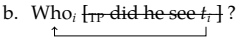# Against island repairs under ellipsis

1 Islands and ellipsis

1.1 Reminder: sluicing

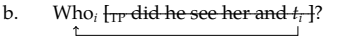**Sluicing**: S-losing (or: TP-ellipsis), Ross (1969).

(1) *Context*: John saw someone.
 a. Who?
 b. Who$_i$ [$_{TP}$ did he see t_i] ?

Sluicing is widely thought to involve *wh*-movement out of an elided constituent.

English would require this movement of *who* independent of the ellipsis; thus, sluicing appears to involve incidental co-occurrence of two discrete syntactic operations (movement and deletion) that are independently available in the language.
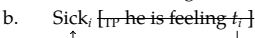
1.2 Reminder: island repairs

In unreduced *wh*-questions, *wh*-movement is prohibited out of islands (e.g. coordinate-structure islands (2a)); however, sluiced analogues of such questions are often perfectly acceptable (2b).

(2) *Context*: John saw Mary and someone else.
 a. * Who did he see her and?
 b. Who$_i$ [$_{TP}$ did he see her and t_i]?

According to Ross, (2a–b) differ only in what is pronounced, meaning the two share a structural description containing an island violation. This led to the proposal that island violations could be mitigated if the offending islands are deleted—the theory of **elliptical repair** of island violations.

This approach has been extended over the years to move-and-delete analyses of many different phenomena. E.g. for **fragment answers**:

(3) *Context*: How is John feeling?
 a. * Sick he is feeling.
 b. Sick$_i$ [$_{TP}$ he is feeling t_i]

For **pseudogapping** (Jayaseelan, 2001, a.o.):

(4) a. * John won't read magazines, but he will books read.
 b. John won't read magazines, but he will books$_i$ [read t_i].

For **multiple fragment answers** (adapted from Merchant 2004: 711):

(5) Q: Wer   hat gestern wen   gesehen?
      who.nom has yesterday who.acc seen
      'Who saw whom yesterday?'
  A1: Der   Mann$_i$ den   Jungen$_j$ [t_i hat gestern t_j gesehen].
      the.nom man the.acc boy   has yesterday seen
      'The man (saw) the boy'
  A2: *Der   Mann den   Junge hat gestern gesehen.
      the.nom man the.acc boy   has yesterday seen

See also similar proposals for **gapping** (Coppock, 2001), **stripping** (Depiante, 2000), apparent **non-constituent coordination** (Sailor and Thoms, 2013), among others.

The idea: Island-escaping movement leaves **starred traces** which lead to ungrammaticality unless deleted at PF.

(6)
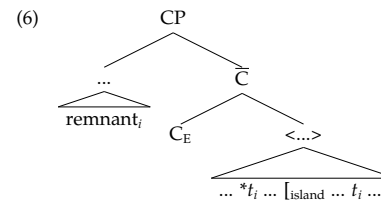
Some examples do not show repair effects despite the presence of ellipsis, e.g. contrastive fragments.

(7) A: Does Abby speak the same Balkan language that BEN speaks?
  B: *No, CHARLIE she speaks the same Balkan language that t speaks.

In this case, the proposal is that a starred trace survives deletion, leading to a crash.

(8)
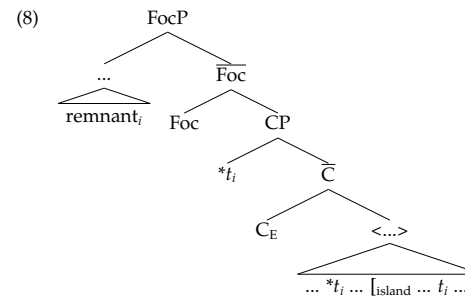
This is Merchant's (2008) theory of *** as a feature of traces**.

2 Against island repairs

Fukaya (2007), Abels (2011), Barros (2014): arguments that apparent cases of island repair in sluicing are actually **illusory**.

They **always** and only arise when the missing material is recoverable from a non-island source, e.g. as a simple cleft (the **pseudosluicing** strategy (9a)) or as some subpart of the island in the antecedent (the **short source** strategy (9b)[1]), neither of which involves an island violation, as the **full recovery** strategy would assume (9c):

(9) They hired someone who speaks a Balkan language, but I don't know which one.
    a. ... which one$_i$ [~~it was t_i~~].   Pseudosluice
    b. ... which one$_i$ [~~they speak t_i~~].   Short source
    c. ... which one$_i$ [~~they hired someone who speaks t_i~~].   Full recovery

2.1 Pseudosluicing

Pseudosluicing was originally proposed by Erteschik-Shir (1973).[2]

(10) Someone just left — guess who ~~it was~~.

    cf: Someone just left — guess who ~~just left~~.

