

ADJECTIVES AND PROPER NOUNS IN ROMANCE AND ENGLISH

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0. Abstract

My contribution examines some problems raised by adjectival restrictive modification of proper nouns. I begin with a contrast between the way in which this modification is achieved in English and in Romance, particularly in Romanian: while English uses the same structure for proper and common nouns, in Romance, in the case of the definite article, other structures are preferred (and in Romanian obligatory), which have the form PN+Art+Adj (structures which I call “identificatory appositions”). After briefly examining the types of conversion of PNs to CNs and the behaviour of determiners with PNs, I discuss some possible solutions to the contrast between Romance and English, and conclude that Romance uses the identificatory apposition for a special type of restrictive modification of PNs, one in which a selection among familiar entities is involved. In Romanian instead of preference we find obligatoriness for morphological reasons. Then I sketch an analysis of the structure of identificatory apposition, associating it to a special semantic rule from which we can derive most of its properties. In the end I present some further applications of the structure I have proposed.

1. The problems

In the standard use, proper nouns directly refer to individuals, coming from the lexicon with the semantic type <e>, so they don't admit restrictive modification. However, sometimes a selection has to be made among entities sharing the same name, in which case a restrictive modification is needed. When the restrictive modifier is an adjective, in English it suffices to insert a definite article (or another determiner) before Adj+N. However, Romance languages, in these cases, prefer another strategy, illustrated in (3)-(4). In Romanian, this is more than a preference: a construction of the type (1)b is completely excluded.

(1) a. the tall boy b. the tall John

(2) a. (rom.) băiatul înalt (it.) il ragazzo biondo/alto (fr.) le garçon grand/blond
 boy.the tall the boy blond/tall the boy tall/blond

- | | |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| b. (rom.) *Ionul blond / înalt
Ion.the blond / tall
*cel Ion blond/înalt
the Ion blond /tall | (it.) ?(?) il Gianni biondo / alto
the G. blond tall
(fr.) ?(?) Le Jean blond / grand
the J. blond/tall |
| (3) a. (rom.) Ion blondul
I. blond.the | b. Ion cel blond/înalt
I. the blond/tall |
| (4) a. (it.) Gianni il biondo / alto
G. the blond / tall | b. (fr.) Jean le blond/grand
J. the blond / tall |

The problems I want to address are:

- (i) Where does this difference come from, and
- (ii) How are the structures in (3) to be analyzed?

2. Preliminary observations

Before addressing these problems, some observations are in place about the general issue of restrictive modification of proper nouns, and the behavior of determiners with proper nouns.

2.1. Proper nouns and restrictive modification

In their standard use PNs (proper nouns), functioning as rigid designators, lacking descriptive content, take neither determiners (ex. 5)¹ nor restrictive modifiers (ex. 6):

- (5) a. *(The/a) boy came in b. (*The/a) John came in
- (6) a. * John whom I met in Bilbao is ugly
b. John, whom I met in Bilbao, is ugly
c. (fr.) Le journaliste se promenait dans Sarajevo dévasté
 "The journalist walked through Sarajevo devastated"
d. I don't like John mad

Examples (6)b-d show various modifiers of proper nouns which have in common the property of not being restrictive: an appositive relative clause in (6)b, adjuncts presumably having the structure of small clauses with a PRO subject coindexed with the N in (6)c and d. Notice that the adjective in (6)c is not used to contrast a devastated Sarajevo with other parts of that town or other towns called like that which are not devastated, but simply says that at the time of the main clause event, that city was devastated.

¹ More precisely, they don't take meaningful determiners. They allow at most an expletive determiner, which is a definite or a specialized, "proprietary" article. Some languages make extensive use of such an article (definite in colloquial German and Portuguese, propriety in Catalan). In other languages the definite article is taken by subclasses or individual PNs marked as such in the lexicon. These PNs are never "prototypical" (the most prototypical PNs being antroponyms), and always take the article. Ex. eng. London vs. The Hague (individual items), fr. Paris, Londres etc., vs. la France, le Mexique (a class contrast).

