

What’s in prenominal position? Non-intersective adjectives in Spanish*

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1 Introduction

Romance languages allow pre- and post-nominal positions for at least a subset of their adjectives. According to several authors, it appears that there is a cluster of interpretative properties associated with prenominal position, and the complement of these properties is associated with postnominal position (Alexiadou 2001, Bouchard 1998, Demonte 2008, Katz 2008, a.o.):

(1) *The Complementarity Hypothesis:*

In Romance, prehead modifiers receive a non-restrictive reading; posthead modifiers receive a restrictive one.

- (2) a. Los pretenciosos amigos de Paloma estaban en la fiesta.
‘Paloma’s pretentious friends were at the party’ (all Paloma’s friends are pretentious)
b. Los amigos pretenciosos de Paloma estaban en la fiesta.
‘Paloma’s pretentious friends were at the party’ (the subset of Paloma’s friends who are pretentious)

Problem Some adjectives in prenominal position seem to be interpreted restrictively:

- (3) a. Los buenos médicos del hospital estaban en la fiesta.
‘The good doctors from the hospital were at the party’ (only the subset of good doctors; #all doctors are good doctors)
b. Los verdaderos artistas del grupo estaban en la fiesta.
‘The true artists of the group were at the party’ (only the subset of artists considered ‘true artists’ by the speaker; #all artist are true artists)

Plan

- Characterize the set of adjectives that can appear in prenominal position in Spanish
- Show that the Complementarity Hypothesis only applies to intersective adjectives
- Argue for an information structure definition of restrictiveness

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- Discuss Cinque (2010) in the light of the data presented and suggest a tentative representation

Main claims

- Only intersective adjectives can receive non-restrictive interpretations
- Non-intersective adjectives in prenominal position in Romance receive a restrictive interpretation
- Non-intersective adjectives in Romance may occupy a position in a specifier of a FocP in the DP. Intersective adjectives would generate postnominally in a reduced relative clause and move to receive a non-restrictive interpretation prenominally

2 What's in prenominal position?

1. **Intersective adjectives:** Follow the pattern in (4). They are predicative (6a) and can appear in postnominal position (6b) with roughly the same meaning.

(4) $[[AN]] = [[A]] \cap [[N]]$

(5) Me encontré con los *pretenciosos* amigos de Paloma.

‘I came across Paloma’s pretentious friends’ (all Paloma’s friends are pretentious)

(6) a. Los amigos de Paloma son *pretenciosos*

‘Paloma’s friends are pretentious.’

b. Me encontré con los amigos *pretenciosos* de Paloma.

‘I came across Paloma’s pretentious friends’ (the subset who are pretentious)

2. **Non-intersective adjectives:** Follow the pattern in (7) (Landman 2001), i.e. they cannot be predicated of the referent and the entailment X is N holds at least in an index. They do not appear either in postnominal position or predicatively with the same meaning.

(7) $[[AN]]^{w,t} \subseteq [[N]]^{w,t}$ (Landman 2001 : 8)

(8) Evaluative adjectives:

a. Me atendió un buen médico. ‘A good doctor looked after me.’

b. # El médico era bueno. ‘The doctor was good.’ (good as a person, sometimes can be understood ‘as a doctor’)

(9) Intensifying adjectives:

a. Le dieron una *verdadera* paliza. ‘They gave him a true beating.’

b. # La paliza era verdadera. ‘The beating was true.’ (= ‘real’)

(10) Modal adjectives:

a. Detuvieron al presunto asesino.

‘The alleged murderer has been arrested.’

b. * El asesino es presunto. ‘The murderer is alleged.’

(11) Expressives:

a. Habló con una pobre anciana.

‘She talked to a pitiful old woman.’

b. # La anciana es pobre. ‘The old woman is poor.’ (\neq ‘pitiful’)

Question Do (8)-(11) receive a non-restrictive interpretation?

