

Ellipsis in Arabic and English

Mohammad Al-Khawalda
Mutah University

1. Introduction

The term ellipsis, broadly construed, applies to syntactic structures that seem to host obligatory positions not filled with overt lexical material. More narrowly construed, the term refers to a hypothetical grammatical process that deprives lexical material of its phonetic content. So, ellipsis is a grammatical omission in contrast to other kinds of omission such as phonological, morphological, or semantic (Quirk, 1985: 883). Ellipsis can be distinguished by its recoverable nature, which means the insertion of grammatical elements results in a grammatical sentence (*ibid.*, 885).

2. Types of Ellipsis

Ellipsis will be classified according to the function of the ellipsed word(s) such as subject, object, etc. .¹ In the course of this paper five types of ellipsis will be discussed : subject ellipsis, object ellipsis, verb ellipsis, subject-verb ellipsis, and verb-object ellipsis. Other types of ellipsis in both Arabic and English are discussed by the author elsewhere (cf. Khawalda, forthcoming). In most cases Arabic examples are drawn from the Holy Quran. Each example from the Holy Quran will be indicated by the number of Surah and verse (in brackets) at the end of the example. In addition to examples from the Holy Quran we will in the course of this paper cite examples representing Modern Standard Arabic. Brackets within the cited example will be used to indicate the ellipsed element(s). In some cases this symbol # will be used.

2.1. Subject Ellipsis

Subject ellipsis can be classified into two types depending on whether or not it can be uniquely recovered/reconstructed from its immediate

linguistic context.. This phenomenon can be exemplified from Arabic. Consider the following data:

1. a. *laa yaghurannaka taqalluba allathiina kafaruu fii albilaadi, (taqalluba hum)mataa9un qaliil.....(2:197)*
 - Don't be deceived by the free disposal of the disbelievers throughout the land, (their free disposal) is brief enjoyment.....)
- b. *wamaa adraaka malhutamah, (alhutamah) naaru Allah almuqadah (104:6)*
 - How do you know what the crushing fire is, (the crushing fire) is the kindled fire of Allah
2. a. *sayaquuluuna (hum) thalathatun rabi9uhum kalbahum.....(18:22)*
 - they will say (they) were three , the fourth was their dog
- b. *waqul (haathaa) alhaqu min rabbikum..... (18: 29)*
 - And say: (this) truth is from your lord.
- c. *?illa saa9atan min nahaarin (hadhaa) balaaghun fahal yuhlaku....(46:35)*
 - ...just an hour in a single day (it) is announcement [promise]....
- d. *(haadhihi) swratun anzalnaaha(24:1)*
 - (This) is a surat we have sent down...²
3. a. *fajluduum (kula wahidin minhum) thamaaniina jaldatan...(24:4)*
 - ...flog them (each of them) eighty strips...
- b- *walaa taquuluu (alihatunaa) thalathatun ?intahu khayran lakum...(4:171)*
 - And don't say (our Gods) are three. Cease it is better for you...
- c- *kallaa ?idhaa balaghat (alruuhu) altaraaqii.(75:26)*
 - No, when (the soul) reaches the collar bone
- d- *hattaa tawart (al- shamsuu) bilhijaab. (38:32)*
 -Till (the sun) had hidden in the veil [of night]
- e- ..*wakhalafa (Allahu) al?insaana Da9ifa.(4:28)*
 - (Allah) created the human weak.

All the above examples (1-3) exhibit an ellipted NP which has a subject function. the elided subjects in (1.a-b) are in the second clause and it is already mentioned in the first. The subjects are *taqalluba* (free disposal) in (1a) and *alhutamah* (crushing fire) in (1b). There is a similarity between English and Arabic in this respect. Quirk et al (1985:885) state that the missing word must be present in the text exactly in the same form, otherwise the result would be a vague or ambiguous sentence. Similarly, Johnson (2001: 465) points out that the ellipsis site must be lexically and syntactically identical to its antecedent as in the following pair of English sentences:

4. a- **Bill** will leave tomorrow and (**Bill**) may see her.

b- John ate the food and (John) drank the juice.

It is difficult to agree with Quirk and Johnson, although the above Arabic examples support their argument since in English we can say '*She speaks English better than I can (speak)*'. In this case, we cannot use '**speaks**' instead of the elided verb (**speak**).

