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Cohesion Shifts and Strategies in Handling Elliptical Structures in English-Arabic Translation among Younger Scholars of Translation

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ABSTRACT

Given the structural and grammatical differences between English and Arabic, translating cohesive devices such as ellipsis presents budding young translation scholars participating in the study with serious challenges. This study examines the performance of the participants in handling ellipsis in English-Arabic translation. Based on Halliday and Hassan's cohesion framework, the study employed an explanatory sequential mixed-methods design that integrated quantitative analysis with qualitative insights. Seventeen participants were tasked with the Arabic translation of 18 English ellipsis-containing sentences, representing the nominal, verbal, and clausal ellipsis types. This was followed by a focus group discussion involving 10 participants to explore reflections and perceptions regarding the challenges of translating ellipsis. The analysis and categorisation of the participants' output reveal that more than half of the ellipsis instances were inaccurately rendered, indicating significant cohesion shifts and revealing the range of translation strategies employed to compensate for ellipsis. The results also revealed that clausal ellipsis was less challenging than nominal ellipsis, highlighting a correlation between ellipsis type and the participants' translation performance. The focus group insights further confirmed participants' limited awareness of ellipsis and their limited ability to handle them. The study contributes to translation pedagogy by empirically illustrating the impact of ellipsis on translation accuracy and by pinpointing curricular deficiencies that impede cohesion awareness among budding young translation scholars. The study offers a mixed-methods link between ellipsis type, translation accuracy, and the participants' metacognitive awareness, advancing evidence-based pedagogy for English-Arabic translation. Future research should test controlled pedagogical interventions on explicit ellipsis instruction (pre-/post-designs) and extend the analysis to professional translators and other language pairs to enhance generalisability across translation contexts.

Keywords: Ellipsis; Cohesion; Translation Strategies; English–Arabic Translation; Younger Scholars of Translation

INTRODUCTION

Cohesion is usually defined as the explicit relationships within a text that hold it together (Halliday & Hasan, 1976). These links allow the language user to deduce the meaning of a term by referencing adjacent sentential elements. Within Systemic Functional Linguistics (Halliday & Hasan, 1976), cohesion is achieved through five cohesive ties: reference, substitution, ellipsis, conjunction, and lexical repetition. Out of these, ellipsis can be considered as a special category as it creates cohesion through omission, unlike reference, substitution, conjunction, or lexical

repetition, which *insert* something (a pronoun, a substitute or a linking word). Halliday and Hasan describe ellipsis as "substitution by zero" (1976, p. 142), explaining, for instance, that ellipsis does not necessitate explicit counters like “one, do, or did” which are required in substitution. Ellipsis requires the language user to reconstruct the missing element from the surrounding context (Crystal, 2008).

Ellipsis contributes to the text economy. However, it can be cognitively harder to process than other cohesive ties, as it does not signal itself overtly and requires a higher level of inference and contextual awareness. In Halliday and Hasan's model, ellipsis is classified based on what grammatical unit is omitted, that is, nominal, verbal, or clausal. Given that syntactic configurations are not universal, it follows that, although ellipsis could be considered a universal language phenomenon, its implementation often remains language-specific, as languages vary in their structures and tolerance of elliptical forms (Betti & AlFartoosy, 2019).

This variation has obvious repercussions for translation. Translators need to be careful when negotiating cases of ellipsis and have to consider the preferences of both the source language (SL) and target language (TL), as the grammatical structures of each language may encourage the employment of some cohesive elements over others (Baker, 2018).

Despite the significance of ellipsis for textual cohesion, there is limited understanding regarding how budding young translation scholars manage such structures when translating between structurally and stylistically disparate languages, such as English and Arabic. Anecdotal evidence shows that novice translators, especially those at the early stages of their training, are often apprehensive about incorporating information that is not explicitly stated in the SL, which may lead them to carry over features and ambiguities, such as ellipsis, from the source text (ST) to the target text (TT) (Al-Qaddoumi & Ageli, 2023). To our knowledge, no systematic investigations have been undertaken to explore this subject. Focusing on participants within the English Language and Translation programme at Sohar University, this study aims to examine how budding young translation scholars in their final year interact with elliptical structures and ultimately to inform translator training by highlighting common challenges and workable solutions.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Research into ellipsis in translation usually focuses on case studies involving specific language pairs, with English often representing the SL. Within this body of work, two main lines of inquiry can be identified: one examining cross-linguistic and structural variability, and the other exploring translators’ responses and pedagogical implications arising from these structural differences.

CROSS-LINGUISTIC AND STRUCTURAL VARIABILITY IN THE TRANSLATION OF ELLIPSIS

A major research direction addresses the devices which translators deploy in the rendering of instances of ellipsis. When the language pair exhibits structural similarities, ellipsis is often literally reproduced in the TL, as is reported in Assalam and Budiharjo (2020), who focus on the English-Indonesian pair. However, such cases represent an exception, as research converges on the idea that the identification and rendering of ellipses represent significant challenges (Baker, 2018), mainly due to structural and stylistic differences between languages. In such situations, a dynamic or functional equivalence approach is usually advocated and implemented, as is

concluded in Arhire (2018) for the English-Romanian pair. Moreover, translating ellipsis requires a balance between linguistic economy and contextual completeness, as ellipsis is found to mobilise full linguistic accuracy, stylistic sensitivity and contextual awareness (Nasretdinova, 2024).

Dealing with the English-French language pair, Vinay and Darbelnet (1995) have noted the French preference for representation (i.e., explicitly stating ideas), while English more readily relies on ellipsis (see also Moindjie, 2024). Moindjie argues that, as a consequence of this discrepancy, when translating from English into French, translators need to utilise other cohesive strategies to ensure alignment with TL norms. Likewise, Osorio Cruz and Torres Melendez (2020) found that the translators adopted the prevalent English grammatical and syntactical structure when translating Spanish instances with subject ellipsis due to the structural dissimilarities of both Spanish and English. This strategy was used to produce natural and coherent structures in the TT. Focusing on the English-Romanian pair, Arhire (2018) reported a tendency to use repetition, rephrasing, and other formal devices in the handling of English structures involving ellipsis. Assalam and Budiharjo (2020) noted that translators used procedures including literal translation, shifting and explicitation, depending on the context. Similar findings prioritising the effective conveyance of original messages at the expense of structural fidelity are reported in Moindjie (2024), Orang'i (2021), and Samudro and Setyorini (2021).

