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Sluicing inside relatives

The case of Gungbe

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This paper contributes to current advances in the cross-linguistic variation of syntactic contexts that allow sluicing. We investigate a relatively rare sluicing strategy: TP-ellipsis inside relative clauses. We analyse this phenomenon in Gungbe based on Van Craenenbroeck and Lipták’s (2006) implementation of the \([e]\)-feature characteristic of sluicing.

Keywords: sluicing, ellipsis licensing, relative clauses, Gungbe, Hungarian

1. The syntactic licensing of sluicing

1.1 Sluicing in English

Sluicing is an instance of clausal ellipsis that leaves a single \(wh\)-remnant behind (Ross 1969). Lobeck (1995: 54–62) and Merchant (2001: 54–61) report that sluicing is restricted to \(wh\)-questions in English, (1a). Accordingly, English excludes sluicing in relatives (1b):

\[
\begin{align*}
(1) & \quad \text{a. Someone read that book, but I don’t know who.} \\
& \quad \text{b. *Someone read that book, but I didn’t know \{the person who / whoever\}.}
\end{align*}
\]

Merchant (2001: 55–61) explains this restriction on sluicing as a property of the syntactic feature \([e]\) on the interrogative \(C^0\)-head whose complement is elided. Further studies on sluicing in English indicate that the feature \([e]\) hosts all the syntactic, semantic, and phonological properties which distinguish elliptical constructions from non-elliptical ones.\(^1\) \([e]\) is endowed with strong and uninterpretable \([uwh^*,uQ^*]\)-features (Chomsky 1995) as indicated in (2a). These features require overt checking of \([e]\)’s feature on the \(C^0\) head of constituent questions as suggested by the configuration in (2b).
(2) a. syntax of \([e]\) in English sluicing: \(E_{[\text{uwh}^*,\text{uQ}^*]}\)
   
   b. \[
   \begin{array}{c}
   \text{CP} \\
   \text{wh} \\
   [\text{+wh},\text{+Q}] \\
   \text{C} \\
   \text{C}^0 \\
   [\text{+wh},\text{+Q}] \\
   \text{TP}
   \end{array}
   \]

   The analysis in (2b) ensures that sluicing in English only targets the TP-complement of a null \(C^0\) found in constituent questions. This appears to be a general restriction in Germanic languages.

1.2 Sluicing with non-\(\text{wh}\)-fronting: Focus sluicing

While English sluicing is confined to constituent questions, there are cross-linguistic variations. Van Craenenbroeck and Lipták (2006), Grebenyova (2006), and Hoyt and Theodorescu (2012) show that sluicing can leave a focus remnant behind in languages where \(\text{wh}\)-phrases and focused phrases target the same position. In Hungarian, for instance, \(\text{wh}\)-phrases front to a focus position (Horváth 1986). Consequently, ellipsis targets the post-focal position as shown by example (3a), to be contrasted with the ungrammatical English example (3b):\(^2\)

(3) a. János meghívott egy lányt, de nem tudtam, hogy Annát.
   John invited a girl but not knew.1sg that Anna-a
   'John invited a girl, but I don’t know that it was Anna.'

   b. *John invited a girl, but I don’t know ANN (i.e. I don’t know it was Ann).

Similar facts are found in Gungbe, a Kwa language (Niger-Congo). Gungbe is a focus-fronting language in which \(\text{wh}\)-constituents and focus phrases target the same position left-adjacent to the focus marker \(\text{w}\) which encodes the \(\text{Foc}^0\) head. This marker is obligatory in \(\text{wh}\)- and focus constructions (Aboh 2004). As expected, Gungbe allows for sluicing both with \(\text{wh}\)- and focus remnants. Ordinary, English-type sluicing with a \(\text{wh}\)-remnant is illustrated in (4a), and focus sluicing with a focus remnant is shown in (4b). Note that sluicing in Gungbe violates Merchant’s (2001) sluicing-COMP generalization because the focus marker must be pronounced after the remnant (Aboh 2010a, Baltin 2010):\(^3\)

(4) a. Kôfì ná yrò mè dê bɔ̀ ɔ̀n kànbìò dʒĩ mɛ̀nù wɛ̀
   Kôfì fut call person IND but/and I ask that person.Q FOC
   'Kofi will call someone and I wonder who.'
b. Mè dé wá, àmón mà nyón èn ní Kofi wè.

someone IND come but 1sg.NEG know it if Kofi FOC

‘Someone came, but I don’t know if (it was) Kofi.’

