

Exploring and Enhancing Comprehension of Elliptical Constructions in Students' Academic Writing: A Case Study

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Abstract

This study explores and enhances the comprehension and use of elliptical constructions in academic writing among EFL students at the Modern College of Business and Science (MCBS). Elliptical constructions, linguistic phenomena where certain words or phrases are intentionally omitted to avoid redundancy, present unique challenges in academic writing contexts. The study, involving 50 students and six teachers from three institutions, employs a Quantitative Content Analysis method and a questionnaire based on the Likert scale and open-ended questions. The research aims to enhance students' comprehension and use of elliptical constructions, with two specific objectives: to assess the level of awareness among students regarding the use of elliptical constructions in their written work, and to formulate strategies to improve students' comprehension and application of elliptical constructions in academic writing. The findings reveal varying degrees of awareness and usage among students, with those scoring higher demonstrating noticeable competency. However, teachers' opinions on effective strategies diverged, indicating a need for more focused strategies. The study suggests that effective teaching strategies should consider the diverse methods employed by teachers and emphasize real-world applications, interactive learning, and personalized feedback. This approach is anticipated to enhance students' understanding and use of elliptical constructions in their academic writing.

Keywords: Elliptical Constructions, Academic Writing, EFL Students, Teaching Strategies, Comprehension

1. Introduction

Elliptical constructions, a linguistic feature where specific words or phrases are deliberately left out to prevent repetition, act as a potent instrument for delivering intricate information in a concise and comprehensible manner. As elucidated by Halliday and Hasan (1976, p. 88), an ellipsis is identified as the exclusion of a component that can be deduced from the previous context. The Glossary of Linguistic Terms further characterizes an elliptical clause as a construct that leaves out an element, which can be inferred or retrieved from the context. Additionally, Goldberg and Perek (n.d.) describe it as formally structured forms where a typically expressed syntactic structure is omitted.

To set ellipses apart from other forms of deletions, it is essential to underscore the principle of precise recoverability that is relevant to ellipses. According to Quirk et al. (1985, P. 884), this signifies the word or words that their significance is perceived or suggested must be recoverable.

This method plays a crucial role in formulating sentences that effectively convey the desired message. In the context of writing, this approach is often employed as a stylistic choice, where the writer subtly insinuates an event rather than providing a direct description. This method, often seen as more creative than plain narration, relies on the art of suggestion to convey an event, rather than detailing it explicitly.

However, the use of ellipses is not without its challenges. According to Hakobyan (2016), only those who have mastered the language can effectively use ellipses, a linguistic feature that deeply interlinks with cultural nuances in languages. It is a complex task to decipher the meaning of sentences with elliptical constructions, requiring a thorough comprehension of the language and its cultural context. Voice of America (2022) adds that, if not used properly, elliptical structures can lead to a decrease in clarity. Despite these challenges, when used effectively, elliptical constructions can enhance the clarity and impact of communication.

Within the field of literacy education, understanding what one reads is a difficult skill to master, involving several different languages and cognitive processes. As Larson and Marsh (2005) along with Cowen and Cohen (2008) have noted, reading is fundamentally reliant on the type and standard of engagement between the reader and the text. This relationship involves the reader actively engaging with the written content and creating a coherent mental image of it, rather than just passively receiving information. This perspective aligns with the work of Dijk and Kintsch (1983), who emphasize the importance of creating a cohesive mental representation of a text for successful reading comprehension. In this process, awareness of discourse markers and elliptical constructions plays a crucial role. Discourse markers serve as signposts within a text, guiding the reader's attention to important connections between ideas and helping to structure the mental representation of the text. Similarly,

elliptical constructions, which require the reader to fill in missing information based on the surrounding context, can also contribute to the richness and complexity of this mental representation. Building on the work of Dijk and Kintsch (1983), it becomes evident that the ability to navigate discourse markers and elliptical constructions is integral to successful reading comprehension. However, when these linguistic features become ambiguous, they can pose significant challenges, particularly in academic writing contexts. This understanding of the complexities of reading comprehension and the role of elliptical constructions leads us to the core problem this research aims to address.

1.1 Ellipsis Structures: History and Evolution

Ellipsis structures, which are used to denote the omission of a word or phrase in a sentence, have evolved over time to facilitate more efficient communication while preserving the sentence's overall meaning. The history and evolution of these structures have been marked by extensive research in various linguistic theories, such as transformational grammar and discourse analysis, as documented by Lasnik and Funakoshi (2019). The advent of the digital age has ushered in a new chapter in the evolution of ellipsis structures. As Spencer (2022) highlights, these structures have found innovative applications in digital platforms such as text messaging and social media, where they are used to express a variety of pragmatic effects, including creating suspense, indicating awkwardness, or denoting the passage of time. As we delve deeper into the digital era, it is anticipated that ellipsis structures will continue to evolve and find new uses in emerging fields like natural language processing and machine learning. This underscores their enduring relevance in linguistics and points to a promising future for ellipses in linguistics, with significant potential to enhance our understanding of language structure and communication.

