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Specification Under Discussion

A characteristic property of specificational copular clauses is that the post-copular phrase is invariably focus. This restriction has figured in syntactic analyses of this clause type in various ways, but the source of the restriction itself remains mysterious. Judith Aissen (public comment, May 2004) suggested that the Question Under Discussion framework (Roberts 1996, Boring 2003) might shed light on this restriction. This paper examines the fixed focus structure of specificational clauses within the QUD framework and concludes that whereas the QUD framework lets us rearticulate the focus restriction on specificational clauses in an interesting way, it does not --- and in fact cannot --- explain this restriction.