The Syntax of Hindi-Urdu Sluicing

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Introduction

The sluicing construction in Hindi-Urdu shows properties indicating unpronounced syntactic structure in the sluice (1) (Merchant 2001; Bhattacharya & Simpson 2012; Manetta 2016).

(1) mai-ne vahaa kisi-ko dekh-aa par mujhe
1SG-ERG there someone.OBL-ACC see.PERF.M.SG but I-DAT
nahii pataa kis-ko
NEG know who.OBL-ACC
I saw someone there, but I don't know who.

Previous analyses have sought to derive the sluice in Hindi-Urdu in the same manner as in English, i.e. through a process of wh-movement to Spec CP followed by TP elision. The current study differs with the aforementioned and seeks to offer an alternative proposal on the heels of Toosarvandani (2009), who posits exceptional Focus Movement for the wh-remnant in Farsi.

Through the interaction between the complementiser and the wh-remnant, it is shown that the interrogative phrase undergoes focus fronting to Spec-FP (as in non-sluicing cases), followed by an elision of TP, with the [E] feature residing in the Foc^0. Additional evidence of the same comes from the fact that Hindi-Urdu attests both wh- and non-wh-sluicing. A direct consequence of this analysis is that it allows a finer picture of WH-fronting to unfold in the language, for both sluicing and non-sluicing contexts.

The study is divided into four sections, following the Introduction. The first provides the necessary background information on sluicing literature. A description of the controversial Hindi-Urdu complementiser is presented in the second, in addition to a small section for the fronting operation in interrogatives. The third section provides a focus fronting analysis of sluicing in the language, which is followed by the final section which concludes the study.

1 Background Literature

1.1 Sluicing

Under the traditional Movement analyses, crosslinguistic inquiries into sluicing constructions have revealed the diverse nature of the kinds of movements that precede elision.[1] The Ross-Merchant approach (Ross (originally 1969, and later 2012), Merchant 2001 and later), which is the most influential, posits traditional wh-movement and calls for the wh-remnant to move to Spec CP, followed by deletion of IP/TP.

The wh-in-situ languages, which lack movement, pose an obvious challenge to the influential approach and therefore, alternative strategies[2] have been proposed to provide an adequate explanation for the same. Hindi-Urdu, which is widely believed to be a wh-in-situ language, displays sluicing patterns frequently. Following prior work (Bhattacharya & Simpson 2012, Gribanova & Manetta 2016) on the subject, the most convincing derivation of the construction remains one where the wh-remnant moves to the Spec CP position, following elision of TP, as in languages like English. Such a movement analysis is supported by instances of (i) connectivity effects in the language (2) and, (ii) its limited clefting strategy (3)[3] which discounts a base-generation account.

(2) Raam-ne kisi-ko kitaab dii-thii par mujhe nahii pata
Ram-ERG someone-DAT book give-PST but me.OBL NEG know
ki kis-ko/*kuan
C who-DAT/*who.NOM
'Ram gave a book to someone, but I don't know who.'

[1] To name a few: Russian (Grebenyova 2009) and Romanian (Hoyt &Teodorescu 2012) have discourse-motivated movement. Sluices in Malagasy (Paul and Potsdam 2012; Potsdam 2007) are derived from pseudoclefts where the pivot moves to the left periphery by a predicate-fronting operation. Farsi sluices involve Focus Fronting (Toosarvandani 2009).

[2] For languages which have clefting mechanisms, a popular alternative analysis includes the pseudosluicing hypothesis, where the source of the sluice is a cleft/reduced cleft. Examples include Japanese (Kizu 1997), Uzbeck (Gribanova 2013).

[3] Clefting is an uncommon strategy in the language. Although the pivot of the cleft can be a wh-word, it can only carry the nominative case whereas sluices in Hindi-Urdu require full case connectivity (Merchant 2001, Bhattacharya and Simpson 2012).

(3) Kya hai jo almaari mein rakh-aa hai?
what be.PRES.3SG REL cupboard in keep-PRF.M.SG be.3SG
'What is it that is kept in the cupboard?'

As can be seen from these instances, there is enough evidence to warrant the possibility of sluicing being analyzed as movement rather than base-generation.

