

Explaining Predicate Inversion with a Clause-Internal Focus Phrase

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1. Introduction. Predicate inversion of a small clause predicate is a prominent analysis of the so-called specificational copular clauses (Moro 1997, Mikkelsen 2004, den Dikken 2006 etc).

- (1) a. John is my friend. Pred(icational copular clause)
 b. My friend is John. Spec(ificational copular clause)

Under this analysis, predicational and specificational copular clauses like the ones in (1) have the same underlying small clause structure with a null head but differ in whether it is the small clause subject or predicate that raises to Spec, TP.

- (2) a. [TP John_i is [SmCIP t_i [SmCl' Ø_{SmCl} my friend]]]
 b. [TP My friend_i is [SmCIP John [SmCl' Ø_{SmCl} t_i]]]

An aspect of specificational copular clauses that is often neglected in predicate inversion analyses is the fact that unlike other types of copular clauses, specificational copular clauses have a fixed Topic-Focus order (den Dikken, Meinunger & Wilder 2000, Mikkelsen 2004 a.o). The only one who attempts an analysis of this fact within a predicate inversion analysis is Mikkelsen (2004) who proposes that predicate inversion in copular clauses occurs just in case the predicate has an interpretable topic feature and the T head has an uninterpretable Topic feature with the pivot, *John*, remaining in situ. However, based on evidence from Tamil, I claim that the pivot in specificational copular clauses is in a slightly higher position and that this position is a copular internal focus phrase as shown in (3).

- (3) [TP My friend_i is [FocP John_j [SmCIP t_j [SmCl' Ø_{SmCl} t_i]]]]

This, I claim, is what explains why specificational copular clauses have a focused pivot.

2. The Tamil Data: First, I introduce the basic Tamil copular clause data.

- (4) a. Balan en nanban (aa iru-{paan/ *-kum}) Pred
 Balan my friend AA be-3sm/ 3sneut
 'Balan is my friend.'
 b. en nanban Balan (aa iru-{kum/ *-paan}) Spec
 my friend Balan AA be-3sneut/ 3sm
 'My friend is Balan.'

Tamil copular clauses can have null or overt copula. When the copula verb *iru-* 'be' is overt, an -aa affix also has to obligatorily occur. In both types of copula clauses, the initial phrase is the element that agrees with the verb. Thus, in (4a), the agreement must be with *Balan*, whereas in (4b), the agreement must be with the inverted predicate. In addition, I also assume that the -aa affix is a small clause head given that it also occurs in small clauses as seen in (5).

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- (5) naa [_{SmCl} Balan-e en nanban aa] karudugir-een
 I Balan-acc my friend AA consider-1.sg
 'I consider Balan my friend.'

2.1 THE TAMIL PUZZLE. Given the Tamil facts, now consider scrambling in copular clauses.

- (6) a. [en nanban aa]_i Balan t_i iru-paan Pred
 my friend AA Balan be-3sm
 'My friend, Balan is.'
- b. *[Balan aa]_i en nanban t_i iru-kum Spec
 Balan AA my friend be-3sneut
 'Balan, My friend is.'

(6a) shows that the pivot+aa can scramble in predicational copular clauses, while (6b) shows that the pivot+aa cannot scramble in specificational copular clauses. It should be noted that -aa has to be scrambled together with the pivot and cannot be stranded.

On the surface, this looks like a similar ban on pivot wh-movement in English specificational copular clauses noticed by several (Moro 1997, Heycock & Kroch 1999, den Dikken 2006 etc). However, there are good reasons to doubt that the English wh-movement facts are the same as the Tamil scrambling facts. **First:** Given that -aa is analyzed as an small clause head, and under the assumption that -aa adjoins to a constituent under PF adjacency, a phrase larger than the pivot scrambles in Tamil, while in English wh-movement, it is probably just the pivot itself that is the target of wh-movement. **Second:** Without overt copula, even scrambling in predicational copular clauses is not allowed as seen in (7).

- (7) *en nanban_i Balan t_i Pred
 my friend Balan
 'My friend, Balan is².'

On the predicational reading, (7) is ungrammatical. If we are to give a uniform explanation for (7) and (6b), then, it must be the case that (6b) cannot be the same as the ban on English wh-movement. **Third:** While Heycock & Kroch (1999: 378) note that the pivot cannot wh-move in English equatives, the pivot+aa can scramble in Tamil equatives.

- (8) [Somu aa]_i Balan t_i iru-paan Equative
 Somu AA Balan be-3sm
 'Somu, Balan is.'

