

Reversibility in specificational copular sentences and pseudoclefts

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1 Introduction

Copular sentences have long been attracting the attention of researchers, due to their syntactic, semantic and pragmatic characteristics. One clause type that draws particular interest since Higgins' (1973) seminal work on this topic is the specificational one, exemplified in (1).

- (1) The most popular Senegalese singer is Youssou Ndour.

In this sentence, the surface subject *the most popular Senegalese singer* is not referential, but is, according to Higgins, interpreted as a heading of a list in that it “delimits a domain”; the post-copular noun phrase *Youssou Ndour* identifies a member of that domain.¹

The main topic of Higgins 1973 are specificational pseudocleft constructions, which have in the literature since been generally considered to be equivalent to specificational copular sentences, the only difference between them being that the surface subject in a pseudocleft is a *wh*-clause as opposed to a noun phrase in a copular sentence.

- (2) [FR What is most important about him] is [NP his honesty].
(3) [NP His most important quality] is [NP his honesty].

Both specificational pseudoclefts and copular sentences are often claimed to share one hallmark property – the **reversibility** of their two constituents around the copula (e.g. den Dikken 2006b, 2017), as in (4) and (5).

- (4) a. [NP His most important quality] is [NP his honesty].
b. [NP His honesty] is [NP his most important quality].
(5) a. [FR What is most important about him] is [NP his honesty].
b. [NP His honesty] is [FR what is most important about him].

The fact that in both specificational copular sentences and pseudoclefts the two main constituents seem to be able to surface in either order around the copula is often taken to be evidence for the underlying *predicate inversion/raising*, the raising of an underlying predicate to the structural subject position (or possibly a higher projection). Specificational and predicational sentences are,

¹In comparison, in a predicational sentence as in (2), the subject *Youssou Ndour* denotes an individual that the post-copular noun phrase *a very famous Senegalese singer* attributes a property to.

- (i) Youssou Ndour is a very popular Senegalese singer.

according to that view, derived from the same underlying source (Williams 1983; Declerck 1988; Heggie 1988; Verheugd 1990; Moro 1997; Heycock 1994; Mikkelsen 2005; den Dikken 2006a).

In this short paper I present data from Wolof specificational copular clauses and pseudoclefts which suggest that they are not equally reversible in the relevant sense. Specifically, I show that while in specificational pseudoclefts either the *wh*-clause or the NP can be raised to the surface subject position, in specificational copular sentences only the non-referential noun phrase can be the surface subject. This points to a crucial difference between copular sentences and pseudoclefts, and suggests that drawing conclusions about copular sentences with two NP constituents based on pseudoclefts, and vice versa, is not straightforward. More specifically, prudence should be exercised when using reversibility as an argument in favor of any particular analysis of specificational sentences.

In section 2, I give evidence for the syntactic structure of those copular clauses and pseudoclefts which are the topic of this paper. I then show in section 3 that in specificational pseudoclefts, even though the English-type, surface, reversibility, is not present, either of the two constituents can in fact occupy the structural subject position. Section 4 demonstrates that this is not the case in specificational copular sentences.

2 The syntactic structure of Wolof copular clauses and pseudoclefts

Both specificational copular sentences and pseudoclefts in Wolof have the surface structure in (6) (FR = free relative, SCL = subject clitic).

$$(6) \quad [_{\text{Top}} \text{NP1}_i/\text{FR}_i [_{\text{CP}} \text{NP2}_j \text{ l-a } [_{\text{TP}} \text{SCL}_i \dots t_j]]]$$

In this section I show that (i) these sentences involve A' -movement of NP2 to Spec,CP, (ii) the subject clitic resumes NP1/FR (and not NP2), and (iii) NP1/FR is left-dislocated.

All sentences with no overt verbal element in Wolof are A' -movement constructions, and they always contain an overt complementizer, *(l)a* (Martinović 2015, 2017). This complementizer exhibits a subject/non-subject asymmetry – it surfaces as *a* in local subject extraction, and as *la* in the extraction of any other constituent. Torrence (2005, 2013a,b) shows that structures with *(l)a* pass the standard and the Wolof-specific movement tests.²

A' -movement structures in Wolof include Exhaustive Identification (EI) (Horvath 2007) constructions, in addition to questions and relative clauses (Torrence 2005, 2012a; Martinović 2015, 2017). An example of subject and object EI is given in (7). An exhaustively identified (EI-ed) constituent is obligatorily moved to Spec,CP, though this position can be occupied by non-EI-ed elements as well.

(7) Subject/non-subject asymmetry in Wolof Exhaustive Identification

- a. Usmaan **a** lekk maafe.
Oussman C eat mafe
“It’s Oussman who ate mafe.”
- b. Maafe **l-a** Usmaan lekk
mafe l-C Oussman eat
“It’s mafe that Oussman ate.”

