



## The Semantic Classification of Adjectives. A View from Syntax.

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### Abstract

The need to distinguish two syntactic sources for adnominal adjectives (a direct modification and a relative clause one), with the associated interpretive properties, turns out to have certain implications for the semantic classification of adjectives. We will see that it provides evidence for the existence of a class of truly privative adjectives, and for the conclusion that subjective adjectives of the *tall/big* type and of the *skillful/good* type cannot be reduced for the direct modification class to (context-sensitive) intersectivity. Furthermore, the available syntactic evidence appears to converge with Partee's more recent position that the principal divide is between predicative and non predicative adjectives, which correspond in the adnominal case to the relative clause and direct modification sources, respectively.

### Keywords

adjectives, syntax, semantics, nominal structure

## 1. Introduction

There is evidence that adnominal adjectives have two syntactic sources; one as direct modifiers of the NP (or of the NP already modified by other direct modifiers), the second as predicates (if the adjective is predicative) of a reduced relative clause that modifies the NP plus any direct modifier adjective (cf. Sproat and Shi's 1990 and Cinque's 2010 notions of direct and indirect modification, and references cited there).<sup>1</sup> Syntactically, the adjectives (more accurately Adjective Phrases, APs) merged as direct modifiers of the NP are closer to the NP than any AP in a reduced relative clause, modify something that is still a predicate (and are also rigidly ordered, and, arguably, a closed class):

- (1)...[ DemonstrativeP ... [ NumeralP ... [ [<sub>ReducedRC</sub> AP ] ... [ AP ... NP ]]]]
- reduced RC modification      direct modification

Interestingly, these two types of syntactic modification appear to be associated with two distinct sets of interpretive properties, summarized in (2) (cf. Cinque 2010, Chapter 2 and references cited there).

- | <b>reduced RC source</b>                   | <b>direct modification source</b>   |
|--|-------------------------------------|
| (2) a. restrictive reading                 | b. non-restrictive reading          |
| intersective reading                       | non-intersective reading            |
| implicit RC reading with ACD of 'possible' | modal reading of 'possible'         |
| relative (to a comparison class) reading   | absolute reading                    |
| comparative reading (of superlatives)      | absolute reading (of superlatives)  |
| epistemic reading of 'unknown'             | evaluative reading of 'unknown'     |
| discourse anaphoric reading of 'different' | NP-dependent reading of 'different' |
| specific or nonspecific reading            | specific reading                    |
| stage-level or individual-level reading    | individual-level reading            |
| literal reading                            | literal or idiomatic reading        |

Languages differ as to how they ultimately realize the Merge structure in (1). While English does not alter it except for a relatively small class of APs that can also occur post-nominally (to which we return), Italian (Romance) modifies it systematically. One of the effects of these modifications is that the adjectives that occur pre-nominally in Italian (Romance) have only the direct modification source, which provides a unique window on the type of interpretive properties that are associated with the direct modification source. English, on the other hand, will be seen to offer a (partial) window on the properties that are associated with the reduced relative clause source as its post-nominal adjectives have the relative clause source as their only source. The pre-nominal position in English and the post-nominal position in Italian are instead structurally ambiguous between the

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<sup>1</sup> The idea that certain adjectives can derive from a relative clause while others cannot has a long tradition. See, among others, Winter (1965), Bolinger (1967), Motsch (1967), Berman (1974), Levi (1975), Emonds (1976), Siegel (1976a).

two sources (which makes it more difficult to see immediately which interpretive properties are associated with each syntactic source).

The structure of the article is as follows. In section 2, I summarize the basic evidence of Cinque (2010) to distinguish the two sources of adnominal APs with their associated interpretive properties. In section 3, I suggest that the systematic differences between English and Italian can be derived from a common structure of Merge ((1) above) via different sets of movements.<sup>2</sup> In section 4, I briefly sketch the main syntactic properties of the two distinct sources of adnominal adjectives and in section 5, I consider certain implications that appear to derive from the syntax of adnominal adjectives for a number of semantic questions, such as the proper understanding of the subsective/intersective and non-subsective usages of adjectives and Partee's puzzle concerning privative adjectives. Failure to distinguish the two syntactic sources of adnominal adjectives with the associated interpretive properties may lead one to miss the correct semantic generalizations. The fundamental syntactic distinction between the two traditional classes of predicative and non-predicative adjectives will also be seen to converge with the general conclusion reached in Partee's more recent semantic analysis of adjectives (see Partee 2003, 2007, 2009a, b, 2010).

## 2. The two sources of adnominal adjectives in English and Italian

In the first part of this section, I will review the systematic difference between English and Italian with respect to the interpretation of pre- and post-nominal APs along the interpretive distinctions in (2a) and (2b). We will observe the general pattern in (3). English adjectives are ambiguous in pre-nominal position, while Italian adjectives are ambiguous in post-nominal position. English adjectives in post-nominal position, when possible, are instead unambiguous and so are the pre-nominal adjectives in Italian (which furthermore take the opposite values of the English post-nominal adjectives).

- |     |             |                      |   |                      |
|-----|-------------|----------------------|---|----------------------|
| (3) | a. English: | AP                   | N | (AP)                 |
|     |             | <i>(ambiguous)</i>   |   | <i>(unambiguous)</i> |
|     | b. Italian: | AP                   | N | AP                   |
|     |             | <i>(unambiguous)</i> |   | <i>(ambiguous)</i>   |

### 2.1. The interpretive properties of pre- and post-nominal adjectives in English and Italian

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<sup>2</sup> As noted, the other Romance languages (with the partial exceptions of Walloon and Istro-Romanian – cf. Bernstein 1991: 105 and Zegrean 2012: §3.5.1) pattern with Italian, while the Germanic languages pattern with English, except for the fact that they do not allow for any (non appositional) post-nominal adjective. Slavic languages pattern with the Germanic ones, with the partial exception of Polish, which allows certain types of classificatory adjectives to occur post-nominally (see Cinque 2010: 134 note 19, and references cited there).

Consider the restrictive/non-restrictive opposition. In English an adjective like *blessed* is ambiguous in pre-nominal position between a restrictive and a non-restrictive interpretation (4), while in post-nominal position it only displays a restrictive interpretation (5). The Italian adjective *noiose* ‘boring’ has instead only a non-restrictive interpretation in pre-nominal position while it is ambiguous between the two interpretations when in post-nominal position.

