

THE COHESIVE CHARACTER OF ELLIPTICAL CONSTRUCTIONS IN ADICHIE'S NARRATIVES

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Abstract

Creative writers use several devices to skilfully craft their works into meaningful cohesive units of discourse in order to convey their intended meanings. This study adopts the structural analysis of ellipsis as provided in Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics to explicate how Adichie uses the device of ellipsis to link the various structures into meaningful cohesive units with shades of meanings in the textures of *Purple Hibiscus*, *Half of a yellow sun* and *AMERiCANAH*. Consequently, twenty six extracts (26); eight (8) from *Purple Hibiscus*, and nine (9) each from *Half of a Yellow Sun* and *AMERiCANAH*, were purposefully selected and subjected to content analysis to demonstrate the cohesive value of ellipsis in the novels. Analysis of these extracts reveals that, the use of nominal, verbal and clausal ellipses have facilitated textual cohesion in the novels. These grammatical contractions apart from enhancing textual cohesion, have also contributed to the emergence of diverse meanings of the structures in the novels where these expressions are used. Therefore, the use of ellipsis has indeed foregrounded Adichie's intended meanings in the textual networks of these novels.

Key words: structural linguistics, cohesion, ellipsis, foregrounding

INTRODUCTION

Language does not function in isolation but rather as a text in actual situation of use. Apparently, there is always a great deal of more evidence available to the hearer/reader for interpreting a sentence than is contained in the sentence itself. Writers use a variety of these discourse strategies to re-create social realities, and each of these strategies has its own way of contribution to the overall structure of a discourse. Consequently, language is the creative writer's essential means of explicating different facets of social life. Therefore, with resources of language, the creative writer deploys a variety of ingenious discourse strategies to re-create events in the society. Literature depends so much on the

resources of language for its depiction of socio-political values of communities and people, creative writers deploy different discursive styles in literary texts in order to re-create the diverse beliefs, feelings, interactive goals, and aspirations of individuals and societies. Since literature 'finds its expression in language' (Osunbade 2), language, therefore, is a vital tool used in literature to re-create happenings in the society.

The foregoing underlie the symbiotic relationship that exists between language, literature and society, this affirms the assertion that all our thinking's, certainly about literature, are done in language (Rene-Wellek 1982). Apparently, literature does not exist in a vacuum; it is about people and events in the society. In this regard, the nexus existing between language, literature and society is such that, 'for any literary work to merit any meaningful consideration, it is necessary that it bears relevance, explicitly or implicitly to the social milieu in which it is set' (Kenhide 88). Apparently, the resourcefulness in the use of language to re-create events in the society is greatly induced by a variety of factors that spring from the social context. What goes on in the society, as a result, has a direct bearing on the nature of language in literary texts. This in turn shapes the quality of the textual networks that operate in the genres of literature, most especially the written ones. This assertion stems from the gap in communication that exists between the writers and their audience; and the linguistic character of the genre in question. The creative writer, for instance, has an overwhelming task to exploit language to overtly and unreservedly reveal events in the society. Thus, to meet up with the pace of events in the society, literalist, especially from the written tradition, are compelled to adopt peculiar discourse strategies that make their works to conform to the yearnings that spring from events in the society. This implies that, since literature is always a reflection of events in the society, the discourse strategies that emanate from the texture of literary genres, like the novel evoke linguistic suppositions that project happenings within the society (Osunbade, 2010). As a result, literature readily becomes a medium through which lives, values and aspirations of people are depicted (Cole, 2005).

This could explain why some writers, like Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, are said to be creatively consecrated in such a way that, their artistry in the use of language distinguishes them from their contemporaries. Novelists with African roots are further obliged to combine western literary archetypes with the oracular mode of African tale-telling art which makes the textual networks in their creative works to flaunt atypical linguistic choices that are unique to the African settings.

Interestingly, with the intricate linguistic character in the textual networks of literary texts, there is also a corresponding increase in the need to decipher discourses in spite of their linguistic complexities. Therefore, analysis of the various lexical and grammatical elements in discourses contributes immensely to a deeper understanding of the textual networks and overall meaning of the text.

Theoretical Framework

Ellipsis is one of the grammatical elements with potentials to supplement what is left unsaid or 'substitution by zero' (Halliday and Hasan 142). Though the notion of ellipsis is not used to refer to any and every instance in which there is some information that the speaker/writer has to supply from his own evidence, but rather to sentences and clauses whose structure is such as to presuppose any preceding text.

