

Ellipsis in Ngwa-Igbo

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Abstract

Ellipsis is the omission of redundant constituents in a construction. The word „ Ngwa“ refers to the people, the geo-political area known as Ngwa land and the dialect of Igbo spoken by the indigenes of Ngwa land. The Ngwa people are found in Abia State in the Federal Republic of Nigeria. Some of the objectives of this work are: to illustrate the ability of the remnant in an elliptical structure in the recovery and interpretation of the elided parts, and to show that Ellipsis enhances the economy of words. Data for this paper was obtained using the elicitation method of translating a set of elliptical constructions in the English language into Ngwa-Igbo by two competent native adult speakers of Ngwa-Igbo. Secondary data was collected from text books, and the internet which were acknowledged. The theoretical framework used for this paper is the X – Bar theory of phrasal analysis and the tree diagrams reflected this wherever it was necessary. Some of the findings are: that Ellipsis is a linguistic mechanism that is used to avoid the repetition of strings that have already been uttered in the previous part of a construction and that the name given to each of the type of Ellipsis, depends on what was elided in the fuller structures. This paper recommends the study of Ellipsis as a natural phenomenon in human languages.

Keywords: Ellipsis, remnant, recoverability, X-bar, Ngwa-Igbo.

1.0 Introduction

‘Ngwa’ refers to the dialect, the people and the geo – political area known as Ngwa land. Ngwa people are found in Abia State of Nigeria. Seven of the seventeen Local Government Areas in the State, belong to the Ngwa people. These local Government Areas are: Isiala Ngwa South, Isiala Ngwa North, Obingwa, Osioma, Aba North, Aba South and Ugwunagbo. Ngwa is classified by Williamson and Blench (2003, p. 31) as an Igbo dialect under the new Benue – Congo language family.

The framework adopted for the analysis of data in this paper is the X-Bar Theory of structural representation. The notion of X – Bar Theory was first introduced into grammatical analysis by Chomsky (1970) in his article titled *Remarks on Nominalization* and was later expanded by Jackendoff (1977) in a monograph entitled *X – Syntax*. The major concerns of the X – Bar

Theory are: to account for word order, to determine the configuration of the D – structure, to determine the direction of movement if there is any, to demonstrate constraints in the movement of structural constituents, to determine the structural relationship between the head of a construction and other members of the construction such as: determiners, complements and adjuncts, to recognize intermediate categories like: (N¹, V¹, P¹, I¹), which are larger than the terminal lexical categories; (N, V, P, A) but smaller than the phrasal categories such as: (NP, VP, PP, IP) and so on. (cf. Ndimele 2004, p. 34). The tree diagrams in this paper will reflect this as required.

The quest for what is grammatical and acceptable in linguistics is a major force beneath the search into the acceptance of elided structures with reference to the context of speech. Lyons (1977, p. 589), refers to Ellipsis as “... grammatically incomplete, but



contextually appropriate and interpretable sentence – fragments”. Here Lyons notes categorically that elided structures are syntactically incomplete, but semantically accepted structures with reference to the context of speech. Lyons (1977, p. 589) observes further that “a conversation consisting entirely of grammatically completed text – sentences would generally be unacceptable as a text, and it is part of the language – competence of a speaker of the language to use and accept such incomplete structures in conversations”. Thus, in the view of Lyons, ellipsis is a natural phenomenon. Lyons (1977, p. 589) to illustrate an instance of a conversation gives the following expressions in the English language:

1. ‘As soon as I can’

He explained that this structure “...produced with the appropriate stress pattern and intonation might occur in a text in reply to an utterance (intended and taken as a question) such as;

2. When are you leaving?

He argued that the grammatical structure of the context – dependent sentence fragment, ‘*As soon as I can*’, can be accounted for by describing it as an elliptical, appropriately contextualized version of the utterance’. ‘*I’m leaving as soon as I can*’. Thus, according to Lyons (1977, p. 589) “ellipsis is one of the most obvious effects of contextualization in the case of sentence fragments such as the one just illustrated above.

Lyons (1989, p. 175) again argues that elliptical structures are shorter forms of some longer version of the same sentence, and that elliptical structures can be understood to refer to grammatically equivalent but perhaps stylistically distinct forms as occurring in otherwise identical sentences. This here means that Ellipsis is a style found in some short expressions that

have longer forms with the same meaning. Hence, the need to make a distinction between grammatical and contextual completeness in elided and non-elided forms of identical constructions.

Brown and Miller (1985, p. 151), refer to ellipsis as “structures that are to a greater or lesser degree either grammatically or semantically incomplete or both; grammatically incomplete insofar as constituents have been elided; semantically incomplete inasmuch as the sentence can only be understood with reference to their context”. In both cases, these sentence fragments as they refer to elided structures can only be fully understood by reference to some understood fuller forms where the items have been elided or reduced to pro-forms. Here Brown and Miller describe elided structures as grammatically and semantically incomplete structures that can only be understood with reference to context. Brown and Miller (1985:151), add further that, “the amount of grammatical and contextual interpretation necessary can be appreciated if we consider, for example (3) below to be only understood as (4) only in the appropriate context. In other contexts, it might be understood as: (5) and (6) below:

3. ‘She wouldn’t’.

4. ‘Mary wouldn’t shut the door’.