Recent studies have persistently examined ellipsis from a comparative translation viewpoint, highlighting structural and semantic difficulties akin to those observed in English-Arabic contexts (see Nasretdinova, 2024). One research strand is of a comparative nature, focusing on the similarities and differences of the use of ellipsis in both languages. Both English and Arabic make ample use of ellipsis (Betti & AlFartoosy, 2019). However, ellipsis in Arabic mostly depends on its interpretation on contextual inference rather than grammatical structure, the latter being more common in English (Betti & AlFartoosy, 2019). With this asymmetry, the risks connected with SL influence are often highlighted (Al-Qaddoumi & Ageli, 2023; Haleem & Abd Elazeez, 2022). Raoufkazemi et al. (2020) found that translators tend to retain Arabic ellipsis in English due to cross-linguistic and structural differences rather than proficiency. Studies within this strand usually conclude that adherence to the norms of the TL is crucial for attaining coherence and fluency in translation. Overall, this body of work demonstrates that ellipsis translation is shaped by cross-linguistic variability. Differences in grammatical structure and stylistic preference determine whether ellipsis can be transferred literally or requires compensatory mechanisms in the TL.

TRANSLATIONAL RESPONSES AND PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

Another direction taken by researchers is the investigation of translator behaviour in the handling of ellipsis. Starting from the premise that comprehending a sentence's meaning necessitates the initial identification of its ellipted elements (Khan, 2018), it was found that novice and professional translators alike often struggled to recognise ellipted elements, resulting in inaccurate translations (Aldosari, 2023; Algryani, 2020). In English-Arabic subtitles, the systematic explicitation of reference and substitution is prevalent, confirming that cohesion-related explicitation is still a major shift (Moud & Bekkouche, 2020).

The pedagogical perspective within the literature on ellipsis in translation highlights the necessity to improve translators' syntactic competence and contextual awareness to tackle challenges posed by structures involving ellipsis (Al-Rayes, 2024; Bokhari & Ahmad, 2024). Bokhari and Ahmad (2024) aimed to explore the strategies employed by translators when

translating ellipsis. They found that the translators adopted different strategies, such as addition and omission. They concluded that ellipsis cannot be translated properly without understanding the context. Similarly, in the investigation conducted by Al-Rayes (2024), the author concludes that the context contributes to the appropriate handling of ellipsis. From this perspective, a comprehensive understanding of grammatical structures and discourse context is essential for the accurate identification and translation of elliptical elements, especially when they are not explicitly marked. Due to the linguistic and analytical skills required for its identification and processing, ellipsis in both English and Arabic serves as an essential educational feature for bilingual learners (Jabbar, 2025) and in translator training curricula (Alawad & Ahmed, 2024).

Collectively, these studies suggest that the effective handling of ellipsis depends on both the translators' strategic competence and their training in contextual interpretation. As demonstrated in the preceding review, most studies on ellipsis in translation have targeted professional translators and published translations, ignoring how undergraduate or trainee translators perform. In contrast, research on student performance has largely emerged from the EFL/ESL domain, where the focus has predominantly been on (1) the phenomenon of transfer, where learners show better comprehension of elliptical structures that exist in their native languages (Duffield & Matsuo, 2009), and (2) examination of the increasingly accepted view that ellipsis resolution is a relatively late-acquired skill in second language development (Klein, 2003). Undergraduate translators are not only novice translators but are often still acquiring proficiency in the foreign language from which they will be translating. This status makes them particularly susceptible to challenges related to textual coherence, and more particularly, ellipsis. Despite the relevance of this issue, the performance of budding young translation scholars in handling ellipsis remains underexplored in the literature, particularly with regard to the English-Arabic pair.

This absence of empirical evidence constitutes a clear research gap, limiting our understanding of how budding young translation scholars recognise and reconstruct elliptical cohesion in practice. Addressing this gap is essential for improving translator education.

Accordingly, this study quantifies participants' translation accuracy across three types of ellipsis—nominal, verbal, and clausal—and interprets the reasoning behind their choices through qualitative insights. By linking linguistic performance with pedagogical awareness, the research establishes an evidence-based foundation for enhancing ellipsis instruction in translator-training programmes. Based on the identified gap, the study addresses the following questions.

1. How accurately do the participants translate instances of ellipsis from English into Arabic?
2. Is there a correlation between the type of ellipsis and the participants' translations?
3. What do the participants' perceptions and reflections reveal about their handling of ellipsis and related pedagogical gaps?

METHODOLOGY

This study is grounded in the theoretical framework established by Halliday and Hasan (1976). This paradigm delineates three categories of ellipsis: (1) Nominal ellipsis that involves a nominal group, (2) Verbal ellipsis that entails the omission of components within a verbal group, and (3) Clausal ellipsis that denotes the omission of complete clauses or segments of clauses. The framework has demonstrated practical value through its application in various investigations (e.g., Aldosari, 2023; Moindjie, 2024; Orang'I, 2021), analysing cohesion shifts and translation

strategies. As noted by Baker (2018), Halliday and Hasan's model remains "the best known and most detailed model of cohesion in English" (Halliday & Hasan, 1976, p. 194). Their taxonomy serves as the conceptual foundation for the present study's investigation.

This study employed an explanatory sequential mixed-methods design integrating quantitative and qualitative data. A survey was used for the quantitative data in the project. It consisted of English sentences involving instances of ellipsis that had to be translated into Arabic. The sentences constituting the instrument were drawn from Rosenthal's *Knowledge Triumphant* (2007). This source was selected for several reasons. The text is characterised by intricate language and an elaborate style that makes frequent use of a broad range of cohesive devices, including ellipsis. Using this reference as a single source for all survey items also ensured internal consistency and strengthened the instrument's validity. At a practical level, the selected work offers the advantage of having an existing professional Arabic translation. This version served as a reference point during both the validation of participant responses and the subsequent analysis.

