An Analysis of Sluicing Construction in Ngwa-Igbo

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ABSTRACT

This study examined sluicing construction as an elliptical process in the Ngwa dialect of Igbo. Sluicing is a situation whereby an interrogative clause is reduced to containing only a wh-element. The aim was to provide evidence of the availability and an analysis of the operation of sluiced elliptical constructions in the dialect. The purposive sampling technique was used to obtain the data. The primary data comprised interviews, participant observation, and native-speaker competence, while the library, the internet, and other published materials formed the secondary sources. The Minimalist Program of Chomsky (2000) was adopted in the analysis. Result shows that sluicing relies on wh-question strategy, making use of question words like ngịrị ‘what’, onye ‘who’, ole ‘how many’, nña/ebe ole ‘where’, mgbe ole ‘when’, ke ole ‘which one’, sịta ngịrị ‘because of what’/‘why’, ndịị ‘which’ (where, what, how) to represent an elided structure. Sluicing in Ngwa occurred in direct and indirect interrogatives and involved eliding the entire question phrase leaving behind only the question word, which remains and functions as the complement of the verb of the subordinate clause. However, the elided parts of the question phrase usually share striking resemblance with the matrix clause.

KEYWORDS: Ellipsis, Sluicing, Ngwa-Igbo, Dialect, Minimalism

INTRODUCTION

An ellipsis is a technical term used to describe the omission of a linguistic item from a sentence. It is a process that occurs in many languages around the world. It happens when the elided material can be unambiguously retrieved from context or through other pragmatic or extralinguistic references. An ellipsis is not applied indiscriminately; rather, there are rules for the relevant element that can undergo deletion. One such rule is that the elided structure must be identical to the antecedent (in the same construction). Hence, ellipsis involves a relationship between the antecedent element and the elided material. This is what guarantees the recoverability of the elided part. The major problem associated with ellipses is the form-meaning mismatch. Hardt (1993) notes that "language is a correlate of syntactic forms with meaning." But, in ellipsis, this is not the case. An ellipsis involves a situation whereby meanings are sometimes expressed by a missing syntactic object. This disparity between phonological material and the syntactic structure of the sentence is regarded as the most intriguing puzzle in ellipsis. The attempt to provide explanations for this problem has led to

the formulation of different theories, like the structural and nonstructural approaches to ellipsis. Another issue in ellipsis research is the licensing requirement for ellipsis.

There has been an increased interest in the study of human languages, especially the different dialects, in recent times because of the need to preserve this essential part of human heritage and thus prevent it from extinction. It is this same interest that motivated the present researcher to carry out an analysis of the ellipsis Ngwa dialect since no research, at least to the best knowledge of the researcher, has been done on this area before now in the dialect or in the Igbo language in general. The name Ngwa refers to the people, their land, and the dialect. Williamson and Blench (2000) classified it as an Igboid lect under the New Benue-Congo sub-family of the Niger-Congo phylum, while Nwaozuzu (2008) placed it under the south-eastern group of dialects. Ngwa Igbo (NI) is the major speech form spoken by Ngwa people and used in Ngwaland. It is used as the primary means of communication in interpersonal relationships, community/village meetings, local trades, worship, folktales, songs, entertainments, etc. In administration and education, however, Standard Igbo and English are the preferred languages.

Statement of the Problem

The idea relating to ellipsis is that it involves omitting some part of a construction on the assumption that an earlier sentence will make the meaning of the elided part clear. Both speakers and writers of a language often leave out redundant grammatical material that is considered to be of no informational relevance. As relevant as this grammatical material is, most Ngwa Igbo speakers are not aware of its absence. What is not clear is whether, despite this omission, the meaning of a construction is still understood by the hearer or reader. Thus, the problem that this study investigated was whether such materials, although omitted, still exert some meaning effects on the understanding of the whole construction.

To the best of the researcher's knowledge, ellipsis is a relatively neglected area of research, and no academic work on the ellipsis phenomenon exists in Ngwa Igbo. This study is, therefore, a first attempt at studying and analysing some ellipsis constructions. Specifically, the problems the study tried to solve are basically two: (i) to find out if sluicing construction is available in Ngwa Igbo and (ii) to determine how Ngwa Igbo listeners get an interpretation of what is said even when there is no overt material in the input through an analysis of sluicing construction.

CONCEPTUAL STUDY

Researchers agree that ellipsis involves the omission of materials (a word, phrase, or clause) from a construction, the meaning of which could be recovered from context or preceding discourse. According to Merchant (2013), "the term *ellipsis* has been applied to a wide range of phenomena across the centuries." "Ellipsis occurs when something that is structurally necessary is left unsaid" (Halliday & Hasan, 1994, p. 13). By using the word "unsaid," it implies that the elided material is "understood nevertheless" within the context. An ellipsis forces a connection—or a tie—between the point of the ellipsis and another part of the text. An ellipsis is an interesting phenomenon because it is identifiable by nothingness or absence within a bound context, usually a clause.

Ellipsis is defined by Crystal and Davy (1984) as the omission of a part of a sentence in conversational speech when the meaning is clear from the situation or verbal context. This corroborates the observation made earlier above that ellipsis involves leaving out elements in

a sentence whose meaning can be inferred from the discourse. Thus, both speakers and writers employ ellipses with the intention of shortening or reducing what they had said or written earlier. For Biber (1999), "elipsis is the omission of elements which are precisely recoverable from the linguistic or situational context." The implication of the above definition is that before an ellipsis can take place, there must have been another grammatical, linguistic, or extralinguistic context that contains the same information as the elliptical element.

