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The Discourse Function of Appositives

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1. Introduction[1]

The maximality/uniqueness effect of e-type pronouns was first noticed by Evans 1977. In (1), for example, the pronouns them refers to *all* of Mary's friends, whereas the pronoun she implies that there is a unique doctor in Manchester:

(1)(a) Mary has many friends. She invited them to her birthday-party.
(b) There is a doctor in Manchester. She is Welsh.

The same maximality/uniqueness effect shows up with appositives as well, as shown in (2). Leftists is predicated of *all* of Mary's friends, whereas the phrase a Welsh woman, or even just Welsh, implies the uniqueness of the Manchester doctor:

(2)(a) Mary has many friends, leftists no doubt.
(b) There is a doctor in Manchester, a Welsh woman.
(c) There is a doctor in Manchester, Welsh I think.

This parallelism between e-type pronouns and appositives is problematic for approaches to e-type pronouns such as Evans 1977, 1980, Cooper 1979, Kadmon 1990 and Heim 1990. Under these approaches, the maximality/uniqueness effect is due to the definiteness of the pronoun, i.e. to its role "of referring to the object(s), if any, which verify the antecedent quantifier-containing clause" (Evans 1980, p. 340).[2] The same criticism extends to Sells 1985, who treats relative pronouns as

e-type pronouns. As he shows, (3) below, his (44a), makes a statement about the totality of each farmer's sheep. Sells attributes the maximality effect to the anaphoric quality of the relative pronoun.

(3) Each farmer owns some sheep, which the State buys in the Spring.

In the case of appositive NPs, there are no pronouns to attribute the maximality/uniqueness effect to. Neither can this effect be attributed to the referential properties of the appositive. Appositive NPs, as will be shown below, are predicates rather than referring expressions. Moreover, they need not even be marked as singular in order to give rise to uniqueness, as (2c) above shows.

2. Appositives as predicates

NPs in apposition are subject to restrictions that apply to predicate nominals, not to NPs in argument position.

Firstly, the prohibition against quantification over individuals, which applies to predicate nominals, applies to appositives as well. The example in (4a) is from Williams 1983, who claims that 'grow into ____' is a predicative position, and therefore does not allow quantification over individuals.[3] Quantification is not allowed in the appositive in (4b) either, which is accounted for if appositive positions are positions of predication:

(4)(a) An acorn grows into a tree/*every tree.
(b) The picture on the wall, a tree/*every tree, was made by Mary.

Secondly, as has been noted by Williams 1982, predicates allow i-within-i, which, according to Chomsky 1981, is not allowed within arguments. Relevant examples are shown in (5a,b). Again, appositives

are like predicates and unlike arguments in allowing i-within-i, as shown by (5c):

(5)(a) *[His$_i$ own worst enemy]$_i$ lost the elections again
(b) John$_i$ is [his$_i$ own worst enemy]$_i$
(c) John$_i$, [his$_i$ own worst enemy]$_i$, lost the elections again

In (5a), the NP in subject position can have no coreferential proper subpart. In other words, since the NP has index i, no subpart of it, in particular the pronoun his, can have the same index. In (5b), the same NP in main-predicate position allows a subpart with the same index. The same is true when the predicate is appositive. (6) is an additional example of the same phenomenon:

(6)(a) *The president met [representatives of themselves$_i$]$_i$
(b) John and Mary are [representatives of themselves$_i$]$_i$
(c) The president met John and Mary, [representatives of themselves$_i$]$_i$

Another argument for treating appositives as predicates is based on its being possible for some NPs in predicate position to appear without an article (see (7a)). In argument position, the article is obligatory. Appositives allow the structure which is special to predicate position. (7c) is from Quirk et al (1972:635):

(7)(a) We elected him President of the Union/leader of the Democratic group.
(b) George Washington, President of the Union, planted a cherry tree.
(c) Robinson, leader of the Democratic group on the committee, refused to answer the questions.

An additional argument is based on examples, again from Quirk et al. (1972:635), where the appositive is modified by adverbs, which normally modify predicates:

(8)(a) Norman Jones, then a student, wrote several best sellers.
(b) Your brother, obviously an expert on English grammar, is highly praised in the book I'm reading.
(c) Someone, maybe his wife, killed Bill.
(d) Mary, his girlfriend for two years, is the prime suspect.
(e) Maureen, normally a timid girl, spoke rudely to them at the party.
(f) They elected as chairman Martin Jones, also a Cambridge graduate.
(g) Many people, mostly women, like to dress up.

