Predication and Clefts in Scottish Gaelic

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1 Introduction

- The syntactic analysis of copular constructions and clefts for Goidelic languages has been debated by several Celtic scholars in recent years. There have been analyses for Scottish Gaelic (Adger and Ramchand, 2003), Irish (Carnie, 1997) and Manx (Lewin, 2017).
- In this project, I aim to provide a unified analysis for augmented copular sentences in Scottish Gaelic (henceforth **ScG**) in which I claim the following:

(1) **Claims**

(i) The augment in augmented copular constructions and in identificational clefts is to be analyzed as an expletive.

(ii) The copula in augmented copular constructions moves to TM1P, a tense modality projection between TP and CP, as proposed by McCloskey (2021).

(iii) Identificational clefts do not have typical cleft semantics in which there is focus.

If the claims above are correct, then they make the following predictions listed in (2) below:

(2) **Predictions**

(i) The analysis of the pronominal augment as an expletive accounts for the instances of the absence of the augment and its alternation of *e* and *ann*.

(ii) The assumption of the copula as a Cop head and its movement of to TM1 accounts for sentences where the copula would not be in complementary distribution under the assumption that is a C.

(iii) Identificational clefts analyzed as extended augmented copular constructions account for predicational sentences in ScG expressed using clefts but not having cleft semantics or cleft interpretation.

- I show that the first prediction accounts for the ScG examples in which the augment is not observed when a pronominal is the subject, as drawn from the first claim.
- The third claim is drawn from the interpretation that identificational clefts receive non-cleft semantics which make prediction (iii) be correct.

2 Scottish Gaelic Syntax

2.1 Some assumptions

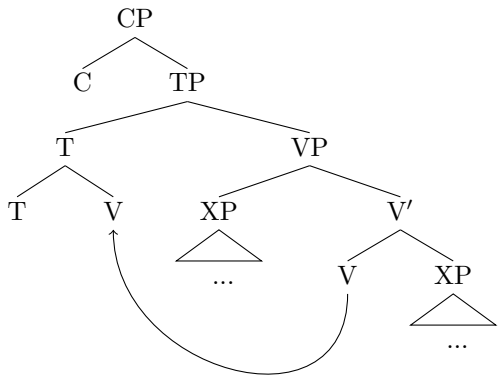
- ScG and the other Goidelic languages have an underlying SVO word order Adger (2010) that surfaces as VSO, suggesting V to T movement.

(3) *Phòg* *Seonag* *Calum*
kiss.PAST Seonag Calum

'Seonag kissed Calum.' (Adger, 2010)

- In (3) we see the surface VSO word worder but it was base generated in V and moved to T, following a structure like (4)

(4)



- As seen in (4) the movement of V to T is represented by adjoining V with th using Chomsky adjunction.
- The analysis or structures presented in this work will follow this same core structure.

2.2 Is vs. bi

- In ScG there are two verbs *to be*, the most common one is *bi*, seen in its independent form in the present tense as *tha*.
- The other one is the defective copula, which is observed in its two inflections, the present-future *is/'s* and the past conditional *bu/b'*.
- For DP predication with the substantive verb, the preposition *ann* (or its inflectional variants such as *'na 'na*, *'nam*, *'nad*, *'nur*) are required as seen in (5):

(5) *Tha* *Luis* *'na* *oileannach*
be.PRES Luis in.HIS student

'Luis is a student.'

- Without the preposition, the construction would be ungrammatical as shown in (6):

(6) ***Tha** *Luis* *oileannach*
be.PRES Luis student

'Luis is a student.'

- In cases like this is where the defective copula is used as it is preferred for DP predication in the present tense. Consider the examples below in (7a-7c):

(7) a. *Is* *mise* *Luis*
COP.PRES 1S.EMPH Luis

'I am Luis'

b. *'S* *e* *Luis* *an* *oileannach*
COP.PRES AUG Luis the student

'Luis is the student.'

c. *S'* *e* *oileannach* *a* *tha* *ann* *an* *Luis*
COP.PRES AUG student REL be.PRES in Luis

'Luis is a student.' (Lit: It is a student that is in Luis)

- In (7a-7b) we see that with the defective copula, there can be a DP as a predicate without the necessity of the *ann* preposition.
- However, for non definite DP predication, we observe a cleft construction in (7c), which we will return to.

