

# Illicit LBE in Russian Sluicing: Rescue by Deletion (of Linearization Statements)

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## The puzzle

Russian does not allow Left Branch Extraction (LBE) from a Prepositional Phrase (PP).

- (1) a. Krasnuju    ja videl [NP \_\_\_\_ mašinu]  
      red.F.ACC.SG I    saw                car.ACC.SG  
      ‘I saw a RED car.’
- b. \*Krasnoj        ja sidel [PP v \_\_\_\_ mašine]  
      red.F.PREP.SG I    sat            in        car.PREP.SG  
      Int.: ‘I sat in a RED car.’

However, the ban is alleviated in sluicing.

- (2) Ja sidel v kakoj-to        mašine    no ja ne pomnju kakoj  
      I sat    in some.F.PREP.SG car.PREP.SG but I not remember which.F.PREP.SG  
      ‘I sat in some car but I don’t remember in which.’

Unlike other cases of P-omission in Russian, the pattern isn’t sensitive to the prosodic status of the preposition (see the studies in Philippova 2019; Ionova 2019).

- (3) Prosodically weak prepositions: LBE-sluice, \*P-omission
- a. LBE sluice is good  
On govoril mne o kakoj-to mašine no ja ne pomnju  
he told me about some.F.PREP.SG car.PREP.SG but I not remember  
      kako  
      which.F.PREP.SG  
      ‘He told be about some car but I don’t remember about which.’
- b. P-omission is bad  
\*On govoril mne o čem-to no ja ne pomnju čom  
he told me about something.PREP.SG but I not remember what.PREP.SG  
Int.: ‘He told be about something but I don’t remember about what.’
- (4) Prosodically strong prepositions: LBE-sluice, P-omission
- a. LBE sluice is good  
Ona sidit okolo čjego-to kabineta no ja ne pomnju  
She sits near somenone.GEN.SG office but I not remember  
      čjego  
      whose.GEN.SG  
      ‘She is sitting near someone’s office but I don’t remember near whose office.’
- b. P-omission is good  
Ja ostavil čemodan okolo čego-to no ja ne pomnju čego  
I left suitcase near something.GEN.SG but I not remember what.GEN.SG  
‘I left my suitcase near something but I don’t remember near what.’

## Why it can’t be a non-isomprhic source

One may conjecture that target clause is not isomorphic to the antecedent and does not contain a preposition, viz. it is derived via pseudo-sluicing. Consider the following English sentence.

- (5) I sat in some car but I don’t remember which ⟨car that was⟩.

This is not applicable to the observed Russian pattern:

- Case connectivity is not predicted: the modifier retains the case assigned by the preposition.
- The remnant and the correlate need to bear the same case.
- If a non-isomorphic source was available, we would predict P-omission to happen as freely.

## The core of the analysis

The effect arises as PF-deletion circumventing linearization-driven ungrammaticality.

- Cyclic Linearization (Fox, Pesetsky 2005, a.m.o.):  
linear ordering established at phase N should be respected for the rest of the derivation.
- PPs are transparent for LBE, but there is no landing site on the edge of PP:  
since PP-internal reordring is not possible, cf. (Davis 2021).
- Then: LBE is possible but is ruled out on linearization grounds unless the PP is elided.

The derivation for (1b, 2):

- (6) a. Ordering at the PP phase: P « Adj « N  
      b. Ordering at the CP phase: Adj « P « N  
      c. Conflicting linearization statements: ⟨Adj, P⟩, ⟨P, Adj⟩ ⇒ (1b) is bad  
      d. Ellipsis of PP: no need to linearize P ⇒ (2) is good

At its core, the argument is that the violation in (1b) is a PF-phenomenon and thus is alleviated by ellipsis, presenting a rescue by deletion pattern (see Mendes, Kandybowicz 2023 for a similar analysis of another repair by ellipsis effect).

## Extensions

The analysis predicts that other linearization-based restrictions on LBE can be alleviated by ellipsis.

- (7) Only the leftmost modifier(s) can be extracted
- a. Vsex ja videl \_\_\_\_ boljšix kotov    b. \*Boljšix ja videl vsex \_\_\_\_ kotov  
   all I saw        big    cats            big I saw all        cats  
   ‘I saw ALL big cats.’                    Int.: ‘I saw all BIG cats.’

The pattern arises through conflict between NP-level *all* « *big* order and CP-level *big* « *all* order.

