Chapter Eight

Island effects in L2 english.

the view from manner of speaking verbs

Irina Stoica

1. **Aim**

Islandhood has been the focus of several studies on second language (L2) learning. Since formal instruction on this topic is practically never given, it offers a good testing ground for access to Universal Grammar in L2. Island effects are subject to parametric variation; while extraction from some types of islands (e.g. complex NPs) seems to be banned across languages, other contexts (e.g. factive islands, wh-islands) are more permissible in some languages. Probing into extraction in L2 can also shed light on the role of language interference effects in the learning of syntactically complex phenomena. Some previous studies provide evidence that L2 learners can acquire extraction in the absence of formal instruction, even when L2 differs from their L1 with respect to extraction (Reglero, 2003). L1 transfer is also attested but its effects can be overidden by explicit instruction (White, 1988).

In the present study I investigate extraction in L2 English in an L1 Romanian context. I focus on extraction out of the complement of manner of speaking (MoS) verbs (*whisper, grunt, moan*, etc.), which are traditionally said to induce (weak) island effects in English (Stowell, 1981; Erteschik-Shir, 2005; Warnasch, 2006). But the acceptability of extraction can be affected by the communicative/non-communicative use of the MoS verb (Stoica, 2016). In Romanian, MoS verbs are not typically listed among island inducers, allowing extraction of both arguments and adjuncts from their post-verbal clause. But even in their case the communicative/non-communicative distinction affects the degree of acceptability of extraction (Stoica, 2019).

I address the following questions: (i) do Romanian L2 learners of English manage to learn the constraints on argument and adjunct extraction out of the complement of MoS verbs, in the absence of any instruction with respect to either extraction or the properties of MoS verbs?; (ii) is this extraction affected by transfer from L1 Romanian?; (iii) how is the variable behaviour of MoS verbs reflected in L2 learning?

The remainder of the paper is organized as follows. Section 2 gives a brief overview of English MoS verbs as island inducers. Section 3 focuses on the Romanian data. In section 4 I put forth an account which could explain the differences between MoS verbs in the two languages. Section 5 proposes a brief detour from MoS verbs and focuses on previous experimental studies on island effects in L2. In section 6 I present an experimental study. A grammaticality acceptance task tested whether L2 learners’ judgements with respect to extraction from the post-verbal clause of MoS verbs pattern with responses given by native speakers of English or wether there is residual optionality and transfer from L1. A brief section 7 draws some conclusions.

1. **MoS verbs in English**
   1. Properties of MoS verbs in a nutshell

MoS verbs denote “intended acts of communication by speech and describing the physical characteristics of the speech act” (Zwicky, 1971). They have been most often analyzed in the literature in contrast with verbs of communication like *say, tell,* etc., and have been singled out as exceptions to many phenomena which normally apply to verbs of communication. To name just a few, in English, MoS verbs do not allow complementizer omission (as illustrated in (1), Stowell, 1981), are incompatible with double object constructions (as seen in (2) below) (Gropen et al., 1989; Pesetsky, 1996) and induce (weak) island effects (illustrated in( 3) and (4) below) (Stowell, 1981; Erteschik-Shir, 2005; Warnasch, 2006).

1. a. Bill says Mary likes John.

b. \*Bill whined Mary likes John. (examples taken from Stowell, 1981)

1. a. He told me the good news.

b. \*I murmured John the answer. (example taken from Gropen et al., 1989)

1. a. What did she say that Fred had done?

b. \*What did she simper that Fred had done? (examples taken from Erteschik-Shir, 2005)

1. a. With which binoculars did Ron say that Frank watched Liliana?

b. \*With which binoculars did Ron whisper that Frank watched Liliana? (examples taken from Warnasch, 2006).

However, a closer look at the data shows that, in fact, MoS verbs evince variable behaviour and that there

are cases where all the aforementioned phenomena are permitted.

