Another Look at Sluicing in Japanese:
The Presence and the Absence of the Copula

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Abstract: Sluicing in English is generally understood to involve a WH-phrase in [Spec, CP], which is typically raised to that position, and TP-deletion. Sluicing in Japanese is widely assumed to involve a reduced cleft structure, which is evidenced by the optional presence of a copula. This paper shows that certain WH-expressions in Japanese allow sluicing but are not compatible with a cleft structure and suggests that the English type of sluicing is possible in Japanese.

0. Introduction
Sluicing is an elliptical structure where an interrogative clause is reduced to a WH-phrase, with other elements missing. (1a) is a typical example, and it is synonymous with (1b).

(1) a. Somebody just left -- guess who.
    b. Somebody just left -- guess who just left.

Given this, Ross (1969) and Merchant (2001) argue that the second conjunct in (1b) is a result of WH-movement and TP-deletion that follows it, as in (2).

(2) Guess [CP who [TP just left]].

This structure has TP and CP, which are unpronounced, and it can be understood as a question. Takahashi (1994) suggests that exactly the same thing takes place in Japanese. He provides the following example.

(3) Mary-ga nanika-o katta rassii ga, boku-wa [nani-o ka] wakara-nai.
    Mary-NOM something-ACC bought likely but I-TOP what-ACC Q know-not
    'It is likely Mary bought something, but I don't know what.'

In (3) the second conjunct involves the part which is composed merely of the WH-phrase and the question marker but it is interpreted as an interrogative clause. Takahashi claims that the sluicing part has the following structure:

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(4) [CP nani-o \[\text{Mary ga t katta}\] KA]  
    what-ACC Mary-NOM bought Q  

In (4) the WH-phrase is scrambled to [Spec, CP], moving out of TP, which is elided. Assuming (4), (3) can correctly be understood as involving an interrogative clause.

Takahashi’s claim has been questioned by many authors including Nishiyama, Whitman & Yi (1996) and Kuwabara (1997). One important question comes from the optional presence of a copula. Thus, the second conjunct of (3) can be realized as in (5).

(5) ... boku-wa [nani-o da ka] wakaranai.  
    I-TOP what-ACC COP Q not-know  

'I don’t know what.’

Nishiyama, Whitman & Yi (1996) and Kuwabara (1997) claim that Japanese sluicing involves a cleft structure with the subject clause being deleted. Given their ideas, I assume that the sluicing part of (3) has the following structure:

(6) \[
\begin{array}{llll}
\text{[CP Op]} & \text{[TP \{Mary ga t katta\} ga]} & \text{[VP nani\textsubscript{1} o (da)]} & \text{ka]}
\end{array}
\]

Mary-NOM bought C-NOM what-ACC COP Q  

‘What it is that Mary bought’

The example in (3) involves a cleft structure, where the clausal subject is elided. The sluicing constructions in English and Japanese can be summarized as in (7).

(7) a. English: a WH-phrase in [Spec, CP], TP deleted  
   \[
   \begin{array}{ll}
   \text{[CP WH \{\ldots\} ]}
   \end{array}
   \]

b. Japanese: Cleft, subject CP deleted, a WH-phrase in VP  
   \[
   \begin{array}{llll}
   \text{[CP1 [TP \{\ldots\} [VP WH (copula)]]} & \text{Q]}
   \end{array}
   \]

In English sluicing, the WH-expression is in [Spec, CP] and the whole TP is deleted. In the Japanese counterpart, the clausal subject is elided, and the WH-element stays in the complement position in VP, which is followed optionally by a copula and obligatorily by the Q-marker. This analysis conforms to the fact that Japanese is a non-WH-movement language.

It is important to note that the optional presence of a copula is the key in analyzing Japanese sluicing as involving a cleft structure. It is expected that they are all compatible with a copula and with a cleft construction. In this study, I show that some WH-expressions in Japanese allow sluicing but are not compatible with a copula nor with a cleft construction, which suggests that Japanese has the English type of sluicing cases, with the WH-expression in [Spec, CP].

This paper is organized as follows. Section 1 presents the existence of WH-expressions, namely, nandemata ‘why’ and nandatte ‘why,’ which allow sluicing but do not work well with a cleft construction. Section 2 shows that the English WH-expression how come is also compatible...
with sluicing and incompatible with the cleft construction. Section 3 suggests that these WH-adjuncts are base-generated in the CP domain, on a par with how come. I attempt to derive this property from these expressions being conveyors of speaker’s strong attitude. Section 4 discusses the behavior of ittai naze ‘why the hell’ and why the hell. Section 5 concludes the paper.

