



FACULTADE DE FILOLOXÍA  
Departamento de inglés

# **Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition**

**Vanesa Gil Vilacoba  
2013**

**UNIVERSIDADE DE SANTIAGO DE COMPOSTELA**

**FACULTADE DE FILOLOXÍA INGLESA**

**DEPARTAMENTO DE FILOLOXÍA INGLESA**



**QUIRKY NPS WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO  
CLOSE APPPOSITION**

**Vanesa Gil Vilacoba**

**2013**

**Universidade de Santiago de Compostela**

**Facultade de Filoloxía**

**Departamento de Filoloxía Inglesa**

**QUIRKY NPS WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO  
CLOSE APPOSITION**

**Tesis doctoral realizada por Vanesa Gil Vilacoba  
bajo la dirección del Profesor  
Dr. Juan Carlos Acuña Fariña**

Visto bueno del director:

Fdo. Vanesa Gil Vilacoba

Fdo. Dr. Juan Carlos Acuña Fariña

**CARLOS ACUÑA FARIÑA**, Catedrático de Filología Inglesa de la Universidad de Santiago y director de la **tesis de doctorado** realizada por Doña **Vanesa Gil Vilacoba**, con el título “Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition”, del Programa de Doctorado de Filología Inglesa (Estudios Ingleses: Tendencias Actuales y Aplicaciones), de esta universidad,

**INFORMA FAVORABLEMENTE** sobre dicha tesis puesto que se trata de una investigación original, que cumple con los requisitos de fondo y forma de un trabajo académico de estas características, donde se realizan aportaciones de relieve al conocimiento teórico sobre la estructura de la frase nominal en inglés contemporáneo.

Lo cual hago constar a los efectos de admisión previa a trámite de la mencionada tesis.

Santiago de Compostela, a tres de abril de dos mil trece.

Firmado: Carlos Acuña Fariña

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The process of creation of a dissertation is no bed of roses. Despair always lies in wait, but the good moments, the intellectual experiences and all the knowledge acquired in this process help you to resist. I would like to praise all those people who encouraged me and did not let despair gain the battle.

First of all, my gratitude and appreciation go to my thesis director, Carlos Acuña. His help, encouragement, intellectual and personal support turned bad moments and disillusion into a learning experience. Anyway, contrary to Chomsky and *his colourless green ideas that sleep furiously*, I cannot find a grammatically correct construction to express all my gratitude, so, the simplest one with the most semantically powerful intentions, *thank you*.

I would also like to say thank you to all those teachers who helped me during this long period to solve the problems that appeared on the road.

I also wish to show my gratitude to my university colleagues. Thank you to all of them for the good moments we spent together in different meetings and conferences here and there. They were the best colleagues one could hope to have and their company was especially delightful.

My friends, those persons who make me laugh more than no one in this world and whose love make me feel one of the most fortunate and happiest persons, for all this and all their support, thank you very much. A special thank you must be given to Judit and her American friends for their international help.

My family, for what is a person without family? I must give them one of the biggest *thank you-s*; especially to my father, my mother and my brother whose support is unconditional and the kindest one.

And finally, I owe Oliver a very personal thank you. He is the personification of support, encouragement, and love because, without knowing anything about the problems that NPs caused me, he had faith in my capacities to solve the NP puzzle no matter what.

**Santiago de Compostela, April 2013**



Language, quite simply, is a window through which we can reach out and touch each other's minds. Anyone can reach through it – regardless of race, regardless of belief. It is the most intimate act we can ever perform. We must be sure, always, to keep that window open.

Altmann (1997), *The Ascent of Babel*

The key to understand acquisition is not the famous poverty of the stimulus (...), but rather the opulence of the substrate.

Feldman (2006), *From Molecule to*

*Metaphor. A Neural Theory of*

*Language.*

# Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>ABBREVIATIONS.....</b>	<b>v</b>
<b>LIST OF FIGURES.....</b>	<b>vii</b>
<b>1. INTRODUCTION.....</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1 Definition.....	2
1.2 Heads and dependents.....	3
1.2.1 Heads.....	3
1.2.2 Dependents: modifiers vs. complements.....	7
1.3 The diversity of the NP structure: structure and constituents.....	10
1.3.1 The diversity of the head-noun.....	10
1.3.2 The diversity of the dependents.....	12
1.3.3 The diversity of the determiner.....	14
1.3.4 Cross-linguistic variation.....	16
<b>2. HEADEDNESS WITHIN NPs. MATTERS OF ENDOCENTRICITY.....</b>	<b>21</b>
2.1 Introduction.....	21
2.2 The conventional Noun Phrase structure.....	26
2.3 The generative perspective.....	30
2.3.1 Generative Grammar until the 90s.....	30
2.3.2 Jackendoff (1977).....	31
2.3.3 Abney's (1987) new NP model.....	39
2.3.4 The current generative analysis: the DP hypothesis.....	42
2.4 The NP and the cognitive analysis.....	45
2.4.1 Meaning as the main target.....	46
2.4.2 Grounding.....	50
2.4.3 Headedness within Cognitive Grammar: nouns and determiners.....	54
2.5 Other recent analysis of the NP structure.....	56



# Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

2.5.1	An exocentric structure.....	56
2.5.2	A headless structure.....	62
2.6	The present framework: a cognitive approach.....	72
2.6.1	The cognitive basis.....	72
2.6.1.1	A brief introduction to Construction Grammar.....	73
2.6.1.2	Grounding the noun.....	76
2.6.1.3	Meaning within the Noun Phrase.....	81
2.6.2	Changes in the Cognitive Model.....	87
2.6.2.1	The noun as the basis of the referent.....	87
2.6.2.1.1	The functional element: the syntactic aid.....	89
<b>3.</b>	<b>CLOSE APPOSITION.....</b>	<b>93</b>
3.1	Introduction.....	93
3.2	Close and loose apposition.....	94
3.2.1	The loose-close apposition relation.....	99
3.2.2	Semantics and loose appositions.....	102
3.2.3	Pragmatics in appositions.....	109
3.2.4	Apposition as a semantic, pragmatic and syntactic relation.....	114
3.2.5	Redefining loose apposition.....	117
3.2.6	Conclusion.....	124
3.3	A whole century about apposition. Historical background.....	125
3.3.1	Introduction.....	125
3.3.2	Close apposition as an endocentric structure.....	125
3.3.3	The <i>Det + N + N</i> structure as a common NP. The close apposition label erased from the map.....	129
3.3.4	Close apposition, an undifferentiated construction.....	136
3.3.5	Gradient apposition.....	143
3.3.6	Determiners and the CA analysis.....	148
3.3.7	Close appositions from a Construction Grammar approach.....	151
<b>4.</b>	<b>CONSTRUCTIONAL LINKS BETWEEN CLOSE APPOSITION AND ORDINARY NOUN PHRASES.....</b>	<b>159</b>

# Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

4.1 Heterogeneity within the close appositive type, but only one head.....	159
4.2 The prototypical CA construction: the <i>the writer Alice Walker</i> structure.....	161
4.3 The members of the CA network.....	173
4.3.1. The <i>my sister Cath /my sister the writer</i> types.....	173
4.3.2 The <i>Alice Walker the writer</i> type.....	179
4.3.2.1 The <i>Kermit the Frog</i> type.....	184
4.3.3 The <i>King Henry VIII</i> type.....	186
4.3.4 The <i>the word ‘courtesy’</i> type.....	191
4.3.5 The <i>‘a friend John [who’s in linguistics]’</i> type.....	193
4.3.6 The <i>we women, you men</i> type.....	197
4.4 Close appositions and their network structure.....	201
4.5 Conclusions about close appositions.....	209
<b>5. BINOMINAL NOUN PHRASES: <i>your brat of a brother</i>.....</b>	<b>213</b>
5.1 Introduction.....	213
5.2 The external form of binominal noun phrases.....	215
5.2.1 The Det1 position.....	216
5.2.2 The N1 position.....	217
5.2.3 The <i>of</i> element.....	218
5.2.4 The Det2 position.....	219
5.2.5 The N2 position.....	219
5.3 Different analyses of the construction.....	219
5.3.1 BNP as a modifier-head structure.....	221
5.3.2 BNP as a head-modifier structure.....	225
5.3.3 BNP as a modifier phrase-head structure.....	236
5.3.4 BNP as a construction with two different underlying representations.....	250
5.4 A constructional analysis of binominal noun phrases.....	264
5.4.1 Structural parallelisms .....	265
5.4.2 The headedness issue.....	268
5.4.3 Agreement in special cases of the BNP construction.....	275

# Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

<b>6. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS.....</b>	<b>281</b>
<b>REFERENCES.....</b>	<b>299</b>
<b>RESUMEN EN CASTELLANO .....</b>	<b>315</b>



# Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

## ABBREVIATIONS

A	Adjective
AdvP	Adverb Phrase
AP	Adjective Phrase
BNP	Binominal Noun Phrase
CA	Close Apposition
CDS	Current Discourse Space
CG	Cognitive Grammar
Comp	Complement
Def. art.	Definite article
Det	Determiner
DP	Determiner Phrase
Fem	Feminine
GB	Government and Binding
H	Head
I	Inflection
IP	Inflectional Phrase
LA	Loose Apposition
Masc	Masculine
Mod	Modifier
N	Noun
N1	First Noun in an Apposition
N2	Second Noun in an Apposition
NP	Noun Phrase
P	Preposition

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

p. Person

Pl. Plural

Poss Possessive

PP Prepositional Phrase

RP Reference Point

S Sentence

Sing. Singular



# Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

## LIST OF FIGURES

<b>Figure 1.</b> The grounding system .....	50
<b>Figure 2.</b> A full nominal according to the grounding system .....	51
<b>Figure 3.</b> Semantic and syntactic interrelation between the noun and the determiner .....	88
<b>Figure 4.</b> The Reference Point Model.....	168
<b>Figure 5.</b> The conceptualizer establishes a reference point .....	170
<b>Figure 6.</b> Possible targets for the established reference point .....	170
<b>Figure 7.</b> Selection of the target element .....	171
<b>Figure 8.</b> A prototypical close apposition following the reference point model .....	171
<b>Figure 9.</b> Internal links in a reference point-target relation of a [Poss + N (common) + N (proper) .....	177
<b>Figure 10.</b> Selection of the reference point in <i>King Henry</i> .....	190
<b>Figure 11.</b> Selection of the target element in <i>King Henry</i> .....	190

## 1

### Introduction

The Noun Phrase (henceforth also NP) is a linguistic category which is often considered to contain a structure more complex or intricate than that of a clause. It is certainly not as easy to deal with as it might seem at first sight. This complexity is due to the fact that it can adopt different forms, that is, its basic prototypical form (the set Det + N) is just a minimal part of all the possible variations which can occur inside the Noun Phrase category. The present work deals with the English NP construction. I consider it important to highlight this because, as will be seen, not all languages follow the English NP model. Variety in the internal make up of NPs is, perhaps, not so surprising. In fact, reality is complex and varied, and humans live a reality and a context which is reflected in their use of language. Language develops out of language use and, at the same time, it is a reflection of our cognitive abilities. One of these abilities is *categorization* which, as Taylor puts it, is “to see similarity in diversity” (Taylor 1995). As a consequence, the formal characteristics of this system of communication have to be complex and varied. Contrary to the generative dogma, variety and gradual membership are taken as granted by Cognitive Grammar, which takes this as definitive for the structure of syntactic categories.

This introduction aims to present the NP from a rather descriptive point of view with the purpose of presenting this variety of forms. First of all, a definition of the basic NP structure is offered in section 1.1 with the intention of introducing the basic elements of this structure before presenting all the other possible constituents. After this brief presentation, the notions *head* and *dependent* are introduced in section 1.2. Finally, section 1.3 contains the main *loci of diversity* within the structure of the NP, that is, the

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

range of all the possible elements which can be set in the *locus* of the noun and which cause internal structural diversity. It also introduces the main theme of chapter 2, namely, the different grammatical analyses of the NP structure.

### 1.1 Definition

The ‘prototypicality’ of an NP lies in the fact that the noun-and-determiner combination is one of the most ‘faithful’ of all the possible grammatical relations of a language. However, NP structures can be quite diverse. A category in general, and a syntactic category in particular, is a bundle of instances belonging to the same type although not sharing clear cut features among them, but “showing a criss-crossing network of similarities” (Taylor 1995: 38; see also, Rosch 1973, 1978; Lakoff 1987; Aarts, Denison, Keizer & Popova 2004; Aarts 2007). In this way, under the label *NP* we may find instances of this category with a common noun used alone, without any accompanying element, as when we use a noun in a generic sense as, for example, *cats are always sleeping*; proper nouns, as in *John took a train at 9.30*, and also just pronouns, as in *we are trying to give our dog a bath*.

Of course pronouns can actually supplant just ‘pieces’ of NPs, as *one* for example (as in *the one*). Interestingly, these types of NP instances are noun phrases without nouns (see section 1.3.1). These instances project an NP structure anyway due to the presence in them of a determiner (Hawkins 1994: 106). Thus, an adjective can also stand in the place of a noun, as in for example, *the happy will live longer* (see section 1.3.1). This is in fact an unconstrained routine in Spanish (*los blancos, las altas, las anchas*; see section 1.3.4). Such NPs present semantic nuances that must be taken into account or dealt with in special ways. Usually, in English, these are possible when the adjective describes the human condition or character, and is used to represent a class



## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

of persons, as in *the rich* or *the blind*. This construction always has a plural meaning. It does not make reference to a concrete person because it lacks the nominal element that evokes a type which can be qualified. In general terms, **an NP is a syntactic category which represents an instance of an entity in the outside world or in the context of communication**, so, of course, words denoting entities tend to be needed, and these tend to be nouns.

As syntactic categories, NPs play a role within the structure of larger units like verb phrases (VP), prepositional phrases (PP) and clauses. Within a VP they can be direct objects, as in, for example, *wash my dog*; or indirect objects, as in *give my dog a bone*; and they can also be predicative complements, as in *my dog is a good pet*. Within a prepositional phrase, NPs function as complements of the preposition, as in, for example, *in the garden*, *with the dog*. Within a clause structure NPs typically function as subjects, as in *the dog ate all his food*.

### 1.2 Heads and dependents

#### 1.2.1 Heads

Most linguistic theories postulate that the notion *head* is a pivotal element in the syntactic analysis of linguistic structures. The truth is that “the notion head has a part to play in almost all current syntactic theories” (Cann 1993: 44). In fact, “a **phrasal construction** can (...) be defined as any construction which has a head, and a **phrase** as any unit which exhibits such a construction” (Matthews 1981: 161). According to Matthews (1981), one of the main elements which makes up a phrase in general terms is that it contains a head which is *almost* obligatory. This ‘obligatoriness’ of the head applies *always* with reference to its syntactic influence; but I also contend that it is

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

*almost* obligatory when dealing with its ‘physical’ presence once we make use of language, that is, its syntactic influence is always present although it is not explicitly visible. Together with obligatoriness, the main function of the notion head is that it **determines the syntactic distribution of the constituents of a construction**. As a consequence these constituents are subordinated to the main element. Zwicky (1985: 2) defends the existence of heads within syntax and offers the following definition for them: “[t]he intuition to be captured with the notion HEAD is that in certain syntactic constructions one constituent in some sense ‘characterizes’ or ‘dominates’ the whole”. Thus, the main function of a head is to project the main characteristics of a larger syntactic construction. Hudson (1987) also makes reference to this notion and, quoting works by Anderson (1971, 1977), Matthews (1981), and Hudson (1984), states that all these linguists “agree not only in using the term ‘head’, but also in using it to refer to the element in some construction to which all the other parts of that construction are (in some sense) subordinate”.

This position is also defended by McGlashan (1993: 205). It is true that sometimes the head of a structure can be omitted, as in the NP *the blind*, where the noun (*people*) is not present, but most linguists consider it is still the latent head (see section 1.3.1). Some linguists take the omission of the noun as a fundamental piece of evidence for defending the idea that the noun is not the head because it can be omitted. But, as McGlashan (p. 205) points out:

Head categories are obligatory since they provide the syntactic and semantic types of the result category: without these, the result category would not be defined. Consequently when the head category is absent, it must be elliptical rather than optional: it is implicit in the discourse and when reconstructed from context provides syntactic and semantic types of the phrase.

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

With this assertion, McGlashan seeks to defend the view that the head is really never optional: it is an obligatory element which, even when omitted, can always, and actually must always, be inferred from the context of communication.

Hudson (1987: 112) offers an analysis of the function *head* following Zwicky (1985) and at the same time modifying his views. He tries to show that:

[T]he analysis which Zwicky assumes, (...) [is] either irrelevant or open to improvement. (...) Zwicky rejects [the idea] that there is a general category which subsumes many –though not all– of the ‘head-like’ concepts. Naturally I shall suggest that this supercategory is what has traditionally been called ‘head’.

He defines *head* as “the name of a grammatical relation category, on a par with categories like ‘subject’ and ‘object’, but on a higher level of generality than these” (p. 131). In a more recent contribution, Hudson (1993: 266) states about the head function that it is “different from the other daughters only in that its features are the same as those of the mother”, that is, the semantic and syntactic features of the head element are projected in the final phrasal category.

In sum, it could be said that the head is the element which contributes the main semantic and syntactic features for the elaboration of a higher syntactic construction. In order to be the head of a construction, an element has to be able to perform or project a syntactic role within the structure which it heads.

Cognitive linguists like Langacker and Taylor have also offered definitions for the notion *head*. Thus, Langacker (1991: 549) makes a distinction between two different

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

types of heads. He posits the existence of a 'local head' and a 'global head', and he defines them as follows:

Locally, at any given level of constituency, the head is that component structure whose profile corresponds to that of the composite structure. Globally, within a nominal<sup>1</sup> or a finite clause, the head is the lowest-level noun or verb which profiles the thing or process instance designated by the nominal or the clause overall.

And, according to Taylor (2002: 590), the notion *head* can be explained in the following way:

The head of an expression is that constituent whose profile is inherited by the expression. *On the table* is headed by *on*, since the relational character of the phrase is inherited from the preposition.

From a generative point of view, the notion *head* is also taken into account.

Dealing with heads, Radford (2004: 455), for instance, offers the following definition:

The head (constituent) of a phrase is the key word which determines the properties of the phrase. So, in a phrase such as *fond of fast food*, the head of the phrase is the adjective *fond*, and consequently the phrase is an adjectival phrase (...).

Although Cognitive Grammar and Generative Grammar use very different tools for studying the syntactic structures of language and are based on quite different principles, both linguistic frameworks defend the idea that there is an element that

---

<sup>1</sup> Langacker uses the term nominal when referring to the structure which contains at least a Determiner and a noun. In the present work I use the term NP, which is more usual.

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

‘directs’ the distribution of the whole structure. For present purposes, I will also assume that the head of a structure is that element whose characteristics (syntactic and semantic) are projected in the highest structure within which it is included. Thus, the head is the constituent element around which all the other constituent elements turn.

### 1.2.2 Dependents: modifiers vs. complements

If the head is the main element within a syntactic structure, the rest of the constituents are its dependent elements. Therefore, whenever we have a head, a dependent or dependents are implied. A dependent is an element which modifies the head and is subordinate to it. This means that if the existence of an element *A* within a structure is not possible except via the presence of another element *B*, *A* is a dependent element of *B*. Taylor (2002: 588) states that “[a] dependent unit can only be conceptualized with reference to other entities”. This means that in order to use the dependent element we have to previously use the head.

But the notion *dependent* is not so simple. This is a general term that subsumes two more specific ones, *modifier* and *complement*. Huddleston & Pullum (2002: 24) label these notions as ‘subtypes of dependent’. They also point out (p. 439) that “[t]he distinction between these two kinds of dependent is essentially the same as in clause structure, but in the NP they are not as clearly differentiated syntactically”. As shall be seen, this is often ignored by some. The most general description of the differences between a complement and a modifier is that a complement is “licensed by the head noun. The licensing criterion is the most basic criterion for complements (...)” (Huddleston & Pullum 2002: 440). On the other hand, a modifier depends on the noun but it is not obligatory for the understanding of the NP.

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

Consider now Matthews's (1981: 147) comment about word subordination within syntactic structure:

In an attributive relation the element which can be dropped is an 'attribute' (or 'subordinate'). So, *very sleek* and *(the) thrushes on the lawn* have attributive constructions with the attributes *very* and *on the lawn*. The determiner in *some thrushes* or *the thrushes* is also classed as an attribute; thus one can say *The thrushes are singing* or *Thrushes are singing*, but not *The are singing*.

In relation to the 'subtypes of dependents' and more specifically to the modifier category, McGlashan (1993: 205-206) maintains that modifiers are generally not obligatory and as consequence they do not influence the final syntactic category. In the case they were obligatory, McGlashan points out that "it is the head category which provides the types". He also points out that when a modifier and a head appear together within the same syntactic structure:

[P]hrases are characterized as the category which results from the extension of a head category through specification by a modifier category. The head category provides the syntactic and semantic type of the result category so long as **the modifier category does not change properties of the head which define its syntactic and semantic type** (emphasis added).

Langacker (1991: 6) also contends that if we have an element which is a head "the other component is a complement or a modifier depending on whether it *elaborates* a salient substructure of the head, or whether one of its salient substructures is *elaborated by* the head". When an element *elaborates* its head, this projects part of the meaning of the head which is not attained by the head itself, and thus complements it.

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

On the other hand, when an element is *elaborated by* the head, the head allows the presence of the modifier which expands its meaning, but which is not necessary for understanding the meaning of the phrase.

From a different linguistic point of view, Generative Grammar also considers the notion of dependent as important in grammar. Moreover, this linguistic framework also considers the distinction between *complement* and *modifier*. Thus, in the words of Radford (2004: 441) a complement is “a term used to denote a specific grammatical function (...). A complement is an expression which is directly **merged** with (and hence is the **sister** of) a head word, thereby projecting the head into a larger structure of essentially the same kind” (emphasis in the original). Radford (2004: 462) also points out that a modifier is an element like *tall* “in an expression such as *tall men*, [where it] is traditionally said that the adjective *tall* **modifies** (i.e. attributes some property to) or is a **modifier** of the noun *men*”.

As can be appreciated, all linguistic theories agree on the basic definition and existence of heads and dependents. This must be indicative of the fact that these syntactic notions are of relevance and must be taken into account when analysing linguistic constructions. These frameworks also draw attention to the basic distinction made between modifiers and complements. Both will be important in the present work, which starts from the premise that within the grammar of the NP these two notions are taken to be unproblematic. In chapter 2 I will start by looking into a series of disagreements that different schools of thought have on the most basic aspects of the NP structure.

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

### 1.3 The diversity of the NP: structure and constituents

That nouns are central to the NP structure is surely obvious. So is the fact that an NP can also be formed by many other words. Whether one defends the point of view which sees the determiner as the head of the Det + N structure (Brame 1982; Abney 1987; Siloni 1997; Alexiadou, Haegeman & Stravou 2007), or the idea that the lexical element is the head of the construction (Matthews 1981; Huddleston & Pullum 2002), the noun is an essential and obligatory element among the possible constituents of such a construction. Generative grammarians analyse the noun as the head of an NP-complement of the determiner head; and for those who defend the NP against the DP (Determiner Phrase), the noun is obviously the cornerstone of the NP construction. However, the preferential syntactic treatment of the noun does not allow it to escape diversity, that is, the lexical element is also an object of variation and change.

#### 1.3.1 The diversity of the head-noun

Its full semantic content is the most salient feature of a noun. As a word category it allows making reference to the different objects, emotions and entities which make up the external world of the speaker and his/her mind. Givón (2001: 58) points out that the main role of nouns is to evoke entities, and that “[n]ouns (‘common nouns’) do not *refer* to individual entities (‘tokens’), but only *connote* classes (‘types’) of entities”. Its content is, thus, rather transparent and accessible. Nouns are the linguistic elements which enable contact with the context of communication, the contact between speakers and hearers, allowing them to make reference to the physical entities and non-physical emotions and thoughts.

Their centrality in the NP structure does not prevent nouns from the fact that they can be omitted, substituted and fused. Thus, although they are usually taken to be



## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

obligatory and the essence of an NP; they can actually disappear. Nonetheless most linguists agree that it is always implicitly present. Consider the following examples:

(1a) *The rich aren't better*

(1b) *The poor aren't to blame*

(1c) *The blacks bore terrible injustices*

(1d) *The whites aren't better humans*

(2a) *I like this one*

(2b) *My dog prefers the ones in the other bag*

(2c) *Give me the other ones*

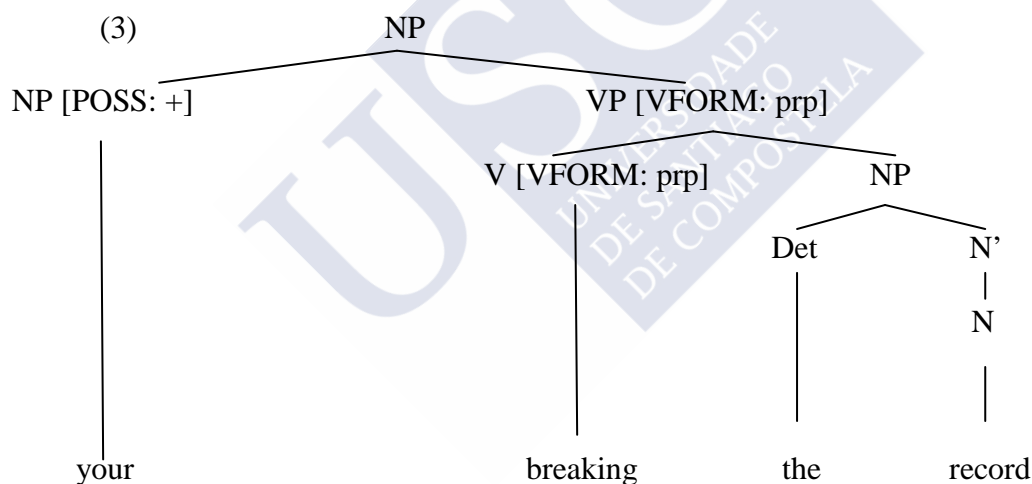
(2d) *The one on the left is bigger*

As can be appreciated, all these examples lack a head-noun (as head of an NP, or as head of an NP-complement of a determiner). These are divided into two types: those which are made up by a determiner and an adjective (Wierzbicka 1986), and those made up by a determiner and *one(s)*. This latter type of construction is denominated 'fused-head construction' by Huddleston & Pullum (2002: 410), who consider that "[f]used-head NPs are those where the head is combined with a dependent function that in ordinary NPs is adjacent to the head, usually determiner or internal modifier" (see also section 1.3.3). This 'fusion' could be indicative of the fact that variety is also present in the syntactic organization of the NP, and not only in the possible elements that may fulfil the nominal position. It could be considered that if the noun is analysed as the head of the NP, once this is not present in the structure, as in *the blind* or *the one*, the

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

headedness position might be developed, exceptionally, by another typical nominal element of the NP (see section 2.6).

In fact, replaced not only by adjectives and by indefinite pronouns, but also verbs can substitute nouns. Thus, Pullum (1991) contends that gerunds develop the functions of a noun in phrases such as *your breaking the record*. He discusses English gerunds and points out that their most salient property is that they show not only verbal, but also nominal characteristics. He uses the term ‘nominal gerund phrases’ for referring to this type of structure but basically maintains that this type of NPs are headed by VPs (Verb Phrases). The following is the syntactic analysis made by Pullum in order to illustrate his theory:



### 1.3.2 The diversity of the dependents

Dependents are also a source of diversity and variety, and as we have already seen, they even show diversity inside their own category because they may be modifiers or complements. The dependents of a noun go from a simple adjective to a complex *that*-clause, and the complexity of a Noun Phrase is due in large measure to the combined use of all these possible dependents. There exists also a type of dependent which differs

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

from the ‘adjective-dependent pattern’; these are **appositive modifiers**. This type of linguistic element is different from other (also called appositive) structures like *John, the gardener*, which have to do with the NP structure but at a different level. ‘Appositive dependents’ (Huddleston & Pullum 2002: 447) are dependents which “when substituted for the matrix NP in a declarative clause systematically yield a clause which is an entailment of the original”. The following examples illustrate this definition:

(4a) *She sang in [the opera ‘Carmen’]*

(4b) *She sang in ‘Carmen’*

(5a) *It was founded in [the year 1850]*

(5b) *It was founded in 1850* (Huddleston & Pullum 2002: 447).

Examples (4a) and (5a) entail (4b) and (5b). In each of these pairs, the *b* examples offer a reduced version of the whole NPs in their *a* counterparts. As a consequence of its strong links to ‘common’ NPs, this issue will be dealt with more deeply in chapters 3 and 4, where the notion of apposition is studied and analysed in depth.

Just as the general category *dependent* shows diversity, the subcategories complement and modifier may be classified as pre-head or post-head elements. Depending on their position and on whether they are complements or modifiers, these two functions may be performed by different syntactic categories. The function of *pre-head complement*, according to some, is usually performed by nouns, as in *a novel writer*, or *in a book seller*; but there are a small number of adjectives which may carry out the complement function as well, as in these examples taken from Huddleston &

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

Pullum (2002: 439): a legal adviser and an ecological expert. Post-head complements have a more elaborate and complex form and are carried out by prepositional phrases or clauses, as in: *the author of the book*, or *the rumour that Jane has married*.

*Modifiers* are more varied. Pre-head position may be developed by a determiner alone, as in *another twenty days* and *the scarcely ten students present*. Adjective Phrases (*the white cats on the roof*); Verb Phrases (*the burning house*); and nominals, (*a children's magazine*); can also function as pre-head modifiers. In post-head position we can also find determinatives, adjectives and APs (Adjective Phrases), but the most common form of this type of dependent is Prepositional Phrases (*the house with three chimneys*, *the girl in a pink dress*).

As we continue our tour through the syntactic structure of the NP construction, we realise that all its possible linguistic components give rise to many forms of structural complexity.

### 1.3.3 The diversity of the determiner

By the side of the syntactic role played by the noun, the determiner also plays a key role in the NP structure. But its absence, as well as that of the noun, is an option among all the diverse instances of the structure of a Noun Phrase. However, in English, the use of a noun without a determiner is only possible if the noun is in the plural and makes reference to an entity in general terms, never referring to a particular group, in which case, we need a determiner. The following examples show this possibility: *Children love games and sweets*; *Dogs love to run and eat bones*. In these two examples, the five underlined nouns appear without an accompanying determiner and, even so, they make up NPs. For this reason this type of construction is called **bare NP**. Huddleston & Pullum (2002: 355) point out that “[n]ominals headed by plural count nouns or by non-

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

count nouns can freely be admitted as indefinite by default, forming **bare indefinite NPs** [...]" (emphasis added).

As noted, the determiner can be omitted under certain circumstances, but there is also the possibility of using it alone. Thus, for example, in *These are better*, the subject of this clausal structure is carried out by an NP which is made up by a demonstrative alone without a nominal accompanying element. This type of NP instance is considered as *fused-head constructions* by Huddleston & Pullum (2002: 410 ff.). Given the absence of the nominal element and the necessity of a head element, it could be considered that the headedness position is also fused with that of the determiner, in which case the determinative would developed the head role (see section 2.6). However, not all the linguistic elements which can occur in determiner position allow this use. The exceptions to this phenomenon are the definite and indefinite articles *the* and *a(n)*, which cannot suffer fusion and, as a consequence, cannot be used alone as head of the NP. This is interesting because these two elements carry out the **determiner function per excellence**, and even so (or perhaps because of that), they are not syntactically strong enough to work alone and make up a Noun Phrase. The definite article *the* is the most basic indicator of definiteness. Its use on the part of the speaker means that he/she assumes that his/her hearer can identify the entity to which the NP makes reference. Moreover, it marks the noun as representing an entity which –the encoder presumes– will be recognized by the hearer. On the other hand, the indefinite article *a(n)* is the most basic element used with singular count nouns to indicate indefiniteness and introduce an entity that is not recognized by the hearer. When discussing the transmission of given-new information, Prince (1981: 224) puts special emphasis on how speakers connect old and new information making use of different linguistic elements, such as in the use of definite and indefinite articles.

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

As far as the presence of the determiner is concerned, the function *determiner* can also be performed by an extensive list of linguistic elements, like demonstratives (*this, that*), personal pronouns (*we, you*), universal quantifiers (*all, both*), distributive determinatives (*each, every*), existential determinatives (*some, any*), cardinal numbers (*one, two, three...*), disjunctive determinatives (*either, neither*), and possessive pronouns and phrases, as in *my dog* and *Alice's cat*, (for an extensive enumeration see Huddleston & Pullum 2002, chapter 5).

From a very descriptive point of view, these elements *determine* the whole phrase. The determiner is considered as a key function in the structure of the NP. When a determiner is added to a noun or nominal, an NP construction is formed (Huddleston & Pullum 2002: 354-355). Determiners add their own meaning to nouns and they specify the Noun Phrase as definite or indefinite. This is a decisive semantic contribution because a noun alone does not make reference to a specific, 'unique' instance of an entity. The function of a noun consists in evoking the general types which need to be complemented in order to be referring expressions (Givón 2001).