(11) Irv and someone were dancing together, but I don't know who ~~it was~~.

    cf: Irv and someone are dancing together, but I don't know who ~~Irv and were dancing together~~.

Merchant (2001): What is the ultimate source of these copular sentences? Perhaps they are actually reduced forms of clefts with an extracted *wh*-phrase as pivot:

(12) Someone just left — guess who ~~it was t that left~~.

But if so, this proposal doesn't actually address the problem of island repairs, as it would predict to have the island in the ellipsis.

Moreover, it's not clear English has the kind of deletion operation required for pseudosluicing.

(13) *Context*: There is a knock on the door. The occupant of the room says:
    Who *(is it)?

More generally, Merchant (2001) shows that pseudosluicing can't provide a general answer to the island repair problem:

In German, PPs can be 'survivors' of sluicing, but can't be pivots of clefts:

(14)   * Mit   wem war es, dass er gesprochen hat?
           with who was it   that he spoken   has

(15)   Er hat mit jemandem gesprochen - rate mal mit wem!
           He has with someone spoken - guess PRT with who

Crucially, PPs can be survivors even in island contexts.

(16)   Anke wird sich ärgern, wenn Peter mit einem der   Lehrer spricht, aber ich weiss
      Anke will REFL upset if   Peter with one of.the teachers speaks but I   know
      nicht mehr, *(mit) welchem.
      not   more with which
      'Anke will get upset if Peter talks with one of his teachers, but I don't remember which.'

Romanian seems to have no cleft constructions at all, but still has sluicing.

(17)   * E Ion ce/care a   cîstigat premiul întîi
      is Ion that/who has won   prize.the first
      'It's Ion that won first prize.'

(18)   * E Ion pe care (l-) am   întîlnit ieri
      is Ion acc who him- have.1sg met   yesterday
      'It's Ion who I met yesterday'

(19)   Cine-va a   cîstigat premiul întîi – ghici cine!
      someone has won   prize.the first   guess who
      'Someone won first prize – guess who!'

2.2 Short sources

Merchant (2001): some apparent island repairs actually contain no island in the elided material. The ellipsis involves **just the structure of the embedded clause** (2a), rather than the structure of the whole relative clause (2b):

(20) They hired someone who speaks a Balkan language...
    a. but I don't know which one$_i$ [~~she speaks t_i~~].
    b. but I don't know which one$_i$ [~~they hired someone who speak t_i~~].

The pronoun in (20a) is an **E-type pronoun**. Roughly: Referential pronouns that are bound in the semantics/discourse, but not in the syntax.[3]

If it can't be bound in the discourse, an E-type pronoun isn't licensed. For example, negative quantifiers don't have a referent and so can't be bound in the discourse in the necessary way.

Merchant (2001): we can't have ellipsis with negative quantifiers:

(21) They didn't hired **anyone** who speaks a Balkan language...
    a. * but I don't know which one$_i$ [~~she speaks t_i~~].
    b. * but I don't know which one$_i$ [~~they hired someone who speak t_i~~].

However, Lasnik (2001): the problem can't be about E-type pronouns. The example improves when 'a certain' is added:

(22)   ? They didn't hired **anyone** who speaks a certain Balkan language, but I don't know which one.

---

[1]This was already worked out in Merchant (2001) for some island violations.
[2]In the last footnote on the last page of her dissertation, but still...

[3]E-type pronouns were originally proposed for 'donkey sentences,' where it turns out that we can't have the pronoun be bound in the way that we would want. The indefinite article 'a' is normally understood as an existential quantifier, but the most natural reading of the donkey sentence in (i) requires it to be understood as a nested universal quantifier.

(i) Every farmer who owns a donkey beats it.

Lasnik: sometimes an island must exist, but the examples are nonetheless grammatical. *The other* must be licensed by *each* in (23) and *each* is located in the matrix clause, so the ellipsis must involve the whole clause including the island.

(23) Each of the linguists met [$_{NP}$ a philosopher [$_{CP}$ who criticized some of the other linguists]], but I'm not sure how many of the other linguists.

