

# SLUICING IN LEBANESE ARABIC: MORE EVIDENCE FOR CLEFT SOURCES

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**Synopsis.** This paper discusses apparent instances of preposition stranding (P-stranding) under sluicing in Lebanese Arabic (LA), as in (1).

- (1) sh-shabeb ħako maʕ ħada, bas ma baʕref meen.  
the-guys talked.3P to someone but NEG know.1S who  
'The guys talked to someone, but I don't know who (they talked to).'

The absence of the preposition *maʕ* from the *wh*-remnant is surprising, given that LA does not allow P-stranding in regular *wh*-questions. LA is thus a *prima facie* exception to Merchant's (2001:92) *Preposition-stranding Generalization* (PSG), which states that P-stranding under sluicing is permitted only in languages that allow P-stranding under regular *wh*-movement. This paper aims to show that LA is in fact *not* a counterexample to the PSG, and that apparent P-stranding in cases such as (1) is the result of 'pseudo-sluicing' over a cleft source.

**Background.** P-stranding under sluicing has been examined in several non-P-stranding languages, such as Brazilian Portuguese (Rodrigues et al. 2009) and Libyan Arabic (Algryani 2012). These accounts suggest that these languages permit a limited form of 'pseudo-sluicing' over non-isomorphic but semantically equivalent cleft sources, schematically illustrated below:

- (2) ... but I don't know who ~~it was that they talked to~~

Since the pivot of a cleft is not headed by a preposition, there is no genuine P-stranding; hence, such cases do not constitute *bona fide* exceptions to the PSG. To support this analysis, the authors cited demonstrate that P-less remnants share certain properties of cleft pivots.

**Proposal.** In line with the works cited above, we propose that apparent P-stranding under sluicing in LA is the result of TP-deletion in a cleft source, shown below for (1):

- (3) ... bas ma baʕref meen [<sub>TP</sub> (huwwe) [ illi ħako maʕ-o ]].  
but NEG know.1S who it that talked.3P to-him  
'... but I don't know who it is that they talked to.'

The preposition is not stranded by the *wh*-pivot but takes as its complement a clitic resumptive pronoun inside the cleft's presupposition. As a result, subsequent PF-deletion of TP will yield the illusion of P-stranding where in fact there is none. We argue for this analysis of LA P-stranding effects in sluicing on the basis of several diagnostics. For instance, when a *wh*-remnant is modified by *kamen* 'else', P-omission becomes impossible:

- (4) Adam dahar maʕ Tala, bas ma baʕref \*(maʕ) meen kamen.  
Adam went.3SM with Tala but NEG know.1S with who also  
'Adam went out with Tala, but I don't know with who else.'

The cleft source is ruled out here by the incompatibility of *else*-modification and the semantic exhaustivity of LA clefts. We show that other diagnostics (such as stripping, contrast sluicing, split questions, etc.) converge with this finding: where cleft sources are ruled out, P-less remnants become impossible, since only an isomorphic source is available.

## References

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