### 1.3.4 Cross-linguistic variation

Diversity does not only affect the English NP construction. When taking a look at different languages, one can realize that different NP structures are used and that different grammatical rules are applied. As a consequence of general linguistic features such as rich morphology and agreement, languages like Spanish, Galician, Italian, and German show syntactic differences with respect to the English NP. Consider the following examples:

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

(6) <i>O</i>	<i>meu</i>	<i>coche (Galician)</i>
<i>Det. masc. sing.</i>	<i>Poss. masc. 1<sup>st</sup> p. sing.</i>	<i>masc. sing. car</i>
<i>My car</i>		

(7) <i>La</i>	<i>mia</i>	<i>macchina (Italian)</i>
<i>Det. fem. sing.</i>	<i>Poss. fem. 1<sup>st</sup> p. sing.</i>	<i>fem. sing. car</i>
<i>My car</i>		

As can be seen from these examples, there is a typological variation between the English model and the Galician and Italian instances. As noted, the prototypical English NP is made up by a Det + N, but that structure is not possible in Galician and Italian because it is not grammatical as can be appreciated from examples (6) and (7); \**Meu coche (My car)* and \**Mia macchina (My car)*. In these two languages it is obligatory to use the construction Det (def. art.) + Poss + N<sup>2</sup>.

If the English and the German NP patterns are compared, typological variation can also be appreciated. When checking through all the possible forms of the English NP, it is impossible to find a construction such as \**give me the olds* (as a consequence of the linguistic constraints already discussed), but in German this structure is perfectly possible, as seen in *gib mir die alten (give me the olds)*. But this linguistic variation is made more obvious –and also common– if we turn our analysis to a cross-linguistic examination, as observed in the German example, and in particular in Spanish and Galician examples. Consider these instances:

(8) <i>A mi</i>	<i>me gustan</i>	<i>los rojos (Spanish)</i>
<i>Reflexive form 1<sup>st</sup> p. sing.</i>	<i>1<sup>st</sup> p. sing. like</i>	<i>masc. pl. red</i>
<i>I like the red ones</i>		

---

<sup>2</sup> As in almost all grammatical constructions in all languages, exceptions to the rules are possible. In the specific case of Galician the determiner before the possessive may be omitted in vocatives, when the noun designates unique beings, in stereotypical phrases and with kinship names. In Italian the determiner is only omitted when used with *father, mother, son* and *daughter*.

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

(9) <i>A min</i>	<i>gustanme</i>	<i>os vermellos</i> (Galician)
<i>Reflexive form 1<sup>st</sup> p. sing.</i>	<i>1<sup>st</sup> p. sing like-me</i>	<i>masc. pl. red</i>
<i>I like the red ones</i>		

These examples show an unconstrained routine in Spanish and Galician, a linguistic fact that is not possible in English. When a determiner (in particular definite and indefinite articles) is used in this position, it develops a nominalising function in Spanish as well as in English. However, these two languages do not make use of this linguistic structure under the same circumstances. On the one hand, the English grammar only allows this possibility if it makes reference to a plural, general use. On the other hand, in Spanish and Galician it can be used to make reference to general and particular instances in the same way. Moreover, singular and plural forms are possible as a consequence of the number agreement system obligatory in Spanish and Galician, as number is marked, redundantly, in all constituents.

Therefore, NPs are not simple constructions that follow a general invariable prototypical pattern of elaboration, but complex, intricate and varied structures which offer a great field of study. All these NP structures and all their possible syntactic functions suggest that the grammar of the NP may indeed not be the fixed, static homogeneous entity that most linguists, somewhat unreflectingly, take it to be.

This general overview of the different words which can determine a noun in order to create an NP has shown that the function of the determiner is an important characteristic in the structure of the Noun Phrase. The determiner is a *functional* category. Its semantic content is almost null, at least in the case of central determiners, which indicate information about quantification, grammatical number and various aspects involving reference. It could be said that it belongs to the ‘syntactic’ part of



## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

language. Consistently, it is a syntactic element which creates syntactic support for the insertion of lexical categories within the syntactic structure of language. Moreover, among all the possible accompanying elements of a noun within an NP structure, without a doubt, the determiner is the most important and essential one. It is almost obligatory in all instances of the NP construction; its presence allows the creation of a full-fledged syntactic category, and it is the 'eternal' partner of a noun. Even more, when the nominal element is not present, the function of the determiner seems to be expanded in the sense that it develops the head role (see section 2.6). With all these characteristics, the determiner is not an easy linguistic element to delimit and analyse. This fact causes a diversity of views with reference to the head element and the complement/ modifier element of an NP structure. Until now we have been dealing with the general features of the structure of the Noun Phrase, features which are not bound to a concrete linguistic framework. Chapter 2 offers an overview of particular and confronting linguistic points of view which offer different analyses of this syntactic structure.



### **Headedness within NPs. Matters of endocentricity**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

Although the majority of linguists accepts and argues in favour of the distinction between head and dependents, as previously seen, there is no such consensus about which constituent is the head and which the dependents within NPs. The main point of this chapter is to discuss different syntactic analyses of the NP structure in relation to its headedness. In section 2.2 we find a traditional/conventional syntactic analysis according to which an NP structure has a noun as its head. Section 2.3 offers a thorough analysis of the generative point of view about the structure of the Noun Phrase, which in its present form (Chomsky 1996) defends a DP account with the determiner as its head. Section 2.4 presents the Cognitive Grammar point of view, which postulates that the determiner is also the main element within the NP structure. However, this framework offers very different arguments for defending this position. Moreover, in section 2.5 we can also find two analyses which deviate from the main stream. One defends a structure with two heads; the other one contends that the NP is a headless structure. Finally, in section 2.6 I offer my own analysis of the central constituency of NPs, that is, that involving the relation between determiners and nouns, which from a cognitive point of view defends the position of the noun as the head of the structure. These different points of view and frameworks also in themselves underscore the various internal dynamics that generate the NP structure.

Huddleston & Pullum (2002: 63) argue in favour of an NP phrase as opposed to a determiner phrase (DP) and point out about the determiner that “there is a wide range

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

of ordinary NPs that contain no determiner (...). The determiner then is a kind of dependent (...). Matthews (1981: 63) is also in favour of the NP –not of the DP- and points out that “[a]n article (...) presupposes the head element”, that is, every time we find an article functioning as a determiner we expect to find also a noun, because it is not possible to find a determiner (definite or indefinite articles) within a syntactic structure without the presence of a noun, as this would not be grammatical, at least in English. In this respect, Matthews (p. 69) adds the following point:

(...) we are concerned with a case in which the dependent element has two special properties. The first is that it enters into a bounded system of oppositions (...). The second is that it can have no dependents of its own, or at most dependents which are themselves of a closed class. Thus, there is no element that in turn presupposes (...) an article (...). When both conditions are met (...) the dependent will be described as a **determiner**, or said to have a **determining** function.

On this view, the function of the determiner depends completely on the use of a noun. Those who defend an NP structure concentrate on the fact that the noun is the head because “[it] defines the selectional properties of the phrase” (Huddleston & Pullum 2002: 357).

Those linguists who are in favour of a DP structure give it a parallel analysis to that of a clause, as understood in most generative works (for a study of the Noun Phrase from the generative point of view consult Alexiadou, Haegeman & Stavrou 2007). Within the generative framework, functional elements have long ago taken central stage in the syntactic analysis of languages in that the head of syntactic constructions is always a functional category. In the case of the clause, the heading element is the

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

inflection (I) or something analogous to *that* (Chomsky 1981, 1986). In the case of the set Det + N, the functional element is the determiner, so that is the head of the construction. Siloni (1997: 7) argues in favour of the so-called DP hypothesis, pointing out that the determiner is the head because “D is the element which converts the nominal expression into a referential phrase, which consequently is able to serve as an argument”. Among the linguists who defend this position are Abney (1987), Szabolcsi (1987), Bernstein (2001, 2008) and Longobardi (2001). In general, current Generative Grammar has adopted this view.

It is worth mentioning here that this analysis was previously pointed out by Brame (1982) before Abney’s full development of it. After suggesting that the functional element, that is, the determiner, should be the head of the construction, he proposed to “call DET of NP, P of PP, infinitival *to* of VP, and COMP of S the *head-selector* of the relevant constructions” (p. 321). He introduced the term ‘head-selector’, a function which will be developed by the functional element and which ‘corresponds roughly to the traditional notion of head’ (p. 321). Then, in a footnote, he clearly states: “In fact, I think it is a mistake to think of N as the head of an NP” (p. 321). As we can see, lexical elements are relegated to mere *subjects* of functional elements despite the fact that these are elements which create a link between the human mind and the reality; a reality that influences the evolution and development of our cognitive abilities.

Not only does Generative Grammar defend the view that functional elements are the heads of the syntactic construction they appear in, but Hudson (1984: 90-92), from a Dependency Grammar point of view, argues also in favour of this thesis. In the

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

Dependency Grammar framework, the syntactic organization of a structure is not defined by a specific word order. Its internal make-up is determined by the relation established between a word, which will be the head, and its dependents, so that phrasal nodes do not exist. Hudson defends the view that when a determiner and a noun appear together within a structure, the former is the head and the latter is the modifier. He offers the following reasons to defend this position: First, he considers that some elements like *all*, *three*, *some*, *this*, *which*, “can occur on their own, with an understood noun, in positions otherwise available only to nouns, so they must themselves be classifiable as nouns” (p. 90). The second reason also involves words such as *all*, *three*, and *which*. Hudson points out that these are the head of the construction in examples like *three of the dogs*, *which of the cats*, because, as can be seen, the determiners “can be followed by an optional *of* phrase (...) with the lexical noun in a clearly modifying position, inside the *of* phrase” (p. 91). The third deals with the lexical content of the linguistic elements. Hudson considers that “the lack of lexical content in determiners is irrelevant, because there is no general requirement for heads to have more lexical-type meaning than their modifiers” (p. 91). He compares the function of the determiner to that of the inflection within the verb phrase, a position defended in Generative Grammar. As can be seen, this view eschews meaning when it comes to motivating syntactic analyses. If the head element, which is reflected in the final category, does not contribute with semantic content, then, the final category is a semantically undefined category. In view of this, he concludes that “if one can accept the semantically empty *does* of *John does like syntax* as head of *like*, there should be no objection (...) to taking even *a* or *the* as head of a following noun” (p. 91). Internal coherence is important when developing a full-fledged theory of grammar, and if the functional element is the head in one type of construction, linguists generally find it appropriate to extend this

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

pattern to the rest of the structures. Now, this is a matter of methodological convenience (Croft 2001). Be that as it may, for now, the fact that the inflection is the head is also arguable. The fourth reason alludes to pronouns. Hudson (p. 91) establishes a relation between nouns and pronouns pointing out that “[a] case can be made (...) for the analysis of *the* as an allomorph of *he*, *she*, *it* and *they*, none of which can occur before a lexical noun (...). This analysis makes it natural to take *the* either as head, or as the first of two nouns in apposition (...)”. Notice that articles cannot stand alone as NPs, and that that does not seem to bother Hudson. In relation to appositive structures, in principle these are structures which show two NPs that make reference to the same entity (see chapters 3 and 4). That has nothing to do with the fact that *the* and the noun within the same NP do not make reference to the same entity. Hudson’s fifth reason deals with the order of the elements. In particular, he maintains that the order of the elements within the NP structure confers to the determiner its position as head. He concludes that “if the lexical noun modifies the determiner, then its own modifiers must not be separated from it by the determiner (...). Otherwise there is no explanation for the total ungrammaticality of examples such as \**big the boy*. [And finally,] (...) if determiners were modifiers, they would be pre-modifiers, so again they should be able to occur in different orders relative to other premodifiers” (p. 91).

This introduction has offered an outline of the linguistic tendencies when analysing syntactic headedness. The next sections capture the essence of different linguistic frameworks and points of view about headedness in NPs.

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

### 2.2 The conventional Noun Phrase structure

The conventional analysis of the NP structure views the noun as the head of the structure, and the articles and demonstratives, and all the possible functional elements which can occupy the first position of the NP, as the dependent of the structure. One of the works which has substantially contributed to the syntactic analysis of the NP structure was Bloomfield's *Language* (1933), where the American linguist introduced the term **endocentrism**. This is a pivotal notion for the syntactic explanation of the NP, especially from the traditional point of view. An example of endocentrism is *three Persian cats*, where the whole NP fulfils the same role as its head alone, that is, the noun *cats*, according to Bloomfield. On the contrary, an example like *until last Christmas* is an exocentric instance. On this occasion the whole phrase does not fulfil the grammatical role of any of its constituents. Bloomfield establishes a tradition with this pioneering work. Taking endocentrism as a guiding characteristic for the syntactic analysis of linguistic expressions, and the fact that lexical elements are the heads within these endocentric constructions, the lexicon of a language must be taken into account. It contains the meanings of the entities which evoke the different elements which make up the context of a community. A community evolves when communication is attained, and this occurs when meaning is transferred. In relation to this idea, Bloomfield (1933: 162-163) points out that for a correct use of language and a fruitful transfer of meaning, the users of that language must pay special attention to the distributional structure of syntactic categories:

(...) if we knew the lexicon of a language, and had a reasonably accurate knowledge of each sememe, we might still fail to understand the forms of this language. Every utterance contains some significant features that are not accounted for by the lexicon. (...). Part of [the] meaning depends upon



## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

the arrangement (...) in which these morphemes appear in the complex form. Every language shows part of its meaning by the arrangement of its forms.

The *arrangement* of things is the one responsible for a good elaboration of meaning and also for its good transmission. In relation to the arrangement of linguistic forms is the conception of word order. In fact, one way of creating linguistic forms (syntactic structures) is by means of word order. “Order is the successions in which the constituents of a complex form are spoken” (Bloomfield 1933: 162-163). Languages like English follow a strict syntactic order as a consequence of their lack of inflectional endings, and thus the order of their constituents is a crucial fact for an appropriate use of language. This is very important in relation to NPs because the prototypical arrangement (the set Det + N) of this type of structure is fixed: speakers cannot alter the syntactic structure of the NP and say things like, for example, *\*House the*, or *\*Dog this*.

As for the role of the determiner, Bloomfield (1933: 202) deals with this aspect of NPs and concentrates on the fact that demonstratives and articles are adjectives:

The adjectives are divided into two classes, *descriptive* and *limiting*, by the circumstance that when adjectives of both these classes occur in a phrase, the limiting adjective precedes and modifies the group of descriptive adjective plus noun. Thus, in a form like *this fresh milk*, the immediate constituents are the limiting adjective *this*, and the noun phrase *fresh milk* (...).

Within this limiting class of adjectives he also makes a distinction, and thus he postulates that limiting adjectives may be determiners or numeratives:

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

Our limiting adjectives fall into two sub-classes of *determiners* and *numeratives*. These two classes have several subdivisions and are crossed, moreover, by several other lines of classification.

The determiners are defined by the fact that certain types of noun expressions (such as *house* or *big house*) are always accompanied by a determiner (as, *this house*, *a big house*). (...). This habit of using certain noun expressions always with a determiner is peculiar to some languages (...), (p. 203).

As we can see, the final aim of using a determiner within an NP structure is that of accompanying the noun. At the same time that the determiner accompanies the head noun, it also fulfils a ‘meaning-role’, that is, it contributes with some meaning to the head noun, that is, the ‘identifiability’ of the noun. Thus, the function of the determiner is to signal if the noun makes reference to identified or unidentified elements. But, why are they not the head of the construction? Bloomfield (1933: 264) states that:

The meaningful features of linguistic signalling are of two kinds: lexical forms, which consist of phonemes, and grammatical forms, which consist of taxemes (features of arrangement).

Bloomfield (p. 166) concludes that “[a] simple feature of grammatical arrangement is a grammatical feature or taxeme. (...) [A] taxeme, taken by itself, in the abstract, is meaningless”. Determiners are taxemes, that is, grammatical features, and as a consequence, they are meaningless, that is, they do not carry meaning by themselves. If they are taken alone, if they are used without a noun, their content is not enough for communication. Their meaning is ‘identifiability’, and they cannot project this meaning if they are not bound to a noun, a fact that does not allow them to be the head of the construction.

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

Bloomfield's work caught on quickly in the world of linguistics. Hockett, an American structuralist, from whom we inherit a great deal about the perspective which nowadays we consider traditional grammar, assumes Bloomfield's vision about endocentrism and elaborates it further. Hockett (1958: 225) considers that nouns, adjectives and verbs indicate which type of pattern a construction must follow, and thus the construction must contain the same characteristics as its head. In reference to nouns he contends that these are:

[A]s head in nests of attributive constructions, often with initial *a* or *an*, *the*, *this* or *these*, *that* or *those*, or unstressed *some* (/səm/): *a boy*, *an elephant*, *the boy* (...). The resulting endocentric phrase, or sometimes the bare word, occurs typically as a subject (*The boy is here*), as an object of a verb (*We saw the boys*), as an object of a preposition (*Look at the boys*), and as a nominal predicate attribute (*My children are boys*).

So, as can be seen, Hockett (p. 184) considers the NP structure as an endocentric construction. He states that we can consider a structure as endocentric when “the form-class of the constituents is similar to the form-class of at least one of the ICs [Immediate Constituent]”. To illustrate this, he offers the following example: “*Old dog* is a singular noun just as *dog* is”. Hockett (p. 184) points out that “the privileges of occurrence in larger forms of *old dog* are much the same as those of *dog*”. Therefore, *the dog* shows the same structure as *old dog* where the noun is the element which designates the class of the larger structure, that is, an NP. He adds: “[t]he constituent whose privileges of occurrence are matched by those of the constituents is the *head* or the *center*; the other constituent is the *attribute*”, (p. 184).

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

As can be seen, this endocentric idea of NP structure has survived to the present day. Despite modern developments starting in the late 80s, this view is still perhaps the paradigm in at least non-specialised grammar classes at the graduate level of most universities.

### 2.3 The generative perspective

#### 2.3.1 Generative Grammar until the 90s

Generative Grammar starts its path with the work of Chomsky in the late 50s. One of its main tenets is that specific grammars arise out of an innate Universal Grammar common to all languages. It also tries to give a set of general rules which could be applied to all syntactic structures, that is, all the utterances of a language follow some patterns and there is no room for exceptions. From its beginnings to the present day, Generative Grammar has offered different versions of the initial theory. It began in the year 1957 with the Standard Theory. This changed in the year 1965 to the Extended Standard Theory. Then the Revised Extended Standard Theory developed in the early 70s. The Government and Binding/Principles and Parameters Theory appeared in the year 1981. Finally, in the 90s the Minimalist Program became the new version of Generative Grammar.

In work prior to the 80s, a structure such as *the door of the house* was analysed as an NP with a head noun, in this case *house*, a complement *of the house* and the definite article *the* was its *specifier*. Chomsky (1965: 26) offers the following example in order to illustrate the constituents of NPs:

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

- (10) (i) NP  $\rightarrow$  T + N  
(ii) T  $\rightarrow$  *the*  
(iii) N  $\rightarrow$  *man, ball, etc.*

This means that the NP involves at least a determiner and a noun, and the final projection reflects the noun as the main element in the formation of this syntactic category. This simple, rather traditional structure continued to be considered until Jackendoff (1977).

### 2.3.2 Jackendoff (1977)

Jackendoff's 1977 work introduces a new theory which would dramatically change the generative outlook about syntactic structures. This is the X-bar Theory. With it, Jackendoff tries to set an analysis which explains the common syntactic core of the different linguistic structures common to all languages, specifically of all phrasal projections (see Fukui 2001). The X-bar Theory is an important reference point for the development of the DP-hypothesis. In fact, this theory of the X-bar was first suggested by Chomsky (1970: 210), and one primary property of it in relation to phrasal categories is that all phrasal units are projections of lexical categories. In Chomsky's own words:

[L]et us use the symbol X-bar for a phrase containing X as its head. Then the base rules introducing N, A, and V will be replaced by schema (48), where in place of ... there appears the full range of structures that serve as complements and X can be any one of N, A, or V:

(48)  $X' \rightarrow X \dots$  (p. 210).

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

Schema (48) shows how phrasal structures, in the present work NP structures, are formed. The X stands for the lexical category noun and the dots are the complements of the head noun within this nominal structure, as in, for example, *house with a garden*, or *dog that bit my cousin*.

In his work, Jackendoff (1977: 29-30) points out about the X-bar Theory that:

The X' Convention can be taken as a theory of syntactic categories in universal grammar, making three principal claims. First, universal grammar includes a set of syntactic features which defines the possible lexical categories of human languages. (...)

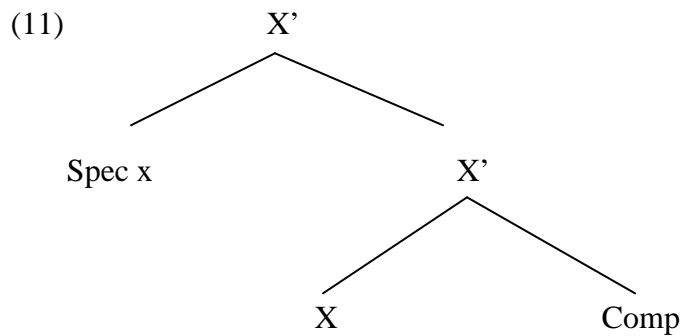
The second claim of the X' Convention is that each lexical category X defines a set of syntactic categories X', X'', ..., X<sub>k</sub>, the *supercategories* of X, related by phrase structure rules (...).

The third claim of the X' Convention is that rules of grammar are stated in terms of syntactic feature complexes and the prime notation.

Dealing with phrasal categories, the X-bar theory claims that all phrasal categories share similar features. Thus, there are not four different phrase structure rules in order to analyse the projections of nouns, verbs, adjectives and prepositions. Rather, all of them share the same underlying structure. For Jackendoff (1977: 34), the syntactic structure of NPs follows this schema: "X<sub>n</sub>→... X<sub>n-1</sub> ...". He points out that "all possible phrase structure rules are of [this] form (...) [and], that [this schema] represents the canonical form for all phrase structure rules". Using the following syntactic tree, Jackendoff (1977: 17) claims that this "structural schema (...), in which X represents any lexical category, is claimed to constitute a linguistically significant generalization of the structures associated with major categories":

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---



The X-bar type of category, in this specific case the N-bar category, can be included within a higher structure. This higher structure will form a new phrasal category. Chomsky (1970: 210) had already introduced this change of category in the following way:

[T]he phrases immediately dominating N-bar, A-bar and V-bar will be designated N-double bar, A-double bar, V-double bar, respectively. To introduce further terminological uniformity, let us refer to the phrase associated with N-bar, A-bar, V-bar in the base structure as the “specifier” of these elements. Then the elements N-bar, A-bar, V-bar might themselves be introduced in the base component by the schema (49):

$$(49) \text{ X''} \rightarrow [\text{Spec, X'}] \text{ X'}$$

This latter schema presents a new element which takes central stage: the *Specifier*. This is responsible for the creation of a new syntactic category, where functional elements go a step further because they become the only guiding elements in the elaboration of syntactic categories, independently of their complexity. The *Specifier* is a functional category, and in the case of NPs “[Spec, N-bar] will be analyzed as the determiner” (Chomsky 1970: 210). When the X-bar theory was introduced for the first time, one of the first steps taken into account was to sharply separate the lexicon from the grammar. Such a step gave functional elements a central position. However, even

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

though functional elements are the *sine quae non* constituents of linguistic structures, they are not considered the head of the different syntactic constructions, either in the previous versions of the theory, or in the new model developed in the 80s after the contributions of, among others, Jackendoff's X-bar Theory.

The X-bar theory establishes a structural relation between NPs and clauses. Chomsky (1970) concentrates on one specific process in order to illustrate this parallelism between two different syntactic structures. That is the process of nominalization. When a verb undergoes nominalization, the resulting NP shows a symmetric structure to that of the clause. In relation to this Chomsky (1970: 211) points out that:

The strict subcategorization features of the lexical item (...) take account of the phrases V-bar and N-bar dominating the category to which it is assigned (...). Its selectional features refer to the heads of the associated phrase, which are the same in both cases. The category N'', like S, is a recursive element of the base. Correspondingly, it would be natural to suppose that in the cyclic application of transformations, the phrases of the form N-double bar play the same role as the phrases of the form S in specifying the domain of transformations.

The fact that functional words are the guiding elements of syntactic structures means that these two different syntactic categories have a parallel structure, that is, they show a symmetrical distribution. In fact, Jackendoff (1977: 37- 38) postulates that "structural parallelism across categories is a crucial consideration", and he adds:

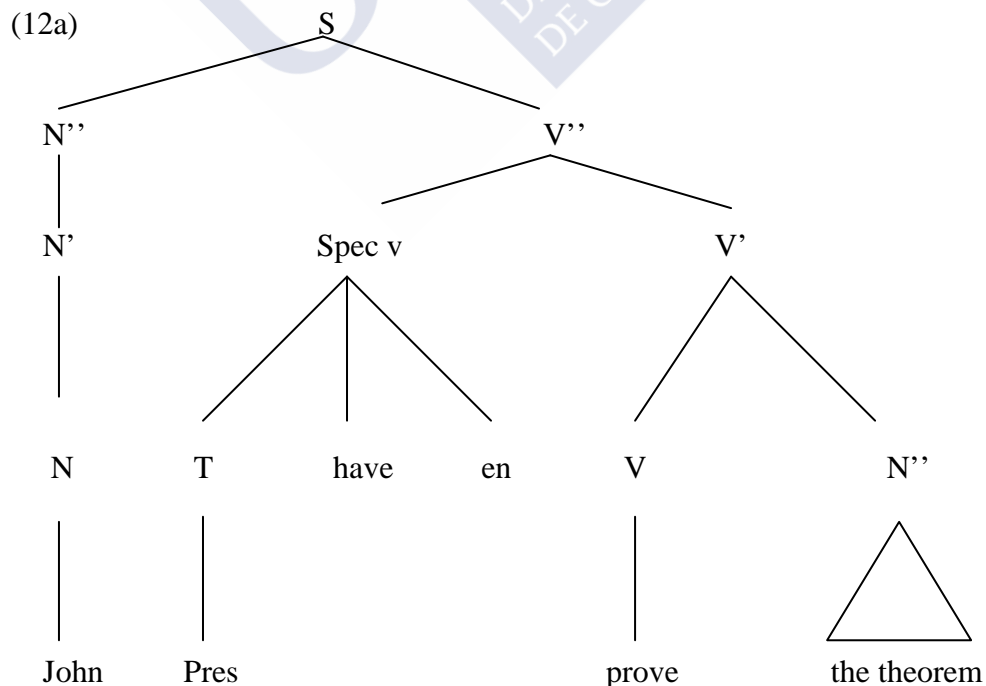
The general principle entailed by the X' Convention is that if parallel grammatical relations exist in two different categories, the categories must



## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

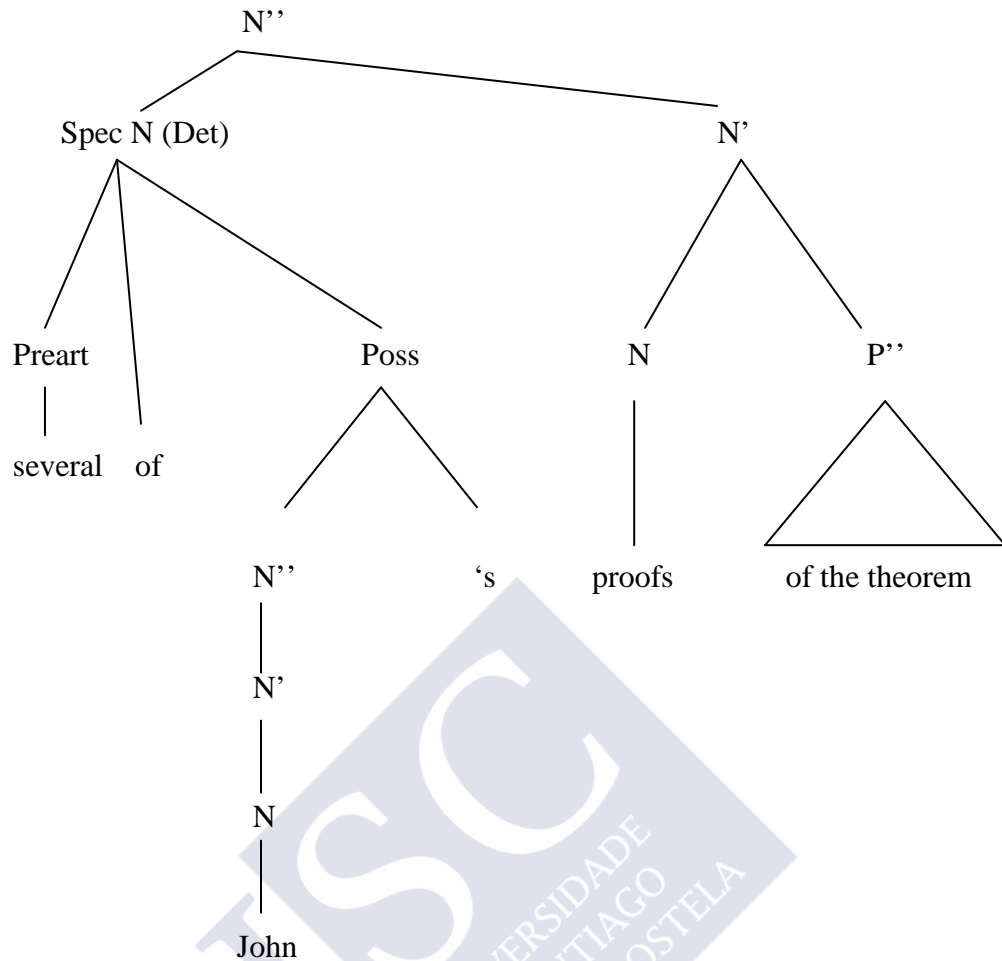
be syntactically parallel with respect to that grammatical relation. In this way rules involving that grammatical relation can be stated so as to apply to both categories, by appropriate use of syntactic distinctive features.

The element which supposedly allows this parallel structure between an NP and a clause is that both of them show the feature +Subj. Jackendoff (1977: 39) contends that the analysis made by Chomsky about this feature in relation to clauses and NPs is not correct because the structural position of the +Subj feature is not the same in these two different categories. He specifically points out about this structural difference that “the subject of the S (12a) is dominated by the third node above the head verb, but the subject of the NP (12b) is dominated by the second node above the head noun. Furthermore, the subject of the NP is embedded in the Specifier node, whereas the subject of the S is directly dominated by S”. He illustrates the difference in the following way:



## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

(12b)



Jackendoff's variation of Chomsky's analysis promotes a new rule, which is said to strengthen the *X'* Convention. It is the *Uniform Three-Level Hypothesis*. Jackendoff (1977: 52) states it in the following way:

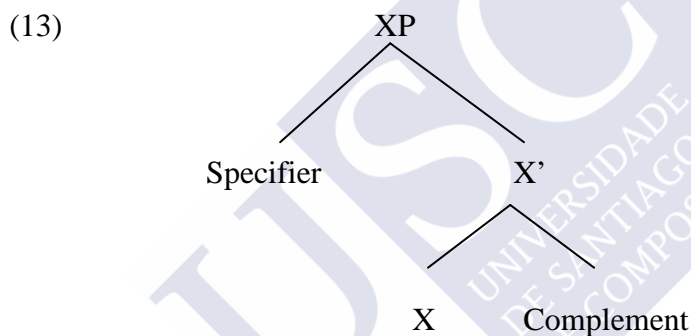
[F]or every lexical category *X*, there are syntactic categories *X'*, *X''*, and *X'''*, and no more, and the major phrase structure rules elaborating these categories are of the form given by the rule schema (3.9) [...]:

(3.9)  $X_n \rightarrow (C_1) \dots (C_j) - X_{n-1} - (C_{j+1}) \dots (C_k)$ , where  $1 \leq n \leq 3$ , and for all  $C_i$ , either  $C_i = Y'''$  for some lexical category *Y*, or  $C_i$  is a specified grammatical formative.

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

Jackendoff (p. 52) finally adds that “rule schema (3.9) provides the bulk of the phrase structure rules of the language”, and by that he means of all languages.

As seen until now, functional elements are the ones responsible for the elaboration of the different syntactic structures. Within Jackendoff’s model the element which corresponds to this type is the specifier. The specifier is the sister of X’ in the X-bar schema of phrasal structures. Different elements can occupy the specifier position, typically the auxiliary verb in a VP, and a determiner or a possessor in an NP. The following schema illustrates this (XP stands for X’):



The model is enriched by a Specifier constituent which is formulated by Jackendoff (1977: 104) in the following way: “[a]n NP specifier may contain at most one demonstrative, one quantifier, and one numeral”.

