

# Sluicing and The Distribution of the Brazilian Portuguese Null Copula

Matthew Barros  
Rutgers University

**Introduction:** Generally lacking a null copula ( $\emptyset$ -copula), Brazilian Portuguese (BP) allows optional omission of the copula in specificational questions with the wh-pronoun *qual* ‘which’ (1). In this talk, I show that an analysis correlating BP copula omission with sluicing (constituent interrogative TP ellipsis) is more parsimonious than a zero hypothesis taking  $\emptyset$ -copulas to be phonetically null verbs (akin to the Russian  $\emptyset$ -copula).

**Parallels between the BP  $\emptyset$ -copula construction & sluicing:** The sluicing hypothesis automatically accounts for several properties correlated with copula omission without stipulation. I highlight four such properties here (more parallels are discussed in the talk). **1.** Restrictions on adverbial modification: When the copula is null, TP & VP adverbs are ungrammatical, whereas when the copula is overt, TP & VP adverbs are possible (2). TP & VP adverbs are also impossible under sluicing (3a) since sluicing is the ellipsis of the TP complement of the interrogative complementizer (C) (Merchant 2001 *inter alia*) and TP & VP adverbs are contained in the elided TP (3b). **2.** Wh-movement locality restrictions: Wh-movement is clause bound in BP  $\emptyset$ -copula constructions and the Wh-phrase must be linearly adjacent to the  $\emptyset$ -copula, whereas if the copula is overt, unbounded raising is licit (4). In Sluicing, remnants must be adjacent to the ellipsis site (5) (no *partial sluicing*, Merchant 2001). The adjacency requirement between the Wh-XP *qual* and the null copula automatically follows if the  $\emptyset$ -copula marks a TP ellipsis site. **3.** Wh-movement required: BP uses both Wh-in-situ and Wh-movement questioning strategies, though copula omission is only possible when coinciding with Wh-movement. Example (6) illustrates an “in-situ” specificational question and the impossibility of copula drop associated with this word order. The availability of sluicing is likewise dependent on Wh-movement of the remnant (Ross 1969, Merchant 2001, Van Craenenbroeck 2004). If the  $\emptyset$ -copula is the signature of TP ellipsis, its correlation with Wh-movement of *qual* is expected. **4.**  $\emptyset$ -COMP effects: BP is not subject to the Doubly-filled-COMP filter; the complementizer *que* ‘that’ is fully compatible with Wh-movement (7a). However, in  $\emptyset$ -copula constructions C is obligatorily null (a ‘ $\emptyset$ -COMP’ effect) (7b). In sluicing, C is also obligatorily null, even in languages not subject to the Doubly-filled-COMP filter, including BP (7c) (Merchant 2001’s Sluicing-COMP generalization). The  $\emptyset$ -COMP effect in BP  $\emptyset$ -copula constructions follows from Merchant’s Sluicing-COMP generalization if the BP  $\emptyset$ -copula is the signature of sluicing.

**Comparative case study-the  $\emptyset$ -copula in Russian:** As an illustration of non-elliptical  $\emptyset$ -copula phenomena, I highlight the properties of  $\emptyset$ -copulas in Russian, a paradigmatic  $\emptyset$ -copula language. Russian  $\emptyset$ -copula constructions are shown to behave differently in every respect. Russian  $\emptyset$ -copulas are compatible with VP adverbs (8), are not sensitive to the force of the clause (i.e. they are compatible with non-interrogatives) (9), and are compatible with Wh-phrases in unbounded dependency constructions (10).

**Specificational clauses in BP:** I argue that the post-copular non-Wh element can escape ellipsis because it functions as a Topic (Mikkelsen 2004) and therefore can move to a TP-external TopicP. I illustrate that there is independent motivation for this movement in BP specificational clauses and not other copula clause types.

**Conclusion:** The sluicing analysis explains why the BP  $\emptyset$ -copula has such a limited distribution. BP lacks a null copula construction; the omission of the copula can be independently accounted for by a (multiple-remnant) sluicing analysis. The parallels highlighted between sluicing and the BP  $\emptyset$ -copula construction can be seen collectively as a diagnostic for  $\emptyset$ -copula constructions; the application of these diagnostics to Russian supports the consensus that the Russian  $\emptyset$ -copula is not correlated with sluicing. This analysis contributes both to work on sluicing and on copula drop.

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- 1) Quais (são) os melhores jogadores de futebol Brasileiro?  
Which (are) the best players of soccer Brazilian  
Who/Which are the best Brazilian soccer players?
- 2) Qual sempre \*(foi) seu maior problema perdendo peso?  
Which always \*(was) your biggest problem losing weight  
What has always been your biggest problem losing weight?
- 3a) Someone's always late, but I don't know who<sub>1</sub> [<sub>TP</sub> ~~*t*<sub>1</sub> is always late~~]/\*who always.
- 3b) Qual<sub>1</sub> [<sub>TP</sub> ~~*t*<sub>1</sub> sempre foi~~] seu maior problema perdendo peso (cf. 2)  
Which<sub>1</sub> [<sub>TP</sub> ~~*t*<sub>1</sub> always was~~] your biggest problem losing weight  
What has always been your biggest problem losing weight?
- 4) Qual<sub>1</sub> você acha que *t*<sub>1</sub> \*(é) seu defeito na aparência?  
Which<sub>1</sub> you think C *t*<sub>1</sub> is your defect in-the appearance  
What do you think is your ugliest feature?
- 5) Speaker A: I think Sally likes someone.  
B: \*Can you tell me who you think [<sub>TP</sub> ~~*she* likes~~] cf. Can you tell me who?
- 6) O melhor jogador de futebol Brasileiro \*(é) qual?  
The best player of soccer Brazilian \*(is) which?  
Who's the best Brazilian soccer player?
- 7a) Qual (que) é a população dos states? cf. (7b) Qual (\*que) a população dos states?  
Which (C) is the population of the states Which (\*C) the population of the states  
What's the population of the U.S.? What's the population of the U.S.?
- 7c) Maria gosta de alguém mas eu não sei quem (\*que) [<sub>TP</sub> ~~*ela* gosta~~].  
Maria likes of someone but I not know who (\*C) she likes  
Maria likes someone but I don't know who.
- 8) kto vseгда krasivii? 9) Moskva gorod  
who always beautiful Moscow city  
Who is always beautiful? Moscow is a city.
- 10) kto ti думаеш krasivii?  
who you think beautiful  
Who do you think is beautiful?

## References:

- Mikkelsen '04. *'Specifying Who'*. PhD UCSC  
Merchant '01. *'The Syntax of Silence'* OUP  
V. Craenenbroeck '04. *'Ellipsis in Dutch Dialects'*. LOT Dissertation Series n° 96. Utrecht: LOT  
Ross '69. *'Guess Who'*. Papers from the 5<sup>th</sup> Regional Meeting of the Chicago Linguistics Society.