحمد امين وخليل مطران ودار الكتب العلمية في بيروت. وقد كشفت التحليلات التي اجريت على هذه العينات أن الحذف كان العامل الأساسي وراء الاخفاق في عملية الترجمة. كما كشفت التحليلات أيضاً، أن التراكيب اللغوية التي يكون فيها عنصر محدثاً والتراكيب غير الواضحة إلى جانب عوامل أخرى: مثل عدم فهم النص كاملًا وراء اخفاقات المترجمين خلال عملية الترجمة. لذلك، توصي الدراسة أن يكون المترجمون (سواء من الطلبة أو التدريسون) على وعي وادراك حينما وجدت أيّ من التراكيب اللغوية التي يكون فيها حذف غيرّة الوصول إلى ترجمة مناسبة ودقيقة.