

# Diagnosing multidominance by focus association of ‘only’\*

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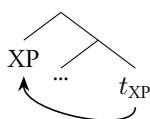
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## 1 Introduction

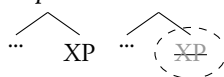
- Several constructions containing **apparent gaps** have been analyzed with one of the three mechanisms:

- ① Movement: Copy Deletion (Chomsky 1995; Nunes 1995, 2004; Bošković and Nunes 2007, *i.a.*)
- ② Ellipsis (Lobeck 1995; Merchant 2001; Johnson 2001, *i.a.*)
- ③ **Multidominance: Parallel Merge** (Wilder 1999; Citko 2005; Gračanin-Yuksek 2007, *i.a.*)

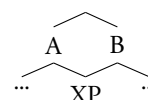
### (1) a. Movement



### b. Ellipsis



### c. Multidominance



- Today's focus: **Right Node Raising (RNR)** (Postal 1974; Hudson 1976; Hartmann 2000; Abels 2004; Citko 2017)
- Involves *syntactic silence (gaps)* in Conjunct 1 in the surface word order.
- Pivot**: the element “shared” by Conjunct 1 and Conjunct 2.

### (2) Right Node Raising (RNR) in English

- a. Mary likes \_\_, and John also likes, [<sub>DP</sub> this book].
- b. Everyone knows that \_\_, and nobody questions if, [<sub>TP</sub> the earth is round]. (Citko 2017:10, adapted)

### (3) Right Node Raising (RNR) in Cantonese<sup>1</sup>

- a. Aaming zungji \_\_ ji Aafan m-zungji [<sub>DP</sub> gobun syu].  
Ming like but Fan not-like that book  
'Ming likes, but Fan dislikes, that book.'
- b. Aaming soeng \_\_, tungmaai Aafan dou soeng, [<sub>TP</sub> tingjat fei Meigwok].  
Ming want and Fan also want tomorrow fly US  
'Ming wants (to), and Fan also wants (to), fly to the US tomorrow.'

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1. Unlike English, prosodic breaks before Conjunct 2 and before the pivot are optional in Cantonese.

- How the silence in RNR is properly analyzed has been subject to debate. (see Citko 2017 for overview)
- ① ATB movement (e.g., Postal 1974; Sabbagh 2007)
- ② Backward deletion/ Ellipsis (e.g., Wilder 1997; Hartmann 2000)
- ③ Parallel Merge/ Horizontal sharing (e.g., McCawley 1982; Wilder 1999, 2008; Bachrach and Katzir 2009; de Vries 2009; Citko 2011; Grosz 2015)<sup>2</sup>
  - While ① can be distinguished from ②–③ by standard syntactic tests like binding, it is sometimes acknowledged that c-command diagnostics “are not going to distinguish [②] ellipsis from [③] multidominance” (Citko 2017:7)
- Recently, a non-uniform/“eclectic” view: RNR is structurally ambiguous between ② or ③<sup>3</sup> (Barros and Vicente 2011; Belk, Neeleman, and Philip 2023)

#### Overview of the talk

- ① This study offers a *novel* diagnostic for ③ multidominance:
 

**Focus association of exclusive operators ‘only’** (e.g., Mary **only** likes **THIS BOOK<sub>F</sub>**.)

  - It requires a c-command relation that can only be generated by ③ in cases with silence
  - ➔ Multidominance is not just another pathway to silence: ③ Parallel Merge creates distinct **structural relations** from ① movement and ② ellipsis (e.g., Wilder 1999; Citko 2005)
- ② We draw cross-linguistic evidence from English (data confirmed by 8 spkr.s.) and Cantonese (3 spkr.s.) on **multidominance** in Right Node Raising.
  - Specifically, we focus on cases like (4) where ‘only’ in Conjunct 1 (and 2) associates with the pivot.

(4) Mary **only** likes \_\_, and John also (**only**) likes, **THIS BOOK<sub>F</sub>**.

(5) [ ... ‘**only**’ ... ] & [ ... ‘**only**’ ... **Obj<sub>F</sub>** ]

  - We will further show that only multidominant RNR accommodates such focus association, but not elliptical RNR, supporting the non-uniform view (e.g., Belk, Neeleman, and Philip 2023).
- ③ We also demonstrate that focus association serves as a powerful diagnostic that can extend to other multidominant structures, such as **parentheticals/amalgams** and **right dislocation**.