The Government and Binding (GB) framework that starts in the early 80s assumes the X-bar Convention. Haegeman (1991: 98-101), for instance, considers that the syntactic structure NP must be compared with that of a VP. In fact she contends about examples (4a) – (4b) below:

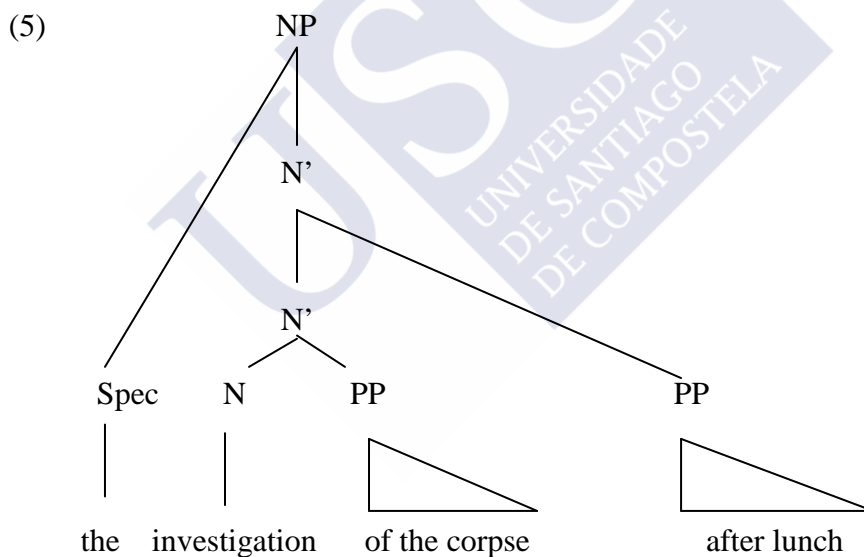
## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

(4a) *The investigation of the corpse after lunch*

(4b) *The police will investigate the corpse after lunch*

that “it is attractive to argue that the relationship between the N *investigation* and the PP *of the corpse* in (4a) is like that between the verb *investigate* and its object NP *the corpse* in (4b). Both the V *investigate* and the N *investigation* have a thematic relation with the NP *the corpse*”.

She suggests the following schema in order to integrate NPs in the format established for VPs:



Haegeman (p. 99) notices about this schema that “[t]he lowest N’ projection dominates N, the head of the phrase and its complement. (...) The specifier of the NP, a determiner, combines with the topmost N’ to form the maximal projection, NP”. In the GB model this layered analysis is the same for all lexical categories (N, V, A, P). This,

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

for instance, is what happens also within an adjective phrase: *little* in *a little girl* is the head of the AP which functions as the modifier of the noun *girl*.

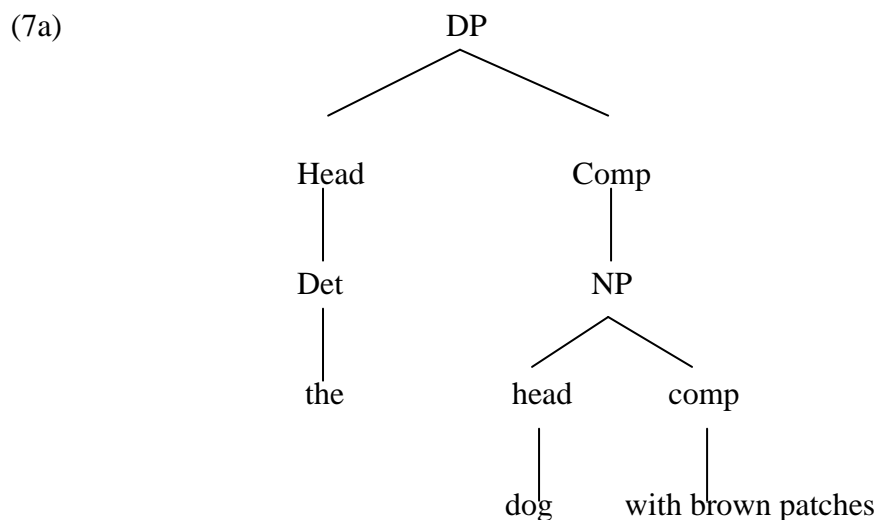
### 2.3.3 Abney's (1987) new NP model

The X-bar theory changed when Abney (1987) modified it radically in order to postulate a new theory of NP. Abney argues in favour of the view that the Noun Phrase is headed by a functional element, that is, the determiner. Following this, the structure of an NP is really seen as parallel to that of a sentence, in the sense that the highest functional projection dominates the lexical element. Consider examples (6a) and (6b) in order to illustrate the symmetry between an NP and a sentence:

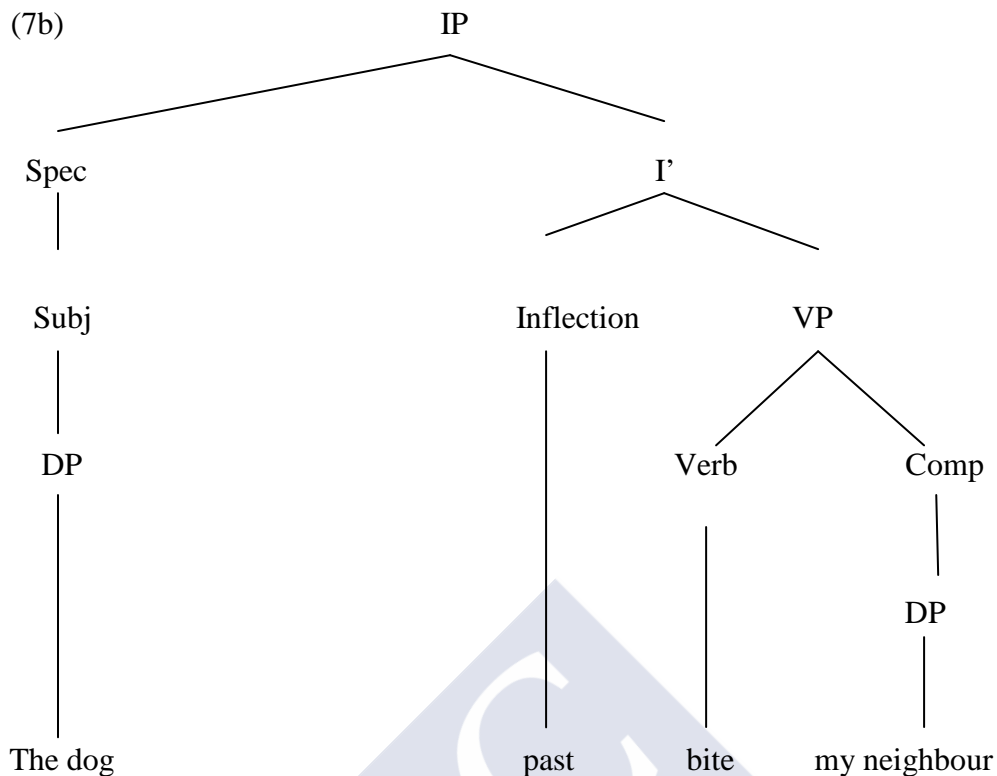
(6a) *the dog with brown patches*

(6b) *the dog bit my neighbour*

Schema (7a) shows the syntactic structure of a DP, and schema (7b) represents the syntactic analysis of a Sentence (S) or Inflectional Phrase (IP). The symmetry between these two structures can be seen through these representations:



## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition



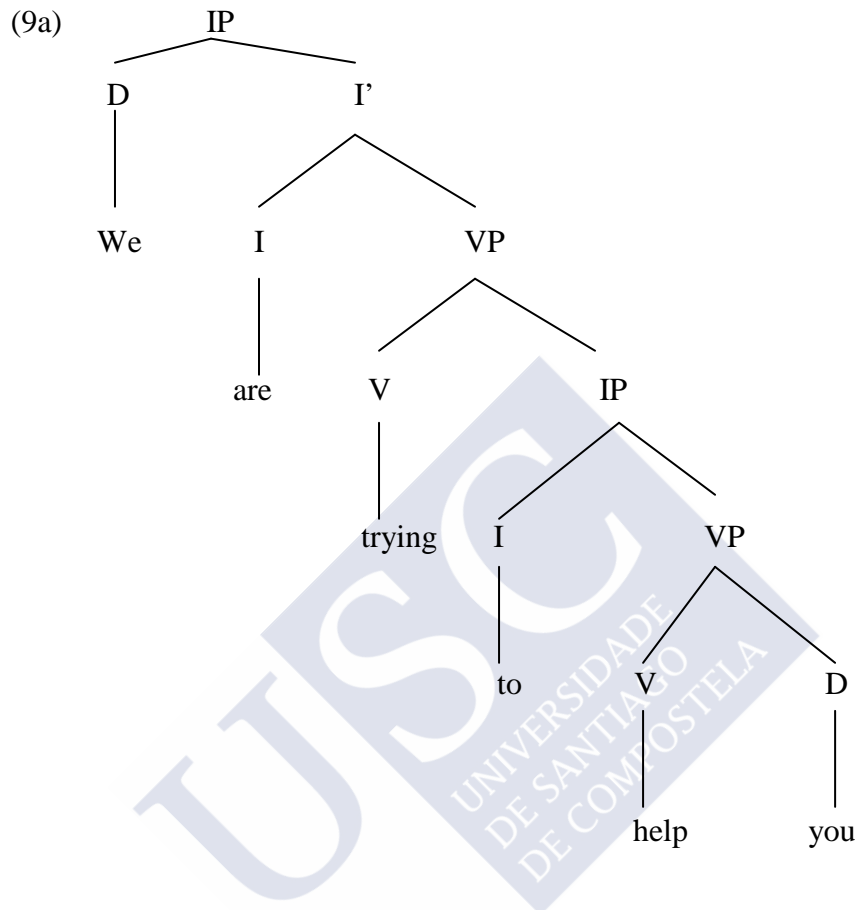
The determiner in the DP structure, the Specifier in the S or IP, and the Inflection in the I' (I-bar) play the same role. All of them are considered the heads of these structures. In order to better illustrate this explanation, consider this example taken from Radford (1997: 64- 65):

(8a) *Are trying to help you*

Radford contends about this example that it is incomplete. He points out that this incompleteness is caused by the fact that “auxiliaries require a subject, and the auxiliary *are* doesn't have a subject (...). More specifically, let's assume that when we merge an auxiliary (= I) with a verb phrase (= VP), we form an incomplete auxiliary expression which is traditionally denoted as (...) I' = I-bar (...) and that only when we merge the relevant I-bar with its subject do we form an **IP**”. Given these explanations, Radford

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

points out that a complete version of the last example is ‘We are trying to help you’. He offers the following syntactic tree:



As noted above, this could be compared with an NP. When we put together an adjective and a noun we do not have a complete NP, as in *black dog*. It is only when we add a determiner that the phrase becomes complete and grammatical, *the black dog*. Thus, this is the generative basis for including a determiner, an inflection and a subject under the same syntactic label.

Fukui and Speas (1986, in Coene & D’huilst 2003: 3) defend a parallel process between IPs and DPs. Moreover, in relation to these categories they “postulate movement of the subject, base generated in the specifier position of the lexical projection (NP), to the specifier position of its functional projection (DP)”.

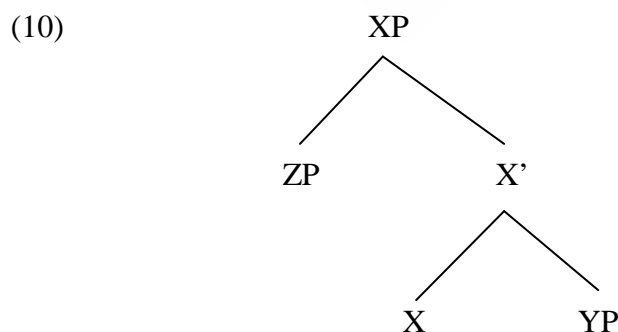
## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

Abney's new vision rejects the views adopted by prior generative analyses, where the N was still the head of the structure and this was accompanied by a specifier. His work follows the X-bar Theory and the new tenets which appeared with Chomsky's (1986) work. As a consequence of this modification, the new syntactic category Determiner Phrase (DP) appeared in linguistics. DPs are extended projections of the lexical element, in this specific case, of the noun, according to him.

### 2.3.4 The current generative analysis: the DP hypothesis

Following Abney's proposal and the X-bar Theory, later generative work adopted these two theories in such a way that the lexical element was relegated to the complement position in all syntactic categories. Chomsky (1996: 172) states that "[a]n X-bar structure is composed of projections of heads selected from the lexicon. Basic relations, then, will involve the head as one term. Furthermore, the basic relations are typically "local"". In the following schema Chomsky presents two examples of local relations "the *Spec(ifier)-head* relation of ZP to X, and the *head-complement* relation of X to YP":



In relation to the headedness of determiners within Noun Phrase structures, Haegeman (1991: 608) points out that the fact that cross-linguistic evidence shows that



## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

“determiners are head-like functional elements is also suggested by the fact that in some languages they are realized as bound morphemes”, and she offers the following example:

- (11) *Swedish*  
flicka -n  
girl det  
'the girl'

Giorgi & Longobardi (1991: 133) argue for specifier headedness by means of the *Argument Uniqueness* principle, which states that “only one argument may occur in each Spec position”. They defend this principle on the grounds that:

Spec, i.e. the pre-head position, is subject to a uniqueness filter for arguments, as a universal property of X-bar theory, (...). Since the external arguments, either possessors or agents, are generated on the left of the head, i.e. in the Spec position, (...), it follows that only one such argument can be generated there.

This principle applies to “the syntactic representations derivable from the lexicon” (Giorgi & Longobardi 1991: 133), that is, it applies to syntactic structures which follow the X-bar theory.

Giorgi & Longobardi (1991: 199) (see also Longobardi 2001) make it clear in their work that the *Uniqueness Principle* which applies to determiners is characterized by its semantic motivation, and thus:

[A]n NP can be determined from the semantic point of view only once: it is plausible, in fact, that elements with the function of Determiners are licensed precisely by each introducing a distinct NP.

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

This quotation alludes to the existence of two Uniqueness Principles; one deals with the structural position of the elements, and the other with their semantic structure. Giorgi and Longobardi state about the structural position of the determiner in relation to this Uniqueness Principle that the constraint relative to Argument Uniqueness is perhaps related to the existence of a single structural slot for nominal expressions in the Spec of NP. Therefore, there can only be one element in the Spec position, i.e. the determiner position.

Authors like Hewson (1991) follow this analysis. He takes as a basis Guillaume's (1973) distinction between *completive* and *suppletive* pronouns because he considers the determiner as a pronoun. The determiner is a completive pronoun, an independent element which functions as the head of the structure. Thus, he points out that (p. 335):

[T]he strictly configurational composition of the phrasal noun (*Det + N*) represents (...) the cognitive binary structure of a noun (referent + lexeme). The determiner represents the internal mental referent of the noun, the element that is characterized by the internal incidence that creates the noun as a distinctive part of speech. The lexeme, in turn, represents the label that is used to characterize the referent, the concept that becomes a noun by incorporating its own referent.

Coene & D'hulst (2003: 6) point out some characteristics of the determiner and one of them makes reference to this parallelism between an NP and a clause (see also Bernstein 2001). They notice that "both the complementizer and the article are subordinators in the sense that they enable the clause or the noun phrase to act as arguments". In fact, they continue the parallelism between a DP and a clause when they defend the idea that "the parallelism between IP and DP still holds, since the subject of

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

the verb phrase will move out of Spec, VP to Spec, IP and the subject of the noun phrase will move out of Spec, NP to Spec, DP'.

We have seen that the determiner is the head of the syntactic structure because it is the element which allows the lexical word to be considered within a syntactic structure as an argument of the verb (Bernstein 2001; Longobardi 2001). It is therefore treated as a sort of *Comp* constituent, an element whose primary function is to link. As a consequence, it is considered the main element in a syntactic structure, the head. This is so because syntax is in charge of the functioning of language. This is, of course, compatible with the linguistic philosophy according to which syntax is an independent part of human cognition. Functional elements are the only ones responsible for the elaboration of syntactic structures. They are in fact the quintessence of syntax.

### 2.4 The NP and the cognitive analysis

Cognitive Grammar started in the late 70s and early 80s with the work of, especially, Lakoff & Johnson (1980), Lakoff (1987) and Langacker (1987, 1991), (for a general overview about cognitive linguistics consult Geeraerts 2006; Evan, Bergen and Zinken 2007; and also Evans, Vyvyan & Stéphanie Pourcel 2009). The first steps of this framework arose as a reaction against the syntactocentrism that prevailed after the so-called generative wars of the early 70s, when a meaning-sensitive and a syntax-sensitive view of grammar were confronted inside the generative framework. As Langacker (1991: preface) clearly states, he helped create it because “[he] felt that neither camp was attacking the basic conceptual problems that needed to be resolved before that issue [the autonomy of syntax] could be examined in a meaningful way”. Thus, Cognitive Grammar posits that meaning is the *raison d'être* for the existence of

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

language use and that syntax is not independent: it forms part of the general cognitive abilities of the human endowment. Following these two tenets, cognitive grammarians like Langacker present an analysis of the NP structure which relies on the fact that functional words and lexical words both contain meaning. The determiner is given great relevance in the cognitive analysis, although it does not acquire the role given to it by generative grammarians. It acquires this importance because, as we will see in section 2.4.2, it is the constituent responsible for *grounding*, that is, the process which, in general terms, creates an NP.

### 2.4.1 Meaning as the main target

One of the principles of the theory of Cognitive Grammar is that the grammar of a language is reduced to symbolic relations between two components, the semantic and the phonological. These two components, and syntax itself, cannot be separated or work alone, because there is no sense in *using* them independently: they need each other in order to express ideas. In relation to this, Langacker (1991: 3) points out that:

A central tenet of the theory is that grammar reduces to symbolic relationships between semantic and phonological structures. In contrast to the generative dogma that grammar (or at least syntax) represents an “autonomous component” distinct from both semantics and lexicon, it maintains that lexicon, morphology and syntax form a continuum of meaningful structures whose segregation into discrete components is necessarily artifactual.

Therefore, the semantic component of language has much to do within the elaboration of the syntactic categories of a language. Grammatical structures are the creation of the equal contribution of semantics and syntax, although, as we will see in section 2.6,

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

semantics has a vital function in the form of syntax. Langacker (1991: 3) points out that “every grammatical construct is thus attributed both conceptual and phonological import and is seen as inhering in the symbolic relationship between the two”.

As for the structure of ‘Nominal Phrases’ -and the different lexical elements of all the possible phrase structures- in relation to the different characteristics of their main constituents, Cognitive Grammar considers, in the words of Langacker (1991: 3), that:

The symbolic units generally thought of as “lexical items” tend to be morphologically simple and quite specific in both their semantics and their phonological content. (...) The units generally thought of as “grammatical” are more schematic semantically and often phonologically.

This implies that, as we have already discussed, functional words, in this specific case the determiner, also have meaning. In fact, no form is devoid of meaning in Cognitive Grammar. What must be clear, though, is that the content of functional words is more schematic than that of lexical items, and this fact must surely be central in the analysis of any syntactic structure. Within the confines of Cognitive Grammar, the schematic features of a determiner do not contribute the same linguistic strength as the specificity of a noun. They differ in the type of content they reflect. These two elements combine their semantics and phonological characteristics in order to *elaborate* a syntactic structure. This is grammar, the combination of “simpler symbolic structures to form progressively more complex ones” (Langacker 1991: 5). Thus, an NP is a complex structure which is the result of the combination of two simpler structures. It is a grammatical *construction*. In fact:

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

Any such combination is referred to as a **construction**. It consists of two or more **component structures** that are **integrated** to form a **composite structure**. At each pole, integration of the component structures is effected by **correspondences** established between their substructures, (...), a construction is characterized as an assembly of symbolic structures linked by correspondences and categorizing relationships, (Langacker 1991: 5, emphasis on the original).

In order to describe and analyse a syntactic structure, Cognitive Grammar deals with categories: “the component structures are best described, not as *constituting* the composite structure, but rather as *categorizing* certain facets of it and as *motivating* to some degree the form-meaning pairing it embodies” (Langacker 1991: 6). Thus, for Cognitive Grammar, an NP is not formed by constituents as such, but by categories.

Of course, in Cognitive Grammar there are grammatical rules for the elaboration of the grammatical categories. These rules are “constructional schemas”, and these can be defined as:

[T]emplate[s] representing in schematic terms the common relationships among component and composite structures observable across the set of specific expressions that support its extraction (Langacker 1991: 6).

Cognitive Grammar defines the head of a structure as “that component structure whose profile corresponds to the composite structure profile” (Langacker 1991: 6). Thus, the head is the one which contributes with its profile (see section 2.4.2) to the whole structure. The profile of an expression is the entity which an expression designates; the element within the base of a whole structure which is obligatory, has prominence and is the main linguistic component within the whole structure.

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

Therefore, the characteristics of the head element are reflected in the final grammatical structure, which is a concrete example of a general category.

Cognitive Grammar has a notional approach to the categories of speech. A noun “is (...) claimed to profile a region in some domain” (Langacker 1991: 18), that is, an expression that profiles a thing. It selects an entity among all the possible candidates in a specific area of conceptualization, that is, mental experience. And within Cognitive Grammar, a region is “**a set of interconnected entities**” (Langacker 1991: 15). Thus, a region is the set of the possible references which a noun can evoke. “A region is ‘bounded’ (along a certain dimension) when there is a limit to the set of participating entities (i.e. it does not extend indefinitely)” (Langacker 1990: 67). This implies that when a region is bounded, its referential properties are narrowed down.

Consistent with the semanticist orientation of the model, Langacker (1991: 51) points out that within “the structure of nominals (...) [the] semantic function (rather than constituency) is the critical factor for understanding their organization”. And there lies the main difference between a bare noun and an NP, that the meaning they project is different. The structure of the NP, as well as other syntactic categories, is influenced mainly by the content of its elements. In order to offer a contrastive explanation between the different features of a noun and an NP, Langacker (p. 51) points out that:

The most basic difference between a simple noun and a nominal is that the former names a **type**, whereas the latter designates an **instance** of that type. When a type is conceived as having multiple instances, some specification of **quantity** is pertinent to identifying the designated entity. An additional semantic function is **grounding**, which pertains to the relation between the designatum and the speech-act participants.

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

In a system like this, the determiner is the element which, with its schematic meaning, gives referential specification to the whole NP. This specification is linked to the participants of the act of communication, that is, to the context of communication. Thus, context, participants, and the meaning of the structure are combined in order to elaborate the structure of an NP. And, as we will see, the participants, the context and the meaning of a construction rest on nouns for their relevance in the elaboration of syntactic structures (see section 2.6).

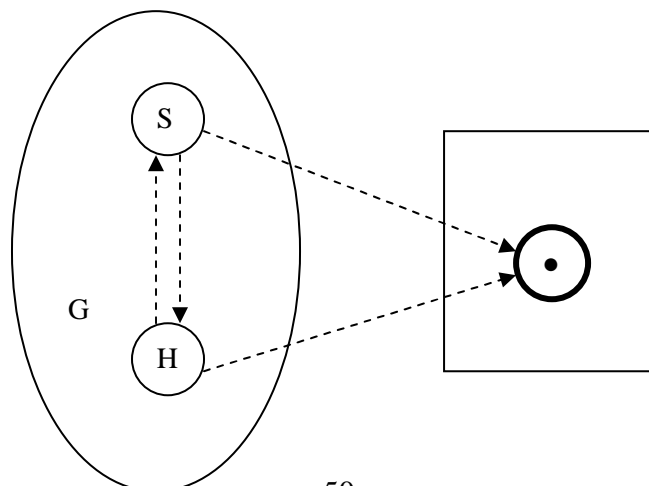
### 2.4.2 Grounding

Grounding is treated as the main function within the elaboration of an NP. It is a central notion within Cognitive Grammar, and Langacker (2004: 85) views it as:

[R]eferring to highly grammaticized elements, essential to the formation of a nominal (...), that relate the profiled thing (...) to the speech event and its participants.

The following is a figure that represents a schema created by Langacker (2004: 86) in order to illustrate the notion of grounding:

**Figure 1. The grounding system**



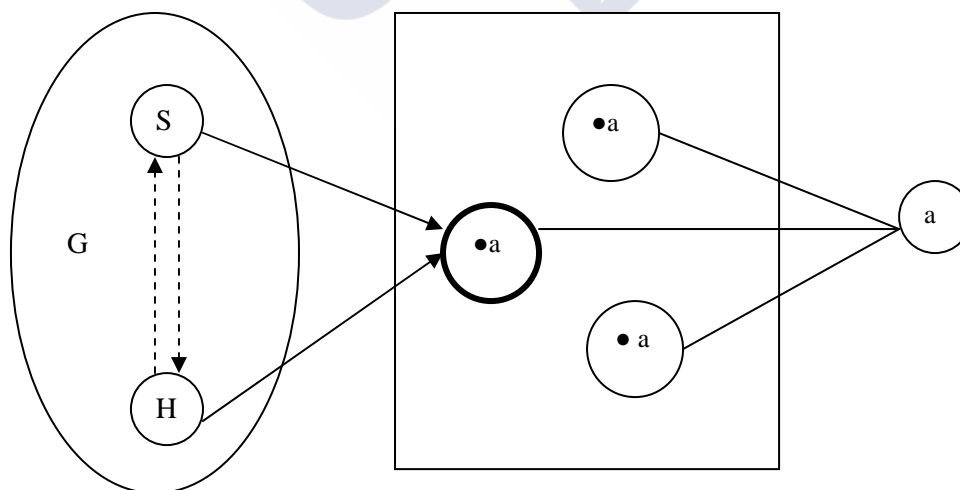


## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

This schema shows how the **speaker** (S) and the **hearer** (H), sharing the same ground (G), establish **coordinated mental reference** to an instance of some **type**. The instance is represented by the dot within the circle which is profiled and marked as the object of attention. The directing of attention is represented by the dashed arrows. Grounding occurs when both the speaker and the hearer make reference to the same entity. This fact is reflected in the use of language the moment the speaker utilises a determiner in the specific case of NPs.

Grounding is considered as the final step for the elaboration of a full syntactic category such as an NP. Notice that the functional elements are responsible for the final step when a noun becomes an NP. This means that the determiner is in some sense the central element within an NP. Figure 2 illustrates the schema of a full nominal taken from Langacker (2004: 87):

**Figure 2. A full nominal according to the grounding system**



The speaker (S) and the hearer (H) achieve coordinated mental reference within the same ground (G). The circle with the thick line represents an NP. It is grounded and

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

differentiated from all the possible candidates of the same type, which are represented by the circles with a dot and the letter *a*. In the words of Langacker (2004: 86), this schema “profiles a particular instance of the type specified by the noun, singled out and contextually identified in the manner indicated by the grounding element”.

Grounding is treated as one of the four components which elaborate the conceptualization of an NP. Taylor (2002: 344-345) terms these four components: *specification*, *instantiation*, *quantification*, and *grounding*. As the sequence suggests, grounding is the final step in the formation of an NP. He offers a definition for this notion in the following lines:

This is the process whereby the speaker ‘locates’ the designated instance from the perspective of the speech event. Differences between definite and indefinite, specific and non-specific, are aspects of grounding.

Taylor (2002: 346-349) also considers that grounding is the main process in the formation of an NP. But, although the determiner is the crucial element in the creation of an NP, it cannot project an NP by itself. This means that it needs the noun for its lexical content; the noun has a semantic function within the structure it elaborates. Langacker (1991: 33) posits that “the semantic function of a simple noun is limited to specifying a **type**”. And the main function of the determiner is to elaborate an instance. But in relation to these two notions, Taylor (2002: 348) concludes that a co-dependent relation is obligatory between the NP construction (a highly abstract syntactic structure) and the lexical element:

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

[A] grounded instance, [that is, an NP], (...) says nothing about the type to which the instance belongs. (...) [and] the type-instance, [i.e. a noun], relation [shows] no indication of the grounding relation. Because of their conceptual overlap (...) we achieve a more complex representation of a grounded nominal.

Therefore, the determiner and the noun work together to create NPs, as the determiner needs the noun and the noun needs the determiner. In fact, it could be said that their relation depends on interdependency (this point of view is defended by Ball 2004, see section 2.5.1). However, from the cognitive point of view, the determiner characterises the NP more than the noun. This is actually the position explicitly defended by Taylor (2002: 348-350). He contends that as consequence of the conceptual overlap between the determiner and the noun, a grounded nominal is created, but this overlap is not equitable. The determiner is given more prominence:

It follows from this account [of the conceptual overlap] that the determiner is the head of the grounded nominal. The bare noun designates a type. It is the contribution of the determiner to profile an instance of the type, identified from the ground (Taylor 2002: 348-349).

And he adds:

Since a grounded nominal designates an instance, not the type, the profile of the composite expression is inherited from the determiner, not from the noun. The determiner itself profiles a schematic instance, which receives semantic content from the type specification designated by the noun with which the determiner combines (Taylor 2002: 349).

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

In sum, Taylor (2002: 350) considers that the determiner is the head of the construction because “[a] constituent is a head to the extent that it contributes its profile to the profile of the complex expression”.

### 2.4.3 Headedness within Cognitive Grammar: nouns and determiners

As has been seen, headedness is a controversial notion in linguistics in general, and within grammar in particular. There are many different points of view about what a head is, and which element is the head of a construction, (see sections 1.2, 1.2.1, 1.2.2; Zwicky 1985, 1993; Hudson 1987; Van Langendonck 1994). Cognitive Grammar offers a definition and a point of view about the characteristics which a word has to exhibit in order to be considered the head of its syntactic structure. There are two main criteria for identifying the head of a construction. One is that the candidate word determines the grammatical category of the whole syntactic structure; the other implies that the chosen word provides the syntactic structure with semantic content. These two parameters are taken into account in order to define the notion head, and Cognitive Grammar decides on the first. In fact, regarding the way headedness applies to nominals, Langacker (2004: 87; see also Langacker 1991: 4.1.1) posits that:

[I]n a given construction, the **head** is the **profile determinant**, i.e. the component which imposes its profile (and hence its grammatical category) on the expression as a whole. This does not deny the centrality and structural significance of the lexical head noun (emphasis on the original).

We have seen that grounding is the main process in the elaboration of an NP, and as consequence the determiner is the main element. But let us analyse the determiner and the noun from the cognitive point of view in detail with the purpose of

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

attaining a precise understanding of these two elements. We have said that the noun profiles a type, and for this reason it cannot be the head, because it does not evoke a specific reference. But it is also considered within the cognitive framework that the determiner alone does not contain enough features for elaborating a syntactic structure by itself. Langacker (2004: 100) admits this ‘deficiency’ of the determiner, especially of the definite article, and points out that:

[T]he definite article relies on unique instantiation of a type to coordinate mental reference. Yet its own type specification, being maximally schematic, has no practical utility in this regard. For this reason the English definite article does not stand alone as a full nominal.

In that way, “[o]ne determining factor is the type specification provided by a lexical head noun (...). [T]he noun (...) selects a pool of candidates that are eligible for consideration” (Langacker 2004: 96-97). So, the noun cannot be the head because it does not make reference to a specific entity. However, it is responsible for bringing into the discourse context references to the entities which make up the context, the community, within which the language evolves and functions. This is because language use is linked to a community. In my opinion, the deficiency of the functional element extends to the entire set of determiners, and not only to the definite article, because all these elements show a certain degree of dependency on the noun.

In sum, Cognitive Grammar seems to opt for a structure of nominal phrases where the ‘profile determinant’ is the grounding constituent. However, the fact that this constituent does not seem to suffice to motivate the composite structure, to project it

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

alone, suggests that its profiling power is not of the same degree of motivation as other instances of profiling within the same framework.

### 2.5 Other recent analysis of the NP structure

Apart from the traditional, generative, and cognitive analyses of the noun phrase, there are other syntactic analyses of this structure which move away from these theories considerably, or which take as a basis some of their tenets but modify them in order to integrate them within their own theory. Together with the possibility of contemplating the determiner as the head or the noun as head, there are also the logical possibilities of contemplating both as heads, or none. To these less-known ways of understanding the structure of the NP we turn now.

#### 2.5.1 An exocentric structure

Jerry Ball (2004) defends an exocentric view of the NP structure. He points out that the syntactic structure Det + N has two heads instead of just one and calls this theory *bi-polar*. Ball (p. 1) refers to his theory in the following way:

A bi-polar theory of the structure and function of nominals (...) is presented in which a specifier, functioning as a referential pole, and a head, functioning as a relational pole, combine to form a referring expression.

Both constituents of the noun phrase are thus equally important in the structure of the construction to the point that neither of them is taken as a dependent of the other. To a certain extent, Ball follows Langacker (1987a)'s theory. Apart from terms like *head*, *modifier* and *complement*, commonly used in any syntactic analysis of an NP, Ball also

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

includes the notion of *grounding*, of cognitive reminiscence. But apart from these notions, Ball (p. 17) invokes another one with generative overtones:

In the bi-polar theory there is a fourth functional category called the *specifier*. The grounding predication typically corresponds to a *specifier* with the specifier functioning as the “referential head” of the composite structure.

Therefore, the Spec category of Ball’s theory equals the grounding function of Langacker, but with the difference that the Spec shares responsibilities with the noun, it is not the only one that is responsible for the creation of the NP. He (p. 1) contends that “both the specifier and the head make significant and meaningful contributions to the larger expressions in which they occur”.

Ball defends the view that the semantics of an element within a construction is very important, in fact, he rejects the theories which rely uniquely on the syntactic part of language, that is, those which give more relevance to functional elements than to the semantics of words. He contends that “purely syntactic representations fail to make important grammatical generalizations. It is only in recognizing the grammatical functions of lexical items and expression forms that the generalizations follow” (p. 3). To illustrate this assertion, he uses examples like:

(12a) The bull is *running*.

(12b) The *running* bull.

(12c) The *running* of the bull.

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

With these examples he seeks to demonstrate that “[i]nsisting that the head of a nominal is necessarily a noun and that a nominal is necessarily a noun phrase only leads to confusion resulting from the confounding of grammatical function with part of speech and phrasal form” (p. 3). In relation to examples (12a), (12b), and (12c), it must be concluded that the word *running* does not have a different meaning in each of these examples. Instead, ““running” [must be treated] as a verb (participle) that functions as the head of a clause in (12a); as a (pre-head) modifier in (12b); and as the head of a nominal in (12c)” (Ball 2004: 3).