An ellipsis is one of the most obvious effects of contextualisation in the case of sentence fragments, as illustrated above. An ellipsis occurs when elements are missing from the so-called surface structure. The surface structure in generative grammar refers to the level of structure reached after all transformations are done. In this regard, McShane and Marjorie (2005) connect ellipsis to syntax and suggest that the absent elements in the surface structure are expected to occupy a place in the syntactic structure of a sentence. Gengel (2007, p. 17) notes that "elliptical structures seem to be an economical device. On the surface, a speaker does not utter material she feels sure is already understood in the context and thus accessible to the hearer". However, in the syntactic derivation, "all considerations of economy seem to fail, as restrictions that hold in the distribution of elliptical structures language-internally and cross-linguistically demand a highly sophisticated approach" (Gengel, 2007).

Theoretical Studies

There are two major theories of ellipsis: the non-structural and the structural theories. The nonstructural (or semantic) approaches posit no unpronounced syntactic structure at all. According to Hardt (1993) “the relation governing ellipsis is a semantic rather than syntactic relation.” There is no more structure in the sentences than what is actually pronounced, and syntactic constraints are not respected in ellipsis. Therefore, an ellipsis site contains no internal structure at any level of representation. Elliptical material is base-generated empty and its meaning can simply be recovered from the antecedent clause or the previous discourse context through general mechanisms of recovery of meaning from discourse (Culicover and Jackendoff 2005; Dalrymple, Shieber, & Pereira, 1991; Hardt 1993). This view is defended by linguists like Ginzburg and Sag (2000); Culicover and Jackendoff (2005).

The structural approach claims that the syntax of an ellipsis site is in general just the same as the syntax of its non-elliptical counterpart, but subject to some kind of operation or constraint that induces non-pronunciation. Within the structural approaches, there are two main lines of argument: those that posit a null lexical element which is replaced at some level of representation not relevant to the pronunciation (at LF or in some semantic/pragmatic component) and those that posit LF-copying/null pro-form approaches. Those that posit null elements in the syntax come in two variants: either the null element is a single, designated terminal, as in Hardt (1993) and Lobeck (1995), or there are a plethora of null elements, as in Wasow (1972) and Ludlow (2004). The second group posits essentially ordinary syntax, subject to some kind of deletion to render the syntax unpronounced (PF-deletion approaches). The discussion is schematised as follows.

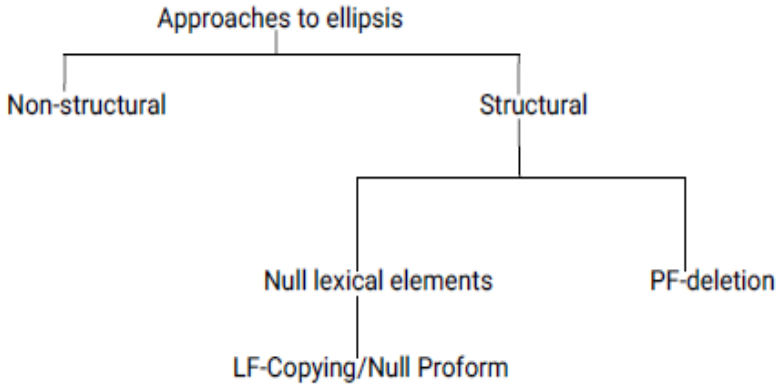

Figure 1: A schematic representation of the different approaches to ellipsis (Asuoha, 2020).

EMPIRICAL REVIEW

The notion "sluicing" was first investigated by Ross (1969), who argued that sluicing involves a regular *wh*-fronting followed by deletion of the sister constituent of the *wh*-phrase. In other words, sluicing typically elides everything from a clause except an interrogative expression (*wh*-element). For instance, in (1) the embedded clause contain a *question*-phrase. However, all the other elements following the *wh*-word have been deleted, leaving only the *wh*-element.

1. Jack bought something, but I don't know what.

Sluicing is a widespread ellipsis grammatical process in many languages of the world. There are two general schools of analysis regarding sluicing structure: either the understood elided material is present at some level of syntactic structure or it is not. Ross (1969) concluded that in English, sluicing formation parallels embedded *wh*-formation. In both, the embedded clause is raised to Spec-CP; in sluicing, it is followed by ellipsis of the embedded TP.

However, Ross (1969) analysis of sluicing appears not to respect islands: more accurately, that the *wh*-phrase in sluicing can be associated with (bind) a variable which corresponds in position to a correlate internal to an island in the antecedent TP. This analysis has been expanded in greater detail by Merchant (2001). The general opinion about sluicing is that it is a subspecies of ellipsis.

A second kind of analysis (Lobeck, 1995) holds that sluicing never occurs in relative clauses. It only deletes the IP-complement of an interrogative *wh*-complementiser, that is to say, sluicing is restricted to *wh*-questions (see Chung & McCloskey 1995).

Other works on sluicing include Ginzburg & Sag (2000) and Culicover (1999), both of who presented non-structural analyses of ellipsis. Their analyses posit no movement of the *wh*-remnant: it is base-generated in Spec-InterP and comes to bind a variable only at LF. They do not posit an unpronounced elliptical material. They are of the opinion that a clausal node immediately and exhaustively dominates the *wh*-phrase. This analysis takes care of island effects; however, its primary explicandum is the connectivity effects.