**restrictive vs. non-restrictive readings** (cf. Bolinger 1967, Larson and Marušič 2004, 275)

*English*

- (4) a. Every **blessed person** was healed **(ambiguous)**<sup>3</sup>  
 b. ‘All the people were healed’ (nonrestrictive)  
 c. ‘All the people that were blessed were healed’ (restrictive)
- (5) a. Every **person blessed** was healed **(unambiguous)**  
 b. #‘All the people were healed’ (\*nonrestrictive)  
 c. ‘All the people that were blessed were healed’ (restrictive)

*Italian*

- (6) a. Le **noiose lezioni** di Ferri se le ricordano tutti **(unambiguous)**  
 the boring classes of Ferri remember all  
 b. ‘Everybody remembers Ferri’s classes, all of which were boring’  
 (nonrestrictive)  
 c. #‘Everybody remembers just those classes by Ferri that were boring’  
 (\*restrictive)
- (7) a. Le **lezioni noiose** di Ferri se le ricordano tutti **(ambiguous)**  
 the classes boring of Ferri remember all  
 b. ‘Everybody remembers Ferri’s classes, all of which were boring’  
 (nonrestrictive)  
 c. ‘Everybody remembers just those classes by Ferri that were boring’  
 (restrictive)

The same pattern is found with the intersective/non-intersective distinction. Both *beautiful* in English and *buon(o)* in Italian allow for an intersective (‘physically beautiful’ and ‘good-hearted’) and a non-intersective (adverbial-like) interpretation. The two readings are available in English in pre-nominal position

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<sup>3</sup> (4) and (5) are from Larson and Marušič (2004,275). They also give the pattern in (i) and (ii), with an adjective like *unsuitable*, but not all speakers appear to share their judgments:

- (i) Every unsuitable word was deleted (ambiguous)  
 ‘Every word was deleted; they were unsuitable’ (non-restrictive)  
 ‘Every word that was unsuitable was deleted’ (restrictive)
- (ii) Every word unsuitable was deleted (unambiguous)  
 #‘Every word was deleted; they were unsuitable’ (\*non-restrictive)  
 ‘Every word that was unsuitable was deleted’ (restrictive)

and in Italian in post-nominal position. Post-nominally only the intersective one is available in English, while pre-nominally only the non-intersective one is available in Italian.

***intersective vs. non-intersective readings*** (Siegel 1976a,1979, Larson 1995)

*English*

- (8) a. I've never met a **more beautiful dancer** than Mary (**ambiguous**)  
 b. 'I've never met a dancer who is more beautiful (as a person) than Mary'  
 (intersective)  
 c. 'I've never met anyone dancing more beautifully than Mary'  
 (nonintersective)
- (9) a. I've never met a **dancer more beautiful** than Mary (**unambiguous**)<sup>4</sup>  
 b. 'I've never met a dancer who is more beautiful (as a person) than Mary'  
 (intersective)  
 c. #'I've never met anyone dancing more beautifully than Mary'  
 (\*nonintersective)

*Italian*

- (10) a. Un **buon attaccante** non farebbe mai una cosa del genere (**unambiguous**)  
 a good forward not would-do never a thing of-the kind  
 b. 'A forward good at playing forward would never do such a thing'  
 (nonintersective)  
 c. #'A good-hearted forward would never do such a thing'  
 (\*intersective)
- (11) a. Un **attaccante buono** non farebbe mai una cosa del genere (**ambiguous**)  
 a forward good not would-do never a thing of-the kind  
 b. 'A forward good at playing forward would never do such a thing'  
 (nonintersective)  
 c. 'A good-hearted forward would never do such a thing'  
 (intersective)

As noted in Larson (1998) the adjective *possible* in English is ambiguous in pre-nominal position between a modal reading and a reduced relative clause reading with A(ntecedent) C(ontained) D(eletion) (12). In post-nominal position only the reduced relative clause reading with ACD is retained (13). In Italian the same ambiguity is instead found post-nominally (15), while only the modal reading is retained pre-nominally (14):

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<sup>4</sup> Some speakers find (9a) also ambiguous between the intersective and non-intersective readings, but they also seem to find the same ambiguity in predicate position ("that dancer is more beautiful than Mary").

***implicit RC with ACD vs. modal readings*** (Larson 1998)*English*

- (12) a. Mary will interview every **possible candidate** (ambiguous)  
 b. ‘Mary will interview every potential candidate’ (modal reading)  
 c. ‘Mary will interview every candidate that it is possible for her to interview’  
 (RC reading)
- (13) a. Mary will interview every **candidate possible** (unambiguous)  
 b. #‘Mary will interview every potential candidate’ (\*modal reading)  
 c. ‘Mary will interview every candidate that it is possible for her to interview’  
 (RC reading)

*Italian*

- (14) a. Maria intervisterà ogni **possibile candidato** (unambiguous)  
 Maria will interview every possible candidate  
 b. ‘Maria will interview every potential candidate’ (modal reading)  
 c. #‘Maria will interview every candidate that it is possible for her to  
 interview’ (\*RC reading)
- (15) a. Maria intervisterà ogni **candidato possibile** (ambiguous)  
 Maria will interview every candidate possible  
 b. ‘Maria will interview every potential candidate’ (modal reading)  
 c. ‘Maria will interview every candidate that it is possible for her to  
 interview’ (RC reading)

Another interpretive distinction, discussed in Higginbotham (1985), opposes an absolute to a relative reading of adjectives like ‘tall’ and ‘big’. Once again, both readings appear to be available in pre-nominal position in English (16) and in post-nominal position in Italian (19), while only the absolute interpretation is possible in pre-nominal position in Italian (18) (the post-nominal position of such adjectives cannot be tested in English as they cannot occur there).

***relative (to a comparison class) vs. absolute readings*** (Higginbotham 1985,563)*English*

- (16) a. New York’s very **tall buildings** impress everybody (ambiguous)  
 b. ‘NY’s buildings, which are very tall objects, impress everybody’ (absolute)  
 c. ‘NY’s buildings, which are very tall wrt the average height of buildings,  
 impress everybody’ (relative)
- (17) [the postnominal positioning of the adjective cannot be tested]

*Italian*

- (18) a. Gli **altissimi edifici** di New York colpiscono tutti (unambiguous)  
 the very-tall buildings of New York strike everybody  
 b. ‘NY’s buildings, which are very tall objects, impress everybody’ (absolute)  
 c. #‘NY’s buildings, which are very tall wrt the average height of buildings,  
 impress everybody’ (\*relative)

- (19) a. Gli **edifici altissimi** di New York colpiscono tutti (**ambiguous**)  
the buildings very-tall of New York strike all  
b. ‘NY’s buildings, which are very tall objects, impress everybody’ (absolute)  
c. ‘NY’s buildings, which are very tall wrt the average height of buildings,  
impress everybody’ (relative)

The same pattern is found with the comparative and absolute readings of superlatives. Both readings appear to be available in pre-nominal position in English (20) and in post-nominal position in Italian (23), while only the absolute interpretation is possible in pre-nominal position in Italian (22). The interpretation of the post-nominal position in English cannot be tested as superlative adjectives cannot occur there.

**comparative vs. absolute readings of superlatives** (Ross 1964, Szabolcsi 1986, Farkas and Kiss 2000, among others)<sup>5</sup>

*English*

- (20) a. Who climbed the **highest snowy mountain?** (**ambiguous**)  
b. ‘Who climbed Mt. Everest?’ (absolute)  
c. ‘Who climbed a snowy mountain higher than those that others climbed?’  
(comparative)
- (21) [the postnominal positioning of the adjective cannot be tested]

*Italian*

- (22) a. Chi ha scalato la **più alta montagna innevata?** (**unambiguous**)  
who has climbed the most high mountain snowy  
b. ‘Who climbed Mt. Everest?’ (absolute)  
c. #‘Who climbed a snowy mountain higher than that which others  
climbed?’ (\*comparative)
- (23) a. Chi ha scalato la **montagna innevata più alta?** (**ambiguous**)  
who has climbed the mountain snowy most high  
b. ‘Who climbed Mt. Everest?’ (absolute)  
c. ‘Who climbed a snowy mountain higher than that which others climbed?’  
(relative)

Abusch and Rooth (1997) point out that, when used attributively in an indefinite DP, a small class of adjectives such as *unknown* is ambiguous between a simple ‘evaluative’ reading and an ‘epistemic’ one. See (24) (the interpretation of *unknown* in post-nominal position cannot be tested because the adjective cannot occur there).

