P-stranding out of Place: The bleeding effect of ellipsis on Dutch P-stranding

Synopsis. The *preposition stranding generalization* ("A language *L* will allow preposition stranding under sluicing iff *L* allows preposition stranding under regular *wh*-movement." Merchant 2001:92) has received much recent attention, with most work focusing on (non-)apparent exceptions to the generalization arising in languages that allow preposition-stranding under ellipsis despite disallowing it in non-elliptical sentences (Fortin 2007, Stjepanović 2008, 2012, van Craenenbroeck 2010, Leung 2014, Stigliano 2019, Alshaalan & Abels 2020). Although the opposite type of exception – wherein a language disallows P-stranding under sluicing despite allowing it in non-elliptical clauses – also exists, it has received scant attention. In this paper, we focus on a language that displays this second type of exception (namely, Dutch) and show that the exception is readily explainable and therefore does undermine the validity of the preposition stranding generalization as an argument for Merchant's (2001, 2004) 'silent structure' approach to sluicing. We show that the ban on P-stranding in Dutch is due to a pronominal argument of P moving to the PP-internal functional projection *PlaceP*, a movement that is EPP-driven and required for further movement (i.e. PlaceP is an 'escape hatch' from the PP-domain). As ellipsis *bleeds* this EPP-driven movement, P-stranding cannot ever surface when PP is elided, while P-stranding is perfectly fine when PP is pronounced.

      The ban on P-stranding under ellipsis. Dutch is a preposition-stranding language with a twist: it permits preposition-stranding under A-bar movement only when *R-pronominalisation* (van Riemsdijk 1978) also occurs. R-pronominalisation refers to the obligatory realization of an inanimate pronominal P-complement as a locative pronoun (e.g. *waar* 'where', *daar* 'there', *hier* 'here', indicated by subscript 'R' in examples) that nonetheless behaves and is interpreted as a standard, moving DP (Zwart 2011:217). Puzzlingly, P-stranding is impossible under sluicing, as (1) shows (Merchant 2001:95, Zwart 2011:44, Hoeksema 2014), as well as in gapping, stripping and fragments (Kluck 2015).

(1) Jan zit in zijn kamer. Hij kijkt ergens$_R$ naar, maar ik weet niet waar$_{R,i}$ *(hij naar t_i kijkt).
    Jan sits in his room he looks something at but I know not where he at looks
    'Jan is in his room. He is looking at something, but I don't know what.'

The only interpretation available for the extracted *wh*-constituent in (1) is the true locative one, which is ruled out in this example by the context. This shows that Dutch R-pronouns cannot strand a preposition in a clausal ellipsis site, despite being perfectly capable of stranding a preposition when ellipsis does not render the stranded preposition unpronounced.

      Experimental results ruling out potential analyses. An online acceptability judgment task we conducted with 91 native-speakers shows that this ban on P-stranding is extremely robust. Compared to its P-pied-piping counterpart (see (2)), which receives an average judgment of 6.6 on a 1–7 Likert scale (where 7 = fully acceptable), the P-stranding configuration exemplified in (1) receives an average judgement of 2.5. This difference is statistically significant (p<.001). Because it also showed that P-stranding in a non-elliptical cleft configuration (see (3)) is judged as degraded but not unacceptable (a score of 3.4, which is significantly different from 2.5 (p<.001)), this experiment also rules out any appeal to non-isomorphic cleft-like ellipsis sites as an explanation for why configurations such as (1) are disallowed.

(2) Jan zit in zijn kamer. Hij kijkt ergens$_R$ naar, maar ik weet niet waar$_R$naar.
    Jan sits in his room he looks something at but I know not where.at

(3) Jan zit in zijn kamer. Hij kijkt ergens$_R$ naar, maar ik weet niet waar$_R$ het naaris.
    Jan sits in his room he looks something at but I know not where it at is