3 (Non-)restrictivity

Definitions of (non-)restrictivity can be classified in two big groups: those based on set entailments (3.1) and those based on information structure (3.2). In this talk, we will focus on the latter, as it covers more facts.

3.1 Set-based definition

The intuition behind the notion of (non-)restrictivity, as formalized by Piñón (2005), is the following:

- (12) Let a model \mathcal{M} consist of a nonempty set O of objects o , a nonempty set S of possible situations s , and an interpretation function $\llbracket \cdot \rrbracket$.
- M nonvacuously restrictively modifies H in s iff $\llbracket \lambda o[M_s(o) \wedge H_s(o)] \rrbracket_{\mathcal{M},g} \subset \llbracket H_s \rrbracket_{\mathcal{M},g}$ and $\llbracket \lambda o[M_s(o) \wedge H_s(o)] \rrbracket_{\mathcal{M},g} \neq \emptyset$
 - M nonvacuously non-restrictively modifies H in s iff $\llbracket \lambda o[M_s(o) \wedge H_s(o)] \rrbracket_{\mathcal{M},g} = \llbracket H_s \rrbracket_{\mathcal{M},g}$ and $\llbracket \lambda o[M_s(o) \wedge H_s(o)] \rrbracket_{\mathcal{M},g} \neq \emptyset$

In this sense, a restrictive modifier is one that presupposes the existence of an object O which satisfies $\llbracket H \rrbracket$ but not $\llbracket MH \rrbracket$: (2b) presupposes that Paloma has other friends apart from the pretentious ones, whereas (2a) implies that all Paloma’s friends are pretentious friends.

Martin (2013) shows that this definition of (non-)restrictivity (*restrictivity*₁) is not sufficient to cover all the contrasts. Specifically, it cannot render the contrasts between pre- and posthead positions with singleton sets, or indefinite NPs, as they do not presuppose their domain of quantification: *some blue flowers* does not presuppose a contextually restricted set of flowers, rather it introduces a contextual set of blue flowers.

3.2 Information structure definition

Nonrestrictivity has been characterized as **conveying not-at-issue implications** (Morzycki 2008, Martin 2013). (Non-)at-issueness is understood in Martin (2013) as relevance to the QUD within Roberts’s 1996 discourse theory. Following Simons et al. (2011), for any proposition p , let $?p$ denote the question whether p , i.e. the partition on the set of worlds with members p and $\neg p$. Then

- (13) A proposition p is at-issue relative to a question Q iff $?p$ is relevant to Q , i.e. if it contextually entails an answer to Q .

Under this approach, a restrictive₂ modifier acts on the context set C , the initial set of possibilities taken to be accessible in the context¹.

As the focus semantic value of the utterance must be identical to the QUD (by the QUD constraint on focus, (Kadmon 2001 based on Roberts 1996), the focused constituent is taken to correspond to the information asked by the QUD. Martin (2013) proposes that, since the implication p conveyed by a restrictive modifier is at issue, $?p$ should be relevant to the QUD and, therefore, focused. Example (15) shows that whereas restrictive modifiers can directly address the QUD, non-restrictive ones cannot, unless they are included in the focused constituent. In any case, they are compatible with new information, as shown by (15c) (see Demonte 2008, Martin 2013).

¹However, the implication conveyed by nonrestrictive modifiers does not project and, differently from appositives, nonrestrictive modifiers can express new or old information. In this sense, two kinds of not-at-issueness are proposed in Martin (2013).

- (14) a. ... head [MOD]_F (restrictive reading)
 b. ... [[mod] HEAD]_F (nonrestrictive reading)
- (15) Comment sont les fleurs tu vas lui acheter ? (Martin 2013 : (39))
 ‘How are the flowers you will buy her?’
- a. Je vais lui acheter des fleurs [MAGNIFIQUES]_F
 ‘I’ll buy her magnificent flowers.’
- b. # Je vais lui acheter de [MAGNIFIQUES]_F fleurs.
- c. Je vais lui acheter [de magnifiques fleurs]_F

In a language such as German, in which adjectives in prehead position are ambiguous between a restrictive and a non-restrictive interpretation (16a), focus can be used to distinguish between the two senses. According to Umbach (2006), focussing *unschuldiger* (16b) forces a reading of *Passagiere* that includes other types of passengers, such as non-innocent ones, and has a restrictive interpretation.

