

Syntactic and semantic identity in Korean sluicing: A direct interpretation approach

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Abstract

Sluicing in Korean allows to unexpress clausal material, but the unexpressed, elided material needs to be recovered in a proper way. The recovering process makes use of either syntactic or semantic identity or parallelism between the elided expression and its antecedent. The paper discusses two different types of sluicing (*merger* and *sprouting*) in Korean and offers an account of sluicing in the matrix as well as in the embedded clause, based on the framework of construction-based HPSG and an independently motivated theory of dialogue context. In particular, the paper offers a direct interpretation approach couched upon this framework that can account for the recovering process, while avoiding pitfalls that affect both syntactically based and semantically based accounts.

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1. Introduction

Sluicing in English is a type of ellipsis introduced by a *wh*-expression, whereby everything except the *wh*-expression is elided from the clause and its interpretation is supplied by the surrounding context (see, among others, Ross, 1969; Chung et al., 1995, 2010; Ginzburg and Sag, 2000; Merchant, 2001, 2006; van Craenenbroeck and Merchant, 2013; Larson, 2013). It has been observed that there are two different types of sluicing in English with respect to the property of the correlate (antecedent) that the remnant *wh*-expression is linked to. For example, in English, the first type, as illustrated by the attested corpus examples in (1), is *merger*, where the remnant *wh*-phrase has an overt correlate (in italics) and the expression within the bracket is understood to be missing or elided:

- (1) a. He looked like *someone* I know, but I can't think **who** <he looked like>.
- b. We always knew he would succeed at *something*, but we didn't know **what** <he would succeed at>.
- c. He came in here *somewhere*, but we don't know **where** <he came in>.

The second type, exemplified in (2), is *sprouting*, in which the first clause includes no overt correlate for the *wh*-remnant:

- (2) a. She is complaining, but we don't know about **what** <she is complaining>.
- b. Unfortunately, the supply seems to have dried up. I don't know **why** <the supply has dried up>.
- c. They know it is coming, but they don't know **when** <it is coming>.

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Given the observation that sluicing is widespread cross-linguistically (see, among others, Lobeck, 1995; Merchant, 2001, 2006; van Craenenbroeck and Lipták, 2006; van Craenenbroeck and Merchant, 2013), we would expect that the typologically different language Korean may also employ two different types of sluicing. As illustrated in (3), we first observe that Korean has the merger type of sluicing where the *wh*-remnant (or sluice) is associated with an overt correlate in the preceding clause (see, among others, Kim, 1997; Park, 2001; Sohn, 2000, 2004; Jo, 2005; Kim and Sells, 2013a,b):¹

- (3) a. ku-nun *nwukwunka-lul* talm-ass-nuntey, **nwukwu**-i-nci molu-keyss-ta.
 he-TOP someone-ACC resemble-PST-but who-COP-QUE not.know-PRES-DECL
 ‘He resembled someone, but I do not know who.’
 b. kapcaki *mwuesinka-ka* nal-a o-ass-nuntey, **mwues**-i-nci molu-keyss-ta.
 suddenly something-NOM fly-CONN come-PST-but what-COP-QUE not.know-PRES-DECL
 ‘Something suddenly flew in, but I do not know what.’

The second clause of the examples here contains a *wh*-phrase associated with the overt correlate *nwukwunka-lul* ‘someone-ACC’ and *mwuesinka-ka* ‘something-NOM’, respectively. In addition, Korean also allows sprouting with no correlate in the preceding clause, as illustrated in (4):

- (4) a. ches khisu-lul ha-yess-nuntey, **nwukwu-wa**-i-nci molu-keyss-ta.
 first kiss-ACC do-PST-but who-with-COP-QUE not.know-PRES-DECL
 ‘(I) did the first kiss, but I don’t know with whom.’
 b. mwullyang-i patakna-ss-nuntey, **way**-i-nci molu-keyss-ta.
 stock-NOM bottom-PST-but why-COP-QUE not.know-PRES-DECL
 ‘The item is out of stock, but I do not know why.’

Unlike the examples in (3), the preceding clause here includes no overt correlate linked to the *wh*-remnant in the matrix clause. Despite this difference from merger, such sprouting examples also include a *wh*-remnant in the second conjunct whose interpretation depends on the previous clause or context. In addition, as seen from the English translations, the understood material appears to be a clause, which is a canonical property of the sluicing construction.

In the analysis of sluicing, much of the previous literature has focused on three main questions: syntactic, identity, and licensing questions (see, among others, Merchant, 2012; van Craenenbroeck and Merchant, 2013; van Craenenbroeck and Lipták, 2013, and Phillips and Parker, 2014). The syntactic question inquires if there is any syntactic structure for the elided parts in sluicing that are given in the context. The identity question concerns the relationship between the understood material in ellipsis and its antecedent, focusing on the question of whether the identity relation is syntactic or semantic. The licensing question looks into what allows for the ellipsis of the missing material in sluicing. The previous literature, paying much attention to some or all of these questions, can be classified into three main approaches: PF-deletion (Ross, 1969; Merchant, 2001; Fox and Lasnik, 2003), LF-copying (Lobeck, 1995; Chung et al., 1995, 2010; Chung, 2006, 2013), and the Direct Interpretation (DI) approach (Ginzburg and Sag, 2000; Culicover and Jackendoff, 2005; Sag and Nykiel, 2011; Nykiel, 2013). Both the PF-deletion and LF-copying approach assume that the ellipsis site has internally structured material through the derivation. The difference lies in the fact that the deletion approach posits ordinary syntax which undergoes some kind of deletion and renders the syntax unpronounced. Meanwhile, the LF copying approach posits a null lexical element which is replaced or identified at some level of representation, say, LF. Unlike these two, the DI approach assumes that there is no syntactic structure at the ellipsis site other than the *wh*-phrase. In this paper, we try to show that the DI approach can be a feasible alternative in accounting for syntactic/semantic identity conditions as well as other concerning grammatical properties observed in Korean sluicing.

The paper will unfold as follows. Section 2 discusses an overview of Korean sluicing, comparing two different types of sluicing, merger and sprouting. These two types behave alike in many respects, but display intriguing differences demanding a sophisticated analysis. Section 3 offers a discussion of the three competing approaches for sluicing, focusing on Korean. This section considers pros and cons of the three approaches in dealing with merger and sprouting in Korean. Section 4 focuses on syntactic and semantic identity issues between the elided parts and the putative sources. The section shows that merger and sprouting require both syntactic and semantic identity conditions. Section 5 provides a DI approach for Korean sluicing while answering the three main research questions for sluicing (is there syntax in the ellipsis site, is the missing material syntactically or semantically identical to its antecedent and what licenses the ellipsis?)

¹ The abbreviations we use for glossing Korean data include ACC (accusative), CL (classifier), COMIT (comitative), COMP (complementizer), CONN (connective), COP (copula), DAT (dative), DECL (declarative), DEL (delimiter marker), GEN (genitive), PNE (prenominal ending), NOM (nominative), PASS (passive), PRES (present), PST (past), QUE (question), and TOP (topic).

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