Snejana Iovtcheva and Despina Oikonomou, Massachusetts Institute of Technology

Island obviation in answer fragments: *Evidence from Bulgarian li-questions*

It has long been observed that sluicing is insensitive to islands (Ross 1969) whereas fragment (short) answers are not (Merchant 2004, Griffiths & Liptak 2014 (G&L)). While the sluice in (1) allows the wh-phrase [which] to be understood as the correlative of the indefinite phrase [*a Balkan language*] despite the Complex Noun Phrase (CNP) island, the question in (2) demonstrates the inability of a fragment answer to correspond to the DP-phrase [*Albanian]* within the island:

(1) John wants to hire someone who speaks a Balkan language, but I don't remember which₁ [$_{TP}$ ~~John wants to hire someone who speaks t₁~~].

(2) A: Does John want to hire someone who speaks Albanian?
B: *No, Serbian₁ [$_{TP}$ ~~John wants to hire someone who speaks t₁~~].

We show that fragments can also be island insensitive as long as the language provides some mechanism **to make a question out of an island**, in other words to mark a constituent that is embedded under an island as the constituent under question. Such a mechanism, we claim, is available in Bulgarian where the question/focus particle *li*, can attach to a wide variety of constituents and mark that the question concerns this particular constituent. Crucially, these so called *narrow-focus questions* in Bulgarian allow for a fragment answer that seems to violate islands as shown for a CNP island in (3) and an adjunct island in (4). Notice that if the relevant constituents are not *li*-marked, the fragment answers are not licensed.

(3) A: Petar iska   da   naeme njakoj,   kojto <u>angliiski₁ #(LI)</u> govori t₁?
    Peter wants subj hire   someone who English   Q   speaks
    'Does Peter want to hire someone who speaks English?
    B: ne, [$_{F}$ Ruski]₁ [$_{TP}$~~Petar iska   da   naeme njakoj   kojto t₁ govori t₁~~]
    'No, Russian.'

(4) A: Maria zavizhda, zashtoto <u>Lena #(LI)</u> ima nov kompjutar?
    Maria envies   because Lena   Q   has new computer
    'Is Maria jealous because Lena has a new computer?'
    B: 'ne, [$_{F}$ Ivana]₁[$_{TP}$~~Maria zavizhda, zashtoto t₁ ima nov kompjutar~~]
    'no,'Ivana'

The data from Bulgarian shed new light on the question of "island insensitivity under ellipsis" as they suggest that islands can be ameliorated under any type of ellipsis, thus allowing for a uniform treatment of sluicing and answer fragments. Following Merchant's (2001) *PF-theory of islands* (5), we argue that answer fragments and sluicing pattern together with respect to island insensitivity.

(5) Island violations are due to properties of the pronounced syntactic structure, not to constraints on derivations or LF representations themselves.   [Merchant 2004; 701]

We also follow G&L (2014) in assuming that the ungrammaticality of (2) is due to the lack of parallelism between the antecedent and the elided structure (6), as the DP *Albanian* in the English question cannot move out of the island, thus violating parallelism:

(6) A: Does John want to hire someone who speaks Albanian?
        LF: [someone who speaks Albanian]₁ λx ([$_{TP}$ John wants to hire t₁])
    B: *No, Serbian₁ [$_{TP}$ ~~John wants to hire someone who speaks t₁~~].

However, contra G&L (2014), we argue that it is possible to preserve parallelism in *contrastive ellipsis* as long as movement out of the island is forced by the overt presence of a focus particle that marks the relevant constituent as being the constituent under question. In this respect, we claim that fragment answers with *–li* in Bulgarian force movement of a constituent to the left periphery, thus achieving parallelism with the sluice. Interestingly, we also notice a contrast between argument and adjunct fragments from Bulgarian island constructions. The contrast below demonstrates the behavior of focused adjunct within CNP (7) and without CNP (8):

(7) A: Ivan pokani student-a, kojto <u>otlichno LI</u>   sviri na piano?   [adjunct-*li* within CNP]
        Ivan invited student-the, who excellent Q plays on piano
        'Does Ivan invite the Student who plays piano excellently?'
    B: *ne, [umereno$_1$] [$_{TP}$ ~~Ivan pokani studenta, kojto t$_1$ sviri na piano?~~]
        'no, moderately'

(8) A: Saobshtixa,   che <u>silno LI</u>   shte vali snjag?   [adjunct-*li*, no CNP]
        announced.3pl that heavily Q will fall snow
        'Did they announced that it will snow heavily?'
    B: ne, [umereno]$_1$ [~~saobshtixa, che t$_1$ shte vali snjag?~~]
        'no, moderately'

The contrast between (3)-(4) and (7) patterns with the well-established distinction between argument and adjunct covert *wh*-movement out of islands (cf. Sauerland 1997). As it was originally observed in Huang (1982) *wh*-arguments are insensitive to islands in Chinese whereas *wh*-adjuncts are not. The contrast in (3) vs (7) shows that the argument - adjunct distinction is replicated in Bulgarian *li*-marked questions, which in turn provides further support for the treatment of answer fragments on a par with sluicing under the *PF-theory of islands*.

In conclusion, we have argued that the *PF-theory of islands* is a general principle and we presented evidence from Bulgarian that contrastive ellipsis is also subject to this principle. We also argued in favor of the G&L account that the ungrammaticality of answer fragments in (2) is due to a lack of parallelism but we further argued that the parallelism can be obtained if there is a factor forcing movement of a DP out of an island. Such a factor is the particle *li-* in Bulgarian. This account can be naturally extended in English where we observe that in disjunctive questions where the disjunction is embedded under an island, the fragment answer is grammatical:

(9) A: Does John want to hire someone who speaks Albanian OR Serbian?
    B: Serbian$_1$ [$_{TP}$ ~~John wants the person that he will hire to speak t$_1$~~].

Selected References
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