

Well, there's the list reading

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The aim of this paper is to show that if we treat the English *there*-construction as a type of copula construction, we can provide a unified analysis of the existential and the list reading. Research on copula structures has distinguished at least three types: predicational, specificational and identificational (or equative). Putting aside the identificational construction, in which two referential DPs are equated, I argue that the cut between the predicational and specificational structures can be found with the *there*-construction as well. As has been shown previously, there are several arguments to take the existential construction as an instance of a predicational copula construction, which I will present. Following a suggestion by Safir (1985), I will show that it makes sense to treat the list reading that occurs with *there* as the specificational variant of the *there*-construction. This move rounds up the picture of looking at *there*-constructions as a copula structure.

1. Introduction

In the literature, on the *there*-construction, one recurring suggestion was that the NP/ DP in the structure is predicative (cf. Jenkins 1975, Williams 1994, McNally 1997, Zamparelli 2000). Furthermore, it has been argued that the cases where *there* occurs with an unaccuastive verb, are different structures altogether, as they behave differently in various contexts (cf. among others Aissen 1975, Ross 1975, McNally 1997, Hartmann 2005). Taking these two facts together, it makes sense to consider the *there*-construction in the more general frame of copula constructions. Copula constructions have been shown to occur in at least three different types: predicational, specificational and identificational. Putting aside the identificational reading, we expect the *there*-construction to appear in a predicational and specificational form as well. The main point of the paper is to argue that they actually do: the existential construction will be argued to be an instance of the predicational structure, and, following an idea by Safir (1985), I will present arguments that suggest that the list reading of the English *there*-construction is an instance of the specificational structure.

2. Copula Constructions

In the literature on the copula construction, at least three different types of copula constructions are distinguished: *predicational*, *specificational*, *identificational*. The predicational structure typically occurs with a referential subject DP and an adjective, locative PP or a predicate nominal in the postcopular position (or a *wh*-cleft). Semantically, the postcopular predicate is predicated of the DP subject. Examples are given in (1):

- (1) a. The main actor is ill/ stupid.
 b. The foodstore is at the corner.
 c. Mary is a teacher.

The identificational structure (also called identity or equative structures) typically shows up with two referential DPs that are equated:

- (2) a. The morning star is the evening star.
 b. Mr Smith is John.

The specificational structure typically occurs with two DPs, however, the meaning seems not to be a meaning of identity, but rather a meaning of specifying a certain person, item as belonging to a certain group or list.

- (3) a. The president of the committee is John.
 b. My best friend is Brad.

There are two important observations that we can make about the classification given: first of all, the subject-predicate structure is rather straightforward when we deal with clear predicative phrases like APs, or PPs. The matter becomes more complicated when we deal with two DPs which are in principle ambiguous between a referential and a predicative meaning. As an illustration, look at the sentence in (4), which shows this ambiguity. In one reading, we say about John that he has a specific function, namely being the president of a committee. The second reading gives the information that the person who is John and the person who is the president are one.

- (4) John is the president of the scientific committee.

Thus, an important aspect of the classification of copular construction is whether we deal with predicative phrases or referential DPs in the postcopular position, but additionally, whether the DP in subject position is a referential DP or not seems also important. Based on a classification

by Huber (2002) we can derive the following classification:^{1, 2}

Subject Position	Predicate Position	Term here	Other terms
Individual	Set/ Property	Predicational, cf. (1)	predicative, identifi- cational
Set/ Property	Set/ Property		generic
Set/ Property Individual	Individual	Specificational cf. (3)	specificational, equative
Individual	Individual	Identificational cf. (2)	identity, equative

Table 1: Types of copular constructions

Independent of the ultimate analysis of the structure, it is clear that it is necessary to distinguish at least two types of predication, as coordination facts suggest (cf. Higginbotham 1987, Huber 2002).

(5) *The woman in the corner is a fool and Mary.

However, researchers do not agree on whether the specificational structure should be analysed with the predicative type or with the identificational type. Thus, one line of research argues that the predicative structure in (1) and the specificational structure in (3) have the same underlying subject-predicate structure, but the surface structure differs: in the predicational structure, the subject of predication moves to a precopular position whereas in the specificational structure, the predicate moves to a precopular position (researchers present different analysis of what exactly this position is) (cf. Heggie 1988, Moro 1997, Mikkelsen 2005). The second line of research argues that the specificational structure should be seen as an instance of the identificational structure in which both DPs are referential (cf. Heycock & Kroch 1999, Rothstein 2001). The two approaches will be discussed in more detail below.

