

The syntax of Swedish copular clauses^{*}

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Abstract

In this article, we argue, in accordance with Lohndal et al. (2008), that Swedish allows for two syntactic structures for copular clauses. The analysis provides the means to distinguish between copular clauses that simply attribute a property to a subject from more complex copular constructions where eventualities are involved. More particularly, the analysis explains a number of syntactic differences between the two, namely modification properties, the ability to appear/not appear in embedded exclamatives vs. embedded interrogatives, the ability to/not to VP topicalize, and the ability to be replaced by the proverb *göra* ‘do’.

1 Introduction

It is a well-known fact that Swedish adjectival predicates, such as *arbetslös* ‘unemployed’ in examples (1) and (2), not only appear with copular *vara* ‘be’ as in example (1) but also with a number of other verbs such as posture and motion verbs, as in example (2) (see Teleman et al. 1999[3]).

- (1) Har du varit arbetslös?
Have you been unemployed
- (2) Hon hade alltså gått arbetslös i nära två månader (PAROLE¹)
She had thus gone unemployed for nearly two months

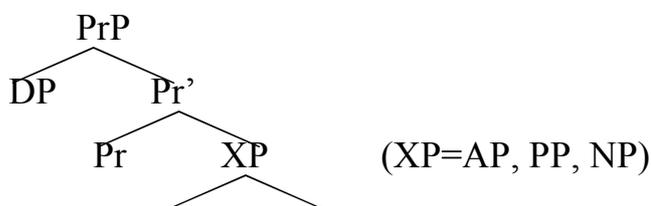
^{*} This article is funded by The Birgit Rausing Language Programme. I thank Heidi Harley and the Linguistics Department at University of Arizona for welcoming me during parts of 2011 and 2012. Finally, I thank Heidi Harley and Christer Platzack for commenting on this article.

¹ Corpus of written Swedish available at sprakbanken.gu.se
Working Papers in Scandinavian Syntax 90 (2012) 23-52

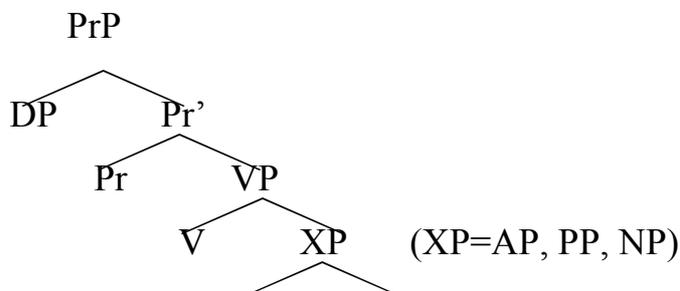
Neither *vara* ‘be’ nor *gå* ‘go’ can in this context be said to have independent meaning; they are copular verbs in the sense of van Gelderen (2009)². On the surface, examples (1) and (2) can be said to have the same linear analysis: a (copular) verb selects for an adjectival predicate. However, the behavior of examples (1) and (2) differ for instance with respect to modification, VP ellipsis, and VP topicalization. We argue that these differences reflect different underlying syntactic structures, drawing on an idea of Lohndal, Nyqvist and Åfarli (2008).

Following Bowers’ development of the small clause analysis of copular clauses (1993, 2001), Lohndal et al. (2008) argue that Norwegian copular clause allows for two syntactic structures, both of which include a PrP where the subject is merged; in the unmarked case the copula is merged directly in Pr, as in example (3), and in the marked case, it is merged in V, then raised to Pr, as in example (4).

(3) The unmarked analysis of copular constructions



(4) The marked analysis of copular constructions



² Another possible analysis would be to distinguish the copular verb in example (1) from a light verb in example (2), as explored in Thurén (2008). However for the purposes of this paper, such an account would not contribute anything that the current account cannot.

We argue that this analysis can be extended to Swedish. In particular, the distinction between structures (3) and (4) accounts for the syntactic differences between examples (1) and (2) mentioned above.

The paper is organized as follows. In section 2, we outline the PrP approach to copular clauses, in particular Lohndal et al.'s (2008) version. In section 3, we show that adjectival predicates of *vara* 'be' as well as of motion and posture verbs are selected. Section 4 demonstrates how Lohndal et al.'s approach can be applied to explain the syntactic differences between examples (1) and (2). In section 5, we conclude our findings.

2 The PrP approach outlined

One of the questions that relates to non-finite predication, such as the adjectival predicates at hand, is that of how the relation between the predicate and its subject is established. An early take on this problem is Stowell's (1983) Subject Across Categories proposal. Under this view, the maximal projection of any lexical category may contain a subject. Stowell's (1983) proposal accounts for the predication relation established in small clauses, such as examples (5 a-b).

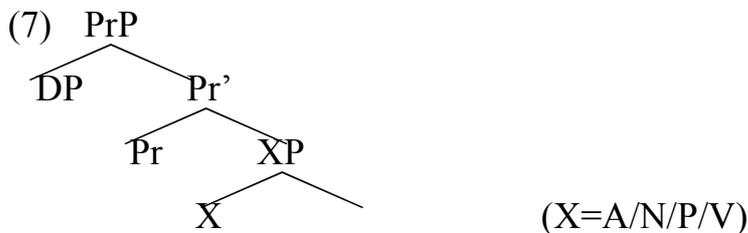
- (5) a. I consider [_{NP} John a good fellow] (Bowers 2001: 300)³
 b. Eleverna målade [_{AP} klassrummet gult]
 The students painted the classroom yellow

The proposal cannot however account for the fact that the maximal projection of a nominal or an adjectival predicate contains modifiers, as shown in examples (6 a-b); there is in fact no room for the subject, neither in the extended projection of the noun, nor in the extended projection of the adjective.

