

Else-modification as a Diagnostic for Pseudosluicing

Introduction: Sluicing is the ellipsis of TP in a Wh-question, leaving a Wh-phrase *remnant* overt:

1) *Jack ate something, but I don't know what* [TP ...].

The ellipsis site in sluicing is standardly assumed to contain fully fledged syntactic structure which is not assigned phonetic content at Spell Out. A central issue examined in the literature on sluicing is what the elided structure may look like. The usual approach assumes that the elided TP in (1) is as in (2), where the interrogative CP consists of a Wh-question version of the antecedent (underlined).

2) *Jack ate something, but I don't know what_i* [TP Jack ate t_i].

Such a view is consistent with the notion that ellipsis is subject to some form of syntactic identity condition (perhaps alongside a semantic one; cf. e.g. Chung 2011 for discussion). Nonetheless, alongside the possibility in (2), a growing body of work shows that the elided TP may be a cleft, departing more radically from the structure of the antecedent; a possibility dubbed *pseudosluicing* in Merchant (1998).

3) *Jack ate something, but I don't know what_i* [TP it was t_i].

Merchant (2001) provides 10 empirical arguments aimed at showing that all sluicing cannot be reduced to pseudosluicing. Merchant's diagnostics are designed to rule out a pseudosluice source in a variety of contexts. In this talk, I present a new diagnostic which rules out the non-pseudosluice source, providing further support for the existence of pseudosluicing.

A diagnostic against pseudosluicing Merchant (2001) observes that sluicing is possible when the remnant is modified by *else* (4); *else*-modification of Wh-phrases in clefts is impossible (5), suggesting that the elided TP in sluicing with *else*-modified remnants cannot be a cleft (6).

4) ✓ *Jack ate some cake, but I don't know what else* [TP ...].

5) **Jack ate some cake, but I don't know what else* [TP it was t_i].

6) ✓ *Jack ate some cake, but I don't know what else* [TP he ate t_i].

A new diagnostic for pseudosluicing In sluicing, the remnant usually corresponds to an indefinite DP in the antecedent, called its *correlate*. When the correlate is modified by *else* (7), only the pseudosluice parse for the elided TP is felicitous (8), suggesting that the elided TP in (7) must be a pseudosluice.

7) ✓ *Jack left, and someone else left too, but I don't know who* [TP ...].

8) ✓ *Jack left, and someone else left too, but I don't know who_i* [TP it was t_i].

9) #*Jack left, and someone else left too, but I don't know who_i* [TP t_i left].

Analysis As for why (9) is infelicitous, I assume that asserting that one does not stand in the *know* relation to a question, Q, entails that one does not stand in the *know* relation to any partial answer to Q (cf. Romero 1998). Assuming a Karttunen (1977)-style semantics for questions, where a question denotes the set of propositions that jointly constitute the true answer to the question, a partial answer can be defined as any proposition that is or entails a proposition that is a proper sub-part of the question meaning. In the context in (9), the speaker asserts that they do not stand in the *know* relation to the question *who left*, entailing that they do not stand in the *know* relation to any partial answer to *who left*; this is inconsistent with having previously asserted that *Jack left*, which constitutes a partial answer to *who left*. This analysis predicts that *else*-modified correlates in contexts where the speaker is not committed to knowing a partial answer to the question should be felicitous; as (10) shows, this is borne out.

10) *Jack didn't leave, someone else did, but I don't know who left*.

The reasoning behind why (9) is infelicitous leads us to conclude that *Jack left* does not constitute a partial answer to the cleft question in (8), *who it was*. I proceed to show that this can be derived from extant assumptions about the semantics of *else* and clefts.

Cleft questions and Else-modified correlates Following von Stechow (1993), Culicover and Jackendoff (1995), I take *else* to be an anaphoric exceptive modifier; in (8), *else* is anaphoric to *Jack*, and excludes *Jack* from the domain of quantification for the indefinite correlate that it modifies (i.e. 'someone else' = 'someone other than Jack' in (8)). We can capture this compositionally by having *else* contribute an exception clause to the existential quantifier's restriction, which can be achieved by having *else* modify the NP restriction of the DP *someone*. A denotation for *else* is given in (11):

11) $[[\textit{else}]]^{\text{M,g}} = \lambda P_{\langle e, t \rangle} \lambda x_{\langle e \rangle} P(x) \wedge x \neq y_i$

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The indexed variable ‘ y_i ’ is assigned a value via an assignment function, g ; in (8), $g(i) = \text{Jack}$. A derivation for *someone else* in (8) is given in (12). *Else* takes the NP it modifies and returns a property which constitutes the restriction for the determiner that composes with NP.