1.2 Typology of Ellipsis

The types of ellipses, as outlined by Stainton (2006, p.31), can be comprehended within the framework of three categories of 'sentence'. The first category, the 'Syntactic Sentence', pertains to an expression that possesses a specific structure or form. In the realm of ellipses, this refers to the syntactic structure that persists following the exclusion of certain words or phrases. The second category, the 'Semantic Sentence', relates to an expression that carries a specific content or meaning. In the context of ellipses, this corresponds to the meaning that is deduced despite the removal of certain words or phrases. The third category, the 'Pragmatic Sentence', denotes an expression that has a specific usage. In terms of ellipses, this concerns the interpretation of the omitted words or phrases based on the context of their usage. This classification offers a thorough framework for understanding and analyzing ellipses from various perspectives, underscoring the complex interaction between syntax, semantics, and pragmatics in the usage of language.

1.3 Common Elliptical Constructions

To reinforce the comprehension of this linguistic phenomenon, it is necessary to explore eight different common forms of ellipses:

Verb Phrase Ellipsis (VPE): As Nielsen's (2005) observations suggest, the concept of Verb Phrase Ellipsis (VPE) is characterized by the intentional exclusion of a verb phrase, which can be deduced from the existing context. This phenomenon is widespread in various types of texts, ranging from formal articles to informal dialogues.

Gapping Ellipsis: We distinguish gapping ellipsis, a type of elliptical construction, by omitting the primary verb and any auxiliary verbs in the subsequent clause. This phenomenon is exclusively observed within coordinate structures, a constraint both McCawley (1988) and Kroeger (2004) noted. According to Nordquist (2020), the terminology "gapping" was first introduced in the academic field by John R. Ross in 1967. This concept was further explored by Ross in the book "Progress in Linguistics," which was edited by Bierwisch and Heidolph (1970) and features a more detailed explanation of this concept.

Stripping Ellipsis: This mechanism, put forth by Hankamer and Sag (1976), works by excluding all elements in a clause that are identical to those in a previous clause, with the exception of one component and any related modifiers. This results in a second clause where only one constituent and its modifiers are retained, thereby enhancing the efficiency and compactness of language.

Sluicing Ellipsis: in a sentence that consists of two clauses, the second clause can be reduced to just a single wh-word through a process referred to as sluicing. According to Merchant (2001), this specific form of ellipsis is especially common in interrogative clauses and is the most frequently observed form across a variety of languages.

Noun Phrase Ellipsis (NPE): (NPE) describes the situation where a noun phrase is omitted yet can be understood from the surrounding context. Despite the absence of established systems for detecting and resolving NPE in English, significant strides have been made in one-anaphora or one-substitution. This related concept, where the missing noun is replaced by an explicit pro-form, has been the subject of extensive data-driven analysis by Gardiner (2003) and heuristic-based machine-learning techniques proposed by Ng et al. (2005).

Pseudo gapping Ellipsis: As described by Kubota and Levine (2014), pseudo gapping is a form of ellipses similar to gapping. However, it is distinguished by a unique feature where a main verb, which is subordinate to an auxiliary verb, is left out, but its associated elements are retained. This partial retention of a verb distinguishes pseudo-gapping from other forms of ellipses.

Comparative Ellipsis (CE): (CE) is a specific form of ellipsis that appears in the 'than-clauses' of comparative sentences. Two unique forms, comparative deletion, and comparative sub deletion, characterize this type of ellipses. As described by Napoli (1983), (CE) in linguistics is a discretionary rule. It eliminates elements from a comparative clause that are not part of the constituent being compared, provided these elements mirror those in the primary sentence where the comparative clause's head is situated.

Answer ellipsis: This ellipsis mechanism, often referred to as answer fragment, is a type of ellipsis that typically appears in replies to inquiries. This phenomenon is a regular feature in conversations and is presumably present in every language. Intriguingly, these fragments

can manifest even without linguistic antecedents. Merchant (2005) posits that such fragments align with an ellipsis analysis and do not advocate for direct interpretation approaches to these phenomena. This viewpoint establishes a robust and logical connection between the widespread presence of answer fragments in dialogues and the specific analysis of fragments lacking linguistic antecedents. Collectively, these insights provide a holistic understanding of the ellipsis phenomenon in language.

The table below provides some examples to illustrate these different types of elliptical mechanisms.

Table 1. Examples of the Reviewed Elliptical Constructions

Type of Elliptical Construction	Examples
1- Verb Phrase Ellipsis (VPE)	(1a) John cannot pass, but Sara can <pass>. (1b) John cannot pass, but Sara <can pass>.
2. Gapping	(2a) Ahmed can speak Spanish, and Mona < can speak>, French.
3. Stripping	(3a) He was reading a novel; she <was reading>, a newspaper.
4. Sluicing	(4a) I'm thinking of adopting a pet, but I haven't decided what kind. < of pet I'm thinking of adopting >. (4b) There's a novel she wants to buy, but she can't remember what < book she wants to buy >.
5. Noun Phrase Ellipsis (NPE)	(5a) Mona has three puppies, and Ahmed < has three puppies > does too.
6. Pseudo gapping	(6a) I can cook dinner, and you can < cook > lunch. (6b) I will order pizza, and my friend will< cook > sea food.
7. Comparative Ellipsis	(7a) Mohammed writes more emails than his boss writes < many emails >. (7b) Mohammed writes more emails than his boss< writes many emails >.
8. Answer Ellipsis	(8a) A: What did she drink? B: < She drank >. tea.

