

MEANING-FORM CORRELATIONS AND ADJECTIVE POSITION IN SPANISH \*

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1. INTRODUCTION

This paper intends to deal with the empirical generalization in (1), which underlies the puzzling question of the putative correlation between meaning and syntax:

(1) In Spanish, a language in which adjectives appear pre and postnominally, there are systematic (although sometimes not easily describable) interpretive differences associated with the position of adjectives in these syntactic domains.

These differences in meaning can be provisionally described, as is usual in descriptive grammars, as an opposition between restrictive [R] and non-restrictive [NR] adjectives (I take into consideration mainly object-denoting nouns):

- (2) a. Encontré *las llaves viejas*.  
Lit. I found the keys old (i.e. The subset of keys which are old)
- b. Encontré *las viejas llaves*.  
Lit. I found the old keys (i.e. (I found certain keys) and they are rusty / and their most remarkable property is to be old)

There are other oppositions cross-cutting the opposition R vs. NR, which I will consider –for the sake of the argument and with the provisions below-- as subparts of the same general principle. Namely, I will assume, first, that modal adjectives have ‘implicit relative reading’ in postnominal position yet ‘direct modification meaning’ in

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the prenominal one. In the implicit relative reading vs. the direct modification reading -- the distinction is Larson's (2000a and b-- the adjective does not modify the noun directly but indirectly through an implicit relative clause. See (3):

- (3) a. Tuvo en cuenta *la salida posible* en la parte de atrás.  
 Lit. He considered the way out possible at the back side.  
 (He considered the way out as feasible / possible for him).
- a'. Atendió a todos *los visitantes posibles*.  
 He received all the visitors it was possible for him to attend.  
 [Implicit relative reading; Larson 2000b]
- b. Tuvo en cuenta *la posible salida* en la parte de atrás.  
 Lit. He considered the possible way out at the back side  
 (He considered the possible / potential way out at the back side)
- b'. Atendió a todos *los posibles visitantes*.  
 (He attended all the people that were possible visitors).  
 [Direct modification meaning; Larson 2000b]

I will also assume that non-intersective and intersective adjectives have preferred positions within DP, the prenominal and the postnominal ones, respectively:

- (4) a. El buen abogado  
 Lit. The good lawyer (good as a lawyer) [Non-intersective reading]
- b. El abogado bueno  
 Lit. The lawyer good (good as a human being<sup>1</sup>) [Intersective reading]

As a matter of fact, while it is generally accepted that intersective adjectives occur postnominally in Romance, since they are a subclass of predicative adjectives (Knittel 2005), it is not obvious what the situation is regarding non-intersective adjectives. At first sight it appears that adjectives like *bueno* 'good', *malo* 'bad' or *grande* 'big', clearly non-intersective when preceding an N, (5a), can also have this reading in postnominal position: (5a') is ambiguous between the intersective and the non-intersective reading. However, if we look at a larger set of data we find that the non-

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<sup>1</sup> Ambiguity also arises in this example, as I will say immediately.

intersective reading is standard in prenominal position (see (5b) vs. (5b')) and it survives in postnominal position mainly when the alternative reading is not possible for independent reasons (see (5c) vs. (5c')):

(5) a. *Búscate un buen abogado.*

Get a good lawyer (good as a lawyer)

a'. *Búscate un abogado bueno.*

Get a good lawyer (good as a lawyer / good person).

b. *Irina es una atractiva bailarina* (Ambiguous: 'attractive person' and 'attractive as a dancer'; preferred reading).

Irina is an attractive dancer.

b'. *Irina es una bailarina atractiva* (Only: 'attractive person').

c. *Fernando es un eficaz colaborador* (Only: 'efficient as a coworker')

'Fernando is an efficient coworker'

c'. *Fernando es un colaborador eficaz* ('efficient as a coworker', the only possible reading in both cases)

A way to dispense with these apparent problems is, first, to claim that the ambiguity in (5b) derives from the nominal and propose, following Larson 1998, that the source of the 'as a' reading is due to the fact that those in (5) are adjectives whose relative meaning comes as a result of event modification in NP/DP. Second, the presence of a non-intersective reading in (5a') can be considered as a singular fact, perhaps a result of rearrangement of the adjective by virtue of prosodic reasons.

It appears, then, that to correctly depict the whole paradigm some qualifications are in order. To address this question let us return to the R –NR distinction. Observe that there are examples like those in (6) in which, similarly to (5), it seems to be the case that both interpretations are allowed in postnominal position:

(6) a. *Los amigos pretenciosos de Laura llegaron tarde.*

Lit. The friends pretentious of Laura were late

(Ambiguous: A subset of the friends of Laura are pretentious, and: All the friends of Laura are pretentious)

b. *Los pretenciosos amigos de Laura llegaron tarde.*

Lit. The pretentious friends of Laura were late

(All the friends of Laura are pretentious).

Note, however, that such an ambiguity is present in very restricted contexts and that there appear to be semantic and pragmatic reasons triggering the shift from the R to an NR interpretation. In fact, (7a) appears as to be a potential counterexample to the generalization in (1) since only the NR interpretation appears postnominally:

(7) a. Me gusta tocar las manos suaves de María. [NR]

Lit. I like to touch the hands soft of Maria

b. Me gusta tocar las suaves manos de María. [NR]

Lit. I like to touch the soft hands of Maria

Contrast now (7) with (8):

(8) a. Me gusta tocar las manos suaves / los tejidos suaves. [R]

I like to touch the hands soft / the cloths soft

b. Me gustan mucho las suaves manos \*(de María) [NR] /

Lit. I like a lot the soft hands of Maria

Me gustan mucho los suaves tejidos \*(de la India).

Lit. I like a lot the soft fabrics of India

What (8a) shows is that the NR interpretation of the postnominal adjective in (7a) disappears when the possessive complement restricting the reference of the noun is absent. It is fair to think, then, that in ‘las manos suaves de María’, (7a), the postnominal adjective has a NR interpretation due to the fact that ‘las manos de María’ cannot have a subset. Moreover, (8b) suggests that an NR interpretation is difficult to obtain, even in prenominal position, when the referent cannot be identified as unique.

Additionally, (9) appears to be an exception to the generalization in (1) since an R interpretation can also be found in prenominal (and sometimes in marked postnominal) position, with certain adjectives:

(9) a. Las FÉRTILES [R] verdes praderas de Irlanda lo deslumbraron.

He was astonished by Ireland’s fertile meadows

b. Odio los vinos malos [R].

I hate the wines bad

Odio los malos [R] vinos.

I hate the bad wines (not the good ones)

c. Adora los coches rojos largos MARAVILLOSOS.

Pro adores the cars red long wonderful.

‘He/she adores magnificent long red cars’

Now, given their interpretation and phonological properties, one can claim that the prenominal/postnominal R adjectives in (9) are (contrastive) focus, both semantic and phonologically and thus are restricted by specific prosodic and syntactic conditions that are usually assumed to be obeyed by foci.

The conclusion that can be drawn from this set of data is that syntactic position determines semantic interpretation (Bolinger 1967, Bouchard 1998 and 2002, Larson 1998, a.o). Strictly speaking, in the case of the relation between nouns and modifying adjectives, there appear to be three canonical interpretations associated with three syntactic environments: R in postnominal position, NR in prenominal position and (restrictive) F in prenominal focus positions (there is still a second right-focus position which I will consider later on).

In this paper I try to give theoretical support to this preliminary conclusion. In the following sections, I provide some evidence for the hypothesis that there is a systematic (with the caveats just made) correlation between syntactic position and logical types of adjectives, where by ‘logical type’ I understand the elements of their meaning able to interact with the semantic structure of N’s. Pretheoretically speaking, the supposition I will take as a point of departure is that adjectives have a lexical meaning which ‘helps’ to produce a logical meaning, but the latter meaning is obtained configurationally.

