

# On the Escapability of Islands in Scandinavian\*

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## 1 Introduction

- Apparent violations of RC-Islands in Mainland Scandinavian (Swedish, Norwegian, etc.), what we call Escapable Islands (EIs), have been discussed by many authors (Allwood 1982, Engdahl 1997, a.o.).
- Observed with all A'-movement - topicalization (1), relativization, and wh-movement.

- (1) a. Garagedörr-en<sub>1</sub> var det bara Kalle [<sub>RC</sub> som kunde öppna t<sub>1</sub>.]  
Garage-door-DEF was it only Kalle RP could open  
'The garage door, it was only Kalle who could open.'
- b. Det språket<sub>1</sub> finns det många [<sub>RC</sub> som talar t<sub>1</sub>. ]  
The language exists it many RP speak  
'That language, there are many who speak.'
- c. De blommorna<sub>1</sub> känner jag en man [<sub>RC</sub> som säljer t<sub>1</sub>.]  
The flowers know I a man RP sells.  
'Those flowers, I know a man who sells.'

- These data threaten 'Universalist', syntactic accounts of Islands (Ross 1967, Chomsky 1977).
- Alternative proposals:
  - (i) Parameterize islands.
  - (ii) Dispense with them altogether in the syntax in favor of semantic/pragmatic constraints.

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- Extraction appears possible only from select environments. The majority of RCs in Scandinavian behave like strong islands cross-linguistically.
- (2) \*Vilken bok<sub>1</sub> gav du mann-en [<sub>RC</sub> som läste t<sub>1</sub>] ett förstoringsglas?  
 Which book gave you man-DEF RP read a magnifying-glass  
 ‘Which book did you give the man who read a magnifying glass?’
- Jettisoning or parameterizing islands runs into problems:
    - Loss of a unified cross-linguistic explanation of bounding.
    - Acquisition trouble: *How does the child ever learn the right settings or the correct subset of islands?*

## Outline

**Main Claim:** Escapable Islands in Scandinavian are a species of Small Clause Complement, not RCs. As such, they are not Islands.

- Present experimental evidence that Extractability tracks SC-Construability
- Show that a SC analysis can offer a unified account of restrictions on EIs.

## 2 Acceptability Judgment Studies

### 2.1 Predicate Restriction

- Previous discussions of EIs have noted that RCs embedded under certain predicates allow extraction more easily than others (Allwood 1982, Engdahl 1997)
- (3) a. De blommorna känner jag en man [<sub>RC</sub> som säljer].  
 The flowers knew I a man RP sells.
- b. De blommorna *fanns/var* det en man [<sub>RC</sub> som sålde].  
 The flowers found/was it a man RP sells.
- (4) \*De blommorna *träffade/kysste* jag en man [<sub>RC</sub> som sålde].  
 The flowers met/kissed I a man RP sells.
- No previous accounts have argued for a structural explanation of the predicate restriction, either ignoring it or treating it as a pragmatic effect.
  - We argue that the predicate restriction is systematic, structural in origin, and central to understanding EIs.
- (5) *Generalization:*  
 Predicates that allow extraction from apparent RC complements are SC-selecting verbs.

- (6) Existential/Thetic SCs  
Existentials (Lasnik 1992), Clefts (den Dikken 2009)
- (7) Categorical SCs (Basilico 2003)
  - a. I know [<sub>SC</sub>Clark Kent as Superman].
  - b. I consider [<sub>SC</sub> him an idiot].
- (5) is consistent with the reported data, but it requires more rigorous demonstration.

## 2.2 Experiments

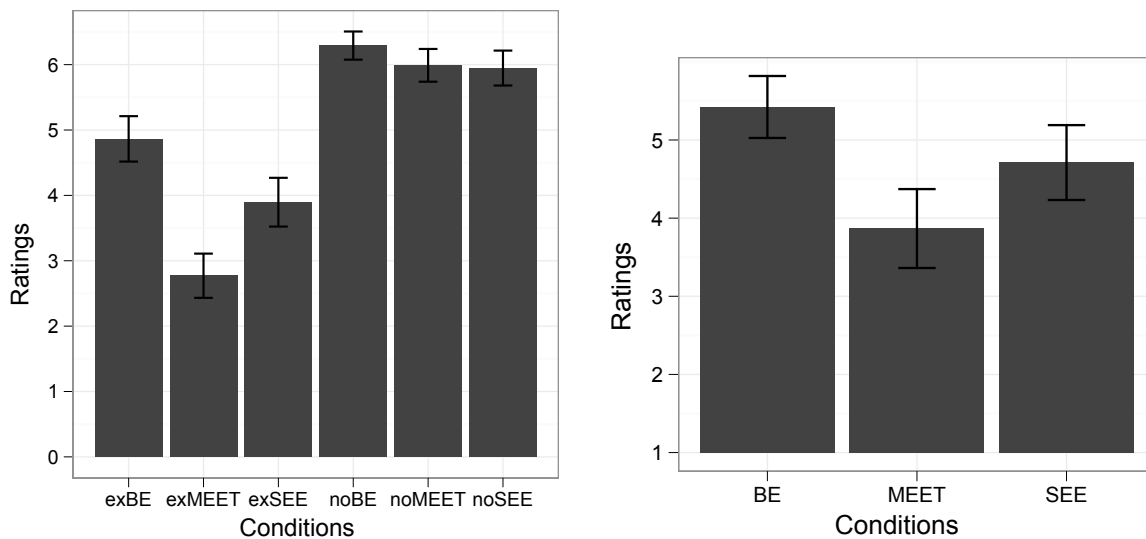
We present the results of two 7-pt Acceptability Judgment Studies that demonstrate the SC-selecting ability of embedding verbs correlates with acceptability of extraction of RCs in their complement.

