Bare Nouns in Predicate Position in French

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Abstract. In this paper we examine the differences between bare singular nouns and indefinite singular NPs in predicate position in French. Our claim is that the semantic value of the singular indefinite determiner is not empty in French and that various interpretative contrasts between bare singular nouns and indefinite nouns in predicate position can be accounted for if a distinction between two rules of predication supported by copular sentences is introduced. We assume that bare nouns denote properties, which can be attributed to individuals, while indefinite noun phrases denote entities, which can be identified with an individual in context. This distinction between two types of statements, attributive ones and identificational ones, takes its source in Higgin's typology, and will be compared with Roy's and Heller and Wolter's works on predicative and specificational sentences.

1   Introduction

It is frequently assumed that French doesn't allow productive bare nouns, neither in argument positions, nor in predicate positions. Such an assumption is in contradiction with the following data, some of which are well-known and studied in the recent literature. (1a) corresponds to autonymic uses of bare nouns, (1b-c) to bare nouns in coordination (cf Roodenburg, 2004), (1d) to bare nouns in compound verbs, (1e) to bare nouns in prepositional phrases, (1f-h) examplify the uses of bare nouns in negative polarity contexts. Such examples need to be explained, and comparison seems to play a crucial role in (1g-h). (1i-j) illustrate some occurences of bare nouns in phrases of the type *N prep N*, (1k-m) present some cases of bare nouns which are not often mentioned in linguistic studies, and (1n-o) show that bare nouns may appear in copular sentences.

(1)   a. <u>Cordiste</u> est un métier d'avenir qui demande une double compétence,
         sportive et technique.

[A] harnessed climber is a up-and-coming trade which requires both technical and athletic skills[1]

b. *Livres et journaux jonchaient le sol.*
Books and newpapers lay everywhere on the ground

c. *Il faut disposer d'un compte bancaire pour toucher salaire ou retraite.*
You need to have a bank account in order to receive [your] wages or pension

d. *prendre rendez-vous, faire usage, avoir faim, soif, mal au coeur...*
take [an] appointement, make use of, to be hungry, to feel sick

e. *un pot en fer, un problème de taille, une idée de génie...*
a pot made of metal, a problem with size, a genius'idea

f. *Jamais homme n'entra dans ce couvent.*
No man has ever stepped in that convent

g. *Je n'avais jamais vu femme si belle.*
I've never seen such [a] beautiful woman

h. *Vous ne trouverez pas hôtel plus agréable dans la région.*
You won't find [a] more pleasant hotel in the area

i. *Il a bu bière sur bière.*
He drank beer after beer

j. *Elle s'embellit jour après jour.*
She gets prettier afer day

k. *Ce nouveau téléphone fait appareil photo.*
This new phone can be used as [a] camera

l. Cette explication fait sens.
This explanation makes sense

m. *Si problème il y a, n'hésite pas à me rappeler.*
In case of problem, don't hesitate to call me

n. Jean est ami avec le directeur.
Jean is [a] friend with the director

o. *Jean est professeur.*
Jean is [a] professor

In this paper, we won't analyze all of these configurations. We will only focus on bare nouns in copular sentences, and more specifically on the contrast between bare singular nouns and indefinite singular nouns in copular sentences. Our aim is to show that copular sentences built with indefinite singulars (IS) differ in crucial ways from sentences built with bare singulars (BS): we can explain the interpretative and distributional differences between IS and BS by analyzing copular sentences built with IS as relying on an identity relation rather than on predication.

(2)   *a. Jean est un clown.*   Jean is a clown
           b. Jean est clown.   Jean is [a] clown

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[1] We indicate with square brackets [] words which are required in the English translation, but are missing in the French sentence.

After a presentation in §2 of various interpretative and distributional contrasts between IS and BS in copular sentences, we propose in §3 to revisit Higgin's typology of copular sentences and to distinguish between predication and equation, grouping copular sentences built with IS together with identificational, specificational and equative sentences. Such an analysis allows to explain both the alternation between *il* and *ce* pronouns in copular sentences (§ 4) and the restrictions on modified bare nouns (§ 5).

