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What does it take to be a copula?

Gréte Dalmi
Jan Kochanowski University, Kielce
grete58@hotmail.com

Abstract

This paper argues that copular sentences without an overt copular predicate do project a VP with a phonologically null head, hence so-called "verbless" copular sentences are illusory. Data from Standard Arabic, Spanish, Maltese, Russian, Jamaican Creole, Finnish and Hungarian copular sentences are used to support this claim. It is also claimed here that variation between the habitual property vs. *ad hoc* property interpretations (traditionally called the individual level vs. stage level distinction) of non-verbal predicates found in copular sentences is closely related to the choice of the copula in multiple BE-system languages. Whilst the current accounts explain this variation by introducing an abstract aspectual operator or an incorporated abstract preposition in the functional layer of the copular predicate, the present proposal derives these interpretive differences from the presence or absence of an OP_{alt} alternative state operator, which can bind the temporal variable of non-verbal predicates in two ways.

Negation and temporal adverbials show scope ambiguity in copular sentences. They either take scope over the whole proposition or only over the non-verbal predicate. Such interpretive differences are demonstrated in Russian and Hungarian in Section 4 of this paper, however, they are taken to be valid cross-linguistically. These amibiguities cannot be explained under the "verbless copular sentence" account but fall out naturally from the "zero copula" analysis.

The "alternative state" approach can be extended to dream narratives and other non-veridical contexts, which serve as alternative triggers. The existing analyses have nothing to say about such contexts.

Keywords: zero copula; alternative trigger; scope ambiguities.

1. Introduction[1]

Languages show a great diversity in the realisation of the copular predicate. This may include verbs, pronouns, particles and the zero copula (Stassen 1996,

[1] I express my gratitude to the following linguists for sharing their grammaticality judgements with me and for commenting on earlier versions of this paper: Ekaterina Chernova, Ljudmila Geist for

2008). Languages that allow copular constructions in which the copula is null alternatively may make use of a lexical copula in these sentences. The choice between the lexical and the zero copulas introduces interpretive differences in such languages. These differences include *(i*) the so-called lifetime effect in the past tense and its absence in the present, as in Russian (Pereltsvaig 2007, Geist 2008, Partee & Borschev 2008), *(ii)* the habitual vs. *ad hoc* property readings, as in Maltese (Borg 1987, Stassen 1996, 2001, 2008); *(iii)* the locational vs. non-locational uses, and *(iv)* the predicational vs. non-predicational interpretations, as in Maltese (Borg 1987, Stassen 1996, 2001, 2008) and Jamaican Creole (Bailey 1965, Patrick 2006, Dürrleman-Tame 2008).[2]

This paper argues that copular sentences without an overt copular predicate do project a VP with a phonologically null head, hence so-called "verbless" copular sentences are illusory (for the "verbless copular sentence" approach see Bennamoun 2000, Al-Balushi 2011 in Arabic; Doron 1993, 1996, Shlonsky 2001, 2009 in Hebrew; Bailey 1965, Patrick 2004 in Jamaican Creole; Borg 1987 in Maltese; Pereltsvaig 2007 in Russian, É.Kiss 2002, Kádár 2007, 2011 in Hungarian).

Standard Arabic, Spanish, Russian and Maltese show variation between the permanent property vs. *ad hoc* property readings of the non-verbal predicate in copular sentences. Whilst recent syntactic accounts explain these differences by assuming either an abstract aspectual operator or an incorporated abstract preposition, the present proposal derives this interpretive variation from the presence or absence of an OP_{alt} alternative state operator, which ranges over accessible worlds, in the sense of Kratzer (1991). The "alternative state" approach provides a wider empirical coverage for non-verbal predication cross-linguisitcally, including dream narratives and other non-veridical environments, which are not normally discussed in the existing literature.

This paper is organized as follows. Section 2 presents cross-linguistic variation in the "*ad hoc* property" vs. "permanent property" readings of non-verbal

checking the Russian data, Joseph Farquharson for providing and checking the Jamaican Creole data, Charles Briffa for explaining and interpreting the Maltese facts, Edith Moravcsik, Julia Horvath, Anna Bondaruk, Malgorzata Krzek, Artur Bartnik for reading and commenting on earlier versions of this paper. I also thank the anonymous reviewers for their comments.

[2] Copular BE-predicates are distinguished from existential BE-predicates primarily by their argument structure and thematic structure. Copular BE is a monadic *Raising*-predicate that takes a small clause as its only argument. Existential BE, by contrast, is a dyadic unaccusative, taking a theme and a locative argument (see Freeze 1992; Heycock 1994; Partee 1998; Paducheva 2000, 2008; Den Dikken 1997, 2006; Błaszczak and Geist 2001; Błaszczak 2007, 2010; Partee and Borshev 2008 and the references therein).

predicates in copular sentences, and some current accounts that explain these interpretive differences by assuming either an aspectual operator or an incorporated preposition. Section 3 discusses problems that arise with such analyses. Section 4 proposes to derive these differences from the presence or absence of an OP_{alt} alternative state operator, which ranges across accessible worlds in the sense of Kratzer (1991). Section 5 summarizes the main claims.

