Selective island-sensitivity in Asante Twi and Limbum*

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1 Introduction

- Ever since Ross’s (1967) discovery of islands they have puzzled linguists and still continue to puzzle us.
- It remains a matter of debate whether they are proper syntactic constraints (as was assumed when they were discovered), representational constraints at the PF-level of grammar (e.g. Merchant, 2001; Lasnik, 2001; Hornstein et al., 2007; Boeckx, 2012; Griffiths and Lipták, 2014) or simply limitations on processing capacity (e.g. Kluender, 1991, 1998; Kluender and Kutas, 1993; Hofmeister et al., 2013; Kluender and Gieselmann, 2013).
- What is reasonably well-known is that they come in two flavours: Strong (or absolute) islands and weak (or selective) islands (see Szabolcsi and Lohndal, 2017 for a recent overview) and that at least in some languages resumptive pronouns may alleviate island violations (Kroch, 1981; Chomsky, 1986; Shlonsky, 1992; McDaniel and Cowart, 1999; Ackerman et al., 2018).
- Today, I will have nothing to say about all those issues. What I want to argue instead is that there are languages, of which Asante Twi and Limbum are examples, in which islands are selectively active for VP- and PP-extraction, while they are inactive for nominals (i.e. objects here) and that this inactivity is not due to these nominals leaving a (silent) resumptive pronoun.

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2 Islands in Asante Twi focus construction

2.1 The focus construction in Twi

- Asante Twi is a Kwa language (Niger-Congo) spoken by about 9 million people mainly in Ghana.
- Base order is SVO.
- Adverbs always appear clause-finally

(1) Asante Twi neutral declarative clause
Kofi á-sí dán enora.
Kofi PRF-build house yesterday
‘Kofi has built a house yesterday.’

- There is a focus construction (encoding contrastive focus) in which a focussed constituent (including wh-elements) appears in the left periphery of the clause followed by the focus marker na (2).

(2) Asante Twi object focus
Dán na Kofi á-sí enora.
house FOC Kofi PRF-build yesterday
‘It’s a house that Kofi has built yesterday. (as opposed to e.g. a boat).’

- Generally, focus of an animate object requires the presence of a resumptive pronoun no in the base position (3-a). However, inanimate objects leave a gap when focussed (3-b) (Saah, 1994; Saah and Goodluck, 1995).

(3) Animate vs. inanimate object focus
a. Hwáŋ na Yaw pê *(no1)?
   who FOC Yaw like 3SG.OBJ
   ‘Who does Yaw like?’
   b. Déé n na Yaw pê (*no1)?
      what FOC Yaw like 3SG.OBJ
      ‘What does Yaw like?’ (Korsah and Murphy, 2020: 845)

- As both animate and inanimate object focus is insensitive to islands, Saah (1994) proposes that they involve base generation of the focussed constituent which binds a (overt or covert) resumptive.
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(4) **Island insensitivity with resumptives and gaps** (Saah, 1994: 172)

a. Ĥwáñí na wo-hú-u [DP onipa ko [CP áa ɔ-bɔ-ɔ nóí who FOC 2SG-see-PST person DEF REL 3SG.SBJ-hit-PST 3SG nóí ]]?

   ‘Who did you see the person who hit?’

b. Dééñ na wo-níí [DP onipa ko [CP áa ɔ-tɔ-ɔ-ɛ nó what FOC 2SG-know person DEF REL 3SG-buy-PST-YE CD ]]?

   ‘What do you know the person that bought?’

- However, Korsah and Murphy (2020) show that the construction exhibits properties of $\bar{A}$-movement.
- First, there is reconstruction for binding, as shown by the grammaticality of (5).

(5) **Reconstruction for variable binding**

[DP Ne₁-máñfó yie-yó hó ], na Kofi níí [CP se abán biárái poss-people well-be self FOC Kofi know that government every dwéne no₁ dáá ].

think 3SG.OBJ every.day

‘It’s the well-being of its₁ people that Kofi knows that every₁ government thinks about every day.’ (Korsah and Murphy, 2020: 850)

- Second, there are weak crossover effects (6).

(6) **Weak Crossover in Twi**

??Hwáñí na né₁-núá tán nóí, (nó) ?

who FOC POSS.3SG-brother hate 3SG.OBJ CD

‘Who, does his, brother hate?’ (Korsah and Murphy, 2020: 851)

- Third, there is reconstruction for scope (7).