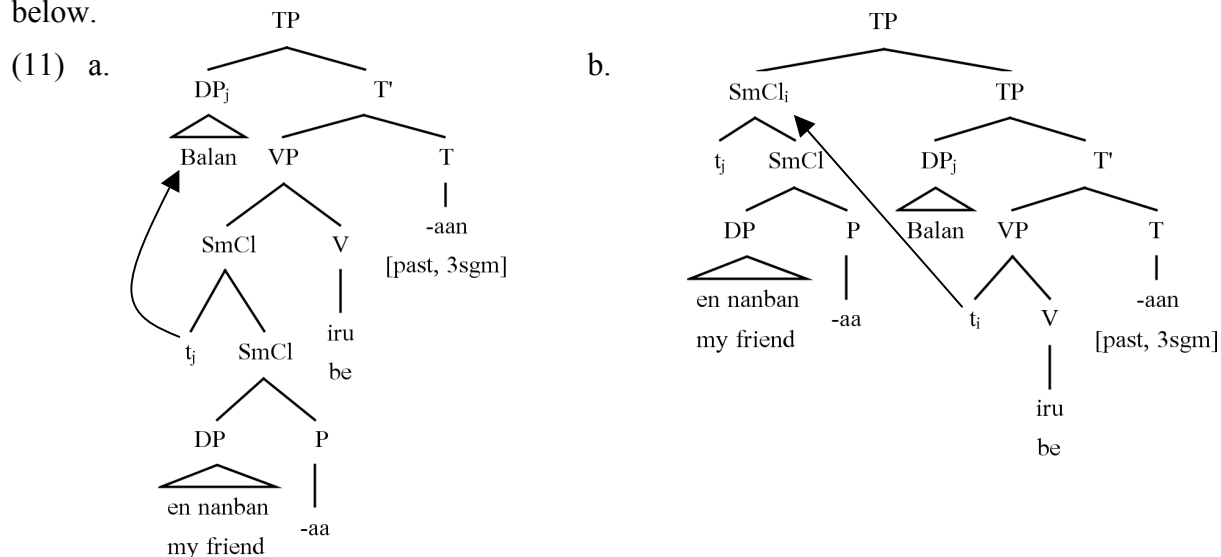
As (8) indicates, scrambling of the pivot+aa in Tamil equatives is possible. These support the claim the Tamil scrambling ban in (6b) has a different source from English wh-movement ban.

3. Towards an analysis. I propose that the right analysis of the Tamil scrambling facts rests in Landau (2007)'s claim that null headed phrases cannot satisfy the EPP.

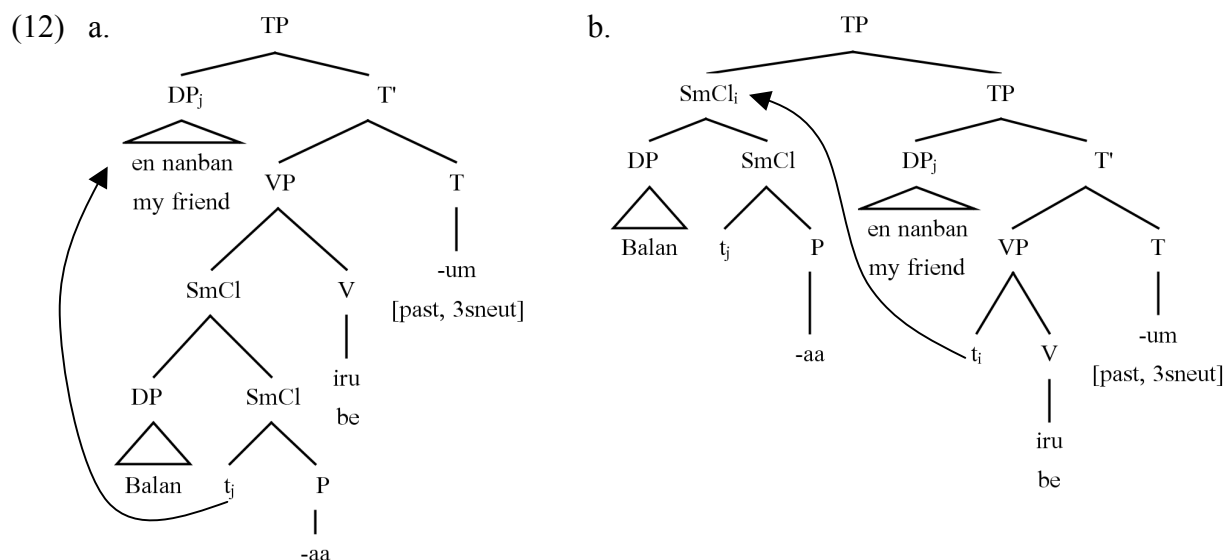
- (9) a. People widely assume [_{CP} (that) politics is corrupting]. Landau (2007: 497)
 b. [_{CP} *(that) politics is corrupting] is widely assumed.
- (10) a. He came back [_{PP} (on) October 1st]. Landau (2007: 500)
 b. [* (On) October 1st], he came back.

² Although on the surface, this sentence just looks like a specificational copular clause, using adjunct placement, it can be shown that the pivot cannot scramble in predicational copular clause when there is no overt copula.