#### • Road map

§2: Focus association	§5: Multidominant structures beyond RNR
§3: RNR as multidominance	§6: Conclusion
§4: A non-uniform view on RNR	§7: Appendices

2. To the best of our knowledge, there is currently no formal analysis of Cantonese RNR. For Mandarin RNR, see H.-T. J. Cheng (2009, 2011) for a multidominance approach; and Y.-h. Cheng (2015) for a PF deletion approach. See also Wang (2014, 2024) for an alternative analysis using empty categories.

3. There are other non-uniform views, such as Chaves (2014) who advocates for a combination of extraposition, backward deletion, and VP/N’ ellipsis. See also Hirsch and Wagner (2015) for arguments from scope that both ex-situ and in-situ analyses are needed. However, see Larson (2012) for objection to the non-uniform treatment (and see Belk, Neeleman, and Philip 2023 for rebuttal).

## 2 C-command requirement of ‘only’ focus association

- ‘Only’ has a particular c-command requirement for focus association
- See Jackendoff (1972), Tancredi (1990), Beaver and Clark (2008), Erlewine (2014), and Hirsch and Wagner (2025) for English adverbial *only*, Cheung (2005, 2009) for Cantonese *zinghai* ‘only’ (cf. Erlewine 2017 for Vietnamese)

### (6) The focus association constraint of exclusive operators

Exclusive operators like adverbial *only* and *zinghai* ‘only’ must *c-command* the **pronounced** copy of their focus associates.

→ **Cannot** associate with traces, elided materials, and even empty categories (see Appendix A)

### 2.1 Focus association fails with traces

- As long observed for English, **focus cannot move out of the scope of ‘only’** as in (7) (e.g., Erlewine 2014)
- Also for Cantonese in (8) (cf. Cheung 2005; Yip 2025a)
- True for all kinds of movement: topicalization (A’), relativization (A’), clefting/ focus movement (A’), raising (A), passivization (A), though many of them allow for vanilla reconstruction (e.g., for binding)

→ The associate cannot be “reconstructed” back

### (7) Focus association fails with movement

- John **only** met **MARY<sub>F</sub>** at the party.
- #**MARY<sub>F</sub>**, John **only** met \_\_ at the party. (meaning ≠ a) (Topicalization; Erlewine 2014:11)
- cf. Mary<sub>i</sub>, John **only** met **HER<sub>F</sub><sub>i</sub>** at the party. (Left dislocation)

### (8) Focus association fails with movement<sup>4</sup>

[Cantonese]

- Aaming **zinghai** m-zungji [**ni zek gau**]<sub>F</sub>. (Baseline)
- Ming only not-like this CL dog  
‘Ming only doesn’t like this dog.’
- \*[**Ni zek gau**]<sub>F</sub> ne, Aaming **zinghai** m-zungji \_\_. (Topicalization)
- this CL dog TOP Ming only not-like \_\_  
Int.: ‘Ming only doesn’t like this dog.’ (ONLY: ‘This dog, Ming only doesn’t like.’)

- This shows a sharp contrast with **reflexive binding**
- A’-movement like topicalization reconstructs the moved reflexives to the gap position

### (9) The pictures of **himself<sub>i</sub>**, John<sub>i</sub> really likes \_\_.

### (10) [**Keoizigei<sub>k</sub>** zek gau], Aaming<sub>k</sub> hou zungji \_\_ gaa3.

[Cantonese]

3sg.self CL dog Ming very like SFP  
Lit.: ‘Himself<sub>k</sub>’s dog, Ming<sub>k</sub> only likes.’ (i.e., Ming<sub>k</sub> likes his<sub>k</sub> dog.)

- When the focus/*wh*-associates contain a reflexive, it is still ungrammatical to move the associates out:

- John<sub>i</sub> **only** likes [the pictures of **HIMSELF<sub>i</sub>**]<sub>F</sub>. (baseline)
- \*[The pictures of **HIMSELF<sub>i</sub>**]<sub>F</sub>, John<sub>i</sub> **only** likes \_\_.

4. There is no focal stress in Cantonese (Wu and Xu 2010; Xu 2011).

- (12) \***[Keoizigei<sub>k</sub> zek gau]<sub>F</sub>**, Aaming<sub>k</sub> **zinghai** zungji \_\_ gaa3. [Cantonese]  
 3sg.self CL dog Ming only like SFP  
 Lit.: ‘Himself<sub>k</sub>’s dog, Ming<sub>k</sub> only likes.’

- **Across-the-board (ATB) movement** also fails focus association.

