A sheyne vertl: What Yiddish can tell us about adjectival modification

Zoë Belk
UCL
The plan

- The syntax and semantics of attribution
- Concord in the DP
- The source(s) of attribution
  - A slight tangent
- Conclusions
But first…

• …Some terms:
  – Attributive adjective
  – Predicative adjective
  – Reduced relative clause (RRC)
  – Cinquean RRC
  – (Direct modification adjective)
The Syntax and Semantics of Attribution
The syntax and semantics of attribution

• Consistently different compared to predicative adjectives

• All attributives seem to behave the same

• Proposal: JOIN attaches to all and only attributive adjectives and is source of unique behaviour
RCs vs RRCs

• What is a reduced relative clause?
  – Like a relative clause but smaller…

• Ross (1972) refers to a “well-known and uncontroversial rule” to derive reduced relatives from full relatives – Whiz deletion
  – However, Hudson (1973) and (Stanton 2010) show that full and reduced relatives are different in some ways
RCs vs. RRCs vs. As

a. a **proud** (*of his son) man
b. a man who is **proud** *(of his son)*
c. a man **proud** *(of his son)*

a. elke [**voor gehandicapten ongeschikt**(-e)] villa
b. elke villa **die voor gehandicapten ongeschikt**(-e) is
c. ?elke villa [**ongeschikt**(-e) voor gehandicapten]

a. the **utter**/*afraid* fiend
b. the fiend **who is** *utter/afraid*
c. the fiend **more** *utter/afraid than any other*

a. de **op zo’n soort parcours waarschijnlijk** *(het) snelst-e* marathonloper
b. de marathonloper **die op zo’n soort parcours waarschijnlijk** *(het) snelst is*
c. ? de marathonloper **waarschijnlijk *(het) snelst op zo’n soort parcours**
## RCs vs. RRCs vs. As

- (R)RCs ≠ As:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(R)RCs</th>
<th>As</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Allow a wider range of predicates (including APs, PPs and participles)</td>
<td>Only allow AP and participial forms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May or must take complements</td>
<td>Disallow complements in English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disallow non-predicative adjectives (intersective or nonintersective)</td>
<td>Allow non-predicative adjectives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No ordering preferences</td>
<td>Some As exhibit ordering preferences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Require particular determiners or quantifiers in English (RRCs only)</td>
<td>Not restricted in terms of the determiners they may appear with</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do not have to satisfy the head-final filter in Dutch</td>
<td>Must satisfy the head-final filter in Dutch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do not take a declensional schwa in Dutch</td>
<td>Must take a declensional schwa in the appropriate contexts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Require or preferably appear with <em>het</em>-superlatives</td>
<td>Disallow <em>het</em>-superlatives</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Adjective ordering and scope

• Some attributive adjectives are subject to (violable) ordering preferences:
  – e.g. the big black bag; a beautiful old house

• Other adjectives are not
  – However, non-ordered adjectives seem always to take scope
Scope-taking adjectives

1. ‘Sortal’ interpretation:
   – Found when violating ordering preferences,
     e.g. I like the black big bag (not the blue one)

2. Inherently scope-taking, ‘modal’ adjectives:
   e.g. the <former> famous <former> actress; the <fake> metal <fake> gun

3. Particpial (?) adjectives
   – e.g. <frozen> chopped <frozen> chicken
     (Svenonius 1994)
Scope-taking relatives?

• Not so much
  1. ‘Sortal’ interpretation:
     – Relatives don’t display ordering preferences
     – Any sortal interpretation that might be found tends to be a) left-to-right (so not true scope) and b) easily cancellable
  2. Inherently scope-taking, ‘modal’ adjectives:
     – Modal adjectives tend to be disallowed in relatives
     – Those that are allowed do not exhibit scope when stacked
Scope-taking relatives?

