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# Reversibility in specificational copular sentences and pseudoclefts

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## 1 Introduction

This squib is concerned with specificational sentences, which have been drawing particular interest since Higgins' (1973) seminal work on this topic. In the sentence in (1), the subject *the most popular Senegalese singer* is not referential, but, according to Higgins, "delimits a domain" (i.e. contributes a description); the NP *Youssou N'Dour* identifies a member of that domain/specifies what falls under the description. The post-copular constituent is generally considered to be in some way focused (e.g. Higgins 1979; Akmajian 1979; Declerck 1988; Heycock and Kroch 1999, 2002; Partee 2000; Mikkelsen 2005), indicated throughout the paper with small caps.

(1) The most popular Senegalese singer is YOUSSOU N'DOUR.

Higgins (1973) focuses on pseudocleft constructions, where one of the two major constituents is the *wh*-clause/free relative and the other an NP. (2) and (3) show a specificational pseudocleft and a specificational copular sentence, respectively.

(2) [$_{\text{FR}}$ What is most important about him ] is [$_{\text{NP}}$ HIS HONESTY].

(3) [$_{\text{NP}}$ His most important quality ] is [$_{\text{NP}}$ HIS HONESTY].

On the surface, some copular sentences and pseudoclefts exhibit *reversibility* of the order of the two major constituents (e.g. den Dikken 2006b, 2017) – in (2) the order of the FR and the NP can be reversed, as can the order of the two NPs in (3).

Even though (2) and (3) appear to be identical, save for the category of the pre-copular constituent, already Higgins notes that specificational copular sentences and

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pseudoclefts differ in a number of ways. It is therefore not a given that reversibility in the two clause-types should be treated identically. In fact, den Dikken et al. (2000) argue that pseudoclefts with wh-clause≻NP order ("Type A") and those with NP≻wh-clause order ("Type B") are not derivationally related. Type A pseudoclefts are akin to question-answer pairs in a topic-comment configuration, with the wh-clause base-generated in Spec,TopP, and the NP being the remnant of ellipsis inside the IP, whereas Type B are regular copular sentences. Den Dikken et al. (2000) claim that neither of the two types of pseudoclefts can have the order of their two constituents reversed (p.45). The surface reversibility of the two constituents in pseudoclefts in their analysis therefore does not involve reversibility in the syntax.

Reversibility in the syntax is prominent in the analyses of specificational copular sentences, which are often argued to involve the raising of an underlying predicate to the structural subject position (or possibly a higher projection). Specificational and predicational sentences are, according to *predicate inversion*, derived from the same source (Williams 1983; Declerck 1988; Heggie 1988; Verheugd 1990; Moro 1997; Heycock 1994; Mikkelsen 2005; den Dikken 2006a). Consequently, there are no specificational sentences in Higgins's sense – they are just inverted predicational sentences. Returning to den Dikken et al.'s (2000) Type B pseudoclefts, even though they are purported copular sentences, inversion in them is argued to be ruled out by an independent ban on the fronting of the predicate free relative over the subject (p.85).

In this short paper I argue that Wolof specificational pseudoclefts do involve reversibility in the syntax, in the sense that either the wh-clause or the NP can be raised to the structural subject position, by hypothesis Spec,IP. Specifically, Wolof equivalents of (4a) and (4b) are derivationally related, in that either the free relative *who won the 2012 Booker Prize* or the (focused) NP *Hilary Mantel* can raise to Spec,IP.

(4) Who won the 2012 Booker Prize?
   a. Who won the 2012 Booker Prize is HILARY MANTEL.
   b. HILARY MANTEL is who won the 2012 Booker Prize.

In contrast, (5a) and (5b) in Wolof are not derivationally related in the same way.

(5) Who is the winner of the 2012 Booker Prize?
   a. The winner of the 2012 Booker Prize is HILARY MANTEL.
   b. HILARY MANTEL is the winner of the 2012 Booker Prize.

I here only discuss examples in which the referential expression (pivot) is focused, in order to more directly compare them with specificational pseudoclefts, where the pivot is focused regardless of the word order. My claim about non-reversibility of specificational copular sentences is therefore narrow, though I believe it has consequences for inversion analyses in general.

The paper proceeds as follows. Section 2 gives a background on Wolof clause structure, and evidence for the syntax I assume for those copular clauses and pseudoclefts that are the topic of this paper. I then show in section 3 that either the FR or the NP can occupy the structural subject position in specificational pseudoclefts. Section 4 demonstrates that this is not the case in specificational copular sentences, and section 5 concludes.

## 2 Background

Wolof finite sentences are 'top-heavy', in that they all have a high, CP-like layer with an overt complementizer-like element (Dunigan 1994; Martinović 2015, 2021). Clauses with nominal predicates are all A′-movement constructions, and they come in several forms, depending on whether they have a copula or not (for a detailed description, see Martinović 2015). My main focus here are sentences without a copula, as in (6) and (7), in which both major constituents must be in the left periphery: one NP is topicalized and resumed, the other A′-moves to Spec,CP. [1]

(6) Xale yi sàcc l-a=ñu.
child the.PL thief *l*-C=3PL.S
'The children are thieves.'[2]

(7) Sàcc bi SÀMBA l-a=∅.
thief the.SG Samba *l*-C=3SG.S
'The thief is SAMBA'

In this section I show that clauses as in (6)-(7) have the structure in (8) (SCL = resumptive subject clitic). I use NP1 and NP2 solely to indicate surface order, not as a claim about the base-generated order/hierarchy of the two constituents.