5. Mary wouldn’t feed the cat; or

6. Jane wouldn’t give up smoking.

Hence, ellipsis from their explanation could give rise to the generic reading of some fragmented structures except in the light of other preceding structures in the context.

Matthews (2007, p. 119) indicates that pro-forms can be used in elided structures to stand in place of full predicates. Matthews explains this by saying that in a structure like:

7. “John did see them”.

Could be reduced to



8.. ‘John did’, with the pro – form *did* replacing the entire predicate. This in other words means that in elliptical structures, stretches of utterances are reduced into just one word recoverable with reference to the context of use.

From the internet, Kennedy (1994, p. 4) asserts that “ellipsis involves the ‘reuse’ of linguistic material, material which is treated by other components of the grammar as identical to the original”. This is what he claims to be the nature of elliptical dependence. It is this aspect of Ellipsis that is responsible for the argument identity constraint in Argument Contained Ellipsis. Argument Contained Ellipsis as used here by Kennedy is Equivalent to a type of Ellipsis called VP Ellipsis. In his defence of the Argument Identity Constraint, Kennedy illustrates that when the subject of the non – elided VP is distinct from the subject of the elided VP, the result is an ungrammatical sentence. He gives the examples below:

9. If John plays well, Lou does [e] too.
10. Mary likes every song that Lou [e].
11. A woman who promised to leave town did [e].
12. * A woman who persuaded Horace to leave town did [e].

(12) above is ungrammatical because the subject of the non – elided VP, *the woman* is distinct from the subject of the elided VP, *Horace*. This he argues “follows from a fundamental property of Anaphoric Relations; dependence or referential dependence, and that intuitively, the interpretation of an anaphoric element is determined by the composition of its antecedent; hence an anaphoric element is dependent on anything contained in its antecedent”. This means that in VP – Ellipsis the elided verb phrase receives its interpretation from the overt verb phrase. Kennedy (1994, p. 4), refers to this type of

relation as ‘elliptical dependence’ or identity relations’. Thus, from the examples above, (9 – 12), the direct object of both the overtly expressed and elided verbs are understood to be the same which gives the required condition for ellipsis to hold. Kennedy schematized his argument as shown below:

“Ellipsis between VP α and VPB, VPB contained in an Argument A α of VP α , is licensed only if A α is identical to the parallel argument AB of VPB”. This means that the recoverability of an elided item is based on dependent relations within the same linguistic environment.

Another insight from the internet by Forgarty (2012, p.1) asserts that the use of ellipsis is indicated by the use of “those little dot – dot – dots you often see in e – mail messages”. Forgarty (2012, p.1) goes further to add that people use it all the time, and it seems like a way of making ones writing more informal and conversational as if a person was pausing, and that one can use ellipsis in formal writing in making quotations. To show the use of dots in indicating ellipsis, Forgarty uses the quotes below:

13. “I cannot help it; reason has nothing to do with it; I love her against reason’.

According to Forgarty, under a tight word limit, the quotation above can be shortened to:

14. ‘I cannot help it ... I love her against reason’.

In his words “the middle part of the construction”... reason has nothing to do with it”, seems redundant and taking it out does not change the meaning. Dot – dot – dot and it is gone, which saves seven words.” He however adds that it is wrong to use an ellipsis to make even a subtle change to the meaning of a quotation. This perception of ellipsis is not what this paper is poised to do



but it is worth mentioning that it is used in the presentation of written materials. This is because points of ellipsis are mechanical devices used to indicate: to indicate a falter in dialog, the passage of time, an unfinished list, or that a speaker has trailed off in the middle of a sentence or left something unsaid, or fragmented speech accompanied by confusion, insecurity, distress or uncertainly.

According to Forgarty the use of ellipsis points as a punctuation mark(...), contrasts with the dash (-), which is used for more confident and decisive pauses. As a warning, Forgarty (2012, p.3) stresses that one should not allow the sweet lure of points of ellipsis “... to muddle one’s ability to write a complete sentence and that writers who use ellipses to imply that they have more to say may not have anything in mind since the device seems a rather cheap one.” This means that one has to be careful when reading a text with points of ellipsis. Forgarty also writes that in the use of points of ellipsis, one must make sure in writing, typesetting, and page designing that the ellipsis points do not end up on two different lines, but with a space on each side of an ellipsis point that is, between the word before it and the word after it because it typically stands in for a missing word or a sentence. Forgarty in this respect points out that if points of ellipsis come after a sentence, one should put the full stop (.), put a space, before putting in the three ellipsis points and that this usually results in four dots in a row. Hence, one has to be careful to observe this punctuational rule. Points of ellipsis, Forgarty adds, must be used to indicate a quotation that starts at the middle of a sentence for good writing habits. For example:

15. Aadvark said, “... squiggly never caught a fish”.

Forgarty argues that “perhaps the original quotation was;

16. “Even though he was on the lake all day, Squiggly never caught a fish”.

Points of ellipsis, in association with question mark, exclamation mark, comma and semicolon Forgarty adds that there should be a gap between each of the different punctuation marks in a good writing exercise. For examples:

17. “Where did he go ...? Why did he go out again?”

18. “Come! Don’t say anything!

In (17), there is a gap between the points of ellipsis and the question mark (?), while in (18) there is a gap between the exclamation mark (!), the points of ellipsis and the full stop (.), which demonstrates a good writing practice.

