CHAPTER 14

ELLIPSIS

Ellipsis refers to the non-native omission of certain lexical items which would normally be present in native English. An example of this given by Anthonymsamy(1997) is the omission of `turned' before `on' in the following sentence: "I just on the radio."

There were altogether 73 examples of Ellipsis in the corpus. Every one of these examples have been arranged and described in the alphabetical order of the word immediately preceding the Ellipsis in Appendix C. Both the non-native examples as well as the omitted words have been highlighted in bold.

These 73 examples have also been sub-divided into 9 types. The following section is a summary of the different types of Ellipsis found in this study.

14.1 Types of Ellipsis

The 73 examples of Ellipsis in the data have been sub-divided into nine types according to the nature of the omitted word, namely:

14.1.1 Word Omission from Multi-word Units
14.1.2 Omission of Preposition from Phrasal Verbs
14.1.3 Omission of Preposition
14.1.4 Omission of Units of Measurement
14.1.5 Omission of Pronouns
14.1.6 Omission of Verb
14.1.7 Omission of Noun after Adjective
14.1.8 Omission of Part of Compound Word
14.1.9 Omission of Object after Transitive Verb

The total numbers of examples under each of the above types as well as their percentages is shown in Table 14.1 on the next page:
Table 14.1

Breakdown of Types of Ellipsis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of Ellipsis</th>
<th>Numbers</th>
<th>Percentages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Word Omission from Multi-word Units</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>15.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Omiss. of Prep. From Phrasal Verbs</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Omission of Preposition</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>26.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Omission of Units of Measurement</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Omission of Pronouns</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Omission of Verb</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>16.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Omission of Noun after Adjective</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>11.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Omission of Part of Compound Word</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Omiss. of Object after Transitive Verb</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Number of Examples of Ellipsis:</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

14.1.1 Word Omission from Multi-Word Units

The first type of Ellipsis involves the omission of words from native multi-word units used in spoken discourse. This type of Ellipsis could be due to the ME users' lack of awareness of the appropriateness of the original multi-word units though the examples were all used in appropriate contexts. It may also be due to lack of attention to details, namely the original words of the expressions. Then again, it may be due to the typical Malaysian habit of taking 'verbal shortcuts' in spoken conversations, shortening everything from people's names to idiomatic expressions.

There are altogether ten examples of 'Word Omission from Multi-word Units' in the data. The omitted words are shown in bold within brackets after each sentence containing the Ellipsis:

(1) 'All in ^ it was a good effort'.(all in all)
(2) 'As far ^ I know, the Board has put money into the bank.'(as far as I know)
(3) 'One minute, eh? I'll get ^ to you.' (I'll get back to you)
(4) 'And the man said, "Very good" and they parted ^ (parted ways)
(5) `OK, I'll come \(^{\text{^ to you}}\) later.' (come \(^{\text{^ back}}\)

(6) `by all \(^{\text{^ parties}}\) (by all parties concerned)

(7) `Water produced by the factories causes pollution to the \(^{\text{^ river}}\) as well \(^{\text{^ ^ to the land.}}\) (as well as)

(8) `It's not worth \(^{\text{^ going into it}}\) at this time.' (not worth it)

(9) `He was with me since the \(^{\text{^ wee hours}}\) yesterday.' (wee hours of the morning)

(10) `Don't go too \(^{\text{^ side}}\). (Don't go too much to one side)

(11) `Our game set will fulfill their need just that.' (just like that)

The multi-word units were used appropriately though they were truncated in usage by the ME speakers. An example \(^{\text{^ it}}\) was a good effort (all in ). This type of Ellipsis consisted of 15.2% of the total number of examples.

