snippets

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Sluicing bleeds differential object marking in Western Armenian

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Western Armenian (WA) has a system of differential object marking (DOM) where certain object nominals appear optionally, and often preferably, in the dative instead of the regular accusative (Khanjian 2013:32ff). This marking preference extends primarily to animate definite objects — i.e., those types of objects for which marking is obligatory in many better-studied DOM systems (e.g. Spanish, Farsi). The examples below illustrate:

(1)　a.　Aram-ə　　{ʃun-ə　　　/ ʃun-in　　　/ ʃun-mə　　　　/ ?*ʃun-i-mə}　　zargav.
　　　　　Aram-DEF　dog-DEF.ACC　dog-DEF.DAT　dog-INDEF.ACC　　dog-DAT-INDEF hit.3S
　　　　　'Aram hit the/a dog.'

　　　b.　Aram-ə　　{sɛʁan-ə　　　/ ?*sɛʁan-in　　/ sɛʁan-mə　　　/ ?*sɛʁan-i-mə}
　　　　　Aram-DEF　table-DEF.ACC　　table-DEF.DAT　table-INDEF.ACC　table-DAT-INDEF
　　　　　zargav.
　　　　　hit.3S
　　　　　'Aram hit the/a table.'

The following examples illustrate optional DOM of an object *wh*-phrase:

(2)　a.　(Z)ov　　/ voru　　　gəzarnɛ (an)?
　　　　　who.ACC　who.DAT　hit.3S　　he/she
　　　　　'Who does he/she hit?'

　　　b.　Vor　　mɛg　əngɛr-ə/-in　　　　　gəzarnɛ (an)?
　　　　　which one　friend-DEF.ACC/-DEF.DAT　hit.3S　　he/she
　　　　　'Which friend does he/she hit?'

In WA sluicing constructions, however, DOM is obligatorily suppressed, crucially even when the correlate of the *wh*-remnant in the antecedent clause is itself dative-marked:

(3)　a.　Kidɛm　(vor)　jɛʁpajr-əs　　mɛgə　　　　zargav, pajts tʃɛm　　kidɛr (z)ov　　　/
　　　　　know.1S　that　brother-POSS　someone.ACC　hit.3S　but　NEG.1S　know who.ACC
　　　　　*voru.
　　　　　　who.DAT

　　　b.　Kidɛm　(vor)　jɛʁpajr-əs　　mɛgumə　　　zargav, pajts tʃɛm　　kidɛr (z)ov　　　/
　　　　　know.1S　that　brother-POSS　someone.DAT　hit.3S　but　NEG.1S　know who.ACC
　　　　　*voru.
　　　　　　who.DAT
　　　　　'I know my brother hit one of his friends, but I don't know which friend.'

(4) Kidɛm   (vor) jɛʁpajr-əs   əngɛrnɛrɛn mɛg had-in   zargav,
     know.1S that   brother-POSS friend.ABL one CL-DAT hit.3S
     pajts tʃɛm   kidɛr vor(mɛg) əngɛr-ə/*-in.
     but   NEG.1S know which   friend-ACC/DAT
     'I know my brother hit one of his friends, but I don't know which friend.'

The marking discrepancy between remnant and correlate witnessed in (3b) and (4) is at variance with Merchant's (2001:91) otherwise cross-linguistically robust *case-matching generalization*, according to which "the sluiced *wh*-phrase must bear the case that its correlate bears". This deviation cannot be attributed to 'pseudosluicing' over a cleft/copular source (see Barros 2014), since cleft pivots in WA exhibit regular case-marking, including optional DOM:

(5) Zov   / voru   er   (vor zargav)?
     who.ACC   who.DAT was that hit.3S
     'Who was it (that he/she hit)?'

The suppression of DOM thus appears to be effected specifically by sluicing.

   In this respect, WA differs strikingly from other languages documented in the literature, where DOM is not bled by sluicing. Consider the following case from Spanish (cf. Gonzalez-Vilbazo and Ramos 2012), modelled on (3) above:

(6) Sé   que mi hermano golpeó   *(a)   alguien, pero no sé   *(a)   quién.
     know.1S that my brother hit.3S.PST DOM someone but   NEG know.1S   DOM who
     'I know that my brother hit somebody, but I don't know who.'

As shown in (6), the preposition associated with the animate direct object is obligatorily present in both the antecedent and the remnant clauses. Basque dialects with optional DOM likewise impose strict matching in sluicing, i.e. whenever the correlate is marked, the remnant must be too (Aritz Irurtzun, p.c.). In Farsi, DOM of sluicing remnants in the presence of a marked correlate is optional for some speakers and obligatory for others (Toosarvandani 2008:686 fn. 6); that is, while some speakers tolerate a mismatch, DOM is not systematically excluded, unlike in WA.

   What makes the suppression of DOM under sluicing in WA particularly striking is the fact that the phenomenon does not appear to extend to other types of clausal ellipsis, i.e. stripping and fragment responses:

(7) Aram-ə   hav-un   zargav, pajts votʃ ʃun-in.
     Aram-DEF chicken-DEF.DAT hit.3S   but   not dog-DEF.DAT
     'Aram hit the chicken, but not the dog.'

(8) A: Voru   gəsiɾɛ (an)?
         who.DAT love.3S he/she
         'Who does he/she love?'

     B: Joan-in.
         Joan-DAT
         '(He/she loves) Joan.'

The above observations raise questions for both the analysis of DOM in WA and the theory of sluicing. How does DOM in WA — which, to our knowledge, has not been extensively studied — differ from DOM in Spanish, Basque, and other languages? And how does sluicing differ from other types of clausal ellipsis in bleeding DOM in WA?

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