This paper assumes familiarity with the following proposals previously made in the syntactic and semantic literature on copular sentences and non-verbal predication, which is far too large to be discussed even partially here:

(i) Copular sentences are analysed as bi-clausal *Raising*-constructions, in which the main clause has a rich left periphery but a poor functional layer (Heycock 1994; Heycock and Kroch 1998; Starke 1995; Den Dikken 1997); Copular predicates select a small clause with a lexical layer (AP, NP, PP) (Stowell 1981, 1983, 1991), surmounted by a rich functional layer, PiP (see Citko 2007, 2008; and Dalmi 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2015), in which the case and agreement features of non-verbal predicates must be licensed via Cyclic Agree (see Bejar and Rezac 2009). Small clauses have no left periphery at all (see Bowers 1993, 2001; Starke 1995; Den Dikken 1997; 2006; Rothstein 2001, 2004; Adger and Ramchand 2003 for details).

(ii) The habitual property vs. *ad hoc* property readings (traditionally called the individual level vs. stage level interpretations, see Carlson 1973; Kratzer 1995) of non-verbal predicates can be explained within an "alternative state" model, without any recourse to the Davidsonian spatio-temporal event variable (Maienborn 2003, 2005a,b, 2008, 2011; Beck 2007; Richardson 2008).

(iii) The 4-way copular system of Maltese can be best accommodated in this "alternative state" model, in which OP_{alt} takes care of all semantic variations within copular sentences (Dalmi 2015).

(iv) Case variation on non-verbal predicates in non-veridical contexts is not explained by the existing theories but fits naturally in the "alternative state" account (see Fong 2003 for Finish; and Dalmi 1994, 2005, 2010a,b for Hungarian).

Before turning to the proposal itself, let us briefly review some cross-linguistic data.

2. Some cross-linguistic facts

Primary predication relation (see Bowers 1993, 2001; Rothstein 2000, 2001) is realized either overtly or covertly in copular sentences. The covert (i.e. "zero") copula carries exactly the same [+phi], [+tns], [+fin] and [+pred] features as its lexical counterpart, which clearly reflects its verbal character. If there is no zero copula assumed in copular sentences with no overt verbal predicate, it is impossible to keep primary and secondary predication apart. Let us first look at some facts of Standard Arabic.

2.1. Standard Arabic zero vs. lexical copula

In Standard Arabic the complementizer-like sentence adverbial *ʔinna* 'certainly' can appear only in finite indicative sentences, (1). In non-finite clauses *ʔan* 'certainly' must be used instead, (2):

(1a) ʔar-rajul-u mariiD-un.
the man-NOM sick-NOM
'The man is sick.' (Al-Balushi 2012: 4)

(1b) ʔinna rajul-a mariiD-un.
certainly the man-ACC sick-NOM
'The man is certainly sick.' (Al-Balushi 2012: 5)

(2) (ʔinna) r-rajula Haawala-0 [(*ʔinna) / ʔan ya-naam-a].
COMP the man tried COMP to sleep
'The man (certainly) tried to (certainly) sleep.' (Al-Balushi 2012: 6)

Unless we want to assume that non-verbal predicates also project a C-domain in their tripartite cartographic clausal architecture (see Rizzi 1997, 2004, 2013), we must accept that the finiteness feature of copular sentences is associated with the left periphery of their main clause, in which the zero copula functions as primary predicate:

(3) [$_{\text{ForceP}}$ …ʔinna. [$_{\text{TOPP}}$…[$_{\text{FOCP}}$…..[$_{\text{FinP}}$……[$_{\text{TP}}$….[$_{\text{VP}}$…∅…[rajul-a mariiD-un]]]]]].

Another argument in favour of the zero copula analysis comes from negation. Proposition negation in the present tense is expressed by *laysa* in Standard Arabic. *Laysa* is the combination of the negative particle *lan* and the tense+agreement markers, and shows person/number/gender agreement with the subject of the small clause predicate head (see Bennamoun 2000, Al-Balushi 2011, Al-Horais 2006 for details):

(4) [$_{\text{TOPP}}$ ʔar-rajul-u [$_{\text{NegP}}$ *laysa* [$_{\text{FinP}}$…[$_{\text{TP}}$…[mariiD-an]]]].
the man-SG.M.NOM NEG.PRES3SG.M sick-ACC
'The man is not sick.'

The fact that present indicative copular sentences are negated by the same negative item as finite clauses indicates that such sentences are also finite. This necessitates a VP projection with a null verbal head in them.

Notice that Standard Arabic has an additional exical copula, which is fairly restricted in its use. It can combine only with non-verbal predicates denoting *ad hoc* properties in the present indicative:

(5) *Ya-kuunu* alyaww-u haarran ffi Sayfi.
PRES3SG-COP the weather.NOM hot.ACC in summer
'The weather is hot this summer.' (*ad hoc* property)

The verbal copula of the present indicative is etymologically related to the future and past tense forms:

(6) [$_{\text{ForceP}}$….[$_{\text{FinP}}$ *Sa-ya-kuun-u* [r-rajul-u mariiD-an]]].
FUT-COP-PRES3SG.M the man-NOM sick-ACC
'The man will be sick.'

(7) [$_{\text{ForceP}}$…… [$_{\text{FinP}}$ *Kaana* [r-rajul-u mariiD-an]]].
PAST-COP-3SG.M the man-NOM sick-ACC
'The man was sick.' (Al-Balushi 2012: 8)

The systematic semantic opposition between copular sentences with a verbal copula, (5)–(7), and those without one, as in (4), would be difficult to explain without assuming a VP projection with a zero head in present indicative copular

sentences[3] for the simple reason that this would eliminate the borderline between primary vs. secondary predication. Furthermore, under the "verbless copular sentence" analysis, the difference between proposition negation vs. constituent negation would vanish in present indicative copular sentences, an undesirable consequence (see the discussion of similar facts in Russian and Hungarian in the rest of this paper).

