

## Well-formed lists

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**Well-formed lists: Specificational copular sentences as predicative inversion  
constructions<sup>1</sup>**

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This paper re-examines the case for analysing specificational NP BE NP sentences as predicative inversions. Taking a constructional and functional perspective, I show that only predicational sentences exhibiting a relation of class inclusion permit a specificational interpretation, and argue, following Higgins (1979), that the form of specificational inversion sentences is dependent upon the construction-specific concept of specificational meaning. In this way, the account provides an explanation for the restrictions on NP predicative inversion that have posed a problem for inverse analyses developed from within the formalist tradition. Since the distributional facts can be better captured than with the alternative equative approach (which treats specificational sentences as instances of semantic equation), the paper concludes that specificational copular sentences are best analysed as instances of predicative inversion.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

On many formal accounts, specificational sentences such as (2) are provided with an INVERSE analysis. From this perspective, pairs of copular sentences like (1) and (2) derive from the same underlying structure, in which a predicative, property-denoting NP (*the manager*) combines with a referring expression (*Rebecca Howe*). Their realisation depends upon which NP undergoes movement to subject position. If the referential NP is raised, a PREDICATIONAL sentence is obtained. In contrast, SPECIFICATIONAL sentences result from raising the predicative NP (see Moro 1997; Mikkelsen 2005).

- |                                  |                   |
|----------------------------------|-------------------|
| (1) Rebecca Howe is the manager. | [predicational]   |
| (2) The manager is Rebecca Howe. | [specificational] |

However, it is well known that some predicational copular sentences resist inversion. For example, indefinite NP predicates often cannot occur in precopular position, shown in (4).

- |                                 |                   |
|---------------------------------|-------------------|
| (3) Rebecca Howe is a manager.  | [predicational]   |
| (4) #A manager is Rebecca Howe. | [specificational] |

Likewise, not all sentences containing property-denoting definite NPs can be inverted, shown in (6).

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| (5) John is the one thing I have always wanted a man to be (that is, he's honest). |  |
| (6) *The one thing I have always wanted a man to be is John.                       |  |

(examples from Heycock & Kroch 1999: 379–380, their judgment)

The challenge of properly accounting for these restrictions remains a longstanding problem for the inverse approach. Mikkelsen (2005) claims that only discourse-old predicates undergo raising, due to the preference for topics to be in subject position. Since indefinite noun phrases typically introduce new entities into the discourse, they rarely meet the criterion for a verified topic. It follows that specificational sentences introduced by indefinite NP predicates are often unacceptable. Nevertheless, while inversion is clearly sensitive to discourse-status (see Penhallurick 1984, Birner 1994; 1996), Mikkelsen (2005) concedes that it cannot fully explain the facts surrounding indefinite specificational subjects. Furthermore, discourse considerations have little bearing on the unacceptability of (6), which contains a definite NP predicate. For Heller (2005), Heycock & Kroch (1999) and Heycock (2012), such examples present a particular problem for inverse accounts.

In this paper, I re-examine these inversion restrictions from a constructional and functional perspective. Rather than proposing constraints affecting syntactic movement operations, my focus is on the concept of specificational meaning and its association with the NP inversion CONSTRUCTION. While formal accounts treat nominal predication (and thus specification) as an interaction between expressions of type  $e$  and  $\langle e, t \rangle$ , functional frameworks favour a more nuanced characterisation of nominal predication, as expressions of identity, class inclusion, naming, or individualising, among other possible semantic relations (see Croft 1991). Here, I provide evidence that the meaning relation involved in acts of specification is CLASS INCLUSION, “the relation of token to its subsuming type” (Croft 1991: 69). In such sentences, class inclusion serves to specify

the membership of a category, rather than ascribing a property to a referent. This corresponds with Higgins' (1979) characterisation of specificational sentences as functioning like lists.

The analysis of specificational meaning and its role in the NP inversion construction is set out in §2. In §3, I turn to the unacceptable definite NP predicative inversions, illustrated by (6) above. I show that these examples fall out from, and thus support, the characterisation of specificational meaning as a class inclusion relation; other predication relations, including those in which the predicative noun phrase “characterizes...without subsuming” the logical subject (Croft 1991:70), are not expected to sanction a specificational reading.

As Partee (2000: 194) notes, the unacceptability of predicative inversions like (6) has been taken as a “strong argument against [the] analysis of specificationals as inverted predicates” and forms the basis for Heycock & Kroch's (1999) alternative EQUATIVE account of specificational sentences, which treats them as instances of semantic equation – an identity relation. In §4, I show that once we recognise the role of class inclusion, an inverse approach to specificational sentences is more successful at capturing the distributional facts than these equative accounts. Together, §3 and §4 demonstrate that it is class inclusion, as opposed to any other possible semantic relation, that is key to understanding the behaviour of specificational NP BE NP sentences.

In §5, I move on to the inversion restrictions involving indefinite NP predicates, illustrated by (4) above. Building on arguments in Patten (2012), I suggest that they result from the implicature of EXCLUSIVENESS (non-uniqueness) that often arises in sentences containing indefinite predicative NPs. Where the referent is taken to form an *incomplete* list of entities described by the NP, the sentence does not “provide

meaningful information about a set's membership and so cannot enable a specificational interpretation" (Patten 2012: 49). Here, I show that this analysis is supported by wider studies of English inversion constructions, and provide further evidence that the felicity of indefinite specificational sentences is dependent upon a relation of class inclusion. In all cases, the distributional facts fall out from a consideration of what constitutes "a well-formed list" (Higgins 1979: 155). Conclusions are provided in §6.

## 2 SPECIFICATION AS A RELATION OF CLASS INCLUSION

Among functional approaches, the concept of specificational meaning is perhaps most commonly characterised as a kind of VALUE-VARIABLE relation (see Higgins 1979, Declerck 1988, Davidse 2000). For Higgins (1979), this captures the observation that such sentences function like lists: the precopular noun phrase acts as the heading of the list and the postcopular elements serve as the items on that list. He notes, "the heading of a list provides a 'variable', thereby delimiting a certain domain, to which the items on the list conform as 'values' of that variable" (Higgins 1979: 155). Consequently, the specificational copular sentence in (7) can be paraphrased as the list given in (8) (see Higgins 1979: 154).

(7) The waitresses were Diane and Carla.

(8) The waitresses were the following: Diane and Carla.

While this characterisation is widely accepted, it is not clear from Higgins' (1979) account how specificational meaning relates to more well-defined concepts.