Ellipsis, a modern grammatical theory, belongs to the linguistic feature that enhances both anaphoric, endophoric and exophoric cohesive relations in texts. Ellipsis refers to a presupposed anaphoric linguistic instance in material, structure and or sound which is understood and interpreted based on its earlier mention in the context and or through its structural link. This requires retrieving of specific information that can be found in the preceding text. This implies therefore that, an elliptical instance is that which refers specifically to sentences or clauses whose structure is such as to presuppose some preceding item which serves as a source of the missing information (Halliday and Hasan 142). Ellipsis, as a structural link, operates through the nominal, verbal and clausal levels. At the nominal level, according to Halliday and Hasan, an elliptical situation is said to exist when there is an omission of the nominal group. Thus the structure of a nominal ellipsis is that of a 'Head optional modifications' (Halliday and Hasan 142).

In verbal ellipsis, the elliptical choices are made within the verbal group system. As Halliday and Hasan (167-194) suggest, an elliptical verbal group is one whose structure does not fully express its systemic features; but understood through its structural link or presupposition. The choices made within the verbal group system include: finite verb forms which indicate tense, person, and number (for example: I go, she goes, we went), positive or negative polarity (for example: John didn't see anyone, but Mary did [positive polarity]/ John saw someone, but Mary didn't [negative polarity], voice (active or passive), and tense (past, present or future). Further studies in textual cohesion have brought about a further classification of verbal ellipsis to include: gapping, antecedent-contained ellipsis, and pseudo-gapping. In gapping a verb is deleted but at least one complement or adjunct of the verb is still overt in the sentence. Antecedent-contained ellipsis is said to be the special case of verb ellipsis where by the ellipsis contain its own antecedent. Though similar to gapping, in pseudo-gapping elliptical structure, a dummy verb "did" appears in the sentence in place of the deleted full lexical verb. In the course of this study, analysis of the various types of verbal ellipsis is made so as to explicate how Adichie uses elliptical constructions to enhance creative verisimilitude as she recreates social realities in the novels under study.

A clause in English, according to Halliday and Hasan, is the expression of various speech functions, such as statement, question, and response and so no, has two-part structure consisting of modal element and propositional element. Clausal ellipsis occurs when either of these elements and or the verbal element of the clause is omitted in the structure. In modal ellipsis there is no choice of mood in the clause. Mood is the choice of declarative, interrogative or imperative. In modal ellipsis, polarity is determined, and the subject can be presupposed from what has been gone before (Halliday and Hasan 196). Modal ellipsis occurs in typical WH-questions. In the case of propositional ellipsis in which the mood [the use of verbal inflections that allow speakers to express their attitude toward what they are saying] and the polarity [the marked and the unmarked which are often expressed using particles or words such as yes/no as responses] are the principal components of the sentence, the propositional elements such as complements or adjuncts are omitted. Propositional ellipsis is used mostly in the response to statements and yes/no questions. For example: Does he has any place to live in? [He has no place to live (in).]/ How do you want to do it? [I want to do it (in) my way.] In the two examples above, the preposition, in, is omitted in the response to the

questions which leads to what is refer to as prepositional ellipsis (Halliday and Hasan 197-225).

Present studies about ellipsis (Igra, Asad and Mudassar 2013, Crane 2008, Merchant 2007, and Stainton 2006) have brought in new dimensions into the analysis of ellipsis in discourses. Aside from the traditional division of ellipsis into nominal, verbal and clausal, there are now further divisions though these are still in tune with what Halliday and Hasan did. Ellipsis is now classified into gapping, verbal phrase, antecedent-contained, sluicing and pseudo-gapping (Merchant, 1). Apart from names, the implications of these further subdivisions still maintain the ideas of the three first divisions observed by Halliday and Hasan. The only one which seems to be different from the first three is Antecedent-contained ellipsis which is said to be a special brand of VP ellipsis where the ellipsis contains its own antecedent.

In this analysis however, attempts are made to explicate the implication for the use of nominal, verbal and nominal ellipsis by Adichie in her three novels: *Purple Hibiscus* (PH), *Half of a Yellow Sun* (HOAYS) and *AMERiCANAH* (AH) so as to expound on how she has deployed the discursive means of ellipsis to forge textual cohesion in the novels.

Textual analysis

This section concentrates on the application of the linguistic resources of ellipsis in the analysis of the extracts to show how these have enhanced the textual cohesive character in the novels. The selected extracts are subjected to content analysis to explicate how these elliptical elements have not only augmented textual cohesion but these have deepened the meanings of Adichie's re-creation of social realities in the selected novels.

