

Predicate Clefts and Base-Generation: Evidence From Yiddish and Brazilian Portuguese ¹

Seth Cable
MIT
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This paper describes and analyzes the predicate cleft construction found in Yiddish. It is shown that the topicalized constituent in this construction paradoxically appears *both* to have been base-generated in its peripheral position *and* to have been moved to that position. This paradox is resolved if we hypothesize that the topic-constituent is first base-generated in a peripheral topic position, and then may subsequently move to higher topic positions via successive A-bar movement. Such an account is nearly identical to the analysis of Clitic Left Dislocation offered in Iatridou 1995. I point out some interesting similarities between Clitic Left Dislocation and the Yiddish predicate cleft, and try to explain away some of their obvious differences. This analysis is also shown to be well-motivated for the predicate cleft in Brazilian Portuguese. Moreover, it seems that it might be correct for the Korean predicate cleft as well. The Hebrew predicate cleft, however, has properties which are problematic for this analysis, and I discuss two hypotheses why this might be so.

(1) The Yiddish Predicate Cleft

1.1 Basic Facts and Evidence for Movement

Yiddish contains a verb-doubling construction superficially similar to the predicate clefts found in many West African languages and creoles. A VP or a V may be topicalized by pairing it with an infinitival copy occupying the left-peripheral topic position of the clause. I'll adopt the term "predicate cleft" for this construction, noting in passing that there's no evidence for it actually being a "cleft".

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(1a) Essen est Maks fish.
to-eat eats Max fish
As for eating, Max eats fish.

(1b) Essen fish est Maks.
to-eat fish eats Max
As for eating fish, Max eats them.

This initial copy of the VP or V may bear past-participial morphology, but only if the lower copy of the VP or V is a past-participle.

(2a) Gegessen hot Maks gegessen fish.
eaten has Max eaten fish
As for having eaten, Max has eaten fish.

(2b) Gegessen fish hot Maks gegessen.
As for having eaten fish, Max has eaten them.

(2c) Gelofn iz Maks in gesheft gelofn.
run is Max in store run
As for having run, Max has run to the store.

(2d) * Gegessen est Maks fish.
As for having eaten, Max eats fish.

(2e) * Gegessen fish est Maks.
As for having eaten fish, Max eats them.

(2f) * Gelofn loyft Maks in gesheft.
As for having run, Max runs to the store.

The unacceptability of (2d, e, f) might well be for semantic reasons; observe the strangeness of their English glosses. Note that the initial copy of the VP or V needn't bear the past-participial morphology in these cases. As the gloss below indicates, the morphology has an interpretational effect.

(3) Essen hot Maks gegessen a fish.
to-eat has Max eaten a fish
As for eating, Max has eaten a fish.

Throughout this paper, I will make use of the following terminology. I will use “clefted VP” and “clefted V” to mean the VP or V in the main clause which is the ‘copy’ of the infinitive or participle in the topic position of the clause. The term “clefted constituent” covers both clefted VPs and clefted Vs. I will use “topic infinitive” and “topic participle” to mean the infinitive or participle in the topic position of the clause. The term “topic constituent” covers both.

Because this construction contains two pronounced copies of the same V that can differ morphologically, one might initially suppose that each such sentence contains two distinct instances of the V, base-generated in different positions. Under this analysis, the Yiddish predicate cleft is something like its left dislocation structure, illustrated in (4).

- (4) Maks₁ – im₁ hob ikh gezen.
Max him have I zeen.
Max₁ – I've seen him₁.

Although tempting, this “base-generation analysis” faces some difficult empirical challenges. The most often mentioned is that the relation between the topic constituent and the clefted constituent is island-sensitive. This strongly suggests that the two constituents are related by movement.

(from Davis & Prince 1986)

- (5a) Veysn hostu mir gezogt az er veyst a sakh.
to-know have-you me told that he knows a lot
As for knowing, you told me that he knows a lot.

- (5b) * Veysn hob ikh gezen dem yidn vos veyst a sakh.
to-know have I seen the man who knows a lot
As for knowing, I saw the man who knows a lot.

- (5c) * Veysn hostu mir gezogt ver es veyst a sakh.
to-know have-you me told who it knows a lot
As for knowing, you told me who knows a lot.

Another problem with grouping together predicate clefts and left dislocation structures is that, as (4) illustrates, left dislocated DPs in Yiddish do not occupy the “first position” in the V2 structure of the sentence. If a left dislocated DP is placed in the first position, ungrammaticality results.

- (6a) * Maks₁ hob ikh im₁ gezen.
(6b) * Maks₁ hob im₁ ikh gezen.

However, the topic constituent of a predicate cleft *does* occupy the first position in the V2 structure. This is shown by the fact that the matrix verb must follow the topic constituent.

(from Davis & Prince 1986)

- (7a) Leyenen leyent er dos bukh.
to-read reads he the book
As for reading, he is reading the book.

(7b) * Leyenen er leyent dos bukh.

These properties make the Yiddish predicate cleft appear more like its topicalization construction than left dislocation. Topicalization in Yiddish clearly involves movement to the first position in the V2 structure (Davis & Prince 1986).

How does one reconcile the evidence that the topic constituent and the clefted constituent are related by movement with the fact that the clefted constituent is pronounced and can differ morphologically from the topic constituent? Landau 2004a offers a contemporary analysis of similar facts surrounding the Hebrew predicate cleft. Like the Yiddish predicate cleft, the Hebrew predicate cleft consists of an infinitival V or VP, occupying a left-peripheral position, paired with an identical, finite V within the matrix clause. The relation between the topic infinitive and the clefted constituent is island-sensitive, suggesting that movement relates the two. In broad strokes, Landau proposes that the Hebrew predicate cleft is derived by A-bar movement of the matrix VP to Spec-CP. Previous to this movement, however, the matrix copy of the head of the VP undergoes head-movement to I. This matrix copy of the V surfaces as pronounced, because otherwise the tense and agreement features within I will not be phonologically realized, an instance of unrecoverable deletion. Finally, the infinitival morphology on the left-peripheral V is default morphology that appears because no other tense or agreement features are attached to this copy of the V.

Landau 2004a,b deftly employs sophisticated contemporary syntactic theories to account for baffling features of the Hebrew predicate cleft that, previously, had hardly even been documented. Naturally, then, we should ask whether a movement analysis of that sort might make sense of the Yiddish predicate cleft. Unfortunately, there are three properties of the Yiddish predicate cleft that would render this sort of movement analysis impossible.

1.2 Problems for Any Movement Account

The predicate cleft in Yiddish presents three puzzles to any analysis which attempts to relate its topic constituent and its clefted constituent by movement. The first two puzzles are merely “challenges” that a proponent of a movement analysis might be happy to meet. The last puzzle, however, I take as definitive evidence against any movement account.

