

Split constructions by base generation: Evidence from reciprocals, NCIs, and indefinites in Russian

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1 Introduction

- Cross-linguistically reciprocals often consist of two parts that may be placed next to each other or split by further material. Analyses differ in whether the split is derived by movement (Sigurðsson et al. 2022, Landau 2024, Messick & Harðarson 2024) or by base generation (Paparounas & Salzman 2024, Messick & Ragotham 2024).
- This research brings to light data on split reciprocals in Russian and shows that splitting in Russian is very restrictive in that only a subset of the prepositions can appear between the two parts of the reciprocal.
- I then demonstrate that there are two other phenomena that allow the same type of splitting: negative concord items and indefinite pronouns.
- On the basis of interpretative differences attested for negative concord items, I argue that split forms in all three constructions are derived by various generation, not by movement.
- I then suggest that prepositions that allow splitting are part of the nominal extended projections (see Grimshaw 1991, Keine 2020) and therefore are transparent for selection.

2 Split constructions

2.1 Split reciprocals

- As in a number of other languages, a reciprocal pronoun in Russian consists of two parts. The first part is indeclinable and the second part inflects for case. It shows class 2 inflection.

(1) My ljubim **drug drug-a**.
we love other other-ACC
'We love each other.'

- Both parts of the reciprocal are the same and are identical to the root of the noun *drug* 'friend', but this noun shows inflection of class 1. In fact, historically both parts of the reciprocal originate from the adjective *drugoj* 'other'.
- The two parts of the reciprocal may be placed next to each other as in (1), but may be also split by other material as in (2); see Es'kova (1996), Arkad'ev (2016).

(2) Oni govorili drug **pro** drug-a.
they talked other about other-ACC
'They talked about each other.'

- In what follows, I will investigate the restrictions on such splits (see also Petelin 2020, Bondarenko 2022).
- As shown in (3) verbs cannot split the two parts of the reciprocal.

- (3) a. My ljubim **drug drug-a**.
 we love other other-ACC
 ‘We love each other.’
 b.*My drug **ljubim** drug-a.
 we other love other-ACC
 ‘We love each other.’
- Reciprocals cannot be split by a noun.
- (4) a. Oni čitali knigi **drug drug-a**.
 they read books other other-GEN
 ‘They read each other’s books.’
 b.*Oni čitali drug **knigi** drug-a.
 they read other books other-GEN
 ‘They read each other’s books.’
- Prepositions can split the two parts of the reciprocal. Non-split sentences are strongly degraded.
- (5) a. Oni spisali domašku drug **u** drug-a.
 they copied homework other by other-GEN
 ‘They copied homework from each other.’
 b. ?*Oni spisali domašku u **drug drug-a**.
 they copied homework by other other-GEN
 ‘They copied homework from each other.’
- (6) a. Oni govorili drug **pro** drug-a.
 they talked other about other-ACC
 ‘They talked about each other.’
 b. ?*Oni govorili pro **drug drug-a**.
 they talked about other other-ACC
 ‘They talked about each other.’
- (7) a. Oni gotovjat užin drug **dlja** drug-a.
 they prepare dinner other for other-GEN
 ‘They prepare dinner for each other.’
 b. ?*Oni gotovjat užin dlja **drug drug-a**.
 they prepare dinner for other other-GEN
 ‘They prepare dinner for each other.’
- Not all prepositions may split the reciprocal.
- (8) a. Druzja idut navstreču **drug drug-u**.
 friends walk towards other other-DAT
 ‘Friends walk towards each other.’
 b.*Druzja idut drug **navstreču** drug-u.
 friends walk other towards other-DAT
 ‘Friends walk towards each other.’
- (9) a. Oni sprašivali po povodu **drug drug-a**.
 they asked on reason other other-GEN
 ‘They asked about each other.’
 b.*Oni sprašivali drug **po povodu** drug-a.
 they asked other on reason other-GEN
 ‘They asked about each other.’

- (10) a. My živy blagodarja **drug drug-u**.
 we alive thanks other other-DAT
 ‘We are alive thanks to each other.’
 b.*My živy drug **blagodarja** drug-u.
 we alive other thanks other-DAT
 ‘We are alive thanks to each other.’