In Italian, the same ambiguity is found in post-nominal but not in pre-nominal position, where only the evaluative reading is possible (see (27) and (26)):

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<sup>5</sup> I thank Chris Kennedy for calling my attention to this ambiguity.

***epistemic vs. evaluative reading of ‘unknown’*** (Abusch and Rooth 1997)*English*

- (24) a. Maria lives in some **unknown village** in the South of France (**ambiguous**)  
 b. Maria lives in some village in the South of France that is not a well-known one (evaluative)  
 c. Maria lives in some village in the South of France, but it is not known which one (epistemic)

(25) [the postnominal positioning of the adjective cannot be tested]

*Italian*

- (26) a. Maria vive in uno **sconosciuto villaggio** del sud della Francia (**unambiguous**)  
 Maria lives in an unknown village of-the South of-the France  
 b. ‘Maria lives in some village in the South of France that is not a well-known one’ (evaluative)  
 c. #‘Maria lives in some village in the South of France, but it is not known which one’ (\*epistemic)
- (27) a. Maria vive in un **villaggio sconosciuto** del sud della Francia (**ambiguous**)  
 Maria lives in a village unknown of-the South of-the France  
 b. ‘Maria lives in some village in the South of France that is not a well-known one’ (evaluative)  
 c. ‘Maria lives in some village in the South of France, but it is not known which one’ (epistemic)

The adjective *different* in English, among its various interpretations (Heim 1985; Carlson 1987; Moltmann 1992,1997, section 4.5.2; Beck 1998, 2000; Dotlačil 2010; Matushansky 2010; Brasoveanu 2011; Tovina and van Peteghem to appear), has what Beck (1998, 2000) refers to as the “NP dependent” (28b), and the “discourse anaphoric” (28c) readings.<sup>6</sup> In English this holds only for the pre-nominal position (the post-nominal position cannot be tested as the adjective cannot occur there). In Italian the corresponding adjective is ambiguous post-nominally (31), but retains just the NP-dependent reading pre-nominally.

***discourse anaphoric vs. NP-dependent reading of ‘different’****English*

- (28) a. John and Mary live in **different cities** (**ambiguous**)  
 b. ‘The city that John lives in is different from the city that Mary lives in’ (NP-dependent reading)  
 c. ‘John and Mary live in cities that are different from some salient city’ (discourse anaphoric reading)

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<sup>6</sup> I abstract here from Beck’s further distinction between “plural” and “universal” NP-dependent readings.

(29) [the postnominal positioning of the adjective cannot be tested]

*Italian*

- (30) a. Gianni e Mario vivono in **differenti citta` (unambiguous)**  
Gianni and Mario live in different cities  
b. ‘The city that G. lives in is different from the city that M. lives in’  
(NP-dependent reading)  
c. #‘G. and M. live in cities that are different from some salient city’  
(\*discourse anaphoric reading)
- (31) a. Gianni e Mario vivono in **citta` differenti (ambiguous)**  
Gianni and Mario live in cities different  
b. ‘The city that Gianni lives in is different from the city that Mario lives in’  
(NP-dependent reading)  
c. ‘Gianni and Mario live in cities that are different from some salient city’  
(discourse anaphoric reading)

There is another property which distinguishes the pre-nominal from the post-nominal position of the adjective in Italian (Romance). This was originally noted by Bosque (1993) for Spanish (also see Bosque 1996 and 2001), and, after him, by Picallo (1994) for Catalan. Similar facts seem to hold in Italian and French, and, we conjecture, throughout Romance. The pre-nominal position of the adjective renders an indefinite DP specific (in *realis* contexts). See (34), which implies the existence of a specific actor that will be at the party, whether or not the speaker knows his identity. When the adjective is post-nominal, instead, the indefinite DP need not be specific (35). No comparable contrast is detectable in English, for reasons that we come back to (see (32) and (33)):<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> The specificity-inducing character of the pre-nominal position of the adjective in Italian emerges more clearly in contexts such as (ia-b), which are incompatible with a specific interpretation of the indefinite DP (as they assert its non existence):

- (i) a. Purtroppo, su questo argomento, non esiste un <\*significativo> articolo <significativo>  
‘Unfortunately, on this topic, no significant article exists’  
b. Non credo proprio che ci sia un <\*famoso> attore <famoso> per questa parte  
‘I really don’t think that there is a famous actor for this part’

This context contrasts with that in (ii), which is instead compatible with a specific interpretation of the indefinite DP:

- (ii) a. Su questo argomento, Gianni ha già scritto un <significativo> articolo <significativo>  
‘On this topic, Gianni has already written a significant article’  
b. Credo proprio che ci sia un <famoso> attore <famoso> per questa parte  
‘I really think that there is a famous actor for this part’

Spanish provides very clear evidence that an indefinite DP with a pre-nominal adjective is interpreted as specific, as specific, animate, direct objects are necessarily preceded by the preposition *a* (‘to’) (see Brugè and Brugger 1996 and Torrego 1998 for discussion and references). As (iii) shows, the preposition has to be present when the adjective is pre-nominal, but not necessarily when it is post-nominal. See (iii) (from Bosque 2001,27):

- (iii) a. Busco \*(a) un famoso actor

**specific vs. non-specific readings** (Bosque 1993,1996; Picallo 1994)*English*

- (32) a. John wants to burn a **nearby house (ambiguous)**  
 b. ‘John wants to burn some specific house that is near his’ (specific)  
 c. ‘John wants to burn some house or other among those that are near his’ (nonspecific)
- (33) a. John wants to burn a **house nearby (ambiguous)**  
 b. ‘John wants to burn a specific house that is near his’ (specific)  
 c. ‘John wants to burn some house or other among those that are near his’ (nonspecific)

*Italian*

- (34) a. Domani, alla festa so che interverrà un **famoso attore (unambiguous)** tomorrow, at-the party I-know that there will be a famous actor  
 b. ‘Tomorrow, I know that a certain famous actor will be at the party’ (specific)  
 c. #‘Tomorrow, I know that some famous actor or other will be at the party’ (\*nonspecific)
- (35) a. Domani, alla festa so che interverrà un **attore famoso (ambiguous)** tomorrow, at-the party I-know that there will be an actor famous  
 b. ‘Tomorrow, I know that a certain famous actor will be at the party’ (specific)  
 c. ‘Tomorrow, I know that some famous actor or other will be at the party’ (nonspecific)

While again no comparable contrast is detectable in English for the stage- and individual-level readings between the pre-nominal and the post-nominal position (pace Bolinger 1967: see (36) and (37) and the discussion and references in note 2 of Chapter 2 of Cinque 2010), in Italian an adjective in pre-nominal position can only have an individual-level reading, while both an individual-level and a stage-level reading are available post-nominally (see (38) and (39)).<sup>8</sup>

**stage- vs. individual-level readings** (Bolinger 1967, Larson 1998)*English*

- (36) a. The **navigable rivers** are not many (**ambiguous**)  
 b. ‘The rivers that are generally navigable are not many’ (individual-level)  
 c. ‘The rivers that happen to be currently navigable are not many’ (stage-level)

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b. Busco (a) un actor famoso  
 ‘I am looking for a famous actor’

<sup>8</sup> The lack of contrasts in English for the specific/non-specific and the individual/stage-level readings has a principled reason, compatible with the ultimate generalization holding of the English/Italian contrast (see the next footnote).