1.2.1 Why is the Clefted Constituent Pronounced?

One of the defining properties of the predicate cleft construction is that there are two copies of the clefted constituent: one in a left-peripheral position and one in the expected position in the main clause. Since Koopman 1984,

analysts who relate these two copies by movement have been at pains to explain why the lower, main clause copy of the clefted constituent is pronounced. Typically, one of two answers is given. The first, dating back to Koopman 1984, is that the lower copy of the V is a resumptive element required to license an otherwise illegal movement. The other, taken up in Landau 2004a, is that languages with predicate clefts lack do-support, and so the lower copy of the V surfaces in order to support the otherwise stranded T/Agr features in I².

The Yiddish predicate cleft creates problems for both these analyses. Consider the data in (8).

(8a) *Gevust hob ikh es.*
 known have I it
As for having known, I have known it.

(8b) *Gevust hob ikh es gevust.*
 known have I it known
As for having known, I have known it.

(8c) *Visn hob ikh es gevust.*
 to-know have I it known
As for knowing, I have known it.

The morphological and interpretational difference between (8b) and (8c) suggests that the topic-constituent can bear past-participial morphology. On a movement account, then, (8b) must be derived by moving the entire participle containing the V to the left-periphery. But, if the whole participle has moved in (8b), what are the “stranded features” demanding pronunciation of the lower copy of the participle? The T/Agr features are born by the auxiliary verb “hubn” *have*, and presumably all the participial features have moved with the V up to Spec CP.

At this point, one might hypothesize that the lower copy of “gevust” in (8b) is a resumptive element, saving an otherwise illicit movement of the participle. But why should movement of a participle be illicit? Even if we were to adopt the ECP, which drives accounts of this sort (Koopman 1984), there is nothing obviously wrong with participial movement in Yiddish. Although such movement might leave a “non lexically-governed trace,” the remnant movement of the VP in (8a) suggests that Yiddish has no problems with movement leaving such a trace.

Now, there is another analysis of (8b) that a movement proponent might develop, one that seems closer to the truth than those we’ve just considered. There happens to be a semantic difference between (8a) and (8b) that I have not

² A third analysis, which is often given for the predicate clefts found in West African languages and creoles, is that they are derived by movement from a doubled verb or cognate object construction (Manfredi 1993, Harbour 2002, Kandybowicz 2003). This does not seem an attractive approach to the Yiddish facts, since it lacks the required base constructions.

yet indicated. In a predicate cleft with a topic participle, the matrix copy of the participle *must* receive a focus intonation and semantics. Thus, (8a) and (8b) are more properly transcribed and glossed as follows.

(9a) *Gevust hob ikh es.*

As for having known, I have known it.

(9b) *Gevust hob ikh es GEVUST.*

As for having known, I have KNOWN it.

In both (9a) and (9b), the topic participle indicates that “having known” is information that is discourse-given. In (9b), however, the lower focused copy of the participle indicates that “my knowing it” is new information (possibly contrasted with some discourse-given alternatives). A movement analysis might, then, hypothesize that the matrix copy of “gevust” in (8b) is pronounced because it bears a focus feature. Not pronouncing the lower copy would presumably result in unrecoverable deletion of the focus feature.

Although this is the most sensible way for a movement account to treat the facts in (8), it raises the question of why the doubling seen in predicate clefts is only possible when V(P)s are topicalized. When a DP is topicalized in Yiddish, one cannot ever pronounce the lower copy, even when focus intonation is given to it.

(10a) *Maks_{n1} hob ikh gezen t₁.*

Max have I seen

Max I have seen.

(10b) * *Maks_{n1} hob ikh gezen MAKS_{n1}.*

The “resumption” and “morphological-stranding” analyses predict (10b) to be ungrammatical, since pronunciation of the lower DP copy would be motivated neither by the movement being illicit nor by there being stranded morphology. However, once we admit a principle which allows lower copies of participles to be pronounced in order to preserve their focus information, we must explain why this principle only applies to elements of verbal category.

1.2.2 Landau’s Generalization and Remnant Movement

Landau 2004b makes the following stunning observation about Hebrew predicate clefts.

Landau's Generalization: if a topic constituent contains any arguments of the V, it must contain all obligatory arguments of the V³.

In other words, there are just three types of topic constituents: ones containing only the clefted V and none of its arguments, ones containing the clefted V and all of its arguments, ones containing the clefted V and all of its obligatory arguments (and possibly some non-obligatory arguments). A topic constituent *cannot* fail to contain an argument of the clefted V if that argument is obligatory. Landau 2004b demonstrates that this generalization holds over a wide assortment of clefted verbs, and no exceptions to it have yet been discovered.

Happily, Landau's Generalization also holds for Yiddish predicate clefts. A true universal of predicate-clefting seems to have been discovered. The following data illustrate.

- (11a) Ikh gib *(di kinder) *(tsukerkes).
I give the children candies
I give the children candies.
- (11b) Gibn gib ikh di kinder tsukerkes.
(11c) Gibn di kinder tsukerkes gib ikh.
(11d) Gegebn di kinder tsukerkes hob ikh gegeben.
(11e) * Gibn di kinder gib ikh tsukerkes.
(11f) * Gibn tsukerkes gib ikh di kinder.
(11g) * Gegebn di kinder hob ikh tsukerkes gegeben.

- (12a) Er leygt *(dos bukh) *(afn tish).
he puts the book on-the table
He puts the book on the table.
- (12b) Leygn leygt er dos bukh afn tish.
(12c) Leygn dos bukh afn tish leygt er.
(12d) Geleygt dos bukh afn tish hob ikh geleygt.
(12e) * Leygn dos bukh leygt er afn tish.
(12f) * Leygn afn tish leygt er dos bukh.
(12g) * Geleygt dos bokh hob ikh afn tish geleygt.

- (13a) Er shraybt a briv (der mamen).
he writes a letter to-the mother
He writes a letter to his mother.
- (13b) Shraybn shraybt er a briv der mamen.
(13c) Shraybn a briv shraybt er der mamen.
(13d) Geshribt a briv hot er der mamen geshribt.

³ Landau 2004b considers this generalization to be one holding of VP-fronting more generally, and points out an identical constraint, reported in Phillips 2003, which holds of VP fronting in English. In this paper, however, I will narrowly treat the constraint as one holding of "predicate clefting", leaving open the question of how this constraint should be related to the "Potential Complete VP Constraint" of Phillips 2003.

As shown in (11), neither of the arguments of “gibn” are optional. Consequently, if the topic constituent ever contains “gibn” or “gegebn” and one of its arguments, it must contain both arguments. In (12) we see the same holds for the verb “leygn”. However, (13) shows us that the verb “shraybn” takes an optional dative argument. As Landau’s Generalization correctly predicts, a topic constituent can contain both “shraybn” and its direct object argument, while its optional dative argument remains “stranded” in the matrix clause.

Curiously, the predicate cleft seems to be the only “V(P)-fronting” construction in Yiddish that is subject to Landau’s Generalization. Remnant movement, for example, massively violates it.