Analysis of nominal ellipsis in the novels

Extract [1]: [i] He picked up the missal and flung it across the room, towards Jaja. [ii] It missed Jaja completely, but it hit the glass étagère, which Mama polished often. [iii] It cracked the top shelf, swept the beige, finger-size ceramic figurines of ballet dancers in various contorted postures to the floor and then landed after them (PH 15).

Extract [1] consists of three sentences labelled: [i], [ii] and [iii]. The subject of the sentence "Missal" is substituted by "it" as a nominal in the second and third clauses ("...it missed Jaja"/ "...but it hit...") of the first sentence. In the second sentence [ii], "it", which substitutes "Missal" occupies the nominal position in the first clause of the third sentence [iii] ("...It cracked..."), which is elided in the second and third clauses of the third sentence [iii] ("...swept the beige... and then landed after them"). An interesting feature of this elision of the nominal "it" is that, in spite of absences of the nominal "missal", meaning is not distorted; what "...swept the beige..." and then "...landed after them..." is easily understood.

The following extract [2] introduces another dimension into Adichie's uses of ellipsis which sometimes can easily be associated with ambiguity; though with her use of ellipsis the subject still been understood, since it renders the nominal is unambiguous.

Extract [2]: [i] I stepped out of my room just as Jaja came out of his. [ii] We stood at the landing and watched Papa descend. [iii] Mama was slung over his shoulder... [iv] Then we heard the front door open ... [iv] "There's blood on the floor," Jaja said. [v] "I'll get the brush from the bathroom." [vi] We cleaned up the trickle of blood which trailed away as if someone had not carried a leaking jar of red water-colour all the way downstairs. [vii] Jaja scrubbed while I wiped (PH 41).

There is elision of the nominal in the second sentence [ii]: "Jaja scrubbed while I wiped." Though what has been elided is recovered by inference from sentence [v] "There's blood on the floor"; with reference to "floor" in sentence [v] what was "scrubbed" and "wiped" is understood.

The next extract [3] also demonstrates Adichie's uses of the nominal type of ellipsis to reconstruct social realities by creating linguistic equivalents that renders dependency of their interpretation on each other.

Extract [3]: [i] When he was ten, he had missed two questions on his catechism test and was not named the best in his first Holy Communion class. [ii] Papa took him upstairs and locked the door. [iii] Jaja, in tears, came out supporting his left hand with his right, and Papa drove him to St. Agnes hospital. [iv] Papa was crying, too, as he carried Jaja in his arms like a baby all the way to the car. [v] Later, Jaja told me that Papa had avoided his right hand because it is the hand he writes with (PH, 153).

There is nominal elision in the third clause in sentence [i] of the extract [3]: "...and was not named the best in his first Holy Communion class." The nominal "he" has not been omitted. And in sentence [ii] there elision of "he" as the nominal in the second clause in structure ("...locked the door."). Typical of Adichie's discursive style, she introduces a topical subject, and with the device of ellipsis it subsequently re-enters the discussion. This is not mentioned again; though the elliptic parts of the sentence are unambiguously specified in the preceding structures.

Excerpts [4], [5] and [6] below demonstrate Adichie's uses of nominal ellipsis in *Half of a Yellow Sun* (HOAYS) as a narrative style to bring together the various components in her narration into cohesive sequential relations.

Extract [4]: Some of the books were placed face down, open, as though Master had not yet finished reading them but had hastily gone on to another (HOAYS 6)

In the above extract [4] nominal adjectival ellipsis is introduced with the insertion of the lexical item "another" at the end-position of the sentence which presupposes "some of the books" discussed in the text. The meaning of the lexical item "another" can only be inferred with reference to "some of the books".

In extract [5], Adichie uses a cardinal number to introduce an elliptical construction.

Extract [5]: ‘Kainene is not just like a son, she is like two,’ her father said (HOAYS 31).

The cardinal number “two” introduces a nominal ellipsis in the above construction which signifies an elision of the nominal “son”; in the objective case in the first clause of the sentence. As a narrative strategy, the information provided in the elided element “two” presupposes earlier information contained in “son”. Though this is considered as a case of elision in the immediate case, the next extract [6] projects nominal elision that occurred at a distance; though with cohesion in the structure still being maintained.

Extract [6]: [i]In the following weeks, Olanna lay in bed and nodded when friends and relatives came to say ndo-sorry- and to shake their heads and mutter about evils of those Muslim Hausa people, those dirty cattle rearers with jigger-infested feet. [ii] Her Dark Swoops were worse on these days she had visitors; sometimes three came in quick succession and left her breathless and exhausted, too exhausted even to cry, and with only enough energy to swallow the pills Odenigbo slipped in her mouth (HOAYS 157).