1.4 Elliptical Constructions: Linguistic Function

Elliptical constructions, as explored by Szczegieliński (2018), hold a pivotal position in the field of linguistics, acting as an effective mechanism for streamlined and impactful communication. They facilitate the removal of certain words or phrases in a sentence, thereby minimizing repetition and improving the fluidity of language. This linguistic characteristic is especially beneficial in scenarios where the information has been previously mentioned or is implicitly comprehended, thus allowing for a more compact articulation of thoughts. Moreover, elliptical constructions add to the dynamism and versatility of language, catering to a variety of discourse requirements and stylistic inclinations. They embody the inherent flexibility of language, showcasing its ability to express intricate ideas in a brief format while preserving coherence and understandability. This distinctive attribute of elliptical constructions, as discussed by Szczegieliński (2018), highlights their crucial role in molding linguistic frameworks and patterns, and their impact on language efficiency and flexibility. His work also underscores the ongoing research in this field and its implications for our understanding of language.

1.5 Understanding Elliptical Constructions

Elliptical constructions, a linguistic phenomenon where certain words or phrases are intentionally omitted, have been a subject of extensive research due to the inherent ambiguity they introduce. This ambiguity often leads to multiple interpretations, posing significant challenges for non-native English speakers and computational linguistics algorithms alike. For instance, in sentences like “Omer can play tennis, and his sister can too,” the elliptical construction “too” leaves it up to the reader to infer what Omer’s sister can also do. This becomes particularly challenging in written discourse, where non-verbal cues are absent. As proposed by McCarthy (1991, p. 43), an ellipsis is the process of omitting elements that grammar usually necessitates. Yet, the speaker or writer believes these elements are understandable from the context and thus, there is no need for explicit statement. Levinson (1983, p.54) also focuses on how the interpretation of statements relies on the examination of the context in which they are uttered. Various pedagogical strategies have been proposed to address this, including explicit instruction on the use and interpretation of elliptical constructions, practice in diverse contexts, and the use of technology to provide immediate feedback. However, as highlighted in the study “Ellipsis as A Cause of Ambiguity in Translation” by Muhammed (2018), even with the use of semantic and communicative translation methods, the ambiguity introduced by ellipsis remains a significant challenge in the field of translation. This underscores the need for continued research in this area, both for its theoretical implications for linguistics and its practical applications in language education.

1.6 Previous Relevant Studies and Research Gap

The current study sets out to explore elliptical constructions in students’ written work, assess their understanding of these structures, and develop strategies to enhance their comprehension and use of these constructions in academic writing. This focus on practical application sets it apart from Bayat’s (2020) study, which found a significant correlation between the comprehension of elliptical structures and reading comprehension. The current study could benefit from the findings of Martin and McElree’s (2009) research, which suggested that understanding verb-phrase ellipsis (VPE) involves reassessing recently processed constituents and recalling information from memory. These insights could inform strategies to improve students’ comprehension. Furthermore, the current study could use the findings of Shapiro et al. (2003) to assess students’ awareness of elliptical constructions. Their study found that listeners re-engage the subject NP from both the first and second clauses, indicating both “strict” and “sloppy” readings. Finally, the current study could draw valuable insights from Astuti & Imaniah’s (2019) research. Their qualitative descriptive analysis of tenth-grade students’ difficulties with elliptical constructions revealed that the primary elements influencing students’ struggles are issues related to meaning, form, and the mapping of form to meaning. This understanding could inform strategies to improve students’ comprehension and use of these constructions in their writing.

While previous studies have provided valuable insights into the comprehension of elliptical constructions, a significant research gap remains in their practical application in students' academic writing, and in the development of effective teaching strategies. This gap is particularly evident when considering the correlation between the comprehension of elliptical structures and reading comprehension, the understanding of verb-phrase ellipsis (VPE) consisting of reviewing newly processed components and recall from memory, students' awareness of elliptical constructions, and the primary elements influencing students' struggles with these constructions. The current study aims to fill this gap by exploring students' understanding of these structures in their written work, developing strategies for their effective use, and devising customized teaching strategies. By doing so, the study offers a unique perspective and has the potential to significantly contribute to this field of research by providing insights for targeted instructional methods in a specific academic setting. This focus on practical application and pedagogical strategies underscores the study's potential to significantly contribute to this field of research by filling this identified research gap.

1.7 Research Problem

The research problem focuses on the ambiguity inherent in elliptical constructions, which can create comprehension difficulties, especially for MCBS students who have recognized a lack in their application in academic writing. The complexity of this issue is highlighted by the intricate engagement process between the reader and the text. This process involves not just the decoding of words but also understanding the structure of the text and the reader's ability to infer the missing parts in the text, as stressed by Larson and Marsh (2005) and Cowen and Cohen (2008). This underscores the significance of teaching methods that enhance this interaction and ultimately improve reading comprehension. The research aims to investigate this issue among these students and devise customized strategies. As Shet (2021) points out, it is crucial for educators and teachers to understand the value of students' learning and utilizing all cohesive devices. The study suggests the importance of explicit instruction in the use of discourse markers and strategies for interpreting elliptical constructions, as it can boost comprehension. The insights gained could aid in the creation of targeted instructional methods and provide a deeper understanding of how these constructions are utilized in a specific academic setting.

1.8 Research Objectives

This study aims to enhance MCBS students' comprehension and use of elliptical constructions in academic writing. Toward reaching this aim, two specific objectives have been developed:

1. To assess the level of awareness among EFL students regarding the use of elliptical constructions in their written work.
2. Formulate strategies to improve EFL students' comprehension and application of elliptical constructions in academic writing.

