

Specificational *kes*-Clefts as Focus-Background Structures

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5/24/2025(토), 대구가톨릭대학교

차례

- 1 Introduction
- 2 Data and Issues
 - 2.1 The *kes*-Phrase: a CP or an NP?
 - 2.2 Do Specificationals Merely Represent **GIVEN-NEW** Articulation?
 - 2.3 The Multiple Clefts and the so-called Amalgam Clefts?
- 3 Specificationals as Focus-Background Structures
 - 3.1 Questions and Alternatives
 - 3.2 Focus-Background Structure and the Partitioning of Sentence Meaning
 - 3.3 Evidence for XP_1 as CP and Subjecthood of XP_2
 - 3.4 Evidence for XP_2 = Focus
 - 3.5 Evidence for XP_1 = Background = CP
- 4 Conclusion

Introduction [1/3]

- ✓ Higgins (1973) classifies copular clauses into three types: equative, predicational, and specificational.

- (1) a. [Mark Twain] is [Samuel Clemens]. (equative)
b. [John] is [a teacher] (by profession). (predicational)
c. [The murderer] is [John]. (specificational)
- Predicational clauses, along with non-copular clauses, convey information **about the referent of the subject**.
 - In contrast, a specificational clause does not describe the subject referent, but rather **identifies who or what that referent is** (cf. Mikkelsen (2005)).

Introduction [2/3]

✓ In Korean, *kes*-headed phrases can be linked by a copula:

(2) Equatives

- a. [Mark Twain]은 [Samuel Clemens]이다. $\lambda x_{\langle e \rangle} \lambda y_{\langle e \rangle} [x = y]$
- b. [이 책]은 [영희가 쓰던 것]이다. $(XP_1 \text{은 } XP_2 \text{이다.})$
- c. [철수가 산 것]은 [이 책]이다. $(XP_1 \text{은 } XP_2 \text{이다.})$
- d. [철수가 산 것]은 [영희가 쓰던 것]이다. $(XP_1 \text{은 } XP_2 \text{이다.})$

(3) Predicationals

- a. [철수]는 [선생님]이다. $\lambda x_{\langle e \rangle} \lambda P_{\langle e, t \rangle} [P(x)]$
- b. *[이 여자]는 [철수가 만난 것]이다. $(NP_{\langle e \rangle} \text{는 } NP_{\langle e, t \rangle} \text{이다.})$

(4) Specificationals

- a. [살인범]은 [철수]이다. $(NP_{\langle e, t \rangle} \text{는 } NP_{\langle e \rangle} \text{이다.})$
- b. [철수가 만난 것]은 [이 여자]이다. ???

Introduction [3/3]

- ✓ This paper investigates specificational *kes*-cleft sentences, such as (4)b, and argues
- 1 that the most important key feature of specificationals is not encoding given-new configurational articulation, but rather a focus-background structure (FBS), inducing alternatives,
 - 2 that specificational constructions constitute a distinct syntactic structure in Korean that encodes a focus-background structure (FBS), setting them apart from predicational constructions, and
 - 3 that *kes*-headed phrase in the specificationals is a sentence, thus *kes* is C.

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1 Introduction

2 Data and Issues

- 2.1 The *kes*-Phrase: a CP or an NP?
- 2.2 Do Specificationals Merely Represent **GIVEN-NEW** Articulation?
- 2.3 The Multiple Clefts and the so-called Amalgam Clefts?

3 Specificationals as Focus-Background Structures

- 3.1 Questions and Alternatives
- 3.2 Focus-Background Structure and the Partitioning of Sentence Meaning
- 3.3 Evidence for XP_1 as CP and Subjecthood of XP_2
- 3.4 Evidence for XP_2 = Focus
- 3.5 Evidence for XP_1 = Background = CP

4 Conclusion

2.1 The *kes*-Phrase: a CP or an NP? [1/5]

- ✓ To account for the contrast between (5)a and (5)b, two competing analyses have been proposed.
- Kang (2006, p.262) propose that the *kes*-headed phrase should be analyzed as a CP in (5)b, and as an NP in (5)a.
 - By contrast, Kim & Sells (2007, 2013) argue that the *kes*-headed phrase in both (5) and (8) should be analyzed as an NP.
- (5) a. *[이 여자]는 [NP 철수가 만난 것]이다. (= (3)b, predicationa)
b. [NP?/CP? 철수가 만난 것]은 [이 여자]이다. (= (4)b, specificational)

2.1 The *kes*-Phrase: a CP or an NP? [2/5]

- ✓ CP vs. NP \leftrightarrow “a true noun used referentially” vs. “looks like a pure nominalizer of a property.”