- Non-homogeneity of Russian prepositions is discussed for a number of other processes; see (Hill 1977, Yadroff & Franks 1999, Philippova 2018, Ionova 2019).
- While different authors postulate different subgroups within Russian preposition, in all groupings there seem to be two poles: simple non-derived prepositions and complex derived prepositions.
- Further distinctions between the prepositions come from the fact that derived prepositions show different degrees of complexity.
 - For instance, *blagodarja* ‘thanks to’ and *po povodu* ‘about’ are build from the verb and the P+N respectively. They clearly display morphology of their original categories and co-exist with the corresponding verb and noun in modern Russian.
 - Prepositions like *vozle* ‘near’ and *krome* ‘except’ also have nominal origin, but corresponding nouns are not present in the language and the derived nature of these prepositions is not obvious.
- Returning to the reciprocal pronoun, it is clear that simple prepositions appear in between the two parts of the reciprocal and the complex preposition must precede the pronoun. And there are also some prepositions for which judgments are less clear and both placings might be possible.

- (11) a. Oni stojat vozle **drug drug-a**.
 they stand near other other-GEN
 ‘They stand next to each other.’
 b.?Oni stojat drug **vozle** drug-a.
 they stand other near other-GEN
 ‘They stand next to each other.’

- (12) a. Oni ne znajut nikogo krome **drug drug-a**.
 they not know no.one except other other-GEN
 ‘They do not know another besides each other.’
 b.?Oni ne znjut nikogo drug **krome** drug-a.
 they not know no.one other except other-GEN
 ‘They do not know another besides each other.’

- To sum up, reciprocals in Russian can be split by other material, but splitting is very limited: It is possible only for a subset of the prepositions.

2.2 Other splits: NCI and indefinites

- Interestingly, reciprocals are not the only case where two elements that are expected to appear next to each other may split by other material.
- In this section, I will present two other constructions that allow splitting and show the same restrictions on it.
- The first such phenomenon comes from negative concord item (NCI).
- NCIs in Russian are composed of negative particle *ni* that is similar but not identical to the negation marker *ni* and a *wh*-word.
- In a regular case, the negative particle appears to be prefixed to a *wh*-word and according to Russian orthography must be spelled adjacent to the pronoun.

(13) Oni ne ljubjat **nikogo**.
they NEG love *n.who.ACC*
'They do not love anyone.'

(14) Oni ne čitali **nič'i** knigi.
they NEG read *n.whose* books
'They read no one's books.'

- I suggest that splitting of NCIs is restricted in the same way as splitting of reciprocals.
- As shown in (15) and (16), verbs and nouns cannot split NCIs.

(15) *Oni ne ni ljubjat kogo.
they NEG *n* love who.ACC
'They do not love anyone.'

(16) *Oni ne čitali ni knigi č'i .
they NEG read *n* books whose
'They read no one's books.'

- Splitting is attested with simple prepositions.
- Sentences without split as in examples (b) are grammatical, but do not have a negative concord interpretation. They have double negation reading; more on this in section 3.3.

(17) a. Oni ne spisali domašku ni **u** kogo.
they NEG copied homework *n* by who.GEN
'They did not copy homework from anyone.'

b#Oni ne spisali domašku u **nikogo**.
they NEG copied homework by *n.who.GEN*
'They did not copy homework from no one.'

(18) a. Oni ne govorili ni **pro** kogo.
they NEG talked *n* about who.ACC
'They did not talk about anyone.'

b#Oni ne govorili pro **nikogo**.
they NEG talked about *n.who.ACC*
'They did not talk about no one.'

(19) a. Oni ne gotovjat užin ni **dlja** kogo.
they NEG prepare dinner *n* for who.GEN
'They did not prepare dinner for anyone.'

b#Oni ne gotovjat užin dlja **nikogo**.
they NEG prepare dinner for *n.who.GEN*
'They did not prepare dinner for no one.'

- Splits are blocked with complex prepositions.

(20) *Druzja ne idut ni **navstreču** komu.
friends NEG walk *n* towards who.DAT
'Friends do not walk towards anyone.'

(21) *Oni ne sprašivali ni **po povodu** kogo.
they NEG asked *n* on reason who.GEN
'They asked about each other.'