(7) **Reconstruction for scope in Twi** (Korsah and Murphy, 2020: 852)

a. Obi ka-a [CP sé abɔfrá biárá ðo Kofi ].

   someone say-PST that child every love Kofi

   ‘Someone said that every child loves Kofi.’ (*∀ > Ǝ, Ǝ > ∀)

b. Ĥwáñí na Kofi ká-a [CP sé abɔfrá biárá ðo no₁ ]?

   who FOC Kofi say-PST that child every love 3SG.OBJ

   ‘Who did Kofi say that every child loves?’ (∀ > wh, wh > ∀)
• Fourth, there is a tonal reflex associated with $\bar{A}$-movement in which lexical low tones on all verbs crossed by the dependency are overwritten with high tones (8).

(8) **Tonal overwriting in focus construction** (Korsah and Murphy, 2020: 834)

a. Kofi $\text{káé}$ $\text{sc}$ Ám'má $\text{kítá}$ bayéré.
Kofi remember that Ama hold yam
‘Kofi remembers that Ama is holding yam.’

b. Déén $\text{na}$ Kofi $\text{káé}$ $\text{sc}$ Ám'má $\text{kítá}$ ___?
what $\text{FOC}$ Kofi remember that Ama hold
‘What does Kofi remember that Ama is holding?’

• Importantly, these movement indicators can also be observed with focalization from inside an island (9).

(9) a. \[
[\text{DP } N^{e}_i \text{-máfó\dagger } \text{yie-yó } \text{hó } \text{]} \text{na } m\text{-á-té } [\text{DP atésé}'m ]
\]
\[
\begin{array}{l}
\text{3SG.Poss \text{-people well-be self FOC 1SG-PERF-hear rumour} } \\
\text{bí } [\text{CP sc } \text{abán } \text{biárá } _i \text{ dwéné no } \text{dáá } ]
\end{array}
\]
INDEF that governmen every think 3SG.OBJ every.day
‘It’s the well-being of its, people that I have heard a rumour that every day government thinks about every day.’

b. Hwáni $\text{na}$ wo-á-té $\text{[DP atésé}'m ]$ \text{bí } $\text{[CP sc}$ who $\text{FOC 2SG-PERF-hear rumour INDEF that}$
\[
\begin{array}{l}
\text{né}_i \text{-núá } \text{tán } \text{nó}_i \text{ nó } ]
\end{array}
\]
\[
\begin{array}{l}
\text{3SG.Poss -sibling hate 3SG.OBJ CD}
\end{array}
\]
‘Who have you heard the rumour that his/her sibling hates (him/her)?’

c. (i) \[
[\text{CP Sē } \text{Kofi dō } \text{Ám'má } ] \text{ye asēm pā.}
\]
\text{that Kofi love Ama be matter good}
‘That Kofi loves Ama is good news.’

(ii) Hwáni $\text{na } [\text{CP sē } \text{Kofi dō } \text{nó}_i \text{ nó } ] \text{e-yé asēm pā?}$
\text{who FOC that Kofi love 3SG.OBJ CD 3SG-be matter good}
‘Who is that Kofi loves her good news?’ (Korsah and Murphy, 2020: 859)

• This suggests that the focus construction in Twi involves proper $\bar{A}$-movement. An account in terms of base-generation (Saah, 1994) therefore seems unfit.

• As resumptives may occur in the root of a focus dependency, it also indicates that they are one possible outcome of movement (Zaenen et al., 1981; Engdahl, 1985; Pesetsky, 1998; Boeckx, 2003; Sichel, 2014; Klein, 2017), e.g. as the spell-out of a lower copy in a movement chain (see e.g. Kandybowicz, 2008; van Urk, 2018).
2.2 Islands are not absent from Twi

- These data do not mean that islands constraints are inactive in the entirety of the language.
- As Korsah and Murphy (2020) point out, focus of VPs (10-a) and PPs (11-a) from a non-island context is grammatical. However, focalization of the same VP or PP from inside an island renders the sentence ungrammatical (10-b) and (11-b).

