

The Existence of Pseudoclefts in Japanese*

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Abstract

This paper demonstrates that Japanese also has pseudocleft constructions that correspond to pseudoclefts in English. Despite the term *pseudocleft* being well known in the Japanese literature, the existence of the construction has been assumed without much justification. Thus, this paper demonstrates its existence based on two defining properties of pseudoclefts that are often adopted in the literature. In so doing, this paper also proposes a new structure of the grammatical subject of Japanese pseudoclefts. Interestingly, this paper concludes that the subject is a relative construction headed by a phonologically null noun. In addition, this paper may contribute to the study of constructions related to Japanese pseudoclefts such as conventional copular sentences, clefts, and some clausal elliptical constructions.

Key words

pseudocleft, relative clause, Japanese

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1. Introduction

This paper demonstrates that so-called pseudocleft constructions in Japanese are indeed pseudoclefts that correspond to English pseudoclefts as exemplified in (1).

- (1) (based on Akmajian's (1979) (1-2), 18)
- | | | |
|---|---------------------------------------|-----------------|
| a. [XP ₁ What Herman bought] | was [XP ₂ that tarantula]. | wh-cleft |
| b. [XP ₁ The thing which Herman bought] | was [XP ₂ that tarantula]. | th-cleft |

(1a-b) both consist of a grammatical subject (hereafter XP_1) and its predicate (hereafter XP_2) with a copula between them. (1a-b) differ from each other only in the form of XP_1 . Although I provide the definition of pseudoclefts and the difference between (1a-b) in Section 2, I note here that (1a-b) are respectively a *wh-cleft* and *th-cleft* because their XP_1 starts with 'wh'at and 'th'e.

An example of so-called pseudoclefts in Japanese is given in (2).^{1,2}

- (2)

[John-ga kat-ta no]-ga	kono ringo	de ar-u	(koto) ³
John-NOM buy-Pst no-NOM	this apple	de ar-NPst	fact

 'the fact that the one John bought is this apple.'

In (2), *no* is not glossed due to its controversial syntactic category although Section 3 argues that it is a complementizer. As for *de ar-*, although it is decomposed into *de* and *ar-*, the nature of each element is immaterial in this paper. Thus, this paper assumes *de ar-* to be a copula, given that the copula *da* in Japanese is the contracted form of *de ar-* (e.g., Nakayama 1988).

This paper makes contributions to the linguistic literature mainly in two respects. First, this paper demonstrates that sentences like (2) are pseudoclefts that correspond to English pseudoclefts. As a result, this paper provides a basis for applying the term *pseudocleft* to sentences like (2) consistently and unambiguously. This is important because so-called pseudoclefts in Japanese have been assumed as pseudoclefts by some authors without much justification, and the term has been used inconsistently. For example, Hiraiwa and Ishihara (2012) call sentences like (2) pseudoclefts, but they do not define the term *pseudocleft*. Thus, it is not clear in what sense their 'pseudoclefts' are pseudoclefts considering the properties of English pseudoclefts in (1a-b). Note that (2) does not look similar to (1a-b) morphosyntactically; it does not involve a *wh*-item or a determiner followed by a noun plus *wh*-item, the hallmarks of *wh*-clefts and *th*-clefts, respectively. In fact, Hoji (1990), who also discusses sentences like (2), does not call them pseudoclefts. Also, Ishihara (2012), who discusses a new type of 'pseudoclefts,' calls pseudoclefts what Hiraiwa and Ishihara (2012) call clefts even though he basically follows Hiraiwa and Ishihara (2012). In this way, the term *pseudocleft* is not used consistently in the Japanese literature. Moreover, Park (2014) clearly says, "it is a historical accident that sentences such as [(2)] are called pseudoclefts (2)." Importantly, Park (2014) mentions this to clarify that Japanese and Korean do not have a construction corresponding to English pseudoclefts, contrary to my claim. Therefore, it is worth demonstrating that Japanese indeed has pseudocleft constructions that correspond to English

¹ Hereafter, XP_1 and XP_2 of copular sentences are boxed so that it is easier to identify them.