(14a) [Geleygt dos bukh] hot er afn tish.
 laid the book has he on-the table
He laid the book on the table.

(14b) [Gegeben tsukerkes] hot er gor di kinder.
 given candies has he of-all-things to-the children.
Of all things, he has given candy to the children.

(14c) [Gegeben di kinder] hot er gor tsukerkes.

Now, it is certainly the case that Landau’s Generalization can be restated as follows⁴.

Landau’s Generalization : [V Arg] is a possible topic-constituent iff [V Arg] is a possible matrix VP.

This restatement makes it more apparent that Landau’s Generalization is actually a condition that unless the topic constituent is a bare V, it must be a base-generable VP. Landau’s Generalization, then, might follow nicely from an analysis in which the topic constituent simply *is* a base generated structure. On the other hand, Landau 2004b shows that it is also possible for Landau’s Generalization to follow from a movement account, given certain assumptions about how the Theta-Criterion is evaluated over copies of a theta-assigning head. Importantly, though, the Yiddish facts present such a movement account with a difficult question: if topic constituents in Yiddish are derived by movement of VPs, why should predicate clefts be subject to Landau’s Generalization while remnant movement of VPs is not? Alternately, why can’t scrambling feed predicate clefting in Yiddish, effectively freeing Yiddish predicate clefts from Landau’s Generalization?

⁴ This restatement, in fact, is closer to the original statement of the generalization in (19) of Landau 2004b.

1.2.3 Genus-Species Predicate Clefts

We have so far seen properties of the Yiddish predicate cleft which are “puzzling” under an analysis that relates the topic constituent and the clefted constituent by movement. However, puzzles are something theorists rise to the challenge of. Are there any more difficult problems a movement analysis faces?

Well, consider these sentences.

(15a) ? Essen fish est Maks hekht.

to-eat fish eats Max pike

As for eating fish, Max eats pike.

(15b) ? Essen frukht est Maks bananes.

to-eat fruit eats Max bananas

As for eating fruit, Max eats bananas.

(15c) ? Essen fleysh est Maks nor fish.

to-eat meat eats Max only fish

As for eating meat, Max only eats fish.

(16a) ? Forn keyn amerike bin ikh gefloygn keyn nyu-york.

to-travel to Amerike am I flown to New York

As for traveling to America, I have flown to New York.

(16b) ? Forn keyn amerike bin ikh gefloygn keyn amerike.

to-travel to Amerike am I flown to Amerika

As for traveling to America, I have flown to Amerika.

These sentences are reported to be natural within a particular context, though it should be noted that my principle informant marks each with exactly one question mark. I will assume that this weak grade of “imperfectness” is not sufficient evidence against such sentences being generable by Yiddish grammar, and will note in passing that resumptive pronouns in English have a similarly “marked” status, though they are often taken to be a syntactic phenomenon.

(17) ? The Saami are the only people who we have any evidence for their being in Scandinavia before 500 BC.

The sentences in (15) and (16) witness a general rule of Yiddish predicate clefting. The topic constituent can differ lexically from the clefted constituent *if and only if* it denotes a topic which the clefted constituent provides more specific information about. The sentences in (15) and (16) establish the “if”-direction of this claim; the sentences in (18) establish the “only-if” direction.

(18a) * Zen den tatn hob ikh gezen mayn foter.
to-see the dad have I seen my father
As for seeing my dad, I saw my father.

(18b) * Essen hekht hob ikh gegessen fish.
to-eat pike have I eaten fish
As for eating pike, I have eaten fish.

I assume that the sentences in (18) are unacceptable for semantic / pragmatic reasons; note the absurdity of their English glosses. Thus, it remains for a syntactic analysis of the predicate cleft only to explain the possibility of (15) and (16).

The grammaticality of the sentences in (15) and (16) essentially refutes any analysis of the Yiddish predicate cleft that claims the topic constituent *always* originates in the position of the clefted constituent. To put the problem concretely, such an analysis would have to assume that the VP “fly to New York” in (16a) became “travel to America” after it had moved into the left-peripheral position. Although I imagine someone could work out such an account, I am not clever enough to attempt it ⁵.

In the face of these facts, however, a movement proponent might propose that Yiddish speakers can generate predicate cleft structures in two very different ways: by moving the clefted constituent to the left periphery, or by base-generating a topic constituent in the left periphery. This, of course, raises the question “When the topic constituent differs lexically from the clefted constituent, is their relation still island-sensitive?” This question, however, is difficult for me to presently answer. The problem is that, unlike the dialects described in Davis & Prince 1986, Kallgren & Prince 1989 and Hoge 1998, the dialect of my primary informant disallows *any examples* in which predicate clefting crosses a tensed CP, be them subjacency-observing or not.

(19a) essen vil ikh essen a fish.
to-eat want I to-eat a fish
As for eating, I want to eat a fish.

(19b) * essen gleybt Bill az Maks est fish.
to-eat believes Bill that Max eats fish.
As for eating, Bill says that Max eats fish.

⁵ Late-insertion models are of no help here. In a late-insertion model, one still has to assume some general principle requiring the syntactic copies of a constituent to be filled by identical lexical material. Perhaps one could imagine that that constraint is somehow obviated in these sentences, but spelling out a theory of when that constraint can be violated seems as impressive a task as spelling out when you can “alter” the lexical content of a constituent you have moved.

Also, although I haven’t had time to check this myself, one might try to find examples in which the *syntactic structure* of the topic constituent differs from that of the clefted constituent. If found, such cases would also render the imagined late-insertion analysis impossible.

(19c) * Gegessen gleybt Bill az Maks hobt gegessen a fish.
eaten believes Bill that Max has eaten a fish
As for having eaten, Bill says that Max has eaten a fish.

However, if we adjust our question to “In the dialect of my primary informant, is the relationship between the topic constituent and the clefted constituent still clause-bounded when they lexically differ?”, the answer is a resounding ‘yes’.

(20a) * Essen frukht gleybt Maks az Maria est bananes.
to-eat fruit believes Max that Maria eats bananas
As for eating fruit, Max believes that Mary eats bananas.

(20b) * Essen fleysh gleybt Maks az Maria est hekht.
to-eat meat believes Max that Maria eats pike
As for eating meat, Max believes that Mary eats pike.

Moreover, these genus-species predicate clefts are also possible in Brazilian Portuguese⁶. Since my primary informant for this language *does* allow predicate clefting to cross tensed CPs, we can test our initial question. The data indicate that island-sensitivity is observed even when the topic constituent and the clefted constituent differ lexically.

(21a) Comer peixe, eu normalmente como samão.
to-eat fish I usually eat salmon
As for eating fish, I usually eat salmon.

(21b) Comer peixe, a Maria acha que eu como samão.
to-eat fish Mary thinks that I eat salmon
As for eating fish, Mary thinks that I eat salmon.

(21c) Ler livros, a Maria acha que eu leio romances.
to-read books Mary thinks that I read novels
As for reading books, Mary thinks that I read novels.

