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## **P-stranding, evasion, and what they (might) mean for ellipsis identity**

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P-stranding,  
evasion, and  
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(might) mean  
for ellipsis  
identity

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# P-stranding, evasion, and what they (might) mean for ellipsis identity

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August 31, 2023

Introduction

Background

Else-  
modification as  
a diagnostic  
French Sluicing  
and PPs  
Orphan  
Prepositions

Experiment

Design  
Results

General  
Discussion

An alternative  
Wrapping Up

References

# Thanks to my co-authors

P-stranding,  
evasion, and  
what they  
(might) mean  
for ellipsis  
identity

Troy Messick  
Rutgers  
University

Introduction

Background

Else-  
modification as  
a diagnostic

French Sluicing  
and PPs

Orphan  
Prepositions

Experiment

Design

Results

General

Discussion

An alternative

Wrapping Up

References

Viviane Déprez (Rutgers) and Meg Gotowski (Pomona)

# The ellipsis site and its antecedent

P-stranding,  
evasion, and  
what they  
(might) mean  
for ellipsis  
identity

Troy Messick  
Rutgers  
University

Introduction

Background

Else-  
modification as  
a diagnostic  
French Sluicing  
and PPs  
Orphan  
Prepositions

Experiment

Design  
Results

General  
Discussion

An alternative  
Wrapping Up

References

When we encounter an ellipsis site, intuitively we take the meaning of the missing phrase to be related in some way to its antecedent. In many (simple) instances, it appears we can “copy and paste” the antecedent phrase into the ellipsis site.

(1) Randall walked along the rode and Rita did  $\Delta$  too.

# Mismatches are possible

P-stranding,  
evasion, and  
what they  
(might) mean  
for ellipsis  
identity

Troy Messick  
Rutgers  
University

What has puzzled linguists for decades now (and the reason for the workshop) are instances where this simple “copy and paste” procedure does not work.

## Introduction

## Background

Else-  
modification as  
a diagnostic  
French Sluicing  
and PPs  
Orphan  
Prepositions

## Experiment

Design  
Results

## General Discussion

An alternative  
Wrapping Up

## References

# Mismatches are possible

What has puzzled linguists for decades now (and the reason for the workshop) are instances where this simple “copy and paste” procedure does not work.

- Tolerated Mismatches

P-stranding,  
evasion, and  
what they  
(might) mean  
for ellipsis  
identity

Troy Messick  
Rutgers  
University

## Introduction

## Background

Else-  
modification as  
a diagnostic  
French Sluicing  
and PPs  
Orphan  
Prepositions

## Experiment

Design  
Results

## General Discussion

An alternative  
Wrapping Up

## References

# Mismatches are possible

P-stranding,  
evasion, and  
what they  
(might) mean  
for ellipsis  
identity

Troy Messick  
Rutgers  
University

Introduction

Background

Else-  
modification as  
a diagnostic  
French Sluicing  
and PPs  
Orphan  
Prepositions

Experiment

Design  
Results

General  
Discussion

An alternative  
Wrapping Up

References

What has puzzled linguists for decades now (and the reason for the workshop) are instances where this simple “copy and paste” procedure does not work.

- Tolerated Mismatches
  - Voice mismatches in VP-ellipsis (Merchant, 2013)

# Mismatches are possible

P-stranding,  
evasion, and  
what they  
(might) mean  
for ellipsis  
identity

Troy Messick  
Rutgers  
University

Introduction

Background

Else-  
modification as  
a diagnostic  
French Sluicing  
and PPs  
Orphan  
Prepositions

Experiment

Design  
Results

General  
Discussion

An alternative  
Wrapping Up

References

What has puzzled linguists for decades now (and the reason for the workshop) are instances where this simple “copy and paste” procedure does not work.

- Tolerated Mismatches
  - Voice mismatches in VP-ellipsis (Merchant, 2013)
  - $\phi$ -feature mismatches in Predicate and NP ellipsis (Bobaljik and Zocca, 2011; Ranero, 2021; Sprouse et al., 2022; Sudo and Spathas, 2020)



# Mismatches are possible

P-stranding,  
evasion, and  
what they  
(might) mean  
for ellipsis  
identity

Troy Messick  
Rutgers  
University

Introduction

Background

Else-  
modification as  
a diagnostic  
French Sluicing  
and PPs  
Orphan  
Prepositions

Experiment

Design  
Results

General  
Discussion

An alternative  
Wrapping Up

References

What has puzzled linguists for decades now (and the reason for the workshop) are instances where this simple “copy and paste” procedure does not work.