METHODOLOGY

Fourteen competent native speakers were selected through convenience and purposive sampling techniques and interviewed. Six of them were elderly persons between 60 – 70

years of age. The remaining eight were competent Igbo language teachers. The researcher personally interviewed and listened to informants as they responded to questions. Other native speakers were also listened to as they used their dialect in a natural uncontrolled situation. Secondary source comprised published and unpublished materials from the library, the internet and other electronic media. Tone marking convention used is as propounded by Igwe and Green (1963), which leaves the high tone unmarked, the low tone is marked with the grave [̀] while the macron [̄] is for down-stepped tone.

The descriptive method was adopted for the study, with interlinear morpheme-to-morpheme glossing. The Minimalist Program (MP) of syntactic analysis proposed in Chomsky (2000) was used in the analysis of data. The MP is the most recent version of transformational generative grammar which employs fewer linguistic apparatus to construct syntactic structures. Its basic operations are centred on economy and operations merge which target movement of features relevant for convergent computation.

Presentation and Analysis of Data

Sluicing in Ngwa dialect relies on *wh*-question formation or strategy. The lexical items that are used in marking questions in Ngwa dialect are: *ngịrị* 'what', *onye* 'who', *ole* 'how many', *nña*/*ebe ole* 'where', *mgbe ole* 'when', *ke ole* 'which one', *sịta ngịrị* 'because of what'/'why', *ndịghị* 'which' (where, what, how). Sluicing in Ngwa dialect is possible in direct interrogatives indirect interrogatives. The presentation will proceed, first, with sluicing in direct interrogatives.

Sluicing in Direct Interrogatives

In direct interrogatives, the questions are not embedded. There is only one clause which is the interrogative clause. Sluicing in direct interrogative involves eliding the entire question phrase leaving behind only the question element such as *onye* 'who', *ole* 'how many', *ebee* 'where', etc. Consider the following sluiced constructions in (2), below.

2 kpọrọ m. Mgbe ole *<la ị kpọrọ m?>*

2sg call-rV-FT me. Time when? <FOC 2sg call-rV.pst me>

'You called me. When' *<did you call me?>*

The sentence in (2), for instance, is a typical example of sluicing in Ngwa in which the antecedent clause contains an active verb inflected for past tense. The remnant of the ellipsis process is the *wh*-phrase, *mgbe ole* 'when'. Observe that sluiced constructions in Ngwa typically elide everything from a clause except an interrogative word (i.e. *wh*-element).

Note, again, that the clause introduced by *mgbe ole* 'when', for instance, which is the string *<ka i kpọrọ m>* is elided. The sluiced expression *ị kpọrọ m* 'you called me' is identical with the antecedent clause in both syntactic and semantic properties. The subject *ị* 'you' is a second person singular pronoun, the verb *kpọrọ* 'called' is a simple past tense (the verb root is *kpọ* 'call'), with -rV past suffix marker. The object complement of the verb *m* 'me' is a first person singular pronoun. Hence, the sluiced construction builds on core argument (subject or object) remnant.

The same explanation also goes for the data presented in (3), with the interrogative phrase as *sịta ngịrị* 'why' (or because of what).

3. chọrọ igbu onwe u. Sịta ngịrị? <*la i ji chọọ igbu onwe u*>

   2sg want-rV-FT kill self you. For what? <that PRN hold want kill self you>

   You want to kill yourself. 'Why?' <*do you want to kill yourself*>

The remnant of the sluiced construction in (3) contains two elements: *sịta ngịrị*. in this instance, it is the second element that bears the interrogative load of the phrase.

Sluicing in Indirect Interrogatives

Sluicing in an indirect interrogative involves eliding the entire question phrase leaving behind only the question word such as *onye* 'who', *ole* 'how many', *ebee* 'where', etc. Only the question word remains and functions as the complement of the verb of the subordinate clause. However, the elided parts of the question phrase usually share striking resemblance with the matrix clause.

The intended interpretations of the question denoting elliptical clause in (4 - 5) are given in parentheses, parts of these are anaphoric to the non-elided material in the antecedent.

4. Nna ụ n-sị tà i gwere ego, ị jụfụghụ ole? <*nna ụ nsị ta i gwere*>

   Father PRN prf-say COMP 2sg take money, 2sg ask-NEG how much? <father you say 2sg take>

   'Your father told you to collect some money, you didn't ask how much?' <*he said you collect*>

In example (4), the *wh*-question word *ole* 'how much' in the sluiced construction in the embedded clause refers back to the core argument in the antecedent clause that is the object complement of the verb, *ego* 'money'. In sluicing, there is a deletion of some parts of an answer culminating in the part that re-echoes the question. Consider the data in (5) example.

5. chọrọ imerụ onwe ụ ahụ; sita ngịrị? <*la i ji chọọ imerụ onwe ụ ahụ*>

   1sg want harm self you body; for what <that 1sg hold want harm self you body>

   Do you want to harm yourself, for what? <*do you want to harm yourself*>

   The next section will provide analysis of the data so far.

ANALYSIS OF DATA

Sluicing in Direct Interrogatives

The analysis is limited to the phrase containing the *wh*-word. The sluiced expression in (2) is repeated here as (6). The phrase marker is sketched as given in 7(a-b), while the derivation is schematised in (fig. 2-3). The discussion is centred on the relevant part.

6. kpọrọ m. Mgbe ole? <là i kpọrọ m>

   2sg called me. Time when? <FOC 2sg call me>

   You called me. When?

