

# Swiping in Canadian French and its Implications for the Theory of Sluicing

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**Synopsis** This paper investigates a subtype of sluicing, dubbed *swiping* in Merchant 2002, in a variety of Ontario French spoken in the Lafontaine, ON area (Lafontaine French, henceforth LFF). In swiping, a sluiced *wh*-phrase and its selecting preposition appear in an inverted order, such that the *wh*-phrase precedes the preposition:

- (1) Jean a acheté un cadeau, mais je ne sais pas qui pour.

Swiping has been extensively investigated in English and Scandinavian but remains understudied in other languages. This paper provides the first detailed description of swiping in a non-Germanic P-stranding language and shows that specific properties of LFF swiping motivate an analysis in terms of non-constituent deletion, as suggested in Ross 1969.

**Background** Previous accounts of swiping (e.g. Richards 2001, Merchant 2002, van Craenenbroeck 2004, Hasegawa 2007, Hartman and Ai 2009, a.o.) invariably conceive of sluicing as deletion of TP. To render this assumption compatible with swiping as in (1), these analyses postulate extraction of the entire PP to the left periphery, followed by further movement of the *wh*-phrase to some higher position. (2) illustrates Hartman and Ai's (2009) analysis, applied to (1).

- (2) [FP [PP pour qui ]<sub>k</sub> ... [TP ... t<sub>k</sub> ... ]] → [CP qui<sub>i</sub> [FP [PP pour t<sub>i</sub> ]<sub>k</sub> ... [~~TP... t<sub>k</sub>...~~]]]

Such *pied-piping analyses* of swiping struggle to explain why the inverted order is found only when TP is elided, and why P-stranding in the left periphery is permitted in this case, whereas it is not in non-elliptical contexts (Postal 1972):

- (3) \*Qui<sub>i</sub> penses-tu [CP [PP pour t<sub>i</sub> ] qu'il a acheté un cadeau t<sub>k</sub> ]?

Existing analyses of swiping thus rest on the assumption that sluicing licenses an exceptional form of P-stranding.

**Proposal** We argue that pied-piping analyses are untenable for LFF swiping. We propose instead that swiping is the result of ordinary P-stranding as productively permitted in LFF and non-constituent deletion at PF (as per Ross 1969):

- (4) [CP qui<sub>i</sub> qu'il a acheté un cadeau [PP pour t<sub>i</sub> ]]

An immediate advantage of such an approach over pied-piping analyses is that it explains why swiping is only ever an option in P-stranding languages and why its occurrence is restricted to elliptical (sluicing) contexts. Furthermore, we show that this approach, unlike its competitors, makes several accurate predictions about particulars of LFF swiping.

One such prediction concerns the *wh*-phrase *quoi*, which can be fronted only when contained in a PP:

- (5) a. \*Quoi<sub>i</sub> a-t-il été tué [PP avec t<sub>i</sub> ]?  
b. [PP Avec quoi ]<sub>i</sub> a-t-il été tué t<sub>i</sub>?

Pied-piping analyses predict PP-fronting as in (5b) to feed exceptional inversion under sluicing, contrary to fact:

- (6) A: Il a été tué. – B: \*Quoi avec?

Our P-stranding analysis, which does not assume any exceptional P-stranding under ellipsis to be possible, correctly derives the absence of *quoi* in swiping from its general inability to front on its own, i.e. to strand prepositions (5a).

Furthermore, we show that pied-piping analyses generate false predictions about cases where pied-piping and stranding of P are not in free variation, but yield distinct interpretations. The minimal pair below illustrates one such case:

- (7) a. Qui<sub>i</sub> aimerais-tu avoir [DP une des photos [PP de t<sub>i</sub> ]]?  
b. [PP De qui ]<sub>i</sub> aimerais-tu avoir [DP une des photos t<sub>i</sub> ]?

While (7a) inquires about the content of the pictures, indicating that *qui* has extracted from a complement PP, (7b) is interpreted as inquiring about the source of the pictures, i.e. the fronted PP is an adjunct. The swiping version in (8) has the interpretation of (7a), contrary to what is expected if the sluice were to derive from the pied-piping variant in (7b).

- (8) A: J'aimerais avoir une des photos. – B: Qui de?

This is the opposite of what is expected on a pied-piping analysis of swiping, but follows naturally on our alternative.

**Conclusion** Contrary to received wisdom, swiping is not restricted to Germanic languages. Our claim that LFF swiping cannot be analyzed in terms of pied-piping and exceptional inversion has significant repercussions for the theory of ellipsis—chiefly, that sluicing cannot be uniformly analyzed as deletion of TP (*pace* Merchant 2001).

## References

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