Ball contends that within syntax the role of the determiner is as important as that of the noun because it is the one which enables us to distinguish a noun from a verb, when these categories are written (or sound) in the same way, something frequent in English. In these cases, the head of the different syntactic constructions, VPs and NPs, as in *the dance* vs. *to dance*, has the same word form. Thus, Ball (p. 6) concludes that:

[T]here is little basis for the head determining the grammatical function of the expression. Rather, it is the specifier [the determiner *the*] that determines the grammatical function.

But, he also rushes to clarify that:

Languages provide a *base lexical construal* which reflects the prototypical, unmarked use of the words in the language. But grammar provides mechanisms for framing alternative construals, often reflected via syntactic and morphological marking (p. 5).



## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

In relation to this ‘base lexical construal’ and to the fact that verbs can be the head of an NP and that nouns can act like verbs on some occasions, Ball (p. 5) adds that:

There is no claim that the criteria for membership in a part of speech or word class are exceptionless. Action words that are frequently used as the heads of nominals may come to have the status of a noun. In this case the action described by the word is construed objectively and the noun sense of the word is separately represented from the verb sense in the mental lexicon.

It was mentioned above that some verbs and nouns are written or pronounced in the same way and that the grammatical element which accompanies them makes it clear which category we are using on each particular occasion. In relation to the determiner, it can actually be used with verbs in order to create a noun. Ball (p. 6) refers to the use of the determiner on these occasions in the following way:

“The” has the effect of *objectifying* the following head, often forcing action words to be interpreted as one of the typical participants in the action, rather than the action itself.

The determiner is treated by Ball as the referential pole which has the power of transforming an action into an object, and thus making an explicit reference using as a base even a verbal lexical item instead of a noun. This is reminiscent of cognitive thinking about construal: the human ability to portray the same situation in different ways, as in for example *An animal ate the cheese* or *A mouse ate the Parmesan cheese*. The content of these two sentences is the same, the fact that somebody ate something. But the second sentence is more specific, and offers more detailed information about the action. These are two examples of interpreting and transmitting the world

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

experience. A good example of construal is the differences between the verbs *rob* and *steal* (Lakoff 1987). These two verbs make reference to the same act, that of taking away something illegally. But the difference lies on the fact that *rob* does not evoke any human being from which something is subtracted. On the contrary, *steal* alludes to a person from whom somebody takes something away. The same act, expressed by means of different linguistic elements, is viewed differently depending on where the linguistic elements place the ‘camera’.

We have seen the characteristics of the *Spec* within the noun phrase structure. But, what about the other element, the one which Ball calls ‘head’? The head is the lexical part of the noun phrase; it is the element which contributes with semantics to the whole structure. He argues this in the following way (p. 16):

[A] linguistic element which combines with a modifier such that the head provides the profile of the composite expression. A modifier, then, constrains the type specification of the head, but does not provide the profile for the composite expression. The profile of the head projects to the composite expression, not the profile of the modifier.

Thus, the noun is the element which specifies which type of entity we are making reference to. Therefore, the final result of Ball’s analysis explains that a grammatical category is linked to a lexical category and both of them have the same relevance within the final structure:

The specifier or “referential head” combines with the “relational head” (...) to form a composite expression, with the “relational head” providing the

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

type specification for the composite expression and the “referential head” projecting the referential type of the composite expression (p. 17).

The introduction of the term *Spec* within the analysis of the NP structure has a clear object in the bi-polar theory. As we have seen in previous sections, the noun is often seen today as the complement of the determiner, which is the head. The insertion of the *Spec* allows Ball (p. 17) to reject this position:

The introduction of the specifier function avoids the need to view the “relational head” as a complement as suggested by Langacker. It allows the head (as opposed to a complement) to project the relational type –thereby, retaining a semantic basis for the notion of a head and at the same time maintaining a distinction between heads and complements (i.e., complements do not project relational type to composite expressions). It avoids the inconvenience of suggesting that “the” is the head of the expression “the book” –contrary to any semantic notion of what a head is.

In general terms, these are the main points of the bi-polar theory where both elements, the determiner and the noun, are given the same relevance within their syntactic structure. The semantics of the whole expression is an important tenet within this theory. Thus, the meaning of the whole expression depends on the equal contribution of the noun and the determiner. On the one hand, the determiner projects the content of the noun given that the nominal element is not a grammatical category, and as such it cannot create a syntactic category by itself. On the other hand, the noun provides the NP construction with semantic content.

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

### 2.5.2 A headless structure

Dryer (2004) presents a completely different analysis of the NP structure. Until now we have been concerned with endocentric analyses, with the determiner as head, or with the noun as head. Exocentric structures have also been discussed, where both elements are important. It would seem that the only logical possibility left is one which holds that the NP has no head at all. This is what Dryer (2004) has proposed.

Dryer takes this position when he examines NP structures which do not contain nouns. He remarks that there are languages which have NPs but which do not have nouns within their constituents, as in Nkore-Kiga, a Bantu language spoken in Uganda. He uses this example taken from Taylor (1985: 54) as illustrative of this language (p. 43):

- (13) Omuto            a-ka-gamba            na-anye  
      young        3<sup>rd</sup> sing-REMOTE.PAST-speak        with-me  
      'the young one spoke to me'

Apart from the Nkore-Kiga language, Dryer also mentions languages like Lucazi, another Bantu language, North-East Ambae, an Austronesian language spoken in Vanuatu; and Spanish. When one examines nominal constructs in such languages, he contends, one finds it easy to:

[A]rgue that in many cases, nouns should just be considered one of many constituents of noun phrases, without a privileged status as head, and with a status no different from various other constituents which are traditionally considered modifiers of the noun. If there are languages in which noun phrases are headless, even when a noun is present, this raises questions as to

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

whether a similar analysis might be applied to languages in which nouns are obligatory (Dryer 2004: 47).

In fact, apart from considering the set Det + N as a headless structure, he posits that the term ‘noun phrase’ is used even when the noun is not the head or there is no noun in the structure. As a consequence, he contends that the use of this notion is a case of “grammaticizing a high frequency pattern rather than in terms of the notion of ‘head’”, (Dryer p. 47).

Dryer (p. 48-49) examines six arguments in order to defend his theory. These are also meant to suggest that the noun is similar to the traditional *modifier*. The arguments have to do with: 1. ellipsis; 2. the fact that the modifier is the noun; 3. the fact that the modifiers are the heads; 4. the fact that the determiner is the head; 5. the fact that that they are headless; or 6. the fact that all NPs are headless structures.

With the aim of defending the first hypothesis, Dryer (p. 50-54) resorts to two arguments: the first is that when nouns are missing in NPs “the speaker could have supplied an appropriate noun, and the noun is recoverable to the hearer”. This reminds us of the informational status of lexical items. When a noun is old, it can be omitted because it is implicit in the context, but it is present in the mind of the interlocutors. This implies ellipsis of the head noun. Dryer (p. 51) does not rely on the recoverability of the noun because he considers “that the ability to provide a noun is not sufficient to justify an ellipsis analysis”. As a consequence, he considers two other options. The first is that it is always possible to supply the noun. In this case an analysis concerning ellipsis is appropriate. The second is the fact that it is just usual to supply the noun, but Dryer takes into account situations where the speaker cannot provide a noun and thus, an analysis in terms of ellipsis is not possible. He (p. 51-52) concludes that “[t]o show

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

that a construction involves ellipsis, one must be able to show that there are logically contexts where the speaker could not provide an appropriate word and where the construction in question cannot be used”. To illustrate this conclusion, consider the following example: a context where one looks into a dark room and sees two objects which cannot be identified clearly. In this situation one can say: “I see two things. (...) The larger thing...” (Dryer p. 52). Now, take a look at the next examples taken from two different languages, Hebrew (14) a. and Indonesian (14) b., where the omission of the noun is possible and this is replaced by ‘thing’ for example (this is also possible in English):

- (14) a. ha-gadol  
DEF-large sing. masc  
‘the large one’
- (14) b. yang besar  
REL large  
‘the large one’ (Dryer p. 52)

In his opinion (Dryer 2004: 52), “[b]ecause the speaker could not provide an appropriate noun in the context described, these are apparently good cases where an ellipsis analysis is not tenable”. Finally, he (p. 53) concludes that:

One might argue that nouns with meanings like ‘thing’ or ‘person’ are appropriate in the sort of the context illustrated above [the dark room], where the speaker cannot provide a more specific noun. But, then the ellipsis claim would seem to be vacuous.

There was a second possibility for explaining a missing noun within an NP. That was ellipsis. It indicates that “in languages with gender/noun classes, it is often possible to use noun phrases without nouns, where the gender or noun class of the

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

modifying word reflects the gender or noun class of the noun that would be used if a noun were used, as in Spanish *el blanco*". But contrary to this idea, Dryer (p. 54-55) argues that:

[T]he argument for ellipsis based on gender agreement does not seem especially convincing. Again, this provides no argument *against* an ellipsis analysis in these cases, but I suspect that in many of the cases involving gender agreement, the construction cannot be used unless a missing noun could be provided. In other words, I suspect that in many of these cases, there is independent motivation for an ellipsis analysis. This is the case for example, with the Spanish construction illustrated by *el blanco*.

The second approach to the analysis of NPs deals with modifiers which can be considered as a noun, used in order to support headless structures. Dryer (p. 62) offers the following example in order to illustrate this situation: *the poor*. He concludes that "[o]ne argument that *poor* (...) is really just a noun is that one cannot use *the poor* to denote a single poor individual, (...). Rather, *the poor* is inherently generic and grammatically plural".

Dryer presents another example taken from a different language, Lucazi. In this example the modifier can be considered as a noun because it appears with inflectional morphology. The example is the following one:

- (15) ma-íḞò    a-á-mu-nénè  
NC6-LEAF    NC6-POSS-NC3-BIG  
'the leaves of the big one (referring to a tree, class 3)'

But apart from this example, he does not find clear cases where this hypothesis works.

Thus, he finally concludes that:

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

The claim that in noun phrases apparently lacking nouns, one of the overt words is really a noun becomes more far-fetched when one examines other sorts of examples of noun phrases lacking nouns (p. 63).

This conclusion is reached because of examples such as the following one taken from Tidore, a West Papuan Language spoken in Halmahera, eastern Indonesia: *ona jang malofo* (the two beautiful ones). In this example it is difficult to decide which of the words *jang* (beautiful) or *malofo* (two) stands for the noun. This is similar to Spanish *las dos* (the two).

The third approach makes reference to various constituents within the NP structure, which can be considered the head instead of the noun. Dryer (p. 65) provides some examples that illustrate this hypothesis as in the following example taken from Koyra Chiini:

- (16) *i-jeeno di*  
ABS-old DEF  
'the old one' (from Heath 1999: 87)

Here the adjective stands in the place of the noun. It can occupy this position because it is accompanied by the prefix *i-*. Dryer (p. 65) points out about this feature that “[o]ne might treat this prefix as a derivational prefix deriving nouns from adjectives, but the process seems to be both productive and transparent, so it is not clear that anything is gained by analysing these words as nouns: rather (...) this is simply one of the things that adjectives can do in this language. The function of the prefix would be to signal that an adjective is serving as the head of a noun phrase”. Finally Dryer (p. 65) comes to the conclusion that this hypothesis does not stand up because:



## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

Despite the cases where this hypothesis has some plausibility, the problem remains of what it means to say that an adjective is serving as the head of a noun phrase.

The fourth approach presents the theory of current Generative Grammar, which views determiners as the head of the whole NP structure. First, Dryer (p. 65) considers the potential adequacy of such an analysis for languages such as Spanish:

There is little question that this approach would solve the problem presented by many of the examples, and that many of the examples could be construed as providing an argument that determiners are the heads of noun phrases. For example, if one claims that determiners are the heads of noun phrases in Spanish, then the possibility of having noun phrases consisting of a determiner plus adjective simply means that the determiner can combine with adjective phrases.

However, he ends up concluding that this analysis does not fit in languages which lack articles and demonstratives. Thus, from the very first moment Dryer does not see the determiner as the head of the construction. He considers that this possibility must be treated separately for each language. Consider the following examples taken from Tidore:

(17) ona        jang        malofo  
      3<sup>rd</sup> pl     beautiful     two  
      'the two beautiful ones' (used by Dryer taken from Van Staden 2000:  
194)

(18) ona        jau        gia  
      3<sup>rd</sup> pl        hold        hand  
      'they hold hands' (taken from Van Staden 2000: 212)

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

It can be seen in these two examples that the same word functions as a definite article or as a pronoun. Dryer (p. 66) concludes about these examples that “since the view that determiners are the heads of noun phrases also claims that what are traditionally called pronouns are really determiners, this view works well for languages like Tidore”.

Although there are languages which may support the idea that the determiner could be the head of a noun phrase, this analysis does not work in many other languages. Thus, Dryer (pp. 67- 68) points out that:

The view of determiner as head does not appear to provide a good solution to the problem presented by relative clauses appearing as noun phrases without a noun (...).

[W]hile the view that determiners (or articles) are heads of what are traditionally called noun phrases would solve the problem presented by some instances of noun phrases without nouns, it leaves cases unsolved.

The next approach is simply descriptive. It presents the theory that phrases with a noun have a head, but those noun phrases which do not have a noun are headless. However, Dryer (p. 69) proposes that the solution to the structure of NPs must be dealt with resolving the headedness issue, not eschewing it:

[W]hat is the motivation for saying that nouns, when present, are heads but that no other words can serve as heads? What property is it that nouns have that other words in noun phrases lack that provides a reason for saying that they are heads but that no words in noun phrases without nouns are heads? One of the traditional features of heads is that they be obligatory; what is the motivation for analysing the noun as head if it is not obligatory?

The last approach holds that noun phrases are structures that always lack heads. Dryer (p. 69) proposes:

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

[C]onsider[ing] that noun phrases are always headless, and that even in canonical noun phrases with a noun, the noun is not a head. Under this hypothesis, nouns are just one of the many types of words that occur in noun phrases.

We may ask: if nouns do not have a certain degree of importance within the noun phrase, why do we use them? Which is its function within the noun phrase if we can express NP meaning without them? Dryer (p. 69-70) points out that the main function of nouns is pragmatic:

Noun phrases refer to particular things in the world. Speakers need to have a way to refer to things in a way that will make it easy for the hearer to understand what they are referring to.

He considers that the noun is usually given such a central position because of a number of features, especially because it allows speakers and hearers to make reference to their context. He makes a difference between permanent properties and temporary properties. Nouns express permanent properties. That is why they are so essential in the NP structure, because “it is far more likely that the hearer will be aware of a permanent property than a temporary property” (Dryer p. 70). Among other elements with the same property, nouns are advantageous because “they typically have richer meanings and are part of a classificatory system by which we classify things in the world” (Dryer p. 70).

This usefulness of nouns for referring to things is important even in languages where NPs can occur without them. Dryer (p. 70) points out that “such noun phrases are likely to be used in only two situations: first, when the speaker does not know what kind of thing the thing that they are referring to is; and second, when the kind will be so obvious to the hearer that it can be left out”. This means that in those languages where

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

the noun is an obligatory element within NPs it can be said that “we can explain this grammatical constraint without appealing to the notion of head” (Dryer p. 70). That is, the noun does not deserve the head label because, from a cross-linguistic perspective, it is only used in the extreme case that the speaker does not achieve communication. Its presence is required when the rest of the possible constituents of an NP do not provide the hearer with reference to the adequate type.

In sum, Dryer contends that the notion *head* is not necessary. One way of describing the grammar of a language is to consider that it contains phrasal categories with heads. The option proposed here is that it is also possible to posit that phrasal categories do not contain heads. This grammatical description spells out rules which reflect similar properties to *heads*, but which must be considered *generalizations* instead of *heads*, and must realize that a difference must be made between them. It is also important “to distinguish cases involving generalizations over a large number of items from generalizations over a small number of items” (Dryer p. 71). Generalizations over a large number, such as pluralization, imply that the speaker will produce them even when he/she never heard them. Generalizations over a small number of items mean that the properties of some categories, such as noun phrases, will apply to other phrasal categories. “[K]nowing properties of some phrasal categories will lead to speakers assuming that other phrasal categories have the same properties. But unlike the case of pluralization of nouns, there is no evidence that speakers do this [generalize over phrasal categories], and there are reasons to doubt that they do” (p. 71). Dryer (p. 71-72) offers three reasons why generalization of the properties of the phrasal categories does not apply:

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

a. “The number of positive cases [speakers] would have to know in order to know the pattern is sufficiently small that it is doubtful that they would draw the generalization”.

b. “Speakers learn the properties of individual phrasal categories at the same time”, that is, when they know the properties of noun phrases and clauses, they already know the properties of adjective phrases.

c. “It is not clear that the properties shared across different phrasal categories are sufficiently similar that they will outnumber the differences enough to cause speakers to detect the patterns of similarity”.

Differences among the different syntactic categories entail that speakers must learn these idiosyncrasies. Thus it is quite difficult that speakers distinguish heads across categories. This is a major reason for Dryer to defend the idea that the notion *head* should not be used in a syntactic analysis.

Going on with Dryer’s reasons for not admitting the existence of heads within syntax, and particularly within NPs, consider the case of pronouns and their antecedents. It is common to use pronouns and their antecedent nouns as an indicative feature of the headedness of nouns within a noun phrase. However, from Dryer’s point of view, the use of pronominal morphemes within the noun phrase illustrates that they are always attached to the noun. But this attachment does not involve any reference to the notion head. “It does make reference to the idea that (...) nouns are the most frequent element in short noun phrases, but it does not make any reference to the notion of head” (Dryer, p. 74).

As a conclusion, Dryer (p. 75) points out that:

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

[T]he conflicting evidence in many languages as to which is the head of noun phrases could be construed as an argument against either being head. If the notion 'head' has a place in linguistic theory, then would not we expect the distribution of head properties to be clearer? It is not clear what argument there is against the view that speakers do not just learn the structure of different sorts of phrase without attempting to identify one element in the phrase as head.

So – on this view – the noun is not the head of the construction because it does not show clear features of headedness cross-linguistically. No doubt, Dryer's ideas are radical indeed. They are suggestive of the difficulty in working out minimally shared views about the structure of the most basic objects in grammatical description. If only because of this, Dryer's way of challenging received wisdom is useful. It does show that NPs are not the pristine objects that linguists have traditionally taken for granted and that as soon as valid and across-the board scientific discovery procedures are used to reason about them, even the most central core of the structure of the NP emerges as an ideal construct. As such, this construction is surprisingly vulnerable to perspectivisation. As such too, that reflects the various forces that build the NP.

### **2.6 The present framework: a cognitive approach**

#### **2.6.1 The cognitive basis**

The general outlines of the cognitive framework have been dealt in section 2.4, where the main aspects of the structure of nominal phrases have been set out. The present work adopts the cognitive framework, although it considers that the analysis that has become widespread in the model does not provide the most adequate view of the syntactic structure of prototypical NPs. The most important difference with respect to the standard cognitive syntactic analysis is that here I intend to argue that the noun is the

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

head of the construction when dealing with the NP prototype. However, there exist some instances of the NP construction that are syntactically better understood if headedness is shared between the noun and the determiner, as it happens in *the blind* or *the black*. The analysis developed in this section follows also some of the principles of Construction Grammar.

### 2.6.1.1 A brief introduction to Construction Grammar

Construction Grammar is a linguistic framework inspired by the works of Fillmore *et al.* (1988), Culicover (1999), Kay & Fillmore (1999), Goldberg (1995, 2006), Goldberg & Jackendoff (2004), and Jackendoff (2008), among others. This linguistic theory also uses elements of *Frame Theory* (Fillmore 1976, 1982), which relies on the fundamental importance of semantics, and its role on influencing or shaping syntactic phenomena. It has to do with the fact that one cannot fully understand the meaning of a word without knowing the encyclopaedic knowledge that relates to this specific word. In that way, a word activates a frame which makes reference to other words and experiences which allow speakers and hearers to shape their language and, consequently, their conversations. A semantic *frame* is a structure of related concepts, and these are elaborated by means of experience. The different concepts which make up the frames interact with one another in such a way that without knowledge of all of them, one does not know the knowledge of one of them. This chained knowledge entails that, when losing one link of it, the elaboration of the conceptual frame fails. Such a theory has to do with the semantic notion of profiling discussed in sections 2.4.2 and 2.6.1.2 (Langacker 1991).

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

Construction Grammar is associated with the principle that **grammatical constructions**, rather than syntactic rules and principles, are the primary units of grammar. Goldberg (1995: 6) points out that:

The basic tenet of Construction Grammar [...] is that traditional constructions –i.e., form-meaning correspondences– are the basic units of language.

Constructions are form-meaning correspondences that exist independently of lexical elements, that is, they carry meaning by themselves. Construction Grammar sharply refuses the generative principle that language must be studied only paying attention to its formal structures without taking into account its semantics and the discourse frames. The focus of this theory is to emphasize the semantics and distribution of particular words and grammatical elements, as well as cross-linguistically unusual patterns. Initially, Construction Grammar arose in connection with structures that rival theories tended to define as ‘marginal’. Soon, however, Construction Grammar argued that “[t]he hypothesis behind this methodology is that an account of the rich semantic/pragmatic and complex formal constraints on these patterns [unusual patterns] readily extends to more general, simple, or regular patterns” (Goldberg 2006: 5).

Construction Grammar is linked to Cognitive Grammar in the sense that they share many theoretical principles. Langacker (1991: 8) reflects on this relation and contends that “in many respects, Cognitive Grammar is basically congruent with Construction Grammar: in its usage-based nature; in its treatment of constructions as complex categories; and its notion that the part of a lexical item’s characterization resides in the structural frames (constructional schemas) in which it occurs”. As well as the cognitive model, the constructionist approach denies the sharp distinction between



## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

syntax and the lexicon and proposes that they form a continuum. It defends the view that a word and a complex structure only differ in their internal complexity, “but both lexical and syntactic constructions are essentially the same type of declaratively represented data structure: both pair form with meaning” (Goldberg 1995: 7).

Construction Grammar focuses on the fact that language develops out of language use; thus this is a usage-based theory, another similarity with Cognitive Grammar. Langacker (1991: 6-7) notes that the usage-based character of Cognitive Grammar provides “emphasis on specific expressions and the extraction therefrom of low-level schemas as well as those representing higher levels of abstraction”, which is a natural solution to explain language. The commitment of Construction Grammar is similar because it treats all types of expressions as equally central for analysing grammatical structures and patterns. There is no ‘core’ grammar, no ‘privileged’ position of language *knowledge*.

Although the constructionist approach rejects the main ideas of Generative Grammar, it must be pointed out that this framework shares a characteristic with the formalist account of language: namely, the fact that both of them postulate that language is *creative*. Both frameworks defend creativity but view it differently:

Constructional approaches share with mainstream generative grammar the goal of *accounting* for the creative potential of language (Chomsky 1957, 1965). That is, it is clear that language is not a set of sentences that can be fixed in advance. Allowing constructions to combine freely as long as there are no conflicts, allows for the creative potential of language. At the same time, constructional approaches generally recognize that grammars don’t generate sentences, speakers do” (Goldberg 2006: 22).

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

Construction Grammar is a linguistic framework which takes into account, and under equal conditions, all the linguistic levels of language, that is, syntax, semantics, pragmatics, discourse frames, etc. All of them contribute to the same extent to the analysis and explanation of language. As regards the role of the speaker, this is the one in charge of generating sentences. Thus his/her personal and mental experience with the world influence his/her use of language, instead of following 'strict' fixed rules of grammar. From a Construction Grammar perspective, in principle, an NP is just another form-meaning symbolic package.

### 2.6.1.2 Grounding the noun

The main properties of grounding in relation to the elaboration of an NP have already been introduced. Now we need to deal with this notion in a more specific way. This time grounding is to be seen in relation to the participants in the act of communication, speakers and hearers. Langacker (2002: 29) contends about the notion of grounding that "the term ground is used for the speech event, its participants, and its immediate circumstances. A nominal [...] incorporates some element which specifies a relationship between the ground and the thing [...] it designates". In this sense, he contends that (Langacker 2004: 85):

Nominal grounding "singles out" or "identifies" the intended nominal referent by enabling the speaker and hearer to direct their attention to the same conceived entity in the context of the current discourse situation.

As can be seen, the context of communication is very important in the elaboration of NPs. The surroundings of speakers and hearers influence their use of language and consequently, they lead to a fruitful communicative act which requires that the speaker

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

and hearer make reference to the same processes and entities. This is achieved when the speaker and the hearer share a **coordinated mental reference**, that is, they concentrate their attention on the same instance of a particular type (Langacker 2004: 91). The notion ‘coordinated mental reference’ evokes a book by Fauconnier (1985) which contains a theory about this mental coordination between the participants in the discourse event. Revealingly, the book is entitled *Mental Spaces*, and it makes reference to the internal organization and composition of the conceptual spaces that speakers and hearers form and which contain, in each precise moment, the entities which are required for fruitful communication. In the words of Fauconnier (p. 16) mental spaces are:

[C]onstructs distinct from linguistic structures but built up in any discourse according to guidelines provided by the linguistic expressions. In the model, mental spaces will be represented as structures, incrementable sets- that is, sets with elements (*a, b, c, ...*) and relations holding between them (*R1ab, R2a, R3cbf, ...*), such that new elements can be added to them and new relations established between their elements.

It is in this milieu of coordinated mental reference inside a particular space that determiners come in: they guarantee the sharing of the same context by speakers and hearers. They make it possible for both interlocutors to be involved in the same conversational topic. When both participants zero in on the same mental reference, it is said that they share the same ‘immediate scope of concern’. Now, “this scope comprises what is onstage and deemed relevant for a particular purpose at a given moment in the flow of discourse” (Langacker 2004: 91). What is particularly important about this is that in order to set the relevant onstage items, language-users need to fix in their minds a certain number of lexical elements which evoke the different types

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

within the context of discourse. If there are no linguistic elements which reflect the class of types, it is impossible to create meaning out of nothing.

Onstage elements are related to what Langacker (2004: 91-92) terms *current discourse space* (CDS):

[T]he **current discourse space** (CDS) [is] defined as whatever is construed as being shared by the speaker and hearer as the basis for communication at that moment. Naturally, as a discourse unfolds the CDS and immediate scope are constantly updated. This is an essential factor in the semantic value of grounding elements.

When the onstage portion of the CDS is set, a frame is established in order to mark the limits of the discourse. Langacker (2004: 92) considers that “[a] discourse **frame** is the onstage portion of the CDS, the immediate scope of attention for interpreting the current expression and augmenting the conceptual structure being constructed in a discourse”.

Thus, the appearance of a new CDS is provoked by the appearance of a new discourse. Consequently, this new discourse implies that a different immediate scope is required for the creation of a coherent act of communication. This in its turn causes the linguistic elements which make reference to the types to change also. That is, the lexical elements, the nouns, are different and they must be set again in the mental references of both speaker and hearer. This change of discourse frame establishes the first as the ‘previous discourse frame’ and the new one, as the ‘current discourse frame’. In order to explain these two notions Langacker (2004: 92-93) points out that:

The **previous frame** is the one to which an expression applies, providing the basis for interpreting it. The **current frame** is the one presently being

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

assembled, the augmented conceptual structure resulting from its interpretation (emphasis on the original).

And he adds:

In schematized form, successive frames of this sort figure in the meanings of nominal grounding elements, which indicate the discourse status of the nominal referents.

This highlights the importance of the context for the creation of meaning. Langacker insists that “frames of this sort figure in the meanings of nominal grounding elements”, but **this is not made possible by determiners because the meaning of the determiner does not change**. It is true that we have definite and indefinite articles, and other demonstratives, that contribute with different meanings to the noun, but their use depends on the noun. They presuppose the noun. This notion of *presupposition* is important. It makes reference to the fact that an element is related to another one, or that it requires or needs other elements as a previous condition for its use. This means that there is an article because there is a noun and since articles presuppose nouns, but not vice versa, this implies that the head is the noun because without it there is no article.

Consider Mathews (1981:63):

[...] we will establish no direct co-variance between the auxiliary and a subject, or an object, and so on. The function of *has* can accordingly be said to **presuppose** that of *appeared*: there is no role for the auxiliary except in relation to the element that it is auxiliary to.

An article similarly presupposes the head element. On the one hand, there are clear restrictions on its relation to a noun. [...]. On the other hand, there is a relation between the object noun and its verb. [...]. Other

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

restrictions apply to nouns in subject position. [...] But there are none which establish a relation between, for example, a verb and the article in its object.

In order to better explain this point, it is important to take into account pragmatics, how language interacts with context. The surroundings of a linguistic expression influence its characteristics; pragmatic functions reveal the linguistic environment of linguistic elements (Prince 1981; Lambrecht 1994). In my view, the context is essential for felicitous language use. Keizer (2007a: 190) shares this point of view and contends that “pragmatic functions (...) are assigned only to those topical and focal elements which are singled out for special treatment; i.e. those elements whose information status is reflected in their grammatical form”. The grammatical form of the NP reflects the informational status of its referents. Its syntactic organization and constituents reflect its informational features. In this sense, the determiner is a sort of complement which elaborates the noun. Thus, the grammatical form of the NP varies depending on the informational status of the noun. If the noun is new in the discourse frame, it obliges the speaker to use the indefinite article. If the noun is old, a definite article is used. So, **the direction of encoding is from noun to determiner**. This means that the use and the meaning of the determiner depend on the noun, as this is inserted in a perfectly specific discourse.

As regards the informational status of an element, it is also important to keep in mind the notions of *primary topic* and *focus domain*. The primary topic is the part of a syntactic construction that is being talked about. The focus domain is “that part of a sentence that is interpretable as being asserted” (Goldberg 2006: 130). Those elements which do not belong to the primary topic or to the potential focus domain are said to belong to the set of *backgrounded elements*. These three notions are considered to be

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

the relevant categories of relational informational status (Goldberg 2006: 129-157). They can be applied to the analysis of NPs and their informational organization. I contend that the noun is the head of the NP structure, in part also because it has to be the primary topic within this construction. The final NP projects a meaning which corresponds to that of the primary topic. Topicality has to do with the informational status of the topic element and is central to noun phrase headedness. If old, an element can be the topic of a sentence. At phrase level, when a noun is old in the discourse frame we use a different determiner than when this is new. This is what we have to take into account for establishing the topic of an NP, the discourse level. If we consider the discourse level as the basis for establishing the primary focus of an NP where the noun is the one responsible for the creation of the discourse frame, then it follows that the noun's headedness resides in its immediate connection with the frame. By contrast, determiners depend on the informational status of the noun within the discourse frame. Thus, they must be considered as backgrounded elements, relating to the discourse frame only indirectly.

### 2.6.1.3 Meaning within the Noun Phrase

Cognitive Grammar understands the grammar of a language in terms of *conceptualization*. Conceptualization is in direct contact with meaning. In fact, it is the process by means of which we elaborate the meaning of a linguistic element or a grammatical category (as seen in section 2.4.2). The meaning of NPs is the main point in the present work, and how the syntactic organization of NPs depends on this meaning projected by the whole phrasal structure. The meaning of the highest category influences its syntactic analysis. From a constructionist point of view, the schematic meaning of an NP is that of a *determined* entity. This construction offers a

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

generalization; it gives a general meaning which can be specified using the appropriate elements. This construction is one of the basic units of language. But, if we take into account how humans store linguistic elements in their minds (Aitchison 1987, 1989), constructions need basic elements whose internal features project different constructions. That is, basic elements which categorize the world and set the linguistic components which tie the human mind with the context where human beings interact. They are the seed of constructions, and these constructions are the basic communicative patterns of language (Jackendoff 1993). Thus, the schematicity of constructions in general and NPs in particular is specified by means of lexical elements which are the ‘basic elements which categorize the world’.

As pointed out above, in section 2.4.3, the determiner is usually taken to be the profile determinant of the NP. In relation to the meaning of grammatical constructions, Langacker (1990: 12-13) points out that:

Grammatical constructions have the effect of imposing a particular profile on their composite semantic value. When a head combines with a modifier, for example, it is the profile of the head that prevails at the composite structure level.

Thus, if the determiner is the head, the meaning of the whole structure is, chiefly, that of the determiner. But, from the point of view of the present work, this analysis should be modified. Viewing the determiner as the head is hard to reconcile with the fact that before establishing mental contact between the speaker and the hearer, the lexical items in the minds of speakers and hearers need to be set first. Nouns are the elements which make up the discourse frame. They develop the main referential function because they are responsible for the framing of a conversation. Consequently, if nouns are not used,



## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

the informational status (old/ new elements) is not activated because speakers and hearers do not recognize the entities of the discourse frame. As a consequence, constructions cannot be projected. If mental contact (in the terms of Fauconnier) is not established between the speaker and the hearer, communication does not follow. When the participants in the communication act establish the lexical items in their heads, they know how to use them, and they know how to link them together. When people use a word, they have to know three important features about it in order to use it correctly. These are its pronunciation, what it sounds like; its role within a sentence; and, of course, its meaning. This means that, if the interlocutors in an act of communication have to establish mental contact, first of all they need to know the meaning, the syntactic role and the pronunciation of the lexical items which elaborate the discourse frame. In fact, it is quite important to mention that if the interlocutor does not use the same discourse frame, they do not achieve understanding, and communication fails. Aitchison (1987: 39), citing Herbert (1935) points out that:

‘Words matter, [...] for words are the tools of thought, and you will often find that you are thinking badly because you are using the wrong tools, trying to bore a hole with a screw-driver, or draw a cork with a coal hammer’.

