Week 4
Pseudosluicing

November 12, 2009

1 The issue for today

(1) *Preposition Stranding Generalization (Merchant 2001:91)*
For any language *L*, *L* will allow P-stranding under sluicing only if it also allows P-stranding in non-elliptical environments.

Or, in more general terms.

(2) *Preposition Stranding Generalization*
We know that sluicing can help repair some cases of movement-induced ungrammaticality, such a strong islands. However, it cannot help repair P-stranding violations.

Merchant has tested this prediction across a large number of languages, covering a lot of Romance and Germanic, with occasional instances of other families. Nonetheless, one still finds counterexamples, such as Finnish, Bulgarian, French, Polish, Serbo-Croatian... Rodrigues, Nevins, and Vicente (2009) –typically abbreviated as RNV– focuses on Spanish and Brazilian Portuguese.

(3) *Spanish*

a. * ¿Quién ha hablado Juan con?
who has talked Juan with

b. Juan ha hablado con alguien, pero no sé quién.
Juan has talked with someone but not know who

So, what do we do with Spanish? We have two options:

1. **The easy but uninteresting option:** Merchant is wrong. Sluicing can repair P-stranding violations, and the fact that some languages exhibit a correlation like (1) is, at best, accidental.

2. **The not-so-easy but more interesting option:** Merchant is correct. Apparent exceptions exist because the relevant languages can create a P-stranding sluice without incurring into a P-stranding violation.

RNV take the second option. The tough part, obviously is devising a way of circumventing P-stranding effects. The starting point is the idea (Ross 1969, Merchant 2001) that sluicing is a combination of wh- movement plus TP deletion:

(4) a. *Step I: move*
I don't know [$_{CP}$ who [$_{TP}$ Juan talked to [t]

b. *Step I: delete*
I don't know [$_{CP}$ who [$_{TP}$ Juan talked to]

Under this analysis, sluicing is inextricably related to the mechanism of question formation, and this the loophole that RNV exploit: we know that several languages (Spanish and Brazilian Portuguese among them) have a second strategy for question formation, which involves a cleft/copular structure.

(5) a. I don't know who it is (that John talked to).

b. No sé quién es (la persona con la que habló Juan)
not know who is the person with which talked Juan

We know that clefts/copulas have different properties than regular interrogatives, so we can test for that. In particular, RNV focus on the following properties;

- Interaction of P-stranding with multiple sluicing.
- *Else* modification.
- Aggressively non-D-linked wh- phrases.
- Complementizers under sluicing (only for BP).
- Split questions.

All of these properties show that there is a correlation between P-stranding effects and copular sources for ellipsis. However, it opens up the question of how the parallelism relations we've seen in the previous two weeks (mutual entailment under F-closure and $\exists$-type shifting) are going to hold up. For this, we can do a close reading of van Craenenbroeck (2004:64-71), which I will upload to the course website. The short answer is that the relevant entailment relations hold.

2 Taking stock

So, what have we learned in the previous weeks? Hopefully, at least the following.

- Ellipsis can be done in (at least) two ways: either by not pronouncing a regular syntactic structure (*surface anaphora*, in Hankamer and Sag's 1976 terms), or by replacing a relevant chunk of structure with a null pronominal (*deep anaphora*).
- In both cases, ellipsis is possible only if there is a certain degree of parallelism between the ellipsis site and its antecedent, which we have defined as mutual entailment under F-closure and $\exists$-type shifting.
- The fact that the parallelism condition is formulated in semantic terms means that we can find form mismatches between the antecedent and the ellipsis site, inasmuch as we can uphold mutual entailment. These can range from sloppy identity effects to the spectacular pseudo-sluicing.