

Instrumental situations: On case marking of copular clauses in Czech

Predicative noun phrases in Czech copular clauses, similarly to other Slavic languages, can appear either in Nominative (NOM), or in Instrumental (INSTR) case (with the other DP being in NOM). We provide novel evidence that INSTR is an overt morphological mapping of a complex predicative structure, more precisely of a nominal combined with a situation pronoun (in the sense of Percus 2000, von Stechow & Heim 2007/2011, Keshet 2008, 2010, among others; henceforth, SP). We thus agree with the intuition that INSTR contains a secondary-predication-like element (Bailyn and Rubin 1991, Bailyn 2001) which restricts the spatio-temporal property of the primary predication (be it modeled as an aspectual projection of Matushansky 2000, eventive predication of Markman 2008, or a specific topic situation of Geist 2007). We depart from the existing accounts in that we show that the spatio-temporal link cannot be modeled as a Case licensing projection. Instead, INSTR is a morphological reflex of the SP merged in the extended projection of the predicative DP. The core empirical evidence for the proposal comes from case marking of concealed questions (Heim 1979) and their interaction with SPs overtly realized in the TP domain.

The background: The predicative DP in Czech copular clauses may appear either in NOM, or INSTR (Uličný 2000 and the literature cited there). The difference, reminiscent of the stage-level vs individual level predicate (Carlson 1977, Kratzer 1995, Filip 2001, among others), is rather subtle in most contexts. As we see in (1), with some DPs both NOM and INSTR are possible. [Note: We leave aside nontrivial interactions with copular agreement.] While INSTR is more likely to be used as a description of a temporally restricted property, such as employment, and NOM describes a more general property of Hana, speakers accept both case forms. The contrast between (2-a) and (2-b), however, clearly shows that INSTR restricts the predicate to a specific temporal interval, here to the play-situation. The examples also suggest that the distinction, rather than being of the stage vs. individual level predicate, is more adequately modeled as a restriction on topic time (be it in terms of aspect, eventuality, or a specified topic situation; cf. Matushansky 2000, Filip 2001, Geist 2007, Markman 2008, for Russian). This in turn provides insight into the apparent optionality of NOM vs. INSTR in some contexts, as a specified topic situation or the lack of it may be accommodated.

- (1) Hana byla zpěvačka/zpěvačkou.
Hana was singer.NOM/singer.INSTR
'Hana was a singer.'
- (2) Scenario: Children role-playing in kindergarten.
- a. #Honzík byl ředitel obchodu.
Honzík was manager.NOM of-store
- b. Honzík byl ředitelem obchodu.
Honzík was manager.INSTR of-store
'Honzík was the store manager.'

The puzzle: This generalization about the distinction between NOM and INSTR does not extend to copular clauses with pronoun TO (3.SG., 'it'). TO in copular clauses, analogically to English 'it', may anaphorically refer to an event, a proposition (situation), or an individual. If TO linearly precedes the copula, it refers to a situation expressed by the proposition, while post-copular TO refers to a sub-situation (including a minimal situation containing only an individual). As we can see in (3-a), post-copular TO may predicate over the car-accident, i.e., a minimal situation that contains only a car accident, while TO must pick up the whole proposition as its antecedent, (3-b). (3-c) is here as a control, to show that the issue is with predicating over the proposition, not with

the word order. Crucially, the predicative DPs in (3) must be in NOM. Since TO explicitly indicates a specified topic situation, the absence of INSTR is entirely unexpected.

- (3) Marie měla autonehodu. ‘Marie had a car accident.’
- a. Byla to nepozornost/*nepozorností.
was TO inattention.NOM/inattention.INSTR
‘It [=the (situation of) the car-accident] resulted from not paying attention.’
 - b. #To byla nepozornost/*nepozorností.
TO was inattention.NOM/inattention.INSTR
‘It [=that Marie had a car accident] was inattention.’
 - c. To byla tragédie/*tragédií.
TO was tragedy.NOM/tragedy.INSTR
‘It [=that Marie had a car accident] was/is a tragedy.’

Crucially, predicative DPs denoting a concealed question (Heim 1979, Nathan 2006, Percus 2014, a.o.), e.g., *příčina* ‘cause’, differ. If such a noun co-occurs with post-verbal TO, then it must be in INSTR, (4-a)–(4-b), but if it co-occurs with pre-verbal TO, it may be NOM or INSTR, (4-c)–(4-d).

- (4) Petr potkal nádhernou dívku. ‘Peter met a beautiful girl.’
- a. ??Byla to příčina jeho rozvodu.
was TO cause.NOM his divorce
‘It[=the situation involving the girl] was the reason of his divorce.’
 - b. Bylo to příčinou jeho rozvodu.
was TO cause.INSTR his divorce
‘It[=the situation involving the girl] was the reason of his divorce.’
 - c. To byla příčina jeho rozvodu.
TO was cause.NOM his divorce
‘It[=that P. met the girl] was the reason of his divorce.’
 - d. ?To bylo příčinou jeho rozvodu.
TO was cause.INSTR his divorce
‘It[=that P. met the girl] was the reason of his divorce.’

The proposal: We follow Nathan 2006 and Percus 2014 in that concealed questions contain a contextually restricted situation. We depart from them in that we argue that the contextually restricted situation is represented in syntax. More precisely, we argue that it corresponds to a SP, modeled as a situation variable attached either within the DP extended projection or in the TP projection (Percus 2000, von Stechow & Heim 2007/2011, Keshet 2008, 2010). Such a pronoun requires a propositional antecedent (cf. question under discussion of Roberts 1996/2012 and Büring 2003). We assume that the pre-verbal, i.e., the proposition referring, TO is in fact an overt morphological realization of such a pronoun, unlike its non-propositional counterpart (Bartošová & Kučerová 2014).

We argue that INSTR case is an overt morphological realization of a DP with a SP adjoined to it. The case distribution then follows: (i) If the DP requires a contextual restrictor and there is no overt SP in the structure, the SP must be adjoined to the DP; consequently, the DP surfaces as INSTR, (4-a)–(4-b). (ii) If there is an overt SP in TP, the DP may but does not have to have its own SP, and in turn it surfaces either with INSTR, (4-d), or with NOM, (4-c), respectively. (iii) Since regular predicative DPs do not require their own contextual restriction, if there is an overt SP in the structure, then the DP is in NOM, (3). (iv) If there is no overt SP, the restrictor is added only if the predication itself is restricted to a specific topic situation, which explains the pattern seen in (1)–(2).