

GUESS WHAT? CLEFTS ARE WHAT WE ARE SILENCING HERE

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ABSTRACT

In this paper, I present new evidence that in Brazilian Portuguese sluiced TPs with preposition deletion are cases of pseudosluicing, involving a clefting plus TP-deletion strategy, as suggested by Rodrigues et al. (2009). First, preposition deletion is allowed only in contexts in which clefts are licensed. Second, preposition deletion (i.e. pseudosluicing) has semantic consequences not observed in regular sluicing.

KEYWORDS: sluicing, preposition deletion, clefting, syntactic restrictions, semantic consequences

RESUMO

Neste artigo, apresentamos novas evidências de que em português brasileiro *sluicing* com apagamento de preposição é *pseudosluicing*, envolvendo clivagem da estrutura elidida, como proposto por Rodrigues et al. (2009). Como veremos, apagamento de preposição só é possível em contextos que licenciam clivadas, e tem consequências semânticas não observadas em casos de *bona fide sluicing*.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: *sluicing*, apagamento de preposição, clivagem, restrições sintáticas, consequências semânticas

1. PREPOSITION STRANDING UNDER SLUICING

Merchant (2001) presents a crosslinguistic study on sluicing (Ross, 1969), arguing for a transformational analysis, according to which sluicing is derived by wh-movement followed by TP-ellipsis at PF, as in (1):

- (1) Alex said someone is working at Petrobras, but I don't know [_{CP} who₁ [_{TP} ~~Alex said_± is working at Petrobras~~]]

In favor of a transformational approach, Merchant observed the following structural condition on sluicing:

- (2) *P-Stranding Generalization - PSG* (Merchant, 2001:92)
 Language L will allow preposition stranding under sluicing iff
 L allows preposition stranding under regular wh-movement

The data below attest the validity of the PSG. English (3), a language that allows P-stranding under A-bar movement also allows P-stranding under sluicing. In contrast, Greek (4) and German (5), which do not license P-stranding under A-bar movement, block P-stranding in sluicing contexts. That is, in P-stranding languages, the wh-phrase moves to spec of CP stranding the preposition, which vanishes when the whole TP is sluiced.¹ That is, P-deletion is a side effect of sluicing. In contrast, in pied-piping languages, wh-movement stranding a preposition is ruled out, and, consequently, preposition deletion (P-deletion) does not happen. Rather, the preposition is pied-piped with the wh-phrase to spec of CP.

- (3) a. Who did Alex speak with?
 b. Alex spoke with someone, but I don't know [who [~~John spoke with~~]]

- (4) a. *Pjon₁ milise me t₁?
who spoke-3rdP with
 b. I Anna milise me kappion, alla dhe ksero *(me) pjon
the Anna spoke with someone but not know-1stP with who
 'Anna spoke with someone, but I don't know with who'

- (5) a. *Wem₁ hat sie mit t₁ gesprochen?
who has she with spoken
 b. Anna hat mit jemandem gesprochen, aber ich weiß nicht, *(mit) wem
Anna has with someone spoken but I know not with who
 'Anna has spoken with someone, but I don't know with whom?'

The crosslinguistic accuracy of the PSG has to be carefully analyzed however, as there are many pied-piping languages that optionally allow P-deletion under sluicing (Finnish (Hartman, 2005), Polish (Szczeplniak, 2008), Mandarin Chinese (Wang, 2007), Spanish (Vicente, 2008, 2014), Serbo-Croatian (Stjepanovic 2008, 2012), Indonesian (Fortin, 2007 & Sato, 2011), Lybian Arabic (Algryani, 2012), Emirati Arabic (Leung, 2014), Romanian (Nicolae, 2012), Malagasy (Paul & Potsdam 2012)). Brazilian Portuguese (BP) is one of them:

- (6) a. *Quem₁ (qu)e o Alex conversou com t₁ na Petrobras?
who that the Alex spoke with at.the Petrobras
 b. O Alex conversou com alguém na Petrobras, mas eu não sei (com) quem

¹ Frisian, Swedish, Norwegian, Danish, Icelandic are also P-stranding languages, therefore, they all allow to P-stranding under sluicing.

the Alex spoke with someone at.the Petrobras but I not know with who
'Alex spoke with someone at Petrobras, but I don't know (with) who'

It seems that there are many different sources of P-deletion under sluicing. In fact, a cross-linguistic examination suggests that the underlying structure of the sluiced constituent depends on the syntactic mechanisms available in the languages under investigation to recover the semantic content of the antecedent. As pointed out by Merchant & Simpson (2012: 10), "different underlying mechanisms may actually result in similar surface structures".