2 Contrasts between bare nouns and indefinite nouns in copular sentences

In *Semantics in Generative Grammar,* Heim and Kratzer (1998:61) assume that "the indefinite article *a* is vacuous when it occurs in predicate nominals such as *a cat* in *Kaline is a cat*". This assumption, even if it was true for English, can't be applied to French, since, as (2) illustrates, copular sentences with and without indefinites may convey different meanings. (2b) means that John is a clown by profession, while (2a) just has a metaphoric meaning, and is adequate if John behaves as a clown, i.e. if the speaker judges that John is a funny person. This observation is due to Laca and Tasmovski (1994) and can be added to other contrasts which distinguish between BS and IS in copular sentences.

First of all, ISs, contrary to BSs, are incompatible with small clauses (3). Secondly, ISs, contrary to BSs, cannot appear in sentences with interruptive or intermittent readings (4). Lastly, the difference between ISs and BSs correlates with different pronouns in left dislocation (5).

(3)   *a. Marie imagine Paul ministre.*
         *b. *Marie imagine Paul un ministre.*
           Mary imagines Paul a minister
(4)   *a. Paul est médecin le jour, chanteur la nuit.*
         *a'. * Paul est un médecin le jour, un chanteur la nuit.*
           Paul is a doctor during the day, a singer during the night
         b. Paul est traducteur à ses heures libres.
         *b'. * Paul est un traducteur à ses heures libres.*
           Paul is a translator after hours
         c. Paul a été professeur à trois occasions dans sa vie.
         *c'. * Paul a été un professeur à trois occasions dans sa vie.*
           Paul has been a teacher three times in his life
(5)   *a. Paul, (il / * c') est traducteur.*
         b. Paul, (?il / c') est un traducteur.
           Paul, (he / CE) is a translator

All of these constrasts suggest a possible parallelism between bare nouns and adjectives: like adjectives, bare nouns denote properties, that can be attributed to a stage of individual and that can give rise to temporary interpretation. On the contrary, sentences built with indefinite singulars seem to convey a different meaning, where

the indefinite nouns denote a stable property or more precisely denote an individual characterized by a permanent property. A comparison can be made between BS *vs* IS on the one hand, and adjective vs nominalization on the other hand, as in examples (6).

(6)   *a. Jean est bossu*   (temporary property)
          b. Jean est un bossu   (permanent property)
              Jean is a hunchbacked

There are some other differences between IS and BS uses. BSs, contrary to ISs, can be followed by *as qua* expressions (7) and can be modified by a prepositional phrase including a superordinate of the noun (8). Furthermore, BSs and ISs don't trigger the same type of inferences concerning the existence of the subject of the copular sentence. It is usual to consider that (9a) triggers the implicature that Pierre is dead, contrary to (9b), which doesn't trigger any implicature of this kind. Conversely, when one considers sentences built with present tense, the sentence with IS is not associated with any lifetime implicature, while the sentence with BS seems inappropriate when the subject denotes an individual who is dead, like in (10b) (cf Matushansky and Spector 2003, 2005).

(7)   *a. En tant que médecin, Pierre n'a pas voulu prendre position sur ce sujet.*
          *b. * En tant qu'un médecin, Pierre n'a pas voulu prendre position sur ce sujet.*
              As a doctor, Pierre didn't want to take a stand on this subject
(8)   *a. Pierre est avocat de profession. / * Pierre est un avocat de profession.*
          *b. Pierre est chrétien de religion. / * Pierre est un chrétien de religion.*
          *c. Pierre est français de nationalité. / * Pierre est un français de nationalité.*
              Pierre is a (lawyer / christian / French) by (profession / religion / nationality)
(9)   *a. Pierre était un médecin.*
              Pierre was a doctor
          b. Pierre était médecin. Maintenant il est retraité.
              Pierre was [a] doctor. Now he is retired
(10)   *a. Balzac est un écrivain.*
              Balzac is a writer
          b. ? Balzac est écrivain.

The last well-known contrasts between IS and BS concern the modification of the noun, which is much more restricted with BS than with IS.

