Pragmatic demarking of clefts:
When and where?

Corinna Handschuh
(based on joined research with Christian Rapold)

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Some old news

The grammaticalization of clefts to basic declarative clauses

predicate nominal (copula) + relative clause

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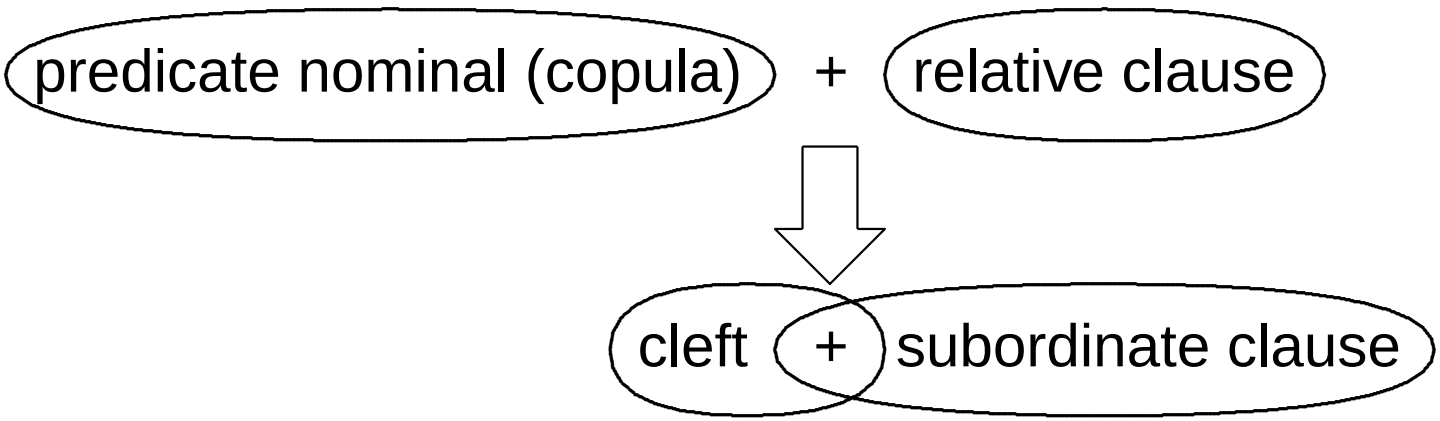

