

Manuscript title:

Experimental evidence for argument ellipsis as the only derivation of Russian verb-stranding constructions.

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Abstract: Russian verb-stranding constructions are argued to exemplify either verb-stranding VP ellipsis (Gribanova 2013b) or argument ellipsis (Bailyn 2017; Landau 2020b). As recent work shows, the debate between verb-stranding VP ellipsis and argument ellipsis is murky due to various confounds in the employed diagnostics (Simpson 2023; Landau 2023b). This paper reports on an acceptability judgment study focused on whether the semantic type of verbal arguments influences acceptability of verb-stranding constructions (as has been observed for Hebrew by Landau 2018). The results suggest that Russian verb-stranding constructions are sensitive to the semantic type of the elided argument, supporting the argument ellipsis approach. Moreover, if a VP ellipsis derivation were available, the sentences would have an acceptable parse. The reported study thus supports the view that argument ellipsis is the only available structure for Russian verb-stranding constructions with overt subjects. We contrast the findings with Russian verb-stranding constructions that involve polarity focus and conclude that the scope of our claim is limited to verb-stranding constructions that do not involve syntactic head movement (assuming a distinction between types of head movement proposed by Harizanov & Gribanova 2019).

Keywords: argument ellipsis · verb stranding VP ellipsis · Russian · acceptability judgment study

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1 Introduction

Many languages, including Russian, seem to lack VP ellipsis in sentences with only one verbal form. Where English has VP ellipsis with do-support (see 1a), Russian shows a clause with every subconstituent of the verbal phrase absent, except the verb itself (see 1b). In this work, we refer to such sentences as verb-stranding constructions. The core question is the nature of the gap in (1b)

(1) a. John likes beer and Ben does Δ too. ($\Delta =_{VP}$ [like beer])

b. *Vasja očen' ljubit pivo, a Maša ne ljubit Δ .*

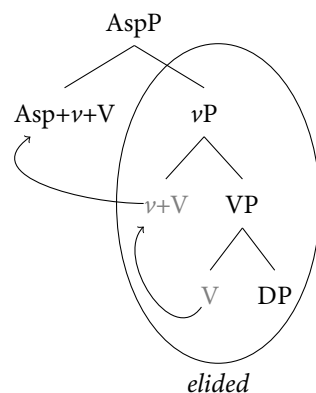
V. very.much loves beer but M. not loves

'Vasja loves beer very much, but Masha doesn't.'

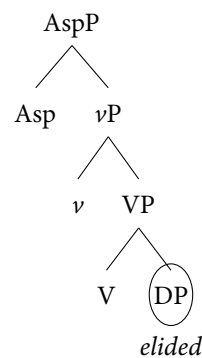
Two main theoretical approaches are the verb-stranding VP ellipsis approach (verb-stranding VP ellipsis; see Goldberg 2005; Gribanova 2013b; Portelance 2020; Gribanova 2020 among others) and the argument ellipsis approach (argument ellipsis; see Saito 2007; Sato 2019; Landau 2020b among others). Both are schematized in (2). The idea behind the verb-stranding VP ellipsis approach is that the gap in verb-stranding constructions is verbal: the derivation involves VP ellipsis that is obscured by head movement of the verb out of the ellipsis site (2a). The idea behind the argument ellipsis approach is that the gap is not verbal: only the verbal arguments undergo ellipsis and, thus, there is no ellipsis of a verbal projection involved in verb-stranding constructions (2b).

(2) Two approaches to the stranded verb constructions, schematized.

a. VPE + head movement



b. Argument Ellipsis



While most cross-linguistic work has mostly focused on the predictions of the argument ellipsis analysis that there can be no adjuncts in the elided structure (since argument ellipsis only applies to verbal arguments: Park 1997; Oku 1998; Landau 2020b), recent studies highlight a

1 number of issues with the diagnostics employed to detect silent adjuncts (Simpson 2023; Lan-
 2 dau 2023b; Kobayashi et al. 2024). Other diagnostics are thus required. A curious property of
 3 verb-stranding constructions in Hebrew is that they are sensitive to the semantic type of silent
 4 verbal arguments (Landau 2018), which is unexpected under the VP ellipsis analysis that treats
 5 ellipsis as non-pronunciation. However, the relevant Hebrew judgments are partially contested
 6 (Benbaji-Elhadad & Pesetsky 2025: fn.56). To establish a clear empirical picture, this paper re-
 7 ports an acceptability judgment study of the effect of the semantic type of silent verbal arguments
 8 on verb-stranding constructions in Russian.

9 Our core result is that Russian verb-stranding constructions are indeed sensitive to the seman-
 10 tic type of silent arguments, supporting an argument ellipsis approach. The paper is structured as
 11 follows. Section 2 presents more background on the topic of verb-stranding constructions and its
 12 theoretical significance. Section 3 presents the experimental study. Section 4 discusses the impli-
 13 cations of the results. Section 5 concludes and highlights certain limitations of our argumentation.

14 2 Diagnosing argument ellipsis / VP ellipsis

15 Verb-stranding constructions are configurations where no subconstituent of the verbal phrase, ex-
 16 cept for the verb itself, is overt in the sentence. In (3a), the verb *ljubit* ‘loves’ is overt but the direct
 17 object *pivo* ‘beer’, present in the antecedent clause, is missing. Our core focus in this work are
 18 verb-stranding constructions with an overt subject, like (3a). Sentences like (3b), where only the
 19 verb surfaces, are not in the scope of our study. The reason is that they involve further head move-
 20 ment, necessary to derive the VSO order in the variant without ellipsis (Gribanova 2017). They
 21 are, however, discussed in Section 3 as a confound and Section 4 relative to our theoretical claims.

