

Against an underlying relative clause approach of attributive adjectives in German

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I. Introduction

1. AN based on relative clauses (Kayne 1994, among others)
2. Mixed analyses (Alexiadou 2001, Delmonte 1999, Larson 2003)
 - a) AN based on relative clause (for some adjectives)
 - b) AN based on something else for other adjectives (individual solutions, depending)

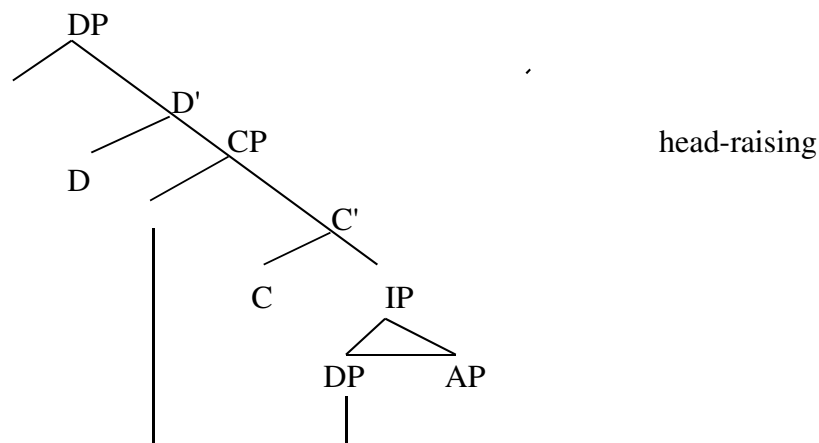
The analyses in 1 and 2 were developed on the basis of English and Romance languages. All of these languages have pre- and postnominal attributive adjectives, and in English, reduced relative clauses are quite prominent.

The assumption that adjectives are one-place predicates - be it in attributive or predicative position - and the fact that they can appear in different positions has led to the conclusion that these positions are related to one another via syntactic movement. The starting point for such movement is always a relative clause. A prenominal adjective starts in a relative clause and moves through an intermediate position into its final position in front of the noun. Reduced relative clauses or postnominal adjectives can be regarded as evidence for such an intermediate position. But not all adjectives that appear in an attributive position can be used in a copula + A construction, which seems to make a relative clause based analysis for such adjectives rather difficult. Supporters of the mixed analyses take this problem into account and make different proposals for these adjectives.

II. Kayne 1994: Predicate fronting approach

Kayne assumes that all adjectives are base-generated in a relative clause. Relative clauses are analysed as CPs, and they are complements of a determiner. The antecedent of the relative clause is base-generated inside the relative clause and moves via head-raising to Spec,CP.

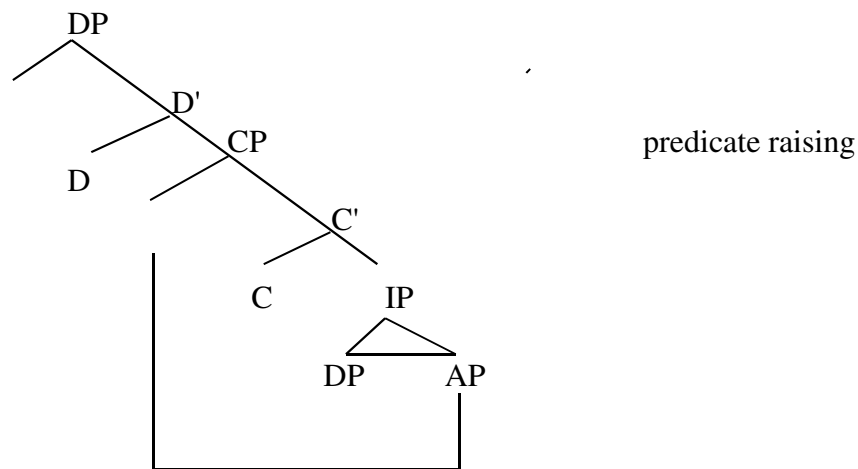
(1) a)



The movement in (1a) creates the string N A.

For prenominal adjectives, the adjective has to move to Spec, CP via predicate raising, as shown in (1b).

b)



This yields the string A N, which is the only grammatical one in German.

This analysis is not available for adjectives that cannot be used predicatively.

- (2) a) der mutmaßliche Mörder
the alleged murderer
b) *Der Mörder ist mutmaßlich.
The murderer is alleged

- (3) a) der ehemalige Präsident
the former president
b) *Der Präsident ist ehemalig.
The president is former.