For now, the important fact is that we have to distinguish the predicational reading from at least another one. The main claim here is that we find the same distinction with the two readings of the *there*-construction: the existential reading and the list reading. Thus, the evidence that

¹Huber bases himself on a classification made by Higgins (1973), who distinguished four types (see Higgins 1973:264):

Type	Subject	Predicate
Identificational	Referential	Identificational
Identity	Referential	Referential
Predicational	Referential	Predicational
Specificational	Superscriptional	Specificational

²The subject position for specificational structures are given as both property and individual. This reflects the discussion of the analysis of these structures (see below).

will be presented suggests that the existential construction is an instance of the predicative copula construction, cf. (1), whereas the list reading with *there* should be seen as a specificational structure.

3. *The existential reading: An instance of a predicative copula construction*

3.1. *The postcopular DP as a predicate*

To argue that the existential reading of the *there*-construction is an instance of the predicative copula structure implies two things: (i) the *there*-construction is a copula construction and (ii) the postcopular DP is a predicative NP. There are two reasons why the *there*-construction should be classified as a copula construction. First, *there* in subject position predominantly occurs with the copula. Second, those clauses in which *there* occurs with a different verb behave very much differently and have been argued to be of a different type (cf. Aissen 1975, Hartmann 2005).

So let's turn our attention to arguing for the postcopular DP as being a predicative DP. This idea is by no means new and it goes back at least as far as Jenkins (1975) and has been argued for in different disguises in Williams (1994), McNally (1997; 1998), Zamparelli (2000) and Hazout (2004). From a syntactic point of view, the postverbal DP behaves as a predicate in the context of weak islands, as Williams (1994; 2004) argues. Thus, predicates are much less acceptable to be extracted from *wh*-islands than arguments are, cf. (6) vs. (7).

- (6) a. ?What do you wonder who fixed?
 b. ?Who do you wonder why Bill likes?
- (7) a. *How tall do you wonder who became?
 b. *How foolish do you wonder why Bill considers anyone t?

The postcopular DP behaves on a par with predicates, cf. (8).³

³The data in (6) to (8) are given from Williams' papers (1994, 2004). However, both extraction of *how many* and *who* could be ungrammatical for independent reasons. Cresti (1995) argues with respect to extraction of *how many*, as pointed out to me by Martin Salzmann (p.c.), that the *there*-construction imposes a restriction on *how many* that is in contrast to licit extraction out of *wh*-islands. Thus, extraction in (8-b) is ungrammatical for independent reasons (for details see Cresti 1995, 87ff). With *who* the difference could be due to the factors such as D-linkedness, referentiality, or individuation, all of which facilitate extraction out of a *wh*-island (for an overview see Szabolcsi 2006), but clash with restrictions on the postcopular DP/NP with *there*. If we control for these factors as much as possible and use *what*-extraction instead, the contrast argument vs. predicate becomes clearer. These examples seem to provide the results that Williams suggested: the pattern remains the same, his argument holds.

- (i) a. ?What do you wonder why John fixed?
 b. ?What do you wonder why Bill likes?
- (ii) a. *What do you wonder why John became?
 b. *What do you wonder why Bill considers anyone?
- (iii) a. *What do you wonder why there was in the garden?
 b. *?What do you wonder why there was?

- (8) a. *Who do you wonder why there was at the party?
 b. *How many people do you wonder why there were?

The other arguments for considering the postcopular DP in existential *there*-contexts come from parallel behaviour of predicative copula constructions and the existential construction. Thus, in both environments, the postcopular DP cannot take wide scope (cf. Williams 1984, McNally 1997).

- (9) a. There weren't two people drunk. Neg > 2, *2>Neg
 b. John and Mary aren't two students I know. Neg > 2, *2>Neg

The same holds for relativisation, where it is not possible (for most speakers) to relativise a predicate nominal with a *wh*-relative pronoun, (cf. McNally 1997).

- (10) They dressed like the eccentric women * who / that / Ø they were.

The existential *there*-construction reveals the same pattern.

- (11) a. The people * who / that / Ø there were at the party were drunk.

