

Island-insensitivity in L2 Production

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Most L2 models [1] argue that learners may transfer (parts of their) L1 grammar to L2 and that such transferred grammars restructure only when the L1 grammar cannot generate the L2 input. Models therefore predict that L2 learners should have difficulty recovering from negative transfer when their L1 grammar generates a superset of the structures allowed in L2. [2] tested this prediction by investigating how L1 Norwegian speakers judged *wh*-island violations in English. Norwegian and English differ in that Norwegian allows filler-gap dependencies (FGDs) into embedded questions (EQs) like (1a), but English does not (1b). When English speakers produce FGDs into EQs, they typically use a *resumptive* pronoun instead of a gap to 'repair' the structure, as in (1c) [3,4]. Consistent with the predictions of transfer, Norwegian speakers accepted ungrammatical English sentences like (1b) more frequently than L1 English speakers. However, Norwegians were less likely to accept (1b) in English than (1a) in Norwegian, suggesting they had nevertheless internalized language-specific facts about the distribution of acceptable English FGDs. [2]'s results suggest both transfer and restructuring, but they do not fully determine what Norwegians know about the distribution of English FGDs. They also leave open the possibility that participants' acceptance of sentences like (1b) was a task effect. To address these issues we ran two written production experiments comparing how native Norwegian speakers would complete FGDs in English and Norwegian.

Experiments. Participants read *base sentences* accompanied by a sentence fragment in which a noun had been relativized from within the base. Participants were instructed to complete the fragment so that it conveyed all the information from the base. In **Experiment 1** (N=32) test items were bi-clausal base sentences where the embedded clause was a declarative clause (*Non-Island*, see 2a) or an embedded question (*Wh-Island*, see 2b). Mono-clausal filler sentences (*1-clause*) were also included. Participants first completed the task in English and then in Norwegian. **Experiment 2** (N=44, collection ongoing) added *Subject Island* items like (4) as a control comparison since such FGDs are unacceptable in both languages. Participants could also reject a fragment if they judged it impossible to complete. Each experiment had a native English control group.

Results. We coded responses for whether completions contained a *gap* or *resumptive* pronoun in the filler's original base position, if participants grammatically *reformulated* the sentence to avoid an island violation, *rejected* the FGD, or provided an incomplete or otherwise *ungrammatical* completion. Results from both experiments were similar (see Figures 1,2 for Expt 2). Native English participants used gaps in *No-Island* sentences almost exclusively, but completed *Wh-Island* with resumptives, reformulated, or rejected the dependency. Norwegian participants primarily completed *Wh-Island* sentences with gaps in English (~75% of trials) and Norwegian (~90%). Norwegians used resumptives, reformulated, or rejected *Wh-Island* sentences in English more often than in Norwegian (~20% v. <10%). Participants rarely used gaps in Subject Island sentences, regardless of their L1.

Discussion. Our results confirm that Norwegian speakers transfer their L1 (analysis governing the) distribution of FGDs to English. Nevertheless, that some participants either used resumptives or reformulations to avoid FGDs into EQs in English but not Norwegian suggests an (inconsistent) degree of learning and restructuring post-transfer.

- (1) a. Det var signalene_i som sjømennene ikke visste [hva ___i betydde.]
b. *Those were the signals_i that the sailors didn't know [what ___i meant.]
c. ??Those were the signals_i that the sailors didn't know [what *they*_i meant.]
- (2) a. The sailors didn't know that the signals meant danger. [Non-Island]
Those were the signals that the sailors ...
b. The sailors didn't know what the signals meant. [Wh-Island]
Those were the signals that the sailors ...
- (3) The farmer grew that kind of corn for 10 years. [1-clause]
That was the kind of corn that ...
- (4) The designer said the office in the factory was very ugly. [Subject]
That was the factory that the designer ...

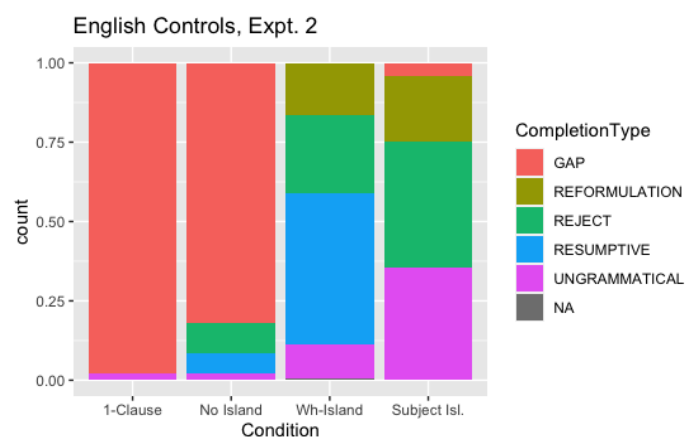


Figure 1. Completions from native English speaker control participants (N=24) in Experiment 2.

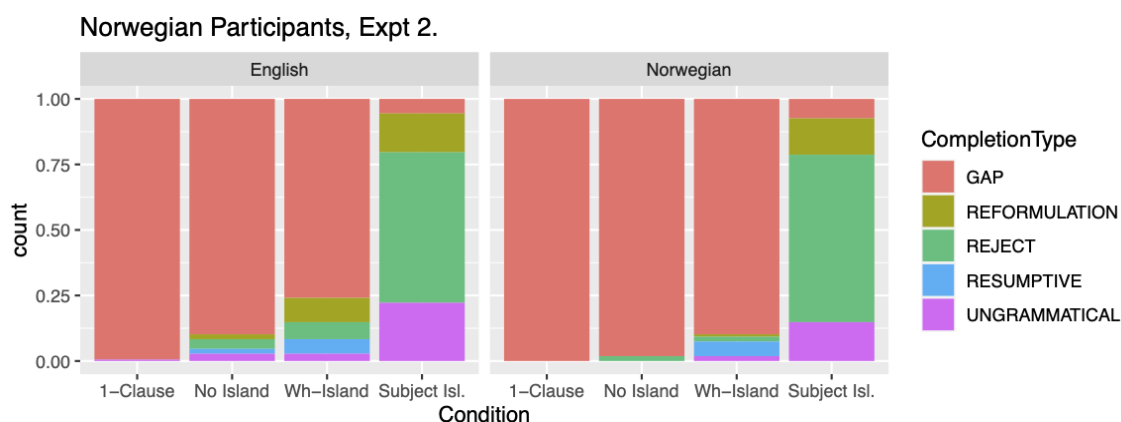


Figure 2. Completions from Native Norwegian Speakers (N=44) on English sentences (left panel) and Norwegian sentences (right panel) in Experiment 2.

[1] Schwartz, B. & Sprouse, R. 1996. *SLR*. [2] Kush, D. & Dahl, A. 2021. *SLR*. [3] Kroch, A. 1981. *CLS*. [4] Morgan, A. & Wagers, M. 2018. *LI*.