

Against the *in situ* account of sluicing: the case of French

Jeroen van Craenenbroeck & Tanja Temmerman

KU Leuven/CRISSP/Meertens Institute & Université Saint-Louis–Bruxelles/CRISSP/SeSLa

jeroen.vancraenenbroeck@kuleuven.be & tanja.temmerman@gmail.com

The data: unmovable sluicing remnants

French allows *wh*-phrases as sluicing remnants that must remain *in situ* in non-elliptical clauses:

***quoi*-sluicing** (Dagnac 2018, Bouchard and Hirschbuhler 1987)

- (1) Il faut faire quelque chose, mais **quoi**?
it must do some thing but what
'We should do something, but what?'
- (2) ***Quoi** faut-il faire? (3) Il faut faire **quoi**?
what must-it do it must do what
'What should we do?'

spading (van Craenenbroeck 2010, Dagnac 2018)

- (4) A: J'ai vu quelqu'un. B: **Qui ça**?
I.have seen someone who that
'A: I saw someone. B: Who?'
- (5) ***Qui ça** as-tu vu? (6) Tu as vu **qui ça**?
who that have-you seen you have seen who that
'Who did you see?'

***comment*-sluicing** (Dagnac 2018, Moline 2009, 2013)

- (7) Elle est belle, mais **belle comment**?
she is pretty but pretty how
'She is pretty, but how pretty?'
- (8) ***Belle comment** est-elle? (9) Elle est **belle comment**?
pretty how is-she she is pretty how
'How pretty is she?'

A possible analysis: *in situ* sluicing

- (10) **The *in situ* account of sluicing** (Abe 2015, Ott 2018)
"sluicing does *not* require *wh*-movement, [and] can "delete around" *wh*-phrases and other remnants in situ" (Ott 2018:1).
- (11) a. Il faut faire quoi?
b. Tu as vu qui ça?
c. Elle est belle comment?

Arguments against the *in situ* account

embedded sluicing (Dagnac 2018:795n14)

Embedded *wh in situ* is disallowed in French (Cheng and Rooryck 2000):

- (12) *Je ne sais pas (qu') il faut faire quoi.
I NEG know not (that) it must do what
INTENDED: 'I don't know what we should do.'

But sluicing in the same context is perfectly fine:

- (13) Il faut faire quelque chose, mais je ne sais pas quoi.
it must do some thing but I NEG know not what
'We should do something, but I don't know what.'

intervention effects

For at least some speakers, French *wh in situ* is subject to intervention (Chang 1997, Cheng and Rooryck 2000):

- (14) ??On peut acheter quoi avec ce coupon au Carrefour?
one can buy what with this coupon in.the Carrefour
INTENDED: 'What can you buy in the Carrefour supermarket with this coupon?'

But under sluicing these intervention effects disappear:

- (15) A: Avec ce coupon on peut acheter quelque chose
with this coupon one can buy some thing
au Carrefour.
in.the Carrefour
'With this coupon you can buy something in the Carrefour supermarket.'
B: Quoi?
what
'What?'

The analysis (I): *quoi*-sluicing and spading

MAIN GIST OF THE ANALYSIS

- The *wh*-phrase in *quoi*-sluicing and spading undergoes regular *wh*-movement.
- The difference in form between ellipsis and non-ellipsis is due to context-sensitive spell-out of a functional head.

Bouchard and Hirschbuhler (1987:50): "This would mean that synchronically we would have three allomorphs for standard French: *quoi*, *que*, *ce que*, each one with its peculiar distribution."

Abels (2019): the lexical insertion rule for WHAT is sensitive to the syntactic context: *que* is inserted in an environment with a complementizer, *quoi* is the elsewhere-case. Sluicing bleeds the insertion context for *que*.

- (16) WHAT → que / [_{CP} __ [C ...]]
→ quoi

our proposal: it is not WHAT as a whole that is subject to context-sensitive spell-out, but more specifically, its DP-layer:

- (17) DP (18) D → ce / V [_{CP} __ *que* [C ...]]
D φP → Ø / [_{CP} __ *que* [C ...]]
que → -oi

note: this correctly predicts (a) *ce que* will show up in embedded questions, (b) *que* in non-elliptical matrix questions, and (c) *quoi* inside PPs and coordinations (even when fronted) (Bouchard and Hirschbuhler 1987):

- (19) a. Je sais **ce que** Jean fait.
I know that what John does
'I know what John is doing.'
b. **Que** faut-il faire?
what must-it do
'What should we do?'

