Pseudo-clefts and semi-clefts in Portuguese and American Spanish

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1. Introduction

Along with *wh*-clefts and *that*-clefts, well distributed among Romance languages, Portuguese also has a type of sentence which has been traditionally analyzed as the reduction of the canonic pseudo-cleft, through the deletion/erasure of the wh-operator (cf. Casteleiros 1979, for European Portuguese (EP), and Wheeler 1982 for Brazilian Portuguese (BP)). They have been called **semi-clefts** in the Portuguese tradition.

(1) a. O que vou comer é [o maior cachorro-quente do mundo].
   Lit: What I am going to eat is the biggest hot-dog in the world.
   b. Quem me ajudou muito foi [o psicólogo].
   Lit: The one who helped a lot was the psychologist.

Some dialects of Latin-American Spanish also exhibit such clefts (Toribio 1992, Bosque 1999, Camacho 2006, a.o.). In Caribbean Spanish semi-clefts have been analyzed as containing a Null Operator (Op Ø) (Toribio 1992), an analysis also adopted by Costa and Duarte (2006) for European Portuguese.

(2) a. Op Ø Nosotras llegamos fue [cansaditas] Lit: The way we arrived was tired.
   b. Op Ø Mamá tenía que ir era [al mercado]. Lit: Where mom had to GO was to the market.
   (apud Toribio 1992)

Both pseudo-clefts and semi-clefts exhibit connectivity effects without showing the necessary c-command requirement (see Boskovic (1997) and Boeck (ms), which seems to support a common derivation/representation:

(3) a. O que o João é é importante para si mesmo.
   b. O João é é importante para si mesmo.
   Lit: What John is is important to himself.

(4) a. Quem o João viu no espelho foi ele mesmo.
   b. O João viu no espelho foi ele-mesmo.
   Lit: The one Who John saw in the mirror was himself.

Bosque (1999), for Caribbean, and Camacho (2006) for Colombian, pursue a line of analysis based on the fact that not all pseudo-clefts, with an overt wh-operator, have a corresponding reduced counterpart.

(5) a. Lo que más le gusta es bailar salsa
   that which most 3pCL pleases COP dance salsa
   ‘What s/he likes the most is to dance salsa’
   b. *Más le gusta es bailar salsa.

Studying Portuguese semi-clefts, Mioto (2008) goes in the same direction, but showing the reverse, that not all semi-clefts have a corresponding pseudo-cleft.

(6) a. *O que o Lula tem é falado pouco e com poucos.
   what the Lula has COP spoken little and with few
   b. O Lula tem é falado pouco e com poucos.
   the Lula has COP spoken little and with few
   Lit: ‘What Lula has done is speak little with only a few.’
However, though these authors propose an analysis of semi-clefts independent of pseudo-clefts, they do not propose a derivation for pseudo-clefts that accounts for the connectivity problem.

The aim of this paper is to propose two independent derivations, one for pseudo-clefts and one for semi-clefts, an analysis that takes into account the connectivity issue.

2. The analysis

2.1 Pseudo-clefts

We do not assume that pseudo-clefts have a free relative clause as part of their derivation as in previous analyses (cf. Kato et alii, 1996, Costa & Duarte 2003). We propose a derivational analysis following Kayne (2002), according to whom construal relations are derived by syntactic movement. Instead of merging the wh-element as part of a free relative clause, we propose that the wh-element is merged in the beginning inside a complex DP structure, merged with the anaphora.

(7) Quem João machucou foi a si-mesmo.

the one who J. hurt was to himself ‘The one who John hurt was himself.’

(8) a. [TopP quem, [IP João machucou [DP t [a si mesmo]]]]
   b. [IP a si-mesmo, [IPTopP quem, [IP Pedro machucou [DP t [t]]]]]
   c. [IP foi [IP a si-mesmo, [IPTopP quem, [IP Pedro machucou [SC t[t]]]]]]
   d. [GroundP [TopP quem, [IP o Pedro machucou [DP t [t]]]] [IP foi [IP a si-mesmo, [t]]]]

2.2. Semi-clefts

We develop Kato’s (2009) proposal that semi-clefts in BP are derived through two movements: VP-Remnant movement to a FocusP and IP-Remnant movement to a GroundP after the copula merges and the upper clause is projected. Unlike sentences with a nuclear stress focus, with informational interpretation, semi-clefts have an additional F and a copula in the numeration, which are responsible for a contrastive focus reading.

(10) João comprou foi batatas;

John bought COP potatoes ‘What John bought was potatoes.’

(11) a. [FP F [IP João [comprou [VP tv batatas]]]]
   b. [FP [VP tv batatas] [F [IP João [I comprou [VP tv ]]]]]
   c. [VP-remnant movement]
   d. [TopP [I João [I comprou [VP tv batatas]]] [Top TopP [IP Cop+I [VP tv batatas] [F [IP [IP tv ]]]]]]
   e. João comprou foi batatas.

With this analysis the connectivity effects are not raised because João c-commands a si-mesmo:

(12) João machucou foi a si-mesmo.

(13) a. [FP F [IP João [machucou [VP tv a si-mesmo]]]]
   b. [FP [VP tv a si-mesmo] [F [IP João [I machucou[VP tv ]]]]]
   c. [IP Cop+I [VP tv a si-mesmo] [F [IP João [I machucou[VP tv ]]]]]]
   d. [TopP [I João [I machucou [VP tv ]]] [Top TopP [IP Cop+I [VP tv a si-mesmo] [F [IP tv ]]]]]]
   e. João machucou foi a si-mesmo
References


Camacho, J. (2006) “In situ focus in Caribbean Spanish: toward a unified account of focus”. Ms University of Rutgers.


