On the Escapability of Islands in Scandinavian*

Dave Kush and Filippa Lindahl
University of Maryland, University of Gothenburg, University West

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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 var det bara Kalle [RC som kunde öppna t1.]
Garage-door-DEF was it only Kalle RP could open
‘The garage door, it was only Kalle who could open.’

b. Det språket finns det många [RC som talar t1.]
The language exists it many RP speak
‘That language, there are many who speak.’

c. De blommorna känner jag en man [RC som säljer t1.]
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 gav du 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 [RC som säljer].
   The flowers knew I a man RP sells.
   b. De blommorna *fannt/var det en man [RC som sålde].*
   The flowers found/was it a man RP sells.

(4) *De blommorna träffade/kysste jag en man [RC 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 \[SC Clark Kent as Superman\].
   b. I consider \[SC him an idiot\].

- (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_{+SC}, See_{+SC}, Meet_{-SC}\}

- 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. \(\rightarrow\) Extraction less acceptable in Meet conditions.

- Meet condition not significantly different from Ungrammatical fillers, Be, See conditions significantly different.
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_{+SC}, \text{See}_{+SC}, \text{Meet}_{-SC}\}
- 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.\(^1\)

3 Small Clause Hypothesis

• SCs headed by PredP (Basilico 2003, Bowers 1993)

• SC-selecting verbs select for PredP, irrespective of phrasal category of SC.

\[ V' \]
\[ V_[+SC] \quad PredP \]
\[ DP \quad Pred' \]
\[ Pred \quad XP \]

• Apparent Subject RCs in Scandinavian are string-ambiguous between CPs and PredPs; the latter lack all C-domain functional structure.

• Restrictions on ELs fall out from SC analysis.

What about the Relative Pronoun?

• In all ELs, there appears to be a relative pronoun: som.

• Som is lexically ambiguous between a Complementizer (which it is in RCs) and Pred\(^0\).

• Eide & Áfarli (1999) argue that som is a spell out of Pred\(^0\).

(10) Som surfaces in some Categorical SCs (Eide & Áfarli 1999)\(^2\):

\(^1\)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).

\(^2\)What principle forces the spell-out of Pred\(^0\) is an open question that we leave to future research.
   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:**

```
          V'
         /   \
        V     DP
       /   \\  
      D     NP
     /   \   \ 
    N    CP  T
    /   \   / \  
   Op_i C'  TP
    \   \   /   
     \   \ /     
      \ som TP
         . . .
```

b. **Escapable Islands:**

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          V'
         /   \
        V     PredP
       /   \  
      DP_i Pred'
     /   \  
    Pred TP
    /     \
   som   . . .
```

### 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]i that I { knew | (?)saw | *met | *kissed} him as t.i.
     (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\textsubscript{1} finns det ingen lingvist\textsubscript{2} \([RC \text{ som } t_2 \text{ tror } \text{ påt}_1]\). 
This here theory exists it no linguist RP believes in
‘There is no linguist that believes in this theory.’
b. *Den här lingvisten\textsubscript{1} finns det ingen teori\textsubscript{2} \([RC \text{ som } t_1 \text{ tror } \text{ påt}_2]\).
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 \([RC \text{ som } \text{Marit gave } \text{book-DEF}]\). 
I know man-DEF RP Marit gave book-DEF
b. *Boken känner jag mann-en \([RC \text{ som } \text{Marit gave}]\).

- 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.
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 [\(RC\) som Frida sa säljer de blommorna].

   I know a man [\(RC\) Frida said sells the flowers].

   b. *De blommorna känner jag en man [\(RC\)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).\(^3\)

(18) *ska, kunde ≈ will, could*

a. Det\(_1\) är det en tjejer i min klass [\(RC\) som ska göra i sommar \(t_1\)].

   That there is a girl in my class [\(RC\) will do in summer

   ‘That, there is a girl in my class that will do next summer.’

b. Garagedörr-en\(_1\) var det bara Kalle [\(RC\) som kunde öppna \(t_1\)].

   Garage-door-DEF was it only Kalle [\(RC\) could open

\(^3\)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.4

(19) a. Has visto a Juan [RC que com-ia] jamon.
    Have seen to Juan C eat.IMPF ham

b. Que cosa has visto a Juan [RC 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 Pred0 and RPs will not have EIs.
• (Standard) English differs from Swedish because as is not used in RCs, nor is that a Pred0.

• 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 [CPOp; asc [ t; 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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4Unlike 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.

References

den Dikken, M. 2009. Predication and specification in the syntax of cleft sentences. ms. CUNY Graduate Center.