

## Ways to Achieve Equivalence in Elliptical Structure Translation

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**ABSTRACT:** Equivalence in translation is a complex phenomenon. It is one of the central notions in the theory of translation and there are numerous ways of its interpretation. To achieve equivalence the translators can use various ways to preserve the message of the source text. A questionnaire survey was used in this research which is one of the methods to assess the equivalence of the elliptical structure translation in its functional aspect. Elliptical structures play an important role in colloquial speech imitation and are widely used in fiction, so their translation requires a lot of skills on the translator's part to achieve equivalence.

**KEYWORDS:** Equivalence. Elliptical structures. Colloquial speech. Source text. Translation

Introduction.

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## Introduction

In linguistics, ellipsis (from the Greek: ἔλλειψις, or "omission") or an elliptical construction is the omission from a clause of one or more words that are easily understood in the context. There are several distinct types of ellipsis in theoretical syntax.

The traditional definition of ellipsis as an incomplete sentence is closely connected with the ideas of structuralists about the sentence structure. According to them, every sentence is bound to have a subject and a predicate. All types of deviations from this structure can be considered as ellipsis. R. Quirk (1986) found that ellipsis is a sentence with omitted both main and secondary parts of the sentence. It is important to note that in every language the formation of ellipsis is predetermined by structural and grammatical peculiarities of the language, which is quite a universal phenomenon and characteristic of most Indo- European languages.

There have been several points of view on this notion, some of which can be contradictory.

V. Yartseva (1961) implied that ellipsis is a gap in the sentence or some “structural incompleteness” of a syntactical construction. In the sentence it can be defined as a lack of some part of speech, a component of an utterance which can be easily restored from the context.

A. Skovorodnikov (2009) singled out several models of elliptical sentences which lack verbs. These sentences include the notion of

1. Being/ having
2. Movement
3. Perception
4. Speech/thought
5. Energetic influence

In fiction we can come across some models where the main parts of the sentences are missing. According to this scholar one of the most widespread types of elliptical sentences are the ones with the missing predicate, the verbs denoting “being”.

A famous linguist Peshkovsky (1956) noted that the more concise and laconic the phrase is the easier it is for comprehension and the bigger role the context plays in it.

Ivanilova (2008) believed that the reason for the emergence of elliptical sentences was the desire of an individual to minimize the physical and mental effort in communication.

Elliptical structures are mostly found in colloquial speech which is characterized by spontaneity, emotivity and ease. Azarova (2001) ascribes the emergence of ellipsis to the above mentioned factors.

According to some scholars, elliptical structures are the direct result of the language degradation, the abandonment of all existing grammar rules, its simplification and deformity. Butusova (2003) implied that carried to the extremes it could lead to the lack of comprehension among the speakers of the language.

### **Achieving equivalence in translation of fiction**

The notion of equivalence is central in the theory of translation and serves to characterize the connection between the source text (ST) and its translation (T).

The definition of “dynamic equivalence” belongs to Y. Nida, where the characteristic feature of a good translation was its ability to produce the same effect on the audience as the source text produced on its readers. To achieve this result the translator was allowed to use all

kinds of means to produce the same effect and overcome cultural barriers. Y. Nida (1975) assumes that the necessity of such translation is predetermined by the public demand.

The requirements for a “relevant” translation are quite fragmentary and are based on the review of general tendencies which are widespread among the translators of fiction. M. Baker (2004) believes that one of the requirements is that the translation must be more conservative than the original literature in this genre. It refers to the lexical, semantical and syntactic structure. According to a Finnish scholar S. Nevalainen (2004) the reader is unwilling to read a translated text if it includes prophanities or vulgarisms. Nevertheless, the readers do not demonstrate any shock coming across the same expressions in the original literature ascribing it to the “author’s original style”. As a result, there are more deviations from the translation (T) than in the source text (ST). Venuti (1998; 2002) criticized the Anglo-American tendency to eliminate everything “foreign” or “alien” to make the translation more legible for the reader.

Taking into account the multitude of opinions and views on the subject the translation of fiction we can assume that an elliptical construction poses some problems for the translators of fiction who need to come up with some tools to overcome cultural differences and barriers and make the translation relevant and equivalent for the readers.

## **Materials and methods**

### ***Questionnaire as a method of evaluation of the literary text translation equivalence.***

In this research we tried to control the equivalence of the translation by means of a questionnaire. The texts were translated from Russian into English, and 2 groups of participants took part in their analysis. The group that read the translation were mostly US citizens and the language of translation was their native language.

2. All the participants were of different professions (no linguists among them).

3. The readers did not know where the translated abstracts came from, so that they could not identify them.

The questionnaire included 5 types of tasks. The participants were supposed to choose 1 or more answers according to some parameters: if the characters are equals, the level of intimacy between them, the level of formality of their communication, etc.

The participants were given either the text with elliptical structures or with the fully restored sentences. In this study we were trying to find out what the degree of equivalence was in its functional aspect.