- (13) (Leftward) ATB-movement bleeds focus association of *only*
- a. [Mary **only** likes **THIS BOOK<sub>F</sub>**] and [John **only** dislikes **THIS BOOK<sub>F</sub>**]. (baseline)
- b. \*It is **THIS BOOK<sub>F</sub>** that [Mary **only** likes \_\_] and [John **only** dislikes \_\_]. (ATB-clefting)  
 cf. It is **THIS BOOK** that [Mary likes \_\_] and [John dislikes \_\_].
- c. \***THIS BOOK<sub>F</sub>**, [Mary **only** likes \_\_] and [John **only** dislikes \_\_]. (ATB-topicalization)  
 cf. **THIS BOOK**, [Mary likes \_\_] and [John dislikes \_\_].
- (14) (Leftward) ATB-movement bleeds focus association of *zinghai* ‘only’<sup>5</sup> [Cantonese]
- a. [Aaming **zinghai** zungji **bingo jan<sub>F</sub>**] ji [Aafan **zinghai** toujim **bingo jan<sub>F</sub>**]? (baseline)  
 Ming only like who but Fan only hate who  
 ‘Who does Ming like, and who does Fan hate?’
- b. \***Bingo jan<sub>F</sub>**, [Aaming **zinghai** zungji \_\_] ji [Aafan **zinghai** toujim \_\_]? (ATB-topicalization)  
 who Ming only like but Fan only hate  
 Int.: ‘Which person x is such that Ming only likes x but Fan only hates x?’
- c. **Bingo jan<sub>F</sub>**, [Aaming zungji \_\_] ji [Aafan toujim \_\_]? (ATB-topicalization w/o ‘only’)  
 who Ming like but Fan hate  
 ‘Which person does Ming like and Fan hate?’

(15) Movement bleeds focus association

Exclusive operators **cannot** associate with unpronounced copies (nor with the higher copies that they do not c-command).

## 2.2 Focus association fails with ellipsis

- As a cross-linguistically robust generalization, exclusive operators cannot associate with elided materials.  
 (Han and Romero 2004; Beaver and Clark 2008; Bassi, Hirsch, and Trinh 2022; Cantonese: Cheung 2005, 2009; Yip 2020, 2025a; Kasem: Aremu 2024)
- VP ellipsis **bleeds** focus association! (also true for sluicing, see Appendix B)

- (16) Focus association of *only* fails in VP ellipsis (Bassi, Hirsch, and Trinh 2022:817)
- A: I **only** know he brought **WHITE<sub>F</sub> wine**. What about you?
- a. B1: I **only** know he brought **WHITE<sub>F</sub> wine**, too.
- b. \*B2: I **only** know he did ~~bring WHITE<sub>F</sub> wine~~, too.
- cf. B3: I do ~~only~~ know he brought ~~white<sub>F</sub> wine~~, too.
- cf. B4: I know he did ~~bring white wine~~, too.

5. Association with in-situ *wh* is possible in Cantonese (cf. Li and Law 2016; Erlewine 2025 for Mandarin).

(17) Focus association of *zinghai* ‘only’ fails in VP ellipsis [Cantonese]

- a. Aaming **zinghai** wui maai **siusyut**<sub>F</sub>. \*Aafan dou **zinghai** wui [<sub>VP</sub> maai **siusyut**<sub>F</sub>].  
 Ming only will buy novel Fan also only will  
 Int.: ‘Ming will only buy novels. Fan as well.’
- b. Aaming wui **zinghai** maai **siusyut**<sub>F</sub>. Aafan dou wui [<sub>VP</sub> **zinghai** maai **siusyut**<sub>F</sub>].  
 Ming will only buy novel Fan also will  
 ‘Ming will only buy novels. Fan as well.’

(18) Ellipsis bleeds focus association

Exclusive operators **cannot** associate into elliptical sites with the elided materials.

## 3 A novel argument for multidominance in RNR

- Is RNR derived by ATB-movement, backward ellipsis, or multidomaince?

→ Focus association: at least **multidomaince**!

- In RNR: ‘Only’ may be placed in the Conjunct 1 with an object gap in (19)-(21).
- Focus association with the object in Conjunct 2, as diagnosed by truth conditions.<sup>6</sup>

(19) Focus association of *only* in RNR

John **only** likes \_\_, and Mary also **only** likes, **THIS BOOK**<sub>F</sub>.

- a. ... # John also likes that book.  
 b. ... # Mary also likes that book.

(20) a. John **only** likes \_\_, and Mary also likes, **THIS BOOK**<sub>F</sub>.

