
The Prosody of Ambiguous Sluicing: A Production Experiment

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I present the results of a language production experiment investigating the prosodic realizations of temporarily ambiguous sluicing structures like (1). The sentences were produced by native speakers of American English who either received prior training regarding the ambiguity of the target items and prosody as a disambiguating factor or not.

- (1) On Tuesday, some lawyer defended some dealers.
a. Do you know which one?
b. Do you know which ones?

Sluicing is a subtype of ellipsis where the major part of a *wh*-question has been elided, leaving only a *wh*-remnant behind, as illustrated in (2).

- (2) Somebody just left, guess who [_ just left]! (Ross, 1969)

I conducted a perceptual and an acoustic analysis to interpret the results of the recordings. As predicted, both speaker groups used prosodic prominence on the antecedent NP to indicate contrastive focus and thus its status as the antecedent of the *wh*-remnant. Moreover, both speaker groups used more prosody to disambiguate a sentence-early NP than a sentence-final NP, which is related to the fact that a sentence-early NP is not affected by sentence final speech phenomena like *phrase final creak* (Keating, Garellek, & Kreiman, 2015). Finally, trained speakers produced stronger prosodic cues than untrained speakers, emphasizing the importance of speaker training and experiment instructions.

References: • Keating, P., Garellek, M., & Kreiman, J. (2015). Acoustic properties of different kinds of creaky voice. *Proceedings of the 18th International Congress of Phonetic Sciences*. • Ross, J. R. (1969). Guess who? In R. Binnick, A. Davison, G. Green, & J. L. Morgan (Eds.), *Papers from the Fifth Regional Meeting of the Chicago Linguistic Society* (pp. 252–286). Chicago: Chicago Linguistic Society.