Nominal Ellipsis in Manipuri

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Abstract

The present paper makes an attempt to explore the extra-linguistic features of some of the modifiers that can function as head in an elliptical nominal group. Those modifiers that are to be studied here are numeratives, adjectives, possessives and quantifiers and they are to be analyzed at the discourse level. In Manipuri nominal ellipsis, an elliptical nominal form is formed by omitting the head noun and making the modifiers as head of that group. The modifiers that become the head of that elliptical nominal group have taken the suffixes having been attached to the head of the non-elliptical nominal group. The elliptical nominal group presupposes the noun that is in the preceding part of the discourse and an anaphoric relation is made between them. The modifiers working at the phrase level are now playing a great role at the discourse level also. As the modifiers have the capacity to become the head of an elliptical nominal group, they become an important part of Manipuri discourse. In such way, nominal ellipsis has become a vital cohesive device used to make a Manipuri cohesive discourse. Because of having such role to make a cohesive discourse, nominal ellipsis has become an inevitable part of the analysis of Manipuri discourse.

Keywords: Manipuri, numeratives, adjectives, possessives, quantifiers, ellipsis.

Introduction

The term ‘ellipsis’ means the ‘substitution by zero’. The starting point of the study of ellipsis can be the familiar notion that it is ‘something left unsaid’. There is no implication here that what is unsaid is not understood; on the contrary, ‘unsaid’ implies ‘but understood nevertheless’, and another way of referring to ellipsis is in fact as something understood where ‘understood’ is used in the special sense of ‘going without saying’ (Halliday and Hasan, 1976). Where there is ellipsis, there will be a presupposition, in the structure, that something is to be supplied, or understood. Here the nominal ellipsis which is frequently used in the Manipuri discourse is studied as follows.
Nominal Ellipsis

Nominal ellipsis means the ellipsis within the nominal group i.e. noun phrase. Nominal ellipsis occurs only when the head noun of a noun phrase is left unsaid and it is associated with the sense of incompleteness. As nominal ellipsis is to keep a relationship between the different parts of the discourse, the head noun of an elliptical nominal group is to be anaphorically related to the presupposed item that is present in the preceding part of the discourse (both spoken and written). The importance of nominal ellipsis in making a cohesive discourse lies on the fact that nominal ellipsis aims to establish a relationship between the different parts of a discourse.

In nominal ellipsis the head noun of a noun phrase is omitted and a noun modifying element should function as the head of that noun phrase. The modifying items include those preceding head noun (pre-modifiers) and those following head noun (post-modifiers). Some of Manipuri linguistic elements (modifiers) that function as head in an elliptical nominal group are focused here. Those Manipuri modifiers that are to be studied here are numeratives, adjectives, possessives and quantifiers. They are given as in the following table.

Table 1
The Manipuri modifiers functioning as head of the elliptical nominal form

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Modifiers</th>
<th>Types</th>
<th>Markers</th>
<th>Gloss</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Numeratives</td>
<td>Cardinal</td>
<td>ǝmǝ, ǝnı, ǝhum</td>
<td>‘one’, ‘two’, ‘three’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ordinal</td>
<td>ǝhanbǝ, ǝnisubǝ</td>
<td>‘first’, ‘second’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Adjectives</td>
<td>Attributive</td>
<td>ǝpʰǝbǝ, ǝnǝubǝ</td>
<td>‘good’, ‘new’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Possessives</td>
<td>Noun</td>
<td>noun + -gi</td>
<td>‘of someone’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pronoun</td>
<td>personal pronoun + -gi</td>
<td>‘of someone’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Quantifiers</td>
<td>___</td>
<td>loinǝ, kʰǝǝ, kʰitǝŋ, ǝmǝttǝ</td>
<td>‘all’, ‘some’, ‘a little’, ‘any’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Numeratives

In Manipuri nominal ellipsis, numerative is one of the linguistic elements that can become the head of an elliptical nominal group. As mentioned above that if there is an elliptical nominal group,
there will be a noun modifying element that functions as head of the nominal group. The numeratives can function as head of the elliptical nominal group. It has become possible for numeratives to function as head of the nominal group that is elliptical because of having a presupposed item in the preceding part of the discourse. In this sense nominal ellipsis is anaphoric in relation that bridges different parts of a discourse.