The semantic differences found between copular sentences with the zero copula and those with the verbal copula in Standard Arabic are reflected in various languages in various ways (see Stassen 1996, 2001, 2008). Spanish is relevant for the present exposition as it reflects these interpretive differences by using two distinct verbal copulas, *ser* and *estar*.

2.2. The Spanish *ser/estar* distinction

The well-known *ser/estar* variation in Spanish is often derived from an abstract aspectual operator (see Schmitt 2005; Schmitt and Miller 2007; Marín 2010; Camacho 2012), or from an abstract incorporated preposition in the lexical layer of *estar* 'be' and from its absence in the case of *ser* 'be' (see Gallego and Uriagereka 2009, 2011):

(8a) Obama *es/*está* americano.
Obama is-S/is-E American
'Obama is American.' (habitual, permanent property)

(8b) Obama **es/está* preocupado.
Obama is-S/is-E worried
'Obama is worried.' (*ad hoc*, temporary property)
(Gallego & Uriagereka 2009)

Furthermore, copular sentences in the past tense show the so-called lifetime effect in Spanish. The sentence in (9a) implies that Doris is not alive anymore, while (9b) carries no such implication (examples from Camacho 2012).

[3] Due to space limitations I cannot discuss the literature on Arabic copular sentences. The interested readers are referred to Fassi-Fehri (1993) and Ouhalla (1993) for the "zero copula" account and to Bennamoun (2000) and Al-Balushi (2011) for the "verbless copular sentence" analysis.

(9a) Doris estaba nerviosa / de Bogotá.
Doris was-S nervous / from Bogotá
'Doris was nervous / from Bogotá.'
(habitual property of Doris, who is now dead)

(9b) Doris era nerviosa / en Bogota.
Doris was-E nervous / in Bogota
'Doris was nervous / in Bogota.'
(*ad hoc* property, no life-time effect)

This holds even in so-called "overlap cases", where the same non-verbal predicate can be used with either of the two copular verbs, with different meanings:

(10) Alejandro estaba agradable.
Alejandro was-S nice
'Alejandro was nice.'
(habitual property of Alejandro, who is now dead)

(11) Alejandro era agradable.
Alejandro was-E nice
'Alejandro was nice.'
(*ad hoc* property of Alejandro, who is in good health)

As is pointed out by Camacho (2012), neither the "aspectual operator account" nor the "preposition incorporation account" provides an adequate explanation for such overlap cases. This paper proposes that these meaning differences stem from alternative state semantics[4] rather than from the terminative Aktionsart (as recently proposed for Spanish by Gallego and Uriagereka (2009, 2011) or the "inherently completed" aspect of the non-verbal predicate (Marín 2010), cross-linguistically. A promising way to give a unified account of the interpretative variation of non-verbal predicates, including the so-called lifetime effect of past tense copular sentences and the absence of the same life-time effect in the present tense (see Camacho 2012), dream narratives and other non-veridical contexts, is the introduction of an OP_{alt} alternative state operator that ranges across possible worlds in the sense of Kratzer (1991).

[4] See Rooth (1992) on alternative semantics and Beck (2007) on alternative triggers.

The "alternative state" model, to be explicated in Section 4, offers a natural explanation both for the lifetime effect and for the semantic overlap of non-verbal predicates. It can also be extended to dream narratives and other non-veridical contexts, which are outside the scope of the existing accounts (see 4.3.)

2.3. Case agreement and case obviation in Russian copular sentences[5]

Russian marks the same interpretive differences by case agreement vs. case obviation between the non-verbal predicate and its lexical subject, which is raised to the matrix subject position.[6] Case agreement is used when the speaker has no logically possible alternatives in mind, while case obviation signals logically possible alternatives (see Richardson 2001, 2007).

(12a) Ivan byl xrabr-yj soldat vsju svoju žizn'.
Ivan COP.PAST brave-NOM soldier.NOM all his life
'Ivan was a brave soldier all his life.' (Ivan is dead now.)

(12b) Ivan byl xrabr-ym soldat-om v korejsk-oj vojne.
Ivan COP.PAST brave-INST soldier-INST in Korean war
'Ivan was a brave soldier in the Korean war.'

The present indicative zero form of the copula always co-occurs with nominative non-verbal predicates (examples modelled on Pereltsvaig 2007):

(13a) Ivan ∅ xrabr-yj soldat.
Ivan COP.PRES brave-NOM soldier.NOM
'Ivan is a brave soldier.'

(13b) *Ivan ∅ xrabr-ym soldat-om.
Ivan COP brave-INST soldier-INST
'Ivan is a brave soldier.'

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[5] Unless otherwise indicated, all Russian examples used in this paper were provided and checked by Ekaterina Chernova and Ljudmila Geist.

[6] On the *Raising*-analysis of copular sentences see Heycock (1994, 2012), Heycock and Kroch (1998).

The verb *byvat'* 'be-EPIS'[7], by contrast, triggers case obviation, (14); furthermore, modal and conditional contexts have the same effect, as is shown in (15) and (16).

(14a) Ivan byvaet pjan-ym posle ekzamena.
Ivan be.EPIS drunk-INST after exam
'Ivan is often drunk after the exam.'

(14b) *Ivan byvaet pjan-yj posle ekzamena.
Ivan be.EPIS drunk-NOM after exam
'Ivan is often drunk after the exam.'