- c. De **quoi** parle-t-il?
of what speaks-T-he?
'What is he talking about?'
- d. Qui ou **quoi** vous fait penser cela?
who or what you makes think that
'Who or what makes you think that?'

moreover: this account can be straightforwardly extended to French spading:

- (20) FP (21) F → Ø / [_{CP} whP __ [C ...]]
F whP → ça

The analysis (II): *comment*-sluicing

MAIN GIST OF THE ANALYSIS

- French *comment*-sluicing is structurally identical to English/Dutch XP-*in what way*-sluicing.
- This type of sluicing combines a quoted fragment with a sluice roughly equivalent to *In what way do you mean XP?*

step #1: *comment*-sluicing behaves like XP-*in what way*-sluicing in (a) interpretation, (b) word order, and (c) types of XP

(a) interpretation

- (22) A: The consequences could have been disastrous.
B: Disastrous in what way? (BNC)
- (23) A: C'était récemment.
it.was recently
'It was recently.'
B: Je ne sais pas ce que ça veut dire récemment.
I NEG know not that what that wants say recently
Récemment comment?
recently how
'I don't know what recently means. Recently in what way?' (Moline 2009)
- (24) A: Le temps est très beau!
the weather is very nice
'The weather is very nice!'
B: Très beau comment?
very nice how
'Very nice in what way?'

(b) word order: both XP-*wh* and *wh*-XP are allowed

- (25) A: They dressed alike, in saffron robes, and had similar rituals and ceremonies, but in other ways they were completely different.
B: In what way different? (BNC)
- (26) A: Quel succès! B: Comment quel succès?
what success how what success
'A: What a success! B: How so, what a success?' (Moline 2009)

(c) type of XP: XP can be a string that normally does not undergo movement, e.g. NP without article

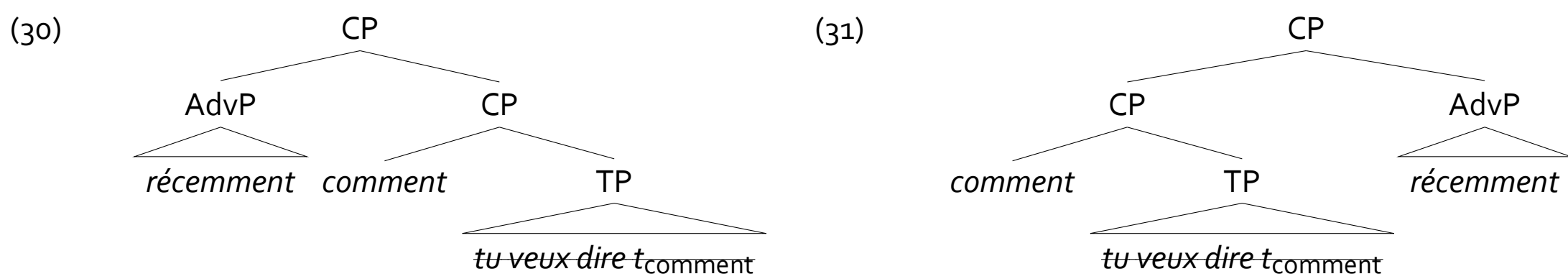
- (27) A: Is this on an employed basis?
B: In what way employed basis? (BNC)

- (28) A: Ce sont des moyens de se cultiver?
it are the means of SE educate
'Are they means of educating oneself?'
- B: Comment moyens de se cultiver?
how means of SE educate
'In what way means of educating oneself?' (Moline 2009)

step #2: XP-*in what way*-sluicing has the hallmark characteristics of mixed quotation (Maier 2014), e.g. XP has to be a verbatim reproduction of (part of) the preceding utterance, no synonym substitution is allowed, it can be sensitive to metalinguistic aspects of the utterance such as the language used:

- (29) A: Hij zei dat hij *very impressed* was.
he said that he very impressed was
'He said he was very impressed.'
B: *Very impressed* op welke manier?
very impressed on which way
'Very impressed in what way?'
- C: #Erg onder de indruk op welke manier?
very under the impression on which way
INTENDED: 'Very impressed in what way?' (Dutch)

analysis: XP is a quoted constituent that is left- or right-adjoined to a regular *comment*-sluice inquiring about the meaning of the quote:



Conclusion

French sluicing with otherwise unmovable remnants offers arguments against rather than in favor of the *in situ* account of sluicing, while a movement alternative is readily available.

Open questions and further issues

1. What is the nature of the F-head spelled out as *ça* in French spading? D-linking (Lopez 2000), Focus (van Craenenbroeck 2010), Q (Cable 2010), ...
2. What about 'true degree' readings of *comment*-sluicing (Moline 2009, 2013, Dagnac 2018)? Are they also structurally identical to XP-*in what way*-sluicing? Or to XP-*to what degree*-sluicing?

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