

PREDICATE CLEFTING IN HAITIAN CREOLE*

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1.0 Introduction

Predicate clefting is a commonly used construction in Haitian Creole. Examples of the sentence type are given in (1)-(3):

- (1) Se [kouri] Jan kouri.
 It-is run John run
 'It is run that John did (not, e.g., walk).'
- (2) Se [manje] Jan manje pen an.
 It-is eat John eat bread Det
 'It is eat that John did to the bread (not, e.g., baking).'
- (3) Se [manje] li te di Jan t' ap manje pen an.
 It-is eat he TNS say John TNS ASP ate bread Det
 'It is eat that he said that John did to the bread (not, e.g., bak).'

As these sentences illustrate, Haitian predicate clefts have the basic form in (4). There is an initial element *se*, followed by a clefted predicate (α), followed by a clause (β) containing another instance of the predicate:

- (4) Se [α] [β ... α ...]

The properties of predicate cleft constructions are discussed by Piou (1982) Koopman (1984), Lumsden and Lefebvre (1990), Hutchisson (nd) and Manfredi (1990). These are summarized in (5) and illustrated in (6)-(9):

- (5) a. Aspectual verbs and adverbs can appear with the predicate in α .
 b. No complements can appear in α .
 c. The set of elements appearing in α is a proper subset of that appearing in β (i.e., everything occurring in α must occur in β).
 d. The predicate is fully projected in β .
 e. The relation between the clefted α and the α in β obeys Subadjacency.
- (6) a. Se [fèk achte] li fèk achte flè yo.
 It-is just buy he just buy flower PL
 'It is just buy flowers that he did (not, e.g. just sell).'
- b. Se [mache vit] I' ap mache vit.
 It-is walk quickly 3SG ASP walk quickly
 'It is walk quickly that he/she is did (not, e.g., run).'
- c. Se [byen domi] Mari te byen domi.
 It-is well sleep Marie TNS well sleep
 'It is sleep really well that Mary did (not, e.g., run well).'
- (7) * Se [manje pen an] Jan manje pen an.
 It-is eat bread Det John ate bread Det
- (8) * Se [kraze] y' ap rebati kay ki te kraze nan
 It-is destroy 3PL ASP rebuild house OP TNS destroy in
 tanpèt la.
 storm Det
 'It is destroy that they are rebuilding the house that was destroyed in the storm.'

In this paper we consider two additional properties of predicate clefts in Haitian that have not (to our knowledge) been noted before. The first concerns an interesting restriction on the class of verbs that can undergo clefting. The second involves certain ambiguities that arise when the subordinate clause contains aspectual elements and/or complements of a particular kind. We will argue that these properties are explained, and the general construction illuminated, under a *quantificational analysis of predicate clefts*, in which a predicate phrase moves at the level of Logical Form and there is an accompanying quantification over events. We begin with the basic data.

1.1 A Verb Class Restriction on Predicate Clefts

The sentences below show that various types of verbs may participate in predicate cleft constructions: (e.g., 'run', 'sleep', 'eat', 'make', 'buy', 'look', 'hear', etc.). In all of these sentences the clefted predicate is understood as contrasting with some other verb that may be implicit in the discourse:

- (9) Se kouri Jan kouri.
It-is run John ran
'It is run that John did (not, e.g., walk).'
- (10) Se dòmi Jan dòmi.
It-is sleep John sleep
'It is sleep that John did (not, e.g., sit).'
- (11) Se manje Jan manje pen.
It-is eat John eat bread
'It is eat bread that John did (not, e.g., bake).'
- (12) Se fè Jan fè tab.
It-is make John made table
'It is make tables that John did (not, e.g., paint).'
- (13) Se achte Jan achte flè.
It-is buy John buy flowers
'It is buy flowers that John did (not, e.g., steal).'
- (14) Se gade Jan gade television an.
It-is watch John watch television Det
'It is watch television that John did (not, e.g., fix).'
- (15) Se tandè Jan tandè vòlè a.
It-is hear John hear thief Det
'It is hear the thief that John did (not, e.g., see).'

