

Predication, specification, and equation in Ch’ol*

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1. Introduction

This paper discusses three types of copular constructions: (i) predicational, in which the first DP is referential and the second is a predicate (*Maria is a teacher*); (ii) specificational, in which the first DP is a non-referential description and the second DP is referential (*The teacher is Maria*); and (iii) equative, in which both DPs are referential (*Clark Kent is Superman*), each described further below. One of the key questions that research on this topic addresses is whether and how these types of clauses are related to one another, both derivationally and in their underlying structure.

We argue that all three types of copular clauses in the Mayan language Ch’ol have different surface structures, previewed in the table in (1). We make specific claims about the surface position of the higher nominal, which we show is either in the predicate, focus, or topic position, depending on the copular sentence type.

(1) *Three surface structures in Ch’ol copular sentences*

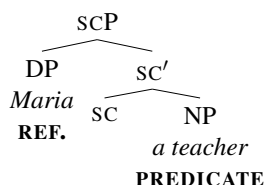
	TOPIC	FOCUS	Predicate	DP
Predicational			NP _{PRED=ABS}	DP _{REF}
Specificational		DP _{REF}		DP _{NON-REF}
Equative	DP _{REF}			DP _{REF}

Ch’ol also provides evidence that predicational and specificational sentences have different underlying structures. We argue that a predicational construction is built from a small clause in which the referential DP asymmetrically c-commands the predicate, as shown in (2), while a specificational construction is built from a small clause in which the non-referential DP c-commands the referential DP, as shown in (3). That is, we claim

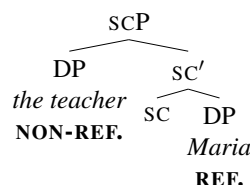
**Wokox awätäl* to Virginia Martínez Vázquez, Morelia Vázquez Martínez, and María Vázquez Martínez for Ch’ol data and discussion. Thanks also to Juan Jesús Vázquez Álvarez, Carol-Rose Little, and audiences at McGill, UMass, TOMILLA, and NELS for comments and helpful feedback. Ch’ol data were collected in summer 2022 in Campanario, Chiapas with support from an FRQSC grant to Martinović, and in subsequent virtual meetings. All errors are our own and authors are listed in alphabetical order.

that specificational sentences are not derived from an underlying predicational small clause (contra e.g., Heggie 1988, Moro 1997, Heycock 1994, Mikkelsen 2005, den Dikken 2006), but are a distinct clause type.

(2) *Predicational small clause*



(3) *Specificational small clause*



This paper then contributes novel data to the theoretical debate surrounding the nature and typology of copular constructions, and also provides what, to our knowledge, is the first systematic investigation of different types of copular constructions in a Mayan language.

The remainder of the paper is organized as follows. Section 2 provides background into copular constructions and the theoretical debate surrounding them. In section 3 we discuss evidence for the underlying difference between predicational and specificational copular clause types in Ch'ol. This will come from the fact that (i) definite descriptions cannot be predicates in Ch'ol, and (ii) absolutive agreement is obligatorily absent in specificational constructions. Finally, we show in section 4 that specificational sentences are also not a type of equative construction (contra Heycock and Kroch 1999, 2002, Rothstein 2001). Section 5 summarizes and concludes.

2. Background on copular clauses

Higgins' (1973) classification of nominal copular sentences is based on interpretational distinctions. Predicational clauses involve a referential subject and a predicate, as in (4). In a specificational construction like (5), on the other hand, the precopular constituent provides a *variable* (i.e., there is an x such that x is a two-time winner of the Booker Prize), and the postcopular constituent provides a *value* for that variable (i.e., $x =$ Hilary Mantel).