- (16) a. Am Heck der Maschine stand unschuldige Passagiere. (ambiguous)
 ‘There are innocent passengers at the rear end of the plain.’
- b. Am Heck der Maschine stand [UNSCHULDIGE]_F Passagiere. (restrictive)
 ‘There are INNOCENT passengers at the rear end of the plain.’

4 Interpretation of adjectives in prenominal position

4.1 Intersective adjectives

When in prenominal position, intersective adjectives in Spanish receive a non-restrictive interpretation and, as such, they are not-at-issue. According to Potts (2007), non-at-issue meaning is *speaker dependent*:

- (17) Sue believes that that bastard Kresge should be fired, # I think he’s a good guy. (Potts 2007 : (10))
- (18) Lucía cree que los inocentes pasajeros han muerto de asfixia, #yo creo que algunos de ellos eran unos sinvergüenzas.
 ‘Lucía believes that the innocent passengers were asphyxiated, I think some of them were true scoundrels.’

Another test for determining whether a component is at-issue or not is the true/false test (Jayez and Rossari 2004) or *deniability test*. In a dialog, speaker B cannot deny what is implicated by speaker A, only what is said:

- (19) a. A: Jean a malheuresement eu un accident.
 ‘Unfortunately, Jean has had an accident.’
- b. B: ??C’est faux, tu es bien content. Tu le détestes.
 ‘It’s false, you are glad, you hate him.’
- (20) a. A: Los inocentes pasajeros murieron asfixiados.
 ‘The innocent passengers were asphyxiated.’
- b. B: ??Es mentira, algunos eran unos sinvergüenzas.
 ‘That’s not true, some of them were true scoundrels.’

Returning to focus, in Spanish, narrow focus on the modifier when preposed is not allowed (21b)-(21c), showing that they cannot be interpreted restrictively:

- (21) a. En la cola del avión quedan inocentes pasajeros, #no pasajeros culpables.
 ‘There are innocent passengers left at the rear end of the plain, not guilty passengers.’
 b. ?? En la cola del avión quedan [INOCENTES]_F pasajeros.²
 c. En la cola del avión solo quedan inocentes pasajeros, #no pasajeros culpables.
 ‘There are only innocent passengers left at the rear end of the plain, not guilty passengers.’
 d. En la cola del avión solo quedan pasajeros [INOCENTES]_F, no pasajeros culpables.

Inocentes in (21a) has a non-restrictive reading due to its prenominal position: all passengers are innocent passengers, so ‘not guilty passengers’ is unfelicitous. This position is not compatible with focus (21b), as the information given by the non-restrictive adjective is backgrounded, as (20) shows. A focus adverb such as *only* forces focus (Rooth 1992, a.o.), but necessarily takes wide scope: the contrast set in (21c) is one including pilots, flight attendants, but not any kind of passengers. When the adjective is postnominal and, thus, has a restrictive interpretation (21d), focus is allowed, although the existence of non-innocent passengers was already presupposed (see §3.1).

4.2 Non-intersective adjectives

- *Speaker dependency:*

- (22) a. Esther cree que han venido verdaderos³ periodistas, pero yo creo que ninguno sabe hacer una entrevista.
 ‘Esther believes that true journalists have come, but I think that none of them knows how to conduct an interview.’
 b. Esther cree que han venido buenos periodistas, yo creo que son todos mediocres.
 ‘Esther believes that good journalists have come, but I think that they are not more than average’
 c. Esther cree que ha venido un posible evasor de impuestos, yo creo que no es culpable.
 ‘Esther believes that a possible tax evader has come, but I think that he is not guilty.’
 d. Esther cree que ha venido una pobre anciana, #yo creo que no da ninguna pena.
 ‘Esther believes that a poor old woman has come, I think she is not pitiable at all.’

