

## **Nominal Ellipsis in Manipuri**

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### **Abstract**

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

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

### **Introduction**

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

## Nominal Ellipsis

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

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

**Table 1**

*The Manipuri modifiers functioning as head of the elliptical nominal form*

Modifiers		Types	Markers	Gloss
1.	Numeratives	Cardinal	əmə, əni, əhum	‘one’, ‘two’, ‘three’
		Ordinal	əhanbə, ənisubə	‘first’, ‘second’
2.	Adjectives	Attributive	əp <sup>h</sup> əbə, ənəubə	‘good’, ‘new’
3.	Possessives	Noun	noun + -gi	‘of someone’
		Pronoun	personal pronoun + -gi	‘of someone’
4.	Quantifiers	—	loinə, k <sup>h</sup> ərə, k <sup>h</sup> itəŋ, əmətta	‘all’, ‘some’, ‘a little’, ‘any’

## Numeratives

In Manipuri nominal ellipsis, numerative is one of the linguistic elements that can become the head of an elliptical nominal group. As mentioned above that if there is an elliptical nominal group,

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

The Manipuri numeratives to be studied first are the cardinals like *əmə* ‘one’, *əni* ‘two’, *əhum* ‘three’... etc. All these cardinals can become the head of an elliptical nominal group.

1. A- *həndək*      *cəhigi*      *keləndər*      *ləibirəbəra*  
*həndək*      *cəhi-gi*      *keləndər*      *ləi-bi-rə-bə-ra*  
 this time      year-GEN      calendar      buy-HON-PERF-NMZ-INTR

‘Have you bought the calendar of this year?’

B- *hoi*      *əmə*      *ləijəre*  
*hoi*      *əmə*      *ləi-jə-re*  
 yes      one      buy-REFL-PERF

‘Yes, I have bought one.’

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

In the example (1) the cardinal *əmə* ‘one’ used in the speaker B’s utterance functions as head presupposing the noun *keləndər* ‘calendar’ that is in the preceding part of the discourse. The non-elliptical form of the nominal group is *keləndər əmə* ‘one calendar’. The cardinal *əmə* ‘one’ is used in the nominal substitution too. But there is a big difference between the elliptical *əmə* and the substitute *əmə*. In the nominal substitution, *əmə* that is used as substitute item will be preceded by a modifying element whereas in the case of nominal ellipsis the cardinal *əmə* will stand alone as the head of a nominal group where the head noun is omitted.

2. magi	tebəldə	g <sup>h</sup> əri	k <sup>h</sup> ərə	ləibəni
ma-gi	tebəl-də	g <sup>h</sup> əri	k <sup>h</sup> ərə	ləi-bə-ni
he-GEN	table-LOC	watch	some	have-NMZ-COP
nəŋ	əni	ləuro		
nəŋ	əni	ləu-ro		
you	two	take-PERS		

‘There are some watches on his table. You take two.’

In the example (2), the nominal group of the second utterance is made up of the cardinal *əni* ‘two’ only. The cardinal *əni* functions as a head of the nominal group in which the head noun is omitted. The non-elliptical form of the nominal group will be *g<sup>h</sup>əri əni* ‘two watches’ because of having anaphoric relation between the cardinal *əni* ‘two’ and the presupposed noun *g<sup>h</sup>əri* ‘watch’ in the preceding utterance.

3. A-	nəŋgi	pensil	kəja	ləiribəge
	nəŋ-gi	pensil	kəja	ləi-ri-bə-ge
	you-GEN	pencil	how many	have-PROG-NMZ-INT

‘How many pencils do you have?’

B-	əigidi	məri	ləiri
	əi-gi-di	məri	ləi-ri
	I-GEN-PART	four	have-PROG

‘I have four.’

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

Another Manipuri numerative that is used as the head of an elliptical nominal group in nominal ellipsis is ordinals. The Manipuri ordinals are like *əhanbə* ‘first’, *ənisubə* ‘second’, *əhumsübə* ‘third’... etc.

4. əhanbə	məna	ədu	gitnə	p <sup>h</sup> əŋle
ə-han-bə	məna	ədu	git-nə	p <sup>h</sup> əŋ-le
ATT-first-NMZ	prize	that	Git-NOM	get-PERF
ənisubədunə	məhesnə	p <sup>h</sup> əŋləgəni		
əni-subə-du-nə	məhes-nə	p <sup>h</sup> əŋ-lə-gəni		
two-ORD-DET-CONT	Mahesh-NOM	get-PROS-NREAL		

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

5. A- tombadu	kəjasubə	kadə	ləi
tomba-du	kəja-subə	ka-də	ləi- φ
Tomba-DET	which-ORD	room-LOC	live-SAM

‘In which room does Tomba live?’

B- madi	əhumsubədə	ləi
ma-di	əhum-subə-də	ləi-φ
he-PART	three-ORD-LOC	live-SAM

‘He lives in the third one.’