(8) $[_{\text{Top}}\ \text{NP1}_i\ [_{\text{CP}}\ \text{NP2}_j$ l-a $[_{\text{IP}}\ \text{SCL}_i$ ... [ $t_i$ ... $t_j$ ]]]]

Copular sentences can also contain a copula, in which case only the subject NP (the element which is at some point in the derivation in Spec,IP; see §2.1 for morphosyntactic evidence for this notion of subjecthood) moves to Spec,CP, as in (9a). Such structures have the properties of regular A′-extraction constructions and are used to focus/exhaustify the subject. The copula cannot be used if both elements are in the left periphery, nor is it possible to leave the subject NP below C if the non-subject NP moves to Spec,CP, regardless of the presence of the copula, as in (9b)-(9c). That is, the subject must left-dislocate if the predicate A′-moves to Spec,CP.

(9) a. MUSAA ak USMAAN-a di [usmaanaj] sàcc (yi).
Moussa and Oussman-C COP thief (the.PL)
'It's MOUSSA and OUSSMAN who are thieves/the thieves.'

b. *Musaa ak Usmaan sàcc l-a=ñu di.
Moussa and Oussman thief *l*-C=3PL.S COP

c. *SÀCC (YI) l-a Moussa ak Usmaan (di).
thief (the.PL) *l*-C Moussa and Oussman COP
intended: 'It's THIEVES/THE THIEVES that Moussa and Oussman are.'

Given that the structure in (8) is only possible in the absence of a copula, and that sentences with a copula only allow the extraction of the subject to Spec,CP, I leave them aside. I here focus on which element can occupy which left-peripheral position in (8), and what this tells us about the derivation and structure of specificational sentences with two NPs, as in (7), and pseudoclefts, in which one of the constituents is a

[1] Unless otherwise noted, the Wolof data in the paper come from my fieldwork in St.-Louis, Senegal, between 2014 and 2018.

[2] Abbreviations: CM = class marker; COP = copula; INDEF = indefinite; O = object clitic; PL = plural; POSS = possessive; PST = past tense; S = subject clitic; SG = singular.

wh-clause. I continue to call sentences in this paper *copular sentences* for simplicity, even though they do not contain an overt copula.

My goal in this squib is fairly narrow: I show that Wolof's top-heaviness and the morphosyntactic properties of A′-movement in this language provide a window into one property of specificational sentences – the apparent reversibility of the two constituents around the copula. My main claim is that Wolof pseudoclefts exhibit syntactic reversibility: either the focused NP or the free relative can raise to Spec,IP, contra den Dikken et al.'s (2000) claim for English. In contrast, the same kind of reversibility is not found in copular sentences when the referential NP is focused.

In this section I give arguments for the structure I assume in (8). I show that (i) these sentences involve A′-movement of NP2 to Spec,CP, (ii) NP1 is left-dislocated, and (iii) the subject clitic resumes NP1 (and not NP2).

### 2.1 NP2 A′-moves to Spec,CP

The A′-movement C in Wolof exhibits a subject/non-subject asymmetry – it surfaces as *a* in local subject extraction, and as *la* otherwise (Martinović 2015, 2017), shown in the Exhaustive Identification constructions in (10)-(11). Torrence (2005, 2013a,b) shows that clauses with *(l)a* pass the standard and the Wolof-specific movement tests.

(10) USMAAN **a** lekk maafe.
Oussman C eat mafe
"It's OUSSMAN who ate mafe."

(11) MAAFE **l-a** Usmaan lekk
mafe *l*-C Oussman eat
"It's MAFE that Oussman ate."

In predicational sentences, as in (12), the nominal predicate *(ay) sàcc* 'thieves' A′-moves to Spec,CP. 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') must be left dislocated. Since a non-subject occupies Spec,CP, C surfaces as *la*. I equate *being a subject* with *occupying Spec,IP at some point in the derivation*, therefore the subject/non-subject asymmetry is tied to the position from which an element is extracted. Subjects in finite sentences cannot stay in situ (in Spec,vP); see §4.

(12) Xale yi$_i$ (ay) sàcc l-a=ñu$_i$.
child the.PL (INDEF.PL) thief *l*-C=3PL.S
*"The children are thieves."* PREDICATIONAL

Specificational sentences on the surface appear identical to predicational ones: one NP is left dislocated and resumed, and the other one A′-moves to Spec,CP.

(13) Waaykat bi$_i$ YUSU NDUUR l-a=∅$_i$.
singer the.SG Youssou N'Dour *l*-C=3SG.S
'The singer is YOUSSOU N'DOUR.' SPECIFICATIONAL

It has been convincingly shown that the surface subject in specificational sentences is not referential, whereas the (in English) post-copular NP appears to be (for extensive evidence see Mikkelsen 2005). As in English, the non-referential NP (*waaykat bi*

'the singer') is in the same position in which the surface referential subject in predicational copular sentences finds itself. The referential NP (*Youssou N'Dour*) occupies Spec,CP, the same position as the predicate in (12). C again surfaces as *la*, meaning that the referential expression did not arrive to Spec,CP from Spec,IP.