³ Notably, small clauses cannot be NPs in Swedish (for a thorough account, see Lundin 2003).

- (6) a. Kalle är en fantastisk lärare
 Charlie is a marvelous teacher
 b. Eleverna målade [klassrummet lysande gult]
 The students painted the classroom bright yellow

In order to solve among other things this problem, Bowers argues for a functional category, labeled Pr⁴ (hence the PrP approach), that selects for the maximal projection of any lexical category A, N, P or V, as illustrated in example (7). Pr also introduces an external argument. A, N, P or V thus is the predicate of the subject.⁵



According to Bowers (2001), the functional category Pr furthermore explains why expletives are allowed in small clauses, as shown in example (8).

- (8) I consider it nice of Mary to do that (Bowers 2001: 306)

Another argument in favor of Pr is lexical realization candidates of Pr such as *as* in English (Bowers 1993, 2001), and *som* ‘as’ in Norwegian (see Eide 1996, Eide & Aafarli 1997). *Som* ‘as’ is also available in Swedish, as shown in example (9).

⁴ Pr is the mnemonic for predicate. Other accounts, such as Baker (2003), use Pred.

⁵ There are of course other ways to explain the presence of a subject with an NP or an AP. Lundin (2003) argue for the functional categories *n*, *a* and *p*, parallel to *v*.

- (9) Hon ansågs som en duktig lärare
 She consider.PASS as a good teacher
 ‘She was considered a good teacher’

Notably, *som* ‘as’ is sometimes interchangeable with *vara* ‘be’ in Swedish, as illustrated in example (10).

- (10) Hon ansågs vara en duktig lärare
 She consider.PASS be a good teacher
 ‘She was considered to be a good teacher’

For a thorough account of Swedish small clauses such as the raising construction in example (10), see Lundin (2003).

Consider next the PrP approach in detail. A question under debate that directly relates to this paper is whether the copula *vara* ‘be’ is directly merged in Pr, as in example (1) or needs to be merged in V and then moved to Pr as in example (2). For the purposes of this article we shall adopt Lohndal et al’s (2008) take on the PrP approach. They argue, using data from Norwegian, that example (3) represents the unmarked, most economic approach, whereas example (4) represents the marked approach; UG, they show with reference to Pustet (2003), allows for both options. Most Norwegian copular clauses can be accounted for by the structure in example (3), although for a subset of Norwegian copular clauses the structure shown in example (4) is needed. The arguments for Lohndal et al’s (2008) take mostly relates to case marking and the fact that accusative case within the Minimalist Program is taken to be assigned by V.

Given Bowers' account of predication, the nominative case of the subject is assigned by Pr. However in Norwegian the typical post-copular pronoun is accusative (cf. Lohndal 2006), as in example (11).

(11) Dette er meg (Lohndal et al. 2008: 33)

'This is me'

Accusative, as opposed to nominative case, is usually argued to be assigned by V. Given this assumption example (11) has the structure given in example (4). As pointed out by Lohndal et al. (2008), some Norwegian dialects and Swedish use the nominative with the post-copular pronoun, even though Swedish has an accusative counterpart. For a thorough account of the nominative/accusative distinction in the Germanic languages, see Sigurðsson (2006). The Swedish equivalent of example (11) is given in example (12).

(12) Detta är jag

'This is me'

Since the nominal predicate shows nominative case, example (12) would rather imply the structure in given in example (3). Hence, Lohndal et al. (2008) argues that there are good reasons to assume that both of the structures given in examples (3) and (4) are available for Norwegian copular clauses.

Another argument given by Lohndal et al (2008) is that of predicates with indirect objects, such as examples (13) and (14) (Lohndahl et al.'s examples 25b, and 27b), that show dative case.

(13) Jeg mener/anser at lånet er oss litt i største laget (Lohndal et al 2008: 35)

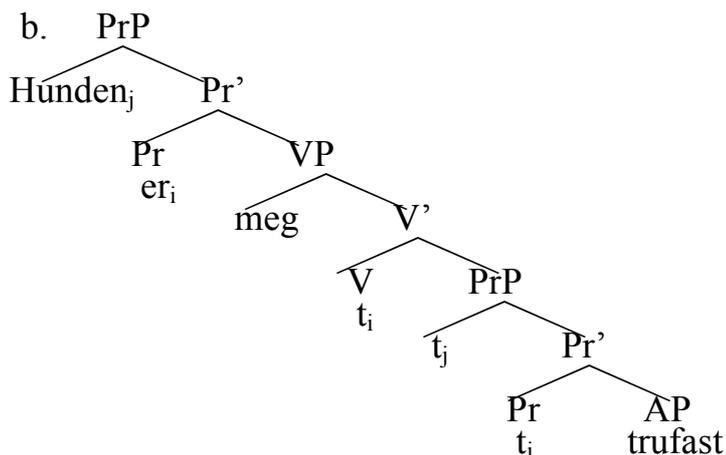
I think/consider that the loan is us a little too big

(14) Jeg regnar med at hunden er meg trofast (Lohndal et al 2008: 35)

I count on that the dog is faithful to me

Indirect objects such as *oss* ‘us’ in example (13) and *meg* ‘me’ in (14) are conventionally taken to be licensed by V. Hence we can consider examples (13) and (14) as arguments in favor of the analysis given in (4). However, as pointed out by Lohndal et al. (2008), the structure in example (4) does not predict the fact that *trofast* ‘faithful’ “is the predicational property of the subject, *hunden* ‘the dog’”, not that of *meg* ‘me’ (Lohndal et al. 2008: 38). The subject, *hunden* ‘the dog’, has to be merged in the specifier of a lower Pr, then raised to the specifier of a higher Pr. The indirect object is merged in the specifier of V. The structure is represented in example (15).