1. She screamed the house was on fire. (example taken from Doherty, 2000)
2. Shooting the Urasian a surprised look, she muttered him a hurried apology as well before skirting down the hall. (exampke taken from Bresnan and Nikitina, 2003).
3. a. Who are you whining that you don’t like? (example taken from Stowell, 1981)

b. ??How did he murmur that John kissed Mary? (example taken from Cinque, 1990)

As seen in (3) and (4) above, MoS verbs are traditionally said to be island inducers (Stowell, 1981; Snyder, 1992; Erteschik-Shir, 2005). While there seems to be some consensus with respect to the ban on adjunct extraction, argument extraction is still a matter of debate in the literature. Some authors consider it fully ungrammatical (Warnasch, 2006), others degraded, as illustrated in (8) (Erteschik-Shir, 2005), while others still identify pragmatic contexts where arguments can be extracted (Ambridge and Goldberg, 2008).

1. ?What did Truman Capote lisp he’d do? (example taken from Erteschik-Shir, 2005)

However, there are also cases where adjunct extraction seems to be possible as well.

1. Towards which gate did the policeman shout to his colleague that the smuggler had run? (example taken from Stoica, 2016)

The example in (9) above shows that even extraction of adjuncts is possible, but mostly when the verb is interpreted communicatively. I focus on this property in the next section.

* 1. **The communicative/non-communicative use distinction**

Zwicky (1971) identifies a difference in interpretation between MoS verbs followed by a *to*-directional PP and an *at*-directional PP. While the example in (10a) is viewed as more communicative, with a focus on the speech act itself, the one in (10b) emphasizes the manner in which the message is sent, the noise created, while the communicative aim is backgrounded.

1. a. He shouted *to* the guards.

b. He shouted *at* the guards.

According to Zwicky (1971), this difference in interpretation is also mirrored in the syntactic behaviour of these verbs.

This communicative/non-communicative use distinction also influences extraction out of the post-verbal clause. In Stoica (2016) I investigated the availability of argument and adjunct extraction from the post-verbal clause of MoS verbs, in both communicative and non-communicative contexts in English.

The test was an acceptability judgement task. It included 16 test sentences: 8 of them targeted argument extraction in communicative and non-communicative contexts[[1]](#footnote-1), while 8 focused on adjunct extraction, balanced for communicative and non-communicative uses. Some examples can be seen in (11) and (12) below (all the test sentences are given in the Appendix at the end of the paper).

1. a. Who did John whisper to his friend that he loved?

b. What did the boy shout at his dog that he had chewed?

1. a. Towards which gate did the policeman shout to his colleague that the smuggler had run?

b. With whom did the ballerina whisper at her friend that she wanted to dance?

The test also included 8 control sentences, with verbs of communication (e.g. *say*) and a verb of communication and an adverbial modifier which denoted manner.

1. What did he tell his mother that he had done?
2. With what did she say softly that they watered the flowers?

Respondents were asked to state whether the sentences were grammatical or not and, if not, to provide a

grammatical alternative. The data were collected by means of an online questionnaire. The participants were 30 native speakers of English (age ranging from 18 to 71 years old (mean age 34.2).

The results are summarized in Table 1 below.

**Table 1: Percent acceptance of extraction out of the post-verbal clause of MoS verbs in L1 English (from Stoica 2016)**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Group | Argument | | Adjunct | |
| Communicative | Non-communicative | Communicative | Non-communicative |
| Native speakers  30  n=480 responses | 48% | 29% | 44% | 28% |
| 38.5% | | 36% | |
|  | 37.25% | | | |

The data in Table 1 show that extraction out of the post-verbal clause of an MoS verb is banned.

However, the statistical analysis revealed that, while extraction overall is judged as being ungrammatical, communicative use effects can, in fact, influence acceptability rates. While there were no statistically significant differences between argument and adjunct extraction (neither overall, nor in communicative and non-communicative contexts analysed separately), a Welch t-test revealed that the effects of sentence type (communicative vs. non-communicative contexts) reached statistic significance: ((t(447)=1.96, p < 0.05). Similar results were found when looking at argument and adjunct extraction separately: communicative use effects reached significance for both argument extraction ((t(119)=-4.77, p < 0.05) and adjunct extraction (t(119) = 3.22, p < 0.05).

The results above confirm, on the one hand, that extraction from the post-verbal clause of an MoS verb in English is ungrammatical. On the other hand, they also support the view according to which there are “some cases” where extraction is accepted. More specifically, it shows that the availability of extraction is influenced by other factors, such as communicative use effects.

1. **Romanian MoS verbs**

In Romanian, MoS verbs are not island inducers. They allow extraction of both arguments and adjuncts from their post-verbal clause, as in (15) below.