- (5) a. *[이 여자]는 [NP 철수가 만난 것]이다. (= (3)b)
b. [NP?/CP? 철수가 만난 것]은 [이 여자]이다. (= (4)b)

- According to Kang (2006), (5)a is ungrammatical because *kes* is an N with the feature [−ANIMATE], which is incompatible with an animate subject. This [−ANIMATE] feature does not apply to the *kes*-headed CP in (5)b.
- In contrast, Kim & Sells (2007, p.482) describe *kes* in (5)a as “a true noun, used referentially,” whereas *kes* in (5)b “looks like a pure nominalizer of a property.”

2.1 The *kes*-Phrase: a CP or an NP? [3/5]

- ✓ Predicationals: $XP_1 = \text{topic} \ \& \ XP_2 = \text{comment} \Rightarrow \lambda P \lambda x [P(x)]$
- The *kes*-phrase in XP_2 in the predicationals is an NP of type $\langle e, t \rangle \approx$ common noun.
 - The *kes*-phrase denotes a property attributed to an entity. In terms of type theory, it is of type $\langle e, t \rangle$.
 - The set of hon-human entities that Chelswu met:
 $\lambda x [met(x)(Chelswu)]$

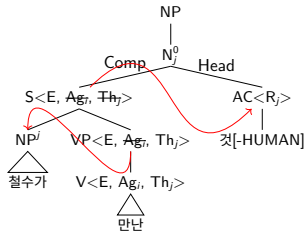
2.1 The *kes*-Phrase: a CP or an NP? [4/5]

-  Against “a true noun used referentially” & [−ANIMATE] feature
- The pre-copular *kes*-phrase is always referential (Jhang (1994)).
 - *kes* is an anti-clitic, functioning as a derivational suffix, occurring independently (Ryu (2023))
 - Syntactic derivation! (cf. Di Sciullo & Williams (1987))
- (6) [NP [D 내] [N 것]]?

a. 이 여자는 내 것이다.

b. 이 강아지는 철수네 것이다.

(7) *[이 여자]는 [철수가 만난 것]이다.
(= (3)b)



2.1 The *kes*-Phrase: a CP or an NP? [5/5]

- ✓ Specificationals: XP_1 = background & XP_2 = focus
- We argue, in line with Kang (2006), that the *kes*-headed phrase should be analyzed as a CP in (5)b and as an NP in (5)a—but our analysis is motivated by considerations of information structure.
 - In focus-background structures, the background is **the part of the sentence** that provides context or presupposed knowledge.
 - Thus, XP_1 is a CP.

2.2 GIVEN-NEW? Alternatives? Or Both? [1/2]

- ✓ In the specificational or updating interpretation,
 - the subject provides given information, while the pre-copular expression introduces new information (Kim & Sells (2013, p.133f.)).
 - One question that arises at this point is why the example in (8)a is ungrammatical, even though the pre-copular expression contributes new information.
 - It's a syntactic matter!
 - Specificationals represent both the GIVEN-NEW articulation and focus (i.e., alternatives) from an information theoretical perspective!

- (8) a. *[철수가 이 책을 산 것]은 [이 서점]이다.
b. [철수가 이 책을 산 것]은 [이 서점에서]이다.

2.2 GIVEN-NEW? Alternatives? Or Both? [2/2]

- ✓ XP₂ signals the presence of **alternatives**
 - While we agree that specificational constructions exhibit a given–new configurational articulation,
 - We argue that the *kes*-headed phrase functions as a CP denoting a proposition, and
 - The pre-copular element serves as both **subject** and **focus**, signaling the presence of **alternatives** relevant to the interpretation of linguistic expressions (Rooth 1985).
- ✓ *kes* “looks like a pure nominalizer of a property”?
 - It is thus uncontroversial that the *kes*-headed phrase is clausal in nature, providing contextual or presupposed information.
 - Therefore, *kes* should not be analyzed as a pure nominalizer, but rather as a complementizer that selects a sentential complement.

2.3 The Multiple and the Amalgam Clefts [1/1]

- ✓ For multiple clefts such as (9)a and the so-called amalgam clefts as in (9)b, two competing analyses have been proposed:
- the syntactic ellipsis approach (Cho, Whitman & Yanagida (2008)) and
 - the descriptive update approach (Kim & Sells (2013)).

- (9) a. [철수가 그 책을 산 것]은 [[작년] [LA에서]] 이다.
b. [철수가 산 것]은 [[제네시스 G80을] [Johnson 딜러십에서]] 이다.

- ✓ We argue that the pre-copular elements express foci, evoking alternatives. There is no file card for descriptive update in XP_1 in (10).

- (10) [산 것]은 [[철수가] [그 책을] [작년] [LA에서]] 이다.