²They exhibit island effects, reconstruction for Principle A, and a Wolof-specific movement test: the applicative suffix obligatorily occurs in all instances of A' -movement of a complement of the preposition *ak* ‘with’.

Copular sentences that concern us in this squib do not contain an overt copula; I refer to them as *copular sentences* for convenience. In predicational sentences (where a property expressed by the predicate NP is predicated of the subject), as in (8), the nominal predicate ((*ay*) *sàcc* ‘thieves’) is A'-moved to Spec,CP. In this sentence-type, the clause-internal subject (i.e. the subject below C) is obligatorily a clitic (*ñu* ‘they’). An optional non-clitic subject (*xale yi* ‘the children’) can only be left dislocated. Since a non-subject occupies Spec,CP, the complementizer surfaces as *la*.³

- (8) *A predicational copular sentence in Wolof*
Xale yi_i (ay) sàcc l-a=ñu_i.
 child DEF.PL (INDEF.PL) thief l-C=SCL.3PL
 ‘The children are thieves.’

Specificational copular sentences are a matter of much discussion in the literature, due to their syntactic and semantic properties. For example, it has been convincingly shown that the surface subject in specificational clauses is not referential, whereas the (in English) post-copular one is (for extensive evidence for this see Mikkelsen 2005). Specificational copular sentences in Wolof have the same surface form as predicational ones: one NP is left dislocated and resumed by a clitic, and the other one A'-moves to Spec,CP.

- (9) *Specificational copular sentence*
Waaykat bi_i Yusu Nduur l-a=∅_i.
 singer DEF.SG Youssou Ndour l-C=SCL.3SG
 ‘The singer is Youssou Ndour.’

As in English, the non-referential NP (*waaykat bi* ‘the singer’) is in the same position in which the surface subject in predicational copular sentences finds itself. The referential NP (*Youssou Ndour*) is exhaustively identified, so it occupies the position that EI-ed elements always occupy in Wolof: Spec,CP.⁴

There are two pieces of evidence that sentences such as (8) and (9) involve A'-movement of one of the NPs to Spec,CP of (*l*)*a*. First, questions about the non-subject NP have the same form as declarative clauses, shown in (10) for predicational and specificational sentences respectively. Wolof does not allow *wh*-in-situ, so the *wh*-phrases must have moved to their surface positions. Second, these copular sentences can be extracted out of long-distance, as in (11). Long-distance extraction from any clause is possible if and only if that clause contains the A'-movement complementizer (*l*)*a* (Dunigan 1994; Martinović 2015, 2017).⁵

³I equate *being a subject* with *occupying the structural subject position* (e.g. *Spec,TP*) at some point in the derivation, therefore the subject/non-subject asymmetry here is tied to the position from which an element is extracted.

⁴There is an interesting observation to be made here about Spec,CP as a position in which both EI-ed elements and (non-EI-ed) predicates are found. This is not just the case in Wolof, but in general in languages in which there is a syntactic position for EI-ed constituents, such as Hungarian or Hausa. For an analysis of movement to Spec,CP of (*l*)*a* in Wolof as a phenomenon unrelated to focusing/Exhaustive Identification, but as a type of predication, see Klecha and Martinović 2015. For similar proposals for Hungarian, see Wedgwood 2003; É. Kiss 2006.

⁵I have found that, while all speakers accept matrix specificational questions, some find long-distance extraction from a specificational copular sentence odd. My hunch is that this has to do something with the fact that equative sentences, in which both NPs are referential, cannot have the form NP1 NP2 *la*, as predicational and specificational sentences do. One NP in equatives also moves to Spec,CP, but the other cannot be left-dislocated; instead, it remains below C. In addition, an obligatory copula must occur.

(10) NP2 copular questions

- a. Xale yi lan l-a=ñu?
 child DEF.PL what l-C=SCL.3PL
 ‘What are the children?’
- b. Waaykat bi kan l-a=∅?
 writer DEF.SG who l-C=SCL.3SG
 ‘Who is the singer?’

(11) Long-distance extraction from copular sentences

- a. Lan l-a Musaa xalaat ni xale yi t l-a=ñu?
 what l-C Moussa believe that child DEF.PL t l-C=SCL.3PL
 ‘What does Moussa believe the children are?’
- b. %Kan l-a Musaa xalaat ni waaykat bi t l-a=∅?
 who l-C Moussa believe that singer DEF.SG t l-C=SCL.3SG
 ‘Who does Moussa believe the singer is?’