3. Participial (?) adjectives

Introducing…

– “Our (new/finest/whatever) chicken frozen in the Arctic tundra, chopped by Japanese masterchefs”
– An order of events, but not the same as scope
– Compare: our (new/finest/whatever) chicken frozen in the Arctic tundra and chopped by Japanese masterchefs

• Overall, there appear to be no scope effects. The interpretation of (R)RCs suggests coordination, as does the intonation
Attribution

• Truswell 2004: Attributive modification isn’t (always) intersective
  – While non-modal adjectives + noun describe a subset of entities denoted by noun, modal adjectives + N describe a subset of a superset: e.g. apparent problem
  – Scope matters for at least some adjectives
    • chopped frozen chicken vs. frozen chopped chicken

• θ-identification (Higginbotham 1985) involves conjunction and is essentially symmetrical – it won’t be able to derive scope between adjectives
JOIN

- We need an operation that combines things asymmetrically (that reflects the syntax?)

- Truswell 2004: JOIN (see also Chierchia and Turner 1988 and Baker 2003)
  - Changes semantic type for an attributive adjective
  - Ensures semantic scope matches syntactic scope

- JOIN is the source of attributive modification; it is found on all and only attributive modifiers (whether we see it or not) (Belk 2017)
Interim summary

• Attribution seems to be inherently scope taking
  – For AOR-abiding adjectives, this effect is masked

• Predication seems to be symmetrical

• The source of this difference is JOIN
Concord in the DP
Concord

- A lot of variation: case, gender, number, attributive-ness
  - All, e.g. Latin
    H-i can-is nigr-is tr-ia magn-i sunt
    large-2.M.NOM.PL are-PL
  - Adjectives more than others, e.g. French
    C-es trois chien(ne)s noir(e)s sont grand(e)s
    These-PL three dogs-(F).PL black-(F).PL are big-(F).PL
  - Adjectives less than others? E.g. English
    These three black dogs are big
  - Attributive only, e.g. German
    Dies-e drei schwarz-en Hunde sind groß
    These-NOM.PL three black-WK.PL dogs are big-∅
Concord vs. agreement

• Ackema and Neeleman (2019), Norris (2014): concord (as opposed to agreement) = “the spell-out of features of an XP on terminals in an XP”
  – It is not feature matching

• They use spell-out rules to demonstrate that agreement in DP is best analysed as concord (and that concord can occur outside DP)
A closer look at Dutch

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Indef.</th>
<th></th>
<th>Def</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sing.</td>
<td>Pl.</td>
<td>Sing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Neut.</strong></td>
<td>een groot paard</td>
<td>grot-e paarden</td>
<td>het grot-e paard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>a big horse</td>
<td>big-E horses</td>
<td>the big-E horse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Common gender</strong></td>
<td>een grot-e koe</td>
<td>grot-e koeien</td>
<td>de grot-e koe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>a big-E cow</td>
<td>big-E cows</td>
<td>the big-E cow</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

De drie zwart-e honden zijn groot.
the three black-E dogs are big

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A closer look at German

- German strong adjectival inflection is analysed as an overt realization of Join (schwa) plus the following featural spell-outs:

  a. [DAT GND-FEM] ↔ /r/  
  b. [GEN GND-FEM] ↔ /r/  
  c. [ACC GND] ↔ /n/  
  d. [DAT GND] ↔ /m/  
  e. [GND-FEM] ↔ /i/  
  f. [DAT PL] ↔ /n/  
  g. [GEN PL] ↔ /r/  
  h. [GND] ↔ /r/  
  i. [DAT] ↔ /m/  
  j. [GEN] ↔ /s/  
  k. [PL] ↔ /i/  
  l. ∅ ↔ /s/

- Determiner inflection involves just the spell-out rules above, plus a vowel
- For weak inflection, fewer spell-out rules
Yiddish 101

• Germanic language, ~1000 yr history  
  – Influences from Slavic, Semitic, Romance

• Pre-War: lingua franca of European Jews, est. 10,000,000 speakers

• Now: est. 750,000-1.5 mill. speakers, almost all ultra-Orthodox  
  – Lingua franca in Hasidic (and to some extent Haredi) world