For Croft (1991), there are several possible semantic relations that can hold between two noun phrases; that is, between a predicate nominal and its argument. These include expressions of identity, class inclusion, naming and individualising, among others. The question then is which of these concepts (if any) applies to specificational copular sentences, and best captures their ‘value-variable’ characterisation. Here, I suggest that the meaning relation involved in acts of specification is one of CLASS INCLUSION, “the relation of token to its subsuming type” (Croft 1991: 69). More specifically, I claim that while a meaning relation of instantiation does not entail a specifying function, *the act of specification can only occur where a class inclusion relation is present*.

My analysis begins with an assumption: that sentences containing definite and indefinite NP predicates “are equivalent in all essential respects” and differ only to the extent that definiteness differs from indefiniteness (see Langacker 1991: 67). Most authors agree that postcopular indefinite noun phrases are like predicative adjectives, predicating a property of the subject referent (see for example Taylor 2002: 362). Thus, indefinite predicative NPs have an interpretation equivalent to a bare common noun interpretation. On this analysis, (9) contains a precopular referring expression (*Carla*) and a postcopular predicative NP which denotes the set of individuals that have the relevant property (of being *waitresses*). From a cognitive grammar perspective, (9) represents an instantiation relation between an instance (i.e. token, *Carla*) and a type specification (i.e. category, *waitress*).

(9) Carla is a waitress.

(10) Diane and Carla were the waitresses.



Although cognitive accounts often view definite NP predicates as inducing a distinct semantic relation from indefinite NPs, namely “token-token identity” (see for example Croft 1991: 69, Evans & Green 2006: 599), I assume that this relation of class inclusion is also present in sentences containing postcopular definite NPs, such as (10).<sup>2</sup> Here too, the predicate nominal relates to a set or category, albeit one restricted by the pragmatic context: *Diane* and *Carla* are both instances of the type specification *waitresses* (*in a particular bar*).

These basic assumptions establish the view of nominal predication as an expression of set (or class) membership, as is found in set theoretic accounts. Through this relation of class inclusion, such sentences function to ASCRIBE a property to an individual; that is, they tell us “something **about** the referent of the subject” (Mikkelsen 2005: 1, emphasis original). However, in (10), what I suggest is *the same class inclusion relation* has yet another function. If the subject is placed in focus (marked by intonation in (11)), the sentence acquires a specificational reading: the speaker is listing the membership of the category of *waitresses*.

(11) DIANE and CARLA were the waitresses.

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<sup>2</sup> See Langacker (1991: 65–67) for a critique of the “standard approach” to nominal predication. His solution differs from mine, however, in that he reworks the analysis of indefinite NP predication to enable an identity relation between an instance and an arbitrary (or imagined) instance of the category/type designated by the indefinite predicate nominal (see Langacker 1991: 68).

Such examples are sometimes referred to as REVERSE specificational sentences, since they share the same specifying function as sentences like (7) above, but not the characteristic inverse word order.<sup>3</sup>

We can account for this specifying function straightforwardly once we examine the concept of definiteness, as was argued in Patten (2012). As noted above, definite descriptions are understood in relation to the pragmatic context. For Hawkins (1991), they are interpreted in relation to a SHARED SET or PRAGMATIC (P)-SET which is manifest in the speech participants' mutual cognitive environment. From this, it follows that the category designated by a definite predicative NP will inevitably be restricted in size, with a limited membership: *waitresses (in a particular bar)*. Indeed, for singular nouns, there is only a single member: *manager (of a particular establishment)*.

In addition, definiteness is associated with INCLUSIVENESS. This means that the definite NP applies to all entities that satisfy the description within the P-set (see also Hawkins 1978). It follows from this that when a definite noun phrase is predicated of a referring expression, the description will uniquely characterise the individual(s) referred to (see Declerck 1986: 30). Consequently, the referring expression will be understood to comprise *a complete list* of entities that make up the restricted set or type (Patten 2012: 37). This is specification i.e. our 'value-variable' relation. For example, in (11), *Diane and Carla* are taken to represent an exhaustive list of *waitresses (in a particular bar)*. The properties of P-membership and inclusiveness (or uniqueness) therefore enable a specificational reading for sentences containing definite predicative NPs.

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<sup>3</sup> As den Dikken (2005) notes, there is confusion in the literature over the terms REVERSE and INVERSE, since they have come to refer to opposing sentences.

This specifying, as opposed to ascriptive, function arises whenever the token (or the instance) is in focus, rather than the type specification (or category). This can occur via intonation, as in (11), or through (what I suggest is) an INVERSION CONSTRUCTION, shown in (12) and (13), repeated from (7) and (2) respectively.

(12) The waitresses were Diane and Carla.

(13) The manager is Rebecca Howe.

This inversion construction has a fixed information structure and so focus is consistently placed on the postcopular element. Once we add class inclusion semantics, we can begin to understand why this sentence type is intrinsically specificational in meaning: when focus is not on the predicative NP, the function of the sentence is no longer to ascribe a property to the referent, but the relation of class inclusion, or class-membership, still holds.

So, in specificational sentences like (12) and (13), the initial NP provides the type, or class, and the postcopular NP provides (or rather specifies) the tokens or instances that make up this category. In essence, specificational meaning is conceived of here in much the same way as by Higgins (1979), as *the listing of entities* (despite the fact that he chooses to discuss specification separately from the concept of predication (p. 214)).

### 3 INVERSION RESTRICTIONS AND NON-CLASSIFYING PREDICATION RELATIONS

In §2, I set out an analysis of specificational sentences, developed in Patten (2012), which draws largely from the INVERSE tradition; that is, it involves an inverse predication relation, in which the predicative, set-denoting NP occurs in precopular

position, while the NP that refers to an individual, or individuals, is situated in postcopular position (see §1). The analysis differs from earlier formalist accounts in that it assumes that this sentence type is a CONSTRUCTION associated with an exclusively specifying function, rather than being the result of a syntactic movement operation.<sup>4</sup> Nevertheless, it is still necessary to account for the restrictions on predicative inversion; or (more appropriately, assuming a monostratal model of language), to explain why some predicative inversion sentences are unacceptable. Indeed, since I explicitly associate the specifying function with the concept of definiteness, the unacceptability of definite NP inversions like (6), repeated here as (15), could be claimed to be especially problematic for my analysis.

(14) John is the one thing I have always wanted a man to be (that is, he's honest).

(15) \*The one thing I have always wanted a man to be is John.

