

Restrictive modifiers in parenthetical positions*

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1. Introduction

The notion of ‘restrictive’ modification – the use of a modifier to clarify the reference of the constituent it modifies – is typically linked to integrated syntactic positions (Partee 1975, Pinón 2005, Leffel 2014).¹ This association is traditionally justified by an interpretive distinction between integrated and appositive relative clauses (IRCs/ARCs) in English and other languages (Partee 1975, Heim and Kratzer 1998):

(1) *Ana and Ben are looking at two lawyers. One has white hair, the other black.*

- a. Ana: The lawyer who has the white hair is my friend.
- b. Ana: #The lawyer, who has the white hair, is my friend.

The IRC in (1a) can be used to distinguish between the two lawyers in the context, while the ARC in (1b) cannot. A widely accepted explanation of this contrast is as follows: the syntactically integrated position of the IRC in (1a) allows it to compose intersectively with the noun, shrinking the noun’s extension and thus the possible referents to whom speakers can use the DP to refer. In contrast, the ARC in (1b) modifies the entire DP – a constituent that is required to have a unique extension. Since the ARC cannot restrict the application of the noun phrase, speakers cannot use it to clarify their referential intentions. This contrast has given these relative clauses their widely used names: ‘restrictive’ and ‘non-restrictive’.

Of course, linguists have noted that one cannot draw a one-to-one correspondence between a modifier’s integrated position and a restrictive use; however, these linguists have

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¹The notion of ‘restrictivity’ has not always been precisely defined. This paper follows Leffel (2014) and others in taking ‘restrictivity’ to characterize the use of a modifier to identify or clarify reference (Loos 2004, Leffel 2014). Regardless of terminology, it remains the case that many linguists tie a modifier’s use in clarifying reference with a syntactically integrated position.

only drawn attention to syntactically integrated modifiers that are used *non-restrictively*, e.g., “the stupid American president” (Schlenker 2005, Morzycki 2008, Leffel 2014).

This paper is concerned with the converse case: a class of prepositional and adverbial modifiers that are syntactically separate from their ‘anchor’ (the modified DP), but used restrictively. These *identificational appositives* are bolded in (2) below:

(2) a. Marie **here** is coming over.
b. Joan’s mother, **with the white hair**, is amazing.
c. I just got a text from the accountant, **from the party yesterday**.

Most of this paper will be spent showing that these modifiers have (i) a similar discourse function to the IRC in (1a) – clarifying the reference of their anchor – but (ii) a similar grammatical status to the ARC in (1b) – lying outside the scope of any determiner in their anchor. This dual status raises the question: how can non-integrated modifiers be used restrictively?

Answering this question requires an analysis of these modifiers that can explain the grammatical and discourse rules they are subject to. I advance such an analysis here. Specifically, I assimilate the modifiers to Onea and Ott (2022)’s analysis of nominal appositives (NAPs), treating them as fragment answers to implicit questions licensed by their containing utterance. New to my analysis will be evidence that the modifiers in (2) have the structure of elliptical copular clauses, and that the implicit questions these expressions answer are Questions of Identification (QoIs) – for (2a), “Who is Marie?” – which embed an equative semantics.

Second, answering the question requires a precise characterization of restrictivity that can explain how the linguistic properties of these modifiers (in addition to the IRC in (1a)) enable them to be used to clarify reference. At minimum, since restrictivity is not tied to any particular syntactic position, it should be not be considered a grammatical phenomenon at all, but a fundamentally *pragmatic* one. This paper will conclude with some constraints that such a characterization would have to meet, a more thorough investigation will be left to future work.

2. The modifiers are restrictive

We can tell that the modifiers in (2) are restrictive – i.e., used to clarify reference – since they can be necessary for speakers to successfully refer at all. Consider the following:

(3) *Ana and Ben are at a party with Marie, among other people. Ana knows Marie, and also knows that Ben doesn’t know Marie and has never heard of her. Marie is currently standing across the room from them. Ana says to Ben:*

- #Marie was recently hired at my company.
- Marie **over there** was recently hired at my company.

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In this context, Ana cannot refer to Marie using her name without tacking on one of these modifiers. Since Ben doesn't know that Marie is the name of the person across the room, her name on its own cannot successfully be used to refer to Marie. This 'rescuing' behavior shows that these modifiers can be used to clarify reference.