Arabic contrasts sharply with English in the examples in (2). As can be noted, the missing subjects in (2) are pronouns; *hum* (they-mas), *haadhaa* (this-mas), *haadhaa* (this-mas) [i.e. Holy Quran] and *haadhihi* (this-fem) (see Al-Zarkashi, 1980:135-38). Unlike the examples in (1), the elided subjects in (2) don't have antecedents whether the elided subject is in the first clause as in (2.a-b) or in the embedded clause as in (2.c-d). The elided subjects here can be predicted syntactically and semantically. For instance, any clause must have a subject according to EPP (Extended Projection Principle) (Haegman, 1991:59). Such ellipsis is not permitted in English.

In some cases as the examples in (3) demonstrate, ellipsis depends on extra-linguistic knowledge. For instance, in (3.a) '*flog them eighty strips*' eighty strips cannot be divided among them, i.e. if they are twenty, four strips for each. Moreover, the pronoun *them* in this context is an indefinite number, it is related to the people having committed adultery. From a religious point of view, anybody having committed this sin must be flogged 80 stripes. Consequently, the subject '*each of them*' is ellipited and, in this case, it is not predicted from its antecedent but from our extralinguistic knowledge of Islam. In (3b), on the other hand, we cannot perceive of the following string '*walaa taquuluu thalathatun*' (don't say three) as a complete sentence without ellipsis, otherwise *thalathatun* (three) is forbidden in Islam, which is not the case. What is forbidden in Islam is saying we have 'three gods'. So, the subject of the embedded clause '*alihatunaa*' (gods-ours) is ellipited. Again, the NP 'God' is not mentioned in a preceding clause. The same interpretation applies to the ellipited subjects in (3.c-e) (i.e. a deleted subject can be uniquely recovered/reconstructed through recourse to our knowledge).

In addition to the religious knowledge through which we can predict/infer the deleted subject, we can predict it via syntactic

knowledge: *thalathat-un* in (3.b) is in the nominative case, which means that it is not object for the verb. This necessarily indicates that it is the predicate for a deleted subject.

Dafr (1998: 200) points out that the subject (doer) is ellipated when it is known to the listener. Levinson (2000:183ff) states that ellipsis is basically a linguistic, rule governed process. He, however, adds that “the pragmatics is involved in the recovery of the elided linguistic material, which must then be semantically interpreted, at which point we apparently need another pragmatic processing stage to recover the implicatures of the elided material” (ibid. 184). Moreover, Levinson says that the syntax does not always resolve the missing word. This position will obviously account for the type of subject ellipsis discussed above.

Sometimes ellipsis could be predicted from the structure of the sentence. That is, the structure tells us that there must be a missing subject: cf.

5. *falamaa jaa?a (alrasulu) sulaymaana*
 when came Solomon-acc.
 “When (the prophet) came to Solomon.”

The NP *sulaymaana* in (5) cannot be taken as a subject ‘*when Solomon came*’ since it is in the accusative. This necessarily entails that the subject, which is *alrasulu* (the prophet), is ellipated. We say that the ellipated subject is the ‘prophet’ not any other noun because it is predicted from the surrounding linguistic context, which indicates that *Allah sent his prophet to Solomon*.

With the exception of the examples in (1), which reflect the rules for subject ellipsis in English, the other types of subject ellipsis cited above behave differently.

Unlike English, many languages with full verbal inflections, like Italian and Spanish, have the option of omitting the subject. Consider the following examples from Italian: (Haegeman, 1991:415)

- 6- a- Ho telefonato
 (I) have telephoned.
 b- Giacomo ha detto che (pro) ha telefonato.
 Giacomo has said that (he) has telephoned.

As can be noted, the subject of the main clause in (6a) and that in the embedded clause in (6b) are ellipited although the verb is finite.