To account for the difference between English-type languages and Hungarian-type languages Van Craenenbroeck and Lipták (2006) propose that overtly fronting wh-constituents check [uwh*,uQ*] features on C° in English and similar languages. In focus movement languages, however, wh-constituents front to check an uninterpretable focus feature on Foc°, whose complement is elided in sluicing. Assuming Rizzi’s (1997) layered COMP field, this would mean that English sluicing deletes the complement of the interrogative head whose specifier hosts wh-phrases, while Hungarian/Gungbe sluicing deletes the complement of Foc°. To link this difference to the typological differences attested in sluicing, Van Craenenbroeck and Lipták (2006) further propose that the behavior of wh-elements in non-elliptical questions determines the syntactic properties of [e], according to the wh/sluicing correlation in (5).

(5) THE WH/SLUCING-CORRELATION (Van Craenenbroeck and Lipták 2006)

The syntactic features that the [e]-feature checks in a certain language are identical to the strong features a wh-phrase checks in a non-elliptical constituent question in that language.

Under (5), the feature [e] responsible for sluicing differs among English and Hungarian/Gungbe. In English sluicing targets the TP complement of C, while in Hungarian/Gungbe sluicing targets the TP complement of Foc. This difference confines sluicing to the particular configurations illustrated in (6c).

(6) a. the syntax of [e] in English:  
    \[ E_{[uwh^*,uQ^*]} \]

b. the syntax of [e] in Hungarian/Gungbe:  
    \[ E_{[uFoc^*]} \]

c. English Hungarian/Gungbe

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{CP} \\
\text{wh} \\
[+wh,+Q] \\
\text{C'} \\
\left( \text{C}_0 \\
[+wh+Q] \\
\left[ E_{[+wh,+Q]} \right] \right) \\
\text{TP} \\
\end{array}
\]

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{CP} \\
\text{FocP} \\
\text{wh/focus} \\
[+Foc] \\
\text{Foc'} \\
\left( \text{Foc}_0 \\
[+Foc] \\
\left[ E_{[+Foc]} \right] \right) \\
\text{TP} \\
\end{array}
\]
1.3 Sluicing with relative pronoun remnants

The analysis in (6) accounts for the cross-linguistic variation between \textit{wh}-movement languages (e.g. English) and focus-movement languages (e.g. Hungarian/Gungbe) in a principled manner. We now extend this analysis to new data sets indicating that, in some focus movement languages, sluicing is licensed in an even wider domain than hitherto thought.

In particular, both Hungarian and Gungbe exhibit a sluicing pattern that is unavailable in English and appears to be rare cross-linguistically: sluicing inside relative clauses (7–8).

\textbf{(7)} Ezért tartunk ott, ahol [TP].
\textit{this.for be.pres.3pl there rel.where}
\textit{lit. ‘For this reason we are wherever we are.’}

\textbf{(8)} Kòfí ná yrɔ́́ mè Ḓù ṁmɔ́́ nàn mè Ḓù ɗè \textit{[TP]}.
Kòfí fut call person ind but 1sg.neg know person rel foc
\textit{lit. ‘Kofi will call someone, but I don’t know the person who.’}

As the translations indicate, Hungarian relative sluicing (7) has a free choice reading, while the meaning of the Gungbe example in (8) reminds us of English-type sluicing, though the syntax of sluicing is different in these two languages as we suggested in the previous paragraphs. The major contribution of this article is to bring the Gungbe pattern of relative sluicing to light and show how they bear on the \textit{wh}/focus-sluicing generalization in (5). As for the Hungarian example in (7), we refer the reader to Lipták (2013) for discussion.