(15) a. Hunden er meg trofast ‘the dog is faithful to me’ (Lohndal et al.’s example 33)



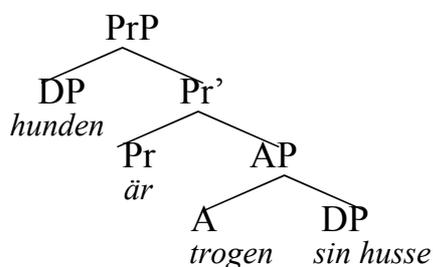
Notably, this type of construction is also available in Swedish with a small group of adjectives Platzack (1982) gives a number of old Swedish as well as modern Swedish examples such as *överlägsen* ‘superior’ and *motbjudande*

‘repulsive’. Notice also the word order variation with respect to indirect object of Swedish transitive adjectives, as illustrated in example (16 a-b).

- (16) a. Hunden är sin husse trogen
 The dog is his master faithful
 ‘The dog is faithful to his master’
- b. Hunden är trogen sin husse
 The dog is faithful his master
 ‘The dog is faithful to his master’

The word order in example (16 b), contrary to the one in (16 a), implies that the indirect object rather is merged in AP than in VP as that of structure (15 b). The structure of example (16 b) might actually be less complex than that of (15 b), thus more minimal, as represented in (17).

(17) Structure of (16 b)

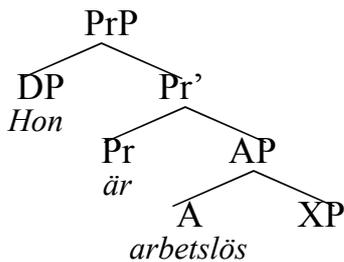


In conclusion, Lohndal et al. (2008) argue that there are reasons for assuming two available structures for Norwegian copular clauses. In the following, we argue that these two structures not only account for the accusative post-copular pronoun in Norwegian, but may account for the asymmetries found with alternations such as *vara arbetslös* ‘be unemployed’ – *gå arbetslös* ‘go unemployed’ in Swedish.

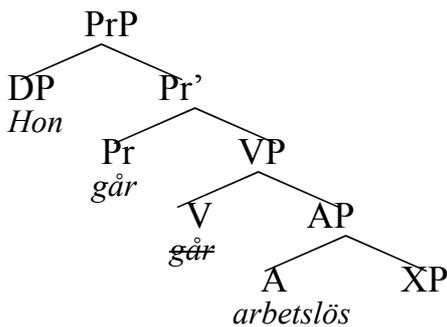
If we are correct in our assumption that the structures in both example (3) and (4) are available for Swedish copular clauses, and that the structure in example

(3) reflects copular *vara* ‘be’ selecting an adjectival predicate, as illustrated in example (18), and example (4) a motion or posture verb selecting an adjectival predicate as illustrated in (19), we expect copular clauses that reflect the structure in example (4) but not in example (3) to show a more verb-like behavior. In the following, we will demonstrate that this is in fact the case.

(18) *Hon är arbetslös* ‘she is unemployed’



(19) *Hon går arbetslös* ‘she goes unemployed’



3 Swedish copular clauses

In this section we show that the adjectival predicate of motion and posture verbs is selected rather than adjoined, a question that is particularly important to our notion of the motion or posture verb being a copular verb. If the adjectival predicate were adjoined to the motion or posture verb, the verb would be a full verb rather than a copular verb.

An observation often made about adjectival predicates (see for instance Teleman 1974; Bolander 1980; Teleman et al. 1999[3]) is that some can be omitted freely without consequences for the grammaticality of the clause whereas some cannot. For instance, it is unambiguously observed for *vara* ‘be’

as well as *bli* ‘become’ ‘remain’ that omission of the adjectival predicate yields an ungrammatical sentence as shown in examples (20 a-b).

- (20) a. [...] han **är fri** att stanna eller gå som han finner bäst (Parole)
 He is free to stay or to go as he finds best
 b. *[...] han **är** att stanna eller gå som han finner bäst
 He is to stay or to go as he finds best

For posture and motion verbs, omission of the adjectival predicate either yields an ungrammatical sentence, as in (21 a-b), and/or strange semantics as in (22 a-b). In example (21 a) for instance, the posture verb *ligga* ‘lie’ combines with the adjectival *klar* ‘ready’ ‘done’.

- (21) a. [...] att boken nu äntligen **ligger klar**
 [...] that the book now finally lies ready
 ‘[...] that the book is now finally ready’
 b. *[...] att boken nu äntligen **ligger**
 that the book now finally lies

Omitting the adjectival predicate as in example (21 a) yields an ungrammatical sentence, as shown in example (21 b).

