

Russian Gerundive gaps as topic drop

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1. The Problem

- **Russian has multiple gap constructions (1) that are parallel to the English parasitic gaps in (2).**

(1)a. Kakije pis'ma Petja sžeg _ [ne pročitav _]?
which letters Peter burned neg. read.*perf. prtc.*
'Which letters did Peter burn without reading?'

b. Čto (imenno) Petja podpisal _ [ne čitaja _]?
what exactly Peter signed neg. read.*imprf. prtc.*
'What (exactly) did Peter sign without reading?'

(2) Which document_i did John file e_i [without reading pg_i]?

- In Russian, unlike in English, the gap in the gerund does not depend on A'-movement of the antecedent (Ivlieva, 2006):

- (3) a. Petja sžeg (èti) pis'ma, ne pročítav.
Peter burned these letters neg. read.*perf. prtc.*
'Peter burned these letters without reading.'
- b. Petja sžeg kakije pis'ma, ne pročítav?
Peter burned which letters neg. read.*perf. prtc.*
'Peter burned which letters without reading?'
- c. Kto sžeg kakie pis'ma, ne pročítav?
who burned which letters neg. read.*perf. prtc.*
'Who burned which letters without reading?'

•(3) violate Engdahl's 1983 generalization that parasitic gaps are licensed only by a wh-trace:

- (4) a. John filed a bunch of articles without reading *(them).
b. John filed which articles without reading *(them)?
c. I forget who filed which articles, without reading *(them).

Two possibilities:

- 1). the gaps in (3) are true parasitic gaps & are licensed by covert movement of the antecedent (Campos, 1991, Wahba, 1995, Ivlieva, 2006)
- 2). the gerundive gaps in (3) are not parasitic, therefore they are not subject to Engdahl's generalization

The Proposal:

The gerundive gap is a result of topic drop. The sole condition on its licensing is the topichood of the constituent it applies to.

2. What is topic drop?

- Topic drop is a PF-deletion operation (= NP ellipsis) triggered solely by the topichood of the constituent it applies to. It is a strategy that Russian employs to mark topics, along with pronominalization and dislocation to a preverbal position.

2.1 Properties of (non-adverbial) topic drop in Russian

- **Null object topics in Russian require a discourse antecedent.**

Linguistic antecedent:

- (5) Ja ne sdala *kursovuju*. U menja vremeni ne bylo
I neg. hand-in.past course-paper to me time neg. was
(jeë) dopisat'.
it.SG.F to-write.perf.
'I haven't handed in the course paper. I haven't had time
to finish writing it.'

Situational antecedent:

- (6) a. [a woman enters home and shows a purchase to her family]

Vot, kupila (èto) po-deševke.

here bought.1SG it prep. cheap

'Here, I bought it cheaply.'

- b. [listening to music]

Vam (èto) nravitsja?

you it like

'Do you like it?'

2.2 Restrictions on topic drop

Restriction 1: In certain contexts transitive object topics cannot drop if the subject is overt :

(7) Q: Petja ljubit jeë? A: Da, Petja/on *(jeë) ljubit.
Peter loves her yes Peter/he her loves

- **Null or contrastive subjects allow object topic drop:**

(8) A: Da, ljubit. A': Net, no OLEG (jeë) ljubit.
yes he loves her no but Oleg her loves
'Yes, he loves her.'

A'': PETJA/ON (jeë) LJUBIT, a JA (jeë) NENAVIŽUa
Peter/he her loves but I her hate

Restriction 2: A topic cannot precede its antecedent

- a pronoun/gap in the answer is felicitous only in the context of Q2:

(9) Q1: *Čto slučilos'?* What happened?

Q2: *Otkuda u tebjā èta kniga?* Where did you get this book from?

Petja vzjal (**jeë**) v biblioteke, i prines ètu knigu/ jeë domoj.

Peter took it in library and brought this book her home

'Peter took it in the library, and brought this book/it home.'

3. Properties of gerundive gaps

- ***A null object in the gerund requires a discourse antecedent.***
overt (linguistic) antecedent:

(10) Petja šzeg (èti) pis'ma, [ne čitaja ?ix].