2.2. Object Ellipsis

Generally speaking, the conditions governing subject deletion in Arabic are the same for object deletion. Consider the following examples:

7. a. Allahu yabsitu alrizqa liman yasha?u wayuqadiru (alrizqa liman yasha?u) wafarihu bilhayati ddunyaa.....(13:26)
 - Allah increases the provision for whom he wills, and straitens (the provision for whom he wills) and they rejoice the life of the world....
- b. yamhu Allahu maa yasha?u wayuthabitu (maa yasha?u) wa9indahu... (13:39)
 - Allah blots out what he wills and confirms (what he wills) and he has...
- c. a9indahu 9ilmu alghayb fahwaa yaraa (alghayba) (89:35)
 - He indeed has the knowledge of the unseen and he sees(the unseen).
- d. wama wadda9a-ka rabuka wama qalaa(ka).(93:3)
 - Allah did not say bye to you or hates (you)
- e.laqad wajadana maa wa9adanaa rabuna, fahal wajadt-um maa wa9ada (kum) rabbukum.....(7:44)
 -We have found what our lord had promised us, have you also found what your lord had promised (you)....
- f. yawma tubaddalu al?ardu ghayra al?ardi wassamawatu (ghayra assamaawati) (14:48).
 - when the earth is replaced by a different earth and the skies by different skies.
- g. fadhuuqu (9adhaba alkहुldi) bimaa nasiitum liqaa?a yawmikum haadhaawadhuuqu 9athaaba alkहुldi bimaa kuntum ta9aluun (32:14)
 - So taste (the abiding torment) for what you have forgotten this.... and taste the abiding torment for what you used to do
- h. hal yasma9uuna (du9aakum) ?in yad9uun.
 - Do they hear (your prayer)when you pray.

All the examples in (7) above exhibit object ellipsis either in the first or the second clause. The objects in (7a-d) [*alrizqa liman yasha?u* (the provision for he wills), *maa yasha?u* (what he wants), *alghayba* (the unseen) and *-ka* (you)] are elided in the second clause and can be predicted from the antecedent in the first clause. The elided objects in the following (7.e-f) are in the second clause. However, although ellipsis

here occurs in the second clause, these two examples differ from the previous ones (i.e. 7.a-d) in that they do not have antecedents or at least no identical antecedent. The ellipsed objects in these two examples can be predicted through analogy: in (7.e) the elided object is connected semantically and syntactically with the subject of the same clause (*we have found what he promised 'us', have you found what he promised 'you'?*). Similarly, (the elided object in 7. f) can be predicted through analogy (i.e. the NP '*the earth*' is replaced by '*different earth*' and the NP '*the skies*' is replaced by '*different skie*').

None of the above processes of object ellipsis (7.a-f) seem to be permissible in English. In English, the object can be ellipsed in the first but not the second clause: Cf.

- 8- *a- Bill likes **syntax** and John likes (syntax).
 b- Bill likes (syntax), and John likes, **syntax**
 *c- John bought **the book** and Mary bought (the book).
 d- John bought **the book** and (John) read it.

Wilder (1995:) accounts for the ungrammaticality of ellipses in sentences like (8.a&c) in terms of an antigovernment condition: "An ellipsis site may not be commanded by an overt head in its domain. (33)

The above remarks do not imply that Arabic does not exhibit ellipsis in the first clause. Object ellipsis in (7.g) is similar to the object ellipsis in English: the verb *taste* requires an object. The object *9aThaba alk_huldi* (abiding torment) is ellipsed in the first clause and realised in the second.

Ellipsis of the object in the second clause is not restricted to Arabic. Many other languages such as Chinese, Korean, and Japanese allow object ellipsis in the second clause (See Otani and Whitman, 1991; Hoji, 1998 for examples). This type of ellipsis is also available in other European languages such as Portuguese and Italian which allow object ellipsis in the second clause (Qtani and Whitman, 1991:356).