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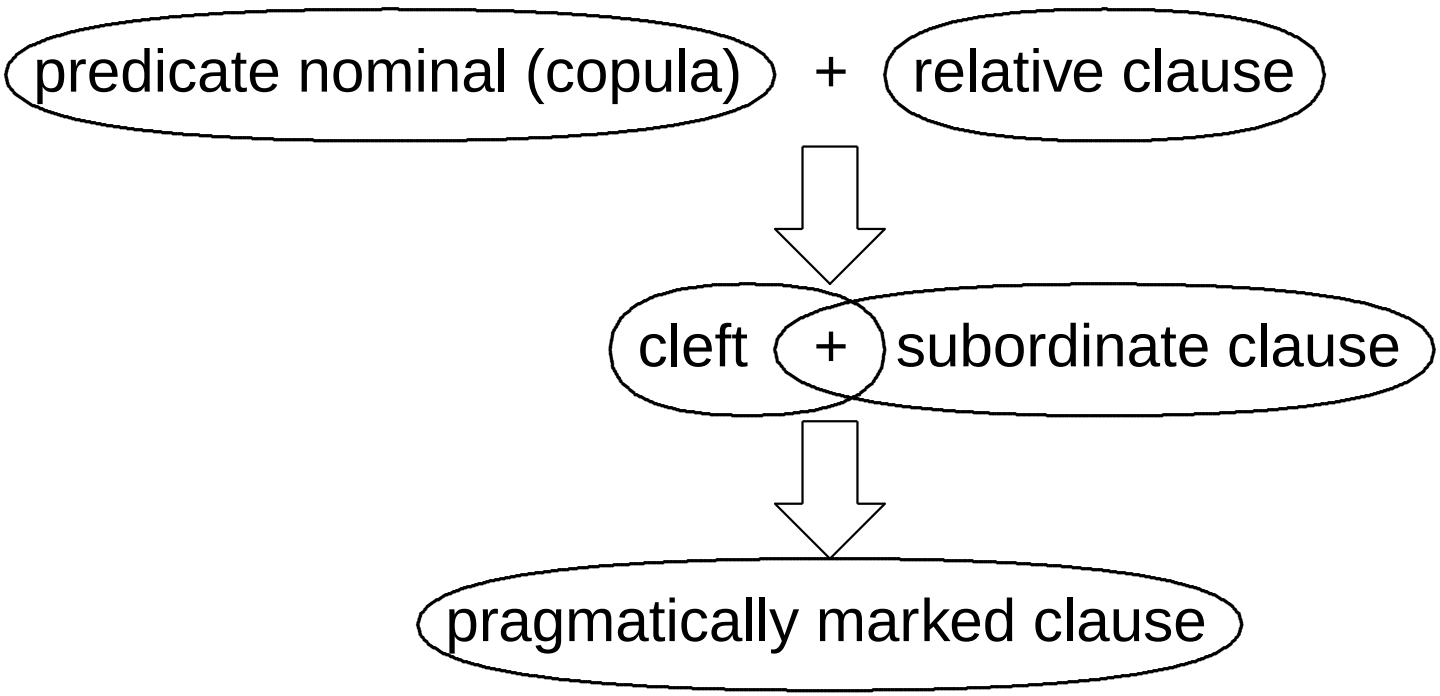

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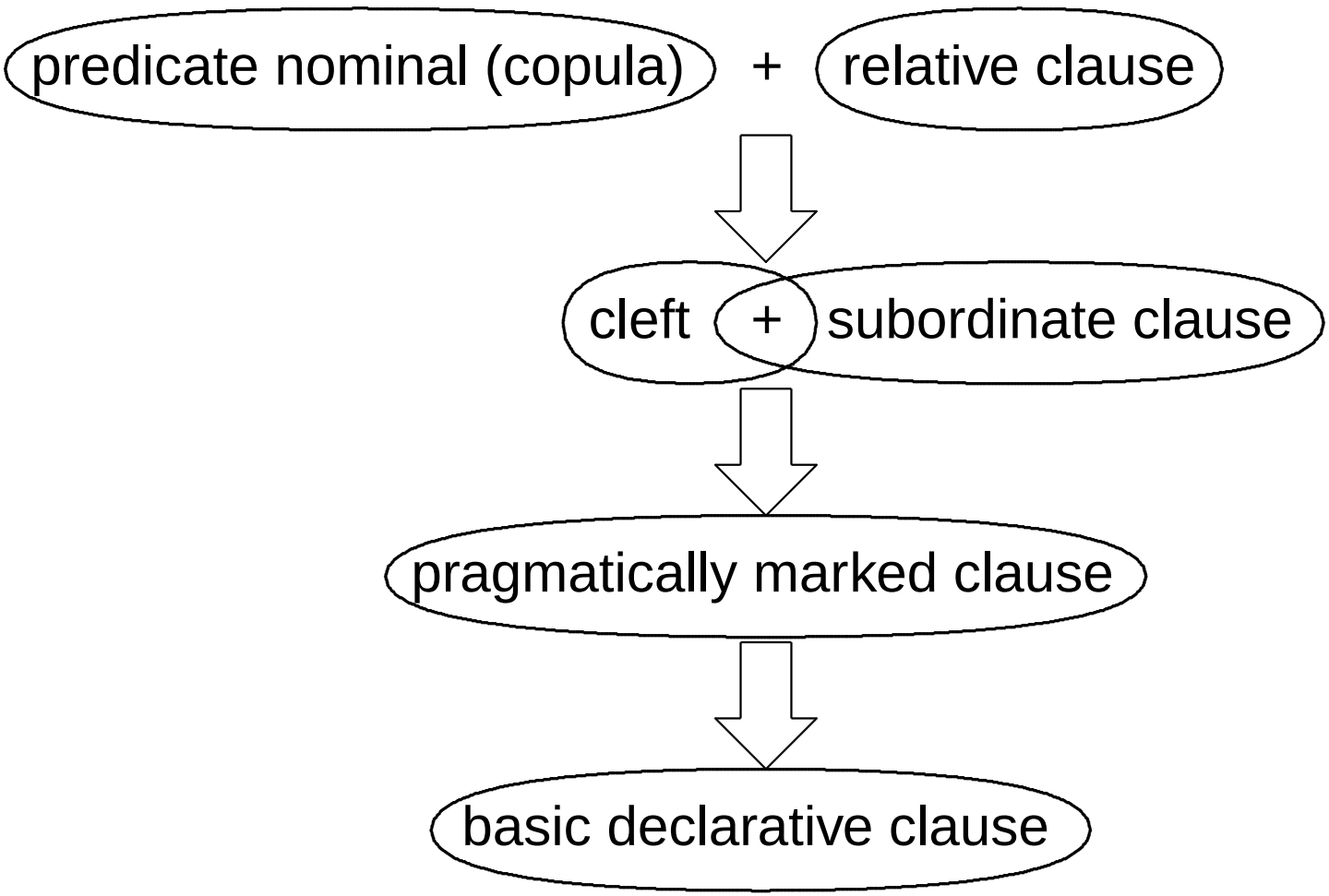

