

## Repair Mechanisms in syntactic islands in Modern Greek

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### Bibliographical Review

In Greek, as well as in English, long-distance dependencies are allowed between the wh-phrase and its trace: "What does Maria believe that Helen said that John bought \_\_\_<sub>i</sub>?" In some structures, however, long distance dependencies are unacceptable, Ross (1967) called these structures "islands"; "\*Which newspaper do you know [the teacher who reads \_\_\_<sub>i</sub>]?" The islands are divided into weak and strong ones, the former preventing only adjuncts from being exported, while the latter preventing any export. Structures that can form islands vary from language to language, for example in English, the subject is a powerful island, while in languages such as Greek et al. (Spyropoulos & Stamatogiannis 2011, Stepanov 2001), it is permitted to move / export an argument from the NP-subject.

However, even powerful islands can be violated through "repair mechanisms". The first repair mechanism is *sluicing*, where the whole island is missing: "Mary denied the charge that Kostas hit somebody but I didn't hear *whom<sub>i</sub>* (Mary denied the charge that Costas hit \_\_\_<sub>i</sub>)". A second repair mechanism is to replace the trace with a *resumptive* pronoun: "?Which *man<sub>i</sub>* did you wonder, [when did Maria meet *him<sub>i</sub>*]?" In fact, resumption works best when the moving element has a trace position in the main clause (parasitic gap structures) "*Whom<sub>i</sub>* had John scolded \_\_\_<sub>i</sub> before he banished *him<sub>i</sub>*?" *Pied-piping* is the third fixing mechanism: "*Whose book<sub>i</sub>* did you regret [that you bought \_\_\_<sub>i</sub>]" instead of "\**Whose<sub>i</sub>* did you regret [that you bought the book of \_\_\_<sub>i</sub>]?"

Boeckx (2012) argues that all of the above fixing mechanisms are actually in the form: [Wh-element<sub>i</sub> [. . . [. . . [resumptive pronoun [wh-element<sub>i</sub>]]. . .]. . .]. Thus we have a subclassification of all repair mechanisms under resumption. For example, the island, which is absent in the case of sluicing, contains in it a resumptive pronoun: "Mary denied the charge that Kostas hit somebody but I didn't hear *whom<sub>i</sub>* (Mary denied the charge that Costas hit \_\_\_<sub>i</sub>)"(same is the case with pied-piping according to Cable, 2010).

The theoretical review leaves some questions. Which islands can be violated by each repair mechanism? How systematically are violations allowed? Consequently, are repair mechanisms a derivative of grammatical rules or processing? Are the repair mechanisms really a resumption? What can the repair mechanisms teach us about the nature and cause of the islands? We will try to answer these questions in the thesis.

## **Methodology**

The theoretical part of the dissertation will examine the effects of each of the three repair mechanisms within the different islands. This will create an overview of the similarities and differences between the repair mechanisms. We will also examine what are the implications of a holistic treatment of the repair mechanisms for the contemporary syntactic theories on islands.

Resumptive pronouns are a central part of the Boeckx's hypothesis (2012/2013) and we need to specify their exact nature. Thus it is considered appropriate to study their distribution in Greek, beyond the environment of islands, and in particular their relationship to the clitics. It is noteworthy that, while the clitics and resumptive pronouns in Greek seem to share the same morphology and the same syntactic distribution, Alexiadou and Anagnostopoulou (2000) argue about the similarities in behavior of the resumptives and the genuine traces.

After completing the first theoretical review, we will conduct a two-stage survey. In the first phase, we will examine the degree of acceptance of the three repair mechanisms (four if we consider separately the case of the resumptive pronoun with parasitic gap in the main clause) in selected island types from native Greek speakers. To conduct the research we will create a questionnaire in which the participant will state on a scale (eg. 1-5) his/her preference for the grammaticality of the violations on specific islands, with and without repair mechanisms, taking into account any interference from any L2 that the participant might have. The islands to be examined will be selected on the basis of the conclusions reached in the theoretical section. The purpose of the experiment will be to identify statistically significant differences: (a) in the acceptance of the repair mechanisms on each of the selected islands; and (b) the effectiveness of each repair mechanism on the various islands. The results will show us whether the repair mechanisms are similar and whether they can be homogenized under resumption. We will also receive answers to the first two questions we asked in

the last paragraph of the "bibliographical review". Moreover, any form of systematicity in the success of a repair mechanism (or in its failure in the case of strong islands) will help us answer the question: "are repair mechanisms the result of grammatical rules or processing?"

The above question is mainly the subject of the second phase of the research in which a self-paced reading test will be conducted. The aim will be to examine differences in reading time when the processor encounters repair mechanisms in weak and strong islands (the latter are normally inviolable). If the fixing mechanisms are the result of grammatical rules and the processor separates the two types of islands, there should be a difference in reading times depending on the type of island. The idea for this research comes from Phillips (2006) who conducted a similar research on parasitic gaps in infinitival and non-infinitival subject islands in English.

In the final phase of the thesis we will evaluate the results of the research in relation to what we have examined in the theoretical section. If the repair mechanisms have similar effectiveness, a holistic interpretation under resumption will be proven. In addition, since the central direction in the literature (Boeckx 2012, Phillips 2011, Sprouce et al. 2012) considers islands as phenomena produced by grammar (and not by processing), it would be reasonable to assume that their repair mechanisms are also products of grammatical rules. Having completed the results of the second phase of the investigation, we will be able to draw conclusions by confirming (or rejecting) the above hypothesis. We will conclude with how our findings may influence the present theories on islands and propose directions for future research in Modern Greek.

### **Timetable**

In the first year of the thesis we will deal with the writing of the theoretical section. As the theoretical section is completed, decisions on how to formulate the exact content of the questionnaire of the first research phase will be formed. At the end of the first year we will be able to define precisely how the questionnaire will be set up.

The second year of the thesis will include the two phases of the research. After the questionnaires are shared and collected, data processing in excel sheets will begin. At the same time, the second phase of the research will begin, once we have decided on its final form, we will proceed with the creation of the self-paced reading test. By the end of the second year the two phases of the survey will be fully completed.

In the third year the statistical processing of the data will be completed and the research part of the dissertation will be written. We will draw conclusions based on the questions raised in this summary. The final correction and overall view of the thesis will then be made. By the end of the third year the dissertation will be completed.

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