(11)   *a. Jean est un médecin (généraliste / honnête / qui a plus de 50 ans).*
          *b. Jean est médecin (généraliste / *honnête / * qui a plus de 50 ans).*
              Jean is a general practitioner doctor / an honest doctor / a doctor who is more than 50-year-old

These contrasts are not new, they are presented in different papers, and in particular in Roy (2006) or in de Swart et al. (2006, 2007). Here our aim is just to present them

again in order to propose an analysis of copular sentences which can explain some of them.

3 Two types of judgments: predication *vs* equation

To account for these interpretative and distributional differences, we propose to introduce a distinction between different types of copular sentences. We focus on two classes of copular sentences, (i) copular sentences built with a bare noun and (ii) copular sentences built with an indefinite noun. We associate these copular sentences to two distinct logical forms.

(12)   *a. Jean est clown*
           b. [[DP is BS]] = 1   iff [[DP]] has P_{BS}
                                             or in other words
                                             iff $P_{BS} \in$ [[DP]]

DP means 'determiner phrase', BS means 'bare singular noun' and P_{BS} refers to the property denoted by the bare noun. Thus the subject DP in (12a) is analyzed as a generalized quantifier.

(13)   *a. Jean est un clown*
           b. [[DP is IS]] = 1   iff [[DP]] = [[IS]]

IS means 'indefinite singular noun'. (13) conveys an identity statement, in which it is claimed that the DP in subject position and the postverbal IS have the same denotation.

Another way to express the difference between these two types of copular sentences is to show that the copula in each of these sentences doesn't play the same role. In (12), the copula corresponds to $\lambda P P$, while in (13) it corresponds to $\lambda y \lambda x$ $(x=y)$. In (12), the bare noun is comparable to an adjective and denotes a property, which is attributed to a subject. The copula is just used to bind or compose the subject and the post-copular noun.

(14)   is : $\lambda P\ P$
        clown : $\lambda x C(x)$
        is clown : $\underline{\lambda P}\ (\underline{P})\ \lambda x C(x)$ which reduces to $\lambda x C(x)$

If we analyze any indefinite NP as a generalized quantifier, we obtain the following composition for a VP built with a copula and an IS such as '*est un clown*'. The copular is viewed as expressing relative identity (cf Gupta 1980): $\lambda P\ \lambda x\ (P)\ \lambda y$ $(x=y)$.

(15)   is : $\lambda P\ \lambda x\ (P)\ \lambda y\ (x=y)$
        a : $\lambda Q\ \lambda R\ \exists z\ (Q(z) \wedge R(z))$

clown : $\lambda x C(x)$

a clown : $\lambda R \, \exists z \, (R(z) \wedge C(z))$

is a clown : $\underline{\lambda P} \, \lambda x \, \underline{(P)} \, \lambda y \, (x=y) \; (\underline{\lambda R \, \exists z \, (R(z) \wedge C(z))})$

    which reduces to

    $\lambda x \, (\lambda \underline{R} \, \exists z \, (R(z) \wedge C(z))) \, \underline{\lambda y \, (x=y)}$

    and finally to

    $\lambda x \, (\, \exists z \, (x=z) \wedge C(z))$

The present proposal is distinct from what can be found in the literature, and in particular distinct from Higgins', Roy's, and Heller and Wolter's analyses, summarized in table 1.

Higgins	Roy	Heller and Wolter's	Beyssade & Sorin
Predicational	i) characterizing ii) defining iii) situation-descriptive	i) ordinary predication ii) quiddity predication (including identificationals)	Predicational
Equative	Equative	Equative	Identity : equatives,
Identificational	Identificational		identificationals,
Specificational	Specificational	Specificational	specificationals

Table 1: Typology of copular sentences

The important point is that here we draw a demarcation line between predicational and non predicational copular sentences, and that we analyze copular sentences built with bare nouns as predicational sentences, while copular sentences built with indefinites nouns are viewed as instances of non predicational sentences. Let's note that in all the other proposals found in the literature no clear distinction is established between copular sentences built with IS *vs* with BS.

In Higgins typology, IS copular sentences may be predicational or non predicational sentences, according to the context.