The above extract [6] consists of two sentences labelled as [i] and [ii]. The first sentence [i] is linked to the second via the insertion of the cardinal number “three”; which is introduced in the second clause of the second sentence [ii]. The cardinal number “three” replaces “friends and relatives” mentioned in the first sentence [i] as well as “visitors” to which it originally elided in the second clause of the second sentence [ii].

Adichie has also enriched the texture of *AMERiCANAH* with cohesive relations which are catered for in the structure which presuppose some preceding grammatical gaps to be completed from another source. In the following excerpt [7], the elliptical item is uniquely recoverable from the preceding context.

Extract [7]: “Don’t be giving money to these beggars, sir,” Gabriel said. “They are begging to make big money. I heard about one that built a block of flats in Ikeja!” (AH 20)

The above extract can be divided into three structures: [i] “Don’t be giving money to these beggars, sir,” Gabriel said. [ii] “They are begging to make big money. I heard about one that built a block of flats in Ikeja!” The numeral “one” in the third sentence is an elliptical element which uniquely refers to back to “these beggars” and “they” in structures [i] and [ii] above. For an understanding of what “one” means recourse must be made to ‘these beggars’ in the preceding structure.

In the next extract [8] Adichie has again used the nominal ellipsis to draw the various sections in her narration into a cohesive tie.

Extract [8]: [i] “One of my friends, her son goes to a school on the Mainland and do you know they have only five computers in the whole school. [ii] Only five!” the other woman said. (AH 39)

The exclamation “only five!” in the second sentence [ii] is elliptical; and information about it can only be arrived at with recourse to “...they have only five computers in the whole school.” This is the measure with which Adichie applies the linguistic tool of cohesion to ensure tying together of the various elements within her narration into a meaningful unit to achieve authenticity in the narrative. The insertion of an exclaimed elliptical expression, “only five!”, at this point in the structure has strengthened the narrative authenticity of the claims raised in the use of the indefinite pronoun “One of my friends...”

Furthermore, Adichie’s use of cardinal number as an elliptical element to introduce a new structure has not only enhanced textual cohesion of the various units in the narrative but has projected the creative verisimilitude stylistic effects in her novels.

Extract [9]: [i] Emenike was talking about something that had happened at work. [ii] “I had actually arrived at the meeting first, kept my files, and then I went to the loo, only to come back and for this stupid Oyinbo man to tell me, oh, I see you are keeping to African time. [iii] And you know what? I just told him off. Since then he has been sending me e-mails to go for a drink. [iv] Drink for what?” Emenike sipped his beer. [v] It was his third and he become looser and louder. [vi] All his stories about work had the same arc: somebody would first underestimate or belittle him, and he would then end up victorious, with the final clever word or action. (AH 265)

The cardinal number “third”, inserted in the first clause of the sentence [iii] introduces a nominal elliptical structure which has enhance the recovery of the omitted element “beer” as used in the sentence marked [iv]. Therefore, it could have been “it was his third (beer)...”

Aside from avoidance of repetition of lexical items, Adichie seems to introduce ellipsis not only to create textual cohesion by leaving out what can be deduced from the preceding discourse but also to create an enabling environment for a shift in focus and attention towards a new piece of information introduced in the structure. For instance, in the above extract [9] “beer” is omitted probably as a means to divert the attention of the sentence to a new piece of information introduced in the structure; how Emenike “...become looser and louder...” after he had taken the “third (bottle of beer).” This is the means with which Adichie employs the nominal ellipsis as features in her recreation of social realities. Is like using one stone to kill two birds.

Verbal ellipsis in PH, HOAYS, and AH

The following extract [10] drawn from *Purple Hibiscus*, demonstrates Adichie’s effectiveness in the application verbal ellipsis as a means of achieving cohesion in the texture of her text.

Extract [10]: [i] Auntie Ifeoma stood up. [ii] “Jaja and Kambili, we usually say the rosary every night before bed. [iii] Of course, you can stay up as long as you want afterwards to watch TV or whatever else” (PH 131-132).

Verbal ellipsis occurs in the underlined part of the second sentence marked [iii]: “Jaja and Kambili, we usually say the rosary before bed”. The insertion of “before”, at this juncture, introduces a verbal elliptical expression. The elliptical element “...going to...” is omitted. The above can be likened to gapping; a situation whereby a verb is deleted but at least one complement or adjunct of the verb is still overt in the sentence. In the above sample, though “...going to...” is deleted, the insertion of “before”, at this instance, serves as a complement of the omitted item.