22 (3) a. *Vasja očen’ ljubit pivo, a Maša ne ljubit.*
 V. very.much loves beer but M. not loves

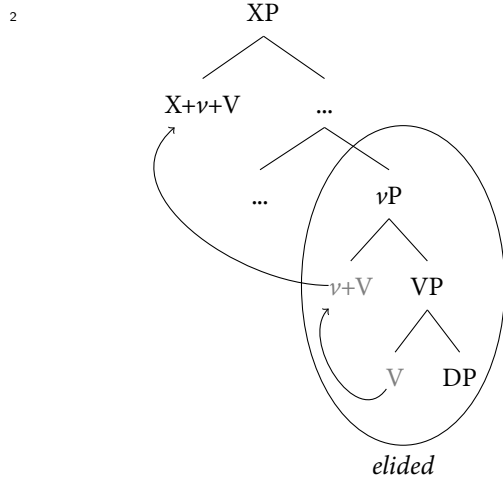
‘Vasja loves beer very much, but Masha doesn’t.’

23 b. – *Vasja očen’ ljubit pivo, a Maša? – Ne ljubit (ona pivo)!*
 V. very.much loves beer but M. not loves she beer

‘– Vasja loves beer very much, but what about Masha? – She doesn’t (love beer)!’

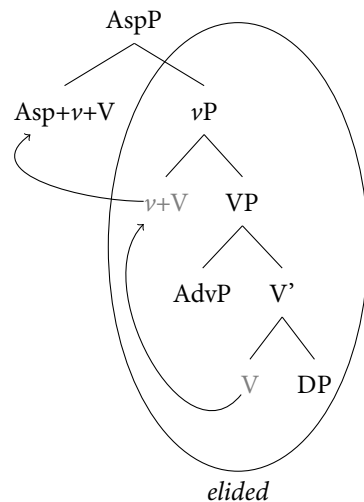
24 Verb-stranding constructions are widely believed to exemplify a prediction of the view that short
 25 head movement is possible from ellipsis sites. As noted by Landau (2020a), many languages which
 26 exhibit verb-stranding constructions seem to exhibit both verbal head movement and VP ellipsis
 27 in the presence of auxiliaries independently, making the verb-stranding VP ellipsis account an
 28 attractive theoretical option.

1 (4) Head-movement + VP ellipsis account for verb stranding

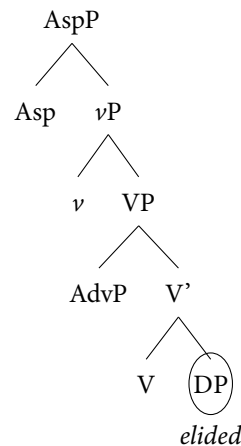


3 However, it is debated whether verb-stranding VP ellipsis is attested. The major alternative is
 4 argument ellipsis. The idea is that the verbal arguments undergo ellipsis and, thus, VP ellipsis
 5 is not involved in the derivation of verb stranding constructions. Recently, this view has been
 6 thoroughly argued for by [Landau 2018](#); [Landau 2020b](#); [Benbaji 2022](#) for Hebrew verb-stranding
 7 constructions. Their conclusion is that argument ellipsis is the only derivational pathway to a verb-
 8 stranding construction, suggesting that something blocks a theoretically clean derivation outlined
 9 above. The discussion in [Landau \(2020b\)](#) is of particular interest due to evidence from multiple
 10 languages, including Russian. Landau's core tool is the so-called adjunct test (with antecedents in
 11 [Park 1997](#); [Oku 1998](#)). The adjunct test is a family of diagnostics aimed at a particular difference
 12 in predictions between the analyses. Consider a possibility that the VP phrase involves an adjunct
 13 AdvP. By hypothesis, argument ellipsis is only available for verbal arguments—making adjunct
 14 ellipsis impossible. A VP ellipsis analysis accommodates silent adjuncts without an issue.

15 (5) a. VPE + head movement



b. Argument Ellipsis



1 Any diagnostic that is able to detect the presence of a silent adjunct is then highly relevant to the
 2 argument ellipsis vs. verb-stranding VP ellipsis debate. The strongest variant of the diagnostic,
 3 employed by Landau, concerns the interaction between verbal adjuncts, negation, and creation
 4 verbs. The basic contrast is in (6): presence of a verbal adjunct in the scope of negation in (6a)
 5 makes it possible to avoid the implication that no cake was baked, which is present in (6b).

6 (6) The contrast behind Landau's adjunct test

7 a. John didn't bake a cake with butter. It was bland.

8 b. John didn't bake a cake. #It was bland.

9 Landau (2020b) argues that verb-stranding configurations behave as if they do not involve an
 10 elided adjunct—demonstrated here by his Russian and Hebrew examples.

11 (7) a. Creation verb adjunct test in Hebrew (Landau 2020b: 346)

Yosi afa et ha-uga lefi ha-matkon. hi hayta me'ula. Gil lo afa
 Yosi baked ACC the-cake according the-recipe it was fabulous Gil not baked
 ____ . # *hi hayta mag'ila.*
 it was gross

'Yosi baked the cake according to the recipe. It was fabulous. Gil didn't bake the cake. #
 It was gross.'

12 b. Creation verb adjunct test favors the AE approach (Landau 2020b: 359)

Ivan pišet stixi ot očajanija. Ja uveren što Sergej ne pišet ____ . # Oni
 Ivan writes poems from despair. I sure that Sergei not writes they
vsegda radostnyje.
 always cheerful.

'Ivan writes poems out of despair. I am sure that Sergei does not write (poems). # They
 are always cheerful.'