In Roy's thesis, copular sentences, either built with IS or with BS, are viewed as cases of predication: defining predicates are expressed by ISs, characterizing predicates are expressed by BSs, and situation-descriptive predicates are expressed by adjectives. It should follow from such an analysis that small clauses would be compatible, both with IS and with BS, which is not the case.

(16) *Marie imagine Paul (ø / *un) ministre*.
    Mary imagine Paul (ø / a) minister

And finally, Heller and Wolter propose to introduce a distinction between two types of predicates: (i) predicates which express ordinary predication, and (ii) what they called quiddity predicates, which provide an answer to the question 'What is that?'. In addition to expressing a property of the entity, quiddity predicates tell us something about the essence or nature of the entity. They don't give any strong argument to justify why they analyze quiddity predicates as instances of predication and not as instances of equatives or specificationals. We have observed that in French, ordinary properties, which express secondary properties, are typically expressed via BS and the verb *faire* (cf (17a)) while quiddity predicates are expressed via IS (cf

(17b)). Consequently, we will analyze quiddity sentences as cases of non predicational sentences. The sentence (17a) is not about a camera, but rather about an object that has a secondary function as a camera.

(17)   a. *Ce téléphone fait appareil photo.*   (*ordinary property*)
            This cell phone is a camera.
        b. *C'est un appareil photo.*   (*quiddity*)
            This is a camera.

4. Alternation between *il* and *ce* in French copular sentences

It is well-known (cf a.o. Kupferman 1979, Tamba 1983, Boone 1987, Beyssade & Sorin 2005) that there is an alternation between pronouns *ce / il* in French left dislocation constructions, which depends on the post-copular element: the pronoun *ce* 'that' appears when the post-copular phrase is an IS, while *il / elle* 'he / she' is used with a BS.

(18)   a. *Jean, c'est (un chanteur / *chanteur).*
            John, CE is (a singer / singer)
        b. *Jean, il est (? un chanteur / chanteur).*
            John, IL is (a singer / singer)

We observe that BSs behave as adjectives in this type of configuration, while copular sentences built with IS can be grouped with equative, identificational and specificational sentences since the pronoun which appears in left dislocation constructions is *ce* and not *il /elle*.

(19)   *Jean, (il / * c') est beau.*
        John, (he / CE) is beautiful
(20)   a. *Clark Kent, (c' /?il) est Superman.*   *equative*
        b. *Ca, (c' / *il) est John.*   *identificational*
        c. *Le problème, (c' / *il) est John.*   *specificational*

This observation provides a new argument to analyze copular sentences with BS as predicational sentences and to group copular sentences built with IS with equative, identificational and specificational sentences in the class of identity statements.

What does the use of *ce vs il/elle* indicate*?* Let us recall that pronouns may be used to give some information about the denotation of their antecedents. According to Blanche-Benveniste (1990, 41-42), "pronouns give a grammatical description which may be more fine-grained than lexical words". For instance, the difference between *ils* and *ça* in (21) has to do with the type of denotation of the noun phrase *les chiens*. In (21a), the pronoun refers to a particular set of dogs, while in (21b), it refers to the kind 'dog', and the sentence is a generic one.

(21)   *a. Les chiens, ils aboient.*
            The-dogs-they-are-barking   The dogs are barking
        b. Les chiens, ça aboie.
            The-dogs-ÇA-barks   Dogs bark

Furthermore, certain pronouns are sensitive to the difference between singular and plural, some other ones (like for instance the French generic one *ça)* are not. Same thing with the pronoun *le,* when it is anaphoric to a proposition as in (22b). It doesn't vary, whether it refers to one or several propositions.

(22)   *a. (Le chien / Les chiens), ça aboie.*
            (The-dog / The dogs)-ÇA-barks   Dogs bark
        *b. Jean est poète. Marie est danseuse. Tout le monde (le / *les) sait.*
            John is a poet. Mary is a dancer. Everybody (LE-sg / LES–pl) knows.