In the next extract [11], there is an omission of the main verb in the verbal group:

Extract [11]: “We don’t sing at home,” Jaja answered. “We do here,” Aunty Ifeoma said and I wondered if it was irritation that made her lower her eyebrows (PH 133).

The expression “we do here ...” is elliptical in the sense that, the main verb: “sing” is omitted and “do” is used as its replacement. This is a sample of what is been referred to as pseudo-gapping; the dummy verb “do” appears in the structure in the place of the deleted full lexical verb “sing”. Another example of this type of elision is observed in the following extract.

Extract [12]: He was the first to receive communion. Most people did not kneel to receive communion at the altar, with the blond life-size Virgin Mary mounted nearby, but Papa did. (PH 12)

In the above extract [12], “Papa did” introduces a verbal elliptical expression; the dummy verb “did” is inserted in the structure in place of the deleted full lexical verb “kneel”. And as a stylistic marker, recourse has to be made to the preceding structure in order to grasp the omitted lexical item.

In *Half of a Yellow Sun* similar expressions are found. And just like in the previous novel, Adichie uses these as a means of enhancing cohesion of the various parts of her narration into a meaningful unit. The sample provided in the extract [116] below demonstrates Adichie’s use of this device of elision to create cohesion in the novel.

Extract [13]: “...You must read books and learn both answers. I will give you books, excellent books”. (HOAYS 11)

The second segment in the above two sentences: “I will give you books, excellent books” introduces a verbal elliptical construct: “to read...” This is because the first construct contains the missing lexical item which is then the emphasis in the second sentence: “...must read...” What Adichie has done at this instance of omission, is to draw our attention to the most important aspect in the utterance which is ‘to read’. Adichie uses this technique as a means to convey accurate and ineffable meaning more eloquently.

This second sample drawn from *HOAYS* has again demonstrated Adichie's uses elliptical device to express ineffable meanings and connect her readers directly to the message in the narration.

Extract [14]: [i] 'Sah! Should I bring another pair?' Ugwu asked. [ii] But Master had already slipped on his shoes, without socks, and hurried out. [iii]Ugwu heard him bang the door and drive away. [iv]His chest felt weighty; he did not know why he had ironed the socks, why he had not simply done the safari suit. [v] Evil spirits had made him do it. They lurked everywhere, after all... (HOAYS 14)

The focus of the above structure seems to be on 'ironed' as is contained in sentence [iv]: "His chest felt weighty; he did not know why he had ironed the socks, why he had not simply done the safari suit." The deletion of "iron" and its subsequent replacement expressed through "done" suggest the emphasis been laid on the item as it is elided in the second clause of sentence [IV].

Extract [15], below, provides a rare variation in the use of elliptical expressions to emphasis a salient message within the structure. Though the concern of this analysis is on verbal ellipsis, this particular extract demonstrates the usage of both nominal and verbal ellipsis within a stretch of a discussion to re-echo and place emphasis on useful information.

Extract [15]: [i] 'They forced themselves on her. [ii] Five of them.' [iii] Nnesinachi sat down and placed the baby on her lap. [iv] Ugwu stared at the distant sky.
[v] 'Where did it happen?'
[vi] 'It has been more than a year.'
[vii] 'I asked where?'
[viii] 'Oh.' Nnesinachi's voice quavered. [ix] 'Near the stream.'
[x] 'Out side?'
[xi] 'Yes.'
[xii] Ugwu bent down and picked up a stone.
[xiii] 'They said the first one that climbed on top of her, she bit him on the arm and drew blood. [xiv] They nearly beat her to death. [xv] One of her eyes has refused to open well since.'
(HOAYS 421)

The first sentence [i]: "They forced themselves on her" is like an opening or a lead to barrage of information which is quickly coordinated with the introduction of a cardinal nominal elliptical expression (sentence [iii]: "five of them.")). The cardinal "five" clears and has provided typical questions that might have arisen from sentence [i] "They forced themselves on her." Sentence [ix]: "Near the stream", is a sample of a verbal ellipsis. Sentence [x] ("outside") and sentence [xi] ("yes") that follows are typical of conversational structures which Adichie has uses to drop pieces of information and develop her narration into a meaningful unit.

Adichie's usage of verbal ellipsis in *AMERiCANAH* (AH) demonstrates the same stylistic feature that operates in *Purple Hibiscus* and *Half of a Yellow Sun*. The application of this stylistic feature seems to suggest Adichie's primary concern for lying of emphasis on some important aspects of information and a perfect flow of thoughts in the narration of her recreation of social realities. The following extract [16], for example, demonstrates Adichie's use of an operator type of verbal ellipsis to lay emphasis on the narrator's preference for Princeton because of "lack of smell" in the city as compared to other American cities during summer in the context of her narration.

