On the grammaticalization of the Assertion Structure: a view from Spanish*

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1. Introduction.

It is well known that natural languages may syntactically encode the focus/presupposition divide; we refer to it as the assertion content of the sentence. One construction that overtly and unambiguously structures this aspect of the meaning of a sentence is the pseudo-cleft and, in particular, the so-called specificational pseudo-cleft (Higgins 1976), where the post-copula constituent specifies a property of the subject of the pre-copula wh-clause:1

(1) What John is is important to himself.

I briefly review the analysis of the English pseudo-cleft construction and its Spanish counterparts in standard and colloquial Peninsular varieties, and argue that Spanish provides support for the bi-clausal analysis of pseudo-clefts, put forth by Schlenker 1998, 2003, and Den Dikken et al. 2000, where the pre-copula clause encodes the presupposition and the post-copula clause the assertion (section 2). I then turn to Caribbean Spanish (CS) bare-copula construction, in particular to the Andean variety of the Bucaramanga dialect of Colombia described by Méndez-Vallejo 2009, exemplified in (2). I propose that CS represents a more advanced stage of the bi-clausal grammaticalization of the assertion structure of the sentence, which involves a reduced bi-clausal structure (section 3).

(2) Nevó ayer fue en Berlín.

Snow.PRET.3SG. yesterday COP.PRET3SG. in Berlin

‘It is in Berlin that it snowed yesterday.’

Finally, I suggest that Standard Spanish monoclausal sentences with a “low” focus and a non-canonical word order, such as the VOS in (3), can be given an analysis that involves a variant of the reduced bi-clausal structure proposed for the CSp bare-copula construction (section 4).

(3) Hoy preparó la cena María.

Today prepared the dinner Maria

‘It was Maria who prepared the dinner today.’
Thus, it is argued that there is an increasing level of grammaticalization of the assertion structure across all three types of constructions. This grammaticalization of the assertion structure has various independent components. First, it contains a presuppositional variable bound by an overt or covert operator in the presuppositional clause. Second, there is a focused phrase within the assertion clause. (The conjunction of the above two components constitute the “structured meaning approach”, first put forth by Jackendoff 1972 and Chomsky 1976, and defended by Krifka 1991; see also Zubizarreta 1998). Third, a PF-LF\textsubscript{ASS} interface condition requires that the focus phrase appear at the left edge of the phase,\textsuperscript{2} a result which is obtained via ellipsis at PF (Molnar & Winkler 2010). Under such analysis, focus movement is unnecessary for the cases at hand, since ellipsis accomplishes what movement would otherwise do. If this conclusion is on the right track, it lends support to the view that there is no focus grammatical feature, i.e. focus does not involve a formal feature-checking operation (contra Rizzi 1997, Belletti 2004). In cases where there is indeed focus fronting (in particular to the CP field, as in the Romance languages), the movement must be due to considerations other than feature-checking.

2. The specificational pseudo-cleft.

2.1. Some preliminaries.

The analysis of the specificational pseudo-cleft in terms of a bi-clausal structure (first proposed by Ross 1972, and further elaborated by Schlenker 1998, 2003 and Den Dikken et al. 2000) provides us with insights as to what the grammatical elements of the assertion structure are. According to such analysis, a sentence like (4) contains a hidden bi-clausal structure, with parts of the post-copula construction elided (as indicated by strike-through). As argued by the proponents of this analysis, the bi-clausal structure provides us with an immediate account for the “connectedness” properties of specificational pseudo-clefts, for example the local binding of the anaphor himself by the subject:

(4) [What John likes __ ] is [John likes himself]

Schlenker op.cit. furthermore proposes that the pre-copula constituent is semantically a question and the post-copula constituent its answer, linked by an equative “be”. Schlenker’s analysis is crucially embedded within a semantic theory in which the extension of a question Q is
the intension of the unique (exhaustive) answer to Q (Groenendijk & Stokhof 1997). As we will see below, the Spanish pseudo-cleft introduced by what is unambiguously a relative pronoun do not lend itself to a Q/A semantic analysis. Nonetheless, data from colloquial Peninsular Spanish do provide some striking evidence in favor of the bi-clausal analysis.

The bi-clausal analysis of pseudo-clefts captures the basic components of the assertion structure of the sentence: (1) the presupposition in the pre-copular part of the sentence, which introduces the presuppositional variable (*John likes* x in the case of (4)); (2) the assertion in the post-copular part of the sentence (*John likes himself* in (4)), with the non-deleted part identified as the focus phrase, which provides the semantic focus value. The copula has the semantic function of a focalizer: it picks a particular alternative (the focus value) from the discourse-determined presuppositional set (Jackendoff 1972, Rooth 1995). Importantly, both the presupposition and the assertion are propositional in nature.3

The following side note is in order. It is important to keep in mind a distinction between the focus phrase and the focus itself, which defines the contrastive part of the focus phrase (i.e. the variant part in the set of alternatives). This distinction can be clearly appreciated in cases where the focus is embedded inside an island, as in (5) (an observation attributed to Dubrig 1994 by Krifka 2008). The focus phrase is the DP complement of the dative preposition *the woman he met at SUE’s party*, while the focus (which introduces the contrast) is limited to the possessor contained within it. What is under focus is part of the *introducing-event*; See Krifka 2008 for elaboration of this point.

(5) John didn’t introduce Bill to [*the woman he met at SUE’s party*], but the woman he met at MARY’s party / *but MARY’s.

We turn next to pseudo-clefts in colloquial Peninsular Spanish, which provides striking evidence in favor of the bi-clausal analysis for the specificational pseudo-cleft.

2.2. The specificational pseudo-cleft in standard and colloquial Peninsular Spanish.

Alongside pseudo-clefts introduced by a wh-phrase (as in English), Spanish also has pseudo-clefts introduced by a relative pronoun, composed of a definite weak pronominal element (*el, los, la, las, lo...*) plus the complementizer *que*.
(6) a. De la que te hablé fue de María. (PP)
   Of DEF.FEM.3SG=that (I) DAT.CL.2SG=spoke was of Maria.
   “Of whom I spoke to you is of Maria”

   b. Con el que hablé es con Pedro. (PP)
   With DEF.MASC.3SG=that (I) talked is with Pedro.
   “With whom I spoke is with Pedro.”

Clearly, the pre-copula part does not have the force of a question, as shown by the fact that it cannot be embedded under indirect question verbs:

(7) *Me pregunto con el que hablé / de la que te hablé.
   “I wonder with whom I spoke / I wonder of whom I spoke to you”

On the other hand, the bi-clausal analysis can readily accommodate the reduplication of the preposition of the relativized phrase in post-copula position:

(8) [[de la que], te habló e₁ ] [ fue [te habló de María]]

The weak pronominal el/la (and their plural counterparts) picks up animate individuals. The neuter lo form picks out events, as in (9a); lo (que) is bound to the complement of hacer ‘to do’. The case of hacer with the ‘to do’ meaning is particularly revealing because under that interpretation, hacer cannot take anything else as a complement other than an event-denoting DP, in particular it cannot take a verbal complement (9c). The relation between the event-denoting DP variable and the post-copula event-denoting vP in (9a) is comparable to the relation between the demonstrative DP and the following verbal phrase in (9b). Thus, the example in (9a) shows that, in the standard pseudo-cleft, it is the semantic type (not the syntactic type) of the presuppositional variable that must match that of the focus phrase. As for the LF, we assume that the entire post-copular clause constitutes the assertion (only propositions can be asserted). The focus phrase at LF (comprar un coche nuevo) is identified by virtue of its relation to PF, namely that part of the assertion structure that is undeleted at PF. This is in line with Zubizarreta 1998’s proposal that PF is visible to that part of LF that encodes the Assertion structure of the
sentence (to which we refer here as LF_{Ass}). The PF-LF_{Ass} constraint requires that what is interpreted as the focus phrase at LF_{Ass} must be at the left-edge of a phase in the asserted clause at PF; see (10). We return to this point later on.