(15a) Ivan možet byt' velik-im poet-om zagranitsej,
Ivan may be great-INST poet-INST abroad

ego doma vse-taki ne uznajut.
him at home still not recognize

'Ivan may be a great poet abroad, they still do not recognize him at home.'

(15b) *Ivan možet byt velik-ij poet zagranitsej,
Ivan may be great-NOM poet.NOM abroad

ego doma vse-taki ne uznajut.
him at home still not recognize

'Ivan may be a great poet abroad, they still do not recognize him at home.'

(16a) Esli Ivan byl by bolee vysok-im / bolee inteligentn-ym,
if Ivan be.PAST COND more tall-INST / more intelligent-INST

ja by vyšla za nego zamuž.
I COND go.PAST.F for him married

'If Ivan were taller/more intelligent, I would get married with him.'

[7] The term "episodic" has been used in various ways in the semantic literature (see Dahl 1995). Here it is used in a sense close to "habitual" (see Comrie 1976).

(16b) *Esli Ivan byl by bolee vysok-ij / bolee inteligentn-yj,
if Ivan be.PAST COND more tall-NOM / more intelligent-NOM

ja by vyšla za nego zamuž.
I COND go.PAST.F for him married

'If Ivan were taller/more intelligent, I would get married with him.'

The correlation with logically possible alternatives provides the key to the semantic restriction imposed by the zero copula. Such sentences have a defective T_0 head, which restricts the discourse domain to the actual world. In the absence of logically possible alternatives, only the permanent property interpretation offers itself. As soon as a non-veridical (modal, conditional) or an episodic operator is added, it introduces alternative states, hence the *ad hoc* property interpretation becomes available at LF. Thus, all these contexts are alternative triggers.

2.4. The 4-way copular system in Maltese

Maltese is a Central Semitic Creole, with a 4-way copular system. The two verbal copulas, *jinsab* 'caused to be found' and *qieghed* 'temporarily be' are used with non-verbal predicates denoting *ad hoc* properties. *Jinsab* also means 'temporarily be' but has a more restricted use; it is excluded from locative sentences altogether. The pronominal copula is mostly used in present indicative equative sentences, while the zero copula is used in present indicative predicational sentences (Stassen 1996, 2001, 2008).

(17a) Pietru *qieghed* l-eżaminatur.
Peter COP.PRES3SG.M the-examiner
'Peter is the examiner.' (*ad hoc* property)

(17b) Malta *hu* gzira.
Malta COP island.
'Malta is the island.' (habitual property, equative)

(17c) Malta ∅ gzira.
Malta COP.PRES island.
'Malta is an island.' (habitual property, predicational)

Maltese locative copular sentences are special in that they do not require any overt or covert preposition. The definite DP can express location in its own right. With the zero copula, the locative DP refers to habitual, permanent location while with *qieghed*, the same locative DP denotes *ad hoc*, temporary location (Borg 1987). While (18a) suggests that the hospital is the regular location for the doctor, the locative DP *il-port* 'in the port' in (18b) has the temporary location reading.

(18a) It-tabib ∅ l-isptar.
the-doctor COP.PRES the hospital
'The doctor is at hospital.'

(18b) Il-vapur qieghed il-port.
the-ship COP.PRES the port
'The ship is in the port now.'

The puzzling variation of copular predicates in Maltese cannot be explained either by the "aspectual operator" account or by the "incorporated preposition" account: the choice of the copula in this language is not regulated by any aspectual or Aktionsart content, rather by alternative state semantics. Furthermore, it would be absurd to incorporate an abstract preposition under the zero copula, as in this language locative copular sentences require no preposition at all.

2.5. The Jamaican Creole 3-way copular system

In Jamaican Creole, as is usual in English-based Creoles, copular sentences have no verbal copula with adjectival or nominal non-verbal predicates in the present indicative.

(19) Jan ∅ brait.
John COP bright
'John is bright.'

(20) Jan ∅ tiicha.
John COP teacher
'John is a teacher.'

(21) Jan ∅ di tiicha.
John COP the teacher
'John is the teacher.'

With locative non-verbal predicates, however, the verbal copula *de(h)* is obligatory.

(22) Di bwai-dem de(h) ina Landan.
the boy-PL COP in London
'The boys are in London.'
(Bailey 1965; Patrick 2004; Dürrleman-Tame 2008)

There is a third copula, morphologically identical to the focus marker *a*. This form is used in emphatic sentences. Thus, in (23), the first occurrence of *a* is the focus marker, and the second occurrence is the copula:[8]

(23) A JAN a di tiicha.
FOC John COP the teacher
'JOHN is the teacher.'

(24) A BRAIT Jan ∅ brait.
FOC bright John COP bright
'John is BRIGHT (not something else).'

(25) A NO brait Jan ∅ brait.
FOC not bright John COP bright
'John is NOT bright (but something else).'
(Dürrleman-Tame 2008 ; Farquharson, p.c.)

In this 3-way system, the zero/lexical variation is used to distinguish locative copular sentences from non-locative ones. This contrast serves to express semantic differences that cannot be explained if these copular sentences project no VP, as is assumed under the "verbless copular sentence" analysis.

[8] An interesting feature of focusing an adjectival non-verbal predicate in JC is that it is copied, rather than simply moved, to the focus position (see Dürrleman-Tame 2008).

