Notes on Ellipsis
Syntax and Information

Satoshi Oku

1. Introduction

It is known since Oku (1998) that argument ellipsis (AE) is syntactically available in Japanese.

(1) a. Mary-wa [zibun-no teian-ga   tooru-to] omotteiru.
   Mary-TOP [self-GEN proposal-NOM pass-C] think
   'Mary₂ thinks that her₂ proposal will pass.'

   b. John-mo [[e]   tooru-to]   omotteiru
   John-also [pass-C]   think
   'Lit. John also thinks that [e] will pass.'   [e] = Mary's proposal or John's proposal

[e] in (1b) can be interpreted either as Mary's proposal (strict identity reading) or John's proposal (sloppy identity reading), the latter being considered as a hallmark of AE. As discussed in Oku (2016), however, it has been argued that some type of argument is ellipsis-resistant as in (2) (e.g., Ikawa 2013) and adjuncts are also ellipsis-resistant as in (3) (e.g., Oku 1998).

(2) a. John-wa   nani-o   katta no?
   John-TOP   what-ACC   bought Q
   'What did John buy?'

   b.*Bill-wa   [e]   katta no?
    Bill-TOP   bought Q
   *(intended) 'What did Bill buy?'   (Possible only as 'Did Bill buy something?')

(3) a. Bill-wa   kuruma-o   teineini   arattta
   Bill-TOP   car-ACC   carefully   washed
   'Bill washed the car carefully.'

   b. John-wa   kuruma-o   [e]   araw-anak-atta
   John-TOP   car-ACC   wash-NEG-PAST

Having (2a) as the antecedent clause, [e] in (2b) cannot be interpreted as *nani-o* 'what-ACC': wh-phrases are ellipsis-resistant even when they are an argument. Likewise, even with (3a) as the antecedent clause, [e] in (3b) cannot be interpreted as *teineini* 'carefully.' The most natural interpretation of (3b) is that John did not wash the car at all: manner adjuncts are ellipsis-resistant. In this report, expanding Oku (2016), I argue that ellipsis-tolerance is heavily dependent on if the target constituent (whether it is an argument or an adjunct) is focused. Assuming (4), I will examine two representative instances of ellipsis-resistant constituents and claim that they do not satisfy (4).

(4) Defocusing Requirement
    Ellipsis presupposes the defocusing of the target constituent.   (Cf. Tancredi 1992)

Wh-phrases are intrinsically focused and thus it is their lexicio-semantic property that makes them ellipsis-resistant. If the manner adjunct *teineini* 'carefully' appears in [e] in (3b), it is inevitably under the focus of negation, and thus ellipsis-resistant, not satisfying (4). Focused constituents are ellipsis-resistant; otherwise, adjuncts as well as arguments can be ellipsis-tolerant in Japanese.

2. It is Focus, not an Operator-Variable Chain

Under the LF-Copy analysis of ellipsis, Saito (2017) proposes that wh-phrases are ellipsis-resistant because they make an Operator-Variable chain (Op-V chain) and a chain cannot be copied to reconstruct the missing argument at LF. Oku (2016), on the other hand, argues that there are cases in which argument ellipsis is possible even when the antecedent is a quantifier phrase which makes an Op-V chain at LF. Thus, it is the violation of (4), not the Op-V chain, that makes wh-phrases ellipsis-resistant. First of all, it is fair to assume that wh-phrases in a normal question is a focus; for instance, in (2a), the speaker presupposes that John bought something and is asking the identity of this 'something:' that is, the information carried by the subject and the verb are presupposed, and the

information carried by the object wh-phrase is the focus. Secondly, in (5a), the inverse scope reading is the most salient in which the universally quantified object takes scope over the existentially quantified subject; that is, quantifier raising applies and the Op-V chain of the object is created at LF. Nonetheless, AE is easily available with the intended inverse scope reading as in (5b): the "[e] = every gate" reading is available. The existence of an Op-V chain does not block AE.

