

The syntax of Likpakpaanl sluicing and fragment answers

1 Introduction. This talk discusses the syntax of sluicing and fragment answers (henceforth, S & F) in Likpakpaanl. Sluicing describes an ellipsis phenomenon illustrated in (1a) where an entire TP is deleted, and a wh-remnant survives. The sluice in (1a) has the same underlying syntax as its non-elliptical counterpart in (1b) since both structures are semantically the same.

- (1) a. Jack bought something, but I don't know what_i [_{TP} Jack bought t_i].
 b. Jack bought something, but I don't know what he bought.

Fragment answers also comprise sentences like (2b), which have the same semantic interpretation as the non-elided response (2c), even though they do not have an overt antecedent.

- (2) a. Who did she see?
 b. JOHN.
 c. She saw John.

(Merchant, 2004, 673)

2 Data. The example in (3a) shows sluicing in Likpakpaanl involving the movement of the wh-phrase to the left periphery followed by the 'deletion' of both the Tense Phrase (TP) and the focus marker.

- (3) a. Chati bì nyù tì-wàn nì-bàà, àmàà m àà bèè kè nì yè bàì [_{FOCP} t_i lè [_{TP} C. IPFV drink 15-thing 15-indef but 1SG NEG know COMP it COP what Chatì-bì-nyù t_i]].

'Chati is drinking something, but I don't know what.'

- b. Chati bì nyù tì-wàn nì-bàà, àmàà m àà bèè kè nì yè [_{FOCP} bà lè [_{TP} C. IPFV drink 15-thing 14-indef but 2sg NEG know COMP it COP what FOC Chatì bì nyù t_i]].
 c. IPFV drink.

'Chati is drinking something, but I don't know what Chati is drinking.'

Responses to wh-questions such (4a) can also occur as fragment answers (4c) where the fragment DP is extracted to the left periphery, or occur in full sentences like in (4b).

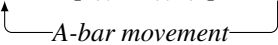
- (4) a. Q: Binlu nàn tì mà lì-nùù-l? Wh-question
 B. PST give who 7-yam-7
 'Who did Binlu give yam?'
 b. A: [_{FOCP} Fàndòì lé [_{TP} Binlu nàn tì ti lì-nùù-l.]]] Non-fragment answer
 F. FOC B. PST give 7-yam-7
 'Binlu gave Fàndò yam.'
 c. A3: [_{FOCP} Fàndòì (*lè)] Fragment answer
 F.
 'Fàndò.'

Likpakpaanl Fragments can also occur in embedded wh-clauses where they require an obligatory overt complementiser (C) **kè**, as shown in the fragment answer in (5c).

- (5) a. Q: [_{TP} Wàjà lèn [_{CP} kè [_{FOCP} bàì lé [_{TP} Mpòpíín dàà t_i]]]]?
 W. say.PFV COMP what FOC M. buy.PFV
 'What did Waja say (that) Mpopiin bought?'
 b. A: Kè chééchèì lé Mpòpíín dàà t_i
 COMP bicycle FOC M. buy.PFV
 'That Mpopiin has bought a bicycle.'
 c. A: Kè chééchèì
 COMP bicycle

‘That a bicycle.’

3 Observation and analysis. The data shows that in Likpakpaanl S & F, the overt focus particle, which is obligatory in non-elliptical variants, is absent. This fact supports Merchant (2001)’s *Sluice-COMP Generalization* which stipulates that in sluicing, only the wh-element (and no non-operator) may appear in COMP. The ‘deletion’ of the focus particle in sluicing and fragments in Likpakpaanl, however, violates Baltin (2010)’s hypothesis, which predicts that in languages with overt focus markers, they must survive ellipsis, and this is born out in Nupe and Gungbe Mendes and Kandybowicz (2023); Lipták and Aboh (2013). I predict that in languages like Likpakpaanl with morphological focus particles which double as coordinating conjunctions, will violate Baltin’s condition and uphold *Sluice-COMP Generalization*. I adopt the standard assumption of Merchant (2001, 2004) that ellipsis (S & F) is licensed by an ellipsis [E]-feature that targets the FocP and its TP complement for deletion. I make two claims in this presentation: (a) Likpakpaanl both S & F involve a focus movement of the wh-sluice or the fragment constituent to the left periphery followed by a PF-deletion of the focus particle and the TP.(b) The absence of the overt focus head in sluicing and fragment answers suggests the projection of a higher functional projection (FP) above FocP as illustrated in (6). The head of this FP is associated with the E-feature, which leads to the deletion of its complement Merchant (2001) and thus Spec-FP serves as a landing site for the fragment constituent and sluice remnant under ellipsis.

(6) [CP [C ké [FP [E-feature_i [FocP_i Foc lé [TP ...t_i]]]]]]


The motivation for assuming the FP comes from the distribution of *mù* ‘else’ in the language which forms a constituent with the focus element. The following example shows that *else-modification* is possible in fragment utterances and sluicing as well.

- (7) a. Kwame àà nà n ch̀ Achore ni Afi baanja?
 K NEG PST invite A. CONJ A. only
 ‘Kwame did not invite only Achore and Afi’
 b. Kìnà-à? ηma mù?
 really who else
 ‘Really, so who else?’
 c. Kìnà-à? ηma mù lé Kwame nà n ch̀?
 really who else FOC K PST invite
 ‘Really, so who else did Kwmane invite?’

Using island constraints, connectivity effects and the absence of weak pronouns in fragment answers and sluicing, I show that S & F in Likpakpaanl does not only target FocP and the TP but also involves movement of the fragment or the wh-remnant to Spec-FP through Spec-FocP in the narrow syntax then followed by and deletion of TP and the Foc-head in PF.

4 Conclusion. This talk contributes to the ongoing research into the syntax of fragment answers and sluicing and the selectional and licensing properties of the ellipsis feature.

References.

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