- (22) *My ne mertvy ni **blagodarja** komu.
 we NEG dead *n* thanks who.DAT
 ‘We are alive thanks to no one.’
- There is however a gray zone where the degree of preposition’s complexity is not obvious and so is its placement with respect to NCIs.
- (23) ??Oni ne stojat ni **voze** kogo.
 they NEG stand *n* near who.GEN
 ‘They do not stand next to anyone.’
- The second case is based on indefinite pronouns.
 - Russian has several types of indefinite pronouns, the ones showing splits are build by indefinite marker *koe-* and a wh-word.
 - As shown in (24), indefinite marker typically occurs next to the wh-word and separated by a hyphen. This series of indefinite pronouns realizes specific indefinite meaning.
- (24) Ona ljubjit **koe-kogo**.
 she loves INDEF-who.ACC
 ‘She love someone.’
- (25) Oni čitali **koe-č’i** knigi.
 they read INDEF-whose books
 ‘They read someone’s books.’
- Verbs and nouns do not split indefinites.
- (26) *Ona koe **ljubjit** kogo.
 she INDEF loves who.ACC
 ‘She love someone.’
- (27) (Oni čitali koe **knigi** č’i.
 they read INDEF books whose
 ‘They read someone’s books.’
- Simple prepositions can split indefinites, but may also precede the indefinite pronoun.
- (28) a. Oni spisali domašku koe **u** kogo.
 they copied homework INDEF by who.GEN
 ‘They copied homework from someone.’
 b. Oni spisali domašku u **koe-kogo**.
 they copied homework by INDEF-who.GEN
 ‘They copied homework from someone.’
- (29) a. Oni govorili koe **pro** kogo.
 they talked INDEF about who.ACC
 ‘They talked about someone.’
 b. Oni govorili pro **koe-kogo**.
 they talked about INDEF-who.ACC
 ‘They talked about someone.’
- (30) a. Oni gotovjat užin koe **dlja** kogo.
 they prepare dinner INDEF for who.GEN
 ‘They prepared dinner for someone.’

- b. Oni gotovjat užin dlja **koe-kogo**.
 they prepare dinner for INDEF-who.GEN
 ‘They prepared dinner for someone.’

- Complex prepositions do not split indefinites. They must be placed before the pronoun.

- (31) a.*Druzja idut koe **navstreču** komu.
 friends walk INDEF towards who.DAT
 ‘Friends walk towards someone.’
 b. Druzja idut navstreču **koe-komu**.
 friends walk towards INDEF-who.DAT
 ‘Friends walk towards someone.’
- (32) a.*Oni sprašivali koe **po povodu** kogo.
 they asked INDEF on reason who.GEN
 ‘They asked about someone.’
 b. Oni sprašivali po povodu **koe-kogo**.
 they asked on reason INDEF-who.GEN
 ‘They asked about someone.’
- (33) a.*My živy koe **blagodarja** komu.
 we alive INDEF thanks who.DAT
 ‘We are alive thanks to someone.’
 b. My živy blagodarja **koe-komu**.
 we alive thanks INDEF-who.DAT
 ‘We are alive thanks to someone.’

- For some prepositions empirical picture is less clear.

- (34) a. ?Oni stojat koe **vozle** kogo.
 they stand INDEF near who.GEN
 ‘They stand next to someone.’
 b. Oni stojat vozle **koe-kogo**.
 they stand near INDEF-who.GEN
 ‘They stand next to someone.’

- To sum up, NCIs and indefinite pronouns allow splitting analogous to reciprocals. The splits are restricted to the same set of prepositions.
- The data are summarized in the table below.

(35) Data summary

Class	Examples	Split reciprocals	Split NCI	Split INDEF
Verbs	<i>ljubit</i> ‘love’	*	*	*
Nouns	<i>kniga</i> ‘book’	*	*	*
Simple prepositions	<i>u</i> ‘by’ <i>pro</i> ‘about’ <i>dlja</i> ‘for’	yes	yes	yes
Mixed prepositions	<i>vozle</i> ‘near’ <i>krome</i> ‘except’	??	??	??
Complex prepositions	<i>navstreču</i> ‘towards’ <i>po povodu</i> ‘about’ <i>blagodarja</i> ‘thanks to’	*	*	*

3 Argument for base generation

3.1 Splits are syntactic

- Preposition type often correlates with morphological complexity (Ionova 2019); cf. monosyllabic *pro* ‘about’ vs. trisyllabic *navstreču* ‘towards’.
- I will now present four arguments for the syntactic nature of the split.
- First, prepositions of different types can be equally complex phonologically: In (36)-(37), both pronouns are disyllabic, but only the second one originates from P+N complex.

(36) Oni kričat drug **iz-za** drug-a.
they cry other due.to other-GEN
‘They cry due to each other.’