1. a. Pe cine a șoptit Ion că urmărea Vasile cu binoclul?

DOM who has whisper-PPT Ion that watched Vasile with binoculars

‘Who did Ion whisper that Vasile was watching with binoculars?’

b. Unde a strigat ghidul că trebuie să mergem?

Where has shout-PPT guide-the that must SUBJ walk

‘Where did the guide shout that we must go?’

However, examples such as the ones in (16) seem to be less acceptable than the ones in (15).

1. a. ?Pe cine a strigat Ion că l- a bătut Andrei?

DOM who has yell Ion that he-ACC has beat-PPT Andrei

‘Who has Ion shouted that Andrei beat up?’

b. ?Pe ce a strigat femeia că punea Vasile cratița fierbinte?

on what has yell-PPT woman-the that put Vasile pot-the hot

‘On what did the wooman yell that Vasile was putting the hot pot?

This observation seems to point towards a familiar direction: while syntactically available, it might be

the case that extraction can be influenced by other factors as well.

In order to test whether extraction out of the post-verbal clause of MoS verbs is subject to parametric variation, Stoica (2019) conducted an experimental study meant, on the one hand, to investigate the availability of extraction of both arguments and adjuncts from the post-verbal clause of MoS verbs and the impact of communicative use effects on speakers’ judgements. While in English the communicative/non-communicative use distinction was illustrated by the *to*-PP / *at*-PP opposition (following Zwicky 1971), in Romanian the difference was conveyed by means of the use of the clitic, as seen in (17) below.

The task was similar to the one used for English in Stoica (2016). It consisted of 16 test sentences, 8 of which targeted argument extraction and 8 adjunct extraction, in both communicative and non-communicative contexts. Some of the test items can be seen in (17) and (18) below.

1. a. Pe cine i- a șoptit Ion că urmărea Vasile cu binoclul?

DOM. who he-DAT has whisper-PPT Ion that follow-IMP Vasile with binoculars?

Who did Ion whisper to him that Vasile followed with binoculars?

b. Pe cine a șoptit Ion că urmărea Vasile cu binoclul?

DOM who has whisper-PPT Ion that follow-IMP Vasile with binoculars?

Who did Ion whisper at him that Vasile followed with binoculars?

1. a. Până unde i- a mormărit Maria că mergeau toți soldații ăia?

to where she.DAT has mumble-PPT Maria that go-INF all soldiers-the those?

‘Where did Maria mumble that all those soldiers were going?’

b. Până unde a mormăit Maria că mergeau toți soldații ăia?

to where has mumble-PPT Maria that go-INF all soldiers-the those?

‘Where did Maria mumble that all those soldiers were going?’

The participants were 30 native speakers of Romanian, age ranging from 18 to 63 years old (mean age 29.2). The overall results are summarized in Table 2 below. They showed that both arguments and adjuncts can be extracted out of the post-verbal clause of MoS verbs. A Welch t-test revealed that there is no statistically significant difference between argument and adjunct extraction across conditions (t(446) =1.975, p = 0.75).

**Table 2. Acceptance of extraction (%) out of the post-verbal clause of MoS verbs in L1 Romanian ( Stoica 2019)**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Group | Argument | | Adjunct | |
| Communicative | Non-  communicative | Communicative | Non-communicative |
| Native speakers  30  n=480 responses | 60% | 77% | 61% | 78% |
| 68.5% | | 69.5% | |
|  | 69% | | | |

As in English, communicative use effects do influence the acceptability of extraction, be it argument or adjunct extraction; the difference between the two reached significance (t(447) = 1.96, p < 0.05). However, interestingly, the Romanian respondents favoured extraction in non-communicative contexts. Communicative use effects can be found in both argument extraction, (t(119) = -1.97, p < 0.05), with 60% of responses rendering extraction grammatical in communicative contexts, as opposed to 77% in non-communicative one. Similar results are found in the case of adjunct extraction where the acceptance rate reached 61% in communicative sentences and 78% in non-communicative contexts the difference between the two reaching significance (t(119) = 1.97, p < 0.05).

While this contrast needs further research, one possible explanation could be that the existence of a dative argument in the structure in communicative contexts renders the latter more difficult. Even if, syntactically, it is not clear why it should hinder extraction, it might be the case that it simply adds to the processing overload that speakers are faced with. Extraction in general can be quite difficult to process, especially with long movement, so we expect that any additional element in the structure could make it even harder for the computational system.

