



**Special Issue title:**

Escaping African 'Islands'

**Tentative completion schedule:**

- Abstract submission deadline: September 12, 2022
- Notification of abstract acceptance: October 3, 2022
- Full manuscript deadline: December 2, 2022

**Guest Editors:**

**Title(s), Name, Surname:** *Professor Jason Kandybowicz*

**Affiliation:** *Linguistics Program, The Graduate Center, City University of New York, 365 Fifth Avenue, Room 7407, New York, New York, 10016, USA*

**Website:** <https://kandybowicz.commons.gc.cuny.edu>

**E-Mail:** [jkandybowicz@gc.cuny.edu](mailto:jkandybowicz@gc.cuny.edu)

**Interests:** Formal Syntax; African Linguistics; Field Linguistics; Islands

**Keywords:** Island insensitivity; Extraction from islands; Probe-Agree into islands; A-bar relations across island boundaries; African languages

**Summary:**

We are pleased to announce a call for papers for a special issue of *Languages* entitled *Escaping African 'Islands'*, devoted entirely to islands and their porousness/absence in African languages. To the best of our knowledge, the volume will represent the first of its kind in the literature.

The phenomenon of islandhood has played a central role in Generative syntactic theory ever since Ross's (1967) seminal work. Island effects have long been regarded as evidence for domain-specific innate constraints on language and as such, have been cited as one motivation for the need for Universal Grammar. Decades of literature on islands have uncovered similarities in island effects across a wide range of languages, leading to the conclusion that a number of Ross's island constraints are candidates for language universals. The languages surveyed that have given rise to this impression, however, tend not to be African languages.

Within the past few years, though, a number of works focused on the nature of islands in African languages have uncovered a trend in which one or more classic "island" configuration is transparent for A-bar dependency formation. Kandybowicz et al. (to appear) show that adjunct clauses of all varieties (e.g. conditional, temporal, and reason clauses) in Ikpana are fully transparent for A-bar extraction. Schurr et al. 2021 demonstrate that in Shupamem all clausal configurations typically held to have island status (e.g. sentential subjects, relative clauses, clausal complements of nouns, adjunct clauses, factive clauses, etc.) are fully transparent for long-distance A-bar dependency formation. Hein & Georgi (2021) and Korsah



& Murphy (2019) argue that sentential subject constructions, definite relative clauses, clausal complements of definite nouns, reason adjunct clauses, factive clauses, and embedded questions fail to have island status in Asante Twi. Hein 2020 shows that factive clauses and clausal complements of nouns are fully transparent for A-bar extraction in Limbum. Keupdjo (2020) points out that extraction out of definite relative clauses, clausal complements of definite nouns, temporal clauses, factive clauses, and embedded questions is possible in Medumba. Gould & Scott (2019) show that Swahili definite relative clauses are A-bar porous, while Scott (2021) argues that both temporal and reason adjunct clauses in Swahili permit A-bar extraction from within. Finally, Georgi & Amaechi (2020) demonstrate that non-clausal domains classically defined as “islands” in Igbo are transparent for A-bar dependency formation, but like Medumba require pronominal resumption.

These findings, while both surprising and highly consequential for Generative theory, are not unprecedented. Over the course of the Generative inquiry into islands, evidence for cross-linguistic variation in island constraints has emerged from time to time. For example, Stepanov (2007) cites examples of acceptable sub-extraction from complex subjects in Russian, while Kiss (1987) and Georgopoulos (1991) present cases of successful subject sub-extraction in Hungarian and Palauan respectively. With regard to extraction from adjunct clauses, Yoshida (2006) presents a case of genuine variation in island constraints based on data from Malay, while Faarlund 1992, Kush et al. 2018, and Bondevik et al. 2021 note instances in which temporal and conditional finite adjunct clauses in Norwegian fail to have strong island status. Instances of successful escape from complex NPs in French, Italian, Spanish, Danish, Swedish, Norwegian, and Hebrew have also been documented in the literature (see Cinque 2010, 2020 & Sichel 2014, 2018 for references and critique). Other instances of island-escape have been noted in the literature. Phillips (2013a,b) draws a distinction between “surface island variation” and “deep island violation”. Instances of the former involve cases in which variation in island sensitivity reduces to independently motivated differences in structural possibilities, which give rise to the appearance of variability in island effects without the need to assume variation in the underlying constraints themselves (see Cinque 2010, 2020 and Sichel 2014, 2018 for analyses of apparent counterexamples to strong islandhood along these lines). Instances of the latter involve cases that cannot be plausibly connected to independently motivated differences in structure, suggesting true variation in the island constraints themselves. Do the porous “islands” observed in African languages represent instances of surface island variation or do they reveal that island constraints are cross-linguistically more variable than previously believed?

This special issue brings together research on African languages that seemingly represent counterexamples to classical island constraints in order to address the issue of the universality of island constraints and enrich our understanding of the nature of islands. Articles submitted for consideration of publication should both document instances of purported “island violations” in African languages and provide argumentation for the claim that escape (i.e.



movement) took place in such cases. Articles should also discuss whether the “violations” in question reflect instances of “surface island variation” or “deep island violation” in Phillips’ (2013a,b) sense and if possible, speculate on why the relevant domains do not have island status in the language(s).