13 Unfortunately, existing adjunct tests have been argued to be rather intricate and, more importantly,
 14 highly context-dependent (Simpson 2023; Landau 2023b; Kobayashi et al. 2024). For example,
 15 Landau (2023b) notes that the preceding context allows for 'pragmatic enrichment' of the verbal
 16 meaning, even in absence of gaps. Consider the example (8): it has a reading that it's false that Bill
 17 baked a vanilla cake in an air fryer. The phenomenon of pragmatic enrichment, then, complicates
 18 the judgments on which the adjunct test rests (ibid.).

1 (8) John baked a chocolate cake in an air fryer. Bill didn't bake a vanilla cake. (He baked a carrot
2 cake)

3 All existing arguments in favor of argument ellipsis in Russian are based on the adjunct test (Bailyn
4 2017; Landau 2020b)—if the diagnostic is flawed, the analyses are as well. Existing arguments in
5 favor of verb-stranding VP ellipsis, mostly pursued by Gribanova (2013a; 2013b) have been suffi-
6 ciently criticized by Bailyn (2017) and Landau (2021), leaving the status of Russian verb stranding
7 constructions unclear. New diagnostics are thus needed. Work on Hebrew verb-stranding con-
8 structions presents one such possible diagnostic. As argued by Landau 2018, Hebrew verb strand-
9 ing constructions are sensitive to the semantic type of silent arguments: if the argument is not of
10 type *e*, Hebrew verb stranding constructions are ungrammatical.

11 (9) Semantic restrictions on Hebrew verb stranding constructions.

12 a. Predicate nominals and Hebrew verb stranding (Landau 2023b: ex. 55a)

*hi hafxa le-menahelet axarey še-ha-bat šela hafxa *(le-menahelet)*
she turned to-manager after that-the-daughter her turned to-manager
'She turned into a manager after her daughter had.'

13 b. Argumental adverbs and Hebrew verb stranding (Landau 2023b: ex. 46a)

*Yosi hitnaheg yafe aval axiv lo hitnaheg *(yafe)*
Yosi behaved.3MSG well but brother.his not behaved.3MSG well
'Yosi behaved well but his brother didn't.'

14 No such restrictions have been reported for VP ellipsis in any language, to our knowledge. The
15 dominant non-pronunciation theory of VP ellipsis (Merchant 2013) leaves no room for accommo-
16 dating such results: decisions at PF cannot be influenced by semantic type which is only visible
17 at LF. Genuine cases of VP ellipsis are not influenced by the semantic type either. In Russian, for
18 example, VP ellipsis in the presence of an auxiliary verb (Kazenin 2006) shows no sensitivity to
19 the semantic type of the verbal argument.

20 (10) Russian Aux-VPE: no semantic restrictions

21 a. Predicate nominals are allowed

Katja budet ščitat' menja durakom. I Maša budet.
K. AUX.FUT.3SG consider me fool and M. AUX.FUT.3SG
'Katja will consider me a fool. Masha will do so as well.'

- 1 b. Argumental adverbs are allowed

Katja budet vesti sebja normal'no. I Maša budet.

K. AUX.FUT.3SG behave self normally and M. AUX.FUT.3SG

‘Katja will behave in a normal way. Masha will do so as well.’

2 Regardless of the account the semantic type restrictions are to be given (see [Landau 2023a](#) for a
3 proposal), they can be used as a diagnostic for argument ellipsis in other languages as well. For
4 example, even if the semantic contrasts are to be given a non-grammatical explanation, insofar
5 as they are dependent on argument ellipsis being involved in the derivation, they can be used as
6 a diagnostic. For Russian, whilst our own judgments seem to support the presence of semantic
7 restrictions on verb-stranding constructions, informal elicitation provides less clear results which
8 are harder to draw safe conclusions from.

- 9 (11) Semantic restrictions on Russian verb-stranding constructions.

- 10 a. Predicate nominals are allowed

?*Katja ščitaet menja durakom. I Maša ščitaet.*

K. considers me fool and M. considers

Int.: ‘Katja considers me a fool. Masha does so as well.’

- 11 b. Argumental adverbs are allowed

?*Katja vedet sebja normal'no. I Maša vedet.*

K. behaves self normally and M. behaves

Int.: ‘Katja behaves in a normal way. Masha does so as well.’

12 Even the initial Hebrew data is partially contested: [Benbaji-Elhadad & Pesetsky \(2025\)](#) cast doubt
13 on predicate nominal judgments (ibid.: fn.56). In accordance with practices advocated for by
14 [Sprouse et al. \(2013\)](#) and [Linzen & Oseki \(2018\)](#), lack of clarity in informal judgments motivates
15 a larger scale acceptability judgment study. Our goal is to establish whether the effect of the verbal
16 arguments’ semantic type on acceptability is observed in Russian.

17 In short, if the semantic type of verbal arguments negatively affects acceptability, the verb-
18 stranding constructions, at least as exemplified in the stimuli, can only have an argument ellipsis
19 derivation. The reason is that the mere possibility of a verb-stranding VP ellipsis should provide a
20 grammatical parse for verb-stranding constructions with verbs that take an argument of a semantic
21 type that isn’t e. The next section describes the study.

3 Experimental study

3.1 The design

As stated in the last section, the goal of our study is to test the sensitivity to semantic type of the verbal arguments reported by Landau for Hebrew verb-stranding constructions. The study is an acceptability judgment task. The dependent variable is thus the acceptability score of presented sentences, ranging from 1 to 7, following the standard (a Likert scale). Our experimental lists conform to the 2:1 filler-stimulus ratio, each containing 16 fillers and 8 stimuli drawn from 24 groups of sentences.

Our study has two independent variables: the first variable is whether the elided verbal arguments have the semantic type *e*. For that, we have chosen the verbs in (12) as taking arguments that are not of semantic type *e* (predicate nominals and adverbials; see Landau 2018). Two anonymous reviewers raised concerns about the heterogeneity of the list of verbs: there are twice as many verbs that take predicate nominals as arguments than those that take adverbials as arguments. The discussion of the results includes a discussion of differences between the two types of verbs.