- (37) a. The **rivers navigable** are not many (**ambiguous**)  
 b. ‘The (only) rivers that are generally navigable are not many’ (individual-level)  
 c. ‘The (only) rivers that happen to be currently navigable are not many’ (stage-level)

*Italian*

- (38) a. Le **invisibili stelle** di Andromeda esercitano un grande fascino (**unambiguous**)  
 the invisible stars of Andromeda have a great fascination  
 b. ‘A’s stars, which are generally invisible, have a great fascination’ (individual-level)  
 c. # ‘A’s generally visible stars, which happen to be invisible now, have a great fascination’ (\*stage-level)
- (39) a. Le **stelle invisibili** di Andromeda sono moltissime (**ambiguous**)  
 the stars invisible of Andromeda are very many  
 b. ‘Andromeda’s stars, which are generally invisible, are very many’ (individual-level)  
 c. ‘Andromeda’s generally visible stars, which happen to be invisible now, are very many’ (stage-level)

One last contrast that we consider is the literal vs. idiomatic readings of an adjective. While Italian allows both a pre-nominal and a post-nominal adjective to have an idiomatic reading (41), English allows such reading only in pre-nominal position (cf.(40))

***literal vs. idiomatic readings***

*English*

- (40) a. ?He has got a **quicker** *temper* than his father  
 b. \*He has got a *temper* **quicker** than his father

*Italian*

- (41) a. E’ un prodotto di **bassa lega**  
 (lit.) It’s a product of low alloy (= of bad quality)  
 b. Loro sono ai **ferri corti**  
 (lit.) they are at the irons short (= in bad terms)

**Summary of the basic generalizations:****(42) English**

<b>prenominal adjectives</b> ( <i>ambiguous</i> )	<b>N</b>	<b>postnominal adjectives</b> ( <i>mostly unambiguous</i> )
restrictive or non-restrictive reading		restrictive reading
intersective or non-intersective reading		intersective reading
implicit RC or modal reading of ‘possible’		implicit RC reading of ‘possible’
relative or absolute reading		[cannot be tested]
comparative or absolute reading (of superlatives)		[cannot be tested]
epistemic or evaluative reading of ‘unknown’		[cannot be tested]
NP-dependent or discourse anaphoric reading of ‘different’		[cannot be tested]
specific or non-specific reading		specific - or non-specific reading
stage-level or individual-level reading		stage-level or individual-level reading
literal or idiomatic reading		literal reading

**(43) Italian (Romance)**

<b>prenominal adjectives</b> ( <i>unambiguous</i> )	<b>N</b>	<b>postnominal adjectives</b> ( <i>ambiguous</i> )
non-restrictive reading		restrictive or non-restrictive reading
non-intersective reading		intersective or non-intersective reading
modal reading of ‘possible’		modal or implicit RC reading of ‘possible’
absolute reading		relative or absolute reading
absolute reading of superlatives		comparative or absolute reading of superlatives
evaluative reading of ‘unknown’		evaluative or epistemic reading of ‘unknown’
NP-dependent reading of ‘different’		NP-dependent or discourse anaphoric reading of ‘different’
specific reading		specific or non-specific reading
individual-level reading		individual- or stage-level reading
literal or idiomatic reading		literal or idiomatic reading

**2.2. Post-nominal APs in English as reduced relative clauses**

As explicitly noted by a number of authors (Ferris 1993, §3.8; Sadler and Arnold 1994, 194-196; Larson 1998; Larson and Marušič 2004), the post-nominal position of the adjective in English (whenever it is possible) shows all the properties of a reduced relative clause.

Evidence for this conclusion comes from the fact that whenever an adjective can be found both in pre-nominal and post-nominal position, with different properties, the post-nominal one invariably shows a behavior identical to that of the corresponding predicative adjective inside a restrictive relative clause. As noted above, the pre-nominal position of *possible* in (12a), repeated here as (44a), is ambiguous between a modal reading (roughly equivalent to ‘potential’) and a reduced relative clause reading with ACD (roughly paraphrasable as ‘every candidate that it is possible for her to interview’ - see Larson 2000a). The post-nominal position (44b), instead, only retains the reduced relative clause reading with ACD, as in the corresponding relative clause containing the adjective in predicate position (44c):

- (44) a. Mary will interview every possible candidate  
 b. Mary will interview every candidate possible  
 c. Mary will interview every candidate that it is possible for her to interview

(45a-b) is another well-known minimal pair (see Sadler and Arnold 1994, 194 for this and other such pairs, as well as Markus 1997). Pre-nominal *present* only has a temporal reading while postnominal *present* only has a locative meaning. The corresponding relative clause with *present* in predicate position (45c) only has the reading of post-nominal *present*: the locative one.

- (45) a. the present editors  
 b. the editors present  
 c. the editors who are/were present

(46a-b) shows an adjectival doublet (cf. Larson and Marušič 2004, 272f). In the relevant readings, one of the two (*live*) can only be found in pre-nominal position; the other (*alive*) only in post-nominal position. The only form possible in the predicate position of the corresponding relative clause (46c) is the 'post-nominal' *alive*.

- (46) a. the live/\*alive animals  
 b. the animals \*live/alive  
 c. the animals which are \*live/alive

The systematic identity in behavior between adjectives in post-nominal position and the same adjectives in the predicate position of a relative clause becomes understandable if the former are nothing other than reduced relative clauses:<sup>9</sup>

- (47) N > AP from reduced RC

### 2.3. The structural basis of the ambiguity of pre-nominal APs in English

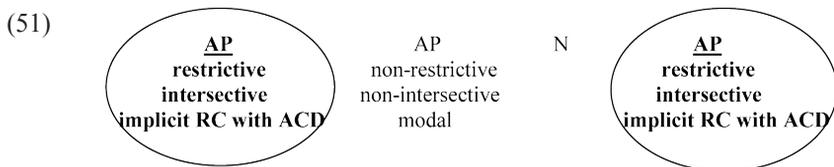
As shown by Larson in a number of his works (Larson 1998, 1999, 2000, Larson and Marušič 2004), the ambiguity of pre-nominal adjectives in English is structural. The two readings are associated with two distinct positions, the leftmost of which has the same readings as the post-nominal position (whenever the latter is possible at all) (see the examples in (48)-(50) containing a subset of the interpretive distinctions seen above, which instantiate the pattern in (51)):

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<sup>9</sup> The fact that an English post-nominal adjective is ambiguous between the specific/non-specific and the individual/stage-level interpretations is directly related to the fact that the same ambiguity is found when the adjective is in the predicate position of a relative clause. Compare (33a) with (ia) and (37a) with (ib):

- (i) a. John wants to burn a house which is nearby  
 b. The rivers which are navigable are not many

