Long-Distance Scrambling, VP Ellipsis and Scope Economy in Russian

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Abstract

This paper discusses novel empirical data on Quantifier scope in Long-Distance Scrambling and VP ellipsis sentences in Russian. Long-Distance Scrambling (henceforth LDS) has been argued to fix quantifier scope in Russian (Bailyn 2001), as demonstrated in (1b). The quantifier scope in LDS sentences is not always fixed, though, as evidenced by the ambiguity of the sentence in (2), which suggests that reconstruction has taken place.

The paper presents a wide range of data on Long Distance Scrambling and argues that Quantifier Scope in Russian LDS sentences is semantically constrained by Fox's Scope Economy principle: the scope derived as a result of scrambling a QP long distance is allowed if and only if this scope reading would not have been available prior to Scrambling. In (1), for instance, the wide scope reading for the scrambled QP is constrained prior to being scrambled to the higher clause by the clause-boundedness of QR (May 1985). Since scrambling this QP (1b) creates the new, otherwise unavailable, scope reading, reconstruction does not take place.

It is further argued that the Scope Economy principle as proposed in Fox (1993, 2000) is also operative in VP ellipsis in Russian. As shown in (3), the presence of an ellipted clause disambiguates scope in favor of the surface reading. However, this is not always the case, as (4a) demonstrates: whenever the ellipted clause is itself ambiguous, the antecedent clause is ambiguous as well; the lack of ambiguity in the ellipsis-containing clause precludes the antecedent clause from being interpreted as ambiguous. This paradigm thus supports Fox's (1993) findings for English: the requirement on parallelism interacts with the Scope Economy in ways that straightforwardly accounts for the presence/absence of scope ambiguity in sentences with VP ellipsis.

With Scope Economy (along with other output constraints) having been argued to be operative in Japanese Long Distance Scrambling as well (Miyagawa 2006), our data constitutes further cross-linguistic evidence that reinforces the idea of Scrambling not being semantically vacuous (Bailyn 2001). The data also constitutes evidence in favor of Scope Economy Principle itself as well as offers some insights into quantifier scope availability in Russian.

(1) ɑ. Dva professora xotjat čtob dekan vygnal každogo studenta
    Two professors want that dean expelled every student
    "Two professors want the dean to expel every student"
    (Two > want > every, *every>two >want)

  b.   [Každogo studenta]$_i$ dva professora xotjat čtob dekan vygnal t$_i$
        Every student two professors want that dean expelled

"Every student, two professors want the dean to expel"
(Every > two, */? two > every)

(2)　　　[Dvux studentov]$_i$　každyj professor　　xočet čtob　dekan vygnal　　　t$_i$
　　　　　Two　students　　　every professor　　wants that　dean　expelled
　　　　　"Two students, every professor wants the dean to expel"
　　　　　(Two > every > want, every > want > two)

(3) a.　Kakoj-to　　　malčik　　　　　potseloval　　každuju　　　devočku
　　　　　some　　　　boy$_{NOM}$　　　kissed　　　　every　　　　girl$_{ACC}$
　　　　　"Some boy kissed every girl"
　　　　　(some > every, every > some)

　　b.　Kakoj-to　　　malčik potseloval　　každuju devočku, a　Vanja – tol'ko odnu/net.
　　　　　Some　　　　boy kissed　　　　　every girl$_{ACC}$ but Vania　just　one$_{ACC}$/not
　　　　　"Some boy kissed every girl but Vania (kissed) just one/but Vania didn't"
　　　　　(some > every, *every > some)

(4) a.　Kakoj-to malčik vosxišaetsia　　　každym učitelem i　kakaja-to devočka tože
　　　　　some　boy　admires　　　　　　every　teacher and　some　　girl　　　too
　　　　　"Some boy admires every teacher and some girl does, too"
　　　　　(some > every, every > some)

　　b.　Kakoj-to malčik vosxišaetsia　　　každym učitelem i　každaja devočka tože
　　　　　some　boy　admires　　　　　　every　teacher and　every girl　　　too
　　　　　"Some boy admires every teacher and every girl does, too"
　　　　　(some > every, *every > some)

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