Extract [16]: [i] Princeton, in the summer, smelled of nothing, and although Ifemelu liked the tranquil greenness of the many trees, the clean streets and stately homes, the delicately overpriced shops and the quiet, abiding air of earned grace, it was this, the lack of smell, that most appealed to her, perhaps because the other American cities she knew well had all smelled distinctly. [ii] Philadelphia had the musty scent of history. [iii] New Haven smelled of neglect. [iv] Baltimore smelled of brine, and Brooklyn of sun-warmed garbage. [v] But Princeton had no smell. (AH 3)

The second clause in the third sentence [iii], which is underlined, is the elided structure in the extract. In the first sentence [i] the focus on the subject of the sentence, which is 'smelled of nothing' is clearly stated. Further from there, the other clauses in sentence [i] help back up the claim introduced in the in the first clause of the sentence. A build up of this comparison of how other American cities "smell in the summer" is reinforced in sentence [ii] and [iii] which has made mention of specific American cities and how they "smell in the summer..." This mention continues up to in the first clause of the fourth sentence [iv]. The second clause in sentence [iv] (underlined above) with an "operator ellipsis" heightens this comparison which is finally the emphasis in the sentence [v] as a conclusive statement "but Princeton had no smell." What can also be deduced from this usage of ellipsis is somewhat like a sentence tempo-builder; whereby an idea is introduced, worked upon to climax and then resolved with the insertion of an ellipsis. In that respect, the first sentence [i] could be regarded as an exposition which is climaxed to sentence [iv], [iii] and the first clause in sentence [iv]. The second clause in sentence [iv] takes the exposition to its final climax leading to resolution contained in sentence [v] "But Princeton had no smell." The implication of the nature of application of ellipsis is that aside cohesion the structural nature of this narrative section corresponds with the traditional narrative strategy of "exposition, climax and resolution". This is the beauty with which Adichie applies this stylistics means of ellipsis to coat the various aspects in her narration into meaningful units.

In the following extract [17] Adichie uses the lexical brand of the verbal ellipsis to create an enabling environment for cohesion and to build up the tempo in the narration.

Extract [17]: [i] SISTER IBINABO was powerful, and because she pretended to wear her power lightly, it only made her more so. [ii] The Pastor, it was said, did whatever she asked him. [iii]

Others that she knew a terrible secret from his past, still others that she simply had more spiritual power than he did but could not be pastor because she was a woman. (AH 50)

There is an omission of the lexical verb (“say”) in the underline two structures in the first and the second clause of sentence marked [iii]. it could have been “others say that...” and ‘still others say that...’, but the lexical verb say has been omitted though by lying emphasis through omission of the lexical verb “say”, the intended meaning becomes more poignant and what people “say” about her has increased in strength so as to show powerful “SISTER IBINABO” was in the church and the community.

The application of this device of ellipsis clearly shows how Adichie places emphasis on some of the salient thematic preoccupations in her narration, at every instance, once she wants her readers to pay attention to a particular issue she uses this device as a strategy to draw attention to it. For instance, in the following extract [18] Adichie’s interest is in the apology which the male Professor offered to Obinze’s mother.

Extract [18]: [i] ‘No she didn’t fight. She was on a committee and they discovered that this Professor had misused funds and my mother accused him publicly and he got angry and slapped her and said he could not take a woman taking to him like that. [ii] So my mother got up and locked of the conference room and put the key in her bra. [iii] She told him she could not slap him back because he was stronger than her but he would have to apologize to her publicly. [iv] So he did. [v] But she knew he didn’t mean it. (AH 59)

The structure in sentence [iv] is a sample of omission of a lexical verb “slapped him.” And as a point of emphasis, the lexical verb is omitted so as to stress the subject matter of in the utterance: “apology...” And just like in the other instances discussed above, Adichie seems to be using the device of ellipsis not only as a means of presupposition but also as a means to build the tempo in her narration; whereby an issue is raised-exposition, and it is drawn to its climax then to its resolution. Adichie uses this device in narration to connect the various sequences of units in her narration at various points into contextually formal connectedness leading to cohesion of the various narrative units into appropriate intended meanings as she recreates social realities.

Clausal ellipsis in PH, HOAYS and AH

Adichie has also deployed clausal ellipsis to connect the various parts of her narration to enhance into a meaningful unit to enhance cohesion. In *Purple Hibiscus*, for instance, the opening paragraph is couched with clausal ellipsis consequently providing an additional meaning unto what is just been said.