- Tolerated Mismatches
  - Voice mismatches in VP-ellipsis (Merchant, 2013)
  - $\phi$ -feature mismatches in Predicate and NP ellipsis (Bobaljik and Zocca, 2011; Ranero, 2021; Sprouse et al., 2022; Sudo and Spathas, 2020)
  - Vehicle Change of R-expressions (Abels, 2022; Fiengo and May, 1994)

# Mismatches are possible

P-stranding,  
evasion, and  
what they  
(might) mean  
for ellipsis  
identity

Troy Messick  
Rutgers  
University

Introduction

Background

Else-  
modification as  
a diagnostic

French Sluicing  
and PPs

Orphan  
Prepositions

Experiment

Design  
Results

General  
Discussion

An alternative  
Wrapping Up

References

What has puzzled linguists for decades now (and the reason for the workshop) are instances where this simple “copy and paste” procedure does not work.

## ■ Tolerated Mismatches

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- $\phi$ -feature mismatches in Predicate and NP ellipsis (Bobaljik and Zocca, 2011; Ranero, 2021; Sprouse et al., 2022; Sudo and Spathas, 2020)
- Vehicle Change of R-expressions (Abels, 2022; Fiengo and May, 1994)
- Short and Cleft Sources in sluicing (Barros, 2014; van Craenenbroeck, 2010; Rodrigues et al., 2009; Vicente et al., 2021)

# Mismatches are possible

P-stranding,  
evasion, and  
what they  
(might) mean  
for ellipsis  
identity

Troy Messick  
Rutgers  
University

Introduction

Background

Else-  
modification as  
a diagnostic

French Sluicing  
and PPs

Orphan  
Prepositions

Experiment

Design

Results

General

Discussion

An alternative

Wrapping Up

References

It has been shown that gender of elided DPs can mismatch from their antecedent (in restricted ways).

- (2) O Paulo é ator e a Fernanda também é  $\Delta$   
The Paulo is actor and the Fernanda also is  $\Delta$   
'Paulo is an actor and Fernanda is too.' Bobaljik &  
Zocca (2011: ex. 2)

# Mismatches are possible

P-stranding,  
evasion, and  
what they  
(might) mean  
for ellipsis  
identity

Troy Messick  
Rutgers  
University

Introduction

Background

Else-  
modification as  
a diagnostic  
French Sluicing  
and PPs  
Orphan  
Prepositions

Experiment

Design  
Results

General  
Discussion

An alternative  
Wrapping Up

References

Elided R-expressions can seemingly undergo ‘vehicle change’ such that an R-expression of one type in the antecedent can be replaced with another type in the ellipsis site (again in restricted ways).

- (3) John believes himself to be heroic and he said that Mary does  $\Delta$  too.  
 $\Delta$  = believe him to be heroic Fiengo & May (1994: 206 ex. 24)



# Mismatches are possible

P-stranding,  
evasion, and  
what they  
(might) mean  
for ellipsis  
identity

Troy Messick  
Rutgers  
University

Introduction

Background

Else-  
modification as  
a diagnostic

French Sluicing  
and PPs

Orphan  
Prepositions

Experiment

Design  
Results

General  
Discussion

An alternative  
Wrapping Up

References

Cleft and other types of copula continuations have been argued to exist for sluicing for a number of reasons. For instance, p-or-q sluices have no isomorphic continuations and may only occur in languages where clefts are possible continuations.

- (4) Either something's burning, or Sally's baking a cake again, but I don't know which  $\Delta$   
 $\Delta =$  it is Barros (2014: 50 ex. 55a)

# Sources of mismatches

P-stranding,  
evasion, and  
what they  
(might) mean  
for ellipsis  
identity

Troy Messick  
Rutgers  
University

Introduction

Background

Else-  
modification as  
a diagnostic  
French Sluicing  
and PPs  
Orphan  
Prepositions

Experiment

Design  
Results

General  
Discussion

An alternative  
Wrapping Up

References

Mismatches force us to either weaken the identity condition on ellipsis or give enrich the morphosyntax in some way (or a combination of both)

- Tolerated Mismatches
  - Voice mismatches in VP-ellipsis
  - $\phi$ -feature mismatches in Predicate and NP ellipsis
  - Vehicle Change of R-expressions
  - Short and Cleft Sources in sluicing

# Sources of mismatches

P-stranding,  
evasion, and  
what they  
(might) mean  
for ellipsis  
identity

Troy Messick  
Rutgers  
University

Introduction

Background

Else-  
modification as  
a diagnostic  
French Sluicing  
and PPs  
Orphan  
Prepositions

Experiment

Design  
Results

General  
Discussion

An alternative  
Wrapping Up

References

Today, I want to focus on looking at an argument from French that P-stranding under sluicing in a non-p-stranding language derives partially from the possibility of cleft sources (following RNV, Barros and others for different Romance languages).

