AGAINT THE IN SITU ACCOUNT OF SLUICING: THE CASE OF FRENCH

Jeroen van Craenenbroeck & Tanja Temmerman
KU Leuven/Meertens Institute Université Saint-Louis – Bruxelles

SUMMARY French allows wh-phrases as sluicing remnants that must remain in situ in non-elliptical clauses, thus rendering plausible an analysis of sluicing as non-constituent deletion of all but the focus-marked material in the clause (Ott 2018, Abe 2015). We argue against such an account and show that in all cases, the sluiced remnant has undergone movement. We thus provide new support for the move-and-delete analysis of sluicing (Merchant 2003).

THE DATA: UNMOVABLE ELEMENTS AS SLUICING REMNANTS French allows sluicing with wh-elements that must remain in situ in non-elliptical clauses. This holds for quoi in (1)–(3), for adjective+comment ‘how’ in (4)–(6), and for wh+ça ‘that’ (so-called spading) in (7)–(9).

(1) Il faut faire quelque chose, mais quoi? (4) Elle est belle, mais belle comment?
   it must do some thing but what
   ‘We should do something, but what?’
   ‘She is pretty but pretty how?

(2) *Qui faut-il faire? (5) *Belle comment est-elle?
   what must-it do
   ‘Who should it do?’
   ‘Pretty how is-she

(3) Il faut faire quoi? (6) Elle est belle comment?
   it must do what
   ‘What should we do?’
   ‘She is pretty how

(7) A: J’ai vu quelqu’un. B: Qui ça? (9) Tu as vu qui ça?
   I have seen someone who that
   you have seen who that
   ‘Who did you see?’

The data in (1)–(6) to which we add the ones in (7)–(9) lead Ott (2018) to propose an in situ analysis of sluicing: ‘sluicing does not require wh-movement, [and] can “delete around” wh-phrases and other remnants in situ’ (Ott 2018:1). B’s reply in (7) would then be analyzed as in (10).

(10) Tu as vu qui ça?

Given that French generally allows wh in situ (Cheng and Rooryck 2000), this type of account can easily be extended to all instances of sluicing in French.

ARGUMENTS AGAINST THE IN SITU ACCOUNT

(1) embedded sluicing: if sluicing is derived from wh in situ, restrictions found on wh in situ should carry over to sluicing. Wh in situ is disallowed in embedded clauses (11). The in situ analysis would thus predict embedded sluicing to be equally ill-formed, quod non (12) (see also Dagnac 2018:795n14).

(11) *Marie pense que Jean a acheté quoi?
    Mary thinks that John has bought what
    INTENDED: ‘What does Mary think that John bought?’

Cheng and Rooryck 2000, 12)

(12) Il faut faire quelque chose, mais je ne sais pas quoi.
    it must do some thing but I NEG know not what
    ‘We should do something, but I don’t know what.’

Dagnac 2018:795)

(2) intervention effects: French wh in situ is disallowed under c-commanding negation (13B), modals, and universal quantifiers (Cheng 1997). In sluicing, however, these restrictions disappear (13B’), again in contradistinction to what is predicted by the in situ account.

(13) A: Elle n’a pas invité un de ses étudiants.
    she NEG.has not invited one of her students
    ‘She didn’t invite one of her students.’

B: *Elle n’a pas invité qui? (only ok as echo question)
    she NEG.has not invited who
    INTENDED: ‘Who didn’t she invite?’

B’: Qui? (only ok as echo question)

who
(3) other remnants: a characteristic of the in situ account is that remnants other than the sluiced wh-phrase can survive the process of non-constituent deletion (Ott 2018; Abe 2015). Example (14) shows that such an account overgenerates: both the subject Marie ‘Mary’ and the wh-phrase quand ‘when’ are F-marked, but retaining those two remnants in their in situ order leads to ungrammaticality:

*Jean a voté ce matin, mais je ne sais pas Marie a voté quand.

John has voted this morning but I know not Mary has voted when

NEW ANALYSIS We start from Munaro et al. (2001), who argue that French wh in situ involves regular wh-movement into the left periphery followed by remnant movement of the clause to a higher TopP (15). We link this to the fact that French wh in situ is only licensed when the content of the IP is presupposed (Cheng and Rooryck 2000:4–5). We propose that sluicing presents an alternative strategy: instead of the presupposed IP being topicalized, it is deleted (16). French thus conforms to the move-and-delete analysis of sluicing (Merchant 2001).

This also accounts for the data in (1)–(9): given that these wh-phrases are limited to presupposed contexts (see e.g. van Craenenbroeck 2010 for spading), they only show up in situ or in sluicing.

REVISITING THE ARGUMENTS AGAINST THE IN SITU ACCOUNT

(1) embedded sluicing: assuming embedded CPs are truncated (see e.g. Benincà and Poletto 2004), we hypothesize that the position the IP moves to in (15) is missing in embedded clauses. As a result, wh in situ is no longer an option, but sluicing—which lacks this movement—still is.

(2) intervention effects: we propose the intervention effect in (13)B is the result of the IP moving across the wh-phrase as in (15). Given that sluicing lacks that movement (16), no such intervention effect shows up in (13)B’. (3) other remnants: non-wh-remnants such as Marie ‘Mary’ in (14) require a high left-peripheral position to move to. In truncated embedded clauses, this position is missing, which is why (14) is ill-formed. This predicts that in (non-truncated) main clauses such remnants do occur, which is confirmed by (17).

(17) A: Jean a voté ce matin. B: Et Marie quand [tMarie a voté tquand]?

John has voted this morning and Mary when