Second, we also should make sure that the resumptive pronoun indeed resumes the left-dislocated NP, and not the A'-moved NP in Spec,CP. We can show that the resumptive pronoun is not linked to the NP in Spec,CP in clauses in which there is a mismatch in number between the two NPs. In such a case, the clitic agrees in number with the left-dislocated NP. The predicational sentence in (12) is grammatical in a context of a school play where all the children are playing various animals and wearing costumes. The speaker's younger siblings are all in one big cow costume.

(12) Number mismatch between NP1 and NP2 in a predicational sentence

- [Samay rakk]_i (ab) nakk l-a=ñu_i.
 POSS.1PL younger.sibling INDEF.SG cow l-C=SCL.3PL
 ‘My younger siblings are a cow.’

This kind of an example is not easy to construct for specificational sentences. The Wolof equivalent of a sentence like ‘(All) the murderers are the Joker’ in a context where, for example, the Joker was the murderer in three different Batman movies, was not accepted by my speakers. However, there are examples in which NP1 is a collective noun, such as *the committee*. In such a case, NP2 can be plural (though the sentence is still judged to be clumsy), but the subject clitic cannot. This tells us that the subject clitic following C does not resume the NP in Spec,CP. The relevant example is given in (13). This sentence is acceptable in a context in which a local school has a committee which organizes extracurricular activities for the children. The members of the committee change every year. This year, the committee has two members, Moussa and Fatou.

(i) Equative copular sentence in Wolof

- Clark Kent-a di (>Kentay) Superman.
 Clark Kent-C COP Superman
 ‘Clark Kent is Superman.’

When both NPs are definite descriptions, even when the context would require one of them to be non-referential, some speakers prefer long-distance extraction to take place out of a clause such as (i). I have nothing specific to say about this at the moment.

- (13) Number mismatch between NP1 and NP2 in a specificational sentence
 At bii, kurél bi {Musaa ak Faatu}/{ñoom} l-a=∅/*ñu.
 year this committee DEF.SG {Moussa and Fatou}/{they} l-C=SCL.3SG/*SCL.3PL
 ‘This year, the committee is Moussa and Fatou/them.’

Finally, I place the left-dislocated constituent in a topic position. There is good evidence that this is correct. In Wolof predicational sentences, subjects cannot be bare quantifiers, which are generally considered to not be able to occupy the topic position (Rizzi 1986, 1997).⁶

- (14) Subjects cannot be bare quantifiers in copular sentences
 a. *Kenn sàcc l-a=∅.
 someone thief l-C_{Wh}=SCL.3SG
 intended: ‘Someone is a thief.’

The subject of a specificational sentences is a definite description, by definition topical. Mikkelsen (2005) likewise shows that specificational subjects have properties of topics in languages such as English and Danish.

The structure of specificational (and predicational) copular sentences is repeated in (15).

- (15) [Top NP1 [CP NP2 l-a [TP SCL ...]]]

We next move on to specificational pseudoclefts. They are classified as a type of a copular sentence, with a free relative (FR)⁷ as one of the constituents, and an NP as the other. Since Higgins (1973), a parallel is commonly drawn between specificational copular sentences, as in (16), and specificational pseudoclefts, as in (17), and they are usually considered to be structurally and

⁶In order to express the intended meaning in (14), the quantifier must be embedded inside a phrase such as *someone amongst us here, someone in this room, etc.*

⁷Concerning the status of the *wh*-clause in pseudoclefts, there are two possibilities, and both have been extensively argued for: that the *wh*-clause in at least one type of specificational pseudocleft is a question, and that such pseudoclefts are question-answer pairs (Dikken et al. 2000; Schlenker 2003; Romero 2005), or that the *wh*-clause is a free relative (Akmajian 1979; Heycock and Kroch 1999; Dikken et al. 2000; Caponigro and Heller 2007). In English, *wh*-words and relative pronouns have the same form, but Wolof distinguishes *wh*-words that introduce interrogatives (class marker followed by *-u*) and free relatives (class marker followed by *-i*). Caponigro and Heller (2007) show that a specificational pseudocleft (which exhibits Principle A connectivity) allows only for the free-relative complementizer (examples from Caponigro and Heller 2007). I therefore treat the *wh*-clause in Wolof as a free relative.

- (i) Embedded Interrogative
 Yëg-na-∅ [*li/lu Móodu gën-ë bëgg].
 find.out-C-3SG C_{FR}/C_{Wh} Modou surpass-a like
 ‘She found out what Modou likes most.’
- (ii) Free Relative
 Bañ-na-∅ [li/*lu Móodu gën-ë bëgg].
 hate-C-3SG C_{FR}/C_{Wh} Modou surpass-INF like
 ‘She hates what Modou likes most.’
- (iii) Specificational pseudocleft
 [li/*lu Móodu gën-ë bëgg] bopp-am l-a.
 C_{FR}/C_{Wh} Modou surpass-INF like head-POSS.3SG l-C_{Wh}
 ‘What Modou likes most is himself.’

derivationally equivalent (e.g. Higgins 1973, 1979; den Dikken 2006b).