1. Acceptable Sluicing Cases Where the Copula Is Disallowed

The majority of studies on Japanese sluicing are based on the widely held observation that it optionally allows the presence of the copula da. There are, however, cases which go against this generalization, though they have gone unnoticed hitherto. Let us begin with the non-sluiced cases.

   John-NOM got-fried but why got-fried Q-TOP unclear-COP
   ‘John got fired, but why he got fired is unclear.’

   John-NOM got-fried but why got-fired Q-TOP unclear-COP
   ‘John got fired, but why he got fired is unclear.’

Both of the indirect questions in (8) concern the same thing, namely the reason for John’s being fired. They can both undergo sluicing.

   John-NOM got-fried but why Q-TOP unclear-COP
   ‘John got fired, but why he got fired is unclear.’

   John-NOM got-fried but why Q-TOP unclear-COP
   ‘John got fired, but why he got fired is unclear.’

Both of the examples in (9) are fine. It is predicted under the cleft analysis that these WH-adjuncts should be compatible with the cleft construction. This prediction is only partially cor-

   John-NOM got-fried but why COP Q-TOP unclear-COP
   ‘John got fired, but why is unclear.’

   John-NOM got-fried but why COP Q-TOP unclear-COP
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(10a) is fine, but (10b) is degraded. The discordance between these WH-expressions and a copula shows up even more clearly in matrix questions.

John-NOM got-fired PRT

‘John got fired.’

b. Naze desu ka?
why COP-POLITE Q

‘Why?’

c. * Nandemata desu ka?
why COP-POLITE Q

d. * Nandatte desu ka?
why COP-POLITE Q

On a par with (10) and (11), this contrast is also observed in the cleft construction.

John-NOM got-fired C-NOM why COP Q-TOP unclear-COP

‘Why it is that John got fired is unclear.’

b. * [CP1 [TP [CP2 John-ga kubini-natta no]-ga [VP nandemata/nandatte da]] ka]-wa
John-NOM got-fired C-NOM why COP Q-TOP

fumei-da.

unclear-COP

Some WH-expressions are incompatible with copulas but they do allow sluicing. This paradigm raises the question of why some WH-expressions resist a cleft structure. The next section shows that a similar pattern can be found in English, which serves as a key to answering the question.

2. Similar Examples in English: How Come
It is interesting to note that English has a WH-expression which patterns in exactly the same way as these Japanese expressions. In addition to why, there is another WH-expression asking for a reason, namely how come. Both why and how come allow sluicing, as shown in (16).

(13) A: Dick murdered his wife.
B: Why? / How come?

(Zwicky & Zwicky 1973: 931)

In the case of a cleft construction, only why is allowed and how come is disallowed.
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(14)  
a. It is [because of the hours] that John quit his job.
b. Why is it [e] that John quit his job?
c. * How come it is [e] that John quit his job?  
(Collins 1991: 35)

In (14a), the reason for John quitting his job is focused. When asking the reason in this cleft construction, only why is allowed as in (14b), while employing how come leads to deviance, as in (14c), with nothing to be focused in the focus position. This shows that English sluicing is not derived from a cleft structure, as strongly advocated by Merchant (2001).

This English paradigm, then, can be taken to suggest that the behavior of nandemata and nandatte should receive about the same treatment as that of how come.

3. An Analysis
Below, an analysis of nandemata and nandatte is presented, based on the treatment of how come.

3.1. How Come
The pattern in (14) shows that how come cannot be related to the focus position. Collins (1991) claims that it is an interrogative head, which is always base-generated in the head position of an interrogative clause. Thus, (14c) is bad because how come originates in the sentence-initial position and there is nothing to fill the focus position. Ochi (2004) assumes how come to be phrasal and to be base-generated in [Spec, CP] of an interrogative clause. Ochi’s view seems empirically favorable, since it has been known that in English complementizers like whether and if (as well as auxiliaries raised to the complementizer position) do not allow sluicing, while WH-phrases can readily allow sluicing. The forced absence of an interrogative complementizer in a sluicing context makes it difficult to assume how come (or even just come) to sit in the complementizer position. I assume (15), following Ochi.¹

(15)  How come is base-generated in [Spec, CP] of an interrogative clause.

