Syntactic absence is not necessary
Chung et al. 2010 posit that sprouting is conditioned on the inner antecedent being syntactically empty.
7) [Dana ate], but I can’t remember what.
There are problems with the syntactic emptiness approach (Larson 2011)
Fragment Answers involve silent syntax (Merchant 2004):
8) Q: Who bought the book? A: Dana
9) Dana [bought the book]
Sprouting characteristics arise with fragment answer antecedents
10) Q: Who bought something? A: Dana, but I don’t know what.
   Island sensitivity
11) Q: Who made the claim that Ivy sold something? A: Iris, but I don’t know what.
   P-stranding prohibition
12) Q: Who was talking to someone? A: Dana, but I don’t know who *(to)
Ellipsis feeds sprouting
VP ellipsis
18) Amy talked to someone. Jim did [talk to someone] too, but I don’t know who *(to)
19) *Dana met a man who invented something. Jill did [met a man who invented something] too, but I don’t know what.
20) *Dana met a man who invented something. Jill did too, but I don’t know what.
   IP ellipsis
21) Someone was waiting for something. I remember who was waiting for something, but I can’t remember what *(for).
22) *Someone wondered whether Dana stole something. I remember who [wondered whether Dana stole something], but I don’t remember what.
23) *Someone wondered whether Dana stole something. I remember who, but I don’t remember what.
A Givenness condition
Descriptively, we see that sprouting is conditioned on the inner antecedent being both indefinite (something or null) and implicit (elided or null).
Rules in: This rules in null indefinite antecedents (2) and elided indefinite antecedents (10)
Rules out: traces of movement (13) and un-elided something (1) which are respectively not indefinite and not implicit.
Sprouting antecedents are Given (Schwarzschild 2000) and unpronounced (Merchant 2001) argues that ellipsis is licensed by Given-ness and eliding the overt indefinite inner antecedent something in (24) ensures that it is Given.
24) Amy saw someone, Jim did [saw someone] too, but I don’t know who.
   The null indefinite complement qua inner antecedent in (2) is also Given, in that the null internal argument of eat is entails that the verb is used intransitively.
25) Amy was eating, but I can’t remember what.
   Discourses are continuously updated, and sluicing takes the most recent update as its antecedent.

Basics of Sprouting
A sub-type of sluicing:
1) Dana was eating something, but I can’t remember what.
2) Dana was eating, but I can’t remember what.
A slight difference with big reccurrences: Island sensitivity
3) I saw the movie that showed Ivy eating something, I just can’t remember what.
4) “I saw the movie that showed Ivy eating. I just can’t remember what.
Swiping Licensing
5) “Dana was talking to someone, I just can’t remember who TO.
6) Dana was talking, I just can’t remember who TO. Ross 1976
P-stranding prohibition
7) Dana was talking to someone, I just can’t remember who.
   Chung 2005
8) “Dana was talking, I just can’t remember who.

One-substitution also feeds sprouting
One-substitution is conditioned upon Givenness
26) Dana saw a green book and Iris saw one too.
   One-substitution spurs swiping/no p-stranding
28) Dana read a book about something. Iris read one too, but I can’t remember what *(about).
   It also spurs island sensitivity
29) Dana read a book about a man who invented something, but I can’t remember what.
30) “Dana read a book about a man who invented something. Iris read one too, but I can’t remember what
   Givenness seems to condition sprouting. But how?

In English, it is extraposition:
31) Dana was eating, but I can’t remember what [Dana was eating] *(for).
   No extraposition of objects prepositions, no sprouting of them:
32) “Dana was talking to a tall man.
33) “Dana was talking, but I don’t know who.
   The extraposed trace is “marked” and goes unelided in island contexts
34) I saw the movie that showed Ivy eating. I just can’t remember what [saw someone] *(for)
   In Dutch, it is scrambling:
35) “Jan heeft Marie niet boeken uitgedeeld, Jan has books out-handed but I don’t know who
   He has handed out books.
   Neelam 1994
36) “Jan heeft boeken uitgedeeld, maar ik weet niet wie.
   Jan has handed out books, but I don’t know who