7a [$_{InterP}$mgbeole[$_{Inter}$Ø][$_{FocP}$~~mgbeole~~[$_{FOC}$là][$_{TP}$i[$_{T}$Ø][$_{vP}$~~mgbeole~~[$_{v}$kpọrọ[$_{VP}$ ~~kpọrọ~~ m ~~mgbeole~~]]]]]]

[$_{InterP}$when[$_{Inter}$Ø][$_{FocP}$~~when~~[$_{FOC}$do][$_{TP}$you[$_{T}$Ø][$_{vP}$~~when~~[$_{v}$call[$_{VP}$~~call~~ me ~~when~~]]]]]]

When <did you call me?>

b. [$_{InterP}$mgbeole[$_{Inter}$Ø][$_{FocP}$~~mgbeole~~[$_{FOC}$~~là~~][$_{TP}$~~i~~[$_{T}$Ø][$_{vP}$~~mgbeole~~[$_{v}$~~kpọrọ~~[$_{VP}$ ~~kpọrọmmgbeole~~]]]]]]

[$_{InterP}$when[$_{Inter}$Ø][$_{FocP}$~~when~~[$_{FOC}$~~do~~][$_{TP}$~~you~~[$_{T}$Ø][$_{vP}$~~when~~[$_{v}$~~call~~[$_{VP}$~~callmewhen~~]]]]]]

When?

Wh-movement derivation of sluicing in direct question

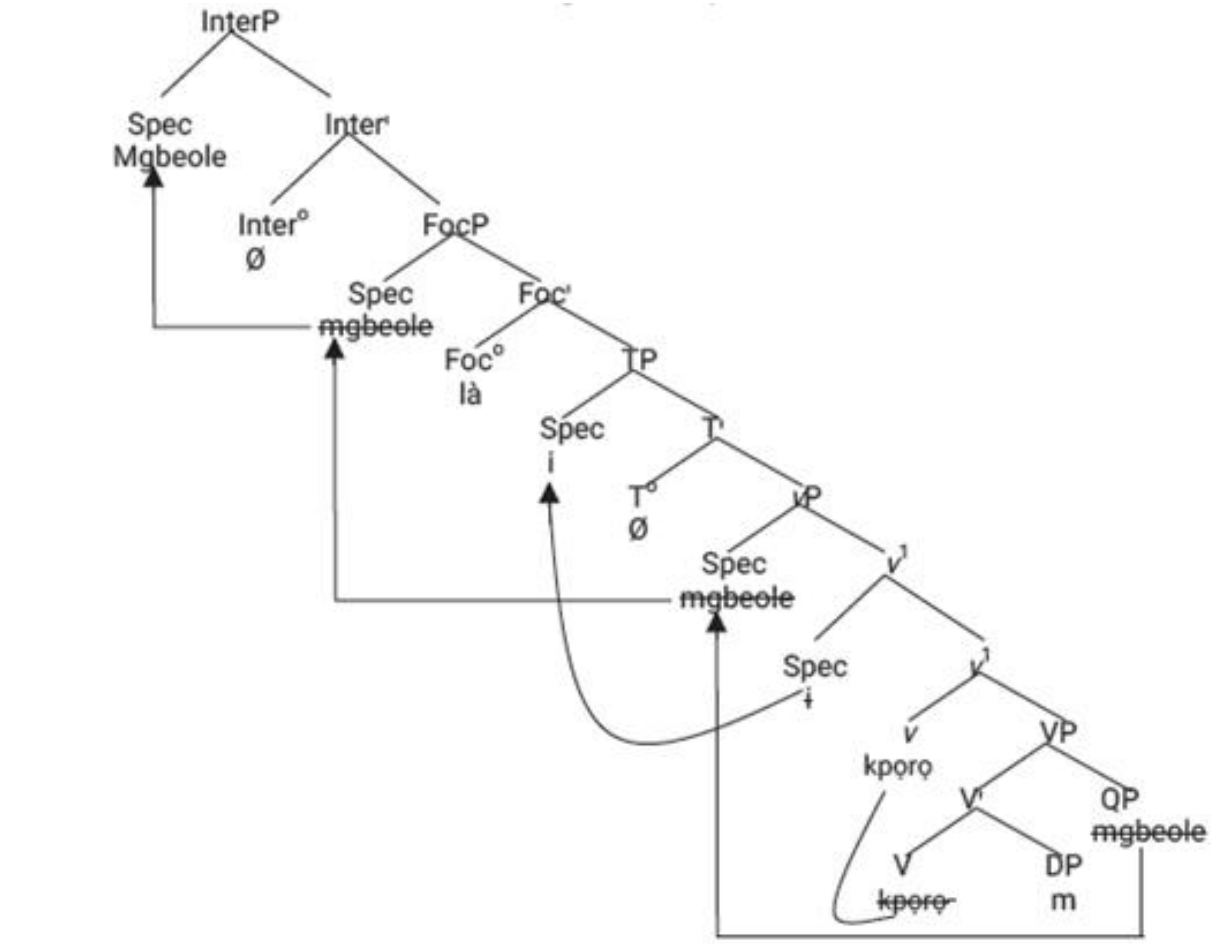

Figure 2: Showing wh-movement of sluicing construction in direct interrogative.

