

Island violations in stripping constructions

1. Introduction

Stripping, also known as bare argument ellipsis, occurs in coordinated structures. It reduces the second conjunct, and requires a remnant (the constituent that survives ellipsis, *Chris* in (1)) and usually one more element such as *not* and *also*. The coordinator (usually *but* or *and*) can be optional. The standard analysis of stripping involves movement of the remnant out of the ellipsis site plus TP-ellipsis (e.g. Depiante 2000; Merchant 2004):

(1) Pat speaks Wampanoag, (but) not Chris_i [_{TP} ~~t_i speaks Wampanoag~~]. *Stripping*

This analysis of stripping is parallel to the analysis of clausal ellipses (i.e. sluicing and fragment answers), which all involve movement of the remnant (a *wh*-phrase or the fragment answer) plus clausal ellipsis, suggesting that stripping may be considered a type of clausal ellipsis. On the other hand, stripping may appear to be similar to gapping, which also happens to occur in coordination, but I want to argue that they are fundamentally different. Stripping behaves like sluicing and fragment answers in many aspects, but differently from more restricted ellipses such as gapping.

The aspect in which stripping is like clausal ellipsis and unlike gapping that is relevant to this squib is the fact that the remnant movement in stripping behaves like *wh*-movement in being able to cross finite clauses (Reinhart 1991; Depiante 2000; Yoshida et al. 2015). For example, (2a) means that Lucie will not admit that she stole the car, not that Lucie will admit that she did not steal the car, suggesting that the remnant *the car*

must have moved across the finite clause boundary (not [the car]; ~~Lucie will admit that she stole it~~). In contrast, the remnants of gapping cannot cross finite clauses (3a-b).

- (2)a. Lucie will admit that she stole the diamonds if you press her, but not the car.
- b. Lucie did not admit that she stole anything, when we pressed her, except the little red book.
- c. More people said they will vote for Bush, in the last poll, than for Dukakis.

(Reinhart 1991:374)

- (3)a. *Lucie will admit that she stole the diamonds, and Lili the car.
- b. *Lucie said she will vote for Bush, and Lili for Dukakis.

Stripping behaves like clausal ellipsis and unlike gapping in other respects, which I list a few of but do not expand on because they are not directly relevant to this squib. For example, gapping requires the remnant to pied-pipe the preposition (e.g. *Charley wrote with a pencil and Jill *(with) a pen*), but sluicing, fragment answers and stripping don't (e.g. *Charley drew with this pencil yesterday, and also that pen*). Gapping cannot delete a portion of an object DP, but sluicing, fragment answers and stripping can. Yoshida et al. (2015) also showed that sprouting is not possible with gapping, but possible with sluicing and stripping. These facts all suggest that stripping should be analyzed as clausal ellipsis.

Having established that stripping is like clausal ellipsis, especially in allowing its remnant to cross finite clauses, in the rest of the squib I will focus on another property of stripping that sluicing and fragment answers also have, that is the remnant movement in these ellipses can sometimes appear to violate island constraints (first observed by Ross

(1969)). I will then show that due to some properties of stripping that other clausal ellipses don't have, stripping offers unique insights into why clausal ellipses can sometimes appear to violate islands. First, (4a-c) show the apparent island violations in clausal ellipsis. (4a-b) are examples from the literature, to which I add my own (4c):

(4)a. They hired someone who speaks a Balkan language – guess which!

(Sluicing; Merchant 2001:209)

b. A: Does Abby speak the same Balkan language that someone in your class speaks?

B: Yeah, Charlie.¹ *(Fragment answer; Griffiths and Liptak 2014:193)*

c. They hired someone who speaks French yesterday, not German. *Stripping*

If we follow the standard analysis of clausal ellipsis, the remnant moves out of a relative clause, which is generally considered an island, and yet the result is fine (5a). Without ellipsis, it is not possible to move a *wh*-phrase out of a relative clause (5b).

(5)a. ... guess which_i [TP they hired [~~Relative Clause someone who speaks t_i]]!]~~

b. *... guess which they hired someone who speaks!