We can observe that the opposition [+Human] / [-Human] is not relevant here for distinguishing *ce* vs *il/elle,* since in the sentences which we are interested in, every subject NP refers to humans. Moreover, *il / elle* can be used to refer to non human noun phrases, like in (23):

(23)   *La soupe, elle est trop chaude.*
        The-soup–ELLE-is-too-hot

According to us, the relevant difference between *ce* and *il/elle* has to do with the type of denotation. Contrary to *il*/elle which refers to an entity which is identified and can be type-shifted as a set of properties, *ce* refers to an entity without identity. In other terms, the reference of *ce* is not strong, but weak (Dummett 1973, 1981), exactly as indefinite noun phrases can be weak, when they are incorporated (cf van Geenhoven 1996, McNally and van Geenhoven 1998) or when they appear in presentational sentences (Mc Nally 1997, Moltmann 2007). Dummett suggests that *this* and *that* in English refer to pre-individuated portions of reality, and thus involve reference without identity. They involve indeterminate reference that leaves open what entity exactly is being referred to. Our proposal is that *ce*, contrary to *il/elle*, has weak reference, and then can not be type-shifted from type e to type $((e,t),t)$. It is why *ce* can appear in identity sentences, but not in predicational sentences. *Il/ Elle* may refer to individual of type e, which can be type-shifted in set of properties (i.e. type $((e,t),t)$).

(24)   Ce can only denote entities (type e). It cannot be type-lifted to denote sets of properties.

Ce is grammatical in identity copular sentences such as *Jean, c'est un chanteur,* because such a sentence doesn't rely on predication, but rather on identity. Inversely, *ce* is ungrammatical in predicational copular sentences such as *Jean, c'est chanteur,* because *ce* doesn't refer to a generalized quantifier, *ce* has weak reference, and can't be type-shifted from type e to type $((e,t),t)$.

5. Modified bare nouns in predicate positions

We will focus here on the class of expressions that can occupy the post copular position without determiner. It has been observed that in Romance languages only a restricted class of common nouns can be used without any determiner (a.o., Kupferman 1979, Pollock 1983, Boone 1987, Laca and Tasmowski 1994, Roy 2006, Matushansky and Spector 2003, de Swart and al. 2007). This class includes professions, titles and functions:

(25)   Professions (*médecin* 'doctor', *avocat* 'lawyer'...), titles (*prince* 'prince', *baron* 'baron', *roi* 'king'...), hobbies (*chasseur* 'hunter', *alpiniste* 'climber',...), functions (*président* 'president', *ministre* 'minister', *sénateur* 'senator'...), status (*étudiant* 'student', *SDF* 'homeless'...)

This thesis has been recently infirmed by Mari and Martin (2008), which claim that basically every common noun can be used bare in copular sentences, and propose to give an unified analysis for sentences such as (26a) and (26b).

(26)   *a. Marie est docteur.*
         Mary is [a] doctor
     b. Marie est voiture / salade / mini-jupe.
       Mary-is (-car / -salad / -mini-skirt)
       Mary is the (car / salad / mini-skirt) type

Even if it is interesting to put examples like (26b) in the picture, it seems to us that it isn't justified to associate the same type of logical form with (26) a and b. Such an analysis blurs important contrasts between (26a) and (26b), as illustrated by (27). If (26b) may be paraphrased by (27d), there is no equivalence between (26a) and (27c).

(27)   *a. Marie est très (*docteur / voiture / salade/ mini-jupe).*
       Mary-is-very (doctor / car / salad / mini-skirt)
     *b. Marie est (un docteur / * une voiture / * une salade/ * une mini-jupe).*
       Mary-is- (a-doctor / a-car / a-salad / a-mini-skirt)
     c. Marie aime les docteurs.
       Mary likes doctors
     d. Marie aime la voiture / la salade / les mini-jupes.
       Mary-likes- the(sg)-car / the(sg)-salad / the(pl)-mini-skirts

And finally, while (26a) is absolutely non marked, (26b) are marked and need some context to be interpreted as well-formed. It's the reason why we won't consider examples of the type of (26b) in this paper. They deserve a separated study.

