1. Introduction

In this squib, we discuss and analyze a new type of nominal ellipsis in Japanese fragments involving overtly case-marked null arguments that have not previously been documented in any other language in the literature. We first show that the elliptic arguments in this type of construction do not fit into the classical generative inventory of empty categories (i.e., pro, PRO, or traces of A or A’-movement). Then, we claim that the existence of this type of apparently atypical ellipsis is exactly what is predicted by recent LF Copy analyses of Japanese (Oku (1998); Kim (1999); Saito (2003); Takahashi (2006)). To the extent that this analysis is correct, we provide
further evidence for the LF Copy Analysis, which has been motivated on other grounds in the above-mentioned work.

2. Case-Stranding Null Arguments in Japanese

To the best of our knowledge, the nominal ellipsis in question came into use quite recently in colloquial dialogues such as (1).

1. The first author did a survey of 25 Japanese speakers in Sendai, Japan from 18 to 24 in age, all non-linguists, and found that the majority of them (17 out of 25) admitted the ellipsis type in (1-4). All the consultants tend to prefer the ellipsis of indirect or locative elements as in (3) and (4) to that of subject or direct objects as in (1) and (2). As Kenji Oda (personal communication) points out, one factor that facilitates this ellipsis might be the distinction between structural and inherent cases in Japanese. We are very grateful to all the consultants for their patient grammaticality judgments on examples such as (1-4).
B:  \textit{e ga mada tsuki-mase-n.}  
Nom  yet  arrive-Pol-Neg  
‘She has not arrived yet.’

The second reply of B in this conversation involves an overtly nominative case-marked empty category (indicated here as \textit{e}) that is intended to refer back to the subject argument \textit{Naomi}, which is salient from the preceding question posed by A. This ellipsis is not restricted to subject positions but can also target direct and indirect objects, as shown in (2) and (3), respectively, under an appropriate discourse setting. Furthermore, examples such as (4) show that this ellipsis is also possible for adjunct expressions such as locative case-marked phrases.\footnote{This pattern is also observed with other adjunct phrases marked with \textit{de} (instrument), \textit{kara} (source), \textit{goal} (made) and so on. The productivity of this pattern with these markers indicates that the distinction between structural and inherent case plays a role in licensing this ellipsis, as suggested in footnote 1.}

(2)  
A:  \textit{Tokyo-de Tom Cruse-o mi-ta no!}  
Tokyo-Loc Tom Cruse-Acc see-Past Excl  
‘I saw Tom Cruse in Tokyo!’

B:  \textit{e!? Honto? Tom Cruse-o?}  
what!? really? Tom Cruse-Acc?  
‘What!? Really? Tom Cruse?’
A: o mi-ta-no! Bikkuri-shi-cha-tta.
   Acc see-Past-Excl surprise-do-Perf-Past
   ‘I saw him! I was surprised.’

(3) A: Akira-ni ai-masi-ta ka?
   Akira-Dat meet-Pol-Past Q
   ‘Did you meet Akira?’

B: Hai, ai-masi-ta.
   yes, see-Pol-Past
   ‘Yes, I met him.’

A: Yusuke-ni-mo ai-masi-ta ka?
   Yusuke-Dat-also see-Pol-Past Q
   ‘Did you also meet Yusuke?’

B: e ni-wa mada atte-mase-n.
   Dat-Top yet meet-Pol-Neg
   ‘I have not met him yet.’

(4) A: Hiroshima-de Tom Cruse-o mi-ta no!
   Hiroshima-Loc Tom Cruse-Acc see-Past Excl
   ‘I saw Tom Cruse in Hiroshima!’

B: e!? Honto? Hiroshima-de (mi-ta no)?
   what really Hiroshima-Loc (see-Past Q)
   ‘What!? Really? (Did you see him) in Hiroshima?’

A: de mi-ta no! Bikkuri-shi-cha-tta.
   Loc see-Past Excl surprise-do-Perf-Past
   ‘(I saw him) in Hiroshima! I was surprised.’
In the second reply of A in (2), we have the accusative case-marked empty object intended to denote Tom Cruse. In the same way, in the second reply of B in (3), we have the dative-marked empty indirect object intended to denote Yosuke. Finally, in the second reply of A in (4), we find the locative-marked elliptical object of the preposition de ‘in’ that refers back to the locative expression Hiroshima from the preceding question.