To sum up so far, it seems that the island effects induced by MoS verbs are subject to parametric variation, being (mostly) disallowed in English and (mostly) grammatical in Romanian. In section 6 of this paper we will see how native speakers of Romanian cope with this mismatch in L2 English. Before we do, however, the next section will briefly account for this parametric variation in more structural terms.

1. **MoS verbs and island effects: an account for the variation**

In recent years, the literature on island effects has been divided into two main approaches: the syntactic one, which still considers structural properties to be at the core of island effects, and reductionist theories, which argue that island effects are largely influenced by processing factors (Featherson, 2005; Hofmeister and Sag, 2010 and references therein). In this section I show that, at least for MoS verbs, their variable behaviour both within a language and crosslingustically can be accounted for structurally. Briefly, I argue that, in fact, MoS verbs come in two guises[[2]](#footnote-2): on the one hand, they are proper manner verbs (illustrated in 19), but they are also verbs of internal creation (as seen in (20)) (see Stoica 2019 for more details). The difference between English and Romanian MoS verbs is structural.

1. John shouted that he was scared 🡪 John said that he was scared, in a shouted manner.
2. John shouted that he was scared 🡪 John produced a shout, which conveyed that he was scared.

Such a proposal seems to reconcile the two main lines of analysis present in the literature: on the one hand, the semantic route, which argues that the manner component is what dictates a behaviour different from that of verbs of communication (Erteschik-Shir, 2005; Kogusuri, 2009), and the syntactic one, which claims that MoS verbs have some sort of nominal component in their structure, which corresponds to the emitted sound. (Stowell, 1981; Snyder, 1992)

In Stoica (2019) I argue that these two subtypes of MoS verbs have, in fact, different syntactic structures. Following Marantz (2005) and Levinson (2007), I followed a root-based approach and put forth the following structures for proper manner verbs, in (21b) and for MoS verbs interpreted as verbs of internal creation, in (22b). The root merges in different positions in the two structures: either directly with the verb, leaving the complement (be it a DP or a CP) in an argument position or as the head of a small clause. In this case, however, the complement is realized as the subject of this small clause. My proposal is that the position of the complement in the two configurations is the one that either allows or hinders extraction.

1. a. John shouted that he was scared, in a whispery manner.
2. vP

2

v√ DP/CP

√whisper the secret/that he loved her

1. a. John uttered a shout, which conveyed that he was scared
2. vP

2

v SC

3

DP/CP √

the secret/ √whisper

that he loved her

There is, however, one important aspect which needs to be taken into account before trying to expand this analysis to Romanian MoS verbs. According to Arad (2003), this pattern of word formation, in which roots can either merge with a verb directly or first nominalize and then merge further with the verb, is possible only when the verb and the noun are zero-derived. For English MoS verbs, this is clearly the case.

1. whisperV-whisperN

On the other hand, Romanian MoS verbs do not have homophonous corresponding nominals, as illustrasted

in (24).

1. șoptiV – șoaptăN

Therefore, I argued that in Romanian MoS verbs only have the configuration of proper manner verbs (as in 25b). Consequently, there is nothing that can structurally ban extraction.

1. a. Andrei a strigat că îi este foame.

Andrei has shouted that CL is hunger

‘Andrei shouted that he was hungry.’

b. vP

2

v√ DP/CP

√striga 6

că îi e foame

However, I also side with those voices which argue that extraction can be influenced by pragmatic and processing factors and suggest that this could be a reason for which there is some variation in island effects in Romanian as well. More specifically, it might be the case that, even though structurally MoS verbs do not induce island effects, emphasizing manner rather than the message itself can add to the processing load and make extraction more difficult.

1. **Island effects in L2: previous studies**

Islandhood in L2 has been investigated in several studies mainly with a view to testing access to Universal Grammar and parameter resetting.