The Manipuri numeratives to be studied first are the cardinals like ǝmǝ ‘one’, ǝni ‘two’, ǝhum ‘three’… etc. All these cardinals can become the head of an elliptical nominal group.

1. A- handǝk cǝhigi kelendǝr laibirǝbǝra
   hǝndǝk cahi-gi kelendǝr lǝi-bi-rǝ-bǝ-ra
   this time year-GEN calendar buy-HON-PERF-NMZ-INTR
   ‘Have you bought the calendar of this year?’
B- hoi ǝmǝ lai-jǝre
   hoi ǝmǝ lai-jǝ-re
   yes one buy-REFL-PERF
   ‘Yes, I have bought one.’

In the above cited example it has been seen that the Manipuri cardinals can be used as head of the elliptical nominal group. These cardinals are working as modifiers and accompanied with a head noun. When a nominal group is elliptical i.e. the head noun is omitted but understood, the cardinals will remain as head of that elliptical nominal group.

In the example (1) the cardinal ǝmǝ ‘one’ used in the speaker B’s utterance functions as head presupposing the noun kelendǝr ‘calendar’ that is in the preceding part of the discourse. The non-elliptical form of the nominal group is kelendǝr ǝmǝ ‘one calendar’. The cardinal ǝmǝ ‘one’ is used in the nominal substitution too. But there is a big difference between the elliptical ǝmǝ and the substitute ǝmǝ. In the nominal substitution, ǝmǝ that is used as substitute item will be preceded by a modifying element whereas in the case of nominal ellipsis the cardinal ǝmǝ will stand alone as the head of a nominal group where the head noun is omitted.
In the example (2), the nominal group of the second utterance is made up of the cardinal *ani* ‘two’ only. The cardinal *ani* functions as a head of the nominal group in which the head noun is omitted. The non-elliptical form of the nominal group will be *gʰari ani* ‘two watches’ because of having anaphoric relation between the cardinal *ani* ‘two’ and the presupposed noun *gʰari* ‘watch’ in the preceding utterance.

In the example (3) the non-elliptical nominal group in the utterance of the speaker B will be *pensil mǝri* ‘four pencils’. The nominal group is made elliptical by omitting the head noun *pensil* ‘pencil’ that is in the preceding part of the discourse and found by means of anaphoric relation, and making the cardinal *mǝri* ‘four’ as the head of the nominal group. By using the cardinals as the head of an elliptical nominal group, cohesion can be brought between the different parts of a discourse.

Another Manipuri numerative that is used as the head of an elliptical nominal group in nominal ellipsis is ordinals. The Manipuri ordinals are like *əhanbǝ* ‘first’, *ənisubǝ* ‘second’, *əhumsubǝ* ‘third’… etc.
4. ǝhanbo  mǝna  ǝdu  gitnǝ  pʰǝŋ-le
ǝ-han-bǝ  mǝna  ǝdu  git-nǝ  pʰǝŋ-le
ATT-first-NMZ  prize  that  Git-NOM  get-PERF
ǝnisubadunǝ  maheǝnǝ  pʰǝŋlǝgǝni
ǝni-subǝ-du-nǝ  mahe-ǝnǝ  pʰǝŋ-la-gǝni
two-ORD-DET-CONT  Mahesh-NOM  get-PROS-NREAL

‘Git has got the first prize. Mahesh will get the second one.’

5.  A- tombadu  kǝjasubǝ  kadǝ  lai
  tomba-du  kǝja-subǝ  ka-dǝ  lai-ϕ
Tomba-DET  which-ORD  room-LOC  live-SAM
  ‘In which room does Tomba live?’

B- madi  ǝhumsubǝdǝ  lai
  ma-di  ǝhum-subǝ-dǝ  lai-ϕ
  he-PART  three-ORD-LOC  live-SAM
  ‘He lives in the third one.’

The ordinals ǝnisubǝ ‘second’, and ǝhumsubǝ ‘third’ in the example (4) and (5) are used as head of the respective elliptical nominal groups in which the head nouns mǝna ‘prize’ and ka ‘room’ are omitted. The non-elliptical forms of the nominal groups in the second utterance of example (4) and in the speaker B’s utterance of example (5) are respectively ǝnisubǝ mǝna ‘second prize’ and ǝhumsubǝ ka ‘third room’. The cardinals follow the head noun and the ordinals can either precede or follow the noun. All these are nominal groups where mǝna ‘prize’ and ka ‘room’ are the head nouns of their respective nominal groups. As nominal ellipsis occurs in these nominal groups, all these head nouns are omitted and the ordinals remain as their head. After the head noun of the nominal group is understood and the ordinal becomes the head of that group, these nominal groups are now elliptical.

