

About the copula of certain Caribbean Spanish focus constructions
Luis Sáez, Universidad Complutense de Madrid. luisaez@gmail.com

1.The facts (and previous approaches). Sentences like (1) illustrate a well-known sort of focus construction attested in Caribbean Spanish (FCCS; [7]). One of the questions raised by FCCSs is what the nature is of their inflected copula (*fue*) as they simultaneously exhibit a second inflected verb (*compró*). Since (1) seems to only differ from the pseudo-cleft in (2) in lacking the relative pronoun *lo que* ‘what’, [8] claims (1) and (2) are the same construction, with (1) exhibiting a null operator instead of *lo que* as well as a regular pseudo-cleft copula:

(1) Juan compró fue un libro
 Juan bought.3.sg was a book. ‘It was a book that Juan bought.’

(2) **Lo que** Juan compró fue un libro.
 that that Juan bought.3.sg. was a book ‘What Juan bought was a book.’

[1] agrees that the tense features of *fue* in (1)/(2) are non-deictic (its replacement by present *es* has no semantic effect), yet he finds several problems in [8]; f.i., [8] wrongly predicts that, since (3a) is possible, (3b) should be too (relative operators license superlative *más*). [1] proposes the structure (3c) for (1), where *fue* is a focus-marker heading a VP-internal FocP:

(3) a. **Lo que** más desea Juan es un libro.
 that that the most wishes Juan is a book ‘What Juan wishes the most is a book.’

b. * Más desea Juan es un libro.

c. Juan [_{SV} compró [[_{FocP} [_{Foc'} [_{Foc°} fue] [_{DP} un libro]]]]]

As [2] observes, though, the structure (3c), being mono-clausal, wrongly allows the derivation of (4) once the interrogative *qué* ‘what’ replaces the DP *un libro* in theta-position and raises to Comp. In order to block (4), [2] proposes a bi-clausal structure for (1) ((5)). Here, *fue* heads an equative copular clause (IP_{COP}) and “has the same minimal structural and argumental properties as other copular verbs”, here selecting a predicate *un libro* (the focused DP) and a null subject (*e*₂, coindexed with a null argument *e*₁ satisfying the selectional requirements of *compró*). Since IP_{COP} is base-generated as an adjunct of the main VP headed by *compró*, the ungrammaticality of (4) can be now understood as a regular Subjacency violation:

(4) *¿**Qué** *i* Juan compró fue *t*_i? ‘What was it that Juan bought?’

(5) [_{IP} Juan [_r [_r [_{v°} compró]_i] [_{VP} *t*_i *e*_{1j}] [_{IP_{COP}} *e*_{2j} [_r [_r fue] [_{DP} un libro]]]]]]]

However, as observed by [2] himself, (5) wrongly predicts a presentational focus for *un libro* (a ‘peak aligned’ focus, i.e., subject to [10]’s *Focus-Prosody Correspondence Principle*) rather than the exhaustive focus actually attested in (1) and characteristic of clefts. Moreover, there is no left-periphery in (5) linking the adjunct with the main clause, which looks rather odd for Spanish. In order to avoid the problems in [1]/[2] while preserving their fine predictions, I propose FCCSs are Horn-amalgams exhibiting a cleft as one of its components.

2.Proposal: The copula of FCCSs is a cleft copula. I adopt [3]’s/[4]’s approach to Horn-amalgams. They claim a Horn-amalgam like (6a) combines (6b) (the ‘host clause’ –HC–, with *e* representing a variable akin to *somewhere*) and (6c) (the ‘interrupting clause’ –IC–, containing a cleft whose relative clause –CRC– in bold type is sluiced in (6a)). (6b) and (6c) are combined by an operation *Par(enthetical)*-Merge ([9]) merging *Par°* and IC and then *Par'* and the Spec *e*; finally, *ParP* *par*-merges to the spine of HC, creating the structure in (7) (sluicing of CP₁ is licensed by *e*-givenness as CP₁ and CP₂ mutually entail one another; [5]).

(6) a. John is going to I think it is CHICAGO. b. John is going to *e*.

c. I think it is CHICAGO_i **that John is going to *t*_i**.

(7) [_{CP2=HC} John is going to [_{ParP} [_{DP} *e*] <[_{Par'} *Par°* [_{CP=IC} I think [_{CP} it’s [_{CP} [_{DP} CHICAGO]_i

[_{CP1} that John is going to *t*_i]]]]]>].