(21d) * Ler livros, eu conheci um cara que lê romances.
to-read books I know a guy who reads novels
As for reading books, I know a guy who reads novels.

(21e) * Ler livros, Maria vê TV antes de ler romances.
to-read books Mary watches TV before of to-read novels
As for reading books, Mary watches TV before reading novels.

We therefore need an account which can reconcile the fact that the relation between the topic constituent and the clefted constituent is island-

⁶ My primary informant for Brazilian Portuguese reported no marked status for the sentences in (21a – c).

sensitive with the fact that the two constituents can contain entirely different lexical items. The challenge is that the latter fact suggests that the topic constituent originates in the left-periphery, while the former suggests that it has moved there from the position of the clefted constituent. Once again, the predicate cleft seems to be paradoxically displaying properties of both movement and base-generation.

Interestingly, such a paradox also surrounds clitic left dislocation structures.

(2) Clitic Left Dislocation and Predicate Clefts

2.1 Cinque's Paradox and Iatridou 1995

Not long ago, there was much debate over the structure of the clitic left dislocation construction (h.f. "CLD"). The debate centered on whether the peripheral DP in these structures was base-generated in its surface position or moved there from within the clause⁷. There appeared to be, paradoxically, evidence for both positions. Evidence in support of the DP being base generated in the left periphery included the fact that the relation between the DP and its co-referent matrix clitic does not license parasitic gaps and does not seem subject to weak crossover effects. Moreover, no proponent of the movement account could give an adequate explanation for the presence of the co-indexed pronominal in the main clause; if it is the remnant of an earlier clitic-doubling structure, why is there CLD in languages that otherwise disallow clitic doubling? Despite these strong arguments for base-generation, the relation between the left-peripheral DP and its co-indexed clitic is island-sensitive. The following data illustrate.

Modern Greek (from Iatridou 1995)

(22a) Ton Kosta₁ i Maria ton₁ idhe.
 the Kosta the Mary him saw
Kosta₁ – Mary saw him₁.

(22b) Ton Kosta₁ nomiza oti i Maria ton₁ idhe.
 the Kosta I-thought that the Mary him saw
Kosta₁ – I thought that Mary saw him₁.

(22c) * Ton Kosta₁ sinandisa tin kopela pu ton₁ idhe.
 the Kosta met-I the girl who him saw
 * *Kosta₁ – I met the girl who saw him₁.*

⁷ By using the past tense here, I do not mean to imply that the debate has been settled, only that (to my knowledge) the field's attention has been diverted away from this topic as of late.

- (22d) * Ton Kosta ipes oti to oti i Maria ton agapa tromazi ton Yani.
 the Kosta said-you that the that Mary him loves scares the Yani.
 * *Kosta₁ – You said that that Mary loves him₁ scares Yani.*

Iatridou 1995 refers to this puzzle as “Cinque’s Paradox”. Cinque 1990 wrestles with these facts, and comes to the conclusion that strong island-sensitivity is a representational property of A’-chains, rather than a property of the movement operation. Iatridou 1995, however, suggests an analysis which would not require appeal to representational constraints on chains.

All the evidence supporting the base-generation of the peripheral DP comes from examples in which it is in the same minimal clause as its co-indexed clitic. All the evidence supporting the movement of the peripheral DP comes from examples in which it is in a different clause from its co-indexed clitic. Now, although the evidence shows that the DP is in its base-generated position in (22a), it is a leap to suppose that it is *also* in its base-generated position in (22b). Iatridou proposes instead that the peripheral DP is first base generated in the left-periphery of the minimal CP containing its co-indexed clitic, and then can move up to higher CP projections. The imagined derivation is illustrated below.

- (23a) [_{IP} i Maria ton₁ idhe] (merger of “ton Kosta”)
 (23b) [_{CP} Ton Kosta₁ [_{IP} i Maria ton₁ idhe]] (merger of higher material)
 (23c) [_{CP} C [_{IP} nomiza oti [_{CP} Ton Kosta₁ [_{IP} i Maria ton₁ idhe]]]] (movement)
 (23d) [_{CP} Ton Kosta₁ [_{CP} C [_{IP} nomiza oti [_{CP} t₁ [_{IP} i Maria ton₁ idhe]]]]]

The island-sensitivity of long-distance CLD naturally follows. If a particular subordinate CP is an island, then movement out of that CP will be illicit even for constituents generated in its left periphery.

Iatridou 1995 works out this proposal in careful technical detail, and shows that it resolves Cinque’s Paradox. Moreover, it is shown to make a number of surprising and accurate predications, including the fact that CLD *does* license PGs as soon as it crosses multiple CPs.

2.2 The Presence of Movement in the Predicate Cleft Construction

It seems that an analysis along these lines could also explain the paradoxical properties of the Yiddish predicate cleft. Consider that all the evidence suggesting a movement relation between the topic constituent and the clefted constituent is found in sentences in which the two are in separate CPs. As with CLD structures, predicate clefting doesn’t license parasitic gaps within a single clause⁸.

⁸ Of course, whether you believe the disputed VP movement should license a parasitic gap of this type depends upon your theory of parasitic gaps. Note, again, that since my primary informant dislikes all

- (24) * Leyenen dos bukh leyent Bill eyder Maks leyent.
 to-read the book reads Bill before Max reads.
As for reading the book, Bill reads it before Max reads it.

When we confine ourselves to a single clause, then, there is no evidence that the topic constituent has been moved into its surface position. Let us suppose, then, that the topic constituent is base-generated in the left periphery of the clause minimally containing the clefted constituent. All long-distance predicate clefting is then derived by movement of the topic-constituent out of this peripheral position. In broad strokes, the imagined derivation is shown in (25).

- (25a) [_{VP} er veyst a sakh] (merger of “veysn”)⁹
 (25b) [_{IP} veysn [_{VP} er veyst a sakh]] (merger of larger structure)
 (25c) [_{VP} du host mir gezogt [_{CP} az [_{IP} veysn [_{VP} er veyst a sakh]]]]
 (movement of “veysn”)
 (25d) [_{IP} veysn₁ [_{VP} du host mir gezogt [_{CP} az [_{IP} t₁ [_{VP} er veyst a sakh]]]]]
 (V2-related (phonological) head-movement)
 (25e) [_{IP} veysn₁ host₂ [_{VP} du t₂ mir gezogt [_{CP} az [_{IP} t₁ [_{VP} er veyst a sakh]]]]]
 (25f) Veysn hostu mir gezogt az er veyst a sakh.

We see, then, that this analysis would explain why the relation between the topic constituent and the clefted constituent is island sensitive, without actually proposing that the topic constituent *originates* in the position of the clefted constituent. Moreover, since the clefted constituent is not a “trace” of the topic constituent, it is not puzzling that they may differ morphologically and may both surface as pronounced. Importantly, we can also make sense of all the sentences in (15) – (21); as long as the semantics of the construction permit it, the topic constituent is free to contain different lexical material from the clefted constituent. We can therefore account for all the classic puzzles surrounding this construction, as well as the special problems introduced in Sections 1.2.1 and 1.2.3. Later, I will offer more detailed argumentation to show that this analysis provides a sound explanation of Landau’s Generalization.