With (15), the effect of (14) concerning how come can be captured. I also assume that why does not necessarily have to be base-generated in an interrogative Comp, in order to account for its behavior given in (14b).

¹ The lack of the subject-auxiliary inversion can be captured by assuming that the verbal part come in how come checks off the feature responsible for the inversion. See Ochi (2004) for details.
3.2. **Nandemata and Nandatte in [Spec, CP]**

Given the treatment of *how come*, it is quite straightforward how to deal with *nandemata* and *nandatte*. I assume the following:

(16) *Nandemata* and *nandatte* are necessarily base-generated in [Spec, CP].

Assuming (16), the deviance in (12b) is trivial. The WH-expressions in (12b) are assumed to be inside VP. (16), however, requires them to be in [Spec, CP]. Deviance is quite natural. This also tells us that the cleft type of sluicing is unworkable with them.

I suggest that the structures for sluicing of *nandemata* and *nandatte* are like (17).

(17) ... [CP nandemata/nandatte [\(\text{e.g., John-ga kubini-natta}\) ka]-wa fumei-da.

   why John-NOM got-fired Q-TOP unclear-COP

   ‘...*why John got fired is unclear.*’

The structures in (17) are for the examples in (10b). As in (17), both *nandemata* and *nandatte* occupy [Spec, CP] and TP is elided. The base-generation of these WH-elements in [Spec, CP] is the key in this kind of sluicing in Japanese because it is a non-WH-movement language.

It might be worth mentioning in passing that *nandemata* and *nandatte* are allowed in constructions involving a copula if the copula follows something other than *nandemata* or *nandatte*.

(18) a. John-ga kubini-natta ga,
   John-NOM got-fired but
   [CP *nandemata/nandatte* John da ka]-wa fumei-da.
   why John COP Q-TOP unclear-COP

   ‘*John got fired, but [why it is John] is unclear.*’

b. [CP *Nandemata/nandatte* [TP[CP e kubini-natta no]-ga [VP John da ka]]-wa
   why got-fired C-NOM John COP Q-TOP
   fumei-da.
   unclear-COP

   ‘*[Why it is John that got fired] is unclear.*’

The WH-expressions in (18) are in [Spec, CP], which makes it impossible for them to occupy the pre-copula position, which is instead occupied by a DP.

The same thing can be said of *how come*.

(19) How come it is John that got fired?

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2 This is intended to allow these expressions to originate in a non-interrogative clause, taking long-distance scope, unlike *how come.*
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In (19) how come originates in the clause initial position and therefore it is unable to fill the focus position, which is instead filled by John. There is nothing wrong with the structure.

3.3. Motivating (16)
The proposal in (16) can capture the relevant effect, which shows that Japanese sometimes allows the English kind of sluicing. This leads to the question why (16) holds. In other words, what makes nandemata and nandatte different from naze?

To answer this question, it would be useful to look at another scenario where nandemata and nandatte are similar to how come. This additional parallelism is that speakers who utter questions involving these expressions do not know the answers and are emotionally affected.

As the paradigm in (20) shows, how come questions sound better when the matrix predicate know is negated.

(20)  a. I know why/how come John is upset.
    b. (?) I don’t know why/how come John is upset.

(adapted from Ochi 2004: 34)

The same effect is observed in the questions with nandemata and nandatte.

      I-TOP why John-NOM got-fired Q know

      ‘I know why John bought the book.’

      I-TOP why John-NOM got-fired Q know-not

      ‘I don’t know why John bought the book.’

There are studies on WH-expressions which reflect the speaker’s strong emotions, notably by Pesetsky (1987), den Dikken & Giannakidou (2002), and Huang & Ochi (2004). One of the important properties that they all notice is that these elements must appear somewhere high in a sentential structure. To account for this effect, I assume the following:

(22)    WH-expressions associated with strong emotions originate in [Spec, CP].

The generalization in (22) answers the question. Nandemata and nandatte are required to be in [Spec, CP] because they carry strong emotions.

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3 One difference between these expressions and how come is that while how come must originate in an interrogative Comp, nandemata and nandatte can originate in a declarative Comp, taking long distance scope.
Ittai Naze ‘Why the Hell’ and Why the Hell

So far we have examined and analyzed the behavior of nandemata and nandatte, drawing on the properties of how come. In this section, we see the distribution of similar expressions, which seem to be problematic at first sight, but actually are easily explained, under the present analysis.