Following a close reading of the work, 33 English sentences together with their corresponding Arabic renditions were initially extracted for analysis. Out of this initial list, 18 sentences were subsequently selected using conceptual and structural clarity as selection criteria. These criteria were necessary to avoid comprehension issues that could interfere with the participants' performance. This final selection also took ellipsis categories into account, as it involved six cases from each of the nominal, verbal, and clausal ellipsis types. For each item in the survey, sufficient context was supplied to secure accurate interpretation. Each item also came with a glossary to facilitate comprehension. A piloting test was finally conducted on the instrument, following which contextual materials and glossary items were further adjusted. The survey layout provided sufficient space for handwritten answers and included margins for the purpose of coding and assessment.

The survey participants were budding young translation scholars in their final year at Sohar University. Before reaching this level, these participants spent two years studying subjects that mainly focus on language skills, followed by one year of an intensive focus on translation theory and practice. This level was chosen as the participants at this stage are expected to display a relatively high degree of intellectual maturity, taking full advantage of all the knowledge they acquired in translation, linguistics, and stylistics. An invitation to participate in the research project was sent to all seventeen final year budding young translation scholars. The invitation included ample information on the study's aims. All the participants accepted to take part.

The ethical approval for the project was obtained from Sohar University's Research Ethics Committee in October 2024 (reference number UEB 2024 - SUStaff – 030). Following this approval, the survey was administered on December 17th, 2024, in a controlled classroom environment within a time limit of 60 minutes. Prior to the survey, written consents were collected. The participants received clear written and oral instructions on how to make use of the expanded context and how to utilise the glossaries to ensure a thorough understanding of the material. The participants' identities were kept confidential and anonymous by assigning code numbers to each survey paper, ensuring that no answer could be traced back to the participant who produced it. Data were securely stored and utilised exclusively for research purposes in compliance with Sohar University's ethical guidelines.

With seventeen participants each translating eighteen items, 306 responses were generated. These responses subsequently went through an assessment process involving two raters, one being the project leader and the other an independent reviewer. An initial calibration session was first organised to ensure scoring consistency. Following this step, the two assessments were collected.

SPSS (Version 23) was used to calculate Cohen's kappa (κ) to assess the consistency between the two raters in judging the acceptability of the translated sentences. The analysis yielded a kappa value of .98 (SE = .011), indicating near-perfect agreement between the two raters, as per the standards established by Landis and Koch (1977). The result was statistically significant ($p < .001$), which means that the agreement observed was not random. These results show that the acceptability ratings given by the raters are very reliable.

The inter-rater reliability value indicates that the raters applied the evaluation scheme consistently. This high level of agreement is particularly expected given the binary structure of the task, which simplifies categorisation into 'acceptable' and 'unacceptable,' as well as the pre-rating calibration process. The total number of instances for each category within each ellipsis type was later calculated. These totals were then used to analyse the participants' performance, addressing research questions 1 and 2.

The qualitative phase took place after the survey results were analysed and aimed to build on and find justifications for the quantitative findings, using participants' reflections to contextualise and elaborate on observed trends. Out of the initial seventeen respondents in the survey, only ten took part in the focus group discussion. Consent forms for participation in this phase were also collected. The session ran for about 45 minutes, guided by questions based on the participants' performance in the translation survey. During this session, the participants deliberated on their awareness and management of elliptical sentences, the challenges they encountered, and the patterns that emerged from their translations. The session was moderated by the researchers, audio-recorded with permission and subsequently transcribed for study utilising the online speech-to-text application Speechnotes©. The transcript underwent manual verification through a comparison with the original audio to ensure accuracy and rectify transcription errors.

The data from the verified transcript were analysed through a multi-step qualitative process involving theme identification and coding of the participants' responses (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Morgan, 1997). Codes were first generated inductively from recurring expressions and translation strategies, then grouped into broader categories reflecting ellipsis recognition challenges, literal-translation tendencies, and pedagogical awareness.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

QUANTITATIVE FINDINGS: OVERALL PERFORMANCE ACROSS THE THREE ELLIPSIS TYPES

Addressing RQ1, the analysis of the survey output reveals six translation patterns, categorised into two groups. The first group consists of acceptable translations and includes lexical repetition, semantic repetition, and substitution. The second group includes translations considered unacceptable and comprises failed attempts, literal translations and omissions.

ACCEPTABLE TRANSLATION PATTERNS

With an overall success rate of 49%, the results reveal a moderate level of accuracy in the participants' translation performance, suggesting their limited ability to identify and reconstruct elliptical structures. This group comprises three patterns that are lexical repetition of the antecedent (32%), semantic repetition of the antecedent (11%), and substitution (6%), as shown in Figure 1.

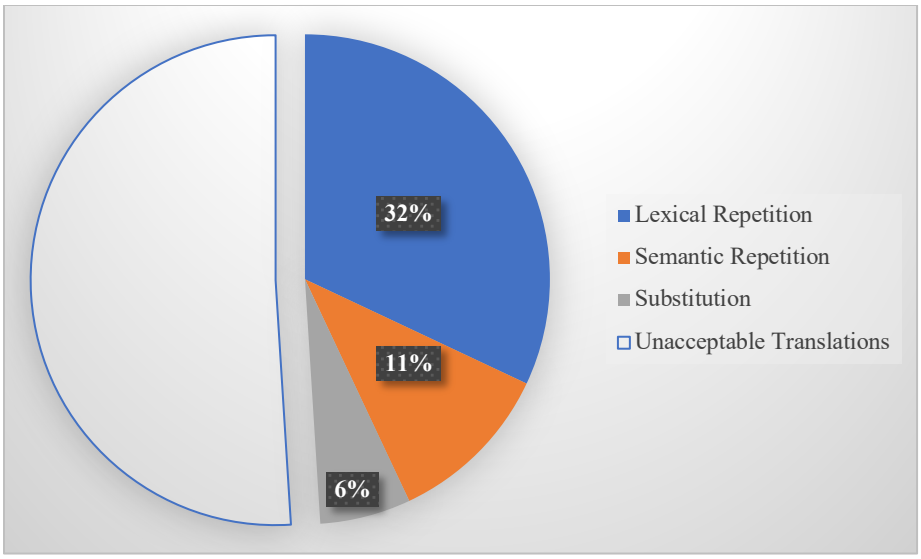

FIGURE 1. Distribution for Acceptable Translations

1. Lexical Repetition of the Antecedent

This pattern refers to cases where the same antecedent was partially or fully reiterated in translation. This pattern appears in Example 1, where the reiteration of the whole antecedent was successfully utilised to retrieve the ellipsis. The participant in this case fully restated the antecedent "know what they need" in the second clause rather than using ellipsis. This method created a unified and clear framework in Arabic, where explicit repetition often enhances clarity and preserves logical contrast. The illustration is another illustration of a successful ellipsis recovery through repetition. Similar findings are reported in Arhire (2018), for example, who highlighted that the Romanian version of some English literary works preserved a coherent texture through lexical repetition of the antecedent that was not repeated in the ST. This reflects a shift from ellipsis to repetition, showing a compensatory strategy to preserve cohesion.