- (11) a. I bought a Van Gogh and several Picassos
 b. (fr.) J'ai écouté du Bach
 "I heard some Bach"²

2.2. Modified proper nouns and determiners

We have seen that in their different uses as CNs (common nouns), PNs generally receive determiners like ordinary CNs, the difference pointed out in (1)-(4) concerning only the definite determiner and the denominative use of PNs.

However, examples (12)-(13) show another difference between Romance and English: while in Romance even non-restrictive prenominal adjectives, when used with a standard PN, require the definite article, in English non-restrictive prenominal adjectives don't require any determiner, thus opposing to the restrictive ones:

- (12) a. I saw tall Mary Appositive, depictive
 b. I saw the tall Mary Restrictive, denominative
- (13) a. (fr.) *J'ai vu belle Marie b. J'ai vu la belle Marie
 I have seen beautiful M. I have seen the beautiful M.

An explanation for this contrast may be found in Longobardi (1994). This case, as well as other differences between Germanic and Romance, is covered, according to him, by the following parameter: D is strong in Romance and weak in Germanic. It is commonly assumed that D is the locus of referentiality in the noun phrase. The referential element in (12)a and (13) is, obviously, the N. In (12)a D can check referentiality by covert movement, while in Romance, as seen in (13), this movement has to be overt. When no prenominal adjective is present, no determiner is necessary because the PN moves to D:

- (14) J'ai vu (*la) Marie.
 I have seen (the) M.

Of course, this explanation, which uses the theoretical apparatus of the early 90's, can be translated in current minimalist terms by putting an EPP-feature on D in Romance.

Longobardi offers the following arguments for his view:

(i) The absence of the determiner is possible in Romance with modified PNs provided that the PN occupies the first position:

- (15) a. (it.) *antica Roma b. l'antica Roma c. Roma antica
 ancient Rome the ancient Rome Rome ancient

² In (11)b the partitive article, impossible with PNs in the standard use, signals the type shifting (compare to (i)). A similar contrast appears in Romanian—in the metonymical use the N may appear as a mass noun ((ii)a), while in the standard use a PN has to receive, in this context (direct object), a prepositional accusative marker ((ii)b-c):

- (i) (fr.) J'ai écouté Jean
 "I listened to John"
- (ii) a. (rom.) Am ascultat Bach b. *Am ascultat Vasile c. L-am ascultat pe Vasile
 have.I listened Bach have.I listened V. him-have.I listened Ac. V.

A possible answer, inspired from the analysis to be presented in 3.1, is that (ordinary) adjectival modification requires an $\langle e, t \rangle$ type, intersective adjectives combining with the nouns (NPs) by the rule of Predicate Modification (Heim and Kratzer 1998, see (22) below), while only $\langle e \rangle$ type nouns raise to D. This would explain why PNs converted to CNs require a determiner, but not why even non-restrictive adjectives with standard PNs do so, as we have seen in (13). The answer lies perhaps in the position of the non-restrictive adjectives with regard to the N: in Romance, they are generally preposed. We could suppose that their position relative to the N must be preserved in order to maintain their special meaning (non-restrictive). So the N must not overpass them. Then the only solution remains the insertion of an expletive article. Formally, this could be represented by assigning prenominal adjectives to special functional projections which the noun should not be able to overpass. It has been in fact proposed (Bernstein 1993, Coene 1999) to treat these adjectives as heads, a proposition which we will not adopt, since such adjectives don't show the usual properties of functional heads (for instance, they are an open class, which is typical for lexical items), and the structures we talk about are obviously nominal extended projections, not adjectival ones.