(10) a. \[ VP Dán sí]-é na Ámá káa sé Kofi á-yó \{__VP / house build-NMLZ FOC Ama say._PST that Kofi _PFV-do *nó \} anɔpá.
    3SG.O morning
    ‘Ama said that Kofi BUILT A HOUSE in the morning (not bought a car).’

b. \*\[ VP Dán sí]-é na mé-n-tée \[DP atétésêm biárá house build-NMLZ FOC 1SG-NEG-hear._PST rumour.PL any \[CP sé \ Kofi á-yó __VP ]].
    that Kofi _PFV-do
    ‘I didn’t hear any rumours that Kofi has BUILT A HOUSE.’

    (Hein, 2017: 38)

    chair the in FOC Kofi lie there morning
    ‘Kofi is lying IN THE CHAIR in the morning.’

b. \*\[PP Akonwá nó mú ] na Ama nĩm \[DP neá ñtí \[CP áa chair the in FOC Ama know thing because.of _REL Kofi dá __PP ]].
    Kofi lie
    ‘Ama knows the reason why Kofi lies IN THE CHAIR.’

    (Korsah and Murphy, 2020: 847f.)

2.3 Repair by resumption

- The immediate question then is: What is special about nominal constituents that allows them to apparently violate island constraints even in the presence of a gap, as with inanimate objects?
- There is a general process of deletion of inanimate object pronouns (12) (Riis, 1854; Christaller, 1875/1964; Osam, 1996).

    Kofi fut-sell tree _DEF
    ‘Kofi will sell the tree.’

b. Kofi be-tɔn (*no)j.
    Kofi fut-sell 3SG.OBJ
    ‘Kofi will sell it (the tree).’
• Following Korsah (2017), Korsah and Murphy (2020) argue that inanimate objects do in fact leave a resumptive pronoun and that this resumptive pronoun is subject to the same obligatory deletion rule at PF (i.e. pro-drop).
• The effect that resumptives circumvent island constraints is then analyzed as a result of the latter being PF-constraints (cf. Merchant, 2001; Lasnik, 2001; Hornstein et al., 2007; Boeckx, 2012; Griffiths and Lipták, 2014) that militate against representations with a gap in the base position. If there is a resumptive, the constraint is satisfied.
• The island-obviating effect of the pseudo-gaps with inanimate objects is accounted for by PF-ordering: the island constraints are checked before the PF-deletion rule applies to the resumptive pronoun of a moved inanimate object, therefore, no island violation is incurred.
• This approach is corroborated by the fact that in the contexts where regular inanimate pronouns are exempt from deletion, i.e. with clause-final adverbs (13-a), secondary predicates (13-b), and change-of-state verbs (13-c), the resumptive is also exempt and therefore surfaces overtly (13-d–f).
• In these contexts, Korsah (2017); Korsah and Murphy (2020) suggest that the PF-rule is suspended.

(13) **Contexts for inanimate pronoun realization** (Korsah and Murphy, 2020: 845-847)

a. Kofi be-tɔn *(no₁) ɔkyena.
   Kofi fut-sell 3SG.OBJ tomorrow
   ‘Kofi will sell it (e.g. the tree) tomorrow.’

b. Kuukuá té *[sC *(no₁) móNó ].
   Kuukuá pluck 3SG.OBJ fresh
   ‘Kuukuá plucks it (e.g. the flower) fresh.’

c. Kofi bu- u *(no₁).
   Kofi break-pst 3SG.OBJ
   ‘Kofi broke it (e.g. the chair).’

d. [Aduane nó₁ na Kofi pɛ *(no₁) anɔpá.
   food def foc Kofi like 3SG.OBJ morning
   ‘It’s the food that Kofi likes in the morning.’

e. [Akonwa nó₁ na Kofi bú-u *(no₁).
   chair def foc Kofi break-pst 3SG.OBJ
   ‘It’s the chair that Kofi broke.’

f. [DP Aduane nó₁ [CP áá Kofi pɛ *(no₁) hyehyééhyé nó ] nie
   food def rel Kofi like 3SG.OBJ very.hot cd this
   ‘This is the food that Kofi likes very hot.’

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2.4 Summary Asante Twi

- Focus fronting involves $\bar{A}$-movement.
- Nominal arguments may be focussed from inside an island leaving a resumptive (animates) or a surface gap (inanimates).
- Focus fronting of VPs and PPs, though perfectly focussable from non-islands, incurs island violations.
- Analysis by Korsah and Murphy (2020): All nominal arguments leave RPs which may circumvent PF-island constraints. The RPs for inanimates are subject to a general PF-deletion rule for inanimate pronouns that applies after the islands have been checked.