Before we begin spelling out this analysis in greater detail, let us address one immediate objection. In Section 1.1, it was shown that although the topic

predicate clefting across finite CPs, I haven’t been able to check whether such PGs are possible with long-distance predicate clefting.

⁹ Note that the topic-infinitive in this sentence is not the standard infinitive of “veys”, which is “visn”. The appearance of such ‘pseudo-infinitives’ in Yiddish predicate clefts has been taken as weak evidence for a movement relation between the topic-infinitive and the clefted-constituent. In Cable 2003, I outline an analysis which would treat this as a purely phonological phenomenon, one that would not require the topic-infinitive and the main V to be syntactic copies of one another. On the other hand, in that paper I do favor an analysis in which, contrary to what I argue here, the two *are* syntactic copies of one another. Lately, though, I’ve uncovered further evidence which argues strongly for a non-syntactic, phonological analysis.

Note that both in this paper and in Cable 2003 I adopt Diesing 1990’s proposal that Yiddish is V2 within its IP.

constituent in Yiddish must occupy the first position in the V2 structure, a left-dislocated DP cannot. If predicate-clefting is essentially the CLD of a verbal structure, why do dislocated DPs in Yiddish seem to target a different position from that targeted by predicate-clefting?

A reasonable response to this worry would be to invoke the distinction between CLD and “Left Dislocation” as found in English. As Cinque 1977, 1990 makes strikingly clear, the two constructions differ with respect to a multitude of properties, despite their superficial similarities. When we apply these diagnostics to the dislocation structure found in Yiddish, we find that Yiddish is clearly a Left Dislocation language like English, and entirely lacks the CLD structures. First, we note that there is a “marked pause” between the dislocated DP and the following matrix clause.

(26a) Maks – im hob ikh gezen.
Max him have I seen
Max – I’ve seen him.

(26b) * Maks im hob ikh gezen.

(26c) * Maks hob ikh im gezen.

(26d) * Maks hob im ikh gezen.

Moreover, there is no “case matching” between the dislocated DP and the co-indexed matrix pronominal.

(27a) * Maksn – Im hob ikh gezen.

(27b) * Maksn im hob ikh gezen.

(27c) * Maksn hob ikh im gezen.

(27d) * Maksn hob im ikh gezen.

As with English, only DPs can be dislocated in Yiddish.

(28a) * In hoyz – ikh bin gegangen ahin.
in house I am gone there
To the house, I went there.

(28b) * In hoyz – ahin bin ikh gegangen.

Finally, dislocated DPs cannot in Yiddish target embedded CPs.

(29) * Maria meynt az Maks – im lib ikh.
Mary thinks that Max him like I
Mary thinks that Max, I like him.

Given that Yiddish lacks CLD, and that CLD and Left Dislocation independently seem to target distinct positions, no immediate paradox for our analysis arises

from the fact that in Yiddish dislocated DPs and topicalized VPs target distinct positions.

Now, if the diagnostics just discussed distinguish CLD structures, then our hypothesis that predicate clefting in Yiddish is essentially CLD of a verbal structure would predict that it should satisfy many of these diagnostics. Interestingly, it does. First, a “marked pause” is not required between the topic constituent and the matrix IP.

- (30a) Essen est Maks nor fish.
to-eat eats Max only fish
As for eating, Max eats only fish.

Furthermore, predicate clefting can target intermediate CPs.

- (31) Maria zagt az essen est Maks nor fish.
Mary says that to-eat eats Max only fish
Mary says that, as for eating, Max eats only fish.

Finally, we might ask why Yiddish should lack classic CLD structures, given that it seems to allow CLD of verbal constituents. Iatridou 1995 hypothesizes that the classic CLD structures crucially require a “pro” appearing within matrix argument positions. Since there is no evidence that Yiddish has “pro”, we might hypothesize that the absence of “pro” in Yiddish prevents it from having the classic CLD structures. Moreover, I assume that “pro” is not a required piece of the predicate cleft construction, a sensible assumption since many languages with predicate clefts lack any kind of pro-drop. Therefore, a language should in principle allow verbal CLD (“predicate clefting”) while not permitting classic, nominal CLD ¹⁰.

(3) The Proposed Analysis

What follow are four special hypotheses which together explain all the data we have seen so far. I will introduce each hypothesis, attempting sometimes to motivate it independently, and then show what aspect of the data it explains. By the end of this section, most of our puzzles will have answers.

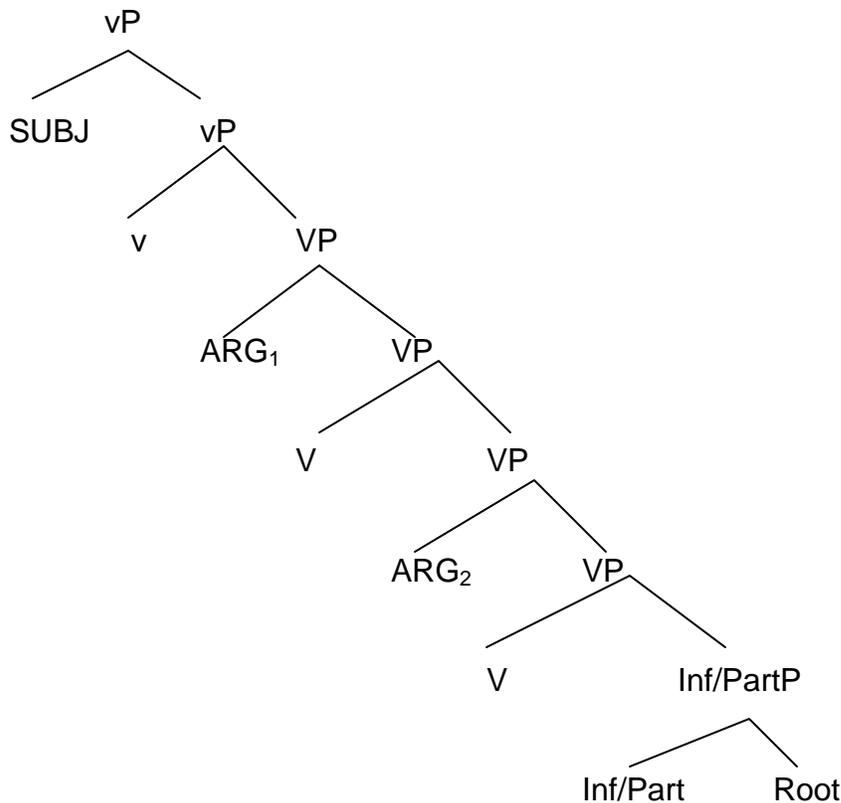
¹⁰ As to why there are languages which disallow even verbal CLD (e.g., English), I have no interesting answer. Note, however, that it is in general a mystery why some languages should permit predicate clefting while other languages do not. Why, for example, should Yiddish have this construction while German lacks it? Why should Yoruba have it while nearby neighbor and relative Igbo disallows it? Why should predicate clefts sound so weird when translated into Standard English, while (according to rumor) Irish English makes regular use of such constructions? To my knowledge, no one has a convincing answer.