In some cases, object ellipsis can take place without having antecedent or being repeated in the following context as the examples in (6) above. That is, the ellipsed object can be inferred by extralinguistic knowledge. Consider the following examples:

9. a. 9alaa ?an ta?juranii (nafsuka) thamaani siniina....(28:27)
 - ...on condition that you rented me (yourself) for eight years...
- b. waqaala alladhina laa ya9lamuna (NP)lawla yukalimuna Allah(2:118)
 -Those who don't know # said only if Allah doesn't talk to us.
- c- afalaa tasma9uuna (NP) (28:71)
 - Don't You hear #
- d- afalaa tubsiruuna (NP) (28:72)
 - Don't you see #
- e- laa nasqii (mawashinaa) hattaa yasduru arru9a?u (28:23)
 - we don't water (our folks) till the shepherd left the water..
- f- kataba Allahu la?aGlibana anaa warusuli (alkafiriina) ?ina Allaha qawiun 9aziiz.(58:21)
 - Allah swears that I (Allah) and my messengers will defeat #, Allah is so powerful

None of the missing objects in (9) above is mentioned previously or in a following sentence. In (9.a) the missing object is *nafsuka* (yourself) for it cannot be the adverbial phrase *thamaani siniina*. In (9.b) the object of the transitive verb *ya9lamuna* (they know) is ellipted , which constitutes the focus of negation. The same phenomenon is present in examples (9. c&d): the objects of the transitive verbss verbs *tasma9uun* (you hear) *tubsiruun* (you see) are deleted because the object can be predicted here to be 'the fact or reality' since Allah here is addressing human beings. On the other hand, The ellipted object of the transitive verb *nasqii* (water-we) in (9.e) can be predicted from the adverbial clause 'till the shepherd left the water', it is the NP *mawashinaa* (our folks). The idea here is that we cannot water our folks till they water their folks. The object in (9. g) can be inferred from our religious knowledge (i.e. *disbelievers*) .

Quirk, et al (1985: 862) distinguish three types of 'recoverability' and point out that it is not necessary for the ellipted element to be mentioned before. Below is a brief exposition of these three types of recoverability:

(i) **Textual recoverability:** The full form of the ellipted constituent is recoverable from a neighboring text, either a preceding text or a following text .

(ii) **Situational recoverability:** The ellipted word(s) can be predicted from the extralinguistic situation as in the Arabic examples cited above.

(iii) **Structural recoverability:** What is ellipsed can be inferred from certain syntactic clues in the sentence as the in example (4) above.

In double object constructions, it is possible to ellip t one or both objects. Consider the following examples:

10. a- walasawfa yu9tika rabuka (NP) fatardaa (58:21)
 - "Allah will give you # and you will satisfy."
 b- thumma ?itakhadhtum al9ijla (?ilahan) min ba9dihi
 - then you take the ox as Allah.
 c- hattaa yu9tu al-jizyah..... (287)
 Till give-they poll-tax
 d- fa?amma man ?9taa (NP) (NP) wattaqaa (92:5)
 - But that who gave # # and feared Allah.

The verbs in the examples in (10) require two objects (direct and indirect objects). In (10.a) the context suggests that the deleted direct object is the the NP '*fortune*'. The same is true of (10.b) where the ellipsed object is the NP '*Allah*'. On the other hand, the situation in (10.c) is different. Here what is ellipsed is the indirect object, which is understood to be the pronoun *you*. In (10.d) the two objects of the verb *?a9Taa* (*gave*) are ellipsed. Since the situation here is about helping poor people and giving them goods and money, we can predict that the two objects are '*the poor*' as the indirect object and '*something*' the direct object. To sum up, none of the suppressed objects in the above examples (110. a-d) can be predicted from the occurrence of an identical constituent

2.3. Verb Ellipsis

As is well-known in Arabic, whether the subject is present as a lexical word or not, it is attached to the verb as an inflectional morpheme. It is thus difficult to talk about verb ellipsis in Arabic since the ellipsis of the verb is necessarily accompanied by subject or object ellipsis. In this paper, we shall use the term "verb ellipsis" to cases ion which the lexical NP for which the verb is inflected (subject or object) is present in the sentence. Otherwise, it will be treated as 'subject and verb ellipsis' or 'object and a verb elipsis'. It is worth pointing out in this context, however, that verb ellipsis in Arabic is rare and is generally restricted to intransitive verbs since the deletion of a transitive or a ditransitive verb is necessarily accompanied by the obligatory deletion of one objects. We return to elaborate on this point below.