At least some sentences as (13) are ambiguous in English: the pre-copular constituent may be non-referential, yielding a specificational sentence, but it can also be referential, in which case the sentence is *equative* – it identifies two individuals as being one and the same. In Wolof, equatives cannot have the form in (12) or (13); they can only occur in a structure with a copula, as in (14).

(14) a. Clark Kent-a di [kentaj] Superman.
Clark Kent-C COP Superman
'Clark Kent is Superman.' EQUATIVE

b. *Clark Kent Superman l-a=∅.
Clark Kent Superman *l*-C=3SG.S
intended: 'Clark Kent is Superman.'

We can therefore be certain that sentences as in (13) are specificational.

There are two pieces of evidence (12) and (13) involve A′-movement. First, questions about NP2 have the same form as declarative clauses (NP1 NP2 *la*), shown in (15)-(16) for predicational and specificational sentences respectively. The dialect of Wolof discussed in this paper does not allow *wh*-in-situ (also Dunigan 1994; Torrence 2012a), so the *wh*-phrases must have moved to their surface positions. The left-dislocation of NP1 in both cases is also obligatory in these questions. Second, NP2 can be extracted out of long-distance, as in (17). Long-distance extraction from any clause is possible if and only if that clause contains the A′-movement complementizer *(l)a* (Dunigan 1994; Torrence 2013a,b; Martinović 2015, 2017). Assuming that long-distance A′-movement passes through intermediate Spec,CPs, the wh-phrases in (17) had to have occupied the embedded Spec,CP position.

(15) Idy lan l-a=∅?
Idy what *l*-C=3SG.S
'What is Idy?'

(16) Sàcc bi kan l-a=∅?
thief the.SG who *l*-C=3SG.S
'Who is the thief?'

(17) a. Lan l-a Musaa xalaat ni xale yi *t* l-a=ñu?
what *l*-C Moussa believe that child the.PL *t* *l*-C=3PL.S
'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 the.SG *t* *l*-C=3SG.S
'Who does Moussa believe the singer is?'[3]

This confirms that *(l)a* in copular sentences is indeed the A′-movement C.

[3] 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 cannot have the form NP1 NP2 *la*, as shown in (14). 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 here.

### 2.2 NP1 is left-dislocated and resumed by the subject clitic

The left-most constituent (NP1) in copular sentences is topicalized. First, as all other topics, it is obligatorily resumed by a clitic. Second, as is common for topics, subjects in copular sentences cannot be bare quantifiers (Rizzi 1986, 1997).[4]

(18) *Kenn sàcc l-a=∅.
someone thief *l*-C=3SG.S
intended: 'Someone is a thief.'

That the subject in specificational sentences has properties of a topic has been noted since early work on copular sentences; see Mikkelsen (2005) for a detailed discussion. This is consistent with the surface position of NP1 in specificational sentences (which is identical to the surface position of NP1 in predicational sentences), and with the fact that it is also obligatorily resumed by a clitic.

And finally, (19)-(20) show that the resumptive pronoun indeed resumes the left-dislocated NP, and not the A′-moved NP in Spec,CP. When there is a number mismatch between the two NPs, the clitic agrees in number with NP1. The predicational sentence in (19) 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.

(19) [Samay rakk]$_i$ (ab) nakk l-a=ñu$_i$.
POSS.1PL younger.sibling INDEF.SG cow *l*-C=3PL.S
'My younger siblings are a cow.'

(20) illustrates the same for a specificational sentence. NP1 is a collective noun *the committee*, in which case NP2 can be plural (though the sentence is judged to be a bit clumsy). The subject clitic must be singular, which tells us that it resumes NP1, and not NP2. (20) is acceptable in a context in which a local school has a committee for extracurricular activities. The members of the committee change every year. This year, the committee has two members, Moussa and Fatou.

(20) Kurél bi {MUSAA AK FAATU}/{ÑOOM} l-a=∅/*ñu.
committee the.SG {Moussa and Fatou}/{they} *l*-C=3SG.S/*3PL.S
'The committee is MOUSSA AND FATOU/THEM.'

In this section, I have shown that Wolof copular sentences that are the topic of this squib have the form in (21), with NP1 topicalized, and NP2 A′-moved to Spec,CP.

(21) [$_{\text{Top}}$ NP1$_i$ [$_{\text{CP}}$ NP2$_j$ l-a [$_{\text{TP}}$ SCL$_i$ ... [ $t_i$ ... $t_j$ ]]]]

I now turn to pseudoclefts, and show that there is one important structural difference between them and copular sentences.

[4] In order to express the intended meaning in (18), the quantifier must be embedded inside a phrase such as *someone amongst us here*, *someone in this room*, etc.