Finally, another crucial working hypothesis is that when R or NR interpretations appear in non canonical positions this is due to ‘interferences’ from other factors, either semantic or pragmatic, external to the syntax of the noun-adjective relation.

## 2. LOGICAL TYPES OF ADJECTIVES AND MEANING RELATIONS IN PRE AND POSTNOMINAL POSITIONS

### 2.1. Logical types of adjectives

In languages in which adjectives appear both pre and postnominally, adjectives establish different meaning relations with N. Descriptively, we can say that *prenominal adjectives* “modify components internal to N” (Bouchard 1998). As it is obvious, this is a pretheoretical observation since I will not provide a fine-grained analysis of these internal components of the lexical structure of nouns. I will assume, with the minimal qualifications about to be stated below, that nouns contain referential and eventive variables that can be saturated by different types of predicates, and that they also contain a qualia structure (Pustejovsky 1995); both can be modified by adjectives.

The crucial point underlying the observation just made is that a given adjective can have different readings (R or Non-R) depending on the position it occupies. One way of approaching this double behavior is to think that its source is the semantic structure of the adjective. Alternatively, we might attribute the double reading to the semantic structure of N, to the extent that this structure is available to the adjective. The second step is the one that I take in this paper. This approach is consubstantial with the assumption that syntax plays a role in the composition of the meaning of phrases.

More specifically, in our idealization of the meaning relation between adjectives and nouns in prenominal syntactic position, the semantics of noun modification by adjectives can be described in the following four ways:

(a) As is the case in (10), adjectives can modify the *denotation assignment function* of Nouns, or even *the possible world*, and “indicate that some postulated assignment may not be in the present world or may even be false” (Bouchard 1998: 143-144). This is the case of ‘modal’ and ‘epistemic’ adjectives:

(10) el {posible, necesario, presunto, supuesto, falso, presumible} asesino  
 the {possible, necessary, alleged, supposed, false, presumed}murderer

(b) Adjectives can also, as in (11), modify *one or more central properties* of N<sup>2</sup>, asserting either that they are completely or exclusively satisfied by N, or that the noun – which must have a perfectly identified referent-- can efficiently fulfill such property/ies.

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<sup>2</sup> ‘Modifier of central properties’ is an informal way to describe what is usually called ‘reference modification’.

The first function corresponds to Quirk's 'restrictive' adjectives<sup>3</sup> like *perfecto* 'perfect', and to 'degree and quantifying' adjectives<sup>4 5</sup> like *verdadero* 'real', *simple* 'utter' or *completo* 'complete'; the second one corresponds to qualitative-evaluative adjectives like *bueno* 'good', *pequeño* 'little', *sagrado* 'sacred', *suave* 'gentle', *amable* 'kind', and color-form-taste adjectives like *verde* 'green', *ácido* 'acidic':

- (11) *restrictive and degree / quantifying adjectives*: {completo 'complete', rotundo 'total', perfecto 'perfect', verdadero 'true', simple 'simple', puro 'pure', mero 'mere', exclusivo 'exclusive', único 'only'} fracaso 'failure'.  
*qualitative – evaluative adjectives*: el {buen / pobre} abogado 'a good lawyer' (good with respect to his qualities as a lawyer) / 'the poor lawyer' (a lawyer who evokes pity), el despiadado crítico 'the merciless critic', las pequeñas ovejas 'the little sheep', la ácida ensalada 'the acidic salad', la última suave curva 'the last gentle / easy bend', los blancos palacios 'the white palaces'

Following standard assumptions it might be difficult to accept that these two sets of adjectives belong to the same logical type since restrictive adjectives, and those of degree, are usually considered predicate modifiers (functions from properties to properties) while qualitative adjectives generally denote properties. What I want to emphasize with this regrouping is the fact that most adjectives in (11) license the entailment 'NP is N' ('a good lawyer is a lawyer') but they do not license the entailment that 'NP is adj' ('a good lawyer is not necessarily good in general terms'). In a similar way, a 'complete failure' is a failure which is complete as a failure, and *un verdadero coche* is a car which satisfies the properties which distinguish 'cars' within a larger domain. Neither of them imply either 'el fracaso es completo' 'the failure was complete' or 'el coche es verdadero' 'the car is true/ real', which have other meanings, as I have said.

Different with regard to this entailment are qualitative evaluative adjectives, specifically sensorial quality adjectives (*white, acid, round*, etc.): 'a white palace' is

<sup>3</sup> The expression "restrictive adjective" is taken from Quirk *et al.* (1978:§7.35) where it refers to those adjectives orienting the interpretation towards the uniqueness of the referent.

<sup>4</sup> Degree and quantifying adjectives indicate "the degree to which the property expressed in the head nominal applies in a given case" (Pullum & Huddleston 2002: 555).

<sup>5</sup> Larson 1998 also says that *utter, mere* and *complete* "cannot be analyzed as simple, univocal predicate of events [like former]. Rather they appear to be forms whose relation to N parallels the relation of a degree modifier to an associated A" (1998: 10).

obviously a white object. In traditional grammars of Spanish it is usual to call these color, shape and taste adjectives ‘epithets’, as they emphasize the prototypical elements in the meaning of the noun, and this is the main characteristic of the attributive NR interpretation when resulting from the use of these forms:

- (12) *la blanca paloma* ‘the white dove’, *la redonda esfera* ‘the round sphere’, *la olorosa rosa* ‘the strong-smelling rose’, *las verdes praderas* ‘the green meadows’.

In fact, these adjectives cannot be prenominal in certain Romance languages like French (Laenzlinger 2005, Knittel 2005, a.o). Additionally, in Spanish these adjectives are not frequent in prenominal position (except with the literary effect I have just mentioned). These lexical subtypes of adjectives (color, form, taste and other sensorial properties) tend to be used postnominally, and are typically predicative, since they are intersective adjectives. Nevertheless, their function when used prenominally is not that of asserting the intersection between the class of objects denoted by the noun and the property expressed by the A, but rather that of ‘affecting’ the denotation of the unique object(s) expressed by N. Observe the contrast between the sensorial adjectives in (13):

- (13) Me gustaban las *amargas* hojas del arce y los sabores *ácidos* de las primeras fresas de junio.

Lit.; I loved the bitter leaves of the maple and the flavours acids of the first strawberries in June

‘Me gustaban las hojas del arce, que son (por naturaleza) amargas, y los sabores que son ácidos de las primeras fresas de junio’.

‘I loved maple leaves, which are (naturally) bitter, and the early June strawberry flavours that are acid’.

In (13) both taste adjectives occur in very similar contexts, [N+PP<sub>restrictive</sub>], but the first is prenominal and the second postnominal. They are both predicates that denote properties of N; however, the first one has to be glossed through an appositive relative clause while the postnominal one is equivalent to a restrictive relative.

In this sense prenominal sensorial adjectives (the ‘epithets’) have an interpretive very similar role to ‘restrictive’ and degree adjectives (cf. (11)). At least as a speculation



it can be said that in both cases (non-intersective restrictive-degree adjectives and pronominal qualitative-evaluative adjectives) the adjectives modify a hidden parameter of N's. We might claim, as in Pustejovsky 1995 that "every category expresses a qualia structure" and that certain nouns (and the NP's containing them) encode information about particular activities or properties associated with them. In this framework, restrictive degree modifiers and qualitative epithetic adjectives can be considered modifiers of the 'formal' quale of N, namely, "the aspects of word's meaning that distinguish (the object) within a larger domain" (1995: 76). I will come back to this aspect of the semantic relation between N and A in §4.1.1, where I will present some speculations about why these structural meanings appear mainly when the adjective occurs in pronominal position.

