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Ellipsis Constructions in Ukrainian: A Verbal Complex Perspective

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Abstract: This study explores the structure of Ukrainian verbal complex and elliptical constructions, specifically object gapping (OG) constructions. Building on the previous research on the topic of OG constructions (Gribanova (2013), Baylin (2017), Landau (2020)) and exploring the two main approaches, the V-stranding VP-ellipsis analysis (VSVPE) and the argument ellipsis (AE) analysis, this study proposes that Ukrainian has both V-raising and T-lowering, assuming the Split-TP Hypothesis (Pollock, 1989). Furthermore, it is argued that OG constructions in Ukrainian present an instance of AE.

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1. Introduction

This study explores the structure of Ukrainian verbal complex and elliptical constructions, more specifically object gapping (OG) constructions. It is proposed that Ukrainian has both V-raising and T-lowering, assuming the Split-TP Hypothesis (Pollock, 1989). Furthermore, this study argues that OG constructions in Ukrainian present an instance of argument ellipsis (AE).

Ellipsis, or an elliptical construction, is a syntactically incomplete clause combined with a complete clause that fully determines its interpretation. Ellipsis occurs when certain portions of a sentence are not spoken and are nevertheless understood in the context of the remaining elements. The topic of ellipsis constructions has received considerable attention among researchers in recent years. However, there is no comprehensive data available in relation to the Ukrainian language. Thus, this study is intended as one of the first attempts to approach ellipsis constructions from the perspective of data in Ukrainian.

2. Background

Previous studies on the topic of ellipsis in OG can generally be divided into two approaches. One is that OG should be treated as an instance of VP-ellipsis (VPE), whereas the other claims that it is to deal with AE.

Gribanova (2013) proposes that V in Russian rises to a position higher than VP, but lower than T, and that it is AspP, which serves as the landing site for such V movement. She also claims that OGs should be

treated as instances of VSVPE, whereas Baylin (2017) and Landau (2020) argue that it is to deal with AE. Baylin argues against VSVPE by presenting six counterarguments to Gribanova’s claim, including both theoretical and empirical arguments, and highlights a significant difference between VP and ν P’s behavior in ellipsis constructions. Landau (2020) claims that VSVPE must be blocked as it overgenerates nonexisting readings, and that AE analysis can fully account for OG sentences in Russian by providing three additional arguments, each related to (i) “valence identity” (i. e., parallel argument structures) condition, (ii) test with creation verbs, and (iii) the fact that VSVPE and AE equally require a linguistic antecedent, making it difficult to distinguish between the two and to provide conclusive evidence in support of VSVPE.

3. Proposals

3.1. Ukrainian Verbal Complex

Consider the following Ukrainian declarative sentence given in (1).

- (1) John chyta-v knygy-u.
 John read-Past.3sg.M book-ACC
 “John was reading a book.”

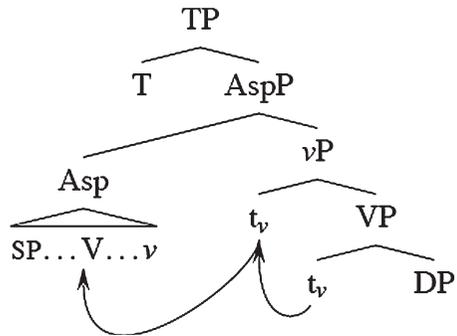
Assuming the VP Internal Subject Hypothesis along with the Extended Projection Principle (the EPP), the subject DP *John* “John” moves from its underlying VP-internal position to Spec of TP, where it stays in the surface structure after rearrangement. As for inflectional morphemes of T, to create a 3rd person singular male verb form in the past tense, there are two derivational possibilities. One is T-to-V lowering, where the head of the TP lowers onto the V, lexical verb *read*. The other is V-to-T raising, where the V rises toward the head of TP.

To determine which of the lowering or the raising analysis is more appropriate, consider the derivation of (2).

- (2) John po-my-v mashyn-u
 John Perf-wash-Past.3sg.M car-ACC
 “John washed the car.”

First, it is widely assumed in Russian that the head of V moves to the head of AspP, which is generated under TP (Baylin, 1995; Gribanova, 2013). The current study also adopts this assumption for the analysis of Ukrainian, that is, V in Ukrainian undergoes the same type of movement to a higher position above VP but below T, as shown in (3).