(16) *Specificational copular sentence in English*
 [NP₁ My most valued possession] is [NP₂ this book].

(17) *Specificational pseudocleft in English*
 [FR What I value most] is [NP this book].

Specificational copular sentences (in (18)) and pseudoclefts (in (19)) in Wolof also seem to have almost identical syntactic structures. The EI-ed constituent in specificational pseudoclefts must end up in Spec,CP, just as in specificational copular sentences. The free relative is obligatorily left-dislocated. There is, however, an important difference between (18) and (19). Specificational copular sentences, like predicational sentences, exhibit the subject/non-subject asymmetry, with C always surfacing as *la*, indicating that a non-subject is in Spec,CP. In pseudoclefts, the asymmetry is absent, and the complementizer surface as either *a* or *la*.

(18) *A/la asymmetry present in specificational NP-Pred sentences*
 [NP Sàcc yi] [NP Samba ak Musaa] {**l-a=ñu/*a**}.
 [NP thief DEF.PL] [NP Samba and Moussa] {*l-C=SCL.3PL/C*}
 “The thieves are Samba and Moussa.”

(19) *A/la asymmetry absent in specificational pseudoclefts*
 [FR Ñi sàcc tangal yi] [NP Samba ak Musaa] {**l-a=∅/a**}.
 [FR C.PL steal sweets DEF.PL] [NP Samba and Moussa] {*l-C=SCL.3SG/C*}
 “Who(pl) stole the sweets were Samba and Moussa.”

Two clarifications are in order. First, a subject clitic to the right of C is expected only if a non-subject is extracted and a subject is left-dislocated, in which case C surfaces as *la*. In subject extraction, signaled by the form of the complementizer (*a*), there would be no resumptive pronoun to the right of C. This is captured in the glosses in (18) and (19).

Second, note that the subject clitic following C is 3rd person singular in the pseudocleft (which happens to be phonologically null after *la*). This is true regardless of the number of the subject inside the free relative, and is due to the fact that the free relative is 3rd person singular. We can show that there is in fact a subject clitic in pseudoclefts, even though it is not overt, by taking a look at pseudocleft questions, which can be formed with a different variant of the complementizer, of the form CM-*u* (here *lu*), that has a null *wh*-phrase in Spec,CP (Torrence 2005, 2012a,b). The 3rd person subject clitic is overt after this C.⁸ Compare the subject clitic in the question with (*l*)*a* in (21a) to the one in the question with CM-*u* in (21b).

(20) Jigéen ji jënd na=ñu dara.
 woman DEF.PL buy C=SCL.3PL something
 ‘The women bought something.’

(21) a. [FR Li ñu jënd] [NP lan] l-a=∅?
 C_{FR} 3PL buy what l-C_{Wh}=3SG
 lit: ‘What is what they bought?’

⁸For extensive evidence that questions with the complementizer (*l*)*a* and those with CM-*u* are syntactically equivalent and differ only in the surface shape of the CP-layer, see Martinović 2015, 2017.

- b. [FR Li ñu jënd] [NP Ø] lu=**mu**?
 C_{FR} 3PL buy what C_{Wh}=3SG
lit. ‘What is what they bought?’

The subject clitic in the question with CM-*u* is always 3rd person, regardless of the number of the subject in the free relative. Compare (22b) with (21b).

- (22) a. Xale bi sàcc na=Ø dara.
 child DEF.SG steal C=3SG something
 ‘The child stole something.’
 b. [FR Li mu sàcc] [NP Ø] lu=**mu**?
 C_{FR} 3SG steal what C_{Wh}=3SG
 lit. ‘What is what s/he stole?’

The central claim of the paper is illustrated by the sentence pair in (18) and (19): the type of reversibility that we observe in specificational pseudoclefts is not present in specificational copular sentences. The fact that the complementizer in pseudoclefts can surface either as *a* or as *la* means that the NP in Spec,CP could have been extracted either from a structural subject position or a non-subject position. In specificational copular sentences, on the other hand, the NP in Spec,CP can only have been a non-subject, as the complementizer can only ever surface as *la*. The Wolof data therefore point to a fundamental difference between specificational pseudoclefts and specificational copular clauses, and, for that matter, all other types of copular sentences. Next section develops an analysis of the absence of the *a/la* asymmetry in specificational pseudoclefts.