(37) Oni kričat **v piku** drug drug-u / *drug **v piku** drug-u.
they cry in spear other other-DAT other in spear other-DAT
‘They cry to spite each other.’

- Second, if the split was regulated morphologically, then all light, clitic-like elements would be predicted to pattern with simple prepositions, contrary to the facts; see negation marker *ne* that cannot split the reciprocal.

(38) Oni slyšat **ne** drug drug-a (/ *drug **ne** drug-a), a menja.
they hear NEG other other-ACC other NEG other-ACC but me
‘They hear not each other, but me.’

- The third argument comes from coordination. The data show that duplication of the preposition before the second conjunct is forced if the preposition splits first conjunct.
- This is unexpected if the placement of the preposition in between the reciprocal and indefinite is post-syntactic.

(39) My edem **k** Van-e i (**k**) Pet-e.
we go to Vanja-DAT and to Petja-DAT
‘We go to Vanja and Petja.’

(40) a. My edem **k** koe-komu i Pet-e.
we go to INDEF.who.DAT and Petja-DAT
‘We go to someone and Petja.’
b. My edem koe **k** komu i k Pet-e.
we go INDEF to who.DAT and to Petja-DAT
‘We go to someone and Petja.’
c. *My edem koe **k** komu i Pet-e.
we go INDEF to who.DAT and Petja-DAT
‘We go to someone and Petja.’

(41) a. My edem drug **k** drug-u i **k** Pet-e.
we go other to other-DAT and to Petja-DAT
‘We go to each other and Petja.’
b. *My edem drug **k** drug-u i Pet-e.
we go other to other-DAT and Petja-DAT
‘We go to each other and Petja.’

- The fourth arguments comes from differences in the interpretation of NCIs.

- Russian is a strict negative concord language (Brown 1999). However, as noted by Fitzgibbons (2010) placement of the negative particle after a preposition as in (42) yields double negation reading. The negative concord reading is grammatical only if negation precedes the preposition; see (43).

- (42) Vera ne sdelala salat **iz** ničego.
 Vera NEG made salad from *n*.what
 ‘Vera didn’t make a salad from nothing.’ DN/*NC
- (43) Vera ne sdelala salat ni **iz** čego.
 Vera NEG made salad *n* from what
 ‘Vera didn’t make a salad from anything.’ NC/*DN

3.2 Against distant extraction

- One way to derive splits in syntax is via movement of the first part. The data in this section show that even if such movement takes place, it must be extremely local, so that the two parts of the split construction still are a constituent afterwards.
- First, independently of whether the reciprocal is split by a preposition, it behaves as a constituent for the purposes of topicalization.

- (44) a. **Éto drug drug-a** my nenavidim.
 this other other-ACC we hate
 ‘It is each other that we hate.’
 b. ***Éto drug** my nenavidim druga.
 this other we hate other-ACC
 ‘It is each other that we hate.’
 c. ***Éto drug-a** my nenavidim drug.
 this other-ACC we hate other
 ‘It is each other that we hate.’
- (45) a. **Éto drug u drug-a** my spisali domašku.
 this other by other-GEN we copy homework
 ‘It is from each other we copied the homework.’
 b. ***Éto drug** my spisali domašku u drug-a .
 this other we copy homework by other-GEN
 ‘It is from each other we copied the homework.’
 c. ***Éto u drug-a** my spisali domašku drug.
 this other by other-GEN we copy homework drug
 ‘It is from each other we copied the homework.’

- The same holds for fragment answers.

- (46) a. Kogo oni nenavidjat? **Drug drug-a**.
 whom they hate other other-ACC
 Who do they hate? Each other.
 b. *Kogo oni nenavidjat? **Drug-a**.
 whom they hate other-ACC
 Who do they hate? Each other.
 c. *Kogo oni nenavidjat? **Drug**.
 whom they hate other
 Who do they hate? Each other.

- (47) a. U kogo oni spisali domašku? **Drug** u **drug-a**.
 by who they copy homework other by other-GEN
 ‘Who did they copy the homework from? From each other.’
 b.*U kogo oni spisali domašku? U **drug-a**.
 by who they copy homework by other-GEN
 ‘Who did they copy the homework from? From each other.’
 c.*U kogo oni spisali domašku? **Drug**.
 by who they copy homework other
 ‘Who did they copy the homework from? From each other.’