(3)



(Gribanova, 2013b: 6)

Following Gribanova's (2013) V-to-Asp movement, in (2), verb stem *myty* "wash" moves to a higher AspP position, where the verbal stem adjoins to the perfective prefix *po-* forming perfective infinitive form *pomyty*.

As for inflectional morphemes on T, what happens to them? Which of the T-to-Asp lowering analysis or the Asp-to-T raising analysis is more appropriate? Consider the following ellipsis construction in (4), where \triangle is intended to show the position of the elided portion.

The partial structure of (4a) is represented in (4b), where the dotted line indicates the elided domain¹. Following Gribanova (2013), it is assumed that AspP is part of the ellipsis site.

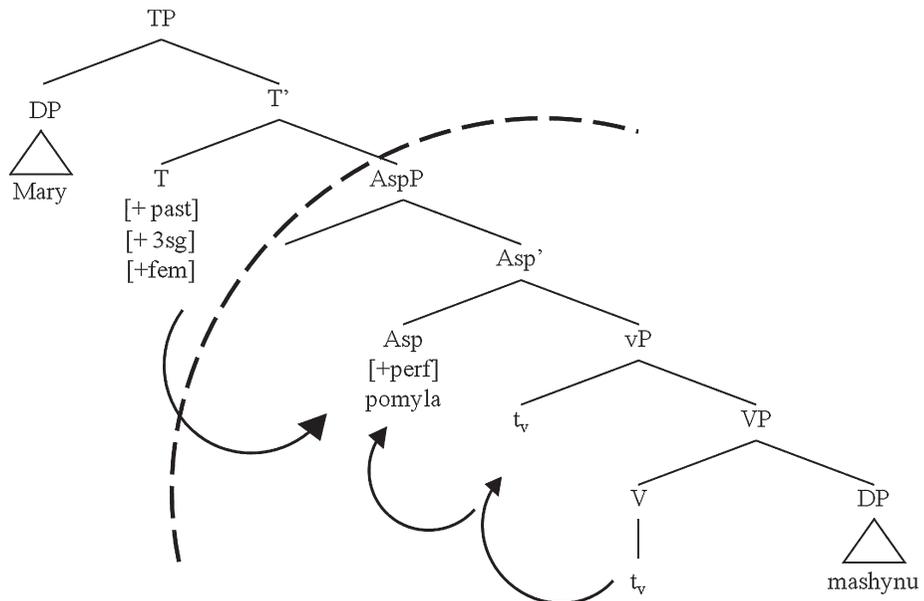
- (4) a. John po-my-v mashyn-u, i Mary \triangle takozh.
 John Perf-wash-Past.3sg.M car-ACC, and Mary \triangle too
 "John washed the car, and Mary [washed the car] too."

\triangle = po-my-la mashyn-u
 Perf-wash-Past.3sg.F car-ACC
 "washed the car"

1 There are two reasons for using ellipsis constructions as means to distinguish which analysis is better:

- (i) When two or more elements of the sentence are elided simultaneously, such elements form one syntactic unit (elision happens at the level of phrase (XP)).
- (ii) The structure of subsequent sentence including ellipsis and the antecedent of preceding sentence are structurally identical.

b.



The grammaticality of (4a) indicates that Ukrainian inflectional morphemes under T are satisfied by lowering onto the lexical verb under the Asp-head. If the V raised up to the head of T, the verb must have stranded, or if the inflectional morphemes remained on T, some supportive elements should have been inserted to satisfy their bound morphological requirement of inflectional morphologies.

However, it is unclear whether V-to-Asp raising is present in cases like (1), where the verb has no aspectual form and thus has no AspP to be raised to. If yes, in what position does it end up?

