

3.

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Extraction out of tough

It is well known that the gap in a *tough* construction shares a number of properties with a *wh*-movement gap. As shown in (1) (and as first observed in Postal and Ross 1971) it can be separated in an unbounded fashion from its licenser:

- (1) Lima beans are hard (for me) to imagine anyone liking ___/wanting to eat ___/
thinking they can get Mary to eat ___.

And -- while a *tough* gap is well-known to be a bit fussier than a *wh*-movement gap -- both can be in any argument position (object, prepositional object, etc.). Thus a common view is that a *tough* adjective takes a complement with a gap of the same sort that is found in *wh*-movement; the particular implementation of this idea depends, of course, on the particular theory (see, e.g., Chomsky 1977; Fodor 1983; Jacobson 1984; Browning 1987). But there is a well-known mystery: while neither a *tough* nor a *wh* gap can be within an island, the latter of course creates an island domain while the *tough* construction does not:

- (2) Which violin_i is that sonata_j easy to play ____j on ____i? (Chomsky 1977)

However, the plot thickens, and the purpose of this snippet is to draw attention to a fact noted in Jacobson 1991 which at least partially removes the above anomaly. Notice that standard cases in the literature in which *wh*-movement is good out of a *tough* domain always involve cases in which the *tough* gap is within the highest VP under the *tough* adjective. Strikingly, though, when the gap is embedded further down we find a robust island effect -- (3) is at least as bad as normal extraction out of, say, a relative clause.

- (3) *Which violin is that sonata hard to imagine (anyone) playing ___ on ___ /
wanting to play ___ on ___?

Note that this contrasts vividly with a similar sentence in which there is no *tough* gap:

- (4) Which violin is it hard to imagine (anyone) playing that sonata on ___ / wanting
to play that sonata on ___?

While a full explanation is of course beyond the present scope, a conjecture is in order. Perhaps there are two different kinds of "gaps" here (put differently, two

different mechanisms at work which sanction missing material in the *tough* construction), and a *tough* adjective allows for a complement with either kind of gap. Only the "unbounded" type of gap creates an island. Note that the conjecture that there are two different gap-sanctioning mechanisms involved in the *tough* construction receives some support from the fact that (for at least some speakers) the *too/enough* construction only allows "bounded" gaps:

- (5) a. That violin is too cheap to play that sonata on ____
b. ?*That violin is too cheap to imagine anyone playing that sonata on ____

References

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