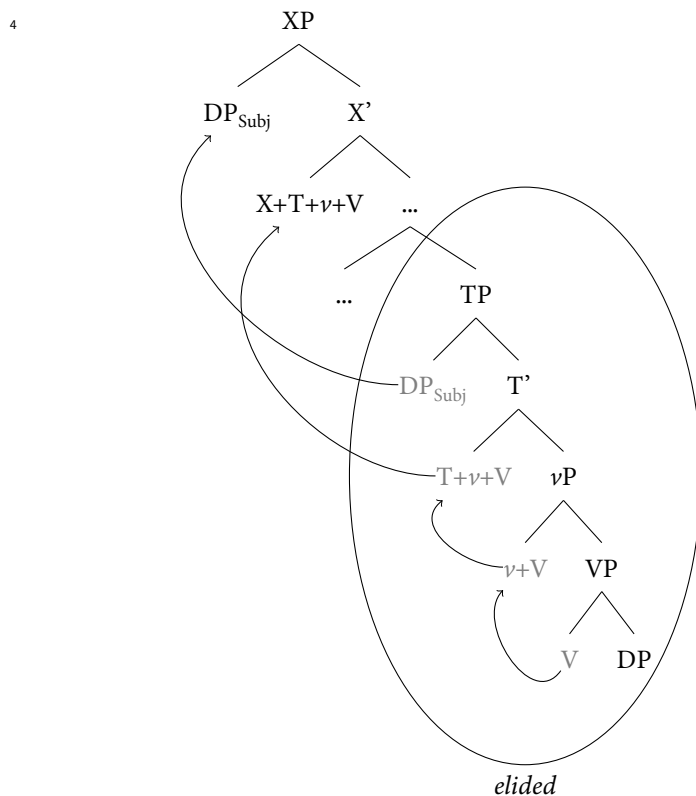
(12) Verbs with arguments that are not type *e*

Verb	Gloss	Argument type
<i>vesti sebja</i> ____	‘behave’	adverbial; ⟨v, t⟩
<i>byt</i> ____	‘be’	predicate nominal; ⟨e, t⟩
<i>nazvat’</i> ____	‘call’	predicate nominal; ⟨e, t⟩
<i>postupit’</i> ____	‘act’	adverbial; ⟨v, t⟩
<i>stat’</i> ____	‘become’	predicate nominal; ⟨e, t⟩
<i>sčitat’</i> ____	‘consider’	predicate nominal; ⟨e, t⟩
<i>otnosit’sja</i> ____	‘treat’	adverbial; ⟨v, t⟩
<i>pobyt’</i> ____	‘be for a while’	predicate nominal; ⟨e, t⟩
<i>naznačit’</i> ____	‘appoint’	predicate nominal; ⟨e, t⟩
<i>obraščat’sja</i> ____	‘treat’	adverbial; ⟨v, t⟩
<i>vybrat’</i> ____	‘choose’	predicate nominal; ⟨e, t⟩
<i>objavit’</i> ____	‘proclaim’	predicate nominal; ⟨e, t⟩

The second independent variable is the possibility of TP ellipsis: as discussed by Landau (2023b), languages that allow verb-echo answers under polarity focus have an alternative pathway to verb-stranding constructions: namely, TP ellipsis after raising of the verb to a left-peripheral polarity head. As discussed by Gribanova (2017), Russian allows verb-echo answers (see also our discussion of the example 3b). The subject might undergo movement outside such ellipsis for informa-

tion structure reasons (13), providing an alternative derivation for verb-stranding constructions with overt subjects.

(13) A third way for verb-stranding to occur: verb-stranding TP ellipsis



5 The possibility is problematic because verb-echo answers are possible with verbs that take argu-
 6 ments of types $\langle e, t \rangle$ and $\langle v, t \rangle$, see (14).¹ Therefore, a derivation like (13) can hide a negative
 7 effect of the semantic type of the verbal argument on verb-stranding constructions that do not
 8 involve TP ellipsis under polarity focus.

9 (14) a.^{OK} – *Katja sčitaet menja durakom? – Sčitaet!*
 K. considers me fool considers

‘– Does Katja consider me a fool? – Yes, she does!’

10 b.^{OK} – *Katja vedet sebja normal’no? – Vedet!*
 K. behaves self normally behaves

‘– Does Katja behave in a normal way? – Yes, she does!’

11 We control for the availability of such TP ellipsis using embedding. The verbs *soglasit’sja* ‘agree
 12 to do X’ and *otkazat’sja* ‘refuse to do X’ have been chosen. As the example (15) shows, neither of

¹We thank an anonymous reviewer for pressing us on this point.

1 those verbs allows embedded polarity particles (which involve TP ellipsis under polarity focus;
 2 [Gribanova 2017](#)). This suggests that polarity focus-driven TP ellipsis is not an option for embed-
 3 ded clauses in those sentences.²

4 (15) Both verbs disallow embedded polarity particles

5 Context: I asked Vasja not to do it and asked Masha to do it.

**Vasja soglasilsja net i Masha otkazalas' da*
 V. agreed not and M. refused yes

Int.: 'Vasja agreed not to do it and Masha refused to do it'

6 We thus work with a 2×2 design: whether the verb-stranding construction is embedded (\pm EMBEDDED)
 7 and whether the verb has an argument of semantic type other than *e* (\pm E-TYPE). Examples of all
 8 four types of stimuli are provided below.

9 (16) a. A (+E-TYPE; +EMBEDDED) example

Vasja soglasilsja narugat' Mašu, a Petja narugat' otkazalsja.