- (48) **restrictive** > **non-restrictive** > **N** > **restrictive** (cf. Larson and Marušič 2004, 281)<sup>10</sup>
- The **VISIBLE** visible stars  
(\*The visible **VISIBLE** stars)
  - The visible stars **VISIBLE**
- (49) **intersective** > **non-intersective** > **N** > **intersective** (Larson and Marušič 2004, 281)
- She is a **BEAUTIFUL** beautiful dancer  
(\*She is a beautiful **BEAUTIFUL** dancer)
  - She is a beautiful dancer **MORE BEAUTIFUL THAN HER INSTRUCTOR**  
(Also see: *the good* (=morally good) *good* (=fast, efficient) *typist* - Jackendoff 1997, 62; Scott 2002, 112)
- (50) **Implicit RC with ACD** > **modal** > **N** > **implicit RC with ACD** (Larson 1998)
- Mary interviewed every **POSSIBLE** possible candidate  
(\*Mary interviewed every possible **POSSIBLE** candidate)
  - Mary interviewed every possible candidate **POSSIBLE**



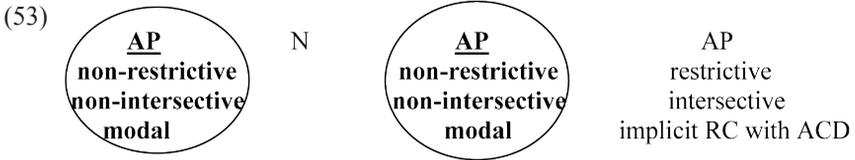
If we call the position of APs that receive a non-restrictive, non-intersective, modal, etc. readings the position of *direct modification*, and put together the observations in section 2.2 with those of the present section, we have evidence that English has the configuration in (52), and that the restrictive, the intersective, and the non-modal reading of *possible* are associated with the RC source.

- (52) **AP from reduced RC** > **direct modification AP** > **N** > **AP from reduced RC**

#### 2.4. The situation of Italian (Romance)

In Italian the ambiguity of post-nominal adjectives is also structural, but the readings associated with the two post-nominal positions are the mirror image of the readings associated with English pre-nominal APs (while the readings available pre-nominally are the same as the readings of the leftmost of the two post-nominal positions). See (53) and the examples from (54) to (56):

<sup>10</sup> Larson and Marušič utilize these noun phrases to exemplify the relative order of the stage-level/individual-level interpretations, but the same phrases also exemplify the relative order of the restrictive/non-restrictive interpretations (as (48a) is interpreted as 'the inherently visible stars THAT ARE CURRENTLY VISIBLE').



(54) *nonrestrictive* > N > *nonrestrictive* > *restrictive*

- a. I greci industriosi PIU' INDUSTRIOSI  
 the Greeks industrious most industrious  
 'the most industrious industrious Greeks'  
 (\*I greci PIU' INDUSTRIOSI industriosi)
- b. Gli industriosi greci PIU' INDUSTRIOSI  
 the industrious Greeks most industrious  
 'the most industrious industrious Greeks'

(55) *nonintersective* > N > *nonintersective* > *intersective*

- a. un attaccante buono BUONO  
 a forward good good-hearted  
 'a good-hearted good forward'  
 (\*un attaccante BUONO buono)
- b. un buon attaccante BUONO  
 a good forward good-hearted  
 'a good-hearted good forward'

(56) *modal* > N > *modal* > *implicit RC with ACD*

- a. Cerco` di intervistare ogni candidato possibile POSSIBILE  
 he-tried to interview every candidate potential possible  
 'He tried to interview every possible potential candidate'  
 (\*Cerco` di intervistare ogni candidato POSSIBILE possibile)
- b. Cerco` di intervistare ogni possibile candidato POSSIBILE  
 'He-tried to interview every potential candidate possible'

## 2.5. Interim summary

We can summarize the respective patterns of English and Italian as in (57) (as noted, Italian/Romance gives us a window, the prenominal position, to check what interpretations are associated with the direct modification source, while English gives us a (partial) window to check the readings associated with the RC source):

- (57) a. En: *AP in a reduced RC* > *direct modification AP* > N > **AP in a reduced RC**
- b. It: **direct modification AP** > N > *direct modification AP* > *AP in a reduced RC*

## 3. Deriving the differences between English and Italian from a common structure of Merge

The existence of two interpretively identical positions in (51) and (53) is arguably an illusion, created by two different sets of movements applying to a unique structure of Merge, namely (1), repeated here in simplified form as (58):

- (58)  $[AP \text{ in a reduced RC}^* [ \text{direct modification AP}^* [ N ] ]]$   
 (\*each of the two sources can contain more than one AP)

Consider English first. Under this view, the illusion of two distinct structural positions with the exact same set of interpretations is due to the possibility of raising the N plus any direct modification APs above an AP in a reduced RC.

- (59) En:  $AP \text{ in a reduced RC} [ (\text{direct modification AP}) N ]$
- 

This is optional with certain APs (*available*. See (60)), just as it is optional with ordinary reduced relative clauses (see (61)); but impossible with most adjectives (see (62)) (cf. Cinque 2010, Chapter 5, for more detailed discussion):

- (60) the available [former students] → the [former students] available
- 

- (61) the recently departed [former students] → the [former students] recently departed
- 

- (62) a. the free seats  
 b. \*the seats free

The case of Italian (Romance) is similar, though more complex in the movement operations that it involves. Here too the apparent existence of two direct modification positions (one preceding and one immediately following the N), with exactly the same sets of interpretations, is an illusion created by the *optional* raising of the N across one (or more) direct modification adjective(s); a movement followed by the *obligatory* raising of the N plus any direct modification adjective above an AP in a reduced RC, as shown in (63), and exemplified in (64):<sup>11</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Given that the order of Italian post-nominal direct modification APs is the mirror image of the order of the English pre-nominal direct modification APs (see (i)), the raising of the N(P) above direct modification APs in Italian must be of the “roll-up” kind (the N(P) raises first around the lowest AP and then the N(P) plus the lowest AP raise above the next AP, and so on, thus reversing the original order):

- (i) a. la causa prima più probabile del disastro  
 (lit.) the cause main most probable of the disaster  
 b. the most probable main cause of the disaster

The situation is actually more complex in that the N(P) raises obligatorily above one class of direct modification APs, optionally around another class, and cannot raise around a third class (see Cinque 2010, Chapter 6 for more detailed discussion).

(63) It: *AP in a reduced RC\** [ *direct modification AP\** *N* ]  

 A diagram showing the structure of a reduced relative clause. The main structure is 'AP in a reduced RC\*'. Inside the brackets, there is 'direct modification AP\*' followed by 'N'. An arrow labeled 'obligatory' points from the 'N' back to the 'AP in a reduced RC\*' structure. A second arrow labeled 'optional' points from the 'direct modification AP\*' back to the 'AP in a reduced RC\*' structure.

(64) un corrotto [ *giovane avvocato* ] → un avvocato giovane corrotto ‘a corrupt young lawyer’  

 A diagram showing the structure of the Italian example. The main structure is 'un corrotto'. Inside the brackets, there is 'giovane avvocato'. An arrow labeled 'obligatory' points from 'avvocato' back to 'un corrotto'. A second arrow labeled 'optional' points from 'giovane' back to 'un corrotto'.