There are a few factors that help license this nominal ellipsis pattern in Japanese. First, the null argument must be a prominent or exhaustively focused NP (Kuno (1973)) from the preceding discourse. Second, native speakers accept the ellipsis option in (1-4) only when an extremely heavy pitch accent is placed on the case marker in sentence-initial position. This prosodic cue can be interpreted as indicating exhaustive focus in the LF side of grammar. It is also notable that putting a heavy accent on the morphological case markers in the elided portions of the examples in (1-4) indicates that there is an empty category preceding them.³

This sort of case-stranding nominal ellipsis has never to our knowledge been documented in any other language in the literature, showing that it calls for a formal

³ The observation that empty categories in syntactic derivations affect prosodic alternations is not new. Wanna-contraction has been shown to provide a phonological argument for the existence of empty categories such as traces of A’-movement, as argued in Jaeggli (1980) (see also Pullum (1997) for a recent overview). Furthermore, there is prosodic evidence from language acquisition. For example, some children hear nana instead of banana because they (mistakenly) perceive ba as an elided syllable (Carter (1999)). This observation suggests that there may be ‘traces’ of omitted syllables in phonetics as well. Thanks to Mike Hammond (personal communication) for bringing this issue to our attention.
analysis from a quite new perspective. In the next section, we first show that this ellipsis pattern is not predicted under any analysis that refers to the fixed classical inventory of empty categories in the Government-and-Binding Theory of Chomsky (1981, 1986), i.e., pro, PRO or traces of A or A’-movement. Then we show that the elliptic argument in question is an invisible element of a quite different character.

3. The Elliptic Argument as an Invisible Monster of a Different Stripe

A possible analysis for the ellipsis pattern described in the previous section is one that posits a pro in the corresponding elliptic NP positions of the examples in (1-4), as is found in Romance languages. However, this analysis does not work for the ellipsis pattern under investigation. It has been a general consensus in the generative literature on the so-called pro-drop languages that pro is covertly case-marked. To take one example in Japanese, it has been widely known in Japanese syntax since Kuroda (1965) that a clause cannot tolerate more than one occurrence of the accusative case marker -o. This is stated as the Double-o Constraint in (5). This constraint correctly accounts for the difference in grammaticality between (6a) and (6b). Example (6a) is ungrammatical because there are two arguments, Xander and ninzin ‘carrot’ that are marked with accusative case. This is ruled out by the Double-o constraint. Example (6b) is fine because there is only one argument, ninzin ‘carrot’, that occurs with accusative case.

(5) The Double-o Constraint

There cannot be more than one accusative Case in a clause.
   Andy-Nom Xander-Acc carrot-Acc eat-Cause-Past
   ‘Andy made Xander eat carrots.’

   b. Andy-ga Xander-ni ninzin-o tabe-ase-ta.
   Andy-Nom Xander-Dat carrot-Acc eat-Cause-Past
   ‘Andy made/let Xander eat carrots.’

Now, consider the sentences in (7a) and (7b). Their adjunct clauses contain
ninzin ‘carrots’, which denotes the empty direct object pro in the matrix clauses
(Saito (2004)).

(7) a. *Janet-ga ninzin-o katte-ki-ta node, Andy-wa Xander-o pro
    Janet-Nom carrot-Acc buy-come-past because Andy-Top Xander-Acc
    tabe-sase-ta.
    eat-Cause-Past
    ‘Because Janet bought carrots, Andy made Xander eat them.’

   b. Janet-ga ninzin-o katte-ki-ta node, Andy-wa Xander-ni pro
    Janet-Nom carrot-Acc buy-come-past because Andy-Top Xander-Dat
    tabe-sase-ta.
    eat-Cause-Past
    ‘Because Janet bought carrots, Andy made/let Xander eat them.’

In (7a), assuming that pro corresponds to ninzin-o ‘carrots-Acc’, there are two
accusative case arguments in the matrix clause, ninzin-o ‘carrots-Acc’ and Xander-o
‘Xander-Acc.’ The ungrammaticality of (7a) naturally falls out if we assume that
accusative case, signified by –o, is realized within pro. The grammaticality of (7b) provides further corroboration for the view that pro counts as the accusative-case marked empty category. Again, pro corresponds to the accusative case marked ninzin ‘carrot’, which is allowed to occur since Xander has dative case, and therefore, there is only one accusative marked argument in the matrix clause. The contrast between (7a) and (7b) thus indicates that pro in Japanese is covertly case-marked and provides evidence against a pro-based analysis of the ellipsis in question.