Finally, the class of pronominal adjectives that I describe as modifiers of a central property can have this function only when the DP identifies unique referents (recall (8b)). This is the reason why these pronominal adjectives are more common in definite DP's and they require modifiers restricting the reference of NP, (14a). Without the modifier, the sentences are acceptable if the DP refers to a previously introduced referent. In the same vein, they are normal in singular and plural indefinite expressions, (14b), since these DP's introduce referents in the discourse:

(14) a. Mostraron los hermosos libros #(de medicina).<sup>6</sup>

They showed the beautiful books (of medicine)

b. Mostraron un hermoso libro / unos hermosos libros.

They showed a beautiful book / some beautiful books

(c) In (15) the adjective modifies a temporal interval of N. This is the case of 'deictic' and 'event-temporal modifier' adjectives:

(15) *la futura reina* 'the future queen', *el antiguo acuerdo* 'the old agreement', *el actual presidente* 'the current president', *los nuevos coches* 'the new cars', *mi anterior marido* 'my former husband', *un largo viaje* 'a long trip',

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<sup>6</sup> An anonymous reviewer asks whether 'libros de medicina' can be considered a 'fixed expression'. As a matter of fact, a similar oddness shows freely with very different PP modifiers: *Nos mostró los bonitos libros #con tapas azules* 'He /she showed us the beautiful books with blue covers'.

(d) In (16) we have the logical type of what I name ‘extreme degree adjectives’: certain Dixon’s human disposition adjectives (*horrible* ‘horrible’, *necio* ‘stupid’, *espantoso* ‘awful’) and qualitative superlative ones (*maravilloso* ‘wonderful’, *hermosísimo* ‘very beautiful’, *magnífico* ‘magnificent’) correspond to this type.<sup>7</sup> Considering their function we may call them ‘appositive’ because they serve to express a distinctive or central property of N, as if it were added to its denotation:

(16) el / un horrible concierto ‘the horrible concert’, los maravillosos sombreros ‘the wonderful hats’, los aburridísimos hombres ‘the very boring men’, la débil voz ‘the soft voice’,

My assertion is that these adjectives are predicative non-restrictive modifiers, different in this sense from the three preceding types. This is so because in all syntactic contexts in which they occur they do not refer to a subset of the class of objects denoted by N. Moreover, they can be paraphrased as parenthetical or as non-restrictive relatives. All the examples in (16) (recall also (7a)) can be paraphrased as in (17):

(17) a. Asistí a un (horrible) concierto (horrible) = Asistí a un concierto, {y fue horrible / que fue horrible (appositive relative sentence)}  
I went to a horrible concert

b. La (débil) voz (débil) apenas se oía = La voz apenas se oía y era débil / La voz, que era débil, apenas se oía.  
The soft voice could hardly be heard

c. Los (aburridísimos) hombres (aburridísimos) nos dejaron exhaustos = Los hombres, que eran aburridísimos, nos dejaron exhaustos.  
The very boring men left us exhausted

Superlative non-restrictive adjectives like *maravillosos* in *sus/los maravillosos sombreros* are usually prenominal in definite expressions (#*Sus sombreros maravillosos* is less frequent). The reason is that, by default, superlative evaluative adjectives do not serve to delimit a subset of objects; they cannot classify objects in the world since they

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<sup>7</sup> Knittel (2005: 193) name these adjectives as ‘subjective comment’ ones. She rightly asserts that these adjectives can be both prenominal and postnominal and they can be modified by subjective adverbs like *verdaderamente* ‘truly’ or *realmente* ‘really’.

do not express objective properties but subjective evaluations. Moreover, the DP *los sombreros maravillosos* (where the superlative adjective is postnominal) is acceptable especially when it refers to a set of hats that has not previously been mentioned (see §2.2.4 below). In my view, these adjectives fall under the subsidiary generalization I established in the first section: there are semantic and pragmatic reasons which sometimes cause the shifting from the expected R to a NR interpretation when these adjectives are found in postnominal position. I will come back to them explaining this is the reason why they can be focalized as external predicates to the right of NP.

Summarizing, the adjectives in the first three subgroups, from (a) to (c), can be argued to form a single group from a semantic and syntactic point of view. This unification is supported by the assumption that they scope over subparts of the meaning of N, a question to which I will return briefly in §4.1.1.

Alternatively to the three just mentioned subgroups, *postnominal adjectives*, (18) and class (e), normally modify the referents, “the individuals determined by all the properties on N” (Bouchard 1998: 143):

- (18) la manzana roja ‘the red apple’  
 dos mariposas negras ‘two black butterflies’  
 el abogado bueno ‘the good lawyer’  
 el hombre pobre ‘the poor (not rich) man’,  
 la sobrina antipática ‘the nasty niece’  
 las señoras amables ‘the kind ladies’.

Briefly stating what we have seen up to this point: the distinction R-NR interpretation correlates with syntactic position in the sense that a) a reduced set of adjectives are assigned either a restrictive or a non restrictive interpretation depending on their position (*pobre, completo, simple, antiguo*, etc.). I refer to the contrast between *el pobre hombre* where the prenominal adjective means ‘the pitiable man’ vs. *el hombre pobre*, where *pobre* is ‘non rich man’. And b) most of adjectives takes one of the two interpretations depending on their position, as we will see in §2.2.

## 2.2. Some diagnoses for the logical types of adjectives

There are at least four diagnostics which typically distinguish the adjectives in classes

(a), (b) and (c), i.e. prenominal adjectives, from postnominal adjectives in (e). First, members of each set differ as to their ‘possibilities to be used in copular predicative structures’. Second, they behave differently with respect to tests that make explicit ‘the subset property’ (Pullum & Huddleston 2002). Third, gradable adjectives with different scalar properties (‘absolute’ and ‘relative’ ones in the sense of Kennedy and McNally 2005) do not always accept degree modification in prenominal position. And fourth, the two positions also mark the difference between the non specific and the specific readings. I will try to provide some evidence for these differences.

2.2.1. *Occurrence as predicative complements in copular structures.* Regular qualitative adjectives that can be used both pre and postnominally can occur as predicates of copular sentences, see (19). As it has frequently been noted, in this construction they only retain the restrictive meaning typical of postnominal adjectives, as the comments in the glosses are meant to show:

- (19) Dame los libros interesantes = Dame los libros que son interesantes ‘Give me the books that are interesting’.

In other words: in *los libros que son interesantes* the predicative adjective has the same restrictive meaning that we find in *los libros interesantes*. The meaning of ‘modification of a central property or modification of the reference’ holding in *los interesantes libros* does not appear in the copular construction.

In the case of ‘human disposition’ adjectives, the adjective appearing in copular constructions generally refers to a property like temporary or stage level; this is the meaning we find in postnominal position, (20a), in contrast with the individual level reading in (20b), where the adjectives is prenominal:

- (20) a. El crítico despiadado no la saludó  
       ‘El crítico que fue / estuvo despiadado no la saludó’  
       The critic who was merciless did not greet her’  
 b. El despiadado crítico no la saludó’  
       ‘The critic is merciless and he did not greet her

The remaining adjectives appearing in prenominal position: modal (*posible*), restrictive

(*mero*), degree /quantifying (*total*) or event modifier / deictic (*futuro*) are either banned from occurring in predicative structures or when they do occur in such structures they have a different meaning which corresponds to the one they receive as postnominal modifiers of N, when they appear in such a context. Let us consider some cases that illustrate these contrasts.

