Island Effects and Amelioration by Resumption in Hong Kong English: An Auditory Acceptability-judgement Study

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This study investigates island effects and amelioration by resumption in Hong Kong English, a primarily spoken language with grammatical-resumption features. To the best knowledge, this is the first formal-experimental study exploring island effects in a spoken variety of English. This study presents evidence from four auditory acceptability-judgment studies that explore two types of syntactic dependencies and four island types, both with and without resumption. The experiments examine 16 distinct conditions, quantifying the acceptability of sentences with gaps versus those with resumption. This study carefully selects two strong islands (adjunct islands and complex-NP islands) and two weak islands (wh-islands and "whether" islands) to enhance the interpretability and generalizability of the results. The findings reveal two main sources of variation: first, variation across dependency types in the occurrence of island effects with gaps, and second, variation across island types in the amelioration of island violations by resumption. This study discusses the implications of these results for four major theories of island effects, highlighting the challenges posed by our data and suggesting possible directions for future research. Furthermore, this study explores the consequences of the variation in amelioration for theories of resumption, arguing that both base generation and movement options must be accessible to learners of Hong Kong English. The study also identifies individual variation in the availability of resumption across dependency types, which warrants further investigation. This research significantly contributes to our understanding of how resumption affects island phenomena in a non-native English variety and provides valuable insights into the formal and experimental study of syntax.

Keywords: Island effects, Amelioration, Resumption, Hong Kong English, Acceptability judgement