

Verb-Stranding Verb Phrase Ellipsis in Russian: Evidence from Unpronounced Subjects

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Introduction In this paper, I contribute to the debate on the status of verb-stranding verb phrase ellipsis (VVPE) in Russian, arguing that a heretofore-unnoticed unpronounced subject construction is the result of VVPE, supporting the conclusions in Gribanova (2013, 2017), contra Erteschik Shir et. al. (2013) and Bailyn (2014).

Background Russian attitude predicates require that the null subject of finite verbs embedded under them be bound by the matrix subject (1), as discussed in Avrutin and Babyonyshev (1997) et seq. That the null embedded subject (NES) is interpreted particularly as a bound variable is made clear when the matrix subject is a quantifier, as in (2), since the NES can only be interpreted as bound by that quantifier. Crucially, this is not simply a side-effect *pro*-drop; in Slovenian, also a *pro*-drop language, there is no obligatorily bound reading of embedded *pro*-dropped subjects (3).

- (1) Vanja skazal, što spojët.
V.NOM said.M.SG that sing.3SG.FUT
'Vanja_i said that he_{i/*j} will sing.'
- (2) každyj student skazal, što pridët na večerinku
every.NOM student.NOM said.M.SG that come.3SG.FUT to party.ACC
'[Every student]_i said that (s)he_{i/*j} would come to the party.'
- (3) Peter je rekel, da *pro*_{3sg} bo pel.
Peter.NOM 3SG.PST say.M.SG that 3SG.FUT sing.M.SG
'Peter_i said that he_{i/j} will sing.'

Data Unlike in (1) and (2), there are environments in which the NES is not bound by the matrix subject. The second sentence in (4) is string identical to that in (1), but here the silent embedded subject is bound by the subject in the previous sentence. I'll call the construction exemplified in (4) the *nonlocal coreference construction* (NLCC). The reading found in (4) does not obtain by merely introducing the intended referent of the null pronoun (5). Furthermore, having two synonymous VPs does not allow this reading either (6).

- (4) Miša spojët? Vanja skazal, što spojët.
Misha.NOM sing.3SG.FUT Vanja.NOM say.M.SG.PST that sing.3SG.FUT
'Will Misha_j sing? Vanja_i said that he_{*i/j/*k} will sing.'
- (5) A Miša što? # Vanja skazal, što spojët.
but M.NOM what V.NOM say.M.SG.PST that sing.3SG.FUT
'What's the deal with Misha_j? Vanja_i said that he_{i/*j} will sing.'
- (6) Miša ispolnit pesnju? # Vanja skazal, što spojët.
M.NOM perform.3SG.FUT song.ACC V.NOM say.M.SG.PST that sing.3SG.FUT
'Will Misha_j perform a song? Vanja_i said that he_{i/*j} will sing.'

This data shows that the verbs have to be identical in order to license this phenomenon, a standard property of VP ellipsis. Additionally, if the verb is transitive, the object must be silent for the NLCC reading to obtain (7a). When the object is overt and the subject is silent, only the local coreference reading is available (7b). If the verb is ditransitive, both the direct object and the indirect object must be silent. In fact, anything vP-internal must be silent in order to get nonlocal coreference, though high adverbs like *navernoje* 'probably' may be in the embedded clause (8).

- (7) a. Miša razbil vazu? Vanja skazal, što razbil.
M.NOM break.M.SG.PST vase.ACC V.NOM say.M.SG.PST that break.M.SG.PST
'Vanja_i said that he_{*i/j} broke the vase.'
- b. Miša razbil vazu? Vanja skazal, što razbil vazu.
M.NOM break.M.SG.PST vase.ACC V.NOM say.M.SG.PST that break.M.SG.PST vase.ACC
'Did Misha_j break the vase? Vanja_i said that he_{#i/*j} broke the vase.'