Nonetheless, not all verbs are cleftable in Haitian. Predicates like 'know', 'love', 'resemble', and 'be intelligent' do not participate in predicate cleft constructions with contrastive readings, as shown in (16)-(19):¹

- (16) * Se kònnè Jan kònnè lang sa a.
It-is know John know language this Det
'It is know this language that John did (not, e.g. speak).'
- (17) * Se renmen Jan renmen Mari.
It-is love John love Mary
'It is love Mary that John does (not, e.g. admire).'
- (18) * Se sanble Jan sanble ak papa -l
It-is resemble John resemble with father his
'It is resemble his father that John does (not, e.g. like).'

- (19) * Se entèlijan Jan entèlijan.
 It-is intelligent John intelligent
 'It is intelligent that John is (not, e.g. polite).'

The division between cleftable and non-cleftable verbs in Haitian appears to track the distinction drawn by Carlson (1977) between *stage-level predicates* and *individual-level predicates*, respectively. In general terms, the former are predicates attributing a property to a spatio-temporal stage or "slice" of an individual, whereas the latter are predicates attributing properties to the individual as individual. Stage-level predicates typically involve transitory properties - ones that may hold of an individual at one time or place and not at another; for example, eating, sleeping, and watching TV. By contrast, individual-level predicates are not spatio-temporally "located", and hence typically attribute some stable or permanent characteristic; for example, being polite, intelligent, resembling someone, etc.

Under this scheme, some stative verbs like 'sit', 'stand', 'hear' and 'see', etc. are classified as stage-level predicates, since they involve transitory states of an individual. While individual-level statives cannot participate in predicate clefts ((16)-(19)), stage-level statives can, as shown in (20)-(22):

- (20) Se chita Jan chita.
 It-is sit John sit
 'It is sit that John did (not, e.g., stand).'
- (21) Se kanpe Jan kanpe.
 It-is stand John stand
 'It is stand that John did (not, e.g., sit).'
- (22) Se tande/wè Jan tande/wè vòlè a.
 It-is hear/see John hear/see thief Det
 'It is hear/see the thief that John did (not, e.g., see/hear).'

The contrast in grammaticality between (16)-(19) and (20)-(22) shows that it is stage-level vs. individual-level status that governs cleftability of predicates, and not stativity vs. nonstativity.

This first set of facts thus raises the following question: what is the source of the verb class restriction on predicate clefts? Why are only stage-level predicates allowed?

1.2 Ambiguities with Aspectually Delimited Predicates

The second property of Haitian predicate clefts concerns their interpretation in the presence of certain subordinate clause elements. As noted above, predicate clefts always involve an understood contrast: the clefted verb is understood as contrasting with some other verb in the discourse. Interestingly, when the copy of the clefted

verb in the subordinate clause co-occurs with certain aspectual verbs, or with aspectually "delimiting" complements (in the sense of Tenny (1987)), then the contrast can be understood more broadly. Contrast can be understood with respect to a whole predicate phrase, or with respect to the aspectual verb or the delimiting complement.

To illustrate, consider the example in (23), in which the subordinate clause contains the aspectually delimiting goal phrase *al lekòl*, 'to school'. It is possible to understand this cleft as in earlier examples, with contrast only on the verb (23a). However it's also possible to understand this cleft as contrasting the larger VP (23b), or as contrasting the delimiting complement (23c):

- (23) Se mache Jan mache al lekòl.
 It-is walk John walk to school
- a. 'It is walk that John did to school (not, e.g., run).'
- b. 'It is walk to school that John did (not, e.g., run home).'
- c. 'It is to school that John walked (not, e.g., to the park).'

Compare this now with the similar cleft in (24), where the latter involves the non-delimiting adverbial phrase *nan lari a*, 'in the street':

- (24) Se mache Jan mache nan lari a.
 It-is walk John walk in street Det
- a. 'It is walk that John did in the street (not, e.g., run).'
- b. *'It is walk in the street that John did (not, e.g., run home).'
- c. *'It is in the street that John walked (not, e.g., in the park).'

Here only the verb can be understood as contrasted; contrast cannot be read on the whole subordinate predicate phrase 'walk in the street', nor on the adverbial 'in the street'.