Martin (2012, p. 1), indicates that “... ellipsis simply means “omission”. In punctuation, Martin adds that the use of the dots of ellipsis means that something is missing from the sentence. For example: (“... and so on ...”). An elliptical conversation, Martin further explains, that it is one where a lot of key information is left out because the speakers know it already”. For example:

19. ‘Have you got one?’ – is elliptical.

Martin explains that in the utterance above, the speakers know what ‘one’ refers to and that in grammar; one most times, in informal conversation, tends to leave out words that our hearers are sure to infer from the context of speech. He gives the following examples:

20. – Got any money? (‘Have you, is omitted).

21. – Must go (I).

22. – There is something but I don’t what ... (its)

23. – I’ve brought the documents, as ... agreed (we).

(20-23) above, have a missing part in them as indicated in the brackets.

From the Free Encyclopedia (2012, p. 1), “Ellipsis is a word from Ancient Greek



which means; omission, or falling short. It refers to the intentional omission of a word, sentence or a whole section from an original text being quoted.” Wikipedia adds that, ellipsis when used at the beginning or end of a sentence, can “inspire a feeling of melancholy or longing. As to its use in writing, this source points out that it is used in reported speech to represent an intentional silence, perhaps indicating irritation, dismay, shock or disgust. In poetry it is used to highlight sarcasm or make the reader think about the last points in the poem. In newspaper reporting, it is used to indicate that a quotation has been condensed for space, brevity or reliance. In Mathematics, it is used to mean “and so forth”. Thus, Wikipedia illustrates the various functions of the points of ellipsis which is required for good reading and writing exercises.

According to Bear (2012, p. 1), in computer interfaces and programming, ellipses are often used in an operating systems taskbars or web browser tabs to indicate longer titles than will fit. In an interface guideline, the use of points of ellipsis after the name of command implies that the user will need to provide further information such as: “Save As...”command, which shows that after being clicked will require the user to enter a file name as opposed to “Save” where the file will usually be saved under its existing name”. This means that point of ellipse is used as a device to direct a computer on what to do. Still on computer operations, this source writes that “an ellipsis character after a status message signifies that an operation may take some time, as in “Downloading updates ...”. Bear also reports that in the internet there is what is called “extended ellipses” which could have several dots of six to twelve points of ellipses used to indicate an awkward silence or a ‘no comment response to a previous

statement made by the other chat party”. Bear, Forgarty and Martin have shown that a good understanding of the use of points of ellipsis is relevant even in the operations of a computer.

Akindele (2012, p. 1), sees ellipsis as, “the idea of omitting part of a sentence on the assumption that an earlier sentence will make the meaning clear”. Akindele identifies three types of ellipsis namely: nominal, verbal and clausal ellipsis. Akindele gives the following examples:

24. Sade bought some oranges and Seun some guavas. (Verbal Ellipsis).
25. Three members of staff went there and yet another three. (Nominal Ellipsis).
26. I left my meal in the kitchen and someone came in and ate it up without saying a word to me. I wish I could find out who. (Clausal Ellipses).

According to Akindele, in (24) above the verb *bought* has been elided, in (25) the noun *members* was elided, while in (26) *who* replaces someone and the clause *came in...* was elided. With reference to Akindele’s assertion, ellipsis is a cohesive device that helps to unify a text by economy of words because it saves a writer from unnecessary repetition of words that already have an endophoric relation in a text.

Ellipsis in the Igbo language is called *ńsépuókúwú* which means deletion of an utterance. This implies that ellipsis is a purely syntactic process that involves the omission of a grammatically required word or phrase that can be inferred from its immediate structural context. Hence, ellipsis is a phenomenon of deletion in the surface structure of a language and this is the view upheld in this paper. Having seen the views of some language scholars on what ellipsis is, the next section of this paper will present the



types of ellipsis in Ngwa-Igbo.

1.1 Ellipsis in Ngwa – Igbo

In this part of the paper, we shall be examining the various types of ellipsis in Ngwa-Igbo. The various types of ellipsis in human language depend on the individual perception of what is omitted in a construction. Below, is a discussion on: Gapping, Stripping, VP- Ellipsis, Pseudo-gapping, Answer Ellipsis, Sluicing, N-Ellipsis, Comparative Ellipsis, and Null Complement Anaphora, as types of ellipsis in Ngwa-Igbo.

1.1.1 Gapping

Matthews (2007, p. 153), refers to gapping as "... the deletion of a verb, with or without other elements from the middle of