- (8) a. The restriction is circumvented by ellipsis  
      – Ty videl vsex boljšix kotov ili vsex melkix kotov? – Boljšix!  
          you saw all big cats or all small cats big  
      – ‘Did you see all big cats or all small cats?’ – ‘All small cats!’
- b. Structure for the fragment in (8a): [CP boljšix (ja videl vsex \_\_\_\_ kotov)]

## Conclusions

- Cyclic Linearization posits that many syntactic violations are actually PF-violations resulting from conflicting linearization statements. Ellipsis is thus predicted to circumvent such violations.
- We showed that Russian sluicing presents a variety of repair-by-deletion configurations best understood as circumvention of linearization requirements that constrain Scattered Deletion.

**Takeaway:** Cyclic Linearization + Scattered Deletion approach gets the facts right.

## References

♦ A. Ionova, *The unbearable lightness of clitics*. Amsterdam: LOT Publications, 2019. ♦ T. Philippova, *Prepositional Repercussions in Russian: Pronouns, Comparatives and Ellipsis*. PhD thesis, Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, 2018. ♦ D. Fox and D. Pesetsky, “Cyclic Linearization of Syntactic Structure,” *Theoretical Linguistics*, vol. 31, no. 1–2, pp. 1–45, 2005. ♦ C. Davis, *The Linear Limitations of Syntactic Derivations*. PhD thesis, MIT, 2021. ♦ J. Goncharov, “P-Doubling in Split PPs and Information Structure,” *Linguistic Inquiry*, vol. 46, no. 4, pp. 731–742, 2015. ♦ I. Sekerina, *The syntax and processing of scrambling constructions in Russian*. PhD thesis, The City University of New York, 1997. ♦ G. Mendes and J. Kandybowicz, “Salvation by Deletion in Nupe,” *Linguistic Inquiry*, vol. 54, no. 2, pp. 299–325, 2023.

## LBE as Scattered Deletion

Bondarenko & Davis (2023) present a parasitic gap-based argument that Russian LBE is derived via Scattered Deletion: the whole nominal phrase is extracted with each copy partially pronounced.

- (9) Scattered Deletion for (1a)  
      [NP krasnuju ⟨mašinu⟩] ja videl [NP (krasnuju) mašinu]

Same can be applied to PPs. Note that linearization based requirements still need to be satisfied, cf. also the ‘P-First Generalization’ of (Sekerina 1997).

- (10) Scattered Deletion for (1b)  
      [PP ⟨v⟩ krasnoj ⟨mašine⟩] ja sidel [PP v ⟨krasnoj⟩ mašine]
- a. PP level ordering: P « Adj « N
- b. CP level ordering: Adj « P « N ⇒ (1b) is bad

## Scattered Deletion gets novel predictions

If the effect of ellipsis is to circumvent linearization based requirements on Scattered Deletion, we predict that other immovable subconstituent of Russian nominal phrase can move with ellipsis.

- (11) Generalization: postnominal genitive phrases are immovable
- a. \*Čego on kupil korobku \_\_\_\_?  
   what.GEN he bought box  
   Int: ‘What did he buy a box of?’
- b. Korobku čego on kupil \_\_\_\_?  
   box what.GEN he bought  
   ‘What did he buy a box of?’

A linearization-based account is needed to understand why scattered deletion cannot apply for postnominal genitive phrases. We predict the restriction to disappear in ellipsis.

- (12) Ellipsis circumvents this restriction
- a. Korobku čego on kupil \_\_\_\_? Konfet!  
   box what.GEN he bought candies.GEN  
   ‘What did he buy a box of? Candies!’
- b. On kupil korobku čego-to no ja ne pomnju čego  
   he bought box something.GEN but I not remember what.GEN  
   ‘He bought a box of something but I don’t remember of what.’

## Curbing overgeneration

Our approach predicts P-omission to always be possible under ellipsis, despite the facts (Ionova 2019).

- (13) Ellipsis of lower PP circumvents linearization conflicts ⇒ P-omission is possible  
      [PP ⟨v⟩ mašine] ja sidel [PP v ⟨mašine⟩]

We claim that Scattered Deletion needs to be constrained by prosody. **We do not know how** (yet). Related datapoint: preposition doubling in split scrambling of PPs (Goncharov 2015).

- (14) V sinem ja pridu v platje  
      in blue I come in dress  
      ‘I will come in BLUE dress’