- b. John likes \_\_, and Mary **ONLY** likes, **THIS BOOK**<sub>F</sub>.<sup>7</sup>

(21) Focus association of *zinghai* ‘only’ in RNR

[Cantonese]

[Aaming **zinghai** zungji \_\_] ji [Aafan (**zinghai**) toujim **gobun syu**<sub>F</sub>]

Ming only like but Fan only hate that book

‘Ming only likes, but Fan (only) hates, *that book*.’

- To satisfy (22), the first (and second) ‘only’ must **c-command** the **overt** pivot pronounced at the clause-final position, configured in (23).

(22) The focus association constraint of exclusive operators

Exclusive operators like adverbial *only* and *zinghai* ‘only’ must **c-command** the **pronounced** copy of their focus associates.

(23) [ ... ‘**only**’ ... ] & [ ... ‘**only**’ ... **Obj**<sub>F</sub> ]

c-command c-command

6. Vietnamese allows doubling of the adverbial particle *chỉ* ‘only’ and adfocal particle *mỗi* ‘only’ (Hole 2017; Erlewine 2017; Yip 2023). There is a syntactic dependency between the two exclusive particles (assumed to be Agree by Quek and Hirsch 2017). Interesting, such a dependency is preserved in RNR (judgment confirmed by 4 speakers):

- (i) [Nam **chỉ** thích \_\_] và [Lan cũng **chỉ** thích **MỖI CUỐN SÁCH NÀY**<sub>F</sub>]

[Vietnamese]

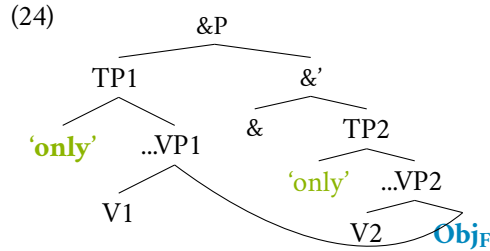
Nam only like and Lan also only like only CL book this

‘Nam only likes, and Lan also only likes, *this book*.’

7. Stress is needed on *only* in Conjunct 2 due to the absence of other contrastive materials.

### RNR = ③ multidominance

Only multidominance creates the required c-command relation for focus association.



- Parallel Merge/ Horizontal node-sharing: the verbs in both conjuncts merge with the same object node. (Wilder 1999; Citko 2011; Grosz 2015, i.a.)
- ‘Only’ in the first conjunct, according to Wilder (1999, ex.18-21)’s definition in (26), **c-commands** the object node shared by both verbs.

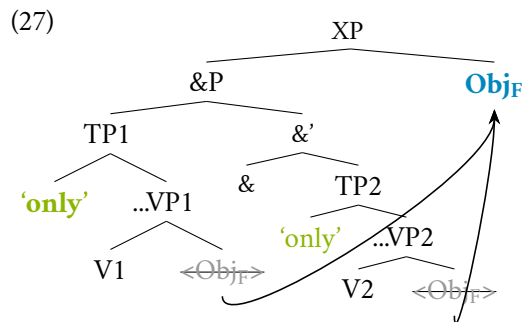


Wilder (1999, ex.18-21)’s definition of c-command (also used to linearize multidominant structures with LCA, see also Wilder 2008):

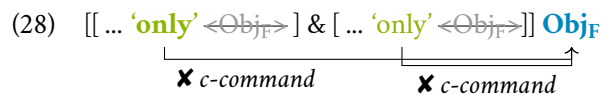
- (26) a. Sharing:  $\alpha$  is shared by X and Y iff (i) neither of X and Y dominates the other, and (ii) both X and Y dominate  $\alpha$ .
- b. Full dominance: X fully dominates  $\alpha$  iff X dominates  $\alpha$  and X does not share  $\alpha$ .
- c. C-command: X c-commands  $\alpha$  iff (i)  $X \neq \alpha$ , (ii) X does not *fully* dominate  $\alpha$ , (iii)  $\alpha$  does not dominate X, and (iv) all categories that dominate X dominate  $\alpha$ .

### Not ① movement

- RNR as movement (e.g., Ross 1967; Postal 1974, 1998; Sabbagh 2007)
- ATB-movement **cannot** create the correct c-command relation for focus association<sup>8</sup>  
—recall how leftward ATB-movement bleeds focus association in (13–14)



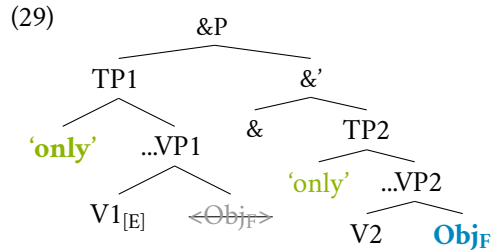
- Both objects move to a higher position rightward to &P
  - Variant: rightward movement of the shared pivot (i.e., ③ multidominance feeds ① movement, cf. Citko 2005’s account of ATB-movement)
  - Under either account, ‘only’ in Conjuncts 1 and 2 **does not c-command** the pronounced copy of the moved pivot. (Rather, ‘only’ is c-command by the pivot)
- **Wrongly** predicts focus association (both TPs) to fail!