White (1988) investigated the responses of French L2 learners of English regarding the Complex Noun Phrase Constraint (CNPC) with a view to testing whether they made errors which violate Universal Grammar or if, on the contrary, they have access to Universal Grammar in L2. This author also tested the responses which advanced L2 learners give to phenomena that differ along the same parameter in their L1 and L2. To this aim, she tested extraction out of wh-islands, which is restricted in English but allowed in French. She used a series of test types (cloze tests, multiple choice judgement tasks, paced judgement tasks and comprehension tests). The results for each of these point in the same direction. On the one hand, learners of L2 English observe the CNPC and judge extraction as being ungrammatical. On the other hand, as predicted, they allow and produce wh-island violations in L2, most probably influenced by the L1 patterns of extraction. What was interesting here is the fact that, while the two groups of respondents in White’s study were of similar proficiency levels, these wh-island violations were primarily observed in only one of the groups, while the others followed the English pattern. This suggests that, even if the L2 is somewhat influenced by L1, learners can still reset parameters, if, for example, they receive formal instruction.

Another study which investigated wh-extraction and that-trace effects in L2 with a view to testing the availability of parameter resetting in L2 learning was carried out by Reglero (2003). Both native speakers of English with L2 Spanish and native speakers of Spanish with L2 English were tested. These languages were chosen because they vary parametrically with respect to wh-island (as illustrated in (26) and that-trace effects (as see in (27)).

1. a. \*Who don’t you know how much weighs?
2. *Quién no sabes cuánto pesa?*

who no know how-much weighs  
 ‘Who don’t you know how much weighs?’

1. a. Who did Max say that saw the burglar?
2. *¿Quién creía María que había arrestado a su hermano?*

‘Who did Mary think that had arrested her brother?’

Respondents were asked to judge both grammatical and ungrammatical structures and their results are

shown in Table 3 below.

**Table 3: Acceptance (%) of extraction in L2 English (taken from Reglero, 2003)**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Construction type | Overall results | Intermediate learners | Advanced learners |
| Wh-islands grammatical | 68.42 | 68.06 | 68.75 |
| Wh-islands ungrammatical | 15.79 | 23.61 | 8.75 |
| That-trace grammatical | 96.05 | 97.22 | 95 |
| That-trace ungrammatical | 14.47 | 16.67 | 12.5 |

Looking at wh-islands, the results reveal that respondents are able to correctly identify both grammatical

and ungrammatical sentences in their L2, even without formal instruction. Although the acceptance rates for grammatical sentences were not very high, respondents were still able to distinguish between grammatical and ungrammatical sentences, despite the fact that all of those structures are ungrammatical in their L1.

Similar results are noticed for native speakers of English with L2 Spanish, as shown in Table 4 below: respondents accepted grammatical sentences, while rejecting ungrammatical ones.

**Table 4: Percent acceptance of extraction in L2 Spanish (taken from Reglero, 2003)**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Construction type | Overall Results | Pre-intermediate leearners | Intermediate learners | Advanced learners |
| Wh-islands grammatical | 45.59 | 45.65 | 41.35 | 51.32 |
| Wh-islands ungrammatical | 20.96 | 27.17 | 21.15 | 13.16 |
| That-trace grammatical | 73.53 | 70.65 | 71.15 | 80.26 |
| That-trace ungrammatical | 70.59 | 61.96 | 76.92 | 72.37 |

Based on the fact that respondents with no formal instruction were clearly able to distinguish between grammatical and ungrammatical sentences in L2, despite the contrast with their L1, Reglero concludes that learners do not simply transfer the value of the parameter in their L1 and have, indeed, access to UG in L2 learning. Proficiency level is shown to be relevant, as higher level learners performed better than lower level ones.

However, there is one important difference between the studies presented above and the present study. In sections 2 and 3 we saw that extraction out of the post-verbal clause of an MoS verb is influenced by non-syntactic factors as well, being therefore a phenomenon at the interface between syntax and discourse pragmatics.

The Interface Hypothesis (Sorace, 2011) predicts that such structures should be vulnerable in L2 learning, even at advanced levels of proficiency. While advanced learners can acquire formal syntactic properties, they might have difficulties with those properties whose acquisition requires integration of discourse information.

The aim of the next section is to test this hypothesis against extraction from the post-verbal clause of an MoS verb.

1. **MoS verbs and island effects in L2 English**
   1. **Aim**

The aim of the study is twofold. It investigates whether speakers of L2 English whose L1 is Romanian converge with the target language regarding extraction out of the post-verbal clause of an MoS verb or whether, even at advanced levels of proficiency, they pattern with their native language with respect to extraction. Given the role of communicative/non-communicative use effects on the acceptability of extraction, I also tested the role of pragmatic factors (i.e. communicative use effects) on the acceptability of extraction in L2.