² The glosses used in this paper are as follows: NOM = nominative case marker, ACC = accusative case marker, GEN = genitive case marker, TOP = topic marker, NPst = non-past tense marker, Pst = past tense marker, Prf = perfective marker, Adn = adnominal marker, C = complementizer, Cop = copula, Dem = demonstrative, Hon = honorific marker, Pl = plural marker, Stv. = stative marker.

³ *Koto* 'fact' is attached to the end of the sentence in order to prevent unnaturalness resulting from the absence of the topic in a root sentence. In the rest of this paper, I will omit *koto*.

pseudoclefts like (1a-b). In the rest of this paper, I consistently use the term *pseudocleft* to refer to constructions satisfying the definition of pseudoclefts proposed in Section 2. On the other hand, so-called pseudoclefts in Japanese are referred to as ‘conventional’ *pseudocleft* until it is demonstrated that they also satisfy the definition of pseudoclefts.

Secondly, this paper also potentially contributes to the study of other constructions. For example, given that pseudoclefts and conventional pseudoclefts in this paper are a particular type of copular sentences, this paper may contribute to the study of copular sentences in general. Also, this paper may contribute to the study of relative constructions. This is because this paper proposes that XP_1 in conventional pseudoclefts is a type of relative construction in Japanese. In addition, the findings of this paper may contribute to the study of Japanese clefts as well, given that Japanese conventional pseudoclefts and clefts look very similar on the surface (e.g., Hiraiwa and Ishihara 2012).⁴ Moreover, this paper may contribute to the study of clausal elliptical constructions known as *sluicing* and *stripping* in Japanese, because they are proposed to derive from a cleft/conventional pseudocleft (e.g., Fukaya and Hoji 1999).⁵

The organization of this paper is as follows. Section 2 first provides the definition of pseudoclefts and some other related terms. This section also clarifies why English pseudoclefts deserve being called such in light of the definition. Section 3 then demonstrates that Japanese conventional pseudoclefts are indeed pseudoclefts based on the definition proposed in Section 2. Finally, Section 4 concludes.

2. Definition of pseudoclefts.

This section proposes a definition of pseudoclefts. But given that pseudoclefts turn out to include a relative construction in XP_1 , this section starts with the definition of relative constructions.

This paper defines a relative construction as a construction consisting of a phrasal constituent, which may be empty, and a clause that modifies the constituent. I call the constituent *head* and the modifying clause *relative clause*. Two examples of English relative constructions are given in (3).

- (3) a. John buys the **thing** [that [Herman bought e]].
b. John buys the **thing** [which [Herman bought e]].

In (3), the word in bold is the head, and the underlined clause modifies the head as a relative clause. Given that the head is outside the relative clause, this type of relative constructions is called a *head-external relative*. The position within the relative clause that corresponds to the head is empty as indicated by [e]. I call *e* in relative constructions *gap*. Also, I call *that* and *which* in the relative clause *relative marker* (e.g., Romaine 1980).

The head of relative constructions does not always appear outside the relative clause. While it sometimes appears inside the relative clause (a.k.a *head-internal relative*), there is a case where overt head does not exist. The latter type of constructions is known as *free relative*, whose example is given in (4).

- (4) John buys [what [Herman bought e]].

⁴ Examples of Japanese clefts are provided later in this paper.

⁵ For examples of Japanese sluicing/stripping, I refer the reader to the literature such as the one cited in the text, due to the limit of space.

(4) corresponds to (3a-b). Just like (3a-b), the complement of *bought* is empty, and relative clause starting with a relative marker *what* exists. But there is no overt head between the matrix verb and relative clause. Thus, (4) is a free relative.

In light of the above discussion, this paper submits (5) as the definition of pseudoclefts, in the same lines with Collins (1991).

(5) Definition of Pseudoclefts

- a. Pseudoclefts are sentences with a grammatical subject (XP₁) and its predicate (XP₂), where XP₁ is a relative construction with a gap.
- b. For each pseudocleft, there is a non-cleft counterpart that consists of XP₂ and relative clause minus relative marker in the pseudocleft.

Given (5), (1a-b), repeated below as (6a-b), are considered pseudoclefts.

- (6) a. What [Herman bought e] was that tarantula. **wh-cleft**
 b. The thing which [Herman bought e] was that tarantula. **th-cleft**

(6a-b) are both copular sentences where *what Herman bought* or *the thing which Herman bought* refers to XP₁ and *that tarantula* refers to XP₂. The XP₁ in (6a) is a free relative, and that in (6b) is a head-external relative. Thus, (6a-b) satisfies (5a).

