Analyzing Ilokano Pseudoclefts

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Abstract
Several researchers have proposed that cleft constructions in many Austronesian languages are in fact concealed pseudoclefts (Chung, 1998 for Chamorro; Paul, 2001, 2008 for Malagasy; Georgopolous, 1991 for Palauan, among others). What this paper examines is the syntactic structure of pseudoclefts in Ilokano, a VSO Austronesian language spoken in the Northern Philippines. I argue that the language employs two types of pseudoclefts, both of which are biclausal. The first type (ti-type or null copula-type pseudocleft) utilizes a null copula between a focused constituent XP and a headless relative introduced by the determiner ti. Thus, we get a construction of the type XP < copula=ø < ti + wh-clause. Despite the lack of an overt wh-phrase, material after the determiner ti contains an operator-variable chain signaled by the ‘trigger’ morphology, creating a headless relative much like in English and other languages. Many Austronesian languages including Ilokano exhibit the famous ‘trigger-only’ restriction to A-bar movement (Keenan and Comrie, 1977; Aldridge, 2004), and thus the trigger morphology found on the verb in a headless relative marks the ‘role’ of the variable. The second type (ket-type pseudocleft) employs the topic particle ket with the word order ti + wh-clause < ket < XP. This time, the headless relative sits in a topicalization position and the constituent after the topic particle ket introduces the focused constituent XP. I argue that the ket-type of pseudocleft is in fact a TOPIC < COMMENT construction where the focus is a full IP subject to optional ellipsis, similar to a type of specificational pseudocleft found in English (cf. den Dikken et al., 2000).
Analyzing Ilokano Pseudoclefts

Jeremy Rafal*

1 Introduction

In the wake of the rich literature on English pseudoclefts (Akmajian, 1970; Higgins, 1979; Bošković, 1997; den Dikken, 2006b, among others), pseudocleft constructions in Austronesian languages have also started to receive considerable attention from several researchers (Aldridge, 2004; Chung, 1998; Georgopoulou, 1991; Paul, 2008, among others). Austronesian languages often employ no copula, no overt expletives, and an alternation between overt and non-overt complementizers, which in turn, results in several interesting consequences to certain types of syntactic structures, particularly clefts. When one takes away these familiar elements as in (1), the surface result may look very much like a classic case of A-bar movement.

(1) a. who is it (that) John kissed
   b. it is Mary (that) John kissed

This paper aims to go beyond what is on the surface and provide a deeper analysis of two particular types of sentences in Ilokano, an Austronesian language spoken in the Northern Philippines. I present arguments for an analysis that treats these sentences as types of pseudoclefts. One type, which I call the ti-type or null copula-type pseudocleft, involves a bi-clausal structure analogous to an English pseudocleft with a FOCUS < be < wh-clause order (*rice is what I ate). The second type of pseudocleft, called the ket-type pseudocleft, is also a bi-clausal structure, but this time the wh-clause is in a topicalization position and the focused XP is the emergent constituent of an optional ellipsis. The outline of the paper is as follows: section 2 explores some basic facts and relevant structures in the language including copular sentences, topicalization strategies, and relatives; section 3 provides a discussion of the typology of pseudoclefts in Ilokano; section 4 briefly compares Ilokano pseudoclefts with their English counterparts; and section 5 concludes the paper.

2 Basic Facts and Relevant Structures in Ilokano

Ilokano is an Austronesian language spoken in the Northern Philippines with approximately 8 million speakers. It has a default VSO word order, but material can precede the verb in topicalization or focalization constructions such as in pseudoclefts. An ergative analysis of the language (Gerdts, 1988; Rubino, 1997, among others) will be adopted, but will not play a direct role in the present discussion. The following sections will survey some of the significant structures in the language that are essential in our discussions of pseudoclefts.

2.1 Voice or Trigger Morphology, and the Restriction on A-bar Movement

As a typical Philippine-type language, unmarked Ilokano sentences select one core argument as the “trigger” argument whose grammatical role determines the voice morphology of the verb. The verb in example (2) is in its “actor-trigger” form, where the trigger (the pronominal clitic 1.SG.ABS -ak) is the external argument of the clause. In (3), the “patient-trigger” form of the verb indicates that the internal argument ti ayayam ‘the toy’ has the trigger status. Other verb forms such as “theme-,” “locative-,” “benefactive-trigger” forms, among others, also exist, but are not illustrated here since they do not play a role in the present discussion.