TT = respondent output; RT = reference translation; BT = back translation;
* = unacceptable; Ø = ellipted; (111) = respondent code.

Example 1

ST	"Diogenes was asked why rich people did not visit smart people, but smart people visit rich people … Aristippus gave a reply to Diogenes: "Because the wise know what they need, while the rich *do not* Ø." (Rosenthal, 2007, p. 325)
TT (111)	لأن الإنسان الحكيم مدرك *لما يحتاجه* حقا، على عكس الإنسان الغني فهو غير مدرك *لما يحتاجه*. Liʾanna al-insān al-ḥakīm mudrik limā yaḥtājuhu ḥaqqan, ʿalā ʿaks al-insān al-ghani fa-huwa ghayr mudrik limā yaḥtājuhu.
BT	Because the wise *know what they really need*, unlike the rich, who do not *know what they need.*

2. Semantic Repetition of Antecedent

This pattern refers to cases where the meaning of the antecedent was reiterated through synonyms or near-synonyms (Halliday & Hasan, 1976, p. 278). The translation in Example 2 successfully rendered the elliptical clause "those who did not [*attend*]" by employing the synonymous expression

"*الغائبين / al-ḡāʾibīn*" (the absentees/absent), instead of using a more literal rendering with " الذين لم يحضروا/ allaḏīna lam yaḥḍurū / those who did not attend". This transition from a negative to an affirmative structure represents a case of modulation (Vinay & Darbelnet, 1995) leading to a more natural expression in Arabic. Similar findings are reported in Betti and AlFartoosy (2019), who emphasised that the objective of using synonymy is to prevent monotony and to engage the reader's attention when translating ellipsis. This case shows modulation as a strategy for maintaining cohesion and naturalness.

Example 2

ST	Those people attending a session are required to inform those who *did not* Ø about what went on in class, even if the latter know the material better in the first place. (Rosenthal, 2007, p. 79)
TT (108)	يتطلب من الاشخاص الحاضرين في المجلس بأن يعلموا *الغائبين* عما جرى فيه، حتى لو كانوا يعرفون المادةة بشكل أفضل مسبقا. yataṭallab min al-ʾašḫāṣ al-ḥāḍirīn fī al-maǧlis bi-ʾan yuʿlimū al-ḡāʾibīn ʿammā ǧarā fīhi, ḥattā law kānū yaʿrifūna al-māddah bi-šakl ʾafḍal musbiqan.
BT	Those people attending a session are required to inform *the* absentees_about what went on in it, even if the latter know the material better in the first place.

3. Substitution

This category refers to cases where the cohesion tie (Halliday & Hasan, 1976) in the sentence was shifted from ellipsis to substitution to prevent meaning loss. The respondent in Example 3 effectively translated the English ellipsis by providing a substitute for the entire ellipted phrase " مصدر مقبول للعلم الديني/ maṣdar maqbūl li-l-ʿilm al-dīnī / acceptable sources of religious knowledge" through the use of the word "*كذلك/ kaḏālika /so*". This substitution preserves the coherence of the sentence and demonstrates a natural and idiomatic construction in Arabic, effectively addressing the ellipsis case in the ST. Moindjie (2024) reported the same finding in his study, where *French* nominal ellipsis was rendered by using substitution devices in English. The use of substitution reflects a deliberate strategy to retain cohesion and clarity.

Example 3

ST	The first chapter of the book is followed by a discussion of the men who are acceptable sources of religious knowledge and those *who are* not_Ø. **(**Rosenthal, 2007, p. 94**)**
TT (1000)	يلي الجزء الأول من الكتاب قسم يناقش فيه عن الرجال الذين هم مصدر مقبول للعلم الديني ومن ليسوا *كذلك*. yalī al-ǧuzʾ al-ʾawwal min al-kitāb qism yunāqaš fīhi ʿan al-riǧāl allaḏīna hum maṣdar maqbūl li-l-ʿilm al-dīnī wa-man laysū kaḏālika.
BT	The first chapter of the book is followed by a discussion of the men who are acceptable sources of religious knowledge and those who are not.

UNACCEPTABLE TRANSLATION PATTERNS

The category of unacceptable translations involves 51% of the overall respondent attempts. These have been categorised into failed attempts (24%), literal translation (5%), and omission (22%), as shown in Figure 2. The results suggest a notable deficiency in comprehending the elliptical

constructions or appropriately handling them in translation, suggesting that the participants require enhanced guidance and targeted training in recognising and translating ellipsis.