1.9 Research Questions

With the research problem and aim clearly defined, the focus now shifts to the specific research questions that will guide this study. These questions are crucial as they chart the course for the investigation and ensure that the study remains aligned with its primary objectives. The overarching questions guiding this research are:

1. What is the level of awareness among EFL students about the use of elliptical constructions in their written work?
2. What strategies can be employed to enhance EFL students' understanding and use of these constructions in academic writing?

The questions posed will function as the starting point for this study, giving it a definite course and verifying that the study stays engaged on the main objectives.

2. Method

2.1 Participants

The study involved fifty EFL students, all native Arabic speakers from Oman, studying at the Modern College of Business and Science in Muscat. They were part of the ENG102 Freshman course in the General Education Department during the fall semester of 2023. This course was a prerequisite for their respective majors in business and science subjects. The students who were selected as participants in the study had joined the college with IELTS scores of 5.5 and above. Six teachers from three different regional institutions also participated in this study.

2.2 Instruments

The research employed three main instruments. The first was the Quantitative Content Analysis method, used to scrutinize student-submitted research papers on the MCBS Edu portal. This analysis focused on papers scoring 14 or higher, providing quantitative data on students' understanding and use of elliptical constructions. The second instrument was a Likert scale and open questions-based questionnaire for a group of six teachers, aimed at gathering data to support the findings from the analysis of students' work and to develop strategies to enhance students' understanding and use of elliptical constructions.

2.3 Research Procedure

The research began with the verification of the instruments and the collection of written works from participants in two writing course classes at MCBS. The research methodology employed a dual approach: scrutinizing a selection of research paragraphs submitted by students and distributing a questionnaire to a handpicked group of six teachers. These teachers, who were carefully selected from three distinct institutions in Sudan, Saudi Arabia, and Oman, are known for their substantial contributions to the teaching of academic writing.

This selection process guaranteed a wide array of viewpoints and experiences in the realm of academic writing.

2.4 Data Collection

In this comprehensive study, an initial pool of 50 student-submitted research paragraphs was narrowed down based on a scoring criterion, with the focus on papers that achieved a score of 14 or higher. This led to a detailed examination of two distinct groups of papers: those from students who scored 16 or higher and those who scored between 14 and 15. This methodology, which prioritized students demonstrating a higher level of English proficiency, resulted in the scrutiny and analysis of 27 out of the initial 50 papers using the Quantitative Content Analysis method.

Additionally, a questionnaire was developed and administered alongside the paper analysis. It was given to the select group of teachers described above. These teachers, referred to by the code names T1, T2, T3, T4, T5, and T6 for confidentiality, were asked to compile their written reflections.

The questionnaire, a blend of eight Likert scale items and two open-ended questions, was designed to gather insights on potential strategies to enhance EFL students' comprehension and application of constructions in academic writing. While the Likert scale items underwent quantitative analysis, the open-ended questions, bolstered by the teachers' written reflections, were subjected to qualitative analysis using thematic analysis, a method used to identify patterns in data as described by Crosley (2021).

This multifaceted approach aligns with the intent of a qualitative descriptive research approach as described by Sandelowski (2000). It leverages a broad spectrum of data collection techniques, including observations, interviews, reflections, and document scrutiny, to deliver a comprehensive and thorough representation of a unique phenomenon or the characteristics of a certain cohort. In this context, the phenomenon being studied is the teaching and learning of academic writing in an EFL setting, with a particular emphasis on the experiences and insights of teachers from diverse institutional backgrounds. This integrated approach ensures a holistic understanding of the subject matter.

3. Findings and Discussion

3.1 Research Question 1: "What Is the Level of Awareness among EFL Students about the Use of Elliptical Constructions in Their Written Work?"

To answer this research question, the study utilized the Quantitative Content Analysis method. The resulting statistical data, which provide insights into the students' level of awareness about the use of elliptical constructions in their written work, are presented in the following tables.

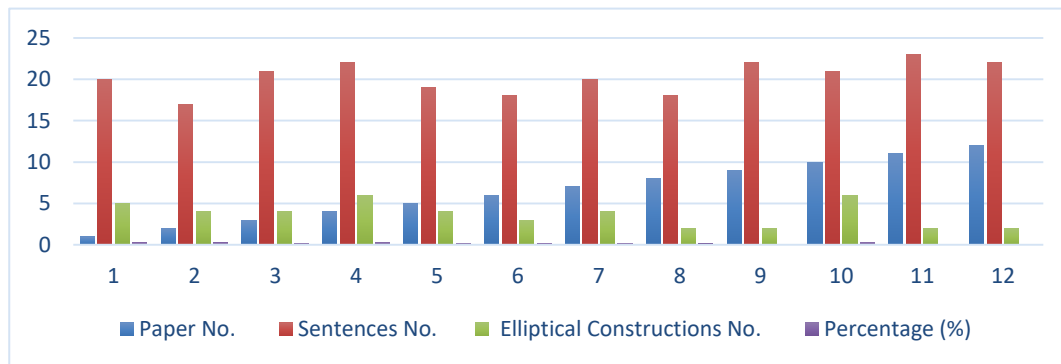


Figure 1. Analysis of written work from the first group of participants

Table 2. Analysis of written work from the first group of participants

Paper No.	Sentences No.	Elliptical Constructions No.	Percentage (%)
1	20	5	25%
2	17	4	23.50%
3	21	4	19%
4	22	6	27.30%
5	19	4	21.10%
6	18	3	16.70%
7	20	4	20%
8	18	2	11.10%
9	22	2	9.10%
10	21	6	28.60%
11	23	2	8.70%
12	22	2	9.10%
Mean (X)	20.25	3.666666667	
Standard Deviation (SD)	1.912875038	1.497472618	
Standard Error (SE)	0.552199459	0.43228311	