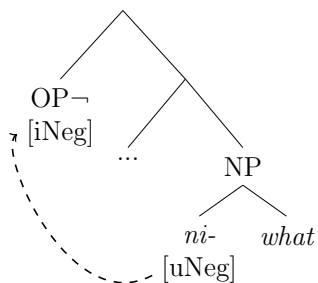
3.3 In favor of the base generation

- The argument comes from different interpretations of the NCI depending on the positions of the negative particle with respect to the preposition.

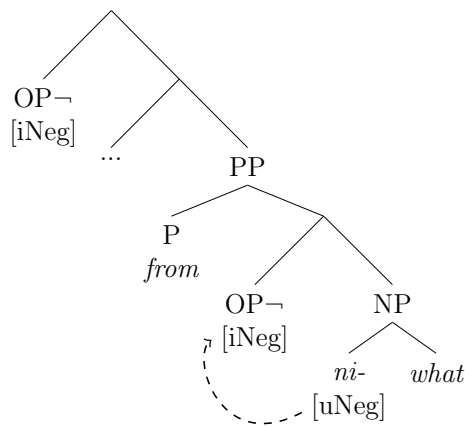
- (48) Vera ne sdelala salat **iz** ničego.
 Vera NEG made salad from *n*.what
 ‘Vera didn’t make a salad from nothing.’ DN/*NC
- (49) Vera ne sdelala salat ni **iz** čego.
 Vera NEG made salad *n* from what
 ‘Vera didn’t make a salad from anything.’ NC/*DN

- If the syntactic approaches to negative concord are to be taken seriously, varying placement of negation before and after the preposition must result from different base generations, not movement.
- Following Zeijlstra (2008, 2022), neg-words in negative concord languages are obligatorily licensed by the negative operator.
- On the clausal level this operator inevitably leads to the presence of the negation marker, but being embedded into a PP, the negative operator may have no realization on the surface (cf. Fitzgibbons 2010, McMahon 2024).
- The distribution of such operator can be restricted semantically (Zeijlstra 2022) or by syntactic licensing, i.e., the operator may have a feature that must be checked against the neg-word (Fitzgibbons 2010).

(50) Regular negative concord



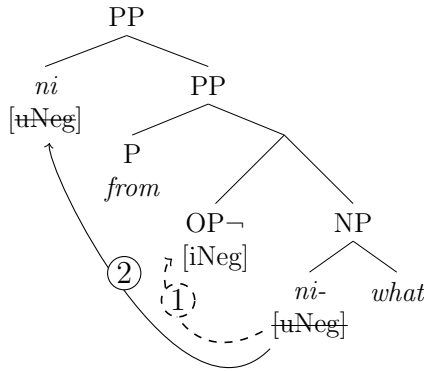
(51) Double negation in PP



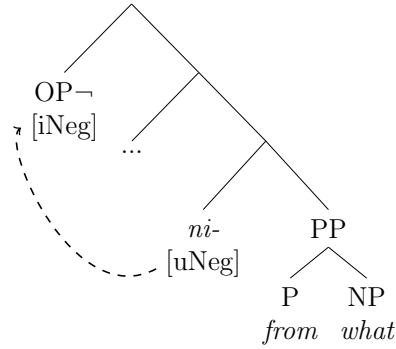
- As agreement and movement are both syntactic operations, agreement may apply before movement.
- Consequently, if *n- P wh* order is derived by movement of negation in front of the preposition, nothing excludes agreement with the negative operator before movement as shown in (52).

- This predicts availability of the double negation reading, contrary to the facts. I suggest that lack of this reading argues for base generation of negation above the P head.

(52) Wrong prediction of movement approach



(53) Base generation outside of PP

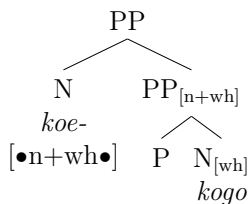


- As splitting of reciprocals, NCIs, and indefinites shows the same restrictions, I suggest that the conclusions drawn on the basis of NCIs extend to the other two processes. To sum up, splitting is syntactic and is derived base generation.