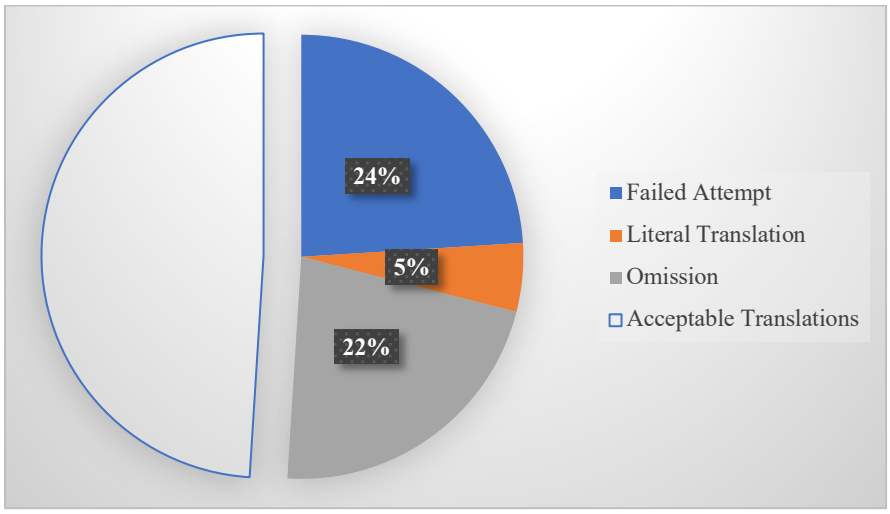

FIGURE 2. Distribution of Unacceptable Translations

4. Failed Attempts

These are the cases where the participants attempted to retrieve the omitted element but were unsuccessful due to insufficient understanding of the source structure and context. In Example 4, the case of nominal ellipsis was challenging for 65% of the participants. Their attempts to recover the ellipted element "who are not [acceptable sources of religious knowledge]" mostly yielded incomplete or awkward translations. TT (103) demonstrates that "ومن لا يعتبرون/ wa man lā yu'tabarun /who are not considered " is structurally incomplete, as it lacks a predicate that fully corresponds to the antecedent element. Samudro and Setyorini (2021) reported similar findings in their research, where the English-Indonesian translations were deemed incomplete and ambiguous to the target readership due to failure to retrieve the right ellipted elements. A more accurate translation would necessitate the use of an expression, such as a reference, a substitution like "كذلك/ kaḏālika " (like that/so), or a direct reiteration of the omitted elements. By assessing the respondent's translation against the RT, one can notice a difference in meaning and structure.

Example 4

ST	The first chapter of the book is followed by a discussion of the men who are acceptable sources of religious knowledge and those *who are not* Ø. **(**Rosenthal, 2007, p. 94**)**
TT (103)	يلحق الجزء الأول من الكتاب نقاش بين الرجال الذين يعتبرون مصدر مقبول للعلم الديني ومن لا *يعتبرون**. yalḥaq al-ǧuzʾ al-ʾawwal min al-kitāb niqāš bayna al-riǧāl allaḏīna yuʿtabarūna maṣdar maqbūl li-l-ʿilm al-dīnī wa-man lā yuʿtabarūn.
BT	The first chapter of the book is followed by a discussion of the men who are *considered* acceptable sources of religious knowledge, and those *who are not considered**.
RT	ويتحدث بعد ذلك عن *الذين يؤخذ منهم* العلم الديني من الرجال، *وعن أولئك الذين لا يؤخذ منهم*. (Rosenthal, 2019, p. 132)

	wa-yataḥaddaṯ baʿda ḏālika ʿan allaḏīna yuʾḫaḏ minhum al-ʿilm al-dīnī min al-riǧāl, wa-ʿan ʾulāʾika allaḏīna lā yuʾḫaḏ minhum.
BT	The first chapter of the book is followed by a discussion of the men who are acceptable sources of religious knowledge and those *who are not acceptable sources*.

The case of clausal ellipsis in Example 5 equally posed significant difficulties for 70.59% of the participants. TT (113) rendered the elliptical clause “if not” as "إذا لم تبق قائمة/ ʾiḏā lam tabqa qāʾimah. /if it were not applicable", which inaccurately pertains to the result clause “the difficulty remains applicable” instead of the conditional antecedent “if the idea is equivalent to reality”. This is a misinterpretation that alters the sentence's logic and results in meaning loss.

Example 5

ST	The Philosophers say that knowledge means that the shape of what we know affects our inner selves… This idea seems silly. It can be argued that what affects our inner self is just the idea of heat and cold, not the actual heat and cold themselves. However, if the idea is equivalent in reality to what is represented by it, the difficulty remains applicable. *If not*_∅, it is not something like it, and knowledge cannot belong to it. (Rosenthal, 2007, p. 224)
TT (113)	*إذا لم تبق قائمة*، فهذا شيء مختلف والمعرفة لا يمكن أن تعلق بها.* ʾiḏā lam tabqa qāʾimah, fa-hāḏā šayʾ muḫtalif wa-al-maʿrifah lā yumkin ʾan tuʿallaq bihā.
BT	*If it were not* applicable, it is not something like it, and knowledge cannot belong to it.
RT	فالمثال إن كان مساويًا في الحقيقة للمثل، فالإشكال لازم، *وإلا* فليس مثلًا له، ولا العلم متعلقًا به . (Rosenthal, 2019, p. 272) fa-al-miṯāl ʾin kāna musāwiyan fī al-ḥaqīqah li-al-miṯl, fa-al-ʾiškāl lāzim, wa-ʾillā fa-laysa miṯlan lahu, wa-lā al-ʿilm mutaʿalliqan bih.
BT	If the simile is equivalent in reality to what is represented by it, the difficulty remains applicable. *Otherwise*, it is not something like it, and knowledge cannot belong to it.

The findings demonstrate that refined contextual sensitivity and control over conditional constructs are essential for achieving both grammatical accuracy and stylistic fidelity, as is argued by Al-Rayes (2024) and Bokhari and Ahmad (2024), who add that understanding the context is essential for translating ellipsis. Bokhari and Ahmad further highlighted that those translators who were able to recover the right meaning showed greater awareness of context. These examples indicate insufficient effort and loss of cohesion.

5. Literal Translation

Literal translation refers to the case where elliptical structures were rendered literally, usually resulting in incomplete or meaningless constructions. Example 6 demonstrates a nominal ellipsis necessitating careful reconstruction to preserve continuity and parallelism. Almost 17% of the participants provided literal translations, which did not capture the ellipted elements or convey the complete idea. The phrase "في العالم وبعد/ fī al-ʿālam wa-baʿd /in the world and after" is unclear and leaves the ellipsis unresolved.

