

## Predictive Rules of Direct Object Ellipsis in Russian\*

Marjorie J. McShane  
New Mexico State University

### 1.0. Introduction

Ellipsis in the world's languages has been studied from two largely segregated linguistic perspectives: syntactic theory and discourse theory. However, at least with regard to Slavic languages, we achieve maximal explanatory and predictive power by taking an integrated approach—by exploring the interaction of syntactic, lexico-semantic, and pragmatic factors on ellipsis. This paper focuses on the interfaces among these components of the language system as they relate to the ellipsis of Russian direct objects (DOs) with definite reference, a type of ellipsis that is widely possible in Russian but does not occur in English.<sup>1</sup> The goal is to present a sampling, rather than a comprehensive inventory, of the rules regulating Russian DO ellipsis, and to show that an integrated approach is required to fully understand the workings of ellipsis in Russian.

Although Russian has a developed system of morphological agreement, ellipted DOs (unlike ellipted subjects) do not agree with their selecting verbs, so their licensing and recoverability strategies cannot be linked to agreement morphology.

The relative weight of syntactic, lexico-semantic, and pragmatic factors in determining the elliptability of a given DO depends primarily upon the nature and placement of the antecedent, which can be syntactically relevant or pragmatically understood. (Provisionally, I define 'syntactically relevant' as syntactically overt and located in the immediately preceding context – generally the preceding clause.) In fact, there are three types of licensing strategies for which different

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\* This paper is an overview of work presented in McShane (1998a-c), where further discussion of all points can be found.

<sup>1</sup> Strictly speaking, DO ellipsis does occur in English, but only in markedly telegraphic language, e.g., stage directions in plays and recipe contexts. For discussion of the latter, see Massam and Roberge (1989)

combinations of factors play a role; they are shown in Table 1 (EC refers to 'empty category').

**Table 1**

Status and Placement of Antecedent	Ellipsis is Licensed Within	Example	Relevant Factors
The antecedent is overt and located in the same sentence as the EC.	Sentence Grammar	1) On vzjal <i>mjač</i> i brosil [e]. 'He took the ball and threw it.'	Syntactic Lexico-Semantic ( <i>limited:</i> Discourse)
The antecedent is overt and syntactically relevant, but not located in the same sentence as the EC.	Discourse Grammar	2) Ja s"ela <i>tri piržoka</i> . Sama [e] ispekla. 'I ate three pirozhki. I baked them myself.'	Syntactic Lexico-Semantic Discourse
The antecedent is pragmatically understood.	Discourse Grammar	3) [ <i>The speaker holds out a bag</i> ] Poderži [e], požalujsta. 'Hold this, please.'	Lexico-Semantic Discourse

The remainder of the paper focuses on the first two types of licensing strategies, i.e., those with a syntactically relevant antecedent.<sup>2</sup> Rules of ellipsis will be proposed that not only provide insight into theoretical aspects of this phenomenon, but also give non-native speakers guidelines regarding when and when not to ellipit DOs in Russian.

<sup>2</sup> As regards the third licensing strategy, ellipsis-promoting factors include the following: the DO refers to the speaker, the interlocutor, or a visible third person/thing; the DO is the object of an imperative or interrogative verb; the speaker and interlocutor have a large set of shared information and a clearly understood current concern. For discussion of the latter, see Yokoyama (1986).

### 1.1. Sentence Grammar Versus Discourse Grammar<sup>3</sup>

For our purposes, the crucial difference between ellipsis licensed within Sentence Grammar (SG) and ellipsis within Discourse Grammar (DG) is as follows. Within SG, there is a direct syntactic link between the antecedent and the EC, and syntax plays the most prominent role in determining ellipsis potential. So, there are different rules of DO ellipsis for VP coordinate structures, IP coordinate structures, sentences containing a subordinate clause, etc. Lexico-semantics and pragmatics play a role in some structures of SG, but syntax remains central. Within DG, there is only an indirect syntactic link between the antecedent and the EC because the antecedent must be reinterpreted as a null discourse topic for the purposes of the elliptical sentence *per se*. It is the null discourse topic located within the elliptical sentence that formally licenses the ellipsis (in the way proposed by Huang 1984 and amended for Slavic in McShane 1998a). Thus, within DG, syntax has a somewhat reduced role, and semantics and pragmatics have a proportionally increased role. One of the numerous concrete manifestations of this SG/DG contrast is that whereas a NOM antecedent can never support DO ellipsis within SG, it sometimes can within DG. The lack of structural parallelism between a NOM antecedent and an ACC DO is fatal within SG, but is tolerated under certain circumstances within DG because the link between the antecedent and the EC is mediated by the intervening null discourse topic.

