Separating Finiteness from Tense in copular sentences
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Copular sentences expose the most basic functions of clausal architecture, because they disentangle the lexical verbal domain from the functional domains. This paper proposes that in an under-studied copular sentence type in colloquial English, the "amalgam" pseudocleft, the Tense/agreement domain is severed from the Force/Finiteness domain—in fact, the Tense domain is not present at all. A semantic experiment contrasting the amalgam pseudocleft (1) and the canonical pseudocleft (2) shows that the copula is inserted in T in the latter, but directly in Fin in the former.

(1)   What you need is [$_{SUBJ}$ you need a vacation].   *amalgam pseudocleft*

(2)   What you need is [$_{SUBJ}$ a vacation].   *canonical pseudocleft*

A clause is fully finite if it is independently anchored to the utterance context (c) and has independent illocutionary force. Anchoring is often assumed to be temporal. Time is not the only anchor, however, since c makes available a set of indexical elements (c: <author, hearer, time, world, location>) ([1]; [3]). While the copula in both types of pseudocleft simply supports the morphological correlates of finiteness ([T, φ]), the two sentence types are anchored to the utterance context by different means: canonical pseudoclefts are anchored by temporal displacement, and amalgam pseudoclefts are anchored by speaker-oriented deixis.

A semantic acceptability task confirmed a difference in the tense interpretations associated with the copula in the two environments. The experiment used a 2x2 Latin square design crossing sentence type with a contrastive stress condition (see Table 1). Because specificational sentences feature a dependency between the tense form of the copula and the tense form of the lexical verb in the *wh*-clause, the tense properties of the copula are notoriously difficult to isolate ([4]). In past-under-past embedded contexts, however, a tensed copula behaves like any other tensed stative: it alternates between a default simultaneous (sequence-of-tenses) interpretation and a marked past-shifted interpretation. The experiment used contrastive stress on the copula, symbolized by capital letters, to coax out the temporal function of the copula. Because the copula is not lexical, contrastive stress focuses the two functional components of finiteness, anchoring and force. The force component projects verum focus alternatives, and the anchoring component—if temporal—projects tense alternatives. The experiment confirmed that the canonical pseudocleft's copula projects both temporal and verum focus alternatives, while the amalgam copula projects only verum focus alternatives.

The experiment consisted of a web-based judgment task completed by 30 participants. Each of the 4 versions of the survey included 16 experimental items and 32 filler items used as controls. Each experimental item consisted of a pair of sentences. The first was a pseudocleft from one of the 4 conditions described above, e.g., *Last year, I said that what he drank WAS coffee*. The second expressed an inference compatible with the past-shifted interpretation but incompatible with the simultaneous (pure verum focus) interpretation, e.g., *He gave up caffeine last month*. Participants were instructed to consider the second sentence in the context of the first one, and to rate their level of surprise at the second sentence on a 7-point Likert scale. An acceptability judgment sub-task checked that participants found simple amalgam pseudoclefts acceptable relative to a baseline.

Normalized results (Figure 1) were analyzed using a linear mixed effects model, which

found a significant interaction between sentence type and stress (p<0.05). Surprise ratings are high for the unstressed copula condition, because it is costly to override the default simultaneous reading. The stressed copula in the canonical pseudocleft projects temporal focus alternatives in addition to verum focus alternatives, so speakers can more easily access the past-shifted reading, reflected in the lower surprise ratings. By contrast, stressed copula in the amalgam pseudocleft condition is atemporal, so it projects only verum focus alternatives.

There is syntactic evidence that the copula in amalgams is introduced in a higher structural domain than its temporally anchored counterpart: the copula in amalgams cannot combine with functional material from the Tense and Aspect domains (e.g., negation, deontic modals, temporal markers). It can, however, combine with epistemic modals, evidential modifiers, and logophoric experiencer datives, which are merged in the Force/Finiteness domain. The finite copula thus anchors the amalgam pseudocleft directly to the speaker's coordinates in the left periphery of the clause ([2]); it does not associate with Tense.

This study provides novel empirical evidence that anchoring to the utterance context in a finite declarative clause can be non-temporal, even in English. It also shows how copular sentences can be used to tease apart the functions of the clause's different structural domains.

	Unstressed *was*	Stressed *WAS*
Canonical	What he liked was coffee	What he liked WAS coffee
Amalgam	What he liked was he liked coffee	What he liked WAS he liked coffee

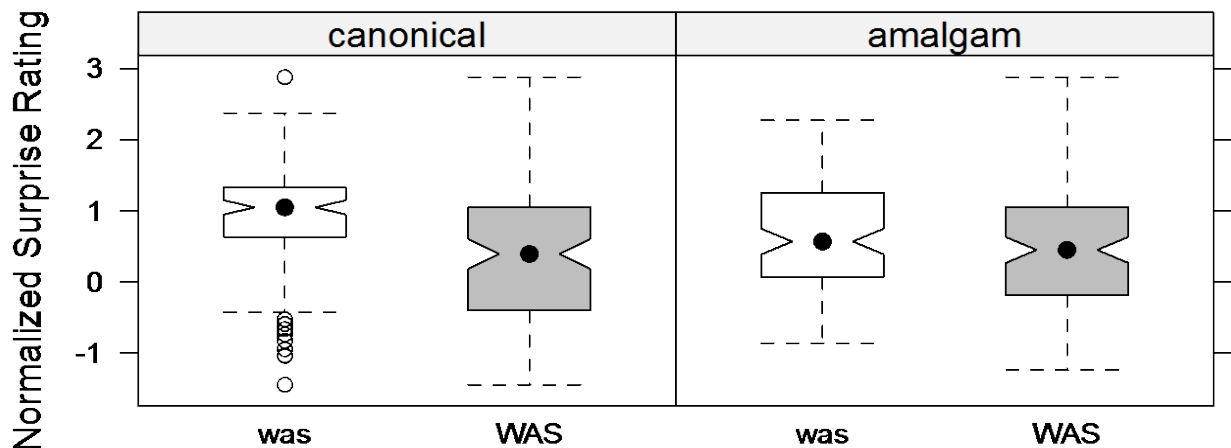Table 1: Factor design for past-shifting experiment

Figure 1: Surprise rating for past-shifted reading by sentence type and copular stress

References
[1] Bianchi, Valentina. 2003. On finiteness as logophoric anchoring. In *Tense and point of view*; [2] Giorgi, Alessandra. 2010. *About the speaker: Towards a syntax of indexicality*. OUP; [3] Schlenker, Philippe. 1999. *Propositional attitudes and indexicality*. MIT Diss. [4] Sharvit, Yael. 2003. Tense and identity in copular constructions. *Natural Language Semantics*.