* 1. **Materials and procedure**

The experiement was a grammaticality judgement task which included the same 16 test sentences used in the studies presented in sections 2 and 3: 8 of the test items targeted argument extraction in communicative and non-communicative contexts, while another set of 8 test items focused on adjunct extraction, in communicative and non-communicative contexts. Some examples can be seen in (28) and (29) below[[3]](#footnote-3).

1. a. Who did the coach shout to the players that the referee kicked out?

b. What did the boy shout at his dog that he had chewed?

1. a. With what did Bob yell to the lawyer that the criminal killed the pig?

b. How did the artist shout at his manager that he wanted to sing?

Throughout the task, four MoS verbs were used: *whisper, shout, mumble* and *yell*. All test sentences were controlled for length, lexical frequency, definiteness of the DP and pragmatic plausibility. The task also included 8 control items, all involving verbs of communication. 4 of these targeted argument and adjunct extraction from the post-verbal clause of a verb of communication (e.g. say), while the other 4 followed a similar pattern, but also included a manner adverbial, as can be seen in (30) and (31) below.

1. What did he tell everybody that he had seen?
2. What did he say in a loud voice that John would buy?
   1. **Participants**

30 advanced learners of L2 English (age ranging between 19 and 46 years old; mean age 26.5) took part in the

experiment, all students of English at the University of Bucharest. None of them had received formal instruction on island effects in general and even less so on extraction out of the post-verbal clause of MoS verbs. In total, 26 female and 4 male took part in the study.

The results gathered from these participants were analysed against those obtainted in the experiment testing extraction in L1 English, therefore 30 native speakers of English functioned as the control group.

* 1. **Results**

In total, 480 responses were analysed for the test items. The overall results, which can be seen in Figure 1 below, reveal that the Romanian learners of L2 English accepted extraction of both arguments and adjuncts from the post-verbal clause of an MoS verb. The overall percentages indicate a rate of acceptability of 76.8%, while a breakdown of extraction type shows that argument extraction is accepted in 75.41% of cases (M=6.03, SD=1.62), whereas adjunct extraction was accepted in 77.5% of cases (M=6.2, SD=1.31). To follow up on these results, a within-group Welch t-test showed that there was no statistically significant difference between these two types of extraction (t(29)=2.04, p=0.64)).

**Figure 1: Acceptance (%) of argument and adjunct extraction in L2 English**

Chart, box and whisker chart

Description automatically generated

The comparison with the results of the control group[[4]](#footnote-4) clearly shows that there is a difference between native speakers of English and the Romanian L2 learners, even though the latter are at an advanced level. A one-way between-groups ANOVA at the α = .05 level showed an effect of extraction type: F(1, 116) = 83.88, p<0.05. Romanian speakers of L2 English had significantly higher scores than native speakers with respect to both argument extraction (t(29)=2.04, p<0.05) and to adjunct extraction (t(29)=2.04, p<0.05).

Another aspect that was tested in this experiment was the influence of pragmatic factors on acceptability judgements. More specifically, I tested whether communicative use effects affected acceptability of extraction.

In this respect, the data coming from L2 learners of English and summarized in Figure 2 below show that these speakers are not sensitive to pragmatic constraints: extraction in communicative contexts reached a 78.75% acceptance rate (M=6.3, SD=1.29), while extraction in non-communicative contexts was accepted in 74.5% of cases (M=5.9, SD=1.49). A within group t-test showed that there is no statistically significant difference between the two contexts (t(29)=2.04, p=0.25)).

**Figure 2: Acceptance (%) of communicative use effects in L2 English**

Chart, box and whisker chart

Description automatically generated

Recall that communicative use effects were proven to influence island effects in the case of native speakers of English, extraction in communicative contexts being preferable to that in non-communicative ones. Comparing the results of the test group with those of the control group, a one way between groups ANOVA at α = .05 level showed an effect of sentence type: F(1,116)=33.78, p<0.05. L2 learners had significantly higher scores than native speakers in both communicative contexts (t(29)=2.04, p<0.05)) and in non-communicative ones (t(29)=2.04, p<0.05)).