Example 6

ST	Since knowledge secures access to happiness in both this world and the *next* ∅, it is the greatest of pleasures, just as ignorance is the greatest of pains. (Rosenthal, 2007, p. 241)
TT (116)	منذ ضمان وصوله للسعادة في العالم *وبعد*، هو الأعظم من اللذات، والجهل هو الألم فقط.* munḏu ḍamān wuṣūlihi li-al-saʿādah fī al-ʿālam wa-baʿd, huwa al-aʿẓam min al-laḏḏāt, wa-al-ǧahl huwa al-ʾalam faqaṭ.
BT	Since securing access to happiness in the world and *after*, it is the greatest of pleasures, and ignorance is just the greatest of pains.
RT	ولما كان العلم يضمن السعادة في *الدنيا والآخرة* فإنه أعظم اللذات، كما أن الجهل هو أعظم الآلام. (Rosenthal, 2019, p. 290) wa-lammā kāna al-ʿilm yaḍman al-saʿādah fī al-dunyā wa-al-āḫirah fa-ʾinnahu aʿẓam al-laḏḏāt, kamā ʾanna al-ǧahl huwa aʿẓam al-ālām.
BT	As knowledge secures happiness in this world and *the after-death world*, it is the greatest of pleasures, just as ignorance is the greatest of pains.

The RT (provided in Example 6) illustrates the effective retrieval of ellipsis through rephrasing and the incorporation of culturally relevant expressions. The findings underscore the necessity of prompting the participants to transcend literal translation and participate in context-driven inferences to accurately reconstruct omitted content.

Example 7 examines a verbal ellipsis structure, where the elliptical clause "if it were [mentioned]" necessitated inferential reconstruction. TT (108) provided a literal translation: " إذا كانت/ ʾiḏā kānat /if it were" without including the omitted verb "mentioned". This literalness led to an awkward and semantically deficient rendering.

Example 7

ST	We may be disappointed to find, for instance, that the word "freedom" is not mentioned expressly in the Quran. However, *if it were* ∅, it would be merely incidental and of little significance. (Rosenthal, 2007, p. 21)
TT (108)	وبالرغم من ذلك، *إذا كانت*، ستكون بشكل عرضي وبأهمية بسيطة.* wa-bi-ragmi min ḏālika, ʾiḏā kānat, satakūnu bi-šakl ʿaraḍī wa-bi-ʾahammiyyah baṣīṭah.
BT	However, *if it were*, it would be merely incidental and of little significance.
RT	*ولو ذكرت*، لكان ذكرها عرضيًا غير ذي بال. (Rosenthal, 2019, p. 45) wa-law ḏukirat, la-kāna ḏikruhā ʿaraḍiyyan ghayr ḏī bāl.
BT	*If it were* mentioned, it would be merely incidental and of little significance.

Literal renderings demonstrate the participants' dependence on surface-level cues. Relying on overt linguistic forms rather than implicit semantic content underscores a lack of training in processing language for hidden structures, which is important to grasp ellipses. The literal strategy shows minimal effort and reduced cohesion.

6. Omission

Omission refers to instances where the elliptical clause was dropped entirely, with no trace of engaging with the elliptical element. Example 8 illustrates a nominal ellipsis, specifically the omission of the word "knowledge" in the expression "a knowledge nobler than ours." This instance was challenging to 35.28% of the participants, who simply left the ellipsis clause out.

Example 8

ST	"al-Junayd said: "If I knew that there might be a *knowledge* nobler than *ours* Ø underneath the sky I would make haste toward it and toward those who know it, in order to learn from them." (Rosenthal, 2007, p. 192)
TT (105)	يقول الجنيد: لو كنت أعرف أن أشرف من المكوث تحت السماء، سوف اسعى نحوها لكي اتعلم من الأشخاص الذين يعرفون عنها.* yaqūlu al-ğunayd: law kuntu ʾaʿlam ʾanna ʾašraf min al-mukūṯ taḥta al-samāʾ, sa-ʾasʿā naḥwahā li-ʾataʿallam min al-ʾašḫāṣ allaḏīna yaʿrifūna ʿanhā.
BT	Al-Junaid says: If I had known that *nobler than staying under the sky*, I would make haste toward it to learn from those who know it.
RT	قال الجنيد":لو علمت أن علمًا تحت أديم السماء أشرف من *علمنا* هذا لسعيت إليه وإلى أهله حتى أسمع منهم ذلك". (Rosenthal, 2019, p. 234) qāla al-ğunayd: "law ʿalimtu ʾanna ʿilman taḥta ʾadīm al-samāʾ ʾašraf min ʿilminā hāḏā la-saʿaytu ʾilayhi wa-ʾilā ʾahlihi ḥattā ʾasmaʿ minhum ḏālika."
BT	"al-Junayd said: "If I knew that there might be a *knowledge* nobler than *our knowledge* underneath the sky, I would make haste toward it and toward those who know it, in order to learn from them.

Another illustration of verbal ellipsis is the case of "taken away" in Example 9. In this instance, almost 77% of the participants were unable to retrieve the ellipted phrase, leading either to incomplete translations or translations that conveyed the message inaccurately. In this particular case, 59% of the participants chose to drop the entire elliptical clause.

Example 9

ST	"Your knowledge cannot be taken away from you, but your wealth can and *often is* Ø. (Rosenthal, 2007, p. 326)
TT (100)	لا يمكن أن يسلب منك العلم، بل ثروتك.* lā yumkin ʾan yuslab minka al-ʿilm, bal ṯarwatuka.
BT	Your knowledge cannot be taken away from you, but your wealth can.
RT	إذ لا يملك أحد أن يسلبك علمك، في حين يمكن أن يسلب مالك منك، *وكثيرًا ما يحدث ذلك* . (Rosenthal, 2019, p. 378) ʾiḏ lā yamliku ʾaḥad ʾan yuslibaka ʿilmaka, fī ḥīn yumkin ʾan yuslab māluka minka, wa-kaṯīran mā yaḥduṯ ḏālika.
BT	Your knowledge cannot be taken away from you, but your wealth can, and *that often occurs*.

The omission of the elliptical clause highlights a notable challenge encountered by the participants when dealing with ellipsis. This pattern demonstrates a lack of awareness regarding incomplete constructions and their significance for meaning in translation (RQ1). Incorporating

additional examples and practical exercises that specifically address translations involving ellipsis could enhance overall proficiency, as reported in Aldosari (2023) and Al-Qaddoumi and Ageli (2023). Omission reflects avoidance and complete cohesion loss.