Our aim in this part of the paper isn't to propose a new characterization of the class of the nouns which can be bare in copular sentences. We consider that the description proposed in Beyssade and Sorin (2005) is on the good track. They claim that these nouns refer to non sortal properties i.e. to properties that are associated with

a principle of application but no principle of identity (cf Gupta 1980). According to Gupta, the principle of identity is just supplied by the common noun connected with a determiner or a quantifier. When a common noun is used bare, it refers to a role, a guise, which doesn't directly refer to an individual, but to a secondary property of the object. Consequently, bare common nouns are comparable to adjectives, they refer to secondary properties, that are not associated with principles of identity.

What we want to study here is the variety of expressions that can appear in post-copular position, without determiner. It seems that, besides names of role, there are a bunch of more complex expressions that can be used without determination, as illustrated in (28):

(28)   a. *Jean est (professeur de mathématiques / père de trois enfants).*
             John is [a] (professor of Mathematics / [the] father of three children)
         b. *Jean est fils d'avocat.*
             John is [the] son of a lawyer
         c. *Jean est bon danseur.*
             John is [a] good dancer

In each case, a property is attributed to an individual, but in each case, the way to build a complex property from a simple one is different. We describe here three different possibilities, the list may not be exhaustive.

A first type of complex property is shown in (28a), where the noun of guise is modified by another noun preceded by a functional preposition. *Professeur de mathématiques* defines a subtype of professor, and *père de trois enfants* is a subtype of father. It is important to note that (28a) implies that John is a professor, or that John is a father.

Another way to build a complex noun of guise is to use a noun of guise as argument of a relational noun, and more specifically a kinship noun such as *son, wife... Fils d'avocat* or *femme de ministre* denotes a complex property.

(29)   a. *Jean est fils d'avocat.*
             Jean is [a] son of lawyer
         a'. *Jean est (*ø / le) fils (de Marie / d'un avocat).*
             Jean is (ø / the) son (of Mary / of a lawyer)
         b. *Marie est femme de ministre.*
             Marie is [a] minister's wife
         b'. * *Marie est (*ø / la) femme du ministre.*
             Marie is (ø / the) wife of the minister

We assume that kinship nouns such as *fils, femme* may denote a relation not only between two individuals but also between an individual and a property (role/guise). Correspondingly, *fils d'avocat* in (29) denotes a complex property, obtained by applying a function (the word *fils* is represented in (30a) by λP λx fils (x, P)) to a property (*avocat*). (30a) can be reduced in (30b), which shows that *fils d'avocat* denotes a property. It is interesting to note that if the argument of the relational noun does not denote a guise, but an individual (cf (29a') and (29b')), then the complex expression can not be used bare, but need to be preceeded by a determiner.

(30)   a. λP λx fils (x, P) (avocat)
        b. λx fils (x, avocat)

The third way of building a complex property consists in modifying an adjective by a noun of guise. We claim that bare nouns can be taken to denote both a property and a property modifier. This idea is borrowed from Fox (2000), who has proposed to formalize property modifiers in the framework of Property Theory. In example (28c), which illustrates the type of cases, the noun of guise is analyzed as a property modifier rather than as a property: the property attributed to Jean is not the property of being a dancer, but the property of being good, as a dancer.

This analysis presents several advantages compared to some other recent proposals (Larson 1998, de Swart et al. 2007).

First, our analysis predicts that there is no entailment from (31a) to (31b): *danseur* in (31a) does not have the restricted meaning of professional dancer, contrary to what happens with bare nouns. Indeed, the property attributed to the subject in (31a) is not the property to be a dancer, but the property to be good.

(31)   a. *Jean est bon danseur.*
            John is [a] good dancer
        b. *Jean est danseur de profession.*
            John is [a] dancer by profession

It is only when they denote a property that BNs have the restricted meaning of capacity. In all other contexts, they have an underspecified meaning: (31a) can be understood as meaning 'Jean is beautiful when he dances', and not necessarily as 'Jean is a professional dancer who dances beautifully'. According to our proposal, a noun like *danseur* is semantically ambiguous in French, it can denote a property, or a property modifier.