(examples from Heycock & Kroch 1999: 379–380)

In example (14), the postcopular definite noun phrase *the one thing I have always wanted a man to be* is clearly property-denoting, in that it corresponds to the adjective phrase *honest*. However, as shown in (15), the referential and predicative NPs of this sentence cannot be inverted. As Heller (2005: 187) observes, this is unexpected assuming an inverse account, as it “wrongly predicts them [(this class of examples)] to be acceptable”. This prediction follows especially from the assumptions of formalist

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<sup>4</sup> I follow Birner (1994, 1996), in using the terms INVERSE and INVERSION without supporting “a multistratal, movement-based analysis, but rather to conform to traditional terminology for clarity” (Birner 1994: 235).

theories. On formal inverse accounts, predication is treated uniformly as an interaction between expressions of type  $e$  and  $\langle e, t \rangle$ ; that is, between individuals and sets of individuals (or properties). Since *the one thing I have always wanted a man to be* is predicative (and so of type  $\langle e, t \rangle$ ), it should be subject to any movement rule that can apply to predicative elements. As Heycock & Kroch (1999: 380) note, the unacceptable outcome in (15) “rules out any analysis under which the “inverse” construction really involves movement of the predicate”.

However, on a monostratal model of language, movement is not invoked as a means of deriving specificational inversion structures. Instead, I claim that the formal characteristics of the NP inversion construction are governed by its specifying function. On adopting the analysis of specificational meaning outlined in §2, the unacceptability of sentence (15) becomes unsurprising, and is in fact anticipated. On this account, the particular kind of predication relation that is relevant to acts of specification is class inclusion, the relation between token and its subsuming type. Only sentences that involve an instantiation relation can enable a specificational interpretation and, consequently, are expected to correspond to acceptable instances of the specificational inversion construction.

As Partee ([1986] 2004: 220) observes, predicative  $\langle e, t \rangle$  uses of a noun phrase can involve a different kind of predication relation from class-membership. She considers the idiosyncratic behaviour of sentence (16); here, “the entities in the extension of *color* are colors: blue, red, green etc. – not shirts” (p. 220). Semantically, (16) amounts to the combination of the two distinct classifying relationships found in (17), albeit with the colour unspecified.

(16) This shirt is a nice color.

(17) (a) This shirt is blue.

(b) Blue is a nice color. (examples from Partee (2004: 220))

While in (17a), the adjective *blue* is predicated of *this shirt*, in (17b) it functions as a type e referring expression – an ‘individualised’, or nominalised property – which is predicated of by the NP *a nice color*. Partee (2004: 221) labels *color* an “attribute noun”; as such, it expresses a property of properties.

The example in (14) appears to represent a definite noun phrase counterpart to the predication relation observed by Partee (2004). This sentence asserts that *John* has a desirable quality. However, it does not classify *John* as a member of some set because the animate *John* cannot be classified by the inanimate *thing*. Instead, *the one thing I have always wanted a man to be* describes a property that *John* has. That is, while this definite description expresses a property, the entities in its extension are also properties (*honest, reliable, passionate* etc.) rather than objects or animate beings. As Partee (2004: 221) suggests, “the combining stem *-thing* can function as [an] attribute noun”. The relation that exists between the subject and the predicate nominal in (14) is therefore quite distinct semantically from ordinary cases of class inclusion. Here, *the one thing I have always wanted a man to be* classifies (or has as its extension) a particular property of *John*; it does not classify *John* directly. Since example (14) does not involve a classifying relationship, we would not expect it to correspond to an acceptable specificational inversion sentence, as shown in (15).

This account offers an explanation for the different acceptability of sentence (19) as compared to (15). In (18), *honest* replaces the proper name *John* as predicated of by the

postcopular definite NP. When occurring in subject position of the PREDICATE NOMINAL CONSTRUCTION (a slot that must be filled by a referring expression), *honest* refers to an ‘individualised’ property; that is, a non-individual which is nevertheless presented as a discrete entity (see Szabolscsi 1983; É. Kiss 1998). Unlike the animate *John*, the subject *honest* can be properly classified as an inanimate *thing*: *honest* is contrasted with other properties as uniquely matching the description *thing I have always wanted a man to be*, and so comprises the sole instance of this single member category. Thus, (19) makes for an acceptable specificational inversion sentence.

(18) Honest is the one thing I have always wanted a man to be.

(19) The one thing I have always wanted a man to be is honest.

(Heycock & Kroch 1999: 379)

It is therefore possible to account for the problematic data presented by Heycock & Kroch (1999), despite maintaining what is essentially an inverse analysis. Specifically, only relations of class inclusion or instantiation, as in (18), can invoke a specificational reading. Predicates that do not directly classify the referent do not enable a specifying function and so are not expected to occur in the specificational inversion construction. On this account, the unacceptability of sentence (15) is entirely predictable.

What is special then about the account presented here is that it assumes, with Mikkelsen (2005) and many other formalists, that the specificational sentence structure is a form of NP inversion, with the semantic predicate preceding its argument; however, rather than looking for categorial constraints on the movement operation of predicate raising to account for the range of acceptable specificational sentences, it suggests that

these sentences form a particular inversion construction, which has its own construction-specific properties and stipulations: namely, an exclusively specifying function. As Heycock & Kroch (1999) and Heller (2005) note, there is little difference in the category, complexity or discourse status of the predicates in (14) and (18); in both, *the one thing I have always wanted a man to be* is a definite noun phrase, is property-denoting, and designates a single member category. Instead, where the difference lies for these two sentences is in the particular kind of *relationship* that holds between subject and predicate nominal, and whether a specificational interpretation can result from it. Here, the focus is brought back to the concept of specificational meaning, as it was for Higgins (1979), with the restrictions on inversion viewed in terms of what makes an acceptable specificational sentence.

Essentially, the unacceptability of the predicative inversion in (15) boils down to an issue of *matching* between value and variable (for us, between instance and type specification). According to Higgins (1979: 155), this represents the most basic kind of connectivity effect apparent in specificational sentences; he states that “a well-formed list contains items that conform to the heading at the top of that list”. The reason is, as Higgins (1979: 150) puts it, that in a specificational sentence, the postcopular element “says what constitutes or makes up” the denotation of the precopular NP. Higgins gets very close to the concept of class inclusion here; he cites Akmajian (1970: 19), who, in talking about clefts, notes that “the focus item must *belong to the appropriate semantic class*, i.e. the class represented by the variable” (my emphasis).