(9)  
a. *Lo que debes hacer es comprar un coche nuevo.
    DEF.NEUT=that must.PRES.2SG. do is buy a car new
    “What you must do is buy a new car.”
b. Debes hacer esto: comprar un coche nuevo.
    “You must do this: buy a new car.”
c. *Debes hacer comprar un coche nuevo
    (you) must.PRES.2SG. do.INF buy a car new

(10) a. PF: [Lo_k que debes hacer [DP_k e ] [es [ debe [vP comprar un coche nuevo]]]
b. LF_{Ass}: [Lo_k que debes hacer [DP_k e ] [es [ debe [vP comprar un coche nuevo]]]

We turn next to pseudo-clefts in colloquial Peninsular Spanish described for the first time (as far as I know) by Fernandez-Soriano 2009; these are illustrated in (11). What we observe here is that part of the assertion is elided in the post-copular rather than in the expected pre-copular part of the pseudo-cleft. This is a case of “ellipsis mismatch” so to speak, which is the kind of quirk that we might expect under a bi-clausal analysis of pseudo-clefts. Note in particular the case of (11d), which involves an idiomatic VP, with the verbal part realized in pre-copular position and the nominal part in post-copular position.

(11) a. No me he disculpado, lo que le he traído es un regalo.
    I didn’t apologize, DEF.NEUT= that (I) dat.cl= have brought is a present
    ‘I did not apologize, what I did is bring her a present.’
b. Lo que no tienes ganas es de ir.
    DEF.Neut=that (you) not have desire is to go
    ‘What happens is that you don’t feel like going.’
c. Lo que no puedes prorrumpir es en sollozos.
    Def.Neut=that (you) not can.PRES.2SG. burst is into tears
    ‘What you cannot do is burst into tears.’
A possible syntactic account for the difference between standard and colloquial Peninsular pseudo-clefts is that in standard pseudo-clefts, the presuppositional variable is created before spell-out, while in colloquial Peninsular Spanish it can be created after spell-out via LF_{Ass} ellipsis, thus allowing for the possibility of an ellipsis mismatch between what is deleted at PF and what is interpreted at LF_{Ass} as the focus phrase. To exemplify, consider the cases of (11b) and (11c), with the PF and LF_{Ass} structures in (12) and (13), respectively. At LF_{Ass}, the vP in pre-copular position functions as the variable, and the vP in post-copular position as the focus phrase. The verbal part of the focus phrase is phonologically realized in pre-copular, rather than in post-copular position, as would be in the standard variety. (We assume that tener ganas constitutes a complex verbal predicate.)

(12) PF: [Lo que [TP pro no tienes ganas de ir] [es [TP pro no tienes ganas de ir]]]

LF: [Lo_{k} que [TP_{k} pro no tienes ganas de ir] [es [TP_{k} pro no tienes ganas de ir]]]

(13) PF: [CP Lo que [pro no puedes [vP prorrumpir en sollozos]]]]

[es [no puedes [vP prorrumpir en sollozos]]]]

LF: [CP Lo_{k} que [pro no puedes [vP_{k} prorrumpir en sollozos]]]]

[es [pro no puedes [vP_{k} prorrumpir en sollozos]]]]

It would appear that colloquial Peninsular Spanish allows for a relaxation of the PF-LF_{Ass} constraint on the identification of the focus phrase, such that part of the focus phrase, namely the verb and its associated functional heads, may be phonologically retrieved from the pre-copular part of the structure. Although the precise nature of the identification of the focus phrase in these quirky cases still remains to be fully investigated,
can license an NPI in post-copular position (14a) and that a clitic argument of the lexical verb can climb across a modal in pre-copular position (as in a monoclausal sentence), with the modal + verb interpreted as part of the focus phrase (14b) (Fernandez-Soriano, p.c.). Thus, in these cases, the lexical verb, as well as its associated functional projections Neg, Tense, and modal verb, surface in pre-copular position at PF but are interpreted as part of the focus phrase in post-copular position at LF. The latter must be a full clause to accommodate negation and tensed modal verbs with an adjoined clitic argument.

(14) a. Lo que no alzó fue un dedo.
   DEF. NEUT=that (she) not raised was a finger
   ‘What she did was she did not raise a finger.’

b. Lo que te quiero es dar un regalo.
   DEF-NEUT=that (I) DAT.CL.2SG want is give.INF a gift
   ‘What happens is that I want to give you a gift.’
   Cf. Te quiero dar un regalo

Finally, it is worthwhile mentioning that the agreement between the copula and the remnant that follows it appears not to be structural in nature; rather, it is based on phonological adjacency. This is shown by the fact that while there is agreement between the copula and the remnant post-copular direct object, what is interpreted as the focus phrase is the negated clause. This is illustrated by the example below (provided by Fernandez-Soriano, p.c.). This is an important fact because it suggests that agreement per se is not an argument for focus fronting within the post-copular structure. In fact, we will assume that given a PF ellipsis analysis, there is no need for focus fronting at all. We will later see an argument based on Caribbean Spanish in favor of this view.

(14) Lo que no tienes son agallas.
   DEF.NEUT= that (you) not have are guts
   ‘What happens is that you do not have guts.’
To conclude, colloquial Peninsular Spanish provide some striking evidence in favor of the bi-clausal-qua-ellipsis analysis of the P-Cleft construction. Such an analysis can readily accommodate the mismatch between the PF realization and the LF interpretation of the focus phrase. There are two important ingredients in the proposed analysis: (1) Ellipsis at the syntax/PF interface may involve backward and forward ellipsis (2) the presuppositional variable may be created via ellipsis and operator binding at LF. These two properties will be important in understanding the Caribbean Spanish bare-copular construction.


The CSp bare-copular construction can be thought of as a further level of grammaticalization of the pseudo-cleft construction. It is likely that the bare-copular structure has its origins in the pseudo-cleft, but it has undergone some important changes. I will draw freely here from the detailed and insightful description provided by Méndez-Vallejo 2009, based on data collected from the Andean variety of Bucaramanga (Colombia). All of the examples cited are from this author’s work, unless otherwise noted.

3.1. A reduced bi-clausal structure with ellipsis.

The most salient difference with the standard pseudo-cleft is that the overt operator in the pre-copular part has been lost. Thus, the existential presupposition introduced by the operator in the pseudo-cleft counterpart is no longer there; cf. compare the bare-copular structure in (15a) with the P-Cleft in (15b): 

(15) a. No comió fue nada.
   Neg ate COP.PRET.3SG. nothing
   ‘He did not eat anything.’

b. *Lo que no comió fue nada.
   DEF.NEUT=that neg ate COP.PRET.3SG.. nothing

The proposal that I put forth here is that the loss of the operator goes hand in hand with the fact that the complement of the copula has undergone reduction from a full (proposition-denoting) CP to an event-denoting vP. This in turn triggers a reanalysis of the copula from being the head of the matrix predicate to being the head of an adjunct. More precisely, the copula + vP
is adjoined to the matrix vP. The proposal that the copular part of the structure is adjoined to the matrix vP was first put forth by Camacho 2006, but this author assumes that it is a full clause, with a structure comparable to “it is XP”. Here it is argued that it is not a full-fledged CP; it is a reduced clause and it is this reduction that triggers its demise from having the status of a main (semantically autonomous) predicate to an adjoined one. As we shall see later, the temporal morphology on the copula is not purely morphological, it is semantically active. Yet, its semantic specification is crucially determined by a minimally c-commanding T. We will label that piece of the structure as CopP, with an underspecified T feature (we return to this point further below). Thus, we maintain the bi-clausal analysis of the pseudo-cleft, albeit with a reduced/temporally underspecified copular clausal structure.