There have been many proposals for the seemingly exceptional island-violating behavior of clausal ellipsis (e.g. Ross (1969); Lasnik (2001) & (2005); Merchant (2001) & (2004); Griffiths & Liptak (2014); Barros et al. (2014); Yoshida et al. (2019)). This squib presents evidence from stripping that supports Barros et al.'s approach, which was originally proposed for sluicing. I argue that the apparent ability of stripping to violate islands is an illusion created by *the evasion strategy* – a parse that does not involve any

islands. If stripping has the same underlying operations as sluicing and fragment answers, the evasion strategy available to stripping should also be available to those other clausal ellipses.

Section 2 provides four novel arguments that the evasion strategy saves island violations in stripping. Yoshida et al. (2019) explicitly rejected the evasion strategy as a source available to stripping. Subsection 2.5 responds to this critique, and argues that Yoshida et al.'s examples don't have the evasion strategy for independent reasons. Once these extraneous factors are controlled for, the evasion strategy is in fact available to stripping and can save island violations. Section 3 concludes the squib.

2. Arguments for the evasion strategies

Barros et al. (2014) have proposed many different evasion strategies. This squib argues for one type specifically – *the short source*, which was first proposed by Merchant (2001) for sluicing. The short source involves ellipsis of a subpart of the antecedent clause that doesn't include the island, and creates the illusion of relative clause island violation in sluicing. Under this analysis, (4a) is fine because it has a parse whose elided phrase does not contain any island (6). In this parse the *wh*-remnant still moves out, but it does not cross any island. This parse contrasts with (5a), whose elided phrase is isomorphic to the antecedent. I call the isomorphic parse *the long source*. Furthermore, Merchant and Barros et al. (2014) suggested that the elided subject in the short source is an E-type pronoun in the sense of Evans (1980). This E-type pronoun refers to the indefinite in first conjunct, but is not in the scope of the indefinite.²

(6) They hired someone_i who speaks a Balkan language, guess which [~~TP he_i speaks~~]]!

Assuming the short source is also available to stripping, the stripping sentence (7) should have two potential parses: the long source (7a), whose remnant *German* crosses a relative clause island, and the short source (7b), whose remnant does not cross any island.³

(7) They hired someone who speaks French yesterday, not German.

a. ... not German_i [~~TP they hired~~ [~~Relative clause someone who speaks t_i~~]]. *Long source*

b. ... not German_i [~~TP she (= the person they hired) speaks t_i~~]]. *Short source*

Barros et al. argued for the evasion strategies in sluicing by showing that when the evasion strategies are blocked, sluicing cannot appear to violate island constraints any more. These arguments can be replicated for stripping, but I will not repeat them here due to limited space. Instead, I will present four new arguments by taking advantage of the properties of stripping that sluicing and fragment answers do not have. While the short source and the long source for sluicing often have the same meaning ((6) and (5a)), I will show that stripping offers an opportunity to disambiguate them: once we manipulate the second conjunct carefully, we can get the short source to take on a different meaning from the long source. Crucially, in those cases, we get the meaning of the short source, suggesting that it is available.

2.1. Evidence 1: Availability of the short source when there is no island

The discussion so far focuses on sentences that appear to violate islands (the relative clause islands), which might lead us to think that the short source is only relevant to these sentences, but it does not have to be. Consider (8), which does not contain any island. By

using *and also German* in the second conjunct, the short source (8b) has a different meaning from the long source (8a).

(8) They said fewer than three students speak French yesterday, and also German.

a. ... and also German_i [~~TP they said fewer than three students speak t_i~~]. *Long source*

b. ... and also German_i [~~TP they speak = t_i~~]. *Short source*

The long source (8a) is compatible with a scenario where they talked about two different groups of students, French speakers and German speakers. The short source (8b), on the other hand, is not compatible with this scenario, and means that they mentioned the same group of students who speak both French and German. (8) has the short source reading, suggesting that even when there is no island involved, the short source is available.

I should mention that only some of my consultants get the long source reading.

