Specificational pseudoclefts as left-adjoined correlatives in Bangla

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The analysis of a specificational pseudocleft sentence as in (1) can be approached in terms of a base-generated structure (Higgins 1979 etc) or a transformational structure (Chomsky 1972 etc), which among other things, lead to different analyses with respect to the underlying position of the wh-clause in (1).

1. What Bheem wants is a good book.

A general theory of predication for copular constructions as in the framework of Relators and Linkers (Den Dikken 2006), reduces the typology of copular constructions to two types: a) canonical and, b) inverse. Under that view, and as emphasised in Den Dikken (2013:37), the underlying predicate in (1) would be the wh-clause which inverts with the underlying subject ('a good book') to be in the surface subject position. This would seem to immediately disqualify the base-generated approach mentioned earlier and imply a transformational approach (such as, predicate inversion as in Den Dikken (2006)). However, it has been noted that certain types of specificational pseudoclefts resist a transformational analysis and yield better to a base-generated analysis (Akmajian 1979, Den Dikken et al 2000). In this work we try to show that data from Bangla specificational pseudoclefts support a base-generated account while also requiring predicate inversion in the main clause. The predicate inversion requirement supports the theoretical premise that the primitive relation is that of predication though a language might have certain structures available which directly fit the semantics attributed to specification (Higgins 1979, Declerck 1988).

Though Bangla allows zero-copular constructions, specificational pseudoclefts (2) in the language require a so-called quirky copula, dubbed so because it takes the perfective form even though it is interpreted in the present tense and because it appears obligatorily clause-medially though Bangla is an SOV language (Dey 2024). This quirky copula is optional in simple specificational sentences but obligatory in root equative clauses. Predicational pseudoclefts (3) block the copula and occur as zero-copular constructions, as do simple predicationals.

2. Bheem ja cha-e ta *(holo) ek-Ta bhalo boi
   Bheem REL(relative) want-3 DEM(demonstrative) COP.3 one-CL(classifier) good book
   'What Bheem wants is a good book.'

3. ami ja kinechi ta (*holo) khub shundor
   I REL bought DEM COP very beautiful
   'What I bought is beautiful.'

This work tries to show that (2) and (6) correspond to the two correlativisation strategies available in Bangla, adapted from Srivastav's (1991) analysis for Hindi correlatives. She posits two independently base-generated structures for correlative formation in Hindi with specific syntactic and semantic characteristics and constraints. The main clause-initial structure in the predicational pseudocleft (6) is deemed to be a right-adjoined correlative (Fig A: 'The girl is tall who is standing'). The relative clause-initial structure (in (2), (3)) is dubbed a left-adjoined correlative (Fig B).

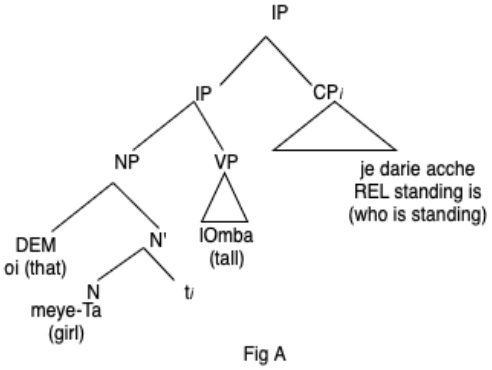

Fig A

5. *ek-Ta bhalo boi holo ja Bheem cha-e
   one-CL good book COP REL Bheem want-3
   Intended: 'A good book is what Bheem wants.'

6. boi-Ta bhalo je-Ta Bheem cha-e
   book-CL good REL-CL Bheem want-3
   'The book Bheem wants is good'

The syntactic and semantic differences of these two strategies seem to correspond to differences between predicational and specificational pseudoclefts. The right-adjoined one (Fig A) corresponds to a 'noun modification' relation between the head noun phrase and the relative clause since the latter is generated in a complement position to the main clause NP, yielding a set intersection relation (Srivastav 1991). This straightforwardly corresponds to a

predicational relationship as the semantic representation of a predicational relation is also described in terms of set intersection (Den Dikken 2006:17). Note that specificational pseudoclefts reject the right-adjoined structure (5), which we treat as an empirical clue against the possibility of base generation of the main clause-relative clause order for such structures and in favour of a left-adjoined correlative structure.

