

## Argument Ellipsis in Japanese and Turkish

This study presents new data involving argument ellipsis in Turkish with the aim of examining Oku's (1998) hypothesis that argument ellipsis correlates with scrambling. Mainly considering data in Japanese that involve null arguments, Oku (1998) claims that argument ellipsis shares its root with scrambling. We scrutinize his idea by considering data from Turkish, another scrambling language.

We begin by illustrating Oku's (1998) analysis of elliptic null arguments in Japanese. Following the literature (Kim (1999), Oku (1998), Otani and Whitman (1991), *etc.*), we take the possibility of sloppy interpretation as an indication of ellipsis (rather than empty pronouns). Cases of the null object construction like the second sentence in (1) have been known to allow sloppy interpretation.

- (1) Taroo-ga zibun-no hahaoya-o semeta. Hanako-mo *e* semeta.  
 Taroo-NOM self-GEN mother-ACC criticized Hanako-also criticized  
 'lit. Taroo criticized self's mother. Hanako criticized *e*, too.'

The second sentence here can mean that Hanako criticized her own mother. To explain this, Oku (1998) adopts Bošković and Takahashi's (1998) idea that  $\theta$ -roles are *weak* features in the sense of Chomsky (1995) in Japanese, so that they can be checked in LF rather than in overt syntax. Assuming further that LF copying can serve as an instance of Merge, Oku analyzes (1) as follows (we represent the Japanese data in English just for convenience):

- (2) a. Taroo criticized *self's mother*. Hanako criticized, too. <overt syntax and hence PF>  
 b. Taroo criticized *self's mother*. Hanako criticized *self's mother*, too. <LF>

In the overt syntactic representation in (2a), the second sentence is literally "object-less", which is allowed in Japanese because the verb's internal  $\theta$ -role does not have to be checked (or assigned) in overt syntax. At LF, the object in the first sentence is copied onto the object position in the second sentence. The anaphor in the copied object is bound by *Hanako*, yielding the desired interpretation.

Oku (1998) assumes that LF copying is triggered by the necessity to check weak  $\theta$ -role features, and hence he predicts that subjects, which are arguments, should be able to be elliptic, too. This is in fact borne out, as Oku himself observes.

- (3) Taroo-wa [zibun-no kodomo-ga kasikoi to] omotteiru. Hanako-wa [*e*  
 Taroo-TOP self-GEN child-NOM smart that think Hanako-TOP  
 baka da to] omotteiru.  
 fool is that think  
 'lit. Taroo thinks that self's child is smart. Hanako thinks that *e* is a fool.'

In the second sentence in (3), the embedded subject is null and can mean Hanako's child. According to Bošković and Takahashi (1998), weak  $\theta$ -role features are responsible for scrambling as well, and hence Oku (1998) claims that argument ellipsis is tied to scrambling.

Bearing these in mind, let us examine whether argument ellipsis is allowed in Turkish, which, just like Japanese, allows null subjects and objects (Kornfilt (1985)) as well as scrambling. The following data are relevant:

- (4) a. Can [pro anne-si-ni] eleştir-di.  
 John-NOM his mother-3SG.POSS-ACC criticize-PAST  
 'John criticized his mother.'  
 b. Filiz-se *e* öv-dü.  
 Phylis-NOM-however praise-PAST  
 'lit. Phylis, however, praised *e*.'  
 (5) a. Can sorun-u hızla çöz-dü.  
 John-NOM problem-ACC quickly solve-PAST  
 'John solved the problem quickly.'

- b. Filiz-se *e* çöz-me-di.  
 Phylis-NOM-however solve-NEG-PAST  
 ‘lit. Phylis, however, did not solve *e*.’

Preceded by (4a), the null object sentence in (4b) has the sloppy interpretation that Phylis praised his own mother, indicating that the object can be elliptic. Preceded by (5a), (5b) means that Phylis did not solve the problem, but crucially it cannot mean that Phylis did not solve the problem *quickly*. This fact is significant in that it shows that what is responsible for elliptic null object constructions such as (4b) is not VP-ellipsis but argument ellipsis (or ellipsis of object noun phrases). If elliptic null object sentences like (4b) were derived by VP-ellipsis as Otani and Whitman (1991) propose for Japanese-type languages, manner adverbs should be able to be included in elliptic sites (just as in *John read it quickly, and Mary did, too.*) and the impossible reading for (5b) should be available. Thus, (4) and (5) indicate that argument ellipsis is indeed available in Turkish, confirming Oku’s hypothesis.

However, Turkish differs from Japanese with respect to subject ellipsis.

- (6) a. Can [[*pro* oğl-u] İngilizce öğren-iyor diye] bil-iyor.  
 John-NOM his son-3SG.POSS English learn-PRES COMP know-PRES  
 ‘John knows that his son learns English.’  
 b. Filiz-se [*e* Fransızca öğren-iyor diye] bil-iyor.  
 Phylis-NOM-however French learn-PRES COMP know-PRES  
 ‘lit. Phylis, however, knows that *e* learns French.’

Example (6a) is intended as the antecedent sentence for (6b), where the embedded subject is empty. Unlike the second sentence in (3), (6b) disallows sloppy interpretation, indicating that subjects cannot be elliptic in Turkish.

We assume that the impossibility of subject ellipsis in Turkish relates to the presence of subject agreement (see Kornfilt (1985) for subject agreement in Turkish). Specifically, we assume that the presence of subject agreement means that the  $\phi$ -features of Tense (or just T) must be checked in overt syntax in Turkish. According to Oku (1998), in order for (6b) to involve argument ellipsis, the embedded clause must be literally “subject-less” in overt syntax, its subject being introduced only at LF by copying of the embedded subject in (6a). But this derivation would fail to check the  $\phi$ -features of the embedded T in (6b) in overt syntax. The lack of subject agreement in Japanese, on the other hand, means that T does not have features to be checked in overt syntax in the language. Our interim research has found independent evidence for this analysis, which comes from subject honorification in Japanese, an instance of agreement: with honorific markers on verbs, subjects are unable to be elliptic even in Japanese.

To conclude, we provide new facts involving argument ellipsis mainly from Turkish, which we believe to lead to a better understanding of the cross-linguistic distribution of the phenomenon. Our result confirms the alleged correlation between argument ellipsis and scrambling, but only partially. We find a difference between Japanese and Turkish in subject ellipsis. Instead of denying Oku’s idea, we try to explain the asymmetry in terms of an independently attested difference between them.

**References:** Bošković, Z and D. Takahashi (1998) “Scrambling and Last Resort.” *Linguistic Inquiry* 29. Chomsky, N. (1995) *The Minimalist Program*. MIT Press. Kim, S. (1999) “Sloppy/strict identity, empty objects, and NP ellipsis.” *Journal of East Asian Linguistics* 8. Kornfilt, J. (1985) *Case Marking, Agreement, and Empty Categories in Turkish*. PhD dissertation, Harvard University. Oku, S. (1998) *A Theory of Selection and Reconstruction in the Minimalist Perspective*. PhD dissertation, University of Connecticut. Otani, K. and J. Whitman (1991) “V-Raising and VP-Ellipsis.” *Linguistic Inquiry* 22.