

**A sheyne vertl:  
What Yiddish can tell us about adjectival modification**

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## The plan

- The syntax and semantics of attribution
- Concord in the DP
- The source(s) of attribution
- Attribution is attribution is attribution
  - A slight tangent
- Conclusions

## But first...

- ...Some terms:
  - Attributive adjective
  - Predicative adjective
  - Reduced relative clause (RRC)
  - Cinquean RRC
  - (Direct modification adjective)

# **The Syntax and Semantics of Attribution**

## The syntax and semantics of attribution

- Consistently different compared to predicative adjectives
- All attributives seem to behave the same
- Proposal: JOIN attaches to all and only attributive adjectives and is source of unique behaviour

## RCs vs RRCs

- What is a reduced relative clause?
  - Like a relative clause but smaller...
- Ross (1972) refers to a “well-known and uncontroversial rule” to derive reduced relatives from full relatives – Whiz deletion
  - However, Hudson (1973) and (Stanton 2010) show that full and reduced relatives are different in some ways

## RCs vs. RRCs vs. As

- a. a **proud** (\*of his son) man
- b. a man who is **proud** (of his son)
- c. a man **proud** \*(of his son)

- a. the **utter**/\*afraid fiend
- b. the fiend **who is** \*utter/afraid
- c. the fiend **more** \*utter/afraid than any other

- a. elke [voor gehandicapten **ongeschikt**\*(-e)] villa
  - b. elke villa **die voor gehandicapten** ogeschikt\*(-e) is
  - c. ?elke villa [**ongeschikt**\*(-e) voor gehandicapten]
- 
- a. de **op zo'n soort parcours** waarchijnlijkst (\*het) snelst-e marathonloper
  - b. de marathonloper **die op zo'n soort parcours** waarschijnlijk \*(het) snelst is
  - c. ? de marathonloper **waarschijnlijk** \*(het) snelst op zo'n soort parcours

## RCs vs. RRCs vs. As

- (R)RCs  $\neq$  As:

(R)RCs	As
Allow a wider range of predicates (including APs, PPs and participles)	Only allow AP and participial forms
May or must take complements	Disallow complements in English
Disallow non-predicative adjectives (intersective or nonintersective)	Allow non-predicative adjectives
No ordering preferences	Some As exhibit ordering preferences
Require particular determiners or quantifiers in English (RRCs only)	Not restricted in terms of the determiners they may appear with
Do not have to satisfy the head-final filter in Dutch	Must satisfy the head-final filter in Dutch
Do not take a declensional schwa in Dutch	Must take a declensional schwa in the appropriate contexts
Require or preferably appear with <i>het</i> -superlatives	Disallow <i>het</i> -superlatives



## Adjective ordering and scope

- Some attributive adjectives are subject to (violable) ordering preferences:
  - e.g. the big black bag; a beautiful old house
- Other adjectives are not
  - However, non-ordered adjectives seem always to take scope

## Scope-taking adjectives

### 1. 'Sortal' interpretation:

- Found when violating ordering preferences,  
e.g. I like the black big bag (not the blue one)

### 2. Inherently scope-taking, 'modal' adjectives:

e.g. the <former> famous <former> actress; the <fake> metal <fake> gun

### 3. Participial (?) adjectives

- e.g. <frozen> chopped <frozen> chicken

(Svenonius 1994)

## Scope-taking relatives?

- Not so much
  1. ‘Sortal’ interpretation:
    - Relatives don’t display ordering preferences
    - Any sortal interpretation that might be found tends to be a) left-to-right (so not true scope) and b) easily cancellable
  2. Inherently scope-taking, ‘modal’ adjectives:
    - Modal adjectives tend to be disallowed in relatives
    - Those that are allowed do not exhibit scope when stacked

## Scope-taking relatives?

### 3. Participial (?) adjectives

Introducing...