3 Reversibility in specificational pseudoclefts in Wolof

A popular analysis of specificational sentences states that they involve *predicate inversion* or *raising* – a process in which the underlying predicate of the sentence ends up in the position usually occupied by the subject, or in a position higher than the subject (for different versions of this analysis see Williams 1983; Heggie 1988; Heycock 1991, 1992; den Dikken 1995; Moro 1997; Mikkelsen 2005; den Dikken 2006c). Reversibility of the two constituents around the copula in languages such as English is meant to be one argument in favor of this approach, suggesting that either of the two underlying constituents can be raised to or over the subject position, with some additional requirements that yield the difference in meaning between predicational and specificational sentences, depending on the analysis. Reversibility in English copular sentences and pseudoclefts is illustrated in (23) and (24). Crucially, it is claimed that (23b) and (24b), in which the order of constituents is reversed compared to the standard order in (23a) and (24a), are also specificational sentences.

- (23) Reversibility in specificational copular sentences
 a. [NP My most valued possession] is [NP this book].
 b. [NP This book] is [NP my most valued possession].
 (24) Reversibility in specificational pseudoclefts
 a. [FR What I value most] is [NP this book].
 b. [NP This book] is [FR what I value most].

Many arguments have been put forth for inversion, and many against. I shall not be concerned with the details of this discussion here. What I aim to show in this squib is that the Wolof data support an analysis according to which specificational pseudoclefts do allow either the NP or the FR to be raised to the structural subject position. Specificational copular clauses, on the other hand, allow only one NP to raise to Spec,CP. In other words, I argue that, while the Wolof equivalents of (24a)-(24b) are derived from the same source, (23a)-(23b) are not. This is also a good place to clarify what this paper is not about. I will have nothing to say about the structure of copular sentences below the TP-layer of the clause – what kind of small clause structure the two constituents are contained in, and which one is the underlying “subject” or “predicate”. This paper therefore does not directly contribute to the question of whether specificational sentences do or do not involve predicate inversion.

As we saw in the previous section, both major constituents in copular clauses and in specificational pseudoclefts in Wolof are in the left periphery. In both clause-types, the EI-ed element must be in Spec,CP, and the other constituent (the subject NP in copular clauses and the FR in pseudoclefts) is left-dislocated. There is also no overt copula. The order of the two constituents is fixed and English-type reversibility does not exist. I argue, however, that the absence of the *a/la* asymmetry in specificational pseudoclefts proves that the two constituents in those clauses are indeed reversible, and that this straightforwardly follows from an analysis which allows either the NP or the FR to move to Spec,TP. At the same time, the absence of this effect in specificational copular sentences suggests that they do not exhibit the same type of reversibility.

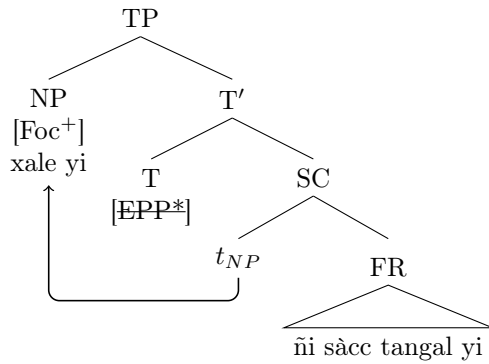
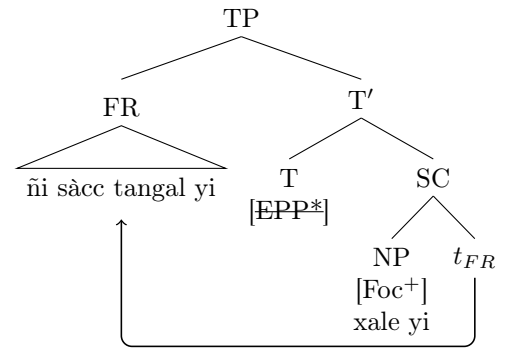
Let us sketch the derivation of specificational pseudoclefts. I adopt the prevalent approach since Williams 1975 and Stowell 1981, 1983, and place the two major constituents—the FR and the NP—in a small clause. I here stay agnostic as to its internal structure – whether the clause is symmetrical or asymmetrical, and whether one of the constituents is the underlying “subject” or “predicate”. I represent the small clause as symmetrical below, with each constituent occupying one terminal node, solely for representational purposes.

As is standard, I assume movement to be the response of an element with a Goal-feature to a trigger in the form of a Probe-feature on a c-commanding head. I mark Probe-features with an asterisk (F*), and Goal-features that perform the checking of Probe-features with a plus sign (F⁺). I capture the fact that the DP is EI-ed with a Foc⁺-feature for sake of simplicity, without committing to a particular analysis of Exhaustive Identification or focus.⁹ I also assume that subjects move to Spec,TP to check an EPP-type feature on T.