Indeed, these modifiers can be used to 'rescue' an infelicitous act of reference for all referring expressions, not just names, albeit in a more limited set of contexts:

(4) *Ana and Ben just got home from the party where they spoke to Ana's father (who has striking blue hair) among other people around Ana's father's age. This was the first time Ben met Ana's father, and the fact that he was Ana's father was never mentioned, so Ben didn't learn it. After the party, Ana says to Ben:*

- #Did you like my dad?
- Did you like my dad, **with the blue hair?**

Intuitively, Ana cannot expect Ben to answer whether he liked her dad because she knows he will not be able to determine which person at the party was her dad. The modifier "with the blue hair" can be used to clarify exactly who she intends to refer to.

In addition, the modifiers become entirely redundant when the anchor is enough to successfully refer. Consider a context similar to (3) except where Ana, Ben, and Marie have been friends since childhood, and thus know each other's names.

(5) *Same context as (3), but Ana, Ben, and Marie have been friends since childhood.*

- Marie was recently hired at my company.
- #Marie **over there** was recently hired at my company.

In this context, the modifier is infelicitous since it implies that Ben did not know Marie's name prior to this act of reference. This implication shows that the modifier's core purpose is to clarify who the speaker is talking about.

This redundancy patterns similarly for the description in (4):

(6) *Same context as (4), but Ben knows that Ana's father was her father – e.g., it came up often during the conversation with all three of them.*

- Ana: Did you like my dad?
- Ana: #Did you like my dad, **with the blue hair?**

Again, since Ana knows the description contains enough information for Ben to successfully identify who she is talking about, the modifier is redundant.

3. The modifiers are appositives

The modifiers in (2) share a few key properties with prototypical appositives (ARCs and NAPs): they modify referring expressions like names and unique descriptions and can be parenthetically separated from the anchor. However, their restrictive use may lead one to

wonder whether they are syntactically integrated in some way, or at the very least lie in the scope of the determiner in the anchor. Below, I present three arguments that these modifiers are appositives that lie outside the scope of the anchor's determiner.

The first concerns interpretive differences between the modifiers in (2) and their integrated counterparts. Unlike the modifiers in (2), integrated modifiers can give rise to an *anti-uniqueness* implication about the denotation of the constituent they modify:

(7) a. In 2012, I met the president of South Sudan **with the huge hat**.
b. In 2012, I met the president of South Sudan, **with the huge hat**.
c. [Pointing at a man.] In 2012, I met the president of South Sudan **here**.

The sentence in (7a) implies that there has been more than one president of South Sudan; a speaker can use this sentence if they know the addressee is aware of multiple presidents. This implication suggests that the modifier is playing a role in meeting a uniqueness requirement imposed by the definite determiner – a speaker would not use the modifier if *president of South Sudan* was already unique (c.f. *Minimize Restrictors!*, Schlenker 2005). In contrast, the sentences in (7b) and (7c) do not give rise to implications about the number of South Sudanese presidents; a speaker can use these sentences even if there has only been a single president.² The differences between these implications suggest that the modifiers in (7b) and (7c) sit outside of the domain in which uniqueness is calculated – i.e. outside of the scope of the definite determiner.

The second argument concerns NP ellipsis and *one*-anaphora. Unlike integrated nominal modifiers, the modifiers in (2) are invisible to these grammatical processes:

(8) a. Sam got the first toy **with the yellow sticker**, and Bill got the second (one).
b. Sam got the first toy, **with the yellow sticker**, and Bill got the second (one).

There is a reading of (8a), a sentence with an integrated nominal modifier, where the speaker is asserting that Bill got the second toy *with a particular kind of yellow sticker*: there may have been many toys, but there were at least two with a certain yellow sticker, and Bill got the second of those two. In contrast, (8b), a sentence with a parenthetical version of the same modifier, does not allow this reading: it entails that Bill got the second toy overall. In other words, in (8a), the relevant anaphor involved in NP ellipsis and *one*-anaphora is allowed to target some constituent containing the regular nominal modifier, but in (8b), these same anaphors are disallowed from targeting any constituent containing the parenthetical modifier.