## 3 Wolof pseudoclefts

### 3.1 Specificational pseudoclefts vs. copular sentences

Pseudoclefts are classified as a type of a copular sentence, with a free relative (FR)[5] as one of the constituents, and an NP as the other. A parallel is often drawn between specificational copular sentences, as in (22), and specificational pseudoclefts, as in (23), however, as the discussion in the Introduction indicated, they are not necessarily considered to be structurally and derivationally equivalent (Higgins 1973, 1979; den Dikken et al. 2000; den Dikken 2006b). Based on evidence from the morphosyntax of A′-movement in Wolof, this paper argues that they are indeed distinct.

(22) [$_{NP1}$ My most valued possession ] is [$_{NP2}$ THIS BOOK].

(23) [$_{FR}$ What I value most ] is [$_{NP}$ THIS BOOK].

Specificational copular sentences (in (24)) and pseudoclefts (in (25)) in Wolof seem to have almost identical surface syntax. The referential constituent in pseudoclefts must end up in the specifier of *(l)a*, just as in copular sentences. It can be a question word, as in (26), confirming that we are again dealing with the A′-movement complementizer. The free relative is obligatorily to its left.

(24) [$_{NP}$ Sàcc yi] [$_{NP}$ SÀMBA AK MUSAA] {**l-a**=ñu/*__a__}.
thief the.PL Samba and Moussa {*l*-C=3PL.S/C}
'The thieves are SAMBA and MOUSSA.'

(25) [$_{FR}$ Ñi sàcc gato bi] [$_{NP}$ SÀMBA AK MUSAA] {**l-a**=∅/__a__}.
C$_{FR}$.PL steal cake the.SG Samba and Moussa {*l*-C=3SG.S/C}
'Who stole the cake were SAMBA and MOUSSA.'

(26) [$_{FR}$ Li ñu jënd ] [$_{NP}$ lan ] {l-a=∅/a}?
C$_{FR}$ 3PL buy what {*l*-C=3SG.S/C}
'What is what they bought?'

There is, however, an important difference between (24) and (25). In specificational copular sentences, as in predicational sentences, C always surfaces as *la*, indicating that a non-subject is in Spec,CP. In pseudoclefts C can surface as either *a* or *la*, meaning that the NP in Spec,CP moves there either from Spec,IP or not.

Two clarifications are in order. First, a subject clitic 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 C (*a*), there would be no subject resumptive pronoun to the right of C. This is captured in the glosses in (24) and (25).

[5] The *wh*-clause in pseudoclefts has been argued to be a question (at least in some pseudoclefts) (den Dikken et al. 2000; Schlenker 2003; Romero 2005), or a free relative (Akmajian 1979; Heycock and Kroch 1999; den Dikken et al. 2000; Caponigro and Heller 2007). Wolof distinguishes Cs that head interrogatives and those that head free relatives. Caponigro and Heller (2007) show that specificational pseudoclefts (which exhibit Principle A connectivity) allow only for the free-relative complementizer.

Second, note that the subject clitic following C is 3*rd* person singular in the pseudocleft (which happens to be phonologically null after *la*). This is due to the fact that the free relative is 3*rd* person singular. That there is indeed a subject clitic in pseudoclefts, even though it is not overt, is confirmed by pseudocleft questions which are 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; Martinović 2015, 2017). The 3*rd* person subject clitic is overt after this C: compare (27a) to (27b).

(27) Jigéen yi jënd na=ñu dara.
woman the.PL buy C=3PL.S something
*'The women bought something.'*

a. [$_{FR}$ Li=ñu jënd ] [$_{NP}$ lan ] l-a=∅?
$C_{FR}$=3PL.S buy what *l*-C=3SG.S
*lit:'What is what they bought?'*

b. [$_{FR}$ Li=ñu jënd ] [$_{NP}$ ∅ ] l-u=**mu**?
$C_{FR}$=3PL.S buy what CM-C=3SG.S
*lit:'What is what they bought?'*

Assuming that questions with *(l)a* and those with CM-*u* are syntactically equivalent (for extensive evidence see Martinović 2015, 2017), (27b) shows that the left-dislocated FR in the pseudocleft is 3SG, and that it is indeed the subject.

The central claim of the paper is illustrated by the sentence pair in (24) and (25): specificational pseudoclefts exhibit a type of reversibility that we do not observe 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. The remainder of this section develops an analysis of the absence of the *a/la* asymmetry in specificational pseudoclefts.

### 3.2 Reversibility in specificational pseudoclefts in Wolof

A popular analysis of (at least some) specificational sentences states that they involve *predicate inversion* – 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.

In contrast, the reversal of the FR and the NP around the copula in pseudoclefts does not appear to have the same effect; both (28a) and (28b) are specificational sentences Higgins's sense, in that the wh-phrase delimits a domain, and the referential expression identifies a member of that domain.[6]

(28) a. [$_{NP}$ This book ] is [$_{FR}$ what I value most ].
b. [$_{FR}$ What I value most ] is [$_{NP}$ this book ].

Already Higgins (1979) notes that there are differences between specificational copular sentences and pseudoclefts; den Dikken et al. (2000) propose that sentences such as (28a) and (28b) are not derivationally related, i.e. that they do not involve inversion.

First, I argue that Wolof equivalents of the pseudoclefts in (28) do in fact involve inversion in the syntax: either the NP or the FR can be raised to the structural subject position, as evidenced by the absence of the *a/la* asymmetry. Note that this is not necessarily *predicate inversion*, but is also in line with a non-predicational analysis, according to which neither the NP nor the FR are predicated of one another (e.g. Heycock and Kroch 1999).