Vasja agreed scold Masha but Petja scold refused

'Vasja agreed to scold Masha, but Petja refused to

10 b. A (−E-TYPE; +EMBEDDED) example

Vasja soglasilsja vesti sebja xorošo, a Petja vesti otkazalsja.

Vasja agreed behave himself well but Petja behave refused

'Vasja agreed to behave himself well, but Petja refused to.'

11 c. A (+E-TYPE; −EMBEDDED) example

Vasja narugal Mašu. A Petja ne narugal.

Vasja scolded Masha but Petja not scold

Vasja scolded Masha, but Petja did not.

²It seems that no embedded non-finite clauses allow embedded polarity particles. If the effect is not due to non-finite morphology, its precise nature is of no consequence to the current work: it is only necessary that polarity focus-driven TP ellipsis be unavailable in embedded clauses under the chosen verbs. One reason to suspect that the effect is not morphological comes from matrix uses of non-finite clauses.

(i) No morphological ban on polarity particles in non-finite clauses

Mne zavtra idti v školu, a tebe net.
 me.DAT tomorrow go to school but you not

'I have to go to school tomorrow and you don't.'

- 1 d. A (–E-TYPE; –EMBEDDED) example

Vasja vel sebjā xorošo. A Petja ne vel.
 Vasja behaved himself well. But Petja not behaved
 ‘Vasja behaved well, but Petja did not.’

2 The fillers are constructed from core examples by getting rid of ellipsis and introducing some
 3 grammatical mistakes (for ungrammatical fillers). The goal of the fillers is mostly to establish a
 4 baseline for every participant (since some may be conservative regarding the scores they give to
 5 the sentences). An example of a filler pair is given below, both sentences a modification of (16b).
 6 Since there are 4 types of stimuli and (thus) 8 types of fillers, there are 12 members in each group
 7 of sentences (corresponding to the 12 verbs that take a ⟨e, t⟩ or ⟨v, t⟩ argument in 12). The ex-
 8 periment is set up in such a way that each participant encounters each type of sentences twice,
 9 resulting in 24 experimental lists—each participant then has seen 8 stimuli sentences, 8 ungram-
 10 matical fillers, and 8 grammatical fillers (1:2 stimulus-filler ratio, and 1:1:1 stimulus-grammatical
 11 filler-ungrammatical filler ratio).

- 12 (17) Fillers (based on 16b)

- 13 a. A grammatical filler

Vasja soglasilsja vesti sebjā xorošo, a Petja vesti sebjā xorošo
 Vasja agreed behave himself well but Petja behave himself well
otkazalsja.
 refused
 ‘Vasja agreed to behave well, but Petja refused to behave well.’

- 14 b. An ungrammatical filler

**Vasja soglasilsja vesti soboj xorošo, a Petja vesti soboj xorošo*
 Vasja agreed behave himself.INS well but Petja behave himself.INS well
otkazalsja.
 refused
 ‘Vasja agreed to behave well, but Petja refused to behave well.’

15 In the next subsection, we present the hypotheses available in the described experiment design
 16 and elaborate upon which results (dis)confirm which hypotheses.

3.2 Hypotheses and expected results

The core hypothesis is as follows. Does the semantic type of the argument lead to significantly degraded acceptability of verb-stranding constructions? There are two versions of this hypothesis, a weak one and a strong one. The strong version requires that the semantic type of the argument have a significant effect regardless of whether the verb-stranding construction is embedded (as reported for Hebrew by Landau 2018, 2023a). It implies that both the VP ellipsis parse and the TP ellipsis parse are unavailable or not chosen by the participants. The weak version requires that the semantic type of the argument have a significant effect if the verb-stranding construction is embedded (there should be a significant interaction between two variables), implying that the TP ellipsis parse is available and has an ameliorating effect on acceptability.

If no effects of the semantic type of the argument are found, two theoretical possibilities emerge. Either the argument ellipsis approach is not the right analysis for Russian verb-stranding construction, or the derivation of Russian argument ellipsis differs from the derivation proposed by Landau (2023a). In the absence of independent evidence, however, the second option should be disregarded. Any other effect, if present, is irrelevant to the verb-stranding VP ellipsis vs. argument ellipsis debate and thus will be ignored.

3.3 Procedure and participants

The experiment was implemented via the web-based software PCIBex (Schwarz & Zehr 2021). Stimuli were presented one at a time. An example of the presentation of stimuli is provided in Figure 1. Before the stimuli were presented, each participant had been given three training items with commentary specifying which judgment the item should get. All training items involved polarity ellipsis in order for participants not to rate elliptical sentences appropriately.



Figure 1: Presentation of stimuli in Experiment 2.

182 participants (all native speakers of Russian) were recruited online using the Yandex.Tasks crowdsourcing platform, resulting in 14 participants on average for each list. All participants provided their informed written consent to take part in the study.

1 3.4 Results

2 The results of each participant were z -score transformed to eliminate potential scale bias. The
 3 grammatical fillers have the mean z -score of $z = .552$, while the ungrammatical fillers have the
 4 mean z -score of $z = -.907$. Looking at the mean z -scores for all four conditions (Figure 2),
 5 it appears that there is an effect of both the syntactic contexts (embedded vs. matrix) and the
 6 semantic type of the argument.

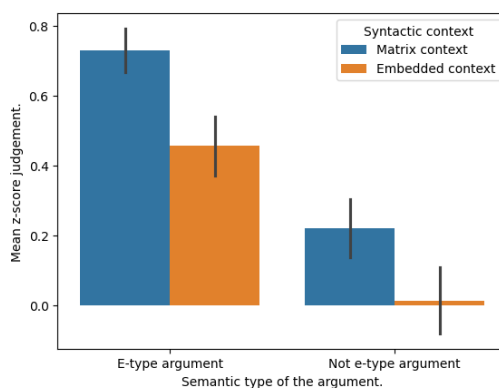


Figure 2: Mean z -score of four conditions of stimuli.