• **Massive** language change over last 2-3 generations (Belk, Kahn & Szendroi, to appear)
A closer look at Klal (Standard) Yiddish

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case</th>
<th>Nom.</th>
<th>Acc.</th>
<th>Dat.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Masc.</td>
<td>der gut-er</td>
<td>dem gut-n</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fem.</td>
<td>di gut-e</td>
<td>der gut-er</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neut. Indef.</td>
<td>(a) gut-∅</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neut. Def.</td>
<td>dos gut-e</td>
<td>dem gut-n</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plural</td>
<td></td>
<td>di gut-e</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- No weak inflection
- System a mix of Dutch and German, plus some impoverishment?

- No marking on predicative adjectives; “exceptionally frequent” use of nominalizations (Lockwood 1995)

  Di dray shvarts-e hint zenen groys
  • The-PL three black-PL dogs are big
  Di hint zenen groyse
  • the-PL dogs are big-PL
  Der hunt iz a groys-*(er)
  • the-M.NOM dog is a big-M.NOM

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A closer look at Contemporary Hasidic Yiddish

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nom.</th>
<th>Acc.</th>
<th>Dat.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Masc.</td>
<td></td>
<td>de gut-e</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fem.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neut. Indef.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neut. Def.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plural</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- No case or gender (Belk, Kahn and Szendroi, to appear)
- Writing: determiner form varies, adjective always -e
- Attributive adjectives always –e, predicative adjectives always -∅
- -e only appears consistently on adjectives, not Det, Dem…
  De dray shvarts-e hint zenen groys
  The three black-∅ dogs are big-∅
JOIN can condition inflectional morphology

• Hasidic Yiddish adjectival morphology does not look like concord
  – “Presence of attributive adjective” is not a feature of DP
  – No other features of DP (case, gender, number) condition its appearance

• Instead: straightforward reflex of JOIN
  – Indicates attributive relationship to the noun
Interim summary

• Patterns of concord and inflection vary widely

• Some are plausibly analysed as reflexes of JOIN

• Hasidic Yiddish is a particularly clear-cut example; no concord
The Source(s) of Attribution
Question

• How closely are attribution and predication related?

• Can we derive one from the other?
How many sources of attributive adjectives?

- There are three basic options:
  - Attributive and predicative adjectives all have the same source (e.g. Smith 1964)
  - Some attributives share a source with (some?) predicatives (e.g. Larson 2000, Cinque 2010)
  - Attributives and predicatives have separate sources (e.g. Bolinger 1967, Belk 2017)
- My proposal: attributives are not derived from predicatives (or vice versa) – they have a single source distinct from predication
What are some possible sources?

• In general, attributive adjectives are argued to be derived from (full or reduced) relative clauses
  – E.g. Smith 1964, Larson 2000, Cinque 2010

• Belk 2017:
  – Attributives and predicatives are syntactically distinct (i.e. not derived from each other via movement and/or deletion)
  – They also relate to the noun in different ways: predicates use θ-identification (Higginbotham 1985), attributes use an operator, JOIN (Truswell 2004)
Some predictions

- If attributives are always or sometimes derived from predicatives, we would expect attributives to behave the same as predicatives in important ways, at least some of the time.

- If attributives have a single distinct source, we would expect them to behave consistently differently to predicatives.

- This means that if attributives and predicatives consistently behave differently, Smith, Larson and Cinque have to explain why.
Attribution is Attribution is Attribution
Deriving attributives from predicatives

- Cinque 2010: attributive adjectives have two sources, direct modification and reduced relative clauses (RRCs)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Direct modification</th>
<th>RRCs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ordering requirements or preferences</td>
<td>free ordering with respect to each other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>individual-level</td>
<td>stage-level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nonintersective</td>
<td>intersective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>absolute reading</td>
<td>relative (to a comparison class) reading</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(among other properties)</td>
<td>(among other properties)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Two sources of attributives?

