ON THE UNIVERSALITY OF ADJUNCT ISLANDS:
EVIDENCE FROM MALAYALAM

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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 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
1a amu unni vthilekxe pojikajnat enta paranaa Ammu [Unni home went after]acu what said

ADJUNCT
2a amu [enta paranakaajn]acu vthilekxe poto a icale Ammu [what say after]acu home went yesterday

FRONTED IN SITU
1b enta amu [uni vthilekxe pojikajn]acu paranaa what Ammu [Unni home went after]acu ___ said

FRONTED IN SITU
2b enta amu [paranakaajn]acu vthilekxe poto a icale what Ammu [__ say after]acu home went yesterday

RESULTS
No significant difference between 2b and matrix conditions, in line with speaker intuition that 2b is 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

No significant difference between 2b and matrix conditions, in line with speaker intuition that 2b is relatively acceptable

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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