This contrast shows that grammatical processes that target integrated nominal modifiers do not target these modifiers, providing additional evidence that they are grammatically distinct. Moreover, NP-ellipsis and *one*-anaphora have been shown to target the material in the restriction of the determiner – e.g., NP or NumP (Llombart-Huesca 2002). The fact that the modifiers in (2) are invisible to these processes provides more evidence that they lie outside of the scope of the anchor's determiner.

²In fact, there has only been a single president of South Sudan.

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The last argument I will make concerns a pragmatic distinction between appositives and presuppositional material that was noted in Potts (2005). Appositives, unlike presuppositional material, are subject to an *anti-backgrounding* requirement: they must not be trivial in a context.

(9) Lance Armstrong survived cancer... (Potts 2005)

- ...And most riders know that Lance Armstrong is a cancer survivor.
- #...And when people interview Lance, a cancer survivor, he often talks about it.

Although the information in the initial clause can be repeated in presuppositional material (the complement of *know*) (9a), it sounds redundant when repeated in apposition (9b).

Modifiers in the scope of a definite determiner are presuppositional: the expression “the dog with the blue eyes” presupposes that there is a dog with blue eyes (Strawson 1950, Elbourne 2013). These modifiers can therefore be used even when they are trivial:

(10) Ana. You see the dog with the blue eyes? Do you like him?
Ben: Yes, I like the dog with the blue eyes.

Of course, a pronoun might be a better choice of referring expression for Ben to use in this context; still, due to its presuppositional character, Ben can felicitously use the same description to refer to the same dog without sounding particularly redundant.

If the modifiers in (2) lie in the scope of the definite determiner in their anchor, they should similarly be allowed to be redundant. However, unlike the integrated modifier in (10), they cannot be repeated ad nauseum throughout a conversation:

(11) Ana: You see the dog, with the blue eyes? Do you like him?
Ben: #Yes, I like the dog, with the blue eyes.

In contrast to (10), Ben’s response in (11) sounds redundant enough to make the entire expression infelicitous. The anti-backgrounding requirement on appositives explains this distinction – Ana’s statement already identified the dog with the blue-eyed animal, so the material in the appositive is redundant. Since appositives cannot be redundant, Ben’s statement is infelicitous.

The three arguments above show that the modifiers in (2) fall into the grammatical class of appositives and lie outside the scope of the anchor’s determiner.

An appositive analysis, however, does not explain why the adverbial modifiers “here” and “(over) there” are pronounced in the same intonational phrase as their anchor. Their prosody is quite different from the prosody of prototypical appositives, which are pronounced in a separate intonational phrase with ‘comma intonation’ (Potts 2005). This prosodic integration may lead one to argue that they should be analyzed as syntactically integrated nominal modifiers.

However, note that “here” is only prosodically integrated in this use when it is deaccented. Unlike regular restrictive modifiers, the nuclear accent of the intonational phrase

appears on the noun (12a), and cannot appear on the modifier (12b). Below, I use small caps to indicate syllables with nuclear accents, and ‘squished’ text to indicate deaccentuation:

(12) a. MaRIE here went to a concert yesterday.
 b. ??Marie HERE went to a concert yesterday.

Under an appositive analysis, one can explain both the modifier’s prosodic integration and its obligatory deaccenting via the interaction of two constraints that govern prosody and information structure in English. First off, indexicals like “here” in English are often deaccented (Wagner 2006):

(13) a. I used to work at LOWES.
 b. [*The speaker stands in front of Lowes, and points at it.*] I used to WORK here.

Standard accentuation rules in English place the nuclear accent on the rightmost constituent in a sentence (13a). However, when that rightmost constituent is “here”, the accent shifts left (13b). One may attribute this shift to a regular prosodic rule requiring ‘given’ constituents – roughly, constituents that refer to objects in the context – to be deaccented (Schwarzschild 1999). Since indexicals are generally given, they are subject to this rule.

Second, constraints on prosody require each intonational phrase to contain a nuclear accent, its ‘head’ (Selkirk 2005, Féry and Samek-Lodovici 2006). These constraints therefore prohibit deaccented expressions from being the sole constituent of an intonational phrase.

These constraints explain appositive “here”’s non-standard prosodic properties: when “here” is given, it is deaccented, and when it is deaccented, it must be incorporated in the intonational phrase of its anchor, since it cannot be realized on its own. The appositive analysis thus gives a natural explanation for the properties of “here” that make it look *least* like an appositive.

