

# Comments on Pullum's Criticisms

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We are reasonably convinced by the remarks in Pullum (p. 182) that the sluicing construction, on which the argument in Postal and Langendoen (p. 177) for the non-CFhood of English is based, is not, contrary to what is assumed there, subject to an intrasentential matching condition. Consequently, the argument does not go through. However, we believe that an analogous argument can be given, which is not subject to Pullum's line of criticism.

Consider the somewhat stilted but unquestionably grammatical **doubling relative construction** illustrated by (1).

- 1a. The FBI arrested some senator, which senator committed suicide.
- b. Some bourbon hater lover was nominated, which bourbon hater lover fainted.
- c. The president feared certain anti-Western demonstrations, which anti-Western demonstrations never took place.
- d. Some mammals, which mammals are now able to vote, are hostile to reptile rights.

It seems initially that there is a parallelism between this construction and the sluicing construction used in our previous argument, in that apparently *wh*-phrase must match an antecedent in the same sentence. It might appear that an analogue of Pullum's "intersentential" criticism could be constructed for this case as well, since the dialogues in (2) are well-formed.

2a. Speaker A: Certain mammals now control the U.S. government.

Speaker B: Which mammals are not too intelligent.

b. Speaker A: He described certain bourbon hater lovers to the convention.

Speaker B: Which bourbon hater lovers merit consideration.

Thus, there is no *general* restriction limiting the *wh*-phrase and its antecedent to the same sentence. Nonetheless, there is such a restriction in at least one set of cases, namely when the *wh*-phrase is itself adjoined to the antecedent phrase, as in (1d). This restriction shows up in the ill-formedness of dialogues like those in (3).

3a. Speaker A: Some mammals are hostile to reptile rights.

Speaker B: \*Some Boeing 747s, which mammals are now able to vote, are being sold to the Saudis.

b. Speaker A: Some bourbon lover haters will be nominated.

Speaker B: \*Some bourbon hater lovers, which bourbon lover haters merit consideration, have proposed to raise the drinking age to 85.

Our suspicion is that when a doubling relative is adjoined to a nominal not in sentence-final position that nominal must be the antecedent of the *wh*-phrase. If so, then in a relevant infinite subclass of cases, the relation between a *wh*-phrase and its antecedent *must* be intrasentential.

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Now consider the required relation between such *wh*-phrases and their antecedents. Clearly, it is not one of morphological matching, as the well-formed examples in (4) illustrate.

- 4a. Some typewriters, which machines were already obsolete when they were designed, have been ordered for the department.
- b. Some bourbon hater lovers, which individuals have been nominated, merit consideration.

Rather, it is essentially the weak matching condition, (13), of Postal and Langendoen (p. 177), that permits examples such as those in (4) while disallowing such ungrammatical sentences as those in (5).

- 5a. \*Some machines, which typewriters were already obsolete when they were designed, have been ordered for the department.
- b. \*Some individuals, which bourbon hater lovers have been nominated, merit consideration.

Therefore, if one substitutes the doubling relative construction for the sluicing construction in the proof given in section 2 of Postal and Langendoen (p. 177), the criticism that Pullum directs against the earlier proof would not apply to the new one. Hence, if the assumptions of these remarks are correct, the logic of the argument in section 2 of Postal and Langendoen (p. 177) does suffice to show that English is not CF.