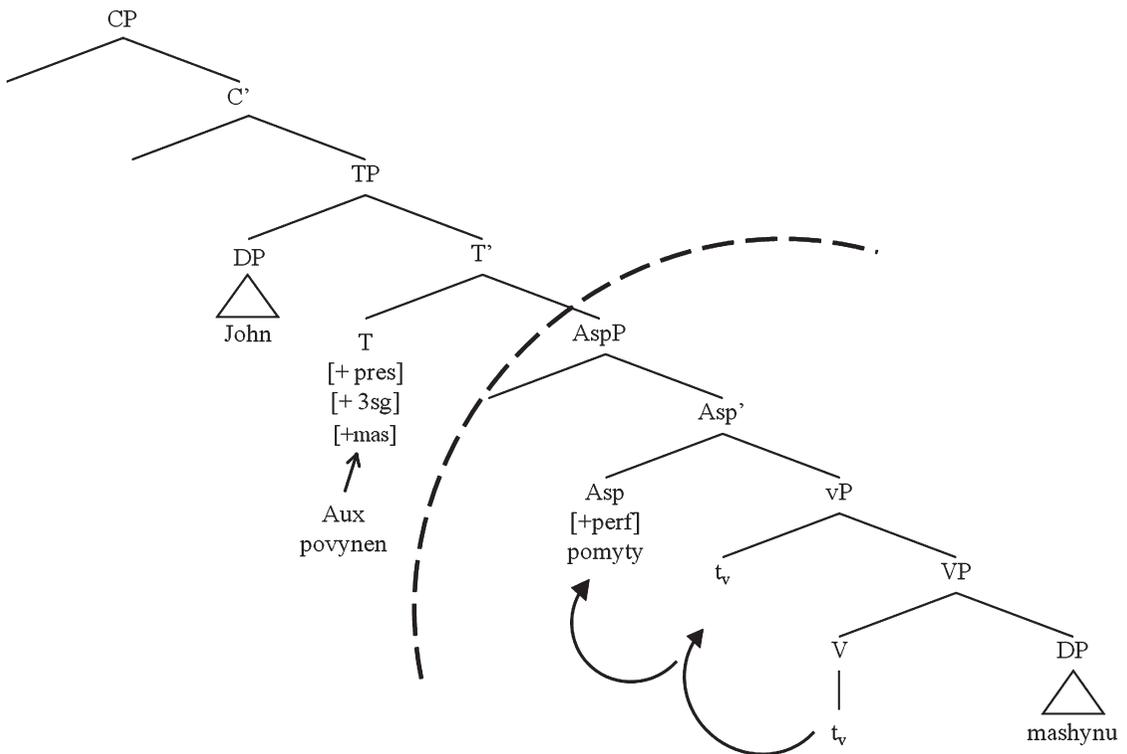
Having proposed that Ukrainian declarative sentences have a derivation with V-raising to AspP and T-lowering onto it, all the personality, gender, number, and tense features are morphologically realized on the lexical verbs. However, the inflectional realization of this language is not so straightforward. Consider (5), where a modal auxiliary appears.

- (5) Mary povyn-na po-myty mashyn-u
 Mary must-Pres.3sg.F Perf-wash car-ACC
 “Mary must wash the car.”

In the case when an auxiliary verb is added to the structure, we can observe that morphemes of person, gender, and tense are phonetically realized on the modal auxiliary verb *must*, while the lexical verb “wash” has only an aspectual prefix added to its infinitival verb form. In Ukrainian declarative sentences with modal auxiliaries, the verb following the modal auxiliary is always in the perfective verb form. Bearing this in mind, consider an ellipsis construction in (6) and its partial derivation in (7).

- (6) Mary povyn-na po-myty mashyn-u,
 Mary must-Pres.3sg.F Perf-wash car-ACC,
 i John povyn-en △ takozh
 and John must- Pres.3sg.M too
 “Mary must wash the car, and John must [wash the car] too.”

