COPULAR SENTENCES AS A WINDOW INTO LOCALITY

§1. A surprising contrast. This study examines locality from the vantage point of copular sentences. Moro (1997) divided copular sentence into two classes: "canonical copular sentences" (1a), where the DP subject occupies the pre-copular position, and "inverse copular sentences" (1b), where the predicative DP occupies the pre-copular position. The class of inverse copular sentences also contains *there*-sentences (1c) (examples from Italian).

(1a) [Una foto del muro]$_i$ fu [$_{SC}$ t_i [la causa della rivolta]]. (canonical)
A picture of.the wall was the cause of.the riot
(1b) [La causa della rivolta]$_i$ fu [$_{SC}$ [una foto del muro] t_i]. (inverse)
The cause of.the riot was a picture of.the wall.
(1c) Ci$_i$ fu [$_{SC}$ [una foto del muro] t_i]. (inverse)
There=was a picture of.the wall

A sharp contrast emerges when extraction from the post-copular DP of inverse copular sentences is considered:

(2) *[Di quale muro]$_i$ pensi che la causa della rivolta fu [$_{DP}$ una foto t_i] ?
Of which wall think.2SG that the cause of.the riot was a picture
(3) [Di quale muro]$_i$ pensi che ci fu [$_{DP}$ una foto t_i] ?
Of which wall think.2SG that there=was a picture

Both (2) and (3) involve extraction from the post-verbal DP, but while (3) is well-formed, (2) is not (see Moro 1997: Ch.1-2 and Moro 2000:103-113 for discussion and other relevant data).

§2. The goal of this study. A priori, there are two types of locality conditions to account for the contrast between (2) and (3): either (i) a condition based on phase theory or (ii) a condition based on the configuration in which the DP occurs. Condition (i) is dubbed as Phase Impenetrability Condition ("PIC" for short), whereas a traditional variant of condition (ii) is dubbed as Subjacency Condition ("Subjacency" for short). The persistence of Subjacency in minimalist theory has already been explicitly highlighted in Chomsky (2000:117). The goal of this study is to show that condition (ii), as opposed to condition (i), naturally captures the contrast between (2) and (3).

§3. The PIC, with ad hoc assumptions. In accordance with the PIC, extraction of an expression α from a phase Φ is only possible if α is the edge of Φ (i.e., if α is the specifier of or an adjunct to Φ); see Chomsky (2000:108), and Legate (2012) for an updated discussion. Since (2) and (3) contain exactly the same maximal projections (CP, TP, DP, etc.), (2) and (3) also necessarily contain exactly the same phases. Furthermore, since the positions of specifier and adjunct are all filled in a parallel manner in (2)-(3), the phase edges through which the wh-phrase *di quale muro* ('of which wall') can transit in (2) and (3) are exactly the same. As a consequence, regardless of which maximal projections count as phases in (2)-(3), any attempt to capture the contrast between (2) and (3) by means of the PIC is doomed to fail, unless ad hoc assumptions are made. Such ad hoc assumptions have indeed been proposed by den Dikken (2006) in his study of inverse copular sentences. First, he takes the TP headed by *was* in (2)-(3) to constitute a phase. Second, he posits a general restriction on adjunction stating that adjunction to phrases headed by meaningless elements is prohibited. Third, he maintains that the copula is meaningless only in (2) (see den Dikken 2006:115-123 for details). When these three assumptions are combined, the contrast between (2) and (3) can actually be reduced to the PIC. Besides being ad hoc, these assumptions are problematic for other reasons too. Among other things, there is no independent evidence that the copula is meaningless only in (2) and that the notion of meaning should affect adjunction.

§4. Subjacency (à la Cinque). In accordance with Subjacency à la Cinque (1990:40-43), extraction from a maximal projection is only possible if that maximal projection is both selected and locally c-commanded by a verb-like head. An account of the contrast between (2) and (3) in terms of Subjacency à la Cinque is offered by Moro (1997). In such an account, the relevant fragment of (2)-(3) is represented as in (4)-(5), respectively. SC stands for "small clause" here, while the trace indicates the position that the *wh*-phrase *di quale muro* ('of which wall') occupies before undergoing *wh*-movement.

(4) … $T°_{copula}$ [$_{SC}$ [$_{DP}$ una foto *t*] …
(5) … [$_{T°}$ ci $T°_{copula}$] [$_{SC}$ [$_{DP}$ una foto *t*] …

(4) minimally differs from (5): no incorporation into the copula takes place in (4), whereas the predicative clitic *ci* (the equivalent of English 'there') incorporates into the copula in (5), thereby forming the complex head *ci*+copula. This minimal difference indeed has dramatic consequences: predicative *ci* selects the post-verbal DP via predicate-subject selection in (5) (see Moro 1997:115; 2000:112); the complex head *ci*+copula inherits the selectional capacities of *ci*, so that *ci*+copula now also selects the post-verbal DP in (5). In contrast, the bare copula does not select the post-verbal DP in (4). Direct evidence for the selection of the post-verbal DP by *ci*+copula comes from the domain of unaccusativity. Unaccusative constructs can be characterized as those constructs headed by a V° that selects (as well as locally c-commanding) the unique argument featuring in the theta-grid of V°. Crucially, the construct headed by *ci*+copula satisfies all the standard diagnostics for unaccusativity (Moro 1997: Ch. 5; Hale and Keyser 2002: Ch. 6): for instance, a subpart of the post-verbal DP can be *ne*-cliticized in (6), paralleling the case of unaccusative constructs. On the other hand, *ne*-cliticization of a subpart of the post-verbal DP fails in the construct headed by the bare copula (i.e., by the copula which appears without *ci*) (7), paralleling the case of unergative constructs.

(6a) Ci furono [alcune foto del muro].
Lit. There=were some pictures of.the wall
(6b) Ce ne$_i$ furono [alcune t_i].
Lit. There=of.them=were some.
(7a) La causa della rivolta furono [alcune foto del muro].
Lit. The cause of.the riot were some pictures of.the wall
(7b) *La causa della rivolta ne$_i$ furono [alcune t_i].
Lit. The cause of the riot of.them=were some.

The data in (6)-(7) thus show that the post-verbal DP is selected by *ci*+copula in (6), but not by the bare copula in (7). A Subjacency-based explanation of the contrast between (2) and (3) now becomes available: *ci*+copula locally c-commands and selects the post-verbal DP in (3), whereas the bare copula locally c-commands – but fails to select – the post-verbal DP in (2). Therefore, the extraction of the *wh*-phrase *di quale muro* ('of which wall') from the post-verbal DP violates Subjacency à la Cinque in (2), but not in (3). Thus, the contrast between (2) and (3) naturally falls out from this version of Subjacency, without any ad hoc assumption.

§5. Conclusion. In this study we have shown that the contrast between (2) and (3) naturally follows from Subjacency à la Cinque (i.e., a locality condition based on configuration and selection), but not from the PIC (i.e., a locality condition based on phases). In particular, the PIC needs to be supplemented with ad hoc assumptions (including reference to meaning). All in all, this study capitalizes on the domain of copular sentences to re-evaluate the role of phase theory in locality, thereby offering a novel view of locality.

Chomsky 2000 In Martin, Michaels, and Uriagereka, eds. **Cinque** 1990 *Types of Ā-dependencies*. **den Dikken** 2006 *Relators and Linkers*. **Hale and Keyser** 2002 *Prolegomenon to a theory of argument structure*. **Legate** 2012 In Gallego, ed. **Moro** 1997 *The Raising of Predicates*. **Moro** 2000 *Dynamic Antisymmetry*.