QUANTITATIVE FINDINGS: ELLIPSIS TYPE-SPECIFIC PERFORMANCE

Overall, the respondent's performance in the present study is weak across the three types of ellipsis. However, addressing RQ2, the results demonstrate that the participants were relatively more challenged by nominal ellipsis, with a success rate of 43%, than they were with clausal ellipsis (57%), as shown in Figure 3.

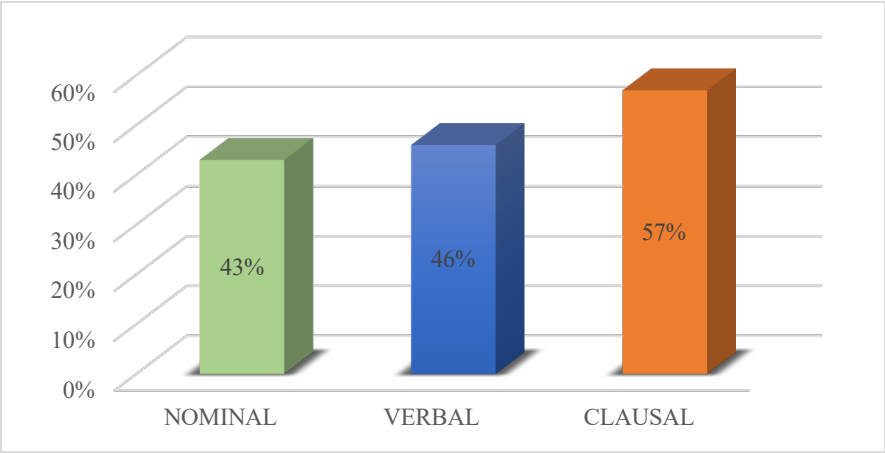

FIGURE 3. Type-specific Performance in Ellipsis Translation

These findings dovetail with previous research on ellipsis processing, where it is argued that clausal ellipsis tends to be easier to retrieve than nominal ellipsis. One explanation for this is that constructions with clausal ellipsis are often characterised by parallelism and a greater degree of syntactic clarity. In this regard, Hankamer and Sag (1976) emphasise that ellipsis is more readily resolved when a clear syntactic antecedent is present in the surrounding discourse. Clausal ellipses often appear in coordinated structures that syntactically mirror each other. This mirroring makes retrieval easier on the language user. The same observation is reinforced by Tanenhaus and Carlson (1990), who found that structural parallelism plays a key role in the processing of verb phrase ellipsis, whereas mismatches between the antecedent and the ellipted structure increase cognitive effort.

In contrast to clausal ellipsis, nominal ellipsis entails the omission of a noun or the head of a noun phrase and typically depends for its interpretation on subtler grammatical cues, such as determiners, modifiers, or numerals. Unlike the more structurally overt cues found in clausal ellipsis, these signals are less syntactically prominent and offer limited support for reconstructing the missing element. As Miller and Hemforth (2024) note, nominal ellipsis tends to be perceived as less recoverable and more demanding at the cognitive level. This is largely due to the fact that retrieval in this case relies more heavily on discourse-level inference than on explicit syntactic structure.

This contrast between clausal and nominal ellipsis becomes even more pronounced with non-native speakers of English, such as the participants who took part in the present study. Research conducted by Duffield and Matsuo (2009) indicates that L2 learners generally find

clausal ellipsis easier to interpret, particularly when clear structural cues are available. By comparison, nominal ellipsis is relatively more challenging. Often lacking an explicit antecedent, it causes the learner to rely more heavily on lexical knowledge and inferencing skills. Example 10 illustrates a case of clausal ellipsis, as seen in the clause "while the rich do not Ø," where the omitted element can be reconstructed as "know what they need." In this instance, 12 out of the 17 participants (70.58%) correctly resolved the ellipsis along the lines of TT (109).

Example 10

ST	"Diogenes was asked why rich people don't visit smart people, but smart people visit rich people … Aristippus gave a reply to Diogenes: "Because the wise know what they need, while the rich *do not* Ø." (Rosenthal, 2007, p. 325)
TT (109)	لأن الحكماء يعرفون ما يريدون بينما الأغنياء لا يعرفون ما يريدون. liʾanna al-ḥukamāʾ yaʿrifūna mā yurīdūna baynamā al-aġniyāʾ lā yaʿrifūna mā yurīdūna.
BT	Because the wise know what they need, while the rich *do not* know *what they need.*

In contrast, Example 11 features a case of nominal ellipsis within a comparative structure. The omitted element is the noun "knowledge" in the phrase "nobler than ours." This type of ellipsis can be recovered from the preceding context. In this instance, the overall respondent performance was lower. Only six out of the 17 participants (35%) could recover the ellipted element. The six patterns together show how strategies and effort shaped cohesion shifts.

Example 11

ST	"al-Junayd said: "If I knew that there might be a knowledge nobler than ***ours*** Ø underneath the sky I would make haste toward it and toward those who know it, in order to learn from them." (Rosenthal, 2007, p. 192)
TT (112)	قال الجنيد: "إذا علمت أن هناك قد يمكن أن يكون هناك معرفة *أشرف من تلك* التي تحت السماء، سأسعى خلف أولئك الذين يعرفونها لأتعلم منهم.* qāla al-ǧunayd: "ʾiḏā ʿalimtu ʾanna hunāka qad yumkin ʾan yakūna hunāka maʿrifah ʾašraf min tilka allatī taḥta al-samāʾ, sa-ʾasʿā ḫalf ʾulāʾika allaḏīna yaʿrifūnahā li-ʾataʿallam minhum.
BT	al-Junayd said: If I knew that there might be a knowledge nobler than *that which is* underneath the sky, I would make haste toward those who know it, in order to learn it.
RT	قال الجنيد":لو علمت أن علمًا تحت أديم السماء أشرف من *علمنا* هذا لسعيت إليه وإلى أهله حتى أسمع منهم ذلك". (Rosenthal, 2019, p. 234) qāla al-ǧunayd: "law ʿalimtu ʾanna ʿilman taḥta ʾadīm al-samāʾ ʾašraf min ʿilminā hāḏā la-saʿaytu ʾilayhi wa-ʾilā ʾahlihi ḥattā ʾasmaʿ minhum ḏālika.
BT	"al-Junayd said: "If I knew that there might be a *knowledge* nobler than *our knowledge* underneath the sky, I would make haste toward it and toward those who know it, in order to learn from them.