Observe, first, in (21), that in the cases in which modal adjectives appear as predicates of copular sentences they are either unacceptable (the series of examples in (21a)) or have an ‘implicit relative reading’, (21b):

(21) *Modal*:

- a. \*El culpable es presunto ‘The guilty is alleged’,  
\*El defensor es supuesto ‘The defender is supposed’.
- b. Los acuerdos son falsos ‘The agreements are untrustworthy’

The meaning in (21b) is the same we find in *los acuerdos falsos*, which is different from the one in *los falsos acuerdos*, namely, ‘fake agreements or agreements that do not have the properties required to be considered as agreements’.

In fact, Larson (2000b: 3) noted that in *the possible candidate* the adjective is ambiguous between the meaning ‘the potential candidate’ (= direct modification reading) and ‘the X which Y considers as a possible candidate’ (= implicit relative reading). In Spanish, as expected, this analysis does not hold for *el posible candidato*, which only means ‘the potential candidate’. There is also no ambiguity in copulative constructions: *El ataque es posible* does not mean ‘the potential attack’ but ‘X considers that the attack is feasible’, the same meaning we find in *el ataque posible*, different from that in *el posible ataque*. Observe that we can say *El ataque es posible/ viable pero arriesgado* ‘the attack is possible (=feasible) but risky’ (i.e. there are constraints as to its feasibility) but not #*El ataque es posible pero no hay modo de hacerlo* ‘the attack is possible (=feasible) but there is no way to launch it’, i.e. there is a contradiction.<sup>8</sup> The contrast in (22) illustrates the same contrast with *falso* and completes the series in (21):

(22)\*Los acuerdos falsos son verdaderos / de toda confianza ‘The untrustworthy agreements are true / deserve to be trusted / are worthy of trust’.

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<sup>8</sup> In this regard there appear to be differences with English and Italian where both interpretations are possible in copulative sentences.

Los falsos acuerdos son verdaderos / de toda confianza ‘The fake agreements are true / deserve to be trusted / are worthy of trust’.

Restrictive, degree/quantifying and deictic/event modifier adjectives are usually not possible either in postnominal position or in copular structures. In case they appear postnominally, a different reading usually obtains: we find the same in copular structures. Let us consider both cases separately.

In the case of *restrictive and degree / quantifying adjectives*, the meaning contrast evokes the opposition non-intersection / intersection. While non-intersection appears in prenominal position, intersection appears in postnominal position and copular sentences (see the second series of examples in (23a)). In the case of *deictic adjectives* the deictic function sometimes cannot be expressed through postnominal modification<sup>9</sup> and even less so through copular predicative structures (see the first series in (23b)). When deictic adjectives appear postnominally it would perhaps be better to think of them as polysemic: adjectives like *Nuevo* ‘new’, *antiguo* ‘antiguo’, *viejo* ‘old’ are interpreted here not as deictic but as qualitative adjectives):

(23)

a. *Restrictive and degree-quantifying adjectives*: \*El hecho es mero ‘\*The fact is mere’.

But: El desacuerdo es total ‘The disagreement is complete’, meaning ‘they disagree in all respects’ but not ‘the act of disagreeing is such that represents a clear case of disagreement’, namely the reading found in *el total desacuerdo*.

La solución es perfecta, namely it belongs to the set of perfect acts [*la solución perfecta*], different from the meaning the adjective has in *una perfecta solución* = perfect as a solution / a solution in all respects.

b. *Deictic adjectives*: \*La reina es futura ‘The queen is future’, \*El alumno es último ‘The student is last’.

But: El acuerdo es antiguo ‘The agreement is antique’ (different from ‘previous and a long time ago’, as in *el antiguo acuerdo*).

*Event modifier adjectives*: El viaje fue largo y entretenido ‘The trip was long and amusing’= El viaje largo y entretenido (Adoro los viajes que son largos y

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<sup>9</sup> The reason remains obscure to me up to this point. Perhaps these forms are not non predicative adjectives but close to deictic determiners.

entretenidos).

2.2.2. *The subset property.* Only DP's with postnominal adjectives can be used in response to the question 'What kind of an N is X'. For example, if somebody were to ask *What kind of lawyers are Rodrigo and Pedro?* a possible answer would be *Rodrigo y Pedro son abogados competentes* 'Rodrigo and Pedro are qualified lawyers' but not *?'Rodrigo y Pedro son competentes abogados'*.

Another context in which we can test the subset property is provided by what we may call 'set making verbs' like *distinguir* 'distinguish', *diferenciar* 'differentiate', *dividir* 'set apart' or *agrupar* 'group'. When we say *Distingo entre sueños posibles e imposibles* 'I distinguish (i.e. can tell the difference) between possible and impossible dreams' we mean that dreams can be classified as possible and impossible, and we suppose that a distinction can be made between dreams that are candidates to become materialized and those that are simply far of reach. *\*Distingo entre posibles e imposibles sueños* sounds awkward if not ungrammatical because the subset reading is not possible. Another example in the same line:

(24) Mis mañanas infantiles se dividen en mañanas luminosas y mañanas tormentosas.

'My childish mornings divide between bright morning and stormy mornings'

? Mis mañanas infantiles se dividen entre luminosas mañanas y tormentosas mañanas. (Strangeness does not appear if 'luminosas mañanas' and 'tormentosa mañanas' is interpreted as 'echoed discourse').

In sum, the subset property shows those cases when adjectives are used restrictively because they serve to denote a class: a subset of the set mentioned by the N head, a class. Prenominal adjectives usually are not qualified to trigger this interpretation.

2.2.3. *Degree modification on pre and postnominal adjectives.* Of course, gradability is not the defining property which differentiates different logical types of adjectives. There are modal adjectives that are gradable: *el muy posible acuerdo* 'the very possible agreement' (but: *\*el muy supuesto asesino* 'the very alleged murderer') or even event / deictic modifiers which accept degree modification: *el muy anterior suceso* 'the very previous event'. However, for the sake of my argument in this work, I will consider

gradability as a property of basically two classes of adjectives: pure qualitative ones (*los ojos tan verdes* ‘the so green eyes’, *el niño menos feliz* ‘the least happy boy’, *los más altos cipreses* ‘the tallest cypresses’, *la muy seca piel de la niña* ‘the very dry girl’s skin’) and deverbal ones (*el muy discutido asunto* ‘a much debated topic’, *el área completamente protegida* ‘the fully protected area’).

Kennedy and McNally 2005 have convincingly stated that gradable adjectives can be partitioned into two semantic classes: that of relative vs. absolute adjectives. These two classes are a grammatical manifestation of the fact that adjectives, by virtue of their lexical features, have different scalar properties. ‘Absolute’ adjectives like *awake*, *open*, *full* or *straight* have a non context-dependent standard of comparison (“they simply require their arguments to possess some minimal [or maximal] degree of the gradable property they introduce” (op.cit: 14)). ‘Relative’ adjectives like *tall* or *expensive* have a context-dependent standard: there is a contextual standard of comparison. Approximately, absolute adjectives have a ‘closed’ scale structure while relative adjectives have an ‘open’ scale structure.

There are many interesting properties which differentiate these two types of adjectives<sup>10</sup>. Here, I will concentrate only on the fact that contextual standard of comparison and scale structure affect the grammatical behavior of the degree modifiers which can be applied to gradable adjectives. According to the aforementioned authors, degree modifiers like *very*, *much* and *well/ completely* are sensitive to standard type and scale structure. More strictly, the degree modifier *very* has a strong connection with relative adjectives, while absolute adjectives, in normal usage, reject modification by this quantifying adverb:

- (25) a. The international space station is very expensive.  
 b. ??They were very able to solve their own problems.

[Kennedy & Mc Nally 2005: (65)]

On the contrary, degree modifiers like *well* or proportional modifiers like *completely*, allow combination with absolute adjectives that have closed scales, (26a) and (26b), but not with adjectives that have open scales, (26c):

- (26) a. We are well aware of the difficulties.