The obligatory raising of the N (plus any direct modification APs) above APs in reduced relative clauses is related to the fact that differently from English the N (plus any AP) obligatorily raises above ordinary reduced RCs (participial reduced relative clauses are obligatorily post-nominal in Italian) (see (65)):

- (65) a. \*i recentemente arrivati giornali  
           the recently arrived newspapers  
       b. i giornali recentemente arrivati  
           the newspapers recently arrived

#### 4. The basic syntactic properties of the two sources of adjectives

##### 4.1 Direct modification adjectives

Syntactically, direct modification adjectives are **i**) non-predicative (66) (though some may also have predicative uses); **ii**) closer to the N (67); **iii**) maximal projections (68); **iv**) a closed functional class;<sup>12</sup> **v**) rigidly ordered;<sup>13</sup>

<sup>12</sup> See the case of those languages like Yorùbá where there are no predicative adjectives (rendered with verbs or PPs), but only adnominal ones, which constitute a closed class. Cf. Cinque (2010, §3.5.1.2).

<sup>13</sup> This can be seen most clearly in languages like Yorùbá that have only a closed class of adnominal adjectives. Their order is rigid:  $N > A_{\text{color}} > A_{\text{size}} > A_{\text{quality}} \text{ Num} \dots$  - Ajibóyè 2005, chapter 1, §1.2.4 ). This order is the same (modulo their being mirror images of each other) as the unmarked order of the same adjectives in languages like English. The fact that in English the natural order of certain adjectives can be reversed (as in (ii) vs. (i)) should not be taken as showing that no rigid order exists in English among direct modification adjectives.

(i) *I have one big brown dog.*

(ii) *I have one bròwn big dog*

If we said that, we would lose the possibility of accounting for what is felt as the unmarked order, which, interestingly, corresponds to the absolutely rigid order of adjectives in languages that only have direct modification adjectives. Such order variations should rather be understood, I suggest, in terms of the two sources of adjectives. The adjective of colour in (i) and (ii) above is once merged as a direct modification adjective, in which case it necessarily follows the size adjective *big* (i); and once as the predicate of a reduced relative clause, in which case it precedes *big* (ii), as sketched in (iii):

(iii) [ *AP from reduced RC\** [ *direct modification AP\** [ *N* ] ] ]  
       <bròwn>                      big    <brown>    dog

The order “reversal” in (ii) above is thus due to the fact that adjectives in reduced RCs precede (and take scope over) direct modification adjectives. If the reversal were due to focus movement of the lower adjective *brown* over *big* we would expect this to render also (ivb) and (vb) (which contain only non-predicative APs) grammatical, contrary to fact. Such reversals are only possible if the

- (66) a. \*That winner is probable  
 b. That friend is old (\*long standing friendship)
- (67) a. a fat heavy drinker ('a fat person who drinks a lot')  
 b. a heavy fat drinker (\*'a fat person who drinks a lot')
- (68) a. the [most probable] winner  
 b. a [bigger than usual] pasta eater  
 c. [[how old] a friend] is he?

#### 4.2. Adjectives in reduced relative clauses

Syntactically, adjectives in reduced RCs are **i**) necessarily predicative (though the same lexical entry may also have direct modification, non-predicative, uses), **ii**) further away from the noun than direct modification adjectives; **iii**) maximal projections, **iv**) an open class; **v**) non-rigidly ordered (cf. Cinque 2010, §4.2).

### 5. Implications for the semantic classification of adjectives

I consider now certain implications that appear to derive from the two syntactic sources of adjectives and their associated interpretive properties for the semantic classification of adjectives.

The standard semantic classification of adjectives, stemming from work by Clark, Kamp, Parsons and Montague of the early '70s,<sup>14</sup> epitomized in Partee (1995) and Kamp and Partee (1995), considered adjectives as arranged along an 'intersectivity' hierarchy restricted by meaning postulates which guarantee the legitimate inferences allowed by each class. "Adjectives are seen as forming a hierarchy from intersective to subsective to nonsective, with privative adjectives an extreme case of the nonsective adjectives" (Partee 2009, 9; also see Siegel 1976a, b, 1979, Chierchia and McConnel-Ginet 1990, 375, among others):

- (69) intersective (*blonde*,...) > subsective (*skillful*,...) > modal/adverbial (*former*,...) > privative (*fake*,...)  
 -----  
 non-intersective non-subsective

More recently the correctness of this hierarchy has been called into question, at least in part. For example Partee (2003, 2007, 2009a, b, 2010) mentions Kamp's (1975) observation that apparently subsective adjectives like 'tall' or 'big' (tall/big *for a boy* ≠ tall/big *for a basketball player*) may be considered intersective after

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lower direct modification adjective also has predicative uses that allow it to enter the predicate of a reduced RC, which *brown* has, but *hard* (in the relevant reading) and *electrical* do not have.

- (iv) a. He is an alleged hard worker  
 b. (\*)He is a hard alleged worker
- (v) a. He was a good electrical engineer  
 b. \*He was an electrical good engineer

<sup>14</sup> Published as Clark (1970), Kamp (1975), Parsons (1970) and Montague (1970).

all, even though vague and context dependent. The reason is that we get the same effect even if we keep the noun constant and change other aspects of the context. See (70), from (Partee 2009b, 15):

- (70) a. My 2-year-old built a really *tall snowman*  
 b. The linguistic students built a really *tall snowman*

Context dependent intersectivity has been invoked even for what Siegel (1976a) classifies as true non-intersective subjective adjectives, like *skillful*.<sup>15</sup>

Beesley (1982) (also see Kamp 1975, 152f and Siegel 1979, 230f) claims that a comparison class is always contextually determined even for these adjectives. Imagine the context of a chess school specializing in teaching musicians. In such a context a sentence like (71) can mean that the violinists are good or bad not as violinists but as chess players (for a violinist):

- (71) We get some good violinists and some bad violinists

This appears to make ‘weak’ subjective adjectives like ‘tall/big’ and ‘strong’ subjective adjectives like ‘skillful/good’ closer to intersective adjectives, with the promise of simplifying the hierarchy in (69).<sup>16</sup> One could even try to claim that context sensitivity is a general property of intersective adjectives. On this view, even standard intersective adjectives like ‘blonde’, ‘bald’, ‘carnivorous’, ‘asleep’, etc., could be claimed to be context-sensitive (at least to the extent to which the sentences in (72) are acceptable), thus making the three cases look more similar to each other (in their degree and type of context sensitivity).<sup>17</sup>

- (72) a. Mary is blonde for a southern Italian (though not for a Scandinavian).  
 b. That man is bald for an African (though not for a European).  
 c. That man is carnivorous for a vegan. (He eats fish).  
 d. To close just one eye is to be asleep for a cat (though not for a human being).

As Partee (2003, 2007, 2009a, b, 2010) points out, more problematic still for the hierarchy is the apparent fact that certain properties seem to treat intersective, subjective and privative adjectives together as a natural class opposed to modal/adverbial adjectives.

<sup>15</sup> Partee (2009a, b) recalls Siegel’s (1976a) observation that *tall/big* differ from “truly nonintersective subjective adjectives like *skillful*”. The former take a *for*-phrase to indicate comparison class: *big (for a 7-year-old boy)*, while the latter “can take *as*-phrases, as in *He is skillful (as a surgeon)*”, with certain “nonintersective” adjectives like *good* taking both: *He is very good as a diagnostician for someone with so little experience*. For the particular structural position of *for* phrases, *as* phrases, *compared-to* phrases and the possible argument PPs and *than* phrases within the AP extended projection see Fulst (2006, chapter 2). They appear to enter a specific hierarchy.

<sup>16</sup> Also see McNally and Boleda’s (2004) proposal to reduce relational adjectives to the intersective class.

