On a selective "violation" of the Complex NP Constraint

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Violations of the Complex NP Constraint (CNPC, Ross 1967) are occasionally reported in the literature. Although one perhaps would not expect (the principles underlying) the constraint to be subject to cross-linguistic variation, some authors have actually suggested that the CNPC may hold in some languages but not others (see Allwood 1976, 1982; Maxwell 1979; Hawkins 2007: §7.4.1, among others).

Setting aside arguably spurious cases (e.g. the CNPC violations originally noted in Kuno 1973: 239f for Japanese (and similarly Korean), which Han & Kim 2004 show to be only apparent, or the Akan cases discussed in Saah & Goodluck 1995, which involve covert resumptive pronouns), in some languages there appear to be some genuine violations; for example the extractions from complex NPs (CNPs) in Scandinavian documented in work of the '70s and early '80s (see Erteschik-Shir 1973: Chapter 2, 1982, for Danish; Andersson 1974, 1982; Engdahl 1980, 1982; Allwood 1976, 1982, for Swedish; Engdahl 1980; Taraldsen 1978: Note 6, 1981, 1982 for Norwegian; and Engdahl 1997 for a more recent general discussion):[1]

(1)   a.   Danish, Erteschik-Shir (1973:67)

　　　　Suppe   kender   jeg   mange   der   kan lide
　　　　soup   know   I   many   who   like
　　　　'Soup, I know many people who like'

　　b.   Swedish, Engdahl (1980:95)

　　　　Johan   känner   jag   ingen   som   tycker om
　　　　Johan   know   I   no one   that   likes
　　　　'I do not know anyone who likes Johan'

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1.   Although Maling & Zaenen (1982:232) say that "in Icelandic such extractions seem to be impossible", they also add that one of their informants accepted an example like (i) (see their fn.6):

(i)   Kaffi   þekki   ég   engan   á   íslandi,   sem   ekki   drekkur
　　　Coffee   know   I   no one   in   Iceland   that   not   drinks
　　　'Coffee, I know no one in Iceland who doesn't drink'

Engdahl (1997, fn.28) also reports that her informants found at least some of the corresponding extractions from CNPs in Icelandic and Faroese acceptable.

    c.   Norwegian, Taraldsen (1982:205)

       Her er en bok   som jeg ikke har møtt noen   som har lest
       here is   a   book that I   not   have met anybody that has read

Such violations are apparently possible under rather stringent conditions: the head of the relative clause must be indefinite and nonspecific; the verb of which the head is an argument must be an existential verb, or a verb like 'know', 'see', 'meet', 'look for', 'have', etc.; and the position relativized in the relative clause from which a constituent is extracted must be the subject (cf. Erteschik 1973: Chapter 2; Taraldsen 1978: Note 6; Engdahl 1980: 95; 1997, passim; Kluender 1992: 243ff).[2]

    While it is generally assumed in the literature that such violations are present in Scandinavian and absent from Romance and English (Engdahl 1997:§7), in the present squib evidence is presented that they are also found, under comparable conditions, in these languages, thus raising the question whether the CNPC can really be the locus of independent parametric variation.[3]

    Consider the following grammatical Italian sentences, similar to the Scandinavian examples in (1):[4]

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2. But see Engdahl (1997, §2) for one example from Norwegian where the subject is extracted from a (free) relative clause on the object, and (i) of Note 4 below. Engdahl (1980) argues that cases such as (1) involve movement rather than base generation of a *pro*, and that their acceptability is not due to the fact that they comply with subjacency because extraction occurs from an extraposed clause. The Italian cases discussed below show it even more clearly.

3. Some minor differences remain among the languages having to do with what type of extraction gives the best result (Topicalization, Clitic Left Dislocation, wh-relative or interrogative movement) and with what counts as the best non-specific indefinite relative clause head (bare negative quantifiers like *nobody, nothing*, non-negative quantified phrase, like *some, many XP*, etc.), but hopefully these differences will turn out to be related to independent differences among the languages in question. For relevant observations, see Engdahl (1997, §7). Allwood (1982:32) also mentions the existence of dialect differences in Swedish to the effect that "eastern dialects are more restrictive than western ones" in their extractions from CNPs.

