




## Identification of substitution and Ellipsis in Leo Tolstoy's short story by English Language major students

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### Abstract

This study is based on the results of the research which aimed (1) to identify the cohesive devices used by Leo Tolstoy in *A grain as Big as a Hen's Egg* as proposed by Halliday & Hasan and (2) to find whether substitution and ellipsis from the same story could be identified by the seven English Major students doing the Discourse Analysis Course during the final assessment after being taught The research followed descriptive quality method and there was also a small quantitative method comparing the actual and identified substitution and ellipsis devices. The results of the research show that the ellipsis 'substitution by zero' Halliday & Hasan (1976: 142), is dominant in *A grain as Big as a Hen's Egg*, the short story in which the devices form aesthetically Tolstoy's lucid and succinct style, which makes the parable clear to all who read it. Ellipsis is so imbedded in communication that ESL learners could identify it better than substitutions.

*Key words:* Identification; Substitution and Ellipsis; English Major Students; Leo Tolstoy; Language

### 1. Introduction

What makes a string of words, or a string of sentences, a meaningful discourse?- this has been discussed and on this issue many linguists differ. According to Crystal (1987: 119) a series of sentences becomes a text only when the sentences have a kind of mutual dependence. Leech et al. (2001: 83)) are of the opinion that cohesion is an array of clauses and phrases so as to create a text. Halliday & Hasan (1976: 4) ascertain that the concept of cohesion is semantic. Interlocutors can follow the development of utterances in a discourse if there's cohesion. In addition, cohesion creates and interprets a discourse. In addition, one-of the textual elements of high quality writing is cohesion, which refers to the explicit links in a discourse (Todd et. al. 2007). Halliday and Hasan (1976) state that cohesion helps in the making of a text through the use of cohesive devices, Halliday and Hasan's cohesive ties include reference, substitution, ellipsis, conjunction, and lexical cohesion.

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As we zoom into the components of modern digital era, we can should admit the reality that due to practicality in these days people speak and write not in complete sentences, they discard the structures, which were once regarded as the ideal structures of language. Moreover, language is made of gaps as the speakers and writers of any language operate within the context comprehend the language even when much of linguistic structures are omitted or replaced. Substitution and ellipsis help to enhance the economical usage of linguistic structures but at the same time lend a big hand to maintain clarity and comprehensiveness. In short, Ellipsis and substitution are used to avoid unnecessary repetition of clauses, words, or phrases in a text, to make the text coherent.

According to Crystal(1987) substitution is a relation within the text, a form of replacement, helps to avoid repetitions of certain linguistic categories. Many words serve as substitutions. There are three types of Substitutions: Nominal, Verbal and Clausal. In Mahalli, Vapori and Mahdavi's (2016: 79) view an ellipsis is "a linguistic feature leaving out certain linguistic elements and yet reveals the meaning of the original text". Ellipsis is a form of abbreviation or shortening of sentences that is done by chipping out a part or parts of a sentence without any reduction to the meaning of the complete sentence. According to Halliday & Hassan (1976) and Jabeen, Mehmood and Iqbal (2013) ellipsis items can be classified into three types: nominal, verbal, and clausal ellipsis. The nominal ellipsis refers to the reduction/impingement of nominal noun/phrase which involves deixis, number, and epithet. Verbal ellipsis relates to the reduction of verbs or verbal phrase. The clausal ellipsis is the imposition of clauses that are inclusive of the elements of modal and proposition.

The below given table exemplifies the types of substitution and ellipsis.

**Table 1.** Substitution and Ellipsis

Substitution And Ellipsis			
1	Noun Phrase	Pronouns	Prem loves chocolates and so <b>he</b> buys a lot of <u>them</u> .(chocolates)
		one/ones	Prem loved Audi Cars and so he bought <u>one</u> .
	Determiners	the same	Rajeswari loved the hamburgers and so she ate <u>4</u> .(4 hamburgers)
		the same	Prem watches the football matches and his wife Revu has to watch <u>the same</u> .(the football matches)
2	Verb Phrase	(Lexical verb substitution)	Saradha sang well but her sister <u>didn't</u> . (sing well)
		Lexical verb Ellipsis	Has Vignesh submitted the assignment? No, he <u>hasn't</u> .(submitted the assignment)
	Auxilliary Verb Ellipsis	Someone should raise his voice against the bill.	
		But, this time Siva Prasad <u>can't</u> .(raise his voice)	
	Verb Phrase And Subject	What is Sri Hari doing?	
		Nothing.(Hari is doing nothing)	
3	Clausal Phrase	So	Niveditha thinks so.