A. The Clause-Boundedness of Predicate Cleft Semantics: The semantic relationship between the topic constituent and the clefted constituent is very local, not extending beyond the CP containing the clefted constituent. However, at LF, a trace/copy of the topic constituent can bear this relation with the clefted constituent.

I do not yet understand the why semantics of the predicate cleft demands that this relationship be so local. Iatridou 1995 derives the analogous locality condition on CLD from the assumption that the relevant semantic relation is “predication”, in the sense of Williams 1980. It is unclear to me, however, whether it is correct to view predicate cleft constructions as instances of predication. Therefore, assumption (A) must be taken as a primitive of my analysis.

It has already been shown that assumption (A) is enough to explain the island-sensitivity of long distance predicate clefting. Since that island-sensitivity is the only special property of long distance predicate clefting, I will now confine my attention purely to predicate clefting within a single clause.

B. The Structure of the Verbal Projection: I have so far been agnostic as to the difference between vPs and VPs. I will now bring vPs into the discussion, by proposing the following as the structure of the verbal projection.



One structure that needs elucidation here is the Inf/Part projection and what it contains. I assume that whatever heads introduce the infinitival and participial features onto the V are located *between* the projection of the category-free root and the first V-head c-commanding it.

Another structure in need of explanation is the RootP. I assume that the Root projection is the lowest element in the tree and contains none of the V's arguments. The Root head then eventually moves up to the V head, at which point its category is defined to be a V. Moreover, I assume that the theta-requirements of the V simply don't hold of the Root; this is why it's possible for the RootP not to contain any of the V's arguments. More specifically, I assume that although the Root has an argument structure, its theta-roles are only "projected" from its argument structure once it has moved into a V-head. Presumably, it is only "projected" theta-roles which are visible to the Theta-Criterion.

The basic idea behind freeing RootPs from the Theta-Criterion is to ensure that Roots can appear without their semantic arguments so long as higher, verbal structure is not present¹¹. The importance of this to our analysis of the predicate cleft will be clear in a moment. However, this idea can also be motivated by independent considerations. Recall the facts below.

- (32a) The army's destruction of the hospital upset the nuns.
- (32b) The army's destruction upset the nuns. ("the army" = agent)
- (32c) The destruction upset the nuns.
- (32d) The army's destroying the hospital upset the nuns.
- (32e) * The army's destroying upset the nuns. ("the army" = agent)
- (32f) * The destroying upset the nuns.

As shown in (32b,c), so-called "root nominalizations" needn't appear with any argument of the head N. However, as (32e,f) show, gerunds require the arguments of the N to be overtly expressed. It is commonly held that gerunds contain a verbal sub-structure while root-nominalizations consist only of a root in conjunction with a nominalizing head. The facts in (32) easily follow from a system in which Vs, but *not* roots on their own, are subject to the Theta-Criterion.

C. The Structure of the Topic Constituent: The topic constituent in a predicate cleft can only be either a vP, an InfP or a PartP.

This restriction on the form of the topic constituent can actually be derived from reasonable assumptions. That the topic constituent cannot be a bare RootP follows from the fact that bare Roots simply are not pronounceable constituents in Yiddish. However, there is nothing obviously wrong with the merger of an InfP or PartP into the left-periphery. Now, since the VP projection contains the

¹¹ Landau 2004b ensures this property of Roots by requiring the Theta-Criterion only to be evaluated at phases. This hypothesis, however, wouldn't cover the data in (32).

internal arguments of the V, a VP projection alone can't be merged into a peripheral position. If it were, there would be no functional heads to check the Case features on the V's arguments, and the derivation would crash. On the other hand, assuming that the little-*v* checks Case, we can merge a *vP* into this position. That IPs and CPs cannot be topic-constituents might either follow from the semantics of the predicate cleft, or from whatever principles generally make the left-periphery an unlikely place to find IPs and CPs. That only maximal projections are possible topic constituents follows from the fact that the topic constituent occupies a Spec position.

Notice that by deriving assumption (C), we have thereby constructed an explanation of Landau's Generalization. If a topic constituent contains any arguments of the V, then that constituent must be a *vP*. However, if it is a *vP*, then the theta-criterion demands that it contain all the V's arguments. It is possible, though, for the topic-constituent to contain *no* arguments of the V, just as long as that topic-constituent is a PartP or an InfP. Happily, this explanation of Landau's Generalization predicts that Landau's Generalization *shouldn't* hold of remnant movement. The difference between remnant movement and predicate clefting is that in remnant movement, the topic *vP* truly *does* move to that position from within the IP. That is, (14a) is possible because the topic *vP* contains a trace/copy of the lower PP argument, which moved out of that *vP* before the *vP* moved into the peripheral topic position. On the other hand, (12g) is impossible because the topic constituent cannot possibly contain any trace/copies of the PP argument of the clefted constituent. It thus lacks the required PP argument, and so violates the Theta Criterion.

Assumption (C) also trivially derives the fact that topic constituents cannot contain tensed copies of the clefted constituents. The reason is simply that IPs are not permitted topic constituents. We thus can easily deduce that lexical subjects cannot appear inside topic constituents for reasons of Case. Moreover, we can deduce the oft-noted fact that topic constituents cannot contain any functional material higher than the *vP*, such as negation. Finally, assumption (C) predicts that topic constituents must always be either infinitives or past-participles. If the topic constituent isn't already an InfP or a PartP, then it must be a *vP*. Since bare V's are not possible in Yiddish, there must be some morphological features on the Root besides [+V], or else the *vP* will be unpronounceable. Given that the only feature-adding heads within the *vP* are InfP and PartP, one of the two must project in order for the topic constituent to be pronounced. Thus, a topic constituent will always bear either infinitive or participial morphology^{12 13}.

¹² Of course, this begs the question of why *present* participles are not possible as topic-constituents in Yiddish. We might hypothesize that this for semantic reasons. Present participles seem only to act as adjectives in Yiddish. Therefore, they denote properties of individuals rather than of states or events. If the function of the Yiddish predicate cleft is to signal a particular event-type or state-type as given information, then present participles are not appropriate as topic constituents.

¹³ Notice that this account follows the intuition of Davis & Prince 1986, Landau 2003 and many others, in hypothesizing that the infinitival morphology appears on the topic constituent because it would be

D. The Elision of Identical Arguments: An argument within the clefted constituent which is identical to an argument in the topic constituent must be deleted at PF *if and only if* the heads of the topic constituent and the clefted constituent are identical.

Assumption (D) is necessary both to allow such sentences as (33a) and (33b), and to rule out sentences like (33c).

