

This correlates with Philippova's (2014) findings about the possibility of preposition omission under sluicing (cf. also similar data from other languages, such as Polish: Szczegielniak 2008, or Spanish: Rodrigues et al. 2009)

- (7) On govoril s čjimi-to rodstvennikami, no ja ne uveren, ^(?)(s) Toninymi li.
he spoke with someone's relatives, but I not sure with Tonya's Q
'He talked to someone's relatives, but I'm not sure if it were Tonya's relatives'

Analysis

The facts about preposition omission can be taken as arguing in favor of the analysis of alternative questions in terms of clausal coordination and ellipsis (e.g., Han and Romero 2004) and against the analysis of alternative questions with term disjunctions (e.g., Nikolae 2015).

The reason why light prepositions cannot be omitted in alternative questions is that the structure of sentences like (2) involves clausal coordination and sluicing. The omission of a preposition would require preposition stranding under sluicing, which is independently prohibited (5).

The preposition omission is allowed in (3), precisely because the preposition in (3) is one of those prepositions that can be stranded under sluicing (4).

Further correlations between the availability of preposition omission under sluicing and preposition omission in alternative questions (as in (6) and (7)) also point at the conclusion that alternative questions involve clausal coordination and ellipsis.

Conclusion

The patterns of preposition omission strongly suggest that alternative questions in Russian are not based on term disjunctions, but. Thus, Russian can be considered one of those languages for which it has been argued (on different grounds) that alternative questions rather involve clausal disjunctive coordination and ellipsis (cf. Japanese: Uegaki 2014, Croatian: Gračanin-Yüksek 2016a, and Turkish: Gračanin-Yüksek 2016b). Finally, I suggest that the correlations between the patterns of preposition omission in alternative questions and under sluicing could be used as a tool to diagnose the proper syntactic structure of alternative question in other languages.

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