2. Relative sluicing in Gungbe: The basic facts

2.1 Some illustrative examples

While ordinary English-type \textit{wh}-sluicing in Gungbe is available after predicates like \textit{kànbí}s ‘ask’ (4a), predicates like \textit{nyɔ́n} ‘know’ exhibit a distinct pattern of sluicing. Here, the sluiced remnant does not correspond to a question phrase or a lexical focus expression. Rather, it contains an indefinite nominal followed by a relativizer, in turn followed by the obligatory focus marker. The bracketed sequences in the following examples illustrate this kind of sluicing:

\textbf{(9)} a. Kòfí ná yrɔ́́ mè Ḓù ṁmɔ́́ nàn mè Ḓù ɗè [mè Ḓù ɗè \textit{wɛ́}]
Kòfí fut call person ind but 1sg.neg know person rel foc
\textit{lit. ‘Kofi will call someone, but I don’t know the person who.’}
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b. Kòfí ná xɔ nú dɛ̀ àmɔn mà nyɔn [nù dɛ̀ wɛ̃].
Kòfí fut buy thing ind but 1sg.neg know thing rel foc
Lit. 'Kofi will buy something, but I don’t know the thing which.’

c. Kòfí ná yi fi dɛ̀ àmɔn mà nyɔn [fi dɛ̀ wɛ̃].
Kòfí fut go place ind but 1sg.neg know place rel foc
Lit. 'Kofi will go to some place, but I don’t know the place what.’

d. Kòfí ná yró mɛ̀ dɛ̀ àmɔn mà nyɔn [dɔwɛ̀ dɛ̀ wɛ̃].
Kòfí fut call person ind but 1sg.neg know man rel foc
Lit. 'Kofi will call someone, but I don’t know the man which.’

The sluiced phrase can also correspond to a complex noun such as a possessive phrase:

(10) Kòfí yrɔ mɛ̀ dɛ̀ àmɔn mà nyɔn [mɛ̀ dɛ̀ sín vi wɛ̀].
Kòfí call person ind but 1sg.neg know person rel poss child foc
‘Kofi called someone but I don’t know whose child.’

A piece of evidence that (9) and (10) contain a reduced form of full clauses comes from the observation that sluicing is optional: The TP following the relativized nominal + the focus marker can also be pronounced, as is shown in (11), which corresponds to example (9a):

(11) Kòfí ná yrɔ mɛ̀ dɛ̀ àmɔn mà nyɔn mɛ̀ dɛ̀ wɛ̀ Kòfí ná yrɔ.
Kofi fut call person ind but 1sg.neg know person rel foc Kofi fut call
‘Kofi will call someone, but I don’t know the person who Kofi will call.’

2.2 Selectional properties: DP complementation

The distribution of this kind of sluicing is tied to the selectional properties of the matrix predicate: Relative sluicing is only found with predicates that select DP complements, such as nyɔn ‘know’. These predicates are different from predicates whose complement is a CP, such as kànbi’ ‘ask’, sè ‘hear’, lɛ̀n ‘think’, and mɔ̀n ‘see’.

Evidence for such a difference in syntactic selection comes from various sources. Two of these, which we illustrate here, concern the category of the verbs’ complement and the realization of the embedded complementizer in clausal complements.

First, the two predicate types show differences in the category they are complemented by in embedding contexts: DP-selecting verbs require the 3sg pronoun èn to introduce the complement (12).

(12) Ùn nyɔn *(èn) dɔ̀ Kòfí wɛ̀ wá.
1sg know 3sg that Kofi foc come
‘I knew it that Kofi came.’
CP-selecting predicates on the other hand are adjacent to the complementizer ḅɔ́ ‘that’ and cannot combine with a pronominal (13a–b):

(13) a. Ùn kànbí (*èn) ḅɔ́ mënù wè wá?
   1sg ask 3sg that who FOC come
   ‘I asked who came.’

   b. Ùn sè/lèn/mòn (*èn) ḅɔ́ Kòfí wè wá
   1sg hear/think/see 3sg that Kofi FOC come
   ‘I heard/thought/saw (*it) that Kofi came.’