Let us sketch the derivation of specificational pseudoclefts that captures the absence of the *a/la* asymmmetry. 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". For simplicity, I represent the small clause as symmetrical below, with each constituent occupying one terminal node.

As is standard, I assume movement to be the response of an element with a Goal-feature ($F^+$) to a trigger in the form of a Probe-feature (F*) on a c-commanding head. I posit a Wh*-feature as the trigger of movement to Spec,CP, and stay agnostic as to whether this movement has to do with the fact that this NP is focused or not.[7] I also assume that subjects move to Spec,IP to check an EPP-type feature on I. I discuss evidence that EPP is active in Wolof in the following section.

I propose that the specificational pseudocleft in (29) is derived in the following way (functional projections not relevant for the analysis are omitted from the derivations). When I is merged, it needs to have its EPP feature checked. I propose that, in specificational pseudoclefts, either the NP or the FR can check the EPP. This yields the two structures in (30) and (31).

[6] The difference between predicational and specificational pseudoclefts can be clearly seen in the following example (due to den Dikken (2006b):304), which has two possible meanings:

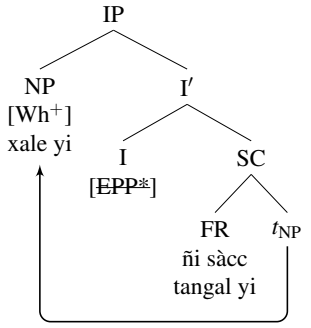
(i) [What John does not eat] is [food for the dog].
a. John feeds the things he does not eat (i.e. his leftovers) to the dog.
b. John does not eat the following thing(s): dog food.

As this example illustrates, the two meanings are not achieved by reversing the word order of the two constituents around the copula.

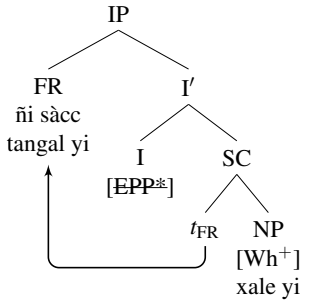
[7] Recall that nominal predicates that are not focused also move to Spec,CP.

(29) [$_{FR}$ Ñi sàcc tangal yi] [$_{NP}$ XALE YI] {**l-a=∅/a**}.
C$_{FR}$.PL steal sweets the.PL child the.PL {*l*-C=3SG.S/C}
'Who stole the sweets were THE CHILDREN.'

(30) NP moves to Spec,IP

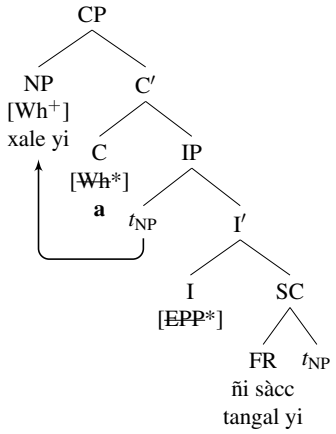



(31) FR moves to Spec,IP

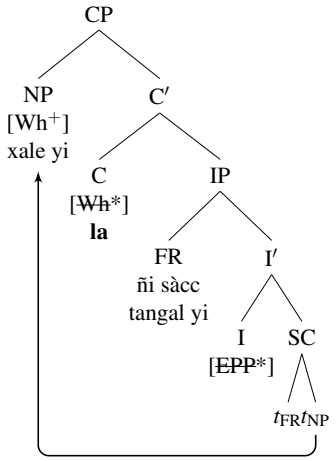



If the derivation ended here, Wolof pseudoclefts would show surface reversibility in the order of the the NP and the FR. There are, however, additional requirements placed on the two constituents. First, the pivot must move to Spec,CP. If it previously moved to Spec,IP, as in (30), it is the structural subject and C surfaces as *a*, illustrated in (32). If the FR is in Spec,IP, as in (31), the movement of the pivot to Spec,CP constitutes non-subject extraction, and C surfaces as *la*, shown in (33).

(32) NP was in Spec,IP




(33) NP was not in Spec,IP




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 (34).[8]

[8] A reviewer points ot that A′-movement of the NP to Spec,CP in (33) occurs across a free relative that is in Spec,IP. Such movement in specificational sentences is extremely difficult in English and related languages (e.g. *'*Which children is the biggest problem?*'; see Mikkelsen 2005 and the references therein

(34) [$_{TopP}$ Ñi sàcc tangal yi] [$_{CP}$ xale yi {**l-a=∅/a**}].
$C_{FR}$.PL steal sweets the.PL child the.PL {*l*-C=3SG.S/C}
'Who 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 reversibility of the order of the NP and the FR. Because of the particularities of Wolof syntax—that the pivot must move to Spec,CP—and this clause-type—that the FR must be left-dislocated—we do not observe the reversal of the surface order of the two constituents. We know, however, that the NP can in the course of the derivation occupy two different positions in the clause, based on the form of C, which tracks the grammatical relation of the element in Spec,CP. The particularities of the extraction morphosyntax in Wolof thus allow a window into the derivational history of specificational pseudoclefts, and provide evidence that, at least in Wolof, they are indeed reversible.