#### 4 DISCOUNTING ALTERNATIVE SEMANTIC RELATIONS

As was noted above in §2, Croft (1991: 69) recognises several possible semantic relations that can hold between two noun phrases, including expressions of identity, class inclusion, naming and individualising, which “does not exhaust the semantic possibilities” (p. 70). In §3, I argued that the relevant relation to acts of specification is class inclusion (the relation between instance and type specification). Copular sentences which do not involve a directly classifying relation, specifically those involving what Partee (2004: 221) labels as a “special predicative use of attribute NPs”, were found not to allow a specifying interpretation. It follows from this account that indefinite NP predicates that “characterize...without subsuming” the logical subject (Croft 1991:70), labelled INDIVIDUALISING by Bolinger (1980), will also be excluded from the specificational inversion construction, as I go on to suggest in §5. However, first I consider, and discount, two alternative proposals, on which specificational meaning is characterised as naming and identity, respectively. The latter warrants special consideration, since the association of specification with identity forms the basis of the EQUATIVE approach to specificational sentences, which is set up in opposition to inverse analyses (see §1).

##### *4.1 Specification is not a naming relation*

As Higgins (1979: 265) suggests, NAMING seems to be a concept separate from specification. He illustrates this with the sentence in (20), which allows for two distinct readings.

(20) The girl who helps us on Fridays is Mary GRAY. (Higgins 1979: 265)

On one reading (labelled IDENTIFICATIONAL for Higgins), we are told the name of the individual referred to by the subject NP; in other words, that the girl in question is *called Mary Gray*. The other, specificational reading, however, identifies *Mary Gray* (an individual known to us by that name) as matching the description *girl who helps us on Fridays*. That is, while the former reading provides only the *name* of a known individual; the latter gives the *identity* of the individual who matches a certain description. Higgins (1979: 266) goes on to provide evidence that while the subjects of naming clauses are referring expressions, the subjects of specificational structures do not refer to individuals (see further below).

Consequently, the specifying function cannot be characterised as a naming or labelling device. As we can see in (21), the contrast drawn is evidently between two separate individuals (one male, one female), and not between two possible names for the same individual.

(21) The owner was Sam Malone, wasn't it? Not Rebecca Howe!

#### 4.2 *Specification is not a relation of identity*

A more plausible, and often proposed, alternative is to consider specificational copular sentences in relation to the concept of IDENTITY. Such EQUATIVE accounts are especially popular and well-developed in the formalist literature, and in most cases, are set up as a direct response to the failings of the inverse approach in accounting for restrictions on inversion. Heycock & Kroch (1999: 380), for example, “do not see any way of avoiding this fundamental problem for the predicative inversion analysis”. Their solution is to

claim that specificational sentences *do not* exhibit an asymmetric predication relation (involving expressions of both type *e* and  $\langle e, t \rangle$ ), and instead contain two expressions of *the same* semantic type.

For proponents of an equative approach, the specificational clause in (22), repeated from (2) above, *equates* two individuals; that is, two type *e* referring expressions.

(22) The manager is Rebecca Howe.

On this account, specificational sentences like (22) are viewed in much the same way as identity statements, such as (23). Here, the phrases on either side of the copula are of the same semantic type. Consequently, they are reversible; it does not matter in which order they appear, shown in (24).

(23) Lance Manion is Sam Malone.

(24) Sam Malone is Lance Manion.

On an equative approach, restrictions on the apparent inversion of copular sentences are accounted for categorically: if the outcome is an acceptable specificational sentence, then we are dealing with an instance of semantic equation; if the resulting sentence is unacceptable, this suggests that the structure only allows a predicational interpretation, involving the combination of a type *e* referring expression with a set or property of type  $\langle e, t \rangle$ . For example, the different acceptability of the sentences in (15) and (19) above, repeated here as (26) and (27), is explained as follows.

- (25) John is the one thing I have always wanted a man to be (that is, he's honest).
- (26) \*The one thing I have always wanted a man to be is John.
- (27) The one thing I have always wanted a man to be is honest.

(examples from Heycock & Kroch 1999: 379–380)

In sentence (25), the subject noun phrase refers to an individual, but the postcopular description is property-denoting (and can be substituted for by the adjectival predicate *honest*). This asymmetric predicational sentence, containing expressions of differing semantic types, is not expected to correspond to an acceptable specificational sentence, as we find in (26). In (27), on the other hand, this same property-denoting description *the one thing I have always wanted a man to be* is paired with the postcopular adjective phrase *honest*, which also denotes a property. On this account, sentence (27) involves an identity relation, equating two properties of the same semantic type, this time  $\langle e, t \rangle$ .

An equative approach is therefore able to sidestep the difficulty in accounting for restrictions on predicative inversion by suggesting that specificational sentences do not actually involve predication, i.e. a set-membership relation. We might ask then, what is the value in trying to accommodate the difficult data into an inverse account, as is achieved in §3, when it can be explained away by opting for an equative approach instead? One answer is that there are strong indicators that specificational clauses are not instances of semantic equation, and that specificational meaning cannot be reduced to a simple identity relation. Secondly, while the equative approach can account neatly for *some* examples considered problematic to traditional inverse analyses, as shown above, the proposed explanation does not extend to *all* such examples. In what follows, I outline each of these arguments in turn.

#### 4.2.1 Existing arguments against identity

Within functional descriptions of specificational sentences, it is often claimed that they perform a unique function, which is separate from the concept of identity (see Higgins 1979: 214). As Declerck (1988: 3) notes, “They are identifying in the sense that they reveal the identity of some entity not in the sense that they state a relation of identity between two entities”. We can observe the difference in (22) and (23), repeated here as (28) and (29). In the specificational sentence in (28), the initial description presupposes the existence of an individual who is revealed by the postcopular referring expression. In the identity statement in (29), the two proper names are both expressions that refer to individuals; the speaker asserts that their denotation is the same.

- |                                   |                      |
|-----------------------------------|----------------------|
| (28) The manager is Rebecca Howe. | [specificational]    |
| (29) Lance Manion is Sam Malone.  | [identity statement] |

The perceived asymmetry of specificational sentences is backed by considerable diagnostic evidence which shows that the initial NP in specificational sentences like (28) is non-referring<sup>5</sup>. For example, Mikkelsen (2002, 2005) experiments with environments involving question-answer pairs, left-dislocation structures and tag questions to reveal that while for predicational and equative constructions, anaphoric pronouns show agreement with the subject (in terms of gender, number and animacy), the gender-specific subjects of specificational clauses invariably pronominalise with *it*,

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<sup>5</sup> This evidence presents a problem too for claims that the initial NP in specificational sentences is “weakly referring” or ATTRIBUTIVE, as suggested by Declerck (1988: 47); see Mikkelsen (2005: 89).

as is shown in (31). This data can be accounted for by assuming an inverse analysis, since the pronoun *it* is often anaphoric to predicative elements (Mikkelsen 2005: 66).

