

# Pseudoclefts as the source of fragment answers in Wolof

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## 1 Introduction

- fragment answers in Wolof (Niger-Congo; Senegal) can be followed by an overt complementizer which marks *wh*-movement
- in full clauses, the complementizer exhibits a subject/non-subject asymmetry:

- |                                                                                      |                                                                                                   |
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| (1) Aali <b>a</b> gis Musaa<br>ali $C_f$ see musa<br>“ <i>[ALI]_{FOC}</i> saw Musa.” | (2) Musaa l- <b>a</b> Aali gis<br>musa $l-C_f$ ali see<br>“ <i>Ali</i> saw <i>[MUSA]_{FOC}</i> .” |
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- in fragment answers, the asymmetry is absent and both forms of the complementizer are possible, regardless of the grammatical relation of the fragment

- |                                                                                 |                                                                                        |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| (3) a. kan <b>a</b> gis Musaa?<br>who $C_f$ see musa<br>“ <i>Who</i> saw Musa?” | (4) a. kan l- <b>a</b> Musaa gis?<br>who $C_f$ musa see<br>“ <i>Who</i> did Musa see?” |
| b. Aali <b>a/l-a</b><br>ali $C_f/l-C_f$                                         | b. Aali <b>a/l-a</b><br>ali $C_f/l-C_f$                                                |

- this paper argues that the source of fragment answers in Wolof are not full clauses as in (1) and (2), but PSEUDOCLEFTS

### OUTLINE

- wh*-movement and the subject/non-subject asymmetry in Wolof
- fragment answers and pseudoclefts
- deriving fragment answers from pseudoclefts

## 2 Wh-movement and the *a/la* asymmetry in Wolof

- a* is a complementizer which marks occurrences of *wh*-movement (Martinović, to appear)
- the form of the complementizer is different depending on whether the extracted element is the subject or any other element:  
*a* occurs in subject extraction, *l-a* in non-subject extraction

- |                                                                                                             |                                                                                                                          |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| (5) Osmaan <b>a</b> jangg téére bi<br>osman $C_f$ read book DEF.SG<br>“ <i>[OSMAN]_{FOC}</i> read the book” | (6) Téére bi l- <b>a</b> Osmaan jangg<br>book DEF.SG $l-C_f$ osman read<br>“ <i>Osman</i> read the <i>[BOOK]_{FOC}</i> ” |
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- the asymmetry is present only at the local extraction site

- |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
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| (7) Aali l- <b>a</b> -ñu gëm ni l- <b>a</b> Musaa xalad ni mu <b>a</b> leen gis<br>ali $l-C_f$ -3PL believe COMP $l-C_f$ musa think COMP 3SG $C_f$ 3PL.OBJ see<br>“ <i>They</i> believe that <i>Musa</i> thinks that <i>[ALI]_{FOC}</i> saw them.” |
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- in Martinović (to appear), I propose an analysis of the asymmetry along the lines of Pesetsky and Torrego (2001)

The *a/l-a* asymmetry is a type of the *that*-trace effect. *l-*, found to the left of *a* whenever a non-subject is extracted, is an instance of T that has moved to C.

- Movement is not optional, but triggered by *uninterpretable features* (Chomsky, 1995).
- An uninterpretable feature must delete and disappear by the end of a derivation.
- EPP is a property of a feature of a head, and not of the head itself.
- Features have a lifespan. If a feature has the EPP property and is marked for deletion, it must disappear at the end of the CP cycle. If it does not have the EPP property, it may remain alive until the end of the derivation.

**Motivation for T-to-C movement:** C bears an uninterpretable T feature ( $uT$ ) with EPP.  
**The nature of nominative case:** Nominative case is  $uT$  on D.