- “Our (new/finest/whatever) chicken frozen in the Arctic tundra, chopped by Japanese masterchefs”
  - An order of events, but not the same as scope
  - Compare: our (new/finest/whatever) chicken frozen in the Arctic tundra and chopped by Japanese masterchefs
- 
- Overall, there appear to be no scope effects. The interpretation of (R)RCs suggests coordination, as does the intonation

## Attribution

- Truswell 2004: Attributive modification isn't (always) intersective
  - While non-modal adjectives + noun describe a subset of entities denoted by noun, modal adjectives + N describe a subset of a superset: e.g. *apparent problem*
  - Scope matters for at least some adjectives
    - chopped frozen chicken vs. frozen chopped chicken
- $\theta$ -identification (Higginbotham 1985) involves conjunction and is essentially symmetrical – it won't be able to derive scope between adjectives

## JOIN

- We need an operation that combines things asymmetrically (that reflects the syntax?)
- Truswell 2004: JOIN (see also Chierchia and Turner 1988 and Baker 2003)
  - Changes semantic type for an attributive adjective
  - Ensures semantic scope matches syntactic scope
- JOIN is the source of attributive modification; it is found on all and only attributive modifiers (whether we see it or not) (Belk 2017)

## Interim summary

- Attribution seems to be inherently scope taking
  - For AOR-abiding adjectives, this effect is masked
- Predication seems to be symmetrical
- The source of this difference is JOIN

# Concord in the DP



## Concord

- A lot of variation: case, gender, number, attributive-ness

- All, e.g. Latin

H-i can-is nigr-is tr-ia magn-i sunt

These-M.NOM.PL dog-3.M.NOM.PL black-3.M.NOM.PL three-3.M.NOM.PL

large-2.M.NOM.PL are-PL

- Adjectives more than others, e.g. French

C-es trois chien(ne)s noir(e)s sont grand(e)s

These-PL three dogs-(F).PL black-(F).PL are big-(F).PL

- Adjectives less than others? E.g. English

These three black dogs are big

- Attributive only, e.g. German

Dies-e drei schwarz-en Hunde sind groß

These-NOM.PL three black-WK.PL dogs are big-Ø

## Concord vs. agreement

- Ackema and Neeleman (2019), Norris (2014): concord (as opposed to agreement) = “the spell-out of features of an XP on terminals in an XP”
  - It is not feature matching
- They use spell-out rules to demonstrate that agreement in DP is best analysed as concord (and that concord can occur outside DP)

## A closer look at Dutch

	Indef.		Def	
	Sing.	Pl.	Sing.	Pl.
<b>Neut.</b>	een groot paard	grot- <b>e</b> paarden	<b>het</b> grot- <b>e</b> paard	<b>de</b> grot- <b>e</b> paarden
	a big horse	big-E horses	the big-E horse	the big-E horses
<b>Common gender</b>	een grot- <b>e</b> koe	grot- <b>e</b> koeien	<b>de</b> grot- <b>e</b> koe	<b>de</b> grot- <b>e</b> koeien
	a big-E cow	big-E cows	the big-E cow	the big-E cows

De drie zwart-**e** honden zijn groot.  
the three black-E dogs are big

## A closer look at German

- German strong adjectival inflection is analysed as an overt realization of Join (schwa) plus the following featural spell-outs:
 

a. [DAT GND-FEM] $\leftrightarrow$ /r/	e. [GND-FEM] $\leftrightarrow$ /i/	i. [DAT] $\leftrightarrow$ /m/
b. [GEN GND-FEM] $\leftrightarrow$ /r/	f. [DAT PL] $\leftrightarrow$ /n/	j. [GEN] $\leftrightarrow$ /s/
c. [ACC GND] $\leftrightarrow$ /n/	g. [GEN PL] $\leftrightarrow$ /r/	k. [PL] $\leftrightarrow$ /i/
d. [DAT GND] $\leftrightarrow$ /m/	h. [GND] $\leftrightarrow$ /r/	l. $\emptyset \leftrightarrow$ /s/
- Determiner inflection involves just the spell-out rules above, plus a vowel
- For weak inflection, fewer spell-out rules

## Yiddish 101

- Germanic language, ~1000 yr history
  - Influences from Slavic, Semitic, Romance
- Pre-War: lingua franca of European Jews, est. 10,000,000 speakers
- Now: est. 750,000-1.5 mill. speakers, almost all ultra-Orthodox
  - Lingua franca in Hasidic (and to some extent Haredi) world
- **Massive** language change over last 2-3 generations (Belk, Kahn & Szendroi, to appear)

## A closer look at Klal (Standard) Yiddish

	Nom.	Acc.	Dat.
Masc.	der gut-er	dem gut-n	
Fem.	di gut-e		der gut-er
Neut. Indef.	(a) gut-Ø		
Neut. Def.	dos gut-e		dem gut-n
Plural	di gut-e		

- No weak inflection
- System a mix of Dutch and German, plus some impoverishment?