7 The interaction plot in Figure 3 suggests that while there is an effect of both factors, no cumula-
 8 tive effect is to be found: the ($-E$ -TYPE; $+EMBEDDED$) subgroup shows no emergent effect of the
 9 combination of two conditions. Therefore, the two variables do not appear to interact, while the
 10 $\pm E$ -TYPE variable appears to have an effect, supporting the strong hypothesis outlined in section
 11 3.2. A possible worry is that the plots in Figure 2 and Figure 3 show the near-zero z -score of the
 12 worst-rated subgroup ($-E$ -TYPE; $+EMBEDDED$). We nevertheless only focus on the relative accept-
 13 ability (see Featherston 2005; Almeida 2014; Kush et al. 2018 on island effects; see Sprouse 2018
 14 for a general discussion of mismatches between relative and absolute acceptability).³

15 The conclusion that the semantic type of the verbal argument influences relative acceptability
 16 is supported by a linear mixed-effects model (via the lmerTest package for R, see Kuznetsova et al.
 17 2017) fitted to the data with the two factors and their interaction as fixed effects ($-E$ -TYPE and
 18 $+EMBEDDED$ are coded as 1). The model included a maximal random effects structure consisting
 19 of by-participant random intercepts, by-participant random slopes for both main effects and their
 20 interaction, as well as by-sentence random intercepts. The effect of the semantic type of the argu-
 21 ment is significant (coefficient estimate = .510, standard error = .088, $p < .001$). The effect of
 22 the syntactic context has not been found to be significant (coefficient estimate = $-.217$, standard

³There are two possible explanations for the absolute acceptability results. The first one is that the violations in elided material are judged not as harshly as overt violations. The second one, suggested by an anonymous reviewer, is that the violations we study are semantic in nature, whereas the violations in ungrammatical fillers are morphosyntactic or, perhaps, even morpho-phonological. We leave the issue at this crossroads, noting a possible topic of further research.

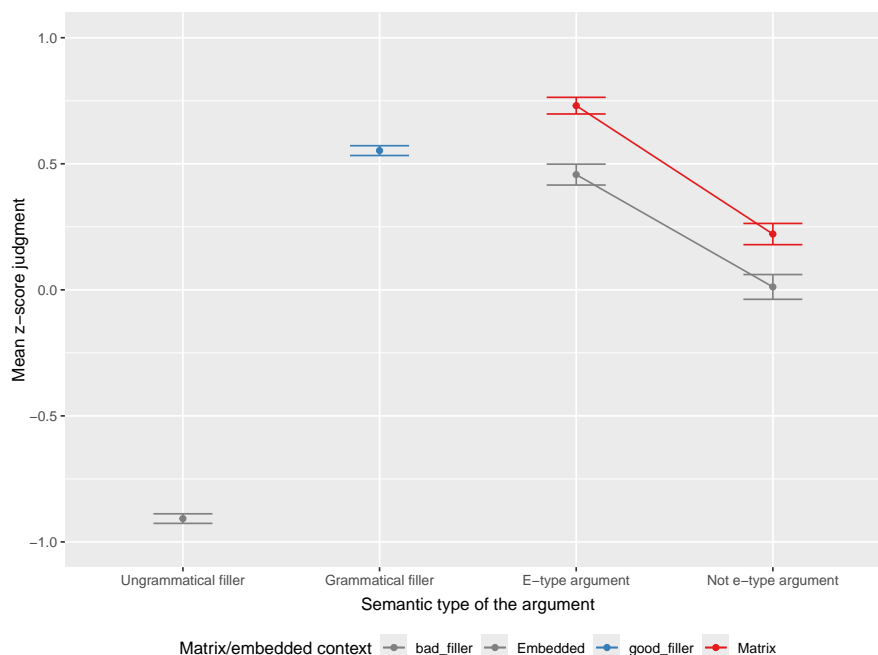


Figure 3: Interaction plot for the factors.

- 1 error = .092, $p = .002$). The effect of the combination of syntactic context and semantic type of
 2 the argument has not been found to be significant (coefficient estimate = $-.057$, standard error
 3 = .126, $p = .652$). The full model outputs are provided in Table 1.

Fixed Effects	Estimate	SE	df	t	p
(Intercept)	.73	.06	86.52	11.91	< .001
+EMBEDDED	-.27	.09	84.28	-3.14	.002
-E-TYPE	-.51	.09	90.77	-5.79	< .001
+EMBEDDED \times -E-TYPE	.06	.13	92.05	.45	.652
Random Effects	Variance	SD			
Participant					
(Intercept)	.06	.24			
+EMBEDDED	.12	.35			
-E-TYPE	.15	.39			
+EMBEDDED \times -E-TYPE	.35	.59			
Sentence					
(Intercept)	.05	.23			
Residual					
	.45	.67			

Table 1: Full output of the linear mixed-effects model.

- 4 Two anonymous reviewers inquire whether there is a difference between verbs that take a predi-
 5 cate nominal or an adverbial as an argument. The question is pressing: for Hebrew, the core dis-
 6 agreemeent in judgments between Landau (2018; 2023a) and Benbaji-Elhadad & Pesetsky (2025)
 7 lies in the elided predicate nominals. To test this, we combined the primary \pm E-TYPE variable and

1 the distinction between verbs that take adverbial arguments and verbs that take predicate nom-
 2 inal arguments into a single 3-level factor (+E-TYPE (the baseline), ADVERBIAL, PREDICATE) and
 3 refit our mixed-effects model. To avoid overparameterization and singular fit errors, the final con-
 4 verged model included fixed effects for syntactic context, type of the verbal argument and their
 5 interaction, alongside by-participant random intercepts, by-participant random slopes for syntac-
 6 tic context, and by-sentence random intercepts.