Before turning to specificational copular sentences, I briefly note that den Dikken et al.'s (2000) analysis does not derive the Wolof data. In both Type A and Type B pseudoclefts, the referential expression is always in the subject position, either as the remnant of ellipsis in the IP in Type A pseudocleft, or the subject of the copular sentence in the Type B pseudocleft. Additionally, den Dikken et al. (2000) argue against predicate inversion in Type B pseudoclefts. If this were correct for Wolof, C in specificational pseudoclefts would never surface as *la*.

## 4 No reversibility in copular 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 referential NP cannot have been the structural subject, at any point in the derivation. The relevant example is repeated in (35).

(35) [$_{NP}$ Sàcc yi] [$_{NP}$ BONNIE AK CLYDE] {**l-a=**ñu/***a**}.
thief the.PL Bonnie and Clyde {*l*-C=3PL.S/C}
'The thieves are BONNIE AND CLYDE.'

What this means for the notion of reversibility in copular sentences is more complicated than it is in pseudoclefts, because reversibility in copular sentences usually refers to the following pair of examples:

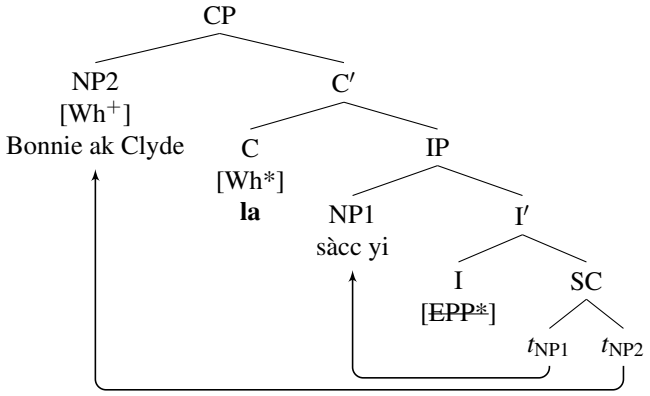
(36) a. Bonnie and Clyde are (the) thieves.
b. The thieves are Bonnie and Clyde.

for more details). First, note that the left-dislocation of the FR in Wolof is not necessarily derived by movement; it is likely that the FR is base-generated in Spec,TopP, as it involves resumption, which A′-movement to Spec,CP does not. The reviewer suggests this might be an information-structural conflict in English, and that Wolof fixes this by left-dislocating the non-referential term to Spec,TopP. This seems like a reasonable possibility to me, as cliticization has been noted to license movements that are otherwise illicit (e.g. Anagnostopoulou 2003). I thank the reviewer for pointing this out.

A sentence such as (36a), in which the subject NP is referential, is generally considered to be a predicational sentence. Under an interpretation where the pre-copular NP is not referential, (36b) is what is usually referred to as a specificational sentence. The predicate inversion approach considers this to be an *inverted* predicational sentence: the pre-copular NP in a specificational sentence is a predicate, which raised over the underlying subject. The pseudocleft-type reversibility I argue for in Wolof means that either the NP or the FR can raise to the structural subject position (Spec,IP), but neither of the word orders yield what we generally consider to be a predicational sentence. So, we should not expect surface reversibility to necessarily mean the same thing, derivationally speaking, in copular sentences and pseudoclefts. In this section, we shall see that only one NP, the non-referential one, can raise to Spec,IP in specificational copular sentences, in contrast to what I argued for in pseudoclefts. Note that I am specifically focusing on copular sentences in which the referential expression is focused, and am not making a broader claim about a potential derivational relationship between predicational and specificational copular sentences.

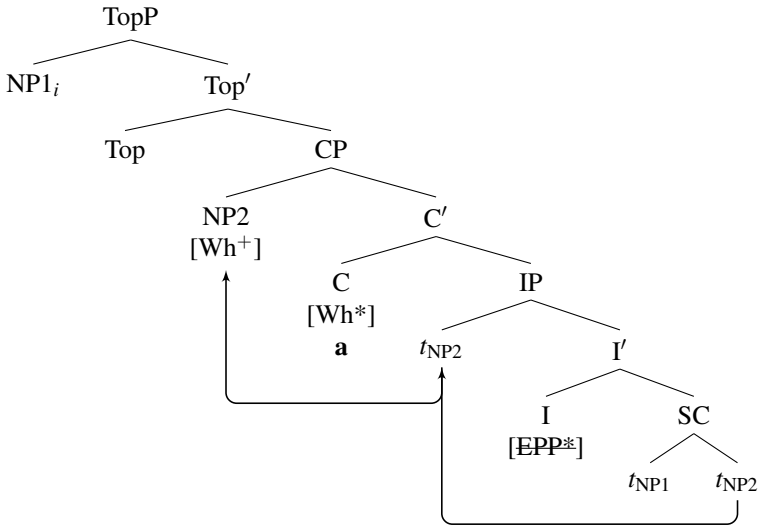
To illustrate what the absence of the *a/la* variability means for copular sentences, consider the derivation of (35). When I is merged, it needs its EPP feature checked. In specificational pseudoclefts, this could be accomplished either by the NP or the FR. In specificational copular sentences, only the non-referential NP can move to Spec,IP. As in pseudoclefts, the referential constituent must move to Spec,CP, as in (37). We know that this constituent can only have moved there from a non-Spec,IP position because C in this clause-type can only ever surface as *la*, never as *a*. The subject NP is again left-dislocated and resumed (not shown), yielding the surface order in (35).