In tasks 2, 3 and 4 we tried to figure out the ways to save the functions of situational elliptical constructions, in task 5 – elliptical structures connected with stereotypical communication situations, which referred to the ability of the speaker to create new words (3), to the social status of the speaker (4) or to the means of connection used in the conversation (5).

In part 6 of the questionnaire the participants were supposed to read pieces of narration where there were elliptical constructions and to underline the part which contained the character's thoughts and words. The task was to evaluate the translator's ability to render them in his/her translation with the help of ellipsis and other means.

The 6th part also included some abstracts where in the source text there were situational elliptical structures with omitted subject or predicate.

So, the participants were asked to fill the gap (the omitted word) and also to say if the sentence with an ellipsis sounds better in translation with the preserved elliptical construction or as a fully restored sentence with subject and predicate. The participants needed to assess both translations

and come to the conclusion if the translated sentence made any sense in case of preserving the elliptical construction. The aim of this study was also to find out if elliptical constructions should be used in the translation of sentences without predicates while translating from Russian into English because such elliptical structures are not natural for native speakers of English and do not have analogues in English.

Here is a part of the questionnaire which can illustrate the type of activities the participants took part in:

**Part 1.**

*II. “ Comrade Oleinik! This is Shamraev speaking, investigator from the Prosecutor’s office”.*

*“Receiving you. What is it?”*

1. This passage characterizes the atmosphere in which the communication is going on as

- A. relaxed
- B. tense
- C. doesn’t bear this kind of characterization
- D. another version

*III. “Married?” Fidel asked him.*

*“Ya”, Gustav answered, blushing.*

*“Become a daddy? “*

*“Ya”.*

1. This passage characterizes the situation in which the communication is going on as

- A. formal
- B. informal
- C. tense
- D. doesn't bear this kind of characterization
- E. another version

2. This passage characterizes the second interlocutor's attitude to the subject on discussion as

- A. delighted
- B. discontented
- C. embarrassed
- D. doesn't bear this kind of characterization
- E. another version

*IV. "And where is Granddad? Snegiryov?"*

*"Briefing the wardens. Telling them not to take bribes."*

1. This passage characterizes the situation in which the communication is going on as

- A. formal
- B. informal
- C. doesn't bear this kind of characterization

D. another version, etc.

## **Results**

### ***The translation of elliptical structures***

We believe the translation is equivalent when all the functions of elliptical structures are fully preserved (both semiotic and stylistic), so that functional and textual equivalence is achieved.

Secondly, there is translation with partial losses. Partial losses in our opinion are:

- The losses of the stylistic potential of an ellipsis
- The loss of its “poetic” implication. We call it “insignificant loss”, because the sense of the sentence is preserved.

Equivalence in elliptical structure translation is not achieved if the text loses secondary functions of elliptical structures in colloquial speech and tertiary functions of elliptical structures in all types of texts. In narration it is the loss of primary functions of elliptical structures which can serve as markers of the register changes.

The translation is not equivalent if the functions mentioned above cannot be restored even in case of macro context, or when a text acquires the meaning which opposes both macro and micro context. In such cases the participants mentioned the fact that those particular translations made no sense or they were not able to understand the meaning of the sentence.

### ***Evaluation of equivalence of elliptical structure translation (examples)***



In this article we will demonstrate some examples of elliptical structures, their translation and the responses of the participants. The elliptical structures in the original text are underlined. All the examples come from Russian fiction.

E.g. 1 (ST)

- Bud'te lyubezny: chasto li zdes' – molodoy chelovek -?

- Molodye lyudi byvayut, vashestvo.

- Nu, a ... s usikami?

- S usikami-s?

- Nu da, i... v pal'to...

Eg. 1 (T)

*“Be so good as to tell me, does the young man come here often?”*

*“Young people come here sometimes, Your Excellency.”*

*“I mean a young man, with a moustache?”*

*“With a moustache?”*

*“Yes, yes, with a small moustache – in an overcoat rather the worse for wear.”*

It should be noted that the preservation of elliptical structures is not enough for preserving the semiotic potential of the utterance. The translator underestimated the significance of punctuation, which suggested hesitation on the character's part. Consequently, it led to losing of the semiotic potential of the elliptical constructions in those sentences. Despite the fact that the elliptical structure was preserved some meaning in the translated text was lost or distorted.

As a result:

1. 100% participants, who read the source text characterized the first character as shy and lacking confidence

2. Those who read the translation characterized the character feels superior to the other character (30%), that he is confident and assertive (30%), others believed that this abstract doesn't imply any characteristics of that sort (40%).

Thus, this translation cannot be considered equivalent as here we can speak about the change of its semiotic potential (60% of responses).

In some cases, the explication of the translator of the real meaning of a sentence which contains elliptical structures leads to inequivalent translation. Besides, it leads to losses and the translator distorts the authors initial intention.

In some cases when ellipsis is restored to the full sentences the translator uses compensation. Compensation is the use of different language means (graphic, stylistic and lexical) which helps the translator to compensate for the potential to express additional meanings which were lost while restoring ellipsis.