### Experiment 1: Predicate Restriction

- Design: 2 x 3: EXTRACTION x VERB.  
EXTRACTION: {NoExtraction, Extraction}, VERB: {Cleft<sub>+SC</sub>, See<sub>+SC</sub>, Meet<sub>-SC</sub>}
  - Test sentences interspersed between Grammatical fillers of comparable complexity and Ungrammatical fillers in a paper questionnaire.
  - 24 native speakers of Swedish from The Universities of Gothenburg and Trollhättan participated.
- (8) a. Det var en skateboardåkare som lyckades med *det tricket* i parken.  
 b. Kalle såg en skateboardåkare som lyckades med *det tricket* i parken.  
 c. Kalle träffade en skateboardåkare som lyckades med *det tricket* i parken.  
 ‘{It was | Kalle saw/met} a skateboarder who pulled off *that trick* in the park.’

### Results:

- ANOVA: EXTRACTION:  $F(1,23) = 130.42$  ( $p < .001$ ), VERB:  $F(2,46) = 36.22$  ( $p < .001$ ), EXTRACTION x VERB:  $F(2,46) = 18.19$  ( $p < .001$ ). TUKEY: All pairwise comparisons between EXTRACTION conditions significant (all  $ps < .001$ ), no significant differences amongst NOEXTRACTION.
- Interaction effect of Extraction and Embedding Verb. → Extraction less acceptable in MEET conditions.
- MEET condition not significantly different from UNGRAMMATICAL fillers, BE, SEE conditions significantly different.



(a) Experiment 1, Gram. Fillers: 6.2, Ungram.: 2.2 (b) Experiment 2, Gram. Fillers: 6.1, Ungram.: 1.8

Figure 1: Experiments 1 (a) and 2 (b)

### 2.3 Experiment 2: Contextual Support

- Engdahl (1997), Andersson (1982): contextual appropriateness is the primary determinant of extractability with escapable islands, to the exclusion of structural configuration.
  - Tested whether context can overcome the effects observed in the previous experiment.
  - Design: 1 x 3: EXTRACTION x VERB  
EXTRACTION held constant. VERB: {Cleft<sub>+SC</sub>, See<sub>+SC</sub>, Meet<sub>-SC</sub>}
  - Unique preamble for each item facilitating topicalization held constant across conditions.
- (9) Jag vet att det inte finns många i värld-en som kan göra en 360-spin,  
I know that it NEG are many in world-DEF that can do a 360-spin,  
men ...  
but ...  
'I know there aren't many in the world who can do a 360-spin, but ...'
- 18 native speakers of Swedish from the University of Gothenburg participated.
  - 2 participants excluded (ratings of grammatical fillers 2 sd's below the mean), 1 chosen at random for exclusion for balanced ANOVA.

#### Results:

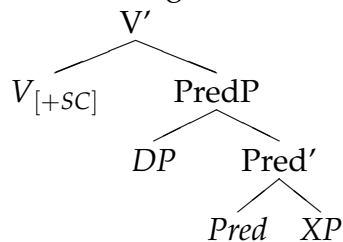
- ANOVA: VERB:  $F(2,28) = 14.50$  ( $p < .001$ ), TUKEY: Pairwise comparison between *be* and other conditions all significant ( $ps < .001$ ), comparison between *meet* and *see* significant ( $p < .05$ ).
- Overall upward-shift of acceptability *across test conditions* in comparison to previous results, but Interaction profile remains - (see Sprouse 2007).

## 2.4 Take-Home Message

- -SC conditions consistently related significantly worse from +SC conditions.
- Structural effects are irreducible to context effects.
- Residual differences between +SC conditions most likely due to ambiguity between individual verb's preference to select Categorical/Thetic SC.<sup>1</sup>

## 3 Small Clause Hypothesis

- SCs headed by PredP (Basilico 2003, Bowers 1993)
- SC-selecting verbs select for PredP, irrespective of phrasal category of SC.