NB: *How many of the other linguists did the philosopher criticize?

Another way to force the ellipsis to include the island is make use of pronouns in a *wh*-phrase that are bound by a quantifier in the matrix clause.

(24) a. Every linguist$_1$ met [$_{DP}$ a philosopher who criticized some of his$_1$ work], but I'm not sure how much of his$_1$ work.
b. ?? Every linguist$_1$ met [$_{DP}$ a philosopher who criticized some of his$_1$ work], but I'm not sure how much of his$_1$ work the philosopher criticized.

2.3 Double clausal ellipsis

Secondary fronting in degree constructions:

(25) a. Mary married [$_{DP}$ a [$_{DegP}$ very tall] man].
b. [$_{DegP}$ How tall [$_{DP}$ a t_{DegP} man]]$_i$ did Mary marry t_i?

Barros et al. (To appear): this movement, along with (two applications of) otherwise available deletion, are responsible for the amelioration of *because*-clauses:

(26) A: Did they leave because you offended Mary?
B: No, Sarah.

(27) a. The fragment first moves to the left edge of the island:
[$_{CP1}$ [$_{TP}$ they left [$_{CP2}$ Sarah$_i$ [$_{\overline{C}}$ because [$_{TP}$ you offended t_i]]]]]
b. Clausal ellipsis applies once in the island:
[$_{CP1}$ [$_{TP}$ they left [$_{CP2}$ Sarah$_i$ [$_{\overline{C}}$ ~~because [$_{TP}$ you offended t_i~~]]]]]
c. The island is pied-piped to the left edge of the matrix CP:
[$_{CP1}$ [$_{CP2}$ Sarah$_i$ [$_{\overline{C}}$ ~~because [$_{TP}$ you offended t_i~~]] [$_{TP}$ they left t_{CP2}]]
d. Clausal ellipsis applies a second time in the matrix CP:
[$_{CP1}$ [$_{CP2}$ Sarah$_i$ [$_{\overline{C}}$ ~~because [$_{TP}$ you offended t_i~~]] ~~[$_{TP}$ they left t_{CP2}~~]]

Claim: This doesn't work for subject extraction, because of a *that*-trace violation:[4]

(28) A: Did Ben leave the party because Abby wouldn't dance with him?
B: *No, Beth.

(29) Step 1 of the derivation would lead to a *that*-trace violation:
[$_{CP1}$ [$_{TP}$ Ben left [$_{CP2}$ Beth$_i$ [$_{\overline{C}}$ because [$_{TP}$ t_i wouldn't dance with him]]]]]

---

[4]The that-trace effect:

(i) a. Which friends$_i$ did they say {that, ∅} they saw t_i?
b. Which friends$_i$ did they say {*that, ∅} t_i saw them?

2.4 Predicational sources

For DP islands, none of the previous repairs are possible.
Proposal: They require yet another explanation, *predicative sources*.

(30) **Left Branch Extractions (LBE)**
a. * Whose$_i$ did Jane kiss [t_i husband]?
b. * [How tall]$_i$ did Mary marry a t_i man?

Merchant (2001): LBEs are repaired under ellipsis.[5]

(31) Mary married a tall man, but I'm not sure [how tall]$_i$ ~~she married a t_i man~~

But data from case concord in German/Dutch suggests that the remnant AP is not merged as an NP modifier. We must have a non-isomorphic source for the ellipsis:

(32) a. Der Mann ist groß**(*en)**
The man is tall(.acc)
b. Lena hat einen groß**(*en)** Mann geheiratet.
Lena has a tall(.acc) man married.
c. Lena hat einen groß**en** Mann geheiratet, aber ich weiß nicht wie groß**(*en)**
Lena has a tall.acc man married, but I know not how tall(.acc)
'Lena married a tall man, but I don't know how tall.'

Proposal: The source for the ellipsis in (32c) is the predicational source in (32a).

Observation: When a predicational source is not possible, LBE repair is impossible.

Predicative adjectives (e.g. *diligent*) and non-predicative adjectives (e.g. *hard* as in hard-working) appear as modifiers (33a), but only predicative adjectives appear as predicates (33b). Both kinds can be *wh*-fronted, so long as they're gradable (34).

(33) a. Billy hired a diligent/hard worker.
b. This worker is diligent/*hard.