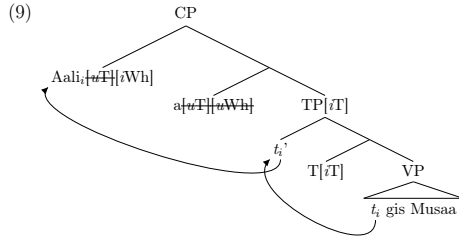
Relevant principles:

- ATTRACT CLOSEST principle (Chomsky, 1995) – only the closest constituent can be attracted
- PRINCIPLE OF MINIMAL COMPLIANCE (Richards, 1997) – a constituent that is farther away may be extracted, if another element that complies with ATTRACT CLOSEST has already moved
- HEAD MOVEMENT GENERALIZATION – the movement from a complement to the nearest head is always realized as head movement

### Subject extraction

- |                                                                                      |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| (8) Aali <b>a</b> gis Musaa<br>ali $C_f$ see musa<br>“ <i>[ALI]_{FOC}</i> saw Musa.” |
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- the subject has both  $uT$ , and  $iWh$  – C can delete both of its uninterpretable features in one operation

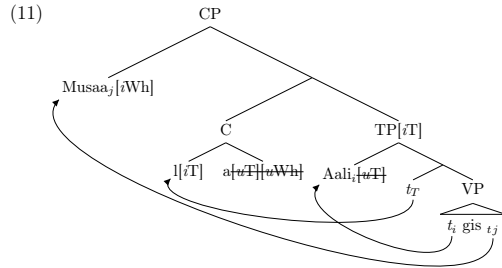


**Object extraction**

(10) Musaa **l-a** Aali gis  
 musa l-C<sub>f</sub> ali see  
 “Ali saw / MUSA ]<sub>FOC</sub>.”

- both the subject and T are closer to C than the object – ATTRACT CLOSEST will force C to delete its *uT* feature by attracting the closest constituent
- *uWh* feature can only be deleted by attracting the object DP → C needs two movement operations to delete all of its uninterpretable features

**l- is the spell-out of T that has moved to C**

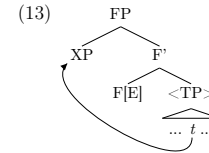


**3 Fragment answers and pseudoclefts**

**3.1 Fragment answers**

- answer to questions *Who saw Musa?* and *Who did Musa see?*
- (12) Aali **a/l-a**.  
 ali C<sub>f</sub>  
 “[ALI]<sub>FOC</sub>”

- fragments have been argued to have full sentential structures, to account for their propositional character
- Merchant (2004): the fragment moves to a left-peripheral position, with the clause elided



- there is evidence that this leftward movement has the properties of focus movement – (Brunetti, 2003; Arregi, 2010) → it would be reasonable to assume that the source of fragments in (12) are contrastive focus structures as in (14) and (15):

(14) Aali **a** gis Musaa.                      (15) Aali **l-a** Musaa gis.  
 ali C<sub>f</sub> see musa                                  ali l-C<sub>f</sub> musa see  
 “[ALI]<sub>FOC</sub> saw Musa.”                              “Musa saw [ALI]<sub>FOC</sub>.”

**PUZZLE: Why is a possible in non-subject extraction, and la in subject extraction?**

**3.2 Pseudoclefts**

- the same lack of asymmetry occurs in specificational pseudoclefts:

(16) a. ñi lekk tangal yi xale yi **l-a/a**  
 who eat sweets DEF.PL child DEF.PL l-C<sub>f</sub>/C<sub>f</sub>  
 “Who ate the sweets were the children.”  
 b. li xale yi lekk tangal yi **l-a/a**  
 what child DEF.PL eat sweets DEF.PL l-C<sub>f</sub>/C<sub>f</sub>  
 “What the children ate, were the sweets.”

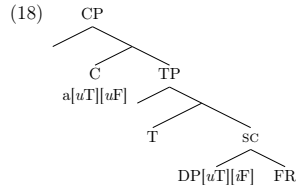
**Fragment answers are derived from pseudoclefts.**

**SPECIFICATIONAL PSEUDOCLEFTS**

- two mayor constituents: the VARIABLE (*wh*-clause, old information) and the VALUE (“focus”, new information) (Blom and Daalder, 1977; Akmajian, 1979; Higgins, 1979)
- the *wh*-phrase is a **free relative** (Akmajian 1979; Heycock and Kroch 1999; den Dikken et al. 2000 (“Type B” of specificational pseudoclefts); Caponigro and Heller 2007)
  - Wolof distinguishes the relativizer that introduces interrogatives (class marker followed by *-u*), and free relatives (class marker followed by *-i*) (examples from Caponigro and Heller (2007))