Some examples are given below. In (16a), with nuclear stress on Armando, the post-copular focus phrase is the VP (galletas V a Armando, where V encodes an abstract transfer predicate), while in (16b), it is the object.

(16) a. Clara le trajo f fue galletas a Armando.
Clara DAT.CL=brought COP.PRET.3SG. cookies to Armando
‘It was cookies for Armando that Clara brought.’

b. Clara le trajo a Armando fue galletas.
Clara DAT.CL=brought to Armando COP.PRET.3SG. cookies.
‘It was cookies that Clara brought for Armando.’

The reduced bi-clausal analysis for (16a) and (16b) would be as in (17a) and (17b), respectively, after PF deletion.

(17) a. PF: [TP Clara [T le trajo, [[vP ej v [vP galletas V a Armando]]]]]

 b. PF: [TP Clara [T le trajo, [[vP ej v [galletas V a Armando]]]]

Unlike colloquial Peninsular pseudo-clefts, CSp bare-copular structure does not exhibit mismatches between LF interpretation and PF realization. Still, it is reasonable to assume that the CSp bare-copular construction does have an operator-variable structure in the pre-copular
structure, but it is created at LF (as in colloquial Peninsular Spanish). The presuppositional variable is created at LF via ellipsis of the vP or subparts of it in the pre-copular clause and this variable is bound by an abstract (lambda-type) operator. The LFs for (17a) and (17b) are as in (18a) and (18b), respectively. In (18a), the presuppositional variable is the VP bound by an operator in the pre-copular part of the structure; the VP in the post-copular (assertion) part of the structure provides the focus value (namely, galletas V a Armando). In (18b), the presuppositional variable is the DP object bound by an operator in the pre-copular structure; the DP object (galletas) in post-copular position provides the focus value. (From now on, for sake of visual simplicity, we represent the site of LF ellipsis by an empty category rather than by the standard strike-through font).

(18)  
a.  \[ Op_k [TP \ Clara_j [T \ le \ trajo_v [vP \ e_j [v \ [vP_k \ e ]]]] ]\]  
[\[CopP \ fue [vP \ e_j \ tra_v [vP_k \ galletas \ V \ a \ Armando]]\]]

b.  \[ Op_k [TP \ Clara_j [T \ le \ trajo_v [vP \ e_j [v \ [DP_k \ e] \ V_k \ a \ Armando]]]]\]  
[\[CopP \ fue [vP \ e_j \ tra_v [\[DP_k \ galletas \ V_k \ a \ Armando]]\] ]\]

Interestingly, with an emphatic accent on the object galletas (which in Spanish is typical of sentence internal accent) and deaccenting on the following indirect object (a Armando), an acceptable variant of (16a), with a contrastive focused object interpretation, is obtained; see (19) (the context is provided in brackets). The PF of this sentence is comparable to (17a), but with an extra-high pitch on the DO and the IO deaccented. On the other hand, its LF_{Ass} structure is comparable to (18b), but with the contrastive implication (namely, exclusion of the other alternatives in the focus set). This is indeed the type of data that a bi-clausal analysis-quae-ellipsis can readily account for.

(19)  
[Did Clara not bring a cake for Armando?]

No, Clara le trajo fue GALLETAS a Armando.

The above analysis in which the presuppositional variable is created at LF (rather than via movement in the overt syntax as in the standard pseudo-cleft) requires that the variable and the focus phrase must match not only semantically (as in the standard pseudo-cleft), but also syntactically. Deletion in pre-copular position requires identity in form and in meaning with the
overt part in the post-copular position. Thus, there is no CSp bare-copular counterpart to the standard pseudo-cleft in (9), repeated in (20a). CSp (20b) is ungrammatical because *hacer with the ‘to do’ meaning does not select a verbal complement. CSp expresses the meaning in (20a) with the form in (20c), which has the PF-LF_{Ass} structure in (21).

(20)  a. Lo que debes hacer es comprar un coche nuevo.

DEF.NEUT =that must.PRES.2SG. COP.PRES.3SG buy a car new

‘What you must do is buy a new car’

b. *Debes hacer es comprar un coche nuevo.

(you) must.PRES.2SG do.INF COP.PRES.3SG buy.INF a car new

c. Debes es comprar un coche nuevo.

(21) PF: [TP proi debes [[vP ei comprar un coche] [CopP es [vP ei comprar un coche nuevo]]]]

LF_{Ass}: [Opk [proi debes [ [vPk e ] [CopP es [vPk ei comprar un coche nuevo]]]]]

There are two immediate arguments in favor of the view that the post-copular part of the structure has indeed lost its upper CP/TP crust and that, in the construction under discussion, the CSp copula takes a vP or an AspP as its complement. The first argument is that while the copula can precede a non-tensed aspectual auxiliary or infinitival lexical verb, it can never precede a tensed auxiliary or tensed verb, as illustrated below.

(22)  a. (*Es) ha es estado haciendo frío.

(*COP.PRES.3SG.) has COP.PRES.3SG. been doing cold

b. A Clara (*es) le gusta es traerle galletas

DAT.Clara (*COP.PRES.3SG.) DAT.CL=likes COP.PRES.3SG. bring.INF.DAT.CL. cookies
to Armando.

to Armando

‘What Clara likes to do is bring cookies for Armando’.

The second argument is that high (speaker-oriented) adverbs cannot appear in post-copula position, as noted by Camacho 2006, from whom I borrow the example in (23a); the only
available reading for the adverb in this example is a manner interpretation. Furthermore, high adverbs, like modals, give rise to ungrammaticality (23b). 8 This second argument does not have much force though because high, speaker-oriented adverbs, and modals do not lend themselves to focalization. Thus, (23a’) can only have the manner reading, although its grammatical status is dubious, and (23b’) is completely ungrammatical.

(23) a. Marta no debería hablar es francamente.
    Marta not should.imp.3sg talk.inf cop.pres.3sg. frankly
    ‘It is frankly that Marta should not talk.’
    a’. Lo que María no debería hablar es francamente.
    (? as manner adverb; * as speaker-oriented adverb)
b. *Dormiré en el hotel es probablemente/posiblemente.
    (I) sleep.fut.1sg. in the hotel cop.pres.3sg. probably/possibly
    b’.* Lo que dormiré en el hotel es probablemente/posiblemente.

While the second argument is not compelling, the first argument is solid. We therefore consider the data in (22) sufficient evidence in favor of the view that the complement of the copula in CSp is a vP (and not a TP).

3.2. The propositional nature of the copular structure.

While the copula part of the structure no longer corresponds to the matrix predicate in CSp, there is an argument in favor of the view that it is still propositional in nature. This argument is based on the temporal properties of the copula. The tense of the copula is dependent on the immediately c-commanding tense, but this dependency is not a purely morphological one; it has semantic content. It is via t-binding with the c-commanding T that the tense on the copula is licensed.

The dependency of the copula on the minimally c-commanding Tense is illustrated in (24), where the copula must appear in the imperfective (the tense of the subordinate complement under which it is embedded) and cannot appear in the preterite (the tense of the matrix). For detailed discussion, see Méndez-Vallejo 2009.
(24) Dijiste que te habías era /*fué
(you) say.PRET.2SG. that (you) REFL.2SG=have.IMP.2SG. COP.IMP.3SG/*COP.PRET.3SG. casado.
made.married.

'It was that you married that you said you had done.'

As expected, when the copular structure is embedded within a subjunctive (which is tenseless), then the copula does agree in Tense with the matrix indicative (25a); it cannot appear in the subjunctive (25b) (Méndez-Vallejo, p.c).³

(25) a. Quería que durmieras era en el hotel
(I) want.IMP.1SG.. that (you) sleep.SUBJ.2SG cop.IMP.3SG in the hotel
b.*Quería que durmieras fuera en el hotel
(I) want.IMP.1SG. that (you) sleep.SUBJ.2SG. COP.SUBJ.3SG. in the hotel

'It was in the hotel that (s)he wanted you to sleep.'