2. DIFFERENT STRATEGIES FOR P-DELETION UNDER SLUICING

Here are some accounts for P-deletion under sluicing in pied-piping languages:

- (a) P-stranding is licensed at PF
- (b) The antecedent in the previous clause is recovered by a pronoun
- (c) Sluicing may involve ellipsis of a clefted TP

Saito (2011) and Leung (2014) argue that in Indonesian and Emirati Arabic, the availability of P-deletion under sluicing is due to the fact that P-stranding violations are evaluated at PF, being, therefore, repairable by sluicing.² In Mandarin Chinese, according to Wang (2004), sluicing involves a pronominalization mechanism, which recovers the content of the antecedent clause through a null pronoun. If this is right, there is no P-stranding and no ellipsis of an underlying structure in Mandarin Chinese. Szczegieliak (2008), Vicente (2008), Paul & Potsdam (2012), analyzing data from Polish, Spanish and Malagasy, concluded that the source of sluicing might be a cleft clause, which can be reduced or not.

Taking this plurality of possibilities in consideration, we ask ourselves about the source of P-deletion under sluicing in BP Almeida & Yoshida (2005) argue against a clefting mechanism, hinting that in BP P-stranding might be a PF condition. However, Rodrigues et al. (2009) re-examining Almeida & Yoshida's arguments, concluded there is actually no strong evidence against a clefting analysis, and suggested the underlying structure in (7) as one of the possible sources of P-deletion under sluicing. Thus, in their analysis, the preposition is deleted because it is inside the relative clause contained by the TP sluiced at PF.

- (7) O Alex conversou com alguém na Petrobras, mas eu não sei [_{CP} quem
the Alex spoke with someone at.the Petrobras but I not know who
~~[HP é [DP a pessoa [RC com quem o Alex conversou na Petrobras]]]~~
is the person with whom the Alex talked at Petrobras
'Alex talked to someone at Petrobras, but I don't know who'

² Similarly Stjepanovic (2012) proposes that in Serbo-Croatian a P-deletion mechanism happens at PF when the content of the preposition is recoverable via the antecedent clause.

In what follows, I provide new evidence in favor of (7). First, structural contexts blocking clefts also block p-deleted sluicing; second, sluiced TPs with P-deletion and sluiced TPs without P-deletion do not have the same semantics, which suggests they have different underlying structures.³

3. WHEN P-DELETION IS ALLOWED

In BP, although P-deletion seems to interact well with high ellipsis (e.g. sluicing), it is blocked in low ellipsis. VP ellipsis and stripping⁴, for instance, are unable to license P-deletion:⁵

- (8) A Maria não vai dar o livro para o Pedro, mas *(para) você
the Maria not will give the book to the Pedro but to you
 ela vai ~~dar o livro~~
she will
 ‘Maria will not give the book to Pedro, but to you she will’
- (9) A Maria dançou com alguém, mas com você não [dançou]
Maria danced with someone, but will you not dançou
 ‘Maria danced with someone, but not with you’

If P-deletion in sluicing stems from elision of a clefted TP containing a relative clause as proposed in (7), we predict correctly that P-deletion is not possible in low ellipsis because the elided sites do not contain a relative clause.

Similarly, although reverse sluicing (Giannakidou and Merchant, 1998) seems to be possible in BP (10),⁶ the unacceptability of (11) and (12) indicates that this type of sluicing does not license P-deletion.

- (10) Não sabemos ainda se e QUEM a polícia interrogou antes do acidente
not know-IP still if and who the police interrogated before of.the accident
 ‘We still don’t know if and who the police interrogated before the accident’
- (11) Não sabemos ainda se e *(COM) QUEM a vítima conversou antes do acidente
know-IP still if and with who the victim spoke before of.the accident
 ‘We still don’t know if and with whom the victim spoke before the accident’

The blockage on P-deletion in (11) follows straightforwardly from the fact that this type sluicing does not involve clefting.

3 The data we discuss here were not experimentally tested, but the author’s judgments were checked with other native speakers of BP.

4 Stripping is type of ellipsis in which a chunk of the sentence is deleted, leaving behind some remnant which is usually accompanied by a polarity item (Hankamer & Sag, 1976).

5 See Milhorange (2014) for a discussion of this restriction.

6 *Reverse sluicing* is the term used by Giannakidou & Merchant (1998) to name constructions involving coordination of a wh-complementizer with a CP containing a wh-phrase, as in (i):

(i) It is not clear if and when Mary bought a book
 I’t is not clear if Mary bought a book and when bought it’

Similarly, under regular sluicing, P-deletion gets seriously degraded if the antecedent clause is a cleft itself. This follows from the fact that a clefted structure inside another clefted structure incurs in A-bar movement out a triple island: a relative clause within a definite DP within another definite DP, as shown in (13).