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<sup>10</sup> See Kennedy & McNally 2005 for a fine-grained analysis of relative and absolute adjectives.



- b. We are completely aware of the difficulties.
- c. \*This book is well / completely expensive.

Let us consider now the two series of Spanish adjectives in (27). Those in (27a) are relative adjectives with an open scale and they accept modification by *muy* ‘very’ but not by the proportional modifier *completamente* ‘completely’. Those in (27b) are absolute adjectives with a closed scale such that they can be modified by *completamente* ‘completely’<sup>11</sup>:

- (27) a. {muy/\*completamente} {inteligente, ágil, triste, tranquilo<sup>12</sup>, orgulloso}.  
 {very/\*completely} {intelligent, agile, sad, calm, proud}
- b. completamente {seca, descuidada, incapaz, abierta, insensible}<sup>13</sup>  
 completely {dry, careless, incapable, open, insensitive}

When relative adjectives with an open scale, (27a), are modified by *muy*, this modifier boosts the (contextual) standard of the property with respect to the objects to which the adjective applies (Kennedy and McNally 2005). When absolute adjectives are modified by *completamente* this modifier fixes the degree of property at an endpoint in the structure of the scale that a gradable adjective uses as a basis for ordering objects in its domain; there is no boosting of the standard of comparison since this is not contextually fixed.<sup>14</sup>

Both types of adjectives can precede or follow N in Spanish DP’s. However, occurrence of both types of adjectives in pre and postnominal position shows restrictions that depend precisely on the presence of the aforementioned degree modifiers. (In the following judgments, I totally disregard generic contexts where these distinctions do not hold).

Actually, observe the facts in (28). They show that there is a kind of complementary distribution between the two classes: relative adjectives modified by

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<sup>11</sup> When modified by *very*, in special contexts, a fact that I do not consider here, they probably change their scalar properties and denote the average degree of the property of an object becoming relative adjectives:

<sup>12</sup> Observe that the adjective *tranquilo* can be modified by *completamente* when it is used as a stage level predicate (*Juan está completamente tranquilo* vs. \**Juan es completamente tranquilo*). I thank Olga Fernández for this observation.

<sup>13</sup> I deeply thank Isabel Pérez Jiménez for the examples in the two series.

<sup>14</sup> Of course, *completamente* has other usages which are equivalent to *very*. Such cases will not be considered here.

*muy* felicitously accept this modification in prenominal position; however, such a modification sounds awkward –or has to be qualified-- when they are postnominal. In contrast, absolute adjectives modified by *completamente* are almost impossible prenominally, their standard position being the postnominal one (of course NP's containing prenominal adjectives preceded by *completamente* (bottom left box in (28)) are perfectly grammatical if the adverb is removed):

(28)

<p>El muy inteligente profesor esquivó la respuesta. Lit: The very intelligent teacher avoided the answer</p> <p>Los muy ágiles atletas llegaron a la meta. Lit: The very agile athletes reached the finish line</p> <p>El muy torpe electricista provocó un cortocircuito. Lit: The very clumsy electrician caused a short circuit</p>	<p>?? El profesor muy inteligente esquivó ...<sup>15</sup></p> <p>? Los atletas muy ágiles llegaron a la meta.</p> <p>?/ok El electricista muy torpe provocó un cortocircuito.</p>
<p>*El completamente seco paisaje da mucha tristeza. Lit: The completely dry landscape causes much sadness</p> <p>*El totalmente ineficaz médico se llama José. Lit: The totally inefficient doctor is called Jose</p> <p>*La completamente insensible cantante es mi prima. Lit: The completely insensitive singer is my cousin</p>	<p>El paisaje completamente seco da mucha tristeza.</p> <p>El medico totalmente ineficaz se llama José.</p> <p>La cantante completamente insensible es mi prima.</p>

<sup>15</sup> *Los atletas muy ágiles...* and *el profesor muy inteligente* sound appropriate under two conditions: a) when the DP has been previously mentioned, and b) when *muy* 'very' is equivalent to *más* 'most'.

I consider it reasonable to assert that such contrastive behavior constitutes further evidence that pre and postnominal adjectives have different semantic relations with the N they modify. I am unable to go as far as to establish exactly why fixing of the scale (the function of *completamente*) helps to fulfill the restrictive function of postnominal adjectives and, at the same time, makes the adjective invalid to be a NR modifier. Perhaps the reason is that absolute adjectives modified by degree adverbs become stage level predicates and stage level predicates are not possible prenominal but only postnominally.

On the contrary, it is more evident, at least intuitively, in what sense relative adjectives modified by *muy* help to delineate the central property expressed by the adjective: (cfr. (11)): if the standard of the property is above the normal standard for the N, this property is more likely to be considered central or distinguished.

2.2.4. *The distinction specific/ non-specific and the position of evaluative adjectives.* In §2.1 above (case (d), examples (15) and (16)) I described ‘extreme degree’ or superlative adjectives as an exception to the correlation between positions and N /NR interpretation. Since they express subjective judgments they are NR in both positions and they do not serve to establish partitions among classes or subsets. However, there are interpretive differences dependent on the position in which they surface.

Knittel (2005: §2.2) (following Waugh 1977) noted that adjectives such as *magnificent*, when postnominal, are used to introduce new information, while their prenominal position indicates that they are part of an anaphoric NP. The following French sentence illustrates this observation:

(29) J’ai vue *an éléphant enorme*. *Cet énorme éléphant* buvait de l’eau.

Lit.: I have seen an elephant huge. This huge elephant was drinking water.

(Waugh 1977: 132, apud Knittel 2005: 190)

This apparent generalization does not hold in Spanish. The examples in (30) show many contexts where new information is introduced when the adjective of subjective evaluation occurs prenominal<sup>16</sup>:

(30) a. -¿Qué os dio de comer?

<sup>16</sup> It has to be said that the same specific reading will obtain when the adjective is located after the noun.

What did he give you for lunch?

-Puso de primer plato *una riquísima paella*.

‘He served a delicious paella as a main course’

b. –¿Qué le vas a regalar?

What will you give her as a present?

-Pienso regalarle un *enorme ramo* de flores.

I will give her a huge bunch of flowers

I understand that the contrast in (29) is a subcase of another much noted important distinction regarding prenominal adjectives, namely, the fact that, in indefinite contexts, DP’s with prenominal adjectives have a specific reading. On the other hand, DP’s with postnominal adjectives are ambiguous between a specific and a non-specific interpretation (Picallo 1994, Bosque 1996, and Demonte 1999). In the pair in (31), presupposition of existence of the journalist is clear in (31a), which accepts to be continued as indicated; the same continuation is not acceptable in (31b) because the DP with an adjective preceding N gets a non-specific reading:

- (31) a. Ana cree que una *muy importante periodista* le solicitará una entrevista. Esa periodista es Marisa Fernández.  
 ‘Ana believes a very important journalist will ask her for an interview. Such a journalist is MF’
- b. Ana cree que una *periodista muy importante* le solicitará una entrevista. #Esa periodista es Marisa Fernández.

Consider now the sentences in (32):

- (32) a. Ana sabe que todos los conferenciantes se entrevistaron con una *muy importante periodista*.  
 ‘Ana knows that all the speakers had an interview with a very important journalist’
- b. Ana sabe que todos los conferenciantes se entrevistaron con *una periodista muy importante*.

