Movement out of Islands and Reconstructive Anchors

In syntax, island effects have mostly been attributed to constraints on the movement operation itself, or as couched in more recent terms, Internal Merge and chain formation. The examples in this paper suggest that the locality requirement of islands may partly be attributable to constraints on reconstruction, in particular the ability to license bound variables. I will show that certain kinds of movement, namely subextraction, permit movement across islands in cases where full extraction is not possible. I will argue that this is because such movements involve “reconstructive anchors” which allow the recovery of the variable of the dislocated expression.

Complex-NP is standardly assumed to be a strong island out of which Ā-dependencies such as topicalization are supposed to be impossible, as shown in (1). However, in (2) such movement appears to be possible. Although extraction out of relative clauses is supposed to be much worse than extraction out of noun complement clauses, (2) is more acceptable than (1). These examples show an asymmetry between the extraction of a full DP (1) versus subextraction of a partitive PP out of a DP (2). Several diagnostics can show that sentences like (2) do not involve base-generation at the left periphery but real movement. (3) shows that the bound variable binding reading is possible because the quantifier scopes over the pronoun in the reconstructed reading. The failure to get such reading in (4) suggests that the partitive PPs are not just hanging topics that establish “aboutness” but are moved elements that reconstruct for interpretation. (5) shows the obviation effects from when an R-expression is reconstructed and results in a Principle C violation. (6) and (7) show reconstruction with anaphors, for which c-command and coindexing must apply. (7) further shows that reconstruction can apply to all edges of clauses and not only the position of base generation, as is classically demonstrated in Wh-movement (Barss 1986).

Not all partitive PPs can be extracted for movement, as (8b) demonstrates. The structures that permit subextraction are only those in which the deletion of a copied count noun, one-substitution, or full resumption of the count noun (all of which are analogs) are possible, as shown in (9). Adapting from Jackendoff (1977), Sauerland & Yatsushiro (2004), Hornstein et al. (1996), and Muramatsu (1998), I provide a structure and derivation for these partitive constructions that make subextraction out of DPs possible (10a). Unlike in full extraction, stranded elements can contain features that facilitate reconstruction. Both examples in (10) show subextraction of the PP out of the DP; however, only (10a) shows two subextraction steps. Here, the stranded element is crucially an Agr-head with a resumptive copy (the “reconstructive anchor”) that denotes the counting measure of the nominal expression that is being raised. Without this analog, the subextraction seen in (10b) does not permit reconstruction back into the DP because the stranded element is not a copied resumptive head but rather another count noun.

Insensitivity to the Complex-NP island has been reported for resumptive pronouns in Hebrew and Irish, and insensitivity to the weaker Wh-island has been reported for clitic-doubling in Romanian, scrambling in Japanese, and D-linking in English. Drawing upon Boeckx’s (2001) account for these phenomena, I propose that the mechanism behind sentences like (2) involve stranding of a D head. However, I depart from these earlier analyses by proposing that the D head is stranded with a copied counting measure, like the pronominal one, in the Agr-head, which may or may not be phonetically realized. The examples from this paper include English in the class of cases that show insensitivity to islands due to the availability of a resumptive strategy and have the potential to unify these phenomena.

This analysis not only extends well to other languages that are otherwise known to be sensitive to the Complex-NP island, like Korean (11) and Spanish (12), but also to extraction out of other islands in English, such as subject islands and moved-constituent islands (cf., Wexler & Culicover 1980; Takahashi 1994), as shown in (13) and (14), respectively. Investigations into the constraints on islands may lead to a better understanding of the way syntactic representations get packaged off and interact with the interfaces. Showing the amelioration of island effects with the stranding of reconstructive anchors, I discuss reconstruction as a condition on interpretability at the LF interface.

Examples:
(1) * [These teams], John heard [DP the boast that the Red Sox frequently beat t].
(2) ? [Of these teams], Mary met [DP a man who didn’t know which t won the World Series].
(3) ? [Of all his1 friends], I met a remarkable teacher who knew which t every student1 trusted the most.
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(4) *As for all his friends / Concerning all his friends, I met a remarkable teacher who knew which every student trusted the most.
(5) * [Of the pictures of John], I met a woman who didn’t know which he disliked the most.
(6) a. ? [Of the pictures of herself], I met a man who didn’t know which Mary disliked the most.
   b. * [Of the pictures of herself], I met a man who didn’t know which Mary’s brother disliked the most.
   c. * [Of the pictures of herself], I met a man who didn’t know which Bill disliked the most.
(7) a. [Of the pictures of herself], Mary met a man who didn’t know which I disliked the most.
   b. [Of these models], every model knows which people will recognize automatically.
(8) a. [Of these books], I don’t know which is the easiest to read.
   b. * [Of this book], I don’t know which pages are missing.
(9) a. ? [Of these teams], Mary met a man who didn’t know which won the World Series.
   b. [Of these teams], Mary met a man who didn’t know which-one won the World Series.
   c. [Of these teams], Mary met a man who didn’t know which team won the World Series.
(10) a. 
   b. 

   ‘Of these foods, I met a man who didn’t know which was delicious.’
(12) ? De estos equipos, María conoció a un hombre que no sabía cuáles los red sox frecuentemente derrotan.
   ‘Of these teams, Mary met a man who didn’t know which the Red Sox defeats frequently.’
(13) [Of the men], which was the tallest?
(14) [Of the men], [which] do you know which is the tallest?