Attributives are not relatives:
A single source analysis for attributive adjectives

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The plan

• An introduction to adjectives
• Attributives as relatives
• The syntactic behaviour of attributives and relatives
• The semantic behaviour of attributives and relatives
• Conclusions

• Slides available at ucl.ac.uk/~zcjtf11/Research
Adjectives 101

- Adjectives can be characterized as either attributive or predicative.
  - Look at that **big red** dog!
  - That dog is **big** and **red**!
  - Clifford is a dog that is **big** and **red**.
- Some languages lack one category (e.g. Yoruba seems to lack predicative adjectives (Ajíbóyè 2001), Slave seems to lack attributive adjectives (Baker 2003))
- The obvious question is how closely attributives and predicatives are related
  - Can we derive one category 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)

• This talk: 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.

• Put differently, if attributives and predicatives consistently behave differently, Smith, Larson and Cinque have to explain why.
Attributives as Relatives
Deriving attributives from predicatives

- Cinque 2010: Adnominal 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 (among other properties)</td>
<td>relative (to a comparison class) reading (among other properties)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Two sources of adjectives?

stage-level > individual-level > N > stage-level
  (Larson 1998 pp.155–6)
  • Every VISIBLE visible star
  • *Every visible VISIBLE star
  • Every visible star VISIBLE (Cinque 2010, p.19)

individual-level > N > individual-level > stage-level
  • una posizione invidiabile (oggi anco più INVIDIABILE
    a position enivable (today even more) enivable
  • *una posizione (oggi ancor più) INVIDIABILE invidiabile
  • un invidiabile posizione (oggi ancor più) INVIDIABILE
    (Cinque 2010 p.21)
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
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.
  – Do these similarities really exist?
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
• RRCs seem to require a complement in English (Belk 2017) – postnominal adjectives without complements do not behave like other RRCs
How can we tell when we’re (not) dealing with an RRC?

• If a postnominal adjective has no complement, it is not an RRC – it’s something else

• But what about the *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>
Uh-oh

• This is a big problem for accounts arguing that some attributives are actually reduced relatives!

• The examples of reduced relatives they rely on are not actually reduced relatives. They’re something else – and likely something attributive.

• So are there similarities between some attributives and (real) reduced relatives? Can we save this approach?
The Syntactic Behaviour of Attributives and Relatives
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 waarschijnlijkst *(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

- \((R)\text{RCs} \neq \text{As}\):

<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>
The Semantic Behaviour of Attributives and Relatives
Adjective ordering and scope

• Some 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. Participial (?) adjectives
   – e.g. <frozen> chopped <frozen> chicken
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 scope only over N
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
Conclusions
Conclusions

• Bare postnominal adjectives are not reduced relative clauses, so can’t be used to determine the properties of RRCs

• Attributives consistently behave homogeneously, both syntactically and semantically

• …And their behaviour is distinct from that of true relatives
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
References

References


• Stanton, T. (2010) *Are Reduced Relatives Reduced Relatives?* BA diss., UCL.