From this we conclude that nýn can only combine with a DP complement, which in cases of clausal complementation embeds a relative clause: A DP containing a CP-clause (see Aboh 2002, 2005 for discussion). Kànbí- type predicates on the other hand are complemented by a CP category without an outside DP layer.6

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>predicate</th>
<th>syntactic category of complement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>nýn ‘know’</td>
<td>[DP …([ CP …])]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ḅɔ́ ‘say’, kànbíó ‘ask’</td>
<td>[CP …]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1. Syntactic selection with the two types of predicates

Related to the latter difference, the two predicate classes also differ in whether they allow for complementizer deletion. Verbs that associate with a nominal category disallow the deletion of the complementizer:

(14) Ùn nýn èn *(monic) Kòfí wá.
    1sg know 3sg that Kofi come
    ‘I knew (that) Kofi came.’

Verbs of saying on the other hand typically allow comp-deletion freely:

(15) Ùn ḅɔ́ (monic) Kòfí wá.
    1sg say that Kofi come
    ‘I said (that) Kofi came.’

One possible way of accounting for these syntactic differences in comp-deletion is to trace them back to the selectional difference introduced above. We assume, together with Aboh (2010b) that comp-deletion is blocked by the intervening DP in (14) and similar examples but not in (15) (or (13b) where there is no DP layer between the selecting verb and the clausal complement.

2.3 Arguments for a DP-internal relative clause

If nýn ‘know’ can only combine with DP complements as argued for here, then sluicing in the examples in (9) and (10) must take place inside that DP. As for the
internal structure of this DP, the presence of the element ḍē, typical of Gungbe relative clauses (16), suggests that the bracketed DP sequences contain a relative clause of some sort.

(16) náwè *(ḍē) wá xɔ̀ mútɔ̀ cè
   woman rel come buy car my
   ‘the woman who came bought my car’

We will therefore refer to examples like (9) and (10) as ‘relative sluicing’ and analyze them along the lines of (17), involving TP deletion inside the relative clause stranding the relative pronoun — a configuration that is ungrammatical in English-type languages (1b).

(17) Kòfí ná yró mè ḍē ámɔ̀n má nyɔ́n [dp mè ḍē wè [tp, Kòfí ná yró]]
     Kòfi fut call person ind but 1sg.neg know person rel foc

We are aware of one important structural difference between relative sluicing and ordinary relativization strategies in Gungbe: While the modified noun and the relative pronoun need not be adjacent in relative clauses, the relativized nominal and the relative morpheme ḍē appear to form a single constituent and thus nothing can intervene between the two. This is shown in examples (18a–c) where the ordinal titàn (first) occurs either between the relative head mè and the relative clause (18a) or to the right of the relative clause (18b). If relative sluicing involved the same structure as ordinary relative clauses, one would expect the ordinal to have the same distribution there as well. Crucially, one would expect the ordinal to intervene between the relative head mè and the relativizer as in (18a). As the ungrammatical example (18c) shows, however, this is impossible:

(18) a. [mè titàn [ḍē wá]] wè ná wà àzɔ̀n lɔ̀
    person num rel come foc fut do job det
    ‘The first person to come will do the job’

b. [mè [ḍē wá] titàn] wè ná wà àzɔ̀n lɔ̀
    person rel come num foc fut do job det
    ‘The first person to come will do the job’

  c. *Kòfí ná yró [mè titàn [ḍē wá]] dɔ̀pɔ̀
     Kòfí fut call person first rel come one
     ámɔ̀n má nyɔ́n mè titàn ḍē wè
     but 1sg.neg know person fist rel foc
     Lit. ‘Kofi will call the first person to come but I don’t know which first person that is.’

This structural difference goes hand in hand with another difference between ordinary relatives and relative sluicing: While the focus marker wè cannot occur
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immediately to the right of the relativizer in ordinary relatives, this is possible in relative sluicing.