Tense	**Independent**	**Dependent**	**Relative**
Present-future	*is/'s*	*gur/gun*	*as*
Past-conditional	*bu/b'*	*gun bu/b'*	*a bu/a b'*

Table 1: Distribution of the copula *is* (Lamb, 2001)

3 Augmented Copular Constructions

- With the assumption of V to T movement, now let's examine augmented copular constructions (henceforth ACC).

- They carry the structure laid down in (8):

(8) COP + AUG + DP^{SUBJ} + DP^{PRED}

(9) *'S* *e* *Seumas* *an* *dotair*
COP.PRES AUG James the doctor

'James is the doctor.'

- The questions to address now are what exactly is the *'S* copoula and the *e* augment.

3.1 The Augment

- The augmented morpheme (labeled AUG in (9) above) is homophonous with the third person singular pronoun (Lamb, 2001).
- According to Sheil (2016) it serves as a predicate and as a pronoun.
- On the other hand, according to Adger and Ramchand (2003) agree with the literature that it serves as the immediate argument of the copula.
- These interpretations of the augment would require a set of predictions that would indicate when it is a pronoun and when it is a predicate.
- Initially we can try to adopt an agreement analysis as it happens with Irish as seen in (10a-10d):

(10) a. *Is* *dochtúir* *(é)* *Seamus.*
COP.PRES doctor ARG James

'James is a doctor.' *Irish*, (Carnie, 1997)

b. *Is* *damhsóir* *(í)* *Amy.*
COP.PRES dancer ARG Amy

'Amy is a dancer.' *Irish*

c. *Is* *é* *Seamus* *an* *captaen.*
COP.PRES ARG James the captain

'James is the captain.' *Irish*, (Carnie, 1997)

d. *Is* *í* *Amy* *an* *máthair.*
COP.PRES ARG James the mother

'Amy is the mother.' *Irish*

- Here in (10a) & (10b) the *é* & *í* are optional agreement morphemes followed by the subject. These agreement morphemes agree in gender with the subject and are obligatory when the predicate is definite, as shown in (10c) & (10d).
- Considering the posibility of agreement, we find classic data[1] data from ScG that might support the idea that the augment is an agreement morpheme, data such as:

(11) a. *'S* ***ise*** *Lily* *cat*
COP.PRES 3SF.EMPH Lily cat

'She is Lily's cat.'

b. *'S* ***i*** *Lily* *cat*
COP.PRES 3SF Lily cat

'She is Lily's cat.'

c. *'S* ***e*** *ise* *Lily* *cat*
COP.PRES AUG 3SF.EMPH Lily cat

'She is Lily's cat.' (Adger, 2021)

- If we adopt the idea that the augment agrees with the subject like in examples (10a-10d), then (11a) and (11b) would prove this idea wrong as there is no augment in these sentences rather instead we observe pronominals occupying the subject position.
- In (11c) we do observe the augment but it does not agree with the subject *ise* as the augment is in its *e* variant, which its homophonous with 3SM and not 3SF as the subject of the sentence. Therefore the data does not seem to support the agreement analysis.
- The other possibility, following Sheil (2016) is that it sometimes is a predicate and sometimes a pronoun.

[1] This specific set of data represents the ScG spoken around 100 years ago, in modern ScG the augment *e* is considered by most speakers to be invariant in ACCs.

- However, I diverge from this approach as it predicts that the copula must always have the augment as an argument. Yet we find instances in which it is not, as seen in (12):

(12) *'S* *toil* *leam* *uisge beatha*
COP.PRES pleasure with.1S whiskey

'I like whiskey.'