<sup>17</sup> Though for some (e.g. *pregnant*) it may be harder to claim that they are context-dependent.

The first property apparently putting together intersective, subjective, and privative adjectives (against modal/adverbial adjectives) is the fact that the former three but not the latter can appear as predicates:

- (73) a. That man is bald  
 b. That surgeon is skillful  
 c. That gun is fake

(74) \*That president is former

The second, correlating, property is provided by the apparent possibility for intersective, subjective, and privative adjectives, but not for modal/adverbial adjectives, to be split from a NP in Slavic. The generalization which Partee mentions in her more recent work (based on Pereltsvaig 2008) is that intersective, subjective and privative adjectives can *freely* participate in NP-split constructions, while modal/adverbial adjectives are more restricted (they can split only when they are the contrastive focus). For relevant examples and discussion, see in particular Partee (2009b).

What looked like a scale from the most intersective to the least intersective type of adjectives breaks down. The adjectives that can be predicative and that split easily do not form a natural class as they apply to a non contiguous sequence on the hierarchy. See (69), repeated here:

(69) **intersective** (*bald,..*) > **subjective** (*skillful,..*) > modal/adverbial (*former,..*) > **privative** (*fake,..*)  
 -----  
 non-intersective non-subjective

Partee finally proposes that privative adjectives may be subjective after all (no adjective being actually privative), and that the fundamental split is between predicative and non-predicative adjectives. While this last conclusion converges strikingly with the syntactic distinction drawn above between the reduced relative clause source (for predicative adjectives) and the direct modification source (for non predicative adjectives; more accurately, adjectives used non predicatively), Italian (Romance) shows, I think, that the other conclusions (the non existence of a class of privative adjectives and the context-sensitivity of adjectives of the ‘tall/big’ and of the ‘skillful/good’ type) must be revised. Those conclusions appear to hold only for one of the two sources of adjectives, the predicative ones (those in predicate position or merged as predicates in an adnominal reduced relative clause). They do *not* hold for the other source of adjectives, the adnominal direct modification ones (those used non predicatively). To see this, consider the following. Recall that the pre-nominal position of an adjective in Italian (Romance) is necessarily non-intersective, while the post-nominal position can be either non-intersective or intersective (depending on the adjective).<sup>18</sup> In this light, the following interpretive

<sup>18</sup> Certain non-intersective interpretations of adjectives can only be pre-nominal (*un vecchio amico*

contrasts with an adjective like *falso* ‘false, fake’ are particularly revealing:

- (75) a. le **falso banconote** con cui giocavano..  
the fake money with which they used to play.. (= Monopoly money; not counterfeited money)  
b. le **banconote falso** con cui giocavano..  
the fake money with which they used to play.. (= counterfeited money; not Monopoly money)
- (76) a. Giorgio si è rivelato un **falso amico**  
G. turned out to be a false friend (= a non-friend; not a hypocritical friend)  
b. Giorgio si è rivelato un **amico falso**  
G. turned out to be a false friend (= a hypocritical friend; not a non-friend)
- (77) a. Un **falso quadro** ornava la parete  
A fake painting was adorning the wall (= not a real painting; something painted on the wall to resemble a real painting)  
b. un **quadro falso** ornava la parete  
A fake painting (= a forged painting; a copy of the original; not something painted on the wall to look like a real painting)

In pre-nominal position, *falso* ‘false, fake’ appears to have a truly privative interpretation, one that reverses the value of the noun (not real money; not a real friend; not a real painting), while in post-nominal position it appears to have a subjective/intersective interpretation, indicating one of the possible forms that the referent of the noun can take (‘money which is counterfeited’, ‘a friend who is hypocritical’ and ‘a painting which is a copy of the original’). Interestingly, in predicate position only the latter interpretations survive. See (78)-(80).

- (78) Quelle banconote sono false  
‘That money is counterfeited’  
#That money is fake (in the sense of Monopoly money)
- (79) Quel tuo amico è falso  
‘That friend of yours is hypocritical’  
#‘That friend of yours is a non-friend’
- (80) Quel quadro è falso  
‘That painting is forged’  
#‘That painting is not a real painting’

When no plausible subjective/intersective interpretation is available, as in

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‘a friend of long-standing’ vs. *un amico vecchio* ‘an aged friend’). The same is true of the adjective *falso*, as we are going to see directly. Syntactically, this means that the NP cannot cross over them when they are in the direct modification position (cf. Cinque 2010, Chapter 6).

(81), the adjective cannot be used post-nominally nor in predicate position (see (82)).

(81) Quello è un falso problema  
That is a false problem (= not a real problem)

- (82) a. \*Quello è un problema falso  
That is a problem false  
b. \*Quel problema è falso  
That problem is false

The fact that Mandarin Chinese only has the direct modification, “privative”, reading of ‘false, fake’ indirectly confirms the conclusion, drawn here on word order and interpretive grounds, that two separate uses of ‘false’ (a direct modification and a reduced relative clause one) should be posited.<sup>19</sup>

This means that privative adjectives exist after all. And they are non-intersective, non-subjective, non-predicative.

Consider now subjective adjectives of the ‘tall/big’ type, which are often taken to always involve a comparison (whether overt or covert: ‘tall/big for a...’). As noted above, after Higginbotham (1985, 563), this is not always the case. In

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<sup>19</sup> Sproat and Shih (1990,574) note that the nonintersective adjective *wèi* ‘fake’ cannot be predicative (*\*nèifu yào wèi* ‘that medicine (is) fake’), and cannot be followed by *de*: *wèi (\*de) yào* ‘a fake medicine’. If Aoun and Li (2003, chapter 5, note 15) are right in attributing this property of *wèi* to its prefixal nature this might mean that only direct modification adjectives can be prefixes in Modern Chinese. Also see Sio (2006, chapter 5, section 2.2.3).

Yang (2005,253) notes that without *de* an adjective like *lao* ‘old’ is ambiguous between the meaning of ‘of long standing’ (*lao pengyou* ‘old friend’, *lao tongxue* ‘old classmate’) and that of “aged” (*lao xiansheng* ‘old gentleman’) (like the case of pronominal *vecchio* in Italian: *un vecchio amico* ‘a friend of long standing’, and *un vecchio signore* ‘an aged gentleman’.) Interestingly, when followed by *de* the meaning of ‘of long standing’ disappears (Tong Wu, p.c.): *lao de pengyou*. Again, compare the case of *vecchio* in Italian in a predicative position (*quel mio amico è vecchio* ‘that friend of mine is aged’). This may be taken to suggest that when a direct modification adjective can be *de*-less (like *lao* ‘old’ vs. *yiqian* ‘former’) it must, so that the *de* that follows it is the relative *de* (which forces an intersective reading of *lao*). Sio (2006,123ff) notes the same for Cantonese. In a sentence like (i) the adjective ‘old’ followed by the subordination marker *ge* can only mean ‘aged’, while the bare adjective ‘old’, following it can be interpreted as ‘of long standing’:

(i) jat1 go3 lou5 ge3 lou5 pang4-jau5  
one CLF old MARKER old friend  
‘an old old friend’

As Wang also observes, “it is natural to say *xian yan* ‘(salty) salt’ and *suan cu* ‘(sour) vinegar’, but odd to say *xian de yan* and *suan de cu* because there is usually no other choice for *yan* and *cu* except to be *xian* and *suan*” (p.310); but see Paul (2009) for different judgments and interpretation. The fact, noted in Paul (2009, section 3), that such direct modifiers as *yiqian* ‘former’, *janglei* ‘future’, etc., require the presence of *de* does not seem to be a problem for the present analysis if, as just conjectured, direct modification adjectives are either with *de* or obligatorily without *de* (in which case whenever they appear with *de*, that *de* must be the relative clause *de*, with its associated properties).