3. Problems with the current accounts

Neo-Davidsonian analyses of copular sentences take it that copulas are void of semantic content, their sole function is to relate the non-verbal predicate to the subject (see Higginbotham and Ramchand 1997). Therefore, the variation in interpretation cannot stem from the copula in their view. Rothstein (2000) provides evidence from distributive *each* and causative *make* that the copula carries important semantic features and contributes to the temporal structure of the whole sentence:

(26) *The medicine made [Eve and Mary each sick].
(27) The medicine made [Eve and Mary each *be* sick].
(28) Jane made [Bill polite]. (assertion of fact)
(29) Jane made [Bill be polite]. (assertion of desired outcome)

If the copula were, as is often assumed, void of semantic content, its presence or absence would not change the grammaticality of sentences like (26)–(27). This argues for an analysis in which lexical and null copulas alike project a VP. Likewise, the interpretive difference between (28) and (29) would remain unexplained under the assumption that copular BE makes no semantic contribution at all.[9]

3.1. The "event variable" account

The classic accounts of the *ad hoc* vs. habitual distinction (traditionally called the individual vs. stage level distinction, as in Carlson (1973), Kratzer (1995), Magri (2009), of non-verbal predicates explain this variation in copular sentences by the presence or absence of a Davidsonian spatio-temporal event variable of non-verbal predicates. Thus, the ungrammaticality of examples like (33a–b) is explained under this account by the absence of the spatio-temporal event variable, which ought to be bound by the temporal or locative adverbial:

(30) *John is sometimes tall.
(31) *Carol is intelligent in the car.

[9] This semantic contribution is mostly restricted to the usual verbal properties, such as temporal and aspectual anchoring and other features of copular sentences.

These accounts offer no explanation to the so-called overlap cases, when the same non-verbal predicate can appear with either interpretation. In the Spanish examples below, the same non-verbal predicate is used with either of the two copular verbs, *ser* and *estar*, with different meanings:

Spanish

(32) Las hojas de este árbol **son** amarillas.
the leaves of this tree are-S yellow.PL
'The leaves of this tree are yellow.' (ser+habitual property)

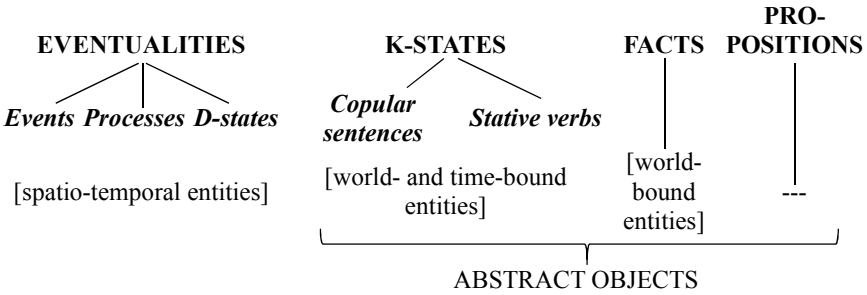
(33) Las hojas de este árbol **están** amarillas.
the leaves of this tree are-E yellow.PL
'The leaves of this tree are yellow.'(estar + *ad hoc* property)
(Querido 1976, cited by Maienborn 2003: 4–5)

Maienborn (2003, 2005a,b, 2011) proposes a discourse-semantic approach to these interpretive differences. In her model, the interpretation of non-verbal predicates is determined either by (i) the temporal dimension or (ii) the spatial dimension or (iii) the epistemic dimension of topic situations.

3.3. The discourse-semantic account

Maienborn (2003, 2005a,b, 2011) introduces a new ontology of eventualities, arguing that neither type of non-verbal predicate within copular sentences passes the traditional eventuality tests.

(34)



Maienborn (2003, 2005a,b) offers a whole range of tests in support of the claim that the non-verbal predicate of copular sentences introduces no Davidsonian spatio-temporal event variable, only a so-called Kimian temporal variable (e.g. the *ein bisschen* 'a little bit' test, the manner adverbial test, the location adverbial test).[10] Maienborn (2003, 2005a,b) concludes that the stage-level vs. individual level distinction (see Kratzer 1995) cannot be derived from the presence or absence of the spatio-temporal event variable as that they invariably denote Kimian states, stating *p* property of *x* individual at *t* time. As these tests relate to event structure, they carry over to similar facts in other languages.[11]

While the uniform treatment of non-verbal predicates denoting permanent vs. *ad hoc* properties as Kimian states seems attractive, Maienborn's theory offers no explanation to similar interpretive variation of non-verbal adjunct predicates in non-copular sentences (see Richardson 2001, 2007):

Russian

(35) Maša vsegda pokupa-et banan-y spel-ye.
Masha always buy-PRES3SG banana-PL.ACC ripe-PL.ACC
'Masha always buys bananas ripe.' (habitual situation)

(36) Maša kupi-la banan-y spel-ymi.
Masha buy-PAST.SG.F banana-PL.ACC ripe-PL.INST
'Masha bought the bananas ripe.' (*ad hoc* situation)
(Richardson 2001: 10)

Richardson (2001, 2007) claims that Russian speakers use the instrumental case on non-verbal adjunct predicates only when they have a set of logically possible alternatives in mind. Thus, the sentence in (38) entails alternative states, hence

[10] I refer the reader to Maienborn (2003, 2005a,b, 2008, 2011) for these tests.