Finally, in both the predicative copular and the existential construction, strong quantifiers can only occur if they range over kinds, (cf. McNally 1997).

- (12) a. There was every kind of wine available for tasting.
 b. ??There was every worker ready.
- (13) a. John has been every kind of doctor.
 b. *John has been every doctor.

3.2. Differences

However, the predicative copular construction and the *there*-construction also differ in some respects. First of all, it has been established that 'which'-clauses can relativise predicates (cf. Rothstein 2001:257) as illustrated in (14-a). However, the postcopular DP of an existential construction cannot be relativised in this way, cf. (14-b):

- (14) a. John is a murderer, which is a horrible thing to be.
 b. *There's a murderer, which is a horrible thing to be.

Furthermore, predicative NPs generally cannot introduce a discourse referent that pronominals can pick up, cf. (15-a), however, it is possible to pick up the reference of the postcopular NP of an existential construction with a pronoun as shown in (15-b).

- (15) a. John is a fool_i. #He_i/ It_i is a spreading species.
 b. There is a professor_i in my office. He_i/#it_i arrived two hours ago.

For both these difference between the predicative copula construction and the existential construction, it seems to me that it is a reflex of the semantics of the existential construction. Taking McNally (1998) as essentially on the right track, the meaning of the existential construction is the instantiation of some property (at some location). Thus, the existential function picks one (or more) individual(s) from the predicative NP/DP. This individual becomes salient, so that relative clauses with ‘which’ are not appropriate, but relative clauses with *who* are because they can refer to the individual that is instantiated via the predicate. The same kind of reasoning holds for the fact that a pronoun can be used to pick up the referent.

A further question is that if the postcopular position is a predicative position, why is it that only nominal predicates are possible (cf. Williams 1994)?

(16) *There’s cold.

There are two ways to proceed: on the one hand, Hazout (2004) proposed that this is basically due to ϕ -feature agreement. The assumption is that *there* is unvalued for ϕ -features and probes for them. A nominal can transfer its interpretable ϕ -features to the expletive *there*, *there* is satisfied and the structure is grammatical. Adjectives lack these features (at least the interpretable ones) and thus, they cannot value *there*’s ϕ -feature, the structure crashes. Instead *it*, the expletive specified for ϕ -features takes up the subject of predicate position and the structure is grammatical.

Alternatively, this fact can again be seen as an effect of the semantics of the construction. In one sense, it is easy to pick a ‘characteristic’ referent from the property ‘a man’, it is much more difficult to see how this works for adjectives.

Finally, there is a syntactic difference between garden variety predicative structures and the *there*-construction, observed by Moro (1997):

- (17) a. I consider Mary sick.
 b. *I consider there a man.
 c. I consider Mary to be sick.
 d. I consider there to be a man.

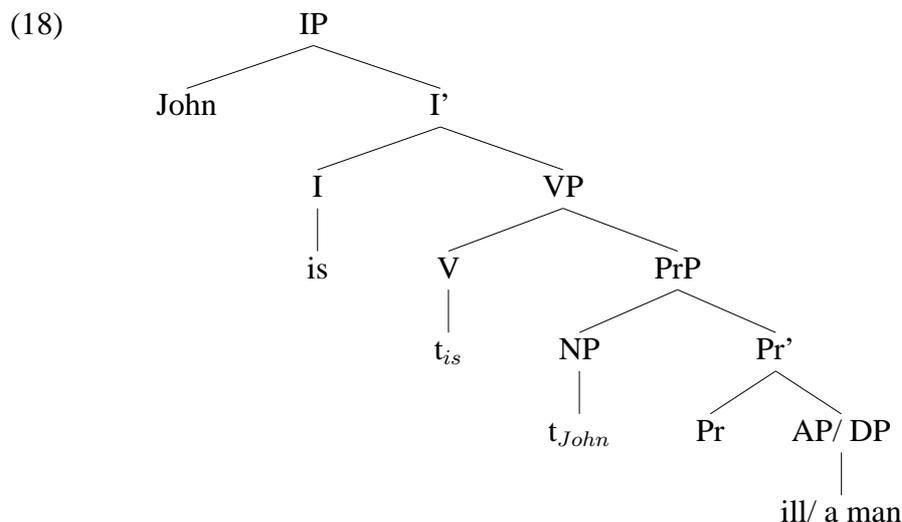
Again, I think that this effect is rather due to the semantics of the structure than to some syntactic effect: the reading of the instantiation of the property of the postcopular DP needs the input of ‘be’ in the sense that ‘be’ provides the ‘eventive’ nature of this instantiation, either by its meaning (cf. the approach by Rothstein 2001) or by introducing a VP structure that is linked to some eventive type. A detailed analysis of this effect, however, is still a topic for future research.