- *Deniability test*

- (23) a. A: Han venido verdaderos periodistas a la rueda de prensa.
 ‘True journalists have come to the press conference.’
 B: No es verdad, ninguno de ellos sabe cómo hacer una entrevista.
 ‘That’s not true, none of them knows how to conduct an interview.’
 b. A: Han venido buenos periodistas a la rueda de prensa.
 ‘Good journalists have come to the press conference.’

²The sentence is possible in an echo sense that I am not considering here.

³*Verdadero* ‘true’, not in its literal sense ‘not false’, only possible in postnominal position in Spanish, but in the one forcing the noun to be interpreted in a strict or prototypical sense.

- B: No es verdad, son todos mediocres.
 ‘That’s not true, they are not more than average.’
- c. A: Han venido presuntos evasores de impuestos a la rueda de prensa.
 ‘Possible tax evaders have come to the press conference.’
 B: No es verdad, no han sido acusados de ello.
 ‘That’s not true, none of them has been indicted.’
- d. A: Han venido unas pobres ancianas a casa.
 ‘Some poor old women have come home.’
 B: # No es verdad, no dan ninguna pena.
 ‘That’s not true, They are not pitiable at all.’

• *Focus*

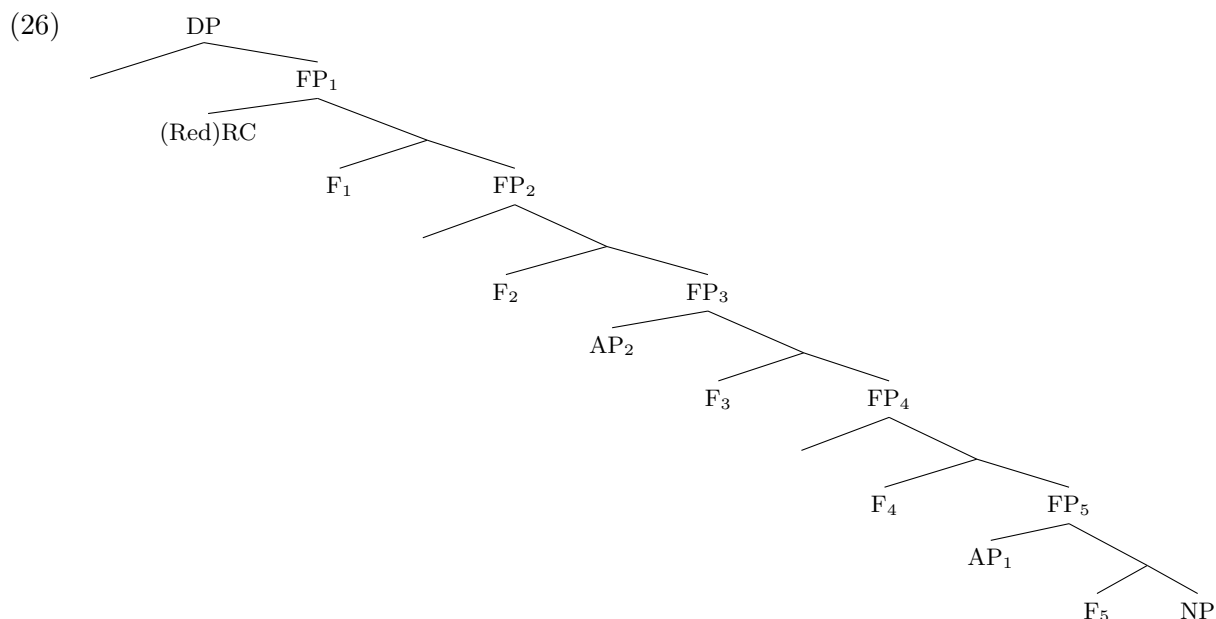
- (24) a. Solo los verdaderos periodistas llegaron al fondo del asunto, no los periodistas mediocres.
 ‘Only the true journalists got to the bottom of the matter, not the average ones.’
- b. Solo los buenos médicos acertaron en el diagnóstico, no los malos.
 ‘Only the good doctors got to the right diagnosis, not the bad ones.’
- c. Solo a los presuntos evasores de impuestos se les retiró el pasaporte, no a los ya condenados.
 ‘Only the alleged tax evaders got their passport confiscated, not the already condemned ones.’
- d. Solo las pobres ancianas han recibido ayuda, #no las admiradas.
 ‘Only the poor old women have got help, not the admired ones.’

