A Wh-in situ Account for Island Insensitivity in Malay Sluicing

Deborah J.M. Wong
University of California, Los Angeles
deborah.jm.wong@ucla.edu

Introduction

Malay displays island insensitivity under sluicing:

(1) Ali bertemu dengan perempuan yang ada sesuatu   diatas kepalanya,
    Ali met   with   woman   C EXT something on   head.3Sg,
    tapi saya tak tahu apa
    but 1Sg NEG know what
    `Ali met a woman who had something on her head, but I don't know what.'

I argue that sluicing in Malay is due to non-movement of the wh-remnant and deletion of non-constituents:

(2) Ali bertemu dengan seseorang semalam, tapi saya tak tahu Ali bertemu
    Ali met   with   someone yesterday, but 1Sg. NEG know Ali met
    dengan siapa semalam
    with   who yesterday
    `Ali met someone yesterday, but I don't know who.'

I show using scope effects and preposition-stranding that sluicing in Malay acts parallel to wh-in situ embedded questions rather than wh-movement embedded questions. Island insensitivity follows straightforwardly from wh-in situ sluicing.

Island Insensitivity Problem

A major approach to sluicing involves wh-movement followed by deletion of the TP that contained the moved wh-phrase under strict identity (Ross 1969, Merchant 2001):

(3) John ate something, but I don't know what$_1$ [John ate t_1].

Such an approach faces difficulty in accounting for island insensitivity:

(4) They want to hire someone who speaks a Balkan language, but I don't remember which. (Balkan language)   (Merchant 2001)

Under the movement approach, there are two main strategies to account for island insensitivity:
(i) Repair Strategy (Merchant 2001)
• Assumes that the ungrammaticality of islands is due to an illicit phonological representation.
• The deletion operation removes the offending construction.

(5) They want to hire someone who speaks a Balkan language, but I don't remember which (Balkan language) *[they want to hire someone who speaks].

(ii) Evade Strategy (Merchant 2001, Barros et al. 2014)
• Relaxes the identity condition on ellipsis.
• Posits a non-isomorphic construction in the ellipsis site.

(6) They want to hire someone who speaks a Balkan language, but I don't remember which (Balkan language) [it is].

Wh-in situ Approaches

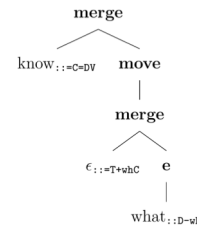String-Vacuous (Kimura 2010, Abe & Hornstein 2012, Abe 2015, Sato 2016)
• The tail of a wh-chain is pronounced because a PF output economy condition prevents string-vacuous application of Move.
• Focus feature on the wh-remnant prevents it from being deleted.

(7) John ate something, but I don't know <what> [John ate <what$_F$>].

Pro-form (Barker 2013, Kobele 2014)
• The locus of ellipsis is on the level of derivation instead of the derived structure.
• Ellipsis sites are resolved by replacing them with their antecedents semantically.

➢ Under a wh-in situ approach, we do not have to decide between the repair or evade strategy as the problem they solve does not arise.

(8) Partial derivation of sluice

Evidence 1 : Scope Effects

In Malay wh-questions that contain quantifiers as subjects, different responses are elicited depending on whether the wh-phrase moves or remains in situ.

(9) a. semua pelajar itu membeli apa?   (wh-in situ)
       all   student the buy   what
    b. apa yang semua pelajar itu beli? (wh-movement)
       what C   all   student the buy
       `What did every student buy?'

Available readings:
(i) ∀ > wh-phrase : Distributive answer
In a model that contains three students {John, Mary, Bill}, the answer could be `John bought a book, Mary bought a pencil, Bill bought a ruler'.
(ii) wh-phrase > ∀ : Collective answer
In a model that contains three students {John, Mary, Bill}, the answer can only be `every student bought a book'

➢ (9a) is ambiguous between readings (i) and (ii). (9b) is unambiguous, having only the reading in (ii).

The pattern is consistent with the scope of quantification in Malay. Malay exhibits scope rigidity.

(10) semua pelajar itu membaca sebuah buku
     all   student the read   CL   book
     `Every student read a book.'

Available reading:
(i) ∀x[student(x) → ∃y[book(y) ∧ read(y)(x)]]
(ii) *∃y[book(y) ∧ ∀x[student(x) → read(y)(x)]]

Under sluicing, two readings can be obtained with the wh-remnant:

(11) semua pelajar itu membaca sebuah buku, tapi saya tak tahu buku yang
     all   student the read   CL   book, but 1Sg NEG know book C
     mana
     which
     `Every student read a book, but I don't know which book.'

Available readings: both (i) ∀ > wh-phrase; and (ii) wh-phrase > ∀.
➢ This fact is consistent with a wh-in situ approach to sluicing but not a wh-movement approach.

Evidence 2: Preposition-Stranding

Malay is a non-p(reposition) stranding language.

(12) a. *siapa yang Ali bagi buku kepada?
         who   C   Ali give book to
     b. kepada siapa yang Ali bagi buku?
         to   who C   Ali give book
         `To who did Ali give the book?'

Merchant (2001) establishes the P-stranding generalization (PSG) that has a straightforward explanation under the wh-movement account.
• A language L will allow p-stranding under sluicing iff L allows p-stranding under regular wh-movement.

Malay is a counterexample to the PSG in allowing p-stranding under sluicing:

(13) Ali bagi buku kepada seseorang, tapi saya tak   tahu (kepada) siapa?
     Ali give book to   someone, but 1Sg NEG know (to)   who
     `Ali gave a book to someone, but I don't know (to) who.'

• Under a wh-movement approach, the violation of the PSG is difficult to explain.
• Under a wh-in situ approach, the violation is explained away, since no preposition is being stranded.

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