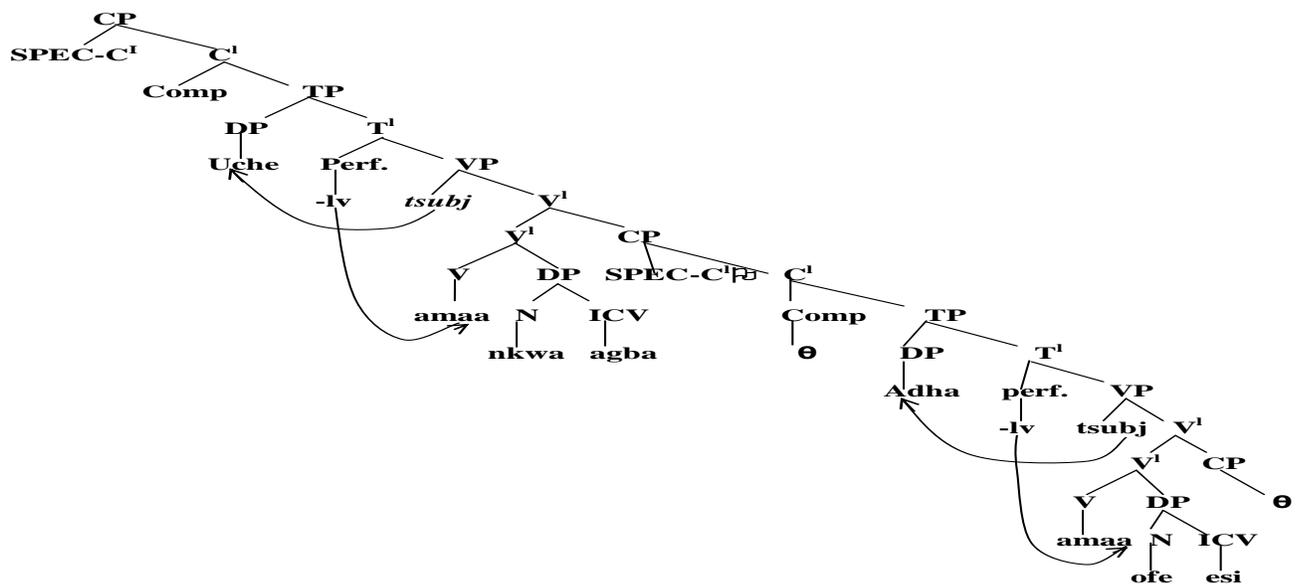
the second and any subsequent clauses in a sequence related by coordination". This means that redundant materials that are present in the immediate preceding clause in a coordinate construction are not deleted. The gapped material usually has a finite verb. For example:

27a. *Úchè amáálá nkwa ágbá Àdhá amáálá ófè' ésí*
 Uche pr. know dance ICV, Adha pr. Know soup ICV
 Uche knows how to dance and Adha knows how to cook soup.

b. *Úchè amáálá nkwa agba Àdhá [e] ófè' [e].*
 Uche pr. knows suff dance ICV Adha [e] soup [e].
 'Uche knows how to dance, Adha soup'.

Below are the tree diagrams for (27a -b) represented as (27c-d):

c.

