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   manze / koze   yer.
       1SG' PERF eat.LF/ speak.LF   yesterday
       'I have eaten/spoken yesterday.'

    c. Mo   pa   trouve/ *trouv [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.'

        Spk2- 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'nn   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'nn   al   deor me 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'nn 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'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'nn manz kitsoz me mo pa'nn trouve [se kiete].

       'He ate something but I didn't see what it was'

    b. * Li'nn 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 [[kiete]$_{NP}$]$_S$

      1SG NEG PERF see.LF what

    'I didn't see what (he ate).'

    b. Mo pa kone [[kote]$_{Adv}$]$_S$

     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.

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