[11] A reviewer claims that in Maienborn's (2003, 2005 2008, 2011) theory it is the copula that introduces the so-called "Kimian" temporal variable. Maienborn follows Kim (1976) and Asher (1993) in viewing copular sentences as abstract entities. The copula has a referential argument "denoting a temporarily bound property exemplification" (i.e. a Kimian state) in all types of copular sentences. By standard generative syntactic considerations, the single referential argument of the copula, denoting a temporarily bound property exemplification, corresponds to the small clause complement, whose lexical head is the non-verbal predicate. Thus, under this view, all non-verbal predicates denoting a Kimian state contain a temporal variable but none of them contains a Davidsonian spatio-temporal variable.

the instrumental case. Nominative case agreement in (35) signals the absence of such entailment.[12]

If Maienborn's account of non-verbal predicates as "Kimian states" is combined with a theory of alternatives (Rooth 1992), we arrive at a unified theory of non-verbal predication in copular and non-copular sentences.

4. The proposal

The present proposal derives the interpretive variation of non-verbal predicates in copular (and non-copular) sentences, traditionally attributed either to the nature of the copula itself or to the lexical-semantic properties of the non-verbal predicate, from the presence or absence of an OP_{alt} operator.

4.1. Ad hoc properties and alternative states

The Kimian temporal variable *t* of non-verbal predicates can be bound in two ways: (i) by the T(ense) operator above the primary predicate or (ii) by the OP_{alt} + T_0 complex head.[13] In the case of (i), there are no logically possible alternative states available, therefore the habitual property reading emerges, (37); in the case of (ii) there is a set of logically possible alternative states available, yielding the *ad hoc* property interpretation at LF, (38).

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[12] Verbs like *arrive* and *return* are alternative triggers in the sense of Beck (2007); they may introduce an OP_{alt} operator, which binds the temporal variable of non-verbal adjunct predicates in accessible worlds, i.e. the speaker has a set of logically possible alternatives in mind (examples from Camacho 2012: 468):

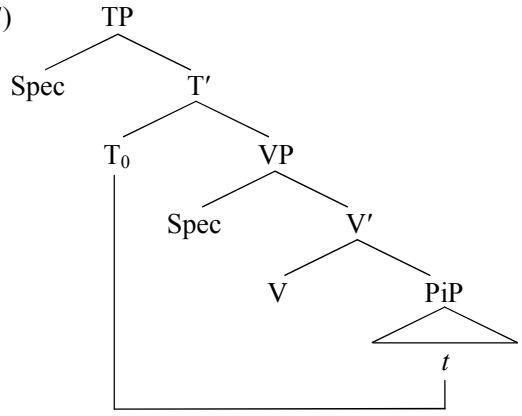
(i) Greta llego contenta/*inteligente.
'Greta arrived happy/*intelligent.'

When a perception verb selects a non-finite clause or a small clause as its complement, it has the direct perception reading (Akmajian 1977). Direct perception restricts the discourse domain to the actual world, hence the habitual property interpretation will not be available any longer:

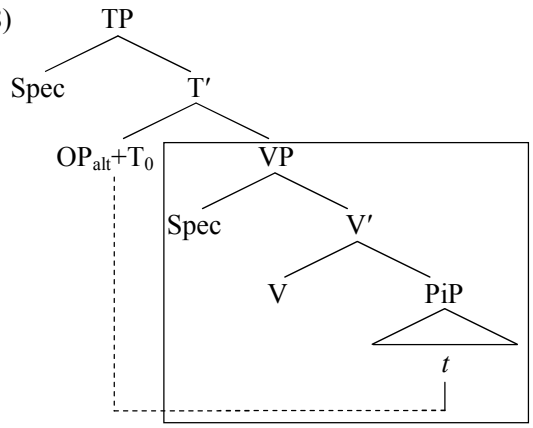
(ii) Greta vio a Miguel contento/*inteligente.
'Greta saw Miguel in a happy state/*in an intelligent state.'

[13] The existing accounts of alternative sets that I am familiar with (e.g. Beck 2007; Magri 2009) take the ALT or EXH operators to be choice functions. The present proposal views OP_{alt} as a modal operator ranging over accessible worlds in the sense of Kratzer (1991). This makes the proposal applicable to non-veridical contexts.

(37)



(38)



The two different ways of binding the *t* temporal variable of non-verbal predicates can be tested if we place copular sentences in non-veridical contexts. Non-verbal predicates denoting a permanent property are incompatible with durative adverbials or the episodic operator, (39)–(40). However, when placed in modal, conditional or episodic environments (which introduce alternative states), the same non-verbal predicates suddenly become acceptable, as is demonstrated by the Russian data in (41)–(43).[14]

[14] Although these semantic tests are demonstrated on Russian data, they are assumed to carry over to other languages.

Durative adverbial

(39) *Ivan byl vysok-im / inteligentn-ym celyj den. (Russian)
Ivan was tall-INST / intelligent-INST whole day
'Ivan was tall/intelligent all day.'

Episodic predicate

(40) *Ivan byvaet vysok-im / inteligentn-ym.
Ivan COP.EPIS tall-INST / intelligent-INST
'Ivan is (in the habit of being) tall/intelligent.'

Modal predicate

(41) Ivan možet byt' vysok-im / glup-ym,
Ivan can be.INF tall-INST / dumb-INST
ja vs'e-taki ljublju ego.
I still love.1SG him
'Ivan may well be tall/dumb, I still love him.'

Conditional mood

(42) Esli Ivan byl by bolee vysok-im / bolee intelligentn-ym,
if Ivan be.PAST COND more tall-INST / more intelligent-INST
ja by vyšla za nego zamuž.
I COND go.PAST.F for him married
'If Ivan were taller/more intelligent, I would get married with him.'