- Tolerated Mismatches
  - Voice mismatches in VP-ellipsis
  - $\phi$ -feature mismatches in Predicate and NP ellipsis
  - Vehicle Change of R-expressions
  - **Short and Cleft Sources in sluicing**

# Clefts in French Sluicing

P-stranding,  
evasion, and  
what they  
(might) mean  
for ellipsis  
identity

Troy Messick  
Rutgers  
University

Introduction

Background

Else-  
modification as  
a diagnostic

French Sluicing  
and PPs

Orphan  
Prepositions

Experiment

Design  
Results

General  
Discussion

An alternative  
Wrapping Up

References

## ■ Roadmap

- Background: Sluicing, p-stranding generalization, and cleft analyses of apparent counter-examples
- Background: French sluicing, Orphan vs. grammatical prepositions in French
- Acceptability judgment experiment: Design, results and discussion
- Comparison of the cleft approach to recent analysis of p-stranding in Spanish in Stigliano 2022
- General discussion about what this means for ellipsis identity



# Some terminology

P-stranding,  
evasion, and  
what they  
(might) mean  
for ellipsis  
identity

Troy Messick  
Rutgers  
University

Introduction

Background

Else-  
modification as  
a diagnostic

French Sluicing  
and PPs

Orphan  
Prepositions

Experiment

Design  
Results

General  
Discussion

An alternative  
Wrapping Up

References

A sluicing construction like (5) is represented schematically in (6).

(5) [John met *someone*], but I don't know [[*who*]  $\Delta$ ].

(6) [A-Clause ... *correlate* ...] [[*remnant*] E-Clause]

I will sometimes use the term **presluice** to refer to the elided clause before ellipsis takes place. (e.g., this ellipsis site derives from a cleft presluice)

# P-stranding Generalization

P-stranding,  
evasion, and  
what they  
(might) mean  
for ellipsis  
identity

Troy Messick  
Rutgers  
University

Introduction

Background

Else-  
modification as  
a diagnostic  
French Sluicing  
and PPs  
Orphan  
Prepositions

Experiment

Design  
Results

General  
Discussion

An alternative  
Wrapping Up

References

- (7) **Preposition stranding generalization** (Merchant, 2001)

A language L will allow preposition stranding under sluicing only if L allows preposition stranding under regular *wh*-movement.

- (8) a. Who did John talk about?  
b. John talked about someone, but I don't know who  
John talked about

# P-stranding Generalization

P-stranding,  
evasion, and  
what they  
(might) mean  
for ellipsis  
identity

Troy Messick  
Rutgers  
University

Introduction

Background

Else-  
modification as  
a diagnostic  
French Sluicing  
and PPs  
Orphan  
Prepositions

Experiment

Design  
Results

General  
Discussion

An alternative  
Wrapping Up

References

- (9) **Preposition stranding generalization** (Merchant, 2001)

A language L will allow preposition stranding under sluicing only if L allows preposition stranding under regular *wh*-movement.

- (10) a. \*Pjon milise me?  
who she.spoke with  
'Who did she speak with?'
- b. I Anna milise me kapjon alla dhe ksero  
The Anna spoke with someone but not I.know  
\*(me) pjon  
with who  
'Anna spoke with someone but I don't know with who.'

# Many Counterexamples

Merchant himself noted that there are apparent counterexamples to the PSG, and in the years since many authors have noted issues with the PSG in numerous different languages (Almeida and Yoshida, 2007; Fortin, 2007; Rodrigues et al., 2009; Sato, 2011).

- (11) a. \*Quem que a Maria dançou com?  
Who that the Maria danced with  
'Who did Maria dance with'?
- b. A Maria dançou com alguém, mas eu não  
the maria danced with someone, but I not  
lembro (com) quem  
remember (with) who  
'Maria danced with someone but I don't  
remember who.' Almeida & Yoshida (2007:350  
ex. 5-6)

P-stranding,  
evasion, and  
what they  
(might) mean  
for ellipsis  
identity

Troy Messick  
Rutgers  
University

Introduction

Background

Else-  
modification as  
a diagnostic

French Sluicing  
and PPs

Orphan  
Prepositions

Experiment

Design

Results

General

Discussion

An alternative

Wrapping Up

References

# Fitting in the counterexamples

While there have been many ways researchers have attempted to account for the problematic cases, one fruitful avenue of research has been to suggest that apparent p-stranding under sluicing in fact does not involve p-stranding at all but instead involves a cleft presluice (Rodrigues et al 2009, Barros 2014, van Craenenbroeck 2010). Though see (Sag and Nykiel, 2011; Stigliano, 2022)

- (12) O João falou com uma menina mas eu não sei  
The João talked with a girl but I not know  
qual é a menina coma qual João falou  
which is the girl with the which João talked  
'João talked with a girl but I don't know which.' (RNV  
2009: ex 7)

P-stranding,  
evasion, and  
what they  
(might) mean  
for ellipsis  
identity

Troy Messick  
Rutgers  
University

Introduction

Background

Else-  
modification as  
a diagnostic  
French Sluicing  
and PPs  
Orphan  
Prepositions