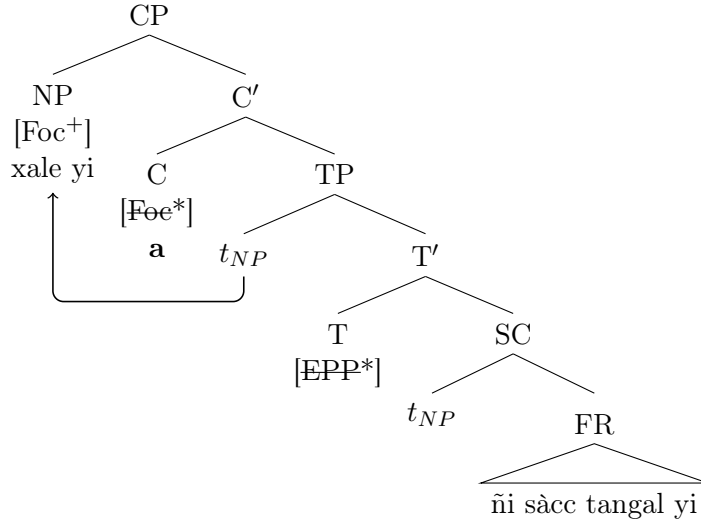
I propose that the specificational pseudocleft in (25) is derived in the following way (functional projections not relevant for the analysis are omitted from the derivations). When T is merged, it needs to have its EPP* feature checked. I propose that, in specificational pseudoclefts, there are two phrases that can achieve this, either the NP or the FR. This yields the two structures in (26) and (27).

- (25) [FR $\tilde{N}i$ *sàcc tangal yi*] [NP *xale yi*] {**l-a=∅/a**}.
 [FR C_{FR.PL} *steal sweets DEF.PL*] [DP *child DEF.PL*] {**l-C_{Wh}=SCL.3SG/C_{Wh}**}
 “*Who(pl) stole the sweets were the children.*”

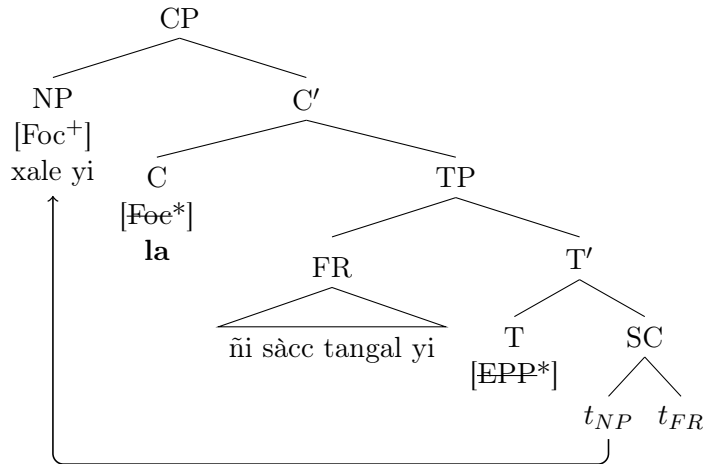
⁹Horvath (2007) argues against the equivalence between “focus” and Exhaustive Identification, and against movement driven by a formal [Focus] feature, proposing instead that movement in examples such as the ones discussed in this paper is due to a quantificational EI operator, that only indirectly interacts with focus. This is not directly relevant for our purposes. Acknowledging that movement to Spec,CP discussed here is what Horvath terms Exhaustive Identification, I use a [Foc]-feature as a simplification for the movement trigger.

(26) NP moves to Spec,TP(27) FR moves to Spec,TP

If the derivation ended here, Wolof specificational pseudoclefts would show surface reversibility, as English ones do. There are, however, additional requirements placed on the two constituents of the pseudocleft in Wolof. First, the NP is EI-ed (here endowed with [Foc⁺]), which in Wolof means that it must move to Spec,CP. The form of the complementizer depends on where the NP is moving from. If the NP is the element that moved to Spec,TP, as in (26), it is in the structural subject position and its movement to Spec,CP will result in the complementizer surfacing as *a*, illustrated in (28). If the FR is in the structural subject position, as in (27), the movement of the NP to Spec,CP constitutes non-subject extraction, and the complementizer will surface as *la*, shown in (29).

(28) NP moves from subject position

(29) NP moves from non-subject position



The final requirement for both derivations is that the FR ends up in a left-dislocated position. This gives us the surface order FR NP *la/a*, repeated in (30).

