Why Ellipsis?

1. Introduction This study aims to further our knowledge of the construction in (1a), which we call Why Stripping. We concentrate on explaining: (i) the main features of this construction (e.g., connectivity effects, lack of island sensitivity, etc.); (ii) the similarities and differences between this construction and the construction in (2), which we call Sluice Stripping; (iii) the relation between focus movement and ellipsis in English type of languages; and (iv) the cross-linguistic variation in the presence/absence of ellipsis in this type of focus constructions (cf. English vs. Serbo-Croatian).

2. Why Stripping This construction shows several signature properties of movement associated to a fully-fledged clausal structure: (i) It shows Case connectivity ((3)); (ii) It shows binding connectivity ((4)); (iii) It is subject to the P-stranding generalization ((5)) ([1]). This construction also shows a strong parallelism with sluicing as can be seen through properties such as: (iv) island amelioration effects ((6)); (v) a voice matching requirement ((7)); (vi) and an interpretative requirement on the elided portion ((8), [1]. This constitutes evidence that this construction involves basically the same type of operations as sluicing ([1,2]). These observations together with the fact that the focused element comes immediately after why, provide evidence for the analysis in (9). Within this view, given an enriched CP-structure such as the one in [3], the focused phrase undergoes movement followed by ellipsis. We claim that why is base-generated high in the CP layer ([3,4]) and attracts a focus element in the FocP (9); this is a natural assumption given that why is a focus-sensitive element and induces focus association unlike other wh-phrases ([5]). On the other hand, we assume that other wh-phrases land in Spec, FocP. This assumption leads us to expect that they cannot cooccur with another focus phrase, as seen in (10B). This analysis also draws the line between Why Stripping and the closely-related construction in (2), Sluice Stripping. The latter construction, where the non-wh-element is contrasted with a corresponding antecedent, shows some differences from Why Stripping. First, as [6] points out, Sluice Stripping shows tighter locality effects than Why Stripping: It is subject to the right roof constraint. Second, Sluice Stripping doesn’t allow P-stranding. These restrictions are normally induced by rightward movement. Given these data, [6] argues that the second element in Sluice Stripping undergoes rightward movement ((11)), in a similar way to that in multiple sluicing as [7] suggests. Since Why Stripping is not constrained by the right roof constraint (i.e. it is not clause-bounded: (12)), and it allows P-stranding ((5a)), we conclude that the derivation of Why Stripping is distinct from that of Sluice Stripping, in keeping with our analysis of the former construction.

3. Ellipsis Feeding Movement [2] claims that fragment answers ((13a)) involve focus movement followed by IP-deletion ((14)). The impossibility of (13b), however, seems to show that this movement is possible only under ellipsis. Similarly, the contrast in (1) suggests that focus movement in Why Stripping also requires ellipsis (in contrast to Sluice Stripping, which may have a non-elliptical counterpart (15) as the derivation (11) predicts). The study of ellipsis has shown that ellipsis, understood as PF-deletion, can ameliorate violations of various locality constraints ([1,8]). From the perspective of the ellipsis repair generalization, we argue that ellipsis is required for focus fronting in English Why Stripping because this movement normally violates some locality constraint, and only the ellipsis can ameliorate this locality violation. Specifically, we assume that (i) A’-movement has intermediate steps, at every maximal projection ([9]) (or cyclic node), and that (ii) these intermediate steps are feature-driven (this is why overt C agreement is seen in intermediate steps in some languages ([10,11]). We speculate that so-called “covert/weak” movement is movement that lacks the feature for intermediate steps; without a motivation for intermediate steps ([16a]), such movement needs be in one-fell swoop, violating locality conditions ([16b]). However, the locality violation in (16b) is ameliorated under deletion in (9) (similarly to [12]’s analysis, where island-violations caused by one-fell-swoop movement in sluicing is repaired by deletion). Thus focus movement can surface overtly in elliptical environments. Under this view, it is predicted that languages allowing overt/strong focus movement pervasively may not require ellipsis in similar constructions. This is indeed the case. E.g., in Serbo-Croatian, where multiple wh-fronting is generally allowed, the second wh-movement is understood as focus movement. In such languages non-wh-focus movement is indeed allowed ([13]). Accordingly, focus movement with why with no ellipsis is also allowed: (17).

4. Conclusion This research adds to our knowledge of the properties of Why Stripping, the relation between focus movement and ellipsis and its the cross-linguistic variation.
(1) A: I heard that John loves Mary.
   a. B: Why Mary (but not Susan)?
   b. B: *Why Mary, John loves (but not Susan)?

(2) Lou will ask Doris about syntax, but I can’t imagine who about phonology.

(3) a. A: Peter will dem Lehrer gefallen. German
   Peter wants dat teacher please. "Peter wants to please the teacher."
   B: Warum dem/*den/*der Lehrer (und nicht dem Chef)?
   why dat /*acc /*nom teacher (and not the boss)?
   "Why the teacher (but not the boss)?"
   b. A: Peter will den Lehrer loben. German
   Peter want acc teacher praise. "Peter wants to praise the teacher."
   B: Warum den/*dem/*der Lehrer (und nicht den Chef)?
   why acc/*dat /*nom Lehrer (and not the boss)?
   "Why the teacher (but not the boss)?"

(4) a. A: John will sell these pictures. B: Why pictures of himself (but not others)?
   b. A: He will sell these pictures. B: *Why pictures of John (but not Mary)?

(5) a. A: John talked to Mary at the party. B: Why to Mary?
   b. A: Peter hat sich auf der Party mit Maria unterhalten. German
   Peter has reflexive at the party with Mary conversed.
   "Peter talked with Mary at the party."
   B: Warum *(mit) Maria?
   Why *(with) Mary?

(6) A: John likes a girl who speaks French. B: Why French (but not German)?

(7) A: John kissed Mary. B: *Why by John?

(8) A: John called Mary an idiot. B: Why Mary?
   a. Why did John call Mary an idiot?
   b. #Why did John insult Mary?

(9) [ForceP Why [FocP Mary [FinP[TP John loves tMary]]]]

(10) A: John likes Mary. B: *Where/When/How Mary?

(11) I can’t imagine [fp who [ip Lou will ask [tpp who tpp [fp about phonology]]]]

(12) A: John thinks Bill likes Mary. B: Why Mary?

   b. B: *Mary, John loves.

(14) [FP Mary, [ip John loves t1]]

(15) I can’t imagine who Lou will ask tpp (tomorrow) [pp about phonology].

(16) a. *[ForceP Why [FP Mary, [ip John [vP loves t1]]]]? (unmotivated steps)
   b. *[ForceP Why [FP Mary, [ip John [vP loves t1]]]]? (locality violation)

(17) A: Ivan je vidio Mariju. Serbo-Croatian
   John is saw Mary. "John saw Mary."
   B: Zasto Mariju? / Zesto je Mariju Ivan vidio?
   Why Mary / why is Mary John saw