As for the nuances involved, Manetta (2011) and Bhattacharya & Simpson (2012) claim that the landing site of remnant is somewhere in the CP domain, but its exact position is unknown. As such, the landing site of the wh-remnant and the actual head that licenses the ellipsis phenomenon have escaped discussion in previous literature in the language. The next section attempts to shed some light on the movement involved.

1.2 Hindi-Urdu

The characterization of Hindi-Urdu as wh-in-situ is controversial, at best (Mahajan 1990). The in-situ label doesn't quite fit as the language permits multiple interrogative strategies including: WH-in situ, fronting, and scope-marking (Dayal 1996, Manetta 2011). The most natural question formation strategy consists of the placement of the wh-phrase in a preverbal position ((4)), which is the locus of interrogative focus.

(4) Meena-ne kamra kis-ko diya? [S DO IOWH V]
Meena-ERG room who-DAT give.PFV
'Who did Meena give the room to?

A construction where the WH-phrase gets fronted to the clause-initial position ((5)) is also permissible and, in some cases, even more acceptable[4].

(5) kis-ko$_i$ Meena-ne kamra t_i diyaa? [IOWH S DO V]
who-DAT Meena-ERG room buy.PFV
'Who did Meena give the room to?

Furthermore, I assume that there are two[5] focus positions: one is TP internal (preverbal: Gambhir 1981, Kidwai 2000) and the other is TP external (Rizzi 1997, Choudhury 2010).

[4] For example, when there is additional emphasis on 'who'.

[5] Additionally, refer to (2012) for the claim that there is a third FP as well, that is postverbal.

In previous literature, however, there have been no concrete claims as to the position of the fronted WH. The landing site cannot be the clause-initial Comp position, because according to Richard (2001), Hindi-Urdu is classified as an IP Absorption language, where movement (both scrambling and wh) takes place to IP Projections rather than to specifiers of CP as in CP-Absorption languages. Chandra (2011:25) proves that such is indeed the case by demonstrating wh-islands, superiority effects and interactions between wh-dependencies, all of which are properties of IP Absorption languages.

The presence[6] of the complementiser in embedded WH-questions in Hindi-Urdu forms a key argument for the purpose of this study. If the language permits constructions where the WH operator follows the complementiser, then it is obvious that the wh does not reside in SpecCP since the place is already occupied by the complementiser. Examine (6a), where the wh-phrase follows the complementiser in a perfectly licit construction.

(6) a. Anu ja:n-na: ca:h-ti: hai [(ki)] kya: tum
Anu know-INF want.HAB.F be.PRES.SG C Q you

ca:i piyoge]
tea drink.FUT.2M.PL

'Anu wants to know whether you will drink tea.' [Bhatt & Dayal 2020]

b. Ravi soctaa hai ki $kaun_j$ tum
Ravi think.HAB.M be.PRES.SG that who you

soctii ho ki t_j aayegaa
think.HAB.F that come.PFV

'Ravi wonders who you think will come.'

c. *Ravi soctaa hai **$kaun_j$ ki** tum soctii ho ki t_i aayegaa [Dayal 1996]

The suggestion here is that the position that the wh-phrase targets is lower than the complementiser which heads C, namely SpecFP. There is enough empirical evidence from numerous languages[7] to show that there exists a Q-position which is lower than the embedding complementiser. I argue for a similar structure for Hindi-Urdu.

[6] Admittedly, the presence of the complementiser is not obligatory. Even so, there must be a node where the complementiser is housed. I assume that that at the very least there must be one version of Hindi-Urdu where it is so.

[7] Hungarian attests movement of wh-phrases to a low CP projection, which is below the complementiser (E′, Kiss 1987: 56–61, Lipták 2001 and references mentioned there)). In both Japanese and Burmese, wh-movement targets 'a discrete interrogative functional head which occurs

2 The Complementiser Conundrum

At this point, a conundrum that arises is that of the status of the Hindi complementiser '*ki*'. This is so because the "alleged" complementiser has some rather peculiar properties to its name. It is a multifunctional element, which can be used for question and non-question clauses, quotative and non-quotatives and even for subjunctives. The complementiser has an invariable form and is devoid of any selectional restrictions.

