Perfect island repair by ellipsis in Nupe: against aspectual mismatch

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Perfect island effects in Nupe arise when non-edge *v*P-internal material (e.g. objects) is A′-extracted in a clause containing the perfect marker *á* (Kandybowicz 2009):

(1)   a.   Ké   Musa [$_{v\text{P}}$ pa   *t*] o?
           what Musa   pound.PST   FOC
           'What did Musa pound?'

      b. *Ké   Musa [$_{v\text{P}}$ |á| *t* pa   ] o?
           what Musa   PRF   pound.PST   FOC
           Intended: 'What has Musa pounded?'

      c.   Zě   *t* [$_{v\text{P}}$ |á| eci pa   ] o?
           who   PRF yam pound.PST   FOC
           'Who has pounded the yam?'

Mendes and Kandybowicz (2023), (MK23), reported that Nupe perfect islands are neutralized in sluicing/stripping environments and argued that perfect island violations can be salvaged by ellipsis:

(2)   A: Musa |á| ejan ndoci   pa.
           Musa PRF thing certain pound.PST
           'Musa has pounded something.'

      B: Ké   ~~Musa |á| *t* pa~~   o?
           what ~~Musa PRF   pound.PST~~ FOC
           'What ~~has Musa pounded~~?'   (cf. (1b))

MK23 empirically rejected several alternative analyses which do not resort to repair: *pseudosluicing*, *nondeletion* (LF-copying/ deep anaphor), *nonmovement* (nonconstituent deletion), and *resumption*. Not considered by MK23, however, was *aspectual mismatch* (suggested to us by Marcel den Dikken and Julie Legate (pc)). In this alternative, the elided clause in sluicing examples like (2B), would not contain the perfect marker despite its presence in the antecedent, evading the perfect island violation, cf. (1a). In fact, (1a) can be felicitously used in the context of (2A):

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(3) A: Musa |á| ejan ndoci pa.
        Musa PRF thing certain pound.PST
        'Musa has pounded something.'
     B: Ké Musa pa   *t* o?
        what Musa pound.PST FOC
        'What did Musa pound?'

(4) A: Musa |á| ejan ndoci pa   [lókàti na mi tun na].
        Musa PRF thing certain pound.PST time REL 1.SG arrive REL
        'Musa had pounded something when I arrived.'
     B: #Ké Musa pa   *t* ([lókàti na mi tun na]) o?
        what Musa pound.PST   time REL 1.SG arrive REL FOC
        'What did Musa pound (when I arrived)?'

The question in (4B) is good in isolation, but infelicitous as a follow-up to (4A). Despite this fact, sluicing is possible in this context:

(5) A: Musa |á| ejan ndoci pa   [lókàti na mi tun na].
        Musa PRF thing certain pound.PST time REL 1.SG arrive REL
        'Musa had pounded something when I arrived.'
     B: Ké ~~Musa |á| *t* pa~~   o?
        what ~~Musa PRF   pound.PST~~ FOC
        'What ~~had Musa pounded~~?'   (cf. (1b))

Since the absence of the perfect marker in the *wh*-question in (4B) leads to an infelicitous question, the availability of the sluicing construction in (5B) cannot be attributed to lack of perfect morphology within the ellipsis site.

To the extent that *aspectual mismatch* has been ruled out, alongside the alternatives mentioned above, we conclude that perfect island violations can indeed be repaired by deletion, and thus that they are *not* the result of narrow syntactic constraints, but rather PF-representation constraints that can be voided under ellipsis.

References

Kandybowicz, Jason. 2009. Embracing edges: syntactic and phono-syntactic edge sensitivity in Nupe. *Natural Language and Linguistic Theory* 27:305–344.

Mendes, Gesoel, and Jason Kandybowicz. 2023. Salvation by deletion in Nupe. *Linguistic Inquiry* 54:299–325.