3 Islands in Limbum focus construction

3.1 The focus construction in Limbum

- Limbum is a Grassfields Bantu language spoken by 70 000–120 000 speakers in Cameroon.
- Base order is SVO.
- Adverbs including negation always appear clause-finally.

(14) Njīnywë fɔ̀ à mû yè bô fɔ̀ nŋkòr.
    woman det sm pst2 see children det yesterday
    ‘The woman saw the children yesterday.’

- There is a focus construction (new information focus, Becker et al., 2019) in which a focussed constituent (including wh-elements) appears in the left periphery of the clause preceded by a particle á and followed by another particle ci.

(15) Á Ngalá (ci) mè bì kônî.
    FOC Ngala comp I futi meet
    ‘I will meet NGALA.’

- Despite the appearance, there are arguments that (15) does not have a biclusal cleft structure (I follow arguments presented in Becker et al., 2019).
- First, á-focus is compatible with non-exhaustive contexts. This is evidenced by the fact that it may contain an inherently non-exhaustive universal quantifier as part of the focussed constituent (16). Clefts, however, are typically found with an exhaustive meaning component (Horn, 1981; Percus, 1997).
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(16) Á nyè nsip (cí) mè bí kənì.
    FOC person every COMP I FUT1 meet
    ‘I will meet EVERYBODY.’ (Becker et al., 2019: 225)

- Second, Fransen (1995) analyses the á marker in (17) as a copula, concluding that it also acts as a copula in the á-focus construction which must therefore be a cleft.

(17) á rtēe
    COP palm.tree
    ‘It is a palm tree.’ (Fransen, 1995: 301)

- Becker et al. (2019) suggest that á in (17) is in fact a focus particle (as it is (16)) while the copula is silent. This correctly predicts that TAM-markers or negation are incompatible with á (18-a). If a TAM-marker is required in the focus part, the only way to express it is to add an overt copula bà and an expletive à resulting in a proper biclausal structure (18-b).

(18) a. (*mù) á (*mù) bàà (cí) Nfor à bà zhē.
    PST2 FOC PST2 fufu COMP Nfor SM PST1 eat
    ‘Nfor ate FUFU.’
    b. À mù bà bàà Nfor à mù zhē.
    EXPL PST2 COP fufu Nfor SM PST2 eat
    ‘It was fufu that Nfor ate.’ (Becker et al., 2019: 227)

- Third, clefts are typically analysed as containing a relative clause (Akmajian, 1970; Gundel, 1977; Percus, 1997; Svenonius, 1998; Hedberg, 2000; Reeve, 2011). As Fransen (1995) and Mpoche (1993) show, a relative clause may optionally be followed by the demonstrative marker nà (19-a). This marker is ungrammatical in an á-focus construction (19-b).

(19) a. mù zhē í mù zhéé mŋəmbé (nà)
    child REL 3SG PST2 eat plantains DEM
    ‘the child who ate plantains’
    b. À ñkféé (cí) mè bí kənì (*nà).
    FOC chief COMP 1SG FUT1 meet DEM
    ‘I will meet the CHIEF.’ (Becker et al., 2019: 228)

- In addition, cí [fì] is distinct from the relative pronoun zhì [zì]. As shown in (20) and pointed out in Becker et al. (2019: 227), cí cannot act as a relative pronoun whereas zhì can.
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(20) Nwè fò rîn njîwè fò zhû/*cí Nfor à mú yē nînkôr.  
    man det know woman det rel/comp Nfor sm pst2 see yesterday  
    ‘The man knows the woman whom Nfor saw yesterday.’

- This is corroborated by data showing that the relative pronoun covaries with  
  the head noun (at least) in number taking the form vî in the plural (21-a)  
  whereas the complementizer cá is invariant in a focus construction (21-b).

(21) a. Nwè fò rîn bômbàŋrô fò vî/*cí njîwè fò à mú  
    man det know boys det rel.pl/comp woman det sm pst2  
    yē nînkôr.  
    see yesterday  
    ‘The man knows the boys whom the woman saw yesterday.’

b. Á bômbàŋrô fò cá/*vî njîwè fò à mú yē nînkôr.  
    foc boys det comp/rel.pl woman det sm pst2 see yesterday  
    ‘The woman saw the boys yesterday.’

