

## ***Do resumptive pronouns ever rescue illicit gaps in English?***

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The literature presents a contradictory picture of resumptive pronouns in English. On the one hand, corpus studies [1,2,3] show that speakers use resumptive pronouns frequently, which is in accord with claims from theoretical syntacticians [4,5] that resumptive pronouns “rescue” what would otherwise be illicit gaps. Moreover, an experimental study [6] lends some support to this view. On the other hand, other experimental studies [7,8], as well as other results in [6], show that in general, speakers judge sentences with resumptive pronouns to be no better than illicit gaps, and sometimes worse.

The present study systematically explores the acceptability of resumptive pronouns *vis à vis* gaps by carefully manipulating the syntactic context (non-island, weak island, strong island, ECP) and the position within the clause (subject, object). We aim to discover when resumptives are more acceptable than gaps, if ever, and to understand why.

Method: Participants (N=121) judged acceptability of sentences with an 11-point scale. Materials were constructed using a 4x2x2 factorial design, with 4 levels of sentence type, 2 levels of position, and 2 levels of gap type, as illustrated in Table 1. 32 lexicalizations of each condition were created, with each subject seeing two tokens of each condition (Latin square design, 1:2 experimental/filler ratio).

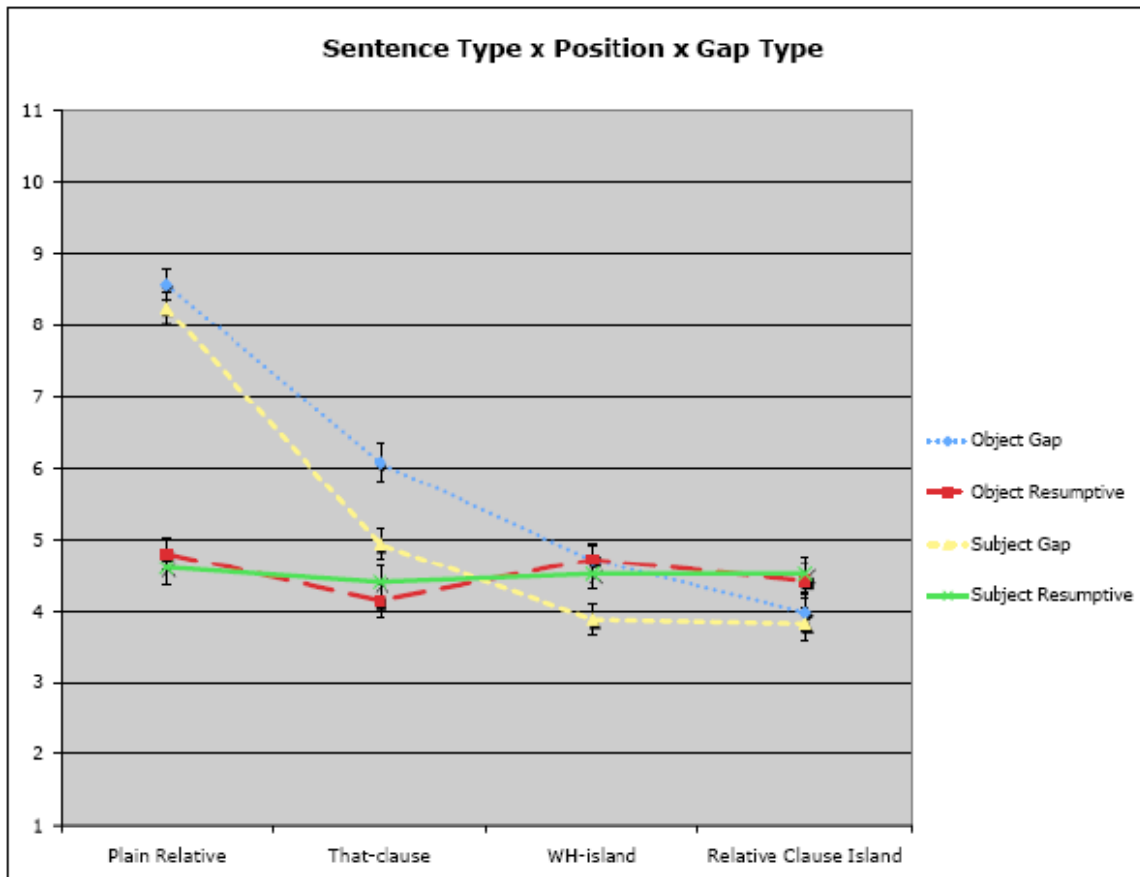
Results are summarized in Figure 1. Resumptives were judged significantly less acceptable than gaps in the plain relative and object embedded *that*-clause conditions. Differences between subject and object positions emerge in the *wh*-island and relative clause island conditions: For subjects, resumptives were significantly better than gaps, but for objects, there was no significant difference.

There are several conclusions of interest. First, resumptives do not rescue simple island violations (object resumptives are as bad as gaps for *wh*-islands and relative clause islands) or simple ECP violations (subject resumptives are as bad as gaps in the embedded *that*-clause condition). Second, resumptives are better than gaps in exactly one circumstance: when a gap violates both an island constraint and ECP simultaneously (subject resumptives are better than gaps in *wh*-islands and relative clause islands). Third, resumptives are judged at a relatively constant level of acceptability regardless of the structure in which they are found.

These results suggest that using a resumptive pronoun in English imposes a uniform penalty on acceptability, regardless of the position. This penalty is worse than that affecting gaps in simple island or ECP configurations (hence the lack of an ameliorating effect for resumptives in these cases). The penalty is not as bad, however, as that affecting gaps violating both an island and ECP, where the effect on acceptability is additive. In this case, then, resumption does show an ameliorating effect. This last fact casts doubt on the claim that resumptives incur many of the same processing costs as gaps and are thus never more acceptable than gaps [7]. We see here that resumptives are immune to many structural properties affecting the acceptability of gaps and under the circumstances just described, may be more acceptable than gaps.

	<b>Subject (gap/resumptive)</b>	<b>Object (gap/resumptive)</b>
<b>Plain Relative</b>	This is the chef that ___/she prepared the potatoes.	These are the potatoes that Ted prepared /them.
<b>Embedded that-clause</b>	This is the chef that Ted realized that ___/she prepared the potatoes.	These are the potatoes that Ted realized that the chef prepared ___/them.
<b>Wh-island</b>	This is the chef that Ted inquired how ___/she prepared the potatoes.	These are the potatoes that Ted inquired how the chef prepared ___/them.
<b>Relative Clause Island</b>	This is the chef that Ted devoured the potatoes that ___/she prepared.	These are the potatoes that Ted flirted with the chef that prepared ___/them.

**Table 1: Experimental conditions**



**Figure 1: Results**

**References:**

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