The above data suggests that the temporal information on the copula is semantically active (it is not just a morphological feature). The copular structure itself lacks a Tense projection or, alternatively, it is dominated by a defective T (i.e. a T with an underspecified feature). Yet the copular structure encodes the assertion, and the assertion must be anchored in time (it is a proposition). Consequently, the t(ense) variable on the copula must be bound to a (minimally) c-commanding Tense with semantic feature. Further argument for the semantic reality of the temporal specification of the copula is provided by examples in which the matrix verb is in the future. It is beyond the scope of this paper to discuss the various usages of the Spanish future, but for present purposes it will suffice to note that when the matrix verb appears in the future that indicates sequentality, the copula does not appear in the future form but in the present; see (26). In fact, any tense on the copula other than the present would give rise to ungrammaticality (see Méndez-Vallejo for a complete paradigm).

(26) Dormirán es/*será en el hotel (este lunes)
(they) sleep.FUT.3PL. COP.PRES.3SG./COP.FUT.3SG. in the hotel (this Monday)
‘It is in the hotel that you will sleep (this next Monday).’

This is an important fact to the extent that the future is argued not to be a tense at all by a number of scholars; see in particular Zagona (2012), whom I quote below.

“Future reference, in many languages, is constructed from a secondary temporal relationship with modal or aspectual morphology, and is located temporally relative to present time. It will be assumed that future reference generally derives from a [subsequence] feature that is introduced by modal constituents in some languages and by aspectual constituents in others.”

The CSp data thus reveals the true nature of the “relational” future. It is a present tense in disguise, with a subsequent feature adjoined to it, which gives rise to a meaning like “Subject is heading towards an event X”. In the case of (26), the meaning would be “they are heading towards a hotel-sleeping event”.10

The conclusion is then that the copula carries a semantically active t(ense) variable (bound by the minimally c-commanding Tense) and that through this t-variable the assertion is anchored in time. In Minimalist-theoretic terms (e.g. Chomsky 1995), this means that the tense on the copula is an interpretable feature, although it is “defective” in the sense that it depends on a c-commanding Tense to “value” it. This would imply that in the Bucaramanga CSp, the copula is located in a “defective” T position.

Further evidence for the “interpretable” nature of the tense feature on the copula comes from another set of facts discussed by Méndez-Vallejo. This author notes that stage-level, but not individual-level, predicates can be embedded under the copula. This is illustrated in (27) with predicate adjectives and in (28) with verbal predicates. Regarding (27), two reviewers note that individual-level predicates cannot function as secondary predicates even in a canonical structure; cf. Julian brought a dog chained vs. *Julian brought a dog Dalmatian. Still, it is the case that the same property that underlies the contrast in (27) (with or without a copula) is most likely at play in the contrast in (28), and this needs to be accounted for.

(27) Julián trajo el perro fue encadenado/*dálmata.

Julián bring.PRET.3SG the dog COP.PRET.3SG chained/*Dalmatian.

* ‘It was Dalmatian that Julian brought the dog.’

Ok. “It was chained that Julian brought the dog.”
The above paradigms can readily be explained if two existing assumptions are adopted.

The first assumption to be adopted is Kratzer 1991’s proposal that stage-level, but not individual-level predicates, have an Event-time variable. The second one is the assumption that tense is a predicate that orders deictic time arguments (Zagona 1990, 1995, Stowell 1993). In root clauses, Tense takes Utt-T as its external time-argument and orders it with respect to the internal time-argument, namely the Event time (Ev-T), provided by the vP.11 (Utt-T and Ev-T are assumed to be specifiers of Tense and v, respectively).

(29)  \[ T \quad \text{Utt-T} \quad \text{Tense} \quad \text{\textsubscript{\textit{vP}} Ev-T} \quad \text{\textsubscript{\textit{vP}} v ...} \]

The t-variable on the copula will then order the Ev-T of its complement vP with respect to the Utt-T by virtue of being bound to the matrix Tense.12 But crucially the complement vP must provide an Ev-T for the t-variable on the copula to establish an order between Utt-T and the Ev-T of the assertion. An Ev-T is indeed provided by stage-level, but not by individual-level predicates. In the case of secondary predicates (27), this time ordering is imposed by the predicative structure itself (even in the absence of the copula). An abstract structure of the temporal skeleton of the CSp copular construction would be as in (30). (In Minimalist-theoretic terms, matrix T assigns a value t to the embedded T via Agree).

(30)  \[ T \quad \text{Utt-T} \quad \text{Tense} \quad \text{\textsubscript{\textit{\langle t\rangle}}} \quad \text{\textsubscript{\textit{vP}} Ev-T} \quad \text{\textsubscript{\textit{vP}} v ...} \quad \text{\textsubscript{\textit{\langle t\rangle}}} \quad \text{\textsubscript{\textit{\langle t\rangle}}} \quad \text{\textsubscript{\textit{\langle t\rangle}}} \quad \text{\textsubscript{\textit{\langle t\rangle}}}} \]

3.3. Some apparent arguments against a bi-clausal analysis.

There are some arguments that have been put forth in favor of a mono-clausal analysis of the bare-copula structure and against a hidden pseudo-cleft structure (Bosque 1999, Méndez-Vallejo 2009). I argue that none of them count against a reduced bi-clausal analysis such as the one put forth in this paper. One argument has to do with sub-categorization, like the one
illustrated by the contrast in (20) above. As proposed there, in CSp the presuppositional variable is created via ellipsis and operator-variable binding at LF. We suggested that this imposes strict identity with respect to both syntactic and semantic type, thus accounting for the ill-formedness of (20b). Recall that *hacer* takes a DP-denoting event, not a VP, and ellipsis under identity requires that the elided complement in pre-copula position be of the same syntactic and semantic type as the category in post-copular position.

Another argument that has been put forth in favor of the monoclausal analysis is that negation and focus-sensitive adverbs like *sólo* ‘only’ can precede the tensed verb and be associated with a constituent in post-copular position. The example with negation was already given in (15b) and is repeated in (31a); the example with *solo* is given in (32a). Compare with their standard pseudo-cleft counterparts in (31b) and (32b).

(31)  
\[a. \text{No comió fue nada.} \]
(I) not ate COP.PRET.3SG nothing
'He did not eat anything.'
\[b. \text{Lo que no comió fue nada.} \]

(32)  
\[a. \text{Sólo escribí fue esta carta.} \]
(I) only wrote COP.PRET.3SG this letter
'What I wrote is only this letter.'
\[b. \text{Lo que sólo escribí fue esta carta.} \]
(ungrammatical with the interpretation of (32a)).

Negation and *sólo* must c-command the focused phrase with which it associates. This is not the case in the standard pseudo-cleft examples, but in the CSp copular structure counterparts, the c-command condition is met. Indeed, in the reduced bi-clausal analysis put forth here, the NPI and the focused phrase (contained within the CopP adjoined to the matrix vP) are c-commanded by negation and *solo*, located above matrix T. Therefore these focus-sensitive morphemes can associate with the focused phrase in post-copular position. The PF-LF_{Ass} for (31a) and for (32a) are given in (33) and in (34), respectively. Neg licenses the NPI in (33) and *sólo* restricts the focus value in (34). (To avoid the independent issue of how focus sensitive operators are associated with the focus phrase, I merely indicate the relation with italics.)
(33) PF: [TP proj [no comió, [vP ej, v nada] fue [vP pro com√ nada ]]]
    LF: [Opk [TP proj [no comió, [vP ej, v DPk] fue [vP pro com√ [DP nada]]]]]

(34) PF: [TP proj [sólo escribí, [vP ej, v esta carta] fue [vP pro escrib√ esta carta ]]]
    LF: [Opk [TP proj [sólo escribí, [vP ej, v DPk] fue [vP pro escrib√ [DPk esta carta]]]]

The third argument relates to the distribution of clitics, in particular to clitic-climbing. In Spanish and other Romance languages, an object clitic of a lexical verb may “climb” to a tensed modal verb. When the lexical verb is in post-copular position and the modal in pre-copular position, the clitic may not “climb” to the modal in the standard pseudo-cleft construction, as illustrated in (35b). On the other hand, “clitic-climbing” is possible in the bare-copular construction (36a), with the same meaning as (35a). In the proposed reduced bi-clausal analysis, the clitic, which is adjoined to T, can be associated with the c-commanded complement position in the reduced copular structure. The “transparency” of the copular structure could be attributed to its reduced status (no Comp) and the defective nature of its T feature; see (36b).