With regard to (5b), (6a-b) have their non-cleft counterparts as in (7).

- (7) [Herman bought [XP₂ that tarantula]].

The string-meaning pair of (7) consists of that of XP₂ and relative clause minus relative marker in (6a-b). In this way, (6a-b) satisfies (5b) as well. Therefore, it is reasonable to assume (6a-b) to be pseudoclefts. For the difference between (6a-b), this paper assumes that wh-clefts are pseudoclefts with a free relative in XP₁, and th-clefts are pseudoclefts with a head-external relative in XP₁.

It should be noted that it is reasonable to assume (5a-b) as the defining properties of pseudoclefts. The reason is that as for (5b), pseudoclefts like (6a-b) look as if they are derived by ‘cleaving’ their non-cleft counterparts in (7) into XP₁ and XP₂ in (6a-b). Thus, sentences satisfying (5b) deserve being called pseudo‘clefts.’ As for (5a), it is important because it provides the basis for (5b), and also captures the hallmark of pseudoclefts, i.e., the presence of a relative construction with a gap in XP₁. Therefore, the satisfaction of (5a) ensures that sentences with the property in (5b) are ‘pseudo’clefts, as opposed to clefts such as (8).

(8) Cleft

It is that tarantula that Herman bought.

3. Japanese conventional pseudoclefts

This section demonstrates that Japanese conventional pseudoclefts are indeed pseudoclefts in light of the definition of pseudoclefts in (5). This section divides into two subsections. Section 3.1 first shows that Japanese conventional pseudoclefts involve a relative construction in XP₁ and satisfy (5a). Section 3.2 then shows that Japanese conventional pseudoclefts satisfy (5b) as well, and argues that Japanese also has pseudoclefts.

3.1 XP₁ = relative construction with a gap

This section demonstrates that XP₁ in Japanese conventional pseudoclefts is a relative construction with a gap by proposing a new structure of the XP₁ shown in (9).

(9) Structure of XP₁ in Japanese conventional pseudoclefts

[NP [CP ... e ... *no*] N]

Essentially, this section argues that *no* in conventional pseudoclefts is a complementizer, and that the relative clause headed by *no* (CP in (9)) modifies the phonologically null head of the relative construction, which is represented as *N* in (9). In demonstrating that (9) is the correct structure of XP₁, two hypotheses need to be clarified; (a) *no* is a complementizer although various lexical and functional items are realized as *no* in Japanese, and (b) there is a null noun head projecting XP₁. The rest of this section supports these hypotheses in turn.

It has been proposed that various lexical and functional items are realized as *no* in Japanese such as genitive case, pronoun, and complementizer (e.g., Murasugi 1991).⁶ First, consider *no* as a genitive case marker in (10).

(10) (= Kizu's (1999) (2-3), 79-80)

- a. [NP Hanako]-**no** hon
 Hanako-GEN book
 'Hanako's book'
- b. [PP daigaku-kara]-**no** [CP pro syorui-o uketot-ta to]-**no** hookoku
 university-from-GEN document-ACC receive-Pst C-GEN report
 'a report from the university telling that (they) received the document'

The genitive marker *no* attaches to an NP, PP, or CP, and the expression with *no* modifies its following nominal expression.

Next, consider the pronoun *no* in (11).

- (11) a. (= Murasugi's (1991) (87a), 72) b. (= Murasugi's (1991) (87d), 72)
- | | | | |
|--------------------------|-----------|----------------------------|-----------|
| siro-i | no | hasit-tei-ru | no |
| white-NPst | one | run-Stv-NPst | one |
| 'the one which is white' | | 'the one which is running' | |

Roughly speaking, *no* as a pronoun corresponds to English indefinite pronoun *one*. But unlike the *one* in English, Japanese pronoun *no* requires a modifier, as it is modified by a relative clause in

⁶ Dr. Nakayama (p.c.) points out that Japanese also has *no* as a copula as exemplified in (ia).