(33a) Essen fish est Maks.
to-eat fish eats Max
As for eating fish, Max eats them.

(33b) ? Essen fish est Maks hekht.
to-eat fish eats Max pike
As for eating fish, Max eats pike.

(33c) * Essen fish est Maks fish.
to-eat fish eats Max fish.
As for eating fish, Max eats fish.

It is unlikely that the ungrammaticality of (33c) is the result of ‘semantic’ or ‘pragmatic’ oddity. The English gloss for (33c) sounds perfectly natural. Moreover, in Yoruba, predicate cleft sentences like (33c) are unproblematic.

(from Harbour 2002)

(34) Rí-rà ìwé ni Olú ra ìwé.
RED-buy paper FOC Olu buy paper
It's buying a paper that Olu did.

Also, the judgment reported for (33c) is that it is completely impossible, not merely redundant, as in sentences where repeated VPs are not elided. Whatever our feelings about (35a) are, it's not ‘impossible’.

(35a) Mary saw a man in the park, and Dave saw a man in the park too.
(35b) Mary saw a man in the park, and Dave did too.

However, the difference between (35a) and (33c) is no argument against there being ellipsis in (33a). As is clear from English alone, different kinds of ellipsis differ in their optionality. Compare (35a) to (36b).

unpronounceable otherwise. This account differs, however, in that no appeal need be made to post-syntactic, post-morphology processes that “save” affix-less roots by adding a variety of ‘default’ suffixes. Note that such would be a different concept of “default-morphology” than what appears in Distributed Morphology, where default morphemes are paired with specific featural information.

- (36a) Dave is taller than Frank is.
 (36b) * Dave is taller than Frank is tall.

Assumption (D) restricts this ellipsis to cases in which the heads of the topic constituent and the clefted constituent are the same. This restriction is required to allow for sentence (37a). Moreover, the data in (37b) reveal the necessity of Assumption (D) being a bi-conditional.

- (37a) ? Forn keyn amerike bin ikh gefloygn keyn amerike.
 to-travel to Amerike am I flown to Amerika
As for traveling to America, I have flown to Amerika.

- (37b) * Forn keyn amerike bin ikh gefloygn.

Why Yiddish places this strange condition on ellipsis, I have no clue. This might, in fact, be evidence that sentence (33b) has a very different structure from (33a). At this point, however, I choose to take it as a primitive.

With this rich set of assumptions, we can now explain all the basic features of the Yiddish predicate cleft, as well as answer the more difficult questions raised in Section 1.2. Many of our answers have already been given in the course of the discussion above. Therefore, rather than repeat myself, I will turn my attention to other languages.

(4) Extending the Analysis: Brazilian Portuguese, Korean and Modern Hebrew

The predicate cleft found in Brazilian Portuguese bears a fascinatingly strong similarity to the Yiddish predicate cleft. For example, the structures which can function as topic constituents are identical.

(from Bastos 2002)

- (38a) [Temperar]_{TopicVP} o cozinheiro temperou o peixe.
 to-season the cook seasoned the fish
As for seasoning, the cook seasoned the fish.

- (38b) [Temperar o peixe]_{TopicVP} o cozinheiro temperou.
 to-season the fish the cook seasoned
As for seasoning the fish, the cook seasoned it.

In (38), we see that the topic constituent can consist of an infinitival containing simply the V or the V and its arguments. If any arguments appear in the topic

constituent, identical arguments in the clefted constituent must be elided. Moreover, as with Yiddish, the topic constituent can bear participial morphology.

(39a) [Comido]_{TopicVP} eu tenho comido peixe.
eaten I have eaten fish
As for having eaten, I have eaten fish.

(39b) [Comido peixe]_{TopicVP} eu tenho comido todo sabato.
eaten fish I have eaten every saturday
As for having eaten fish, I have eaten it every Saturday.

The examples so far show that the clefted constituent can be a tensed vP or a past-participle. As with Yiddish (see (19a)), it can also be an infinitive.

(40) [Ler]_{TopicVP} eu quero ler romances.
to-read I want to-read novels.
As for reading, I want to read novels.

The predicate cleft in Brazilian Portuguese is also subject to Landau's Generalization, further supporting the reality of this universal.

(41a) Eu pus na mesa. (object drop)
I put on-the table.
I put it on the table.

(41b) * Eu pus o livro.
I put the book.
I put the book.

(41c) [Por na mesa]_{TopicVP} eu pus o livro.
to-put on-the table I put the book
As for putting it on the table, I put the book there.

(41d) *[Por o livro]_{TopicVP} eu pus na mesa.
to-put the book I put on-the table
As for putting the book, I put it on the table.

Finally, as was already mentioned in Section 1.2.3, the topic constituent can contain different lexical material from the clefted constituent, as long as it denotes a topic which the clefted constituent contributes more specific information about.

These properties suggest that we apply our analysis of the Yiddish predicate cleft developed in Section 3 to the Brazilian construction. Assumption (A) would cover the properties, noted in Section 1.2.3, of long distance predicate clefting in Brazilian Portuguese. Assumptions (B) and (C) would account for the

limits on what can be a topic constituent. Finally, assumption (D) would be necessary to drive the ellipsis witnessed in (38b) and (39b). Note that assumption (D) must be slightly augmented for Brazilian Portuguese in order to capture the following data.

(42a) [Me emprestar]_{TopicVP} João me emprestou o livro.
 me to-lend John me lent the book
As for lending it to me, John lent me the book.

(42b) [Me emprestar]_{TopicVP} João emprestou o livro.
 Me to-lend John lent the book
As for lending it to me, John lent me the book.

It appears that if the argument in the topic constituent is a pronominal clitic, then its elision within the clefted constituent is optional ¹⁴.

Now, although our ‘verbal CLD’ analysis can be applied to the Brazilian predicate cleft, do any considerations specifically motivate it over a movement analysis? The heaviest challenges the Yiddish construction presented to a movement account were to explain why Landau’s Generalization should not hold of remnant movement, and to account for the ability of the topic constituent to contain different lexical items from the clefted constituent. In Brazilian Portuguese, however, there is no remnant movement. Therefore, the only data which truly motivate our base generation analysis over a movement account of the kind offered in Landau 2004a,b is the existence of the ‘genus-species’ predicate clefts.

Let us here note in passing that Korean might also be a language containing our proposed “verbal CLD”. It seems some speakers do accept certain genus-species predicate clefts ¹⁵.

(43)
 Person A: Ne-nun etilo ka-ss-ni? (Kuriko) Mwuet-ul hay-ss-ni?
 You-Top where go-Past-Q? (And) what-Acc do-Past-Q
Where did you go? (And) What did you do?

Person B: (?) Ka-ki-nun New York-ulo nalaka-ss-ko, ha-ki-nun konsetu-lul
 Go-Nom-Top New York-to fly-Past-and, do-Nom-Top concert-Acc
 po-ass-e.
 see-Past-Dec.
Go, I flew to New York, and do, I saw a concert.