**Adjectives**

Those words belonging to the adjectival category are used as the head of an elliptical nominal group of Manipuri. The Manipuri adjectives are formed by prefixing the attributive ǝ- to the verbal noun. In a nominal group, adjectives are accompanied with a head noun. When nominal ellipsis occurs, the head noun of the nominal group will be omitted and the adjective in that nominal group will become the head of the elliptical nominal group. The Manipuri adjectives are like ǝpʰǝba ‘good’, ǝnǝubǝ ‘new’, ǝpikǝ ‘small’, ǝŋǝubǝ ‘white’ etc.
6. sidǝ mǝnamǝsiŋsiŋdu laire ǝpǝtpǝsiŋdu
   si-dǝ mǝnamǝsiŋ-siŋ-du lai-re a-pǝt-pǝ-siŋ-du
   this-LOC vegetable-PL-DET have-PERF ATT-rotten-NMZ-PL-DET
   hundokkǝɾǝsi
   hun-dok-kǝ-ra-si
   throw-OUT-DEIC-PROS-SUG
   ‘The vegetables are here. Let’s throw away the rotten ones.’

7. ǝdudǝ lairibǝ kʰongrausиŋdu ubǝra
   ǝdǝ-ɗǝ lai-ri-bǝ kʰongrau-siŋ-du u-bǝ-ra
   that-LOC have-PROG-NMZ pant-PL-DET see-NMZ-INTR
   ǝmubǝdu purǝku
   ǝ-mu-bǝ-du pu-rǝk-u
   ATT-black-NMZ-DET bring-DEIC-COM
   ‘Have you seen the pants there? Bring the black one.’

In the above cited example (6), there is an adjective ǝpǝtpǝ ‘rotten’ functioning as head of the elliptical nominal group ǝpǝtpǝsiŋdu ‘the rotten ones’. The adjective ǝpǝtpǝ ‘rotten’ refers back to the noun mǝnamǝsiŋ ‘vegetable’ that is in the preceding utterance. The non-elliptical form of the nominal group is ǝpǝtpǝ mǝnamǝsiŋsiŋdu ‘the rotten vegetables’. From the non-elliptical nominal form, it has been realized that the omitted head noun must be the noun mǝnamǝsiŋ that has already been in the preceding utterance. This means nominal ellipsis occurs only when there is a presupposition. One thing is that both the adjectives ǝpǝtpǝ ‘rotten’ and ǝmubǝ ‘black’ in the example (6) and (7) are used as the head of their respective nominal groups. The non-elliptical form of the nominal group that is elliptical in example (7) is ǝmubǝ kʰongraudu ‘the black pant’. When these nominal groups are elliptical the head nouns mǝnamǝsiŋ ‘vegetable’ in the example (6) and kʰongrau ‘pant’ in the example (7) are omitted and at the same time the suffixes attached to the head nouns are added to the adjectives that function as head of the elliptical nominal group as given below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Elliptical form</th>
<th>Non-elliptical form</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>i. ǝpǝtpǝsiŋdu</td>
<td>ǝpǝtpǝ mǝnamǝsiŋsiŋdu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a-pǝt-pǝ-siŋ-du</td>
<td>a-pǝt-pǝ mǝnamǝsiŋ-siŋ-du</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ATT-rotten-NMZ-PL-DET</td>
<td>ATT-rotten-NMZ vegetable-PL-DET</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ii. ǝmubǝdu</td>
<td>ǝmubǝ kʰongraudu</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Language in India www.languageinindia.com ISSN 1930-294018:1 January 2018
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Why the adjectives can be used as head in the elliptical nominal group is explained here. When the head noun is omitted the remaining constituents in the nominal group are adjective, plural marker and determiner. Of these constituents, the plural marker and determiner are suffixes. And then these suffixes attach to the adjectives in the same way as they do to the noun. As suffixes cannot stand as word they cannot become the head of the elliptical nominal group. The only element that can become head is the adjective. That is why the adjectives have to become head of the elliptical nominal group.