(i) a. inu **no** Pochi b. inu de ar-u Pochi
 dog no Pochi dog de ar-NPst Pochi
 'Pochi that is a dog' 'Pochi that is a dog'

In (i), *inu* is predicated of the property of the referent of the term *Pochi*. Note that (ia-b) have the same meaning, whether *no* or *de ar-u* surfaces. Thus, *no* in (ia) is considered to be a variant of the copula *de ar-u*. However, the possibility that *no* in conventional pseudoclefts is the variant of copula is less likely than the possibility that the *no* is a genitive case, pronoun or complementizer. This is because *no* in conventional pseudoclefts cannot be replaced by *de ar-u* and that there seems no reasonable explanation of why copula appears in XP₁ of conventional pseudoclefts. Thus, I focus only on the possibilities of *no* being genitive case, pronoun or complementizer in this section.

(11).⁷ On the other hand, pronoun *no* and its associated modifier never modify a noun unlike the genitive *no*. Thus, the pronoun *no* is distributed differently from the genitive *no*.

Finally, consider the complementizer *no* in (12).

(12) (= Murasugi's (1991) (142b), 93)

[Yamada-ga at-ta no]-wa	Russell-ni	da
Yamada-NOM meet-Pst C-TOP	Russell-with	Cop
‘It was with Russell that Yamada met.’		

(12) is a cleft construction. Cleft constructions and conventional pseudoclefts are very similar in Japanese, and they superficially differ only in whether XP₂ has a case. However, it is widely assumed that *no* in Japanese clefts is a complementizer, unlike *no* in conventional pseudoclefts as in (13).

(13) (= Murasugi's (1991) (142a), 93)

[Yamada-ga at-ta no]-wa	Russell- \emptyset	da
Yamada-NOM meet-Pst no-TOP	Russell	Cop
‘The one Yamada met was Russell.’		

Having confirmed that *no* in Japanese serves as a genitive case, pronoun or complementizer, I argue that *no* in conventional pseudoclefts is a complementizer by eliminating the other two possibilities. First, one piece of evidence against the possibility of *no* being a genitive case is that *no* and its associated expression do not modify any nominal expression. For example, in (13), [Yamada-ga at-ta no] does not modify any nominal expression. One might argue that the nominal expression is elided. But this is not likely because the potentially elided expression cannot be overtly spelled out as in (14).

(14) * [Yamada-ga at-ta no] hito-wa	Russell- \emptyset	da
Yamada-NOM meet-Pst no person-TOP	Russell	Cop
‘The one Yamada met was Russell.’		

This is problematic if (13) involves ellipsis because ellipsis is an optional operation. Thus, it is implausible to assume that *no* in conventional pseudoclefts is a genitive case and XP₁ involves ellipsis (Kizu 1999).

Another piece of evidence against the possibility of *no* being a genitive case comes from data in Toyama dialect of Japanese. In this dialect, although genitive case is realized as *no*, as in Tokyo dialect, *no* as a pronoun or complementizer in Tokyo dialect is realized as *ga*. In light of this, consider the conventional pseudocleft in Toyama dialect in (15).

(15) (= Murasugi's (1991) (147a), 95)

[Yamada-ga at-ta ga]-wa	Russell	da
Yamada-NOM meet-Pst ga-TOP	Russell	Cop
‘The one Yamada met was Russell.’		

⁷ Murasugi (1991) treats *siro-i* in (11a) as a relative clause rather than an attributive AP, because it contains a tense.

Note that *ga* appears in (15). Thus, null hypothesis would be that *no* in conventional pseudoclefts in Tokyo dialect would also be either a pronoun or complementizer.

As for the possibility of *no* being a pronoun, it is eliminated by the availability of using honorific expressions. It has been proposed that the pronoun *no* cannot refer to an individual who is socially superior to the speaker (e.g., Harada 1976) (16).

(16) (= Murasugi's (1991) (149), 96)

Taroo-wa	[_{NP} [asoko-de	tabe-te- orare -ru]	hito /* no]-to	hanasi-o	si-ta
Taroo-TOP	there-at	eat-Stv-Hon-NPst	person/one-with	talk-ACC	do-Pst

‘Taro talked to the person/one who is eating there.’

In (16), an honorific marker *orare* is used. This indicates that the person who is eating there is a respected person for the speaker of (16). Accordingly, (16) is ill-formed when *no* is used instead of *hito* because *no* cannot refer to a respected human.