Herbert obviously means ‘lexical’ words. If the wrong lexical items are selected communication is not attained. When the lexical items which make up the discourse frame do not fit semantically with one another, communication is messy. For example, if we choose the verb phrase *commit suicide* and the noun phrase *the dog*, the resulting clause does not work semantically, *the dog committed suicide*.

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

Let us detour briefly and consider the notion of *subcategorization* now. It is the case that verb subcategorization of NPs is compared with verbal subcategorization of clauses. Payne (1993: 129) makes reference to Baltin (1989: 3-5) in order to explain verb subcategorization of clauses and he contends that:

[V]erbs subcategorize for clauses according to different complementizer types, and this is all the information that is necessary for the lexical entry. For example, a verb like *wonder* subcategorizes for a [+WH] complementizer like *whether* or *if*. Once *whether* has been chosen, both finite and non-finite clauses are possible, but *if* permits only a finite clause.

Baltin suggests that the complementizer is the head of the clause because it is responsible for the verb form of the subordinate clause. In contrast to Baltin, Payne, (1993: 129) mentioning Zwicky's theory of complementizers, points out that:

[T]he English complementizer *that* permits indicative and subjunctive complements, and the choice of indicative versus subjunctive is dependent on the matrix verb rather than the complementizer.

This highlights the fact that verbs on some occasions depend on their complementizers for subcategorizing their complements, but sometimes the complementizer does not play any role in the election of complements. NPs seem to be different. Payne (1993: 129- 130) contends that:

[V]erbs in English do not seem to subcategorize for different determiners or quantifiers. If a verb permits a noun-phrase complement, it permits a noun-phrase complement regardless of its determiner or quantifier. We do not have a set of verbs X which only permit objects beginning with, for example

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

the quantifier *every*, and another Y which only permits objects beginning with *each*.

This indicates that verb subcategorization depends on the content of the lexical word which is subcategorized, not on its grounding features. This is in relation to discourse frames because the lexical elements which draw them are responsible for the right subcategorization of verbs. The meaning of the whole expression depends on the lexical items which make up the discourse frame, and these are the ones which – in their turn – select their own dependent elements.

The fact that lexical items, nouns, are the ones responsible for the distributional characteristics of NPs depends upon their semantic features. Those who defend an NP structure concentrate on the fact that the noun is the head because “[it] defines the selectional properties of the phrase” (Huddleston & Pullum 2002: 357). This means that the semantic properties of the noun are the guiding features of the whole phrase. In reference to this fact, Zwicky (1985: 4), a formal grammarian, signals that the distinction between a head and a modifier can be elaborated taking as a basis the semantic content of the words:

[...] we could take the head/ modifier distinction to be at root semantic: in a combination X + Y, X is the ‘semantic head’ if, speaking very crudely, X + Y describes a kind of thing described by X. On this basis, N is the semantic head in Det + N (*those penguins* describes a kind of penguin).

Zwicky points out that one element of the structure “characterizes” the whole construction within which it is included. Thus, if the head contributes with all its characteristics to the highest construction, it also contributes with its semantic content.

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

The meaning of the whole expression depends on the meaning of the element which is the head. And the head has to be an element with enough semantic strength to allow the highest structure to work within an even higher construction. This is the reason why verb-argument ties ignore the determiners of the arguments.

Apart from this, the noun is also the head of the structure because, as Jiménez-Juliá (2000: 109- 110) points out “a head is a unit which has suffered an expansion. An expansion, in turn, is an addition of constituents to an initial unit, an addition which complements and enriches its content, modifying its referential and communicative possibilities, but without changing the nature of the unit<sup>3</sup>”. To begin with, the determiner cannot be the head because this element does not make reference to a linguistically ‘tangible’ element, that is, its meaning – its content – cannot be expanded. It evokes such an abstract linguistic component that its meaning expansion is not feasible. On the other hand, the ‘contentful’ nature of the noun allows its headedness because it represents a specific referent which may undergo modification and complementation. Moreover, in relation to the nature of the head unit, if this feature does not or cannot change, this unchangeability blocks the possibility of the determiner of being the head because its nature changes dramatically from a highly schematic structure to a totally concrete construction. Jiménez-Juliá (p. 110) also states that “an element is obligatory within a syntactic unit, if its absence invalidates the possibility of expressing the categorial semantics associated to it<sup>4</sup>”. This is what happens within an NP: if the noun is absent the resulting structure does not work

---

<sup>3</sup> The translation is mine. “Un núcleo es una unidad que ha sufrido una expansión. Una expansión, a su vez, es una adición de constituyentes a una unidad inicial, adición que complementa y enriquece su contenido, alterando sus posibilidades referenciales y comunicativas, pero sin cambiar la naturaleza de la unidad.”

<sup>4</sup> The original says: “un elemento es obligatorio dentro de una unidad sintáctica, si su ausencia invalida la posibilidad de expresar el valor semántico clasemático asociado a la misma.”

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

because of the schematic meaning of the determiner, and in fact if there is no noun, there is no determiner. No one seems, to have considered the basic fact that one can – in fact, Broca’s aphasics do just that – conceivably manage to communicate using only lexical pieces like *tiger, eat, lion, yesterday*. It would of course be impossible to do the same with function words: *the, this, has, -ing*.

It is important to realise that all these considerations stem from the raw lexical meaning of nouns but they relate to whether and how that meaning has syntactic representations. And what they suggest is that both when it comes to integrating a referent (meaning) with its discourse frame and an argument (meaning) with its syntactic frame, it is the sheer lexicality of the noun (which includes its grammatical category) that becomes relevant. There thus seem to be nothing wrong with the idea that the functional elements are slaves to those integrative processes. They do not drive them, but are simply instruments to make them possible. Regarding their instrumentality as the key feature of NPs is like regarding gasoline as the key feature of a car.

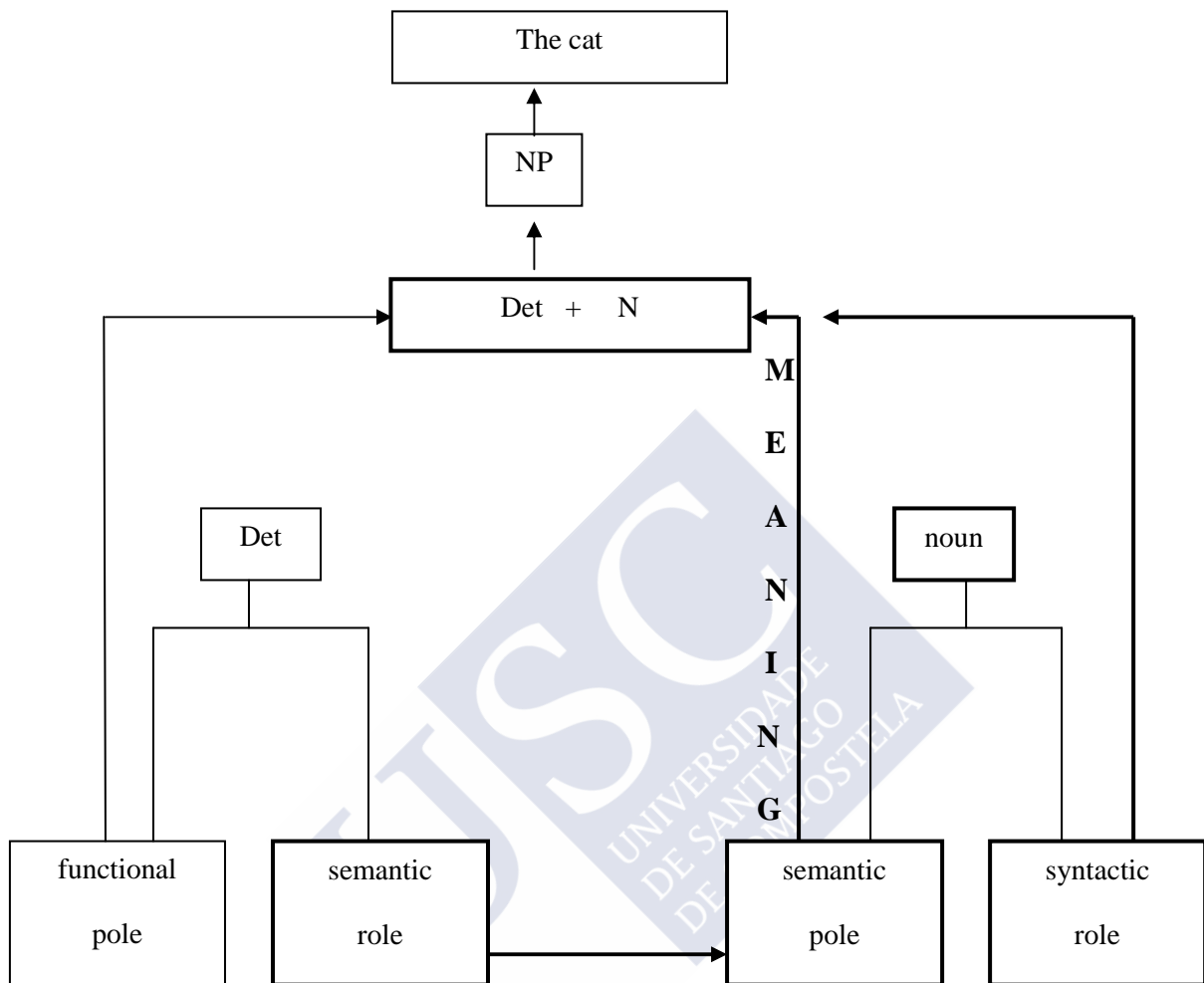
### 2.6.2 Changes in the cognitive model

#### 2.6.2.1 The noun as the basis of the referent

As we have already noted, Langacker (2004) observes that different discourse frames influence the meaning of the grounding elements. I propose giving adequate consideration to the fact that discourse frames influence the meaning of determiners and discourse frames are the product of the nouns set in the mental spaces. Now, consider the following figure:

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

**Figure 3. Semantic and syntactic interrelation between the noun and the determiner**



Here there are a functional word, asserted by its functional pole, and a lexical word, which is characterised by its semantic pole. What must be taken into account is the fact that the functional element has a semantic role, and the lexical one has a syntactic role, contrary to the view that functional words are the axis of linguistic expressions and thus the organisers of the syntactic structure. The boxes with the thick lines represent the main features of NPs concerning their meaning and thus, syntactic structure. The semantic role of the determiner influences the semantic pole of the noun. This can represent the grounding function. Grounding, as a semantic function, affects the noun

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

in its semantic pole, marking the informational characteristics of the noun, which depends on the discourse frame that it creates. As can be seen, the semantic features of the determiner are not directly projected in the highest structure, that is, its contribution is meaningful when we deal with the noun, but not with the NP. Both features of the noun are projected in the NP, its semantic pole, influenced by the determiner, and its syntactic role, as head of the structure.

Figure 3 shows the separate syntactic and semantic contributions of determiners and nouns. The noun is a lexical item with a semantic pole and a syntactic role. “[T]he head of a syntactic phrase tends to map into the outer most function of the corresponding conceptual constituent” (Jackendoff 2002: 14), in that sense, the noun is the main element within the phrasal category because both of its features are projected in the NP structure. It develops a syntactic role, as head of the construction, and as a subcategorizand of a verb. Its semantic pole is its main contribution. In this part the determiner plays its semantic role. The noun selects its complement among the possible candidates, *definite/ indefinite articles, quantifiers, determinatives*, etc. It could be said that the meaning of the determiner is part of the extrinsic meaning of the noun. It only affects the noun at the word level, that is, when the noun is analysed at the lexical level. Once the content of the noun is complemented by the determiner it develops its syntactic role. Both together, the semantic pole, complemented by the semantic role of the determiner, and the syntactic role of the noun, elaborate an NP.

### 2.6.2.1.1 The functional element: the syntactic aid

*Schemas* are devices of grammatical description. Langacker points out that they are templates representing sets of expressions, with their abstracted commonality being

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

observable at certain levels of specificity.<sup>5</sup> They represent an abstract commonality to the type of lexical element which requires a template. As noted, Taylor (2002) defends the idea that the determiner is the head of a grounded nominal because the determiner is considered to profile a schematic instance, which receives semantic content from the noun. Thus, in his opinion, the determiner is the head because it allows the specific identification of an element within the wide range of possible candidate types. The question is: how can a schematic meaning project a specific category like an NP? As an element of grammatical description, the determiner reveals the syntactic features of the noun. Moreover, the schematic meaning of the determiner is revealed by the specificity of the noun. This supports the main idea of this chapter, that semantics directs syntax. In fact, as Jackendoff (2002: 54) points out “[o]ne approach that has won some degree of acceptance (...) is that the lexicon contains not just the actual lexical items of the language but also more abstract schemata from which actual items can “inherit” properties”. This means that the lexicon of a language includes those words which traditionally were considered only functional and belonging uniquely to syntax. The present outlook of language points out that, as a consequence of functional words having a certain degree of semantic content, they can be considered as part of the lexicon. They are additional meaningful complements for the proper lexical items. Narrowing down the referential possibilities of the NP by means of a determiner is a process which makes use of an abstract schema included in the linguistic features of the lexical item.

Langacker contends that constructions are either expressions (of any size) or schemas abstracted from expressions in order to capture commonality (at any level of

---

<sup>5</sup> These notes have been taken from a course given by Langacker in Madrid, March 2008.



## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

specificity).<sup>6</sup> This commonality is only visible when the elements which allow its visibility are used within the construction. Within the NP structure, the element which contributes with specificity to the whole NP is the noun. Construction Grammar points out a similar problem. The NP construction contains a general meaning that must be specified. It needs some sort of specification and be understood correctly. The construction offers a general schema to the speaker. She/he uses this generalization in order to present all the possible candidates that may appear in this pattern. It could be said that the NP construction is a schematic representation of the internal meaning of nouns. Thus, nouns are the elements which bring meaning to the specific NP. Goldberg (1995: 66) contends that “the semantics associated with a construction is ultimately generalized, or that it is abstracted to a single more general sense”. This means that an NP is an abstract general ‘notion’ which is specified by means of a noun, which at the same time brings an array of complements which are selected depending on the informational status of the noun. Thus, the specificity of the NP is due to the use of a noun, not that of a determiner. And the commonality among nouns is that they use determiners as templates and vice versa. So, the syntactic role of the noun is the governing position within an NP, that is, the head. With respect to the determiner, it is contended that, as an abstract schemata, it is the representation of the schema abstracted from lexical items. Thus, a determiner is the representation of the schema used by nouns. The noun is the head of the expression because it is the base from where the schematic meaning of the determiner is obtained.

The constructional pattern Det + N implies a general construction, as seen above; it is like the road which has to be followed by the vehicles. But although this way is obligatory, it does not work without the lexical elements. What is more, it does

---

<sup>6</sup> These notes have also been taken from a course given by Langacker in Madrid, March 2008.

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

not work even with only functional elements. Thus, the construction generally and specifically used by nouns can be applied to different lexical categories (adjectives and *-ing* forms) because it offers a general nominal sense to the lexical element. That is, the Det + N construction is adapted to the adjective or the *-ing* form providing them with the syntactic capacities of NPs. The construction, not the determiner, contributes with the general meaning of its nominal head to the novel lexical use of different items which can be included in the construction. So, the construction is independent of the nouns and determiners. Going on with the specificity of constructions, Goldberg (2006: 115) quotes the work of Kaschak & Glenberg (2000) on the fact that “subjects rely on constructional meaning when they encounter nouns used as verbs in novel ways”. As a conclusion, they contend that “the constructional pattern specifies a general scene and that the “affordances” of particular objects are used to specify the scene in detail.” Thus, as can be seen, the use of a noun as a verb changes its category into that of the verb because the construction moulds the nouns until it fits grammatically. So, this could be applied to NPs which contain a lexical element which is not a noun but develops its role. The constructional meaning of the whole structure adapts the novel element until it fits. This novel element acquires a minimum of noun-features, provided by the NP structure, which allow it to work like a proper noun. An example of this type is for example *the rich*. There is an adjective developing the head function of the noun. This is possible because the NP construction contains a schematic/general meaning which moulds the adjective and couples it within the noun construction, as seen above (see section 1.3.1).

## Close Apposition

### 3.1 Introduction

The present chapter is devoted to continue with the headedness issue within grammatical constructions. Specifically, it is going to deal with the headedness problem within a construction that could be considered the quintessential headedness problem, that is, the close apposition.

Close apposition (henceforth also CA) is a well-known object of study in linguistic studies, but it *resists* the passing of time because it *resists* revealing its internal design. Appositive studies go back in time until the ancient Romans, but it was during the twentieth century when apposition began to be analyzed in depth. From Poutsma (1904) until Acuña-Fariña (2009), during a whole century, this notion has undergone and is undergoing no end of analyses. It has been considered as a double-headed structure (Hockett 1955; more recently Lekakou & Szendrői 2007), and when its headedness is attributed to only one of its nominal elements, there is no consensus about which of the two nouns is the head. Some consider the first noun (U1) the main element (Lee 1952; Hawkins 1978; Keizer 2007a, b); others claim that it is the second noun (U2) that deserves that status (Haugen 1953; Burton-Roberts 1975). Still others contend that the head of an apposition varies depending on its constituency (Acuña-Fariña 1996). This issue will be treated in more depth in section 3.3.

In light of an obvious structural relation, it is convenient and relevant to discuss the main differences between close and loose appositions (henceforth also LA). This is the aim of section 3.2, but before contemplating their grammatical differences in detail, we must know what an apposition is in general terms. Traditionally, apposition was a

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

concept that applied to nominal elements, and thus, mainly, an apposition has typically been seen as a construction which contains two juxtaposed nominal elements. But as we will see, according to some authors, apposition can be also possible between verb phrases (VPs), adjective phrases (AP), adverb phrases (AdvP), and even clauses. It is also important to explain here that apposition can be seen as a grammatical relation (Burton-Roberts 1975; Bitea 1977; Koktová 1985; Meyer 1992), or as a grammatical category (Fries 1952; Francis 1958; Bogacki 1973). In general, the former view is better received by the majority of grammarians. But, still, there are disagreements among those who are in favour of apposition as a grammatical relation. Some authors consider it as a relationship of its own, comparable to coordination and dependency (Sopher 1971; Burton-Roberts 1975; Bitea 1977; Koktová 1985). Others treat it as a subtype of dependency (Poutsma 1904), and still others contend that it must be treated as a subtype of coordination (Allerton 1979). There are, finally, those who think that it simply does not exist (Pignón 1961; Longrée 1987).

### 3.2 Close and loose apposition

It has never been an easy task to define and illustrate the notion of apposition, that is why most linguists seem to have used it sporadically and they have taken advantage of this notion when the analysis of a given construction shows internal syntactic problems which lead one in 'appositive ways'. In such a situation, expressions such as 'maybe appositive' or 'an appositive resemblance' are rescuer tags which imply a request for permission to leave the topic, and, astonishingly, this permission is hardly ever refused.

Unfortunately, this strategy has only contributed to creating a very large notion of apposition, the main (but by no means the only) subparts of it being the close and the loose types. Perhaps, because it is inherent in the loose variety that this is more loosely

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

defined, it has received more attention than close apposition. Both of them are made up by a determiner and two nominal elements, but at the same time they show some subtle differences. Consider (1) and (2):

(1) *The writer Alice Walker won the Pulitzer Prize*<sup>7</sup>.

(2) *The writer, Alice Walker, won the Pulitzer Prize.*

As can be seen, the main formal difference between close and loose appositions, at first sight, is that the latter contains **intonational boundaries**. But this is such a crucial fact in the analysis of these structures that, as we will see in the following sections, apart from being a small distinguishing mark, it conceals a world of grammatical differences.

There exists a group of appositive instances that make up a paradigm: a number of examples that share common features which are considered as the ones which better characterize the notion of apposition at large. It so happens that the examples that instantiate apposition *per excellence* are loose appositions (see Heringa 2011). Examples (3) and (4) are two prototypical models of the paradigm:

(3) *Santiago, the capital of Galicia, is worldwide known for its cathedral.*

(4) *Don Quixote, Cervantes' most known novel, is one of the greatest works of fiction ever published.*

Apart from intonational detachment, these paradigmatic appositions are characterized by *coreferentiality* and *functional equivalence*. Linguists have

---

<sup>7</sup> Henceforth, those examples which contain an apposition within a larger text will only show the appositive construction in italics.

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

traditionally considered these three characteristics as the most important features for considering a construction to be an apposition. The first of them, the presence of intonational boundaries, as pointed out before, is the most perceptible characteristic of loose apposition. In fact, authors like Norwood (1954), Burton-Roberts (1975), Dupont (1985), Fuentes-Rodríguez (1989), Lago (1991), and Acuña-Farina (1996) contend that the presence of intonational boundaries is a determining factor for considering a structure an apposition. However, the appositive status may be achieved, according to Fries (1952), Francis (1958), and Bogacky (1973), when two constituents, in this case two juxtaposed NPs, make reference to the same element, that is, when they are coreferential. And finally, as regards functional equivalence, authors like Sopher (1971) and Burton-Roberts (1975) point out that the feature that most characterizes apposition is the fact that its constituents must be able to perform the same functions inside the structure where they are embedded.

As can be surmised, linguists have never reached a consensus about the structure of apposition, so, their different points of view and their different criteria for characterizing this construction lead to a situation where a great number of examples of a seemingly very different nature are included under the label apposition. Consider the following ones:

- (5) And it was *Greaves'*, *that master goal scorer, that masterful taker of the half-chance*, who put Tottenham in that happy position (Meyer 1991).
- (6) Consider *the features of Utopian communism: generous public provision for the infirm; democratic an secret elections of all officers including priests; meals taken publicly in common refectories; a common habit or uniform*

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

*prescribed for all citizens; even houses changed once a decade ...* (Meyer 1991).

- (7) *You should rewrite the paper. That is to say, you should organize it better and improve its style* (Meyer 1987).
- (8) *Mr Kinkel, aged 55, a former head of West German intelligence and a high profile justice minister, is well-engaged by MPs [...]* (Hannay & Keizer 2005).
- (9) *In London, in Chelsea, Terry met most peculiar people* (Koktová 1985).
- (10) The young lady took us *into the house*, said Arthur Baddock, *and up the stairs. That's where the party was. On the landing up there.* (Bitea 1977).
- (11) *In 1958, 33 years after the founding of St. Augustin, nine years before the settlement of Jamestown, ... I visited the place for the second time* (Koktová 1985).

Broadly speaking, all the previous strings might well fall under the following definition of apposition:

(...) apposition is an instance of what Roman Jakobson calls “intralingual translation or *rewording*” or “interlingual translation or translation proper”: in other words, apposition usually belongs to the “METALINGUAL (i.e., glossing) function” of language, since it is “focused on the CODE” and generally conveys “information about the lexical code of English” as known and interpreted by each encoder. In so far as it rests on synonymy, apposition produces what Carnap and Kennedy call “meaning postulates” (Bitea 1977: 456).

Note that examples (5) to (11) are considered as loose appositions, but they show features which differ considerably from the paradigm. Some of them are appositive PPs,

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

others APs, and still others are clauses. Thus, the NP hegemony disappears from the appositive map and this begins to be populated with diverse syntactic categories (on the contrary close appositions tend to allow only nominal elements). In fact, Burton-Roberts (1975: 410) clearly states that the notion of apposition “need[s] not be confined to appositions of NPs, but can be used to describe appositions of full sentences, verbs, verb phrases, adjectives and adverbials (...)”. Once all these different syntactic categories establish appositive relations among them, a common thread needs to be found for identifying them, that is, a prototypical feature or set of features that characterizes this linguistic phenomenon. The most salient property is that all of them share intonational detachment. Moreover, between the two members of the apposition, an appositive marker may be inserted, and as Burton-Roberts (1975: 417) contends “(...) those sequences that contain an APP-marker anyway must be appositions. Such markers, after all, make appositions”.

As for its headedness, it is not clear that we can deal with *head* and *modifier* when analysing loose apposition. It is true that the second element, the one between commas, is often treated as a clarification of the first nominal unit. But loose apposition is “(...) characterized by **interchangeability** (...)” (Bitea 1977: 456; see section 3.2.1); Burton-Roberts (1975: 392- 393) insists that “reversibility” is in fact one of the main features of loose apposition, and that “[i]t can be used as a test of apposition”, (see section 3.3.3). Therefore, if its elements may exchange positions and U2 becomes U1, it does not make sense to deal with headedness because the grammaticality of the clause is not affected by this exchange. Moreover, maybe as a consequence of this clarifying nature of the appositive element, there are those who maintain the view that loose apposition is not considered as a “genuine syntactic relation” (Burton-Roberts 1993:



## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

184). On this view, it is not even included within the syntactic architecture of a sentence. Therefore, “(...) apposition (...) should be viewed (...) as a message which deflects from the main stream of communication and which should be kept distinct from the proper assertion (main information) of a sentence” (Koktová 1985: 41; see section 3.2.2). It is analysed as a semantic strategy used by the speaker in order to clarify his/her message. In fact, Bitea (1977: 461) contends that “(...) apposition is used to make the message clear to the decoder by avoiding ambiguity (...)”. Thus, loose apposition is considered as a semantic device with a first member (U1) as the main element and the second member as a clarification of the first one, but syntactically unconnected with it.

### 3.2.1 The loose-close apposition relation

Loose appositions seem to be related to one another by chaining principles that compose a *super category* or *space*. In this appositive space, all nodes are distinct categories and the space exists because of the dense chain of similarities, which make up an emergent, Wittgensteinian family (Acuña-Fariña 2006a). In this sense, loose apposition is a different kind of radial category if we compare it with Lakoff's (1987) *there* construction, or the [SBJ DITRV OBJ1 OBJ2] schema in Goldberg's (1995) ditransitives (see Taylor 1995: 116 ff.; Croft & Cruse 2004: 272 ff.), in the sense that no relevant attribute is shared by all the members of the family. Its characteristic intonation detachment is not enough since other constructions also have it. However, the loose family of structures is only half of the problem with the long-standing problematic notion of apposition. The other half is that together with the classic loose structure in (2), (*The writer, Alice Walker, won the Pulitzer Prize*) there has always been in the literature a classic close version of it, that is, one with no intonational detachment as in

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

(1), (*The writer Alice Walker* won the Pulitzer Prize). In that respect, Hockett (1955, 1958) treats close and loose appositions in the same way. Contrary to him, Burton-Roberts (1975, 1993) does not accept structures like *the writer Alice Walker* as an apposition (for discussion see section 3.3).

The following examples illustrate some of the different structures that make up the close appositionive family:

(12) *The writer Alice Walker* won the Pulitzer Prize.

(13) *Alice Walker the writer* won the Pulitzer Prize.

(14) *The word “racism”* evokes sadness.

(15) *My sister the dancer* participated in the contest.

(16) *My sister Cath* participated in the contest.

(17) *We women* participated in the race.

Example (12) could be considered as the prototypical instance, as the one which better instantiates the close appositionive group of constructions. In fact, and maybe as a consequence of being the prototype, it is the one which has been the object of most works dealing with close apposition. But, its presence in linguistic studies depends also on the fact that this construction seems to also emulate the well known ‘common’ NP. The use of a determiner, a noun as the head, and a possible premodifier are some features that link these two types of constructions, and for better or for worse, this similitude has determined the analyses made about close apposition. Thus, the fact that two constructions with the same constituents and seemingly the same functions receive different designations is surely in need of explanation.

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

As noted above, close appositions are made up by two nominal elements (with some exceptions). Apart from the lack of intonational boundaries which characterizes loose apposition, the almost invariable nominal character of close apposition is, in principle, one of its most representative features (exceptions like *here in Santiago, now in September* are, however, possible). Again, this is a crucial difference between loose and close appositions because, as seen, instances like (7) (*You should rewrite the paper. That is to say, you should organize it better and improve its style*) are possible within the loose appositive group. Thus, as a consequence of these nominal features, close appositions were and are compared with standard NPs in every sense, to such an extent that they are sometimes simply analysed as a special type of NP (see Burton-Roberts 1975), as also happens with other types of nominal constructions like *your brat of a brother*, as we will see in chapter 5.

One of the most salient features of the NP category (see chapter 2) is that its major role is to establish reference: NPs pick out extralinguistic objects in a universe of discourse. In the case of close appositions, this referential feature is maintained by some authors (Haugen 1953; Hockett 1955; Sopher 1971; Quirk *et al.* 1985) who contend that the two nominal elements make reference to the same entity and thus they are co-referential. This is also presumably a feature of loose apposition. But not all grammarians share this point of view. Burton-Roberts (1975: 395-396, 1993) points out that close appositions may not contain co-referential units because co-referential NPs cannot make up a superordinate NP. In fact, Keizer (2007a: 38) proposes that “neither of the two elements is referential”; it is rather the whole apposition that is referential, having as a consequence a relation of predication between the two nominal elements.

As previously seen, whether a category is seen as homogeneous or

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

heterogeneous depends on the eyes of the beholder (see chapter 2). Variety exists even within the most basic grammatical category, as it exists within ordinary NPs and close appositions. So, it is easy to see a gradience relation between all the possible instances that make up a category (see Aarts 2007), and close apposition does not escape grammatical indeterminacy. But not all grammarians accept this idea. Some opt for a homogeneous account of the facts. Thus, Korzen (2006: 113) adopts this position and contends that “(...) the category of “appositions” has become pleasantly homogeneous”. He includes a quite diverse group of appositions (which he contends are made up by a *host* and an apposition) where he includes ordinary NPs, appositions as determinerless NPs, as NPs with an indefinite article, as a proper noun, appositions as pronouns, as infinitive clauses, as a nominal relative clause, etc., to come to the conclusion that all the appositive examples are homogeneous with respect to their grammatical structure. On the contrary, Keizer (2007a: 58) is of the opinion that appositions should be seen as a heterogeneous group because if “each member has the same internal structure, the evidence for headedness may seem confusing and inconclusive”. Thus, “there are different types of close apposition” (p. 58) which follow a pattern, but not all the examples of close apposition have to stick to the general norm.

The following sub-sections discuss the most salient properties of LA, and they argue in favour of this construction as the only possible type of apposition.

### 3.2.2 Semantics and loose appositions

Bitea (1977) offers a semantic analysis of loose apposition that views meaning as one of the major structuring forces of this construction. His analysis of apposition begins with an assertion which can be considered the most representative one of the entire article:

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

Semantic considerations should be the cornerstone of any description of apposition for, as it will be seen, it is the meaning of the units linked by the relationship of apposition (appositives) that determines their syntactic status. (Bitea p. 454).

Loose apposition is related to meaning via the notion of synonymy. In fact, “sameness of reference/ extension means synonymy” (Bitea p. 455), that is, the similarity between the two nominal elements, the fact that one functions as the extension of the other, and that both of them make reference to the same entity at different levels, leads to a synonymous status of the members of the structure. This synonymy can be dealt with from two different perspectives, from the theory of competence or from the theory of performance. Likewise, three different points of view appear on scene when dealing with performance: the encoder’s point of view, the decoder’s point of view, and the native speaker’s point of view. But, although loose apposition involves these three notions, Bitea is of the opinion that only the encoder’s performance ought to be taken into account, to such an extent that his/her motivation and his/her intentions are the most important factors when dealing and discussing the use of loose apposition.

On the same grounds, apposition is seen as “an instance of what Roman Jakobson [1971-1981, vol. 2: 261] calls “an interpretation of verbal signs by means of other signs”, since it illustrates either “intralingual translations or rewording” or interlingual translation or translation proper” (Bitea p. 456). Therefore, appositive structures are included within the metalinguistic part of language; a linguistic means used in order to expand a previously used expression. The synonymy between these two expressions is latent, as examples (18) and (19) demonstrate. As a consequence, **interchangeability** is considered one of the main features of apposition:

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

- (18) a. Either study the subject or hire (...) someone who *understands it* (viz., *recognizes what he does not know*) (IEEE, 344).
- b. Either study the subject or hire (...) someone who *recognizes what he does not know* (viz., *understands it*).
- (19) a. Our concern (...) is with *language action – language in the full context of the non linguistic event which are its setting* (SIH, 44).
- b. Our concern (...) is with *language in full context of the non linguistic event which are its setting – language action*.

Together with the interchangeability of loose appositive structures (*Santiago, the capital of Galicia, is a rainy town; The capital of Galicia, Santiago, is a rainy town*), and at the same time related to it, the **omission** of one of the elements in this type of apposition is considered as a valid option for elucidating loose appositive structures. Consider examples (20) and (21):

- (20) a. Either study the subject or hire (...) someone who *understands it* (viz., *recognizes what he does not know*). (IEEE, 344)
- b. Either study the subject or hire (...) someone who understands it.
- c. Either study the subject or hire (...) someone who recognizes what he does not know.
- (21) a. Our concern (...) is with *language action – language in the full context of the non linguistic events which are its setting*. (SIH, 44)
- b. Our concern (...) is with language action.
- c. Our concern (...) is with language in the full context of the non-linguistic events which are its setting.

