On Some Doubly-Filled Comps That Are Not*

Mark Baltin

Department of Linguistics

New York University

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This squib provides evidence from a cross-linguistic perspective for a view of clause structure originally proposed by Rizzi (1997) that posits, in place of a unitary node Complementizer, the series of functional projections in (1):

(1) ForceP
    |   TopicP
    |   FocP
    |   TopP
    |   Fin(ite)P

The focus of this squib will be the structure of wh-interrogatives, which are generally thought to be in [Spec, CP], with the structure in (2):

(2) CP
    |   XP
    |   [ +wh] C’
    |   C
    |   TP

The structure in (2) will be shown to be deficient in several key respects with respect to the analysis of sluicing in languages with overt material in what (2) would take to be Comp (in the non-sluiced versions), with those deficits being traced back to its impoverishment of structure.

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A number of linguists have noted that interrogative wh-phrases are, or have the ability to be, focussed (e.g. Merchant (2001), Rizzi (1997)). In Rizzi’s view, interrogative wh-phrases are in [Spec, FocP], giving an interrogative the potential structure in (3):

(3) 
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  ForceP
  `Force'
   Force       TopP
     `Top'
      Top       FocP
        `Foc'
         DP +wh Foc
           Foc FinP
             Fin `Fin'
                Fin TP
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This structure for constituent interrogatives gives a natural account of the fact, first noted, to my knowledge, by Lobeck (1995) and then discussed extensively in Merchant

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1 This must be qualified, in view of van Craenenbroeck’s (to appear) convincing, to my mind, distinction between simple and complex wh-phrases (corresponding roughly to Pesetsky’s (1987) distinction between non-D-linked and D-linked wh-phrases).

Craenenbroeck argues that the former are operators, while the latter are not, and places them in different structural positions. It is tempting to identify the simple wh-phrases as foci, and the complex ones as topics. Interestingly, Thrainsson (2001) reports that German wh-phrases do not induce weak crossover effects, and Rizzi (1997) notes that topicalizations generally don’t induce these effects. Mahajan (1990) argues that Hindi wh-phrases occur in the position of topics. If correct, these findings must be integrated into the analysis of sluicing.
that in so-called “Doubly-Filled Comp” languages, in which a wh-phrase occurs with an overt complementizer, the complementizer must be retained in sluicing.

Examples of such languages are the following:

(4) (Bavarian German)(Lobeck, p. 58, ex. (64)) Du woidd-st doch kumma, owa mia wissn ned

You wanted come, but we know not waan-st (du) kumma woidd-st.

when-(2sg) (you) come wanted-(2sg).

You wanted to come, but we don’t know when you wanted to come.

(5) (Norwegian) (Lobeck, p. 59, ex. (67)) Vi vet [CP hvem som [t snakker med Marit]]

We know who that talks with Mary.

(6) (Allison Henry, p.c.) (Belfast English) They discussed a certain model, but they didn’t know which model that they discussed.

(7) (Bellinzonese)(Andrea Cattaneo, p.c.) Al Gianni l ha legiü un certu libru, ma a sò mia quale libru che l ha legiü

the J. SCL_IIIsg has read a certain book but SCl_IIsg know not which book that SCL has read.

John has read a certain book, but you don’t know which book her has read.

In the case of Bavarian German, the supposed lexical material in Comp, rather than being a free morpheme, is an inflectional suffix that agrees with the subject.

In all of these cases, the overt complementizer must delete. I illustrate for Belfast English, but the same facts hold for all of the languages cited:
They discussed a certain model, but they didn’t know which model (*that )___

A straightforward account of this fact could be provided if sluicing were deletion of the complement of a head that included the overt complementizer. If we place the overt complementizer in Fin, and view sluicing as the deletion of the complement of Foc, we would accomplish our aim; the complement of Foc includes FinP.