Consider also the motion verb *gå* ‘go’. *Gå* has at least two full verb readings in Swedish, one that corresponds to English ‘walk’, and one that corresponds to English ‘leave’, both of which appear in copular varieties, as illustrated in examples (22 a) and (22 b).

- (22) a. [...] men att gå sysslolös passade honom illa (SUC2.0)
 [...] but to go inactive suited him bad
 ‘[...] but being inactive suited him bad’
- b. ?[...] men att gå passade honom illa
 [...] but to go suited him bad
 ‘[...] walking/leaving suited him bad’

In example (22), omitting the adjectival predicate *sysslolös* ‘inactive’ does not yield an ungrammatical sentence. However the copular reading of *gå* ‘go’ is not available; the full verb readings are coerced. Thus, strange semantics is usually associated with the fact that the meaning of the posture or motion verb is underspecified compared to that of the corresponding full verb (Teleman et al. 1999[3]: 338), something we would expect with a copular verb or a light verb.

A contrasting example is given in example (23 a-b) where the adjectival predicate can be analyzed as adjoined rather than selected. First, omission of the adjectival predicate does not yield an ungrammatical or unsemantic reading, as shown in example (23 b). Second, the adjectival predicate appears in between the finite verb *gå* ‘go’ and the PathP *från bordet* ‘from the table’. Given that motion verbs take a path argument, be it sometimes null, and that the path argument appear in the complement of V, there is no room for a selected adjectival predicate. Moreover, example (23 c) shows that the adjectival predicate may appear after the path argument. We therefore conclude that the adjectival predicate is adjoined. This analysis is equivalent to that of Bolander (1980) and Teleman et al (1999) with respect to word order facts.

- (23) a. ... inte låter de sina gäster **gå hungriga** från bordet
 ... NEG let they their guest go hungry from the table
 '... they do not let their guest leave the table hungry'
- b. ... inte låter de sina gäster gå från bordet
 ... NEG let they their guests leave the table
 '... they do not let their guests leave the table'
- c. ... inte låter de sina gäster gå från bordet hungriga
 ... neg let they their guests go from table hungry
 '... they do not let their guest leave the table hungry'

From the examples given in (22) and (23), we can conclude that there has to be an intimate relation between the motion or posture verb and the adjectival predicate. In the following, we show that there are reasons to assume that some Swedish motion and posture verbs can select an adjectival predicate.

Another diagnostic that can be used to examine if the adjectival predicate of copular verbs is selected is that of ellipsis from a second conjunct. If ellipsis from a second conjunct is not available, the verb can be analyzed as a copular verb. In examples (24) and (25), we show that neither the adjectival predicate of *vara* 'be' nor the adjectival predicate of motion and posture verbs can be elided without yielding an ungrammatical clause.

- (24) *Anna är fri och Kalle är också
 Anna is free and Charlie is too
- (25) *Anna gick fri och Kalle gick också
 Anna went free and Charlie went too

In contrast the copular verb in combination with the adjectival predicate can be elided, as shown in examples (26) and (27).

(26) Anna är fri och Kalle också

Anna is free and Charlie too

(27) Anna gick fri och Kalle också

Anna went free and Charlie too

Notably, copular *vara* ‘be’ allows for VP pronominalization, as shown in example (28).

(28) Anna är fri och Kalle är också det

Anna is free and Charlie is too PRO

The facts are more complex with motion and posture verbs. VP pronominalization is allowed as long as the copula is replaced by proverb *göra* ‘do’, as shown in examples (29 a-b).

(29) a. *Anna gick fri och Kalle gick också det

Anna went free and Charlie went too PRO

b. Anna gick fri och Kalle gjorde också det

Anna went free and Charlie did too PRO

’Anna avoided being caught and Charlie did too’

The question of *göra* ‘do’-ellipsis is discussed in section 4.

Related to the VP pronominalization facts are those of pronominal doubling by the anaphor *det*. Telemann et al. shows (1999[3]: 339) that the adjectival predicate of both *vara* ‘be’, the adjectival predicate of motion and posture verbs can be duplicated by the anaphor *det*, as in examples (30) to (32)⁶.

⁶ According to Telemann et al (1999), adjectival predicates differ from adverbials in this way, since adverbials are duplicated by *så* ‘so’. Compare the predicate *glad* ‘happy’ *Glad, det var*

- (30) Sjuk, det vill han inte vara
 Sick, PRO want he not be
 'Sick, he does not want to be'
- (31) Arbetslös, det vill han inte gå (cf. Teleman et al. 1999[3]: 339)
 Unemployed, PRO want he not GO
 'Unemployed, he does not want to be'
- (32) Sjuk, det vill han inte ligga (Teleman et al. 1999[3]: 339)
 Sick, PRO want he not LIE
 'Sick, he does not want to be'

The fact that the adjectival predicate can be doubled by an anaphor, pairs it with other cases of pronominal doubling, see Josefsson (2010). Josefsson shows that the anaphor *det* 'it' in (33 a) and (33 b) refers to "a discourse element" (2010: 2113).

