Clausal ellipsis has an isomorphic source: Evidence from Hungarian adjectival sluicing

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Main claims

- **sluicing**: isomorphic wh-sources followed by ellipsis (i.a. Ross 1969)
- **pseudosluicing**: not ellipsis, but null subject + null copula, whose restricted distribution explains the distribution of pseudosluicing — contra previous analyses

Hungarian sluices have an isomorphic source. Predicative copular sources are not available.

Roadmap

1. Basic facts (number agreement in adjectives) → evidence for copular sources?
2. Novel data: an argument for isomorphic sources
3. Case mismatches are disallowed: an argument against copular sources
4. Deriving pseudosluicing as null subject (pro) + null copula
   - Evidence from the distribution of null copulas: tense and person contrast, locatives

1. Background and basic facts

Larger context

Violations of the Left Branch Condition (LBC) are repaired by sluicing (1):

(1) Mary married a tall man, but I don’t know how tall.
   a. Mary married a tall man, but I don’t know [how tall], she married a t. man.
   b. Mary married a tall man, but I don’t know [how tall], he was t.

What are such sentence derived from?
(1a): Island violating **isomorphic wh-source** (Merchant, 2018; Kennedy & Merchant, 2000).
(1b): Non-isomorphic **predicative copular source**; island repair is apparent (Barros, 2016).

Agreement patterns in Hungarian adjectives

**Predicative** adjectives show number agreement with the subject (2):

(2) A lány-ok [magas-*(ak)]
   The girl-PL tall-*PL 
   ‘The girls are tall.’

**Attributive** adjectives do not show number agreement with the noun they modify (3):

(3) Mari ismer [magas-*(ak)] lány-ok-at 
   Mary knows tall-PL girl-PL-ACC 
   ‘Mary knows tall girls.’

Remnants in adjectival sluices (4) pattern with (2), the predicative structure.

(4) Mari ismer néhány [magas] lány-t, de nem tudom milyen [magas-*(ak)]
   Mary knows some tall girl-ACC, but not how tall.
   ‘Mary knows some tall girls, but I don’t know how tall.’

The **remnant adjective must bear plural marking**, even though the correlate of the adjective is in attributive position (Barros et al., 2015; Barros, 2016; Elliott, 2013).

→ Evidence for a copular source analysis of sluicing, cf. (5) (as well as (1b)):

(5) Mary knows some tall girls, but I don’t know how tall, the girls that Mary knows are t,

Properties of NPE in Hungarian

Number and case marking in non-elliptical sentences only show up on the noun (6):

(6) a. Mari a magas lány-ok-at ismeri.
    Mari the tall girl-PL-ACC she knows
    b. *Mari a magas-ak-at lány-ok-at ismeri.
       Mari the tall-PL-ACC girl-PL-ACC she knows
    c. *Mari a magas-ak-at lány ismeri.
       Mari the tall-PL-ACC girl she knows
       ‘Mari knows the tall girls.’

However, number and case obligatorily occur on the last remnant of ellipsis (i.e. the adjective) when NP-ellipsis (NPE) applies (7) - cf. crucially (3):

(7) Mari a magas lány-ok-at ismeri. Én az alacsony-*{(ak)}
    Mari the tall girl-PL-ACC she knows I the short-PL-ACC 
    ‘Mari knows the tall girls. I know the short ones.’
2. An isomorphic source for adjectival sluices

**Novel data: adjectival sluices with case marking**

Remnant can be case-marked, matching the case of the noun its correlate modifies (8), cf. (4).

(8) Mari ismer néhány magas [lánya-t] de nem tudom milyen [magas-ak-at].
Mary knows some tall girls-ACC, but not know.I how tall-PL-ACC

'Mary knows some tall girls, but I don’t know how tall.'

**Deriving the case-marked data**

Proposal: wh-question + clausal ellipsis (9a, 10a) + NPE (9b, 10b).

(9) a. Sluicing (i.e. clausal ellipsis) (Merchant 2001):

b. NP-ellipsis (simplified and adapted from Saab & Lipták 2016):

(10) Mari ismer néhány magas lánya-t, de nem tudom...
Mary knows some tall girls-ACC, but not know.I...

'Mary knows some tall girls, but I don’t know...'

3. The distribution of apparent case mismatches in Hungarian

**Apparent optionality in case-marking**

Previous analysis (e.g. Barros et al. 2015)) argue that (11a) has a *copular source*. We argue that (11b) has an isomorphic *wh-source*.

→ Free optionality?

**Prediction:** if copular sources are available as a source for ellipsis in Hungarian, then case-mismatches should also be allowed in regular sluicing. → this prediction is not borne out

**Case-mismatches are ungrammatical**

Case-mismatches in regular sluicing are impossible (12)...

(12) Mari ismer [valaki-t] de nem tudom [ki-* (t)]
Mary knows someone-ACC, but not know.I who-* (ACC)

'Mary knows someone, but I don’t know who.'

...despite the fact that copular continuations are possible with a nominative wh-phrase (13):

(13) Mari ismer [valaki-t] de nem tudom [ki-* (t)] az/ő.
Mary knows someone-ACC, but not know.I who-* (ACC) that/s/he

'Mary knows someone, but I don’t know who they are.'

Solution: adjectival sluices can have a copular source, but regular sluices cannot? — unappealing
4. Apparent case mismatches are not elliptical

**Proposal**

Non-matching adjectival sluices in Hungarian are derived from the combination of a **null subject** (*pro*) and a **null copula** (**BE**<sub>null</sub>) (i.a. É. Kiss 2002, Hegedűs 2013):

(14) Mari ismer néná magas lány-t, de nem tudom milyen magas-ak **BE**<sub>null</sub> **pro**.