Experiment

Design  
Results

General  
Discussion

An alternative  
Wrapping Up

References

# Else sluices

P-stranding,  
evasion, and  
what they  
(might) mean  
for ellipsis  
identity

Troy Messick  
Rutgers  
University

Introduction

Background

Else-  
modification as  
a diagnostic

French Sluicing  
and PPs

Orphan  
Prepositions

Experiment

Design

Results

General

Discussion

An alternative

Wrapping Up

References

In arguing against cleft sources for English sluices, Merchant gives a number of diagnostics that he uses to control for the possibility of a cleft preluice (Merchant, 2001).

- (13) a. Harry was there, but I don't know who else was  
there
- b. #Harry was there, but I don't know who else it was

# Else sluices

P-stranding,  
evasion, and  
what they  
(might) mean  
for ellipsis  
identity

Troy Messick  
Rutgers  
University

Introduction

Background

Else-  
modification as  
a diagnostic

French Sluicing  
and PPs

Orphan  
Prepositions

Experiment

Design  
Results

General  
Discussion

An alternative  
Wrapping Up

References

*Else* is incompatible with clefts due to the fact that it leads to a semantic anomaly when composed with the meaning of the cleft pronoun (Barros, 2012).

- (14) a. Jack left, but I don't know who else left.  
b.  $\lambda p. \exists x[\text{human}(x) \ \& \ x \neq y_j \ \& \ p = \hat{\text{left}}(x)]$
- (15) a. #Jack left, but I don't know who else it was  
b.  $\lambda p. \exists x[\text{human}(x) \ \& \ x \neq y_j \ \& \ p = \hat{\text{left}}(z)] = x]$

# Else-modification meets P-stranding

P-stranding,  
evasion, and  
what they  
(might) mean  
for ellipsis  
identity

Troy Messick  
Rutgers  
University

Introduction

Background

Else-  
modification as  
a diagnostic

French Sluicing  
and PPs

Orphan  
Prepositions

Experiment

Design  
Results

General

Discussion

An alternative  
Wrapping Up

References

At least in the languages where *else* modification is incompatible with clefts, Rodrigues predicts that p-stranding should not be possible with *else* modification since it would rule out the possibility of a cleft preluice. This is the case for Spanish.

- (16) Juan ha hablado con una chica rubia, pero no  
Juan has talked with a girl blonde, but not  
sé \*(con) qué chica más  
know (with) what girl else  
'Juan has talked with a blonde girl, but I don't know  
with what other girl' RNV (2009: ex. 27a)



# Looking at French

In an appendix, RNV 2009 discuss French. Like the other Romance languages we have discussed so far, French does not allow for p-stranding under *wh*-movement, but it is possible in sluicing.

- (17) a. \*Qui tu as dansé avec?  
Who you have danced with  
'Who have you danced with?'
- b. Jean a dansé avec quelqu'un, et je ne  
Jean has danced with someone, and I NEG  
sais pas qui  
I NEG who  
'Jean has danced with someone but I don't know  
who.'
- RNV (2009: ex. 70 & 72)

P-stranding,  
evasion, and  
what they  
(might) mean  
for ellipsis  
identity

Troy Messick  
Rutgers  
University

Introduction

Background

Else-  
modification as  
a diagnostic

French Sluicing  
and PPs

Orphan  
Prepositions

Experiment

Design  
Results

General  
Discussion

An alternative  
Wrapping Up

References

# Looking at French

P-stranding,  
evasion, and  
what they  
(might) mean  
for ellipsis  
identity

Troy Messick  
Rutgers  
University

Introduction

Background

Else-  
modification as  
a diagnostic

French Sluicing  
and PPs

Orphan  
Prepositions

Experiment

Design  
Results

General  
Discussion

An alternative  
Wrapping Up

References

Unlike Spanish, at least with the preposition *avec*, p-stranding under sluicing is still possible with *else* modification.

- (18) Jean a dansé avec Marie, mais je ne sais  
Jean has danced with Marie, but I NEG know  
pas (avec) qui d'autre  
NEG (with) who else.  
'Jean danced with Marie, but I don't know who else.'  
RNV (2009: ex. 77)

# Looking at French: A twist

While this appears to be the case for *avec*, other prepositions seem to behave differently.

- (19) Les policiers ont parlé à quelqu'un mais on se  
The police have spoken to someone but we SE  
demande (à) qui  
ask (to) who  
'The police have spoken to someone, but we wonder  
who.'
- (20) Les policiers ont parlé à ce garçon et on se  
The police have spoken to this boy and we SE  
demande \*(à) qui d'autre  
ask (to) who else  
'The police have spoken to this boy and we wonder  
who else.'