(19) a. mó tô ɖɛ (*wɛ̀) mí ɔ̀
   car REL FOC 1PL buy
   ‘the car that we bought’

b. Kɔfì ná yrɔ̀ mɛ̀ ɖɛ̀ ìmɔ̀n mɛ̀ nyɔ̀n mɛ̀ ɖɛ̀ *(*wɛ̀)
   Kɔfì fut call person IND but 1SG.NEG know person REL FOC
   Lit. ‘Kofi will call someone, but I don’t know the person who.’

We will return to these points in Section 3 and provide more arguments for the claim that mɛ̀-ɖɛ forms a single constituent in relative sluicing.

2.4 Ruling out a cleft analysis

Before concluding this section, we dedicate some space to ruling out a cleft underliner for the sluice. Clearly, a simple cleft with a structure like (20) cannot be what underlies relative sluicing.

(20) Kofi will call someone, but I don’t know [CP who [TP that is t]]

Several facts undermine (20). First, an underliner like (20) would require the presence of the 3sg pronoun ɛ̀(n) to occur between the verb and the CP-complement (recall that nyɔ̀n selects DP complements). Such a pronoun, however, is ungrammatical in relative sluicing:

(21) Kɔfì ná yrɔ̀ mɛ̀ ɖɛ̀ ìmɔ̀n mɛ̀ nyɔ̀n *(ɛ̀n) mɛ̀ ɖɛ̀ wɛ̀.
   Kɔfì fut call person IND but 1SG.NEG know 3SG PERSON REL FOC
   ‘Kofi will call someone, but I don’t know who.’

Second, (20) would not predict the presence of the relativizer ɖɛ, in the sluiced clause. To account for the latter, the underliner should contain a relative clause as the pivot of the cleft, thus suggesting a structure like (22):

(22) Kofi will call someone, but I don’t know …
    [DP [CP [DP relative who [TP1 Kofi will call t]], [TP2 that is t]]]]

The most problematic point with (22) is that it involves two instances of TP ellipsis, which in principle are independent of each other. The deletion of TP₁ inside the relative clause should therefore not affect TP₂ inside the cleft. If (22) were correct, we would expect ellipsis to target any of these TPs independently. Example (23) illustrates such a sentence. In this example, the relative clause (the alleged pivot of the cleft) is fully spelled out, followed by the focus marker that accompa-
nies sluiced remnants. The rest of the cleft is not spelled out, yet the construction is ungrammatical.

(23) * Kófi ná yró mè dë àmén mà nyşn
    \[ \text{K \textsc{fut} call person ind but 1sg.neg know} \]
    \[ \text{[mè dë Kófi ná yró ] wè [—].} \]
    person rel Kofi fut call foc
    ‘Kofi will call someone, but I don’t know the person who Kofi will call.’

This is unexpected under (22). We conclude that an analysis that assumes a simple or a complex cleft underlier is untenable. Instead, we propose that the elided constituent is a TP inside a DP relative clause that itself is a complement to the selecting verb. This is schematized again in (24).

(24) … nyşn \[ \text{DP {thing/man/place} dë wè [—TP ——]} \]
    NP rel foc

The next section discusses the internal structure of the sluiced relative and the syntactic licensing of TP-ellipsis.

3. The fine structure of relative sluicing

In order to understand the conditions on relative sluicing, we first discuss the structure of standard relativization in Gungbe. Our analysis of standard relatives builds on Aboh (2002, 2005): Relative clauses involve a DP embedding a CP, with the relativized noun in Sp,CP and the relative morpheme $dë$ in $C^0$. It is important to note that the focus marker $wè$ is only attested inside relative clauses if the relative clause contains a focused phrase, promoted to Sp,FocP. This is the case in (25a), with the structure of the relative illustrated in (25b) (here we ignore subsequence generalized pied-piping of CP to spec,DP as argued in Aboh 2002, 2005):

(25) a. Mótò \[ \text{dë Kófi wè xo ná mí}. \]
    car rel Kofi foc buy for us
    ‘The car that Kofi bought for us.’
Extending the structure in (25b) to relative sluicing would lead us to propose the structure in (26b) for an example like (9a), repeated in (26a).