We request that, prior to submitting a manuscript, interested authors initially submit a proposed title and an abstract of 400-600 words summarizing their intended contribution. Please send it either to guest editor Jason Kandybowicz ([jkandybowicz@gc.cuny.edu](mailto:jkandybowicz@gc.cuny.edu)) or to the *Languages* editorial office ([languages@mdpi.com](mailto:languages@mdpi.com)). Abstracts will be reviewed by the guest editor for the purposes of ensuring proper fit within the scope of the special issue. Full manuscripts will undergo double-blind peer-review.

## References

- Bondevik, Ingrid, Dave Whitney Kush and Terje Lohndal. 2021. Variation in Adjunct Islands: The Case of Norwegian. *Nordic Journal of Linguistics* 44: 223-254.
- Cinque, Guglielmo. 2010. On a Selective “Violation” of the Complex NP Constraint. In C. Jan-Wouter Zwart and Mark de Vries (eds.), *Structure Preserved: Studies in Syntax for Jan Koster*, 81-90. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Cinque, Guglielmo. 2020. *The Syntax of Relative Clauses: A Unified Analysis*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Faarlund, Jan Terje. 1992. *Morfologi: Bøyingsystemet i Nynorsk og Bokmål*. Oslo: Det norske samlaget.
- Georgi, Doreen and Mary Amaechi. 2020. Resumption and Islandhood in Igbo. In Mariam Asatryan, Yixiao Song and Ayana Whitmal (eds.), *Proceedings of the 50<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting of the North East Linguistic Society*, 261-274. Amherst, MA: GSLA.
- Georgopoulos, Carol. 1991. *Syntactic Variables: Resumptive Pronouns and Binding in Palauan*. Dordrecht: Kluwer.
- Gould, Isaac and Tessa Scott. 2019. On the Derivation of Swahili *Amba* Relative Clauses: Evidence for Movement. In Emily Clem, Peter Jenks and Hannah Sande (eds.), *Theory and Description in African Linguistics: Selected Papers from the 47<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference on African Linguistics*, 441-462. Berlin: Language Science Press.
- Hein, Johannes. 2020. Island Constraints are Island-sensitive: The Case of Asante Twi and Limbum. Talk presented at Ben Gurion University of the Negev, Be’er Sheva, November 17, 2020. Available at: [http://www.johannes-hein.de/handouts/BenGurion\\_handout.pdf](http://www.johannes-hein.de/handouts/BenGurion_handout.pdf)
- Hein, Johannes and Doreen Georgi. 2021. Asymmetries in Asante Twi A’-movement: On the Role of Noun Type in Resumption. In Alessa Farinella and Angelica Hill (eds.), *Proceedings of the 51<sup>st</sup> Annual Meeting of the North East Linguistic Society*, 223-236. Amherst, MA: GSLA.
- Kandybowicz, Jason, Bertille Baron, Philip T. Duncan, and Hironori Katsuda. To appear. *Ikpana Interrogatives*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.



- Keupdjio, Hermann. 2020. *The Syntax of A' Dependencies in Bamileke Medumba*. Ph.D. thesis, University of British Columbia.
- Kiss, Katlin É. 1987. *Configurationality in Hungarian*. Dordrecht: Reidel.
- Korsah, Sampson and Andrew Murphy. 2019. Islands and Resumption in Asante Twi. In Richard Stockwell, Maura O'Leary, Zhongshi Xu and Z.L. Zhou (eds.), *Proceedings of the 36<sup>th</sup> West Coast Conference on Formal Linguistics*, 222-236. Somerville, MA: Cascadilla Proceedings Project.
- Kush, Dave Whitney, Terje Lohndal and Jon Sprouse. 2018. Investigating Variation in Island Effects: A Case Study of Norwegian *Wh*- Extraction. *Natural Language and Linguistic Theory* 36: 743-779.
- Phillips, Colin. 2013a. On the Nature of Island Constraints I: Language Processing and Reductionist Accounts. In Jon Sprouse and Norbert Hornstein (eds.), *Experimental Syntax and Island Effects*, 64-108. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Phillips, Colin. 2013b. On the Nature of Island Constraints II: Language Learning and Innateness. In Jon Sprouse and Norbert Hornstein (eds.), *Experimental Syntax and Island Effects*, 132-158. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Ross, John Robert. 1967. *Constraints on Variables in Syntax*. Ph.D. thesis, Massachusetts Institute of Technology.
- Schurr, Hagay, Jason Kandybowicz, Abdoulaye Laziz Nchare, Tysean Bucknor, Xiaomeng Ma, Magdalena Markowska, and Armando Tapia. 2022. On the Absence of Clausal Islands in Shupamem. Talk presented at Annual Conference on African Linguistics 51-52. University of Florida.
- Scott, Tessa. 2021. Two Types of Resumptive Pronouns in Swahili. *Linguistic Inquiry* 52: 812-833.
- Sichel, Ivy. 2014. Resumptive Pronouns and Competition. *Linguistic Inquiry* 45: 655-693.
- Sichel, Ivy. 2018. Anatomy of a Counterexample: Extraction from Relative Clauses. *Linguistic Inquiry* 49: 335-378.
- Stepanov, Arthur. 2007. The End of CEDL: Minimalism and Extraction Domains. *Syntax* 10: 80-126.
- Yoshida, Masaya. 2006. *Constraints and Mechanisms in Long-distance Dependency Formation*. Ph.D. thesis, University of Maryland.