### 1.2. The Limits of Pragmatics

Perhaps the most important point about DO ellipsis in Russian is that it is *not* the case that any DO that can be logically understood can be ellipted. Consider in this regard examples (4) and (5):

- (4) Ja slučajno      vypustila    *pticu*,      no      brat  
 I accidentally let-out    *bird*<sub>ACC</sub>    but      brother  
 (*ee*)      pojmal.  
 (*it*)<sub>ACC</sub>    caught  
 'I accidentally let out the bird but my brother caught it.'

<sup>3</sup> For a discussion of Sentence Grammar versus Discourse Grammar as it relates to ellipsis, see Williams (1977), Huang (1984), and McShane (1998a).

- (5) V komnatu vletela ptica, i brat  
 into room flew bird<sub>NOM</sub> and brother  
 ee/\*[e] pojmal.  
 it/\*[e]<sub>ACC</sub> caught  
 'A bird flew into the room and my brother caught it.'

In both sentences it is equally clear on a logical level that *bird* is intended to be the DO of the second clause. However, in (5) the ellipsis-blocking syntactic factor of having a NOM antecedent is stronger than the ellipsis-promoting pragmatic factor of having a logically retrievable DO. The impossibility of ellipsis in (5), therefore, provides indisputable evidence that the study of DO ellipsis must not be relegated to a purely pragmatic framework.

## 2.0. DO Ellipsis Licensed within SG

Below are a number of rules of DO ellipsis within SG, which are organized according to what factor most strongly determines them (note, however, that most instances of ellipsis are influenced at least to some extent by multiple factors):

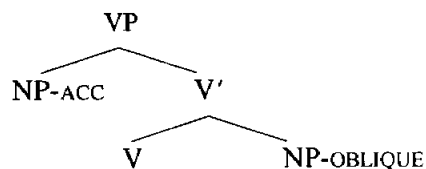
### 2.1. Syntactic Rules of DO Ellipsis Licensed within SG

In Russian, ACC antecedents support DO ellipsis better than NPs with any other case marking. Let us call this Syntactic Rule of SG #1.

*Syntactic Rule of SG #1: ACC antecedents best support DO Ellipsis in Russian.*

Following Bailyn (1995), I assume that ACC NPs occupy spec-VP, whereas oblique NPs occupy sister-of-V position.<sup>4</sup>

Tree 1



<sup>4</sup> Spec-VP is the specifier position in the VP.

This difference in structural placement explains why the case-marking of the antecedent can be considered a matter of syntax rather than of pure morphology: when the antecedent is ACC, it is structurally parallel to its coreferential DO, and ellipsis is promoted. Lack of structural parallelism between the antecedent and EC significantly impedes ellipsis potential. It must be stressed that in some instances an oblique antecedent *can* support DO ellipsis within SG, but the rules for that are complex and include a strong semantic component, so they are not formalizable in the manner attempted here. Thus, in continuing this section on the syntactic factors affecting DO ellipsis within SG, I limit the discussion to configurations containing an ACC antecedent.

When the antecedent is ACC, there are at least four syntactically based patterns of DO ellipsis within SG, designated Syntactic Rules of SG #2-4.

*Syntactic Rule of SG #2: In Syndetic VP Coordinate Structures (with an ACC antecedent) DO Ellipsis is consistently possible.*<sup>5</sup>

Syndetic VP Coordinate Structures are structures in which two VPs (that share a subject) are joined by an overt coordinating conjunction (see example (1)).<sup>6</sup>

SUBJ [[VP<sub>i</sub>] and/but [VP<sub>j</sub>]]

<sup>5</sup> If a coordinate structure lacks an overt coordinating conjunction, it is called an asyndetic coordinate structure (Quirk et al. 1972: 918). I consider asyndetic structures to be part of Discourse Grammar.