- (12) O ARTURO é o aluno que vai dançar com alguém na apresentação da
the Arturo is the student who will dance with someone in.the presentation of.the
escola, mas eu ainda não sei ?(com) quem⁷*
school, but I still not know-1Sg with who
 ‘Arturo is the student that will dance with someone in the school presentation, but I still don’t know with whom’

- (13) O ARTURO é o aluno que vai dançar com alguém na apresentação da
the Arturo is the student who will dance with someone in.the presentation of.the
*escola, mas eu ainda não sei quem é a pessoa *_{[RC [com quem]]}*
school, but I still not know-1Sg who is the person with whom
{[{DP} o ARTURO é [_{DP} o aluno [_{RC} que vai dançar t₁]]]]}
the Arturo is hthe student that will dance

Restrictions on contexts in which ellipsis interacts with P-deletion are very telling about the syntax of the sluiced structure. If in BP P-deleted sluicing were a case of wh-movement followed by ellipsis of a regular TP containing the offended stranded preposition, then we would not expect any of restrictions presented above. In other words, observations on the size of the elided site (high ellipsis vs. low ellipsis), on the structural position of the sluiced TP (regular vs. reverse sluicing), and on the structural complexity of the antecedent (clefted vs. non-clefted antecedents) should not matter if we were dealing with regular sluicing (Wh-movement followed TP-deleting) plus P-stranding evaluation at PF.

4. A SEMANTIC CONSEQUENCE OF P-DELETION UNDER SLUICING

Studying the underlying structure of silence is hard because its PF is mute, giving us no hints about its syntax. However, if we are dealing with elision at PF, LF should be very rich and telling. Thus, in the case of sluicing, looking at the meaning of the silenced structure is very helpful. One example is the phenomenon we are investigating here. If P-deleted sluicing are underlying clefts, then it should be semantically different from non-P-deleted sluicing, which is by assumption a regular TP structure. The contrast in meaning presented below hints towards this prediction.

While in (14) - a case of non-P-deleted sluicing)), the pronoun can receive both a strict and a sloppy reading, in (15) – a case of P-deleted sluicing)), the pronoun receives only a strict reading:

- (14) Os meninos ficaram bêbados na festa e o Pedro não sabe com quem ele
the boys got.3Pl drunk at. Party and the Pedro not knows with who he

⁷ For some speakers, this sentence is perfect when the pivot of the clefted antecedent is emphasized and the preposition is not deleted. Others do not require emphasis on the pivot.

dançou, mas o João sabe com quem
danced, but the João knows with who

= mas o João sabe com quem o Pedro dançou (Strict reading)
but the João knows with who the Pedro danced

= mas o João sabe com quem o João dançou (Sloppy reading)
but the João knows with who the João danced

- (15) Os meninos ficaram bêbados na festa e o Pedro não sabe com quem ele
the boys got.3Pl drunk at. Party and the Pedro not knows with who he
dançou, mas o João sabe quem
danced, but the João knows who

= mas o João sabe com quem o Pedro dançou (Strict reading)
but the João knows with who the Pedro danced

= *mas o João sabe com quem o João dançou (Sloppy reading)
but the João knows with who the João danced

Crucially this very same semantic restriction is observed in pseudosluicing involving a reduced cleft. Only a strict reading is available for the pronoun in (16), for instance.

- (16) Os meninos ficaram bêbados na festa e o Pedro não sabe com quem ele
the boys got.3Pl drunk at. Party and the Pedro not knows with who he
dançou, mas o João sabe quem é
danced, but the João knows who is

‘The boys got drunk at the party and Pedro does not know who he danced with, but João knows who it is’

Therefore, from the LF point of view, it makes sense to conclude that clefts are what we are silencing in P-deleted sluicing.

6. CONCLUSION

In this paper, we observed that there are syntactic and semantic restrictions on P-deleted sluicing in BP. This type of sluicing is possible only in syntactic contexts in which clefts are licensed, and preposition deletion has semantic consequences not observed in regular sluicing: a pronoun within a P-deleted sluiced TP can receive a strict reading only. These restrictions are not observed in regular cases of sluicing, but are observed in cases of pseudosluicing involving a reduced cleft. Therefore, the evidence presented here supports Rodrigues et al.’s (2009) conclusion that the P-deleted sluicing are cases of pseudosluicing - ellipsis of a TP containing a relative clause within which the preposition is.

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