Verb deletion can be exemplified by the following two verses from the Holy Quran:

- 11- a- ?in (halaka) ?imri?un halaka..... (4: 176)
“.....If a man (died) he is dead.....”
b. ?idha (?inshaqat) alsamaa?u ?inshaqat (84:1)
“When the heaven (splits) it is split”

It is easy to recognize that the ellipited verbs examples (11.a-b) above can be inferred from the occurrence of an adjective that is derived from the main verb in the senence. However, some traditional Arab grammarians (Kufan School) deny the existence of ellipsis in these two examples. They treat the phenomenon present in these two sentences as a change in the word order and maintain that the two sentences above can be interpreted as (12.c) and (12.d) respectively:

- 12- c- If a man died.
d- when the heaven split.

Other grammarians(Dafr, 1998: 189ff and Alzarkashy, 1980:198ff) insist that what we have here is a case of verb ellipsis (for more discussion see

There are contexts where the verb may be ellipited . One such context is when the complement is a verbal noun (masdar) (cf.Al-Hroot, 1994) as in the following example:

- 13- (?uktub) kitabatan laa (taqra?a) qira?atan.
“(write) a writing don’t (read) reading

The ellipited verbs in the above example are imperative. In such cases it is assumed that the verbs (*write* and *read*) are ellipited because the objects NPs (*reading* and *writing*) are in the accusative case , which means that an accusative case assignor is required. The above example satisfies the two criteria defined by Quirk (1985:887), namely ,(1) the missing word is textually recoverable and (2) present in the text in exactly the same form.

In Modern Standard Arabic (MSA), verb ellipsis is restricted to intransitive verbs. The following are some representative exmples:

14. a- dhahaba zaydun lmasjidi wa (dhahaba) 9amrun lmadrasati.

“Zayd went to the mosque and Amer (went) to school.”

b- *jaa?a* zaydun fi *assabahi* wa (*jaa?a*) 9amrun fi *almasa?i*

“Zayd came in the morning and Amer (came) in the evening.”

c- *naama* zaydun wa (*naama*) 9amrun.

“Zayd slept and Amer (slept).”

The most important thing about verb ellipsis in these example is that, as we will see, it is the only type of ellipsis which must have an identical antecedent in the first clause. All the above verbs *dhahaba* (went), *jaa?a* (came) and *naama* (slept) are intransitive verbs. Although these verbs are inflected for the subject, the subject itself is present in the first sentence..

It seems that, although verb ellipsis in English is clear, there are many restrictions which make this process not so common (Quirk, et. al., 1972:578). However, there are two basic restrictions on the ellipsis of the verb. First, if we have identical auxiliary verbs, as mentioned before. Second, if we have identical subjects. For examples:

- 15- a- Bill likes Mary but Peter (likes) Vicki.
 b- Bill was happy but John (was) miserable.
 c- She gave him a book and he (gave) her sister a pen.
 d- I will pay for the food and you can (pay) for the drink.

- 16- ? a- She gave him a book and she (gave) her sister a pen.(579)
 ? b- I will pay for the food if you will (pay) for the drink.

The sentences in (15) are grammatical. The verbs in the second clauses are ellipped and can be predicted from their identical antecedents in the first clause. Unlike those in (15), the examples in (16) are rather odd for the reasons mentioned above. Notice in this context that verb ellipsis in the three examples in (15.a-c) is similar to verb ellipsis in Arabic (see the examples in (14) above).

Lasnik (1999) points out that it is possible to delete the verb with the object in the first clause but not the verb. Consider the following examples (ibid. 202):

- 17-*a- Because John didn't (interview) Clinton, Mary interviewed Gingrich.

- b- Because John didn't (interview Gingrich), Mary interviewed Gingrich.

The first example (17.a) is ungrammatical since we cannot delete the verb (*interview*) leaving the object aside. In the second example (17.b) the verb and the object are deleted. However, Lasnik cites many counterexamples in which the verb of the second clause is ellipted.cf.

18. You might not believe me but you will (believe) Bob.

According to Lasnik , the reason why the verb in the subordinate clause in (18) gets deleted is that the object NP '**Bob**' is raised to [spec,Agro] and the verb '**believe**' remains in situ. The deletion of the verb results in what is called in generative grammar 'pseudogapping' (see Lasnik,1995 for more details).