<sup>6</sup> I analyze such structures as VP Coordination, rather than IP Coordination with *pro*-drop of the second subject, for two reasons:

(i) When two coordinated VPs in Russian have the same subject, that subject is almost never repeated, regardless of whether the DO is overt or ellipted (\* On<sub>i</sub> vzjal mjač i on<sub>i</sub> brosil (ego). 'He took the ball and he threw it.'). In fact, having the second subject overt would either be generally confusing or would imply that the second subject had a different referent from that of the first subject.

(ii) Different DO-ellipsis patterns obtain in same-subject coordinate structures and in different-subject coordinate structures. This finds a natural explanation if we consider the former to be VP-coordination and the latter to be IP-coordination.

Example (6), like (1), is a VP-coordinate structure that permits DO ellipsis – as do virtually all Russian VP-coordinate structures containing coreferential DOs. Note that the clauses may contain additional adjuncts and/or arguments, which in no way affect ellipsis potential:

- (6) Lizka vzjala Arkašu pod ruku i povela  
 Lizka took Arkasha<sub>ACC</sub> by arm and led  
 (ego) po ulice.<sup>7</sup>  
 (him)<sub>ACC</sub> down street  
 'Lizka took Arkasha by the arm and led him down the street.'

*Syntactic Rule of SG #3:* In Multi-Clause Syndetic VP Coordinate Structures (with an ACC antecedent), Ellipsis of one or more DOs tends to be highly preferred.

Multi-Clause Syndetic VP Coordinate Structures are sentences in which three or more VPs (that share a subject) are conjoined and the last is preceded by an overt coordinating conjunction:

[SUBJ [[VP<sub>i</sub>], [VP<sub>j</sub>] and/but [VP<sub>k</sub>]]

When Russian structures of this type have three coreferential DOs, ellipsis of at least one of them is not only possible, it tends to be highly preferred in order to avoid what is considered excessive repetition of DO pronouns. (Of course, this assumes a non-emphatic context.) In three-clause examples, there are four possible combinations of overt and covert DOs. Three of these are generally acceptable in Russian, and one is not, as illustrated by (7). The symbol % denotes stylistic infelicity produced by overrepetition of pronouns.

<sup>7</sup> This example is quoted from V. Vojnovič's *My zdes' živem* (Moskva: Sovetskij pisatel', 1963). The DO is ellipted in the source text.

- (7) Pelageja usmexnulas' tixo, vzjala bukvar' v ruki,  
 Pelageja laughed quietly, took primer<sub>ACC</sub> in hands
- a. povertela ego i v komod sprjatala [e].<sup>8</sup>
- b. povertela [e] i v komod sprjatala [e].
- c. povertela [e] i v komod sprjatala ego.
- d. %povertela ego i v komod sprjatala ego.  
 twirled it/[e]<sub>ACC</sub> and into bureau stashed it/[e]<sub>ACC</sub>
- 'Pelagea laughed quietly, took the primer in her hands, fiddled with it and stashed it in the bureau.'

It bears mentioning, however, that multi-clause examples can be complex rhythmically, intonationally, semantically, etc., so although in a majority of contexts patterns (a)-(c) are possible and (d) is infelicitous, there are exceptions.

The next two rules of ellipsis concern sentences containing a Gerund Phrase (GP) or a subordinate clause. In all instances, I assume that the matrix clause is base-generated to the left of, and higher on the tree than, the GP or subordinate clause. In addition, recall that in Russian, antecedents must canonically precede their ECs at surface structure; thus, we will not see Russian sentences similar to the English \*Having spied [e]<sub>i</sub>, John picked up the twenty-dollar bill; (exceptions will not be dealt with here). Finally, all sentences under consideration are, to the extent possible, taken out of context. (If, for example, the given object were to occur as a DO in the preceding sentence, inter-sentential influences on ellipsis would complicate ellipsis judgments.)

*Syntactic Rule of SG #4:* In sentences containing a GP, DO-Ellipsis potential is determined prior to syntactic movement.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>8</sup> This example is quoted from M.M. Zoščenko's 'Pismo' (pp. 118-121 in *Russian Intermediate Reader*, Igor S. Mihalchenko (ed.), Lincolnwood, Illinois: National Textbook Company, 1985). The original variant is (a).

<sup>9</sup> Following the approach proposed by Babby and Franks (ms. 1998), I analyze GPs as nonclausal, nonfinite VP adjuncts that originate within the VP then may or may not move up to clause-initial position.

