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OVS in Russian: The OVS word order in Russian is often argued to be derived via A-movement of the object (Bailyn 2004; Pereltsvaig 2021, a.o.). For example, Pereltsvaig (2021) provides evidence from reciprocal binding and weak crossover effects that there is no \bar{A} -movement involved. If OVS is derived via A-movement of the object, two questions emerge: (i) how the main verb ends up before the subject; (ii) how to A-move the object over the subject without violating minimality.

A smuggling approach to inversion: Smuggling (Collins 2005) is the idea that the lower DP can be moved above the higher DP as a subconstituent of some VP via movement of VP. As a result, the lower DP can be targeted for A-movement without violating minimality. Storment (2025) argues that smuggling of the VP derives the surface word order in subject-object inversion constructions, including those found in Russian (e.g., ibid. pp.204–205).

- (1) a. *Knigu čitajet Petja.*
book.ACC reads Petya.NOM
'Petya reads the book.'
b. [VoiceP [VP citajet knigu] Voice [vP Petja v [VP čitajet knigu]]]

In (1), the VP moves to [Spec, VoiceP], after which the object DP is close enough to be targeted for further movement operations without violating A-minimality – it can satisfy the EPP feature on T by moving to [Spec, TP], thus deriving the OV order (Bailyn 2004, a.o.).

The negative claim: The smuggling account predicts that the postverbal argument is the external argument. We argue that this prediction is **not** borne out.

Diagnostics for external arguments: We use agent-oriented adverbials and purpose clauses formed with *čtoby* as diagnostics for the presence of the external argument-introducing Voice head. To guarantee that they work in Russian, we use the absolute impersonal verb *tošnit'* ‘to be nauseated’, which is argued to involve an internal argument (Lavine and Franks 2008), cf. (2). If the smuggling approach to OVS is on the right track, we should expect that S will retain the external argument properties under inversion, as it is resides in its usual structural position.

- (2) a. **Menja naročno tošnit*
me.ACC intentionally nauseates
Int.: 'I intentionally nauseate myself.'
b. **Menja tošnit, čtoby ne čuvstvovat' sebja ploxo s utra*
me.ACC nauseates in.order not feel self bad in morning
Int.: 'I nauseate myself in order not to feel bad in the morning.'

A problem for the smuggling approach: As shown by agent-oriented adverbials and control into a purpose adjunct clause, OVS configurations do not involve external arguments.

- (3) a. *Petja naročno čitajet knigu.*
 Petya.NOM intentionally reads book.ACC
 ‘Petya reads the book intentionally.’

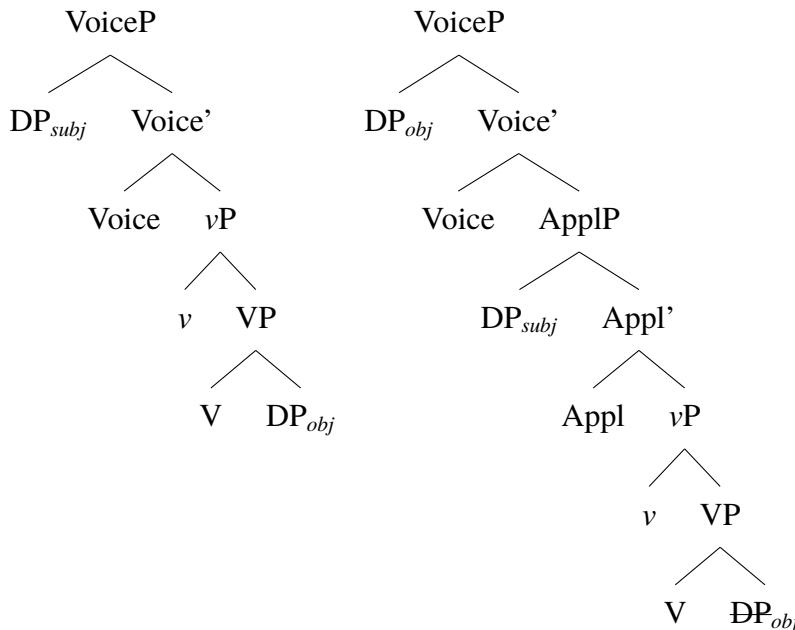
- b. *?? *Knigu naročno čitajet Petja.*
 book.ACC intentionally reads Petya.NOM
 Int.: ‘Petya reads the book intentionally.’