P-stranding,  
evasion, and  
what they  
(might) mean  
for ellipsis  
identity

Troy Messick  
Rutgers  
University

Introduction

Background

Else-  
modification as  
a diagnostic

French Sluicing  
and PPs

Orphan  
Prepositions

Experiment

Design  
Results

General

Discussion

An alternative  
Wrapping Up

References

# The puzzle in a nutshell

P-stranding,  
evasion, and  
what they  
(might) mean  
for ellipsis  
identity

Troy Messick  
Rutgers  
University

Introduction

Background

Else-  
modification as  
a diagnostic

French Sluicing  
and PPs

Orphan  
Prepositions

Experiment

Design  
Results

General  
Discussion

An alternative  
Wrapping Up

References

Some prepositions, like *avec*, can be dropped in sluicing even when there is *else* modification. Other prepositions, like *à*, can only be dropped in instances where *else* modification has not taken place. How and Why does this difference exist?

# French sluicing

Compared with other Romance languages, sluicing in French (dialects) is relatively understudied (Dagnac, 2019; Gotowski, 2022; Ott and Therrien, 2020). We assume that French sluicing is the result of movement + deletion. One piece of evidence for this is that remnants can show reconstruction effects.

- (21) Chaque linguiste<sub>i</sub> a critiqué une partie de ses<sub>i</sub>;  
each linguist has criticized a part of his  
travail mais je ne sais pas combien de ses<sub>i</sub>;  
work but I NEG know not how.much of his  
travail  
work  
'Each linguist criticized part of his own work, but I  
don't know how much of his own work.'

P-stranding,  
evasion, and  
what they  
(might) mean  
for ellipsis  
identity

Troy Messick  
Rutgers  
University

Introduction

Background

Else-  
modification as  
a diagnostic

French Sluicing  
and PPs

Orphan  
Prepositions

Experiment

Design  
Results

General  
Discussion

An alternative  
Wrapping Up

References

# French Sluicing

P-stranding,  
evasion, and  
what they  
(might) mean  
for ellipsis  
identity

Troy Messick  
Rutgers  
University

Introduction

Background

Else-  
modification as  
a diagnostic

French Sluicing  
and PPs

Orphan  
Prepositions

Experiment


Design  
Results

General  
Discussion

An alternative  
Wrapping Up

References

A piece of evidence that the remnant must be *ex situ* comes from sluices with *pourquoi*. While most questions in French can occur with *wh-in-situ*, *pourquoi* must occur *ex situ*. [Gotowski examples]

- (22) a. Pourquoi tu ris?   
Why you laugh  
'Why are you laughing?'
- b. \*tu ris pourquoi  
you laugh why  
'You are laughing why?'

# French Sluicing

P-stranding,  
evasion, and  
what they  
(might) mean  
for ellipsis  
identity

Troy Messick  
Rutgers  
University

Introduction

Background

Else-  
modification as  
a diagnostic

**French Sluicing  
and PPs**

Orphan  
Prepositions

Experiment

Design  
Results

General  
Discussion

An alternative  
Wrapping Up

References

Sluices with *pourquoi* are perfectly acceptable.

(23) Jean mange quelque chose, mais je sais pas  
Jean eat some thing, but I know not  
pourquoi

why



'Jean is eating something but I do not know why.'

# Quoi-sluices

A potential issue for a move and delete approach to French sluicing is that the form *quoi* appears in sluiced clauses, but is typically found when left in situ.

- (24)
- a. Que/\*Quoi regardes-tu  
what watch-you  
'What are you watching?'
  - b. Tu regarde quoi/\*que  
you watch what  
'You are watching what?'
  - c. Jean mange quelque chose, mais je ne sais  
Jean eat some thing, but I NEG know  
pas quoi/\*que  
not what  
'Jean is eating something, but I don't know what.'

P-stranding,  
evasion, and  
what they  
(might) mean  
for ellipsis  
identity

Troy Messick  
Rutgers  
University

Introduction

Background

Else-  
modification as  
a diagnostic

French Sluicing  
and PPs

Orphan  
Prepositions

Experiment

Design  
Results

General  
Discussion

An alternative  
Wrapping Up

References



# Quoi-sluices

P-stranding,  
evasion, and  
what they  
(might) mean  
for ellipsis  
identity

Troy Messick  
Rutgers  
University

Introduction

Background

Else-  
modification as  
a diagnostic

French Sluicing  
and PPs

Orphan  
Prepositions

Experiment

Design  
Results

General  
Discussion

An alternative  
Wrapping Up

References

Gotowski's solution in a nutshell is to analyze *que/quoi* as allomorphs. *Que* is inserted when the interrogative pronoun is structural adjacent to the verb. *Quoi* is an elsewhere form. Sluicing destroys the environment for the *que* VI rule to apply, hence the elsewhere form surfaces.