4.1. Ittai Naze ‘Why the Hell’

In addition to nandemata and nandatte, there is another emotionally-colored reason-asking WH-expression, namely ittai naze ‘why the hell.’ On a par with nandemata and nandatte, speakers who utter this expression do not know the answers and they are in a strongly emotional state.

(23)  
‘I (don’t) know why the hell John bought the book.’

Ittai naze allows sluicing, as expected.

(24) a. John-ga kubini-natta ga, [ittai naze pro kubini-natta ka]-wa  
John-NOM got-fired but the-hell why got-fired Q-TOP  
fumei-da.    
‘John got fired, but why the hell he got fired is unclear.’

John-NOM got-fired but the-hell why Q-TOP unclear-COP  
‘John got fired, but why the hell is unclear.’

Contrary to expectation, ittai naze is compatible with the copula, that is to say, compatible with the cleft construction.

(25)  
John-NOM got-fired C-NOM the-hell why COP Q-TOP unclear-COP  
‘[Why the hell it is that John got fired] is unclear.’

I show that this does not pose a problem to the present analysis.

It has been observed that ittai and its WH-associate can be separated.

(26)  
Ittai sore-ga naze da ka-wa fumei-da.  
the hell it-NOM why COP Q-TOP unclear-COP  
‘[Why the hell it is] is unclear.’

It is obvious that ittai and naze occupy different positions. What we have seen tells us that (26) has a structure as in (27).
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(27) [CP \(\text{ittai}\) \[TP \text{sore-ga} \[VP \text{naze da}\] \] \(ka\)-wa \(fumei\)-da.]

the-hell iit NOM why COP Q-TOP unclear-COP

In (27), \(\text{ittai}\) is in [Spec, CP], since it is a WH-related expression carrying strong emotions, and \(\text{naze}\) is in the position immediately before the copula. Considering (27), the cleft construction in (25) has a structure like (28).

(28) [CP\(_1\) [CP\(_2\) [TP\(_1\) \text{John-ga} \text{kubini-natta] no]-ga]
John-NOM got-fired C-NOM

\[\text{ittai} \[TP \text{t\(_{CP2}\)} [VP \text{naze da}] \] \(ka\)]-wa \(fumei\) da.

the-hell \(why\) COP Q-TOP unclear-COP

In (28), CP\(_2\), which is the clausal subject, is scrambled over \(\text{ittai}\) to the clause initial position and adjoined to CP\(_1\), and \(\text{ittai}\) sits in [Spec, CP\(_1\)] as required by (22). Thus the apparent problematic example in (32) is not a problem after all.

4.2. Why the Hell

Let us finally turn to \textit{why the hell}.\(^4\) WH-\textit{the hell} questions are generally uttered to convey the speaker’s strong emotion as well as his or her ignorance to the answer, as illustrated in (29).

(29) a. I (don’t) know why John was fired.
b. I *(don’t) know why the hell John was fired.

It is then expected that \textit{why the hell}, on a par with \textit{how come}, originates in [Spec, CP] of an interrogative clause. To be more concrete, \textit{why the hell} should be incompatible with the cleft construction. The fact, however, is that it works fine with the cleft construction.

(30) Why the hell is it [e] that John got fired?

One way to deal with this would be to treat \textit{the hell} like \(\text{ittai}\), as suggested in Huang & Ochi (2004). It is reasonable to suppose that \textit{why} and \textit{the hell} originate in two different positions, and they are combined later. Thus, (30) may involve the two following derivational steps in (31).

(31) a. \[\text{CP\(_1\) the hell is [TP it \(t\(_{CP2}\) that John got fired]]]\n
b. \[\text{CP\(_1\) why the hell is [TP it \(t\_why \[\text{CP\(_2\) that John got fired]\]}}\]

In (31a), \textit{the hell} is base-generated in the matrix interrogative Comp and \textit{why} is in the focus position. In (31b), the adjunct \textit{why} moves to the matrix Comp and forms a unit with \textit{the hell}. In this

\(^4\) Merchant (2001) observes that WH-\textit{the hell} expressions are disallowed in sluicing. See Sprouse (2005) for an account.
way, the fine status of (30) can be captured. Though details need to be worked out, this seems to be a possible direction.

5. Conclusion

In this paper, I have shown that Japanese allows the English type of sluicing when the WH-expression involved is *nandemata* or *nandatte* because, unlike other expressions, they are base-generated in [Spec,CP], due to their emotionally colored nature.

References