- The augment then seems to not be obligatory, as it is optional in some instances, such as examples of pronominals as subjects, according to Lamb (2001) and seen in (13a):

(13) a. *Is* *(e)* *ise* *mo* *mhàthair*
COP.PRES AUG 2SF.EMPH my mother

'She is my mother.'

- This might be a case of haplology; since the augment is homophonous is the 3SM pronominal, according to Tat and Kornfilt (2018) there can't be two instances of the same category. So a sentence like (14) would be unnatural or even ungrammatical:

(14) */? *Is* *e* *esan* *am* *bodach* *sin*
COP.PRES AUG 3.SM.EMPH the old man that

'Iain is that old man.'

- Taking in consideration the following assumptions:

(i) The augment *e* is not an argument of the copula

(ii) The augment is not an agreement morpheme as it would be in Irish

(iii) It is not observed in cases of haplology when it co-occurs with pronominals

- I propose the augment to be analyzed as an expletive.

- An expletive being semantically vacuous, it accounts for instances in which the augment is not present, the meaning is not affected.

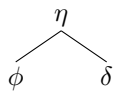
- To account for the instances in which the agument is not present with pronominal subjects, I adopt the feature geometry proposal by Sheil (2016).

- The augment enters the derivation with an unvalued [D:] feature and then searches for a value via the Agree operation which results in affecting the spellout depending on what feature gets valued.

- Under Sheil's assumption, unvalued features are allowed at the interfaces so if there is no value, grammaticality should not be affected.

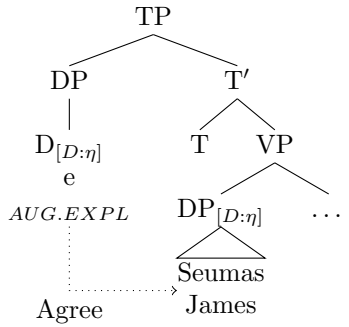
- The feature geometry proposed by Sheil (2016) includes a super-feature value η, which presence is entailed by the presence of ϕ & δ as seen in (15)

(15)



- The idea here is the augment's unvalued [D:] feature will perform the Agree operation in the closest constituent. The η value is found in arguments. Under this assumption, the closest constituent in (9) is DP^{SUBJ} so the augment gets spelled out as seen in (16):

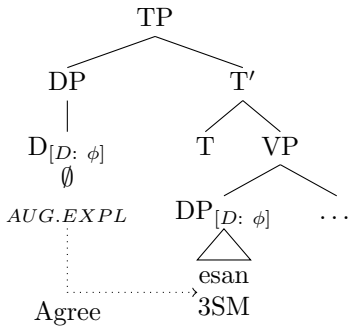
(16)



- To account for the cases of the absence of the augment, Sheil (2016) claims that the probe of the Agree operation 'sees' the η value and can stop there or continue to search for ϕ; alternatively the probe can see the whole structure in (15) and copy either of the values.

- I propose that the augment is null or silent when the probe values the ϕ feature. As seen in (17)

(17)



3.2 The Copula

- Previously in Irizarry-Figueroa (2020) I argued to base generate the copula as C, following the Carnie (1995) for Irish copulas.
- However, under that assumption it does not seem to appear in complementary distribution, as shown in (18a) below.