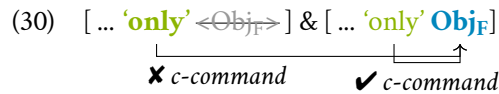
8. We do **not** assume the Remerge/multidominance theory of movement (see, e.g., Bachrach and Katzir 2009 for application to RNR), because there is ample evidence for the Copy Theory of Movement from partial Copy Deletion (Bošković and Nunes 2007; van Urk 2018; see Yip and Ahenkorah 2023; Lee and Yip 2025 for Cantonese). Even if one takes the Remerge view, there still needs to be a principled difference from Parallel Merge that derives the ban on focus association with movement.

### Not ❷ ellipsis

- RNR as (solely) ellipsis (or some PF deletion) (e.g., Wilder 1997; Hartmann 2000; Bošković 2004; Ha 2008)
- **At least** in the cases with focus association, ellipsis **cannot** provide the required c-command relation—indeed, it does not create any new c-command relations. (see §4 for more discussion on elliptical RNR)



- Two (near-)identical objects are base-generated in the two conjuncts respectively
  - The first object undergoes backward deletion/ellipsis
  - 'Only' in Conjunct 1 does not c-command the pronounced copy of the object in the second conjunct.
- **Wrongly** predicts focus association (from TP1) to fail!



## 4 A non-uniform view on RNR

Barros and Vicente (2011) and Belk, Neeleman, and Philip (2023):

→ RNR is structurally ambiguous between ❷ ellipsis and ❸ multidominance

- (31) Crucial diagnostics:<sup>9</sup>
- |  |                    |
|--|--------------------|
| Internal reading of relational modifiers | → ❸ multidominance |
| Cumulative agreement                     | → ❸ multidominance |
| Vehicle change effects                   | → ❷ ellipsis       |
| Morphological mismatches                 | → ❷ ellipsis       |

### 4.1 Multidominant RNR: focus association allowed

#### ① Internal reading of relational modifiers in RNR

(Jackendoff 1977; Abels 2004; Barros and Vicente 2011; Belk, Neeleman, and Philip 2023; cf. Carlson 1987; Barker 2007)

- The internal reading of *same/different* in the pivot scopes over subjects in both conjuncts in RNR.

→ Requires multidominance<sup>10</sup>

- (32) a. John likes, and Mary dislikes, the **same** books. (Internal reading)  
       → Compare the set of books that John likes and the set of books that Mary dislikes: same
- b. John likes, and Mary dislikes, **different** books. (Internal reading)  
       → Compare the set of books that John likes and the set of books that Mary dislikes: different

- **Not possible** under an ellipsis account: (i) pronouncing both objects result in the external reading (Jackendoff 1977); (ii) VP ellipsis bleeds the internal reading (Abels 2004).

9. These diagnostics may interact in a systematic way given that it is possible for an elided structure to contain a multidominant structure (i.e., ❸ feeding ❷, see extensive discussion in Belk, Neeleman, and Philip 2023:§5, taking up the challenge raised by Larson 2012).

10. Belk, Neeleman, and Philip (2023) propose to derive the wide scope by QR-ing the pivot. See Bachrach and Katzir (2009) for a Delayed Spell Out approach and Hirsch and Wagner (2015) for discussion of other quantifiers.