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

However, “even if the sentence remains both grammatical and acceptable, a gap will appear in the informational structure of the sentence and the decoder will perceive the meaning of the sentence to be incomplete (...)” (Bitea p. 457). Therefore, both appositive parts are necessary, and the omission of one of them is possible from the part of the encoder, but the fact that he/she understands the message does not imply that the decoder will understand it. Thus, omission of one of the appositive elements leads to grammatical acceptability but semantic incompleteness. In fact, the omission of one of the elements and its semantic consequences are more obvious in close appositive structures. However, appositive structures without intonational boundaries are not accounted under the label apposition. Bitea’s account is not too well focused on close apposition. Consider the following quotation:

The two or more syntactic units which enter a relationship of apposition are either separated by one or several other syntactic units or placed side by side; in the latter case they are prevented from forming a whole by a pause, which is rendered in writing by means of punctuation marks (...) (Bitea p. 460).

This means that the two elements involved in an appositive relationship do not need to appear together, one following the other, and other parts of the clause may appear between them. On the contrary, when U2 immediately follows U1, then, an intonational mark, that is, a comma, a semi-colon, dots, etc., must be obligatorily inserted between the two nominal elements. Therefore, expressions like *the writer Alice Walker* are grammatically and linguistically not possible from the point of view presented in this section.

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

The acceptance of interchangeability and omission as two main features of appositive structures means that apposition shows **distributional equivalence**, that is, both elements involved in the appositive relation may fulfil the same syntactic function. This implies that “identical distribution and identical syntactic function entail identical syntactic status” (Bitea (p. 458) *contra* Burton-Roberts 1975).

With respect to the syntactic relation established between the two members of an apposition, three options are taken into account:

- apposition as an instance of coordination,
- apposition as a form of subordination,
- apposition differing from both coordination and subordination.

Subordination is rejected from the beginning, since the relation that exists between the main element and the subordinate element is never between semantically and syntactically equivalent units, as seems to be the case in apposition. Therefore, we are left with two options, coordination or something different from it. As a first consideration “it would be blatantly wrong to say that apposition belongs either to subordination or to coordination” (Bitea p. 459). In that case, if one considers that “it is disjunctive coordination blending choice and redundancy that illuminatingly throws light on the syntactic status of apposition” (p. 459), then, as a result, the appositive member U2 “should be treated as a distinct part of the sentence” (459). Both units therefore do not fulfil the same syntactic functions: U1 is the ‘main element’ and functions as subject, object, etc., and U2 is always and unquestionably the appositive member. Therefore, if the elements of a loose appositive relation are different parts of a



## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

sentence they do not fulfil the same syntactic roles. It must be noted that Bitea's position about syntactic equivalence is not perfectly clear.

The nature of U2 determines the syntactic relation established between the two appositive elements. It could be that the second nominal is another part of the sentence in which case the appositive relationship is "a first-degree apposition". But, it could also be an appositive, in which case it is a "second-degree apposition". At the same time, these first-degree and second-degree appositions could be classified as close appositions or detached appositions. It must be pointed out here that, on the one hand, a close appositive relationship is characterized by the fact that U2 appears right after U1, but always separated by a comma or the like, as in *Writing was a slow and arduous process for Conrad, but he left a golden legacy – superb tales of the sea, and its most exotic ports of call*. On the other hand, a detached appositive structure is established between U1 and U2 when other types of linguistic material appear between the two appositives as in *He is obsessed with death, or rather, to borrow Poe's phrase, the terror of the soul which leads to death*, where the two members of the apposition are separated by a *to*-infinitive clause.

As seen, the main aim of Bitea's account of apposition is the metalingual function of this type of structure. Metalingual apposition was already discussed in relation to synonymy. Now we need to relate it to the encoder and the decoder of the message. Consider this:

(...) apposition (...) originates in the encoder's desire to make his/her utterance understood, to make certain points. In other words, apposition is

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

used to make the message clear to the decoder by **avoiding ambiguity** (Bitea p. 461, emphasis added).

Therefore, avoiding ambiguity is one of the targets of the metalingual function of apposition, together with the desire to express an afterthought, which also in some way or another may avoid ambiguity. But appositive structures are also used to perform a quite varied group of different functions. Thus, this type of structure may be equally used in order to introduce an abbreviation, as in *Many of the suggestions are akin to **the KISS system – Keep It Simple, Stupid***, as well as to introduce a definition of U1, as in *Poets, i.e. **persons with poetic talent**, stop writing good poetry when they stop reacting to the world they live in*; or even to abandon the original construction and start in mid-sentence, as in *These people who have just come in – did you notice them on the train the other night?*. All these targets share one and the same feature, “the desire to be understood”, which implies “the linguistic principle which “inhibits the shortening effect of the principle of ‘least effort’ by introducing redundancy at various levels”” (Bitea p. 462, quoting Lyons (1972: 90)). Apposition is considered a semantic and structural redundant means of being understood on the part of the encoder. However, this redundancy is not considered a linguistic excess. The omission of one of the elements would result in a semantically incomplete string, a fact which argues in favour of redundancy as the only possible way for an expression not being incomplete.

Bitea shares with Burton-Roberts (1975) the idea that, as a consequence of not being derived from relative-clauses (as close appositions do, in Burton-Roberts’s opinion) appositions can be made up by different parts of speech (italics are used to highlight the appositive relation): adjectives (*Your sister is **charming – awfully pretty and modest***), adverbs (*As a matter of fact, there are several very distinguished people*

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

*here, in Jerusalem, just at the present*), infinitival phrases (In order *to fix a grammar* (that is, *to revise the normal rules so that this grammar will generate the deviant utterances*) there are two methods which may be used), participial phrases (The body of a woman who was *murdered – strangled* actually – in a train), and pronouns (Something incalculable wrought for *them – for him and Kate*). In that way, the fact that the categorial status of the members within an appositive relation need not be identical is evidence of “the syntactic nature of the appositive” (p. 475), that is, the classification of appositive structures is also based in the type of members that make up the apposition.

In summary, Bitea contends that apposition is a relation between a main member and something else – the appositive. Between them, a semantic relationship exists where N2 extends the meaning of N1, in an attempt by the encoder to clarify his/her message. But, at the same time, this relationship is also a syntactic one, because the two members share distributional equivalence. This assertion is not very convincing because since the appositive is considered a distinct part of the sentence, it seems to be logical that it cannot develop the same role as the main member, that is, it does not fulfil the same syntactic role as N1. The final conclusion is that “apposition is an instance of semantic and syntactic equivalence *in praesentia*” (Bitea p. 476).

### 3.2.3 Pragmatics in appositions

Koktová (1985) proposes a “functional generative description” of the internal structure of appositive constructions. This framework consists of “a sequence of several levels which are connected by the asymmetrical relation of form and function” (Koktová 1985: 51). At the same time, a difference between the level of meaning and the level of

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

surface syntax is postulated; a fact which strengthens the generative character of this framework. Moreover, this analysis is also focused on the pragmatic functions of such a construction. This is a point of vital importance for this account in view of the fact that “apposition (...) should be considered as a **pragmatic phenomenon of natural language**” (Koktová 1985: 39-40, emphasis added).

Consider the following definition of apposition:

[A]pposition (...) should be viewed (...) as a message which deflects from the mainstream of communication and which should be kept distinct from the proper assertion (main information) of a sentence (p. 41).

This can be considered as the ‘surface structure’ definition of apposition because, from the point of view of the present account, this structure must be analysed taking into account its deep structure. Therefore, the deep word order of such structures indicates that apposition and coordination are similar. This similarity is the result of “a special device which should be combined, in the underlying representation of a sentence, with the dependency principle of the dependency tree to yield a special kind of underlying representation, namely complex dependency structure”. As a consequence, apposition and coordination behave equivalently, that is, their grammatical status is the same as that of a single word in the underlying structure. However, the surface and the deep structure do not coincide. The same deep word order results in two opposite surface structures. That is, whereas the information provided by the second element of an apposition is secondary, the second element of a coordination is part of the main information of the sentence with both of them contributing to the truth conditions of the

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

whole clause. Therefore, the actual use of language, that is, the surface structure, will lead Koktová to admit the differences between coordination and apposition.

Apposition is seen as **a message distinct from the assertion of the main sentence**. This definition evokes a logical property about **the truth conditions of a sentence**, that is, “apposition does not contribute to the truth conditions (intension) of the proper assertion of a sentence” (p. 41), (as in, for example, I do not know *Bill, Mary’s friend*). The appositive element strays off from the truth conditions of the main sentence, and thus, sentential negation does not affect it. Thus, in order “to describe the truth conditional semantics of sentences containing appositions, it is necessary to analyze the proper assertion and the secondary information of a sentence separately” (pp. 42-43).

Therefore, coordination and apposition are not so similar after all in view of the logical property of a **common referent** that characterizes appositions. The similitude between these two grammatical relations is revoked based on the fact that “in this property apposition differs from coordination, the referents of whose members [are] supposed to be disjoint” (p. 46). Consider the following examples:

(22) In Los Angeles and in its suburbs, many people own horses.

(23) *In Los Angeles, in its suburbs*, many people own horses.

Example (22) illustrates coordination, and it is contended that in both places in Los Angeles in general and also in its suburbs, people own horses. On the contrary, example (23) is an apposition, and in this specific case only a place is mentioned, the suburbs of Los Angeles, and both NPs make reference to the same place. To this, it must be added

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

that there only exists one type of apposition, contrary to coordination which has four different semantic types<sup>8</sup>. This is a consequence of “the relations between the referents of the appositive members [which] are indistinct” (p. 58), a feature that can only be avoided “cognitively (...), i.e. by means of a factual knowledge and in context and hence unable to provide a basis for a strict linguistic subcategorization of apposition” (p. 58). In the light of these linguistic features, differences between coordination and apposition accumulate: together with the fact that the information contributed by the apposition is secondary and the fact that these two different types of constructions do not share the feature of a common referent, we must add the fact that appositive structures only belong to one type of apposition, which is an argument against the view that apposition is a relation similar to coordination.

As regards the prototype, a construction can only be considered a prototypical appositions if it is made up by two apposed NPs (Koktová p. 52) separated always by a punctuation mark, where the second one of them is not an overtly attributive element, that is, a construction traditionally considered as the paradigmatic case, as in (24):

(24) *John, the gardener, is a very perfectionist man.*

With respect to the other types of appositive constructions, those structures that contain:

- i. two apposed NPs where the second nominal element is an indefinite NP, in which case it is an attribute (*Maggie, a waitress of the restaurant, is a special girl*);
- ii. apposed Prepositional Phrases (*The World Cup 2010 is celebrated in Africa, in South Africa*);
- Adjective Phrases, Adverbial Phrases, and Verbal Phrases can make up appositions

---

<sup>8</sup> The four different types of coordination that Koktová distinguishes are: (1) conjunctive coordination, (2) adversative coordination, (3) inclusive coordination, and (4) exclusive coordination.

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

(Mary wants *to cook, to prepare the meal*); apposition of clauses (When Alfred realized *that his car was not there, that somebody had stolen it*, he almost fainted); and apposition of two different syntactic categories, that is, of an Adverb Phrase and a Prepositional Phrase for instance (He finished his exam *late, out of time*) are also part of the group of appositions. In the same line as Burton-Roberts (1975) and Bitea (1977), Koktová postulates that appositive structures are not exclusive of noun phrases.

As could be seen throughout this sub-section, close appositions are not included within the appositive group. In fact, it is considered that Quirk *et al.* (1972) are wrong when they include instances like *The word 'if'* within the appositive group. Thus, the following structures are excluded from the appositive family:

- The set Det + N + N:

(25) *The actor Jude Law* presented his new film.

- Non-restrictive (appositive) relative clauses:

(26) *Their proposal, which they presented yesterday*, was well received.

- Chunks of complementation juxtaposed on the surface:

(27) *Norman Jones, who was at that time a student*, wrote several bestsellers.

In example (25) *Jude Law* is a restrictive adnominal adjunct, (compared to *Mississippi* in *The River Mississippi*). In the case of example (26), this structure is considered as a non-restrictive adnominal adjunct. And finally, example (27) is not included within the group of appositions owing to the fact that it is derived from an underlying non-restrictive clause.

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

With respect to appositive markers, considered traditionally<sup>9</sup> as identifying elements when classifying the different types of appositions, these elements do not carry grammatical meaning, that is, they do not “represent distinct appositive types” (p. 61). Moreover, these elements “should be treated, due to the indistinctness of their lexical semantics, as sentence adverbials”. In this way, appositive markers lose their grammatical implications in the elaboration of appositive structures.

Summing up, Koktová’s proposal offers a pragmatic analysis about apposition with generative overtones. Underlying structures lead the author to create a similarity between apposition and coordination. However, this theory seems difficult to uphold in view of the differences on the primary/secondary nature of information, truth conditions, and common referentiality between coordination and appositive structures. Only a hypothetical deep structure, where coordination and apposition are identical, supports this idea. But this is only possible from a generative framework. If actual language use is taken into account, then the linguistic form of the different speech acts is the material we must use in order to support a theory, and in this specific case, appositive structures do not argue in favour of a generative account where coordination and apposition are essentially the same.

### 3.2.4 Apposition as a semantic, pragmatic and syntactic relation

Meyer begins his appositive studies in the year 1987 with an article entitled “Apposition in English”. His main point of departure with respect to the notion of loose apposition is that, for a precise analysis of structures like *a famous linguist*, namely *Noam Chomsky*, a semantic, pragmatic and syntactic account is needed. We are going to see that Meyer’s

---

<sup>9</sup> See Sopher (1971), Quirk *et al.* (1972), Burton-Roberts (1975), and Meyer (1992) for arguments in favour of appositive markers as identifiers of appositive structures.



## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

(1987) analysis only makes reference to loose apposition, in principle. However, in the process of the study of apposition, he changes his mind and he also takes into account close appositions as part of the appositive group (Meyer 1989, 1992; see also section 3.3.5).

Following Matthews's (1981) work, Meyer (1987) is of the opinion that grammarians confront serious linguistic difficulties if they only take into account syntactic criteria when analysing apposition. But, in the same way, an exclusively pragmatic account does not solve the puzzle of apposition either in his view. Therefore, "apposition [should] be defined in terms of constraints that specify its semantic, pragmatic, and syntactic characteristics" (p. 102). Rejecting some, if not most, of the traditional criteria for apposition, Meyer proposes his own semantic, pragmatic, and syntactic constraints. The most defining semantic feature of apposition is that of co-referentiality, traditionally considered as the prime criterion for analysing this type of structure. However, abandoning somehow the grammatical tradition, co-referentiality is rejected as an essential criterion on the grounds that "some appositions are either questionably co-referential or not co-referential at all" (Meyer 1987: 103). Thus, co-referentiality is not the only semantic relation that may exist between the members of an apposition.

In particular, the idea that "(...) attributes behave more like appositions than reduced relative clauses" (p. 106) with respect to the relation established between the two members of an apposition is in tune with the co-referentiality option given that they can be reversed and left out and the resulting structure is perfectly acceptable. Thus, "[a]ttributes are therefore best analyzed as appositions; to include them within the class of appositions, units in appositions must be allowed to be either co-referential or

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

attributively related” (p. 108). Together with the attributive semantic relation, relations of hyponymy and synonymy may also hold between the two units of an apposition (see also Meyer 1991: 173; 1992: 57-72). Therefore, Meyer’s idea of including attribution, hyponymy, and synonymy relations between the appositive elements as indicators of this type of structure allows a much wider group of instances to be admitted under the label apposition. Moreover, “the main advantage of allowing U1 and U2 to be hyponyms or synonyms is that non-nominal constructions can be accounted for as appositions” (p. 109).

Meyer realises that if one is to be realistic and objective, this semantic account presents “one unfortunate consequence of the semantic constraint on apposition (...), [that is] it admits as appositions too many constructions (...)” (Meyer 1987: 111). While Quirk *et al.* (1972: 620) solve this inconvenience pointing out that co-referential units do not make up an apposition if they do not fulfil the same syntactic function, Meyer opts for a pragmatic constraint : “in order for two units to be considered appositional, U2 must supply new information about U1” (Meyer 1987: 112); see also Koktová 1985; or section 3.2.3).

But this pragmatic account also meets some objections. Example (28) illustrates these objections:

(28) It surprises me *that they don’t write* (Quirk *et al.* 1972: 633).

In example (28) the *that*-clause expands the information given by the pronoun *It*. But it cannot be considered an apposition in any way. Meyer’s solution is to make use of a

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

syntactic constraint: the “two units are not in apposition if they cannot at least potentially be juxtaposed” (1987: 116). Thus, example (28) is not an apposition because (29) is not possible:

(29) \*It, that they don't write, surprises me.

This leads him to conclude that “a wide range of constructions can be admitted as appositions if apposition is viewed as a semantic, pragmatic, and syntactic relation” (1987: 118). This conclusion results in a flood of examples which are considered as appositions only because they do not show clear features of coordination or subordination.

In sum, more and more instances were added to the notion of apposition given Meyer's semantic, pragmatic and syntactic classification. Even more, his (1987) conclusions lead him to contend, in his (1989) article, that instances like *my sister Cath* should be included under the appositive label as well, as we will see in section 3.3.5.

### 3.2.5 Redefining loose apposition

Acuña-Fariña's (1999) article “On apposition” is aimed at reducing and specifying the loose appositive group (see also Acuña-Fariña 2006a<sup>10</sup>). As seen in the previous section, Meyer (1987) analysis allows including under the LA label not only nominal appositive instances but also structures containing clauses in an appositive relation (see Burton-Roberts 1975).

---

<sup>10</sup> Acuña-Fariña's (2006) is not deeply pursued here given the fact that the analysis carried out in this article puts emphasis only on the relations established inside the constructional map developed for the different types of loose apposition only and this issue falls out of the scope of the present work.

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

The different analyses developed in order to puzzle out the structure of loose apposition had very different conclusions as a result. Thus, the main defining features of loose apposition are as varied as: functional equivalence (Hockett 1955; Sopher 1971; Burton-Roberts 1975), coreferentiality (Fries 1952; Francis 1958; Roberts 1962; Bogacki 1973; Taboada 1978), intonational boundaries (Norwood 1954; Hadlich 1973; Dupont 1985; Fuentes-Rodríguez 1989; Lago 1991), predicativity (Pignón 1961; Mathesius 1975) and the use of appositive markers (Sopher 1971; Burton-Roberts 1975). In Acuña-Fariña's (1999) opinion, these characteristics only prompted the inclusion of too many structures under the LA label, which caused the notion of apposition to "become virtually meaningless" (Acuña-Fariña 1999: 62).

Therefore, Acuña-Fariña's main purpose is to delimit the types of structures that can be considered appositions by means of the re-establishment of the features that a structure must show in order to be considered a loose apposition. In the same way, his (2006a) article is aimed to specify and clarify the "conceptual space" (Acuña-Fariña 2006: 1) of apposition, characterized by "[...] the notions of family resemblance, prototype, and construction" (p. 1). It must be pointed out here that both Acuña-Fariña's analyses only deal with loose appositions; the close appositive type is not included in either study.

In the structure traditionally considered paradigmatic apposition, as in, *Anne Chapman, the newly hired gynaecologist*, both NPs show features of definiteness and coreferentiality. It is traditionally considered that these features allow each of the NPs to perform the same function and also to carry the same meaning. This implies a grammatical relation of semantic and syntactic equivalence, which mainly characterizes loose apposition. However, when we try to apply these features to other constructions "[...] a host of problems arise" (p. 66). Thus, to begin with, Acuña-Fariña (1999) puts to

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

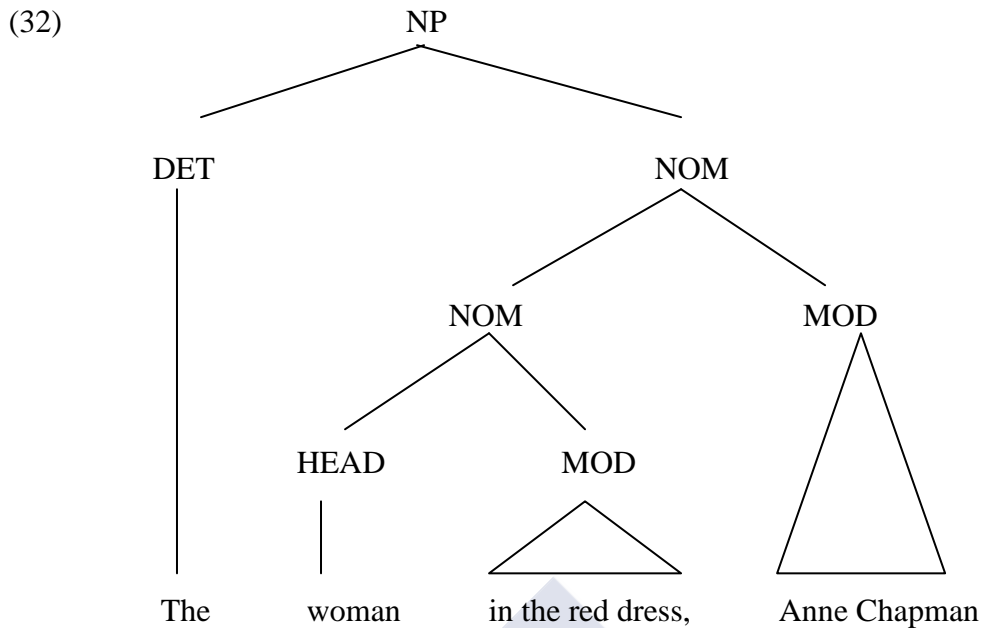
test the syntactic and semantic equivalence advocated for apposition. Take the following nominal examples:

(30) *Anne Chapman, a gynaecologist*, will soon do that job in the firm.

(31) *Anne Chapman, gynaecologist*, will soon do that job in the firm.

These examples contain two clearly juxtaposed NPs, as in the appositive paradigm. It is supposed that, as well as in *Anne Chapman, the newly hired gynaecologist*, both NPs also show semantic and syntactic equivalence. But this is not the case, “[...] without an article and with an indefinite article, the absolute functional and notional equivalence that we find in the paradigm is not present” (p. 66). This not sharing of the most representative feature of apposition implies that the paradigm is the unique example that shows semantic and syntactic equivalence, which implies that it is the only instance that can be supposedly called apposition. Given this mismatch of features, Acuña-Fariña contends that “[...] the best analysis for these [other] nominal types is one in terms of non-restrictive modification, rather than one in terms of apposition. Let us refer to the analysis I am proposing as the External Projection Theory [...]” (p. 67). The external projection is as in the following syntactic tree:

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition



This analysis seems to be supported by Quirk *et al.* (1985), who contend that it is the first NP only which shows agreement with the verb when introduced in a sentence. This would imply that only the first nominal is considered the subject of the sentence. For instance, in *Land, brains, wealth, technology – in other words everything we need – are/\*is plentiful in our country*, *are* agrees with the coordinated phrase, not with the apposed material. This analysis receives also support from the fact that “[...] not all definite NPs in U2 position may be said to equal the referential potential of the definite NP in U1 position” (p. 68). For instance, in *He introduced me to the young man, the heir to a fortune*, *the heir to a fortune* is not even a referential phrase but a descriptive one.

Now, if we consider non-nominal appositions as shown in (33) and (34),

(33) He *ran –absolutely raced-* up the hill.

(34) They *sent him to Coventry, refused to speak to him.*

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

it can be posited that the element in apposition –verbs in example (33) and sentences in example (34) - reveal syntactic equivalence as well as the paradigm (*He ran up the hill; He raced up the hill*). But the paradigm also shows semantic equivalence, a feature that does not seem to be among those of example (34) at least (*They sent him to Coventry; They refused to speak to him*). Therefore, Acuña-Fariña concludes that “[...] it would appear that the equative meaning that characterizes nominal instances of apposition is not preserved across the categorical spectrum [...], it turns out that only the juxtaposition of adverbials (*They met there, in London*) exhibits the kind of relation that hold between nouns in the paradigm” (p. 70).

As already mentioned, intonational boundaries are considered to be an essential feature of loose apposition. As such Acuña-Fariña uses this characteristic as an argument in favour of the similarity established between nominal and adverbial appositions (*They met there, in London*). He contents that “[...] the second pause is strongly obligatory in [(35) and (36)], but optional in [(37) and (38)]” (p. 71). Consider the following examples:

- (35) \**Anne Chapman, the newly hired gynaecologist* will soon do that job in the firm.
- (36) \**They met there, in London* on the eve of the final.
- (37) He *ran*, absolutely *raced up* the hill.
- (38) *They sent him to Coventry, refused to speak to him* when they found out about the harassment.

In examples (35) and (36), “[...] the U1s [are] unacceptably dislocated from the remainder of their respective sentences.” (p. 71). And “[w]ithout this second break, only

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

U2 relates to the predicator. The result is unacceptability” (p. 71). This unacceptability is justified because U1 is left in a dislocated position with respect to the rest of the sentence. This ungrammatical dislocation of U1 is also explained in terms of their respective local and sentence domains. When the two pauses are used, U2 is the one that is isolated from the rest of the sentence having, as a result, a grammatical construction. This implies that “[...] the intervening string (U2) is processed in the local domain of the first antecedent NP, (the subject of the sentence, *Anne Chapman*), instead of in the broader domain of the sentence [...]” (p. 73). On the contrary, in verbal and sentential appositions, which are not in need of a second intonational marker, “[t]he second predicator simply takes on the sentential role that had originally been intended for the first. It does not look backwards to that predicator, as in expansion of it. Instead, it looks forward in search of its complements and adjuncts. Its domain is sentential, not local” (p. 74).

It turns out that the use of intonational markers implies and explains more features of loose apposition. If the commas before and after U2 in a nominal apposition prevent it from developing a function with respect to the whole sentence, U1 and U2 “do not have the same function [...] [then] there cannot be apposition” (p. 75) given that functional equivalence is one of the main features of the appositive paradigm (Acuña-Fariña 2006: 13). On the contrary, in the verbal and sentential types both units, U1 and U2, would seem to be functionally equivalent. Acuña-Fariña (1999: 76) posits that in verbal and sentential apposition “[...] U1 and U2 do share the same function in the sentence.” He follows Burton-Roberts’s (1975: 410) account of apposition and his *Separate Constituent Analysis*, according to which the two units in an apposition do not make up a constituent as each relates separately to the rest of the sentence. However, instead of applying this analysis to what are considered canonical appositions, Acuña-



## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

Fariña applies it only to examples (37) and (38) above. This *Separate Constituent Analysis* is considered to “defin[e] a structure in which two constituents perform the same function without making up a superordinate constituent” (p. 77). In the light of this, Acuña-Fariña posits that “[...] if anything in grammar is to be called apposition, the label should be given to this construction-type only”, that is, to those instances illustrated by examples (37) and (38) (see also Acuña-Fariña 2006: 19-21).

The Separate Constituent Analysis is in tune with the results of the omission and interchangeability tests. The fact is that in a sentential apposition both units can be omitted and interchanged and the whole construction does not suffer from ungrammaticality. In that way, Acuña-Fariña points out that “[...] apposition is characterized by *true functional equivalence*, since its members *do* perform the same function when they appear together.” (p. 77, emphasis in the original). This view rejects the traditional idea of functional equivalence as applied to appositions. As a consequence, it is concluded that the paradigm must be analysed as “not being [an] apposition [...]” (p. 77).

All in all, in the light of the fact that apposition became a blurred notion, Acuña-Fariña (1999) considers that it needs to be redefined. The *Anne Chapman, the gynaecologist*, type is better described in terms of non-restrictive modification, given the lack of true functional equivalence, which is also supported by agreement facts. With respect to cases of non-nominal apposition, as in *They sent him to Coventry, refused to speak to him*, semantic equivalence is not found with the exception of the adverbial type as in, *there, in London*. In that respect, it was concluded that the obligatory intonational boundaries in nominal and adverbial appositions make them the same. In both U2 is isolated from the rest of the sentence and does not play a role in it.

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

At the same time, this supports the non-restrictive modification analysis for those instances that belong to the paradigm. On the contrary, given that verbal and sentential appositions do not show obligatory intonational markers, allowing both units to develop the same function with respect to the whole sentence, they are considered true appositions. Therefore, “[...] the members of an apposition are not dominated by a superordinate node ‘apposition’, but instead relate to all the other sentence constituents individually” (p. 79).

### 3.2.6 Conclusion

As a conclusion, it must be highlighted that the existence of loose appositive structures is rather entrenched in grammatical studies. There may be different points of view about their internal compositionality, their grammatical features or functional potential, but all grammarians accept loose appositions within the syntax of a language. On the contrary, close apposition is a much more open question, and not all linguists agree with the syntactic position that this type of construction has carved out in the grammatical map of constructions. The present work agrees with the fact that close and loose appositions show resemblances, but it also argues in favour of a deeper analysis which demonstrates that similarities are in fact relatively superficial. CA instances resemble other constructions like NPs, that is, both close appositions and NPs develop the same functional roles within a sentence. As we will see, even though their external appearance is very similar, their internal constituency differs. Thus, we are faced with a problem: same function, same appearance, almost same constituents, but different internal links (as BNPs also prove, see chapter 5). Language has no perfect design. Here I will try to show that grammatical constructions are not clear and sharp. At the same time, they show such grammatical interconnections among them which lead to a

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

situation where defining the barriers of this constructional overlap becomes a complex task. Thus, language must be seen as a huge system of communication characterized by its variability.

The previous sections offered a sketchy overview of the loose appositive structure. In view of both history and at least obvious superficial resemblances (Mathews 1981), this was necessary. From now on we will concentrate on CA, beginning with a historical account of the theories about it.

### **3.3 A whole century about apposition. Historical background**

#### **3.3.1 Introduction**

In the following sections the most authoritative works dealing with CA are discussed and analyzed in order to draw a map of the historical trajectory of this structure in linguistic studies. We will see how it has evolved in such a way that it has gone from being a double-headed structure to having only one head, with discrepancies as to which one of the two nominals is the head. A whole century of studies on this structure has left us a large number of different analyses.

#### **3.3.2 Close apposition as an endocentric structure**

Poutsma (1904), Jespersen (1924), and Curme (1947) are the most relevant of early work on apposition. Poutsma's *A Grammar of Late Modern English* includes appositions within the 'attributive adnominal adjuncts' section. The main conclusion of this account is that apposition is a type of subordination where the two nominal elements are equivalent, one being the head and the other the modifier. Throughout Jespersen's famous grammar, apposition is mentioned on some occasions, but there is

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

no special section devoted to the analysis of this construction. The existence of apposition is not denied, but it is never referred to as a grammatical construction; all instances that resemble adjuncts, predicatives, extrapositions, etc. and structures of the like, are considered as appositions. By the time Curme's *English Grammar* appeared, there was a division of opinions on whether apposition was a grammatical category or a grammatical relation. Curme does not offer a specific theory about this structure; apposition is the juxtaposition of two nominal constituents, one modifying the other. The novel and remarkable issue of Curme's analysis is that, contrary to the traditional idea, the two nominal elements develop two different roles within the whole sentence structure.

Thus, during the first half of the twentieth century the notion of apposition was present in most respected and consulted grammars, but none of them conferred a relevant place to apposition among their most discussed themes.

The notion of apposition had to wait until the year 1955 when Charles F. Hockett wrote an article dealing with its internal structure. Taking as a basis two previous analyses of apposition, those of Lee (1952) and Haugen (1953), this work was the first which offered a clear syntactic analysis. Let us start with Hockett's own points of departure.

Lee (1952) considers that apposition is, in general, "a purely mechanical term". However, when dealing with loose and close appositions particularly, they are considered to differ; and the main difference lies in the fact that N1 and N2 are equal in loose apposition, but different in close apposition. Therefore, on the one hand, "[i]n ordinary nonrestrictive appositions of the *Burns, the poet* type there is a suggestion of incidental afterthought. (...). In these collocations of substantives, A equals B, which

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

latter is incidentally mentioned” (p. 268). On the other hand, “[i]n locutions like *the poet Burns*, (...) we have a different situation. (...) the second element is restrictive and is necessary to limit, restrict, or define the meaning of the first” (p. 268). Therefore, loose and close appositions are different in nature, but both of them show a head-modifier structure.

Haugen (1953) rejects Lee’s proposal considering that N2 is the element that restricts N1, and that “his basis [Lee’s] for regarding *Burns* as a modifier of *the poet* is that *Burns* is specific, while *the poet* is general (...). This is true if one defines grammatical relations in terms of external reality; but if one defines them in terms of grammatical reality, the opposite is here seen to be obviously true” (p. 165). Thus, in order to support his own point of view and reject that of Lee, Haugen applies the ‘replacement by zero’ test, which supports the thesis that “[t]he head of the construction is not the first, but the second noun” (p. 166). As a consequence, the close appositive construction “is closely parallel to one in which adjectives modify following nouns (...)” (p. 167). As conclusion: “so-called ‘close apposition’ is a modifier-head construction” (p. 170).

The rejection of Haugen’s modifier-head analysis is the first remarkable point of Hockett’s theory, too (Hockett opts for a double-headed structure). But this rejection does not imply that differentiating between a double-headed structure and a construction with only one head and a modifier is an easy enterprise. As a matter of fact, when headedness is unclear, according to Hockett (pp. 100-101), we have an apposition:

We have found a rather simple rule of thumb to help us in making this distinction. Let the constitute (necessarily endocentric, of course) be *AB*. All the evidence may point to interpreting *A* as attribute and *B* as head, in which

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

case we do so. Or all the evidence may point to interpreting *A* as head and *B* as attribute. In some cases, however, there is cogent evidence for both of these attributive alternatives. When we find this to be the case, we speak of ‘apposition’.

Hockett goes on to further delimit the notion and proposes four requirements that a construction must meet if: i. the elements making up the construction must belong to the same major class; ii. the structure must be endocentric, so, iii. “there must be no more justification for taking the first IC as attribute to the second as head than for the reverse”, and finally, iv. both elements must make reference to the same entity.