		Not	I want to fly to India during the COVID19 time.I dare <u>not</u> (to fly...)
		Wh-	Naveena went on a trip. But I don't know <u>where</u> .(where she went on a trip)
		to	Everyone requested Suman to sing a film song but she was too shy <u>to</u> .(to sing a film song)

Nevertheless, many research studies on cohesive devices show that, in comparison to the others, ellipsis and substitution are less frequently used in learners' writings. This can be attributed to various reasons. For instance, Yang and Sun (2012) noted that ellipsis and substitution were most frequently used in spoken language whereas they were rarely used in formal written discourse. They reason it out that it is due to lack of adequate amount of knowledge by the SLA/EFL learners about these devices to use them and cross-linguistic differences leads to different use of cohesive devices by native and nonnative learners. Also, poor educational background is also pointed a finger at for the very limited knowledge of coherence and cohesion. (Ghasemi 2013).

This study, therefore, aims to explore whether there was any significant difference in identifying the two much uncared cohesive devices -Substitutions and Ellipsis in the English Major undergraduate students performance after being taught, practiced. As Hasannejad et al. (2012) asserted that learners may use substitution accurately when they are taught. For this exploration the discourse analysis don by seven students were taken for the study and interpreted the identification and mis-identification of Substitutions and Ellipsis.

According to Mirza Ezra in *A Grain as Big as a Hen's Egg* written from omniscient point of view, Tolstoy's diction is conversational with many colloquial phrases like "could not make head or tail of it" that are commonly used in the late nineteenth century. Leo Tolstoy is illustrious for his writing style for the ease with which he makes his stories clear and concise and for his dazzling with a lucid style. His short stories, conclude with a moral lesson. As the Course Specification of the Course ENG467 insists that the students should perform a discourse analysis on any spoken or written genre, this story thus with its simplicity and morals is appropriate for a 90 minute reading and doing a discourse analysis as the purpose of the study was to measure students' knowledge of substitutions and Ellipsis within a stipulated time during the summative assessment. Since it was face to face regular examination there wasn't any sort of plagiarism too.

Based on the above queries, the following Research Questions will be the focus of this study.

1. What are the cohesive devices used in the short story, *A Grain As Big As A Hen's Egg* written by the famous Russian writer Leo Tolstoy?
2. Which one is dominant in the above mentioned story?
3. Could the students of Discourse Analysis Course identify the least probable, noticeable cohesive devices- Substitution and Ellipsis from an unseen text?
4. Which type of cohesive Devices was the most identified in the summative assessment?
5. Which type of cohesive Devices was not identified/ was the least identified?
6. Which item was the most identified?
7. What are the most prominent errors committed by the students?

## **2. Literature Review**

There were many studies on the use of different cohesive devices in different types of genres: novels, short stories, poems, essays, etc., based upon Halliday and Hasan's (1976) taxonomy on cohesive devices. Saadat M. and Alavi S. Z (2018), Alyousef & Alnasser (2015), Liyana C. I.(2014), Sayah & Fatemi (2013), Yang & Sun (2012), Kudo (2009), Ramaswamy & Narainsamy (2004) and Meisuo (2000) are some illustrious studies. Sayah and Fatemi's (2013) investigation, RamaSwamy & Narayanaswamy and Kudo's (2009) investigations were mostly on conjunctions in EFL learner's writings. Sayah and Fatema found certain types of conjunctions were dominant. Kusos's study concluded that the more proficient the Japanese students the more was the usage of conjunctions. Ramasawmy and Narainsamy 's study (2004) showed that there was equal distributions of all types of conjunctions in narrative and expository writings. Alyousef and Alnasser's (2015) investigation proved that reference was the most frequent one of all cohesive devices in the Management Accounting texts comprising multimodal data.

Alyousef and Alnasser's (2015) investigation showed that their participants underused substitution, ellipsis and conjunction. Ellipsis occurred in the participants' written texts very rarely, substitution was not at all used. The underuse of these devices in the respondents' texts was accounted for the educational system which relied even in the 21<sup>st</sup> C heavily on memorization.

Meisuo's (2000) investigation was on the cohesive devices used in expository compositions by Chinese EFL undergraduate students. His conclusion was that conjunction was the predominant one of all grammatical cohesive devices.