The statistics presented in **Table 2** and **Figure 1** are specific to a group of students who achieved scores of 16 or higher on their papers. This group, encompassing 12 papers, exhibits a relatively pronounced level of awareness and application of elliptical constructions in their academic compositions. On average, each paper within this group includes approximately 20.25 sentences and 3.67 elliptical constructions. This data indicates that these students are integrating elliptical constructions into their writing, suggesting a certain degree of familiarity with, and comprehension of, these constructions. The standard deviation (SD) for the quantity of elliptical constructions in this group’s papers is 1.50, reflecting a moderate degree of variation in the application of these constructions. It is observed that some students within this group employ them more frequently, while others do so less frequently. The proportion of elliptical constructions per paper within this group varies from 8.7% to 28.6%, with a number of papers incorporating more than 20% elliptical constructions. This variation implies that while a subset of students in this group are proficient in using elliptical constructions (reaching up to 28.6%), others use them less frequently.

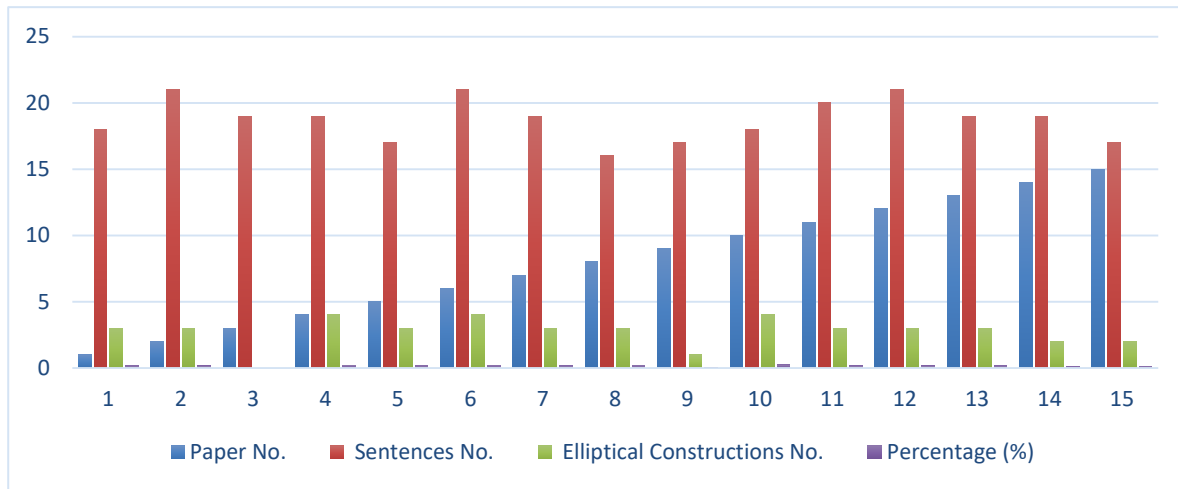


Figure 2. Analysis of written work from the second group of participants

Table 3. Analysis of written work from the first group of participants

Paper No.	Sentences No.	Elliptical Constructions No.	Percentage (%)
1	18	3	16.70%
2	21	3	14.30%
3	19	0	0%
4	19	4	21.10%
5	17	3	17.60%
6	21	4	19%
7	19	3	15.80%
8	16	3	18.80%
9	17	1	5.90%
10	18	4	22.20%
11	20	3	15%
12	21	3	14.30%
13	19	3	15.80%
14	19	2	10.50%
15	17	2	11.80%
Mean (X)	18.73333333	2.73333333	
Standard Deviation (SD)	1.579632266	1.099783528	
Standard Error (SE)	0.407859297	0.283962886	

As per the data delineated in Table 3 and Figure 2, the analysis was confined to a distinct group of students, specifically those whose papers scored between 14 and 15. This group, comprising 15 papers, demonstrated diverse levels of awareness and application of elliptical constructions in their academic writing. On an average basis, each paper within this group encompassed approximately 18.73 sentences and 2.73 elliptical constructions. This data implies that these students are integrating elliptical constructions into their writing, though not in a widespread manner. The standard deviation (SD) for the count of elliptical constructions in this group’s papers stands at 1.10, signifying a certain degree of variation in the employment of these constructions. It is observed that some students within this group deploy them more frequently, while others do so sparingly. The proportion of elliptical constructions per paper within this group spans from 0% to 22.2%, with a majority of the papers incorporating between 10% and 20% elliptical constructions. This distribution suggests that while a subset of students in this group are proficient in using elliptical constructions (reaching up to 22.2%), others refrain from using them entirely (0%).

To sum up, both groups of students demonstrate varying degrees of awareness and usage of elliptical constructions in their academic writing. While there is a noticeable level of competency among students who scored 16 or higher, there is also discernible evidence of awareness among students scoring between 14 and 15, albeit with some inconsistency. These findings suggest that targeted instructional interventions could potentially enhance the consistent and accurate application of elliptical constructions across all levels of student academic writing.