In Russian sentences containing a Gerund Phrase (GP), DO ellipsis is possible only if the matrix clause precedes the GP, such that the matrix clause contains the antecedent and the GP contains the EC:<sup>10</sup>

- 8) Džon otdal professoru èsse, ne  
 John gave professor<sub>DAT</sub> essay<sub>ACC</sub> NEG  
 proveriv (ego).  
 having-checked (it)<sub>ACC</sub>  
 'John gave his professor the essay, not having checked it over.'

If the GP is fronted, ellipsis is impossible:

- (9) Podnjav okurok, Džon brosil  
 having-picked-up cigarette-butt<sub>ACC</sub> Džon threw  
 ego/\*[e] v urnu.  
 it/\*[e]<sub>ACC</sub> into trash-can  
 'Having picked up the cigarette butt, John threw it in the trash can.'

This contrast cannot be explained by the surface linear order of elements because in (9), as in (8), there is an NP<sub>ACC</sub> that looks as if it should be a licit antecedent for DO ellipsis. The impossibility of ellipsis in (9) can, however, be explained in terms of movement: ellipsis potential in such Russian structures must be established prior to syntactic movement. This means that the DO located in the matrix clause will always be understood as the antecedent because it is always base-generated to the left of, and higher than, the DO located in the GP. Thus, when the GP remains *in situ*, its DO can be ellipped because it follows the matrix-clause antecedent. If, however, the GP is fronted, an illicit ordering of antecedent and EC obtains. If ellipsis were to be licensed in such a structure, the DO located in the GP would have to adopt the function of antecedent—which, the evidence shows, is impossible in Russian.

<sup>10</sup> This pair of examples, (8)-(9), is not strictly minimal because with sentences of this type, one of the members of a truly minimal pair is virtually always semantically awkward, and semantic normality is an inviolable requirement for all types of ellipsis.



*Syntactic Rule of SG #5:* In sentences containing a subordinate clause, DO-Ellipsis potential is determined prior to syntactic movement.<sup>11</sup>

Sentences containing a subordinate clause have the same ellipsis-related clause-order restrictions as sentences containing a GP, as shown by (10)-(11):

- (10) Anja vnimatel'no perečitala pis'mo, pered tem kak  
 Anya carefully reread letter<sub>ACC</sub> before  
 vložit' (ego) v konvert.  
 put<sub>INFIN</sub> (it)<sub>ACC</sub> in envelope  
 'Anya carefully reread the letter before putting it in the envelope.'
- (11) Pered tem kak vložit' pis'mo v konvert,  
 before put<sub>INFIN</sub> letter<sub>ACC</sub> in envelope,  
 Anja vnimatel'no perečitala ego!\*[e].  
 Anya carefully reread it!\*[e]<sub>ACC</sub>  
 'Before putting the letter in the envelope, Anya carefully reread it.'

Assuming, again, that the matrix clause is base-generated to the left of, and higher than, the subordinate clause, the matrix-clause DO will always be interpreted as the antecedent. When no movement takes place, the matrix-clause antecedent precedes the DO in the subordinate clause, and that DO may be ellipted. When, however, the clause order is switched, ellipsis is blocked because the subordinate-clause DO cannot assume the role of antecedent after movement operations have occurred.

## 2.2. Lexico-Semantic Rules of DO Ellipsis

Thus far, five syntactic rules of DO ellipsis licensed within SG have been proposed. However, even if a given sentence would be expected to have optional DO ellipsis on *syntactic* grounds, the combination of lexical

<sup>11</sup> Although this generalization applies to most subordinate clauses in Russian, it does not apply to all of them. For example, *esli* ('if') permits DO ellipsis with either clause order. See McShane (1998a: 222-225) for discussion of the data and theoretical implications.

items in the sentence can render ellipsis highly preferred (if not virtually mandatory) on *lexico-semantic* grounds.<sup>12</sup> In stating the lexico-semantic rules that follow, I do not specify that they are limited to SG, because, as will be shown later, they apply equally rigorously to configurations of DG. The discussion continues to address only those configurations that contain an ACC antecedent.

*Lexico-Semantic Rule #1:* Pronominal antecedents often render DO Ellipsis highly preferred.

In many syntactic configurations in which an ACC *R-expression* antecedent would permit optional ellipsis, an ACC *pronominal* antecedent renders DO ellipsis highly preferred, as in (12). (Recall that the percent sign indicates that the overt-object variant is stylistically infelicitous, albeit not ungrammatical per se.)