There is no consensus on the issue in previous literature on the subject[8]. The fact that '*ki*', is in fact a complementiser, can be argued for using two key pieces of information. The first piece of evidence lies in the very definition put forth by Rosenbaum (1965: 41) which categorises a complementiser based on whether it appears only in subordinate clauses –sentential complements (7) or relative clauses (8) and never in matrix clauses (11).

(7) Ramesh jaanta hai ki Seema-ne saari kharidii
Ramesh.ERG know.HAB.M be.PRS C Seema-ERG saari buy.PFV
'Ramesh knows that Seema bought a saari.'

(8) vo baat jo ki Anu jaantii hai vo nahiiN kah saktii
that matter which that Anu know-PR she NEG say can-PR
'The thing which Anu knows she cannot say'. (Dayal 1996)

(9) *Ki Saif-ne khana kha lia
C Saif-ERG food eat take.PFV
Intended: *Saif ate food.*

Dayal (1996) sheds some light on the matter and provides concrete evidence in favour of '*ki'* being a complementiser. She puts forth a relative clause construction where the WH precedes the complementiser to show that Mahajan's analysis of *'ki*' being in a pre-Spec position is incorrect[9], and the only position it can be in, is the C head.

below complementisers identifying Q-positions which are independent of and below the Comp-position' (Simpson & Bhattacharya 2003).

[8] Mahajan (1997) presents an analysis of '*ki*' where the element resides in the pre-Spec position of CP. Dwivedi (1994) argues that '*ki'* is not a complementiser at all, but a quotative particle of some kind. Manetta (2011) suggests that '*ki*' is "a morphological marker of the phase edge - one that is inserted following spell-out" on account of its embedding properties.

[9] For details, look at Dayal (1996).

Owing to the aforementioned, the current study supports the claim that Hindi *'ki'* resides in the C^0, and acts as a subordinator, which may be referred to as a sub-species of Force[10] (cf. Biberauer, Newton & Sheehan 2008b for further discussion).

Coming now to Sluicing, Merchant (2001) puts forth empirical evidence for the (optional) occurrence of the complementiser in Hungarian (which is an apparent violation of the Sluicing- COMP generalization[11]).

(10) A gyerekek tala ´lkoztak valakivel de nem [Hungarian]
the children met someone.with but not
emle´kszem, (hogy) kivel.
I.remember that who.with
'The kids met someone, but I don't remember who.' (Merchant 2001: 82)

Hindi-Urdu patterns similarly with Hungarian sluicing to allow the complementiser 'ki' to co-occur with the remnant at the clause initial position in the sluice (11).

(11) Ram-ne kuch ciiz cori-kii-thii, par mujhe nahii malum
Ram-ERG some thing stealing-DO-PST but I.DAT NEG know
∗(ki) kyaa.
C what
'Ram had stolen something, but I don't know what.'(Bhattacharya & Simpson 2012)

Such observations suggest that the wh-remnant moves to a different landing site than the SpecCP. The proposal for the same is outlined in the following section.

3 The Proposal

It has been well established that remnants of sluicing in English move to SpecCP. For languages like Hungarian and Farsi, the remnants move to spec of FocP. At this point, a word about the [E] feature is in order. Merchant (2001) posits the existence of a syntactic feature, [E], that is responsible for the syntactic, semantic, and phonological effect of

[10] In contrast to Hindi, the English complementiser 'that' allegedly carries features of both Force and Finiteness (cf. Giorgi & Pianesi 1991)

[11] In sluicing, no non-operator material may appear in COMP (Merchant 2001: 62)

ellipsis[12]. The head that carries the feature differs, cross linguistically. The feature may vary in strength, enabling movement for checking in some, and for others, being checked by Agree. For English, the [E] feature resides in C [Q, uwh*] (Merchant (2001: 60)), where it gets checked by the wh-remnant moving to the SpecCP. The current proposal claims that the [E] feature in Hindi-Urdu resides in the Foc^0.

Additionally, I liken the features carried by F^0 to that in Farsi (Toosarvandini, 2009), where the [E] feature is bundled with an uninterpretable EPP laden wh-feature, thereby ensuring sluicing is licensed in only interrogative constructions. Hindi-Urdu, therefore, possesses the F^0 [E, uwh*]. Moreover, I claim that the [E] feature in Hindi is strong and requires the wh-phrase to move to the spec position next to it, to enable the checking process. Such a requirement drives obligatory focus fronting[13] under sluicing.