* 1. **Discussion**

The results above reveal that native speakers of Romanian with L2 English allow extraction of both arguments and adjuncts from the post-verbal clause of MoS verbs, in both communicative and non-communicative contexts. L2 learners seem to disregard the pattern of the target grammar. The scores reveal residual optionality which possibly reflects transfer from L1 Romanian, where MoS verbs do not ban extraction of either arguments or adjuncts.

There were at least two aspects that were surprising when analysing the results, especially in contrast to those collected from native speakers of English and from native speakers of Romanian. Not only do learners of L2 English accept extraction at a significantly larger rate than native speakers of English, but they in fact seem to rate it better than extraction in their L1[[5]](#footnote-5).

Secondly, note that, at least at first sight, the results seem to go against previous studies in the literature, which show that advanced learners converge with the target grammar with respect to island effects. In this study they do not converge with the target grammar. One possible account of these findings may be that extraction out of the post-verbal clause of MoS verbs is constrained by both structural and pragmatic factors, i.e. it is not an exclusively syntactic phenomenon.

1. **Conclusion**

The present study aimed to contribute to the investigation of island effects in L2. Data coming from advanced learners of L2 English showed that the acquisition of extraction out of the post-verbal clause of MoS verbs can be vulnerable even at this level of proficiency. In this respect, the findings of the present study differ from results reported on the basis of experiments on other types of islands, which showed that L2 learners converge with the target language. This discrepancy is not surprising given that, in the case of MoS verbs, extraction was shown to be influenced by structural and pragmatic factors.

There are, however, several aspects that still need further research in order to achieve a more comprehensive picture. First of all, it would be interesting to expand the test to other levels of proficiency and see whether there is any difference between lower levels and higher levels.

Secondly, controlling for more possible variables should provide more accurate results. More specifically, lexical frequency could impact the availability of extraction, as could the type of the element extracted (i.e. type of object or type of adjunct).

Lastly, given that the differences in acceptability of extraction in English and Romanian can be narrowed down to structural factors and that, in general, English is more restrictive with respect to extraction out of post-verbal clause of MoS verbs, it would be interesting to investigate the responses and judgements of native speakers of English in an L2 that is more permissive with respect to extraction, such as Romanian.

**Appendix: L2 experiment stimuli**

I. Argument extraction – communicative contexts

1. Who did John whisper to his friend that Mary loved\_\_\_\_?
2. Who did the coach shout to the players that the referee kicked out\_\_\_\_?
3. What did Mary yell to her sister that Bob didn’t like \_\_\_\_?
4. What did Bob mumble to his wife that the child didn’t eat\_\_\_\_?

II. Argument extraction – non-communicative contexts

1. What did Sophie whisper at her cousin that she was scared of\_\_\_\_?
2. What did the boy shout at his dog that it had chewed\_\_\_\_?
3. Who did Robert yell at his room-mate that he hated\_\_\_\_?
4. Who did the secretary mumble at her boss that she hated\_\_\_?

III. Adjunct extraction – communicative contexts

1. How did Ron whisper to Harrythat Hermione solved the mystery\_\_\_\_?
2. Towards which gate did the policeman shout to his colleague that the smuggler ran\_\_\_\_?
3. How did John mumble to his wife that Rob treated Liliana\_\_\_\_?
4. With what did Bob yell to the lawyer that the criminal killed the pig\_\_\_\_?

IV. Adjunct extraction – non-communicative contexts

1. With whom did the ballerina whisper at her friend that she wanted to dance\_\_\_\_?
2. How did the artist shout at his manager that he wanted to sing\_\_\_\_?
3. How did Jane yell at her husband that Bob hit the car\_\_\_\_?
4. With which binoculars did Ron mumble at his wife that he watched his neighbour\_\_\_\_?

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1. The communicative/non-communicative use distinction was set to be represented by the to-PP vs. at-PP distinction noted by Zwicky, 1971. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. For a more detailed analysis, see Stoica, 2019. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. For the full set of stimuli, see the Appendix below. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. The results for the control group are summarized in Table 1 of this paper. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. True enough, the group of respondents was different in the two tests. In this respect, it would be interesting what the results would be if the same group took part in two distinct tests: one focusing on extraction in L1 and one focusing on extraction in L2. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)