Sluicing is linguistically uncontroversial to occur in many languages; in other words, it is “widespread cross-linguistically” Merchant (2003:1). However, it is not agreed upon how the sluice is formed or which are the processes happening inside the sluicing site (Lasnik, 2014; Vicente, to appear).

(1) Someone talked about something; I can’t remember who about what. 

(Lasnik, 2014)

Sentence (1), originally marked by Lasnik (2014) with a question mark (?), was judged as 59% acceptable in our acceptability survey. Moreover, we tested sentence (2) with three wh-remnants and its counterpart (3) where NP are following the wh-word.

(2) One of the students spoke to one of the professors about something, but I don’t know which to which about what. 

(Lasnik, 2014)

(3) One of the students spoke to one of the professors about something, but I don’t know which student to which professor about what.

Interestingly, while the acceptability of (2) was barely 12,5%, the acceptance range of (3) increases drastically to a 69% because of the presence of the NPs.

Our interpretation is that any wh-remnant after the first one improves in acceptability when it is a PP. Additionally, when the wh-word in the remnant is followed by an NP the sentence also improves its acceptance.

References:  