Extract [19]: Things started to fall apart at home when my brother, Jaja, did not go to communion and Papa flung his heavy missal across the room and broke the figurines on the étagère. We had just returned from church. (PH 11)

The underlined expression in extract [19] above is a sample of clausal (propositional) ellipsis. Recourse to this emphasis in the two propositions above, that: “things started to fall apart from home...when we had just returned from church” and that: “Papa flung his heavy missal across the room and broke the figurines on the étagère (when) we had just returned from church”. What is apparent from this usage is the fact that at any point where Adichie intend to raises a very important issue in her narration she resorts to usage of ellipsis in order to make the intended message more poignant. These two issues; the home and the church, with the application of ellipsis, have been projected and as the narration progresses, these two becomes the central focus for examination of social realities.

This observation can also be made given the role played by clausal ellipsis in the following extract [20] below:

Extract [20]: I lay in bed after Mama left and let my mind rake through the past, through the years when Jaja and Mama and I spoke with our spirits than with our lips. Until Nsukka. Nsukka started it all. Auntie Ifeoma’s little garden next to the veranda of her flat in Nsukka began to lift the silence. Jaja’s defiance seemed to me now like Auntie Ifeoma’s experimental purple hibiscus: rare, fragrant with the undertones of freedom, a different kind of freedom from the one the crowds waving green leaves chanted at Government Square of the camp. A freedom to be, to do (PH 23).

In the above extract [20], the expression: “A freedom to be, to do” is the case of clausal ellipsis. And usual of Adichie, this elliptical clausal element has provided enough clues to the nature and kind of freedom she is referring to; a freedom that lifted the silence off their lips and gave them the opportunity to explore their environment freely. And just like in the extract [20] above, by application of elliptical element at that instance in the narration; her intended message is played to prominence as she easily, through her character, makes a comparison of the present and later situations. Aside from playing to prominence some thematic concerns, elliptical constructions have also enhanced textual cohesion. The narration is built from one angle to another through powerful connectors; making the various parts of the story to connect and flow into a cohesive unit.

The same stylistic application of ellipsis is also employed by Adichie in *Half of a Yellow Sun* (HOAYS). The following extract demonstrates Adichie’s usage clausal ellipsis as point of emphasis of a very significant feature in her narration.

Extract [21]: Ugwu did not believe that anybody, not even this Master he was going to live with, ate meat *every day*. He did not disagree with his aunty, though, because he was too choked with expectation, too busy imagining his new life away from the village. They had been walking for a while now, since they got off the lorry at the motor park, and the afternoon sun burned the back of his neck. But he did not mind. (HOAYS 3)

The clausal propositional element is omitted in the underlined structure: “But he did not mind”. To understand this structure (‘but he did not mind’) better can best be achieved when it is connected variously with the preceding structures so as to obtain useful clue as to why ‘he did not mind’. Consequently, deductions can be made that “though they had been walking for a while now ... he did not mind”, and that though “...the afternoon sun burned the back of his neck ...but he did not mind ...because he was too choked with expectation, too busy imagining his life away from the village”. The interpretation of “but he did not mind” is therefore dependent on recourse to the other constituents thereby creating meaning.

In the following extract [22], Adichie has created a more subtle relationship between the elliptical element and the other elements to which recourse is made. That is as a matter of fact, as the elliptical element is connected to the other elements the meaning of the utterance to emerge from these relations.

Extract [22]: Richard laughed, and he was even more amused because she did not laugh; she simply went back to brushing her hair. He thought about the next time he would laugh with her and then the next. He found himself often thinking about the future, even before the present was over. (HOAYS 69)

The elliptical element in the above extract [22]: “...then the next”, is not only suggestive of the countless number of times Richard was thinking of meeting Kainene, but significant of this particular meeting. Apparently, Adichie’s application of clausal ellipsis extends beyond mere omission but seems to be a deliberate attempt to allow the readers fill up the rest of the stories with whatever conclusion without necessarily disclosing the entire information.

This next extract [23] has even offered yet another dimension into usage of ellipsis.

Extract [23]: “I’m going to sell my brown shoes to Mama Onitsha, and I will make a new pretty dress for Baby.” Olanna said finally and Ugwu thought her voice was forced (HOAYS 286).

The first part of the underlined structure: “I’m going to sell my brown shoes to Mama Onitsha...” is an elliptical expression in the sense that it has not provided in total the complete information about the action of selling “my brown shoes”, the second part, however contain information about what will be done with the proceeds from the act of selling “my brown shoes” which would be to “...make a new pretty dress for Baby.” What has been noticed here is that given the nature with which the two sentences depend on each other, they become meaningful given the nature of cohesion that exists between them.