(4) Hilary Mantel is a two-time winner of the Booker Prize.
 REFERENTIAL PREDICATE *Predicational*

(5) The two-time winner of the Booker Prize is Hilary Mantel.
 NON-REFERENTIAL REFERENTIAL *Specificational*

Analyses of specificational sentences in the syntax and semantics literature can be grouped into three main camps. First, some work has argued that these are inverted predicational sentences, with a subject of type $\langle e \rangle$ and a predicate of type $\langle e, t \rangle$ (Heggie 1988, Moro 1997, Heycock 1994, Mikkelsen 2005, den Dikken 2006). On the other hand, Heycock and Kroch (1999, 2002), and Rothstein (2001) argue that they are inverted equative sentence, in which both DPs are of type $\langle e \rangle$. Finally, specificational sentences have been argued to be a

distinct type of sentence altogether, with the non-referential DP being an *individual concept* of type $\langle s\langle e, t \rangle \rangle$ (Romero 2005, Heycock 2012, Arregi et al. 2021)¹. Individual concepts, like “the winner of the Booker Prize” or “the president of the U.S.” denote potentially different referents across possible worlds and/or times, setting them apart from referential DPs of type $\langle e \rangle$.

Here we argue that specificational sentences are distinct from both predicational and equative clauses, a view compatible with the individual concept analysis of specificational subjects. We provide no new arguments that the non-referential expression in specificational sentence is an individual concept, but we believe that data from Ch'ol conclusively show that the non-referential DP in a specificational sentence is not a predicate, that specificational sentences do not involve inversion of the type argued for in English, and that they are also distinct from equatives.² Additionally, we show that the referential expression in a specificational clause is *not* the underlying subject of the small clause; instead, the non-referential DP is in the subject position, as in (3) above.

3. Predication and specification in Ch'ol

Ch'ol is a Mayan language of the Greater Tzeltalan branch spoken by around 250,000 people, primarily in the state of Chiapas in Mexico (Vázquez Álvarez 2011, Coon 2017a). Basic structure of the Ch'ol clause is previewed in (6).

(6) TOPIC [_{FOCP} FOCUS [Predicate DP (DP)]]

Discourse-neutral word order in Ch'ol is predicate-initial for both verbal and non-verbal predicates (NVPs) (Vázquez Álvarez 2011, Clemens and Coon 2018), shown in (7a) and (7b), respectively.³

- (7) a. **Tyi** i-mek'-e ñeñe' ajMaria.
PFV 3ERG-hug-TV baby Maria
'Maria hugged the baby.'
- b. Chañ ajMaria.
tall Maria
'Maria is tall.'

Verbal predicates like the one in (7a) denote events and require one of a set of aspectual morphemes and a “status suffix” (bolded). Non-verbal predicates like (7b), on the other hand, denote states and may not appear with aspectual morphology or status suffixes.

¹Heycock (2012) still argues for an inversion analysis of specificational sentences, whereas Romero's (2005) and Arregi et al.'s (2021) proposals are compatible with either an inverted or a non-inverted syntax.

²We focus on clauses with two DP arguments, and have nothing to say about specificational pseudoclefts.

³Abbreviations in glosses follow Leipzig glossing conventions with the following additions: AFF – affirmative clitic; AGT – agentive prefix; DIR – directional; ENC – enclitic; REAL – realis clitic; TV – transitive status suffix. Unattributed examples come from contextually-driven elicitation work with three Ch'ol speakers from Campanario, Chiapas. In some cases, glosses have been simplified where details are not relevant.

As the NVP in (7b) shows, Ch’ol does not have a copula. This is true regardless of temporal or person/number specification, as showed by the additional examples in (8).

- (8) a. Maystraj-oñ.
 teacher-1 ABS
 ‘I am a teacher.’
 b. Wajali maystraj-oñ.
 back.then teacher-1 ABS
 ‘Back then, I was a teacher.’
 c. Maystraj ajMaria.
 teacher Maria
 ‘Maria is a teacher.’

Ch’ol is head-marking and pro-drop. Absolutive morphemes—like 1st person *-oñ* in (8)—co-index objects and intransitive subjects; free-standing pronouns typically only appear in preverbal topic or focus positions, or when pro-drop is not licensed. Absolutive morphemes and corresponding free-standing pronouns are shown in (9).

(9) *Ch’ol absolutive morphemes and full pronouns*

	absolutive	full pronoun
1st person	-(y)oñ	joñoñ
2nd person	-(y)ety	jatyety
3rd person	∅	∅

As in other Mayan languages, a single focus position is available at the left edge of the clause, for which focused constituents, *wh*-words, relativized elements, and certain focus-sensitive operators compete (Norman 1977, Aissen 1992). Examples with a *wh*-question and focused constituent are shown in (10).