- (25) a. [+wh -human] ⇔ *que* / \_\_\_ +V  
b. [+wh -human] ⇔ *quoi* / elsewhere

Given these data, we assume that Ross/Merchant's classic move and delete analysis of sluicing is applicable to French (though see our discussion later).



# French Sluicing

P-stranding,  
evasion, and  
what they  
(might) mean  
for ellipsis  
identity

Troy Messick  
Rutgers  
University

Introduction

Background

Else-  
modification as  
a diagnostic

French Sluicing  
and PPs

Orphan  
Prepositions

Experiment

Design  
Results

General  
Discussion

An alternative  
Wrapping Up

References

Returning to P-stranding data, as far as we are aware, all Ps can be omitted in sluicing without *else* modification. However, only a subset of Ps can be omitted with *else* modification. (Here we are putting aside Lafontaine French, which allows for P-stranding under regular *wh*-movement). Based on traditional judgment collection, we categorized Ps into the following two groups.

- (26) a. **Ps that can be omitted with or without else-modification:** *avec* (with), *pour* (for), *derrière* (behind)
- b. **Ps that can be omitted only without else-modification:** *à* (to), *de* (of), *par* (by)

# French Orphans

P-stranding,  
evasion, and  
what they  
(might) mean  
for ellipsis  
identity

Troy Messick  
Rutgers  
University

Introduction

Background

Else-  
modification as  
a diagnostic  
French Sluicing  
and PPs

**Orphan  
Prepositions**

Experiment

Design  
Results

General  
Discussion

An alternative  
Wrapping Up

References

These groupings seem to correlate with another property of French prepositions: their ability to occur as **Orphans** (i.e., without a complement) (Authier, 2016; Zribi-Hertz, 1984). The group that always allows for P-omission can also act as Orphans.

- (27) a. Je voyage toujours avec cette valise  
I travel always with this suitcase  
'I always travel with this suitcase.'
- b. Cette valise, je voyage toujours avec  
this suitcase, I travel always with  
'This suitcase, I always travel with (it).'
- Zribi-Hertz (1984: ex. 1-2)

# French Orphans

P-stranding,  
evasion, and  
what they  
(might) mean  
for ellipsis  
identity

Troy Messick  
Rutgers  
University

Introduction

Background

Else-  
modification as  
a diagnostic

French Sluicing  
and PPs

**Orphan  
Prepositions**

Experiment

Design  
Results

General

Discussion

An alternative  
Wrapping Up

References

The group that only allows P-omission without *else* modification cannot act as Orphans. Following the literature we refer to these as **Grammatical** prepositions.

- (28) a. J' adore aller à Paris  
I love go.INF to Paris  
'I love to go to Paris.'
- b. \*Paris, J' adore aller à  
Paris, I love go.INF to  
'Paris, I love to go to (it).' Zribi-Hertz (1984: ex.  
33)

# French Orphans

P-stranding,  
evasion, and  
what they  
(might) mean  
for ellipsis  
identity

Troy Messick  
Rutgers  
University

Introduction

Background

Else-  
modification as  
a diagnostic

French Sluicing  
and PPs

**Orphan  
Prepositions**

Experiment

Design  
Results

General  
Discussion

An alternative  
Wrapping Up

References

Despite first appearances, orphanhood does not seem to be derived via movement as the dependency can occur across islands.

- (29) Cette valise, J'ai concu l'hypothese que  
this suitcase, I.have concieved the.hypothesis that  
Marie pourrait voyager avec  
Marie might travel with  
'This suitcase, I have conceived the hypothesis that  
Marie might travel with (it).' Zribi-Hertz (1984: ex.  
30)

The gaps found in the Orphan prepositions are analyzed as null pronominals similar to resumptives.

# Our hunch

- The correlation between Orphanhood and the possibility of P-omission with *else*-modification is not coincidental, but stem from the same source.

P-stranding,  
evasion, and  
what they  
(might) mean  
for ellipsis  
identity

Troy Messick  
Rutgers  
University

Introduction

Background

Else-  
modification as  
a diagnostic

French Sluicing  
and PPs

**Orphan  
Prepositions**

Experiment

Design

Results

General

Discussion

An alternative

Wrapping Up

References

# Our hunch

P-stranding,  
evasion, and  
what they  
(might) mean  
for ellipsis  
identity

Troy Messick  
Rutgers  
University

Introduction

Background

Else-  
modification as  
a diagnostic

French Sluicing  
and PPs

**Orphan  
Prepositions**

Experiment

Design  
Results

General  
Discussion

An alternative  
Wrapping Up

References

- The correlation between Orphanhood and the possibility of P-omission with *else*-modification is not coincidental, but stem from the same source.
- P-omission with grammatical prepositions is only possible with a cleft presluice. Once you control for that possibility through the use of *else*-modification, P-omission is no longer possible.