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The “actor” trigger
{-imm-}gatang-ak ( > gimmangak) iti ayayam idiay Vigan.
PRF,AT-buy 1.SG.ABS OBL toy DEM Vigan
‘I bought a toy in Vigan.’

The “patient” trigger
{-in-}gatang-ko ( > ginatangko) ti ayayam idiay Vigan.
PRF,PT-buy 1.SG.ERG OBL toy DEM Vigan
‘I bought a toy in Vigan.’

Ilokano also exhibits the famous “trigger-only” (or “subject-only”) restriction to A-bar movement as discussed in Keenan and Comrie (1977). This means that Ilokano is part of a group of languages where only the subject (the trigger or the absolutive argument) can go through A-bar movement such as in relativization and wh-questions. Consequently, voice morphology on the verb must reflect the grammatical role of the extracted argument. In example (4), the extracted argument is the external argument, as indicated by the “actor-trigger” form of the verb. Likewise, the “patient-trigger” form of the verb correctly signals the extracted internal argument in (5). A mismatch between the extracted argument and voice morphology on the verb would lead to ungrammaticality, as in (6) and (7).

2.2 Copular Sentences

No discussion of pseudoclefts is complete without touching upon copular sentences. Pseudoclefts in English and many other languages seem to be derived from a predication relationship between two DPs manifested in a copular sentence construction. Ilokano does in fact use this construction to build one of the two types of pseudoclefts, making it a vital topic of discussion.

2.2.1 Predicate-initiality and Definiteness

Ilokano copular sentences are primarily predicate-initial and do not employ an overt copula. Copular sentences with non-verbal predicates are illustrated in (8) with an adjective and in (9) with a “bare” NP. Note that the predicate NP in the initial position in (9) is indefinite, and it must be so for reasons to be discussed shortly.

(8) Nalabbaga ti kotse.
red DET car
‘The car is red.’

(9) Ubing nga nasirib ti maestra.
child LIG smart DET teacher
‘The teacher is a smart child.’

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1 ABS=absolutive case; AT=actor trigger; COMP=complementizer; DET=determiner; DEM=demonstrative; ERG=ergative case; IMPRF=imperfective; LIG=ligature; OBL=oblique; PSN=person marker; PRF=perfective aspect; PT=patient trigger; SG=singular; TOP=topic particle
While bare predicates freely occupy the initial position of copular sentences, predicate nominals, which play an important role in Ilokano pseudoclefts, are much more restricted in this position. To nominalize any predicate, one can simply add the determiner ti. Adding ti to the adjective nalabbaga ‘red’ in (10a) creates a predicate nominal [DP ti nalabbaga] with the interpretation ‘the red (one).’ In (10b), the determiner also unsurprisingly makes a noun definite in the process of forming a predicate nominal. More interestingly, verbal predicates can also be easily nominalized with ti, as shown in (10c).

(10) a. ti nalabbaga
    DET red
    ‘the red (one)’
  b. ti ubing nga nasirib
    DET child LIG smart
    ‘the smart child’
  c. ti mangi-sursuro (nga ubing)
    DET IMPRF.AT-teach LIG child
    ‘the teaching (child)’

Once predicates are nominalized, they are no longer permitted to occupy the initial position, as shown in examples (11) and (12).

(11) *Ti nalabbaga ti kotse.
    DET red DET car
    ‘The car is the red (one).’

(12) a. Ni Maria ti ubing.
    PSN Maria DET child
    ‘María is the child.’
  b. *Ti ubing ni Maria.
    DET child PSN Maria
    ‘María is the child.’
  c. *Ti mangi-sursuro (nga ubing) ni Maria.
    DET IMPRF.AT-teach LIG child PSN Maria
    ‘María is the teaching (child).’

A similar case of restricting definite DPs in the initial position is also observed in Malagasy, another Austronesian language, spoken in Madagascar. Paul (2008) points out that Malagasy disallows definite DPs as predicates to occupy the initial position of copular sentences. This “definiteness constraint,” as Paul argues, is a formal restriction rather than a semantic one because NPs in the initial position are syntactically indefinite, but are not necessarily interpreted as indefinites.