¹⁴ The various conditions we are having to place on assumption (D) signal that something about this ‘elision’ phenomenon is being deeply misunderstood.

¹⁵ Speakers disagree on how bad the genus-species construction in Person B’s utterance is. Some report it as distinctly “odd”, though not necessarily bad. For others, it is reported as “natural”, though there remains something slightly “off” about it.

Further work with Korean speakers might provide more insight into the nature of these structures.

For the predicate cleft in Modern Hebrew, the evidence in support of our base-generation account is disturbingly non-existent. The Hebrew predicate cleft is richly described in Landau 2004a,b, and seems to again have many of the same properties as the Yiddish predicate cleft. However, one striking difference between the Hebrew and the Yiddish predicate clefts is that in the Hebrew predicate cleft, the topic constituent *must* contain the same lexical items as the clefted constituent. The genus-species predicate clefts familiar from Yiddish and Brazilian Portuguese are not possible in Hebrew.

(44a) [Liknot praxim]_{TopicVP} hi kanta.
to-buy flowers she bought
Buy flowers, she did.

(44b) * [Liknot praxim]_{TopicVP} hi kanta shoshanim.
to-buy flowers she bought roses.
Buy flowers, she did roses.

The challenge these data pose to any “verbal CLD” analysis of the Hebrew predicate cleft is clear: how is it to explain the fact that the topic constituent must contain the *exact same* lexical items as the clefted constituent? More generally, though, Modern Hebrew shows that our theory of predicate clefts must make room for a language which *disallows* genus-species predicate clefts. *Why aren’t* genus-species predicate clefts possible in Hebrew?

In light of these data, one might reasonably propose that, while the “verbal CLD” analysis may well be right for languages allowing genus-species predicate clefts, it is *wrong* for Modern Hebrew. Instead, the right analysis for Hebrew’s predicate cleft is that proposed in Landau 2004a,b: the topic constituent isn’t base-generated in the left-periphery, but moves there from within the matrix vP. The topic constituent in Hebrew is a syntactic copy of some vP within the matrix clause, which is why genus-species constructions are not possible. The notion that the term “predicate cleft” does not pick out a homogeneous set of structures is certainly not an uncommon one (Harbour 2002), and this particular typological hypothesis has already been put forth in Landau 2004b.

Although this is a reasonable proposal, there are at least two reasons why one should be wary of it. The first is that it seems to posit too fundamental a difference between the Yiddish and Hebrew predicate clefts. Except for its requirement that topic constituents be lexically identical to some vP in the matrix clause, the Hebrew predicate cleft is identical to the Yiddish construction. Not only is it surprising that two nearly identical structures should have such a drastically different nature, it also raises the question of how a child learning Hebrew knows that their language *doesn’t* permit “verbal CLD.” The second

reason to be wary of the proposal is that it makes a yet-unconfirmed typological prediction. Under this view, nothing rules out a language with *both* scrambling and “Modern Hebrew-style” predicate clefting via VP movement. *Ceteris paribus*, such a language should appear to violate Landau’s Generalization. So far, such a language has not been found ¹⁶.

Now, certainly it’s imaginable that the Modern Hebrew ban on genus-species predicate clefts has a *semantic* basis. That is, it could be that although both Hebrew and Yiddish have “verbal CLD”, the Hebrew structure has a semantics which systematically prevents it from making sense within a genus-species construction. For example, if the coherence of genus-species predicate clefts requires that the topic constituent be used simply to reintroduce a discourse topic, then if Hebrew topic constituents could not (for whatever reason) be used in that fashion, the result would be Hebrew’s systematic ban on the genus-species construction.

The benefit of this semantic proposal is that it allows for a uniform analysis of the Hebrew and the Yiddish predicate clefts. On the other hand, it isn’t clear that it avoids the learnability puzzle just raised against the prior, syntactic proposal; how is a Hebrew-learning child to know that their language *doesn’t* allow predicate clefts to have the semantics crucial for genus-species constructions? The greatest problem with this proposal, however, is that no semantic difference between the Yiddish and the Hebrew predicate cleft has yet been discovered. That is, *modulo* the existence of genus-species constructions, the predicate clefts in Yiddish and Hebrew have *exactly* the same range of uses.

Thus far, we’ve considered two reasonable – though problematic – hypotheses as to why Hebrew does not permit genus-species predicate clefts. Let us contrast these with an unreasonable explanation. Suppose one were to offer the view that, in fact, *all* predicate clefts are derived by VP-fronting. That is, despite the apparent existence of genus-species predicate clefts, *no* topic constituent is base-generated in the left periphery. Moreover, suppose one were to dismiss the genus-species predicate clefts as “artifactual.” Rather than being structures generated by the grammar, genus-species predicate clefts are ungrammatical sentences whose impossibility is mitigated by the fact that they might be charitably interpreted by native speakers.

Although a disengaged skeptic might hold this view, it simply does not seriously address the data. If the marginal acceptability of genus-species predicate clefts is due to their being ‘charitably interpreted’, why can *no* Hebrew speaker (0 out of 4) seem to ‘charitably interpret’ the sentence in (44b)? Moreover, if the imperfectness of (15a) were the result of an ungrammatical sentence being given a reasonable interpretation, why do speakers categorically reject sentences like those in (45)? These sentences *also* have reasonable interpretations, despite their morpho-syntactic violations.

¹⁶ Though, a more thorough study of predicate clefting in the Slavic languages is required.

(45a) * Est fish est Maks fish. (violation = finitude of topic constituent)
eats fish eats Max fish
As for eating fish, Max eats fish.

(45b) * Visn veyst Maks ir nomen. (violation = lack of “pseudo-infinitive”)
to-know knows Max her name
As for knowing her name, Max knows it.

Furthermore, let us recall that *no* imperfection was reported for the Brazilian Portuguese examples. Finally, even if we ignore the existence of genus-species predicate clefts, there are still the remaining problems which Yiddish presents to the VP-fronting analysis, discussed in Sections 1.2.1 and 1.2.2.

(5) Conclusion

It has been shown that the seemingly paradoxical properties of the Yiddish predicate cleft are best explained by an analysis in which the topic constituent is first base-generated in the left periphery of the clause minimally containing the clefted constituent, and then can subsequently move up to higher CP projections. Such an analysis would view the Yiddish predicate cleft as a kind of “verbal Clitic Left Dislocation.” This analysis has also been shown to work well for the predicate cleft of Brazilian Portuguese, and could prove insightful for the Korean predicate cleft as well. However, certain facts about the Hebrew predicate cleft are problematic under this analysis. There seem to be two possible hypotheses as to how the Hebrew predicate cleft differs from the Yiddish structure: a semantic one and a syntactic one. Each hypothesis has its own unique problems, and it is not at this point clear which is the most plausible.

At least one thing seems certain: in some languages the “predicate cleft” is not a VP-fronting structure.

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