Saadat M. and Alavi S. Z (2018) examined the use of grammatical cohesive options in two different types of paragraphs written both EFL learners and native speakers. The Study also investigated if the employment of cohesive devices affected raters' analysis of the paragraphs. Results showed native speakers used more reference in their writings than EFL students did. Findings indicated that cohesion within the paragraphs was typically unnoticed by some raters.

Cut Irna Liyana. (2014)'s qualitative research investigated the cohesion and coherence as wholeness aspect of discourse in the theses of English Education students selected by purposive sampling. The study found out that the students used all the cohesive devices in their theses. Likewise, Abdul Rahman's (2013), study of EFL learners showed that the learners overused repetition and reference and ignored other cohesive devices.

Elkhayma R.'s (2020) study identified cohesion and coherence problems of Moroccan graduates in writing. Students' achievement of cohesion and coherence were calculated based on Halliday and Hasan's Cohesion in English (1976) and also based on Oshima and Hogue's (2006) criteria for coherence. It was found that students used more reference and conjunctions ties and there was a poor usage of Substitution and ellipsis.

All the above studies focused either on the usage of all the grammatical devices or on the uses of repetition, conjunction or reference in the writings of EFL learners. This study is unique in the way, as the researcher taught the students of Discourse Analysis (ENG467) all the grammatical devices, gave them practice tasks, made them give presentation on Substitution and Ellipsis, instructed them to focus on Substitution and Ellipsis on examination point of view and finally tested their ability to identify the types of Substitution and Ellipsis in a simple story within a stipulated time and compared their performance with the actual ones occurred in the story.



**Table 2.** References

Cohesive Device	Item	Occurrences	Total	Percentage
Personal Pronouns	it	27	126	12.78
	he	16		
	you	13		
	I	10		
	my	10		
	him	10		
	his	10		
	your	9		
	We	5		
	their	5		
	me	4		
us	2			
ours	2			
our	1			
them	2			
Demonstrative Pronouns	The	55	73	7.4
	That	5		
	This	11		
	These	2		
Interrogative Pronouns	Who	1	23	2.3
	What	4		
	Where	9		
	When	7		
	Why	2		
Indefinite Pronoun+ Comparative Pronouns+ Relative Pronouns	some	3	21	2.1

Out of 986 words in the story 12.78% of them were personal pronouns. The pronoun *it* tops the list with 27 occurrences, since the story is all about the grain. There were 7.2% of Demonstrative pronouns. The dominant one as usual, is *The Altogether* 24.5% of the total words are references

**Conjunctions:** There were altogether 81 occurrences.(8.2%)

**Table 3.** Conjunctions

For	4
And	49
But	5
Or	6
Yet	1
So	7
then	3
though	1
however	1
nor	3
since	1
	81

**Lexical Cohesion**

**Table 4.** Lexical Cohesion

Collocations						Hyponym		
grains	1	0.10%	man's	2	0.20%	father	4	0.40%
grew	6	0.60%	man	11	1.10%	grandfather		
grow	4	0.40%	men	7	0.70%	r	5	0.50%
fields	4	0.40%	see	2	0.20%	children	2	0.20%
field	4	0.40%	eyes	2	0.20%	grandson	1	0.10%
sown	3	0.30%	hearing	2	0.20%	son	2	0.20%
sowed	2	0.20%	hear	1	0.10%	father's	1	0.10%
peasant	2	0.20%	heard	4	0.40%		15	1.50%
reaped	2	0.20%	head	1	0.10%	ii) Sowed, ploughed, reaped		
yielded	2	0.20%	hands	1	0.10%	Antonymy		
grown	2	0.20%	walks	1	0.10%	Bought x sold		
grain	15	1.50%	walking	2	0.20%			
corn	13	1.30%	teeth	1	0.10%			
thresh	1	0.10%	spoke	1	0.10%			
earth	1	0.10%	toothless					
ploughed			s	1	0.10%			
d	1	0.10%	deaf	1	0.10%			
peasant's	1	0.10%	totter	1	0.10%			
s	1	0.10%		1	0.10%			
bears	1	0.10%		42	4.20%			
	65	6.50%						
Total 127 words		12.88%						