In light of (16), it is predicted that if *no* in conventional pseudoclefts is a pronoun, they cannot involve an honorific expression in XP₁. But this prediction is not borne out (17).

(17) (= Murasugi's (1991) (150), 96)

[_{NP} [asoko-de	tabe-te- orare -ru]	no]-wa	[Tanaka	sensee]	desu
there-at	eat-Stv-Hon-NPst	no-TOP	Tanaka	Prof.	Cop

‘The one who is eating there is Prof. Tanaka.’

Note that (17) is grammatical even though *no* is used with *orare*. This indicates that *no* in conventional pseudoclefts is not a pronoun, either. Therefore, it is most reasonable to assume that *no* in conventional pseudoclefts is a complementizer.

Having demonstrated that *no* in Japanese conventional pseudoclefts is a complementizer, a straightforward assumption is that XP₁ in conventional pseudoclefts is a CP. This is because Japanese is a strictly head-final language, and *no* appears at the right edge of XP₁. However, this paper demonstrates that the XP₁ is an NP headed by a phonologically null noun. One piece of evidence comes from the availability of *nominative-genitive conversion*. It has been reported that the subject of prenominal sentential modifiers can be not only nominative case-marked but also genitive case-marked (e.g., Harada 1976; Watanabe 1996). Consider first (18).⁸

(18) [_{NP} [kare- ga / no	deat-ta]	hito]-wa	[sono	gakusee-tati]	de at-ta
he-NOM/GEN	come across-Pst	person-TOP	Dem	student-Pl	de ar-Pst

‘The people he came across were those students.’

In (18), the sentence, *Kare-ga deat-ta*, is modifying the noun *hito*. Thus, *kare* can also be genitive case-marked. In light of (18), consider next (19).

(19) [_{NP} [_{CP} kare- ga / no	deat-ta	no] N]-wa	[sono	gakusee-tati]	de at-ta
he-NOM/GEN	come across-Pst	C -TOP	Dem	student-Pl	de ar-Pst

‘The ones he came across were those students.’

⁸ *At* of *at-ta* is an allomorph of *ar-*. The phonological shape of *at* is caused by the following affix in the process of a sound change known as *onbin*.

Notice that *kare* in the conventional pseudocleft in (19) can involve a genitive case as well as a nominative case. This indicates that in (19), there is a noun *N* that *kare-no deat-ta no* modifies.

Another piece of evidence for the presence of a null noun in conventional pseudoclefts comes from data in Classical Japanese. Interestingly, head-external relatives in Classical Japanese allow their head to be phonologically null. To begin with, consider (20) to confirm that Classical Japanese has head-external relative constructions, just like in Modern Japanese.

(20) (= based on Fujino's (2013) (2), 57)

[onoko-mo	e _i	su-na-ru]	nikki _i
men-too		do-I hear-Adn	diary

'diary that I hear that men also write' (Tosanikki, 10th century)

In (20), the bracketed phrase is the relative clause with a gap, and there is a head of the relative construction to the right of the relative clause. One thing that is crucially different between Classical and Modern Japanese is the conjugation form of the verb. Unlike in Modern Japanese, Classical Japanese morphologically distinguishes conclusive form from adnominal form; the conclusive form marks the end of sentences, and the adnominal form indicates that a clause with a verb of its form serves as a sentential modifier. Thus, the verb in the relative clause in (20) has the adnominal form *na-ru* instead of its conclusive counterpart *na-ri*, because the embedded clause modifies *nikki*.

With that in mind, consider next (21), where the relative head is phonologically null.⁹

(21) (= based on Fujino's (2013) (4), 58)

[e _i kaku	ar-u]	pro _{i-o}	mi-tutu
thus	be-Adn	-ACC	look-as

'looking at (the scenery)_i that e_i is thus there' (Tosanikki, 10th century)

In (21), the verb in the relative clause is of adnominal form, which indicates that there is a noun modified by the relative clause. But notice that there is no overt noun immediately after the relative clause. Thus, it is reasonable to assume that there is a phonologically null noun in (21). Therefore, it is not implausible to assume a null noun in conventional pseudoclefts in Modern Japanese as well. In this way, the discussion so far supports my analysis of the XP₁ structure of Japanese conventional pseudoclefts, which is repeated below as (22).