- (33) a. En DSB-cykel, det vill jag också ha (2010: 2113)
 a.COMMON DSB bicycle it.NEUTER want I too have
 DSB bicycle, I want to have one'
- b. Springer, det gör han (2010: 2115)
 runs, it.NEUTER does he
 'Runs, that is what he is doing'

Likewise, the anaphor *det* 'it' in examples (30) to (32) refers to discourse elements made available by the adjectival predicates. We take this as evidence that adjectival predicates with motion and posture verbs may be selected.

han inte! 'Happy, PRO he was not' with the adverbial *gladeligen* 'happily' *Gladeligen så kom han till festen* 'happily ADV he came to the party'.

Another argument in favor of adjectival predicates with motion and posture verbs being selected is the restrictions with respect to adjective type. According to Teleman et al. (1999[2]: 155), only adjectives denoting temporary states (with few exceptions), i.e. stage level predicates, appear with *stå* ‘stand’, *sitta* ‘sit’, *ligga* ‘lie’. A search in the SUC2.0 corpus⁷ yields only stage level predicates such as *sysslolös* ‘inactive’ in (34), *ensam* ‘alone’ in (35), *tom* ‘empty’ in (36), and *sömlös* ‘sleepless’ in (37) with motion and posture verbs.

(34) Större delen av natten hade han sedan legat sömlös ... (SUC 2.0)

For the remainder of the night had he then lain sleepless

’For the remainder of the night, he had then been sleepless’

(35) ... en person som satt ensam och arbetade mot en persondator (SUC 2.0)

... a person who sat alone & worked towards a pc

’... a person who sat alone working towards a pc’

(36) Vävstolarna ska aldrig stå tomma (SUC 2.0)

The looms shall never stand empty

’The looms shall never be empty’

(37) Efter två års sjukskrivning stod jag nästan inte ut med att gå sysslolös

After two years sickleave stood I almost not PL PR to go inactive

’After two years of sickleave I almost could not take being inactive’

(SUC 2.0)

There are a few logically possible analyses with respect to the stage level reading, depending on the version of the Minimalist Program you adhere to. First, the stage level reading of the adjectival predicate can be seen as inherent to some feature of the adjective. Second, the stage level reading can be the result of the adjectival predicate being selected by a posture verb. If the stage level

⁷ SUC2.0 is the acronym of the Stockholm-Umeå-korpus, a 1166593 word corpus of written Swedish, available at spraakbanken.gu.se.

reading is the result of the adjectival predicate being selected by a posture verb, one alternative is that the stage level reading is due to the verb, the other alternative is that it is the result of some agree relation between a feature of the posture verb and a feature of the adjectival predicate.

Consider finally how motion verbs with adjectival predicates differ from full motion verbs. It is a well-known fact that motion verbs take path arguments, albeit sometimes null path arguments (see among others Platzack 2011), as shown in (38).

- (38) Camilla sprang två mil
Camilla ran 20 K

Conversely, copular clauses with motion verbs do not take path arguments, as illustrated in (39).

- (39) *Camilla gick fri en mil
Camilla went free 10 K

Distinguish also from an adjunct adjectival predicate as in (40).

- (40) Camilla gick en mil, fri
Camilla walked 10 K, free

The selectional patterns of motion verbs are represented in (41 a-b):

- (41) a. [_{PrP} DP *gå*_{cop} [_{VP} *gå*_{cop} [_{AP} A]]]
b. [_{VP} *gå*_{full} [_{VP} DP *gå*_{full} [_{PathP} Path]]]

Thus far we have shown that we conclude that there is evidence that both *vara* ‘be’ and motion and posture verbs select for adjectival predicates. Thus we argue that *vara* ‘be’ and motion and posture verbs can be analyzed on par when motion and posture verbs select for an adjectival predicate⁸.

4 The Data

Thus far, we have presented arguments in favor of the adjectival predicate of motion and posture verbs being selected. In the following, we discuss data that distinguishes *vara* ‘be’ + adjectival predicate from motion and motion/posture verb + adjectival predicate, and argue that these differences can be derived from a VP in the structure of motion and motion/posture verb + adjectival predicate.

4.1 Embedded exclamatives vs. embedded interrogatives

A contrast that Bolander (1980) observes for the copular constructions at hand is that the adjectival predicates of *vara* ‘be’ form embedded exclamatives with *hur* ‘how’, as shown in (42a). In (42b) is represented the corresponding ungrammatical embedded interrogative.

- (42) a. Hon mindes hur sjuk hon [hade] varit (Bolander 1980: 34)
 She remembered how sick she [had] been
- b. *Hon mindes hur hon hade varit sjuk (Bolander 1980: 34)
 She remembered how she had been sick

Embedded exclamatives are often taken to involve degree or scales (see for instance Zanuttini and Portner 2003). Example (43) illustrates that the embedded exclamative involves degree since the adjectival predicate is modified by the degree adverbial *väldigt* ‘very’.

⁸ Quite possibly, the analysis also extends to motion and posture verbs that select for prepositional predicates. See Ekberg (1989) for an account.

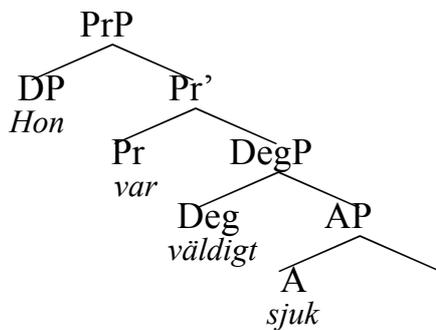
(43) Hon mindes hur väldigt sjuk hon [hade] varit.

