Particle Stranding Ellipsis in Japanese, String Deletion, and Argument Ellipsis

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This paper develops an ellipsis analysis of particle stranding ellipsis (PSE) in Japanese as an alternative to a phase-theoretic analysis proposed by Sato (2012). We develop Shibata’s (2014) observations on PSE and argue that PSE arises through string-based deletion of an XP so that the left edge of an utterance aligns with the left edge of an intermediate phrase. We further present evidence to show that the ellipsis in question can take the form of Argument Ellipsis (AE).

PSE is illustrated in (1). Sato’s analysis, depicted in (2), is designed to account for three properties of PSE. First, PSE must target a sentence-initial topic element, assuming that the Top head constitutes the highest functional projection in the derivation of PSE. Second, PSE must be a root phenomenon because the specifier of TopP within an embedded clause would be Spelled-Out. Finally, PSE cannot apply more than once because the second application of PSE would target a non-sentence-initial topic.

Sato’s analysis has three problems, however. First, Sato and Ginsburg (2007) note that PSE occurs with many other non-topic particles such as case particles (3) and focus particles (4). Since Sato’s analysis is tailored for topic-based PSE, it may not be extended to those cases. Second, Shibata (2014) observes that PSE is not necessarily a root phenomenon (5). Finally, Shibata points out that the target of PSE exhibits strict linear sensitivity so that it cannot be preceded by any phonologically overt material such as interjections (6Ba). The contrast between (6Ba) and (6Bb) is difficult to explain under Sato’s theory since (6Bb), the input for (6Ba), can have the interjection illicitly preceding the overt topic.

Shibata suggests that PSE is subject to the condition in (7), but leaves the generative mechanism behind PSE open. We propose that PSE results from what Mukai (2003) calls String Deletion, a phonological operation which applies to a continuous string at PF under surface identity with its previous antecedent, so that the left edge of an utterance aligns with the left edge of a focused particle. (1B) is then re-analyzed as in (8). Our analysis solves the problems noted above. First, the presence of PSE with many non-topic particles is automatically predicted by our analysis. Second, PSE may occur in an embedded clause since nothing prevents it so long as String Deletion meets (7). Finally, PSE exhibits linear sensitivity since the interjection would cause the violation of (7).

Having established a PF-deletion analysis of PSE, we present three arguments that the deletion involved in PSE may take the form of AE. Previous research has discovered three major properties: strict/sloppy ambiguities, the disjunctive reading, and the parallelism constraint on binder-bindee relations. Significantly, PSE shares those properties as AE. First, (9B) permits both strict and sloppy interpretations. Second, (10B) permits the disjunctive interpretation. Finally, PSE exhibits the parallelism constraint: in (11B), the PSE target can only be construed as being bound to its local subject Bill, but in (12B), it can refer to either the embedded subject or the matrix subject.
(1) Speaker A: Tanaka-kun-wa? Speaker B: wa-ne, kaisha-o yameta-yo.
Tanaka-TTT-TOP TOP-PRT company-ACC quit-PRT
‘How about Tanaka?’ ‘He quit his company.’ (Hattori 1960:452)

(2) Transfer to LF
TopP
Top
Tanaka-kun
NP1
-wa

John-NOM how did-Q NOM company-ACC quit-PRT
‘What did John do?’ ‘John quit his company.’ (Goto 2012:103)

(4) A: Taroo-no kita-no? B: mo ki-masita.
Taro-also came-Q also come-POL.PAST
‘Did Taro also come?’ ‘Taro also came.’ (Shibata 2014)

(5) A: John-wa sigoto-o yameru-no?
John-TOP job-ACC quit-Q
‘Will John quit his job?’
B: [cp [cp ga sigoto-o yameru kadooka-wa] sira-nai-kedo], sooiu uwasa-wa aru.
NOM job-ACC quit whether-TOP know-NEG-though such rumor-TOP exist
‘Though I don’t know whether he will quit his job, there is such a rumor.’ (Shibata 2014)

John-TOP come-Q well TOP come-POL.NEG well
‘Will John come?’ ‘Well, he won’t come.’ ‘Well, he won’t come.’

(7) PSE is licensed in: [a | X . . . .], where X is a stranded particle and is focused. (Shibata 2014)

(8) A: [dp Tanaka-kun-wa]? B: [dp Tanaka-kun]-wa-ne kaisha-o yameta-yo.

(9) A: Zibun-no haaoya-o Hanako-ga sonkeisiteiru-no?
self-GEN mother-ACC Hanako-NOM respect-Q
‘Does Hanako respect self’S1 mother?’
B: wa, tasika, Taro-ga sonkeisiteiru-yo. (✔ strict/sloppy)
TOP as I recall Taro-NOM respect-PRT
‘Taro2 respects self’S1/2 mother.’

(10) A: Kinoo Tarooka Ziroo-ga Kanako-o sikatta-yo.
yesterday Taro or Ziroo-NOM Kanako-ACC scolded-PRT
‘Yesterday, either Taro or Ziro scolded Kanako.’
B: wa, Ayaka-mo sikatteita-yo. (✔ Disjunctive reading)
TOP Ayaka-also scolded-PRT
‘Either Taro or Ziro also scolded Ayaka.’

(11) A: Zibun-no kuruma-o John-ga aratta-no?
self-GEN car-ACC John-NOM washed-Q
‘Did John1 wash self’S1 car?’
B: wa Mary-ga [cp Bill-ga aratta-to] itteta-yo.
TOP Mary-NOM Bill-NOM washed-Comp said-PRT
‘Mary1 said that Bill2 washed self’S1 car.’

(12) A: Zibun-no kuruma-o Sue-ga John-ga aratta-to itteta-no?
self-GEN car-ACC Sue-NOM John-NOM washed-Comp said-Q
‘Did Sue1 say that John2 washed self’S1/2 car?’
B: wa, tasika, Mary-ga Bill-ga aratta-to itteta-yo.
TOP as I recall Mary-NOM Bill-NOM washed-Comp said-PRT
‘As I recall, Mary1 said that Bill2 washed self’S1/2 car.’