(30) The tallest girl in the class is Swedish, isn't she? [predicational]

(31) The tallest girl in the class is Molly, isn't it? [specificational]

(32) [*Pointing to a player on the field*]

SHE is Molly Jacobson, isn't she? [equative]

(examples from Mikkelsen 2005: 72)

#### 4.2.2 A further argument against identity

The value of an equative approach therefore rests on its ability to account for evidence that reveals restrictions on predicative inversion. However, not all of this data is equally amenable to interpretation consistent with an equative analysis. The sentence in (34) is provided by Heller (2005: 118), a proponent of the equative approach, as a further example of an ungrammatical predicative inversion, akin to (26) above.

(33) John Smith is what Dan Blum was last year. Namely, the chair.

(34) \*What Dan Blum was last year was John Smith. Namely, the chair.

(examples from Heller 2005: 188, her judgment)

Assuming Heycock & Kroch's (1999) line of reasoning, which is adopted by Heller (2005), the ungrammaticality of sentence (34) stems from its semantic asymmetry: "the pre-copular phrase denotes a property and the postcopular phrase denotes an individual" (Heller 2005: 188). However, while Heycock & Kroch (1999: 379–380) support their

analysis by substituting *the one thing I have always wanted a man to be* with the adjective phrase *honest*, in Heller's (2005: 188) examples, the fused relative *what Dan Blum was last year* is set up as akin to a further definite noun phrase: *the chair*. It is here that Heller's data points to inconsistency in the equative approach.

As Heycock (2012: 225) observes, the “predicational and equational uses of a definite noun phrase are clearly distinct” in the example sentences from Heycock and Kroch (1999); she continues “The crucial point of course is that the equation in [(36)] can be “reversed”, but the predication [in (35)] quite clearly cannot” (p. 226). On this account, *John* is a referring expression, while both *the one thing I have always wanted a man to be* and *honest* are analysed consistently as  $\langle e, t \rangle$  property-denoting expressions.

(35) John is the one thing I have always wanted a man to be. [predicational]

(36) Honest is the one thing I have always wanted a man to be. [equative  $\langle e, t \rangle$ ]

An equative analysis is not so straightforward for Heller's (2005) data, however. The usual interpretation of both (37) and (38) is as predicational structures, with *John Smith* and *the chair* functioning as type *e* subjects. Consequently, in terms of semantic *types*, the distinction between these sentences is not as transparent as can be argued for (35) and (36) above. Nevertheless, in order to capture the acceptability of (39), it follows (from the equative account) that if *what Dan Blum was last year* is an expression of type  $\langle e, t \rangle$ , the subject NP *the chair* in (38) must allow for an  $\langle e, t \rangle$  interpretation too.

(37) John Smith is what Dan Blum was last year. [predicational]

(38) The chair is what Dan Blum was last year. [predicational/equative  $\langle e, t \rangle$ ]

(39) What Dan Blum was last year was the chair. [equative <e,t>]

The picture is further obfuscated by (40) and (41). Although Heller (2005: 118) identifies the fused relative *what Dan Blum was last year* with *the chair*, as another <e,t> property-denoting expression, these descriptions differ in that the latter can form a specificational sentence with the proper name *John Smith*, shown in (41). It follows from the equative approach (though not from the pronominalisation evidence discussed in §4.2.1) that *the chair* must be of the same semantic type as *John Smith*; namely, a referring expression. Thus, the predicational structure in (40) also requires interpretation as an equative structure. The analysis differs from that provided for sentence (38), however; here, it is the postcopular noun phrase that shifts between types e and <e,t>.

(40) John Smith is the chair. [predicational/equative type e]

(41) The chair is John Smith. [equative type e]

What this discussion shows is that the equative approach leads us to be opportunistic when it comes to classifying definite descriptions as type e or <e,t>; the decision rests upon the semantic interpretation of the expressions with which they are paired. As a result, it is difficult to see what separates the definite description *what Dan Blum was last year* in (37) from *the chair* in (40), and why a type e interpretation should be possible only for the latter. While it is claimed that “an equative...reading is excluded” from sentences like (37), and that this accounts for the unacceptability of inversions like (34) (Heycock 2012: 226), it is not made clear why this reading is unavailable; after all, *what Dan Blum was last year* and *the chair* are themselves ‘equated’ in (39). It would



seem that on this approach, the analysis is led by the grammaticality judgements: if inversion is unacceptable, it follows that the sentence lacks an equative interpretation. This undermines its predictive power.

#### *4.2.3 Why we need class inclusion to account for inversion restrictions*

In contrast, Heller's (2005: 118) data can be accounted for much more neatly if we assume the analysis of specificational sentences outlined in §2. As we can see from (43), the predication relation in (42), repeated from (33) above, can be unpacked into two separate instantiation relations. Sentence (42) is therefore shown to be an instance of the "frequently puzzled over construction" that for Partee (2004: 221) involves a "special predicative use of attribute NPs".

(42) John Smith is what Dan Blum was last year. Namely, the chair.

(Heller 2005: 188)

(43) (a) John Smith is the chair.

(b) The chair is what Dan Blum was last year.

As was established in §3, these interesting examples are not expected to correspond to acceptable inversions, because they do not involve the semantic relation of class inclusion. This simple observation accounts for Heller's (2005: 188) ungrammatical predicative inversion in (34), as well as for the acceptability of the inverse counterparts to (43), shown in (39) and (41) above. The analysis is based on a discernible difference between (42) and (43); while all three sentences are comprised of a subject referent and a predicative NP that denotes a set or type, it is only in (43) that the referent is an

instance of the type specified by the definite description; in (42), the animate entity *John Smith* cannot be classified by the head noun *what*. This is an improvement on the equative approach. Here, the focus is not on the combination of the *semantic types*  $e$  and  $\langle e, t \rangle$ , but on the *semantic relation* that exists between them.

On this account, the unacceptable predicative inversions are shown to correspond to examples of a specific construction that exhibits a non-classifying predication relation<sup>6</sup>; in contrast, the counterparts to acceptable inversions are instances of the more common predicate nominal schema. While as Heller (2005: 188) acknowledges, the exceptional tokens do “seem like a single kind of example”, the equative approach perceives them as revealing ambiguities normally present in sentences containing postcopular definite NPs. This serves to complicate the analysis of predicate nominal constructs like those in (43), which require different processes of type-shifting in order to achieve the requisite equative semantics, as shown in (38) and (40) above.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> From this, we can identify additional examples corresponding to unacceptable inversions beyond those already discussed in the relevant literature. For example, (i) expresses a complex proposition amounting to the combination of two class inclusion relations: *the worst kind of man* classifies a particular *kind of man*, which in turn can be used to classify *Sam* (as a dishonest man, for instance). As the account predicts, the inverse counterpart to this sentence is unacceptable, shown in (ii).