- Thus, despite its appearance, the á-focus construction does not show typical  
  properties of a cleft. Rather, it seems to involve a monoclusal structure in  
  which the focussed constituent is placed in the left periphery instead of its base  
  position.

3.2 Evidence for movement

- Several movement diagnostics indicate that the focussed constituent originates  
  inside the clause in its respective canonical position.
- First, there is binding reconstruction for Condition C (22).

(22) Reconstruction for Condition C

a. Í-i/j rîn i-nô à cá rô Nôfôrî.  
    3sg know 3sg-c 2sg prog search Nôfôr  
    ‘He knows that you are searching for Nôfôr.’

b. Á Nôfôrî ci i-i/j rîn i-nô wê cá rô __î.  
    foc Nôfôr comp 3sg know 3sg-c 2sg prog search __  
    ‘He knows that you are searching for NÔFÔR.’

- Second, there is reconstruction for variable binding (23).

(23) a. [Nwè nsîp]x bî kôni táá zhî-x/y nôgwà.  
    man every fut1 meet father 3sg.poss wife  
    ‘Every man will meet the father of his wife.’
b. Á [táá ñgwá zhíx/y]₁ cí mè kwá?shì mè-nē [ñwè nsìp]ₓ 
   FOC father wife 3SG.POSS COMP 1SG think 1SG-C man every 
   bí kōnį _[_1].
   FUT₁ meet _
   ‘I think that every man will meet THE FATHER OF HIS WIFE.’

• Third, there is reconstruction for relative quantifier scope (25). Example (24) 
  shows that quantifier raising is clause-bound (May, 1985; Larson and May, 
  1990).

(24) Ñwè-ryé?nì à mù la í-nē mù nsìp à mù cí bumi. 
MAN/teach SM PST2 say 3SG-C child every SM PST2 PROG sleep 
‘A/Some teacher said that every child was sleeping.’ (∃ > ∀, *∀ > ∃)

(25) Á mbànrú₁ cí Shey à mù lâ í-nē nñìwè nsìp à mù bá 
FOC male COMP Shey SM PST2 say 3SG-C woman every SM PST2 birth 
___₁. 
   ___
   ‘Shey said that every woman gave birth to a son.’ (∀ > ∃, *∃ > ∀)

• Finally, we find reconstruction into intermediate position, i.e. reconstruction 
  conflicts (26) (cf. Rouveret, 2008; Guiliott and Malkawi, 2009; Moulton, 2013; 
  Panitz, 2018) along the lines of the English example in (27).

(26) a. Á ṅkàr [bó bvi₁]₂ cí nñìwè nsìp₁ kwá?shì [CP t₂' 
   FOC friend children 3SG.POSS COMP woman every think 
   í-nē ó₂ mù cèb t₂ ].
   3SG-C 3PL.SM PST2 insult 
   ‘(It’s) a friend of [her₁ children]₂ (that) every woman₁ thinks that they₂ 
   insulted.’

b. *Á ṅkàr [bó bvi₁]₂ cí ó₂ kwá?shì [CP t₂' ó-nē 
   FOC friend children 3SG.POSS COMP 3PL.SM think 3SG-C 
   nñìwè nsìp₁ à mù cèb t₂ ].
   woman every SM PST2 insult 
   ‘(It’s) a friend of [her₁ children]₂ (that) they₂ think that every woman₁ 
   insulted.’

(27) a. [Which paper that he₁ gave to Bresnan₂]₁ did every student₁ think [ 
   t₂' that she₂ would like t₁ ]?

b. *[Which paper that he₁ gave to Bresnan₂]₁ did she₂ think [ t₂' that ev-
   ery student₁ would like t₁ ]? (Lebeaux, 1991)

• I take this to show that ex-situ focus in Limbum involves A-movement.
3.3 Island-insensitivity of nominal focus

- Curiously, extraction of nominal objects is island-insensitive just like in Asante Twi, with the difference that there are no resumptive pronouns.¹

(28) Nominal object extraction from island

a. Á nínjwe₁ cí mè mú yô? [DP ñsùŋ] [CP zhí-ñē Nfor FOC woman COMP I PST₂ hear rumour 3SG.INAN-C N. bí kôni —₁]].
   fut₁ meet __
   ‘I heard the rumour that Nfor will meet A WOMAN.’

b. Á rkar₁ cí mè mú yô? [DP ñsùŋ] [CP zhí-ñē Nfor FOC car COMP I PST₂ hear rumour 3SG.INAN-C N. bí yū —₁]].
   fut₁ buy __
   ‘I heard the rumour that Nfor will buy A CAR.’

