Sluicing for Clarification: A Discourse-Based Perspective

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1. Sluicing in clarification

Sluicing is an ellipsis construction where only a stand-alone *wh*-phrase (a remnant) receives **sentential interpretation** (i.a., Chung et al. 1995):

(1) A: John hates **someone**. B: *Who?* (= '*Who* does John hate?')

In **Clarification request sluicing (CR-sluicing)**, a responder **fails to understand** some aspects of the correlate (the expression the remnant refers back to), **presumed to be shared** among speakers in the given context (a.k.a. reprise sluicing in Ginzburg and Sag 2000).

In this regard, CR-sluicing receives **idiosyncratic interpretations**:

(2) A: You know **she** came back.
B: *Who?* ('*Who*/*Which woman* do you mean by '**she**'?')
A: Your girlfriend. (COCA 2018 FIC)

Previous analyses of canonical sluicing cannot fully account for the characteristics of CR-sluicing. As an alternative, this study claims that **the Table model** by Farkas and Bruce (2010) can improve the existing analyses.

2. Key observations

2.1. On correlates

Canonical sluicing requires an indefinite correlate that may be covert (i.a., Merchant 2001), whereas **CR-sluicing** demands a definite, overt antecedent.

(3) a. A: John was talking (**to someone**). B: (*To*) *who?* [canonical]
b. A: John was talking *(**to Mary**). B: (*To*) *who?* [CR-sluicing]

2.2. Two possible readings

There are two possible readings for CR-sluicing which arises from the interlocutors' background knowledge (data from COCA 2018 MOV).

(4) a. **No corresponding referents** ('*Who* do you mean by *x*?')
A: I should talk to **Dr. Johns** about it. B: *Who?* A: Dr. Harold Johns.
b. **Multiple possible referents** ('*Which x* do you mean?')
A: Did you know **the kid**? B: *Who?* Which kid? A: The Beech kid.

2.3. Correlate-echoing CR-sluicing

In CR-sluicing, a remnant can be preceded by an NP:

(5) a. A: Yo, who that?
B: It's **me**?
A: *Me who?*
B: It's Ali! (COCA 2018 MOV)

b. "She was **Apollo**'s sister."
"Apollo? *Apollo who?*
Oh, wait. Apollo." (COCA FIC 2004)

2.4. Island insensitivity

Just like canonical sluicing ((6); Merchant 2001), CR-sluicing is island-insensitive – a remnant can refer to a correlate inside a syntactic island.

(6) a. They want to hire [$_{NP}$ someone who speaks a **Balkan** language], but I don't remember *which*. (Merchant 2001: 6)
b. A: So, you mad about [$_{NP}$ the **Jason** thing]?
B: *Who?* (COCA 2018 MOV)

2.5. No SWIPING

Unlike canonical sluicing, CR-sluicing is subject to an additional phonological identity condition that affects its syntax:

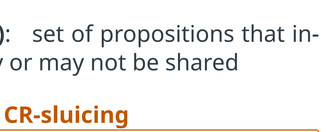
(7) a. A: John was talking (**to someone**). B: *Who to?* (Merchant 2001: 88)
b. A: John was talking **to Mary**. B: *#Who to?*

Poster Paper

3. Previous analysis & Discussion

The mainstream approach of sluicing, called **the PF-deletion approach** (i.a., Merchant 2001) assumes that sluicing derives from underlying source:

(8) A: John was talking to **someone**. B: (*To*) *who?*
a. [$_{CP}$ C$_{[E]}$ [$_{IP}$ John was talking to *who*]]
b. [$_{CP}$ *who*$_i$ C$_{[E]}$ [$_{IP}$ John was talking to t_i]]
c. [$_{CP}$ *who*$_i$ C$_{[E]}$ [$_{IP}$ John was talking to t_i]]



Empirical issues

Q1. The PF-deletion approach cannot fully account for the idiosyncratic, context-dependent meaning of CR-sluicing:

(9) A: John was talking to **Mary**. B: (*To*) *who?*
[$_{CP}$ *who*$_i$ C$_{[E]}$ [$_{IP}$ John was talking to t_i]] [Underlying source]
≠ 'Who do you mean by '**Mary**'?' [No corresponding ref.]
≠ 'Which **Mary** do you mean?' [Multiple possible ref.]

Q2. Since the derivation accompanies movement, it needs additional explanation for the island insensitivity (i.e., island repair).

(10) A: You mad about [$_{NP}$ the **Jason** thing]? B: *Who?*
⇒ ***Who** [$_{CP}$ ⟨am I mad about [$_{NP}$ the t_i thing]⟩]? [Underlying source]

Q3. What is the structure and meaning of correlate-echoing CR-sluicing?