- Apparent Subject RCs in Scandinavian are string-ambiguous between CPs and PredPs; the latter lack all C-domain functional structure.
- Restrictions on EIs fall out from SC analysis.

### What about the Relative Pronoun?

- In all EIs, there appears to be a relative pronoun: *som*.
- *Som* is lexically ambiguous between a Complementizer (which it is in RCs) and  $\text{Pred}^0$ .
- Eide & Åfarli (1999) argue that *som* is a spell out of  $\text{Pred}^0$ .

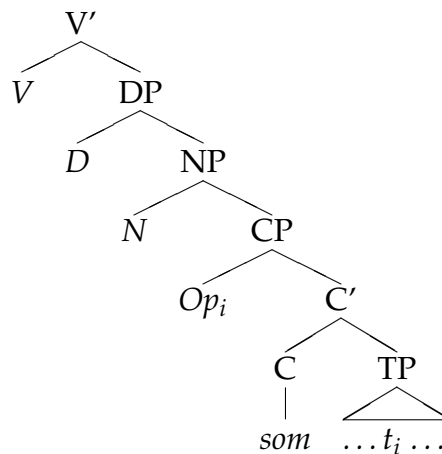
(10) *Som* surfaces in some Categorical SCs (Eide & Åfarli 1999)<sup>2</sup>:

<sup>1</sup>Thetic SCs (e.g. direct perception complements) differ from Categorical SCs with respect to the extractability of the embedded predicate's external argument (see Basilico 2003 for further discussion).

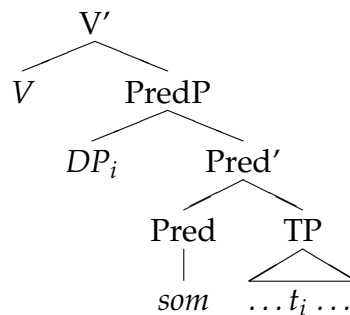
<sup>2</sup>What principle forces the spell-out of  $\text{Pred}^0$  is an open question that we leave to future research.

- a. Jag känner bara Clark Kent som Stålmann-en.  
 1sg know only Clark Kent *som* Superman.  
 'I only know Clark Kent as Superman.'
- b. Jag betrakter honom som en idiot.  
 1sg consider him *som* a idiot.  
 'I consider him an idiot.'

(11) a. TRUE RELATIVES:



b. ESCAPABLE ISLANDS:



### Predicate Restriction

- The predicate Restriction follows from the structure above. Only SC-selecting verbs can take a PredP complement.

(12) Similar to *as*-headed SCs in English (den Dikken 2008), *som*-headed SCs permit extraction only when the SC can be interpreted as complement of the embedding verb.

- a. It was only [Clark Kent]<sub>i</sub> that I { knew | (?)saw | \*met | \*kissed } him as t<sub>i</sub>.  
*(On the interpretation where Clark Kent is one of the guises of the individual in question, not the speaker.)*
- b. Det var bara CK som jag { kände | (?)såg | \*träffade | \*kysste } honom som.

### Subject Restriction

- Extraction is only permitted from subject RCs (Engdahl 1997, Platzack 1999).

(13) a. Den här teorin<sub>1</sub> finns det ingen lingvist<sub>2</sub> [<sub>RC</sub> som t<sub>2</sub> tror påt<sub>1</sub>].  
 This here theory exists it no linguist RP believes in  
 'There is no linguist that believes in this theory.'

b. \*Den här lingvisten<sub>1</sub> finns det ingen teori<sub>2</sub> [<sub>RC</sub> som t<sub>1</sub> tror påt<sub>2</sub>].  
 The here linguist exists it no theory RP believes in  
 'There is no theory that this linguist believes in.'

- Engdahl argues that this restriction is epiphenomenal, arising from an independent ban on intersecting A'-dependencies in Scandinavian.
- However, (14) shows that even nesting dependencies produce ungrammaticality in the absence of a subject RC.

(14) a. Jag känner mann-en [<sub>RC</sub> som Marit gav bok-en].  
 I know man-DEF RP Marit gave book-DEF

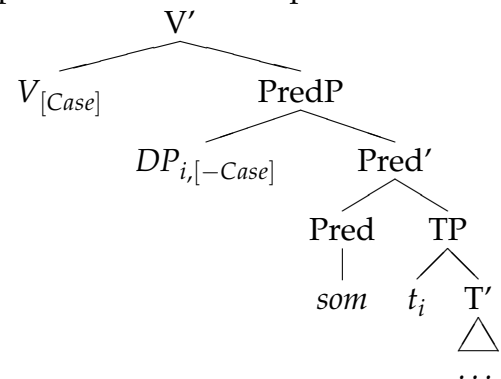
b. \*Boken känner jag mann-en [<sub>RC</sub> som Marit gav].