7 The model, the output of which is reported in Table 3.4, confirmed that our original findings
 8 are robust across both sub-categories of verbs that do not take an e-type argument. Compared to
 9 the e-type baseline, we found a significant main effect indicating lower judgment scores for both
 10 the adverbial sub-type (Estimate = $-.75$, SE = $.11$, $p < .001$) and the predicate nominal sub-type
 11 (Estimate = $-.39$, SE = $.09$, $p < .001$). Furthermore, neither sub-type significantly interacted with
 12 the syntactic context ($p = .724$ and $p = .376$, respectively).

Fixed Effects	Estimate	SE	df	t	<i>p</i>
(Intercept)	.73	.06	87.78	13.29	< .001
+EMBEDDED	-.27	.08	91.37	-3.46	< .001
ADVERBIAL	-.75	.11	84.03	-6.95	< .001
PREDICATE	-.39	.09	84.58	-4.52	< .001
+EMBEDDED × ADVERBIAL	-.05	.15	85.55	-.35	.724
+EMBEDDED × PREDICATE	.11	.12	84.28	.89	.376
Random Effects	Variance	SD			
Participant					
(Intercept)	.02	.13			
+EMBEDDED	.07	.26			
Sentence					
(Intercept)	.03	.18			
Residual	.54	.74			

Table 2: Full output of the updated linear mixed-effects model.

13 We therefore conclude that both predicate nominal arguments and adverbial arguments degrade
 14 acceptability, when elided. The model estimates, however, do suggest a difference between differ-
 15 ent arguments: adverbial arguments have a stronger negative impact on acceptability, similar to
 16 the judgement disagreements reported for Hebrew. We leave this asymmetry for further studies.

17 4 Theoretical implications

18 It appears that the strongest version of our hypothesis has been confirmed: if the verb has an
 19 argument of semantic type other than *e*, Russian verb-stranding constructions with an overt sub-
 20 ject and SV word order are judged as less acceptable, regardless of embedding. This suggests that
 21 argument ellipsis is the only derivational way to get a verb-stranding construction with an overt
 22 subject in Russian—possibility of a VP ellipsis parse or a polarity focus-driven TP ellipsis parse

1 would ‘save’ the sentences. This section discusses the significance of the results for verb-stranding
2 VP and TP ellipsis in Russian and cross-linguistically.

3 4.1 Verb-stranding VP ellipsis

4 Our findings go in line with Landau (2020a): semantic type of the elided argument results in
5 degraded acceptability of verb-stranding constructions, supporting the argument ellipsis analysis
6 for Russian. Here, we wish to note that our experimental stimuli address one of the issues raised
7 by Benbaji-Elhadad & Pesetsky (2025) for Landau’s results. Benbaji-Elhadad and Pesetsky argue
8 that Hebrew verb-stranding constructions are possible with predicate nominal arguments when
9 both arguments are elided. Our results, however, suggest that ellipsis of both arguments impacts
10 acceptability in Russian.

11 (18) Claims for Hebrew in Benbaji-Elhadad & Pesetsky 2025 and our results

12 a.^{OK} *Ani karati la-xatul šeli Geršon lifney še-at karat* Δ Δ

I called to.the-cat my Gershon before that-you called

‘I called my cat Gershon before you did.’ (Benbaji-Elhadad & Pesetsky 2025: ex. 91)

13 b. **Katja ščitaet menja durakom. I Maša ščitaet.*

K. considers me fool and M. considers

Int.: ‘Katja considers me a fool. Masha does so as well.’

14 Why should this asymmetry hold? We don’t have an answer. It might be related to availability
15 of ellipsis of an XP larger than VP in (18a), despite the claims of Landau (2023b) that polarity
16 ellipsis is impossible in Hebrew. Regardless, we take our results to reinforce the empirical claims
17 of Landau’s regarding unavailability of verb-stranding VP ellipsis and the effect of semantic type
18 on argument ellipsis in light of recent skepticism.

19 However, the strong claim of Landau (2020a) regarding complete absence of verb-stranding
20 VP ellipsis is likely not to hold cross-linguistically in light of novel arguments (Uzbek: Gribanova
21 2020; Lithuanian: Portelance 2020; Polish: Ruda 2022; Uyghur: Jenkins 2025). The question
22 shifts, then: what blocks verb-stranding VP ellipsis in Russian and why is it absent in Lithuanian?
23 We believe the answer might come from the nature of verb movement involved in Russian polarity
24 focus-driven TP ellipsis, to which we turn.

25 4.2 Verb-stranding TP ellipsis

26 Our results seem to also suggest that verb-stranding TP ellipsis is an unavailable parse for Russian
27 verb-stranding constructions with an overt subject and an SV word order: otherwise, the available

1 TP ellipsis parse would ‘save’ the stimuli from degraded acceptability. However, the absence of the
 2 subject makes a TP ellipsis parse possible: verb-echo answers are possible with verbs that take
 3 predicate nominal or adverbial arguments, as shown in (19), repeated from (14).

4 (19) a.^{OK}– *Katja sčitaet menja durakom? – Sčitaet!*
 K. considers me fool considers

 ‘– Does Katja consider me a fool? – Yes, she does!’

5 b.^{OK}– *Katja vedet sebja normal’no? – Vedet!*
 K. behaves self normally behaves

 ‘– Does Katja behave in a normal way? – Yes, she does!’

6 A required clarification is that it is, in fact, inconsequential for this section whether the polarity-
 7 driven ellipsis involves TP. All that is required is that the elided phrase be larger than the verbal
 8 phrase. However, even that is not guaranteed: Ruda (2022) argues that Polish verb-echo answers
 9 (which involve polarity-driven ellipsis) only involve ellipsis of a verbal phrase (*vP/VoiceP*). There-
 10 fore, we need to make sure that (i) the polarity-driven ellipsis involves ellipsis of a constituent
 11 larger than *vP*; and (ii) this type of ellipsis is compatible with a subject-initial word order.