2.4. Subject-Verb Ellipsis

As stated above, the deletion of the subject and the verb in Arabic is so common since the subject appears as an inflection that accompanies the verb. Consequently, the ellipsis of the subject and the verb is permissible in different situations. Consider the following examples:

- 19.a- wanazalnaa 9alaykum almanna wassalwa (waqulnaa kuluu.....(2:57)
 "And we sent you Almana and the quails (and we said) eat....."
 b-.....walmalaa?ikatu yadkhuluuna 9alayhim min kulli babin, (yaquluuna) salaamun 9alaykum.....(13:23,24)
 ".....And angels enter unto them from every gate, (they say) peace be upon you..."
 c- wa?ilaa thamuda (arsalnaa) ?akhaahum saalihan..... (11:61)
 "And to Thamud people (we sent) their brother Salih...."
 d- walisulaymaana (sakhmaaa) arriha..... (21:81).
 "And to Solomon (we subjected) the wind....."
 e- (wadhkur) nuhan ?idh naadaa-----(21:76)
 "(and mention) Noah when he called....."
 f- (wadhkur) dawuda wasulaymana ?idh yahkumaani fi alharthi.(21:78)
 "(And mention) Dawuda(David) and Suliaman(Solomon) when they judge in the field"

The above examples indicate that subject-verb ellipsis in Arabic may be in the first or the second clause. For instance, verbs of saying and the

subject, *qulnaa* (we said) and *yaquluuna* (they say), are ellipited in (19.a,b). In both cases, the ellipited structure is in the second clause without having any antecedent in the first clause. The ellipited elements here can be predicted syntactically from the context. In the second clause the object is left with no subject or verbr. Ellipsis in the second two examples (19.c-d) is in the main clause. Syntax and extra-linguistic knowledge play a vital role in predicting the ellipited elements. Syntactically, the NPs *saaliḥan* (Salih) *arriḥa* (the wind) in (19.c,d) respectively have accusative case marks and thus they are the direct objects for the ellipited ditransitive verbs, which are the case assignors. The indirect objects in these two examples are *waʔilaa ṭhamuda* (to Thamud people) *walisulaymaana* (to Solomon) respectively.. Moreover, from a religious point of view, the wind is driven by Allah and the prophets were sent by Allah. That is in both cases the subject is 'Allah'. In (19.e,f) the ellipited element is the imperative verb *ʔudḥkur* (mention). The ellipsis of the verb is clear here since the following NPs *nuḥan* (Noah) and *dawuda* (David) are in the accusative case, which means that they are objects for deleted verbs. Again, It is known that the subject in the case of the imperative is 'you'. So, none of the above examples in (19) incorporates an antecedent for the ellipited element. This does not, however, mean that subject-verb ellipsis occur without antecedent. Consider the following examples:

- 20- a- waqaalu (ʔitabi9) ʔabasharan minna waḥidan nattabi9ahu
(54:24)
"they said (follow) a person among us we follow him"
- b- waqiila lil-ladhiina ʔitaquu madḥaa ʔanzala rabbukum qaaluu (ʔanzala)
khayran (16:30)
"it was said to the believers what Allah sent, they said (he sent) good things"

The ellipited elements in (20.a,b) are predicted from their antecedents. The subject and verb *ʔitabi9* (you-follow) in (20.a) are predicted from *nattabi9ahu* (we-follow-him) which appear in the second clause. The ellipited elements in (20.b) are the answer for the question 'What did Allah send'. That is, the antecedent *ʔanzala* (he sent) is mentioned in the first clause and ellipsis takes place in the second clause. It should be noted here that the ellipited elements in this example (20.b) are identical. This type of ellipsis is so common in English.

In English, the subject and the auxiliary and /or the verb are ellipted freely in the second clause. But it must be noted that in the case of subordinators such ellipsis is not allowed: cf.

21. a- Bill will wash the glasses and (Bill will wash) the dishes.
b- Bill likes tea more than (he likes) coffee
*c- Bill will wash the glasses because (Bill will wash) the dishes.

In the first two examples (21.a,b) ellipsis is permitted since it occurs in the second clause and having its antecedent in the first clause. The example in (21.c) is ungrammatical since ellipsis in English is not permitted after subordinators.