- Nonetheless, just as in Twi, we find that the same movement diagnostics as for non-island focus, i.e. binding reconstruction for Condition C and variables, scope reconstruction, and reconstruction conflicts, appear in focalizations from inside an island (29).

(29) Á Nfor₁ cí i-i/j mú yô? [DP ñsùŋ] [CP zhí-ñē à cí FOC Nfor COMP 3SG PST₂ hear rumour 3.INAN-C 2SG PROG ró —₁]].
   search
   ‘He has heard a rumour that you are searching for NFOR.’

(30) Á [tāá ñgwá zhí₁/j/x₁]₁ cí mè mú yô? [DP ñsùŋ] [CP FOC father wife 3SG.POSS COMP 1SG PST₂ hear rumour zhí-ñē [ñwē nsîp]₁ x bí kôni —₁]].
   3SG.INAN-C man every fut₁ meet __
   ‘I heard a rumour that every man will meet THE FATHER OF HIS WIFE.’

(31) Á [mbànørû₁]₁ cí mè mú yô? [DP ñsùŋ] [CP zhí-ñē nínjwe₁ FOC male COMP 1SG PST₂ hear rumour 3SG.INAN-C woman nsîp à mú bzú —₁]].
   every sm PST₂ birth __
   ‘I heard a rumour that every woman gave birth to a son.’ (*∃ > ∀, ∀ > ∃)

¹Resumption may optionally occur when a bare noun indefinite is focussed. In this case, the focussed constituent obligatorily receives a specific interpretation.
(32) a. Á [ŋkâr [bô bvi₁₂]₃ cí njînwè nsîp₁ à mú yō? [DP foc friend children 3SG.POSS COMP woman every SM PST2 hear nsûn [CP zhî-në ò₂ mú cèb _3]].
rumour 3.INAN-C 3PL PST2 insult
'It is a friend of [her₁ children]₂ that every woman₁ heard a rumour that they₂ insulted.'

b. *Á [ŋkâr [bô bvi₁₂]₃ cí ò₂ mú yō? [DP nsûn [CP foc friend children 3SG.POSS COMP 3PL PST2 hear rumour zhî-në njînwè nsîp₁ à mú cèb _3]].
3.INAN-C woman every SM PST2 insult
'It is a friend of [her₁ children]₂ that they₂ heard a rumour that every woman₁ insulted.'

- Thus, it seems that nominal focus from islands involves A-movement just like nominal focus from non-islands does, too.
- In contrast to Asante Twi, however, we do not observe the presence of a resumptive pronoun (with at least one type of nominal, e.g. animates).

3.4 Island-sensitivity of non-nominal focus

- Parallel to the Asante Twi case, this does not entail that island constraints are inactive in Limbum entirely.
- Note that focus fronting of VPs (33) and PPs (34) is grammatical in Limbum leaving a gap.

(33) Á r-[yū msâñ] cí njînwè fo bî gî __.
FOC NMLZ-buy rice COMP woman DET FUT₁ do
'It is buying rice that the woman will do.' (Becker and Nformi, 2016: 75)

(34) Á [nî pkûh] cí Nför nɔŋ __.
FOC in bed COMP N. sleep __
'It is in the bed that Kofi is lying.'

- However, when focussed from inside an island, VPs and PPs incur an island violation (35) and (36).

(35) *Á r-[yû msâñ] cí mè mú yō? [DP nsûn [CP foc NMLZ-buy rice COMP 1SG PST2 hear rumour zhî-në Nför bî gî __]].
3SG.INAN-COMP Nför FUT₁ do
'I heard a rumour that Nför will buy rice.'
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(36) *Á [nî pkûh] cî mè mû yô? [DP nsûn] [CP zhî-nê Nför nôn
FOC in bed COMP 1SG PST2 hear rumour 3SG-COMP Nför sleep
— ]).

