

Verb Root Ellipsis: Americas and beyond.

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Verb Root Ellipsis, whereby the root of a verb is ellipted leaving behind, usually, a string of affixes and/or clitics, is a cross-linguistically rare phenomenon that is none the less robustly attested in a geographically and genealogically dispersed set of two American languages, Inuktitut [iku] and Kwaza [xwa], and one small family of South Asia, Great Andamanese.

Ellipsis takes place of verb roots whose content is retrievable from the discourse context, sometimes from the linguistic context (e.g. the verb ‘go’ in the presence of a directional expression), and in Akabea is conventionalised for the verb ‘hit’. Verb Root Ellipsis has a functional parallel in the cross-linguistically more widespread phenomenon of contextually-determined verb ellipsis, i.e. ellipsis of the whole verb word, though verb ellipsis lacks the morphological peculiarities of verb root ellipsis. Verb Root Ellipsis also has a formal parallel in the surprisingly widespread phenomenon of zero roots, in particular in that both require pronounceability of a sequence of affixes lacking a root, though the two phenomena differ in that zero roots are lexicalised, while Verb Root Ellipsis is primarily context-driven.