(5) a. A-too-de-wa   keikan-ga   hitori   dono iriguti-mo   gaado-sitei-ru
        A-building-at-TOP police officer-NOM   one   every gate-also   guard-PROG-PRES
        'At building A, a police officer is guarding every gate'   ($\forall > \exists$)
     b. B-too-de-wa   keibiin-ga   hitori   [e]   gaado-sitei-ru
        B-building-at-TOP security guard-NOM   one   guard-PROG-PRES
        'At building B, a security guard is guarding [e]'   ($\forall > \exists$)

The assumed 'every gate' at the [e] position in (5b) satisfies (4). Hence, AE is possible.

3. Manner Adjunct Ellipsis

As Simpson (2022) rightly points out, with (3a) as the antecedent, there is a clear contrast between (6b) (AE) and (6c) (the attempted adjunct ellipsis), which leads him to conclude that adjunct ellipsis is not possible. I will argue, however, that there are many cases in which adjunct ellipsis is available and (6c) is not good in the adjunct-inclusive reading because such a reading violates (4).

(6) a. Mary-wa   kuruma-o   teineini   araw-anak-atta
        Mary-TOP   car-ACC   carefully   wash-NEG-PAST
        'Lit. Mary did not wash [e_1] carefully.'   [no ellipsis]
     b. Mary-wa   [e_1]   teineini   araw-anak-atta
        Mary-TOP   carefully   wash-NEG-PAST   [AE]
        'Lit. Mary did not wash [e_1] carefully.'
     c. Mary-wa   kuruma-o   ([e_2])   araw-anak-atta
        Mary-TOP   car-ACC   wash-NEG-PAST   [attempted adjunct E]

Although both 'car' and 'carefully' are recoverable from the antecedent clause (3a), AE in (6b) is possible but adjunct ellipsis as in (6c) is not: the adjunct-inclusive reading is difficult to obtain for [e_2]. Note that the adjunct is the sole focus of negation while the object argument is not in (6a); that is, (6a) means that Mary actually washed the car but not in a careful manner. I suggest therefore that the adjunct-inclusive reading is not possible in (6c) because the sole focus of negation is elided while retaining everything else: a specific case of the violation of (4). As reported in Oku (2016), adjunct-inclusive reading (i.e., adjunct ellipsis) is available when the condition in (4) is met.

(7) a. Ziroo-wa   zibun-no burasi-de   sono kuruma-o   aratta
        Jiro-TOP   self-GEN brush-with   the car-ACC   washed
        'Jiro$_2$ washed the car with his$_2$ brush.'
     b. Taroo-wa   [e]   kono kuruma-o   aratta
        Taro-TOP   this car-ACC   washed
        'Lit. Taro washed this car [e].'   ([e] = Taro's car is available)   [manner adjunct ellipsis]

In this paper, I argued that condition (4) is one crucial factor for ellipsis. Japanese AE is available but also conditioned by (4) as shown in (2). Manner adjuncts in Japanese are ellipsis-resistant when they violate (4) as in (6c) while they are ellipsis-tolerant when they met (4) as shown in (7).

References: Ikawa, H. (2013) "What the Ineligibility of Wh-Phrases for Argument Ellipsis Tells Us: On the Inertness of Phonetically Null Elements," Online *Proceedings of GLOW in Asia 2012*. / **Oku, S. (1998)** *A Theory Selection and Reconstruction in the Minimalist Perspective*, Ph.D. diss. UConn. / **Oku, S. (2016)** "A Note on Ellipsis-Resistant Constraints," *Nanzan Linguistics* 11, 56-70. / **Saito, M. (2017)** "Ellipsis." In Shibatani, M., S. Miyagawa & H. Noda eds., *Handbook of Japanese Syntax*, De Gruyter Mouton, 701-750. / **Simpson, A. (2022)** "In Defense of Verb-Stranding VP-Ellipsis," ms. Univ. of Southern California. / **Tancredi, C. (1992)** *Deletion, Deaccenting, and Presupposition*, Ph.D. diss. MIT.