# Our hunch

P-stranding,  
evasion, and  
what they  
(might) mean  
for ellipsis  
identity

Troy Messick  
Rutgers  
University

Introduction

Background

Else-  
modification as  
a diagnostic

French Sluicing  
and PPs

Orphan  
Prepositions

Experiment

Design  
Results

General  
Discussion

An alternative  
Wrapping Up

References

- The correlation between Orphanhood and the possibility of P-omission with *else*-modification is not coincidental, but stem from the same source.
- P-omission with grammatical prepositions is only possible with a cleft presluice. Once you control for that possibility through the use of *else*-modification, P-omission is no longer possible.
- P-omission with Orphan prepositions can come for cleft or Orphan presluices. Hence, even if you control for the cleft presluice, P-omission can still obtain through the prepositions Orphan use. Cf. Saudi Arabic where resumption is argued to be a source of P-omission (Alshaalan and Abels, 2020)



# Acceptability Judgment experiment

P-stranding,  
evasion, and  
what they  
(might) mean  
for ellipsis  
identity

Troy Messick  
Rutgers  
University

Introduction

Background

Else-  
modification as  
a diagnostic

French Sluicing  
and PPs

Orphan  
Prepositions

Experiment

Design  
Results

General  
Discussion

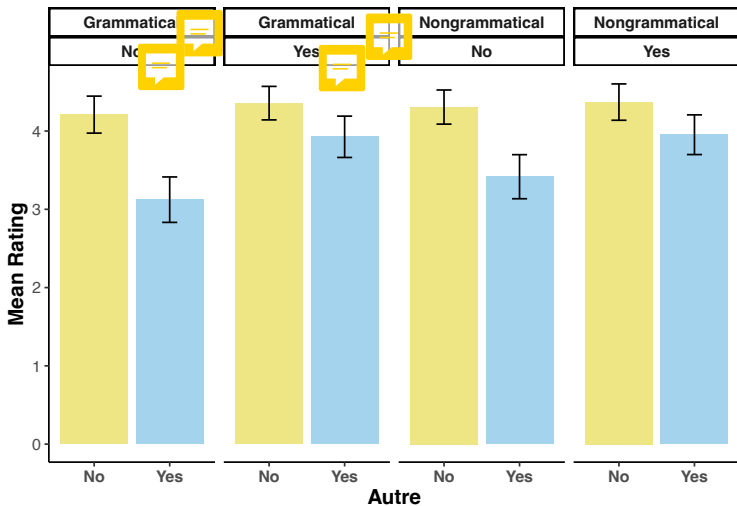
An alternative  
Wrapping Up

References

To put us on surer empirical footing, we ran an acceptability judgment experiment.

- The design was  $2 \times 2 \times 2$ 
  - The variables we controlled were: P-omission (omitted vs. not omitted), P-type (grammatical vs. Orphan), Else-modification (Else vs. No else)
- The target sentences were randomized with an equal number of fillers.
- 50 French speakers were recruited over Prolific, and were asked to rate the acceptability of a sentence on a scale of 1-5 using Qualtrics.

# Results



P-stranding, evasion, and what they (might) mean for ellipsis identity

Troy Messick  
Rutgers University

Introduction

Background

Else-modification as a diagnostic

French Sluicing and PPs

Orphan Prepositions

Experiment

Design

Results

General Discussion

An alternative Wrapping Up

References

# Results discussion

P-stranding,  
evasion, and  
what they  
(might) mean  
for ellipsis  
identity

Troy Messick  
Rutgers  
University

Introduction

Background

Else-  
modification as  
a diagnostic

French Sluicing  
and PPs

Orphan  
Prepositions

Experiment

Design

Results

General

Discussion

An alternative

Wrapping Up

References

- While sentences were judged highly, we see a statistically significant drop when *else*-modification is used.
- We also see a small but significant difference between Orphan vs Grammatical prepositions with P-stranding with Orphan with *else*-modification being rated higher than Grammatical omission with *else*-modification.
- The relative means in what we found is in line with what our analysis predicts (with the caveat the absolute means are somewhat higher than we might have expected). We take this as modest support for our proposal.

# An Alternative: Stigliano 2022

P-stranding,  
evasion, and  
what they  
(might) mean  
for ellipsis  
identity

Troy Messick  
Rutgers  
University

Introduction

Background

Else-  
modification as  
a diagnostic  
French Sluicing  
and PPs  
Orphan  
Prepositions

Experiment

Design  
Results

General  
Discussion

**An alternative**  
Wrapping Up

References

Stigliano 2022 gives an alternative analysis for P-omission in (her dialect of) Spanish. Based on P-omission in a number of different elliptical environments, she comes up with the descriptive generalization in (30), on which she bases her analysis.