- (10) a. [_{FOC} Maxki] tyi i-mek’-e ñeñe ___?
 who PFV 3ERG-hug-TV baby
 ‘Who hugged the baby?’ *wh-question*
 b. [_{FOC} AjMaria] tyi i-mek’-e ñeñe ____.
 Maria PFV 3ERG-hug-TV baby
 ‘MARIA hugged the baby.’ *focus*

As the translations in (10) indicate, determiners are not required for definite readings in Ch’ol; see Little 2020 for discussion.

3.1 Predicational sentences

Predicational constructions in Ch'ol are characterized by (i) obligatory absolutive agreement on the predicate, and (ii) the impossibility of definite descriptions as predicates. We examine each of these properties in turn.

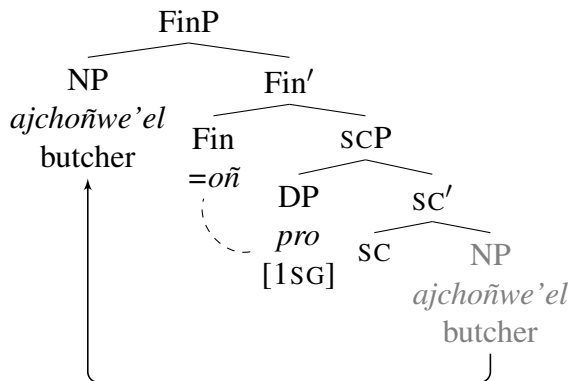
Absolutive morphology appears obligatorily on the predicate to mark subjects in predicational copular constructions, shown in (11a). The absolutive suffix is required regardless of whether an overt pronoun is also present, as in the construction in (11b) with a focussed pronominal subject. There is no overt reflex of 3rd person absolutive, as shown in (11c).

- (11) a. Aj-choñ-we'el-*(oñ).
AGT-sell-meat-1ABS
'I am a butcher.'
- b. [_{FOC} Jatyety] sajxk'aläl-*(ety).
2PRON little.girl-2ABS
'YOU'RE a little girl.'
- c. Xwujty jiñi wiñik.
healer DET man
'The man is a healer.'

Nominal predicates may include phrasal material (e.g., adjectives) but may *not* include D⁰-level elements, a restriction also noted by Armstrong (2009) for Yucatec Maya.

- (12) a. Chuty x'ixik-oñ.
short woman-1ABS
'I'm a short woman.'
- b. ***Jiñi** maystraj-ety.
DET teacher-2ABS
intended: 'You are the teacher.'

We propose that predicational sentences like (11a) have the structure in (13). Specifically, we take predication to involve an asymmetrical small clause (Bowers 1993, Baker 2003, den Dikken 2006; Armstrong 2009 for Yucatec Maya). We assume that absolutive morphemes are pronominal clitics generated via an Agree relation between a φ -probe on a functional head (Coon 2017b), here represented as Fin⁰, and the closest DP in its search domain. Finally, as with all other predicates, the nominal predicate raises to a position above the subject, resulting in predicate-initial word order, and the absolutive clitic adjoins to it.

(13) *Predicational structure*

Against this backdrop, we turn to specificational sentences.

3.2 Specificational sentences

In contrast to predicational sentences, specificational sentences in Ch'ol are characterized by the *impossibility* of absolute agreement, and the possibility of D^0 -level material on the non-referential nominal. These two properties are at the core of our argument that predicational and specificational sentences do not contain the same underlying small clause, as previewed in (2) and (3) above.

In order to elicit specificational sentences, we set up contexts in which a nominal denoting a *value* satisfies a non-referential description or *individual concept*, in this case, a particular profession, shown in (14).

- (14) Context: There's a small market that your friend's family runs. There's a tortilla-seller, a butcher, and a fish-monger. You know that your friend and her family members work in all the stalls, but you're not sure who does what. You ask...
- a. Maxki jiñ aj-choñ-we'el=i?
 who DET AGT-sell-meat=ENC
 'Who's the butcher?'
 - b. [_{FOC} Joñoñ] aj-choñ-we'el.
 1PRON AGT-sell-meat
 'The butcher is me.'

