

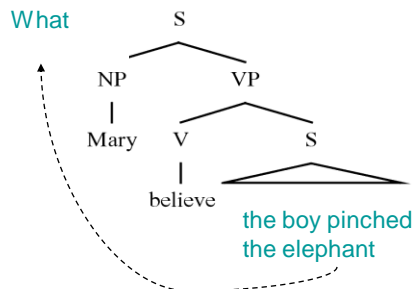


An Animated and Narrated Glossary of
Terms used in Linguistics
presents

Island



Movement in syntax



Movement is used here as a metaphor for expressing correlations between **gaps** and their **fillers**.

Using this metaphor, what we are seeing here is the extraction of a syntactic constituent to outside its original domain.

Island

- An **island** in syntax refers to a syntactic domain from which its constituents cannot be extracted.
- In other words, a **gap** inside an island cannot be filled by an antecedent outside of that island.
- First discovered by Ross (1967).



Slide 3 

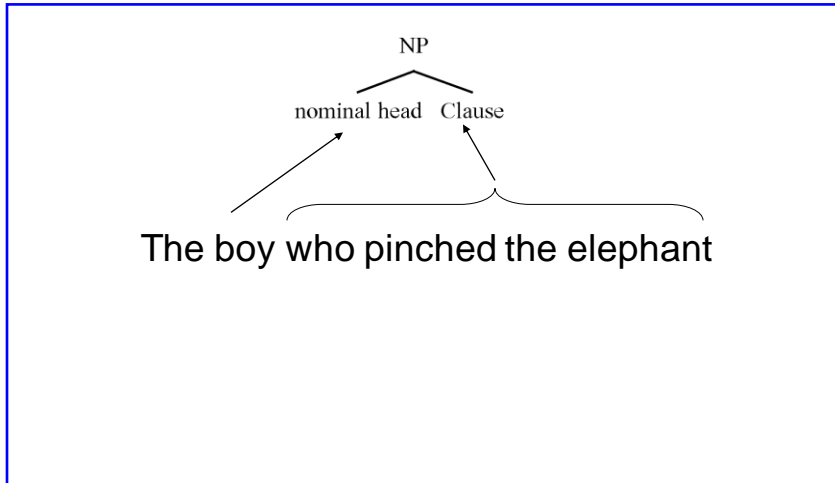
Types of islands

- Complex NP island
- Subject island
- Adjunct island
- Question island
- Left-branch constraint
- Coordinate structure constraint

Slide 4 



Complex NP



Slide 5 



Complex NP island

The boy pinched **the elephant** .

What did the boy pinch _____?

Susan believed the boy pinched **the elephant** .

What did Susan believe the boy pinched _____?

Susan believed the boy who pinched **the elephant** .

***What** did Susan believe the boy who pinched _____?

The complex NP is an island. One cannot move items out of it.

Slide 6 



Subject island



The boy pinched the trunk of **the elephant**.

What did the boy pinch the trunk of _____?

The trunk of **the elephant** fascinated many biologists.

***What** did the trunk of _____ fascinate many biologists?

The subject of a clause is an island. One cannot move items out of it.

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Adjunct island



Chloe gasped **because Tim kissed Carrie**.

***Who** did Chloe gasped because Tim kissed _____?

The adjunct of a clause is an island. One cannot move items out of it.

Slide 8

Question island



Lily knew that the boy pinched **the elephant** .

What did Lily know that the boy pinched _____?

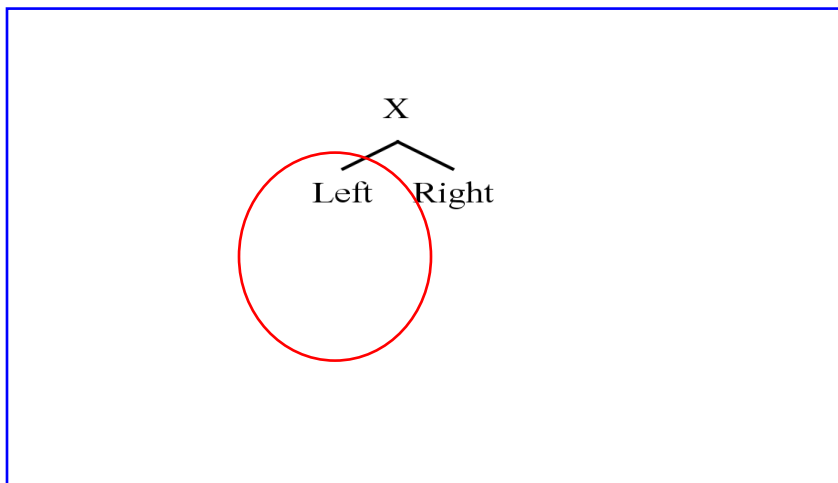
Lily knew **who pinched the elephant** .

***What** did Lily believe who pinched _____?

The Question clause is an island. One cannot move items out of it.

Slide 9

The left branch



Slide 10

Left-branch constraint


Tiffany tore the cover of **the book**.

What did Tiffany tear the cover of _____?

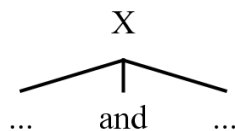
Tiffany tore **the cover** of the book.

***What** did Tiffany tear _____ of the book?


The left-branch is trapped. One cannot move it or items from it.

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Coordinate structure




The coordinate structure is an island.
One cannot move items out of it.

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Coordinate structure constraint


1. a. Tom saw **the boy and the girl**.
b. *Who did Tom see the boy and ___?
2. a. Tom **rode a bike and whistled a song**.
b. *What did Tom ride ___ and whistle a song?
3. a. Tom pinched Susan **and** Mary kissed Bill.
b. *Who did Tom pinch Susan and Mary kiss ___?

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Summary

- Movement (metaphor for gap-filler relationships) **is** common in syntax.
- Islands are cases where movement is forbidden.
- Though illustrated using English here, the island constraints are found across many languages.

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The End

Wee, Lian-Hee and Winnie H.Y. Cheung (2009)
An animated and narrated glossary of terms used in Linguistics.
Hong Kong Baptist University.