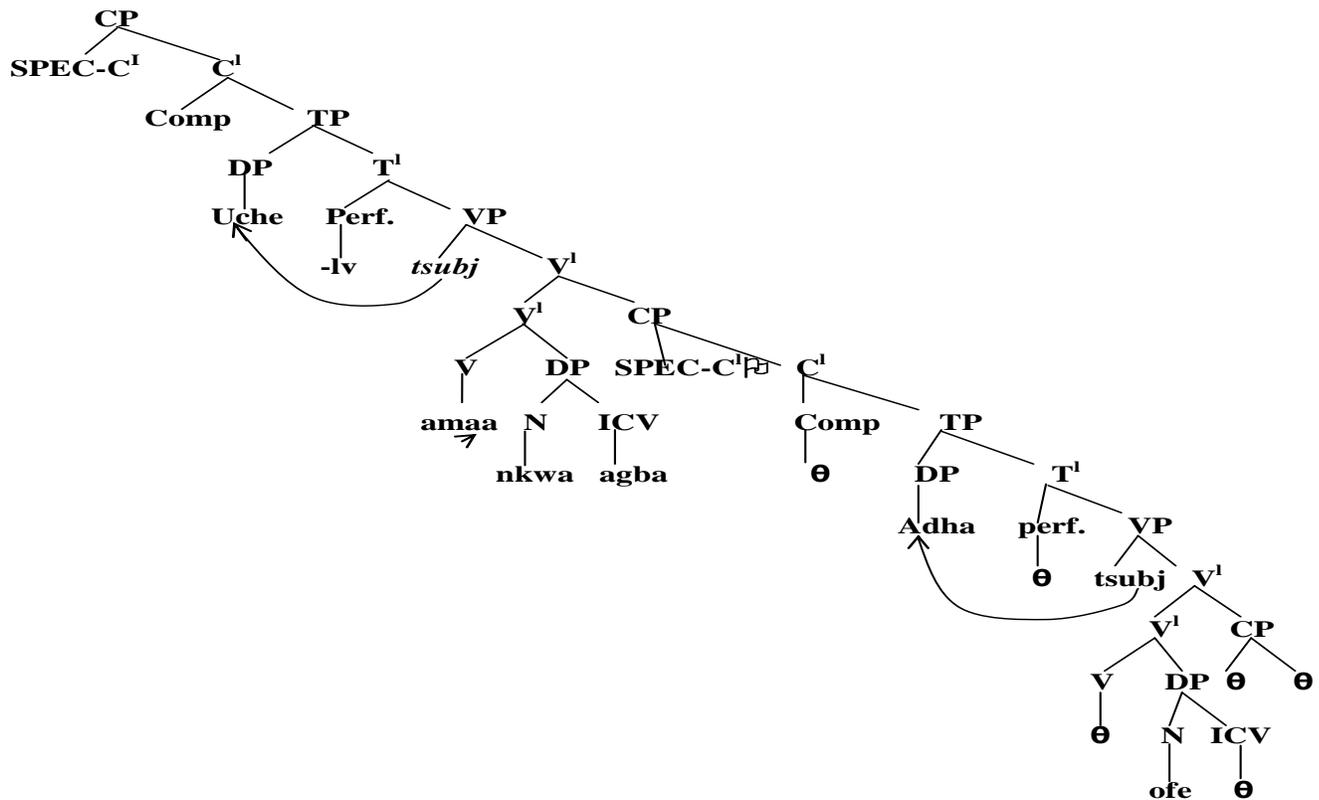


Úchè amáálá nkwa ágbá Àdhá amáálá ófè' ésí

Fig.1: Diagram illustrating a non-gapped structure in Ngwa-Igbo.



d.



Úchè amáálá nkwa agba Àdhá [e] ófè' [e].

Fig.2: Diagram illustrating a gapped structure in Ngwa-Igbo.

In (27a) is the underlying structure from which (27b) is derived. In (27a) there are two clauses: *Úchè amáálá nkwa àgbá*, ‘Uche knows how to dance’ and *Àdhá amáálá ófè esi*. ‘Adha knows how to cook soup’. conjoined without an overt coordinating conjunction. In (27b), the verb phrase in the second clause has been eliminated, leaving only the subject nominal *Àdhá* and the object *ófè* in the predicate positions of the second clause. In the tree diagram for (27c-d), the arrow from the *tsubj* to DP (Determiner Phrase) in consonance with the X-Bar Theory shows that the subjects: *Úchè* and *Àdhá* in the coordinate sentence are internally generated

by the verb which is the theta role assigner. The arrow from the T (Tense node) lowers the *-lv* suffix to the verb for the complete realisation of the verb *amáálá* ‘knows’ in its appropriate perfect tense in Ngwa. There is no elision of any constituent in (27c). In (27d), there is a deletion of the verb *amáálá* ‘knows’, and the inherent complement verb *esi* ‘cook’, in the second clause. The condition which enabled this is because the verbs in the coordinated construction are identical.

1.1.2 Stripping

According to Matthews (2007, p. 348), stripping in linguistics is “... the reduction of a clause to a single unit by which it differs



from an earlier clause to which it is related by coordination. Matthews gives this example in English:

- 28a. I sent a letter to her parents and I sent some flowers to her parents.
b. I sent a letter to her parents and <> some flowers.

Here in stripping, one can see that the agent in the two clauses refers to a particular person. Hence the difference between gapping and stripping is that while gapping refers to different subjects in the two coordinated structures, that of stripping refers to the same agent carrying out different actions in the two coordinated structures, hence the elision of the subject in the second clause since it can be recovered by reference to the preceding subject. This is demonstrated below in Ngwa:

- 29a. *Ūbí n̄zùtààrà yá ósè, Ūbí n̄zùtààrà yá n̄nú.*
Ūbi pr. buy - suff - past he pepper Ūbi pr - buy past her salt.
'Ūbi bought her some pepper and Ūbi bought her some salt'.

- b. *Ūbí n̄zùtààrà yá ósè[e] là n̄nú.*
Ūbi pr. buy - suff- past her pepper elision and salt.
'Ūbi bought her some pepper and some salt.

In (29a) there are two coordinated structures: *Ūbí n̄zùtààrà yá ósè* 'Ūbi bought some pepper for her, and *Ūbí n̄zùtààrà yá n̄nú*. 'Ūbi bought some salt for her' In (29b) above, the entire constituents of the second clause was elided with the exception of its direct object *n̄nú* ⇔ 'salt'. So the stripping was almost a total one.

1.1.3 VP – Ellipsis

Kennedy, (1994, P. 2) argues that, "VP – ellipsis is characterized by the apparent deletion of a full VP under identity with some VP in the discourse". An insight from Wikipedia, the Free Encyclopedia asserts that "this type of ellipsis is also known as Verb Phrase ellipsis (VPE). The VP – ellipsis, elides a non – finite VP. The ellipsis must be introduced by an auxiliary verb or by the particle *to*. Examples from Kennedy (1994, p.

2)are:

30. If John plays well, Lou does [e] too.
31. Sterling will try the push after Maureen has [e].

Examples from Ngwa – Igbo are:

- 32a. *Àdhá n̄dì írì n̄rí, Úchè n̄dì írì n̄rí.*
Adha pr. be to eat food, Uchepr be to eat food.
'Adha is eating food Uche is eating food.

- b. *Àdhá n̄dì írì n̄rí, Úchè n̄dì kwà.*
Adha pr be to eat food, Uchepr be too.
Adha is eating and so is Uche.

(32a) above, is a coordinate construction but with no overt marking of the coordination. However, it is obvious that the construction is made up of two independent clauses: *Àdhá n̄dì írì n̄rí*, 'Adha is eating', and *Úchè n̄dì írì n̄rí*, 'Uche is eating'. In (32b), in the second clause of the coordinate construction, the main verb has been elided, leaving only the VP *n̄dì írì n̄rí* is eating' and the adverb *kwa*, 'too'.