3. Solutions to the problem in (1)

3.1. A syntactico-semantic solution (Cornilescu 2004a,b)

Turning back now to the problems presented in section 1, I will present the account for the facts illustrated in (2)-(3) (reproduced below for convenience) given by Cornilescu (2004) for Romanian:

- | | | | |
|-----|-------------------------|-------------------------|----------------------|
| (2) | a. (rom.) băiatul înalt | b. *Ionul blond / înalt | Ion.the blond / tall |
| | boy.the tall | *cel Ion blond/înalt | the Ion blond /tall |
| (3) | a. (rom.) Ion blondul | b. Ion cel blond/înalt | |
| | I. blond.the | I. the blond/tall | |

Cornilescu starts by distinguishing two types of adnominal adjectives: NP-adjectives and DP-adjectives. NP-adjectives combine with an $\langle e, t \rangle$ type (which is the denotation of NPs) as follows: intersective adjectives (type $\langle e, t \rangle$) combine by the rule of Predicate Modification (Heim and Kratzer 1998) (or Theta-Identification; Higginbotham 1985):

$$(22) [[\alpha \beta]] = \lambda x [[\alpha]](x) \text{ and } [[\beta]](x)$$

Non-intersective (intensional and relational) adjectives, which are of the type $\langle e, t \rangle$ (predicates of predicates of individuals) combine by the normal Functional Application rule.

Since all NP-adjectives require an $\langle e, t \rangle$ type to combine with, they can't modify PNs. Adjectives in (2) are NP-adjectives, hence the ungrammaticality of (2)b.

DP-adjectives combine with an $\langle e \rangle$ type, in a predicative construction (small clause). PNs are of type $\langle e \rangle$, so they allow DP-adjectives. The structures in (3) reflect DP-level adjectives, in a predicative structure:

(3^b)_b [_{DP} DP [_{D'} +def [_{CP} τ_{DP} [_{C'} [_{PredP} τ_{DP} [_{Pred'} *cel* [AP]]]]]]]]

Cornilescu bases her analysis of (3)_b on the following arguments: first, relational adjectives, which typically apply to the intension of the N-function and not to the entity denoted by the DP, are impossible in the structure (3)_b:

(23) a. societatea (cea) bogată b. societatea (*cea) astronomică
 society.the (the) rich society.the the astronomical

Secondly, the structure (3)_b requires a definite determiner:

(24) a. muntele cel înalt b. * un/fiecare/alt munte cel înalt
 mountain.the the high a/each/another mountain the high

This second constraint is explained by analyzing *cel* as a predicative head with a deictic feature (hence its interpretation, see section 4, (39)-(40)), requiring a definite subject.

As for structure (3)_a, which is not available for CNs, she assumes that the adjective checks definiteness and the PN moves to SpecDP_{max}, as ordinary PNs do (see Longobardi 1994, presented in 2.2. above).

This analysis has several problems. First, why is the structure Det+Adj+NP possible?

(25) frumoasa Maria
 beautiful.the Maria

To see if we can answer this, we have to give a closer look to prenominal adjectives. As other Romance languages, Romanian has three kinds of prenominal adjectives (putting aside determiner-like adjectives like *prim* “first”, *ambii* “both”, which we won’t discuss here, since they don’t involve restrictive modification):

(i) most adjectives appearing in this position are non-restrictive (when they are restrictive, they appear after the noun); they usually express inherent, familiar properties, and often have an affective, emotional connotation (ex. (25));³

³ Various tests indicate that ordinary quality adjectives are non-restrictive in Romance when anteposed:

— impossibility of contrastive focus:

(i) (it.) * Il BIONDO ragazzo è venuto, non il bruno
 the blond boy is come not the dark-haired
 (rom.) *BLONDUL băiat a venit, nu cel brunet
 blond.the boy has come not the dark-haired

— impossibility of generic use:

(ii) (rom.)a. * Îmi plac înaltele case b. Îmi plac casele înalte
 me.D like high.the houses me.D like houses.the high

— impossibility to appear in quantificational DPs:

(iii) (rom.) Fiecare (*frumoasă) zi (frumoasă) mă bucură
 each beautiful day beautiful me delights “Each beautiful day delights me”

— impossibility to be used as an answer to a which- question:

(iv) (it.) — Quale ragazza è venuta? # — La bionda ragazza — La ragazza bionda
 which girl is come the blond girl the girl blond

See Zamparelli (1993), a.o.