As is known, a DP is specific if it always takes wide scope, even when embedded under

a quantifier under which the DP would not normally be able to scope. In (32a), where the nominal with indefinite article and prenominal adjective is embedded under a universal quantifier, we find the referential / quantifier ambiguity characteristics of indefinites (Fodor and Sag 1982). The DP is specific in the referential reading and it takes wide scope. In (32b), which corresponds to the same sentence with the embedded nominal constructed with a postnominal adjective, the indefinite DP has only the expected narrow scope quantificational reading. Fodor & Sag (1982: 359) noted that “richness” of the NP correlates with referential understanding and loss of narrow scope quantifier interpretation for indefinites. Unexpectedly, a prenominal adjective appears to contribute to the referential reading of the indefinite. It is far from the objectives of this paper to provide an explanation for these interesting facts. I only want to remark that (29), (30), (31) and (32) show again that there are reasons to assert that adjectives have a meaning contribution to DP which comes from configurational factors.

### 2.3. A generalization: two positions, two classes of adjectives

Following a long tradition (Bolinger 1967, Chierchia and Mc Connell-Ginet 1993), I will label the two subclasses of pre and postnominal adjectives as non-predicative and predicative, respectively.<sup>17</sup> These two types of adjectives differ as to their denotation. A non-predicative adjective denotes a function from adjective denotations to adjective denotations; they map ‘properties to properties’. A predicative adjective denotes a function from individuals to truth values or ‘a property of individuals’.

As also noted by Chierchia and Mc Connell-Ginet (1993: 374-375), adjectives that can be analyzed as a property of individuals can also be analyzed as a function from property to properties, and “the differences in logical type may actually explain certain distributional properties of classes of expression and thus constitute a substantive component of their behavior” (1993: 376-377). In other words, a large class of adjectives belongs to both categories of predicative and non-predicative adjectives; namely, adjectives like *alegre* ‘funny’, *rojo* ‘red’, *prudente* ‘wise’, *sabio* ‘learned’, *estúpido* ‘stupid’, *redondo* ‘round’, *saludable* ‘healthy’, etc. can appear both pre and postnominally without any significant change in their lexical meaning but with the previously analyzed differences in reading.

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<sup>17</sup> In fact, many authors use the term ‘attributive’ to refer to adjectives that Chierchia and Mc Connell-Ginet call ‘non-predicative’

Given this background, the following questions arise: Are such configurations and interpretations due to the intrinsic meaning of the adjectives? Or are they rather due to the syntax of the expression, or perhaps to the combination of both factors? As I have anticipated, I think the latter is the right answer.

In section 4 of this paper I discuss the syntax which underlies the lexical - semantic facts elaborated along these pages.

### 3. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

To explain the syntax of pre and postnominal adjectives I adopt the basic assumptions of the Minimalist framework as outlined in Chomsky (1999 and 2001). In this approach the fundamental syntactic operations are ‘Merge’ and ‘Move’. (*External merge*, the operation of basic-structure building, is an operation imposed by the recursive nature of language: it takes two syntactic objects, A and B, and creates a new object consisting of the two {A, B}. *Move* (also called *internal merge*) takes an element, B, already constructed by external merge and places it under the c-command of a probe, A. As to the motivation for Move, it is considered to be necessary in derivational approaches to express the fact that certain elements appear in non-theta positions for reasons of scope, or to manifest informational or discourse-oriented properties.

Internal and external merge are both facets of so called *set-merge*. Apart from set-merge, another way of yielding syntactic objects out of already constructed units can be conceived. In fact, *pair-merge or adjunction* is such an operation. Pair-Merge is asymmetric: it takes two elements (one of which is already built) and adjoins one of them to the basic projection, taking its label. Pair-Merge “has no selector and is optional” (1998: 51).<sup>18</sup>

In a strict minimalist system, every device employed has to be sustained on “conditions of computation efficiency and the interface conditions that the [linguistic] organ must satisfy for it to function at all” (Chomsky 2001:3). If this quite strong position holds, any syntactic derivation D should provide a pair of forms legible by the Phonetic and Semantic levels or interfaces which are respectively accessed by the sensory motor and the conceptual-intentional systems. These systems impose conditions on the operations which are active in narrow syntax. As to Merge and its relation to the

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<sup>18</sup> According to Chomsky (2001: 16) the interface condition which imposes pair-merge appears to be the necessity to produce “composition of predicates”.

semantic module SEM, if it “comes free” (Chomsky 1999:2), and if it has to provide units easily mapped onto the interface level SEM, it is conceivable that there could be a correlation between the semantic properties required by the C-I interface and the structures provided by the operations in narrow syntax.

The fundamental interface semantic properties discovered and elaborated along the history of formal grammar are (i) properties related to theta-theoretic relations, namely, to predicate-argument and predicative relations, (ii) properties deriving from the ‘composition of predicates’, and (iii) discourse related properties. Theta-theoretic relations express s-selection and obey c-command; composition of predicates expresses the necessity of a predicate to act as an A’ operator binding a variable when no subject is available; discourse related properties are A or A-bar relations resulting from the distribution of information.

It appears that the category labelled Adjective participates in these three semantic properties and therefore gives rise to the three operations. The proposal I will elaborate on in the following section shows three possibilities.<sup>19</sup> The first one is based on the idea that certain adjectives (externally merged in DP) will be interpreted as expressing, roughly speaking, theta-theoretic requirements: they will be predicates selecting N’s as their ‘subjects’. This is the case of predicative adjectives –usually postnominal ones in Romance languages—(cf. (33) below). As a second possibility, other adjectives, those which interact with a functional category above NP (nP) as their adjuncts, will have the semantic properties associated with the ‘composition of predicates’; I understand as such the operation of one-place predicates that modifies elements in N. This is the case of non-predicative adjectives –usually prenominal ones—(cf. (34) below). In the third possibility, adjectives with a predicative interpretation may be moved from NP to the edge of nP to receive a focus interpretation (cf. (38) below).

The semantic relations between adjectives and nouns result then from the configuration obtained when certain lexical categories are merged with the appropriate heads. In other words, the interaction between lexical-semantic interpretable (valued) properties of adjectives and the configurations in which they appear provides the interpretation of DP’s containing adjectives. I claim, moreover, that adjectives come from the lexicon encoding uninterpretable formal features (gender and number) and (valued) semantic features. Adjectives will end up with a specific semantic

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<sup>19</sup> Demonte (2005) contains a more comprehensive elaboration of this hypothesis.

interpretation, predicative or non-predicative: [+p] or [-p], according to their position after external merge. Of course, [+p] or [-p] are only convenient ways to represent the many nuances of the two distinct but not always univocal semantic interpretations that adjectives may receive in pre and postnominal position.

Regarding the structure of DP, I assume a quite strict –although not total– parallelism with VP (see §4.1. and §4.2.2. below) and I propose that, besides NP and DP, there must be an nP category whose head is a light n (Carstens 1991, 2000; Adger 2003). This head contains uninterpretable phi-features and may project a possessive “agent” in its Spec. This head becomes a probe to delete the (un)interpretable gender and number features of a goal N. I assume that, aside from nP and from conceptually and empirically necessary functional projections like, perhaps, DemP, there are no other functional categories in DP.

#### 4. MERGE OF ADJECTIVES IN DP

##### 4.1. Types of syntactic N-A relations

Given the assumptions adopted earlier, we expect to find basically two types of syntactic relations between nouns and adjectives (for the time being, I leave aside internal merger for reasons of focalization):

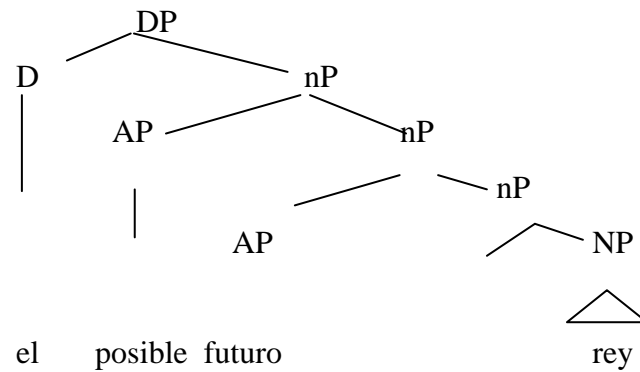
(a) There is a structure in which adjectives are recursively adjoined to nP –a functional phrase that perhaps may simply be called FP-- as in (33); this is the case of non-predicative adjectives.

b) There is a configuration obtained by the merging of adjectives as predicates of N within the c-command domain of the N head, as in (34) –this is the case of predicative adjectives.