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

## Adjectives

Those words belonging to the adjectival category are used as the head of an elliptical nominal group of Manipuri. The Manipuri adjectives are formed by prefixing the attributive *ə-* to the verbal noun. In a nominal group, adjectives are accompanied with a head noun. When nominal ellipsis occurs, the head noun of the nominal group will be omitted and the adjective in that nominal group will become the head of the elliptical nominal group. The Manipuri adjectives are like *əp<sup>h</sup>əbə* ‘good’, *ənəubə* ‘new’, *əpikpə* ‘small’, *əŋəubə* ‘white’ etc.

6. sidə                      mənaməsiŋsiŋdu                      ləire                      əpətpəsiŋdu  
 si-də                      mənaməsiŋ-siŋ-du                      ləi-re                      ə-pət-pə-siŋ-du  
 this-LOC                      vegetable-PL-DET                      have-PERF                      ATT-rotten-NMZ-PL-DET  
 hundokk<sup>h</sup>ərəsi  
 hun-dok-k<sup>h</sup>ə-rə-si  
 throw-OUT-DEIC-PROS-SUG  
 ‘The vegetables are here. Let’s throw away the rotten ones.’
7. ədudə                      ləiribə                      k<sup>h</sup>oŋgrausiŋdu                      ubəra  
 ədu-də                      ləi-ri-bə                      k<sup>h</sup>oŋgrau-siŋ-du                      u-bə-ra  
 that-LOC                      have-PROG-NMZ                      pant-PL-DET                      see-NMZ-INTR  
 əmubədu                      purəku  
 ə-mu-bə-du                      pu-rək-u  
 ATT-black-NMZ-DET                      bring-DEIC-COM  
 ‘Have you seen the pants there? Bring the black one.’

In the above cited example (6), there is an adjective *əpətpə* ‘rotten’ functioning as head of the elliptical nominal group *əpətpəsiŋdu* ‘the rotten ones’. The adjective *əpətpə* ‘rotten’ refers back to the noun *mənaməsiŋ* ‘vegetable’ that is in the preceding utterance. The non-elliptical form of the nominal group is *əpətpə mənaməsiŋsiŋdu* ‘the rotten vegetables’. From the non-elliptical nominal form, it has been realized that the omitted head noun must be the noun *mənaməsiŋ* that has already been in the preceding utterance. This means nominal ellipsis occurs only when there is a presupposition. One thing is that both the adjectives *əpətpə* ‘rotten’ and *əmubə* ‘black’ in the example (6) and (7) are used as the head of their respective nominal groups. The non-elliptical form of the nominal group that is elliptical in example (7) is *əmubə k<sup>h</sup>oŋgraudu* ‘the black pant’. When these nominal groups are elliptical the head nouns *mənaməsiŋ* ‘vegetable’ in the example (6) and *k<sup>h</sup>oŋgrau* ‘pant’ in the example (7) are omitted and at the same time the suffixes attached to the head nouns are added to the adjectives that function as head of the elliptical nominal group as given below:

	<b>Elliptical form</b>	=	<b>Non-elliptical form</b>	
<b>i.</b>	əpətpəsiŋdu ə-pət-pə-siŋ-du ATT-rotten-NMZ-PL-DET		əpətpə ə-pət-pə ATT-rotten-NMZ	mənaməsiŋsiŋdu mənaməsiŋ-siŋ-du vegetable-PL-DET
<b>ii.</b>	əmubədu	=	əmubə	k <sup>h</sup> oŋgraudu

ə-mu-bə-du

ATT-black-NMZ-DET

ə-mu-bə

ATT-black-NMZ

k<sup>h</sup>oŋgrau-du

pant-DET

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

### Possessives

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

### Noun

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

8. A- sek<sup>h</sup>ərgi      kardu      mək<sup>h</sup>oi<sup>nə</sup>      puk<sup>h</sup>ərəni  
 sek<sup>h</sup>ər-gi      kar-du      mə-k<sup>h</sup>oi-nə      pu-k<sup>h</sup>ə-rə-gəni  
 Sekhar-GEN      car-DET      3P-PL-NOM      bring-DEF-PROS-NREAL

‘They will take away Sekhar’s car.’

- B- p<sup>h</sup>əre      tombagidunə      əik<sup>h</sup>oi<sup>nə</sup>  
 p<sup>h</sup>əre      tomba-gi-du-nə      əi-k<sup>h</sup>oi-nə  
 DM      Tomba-GEN-DET-CONT      I-PL-NOM

purəsi

pu-rə-si

bring-PROS-SUG

‘Well, let’s take Tomba’s.’

9. A- romengi      məpadi      ojani      əmugi

romen-gi	mə-pa-di	oja-ni	əmu-gi
Romen-GEN	3P-father-PART	teacher-COP	Amu-GEN
məpanə	kəri	oige	
mə-pa-nə	kəri	oi-ge	
3P-father-CONT	what	be-INT	

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

B- əmuginə	ləumini
əmu-gi-nə	ləumi-ni
Amu-GEN-CONT	farmer-COP

‘Amu’s is a farmer.’