(26) a. Kòfi ná yrɔ́ mɛ̀ ɗé àmɔ́n mā nyɔ́n mɛ̀ ɗé wɛ̀
Kòfi fut call person ind but 1sg.neg know person rel foc
Lit. 'Kofi will call someone, but I don’t know the person who.'

b. 
\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{DP} \\
\text{D} \\
\text{CP} \\
\text{m}ɔ́tɔ̀ \\
\text{C} \\
\text{d}ɛ́ \\
\text{FocP} \\
\text{Kòfi} \\
\text{Foc'} \\
\text{Foc} \\
\text{wɛ̀} \\
\text{TP} \\
\text{Kòfi xɔ́ m}ɔ́tɔ̀ nά mî
\end{array}
\]

The syntactic configuration in (26b) parallels standard relativization in that the relativized noun (mɛ̀) is in Sp,CP, and the relativizer dɛ́ is in C0. (26b) also parallels ordinary wh-sluicing and focus sluicing in that the TP complement of the Foc0-head is elided (4b). Clearly, however, this analysis is dissatisfactory as it leaves the presence of the focus marker wɛ̀ unexplained. FocP is obligatorily projected,
but there is no focus constituent occupying \( \text{Sp,FocP} \), though Gungbe disallows stranding of the focus head (Aboh 2004, 2010a).

For this reason we follow a different path, where the relativized noun and the relativizer form a constituent in relative sluicing (unlike in standard relativization, 18c). We further argue that this constituent occupies \( \text{Sp,FocP} \), rather than the \( \text{CP} \) projection (27):

\[
\text{(27)}
\]

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{DP} \\
\text{D} & \text{CP} \\
\text{C} & \text{FocP} \\
\text{mè ɖè} & \text{Foc} \\
\text{Foc} & \text{TP} \\
\text{wè} & \text{Kòfì ná yrụ mè}
\end{array}
\]

We suggest that ɖè is not a head encoding the relative C₀ head in relative sluicing. Instead, ɖè forms a constituent with the relativized noun. The formation of this constituent underlies the derivation of a particular type of relative in Gungbe: The equivalents of headless relatives in other languages. In Gungbe, the term headless relatives refers to the fact that these constructions do not have an external overt head, i.e. \( \text{Sp,CP} \) is not filled. Rather, the indefinite noun phrase mè embedding the particle ɖè moves in the manner of wh- or focus movement to a relatively low left peripheral position, FocP. (The derivation may subsequently involve snowballing movement to \( \text{Sp,DP} \) as proposed in Aboh 2002, 2005, 2010b).\(^7\)

An independent argument for the proposal in (27) can be found in the behaviour of complex wh-expressions and their relativized equivalents, such as when-phrases. Corresponding sequences \( \text{hwè-té-nù} \) ‘what time’ and \( \text{hwè-dé-nù} \) ‘the time that’ contain the nouns ‘sun’ and ‘edge’ with a functional element appearing between the two.

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{(28) a.} & \quad \text{hwè-té-nù} \quad \text{wè} \quad \text{Kòfì wá?} \\
& \quad \text{sun-Q-edge foc Kofi come} \\
& \quad \text{‘When did Kofi come?’} \\
\text{b.} & \quad \text{hwè-dé-nù} \quad \text{àsì étbn ji-vi} \\
& \quad \text{sun-det-edge wife his gave.birth} \\
& \quad \text{‘{When / the time that} his wife gave birth’}
\end{align*}
\]

A similar pattern arises with locative question expressions as well:
Comparing these examples, it seems reasonable to assume that -tɛ́- is the question operator in (28a) and (29a) and that -ɖɛ́- in (28b) and (29b) provides the value required by -tɛ́- inside the question word. In these examples, we glossed this item as det because it seems to function as a deictic element. We take this to indicate that ɖɛ́ is not a C0 head in this case, but rather part of the fronted relative phrase comparable to English when and where in adjunct relative clauses. This should not be surprising since the element -ɖɛ́- arguably derived from the numeral ṭɔ́ɖɛ́ ‘one’. We believe furthermore that -tɛ́- and -ɖɛ́- not only have a parallel semantic function, the phrases formed with them also target the same syntactic position, Sp,FocP.