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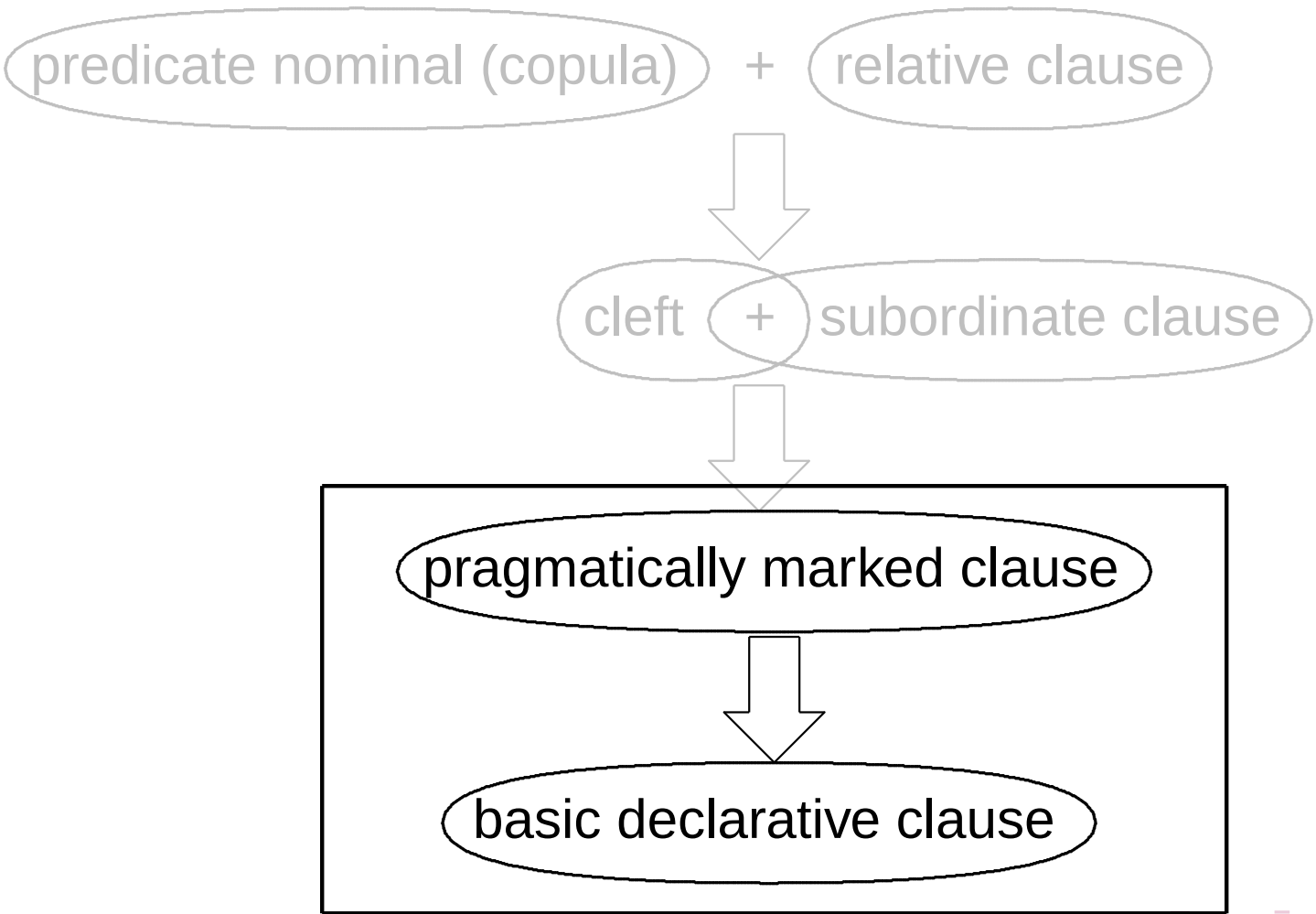