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

	<b>Elliptical form</b>	=	<b>Non-elliptical form</b>	
<b>i.</b>	tombagidunə	=	tombagi	kardunə
	tomba-gi-du-nə		tomba-gi	kar-du-nə
	Tomba-GEN-DET-CONT		Tomba-GEN	car-DET-CONT
<b>ii.</b>	əmuginə	=	əmugi	məpanə
	əmu-gi-nə		əmu-gi	mə-pa-nə
	Amu-GEN-CONT		Amu-GEN	3P-father-CONT

## Pronoun

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

10. magi                      waridi                      əik<sup>h</sup>oi                      taminnəre

ma-gi	wari-di	əi-k <sup>h</sup> oi	ta-min-nə-re
he-GEN	story-PART	I-PL	listen-together-REC-PERF
mət <sup>h</sup> əŋdi	nəŋgi	əmuk	tarəsi
mət <sup>h</sup> əŋ-di	nəŋ-gi	əmuk	ta-rə-si
next-PART	you-GEN	again	listen-PROS-SUG

‘We have listened to his story together. Next, let’s listen to yours.’

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

	Elliptical form	=	Non-elliptical form
i.	nəŋgi	=	nəŋgi wari
	nəŋ-gi	=	nəŋ-gi wari
	you-GEN	=	you-GEN story

### Quantifiers

In Manipuri the quantifiers like *loina* ‘all’, *k<sup>h</sup>itəŋ* ‘a little’, *k<sup>h</sup>ərə* ‘some’, *aməttə* ‘any’... etc. can become the head of an elliptical nominal group. The quantifiers can occur within a nominal group. They can occur with an omitted or non-omitted head noun. Quantifiers are contributing a lot to carrying out nominal ellipsis.

11. A-	tombadu	səŋgom	kəjam	t <sup>h</sup> ək <sup>h</sup> i
	tomba-du	səŋgom	kəjam	t <sup>h</sup> ək-k <sup>h</sup> ə-i
	Tomba-DET	milk	how much	drink-DEF-SAM

‘How much milk did Tomba drink?’

B-	madi	k <sup>h</sup> itəŋ	t <sup>h</sup> ək <sup>h</sup> i
	ma-di	k <sup>h</sup> itəŋ	t <sup>h</sup> ək-k <sup>h</sup> ə-i
	he-PART	a little	drink-DEF-SAM

‘He drank a little.’

12. A-	satrəsɪndu	kadə	cəŋləbərə
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satrə-siŋ-du            ka-də            cəŋ-lə-bə-ra  
 student-PL-DET        room-LOC        enter-PERF-NMZ-INTR

‘Have the students entered the room?’

B- hoi    loinə        cəŋle  
     hoi    loinə        cəŋ-le  
     yes    all            enter-PERF

‘Yes, all of them have entered the room.’

In the example (11) and (12), the respective head noun of the elliptical nominal group in which the quantifiers *k<sup>h</sup>itəŋ* ‘a little’ and *loinə* ‘all’ occur are omitted. Since the quantifiers are to occur with a head noun of a nominal group, they cannot stand alone. From this it has been realized that the head nouns are omitted and the quantifiers remain as the head of their elliptical nominal group. The quantifiers *k<sup>h</sup>itəŋ* and *loinə* are the head of their elliptical nominal group. As nominal ellipsis has presupposition, the quantifiers presuppose the person or thing in the preceding part of the discourse. In the case of the example (11) and (12), the quantifier *k<sup>h</sup>itəŋ* presupposes the noun *səŋgom* ‘milk’ and *loinə* presupposes the noun *satrəsiŋ* ‘students’.

	<b>Elliptical form</b>	=	<b>Non-elliptical form</b>
<b>i.</b>	k <sup>h</sup> itəŋ	=	səŋgom    k <sup>h</sup> itəŋ
	k <sup>h</sup> itəŋ		səŋgom    k <sup>h</sup> itəŋ
	a little		milk        a little
<b>ii.</b>	loinə	=	satrəsiŋ    loinə
	loinə		satrə-siŋ    loinə
	all		student-PL    all

## Conclusion

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

present study as a starting point, it is a must to go deeper for exploring many new things in Manipuri discourse.

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### Abbreviations

ATT	attributive	NREAL	nonrealized
COM	command	ORD	ordinal
CONT	contrast	OUT	outward
COP	copula	PART	particularization
DEF	definitive	PERF	perfective
DEIC	deictic	PERS	persuasive
DET	determiner	PL	plural
DM	discourse marker	PROG	progressive
GEN	genitive	PROS	prospective
HON	honorific	REC	reciprocal
INT	intensive	REFL	reflexive
INTR	interrogative	SAM	simple aspect marker
LOC	locative	SUG	suggestive
NMZ	nominalizer	3P	third person
NOM	nominative		

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