

Scrambling-derived sluicing-like constructions — evidence from Buryat

Introduction It is well known that the analysis of sluicing, proposed in Merchant 2001, is hardly applicable to sluicing-like construction (SLC) in wh-in-situ languages: Merchant’s analysis is based on the assumption that wh-words undergo wh-movement in sluicing, while those languages do not have wh-movement in general. Several possible analyses, including those where SLC is an instance of genuine sluicing, have been suggested in the recent literature for different languages of that type (see Gribanova, Manetta 2016 a.o.).

My talk will be dedicated to SLC in Buryat (Barguzin dialect), which is also a wh-in-situ language. In my talk I am going to propose a new analysis, which is based on the assumption that wh-words in SLC escape the ellipsis site via scrambling.

Data Although Buryat SLC demonstrates features which are common for sluicing in other languages (such as connectivity effects and the island constraint violation), it also has some remarkable properties. Firstly, the COMP-constraint, stated in Merchant 2001, is not operative in Buryat. According to it, «in sluicing, no non-operator material may appear in COMP» (the material dominated by CP but external to TP). In Buryat, however, the complementizer *gəʒə* appearing along with the wh-remnant, as in (1), is readily available.

- (1) badma xəbʌ: ju-b-da: gəʒə mədə-nə
Badma boy.ACC what-Q-PTCL COMP know-PRS
xarʲin ju: (gəʒə) mədə-nə-gʷi
but what COMP know-PRS-NEG

‘Badma knows, that the boy broke something, but he doesn’t know what’.

Secondly, wh-word from the embedded clause can occupy different positions in the matrix clause, as shown in (2).

- (2) dugar xən-də-b-da: bəʃəg əʃʲgə:g-ə:
Dugar who-DAT-Q-PTCL letter.ACC send-PRT1
xarʲin (xən-də) bʲi (xən-də) mədə-nə-gʷi-b (xən-də)
but who-DAT I who-DAT know-PRS-NEG-1 who-DAT

‘Dugar sent somebody a letter, but I don’t know whom’.

Analysis I am going to show that current approaches to SLC in wh-in-situ languages are not applicable to the Buryat data. Two possible analyses will be considered: cleft analysis (see a.o. Merchant 1998, Adams 2004) and focus analysis (Toosarvandani 2008). The cleft constructions differ from SLCs in several crucial points, such as the inability of clefts to host adjunct pivots or several pivots at once. The focus analysis is also not suitable for the presented data, since the position of focused constituent in Buryat seems to be low, immediately preceding the clause-final verb.

In the light of these data I am going to put forward an alternative analysis. Namely, I will argue that SLCs in Buryat are derived through scrambling — the type of movement that is attested in Buryat questions, as shown in (3).

- (3) (xən) ʌstər dal də:rə (xən) ʌrainai nom (xən) ol-o:=b (*xən)?
who yesterday attic at who old book.ACC who find-PST1=Q who
‘Who found an old book at the attic yesterday?’

I assume that there is a certain projection in Buryat that hosts scrambled elements — ΣP . Similar to the TopP and FocP, ΣP is present in the structure only if its specifier is filled (Rizzi 1997).

In case of SLC, Σ is the head that licenses the [E] feature, responsible for the ellipsis of the clause. Following the proposal in Toosarvandani 2008, I assume that the [E] feature has its own features — [uwh , EPP]. Hence in Buryat SLC wh-word is moved out of the ellipsis site, because it is able to check the uninterpretable feature uwh of [E] and thus is being obligatorily attracted to the specifier of ΣP due to the EPP feature of [E].

Additional evidence supporting the current proposal comes from similarities in superiority effects present both in SLCs and in questions (compare (4) and (5)). The peculiarity of Buryat superiority is that it affects only two wh-words: *xən* ‘who’ and *ju:* ‘what’, but doesn’t affect the other combinations of wh-words (not shown here).

(4) *sajana-da tərə-hən ʊdər-tə-nʲ xən ju / *ju xən bəleɣl-ə:-b?*
 Sajana-DAT be.born-PFCT день-DAT-POSS who what what who give-PRT1-Q
 ‘Who gave what to Sajana for her birthday?’

(5) *xən-da: ju:-b-da: du:l-a:*
 who-PTCL what-Q-PTCL sing-PRT1
*xarʲin bʲi xən ju: / *ju: xən oilg-o:-gʷi-b.*
 but I who what what who understand-PRT1-NEG-1SG
 ‘Somebody sang something, but I didn’t understand who (sang) what’.

The proposed analysis is thus quite similar to the ones presented in Merchant 2001 or Toosarvandani 2008, differing from them only with respect to the head licensing the [E] feature and the type of movement which the remnant undergoes. However, my analysis is superior for Buryat data because it is able to provide an account for all the properties of Buryat SLCs, while employing the same mechanism as regular questions do.

Going back to the specific properties of Buryat exemplified in (1) and (2), it is quite easy to provide an explanation for them once we state that the elided clause in SLC is an embedded clause, and not some other type of structure such as cleft constructions.

First, as data in (3) suggests, ΣP may occupy different positions in the clause. In case of SLC, ΣP may either dominate or be embedded under CP. This explains the optional appearance of complementizer *gəʒə* along with the remnant. Secondly, different possible sites of remnant in SLC are possible since *gəʒə*-clause can itself appear in various positions of the matrix clause — preverbal, postverbal or in the beginning of the clause (not shown here).

References

- Gribanova V., Manetta E. 2016.** Ellipsis in wh-in-situ languages: Deriving apparent sluicing in Hindi-Urdu and Uzbek. *Linguistic Inquiry* 47(4):631–668; **Merchant J. 2001.** The syntax of silence: Sluicing, islands, and the theory of ellipsis. Oxford University Press on Demand; **Rizzi L. 1997.** The fine structure of the left periphery. *Elements of grammar*. Springer, Dordrecht. 281–337; **Toosarvandani M. 2008.** Wh-movement and the syntax of sluicing. *Journal of Linguistics* 44 (3):677–722.