Outline

From pragmatically marked to unmarked
Background of research

- preposed nominals (with case identical to predicate nominal) are an pragmatically marked option in a number of (otherwise) verb-initial languages (Handschuh 2014: Chapter 5)
- tendency for alternative word-orders in verb-initial languages is well-known (eg. Payne 1990: 11)
- explanations are often based on (synchronic) pragmatics (e.g. “old information precedes new information”)
- we propose a diachronic explanation via the grammaticalization of clefts
- pragmatically marked cleft constructions may even develop further to unmarked sentences (Rapold 2007)

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Two clause types in Agar Dinka (Nilotic)

Where is the relative clause?

(1)	a.	jó̤ŋ	cé̤	mḛ̀t̪	câ̰am
		dog.CASE1	PRF	child	eat:NFIN
	b.	jó̤	à̰=cé̤	mḛ̀t̪	câ̰am
		dog.CASE2	?=PRF	child	eat:NFIN

Andersen (1991: 289)

Two clause types in Agar Dinka (Nilotic)

Where is the relative clause?

(1) a. jo̱ŋ cé̱ mèt̰ cã̱am
dog.ANTGEN PRF child eat:NFIN
'the dog which has bitten the child'

b. jó à̰=cé̱ mèt̰ cã̱am
dog.ZERO DECL=PRF child eat:NFIN
'The dog has bitten the child.'

Andersen (1991: 289)

Structure of declarative clauses

Template of simple declarative clauses:

Conj Topic DECL=Neg V_{fin} S O_{prim} V_{nfin} O_{sec} Adv

(adapted from Andersen 2007: 91)

- declarative clauses are topic-initial, non-declarative (imperatives and interrogatives) and subordinate clauses are usually verb-initial
- declarative marker (DECL) agrees with the topic in number
- topics are in the zero-coded case (Absolutive), any argument/adjunct can be topic (omitted from usual position)
- finite verb agrees with the (non-topical) subject in person and number

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Agreement with topic and subject

(2) a. à̰=cɔ̰̀ɔ̰l mɛ̰̀n̰
DECL=call child
'He/she is calling the child.'

b. á̰a=cɔ̰̀ɔ̰l mɛ̰̀n̰
DECL.PL=call child
'They are calling the child.'

c. mɛ̰̀n̰ à̰=caà̰a̰l
child DECL=call.1SG
'I am calling the child.'

d. mɛ̰̀n̰ à̰=cɔ̰̀ɔ̰l-kṵ
child DECL=call-1PL
'We are calling the child.'