As said, I propose FCCSs are Horn-amalgams too. I claim HC in (1) is (8a), whose *e* is the very same *e*₁ in (5) proposed by [2], and IC is the cleft in (8b). The resulting structure is (8c),

where e_i , via *par*-Merge, occupies the Spec-ParP, and IC is the complement of Par°; CRC in IC (in bold type) undergoes sluicing (licensed by e-givenness: CP1 and CP2 mutually entail one another), and *un libro_i* is co-indexed with its correlate e_i in HC:

(8) a. Juan compró *e*. b. Fue un libro **lo que Juan compró**.

c. [_{CP2=HC} J. compró [_{ParP} [_{DP} e_i] < [_{Par'} Par° [_{CP=IC} fue [_{DP} un libro]_i [_{CP1} **lo que J. compró**]]]]>]]

Notice that the null element e_2 required in (5) is unnecessary in (8c), and the exhaustive focus of *un libro* in (1) is predicted as it is a clefted DP (which also explains that it must be the only constituent after the copula –the ‘single-constituent restriction’ in [2], problematic for [1]: *Juan compró fue un libro* (**a Luis*) ‘What Juan bought to Luis was a book’). Further, since *un libro* is part of a parenthetical, the extraction in (4) is unavailable ([4]:310). Last, notice that HC lacks a relative operator, which explains the ungrammaticality of (3b) (and of many other facts, observed by [1], wrongly predicted as possible by the presence of such operator in [8]).

3. Further predictions. a) The copular verb of FCCSs cannot introduce preverbal subjects ((9a)). This is a well-known restriction holding on Horn-amalgams ((9b)). When the subject is post-verbal, both constructions are available ((9c,d)).

(9) a. *Fue Juan compró papas. ([2])

was.3.sg. Juan bought.3.sg. potatoes ‘It is Juan that bought potatoes.’

b. *I think it’s Brussels is the capital of Belgium. ([4])

c. Compró papas fue Juan ([2]) d. Down the hill rolled I think it was a baby carriage. ([4])

b) [1] reports FCCS-copulas cannot be negated (compare (10b) with the constituent negation in (10a)); the same restriction holds for the copula of ‘English amalgam pseudo-clefts’ ((11); [6]), which suggests that an amalgam-related account for FCCSs is on the right track:

(10) a. Quiero es **no** trabajar.

I.want is not work

‘What I want is to not work.’

b. *Quiero **no** es trabajar.

I.want not is work

‘What I want isn’t to work.’

(11) He wants some coffee is (*not) what he wants.

c) The copula introduces a DP-internal NP in (12) (a problem for [1]/[8]; [2]), predicted by obligatory CRC-sluicing licensed by e-givenness (*Fue parálisis lo que tuvo* is grammatical):

(12) él tuvo una fue parálisis (***lo que tuvo**)

he had.3.sg. a was.3.sg. paralysis that had.3.sg. ‘It was a paralysis that he had.’

For the general question why sluicing is obligatory in amalgams (asterisk in (12)), see [3]/[4].

d) As [2] points out, [1]/[8] cannot explain FCCSs like (13), since *eso*, interpreted as the object of *compró*, is inside an island (thus, structurally distant from *compró*). Notice that the string *me sorprende el hecho de que fuera* in (13) resembles the string *I think it is* in the IC of (6a) as both ‘interrupt’ the expected adjacency between *compró/to* and *eso/Chicago*; thus, a common, amalgam-related approach to (6a) and (13) seems to be desirable.

(13) Juan compró me sorprende el hecho de que fuera eso

Juan bought me surprises the fact of that was that

‘Juan bought I am surprised about the fact that it was that.’

4. References. [1] Bosque, I. 1999. Sobre la estructura sintáctica de una construcción focalizadora. *Homenaje Ambrosio Rabanales*. U. Chile. Santiago. [2] Camacho, J. 2006. In situ focus in Caribbean Spanish: Towards a unified account of focus. *9th Hispanic Linguistics Symposium*. Cascadilla Project. [3] Griffiths, J. 2015. Parenthetical verb constructions, fragment answers and constituent modification. *NLLT* 33. [4] Kluck, M. 2011. *Sentence amalgamation*. Diss. U. Groningen [5] Merchant, J. 2001. *The syntax of silence*. OUP. [6] O’Neill, T. 2015. The structure of English amalgam pseudoclefts. ms. CUNY. [7] Sedano, M. 1990. Hendidias y otras construcciones con *ser* en el habla de Caracas. *Cuadernos del Instituto de Filología “Andrés Bello”*. U. Central de Caracas. [8] Toribio, J. A. 1992. Proper government in Spanish subject relativization. *Probus* 4. [9] de Vries, M. 2007. Invisible

constituents? Parentheses as B-merged adverbial phrases. *Parentheticals*. John Benjamins. [9]
Zubizarreta, M. L. 1998. *Prosody, focus and word order*, Cambridge, MIT Press.