We show that in Ch'ol specificational constructions like the one in (14b) the referential DP—here the pronoun *joñoñ*—occupies the syntactic focus position. Furthermore, the non-referential nominal, *ajchoñwe'el* 'the butcher', claimed to be a predicate in approaches which treat predicational and specificational sentences as derived from the same small clause, is not in the predicate position. We argue that the non-referential expression is in fact the underlying subject of the small clause.

Predication, specification, and equation in Ch'ol

We first examine the focused position. Work since Higgins (1973) has noted that the referential DP in specificational sentences is in some way focused; this has been taken to be one of the defining characteristics of specificational sentences, and it thus comes as no surprise that the pronoun in (14b) should be in the preverbal Ch'ol focus position. In contrast, since no element necessarily occupies the focus position in a *predicational* construction, we correctly predict that predicational subjects can move to this position; this was seen in (11b) above.

In Ch'ol, constituents marked with the clitic =*jach* 'only' obligatorily occupy the preverbal focus position. Unsurprisingly, then, =*jach* may appear on the referential DP, which we argue to be in focus position, as shown in (15a). However, given that there is only a single focus position, specificational sentences are correctly predicted to be degraded with other elements in focus, such as the adverb in (15b).

- (15) a. Joñoñ=*jach* jiñi aj-choñ-we'el.
1PRON=ONLY DET AGT-sell-meat
'The butcher is only me.' (i.e., nobody else works in that stall)
- b. ?/*A'bi=*jach* joñoñ jiñi aj-choñ-we'el.
yesterday=ONLY 1PRON DET AGT-sell-meat
intended: 'Only yesterday the butcher was me' (e.g., I was filling in for my sister)

There is no inherent problem with attaching =*jach* to a temporal adverb, as shown by the grammaticality of focussed *a'bijach* with a predicative construction in (16).

- (16) A'bi=*jach* aj-choñ-we'el-oñ.
yesterday=ONLY AGT-sell-meat-1ABS
'Only yesterday I was a butcher.'

We now turn to absolutive agreement. While agreement is obligatory in predicational constructions, it is ungrammatical in specificational ones, as shown by the pair in (17).

- (17) a. Aj-choñ-we'el-oñ.
AGT-sell-meat-1ABS
'I'm a butcher.' (predicational)
- b. *Joñoñ aj-choñ-we'el-oñ.
1PRON AGT-sell-meat-1ABS
intended: 'The butcher is me.' (*specificational)
possible as: 'I am a butcher.' (predicational)

The sentence in (17b) is impossible in a specificational context, like the one in (14) above. The same string can receive an interpretation as a predicational construction with a focussed subject (parallel to the example in (11b) above).

While predicates in predicational constructions cannot have D⁰ elements, as in (18a), the non-referential expression *can* appear with a determiner, as shown in (18b).

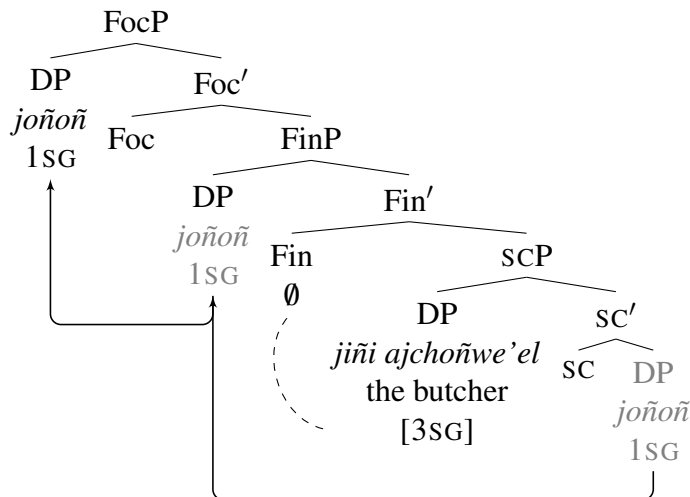
- (18) a. *[Jiñi aj-choñ-waj] [ajMaria].
 DET AGT-sell-tortilla Maria
 intended: ‘Maria is the tortilla-seller.’ (predicational)
- b. [AjMaria] [jiñi aj-choñ-waj].
 Maria DET AGT-sell-tortilla
 ‘The tortilla-seller is Maria.’ (specificational)

As predicted, absolutive morphology (possible only with predicational constructions) is incompatible with a determiner on the non-referential DP (possible only with specificational constructions). This is illustrated in (19), which is bad under any imaginable interpretation.