Germanic order: Prenominal As base-generated.

Romance order: Derived through roll-up movement of the noun through the direct modification adjectives and the reduced relative clauses.

Cinque 2010

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Adjectives as reduced relative clauses

• This approach has a few problems.
• If we can’t tell when a given adjective is DM or RRC, we can’t make good predictions about their behaviour:
  – The bus is big. The bus is red.
    the big red bus *the red big bus
• It also relies on there being similarities between (some) attributives and reduced relative clauses.
  – But we’ve seen that this isn’t obviously true
Relatives in Hasidic Yiddish

- Full relatives: roughly like English. Never have –e.
  e.g. De hint vos zenen shvarts zenen (okhet) groys.
      the dogs that are black-∅ are (also) big-∅.

- Reduced relatives: roughly like English. Require complement. Never have –e.
  e.g. A man ful mit nakhes iz a sheyne zakh
       a man full-∅ with pride (in offspring) is a beautiful-∅ thing

- Predicative adjectives always disallow –e.
Hasidic attributive ayin as a test for predication

• If attributive adjectives can be derived from RRCs, we might predict that these (predicative) adjectives would not allow attributive ayin.

But…

• All attributive adjectives in Hasidic Yiddish require attributive ayin

• Pattern supports earlier observations that attributive adjectives behave as a homogeneous class
Interim summary

• The behavior of full and reduced relatives in Yiddish is like that of other Germanic languages

• Inflectional patterns in Hasidic Yiddish support the idea that attributives form a homogeneous class and are not derived from relative clauses
A slight tangent
Two sources of adjectives?

\[ \text{stage-level} > \text{individual-level} > N > \text{stage-level} \]

(Larson 1998 pp.155–6)

- Every \text{VISIBLE} visible star
- *Every visible \text{VISIBLE} star
- Every visible star \text{VISIBLE} (Cinque 2010, p.19)

\[ \text{individual-level} > N > \text{individual-level} > \text{stage-level} \]

- una posizione invidiabile (oggi anco più \text{INVIDIABILE}
  \text{a position enviable (today even more) enviable}
- *una posizione (oggi ancor più) \text{INVIDIABILE} invidiabile
- un invidiabile posizione (oggi ancor più) \text{INVIDIABILE} (Cinque 2010 p.21)
How can we tell when we’re (not) dealing with an RRC?

• What’s going on with *visible stars visible*?

• …I don’t think the second *visible* is an RRC.
  – No complement (normally required in RRCs)
  – Restricted to certain adjectives and fixed expressions
  – Only possible with certain determiners
    • *Every/a/the/three/the three star(s) visible*
    • *Every/a/the/three/the three man/men proud of his/their son(s)*
  – *(R)RCs are actually ambiguous!*
    • We looked at *every star (that was) <generally> visible <that night>*

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No answers from Yiddish

- Yiddish, like Dutch, German, does not have an equivalent construction

- We can’t use the attributive ayin (or the declensional schwa) to tell whether they are attributive or predicative
  - (This itself suggests they are not straightforward RRCs)

- My best guess: attributive, akin to Romance pre-nominal adjectives

- At any rate, **big problem** for RRCs-as-APs analyses
Conclusions
Conclusions

• Attributive adjectives demonstrate syntactic, semantic and morphological behavior that is distinct from predicative adjectives and (R)RCs

• This behaviour is homogeneous across the class of adnominal adjectives

• Proposal: JOIN is the source of this behavior

• JOIN has an overt reflex in the adjectival inflection of Hasidic Yiddish
Conclusions

• Overall, there is no evidence that any attributives are derived from relatives and lots of evidence that they are their own homogeneous class of modifier

• Any attempt to derive attributives would have to explain these differences

• …This is especially true of analyses where attributives are argued to have multiple sources
Acknowledgments

Thank you!

Audience at LAGB 2017

Lily Kahn, Kriszta Szendrői, Eli Benedict, Shiffy Hiley

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References

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