Though that is interesting in its own right, it is beside the point here. The point is to show that the short source reading is available, but not that the long source reading is. As Reinhart (1991) showed, the long source is indeed available, but requires certain contexts (2a-c). I leave it to future research exactly which contexts bring out the long source reading easily, but instead focus on the availability of the short source in this squib.

2.2. Evid. 2: Availability of the short source when there is an island

This subsection continues the logic of the previous one by showing that when the short source has a different reading from the long source, we can get the reading of the short source. Consider (9), which differs from (8) minimally in that its first conjunct contains an island, which as we will see, apparently makes the long source disappear. I put the two potential parses of (9) below, which have different truth conditions:

- (9) They hired someone who speaks French yesterday, and also German.
- a. ... and also German_i [~~TP they hired~~ [~~RC someone who speaks t_i yesterday~~]]. *LongS*
- b. ... and also German_i [~~TP she (= the person they hired) speaks t_i~~]]. *Short source*

The island-violating parse (9a) is true if they hired two monolingual speakers, a French speaker and a German speaker. The short source (9b) is only true if they hired a bilingual speaker who speaks both French and German.

In an informal survey I asked seven native speakers to rate (9) on a scale of 1-7. Six speakers rated it 7, which is consistent with my finding that apparent island violations are possible in stripping. I further asked those six speakers how many people were hired. All but one said only one bilingual person was hired, and the other speaker said it is possible that either one bilingual was hired, or two monolinguals were. Thus, all the speakers can get the short source reading, an indication that the short source is present for (9). Because (7) is very similar to (9), we may infer that (7) also has the short source.⁴

2.3. Evidence 3: Contradictory contexts

This subsection takes advantage of the observation in the previous subsection that for most speakers, when the first conjunct contains an island, as in (9), the long source reading disappears. If the short source produces the only available parse of such stripping sentences, then when the short source is blocked, the corresponding stripping sentence can no longer appear to violate islands.

Recall that the short-source reading, as in (9b), relies on hiring a bilingual speaker. We can thus block it with a contradictory context by using *a monolingual* in the first

conjunct, as in (10), and the sentence becomes ungrammatical for the speakers who could only get the short source reading for (9):

(10) *They hired a monolingual who speaks French yesterday, and also German.

For those speakers, (10) is bad because neither of its potential parses (11a-b) is possible. The long source (11a) is not available (due to the presence of the island, as was the case for (9a)). The short source (11b) is blocked by *a monolingual* in the antecedent.

(11) a. *They hired a monolingual who speaks French yesterday, and also German;

[~~TP they hired~~ [~~RC a monolingual who speaks t_i~~]]. *Long source*

b. #They hired a monolingual who speaks French yesterday, and also German;

[~~TP she (= the person they hired) speaks t_i~~]. *Short source*

2.4. Evidence 4: Russian

This subsection makes a similar argument, but with a different language, Russian.

Stripping in Russian can appear to violate island constraints, but only with a special intonation, and giving rise only to the short source reading. When the short source is spelled out overtly, it requires the special intonation as well, suggesting that the short source is indeed the reason why stripping can appear to violate islands in Russian.

Russian has the relative clause island when there is no ellipsis, just like English, but the remnant of stripping can appear to violate the relative clause island (12). (12) only has the reading that they hired a single bilingual speaker, suggesting that only the short source is available. Also, (12) is only fine if a significant intonational break precedes *a*.

(12) Oni vchera nanyali kogo-to, kto govorit po-francuzski, a
They yesterday hired who-EI who speaks at-French, and
takzhe po-nemecki.
also at-German.

Intended meaning: ‘They hired someone who speaks French, and also German.’

The meaning of (12) already suggests that its appearance to violate the island is due to the short source. In addition, when the short source is spelled out overtly (13), it also requires the special intonation, where a significant break must immediately precede *a*.

(13) Oni vchera nanjali kogo-to, kto govorit po-francuzski, a takzhe
They yesterday hired who-EI who speaks at-French, and also
(ona) govorit po-nemecki.
she speaks at-German.

Intended meaning: ‘They hired someone who speaks French yesterday, and she also speaks German.’