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- 2.1 The *kes*-Phrase: a CP or an NP?
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- 2.3 The Multiple Clefts and the so-called Amalgam Clefts?

3 Specificationals as Focus-Background Structures

- 3.1 Questions and Alternatives
- 3.2 Focus-Background Structure and the Partitioning of Sentence Meaning
- 3.3 Evidence for XP_1 as CP and Subjecthood of XP_2
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4 Conclusion

3.1 Questions and Alternatives [1/3]

✓ Focus

- induces **alternatives** that correspond to the Hamblin (1973) meaning of questions;
- in the theory of Rooth (1992), the alternative set is a superset of the question set (Krifka (2008, p.21f.));
- The focus is restricted to PERSON in (12), in which the *wh*-word *nwukwu* (who) enforces this restriction.

(11) Q: 철수가 [누구]_F 를 만났니?

- a. Presupposition (existential): Chelswu met someone. = $\exists xB(x)$
- b. Hamblin (1973) meaning: $\{\text{MEET}(x)(\text{CHELSWU}) \mid x \in \text{PERSON}\}$

3.1 Questions and Alternatives [2/3]

✓ The focus is not restricted to PERSON in (12).

(12) A: 철수가 [그 여자]_F 를 만났어.

- a. Background = Chelswu met $x = \mathbf{B}$
- b. Focus = this woman = \mathbf{F}
- c. Ordinary meaning of the answer: Chelswu met this woman = $\mathbf{B(F)}$
 $= \{\text{MEET}(\text{THIS_WOMAN})(\text{CHELSWU})\}$
- d. Focus-induced alternatives:
 $\{\text{MEET}(x)(\text{CHELSWU}) \mid x \in \text{ENTITY}\}$
 $= \{\text{MEET}(\text{THIS_WOMAN})(\text{CHELSWU}),$
 $\text{MEET}(\text{MARY})(\text{CHELSWU}), \dots\}$
- e. Presupposition (existential): Chelswu met someone = $\exists x \mathbf{B}(x)$
- f. Felicity conditions: The sentence is uttered felicitously if its presupposition matches with the presupposition of the question.

3.1 Questions and Alternatives [3/3]

- ✓ FBS refers to
 - how **sentences** are structured to highlight specific information (the focus) while providing contextual or background information.
 - The **focus** is the part of the sentence that conveys **new**, **important**, or **contrastive** information,
 - whereas the **background** provides context or presupposed knowledge.

3.2 FBS and the Partitioning of Sentence Meaning

- ✓ For the representation of FBS, we adopt the view proposed by Jacobs (1991), according to which FBS is a partitioning of formulas within the scope of certain operators, as exemplified in (13).

- (13) a. $[_{CP} [_{CP} [\text{철수가 만난}]\text{ 것}] \text{은} [_{\text{이 여자}}]_F \text{이다}].$ (= (4)b)
b. $\text{ASSERT}(\# \lambda X_{NP} [\text{CHELSWU} (\lambda x [X (\lambda y [\text{MEET}(y)(x)])])],$
 $\text{THIS_WOMAN}\#)$
c. $\text{ASSERT}(\# \lambda X_{NP} [\text{CHELSWU MEET } X],$
 $\text{THIS_WOMAN}\#)$

3.3 XP₁ = CP and Subject = XP₂

- ✓ The expressions in the XP₁ position of specificational copular sentences do not show honorification agreement. This lack of agreement supports the analysis that the XP₁ constituent is a CP and that the element in the XP₂ position functions as the grammatical subject.

(14) [CP 선생님께서 만난 것]은

- a. { 우리 어머님이**시**다. }
 { *우리 어머님이다. }
- b. { *내 친구이**시**다. }
 { 내 친구이다. }

3.4 Evidence for $XP_2 = \text{Focus}$

- ✓ Focus particles are words or phrases that mark or emphasize the focus, such as *only*, *even*, or *also*. In Korean, such focus-inducing particles appear exclusively in the XP_2 position of specificational copular sentences. This distributional restriction provides evidence that XP_2 is the designated focus position.

- (15) a. $[_{CP}$ 철수가 산 것]은 [그 책 뿐]_F 이다.
b. * $[_{CP}$ 철수가 산 것]은 [그 책 뿐]_F 이다.

- (15') a. * $[_{CP}$ 철수가 산 것]은 [그 책]_F 만이다. (specificational)
b. * $[_{CP}$ 철수가 산 것]은 [그 책]_F 도이다. (specificational)

- (15'') a. [그 책]_F 만 [철수가 산 것]이다. (predicational)
b. [그 책]_F 도 [철수가 산 것]이다. (predicational)

3.5 Evidence for $XP_1 = \text{Background} = \text{CP}$

- ✓ Given that certain expressions appear exclusively in the XP_1 position of specificational copular sentences and that these expressions are independently analyzed as CPs, we conclude that the expression in the XP_1 position of specificationals is a clause—and, by extension, that it is a CP.