III. Mixed analyses

1. Mandelbaum (1994)

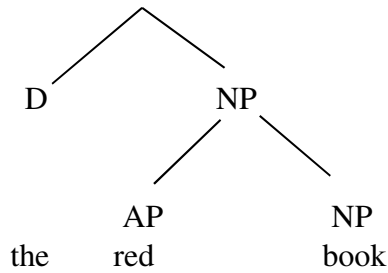
Mandelbaum has two different analyses for attributive adjectives:

- head analysis for non-intersective intensional adjectives
- adjunction analysis for intersective adjectives

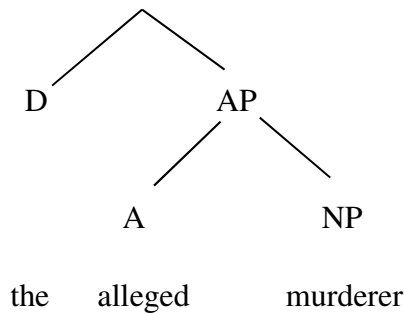
- (4) a) D° [_{NP} AP NP] intersective adjective (e. g. the red book)
b) D° [_{AP} A NP] non-intersective adjective (e. g. the alleged murderer)
c) D° [_{AP} A [_{NP} AP [_{NP} NP]]] combination of both (e. g. any future big investment)

5)

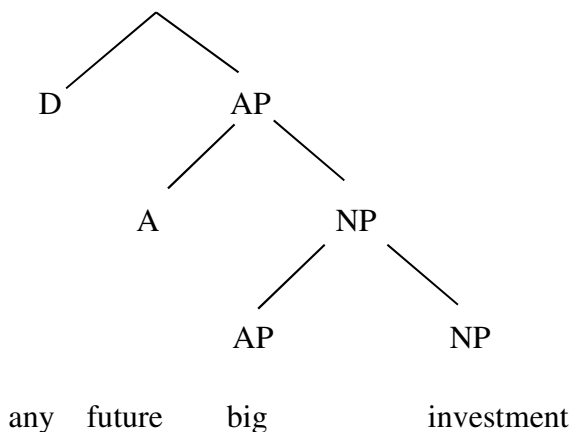
a)



b)



c)



This analysis can be combined with the idea that some adjectives are base-generated in a relative clause, whereas some are not. Non-intersective adjectives which cannot be base-generated inside a relative clause take a noun phrase as a complement. Intersective and evaluative adjectives, on the other hand, are moved out of the relative clause and adjoined to NP. Thus, non-intersective adjectives precede intersective ones.

In order to decide between an intersective and a non-intersective reading of a German adjective, the only test that is available is to test it in predicative position. If it cannot be used predicatively, then it is not intersective. There are no different attributive positions (i. e. pre- vs. postnominal) as in the Romance languages or constructions like determiner spread in Greek.

- (6) a) die wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit
the economic/economical cooperation
- b) Die Zusammenarbeit ist wirtschaftlich.
the cooperation is economical/*economic

7) Determiner > non-intersective adjectives (n-i) > intersective adjectives (i) > Noun

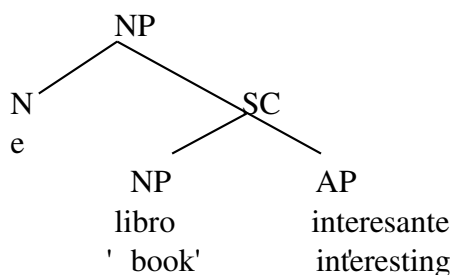
This approach invariably gives the string given in (7). Other sequences are not expected, but they exist in German.

- (8) a) das große zukünftige Potential des Subkontinents
 the big future potential of the subcontinent
 i n-i N
- b) Das zukünftige Potential des Subkontinents ist groß.
- c) *Das große Potential des Subkontinents ist zukünftig.
- (9) a) die zukünftige wirtschaftliche gute Zusammenarbeit
 the future economic/economical good cooperation
 n-i n-i/i i N
- b) die gute zukünftige wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit
 economic
 i n-i n-i N
- c) die zukünftige gute wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit
 economic
 n-i i n-i N
- d) #die wirtschaftliche zukünftige gute Zusammenarbeit
 i ni i N
 the economical future good cooperation
- e) Die zukünftige wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit ist gut.
- f) *Die wirtschaftliche gute Zusammenarbeit ist zukünftig.
- g) #Die gute zukünftige Zusammenarbeit ist wirtschaftlich.
 economical/*economic