Episodic adverbial

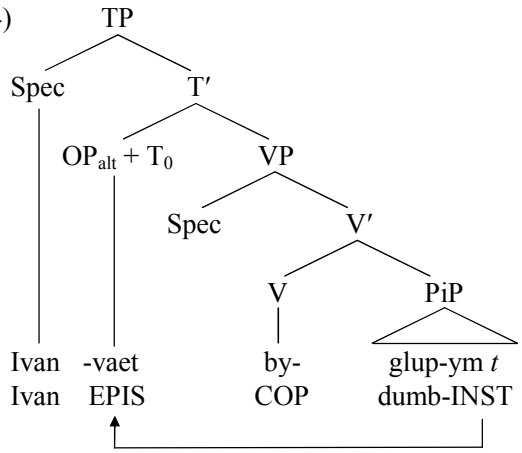
(43) Ivan inogda byvaet glup-ym.
Ivan sometimes COP.EPIS dumb-INST
'Ivan is sometimes dumb.'

The common property of these environments is that they all contain a non-veridical operator. Such sentences trigger the *ad hoc* property interpretation because they entail alternative states.

The structure assumed for sentences containing a non-verbal predicate with the *ad hoc* property interpretation in Russian is given in (44). In this structure

OP_{alt} merges with the T_0 head above the VP and binds the temporal variable *t* of the non-verbal predicate in the lexical layer of the small clause (PiP)[15] in accessible worlds:

(44)



Ivan byvaet glupym.
'Ivan is-EPIS dumb.'

The OP_{alt}+T_0 complex head binds the *t* temporal variable of the non-verbal predicate and also licenses the instrumental case on the non-verbal predicate at the computational level, giving rise to the *ad hoc* property interpretation at LF.[16]

The zero copula originates as a bundle of syntactic and semantic features under the V_0 head, The defective T_0 head above the zero copula (just like pronominal copulas do elsewhere) restricts the domain of conversation to the actual

[15] Under the "rich structure" account of small clauses (Citko 2007, 2008; Dalmi 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013), adopted in this paper, PiP is a mnemonic for Predicate Phrase (or PredP, as Bowers 1993, 2001 calls it). PiP is the locus of licensing the features [+oblique] case and [+pred), while the lower PsiP projection licenses nominative case and phi features, all by Cyclic Agree (Bejar and Rezac 2009).

[16] Notice that non-verbal predicates denoting inherent properties give ungrammatical results when they combine with primary predicates that normally trigger the alternative state interpretation:

(i) *Ja videla Ivana vysok-ym / inteligentn-ym.
I saw Ivan tall-INST / intelligent-INST
'I saw Ivan (in the state of being) tall/intelligent.'

world and therefore it cannot combine with OP_{alt}.This excludes logically possible alternatives and hence the *ad hoc* property reading of the non-verbal predicates. Thus, the reason why sentences like (45) in Russian are ungrammatical is not the absence of phonological material, as proposed by Pereltsvaig (2007) but rather, the absence of accessible worlds, where logically possible alternative states could be interpreted.[17]

(45) *Ivan 0 vesel-ym.
Ivan COP happy-INST
'Ivan is happy.'

Pronominal copulas lack the [+V] feature and they do not project a VP at all cross-linguistically; they merely instantiate the abstract tense and agreement features of the sentence (see Al-Balushi 2011; Citko 2008; Eid 1991; Doherty 1996; Doron 1983, 1986 for such proposals). The common property pronominal copulas share with the zero copula is their defective T_0. Pronominal copulas, just like the zero copula, occur only in the present indicative. The defective T_0 head of such copular sentences restricts the discourse domain to the actual world, and this automatically excludes alternative states.[18]

4.2. Scope ambiguities

4.2.1. The scope of NEG

Under the "verbless copular sentence" analysis, no principled explanation can be given for the following scope ambiguities (see Partee and Borschev 2008 on Russian and É.Kiss 2002 on Hungarian).

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[17] The fact that frequency adverbials are illicit in (46) provides sufficient evidence for this claim:

*Ivan inogda 0 vesel-ym.
Ivan sometimes COP happy-INST
'Ivan is sometimes happy.'

Ivan byva-et vesel-ym.
Ivan be-EPIS happy-INST
'Ivan is (in the habit of being) happy.'

[18] See Bailyn (2012) for a critical review of the syntactic accounts of the zero/lexical verb variation in Russian copular sentences, and Partee and Borschev (2008) for a discourse-semantic analysis of the same.

NEG scope ambiguity: clause negation and focus negation

(46) Sejčas Ivan ne 0 v Londone.
now Ivan not COP in London
'Ivan is not in London now.' (Clause negation)

(47) Sejčas Ivan 0 ne v Londone (a v Moskve).
now Ivan COP not in London (but in Moscow)
'Ivan is not in London but in Moscow now.' (Focus negation)
(Russian; Partee and Borschev 2008)

Here again, NEG has scope over the whole proposition in (46) but only scopes over the focused constituent in (47). This contrast becomes more straightforward when the past tense form of the copula is used:

(48) Včera Ivan ne byl v Londone.
yesterday Ivan not COP.PAST in London
'Yesterday Ivan was not in London.' (Clause negation)

(49) Včera Ivan byl ne v LONDONE (a v MOSKVE).
now Ivan COP.PAST not in London (but in Moscow)
'Yesterday Ivan was not in London (but in Moscow).' (Focus negation)
(Russian; Partee and Borschev 2008)

Notice that under clause negation, (48), the negative particle *ne* 'not' immediately precedes the copula *byl* 'was'. In the case of focus negation in (49), however, the same negative particle *ne* 'not' must immediately precede the focused constituent, hence it appears on the right of the copula. The scope differences of NEG would remain mysterious under the "verbless copular sentence" analysis.