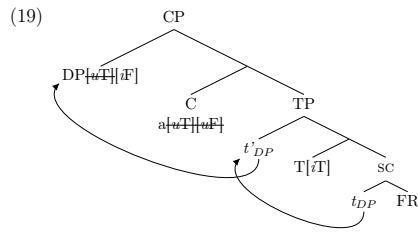
- (17) a. *Embedded Interrogative*  
 yëg na-θ [\*l-i/l-u Móódu gën-ë bëgg].  
 find.out na-3.SG cl-FR/cl-INT modu surpass-INF like  
 “She found out what Modu likes most.”
- b. *Free Relative*  
 bañ na-θ [l-i/\*l-u Móódu gën-ë bëgg].  
 hate na-3.SG cl-FR/cl-INT modu surpass-INF like  
 “She hates what Modu likes most.”
- c. *Specificational pseudocleft*  
 [l-i/\*l-u Móódu gën-ë bëgg] bopp-am l-a.  
 cl-FR/cl-INT modu surpass-INF like head-POSS.3.SG l-C<sub>f</sub>  
 “What Modu likes most is himself.”

- the relationship between the two constituents:
  - **non-predicational approach** (Akmajian, 1979; Heycock and Kroch, 1999)
  - **predicational approach** (Higgins, 1979; Heggie, 1988; Moro, 1997)
- the analysis here is agnostic as to this question – it is only assumed that the two constituents are contained in a small clause
- the existence and status of the copula is also not addressed
- the structure of the pseudocleft before any movement operations have applied:

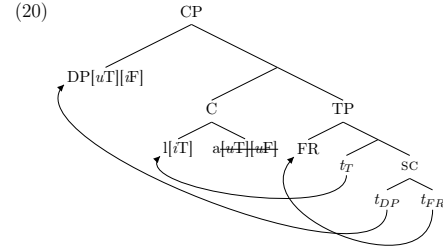


- either the DP or the FR can move to Spec,TP to satisfy the EPP feature of T
  - **DP is the subject** → *a*
  - **FR is the subject** → *la*

**DP is the subject**



**FR is the subject**

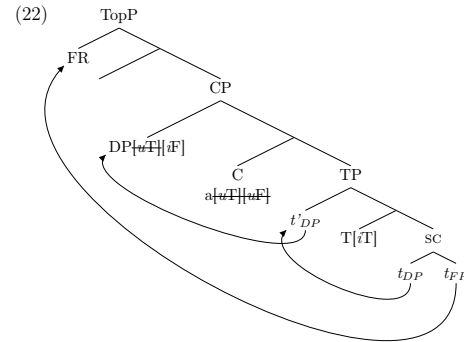


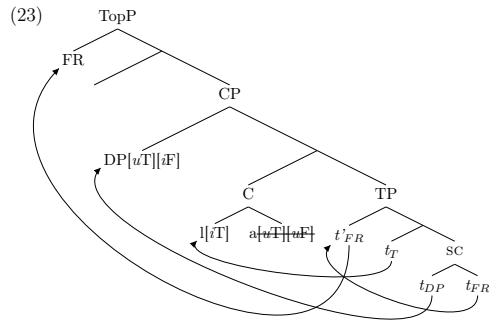
*a/la* alternation in Wolof specificational pseudoclefts is like the word order alternation in English specificational pseudoclefts.

- one of the key properties of specificational pseudoclefts is REVERSIBILITY: English specificational pseudoclefts can exhibit either *wh*>XP or XP>*wh* constituent order

- (21) a. What Ali gave Fatou was his brand new car.  
 b. His brand new car was what Ali gave Fatou.

- specificational pseudoclefts in Wolof can only exhibit *wh*>XP surface order (“**topic/comment**”), but SpecTP can be occupied either by the DP or by the FR
- the surface order is the result of two requirements:
  - the XP containing the value must be focused
  - the FR must be topicalized





### 3.3 Deriving fragment answers from pseudoclefts

Fragment answers in Wolof are specificational pseudoclefts with a covert free relative.

- (24) a.  $\{ki\ Musaa\ gis\}$  Aali-a  
 who musaa see ali-C<sub>f</sub>  
 "Ali."  
 b.  $\{ki\ Musaa\ gis\}$  Aali l-a  
 who musaa see Aali l-C<sub>f</sub>  
 "Ali."

