Chamorro Evidence for Syntactic Identity in Sluicing
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Two hard questions have shaped the study of the ellipsis construction known as sluicing. First, does the sluice (= the ellipse) have internal structure? Second, if it does, what sort of identity condition is imposed on the relation of that structure to its linguistic antecedent?

Merchant (2001) argued that the sluice is a fully fleshed-out syntactic object. He proposed that the identity condition relating the sluice to its antecedent is one of semantic equivalence (mutual entailment). Responding partly to evidence from English and other languages, he later (2005) suggested extending this condition to include identity of argument structure. The same evidence led Chung, Ladusaw, and McCloskey (to appear) to reiterate their 1995 proposal that the identity condition on sluicing is syntactic identity at LF.

In this talk I use Chamorro evidence to strengthen the case that the identity condition on sluicing is syntactic. I then begin to deconstruct the relevant notion of syntactic identity. Specifically, I argue that this notion extends beyond argument structure to abstract Case: a wh-DP remnant of sluicing must have Case, and its Case assigner must be a head in the ellipsis that is identical to a head in the sluice’s antecedent.

Chamorro is a head-initial, null argument language with wh-movement and Wh-Agreement (Chung 1998). This language has a sluicing construction (see (1)). Chamorro sluicing obeys Merchant’s P-stranding generalization: overt prepositions cannot be stranded in the sluice (Chung 2005). I take this to indicate that the sluice has internal structure.

Novel evidence reveals that the identity condition on Chamorro sluicing extends to argument structure. Chamorro has numerous intransitive predicates that take an optional oblique complement (2a). Many of these predicates can be combined with the suffix –i to form a derived transitive verb whose direct object corresponds to the oblique complement of the original intransitive (2b). Some of these predicates can be shown to have an implicit argument when their oblique complement is not overtly realized. These predicates are synonymous with their transitive counterparts but differ from them in argument structure. Significantly, sluicing does not tolerate this mismatch: an intransitive predicate with an implicit argument cannot antecede sluicing that strands the wh-direct object of the corresponding transitive verb, as (3) shows.

Further evidence reveals that the identity condition on sluicing extends to abstract Case. For instance, Chamorro allows possessors to undergo wh-movement under limited circumstances. But even when these conditions are met in the ellipsis site, a possessor cannot be the wh-remnant of sluicing unless there is a possessor corresponding to it in the antecedent (Chung 2005); see (4). Argument structure is not at issue here: pátgun ‘child’, a relational noun, has the same argument structure whether or not it is possessed. Instead, the pattern follows from Case. Suppose that the wh-DP remnants in (4) must be assigned Case by a feature on D in the ellipsis site. (4a) has such a feature on the corresponding (null) D in the antecedent. But (4b) does not—and cannot, because pátgun in the antecedent is not possessed. In short, the identity condition on sluicing includes identity of Case assigners—an identity that is syntactic, not lexical or morphological (see Legate 2008).

Well-known problems stand in the way of demanding full syntactic identity between the sluice and its antecedent. Nonetheless, the evidence discussed here shows that some syntactic identity is required. The remnant of the sluice must be integrated into an argument structure identical to that of the antecedent. Further, if the remnant is a wh-DP, it must be assigned Case by a head identical to a head in the antecedent. Importantly, this last aspect of identity has no semantic ramifications. I conclude by exhibiting English evidence that supports the claim that the identity condition on sluicing includes identity of Case assigners—just as expected if the notion of identity universally relevant for sluicing is syntactic.
(1) a. Guaha dângkulu-n pokuk gi tatalo’-hu, lao ti ha tungu’ i mediku
   AGR.exist big-L boil LOC back-AGR but not AGR know the doctor
   háfa na klâsin pokuk __.
   what? L sort-L boil
   ‘I have a boil on my back, but the doctor does not know what kind of boil.’ (CD, entry for pokuk)

b. Ma sangâni yu’ na man-e’egga’ mubi i famagu’un, lao ti ma sangâni
   AGR tell me COMP AGR-watch.PROG movie the children but not AGR tell
   yu’amânu guatu __.
   me where? there
   ‘They told me that the kids are watching a movie, but they didn’t say where.’

(2) a. Um-a’andi’ si Juan gias Maria.
   AGR-flirt.PROG NM Juan OBL Maria
   ‘Juan is flirting with Maria.’

b. Ha andi’i si Juan si Maria.
   AGR flirt.with NM Juan NM Maria
   ‘Juan flirted with Maria.’

(3) Um-a’andi’ si Juan, lao ti hu tungu’ háyi *(ha andidi’i).
   AGR-flirt.PROG NM Juan but not AGR know who? WH[OBJ].AGR flirt.with.PROG
   ‘Juan is flirting, but I don’t know who *(he is flirting with).’

(4) a. Guaha malingu pâtgun tâotao, lao ti hu tungu’ háyi __.
   AGR.exist WH[SUBJ].AGR.lost child.L person but not AGR know who?
   ‘Some person’s child is lost, but I don’t know whose.’

b. *Guaha pâtgun mâtaï, lao ti hu tungu’ háyi __.
   AGR.exist child WH[SUBJ].AGR.die but not AGR know who
   (A child died, but I don’t know whose.)

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