(35) a. Lo que quiero es venderlo.
    DEF.PRON.that (I) want COP.PRES.3Sg sell.INF=3SG.ACC.CL
    ‘What I want is to sell it.’
    b. *Lo que lo quiero es vender.

(36) a. Lo quiero es vender.
    (I) ACC.3SG= want COP.PRES.3SG sell.INF
b. [Opk [TP proi [lo quiero-T,<> [[vP ei, [vender e_k] [CopP es,<> [vP proi [vender pro_i]]]]]]

3.4. Scope relations.

Camacho 2006 has noted that a focalized QP object in the bare-copular structure cannot have scope over the matrix subject; see (37), which the author attributes to the adjunct (island) status of the copular structure. Besides the fact that the lack of wide scope for the QP object in post-copular position could be attributed to the clause-boundedness of Quantifier Raising (QR), it is also to be noted that the copula possibly functions both as a focusing device as well as a
scope marker. Indeed, it marks the scope of the assertion: a focus phrase contained within an assertion A cannot scope outside A.

(37) Un niño se comió fue cada manzana
     a boy REFL.3SG=ate COP.PRET.3SG. each apple.
     ‘A single boy ate each apple.’
     *’For each apple, there was a (different) boy that ate it.’

On the other hand, we predict that in Bucaramanga, which allows deaccented constituents after the focused phrase, an example like (38) should be ambiguous, both the wide scope and narrow scope readings for the QP object should be available. In such example, both subject and object are contained within the assertion part of the clause; therefore, the two QPs (the indefinite object and the PP complement) can interact. The prediction is borne out (Méndez-Vallejo, p.c); (38) can have both the non-distributive as well as the distributive reading.

(38) Habló fue una MAESTRA con cada estudiante.
     (He) talked COP. PRET.3SG. a TEACHER with each student.
     ‘A single teacher talked with each student.’
     ‘For each student, there was a (different) teacher that talked with him.’

Méndez-Vallejo furthermore notes the impossibility of building a y/n question based on the bare-copula construction, as illustrated in (39a). Compare with (39b). 13

(39) a. *Matilde compró fue papas?
     Matilde bought COP.PRET.3SG potatoes
     b. Matilde compró PAPAS?
     Matilde bought POTATOES?
     ‘Matilde bought POTATOES?’

An analysis of the above contrast would require a careful discussion of the interaction of focus with the polarity y/n operator. I will simply mention here a possible line of analysis (suggested
to me by E. Guerzoni). The intended meaning of (39a) and (39b) is something along the lines of (40) below. In other words, the y/n question only pertains to the object *potatoes* (the other alternatives being irrelevant). This would suggest that the focus phrase has wider scope than the disjunctive operator that underlies the y/n question. This is not possible in (39a) because the copula marks the scope of the assertion, and therefore the scope of the focus phrase contained within it.\(^\text{14}\)

(40) As for potatoes, did Matilde buy them or did Matilde not buy them?

Another argument (aside scope) that Camacho op.cit. mentions as militating for the adjunct status of the copular structure is the impossibility of applying wh-movement to a constituent from post-copular position; see (41a) (from Méndez-Vallejo 2009). This would appear to contrast with the standard pseudo-cleft; see (41b).

(41) a. *Quéi compró Matilde fue ei?*
   ‘What was it that Matilde bought?’

b. *Qué es lo que Matilde compró?*
   What is def.pron.that Matilde buy.3PSg.Pret
   ‘What is it that Matilde bought?’

It is to be noted though that the origins of the pseudo-cleft in (41b) might not be a bi-clausal structure of the type introduced earlier. The origins of (41b) might very well be the “inverted pseudo-cleft” of the type illustrated in (42). Den Dikken et al. argue that in such structures, the copula takes a small clause complement in which the wh-phrase functions as a relative clause that is predicated of a subject that then raises to Spec of TP.

(42) \([\text{DPk \ A book}] \text{ is} \ [\text{ek} \ [\text{what he bought}]]\]

The example in (41b) would then be analyzed as in (43a), where the wh-phrase originates as the subject of the small clause and the relative clause as its predicate. On the other hand, the analysis of CSp (41a) is as in (43b), where the wh-phrase is moved out of the post-copular part of a bi-
clausal specificational pseudo-cleft structure. The reason the presuppositional variable cannot originate in post-copular position is that the post-copular reduced clause constitutes the assertion. The assertion, by definition, contains the focus phrase (i.e. the focus value), not the presuppositional variable. It then follows that (41a) should be ill-formed, as it is in effect.

(43)  a.  
      \[ \text{qué}_k \left[ e_k \left[ \text{es} \left[ e_k \left[ \text{lo que}_j \text{Matilde compró}_j \right] \right] \right] \right] \] (k = j)  
   
b.  
      *\[ \text{qué}_k \left[ \text{lo que}_j \left[ \text{Matilde compró}_j \right] \text{es} \left[ \text{Matilde compró}_k \right] \right] \] (k = j)

The contrast in (44)-(45) (from Méndez-Vallejo 2009) speaks more directly to the island status of the post-copular structure. As mentioned earlier, the island status can be attributed to the presence of the copula itself, which functions both as a focalizer as well as the scope marker for the assertion, and therefore for a focus phrase contained within it. In (44), the preposed focused object is outside the scope of the copula. The focus phrase must be The ill-formed (44) contrasts with the well-formed (45a), where both foci are within the scope of the copula. At LF_{Ass}, the (lambda) operator binds both variables in pre-copular position via an “absorption” mechanism (Higginbotham and May 1981) and their focus values are given in the assertion part of the clause, within the scope of the copula; see (45b).^{15}

(44)  
      *Una TORTA le dio \text{fue a ANA.}
      a CAKE DAT.3SG=gave COP.PRET.3SG. to ANA
      \text{“It was a cake that he gave to Ana.”}

(45)  [I heard that Clara brought a cake for Juan]
      a. No, Clara \text{le trajo} \text{fue} \text{GALLETAS a ARMANDO.}
      \text{No, Clara DAT.3SG=brought COP.PRET.3SG. cookies to Armando}
      \text{“No, it was COOKIES for ARMANDO that Clara brought.”}
      b. LF_{Ass}: Op(k,m) \left[ \text{Claraj le trajo}_v \left[ vP e_j \left[ v \left[ vP e_k V e_m \right] \right] \right] \right]
      \text{[fue} \left[ vP \text{proj tr}^\sqrt{\left[ vP \text{galletas}_k V a \text{Armando}_m \right]} \right] \right]
All of the above data indicate that the presuppositional variable originates unambiguously in the pre-copular part of the structure and the focus phrase must be within the scope of the copula. This is indeed what is expected in a bi-clausal type of analysis of the CSp copular structure, where the pre-copular clause encodes the presupposition and the post-copular (reduced) clause encodes the assertion. The copula, besides functioning as a focusing device, also marks the scope of the assertion, which determines the scope of the focus phrase contained within it.