1.1.4 Pseudo-gapping

This is a type of ellipsis that many linguists take to be a particular manifestation of VP – Ellipsis. The major difference between VP – ellipsis and Pseudo-gapping is that Pseudo-gapping occurs in contrastive contexts of a single verb. Carnie (2007, p. 384) asserts that pseudo-gapping is a "...variant of ellipsis that puzzlingly doesn't delete the entire VP... but that the accusative DP is left behind". The accusative DP here refers to the object of the second clause. Carnie (2007, p. 384) argues that in regular VP – ellipsis, the object disappears in those contexts, unlike in pseudo-gapping. Carnie gives the example below to drive home his point.

33. Darin will eat a squid sandwich and Raiza will [e] a peanut butter one.

An example of Pseudogapping in Ngwa-Igbo is:

- 34a. *Úchè n̄chòrò jí, mà Àdhá n̄chòrò éde.*



Uche pr want + past yam but Adha pr want + past cocoyam.
Uche wants yam, but Adha wants cocoyam.

b. *Úchè òchòrò jí, Àdhá [e] éde.*

Uche pr. want + past yam Adha pr. [e] cocoyam.

'Uche wants yam, Adha cocoyam.

In (34a), we have two structures: *Úchè òchòrò jí*, 'Uche wants yam' and *Àdhá òchòrò éde*, 'Adha wants cocoyam', linked by the contrastive coordinator *mà* 'but'. In (34b) there is a deletion of the coordinator and the verb of the second clause which leaves only the subject *Àdhá* and the object *éde* in the second clause.

1.1.5 Answer Ellipsis

This type of ellipsis involves question – answer pairs. The question focuses on an unknown piece of information, often using an interrogative word like: *who*, *which*, *what*, *when*, *how*, and so on. The corresponding answer provides the missing information and in so doing, the redundant information that appeared in the question, could be optionally elided. For example:

35a. Who has been hiding the truth?

b. Billy (has been hiding the truth.)

36a. What have you been trying to cook?

b. (I have been trying to cook) rice.

Examples in Ngwa-Igbo are:

37a. *Únyé nsi là Èzè òzùrù ígwè?*

Who pr say that Ezepr buy + past bicycle?

Who said that Eze bought a bicycle?

b. *Àdhá [e]*

(37a) above is the question construction. (37b) represents the structure of ellipsis where every constituent of the answer has been elided, leaving only the subject '*Àdhá*'. The realization of the elided section in the answer would come from the information contained in the question.

1.1.6. Sluicing

According to Chung (2012, p. 1),in

Sluicing, "...an interrogative phrase appears stranded where one might have expected to find a complete constituent question". In the words of Matthews (2007, p. 370), Sluicing is used to refer to "... a term proposed for a syntactic process deleting all but a questioned element in a dependent interrogative". Thus, in Sluicing, there is a deletion of some parts of an answer terminating in the part that re – echoes the question. For example in Ngwa:

38a. *Úléè mgbè Jísosgà – àbía?*

Q when Jesus will come.

'When will Jesus come?'

b. *Úgà – àbía, kámaàmághi mí, mgbè óbū [e].*

He aux. pr. Come conj. Pr know NEG. When he it be [e].

'He will come but I know not when it will be [e].'

39a. *Ú bú gírì là Àdhá mmà esí?*

Pro be what that Adha know cook

What is it that Adha can cook?

b. *Àdhá mmà hwé esí, káma àmághi mhwé óbū [e].*

Adha pr know thing pr cook, but pr know not me thing pro cook [e]

Adha knows how to cook but I don't know what [e].

In (38b) the verb part *Ó gà – àbía*, 'he will come' which should have completed the answer part is deleted and in (39b), the verb part *Ó mà esí*, 'she knows how to cook' which should also have completed the answer part is equally deleted. But these deleted parts are recoverable from the questions part of the conversation.

1.1.7. N – Ellipsis

This means Noun ellipsis. This occurs when the noun and perhaps the accompanying modifiers are omitted from a noun phrase. N – ellipsis often occurs in structures with cardinal or ordinal numbers. (cf. Wikipedia (2012, p. 5). Examples are given below from Ngwa – Igbo.

40a. *Úché mbugá ádí ghí mímá, óchénkéátó ádí ghi mímá.*

Chair first pr. be + NEG good, chair of three pr be +neg good.

The first chair is not good, and the third chair is not good.



- b. Óché mbụ là [e] òkéáto ádi ghi mǎmá.
Chair first and ellipsis of three pr be + neg good.
'The first and third chairs are not good.'

The above examples illustrate N – Ellipsis with cardinal and ordinal numbers. In the deep structure in (40a), the nouns in the two clauses are fully spelt out with their ordinal numbers. In (40b) however, there is a merge of the two nouns by the coordinating conjunction *la* 'and', followed by the elision of the subject *óché* 'chair' in the second construction. However, there is an elision of the verb phrase *ádíghī mǎmá* 'is not good' in the first clause. This resulted in the realisation of the construction: *Óché mbụ là [e] òké áto ádi ghi mǎmá*. 'The first and third chairs are not good'.

1.1.8. Comparative Ellipsis

This is also called comparative deletion. It occurs in comparative clauses introduced by *than* in the English language. The expression in the comparative clause is elided that corresponds to the expression focused by a comparative morph such as *more* or words with the suffix *-er* in the antecedent clause. Examples of Comparative ellipsis in the English language are:

41. Doris looks more satisfied than Doreen looks [satisfied].
42. William has more friends in many countries than you have [in many countries].