(ii) a small number of ordinary quality adjectives may be restrictive (function as selectors):

(26) a. *tânărul Petre*
young.the Petre

(iii) some are non-intersective modalizers (or intensional adjectives) (type “former, alleged, possible, mere, true”), which are always restrictive and appear only in this position:

(27) a. *pretinsul Grigore*
alleged.the Grigore

For type (i) we may say, given the meaning, that they are DP-level adjectives, in the left-periphery of DP, either topical or focal.

In (ii) we may have to deal with an appositive structure, since *tânărul* “the young” may also function as a noun (these are adjectives that allow (lexical) nominalization):

(28) *Tânărul a intrat în cameră*
young.the has entered in room

But what about (iii)? The adjective is surely NP-level (being of the type $\langle e, t \rangle \langle e, t \rangle$). We could say that the PN is converted to a CN. But why can't this conversion apply in the case of postnominal adjectives, as we have seen in (2)-(3)?

Here we should observe that this conversion is available in Romanian, as for other Romance languages, for most types of determiners and meanings of the converted N, as shown throughout 2.1. The only problematic case, presented in (2)-(3), involves a different type of restrictive modification, one in which an acquaintance with the members of the class PN is supposed, which is not the case in (27), for example, where the N is purely “denominative”. So I would propose the following generalization

(29) Romanian applies conversion $PN \rightarrow CN$ when PN must denote a class except for the case of unique selection from familiar individuals; in this latter case, a special structure (which I will call “identificatory apposition” - see ex. (3)) is used

For a usual conversion of the denominative type, see also:

(30) *Sunt un Ion si trei Marii la cursul nostru*
are a Ion and three Maries at course.the our

A further problem for Cornilescu's analysis is that PNs which are specified in the lexicon as requiring a definite article do admit the structure $D+PN+Adj$:

(31) *Parisul vechi*
Paris.the old

Also the analysis of examples (3) as instances of raising reduced relatives faces a series of problems, which I will present in section 4, when I discuss the analysis of these structures, proposing an alternative view.

3.2. A morphological solution

Since the impossibility of having a determiner concerns only the definite article, and does not arise when this article comes from the lexicon, as shown in (31), we could simply assume that the reason for the impossibility of (2)b is the fact that some PNs don't allow an enclitic definite article. This is plausible because the Romanian enclitic definite article has affixal status —forming a true definite declension:

- (32) a. lupul (m.sg.N-A.) b. câinele (m.sg. N-A.)
 wolf.the dog.the

In (32) we see how the forms of the article for the same gender, number and case may vary according to the declensional type of the N, which is an indisputable sign of the inflectional status of the article.

So the ability of having or not having definite forms is a morphological matter.

However, in other cases where an enclitic article is possible, Romanian uses a proclitical form, which is clitic but not affixal (see (33)). Then why isn't this form used in the case under discussion (34)?

- (33) a. *doiii copii c. *maii mari copii
 two.the children more.the big children
 b. cei doi copii d. cei mai mari copii
 the two children the more big children "the biggest (eldest) children"
- (34) a. *Ionul blond b. *cel Ion blond
 Ion.the blond the Ion blond

3.3. Conclusion: a compromise

(33)-(34) show that a purely morphological explanation is difficult to maintain. So I will adopt (29), which also covers other Romance languages (see ex. (4)), with the amendment that the preference in (29) is stricter for Romanian due to the affixal status of the ordinary definite article in this language.

In conclusion, when speaking of restrictive modification of PNs and type-shifting from PN to CN, we have to distinguish two types of selection from a class denoted by the N:

- (35) (i) PN = {(the.PN)₁, (the.PN)₂, ...} (selection among familiar individuals)
 (ii) PN = {x: entity called "PN"} (denominative), or
 = {x: (spatial/temporal) part of PN}, or
 = {x: image of PN}, or
 = {x: entity resembling to PN} (metaphorical), or
 = {x: entity produced by PN} (metonymical) etc.