To sum up, there is a significant difference between Arabic and English in subject-verb ellipsis. None of the above types of ellipsis in Arabic is allowed in English except the last example (25b)

2.5. Verb-Object Ellipsis

Two conditions should be met for verb-object (VO) ellipsis to take place : (i) The ellipted elements are in the second clause , and (ii) They have identical antecedents in the first clause. It seems that verb-object ellipsis is not so free like verb-subject ellipsis. The reason for this could be related to the fact that the relationship between the verb and the object is different from the one between the verb and its subject. The object is the internal argument of the verb(i.e. it is part of the verb shell), it receives direct theta-role from the verb and it receives its case mark from the verb (accusative case mark). The subject, on the other hand, is the external argument of the verb (outside the verb shell), it receives compositional theta-role from the verb and the object and does not receive a case mark from the verb (it receives nominative case mark from the inflection of the verb).

The following are some illustrative examples of VO deletion:

- 22-ayusabihu lahu bilghaduwi wal?asaal (yusabihu) rijaalun(24: 36,37)
“....Glorify him in the morning and in the evening, men (glorify him)....”
b- . zuyina likadhirin min almushrikina qatlu ?awlaadahum, (zayanahu)

- shuraka?uhum....(6:137)
 “..... It is made fair-seeming to many disbelievers to kill their kids, their partener (made it fair-seeming)....”
- c. wala?in sa?altahum man khalafa assamaawati wal?arda.... layaqulan (khalafa-hum) Allahu (29:61).
 “And if you asked them who created the skies and the earth.... theyn will say Allah (created them).”
- d- wala?in sa?altuhum man khalafakunm layqulan (khalafana) Allahu.
 “If you ask them who creates you, they will say Allah (creates us)”
- e-?in Allaha barii?un min almushrikiina warasulahu (barii?un min almushrikiina) (9:3)
 “..Allah repudiates the disbelievers and his prophet (repudiates the disbelievers).”
- f. yamhuu Allahu mayashaa?u wayuthabitu (mayashaa?u) wa9indah wa9indahu ... (13:39)
 “Allah blots out whatever he wants and confirms (whatever he wants) and he has....”

As can be noted from the above examples, ellipsis takes place in the second clause. Unlike most types of ellipsis in Arabic, the ellipited element has its antecedent in the first clause. The NPs *rijaalun* (men) *shuraka?uhum* (their partners) *Allahu* (Allah), *Allahu* (Allah), *rasulahu* (his prophet) which are left after ellipsis in the examples in (22.a,b,c,d,e) respectively are subjects. This is clear from the nominative case marks which they have. The ellipited VO element in (22.a) is *yusabihu* (glorify-him .. i.e. Allah) is predicted from its antecedent which has the same form. In (22.b) the pronoun (**it**), which is attached to the ellipited element *zayana-hu* (made fair-seeing-it), refers to the object in the first clause *qatlu ?awlaadahum* (the killing of their kids). Also the verb *zyana* (made fair seeing) has its antecedent in the first clause but the antecedent has the passive form *zuyina* (was made fair-seeing). In (22.c), the ellipited VO *khalafa-ha* (created them) is part of the answer for the question in the first clause ‘Who created the sky and the earth?’ the answer is ‘Allah (created them)’. So the verb and the object are ellipited to avoid repetition. The same interpretation is true of the example in (22.d).

It seems that VO ellipsis in English is more flexible than it is in Arabic. But, still, “this type of ellipsis [VO] is not widespread: it comes under the heading of special ellipsis, and occurs only in certain special constructions, such as comparative, coordinate, and response constructions” (Quirk, et al, 1985: 906). Consider the following examples:

- 23- a- He will **buy the book** and she must (buy the book)
b- She will **clean the room** today and he will (clean the room) tomorrow.
c- She **finishes the exam** at the same time as Bill (finishes the exam).
- 24- *a- He **finished the exam** when she #
b- He **finished the exam** when she **did** #

The VO ellipsis in (23) confines the general principle of ellipsis in which the ellipsed element is in the second clause having its antecedent in the first clause. But when the second clause is adverbial as in (24.a)), ellipsis is not allowed without adding the auxiliary verb 'did' (cf. 24.b).

Borsley (1989:127) points out that the verb and its complement can be ellipsed in non-finite clauses but not in finite ones. Witness the acceptability of (25.a) and the unacceptability of (25.b) :

- 25- a- I want John to see **everyone** that you expect him to (see everyone).
*b - I want John to see **everyone** that you expect him (to see every one).