- (33) a. John likes **different** books, and Mary dislikes **different** books. (External reading)  
 b. John likes **different** books, and Mary does too. (External reading)
- Prediction: **Focus association** should be possible with **internal readings**.
- Borne out! The sets of books liked and disliked are the *same* and *exhaustive* among John and Mary in (34):
- (34) *There are 4 books: 1984, Animal Farm, Lord Of The Rings, Harry Potter. John only likes fantasy books: LOTR and HP. Mary, on the other hand, only dislikes fantasy books: LOTR and HP. So, you report:*  
 John **only** likes, and Mary **only** dislikes, **THE SAME BOOKS<sub>F</sub>**.
- (35) *You and I each have a cat. Your cat is picky and only likes a certain brand of wet cat food. My cat is not picky, but there is a particular brand that he doesn't like. You just discovered that the brand that your cat likes is the same brand that my cat doesn't like. You say: What a coincidence! ...* [Cantonese]  
 [Ngo zek maau **zinghai** zingji \_] ji [nei zek maau **zinghai** m-zingji **tung** jat-zung paaizi-ge  
 1SG CL cat only like but 2SG CL cat only not-like SAME one-CL brand-GE  
**gungun<sub>F</sub>**] wo4!  
 can SFP  
 '(How surprising!) You cat only likes, and my cat only dislikes, the same brand of wet cat food!'
- Though usually marked, focus association is also possible with *different*, facilitated by the context.
- (36) *There are 4 books: 1984, Animal Farm, Lord Of The Rings, Harry Potter. John and Mary are supposed to give the same books to Jim and Maggie. However, John only gave Jim LOTR and HP, but not the other two. Mary, on the other hand, only gave Maggie 1984 and AF, but not the other two. So, you report:*  
 %John **only** gave Jim, and Mary **only** gave Maggie, **DIFFERENT BOOKS<sub>F</sub>**.
- (37) *This school has an inadequate sex education program. Male teachers only teach male students about condoms, and not about IUDs. Similarly, female teachers only teach female students about IUDs, but not about condoms. So you report:* [Cantonese]  
 [Naamlousi **zinghai** gaau naamtungbok \_] ji [neoilousi **zinghai** gaau neoitungbok  
 male.teacher only teach male.student but female.teacher only teach female.student  
**mtung-ge** **beijan** **fongfaat<sub>F</sub>**].  
 different-GE birth.control method  
 'Male teachers only teach male students, and female teachers only teach female students, different birth control methods.'

## ② Cumulative/summative agreement in RNR

(Grosz 2015 (first circulated in 2009), Barros and Vicente 2011; Belk, Neeleman, and Philip 2023; cf. Yatabe 2003)<sup>11</sup>

- Cumulative plural agreement: *have* in (38) agrees with both embedded subjects in the two conjuncts in RNR (Grosz 2015; Belk, Neeleman, and Philip 2023)
- Subject to speaker variations
- Grosz & Belk et al.: can only be captured by multidominance<sup>12</sup>

11. See also Tamar-Mattis (2025) for cumulative agreement in Basque backward gapping and a multidominant account.

12. Grosz (2015) propose to capture cumulative agreement by shared T heads, whereas Belk, Neeleman, and Philip (2023) resort to semantic agreement by assuming that multidominance blocks syntactic agreement. Our arguments go through under both views.



(38) *Several people have stolen backdoor keys, and we know who some of them are.*

%Mary discovered that Ryo<sub>{j}</sub>, and Carla discovered that John<sub>{r}</sub>, **have**<sub>{j,r}</sub> stolen backdoor keys.

(Belk, Neeleman, and Philip 2023:693)

- Importantly, for speakers who accept (38), focus association is also possible in (39):

(39) *Mary discovered that Ryo stole BACKDOOR keys (but didn't realize Ryo also stole frontdoor keys), and Carla discovered that John stole BACKDOOR keys (but didn't realize John also stole frontdoor keys). You report:*

Mary **only** discovered that Ryo, and Carla **only** discovered that John, **have** stolen BACKDOOR<sub>F</sub> KEYS.

→ Focus association **corroborates the multidominant structure** of RNR diagnosed by internal readings and cumulative agreement.

## 4.2 Elliptical RNR: focus association disallowed

### ③ Vehicle change effects in RNR

(Ha 2008; Barros and Vicente 2011; Belk, Neeleman, and Philip 2023, i.a.)

- Vehicle change effects: a signature property of ellipsis (e.g., Fiengo and May 1994)
  - Follows from the semantic identity condition (i.e., no strict syntactic identity)
- Possible in RNR: Condition C violation is circumvented by ellipsis in (40)

- (40) a. I used to show **Mary**<sub>i</sub>'s teacher interesting papers, and she<sub>i</sub> will soon too. (VP ellipsis)  
 b. **She**<sub>i</sub> is going to, and I will soon, show **Mary**<sub>i</sub>'s teacher interesting papers. (RNR)  
 c. \***She**<sub>i</sub> used to show **Mary**<sub>i</sub>'s teacher interesting papers, and I will soon show **Mary**<sub>i</sub>'s teacher interesting papers.  
 d. **She**<sub>i</sub> used to show **her**<sub>i</sub> teacher interesting papers, and I will soon show **Mary**<sub>i</sub>'s teacher interesting papers.

(adapted from Belk, Neeleman, and Philip 2023:705)

- Prediction: Vehicle change effects require ellipsis, which **bleeds** focus association of *only*

→ Borne out below!