Since (12) only has the short source reading, and both (12) and (13) require a significant intonational break, I take this to mean that the short source (13) is the reason why (12) is grammatical.

2.5. Yoshida et al.’s (2019) rejection of the evasion strategy

Yoshida et al. (2019) presented experimental results showing that the evasion strategies can’t be the reason why stripping can violate islands. They constructed stripping examples where the remnant is an R-expression that is co-indexed with the matrix subject in the antecedent, as in (14). (15) spells out the possible derivations for the response in

(14). In the long source (15a), the matrix subject *she* c-commands the trace of the remnant, incurring a Condition C violation. The short source (15b), if available, avoids such a violation because it does not include the matrix subject.⁵ (14) received low ratings from subjects, suggesting that the short source is not available. As a control, they tested another dialog with a pronoun instead of an R-expression in the remnant, which would avoid the Condition C violation. The control sentences received higher ratings, suggesting a real Condition C effect for (14).

(14) Joe: While Joe was singing, she_i noticed the student who met with *Bill*.

Bill: *No, with *Mary*_i. (Yoshida et al. 2019:1536)

(15) a. Bill: No, with *Mary*_i [_{TP} she_i noticed the student who met t_i]. *Long source*

b. Bill: No, with *Mary*_i [_{TP} {he / the student} met t_i]. *Short source*

I agree that the short source is not available to (14); but when the short source is spelled out overtly, it already sounds odd. The intuition is that *no* can only deny Joe's main assertion here, but not the content in the relative clause. Thus, the badness of the short source may be due to the setup of this particular discourse. I leave the exact reason for future research, and simply point out that the short source is not available to (14) to begin with. When the short source is available, it does save an island violation.

3. Conclusion

This squib has shown that evasion strategies, in particular the short source, are available to stripping. In particular, it must be the reason why the stripping sentences discussed in this squib appear to violate island constraints. Since stripping involves the same

underlying operations as sluicing and fragment answers, the evasion strategies that are available to stripping should be available to sluicing and fragment answers as well.

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¹ I follow Griffiths & Liptak and Barros et al. in calling the entire sentence fragment answer, but strictly speaking, only *Yeah* is the fragment answer, and *Charlie* is likely to be derived from stripping.

² This configuration satisfies the licensing condition on ellipsis that has been proposed in the literature. See Merchant (2001), for example, for a discussion on how it satisfies his semantic identity condition.

³ A reviewer suggested two other possible short sources for (7):

- (i) They hired someone who speaks French yesterday, not German_i [~~CP-who speaks t_i]].~~
- (ii) They hired someone who speaks French yesterday, not German_i [_{VP} speaks t_i].

If these parses are possible, I will still call them the short source because they both involve a subpart of the antecedent that does not include any island. I leave to future research how to tease them apart from the short source proposed in this squib, which may rely on factors such as the scope of the quantifier relative to the conjunction. Also, it is worth mentioning that while these two parses may be possible for the stripping sentences, they can't save the sluicing sentence (4a) (e.g. *...guess which_i [~~CP-who speaks t_i]). Thus, we would need the short source proposed in this squib for sluicing anyway.~~

⁴ We may wonder why for most speakers, the long source disappears when the first conjunct contains an island. Barros et al. (2014) suggested that no movement may violate the island constraints, and the remnant in the long source (9a) does the relative clause island. As Barros et al. and Griffiths & Liptak (2014, fn. 10 and 28) observed, there is an exception to this: when the correlate is in the final position in the antecedent, the long source seems possible. Yoshida et al.'s (2019) experimental results support this generalization: their sentences show island insensitivity even when the evasion strategy is not available, and all those sentences involve utterance-final correlates. I am grateful to a reviewer for pointing this out to me.

⁵ Yoshida et al. (2019) actually focused on another evasion strategy called the cleft source, though they mentioned that their evidence would argue against the short source as well. Following Barros et al. (2014), I assume that the cleft source is generally not available to contrastive remnants. Since Yoshida et al.'s examples all have contrastive remnants, I assume the cleft source is not available, and do not discuss it.