The result of the questionnaire showed that in those cases when restoring of an ellipsis the translator uses lexical addition (without tautology or repetition) the meaning of the utterance changes:

E.g. 2 (ST)

- *Vy, kohechno, budete na balu u Tsukatovykh...*

- *Budu, - otvetstvoval Angel.*

E.g. 2 (T)

*“You’ll come, of course, to the ball of the Tzukatov!”*

*“To be sure, I will”.*

So, the participants who read the source text implied that the second character is reluctant to continue the conversation (40%), that the character is not quite sure in what he is saying (60%). Those who read the translation can be divided into 2 groups. Some believe that the second character is interested in the conversation (50%), the other part was sure that this dialogue did not contain any information about it (50%). So, for the correct interpretation of the phrase containing elliptical structures we need a wider context. The speaker lets the counterpart know that the further conversation on this topic is meaningless. In the source text the the semiotic potential of the utterance with the elliptical construction coincides with the meaning of the context. In the translation the same semiotic potential of the phrase is lost as a result of the translator’s attempt to restore the elliptical construction through compensation (adding “ to be sure”). Still, this phrase does not contradict the meaning of the respective phrase in the source

text. Thus, this translation can be called partly equivalent with a significant loss. In our opinion the best option for the translation would be “I will come” where we compensate by repeating the verb from the phrase of the speaker.

Grammatical means can also be used for compensation:

E.g. 3 (ST):

- *“Ya vse-taki budu...”*

- *“Net, ne budete!!” Porazila ugroza, s kotoroy Sergey Sergeevich proiznes etu frazu.*

- *“Net, budu.”*

E.g. 3 (T):

*“I shall go, all the same”, she answered at last.*

*“No, you shall not!” There was menace in the way he spoke.*

*“I will go”.*

According to the results we can assume that the second remark of the first character (an elliptical structure) can indicate his determination as well as the lack of it.(50%/50%)Here the wife wants to go to the ball but she is scared of her husband’s indignation, though he used to go along with anything she wished before) The translator achieved the right effect by using the play of shall и will (SMITH, 2003, p. 1155). As a result, this translation can be called equivalent with slight losses.

In some cases, situational elliptical constructions with omitted subject can characterize the communication as business-like or strained.

E.g. 4:

ST	T
<p>a) - <i>Igor</i>’, <u><i>zvonyu s dorogi, iz mashiny.</i></u> <i>Nichego ne obsuzhdaem...</i></p>	<p>a) “<i>Igor, I am phoning from a car on the road. No discussion.</i>”</p>
<p>b) <i>Zakhar Pavlovich ostanovilsya, pokurivaya na svezhem vozdukhe ranney oseni.</i>  - <u><i>Otbrakovyyaesh’?</i></u>  <i>Malchik ne ponyal tekhnicheskogo slova.</i></p>	<p>b) <i>Zakhar Pavlovich stopped, smoking in the fresh air of early fall.</i>  “<i>Quality control?</i>”  <i>The boy didn’t understand the technical words.</i></p>

As we can see the translator uses substitution of such elliptical constructions by single part sentences which basically serve the same purpose. Here in example 4 (a) the semiotic potential is fully preserved. (100% of participants perceived it as strained), but in b) the potential is partly lost. The readers of the source text perceived the atmosphere as positive and friendly (50% and 50%). In the English translation the atmosphere was perceived as formal (100%).

In the English text the interviewed referred to it as “casual” or “informal” due to its conciseness and its lexical content. The translation of the elliptical construction with the help of compensation can be considered equivalent with slight losses because the losses are compensated for by the wide context which makes it clear that the conversation takes place at work, yet the attitude of the man to the boy is friendly and a little condescending.

## **Conclusion**

As a result of the study 3 groups of tactics of elliptical structure translation from Russian into English were singled out:

- 1) preserving the elliptical constructions, if in the translation it has the same function as in the English text (about 70% of our examples).
- 2) replacing the elliptical structure by a functional analogue.

In translation of situational elliptical constructions which were used in stereotypical situations the elliptical constructions are translated with stereotypical phrases in English used in similar situations.

Elliptical structures which are used in pseudo-formal context are replaced by expressions which characterize the speaker of a low social status or show where he/she comes from (geographical and social factors).

Restoring sentences to completion is undertaken with the help of many means:

Syntactic means are used (such as inversion) which can perform the function of showing the person's emotional state.

Morphological means, such as imperative sentences to imitate the stream of consciousness (instead of finding elliptical structures with a similar meaning). This type of compensation was used quite often in our study.

Lexico-syntactic means, such as repetition of the subject, also used by the translator in order to imitate the stream of consciousness, the imitation of psychological processes, etc.

Lexical means, which is mostly done by including some colloquial words and phrases, filling in the pauses (“well, so, yes”), etc.

Graphical means – using cursive in some parts of sentences, which is used as an imitation of emphasis of some words in colloquial speech. This means was used quite rarely in our research.

The translator can also calque translation for elliptical structures, which can be ineffective in most cases and leads to inequivalent translation.

Selective preservation of elliptical structures is widely used for the fiction who’s authors excessively use elliptical structures. The necessity to use selective preservation of elliptical structures in translation can be explained by more rare use of elliptical structures in English.

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