3.2 Research Question 2: What Strategies Can Be Employed To Enhance EFL Students' Understanding and Use of These Constructions in Academic Writing?

To explore this research question, a teachers' questionnaire was employed. The data gathered from this instrument, encompassing both quantitative and qualitative aspects, are divided and presented separately in the subsequent sections.

3.2.1 Section One: Quantitative Analysis of Teachers' Questionnaire Responses

The following section presents a quantitative analysis of the responses to the eight closed-ended statements in the teachers' questionnaire. The detailed findings are illustrated in the table below

Table 4. Analysis of responses to eight closed-ended statements in the teachers' questionnaire

Item no.	Statements	Very Effective	Somewhat Effective	Neutral	Somewhat Ineffective	Very Ineffective
1	Teaching methods facilitating students' understanding of elliptical constructions in academic writing.	1 (16.67%)	3 (50%)	2 (33.33%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
2	Instructional methods improving students' understanding and application of elliptical constructions.	1 (16.67%)	2 (33.33%)	1 (16.67%)	1 (16.67%)	1 (16.67%)
3	Effectiveness of methods to address the challenge posed by understanding elliptical constructions.	2 (33.33%)	1 (16.67%)	0 (0%)	2 (33.33%)	1 (16.67%)
4	Effectiveness of resources (e.g., textbooks, online materials, etc.) used in teaching elliptical constructions.	0 (0%)	3 (50%)	1 (16.67%)	1 (16.67%)	1 (16.67%)
5	Effectiveness of assessment methods in evaluating students' understanding and application of elliptical constructions in their writing.	2 (33.33%)	2 (33.33%)	1 (16.67%)	1 (16.67%)	0 (0%)
6	Effectiveness of the integration of the teaching of elliptical constructions into lesson plans.	0 (0%)	4 (66.67%)	1 (16.67%)	1 (16.67%)	0 (0%)
7	Capability to instruct on elliptical constructions.	1 (16.67%)	2 (33.33%)	1 (16.67%)	2 (33.33%)	0 (0%)
8	Professional development opportunities related to elliptical constructions enhancing teaching skills.	4 (66.67%)	2 (33.33%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Mean (X)		1.375	2.375	0.875	1	0.375
Standard Deviation (SD)		1.302470181	0.916125381	0.640869944	0.755928946	0.51754917

