



# A Study of application of ellipsis and lexical cohesion as two types of cohesive devices in subtitling and dubbing: the case of Anne of green gables

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### ARTICLE INFO

#### Article history:

Received: 3 November 2013;

Received in revised form:

20 April 2014;

Accepted: 25 April 2014;

#### Keywords

Audio-Visual Translation,  
Dubbing,  
Subtitling,  
Cohesion,  
Lexical Cohesion,  
Ellipsis.

### ABSTRACT

This study is a descriptive research attempting to compare and contrast the use of two types of cohesive devices (i.e. lexical cohesion and ellipsis) in the original dialogues of a television serial with the Persian subtitled and dubbed versions of the same dialogues. The data used in this study comprised the dialogues of 10 scenes selected by the researcher from the television serial 'Ann of Green Gables' as well as the dubbed and subtitled counterparts of the dialogues of the same scenes. The study sought two objectives: First, it attempted to investigate the original dialogues of the film, in terms of the frequency of the use of the two mentioned types of cohesive devices, and to compare them with the dubbed and subtitled versions; second, it aimed to compare the two types of audio-visual translations (i.e. dubbing and subtitling) to find out how they have dealt with these cohesive devices and what differences exist between these two types of translation in terms of their handling lexical cohesion and ellipsis. For this purpose, the study employed Halliday and Hasan's (1976) model of cohesive devices. The findings revealed that repetition has the greatest frequency of use among lexical cohesion elements and clausal ellipsis has the greatest frequency among ellipsis types in the original dialogues. The findings also demonstrated that the two translated versions were relatively similar in their handling lexical cohesion but the dubbed version contained a substantially greater number of cases of ellipsis than the subtitled version did. The findings of this research could provide audiovisual translators with information as to how the cohesive elements are differently used in the English dialogues and their Persian translations (subtitled and dubbed dialogues).

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### Introduction

The media play an important role in this age of globalization and global communications. The introduction and subsequent boom in satellite television, plus the Internet, has made the world a much smaller place, allowing different peoples, cultures and languages to interact more frequently. The "screen" is a primary vehicle for this interaction and as a result the audio-visual or film translator has an increasingly important role to play. Since the audio-visual text is a complex medium comprising both verbal and non-verbal signs, it is up to the translator to transfer the true meaning and value of all the signs and to refrain from too many deletions. Although translation is a matter of approximation, one cannot underestimate the value of the chunks of language and the logical relationship existing among them.

Cohesive devices, and the ways in which they are used, vary from language to language and thus, if they are translated one for one from the source to the receptor language, it will certainly distort the intended meaning of the original author. Therefore translators should be fully aware of the cohesive devices of the source language and look for the appropriate devices of the receptor language for use in the translation (Larson, 1984). Baker (1992:206) refers to different networks of lexical cohesion in different languages. She states, "As with the thematic structure, it is in many ways the density and progression of cohesive ties throughout a text that are important. This web of relationships may have to differ between ST and

TT. Since the networks of lexical relations will not be identical across languages".

### Literature Review

This section attempts to discuss the theoretical framework of the study and review the related literature.

### Audiovisual translation

Audiovisual translation is one of several overlapping umbrella terms that include 'media translation', 'multimedia translation', 'multimodal translation' and 'screen translation'. These different terms all set out to cover the interlingual transfer of verbal language when it is transmitted and accessed both visually and acoustically, usually, but not necessarily, through some kind of electronic device. Remael et al. (2008: 1-2) define audiovisual translation as follows:

Audiovisual translation (AVT) constitutes a sub-discipline of Translation Studies (TS) that is now in full swing, as witnessed by the numerous very recent publications dealing with this extremely volatile translation form. Having started out as a discipline focusing on the traditional forms of interlingual subtitling and dubbing, studies in AVT now embrace such diverse forms of text production as partial dubbing, consecutive and simultaneous interpretation (for television), off-screen narration, voice over, subtitling for opera and theatre, intra lingual and interlingual subtitling for the deaf and hard-of hearing (SDH), and audio description for the blind and visually impaired (AD). Many researchers in the field are treating AVT as a form of 'accessibility', i.e., a form of text production that

does not merely overcome linguistic and language-specific cultural boundaries, but also sensorial boundaries, boundaries of a quite different kind.