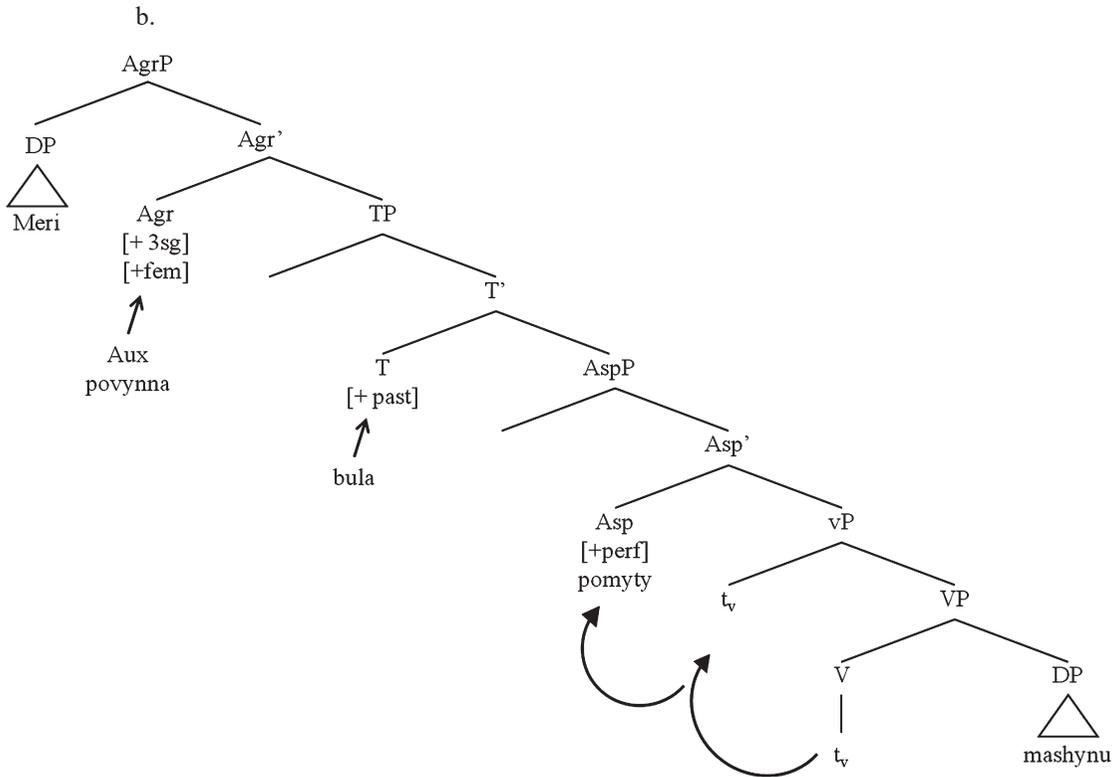
(7)



In (7), the auxiliary “must” is directly inserted under T satisfying the bound morphemes under it, so there is no need for further lowering. The lexical verb “wash” is raised to AspP to satisfy the perfective affix, and both the verb and the perfective affix are included in the ellipsis site. The fact in (6) that Ukrainian permits Aux-stranding in ellipsis constructions indicates that modal auxiliary *povynen* “must” can remain in its position under T outside of the elided vP (where AspP is an extended cartographic domain of vP (1)).

Now, consider sentence (8a, b), which describes (5) as the past event.

- (8) a. Mary povyn-na bu-la po-myty mashyn-u
 Mary must-3sg.F be-Past.3sg.F Perf-wash car-ACC
 “Mary must have washed the car.”



To explain this, this study proposes that Ukrainian is subject to the Split-TP Hypothesis (Pollock, 1989). If we assume that modal auxiliary *povynna* “must” occupies the head of Agreement Phrase (AgrP) and the Agr bears the bound inflectional features, that is, person, number, and gender, then they are satisfied by the modal auxiliary on the head of Agr and there is no necessity of lowering. Thus, no movement is observed with respect to the head of Agr. Then, for T to avoid being stranded, the supportive verb *buty* “be” is inserted to T, and combines with the past inflection, forming *bula* “was.”

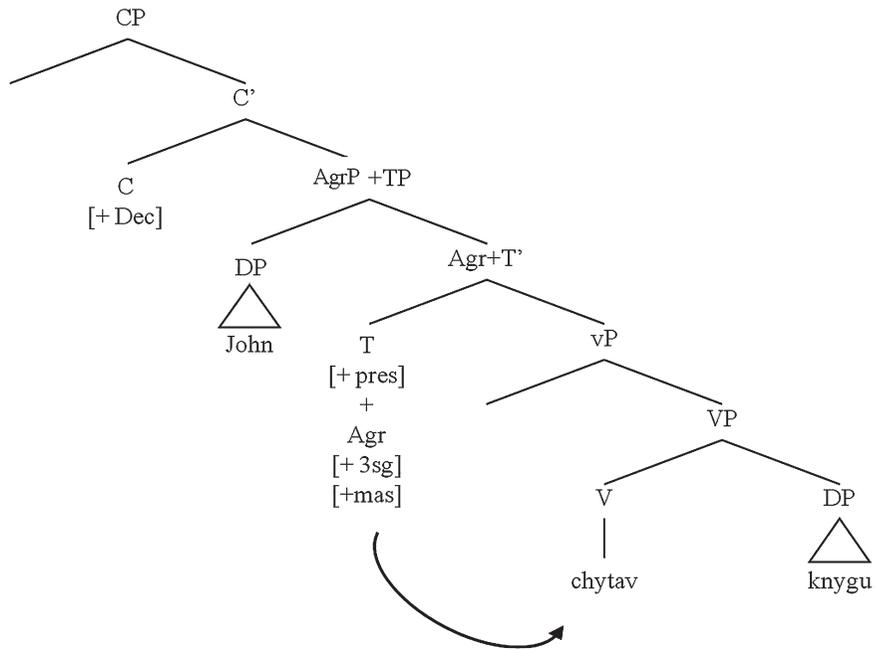
Previously, the study argued for the T-lowering hypothesis in the structure of Ukrainian through ellipsis constructions in (4). Let us consider this again. If Ukrainian is subject to the Split-TP Hypothesis, what happens to T when there is no “*be*” verb under T and the lexical verb cannot support it either?