- i. Sam is the worst kind of man.
- ii. #The worst kind of man is Sam.

<sup>7</sup> My account is not free from type-shifting, since definite descriptions like *the chair* function either as referring expressions or as semantic predicates depending upon the slot they fill in the predicate nominal construction. However, such COERCION (in the sense of Michaelis 2003) is consistent and has been argued for on independent grounds (see Partee 2004: 220, and the analysis of *honest* as an ‘individualised’ property in §3).

In conclusion, the equative approach to specificational sentences brings with it its own set of problems. These analyses are set up as a response to the fact that inverse accounts have struggled to determine the limits of predicative inversion; they attempt to sidestep the problematic inversion data by claiming that specification involves semantic equation instead of predication. In doing so, functional differences between identity statements and specificational clauses are overlooked (see §4.2.1). As Higgins (1979: 215) puts it, theories which build upon the treatment of specificational sentences as identity statements “naturally rest on shaky foundations”.

In contrast, I have shown that we can account for this problematic inversion data straightforwardly and still maintain an inverse analysis of specificational sentences, if, rather than focusing on the combinatorics of predicational copular sentences (as the combination of expressions of type *e* and  $\langle e, t \rangle$ ), we focus on the *relation* of predication that exists between these elements. In the analysis set out in §2, specificational meaning involves a class inclusion predication relation; that is, an instantiation relation between an instance and a type specification. Since the NP inversion construction is exclusively specifying in function, it follows that *only a subset* of predicational copular sentences, those in which the definite NP predicate directly classifies and enters into an instantiation relation with the subject, will correspond to acceptable specificational inversion sentences. On this account, the restrictions on NP inversion discussed in §3 and §4 are no longer problematic, but instead fall out as a consequence of the analysis.

## 5 INVERSION RESTRICTIONS AND INDEFINITE NP PREDICATION

In this section, I turn to the second set of data that has presented a longstanding problem for traditional inverse accounts: namely, the restrictions on specificational sentences

introduced by indefinite NPs. As shown in (45), repeated from (4) above, predicative NPs marked as indefinite often cannot occur in precopular position.

- (44) Rebecca Howe is a manager. [predicational]  
 (45) #A manager is Rebecca Howe. [specificational]

In (44), repeated from (3) above, the postcopular NP is clearly predicative, providing a description of the subject referent (rather than referring to a distinct individual).

Furthermore, this predication relation is one of class inclusion: *Rebecca Howe* is a member of the class or category of *managers*. Consequently, the unacceptability of the inversion in (45) cannot be accounted for by appealing to the insight that specification is a type of classifying relation; it is clear that while specificational meaning is dependent upon the relation of class inclusion, class inclusion does not *entail* a specificational interpretation.

Nor can we say that because specification is tied to the concept of definiteness (as was argued in §2 above), it follows that indefinite NP predicates cannot occur in the specificational inversion construction. This is not simply a categorial distinction; we do find acceptable examples introduced by indefinite noun phrases, including (46).

- (46) A philosopher who seems to share the Kiparskys' intuitions on some factive predicates is Unger (1972), who argues...

(Delacruz 1976: 195 [Mikkelsen 2005: 155])

Nevertheless, in the following discussion, we will see that the restrictions on indefinite specificational sentences can be accounted for by the combination of these properties: specification *requires* a class inclusion relation, but also *prefers* a relation involving definite NP predicates. The defining characteristic of acceptable indefinite noun phrases therefore lies in their degree of closeness to definite noun phrases.

This suggestion – that the behaviour of indefinite specificational sentences rests upon the distinction between definiteness and indefiniteness – is not a new one. However, such arguments usually revolve around their differing discourse status. For example, Mikkelsen (2005) claims that inversion (which for her is a syntactic movement operation) is governed by a discourse requirement: the predicative NP will only be raised to subject position if it contains discourse-old information. On this account, “we would expect indefinite specificational subjects to be rare” (Mikkelsen 2005: 154): it is well known that while the definite article is associated with familiarity, indicating that the entity can be located in the previous discourse, the indefinite article instead signals that the entity is new to the discourse. Acceptable inversions like (46) contain indefinite NPs that are somehow linked to the preceding text. (46) is from an article on factive predicates, in which the Kiparskys figure prominently. Although the existence of *a philosopher who shares the Kiparskys’ intuitions* is new information, the embedded phrase *the Kiparskys’ intuitions on some factive predicates* connects this footnote to the previous discussion.

On the assumption that specificational copular sentences are instances of NP inversion, it is not surprising that they are sensitive to discourse status: from her corpus

of English inversion sentences<sup>8</sup>, Birner (1994, 1996) observes that they are subject to a robust pragmatic constraint, such that “the preposed element... must not be newer in the discourse than the postposed element” (Birner 1996: 90). However, discourse status cannot explain all of the distributional facts surrounding indefinite specificational sentences. Using examples similar to (45), Mikkelsen (2005: 159) shows that their unacceptability prevails *regardless* of the discourse context; she concludes that “there are still other factors that seem to play a role in determining the felicity of indefinite specificational subjects”.

In Patten (2012), I claimed that we can better account for the data if we attend also to the semantic distinction between inclusiveness and exclusiveness, which further differentiates definiteness from indefiniteness. This follows from the interpretation of specification as a class inclusion relation. Definite NP predicates are well-suited to acts of specification, which involves listing the entities (or instances) that comprise the membership of a particular category (see §2). The characteristics of inclusiveness and P-set membership mean that the individual(s) referred to will be taken to form an exhaustive list of entities that satisfy the description. This creates an ideal scenario for an act of specification, on the principle that a well-formed list should ideally be complete (see also Declerck 1988: 30). For example, in (47), repeated from (10), *Diane* and *Carla* together make up the set of *waitresses (in a particular bar)*. Likewise, in (48), repeated from (1), *Rebecca* is the only *manager (of this establishment)*.

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<sup>8</sup> Birner (1994: 235) defines inversion sentences as those in which the “logical subject appears in postverbal position while some other, canonically postverbal, constituent appears in clause-initial position”.