In light of the Malagasy examples, Ilokano behaves in a similar manner where NPs in this initial position are not always necessarily interpreted as indefinite. Take the example in (13). The initial constituent may be marked with a demonstrative and a possessor making it semantically definite. While the language seems to bar two ti-marked DPs in a copular construction, the presence of both the demonstrative and the possessor does not obstruct the grammaticality of this sentence.

(13) Idiay/*ti kotse-k ti nalabbaga.
    DEM/DET car-1,SG,GEN DET red
    ‘That car of mine is the red (one).’

This data also reminds one of the facts in Scottish Gaelic, another VSO language. Adger and Ramchand (2003) suggest that two DPs in the language pose problems in a “substantive auxiliary construction” (the default copular construction) since full-fledged DPs are simply ineligible as predicates. Instead, the language reverts to a strategy that employs what is called the “defective copula” and with the help of a “pronominal augment” that agrees in number with the subject.
As in Ilokano, the Malagasy and Scottish Gaelic data suggest that there is a correlation between definiteness and what qualifies as predicates. The following section examines some consequences due to this observation, particularly in regards to predicate-initiality and word order in Ilokano.

2.2.2 Subject-first in a Predicate-initial Language

As mentioned above, Ilokano copular sentences have a default predicate-initial word order. Our discussions about predicate nominals and the “definiteness constraint,” however, open the possibility that copular sentences can in fact have a SUBJ < PRED word order. This is especially true when a predicate is nominalized and cannot occupy the initial position. We also see this word order effect in action in copular sentences featuring a universal QP as one of its major constituents. It is well known that there is a formal ban on the universal quantifier functioning as a predicate as shown in (14).

(14) a. Every man is Juan.
    b. *Juan is every man.

The data in (14) illustrates that the universal quantifier happily functions as the subject, but not as a predicate. In Ilokano, the universal quantifier (*amin amin nga tao ‘every person’) can be in the initial position typically reserved for predicates. Yet it must be interpreted as the subject and it is impossible to interpret it as the predicate.

(15) Amin amin nga tao ni Juan.
    every LIG person PSN Juan
    ‘Every person is Juan.’ / ‘Juan is every person.’

In a previous account of predicate-initiality in Austronesian languages, Massam (2000) derives the word order in languages such as Niuean by positing an EPP [PRED] feature in I” attracting eligible predicates into Spec,IP. This approach seems to predict a robust PRED < SUBJ word order since the “Predicative EPP” feature must be checked by moving a predicate to Spec,IP. This approach does not seem to accommodate the possibility of having a SUBJ < PRED word order in an otherwise predicate-initial language like Ilokano.

Instead, I adopt an approach proposed by den Dikken (2006a) on licensing empty-headed predicates. Drawing from several facts like Celtic copular sentences and predicate inversion in English, an empty-headed predicate “is not licensed to stay in the predicate position of the small clause: it must raise to Spec,TP in order to be properly licensed” (den Dikken 2006a:93). Empty-headed predicates in Ilokano constitute eligible predicates such as bare NPs and must front. Headed predicates, particularly predicate nominals headed by the D-head ti, have no motivation to front. Hence, we predict that although the initial position in Ilokano is typically occupied by a predicate as in (16a), a SUBJ < PRED word order is in fact possible as in (16b). A structure is provided in (17) and (18), where the RELATOR is a functional head that establishes a predication relationship between a subject and a predicate (see den Dikken 2006a).

(16) a. (*Ti) ubing ni Maria. PRED < SUBJ
    DET child PSN Maria
    ‘Maria is a child.’

b. Ni Maria ti ubing. SUBJ < PRED
    PSN Maria DET child
    ‘Maria is the child’

(18) A headed predicate (headed by determiner ti) does not have the motivation to raise, resulting in a SUBJ < PRED word order.

Deriving subject-first word order in a predicate-initial language such as Ilokano is subject to further investigations beyond the scope of this paper. Whatever the best account of subject-first word order is, it is important to recognize that this word order is in fact possible in Ilokano.

2.3 Topicalization with ket

The Ilokano ket-construction is a multi-purpose TOPIC < COMMENT topicalization construction. It can host any possible topics and constituents as big as full clauses as COMMENT XPs. I analyze the particle ket as a topic particle in between the two parts of a bi-clausal structure: a topicalized constituent in a high position or the "pre-ket" position and the COMMENT XP in the "post-ket" position. The examples below are ket-constructions with topics co-referenced with arguments in the lower clause in (19a) and (19b), and with locative and temporal adjuncts as topics in (19c) and (19d).

