

An analysis of Indonesian *Wh*-questions and Pseudoclefts

One of the most influential approaches to (Bahasa) Indonesian *wh*-questions is the copular construction approach. In this approach, the clause headed by *yang* is a free relative clause, while the *wh*-elements are inversed (concealed) predicates containing the null copula, as illustrated in (1). (Paul 2001, Travis 2008, Jeoung 2018, among many others; cf. Aldridge 2008). As illustrated in (2), the copula seems to be optional in *wh*-in-situ construction.

- (1) a. Siapa yang di-tua-kan?
 who C PASS-old-APPL
 ‘Who is the one treated as an elder?’
 b. [\emptyset_V XP_{WH}]₁ [DP yang [TP di-tua kan] t₁ ? (Paul 2001, Potsdam 2004)
 COP XP_{WH} Rel
- (2) Yang di-tua-kan (adalah) siapa?
 Rel PASS-old-APPL COP who ‘The one treated as an elder is who?’

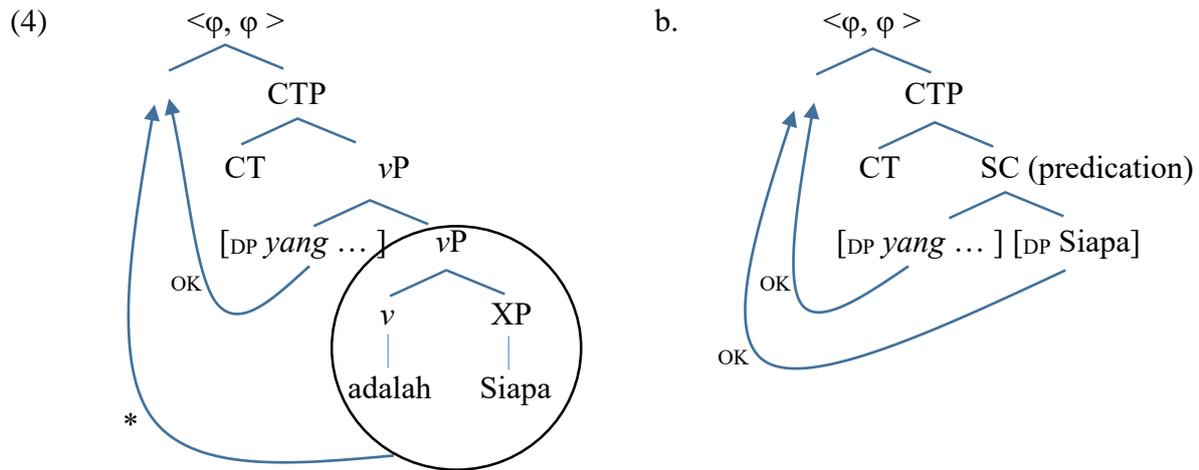
If (1a) had the structure in (1b), as the copular construction approach assumes, and the difference in the word order between (1a) and a variant of (2) containing a null copula resulted from optional movement of the predicate, then it would be erroneously predicted that (3a) as well as (3b) should be grammatical, contra to fact.

- (3) a. Yang di-tua-kan adalah siapa?
 C PASS-old-APPL COP who
 ‘The one treated as an elder is who?’
 b. *Adalah Siapa yang di-tua-kan?
 COP who C PASS-old-APPL
 ‘Who is the one treated as an elder?’
 ‘The one treated as an elder is who?’ (Kaufman)

In both (1a) and (3b), the copula and its following *wh*-element are moved together. The only difference between the two is the presence/absence of the overt copula.

In order to account for this puzzle, we propose that the sentences in (1a) and (3a) differ in their structure, and they end up resulting in distinct surface word order through Chomsky’s (2015) Labeling Theory. Additionally, we suggest that it is not a constituent containing both the copula and the *wh*-element but just a *wh*-element element that moves to form derived *wh*-question sentences such as (1a), where *wh*-elements are in the sentence initial position.

We assume here that in Indonesian, C and T are not separate heads (see Legate 2014, Erlewine 2018). For the expository purpose, I will use CT to represent the inseparable C-T head. When the copula is present in the structure, it is base-generated in *v* (see Mikkelsen 2005), and *v* takes a *wh*-element as its complement. The highest nominal (i.e., the free relative clause) moves and merges with CTP, as shown in (4a). Then CTP is successfully labeled as $\langle \varphi, \varphi \rangle$ due to feature sharing, since both the relative DP and TP bears φ -features. However, internal merger of the lower *v*P with TP is impossible. This is because the constituent containing moved *v*P and CTP cannot be labeled. This is the reason (3b) is ungrammatical. The present analysis can straightforwardly account for the reason (5) is ill-formed: Because the *wh*-nominal is located lower than the free relative clause, the former cannot move to the subject position over the latter stranding the copula – the locality problem (cf. Chomsky’s (1995) Minimal Link Condition).



- (5) *Siapa yang di-tua-kan adalah?
 who C PASS-old-APPL COP
 ‘Who is the one treated as an older?’

On the other hand, when the copula is not present, the *vP* layer is absent in the structure. The relative DP headed by *yang* and the predicate DP (i.e., *wh*-element) are generated in a small Clause (SC). In this case, both the former and the latter are in the minimal search domain from CT (cf. they are in a symmetric relation in Moro’s (1997) terms). Because of this, either the two DPs can move and merge with CTP for the labeling purpose. When the relative clause merges with CTP, then the word order in (3a) is generate, while (1a) is created when the *wh*-phrase moves. This is illustrated in (4b).

This analysis is based on the assumption that Indonesian lacks overt *wh*-movement identical to English *wh*-movement. This indicates that there is no *wh*-feature that triggers overt movement. This is because if CT contained a *wh*-feature, then internal merger of the **wh**-element to CTP would give rise to a grammatical sentence in (5) – the constituent containing the CTP and the moved *wh*-element is labeled as $\langle wh, wh \rangle$. At first glance, the sentence in (6) seems to be a counterexample of the present analysis. However, I assume here that the adjunct in (6) is not extracted from a lower position, but base-generated in CP (Yoshida et al. 2015).

- (6) Kenapa Jon mem-beli buku
 why Jon meN-bought a book
 ‘Why did Jon buy a book?’ (Cole, Hermon, and Tjung 2005)

This analysis can easily carry over to Indonesian pseudocleft sentences, which exhibit the similar word order, as illustrated in (7).

- (7) a. Yang di-dua-kan adalah Siti
 C PASS-old-APPL COP Siti
 ‘The person who treated as old is Siti.’
 b. *Adalah Siti yang di-dua-kan.
 c. *Siti yang di-dua-kan Adalah
 d. Siti yang di-dua-kan.