

Restrictive Modifiers in Parenthetical Positions

This paper is concerned with the grammatical mechanisms that interlocutors use to determine the reference of DPs. I present a class of nominal modifiers that I argue are (i) appositives, but nonetheless (ii) used to establish the reference of their *anchor DP*. These *identificational appositives* challenge theories of “restrictive” modification in which reference is fully determined by overt or contextually supplied material in the scope of a determiner (Elbourne 2005, Ahn 2022), as well as theories of the “non-restrictivity” of appositives (Potts 2004, Morzycki 2008, Leffel 2014). They thus raise questions about what notions of “reference” and “restrictivity” are needed to account for intuitions about referential DPs and their modifiers. I propose that the relevant notion of reference is identification with a discourse referent across all worlds/assignments in the context – i.e., a kind of familiarity requirement (Roberts 2003); restrictive modifiers are used to meet this requirement. Unlike subsective modifiers, which contribute to achieving reference by taking scope under a determiner, identificational appositives answer a potential question (Onea 2016), as in Onea & Ott’s (2022) theory of appositives. Because of the kind of potential question they answer, they enable their anchor to meet their identification requirement, even when its descriptive content alone is not sufficient to do so.

The Data. Intuitively, “restrictive” modifiers are modifiers used to distinguish between potential referents; “non-restrictive” modifiers serve other purposes (Leffel 2014). In the literature, this notion is often reduced to *subsectivity* — when a modifier in the scope of a determiner shrinks the extension of the constituent it modifies (Piñon 2005) — even if not all modifiers in this position play this role (Schlenker 2005, Morzycki 2008). Appositives, accordingly, are “non-restrictive” as they sit outside the scope of a determiner: they add supplemental information not necessary for a DP to refer (Partee 1975, Potts 2004).

I present a set of modifiers that undermine this picture. These PP or adverbial modifiers are used in the determination of reference, but are linguistically separate from their anchor like appositives. In (1a), *here* is licensed if Marie is next to the speaker, and the addressee doesn’t know her name: *here* adds locational info so the addressee can pick out Marie. Similarly, in (1b), the speaker can add *with the white hair* if the interlocutors are looking at a picture of women and the addressee doesn’t know what Joan’s mother looks like. (I return to the differences between names and descriptions below.)

1. a. Marie **here** is my best friend.
- b. Joan’s mother, **with the white hair**, is coming over tomorrow.

Indeed, these modifiers can rescue the anchor DP from “failing to refer” in certain contexts, such as with unfamiliar names (2a-a’) or unfamiliar descriptions in certain questions (2b-b’).

2. *Joe & Lucy just got home from a party where Lucy met Joe’s dad and Joe’s friend Paul for the first time. Joe knows that Lucy doesn’t know that his dad was his dad and that Paul was named Paul.*
 - a. Joe: #Paul is coming over.
 - b. Joe: #Did you like my dad?
 - a’. Joe: Paul, with the blue hair, is coming over.
 - b’. Joe: Did you like my dad, with the grey hair?

Without these modifiers, it is infelicitous for Joe to talk about Paul (2a) or ask Marta about his dad (2b).

The Modifiers are Appositives. Since the modifiers are used restrictively in (1)/(2), one possibility is that they combine intersectively in the scope of a determiner. I show, however, that they lie outside of the scope of this core boundary. To start, they do not trigger implications of non-uniqueness for the modified noun: unlike (3a), (3b) and (3c) do not imply that there have been at least two presidents of South Sudan:

3. 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. [*The speaker points at a man.*] In 2012, I met the president of South Sudan **here**.

The implication in (3a) can be explained by Gricean reasoning – the modifier is only useful if the noun is not unique (Schlenker 2005). That (3b-c) lack this implication indicates that those modifiers sit outside the domain of uniqueness – *iota*’s scope. Moreover, unlike regular restrictive modifiers, the modifiers are invisible to NP-ellipsis/*one*-anaphora (*Sam caught the first train, with the big engine, and Bill caught the second (one)* cannot convey that Bill caught the second one with a big engine), and like other appositives are subject to an anti-backgrounding requirement (Llombart-Huesca 2002, Potts 2004) (data not shown).

One potential hurdle for the appositive analysis is that the modifier *here* in (1a) lacks the typical prosodic separation from its anchor. Crucially, however, this indexical can only be an identificational appositive when it is deaccented, with the anchor DP bearing the phrasal accent instead (4a-b):

4. a. MARIE here went to the concert yesterday. B. #Marie HERE went to the concert yesterday.