‘It is in the bed that I heard a rumour that Nför is lying.’

• Summarizing briefly, the pattern in Limbum is parallel to the one in Asante Twi. Nominal arguments may extract freely from islands while VPs and PPs incur violations in these contexts despite being focus-frontable in non-island environments.

3.5 Repair by resumption?

• Recall that the exemption of nominals from island constraints in Asante Twi was suggested to be due to them leaving a resumptive pronoun that circumvents a violation of a representational PF-island constraint before it is deleted (for inanimate pronouns).
• This proposal gains some support in Twi from the fact that the resumptive pronoun appears overtly with animate objects.
• Can this analysis be transferred to the Limbum data?
• Overt resumption can indeed be found in Limbum ex-situ object focus. However, it is restricted to specific indefinites (37). And even with those it is only one additional option besides a gap.

(37) Object focus with resumptive pronoun
a. Á njinwe1 cî Nför bî kônî —1/yê1.
   FOC woman COMP Nför FUT1 meet /her
   ‘Nför will meet a SPECIFIC WOMAN.’

b. Á rkar1 cî Nför bî yû —1/zhî1.
   FOC car COMP Nför FUT1 buy /it
   ‘Nför will buy a SPECIFIC CAR.’

• Resumption for other noun types results in ungrammaticality, as shown for a proper name in (38-a), a pronoun in (38-b), and a definite expression in (38-c).

(38) a. Á Tanko1 cî Nför à mû yê *yê1/—1 nînkôr.
   FOC Tanko COMP N. SM PST2 see 3SG/— yesterday
   ‘Nför saw TANKO yesterday.’

b. Á yê1 cî Nför à mû yê *yê1/—1 nînkôr.
   FOC 3SG COMP Nför SM PST2 see 3SG/— yesterday
   ‘Nför saw HIM/HER yesterday.’
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• One could, of course, assume that the lack of resumptives with the latter nominals is due to a deletion rule akin to the one in Asante Twi. However, there are some considerations that this is not the case.
• First, gaps in Twi nominal extraction occur in a natural class of contexts, namely with inanimate objects. The contexts for gaps in Limbum do not form a natural class. Rather, the opposite is true. If we were to treat resumption in Limbum on a par with resumption in Asante Twi, that is as the default output of extraction from object position, we would have to restrict the domain of application of a purported PF-deletion rule to all nominals except specific indefinites.
• In addition, such a rule would have to be optionally applicable to specific indefinites (and only for them) since a gap is compatible with both a specific and non-specific indefinite.
• Second, unlike in Twi, there is no evidence that an alleged underlying resumptive pronoun appears overtly in any other contexts except specific indefinites. In particular, clause-final adverbs do not force an overt resumptive instead of a gap (38-c).
• What is more, there seems to exist a deletion rule in Limbum that is almost identical to the one proposed for Asante Twi. It applies to regular object pronouns in discourse-anaphoric use and optionally deletes them (39) (cf. object (pro-)drop).

(39) a. Yaa à mú yē rkār zhì í kōn. Ndū zhì bí yū Yaa sm pst2 see car rel.sg 3sg like husband 3sg.poss fut1 buy (zhì) áyânsè. 3sg.inan.o tomorrow ‘Yaa saw a car that she likes. Her husband will buy it tomorrow.’

b. Yaa à mú yē mŋkōb bɔ̀ ì kōn. Ndū zhì bí yū Yaa sm pst2 see suitcases rel 3sg like husband 3sg.poss fut1 buy (bɔ̀) áyânsè. 3pl.inan.o tomorrow ‘Yaa saw suitcases (that she likes). Her husband will buy them tomorrow.’

• However, it is restricted to inanimates. Deletion of animate object pronouns leads to ungrammaticality (40).
(40)  a. Yaa à mú yé Shey. Ndù zhì bífu kòni *(yé)
    Yaa sm pst2 see Shey husband 3sg.poss fut3 meet 3sg.o
    àyànsè.
tomorrow
    ‘Yaa saw Shey. Her husband will meet him tomorrow.’
  b. Yaa à mú yé Shey ba Ngala. Ndù zhì bífu kòni
    Yaa sm pst2 see Shey and Ngala husband 3sg.poss fut3 meet
    *(wó) àyànsè.
    3pl.o tomorrow
    ‘Yaa saw Shey and Ngala. Her husband will meet them tomorrow.’