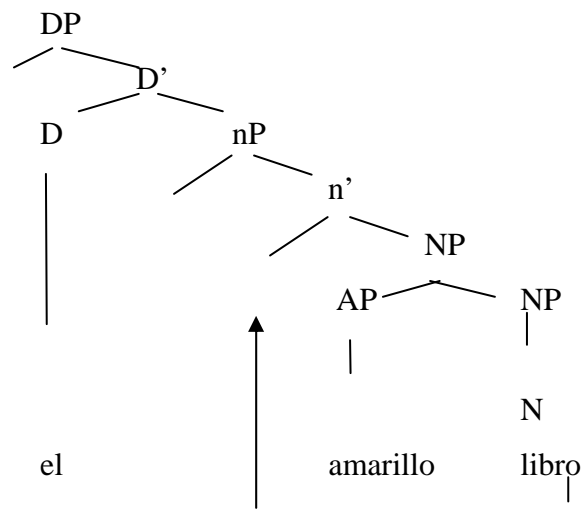
I would also like to claim that the difference between languages in which adjectives may be both pre and postnominal, and languages like English where adjectives occur only prenominal is due to the lack of overt N-movement in languages of the latter type (a question I will not consider in this paper). Similarly to what occurs with V to I movement, this type of movement might ultimately be related to the morphophonological content of the functional head. Still, this assumption is controversial since I am claiming that N to n –as opposed to V to v-- is not universal.



## (33) Non-predicative (prenominal) adjectives



## (34) Predicative (postnominal) adjectives



Now let us consider the reasons for the two representations just proposed.

4.1.1. *Non-predicative prenominal adjectives.* First, consider (33). Recall that it has been shown in §1.2 that [-p] and [+p] adjectives differ interpretively. Given (33), it can be claimed that [-p] adjectives receive the aforementioned intensional interpretation at SEM (the semantic module) once they pair-merge with nP. As a consequence of this merge, the members of the pair are then sent to Spell-Out, the last step in the derivation, and, at the same time, are interpreted according to both their intrinsic meaning and the position they occupy in the syntactic hierarchy.

Secondly, note that in §2 we have distinguished two subtypes of [-p] or prenominal adjectives, which give rise to the following readings: (i) modal and event modifier adjectives, with an intensional reading, as in (35) (recall also (9) and (14)), and (ii) qualitative adjectives with a non-restrictive reading, as in (36) (recall also (10)):

- (35) El *posible futuro rey* llegó tarde.  
 ‘The possible future king arrived late.’
- (36) a. Se abrirán las *anchas alamedas*.  
 ‘The wide tree-lined avenues will be opened’. (The tree-lined avenues will be opened, and they are wide).
- b. Las *deliciosas galletas* están en el coche.  
 ‘The delicious cookies are in the car’ (The cookies are in the car, and they are delicious).

These two types of readings have been described by Higginbotham 1985 as a case of (modal, intensionally oriented) modification of the attribute indicated by N, as in (35a), and as a case of “autonomous theta-marking”, where the adjective saturates a denotational variable in N, as in (36).

The relevant question now is how syntax (pair-merge) sets the basis for semantic interpretation. My claim is that in DPs with pair-merged adjectives these predicates combine semantically with elements in the semantic structure of n due to the effect of independent compositional rules that apply straightforwardly in adjunction configurations.<sup>20</sup> More strictly, adjunction is the suitable operation for certain compositional rules to the extent that adjuncts syntactically have a binding capacity, and semantically can be taken as one place predicates whose arguments are present in the nominal. Descriptively speaking, these interactions between adjunct adjectives and nouns entail the following possibilities: First, adjectives have scope over spatio-temporal event arguments (e.g., circumstantial adjectives like *antiguo* ‘old’). Second, adjectives have scope over denotational variables (e.g., non-restrictive qualitative adjectives like *bonita* ‘nice/pretty’) or over the ‘attribute’ expressed by N, mentioned by it (e.g. modal adjectives like *presunto* ‘presumed’ or restrictive adjectives like *completo* ‘complete’). Among the just mentioned putative elements in the semantic structure of N, event arguments do not need specific motivation. Nevertheless, it is obvious that the notion of ‘denotational variable’ is left (deliberately) vague. Since it

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<sup>20</sup> A piece of evidence that these prenominal adjectives are adjuncts with a binding capacity—as opposed to postnominal adjectives—is that they have scope requirements that are violated if they do not occur in a given order.

refers to the various aspects covered by the intension of the noun (tentatively: (i) properties ‘mentioned’ by N, in the case of modal modification; and (ii) ‘distinguished’ or particular properties of N, in the case of evaluative adjectives) we might think that this ‘denotational’ variable is the R argument claimed to be bound by determiners when dealing with referential expressions (Longobardi 1994) or perhaps a world argument.<sup>21</sup>

The configuration in (33) accommodates to express these relations since it involves, in the line of Ernst 2002 for the treatment of adverbs, a Scope-based approach to the position of non-predicative adjectives. This approach states that, in general, these adjectives must be the sister (i.e., be adjoined to) a constituent with which they can establish the appropriate semantic relation (e.g., an eventive reading if n has an event argument). In this sense, the relation shown in (33) could be well adjusted to satisfy requirements of SEM at C-I.

4.1.2. *Postnominal predicative adjectives*. As for the set of [+p] adjectives, I claim that the appropriate representation for this type of relation is similar to the one found in (secondary) predication within VP, namely, when a predicate merges above the maximal lexical projection of N, as in (34).

In standard approaches to (secondary) predication this relation has been termed an adjunction relation. However, I will be assuming that there exists a distinction between true adjunction or pair-merge and merge for predication purposes between AP and NP. In predication –as has been classically argued (Williams 1980)-- predicative adjectives select for the category they modify. A (mutual) c/m-command relation should hold for the predication relation to be established. The question is then how to express c/m-command and what basic relation is expressed by c/m-command in (34).

Under the hypothesis of minimal search and restriction on bare phrase structure (Chomsky 2001), we may contend that a head noun –and its maximal projection-- can be extended through (a series of) second or subsequent merges. The unit so merged would be, strictly speaking, a special kind of Spec or, in my descriptive terms, an Adjunct/Spec. By definition, Specifiers must satisfy the EPP feature of the head (internal merge) or be semantically selected by the head (external merge). In certain cases, they have to undergo Agree (where a head contains a probe seeking for a goal

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<sup>21</sup> One referee, wondering about the justification of this denotational variable, suggested that this notion could be implemented within a semantics where nouns do not have world arguments and where intensionality is handled in some indirect way. Unfortunately, for lack of space I cannot develop this suggestion any further.

with matching features). In the case of predicative adjectives they are not selected by N (instead the adjective would select for N, in a certain sense) and the relation between nouns and predicative adjectives in DP is not one of Agree. I stipulate that the relation between N and the predicative adjective in (34) is Concord (Carstens 2000). Concord is assumed to take place when pairing among features is required, as a part of merge, but there is no matching of features with the resulting pied-piping and deletion. I will not take a decision as to whether Concord delimits a second type of specifiers, but there are independent reasons to assert that the relation between AP and NP in (34) is closer to the Spec-head relation than to the adjunct-XP relation. As we will see immediately, the weak constraints on the order among restrictive adjectives also appear to provide some support for this hypothesis.

