

F. Akkus (UMass Amherst), O. Aljani (Nantes U. & Leiden U.), M. Camilleri (U. of Essex), L. Choueiri (American U. of Beirut), J. Roy (Nantes U.), U. Shlonsky (U. of Geneva)

The comparative data, elicited in fieldwork (Nantes Semitic Copula summer school 2025 and follow-ups), provides strong support for the view that predicationals and specificationals are separate structures and are not derivationally related.

(1)	a.	l-qatel	*(hu:we)	ben	
		the-murderer	PRON	Ben	
		'The murderer is Ben.'			(SyA)
	b.	ha-roce'ax	*(hu)	ben	
		the-murderer	PRON	Ben	
		'The murderer is Ben.'			(Hebrew)

(2) a. masale nana ẓɣar kɪnna
 problem we children be.1.pl
 ‘The problem is us children.’
 b. *masale kɪnna nana ẓɣar
 problem be.1.pl we children
 ‘The problem is us children.’ (SA)

(3) a. masale NANA ZyAR kɪnna
 problem we children be.1.pl
 'The problem is US CHILDREN.'

b. *MASALE nana zyār kɪnna
 problem we children be.1.pl
 'THE PROBLEM is us children.'

(SA)

Predicational clauses. We demonstrate that the constraints on specificationals do not apply to predicationals. In these, PRON is either ungrammatical, as in (4)-(5), or optional, as in (6), depending on the language and on properties of the predicate (category, definiteness, etc.)

- (4) ʕali (*hu:we) zaki
Ali PRON-sg.m intelligent.sg.m
'Ali is intelligent.' (SyA)
- (5) Aħmed (*huwa) daki
Ahmed PRON-sg.m intelligent.sg.m
'Ahmed is intelligent' (AA)
- (6) Rina (hi) intilgent-it
Rina PRON-sg.f intelligent-sg.f
'Mary is intelligent.' (Hebrew)

Turning to SA, we observe that, both the Pred_(NP/AP/PP) COP and COP Pred_(NP/AP/PP) orders are possible (7).

- (7) a. nana raxu kınna. b. nana kınna raxu.
we sick be.1.pl we be.1.pl sick
'We are sick.' 'We are sick.' (SA)

Unlike the rigid information structure displayed in the specificational (3), both DP and the predicate can be focused in (8).

- (8) a. NANA raxu kınna. b. nana RAXU kınna.
we sick be.1.pl we sick be.1.pl
'WE are sick.' 'We are SICK.' (SA)

Crucially, the order found in specificationals is also possible in predicationals, but with a different interpretation and information structure (cf, (2a) and (7a)).

Additional contrasts. In both SyA and Hebrew, negation is represented differently in specificationals and predicationals. We illustrate this for Hebrew in (9). The negative particle *lo* renders the presence of PRON optional in at least one subtype of predicational sentences - generics - (compare (9a) and (9b)) but fails to do so in specificationals, (9c), where PRON is obligatory in both positive and negative clauses.

- (9) a. orvim (hem) lo lvanim
ravens PRON-sg.m neg white-pl
'Ravens aren't white.'
- b. orvim *(hem) Sxorim
ravens PRON-pl.m black
'Ravens are black.'
- c. ha roce'ax *(hu) lo Ben
the murdered PRON-sg.m neg Ben
'The murderer isn't Ben.'

Discussion. We map the differences in the distribution of PRON across the studied varieties of Semitic, arguing that they stem from PRON's being merged at different heights of the functional spine. We argue that the differences between specificationals and predicationals are problematic for a predicate inversion approach, according to which the subject of a specificational clause is a predicate raised to the clausal subject position (Moro 1997). Shlonsky & Rizzi (2018) develop a smuggling derivation of inversion, in which focalization of the referential DP (DP2) plays a central role. While this analysis resolves some difficulties with Moro's predicate raising, specificationals are still viewed as inverted predicationals. The generalizations from Semitic (the distribution of PRON, the word order patterns) are better explained on the view that specificationals are not derived via any version of predicate inversion. We explore the consequences of the view that the subject position of specificationals (and perhaps of equatives as well) is different - in terms of its (semantic) properties and its position - from that of subjects of predicationals and relate these to the distribution of PRON and the word order patterns in the Semitic languages we studied.

References: Moro A. 1997. *The raising of predicates: Predicative noun phrases and the theory of clause structure*. Cambridge UP. Heycock C. 2012. Specification, equation, and agreement in copular sentences. *Canadian Journal of Linguistics* 57(2). Shlonsky U. & Rizzi L. 2018. Criterial freezing in small clauses and the cartography of copular constructions. *Freezing, Studies in Generative Grammar*