

Exploring the cross-linguistic variation in sluicing

Ekaterina Georgieva

HUN-REN Hungarian Research Centre for Linguistics

Proposal: In this talk I discuss sluicing in Meadow Mari (Uralic). I show that there are three types of sluicing-like constructions (SLCs) in the sense of Paul & Potsdam (2012): two of them being derived from non-isomorphic sources. The third one shows several properties associated with isomorphic sluicing. I propose an analysis according to which the *wh*-remnant undergoes either focus movement (that being a type of isomorphic sluicing) or is contrastively topicalized (similarly to English sluicing with massive pied-piping, cf. Abels 2019).

Background & novel empirical findings: Mari is a fairly strict SOV and *wh*-in situ language (for most speakers); P-stranding is impossible. Three SLCs are employed in Mari (1). SLC3 is the most general one and will be the focus of this paper.

- (1) Təj alakö-lan oksa-m puenat...
 2SG someone-DAT money-ACC give.PRF.2SG
- a. no (tudən) kö ul-mê-žê-m, om pale. [SLC1]
 but 3SG.GEN who.NOM be-NMLZ-POSS:3SG-ACC NEG.PRS.1SG know
- b. no (tudo / tide) kö (uleš), om pale. [SLC2]
 but 3SG this who.NOM be.PRS.3SG NEG.PRS.1SG know
- c. no kö-*(lan) (*uleš), om pale. [SLC3]
 but who-DAT be.PRS.3SG NEG.PRS.1SG know
 ‘You gave money to someone but I don’t know to whom.’

Analysis: From the properties of the three SLCs (see table), it follows that SLC1 & 2 are to be analyzed as derived from non-isomorphic copular sources.

	Case connectivity	Copula
SLC1	✗	✓
SLC2	✗	✓
SLC3	✓	✗

In contrast, SLC3 shows properties characteristic of isomorphic sluicing: case connectivity effects and absence of a copula (1c); P-stranding is ungrammatical (2), similarly to full questions (not illustrated); *else*-modification is fine (3).

- (2) Aβam alakö dene βašlijən, no kö *(dene), om pale.
 mother.POSS:1SG someone with meet.PRF.3SG but who with NEG.PRS.1SG know.CN
 ‘My mother met someone, but I don’t know who.’
- (3) A: Jəβan Maša-m gəna ogəl užən. B: *Kö eše tide? B’: Kö-m eše?
 Ivan Masha-ACC only NEG see.GER who.NOM else this? who-ACC else
 ‘Ivan didn’t only see Masha. Whom else (*it was)?’ [root SLC2; *else* ✗, root SLC3: *else* ✓]

Another property of SLC3 is that the *wh*-remnant can bear a 3SG possessive suffix (4). As shown in Georgieva (2022), this Poss suffix is also used in noun phrase ellipsis (NPE); (5) it is argued that (i) 3SG Poss spells out a D head, (ii) the remnant is a contrastive topic.

- (4) Pet’a üdêr-əm nalən, no kö-m / kö-žê-m, om pale.
 Petya girl-ACC take.PRF.3SG but who-ACC who-POSS:3SG-ACC NEG.PRS.1SG know.CN
 ‘Petya got married (lit. girl-took) but I don’t know who.’ [SLC3; 3SG Poss ✓]
- (5) Nele sumka-t üstembalne, a kuštəlgo / kuštəlgə-žo polkəšto.
 heavy bag-POSS:2SG on.table but light light-POSS:3SG on.shelf
 (Context: You have one heavy and one light bag.)
 ‘Your heavy bag is on the table, and your light one is on the shelf.’ [NPE; 3SG Poss ✓]

Given the unavailability of wh-fronting in questions (for most speakers), SLC3 may be argued to be isomorphic sluicing with focus movement, as proposed for Hungarian, Turkish, Persian and Georgian (van Craenenbroeck & Lipták 2006; İnce 2012; Toosarvandani 2018; Erschler 2015). However, it is difficult to pin down the landing site of this focus movement (CP or below CP), as the diagnostics used in the aforementioned languages are not applicable to Mari (e.g., the position of the wh-phrase wrt complementizers).

The analysis in terms of isomorphic sluicing with focus movement captures the case connectivity effects but does not explain the presence of 3SG Poss in (4) nor does it account for the parallelism between sluicing and NPE wrt morphology on the remnant (cf. (4)–(5)). I propose that these properties of SLC3 can be captured by adopting and adapting Abels’s (2019) analysis of English sluicing with massive pied-piping (‘swamp construction’) (6). Abels (2019) proposes that the swamp construction involves neither (proper) sluicing nor pied-piping; rather, it is a contrastive left dislocation (CLD) with ellipsis. Thus, *a picture of who* in (6) is a left dislocate resumed by a d-pronoun (which is null in English).

(6) He has a picture of somebody, but [a picture of who] I don’t know.

I propose that in Mari, the wh-remnant in (4) undergoes either focus movement (7a) or CLD (7b), in the latter case it features a 3SG Poss (=d-pronoun). Case connectivity and P-stranding are predicted in (7b), just as under an isomorphic sluicing analysis, since left dislocates do show connectivity effects (Ott 2014). In English, the swamp construction is only possible with fronting; in Mari, an SOV language, CLD cannot be easily diagnosed based on word order, but is evidenced by the presence of 3SG Poss.

(7) a. [but [_{FP} [_{DP_i} ... wh- ...] [_{F'} F [_{VP} I t_{DP_i} don’t know]]]] [SLC3: focus mvt]
 b. [but [_{FP} [_{DP_i} [_{DP} ... wh- ...] [_D 3SG POSS]] [_{F'} F [_{VP} I t_{DP_i} don’t know]]]] [SLC3: CLD]

Implications: The Mari data contribute to our understanding of non-isomorphic sluicing. Vicente (2018) proposes a taxonomy of sluicing that includes three possible non-isomorphic sources: copular clauses, clefts and pseudoclefts. This kind of sluices are attested in Mari, too (SLC1 & 2). But importantly, Vicente’s taxonomy can be expanded by adding a fourth type, non-isomorphic sluices analyzable as CLD: Mari SLC3 (with Poss) and the English swamp construction fall into this type. In both English and Mari, the CLD-type of SLC co-exists with isomorphic sluicing.

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