- (41) \***She**<sub>i</sub> **only** used to, and I will soon, show **MARY**<sub>i</sub>'s **TEACHER**<sub>F</sub> interesting papers.

### ④ Morphological mismatches in RNR

(Bošković 2004; Ha 2008; Barros and Vicente 2011; Chaves 2014; Belk, Neeleman, and Philip 2023, i.a.)

- Ellipsis does not require syntactic/morphological identity: morphological mismatches
- RNR in (42): The gerund form *studying* mismatches with infinitival *to* in the first conjunct.<sup>13</sup>

- (42) a. Ava will soon be **studying** Oceanic languages, but Habib is not going **to**. (VP ellipsis)  
 b. Habib is going **to**, and Ava will soon be, **studying** Oceanic languages. (RNR)  
 c. \*Habib is going **to studying** Oceanic languages, and Ava will soon be **studying** Oceanic languages.  
 d. Habib is going **to study** Oceanic languages, and Ava will soon be **studying** Oceanic languages.

(adapted from Belk, Neeleman, and Philip 2023:705)

13. It is crucial to place the pause **after** *be*. Otherwise, there are not necessarily morphological mismatches (i.e., <sup>OK</sup>*to be studying*).



## 6 Conclusion

- ① We offered a **novel** diagnostic for **multidominance**: Focus association of exclusive operators ‘only’
- Possible in **Right Node Raising** in English and Cantonese
- Only Parallel Merge generates the c-command relation for focus association in RNR
- Multidominance is not just another pathway to silence: it creates distinct **structural relations** from movement and ellipsis (e.g., Wilder 1999; Citko 2005)
- ② We showed that there are two derivations of RNR:
- **Multidominant RNR** feeds focus association and **elliptical RNR** bleeds it.
- Supports the **non-uniform view** on RNR (Barros and Vicente 2011; Belk, Neeleman, and Philip 2023)
- (49) [ ... ‘only’ ... ] & [ ... ‘only’ ... **Obj<sub>F</sub>** ]
- c-command                      c-command
- (50) [ ... ‘only’ <Obj<sub>F</sub>> ] & [ ... ‘only’ **Obj<sub>F</sub>** ]
- ✗ c-command                      ✓ c-command
- ③ We also demonstrated that focus association is a more general test for multidominance:
- Extends to **parentheticals/amalgams** and **right dislocation**.

## 7 Appendices

## Appendix A: Sluicing bleeds focus association

- Sluicing bleeds focus association of *only* in English.

- (51) Focus association fails with sluicing

Some student took GERMAN. Also, some other student took FRENCH. ...

- a. ... I don't know which student took FRENCH, though I know who took GERMAN.
- b. ... I don't know which student ~~took FRENCH~~, though I know who took GERMAN.
- c. ... I **only** don't know which student took **FRENCH<sub>F</sub>**, though I know who took GERMAN.
- d. \*... I **only** don't know which student ~~took FRENCH<sub>F</sub>~~, though I know who took GERMAN.  
(with FRENCH as the intended associate)

- The comparable construction in Cantonese is fragment questions
- Wei (2018): fragment questions in Chinese are derived by movement + deletion (=sluicing)
- Importantly, fragment questions, unlike regular movement, have selective island repair effects, supporting the sluicing approach (see Wei 2018 for a pied-piping explanation on the island repair effects)



- (52) Fragment polar questions

(baseline) [Cantonese]

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| Q1. Aaming tingjat wui heoi <b>tousyugun</b> aa4?<br>Ming tmr. will go library SFP<br>'Will Ming go to the library tomorrow?'              | A1. Wui.<br>will<br>'He will.'                   |
| Q2. Gam <b>Aafan (tingjat)</b> ne?<br>then Fan tomorrow TOP<br>'What about Fan (tomorrow)?'<br>(i.e. Will Fan go to the library tomorrow?) | A2. Dou wui.<br>also will<br>'She will as well.' |

- A1. Wui.  
will  
'He will.'
- A2. Dou wui.  
also will  
'She will as well.'

(53) Sluicing in question fragments repairs islands selectively

- a. [CP Question fragment  $\left[ \left[ \left[ \text{Left-branch/Sent.-Subj.} \right] \dots \right] \right]$  ]  

- b. \*[CP Question fragment  $\left[ \left[ \left[ \text{CNPI/Adjunct} \right] \dots \right] \right]$  ]  


- Fragment questions in Cantonese also bleed focus association of *zinghai* ‘only’.