3.3. An analysis

For the predicative copula construction, the dominant view is that there is a local relationship between the subject of predication and the predicate (a notable exception is the work by Williams 1994). Locality of predication means in this type of analyses that the subject of predication and the predicate phrase are either sisters (cf. among others Rothstein 1995; 2001, Moro 1997;

2005) or in a specifier - complement relationship with a predicative head as mediator (cf. among others Bowers 1993; 2001, Adger & Ramchand 2003, den Dikken 2006). Due to lack of space, I will not go into detail with some disputed issues here, but assume that in these structures, the subject and predicate originate in a PredP (a small clause) that the copula 'be' (that is rather a functional element) selects for.⁴

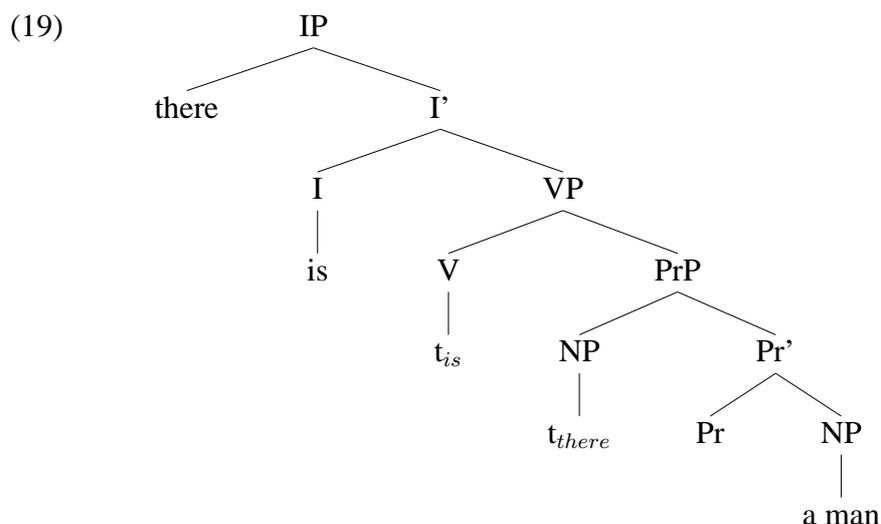
The structure is given in (18).



Having a parallel structure for the existential construction, I essentially follow Hazout (2004) in his small clause structure:⁵

⁴Of course there is still plenty disagreement on (i) whether there is a head relating the predicate and subject (contra Moro 1997; 2000), and (ii) if yes, what type of head it is: a functional head (Pred) or a V or the copula 'be' (iii) whether predication is directional (den Dikken 2006) or (iv) if there is even more structure (up to CP in Starke 1995 and Čitko 2005).

⁵Hazout (2004) bases his analysis on the findings of Williams (1994) that the postcopular nominal is a prediative nominal. Note however, Williams did not suggest a small clause analysis as for him predication is not local, and he argued extensively against small clauses in general.



Thus, we arrive at a parallel analysis of predicative copula constructions and the existential construction reflecting the parallel behaviour as observed above. So, let us turn our attention to the specificational structures and the list reading.

4. The list reading: An instance of the specificational copula construction

4.1. The list reading as a specificational copula construction

Higgins (1973) pointed out with respect to pseudocleft constructions that specification opens a list of which the postcopular DP is a (unique) member. The same kind of list readings seems to occur with simpler specificational structures as the following:

(20) Angie's friends are Peter, Paul and Catherine (among others).

The same meaning occurs with proper names in the *there*-construction (cf. also Safir 1985). The list is opened in the context, and the post-copular DPs are members of this list. This suggests that the list reading and specificational copula clauses are of one type.

(21) A: Whom shall we invite to our party?
 B: Well, there's John, Mary and David.

Furthermore, the two types of predication occurring in *there*-sentences are not possible to be coordinated. The same occurs with simple predicative copula structures and specificational copula constructions:

(22) a. #There is a god and John.
 b. #Gabi's husband is Peter but not a lucky person.