(37)




The main difference between specificational copular sentences and pseudoclefts is the following: in specificational copular sentences, the referential NP cannot also be the structural subject (raise to Spec,IP). In specificational pseudoclefts, it can. The derivation in (38) yields a grammatical structure in specificational pseudoclefts, but not in specificational copular clauses.

(38) *




A copular sentence where the referential NP moves to Spec,IP and then to Spec,CP has an obligatory copula, and the non-referential NP stays below C (see (9a)).

In copular sentences therefore, if the subject is focused and moves to Spec,CP, the non-subject *cannot* be left-dislocated. Compare this with the English examples in (39). Under predicate inversion, (39a) and (39b) have the same underlying source and syntactically differ only in which element raises to Spec,IP (with focus being orthogonal to this). Since movement to the subject position and movement for focus are separate in Wolof, we can observe the two operations independently, and shows that this pair of examples cannot be derived from the same underlying source.[9]

(39) Who is the winner of the 2012 Booker Prize?

a. The winner of the 2012 Booker Prize is HILARY MANTEL.
b. HILARY MANTEL is the winner of the 2012 Booker Prize.

On the other hand, I have argued that Wolof equivalents of (40a) and (40b) *are* derived from the same underlying source.[10]

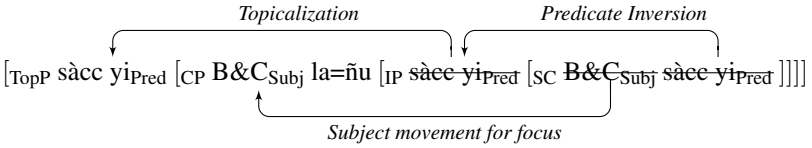
(40) Who won the 2012 Booker Prize?

a. Who won the 2012 Booker Prize is HILARY MANTEL.
b. HILARY MANTEL is who won the 2012 Booker Prize.

[9] A reviewer proposes that this could be the result of a ban on subject extraction. I find there to be no basis for this assumption. Wolof has a subject/non-subject asymmetry reflected in the morphosyntax of its wh-complementizer, meaning that some sort of a mechanism already exists that enables subjects to extract. There is no reason to suspect that this mechanism would fail in just this type of copular sentence, so that Wolof would have an extraction asymmetry on top of an already existing extraction asymmetry.

[10] This does not exclude the possibility that there is another available underlying structure that results in a pseudocleft in Wolof, as is claimed in den Dikken et al. 2000.

I do not give an analysis of this difference between pseudoclefts and copular sentences here. The main purpose of this squib is to show that specificational pseudoclefts do show syntactic reversibility, contra den Dikken et al. (2000), and that they in that sense contrast with specificational copular sentences. I also do not mean to offer definitive arguments against inversion in copular sentences – for example, (35) could involve inversion if *Bonnie ak Clyde* is the underlying subject, and *sàcc yi* the predicate which has moved to Spec,IP, represented in (41).

(41) 


What is puzzling is that it is impossible for *Bonnie ak Clyde* to move to Spec,IP before moving to Spec,CP, and then for the *sàcc yi* to be topicalized. This is exactly the derivation that is allowed in specificational pseudoclefts.

While a detailed analysis of copular sentences is beyond the scope of this squib, I can speculate on why (38) is not a possible derivation. Suppose that predicate inversion, as in (41), is actually not possible. It would straightforwardly follow why (38) is bad: because the referential expression in specificational sentences is in fact a predicate, and therefore cannot move to Spec,IP. This would be consistent with the analysis of specificational sentences by Arregi et al. (2020), who present evidence, following Romero (2005), that the surface subject in a specificational sentence (*the winner* in (39a)) is an individual concept (of type $\langle s, et \rangle$), and not a predicate (of type $\langle e, t \rangle$), and that the post-copular NP (*Hilary Mantel* in (39a)) denotes a property of individual concepts, meaning that specificational sentences do exist as a different clause type, and are not just inverted predicational sentences. Arregi et al. (2020) make no claims about syntactic inversion, but their analysis is compatible with a non-inversion syntax of specificational sentences, where the individual concept is the underlying subject, and the apparently referential NP the underlying predicate. If there is no inversion in any kind of a copular sentence, then the apparently peculiar restriction we observe in Wolof, where a 'predicate' cannot left-dislocate if the subject is focused, is no longer mysterious. Specificational pseudoclefts may be different in that their two major constituents are not in a subject-predicate relationship. I leave this as a speculation, to be investigated in future work.

A reviewer proposes an alternative that preserves reversibility, to the extent that reversibility means that the non-referential NP either does or does not raise to Spec,IP, which is the crucial element of predicate inversion. In addition to the derivation in (37), the reviewer suggests that perhaps nothing must move to Spec,IP: as in (37), the referential (and focused) NP moves to Spec,CP, and the non-referential NP (a predicate) is left-dislocated from its base position. The non-referential NP then did not move to the subject position; its left dislocation is irrelevant for the reversibility question. There are a number of arguments against this proposal.

