Proforms in French depictives and copula constructions and the 'favor clitic' principle

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In French copula constructions, the clitic proform *le* is used for 'adjectival coreference' (reference to a state explicitly mentioned by an adjective in the preceding context) (Sandfeld 1965, Kayne 1975, Sportiche 1995).

(1) Jean est intelligent$_i$. Oui, il l$_i$' est.
     Jean is   intelligent yes   he CL *is*
     'Jean is intelligent. Yes, he is.'

In contrast, French depictive constructions only allow non-clitic proforms (*ainsi* 'like that') while *le* is ungrammatical (Sandfeld 1965, Kayne 1975). In depictive constructions, the non-clitic proform *ainsi* is used for 'adjectival coreference' (unlike in copula constructions). We therefore argue that the absence of non-clitic proforms in the 'adjectival coreference' function in copulas is not rooted in the non-clitic proforms themselves. Instead, non-clitic proforms are blocked from the 'adjectival coreference' function in copulas by the combination of (i) the existence of a clitic proform (namely *le*) and (ii) the 'favor clitic' principle (Jones 1996).

References: • Jones, M. A. (1996): *Foundations of French syntax*. CUP. • Kayne, R. S. (1975): *French syntax: The transformational cycle*. Current studies in Linguistics. • Sandfeld, K. (1965): *Syntaxe du français contemporain: Les pronoms.* Paris : Librairie Honore Champion. • Sportiche, D. (1995): French predicate clitics and clause structure. *Syntax and semantics* 28, 287–324.