Similar results hold for the pairs in (25) and (26), and those in (27) and (28). In (25), the subordinate clause contains the delimiting object *pen an*, 'the bread' and shows three readings corresponding to contrast on the predicate (25a), contrast on the predicate phrase (25b), or contrast on the delimiting object (25c). The subordinate clause in (26) contains a non-delimiting object *fransè*, 'French', and contrast is understood only on the verb:

- (25) Se manje Jan manje pen an.
 It-is eat John eat bread Det
- a. 'It is eat that John did with the bread (not, e.g., bake).'
- b. 'It is eat the bread that John did (not, e.g., wash the dishes).'
- c. 'It is the bread that John ate (not, e.g., the apple).'

- (26) Se etidye Jan etidye fransè.
 It-is study John study French
- a. 'It is study that John did with French (not, e.g., speak).'
- b. *'It is study French that John did (not, e.g., speak English).'
- c. *'It is French that John studied (not, e.g., English).'

In (27), the subordinate clause contains the aspectual verb *fèk*, 'just finish', and conveys contrast on the predicate (27a), on the predicate phrase (27b), or on the aspectual verb (27c). In contrast, the subordinate clause in (28) contains no aspectual verb (or delimiting object) and the cleft is again unambiguous:

- (27) Se fè Jan fèk fè tab.
 It-is make John ASP make table
- a. 'It is making that John is just finished doing with a table (not, e.g., painting).'
- b. 'It is making a table that John is just finished doing (not, e.g., painting walls).'
- c. 'It is just finished that John is with respect to making a table (not, e.g., just starting).'
- (28) Se fè Jan fè tab.
 It-is make John make table
- a. 'It is making that John did with tables (not, e.g., painting).'
- b. *'It is making a table that John did (not, e.g., painting walls).'
- c. *'It is a table that John made (not, e.g., a chair).'

This second set of facts raises the questions: how do the ambiguities in (23), (25) and (27) arise, and why do aspectual elements induce them?

2.0 A Quantificational Analysis

2.1 Focus, Clefts and Quantification

Our answer to these questions is based on a general analysis of clefts as quantifications. This analysis can be motivated by reflection on the parallel between cleft examples like (29) and focus examples like (30) (where capitalization indicates stress or accent):

- (29) It was John that saw Mary
- (30) JOHN saw Mary

(31) John = FOCUS
x saw Mary, for some x = PRESUPPOSITION

(32) a. [John]_i [_{IP} t_i saw Mary]
 b. [$\exists x_i : x_i = \text{John}$] [x_i saw Mary]
 c. John = Q-RESTRICTION = FOCUS
 x_i saw Mary (for some x_i) = Q-SCOPE = PRESUPPOSITION

Given the intuitive parallel between clefts and focus, we suggest a similar quantificational analysis of clefts, yielding a similar partition of sentence information. Taking the general structure for clefts as in (33a), we propose the interpretation in (33b) and the mapping to focus and presupposition in (33c):

- (33) a. It be XP_i [$CP \dots t_i \dots$]
 b. [$\exists x_i : x_i = XP$] [$\dots x_i \dots$]
 c. XP = Q-RESTRICTION = FOCUS
 $\dots x_i \dots$ (for some x_i) = Q-SCOPE = PRESUPPOSITION

The clefted phrase (XP) represents the quantifier restriction and corresponds to the focus. The phrase containing the trace (CP) represents the quantifier scope and corresponds to the presupposition. As with focus, the existential quantifier is "constructional" – it comes as part of the general scheme for interpreting the structure.