12 To establish both, we employ polar particles, which we assume involve clausal ellipsis, follow-
 13 ing Gribanova 2017. As the examples in (20) show, polar particles are fully compatible with a
 14 preceding subject (which, likely, occupies a position above *Spec,TP*; see ex. 13).

15 (20) Context: asking Katja and Masha whether they opened their windows.

16 a. *Maša otkryla okno a Katja net*
 M. opened window but K. not

 ‘Masha opened the window, but Katja didn’t.’

17 b. *Maša da a vot Katja ne otkryla okno*
 M. yes but K. not opened window

 ‘Masha did, but Katja didn’t open the window.’

18 The evidence that the polar particles involve ellipsis of TP or a similar projection comes from the
 19 fact that no clause-internal material, even the subject, can come after the polarity particle (Grib-
 20 anova 2017; with the exception of some other particles like *eščë* ‘yet’ and *uže* ‘already’).

1 (21) Context: asking Masha whether she opened the window yesterday.

2 a. *Net*

no

‘No.’

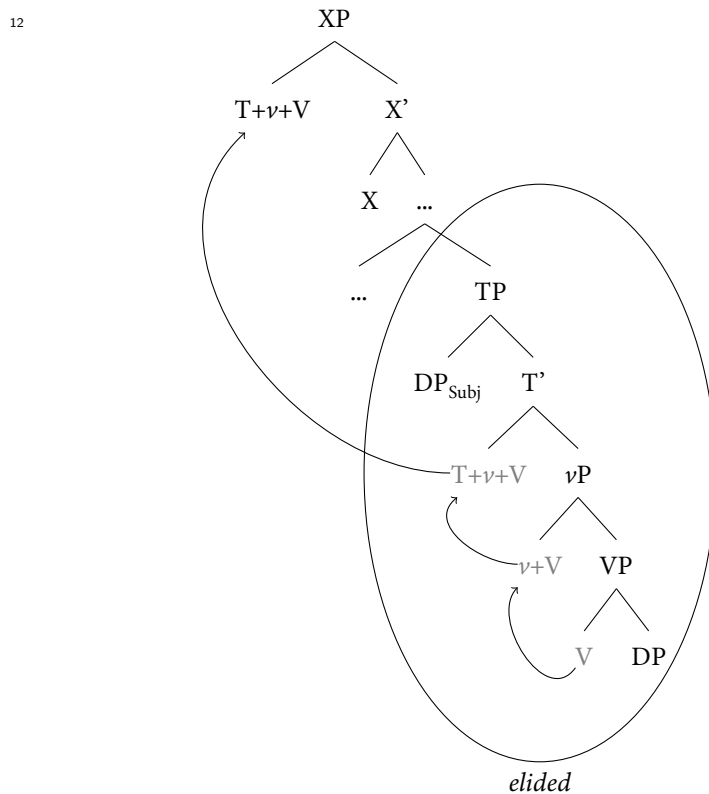
b. **Net {ja /okno /včera}*

no I window yesterday

Int. “No, I didn’t open a window yesterday.”

3 To sum up, we have shown that the clausal ellipsis involved in polar particles both contains a verbal
4 constituent larger than ν P/VoiceP (we continue to refer to this constituent as TP for clarity) and
5 is available with a subject-initial word order. As argued by Gribanova (2017), the Russian verbal
6 complex can move into the Polarity head (which hosts polar particles in its specifier, according to
7 Gribanova). Therefore, we expect the word order present in our stimuli to have a TP ellipsis parse.
8 Why doesn’t it? Our preliminary suggestion is that the position to which the subject has to move
9 in order to escape TP ellipsis is instead occupied by the verb—exemplifying head movement into
10 a specifier position (Harizanov 2019), as sketched in (22).

11 (22) Verb-stranding TP ellipsis in Russian



13 Our claim is then that Russian verb-stranding TP ellipsis involves genuine syntactic movement
14 whereas Russian short verb movement is argued to be post-syntactic by authors who make a dis-
15 tinction between syntactic and post-syntactic head movement (like Harizanov & Gribanova 2019).
16 This move makes it possible to account for the possibility of verb-stranding TP ellipsis and the

1 impossibility of verb-stranding VP ellipsis in Russian—ellipsis bleeds post-syntactic operations.
 2 Cross-linguistic differences in the availability of verb-stranding VP ellipsis might result from vari-
 3 able order of operations: for example, Hein (2018; 2020) argues that head movement can either
 4 precede or follow ellipsis in the derivation. Finally, it should be noted that Hein's theory predicts
 5 Russian to have verb-stranding VP ellipsis, contrary to our findings. We leave a thorough theoret-
 6 ical assessment of the pattern for a later occasion.

7 5 Conclusion

8 In this work, we have presented novel evidence that Russian does not allow verb-stranding VP el-
 9 lipsis in verb-stranding constructions with overt subjects and SV word order (Bailyn 2017; Landau
 10 2020b; *contra* Gribanova 2013b). The evidence comes from an experimental study which shows
 11 that the semantic type of the verbal arguments significantly affects the acceptability of Russian
 12 verb-stranding construction, regardless of other factors, supporting an argument ellipsis deriva-
 13 tion as the only pathway to verb-stranding constructions in Russian. Our results do not depend
 14 on any particular account of the effects discovered by Landau (2018). Even if the effect of the se-
 15 mantic type is not grammatical in nature, the results stand insofar as the effect makes the right cut
 16 between argument ellipsis and VP/TP ellipsis.

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