$$\begin{array}{c}
 (12) \quad \text{DP: } \lambda Q \exists x [\text{person}(x) \wedge x \neq y_i \wedge Q(x)] \\
 \swarrow \quad \searrow \\
 \text{some: } \lambda P \lambda Q \exists x [P(x) \wedge Q(x)] \quad \text{NP: } \lambda z \text{ person}(z) \wedge z \neq y_i \\
 \swarrow \quad \searrow \\
 \text{one: } \lambda x \text{ person}(x) \quad \text{else: } \lambda P \lambda z P(z) \wedge z \neq y_i
 \end{array}$$

I argue that the contribution of *else* to the correlate’s meaning prevents *Jack left* from counting as a partial answer to the cleft question. This can be captured by appealing to an anaphoric link between the antecedent ‘*someone else left*’ and the cleft question. I claim that the cleft’s pronominal subject, *it*, provides this link. I analyze clefts as equative clauses, where the cleft pronoun *it* denotes a salient entity which is equated with the post-copular DP. In (8), this entity is made salient by the correlate, so that *it* denotes the entity associated with the discourse referent supplied by the correlate *someone else*. The cleft question asks for this entity’s identity, so that *who it was* denotes a set of propositions of the form ‘*x was the non-Jack person that left*’. It follows that asserting that *Jack left* in (8) is consistent with not standing in the *know* relation to a partial answer to the cleft question. To summarize, the above discussion derives the paradigm in (7-9); else-modified correlates force a pseudosluice parse for the elided TP in sluicing.

Deriving the infelicity of else-modified Wh-phrases in clefts As for Merchant’s (2001) diagnostic, exemplified in (4-6), the assumption that the cleft pronoun *it* is anaphoric to the discourse referent introduced by a correlate also derives the incompatibility of else-modification of the Wh-phrase in a cleft. The only available antecedent for the cleft pronoun is *Jack* in (5), which is also the only available antecedent for *else*, so that the cleft question can be paraphrased as ‘who, besides Jack, is Jack?’. An alternative possibility exists; in a context where it is understood that Jack was not the only person that left, we might expect the cleft question ‘*who else it was*’ to be capable of asking for the identity of non-Jack individuals who left. In this context, we have an implicit antecedent for *it*; however, as noted in Merchant (2001), implicit correlates do not license clefting in sluicing contexts, (13).

(13) *Jack is jealous *(of someone), but I don’t know who it is.*

Conclusion When a speaker is committed to knowing a partial answer to a sluiced question, else modified correlates force a pseudosluice parse for the elided TP. This observation provides additional empirical support for the existence of pseudosluicing, and is motivated independently by considerations about the licensing of questions in discourses and semantic differences between cleft and non-cleft questions. In the talk, I provide additional empirical support for the claim that clefts are best analyzed as equative, a conclusion prefigured in Mikkelsen (2005) and Den Dikken (2009), which claim that clefts are specificational in nature, and Heycock and Kroch (1998), which argues convincingly that specificational clauses are a species of equative clause. This conclusion is also shown to derive Merchant’s (2001) observation that else-modification of cleft Wh-phrases is infelicitous (as in (5)). Finally, it is worth noting that Merchant’s (2001) diagnostics are only applied to *truncated clefts* (i.e. clefts with implicit relative clauses); examples like (5) improve dramatically with *full clefts*, as in (14):

(14) *Jack ate some cake, but I don’t know what else it was that he ate.*

In the talk, I provide an account of this asymmetry between full and truncated clefts, and show that Merchant’s diagnostic and the new diagnostic proposed here both extend to full clefts as well.

Chung ‘11 Syntactic identity in sluicing: how much and why, to appear *LI Culicover and Jackendoff ‘95* Something else for the Binding Theory, *LI Heycock and Kroch ‘98* Inversion and equation in copular sentences, *Papers in Linguistics*, volume 10. ZAS, Berlin **Karttunen ‘77** Syntax and semantics of questions, *LI Merchant ‘98* Pseudosluicing: elliptical clefts in Japanese and English, *Papers in Linguistics*, 10 ZAS, Berlin **Merchant ‘01** *The Syntax of Silence*, PhD Thesis, UC Santa Cruz. **Mikkelsen ‘05** *Copular Clauses*, John Benjamins **Romero ‘98** *Focus and Reconstruction Effects in Wh-phrases*, PhD Thesis, UMassAmherst **von Stechow ‘98** Exeptive Constructions, *NLS*

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