Peter burned these letters neg. read.imprf.prtc. them
'Peter burned these letters without reading them.'

situational (extralinguistic) antecedent:

(11)[somebody is trying on a new shirt, which is too tight on him]

Čto, kupil [ne primer'aja]?
what bought.2SG neg. try.imprf.prtc.
'Did you buy it without trying it on?'

A D-linked set antecedent. The wh- phrase ('which'-phrase or its equivalent) and the dropped object in the gerund can refer back to a discourse given set of objects familiar to the speaker and the hearer (for *D-linking*: Pesetsky, 1987, for restrictive set linking: Erteschik-Shir, 1997).

- (12) *Petja šzeg kakije pis'ma*, [ne čitaja *ix]?
Peter burned which letters neg. read.imprf.prtc. them
'Peter burned which letters without reading them?'

- (13) *Kakije pis'ma* Petja šzeg [ne pročitav ?ix]?
which letters Peter burned neg. read.perf.prtc.
'Which letters did Peter burn without reading?'

➤ our analysis does not discriminate between (12) & (13).

- ***A null gerundive object cannot precede its antecedent.***

(14) Q1: *Čto slučilos'?* What happened?

Q2: A gde kniga, kotoruju my podarili Olegu (na denj roždenija)?

‘Where is the book that we presented Oleg (on his birthday)?’

Oleg, [ne pročitav (jeë) (ni razu)], otnjes (ètu) knigu

Oleg neg. read.perf.prt. it part. once took-away this book
k bukinistu.

to bookseller.

'Oleg took this book/it to the bookseller without having read it (even once).'

4. Arguments against Ivlieva's 2006 analysis of adjunct gaps

- (15) and (16) are true parasitic gap constructions. The gap in the adjunct is a result of the Null Operator movement. The antecedent moves either overtly (15) or covertly (16).

(15) a. *Kakije pis'ma* Petja šzeg [ne pročítav pg]?
which letters Peter burned neg. read.perf. prtc.
'Which letters did Peter burn without reading?'

b. $[_{CP} \text{ which letters}_1 \dots t_1 [_{Adjunct} OP_1 \dots pg_1]]$

(16) a. Petja šzeg (*èti*) *pis'ma*, [ne pročítav pg₁].
Peter burned these letters neg. read.perf. prtc.
*'Peter burned these letters without reading.'

b. $[_{CP} OP_1 \dots \text{these letters}_1 [_{Adjunct} OP_1 \dots pg_1]]$

4. 1 Arguments against covert movement licensing

- *A precedent.* Wahba, 1995: in Jeddah Arabic a parasitic gap can be licensed by covert wh-movement of the antecedent:
- - (17) a. Mona *ḡaarat min miin_i* ṡaṡaan [ṡomar_j yebḡa [PRO_j
Mona was jealous of whom because Omar wants
to-marry
yetjawwaz *pg_i*]]
"Of whom_i was Mona jealous e_i because Omar wants to
marry *pg_i*?"
 - b. ṡali darab *miin_i* ṡaṡaan biyekra *pg_i* ?
Ali hit whom because he-hates
"Who_i did Ali hit e_i because he hated *pg_i*?"

- Lin, 2005: in Chinese the in-situ wh-phrase is unable to license the parasitic gap (a). The topicalized wh-phrase can do so (b).

(18) a. *Laowang [zai huijian pgi zhiqian] jiu kaichu-le sheii?

Laowang at meet before already fire-PERF who
'Who did Laowang fire before meeting?'

b. Sheii Laowang [zai huijian pgi zhiqian] jiu kaichu-le ei?

who Laowang at meet before already fire-PERF

'Which person is it who Laowang fired before meeting?'

(A similar situation has been observed in Japanese (Takahashi, 2006).)

- Covert wh-movement does not license parasitic gaps in English (Engdahl, 1983):

- (19) a. *John filed which articles without reading?
 b. *I forget who filed which articles without reading?

- Why isn't covert movement analysis equally operative in different languages?

Can we do better?

4. 2 Arguments for the topic drop analysis & against the Null Operator movement analysis

- Ivlieva, 2006: the null object in the gerund is a result of the Null Operator movement (originally Huang, 1984). Prediction of the Null Operator analysis: the null object inside an island is ungrammatical:

(20) On iskal ključi vsjě utro, [ne pripominaja [kuda
he looked-for keys all morning neg. recall.imprf.prtc.
on položyl *(ix)]].

where he put them

'He was looking for the keys all the morning without being
able to recall where he had put them.'