In *Course in English Linguistics* (Hockett 1958), the idea of apposition as an endocentric structure is maintained. The novelty of this account rests on the fact that apposition is included under a different grammatical label, that of coordination; it is considered as a subtype of coordination. However, the original idea of an endocentric structure is not abandoned, that is, “in some instances it is clear that a construction is endocentric, and reasonable to suppose that it is attributive, but difficult to tell which IC is the head. (...). In these circumstances we speak of apposition, not of attribution: both ICs are heads, and both are also attributes” (pp. 185-186).

All in all, Hockett’s proposal was a radical innovation. Challenging the classic superficial analyses of previous authors and all their theories in the face of their semanticist arguments in favour of either one of the nominals, he postulates that the headedness of appositive structures is not to be found in only one of them, but is shared by both. Moreover, this theory applies to close and loose appositions equally (*contra* Lee 1952), that is, there are no distinctions between these two types of structures. His

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

thesis was heavily criticised years later when Burton-Roberts (1975) rejected endocentrism and pointed out that apposition in particular was not an endocentric structure (see section 3.3.3). It was not Burton-Roberts the only one who saw problems in Hockett's appositive account: Acuña-Fariña (1996: 79) states that "Hockett's conception of apposition as a double-headed construction [is] incompatible with all the types of close structures (...)." In fact, Hockett's thesis was not revived until the 21<sup>st</sup> century when Lekakou & Szendroi (2007) published an article which takes the firm line that appositive structures are a clear example of a doubly-endocentric syntactic organization.

### **3.3.3 The *Det + N + N* structure as a common NP. The close apposition label erased from the map**

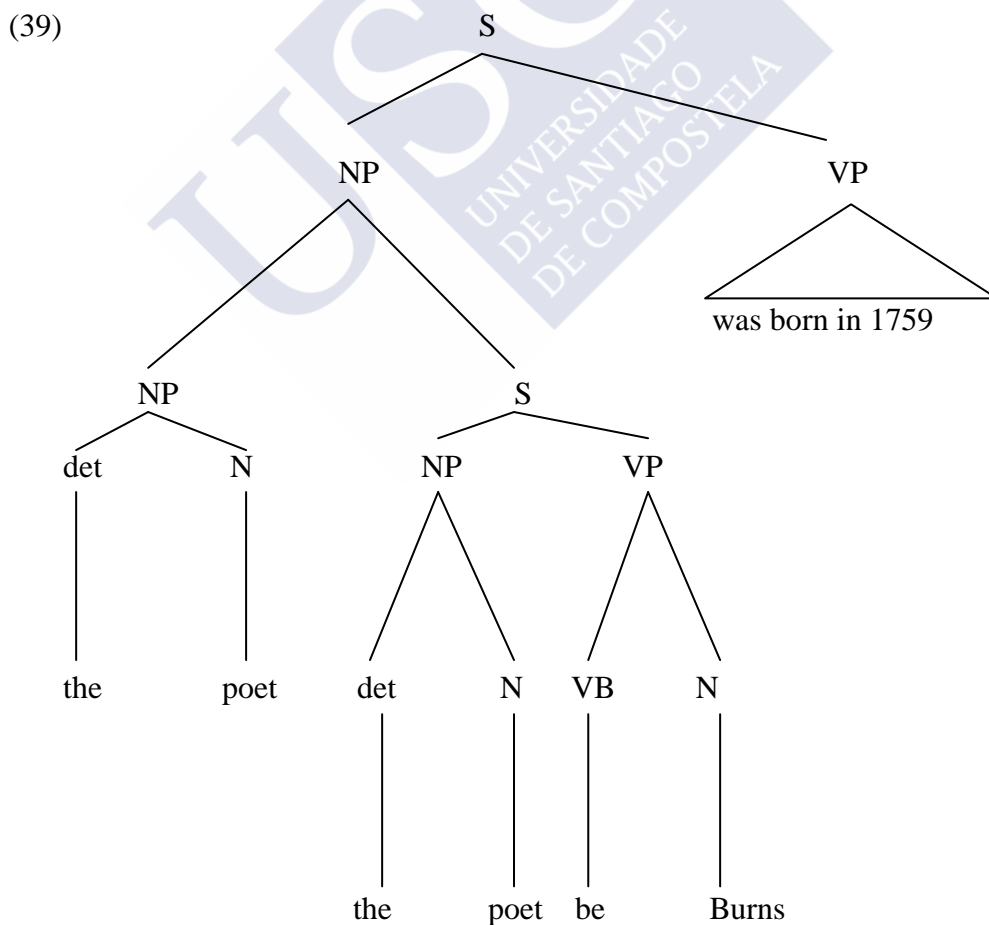
As noted, Burton-Roberts's analysis about close apposition rejects Hockett's theory completely. Maybe these disagreements have to do with the fact that they use two very different grammatical frameworks. Hockett's work belongs to the pre-generative era; it offers a structuralist account taking as a basis post-bloomfieldian ideas about clause structure. On the contrary, Burton-Roberts embraces a transformationalist analysis, in the generative tradition of the 70s.

Burton-Roberts's main target is endocentricity, rejected from the very beginning as one of the main features of close apposition ("appositions cannot be endocentric" (Burton-Roberts 1975: 393)). However, it cannot be denied that endocentricity is a pivotal feature of noun phrases. Thus, although appositions are not endocentric "(...) noun phrases containing nouns are, by definition, endocentric: and so-called restrictive apposition [close apposition] is a noun phrase containing nouns" (p. 393). This first

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

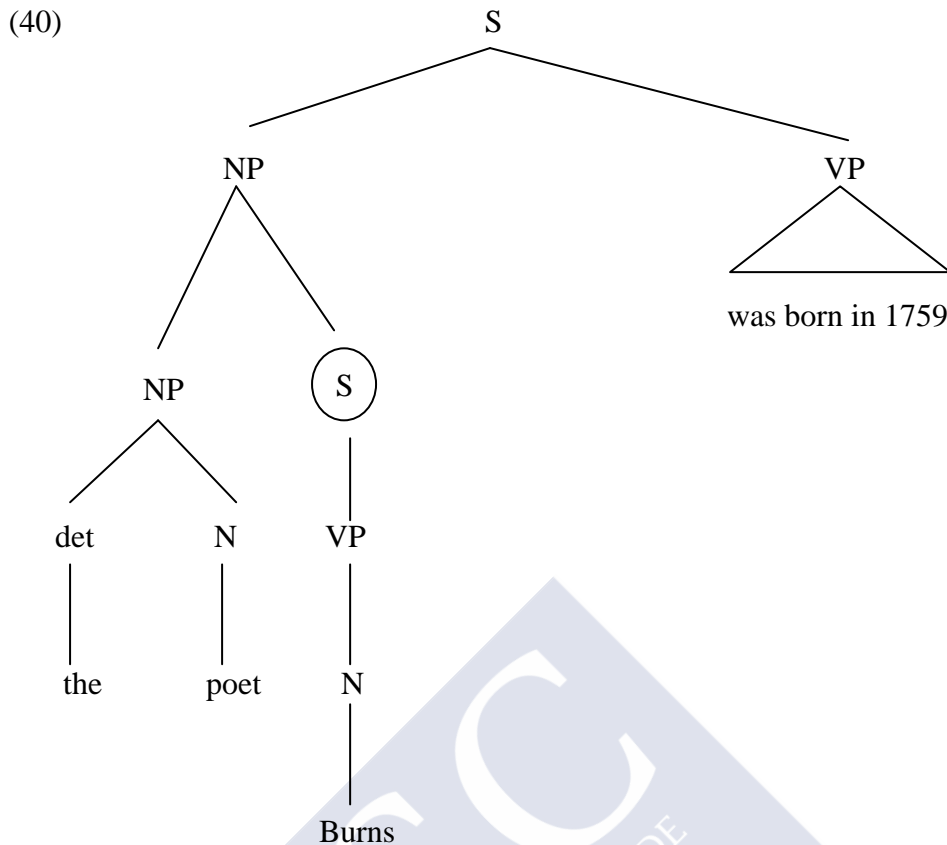
strategic step allows the rejection of the notion of close apposition, in favour of the idea that this type of structure exemplifies the NP category in every sense.

The extremely well-known instance *the poet Burns* is the point of departure of this analysis. To begin with, it is considered that this example violates all the conditions for being treated as an apposition in the light of the fact that “*Burns* is subordinate to the *poet*” (p. 395). In that way, if *Burns* is a subordinate element, it cannot fulfil the same function as *the poet*. Therefore, so-called close apposition cannot belong to the appositive paradigm because the nominal elements do not fulfil the same function. Consider examples (39) and (40) as an illustration of this first consideration:





## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition



On the face of these two syntactic trees, “it is quite clear that the two NPs do not have the same function: one is the subject of *was born in 1759* and the other is the complement of an embedded sentence” (p. 395). Moreover, the *the poet Burns* structure fails the criterion of coreferentiality, a cornerstone feature of apposition. Following Strawson (1952: 145), and his differentiation between the referring and the ascriptive role of NPs, the idea that “*the poet* and *Burns* cannot (...) be coreferential, since one or other of them is not a referend (...)” (p. 395) gains ground. As a consequence, “the relationship that exists between two nouns (...) must be one of attribute and head”. Thus, in order to set the basis of this account, *the poet Burns* is a modifier-head structure, which resembles the internal configuration of standard NPs.

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

Therefore, if the *the writer Alice Walker* type of structure is not a close apposition, what is it? At this point, a transformational analysis comes to the rescue. Example (41) is considered to be the underlying structure of the surface structure *the poet Burns*:

(41) Burns Burns is the poet.

“The underlying string in [(41)], then, would appear to be the most appropriate” (p. 398), since from it we derive that *Burns* is the head and *poet* the modifier. Therefore, Burton-Roberts’ modifier-head analysis of close appositions is supported by an underlying structure where the proper name is the subject of a subordinate sentence (*The Burns who is a poet*; see example (42)).

Definiteness is another point of discussion. The main idea is the distinction that exists between generic and indexical definite determiners which appear in the deep structure of a construction, and other kinds of determiners which derive from the deep structure. Concerning the structure of *the poet Burns*, its definite determiner is neither generic nor indexical, which implies that the article “is triggered by an **underlying specification** in the form of **relative clauses restrictively modifying the noun**” (p. 399, emphasis added). However, in the transformational process, example (42), *the poet* is never considered as forming an immediate constituent, because “at no stage of the derivation of *The poet Burns*, (...) is *poet* specified” (p. 400). In that way, “since it is *Burns* that is being modified, it is *Burns* that is being determined”. Therefore, the definite determiner is present because of the proper noun, and because it is modified. Were it not modified, the determiner node would not be filled (as proper nouns alone

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

need no determiners). To that effect, the deep structure and consequent derivation of *the poet Burns*, considered as an NP, are the following:

- (42) a. [det] Burns [det] Burns be poet →  
b. [det] Burns WH be poet (by relativisation, oblig.) →  
c. The Burns who is a poet →  
d. The Burns poet (by relative reduction, opt.) →  
e. The poet Burns (by attributive preposing, oblig.)

It is this derivation that leads to the conclusion that close appositions must be considered as a structure similar, if not identical, to that of premodified noun phrases. Thus, the close apposition *the writer Alice Walker* has the same structure as *the red car*, a common NP premodified by an adjective. In the case of close apposition, this structure is another instance of the NP construction but made up by a proper noun as head and a common noun as a modifier. Burton-Roberts' explanation includes within the NP model a not very orthodox instance. NPs made up by a proper noun (not alone) are perfectly common and unproblematic; NPs made up by a determiner and a common noun are the NP prototype. NPs made up by a bare noun offer no grammatical difficulties. But NPs where the definite article is used because of a proper noun premodified by a common noun are, at least, grammatically disconcerting. In that respect, even one of the simplest structures of language, as NPs could be considered, show internal and external variation.

As seen, definiteness is one of the main features of so-called close apposition. In this specific case, according to Burton-Roberts (see also Acuña-Fariña (2009); section

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

3.3.7), the use of the definite article depends on the presence of the premodified proper noun, and the fact that this proper noun is considered as the head of the whole appositive set implies that indefinite close appositions are unacceptable. Examples (43-46) are thus incorrect, precisely because they are indefinite (see Keizer (2007a) for a different opinion, section 3.3.6<sup>11</sup>):

- (43) \*A poet Burns
- (44) \*A friend John (or, \*A friend of yours)
- (45) \*An actor Laurence Olivier
- (46) \*A curve QCR

In order for them to be grammatically possible, they should contain “commas on either side of the name (...) [because] the name would no longer be functioning as head” (p. 401), as shown in examples (47-50):

- (47) A poet, Burns
- (48) A friend, John
- (49) An actor, Laurence Olivier
- (50) A curve, QCR

---

<sup>11</sup> However, not all linguists accept this assertion. In fact, Keizer (2007a: 32-34) argues in favour of indefinite close appositions. She uses examples taken from the ICE-GB Corpus, and three of them are the following ones: *a sappy elder brother Roberts*, *a sister Ethel*, and *a friend John who's in linguistics with me*, see section 3.3.8.

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

In this case, when the comma is introduced between the common noun and the proper noun, these structures are appositions proper, that is, loose or non-restrictive appositions. As a foregone conclusion:

It appears, then, that in dealing with NPs of the kind we have been discussing (...), we are dealing, not with a putative aspect of the grammar of apposition, but with the grammar of names when they are modified, within the grammar of premodified nouns in general (p. 401).

As briefly seen in section 3.2.2, reversibility is another traditional, prototypical characterising feature of true apposition, that is, loose apposition (Bitea 1977: 456). On this occasion it is also used in order to argue against the existence of close appositions. In the case of examples like *the writer Alice Walker* this condition does not apply because for *Alice Walker the writer* to be accepted, it must be contextualized. This type of structure is “only acceptable if [it is] provided with a context in which [it] can have contrastive function” (p. 402). In that way, for *Alice Walker the writer* to be used correctly, it must be inserted into a context where a structure like, for example, *the teacher Alice Walker* has been previously mentioned. Therefore, “the reversal, if that is what it is, is transformationally motivated, not arbitrary” (p. 402). Then, again, transformations are the eternal solution to grammatical analysis: the *Alice Walker the writer* structure is the result of another step added to those in (42), that is, a transformation which “shifts to post-head position the modifier (and any item that the modifier has triggered, that is, the article) when it precedes the name” (p. 402). At the same time, the main motivation of the application of this transformation is the desire to identify the referent of the proper noun uniquely. Therefore, the main purpose of the use of reversibility with so-called close appositions is “to bring into focus the contrastive

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

function the modification only potentially has in pre-head position, by moving it from that position, where its function is neither merely attributive nor sharply contrastive but somewhere in between the two” (pp. 402-403).

As a conclusion, Burton-Roberts’s account offers a clear generative analysis where derivations, underlying structures and surface structures are the guidelines of grammatical analysis. *The writer Alice Walker* is an instance of a common NP. Its surface structure is the result of a derivation process whose point of departure is an underlying NP modified by a relative clause, *the Alice Walker who is a writer*. Therefore, the distinctiveness of CA is drastically rejected. As a pure generative account, it is concluded that the internal constituency and constituent links within a Det + N (common) + N (proper) structure are the same as in a prototypical NP. As a consequence, this analysis offers some results where there is no room for exceptions. It could be said that all those structures which contain a determiner and nouns must be, obligatorily, common NPs. However, Burton-Roberts’ own words argue against his own point of view, in some sense, because *the writer Alice Walker* cannot be considered a common NP given that the definite article is used because of the proper noun and not for the common noun, as in prototypical NPs; and also the fact that the head is modified by a common noun surely matters. No matter how we look at these phenomena: they seem to resist a homogeneous account of their varied internal structures.

### 3.3.4 Close apposition, an undifferentiated construction

Matthews (1981) states that undifferentiation is the term that best characterizes the grammatical status of the general notion of apposition within the grammatical map of relations. In the face of this:

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

(...) apposition (...) may be characterised as [a] relationship of **juxtaposition**. This is the most primitive constructional relation, being undifferentiated with respect to any of the specific types [of coordination, complementation and modification]” (p. 223, emphasis in the original).

The main aim of Matthews’s analysis is to show that coordination and dependency – complementation and modification- influence the identification and subsequent characterization of apposition. As a consequence of this undifferentiated character, the appositive construction shows boundary problems with coordinative and dependency relationships. On the one hand, one may dismiss a dependency relation, but the problem does not cease because the construction could be considered either an apposition or a coordinative structure. On the other hand, if coordination is rejected, the dilemma consists in differentiating between apposition and complementation, or apposition and modification.

In order to set the criteria for apposition, consider the following different types of appositive structures:

- (51) your brother, the poet
- (52) King George VI
- (53) the brother who used to live in London
- (54) the fact that he did it
- (55) his father, a car salesman

As commonly and traditionally postulated, there is a paradigmatic case, example (51), and four related types of apposition (52-55). As in any analysis of apposition, the loose appositive construction is considered to illustrate the notion of apposition to perfection, and that the rest of the instances resemble the prototype in some way or another. In

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

consideration of the variations between the prototype and the rest of the types, “(...) the term ‘apposition’ has been used of a variety of constructions, which are not grouped together by any single criterion (...)” (p. 223).

One of the tests that Matthews uses in order to identify and classify appositive structures is that of **co-reference**. Following this criterion, “[i]n general, two noun phrases would not stand in apposition unless their referents were to be understood as identical” (p. 225). When analyzing possible cases of apposition, as seen, coordination is always an option for Matthews and dealing with co-reference its influence on the analysis is almost natural. In the same line, in *your brother, the poet* the NPs are co-referential, even though if the nominal elements are linked by a coordinative element, they cease to be co-referential, *your brother or the poet*, and the apposition becomes coordination. However, in cases like *Sir Winston, or Mr Churchill...*, where a coordinative element is between the two NPs, the fact that NP2 is co-referential with NP1 implies that this case “(...) would be seen as appositional, even though, (...), the same conjunction is classed as coordinative” (p. 225). It must be pointed out here that the evidence that Matthews uses shows some inconsistencies. Given that *your brother the poet* and *your brother, the poet* are considered to be two different constructions, belonging to different grammatical classes, in the case of *your brother or the poet* and *Sir Winston, or Churchill*, the comma might imply some nuances which make Matthews’s analysis difficult to maintain.

**Reversibility** is, for Matthews, the other useful indicator of apposition. Instances like (52) illustrate this criterion. *King George VI, Mount Everest* and *Mr Churchill* are included under the label of apposition, even though it is clear that these instances “(...) clearly differ[...] from the paradigm” (p. 227). And precisely, it is the



## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

reversibility option that leads to this conclusion given that the elements in *Mount Everest* cannot be reversed: \**Everest Mount*. Moreover, with respect to the paradigm, these instances cannot be separated either. It is possible to say *your brother came, the poet*, but instead it is completely ungrammatical to use *Mr. spoke next, Churchill*.

The idiosyncratic nature of *King George VI* is also an important factor, in the sense that NP1 shows restrictions of use. One cannot say \**Sovereign George*, or \**Mountain Everest*. Consequently, the traditional test of **omission** is a helpful criterion of apposition owing to the fact that “(...) in these examples only the first element can be dropped” (p. 228). One can say *Churchill spoke* but not \**Mr. spoke*, contrary to the paradigm (*your brother, the poet*) where both elements can be omitted: *your brother spoke* or *the poet spoke*.

Then, as a first consideration, the previous tests and analyses demonstrate that “[a]pposition (...) lies on a gradation between attribution and coordination (...)” (p. 228). As a consequence of this undetermined character, grammatical relations like the previous ones “(...) are appositional precisely in that they cannot be convincingly assigned to either of the fully differentiated types” (p. 229). This is not too unlike Hockett’s (1955) account (section 3.3.2).

Besides coordination, dependency relations are also considered to exert some type of influence on the notion of apposition. These are illustrated by examples (53), *the brother who used to live in London*, a modifying relation; and (54) *the fact that he did it*, an instance of complementation. The non-restrictive relative clause in *his brother, who used to live in London* resembles a second NP as in *his brother, an old friend of mine* (example (55)). This possible similarity would imply the existence of a structural

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

parallelism between modification and an appositive relation. In fact, some scholars postulate the term ‘appositive relative clauses’ with respect to this type of structures. Then, if these instances are appositions, they must fulfill Matthews’s criteria for apposition – co-reference, reversibility and omission –. In the case of a restrictive relative clause, *his brother who used to live in London*, if it resembles apposition to perfection, both members could be omitted, but in fact only the relative clause offers this possibility: *I met his brother* vs. *\*I met who used to live in London*. Reversibility is not an option either: *\*I met who used to live in London, his brother*. Therefore, restrictive relative clauses side more with an attributive relation than with an appositive one. With non-restrictive relative clauses (*his brother, who used to live in London*) the co-reference criterion is not fulfilled either. Then, after due consideration, the first NP is a referring expression, but the clause is of a different nature. As a consequence, “[t]his suggests a juxtapositional analysis, in which [the NP] and [the clause] do not form a syntagm” (p. 230). Then, modification cases like *his brother who used to live in London* cannot be considered cases of apposition. Apposition and modification resemble each other to such an extent that some instances may question the grammatical barriers among the different types of syntactic relations.

Another type of dependency relation is complementation. Opinions are divided with respect to examples like *the fact that he did it*. Some linguists consider that this is a case similar to paradigmatic apposition (Matthews 1981: 231 ff.), and others contend that the clause is a complement of the NP (Huddleston 1971: 106 ff., 1984: 263-4; Brown & Miller 1982: 134 ff.; Burton-Roberts 1986: 176-8; Radford 1988: 193-4, 218-9). In fact, there are arguments in favor of both analyses. A complementation relation is the result of the valency of the previous verb or noun. In the specific case of nouns,

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

“[t]he case for complementation would be strengthened if there were nouns with which the clause was strongly obligatory. But in general it is not so: *The fact is indisputable (...)*” (p. 232). However, there are nouns which are nominalizations of verbs, verbs which do require a complement clause, in which case the noun would also require a complement. However, “(...) no latent element need be posited” (p. 232) in such a nominalization because the phrase includes a definite article (*I heard the announcement; the realization surprised me*). The use of *the* implies that the referent of the noun is known and then it does not need further specifications.

As far as the appositive relation is concerned, this may only be postulated if there is an intonational boundary between the NP and the clause. In the case that there was no intonational boundary, the noun does not need the complement clause either. However, in actual use, certain types of nouns do allow a complement clause with or without intonational detachment, as in the case of *news* (*the news that Bill is leaving*), and *feeling* (*the feeling that it would not happen*). Only in these specific cases, “(...) the peculiarity of NEWS, FEELING and the like is not that they can take a complement, but merely that they allow close apposition (in Bloomfield’s sense<sup>12</sup>) as well as the looser form” (p. 232, emphasis on the original). Therefore, in this specific case we might deal with a type of close apposition, even in the presence of subcategorization.

As a consequence, the structure *the fact that he did it* could be a complementation relation if it is considered as “(...) a single referring expression, whose construction would be incomplete if *that he did it* were deleted (...)” (p. 232). Even though it could also be considered an apposition if *the fact* is “(...) a referring expression (...), with *that he did it* [as] a subsidiary aid to identification (...)” (p. 232). Then, again, the barriers between complementation and apposition are blurred.

---

<sup>12</sup> In Bloomfield’s sense two nominal elements are in close apposition when there is no boundary element between them.

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

The last of the grammatical relations that presents problems of indeterminacy with apposition is parataxis. Consider the following examples taken from Matthews (1981: 233):

- (56) I met [his father], [a car salesman]
- (57) [he is a car salesman], [isn't he?]
- (58) [a car salesman], [isn't he?]
- (59) I met [his father] – [a car salesman], [isn't he?]
- (60) [I met his father] [a car salesman, isn't he?]
- (61) [I met his father – a car salesman] [isn't he?]

Example (56) includes two apposed NPs. In example (57) the tag question is syntactically related to the previous sentence; as well as in the incomplete sentence in (58). If in example (59) *a car salesman* and *isn't he?* form an incomplete sentence, the result is a paratactic structure as in example (60), but it could be that only the tag question is the paratactic element, as in example (61), and the noun phrases two appositive elements. Therefore, these examples strengthen the undifferentiated character of the relation of apposition with respect to other syntactic relations.

We may conclude this section with this quotation:

There is a tradition in linguistics which requires that terms should be defined with respect to our data, with necessary and sufficient conditions for their use. Apposition is a striking instance of a category that cannot be elucidated in that way.

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

Instead we have a paradigm use, and other uses that are linked to it by various forms of resemblance. Where the resemblances end is naturally indeterminate (p. 236).

It could be considered that Matthews's study of apposition offers the first grammatical network of similarities and differences between different syntactic relations. However, the study of apposition could be improved if, apart from the internal links, one takes into account the possible external similarities between appositions and a different category. And if there is a category which influences CA par excellence, that is the NP category. The NP influence on appositions in general, and close appositions in particular, provokes a categorial merge between NPs and close appositions. The study of this merge would clear up many of the internal, and also external, characteristics of the CA construction, as we will see in chapter 4.

### 3.3.5 Gradient apposition

Meyer's main idea about appositive structures is that they are gradable units and that syntax alone is not enough to explain the grammatical properties of this type of structure (see also Meyer 1991, 1992, and section 3.2.4). In that line:

Appositions can be only accounted for formally if apposition is viewed as a semantic, pragmatic, and syntactic relation (1987: 101).

Meyer (1987) begins to toy with the idea of the gradable character of apposition. Dissatisfied with the traditional account, where only intonationally demarcated NPs are considered true instances of apposition (62), examples like (63) (an example of loose apposition in any case, but which contains two clauses instead of two NPs) are also considered appositional:

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

(62) *A famous linguist, namely Noam Chomsky, will speak tomorrow night.*

(63) *You should rewrite the paper. That is to say, you should organize it better and improve its style.*

Gradience is finally fully elaborated in his 1992 monograph, where his earlier intuitions on prototypical and peripheral appositions are extended:

(...) apposition is considered an undifferentiated, or gradable, relation, we can distinguish those constructions that are most appositional –central appositions- from those that are (in varying degrees) less appositional – peripheral appositions (Meyer 1992: 41).

With respect to the traditional debate about whether close apposition exists or not, Meyer (1989) takes a stand in favour of the existence of CA, and posits that “restrictive apposition is (...) best viewed as a category whose forms are on a gradient between full apposition and partial apposition”<sup>13</sup> (p. 147). A first general consideration about CAs is that traditional analyses of close apposition failed because of the “undifferentiated” (Mathews 1981: 224; see section 3.3.4) treatment that grammarians have given to appositive structures in general. The problem lies in the comparison made between apposition and modification and complementation; a problem which may be solved if these types of structures are treated on their own, as independent and differentiated linguistic phenomena: if loose apposition showed grammatical gradience, close apposition is a much better example of internal and external grammatical variation. Thus, there exist “various forms” of close apposition, seven types in particular

---

<sup>13</sup> These two notions are taken by Meyer from Quirk *et al.* (1985).

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

– even though Meyer does not take into account the *the writer Alice Walker* construction with an indefinite article (*a guy Mark who is my friend*), which is a structure quite different from the one which contains a possessive – of which Type 1 is the most common:

Type 1: NP (Det. + common noun) + NP (proper noun)

My sister Cath

Type 2: NP + *that*-clause

The idea that John was unfaithful

Type 3: NP + *to*-infinitive

Their obsession to win the race

Type 4: NP + *of*-NP

The capital of Germany

Type 5: NP + *like* + NP

A dog like Boss

Type 6: NP (proper noun) + NP (Det. + common noun)

Alice Walker the writer

Type 7: NP + *whether*

The question whether you should marry or not

Gradience is certainly obvious when analysing the semantic behaviour of these structures. It is clear that the second nominal element does not develop the same semantic functions in all of these appositions. Using Quirk *et al.*'s categories, this semantic variability includes examples of “appellation, identification, exemplification, and designation” (Meyer 1989: 155-158). And, at the same time, “those within the class

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

of appellation are most appositional [*his brother Joe*] and those within the class of exemplification least appositional [*a person like Mary*]" (Meyer 1989: 158). Despite all this great variability, there is a constant, permanent and invariable feature which characterizes close appositions to a large extent: this is the nominal character of both elements within the close appositive construction (Meyer 1992: 10, 21-24). Thus, just as the most obvious feature of loose apposition is that it is always demarcated by intonation or punctuation marks, in the case of close appositions, the nominal make up defines the construction a great deal. In fact, "because apposition is a relation in which at least one of the units is usually a noun phrase (...), it is not surprising that nearly 88 per cent of the appositions in the corpora had functions associated with noun phrases: subject (...), direct object (...), and object of prepositions (...)" (Meyer 1992: 34-35). Therefore, for an appositive construction to be included under the label close apposition it must contain an NP almost obligatorily (as already mentioned, exceptions are possible, such as *here in Spain*).

With respect to the syntactic behaviour of N2 in these seven types, Meyer (1989: 151) contends that:

(...) it is wrong to assume (...) that each of these forms is equally appositional. While all forms contain appositions whose second units restrict the reference of the first units, some forms are **semantically and syntactically more appositional than other forms** (emphasis added).

The gradience of apposition in general does not affect its internal syntactic structure, that is, N1 is considered as the main element of the structure and N2 the expanding and restricting element (see also Meyer 1992: 73-83). Moreover, when comparing appositions with restrictive and non-restrictive clauses it turns out that:



## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

(...) appositions (...) parallel the behavior of restrictive and nonrestrictive relative clauses quite closely: like the head noun of a relative clause, the first unit of an apposition determined whether the apposition was restrictive or nonrestrictive (Meyer 1989: 151).

In the face of this, the first noun is the element which determines the syntactic function of N2. However, this fact does not imply that N1 is the head in all appositive structures. Meyer (1989: 151) clarifies in a footnote that he is “not suggesting that a head-modifier relationship exists between units in apposition” .

On the same grounds, close appositions may be fully (coordinate) or partially (subordinate) appositional. The criteria for this distribution depend on the obligatoriness of the two nominal elements. Therefore, coordinate appositions such as *the writer Alice Walker* or *my sister Cath* are “**fully appositional or double-headed**”, and that subordinate appositions, as in *a dog like Boss*, are “**partially appositional** and indeterminate in terms of their constituent structure” (1989: 159, emphasis added) (see also Meyer 1992: 41-42).

As a conclusion, Meyer’s account centers on the semantic variability of apposition in general and close appositions in particular. However, gradience and variability with respect to its syntactic structure are not so present in his analysis. First of all, the second nominal element is always in charge of expanding the meaning of N1, a fact which implies the centrality of the first nominal element. This fact indicates that N1 is the syntactic head within an appositive structure. But, in consideration of this reading, Meyer clearly denies that his analysis entails that appositive structures are Head + Modifier constructions. In the second place, his distinction between full and

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

partial appositions does not clarify the rejection of a Head + Modifier analysis either, and in fact the subordinate type (partial apposition) with only one obligatory element is an indicator that N1 is the head, because in a structure like *a dog like Boss*, *like Boss* can never be the head. The general impression is that Meyer seems not to want to say that CA is simply a special case of modification inside the habitual NP mold. But in fact his own arguments and examples lead to that conclusion.

### 3.3.6 Determiners and the CA analysis

Keizer's (2007a, b) study of close apposition takes as a linguistic basis the framework developed by Van Valin and LaPolla (1997). Authors like Halliday (1985), going through Fillmore (1988) and Croft (2001), Hengeveld & Mackenzie (2008) have adapted this framework to their studies and accepted its main assumption, that is, that language is a means of communication and as such, utterances are influenced by the use that speakers make of them. Therefore, Keizer's analysis is based on the fact that linguistic expressions are the product of general human cognitive processes such as conceptualization, reasoning, and storage and retrieval of knowledge.

After having analyzed all the different proposals about headedness in CA, Keizer rejects the modifier-head analysis defended by Haugen (1953) on the grounds that the proposed "replacement-by-zero test to determine headedness within close appositions fails to prove his point (...)" (pp. 30-31), that is, that NP1 does not have the same referential power as NP2, considered for this reason the head of the apposition. However, Keizer's conclusion is that NP2 (the proper noun) is not enough to identify the referent of the whole NP as the whole apposition does. The double-headed analysis (Hockett (1955); see section 3.3.2) is not very convincing either, and it loses credibility

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

because “there is, (...), something distinctly odd about two NPs being mutually attributive; moreover, Hockett does not actually specify any evidence to support this claim” (p. 31). Burton-Roberts’s (1975) single NP analysis of close apposition (see section 3.3.3) is also questioned for its lack of syntactic evidence in favour of his theory. Finally, Keizer leaves no room for doubt that she rejects a modifier-head analysis of CAs based on the view that the proper noun is the one in charge of imposing restrictions on the other elements of the construction. The fact that the proper noun is the head explains why close appositions have to be always definite, as proper nouns make reference to very specific referents; this assertion leads her to heavily criticize Acuña-Fariña’s (1996) work. The obligatory definite character of CAs is one of the main reasons of the rejection of this analysis. She takes a strong line on arguing for the existence of appositions such as *a friend John who’s in linguistics*, or *this bloke Mark*. Keizer sides with those who view these structures as close appositions, adducing that the indefinite feature “does not seem sufficient ground for regarding them as a different category of constructions” (p. 29). This type of construction would be used when the proper noun “cannot be assumed to refer uniquely, in which case the speaker may wish to add a modifier to enable the hearer to identify the intended referent. (...) If, on the other hand, the additional information cannot be assumed to guide the hearer, (...) the indefinite article is used (...)” (p. 33).