If *here* is appositive, its prosodic integration and deaccenting are expected as: (i) indexicals are given and thus deaccented (Wagner 2006); (ii) prosodic constraints require accents in every phrase (Selkirk 1984).

Restrictivity & Reference. How do identificational appositives restrict the reference of their anchor? I assume that the relevant notion of reference – the goal of restrictive modification – is identification with a discourse referent across epistemic possibilities (world/assignment pairs) in the CG, as in (5), which corresponds to Roberts’ (2003) *weak familiarity*, or resolution of an anaphoric index (Beaver 1999):

5. **Identification:** Given a DP with index i , $\exists j \in \text{domain}(C): \forall \langle w, g \rangle \in C: g(i) = g(j)$

As the examples in (2) show, all names and certain descriptions must be *identified* in this sense – they cannot be used if the addressee cannot pick out the referent. I attribute differences between names and descriptions to (i) names always contributing an anaphoric index (Cumming 2008, Schoubye 2020) with (ii) descriptions only optionally carrying one (Schwarz 2009). (This index is required on descriptions in questions like (2c-d) that presuppose that the addressee is acquainted with the referent).

From this perspective, a more general notion of restrictive modification is possible, which captures our intuitions about the restrictivity of both substantive modifiers and identificational appositives:

6. **Restrictivity:** A modifier is restrictive in context C if it maps C to C' s.t.

$$\exists x \in \text{domain}(C), \text{domain}(C'): \{ g'(x) \mid \langle w', g' \rangle \in C' \} \subset \{ g(x) \mid \langle w, g \rangle \in C \}$$

Substantive modifiers are always restrictive according to (6). But appositives can also be, when they rule out possibilities in which the anchor’s index resolves to a particular individual.

How Identificational Appositives become Restrictive. Following Onea & Ott’s account of nominal appositives (2022), I assume that appositives answer a potential question, representing their relevance in the discourse (Onea 2016). For identificational appositives, I propose this implicit question is a *Question of Identification (QoI)* with an equative semantics (*Who is X?*). QoIs are made salient as potential questions when identification is required but not met by the anchor or context. An identificational appositive targets this QoI as an elliptical fragment of a copular clause that answers such a question.

(1a') $\begin{array}{ccc} \text{licenses} & & \text{answers} \\ \nearrow & & \nwarrow \\ \text{[Marie]} & \text{Who is Marie?} & \text{[Marie is here]} \end{array}$ is my best friend.

As answers to QoIs, the appositives associate the anchor with a property that *identifies* the anchor in the sense of (5), meeting the anchor’s identification requirement and removing assignments of the anchor’s index to entities, thus meeting the definition of restrictivity in (6).

The analysis of identificational appositives as answers to QoIs is motivated by (i) their ability to be used as answers to overt QoIs and (ii) the generalization that they must denote uniquely (“*I really liked Marie, with #(the) white hair.*”); this follows from answerhood requirements to QoIs. An elliptical copular clause structure is motivated by the ungrammaticality of integrated relative clauses (IRCs) in this position (**Marie, that has the white hair, is my best friend*): copular clauses cannot host IRs, but they can host PPs. The felicity of *with*-PPs in this position but not in full copular clauses (*?Marie is with the blue hair*) is attributed to morphological blocking by *has* (=is with) (Harley 2002, Levinson 2011).

Future Work. As mentioned above, identificational appositives indicate differences in the anaphoric properties of names and descriptions. These differences should be considered in and integrated into existing theories of their semantics. In addition, our theory of restrictivity should be applied to other phenomena where restrictivity is relevant, such as left-right asymmetries in modifiers (Morzycki 2008).

Selected References. Ahn, D. 2022. *Indirectly direct: An account of demonstratives and pointing*. Potts, C. 2004. *The logic of conventional implicatures*. Morzycki, M. 2008. *Nonrestrictive modifiers in non-parenthetical positions*. Leffel, T. 2014. *The semantics of modification: Adjectives, nouns, and order*. Roberts, C. 2003. *Uniqueness in definite noun phrases*. Onea, E., & Ott, D. 2022. *Nominal appositives in grammar & discourse*. Beaver, D. 1999. *The logic of anaphora resolution*. Cumming. 2008. *Variabilism*.