A Restrictive/Non-Restrictive Distinction in Possessive Nominals

JOSÉ BONNEAU, PIERRE PICA & TAKASHI NAKAJIMA
McGill University, CNRS-Paris, & Toyama University

1. Introduction

Kayne (1994) attempts to capture the fact that NRRC are not in the scope of the article at the level of semantic interpretation by assuming covert movement of the IP to Spec DP at this abstract level as in (2):

(1) \[ \text{DP [IP} [\text{CP} [\text{NP homme}] \text{] que [IP [VP je vois e1] ]}] \]
(\[ \text{DP} [\text{IP} \text{je vois e1}] [\text{CP} [\text{NP homme}] \text{] que [IP e1]}] \]) (NRRC only)

This amounts to saying that while (1) represents both RRC and NRRC at PF, the difference between (1) vs (2) represents the difference between RRC and NRRC at LF. This analysis is problematic in the light of Kayne (1998), according to which covert movement is not part of Ug, the most important cases of covert movement being restated in terms of overt syntactic operations.

Assuming that (1) is a common structure for both RRC and NRRC, we are led to suggest, much in the spirit of Kayne (1998), that, while (1) is the full fledged structure of RRC at PF; it is not the full fledged structure of NRRC at this level.

In the case of NRCC, we assume that overt movement of the remnant VP outside DP, followed by further movement of the whole DP, as illustrated in (3a) and (3b) respectively:

\[ \text{(3a)} \quad [\text{VP je vois e1}] [\text{DP} [\text{CP} [\text{NP homme}] \text{] que [IP [VP e1] ]}] \]
\[ \text{(3b)} \quad [\text{IP} [\text{CP} [\text{NP homme}] \text{] que [IP [VP e1] ]}] [\text{IP} [\text{je vois e1}] [\text{DP}]] \]

According to this analysis, RCC, and NRRC have a very different structure at Spell Out, at least in languages where NRCCs are signaled by an intonation break (see Safir (1986), among many others). While the fact that raising of the ‘Predicative Noun’ into the Spec of Comp in both NRRC and RCC (cf. Vergnaud, (1974)) might explain some similarities between the two constructions, we take the contrast between (1) on the one hand and (3.a) and (3.b) on the other hand, to be responsible for a series of contrasts between NRCC and RCC. (3.a) in particular expresses the fact that the relative clause acts ‘as if’ it is not in the scope of the Determiner. We take the difference between (1) and (3.b) to be responsible for various contrasts in the literature. As Kayne notes following Emonds, (1979), stacked relatives are only possible if all are RRC, or if all are restricted but the last:

(4) \[ \text{a. Le livre qui est sur la table, que j’ai lu hier (the book that is on the table, that I read yesterday)} \]

1 See Kayne (1998) for a general hypothesis concerning the functional categories that could trigger these movements, which we adopt from Kayne.

2 See also section 32 below, where it is suggested that the movement illustrated in (3.b) might be triggered by PF features not accessible to semantic interpretation.
2.2 Restrictive vs Non-Restrictive Possessive Constructions

Our analysis in terms of overt movement of the distinction between NRRC and RRC suggests that there is much more structure above DP than what is usually assumed in the literature. This point was already suggested by the properties of Possessive Nominals (see in particular Kayne (1993), (1994). Extending Szabolcsi’s (1981), (1994)’s analysis of Hungarian Noun phrases, Kayne (1994) proposes that the structure of a Possessive Nominal like (7) is close to that illustrated in (8):

(7) la table/mère de Jean
(lit. ‘the table/mother of Jean’)
(Jean’s table/mother)

(8) [DP la [CP [NP table/mère] de [IP Jean e;]]]

This amounts to saying that Possessive Nominals with ‘de’ have a structure akin to that of RRC, and that the possessed noun has moved into the Spec of ‘de’, now interpreted as a nominal complementizer. Kayne’s analysis of possessive constructions raises the question of whether Possessive Nominals, akin to NRRCs exist. We would like to claim that they do, and that they correspond to Possessive Nominal’s constructions involving the element ‘à’, illustrated by (9):

(9) la table à Jean
(lit. ‘the table to Jean’)
(Jean’s table)

Let us suggest, extending our analysis of NRRC to NRR Possessive Constructions (NRRPC), that the structure corresponding to (9) involves an overt movement of the N to Spec CP as in (10):

(10) [DP la [CP [NP table] à [IP [NP Jean e;]]]]

This operation, which amounts an extension of Vergnaud’s raising analysis of RC to nominal constructions is, in our terms subject to further overt movement of the remnant NP [Jean e;] outside DP, as illustrated in (11.a), followed by further movement of whole DP, as illustrated in (11.b):

(11) a. [NP Jean e;] [DP la [CP [NP table] à [IP [NP e;]]]]
   b. [DP la [CP [NP table] à [IP [NP e;]]]] [NP Jean e;] [DP]

In (11.a) the NP following the complementizer like element ‘à’ is not in the scope of the article, much as the VP is not in the scope of the article in the NRRC in (3.a). Note that, as expected under the present analysis, ‘à’ is clearly intonationally set off in (12.a), where ‘voisin de table’ is not inalienably possessed by ‘Jean’ while this is not the case with ‘de’ in (12.b):

(12) a. le voisin de table à Jean
   (lit. ‘the neighbor at the table to Jean’)
   b. le voisin de table de Jean
   (lit. ‘the neighbor at the table of Jean’)

That is, while NRRPC pattern with NRRC, Restrictive Relative Possessive Nominals (RRPN) pattern with RRC.

3. On the Restrictive vs Non-Restrictive Distinction

3.1 On Restrictive vs Non Restrictive Possessive Nominals

Our general hypothesis captures in structural terms the traditional intuition according to which Possessive Nominals are related to Relative Clauses (cf. Benveniste (1960a), among others). We would like to draw a parallelism between the restrictive vs. non restrictive interpretation of relative clauses, and the inalienable and alienable interpretations of Possessive Nominals: While in RCC the head of the relative forms a complex predicate bound by D° (a relation which can be mediated by a ‘that’ complementizer in English), while in NRRC the D° bounds the Noun alone and the NRRC is predicated and the whole relative clause is predicated of the whole DP (cf. McCawley (1981); Stowell (1981); and Larson & Segal (1995), for a brief survey of what is at stake.

We would like to suggest NRRCs, just like NRRPCs, express a permanent (inalienable) relation between two entities. This is not the case of...
RRCs and RRPNs which express a non-permanent (alienable) relation. Note moreover that the observation that NRRC does not allow indefinite in Possessive Nominals, as illustrated in (13):\(^3\)

\[(13)\]
\[
a. \text{un livre à un enfant}
   \quad (\text{'a book to a child'})
b. ? un livre à l'enfant
   \quad (\text{'a book to the child'})
c. *le livre à un enfant
   \quad (\text{the book to a child})
d. le livre à l' enfant
   \quad (\text{'the book to the child'})
\]

That our general analysis is on the right track is supported by the fact that NRRPC favors strongly inalienable possession, as illustrated by (14), inspired from Kayne (1994):

\[(14)\]
\[
a. *\text{la conférence à hier}
   \quad (\text{the conference to yesterday})
b. la conférence d'hier
   \quad (\text{the conference of yesterday})
\]

Note that one can hardly speak of 'possession' in (14.b) where the relation between 'conférence' and 'hier' seems reducible to predication, as already expressed by Benveniste’s concept of ‘appartenance’.\(^4\) It is conceivable,

\(^3\) Example (13) is reminiscent of (i) bellow:

\[(i)\]
\[
\text{un mur, qui est rouge, s'est écroulé}
   \quad (\text{a wall which is red, fell apart})
\]

where 'un' needs to be interpreted as a partitive. Note that the hypothesis according to which NRRC expresses a permanent (inalienable) property is supported by (ii) bellow:

\[(ii)\]
\[
?*\text{le mur, qui est en face de moi à ce moment-ci, est rouge}
   \quad (\text{the wall, which is in front of me at this moment, is red})
\]

If one assumes that DP raising expresses the fact that NRRCs do not form a new NP, that is, are not part of the Noun Phrase, then the constraint on stacking follows. See for a configurational approach, Kayne (1994)'s Chapter 3 according to which stacking of NRRC is blocked by illicit movement of a predicate out of a left branch (in the terms of the present analysis, by illicit movement of something (the NRCC) contained in a Specifier).

\(^4\) See Benveniste (1962), who uses examples like 'la couleur de la forêt' (the color of the forest). Of interest here is the concept of 'non-possessable Noun', clearly related to natural elements in some Amerindian languages (see Crowely (1996) and Richards (1973), among many others. See also Bonneau & Pica (1996). Kayne develops an analysis according to which what Benveniste calls 'appartenance' constructions have to be analyzed in terms of relative clauses. From this point of view the fact that we do not find structures like (i) might be reducible to stacking constraints on NRRCs:

\[(i)\]
\[
*\text{l'imbecile de Jean de Paul}
   \quad (\text{l'imbécile de Jean de Paul})
\]

from the point of view developed in the text, that 'à' in NRPPC is associated with an empty element. This element moves to some higher position in a structure like (11.a), perhaps to allow long distance movement of 'Jean' in Spec CP, and further movement of the whole DP further up, much in the spirit of Kayne’s 1993’s analysis of auxiliary selection.\(^5\) If it is right that ‘avoir’ is the spell-out of ‘être+a’ as his analysis suggests, implementing the intuition of Benveniste (1960a), then it is not inconceivable that ‘à’ is the spell-out of ‘de+à’. This might in turn explain why ‘à’ is, in Possessive Nominals, restricted to human possessor (Kayne (1975), Milner (1978), Tremblay (1989), Bonneau & Pica (1996), among others), while no such a restriction seems to be observed with NRRC. This is illustrated in (15) which shows that the DP following ‘à’ cannot be an inanimate:

\[(15)\]
\[
\text{le pied à la table}
   \quad (\text{the foot of the table})
\]

The ungrammaticality of (15) strongly suggests that inalienable possession is associated with the concept of a permanent and active process, as strongly argued for in Bonneau & Pica (1996). The analogy we draw between RC and Possessive nominals allows us furthermore to account for the following contrast reminiscent of (4) of section 1, above:

\[(16)\]
\[
a. \text{la voiture de Pierre de Jean}
   \quad (\text{the car of Pierre of Jean})
b. *\text{la voiture à Pierre de Jean}
   \quad (\text{the car to Pierre of Jean})
\]

Example (16) shows that the stacking properties observed with RRC versus NRRC (see Emonds (1979)) can be reproduced within Nominal Possessive Constructions: While RRPC, that is constructions with 'de', do stack, constructions with NRPPC do not. More precisely NRPPC stacking is subject to the very same conditions that usual RRCs, as illustrated by (17), which should be compared with (4) above:

\[(17)\]
\[
a. *\text{la voiture à Pierre à Jean}
   \quad (\text{the car to Pierre to Jean})
\]

On the other hand it is conceivable that the ungrammaticality of such structures derives from some interpretative principles. We leave this topic aside, for further research.

\(^5\) On the fact that 'à' might not be in the same position as 'de', see Kayne (1998: 160, note 43), and Kayne (1975). A parallelism between 'de' and 'à' and 'avoir' and 'être' is already suggested in Milner, (1982).
believe that it does - and corresponds to a structure like (22.b) & (22.c), which illustrates the fact that ‘son’ is not in the Scope of D:<

\[ \text{(22.a) } [\text{DP D}^\circ [\text{CP son} \{ \alpha [\text{IP [naivre e_i]]}\}]] \]
(Raising of 'son' in Spec CP) \[ \Rightarrow \]
\[ [\text{livre e_i}] [\text{DP D}^\circ [\text{CP son} \{ \alpha [\{ e_i \} j] e_i] \}]] \]
(Raising of the remnant DP outside Spec DP) \[ \Rightarrow \]
\[ [\text{DP D}^\circ [\text{CP son} \{ \alpha [\{ e_i \} j] e_i] \}]] \]
(Raising of the whole DP)

We believe that this derivation where ‘à’ incorporates into ‘son’ corresponds to a meaning of a Non Restrictive Adjectival relative Clause within which ‘sa’ expresses inalienable possession.

Our analysis, which amounts to saying that there are two possessive adjectives ‘sa’ in French, corresponding respectively to a (restrictive) ‘pronominal possessive’ ‘sa’ and to a restricted ‘reflexive (adjectival) possessive’, is supported by the fact that long distance possessives akin the Scandinavian ‘sin’ can be detected in French, as first observed in Bonnieau & Pica (1996):

\[ \text{(23.a) } \text{L’on souhaite toujours que l’on dise du bien de sa femme} \]
(One always wishes that one praise (SUBJ) his (own) wife)
\[ \text{(b) } #\text{L’on souhaite toujours que Paul dise du bien de sa femme} \]
(One always wishes that Paul praise (SUBJ) his (own) wife)

The contrast illustrated in (23) is, in our terms, blocked by a specific element ‘Paul’ in (b) reminiscent of similar contrasts with long distance ‘soi’, which can only be detected with bare quantifier antecedents in French (see Pica (1982), (1984)).

\[ \text{If the analysis of so called ‘adjectival possessives’ is on the right track, one could say that ‘sa’ is a Non-Restrictive Possesses when it is associated with a relational Noun (such as body parts, kinship terms) or a Noun expressing social activities. } \]

This might explain the status of (24b), where the NRRC precedes the RRC. This hypothesis also explains the status of (24.a). The possessive associated with the kinship term ‘soeur’ is interpreted as a NRRC, as is ‘sa soeur à Jean’, but NRRC do not stack.\[ ^6 \]

\[ \text{\text{6 See also Pica (1998). The analysis developed in the text suggests that there is a parallelism between Possession and Reflexivization, as suggested in Pica (1992).} \]
\[ \text{\text{7 See the notion of ‘Personal Sphere’ in Bally (1926).} \]
\[ \text{\text{8 Example (24.a) is nevertheless grammatical in some dialects of French - where ‘à’ is not intentionally set off. We interpret this fact as indicating that for some speakers the ‘à + N’ phrase is interpreted as a kind of doubling of the clitic-like element ‘sa’. The analysis of (20.a) in the text might be extended to (i), which is ungrammatical for most speakers.} \]
\[ \text{\text{(i) Je connais la soeur qui est belle à Jean} \]