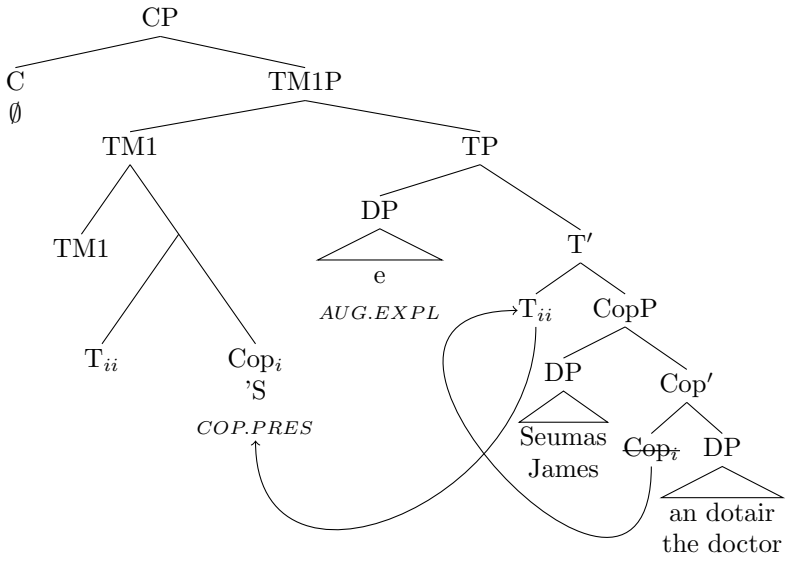
(18) a. *Thuirt mi gum b' e Jesús a bha ann.*
say.PAST 1S that COP.PAST AUG.EXPL Jesús REL be.PAST in

'I said that Jesús was there'

b. [CP [C ∅] Thuirt mi [CP [C gum] b' e Jesús [CP [C a] bha ann]]]

- Here we have two embedded clauses in which the complementizers *gum* and *a* are already occupying the C node.
- I adopt the approach taken by McCloskey (2021) in which he assumed the existence of a Tense Modality projection labeled TM1 that sits between CP and TP.
- I propose that the copula is generated lower in the structure as a Cop head and moved into TM1, motivated by tense features being in TM1 and not in T as the typical analysis predicts.
- Implementing this and analyzing the augment as an expletive, a sentence like (9) would have the following analysis in (19):

(19)



- This analysis accounts for (1) the optionality of the augment in ACCs with pronominal subjects and (2) the proper distribution of the copula in biclausal sentences with more multiple complementizers.

4 Clefts in Scottish Gaelic

4.1 Types of Clefts

There are two types of clefts in ScG, the identificational and the propositional. For this work I will focus on the identificational cleft.

4.1.1 Identificational Cleft:

- There are multiple ways of saying simple declaratives in ScG with non-definite DPs, like (20a-20b) below:

(20) a. *Bu* *dannsair* *Anndra*
COP.PAST dancer Andrew

'Andrew was a dancer'

b. *Is* *thidsear* *Muriel*
COP.PRES teacher Muriel

'Muriel is a teacher.'

- (20a - 20b) are grammatical, yet there is an unnatural element in them, and some native speakers will even categorize them as ungrammatical.
- There is however a preference to say these types of copular sentences with identificational clefts like (21) below:

(21) *'S* ***e*** *tidsear* *a* *th'* *ann an* *Muriel*
COP.PRES AUG.EXPL teacher REL be.PRES in Muriel

'Muriel is a teacher.' (Lit. It is a teacher that is in Muriel.)

- Here in (21) we see that the cleft carries the same meaning or at least fulfills the same pragmatic requirement of the sentence in (20b).
- The identificational cleft usually has the following structure:

(22) COP + AUG (e) + DP^{PRED} + REL + THA + ANN + DP^{SUBJ}

- This type of cleft does not get the interpretation like a typical cleft that usually expresses focus or has cleft semantics like it does in English for example:

(23) a. What did he steal?

b. It was a book, that he stole.

- In (23b) we see the traditional cleft that contains the *It is X that Y...* construction.
- Identificational clefts in ScG are the most common way of expressing proper inclusion, as seen in (24) below:

(24) *Is* *e* *crioitear* *a* *th'* *ann an* *Ùisdean*
COP.PRES AUG.EXPL crofter REL be.PRES in Hugh

'Hugh is a crofter.' (Lamb, 2001)

- An interesting fact about constructions like (24) is that they can be used in constrastive contexts but also when giving information "out of the blue." See below:

(25) a. A: Nach eil Ryan an innleadair ?
"Isn't Ryan the engineer?"

b. B: Chan eil. 'S e innleadair a tha ann an Gisli.
"No. Gisli is an engineer."

c. *Chan* *eil* *'S* *e* *innleadair* *a* *tha* *ann an*
NEG be.DEP COP.PRES AUG.EXPL engineer REL be.PRES in
Gisli
Gisli

'No. Gisli is an engineer. (Lit: It is an engineer that is in Gisli.)'

