Equatives as Predicationals: Evidence from Bangla

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Adger and Ramchand (2003) claim that the different kinds of copular constructions can actually be reduced to predicationals since all such constructions are formed under a PredP. Bangla, on the surface, exhibits two kinds of structures for predicationals and equatives. Predicationals do not carry a copula. However, equatives take an obligatory copula in non-embedded clauses which is marked aspectually (perfect or progressive) and occur in clause-medial position.

- (1) oi chele-ta klanto that boy-CLASS tired That boy is tired.
- (2) Peter Parker ho-l-o/ho-chch-e Spiderman Peter Parker be-PERF-3P/be-PROG-3P Spiderman Peter Parker is Spiderman.

However, despite this surface difference it can be shown that Bangla copular constructions actually abide by Adger and Ramchand's claims and also give an insight into the system of finiteness in this language. Becker (2004) cites examples from child English data and Russian to show that stage-level predicates (which include adjectival (as in (1)) and prepositional phrases) have an inherent aspectual projection that allows their 'anchoring' even without an overt copula. Here are a few instructive observations of equative clauses that strengthen the claim that appearance of the copula in equatives is related to finiteness and not to the nature of predication:

- (i) They are not obligatory in embedded clauses:
- (3) ami jan-i je Peter Parker (ho-l-o /ho-chch-e) I know-1P that Peter Parker be-PERF-3P be-PROG-3P

Spiderman Spiderman

I know that Peter Parker is Spiderman.

Since the anchoring requirements are already met by the matrix clause the copula becomes optional in embedded contexts.

- (ii) The copula is impossible with clause-final complementiser 'bole'. Bangla has a clause-initial complementiser 'je' (as seen in 3) and a clause-final' complementiser 'bole'. Bhattacharya (2013) shows that 'bole' occupies the C head in Bangla. Thus, the inability of 'bole' and the copula to occur together possibly indicates that they occupy the same position in the clause:
- (4) Peter Parker Spiderman bole oder ek-Sathe dekh-a jae na Peter Parker Spiderman so they together see-GER go-3P NEG Peter Parker is Spiderman so they cannot be seen together.
- (5) *Peter Parker ho-l-o/ho-chch-e Spiderman bole oder Peter Parker be-PERF-3P/be-PROG-3P Spiderman so they ek-Sathe dekh-a jae na together see-GER go-3P NEG Intended: Peter Parker is Spiderman so they cannot be seen together.
 - (iii) The word order changes from SOV to SVO. As seen in the above examples, the copula occurs sentence-medially in equatives though Bangla is a head-final language. This again indicates that the movement is triggered higher up in the clause to achieve finiteness. Thus, in a way, both predicationals and equatives occur without an overt copula.

The paper analyses these observations to show how predicationals and equatives underlyingly have the same structure in Bangla and the differences can be explained in terms of the demand imposed by the finiteness (Fin) feature (Adger 2007).

References:

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