



- (5) a. Byl to inženýr.  
was.M.SG TO engineer.M.SG  
'It[=what this man was] was an engineer.
- b. \*Bylo to chytré/ důležité.  
was.N.SG TO smart/ important.N.SG  
(intended: 'He was smart/ important.')
- (6) a. Je to vítěz závodu.  
is.3SG TO winner.M.SG of-race  
'It[=what this male/ female person is] is  
the winner of the race.'
- b. Byl to vítěz závodu.  
was.M.SG TO winner.M.SG of-race  
'It[=what this male/ #female person is]  
was the winner of the race.'

**It is a topic what binds** Our proposal directly builds on the analysis of classificatory copular clauses (e.g., *This tree is a linden tree*) in Czech and German by Kučerová and Onea (2026). They systematically display agreement with the NP predicate and even allow inter-sentential anaphoric pronouns to seemingly refer to this predicate (NP<sub>2</sub>). K&O argue that the agreement is an illusion: these clauses include a complex covert pronoun (IT), the real subject of the copular clause. IT is bound by NP<sub>1</sub> (a topic merged in the MiddleField), and its  $\phi$ -features agree (via concord) with NP<sub>2</sub>. The agreement is always with IT, never directly with NP<sub>2</sub>. The analysis is further motivated by a pseudo-cleft-like interpretation of these clauses ( $\approx$  *what this tree is, is a linden tree*). We extend this analysis to TO. We argue that TO is a topic and, as such, it always associates with a bindee: the covert pronominal IT. This is because topics are inherent binders (Onea 2025), and spurious binding yields ungrammaticality (e.g., Heim & Kratzer 1998). Since IT is bound by the topic situation, it is interpreted as a referential construal of the topic situation. This explains the domain-dependent interpretations in (1)–(3) and the lack of individuation. Copular clauses are always interpreted as pseudoclefts: e.g., *to was an engineer* means appx. *what this person was, was an engineer*. This directly follows from the extension of K&O's analysis: IT itself is predicated over by NP<sub>2</sub> (engineer), forming a small clause. TO binds IT from the MiddleField, (7). Since IT has already been predicated over, the predicational relation needs to be reflected in the interpretation of the bound topic situation (akin to secondary predication), yielding a pseudo-cleft-like interpretation: *What the individual in the topic situation is, is an engineer*, more precisely, *The individual in the topic situation is an engineer*. When IT is not predicated over, TO binds it directly, without a pseudocleft interpretation, (1)–(4).

(7) [<sub>TopP</sub> TO<sub>i</sub> [<sub>PredP</sub> IT<sub>i</sub> [ Pred engineer ]]]

In general, predicational pseudoclefts are only compatible with adjectival predicates taking inanimate subjects because the pseudocleft subject construal effectively corresponds to an inanimate object (role/job. . . ; e.g., Higgins 1973/1979, Schlenker 2003). For example, *What this man is, is smart* can only obtain a specificational interpretation. The restriction on Czech TO copular clauses is stronger: no adjectival predicates are allowed. We argue that this is because the topic situation is restricted by features of IT. If the antecedent is animate, the semantic person feature gets transmitted (in the sense of Kratzer 2009 or similar) onto IT through binding by TO. However, we know that while there is some flexibility in construing a situation as an inanimate object, this is rather restricted for animates, and especially humans. This underlies the restriction on animacy in (4): when the topic situation contains only a human, the result is not felicitous because humans, formally represented as a person/participant feature on IT, do not lend themselves to topic-situation construals. The TO copular clauses are different in that IT carries two sets of features: semantic features transmitted from the topic TO by binding, and valued syntactic features obtained by concord from NP<sub>2</sub>: [<sub>IT</sub> D<sub>i</sub> [<sub>NP</sub>  $\phi$ ]]. The values of the semantic and syntactic features do not need to match in principle; however, when something probes for IT's gender feature and the syntactic and semantic features differ in value, the Agree operation fails, (6). The problem does not arise for inanimates because they only have syntactic features for gender; there is no clash. This contrast also helps us understand the restriction on adjectives: since adjectives do not come with valued  $\phi$ -features, IT bound by a person feature from the topic situation will behave as an animate object even when predicated upon, making it impossible to form a predicational pseudocleft for any adjectival predicate, (5b). When IT contains a dual set of features, the topic construal contains more than a person feature, which in turn expands the topic situation and makes the interpretation felicitous, (5a).