

A FEATURE-BASED ACCOUNT OF WEAK ISLANDS *

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ABSTRACT

In language an element can be displaced to a position which is different from the position where it is inserted into the structure. Even though movement can proceed long-distance (but in steps, cyclically), it is subject to locality constraints. These constraints are classified into two classes: (i) there are domains which are completely impervious to movement; (ii) there are others where certain types of elements (i.e. the intervener) occurring on the movement path of the moving element (i.e. the extractee) have the capacity of blocking movement. Put differently, they intervene on the movement of an element. Whereas the locality constraint is absolute for cases like (i), it is selective for cases like (ii). Here we are going to focus on the second type of locality effects, i.e. those created by a specific intervening constituent. The goal of the paper is to identify the locality effects arising from the asymmetries between a moved quantificational element across another, when the moved element is *wh* and the intervener is *wh* and negation/measure. The hypothesis to work with is that the combination of the Relativized Minimality (RM) approach with a fine-grained feature system provides a locality system capable of predicting subtle gradations in intervention effects. The objective of this paper is to explore to what extent the Relativized Minimality view of locality developed in Rizzi (1990) coupled with a fine-grained featural analysis as in Starke (2001) and Rizzi (2004a) can account for a gradient of extraction from Weak Islands (WI) in French as well as in Italian and Romanian. The more general aim is to show that such an explanation holds cross-linguistically. In order to achieve this goal, we will proceed along two axes.

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