They also add that AVT is a translation form with a strong technical component which is very susceptible to influence from technological developments that necessarily exert influence on how AVT is produced, and hence on its form. In many ways, they argue, AVT acts as a microcosm of current text production especially mixing spoken, written, visual and aural modes. They state that this type of translation undermines traditional notions such as the linearity of verbal texts and reliance on multiple forms of intertextuality (Remael, A. et al. 2008).

As mentioned above, this new area has got strong relationship with translation, literary studies and cultural communication. It is also associated with the subtitling or dubbing process. These two methods of film translation are, according to Diaz Cintas (2008:7), "the most popular in the profession and the best known by audiences, but there are some others such as voice-over, narration and interpreting. The translation of live performances was added to this taxonomy at a later stage and that is how subtitling for the opera and the theatre has also come to be included. The change of language that takes place in all these cases has been a key factor when labeling these practices as translation."

Dubbing and subtitling are the means to render voice tracks whether in the oral or written forms. Subtitle is regarded as the abbreviated version of the dialogue which is projected onto the screen; and dubbing is a synchronized soundtrack of the complete dialogue. House (1977: 188-89) states that "subtitles are overt translations whereas dubbing which purports to be a second original is covert."

### **Cohesion**

In a definition of cohesion, Baker (1992: 24) states, "cohesion is the network of lexical, grammatical and other relations, which provides links between various parts of a text. These relations or ties organize and to some extent create a text". She adds, "cohesion is a surface relation; it connects together the actual words and expressions that we can see or hear". In a definition of cohesion and coherence, Azzaro (2002) maintains that a text has to be perceived as an integrated whole. Cohesion refers to its linguistic unity comparable with coherence which refers to its conceptual unity. According to Halliday and Hasan (1976: 4):

"The concept of cohesion is a semantic one; it refers to relations of meaning that exist within the text, and that define it as a text. Cohesion occurs where the INTERPRETATION of some element in the discourse is dependent on that of another. The one PRESOPPOSES the other, in the sense that it cannot be effectively decoded except by recourse to it. When this happens, a relation of cohesion is set up, and the two elements, the presupposing and the presupposed, are thereby at least potentially integrated into a text".

In other words, as stated by Carter (1998: 80), cohesion can be described as "the means by which texts are linguistically connected". "However it is necessary to recognize that "Cohesion is a manifestation of certain aspects of coherence, and a pointer towards it, rather than its cause or necessary result" (Cook, 1994: 34).

Each text intended to read needs to be as clear as possible so that the reader can easily follow sentences, ideas and details. One of the most important aspects is to show the connections and relationships among ideas. In fact, cohesion can be defined as "manifestation of how we are making sense of the message in the text" (Carter & McCarthy, 1988: 204).

Cohesion is achieved by a set of linguistic devices which connect ideas making explicit the semantic relations underlying them. The most commonly used typology of cohesive devices is provided by Halliday and Hassan (1976). This typology contains the following five cohesive devices: reference, substitution, ellipsis, conjunction and lexical cohesion.

Using these particular types of words and phrases, known as 'cohesive ties', to link individual sentences, and parts of sentences, helps the reader to follow the movement of ideas without any difficulty. They help the text to flow naturally, without any unnecessary repetition. Such ties serve as sign posts, which signal readers how texts are organized and how parts of texts are functionally interconnected, and in turn help readers comprehend the entire text.

### **Cohesive devices**

Halliday and Hasan (1976) divided cohesive ties into five types: conjunction, reference, substitution, ellipsis and lexical cohesion. These are referred to as resources that are used in the surface structures of texts. This model of cohesion as used by Halliday and Hasan is obvious between sentences as those within the sentences can also function as structural elements.