(9) and (10) are representative data that motivates his analysis. According to Landau, movement of the CP and PP is only allowed if the C and P are overt. This is because both movements satisfy an EPP requirement (of T and C) which is assumed to be a PF condition. Thus, only phrases with overt heads can be targeted. This analysis straightforwardly explains (7) as shown below.

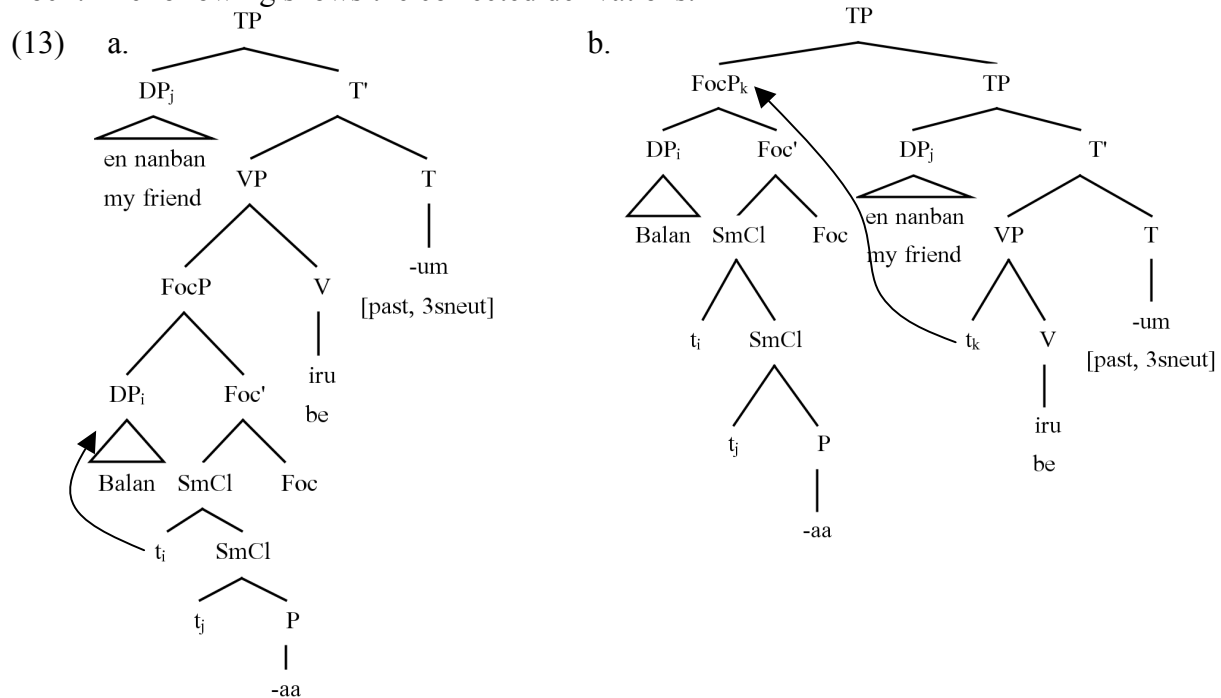


(11a) shows the derivation of the Tamil predicational copular clause in (4a) and (11b) shows the derivation where the pivot+aa has scrambled as in (6a). The scrambling is analyzed as an adjunction of the whole small clause to TP. The crucial assumption here is that scrambling in Tamil is also driven by the EPP. Thus, since it is the small clause that scrambles, when the small clause head -aa is null, scrambling is disallowed as seen in (7). Explaining (6b) is not as straightforward.



(12a) shows a possible (but wrong) derivation of a specificational copular clause where the small clause predicate moves to Spec, TP. (12b) shows how scrambling in (6b) would be explained with this derivation. However, this cannot be correct because if this was the case, then we have no way of explaining why (12b) does not lead to a grammatical sentence. After all, the

predicational copular clause counterpart in (11b) looks practically the same. However, several authors have proposed a clause internal focus phrase (Jayaseelan (1999) and Belletti (2004) a.o) and following them I propose that in specificational copular clauses, the pivot is actually in Spec, FocP. The following shows the corrected derivations.



(13a) shows the proposed derivation of the specificational copular clause. Here, the pivot has moved to Spec, FocP. Note that this explains why specificational copular clauses have a focused pivot. We can also explain why scrambling of the pivot+aa is not allowed in specificational copular clauses as seen in (13b). Here, the only way to scramble the lower material without stranding -aa is to move the whole FocP. However, there is no overt counterpart of the Focus head in Tamil and as such, FocP will never be a good target for scrambling.

4. Conclusion. Based on Tamil data, I have argued that in specificational copular clauses, the pivot is not in situ but in the specifier of a clause internal FocP. The analysis here also indicates that the reason for obligatory focus on specificational copular clause pivots is not due to predicate topicalization as previously thought but rather pivot focusing. Finally, given the prevalence of specificational copular clauses with the same type of information structure profile cross-linguistically, the analysis here indicates that clause internal informational structure projections are much more common than it would appear.

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