4.2.2. ADV scope: proposition vs. focus

The Hungarian examples given below are used by É.Kiss (2002) to illustrate that the temporal adverbal *mindig* 'always' shows scope ambiguity, as in example (51) and (52).

(50) Péter MINDIG beteg 0 a vadkender-től.
Peter always ill COP the ragweed-from
'Peter is always ill from the ragweed.'
(Hungarian; É.Kiss 2002)

(51) Péter mindig A VADKENDER-TŐL 0 beteg.
Peter always the ragweed-from COP ill
'It is always the ragweed that Peter is ill from.'

Given that there is no overt copula in the sentence, the temporal adverbial seemingly takes scope only over the non-verbal predicate in (50) but scopes over the focused constituent in (51). However, as the past tense counterparts of these copular sentences reveal, when the frequency adverbial *mindig* 'always' prcedes the non-verbal predicate, it takes scope over the whole VP (the propositional part of the sentence), as in (52). In order to take scope over the focused constituent only, it must immediately precede it, as in (53).

(52) Péter MINDIG [$_{VP}$ beteg volt a vadkender-től].
Peter always ill COP.PAST the ragweed-from
'Peter was always ill from the ragweed.'

(53) Péter mindig [$_{FocP}$ A VADKENDER-TŐL] volt beteg.
Peter always the ragweed-from COP.PAST ill
'It was always the ragweed that Peter was ill from.'

Under the "verbless copular sentence" analysis (see Kádár 2007, 2011), the non-verbal predicate is viewed as the primary predicate in the present tense, (50), but as secondary predicate in all other tenses and moods. This can only be achieved at the cost of introducing two syntactic rules for one and the same phenomenon.

4.3. Dream narratives

Finnish and Hungarian argument and adjunct non-verbal predicates are case-marked. Different oblique cases appear on resultative vs. depictive adjunct predicates, and on argument non-verbal predicates of copular, *ECM* and *Raising* verbs (see Fong 2003 on Finnish; and Dalmi 1994, 2005, 2010 on Hungarian).

Predicates like *dream*, *imagine*, *consider*, *find*, *seem* arguably contain a non-veridical operator and are alternative triggers in the sense of Beck (2007). This is reflected by the ESSIVE/DATIVE case variation on the non-verbal predicates in veridical and non-veridical contexts in Hungarian, (54)–(55), and the ESSIVE/ABLATIVE case variation in the same environments in Finnish, (56)–(57):

Hungarian

(54) Mari$_j$ öreg-en$_k$ látta ismét az apját$_k$.
Mary old-**ESS** saw again the father.POSS.ACC
'Mary$_j$ saw her father$_k$ again (when) old$_k$.'

(55) Mari túl öreg-nek látta az apját.
Mary too old-**DAT** saw the father.POSS.ACC
'Mary found her father too old.'

Finnish

(56) Toini tuli kotiin sairaa-na.
Toini came home ill-**ESS**
'Toini came home ill.'

(57) Toini näytää sairaa-lta.
Toini seems ill-**ABL**
'Toini seems ill.' (modelled on Fong 2003)

The interpretive differences found in dream narratives and other non-veridical contexts can be explained by the presence or absence of the OP_{alt} alternative operator. These contexts fall outside the scope of the existing accounts.

5. Conclusion

This paper takes it that copular sentences with no overt verbal copula project a VP with a null head. In multiple BE-system languages the zero copula is invariably used with non-verbal predicates denoting a permanent property and the verbal copula must be used with non-verbal predicates denoting an *ad hoc* prop-

erty. This indisputably connects the choice of the copula to the semantic content expressed by the non-verbal predicate of copular sentences.

Once the ontological status of the zero copula is established, we can account for a whole range of facts without any recourse to the Davidsonian spatio-temporal event variable. By combining Maienborn's proposal to treat all non-verbal predicates as Kimian states (i.e. "abstract objects denoting a p property predicated of an individual at *t* time") with a theory of alternative states (Richardson 2001, 2007), we are in a position to offer a unified theory of non-verbal predication in copular and non-copular sentences alike. The so-called life-time effect in past indicative copular sentences and its absence in the present, the absence of the *ad hoc* property reading with the zero and the pronominal copulas, case variation on non-verbal predicates in veridical and non-veridical contexts can all be derived from the presence or absence of OP_{alt} under the present proposal, while these facts remain isolated facts of individual languages under the verbless/nominal copular sentence analysis.

Abbreviations used in the paper

ABL	ablative case	INST	instrumental case
ACC	accusative case	M	masculine gender
COND	conditional mood	NEG	negative operator
COP	copula	OPalt	alternative state operator
DAT	dative case	PL	plural number
EPIS	episodic operator	POSS	possessive marker
ESS	essive case	PRES	present tense
F	feminine gender	SG	singular number
FOC	focus marker	T0	tense operator, head of TP

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Address for correspondence:
Gréte Dalmi
Department of English Studies
Jan Kochanowski University
Świętokrzyska 21D
Kielce
Poland
grete58@hotmail.com