### **Grammatical Devices**

Halliday and Hasan (1976) give taxonomy of the types of cohesive relationship which can be formally established within a text. Therefore, the main cohesive devices which bind a text together are of two main categories: grammatical and lexical devices. The kinds of grammatical cohesive ties discussed by Halliday and Hasan (1976) are reference, substitution, ellipsis and conjunction. The following is an explanation of different types of ellipsis which is the focus of the present study.

### **Ellipsis**

Ellipsis occurs when "something which is present in the selection of underlying (systematic) options is omitted in the structure- whether or not the resulting structure is in itself 'incomplete' " (Halliday and Hasan, 1976: 144). In crude terms, we can take as a general guide the notion that ellipsis occurs when something that is structurally necessary is left unsaid. Ellipsis, like substitution, is believed to embody the same fundamental relation between parts of a text (a relation between words or groups or clauses, as distinct from reference, which is a relation between meanings). There are three types of ellipsis, depending on the structural unit within which ellipsis occurs: nominal ellipsis, verbal ellipsis, and clausal ellipsis.

### **Nominal Ellipsis**

According to Halliday and Hasan (1976:147), nominal ellipsis means ellipsis within the nominal group. On the logical dimension, "the structure is that of Head with optional modification; the modifying elements include some which precede the Head and some which follow it, referred to as pre-modifier and post-modifier respectively". On the other hand, "the modifier is combined with another structure, on the experimental direction, which consists of the elements Deictic, Numerative, Epithet, Classifier, and Qualifier". In general, any nominal group having the function of Head filled by a word that normally functions within the Modifier is an elliptical one. Therefore, as pointed out by Halliday and Hasan (1976: 147), nominal ellipsis involves the upgrading of a word functioning as Deictic, Numerative, Epithet or Classifier from the status of Modifier to the status of Head. The following example can illustrate the point.

Four students passed the course. The other *four* failed it. In the second line 'four', which is a Numerative and therefore normally acts as Modifier is upgraded to function as Head.

### Verbal Ellipsis

Verbal ellipsis is defined as ellipsis within the verbal group. In other words, it is technically defined as a verbal group, the structure of which does not fully express its syntactic features—all the choices that are being made within the verbal group system. As implied in the definition put forth by Halliday and Hasan (1976), verbal ellipsis undoubtedly differs from nominal ellipsis. In the verbal group, unlike nominal ellipsis, there is only one lexical element, and that is the verb itself. And the whole of the rest of the verbal group expresses systematic selections, a choice of an either-or type. The following example can illustrate the point:

**A: what have you been doing?**

**B: *Swimming*.**

'Swimming' in the above example adopted from Halliday and Hasan (1976) is considered to be a case of verbal ellipsis. There are two basic kinds of verbal ellipsis: lexical ellipsis and operator ellipsis.

### Lexical Ellipsis

"It is the type of ellipsis in which the lexical verb is missing from the verbal group" (Halliday and Hasan, 1976: 170). Heed should be taken of the fact that lexical ellipsis is ellipsis 'from the right': it always involves omission of the last word, which is the lexical verb, and only may extend 'leftward', to leave only the first word intact (Halliday and Hasan, 1976).

A: Is he going to come?

**B: He might.**

In the above example, the response part is a case of lexical ellipsis.

### Operator Ellipsis

Operator ellipsis is ellipsis 'from the left'. In fact, in most instances of operator ellipsis, everything is presupposed but the lexical verb. It should be emphasized that operator ellipsis, unlike lexical ellipsis, involves only the omission operators; the lexical verb always remains intact. The following example would illustrate the difference between lexical and operator ellipsis.

A: Have you been running?

B: Yes, I have.

A: What have you been doing?

B: Running.

A case of lexical ellipsis is self-evident in the first dialogical exchange, with the lexical verb '*swimming*' being omitted, while a case of operator ellipsis is quite obvious in the second dialogue, with the lexical verb '*swimming*' present, and all operators to its left.