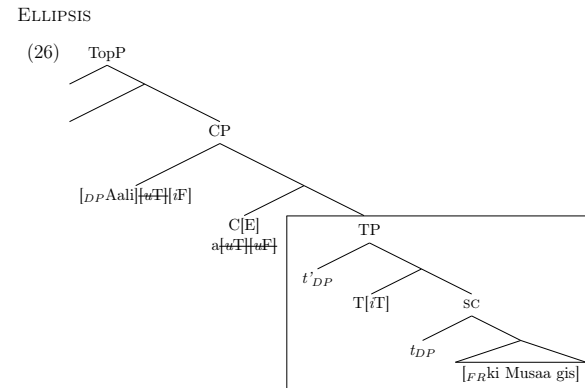
- two possibilities
  1. the FR is deleted after it has moved to SpecTop ("Topic Drop")
  2. the TP containing the FR is elided before topicalization ("Ellipsis")

TOPIC DROP (Huang, 1984; Cardinaletti, 1990)

- Chinese: NPs can be deleted in topic position across discourse under identity with a topic in a preceding sentence
- German: subjects, objects or adjuncts that have moved to the first position in the sentence can be omitted if linked to an antecedent in the immediately preceding discourse
- topic-drop constructions involve a *pro* – it is expected that a topic-drop construction in Wolof would have the form (NP) NP (*l*)*a*
- there are such constructions in Wolof: COPULAR SENTENCES

- (25) Aali jangalekat l-a/\*a  
 ali teacher l-C<sub>f</sub>.3SG/\*C<sub>f</sub>.3SG  
 "Ali is a teacher."

→ **no optionality of *l*** → the covert FR is not a *pro*



- a type of *sluicing*; C bears an [E] feature (Merchant, 2001)
- 2 issues:
  1. the Sluicing-COMP Generalization (Merchant, 2001): no non-operator material may appear in COMP
  2. relationship between ellipsis and movement – ellipsis only occurs when movement does not occur
- 1. • van Craenenbroeck and Lipták (2006): the type of sluicing in a language depends on the type of *wh*-movement it exhibits (evidence from "relative deletion") – where the overt syntax of *wh*-movement coincides with that of other operator material (focus, *is*-phrases, universal quantifiers), sluicing is also allowed with these other types of operators
  - sluicing in *is*-phrases in Hungarian: the head is spelled out, in addition to the remnant in its specifier
  - this may suggest that, at least in specificational pseudoclefts, there is another lower projection which hosts *a*
- 2. SALVATION BY DELETION
  - repair of island violations via ellipsis (Fox and Lasnik, 2003; Merchant, 2004)
    - *wh*-movement targets every intermediate maximal projection
    - intermediate traces of island-escaping XP are defective, marked with \*
    - if ellipsis does not eliminate all structures that contain \*, PF cannot interpret the object → difference between TP-deletion (eliminates all \*-traces) and VP-deletion (does not eliminate the highest \*-trace)

#### PROPOSAL:

- FR carries a feature which requires it to be topicalized (call it [*u*TOP])
- failure to topicalize the FR means that [*u*TOP] is not checked, and the structure crashes at PF
- TP-ellipsis deletes the structure with the uninterpretable feature, thus rendering the structure interpretable at PF → when TP is ellided FR does not have to move (ellipsis can bleed movement)

#### 4 Conclusion

- the complementizer *a* in Wolof marks occurrences of *wh*-movement and exhibits a subject/non-subject asymmetry
- *L*-, which occurs before *a* in non-subject extraction is an instance of T-to-C movement, triggered by the presence of an uninterpretable T feature on C, which is, in case of subject extraction, deleted by the moved subject itself
- the asymmetry is absent in fragment answers and pseudoclefts
- the optionality of T-to-C in pseudoclefts is expected due to the reversibility of specificational pseudoclefts (either the XP or the FR can move to SpecTP)
- the free relative possesses a feature [*u*TOP] which forces it to topicalize
- fragment answers are derived from specificational pseudoclefts, by deleting the TP that contains the free relative, thus allowing for the free relative not to topicalize (“salvation by deletion”)

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