4. Extraction from (at least some) relative clauses that relativize the direct object is also possible in Italian:

    (i)   Gianni, a cui$_k$ non c'è proprio niente che$_j$ potremmo far avere t_j t_k in giornata,…
           'Gianni, whom there is really nothing that we could provide him with in one day,…'

I thank Paola Beninca' and Alessio Muro for checking my judgments on (i) and (ii) of this note and the sentences in (2).

(2) a. Giorgio, al quale non conosco nessuno che sarebbe disposto ad affidare i
          propri risparmi,…
          'Giorgio, whom I don't know anybody that would be ready to entrust with
          their savings,…

     b. Ida, di cui non c'è nessuno che sia mai stato innamorato,…
          'Ida, whom there is nobody that was ever in love with,…'

     c. Gianni, al quale non c'è nessuno che sia in grado di resistere,…
          'Gianni, whom there is nobody that is able to resist,…'

These cases are bona fide cases of extraction as they involve PPs rather than DPs
(which could also be base generated A-bar bound pro's; cf. Cinque 1990, Chapter 3).
Their acceptability cannot simply be attributed to the possible extraposition of the
relative CP, to the effect that extraction would then only cross a single bounding node
(CP). Relative clauses relativizing an oblique argument can also be extraposed ((3));
yet, they resist extraction ((4)):

(3) a. Niénte ha fatto finora di cui potersi vantare con i suoi superiori
          'Nothing he did so far about which to boast with his bosses.'

     b. Non conosco nessuno in questa città con cui potrei parlare di questi
          argomenti
          'I know nobody in this town with whom I could talk about these topics.'

(4) a. *I suoi superiori, con i quali$_k$ non ha fatto niente finora [di cui potersi
          vantare t_k],…
          'His bosses, with whom he did nothing so far about which to boast,…'

     b. *Sono argomenti di cui$_k$ non conosco nessuno in questa città
          [con cui potrei parlare t_k]
          'These are topics about which I know nobody in this town with whom I
          could talk.'

Given that Clitic Left Dislocation also shows sensitivity to the CNPC (Cinque 1977, 1990,
Chapter 2), the sentences in (ii) are even closer analogues to some of the Swedish *satsflätor*
discussed in the literature on Scandinavian:

(ii) a. **A Giorgio**, non c'è   niente   che **gli**   interessi veramente.
          to Giorgio, not there is nothing that to-him interests really
          'Giorgio, there is nothing that really interests him.'

     b. **Di questo argomento**, conosco/ci sono molte persone che **ne**
          of this   topic,   I know/there are many people that of-it
          saprebbero parlare molto meglio di   me.
          could   talk   much better than me
          'This topic, I know/there are many people who could speak about much better
          than me.'

Examples similar to (2) are also apparently possible in French ((5)) and in Spanish ((6)):[5]

(5)   a.   Jean, à qui il n'y a personne qui puisse s'opposer,…
           'Jean, whom there is nobody that could oppose,…'

      b.   [(?)]C'est un endroit où il n'y a personne qui voudrait vivre.
           'It's a place where there is no one that would like to live.'

      c.   [(?)] Jean, à qui je ne connais personne qui soit prêt à confier ses secrets,…
           'Jean, to whom I don't know anybody that would be ready to confide
           their secrets,…'

(6)   a.   Ida, de quien no hay nadie que se haya enamorado alguna vez,…
           'Ida, whom there is nobody that was ever in love with,…'

      b.   Juan, al que no hay nadie que sea capaz de soportar,…
           Juan, whom there is nobody that can stand,…'

      c.   Ese es un sitio en el que no hay nadie que querría vivir.
           'This is a place where there is no one that would like to live.'