- (19) *Joñoñ **jiñi** aj-choñ-we’el-oñ.
 1PRON DET AGT-sell-meat-1ABS
 intended: ‘I am the butcher.’ / ‘The butcher is me.’

We propose that specificational sentences like the one in (14b) have the structure in (20).

- (20) *Specificational structure*



In specificational sentences, the subject of the small clause is the non-referential expression (i.e., the variable *jiñi ajchoñwe’el* ‘the butcher’). The referential DP (i.e., the value, here the 1st person pronoun *joñoñ*) is generated low and raises to the clause-initial focus position. We take it to be a predicate, in the sense that it predicates of the individual concept the property of having a certain value in the world of evaluation.⁴ We therefore assume that the referential expression raises to Spec,FinP as all predicates are argued to do, but as far

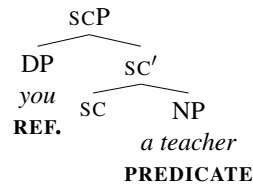
⁴For a more detailed semantic analysis, see Arregi et al. 2021.

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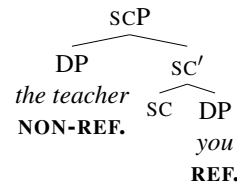
as we can tell, nothing hinges on this particular assumption. Notably, given this proposed structure, the obligatory absence of a 1st person absolutive agreement morpheme is entirely expected based on the structure of the underlying small clause.

The two different small clauses proposed to underlie predicational and specificational copular constructions shown with a 2nd person referential DP in (21) and (22), respectively.

(21) *Predicational small clause*



(22) *Specificational small clause*



In both copular clause types, the agreement probe on the higher functional head enters into Agree with the closest DP in its search domain. In a predicational clause like (23a), this is the referential DP; when it is 1st or 2nd person, absolutive agreement is correctly expected, as shown in (23a) (see the full predicational structure in (13) above). However, in a specificational small clause like (22), the closest DP is the non-referential expression (the individual concept in Romero 2005, Arregi et al. 2021). This higher DP will *always* be 3rd person in a specificational sentence because it is an individual concept, and recall from table (9) that 3rd person absolutive has no overt reflex in Ch'ol. This correctly derives the obligatory absence of absolutive morphology in the specificational clause in (23b).

- (23) a. *Maystraj-ety.*
 teacher-2ABS
 ‘You are a teacher.’ *(predicational)*
- b. *Jatyety jiñi maystraj.*
 2PRON DET teacher
 ‘The teacher is you.’ *(specificational)*

In summary, the proposed underlying structure of the small clause, where the subject of the specificational sentence is the non-referential expression, correctly predicts the obligatory absence of agreement in Ch'ol specificational clauses, without additional stipulations.

If, on the other hand, the subject of the specificational clause were the referential DP, and the only difference between predicational and specificational sentences lay in their surface syntax—resulting from the reversal of the surface order via movement operations (e.g., in English, predicate inversion; in Ch'ol, the fronting of the focused DP), as is proposed in inversion-based analyses of English specificational constructions (see §2)—something else would need to be said about why the referential DP does not trigger agreement. Furthermore, the possibility of D⁰-level material on the non-referential DP (i.e., *jiñi* in 23b) would also require an explanation, since determiners are impossible on the predicates of predicational constructions.

4. Equatives in Ch'ol

The preceding section demonstrated that the non-referential DP in a specificational construction does not behave like a predicate in Ch'ol. The question we address in this section is whether Ch'ol specificational sentences are a type of *equative* construction. This is proposed for English by Heycock and Kroch (1999, 2002), and Rothstein (2001), for whom both DPs are of type $\langle e \rangle$, as well as in Heycock (2012), where specificational sentences have equative syntax (though she assumes here that the non-referential DP is an individual concept). The Ch'ol findings presented in this section are preliminary, but we believe that they conclusively show at least that specificational sentences are not composed of two DPs of type $\langle e \rangle$.