(30) Wolof specificational pseudoclefts

[FR Ñi sàcc tangal yi]		[DP xale yi]		{ l-a=∅/a }
[FR C _{FR.PL} steal sweets DEF.PL]		[DP child DEF.PL]		{ <i>l-C_{Wh}=3SG/C_{Wh}</i> }

“*Who(pl) stole the sweets were the children.*”

The proposed analysis captures the lack of the subject/non-subject asymmetry in Wolof specificational pseudoclefts and relates it to a known property of this sentence type – the reversibility of the order of its two constituents, the NP and the FR. Because of the particularities of Wolof syntax—that EI-ed constituents must occupy Spec,CP—and this clause-type—that the FR must be left-dislocated—we do not observe English-type reversibility, where the surface order of the two constituents in the sentence can change. We know, however, that the EI-ed constituent can during the derivation occupy two different positions in the clause, based on the form of the complementizer, which tracks the grammatical relation of the element in Spec,CP. This means that either the NP moves to Spec,TP, or the FR does. Wolof therefore presents an interesting case, in which the surface order of constituents in the pseudocleft is fixed, but the form of the complementizer uncovers the same type of reversibility of the constituent order during the derivation as in English specificational pseudoclefts.

4 Specificational copular sentences in Wolof

In this section I argue that the lack of reversibility in specificational copular sentences of the type found in specificational pseudoclefts in Wolof suggests that sentence pairs (23a)-(23b) are not equivalent to sentence pairs (24a)-(24b). This points to a deeper difference between the two types of specificational sentences.

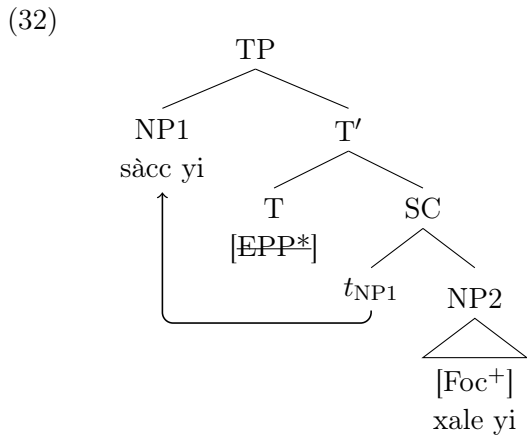
Specificational copular sentences in Wolof do not exhibit the absence of the subject/non-subject asymmetry as pseudoclefts do. The complementizer only surfaces as *la*, meaning that the EI-ed NP cannot have been the structural subject, at any point in the derivation. The relevant example is repeated in (31).

- (31) *A/la* asymmetry present in specificational copular sentences

$$\frac{[_{NP} \text{Sàcc yi}] [_{NP} \text{xale yi}] \{ \mathbf{l-a}=\tilde{\text{n}}\text{u}/\mathbf{*a} \}}{[_{NP} \text{thief the.PL}] [_{NP} \text{child the.PL}] \{ l\text{-C}_{\text{Wh}}=\text{SCL.3PL}/\text{C}_{\text{Wh}} \}}$$
“The thieves are the children.”

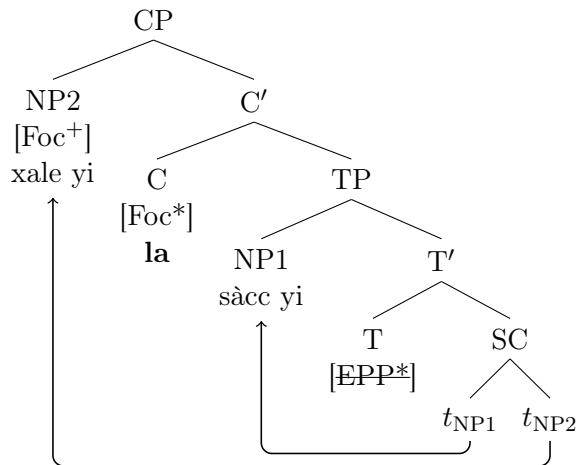
As with specificational pseudoclefts, I assume that the two NPs start out in a small clause. I am again agnostic as to the internal structure of the small clause; specifically, I do not address the question of which NP is the small clause subject, and which the small clause predicate. That means that *predicate inversion* of the type proposed to occur in specificational sentences could conceivably take place in Wolof specificational copular sentences as well. The point I wish to make is that the lack of the subject/non-subject asymmetry in specificational copular sentences suggests that the apparent surface reversibility of the two constituents in copular sentences does not mean the same thing as the surface reversibility in pseudoclefts. In other words, while it seems to be the case that either the FR or the NP of a pseudocleft in Wolof may raise to Spec,TP, the same is not true in specificational copular sentences. Whatever the shape of the specificational small clause may be, only one of its constituents can raise to Spec,TP: the non-referential NP. While both versions of the pseudocleft discussed in previous section have a specificational interpretation, the same derivation cannot yield two possible specificational clauses.