(54) Focus association fails in fragment questions

[Cantonese]

- Q1. Aaming **zinghai** wui heoi **tousyugunf** aa4?      A1. Wui.  
 Ming    only    will go   library    SFP                      will  
 ‘Will Ming only go to the library?’                      ‘He will.’
- Q2. \*Gam Aafan **zinghai** ne?  
 then Fan    only    TOP  
 Int.: ‘What about Fan?’

**Appendix B: Focus association fails with empty categories**(55) ‘Only’ cannot associate with big PRO

- a.  $I_i$  **only** want  $[\text{MYSELF}_i]_F$   $[\text{PRO}_i \text{ to succeed}]$ .  
 b.  $\#I_i$  **only** want to  $[[\text{PRO}_i]_F \text{ to succeed}]$ . (meaning  $\neq$  (a))

(56) ‘Only’ cannot associate with subject *pro*

[Cantonese]

- a. *Ming asks you, besides Fan, whether YOU will come too. You say:*  
 Hai aa3, {ngo/ *pro*} dou wui lai aa3.  
 yes SFP 1SG also will come SFP  
 ‘Yes, (I) will come too.’
- b. *Ming asks you whether YOU are the only one coming. You say:*  
 Hai aa3, **zinghai** {ngo<sub>F</sub>/ \**pro*<sub>F</sub>} wui lai aa3.  
 yes SFP only 1SG will come SFP  
 ‘Yes, only \*(I) will come.’

(57) ‘Only’ cannot associate with null object *e*

[Cantonese]

- a. *Tommy is showing off his new MacBook. You say:*  
 Ngo dou jau {Mekbuk/ *e*<sub>O</sub>} laa1.  
 1SG also have MacBook SFP  
 ‘I also have (a Mac).’
- b. *Tommy asks you whether you only have MACBOOK AIR (and don’t have Macbook Pro). You say:*  
 Hai aa3, ngo **zinghai** jau {Mekbuk-Ejaaf/ \*[*e*<sub>O</sub>]<sub>F</sub>} zaa3.  
 yes SFP 1SG only have MacBook-Air SFP  
 ‘Yes, I only have \*(MacBook Air).’

## Appendix C: Focus association in right dislocation

Zinghai ‘only’ in Cantonese can be right-dislocated to the end of a sentence after sentence-final particles (SFPs). (As observed the earliest in Cheung 1997, cf. Cheung 2005, 2009, 2015; Yip 2020, 2025a)

- (58) a. [ \_ Aaming<sub>F</sub> wui lai zaa3] zinghai. [Cantonese]  
 Ming will come SFP only  
 ‘(Only) Ming will come, only’
- b. [Aaming \_ zungji nibun syu<sub>F</sub> zaa3] zinghai. (Obj focus)  
 Ming like this book SFP only  
 ‘Ming (only) likes *this book*, only’ [Cantonese]

- Challenges existing analyses with movement or ellipsis:
  - (i) a monoclausal structure with leftward movement in (59) (Cheung 2009; Lee 2017); and
  - (ii) a biclausal structure with sluicing in CP2 in (60) (Cheung 2015; Yip 2025a)

- (59) [CP Δ SFP [ Δ... [TP ‘only’...focus ] ]]] RD by mvt. (60) [CP1 ...focus...SFP][CP2 Δ { ‘only’...XP<sub>F</sub> } ] RD by sluicing

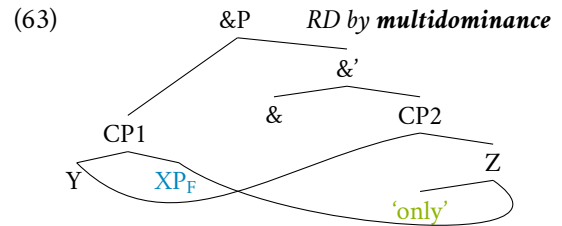
- Both approaches generate an *illicit* configuration (61) for focus association.<sup>16</sup>

- (61) \*<sub>[main ... XP<sub>F</sub> ... ] SFP [RD ... ‘only’ ... <XP<sub>F</sub>> ... ]</sub>  
 ↑ no c-command | c-command↑

- Non-bulk sharing (cf. Gračanin-Yuksek 2007):  
 Creates the required c-command relation in (58) for focus association in RD

→ See Yip (2025b) for such an analysis

- (62) [<sub>main</sub> ... focus/wh ... ] SFP [RD ‘only’/‘the hell’ ]  
 ↑ c-command



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16. Note that rightward movement in RD with a monoclausal structure is not feasible independently, see Cheung (2009) and Yip (2025a) for arguments.

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