(b) Ellipsis – Sluicing COMP and PF deletion

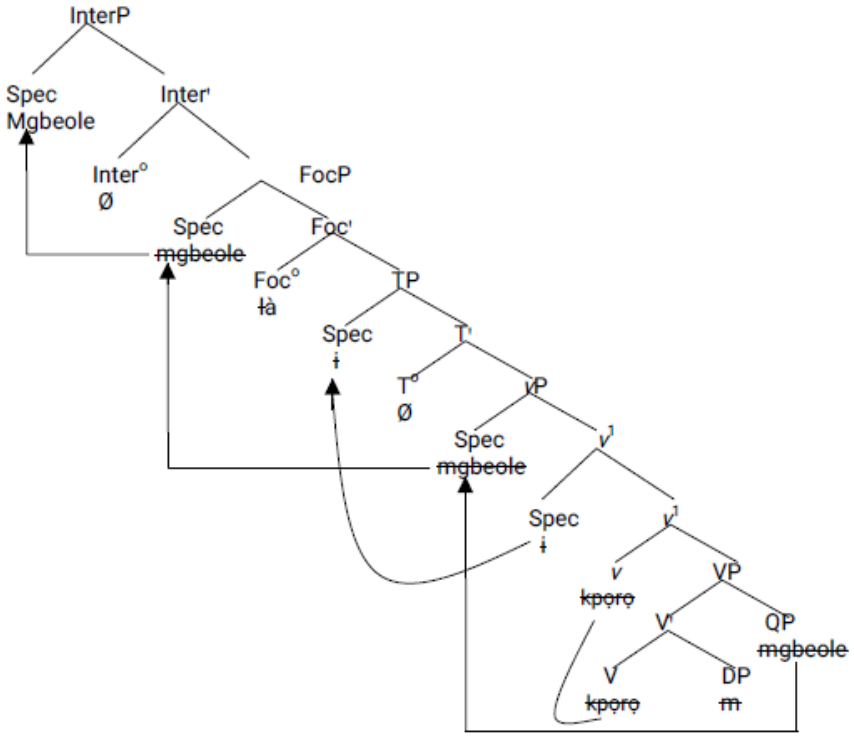

Figure 3: Showing ellipsis – sluicing COMP and PF deletion in direct interrogative.

Ngwa Igbo allows the *wh*-movement hence the *wh*-operators in the above examples move from their base-generated positions into [Spec FocP]. This follows from Rizzi (1997, p. 299) who argues that a preposed *wh*-operator expression 'ends up in Spec of Foc in main questions'. In the above derivation, the focus element, *la* occupies Foc^{o} in both constructions. The *wh*-operator has strong [Qf] and the Foc^{o} has an [+u-interpretable] feature of its own, which must be valued before reaching the covert syntax interface if not the derivation crashes at LF. Hence, preposing the wh-operator to Spec-Foc values this [+uF] on the Foc^{o}. Assuming the Split-CP analysis, the question phrase cartographically is a projection of the functional head Inter^{o}. Inter^{o} activates interrogative force through its edge features [EF] with which it attracts [+wh] operator from [Spec FocP] into its Spec to value its [Qf] features.

Taking 7(a) for illustration, and assuming the PISH analysis (the hypothesis assumes that the subject is base generated from [Spec, *v*P] before raising to [Spec, TP]), first the direct object *m* 'me' is merged with the verb *kpọrọ* 'call' to derive a v^{1}. The v^{1} then merges with the *wh*-operator *mgbe ole* 'when' to form VP. Then the VP merges with the light verb *v* to form a *v*^{1}. The light verb values the accusative case of the object *m* 'me'. The lexical verb raises to *v*^{o} and adjoins with the null causative verb. Then the *v*^{1} is merged with Spec *i* 'you' to form another *v*^{1} and then, finally, the *wh*-operator merges with the *v*^{1} to derive the *v*P. *I* 'you' is assigned θ-role but has an unvalued case feature. The VP circle is ready and thus undergoes transfer to the interface i.e. it becomes frozen to a probing head. And only the Edge and the head are available for further computation. Phase Impenetrability Condition (PIC) stated here in rule (1) is satisfied.

Rule 1: Phase Impenetrability Condition (PIC)

The c-command domain of a phase head is impenetrable to an external probe (i.e. a goal which is c-commanded by the head of a phase is impenetrable to any probe c-commanding the phase).

The *v*P proceeds in the computation, it merges with T^{o} which has some [Tns], [EPP] [uF] which must be assigned value if not the derivation will crash. T^{o} probes into its domain and finds the subject DP *i* which is attracted to [Spec, TP] and the DP's case is valued. The convergent TP is merged then with Foc^{o} *ka*. The Foc^{o} has [EPP] and [EF] which need to be valued. The Foc^{o} probes into its c-commanding domain and sees an active goal which is the wh-operator at the outer [Spec *v*P]. The probe and the wh-operator goal enter an agree relation, the wh-word is attracted to [Spec, FocP]. The TP circle is now ready for transfer. It is frozen, i.e. it becomes inactive and PIC is satisfied. Following Abimbola and Olaogun (2013), the derivation is then merged with Inter^{o} the locus of illocutionary force marked as interrogative. The Foc^{o} and its edge are still available for further computation. Thus, the FocP is merged with Inter^{o} which has [EF] that must be satisfied. Inter^{o} probes into its domain and finds the QP wh-operator *mgbe ole* 'when' at [Spec Foc] with [QF], the probe Inter^{o} attracts the QP and the features are valued. This is represented in 8(b) above. The crossed items are the *copies* of the moved items in the movement chain. After this, the sluicing-COMP generalisation stated in rule (2) applies, followed by the TP ellipsis.

Rule 2: The Sluicing-COMP Generalisation

In sluicing, no non-operator material may appear in COMP.