(34) [How diligent/hard]$_i$ a worker did Billy hire t_i?

A non-predicative AP remnant is degraded compared to a predicative one.

This suggests that the AP is merged as a predicate, and that an isomorphic e-site not possible, as it would give rise to unrepaired LBE.

(35) Billy hired a diligent/hard worker, but I don't know how diligent/*?hard.

The same can be shown for e.g. *heavy* (as in *drinks heavily*):

(36) a. Mary ignored a ugly/heavy drinker.
b. The drinker was ugly/*heavy

(37) [How ugly/heavy]$_i$ a drinker did Mary ignore t_i?

(38) Mary ignored a heavy/ugly drinker, but I'm not sure how ugly/*?heavy.

---

[5]Here we focus on **adjectival LBE**; Possessors and demonstratives independently licensed nominal ellipsis, introducing a confounding factor, whereas attributive APs don't:

(i) a. Jane kissed Mary's husband, and Susan kissed Helen's ~~husband~~.
b. * Mary married a tall man, and Jane married a short ~~man~~.

3 So which approach is right?

This is fairly new and ongoing research.

- If we believe Ross (1969); Lasnik (2001); Merchant (2008) and others, then islands are a PF phenomenon and violations are 'fixed' when they are not pronounced (with the complications we discussed last week: e.g. a *-feature needs to be assigned when movement crossed an island; movement needs to stop off in Spec,TP; there needs to be a mechanism to remove the highest *).

- If we believe Fukuya (2007); Abels (2011); Barros (2012); Barros et al. (2014) and others, then every apparent island amelioration effect can be derived from a non-island source. This is appealing, but the danger is that the theory may over-generate: how do we constrain the possible sources to derive all and only the attested patterns? Furthermore, once we allow non-isomorphic sources for ellipsis, how do we explain the licensing conditions on ellipsis?

References

Abels, Klaus. 2011. Don't fix that island! it ain't broke. Paper presented at the *Islands in Contemporary Linguistic Theory* conference.

Barros, Matthew. 2012. Arguments against island repair: Evidence from contrastive TP ellipsis. Manuscript.

Barros, Matthew. 2014. A non-repair approach to island sensitivity in contrastive TP ellipsis. In *Proceedings from the forty-eighth Annual Meeting of the Chicago Linguistic Society*.

Barros, Matthew, Patrick Elliott, and Gary Thoms. 2014. There is no island repair. URL `http://ling.auf.net/lingbuzz/002100`, unpublished manuscript.

Barros, Matthew, Patrick Elliott, and Gary Thoms. To appear. More variation in island repair: The clausal/non-clausal distinction. In *Proceedings of CLS 49*.

Coppock, Elizabeth. 2001. Gapping: in defense of deletion. In *Proceedings of CLS 37*, ed. Mary Andronis, Christopher Ball, Heidi Elston, and Sylvain Neuvel, 133–148. Chicago: Chicago Linguistic Society.

Depiante, Marcela. 2000. The syntax of deep and surface anaphora: A study of null complement anaphora and stripping/bare argument ellipsis. Doctoral Dissertation, University of Connecticut.

Erteschik-Shir, Nomi. 1973. On the nature of island constraints. Doctoral Dissertation, Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

Fukuya, Teruhiko. 2007. Sluicing and stripping in Japanese and some implications. Doctoral Dissertation, University of Southern California.

Jayaseelan, K. A. 2001. IP-internal topic and focus phrases. *Studia Linguistica* 55:39–75.

Lasnik, Howard. 2001. When can you save a structure by destroying it? In *Proceedings of NELS 31*, ed. M. Kim and U. Strauss, volume 2, 301–320. Amherst, MA: GLSA.

Merchant, Jason. 2001. *The syntax of silence*. Oxford University Press.

Merchant, Jason. 2004. Fragments and ellipsis. *Linguistics and Philosophy* 27:661–738.

Merchant, Jason. 2008. Variable island repair under ellipsis. In *Topics in ellipsis*. Oxford.

Ross, John Robert. 1969. Guess who? In *Proceedings of CLS 5*, ed. Robert I. Binnick, Alice Davison, Georgia M. Green, and Jerry L. Morgan, 252–286. Chicago: Chicago Linguistic Society.

Sailor, Craig, and Gary Thoms. 2013. On the non-existence of non-constituent coordination and non-constituent ellipsis. In *Proceedings of WCCFL 31*.