(32)   a. *danseur* as property   D or λx D(x)
        b. *danseur* as a property modifier   λP λx ∀s (D(x,s) → P(x,s))

(32b) translates the fact that *danseur* can modify a property P and yields another property. This new property can be attributed to an individual x if and only if, in a situation s where x has the property D (i.e. when x dances, as a professional dancer or not), x also has the property P. Thus (28c) can be analyzed as a predicative sentence in which *bon danseur* denotes a complex property that is attributed to Jean.

The second advantage of our proposal is that it can be extended to account for examples of the type shown in (33), which are usually analyzed as lexicalizations or idioms. Within our account, they can be instead analyzed in terms of property modification:

(33)   a. *Jean est (beau / gentil) garçon.*
            Jean is [a] (beautiful / nice) guy
        b. *Marie est (vieille fille / jeune grand-mère)*
            Mary is [a] (old maid / young grandmother)

And finally, we can understand why there are restrictions on the adjectives which can be used in examples like (34a). The more usual are *good* and *bad*, and all their variants like *beautiful, awful...* One can find examples with *young* but they are less frequent, and it often seems difficult to use *old* instead of *young*. *Young* in (35a-b) means *young in this function* and can be paraphrased by *depuis peu, recently*.

(34)   a. *Paul est bon élève.*
        Paul is [a] good student
        b. *Jean est piètre avocat.*
        John is [a] very mediocre lawyer
(35)   a. *Quand je serai jeune retraité,….*
        When I am a young retired person, ...
        b. *Marie est jeune députée et ne connaît pas encore les usages.*
        Mary is a young member of Parliament and doesn't know yet the manners

All other adjectives are excluded of these constructions, and in particular I-level adjectives, which denote permament properties, like *rich, parisian...*

(36)   a. **Paul est (beau / riche) professeur.*
        Paul-is(-nice/-rich)-professor
        b. **Paul est professeur parisien.*
        Paul-is-parisian-professor

In fact, the only adjectives that can appear in this type of construction belong to the class of what Siegel (1976) named non intersective but subsective adjectives. According to him, intersective adjectives are of type (e,t) while subsective adjectives are of type ((e,t), (e,t)) and modify the noun with which they are phrased: a sentence like *John is a good dancer* is ambiguous because the adjective *good* is ambiguous, and may be intersective or subsective. Larson (1995) has proposed another analysis for the same type of examples. According to him, the ambiguity doesn't come from the adjectives but from the nouns like *dancer,* which introduce two variables, one event variable and one individual variable. The lexical content associated with the noun *dancer* corresponds to λxλe. dancer (x,e). Larson (1995) proposed to import Davidson's analysis of adverbial modification to adjectival modification. To do that, he relativizes the semantics of common nouns like *dancer* to events, he analyzes adjectives as predicates and he allows adjective phrases to be predicated either of x or e. Consequently, *a beautiful dancer* may be associated with both logical forms given in (37):

(37)   a. λe λx [dancing (x, e) & beautiful(x)]   ' beautiful dancer$_1$'
        b. λe λx [dancing (x, e) & beautiful(e)]   ' beautiful dancer$_2$ '

Larson's analysis accounts for the ambiguity of (38), which can be associated with the two following Logical Forms (38b-c), presented as tripartite structures Quantifier [Restriction] [Nuclear scope].

(38)　　a.　　*John is a beautiful dancer*
　　　　b.　　∀e [dancing(e, j)] [beautiful (j)]
　　　　c.　　∀e [dancing(e, j)] [beautiful(e)]

The general situation is the following: some adjectives apply strictly to non-events (for instance *aged)*, others apply strictly to events (for instance *former*) and still others apply naturally to both, yielding ambiguity (for instance *beautiful*). Larson's analysis is very interesting and is perhaps adequate for English, but it can't be used to account for French data, because there is a contrast in French between copular sentences with IS and copular sentences with BS, which has no equivalent in English. English doesn't have bare nouns in predicate positions[2].