14.1.2 Omission of Preposition from Phrasal Verbs

The second type of Ellipsis involves the omission of prepositions from native phrasal verbs. Seven examples of preposition omission from phrasal verbs are shown below:

(1) `...so it won't \(^{\text{^ cater}}\) all the students.' (cater to)

(2) `...not only the company \(^{\text{^ carrying}}\) development projects ....' (carrying out)

(3) `As you sit and listen, I guarantee you that in a year you can \(^{\text{^ pick}}\) a large number of skills.' (pick up)

(4) `He got \(^{\text{^ away}}\) the challenge trophy.' (got away with)

(5) `My role as a timekeeper is to \(^{\text{^ keep track}}\) the time.' (keep track of)

(6) `There are a lot of areas that I feel I need to \(^{\text{^ improve}}\).' (improve on)

(7) `This would explain why there is a total absence of dark-complexioned models as \(^{\text{^ pointed}}\) by the writer of the letter.' (pointed out)

The above type of Ellipsis consists of 9.6% of the examples of Ellipsis.
14.1.3 Omission of Preposition

ME users show a strong tendency to omit prepositions not only at the level of phrasal verbs but also at sentence level. It is possible that this tendency is due to Language Transfer as Bahasa Malaysia and the vernacular languages hardly use preposition forms. Hence the third type of Ellipsis involves the omission of prepositions at the sentence level as shown in the 19 examples below:

(1) 'I applied ^ this course.' (applied for)
(2) 'Now I'm more confident in conversing ^ English with my classmates and friends.' (conversing in)
(3) '...so as to educate them ^ the right lifestyle.' (educate them on the right lifestyle)
(4) 'We are hinting ^ something that is not our real intention.' (hinting at)
(5) 'We are here to learn ^ our mistakes.' (learn from)
(6) 'It is to avoid residents from being left ^.' (left out)
(7) 'We paused because we want to make sure that we listened ^ it right.' (listened to it)
(8) 'Look^ the real situation.' (look at the real situation)
(9) 'I plead ^ all of you - it is a fantastic activity.' (plead with)
(10) 'This is history I am talking ^.' (talking about)
(11) 'What can we do to help ^ this situation?' (help in)
(12) '...for final year students to gain work experience and ^ sharpen skills ^ their particular majors.' (sharpen skills in their particular majors)
(13) 'Students are indirectly inculcated these values.' (inculcated with these values)
(14) 'We not only please the teachers but at the same time the welfare of the teachers has been taken care (taken care of)
(15) 'One way of disposing^ rubbish is to throw it into your neighbour's compound.' (disposing of)

(16) 'I was driving cautiously by keeping ten feet^ from the car in front of me.' (away from)

(17) '^Weekends I really try to settle things backhome.' (on weekends)

(18) 'make use^ their old cabinet' (make use of)

(19) 'The curiosity to experiment^ something new.' (experiment on/with)

The above appeared to be the largest sub-type of Ellipsis as there was a total of 26% of all the examples of Ellipsis.

14.1.4 Omission of Units of Measurement

The fourth type of Ellipsis involves the omission of units of measurement such as 'a^ staff', 'one^ teaching staff' and 'many^ broken glass'. This omission is reflected in the following seven examples:

(1) 'You will see that for every^ of your points there will e someone to remove your points.' (every one)

(2) 'I remember one research^ on male and female learning strategies.' (one research study)

(3) A^ staff' (a member of the staff)

(4) 'one teaching staff (one member of the teaching staff)^

(5) Every^ Swami's discourse he talks about Damayanti. (Every one of)

(6) Many^ broken glass' (many pieces of broken glass)

(7) A lot of^ middle class don't take public transport.' (members of the middle class)

This type consisted of 9.6% of the total corpus of Ellipsis.
14.1.5 Omission of Pronoun

The fifth type of Ellipsis involves the omission of pronouns as reflected in the following sentences in the data:

(1) 'All lead singers are encouraged to commit ^ to the other centre activities as well.' (commit themselves)

(2) 'Today I would like to tell ^ about what happened to me when I reached Kuala Lumpur.' (to tell you)

(3) 'It is not worth ^ going into it at this time. (worth it)

(4) 'Choose any set of words that ^ want the students to work on.' (that you want)

(5) 'Something which ^ can put into practice straightaway.' (which we)

This type consisted of 6.8% of the corpus.