To answer this question, in addition to the Split-TP Hypothesis, this study proposes that T possesses the ability to amalgamate with Agr when there is no “*be*” verb present to support it. This is why T does not lower onto the lexical verb as in (5).

Now, let us return to (1), which is repeated as (9) below.

- (9) a. John chyta-v knygy-u
 John read-Past.3sg.M book-ACC
 “John was reading a book.”

b.



Considering the proposed analysis, we can assume the following movement: Subject DP *John* moves from its underlying VP-internal position to the Spec of T amalgamating AgrP, where it stays in the surface structure. Person and gender inflections located under Agr, being bound morphemes and having no supporting element (modal auxiliary verb) to adjoin, amalgamate with T. There, together with bound tense morphemes, lower further onto V in situ in need of a host not to be left stranded. Thus, the morphemes of person, gender, and tense are satisfied by lexical verbs through Agr-plus-T-to-V movement (lowering).

To support the T-lowering analysis, verb-lowering tests including adverbs are conducted. Consider the examples in (10):

10. John chasto chyta-ie (*chasto) kny-zhky
 John often read-Pres.3sg (*often) book-pl.ACC
 "John often reads books."

It is generally accepted that adverbs are VP-adjoined, and T is located at a higher position. As a result, in (10), the inflected verb *chytaty* "read" is located after the adverb *chasto* "often," which indicates that inflections under T possess the ability to lower down onto the lexical verb located inside of VP to form the finite *chytaie* "reads."

3.2. VSVPE problems - Ukrainian perspective

As mentioned in section 3, the VSVPE analysis faces the following problems in languages with generally accepted AE. This is repeated here as (11). Let us consider each of the problems separately

and inspect them using Ukrainian data.

11. a. The antecedent for the OG can be a subject;
- b. Subject gaps (in Japanese and Korean) display sloppy readings similar to OGs.
- c. OGs with sloppy readings can co-occur with a second object in ditransitive VPs.
- d. Gaps corresponding to PPs are attested.
- e. Adverbs (VP-adjuncts) are excluded from the ellipsis site.
- f. Verb identity is not imposed between the antecedent and the target clauses.

(Landau 2020: 342)

The first problem is related to the possibility of subject gapping and yielding sloppy readings (11a, b). An interesting contrast is observed in the interpretation of subject gapping between other Asian languages, such as Japanese and Ukrainian. Consider the following sentence in (12):

12. Prodavets' pry-ishov do Mary dodomy,
 A salesman Perf-came to Mary to-house-Loc
 i takozh [e] pry-ishov do Dzhona dodomu
 and also Perf-came to John to-house-Loc.
 "A salesman came to Mary's house, and [e] came to John's house, too."

In (12), the subject "salesman" in the first conjunct serves as an antecedent for the OG in the second conjunct, but only a strict reading is available: the same salesman visited Mary's house and John's house. Next, consider (13), where (13a) and (13b) represent two separate sentences. In addition, the word order is changed as a result of scrambling.

13. a. Do Mary dodomy pry-ishov prodavets'.
 to Mary to-house-Loc Perf-came a salesman
 "A salesman came to Mary's house."
- b. Do Dzhona dodomu takozh pry-ishov [e]
 to John to-house-Loc also Perf-came
 Lit. "[e] came to John's house, too."

