Sluicing in two French based-creoles: a fragment-based analysis
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Since Ross (1969), the syntactic structure of sluices has been shown to vary across languages: they may be derived from wh-interrogatives (Merchant 2001) or from clefts (van Craenenbroeck 2011). We provide new data from two French-based creoles showing that sluices in these languages behave like sentential complements, but comprise in situ wh-words. To reconcile these apparent contradictory properties, we propose to follow a fragment-based analysis (Ginzburg & Sag 2000).

1. Sluices as clausal complements
In Mauritian (Baker 1972, Syea 2012) and Seychellois (Corne 1977), most verbs have a short form (SF), used with a postverbal complement (1a), and a long form (LF) used otherwise (1b). Without verum focus (Henri 2010), only the long form is allowed before a clausal complement (1c):

(1) a. Mo‘nn manz pom/ koz ek Pol.
   1SG* PERF eat.SF apple/ speak.SF with Paul
   ‘I ate apples/spoke with Paul.’

b. Mo‘nn manz / koz yer.
   1SG* PERF eat.LF/ speak.LF yesterday
   ‘I have eaten/spoken yesterday.’

c. Mo pa trouve/ *trou [si Pol pe koze].
   1SG NEG see.LF/*SF if Paul PROG speak
   ‘I do not see whether Paul is speaking.’

Unsurprisingly, a sluice (2a) behaves like a wh-interrogative clause (2b), and the matrix verb must be in long form:

(2) a. Pol inn koz ek kikenn me mo pa kone/*konn [ek kisannla].
   Paul PERF speak with someone but 1SG NEG know.LF/*SF with who
   ‘Paul has spoken with someone but I don’t know with whom.’

b. Mo pa kone/*konn [ek kisannla] li‘nn koze].
   1SG NEG know.LF/*SF with who 3SG* PERF speak.LF
   ‘I don’t know with whom he spoke.’

2. Weak and strong wh-words
In Mauritian and Seychellois interrogatives, wh-phrases are usually extracted (2b)(3a), but they may also be in situ, without an echo interpretation (3b)(Syea 2017).

(3) a. [Ek kisannla] to‘nn koze/*koz ?
   With who 2SG* PERF speak.LF/*SF
   ‘With whom did you speak?’

b. To‘nn koz ek kisannla ?
   2SG* PERF speak.SF/*LF with whom
   ‘You spoke with whom?’

While most wh-words may be fronted or in situ, Mauritian inanimates ki,kiete (‘what’), and locatives kot,kote ‘where’ exhibit a complementary distribution: ki, kot must be extracted, while kiete, kote are in situ or in isolation. The same contrast holds for the Seychellois inanimate pair ki/kwa (‘what’).

(4) a. Ki/*Kiete to pou manze?
   What 2SG FUT eat.LF
   ‘What will you eat?’

b. To pou manz *ki/kiete?
   2SG FUT eat.SF what?
   ‘You will eat what?’

(5) a. Kot/*Kote to pou ale?
   Where 2SG FUT go.LF
   ‘Where will you go?’

b. To pou al *kot/kote?
   2SG FUT go.SF where?
   ‘You will go where?’

c. Spk1 – Pol inn al deor.
   Pol PERF go.SF abroad
   ‘Paul went abroad.’
Syp2- Kote/*Kot?

‘Where?’

We analyse ki, kot as weak forms and kiete, kote as strong forms (Cardinaletti & Starke 1999).

3. The internal structure of sluices

Crucially, sluices only allow the strong wh-words (6a,b), unlike full embedded interrogatives (6c,d):

(6) a. Li’n’n manz kitsoz me mo pa’nn trouve [kiete/*ki].
   3SG PERF eat.SF something but 1SG NEG PERF see.LF what
   ‘He ate something but I didn’t see what.’
   b. Li’n’n al deor mo pa kone [kote/*kot].
   3SG PERF go.SF abroad but 1SG NEG know.LF where
   ‘He has gone abroad but I don’t know where.’
   c. Mo pa’nn trouve [ki/*kiete li’n’n manze].
   1SG NEG PERF see.LF what 3SG PERF eat.LF
   ‘I didn’t see what he has eaten.’
   d. Mo pa kone [kot/*kote li’n’nn ale].
   1SG NEG know.LF where 3SG PERF go.LF
   ‘I don’t know where he has gone.’

This may challenge a deletion analysis of sluices based on wh-interrogatives, unless deletion applies before spell-out. An alternative derivation based on cleft structures, as has been proposed for other languages (Merchant & Simpson 2013), is not available either:

(7) a. *Li’n’n manz kitsoz me mo pa’nn trouve [se kiete].
   ‘He ate something but I didn’t see what it was’
   b. * Li’n’n al deor me mo pa kone [se kote].
   ‘He has gone abroad but I don’t know where it was.’

Mauritian sluices thus exhibit contradictory syntactic properties: like interrogative clauses, they combine with a matrix long form of the verb; but they do not allow weak wh-words, unlike full interrogative clauses. To overcome this contradiction, we propose to use Ginzburg & Sag (2000)’s fragment analysis: sluices behave externally as clauses but internally as phrases. They are unary clauses dominating a DP or PP, with a propositional content inherited from the context (QUD); they obey syntactic parallelism constraints with a salient constituent, kitsoz (‘something’) in (6a), deor (‘abroad’) in (6b).

(8) a. Mo pa’nn trouve [k[iete]sp i].
   1SG NEG PERF see.LF what
   ‘I didn’t see what (he ate).’
   b. Mo pa kone [kote]adv i.
   1SG NEG know.LF where
   ‘I do not know where (he went).’

In this approach, sluices inherit a clausal interpretation from the context (QUD), and the wh-phrase is coindexed with the salient constituent, (ek) kikenn in (2a), kitsoz in (6a), deor in (6b). They thus differ from plain wh- phrases both syntactically and semantically.

Selected References