(cf. Wikipedia (2012, p. 6). In Comparative Ellipsis, one must observe that the unelliptical versions of these sentences are unacceptable. Hence, Comparative Ellipsis seems to be obligatory for structural acceptability in order to avoid the production and use of clumsy constructions. An example in the Ngwa-Igbo is:

- 43a. Nkèchí nnwèrè nṅhùṅhù káriákè Àdhá nnwèrè nṅhùṅhù.
Nkechi NNP have + rv hair more of Adha NNP have + rv hair
'Nkechi has more hair than Adha has more hair.'

- b. Nkèchí nnwèrè nṅhùṅhù káriá [e] Àdhá [e]
Nkechi NNP have + rv hair more [e] Adha [e]
Nkechi has more hair than Adha.

In (43a) the item that is in comparison is: *nṅhùṅhù* 'hair' and it occurs in the two clauses in the construction. With the application of Comparative ellipsis *nṅhùṅhù* 'hair' is deleted from the underlying construction resulting in the production of (43b) which is a less clumsy construction and a more generally accepted form.

1.1.9. Null Complement Anaphora

In this type of Ellipsis, there is a complete deletion of a complement, whereby the elided complement could be a finite clause, an infinitive clause or a prepositional phrase that has already occurred in the question. The free encyclopedia (2012, p. 6), reports that: "The verbal predicates that can license Null Complement Anaphora, form a limited set. These include verbs like: know, approve, refuse and decide". This means that not all verbs can be subcategorized for this kind of ellipsis. Some examples in English are:

- 44a. Do you know what happened?
b. No, I don't know (what happened). = finite clause
45a. Do you approve of the plan?
b. No, I don't approve (of the plan). = prepositional phrase
46a. Have you decided to take the offer?
b. Yes, I have (decided to take the offer). = infinitive clause
47a. They told Bill to help but he refused (to help).
= infinitive clause.

Examples from Ngwa-Igbo are:

- 48a. Ị kpébiélá ịru órú áhụ?
Pro decide + perfpr work work that
Have you decided to do the work?
b. Ééé, ékpébiaaálá ḿ.
Yes, pr. decide me
Yes, I have decided

(48a - b) is structurally represented below as (48c-d):



c.

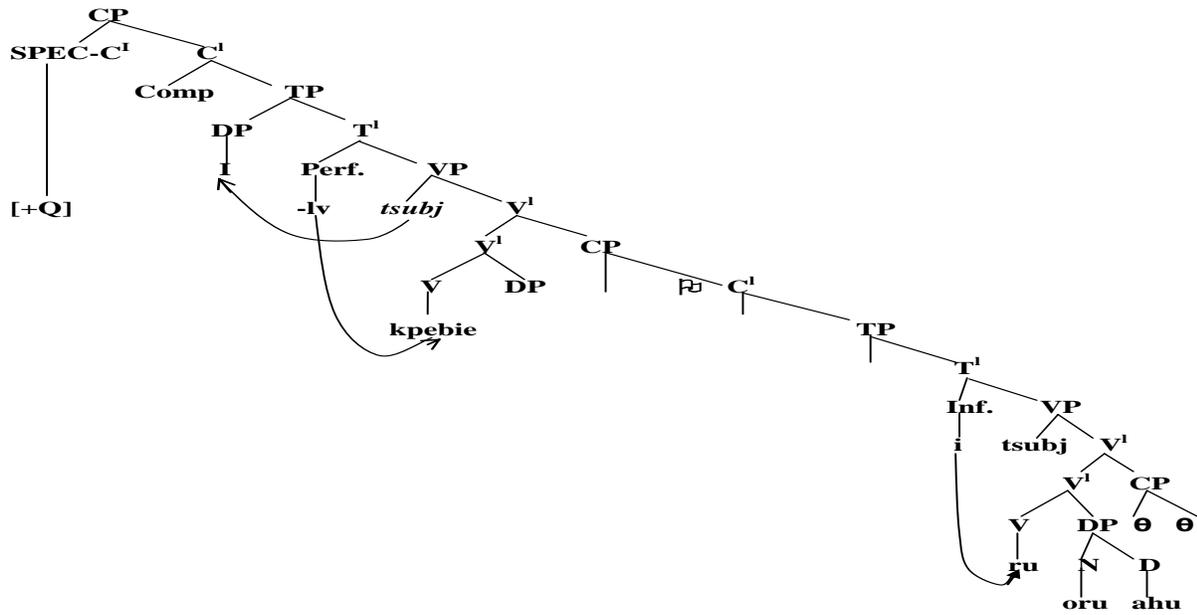


Fig. 3: Diagram representing an unnull complement anaphora in Ngwa-Igbo

d.