In fact, if we analyzed so-called T-to-C movement as, more precisely in Rizzi’s approach, T-to-Fin movement, we could account for the facts noted above as well as a fact noted by Lasnik (1999) about the incompatibility of sluicing with inversion.

Lasnik considers the following type of sluice:

(9)a. Speaker A: John saw somebody.

b. Speaker B: Who?

Speaker B’s utterance is obviously a shortened version of (10):

(10) Who did John see?

The structure of Speaker B’s utterance in (9) is (11) for Lasnik:
Lasnik assumes sluicing to be TP-deletion. Assuming inversion to be T-to-C movement, as is standard, the crucial question is why inversion does not apply if sluicing occurs, so that Speaker B’s utterance would be, instead of (8)(b), (8)(b’):

(8)(b’) *Who did__?*

Given that T-to-C movement is driven by the need to check a strong feature, Lasnik notes that ellipsis can function as an alternative route to the elimination of a strong feature, which he takes to reside in T, rather than C. The question, then, is why, if T’s strong feature can be checked in C, T-to-C movement cannot occur, as well as sluicing. One would have to formulate an economy condition that would, perhaps, rule out one of the two ways of eliminating the strong feature (i.e., checking through T-to-C movement, or deletion of the projection that contains T), creating a sort of “last resort” condition for either deletion or movement, but this seems dubious for ellipsis, given that it seems generally optional.

However, the main problem with this approach, from my perspective, is that it separates the incompatibility of T-to-C movement and sluicing from the impossibility of
stranding overt complementizers when the rest of the clause is sluiced. Placing the wh-phrase in a projection separate from, and higher than, the overt material, we can simply have sluicing delete the projection that dominates the overt material but which excludes the wh-phrase, in this case the complement of focus.

II. Deletion of Non-Interrogative Complements of Focus

If there is a Foc head, and what is called sluicing is the deletion of the complement of Foc, we predict that sluicing should have a wider distribution than just the deletion of clausal complements of interrogative operators. Indeed, we do find deletion of clausal complements of focussed phrases.

For example, Merchant (2004) gives extensive arguments that answer fragments are focussed, and have been extracted from clauses that then delete. Thus, Speaker B’s answer would have the structure in (12) (again, bolding indicates deletion):

(12) Speaker A: What did John eat?

Speaker B: [ [steak] [Foc’ [ Foc [ John ate t ]]]

Similarly, it seems plausible to place the focus of a cleft sentence in a focus projection, as in (13):

(13) It was [ [John] [Foc’ [ Foc [TopP [who] [Top’ Top[ Fred saw t]]]]]]

One then notes that it is possible to omit the presupposed clause, as in (14):

(14) It was John.

Wang (2006) notes that such deletion is possible in Chinese for non-wh-clauses out of which focussed material has been extracted, and provides the following examples (his (35-37):

(15) Lisi zuotian jiandao yi-ge dongxi, (er) wo houlai cai zhidao *(shi) pijia Lisi
yesterday pick one-CL thing and I later then know FOC wallet
Lit. ‘Lisi picked up something yesterday, and I knew (it was) a wallet afterwards.’

(16) Lisi zuotian yujian yi-ge ren, (er) wo houlai cai zhidao *(shi) na-ge ren
Lisi yesterday met one-CL person and I later then know FOC that-CL person
Lit. ‘Lisi met someone yesterday, and I knew (it was) that person afterwards.’

(17) wo tingshuo Lisi mai-le yi-dong fangzi, (er) wo houlai cai zhidao *(shi) zai niuyue
I hear Lisi buy-PRF one-CL house and I later then know FOC at N.Y.
Lit. ‘I heard that Lisi bought a house, but I knew afterwards that (it was) in N.Y.’

Van Craenenbroeck & Liptak (2006) similarly show that in Hungarian, non-interrogative complements can elide. For example, (18) (their (25)) shows the complement of a non-wh-focus deleting:

(18) Ja´nos meghı´vott valakit e´s azt hiszem
Ja´nos pv.invited someone-acc and that-acc think
hogy Be´la´t [e].
that Be´la-acc
Ja´nos invited someone and I think it was Be´la he invited.