- Platzack (1999): Argues the subject RP needn't raise to spec,CP, thus leaving it open as an escape hatch.
- This analysis predicts *all* subject RCs should allow extraction. (2) shows this is incorrect.
- The SC analysis can account for the Subject Restriction on grounds of Case.
- Note that the external arguments of all SCs receive Case from the SC-selecting verb, not internal to the SC.

(15) a. John såg honom/\*han äta ost.  
 John saw him/\*he eat cheese.

b. John känner honom/\*han som Stålmänn-en.  
 John knows him/\*he as Superman.

- On analogy to other SCs, assume the EI-internal spec,TP is not a Case position, the subject must move to spec,PredP to receive Case.



- If an object occupies spec,PredP, the SC-Subject cannot move to receive Case.
- The only structure available for object RCs is the standard CP-relative configuration.

## Subject Locality

- Not discussed in the literature is a further restriction on EIs, (16).

(16) SUBJECT LOCALITY:

Only RCs where the highest subject has been relativized are EIs.

- (17) a. Jag känner en man [<sub>RC</sub> som Frida sa säljer de blommorna].  
 I know a man RP Frida said sells the flowers.
- b. \*De blommorna känner jag en man [<sub>RC</sub> som Frida sa säljer].

- This restriction is also expected on the SC analysis.
- Only the local subject can be assigned Case by the selecting verb in spec, PredP.
- As with objects, the only possible relativization strategy is to move the embedded subject to spec, CP.

## Why is the Subject Position Not A Case Position in EIs?

- SCs lack functional structure for assigning Nominative Case.
- Pesetsky & Torrego (2001) argue that a relation between T and C required for Nominative Case Assignment.
- We assume that the lack of C-domain functional structure voids spec, TP of EIs as a Case position.

## 4 An Outstanding Issue: Tense in EIs

- SCs are generally thought to lack Tense.
- EIs appear to contain a TP:
  - Tense agreement is required.
  - (Most) modal auxiliaries are allowed (18).<sup>3</sup>

(18) *ska, kunde* ≈ *will, could*

- a. Det<sub>1</sub> är det en tjej i min klass [<sub>RC</sub> som ska göra i sommar t<sub>1</sub>].  
 That is there a girl in my class *som* will do in summer  
 ‘That, there is a girl in my class that will do next summer.’
- b. Garagedörr-en<sub>1</sub> var det bara Kalle [<sub>RC</sub> som kunde öppna t<sub>1</sub>].  
 Garage-door-DEF was it only Kalle *som* could open

<sup>3</sup>Interestingly, epistemic modals are not possible in EIs, though they are possible in ordinary RCs, and extraction across embedded epistemics is allowed.

- The possibility that certain SCs can be TPs is not novel. Pseudo-relatives in Spanish, which have been analyzed as SCs (Campos 1994, Cinque 1995, a.o.), require Tense agreement.<sup>4</sup>

- (19) a. Has visto a Juan [<sub>RC</sub>que com-*ia* jamon].  
 Have seen to Juan C eat.IMPF ham
- b. Que cosa has visto a Juan [<sub>RC</sub>que com-*ia*]?  
 What thing have seen to Juan C eat.IMPF

- Tense concord between embedding verb and EI-internal verb is preferred (especially in clefts).

## 5 Acquisition

- Apparent Island violations never considered counterexample to Islands.
- Child learns *som* can head PredP (from examples of Categorical SCs).
- Child must learn *som* can take TP complements.
- All other characteristics of EIs follow from independent properties of SCs.

### Crosslinguistic Differences

- The availability of EIs can be seen as a lexical accident in Scandinavian.
- Languages that lack syncretism between Pred<sup>0</sup> and RPs will not have EIs.
- (Standard) English differs from Swedish because *as* is not used in RCs, nor is *that* a Pred<sup>0</sup>.
- Some dialects of English permit RP *as*. The following example is from Biber et al. (1999, p. 609).

- (20) Well, I know one person as'll eat it.  
 I know one person [<sub>CP</sub>Op<sub>i</sub> as<sub>C</sub> [ t<sub>i</sub> will eat it]].

- All else equal, we would expect these dialects to display properties similar to Scandinavian languages with respect to EIs.

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<sup>4</sup>Unlike EIs in Swedish, porous pseudo-relatives are only possible with Imperfective marking on the Verb. Pseudo-relatives also differ from EIs in that they do not allow any auxiliaries.

## 6 Conclusion

- Escapable Islands are not Islands at all, but rather SCs.
- The SC Hypothesis renders the Scandinavian data compatible with Universalist Accounts of Islands and can explain restrictions on Escapable Islands in a unified manner.
- Acquisition linked to observable properties of the input.

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