In that connection, a special class of modifiers should be noted, floated-quantifiers, which are sometimes treated as adverbs (see Dowty 1986, Roberts 1986) and mark collectivity on predicates. Floated quantifiers appear with appositives, which again lends strength to the claim that these are predicates:

(9) The men, both/some/all doctors, were awarded medals.

In the same connection, appositives are negated like predicates:

(10) Orville Wright, not Wilbur, made the first flight at Kitty Hawk.
(11)(a) ... to settle one of the historical controversies, though not the major one.
(b) His principal objective, which was the successful invasion of the Marianas, not the destruction of the Japanese fleet ... (from Norwood 1954)

Another argument is that numerals in appositive NPs give rise to the "exactly" effect typical of predicates:

(12)(a) Mary invited two musicians from New Orleans to have supper with her.
(b) Mary's guests were two musicians from New Orleans.
(c) Mary invited her guests, two musicians from New Orleans, to have supper with her.

The NP <u>two musicians from New Orleans</u> restricts the number of guests to exactly two when used in predicate position in (12b) and in apposition in (12c), but not when used in argument position in (12a).

Bare plurals also provide a predicate diagnostic. Bare plurals in argument position may refer to a kind as an individual (see Carlson 1979), but in predicate position they denote the extension of the kind. In appositive position, the denotation is not to the individual, therefrom the difference in meaning between (13a) and (13b):

(13)(a) John and Bill, students from abroad, do not like poetry.
(b) Students from abroad do not like poetry.

Finally, appositives may be property denoting phrases other than NP, such as VP, AP, PP and CP:

(14)(a) Many people, including my sister, won't forgive him for that.
(b) John, drowsy with drugs, immediately fell asleep.
(c) John, in a state of stupor, could not answer any of the questions.
(d) John, who was standing on a stool, reached the upper shelf.

Just as with predicates, conjunction of mixed categories is possible, contrary to its impossiblity in argument position:

(15)(a) John is an unskilled labourer and without any prospects for the future.
(b) John, an unskilled labourer and without any prospects for the future, decided to emigrate.
(c) * An unskilled labourer and without any prospects for the future decided to emigrate.

To conclude, appositives show characteristics of phrases which function in predication. When names are used in apposition, they show the same ambiguity as in predicate position. Mary Smith in (16a) can in certain contexts refer to the person, and in other contexts predicate a name of the referent provided by the subject. The same is true in (16b):

(16)(a) She is Mary Smith.
(b) I helped a student of mine, Mary Smith, with her homework.

3. Close apposition

In contrast to appositives considered above, which are sometimes called "loose" appositives, NPs in "close" apposition, as in (17), fulfill only a partial function of predicates, that of restrictive modification:[4]

(17)(a) Lawrence the writer
(b) my friend the pensioner

Close apposition is restrictive, as can be seen from the contrast in (18):

(18)(a) Clinton the president is different from Clinton the candidate.
(b)# Clinton, the president, is different from Clinton, the candidate.

An NP in close apposition cannot refer, unlike loose appositives. The loose appositive the writer in (19b) corefers with previous discourse, but this is impossible for the close appositive in (19c):

(19) Tonight I wish to speak of two artists who have died of tuberculosis, one a writer and one a painter. (Hockett 1955)
(a) The writer died in 1930.
(b) Lawrence, the writer, died in 1930.
(c) #Lawrence the writer died in 1930.

4. The discourse status of apposition

Having established that appositives are predicates, the next question is what are they predicated of. Consider for example (2a), repeated below:

(2)(a) Mary has many friends, leftists no doubt.

The property leftists is not predicated of the NP many friends to which it is in apposition. Rather, the subject of that property is calculated based on the maximal set of friends *of Mary's*. In other words, in calculating the subject for the property leftists, it is not enough to take in to account the denotation of the quantifier many friends it is in apposition to. The nuclear scope of that quantifier has to be taken into the calculation as well; in the present example, it is the property ∃x(Mary "has" x).