- No marking on predicative adjectives; “exceptionally frequent” use of nominalizations (Lockwood 1995)

Di dray shvarts-e hint zenen groys  
The-PL three black-PL dogs are big

Di hint zenen groyse  
the-PL dogs are big-PL

Der hunt iz a groys-\*(er)  
the-M.NOM dog is a big-M.NOM

## A closer look at Contemporary Hasidic Yiddish

	Nom.	Acc.	Dat.
Masc.	de gut-e		
Fem.			
Neut. Indef.			
Neut. Def.			
Plural			

- No case or gender (Belk, Kahn and Szendroi, to appear)
- Writing: determiner form varies, adjective always -e
- Attributive adjectives always –e, predicative adjectives always -∅
- -e only appears consistently on adjectives, not Det, Dem...  
 De dray shvarts-e hint zenen groys  
 The three black-E dogs are big-∅

## JOIN can condition inflectional morphology

- Hasidic Yiddish adjectival morphology does not look like concord
  - “Presence of attributive adjective” is not a feature of DP
  - No other features of DP (case, gender, number) condition its appearance
- Instead: straightforward reflex of JOIN
  - Indicates attributive relationship to the noun



## Interim summary

- Patterns of concord and inflection vary widely
- Some are plausibly analysed as reflexes of JOIN
- Hasidic Yiddish is a particularly clear-cut example; no concord

# **The Source(s) of Attribution**

## Question

- How closely are attribution and predication related?
- Can we derive one from the other?

## How many sources of attributive adjectives?

- There are three basic options:
  - Attributive and predicative adjectives all have the same source (e.g. Smith 1964)
  - Some attributives share a source with (some?) predicatives (e.g. Larson 2000, Cinque 2010)
  - Attributives and predicatives have separate sources (e.g. Bolinger 1967, Belk 2017)
- My proposal: attributives are not derived from predicatives (or vice versa) – they have a single source distinct from predication

## What are some possible sources?

- In general, attributive adjectives are argued to be derived from (full or reduced) relative clauses
  - E.g. Smith 1964, Larson 2000, Cinque 2010
- Belk 2017:
  - Attributives and predicatives are syntactically distinct (i.e. not derived from each other via movement and/or deletion)
  - They also relate to the noun in different ways: predicates use  $\theta$ -identification (Higginbotham 1985), attributes use an operator, JOIN (Truswell 2004)

## Some predictions

- If attributives are always or sometimes derived from predicatives, we would expect attributives to behave the same as predicatives in important ways, at least some of the time.
- If attributives have a single distinct source, we would expect them to behave consistently differently to predicatives.
- This means that if attributives and predicatives consistently behave differently, Smith, Larson and Cinque have to explain why.

**Attribution is Attribution is Attribution**

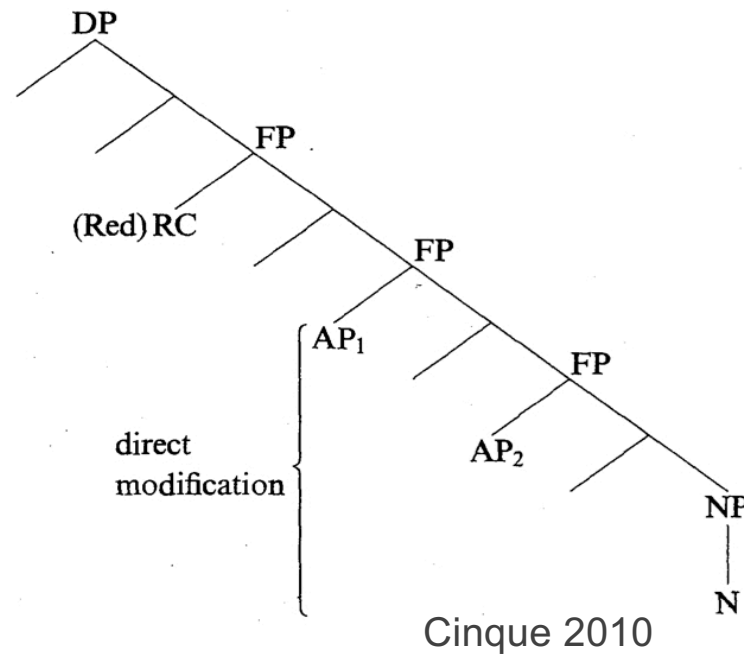
## Deriving attributives from predicatives