Our proposal is distinct from Siegel's one and from Larson's one. According to us, *bon danseur* is viewed not as a bare noun modified with an adjective, but as an adjective modified by a noun of property. *Bon danseur* means "bon en tant que danseur", "bon, quand il danse". When one combines a bare noun with an adjective, one obtains a complex property, built from the adjective and modified by the bare noun. We consider that the core of the phrase *bon danseur* is the adjective *bon,* not the noun *danseur*. It is why our analysis is very different from Larson's one: what is relevant in this type of construction is the adjective, which support various constraints, not the noun. We don't analyze the noun in (39) as a noun of event . It is the adjective which supports the major predication in (39), the noun only modifies it, and is used to impose a restriction on the denotation of the subject. The subject is interpreted as a *qua-objet*, as defined by Fine (1982). More generally, we can say that when an adjective is modified by a noun of property, the sentence can be paraphrased by (40). This explain why (i) the noun has to be in a relation with a verb, and the adjective has to be related with an adverb.

(39)　　a. *Jean est bon danseur.*
　　　　　John is [a] good dancer
(40)　　a. DP, as N, is Adj.
　　　　b. DP, when he $V_{\text{derived from N}}$, $V_{\text{derived from N}}$ $Adv_{\text{derived from Adj}}$

Our proposal presents two empirical advantages over others: it can be extended to comparable constructions, including an adjective modified by a noun or a *participe*, which can't be used bare without the adjective, like in (41). In fact, besides nouns of profession which can be used as property modifiers, most of deverbal nouns can also appear in this position.

(41)　　a. *Jean est bon/ mauvais perdant*
　　　　　John-is-(good / bad)-looser
　　　　a'. * *Jean est perdant*　　　(with the meaning of a status)
　　　　　John-is-looser
　　　　b. *Jean est-il beau parleur, désespéré ou crétin ?*
　　　　　Is John [a] smooth talker, [a] desesperate man or [a] moron?

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[2] Let us note two exceptions: *Chairman* and *President* may be used bare in predicate position.

*b'. * Jean est parleur.*
   John-is-talker

Furthermore, we can add to the list of adjectives which can appear in these constructions, *grand*, which is in relation with the adverb *grandement*, or *gros*, which may be contextually recategorized as an adverb, as in (42c-d). *Grand* and *gros* are qualified by Szabo (2001) as evaluative adjectives: this means that they present a *as qua* position which may remains unsaturated (cf (43)).

(42)   *a. Jean est grand amateur d'art.*
          John-is-big-lover-of-art
       b. Jean est gros buveur de bière.
          John-is-big-drinker-of-beer
       c. Jean joue gros
          John-plays-GROS   'John plays a lot of money'
       d. Ça peut te coûter gros.
          ÇA-may-dative-cost-GROS   'It may cost you a lot'

(43)   *a. John is tall*   *John is tall as a person.*
       b. Everest is tall   *Everest is tall as a mountain*.

6. Conclusion

The main claim of this paper is that interpretative differences between bare nouns and indefinite nouns in predicate position in French derive from a difference between two types of judgments. We have proposed to analyze copular sentences built with bare nouns as predicational sentences, and copular sentences built with indefinite noun phrases as identity sentences. Consequently, bare nouns present some similarities with adjectives, which denote properties, whereas indefinite noun phrases are viewed as individual denoting phrases, just like proper names or definite noun phrases.

We have also shown how toaccount for modified bare nouns in this framework. Very frequently, when a bare noun co-occurs with an adjective in a copular sentence, the head of the postcopular phrase is not the bare noun, but the adjective. Nevertheless, in certain cases such as (44), both analyses may be possible : either the head of the postcopular phrase is the adjective (and the bare noun is an adjective modifier), or the head of the phrase is the bare noun (and the adjective modifies the noun). Thus, *simple soldat, petit commençant* and *danseur professional* are ambiguous and may be analyzed either as an adjective phrase or as a noun phrase.

(44)   *a. Jean est (simple soldat / petit commerçant).*
          John is [a] (regular soldier / little storekeeper)
       b. Paul est danseur professionel.
          John is [a] professional dancer

Finally, some issues concerning bare nouns in French have been leave aside. In particular, nothing was said about restrictions on the class of nouns which can appear without determiner in predicate position. However, we hope that the line of thought proposed here may provide some pointers for further studies of bare nominals and their special status at the syntax-semantics interface.

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