### Clausal Ellipsis

As the title suggests, clausal ellipsis is a kind of ellipsis in which the omission occurs within a clause. The clause in English, as Halliday and Hasan (1976) put it, has a two-part structure consisting of 'a modal element' plus 'propositional element'. The modal element consists of the subject plus the final element in the verbal group. The propositional element, on the other hand, consists of the residue: the remainder of the verbal group, and any complements or adjuncts that may be present. Consider the example that follows:

The Duke was going to plant a row of poplars in the park.

In the above example, 'the Duke was' is the modal element of the clause and the rest constitutes its propositional element. The clausal ellipsis occurs where one of these elements is missing. The following example is worth noting:

A: What was the Duke going to do?

B: Plant a row of poplars in the park.

In the above example, the modal element of the clause '*the Duke was going to*' is omitted in the answer, so we have a case of clausal ellipsis.

### Lexical Cohesion

Lexical cohesion is the cohesive effect which is achieved through the selection of vocabulary. It involves using the characteristics and features of words as well as the group relationship among them to achieve cohesion. Lexical cohesion is classified into two types: reiteration and collocation. Halliday and Hasan (1976) classify reiteration into four types: the same word, a synonym/near-synonym, a super ordinate, and a general word. For example, '*a boy*' can be replaced in the following sentences with '*the boy*' (the same word), '*the lad*' (a synonym/near-synonym), '*the child*' (a superordinate), and '*the idiot*' (a general word).

**There is a boy climbing that tree.**

*The boy* is going to fall off if he doesn't take care (Halliday and Hasan, 1976: 279-80).

Halliday and Hasan (1976) regard collocation as an important part of creating cohesion in connected text. Collocation refers to the semantic and structural relation among words, which native speakers can use subconsciously for comprehension or production of a text. They argue the case of collocation as follows:

The cohesive effect of such pairs depends not so much on any systematic relationship as on their tendency to share the same lexical environment, to occur in *collocation* with one another. In general, any two lexical items having similar patterns of collocation – that is, tending to appear in similar contexts – will generate a cohesive force if they occur in adjacent sentences. (Halliday and Hasan, 1976: 286)

A 'cohesive force' will produce a 'cohesive tie,' which is the relationship between a cohesive item and the item it presupposes in a text. In other words, collocational links between lexical items create cohesion. It is significant to recognize that lexical cohesion cannot exist without sentences. That is, cohesive words should be discussed not only as the meaning relations which hold between items, but also as the explicit expression of those meaning relations within a text. Collocation is achieved through the association of lexical items that regularly occur. It also involves pairs of words drawn from the same order series. Examples are Naira..., Kobo, North..., South, Car... brake, Father... mother, doctors... patients, spoken language etc.

### Methodology

In conducting this research, first 10 scenes of the TV serial 'Ann of Green Gables' were selected by the researcher. Afterwards, the original dialogues of the serial as well as their subtitled and dubbed counterparts were extracted from the three versions (original, dubbed, and subtitled versions) of the serial. In the next step, the original dialogues were investigated sentence-by-sentence and the cases of the use of lexical cohesion and ellipsis in the sentences were identified. For this purpose, the study employed the framework developed by Halliday and Hasan's (1976). After identification of the cases of occurrence of the two types of cohesive devices, the density and percentage of their use was calculated. Afterwards, the same procedure was done for the subtitled and dubbed versions, too. After investigating all the three versions and identifying all the cases of occurrence of lexical cohesion and ellipsis, the frequency and percentage of their use were compared with each other in order to determine how the translators of the dubbed and subtitled versions have managed to deal with these cohesive

elements and to what extent they have succeeded in transferring these elements into the target language.

### Findings and Discussion

This section attempts to discuss and investigate the findings.

#### Analysis of original dialogues

According to the findings, as regards lexical cohesion, repetition – with a percentage of 72.36 – have the greatest density in the original dialogues of the serial. The findings also demonstrate that collocation (13.15%), synonymy (8.77%), the use of superordinates (4.82%) and the use of general terms (0.87%) occupy the second to fifth ranks, respectively.