- (12) ...Ona ešče i ešče blagoslovljala ego i  
 she again and again blessed him<sub>ACC</sub> and  
 prižimala [e]/%ego k grudi.<sup>13</sup>  
 pressed [e]/%him<sub>ACC</sub> to breast  
 '...She blessed him time and again and pressed him to her breast.'

*Lexico-Semantic Rule #2:* Referent mismatches (Generic-Specific or Whole-Part) may render DO Ellipsis virtually mandatory.

In some instances, a DO and its antecedent have a generic-specific or whole-part relationship: e.g., *I like Ferraris and bought one*; *They were selling grapes and I bought some*. In Russian, as in English, the second DO in such contexts generally cannot be expressed by a pronoun like *it* or *them* because there is an inexact match between referents. In sentences like (13), in which English uses *one*, Russian must ellipit the DO because *odin* cannot be employed in this manner:

<sup>12</sup> There also exist lexico-semantic factors that can block ellipsis – e.g., when the ellipsis-clause verb has wide selectional restrictions – but these factors are more prevalent in DG than in SG, and are not pursued here for reasons of space.

<sup>13</sup> This example is cited from L. Tolstoj's *Detstvo* (pp. 5-104 in *Detstvo, otročestvo, junost'*, Moskva: Detskaja literatura, 1973). The DO is ellipit in the source text.

- (13) *Včera v universitete prodavali komp'jutery,*  
 yesterday at university were-selling<sub>3,PL</sub> computers<sub>ACC</sub>  
*i moj brat kupil [e]/\*odin.*  
 and my brother bought [e]/\*one<sub>ACC</sub>  
 'Yesterday they were selling computers at the university and my  
 brother bought one.'

In sentences like (14), both English and Russian can express the second DO using *some* (or another referential expression indicating quantity); Russian, however, presents the additional option of ellipting the DO.<sup>14</sup>

- (14) *Na uglu prodavali apel'siny, i*  
 on corner were-selling<sub>3,PL</sub> oranges<sub>ACC</sub> and  
*ja kupila neskol'kol[e].*  
 I bought some/[e]<sub>ACC</sub>  
 'They were selling oranges on the corner and I bought some.'

*Lexico-Semantic Rule #3:* Gender agreement quandaries may render DO Ellipsis virtually mandatory.

DOs in Russian are often ellipted when there are gender-related complications associated with expressing the DO overtly. Such complications most often occur when the biological gender of a person does not correspond to the grammatical gender of the word used to refer to that person in the context, as in (15):

- (15) [Assume that the child is a girl]  
*Mat' pojimala rebenka i šlepnula [e].*  
 mother caught child<sub>MASC.ACC</sub> and slapped [e]<sub>ACC</sub>  
 'The mother caught the child and slapped her.'

In the first clause of this example, a biologically feminine girl is referred to by the grammatically masculine noun *rebenok* 'child'. The next reference to the girl is as the DO of *šlepnula* 'slap'. Biological gender suggests that the object of *šlepnula* should be expressed using the

<sup>14</sup> While some speakers of Russian marginally permit the pronoun *ix* ('them') to be used in examples like (14), others consider this sloppy to the point of being ungrammatical.

feminine pronoun *ee*. However, this is grammatically impossible: rules of Russian grammar require that all pronouns agree in gender with their syntactic antecedents, if they have a syntactic antecedent. Therefore, if the object of *šlepnula* is to be expressed overtly, it must be by the masculine pronoun *ego*. However, since it is strange to refer to a girl using a masculine pronoun, the elliptical variant of this sentence is highly preferred.

### 2.3. Combined Rules of DO Ellipsis Within SG

As was mentioned above, pragmatic factors most often do not affect DO-ellipsis potential within SG, but in certain configurations they do. One such configuration is Syndetic IP Coordination.

Syndetic IP Coordination describes sentences in which two clauses with different subjects are joined by an overt coordinating conjunction.

[[[SUBJ<sub>i</sub>] [VP<sub>i</sub>]] and/but [[SUBJ<sub>j</sub>] [VP<sub>j</sub>]]]

Naturally, we are only interested in configurations of this type that contain coreferential DOs.