In addition, audio recordings we elicited from 3 native speakers invalidate Merchant's (2001:95) prosodic explanation of the ban on P-stranding under sluicing in Dutch, which assumes that remnants
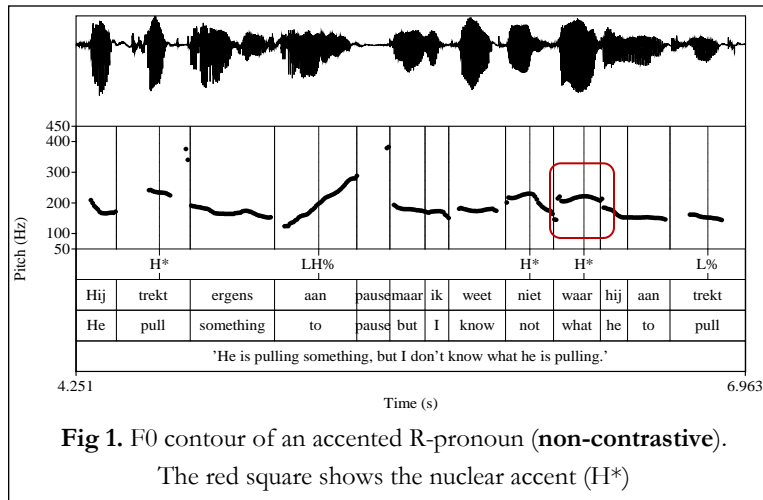
Fig 1. F0 contour of an accented R-pronoun (**non-contrastive**). The red square shows the nuclear accent (H*)

of clausal ellipsis must be capable of bearing a non-contrastive nuclear accent and which postulates that R-pronouns are unsuitable remnants of clausal ellipsis because they cannot bear this accent. Our recordings show that R-pronouns **can** bear this accent (see Fig. 1), which therefore invalidates Merchant's explanation. In addition, our recordings show that stranded prepositions are prosodically-viable elided items (i.e. they can undergo de-accentuation). Taken together, our experimental results indicate that the ban on P-stranding under ellipsis must have a syntactic explanation.

The basics of our syntactic analysis. Our analysis derives the P-stranding ban as the *bleeding* effect of ellipsis on an EPP-driven step of movement on which R-pronominalisation and thus P-stranding depends. The analysis builds on a number of insights from the literature: **[1]** The head of the highest functional projection in the Dutch locative PP (namely, *Place*), triggers EPP-driven movement to its specifier (Koopman 2000) (see Fig. 2). In R-pronominalization contexts, the R-pronoun moves to SpecPlaceP; in other contexts, Place's PP complement moves to SpecPlaceP (ibid.) (the idea that Place's EPP requirement can be satisfied by an R-pronoun is supported by the
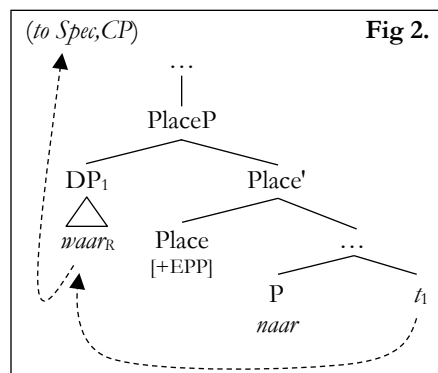

observation that, in addition to true pleonastics (*er*), contentful locative phrases such as *hier* 'here' and *daar* 'there' can satisfy the EPP requirement on T in Dutch (Wesseling 2018)). **[2]** SpecPlaceP is the 'escape hatch' through which an R-pronoun must move to exit the PP domain in P-stranding configurations (Koopman 2000) (see Fig. 2). **[3]** ellipsis *bleeds* EPP-driven movement in the clausal domain (Merchant 2001, van Craenenbroeck & Den Dikken 2006). Assuming that EPP-driven movement occurs to satisfy purely PF-demands (see Landau 2007 and references in there), the only innovation required to explain the Dutch sluicing facts is to claim – as we do – that the bleeding effect of ellipsis arises because the features that trigger EPP-driven movement are never present in an ellipsis site (plausibly, to ensure Global Economy). Because this includes the features that trigger EPP-driven movement on Place, this ensures R-pronouns cannot escape the PP domain under sluicing, and therefore cannot reach SpecCP to yield a good sluicing configuration.

The formal implementation. In our talk, we will provide a detailed formal implementation of the analysis outlined above. This implementation utilizes Pesetsky & Torrego's (2007) feature-sharing Agree system and translates insights from Kayne (2004) on locative expressions into Distributed Morphology's Late Insertion approach. The resulting analysis captures not only the ellipsis facts but also the more general interactions observed in Dutch between (i) P-pied-piping and R-pronominalisation and (i) R-pronouns and true locative pronouns. In addition, the analysis also establishes a formal link between EPP-satisfaction in the clausal and preposition domain. Therefore, in addition to solving a longstanding puzzle in the arena of ellipsis, this research provides new perspectives on a number of frequently-discussed topics in Dutch syntax.

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