3.5. An argument for an ellipsis-based analysis (in lieu of focus movement).

We have presented above an analysis of pseudo-cleft and its reduced grammatical variant in CSp that assumes a bi-clausal propositional structure, which in conjunction with ellipsis gives us the appropriate PF-LF_{Ass} pairs. Note that in an ellipsis analysis (which, by the way, deletes phonological material and not constituent structure), there is no need to postulate focus-fronting to the left edge of the clausal phase (CP or vP) The fact that the focus-phrase appears at PF at the left-edge of the vP phase is due to ellipsis itself. Indeed, Molnar & Winkler 2010 have argued that ellipsis, like movement, has this function; the two mechanisms are two sides of the same coin. There is no need, and in fact it would be uneconomical, to have both focus movement and ellipsis in the cases under discussion, since ellipsis can achieve the phase-edge requirement at PF, and much more, namely deletion of deaccented, given information.

An argument against focus movement in the construction under discussion is based on word order. It appears that the material in the post-copular structure must obey the base word order. Thus, a PPO word order (where PP is focused and the object is deaccented) is highly unnatural (Méndez-Vallejo p.c.). Compare (46a) with the well-formed sentence in (46b), where the given object precedes the copula, or with (47) where the base order is preserved but with the direct object in focus and the indirect object deaccented

\[(46) \text{[The child hid the toy under the table]}\]
\[a. \text{No, escondió fue debajo de la CAMA el juguete.}\]
\[b. \text{No, escondió el juguete fue debajo de la CAMA.}\]
\[\text{‘No, It is under the bed that he hid the toy.’}\]
No, escondió fue el LIBRO debajo de la cama.

No, (he) hid the BOOK under the bed

‘No, it is a book that he hid under the bed.’

The same remarks apply to OS word order: a given S following a focused O could only arise from right-dislocation of the subject. This point can be appreciated if the Subject is a QP, given that QPs cannot be right-dislocated (Cardinaletti 2002). The OS order, where S is a QP, should then give rise to ungrammaticality, and that is indeed the case (Méndez-Vallejo, p.c).16

(48)  a. *Al editor, le enseñó fue un MANUSCRITO cada autor.

To the editor showed a manuscript each author

Cf. Al editor, cada autor le enseñó un manuscrito.

‘To the editor, each author showed him a manuscript.’

b. *Al editor, no le enseñó fue un MANUSCRITO ningún autor.

To the editor not showed a manuscript no author

Cf. Al editor, ningún autor le enseñó un manuscrito.

“To the editor, no author showed him a manuscript.”

To conclude, the base word order constraint on the constituents in the post-copular part of the structure provides evidence against focus-movement in the CSp copular structure. The adjacency of the focus-phrase with the left edge of the phase (and therefore with the copula) can be attributed to an interface PF-LF\textsubscript{Ass} constraint on the identification of focus. Ellipsis (like movement to the edge of a phase) can achieve just this (Molnar & Winkler op.cit.). Data from CSp suggest that ellipsis (rather than focus fronting) is at play in the bare-copular structure. The argument extends, ceteris paribus, to the standard pseudo-cleft construction. In the latter case, though, since all material other than the focus phrase gets obligatorily elided, the consequences of the “focus-at-the-edge-of-the-phase” condition are trivial.


To summarize, the CSp bare copula construction represents a revealing grammaticalization of the specificational pseudo-cleft. It was argued that the copula still
maintains its same focalizing function (i.e. it picks out a focus value for the presuppositional variable); furthermore it functions as a scope marker for the assertion, from which the focus phrase cannot escape. The main changes that the CSp bare-copular construction has undergone, with respect to the standard pseudo-cleft construction, are: (1) the overt operator was lost; (2) the presuppositional variable in the pre-copular part is created post-spell out (via ellipsis) and bound by a general operator; (3) the complement of the copula is a reduced vP (or AspP); the copular structure is adjoined to the matrix vP. The latter part of the structure is still propositional in nature because the copula has preserved an underspecified Tense feature, which is bound to the minimal c-commanding Tense. Thus, the copular structure, although temporally defective, can still encode an assertion, with the copula itself as the focalizer and scope marker of the assertion.

It was furthermore argued that there is no focus phrase fronting in the CSp bare-copular construction, and ceteris paribus in the pseudo-cleft construction. The implication of the above analysis is that what has been analyzed as the low focus position, located between TP and vP, may not exist at all. The fact that the focus phrase is realized at the left edge of the vP is attributed to ellipsis. As argued by Molnar & Winkler, ellipsis has the effect of locating a focus (contrast) constituent at the (left) edge of the phase at PF. The focus-at-the-edge condition serves the purpose of identifying the focus phrase at the syntax/PF interface. Whether this claim can be made across the board for what appears to be mono-clausal structures with narrow focus remains to be investigated, but I will argue below that there is at least one type of marked word order in Spanish that can be reanalyzed along the same lines of the CSp bare-copular construction, but crucially without the copula.

4. Extending the analysis of CSp bare-copula structures to certain “marked” word order cases.

It is known that there is a local reordering of constituents in Spanish clauses that gives rise to a narrow focus on the rightmost constituent (Zubizarreta 1998); see the examples below, where focused phrases are marked is underlined).

(49) a. Me regaló el libro María. (VOS)
Dat.1sg=gave the book Maria
‘It was Maria who gave me the book.’

b. Ayer discutieron sobre el problema los congresistas. (VPPS)
yesterday talked about the problem the congressmen

‘It was the congressmen who talked about the problem yesterday.’

c. Puso la valija sobre la cama la camarera del hotel. (VOPPS)

Put the suitcase on the bed the hotel maid.

‘It was the hotel maid who put the suitcase on the bed.’

d. El niño escondió debajo de la cama el juguete. (SVPPO)

The boy hid under the bed the toy

‘It was the toy that the boy hid under the bed.’

The re-orderings illustrated above have been attributed to movement, although what kind of movement is involved has been a matter of debate. Zubizarreta 1998 attributed the reordering to a prosodically-motivated movement; e.g. in examples such as those in (49), the DO or PP complement is moved above the subject from the base VSO in order to locate the focused S in a position to receive NS. But see Ordoñez 1998 and Belletti 2004 for an alternative analysis with syntactic-driven movement, i.e. movement triggered by feature-checking of a low topic and/or focus position.

A new way of analyzing the above data now presents itself, which involves a reduced vP clause, adjoined to the matrix vP. As in CSp, we could assume that the presuppositional variable in the matrix is created at LF. The focused phrase, on the other hand, is part of the assertion, encoded by the reduced vP (via ellipsis at PF). To illustrate, consider the examples in (49a) and (49d). Their PF-LF Ass would be as in (50) and (51), respectively. (I disregard the internal details of the vP structure.) There is no copula with a tense variable in these cases, so we assume that the matrix Ev-T encodes the temporal value of both the matrix and the adjoined vP, and matrix Tense computes the temporal orderings of Utt-T with respect to this shared Ev-T. This amounts to saying that one and the same proposition encodes the presupposition and the assertion, with bifurcation at the vP level. The adjoined vP can thus be seen as a reduplication of the matrix vP.

(50) PF: [TP me regaló v [vP María v el libro ]] [[vP María [regal√ el libro]]]

LF Ass: [Opk [TP me regaló v [Ev-T [vP [vP [DPk e] v el libro] [vP [DPk María] regal√ el libro]]]]]
(51) PF: [TP El niño escondió [vP ej [vP el juguete V debajo de la cama]]]
[vP pro escond [vP el juguete V debajo de la cama]]]

LFAss: [Opk [TP El niño [escondió [Ev-T [vP ej [vP el juguete V debajo de la cama]]]
[vP pro escond [vP [DPk el juguete] V debajo de la cama]]]

Given the above analysis, we expect that negation and other focus-sensitive morphemes that originate in the matrix clause will be able to associate with the focus phrase in the adjoined vP, since the latter is in the scope of these operators. Cf. (31) and (32) with (52).

(52) a. *No habló con María nadie.
   neg.talked with Maria nobody
   ‘No one spoke to Maria.’

b. Sólo trajo vino María.
   only brought wine María
   ‘It is only Maria who brought wine.’