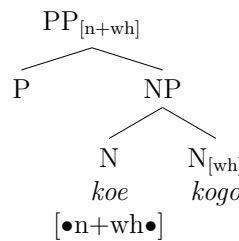
4 P heads as extended nominal projections

- Splits of negative concord items and thus also of reciprocals and indefinites are base generated. It remains to be derived why only simple prepositions may appear in all three split constructions.
- I suggest that simple prepositions being P heads (cf. Philippova 2018) are part of the nominal extended projections, while derived prepositions contain another lexical head (N, Adv, or V depending on the origin of the preposition) and hence start their own functional projection.
- I further assume that extended projections are defined by inheritance of features from their base to the top (Van Riemsdijk 1990, 1998, Grimshaw 1991, 2000, Shlonsky 2006, and Keine 2019, 2020 for a technical implementation).
- The part separated by a preposition selects for the part that is embedded under the P head. Due to feature inheritance within maximal projections, such selection can be satisfied by merge at the P-level; see (54).
- This accounts for varibale placement of *koe* with simple prepositions:

(54) Simple P: Low position

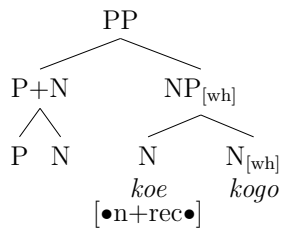


(55) Simple P: High position

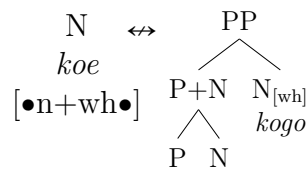


- Complex prepositions contain a new lexical head that blocks feature inheritance, so that seemingly non-local selection cannot succeed.

(56) Complex P: Low position

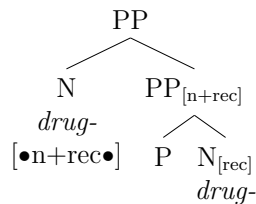


(57) Complex P: No high position



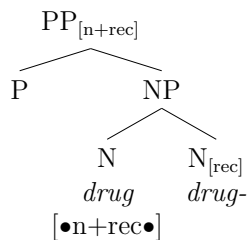
- Reciprocals and NCIs differ in that splitting is obligatory for simple prepositions.
- This is because NCIs and reciprocals require licensing in the main clause (negative concord and condition A, respectively). This licensing is blocked if they are embedded into the PP, it is a phase.

(58) Simple P: Low position



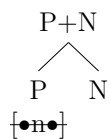
- High position of the preposition – licensing of the reciprocal within PP is not possible.

(59) Simple P: High position – blocked



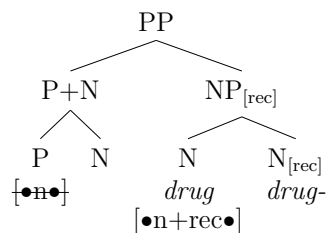
- Due to the internal structure of the complex prepositions, the NP is the second argument of the P head, i.e., it is automatically at the edge and available for processes outside.

(60) Complex P

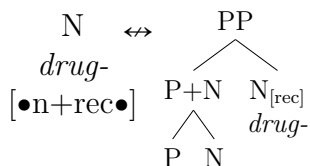


- Low placement of the preposition remains blocked by selection.

(61) Complex P: Low position



(62) Complex P: No high position



5 Conclusion and outlook

- This research presents an investigation of split reciprocals, negative concord items, and indefinites in Russian and shows that all three can be split by simple prepositions.
- If the analysis is on the right track, it has two main theoretical implications.
 1. Splits results from various generation, not movement.
 2. Simple prepositions are transparent to selection.
- What about other properties that differentiate simple and complex prepositions (Hill 1977, Yadroff & Franks 1999, Philippova 2018)?
 - Simple prepositions require the n-form of third person pronouns.

(63) My idëm k **nej** / *ej.
we go to her her
'We go to her.'

(64) My idëm navstreču **ej** / *nej.
we go to her her
'We go towards her.'

- Complex, not simple prepositions may be stranded.

(65) a. **K** komu my idëm?
to who.DAT we go
b. *Komu my idëm **k**?
who.DAT we go to
'Who do we go to?'

(66) a. **Navstreču** komu my idëm?
towards who.DAT we go
b. Komu my idëm **navstreču**?
who.DAT we go towards
'Who do we go towards?'

- I would like to suggest that other properties are compatible with the proposed analysis.
 - First, heavily relying on Philippova (2018), I assume that n-forms of the pronouns are morphologically conditioned allomorphy that is possible for the P head as it is local enough. In case of the complex prepositions, the locality requirement is not met.
 - Second, I assume that P is a phase head that has no escape hatch. Complements of simple prepositions are thus unavailable for movement by their own, while arguments of complex prepositions are the second argument of P and remain accessible (see also Podobryaev 2009, Philippova 2022).

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