Mary knows some tall girl-ACC, but not know.I how tall-PL.

(15) a. Nem tudom milyen magas-ak (**van-nak**) a lány-ok.
not know.I how tall-PL the girl-PL
‘I don’t know how tall the girls are.’

**Prediction:** when a past reading is enforced pseudosluicing will be ruled out.
→ this prediction is borne out, compare (16a) to (14).

(16) Mari ki-vágott néná magas fá-t múlt nyár-on...
Mary out-cut some tall tree-ACC last summer-SUPERESSIVE...
‘Mary cut down some tall trees in last summer...’

a. ...de nem tudom milyen [magas-ak *(volt-ak)*]...but not know.I how tall-PL be.PAST-PL
‘...but I don’t know how tall they were.’

b. ...de nem tudom milyen [magas-ak *(vagy)*]...but not know.I how tall-PL ACC
‘...but I don’t know how tall.’

Sluicing with case-matching, which we derive from a wh-source, is of course available (16b).

**Third person vs. Second person**

Copulas are absent in third person (17a), but obligatory in second person (17b):

(17) a. Nem tudom milyen magas-ak (**van-nak**) a lány-ok.
not know.I how tall-PL be.PRES-PL the girl-PL
‘I don’t know how tall the girls are.’

b. Nem tudom (te) milyen magas-ak (**vagy**) not know.I how tall be.PRES.2SG
‘I don’t know how tall you are.’

**Prediction:** third person will allow pseudosluicing, second person won’t allow it.
→ this prediction is borne out.

Third person allows pseudosluicing (as well as case-matched sluicing from a wh-source):

(18) Magas-(ak)-nak képzelem a lányokat...
tall-PL-DAT imagine.I the girls.ACC
‘I imagine the girls (to be) tall...’

a. ...de nem tudom valójában milyen [magas-ak (**van-nak**)]
...but not know.I in.reality how tall-PL be.PRES-PL
‘...but in fact I don’t know how tall (they are).’

b. ...de nem tudom pontosan milyen [magas-(ak)-nak]
...but not know.I exactly how tall-PL-DAT
‘...but I don’t know exactly how tall (I imagine them to be).’

Note: plural marking -(ak) is optional in (18) and (18b), i.e. the antecedent and sluicing remnant — another correlation between number and case marking, as predicted by our analysis.

4.1. Pseudosluicing is only allowed when null copulas are allowed

**Distribution of null copulas**

Null copulas in adjectival predicates: restricted to **3rd person + present tense** (É. Kiss 2002):

✓ present vs. past tense
✓ third vs. second person
✓ possessed vs. non-possessed locatives (novel observation)

**Present vs. past**

Copulas are absent in the present tense (15a), but obligatory in the past tense (15b):

(15) a. Nem tudom milyen magas-ak (**van-nak**) a lány-ok.
not know.I how tall-PL be.PRES-PL the girl-PL
‘I don’t know how tall the girls are.’
Second person doesn’t allow pseudosluicing (only case-matched sluicing from a wh-source):

\[\text{(19) Magas-nak képzellek...} \]
\[\text{tall-DAT imagine.I→you...} \]
\[\text{‘I imagine you (to be) tall...’} \]
\[\text{a. ...de nem tudom valójában milyen [magas *(vagy)]} \]
\[\text{...but not know.I in.reality how tall be.PRES.2SG} \]
\[\text{‘...but I don’t know how tall you actually are.’} \]
\[\text{b. ...de nem tudom pontosan milyen [magas-nak]} \]
\[\text{...but not know.I exactly how tall-DAT} \]
\[\text{‘...but I don’t know exactly how tall (I imagine you to be).’} \]

Possessed vs. non-possessed locatives

- Novel observation: possessive locatives don’t allow null copulas, though regular locatives do.

\[\text{(20) Hol *(van) Mari ház-a?} \]
\[\text{where be.SG Mary house-POSS} \]
\[\text{‘Where is Mary’s house?’} \]

Obligatory presence of copula in wh-question predicts the unavailability of pseudosluicing.

\[\text{(21) Mari ház-á-hoz megyünk, de nem tudom hol [*(van)]} \]
\[\text{Mary house-POS-ALL we.go, but not know.I where is} \]
\[\text{‘We’re going to Mary’s house, but I don’t know where it is.’} \]

A sluicing derivation (case-marking (ALL) on the remnant) is grammatically possible, but infelicitous because the question ‘Where are we going?’ constitutes a contradiction with the antecedent:

\[\text{(22) #{Mari ház-á-hoz/ A ház-hoz} megyünk, de nem tudom hov-á} \]
\[\text{Mary house-POS-ALL The house-ALL we.go, but not know.I where-ALL} \]
\[\text{‘We’re going to [Mary’s house/ the house], but I don’t know where.’} \]

5. Conclusions

- (Apparent) adjectival sluices arise from 2 configurations → different number/case marking:
  - Sluicing = true cases of clausal ellipsis → case-matching and number/case marking on the adjective (predicted by properties of NPE).
  - Pseudosluicing = combination of null subjects and null copulas, not derived from ellipsis → no case marking on the adjective.
- The analysis is supported i.a. by evidence from the restrictions on null copulas: whenever the copula is obligatory, pseudosluicing is ruled out.
- No need to posit two different sources of ellipsis within the same language.

References


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