Finally, the relative pronouns figuring in (28/29) are also found in relative sluicing involving complex wh-expressions. The following example contains a temporal wh-phrase but locative wh-phrases are allowed as well.

(30) ùn sè ɖɔ́́ Kɔfí wá tɔ́mè àmɔ́n má nyɔ́n hwɛ́-ɖɛ́-nù wɛ́ gàn
1sg hear that Kofi come country but 1sg.neg know sun-Q-edge foc precisely
‘I heard that Kofi came back home, but I don’t know the precise/exact moment.’

What we are proposing for relative sluicing then is that it embodies a headless relative clause strategy in which the sluiced remnant corresponds to the relative pronoun of the headless relative. It is important to note that such headless relatives are particularly restricted in Gungbe. For reasons that we do not understand, they seem to be limited to sluicing contexts after predicates like nyɔ́n and to temporal and locative adjunct clauses we illustrated above in (28/29).

While further study is needed in order to explain the limited distribution of headless relatives in Gbe and other Kwa languages (Saah 2010), the fact remains that the syntax of [e] in Gungbe being e$_{u\text{Foc}^0}$, the relative pronoun in headless relatives is a well-formed sluiced remnant: Foc$_0$ in headless relatives is capable of checking the focus feature of [e], in a local configuration that is in every respect identical to that found in ordinary wh-sluicing and focus sluicing, (31).
This in turn explains why the focus marker is obligatory in relative sluicing just like in \(wh\)-sluicing and focus sluicing: Sluicing is ellipsis of the complement of \(Foc\) — in all instances of sluicing. The Gungbe facts are compatible with generalization (5) and further indicate that relative sluicing can only occur in languages in which relative pronouns check the same feature as \(wh\)-movement in constituent questions. Whether this is the only condition for relative sluicing to be grammatical in languages we leave for further research.\(^8\)

4. Summary and concluding remarks

In this paper we have provided the first study of a hitherto unknown and typologically rare sluicing strategy, sluicing inside relative clauses, leaving relative pronouns as remnants. The language of study is the Niger-Congo language Gungbe, which is a focus movement language where \(wh\)- and focus constituents target the same left peripheral position, \(FocP\). We have identified three types of possible remnants in sluicing: (i) \(wh\)-phrases, giving rise to ordinary, English-type sluicing constructions; (ii) focused phrases, giving rise to focus sluicing; and (iii) relative pronouns in headless relatives, giving rise to sluicing in relative clauses. Sluicing types (ii) and (iii) do not occur in English but are possible in Gungbe due to the fact that both focus phrases and relative pronouns in headless relatives track the syntax of \(wh\)-movement and check the same feature as \(wh\)-phrases under \(Foc\). These findings clearly show that sluicing is typologically more wide-spread than hitherto assumed, and is not confined to English-type interrogative environments.
Notes

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1. The precise feature specification of [E] is as follows (Merchant 2001):
   (i) the syntax of [E]: \(E_{[\text{wh}^*, \text{uQ}^*]}\)
   (ii) the phonology of [E]: \(\phi\text{IP} \rightarrow \text{Ø}\)/E __
   (iii) the semantics of [E]: \([E] = \lambda p : \text{e-given}(p)\ [p]\)

2. We refer to (3b) as an ungrammatical instance of focus sluicing in English, but we are aware of the fact that in main clauses, English has two constructions which seem to show certain parallels with Hungarian: stripping (i) and fragment answers (ii):
   (i) John talked to Mary yesterday and Bill [E] too.
   (ii) Q: What did Carlos eat?
        A: Two bananas [E].