• If, as in Twi, this rule were responsible for the deletion of resumptive pronouns and the occurrence of pseudo-gaps, it should spare animate resumptives. Under the assumption that every nominal extraction first left a resumptive pronoun to later be deleted at PF, we would therefore expect that pseudo-gaps were restricted to inanimate objects, contrary to fact.

• In light of these observations, it seems to be the case that island constraints must be regarded as selectively inactive for nominal (argument) focalization. If one can focus a nominal object via movement from inside an island and leave a true gap (as opposed to a silent resumptive pronoun) the island simply cannot hold.

4 Special noun-types in Asante Twi

• In fact, novel data from Asante Twi indicate that the PF-deletion analysis suggested by Korsah and Murphy (2020) cannot be the whole story in Twi either.
• Recall that all nominals in Twi are claimed to leave a resumptive when extracted, which is deleted at PF for inanimates, but only after the PF-island constraints have been checked. This was corroborated by data showing that in some contexts (e.g. clause-final adverbs) the deletion is suspended.
• Georgi and Hein (2020) observe that there are some special noun types, including predicate nouns, kind/generic expressions, and parts of idioms, whose extraction always results in a gap even if they are animate (in which case the deletion rule should be inapplicable) or inanimate appearing in the deletion-suspending contexts (41).

(41)  Some noun types leave true gaps in Asante Twi (Georgi and Hein, 2020)
  a. Tikyani na Kofi bë-yé \{__1 / *nó1\} afe yí.
     teacher  foc Kofi fut-be 3sg.o year this
     ‘It is a teacher that Kofi will become this year.’
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b. Nípa₁ na Kofi sûró {___ / *nó₁} páa.
   person foc Kofi fear 3sg.o really
   ‘It’s people that Kofi really fears.’

c. Ne-nán₁ na ɔ-gyāe {___ / *nó₁} [PP wò dán nó mú ].
   his-leg foc 3sg.s-leave.pst 3sg.o loc room the inside
   Id.: ‘It’s defecating that he did in the room.’
   Lit.: ‘It’s his leg that he left in the room.’

- They thus do not seem to involve an underlying resumptive pronoun. Nonetheless, like the gaps that occur in Limbum focalizations, those gaps do not incur an island violation (42).

(42) True gaps appear in islands in Asante Twi (Georgi and Hein, 2020)

  a. Ne-nán₁ na m-á-té [DP atésɛm bì [CP sɛ ɔ-gyāe
     his-leg foc 1sg.s-pfv-hear rumour a that 3sg.s-leave.pst
     {___ / *nó₁} wò dán nó mú ]].
     3sg.o loc room the inside
     Id.: ‘It’s defecating that I have heard a rumour that he did in the room.’

  b. Tíkya₁ na m-á-té [DP atésɛm nó [CP sɛ Kofi bé-yé
     teacher foc 1sg-perf-hear rumour the that Kofi fut-be
     {___ / *nó} afe yí ]].
     3sg.o year this
     ‘It is a teacher that I have heard the rumour that Kofi will become this
     year.’

  c. Nípa₁ na wo-té-e [DP atésɛm nó [CP sɛ Kofi sûró {___ /
     person foc 2sg.s-hear-pst rumour the that Kofi fear
     *nó₁} páa ]].
     3sg.o really
     ‘It’s people that I have heard the rumour that Kofi really fears.’ (not
     animals)

- This indicates that the presence of a resumptive pronoun that undergoes deletion at PF is not the sole property of Twi that renders argument focalization insensitive to islands (as suggested by Korsah and Murphy, 2020). Rather, like in Limbum, island constraints seem to be inactive in the extraction of (some types of) nominal arguments.
5 Conclusion

- Both Asante Twi and Limbum exhibit a pattern of focus/wh-movement in which nominal arguments may extract freely from inside islands while VP- and PP-movement incurs a violation of the island constraint.
- While this could (partly) be explained as a case of repair by resumption and PF-deletion of the resumptive in Asante Twi, no such explanation presents itself for the Limbum data.
- In fact, additional data from Asante Twi evade the repair by resumption analysis, too.
- I take this to mean that island constraints, at least in some languages, are sensitive to the category of the extracting element.

References


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