The term operator here refers to the phonological exponence of the wh-phrase itself, and COMP denotes pre-subject position in clauses ('the complementiser position') which is typically occupied by a complementiser which here refers to the InterP and theFocP. The generalisation in (1) rules out **là** which occupies the Foc^{o} position. Afterwards, the TP deletion follows and this sluices p-markers, leaving behind the wh-word *mgbe ole* 'when'.

Analysis of Sluicing in Indirect Interrogatives

The sluiced expression in (4) is repeated here as (8). It is sketched and derived as given in 9(a) *wh*-movement and 9(b) sluicing COMP deletion. The tree diagrams are presented in (fig. 4) for *wh*-movement and (fig. 5) for sluicing COMP deletion, respectively.

8. Nna ụ n-sị ta i gwere ego, ị jụfụghụ ole? <*nna ụ nsị ta i gwere*>

Father 2sg prf-say COMP 2sg take money, 2sg askNEG how much? <father you said 2sg take>

'Your father told you to take some money, you didn't ask how much?' <*he said you collect*>

9a. ị jụghụ [$_{\text{InterP}}$ole [$_{\text{FocP}}$ole [$_{\text{Foc}}$là [$_{\text{TP}}$~~nnaụ~~ [$_{\text{T}}$Ø][$_{v\text{P}}$~~ole~~ [$_{\text{V}}$si [$_{\text{VP}}$~~si~~ [$_{\text{ForceP}}$~~ole~~ [$_{\text{Force}}$ka]

2sg askNEG how much[$_{\text{FocP}}$howmuch[$_{\text{Foc}}$do[$_{\text{TP}}$fatheryou[$_{\text{T}}$Ø][$_{v\text{P}}$howmuch[$_{\text{V}}$say[$_{\text{VP}}$~~say~~[$_{\text{ForceP}}$ howmuch [$_{\text{Force}}$that]

[$_{\text{TP}}$i [$_{\text{T}}$Ø] [$_{v\text{P}}$gwere[$_{\text{VP}}$~~gwereole~~]]]]]

[$_{TP}$you[$_{T}$Ø][$_{vP}$collect[$_{VP}$collecthowmuch]]]]]

b. ị jụghụ [$_{InterP}$ole [$_{FocP}$~~ole~~ [$_{Foc}$~~là~~[$_{TP}$~~nna ụ~~ [$_{T}$Ø] [$_{vP}$~~ole~~ [$_{V}$~~si~~ [$_{VP}$~~si~~

2sg askNEG howmuch [$_{FocP}$~~howmuch~~[$_{Foc}$~~do~~[$_{TP}$~~fatheryou~~[$_{T}$Ø][$_{vP}$~~howmuch~~[$_{V}$~~say~~ [$_{VP}$~~say~~

$_{ForceP}$~~ole~~[$_{Force}$~~ta~~] [$_{TP}$~~i~~[$_{T}$Ø][$_{vP}$~~gwere~~[$_{VP}$~~gwereole~~]]]]]

[$_{ForceP}$~~howmuch~~ [$_{Force}$~~that~~][$_{TP}$~~you~~ [$_{T}$Ø] [$_{vP}$~~collect~~ [$_{VP}$~~collecthowmuch~~]]]]]