(19) a. [Ti ayayam], ket gimmatang-ko pro, idi kalman.
   DET toy TOP PRF.BUY-1.SG.ERG 3.SG.ABS PST yesterday
   ‘(As for) the toy, I bought (it) yesterday.’

b. [Siak], ket gimmatang-ak, iti ayayam.
   1.SG.ABS TOP PRF.BUY-1.SG.ABS OBL toy
   ‘(As for) me, I bought the toy in Vigan.’

c. [Idiay Vigan] ket gimmatang-ak iti ayayam.
   DEM Vigan TOP PRF.BUY-1.SG.ABS OBL toy
   ‘In Vigan, I bought the toy.’

d. [Idi kalman] ket gimmatang-ak iti ayayam.
   PST yesterday TOP PRF.BUY-1.SG.ABS OBL toy
   ‘Yesterday, I bought the toy.’

Note that examples (19a) and (19b) contain co-referential DPs in the “pre-ket” and “post-ket” positions (the 3.SG.ABS [-HUMAN] pronoun in Ilokano is null). This suggests that the ket-topicalization involves base generation rather than movement. While the “pre-ket” position can host any base-generated eligible topics, the constituent in the “post-ket” position can be a full-fledged IP with no sign of extraction. The example in (20) illustrates the fact that the ket-construction involves no movement, and hence does not exhibit island violations.
2.4 Headed and Headless Relatives in Ilokano

Another crucial topic in our discussion of pseudoclefts is the structure of headed and headless relatives in the language. In English, headed relatives are DPs with an overt “head” noun of a relative clause as in \([\text{CP} \text{the horse} \text{CP} \text{that I saw}]\). Headless relatives, as the name suggests, do not have an overt head noun. Instead, as would some suggest, there is a null head noun, and a wh-word (instead of that) introduces the relative clause (Collins, 1991; Grosu, 1996, among others). Headless relatives in English and other languages are essential in forming pseudocleft constructions, as in the relative clause as in (21).

Ilokano headed relatives must involve the ligature nga between the “head” and its relative clause as in (21). Leaving the ligature out would deliver an ungrammatical result. Note that the verb in the relative clause must also have the appropriate voice morphology that matches the grammatical role of the head noun. The “actor-trigger” verb form in (21a) matches the role of the head noun ti tao ‘the person,’ and likewise in (22a) where the “patient-trigger” form corresponds with the head noun ti ayayam ‘the toy.’ Note that the verb must again reflect the grammatical role of the extracted argument, and a mismatch would lead to ungrammaticality, as shown in examples (21b) and (22b).

The relative clause itself involves movement of a null operator, which is subject to the “trigger-only” restriction to A-bar movement as discussed in section 2.1. Evidence of movement is shown in example (22c), where a wh-island violation is observed.

Headless relatives in Ilokano, as in English, constitute a relative clause with a null head noun. This time, the determiner ti introduces the headless relative rather than a wh-word or a complementizer. The formation of predicate nominals discussed in section 2.2 should come to mind, where one can simply add the determiner ti to nominalize predicates.

The relative clauses in headless relatives are formed once again in an operator movement as discussed above. In (23a), the verb must be in its “actor-trigger” form to match the extracted external argument; any other verb forms as in (23b) would lead to ungrammaticality. Similarly, the verb must be in its “patient-trigger” form when the extracted argument is the internal argument as in (24). The same island effects are again observed in headless relatives as shown in (24c).
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(23) a. ti ø [Op₁ gimmatang ec₁ iti ayayam idiay Vigan]
   DET PRF-AT-buy OBL toy DEM Vigan
   ‘(the one) who bought the toy in Vigan’

b. *ti ø [Op₁ ginatang ec₁ iti ayayam idiay Vigan]
   DET PRF-PT-buy OBL toy DEM Vigan
   ‘(the one) who bought the toy in Vigan’