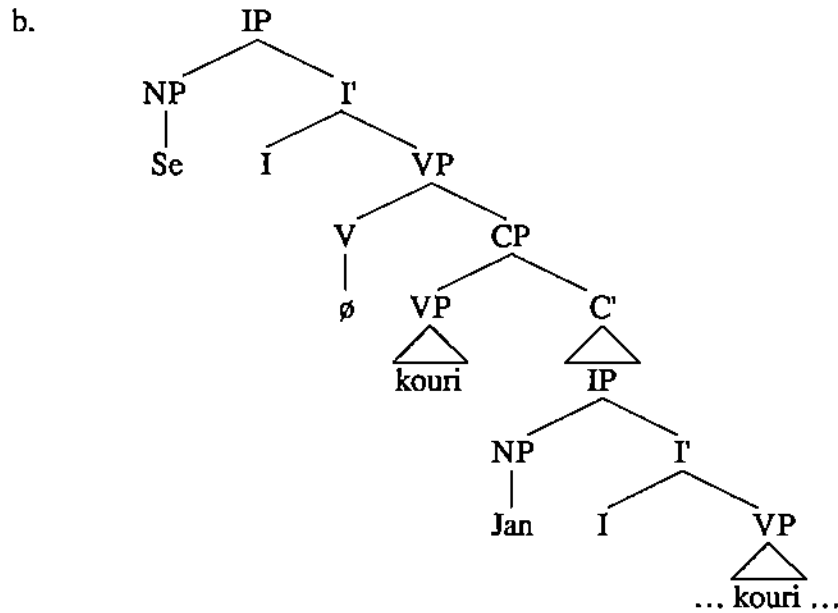
2.2 Predicate Clefts as Quantifications

In order to extend this general view of clefts to predicate clefts in Haitian Creole, we need a syntax like (33a) involving an empty category in CP, and we need a semantics like (33b) involving quantification.

2.2.1 LF Movement of Predicates. Our basic syntactic proposal is that a structure parallel to (33a) is created for predicate clefts at the level of Logical Form by movement of the subordinate predicate, or a projection there of.

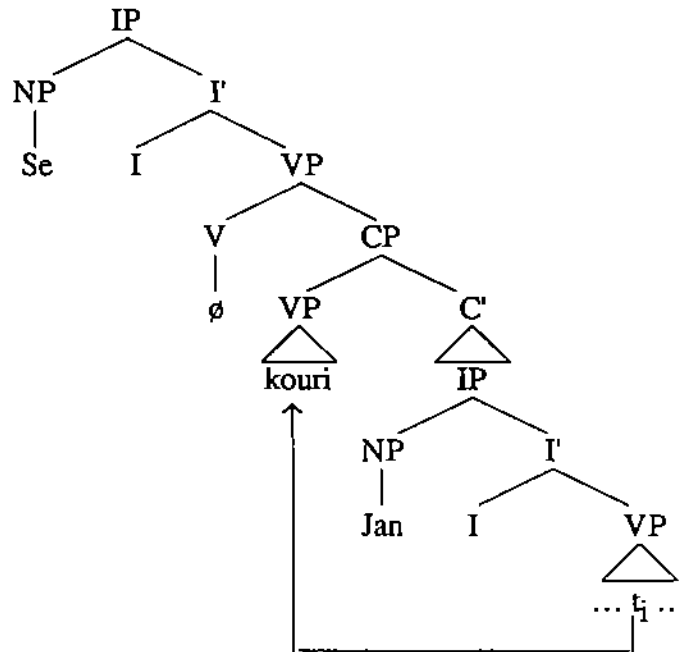
Assume the surface form of (34a) to be as in (34b), which is similar to an English cleft. The higher sentence contains a pleonastic pronoun subject (*se*) and a null copula (\emptyset). The clefted element is base-generated in A-bar position – on our view, in the Spec of CP:²

- (34) a. *Se kouri Jan kouri.*
 It-is run John ran
 'It is run that John did.'



Our proposal is that at the level of Logical Form, the predicate from the lower clause actually replaces its higher copy in the cleft, as illustrated in (34c). Movement produces an empty category in CP:

(34) c.



This analysis can be motivated under the logic of the Full Interpretation Principle of Chomsky (1986). In a predicate cleft construction, the clefted predicate appears twice. But it is "understood" – that is, interpreted – only once. One of its instances is thus a dummy or pleonastic occurrence.

Now recall that in a Haitian predicate cleft construction, the "upstairs" predicate projects no complements, that is, it assigns no thematic roles. Recall also that it is formally dependent on the lower predicate in the sense that it contains no elements not already present in the lower predicate – it is simply a partial copy of the latter. We interpret these facts as showing that the upstairs predicate is pleonastic in the sense relevant for predicates, i.e., assigning no theta-roles. It is an uninterpreted, purely formal element.