Derivation of Sluicing in indirect question

(a) Wh-movement Sluicing

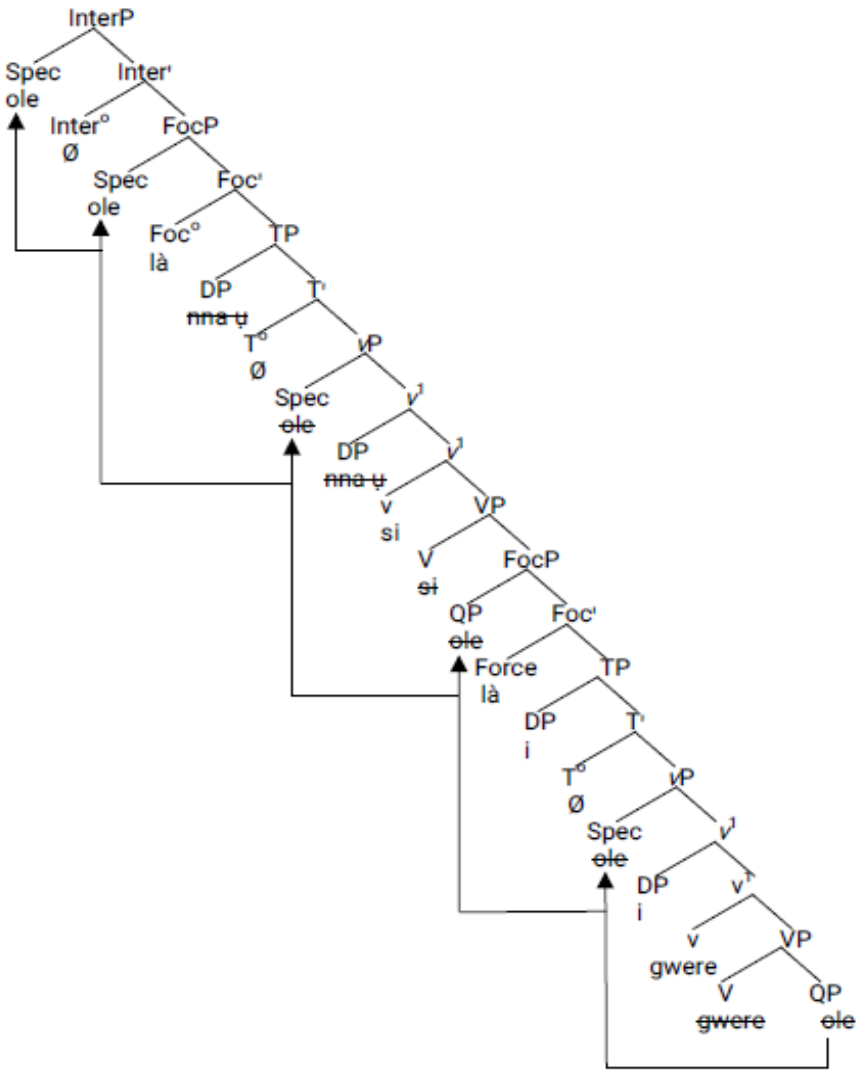

Figure 4: Showing *wh*-movement sluicing construction in indirect interrogative.

(b) Sluicing COMP and TP deletion

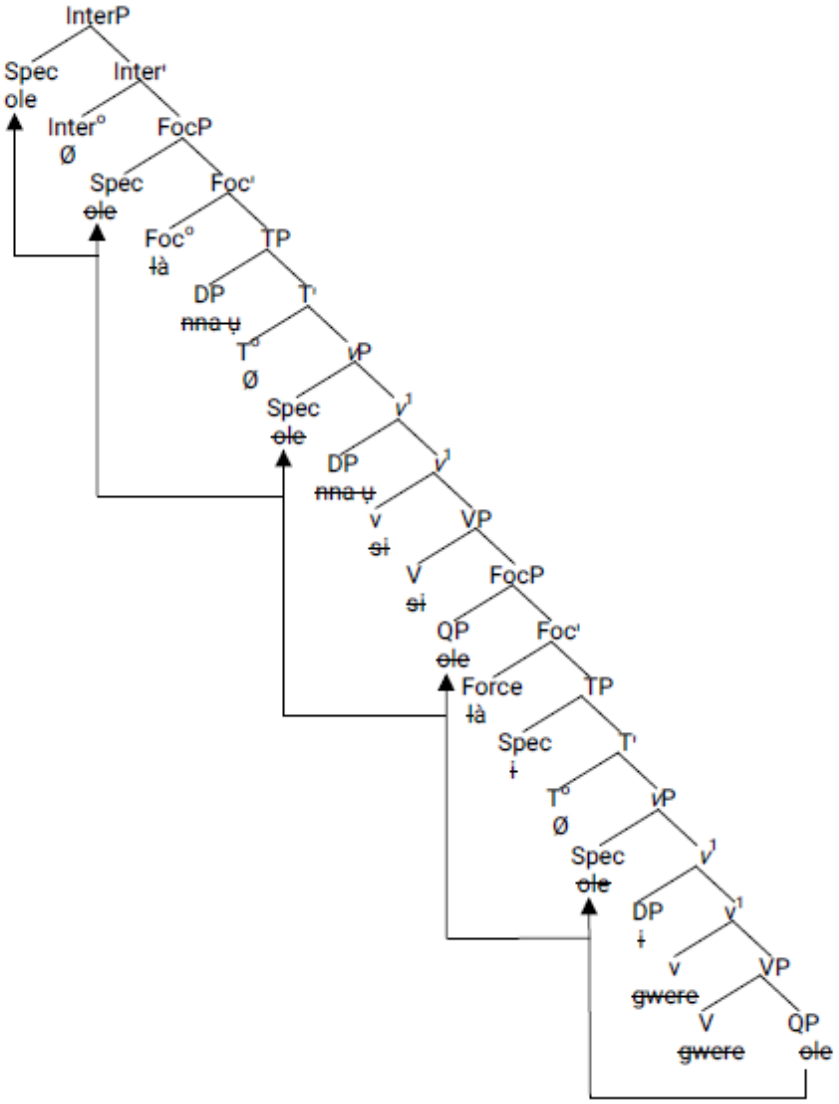

Figure 5: Showing sluicing COMP and TP deletion in indirect interrogative.

As was the case with direct questions, the derivation proceeds in the following manner: first, the wh-operator *ole* 'how much' is merged with the verb *were* 'collect' to derive a VP, the VP then merges with the light verb v to form a v^1. The lexical verb raises to v^o and adjoins with the null causative verb. Then the v^1 is merged with Spec *i* 'you' to form another v^1 and then, finally, the wh-operator merges with v^1 to derive the *v*P. *I* 'you' is assigned θ-role but still has an unvalued case feature. The VP circle is ready and thus undergoes transfer to the interface i.e. it becomes frozen to a probing head. And only the Edge and the head are available for further computation. Phase Impenetrability Condition (PIC) stated in Rule 1 is satisfied. The *v*P proceeds in the computation, it merges with T^o which has some [Tns], [EPP] [uF] which must be assigned values if not the derivation will crash. T^o probes into its domain and finds the subject DP *i* 'you', which is attracted to [Spec, TP] and the DP's case is valued. The convergent TP is merged then with Force^o *là* to derive Force^1, thereby producing an outer specifier position which serves as an escape hatch for the wh-operator at the outer Spec-*v*P. The wh-word is moved into Spec-ForceP, this prevents it from getting freezed in the phase,

and as a result, it is still visible for further computation. The TP circle is ready and thus undergoes transfer to the interface levels.

