

Sluicing and the nature of encoding locality violations

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Ross (1969), Lasnik (2000) and Merchant (2001) provide quite convincing evidence that Sluicing repairs island violations. This phenomenon has been treated under the view that ellipsis eliminates the structure made defective by non-local extraction. In this paper, I explore how the interaction of left-branch extraction and islands behaves under Sluicing. I observe that, although Sluicing can repair left-branch violations and island violations independent of each other it cannot repair derivations involving left-branch extraction out of an island. To account for this phenomenon, I propose that one of the two locality violations involved in a derivation of that kind must be marked on the moving category and not on the structure constituting an island.

Consider an instance of an island violation repair by Sluicing in (1): extraction out of a relative clause. The corresponding non-elided version is in (2), which is unacceptable. Left-branch extraction violations can be repaired by Sluicing as well, as in (3). The corresponding non-elided version is in (4). Merchant (2001) argues that this is a true case of left-branch extraction and not an instance of NP-ellipsis due to the fact that English does not allow NP ellipsis of this sort, as shown in (5).

If we combine the two violations and extract a left-branch out of an island, would Sluicing be able to repair the resulting derivation? (6) is the result of a test using left-branch extraction of a noun modifier out of an adjunct-island, all topped with Sluicing. Sluicing is expected to repair the derivation. However, (6) is strongly degraded, even though it is slightly better than the non-elided version in (7). The same can be seen in the relative clause island paradigm in (8) and (9).

I propose an analysis of these puzzling facts which distinguishes where precisely a particular island violation is marked: on the structure constituting the island or on the moving category. This requires a dynamic approach to a syntactic derivation. Once a particular step of movement violates locality, the violation is immediately recorded on the relevant node that is ‘illegally’ crossed (as in Chomsky (1972) and Lasnik (2000)). I suggest that any subsequent locality violation is marked on the moving category. Thus, in (6) and (8) only one of the two island violations is repaired, due to the fact that the other violation is marked on the wh-phrase itself, which has not undergone deletion, invoking unacceptability. This captures the contrast in acceptability status of (6) and (8) on the one hand and their non-elided counterparts in (7) and (9), in which both violations are present in the end, producing a greater degree of unacceptability.

To determine if we are dealing with a general property of having more than one island violation in a single derivation or a particular property of left-branch extraction out of islands, I run relevant tests with other islands. Other island combinations do not exhibit the same behavior. (10) demonstrates an extraction out of a relative clause within a subject-island, all topped with Sluicing, and it is fine. Thus this phenomenon seems to be restricted to left-branch extraction interacting with other islands. Hence, we need to distinguish somehow the nature of the left-branch extraction from other islands. Here, I appeal to the analyses of Corver (1992) and Bošković (in press) which relate the availability of left-branch extraction in a certain language to the weakness and even possible absence of a determiner in those languages. On the other hand, if a language has a strong enough determiner to create a barrier for movement, the first movement step has to go via Spec,DP or adjoining to DP. This movement step can be viewed as too short (anti-local), as in Abels (2003), Grohmann (2003) among others. I argue that it is this property of left-branch extraction that distinguishes it from other island violations, which are bad due to certain movements being too long. Thus, the system seems sensitive to how precisely locality is violated: if a step of movement which is too short takes place (i.e., left-branch extraction), a violation mark, like a (*), is placed on the structure constituting the island. However, if it is then followed by movement that is too long (e.g. adjunct-island), the inadequacy is no longer marked on the structure, but rather on the moving category, to prevent the mixture of the two violations so different in nature.

I also examine the fact that multiple Sluicing and left-branch extraction are available in Russian in isolation (11-12), but not when the two are combined, as in (13). In my account of this phenomenon, I draw a parallel with the phenomenon discussed above.

- (1) She knows a man who bought something but I don't know what [~~she knows a man who bought t~~].
- (2) *She knows a man who bought something but I don't know what [she knows a man who bought t].
- (3) She bought a certain expensive car but I don't know how expensive [~~she bought [a t car]]~~].
- (4) *She bought a certain expensive car but I don't know how expensive [she bought [a t car]].
- (5) *She bought an expensive car but I wanted a cheap [~~car~~].
- (6) ??Her parents will be upset if she buys a certain expensive car but I don't know how expensive.
- (7) *Her parents will be upset if she buys a certain expensive car but I don't know how expensive [her parents will be upset if she buys [a t car]].
- (8) ??No one had a student who owned an expensive car, but I can't remember how expensive.
- (9) *No one had a student who owned an expensive car, but I can't remember how expensive [no one had a student who owned [a t car]].
- (10) That they'll hire a linguist who works on a certain language is possible but I don't know which language.
- (11) Každyj priglasil kogo-to na tanec, no ja ne znaju kto kogo
 everyone invited someone to dance but I not know who whom
 'Everyone invited someone to a dance but I don't know who invited who'
- (12) Ona kupila doroquju mašinu, no ja ne znaju na skol'ko doroquju
 she bought expensive car but I not know how expensive
 'She bought an expensive car but I don't know how expensive'
- (13) *Každyj bogatyj acter kupil doroquju mašinu no ja ne znaju na skol'ko bogatyj na skol'ko doroquju
 every rich actor bought expensive car but I not know how rich how expensive
 'Every rich actor bought an expensive car but I don't know how rich an actor bought how expensive a car'

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