Under the Full Interpretation Principle, uninterpreted elements must be eliminated at the level of Logical Form. The proposal here is that uninterpreted predicates in a predicate cleft are eliminated like pleonastic *there* in a *there*-insertion sentence: both are replaced by a correlated phrase at LF.³

2.2.2 Event Quantification. The basic semantic proposal we would like to make is that predicate clefts are also underlying quantifications, but rather than quantifying over familiar individuals like persons and chairs, they quantify over events.

We can spell out this idea with some notation drawn from recent work on event semantics by Terry Parsons, which develops original proposals by Donald

Davidson (see Davidson (1967), Parsons (1985, forthcoming)).⁴ On Parsons' account, simple action sentences like (35a) involve a semantic analysis as in (35b), where the verb is a one-place predicate of events, and where the nominal arguments of V are related to it by means of binary thematic relations like Agent, Theme, and To:

- (35) a. John ran to school
 b. $\exists e$ [running (e) & Agent (j, e) & To (s, e) & Past (e)]

Thus the sentence *John ran to school* is true just in case there is an event of running whose agent was John, which was to school, and which was in the past.

Assuming event semantics together with our LF structures, it now becomes possible to assimilate the analysis of predicate clefts to the analysis of clefts generally. In parallel to the scheme given earlier in (33), we can provide the scheme in (36), where the clefted predicate represents the restriction on a quantifier over events and gives the focus, and where the subordinate clause represents the scope of event quantification and gives the presupposition:

- (36) a. $Se \emptyset \text{Pred}_i [C' \dots t_i \dots]$
 b. $[\exists e_i: \text{Pred}(e_i)] [\dots e_i \dots]$
 c. $\text{Pred}(e_i)$ = Q-RESTRICTION = FOCUS
 $\dots e_i \dots$ (for some e_i) = Q-SCOPE = PRESUPPOSITION

To illustrate with our example *Se kouri Jan kouri*, the sentence will get the LF structure in (37a), and express the quantification in (37b). Focus and presupposition will be assigned as in (37c):

- (37) a. $Se \emptyset [\text{kouri}]_i [C' \text{Jan } t_i]$
 b. $[\exists e_i: \text{running}(e_i)] [\text{Agent}(j, e_i)]$
 c. $\text{running}(e_i)$ = Q-RESTRICTION = FOCUS
 $\text{Agent}(j, e_i)$ (for some e_i) = Q-SCOPE = PRESUPPOSITION

So, *Se kouri Jan kouri* asserts that John was running. It conveys that the running (the focus) contrasts with some understood action – say, walking. And it presupposes that John was the agent of *some* event – that is, it presupposes that he did *something*. These are just the desired results.

3.0 Predicate Cleft Properties Again

3.1 Clefting of Stage-level Predicates

The event-quantification analysis yields a simple account of the verb class restriction on cleftable predicates in Haitian when taken together with a recent proposal by Kratzer (1988). Recall that only stage-level predicates are permitted in clefts (38a); individual-level predicates are not (38b):

- (38) a. *Se manje Jan manje pen an.*
 'It is eat that John did to the bread (not, e.g., bake).'
 b. **Se kònnè Jan kònnè lang sa a.*
 'It is know this language that John does (not, e.g., speak).'

Kratzer (1988) has argued on independent grounds that the stage-level individual-level distinction should be analyzed in terms of whether the predicate in question contains an event position. On this view, stage-level predicates such as *manje* and *kouri* would be predicates of events, whereas individual-level predicates such as *kònnè* and *renmen* would contain no event position and would be predicates of non-event individuals.

Under our analysis, Kratzer's proposal explains the verb class restriction directly. As predicates of events, stage-level predicates are able to restrict an event quantification, and hence are able to appear in predicate clefts. By contrast, as non-predicates of events, individual-level predicates are unable to function as event quantification restrictors, and hence are disallowed in clefts⁵.

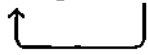

3.2 Focal Ambiguities

The event-quantification analysis also gives a simple account of the focal ambiguities like those in (23) and (25) (repeated below).