Indeed, prosodic incorporation only occurs when the hearer is attending to the location denoted by “here”. If the speaker has to direct the addressee to look at the referent, the modifier has the prosody of a prototypical appositive:

(14) *Ben is looking at someone else besides Marie.*
 Ana: Marie, [*pointing to Marie*] HERE, went to a concert yesterday.

I assume that Ben’s lack of perceptual attention on the location of the referent in (14) justifies marking the modifier as informationally new, in turn preventing deaccentuation.

The discussion above shows that certain appositives may be prosodically incorporated into their anchor for phonological and information structural reasons. One should not take lack of comma-intonation to necessarily indicate lack of appositive status.

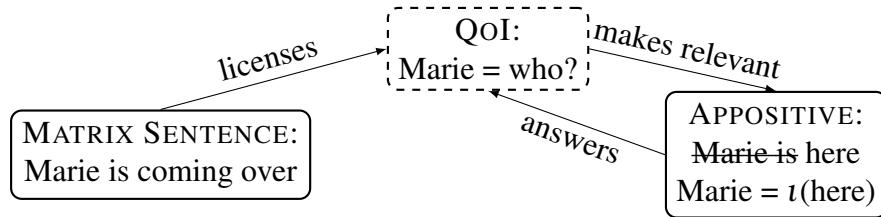
4. The modifiers are fragment answers to *Questions of Identification*

The last two sections have shown that the modifiers in (2) are restrictive appositives. This dual status is at odds with linguistic descriptions and analyses that tie restrictivity to posi-

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tions within the core DP (Pinón 2005, Leffel 2014). To understand how appositives can be restrictive, this section will present a finer grained analysis of these expressions following Onea and Ott (2022)'s analysis of nominal appositives (NAPs). Their analysis takes NAPs to be elliptical answers to implicit questions licensed by their containing utterance, which in turn represent the NAPs' relevance in the discourse (Onea and Ott 2022). This section will motivate extending their analysis to these modifiers, arguing that they (i) have the structure of elliptical copular clauses and (ii) answer an implicit *Question of Identification* (QoI) – an equative question concerning the identity of the referent of the anchor. I call appositives that answer such questions *identificational appositives*.

(15) [(2a) repeated] Marie **Marie is here** is coming over.



Evidence for an analysis as elliptical copular clauses comes from a comparison with integrated relative clauses (IRCs), which cannot be used as identificational appositives:

(16) a. *Marie that has the big hat is a good friend of mine.
 b. *You see the dog, that has the blue eyes?

Analyzing these modifiers as having a copular structure explains this ungrammaticality, as IRCs (17), unlike, e.g., indexical adverbs 18, are ungrammatical after copulas:

(17) a. *Marie ~~is~~ that has the big hat.
 b. *The dog ~~is~~ that has the blue eyes.

(18) Marie is here.

Of course, possessive “with” PPs are ungrammatical after copulas (19a). This ungrammaticality is crucially different from that of IRCs, however, as it can be explained via morphological blocking: many linguists have argued “have” is the spell out of the copula and possessive “with” (19b) (Harley 2002, Levinson 2011):

(19) a. *The dog is with the blue eyes.
 b. The dog has (→ *is with*) the blue eyes.

Crucially, this spell out rule does not apply in the case of these appositives since the copula is elided, so the preposition is not blocked from surfacing in its normal form.

Identificational appositives can also take the form of full copular clause parentheticals:

(20) a. Marie – [tapping on Marie] Marie is here – is coming over.
 b. Marie – [pointing to Marie] Marie has the blue hair – is really nice.³

The fact that overt copular clauses can be used in the same position and with the same discourse use provides evidence that the modifiers in (2) have the same underlying structure.

So far, I've only argued that the modifiers have an elliptical copular structure. Below, I present two pieces of evidence that ellipsis is licensed in these modifiers because they are fragment answers. The first piece of evidence is that these expressions are felicitous answers to overt QoIs:

(21) *Ada and Ben are looking at pictures of their classmates.*
 Ada: Marie is coming over later.
 Ben: Who is Marie?
 Ada: [Pointing.] Oh, **here / with the white hair**.

In this context, Ada's first utterance licenses a QoI since Ben cannot identify Marie. Ada can then use one of these modifiers to respond to that overt QoI.