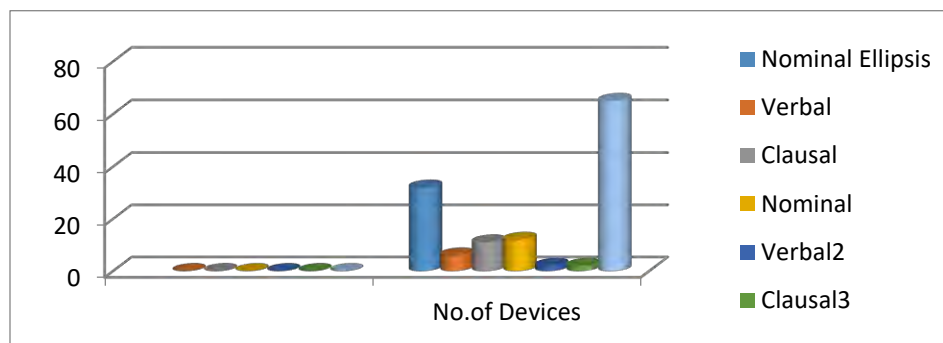
Around 13% of words are tied with collocations, hyponymy and antonymy.

**Substitutions and Ellipsis**

**Table 5.** No. of Substitution and Ellipsis in the Story

	Nominal Ellipsis	Verbal Ellipsis	Clausal Ellipsis	Nominal Substitution	Verbal Substitution	Clausal Substitution	Total Devices
<b>No. of Devices</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>65</b>

Leo Tolstoy's story has 65 items of Substitution and Ellipsis ties.(6.59%)



**Figure 2.** No. of Ellipsis & Substitutions in the Story

**R.Q2.** The most dominant cohesive device was Nominal Ellipsis (32) followed by Nominal Substitution (12). The least occurred were Verbal and Clausal Substitutions.

*The researcher could identify 65 items in these two categories together.*

**Table 6.** Substitution and Ellipsis in the Story Linewise

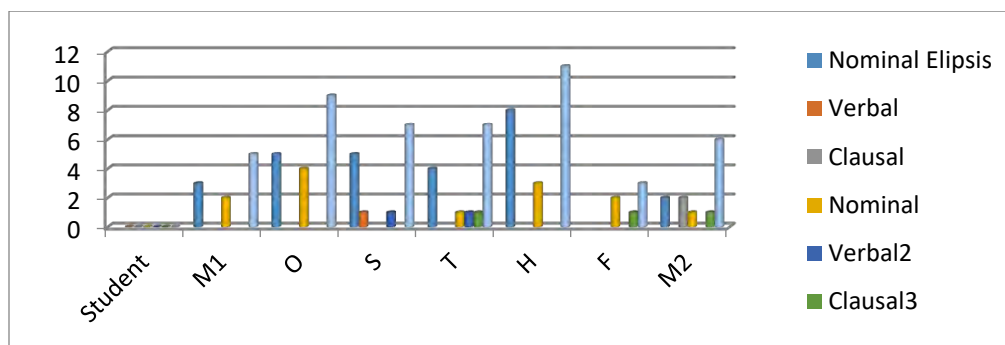
Line N	Noun	Colou	Verba	Colou	Cl Ellip	Colou	Nom	Colu	Verb	Colui	Colu	Clau
2	EN 2	2					Substitution		Substitu	0		Substit
3	EN1	1										
5	EN 1	1										
6	EN 3	3										
7	EN 1	1										
8	EN1	1										
10					ECl 1	1						
11	EN1	1										
12	EN1	1										
14					ECl a1	1						
17	EN 1	1										
18	EN1	1										
20					ECa 1	1						
21							SN1	1				
22							SN 1	1				
23	EN 2	2										
25	EN1	1					SN1	1				
26							SN1	1				
28					ECl a 1	1						
32			EV 1	1			SN1	1				
33									SV1	1		
34	EN1	1										
35	EN1	1										
36					ECl a 2	2						
37	EN1	1					SN1	1				
38							SN1	1				
40	EN1	1										
41			EV 1	1	ECl a 1	1						
43	EN1	1										
44	EN1	1										
46	EN1	1										
47					ECl a 1	1						
47					ECl a 1	1	SN1	1				
49	EN1	1			ECl a 1	1						
50					ECl a 1	1						
51	EN1	1										
52							SN1	1				
54	EN1	1										
57	EN2	2										
58	EN 2	2							SV 1	1		1 SCI 1
59			EV 2	2			SN2	1				
60			EV 2	2			SN1	1				
61	EN1	1					SN1	1				1 SCI 1
62	EN1	1										
		32			6		11		12		2	2

