

When Can You Repair An Island By Destroying It?  
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It has long been known that in Sluicing constructions wh-dependencies can cross certain projections that are otherwise barriers to movement (Ross (1969), Chomsky (1972)):

- (1)a \*That he'll hire someone is possible, but I won't divulge who that he'll hire is possible [Sentential Subject Constraint]  
b That he'll hire someone is possible, but I won't divulge who

This fact would follow under the assumption that the relevant barriers are somehow deactivated when phonologically deleted ('island repair'). The problem, however, is that another instance of deletion (VP Ellipsis, VPE) is seemingly impossible in contexts where Sluicing allows for island repair, as observed by Chung et al. (1995) and Merchant (1999):

- (2)a \*What did you leave before they started playing t  
b \*We left before they started playing party games. What did you leave before they did?
- (3)a \*They want to hire someone who speaks a Balkan language, but I don't know which (Balkan language) [IP they want to hire someone who speaks t]  
b They want to hire someone who speaks a Balkan language, but I don't know which (Balkan language) [IP ~~they want to hire someone who speaks t~~]  
c \*They want to hire someone who speaks a Balkan language, but I don't know which they do [VP ~~want to hire someone who speaks t~~]

I consider, but reject, the CLM conjecture that Sluicing and VPE are entirely different sorts of operations, and the Merchant proposal that there is a relevant bifurcation of island types. The rejection is based, in part, on the fact that in the constructions at issue VPE fails to 'repair' even when there is no island violation in the first place:

- (4) \*They said they heard about a Balkan language, but I don't know which Balkan language they did

This leaves a puzzle that I attempt to resolve (following Fox and Lasnik (forthcoming)) by capitalizing on a very special property of Sluicing contexts, namely the presence of indefinite NP in the antecedent clause in a parallel position to that of a trace in the elided clause. Given parallelism conditions on ellipsis, this prevents the remnant wh-phrase from undergoing successive cyclic movement. The remaining option (one fell swoop movement) requires the deletion of all barriers, including those that would otherwise be circumvented via an intermediate landing-site. Such deletion occurs in Sluicing but not in VPE, which targets a smaller constituent.

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