

Sluicing in Kathmandu Newari: Evidence from the Effect of Island Repairing
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1. The puzzle: Kathmandu Newari (Sino-Tibetan) is a *wh*-in-situ language which has a sluicing-like construction (SLC), as shown in (1-a). This paper argues that Newari SLC is genuine sluicing, as in (1-b), despite the fact that *wh*-phrases in embedded clauses normally show no evidence of covert movement. I build on Gribanova and Manetta’s (2016) analysis of Hindi-Urdu that the higher copy with a [Weak] feature of the *wh*-phrase gets pronounced in Newari SLCs, and the lower copy with a [Strong] feature gets elided in SLC. I argue that the fact that *wh*-movement can occur in these sluicing contexts is due to the effect of island repair by sluicing (Merchant 2001).

- (1) a. Sitā-na su-ita dā-u, tala su-ita jīm ma-syu.
 Sita-ERG someone-DAT hit-PST, but who-DAT 1SG.ERG NEG-know
 ‘Sita hit someone but I don’t know who.’
 b. Sitā-na su-ita dā-u, tala [CP su-ita ~~{TP Sitā-na su-ita dā-u}~~]
 Sita-ERG someone-DAT hit-PST, but who-DAT Sita-ERG who-DAT hit-PST
 jīm ma-syu.
 1SG.ERG NEG-know

2. Previous analyses: Classic approaches to sluicing (e.g., Ross 1969 and Merchant 2001) propose that the syntax of sluicing is the syntax of an ordinary *wh*-question. This will predict that sluicing should not occur in *wh*-in-situ languages, where the *wh*-phrases remain in TP. If this is the case we expect Newari SLCs to show evidence that they can be analyzed in some other way.

Newari reduced copular clauses are distinct from sluicing. Some *wh*-in-situ languages can derive a SLC string via a reduced copular clause (Merchant 1998, Gribanova 2013). This will not be the correct account for Newari since the *wh*-pivot in a copula clause must be unmarked. (2) contains a copular clause, and it can be reduced to (3), but not (1-a), due to *pro*-drop and copula-drop.

- (2) Sitā-na su-ita dā-u, tala [(wo) su/*su-ita/*su-na (kha)] jīm ma-syu.
 Sita-ERG someone-DAT hit-PST, but 3.SG. who/*DAT/*ERG COP 1st.ERG NEG-know
 ‘Sita hit someone but I don’t know who that is.’
 (3) Sitā-na su-ita dā-u, tala [su] jīm ma-syu.
 Sita-ERG someone-DAT hit-PST, but who 1st.ERG NEG-know
 ‘Sita hit someone but I don’t know who (that is).’

Newari SLCs are not fed by focus projection movement. In some languages, SLC is fed by moving a focused element to a position higher than the elided TP, followed by a deletion operation (Toosarvandani 2009). I argue this will not account for Newari. As (4-a) shows, the default position for the focused subject NP is low, and fronting the NP is ungrammatical, as in (4-b).

- (4) a. Sitā-na dhā-u [CP ki [NP Rām-na caka] om na-u].
 Sita.ERG say-PST that Ram-ERG only mango eat-PST
 ‘Sita said that only Ram ate mangos.’
 b. * [NP Rām-na caka]_i Sitā-na dhā-u [CP ki t_i om na-u].
 Ram-ERG only Sita.ERG say-PST that mango eat-PST
 Intended ‘Sita said that only Ram ate mangos.’

3. Account: *Genuine sluicing in Newari.* Gribanova and Manetta (2016) suggest that SLC in Hindi-

Urdu may be a genuine sluicing, but it is the higher copy with [Weak] feature being pronounced at PF, on the assumption the [Strong] is the lower copy.

(5) [Weak] [α [Strong] X]

The big difference between Newari and Hindi-Urdu is that, unlike Hindi-Urdu, in Newari argument CPs, *wh*-phrases get interpreted via focus alternatives composition, as in (6).

(6) ✓ [CP-arg C ... [CP-arg C ... *wh* ...]]

Elsewhere, for example in adjunct clauses, covert movement is possible, as in (7). In contrast, as (8) shows, I suggest that argument CPs in Newari are islands for covert movement, based on the evidence from scope and focus intervention.

(7) ✓ [CP-matrix C ... [CP-adj C ... *wh* ...]] (8) * [CP-arg C ... [CP-adj C ... *wh* ...]]

Essentially, for independent reasons, the *wh*-phrases cannot overtly cross argument CPs, as in (9), unless in SLC, where the *wh*-phrase can move with crossing multiple CP boundaries.

(9) * [CP-arg *wh* C ... [CP-arg C ... *t* ...]]

Despite all these special properties of argument CPs and *wh*-syntax, Newari still shows genuine sluicing. This analysis can account for Newari although argument CPs are islands. *Wh*-phrases cannot move outside of the argument CP that contains it as in (10-a), but stay within that CP (pronounce the lower copies), as in (10-b) and (10-c).

- (10) a. * Su-ita_i Rām-na [CP Sitā-na *t_i* dā-u] dhā-u?
 who-DAT Ram-ERG Sita-ERG hit-PST say-PST
 Intended: ‘Who did Ram say that Sita hit?’
 b. ✓ Rām-na [CP Sitā-na su-ita dā-u] dhā-u?
 Ram-ERG Sita-ERG who-DAT hit-PST say-PST
 c. ✓ Rām-na [CP su-ita Sitā-na *t_i* dā-u] dhā-u?
 Ram-ERG who-DAT Sita-ERG hit-PST say-PST
 ‘Who did Ram say that Sita hit?’

If Newari does not allow *wh*-phrases to move across CP boundaries, as in (10-a), we would not expect sluicing in (11) be possible, as shown in (12).

- (11) ✓ Rām-na Sitā-na su-ita dā-u dhā-u, tala su-ita jīm ma-syu.
 Ram-ERG Sita-ERG someone-DAT hit-PST say-PST, but who-DAT 1SG.ERG NEG-know
 Ram said that Sita hit someone, but I don’t know who.
 (12) [CP Rām-na [CP Sitā-na su-ita dā-u] dhā-u], tala [CP su-ita
 Ram-ERG Sita-ERG someone-DAT hit-PST say-PST, but who-DAT
 ~~[TP Rām-na [CP Sitā-na su-ita dā-u] dhā-u]~~ jīm ma-syu.
 Ram-ERG Sita-ERG who-DAT hit-PST say-PST 1SG.ERG NEG-know
 Ram said that Sita hit someone, but I don’t know who (that Ram said that Sita hit).

However, I suggest that the availability of (11) reflects an effect of island repair under sluicing. Ellipsis of a CP from which a *wh*-phrase has been extracted obviates the relevant island effects.

Selected references: Gribanova, V. and Manetta, E., 2016. Ellipsis in wh-in-situ languages: Deriving apparent sluicing in Hindi-Urdu and Uzbek. *Linguistic Inquiry*. • Merchant, Jason. 2001. The syntax of silence: Sluicing, islands, and the theory of ellipsis. *Oxford: Oxford University Press*. • Ross, J.R., 1969, April. Guess who. *In fifth regional meeting of the Chicago Linguistic Society* (Vol. 252286). • Toosarvandani, Maziar. 2008. Wh-movement and the syntax of sluicing. *Journal of Linguistics* 44:677-722.