(47) Diane and Carla were the waitresses.

(48) Rebecca Howe is the manager.

The characteristic properties of indefinite descriptions, however, are less suited to the specifying function.<sup>9</sup> The use of the indefinite article conversationally implicates EXCLUSIVENESS, or non-uniqueness (see Declerck 1987; Hawkins 1991). Thus, (49) implies that *Carla* is not the only waitress; it is “possible (and in fact suggested) that the property can be ascribed to other people as well” (Declerck 1986: 30). Furthermore, indefinite NPs are not always understood in relation to a pragmatically given context, and so often denote general categories (see Hawkins 1991: 419). Since, in (49), the indefinite NP is unmodified, we can interpret the sentence as including *Carla* within the unrestricted set of *waitresses that exist*. It follows that, while (49) tells us something about *Carla* (providing an ascriptive assertion), it does little to inform us about the membership of the category *waitresses*. This explains why inversions involving unmodified indefinite noun phrases, like (50) and (45), are deemed unacceptable.

(49) Carla is a waitress

(50) #A waitress is Carla.

In contrast, the indefinite noun phrases that occur in the initial position of acceptable specificational inversion sentences do not exhibit these characteristic properties of indefiniteness, and so are closer in interpretation to definite noun phrases. Example (46)

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<sup>9</sup> Here, I discuss only NPs introduced by the indefinite article; specificational sentences introduced with the numeral *one* behave somewhat differently, as I explain in Patten (2012: 48–56).

contains an establishing relative clause. As well as anchoring the indefinite description to the speech event, the restrictive modification serves to further specify the type designated by the indefinite noun phrase. This limits the number of possible instances or tokens of the type category. Furthermore, as Hawkins (1978: 225) points out, “the exclusiveness condition is no longer operative” in indefinite NPs containing establishing relative clauses. Consequently, there is no implication that there is more than one *philosopher who shares the Kiparskys’ intuitions on some factive predicates*.

What characterises acceptable indefinite noun phrases, then, is that “they bridge the gap between definiteness and indefiniteness” (Patten 2012: 54). This is true *not only* of their discourse-status (in that they establish a brand-new type description, which is nevertheless grounded to the speech event) *but also* in the fact that they designate restricted categories and allow us to be non-committal with respect to exclusiveness and inclusiveness. Specificational sentences containing indefinite descriptions therefore have a unique and useful function, which separates them from those containing definite NPs. A similar point is made by Declerck (1988: 20), who claims that their use is “motivated by the semantic difference between these NPs and the corresponding definites”. However, while Declerck associates these examples with the characteristics of indefiniteness, namely exclusiveness (as indicating that there are other entities that satisfy the description provided), we can see that the form of indefinite specificational clauses is governed instead by the degree of closeness to definiteness – a concept better suited to acts of specification.

One advantage to this analysis is that it anticipates the *gradient* acceptability judgements associated with such sentences. As Donka Farkas observes (in Mikkelsen 2005: 159), the content and form of modification seems to influence the degree of



felicity of indefinite specificational subjects. Such behaviour is difficult to account for on inverse analyses drawing from the formalist tradition, which seeks to identify general constraints on syntactic movement operations.

For example, Patten (2012: 54-55) compares pairs of examples like (51) and (52). Here, the initial description is anchored through the discourse-old head noun *waitress*. This carries with it an implicature of P-membership, and so is understood within the more restricted context of *waitresses in the Boston Barmaid contest*. The restricted type is further specified by adjectival modification, which also ensures that the description is novel to the discourse. Nevertheless, despite clear similarities in form and discourse status, the two sentences differ in felicitousness.

(51) There are several waitresses in the Boston Barmaid contest. An especially efficient waitress is Diane Chambers.

(52) There are several waitresses in the Boston Barmaid contest. ?An efficient waitress is Diane Chambers.

These felicity judgements are accounted for as follows. While the adverb *especially* enables a uniqueness interpretation, such that *Diane Chambers* could well be the most efficient waitress within the P-set, it is more difficult to obtain a non-exclusive reading without this adverb. *Efficient* is a gradable adjective, and so we might expect there to be more than one efficient waitresses within the shared context (even if some are more efficient than others).

It seems then “that indefinite noun phrases will be better suited to the specifying function”, and therefore more amenable to the specificational inversion construction, “if

they contain lots of modifying information”, and if the content of modification does not rule out an interpretation of uniqueness or inclusiveness (Patten 2012: 55). Although this claim warrants empirical investigation (see Patten in prep.), the explanation sketched here gains further support from the findings of wider studies of English inversion constructions. In a discussion of adjective phrase inversion, Dorgeloh (1997: 82) observes that inversion is deemed more acceptable if the AP is marked as “a comparative, or if accompanied by *also, especially*” and the like, as in (53).

- (53) Especially worrisome to public health experts is the growing number of cases caused by tuberculosis germ strains that have become resistant to drugs...

(*New York Times*, 7/15/90 [Birner 1996: 41])

Although other authors have attributed this finding to discourse familiarity (see Penhallurick 1984:43; Birner 1996: 40–42), in Dorgeloh’s view, “this is not the whole story”. She suggests that these APs denote “a property which is particularly attributable to the discourse entity that follows [the copula]”; the construction therefore has a contrastive function, singling out the referent that exhibits this property to a greater extent than the other individuals or items that also have this property (Dorgeloh 1997: 82).

As with indefinite noun phrases, shown in (51) and (52) above, the suitability of the adjective phrase in performing this function has consequences for the acceptability of the sentence, shown in (54) and (55); see also the examples in Penhallurick (1984: 43).

- (54) Particularly impressive was Diane’s demeanour.

(55) ?Impressive was Diane's demeanour.

Again, we might say that without the adverb *particularly* creating a sense of uniqueness, or rather distinctiveness, the property of being *impressive* could characterise a number of things in addition to *Diane's demeanour*. Clearly, the AP inversion data is relevant to the characterisation of specificational meaning developed here. This lends additional support to the inverse approach to specificational sentences, and builds up a picture of a family of predicative inversion constructions sharing a similar specifying function (see Patten in prep.).

Finally, if we return once more to the behaviour of definite noun phrase predicates, we find yet further evidence to suggest that specificational meaning is at odds with an indefiniteness interpretation. In example (56), *the perfect gentleman* behaves differently from most definite NP predicates in that it does not function to uniquely characterise *Sam* in relation to some shared set of individuals. Instead, the intended interpretation is that 'Sam behaved in a gentlemanly fashion'. As we can see in (57), substituting the indefinite article does little to change the meaning of the sentence. As Declerck (1986: 35) notes "predicational NPs that are formally definite sometimes yield an indefinite interpretation".

