

# snippets

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Issue 26

December 2012

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## Contents

1. Luka Crnic. *Projection of supplements in alternatives.*
2. Michael Erlewine. *Structurally distant haplology.*
3. Natalia Fitzgibbons. *Pied-pipe your preposition and strand it too.*
4. Michael Frazier and Masaya Yoshida. *Remarks on gapping in ASL.*
5. Sumiyo Nishiguchi. *Shifty operators in Dhaasanac.*
6. Jacopo Romoli. *Strong NPIs and Neg-raising desire predicates.*
7. Philippe Schlenker. *Informativity-based maximality conditions.*



**Natalia Fitzgibbons – Concordia University**  
***Pied-pipe your preposition and strand it too***

[fitzgibbonsnatasha@gmail.com](mailto:fitzgibbonsnatasha@gmail.com)

doi: 10.7358/snip-2012-026-fitz

Languages differ in whether they allow stranding prepositions under wh-movement (1) or require pied-piping of the preposition (2), or even neither of the two. Snyder (2007) provides a comprehensive overview of the history of the P-stranding parameter and points out that there might exist varieties of English that permit either pied-piping or stranding, the two options possibly associated with different grammars in the same speaker. I would like to propose that another logically possible option may in fact be realized: some speakers of American English use a construction in informal speech that appears to combine both pied-piping and stranding (3a,b).

(1) What subject did they talk **about** *t*? (Snyder, Sugisaki 2003)

(2) a. Spanish (Snyder, Sugisaki 2003) :

\* Cuál asunto hablaban **sobre** *t* ?  
 which subject were-they-talking about

b. **Sobre** cuál asunto hablaban *t* ?  
 about which subject were-they-talking

(3) a. A Joliet man was stabbed in the head with a screwdriver by the husband of a woman **with** whom he was speaking **with** at a local bar, police said. (Lieberman 2009)

b. **For** who did you buy this **for**?

Speakers I have discussed these constructions with characterise them as informal and not infrequent; not surprisingly, many do not accept these constructions at all. Doubled Ps seem more acceptable in relative clauses than in matrix wh-questions, (see Hoffman (2011) for a quantitative discussion of British English). Nevertheless, one of my students, a native of Sussex County in Delaware, USA, enthusiastically accepts a large number of such questions as something he would definitely say; a number of other students accept them more cautiously. They quickly suggest a connection to the prescriptive ban on ending sentences with a preposition. I would not chalk these constructions up to the prescriptive ban, however, because they occur in informal speech where there is no reason to satisfy prescriptive rules. Moreover, this phenomenon is not restricted to modern colloquial American English. Mark Lieberman (and Nuria Yanez-Bouza) provide examples of relative clauses with doubled Ps from different stages of the history of English. (4) is an early Modern English example:

- (4) Behinde the Lunges, towarde the Spondels, passeth Mire or Isofagus, **of** whom it is spoken **of** in the Anatomie of the necke  
(Helsinki Corpus, science, Thomas Vicary 1548, s2, p62, chVIII)

Thus, the examples in (3) are not isolated instances of attempts to satisfy prescriptive rules or of performance errors.

The explanations we have for the stranded P in the base position will make the full copy of the PP at the landing site unexplained, and vice versa. If further research establishes conclusively that doubled Ps are a feature of some speakers' grammars, we will want to re-examine the idea that P-stranding and pied-piping are necessarily mutually exclusive options within a speaker's grammar. Snyder's (2007) proposal that wh-movement of PP-complements is determined by a cluster of parameters regulating movement will then receive a strong confirmation.

### References

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