(26) a. A: Cò tha air an àrd-àrlar ?
"Who is on the stage?"

b. B: Is ise Ròs
" She is Rose."

c. B: *'S* *e* *seinneadair* *a* *th'* *ann an* *Rós*
COP.PRES AUG.EXPL singer REL be.PRES in Rose

'Rose is a singer.' (Lit: It is a singer that is in Rose.)

4.1.2 Propositional Cleft:

- The propositional cleft is usually observed in contrastive contexts and also as an answer to a question.
- The ACCs and identificational clefts discussed previously use the *'S + e* combination of copula and augment.

- The propositional cleft on the other hand is observed with the *'S + ann* combination of copula and augment as seen in (27).

(27) *'S* *ann* *breagha* *a* *tha* *i*
COP.PRES in.3MS beautiful rel be.PRES 3-SGF

'She is beautiful'

4.2 Syntax of the cleft

- Now let us decompose the cleft to understand its components.

4.2.1 The copula revisited

- The identificational cleft has a similar syntactic analysis like the one for ACCs in which I proposed that
  1. TM1 was the landing site for the copula generated in Cop
  2. The augment was based generated in the specifier of TP as an expletive that was semantically vacuous.

4.2.2 The augment in the cleft

- The augment/expletive we saw in the ACCs is present in the cleft for ScG.
- For these types of constructions, there are two variants *e* and *ann*.

e	*ann*
nominals	prepositional phrases
finite clauses	adverbials (AP, CP, NP)
non-finite clauses	aspectual phrases
nominalized verbs and adjectives	adjectives and comparative phrases

Table 2: Form of augment and type of clefted constituent (Sheil, 2016)

4.2.3 Relative clause and focus movement

- For this work I adopt Sheil's (2016) approach in which there is a focalized constitent inside the relative clause[2]

[2]For the relative clauses in this work, I am adopting the idea that the identificational cleft is always observed with the relative complementizer *a* which is also sometimes observed as *an*. According to Sheil (2016), this complementizer triggers a focus movement motivated by feature valuationn of [*wh*] and [*EPP*]. For more information on ScG A-Bar dependencies, see Chapter 4 of (Sheil, 2016).

- Consider the example below:

(28) a. *'S* *e* *dannsair* *a* *tha* *ann an* *Anndra*
COP.PRES AUG.EXPL dancer REL be.PRES in Andrew

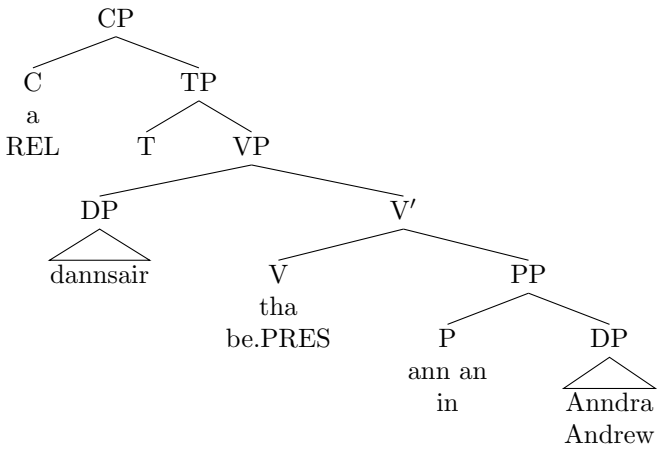
'Andrew is a dancer.' (Lit. It was a dancer that is in Andrew.)