She remembered how very sick she had been

Given that copular clauses with *vara* ‘be’ appear in embedded exclamatives, and that exclamatives typically involve degree or scale, we take it as initial evidence for the structure in (10), or rather for a structure that also includes a DegP, as represented in example (44).

(44) Hon var väldigt sjuk

‘She was very sick’



As opposed to adjectival predicates of *vara* ‘be’, Bolander (1980) observes that adjectival predicates of posture or motion verbs cannot form embedded exclamatives, as shown in example (45).

(45) *Hon mindes hur sjuk hon [hade] legat (Bolander 1980: 34)

She remembered how sick she [had] lain

Conversely, adjectival predicates of posture and motion verbs embedded interrogatives, as shown in example (46).

(46) Hon mindes hur hon hade legat sjuk (Bolander 1980: 34)

She remembered how she had lain sick

Bolander (1980) observes that forming an embedded exclamative is available as long as the function of the copula is to assign a property to the subject and that the property can be degree modified (compare Zanuttini and Porter 2003). Degree modification is a characteristic usually attributed to adjectives, and used as a diagnostic to distinguish adjectival participles from verbal (see for instance Borer 1991; Embick 2003, 2004). Under our analysis, the VP separates the two copular constructions. We therefore hypothesize that the VP plays a role here.

If a VP in fact blocks degree modification, our analysis predicts that a transitive adjectival predicate cannot appear in an embedded exclamative since it contains at least one VP (see Section 2). As shown in (47) this prediction is correct; (47 a-b) shows that the embedded exclamatives are ungrammatical whereas the embedded interrogative in (47 c) is grammatical. Notice also in (47 e) that the embedded exclamative is grammatical as long as the object is not spelled out, which we would expect since *trofast* ‘faithful’ can be degree modified.

- (47) a. *Han mindes hur trofast hunden honom var
 He remembered how faithful the dog him was
- b. *Han mindes hur honom trofast hunden var
 He remembered how him faithful the dog was
- c. Han mindes hur hunden var honom trofast (interrogative)
 he remembered how the dog was him faithful
- d. Han mindes hur trofast hunden var honom
 ’He remembered how faithful the dog was [to] him
- e. Han mindes hur trofast hunden var
 ‘He remembered how faithful the dog was’

4.2 Modification by a PlaceP

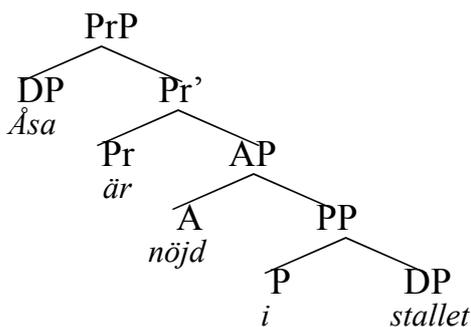
In section 3.2, we have shown that *vara* ‘be’ + adjectival predicate can be modified by degree modifiers. Motion and posture verbs + adjectival predicates on the other hand cannot. If our assumptions about the structure of motion and posture verbs + adjectival predicates are correct, i.e. if there is a V in the structure of the copular clause, we would expect that event modifiers optionally appear with motion and posture verbs with adjectival predicates.

Consider first an observation about PlacePs in copular clauses made by Bolander (1980). In (48 a), the subject *Åsa* is assigned the property of being *nöjd* ‘content’. If the sentence is modified with a locative adverb, in this case a PlaceP, such as *i stallet* ‘in the stable’, the PlaceP restricts where the property holds (see Bolander 1980); *Åsa* is *nöjd* ‘content’ as long as she is in the stable. The syntactic structure of the modification is given in (48 b).

(48) a. *Åsa är nöjd i stallet* (Bolander 1980: 38)

‘Åsa is content in the stable’

b. Structure of (47a)

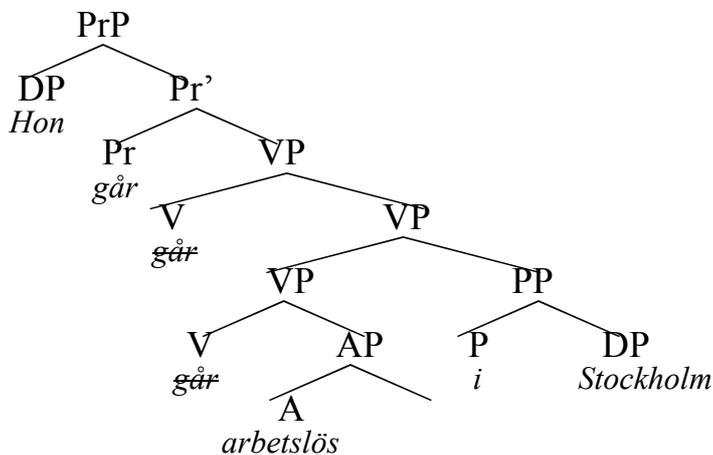


Conversely Bolander (1980) notes, modifying a posture or motion verb + adjectival predicate by a PlaceP restricts where the event takes place, as in (49).

(49) a. ...att fadern låg död på golvet (BT 33) (Bolander 1980: 39)

‘...that the father lay dead on the floor’

b. Structure of (48 a)



Thus, we take this as evidence of a VP being modified in the structure of posture and motion verb + adjectival predicate.