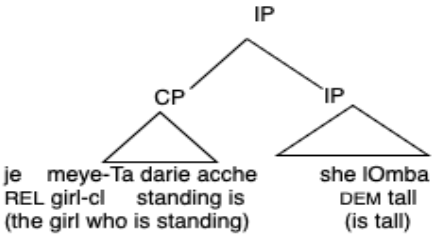

Fig B

In this paper we claim that structures like (2) map to the semantic interpretation attributed to left-adjoined structures (Fig B: 'The girl who is standing is tall') in Srivastav (1991) and make a case for the base-generation of pseudoclefts in Bangla. Srivastav says the CP in Fig B denotes a set of sets and its sister IP is a set within this set of sets; in other words, the IP constituent provides a 'specification' for the set of sets denoted by the CP. This directly corresponds to the list denotation and question-answer semantics attributed to specificational clauses (Declerck 1988, Higgins 1979). Specificationals are said to have a value-variable constitution where the predicate is the 'variable' (Declerck 1988) or the heading of a list (Higgins 1979) and the subject provides a 'value' (Declerck 1988) or a 'specification' (Higgins 1979); thus, this relation can be characterised in quantificational terms. The fact that the relative operator in left-adjoined correlative structures needs to take scope over an obligatory demonstrative in the sister IP while the demonstrative can be optional in the right-adjoined ones (Srivastav 1991) attests the quantificational nature of the left-adjoined correlatives (cf. the predicational nature of the right-adjoined ones).

Going back to the empirical issue of the obligatory quirky copula in specificational pseudoclefts (2) as opposed to predicational ones (3), we propose that the former involve an obligatory predicate inversion operation within the main clause – the demonstrative (DEM) emerges in the predicate position in the main clause in (2; Fig C) but in the subject position in (3; Fig D). The quirky copula emerges to license the subsequent predicate inversion in (2) (Den Dikken 2006). The proposed underlying positions for the demonstratives are similar to the underlying positions posited for *it* in specificational and 'predicational' it-clefts in English and Dutch (Den Dikken 2013).

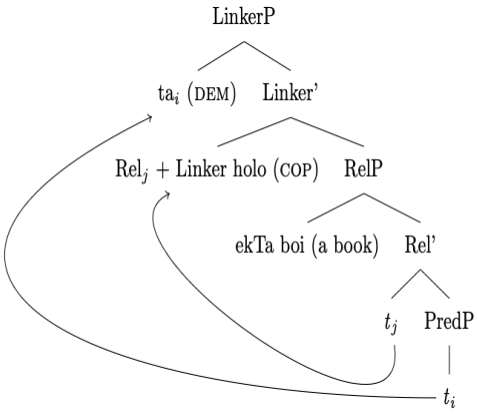

Fig C

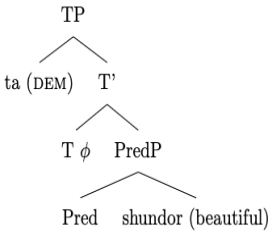

Fig D

Since the analysis of Hindi correlatives has been applied to Bangla pseudoclefts, the above-mentioned empirical observations should extend to Hindi too. Indeed, Hindi specificational pseudoclefts (7) also require the copula to occur clause-medially the predicational sentence in (8) carries the copula clause-finally (Hindi is also an SOV language):

7. Bheem-ne jo kaam lia hai vo **hai** apne bareme kitab likhna ***hai**
   Bheem-ERG REL work taken be.PRES.3 DEM COP.3 self about book to.write COP.3
   'The job Bheem has accepted is to write a book about himself.'
8. Bheem-ne jo kaam liya hai voh uske liye peeDa-ka karan **hai**
   Bheem-ERG REL work taken be.PRES.3 DEM him.acc for pain-GEN source COP.3
   'The job Bheem has accepted is a source of pain for him.' [adapted from Declerck 1988]

Abstracting over the unexpected aspectual marking on the Bangla quirky copula, it seems that both languages require a different structural configuration for specificational pseudoclefts that corresponds to the left-adjoined correlative structure depicted in Srivastav (1991) and also require predicate inversion (Den Dikken 2006) within the main clause not seen in the cases of predicational pseudoclefts ((3), (8)).

Selected references: 1. Declerck, Renaat (1988). Studies on Copular Sentences, Clefts and Pseudo-Clefts. 2. Den Dikken, Marcel (2006). Relators and linkers: the syntax of predication, predicate inversion, and copulas. MIT Press. 3. Dey, Srabasti (2024).

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