Another similarity between the CSp copular and the marked word order of Standard Spanish regards the base word-order constraint that can be observed when we are dealing with a non-final corrective focus. Thus, the same type of awkwardness in (48) is found in the standard Spanish counterparts; see (53) (equivalent to CSp (48) but without the copula). The account is the same: the contrastive focused object must be at the left-edge of the (adjoined) vP phase; therefore it cannot be followed by a subject since the subject precedes the object in the base word order. As mentioned earlier, these data militates against a focus-movement analysis (as noted by Cardinaletti 2002).

(53) a. *Al editor, le enseñó un MANUSCRITO cada autor (no un LIBRO).

b. *Al editor, no le enseñó un MANUSCRITO ningún autor (sino un LIBRO).

Let us next turn to binding. It was noted in Zubizarreta 1998 that both word orders VSO and VOS share the same binding possibilities. It was noted there (p. 143) that the VSO order (with corrective focused subject) allows the S to bind the O, and that the VOS order (with focused subject) also allows the S to bind the O. The examples in (54) and (55) only differ in the
type of QP subject; in (54) the QP is ‘cada N’ (each N) and in (55), it is ‘ningún N’ (no N). (Corrective/contrastive foci are in caps. Recall that in Spanish, sentence internal main stress is corrective/emphatic.)

(54)  
\[ (a) \text{ El primer día de escuela acompañará cada MADRE a su hijo. (VSO)} \]  
The first day of school will accompany each mother his son
\[ (b) \text{ El primer día de escuela acompañará a su hijo cada madre. (VOS)} \]  
The first day of school will accompany his child each mother
‘The first day of school, each mother will accompany his son.’

(55)  
\[ (a) \text{ El primer día de escuela no acompañará ninguna MADRE a su hijo. (VSO)} \]  
The first day of school not will accompany any mother his son
\[ (b) \text{ El primer día de escuela no acompañará a su hijo ninguna madre. (VOS)} \]  
The first day of school will accompany his child each mother
‘The first day of school, no mother will accompany his son.’

Under the present analysis, these data receive a straightforward account: while the two word orders are obviously different at PF (due to distinct applications of ellipsis), they share the same LF_{Ass}. More specifically, the fact that the same binding possibilities are obtained in both word orders follow from the fact that in both cases, the Subject c-commands the Object in the adjoined vP at LF_{Ass}; see (56). (We disregards details of the verbal structure, omitting the lower VP shell.)

(56)  
\[ \text{LF}_{Ass}: \ [Q_{pk} [TP \text{ acompañar}a_{v}, [Ev-T [vP [vP [DP_{pk} e] v a su hijo] \]
\[ [vP [DP_{pk} cada madre] acompañ\ y a su hijo]]]]] \]

While (54a-b) and (55a-b) share the same LF_{Ass}, they do not all share the same PF. The PF associated with (54a)/(55a) is different from the PF associated with (54b)/(55b). In (54a)/(55a), the S and the O are both elided in the matrix vP, thus giving rise to the VSO word order (see 57a). In (54b)/(55b), the S is elided in the matrix vP and the O is elided in the adjoined vP, giving rise to the VOS word order (see 57b).
Recall that the CSp counterpart to VSO (with internal focused subject) contains a copula immediately to the left of S and the object that follows the S is deaccented; cf. (54a) and (58a). In the CSp counterpart of VOS (with final focused subject), the copula also immediately precedes the focused subject, but the object precedes the copula because in this case it is contained within the pre-copula presuppositional vP (its copy in the post-copular vP having been elided). Cf. (54b) and (58b).

(58) a. Acompañará es cada MADRE a su hijo.

b. Acompañará a su hijo es cada madre.

There is one important difference that must be accounted for between the CSp copular construction and the Standard Spanish counterpart discussed in this section. The adjoined vP in the latter case does not appear to be an island for scope. This is shown by the fact that the y/n operator, while incompatible with the CSp copular construction (39a), is perfectly compatible with the Standard Spanish construction with final focus; cf. CSp (59a) and Standard Spanish (59b). It appears that the presence of the copula does make a difference. Indeed, as was argued in the previous section, the copula in CSp functions both as a focalizing device and as a scope marker for the assertion (from which the focused phrase cannot escape). On the other hand, in Standard Spanish, there is no copula functioning as focalizer and scope marker. It was suggested that in the Standard Spanish construction, the same tensed clause (proposition) encodes the presupposition and the assertion, with the bifurcation occurring at the level of the bare-vP. The focused subject therefore can scope out above the disjunctive (y/n) operator. Cf. the LFs in CSp (60a) and standard Spanish (60b) (details omitted).

(59) a. *Compró papas fue Matilde? (CSp)

bought potatoes COP.PRET.3SG. Matilde
b. Compró papas Matilde? (Standard Spanish)
   bought potatoes Matilde?
   Was it Matilde who bought potatoes?

(60)  a. LF$_{Ass}$: * Matilde$_i$ [y/n [compró$_v$ [vP [vP ei papas] [CoP fue [vP pro$_i$ compr$_v$ papas ]]]]]
   b. LF$_{Ass}$: Matilde$_i$ [y/n [compró$_v$ [vP [vP ei v papas] [vP pro$_i$ compr$_v$ papas ]]]]

5. Conclusion.

To conclude, a bi-clausal and ellipsis analysis of the specificational pseudo-cleft renders
the syntax of this construction interpretationally transparent: all the ingredients of the assertion
structure are straightforwardly represented: (1) the presupposition represented in the pre-copula
part of the structure, with the presuppositional variable bound by an operator; (2) the assertion in
the post-copular part of the structure, which contains the focus phrase; (3) the copula as the
focalizing element. A bi-clausal analysis of the specificational pseudo-cleft also allows to
articulate the difference between Standard and Colloquial Peninsular Spanish: the
presuppositional variable in the latter construction is created post-spell out (at LF), allowing for
the PF-LF$_{Ass}$ mismatches that characterize this dialect.

It was furthermore argued that the CSp bare-copular structure is a more advanced
grammaticalization stage of the pseudo-cleft, where the syntactic relative operator has been
dropped, which has brought about a reanalysis of the clause. While the operator-variable
structure is indeed missing from the overt syntax, it is still there at LF$_{Ass}$: the presuppositional
variable is created post-spell out and bound by a general operator.

As the overt operator of the “free” relative clause of the standard pseudo-cleft is lost, its
grammatical status undergoes reanalysis: what was the subject of the main clause becomes the
main clause itself. The copular structure is then demoted from being the main predicate of the
construction to a structure adjoined to vP. While the upper crust of the copular structure of the
standard P-cleft is lost, the tense-variable on the copula is still active and gets its value via
binding from the minimal c-commanding Tense. Thus, the reduced copular structure is still
propositional and can directly encode the assertion. It was furthermore suggested that the copula
functions both as a focalizer and as a scope marker for the assertion.

A still deeper degree of grammaticalization of such presupposition/assertion structures
makes its way into the mono-clausal structures that underlie the marked word orders of Spanish,
with rightmost focus. The tensed copula no longer being there, the same tensed clause encodes the presupposition and the assertion. We have suggested that a vP reduplication structure is still there; vP reduplication in conjunction with ellipsis insures that the focused phrase is located at the left-most edge of the reduplicated vP at PF, thus giving rise to a marked word order in certain cases.

Why do we have recourse to vP adjunction or vP reduplication in conjunction with ellipsis to locate the focus at the left edge of the vP phase, instead of having recourse to focus-movement to the left edge? I propose that the answer to that question is the following: there is no syntactic motivation for such a movement and movement is unequivocally driven by syntactic considerations; there is no such thing as focus-feature checking or prosodically-motivated movement. The motivation for cases of (long-distance) fronted focus, such as (61) below, must be due to some other factor. Notice that focus-fronting in Spanish is always optional, never obligatory. Such cases involve a corrective interpretation, which is linked to a topic set of alternatives. Topic being structurally high in the clause, perhaps movement of corrective focus is driven by CP topichood-considerations.

