

## Review of *Sluicing: Cross-Linguistic Perspectives*

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The back cover blurb of *Sluicing: Cross-Linguistic Perspectives* presents the book primarily as a collection of articles about the properties of sluicing in a variety of languages (specifically, English, Dutch, Frisian, Serbo-Croatian, Romanian, Turkish, Malagasy, Chinese, Japanese, Hindi, and Bangla). I am not going to provide a chapter-by-chapter summary of the book, given that the editors' Introduction (chapter 1) already contains an excellent one and Oxford University Press has graciously decided to offer this one chapter as a free download from the book's website (<http://ukcatalogue.oup.com/product/9780199645763.do>). Suffice it to say that all the chapters are very competent pieces of research, combining new or little-known data with detailed technical analyses. If they hadn't been compiled in this book, the chapters could have easily found their way into the pages of the top journals in the field.

What I want to do here instead is to take a step back from the individual chapters, so as to gain a better perspective on the broader line of research that this book represents. In this respect, it is fortunate that the editors have decided to reprint Ross' seminal 1969 article "Guess who?" as chapter 2, so that it functions a prologue of sorts to the rest of the chapters. Ross' central insight is that a sluiced clause has the same underlying syntax as a *wh*-question; it's just that a large part of it remains unpronounced. The rest of the chapters take Ross' insight seriously, to the extent that the following is an accurate one-sentence summary of the main theoretical theme of the book:

- (1) The best analysis of sluicing is the one in which the syntax of sluicing deviates the least from the syntax of *wh*-questions.

Note that this is neither trivial nor obvious. Your local sluicing expert will be quick to point out that there are a number of analyses that, for a variety of reasons, choose not to adhere to (1). For example, Chung et al (1995) argue that the sluicing site contains an impoverished syntactic structure, and Jackendoff and Culicover (2005) argue that it contains no structure at all, the correct reading of the sluiced clause arising from semantic and/or pragmatic mechanisms (e.g., LF-copying in Chung et al). Similarly, there are analyses where sluiced clauses, while having the same syntactic structure as *wh*-questions, are subject to fewer restrictions; for example, Richards (1999) claims that English exceptionally allows multiple overt *wh*-fronting under sluicing, and Almeida and Yoshida (2007) claim that Brazilian Portuguese, a non-P-stranding language, exceptionally allows P-stranding under sluicing. There are, however, consequences to not adopting (1) as your working hypothesis. If (1) is true, we expect that, for any language we examine, the whole range of syntactic and semantic properties of *wh*-questions will be present in sluiced clauses too. In contrast, there is no reason to expect such a consistent correlation if (1) is not the correct working hypothesis. Obviously, this is a question that has to be resolved empirically—in fact, as the chapters in this book collectively do,

by examining both sluicing and *wh*- questions in a variety of languages and determining whether adopting (1) leads to interesting insights.

In practice, this task is more complicated than I've made it sound, partly because individual languages exhibit a range of idiosyncracies in the way they construct *wh*- questions. This requires the authors to devote a sizeable portion of each chapter to mapping out the syntax of *wh*- questions (and different subtypes thereof) in the corresponding language in detail; otherwise, there would be no reliable baseline to compare sluiced clauses against. Consequently, readers can expect to end up learning as much about *wh*- questions as they do about sluicing. In other words, one can add the slogan in (2) as a corollary to the thesis in (1).

- (2) If you want to understand the syntax of sluicing in any given language, you also need to understand the syntax of *wh*- questions in that language.

The result, at least as far as the languages examined here go, is that (1) and (2) are indeed the correct working hypotheses. In fact, the book's notable skew towards *wh*- in situ languages (which account for six out of the nine chapters that report new research) is arguably a powerful way of testing the validity of (1) and (2). To give a single example, consider Kizu's (1997) and Merchant's (1998) claim that what looks like sluicing in Japanese should be reclassified as pseudosluicing (i.e., an elliptical *it* cleft with a *wh*-pivot), as it lacks various properties of English-type sluicing. Kizu's and Merchant's contention is that this difference between English and Japanese can be ascribed to the fact that the latter, but not the former, lacks overt *wh*- fronting. Now, the discussion in chapters 6 ("Case morphology and island repair", by Nakamura) and 7 ("Island-sensitivity in Japanese sluicing and some implications", by Fukaya) relies on the fact that Japanese *wh*- words do not necessarily stay overtly in situ. Specifically, they can undergo movement to SpecCP (giving rise to a structure largely analogous to that of English-type *wh*- questions), but crucially this movement is not *wh*- fronting, but rather focus fronting. Given this much, the question arises of whether this class of Japanese *wh*- questions supports TP deletion in the same way as English *wh*- questions do. Nakamura and Fukaya answer this question in the affirmative, showing that an analysis along these lines correctly predicts certain subtle locality effects, also found in English, that are contingent on overt movement of the *wh*- phrase. In short, Nakamura and Fukaya are able to gain new insights into Japanese sluicing precisely because they implicitly accept (1) and (2)—i.e., that the syntax and, by extension, the properties of sluicing very closely parallel the syntax and properties of non-elliptical *wh*- questions. Abstracting away from the variation in languages and specific properties under investigation, all the chapters in this book follow a similar line of reasoning.

Overall, the contributors to this book are collectively pushing for a very spartan approach to sluicing—i.e., in the best possible world, sluicing would be just a *wh*- question where TP remains unpronounced when a suitable antecedent exists, and no further principles or restrictions would need to be formulated. It is doubtful that this ideal can be attained (see, e.g., the morphosyntactic restrictions discussed in van Craenenbroeck 2010

or Merchant 2013), but the research reported in this book suggests that we can get surprisingly close to it. The value of these chapters (and of similar papers not included here, e.g., Lasnik 2006 or Gribanova 2013) lies on demonstrating that, by staying faithful to (1) and (2), we are led down a research path that provides valuable new insights along the way. As I already said, this result is neither trivial nor obvious, but it is certainly important. I, for one, welcome the fact that there now exists a book that makes this point in this particular way.

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