A third, though more complicated argument comes from the information structural properties

of specificational clauses. It has been observed that they can only occur when the precopular DP is old information (cf. Heycock 1994, Mikkelsen 2005).

- (23) A: What is John?
 B': John is the winner.
 B'': #THE WINNER is John.
 (cf. Mikkelsen 2005:example 9.33)

This is in contrast to regular subjects: they can be in the subject position when they are new information:

- (24) A: Who was the culprit? (John or Bill?)
 B': JOHN was the culprit.
 B'': The culprit was JOHN.

If these data are the correct generalization, we expect specificational copula constructions not to occur as out of the blue sentences. This is what certainly holds for the list reading: there has to be a salient list in the context in order for the specificational structures to occur.

Finally, let us look at an interesting difference between the list reading and specificational copula constructions. It has been reported that the list reading can be hardly negated or questioned (cf. Ross 1975, Keenan 2003).

- (25) a. *There isn't the bus.
 b. *Is there the bus?

This, however does not seem to hold for the garden variety of specificational clauses.

- (26) a. The culprit isn't John.
 b. Is the culprit John?

Yet, there are two reasons why this difference has to be taken with a grain of salt. In a related construction, the specificational pseudocleft construction, Higgins (1973:321) pointed out that this type of negation seems to be not clausal negation but rather 'contradiction' negation in Higgins words, or constituent negation in more recent terms. Secondly, there is a subtype of the specificational pseudoclefts as in (27) that seems to pattern the same (this type seems to be type A in den Dikken et al. 2000).⁶

- (27) a. *What she did wasn't go home.
 b. *Was what she did go home?

⁶Thanks to Caroline Heycock (p.c.) for bringing these facts to my attention. She also pointed out to me that the structures improve with a DP instead of the VP. She suggested that the reason is that they are ambiguous between a specificational and predicational pseudocleft analysis:

- (i) a. What she did wasn't the main problem.
 b. Was what she did the main problem?

(28) *What John is isn't angry with himself. (den Dikken et al. 2000:66)

Taking the last set of data with a wrinkle, I take the data presented above to suggest that the list reading is indeed an instance of a specificational copula construction. Thus, whatever analysis holds for the specificational structure, should also be appropriate for the predicational structure. However, what the appropriate analysis of these sentences is, is not so clear, as will be seen in the following section.⁷

4.2. *Specificational copula constructions*

In the literature, there are two streams of research on specificational copula constructions. One line pursues an analysis in which the specificational clauses are related to predicational clauses by predicate movement (cf. among others Heggie 1988, Moro 1997, Mikkelsen 2005). Thus, examples like those in (29) have been analysed as originating from the same predicative small clause. The difference between the two is that in (29-a) the subject of predication moved to the Spec,IP position whereas it is the predicate in (29-b).

- (29) a. [John and Paul]_i are [_{SC} t_i my best friends].
 b. [My best friends]_j are [_{SC} John and Paul t_j]

An alternative line of research argues that the specificational clauses are in fact structures like equatives (cf. among others Heycock & Kroch 1999, Rothstein 2001): a relation is established between two referential DPs, just as with the equative sentences. Thus, the two lines of research differ in whether the precopular DP is a predicate (the predicate inversion analysis) or a referential DP. Both positions are supported by several convincing arguments. On the one hand, the precopular phrase seems to be referential as the following data show:⁸

1. Relative clauses: A definite DP in subject position cannot be modified by a 'which'-clause as predicates usually can Rothstein (cf. 2001:257)

(30) They think John mean/ a murderer which is a horrible thing to be.

- (31) a. *The murderer, which is a horrible thing to be, is John.
 b. The (alleged) murderer, who was acquitted yesterday, is John.

2. Pronoun: the DP in Spec,IP can be referred to by a pronoun Rothstein (cf. 2001:257)

⁷It might as well turn out that regular specificational copular construction are of two types, just as much as it has been suggested for specificational pseudoclefts. I do not want to exclude this possibility here.