4. An alternative approach

4.1. Pragmatics and semantics: The Table model

This study proposes a discourse-based analysis using **the Table model** (cf., Farkas and Bruce 2010; Jeong 2018: 329).

(11) Key notions
a. **CG (Common Ground)**: set of propositions mutually and publicly agreed among interlocutors; shared background knowledge
b. **Table**: stack of issues (propositions; QUD) raised
c. **PS (Projected Set, *ps*)**: possible future common grounds

Additionally, this analysis takes the **Personal Background Knowledge** into account, based on the definition of CG:

(12) **PB$_{Sp}$ (Personal Background Knowledge)**: set of propositions that individual *Sp*(eaker)s believe/know and may or may not be shared

How it works: No corresponding referents CR-sluicing

(13) A: I met **John** yesterday. p = *meet*(A, j); K$_1$: s_1
B: *Who?* ('Who do you mean by *John*?') K$_2$: s_2
A: He is a linguist. q = *linguist*(j); K$_3$: s_3
(K: context state; s: situation)

- **PB condition for speaker's ignorance CR-sluicing**: $\{p \cap q\} \in \text{PB}_A$; $q \notin \text{PB}_B$
- **Initial CG condition for speaker's ignorance CR-sluicing** (K$_1$): CG$_1$: $q \notin s_1$; $ps_1 = s_1$

The meaning of *Who?* is captured as a set of propositions where the antecedent p intersecting with all the correlate's possible properties:

(14) $[\![\textit{Who?}]\!]$ = {$p \cap$ *linguist*(j), $p \cap$ *novelist*(j), $p \cap$ *teacher*(j), ...} (K$_2$)
= $\lambda P.\textit{meet}(A, j)$ & $P(j)$

Finally, the corresponding answer expands the CG and PS.

(15) **CG repaired by an answer to *Who?* on K$_3$**:
CG$_3$: $s_3 \oplus \{p \cap q\}$; $ps_3 = \{s_3 \cup \{p \cap q\}\}$

4.2. Syntax: A non-derivational approach

This analysis assumes that there is **no hidden linguistic units** in the sluiced site. Instead, a simple XP directly projects to a sentential-level expression.

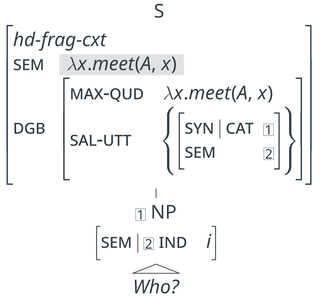
The projection is based on the following key concepts (i.a., Ginzburg and Sag 2000; Goldberg 2006):

(16) Key notions
a. **MAX-QUD (MAXimal Question-Under-Discussion)**: the most salient discussable question in the given context (i.e., current discourse topic)
b. **SAL-UTT (SALient-UTTerance)**: the (sub)utterance which receives the widest scope within MAX-QUD (i.e., focused material)
c. **DGB (Dialogue Game Board)**: a set of attributes recording contextual parameters in the ongoing discourse (similar to the Table)

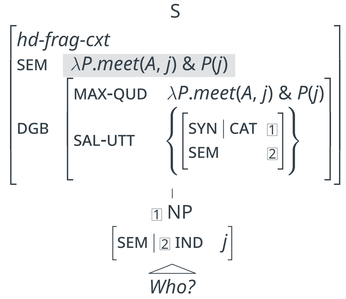
The sentential meaning (MAX-QUD) of the remnant (SAL-UTT) is retrieved by the given context fed by the Table (cf., (13)-(15)):

(17) **Sluicing: Structure and meaning** (c.f., Ginzburg and Sag 2000)

[Canonical sluicing]
A: I met **someone**.
B: [*Who?*]$_F$ (= $\lambda x.\textit{meet}(A, x)$)



[CR-sluicing – No corr. ref.]
A: I met **John**.
B: [*Who?*]$_F$ (= $\lambda P.\textit{meet}(A, j)$ & $P(j)$)



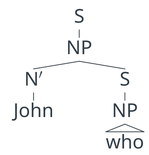
4.3. Correlate-echoing CR-sluicing

CR-sluicing queries ***not-at-issue*** information related to its antecedent, which is a pattern that can also be observed in **appositives** (Keizer 2005: 455):

(18) a. A: John, *a friend of mine*, teaches Linguistics.
B: No, he doesn't./#No, he isn't.

b. A: I met **John** yesterday.
B: John *who?*
A: The linguist.

Given this, we can assume that the whole string is **an NP headed by the copied correlate**. The remnant is an appositive clause modifying the N head.



5. Theoretical implication

By using this alternative approach, we can account for the idiosyncratic meaning of CR-sluicing interacting with discourse in a streamlined manner.

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