(61) PAPAS creo que compró Matilde (no cebollas).
    POTATOES (I) believe that bought Matilde (not onions).
    ‘It was potatoes that I believe that Matilde bought, not onions.’

We leave for future research the issue of what drives the displacement in cases like (61). It also remains to be seen how the type of analysis provided here for Spanish fares in the case of other languages, such as Hungarian and many of the Bantu languages, where focus often gives rise to an apparent reordering of constituents.

References.


Camacho, José. 2006. In Situ focus in Caribbean Spanish: Towards a unified account of focus. 


The specificational copula contrasts with the predicational use of the copula, as in (i) below, where the postcopula constituent functions as the predicate of what John is (John’s role or function has the property of being important to him). This construction lacks the connectedness effects typical of the specificational copula; see Higgins 1976 and others cited further below in the text.

(i) What John is is important to him.

2 By LF\textsubscript{Ass} we refer to that part of LF that encodes the Assertion Structure of the sentence (the presupposition/assertion divide).

3 Note that the role of the specificational copula resembles very much the role that Aspect has in the temporal domain. As proposed by Smith 1991 and further elaborated by Klein 1995 and Dermaidache & Uribe-Etxebarria 2000, 2005, Aspect picks out a temporal slice of the Event time and it is that temporal slice of the event that is asserted. The specificational copula picks out a certain part of the event and makes an assertion about it. See also Kiss 2007 on the relation between identificational focus and specificational predication.

4 As pointed out by a reviewer 3\textsuperscript{rd} person pronoun el/la can pick out an inanimate demonstrative pronoun. Eg. (i) vs. (ii) below:

(i) *La que quiero es esa mesa
   DEF.FEM.3SG=that (I) want is that table

(ii) La que quiero es esa
   DEF.FEM.3SG=that (I) want is that one

5 In example (i), lo does not agree in number and person with the post-copulat DP, which is feminine plural. Since modals (like querer ‘to want’) can take a vP event as complement, we may assume that in this case, lo (que) binds a verbal complement, which is semantically
associated with an abstract predicate POSS (of the same type that we find in double object constructions), see (ii). It appears that a DP object of a volitional verb may be semantically associated with such Poss-event reading; therefore the relative pronoun can associate the semantics of the presuppositional variable (in pre-copular position) with the semantics of the focused phrase (in post-copular position). Since the post-copular part contains the DP focus phrase (las tartas), which surfaces at PF at the left edge of the asserted clause, the copula agrees with this linearly adjacent DP; see (iii).

(i) \( Lo \ que \) quiero son las tartas.

\( \text{DEF. NEUT.= that (I) want are DEF.DET.FEM.PL. pies.FEM.PL.} \)

“What I want are the pies.”

(ii) I wants this: pies (--> to “have” pies)

(iii) \([Lo que_k \text{ pro_i quiero vP_k} \text{ son } \text{ pro_i quiere [DP las tartas ]}]\)

In fact there are important restrictions, which I cannot fully discuss here due to space limitations, but see Fernandez-Soriano 2009 for detailed discussion. Here I only briefly mention one important paradigm from Fernandez-Soriano op.cit. While (i), with a cliticized object is well formed (with a VP focus interpretation), (ii) is not, and (iii) is unambiguous (with a narrow focus object interpretation only). This shows that complements are excluded from the mismatch phenomenon. In effect, paradigms like the ones below suggest that only the lexical Verb, along with its associated functional projections (such as negation and tense) can be spelled-out in the pre-copular part at PF and interpreted as part as part of the focus phrase in the post-copular part at LFAss.

(i) Lo que no puedes ponerlo es en otro garaje

\( \text{DEF.NEUT=that (you) neg can.PRES.2SG put=ACC.3SG is in another garage} \)

‘What you cannot do is put it in another garage.’

(ii) *Lo que no puedes poner el coche es en otro garaje

\( \text{DEF.NEUT=that (you) neg. can.PRES.2SG put.INF the car COP.PRES.1SG in another garage} \)

“What you cannot do is put the car in another garage” (intended meaning)

(iii) Lo que no puedes poner en otro garage es el coche.

‘What you cannot put in another garage is the car.’
The above data suggest that the type of constraint that we might expect on this type of PF-LF\textsubscript{Ass} mismatch might be (at least partly) comparable to what we find in other cases of head ellipsis (such as noun ellipsis). For example, we might expect that \textit{the elided lexical verb in the post-copular structure may be recoverable only through the presence of an argument of the lexical verb}, thus predicting that neither adverbs nor the subject (which is not an argument of the lexical verb, but of little v) should be able to survive as the sole unelided part in the post-copula part of the construction. These predictions are borne out (see Fernandez-Soriano 2009).

Note that the lack of definiteness effect in the standard P-Clefts in (i) is an illusion. In (i), \textit{un coche ‘a car’} is type-denoting, while the bare plural \textit{coches} in (ii) is unambiguously a non-specific indefinite.

(i) Lo que no debes comprar es un coche/ *nada

(ii) *Los que (no) debes comprar son coches.

J. Camacho brought to my attention that temporal adverbs can be focalized via the copula; e.g. \textit{Llegaron fue a las cuatro ((they)arrived was at four)}. Temporal adverbs are generally assumed to be vP-level adverbs.

A reviewer notes that the standard pseudo-cleft counterpart of (25b) is also ungrammatical:

*Lo que quería que durmiera fuera en el hotel. That is indeed expected, since in the standard construction the copula is the root predicate and the subjunctive cannot appear in root clauses except in modalized contexts.

Méndez-Vallejo gives some interesting contrasts with respect to “tense agreement” between different kinds of modal readings of the future. Discussion of this topic is beyond the scope of the present paper.

I abstract away from the role of Aspect, in particular in complex tenses. Dermidache and Uribe-Etxebarría 2000, 2007 have argued that there is in fact a second temporal predicate, namely Aspect, which introduces what they call Assertion time (Ast-T), and that Tense orders
Utt-T with respect to Ast-T and Aspect orders Ast-T with respect to Ev-T. In their system, Ast-T plays a comparable role to the abstract R(eference) time in the Rachenbachian theory.

12 In cases of subordinate complements, in which the subordinate tense is itself dependent on the matrix tense, the analysis needs sharpening, but we will abstract away here from such complications.

13 The question in (39a) significantly improves in an echo-question context (Méndez-Vallejo 2009; pp. 200-204). We assume that there is no scoping out of echo-questions.

14 Note that this does not undermine the account put forth for for the sentence in (31b), to the extent that while sólo ‘only’ restricts the value picked out by the focus phrase, it does not mark the scope of the focus phrase. This is shown by the fact that sólo in (31a), under the intended interpretation, is equivalent to Escribí fue sólo esta carta ‘(I) wrote was only that letter’.

15 The question still remains why (i) is impossible even under that analysis where the wh-phrase originates in pre-copular position. Note the contrast with the question in (ii), without the copula but with contrastive accent on Ana. It is tempting to give (ii) the same analysis as the y/n question in (39b), where the focus phrase has scope outside the question operator: As for Ana, what did she buy? –an analysis not available for (i) for reasons explained earlier in the text.

(i) *Qué compró fue Ana?
   what bought COP.PRET.3SG. Ana
   “What did Ana buy?” (intended meaning)

(ii) Qué compró ANA?
   ‘What did ANA buy?’

16 This argument is modeled after Cardinaletti 2002, who used base order to argue against focus movement in the so-called “emarginazione” structures of Italian.

17 Or more precisely, Tense orders Utt-T with respect to the Event temporal slice which Aspect focuses on, i.e. what Dermidache & Uribe-Echeverria call Assertion Time; see note 7.

18 This analysis builds on Jean-Roger Vergnaud’s intuition that focus involves clausal reduplication.