- The gerundive gap embedded in an island is grammatical provided the conditions on topic drop are satisfied (clausemate subject is also null + contrast):

(21) On iskal ključí VEZDE, [ne pripominaja
he looked-for keys everywhere neg. recall.imprf.prtc.
[KUDA (IMENNO) *(on) (ix) položyl]].
where exactly he them put
'He was looking for the keys everywhere without being
able to recall where exactly he had put them.'

- The overt subject restriction applies to non adverbial topic drop:

(22) Q: Petja ljubit jeë?
Peter loves her

A: Da, Petja/on *(jeë) ljubit.
yes Peter/he her loves

A': Da, ljubit.
yes he loves her
'Yes, he loves her.'

- The Op-movement analysis makes wrong predictions, indiscriminately ruling out (20) and (21). The Topic drop analysis can explain the difference in acceptability of the null object in these examples.

- Ivlieva, 2006, following Engdahl, 1983: the overt pronoun in (23) causes a weak cross over violation (c). The gap in the adverbial cannot be a null pronoun (*pro*) and must be a null operator (b) (=true parasitic gap).

(23) a. Kakuju knigu_i ty, [ne čitaja pg_i/*jeë_i], vybrosil t_i?
 which.ACC book.ACC you neg. read it threw.away
 'Which book did you throw away without reading?'

- ✓ b. [_{CP} **which letters**₁ [_{Adjunct} OP₁ pg₁]] ... t₁]
- X c. [_{CP} **which letters**₁ [_{Adjunct} *pro*/pronoun₁]] ... t₁]

- **Overt pronouns in gerunds are redundant or ungrammatical even if the gerund follows the matrix verb:**

(24) a. Kakije pis'ma Petja šzeg [ne pročitav ?ix]?
which letters Peter burned neg. read.perf.prtc. them
'Which letters did Peter burn without reading?'

b. Petja šzeg kakije pis'ma, [ne čitaja *ix]?
Peter burned which letters neg. read.imprf.prtc. them
'Peter burned which letters without reading them?'

- 1. redundancy/ungrammaticality of the pronoun in (24) is not connected to the weak cross over violation.
- 2. the ungrammaticality of an overt pronoun does not argue against topic drop analysis.

- Ivlieva, 2006: the unacceptability of the gap in the finite adjunct that includes an overt subject is a property of parasitic gaps (Culicover, 2001).

(25) a. Petja szeg pis'ma, ne pročitav (?ix).

Peter burned letters neg. read.perf.prtc. them

'Peter burned the letters without having read them.'

b. Petja szeg pis'ma posle toga kak on *(ix) pročitav.

Peter burned letters after that how he them read

'Peter burned the letters after he had read them.'

- **Overt subject blocks topic drop also in a non-adverbial context:**

(26) Q: Petja ljubit jeë?
 Peter loves her

A: Da, Petja/on *(jeë) ljubit.
 yes Peter/he her loves

(27) A': Da, ljubit.
 yes loves
 'Yes, he loves her.'

- **Finite subjectless adjuncts allow for topic drop.**

(28) = (25)b modified:

(28) Petja szeg pis'ma posle togo kak pročitao (?ix).
Peter burned letters after that read them
'Peter burned the letters after he had read them.'

- 1. the form of the verb (finite/ non-finite) has nothing to do with topic drop.
- 2. The unacceptability of the gap in the adjunct in the presence of the overt (non-contrastive) subject is a property of topic drop, not a property of parasitic gaps.

❖ Conclusions

- There is nothing 'parasitic' about Russian gerundive gaps, they are instances of topic drop;
- The topic drop analysis of gerundive gaps, unlike the operator movement analysis explains the behavior of the gerundive gaps and accounts for the variation in speakers' judgments.

❖ Remaining issues

- What are the conditions regulating the topic drop/overt pronoun interchange?
- Can the topic drop analysis be extended to other domains (different kinds of adjuncts, subject phrases) in Russian?
- Are there any other languages that allow for topic drop and behave like Russian with respect to the adjunct gaps?

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