It is also unlikely that the argument in question is PRO. An analysis that posits PRO for the ellipsis site in (1-4) does not work because crosslinguistically, this formative is found in control configurations (see Harley (2000), however, for the claim that PRO is present in Irish finite clauses). Yet none of the relevant portions of these examples involve control structures. Finally, as there does not seem to be any type of movement involved in these examples, since there is no c-commanding antecedent for the elided NP, it is also unlikely that the empty NPs are instances of traces created by A or A’-movement.

The discussion so far therefore suggests that the empty arguments in the examples in (1-4) do not fit into the classical generative inventory of empty categories and that the source of the ellipsis pattern in question needs to be sought elsewhere in the Japanese grammar. A question also arises as to the identity of this argument. In the next section, we show that this type of apparently atypical ellipsis pattern is exactly what is predicted under the recent theory of Japanese ellipsis known as the LF Copy Analysis.

4. The LF Copy Analysis
The existence of the ellipsis pattern that is our focus can naturally be accounted for under the LF Copy Analysis recently proposed by Oku (1998), Kim (1999), Saito (2003) and Takahashi (2006). For example, Oku argues that an argument is copied onto an empty slot in an incomplete clause from the full linguistic antecedent to save an otherwise semantically uninterpretable structure at LF. His analysis is illustrated in (9a, b) for the example in (8b), a null object construction in Japanese.

   John-Nom ninzin-Acc eat-Past
   ‘John ate carrots.’
   b. Bill-mo e tabe-ta.
   Bill-also eat-Past
   ‘(Lit.) Bill also ate.’

(9) a. [TP John-ga [vP ninzin-o tabe-ta]]
   b. [TP Bill-mo [vP ninzin tabe-ta]]

In (9a, b), the direct object in (9a) is copied and merged onto the corresponding direct object slot in (9b) at LF in order to satisfy the selectional properties of the verb *taberu* ‘eat’.

---

4. See these works for discussion of other elliptic cases in Japanese, such as null argument and parasitic gap-like constructions.
This analysis is directly applicable to the ellipsis pattern under investigation, as observed in the examples in (1-4). For instance, the LF Copy Analysis assigns the rough LF representation in (10b) to the relevant elided portion of the example in (1), repeated below.

(1) A: Asami-wa moo tsuki-masi-ta ka?
   Asami-Top already arrive-Pol-Past Q
   ‘Has Asami already arrived?’
B: Hai, moo tsuki-masi-ta.
   yes, already arrive-Pol-Past
   ‘Yes, she has already arrived.’
A: Naomi-mo moo tsuki-masi-ta ka?
   Naomi-also already arrive-Pol-Past Q
   ‘Has Naomi also already arrived?’
B: e ga mada tsuki-mase-n.
   Nom yet arrive-Pol-Neg
   ‘She has not arrived yet.’

(10) a. \([CP[TP Naomi-mo moo tsuki-masi-ta] ka]]\)
    Naomi-also already arrive-Pol-Past Q
b. \([TP[DP Naomi F ga mada tsuki-mase-n]]\)
    Naomi Nom yet arrive-Pol-Neg

In this structure, the subject argument Naomi is copied from the LF representation in (10a) onto that in (10b) to supply the theme argument for the unaccusative verb tsuku.
‘arrive.’ This copying operation thus correctly derives the semantic interpretation ‘Naomi has not arrived yet’, as desired. This analysis also does not face any problems with the previous accounts reviewed in the previous section that resort to the classical generative inventory of empty categories.5

5. Conclusions

This squib has analyzed a new type of nominal ellipsis in Japanese involving case-stranding null arguments that have never been documented in any other language. Accounts that posit an element from the fixed inventory of empty categories are not feasible. This apparently mysterious ellipsis pattern is predicted by the recent LF Copy Analysis of Japanese ellipsis. This ellipsis pattern therefore indicates the rather unique nature and origin of Japanese ellipsis and hence provides further empirical support for the LF Copy Analysis.

References

5. One remaining question is how to account for the ungrammaticality of examples such as (7a), which has been taken to suggest that the empty category is the covertly case-marked pro. The LF Copy Analysis would wrongly predict that (7a) should be grammatical because this analysis allows only the NP portion to be copied to the ellipsis site to the exclusion of its covert accusative Case and as a result the sentence would not violate the Double-o Constraint in (5). We leave this important question for another occasion.


*Journal of East Asian Linguistics* 15, 1-35.

Yosuke Sato
Jason Ginsburg
Department of Linguistics, Douglass 200E,
University of Arizona,
Tucson, Arizona 85721-0028, USA.
yosukes@email.arizona.edu
jginsbur@email.arizona.edu