English they are ambiguous between an absolute interpretation ('a big thing') and one relative to a comparison class ('big for...') (see (16)). As Italian (Romance) shows more clearly, the relative interpretation is only possible with adjectives in reduced relative clauses, not with those in direct modification. When the adjectives appear pre-nominally no comparison class is involved. Only an absolute interpretation is possible (see (18) vs. (19)).

So, the implicit "for an NP" PP is only available to APs in reduced RCs.

Consider next subsecutive adjectives of the 'good/skillful' type, those that Siegel (1976a, b, 1979) analysed as having an (overt or understood) 'as a NP', with the AP interpreted as bound to the NP directly modified by the adjective (a good/skillful surgeon = a surgeon good/skillful as a surgeon). As mentioned above, Kamp (1975, 152f) and Beesley (1982) claimed that even with these APs the comparison class is not necessarily limited to the NP modified by the AP (recall the case of a chess school specializing in teaching chess to musicians - example (71) above, repeated here - where it is apparently possible to interpret the violinists as being good, or no good, at playing chess).

(71) We get some good violinists and some bad violinists

Once again, as Italian (Romance) shows, this is true only for adjectives that are found in the predicate position of a reduced RC, not for direct modification adjectives:

In the same context only the postnominal position of the adjective allows for the contextually determined interpretation:<sup>20</sup>

- (83) a. Abbiamo dei **violinisti bravi** e dei violinisti meno bravi (can be good or no good also as chess players)  
 We get some good violinists and some bad violinists  
 b. #Qui abbiamo solo dei **bravi violinisti** (cannot be good as chess players, but only as violinists)  
 Here we get only good violinists

This suggests that these adjectives have an implicit "as a N" adjunct which in their direct modification usage cannot be anaphoric to the context but only to the N which they modify (much as the direct modification reading of 'different' seen above did not allow anaphoric reference to a N in the context external to the sentence).

This seems to lead us back to the basic distinction drawn by Montague

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<sup>20</sup> Bouchard (2002,99) also notes that in pre-nominal position in French an adjective like *habile* 'skillful' (*un habile chirurgien* 'a skillful surgeon') can only have the interpretation of 'skillful as a surgeon', while in post-nominal position it can have the interpretation 'skillful for a surgeon as...' (whatever the context may suggest).

between adjectives that behave as one-place predicates and adjectives that are functions from common nouns to common nouns (CN/CN) (though not to his unification of all adjectives as CN/CN by “generalizing to the worst case”), as well as to Siegel’s (1976a, b, 1979) development of Montague’s distinction.<sup>21</sup>

In other words, it seems we can retain the idea that the fundamental syntactic and semantic divide is between predicative and non-predicative adjectives (with the associated semantic interpretations seen above), which *adnominally* corresponds to the divide between:

<p><b>APs in reduced RCs</b> (only predicative)</p> <p>intersective (<i>bald, blonde, ..</i>)</p> <p>‘for a N’ subjective (<i>tall, big, ..</i>)</p> <p>‘as a N’ subjective (<i>skillful, beautiful, ..</i>)</p> <p>•</p> <p>•</p> <p>•</p>	<p><b>APs in direct modification</b> (only non-predicative)</p> <p>adverbial (<i>former, total, mere, ..</i>)</p> <p>modal (<i>possible, alleged, ..</i>)</p> <p>privative (<i>false, fake, ..</i>)</p> <p>•</p> <p>•</p> <p>•</p>
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As claimed in the literature, the two are taken to differ as follows:

<p>They modify the referent of the nominal phrase</p> <p>They modify the extension of the nominal phrase</p> <p>The meaning of the AP is not bound to, or relative to, the meaning of the common noun</p> <p>They modify something that already designates an individual</p>	<p>They modify the reference of the nominal phrase (Bolinger 1967)</p> <p>They modify the intension of the nominal phrase (Siegel 1976a)</p> <p>The meaning of the AP is bound to, or relative to, the meaning of the common noun (Siegel 1976a, b, 1979)</p> <p>They modify something that is still a predicate</p>
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The difference may fall out from the syntactic position occupied by direct modification APs and APs in reduced relative clauses. The former modify a chunk of the extended projection of the nominal phrase which cannot refer to its extension as it is below both weak (indefinite article, cardinal numerals, paucal and multal quantifiers, etc.) and strong (definite article, demonstratives, universal quantifiers, etc.) determiners, in Milsark’s (1974) sense, which are crucially involved in building the extension of a nominal expression. The latter, instead, modify a chunk of the nominal extended projection that already qualifies as extensional if the

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<sup>21</sup> I only differ from Siegel’s analysis in taking adnominal adjectives of the ‘tall/big’ type as genuinely non-intersective subjective when in direct modification and as (context-sensitive) intersective when in predicate position of a reduced relative clause, as indicated by Italian (Romance). In Cinque (2010, section 6 of the Appendix) I also argued that Larson’s (1999, lecture 2) objections to Siegel’s analysis of Russian adjectives can be reconciled with her general analysis if long-form adjectives in pre-nominal position can be (structurally) ambiguous, just as in English, between the two sources (the direct modification one with intensional, non-intersective readings, and the relative clause one with extensional, intersective readings).

Head internal to the (reduced) relative clause, as suggested by Chomsky, cited in Browning (1987) (and the matching external Head) is indefinite, namely preceded by an indefinite article:

(84) the ... [~~a~~book is red] a book<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Certain languages appear to show this overtly. The Oceanic language Kusaiean (Kosraean), for example, shows the regular co-occurrence of a lower indefinite article with a definite determiner/demonstrative. The indefinite article follows the Head and precedes the relative clause and the definite determiner/demonstrative. See:

- (i) [mwet se [ elthal uniyah] ah] pa Sohn (Sohn 1973,114f)  
 [person a [person-a they killed] Dem] TOP John  
 ‘The person whom they killed was John’

The word order in (i) arguably derives from a Merge order [Dem [RC [indef.det. [NP]]]], via successive roll-up movements, which reverse it entirely (cf. Cinque 2005). This may be taken to suggest that the Head of the relative clause is an “indefinite DP” embedded in the larger (definite) DP.

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## 從句法角度看形容詞的語義分類

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### 提要

對於用作定語的形容詞，應分出兩個句法來源（一個用於直接修飾，一個用於關係小句修飾），識別它們在解釋上的相關特性，如此分析對形容詞的語義分類具有一定意義。下文所見，這提供了證據，證明存在一組真正的否定型形容詞，並證明“*tall/big*”類和“*skillful/good*”類的類屬式形容詞，其直接修飾的組別性不能縮減為（語境敏感）的互交性。此外，現有的句法證據似乎跟 Partee 的新近立場吻合，即謂語性形容詞和非謂語性形容詞的區分是主要劃分。在定語的情況中，兩者分別相當於關係小句和直接修飾這兩個來源。

### 關鍵詞

形容詞，句法，語義，名詞性結構