- (16) a. [_{CP} 철수가 죽은 지]가/는 [벌써 3년]_F 이다.
b. *[벌써 3년]_F 은 [철수가 죽은 지]이다.

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- 2 Data and Issues
 - 2.1 The *kes*-Phrase: a CP or an NP?
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 - 2.3 The Multiple Clefts and the so-called Amalgam Clefts?
- 3 Specificationals as Focus-Background Structures
 - 3.1 Questions and Alternatives
 - 3.2 Focus-Background Structure and the Partitioning of Sentence Meaning
 - 3.3 Evidence for XP_1 as CP and Subjecthood of XP_2
 - 3.4 Evidence for $XP_2 = \text{Focus}$
 - 3.5 Evidence for $XP_1 = \text{Background} = \text{CP}$
- 4 Conclusion

4. Conclusion [1/3]

- ✓ Equatives \neq Predicationals \neq Specificationals
- ✓ Predicational: NP = topic & *kes*-NP = comment $\Rightarrow \lambda P\lambda x[P(x)]$
 - The *kes*-headed phrase should be analyzed as a referring NP (Jhang (1994)).
 - *kes* is not a pure noun (Kim & Sells (2007, 2013)), but functions as an anti-clitic (Ryu (2023)).
 - The appropriate feature for *kes* is not [-ANIMATE], but rather [-HUMAN].

- (17) a. *[이 서점]은 [철수가 그 책을 산 것]이다.
b. *[이 서점에서]는 [철수가 그 책을 산 것]이다.
- (18) a. [이 서점]은 [철수가 그 책을 산 곳]이다.
b. *[이 서점에서]는 [철수가 그 책을 산 곳]이다.
- (19) *[[작년] [LA에서]]는 [철수가 그 책을 산 것]이다.

4. Conclusion [2/3]

- ✓ **Specification:** *kes*-CP = background & XP2 = focus
 - Specificational clauses in Korean do not simply reflect a GIVEN–NEW articulation but instead encode a focus–background structure (FBS).
 - Specificational clauses constitute a distinct construction in Korean used to express FBS.
 - The analysis of specificationals as FBS, partitioning the sentence into two components, supports the claim that the *kes*-headed phrase is in fact a CP.
 - Multiple clefts and so-called amalgam clefts can be naturally interpreted as instances of multiple focus constructions within the FBS framework.

4. Conclusion [3/3]

- (20) a. $[_{CP} [_{CP} [_{TP} \text{철수가 이 책을 산}]] \text{것}] \text{은} [_{\text{이 서점(*에서)}]}_F$
이다]. (= (8))
- b. $\text{ASSERT}(\# \lambda X_{PP} [\text{CHELSWU BUY THIS_BOOK X}],$
 $\text{AT_THIS_BOOKSTORE}\#)$
- (21) a. $[_{CP} [_{CP} [_{TP} \text{철수가 이 책을 산}]] \text{것}] \text{은} [_{\text{작년}}]_F [_{\text{LA에서}}]_F$
이다]. (= (9))
- b. $\text{ASSERT}(\# \lambda X_{AdvP} \lambda Y_{PP} [\text{CHELSWU BUY THIS_BOOK}$
 $\text{X Y}], \text{LAST_YEAR}, \text{IN_LA}\#)$

행복

나태주

저녁 때

돌아갈 집이 있다는 것

힘들 때

마음속으로 생각할 사람 있다는 것

외로울 때

혼자서 부를 노래 있다는 것.

- (22) a. [저녁 때 돌아갈 집이 있다는 것]은 [행복한 것]이다.
(E: $\langle s, t \rangle = \langle s, t \rangle$)
(E*: $\langle s, t \rangle \neq \langle e, t \rangle$)
- b. [행복한 것]은 [저녁 때 돌아갈 집이 있다는 것]이다.
(*E: $\langle e, t \rangle \neq \langle s, t \rangle$)
(*P: $\lambda x_{\langle e, t \rangle} \lambda P_{\langle s, t \rangle} [P(x)]$)
(*S: AS-SERT($\# \lambda X_{NP} [X \text{ IS HAPPY}], S\#$))
- (23) a. [저녁 때 돌아갈 집이 있다는 것]은 [행복]이다.
(*E: $\langle s, t \rangle \neq \langle s, e \rangle$)
- b. [행복]은 [저녁 때 돌아갈 집이 있다는 것]이다.
(*E: $\langle s, e \rangle \neq \langle s, t \rangle$)

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