(31) is derived in the following way. When T is merged, an NP needs to move to its specifier to check EPP*. In specificational pseudoclefts, this could be either the NP or the FR. In specificational copular sentences, this can be only one of the two NPs: the non-referential one, as in (33).



As in pseudoclefts, the EI-ed constituent must move to Spec,CP, as in (33). We know that this constituent can only have moved there from a non-Spec,TP position because the complementizer in this clause-type can only ever surface as *la*, never as *a*.

(33)



Finally, the subject DP must again be left-dislocated, yielding the surface order in (31).

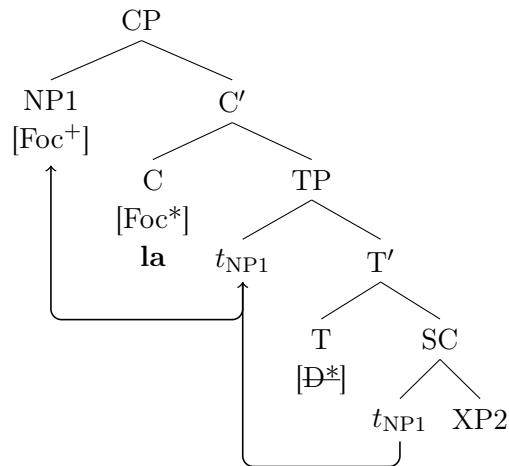
The data from specificational pseudoclefts and NP-Pred sentences in Wolof presented in this squib suggest that the two sentence types are not identical with respect to their underlying and/or derivational structure. This suggests that the reversibility that is claimed to be a property of all specificational sentences is only apparent, and that the equivalents of the two sentences in (34) and (35) in Wolof are not derived by raising either one or the other DP to Spec,TP from a unified underlying structure.

(34) Jean-Luc Picard is the captain of the Enterprise.

(35) The captain of the Enterprise is Jean-Luc Picard.

The generalization is the following: in specificational copular sentences, the DP that is EI-ed, cannot also be the structural subject. In specificational pseudoclefts, it can. In other words, the derivation in (36) yields a grammatical structure in specificational pseudoclefts, but not in specificational copular clauses.

(36)



Finally, I wish to briefly compare specificational and predicational copular sentences in Wolof. As noted at the beginning of this paper, the two clauses show the same structure: the NP that is the structural subject is left-dislocated, the other NP is in Spec,CP. The two clauses are repeated

in (37) and (38).

- (37) Specificational copular sentence
Waaykat bi Yusu Nduur l-a= \emptyset .
singer the.SG Youssou Ndour l-C_{Wh}=3SG
'The singer is Youssou Ndour.'
- (38) Predicational copular sentence
Yusu Nduur waykat l-a= \emptyset .
Youssou Ndour singer l-C_{Wh}=3SG
'Youssou Ndour is a singer.'

Specificational and predicational copular sentences show a pattern more similar to the English-type reversibility, where the two NPs occupy the opposite surface positions. The main difference between these clauses and pseudoclefts is that the NP that must move to Spec,CP (the predicate in predicational clauses, and the EI-ed constituent in specificational clauses) *cannot* also be the structural subject. The reasons behind this are beyond the scope of this squib, but may ultimately point to a different internal structure of a predicational and a specificational small clause. Specificational pseudoclefts, or the simple subject EI-structure as in (7a), for that matter, show us that there is nothing that in principle prevents the structural subject from being EI-ed, so the reason for the difference between specificational pseudoclefts and copular sentences will have to be searched for elsewhere.

5 Conclusion

The purpose of this squib is to show that there is a fundamental difference between specificational copular sentences and specificational pseudoclefts and that they should not be treated as one and the same structure in all respects. The difference is revealed through what is called *reversibility* in work on copular clauses in English, where the order of the two constituents can be reversed around the copula. Wolof specificational sentences, in which the referential NP must move to the specifier of a complementizer that exhibits a subject/non-subject asymmetry, give us a way to identify the element that occupies the structural subject position at some point in the derivation. This reveals that either of the two constituents of a specificational pseudocleft can be the structural subject (implying two different derivations for this clause type), whereas only one can do so in a specificational copular sentence. English-type reversibility is evident in Wolof in the comparison between predicational and specificational sentences, indicating that the two notions of reversibility are not identical. Reversibility therefore appears to be a phenomenon that we do not necessarily understand well, and it should not be used as an argument for equivalence between specificational pseudoclefts and copular clauses, or as evidence for one analysis of specificational sentences over another.

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