They also cite Hoyt & Theodorescu (to appear) for examples showing that Roumanan also allows the focus of a eleft to delete:

(19) Am aflat ca´ cineva a plecat, dar nu
past.1sg learned that someone past.3sg left but not
nu s, tiu dacar Ion [e].
not know.1sg if Ion
I found out that someone left, but I don’t know if it was Ion.
Hence, it is clear that slucing does not only target complements of wh-phrases; however, we clearly cannot delete simply any kind of complements. Targeting the deletion to the complement of a Foc head would seem to characterize the facts accurately.

III. Sluicing and an Overt Foc Head

Aboh (2004, 2005) shows that Gungbe, a Niger-Congo language, has overt particles that mark focus and topic. The focus marker is the particle *we*, and an example is found in (20):

(20) 1. Un do na Assiba do moto ve lo we mi na xo
<moto ve lo>
1sg tell Prep Asiba Comp car red Det FOC 1pl Fut buy
'I told Asiba that we will buy THE RED CAR'

The focus particle *we* shows up in questions as well:

(21) Un kanbio Asiba do ete we mi na xo
1sg ask Asiba Comp what FOC 1pl Fut buy
'I asked Asiba (that) what will we buy?'

The crucial example is one in which sluicing occurs, and the focus particle *we* must be retained, in contradistinction to the cases in Norwegian (6), Belfast English (10), and Bellinzonese (11):

(22) Sûrû xO~ nù "ë, àmO!n má nyO! nù "ë
*(wE~)*
Suru buy thing Indef but 1sg.Neg know thing that Foc
'Suru bought something, but I don’t what’

b. ME~ "ë wá, àmO!n má nyO! mE~ "ë
*(wE~)

person Indef come but 1sg.Neg know person that Foc

‘Someone came, but I don’t know who’

The Gungbe facts show that there is not a prohibition against overt material per se in the Comp domain, but rather a restriction against non-focal particles following the wh-phrase.

V. Conclusion

In this squib, I have shown that Rizzi’s (1997) more articulated system of functional projections provides a plausible and simple account of the universal restrictions on sluicing in languages that have so-called “Doubly-filled Comps”, and that the term “Doubly-filled Comp” is an expository term that does not seem to have any theoretical content.

Another implication of this work is for the grammatical representation of focus. There are currently at least two approaches to the syntax of focus of which I am aware. One, embodied by Rizzi (1997) and adopted here, posits a functional head that is dedicated to focus, a Focus with its associated projections; the other approach, embodied by Cinque (1993), Horvath (2007), and others, takes focus to be derivative on factors such as stress or intonation, but not specifically represented in its own projection.

The approach taken here assumes, and I believe requires, a universal formulation of sluicing as deletion of the complement of a Focus head. Its universality would therefore require a Focus head in the languages, German and Hungarian, that Cinque and Horvath respectively, investigate. Further research is clearly needed to arrive at an integrated account of focus.
On the face of it, this analysis would seem to support Koopman’s (2000) “Generalized Doubly-Filled Comp Filter”, which bans lexical material in both the head and spec of a given projection (she argues that this filter is really a consequence of Kayne’s (1994) Linear Correspondence Axiom). While it is true that the majority of cases that this squib analyzes of so-called “doubly-filled Comps” are shown really to have the specifiers and heads in different projections, there is one case that does not: Aboh’s Gungbe examples, in which a simple wh-phrase (argued for English and Dutch to be an operator, and hence presumably focussed) co-occurs with a focus particle.

Following Aboh in taking the focus particle to be a Foc⁰ head, this case would seem to be inconsistent with Koopman’s filter. More research is clearly needed to see if such violations are pervasive.

References:


