

# A semantic typology of non-restrictive NP modifiers

Kathleen M. O'Connor

Université Lille 3 – Nord de France

UMR 8163 du CNRS

Savoirs, Textes, Langage



Université Lille Nord de France  
Pôle de Recherche  
et d'Enseignement Supérieur



# Object of study

## ➤ Examples

- AP: The children, Andrei and Dmitri, both around Phyllis's age, wore their usual aprons, red and blue. (A.S. Byatt, *The Children's Book*, 2009: 40)
- PP: They took the train to Andreden, in the Kentish Weald, and took a fly at the station. (A.S. Byatt, *The Children's Book*, 2009: 17)

## ➤ Characteristics

- Modify an NP anchor
- Non-restrictive

# And nominal appositives

- NP appositives modify a nominal anchor (e.g. Burton-Roberts 1975, Heringa 2011)
- Appositive acts as a predicate of the anchor (e. g. Doron 1992, Heringa 2011, O'Connor 2008)
- If appositives are predicates, then they can be non-nominal (e. g. Loock and O'Connor *to appear*, O'Connor 2008, Quirk et al. 1994)
  - AP: *A man, timid and hesitant, approached the official.* (Quirk et al. 1994: 1295)
  - PP: *This course, on English grammar, starts tomorrow.* (Quirk et al. 1994: 1287)

# Objectives

- Investigate whether AP and PP appositives indeed form a homogeneous class with one another and with NP appositives
- Semantics: Compare to Heringa's typology of semantic relationships between anchor and nominal appositive
- Application to stacked appositives

# Heringa's typology of nominal appositives



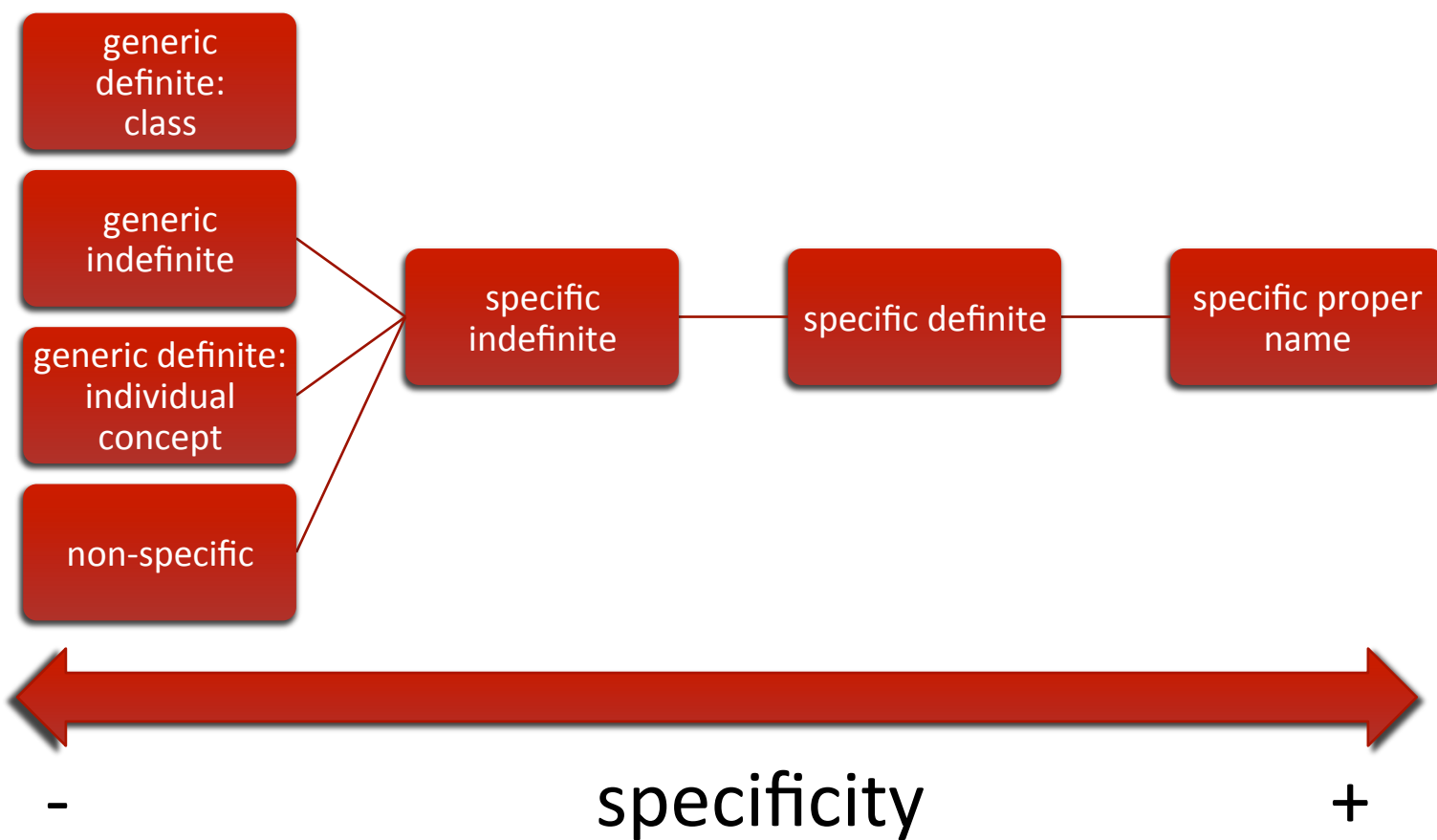
# Three classes of apposition (Heringa 2011)

1. Identification: *The lion, the panthera leo, is threatened with extinction.*
2. Attribution: Part-whole relationship between anchor and appositive  
➤ *Jan's pet, a baboon, shows its teeth when it is angry.*
3. Inclusion: Whole-part relationship between anchor and appositive
  - a. Exemplification: *A zoo, such as the Apenheul, costs a lot of money*
  - b. Particularization: *An ape, but especially Jan's gorilla, likes bananas a lot.*

# Apposition classes and copular clauses

- Heringa (2011): anchor-apposition relation = anchor BE apposition
- Two types of copular clauses
  - Predicational: The best student is a nice guy.
  - Equative: The best student is Paul
- Correspond to two types of appositions
  - Predicational = Attributive: *Christine, a genius, applied for a patent on several of her inventions. (p. 89)*
  - Equative = Identificational: The police think that *the man in this picture, John Dillinger, robbed a bank. (p. 89)*

# The specificity scale (Heringa 2011)





# Identification

- Anchor and appositive = same on the specificity scale
  - Generic: *The lion, the panthera leo, is threatened with extinction; definiteness respected*
  - Non-specific: *Jan would like to have *a little monkey*, such a nice inhabitant of the Apenheul, on his shoulder.*
  - Specific: *The youngest inhabitant of the Apenheul, this sweet little animal, jumped on Jan's shoulder; definiteness not always respected*

# Inclusion

- Many different combinations possible for the anchor and the appositive
- Generally speaking the appositive is as or more specific than the anchor
- Non-specific and non-specific must go together

# Attribution

- Anchor: All positions on the scale
- Appositive: Generic indefinite or generic individual concept ONLY
- Examples
  - Generic anchor: *The prism, a three-dimensional figure, is applied in optics.*
  - Specific anchor: *Piet's cone, a toy, is bright red.*
  - Non-specific anchor: *Jan wants to draw *a tetrahedron, a special polyhedron.**

# Application to non-nominal appositives



# Non-nominal appositives

- Only the anchor fits on the specificity scale
- Option is to look at stage-level vs. individual-level predicates
  - Individual-level predicates can be considered generic (e.g. Chierchia 1995)
  - Stage-level predicates are associated with non-generics
- Question: How do different types of anchors interact with different types of predicates and how can this be related back to Heringa's classes (if at all)?

# Prediction: Non-nominal appositives

- Non-nominal appositives are predicates
- Predicative appositives correspond to Heringa's attributive class
- Prediction: only individual-level (i.e. generic) APs and PPs should be possible

# Predicted results

Anchor	S-level AP/PP	I-level AP/PP
Generic definite class	*	✓
Generic indefinite	*	✓
Generic definite – individual concept	*	✓
Non-specific	*	✓
Specific indefinite	*	✓
Specific definite	*	✓
Specific – proper noun	*	✓

# Generic anchor /S-level apposition

- Generic definite class: incompatible
  - \**The dog, happy to have a meaty bone/on John's lap, is the most popular housepet in America.*
- Generic indefinite: incompatible
  - \**A dog, happy to have a meaty bone/on John's lap, may bite when provoked.*
- Generic definite individual concept: incompatible
  - \**The dog of the year, happy to have a meaty bone/on John's lap, is chosen from a pool of nominees.*



# Generic anchor/I-level apposition

- Generic definite class: okay
  - Scientists have relied on a few descriptions, preserved skins and the odd bone to describe *the dodo*, extinct for more than 300 years. (*New York Times* online, 4/7/06)
  - *The dog*, from the family Canidae, is known as man's best friend.
- Generic indefinite: okay
  - *Cockfighting*, illegal in the United States, involves specially bred roosters being put into a ring and urged to fight until one is crippled or killed. (*The Times* online, 8/2/11)
  - *A Hawaiian*, from the Hawaiian Islands, typically likes hot weather.
- Generic definite individual concept: okay
  - *The designer of the year*, generally passionate about fashion/ generally from one of the big houses, is chosen by a set of industry insiders.

# Non-specific anchor

- S-level appositive: okay
  - AP: A *puppy*, hungry for love, chased the children down the street.
  - PP: A *puppy*, in ecstasy over his new toy, chased the children down the street.
  
- I-level appositive: okay
  - AP: A *puppy*, loyal and true, chased the children down the street.
  - PP: A *puppy*, of a deep brown color, chased the children down the street.

# Specific anchor/S-level appositive

## ➤ Specific indefinite anchor: okay

- AP: *...a 69-year-old man, upset over a land dispute, started a fire that destroyed a 14th-century gate in Seoul...* (*The Times* online, 20/10/08)
- PP: I turned around and saw *a young man: slim, in a white robe with a white embroidered hat*. (*The Guardian*, 28/5/11)

## ➤ Specific definite anchor: okay

- AP: *Her socially ambitious mother, not content to see her daughter's conquests restricted to one side of the Atlantic, sends her to England.* (*The Times* online, 30/10/11)
- PP: *His wife, still in Panama, was tracked down by a journalist...* (*The Guardian* online, 9/3/11)

## ➤ Specific proper noun: okay

- AP: *Second Life, upset over the commercialisation of the online world, has established a virtual faction of terrorists.* (*The Times* online, 20/20/11)
- PP: Allen, who had moved to Massachusetts, and Gates, then at Harvard, set to work. (*The Times* online, 8/5/11)

# Specific anchor and I-level appositive

- Specific indefinite anchor: okay
  - AP: What has been visible since then is *a more familiar Mladic, arrogant and demanding*... (*The Guardian* online, 28/5/11)
  - PP: *At a checkpoint two miles outside, on the other road into the village, only police cars were allowed to pass.* (*The Guardian* online, 23/5/11)
  
- Specific definite: okay
  - AP: *The Iberworld aircraft, smaller than the A330, had just left Las Palmas to fly Norwegian tourists to Oslo...* (*The Times* online, 10/6/09)
  - PP: *The shooting, in a quiet farming village surrounded by vineyards and pomegranate orchards, happened on October 16, 2009.* (*The Times* online, 10/3/11)
  
- Specific proper noun: okay
  - AP: *Mrs. Grant, innocent of his activities, politely asked the policeman to call back later.* (*The Times* online, 19/6/04)
  - PP: *...Britain would expand its presence in the rebel stronghold of Benghazi, in the east of Libya...* (*The Times* online, 12/5/11)

# Overview of results

Anchor	S-level AP/PP	I-level AP/PP
Generic definite class	*	✓
Generic indefinite	*	✓
Generic definite – individual concept	*	✓
Non-specific	✓	✓
Specific indefinite	✓	✓
Specific definite	✓	✓
Specific – proper noun	✓	✓

# Conflict area

Anchor	S-level AP/PP	I-level AP/PP
Generic definite class	*	✓
Generic indefinite	*	✓
Generic definite – individual concept	*	✓
Non-specific	✓	✓
Specific indefinite	✓	✓
Specific definite	✓	✓
Specific – proper noun	✓	✓

# Source of conflict

- Predicative nominals are individual-level (Carlson 1977)
- Therefore, they are always generic – Heringa's assumption
- BUT, they can be stage-level (Weir 1986): *Rain clouds were a welcome sight.*
- Appositive version: *Rain clouds, a welcome sight on such a hot day, rolled in from the west.*

# Conflict resolution

Anchor	S-level NP
Non-specific	<i>Clouds, <u>a welcome sight on such a hot day</u>, rolled in from the west.</i>
Specific indefinite	<i>A <u>giant cloud, a welcome sight on a hot day</u>, blocked out the sun.</i>
Specific definite	<i><u>The cloud, a welcome sight on such a hot day</u>, opened up and poured down rain.</i>
Specific – proper noun	<i><u>Roger, a welcome sight in a a difficult situation</u>, walked into the room.</i>



# Summary

- Non-nominal appositives = attributive appositives
  - All three classes pattern together when considered in terms of stage- and individual-level predicates
  - Further evidence that non-nominal non-restrictive modifiers should be analyzed together with nominal appositives
  
- Apposition is a predication: anchor BE appositive
  - Combinations of anchor and predicate type are consistent with copular clauses
  - \*The dog is happy to have a fresh bone. (generic NP)

# Possible extension

- Appositives can be stacked (DeVries 2006, O'Connor 2008, Heringa 2011)
- The two appositives cannot appear in random order
- May be that individual-level must precede stage-level

*The clouds, mostly stratiforms, a welcome sight on such a hot day, spread across the sky.*

*?The clouds, a welcome sight, mostly stratiforms, spread across the sky.*

# Future research

- More detailed investigation of apposition types and the stage- / individual-level distinction
- In-depth study of stacked appositions and the factors involved
- Comparisons of nominal and non-nominal appositives along other dimensions