(24) a. ti ø [Op₁ ginatang-ko ec₁ idiay Vigan]
   DET PRF-PT-buy-1.SG.ERG OBL toy DEM Vigan
   ‘what I bought in Vigan’

b. *ti ø [Op₁ gimmatang-ak ec₁ idiay Vigan]
   DET PRF-AT-buy-1.SG.ABS OBL toy DEM Vigan
   ‘what I bought in Vigan’

c. *ti ø [saan-ko ammo [no apay nga ginatang-ko ti ... ]]
   DET NEG-1.SG.ERG know COMP why LIG PT.PRZ-buy-1.SG.ERG
   ‘what I don’t know if why I bought (it)’

d. *[DP D=tí ø [CP Op₁ [NegP ... [CP ... t ... ]]]]

Based on the facts discussed above, we conclude that there is a correlation between “headedness” of Ilokano relatives and the distribution of the ligature nga. Whenever the relative clause is overtly headed, the ligature is obligatorily present as in (25). This suggests a typical relative clause construction where the ligature nga introduces the relative clause after the overt head. When it is “headless,” the ligature is obligatorily absent as in (26). This alternation reminds us of a similar alternation in English such as the one that bought a toy in Vigan and who bought the toy in Vigan (see Collins, 1991 for a more detailed discussion). The structures of headed and headless relatives are provided in (27) and (28).

(25) a. *ti nga gimmatang iti ayayam idiay Vigan
   DET LIG PRF-AT-buy OBL toy DEM Vigan
   ‘(the one) who bought the toy in Vigan’

b. *ti nga gimmatang-ko idiay Vigan
   DET LIG PRF-PT-buy-1.SG.ERG OBL toy DEM Vigan
   ‘(the one) who bought the toy in Vigan’

(26) a. *ti tao gimmatang iti ayayam idiay Vigan
   DET person PRF-AT-buy OBL toy DEM Vigan
   ‘the person who bought the toy in Vigan’

b. *ti ayayam gimmatang-ko idiay Vigan
   DET toy PRF-PT-buy-1.SG.ERG OBL toy DEM Vigan
   ‘the toy that I bought in Vigan’

(27) Structure of Ilokano headed relatives

(28) Structure of Ilokano headless relatives
3 A Typology of Pseudoclefts in Ilokano

It is possible to construct pseudoclefts in Ilokano by utilizing one of the two constructions discussed above. The first type, the ti-type (or null copula-type) pseudocleft, is formed with the canonical copular sentence construction connecting a focus XP and a headless relative introduced by the determiner ti. The ket-type pseudocleft is formed with the ket-topicalization construction, with the headless relative in the topic or pre-ket position and the focus XP in the post-ket position as the emergent constituent of an optional ellipsis of a full-fledged IP.

3.1 The ti-type (Null Copula-type) Pseudocleft

In a ti-type pseudocleft, we have a bi-clausal structure with the focused XP originating outside the constituent that consists of the determiner ti and a headless relative (or the predicate nominal). The result is the following word order:

\[
\text{[DP FOCUSED CONSTITUENT]} < \text{RELATOR (copula)} = \emptyset < \text{[DP ti + wh-clause]}
\]

as illustrated in the examples (33a) and (34a).

\[\text{(30) a. [DP Siak]} \emptyset \ [DP ti \text{ gimmatang} \text{ iti ayayam}].
\]
\[\text{1.SG.ABS COP DET PRF.BUY OBL toy}
\]
\n\[\text{b. *[DP Ti} \text{ gimmatang} \text{ iti ayayam} ] \emptyset \ [DP siak].
\]
\[\text{DET PRF.BUY OBL COP 1.SG.ABS}
\]

\[\text{(31) a. [DP Ayayam]} \emptyset \ [DP ti \text{ ginatang} \text{ ni Juan idiay Vigan}].
\]
\[\text{toy COP DET PRF.PT.BUY PSN Juan DEM Vigan}
\]
\n\[\text{b. *[DP Ti} \text{ ginatang} \text{ ni Juan idiay Vigan} ] \emptyset \ [DP ayayam].
\]
\[\text{DET PRF.PT.BUY PSN Juan DEM Vigan COP toy}
\]

Note that the reverse word order is impossible as in the b. examples, due to reasons previously discussed: predicate nominals are headed predicates that do not have the motivation to front. The presence of the determiner ti “freezes” the predicate in its base position; thus, it cannot front. Crucially, the result is a SUBJ < PRED word order and not a predicate-initial construction. Thus, an analysis of the ti-type pseudocleft is provided in the structure below:

\[\text{(32) Analysis of the ti-type pseudocleft}
\]

\[\text{XP}
\]
\[\text{[DP ti + wh-clause]}
\]
\[\text{TOPIC PARTICLE = ket < [IP ... FOCUS XP ...]}
\]