\[ \text{\text{9 See also Pica (1998). The analysis developed in the text suggests that there is a parallelism between Possession and Reflexivization, as suggested in Pica (1992).} \]
\[ \text{\text{7 See the notion of ‘Personal Sphere’ in Bally (1926).} \]
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mother. Put in syntactic terms, the quantifier is interpreted within the scope of the determiner associated with the 'head' of the relative clause. The quantificational reading on the other hand corresponds to an interpretation where the quantificational element can take scope over the D*, perhaps by overt movement to the Specifier of a Distributive Phrase as in Kayne (1998). These contrast pattern together with the contrast between (25) and (28):

(28) Jean a parlé avec tout le monde qu’il connaissait
(John has spoken with everybody he knew)

This is reminiscent of our observation that in (3.a) the relative clause acts ‘as if’ it is not in the scope of the Determiner. Let us assume that the last movement (3.a) is triggered by PF features (related to word order). If this kind of feature is not accessible to semantic interpretation, we can derive the facts alluded to above in a straightforward fashion. In a more general way the parallelism between Relative Clauses and Possessive Nominals supports our claim that both constructions involve the same general mechanisms made available by UG.

4. On Restrictive vs Non Restrictive Adjectives in French

If we assume as in Kayne (1994) (see also Smith (1964)) that adjectives involve RC constructions, we expect to find a restrictive vs. non-restrictive distinction in this syntactic area too. That is, we expect all adjectives to enter in a common structure, as illustrated in (29):

(29) [DP D* [CP [AP grand;1] [IP [NP pays c1]]]] (RC + NRRC)

One further expects that overt movement of the remnant NP outside DP, followed by movement of the whole DP, as illustrated in (30a) and (30b) respectively:

(30) a. [NP pays c1] [DP le [CP [AP grand;1] [IP [NP c1]]]]

b. [DP le [CP [AP grand;1] [IP [NP c1]]]] [IP pays c1]

That this might indeed be the case is suggested by the following examples where 'grand' must be interpreted as ‘great’ in (31.b), hereby expressing an inalienable (non restrictive) property of ‘Paul”, while it is most naturally interpreted as 'big' in (31.a), where it expresses an alienable property. 10

10 See Bonneau & Pica (1996) for a larger class of examples.

11 We would like to suggest that while (31.a) in the text illustrates stacking, (31.b) does not, as the ungrammaticality of (i) suggests.
(31) a. le grand pays de Paul  
    (the big country of Paul)  
    b. le grand pays à Paul  
    (lit. the great country to Paul)  
    (Paul's great country)  

That is, we would like to suggest that a certain class of adjectives expresses inalienable properties when they are employed with social noun or kinship terms such as 'pays' 'mère' etc., which are inherently non-restrictive (see Benveniste (1960b)). Interestingly this non-restrictive adjective seems to express permanent (non-specific) properties and are compatible with long distance reflexivization as illustrated by (32) where 'grand' must be interpreted as 'big' (non restrictive) in (32.b), not as 'great' (restrictive) in (32.a):\(^{12}\)

(32) a. On n' souhaite toujours que les gens disent du bien de son grand pays  
    (One always wishes that people praise (SUBJ) his great country)  
    b. *On n' souhaite toujours que Paul dise du bien de son grand pays  
    (One always wishes that people say praise (SUBJ) his big country)  

5. Conclusion

While the analysis developed in the text leaves many areas unexplored, it suggests clearly that the very same mechanisms are playing a role in what used to be considered distinct constructions of the Grammar. If the analysis developed in the text is on the right track, the very same Restrictive/Inalienable versus Non-Restrictive/Inalienable distinction seems to play a role in various types of Relative Clauses, Possessive Nominals and Adjectival Constructions, as well as in the process of Reflexivization.

\(^{(i)}\) * le grand pays à l'homme que je connais  
    (The great country to the man that I know)  

That is, as suggested in note (6) above 'a+N' seems, in some constructions, to play a mere role of identification of the relative clause Possessor, as in clitic doubling construction. Perhaps related is 'mon ami à moi' ('my friend to me'). This suggests that the absence of stacking with NRC might be due to an interpretative according to which NRC establish an unique relation between two objects x and y and that inalienable relationship holds of two objects only (as opposed to part-whole relationship). We hope to be able come back to this topic in the next future.\(^{12}\) See on that matter which suggests some relationship between Possession and Reflexivization (as suggested in note 6), Pica (1982), Pica (1985) and Pica & Tancredi, (1988).

\(^{13}\) See for a discussion, Higginbotham (1995,) among others.
7. References