- Cinque 2010: attributive adjectives have two sources, direct modification and reduced relative clauses (RRCs)

Direct modification	RRCs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ordering requirements or preferences</li> <li>• individual-level</li> <li>• nonintersective</li> <li>• absolute reading (among other properties)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• free ordering with respect to each other</li> <li>• stage-level</li> <li>• intersective</li> <li>• relative (to a comparison class) reading (among other properties)</li> </ul>



## Two sources of attributives?



Germanic order: Prenominal As  
base-generated.

Romance order: Derived  
through roll-up movement of the  
noun through the direct  
modification adjectives and the  
reduced relative clauses.

## Adjectives as reduced relative clauses

- This approach has a few problems.
- If we can't tell when a given adjective is DM or RRC, we can't make good predictions about their behaviour:
  - The bus is big.                      The bus is red.  
    the big red bus                      \*the red big bus
- It also relies on there being similarities between (some) attributives and reduced relative clauses.
  - But we've seen that this isn't obviously true

## Relatives in Hasidic Yiddish

- Full relatives: roughly like English. Never have –e.  
e.g. De hint vos zenen shvarts zenen (okhet) groys.  
the dogs that are black-Ø are (also) big-Ø.
- Reduced relatives: roughly like English. Require complement. Never have –e.  
e.g. A man ful mit nakhes iz a sheyne zakh  
a man full-Ø with pride (in offspring) is a beautiful-E thing
- Predicative adjectives always disallow –e.

## Hasidic attributive ayin as a test for predication

- If attributive adjectives can be derived from RRCs, we might predict that these (predicative) adjectives would not allow attributive ayin.

But...

- All attributive adjectives in Hasidic Yiddish require attributive ayin
- Pattern supports earlier observations that attributive adjectives behave as a homogeneous class

## Interim summary

- The behavior of full and reduced relatives in Yiddish is like that of other Germanic languages
- Inflectional patterns in Hasidic Yiddish support the idea that attributives form a homogeneous class and are not derived from relative clauses

**A slight tangent**

## Two sources of adjectives?

*stage-level > individual-level > N > stage-level*  
(Larson 1998 pp.155–6)

- Every VISIBLE visible star
- \*Every visible VISIBLE star
- Every visible star VISIBLE (Cinque 2010, p.19)

*individual-level > N > individual-level > stage-level*

- una posizone invidiabile (oggie anco più INVIDIABILE  
*a position enviable (today even more) enviable*)
- \*una posizione (oggi ancor più) INVIDIABILE invidiabile
- un invidiabile posizione (oggi ancor più) INVIDIABILE (Cinque 2010 p.21)

## How can we tell when we're (not) dealing with an RRC?

- What's going on with *visible stars visible*?
- ...I don't think the second *visible* is an RRC.
  - No complement (normally required in RRCs)
  - Restricted to certain adjectives and fixed expressions
  - Only possible with certain determiners
    - Every/\*a/\*the/\*three/the three star(s) visible
    - Every/a/the/three/the three man/men proud of his/their son(s)
  - (R)RCs are actually ambiguous!
    - We looked at every star (that was) <generally> visible <that night>



## No answers from Yiddish

- Yiddish, like Dutch, German, does not have an equivalent construction
- We can't use the attributive ayin (or the declensional schwa) to tell whether they are attributive or predicative
  - (This itself suggests they are not straightforward RRCs)
- My best guess: attributive, akin to Romance pre-nominal adjectives
- At any rate, **big problem** for RRCs-as-APs analyses

# Conclusions

## Conclusions

- Attributive adjectives demonstrate syntactic, semantic and morphological behavior that is distinct from predicative adjectives and (R)RCs
- This behaviour is homogeneous across the class of adnominal adjectives
- Proposal: JOIN is the source of this behavior
- JOIN has an overt reflex in the adjectival inflection of Hasidic Yiddish

## Conclusions

- Overall, there is no evidence that any attributives are derived from relatives and lots of evidence that they are their own homogeneous class of modifier
- Any attempt to derive attributives would have to explain these differences
- ...This is especially true of analyses where attributives are argued to have multiple sources

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