In order for DO ellipsis to be possible in such structures, there must be a clear semantic and intonational contrast established between rhematic categories in the clauses, and this contrast must be signalled by the contrastive conjunction *a* or *no*.<sup>15</sup> When a strong contrast is thus established between rhematic categories, thematic ones (here, the repeated DO) are deemphasized and may often be ellipted. Compare in this regard (16a) and (16b). Whereas (16a) presents the actions as a discourse-neutral series and blocks DO ellipsis, (16b) permits ellipsis because of the strong contrast between rhematic *bought* and *hung on the wall*. (This contrast is prosodically indicated by a contrastive rising contour on the verb *kupil*).<sup>16</sup>

<sup>15</sup> For our purposes, an intuitive notion of semantic contrast will suffice. As Yokoyama (1986: 314) says, "Contrast is an intuitively clear but not clearly defined concept." See Yokoyama (1986: 312-316) for a discussion of contrast in Russian.

<sup>16</sup> Yokoyama notes (in a personal communication) that another word order is possible for (16b), producing the same ellipsis judgment (of course, different intonation is required): *Muž kartinu kupil, a rabočie (ee) povesili na stenu*.

- (16) a. Muž kupil *kartinu*, i rabočie povesili  
 husband bought *painting*<sub>ACC</sub> and<sub>COORD</sub> workers hung  
*iee*/\*[e] na stenu.  
*it*/\*[e]<sub>ACC</sub> on wall  
 'My husband bought a painting and workers hung it on the wall.'
- b. Muž kupil *kartinu*, a rabočie povesili  
 husband bought *painting*<sub>ACC</sub> and<sub>CONTRAST</sub> workers hung  
 (*ee*) na stenu.  
 (*it*)<sub>ACC</sub> on wall  
 'My husband bought a painting and workers hung it on the wall.'

### 3.0. DO Ellipsis Licensed within Discourse Grammar with a Syntactically Relevant Antecedent

As (2) shows, syntactically relevant antecedents need not be located within the minimal sentence – they may also be located outside the minimal sentence, making the clause complex part of Discourse Grammar. However, even when an antecedent is not located within the minimal sentence, its position and case-marking can still affect DO ellipsis potential. As a preliminary approach, I analyze all clause complexes that are not clearly single sentences as part of DG. Punctuation is, of course, irrelevant: such clause complexes may be separated a period, a colon, a comma, or a semi-colon.

#### 3.1. Syntactic Rules of DO Ellipsis Licensed within DG

As with ellipsis in SG, ellipsis in DG is most consistently possible in Russian when the antecedent is ACC.

*Syntactic Rule of DG #1: Syntactically visible Antecedents best support DO Ellipsis if they are ACC.*

- (17) Ja snjala s nego *plašč*. Povesila  
 I took-off from him *raincoat*<sub>ACC</sub> Hung  
 (*ego*) na vešalku.  
 (*it*)<sub>ACC</sub> on hanger  
 'I took his raincoat off of him. I hung it on a hanger.'

This appears to be the only primarily syntactic rule of DG. All other rules of DG are “combined” rules, since they indivisibly incorporate aspects of syntax, lexico-semantics, and discourse. Particularly important in all configurations of DG is the semantic and functional relationship between the antecedent clause and the ellipsis clause.

### 3.2. Combined Rules of DG

There are at least two semantically/functionally determined relationships between clause complexes within DG: Asyndetic Coordination and what I call the [Assertion + Elaboration] Strategy.

Asyndetic Coordination represents the same semantic relationship between clauses as Syndetic Coordination does, but there is no overt conjunction joining the clauses, as shown in (17).

Although Asyndetic Coordinate Structures generally permit DO ellipsis, the elliptical variant is often stylistically marked as being overly elliptical or telegraphic. So, whereas the elliptical variant of (17) is stylistically neutral, the elliptical variant of (18) is not – it could only be used in stage directions and other such contexts.<sup>17</sup>

- (18) Rycar' podnimaet meč,            protjagivaet (ego) korolju.  
 knight picks-up sword<sub>ACC</sub> holds-out (it)<sub>ACC</sub> king<sub>DAT</sub>  
 'The knight picks up the sword and holds it out to the king.'

This generalization will be called Combined Rule of DG #1:

*Combined Rule of DG #1:* Asyndetic VP Coordinate Structures (with an ACC antecedent) in Russian regularly permit DO Ellipsis, but the elliptical variant may be stylistically marked.