14.1.6 Omission of Verb

The sixth type of Ellipsis involves omission of verb at sentence level as shown in the examples below:

(1) 'Some of them can ^ out of control. (get out of control)

(2) 'Public must ^ aware of the danger. (be aware)

(3) 'Students should ^ aware of the problem. (be aware)

(4) 'Local authorities should ^ time-table for water supplies and get residents to be involved.' (should prepare)

(5) 'If we practise this proposal many people will ^ scared to waste water.' (will be scared)

(6) 'TESLians most of them have families; they ^ no need find a place to stay. (they have no need)

(7) 'It is a sad thing if leatherback turtle ^ extinct our seas.' (becomes extinct in)

(8) 'made everybody ^ included.' (feel included)

(9) 'My third baby was ^ during Adventist.' (was born)
(10) 'Can you ^ up your right hand?' (put up)

(11) 'Her intention was to prevent her child from^ food that is allergen to her child which can cause death.' (from eating food)

(12) 'Public must ^ aware of the danger.' (be aware)

This type consisted of 16.4% of the corpus.

14.1.7 Omission of Noun after Adjective

The seventh type of Ellipsis involves the omission of the noun after an adjective or adjective after a noun such as observed in the following:

(1) 'A lot of middle class^ don't take public transport.' (middle class people)

(2) 'I got my monthly ^ already.' (monthly period)

(2) 'As a member of the committee I think we need to set an in-service ^.
(in-service course)

(4) 'People are living a routine ^.' (routine existence)

(5) 'They now fear it may help Halim out by giving him longer^ to find the money.' (longer time)

(6) 'If we need anything we can ask the corporate^ to contribute.'
(corporate sector)

(7) 'It is not just about wearing smiling faces that is given in our industry no matter what star^ you are in.' (star hotel)

(8) 'He is a very vegetarian.' (very strict vegetarian)

This type of Ellipsis consisted of 11% of the corpus.

14.1.8 Omission of Part of Compound Word

There are two examples of such omission namely:

(1) the above^ competition (above-mentioned)

(2) Further, the time has now come to accept and understand the concept of Educare.' (Furthermore)

This consisted of 2.7% of the total corpus.
14.1.9 Omission of Object after Transitive Verb

The last type of Ellipsis involves the omission of the object after transitive verbs. Examples are shown below:

(1) Teachers must encourage \(^{^*}\) to go to the temple or mosque." (encourage their students)

(2) It's not an easy matter to carry out because we have to \(^{^*}\) for that." (spend money)

This also consisted of 2.7% of the corpus under Ellipsis.

14.2 Possible Reasons for Ellipsis

There may be three possible causes for Ellipsis among Malaysian speakers. Firstly, since all the examples given were spoken data, the speakers may have felt that it is not necessary to complete the utterances as the listeners were present in front of them and they know what they are talking about.

The second possible reason is the verbal laziness that seems to be a common speech habit of Malaysians. Malaysians love to use 'short-cuts' for everything. An example of this is the truncation of people's names such as 'Andy' for 'Palaniandy' and the tendency to only call people by surnames in the case of Chinese names. Abbreviations are coined almost everyday for almost everything from place names such as KLIA to course names such as TESL.

The third possible reason is transfer of linguistic habits of the mothertongue whereby certain parts of speech which are usually omitted in spoken Bahasa, Cantonese or Tamil, such as articles are also omitted in Malaysian English. Perhaps the speakers feel that since they are not necessary in their native languages, they are not necessary in English either.
14.3 Conclusion of Ellipsis

Previous researchers such as Anthonysamy (1997) perceived Ellipsis as a minor category of non-native variation, perhaps due to the fact that their data was limited. However, the present researcher has found a relatively large number of 73 examples of Ellipsis in the corpus. Hence she has sub-divided it into nine types according to the formal nature of the omitted words, namely:

i. Word Omission from Multi-word Units
ii. Omission of Preposition from Phrasal Verbs
iii. Omission of Preposition
iv. Omission of Units of Measurement
v. Omission of Pronouns
vi. Omission of Verb
vii. Omission of Noun after Adjective
viii. Omission of Part of Compound Word
ix. Omission of Object after Transitive Verb

The large number of examples of Ellipsis and the above sub-division indicate that Ellipsis is a common feature of spoken Malaysian English. Perhaps the present researcher’s findings on Ellipsis could be further explored by other researchers.

In the next two chapters the researcher will describe examples of Semantic Extension and Register Mixing, which are the only categories which have not been further sub-divided into sub-categories or types.