As an additional example consider again (8c):

(8)(c) Someone, maybe his wife, killed Bill.

The application (under the appropriate modality) of the property of being Bill's wife is not to someone, but to the singleton (by maximality/uniqueness) set calculated on the basis of the quantifier someone's nuclear scope as well, the property ∂x(x killed Bill).

There are also other arguments for maintaining that appositives are not predicated of the NPs they are in apposition to. Emonds 1979 and McCawley 1982 have adduced such arguments based on the observation due to Ross 1967 that appositives are not "in the scope of" the NPs they are in apposition to:

(20) One/*Every/*No friend of mine, the owner of a Cadillac, is coming for a visit

Actually, as noted by Jackendoff 1977, appositives are not in the scope of any quantifier in the sentence:

(21) One/*Every/*No friend of mine owns a Cadillac, his favourite car.

Immunity to quantification does not hold under modal subordination. Examples can be constructed, as are the following examples adapted from Sells 1985, where modal operators, hidden (as in (22a, b) or explicit, (22c), can take scope over the appositives. I refer the reader to treatments of modal subordination such as Roberts 1986.

(22)(a) Every chess set comes with a spare piece, a pawn.
(b) Every new student is assigned a tutor, an older undergraduate.
(c) Every rice farmer in Korea owns a wooden cart, usually a rickety old thing.

These observations led Sells 1985, following Emonds 1979 and McCawley 1982, to interpret non-restrictive relative clauses as the

interpretation of a following independent clause. Thus, (23a) and (23b) receive the same interpretation:

(23)(a) John met an interesting person. She is a friend of Mary's.
(b) John met an interesting person, who is a friend of Mary's.
(c) John met an interesting person, a friend of Mary's.

But at least in the case of an appositive NP, as in (23c), there is no syntactic justification for introducing a pronoun.

I propose here a different approach, according to which both appositive predicates and sentences with e-type pronouns are viewed as examples of the same more general discourse phenomenon. Such an approach can be worked out in a variable-free semantics (as developed for example in Szabolcsi 1987 and Jacobson 1992). In this framework, a sentence containing a pronoun denotes a property. In particular, (23a) denotes the property of being a friend of Mary's (ignoring here the contribution of the pronoun's gender). But this is exactly the same property denoted by the appositive relative clause in (23b) and by the appositive NP in (23c). Examples (23a-c) contain therefore different syntactic realizations of the same property. The different realizations exemplify the same discourse phenomenon: the application of a property to its subject accross sentential boundaries. The property is realized outside of the sentence which contains its subject. And this is so since the denotation of the subject cannot in general be calculated on the basis of a single syntactic constituent of the sentence. Rather, the reference of the subject has to be calculated on the basis of the full sentence. E-type pronouns and apposition are, under the present view, two different syntactic means for marking their "antecedent" -- the quantifier whose restriction and nuclear scope are relevant for calculating the denotation of their subject.

Calculating the subject is based on two factors:

1. Determining the "antecedent" of the predicate, on the basis of the number and gender of the e-type pronoun, or on the apposition relation. In this case the antecedent is the quantifier an interesting person.

2. The antecedent an interesting person is not in itself the subject of the property ∂x(x is a friend of Mary's). Rather, the denotation of the subject for that predicate is calculated based on the restriction ∂x(x is an interesting person) of the antecedent, and its nuclear scope ∂x(John met x). I will leave the exact nature of this calculation open, since it has been already extensively debated in the e-type literature referred to above.

FOOTNOTES

1. For helpful comments I am grateful to Jonathan Ginzburg, Fred Landman, Anita Mittwoch, to the members of the Hebrew University Psycholinguistics Group and to the participants of the IATL Discourse Workshop.

2. Other approaches, for example Kamp 1981, Heim 1982 and Gawron, Nerbonne and Peters 1991, deny the truth-value relevance of uniqueness.

3. Partee 1987 offers a semantic explanation involving type shifting for the impossibility of quantification in predicate positions.

4. Close apposition differs form pre-head non-restrictive modifiers of names:
   (a) the writer Lawrence
   (b) the agnostic Huxley
   (c) democratic leader Robinson
   (d) financial expert Tom Timber
   (e) President Clinton

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