⁸This is only a selection of arguments for both of the approaches. Some of them seem rather convincing to me, yet, they are pretty contradictory. One argument in favour of the predicate inversion approach recurring in the literature that I do not present here, is Moro's data from *wh*-extraction. He argues that the predicative structure (his canonical structure) allows *wh*-extraction of both the pre- and postcopular DP whereas the specificational structure (his inverse structure) allows neither. The same holds for the extraction from within the pre- and postcopular DPs. However, the data is rather difficult to judge as extraction of definite DPs is restricted by various factors, and it is not clear to what extent these factors intervene with Moro's examples (cf. Rothstein 2001:260f).

- (32) Now I realize that the murderer was John. He was wearing size 12 shoes and only John has feet that size.

3. The specificational structure does not pattern with other predicate inversion constructions Rothstein (cf. 2001:256):

- (33) a. The leader is Mary
 b. The leader seems to be Mary.
 c. It is the leader who/ *that is Mary.
 d. I consider the leader to be Mary.

- (34) a. A teacher/ very clever is Mary.
 b. *A teacher/ Very clever seems to be Mary.
 c. *It is very clever/ a teacher that/who is Mary.
 d. *I consider a teacher/ very clever to be Mary.

4. An indefinite in pre-copular DP seems to behave like a subject of individual-level predicates. This fact would be mysterious, if these DPs were predicates (cf. Heycock 2006).

- (35) a. ??An explanation was plausible, so we pursued that line of inquiry.
 b. ONE explanation was plausible, so we pursued that line of inquiry.
 c. An ALTERNATIVE explanation was plausible, so we pursued that line of inquiry.

- (36) a. ??*An explanation was that they didn't want to spend the money.
 b. ONE explanation was that they didn't want to spend the money.
 c. An ALTERNATIVE explanation was that they didn't want to spend the money.

On the other hand, there are also good arguments for the precopular phrase being analysed as a predicative DP:⁹

⁹Note that the arguments only hold if one accepts Mikkelsen's arguments for considering *it* a pronominal for predicates. She gives the following data:

- (i) a. He is a fool although he doesn't look it/*him.
 b. LBJ is the president of the United States. He has been it/ *him since 1963 (cf. Mikkelsen 2005:65)
- (ii) a. John is [considerate]. It/ That is a rare thing to be.
 b. John [talks quietly]. It/ That is a good thing to do.
 c. John is [president of the club]. It/ That is a prestigious position.

However, as Anthony Kroch (p.c.) pointed out, there are also counterexamples:

- (iii) *I consider John it.

1. Tag questions: ‘it’ refers back to predicative phrases (cf. Mikkelsen 2005:72)

- (37) a. The tallest girl in the class is Swedish, isn’t she?
 b. The tallest girl in the class is Molly, isn’t it?

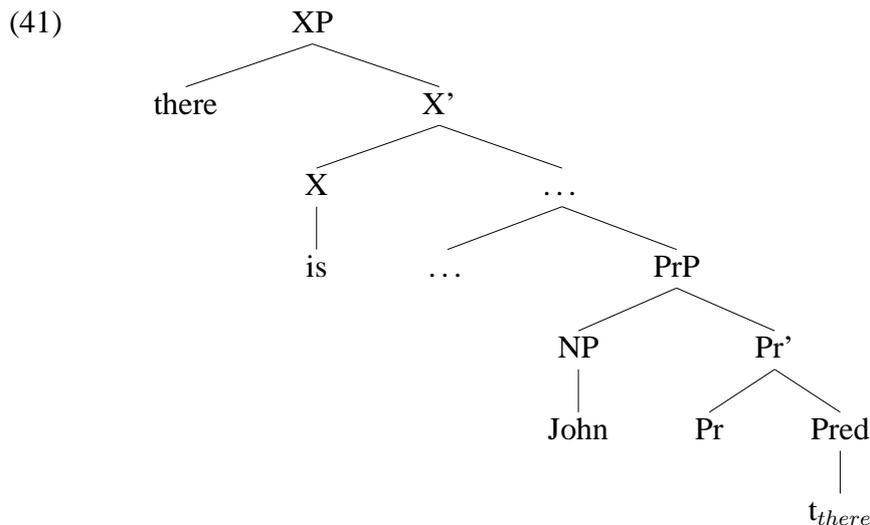
2. Left dislocation: ‘it’/ ‘that’ refers back to predicative phrases (cf. Mikkelsen 2005:75)

- (38) a. (As for) the tallest girl in class, she is Swedish.
 b. (As for) the tallest girl in class, {it/ that} is Molly.
 c. *(As for) the tallest girl in class, {it/ that} is Swedish.