3.2 The ket-type Pseudocleft

The ket-type pseudocleft, as the name suggests, is formed with the aid of the ket-topicalization construction. This time, the DP containing the determiner ti and headless relative is introduced in the pre-ket position, and the focus XP emerges in the post-ket position as a result of an optional ellipsis of a full-fledged IP. The result is the following word order:

\[\text{(33) [DP ti + wh-clause] < TOPIC PARTICLE = ket < [IP ... FOCUS XP ...]}
\]

As discussed in section 2.3, ket-topicalization is a construction that results in a TOPIC < COMMENT information structure. All constituents are base-generated rather than through movement,
and can host any possible topics. Since any topics are possible, DPs containing a headless relative (\(ti + \) wh-clause) are certainly eligible candidates. Recall that the post-\(ket\) position can host full-fledged IPs, which are subject to optional ellipsis. Emerging from this ellipsis is the focused constituent that is co-referential with the topic DP. Example (34a) is a typical example of a \(ket\)-type pseudocleft, where the headless relative is in the pre-\(ket\) position and a full IP in the post-\(ket\) position with ellipsis leaving the trigger argument as the focused constituent. Note that it is impossible for a non-trigger argument to emerge as the focused constituent as in (34b), where \(iti\ ayayam \) ‘a toy’ is in its oblique form.

(34) a. \[DP Ti \ gimatang-ko \ idiy Vigan \ ket \ [IP \ (gimatang-ko) \ [DP ti ayayam]].\]
   ‘What I bought in Vigan is (I bought) the toy.’
   b. *\[DP Ti \ gimatang-ko \ idiy Vigan \ ket \ [IP \ (gimatang-ak) \ [DP iti ayayam]].\]
   ‘What I bought in Vigan is (I bought) the toy.’

(35) \[DP Ti \ gimatang \ iti \ ayayam \ ket \ [IP \ siak].\]
   ‘(The one) who bought a toy is me (who bought a toy).’

(36) Structure of the \(ket\)-type pseudocleft

4 A Typology of Pseudoclefts in English and Ilokano

From our discussion above emerge two strategies in forming pseudoclefts: one involving a canonical copular sentence and the other topicalization. This approach provides overt evidence on the analysis of specificationals pseudoclefts as argued by den Dikken, Meinunger, and Wilder (2000). Their analysis argues for two types of English specificationals pseudoclefts: type A pseudoclefts consist of full-IP counterweights subject to ellipsis and type B pseudoclefts do not have an IP-counterweight and no ellipsis is involved. The examples in (37) are type A pseudoclefts and the licensing of the NPI in the post-copular position supports the optional ellipsis analysis.

(37) a. What John bought was [he bought some wine].
   b. What John didn’t buy was [he didn’t buy any wine].
   c. *Any wine was [what John didn’t buy].

Type A pseudoclefts follow straightforwardly from the analysis of Ilokano \(ket\)-type pseudoclefts. Both involve topicalization and optional ellipsis in the counterweight or the post-\(ket\) position. The following examples in (38) exhibit Type B pseudoclefts where the counterweight is not an IP and thus no ellipsis is involved. We should also expect there to be no NPI connectivity effects in this type, and word order to be interchangeable. The Ilokano \(ti\)-type pseudocleft parallels this structure, but it does not enjoy the same freedom of word order around the null copula due to a “definiteness constraint” in the language.
(38) a. Rice is [what many people eat].
b. [What many people eat] is rice.

5 Concluding Remarks

My primary aim in this paper has been to provide a syntactic analysis of pseudoclefts in Ilokano, hoping to contribute to the overall discussion of pseudoclefts, especially in Austronesian languages. I have argued that there are two strategies in constructing pseudoclefts in Ilokano: one is manifested in a copular construction and the other is a topicalization construction. I also presented facts about the information structure in these pseudoclefts, where the ti-type pseudoclefts are interpreted with a SUBJ < PRED word order and the ket-type pseudocleft as a TOPIC < COMMENT structure.

References


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