**Possessives**

The possessives are used as head in an elliptical nominal group. The possessive forms may be of noun or pronoun. Both the possessive forms of noun and pronoun are made by adding the genitive suffix ***-ki--gi*** to the noun and the personal pronoun. Separate analysis of the possessive forms of noun and pronoun that function as head of an elliptical nominal group are given here.

**Noun**

Normally the possessive form of a noun is made by adding the genitive suffix ***-ki--gi*** to it. The nominal possessive can be a part of a nominal group. When the nominal group containing the possessive noun is elliptical, the head noun can be omitted and the possessive noun will be the head of the elliptical nominal group.

8. A- sek^h^argi kardu mək^h^oinə puk^h^ərənι
   sek^h^ər-gi kar-du mə-k^h^oi-nə pu-k^h^ο-rə-gənι

Sekhar-GEN  car-DET  3P-PL-NOM  bring-DEF-PROS-NREAL

‘They will take away Sekhar’s car.’

B- p^h^are tombagidunə əik^h^oinə
   p^h^are tomba-gi-du-nə əi-k^h^oi-nə

DM  Tomba-GEN-DET-CONT  I-PL-NOM

purəsi

pu-rə-si

bring-PROS-SUG

‘Well, let’s take Tomba’s.’

9. A- romengi məpadi ojaniəmugi

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romen-gi mǝ-pa-di oja-ni ǝmu-gi
Romen-GEN 3p-father-PART teacher-COP Amu-GEN
mǝpanǝ kǝri oige
ma-pa-nǝ kǝri oi-ge
3p-father-CONT what be-INT

‘Romen’s father is a teacher. What is Amu’s father?’

B- ǝmuginǝ læumiini
ǝmu-gi-nǝ læumi-ni
Amu-GEN-CONT farmer-COP

‘Amu’s is a farmer.’

In the above given example (8) and (9), the possessive noun tombagi ‘Tomba’s’ and ǝmugi ‘Amu’s’ presuppose their respective nouns kar ‘car’ and mǝpa ‘father’ being possessed by the possessive nouns. The non-elliptical forms of the nominal groups that are elliptical are tombagi kar ‘Tomba’s car’ and ǝmugi mǝpa ‘Amu’s father’. The nominal groups tombaginǝ ‘Tomba’s’ and ǝmuginǝ ‘Amu’s’ are elliptical because the head nouns that are presupposed are omitted and the possessive nouns become the head of the nominal groups, the suffixes -nǝ and -du attached to the head nouns are added to the possessive nouns as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Elliptical form</th>
<th>Non-elliptical form</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| i. tombagidunǝ = tombagi kardunǝ
  tomba-gi-du-nǝ = tomba-gi kar-du-nǝ
  Tomba-GEN-DET-CONT = Tomba-GEN car-DET-CONT |
| ii. ǝmuginǝ = ǝmugi mǝpanǝ
  ǝmu-gi-nǝ = ǝmu-gi mǝ-pa-nǝ
  Amu-GEN-CONT = Amu-GEN 3p-father-CONT |

Pronoun

The possessive pronouns are also made by adding the genitive suffix -ki~gi to the personal pronouns. The possessive pronouns like ǝigi ‘my’, ǝnǝgi ‘your’, magi ‘his/her’… etc. can be used as the head in the elliptical nominal group presupposing the thing or person being possessed by the possessive pronoun.

10. magi waridi əıkʰoi taminnǝre
‘We have listened to his story together. Next, let’s listen to yours.’

In the above example (10), the elliptical nominal group in which the possessive pronoun functions as head is nǝŋgi ‘yours’. As the possessive pronoun presupposes the noun wari ‘story’ that is in the preceding utterance, the non-elliptical form of that nominal group will be nǝŋgi wari ‘your story’. And it is clear that the omitted head noun is wari ‘story’. This omitted head noun is in the preceding utterance. That is to say that nominal ellipsis has an anaphoric relation between the possessive pronoun and the presupposed noun in the preceding utterance.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Elliptical form</th>
<th>Non-elliptical form</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>nǝŋgi</td>
<td>nǝŋgi wari</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nǝŋ-gi</td>
<td>nǝŋ-gi wari</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>you-GEN</td>
<td>you-GEN story</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Quantifiers

In Manipuri the quantifiers like loina ‘all’, kʰitǝŋ ‘a little’, kʰǝrǝ ‘some’, amǝtǝ ‘any’ … etc. can become the head of an elliptical nominal group. The quantifiers can occur within a nominal group. They can occur with an omitted or non-omitted head noun. Quantifiers are contributing a lot to carrying out nominal ellipsis.