From the tests can be concluded that **evaluative, intensifying, and modal adjectives receive a restrictive interpretation in prenominal position** in Spanish. They are restrictive in a discursive sense, as they are related with focus. Expressives, however, pattern with non-restrictive (intersective) adjectives in contributing to the non-at-issue meaning.

5 Syntactic representation

Cinque’s (2010) proposal for the structure of the DP is reproduced in (26). This author takes Sproat and Shin (1988) distinction between direct and indirect modification adjectives and characterizes them as in (25). Direct modification adjectives are merged in the specifier of various dedicated functional heads of the extended projection of the NP (AP₁ and AP₂); indirect modification adjectives are generated in a reduced relative clause, generated in the specifier of a projection above the other two:

	<i>Indirect modification</i>	<i>Direct modification</i>
	restrictive	nonrestrictive
(25)	implicit RC	modal
	intersective	non-intersective
	literal interpretation	possible idiomatic interpr.



Problems with Cinque (2010)

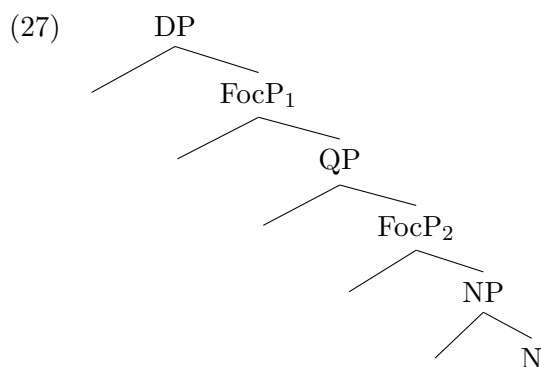
- Restrictive interpretation of direct modification adjectives such as *verdadero*, *presunto*, or *bueno* is not expected.
- Nonrestrictive and restrictive versions of intersective adjectives are generated in two different positions, when the difference between them is only related to level of meaning (not-at-issue/at-issue).
- It is not clear how an adjective knows where to merge according to whether it is interpreted restrictively or nonrestrictively, or whether each intersective adjective has two versions in the lexicon.

5.1 Extremely tentative proposal

In order to account for the characterization of adjectives developed in §2 and §4, we need a structure that accounts for the following facts:

- Adjectives are divided into intersective/non-intersective.
- Intersective adjectives are predicative (arguably generated in a reduced relative clause).
- Intersective adjectives are interpreted restrictively when postnominal and nonrestrictively when prenominal (in Romance).
- Nonrestrictiveness is related to not-at-issueness.
- Restrictiveness is related to focus.

A structure of the DP deriving some prenominal adjectives from postnominal ones (intersective) and generating the rest of prenominal adjectives *in situ* (in the line of Demonte (2008)) seems the most appropriate for Spanish. As non-intersective adjectives are restrictive and thus related to focus, a proposal such as Gutiérrez's 2013, who postulates two focus phrases internal to the DP, in a strict parallelism with the CP (27), may account for our data. The lower focus position would be, tentatively, where non-intersective (restrictive) adjectives are merged.



6 Conclusions and further research

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