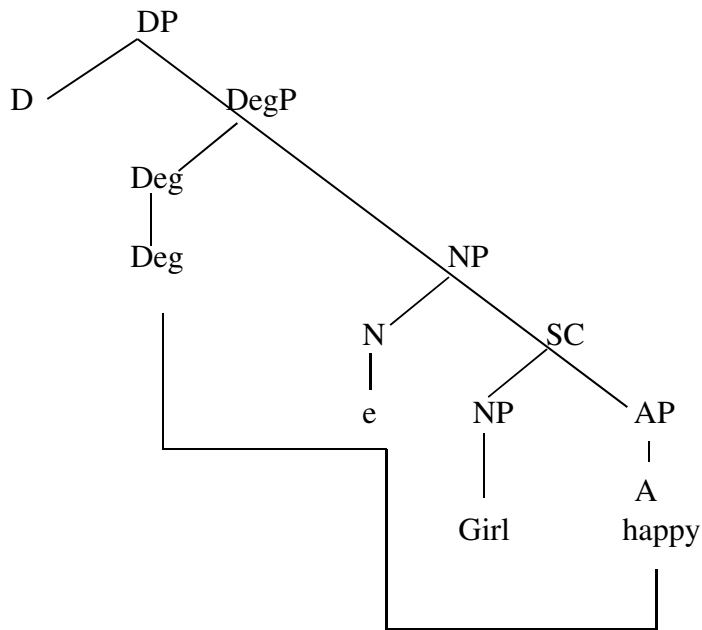
2. Demonte (1999)

Demonte assumes a small clause analysis for postnominal adjectives in (10) and a mixed analysis for prenominal adjectives in Spanish. Prenominal adjectives either move from the small clause to the head of Degree Phrase when they have a strong degree feature (11), or they are adjoined to DegP (12) or NP (13) when they are non-scalar and non-intersective.

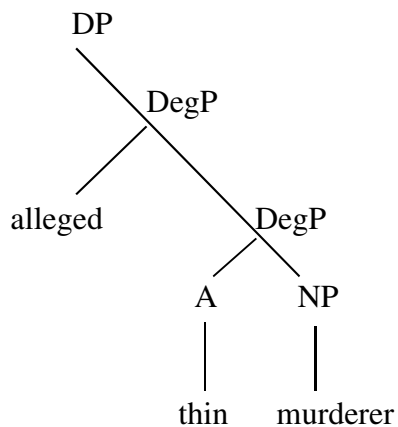
(10)



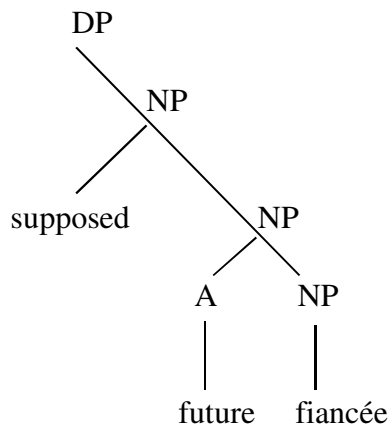
(11)



(12)



(13)



Demonte's analysis explains the difference between pre- and postnominal adjectives in Spanish. In German all attributive adjectives are prenominal - independent of their degree status. If we want to assume the same structure for German we need another functional projection to move the intersective adjectives to. The structure as it is in Demonte's analysis cannot explain why there are

differences in interpretation depending on the sequence of evaluative and gradable adjectives. Both adjectives should move to DegP. Only one sequence allows a degree reading. If the degree reading depends only on the feature checking at DegP then no difference is expected.

- (14) a) ein arroganter großer Idiot (degree)
 an arrogant big idiot
- b) ein großer arroganter Idiot (size)
 a tall arrogant idiot
- c) Der Idiot ist groß. (size)
 the idiot is tall

In (14b) *groß* cannot have a degree reading, and the same is true for the predicative construction in (14c). The absence of the degree reading in predicative position does not depend on the structure or the adjective, it depends on the noun.

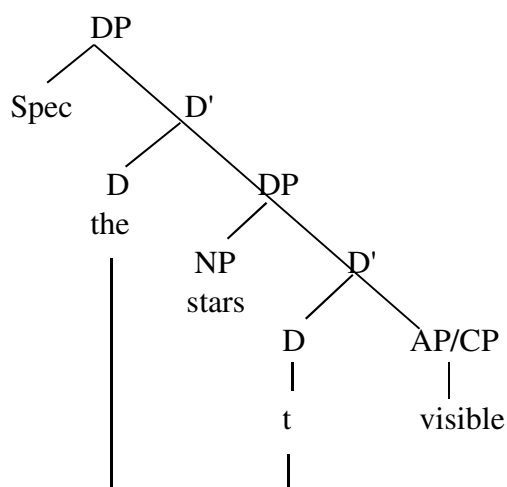
- (15) a) Ihre große Unsicherheit
 her big unsureness
- b) Ihre Unsicherheit ist groß
 her unsureness is big
- c) Ihre Unsicherheit ist größer als seine.
 her unsureness is bigger than his.

As the degree reading can be available in copular constructions it should also be available in the small clause. This analysis cannot explain the German data.

3. Larson (1999)

Larson's proposal differs from the analysis above because he moves the determiner from a postnominal position to a prenominal position, as in (16). This yields the sequence Det-N-A.

