

Reformulative appositions and clausal ellipsis

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Abstract

I claim that, from a syntactic perspective, reformulative appositions and their host clause anchors are coordinated in the same standard manner as the DPs in a sentence like *Bill and Ben slept*. I demonstrate that this ‘what you see is what you get’ low coordination account of reformulative apposition confers greater explanatory power than analyses that propose that reformulative appositions are contained within parenthetical clauses to which clausal ellipsis is applied.

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1. Introduction

The functional distinction between *attributive* and *reformulative* apposition has been influential in many generative analyses of the syntax of apposition.¹ According to this distinction, attributive appositions ascribe properties to their **anchors** (1a), while reformulative appositions provide additional and often more informative names for their anchors (1b).

- (1) a. **The Big Apple**, *a magical place*, is a huge city.
b. **The Big Apple**, *New York*, is a huge city.

While there is still disagreement about the exact nature of their subjects (cf. [Del Gobbo, 2007](#); [O'Connor, 2008](#); [Heringa, 2011](#); [Griffiths, 2015b](#)), recent consensus has been reached that attributive appositions like (1a) are derived from finite predicative copular clauses whose subjects, auxiliary verbs (if any), and copulas are unpronounced ([O'Connor, 2008](#); [Cardoso and de Vries, 2010](#); [Heringa, 2011](#); [Döring, 2014](#); [Griffiths and Güneş, 2014](#); [Ott, 2014](#); [Griffiths, 2015b](#); *contra* [Potts, 2005](#)) (see (2), where unpronounced material is enclosed in chevrons).

- (2) [**The Big Apple**]_i <{*which/it*}_i *is*> *a magical place*, is a huge city.

No consensus has been reached about the syntax of reformulative appositions like (1b), however. Analyses of these structures can be grouped into two camps: those that analyse reformulative appositions as displaying ‘what you see is

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¹ [Heringa \(2011\)](#) traces this distinction as far back as [Poutsma \(1904\)](#). For discussion of this distinction and formal analyses based thereupon, see [Smith \(1964\)](#), [Motsch \(1966\)](#), [Burton-Roberts \(1975\)](#), [Klein \(1976\)](#), [McCawley \(1998\)](#), [Heringa and de Vries \(2008\)](#), [Cardoso and de Vries \(2010\)](#), [Heringa \(2011\)](#), [Griffiths \(2015b\)](#), among others.

what you get' (WYSIWYG) syntax (McCawley, 1998; Cardoso and de Vries, 2010; Griffiths and Güneş, 2014; Griffiths, 2015b, among others), and those that analyse reformulative appositions as contained within parenthetical clauses in which ellipsis occurs (Döring, 2014; Ott, 2014, also mentioned briefly in Potts, 2005:109) (3).

(3) **The Big Apple**, *New York* <is a huge city>, is a huge city.

Because subclausal units cannot be utilised as independent speech acts,² WYSIWYG analyses are forced to maintain that a syntactic connection pertains between reformulative appositions and the host clauses into which they interpolate. In De Vries (2007) and Cardoso and de Vries (2010), it is claimed that reformulative appositions and their anchors are parenthetically coordinated (4).³ For them, parenthetical coordination, unlike its 'regular' counterpart, results in the apposition being invisible to c-command, and hence any syntactic or semantic dependency based thereupon.

(4) [_{DP} **The Big Apple**,] &⁰_{PAR} [_{DP} *New York*], is a huge city.

Because finite clauses **can** be utilised as independent speech acts, clausal ellipsis analyses of reformulative apposition may – and Döring (2014) and Ott (2014) indeed *do* – maintain that no syntactic connection pertains between the appositional and host clauses that are postulated in (3). On this *orphanage* analysis of appositions,⁴ the precedence relation that pertains between *apple* and *new* in (3) is necessarily established by non-syntactic means. The adoption of a clausal ellipsis analysis of reformulative appositions does not necessarily demand the adoption of orphanage, however. One might argue that appositional and host clauses are coordinated and that ellipsis and a reordering operation derives the observed surface word order (cf. Emonds, 1979; Del Gobbo, 2007) (see (5), where Ω represents the base position of the reordered host constituent, which has been reordered rightwards).

(5) [_{CP1} [_{DP} **The Big Apple**] Ω_1], &⁰ [_{CP2} *New York* <is a huge city>.] [is a huge city]₁.

In this paper, I support a WYSIWYG analysis of reformulative appositions. Like De Vries (2007) and Cardoso and de Vries (2010), I argue that reformulative appositions and their anchors are coordinated. However, unlike these authors, I claim that this coordinative relationship is not parenthetical. Rather, the coordinative relationship into which reformulative appositions and their anchors enter is, from a syntactic perspective, identical to the relation into which *Bill* and *Ben* enter in a sentence like *Bill and Ben slept*. In other words, I claim that reformulative appositions display the syntax in (6), which is identical to the representation in (4) minus the 'PAR' that accompanies &⁰ in (4).⁵

(6) [_{DP} **The Big Apple**,] &⁰ [_{DP} *New York*], is a huge city.

This novel approach to the syntax of reformulative appositions has immediate taxonomic repercussions, as it implies that attributive and reformulative appositions are wholly dissimilar. While attributive appositions are still parenthetical in a theoretically relevant sense – as they are part of a clause that denotes a proposition that is 'secondary' to the proposition that the host clause denotes – and consequently form a natural class with exemplary cases of parenthesis such as *and*-parentheticals (Kavalova, 2007) (7), reformulative appositions are not parenthetical in any theoretically relevant sense

² With the possible exception of vocatives (i) and exclamative epithets (ii); see Güneş (2015) for discussion.

- (i) Sebastian will, *my dear*, be late.
- (ii) Connor has, *the lucky sod*, won the lottery.

³ Whether coordination involves X'-schematic binary branching (Johannessen, 1998) or ternary branching is irrelevant for my purposes. As such, I adopt a ternary branching representation of coordination for expository purposes alone. However, I maintain throughout that coordination phrases display the same semantic type as their conjuncts (Zhang, 2010), and that conjuncts must display the same semantic type as each other (in accordance with a semantic formulation of William's 1981 *law of coordination of likes*). Also, I assume that asyndetic conjuncts are always separated by an unpronounced coordinator. This assumption arises from the observation that such coordinators are always optional:

- (i) Baz {,/and} Maddy {,/and} Frank, and Polly have been fired.

⁴ While all orphanage approaches to appositions (and parenthesis more generally) maintain that *orphans* and their host clauses are syntactically unconnected, the technicalities of individual approaches to orphanage differ substantially. See Safir (1986), Haegeman (1991), Espinal (1991), Burton-Roberts (1999), and Peterson (1999) for possible implementations.

⁵ Although reformulative apposition and regular coordination (conjunction, disjunction, etc.) fit the same syntactic schema (or so I will argue in Sections 3–5), the coordinators in these structures do not exhibit the same lexical semantics. While I do not discuss the lexical semantics of reformulative &⁰ in this paper, it should be noted that Koster (2000), de Vries (2009), and Lassiter (2011) contain pertinent remarks on this topic.

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