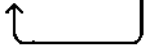
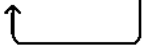
- (23) *Se mache Jan mache al lekòl.*
 It-is walk John walk go school
 a. 'It is walk that John did to school (not, e.g., run).'
 b. 'It is walk to school that John did (not, e.g., run home).'
 c. 'It is to school that John walked (not, e.g., to the park).'
- (25) *Se manje Jan manje pen an.*
 It-is eat John eat bread Det
 a. 'It is eat that John did with the bread (not, e.g., bake).'
 b. 'It is eat the bread that John did (not, e.g., wash the dishes).'
 c. 'It is the bread that John ate (not, e.g., the apple).'

Recall that there are three basic cases to consider: (i) a reading where the subordinate V is focused, (ii) a reading where the V + delimiter is focused, and (iii) and a reading where the delimiter is focused.

We propose to analyze Case I in the following way: at LF the subordinate predicate raises and replaces the pleonastic predicate, leaving an empty category in C' as in (39) and (40). The raised predicates are understood as the exclusive foci and the remainder of C' provides the presupposition:

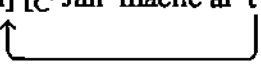
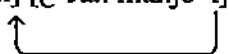
- (39) a. Se \emptyset [mache] [_{C'} Jan t al lekòl]

 b. [\exists e: walking (e)] [Agent (j, e) & To (s, e)]
 c. walking (e) = FOCUS
 Agent (j, e) & To (s, e) = PRESUPPOSITION
 'It is walk that John did to school (not, e.g., run).'
- (40) a. Se \emptyset [manje] [_{C'} Jan t pen an]

 b. [\exists e: eating (e)] [Agent (j, e) & Theme (b, e)]
 c. eating (e) = FOCUS
 Agent (j, e) & Theme (b, e) = PRESUPPOSITION
 'It is eat that John did with the bread (not, e.g., bake).'

Case II is similar, but instead of the predicate moving alone, we propose that the predicate + delimiter raise as in (41) and (42). The moved phrases are then understood as joint foci, and what's left in C' gives the presupposition:

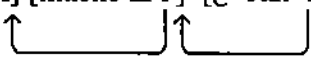
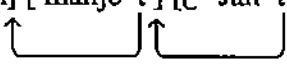
- (41) a. Se \emptyset [mache al lekòl] [_{C'} Jan t]

 b. [\exists e: walking (e) & To (s, e)] [Agent (j, e)]
 c. walking (e) & To (s, e) = FOCUS
 Agent (j, e) = PRESUPPOSITION
 'It is walk to school that John did (not, e.g., run home).'
- (42) a. Se \emptyset [manje pen an] [_{C'} Jan t]

 b. [\exists e: eating (e) & Theme (b, e)] [Agent (j, e)]

- c. eating (e) & Theme (b, e) = FOCUS
 Agent (j, e) = PRESUPPOSITION
 'It is eat the bread that John did (not, e.g., wash the dishes).'

Finally consider Case III, where the delimiter is focused. These readings appear problematic at first for the general line suggested here, since LFs for the desired readings would seem to require a peculiar derivation in which the clefted predicate is replaced at LF by a categorially distinct element such as an NP:

- (43) a. Se \emptyset [lekòl] [_C Jan mache al t]

 b. Se \emptyset [pen an] [_C Jan manje t]


There is, however, another analysis for these examples. Suppose we take the relevant LF to derive as follows: first a larger predicate phrase raises as in case (b), leaving a trace inside C'. But then there is a further focal extraction out of the raised VP, leaving a trace in the latter. The result would be the structures and the quantifications shown in (44) and (45):



- (44) Se \emptyset [lekòl] [mache al t] [_C Jan t]

 $[\exists x: x = \text{school}] [\exists e: \text{walking (e) \& To (x, e)}] [\text{Agent (j, e)}]$
 (45) Se \emptyset [pen an] [manje t] [_C Jan t]

 $[\exists x: x = \text{the bread}] [\exists e: \text{eating (e) \& Theme (x, e)}] [\text{Agent (j, e)}]$