The representation in (35)(i) gives us a clue for the analysis of the structures in (3), to which we may proceed now.

4. The structure used by Romanian to avoid (1): the "identificatory" apposition (IA)

The structures illustrated in (3) are an instance of a wider type, which can be encountered in many languages, including Germanic:

from a SC, and then the adjective inflected for definiteness checks definiteness on D while the PN, being referential, moves to SpecDP:

- (42) $[_{DP} \text{PN} [_{D} \text{Adj-Art}] [_{CP} \tau_{PN} [_{C+\text{rel}}] [_{\text{PredP}} \tau_{PN} \text{Pred}^0 \tau_{\text{Adj-Art}}]]]]$
 $[_{DP} \text{Ion} [_{D} \text{blond-ul}] [_{CP} \tau_{\text{Ion}} [_{C+\text{rel}}] [_{\text{PredP}} \tau_{\text{Ion}} \text{Pred}^0 \tau_{\text{blond-ul}}]]]]$

But if the article is necessary to check some feature on D in this case, despite the raising of the PN, why isn't it necessary with unmodified PNs (where, let us recall, it is forbidden)?

- (43) a. Mihai Viteazul b. Mihai(*ul)
 Mihai brave.the Mihai the

Secondly, according to her analysis of (3)b (see (3')b above), *cel* would have to be split into two words: a Pred^0 when preceded by a N, a D^0 elsewhere (that is in cases of N-ellipsis, cardinals, superlatives, see (33)).

Thirdly, structure (3)a is in fact possible only with adjectives that can be nominalized (ex. (44)-(45)):

- (44) a. Maria blonda b. M-am întâlnit cu blonda
 Maria blond.the me-have.1 met with blond.the(fem) "I met the blonde"
- (45) a. *Maria roșia c. *M-am întâlnit cu roșia
 Maria red.the me-have.1 met with red.the(fem)
 b. Maria cea roșie
 Maria the red

This follows from our analysis, in which the definite adjective is part of a second DP. In Romanian only nominalized adjectives can take the enclitic definite article. In the elliptical constructions ($[_{N}e]$ +Adj) only the proclitic definite article *cel* may be used. So the second DP of the IA may either appear as *cel*+Adj, if the adjective is not nominalized (case (3)b), or as Adj+Art, with nominalized adjectives (case (3)a). In Cornilescu's analysis, where the adjective is the predicate of a SC, the restriction of the structure (3)a to nominalized adjectives remains a mystery.

The existence of two structures for this sort of PN modification, (3)a and (3)b, is thus better explained by our analysis than by Cornilescu's. Moreover, our analysis unifies structure (3)a to another structure, not discussed by Cornilescu, PN CN-Art:

- (46) a. Maria profesoara
 Maria teacher.the

We see that in the structure PN X-Art, X must always be nominal, a N or a nominalizable adjective, which directly follows from our analysis of X-Art as a separate DP.

5. Problems for our analysis

Our analysis doesn't explain why in Romanian CNs too are allowed in the structure (3)b, while this is impossible in other Romance languages, and also in Romanian for the structure (3)a:

- (46) (rom.) a. fata cea blondă c. (fr.) *la fille la blonde
 girl.the the blond the girl the blond
 b. *fata blonda d. (it.) *la ragazza la bionda
 girl.the blond the girl the blond

An economy principle could easily rule out (46)b-d. The difficulty remains the structure (46)a. Cornilescu explains this structure by the selectional properties of the predicative head *cel*: it takes as a subject any definite DP (hence also CNs). In (3)a only PNs are allowed because only they can raise to SpecDP_{max}, above the determiner -L.

An answer in the lines of our analysis (37)-(38) would be that Romanian has further developed the marking of selection among familiar entities, as opposed to ordinary restrictive modification.

The agrammaticality of (46)b can further be related to the impossibility of having CNs in the second member of IAs after a CN (see (47)). If the adjective in (46)b is nominalized, as we proposed, the two cases can be covered by the same rule.