The ForceP proceeds in the computation, it merges with the verb *sị* 'say' to form a VP, the VP in turn merges with a light verb to form a v^1. The lexical verb is raised to adjoin with the light verb. The v^1 is then merged with the DP *nna gị* 'your father' to form a v^1 and then, the wh-operator is preposed to the [Spec *v*P] position, merged with the v^1, it forms a *v*P. Again, the VP, alongside the ForceP undergoes transfer to the interface. The *v*P then proceeds to be merged with a T^o which has some [Tns], [EPP] [uF] which must be assigned values if not the derivation will not converge.

Then, T^o probes into its domain and finds the subject DP *nna gị* 'your father', which is attracted to [Spec, TP], the DP's case is valued so are the features on T^o. The emergent TP is merged then with Foc^o *là*. The Foc^o has [EPP] and [EF] which need to be valued. The Foc^o probes into its c-commanding domain and sees an active goal which is the wh-operator *ole* at [Spec *v*P]. The probe and the wh-operator goal enter an agree relation, the DP is attracted to [Spec, FocP]. Assuming the Split-CP analysis, the question phrase cartographically is a projection of the functional head $Inter^o$. $Inter^o$ which activates interrogative force is merged with FocP to form $Inter^1$. Because of the $Inter^o$ edge features [EF], it attracts the wh-operator from [Spec FocP] into its Spec to value its [Qf] features. The TP circle is now ready for transfer. It is frozen i.e. it becomes inactive and PIC is satisfied. It undergoes transfer. So does the InterP and FocP. This is the line with Principle II of transfer which states that 'At the end of the overall derivation, all remaining constituents undergo transfer'. The crossed items are the *trace copies* in the movement chains as illustrated in 10(b). After this, Sluicing COMP generalisation applies and deletes all non-operators in the FocP. Subsequently TP deletion deletes all other items dominated by T.

DISCUSSION

The data presented above and subsequently anlaysed show clearly that sluicing is an ellipsis mechanism that is available in Ngwa dialect of Igbo and occur in interrogative constructions. The interrogative sentences appear in two parts: the yes/no and the *wh*-questions. The *wh*-interrogatives have two construction patterns: the base-generated or *in-situ* questions and *wh*-movement constructions. Sluicing is not possible within the base-generated questions. Therefore, in a non-sluicing construction, the question word remains *in-situ*. However, sluicing is possible and available with the movement operation syntax.

Sluicing construction in Ngwa Igbo is motivated by the syntax of its *wh*-system. The *wh*-system involves the extraction of a question phrase or word from the internal constituent of a sentence and placing it at the beginning of the sentence. For instance, the syntax of the data in (2) with the tree construction (fig. 3-4) is the syntax of *wh*-movement, in which a clause-size constituent (TP) has been elided. The elided clause leaves behind a *wh*-word *mgbe ole* 'when', which now moves to the initial position of the construction as the subject of the sentence.

The analysis here agrees with that proposed by Ross (1969) and Merchant (2001) which makes prediction that it should be possible to explain the properties of a sluicing construction in a given language by appealing to two independent properties of the language: first, the syntax of its wh-system and second, the mechanism it has at its disposal to achieve nonpronunciation.

The sluiced construction is an adjunct *wh*-word *mgbe ole* 'when', which is the remnant of the embedded tense phrase that has been elided or deleted. The tensed phrase minimally includes the subject 'you' and the predicate 'called me'. For ellipsis to take place, the constituent '*mgbe ole*' has to move outside of the TP to the specifier of the complementiser phrase (spec-CP) and, therefore, survive deletion. However, it is generated within the TP before it is moved to the front of the sentence. The surviving constituent or, precisely, the remnant is a *wh*-word that is fronted and forms part of the *wh*-question in line with what obtains in the English language setting.

The data presented shows that the structure of the elided part corresponds with that of the antecedent. In other words, the correlate in the antecedent clause is matched by the *wh*-word remnant in the sluice, and the combination of remnant and ellipsis site, is structurally parallel to the antecedent clause. It means is that the necessary conditions (licensing and recoverability) needed for ellipsis to take place are satisfied hence the sluiced construction is guaranteed.

Following Ross (1969) prediction, there is connectivity between the elliptical expression and the non-elliptical structure. The connectivity effect involved here includes feature-matching effect of case. As noted in Ross (1969), the sluiced *wh*-phrase in (5) bears the case that its counterpart in a non-elided structure is identified with. This is illustrated as (11).

11. Nna ụ n-sị ta i gwere ego, ị jụfụghụ ole? <nna ụ nsị ta i gwere>

Father 2sg prf-say COMP 2sg take moneyACC, 2sg askNEG howmuchACC

'Your father told you to collect money, yet you did not ask how much'.

The data in (11) clearly indicates that the wh-operator *ole* 'how much' that is the remnant in the sluiced site bears the same case as *ego* 'money' in the antecedent clause or correlate.

CONCLUSION

It is discovered in this study that sluicing in Ngwa Igbo is licensed by syntactic identity between the antecedent clause and the ellipsis site (Lasnik, 2001; Merchant, 2005). This is evident in all the data presented and analysed. In the different cases, the antecedent clause and the sluice part have matching syntactic structure (Ross, 1969; Merchant, 2008). The Ngwa Igbo listeners, therefore, get an interpretation of what is said by unambiguously connecting the implied meaning of the elided material with the antecedent information based on their syntactic similarity. Ellipsis is a process in many languages of the world. This study dwelt only one aspect of its manifestations in Ngwa.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that other types be taken up by future researchers.

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