(22) Structure of XP₁ in Japanese conventional pseudoclefts

[NP [CP ... e ... *no*] N]

Importantly (22) looks like a relative construction such that the CP modifies the head *N* as a relative clause. Therefore, to the extent that (22) is the XP₁ structure of conventional pseudoclefts, conventional pseudoclefts satisfy one of the defining properties of pseudoclefts in (5a), which is repeated below as (23a).

(23) Definition of Pseudoclefts

- a. Pseudoclefts are sentences with a grammatical subject (XP₁) and its predicate (XP₂), where XP₁ is a relative construction with a gap.

⁹ Fujino (2013) just assumes that the empty category following the relative clause is a pro without any discussion.

- b. For each pseudocleft, there is a non-cleft counterpart that consists of XP₂ and relative clause minus relative marker in the pseudocleft.

3.2 Non-cleft counterparts for Japanese conventional pseudoclefts

This section demonstrates that Japanese conventional pseudoclefts satisfy (23b) as well. First, consider the conventional pseudocleft in (24) again.

- (24)

NP	[CP	John-ga	e	kat-ta]	no]	N]-ga	kono	ringo]	de ar-u
		John-NOM		buy-Pst	C	-NOM	this	apple	de ar-NPst

 ‘The one John bought is this apple.’

With (24) in mind, consider next (25).

- (25)

[John-ga	[XP ₂ kono	ringo-o]	kat-ta]
John-NOM	this	apple-ACC	buy-Pst

 ‘John bought this apple.’

The string-meaning pair of (25) consists of that of XP₂ and relative clause minus relative marker in (24). In this way, Japanese conventional pseudoclefts also have their non-cleft counterparts.¹⁰ Therefore, given that Japanese conventional pseudoclefts satisfy (23a-b), it is reasonable to claim that they are indeed pseudoclefts that correspond to English pseudoclefts.

Now that Japanese has pseudocleft constructions, their schematic structure is given in (26).

(26) Schematic structure of Japanese pseudoclefts

- | | | |
|------------------------------|-----------------|--------|
| NP [CP ... e ... no] N]-case | XP ₂ | de ar- |
|------------------------------|-----------------|--------|

As shown in (26), Japanese pseudoclefts consist of three major components; XP₁, XP₂, and *de ar-*. XP₁ is a relative construction, where *no* serves as a complementizer/relative marker, and there is a phonologically null noun head projecting XP₁.

4. Conclusion

This paper demonstrated the presence of pseudoclefts in Japanese that correspond to English pseudoclefts. This conclusion was reached by providing a clear definition of pseudoclefts, which is based on what has been discussed about pseudoclefts in the literature. The definition consists of two parts; whether XP₁ of potential pseudoclefts is a relative construction with a gap, and whether potential pseudoclefts have their non-cleft counterparts. In light of these two defining properties, this paper first demonstrated that XP₁ of Japanese pseudoclefts is a relative construction with a gap and thus Japanese pseudoclefts satisfy one of the defining properties. I argued that *no*, which can be realized as a genitive case, pronoun or complementizer in Japanese, is a complementizer in

¹⁰ In fact, (24) does not perfectly look as if it is derived by ‘cleaving’ (25) into XP₁ and XP₂ of (24), in the sense that *kono ringo* in (24) does not have a case while that in (25) has an accusative case. But this is not particular to Japanese conventional pseudocleft. Consider an English pseudocleft and its non-cleft counterpart in (i).

- (i) a.

The one who [e bought this tarantula]	is	me].
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 b. [[I] bought this tarantula].

While the XP₂ in (ia) is *me*, its counterpart in (ib) is *I*. Thus, there is a case mismatch between pseudoclefts and their non-cleft counterparts in English, too.

Japanese pseudoclefts. Given this conclusion, it is counterintuitive that XP₁ in Japanese pseudoclefts is an NP because there is no overt noun head in XP₁. However, I showed a couple of pieces of evidence for a phonologically null noun in XP₁ of Japanese pseudoclefts. After that, this paper argued that Japanese pseudoclefts satisfy the other defining property of pseudoclefts as well. That is, they have their non-cleft counterparts. Therefore, the satisfaction of two defining properties of pseudoclefts indicates that Japanese pseudoclefts are indeed pseudoclefts that correspond to English pseudoclefts.

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