Importantly, if we were to add a coordinating conjunction to (18), the utterance would belong to SG and the elliptical variant would be stylistically neutral. Thus, Syndetic and Asyndetic coordination are fundamentally different with regard to DO ellipsis.

*Combined Rule of DG #2:* The [Assertion + Elaboration] strategy promotes DO Ellipsis.

<sup>17</sup> The overt-object variant of (18) is stylistically neutral.

The [Assertion + Elaboration] Strategy describes clause complexes in which the first clause asserts something and the second clause explains, embellishes, or otherwise comments upon it, as in (2) and (19):<sup>18</sup>

- (19) Pered teatrom ja kupila bilet na spektakl':  
 in-front-of theater I bought ticket<sub>ACC</sub> to show:  
 odna ženščina prodala (ego) mne za polceny.  
 one woman sold (it)<sub>ACC</sub> me<sub>DAT</sub> for half-price  
 'In front of the theater I bought a ticket to a show: a woman sold it to me for half price.'

*Structurally*, such clause complexes look just like Asyndetic Coordinate Structures: that is, two clauses occur in series with no conjunction joining them. However, *semantically* and *functionally* there is a crucial difference: the [Assertion + Elaboration] Strategy is incompatible with a coordinating conjunction (\**I ate three pirozhki and baked them myself.*), since the second clause acts as an attribute and therefore is not semantically or functionally on a level with the first. On a prosodic level, the clauses in an [Assertion + Elaboration] Structure must be separated by a significant pause. In Russian, this configuration strongly promotes DO ellipsis by making the categories in the first clause felt to be strongly thematic for purposes of the second clause. The ellipsis-promoting power of this configuration is especially clear when the antecedent is non-ACC (a topic pursued in McShane 1998a-b).

### 3.2. Lexico-Semantic Rules of DO Ellipsis Applied to DG

The same lexico-semantic factors that affect DO ellipsis within SG affect it within DG: DO ellipsis can be rendered highly preferred or virtually obligatory by a pronominal antecedent (20) or referent mismatches (21):

- (20) Ona ne otpuskaet menja, prosit [e]/% menja  
 she NEG let-go-of me<sub>ACC</sub> asks<sub>3.SG.</sub> [e]/% me<sub>ACC</sub>  
 vypit' s nej čaj.  
 to-drink with her tea  
 'She doesn't let me go, she asks me to have tea with her.'

<sup>18</sup> See Halliday (1994) for a discussion of 'elaboration' and related notions in Functional Grammar.

- (21) Možet byt', vy kupite kalendar? Net.  
 maybe you will-buy calendar<sub>ACC</sub> no  
 Vy uže [e]/\*odin kupili.  
 you already [e]/\*one<sub>ACC</sub> bought

'How about buying a calendar? No. You already bought one.'

### 3.3. NOM Antecedents

Until now the discussion has focused on configurations in which the antecedent was an ACC DO, since this type of antecedent gives us maximal predictive power regarding DO-ellipsis potential. However, as noted earlier, other types of antecedents can, under certain circumstances, support DO ellipsis. Notable in this regard are NOM antecedents, since they support DO ellipsis in highly predictable configurations of DG (although never within SG). NOM antecedents can function as subjects or as quasi-topics, which are discussed in turn.

The ability of a NOM subject to support DO ellipsis depends upon the nature of its selecting verb. Subjects of lexical verbs can virtually never antecede DO ellipsis, whereas subjects of existential (e.g., *byt'*) or quasi-existential (e.g., *ležat'* 'lie', *ostat'sja* 'remain') verbs sometimes can.<sup>19</sup>

*Combined Rule of DG #3:* NOM Antecedents can support DO Ellipsis only if selected by an existential or quasi-existential verb, never if selected by a lexical verb.

Examples (22) and (23) illustrate this contrast. When the antecedent is the subject of the lexical verb *igrat'* ('play'), DO ellipsis is impossible, but when the antecedent is the subject of *byt'* ('be'), DO ellipsis is possible:<sup>20</sup>

<sup>19</sup> For further discussion of the existential use of lexical verbs see Babby (1980).

<sup>20</sup> For reasons of space, different functions of *byt'* are not pursued here. For discussion, see Chvany (1975).