(16)



The determiner can carry adjectives following it along with it (17) and thus returns the sequence Det-A-N.

(17) [DP [D' [D the [AP visible]] [DP stars [D' t [DP [D t]]]]]]

German adjectives agree with the noun in attributive position. Where in Larson' s structure does concord take place? The distinction between strong and weak declension depends on the determiner. It is possible that the adjective is already inflected in the base position below the noun.

(18) Øg rüner Tee
green tee

In (18) a null-determiner has to be assumed in order to move the adjective in front of the noun. German children produce attributive adjectives with strong declension before they use determiners in a systematic manner. Assuming the movement in (16), this amounts to saying that children have null determiners and movement operations based on such null determiners before they use overt determiners. This contradicts the assumption that children learn prominent features first.

Larson distinguishes between inner and outer modification. Ambiguities in prenominal A-N-combinations are due to the proximity of the adjective to the noun.

(19) a) an old friend
- the friend is old
- the friendship is old

(20) a) Olga is a beautiful dancer
- beautiful as a woman
- beautiful qua dance

The non-intersective interpretation depends on the close proximity to the noun alone. This is not true in the following German examples:

(21) a) Olga ist eine schöne Tänzerin
- beautiful as a woman
* beautiful qua dance
b) Olga tanzt schön.
dances beautiful

The adverbial use in (21) shows that *schön* can modify a verb, but not if *schön* is in attributive position. This is not expected if the meaning depends on the structure alone. Even doubling the adjective does not enforce a non-intersective reading of *schön* in German.

(22) a) ein alter alter Freund
an old old friend
i n-i

- b) eine schöne schöne Tänzerin
 i i
 a very beautiful dancer

Coordination of adjectives secures the same distance to the noun. Surprisingly, there is a difference in meaning between the attributive and predicative use of only one of the coordinated adjectives in (23). I do not see how this could be explained structurally.

- (23) a) ein alter und treuer Freund
 n-i n-i
 - old qua friend
 - true qua friend

- b) Der Freund ist alt und treu
 i n-i
 - old of age /*old qua age
 - true qua friend

The example in (24) is not expected either, where the non-intersective adjective is further away from the noun than the intersective one.

- (24) Joseph Conrad war ein begnadeter polnischer Schriftsteller
 was a gifted Polish writer
 n-i i
 - gifted qua writer
 - Polish = Joseph Conrad; not qua writer (he wrote in English)

IV. A non-derivational approach

German has only one position for attributive adjectives: they are always prenominal. One and the same adjective may also have different interpretations in this (its only) position - depending on the context, especially on the noun it modifies. I therefore assume that different interpretations are not due to different structural properties but depend on pragmatic processes alone. These pragmatic processes, however, do depend on the structure.

The correlation between the attributive or predicative use of intersective adjectives does not result from the syntax, nor is it expressed anywhere in the syntax. Rather, it is situated on a different conceptual - i. e. pre-syntactic - level. An attributive adjective characterizes the noun it accompanies. This characterization can be done in a very broad and associative sense. One way to characterize an object - and maybe the most obvious one - is to mention one of the object's properties. What can be used in copula + A sentences are properties that the object (i.e. the grammatical subject) possesses; it is not possible to use other - more associative - material because the construction is always interpreted as A being a property of the object.

The prediction that results from the above is that *all adjectives that can be used predicatively can also be used attributively in German*, because the "being a property" of a certain object is enough to characterize this object. We only find one syntactical restriction to the prenominal position in German. A finite verb cannot appear in a prenominal position in the DP (finite verbs in relative

clauses are ok). Thus, adjectives that take a finite clause as their argument cannot appear in prenominal position for syntactic reasons.

- (25) a) Es ist schade, dass deine Party ins Wasser gefallen ist.
It is a pity that your party has been cancelled.
b) *die deine Party ins Wasser gefallen ist schade Mitteilung
c) die schade-dass-deine-Party-ins-Wasser-gefallen-ist-Mitteilung

Except for a small group of adjectives, this prediction seems to hold.

Recanati distinguishes between local and non-local pragmatic processes. The local pragmatic processes such as *saturation*, *enrichment* and *semantic transfer* are subconscious, in contrast to the non-local pragmatic processes such as conventional implicatures which are always conscious. I assume that the interpretation of AN is local and can thus make use of various pragmatic means without the speaker's/hearer's conscious recognition. An adjective in a predicative position is no longer local with respect to the noun, unconscious pragmatic adaptation is thus not available.

In this approach syntax may have an influence on the meaning of an adjective insofar as the relation between the noun and the adjective is local or not, and as a consequence it allows or disallows subconscious pragmatic processes.

In sum, a non-derivational approach can account for the German data and has the advantage of a single analysis for all adjectives.

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