First, the form of the resumptive pronoun tells us which element is being resumed, which excludes the possibility that the non-referential NP is underlyingly a predicate that left-dislocated, but never when through Spec,IP. Compare the 3SG subject clitic

in (42) (∅), resuming a left-dislocated subject, and the 3SG object clitic in (43) (*ko*), resuming a left-dislocated object.

(42) Xale bi$_j$, gato$_i$ la=∅$_j$ lekk $t_i$.
child the.SG, cake C=3SG.S eat
'(As for) the child, it's cake that s/he ate.'

(43) Gato bi$_j$, démb la=**ko**$_j$ xale yi lekk.
cake the.SG yesterday C=3SG.O child the.SG eat
'(As for) the cake, it's yesterday that the child ate it.'

(44) shows that predicates are pronominalized with object pronouns.

(44) Faatu ndongo la=∅, Musaa nekk-u(l)=∅=**ko**.
Fatou student C=3SG.S, Moussa be-NEG.C=3SG.S=3SG.O
'Fatou is a student, Musaa isn't (it).'

What this means is that, were this alternative analysis correct and the non-referential (predicate) NP never moved to Spec,IP, it should not be resumed by the subject, but by the object clitic, as we have seen throughout the paper. This excludes the possibility that the non-referential DP *waykat bi* is a predicate that never raised to Spec,IP.[11]

Another argument against this proposal is that, if there is a derivation in which no NP raises to Spec,IP, we should find evidence in Wolof that the EPP is not obligatorily active. This is not the case; in all clause-types, the subject must precede elements usually taken to occur at the VP-edge, like low adverbs. Additionally, the verb always precedes these elements as well, and raises high in the clause (to either I or C; Dunigan 1994; Torrence 2003, 2005, 2012a; Martinović 2015, 2019). I do not give examples here for reasons of space; see the cited works for evidence.

Finally, we might be tempted to think that copular structures discussed in this squib are perhaps of reduced size, so the subject stays low in such clauses because the inflectional layer, and by extension the derived subject position, are not there. This line of reasoning will not get us far either, as some inflectional morphology *can* occur in these kinds of copular sentences – specifically, the optional past tense morpheme *(w)oon* (Bochnak and Martinović 2019):

(45) a. Musaa ndongo la=∅ woon.
Moussa student C=3SG.S PST
'Moussa was a student.'
b. Waykat bi Musaa la=∅ woon.
singer the.SG Moussa C=3SG.S PST
'The singer was Moussa.'

This shows that tense is present in these structures, indicating that the inflectional layer is there. I do not see any reason to think that the subject position is not present, and therefore the EPP should be active as well.

[11] This alternative proposal presupposes that a non-subject that moves to Spec,IP could still be pronominalized with the subject pronoun. I have no evidence for this, but also no evidence against it.

## 5 Conclusion

In this short paper I discuss one property of specificational copular sentences and pseudoclefts, the apparent reversibility of the order of their two major constituents. In English, this manifests itself in reversible surface word order. It has been argued in the literature that reversibility in specificational pseudoclefts (*What the dog broke is THE CHAIR* $\sim$ *THE CHAIR is what the dog broke*) does not indicate reversibility in the syntax – the two word orders are not derivationally related (den Dikken et al. 2000). In copular sentences, on the other hand, the reversal of the order (*HILARY MANTEL is the winner* $\sim$ *The winner is HILARY MANTEL*) **is** generally argued to be the result of reversal in the syntax. In this squib, I limit the discussion of copular sentences to examples in which the referential expression is focused, as above, in order to compare them more directly with specificational pseudoclefts, where this is always the case, regardless of the order of the NP and the FR.

Copular sentences and pseudoclefts in Wolof provide us with the opportunity to observe part of their derivational history, as the focused referential expression A′-moves to Spec,CP, with the other element being topicalized. A′-extraction in Wolof is morphosyntactically marked on the complementizer, which exhibits a subject/non-subject asymmetry, and therefore reveals whether an element has moved there from Spec,IP or another position. This straightforward diagnostic shows that in specificational pseudoclefts either of the two constituents, the FR or the NP, can in fact raise to Spec,IP. The same kind of reversibility is not found in specificational copular sentences; specifically, only the non-referential expression can move to Spec,IP. The focused NP, which is extracted to Spec,CP, cannot move there from Spec,IP.

The main contribution of this squib has to do with specificational pseudoclefts, showing one important difference between them and specificational copular sentences. Why the two sentence types differ in this particular way is beyond the scope of this paper; it may point towards a non-predicational analysis for pseudoclefts, where neither of the two constituents is predicated of the other and therefore either can move to Spec,IP. Conclusions that can be drawn about reversibility of copular sentences are limited to copular sentences in which the referential expression is focused; I have here not given definitive arguments against predicate inversion in copular sentences in general. I have, however, suggested that, if specificational sentences were in fact *not* derived via predicate inversion, we could understand the otherwise puzzling restriction, where the focused NP cannot move to Spec,IP before moving to Spec,CP, if the non-referential NP is left-dislocated. I leave the details to be worked out in future research.

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