

Backwards Pronominalization in Russian: A Syntactic Account

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It is well-known that Backwards Pronominalization (BP), in which a coreferent pronoun precedes its antecedent (1), is more restricted in certain languages than in others. In Russian, for example, sentences equivalent to English (1) are judged to be ungrammatical, as in (2). Standard Binding Principles predict the English case, since there is no c-command relation between the *his/ego* in (1-2) and its subsequent antecedent *John/Ivan*. Attributing the effect to Principle C has been found to be inconsistent with L1 acquisition facts, which show Principle C effects to be present at the earliest age, whereas BP is allowed (Kazanina & Phillips 2006). We determine the exact conditions under which Russian BP is and is not allowed, and thus show that existing accounts (Kazanina 2005, Avrutin & Reuland 2004) cannot be the whole story.

First, we show examples of *poka/while* clauses triggering the violations that are cited in the literature, such as (3), in which the pronominal subject of the subordinate (preceding) *poka/while* clause cannot be coreferent with the matrix (following) clause. However, there are many cases of BP in Russian which do not lead to ungrammaticality. In these cases aspect, grammatical role and the depth of embedding appear to play a crucial role.

The primary theoretical goal of the paper is to provide a unified explanation for the Russian BP violations in (2-3) as a special brand of Principle B violation. Under this approach the remarkable parallels between the embedding effects of (6) and equivalent embedding effects with Principle B (compare (7) to BP effects in (8)) become predictable. Principle B, however, typically involves a local binding domain and a syntactic relation such as c-command. Examples such as (2) have a local domain but no obvious c-command relation. We propose that Russian and English differ in the LF treatment of R-expressions such as *John*, in that they raise to a local A-position in Russian, causing the violation in (2). We unite the possessive cases with the *poka* clauses such as (3) by showing that a process of sharing of temporal features, in the spirit of Pesetsky & Torrego 2004, extends the binding domain to the main clause in cases such as (3). This does not happen in (4) because of the temporal independence of the two clauses in (4a) and the non-simultaneity in (4b); (5) can also be understood in this light: in (5a), the effect is parallel to the embedding effect found in (6), whereas in (5b), the non-Nominative subject of the lower clause does not escape to the higher domain because it is not in an agreement relation with T. The three sets of non-violations discussed in the paper are therefore related to the basic BP violations in a way that reduces the English/Russian difference to independently motivated differences in the Tense system.

- (1) His_i mother loves John_i
- (2) *Ego_i mama ljubit Ivana_i
His mother_{NOM} loves Ivan_{ACC}
“His_i mother loves Ivan_i”
- (3) *Poka on_i rabotal professor_i mečtal o buduščem
while he worked_{IMP} professor dreamt about future_{IMP}
“While he_i was working, the professor dreamt about the future”
- (4) a. Kogda on_i polnostju razvalil stranu, prezident_i ušel
when he completely destroyed_{PERF} country president went
“When/as soon as he_i completely destroyed the country, the president_i left”

- b. Poka on_i razvalival stranu, president_i mnogo pil
While he_{NOM} was destroying_{IMP} country president much drank_{IMP}
“While he_i was destroying the country, the president_i drank a lot”
- c. Poka ona_i byla direktorom, Maša_i delala čto xotela
While she was director_{INSTR} Maša did_{IMP} what wanted
“While she was the director, Maša did what she pleased”
- (5) a. Poka Maša čitala emu_i gazetu, Ivan_i dremal.
While Maša read_{IMP} him_{DAT} newspaper Ivan drowsed_{IMP}
“While Maša read him_i a newspaper Ivan_i was drowsing”
- b. Poka ona_i xorošo učilas, Mašej_i vse byli dovol’ny
While she well studied_{IMP} Maša_{INSTR} all were content
“While she studied well, everyone was happy with Maša”
- (6) a. Rasskaz, kotoryi ona_i pročitala, rasstroil devočku.
story which she read_{PERF} upset_{PERF} girl
“The story which she_i read upset the girl_i”
- b. Poka [ego_i studenty] rabotali, professor_i spal.
While his_{GEN} students worked_{IMP} professor slept_{IMP}
“While his students worked, the professor was sleeping”
- (7) a. */# Ego mašina_i nravitsja Ivanu_i
His_{GEN} car_{NOM} pleases_{PRES.REFL} Ivan_{DA}
“Ivan_i likes his_i car”
- b. Mašina_i ego_i direktora nravitsja Ivanu_i
Car_{NOM} his_{GEN} director_{GEN} pleases_{PRES.REFL} Ivan_{DAT}
“Ivan_i likes his_i boss’ car”
- (8) a. *Ego_i professora predstavili Ivana_i dekanu
His professors introduced Ivan-Acc Dean-Dat
“His_i professors introduced Ivan_i to the Dean”
- b. Druz’ja ego_i profesorov predstavil_i Ivana_i dekanu
Friends his professors introduced Ivan Dean-Dat
“The friends of his_i professors introduced Ivan_i to the Dean.”

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