Andersen (1991: 274, 275)

The copula as possible source for DECL

(3) a. cọ́ol ɛ̀e mɔ̀c.
Chol DECL.be man
'Chol is a man.'

b. cọ́ol à=cɛ̈ âa mɔ̀c.
Chol DECL=PRF be.NFIN man
'Chol has become a man.'

c. ô̰ok â̰a rɔ̈or
1PL DECL.PL.be man.PL
'We are men.'

Andersen (2012: 145–146), Tucker (1981: 300)

From cleft to declarative clause
points supporting the analysis for Dinka

- case-form of topic = nominal predicate (Absolutive/Zero)
- declarative clauses = relative clauses + declarative marker
- topic-initial word-order appears to be an innovation based on the following evidence

language internal: other clause types (imperatives, interrogatives, subordinate) are usually verb-initial, Gjerlow-Johnson & Ayom (1986: 172) argue for VSO as underlying word order in Bor variety

comparative: verb-initial word order has been suggested for Proto-Nilotic (Rottland 1979, Vossen 1983), but see also Nyombe (1996)

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Demonstrative to agreement in Benchnon (Omotic)

- Rapold (2007) argues that the “indicative final” agreement markers originate in a (distal) demonstrative pronoun via a cleft structure
- indicative final agreement also occurs on the verb of a relative clause, marking agreement with the head of the relative clause only

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Historical scenario:

Stage I:	Stage II:	Stage III:	Stage IV:
[[N REL] DEM]	N [V_{REL} DEM]	N [V_{REL} PN]$_{cleft}$	N V-AGR

1 this man (who) saw the child.

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II man who saw the child.

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III The man (is) (the one) who saw the child.

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IV The man saw the child.

Other languages discussed in Rapold (2007)

Tamazight (Berber): cleft-demarking started

Amharic (Ethio-Semitic): still pragmatically marked, textual frequency is rapidly increasing

Breton (Celtic): argued to have changes basic word order through demarking of clefts

Northern Swahili (Bantu): restricted to ‘to come’ and ‘to go’ (marking new ‘present continuous’ tense)

Ngazija (Bantu): evolved into present tense (applicable to activity verbs only)

Wolof (Atlantic): perfect tense is hypothesized to derive from cleft construction

Kinyamwezi (Bantu): most past and perfective tenses derived from relative verb forms (probably through clefts)

Japanese: non-past verbs are derived from cleft construction

Pathways from pragmatically marked to unmarked
Final remarks and open questions

- grammaticalization of standard declarative sentences from a pragmatically marked cleft structure is plausible for Agar Dinka, Benchnon, and other languages
- loss of emphatic power is well attested for negation (cf. research on the “Jespersen Cycle”, Jespersen 1917)
- tendency of emphatic power to be lost can also be explained along the lines of the *invisible hand* theory (Keller 1994) and the maxims of *extravagance* and *conformity* (Haspelmath 1999: 1005)
- the data suggest a loss of pragmatically marked status is particularly common in tenses/aspects that are linked to the present moment, the present/non-past tense and perfect respectively

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Thank you,

comments are welcome!

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List of Glosses

1/2/3	1st/2nd/3rd person
AGR	agreement
ANTGEN	antigenitive
AUX	auxiliary
DECL	declarative
DEM	demonstrative
FIN	finite
GEN	genitive
LOC	locative
N	noun
NFIN	non-finite
NOM	nominative
OBL	oblique
PL	plural
PREP	preposition
PRF	perfect
PST	past tense
REL	relative clause
SG	singular

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