LIGN 225 / G. Goodall

UCSD

**Notes on recent syntactic accounts of island phenomena**

**Strong islands**

We have seen syntactic analyses of:

* subject islands
* adjunct islands

If relative clauses are also subject to “late adjunction”, then we get the relative clause part of the CNPC too, as Ivano pointed out.

**Weak islands**

* Most influential syntactic account: Relativized minimality. Simplifying, the probe has to take the first goal that it finds in its search domain.
* The RM approach seems very different from the Scope Theory account. One would think that it would be easy to distinguish them empirically.
* In general, RM is compatible with minimalist approaches, but in *On Phases*, Chomsky appears to back away from this (see discussion of Superiority). It is not clear what he has in mind for weak islands.

**Summary of *On Phases*:**

* Many technical modifications to basic minimalist model.
* New descriptive claim: Subject islands vary depending on clause type (transitive, unergative, etc.)
* Adjunct islands: Accounted for in terms of a late adjunction analysis and the search domain of v\*.
* Subject islands: Accounted for in terms of the search domain of v\* and a penalty for reaching too far into lower phase.
* Major innovation: parallel probing. A- and A’-movement occur simultaneously, rather than sequentially. No mixed chains.

**Some open questions at this point:**

* Are subject islands universal?
* Are subject islands and adjunct islands part of the same generalization?
* Are Chomsky’s descriptive claims about subject islands correct? Even if they are on the right track, what about the more subtle differences among his cases (e.g. object of transitive ≠ subject of unaccusative)?