b. [CP [C ∅] [TM1P [TM1 'S][TP [DP e] dannsair [CopP [Cop 'S] [CP a tha ann an Anndra]]]]]

- In (28a) we have an identificational cleft and in (28b) we see the derivation of the copula as done previously with the ACCs
- I will assume for this type of cleft that both the DP^{SUBJ} and DP^{PRED} are base generated in the relative clause. Having an underlying structure like in (29)

(29) [CP [C a] [TP [VP [DP dannsair] tha ann an [DP Anndra]]]]

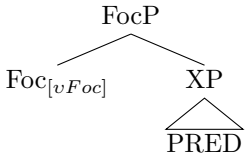
(30)



- As can be seen (30) DP^{SUBJ} is generated as the complement of P and DP^{PRED} in the specifier of VP.

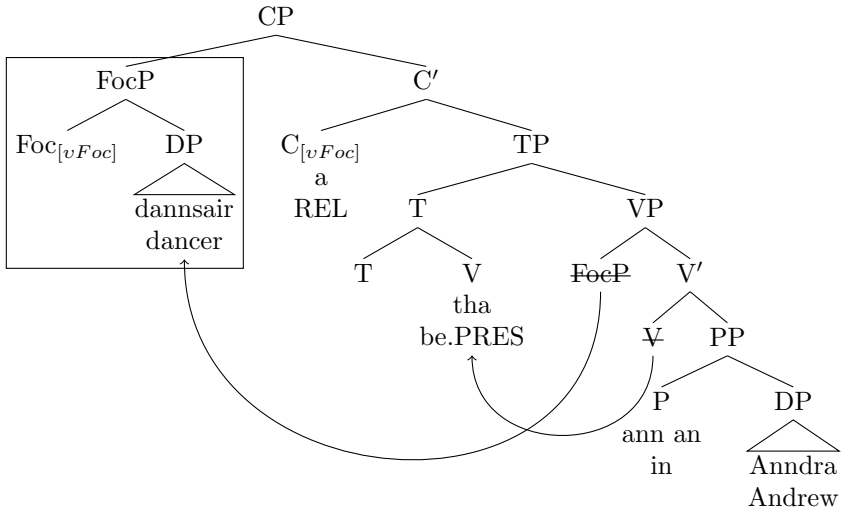
- However the predicate still needs to undergo movement to satisfy a series of features.
- For this I follow Sheil (2016) in proposing a focalization movement. This movement is motivated by a $[\upsilon FOC]$ feature that needs to be valued in the relative complementizer.
- In order to check this feature, she argues that there is a FocP containing DP^{PRED} in the sentence that will be base generated in the specifier of VP. This FocP has the following configuration:

(31)



- I remark that the presence of FocP containing the predicate of the identificational cleft is not similar to the FocP presented in Rizzi (1997), in which the FocP is higher up than CP in the structure. The FocP label presented in this work is arbitrary to show that it is the projection or argument that it is undergoing the movement triggered by the complementizer.
- Moving FocP to the Spec. of CP would leave us with the derivation below:

(32)

