**Background:** Russian exhibits verb-stranding constructions (VSCs): configurations where no member of the VP is present, except the verb. The current debate regarding VSCs is whether they are derived via head movement of the verb to a position outside of VP and subsequent VP ellipsis (Gribanova 2013, see ex.1 where the position of the verb is boxed), or via ellipsis of the verb's arguments (Landau 2023, see ex.2). One confound is polarity ellipsis (TP ellipsis under verum focus) which also derives VSCs (Gribanova 2017, see ex.3).



The claim: In this paper, we present experimental evidence in favor of argument ellipsis derivation for Russian VSCs when the possibility of polarity ellipsis is controlled for. In line with Landau's (2023) results for Hebrew, we show that VSCs are ungrammatical if they involve omission of constituents the interpretation of which is not of type *e*: which is predicted by Landau's argument ellipsis account and not predicted by any VP ellipsis accounts of VSCs insofar as VP ellipsis is insensitive to the semantic type of subconstituents of VP (as it is under most accounts).

**Experimental design:** The online acceptability judgement study used a  $2 \times 2$  experimental design: the first variable was *e*-type argument vs. non-*e*-type argument (as non-*e*-type arguments, we have employed argumental adverbs and name arguments of naming verbs). The second variable was matrix vs. embedded context: to rule out the possibility of polarity ellipsis, we have employed embedding under verbs that take an embedded clause smaller than TP (namely, predicative control verbs). An example paradigm of all four conditions is provided below.

(4)	a.	Vasja soglasilsja narugať Mašu, a Petja narugať otkazalsja.	
		Vasja agreed scold Masha but Petja scold refused	
		'Vasja agreed to scold Masha, but Petja refused to.'	(+e-type;+embedded)
	b.	Vasja soglasilsja vesti sebja xorošo, a Petja vesti otkazalsja	
		Vasja agreed behave himself well but Petja behave refused	
		'Vasja agreed to himself well, but Petja refused to.'	(-e-type; +embedded)
	с.	Vasja narugal Mašu. A Petja ne narugal.	
		Vasja scolded Masha but Petja not scold	
		'Vasja scolded Masha, but Petja did not.'	(+e-type; -embedded)
	d.	Vasja vel sebja xorošo. A Petja ne vel.	
		Vasja behaved himself well. But Petja not behaved	
		'Vasja behaved well, but Petja did not.'	(-e-type; -embedded)

**Experimental setup:** Our experimental lists conform to 2:1 filler-to-stimulus ratio, each containing 16 filler sentences and 8 stimulus sentences (in order for each participant to encounter each experimental condition twice). The experiment was implemented via the web-based software PCIbex (Schwarz & Zehr 2021). Sentences were presented one at a time. The participants were asked to score each sentence's acceptability on the 1–7 Likert scale. 182 participants (all native speakers of Russian) were recruited online using the Yandex.Tasks crowd- sourcing platform, resulting in 14 participants on average for each list. All participants provided their informed written consent to take part in the study.

**Results:** The results of each participant were z-score transformed to eliminate potential scale bias. The grammatical fillers have the mean z-score of z = .552, while the ungrammatical fillers have the mean z-score of z = -.907. The interaction plot in figure 1 suggests that while there is an effect of both factors, no cumulative effect is to be found: the (-E-TYPE; +EMBEDDED) subgroup shows no emergent effect of the combination of the two conditions. This conclusion is partially supported by a generalized linear mixed-effects model (via

the lmerTest package for R, see Kuznetsova et al. 2017) fitted to the data with the two factors as fixed effects and participant and sentence as random effects. The effect of the semantic type of the argument is significant (coefficient estimate = .510, standard error = .088, p < .001). The effect of the syntactic context has not been found to be as significant (coefficient estimate = -.217, standard error = .092, .01 ,) and is likely due to general dislike of embedded structures by the participants. The effect of the combination of syntactic context and semantic type of the argument has been found to be insignificant (coefficient estimate <math>= -.057, standard error = .126, p > 0.05).



Figure 1: Interaction plot for the factors.

**Discussion:** The effect of the semantic type of the omitted constituent appears to be clear: omitting a constituent of non-*e*-type results in degradation in acceptability of target sentences. While (some) argument ellipsis accounts of VSCs predict such an effect (see Landau 2023), VP ellipsis accounts of VSCs cannot acommodate the role of semantic type of a subconstituent of VP in possibility of VSC. One worry raised by the results is that the mean scores of all subgroups are closer to grammatical fillers than ungrammatical fillers: only relative acceptability shows an effect of the semantic type, which we take to be conclusive. Such a move is not without a precedent: previous studies have argued that a significant effect found in experimental results should be taken as evidence for the initial hypotheses regardless of absolute acceptability (Almeida 2014; Kush et al. 2018).

**Conclusion:** This paper presented an experimental study which supports an argument ellipsis account of Russian VSCs by showing that the semantic type of the omitted constituents influences the grammaticality of VSCs, in line with Landau's (2023) results for Hebrew.

**Sel. references:** • Almeida, D. (2014). Subliminal wh-islands in Brazilian Portuguese and the consequences for syntactic theory. *Revista da ABRALIN*. • Gribanova, V. (2013). Verb-stranding verb phrase ellipsis and the structure of the Russian verbal complex. *Natural Language & Linguistic Theory*, 31:91–136. • Gribanova, V. (2017). Head movement and ellipsis in the expression of Russian polarity focus. *Natural Language & Linguistic Theory*, 35:1079–1121. • Kush, D., Lohndal, T., and Sprouse, J. (2018). Investigating variation in island effects: A case study of Norwegian wh-extraction. *Natural language & linguistic theory*, 36:743–779. • Landau, I. (2023). Argument ellipsis as external merge after transfer. *Natural Language & Linguistic Theory*, 41(2):793–845.