Although it is generally assumed that English disallows extractions from CNPs entirely,
one finds that similar examples are acceptable (to varying degrees to at least some
native speakers). See (7).[6]

(7)   a.   Then you look at what happens in languages that you know and languages
           that you have a friend who knows
                                   (Charles Ferguson, lecture at the University of Chicago,
                                                  May 1971; cited in Kuno 1976:423)

      b.   Isn't that the song that Paul and Stevie were the only ones who wanted to
           record   (Chung & McCloskey 1983: 708)

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6.   Thanks to David Pesetsky, Megan Rae, and Peter Svenonius for sharing their judgments with
me. Even though examples such as those in (7) and (i) are given as possible in the literature, some
of my informants found them either ungrammatical or highly marginal, saying that they become
better if *that* replaces *who*. Also relevant in this connection are Kayne's (2008a) Notes 30 and 38.

   (i)   a.   Violence is something that there are many Americans who condone.
                                                          (McCawley 1981: 108)
         b.   This is the one that Bob Wall was the only person who hadn't read.
                                                          (McCawley 1981: 108)
         c.   That's one trick that I've known a lot of people who've been taken in by.
                                                      (Chung & McCloskey 1983: 708)
         d.   This is a paper that we really need to find someone who understands.
                                                   (Noam Chomsky, cited in Koster 1987: 169)

    c.   This is the kind of weather that there are many people who like

<div align="right">(Erteschik-Shir 2007: 163)[7]</div>

    d.   This is the child who there is nobody who is willing to accept

<div align="right">(cf. Kuno 1976: 423)</div>

    e.   This is a paper that we really need to find someone to intimidate with

<div align="right">(Kluender 1992: 243)</div>

Comparable examples in German ((8), Josef Bayer, p.c.; Kvam 1983: 124 Note 34; Andersson & Kvam 1984: 46), and in Bulgarian ((9), Iliyana Krapova, p.c.) are on the other hand apparently ungrammatical.

(8)   a.   *Diese Schrift gibt es niemand, der gelesen hat.
            'This writing there is nobody who has read.'

        b.   *Johann, dem es keinen Freund gibt, der helfen kann,…
            'Johann, whom (DAT) there is no friend who can help,…'

        c.   *Dies habe ich nie jemand getroffen, der getan hat
            'This, I have never met anyone who has done'

(9)   a.   *Ivan, na kojto njama nikoj, kojto/deto može da
            Ivan to whom there-isn't nobody who/that can:3SG to

            mu kaže novinata.
            him:CL.DAT tell:3SG news-the

        b.   *Ivan, na kojto njama nito edin prijatel, kojto/deto iska
            Ivan to whom there-isn't not one friend who/that wants

            da mu pomaga.
            to him:CL.DAT help

The languages that appear not to allow for the selective extraction from CNPs discussed here seem to involve relative clauses introduced by "ordinary" relative pronouns (*der*, etc. and *welcher*, etc., in German), or by either "ordinary" relative pronouns or an exclusively relative "complementizer" (*kojto*, etc., and *deto*, respectively, in Bulgarian).[8] The languages that instead appear to allow for the selective extraction in question utilize a relative clause introducer which is also used in constructions other than "ordinary" relative clauses (*som/sem* in Scandinavian; *che/que* in Italian, French and

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7.   The example is originally from Erteschik-Shir & Lappin (1979).

8.   For evidence that the *deto* which introduces emotive factive clauses is the same *deto* which introduces relative clauses (in that the former are in fact hidden relative clauses), see Krapova (2010).