The derivation is shown schematically in (13). Sluiced phrases are invariably focus-marked (Hartman 2007), and therefore the first step requires the interrogative phrase to undergo focus fronting to Spec-FP, following which the complement of F, the TP gets elided at PF.

(12) Ramesh baazar-se kuch laaya, par mujhe nahi
Ramesh market-from something bring.PFV.M but 1SG.OBL NEG

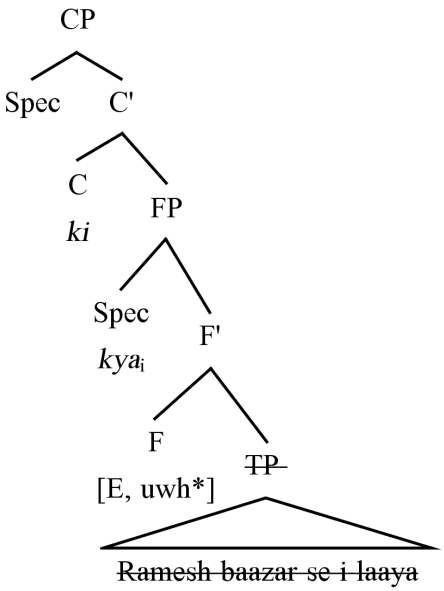
pata [$_{CP}$ (ki) [$_{FP}$ kya$_i$ [$_{TP}$ ~~Ramesh baazar-se t$_i$ laaya~~]]]
know C what Ramesh market-from bring.PFV.M

'Ramesh bought something from the market, but I don't know what$_i$ ~~*Ramesh bought t$_i$*~~

[12] For more information on the [E] feature, the reader is directed to Merchant (2001:55-61, 2004)

[13] According to Rizzi (1997: 287f.), the Focus phrase and the Topic phrase mandate the presence of specifiers in order to be present as a projection. I assume the same.

(13)



The primary argument for such an analysis comes from the presence of the complementiser '*ki',* as in (11). The proposal presented here manages to explain straightforwardly why the sluiced remnant follows the complementiser.

Such an analysis makes a key prediction about the FocP: if the [E] feature resides in the Foc^0, then movement of non-wh-words to the SpecFocP position should also be able to license TP-Ellipsis (Grebenyova 2009; Van Craenenbroeck & Lipták 2008). Hindi-Urdu is then expected to attest both *wh*- and non-*wh*-sluicing.

(14) **Speaker A**:Kya tumne yeh bola ki Rama-ko saari
Q you-ERG this say.PFV C Rama-ACC saari
kharidni hai?
buy.INF.F be.PRES.SG
'Did you say that Rama has to buy a saari?

Speaker B: Nahi. Mein-ne bola ki Meena-ko [saari
NEG I-ERG say.PFV C Meena-ACC saari
kharidni hai].
buy.INF.F be.PRES.SG
'No. I said that Meena (has to buy a saari).'

As can be seen from (14), such a prediction is borne out. Both instances can be analysed in a similar fashion, with the elision of the complement of the Foc° licensed by the [E] feature it carries.

Conclusion

Paul & Potsdam (2012) claim that sluicing is not, in fact, a unified syntactic phenomenon and that different languages use different syntactic means to arrive at the same surface form. This paper builds upon a similar line of thought, thereby entailing the possibility that the source of the sluice might differ cross-linguistically. With no consensus on its underlying syntactic structure and derivation, the occurrence of the sluicing phenomenon in Hindi-Urdu has remained a puzzle in previous literature. The current study attempted to put forth a novel analysis of the sluicing construction in Hindi-Urdu, much like that in Farsi (Toosarvandani, 2009) and Hungarian (van Craenenbroeck & Lipták 2008), where the wh-phrase targets a landing site which is lower than the complementizer (which heads C), namely SpecFP. Such an account can account for the presence of the complementizer and instances of both wh- and non-wh-sluicing. However, there remains a need to further investigate other Indo-Aryan/Dravidian languages to determine the cross linguistic viability of the model proposed above.

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