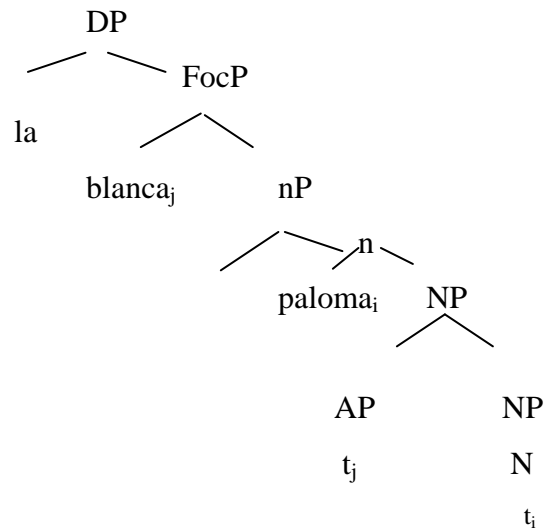
If these suppositions are tenable, Predicate adjectives are then merged in DP as (multiple) specifier-like elements. In other words, I assume that the syntactic relation between N and the predicative adjectives modifying it is similar to the one that is established in secondary predication, namely, the AP merges higher to NP within the same maximal projection and the configuration does not preclude m-command as would be the case if we were dealing with an adjunction relation. At the SEM module this way of combining the adjective with the noun will be read, then, as the intersection between the denotations of N and A. Merge of predicative adjectives in DP will not have, in my view, any other restriction, and lexical interferences between N and A will produce deviance and not ungrammaticality.

4.1.3. *Focused adjectives in DP*. Let us turn to the cases of (epithetic) appositive adjectives like *la blanca paloma* ‘the white dove’, (recall (11) and (12) above) or the case of contrastively stressed restrictive adjectives (recall (8)):

- (37) las ESPANTOSAS tristes jornadas ‘the HORRIBLE sad journeys’,  
 ‘The journeys had the distinguished characteristic of being sad. Moreover, they were horrible (not melancholic or simply different from regular ones)’,

I propose that what we have here is raising of a predicative adjective from Spec, NP up to a Focus positions above nP (see (38)):

(38)



Bolinger 1967 wrote that in examples like *Los españoles que vinieron en opuesta dirección* ‘the Spaniards who came in the opposite direction’, where it is not expected for a restrictive adjective like *opuesta* to appear in such a position, “when [somebody] says it, [he/she] de-accented *dirección*” (1967:91). I share this assumption and claim then that a strategy of focalization (coupled with previous de-stressing of other focused constituents) is co-substantial with the marked meaning of certain prenominal adjectives that appear postnominally (when they are restrictive instead of non-restrictive).<sup>22</sup>

At this point, we may ask whether the configuration in (38) is also used to derive nominal predications with exclamatory meaning, as in (39a), similar to English (39b):

- (39) a. ¡(Muy) Guapo tu novio!  
Lit: (Very) Handsome your boy friend
- b. How tall a man.

The construction in (39b) has been analyzed as movement of a DP modifier to a focus position at the edge of DP (Den Dikken 1998). At first sight it might be claimed that the Spec-FocP at the edge of nP in (38) could be the same position where adjectives are found in (39). Now, the ban against degree modifiers in constructions like the ones in (37): *La (\*muy) ESPANTOSA triste jornada*, but not in cases like (39a) indicates that

<sup>22</sup> Scott 2002 also claims that certain adjectives may be preposed into some sort of Focus Phrase within DP.

we are dealing with two different configurations. The focused A(P) in (39a) and (39b) could be the predicate of a small clause predicative DP structure (Trombetta 2002) and be, in fact, moved to a FocP at the edge of a PredP. In a similar vein, these cases of ‘extraposed’ degree adjectives are analyzed by many authors as constituent fronting in the left periphery of the noun phrase:

(40)<sub>[DP [How tall] <sub>[DP a man]]</sub> is your friend?</sub>

Consequently, the facts in (39) show that there could be two Focus positions within DP, a lower one related to the nP domain, where qualitative adjectives move past nP, and a higher one related to degree evaluation. In (41) both possibilities are attested:

(41)<sub>[DP [<sub>FocP</sub> Muy guapo] <sub>[DP /PredP [tu [<sub>FocP</sub> [ENCANTADOR]] <sub>[nP riquísimo novio]]]]</sub></sub></sub>

Lit: Very handsome, your charming wealthy boy friend.

But there is still another set of facts that falls within the hypothesis that merge of A at a FocP plays a significant role to account for the position and interpretation of adjectives within DP. Cinque (1994) attested a class of ‘predicative’ adjective structures. In fact, he characterized for the first time the case of adjectives which appear after a series of adjectives, or after a PP complement of N, with a contrastive interpretation. Italian, Spanish and French are similar on this regard. English has the same construction, with the specific qualification that this position is restricted to ‘heavy’ adjectives. Observe the series in (42). (42 a, b & c) are taken from Laenzlinger (2005: 671) and the postposed adjective in (42d) is not supposed to be a contrastive focus):

- (42)a. una macchina rossa italiana, (veramente) BELLISIMA  
 b. une voiture rouge italienne, (vraiment) MAGNIFIQUE  
 c. un coche rojo italiano, (verdaderamente) FANTASTICO  
 ‘a really fantastic red American car’  
 d. a red Italian car, charged of four idiots

The usual analysis for this construction (see Bernstein 1991 or Campos and Stavrou 2003) is the Cinquean one, i.e., it is assumed that a predicative projection (a PredP on

the right of the position of a postnominal adjective) hosts the contrastively marked adjectives in (42). We can accept this analysis for Spanish (42c), which will simply add another structural position to the one already proposed. However, I would like to highlight in my favour two distinctive properties of the phrases in (42a, b and c). One is the fact that, like (37), they receive a contrastive interpretation. The other is that this position is restricted usually to evaluative gradable adjectives generally carrying subjective meaning.

I agree, then, with Laenzlinger (along the lines of Bernstein 2001) in that there is a specific predicative/focus projection in a very high position within the noun phrase. I differ from this author in not assuming the pied-piping/snowballing  $FP_{Agr(NP)}$  movement within NP. Given my analysis, a FocP in the higher part of the DP (recall (41)) could host the contrastive predicates in (42). The process giving this result is an external merge that strands a XP constituent on the right of DP. As a result, we have, as usual, two types of focus: one resulting from internal merge, and another coming from external merge.

To summarize, the three derivations for adjectives modifying Ns in DPs appear to be just the possible ones according to general principles of constituent structure formation, and they adapt straightforwardly to interface conditions. They also adapt rightly to the types of adjective meanings found and justified in section 2.

## 5. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

In the first part of this paper I present a new classification of non-predicative and predicative adjectives and introduce a series of generalizations showing that semantic interpretation and logical types of adjectives strongly correlate with syntactic position. In the second part, I justify the proposal that the modifying relation that adjectives establish with N's is created by the three possible operations to form phrase structure as provided by the hypothesis of narrow syntax developed by Chomsky (1999, 2001): external merge, internal merge (both cases of set-merge) and pair merge. My claim is that non-predicative adjectives, [-p], receive such an interpretation at SEM when they pair-merge, or adjoin, to the maximal projection of N; predicative adjectives, [+p], receive their interpretation when they form a predication structure through external merge; adjectives which 'preserve' their predicative interpretation in prenominal position, or are non-restrictive in postnominal position, do so because they have been

displaced to a Focus position above NP, which constitutes a case of internal merge. The three aforementioned operations are then the only possible ones. The assumptions and minimal analyses provided in this paper have intended to illuminate aspects of the syntax-semantics interface.

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