In (13), the sloppy reading is available; it is possible for the salesman who visited John's house to be a different person from the one who came to Mary's house.

One of the possibilities to account for such a difference can be Abe's generalization (5) that has to do with c-command, as shown in (14). In (12), the sloppy reading is unavailable as the antecedent "salesman" in (12a) c-commands the null argument in (12b). However, in (13), being a part of an independent clause, the antecedent in (13a) does not c-command the null argument in (13b), making it possible to yield the sloppy reading.

14. Argument ellipsis does not apply to an argument when it is c-commanded by its antecedent.

(Sakamoto, 2016: 251)

Next, (11c, e) has to do with OG readings in ditransitive VPs and adverbs inclusion. Consider (15), where OG is one of the arguments of ditransitive verb *vdiagaty* “to put.”

15. a. Taro shvydko vdiagnuv svoiemu sobatsi oshyinyk
 Taro quickly put-Past.m self’s dog-Dat collar
 iakyyi [e] ne vdiagnula Hanako.
 which not put-Past.fem Hanako
 lit: “Taro quickly put a collar on self’s dog which Hanako didn’t put [].”

In this sentence, both strict and sloppy, readings are available: the collar that Hanako did not put on Taro’s dog, Taro put on his own dog himself (strict); the collar that Hanako did not put on her dog, Taro put on his own dog (sloppy). With regard to the adverb inclusion, only one meaning is possible: Taro quickly put a collar on his dog, which Hanako did not put on her dog at all. This result is consistent with the data in Japanese.

Moving on to the problem of attested PP gaps in (11d), consider (16).

16. Vin pry-gotuv-av mlynts-i na drijj-ah,
 He Perf-make-3p.sg.M.Past pancakes-ACC on baking-powder-LOC,
 a ya ne pry-gotuva-la _____ .
 but I NEG Perf-make-3p.sg.Fem.Past
 “He made pancakes with baking powder, but I didn’t make.”

17. *Vony vyi-shly ploski.
 They come-out-3p.pl.Past flat
 “*It came out flat.”

In Ukrainian, PPs behave similarly to PPs in Japanese and can undergo independent ellipsis. It can be concluded from the fact that in (16) PP *na drijjah* “with baking powder” is elided alongside the missing direct object of verb “made.” Note that the continuation *It came out flat* is considered inappropriate, as shown in (17). This study argues that this is an instance of AE.

Lastly, the problem in (11f) is related to the verb identity requirement not being imposed between the antecedent and the target clauses:

18. a. John vdary-v svogo vislyuk-a.
 John hit-Past self’s donkey-ACC
 ‘John hit self’s donkey.’

- b. A Bill [e] pnuv.
 But Bill kick-Past
 “But Bill kicked self’s/John’s donkey.”

Example (18) yields both strict and sloppy readings. (18b) can be interpreted as Bill kicking John’s or his own donkey. In addition, (18b) is grammatical, despite the fact that the antecedent verb “hit” and the target verb “kick” are not identical. The fact that the verb identity requirement does not hold in Ukrainian serves as one more reason to accept the AE analysis over VSVPE.

To summarize, this study has examined the problems that the VSVPE analysis is facing in languages such as Japanese from the perspective of Ukrainian data and concluded that the same problems hold in Ukrainian. Having T-to-Agr raising and Aux-stranding present in Ukrainian, the general prediction regarding OG constructions would be VSVPE. However, considering the above-mentioned problems, it is argued that to account for the OG constructions in Ukrainian, AE analysis is more appropriate. In the next section, this proposal is confirmed by providing additional data in terms of the three diagnoses of AE: (i) verb identity requirement, (ii) valence identity requirement, and (iii) adjunct inclusion test.

3.3.1. Verb identity requirement

Generally, VSVPE is predicted to be licensed by identical verbs, whereas structures with different verbs are predicted to be ungrammatical (4). However, to support the claim that Ukrainian OG constructions represent the instance of AE, this study predicts that the verb identity requirement will not hold (1) in Ukrainian either.

19. Usi vzhe davno zabu-ly toi vypadoc,
 Everyone already long ago forget-Pest.3pl. that case,
 i mene z-duvuva-v fakt shcho ty dosi pam’yata-iesh _____.
 and I-Gen Perf-surprise-Past.3sg.M fact that you still remember-Pres.2sg
 “Everyone has long forgotten about that case, and I am surprised by the fact that you
 still remember (about that case).”