Adichie has also used clausal ellipsis in *AMERiCANAH* to create and enhance cohesion of the various units of her narration into meaningful narrative unit to achieve authenticity and creative verisimilitude in the narrative. The extract below demonstrates Adichie’s use of propositional clausal ellipsis to create cohesion.

Extract [24]: [i] THEIR FLAT SMELLED of vanilla on weekends, when Obinze's mother baked. [ii] Slices of mango glistening on a pie, small brown cakes swelling with raisings. [iii] Ifemelu stirred the batter and peeled the fruits; her own mother did not bake, their oven housed cockroaches (AH 71).

The above extract which is subdivided into [i], [ii] and [iii] has provided a very interesting instance in the use of propositional clausal ellipsis to aid grammatical cohesion. The second clause in the first sentence (“...when Obinze’s mother baked.”) housed the propositional ellipsis. The question which arises is “baked what?” and the answer to this question is quickly supplied in the preceding “...small brown cakes.” Other piece of information which is aided by the usage of the propositional ellipsis is found in the second and third clauses of the third sentence marked [iii], that Ifemelu’s “...mother did not bake...” and that “...their oven housed cockroaches.” What this has done is that it has not only provided information about what goes on in the two houses as a matter of comparison but has also answered another question that might have arisen; “what do she use in baking ?” the answer been provided in the third clause of the third sentence; which is “oven”. As an elliptical element, most of the information that are now been provided in the subsequent structures are presupposing and in this respect the use of ellipsis here has not only enhanced grammatical cohesion but has also facilitated the meaning attached to the structures.

In this next extract [25]; Adichie seems to use elliptical structures to allow her readers into suggestiveness of actions that might follow a sequent of an event.

Extract [25]: “I have a suggestion for a better kind of massage”, he said. When he undressed her, he did not stop, as usual, at her underwear. He pulled it down and she raised her legs to aid him. “Ceiling,” she said, half-certain. She did not want him to stop, but she had imagined this differently, assumed they would make a carefully planned ceremony of it.

“I’ll come out,” he said.

“You know it doesn’t always work.”

“If it doesn’t work, then we’ll welcome Junior.” (AH 93)

The above underlined elliptical structures demonstrate the dependence of each structure on the preceding other structures. ‘...She raised her legs to aid him’ presupposed the first clause in that structure: “He pulled it down”, which in turn depend on the preceding structure: “when he undressed her, he did not stop, as usual, at her underwear.” The second underlined structure, however, does not in any way depend on the preceding structure rather with the proceeding structures: [i] “You know it doesn’t work.” [ii] “If it doesn’t, then, we’ll welcome Junior”. With these suggestions the gap to be filled becomes so obvious and with these proceeding two structures Adichie seems to permit her readers to fill it up and make up the story. Interestingly, even with this sort of disconnect, cohesion still exists.

The following extract [26] demonstrates Adichie’s usage of the modal brand of clausal ellipsis to create cohesion and then develop her narration into a meaningful unit.

Extract [26]: “Oh. Cool.” Kesley had slender fingers; they would be perfect for advertising rings. I’m going to Africa in the fall. Congo and Kenya and I’m going to try and see Tanzania too. (AH 189)

The subject of the above underlined structure can be presupposed from what has gone on before in the preceding structure: ‘I’m going to Africa in the fall.’ Apparently, it is only by recourse to this preceding structure that the meaning of the elliptical structure would be understood. Apparently, where there is ellipsis there is presupposition; something needs to be reconstructed or understood. The essence of elliptical constructions, therefore, lies in the omission of those linguistic structures that are present as choices in the system of options. Though these positions remain basically vacant as they are replaced by ‘zero’ entries since the structural relationship is anaphoric in nature meaning is still deduced from the structures.

Conclusion

Though ellipsis is a form of presupposition; a mechanism for identification of information in an extralinguistic situation, the linguistic environment is such that the listener/reader reconstructs from the ‘zero’ entry to arrive at diverse meanings that ensue from the lexical and grammatical omissions in the text. This process of presupposition by elision therefore has linguistic mechanisms that enhance both cohesion and creative verisimilitude in the textual networks of discourses. The above analysis reveals the fact that the application of the linguistic devices of ellipsis, such as nominal, verbal and clausal elisions, by Adichie has helped to enhanced the quality of textual cohesion and narrative authenticity of the different facets of meanings in the novels.

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