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:

(1) Aali a C fis see Musaa
   "Ali saw Musa."

(2) Musaa l-a C fis Aali
   "Musa saw Ali."

• 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 a C gis Musaa?
   "Who saw Musa?"

b. Aali a l-a C
   "Ali saw."

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

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

1

2
Object extraction

(10) Musaa l-a Aali gis musa l-C_f ali see “Ali saw [MUSA] FOC.”

- both the subject and T are closer to C then 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

Puzzle: Why is a possible in non-subject extraction, and l-a in subject extraction?

3.2 Pseudoclefts

- the same lack of asymmetry occurs in specificational pseudoclefts:

(16) a. ñi lekkal yi xale yi l-a/a who eat sweets DEP.PL child DEP.PL l-C_f/C_f “Who ate the sweets were the children.”

b. li xale yi lekkal yi l-a/a what child DEP.PL eat sweets DEP.PL l-C_f/C_f “What the children ate, were the sweets.”

Fragment answers are derived from pseudoclefts.

Specificational pseudoclefts

- two major constituents: the VARIABLE (wh-clause, old information) and the VALUE (“focus”, new information) (Blom and Daalder, 1977; Akamian, 1979; Higgins, 1979)
- the wh-phrase is a free relative (Akamian 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))
a. Embedded Interrogative
yëg na-∅ [l-i/ ] l-u Móódu gën-ê 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-∅ [l-i/ ] l-u Móódu gën-ê 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-ê bëgg] bopp-am l-a. cl-FR/cl-INT modu surpass-INF like head-poss.3.sg l/C,
“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:

(18) CP
     C
     s[l][F]
     T[
     sc
     DP[l][F] FR

- either the DP or the FR can move to Spec,TP to satisfy the EPP feature of T
  - DP is the subject \( \rightarrow a \)
  - FR is the subject \( \rightarrow la \)

DP is the subject

(19) CP
     DP[l][F]
     C
     s[l][F]
     T[
     sc
     tDP FR

FR is the subject

(20) CP
     DP[l][F]
     C
     T[
     sc
     \( tDP FR \)

\( a/la \) 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

(22) TopP
     CP
     DP[l][F]
     C
     T[
     sc
     \( tDP FR \)

a/la alternation in Wolof specificational pseudoclefts is like the word order alternation in English specificational pseudoclefts.
3.3 Deriving fragment answers from pseudoclefts

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

(24) a. [ki Musaa gis] who musa see Aali-Aali-Cf "Ali."  
    b. [ki Musaa gis] who musa see Aali Aali la-Cf "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 t'a  
• there are such constructions in Wolof: **Copular sentences**

(25) Aali jangalekat l-a,*a  
    ali teacher l-Cf,3SG,*Cf,3SG  
    "Ali is a teacher."  

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

**Ellipsis**

(26) [ki Musaa gis] who musa see Aali-Aali-Cf "Ali.""  

• 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, α-phrases, universal quantifiers), sluicing is also allowed with these other types of operators  
• sluicing in α-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 [uTOP])
- failure to topicalize the FR means that [uTOP] 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 specificalional pseudoclefts (either the XP or the FR can move to SpecTP)
- the free relative possesses a feature [uTOP] which forces it to topicalize
- fragment answers are derived from specificalional pseudoclefts, by deleting the TP that contains the free relative, thus allowing for the free relative not to topicalize ("salvation by deletion")

References