- (4) a. *Petja čitajet knigu, čtoby poumnet’.*
 Petya.NOM reads book.ACC in.order get.smart
 ‘Petya is reading the book in order to get smart.’

- b. *?? *Knigu čitajet Petja, čtoby poumnet’.*
 book.ACC reads Petya.NOM in.order get.smart
 Int.: ‘Petya is reading the book in order to get smart.’

Our analysis: In the spirit of Neu (2024), we suggest that the inversion order corresponds to an affectee reading of the subject, derived via an applicative thematic structure (see the discussion of agent-affectee alternations in German and Spanish in (Cuervo 2003; Neu 2024)).

- (5) Two structures for Russian transitive verbs (Cuervo 2003; Schäfer 2008; Neu 2024)



In the spirit of Deal’s 2019 analysis of applicatives of unaccusatives in Nez Perce, we suggest that the affectee DP cannot undergo A-movement to Spec, VoiceP for anti-locality reasons and, thus, the lower argument undergoes A-movement. Therefore, the affectee DP (the ‘subject’) stays in the thematic domain and is predicted to be on the right of the verb, assuming that Russian verb undergoes head movement to Asp (Gribanova 2013).

Conclusion: We have argued that a smuggling approach to OVS order in Russian makes incorrect predictions regarding the external argument status of the ‘subject’ and proposed an alternative analysis that assumes variable argument linking (Neu 2024).

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[ФМЛ 2025] Результаты рецензирования

Писем: 3

FML Conference <fmliconf@gmail.com>

15 сентября 2025 г. в 22:30

Кому: Беркович Мария Александровна <mberkovich@hse.ru>, Ivan Kalyakin <kalyakin.iv@gmail.com>, dk4981@nyu.edu

Дорогие Мария Александровна, Иван Викторович и Данияр Ерланович,

Мы рады сообщить Вам, что Ваш доклад «OVSorder in Russian_a view from variable argument linking» был принят для участия в конференции «Формальные модели в лингвистике 2025», которая состоится 2-3 декабря 2025 года в Санкт-Петербурге.

Мы просим Вас подтвердить Ваше участие в конференции и прислать деанонимизированную версию тезисов с учётом комментариев рецензентов до 30 сентября. Финальная версия тезисов будет опубликована на сайте конференции.

Чуть позже мы вышлем программу конференции и подробные инструкции о том, как добраться до места её проведения.

Поздравляем и с нетерпением ждём встречи на ФМЛ 2025!

С уважением,
Оргкомитет ФМЛ

Рецензент 1:

The abstract constructs an elegant argument against the smuggling approach to inversion relying on the acceptability of agent-oriented adverbials and purposive adjunct clauses. The logic of the argument is sound but it crucially relies on the unacceptability/ungrammaticality of (3b) and (4b), a judgement I do not share, since I find contrastively focused fronted objects in (3b) and (4b) fully acceptable. I suppose something could be said about there being various subtypes of OVS, though.

Рецензент 2:

This is certainly an interesting analysis of the OVS sentences. But I am a bit uneasy with applicative arguments being assigned nominative in Russian. Is there independent evidence for that? Perhaps I am not familiar with the literature, but I wonder about the nature of the Voice head in the second tree in (5)? Is it unaccusative or passive? Then you predict that it should pass the relevant diagnostics, does it? Also, information-structural and other explanations for (3)–(4) must be explored (and rejected) to make the argument stronger, e.g. I find all, not just agent-oriented, final-position adjuncts (including locative ones, etc.) rather bad with the OVS order (??Knigu chitaet Petja v komnate).

Ivan Kalyakin <kalyakin.iv@gmail.com>

30 сентября 2025 г. в 22:27

Кому: FML Conference <fmliconf@gmail.com>

Копия: Беркович Мария Александровна <mberkovich@hse.ru>, dk4981@nyu.edu

Здравствуйте!

Извините за задержку, вот тезисы Касенов, Беркович, Калякин

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[Цитируемый текст скрыт]

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1 октября 2025 г. в 00:22