

"Equation is predication: evidence from Hungarian"

Copula clauses of the type *DP be DP* have been a major research topic in the last decades in linguistics. The present paper contributes to this discussion by arguing (i) that all types of copula clauses have a syntactic predicate which is mapped on a semantic predication structure. (ii) identity statements also exhibit a syntactic and semantic predication structure.

Data. The English data in (1) have received much attention in the past decade. (1a) is a regular predicational clause in which ‘Hamlet’ has the property of being ‘my best friend’. In (1b) however, the so-called specificational sentences, this is not obvious. One line of analysis (Moro, 1997; Den Dikken 2006 among others) claims that the DP ‘my best friend’ is the predicate of the clause and is moved to the subject position from its base position in a small clause configuration (SC, or PrP depending on the analysis). A different line of analysis (Heycock & Kroch 1997) suggests that both DPs are referential and that the specificational sentences are a subclass of identity statements like *The morning star is the evening star*, in which they assume that both DPs are referential.

- (1) a. Hamlet is my best friend, b. My best friend is Hamlet.

Note however, that the sentences in (1) are both ambiguous because in principle either DP can be the predicate of the clause independent of the word order: in the first meaning, Hamlet has the property of being my best friend, in the second meaning the person who is my best friend has the property of being (playing) Hamlet. The crucial difference between the two sentences is that the information structure differs due to the different word order. This is more obvious in the Hungarian counterparts of the sentences. They come in four word-order variants, cf. (3). None of them is a neutral sentence (in the sense of Kálmán, 1985; É. Kiss, 2002; etc.), because one of the DPs must be a Focus (cf. Kádár, 2007). Furthermore, (3b) and (3c) are ambiguous in writing because the initial DP can be either a Contrastive Topic (with rise-fall intonation) or a (discourse) Topic.

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| <p>(3) a. HAMLET lesz a legjobb barátom.
Hamlet will.be the best friend.poss
‘Hamlet will be(come) my best friend.’</p> <p>b. Hamlet A LEGJOBB BARÁTOM lesz.
Hamlet the best friend.poss will.be
‘Hamlet will be my best friend. /
It’s my best friend that will be Hamlet.’</p> | <p>c. A legjobb barátom HAMLET lesz.
the best friend.poss Hamlet will.be
‘My best friend will be Hamlet.’</p> <p>d. A LEGJOBB BARÁTOM lesz Hamlet.
the best friend.poss will.be Hamlet
‘My best friend will be Hamlet. /
It’s my best friend that will be Hamlet’</p> |
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If a DP is a discourse topic, it has to be referential (cf. É. Kiss, 2002), and therefore, this DP can be only the subject of the predication. Therefore, sentences with a discourse topic are not ambiguous. However, either referential or predicative DPs can appear as Contrastive Topics, so either the subject or the predicate of the SC can fill that position. Accordingly, sentences with Contrastive Topics are ambiguous.

Analysis. We follow Bowers (1993) and Moro (1997) and propose that all copula clauses have the same predication structure, and one of the DPs is always the (syntactic) predicate. In this respect we follow the observations and the SC-analysis of Kádár (2007), however, we assume the same structure for all copular clauses and extend this SC-analysis to identity sentences as well (see below). Embedding under *consider* is a good test to identify which one of the DPs is the predicate of the copula clause because the predicate is always in dative case.

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| <p>(4) a. HAMLET-ET tartom a legjobb barátom-nak.
Hamlet-ACC consider the best friend.POSS-DAT
‘I consider Hamlet my best friend.’</p> | <p>b. A LEGJOBB BARÁTOM-AT tartom Hamlet-nek.
the best friend.POSS-ACC consider Hamlet-DAT
‘I consider my best friend to be Hamlet.’</p> |
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In (4), it is the subject that is focused and the predicate of the SC is in postverbal position. It is clear that the syntactic predicate has to map onto the semantic predicate: it is impossible to put the syntactic predicate into a discourse topic position as in (5a), it can only be a contrastive topic as in (5b).

- (5) a. *_[TOPP] Hamlet-nek _[FOCP] A LEGJOBB BARÁTOM-AT tartom]].
 Hamlet-DAT the best friend.poss-ACC consider
 ‘I consider my best friend Hamlet.’
 b. _[CONTRTP] Hamlet-nek _[FOCP] A LEGJOBB BARÁTOM-AT tartom]].
 Hamlet-DAT the best friend.poss-ACC consider
 ‘As for being Hamlet, it’s my best friend that I consider to be that.’

If we apply this test to identity statements we see that one of the DPs is marked as a predicate as well. This strongly suggests that identity sentences have the same structure as specificational sentences. We will show that this syntactic predication structure forces a semantic predicative interpretation: Peter Parker has all the properties that Superman has, cf. (6a), or Superman has all the properties of Peter Parker in (6b).

- (6) a. Kezdetől fogva PETER PARKER-T gondoltuk Pókember-nek.
 beginning.from taken Peter Parker-ACC believed.1pl Spiderman-DAT
 ‘We believed Peter Parker to be Spiderman from the beginning.’
 b. (Nem tudok sokat a szuperhősök alteregói-ról, de)
 not know.1sg much the superheroes alteregoes-DEL but
 ‘(I don’t know much about the alteregoes of superheroes, but)
 Pókember-t PETER PARKER-NEK gondolom.
 Spiderman-ACC Peter Parker-DAT think.1sg
 I believe Spiderman to be Peter Parker.’

The topicalization test works in these cases as well: the (dative) predicate cannot be a (discourse) Topic, but it can be a Contrastive Topic as shown by the contrast between (7a) and (7b).

- (7) a. *_[TOPP] Pókember-nek _[FOCP] PETER PARKER-T tartottuk]].
 Spiderman-DAT Peter Parker-ACC considered.1pl
 ‘We considered Peter Parker Spiderman.’
 b. _[CONTRTP] Pókember-nek _[FOCP] PETER PARKER-T tartottuk]].
 Spiderman-DAT Peter Parker-ACC considered.1pl
 ‘As for being Spiderman, we considered Peter Parker to be that.’

Consequences and Extensions. This analysis of copula allows a unified analysis of copula sentences in Hungarian and other languages: identity statements are not different from other predicative structures, they also map on a semantic predication structure. Furthermore, it is clear that the information structure of these sentences is different from regular sentences. All *DP be DP* sentences contain a focus, which is usually the subject. We will elaborate on this aspect in the talk and argue that the fact that these copula clauses do not have a neutral interpretation is due to the fact that we are dealing with two DPs, which are by default not predicates. The specific information structure seems to be a product of making one of the DPs predicative.

References:

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