Example (19) is perfectly grammatical while containing two verbs that are not identical. Landau (2020) suggests that “What seems to be involved is a general constraint on the range of permissible contrastive semantic relationships between the two verbs.” Example (19) confirms that Ukrainian can be added to the list of V-stranding languages in which identity requirement is not compulsory and the only relationship between the target verb and the antecedent.

3.3.2. Valence identity requirement

Valence identity (parallel argument structures) is considered an absolute prerequisite for VSVPE (2) (see also Landau 2018). The valence identity condition states that “the raised V creates an l-predicate of verb meanings, which is copied from the antecedent to the target clause. Because the l-predicate contains l-binders for each argument position, it would fail to properly apply to a verb with different valence in the target clause (either resulting in uninterpreted l-binders or uninterpreted arguments)” (Landau, 2018: 15). Thus, if Ukrainian OG constructions represent the instance of AE, it is expected that the valence identity

requirement will not hold in Ukrainian.

Consider example in (20).

20. a. John s-fotografuva-v kelyh
 John Perf-take a picture-Past.3sg.M glass-ACC
 do togo yak po-stavyty ___ na stil.
 before as Perf-put on table
 “John took a picture of the glass before putting (it) on the table.”

b. John po-stavy-v kelyh na stil
 John Perf-put- Past.3sg.M glass-ACC on table
 pislia togo yak s-fotografuva-v ____.
 after as Perf-take a picture-Past.3sg.M
 “John put the glass on the table after taking a picture (of it).”

In (20), the object of a monotransitive VP can be taken as an antecedent for an OG in a ditransitive VP. In (20b), it happens the other way around. This means that OG sentences need not be valence-identical to their antecedents in Ukrainian. This serves as an argument against VSVPE. (20) indicates that Ukrainian OG constructions do not undergo VSVPE but AE.

3.3.3. Adjunct inclusion test

It is predicted that the adjunct that modifies the VP (4) is included in the ellipsis site as a part of VSVPE, as it does in English. However, to support the claim that Ukrainian OG constructions represent the instance of AE, this study presents additional data and predicts that an adjunct will not be included in the ellipsis site. The only possible meaning of the target clause in (21) is “I do not do sports at all,” suggesting that the gap corresponds to a bare argument. If the gap in (21) corresponds to a full VP, it should allow the inclusion of the adjunct “often,” leading to the meaning “I do sports, but not often.”

21. Ty zaima-ieshsia sport-om chasto, a ya ne zaima-yus' ____.
 You do-Pres.2sg sport-Inst often, but I Neg do-Pres.1sg
 “You are doing sports often, but I don’t do (sports).”

Next, to go one step further, consider the example with creation verbs (based on (2)) in (22). There is an advantage in predicates, including creation verbs, as under Neg, the existence of the object is denied, and further reference to it is inappropriate, as shown in (23).

22. John pysh-e virsh-i zaradu zadovolennia.
 John write-Pres.3sg.M poem-pl for the sake of pleasure-Acc.
 Ya vpevne-na shcho Bill ne pysh-e ____.
 I sure-1sg.Fem that Bill Neg write-Pres.3sg.M
 “John writes poems for the sake of pleasure. I am sure that Bill does not write (poems).”

23. *Vony zavzhdy duzhe serioznyi.
 they always very serious
 “*They are always professional (lit.serious).”

In the VSVPE analysis the target clause would be including “for the sake of pleasure” allowing the reading “Bill writes poems, but not for the sake of pleasure.” This would make the further reference to the poems natural, but this is not the case.

4. Conclusions and remaining problems

This study explored Ukrainian verbal complex and OG constructions in Ukrainian, and examined which type of ellipsis analysis is more appropriate to account for such constructions.

The claims presented in this study are as follows: First, Ukrainian has both V-raising and T-lowering, assuming the Split-TP Hypothesis. Second, OG constructions in Ukrainian present an instance of AE. This claim is supported by highlighting that problems for the VSVPE analysis of OG constructions in Japanese and Russian hold in Ukrainian.

The Neg position in Ukrainian and its relationship to other nodes in the structure of Ukrainian sentences remain as a possible topic for further research.

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