

ON THE UNIVERSALITY OF ADJUNCT ISLANDS:

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EVIDENCE FROM MALAYALAM



BACKGROUND

- Malayalam (Dravidian)
 - WH-in situ, but fronting is also possible
 - appears not to observe adjunct islands (Yoshida 2006)
 - adjunct island violations are observed in everyday speech and seem acceptable to native speakers in isolation

MALAYALAM SEEMS TO VIOLATE ADJUNCT ISLAND CONSTRAINTS.
HOW IS THIS POSSIBLE?

- Whether adjunct islands result from grammar (a constraint on *wh*-movement) or processor (difficulty in resolving filler-gap dependency), **we expect them to occur in all languages.**

METHODS & MATERIALS

- Acceptability task** (rating on a 1-7 scale)
- 18 university students from central Kerala, India (12 female)
- 2x2 design:** factors are **CLAUSE** with which the WH-word is associated (**matrix** or **adjunct**) and **POSITION** (**fronted** or **in situ**).
- 70 items total (20 experimental, 50 fillers, counterbalanced (Latin square design))
- Every participant saw 5 items from each experimental condition
- Audio stimuli presented in Praat (to avoid effects of diglossia)

STIMULI

‘What did Ammu say after Unni went home?’

MATRIX

IN SITU

1a am:u un:ɪ vɪ:ɪle:kɪə pɔ:ɟika:ɟinaɪə **en̩ta** paraɳaɪə
Ammu [Unni home went.after]_{ADJ} **what** said

FRONTED

1b **en̩ta** am:u [un:ɪ vɪ:ɪle:kɪə pɔ:ɟika:ɟinaɪə]_{ADJ} paraɳaɪə
what Ammu [Unni home went.after]_{ADJ} ____ said

‘What did Ammu go home after saying yesterday?’

ADJUNCT

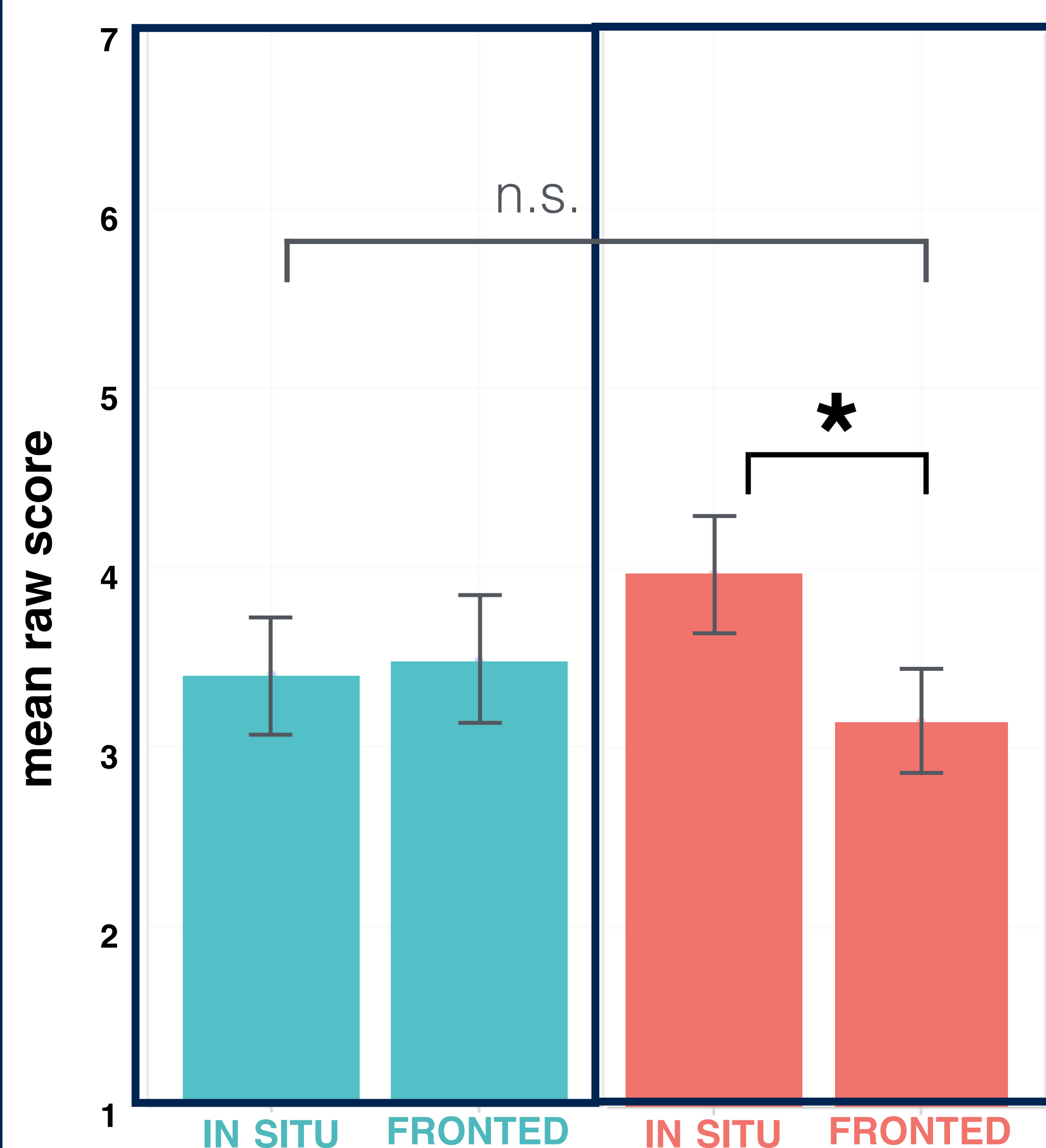
IN SITU

2a am:u [**en̩tə** paraɳaka:ɟinaɪə]_{ADJ} vɪ:ɪle:kɪə pɔ:ɟaɪə iɳ:ale
Ammu [**what** say.after]_{ADJ} home went yesterday

FRONTED

2b **en̩tə** am:u [paraɳaka:ɟinaɪə]_{ADJ} vɪ:ɪle:kɪə pɔ:ɟaɪə iɳ:ale
what Ammu [____ say.after]_{ADJ} home went yesterday

RESULTS



There was no significant difference between 2b and the matrix sentences, indicating that island extracted sentences are relatively acceptable.

Responses were transformed to z-scores prior to statistical analysis, and **the interaction between factors was significant ($p=0.0039$)**, indicating an island effect.

MALAYALAM OBEYS ADJUNCT ISLAND CONSTRAINTS, DESPITE INITIAL APPEARANCES.

DISCUSSION

- Highlights the importance of careful formal experimentation to evaluate claims about (non)universality.
- In line with other experimental work showing that island violations are sometimes relatively acceptable, but remain island violations nonetheless. (Almeida 2014, Kush et al. 2015, Sprouse et al. 2014, Goodall 2015)
- Predicts comparable results for cases where adjunct island violations are relatively acceptable in English (Truswell 2007, Michel & Goodall 2012):
 - 3a** The man that I went to England [after Mary spoke to e].
 - 3b** The man that I went to England [after speaking to e].
- Despite the amelioration seen in (3b), we would expect an island violation to still be detectable.

REMAINING QUESTIONS

- Exactly what causes the relative acceptability of adjunct island violations in Malayalam?
- Language contact effects: Might more contact with English increase the island effect?

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