11. A- tombadu sǝŋgom kǝjam tʰǝkkʰi
    tomba-du sǝŋgom kǝjam tʰǝk-kʰǝ-i
    Tomba-DET milk how much drink-DEF-SAM
    ‘How much milk did Tomba drink?’

B- madi kʰitǝŋ tʰǝkkʰi
    ma-di kʰitǝŋ tʰǝk-kʰǝ-i
    he-PART a little drink-DEF-SAM
    ‘He drank a little.’

12. A- satrǝsiŋdu kǝdǝ ǝŋlǝbǝra
In the example (11) and (12), the respective head noun of the elliptical nominal group in which the quantifiers $k^h\text{itəŋ}$ ‘a little’ and $\text{loinə}$ ‘all’ occur are omitted. Since the quantifiers are to occur with a head noun of a nominal group, they cannot stand alone. From this it has been realized that the head nouns are omitted and the quantifiers remain as the head of their elliptical nominal group. The quantifiers $k^h\text{itəŋ}$ and $\text{loinə}$ are the head of their elliptical nominal group. As nominal ellipsis has presupposition, the quantifiers presuppose the person or thing in the preceding part of the discourse. In the case of the example (11) and (12), the quantifier $k^h\text{itəŋ}$ presupposes the noun $\text{sǝŋgom}$ ‘milk’ and $\text{loinə}$ presupposes the noun $\text{satrǝsiŋ}$ ‘students’.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Elliptical form</th>
<th>Non-elliptical form</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>i. $k^h\text{itəŋ}$ = $\text{sǝŋgom}$ $k^h\text{itəŋ}$</td>
<td>$\text{sǝŋgom}$ $k^h\text{itəŋ}$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$k^h\text{itəŋ}$ $\text{sǝŋgom}$ $k^h\text{itəŋ}$</td>
<td>a little $\text{milk}$ a little</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ii. $\text{loinə}$ = $\text{satrǝsiŋ}$ $\text{loinə}$</td>
<td>$\text{satrǝsiŋ}$ $\text{loinə}$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$\text{loinə}$ $\text{satrǝsiŋ}$ $\text{loinə}$</td>
<td>all $\text{student-PL}$ all</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Conclusion**

The present study has an advantage of exploring the extra-linguistic features of modifiers of Manipuri at the discourse level. It is clear that the modifiers are playing a great role not only at phrase level but at the discourse level also. Another important point to note here is that those modifiers that will occur only with the head noun of a nominal group are allowed to function as head of the elliptical nominal group and the omitted head noun has to be found through an anaphoric relation that is with the preceding part of the discourse. This makes a discourse a cohesive one. The present work is just highlighting a path through which a deeper exploration might be carried out in this area. Keeping the
present study as a starting point, it is a must to go deeper for exploring many new things in Manipuri discourse.

Abbreviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ATT</td>
<td>attributive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COM</td>
<td>command</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONT</td>
<td>contrast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COP</td>
<td>copula</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DEF</td>
<td>definitive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DEIC</td>
<td>deictic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DET</td>
<td>determiner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DM</td>
<td>discourse marker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GEN</td>
<td>genitive</td>
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<td>honorific</td>
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<td>INT</td>
<td>inteventive</td>
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<tr>
<td>INTR</td>
<td>interrogative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>locative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NMZ</td>
<td>nominalizer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>nominative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NREAL</td>
<td>nonrealized</td>
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<tr>
<td>ORD</td>
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<td>OUT</td>
<td>outward</td>
</tr>
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<td>particularization</td>
</tr>
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<td>perfective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PERS</td>
<td>persuasive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PL</td>
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<td>progressive</td>
</tr>
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<td>prospective</td>
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<tr>
<td>REC</td>
<td>reciprocal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REFL</td>
<td>reflexive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAM</td>
<td>simple aspect marker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SUG</td>
<td>suggestive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3P</td>
<td>third person</td>
</tr>
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</table>

References


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