PATTERNS OF REASONING AND AWARENESS

The purpose of the focus group is to explore the participants' reactions to the survey content and results through a focus on specific cases. The discussion was also meant to investigate their general perception of ellipsis in translation and identify any related pedagogical gaps. The most salient conclusion emerging from the focus group discussion was that the participants demonstrated a clear lack of awareness and understanding when it came to identifying cases of ellipsis and handling them in the translation process. For example, several participants omitted the phrase *"as well as in this"* when translating the sentence:

> *"As medieval Muslims themselves might have put it, theology and law were the twin pillars of Islam responsible for the welfare of the Muslim community in the other world as well as in this"*
> (Rosenthal, 2007, p. 109)

Their justifications included statements such as: "It was not understandable," "I deemed it [the word 'this'] unnecessary in the translation," and "I was unable to comprehend which *world* [the author was talking about]." These responses reflect a tendency for total reliance on surface-level cues and unawareness of implicit semantic content. Only one respondent successfully inferred the ellipted meaning, stating, "Due to the context, I comprehended the meaning." These examples underscore the importance of contextual awareness in dealing with ellipsis.

In relation to RQ3, the discussion also reveals a curriculum gap. While the participants recalled hearing about ellipsis in previous courses, no one could specify when or how it had been taught. One participant summed this up by saying, "We heard about it, but we do not remember." This suggests that ellipsis was only addressed tangentially but not adequately emphasised or targeted as a specific object of practice, leaving the participants without a strong conceptual foundation or practical strategies for managing it. This situation is typical of ESL/EFL contexts where the focus on ellipsis is typically neglected (Klein, 2003).

INTEGRATED INTERPRETATION AND PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

Cohesion shifts largely stem from differing strategies and levels of effort. Both quantitative and qualitative data converge on the conclusion that the participants possess a poor understanding of ellipsis and a limited command of how to address it in translation. While general instruction on avoiding redundancy may have been given, ellipsis was not treated as a distinct topic or was not given enough attention for the participants to internalise it as a discrete topic. The findings suggest that the challenges the participants faced stemmed not from a lack of resources but from insufficient explicit instruction and conceptual grounding. As the focus group discussion progressed, the participants came to appreciate the significance of ellipsis and agreed on the need for its explicit integration into their training.

RESPONSES TO THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS

RQ1: ACCURACY IN TRANSLATING ELLIPSIS

The findings show that the participants managed to correctly render only about half of the elliptical instances (49%), mainly through repetition or substitution.

RQ2: ELLIPSIS TYPE AND PERFORMANCE

The findings demonstrate that respondent performance differed by ellipsis type: clausal ellipsis was handled relatively more accurately, while nominal ellipsis posed the greatest difficulty, confirming that syntactic complexity influences the handling of ellipsis cases.

RQ3: PERCEPTIONS AND PEDAGOGICAL AWARENESS

The analysis of focus-group data reveals that most of the participants were unaware of ellipsis as a cohesive device and relied on literal translation, underscoring the need for explicit instruction on cohesion and contextual inference.

Collectively, these findings address the study's objectives of examining the performance of the translation participants in handling ellipsis in English-Arabic translation by demonstrating that this performance is limited and by showing that this poor performance is due to clearly established lacunas in the formal training of these participants on ellipsis as a linguistic phenomenon.

While the findings offer useful insights, they should be interpreted considering certain limitations, particularly the restricted sample size and institutional focus. These constraints highlight the need for broader studies involving a larger number of participants from different translation programmes across different countries.

CONCLUSION

This study has explored how undergraduate translation participants handle ellipsis in English into Arabic translation, focusing on accuracy, performance levels in relation to ellipsis types, and participants' own reporting on their experience with the experiment. The findings reveal a limited level of accuracy, with only 49% of elliptical structures translated acceptably, indicating challenges in identifying and rendering elliptical elements, especially when these are not clearly marked. Six translation patterns emerged: three demonstrating acceptable translation, namely lexical repetition of antecedent, semantic repetition of antecedent, and substitution, and three that were deemed unacceptable: failed attempts, literal translation, and omission. Comparing the results for different ellipsis types, it has been found that dealing with nominal ellipsis was most challenging, whereas clausal ellipsis was relatively easier to retrieve and render into Arabic, thus confirming findings reported in the literature about the accessibility of these two types of ellipsis, especially for learners of English.

The focus group discussions reveal a general lack of awareness of ellipsis as a cohesive or stylistic feature, reflecting the limited attention typically given to this aspect of language, whether in ESL/EFL or translation curricula, highlighting the need for explicit training on ellipsis. Practically, translator-training programmes should incorporate guided translation tasks targeting ellipsis reconstruction, explicit instruction on cohesive ties within authentic texts, and reflective activities linking linguistic awareness to translation quality. Given this observed deficiency, future research projects could investigate the effects of structured pedagogical interventions aimed at increasing ellipsis awareness on the participants' translation output.

Theoretically, the study highlights the significance of discourse-level phenomena in translation pedagogy, advocating for the integration of pragmatic and contextual awareness into translation assessment frameworks. Compared with previous studies on ellipsis in Arabic translation (e.g., Aldosari, 2023; Algryani, 2020), this study presents a mixed-methods approach that links the participants' linguistic performance with their metacognitive awareness. This dual focus helps contribute to ongoing discourse (Bokhari & Ahmad, 2024) regarding language processing and translation quality assessment. Unlike these prior studies, which primarily employed single-method or text-based analyses, the current research integrates performance data with reflective qualitative evidence to explain translation behaviour. By combining both quantitative and qualitative findings, the study offers an evidence-based understanding of the need to integrate an explicit focus on cohesion and ellipsis reconstruction in different types of texts within our curricula.

Future research should test controlled pedagogical interventions (pre/post explicit ellipsis instruction), compare the performance of the participants and professional translators, and scale to larger mixed-methods datasets.

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