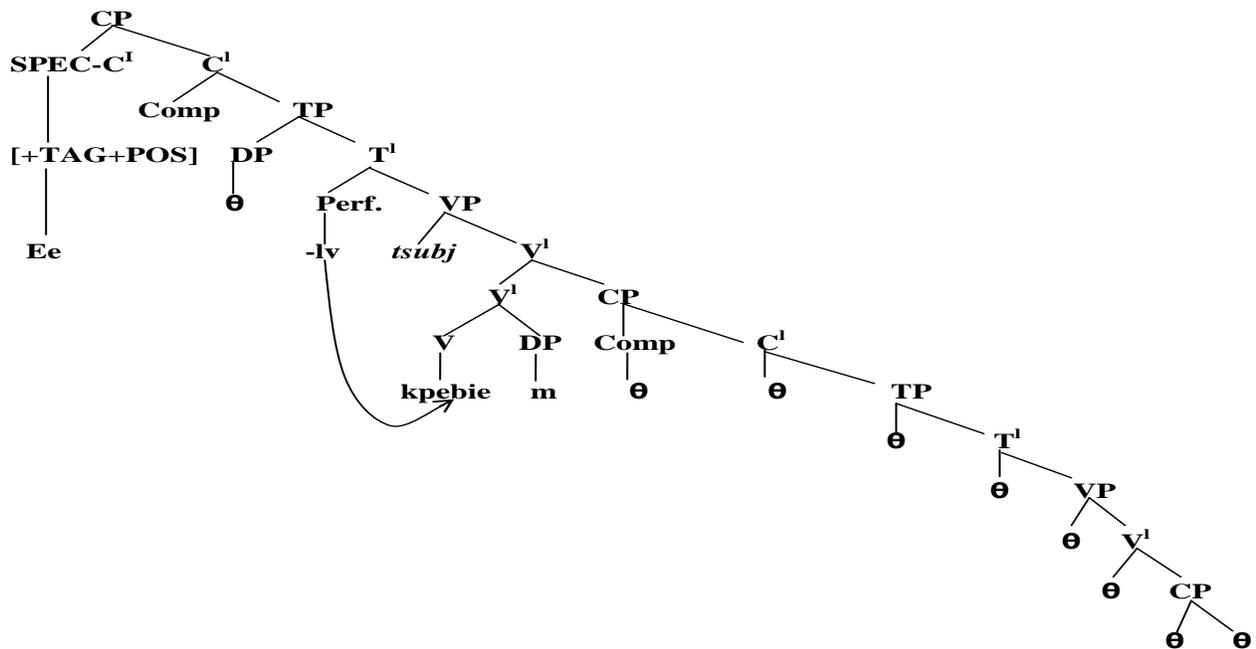


Fig. 4: Diagram representing a null complement anaphora in Ngwa-Igbo



In (48b) the elided part is: *iru órú áhù* ‘to do that work’.the part that is already contained in the question in (48a). From the tree diagram in (48c), the arrow from the *tsubj* to the DP, shows that the subject is internally generated by the verb, while the arrow from T (Tense node) to the verb lowers the prefix *i-* to form the infinitive *iru* ‘to work’. In (28d), which is the response to (28c), there is a deletion of the anaphoric complement: *iru órú áhù* ‘to do that work’. This resulted in the elliptical structure: *Ééé, ékpéébiaálá m.* ‘Yes, I have decided instead of : *Ééé, ékpéébiaálá m iru órú áhù.* ‘ Yes, I have decided to do that job’ which is the full expression of the reduced answer.

2.0 Conclusion

This paper, started off by introducing the dialect of study and its linguistic classification. Thereafter, a brief review of some literature of what ellipsis is, was presented. This paper, it is establishes that ellipsis refers to structures that are shorter forms of some longer versions of the same sentence that are grammatically equivalent but perhaps stylistically distinct forms. This paper in line with the assertion of Lyons (1977, p. 589) was able to establish the fact that there are contexts where structurally incomplete expressions are acceptable to both speaker and hearer and that the ability to produce and accept such structures form part of the native speakers competence in that, language or dialect as the case may be.

In the review of literature on ellipsis, it was found out that when elliptical structures are used in quotation, such quotations should retain the original meaning and that the use of points of ellipsis as a punctuation mark, is of great relevance to the act of good writing. In all the examples presented in this paper, it was observed that ellipsis is a linguistic mechanism that is used to avoid the repetition of strings that have

already been uttered in the previous part of a construction.

The paper illustrates too that elliptical structures could give rise to the generic reading of some structures, but the context of speech helps to resolve such instances of ambiguity. This paper has also shown that ellipsis is a natural phenomenon in Ngwa – Igbo as it is in all human languages; though such structures are grammatically and semantically incomplete. Their grammatical incompleteness is as a result of the fact that some constituents have been elided; and semantically incomplete in as much as the sentences can only be understood with reference to their context or reference to some other constituents in the discourse.

The paper also showed that the name given to each of the type of ellipsis depends on what was elided in the fuller structures. This paper also demonstrates the fact that ellipsis involves a dependence relation that holds between some elements within the same linguistic environment. Thus, in ellipsis recoverability of elided constituents is possible because of the antecedent and anaphoric relation that exist in elliptical structures. The paper also showed that ellipsis enhances the economy of words and avoids clumsy constructions. The data from Ngwa-Igbo have shown that ellipsis is a cohesive device which helps to bind elements of a construction together by the dependence relation of elided constituents on the non-elided counterparts. Hence, in ellipsis there is a reuse of materials. From the data, it was found out that ellipsis occurred more in coordinate constructions and in question and answer pairs. This paper is not exhaustive in all that could be said about ellipsis in Ngwa-Igbo, but it rather recommends for further research in the study of ellipsis in Ngwa-Igbo and other languages of the world.



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