

# Constraints on Extraction from Finite Embedded Clauses in Malayalam

K. J. Binu\*

Research Scholar, Department of Dravidian and Computational Linguistics, Dravidian University, Kuppam, India

**Abstract:** This paper argues that the finite embedded clauses in Malayalam are islands to extractions. It also argues that the weak islands effect the embedded clauses show is not purely a syntactic and hence a processing-based account must be attempted.

**Keywords:** Finite embedded clauses, weak islands, extraction, filler, gap.

fully grammatical when the arguments of the matrix clauses are omitted (3).

- Movement of dative subjects out of embedded finite clauses are allowed (4).
- Adverbial complements can also be extracted from the finite embedded clauses (5).

## 1. Embedded Finite Clauses in Malayalam

Srikumar [1] has observed that there is an island effect on extraction from the embedded finite clauses in Malayalam. He gives the data in 1 & 2 as evidence.

In (3) the subject is extracted from the finite embedded clause and still the sentence is acceptable. The difference from unacceptable (2) and (3) is that in the latter the subject of the matrix clause is omitted. The sentence (4), in which a dative subject is extracted is fully acceptable in Malayalam. Notice that the subject of the matrix clause is not omitted here.

Adverbial complements also can be extracted from finite embedded clauses as exemplified in (5).

The above discussion has shown that extraction from embedded clauses have the following properties

- Extraction of non-complements from a finite clause is

## 2. Island Effects

I fully agree with Srikumar [1] that the variations in extraction from finite clauses are due to island effects. All the above sentences have corresponding fully grammatical versions wherein the entire embedded clauses are pied-piped, for example the ungrammatical (2) has a corresponding grammatical counter-part given in (6).

It is to be noticed that extraction of complements from finite embedded clauses are not always possible, as exemplified in (7). The sentence has a grammatical counterpart in which the embedded clause is pied-piped to the left (8).

The above data shows that Malayalam embedded clauses can be pied-piped. Now, if we follow Heck [3] only proposal that only syntactic islands are pied-piped Malayalam finite embedded clauses are to be treated syntactic islands.

Table 1

1	<i>āre<sub>i</sub></i>	<i>āṇə</i>	<i>[rāman]</i>	<i>t<sub>i</sub></i>	<i>kaṇṭu</i>	<i>ennə</i>	<i>niṇṇal</i>	<i>paraññatə</i>
	who.Acc	be	Raman		saw	Comp	you	said.Nomnr
‘Who did you say that Rajan saw?’								

Table 2

2*	<i>ārə<sub>i</sub></i>	<i>āṇə</i>	<i>[t<sub>i</sub></i>	<i>kuṭṭi-(y)-e</i>	<i>kaṇṭu</i>	<i>ennə</i>	<i>niṇṇal</i>	<i>paraññatə?</i>
	who	be		child.Acc.	saw	Comp	you	said.Nomnr
‘Who did you say saw the child?’ Srikumar (2008)								

Table 3

3	<i>ārə</i>	<i>āṇə</i>	<i>[t<sub>i</sub></i>	<i>vanne</i>	<i>ennə</i>	<i>paraññatə</i>
	who	be		came	Comp	said.Nomnr
‘Who did (you)say has come?’						

Table 4

4	<i>ārkkə<sub>i</sub></i>	<i>āṇə</i>	<i>[t<sub>i</sub></i>	<i>baikkə</i>	<i>uṇṭə</i>	<i>ennə</i>	<i>nī</i>	<i>paraññatə</i>
	where	be		bike	have	Comp	you	said.Nomnr
‘Who did you say has bike?’								

Table 5

5	<i>evite<sub>i</sub></i>	<i>āṇə</i>	<i>[kuṭṭi</i>	<i>t<sub>i</sub></i>	<i>pēṇa</i>	<i>vaccu</i>	<i>ennə</i>	<i>niṇṇal</i>	<i>paraññatə</i>
	where	be	child		pen	kept	Comp	you	said.Nomnr
‘Where did you say that the child has kept the pen?’									

\*Corresponding author: [kjbinukj@gmail.com](mailto:kjbinukj@gmail.com)

Table 6

6	[ <i>kuṭṭi-(v)-e</i> ]	<i>ārə,</i>	<i>kaṇṭu</i>	<i>ennə</i> ]	<i>āṇə</i>	<i>niṇṇal</i>	<i>paraññatə?</i>
	child.Acc.	who	saw	Comp	be	you	said.Nomnr
‘Who did you say saw the child?’							

Table 7

7	<i>āre</i>	<i>āṇə</i>	[ <i>rāmaṇ</i>	<i>kaṇṭu</i>	<i>ennə</i> ]	<i>aṇu</i>	<i>rāju-(vin)-ōṭə</i>	<i>innale</i>	<i>paraññatə</i>
	who. Acc	be	Raman	saw	Comp	Anu	Raj.Soc.	yesterday	said.Nomnr
‘Who did Anu tell Rajan yesterday that Raman saw?’									

Table 8

8	[ <i>rāmaṇ</i>	<i>āre</i>	<i>kaṇṭu</i>	<i>ennə</i> ]	<i>āṇə</i>	<i>aṇu</i>	<i>rāju-(vin)-ōṭə</i>	<i>innale</i>	<i>paraññatə</i>
	Raman	who.Acc	saw	Comp	be	Anu	Raj.Soc.	yesterday	said.Nomnr
Matrix Question ‘Who did Anu tell Raju yesterday that Raman saw?’									
Embedded Question ‘Anu said Raju that who he saw yesterday’									

Now the question is why Malayalam resort to extraction when pied-piping is available. This is because the sentences in which the embedded questions clauses are pied-piped are ambiguous between embedded and matrix question reading as shown in (8). This can be avoided if the question word alone is pied-piped (see 7).

Now, having seen that finite embedded clauses are islands the question is whether the data given above can be given a purely syntactic treatment. The data above shows that complement-non complement asymmetry is not consistent. The example (8) (It is a more detailed version of 3) shows that subject extraction is possible when the arguments of the matrix sentence is omitted. The sentence (4) illustrates that extraction of dative subjects from finite embedded clauses is licit.

The sentence 3 proves that non-structural manipulations that leave the syntactic structure intact can improve the acceptability of sentences violating subjacency conditions. Hence, a purely syntactic account of the phenomenon is implausible (Hofmeister & Sag [2]) I suggest a language processing-based account as an alternative.

### 3. Island Effects as a Processing phenomenon

Kluender and Kurtas [3] and Hofmeister & Sag [4] has argued that the source of island effects is due to the processing cost certain structures incur on the parser and only a processing-based account can fully capture the phenomenon. According to Kluender and Kurtas (1993) the interventions on the path from the moved element (filler) to the original position of the moved element (gap) is one source of unacceptability of certain syntactic islands.

The most difficult task for the parser in parsing the filler-gap dependencies is identifying the gap [5] & [6]. The gaps the arguments leave can be easily identified if they are case marked.

This explains the better acceptability of (2) over (3). Dative subject constructions in (4) is acceptable because the subject is case marked. Interventions also will play a role in variations in acceptability. Interventions caused by the arguments and the adjuncts must be the reason for the unacceptability of (7).

I propose that a detailed processing-based analysis of island effects in Malayalam as suggested above can give an explanation for the phenomenon.

### 4. Conclusion

From the above discussions we can draw the following conclusions

1. Finite embedded clauses in Malayalam are weak islands to extractions.
2. The island effects is not purely a syntactic phenomenon.
3. A processing-based account can explain the properties of Islands better.

### References

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