4.3 VP ellipsis and VP topicalization

A copular verb is often thought of as vacuous or semantically empty, and as such often given the status of an auxiliary⁹ (see Platzack 2011). A test, which is often considered to distinguish auxiliaries from full verbs, is that of VP ellipsis (see Bolander 1980, Teleman et al. 1999; Eide 2006): An auxiliary cannot be replaced by the proverb *göra* ‘do’ in ellipsis; the auxiliary has to be repeated, as shown in (50), contrasted with a full verb example in (51).

(50) Du kan väl baka en kaka, kan du inte?

You can PL bake a cake, can you NEG

(51) Du bakar en kaka, gör du inte?

You bake a cake, do you NEG

⁹ There are however other analyses that argue semantic content, even in *vara* ‘be’ (see Rothstein 1999).

It is a well-known fact that for Swedish that copular *vara* ‘be’ has to be repeated in VP ellipsis, as shown in example (52) (see for instance Teleman et al. 1999[3] 266n).

- (52) Du är själv arbetslös, är du inte?
 You are REFL unemployed, are you not?

A common assumption of the proverb *göra* ‘do’ is that it replaces for dynamic eventuality¹⁰. Under our analysis, the structure of copular *gå* ‘go’ but not copular *vara* ‘be’ contains a VP. The V carries by assumption some feature that yields an eventuality reading. This predicts that copular clauses with motion and posture verbs can be replaced by proverb *göra* ‘do’ in VP ellipsis. As shown in example (53), this prediction is borne out:

- (53) Hon går arbetslös sedan nära två månader, gör hon inte?
 She goes unemployed since nearly two months, does she not?

Notably, Teleman et al. (1999[3]: 266n) shows that there is one copular verb in Swedish, *bli* ‘become, remain’ that is ambiguous with respect to *göra* ‘do’-ellipsis. *Bli* ‘become’ can be repeated or *göra* ‘do’ can be used, see example (54):

- (54) a. Han blev rädd, blev han inte?
 He became scared, became he not?
 b. Han blev rädd, gjorde han inte?
 He became scared, did he not?

¹⁰ We take dynamic eventuality to include posture verbs.

VP ellipsis is often discussed alongside with VP topicalization, that is the topicalization of a full verb, as in example (55).

- (55) Läste boken sa Johan att han gjorde (Platzack 2012: 280)
 Read book.DEF said John that he did
 ‘Read the book, John said that he did’

As noted by for instance Platzack (2012), auxiliaries and copular verbs such as *vara* ‘be’ cannot be VP topicalized, as shown in example (56).

- (56) a. *Är arbetslös gör du väl?
 Is unemployed do you PL
 b. *Är arbetslös är du väl?
 Is unemployed do you PL

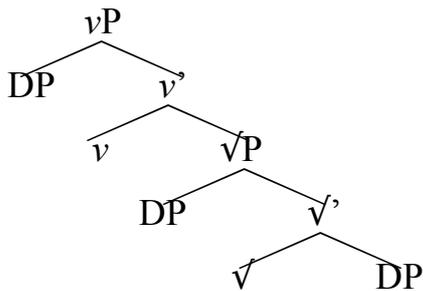
Thus far we have seen that motion and posture verbs pattern with full verbs with respect to VP ellipsis. We have argued that the fact that motion and posture verbs + adjectival predicate pattern with full verbs can be explained by a VP in their syntactic structure. If we are correct, we would expect that motion and posture verbs + adjectival predicate topicalize since *be* + adjectival predicate do not. As shown in example (57), this is borne out. Motion and posture verbs + adjectival predicate follow the pattern of full verbs.

- (57) Går arbetslös sedan nära två månader gör hon
 Goes unemployed since nearly two months does she

In the following, we attempt to account for the VP topicalization facts for copular clauses. To do so we follow Platzack (2012).

In his account of Swedish *göra* ‘do’-support, Platzack (2012) assumes a different version of the Minimalist Program than the one assumed for the purpose of this article. A verb phrase in this version has the structure in example (58).

(58) The verb phrase in Platzack (2012)



He argues that VP topicalization is actually the topicalization of a \sqrt{P} , which is the equivalent of VP in the version of the Minimalist Program assumed here. Hence, we do not assume PrP to move. Platzack (2012) presents a number of arguments for the \sqrt{P} and not the vP moving. For instance, he shows that you can neither negate nor modify by a sentence adverbial the topicalized constituent as you would expect if topicalized constituent were a vP . This is shown in examples (59 a-b).

(59) a. *Läste inte boken gjorde han (Platzack 2012: 290)

Read not the book did he

b. *Läste troligen boken gjorde han (Platzack 2012: 290)

Read probably the book did he

In example (60) we show that the same is true for motion and posture verbs + adjectival predicate.

- (60) a. *Går inte arbetslös sedan nära två månader gör hon
 Goes not unemployed since nearly two months does she
 b. *Går troligen arbetslös sedan nära två månader gör hon
 Goes probably unemployed since nearly two months does she

Moreover, Platzack shows that VP internal adverbials, i.e. adverbials adjoined to VP, contrary to VP external adverbials, i.e. adverbials adjoined to ν P, can be topicalized along with the verb, as illustrated in examples (61a-d).