Indeed, the analysis proposed here treats the modifiers as grammatically identical to the answers in (21), but interpolated into a speaker's utterance in order to *pre-emptively* answer the type of question Ben asked above (Onea and Ott 2022).

A second piece of evidence comes from a robust empirical generalization about the modifiers: they have to denote a singleton set. We can see this generalization at play in PPs that can host an internal definite determiner: in this use, a definite determiner is required or at least greatly preferred to the corresponding appositive without the determiner. For example, the modifier “with the blue hair” is a much better identificational appositive than “with blue hair”:

(22) *Ana and Ben went to a party and talked to Marie, but Ben never learned her name.*
After the party, Ben asks Ana: “I loved that party. Who should I be friends with?”
 a. Ana: Marie, with the blue hair, is really nice.
 b. Ana: #Marie, with blue hair, is really nice.

In the context of (22), Ben cannot identify Marie using the PP “with blue hair”, even if that property applies to her. One can explain this infelicity using a requirement of uniqueness in conjunction with Maximize Presupposition, a pragmatic principle (Heim 1991). Maximize Presupposition requires speakers to use items with the strongest possible presuppositions in contexts where those presuppositions are met; not using such an item signals to interlocutors that the presupposition is not met. Since “the” has a uniqueness presupposition, then not using the determiner when it's available can signal that the predicate is non-unique. The infelicity of (22) thus suggests that these modifiers are required to be unique.

This generalization can be explained as a reflex of answerhood requirements on QoIs: since QoIs (as I've defined them) embed an equative semantics, full answers to them must

³Under our analysis in which “has” is underlyingly copular.

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be semantically equative, equating one unique individual argument with another. A non-unique predicate cannot serve as one of these arguments.

5. Conclusion

Above, I've analyzed the modifiers in (2) as answers to implicit questions of identification. Canonical appositives, which add extra information, do not serve this purpose (Potts 2005). To be clear, the distinction is pragmatic: NAPs and ARCs can be identificational appositives too. The infelicity of (1b) (repeated below) stems from the ARC's inability to play a role in satisfying the *uniqueness* requirement of the definite determiner, not from its inability to clarify reference. Indeed, the exact same modifier can be an identificational appositive when there is only one lawyer in the context, but which individual is the lawyer is unclear to the addressee (24).

(23) [(1b) repeated] *Ana and Ben are looking at two lawyers. One has white hair, the other black.*
Ana: #The lawyer, who has the white hair, is my friend.

(24) *Ana and Ben are looking at two men. Ana knows one is a lawyer and the other a doctor, and Ben doesn't know their jobs. Ana says to Ben:*
The lawyer, who has the white hair, is my friend.

Once 'the lawyer' is unique in the context, it becomes felicitous; the appositive can still be used to clarify which person the lawyer is.

This analysis explains which appositives can be used restrictively, but it doesn't explain what restrictivity *is*. Indeed, what is the purpose of clarifying reference if uniqueness is already met? Another way of phrasing this last question is: what causes these questions of identification to be 'licensed' by the containing utterance? And why, when they are not answered, can that sometimes render an utterance infelicitous (3-4)?

Any precise definition of restrictivity would have to capture both regular integrated modifiers like (1a) and identificational appositives, while leaving out canonical appositives and integrated non-restrictive modifiers. Since syntax is not determinative of whether a modifier is considered restrictive or not, this definition would moreover be situated in the domain of pragmatics. Some help may stem from the classic distinction between 'semantic reference' and 'speaker reference' introduced in Kripke (1977): as the contrast between (23) and (24) shows, identificational appositives are not able to help an *expression* refer, but they can help *speakers* refer. Using this distinction, the purpose of restrictive modification would be speaker reference, however defined.

That said, such a pragmatic story would have to be able to explain the infelicity seen in, e.g., (3-4), as pragmatic in nature. However, as discussed briefly in section 2, this infelicity surfaces in different sets of contexts with different referential expressions – in particular, names require an identificational appositive to clarify their reference in more cases than

definite descriptions.⁴ These considerations point to an explanation of restrictivity that involves both the pragmatics of speaker reference as well as the semantics of different kinds of determiner phrases.

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⁴As an extreme case, one would want an account of why quantificational DPs do not easily co-occur with identificational appositives (??I just had a chat with every child in Mr. Jones’ class, with the blue uniforms.).