One of the basic premises of the theory of syntax is that clause structures can be minimally identified as containing a verb phrase, playing the role of predicate, and a noun phrase, playing the role of subject. In this study Andrea Moro identifies a new category of copular sentences, namely inverse copular sentences, where the noun phrase which co-occurs with the verb phrase plays the role of predicate, occupying the position which is canonically reserved for subjects, and the subject is embedded in the verb phrase.

The consequences of such a discovery are pervasive. Four distinct areas of syntax are unified into a unique natural class. Along with inverse copular sentences, existential sentences, sentences with seem and unaccusative constructions are analysed as involving the raising of a predicative noun phrase to the most prominent position in the clause structure. In addition, new light is shed on some classical issues such as the distribution and nature of expletives, locality theory, cliticization phenomena, possessive constructions and the cross-linguistic variations of the Definiteness Effect.
CAMBRIDGE STUDIES IN LINGUISTICS

_General Editors: S. R. ANDERSON, J. BRESNAN, B. COMRIE,
W. DRESSLER, C. EWEN, R. HUDDLESTON, R. LASS,
D. LIGHTFOOT, J. LYONS, P. H. MATTHEWS,
R. POSNER, S. ROMAINE, N. V. SMITH, N. VINCENT_

_The raising of predicates_
THE RAISING OF PREDICATES

Predicative noun phrases and the theory of clause structure

ANDREA MORO

Istituto Scientifico H. San Raffaele, Milan
# Contents

_Acknowledgments_ page ix

Introduction: four apparently unrelated empirical domains 1

1 The anomaly of copular sentences: the raising of predicates 17

1.1 Subject–object asymmetries and the theory of clause structure 17

1.2 The anomaly of copular sentences: the data 23

1.3 The raising of predicates: a unified theory of copular sentences 30

1.4 Exploring the syntax of predicative noun phrases: 0-role assignment and the local domain for binding 77

1.5 Conclusions 89

2 The syntax of _ci_ 94

2.1 The standard analysis: on the notion of expletive 94

2.2 Extraction from the embedded subject of _ci_-sentences and other unexpected phenomena 103

2.3 An alternative analysis: _ci_ as a raised predicate 107

2.4 A difference between English _there_ and Italian _ci_ 118

2.5 Conclusions 127

3 Are there parameters in semantics? The defining properties of existential sentences 131

3.1 Introduction: on the absence of the Definiteness Effect in Italian existential sentences 131

3.2 On the so-called ‘existential meaning’: the role of syntax 133

3.3 How to escape the Definiteness Effect: the role of the pro-drop parameter 150

3.4 A cursory view across languages: ‘Jespersen’s generalization’ 159

3.5 Conclusions 163
Contents

4. The ‘quasi-copula’: the role of finite clauses in seem-sentences 167
   4.1 Finite clauses as arguments: passive vs seem 167
   4.2 Seem as the ‘quasi-copula’ 170
   4.3 On differentiating the role of it: empirical evidence 180
   4.4 Infinitival clauses with seem 194
   4.5 Conclusions 210

5 A view beyond: unaccusativity as an epiphenomenon 214
   5.1 On the notion of intransitive verbs 214
   5.2 A view beyond: unaccusative constructions as ci-sentences 222
   5.3 Conclusions 245

Appendix: a brief history of the copula 248
   1 The meaning(s) of ‘copula’ 248
   11 A brief survey of three major approaches 248
   111 ‘Grammatical subjects’: copular sentences in modern syntax 255

Notes 262
References 301
Index 310
Acknowledgments

Ideas are never developed in isolation; they always require the stimulation and the support of a community of people. In my case, the intellectual and emotional debt I have accumulated since I embarked on this project is enormous. Among the persons and institutions who have contributed to this work in different forms and at various times, I would like to thank: Giorgio Graffi, who allowed me to make my first steps in linguistics at the University of Pavia; Guglielmo Cinque and Giuseppe Longobardi at the University of Venice, who followed my Ph.D. programme; Noam Chomsky and James Higginbotham at MIT, where I spent a considerable time as a visiting scholar, partially supported by a Fulbright grant; Luigi Rizzi and Liliane Haegeman at the University of Geneva, where I took the Diplôme d’Études Supérieures. I would also like to express my gratitude to Luigi Burzio, Gennaro Chierchia, Marcel Den Dikken, Jacqueline Guéron, Teun Hoekstra, Richard Kayne, Anthony Kroch, Alessandra Tomaselli and Maria Rita Manzini for their generous attention to my work and to Peter Taylor for having translated my quasi-English into a natural language; special thanks to my (extended standard) family for having shared with me the catastrophic belief that copular sentences are the centre of the universe.

The original idea of inverse copular sentences (discussed in the first three chapters of the present book) was presented in its first published form in 1988 (Moro 1988), and, during 1990, was presented at the Cambridge GLOW Conference in a talk entitled ‘there-raising; principles across levels’; at the Syntax Lunch Seminar at the CUNY Graduate Center in New York City; and at the Penn Linguistics Club at the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia. The last part of chapter 1, where predicative nominals are analysed, was presented as a separate piece of research at a University of Geneva Séminaire de recherche in 1993. The analysis set out in chapter 4 was presented in talks given at the Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore in 1991; at a University of Geneva Séminaire de recherche in 1995; and at the ‘Arbeitsgruppe Strukturelle Grammatik an der Humboldt-Universität’ at Max Planck Gesellschaft in Berlin in 1995. The content of the last chapter
x Acknowledgments

was presented at the University of Lisbon GLOW Conference in 1992 in a talk entitled ‘A syntactic decomposition of a lexical primitive: the unaccusativity effect’; at a University of Geneva ‘Séminaire de recherche’ in 1992; as well as at the first ‘Langues et Grammaire’ conference at the University of Paris 8 in 1994; and the section concerning possessive constructions was presented at the Societas Linguistica Europaea twenty-eighth annual meeting in Leiden in 1995. It goes without saying that I also benefited by the various formal and informal presentations I had the opportunity of giving at the universities of Pavia, Venice and Padua, as well as MIT. Two preliminary versions of the theory presented here have been circulating as Moro (1991) and Moro (1993a).

Finally, I would like to express my deep gratitude to Massimo Piattelli Palmarini, who encouraged me to undertake the final revision of this work while we were working together at the foundation of the Dipartimento di Scienze Cognitive at the Istituto Scientifico H. San Raffaele in Milan, and to Don Luigi Maria Verzé for having believed in linguistics.