- (61) a. Vi sjunger ofta i kyrkan (Platzack 2012: 292)
 We sing often in church
 b. [Sjunger] gör vi ofta i kyrkan (Platzack 2012: 292)
 Sing do we often in church
 c. *[Sjunger ofta] gör vi i kyrkan (Platzack 2012: 292)
 Sing often do we in church
 d. [Sjunger i kyrkan] gör vi ofta (Platzack 2012: 292)
 Sing in church do we often

In fact, the adjectival predicate has to be topicalized along with the copular verb¹¹, as shown in examples (62 a-b).

- (62) a. *Gick gjorde Johan arbetslös
 Went did Johan unemployed
 b. Gick arbetslös gjorde Johan
 Went unemployed did Johan

¹¹ In fact, this is a good argument in favor of the predicate being selected with motion and posture verbs.

We take the fact that motion and posture verbs + adjectival predicate pattern with full verbs as evidence for a VP in their structure, a VP that can topicalize¹². The fact that *vara* ‘be’ + adjectival predicate does not topicalize also follows from the structure in (10). It is not PrP that topicalizes, but the category that is selected by Pr, that is either VP or DegP/AP. In fact *vara* ‘be’ behaves more or less like *göra* ‘do’, being directly merged in Pr.

We also have to take into account the so-called transitive adjective, such as example (63).

- (63) Robin var sin hustru trogen
 Robin was REFL wife faithful

We have seen that Lohndal et al. (2008) argues that V is needed to introduce a second argument in the copular clause. If this is correct we expect that VP topicalization is available for example (63). However, as shown in example (64), replacement by the proverb *göra* ‘do’, which would indicate VP topicalization is not available.

- (64) *Var sin hustru trogen gjorde Robin
 Was REFL wife faithful did Robin

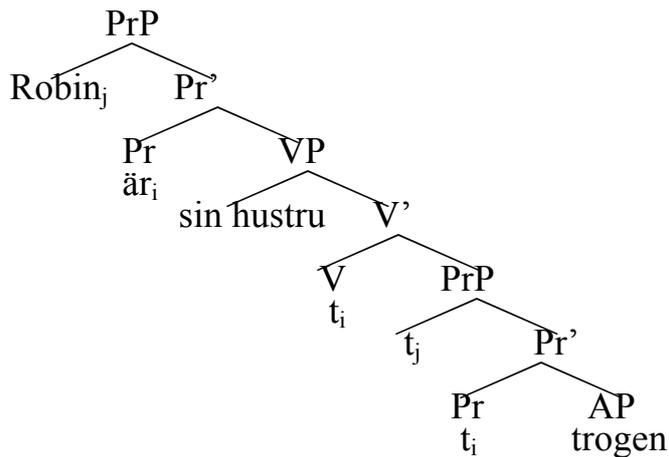
How is it that replacement by proverb *göra* ‘do’ is not available even though we expect there to be a VP in the syntactic structure of example (63)? Consider the relations that need to be established in the syntactic structure of example (63).

As pointed out by Lohndal et al. (2008), in order to establish the relations semantically needed to account for example (63) we have to assume that *vara*

¹² Platzack’s (2012) explanation for the topicalization involves both \checkmark and v , carrying sets of valued tense features. The valued tense features of \checkmark allow for the \checkmark P to topicalize, which in turn makes it possible for valued tense on v to surface as *göra* ‘do’.

‘be’ starts out in a Pr that selects for the adjective *trogen* ‘faithful’. Furthermore, it is in fact the subject *Robin*, not the wife who is in a <Spec, head> relation with the adjective. The subject thus starts out in the PrP that contains the Pr selects for the adjective; then the subject is raised to another PrP, see example (65).

(65) Robin är sin hustru trogen



What distinguishes example (65) from the examples of VP topicalization presented above is that the subject starts out low in a Pr. The subject is then raised to <Spec,Pr>. The subject raised to <Spec, Pr>, the VP is available for topicalization, as shown in example (66). An explanation would be something along the following lines: Since the copula *vara* ‘be’ is raised from the lower Pr to the higher, there is a trace of it in V. Thus, V does not need to be spelled out as neither *göra* ‘do’, nor *vara* ‘be’. Consequently, example (66) is grammatical.

(66) Trogen sin hustru var Robin

Faithful his wife was Robin

5 Conclusions

In this article, we have argued in accordance with Lohndal et al. (2008) that Swedish allows for two syntactic structures of copular clauses, one in which the copular verb is merged directly in the functional category Pr, and one in which

the copular verb is merged in V, then raised to Pr. As stated by Lohndal (2006) and Lohndal et al (2008), the two structures are spelled out as *vara* ‘be’ + AP/PP/NP in Norwegian.

In conclusion, the analysis provides the means to distinguish between copular constructions that simply attribute a property to a subject from more complex copular constructions where eventualities are involved, and more particularly to explain a number of syntactic differences between the two, namely modification properties, the ability to appear/not appear in embedded exclamatives vs. embedded interrogatives, the ability to/not to VP topicalize, and the ability to be replaced by the proverb *göra* ‘do’. As a consequence we find that copular *vara* ‘be’, spell out as the minimal structure in Swedish, contrary to Norwegian, whereas *bli* ‘become/remain’ spell out as either one of the two structures. Motion and posture verbs typically spell out as the larger structure, albeit not as their full verb counterpart. This explains their “light” verb behavior, although dispose of the term “light”. Their “light” behavior is a consequence of a specific syntactic configuration. Another advantage of the analysis is that it conserves the similarities between all selected adjectival predicates, which a light verb analysis would not do.

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