Spanish).[9] Putting this together with the fact that in English such extractions appear to be possible (or at least more acceptable) if the relative clause is introduced by *that* (or Ø in infinitival and reduced relatives) rather than by "ordinary" relative pronouns like *who*, it becomes tempting to think that extraction is really not out of an "ordinary" relative clause.[10]

Thinking of languages/dialects that allow "ordinary" relative pronouns to co-occur with *that* or *che/que*, in the order relative pronoun > *that/che/que* (e.g. Middle English, and various Romance dialects), the fact that extraction is more readily available with *that/che/que* than with "ordinary" relative pronouns can perhaps be understood in terms of movement through the higher Spec of Comp; the one which hosts "ordinary" relative pronouns, and which is presumably not filled when the "weak" relative pronouns *that/che/que* are used.[11] The additional fact that extraction is available only in the presence of indefinite non-specific relative clause heads may possibly

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9.   If English *that* and French *que* are a variety of relative pronouns (Kayne 2008a,b, and Sportiche 2008), then the distinction should be thought of in terms of different types of relative pronouns (see the text below).

10.   Goodluck, Foley & Sedivy (1992:191 Note 11) report a similar contrast in Swedish clauses introduced by *som* and by *vilken* (example provided by Christer Platzack):

(i)   Blommor känner jag till   en affär som/[??]vilken säljer
      flowers   know   I   PRT a   shop that/which   sells

The same contrast is found in Italian

(ii)   Il premier, a cui/al quale non sono molti i giornalisti che/*[?]i quali oserebbero porre una simile domanda…
       'The prime minister to whom the journalists that/who would dare put such a question are not many,…'

(cf. *Non sono molti i giornalisti i quali oserebbero porre una simile domanda al premier* 'the journalists who would dare put such a question to the prime minister are not many', possible in the marked restrictive construction discussed in Cinque 1995,§1.5).

Those English speakers that do not make a difference between *who* and *that* in (7) and (i) of Note 6 perhaps allow *who* to be in the same class as *that*.

11.   If "ordinary" and "weak" relative pronouns are featurally distinct, and a "weak" relative pronoun is allowed to pass through the Spec of the higher Comp acquiring its features, then no relativized minimality (Rizzi 2004) violation should be triggered. The fact that *deto* in Bulgarian (perhaps also a "weak" relative pronoun) blocks extraction perhaps indicates the necessary presence of an operator filling the Spec of the higher Comp.

A potential counterexample to the idea that extraction is blocked out of CNPs introduced by "ordinary" relative pronouns is represented by Romanian, which apparently allows extractions from CNPs introduced by the relative pronoun *care* ('who,which'). See the examples in (i), kindly provided by Alexandra Cornilescu and Iulia Zegrean:

be understood in terms of the absence of a DP initial (silent) demonstrative/opera-
tor that would independently block the extraction (cf. Kayne 2008a, end of §10). As
complements, but not adjuncts, can be extracted from these CNPs (see the contrast
between (2) and (10a) in Italian, and that between (7b) and (10b) in English), such
CNPs seem to qualify as weak islands:

(10)   a.   *E' un modo in cui non conosco nessuno che si sia mai comportato.
              'It's a manner in which I don't know anybody who ever behaved'

        b.   *Isn't that the color which Paul and Stevie were the only ones who painted
              their yacht?   (Postal 1998,170)

For a different idea (according to which such extractions are out of a complement
small clause rather than out of a CNP), see Kush, Omaki & Hornstein (2009), which is
otherwise quite similar in spirit to the present analysis in doubting, for example, that
the CNPC could be parameterized differently in different languages.

Acknowledgment

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    (eds.), 15–32.

(i)   a.   Ion, pe care nu cunosc pe nimeni care să-l aprecieze pentru ceea ce a făcut,…
             'Ion, who (ACC) I do not know anybody who appreciates him for what
             he did,…'

       b.   Ion, căruia nu este nimeni care poate să-i reziste,…
             'Ion, who (DAT) there is nobody who can resist,…'

There is however evidence that *care* in colloquial Romanian has (also) been reanalyzed as a
"complementizer" (or "weak" relative pronoun) (see Grosu 1994: 212). This is clearly shown by
examples such as (ii), from Gheorghe (2004:279):

(ii)   A venit la noi un elveţian, care proiectul lui l-a interesat pe director
        'A Swiss came to us, who his project interested the director'

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