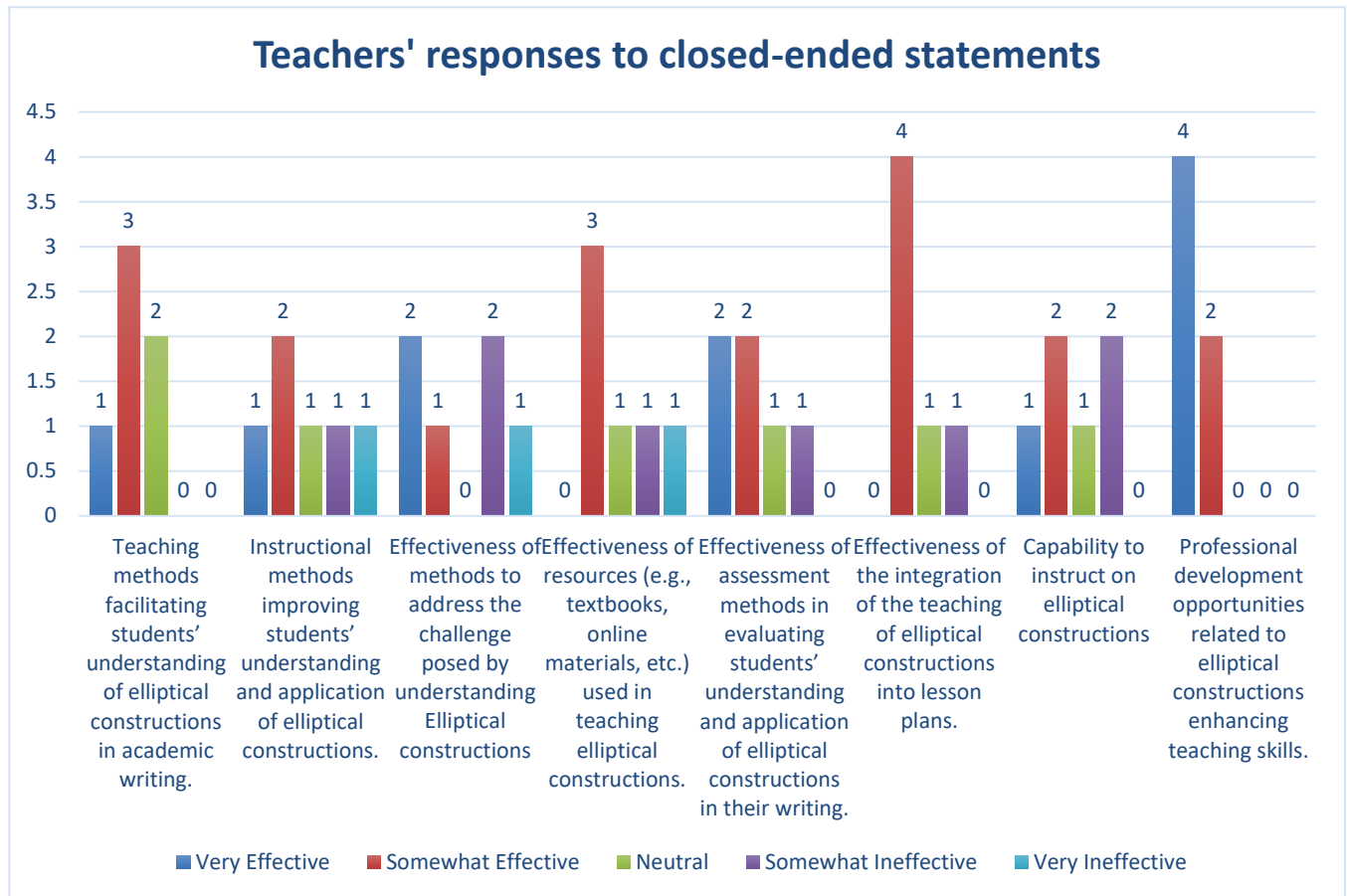


Figure 3. Analysis of responses to the eight closed-ended statements in the teachers' questionnaire

Based on Table 4 and Figure 3, Item 1 from the teachers' questionnaire indicates that half of the respondents found teaching methods that enhance students' understanding of elliptical constructions to be somewhat effective, while the remainder rated them as very effective or neutral. Item 2 reveals a range of opinions on instructional methods designed to improve students' understanding and application of these constructions. Item 3 demonstrates a split in views on the effectiveness of methods for addressing the challenges of understanding elliptical constructions, with equal proportions rating them as very effective and somewhat ineffective. Item 4 suggests that half of the respondents deemed resources such as textbooks and online materials somewhat effective, while the rest had mixed views. Item 5 shows that assessment methods for gauging students' understanding and application of elliptical constructions in their writing were viewed as both very effective and somewhat effective by equal proportions of respondents, with a smaller proportion rating them as neutral or somewhat ineffective. Item 6 indicates that the majority of respondents (66.67%) found the integration of teaching elliptical constructions into lesson plans to be somewhat effective. Item 7 reveals varied opinions on the capability to instruct on elliptical constructions, with responses distributed across the very effective, somewhat effective, and neutral categories. Notably, Item 8 shows that a majority of respondents (66.67%) rated professional development opportunities related to elliptical constructions as very effective. The mean effectiveness rating across all strategies was highest for "Somewhat Effective" (2.375) and lowest for "Very Ineffective" (0.375). The standard deviation, a measure of response variability, was highest for "Very Effective" (1.302) and lowest for "Very Ineffective" (0.517), indicating that respondents' assessments varied most for what was very effective and least for what was very ineffective. The data suggests that professional development opportunities, the integration of teaching elliptical constructions into lesson plans, and the use of specific teaching methods are perceived as the most effective strategies. However, the noted divergence in opinions, especially concerning the effectiveness of specific methods and resources, indicates a need for more comprehensive research involving a larger sample size, or the development of more focused strategies to improve EFL students' comprehension and application of elliptical constructions in academic writing.

3.2.2 Section Two: Qualitative Analysis of the Teachers' Questionnaire Responses

In the qualitative analysis section of the Teachers' Questionnaire, specifically item 9, teachers were asked about the strategies they are currently employing to enhance the effectiveness of teaching elliptical constructions. Their responses shed light on the diverse methods being utilized in classrooms to improve the teaching of these constructions. The teachers T1 and T3 underscore the importance of using examples from native speakers' daily conversations. They believe that such real-world examples help students better understand the use of elliptical constructions. T2 and T4, on the other hand, focus on making learning interactive with exercises and tests. They also leverage technology to enhance these activities, believing that these strategies provide students with opportunities to practice and improve their

understanding of elliptical structures. T5 advocates for peer learning, often setting up group assignments where students can collaborate and learn from each other. Lastly, T6 emphasizes the importance of providing personalized feedback to each student, which they believe helps address each student's unique challenges and improves their use of elliptical constructions. In conclusion, these teachers employ a combination of real-world examples, interactive exercises, technology, peer learning, and personalized feedback to enhance the teaching of elliptical constructions. Their strategies reflect the multifaceted approach necessary for effective language instruction, aiming to improve EFL students' understanding and use of these constructions in academic writing.

In relation to Item 10, inquiries were made to teachers about the impact of their feedback on enhancing the instruction of elliptical constructions in academic writing. Their feedback reveals a variety of strategies being employed to improve the teaching of these constructions. The teachers T1 and T3 emphasize the importance of connecting abstract concepts to real-world applications. They argue that such tangible examples aid students in better understanding the application of elliptical constructions. In contrast, T2 and T5 focus on fostering an engaging learning environment with exercises and tests. They also incorporate technology to supplement these activities, asserting that these techniques provide students with opportunities to practice and enhance their understanding of elliptical structures. T4 champions the idea of iterative improvement and perceives the learning process as cyclical. They frequently organize group tasks where students can collaborate and learn from one another. Lastly, T1, T3, and T5 underscore the necessity of offering tailored application suggestions to each student, which they believe assists in addressing each student's unique challenges and enhances their usage of elliptical constructions.

In conclusion, these teachers utilize a blend of tangible examples, engaging exercises, technology, iterative improvement, and tailored suggestions to improve the teaching of elliptical constructions. Their strategies represent the comprehensive approach required for effective language instruction, with the goal of enhancing EFL students' understanding and application of these constructions in academic writing.