- (22) *Moi vnuki*                    igrajut        v    podvale.  
*my grandchildren<sub>NOM</sub>*    are-playing in basement.  
 Privedi *ix/\*[e]*                sjuda,    požalujsta.  
 Bring *them/\*[e]<sub>ACC</sub>*    here,    please  
 'My grandchildren are playing in the basement. Bring them here, please.'

- (23) *Moi sapogi*                v    podvale.    Prinesi    (*ix*)  
*my boots<sub>NOM</sub>*    in    basement.    Bring    (*them*)<sub>ACC</sub>  
 sjuda,    poalujsta.  
 here,    please  
 'My boots are in the basement. Bring them here, please.'

Example (24) shows optional DO ellipsis when the antecedent is the subject of quasi-existential *ostat'sja* 'remain'.

- (24) U nix    ostalsja    naš    komp'juter.    Zaberem  
 at them    remained    our    computer<sub>ACC</sub>    we'll-pick-up  
 (*ego*)    na    sledujuščej    nedele.  
 (*it*)<sub>ACC</sub>        next        week  
 'Our computer remained at their house. We'll pick it up next week.'

Crucially, in order for DO ellipsis with a NOM antecedent to be possible, the clause complex must semantically/functionally be of the [Assertion + Elaboration] type, since this clause relationship is highly ellipsis promoting. Ellipsis with a NOM antecedent is consistently blocked in all types of coordinate configurations.

There is a syntactic explanation for why only (quasi-)existential subjects support DO ellipsis. Existential and quasi-existential verbs are unaccusative verbs whose surface subjects occupy DO position at an early stage of the derivation. In other words, existential subjects originate in the ideal position for a DO-ellipsis antecedent. Thus, if ellipsis potential is established prior to syntactic movement (as was suggested earlier with respect to sentences containing subordinate clauses and GPs),

the ability of existential subjects to antecede DO ellipsis is explained.<sup>21</sup> In fact, it is possible that the ability of a subject to support DO-ellipsis in the succeeding clause might be a good test for unaccusativity in Russian.

Apart from being subjects, NOM NPs can present a person or thing as a discourse theme upon which the following sentence comments. By singling out the NP as a discourse theme, such configurations promote DO ellipsis potential on the level of discourse, as in (25)-(27).

- 25) «*Večnyj student!* Uže dva raza uvol'njali  
 eternal student<sub>NOM</sub> Already two times expelled<sub>3.PL</sub>  
 (*ego*) iz universiteta». <sup>22</sup>  
 (*him*)<sub>ACC</sub> from university

“‘An eternal student! They’ve already expelled him from the university twice.’”

- (26) *Vot <Smotri,> bužmanik. Kto-to poterjal (ego).*  
 here-is <look,> wallet<sub>NOM</sub> someone lost (*it*)<sub>ACC</sub>

“‘Here’s <Look,> a wallet. Someone must have lost it.’”

- (27) «*Čto èto?» -- «Zajac. Moj brat (ego) pojmal».*  
 what (is)-that -- hare<sub>NOM</sub> My brother (*it*)<sub>ACC</sub> caught

“‘What’s that?’ ‘A hare. My brother caught it.’”

The ellipsis-promoting discourse properties of topic-like NOM NPs are captured in Combined Rule of DG #4.

*Combined Rule of DG #4: NOM Antecedents that function as Discourse Themes often support DO Ellipsis.*

#### 4. Conclusions

This paper has outlined an approach to DO ellipsis that incorporates syntactic, lexico-semantic, and functional aspects of the language system. An attempt has been made not only to explain patterns of DO ellipsis, but

<sup>21</sup> The similarity between DOs and existential subjects in Russian is discussed in Chvany (1975).

<sup>22</sup> Cited from A. Čexov’s *Višnevij sad* (pp. 555-606 in *Izbrannye proizvedenia v trex tomax, tom III*, Moskva: Xudožestvennaja literatura, 1967). The DO was ellipted in the source text.

also to formulate generalizations that give non-native speakers of Russian some power to predict the elliptability of Russian DOs in various types of configurations. Although the rules proposed here do not comprehensively capture native speaker intuitions regarding DO ellipsis, they do, I believe, argue for the fact that progress can be made in this area. Future work on this topic will undoubtedly include adding to and amending the rules proposed here, as well as placing them in a weighted hierarchy of the type currently being developed in Optimality Theoretic approaches to syntax.

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Computing Research Lab  
Box 3CRL  
New Mexico State University  
Las Cruces, NM 88003