

Fragment answers and island insensitivity in Turkish

We provide novel evidence that certain contrastive fragments in Turkish, as well as non-contrastive fragments, are insensitive to several types of islands. Thus, Turkish does not conform to the asymmetry between contrastive and non-contrastive ellipsis island insensitivity proposed by Griffiths and Lipták (2014). We further argue that the ellipsis sites of island-insensitive fragments are populated with syntactic structure, which is isomorphic to that of their antecedents (Merchant 2004; c.f. Barros et. al. 2014).

İnce (2009, 2012) observed that *non-contrastive fragment answers* in Turkish are island insensitive, (1). The correlate in (1A), the *wh*-phrase “hangi Avrupa dil-i-ni”, is contained within relative clause island, yet the fragment answer remains acceptable. Following Merchant (2004), İnce argues that these fragments involve movement of the remnant to a Focus Phrase at the left edge of the clause, followed by clausal ellipsis.

(1) A: Ali [RC [hangi Avrupa dil-i-ni konuş-an] öğrenci-yi] gör-dü?
Ali which Europe. language-3POSS-ACC speak-SR student-ACC see-PAST
'Ali saw the student who speaks WHICH EUROPEAN LANGUAGE?'

B: Fransızca.
'French'

Contrastive fragment answers are also possible in Turkish, (2), and we argue that they are also insensitive to island effects. Griffiths and Lipták (2014) claimed that non-contrastive ellipsis is in general island insensitive while contrastive ellipsis remains sensitive to island effects. However, it is not clear whether this generalization holds cross-linguistically (Iovtcheva & Oikonomou 2015), or even for English (Potter 2017).

2.A: Bill Türkçe konuş-tuğ-u-nu mu söyle-di?
Bill Turkish speak-FNOM-3POSS-ACC Q say-PAST
'Bill said that he speaks TURKISH?'

B: Hayır, Almanca.
'No, German'

Initial examination of contrastive fragment answers to yes/no questions suggests these are indeed sensitive to islands (3). However, even non-contrastive fragment answers are unacceptable answers to yes/no questions in which the correlate is contained within an island (4). We therefore conclude yes/no questions to not be a useful test case here.

(3) A: Ahmet [RC [Türkçe konuş-an] öğrenci-yi] mi gör-dü?
Ahmet Turkish speak-SR student-ACC Q see-PAST
'Ahmet saw the student who speaks TURKISH?'

B. *Hayır, Fransızca
'No, French.'

(4) A: Ali [RC [bir Avrupa dil-i-ni konuş-an] öğrenci-yi] mi gör-dü?
Ali one Europe. language-3POSS-ACC speak-SR student-ACC Q see-PAST
'Ali saw the student who speaks a EUROPEAN LANGUAGE?'

B: *Evet, Fransızca

‘Yes, French.’

However, there is a context in which contrastive fragment replies are island insensitive: when they are replies to fragment answers to yes/no and alternative questions (5-6A). The island insensitivity of both contrastive and non-contrastive fragment answers follows from a simplified version of the analysis proposed by Merchant (2004), as proposed in Potter (2017): the remnants of both contrastive and non-contrastive fragment answers raise to the same position within the left periphery, followed by ellipsis of the complement of the remnant landing site, thereby repairing the island violation.

(5) A: Ali [RC [hangi Avrupa dil-i-ni konuş-an öğrenci-yi] gör-dü?
Ali which Europe. language-3POSS-ACC speak-SR student-ACC see-PAST
‘Ali saw the student who speaks WHICH EUROPEAN LANGUAGE?’

B: Fransızca

‘French.’

C: Hayır, Türkçe.

‘No, Turkish’

Finally, we argue against reduced it-cleft, pseudo-strip, and short source accounts of ellipsis island repair (Barros et al. 2014), in which the syntax of the ellipsis site does not contain an island at all. Turkish has no available reduced cleft structure (Kornfilt 1997), and the presence of a copula, as in a pseudo-strip analysis, yields unacceptability (6B’). Nor is the short source analysis tenable, as fragment answers consisting of just the island (6B’’) are infelicitous responses to disjunctive and yes/no questions. Thus, if the island insensitivity of ellipsis were due to the ellipsis site containing just the island itself, fragment responses would be incorrectly predicted to be as infelicitous as (6B’). It seems that the island insensitivity of Turkish fragment answers is due to the island repair properties of ellipsis.

(6) A: Ahmet Fransızca mı yoksa Almanca mı konuş-an öğrenci-yi gör-dü?
Ahmet French Q or German Q speak-SR student-ACC see-PAST
‘Ahmet saw the student who speaks FRENCH or GERMAN?’

B: Fransızca

‘French.’

B’: *Fransızca-dır

‘It’s French.’

B’’: #Öğrenci Fransızca konuş-uyor.

student French speak-PROG

‘The student speaks French.’

İnce, A. 2012. Fragment Answers and Islands. *Syntax* 15(2): 181-214.

Merchant, J. 2004. Fragments and Ellipsis. *Linguistics and Philosophy* 27, 661-738.

Potter, D. 2017. The Island (In)sensitivity of Stripping. Doctoral Dissertation. NU