- (47) a. Maria profesoara b. *Femeia profesoara
 Maria teacher.the woman.the teacher.the

As to where this rule comes from, I propose that the answer is that in an IA-structure involving CNs the N must be interpreted as the same in the two DPs:

- (48) a. the x {x=the {y:N(y)} and x= the {y: N(y) and A(y)}}
 b. * the x {x=the {y:N(y)} and x=the {y: M(y) and A(y)}}, with M≠N

This is a natural restriction, which simply says that *a thing cannot be identified as two sorts of things*. It doesn't operate on PNs because there only one sort of things is involved (only one of the DPs contains a predicate).

The structure (3)b, as all structures of type *cel*+Adj, relies on an ellipsis:

- (49) [_{DP} cel [_{NP} [e] AP]

In IA, [e] in the second DP is identified with the N in the first DP.

Thus the structure (3)b, with N-ellipsis in the second member, is the only way for an IA involving CNs to satisfy the condition stated in (48).

A further structure apparently involving IA is the structure Def+CN+PN:

- (51) a. (rom.) profesorul Popescu b. (fr.) le professeur Ducange
 professor.the Popescu the professor Ducange

In this structure the determiner has to be definite, which seems to indicate an IA:

- (52) a. (rom) *un profesor Popescu b. (fr.) *un professeur Ducange
 a professor Popescu a professor Ducange

But, unlike in the IA cases treated above, DP₁ is not familiar. Moreover, D may be absent in English, which recalls the behavior of modified PNs:

- (53) professor Smith

Stowell (1991) and Giusti (2002) have proposed that the CN is an (adjectival) modifier in such cases. But that doesn't explain why it appears only with PNs. I leave this problem for further study.

The strong limitations on IA (for instance, only PNs and personal pronouns in Romance languages other than Romanian) could be seen as a general problem for my analysis. The answer I can give is that wherever ordinary restrictive modification is available (by Predicate Modification or Functional Application), it is preferred.

6. Further applications of the structure proposed for IA

The same IA could be represented in the structure *personal pronoun+definite DP*, which appears in languages where the personal pronoun can't be a transitive D (a-b below vs. c-d):

- | | |
|-------------------------------|------------------------|
| (54) a. (rom.) noi lingviștii | c. we linguists |
| we linguists.the | d. (it.) noi linguisti |
| b. (fr.) nous les linguists | we linguists |
| we the linguists | |

The structure of IA apposition could explain the arousal of structures with multiple determiners, which are found in many languages:

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| (55) (old rom.) locul cela strimtul | (got.) jains wigs sa raihta |
| place.the that-one narrow.the | that way the right |
| (alb.) burri i madh ⁴ | (norv.) skogen den grønne |
| man.the Agr.msgN big | forest.the the green |
| (gr.) o anthropos o kalos | |
| the man the good | |

The structure in (37)-(38) explains why in multiple determiners constructions the determiner is always definite. No other theory of multiple determiners, as far as I know, does this (usually, two D-layers are posited, but why should those layers always be definite?).

A further interesting related problem is the arousal of Germanic adjectival weak declension, which appears when the adjective is preceded by definite determiners. In the first attested stages of Germanic languages, the adjective took weak declension only when combined with the definite article (*sa, so, þata* everywhere except ON, which has *inn*), and the definite article was only anaphorical. Historical grammarians trace back the weak declension to nominalizing suffix. The Germanic weak declension is formed by adding the suffix *-n-* to the adjectival stem, and a similar *-n-* suffix (in the form *-o:n-*) is used, in Latin and Greek, to build nouns meaning "entity (usually person) having the property P".

⁴ In Albanian the so-called "adjectival article" has lost all its determiner properties, functioning as a mere agreement marker (it appears, with most adjectives, in all positions —predicative, in indefinite or quantified DPs, when the adjective is nominalized, etc.). However, as the example shows, it reproduces the forms of the definite article, so the two probably have the same source.