**Table 7.** Devices Identified By the Students

	Nomina l Ellipsis	Verbal Ellipsis	Clausal Ellipsis	Nominal Substitutio n	Verbal Substitutio n	Clausal Substitutio n	Total Devices
M1	3			2			5
O	5			4			9
S	5	1			1		7
T	4			1	1	1	7
H	8			3			11
F				2		1	3
M2	2		2	1		1	6



**R.Q 4&5** The most Identified cohesive device identified was Nominal Ellipsis. 6/7 students identified Nominal Ellipsis as well as Nominal Substitutions. There was at least one student to identify every cohesive device. The least identified was Verbal Ellipsis.



**Figure 3.** No. of Devices Identified

**R.Q3** All the students could identify some devices of the hardest grammatical devices Substitution and Ellipsis from an unseen text within stipulated time. Student H identified the maximum number of devices i.e., 11 (1.11%). The student F identified the least number of devices i.e., 3.(0.30%)

**R.Q 6.** The Most answered item was “Your son(walks)with one .” All the seven student s could identify the nominal Substitution in this sentence since the word one as a substitute word was very easy for them.

**R.Q 7** Errors Committed: The students who faired satisfactorily in the stipulated time, though not could do extremely well were able to identify the substitutions and Ellipsis. Only the following blunders were heart –breaking ones. i)Auxilliaris such as: do, does, did, ii)primary auxiliary verbs such as have, has, had, is, was, are were, am and iii)modal auxiliary verbs such as may/might stand for the verb phrase and they also sometimes stand for the whole predicate

Examples

- i. *Suintha wants to drink orange juice but her friends don't.*
- ii. *Parameswaran and Premkumar haven't got vaccinated yet but their families have already.*
- iii. *Rithika and Roshi don't like it here but their mother Beena might.*

But Student M2 misunderstood ‘did’ in the sentence as the substitution word. The verbs are very much there in the sentences. There were two instances of mistaking “one “as a substitution word in words like “one day.” So the instructors distinguish these differences in EFL and Linguistics lectures.

According to (Halliday & Hasan, 1976, p. 147) occurs where the omission of another noun is provided by some modifying elements such as Deictic (Determiner), Numerative (Numeral or other qualifiers), and Epithet (adjective). To get the clear understanding about, these are some examples taken from the data analysis which belongs to nominal ellipsis occurred in finding and discussion sections of *skripsi*.

## 5. Discussion

The findings show that the most dominantly used cohesive device is nominal ellipsis with 32 times or 49.23%. Nga (2011) states that noun / noun phrase as the subject or the object in any sentence is omitted in nominal ellipsis since ellipsis occurs with elements in the very basic structure of the sentence, they

serve as the subject, predicate and complement. He also claims that ellipsis was overused in abstract journals and nominal one is the most frequently used in the section.

Sayah and Fatemi's (2013) propose if students receive instructions on different types of conjunctions through tasks like summarizing reading passages, they could be trained to use more conjunctions in their writings. In the present study an average 10% ellipsis and substitutions are found by the students who were given a lot of practice throughout the semester. Though the percentage and the figure look small when compared to the other research studies this is spectacular outcome.

## 6. Conclusion

Based on the findings of cohesive devices identified by the researcher and students' serious attempts to identify them in the short story *A grain as big as a Hen's Egg*, it can be concluded that the ellipsis, which a stylistic device for the writer because it imparts other information implicitly about the author in describing the background and the character of the story is predominant and could easily be identified than Substitution. In his short story "A Grain as Big as a Hen's Egg", Tolstoy uses more cohesive devices, especially Ellipsis and substitutions than many other short stories and thus gives the story cohesiveness as he handles the old French folktale with ease coupled with his strong beliefs and clear style to communicate his message: "Covet not others' possession" and "Hard-work is Healthy and Bountiful" to his audience and forms it into a parable.

The study puts forth a few suggestions for material developers, teacher educators and teachers. Material developers can pay more focus more supplementary tasks in Reading, Grammar and Writing EFL Materials to teach and to practice all cohesive devices. Educators and teachers should realize the significance of students' learning and using all the cohesive devices.

## Recommendations:

Future studies can bring out comparisons between the percentage of ellipsis and substitutions found in the translations of different genres.

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