In the first example VO ellipsis is possible), whereas in the second it is not due to the fact that the inflection (i.e. infinitive marker *to*) is ellipsed together with the VP. It should be pointed out, however, that in certain context when the use of the verb is without its infinitival complement is permissible, the infinitive marker 'to' can be ellipsed together with the verb as in the following example cited by Quirk, et. al.(1985:885):

- 26- Visit me tomorrow if you wish (to visit me tomorrow).

In addition to the VO ellipsis in the second clause as in the examples cited above, it is also possible for VO ellipsis to take place in the first clause. The following is an illustrative example:

- 27- a- I will **write the lesson** and he must (write the lesson).
b- I will (write the lesson), and he must **write the lesson**.

So, the verb and the object (*write the lesson*) can be ellipsed either in the second or the first clause. However, the deletion of the verb and the object side by side is obligatory in this case, the verb alone cannot be ellipsed in the first clause as can be seen in the following examples cite by Lasnik (1999:202):

28- a- Because Mary did not (interview Clinton), John interviewed Gingrich.

*b- Because Mary did (interview) Clinton, John interviewed Gingrich.

3. Conclusion

The above discussion shows that there are significant differences between ellipsis in Arabic and English. In English, ellipsis is generally a structural process. In most cases, the elided element is in the second clause and can be predicted/recovered from its antecedent in the first clause. Admittedly, in certain contexts a constituent in the first clause may be ellipted (e.g. object and predicate) if it is mentioned in the second clause. That is, the elided element in English is recoverable and predicted from the surrounding context.

Ellipsis in Arabic, on the other hand, does not necessarily depend on the surrounding context, i.e. first or second clause. In many cases, it depends on extra linguistic knowledge. In other words, without having a good knowledge in Arabic and Islamic culture one cannot uniquely predict/recover the elided element. Obviously, more research is still needed in this area.

Note

In paraphrasing the verses, I drew on (*saheh muslim*, and *albukhari*) as well as on the intuition of some of my colleagues in the Department of Arabic Language and Literature and the Faculty Share'ah at Mutah university.

References

- Al-Hroot, A. (1994). *Some Aspects of Arabic Deletion*. Jordan: Mutah university.
- Al-Zarkashy, B. (1980). *Al-burhaan fii 9uluum al-Quran*. Dar Al-Fikr.
- Borsley, R. (1989). "A Note on Ellipsis and Case". *Linguistic Inquiry*, 20:125-130.
- Dafr, J. (1998) *alnahw al-Qur'ani: qawa9id wa shawahid*. Maka Al-mukarama.

-
- Haegman, W. (1991). *Introduction to Government and Binding*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Khawalda, Mohammed (forthcoming). "Other Instances of Ellipsis in English and Arabic"
- Lasnik, H. (1999). "On feature strength: Three minimalist approaches to overt movement." *Linguistic Inquiry* 30, 197-217.
- Levinson, S (2000). *Presumptive Meanings*. Cambridge: MIT Press.
- Lobeck, A. (1995). *Ellipsis: Functional Head, Licensing and Identification*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Quirk, R.; S. Greenbaum; G. Leech; J. Svartvik (1972). *A Grammar of Contemporary English*. London: Longman
- (1985). *A Comprehensive Grammar of the English Language*. London: Longman.
- Johnson, K. (2001). "What Vp Ellipsis can do, and What It can't, but not Why". In Baltin, M. and Collins, Chris (eds.) *The handbook of Contemporary Syntactic Theory*. Blackwell. 439-480.
- Otani, K. and Whitman, J. (1991) "V-Raising and VP-Ellipsis" *Linguistic Inquiry*, vol. 22, n.2: 345-358.
- Potsdam, E. (1996). "English Verbal Morphology and VP Ellipsis". In Kikusumoto (ed.) *Proceeding of NELS* :358-368.
- Swan, M. (1995). *Practical English Usage*. Oxford. Oxford University Press.
- Wilder, X (1995). "Some Properties of Ellipsis in Coordination". *Geneva Generative Papers*, 2: 23-63.