Specifically, unlike the other two copular clause types, Ch'ol equatives make obligatory use of a clause-external *topic* position. The three surface structures of Ch'ol predicational, specificational, and equative constructions are repeated in (24).

(24) *Three surface structures in Ch'ol copular sentences*

	TOPIC	FOCUS	Predicate	DP
Predicational			NP _{PRED=ABS}	DP _{REF}
Specificational		DP _{REF}		DP _{NON-REF}
Equative	DP _{REF}			DP _{REF}

In an equative construction in Ch'ol, two DPs appear juxtaposed with the initial DP occupying the topic position, as in (25b), based on the context in (25a).

- (25) a. Context: Brad Pitt is staying at a hotel in Palenque, but he wants to have a relaxing vacation, so he's grown out his beard, is wearing sunglasses, and is not telling anyone who he is—he's going by the name "Juan". We've been staying there a few days, and you start to suspect who Juan is. You say to me...
- b. Jiñi ajJuan, ajBrad Pitt=**me**.
 DET Juan Brad Pitt=AFF
 'Juan is actually Brad Pitt.'

Evidence that the first DP is in topic position comes from the obligatory pause after the first DP, as well as the presence of a second-position clitic on the lower DP, discussed below.

Vázquez Álvarez (2011) argues that Ch'ol topics are *external topics* in the sense of Aissen 1992: they appear obligatorily to the left of a focussed element if one is present, and are separated from the clause by an intonational pause, as shown in (26).

- (26) [A li ajOskar=i], [ixim=**äch**] tyi i-kuch-u tyälel.
 TOP DET Oskar=ENC corn=AFF PFV 3ERG-carry-TV DIR
 'As for Oskar, he brought CORN.' (Vázquez Álvarez 2011)

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3rd-person topics always appear with one of a set of D⁰ elements (*li*, *jiñ(i)*, *ili*, *ixä*), and may appear with a final enclitic =*i*. Topics may optionally be introduced with a topic marker, *a*. Clausal second-position clitics may attach to elements in the clause-internal focus position, as with the affirmative clitic =*äch* in (26). Clitic placement in examples like (26) then indicate that the topic is outside of the clause; see Vázquez Álvarez 2011 for discussion.

Because neither predicational nor specificational constructions involve the topic position, second-position clitics are correctly predicted to attach to the first nominal expression in a binomial copular clause, as in (27a)–(27b). This contrasts with the behaviour of equative constructions, in which second-position clitics may appear on the linearly second DP.

- (27) a. Ñeñe'=tyo ajMaria(*=tyo).
 baby=STILL Maria=STILL
 'Maria is still a baby.' (predicational)
- b. Joñoñ=äch jiñi aj-choñ-waj(*=äch).
 1PRON=AFF DET AGT-sell-tortilla=AFF
 'The tortilla seller is indeed me.' (specificational)
- c. Jiñi ajJuan, ajBrad Pitt=me.
 DET Juan Brad Pitt=AFF
 'Juan is actually Brad Pitt.' (equative)

Note that certain second-position clitics may actually appear on both DPs in an equative construction, as shown in (28). What is crucial for us is that the appearance of the clitics on the second nominal indicate that the two DPs occupy separate clausal domains; see Vázquez Álvarez 2011 for additional discussion of Ch'ol second-position clitics.

- (28) Jiñ=ku ajLinda, Shakira=ta'.
 DET=AFF Linda Shakira=REAL
 'Linda is really Shakira.'

A second piece of evidence that the first DP in an equative occupies topic position comes from clausal embedding. Vázquez Álvarez (2011) shows that while foci may be embedded in finite embedded clauses, topics may not. Example (29) shows an embedded finite clause containing a focussed subject (*jiñ ajPeru'*). An equivalent clause but with the same DP in focussed position is ungrammatical, as in (30).

- (29) Tyi k-ñächty-ä [che' jiñ ajPeru' tyi i-tyum-i xchutyalob].
 PFV 1ERG-hear-DTV COMP DET Pedro PFV 3ERG-advise-DTV boy
 'I heard that *Pedro* gave advice to the boy.'