These LFs would, it seems, allow either of two possible interpretations depending on whether the intermediate quantifier phrase – $\exists e: \text{walking (e) and To (x, e)}$ and $\exists e: \text{eating (e) and Theme (x, e)}$ – is understood as part of the presupposition or as a separate focus. If the intermediate phrase forms part of the presupposition we get the readings in (46a) and (46a), respectively. These are similar to what would be assigned to the structures in (43). On the other hand, if the intermediate phrase forms a separate focus, then we get the "double focus" readings in (47a) and (47b), respectively:

- (46) a. school = FOCUS
 $\exists e [\text{walking (e) \& To (x, e) \& Agent (j, e)}]$ = PRESUPPOSITION
 'It is SCHOOL that John is walking to.'

- b. The bread = FOCUS
 $\exists e$ [eating (e) & Theme (x, e) & Agent (j, e)] = PRESUPPOSITION
 'It is THE BREAD that John is eating.'
- (47) a. school = PRIMARY FOCUS
 walking (e) & To (x, e) = SECONDARY FOCUS
 Agent (j, e) = PRESUPPOSITION
 'It is SCHOOL that is such that it is WALKING THERE that John did.'
- b. the bread = PRIMARY FOCUS
 eating (e) & Theme (x, e) = SECONDARY FOCUS
 Agent (j, e) = PRESUPPOSITION
 'It is the BREAD that is such that it is EATING THAT that John did.'

Because of the subtle difference between delimiter focus and double focus, we are not yet able to determine conclusively which of these these glosses best records the force that Haitian speakers attach to such sentences. However it is worth noting that movements of the kind proposed here are not unprecedented. Nested LF extractions like those in (44) and (45) also occur with quantifiers in what Robert May has termed "inverse linking constructions". Examples of these are given in (48) and (49).

- (48) a. Someone in every city records its population
 b. $[_{NP} \text{ every city }] [_{NP} \text{ someone in } t] [_{TP} t \text{ records its population}]$

- (49) a. The parents of each child received a note
 b. $[_{NP} \text{ each child }] [_{NP} \text{ the parents of } t] [_{TP} t \text{ received a note}]$


As in the "double focus" cases, there is an initial LF raising out of the clause followed by a second extraction from the dislocated element.

4.0. Conclusion

Our analysis accounts for the restriction on the type of predicate that can occur in predicate clefts, and on the nature of focal ambiguity. What we must leave unanswered at present is the third and very intriguing question: why do aspectual elements induce the variations in predicate scope that we observe? We believe that the answer to this question may lie in seeing aspect as combining with verbs to produce *sortal predicates of events*: predicates which not only classify events as eatings, runnings, sleepings, etc., but which also provide a criterion for saying which and how many such events occurred. Only such predicates would provide an

appropriate restriction on an event quantifier and thus be allowed in the focus of a predicate cleft. This answer carries us outside the scope of the present paper and into a number of other domains of Haitian grammar. Hence we must leave the topic for another time.

Notes

- * This research was supported by CRSH, FCAR and FIR (UQAM).
- 1. There is another type of predicate cleft – not discussed in this paper – that involves an emphatic reading on the clefted verb as in (i):
 - (i) Se rouj li rouj.
 It-is red it red
 'It is really red (e.g. It is red for red).'
- 2. For present purposes we will assume that the clefted phrase is a VP.
- 3. We assume that LF movement of the raised predicate is cyclic through SpecC', and that this movement obeys Subjacency. This accounts for the facts noted earlier in (5e) and (8). For a defense of the view that LF movement obeys Subjacency, see Pesetsky (1987) and Fiengo and May (forthcoming).
- 4. Related approaches to event semantics are developed in Higginbotham (1985, 1989) and in Schein (1986).
- 5. In the scheme for interpreting English clefts given above in (33), where the focused phrase XP is a referring expression, a predicate 'X = XP' is created by means of the identity relation. Assuming first-order quantification, no such derived predicate will be available in the case of clefted individual-level predicates; expressions of the form 'X = know' or 'X = resemble' will simply be nonsensical. (We are grateful to Sabine Iatridou for discussion on this point.)

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