   These resemble (3b) in that a focused non-wh-XP is found next to a clausal ellipsis site, which corresponds to a TP in stripping and a CP in fragment answers (see Merchant 2003, 2004 respectively). The most important difference between the grammatical (i) and (ii) and the ungrammatical (3b) is the syntactic contexts they are found in: Focal remnants are ruled out in embedded contexts but not in matrix ones. We refer the reader to van Craenenbroeck and Lipták (2006) for an explanation for this fact.

3. The Sluicing-COMP generalization reads as follows:
   (i) Sluicing-COMP generalization (Merchant 2001)
       In sluicing, no non-operator material may appear in COMP.

   We contend that the reason that Gungbe spells out the focus marker necessarily in sluicing has to do with the fact that focus markers are in fact operator material.
   (ii) Kofi ná yrɔ́ mɛ̀ dɛ̀ bɔ́ ḻ̀ ƙànɓí dʒ̀ mɛ̀nù *(wɛ̀)
       K. fut call person ind but/and I ask that person.Q foc
       ‘Kofi will call someone and I wonder who.’

4. Aside Gbe languages, another language that was found to exhibit this kind of sluicing is Brazilian Portuguese. Rodrigues et al. (2009) argue that the following example contains a free relative complement to the verb conheço:
   (i) O João beijou alguém, mas en não conheço quem.
       the J. kissed someone but I not know whom
       ‘João kissed someone but I don’t know who.’

   A question that we plan to investigate in future work is what factor determines the occurrence of relative sluicing across languages. This paper focuses on the specifics of relative sluicing in Gungbe only.
5. See Aboh (2010) for discussion on similar predicates and their relation to the so-called inherent complement verbs (Essegbey 1999).

6. A reviewer remarked that further evidence that nyɔ́n-type predicates select for an embedded relative clause as opposed to kànbì́-type predicates could be sought in island effects. The rationale here is that because nyɔ́n-type predicates select for an embedded relative clauses, these should be subject to the complex NP constraint (CNPC) and exclude long extraction. Interestingly, however, these clauses appear to violate the CNPC.

(i) ùn nyɔ́n ɛ̀n dɔ̀ Kòfí ná dà Asíbá
1sg know 3sg that Kofi fut marry Asiba
'I know it that kofi will marry Asiba'
(ii) mɛ́nù wɛ̀ à nyɔ́n ɛ̀n dɔ̀ Kòfí ná dà mɛ́nù?
Who foc 2sg know 3sg that Kofi fut marry
'Who do you know that Kofi will marry?'

These facts need not be interpreted as counter-evidence against the view developed in this paper, though. Interestingly, these constructions appear to belong to a restricted set of constructions which Cinque (2010: 82) has shown to allow such violations cross-linguistically. According to Cinque, "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": Needless to say that this characterization seems to apply to the Gungbe cases as well, thus confirming Cinque’s generalization. We hope to return to this issue in future work.

7. A different approach to account for the constituency of mɛ̀ɖɛ and its position in the left periphery would be to assume that this element adjoins to the TP and reprojects into a NP/DP (Rodrigues et al. 2009; Donati & Cecchetto 2011).

(i) [DP/NP mɛ̀ɖɛ, [TP t_i]]

First, this analysis fails to account for the snowballing movement observed in relative clauses as discussed in Aboh (2005). Second, it cannot account for the obligatory presence of the focus marker wɛ̀ in such structures. Because wɛ̀ is a left peripheral head, this scenario requires a FocP projection between the DP/NP and the TP, together with another projection that hosts the relative pronoun in its specifier (not in an adjoined position).

8. It is quite possible that next to the syntactic condition on relative sluicing in (5), other conditions are also required to be fulfilled for a language to have relative sluicing. One non-syntactic condition might be prosodic in nature, as the Hungarian relative sluicing pattern illustrated in (7) requires accent both on the relative pronoun and the relativized head:

(i) Ezért tartunk ‘ott, ‘ahol.
this.for be.pres.3PL there rel.where
lit. ‘For this reason we are wherever we are.’

Note that a similar effect cannot be observed in Gungbe as it is a tone language.
References


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