Multiple Focus and Sluicing in Spoken Georgian and Megrelian

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This paper deals with so far not studied aspects of the topic—sluicing and corresponded information structuring effects —in two south Kartvelian languages: Georgian and Megrelian. The recent developments in the corpus linguistics regarding Kartvelian languages allow a corpus-based investigation of above topic.[1]

Sluicing is a type of ellipsis and a characteristic feature of the spoken language. Sluicing (Ross.[2]) is considered as advantageous context for an adequate explanation of syntactic constructions and pragmatic implicatures.[3]

The predominant property of sluicing is the stranded remnants of the interrogative phrase in the form of the *wh*-word clause-final position. (1) *I was afraid of something that day, but I didn't know of* **what**.

In most of the cases they are of the form:

- Matrix sentence + subordinate clause: (negated) *verbum* (sentiendi) + *wh*-word [~ omission].

The example (G1) correspond with (1). (For full constructions see Appendix 1.)

(G[4]1) […] *magram*   *ver*   *gavarčie*   ***ra***.
             but   NEG   distinguish1SG   **what**
        […]   but I could not see **what**.

The omitted phrase (Geo) [_sagnebi_ (*ečirat* (*xelši*))] / (Megr) [(*mugdarenepi* (*uķebudes* (*xes*))] "kind of things (they kept (in hand))" complete the syntactic construction at different clause positions depending on the language:

(G1)   […] *magram ver gavarčie **ra*** [_sagnebi_ (*ečirat* (*xelši*))].
        […] but I could not see **what** [kind of things (they kept (in hand))].

(M[5]1)   […] *mara **mu**-*[_mugdarenepi_ (*uķebudes* (*xes*))]*-ni va-gmarčiebu*.
        […] but **what** [kind of things (they kept (in hand))], I could not see.

We assign the omission of the type (M1), in which the finite construction does not precede rather follows the *wh*-word, to *pseudo-sluicing*.

- Matrix sentence + subordinate clause: *wh*-word [~ omission] + (negated) *verbum* (sentiendi).

Georgian uses both ways in different frequency, while Megrelian knows only pseudo-sluicing (Table1.):

	Georgian	Megrelian
Sluicing	+	-
Pseudo-Sluicing	+	+

Table 1.

We observe different stratification of the overlapped focus scopes by wh- words and negation particles in both languages. In Georgian is the negation particle more highlighted as the sluiced wh- word, whereas in Megrelian we verify a situation vice versa. Information structure effects by sluicing interact with basic constituent order in the subordinate clause. It is likely that the different sluicing behaviour and depending realization of focus strategies in (G3) and (M3) corresponds to the different degree of word order flexibility in the treated languages.

(G3)	[…]	*daagviana*	*da*	*mere*	***rogor*!**FOCUS	((German)	*er hat sich verspätet und **wie**!*)
		He was late	and	than	**how!**FOCUS		

(M3)	[…]	*degviano*	*do*	*uķuli*	***mučo***FOCUS	*degviano*. late	cf.	**degviano do uķuli **mučo**.*
		He was late	and	than	**how** FOCUS	he was!		

The fact, that "**degviano do uķuli mučo*" is fully ungrammatical, suggests that Megrelian tends to order with obligatory final verb position, while in Georgian this is optional. That has some consequential effects in regard to information structuring discussed in the given paper.

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1 http://clarino.uib.no/gnc/ (Georgian National Corpus, SSGG – Spoken Georgian Language Corpus, Size (tokens) 179 429).
2 Ross:1969.
3 Merchant:2001.
4 G~Georgian.
5 M~Megrelian.

Appendix 1.

(G1) *xelši   ertnairi pormis   sagnebi ečirat,   magram   ver   gavarčie   **ra**.*
     hand.in identical formGEN   itemPL hold3PL,   but   NEG   distinguish1SG **wh**

Literally: In hand uniform things they kept, but I could not see **what**.

(M1) *xes   artner formaš   mudgarenepi uḳebudes, mara **mu**-ni   va-gmarčiebu.*
     hand.in identical formGEN   itemPL   hold3PL,   but   **wh**- whether   NEG-distinguish1SG
     Literally: In hand uniform things they kept, but **what** whether I could not see.
     They kept uniform things in hand, but I could not see **what**.

(G2) *vusmendi. raġacas mnišvnelovans rom ambobda, vxvdebodi. magarm – **ras**, ver vigebdi.*
     vusmendi raġacas mnišvnelovans   rom ambobda, vxvdebodi. Listen1SG somethingDAT importantDAT   that
     say3SG   guess1SG
     *magarm –   **ras**,   ver   vigebdi.*
     but –   **what**,   NEG   understand1SG
     Literally: I listened to her. Something important that she said, I guessed, but – **what**, I did not understand.

(M2) *určḳiledi. mudgareni sarḳo rduni tis ičiebudu-ni, bxvadudi. mara **musu**-ni, va-vgebulendi.*
     určḳiledi.   mudgare-ni   sarḳo   rdu-ni   tis   ičiebudu-ni,
     I listened (to her).   somethingDAT-that importantDAT   was-that   this   say3SG-that
     bxvadudi.   mara musu-ni,   va-vgebulendi.
     guess1SG   but, **wha**t-that   NEG-undestand1SG.

Literally: I listened to her. That something important that was, this she that said, I guessed, but **what** whether, I did not understand.
I listened to her. I guessed that she said something important, but I did not understand **what**.

(G3) *satamašod gakceul švils   dedam miaʒaxa – ar daavianoo. daagviana da mere **rogor**!*
     satamašod   gakceul švils   dedam   miaʒaxa –   ar   daavianoo.
     to play   racing sonDAT   motherERG   call after3SG NEG   be late2SG.QUOT

     daagviana   da and mere than **rogor**!
     late3SG   **how**!
     Literally: To the son, who race to play, the mother called after– do not be late! He was late and **how**!

(M3) *olaᵬapuša irṭuni ti sḳuas didak miaḳaʒaxu – ve-degvianu-ava. degviano do uḳuli **mučo** degviano.*
     olaᵬapuša   irṭu-ni   ti   sḳuas   didak   miaḳaʒaxu –   ve-degvianu-ava.
     to play   race-who do   this   sonDAT   motherERG   call after3SG -   NEG-belate-QUOT
     degviano   uḳuli **mučo** degviano.
     late3SG   and   than   **how**   late3SG.
     Literally: To play who race this son the mother called after – do not be late! He was late and than **how** late he was!
     The mother called after to the son, who was racing to play – do not be late! He was late. *And how!*