Introduction: This paper argues against the anti-agreement theory of argument ellipsis, according to which the availability of argument ellipsis (AE) in a language is determined by the presence or absence of φ-agreement with arguments (Saito 2007). Drawing on evidence from the split ergative language Zazaki (Northwestern Iranian), I show that null objects may undergo AE, and that null subjects may not, regardless of whether the subject or the object agrees with the verb. I propose an alternative analysis of subject-object asymmetries in Zazaki AE in terms of the topicality of subjects in the language, a factor that was argued by Sato (2016) to play a role in the availability of AE in languages that lack overt φ-agreement. Although Sato allows for both agreement and an operator-variable topic chain to block AE, I conclude that agreement does not block AE.

The anti-agreement theory of argument ellipsis: Many languages permit argument ellipsis (AE). In such languages, null possessed or quantificational NPs permit sloppy and quantificational interpretations that are unattested with overt pronouns, thus suggesting an analysis in terms of ellipsis (Takahashi 2008). One prominent theory that attempts to explain the distribution of AE in the world’s languages is Saito’s (2007) anti-agreement theory, according to which AE of some argument will only be possible in a language if nothing undergoes φ-agreement with that argument. This theory correctly predicts that languages like Japanese, which lack verbal agreement with any argument, permit ellipsis of both subjects and objects. What’s more, Şener & Takahashi (2010) and Sato & Karimi (2016) show that the anti-agreement theory correctly predicts that objects, but not subjects, may undergo AE in Turkish and Persian, respectively, due to the fact that these languages possess subject-verb agreement.

Argument ellipsis in Zazaki: Zazaki (Northwestern Iranian) permits argument ellipsis: null possessed objects may receive sloppy or quantificational readings, in which the entity or quantified NP in the ellipsis site has a different referent from the one in the antecedent sentence. This stands in contrast with sentences with an overt pronoun, which only allow strict or referential (E-type) readings.

1. Sloppy readings with null object but not with overt pronoun
   a. Muhsin malm-ě xo vën-en-o
      Muhsin teacher-3.sg.m self see-pres.ind-3.sg.m
      ‘Muhsin sees his teacher’
   b. Rıza ki vën-en-o c. Rıza ki ey vën-en-o
      Rıza also see-pres.ind-3.sg.m Rıza also 3.sg.obl see-pres.ind-3.sg.m
      ‘Rıza also sees’ (strict/sloppy) ‘Rıza also sees him’ (strict only)

2. Quantificational readings with null object but not with overt pronoun
   a. Muhsin hirê malm-an dawet k-en-o.
      Muhsin three teacher-obl.pl invitation do-pres.ind-3.sg.m.
      ‘Muhsin will invite three teachers’
   b. Rıza ki dawet k-en-o c. Rıza ki inan dawet k-en-o
      Rıza also invitation do-pres.ind-3.sg.m Rıza also 3.pl.obl invitation do-pres.ind-3.sg.m
      ‘Rıza will also invite’ (Quant / E-type) ‘Rıza will also invite them’ (E-type only)

3. No sloppy readings with null subjects
   a. Muhsin-i vat ke dost-ê xo oda ken-o pak
      Muhsin-obl.sg.m said that friend-obl.sg.m self room do-3.sg.m. clean
      ‘Muhsin said that his friend cleans the room’
   b. Rıza-y vat ke banyo-y k-en-o pak
      Rıza-obl.sg.m said that bathroom-obl.sg.m do-pres.ind-3.sg.m clean
      ‘Rıza said that cleans the bathroom’ (strict only)
   c. Rıza-y vat ke o banyo-y ken-o pak
      Rıza-obl.sg.m said that he/she bathroom-obl.sg.m do-3.sg.m clean
      ‘Rıza said that he cleans the bathroom’ (strict only)

4. No quantificational readings with subjects
   a. Muhsin-i vat ke hirê telebe-y İngilizki wanen-ě
      Muhsin-obl.sg.m said that three student-dir.pl English read-3.pl
      ‘Muhsin said that three students study English’
In this paper, I have demonstrated that the anti-agreement theory makes incorrect predictions about the availability of argument ellipsis in Zazaki; although the anti-agreement theory predicts that objects, but not subjects, should permit AE in the imperfective aspect, while subjects, but not objects, should permit it in the perfective aspect, Zazaki permits object AE, and disallows subject AE, regardless of which argument agrees with the verb. I have proposed that it is not agreement, but topichood, which blocks subject AE in Zazaki. Although previous approaches that invoke topichood as a possible factor blocking AE also permit agreement to block AE, the Zazaki data presented here present an argument in favor of eliminating agreement as a factor conditioning the availability of AE in languages that permit it.

Conclusion: In this paper, I have demonstrated that the anti-agreement theory makes incorrect predictions about the availability of argument ellipsis in Zazaki; although the anti-agreement theory predicts that objects, but not subjects, should permit AE in the imperfective aspect, while subjects, but not objects, should permit it in the perfective aspect, Zazaki permits object AE, and disallows subject AE, regardless of which argument agrees with the verb. I have proposed that it is not agreement, but topichood, which blocks subject AE in Zazaki. Although previous approaches that invoke topichood as a possible factor blocking AE also permit agreement to block AE, the Zazaki data presented here present an argument in favor of eliminating agreement as a factor conditioning the availability of AE in languages that permit it.