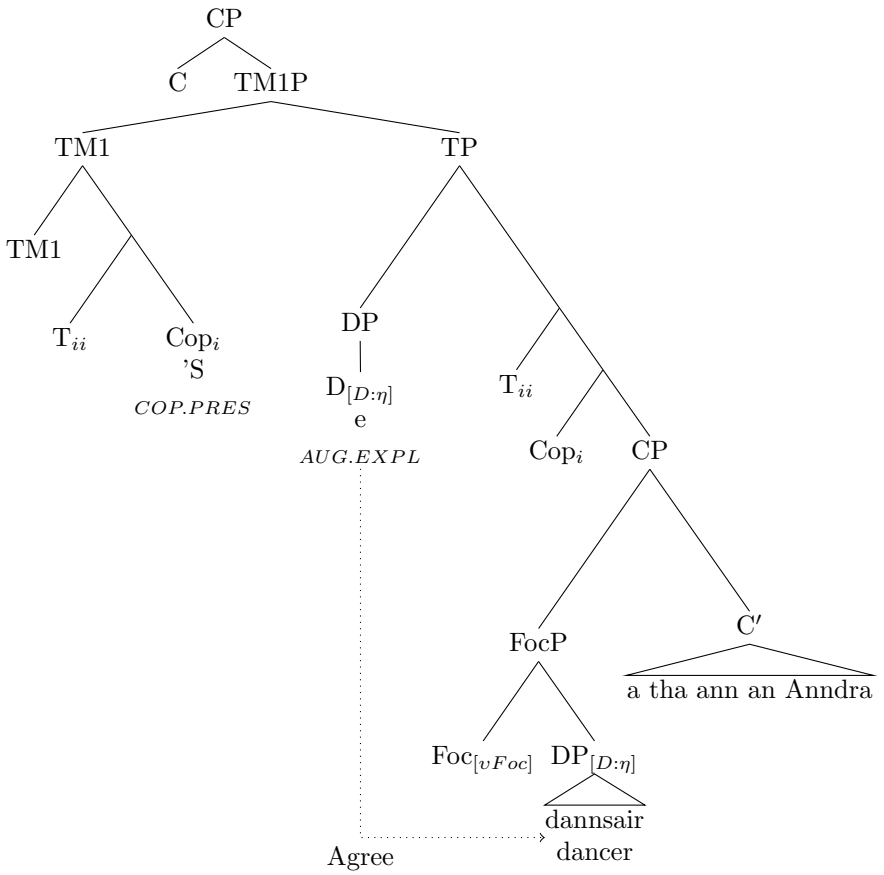


- FocP in the specifier of VP is moved to the specifier of CP, triggered by the $[\upsilon$ Foc$]$ feature in C. I now show how this FocP is in the ideal position to be 'seen' by the probe in the Agree operation from the augment inside the main clause.

4.2.4 Agreement for the augment

- The remaining bit of syntactic analysis of the augment is to account for the alternation of *e* and *ann*.
- For this, I adopt partially Sheil's (2016) approach in which the Agree operation in the augment probes down to the Spec. of CP.
- Her original approach was done in a a specifier-head relation, I propose that the Agree operation takes place from the location of the augment as it was base generated in the Spec of TP, therefore it C-commands the FocP in the Spec. of CP, falling into the phase and therefore allowing the agree operation to take place.
- If the probe finds a constituent that is a DP, a NP or an argument CP, the η feature will be valued and the augment will get spelled out as *e*.
- If the probe does not find any of the constituents previously mentioned, and finds a PP, adverbial DP or AP, the augment will get spelled out as *ann*.

(33)



- As seen in (33), the FocP moves from the specifier of VP to the specifier of CP, the Cop moved all the way up to TM1 to check the tense features and the augment in D performs the Agree operation in search of the [η] feature which happens to find it in the Foc head (having acquired it from the DP *dannsair*); recall that if the Agree operation is not successful in checking the feature, the augment gets spelled out as *ann*.

- This unified analysis of the cleft as an expanded ACC can account for (1) the alternation of the spellout of the augment, whether is *e* or *ann* and (2) it provides a syntactic structure that can be analyzed as a simple declarative, which is the pragmatic function that the identificational cleft fulfills.

5 Concluding Remarks

- I provided an analysis for ACCs in which:
  - The augment is analyzed as an expletive, allowing it to account for the instances in which the augment is absent.
  - The copula is analyzed as a Cop head, which is ultimately moved to TM1, motivated by tense features in TM1 and accounting for sentences with multiple complementizers

- I provided an analysis for Identificational Clefts in which:
  - The cleft is treated as an expanded ACC, with a relative clause that has a focus-like movement for the clefted constituent, which accounts for the absence of a cleft interpretation.
  - The Agree operation probes down to the Spec. of CP in search of the η feature to value [D:]; this accounts for the *e/ann* augment alternation.

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