Predication, Specification and Information Structure in Kinande

There are currently two competing accounts in the literature for the distinction made by Higgins 1973 between predicational and specificational copular sentences. The 'inverse analysis' (e.g. Moro 1997, den Dikken 2006) posits that specificational sentences are generated from predicational ones via inversion of the predicate to initial position. Mikkelsen 2005 points out that inverse sentences, such as (1A1), have a fixed topic+focus information structure; while non-inverse sentences, such as (1A2) and (2A4) have flexible information structure. On this account, sentence (1A2) is a predicational sentence with subject focus.

(1)　Q:　Who is the winner?　　(2)　Q:　What is John?
　　A1:　The winner is JOHN.　　　　A3:　#The WINNER is John.
　　A2:　JOHN is the winner.　　　　A4:　John is the WINNER.

By contrast, the competing 'equative analysis' (e.g. Heycock & Kroch 1999) posits that both phrases in specificational sentences such as (1A1) are referential. Following Kuno & Wongkhomthong 1981, Hedberg & Potter 2010 show that specificational sentences such as (1A1) and predicational sentences such as (2A4) surface with different copulas in Thai. Crucially, sentences such as (1A2), which they term 'reverse specificational,' occur with the same copula as (1A1). They argue that such reversibility is evidence for the **equative** nature of specificational sentences in Thai.

In this paper, we argue that facts from the Bantu language Kinande support the **inverse** analysis of specificational sentences in that language. Like Thai, Kinande exhibits two different morphemes for connecting two nominals in copular sentences; and reverse-specificational as well as specificational sentences exhibit one morpheme while predicational sentences exhibit the other morpheme. However, just as in predicational sentences, the second nominal in reverse-specificational sentences is marked as a syntactic predicate. The difference is only that the subject is focused. We argue that den Dikken's 2006 inverse-analysis theory of relators and linkers successfully explains all of the Kinande data under the assumption that those categories can be realized as topic and focus heads in the left periphery.

The sentence in (4) answers the question, 'What about the war?' and is an ordinary subject-predicate sentence with a copula connecting the two nominals. We claim that NI is a (non-agreeing) copulative RELATOR in the sense of den Dikken 2006, which serves to mediate the predication of 'being a problem' to 'the war', as shown in the analysis in (5). Kinande doesn't have definite or indefinite articles. Although in-situ referential objects can take prefixed augments, complements of NI cannot take augments. Lack of an augment indicates that they are syntactic predicates.

(4)　olúhi　　　**ni**　　mbúga
　　aug.11war　COP　9.problem
　　'The war is a problem.'

(5)　[RP oluhi [R' [RELATOR=COP **NI**] [mbuga]]]

The specificational sentence in (6) and its reverse-specificational counterpart in (7) both constitute ways of answering the question, 'What is the problem?'. Note that specificational sentences involve a different copular element: LO.

(6)　émbugá　　**lô**　　lúhi　　　　(Augment realized tonally on preceding syllable.)
　　aug.9problem 11FOC　aug.11war
　　'The problem is the WAR.'

(7)　olúhi　　　**ló**　　mbúga
　　aug.11war　11FOC 9.problem
　　'The WAR is the problem.'

In both cases, 'war' is focused, and the mediating element, LO, agrees with the focus in noun class. The final nominal in (6) has an augment, which indicates it is referential. However, the final nominal in (7) lacks an augment, indicating that it is syntactically predicative despite its definite translation into English and its pragmatic status as topical by virtue of repeating material from the eliciting question. This nominal is clearly marked as a syntactic predicate, consistent with the inverse analysis.

We propose that (7) receives the analysis in (8), following den Dikken's claim that predication can be mediated by RELATORS instantiated by a variety of functional heads, here FOCUS (FOC). FOC agrees with the nominal occurring in its specifier.

(8) $[_{RP}$ oluhi $[_{R'}$ $[_{RELATOR=FOC}$ **LO**$]$ [mbuga$]]]$

Finally, we analyze (6) as an instance of predicate inversion, where the RELATOR (here again FOC) agrees with the nominal in its specifier and then raises to an external functional head, here TOPIC (TOP), and merges with it, thereby licensing the non-minimal movement of the predicate across the subject. The initial predicative nominal obligatorily contains an augment, indicating that it is a reduced relative clause of the type found also in headed relative clauses, as shown in (9).

(9) a. e-netbook   e-nyihyaka   b. a-ba-lume a-ba-genda
       aug-9.netbook aug-9.new   aug-2-man aug-2-left
       'a netbook which is new'   'the men who left'

A more accurate translation of (6) then is 'That which is a problem is the war.' We note that inversion, as proposed by den Dikken, is motivated as a means of licensing the reduced relative in its headless state. Our analysis of (6), shown in (10), thus instantiates den Dikken's LINKER schema shown in (11).

(10) $[_{TopP}$ embuga$_j$ $[_{Top'}$ $[_{LINKER=TOP+RELATOR=FOC}$ **LO**$]_i$ $[_{RP}$ luhi $[_{R'}$ t$_i$ t$_j]]]]$

(11) $[_{FP}$ PREDICATE$_j$ $[$**F+R$_i$**$ [_{RP}$ SUBJECT $[_{R'}$ t$_i$ t$_j]]]]$

Topic and focus structure is independently motivated in Kisnande. It has been argued (e.g., Baker 2003) that in a typical SVO sentence in Kinande, the subject must be dislocated. Schneider-Zioga 2001, 2007 identifies this dislocated position as specifier of topic position. This view accounts for the fact that a focused expression is ungrammatical as a simple preverbal subject (data is ours here):

(12) *[Kutse Kambale kutse Marya] agenda
       [or   Kambale or   Mary] 3sg.left
       'Either Kambale or Mary left.' (I'm not sure who.)

In order for the preverbal subject to receive a focus interpretation, it must be immediately followed by a focus marker. We take this to indicate it occupies a specifier of focus position:

(13) [Kutse Kambale kutse Marya] **yo**   wagenda
       [or   1Kambale or   1Mary] **1FOC** anti-agr.left
       'Either Kambale or Mary left.' (I'm not sure who.)

When both topic and focus occur in the left periphery in Kinande, the order is fixed: focus is subordinate to topic. This follows if the left periphery of Kinande is structured according to Rizzi's 1997, 2004 cartographic approach to topic and focus.

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