4. Conclusion

By examining the awareness and application of elliptical constructions among EFL students in their academic writing, this study has established that there is indeed a significant level of competency, with a strong correlation between high scores (16 or higher) and the integration of an average of 3.67 elliptical constructions per paper. However, the degree of variation within this group, as well as the diverse levels of awareness and application among students scoring between 14 and 15, suggests the need for further instruction and targeted interventions.

The strength of these findings is moderated by the teachers' questionnaire responses: Teachers who have access to professional development opportunities related to elliptical constructions, integrate teaching elliptical constructions into lesson plans, and employ specific teaching methods are less likely to perceive a need for more comprehensive research or more focused strategies. This suggests that, while a noticeable level of competency exists among students in using elliptical constructions, it is also important to consider the wider educational and pedagogical context in which this learning occurs. Teachers who are already equipped with a diverse range of methods may be at a lower risk of experiencing challenges in teaching elliptical constructions.

In conclusion, while the study has revealed valuable insights into the awareness and application of elliptical constructions among EFL students, there remains room for improvement. The study strongly advocates for the development and implementation of more focused and effective teaching strategies, taking into account the diverse range of methods currently employed by teachers and the divergence in opinions on their effectiveness. By addressing these areas, the study is confident that it can significantly enhance EFL students' understanding and use of elliptical constructions in their academic writing, thereby to great extent filling the identified research gap.

5. Suggestions

Based on the study findings, the following suggestions are put forth:

1. **Customized and Concentrated Approaches:** Considering the varied views of teachers on the efficacy of different strategies, there is a clear need for strategies that are both more concentrated and customized to enhance students' understanding and usage of elliptical constructions.
2. **Integration of Current Pedagogical Practices:** The proposed strategies should take into account the wide array of techniques currently used by teachers, such as real-world examples, interactive activities, technology, peer learning, and individualized feedback.
3. **Focus on Practical Applications, Interactive Education, and Individualized Feedback:** These elements should be stressed in the teaching strategies to boost students' comprehension and application of elliptical constructions in their academic writing. By focusing on these areas, the study aims to significantly improve students' comprehension and application of elliptical constructions in their academic writing, effectively addressing the identified research gap.

By addressing these areas, the study believes that it can significantly enhance students' understanding and use of elliptical constructions in their academic writing, thereby filling the identified research gap.

6. Limitations

While the study offers valuable perspectives, it does come with certain limitations:

1. **Inconsistency in Student Proficiency:** The study uncovers a moderate level of inconsistency among students who show a significant proficiency in using elliptical constructions. This suggests that there is room for enhancing the teaching strategies.
2. **Disparity in Teachers' Views:** The disparity in teachers' views on the effectiveness of various strategies means that a method that proves

effective for one certain teacher or student may not be effective for another in an equivalent way. This underscores the need for teaching strategies that are flexible and adaptable.

3. Study Scope: The study is centered on the practical application of elliptical constructions in students' academic writing. While this offers a unique viewpoint, it also narrows the scope of the study. Future research could delve into other facets of elliptical constructions, such as their usage in spoken language or in different writing genres.

These limitations pave the way for future research and should be considered when studying the results of this research. Despite these limitations, the study significantly contributes to the field by identifying the research gap and proposing ways to bridge it.

BIOGRAPHIES

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Dr. Emad Ali Alawad, born in Sudan in 1972, is a respected academic in English Language. He earned his bachelor's degree from Omdurman Islamic University in 1996, his Master's in 2017, and his Ph.D. in Applied Linguistics in 2020, both from Sudan University of Science & Technology. He has held various positions in different educational institutions. Currently, he is an Assistant Professor at Modern College of Business and Science. Previously, he was a lecturer at Prince Sattam bin Abdulaziz University (Dec. 2021 – Aug. 2023), an Assistant Professor at Al Qalam College for Science & Technology (Aug 2019 - Aug 2021), and a part-time Lecturer at Comboni College of Science & Technology (Dec. 2017 – Apr. 2020) and Sudan University of Science & Technology (Nov 2017 - Feb 2019). He also worked as an Instructor at APTECH Computer Education (Jan 2012 - Jan 2016) and British Educational Institutes (Mar. 2015 – Oct. 2015), and as an English Teacher in Saudi Arabia (Aug 2000 - Jun 2009) and Sudan (Aug. 1996 – Jul. 2000).



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Dr. Elhafiz Elwaly has obtained a PhD in English Language Teaching, an MA in Applied Linguistics, and a BA degree in English Language and Literature. He has extensive work experience of more than 25 years in the domains of ESL, EAP, ESP, Arts, and Foundation programs. In Sudan, he worked at four different universities as well as two acknowledged language training centers where he was employed for about twelve years mainly as an instructor of general English language and ESP before joining Al-Jouf University in KSA as an English language and ESP instructor in the preparatory year. Currently, he is an Assistant Professor at the General Education Department at the Modern College of Business and Science located in Muscat, Oman.

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Authors contributions

Dr. Emad Ali Alawad and Dr. Elhafiz Mohammed Ahmed equally contributed to the conceptualization and critical revision of the work. All authors have given their approval for the final version to be published. Furthermore, they agree to be accountable for all aspects of the work, ensuring that questions related to the accuracy or integrity of any part of the work are appropriately investigated and resolved.

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