(56) Sam was the perfect gentleman.

(57) Sam was a perfect gentleman.

It is telling that the sentence in (56) does not enable a specificational reading, and does not correspond to an acceptable specificational inversion sentence, as shown in (58).

(58) #The perfect gentleman was Sam.

Such data points once more to the lack of a clear boundary between the concepts of definiteness and indefiniteness, which I have suggested is crucial to understanding the use of definite and indefinite noun phrases in specificational NP BE NP sentences.

However, while the unacceptability of (58) *may* be explained by a lack of inclusiveness, it is possible too that what we are witnessing here is the absence of a class inclusion relation in both (56) and (57).

These examples are relevant to the INDIVIDUALISING predication relation recognised by Croft (1991: 70). In Bolinger (1980), this label is applied to indefinite NP predicates that lack a classifying function (in contrast to bare, articleless nouns, which are always classifying). In order to tease apart these distinct functions of the indefinite article in English, Bolinger (1980: 3) considers the behaviour of gradable nouns with degree adverbs that indicate the extent to which the subject has an individual quality. For example, in (59), *such an* and *a complete* indicate (or intensify) the extent of Carla's angelic behaviour. *Carla* is not necessarily a real angel; nor is she being compared to or distinguished from other angels through degree modification. Instead, (59) states that *Carla* "acts/is acting like" an angel; that is, she "has the characteristics or behaviour" associated with this category (Croft 1991: 70).

(59) Carla is such an/a complete angel today.

Sentence (59) can therefore be said to have an individualising, rather than classifying, meaning; as Croft (1991: 70) notes, the predicative noun phrase “characterizes the subject without subsuming it”. Such examples clearly have much in common with the data in (56) and (57), where, as we saw, *perfect gentleman* describes Sam’s behaviour as gentlemanly; but does not distinguish *Sam* from some set of gentlemen. The use of the definite article in (56) serves only to emphasise the extent of Sam’s gentlemanly behaviour. Consequently, this example seems to function as a definite noun phrase counterpart to the individualising relation recognised for indefinite NP predicates.

It would therefore support the analysis of specificational sentences outlined in §2, if it were shown that (in addition to the property of non-exclusiveness) the presence of a classifying predication relation was just as important for the felicity of indefinite specificational sentences as definite ones. And indeed this does seem to be the case. For example, in (51), *Diane* is distinguished from the other members of the set of *waitresses* in the shared context by a potentially unique (or at least distinctive) description. In contrast, the non-classifying predication relation in (59) does not allow a specificational reading for the corresponding inversion sentence in (60), irrespective of the presence of adjectival modification in the indefinite NP.

(60) A complete angel is Carla.

While the sentence in (60) is grammatical, it is acceptable only on an ascriptive reading, in which *a complete angel* predicates a property of, and ascribes a property to, *Carla*. That is, the sentence tells us something about *Carla*, rather than specifying *Carla* as matching an anchored description. The sentence is an example of a rare construction

distinct from our specificational inversion sentences, with an information structure that places focus on the precopular predicate (see Renský 1981: 140).<sup>10</sup>

The importance of class inclusion to the felicitousness of indefinite specificational sentences is made even clearer when we consider the inversions in (61) and (62) below. While (61) involves an instantiation relation, with *blue* serving as an instance of the type *colour*, the referring expression *this shirt* cannot be interpreted as a member of this category. The inversion in (62) therefore corresponds to the non-classifying predication relation discussed in §3; that is, to Partee's (2004: 221) "special predicative use of attribute NPs". As we would expect from the account provided in §2, the two sentences differ in acceptability. Restrictive modification in (61) makes for a perfectly good specificational sentence; however, it cannot improve sentence (62), which does not involve the requisite classifying relation.

(61) A particularly attractive colour is blue.

(62) #A particularly attractive colour is this shirt.

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<sup>10</sup> While this rare sentence type is occasionally noted in the literature, Declerck (1988: 64) states that in everyday English (rather than poetry), "sentences like these will surely be judged unacceptable". As shown in (iii), however, they are attested in rural dialect representations, and it would be worthwhile considering how they relate to specificational inversion constructions and to Birmer's (1994, 1996) discourse condition on inversion. This is outside of the scope of this paper (but see Patten in prep.).

iii. ...Harry brought him back. A thoroughly decent chap is Harry and he has an appetite for malt whisky of which I always approve. (Rebecca Shaw, *A Village Deception*, 2011, p. 50)

What this shows is that indefinite NP inversion is subject to the same constraints as specificational copular sentences introduced by definite NPs. Both constructions are governed by the concept of specification; that is, by what constitutes a “well-formed list”.

## 6 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

This paper has re-examined the case for an analysis of specificational copular sentences as instances of predicative inversion. Its focus was on the restrictions on inversion that have proven difficult to account for on formal inverse analyses; and that have motivated alternative analyses of specification as semantic equation. The paper demonstrates that we can account for the restrictions on inversion by focusing on the concept of specificational meaning that is integral to this construction. In viewing specification as a construction-specific requirement or stipulation, the distributional facts are shown to fall out straightforwardly.

Inversion restrictions involving definite NP predicates were shown to stem from the claim that only a particular type of predication relation, namely class inclusion (or instantiation), permits a specificational reading; non-classifying semantic relations, in which the predicative NP does not subsume the logical subject, do not sanction a specificational reading and so cannot occur in the specificational inversion construction. This stipulation was shown to capture individual examples exhibiting these restrictions more successfully than an equative approach to specificational sentences, despite repeated claims that they “pose a serious problem for predicative inversion analyses” (Heycock 2012: 226).

Inversion restrictions involving indefinite NP predicates were claimed to relate both to their discourse status (Mikkelsen 2005), and to the implicature of exclusiveness commonly associated with indefinite noun phrases (Patten 2012). Both accounts are consistent with the findings of wider studies of predicative inversion, thus supporting an inverse analysis. Finally, it was argued that all specificational NP BE NP sentences are subject to the same stipulation: specification *requires* a class inclusion relation, and *prefers* NPs that exhibit properties closer to definiteness than indefiniteness.

In conclusion, straightforward explanations for inversion restrictions emerge from a reconsideration of what constitutes specificational meaning, conceptualised here, as in Higgins (1979), as “a well-formed list”. This follows Higgins’ (1979: 362) suggestion that “further work...should probably concentrate on...testing the fruitfulness of the notion that Specificational...sentences are essentially lists”.



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