- (30) *Tyi k-ñächty-ä [che' a li ajPeru', tyi ityumi xchutyalob].
 PFV 1ERG-hear-DTV COMP TOP DET Pedro PFV advise boy
 intended: 'I heard that, as for Pedro, he gave advice to the boy.' (Vázquez Álvarez 2011:394)

Since predicational and specificational clauses do not require any elements to be in the topic position, we correctly predict that these may be embedded, as shown in (31).

- (31) a. Mi k-ña'tyañ [che' maystraj-ety].
 IPFV 1ERG-know COMP teacher-2ABS
 'I know that you're a teacher.' (predicational)
- b. Tyi y-älä [che' jiñi ajMaria aj-choñ-waj].
 PFV 3ERG-say COMP DET Maria AGT-sell-tortilla
 'He said that the tortilla-seller is Maria.' (specificational)

Strikingly, however, equative clauses resist embedding altogether, as shown by the ungrammatical sentence in (32) (again drawing on the equative context above). In order to express the intended reading, speakers consulted instead offered sentences with alternative paraphrases (e.g., 'Juan is acting as Brad Pitt').

- (32) *AjMaria tyi y-älä [(che') jiñi ajJuan, ajBrad Pitt].
 Maria PFV 3ERG-say COMP DET Juan Brad Pitt
 intended: 'Maria said that Juan is Brad Pitt.' (equative)

The findings from equatives are preliminary; for example, we do not yet have any evidence for the position of the second DP in equatives, which could be either in the focus position, or in its base-generated position. The data do show that, given that two DPs of type $\langle e \rangle$ cannot form a copular sentence clause-internally, such an analysis of specificational sentences is not tenable for Ch'ol. We can speculate that equatives, unlike predicational and specificational sentences, have a symmetrical structure, along the lines of Pereltsvaig (2001, 2007) and Bondaruk (2014). Under the assumption that neither of the two DPs is a predicate, the only way to break up the symmetry is to juxtapose the two DPs by dislocating one to a clause-external position. We leave the details of this for future work.

5. Conclusion

This paper examined three types of copular sentences in Ch'ol: predicational, specificational, and equative. We argued that all three types of constructions involve a different surface syntax, seen in the table in (24) above. Specifically, in a predicational construction the referential DP follows the nominal predicate and triggers absolutive agreement on it (on par with with word order and agreement in regular verbal predication). Specificational clauses, in contrast, place the referential DP in the focus position; we argued that the non-referential nominal is not a predicate, but rather is semantically an *individual concept*. No overt absolutive agreement is present in specificational constructions, which we argued in section 3 to be the result of two factors: (i) the fact that the individual concept DP occupies the highest position in the small clause; and (ii) the individual concept is 3rd person, and 3rd person absolutive has no overt reflex in Ch'ol. The absence of agreement indicates that the referential expression in specificational sentences is not the subject of the small clause.

The different syntactic structures motivated for predicational and specificational constructions align with recent work in the semantics of these constructions, which argues that each clause type is derived from a different underlying small clause (Romero 2005, Heycock 2012, Arregi et al. 2021). This further aligns with the fact that in Ch'ol, the non-referential nominal (i.e., the predicate) in predicational copular sentences may not be a definite description and may not appear with D⁰-level material such as determiners or demonstratives. On the other hand, the non-referential nominal in a specificational clause *may* appear with D⁰-level material. These facts are surprising under accounts which take predicational and specificational clauses to be derived from the same small clause, but find a natural explanation under the account presented here, in which the non-referential nominals in predicational and specificational clauses are of different semantic types.

Finally, in section 4, we turned to equative constructions, which we showed make obligatory use of a clause-external topic position. While at this time we do not make specific claims about either the underlying syntax or semantics of equative clauses, this section serves to illustrate that specificational constructions also behave differently from equatives, casting doubt on analyses which take these to be related.

The discussion here has focused on copular constructions in Ch'ol, the results are consistent with work on other unrelated languages—for example, Scottish Gaelic (Adger and Ramchand 2003) and Wolof (Martinović 2022)—which illustrate structural differences among different types of copular constructions. We speculate here that these differences are present yet masked in more commonly-studied languages like English and German, in which factors such as a dedicated subject position and an agreeing copular verb lead to similar surface configurations.

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