With respect to ellipsis, the findings revealed that clausal ellipsis (62.31%) is the first, nominal ellipsis (36.23%) is the second, and clausal ellipsis (1.44%) is the last type of ellipsis in terms of frequency of use in the original dialogues of the film.

#### Analysis of Persian subtitles

According to the findings, with regard to lexical cohesion, repetition – with a percentage of 83.90 – has the greatest density in the original dialogues of the film. It is also revealed that collocation (11.49%) holds the second rank; synonymy (1.91%) and the use of superordinates (1.91%) together occupy the third rank; and the use of general terms (0.76%) holds the fourth rank. With respect to ellipsis, the findings revealed that nominal ellipsis (65.71%) is the first, and nominal ellipsis (17.14%) and clausal ellipsis (17.14%) together hold the second rank in terms of frequency of use in the original dialogues of the film.

#### Analysis of dubbed version

According to the findings, as regards lexical cohesion, repetition – with a percentage of 81.37 – has the greatest density in the original dialogues of the film. The findings also demonstrated that collocation (11.74%), use of superordinates (4.85%), synonymy (1.21%) and the use of general terms (0.80%) occupy the second to fifth ranks, respectively.

With respect to ellipsis, the findings reveal that nominal ellipsis (77.98%) is the first, clausal ellipsis (11.92%) is the second, and verbal ellipsis (10.09%) is the last type of ellipsis in terms of frequency of use in the original dialogues of the film.

#### Concluding remarks

Overall, the findings demonstrated that 228 cases of lexical cohesion elements have been used in the original dialogues of the film whereas the Persian subtitles contain 261 cases of lexical cohesion elements and the dubbed version contains 247 elements. Therefore, it appears that there are more lexical cohesion elements in the subtitled and dubbed versions than there are in the original dialogues. That is because of the greater number of repetitions in the Persian versions. Among the subcategories of lexical cohesion, repetition was the most frequently used in all the three versions. After repetition, collocations were the second most frequently used lexical elements. Synonymy and superordinates occupied the third and fourth ranks, and general words had the lowest frequency of use.

The findings also demonstrate that 69 cases of ellipsis have been used in the original dialogues whereas 70 cases have been used in the Persian subtitles, and 109 cases have been used in the dubbed version. Therefore, it appears that there are more cases of ellipsis in the two translated version than in the original dialogues, especially in the dubbed version where there are 40 more cases of ellipsis than in the original dialogues. This could be due to the restrictions imposed on dubbing and subtitling. Due to the fact that in dubbing, the dubbed speech must be

synchronized with the lip-movements of the characters, the translators at times have to reduce some elements so that the dubbed words match appropriately with the lip-movements of the character. In extreme close-ups, this needs to be quite rigorous to meet standards of quality, especially when it comes to open vowels and labial consonants. Kinetic synchrony is another form which matches the voices with characters' body movements, and isochrony, which matches the length of the dubbed utterance to the length of the original utterance are two other forms of synchrony in dubbing. Ivarsson and Carroll (1998) assert that often not only the text but also the content of the script is altered for the sake of better lip-synchronization, and changes are made that not only affect details but even the main point of a scene. Among the subcategories of ellipsis, clausal ellipsis is the most frequently used in the original dialogues whereas nominal ellipsis has the greatest frequency of use in the Persian subtitles and the dubbed version.

Comparison of the results of the two translation types (subtitles and dubbing) shows that, in terms of the use of lexical cohesion, the subtitled version contains 9 more cases of lexical cohesion elements than the dubbed version. In both versions, repetition is the dominant type and general words have the lowest density of use. With regard to ellipsis, the dubbed version contains 51 more cases of ellipsis than the Persian subtitles. In both of the versions nominal ellipsis is the dominant type of ellipsis. Therefore, in general, the findings demonstrated that whereas the two translated versions are somewhat similar in terms of the frequency of their use of lexical cohesion, the dubbed version has shown a much greater interest in the use of ellipsis, which could be because of the limitations imposed on dubbing in terms of the necessity of the synchronization and matching of the characters' lip-movements and body language with the dubbed words which forces the translators to omit some elements.

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