- (30) P-omission in ellipsis in Spanish is only allowed when the following two conditions are met (a) the remnants correlate in the antecedent does not move, and (b) the remnant does not move.

# An Alternative: Stigliano 2022

P-stranding,  
evasion, and  
what they  
(might) mean  
for ellipsis  
identity

Troy Messick  
Rutgers  
University

Introduction

Background

Else-  
modification as  
a diagnostic

French Sluicing  
and PPs

Orphan  
Prepositions

Experiment




Design  
Results

General  
Discussion

An alternative  
Wrapping Up

References

Recall that French allows for both wh-ex-situ and wh-in-situ productively. We might expect the possibility of P-omission to differ when a fragment is a response to a ex-situ or in-situ question. This does not appear to be the case. The fragment in (32) can be used as an answer to either of the questions in (31).

- (31) a. Avec qui tu dansais   
with who you dance  
'With whom are you dancing'
- b.  dansais  avec qui  
you dance with who  
'you are dancing with who?'

- (32) (Avec) Maria  
(with) Maria  
'(with) Maria'

# Implications for Identity

What does this mean for identity?

P-stranding,  
evasion, and  
what they  
(might) mean  
for ellipsis  
identity

Troy Messick  
Rutgers  
University

Introduction

Background

Else-  
modification as  
a diagnostic

French Sluicing  
and PPs

Orphan  
Prepositions

Experiment

Design

Results

General

Discussion


An alternative

**Wrapping Up**

References

# Implications for Identity

What does this mean for identity?

- If it is the case that clefts are possible as a way to allow for P-omission, this appears to  evidence for a mismatch between the antecedent and ellipsis site.

P-stranding,  
evasion, and  
what they  
(might) mean  
for ellipsis  
identity

Troy Messick  
Rutgers  
University

Introduction

Background

Else-  
modification as  
a diagnostic

French Sluicing  
and PPs

Orphan  
Prepositions

Experiment

Design

Results

General

Discussion

An alternative

**Wrapping Up**

References

# Implications for Identity

P-stranding,  
evasion, and  
what they  
(might) mean  
for ellipsis  
identity

Troy Messick  
Rutgers  
University

Introduction

Background

Else-  
modification as  
a diagnostic

French Sluicing  
and PPs

Orphan  
Prepositions

Experiment

Design  
Results

General  
Discussion

An alternative  
**Wrapping Up**

References

What does this mean for identity?

- If it is the case that clefts are possible as a way to allow for P-omission, this appears to evidence for a mismatch between the antecedent and ellipsis site.
- Difficult to see how cases fit with a strict syntactic isomorphic condition.



# Implications for Identity

P-stranding,  
evasion, and  
what they  
(might) mean  
for ellipsis  
identity

Troy Messick  
Rutgers  
University

Introduction

Background

Else-  
modification as  
a diagnostic

French Sluicing  
and PPs

Orphan  
Prepositions

Experiment

Design

Results

General

Discussion

An alternative

Wrapping Up

References

What does this mean for identity?

- If it is the case that clefts are possible as a way to allow for P-omission, this appears to evidence for a mismatch between the antecedent and ellipsis site.
- Difficult to see how cases fit with a strict syntactic isomorphic condition.
- Also potentially at odds with conditions like “no new words” (Chung, 2005)

# Implications for Identity

P-stranding,  
evasion, and  
what they  
(might) mean  
for ellipsis  
identity

Troy Messick  
Rutgers  
University

Introduction

Background

Else-  
modification as  
a diagnostic

French Sluicing  
and PPs

Orphan  
Prepositions

Experiment

Design  
Results

General  
Discussion

An alternative  
Wrapping Up

References

## What does this mean for identity?

- If it is the case that clefts are possible as a way to allow for P-omission, this appears to evidence for a mismatch between the antecedent and ellipsis site.
- Difficult to see how cases fit with a strict syntactic isomorphic condition.
- Also potentially at odds with conditions like “no new words” (Chung, 2005)
- Cleft mismatches do seem compatible with certain semantic approaches to identity (Focus/QUD-based) or potentially structural approaches that allow for less structure than the antecedent.

P-stranding,  
evasion, and  
what they  
(might) mean  
for ellipsis  
identity



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Rutgers  
University

Thank You!

Introduction

Background

Else-  
modification as  
a diagnostic

French Sluicing  
and PPs

Orphan  
Prepositions

Experiment

Design

Results

General

Discussion

An alternative

**Wrapping Up**

References

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P-stranding,  
evasion, and  
what they  
(might) mean  
for ellipsis  
identity

Troy Messick  
Rutgers  
University

Introduction

Background

Else-  
modification as  
a diagnostic  
French Sluicing  
and PPs  
Orphan  
Prepositions

Experiment

Design  
Results

General  
Discussion

An alternative  
Wrapping Up

References

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