LIGN 225: Interim summary (5/10/11)

We have seen accounts of islands based primarily on:

- syntax
- information structure / discourse
- semantics
- processing

A priori, all of these approaches have some plausibility, so plausibility alone cannot adequately distinguish among them. We need to examine their predictions and then evaluate them empirically.

Any account needs to tell us:

- what is the island domain
- why extraction from this domain is not possible

Subject island

	What is island domain?	Why is extraction impossible?	Comments
Nunes & Uriagereka	Constituent built in parallel to main structure.	Elements inside this domain are not in c-command relationship with elements in main structure, so they must be linearized (prior to *wh*-movement).	Also accounts for adjunct islands.
Stepanov	Constituent has moved (formed non-trivial chain).	Extraction would violate Chain Uniformity.	Reworking of "freezing principle".
Chomsky	External argument (logical subject of unergative or transitive)	External argument is not in search domain of v*, so elements within it cannot be extracted.	Relies on novel notion of parallel probing.
Erteschik-Shir	Topic	Extraction is only possible out of the focus domain.	Subjects are claimed to always be topics, so subjects are always islands.
Goldberg	Backgrounded elements (subject is topic, but elements within it are backgrounded).	No extraction of backgrounded elements.	As with E-S, not clear how to treat in situ *wh* questions with *wh* in island. Suggests that backgrounded constraint is weak on its own, mainly detectable when combined with movement.

Adjunct island

	What is island domain?	Why is extraction impossible?	Comments
Nunes & Uriagereka			
Stepanov			
Chomsky			
Erteschik-Shir			
Goldberg			
Truswell			

Weak islands

	What is island domain?	Why is extraction impossible?	Comments
Scope Theory	Contains operator requiring Boolean operation	Quantifiers that don't range over individuals can't scope over this domain (because Boolean operations require individuals).	
Relativized Minimality	Intervening element (that c-commands gap) has feature that is being probed.	Probe must take closer goal.	

Two notes about Culicover and Jackendoff (2005)

- Culicover and Jackendoff propose that children do not generalize *wh*-movement to all environments, and those environments to which they do not are what we see as islands. To evaluate this claim, we would need to examine in detail the theory of acquisition that underlies it.

- Culicover and Jackendoff use the slash category mechanism of GPSG/HPSG, rather than movement, to account for the filler-gap dependency in *wh*-questions. Note that this analysis shares an interesting property with the successive-cyclic movement analysis: both claim that *wh*-dependencies are highly local, even when they appear not to be. Which analysis is correct (and whether this shared property is correct) is of course an empirical question.