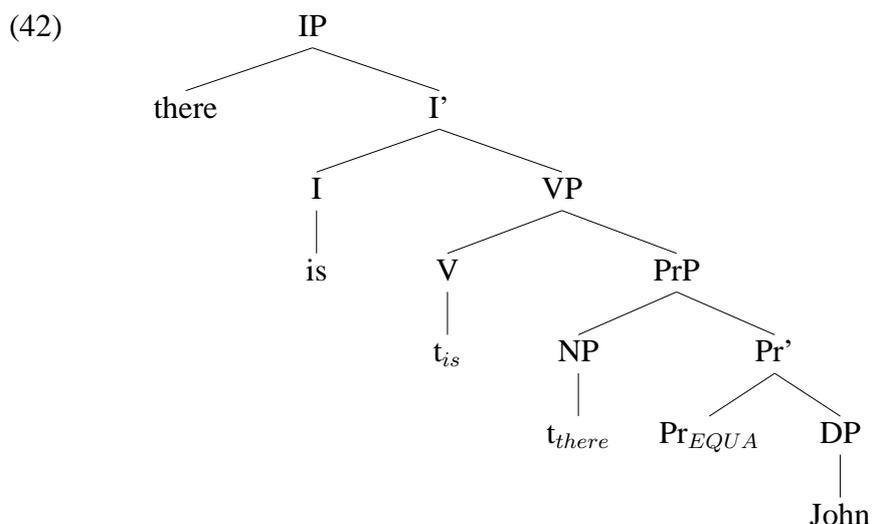
3. Question/ Answer pairs (cf. Mikkelsen 2005:76)

- (39) Q: What nationality is the tallest girl in the class?
 A: {She/ *it/ *that} is Swedish.
- (40) Q: Who is the tallest girl in the class?
 A: {That/ it} is Molly.

Looking at the data given above, it is hard to decide which of the approaches to specificational structures is on the right track. The important point of the paper is, that whichever structure is correct, the list reading should find an analysis among the specificational structures. From the discussion so far, we have two options: either we interpret *there* as being an inverted predicate as seen in (41) or we deal with a type of identity construction as seen in (42). For simplicity’s sake, I assume an analysis of the identity construction along the lines of Heycock (1994), Heycock & Kroch (1997) who propose that the difference between identity and predicative copular structures lies in the small clause head.¹⁰



¹⁰This type of analysis circumvents postulating two types of ‘be’ for English, but the difference resides in the small clause head.



In (41), I left open what type of XP *there* moves to because it is not easy to decide whether this is simply Spec,IP or some topic position. Possibly, it is a topic position, given that in specificational structures the precopular DP has to be old information in some sense. On the other hand, taking this step would probably assimilate specificational structures to clear cases of predicate inversion structures, but as Rothstein pointed out, they behave differently under raising, clefting and embedding under *consider* (Rothstein 2001:256).

For the time being, I will leave the question what the correct analysis of specificational structures to further research, and in doing this, I remain undecided as to the structure of list readings as well.¹¹

5. Conclusion

Pulling together various strings of research both in the field of the *there*-construction as well as in the field of the copula construction, I argued in this paper that it makes sense to look at the English *there*-construction as a copula construction. It has been shown that a parallel analysis of the predicative type of the copula construction and the existential *there*-construction is possible and explains some features of the post-copular DP. Furthermore, I presented arguments for a parallel analysis of the list reading and specificational copula construction. As the disputes about a correct analysis of specificational structures is not settled in the research on copula structures, I left it open which of the dominant two analyses of specificational structures holds for the list reading. Whichever analysis will in the end turn out to be correct, should be taken over for the list reading structure as well.

¹¹It might as well turn out that specificational copular construction are of two types, just as much as it has been suggested for specificational pseudoclefts (see den Dikken et al. 2000 and Heycock & Kroch 2002). If this is true, of course the most pending question would be in which category the list reading would belong. If the cut is along the lines suggested by den Dikken et al. (2000) the negation data would suggest that the list reading belongs to the Type A structures, which have been analysed as question-answer structures (accompanied by ellipsis) (the approach by den Dikken et al. 2000) or as Topic - Focus structures at LF (cf. Heycock & Kroch 2002).

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