A Translational Perspective of Verbal Ellipsis in Standard Arabic and English: A Contrastive Analysis Study

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Amman 1991

Thesis submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements of the Degree of Master of Translation at Yarmouk University.

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Irbid, Jordan
Date: July 3, 1996
ABSTRACT

A TRANSLATIONAL PERSPECTIVE OF VERBAL ELLIPSIS IN STANDARD ARABIC AND ENGLISH: A CONTRASTIVE ANALYSIS STUDY

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The present study investigated an important linguistic phenomenon; namely verbal ellipsis in Standard Arabic and English for translation purposes. Verbal ellipsis was observed to pose a difficulty when translating from Arabic into English and vice versa. Translation literature was also found to lack references dealing with this topic contrastively. Therefore, this study was meant to bridge this gap through contrasting and comparing this phenomenon in both languages, Arabic and English.

This study reached the following linguistic and translational conclusions:

A. Linguistic Conclusions:
1. Arabic and English are elliptical languages. However, the former is far more elliptical than the latter.
2. English elliptical constructions can be easily identified and thus recovered by a non-native learner of English, while Arabic elliptical constructions cannot, except by people specialized in the field.
3. All verbal ellipses in English are categorically optional, as noted by Quirk et al in their book A Grammar of Contemporary English, whereas most verbal ellipses in Arabic are obligatory.
B. Translational Conclusions:

1-Translation related problems resulting from verbal ellipsis could be attributed to the linguistic differences mentioned earlier.

2-In most cases, elliptical verbal items in English could be rendered into Arabic by means of the one-to-one correspondence method, whereas elliptical verbal ones in Arabic couldn’t.

3-Generally speaking, the equivalent of an elliptical verbal item in English cannot necessarily be elliptical in Arabic and vice versa.

4-To compensate partially for the loss of the effect of ellipsis whether it is stylistic or whatsoever, the translator should add some articles in the target language text especially those used for emphatic purposes like “do”, “really” and other intensifiers like “extremely”, “very”, when rendering the elliptical constructions like “at-tahżîr” “cautioning” as can be seen in the poetic line below:

Foto’ak ḳānā ṭāwâ al-mâra’u fa’li ilâ ash-sharr u da’sâa-un wa lish-sharr u jaalib-tâ

Do beware of hypocrisy because........... .