With respect to reference and semantic omissibility, Keizer is of the opinion that neither those who argue in favour of the two parts referring to one and the same entity (Haugen 1953; Hockett 1955; Quirk *et al.* 1972, 1985) nor those who propose that close appositions do not contain two referential parts (because of the logical impossibility of two coreferential constituents to make up a higher constituent); (cfr. Burton-Roberts 1975), are on the right track. Burton-Roberts (1975) points out that the use of a

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

premodified NP1, considered as a more referential structure, turns the whole appositive construction even more impossible. Along the same lines, Acuña-Fariña (1996) contends that constructions like *\*the poet of the decade* is not possible precisely because if NP1 is heavily modified then it becomes referentially ‘saturated’. Placed alongside an equally ‘saturated’ referential phrase, the result is not a synthesis, but a mere repetition. Only a loose apposition (that is, *the writer, Alice Walker*) would salvage these ungrammatical strings, as in this kind of structure the scope of *the* does not reach the two nouns, but only the first common noun. However, Keizer does not accept this point of view because, based on a corpus, examples like *David’s twin sister Sally* (Keizer 2007a: 35) are perfectly possible. Thus, NP1 modification does “not tell us anything about the scope of the definite article” (p. 36). In sum: “once it is assumed that close appositions do not consist of two coreferential elements, the whole idea of semantic omissibility – the most generally applied test – becomes irrelevant” (p. 37).

With respect to the order of the elements, their reversibility and omissibility, Keizer points out that after the omission of one of the two elements the resulting structure is syntactically and grammatically accepted, but “this does not mean that they must have the same internal structure or discourse function” (pp. 37-38). In the same line, regarding reversibility, it must be taken into account that “reversing the order of the two elements of a close apposition does not always yield a syntactically acceptable construction (...)”. Therefore, from an actual use of language, the reversibility and omission tests are inadequate for classifying double nominal structures like close appositions.

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

Keizer arrives at the general conclusion that close appositions are two nominal elements –a count noun and a proper noun- with no linking element between them, which form one intonation unit. Between them, a relation of modification is established and neither of the two elements is referential: only the whole appositive construction can make reference. The determiner is given great relevance, having as a consequence that all the different types of close appositions have the same structure but different analyses, that is, *the writer Alice Walker* is a head-modifier structure with a determiner having scope over the two nouns, but in the case of *my sister Cath*, even though it is also considered a head-modifier structure, the possessive pronoun is not considered a determiner but a modifier or specifier having scope only over the first noun (see section 4.3.1). In fact, Keizer (p. 46) clearly states that “it is important to differentiate between the features of definiteness and possessiveness”. Thus, Keizer leaves us with the conclusion that the internal syntactic structure of a double nominal structure, as CAs happen to be, is easily solved analysing the relation established between the determiner and the nouns. Of course, the determiner has a very important role to play in this construction, but once you deal with nominal phrases containing common nouns and proper nouns, surely there must be a more ‘nouny’ solution to this grammatical puzzle.

### 3.3.7 Close appositions from a Construction Grammar approach

Having as predecessor his already mentioned (1996) work, Acuña-Fariña (2009) offers a quite different vision about the internal and external structure of close appositions. Taking as a basis the Constructional Grammar framework (Goldberg 1995, 2006), this work puts forward that:

[A] close look at this family of constructions reveals a rich ecological niche where each construction relates to the other constructions forming a dense

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

network of taxonomic and inheritance ties (Goldberg 1995), while each preserves sufficient formal specificity and idiosyncrasy to merit its own space in the close apposition network (Acuña-Fariña 2009: 456).

A good point of departure to understand this new analysis of CAs is to bear in mind expressions like “inchoate noun phrases” and “lack of strong functional pressure” which will define the notion of close apposition in general, as well as the fact that “so-called close appositions can only be seen as instances of more or less ordinary NP structure” (p. 458). A close inspection of the CA construction reveals that it shows general aspects of the NP construction, even though, at the same time, it must be pointed out that some of its aspects do not reflect typical NPs.

From the very beginning, the notion of close apposition is compared with that of loose apposition. Such a comparison reveals that *the poet Burns* “does not code predications of the same calibre as those in LA”, “so-called appositive markers (...) are also barred from the [CA] construction”, CAs cannot appear in series, and “the separate illocutionary force of the two nominals (...) cannot even be tested in close types” (p. 459). Moreover, the function of the determiner is different if it is included in a CA or a LA. While in *the poet, Burns* structure, the determiner is used anaphorically, and it “points backwards in discourse in search of specificity for its reference” (p. 460); in the close counterpart, *the poet Burns*, definiteness is not achieved via anaphora but it “is the construction as a whole that builds reference *ex novo*” (p. 460).

Following the same line of his (1996) work, Acuña-Fariña reiterates the proper noun headedness position given that the proper noun “imposes conditions on the whole construction” (p. 462). In the face of this position, whenever there is a modification inside the close appositive group it must match the proper noun, U2, given that U1 is

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

incapable of elaboration. It is possible to say *the great painter Picasso* in the light of the fact that *the great Picasso* is perfectly correct. On the contrary, *the short painter Picasso* sounds odd because *the short Picasso* sounds odd too. In consideration of modified indefinite close appositions, which Keizer (2007a) argues for, it is considered and accepted that instances like *an embarrassed Sir Patrick Mayhew* are perfectly possible, even though they simply confirm that proper nouns can be modified by a restrictive group of modifiers, a fact “independent of the grammar of CA” (p. 465). However, even though the modification of the proper noun is not exclusive of the CA construction, the fact that the presence of an indefinite article does not alter its internal structure, which “suggests that the construction as a whole is rather fixed” (p. 465), is a feature exclusive of the grammar of CA. On the same grounds, it is exclusive of the grammar of close apposition that when elaboration of the first noun is possible, it allows instances like *the poet of the decade Burns*. This type of instances become even more real when compared with cases like *the most influential writer on the English constitution Walter Bagehot*, which “are either extremely sporadic or deviant in the use of punctuation or tonicity” (p. 465) contrary to Keizer.

Acuña-Fariña defines close appositions as “inchoate noun phrases”. Given the grammatical evidence in favour of different analysis, this label is considered the most adequate for this type of construction. Considering headedness analyses: on the one hand, U2, the proper noun, could be the head as a consequence of the selection restrictions that it imposes on the whole structure; and also the constrained character of the elaboration potential of the common noun, U1, which is in favour of U2 as the head, as well as the secondary-primary stress pattern of the construction. On the other hand, U1 is pointed out as head of the structure because of pluralisation (which affects the

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

common noun) and agreement, which in tune with pluralisation effects, also indicates that the common noun is the one which links with the verb in a clause. Likewise, the order of the parts shows that if in *Burns the poet* the proper noun is the theme, in its counterpart *the poet Burns*, it is reasonable to signal the common noun as the theme too; in the same way inheritance and taxonomic ties imply that “if we view the entire collection of CAs as constituting a dynamic network organized around a number of inheritance and taxonomic hierarchies (a network of associations), then attractors in the vicinity of this construction which have a rather clearer [head+ modifier] constituency would be expected to exert (via partial, shared co-activation) some influence on the constituency of the construction under analysis here” (p. 469). Thus, examples like *my friend Burns* (\**My Burns who is a friend*) and *this bloke Steve* (\**This Steve who is a bloke*) show a clear N1 headedness. Finally, there is evidence which speaks in favour of the two nouns as head. Pronominalization indicates that only the entire structure can be pronominalized, and distribution shows that *the poet Burns* can be integrated in the *the excellent Burns* paradigm as well as in the *the poet over there* one (for a more extended explanation of this entire evidence see section 4.1). All this varied evidence leads to the conclusion that “paradigmatic CAs like *the poet Burns* have a [*the* + [X Y]] structure in which the constituency of the internal [XY] node is left unresolved” (p. 470). Therefore, close appositions show an NP structure whose nominal component shows such syntactic indeterminacy that cannot be solved. This indeterminacy is seen as the consequence of a “lack of strong functional pressure” motivated by the social referential character of the construction, that is, “(...) the construction has as its job the activation of a social referent, and in the social world that we inhabit this is usually done either by name or profession” (p. 470). Its hybrid constituency also influences this indeterminacy as well as the fact that “the construction is easily identifiable as such ‘from the top’” (p. 470).



## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

The hybrid character of the CA construction is a good point in favour of a constructionist approach to this type of construction. The advantage of this model with respect to others is that “in a representational map of the constituent features of a given construction, the features which are suggestive of a certain analysis do actually co-exist with those suggestive of another, different analysis” (p. 471). In the face of this, hybridism is the most adequate explanation when analysing CAs. Close appositions are considered to be the result of the fusion of a [*the* + Modifier + Proper noun] construction (*the famous Burns*) and a [*the* + Head Noun + Modifier] construction (*the poet of the revolution*). As a result “a third construction arises which is different from these two” (p. 471), that is, a close apposition. The resulting construction “has unique features of its own, and these *emerge* with the construction” (p. 471). Due to the constraints that affect the emerging construction, it must be said that at the same time that it develops new features, it is also “subject to constraints which [do] not affect the parent constructions” (p. 471). These are the constraints:

- a. The only nouns available are those which make reference to occupations and the like (*writer, poet, professor, etc.*)
- b. The construction is frozen with respect to the referential options of the first unit. If the common noun is expanded, it would saturate reference and the whole structure could not be pronounced “in a fully integrated manner” (p. 472).
- c. Restrictions related to conventionalization and idiomaticity also affect the construction. That is, the construction “does not accommodate two full NPs – at least not with the same grounding mechanism (determiner *the*)” (*\*the writer the poet vs. my sister the dancer*) (p. 472).

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

- d. The possibility of reversibility of *the poet Burns* is another emergent property of this structure given “the ‘traces of equality’ that have long characterized the notion of apposition” (p. 473).

As far as recognisability ‘from the top’ is concerned, and in line with Construction Grammar tenets and its view on compositionality, it is considered that “language users develop language systems that maximize the expression of meaning, so meaning – not componentiality – is really the final purpose of language” (p. 474). Additionally, in a construction like *the poet Burns*, “right after *the* the top of the structure can be reached automatically via neuromotor routinization, and the top is after all what we need to make sense of the meaning” (p. 474). Therefore, in Acuña-Fariña’s opinion, given the major advances in the field of memory and the role of frequency in cognition, it makes much more sense to accept that:

[I]t is actually more wasteful for the mind to generate the same percept all over again, especially if what is to be generated has already been generated a million times in the past. In such circumstances, all that is needed is *recognition and retrieval*, of *structure*, for notice that absence of fine-grained internal structure by no means entails absence of structure: all these strings are clear, unambiguous NPs at the top (Acuña-Fariña 2009: 476, emphasis in the original).

As a conclusion, the *the* + common noun + proper noun construction, considered as the “prototypical” close appositive construction, is inserted into a ‘rich ecological niche’ where it relates to the rest of the different types of close appositions. Its internal structure is due to a fusion process of two NP structures (*the* + modifier + proper noun and *the* + head noun + modifier) which has as a result a construction with its own

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

specific constrains characterised by a social referential role and a hybrid internal structure that is nevertheless easily identifiable from the top. Given its NP-origin this construction is considered to be an inchoate NP as a consequence of the indefinite form of its nominal group.





## **Constructional links between close appositions and ordinary noun phrases**

### **4.1 Heterogeneity within the close appositive group, but only one head**

The previous chapter provides an extensive list of similar but different structures which have fallen under the definition of apposition at the same time as it offers a panoramic view about the historical evolution of the notion of close apposition. Instances like *the writer Alice Walker* (considered as the prototype) have given way to examples like *this bloke Mark*. Some authors have described all possible appositive structures as forming a homogeneous group (see Korzen 2006), and others argue in favour of a heterogeneous group even though they allege a uniform internal structure (see section 3.3.6; Keizer 2007a). With respect to these two differing positions, the aim of this chapter is to demonstrate that even though most close appositive constructions are characterized by a strong degree of conventionalization and a fixed internal structure, some in fact show how structural variation is itself one of the main characteristics of language, as seen in their own varied internal structure.

The following sections concentrate on the analysis of the possible close appositive constructions from the point of view of the present work. First of all, section 4.2 deals with the CA prototype, the structure in *the writer Alice Walker*, which has intuitively been taken to represent close apposition at large. It deals with the fact that such structures (Det + N + N) do not have a poor internal structure. Following this, the main subtypes of CA will be analysed in section 4.3, with sub-sections 4.3.1-6 each devoted to the particular analysis of one specific type. It will be shown that the majority of them are characterised by a strong degree of conventionalisation and fixity and that

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

they are also characterized by a relatively fossilised schematicity with low type frequency (Bybee 1985; Ogura 1993; Smith 2001) and large token frequency. This makes recognisability ‘from the top’ (Acuña-Fariña 2009) one of the main features in the identification of close appositive constructions (Haiman 1994; Boyland 1996; Hay 2001). However, the issue is in fact not so simple or straightforward; it will also be shown that these various seemingly binominal constructions (Keizer 2007a: 22) do *not* all have exactly the same internal constituency, especially if by constituency we understand something perfectly well demarcated. With all these possible close appositive constructions in mind, section 4.4 will deal with a possible network structure of close apposition. This may be considered as an attempt to prove whether a map of taxonomic and inheritance ties (Goldberg 1995), such as the one that can be recognised for loose appositive constructions (Acuña-Fariña 2006), can also be drawn for CA. If this were feasible, a further challenge would be to demonstrate what sort of ontological reality such a map might have, an issue related to whether CA is to be seen as a monosemous or polysemous category. This section also attempts to show CA structures as an interconnected group of constructions with strong internal relationships between them. It does so through a construction-grammar-inspired approach with cognitive-grammar overtones such as the one advocated by, for instance, Fillmore *et al.* (1988), Langacker (1987a, 1991, 1993), Culicover (1999), Kay & Fillmore (1999), Goldberg (1995, 2006), Goldberg & Jackendoff (2004), and Jackendoff (2008), among others. Section 4.5 will then summarise the main points touched covered in the previous sections.

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

### 4.2 The prototypical CA construction: *the writer Alice Walker*

It is perhaps shocking to realise that the construction *the writer Alice Walker* construction, such an innocent-looking structure in itself, has never been wholly clarified. Part of the problem stems from the fact that it shows such a similar superficial organization to its loose counterpart (*the writer* + comma + *Alice Walker*) that it is has been treated as a second-class construction unworthy of consideration. At the same time, this close-but-loose constructions connects CAs to a group of intonationally demarcated structures with often unique predicative properties (see Burton-Roberts 1975; Matthews 1981; Kolliakou 2004; Lekakou & Szendrői 2007; Keizer 2005, 2007a,b; Acuña-Fariña 1999, 2000, 2006 a, b, 2009). In part, the root cause of the close-appositive problem lies the difficulty of deciding whether *the writer Alice Walker* patterns more with *the **writer** over there* or with *the excellent **Alice Walker*** (bold type is used to indicate head status). This is what we now need to resolve.

Traditional grammar has wavered between the three views mentioned in chapter 3, that is, between U1 or U2 is the head, or whether of them are. It must be recalled, however, that evidence exists to support the contention that U1 is the head:

(a) Pluralization: usually speakers prefer to say *the painters Van Gogh* instead of *the painter Van Goghs* (except when a contrastive interpretation is intended; see Burton-Roberts 1975; Keizer 2007a: 56 ff). Moreover, in the presence of two proper nouns, it is the common noun that receives the inflectional plural mark: *the Whitemarsh brothers Tom and Phillip*.

(b) Agreement: consistent with information on pluralization, formal agreement is established between the verb and the common noun: *the painters Van Gogh were so different*.

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

(c) Constituent order: compare two extremely similar structures such, as *Alice Walker the writer* and *the writer Alice Walker*. If *Alice Walker the writer* means *the Alice Walker who is a writer* and the theme *Alice Walker* functions as head, and if the predicative non-referential string *the writer* is the attribute, it seems reasonable to suggest, on the same thematic grounds, that in *the writer Alice Walker*, *writer* is the profiled constituent of the whole structure that is qualified by the U2 segment *Alice Walker*.

(d) Taxonomic ties (Goldberg 1995). This is the topic of section 4.4, but for now we might consider another comparison, this time between *the writer Alice Walker* and *my sister Cath* constructions. Looking only at the meaning of the *my sister Cath* string, it is immediately clear that we are not talking about *\*my Cath who is a sister* (with U2 as head; compare: [the Alice Walker] who is a writer). But the obvious external similarities between these two constructions, and given the apparently clear U1 constituency of the possessive close appositive construction, *the writer Alice Walker* might be also considered a head-modifier construction.

There is also evidence to suggest that U2, the proper noun, is the profiled constituent:

(a) Stress patterns: a secondary + primary stress pattern for *the writer Alice Walker* (Haugen 1953; Keizer 2007a: 24) would be keeping with a U2 head status analysis due to the similarity with *the kitchen table* or *the large truck*.

(b) Selection restrictions: at least in its most natural use, the proper noun, in *the writer Alice Walker*, seems to be the one which imposes conditions on the kind of constituents that can co-occur with it, specifically that they must be definite and add something to the bare name (Acuña-Fariña 1996); normally, *\*the Alice Walker*, *\*an*



## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

*Alice Walker*, \**Writers Alice Walker*, that is, are all wrong. However, Keizer (2007a: 32 ff.) contends that these restrictions on definiteness are not real given that cases like *an excellent Clint Eastwood* and *a Clint Eastwood never seen before* are indeed acceptable. In any case, for these structures to be correctly used, they must all show one of the following features: a) the proper noun must suffer a recategorization into a common noun (as Keizer herself points out); b) or their meaning must change slightly, with either an ‘a certain’ interpretation or a contrastive interpretation becoming obligatory (*a (certain) Clint Eastwood never seen before; it was an excellent Clint Eastwood that won the Oscar*), or c) the pronunciation of the article must be forced to signal the change (*/ei/ Clint Eastwood that astonished the stands*). All this suggests that we are dealing with a related but different construction.

At the same time, premodification guarantees the proper noun as the constituent that imposes conditions on the whole structure. When premodifying adjectives occur in the construction, the string sounds better when the adjective points more clearly to the proper noun: *the excellent writer Alice Walker*, *the great writer Alice Walker*, *the famous writer Alice Walker* are all fine because it is natural to say *the excellent Alice Walker*, *the great Alice Walker*, and *the famous Alice Walker* (Acuña-Fariña 1999). Conversely, *the short writer Alice Walker* sounds strange precisely because *the short Alice Walker* also sounds strange. Keizer (2007a: 33 ff.) also points out that close appositive constructions like *a sappy elder brother Robert* or *this bloke Smith* are attested in corpora. These might be considered instances of indefinite CA with a U1 head, but in the next section it will be argued that they are different from definite CA and that their idiosyncrasy does not fit a constructionist approach to grammar.

(c) The first, common noun is severely constrained in its potential for elaboration: if structures like (?)*the acclaimed writer Alice Walker*, ?/\**the writer*

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

*acclaimed Alice Walker*, \**the writer of feminist works Alice Walker*, \**the writer of multicultural origins Alice Walker*, \**the writer that won the Pulitzer Prize Alice Walker* are deprived of intonational boundaries, their acceptability decreases. These examples illustrate the linguistic impact that the *saturation* of the first segment causes on the whole construction (Acuña-Fariña 1996; also Burton-Roberts 1975). Saturation means that the first common noun acquires enough specificity to make reference by itself, and once reference is established any further addition must appear dissociated from the nominal core. In that way, close apposition would not be the most adequate construction, giving rise to the use of a loose appositive structure which offers different referential properties (however, see Keizer 2007a: 35 for the view that such cases are not ungrammatical). On the contrary, the construction does not constrain U2 with the limitations imposed on U1. The proper noun may co-occur with the same determiners and adjectives with which it ordinarily occurs outside close apposition: *the Alice Walker that we all know*, *the **admired** Alice Walker*. It should also be noted that the slight change to the construction seems to affect it enough for it become another construction. This suggests a strong degree of entrenchment and conventionalisation (see section 4.4).

Finally, there is evidence to suggest that it may in fact not be possible to differentiate between the two nouns, and that both contribute in the same way to the construction.

(a) Distribution: if integration within a productive paradigm is positive proof of the validity of one analysis or other, in this specific case both analyses (U1 head or U2 head) of the same construction would be easily integrated in existing paradigms: *the writer Alice Walker* might be like *the excellent **Alice Walker***, with a clear U2 profiled

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

element (*the* + Mod + Head); but it might also be like *the writer over there*, with a clear U1 centre (*the* + Head + Mod).

(b) Pronominalization: this is usually a good indicator of head status, but, revealingly, in CAs like *the writer Alice Walker* one cannot pronominalize any of the nouns alone, but only the entire structure: *the writer Alice Walker/ \*the one Virginia Wolf; the writer Alice Walker/ \*the teacher one* (meaning: *the Alice Walker who is a teacher*). In a clear endocentric structure like *the leather jacket*, one can only pronominalize the head (*the leather one*), and pronominalization actually ‘reveals’ the head.

Despite having long been considered an uncontroversial phenomenon in linguistics, then, close apposition remains a striking notion. A century of linguistic studies has not been enough to delineate its structure and the previous set of conflicting properties might be the reason for this. Hence, rather than expecting that any of these principal views on close apposition (U1 as the head, U2 as the head, or both as heads) be capable of describing the internal structure of all the possible close appositive constructions, it might perhaps be more useful to consider that the head status of the construction is simply not resolved. As we have seen, according to Acuña-Fariña (2009; also see section 3.3.7) the main idea that we can draw from these strings is that they exhibit traces of constituency pointing in conflicting directions, and, at the same time, that these traces are inchoate due to lack of strong functional pressure. There seems to be three main reasons for this:

1. because the construction has as its job the activation of a **social referent**, and in the social world that we inhabit this is usually done either by name or profession (i.e. not by height, size, colour of the eyes, etc), with no reason to

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

prefer one over the other, and no logical incompatibility between the two; 2. because the construction is a **hybrid** of distinct and more productive (and fully elaborated) templates, which act as *attractor poles* and pull constituency in opposite directions; and 3. and more importantly, because the construction is easily identifiable as such '**from the top**'. This makes it unnecessary to have to spend valuable cognitive resources (like creating, storing and deploying inaudible, abstract, constituent structure) when, somewhat metaphorically, we can reach the final destination of that journey (last stop: meaning) directly, as it were, with no changing of trains (Haiman 1994; Boyland 1996; Hay 2001), (Acuña-Fariña 2009: 470, emphasis in the original).

With respect to the social referent and the social role implied in the close appositive construction as advocated by Acuña-Fariña, I agree that the great majority of the instances that can be seen as prototypical, close appositions contain a social referent (*the ambassador Margaret Scobey, the astronomer Martin Reese, the prince Charles of Wales, the actor Tom Hanks*), even though, as we will see in sections 4.3.2.1 and 4.3.4 this is not true of all types (*Kermit the frog; the word 'courtesy'*).

Despite these 'traces of constituency', I will argue here that the Det + N (modifier) + N (head) structure when dealing with prototypical close appositions like *the writer Alice Walker* is the most appropriate analysis (the situation changes in the analysis structures like *my sister Cath*, see section 4.3.1). Apart from the traditional evidence advocated above in favour of this syntactic distribution (the secondary-primary stress pattern, selection restrictions, the fact that the first common noun is constrained in its potential for elaboration), it might be argued that a further – and conclusive – proof exists that this is indeed the most accurate structural analysis of the internal constituency of this type of construction; it is that prototypical close appositive

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

constructions, that is, those composed of a Det (definite article) + N (common) +N (proper), are clear examples of a structure whose internal syntactic constituency can be solved using the **reference point model** (Langacker 1993, 2009).

Before applying the reference point model here, its functioning and the main purpose of its application will be set out. Langacker (1993: 8) depicts a reference point in the following way:

(...) one entity (...) is invoked as a reference point for purposes of establishing mental contact with another (...).

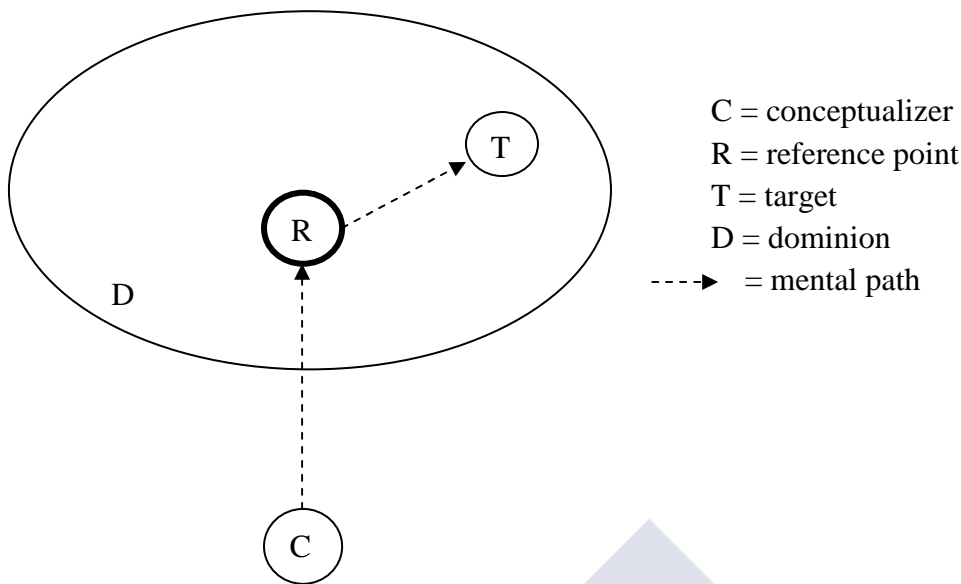
On the same grounds, Van Hoek (1995: 313) considers that:

[r]eference points are, intuitively speaking, local topics – elements which the conceptualizer (the speaker or addressee) uses to contextualize other elements.

That is, the reference point word is used as a springboard of the target element that functions as the head of the construction. Langacker confers great linguistic importance on this model, in light of the fact that “our reference point ability [which] is fundamental and ubiquitous, and it occurs in the first place because it serves as a useful cognitive and communicative function” (p. 30). Figure 4 illustrates the model:

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

Figure 4. The Reference Point model (Langacker 1993: 6)



The following definition offers an explanation of the position of the reference point with respect to the whole figure:

Observe that a heavy-line circle is used for the reference-point. The intent is to indicate that the reference point has a certain cognitive salience, either intrinsic or contextually determined. It is, of course, owing to **some kind of salience** that an entity comes to be chosen as a reference point in the first place (Langacker 1993: 6, emphasis added).

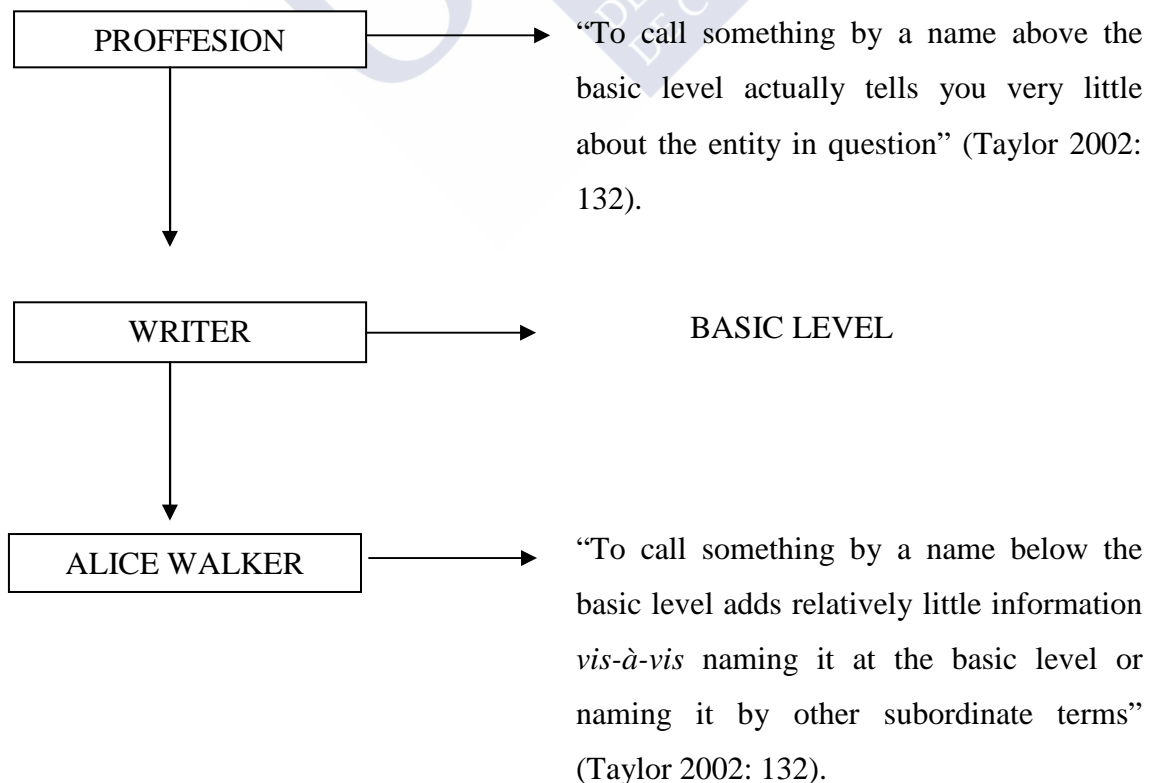
Likewise, with respect to this 'some kind of salience' feature:

Reference point organization is determined largely by **semantic prominence**. Two kinds of prominence have been established as central within CG: **PROFILING** and **FIGURE/GROUND ASYMMETRY** (Langacker 1987a). Profiling is central to the CG definitions of core grammatical constructs such as syntactic categories (nouns, verbs, etc.), as well as the notions head, complements, and modifier; figure/ground

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

asymmetry is the basis for the CG definitions of grammatical relations (Van Hoek 1995: 314-315, emphasis added).

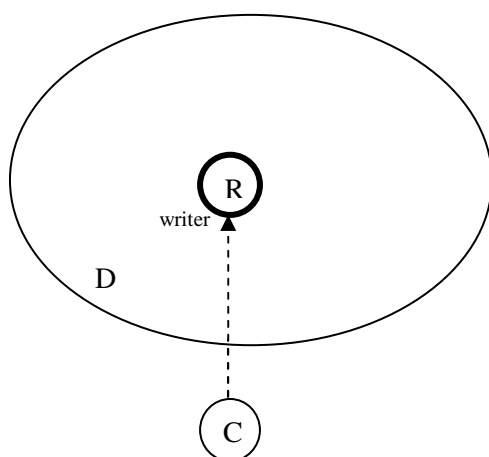
Yet, how are ‘some kind of salience’ and ‘semantic prominence’, but how are this salience and this prominence achieved? In order to answer this, let us concentrate on our current example, *the writer Alice Walker*. In this case, I suggest that in this specific case the common noun *writer* is the reference point of the structure, but, where does its salience come from? Following the cognitive orientation of this kind analysis, the salient status has to do with a taxonomic analysis of the structure and the basic level of concepts. Taylor (2002: 128-130) points out that “a taxonomy is a system of classifying things” and that “(...) in natural languages [it] is not so much a neat classification of everything, but quite well developed and compact taxonomies for specific domains of experience”. Thus, *the writer Alice Walker* could be explained following these notions. Consider the following schema:



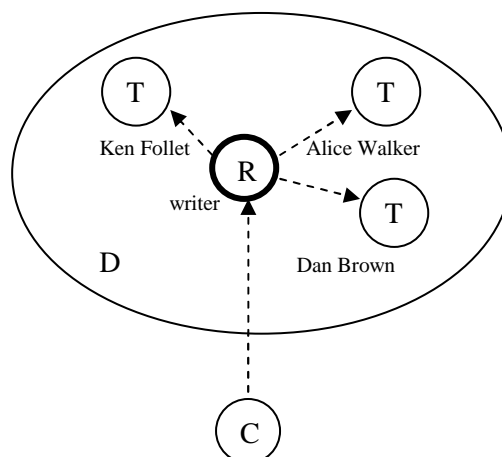
## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

Therefore, *writer* in *the writer Alice Walker* achieves its reference point status as a consequence of being a basic level concept in the light of the fact that “basic level categories (...) cut up reality in maximally informative categories” (Taylor 1995: 50), and also “because of their schematicity, it is difficult, if not impossible, to form a mental image of concepts above the basic level. (...) [O]ne way of characterizing the basic level is to say it is the highest level in a taxonomy at which one is able to form a mental image of a concept” (Taylor 2002: 132). So, U1 is used as a reference point due to the fact that it is a basic level category with maximally informative features whose aim is to set the context for the hearer. Thus, when conceptualizing, the basic level feature of the common noun is used as the bridge to evoke and reach the target of our linguistic act. In face of this “when R is actually used as a reference point – it is the target thereby reached that now becomes prominent in the sense of being the focus of C’s conception. Even as it fulfils its reference-point function, R recedes into the background in favour of T (...)” (Langacker 1993: 6), which becomes the head of the construction. Now, consider the following four-step process (Figures 5, 6, 7 and 8) in the creation of a close apposition like *the writer Alice Walker*:

**Figure 5. The conceptualizer establishes a reference point**



**Figure 6. Possible targets for the established reference point**



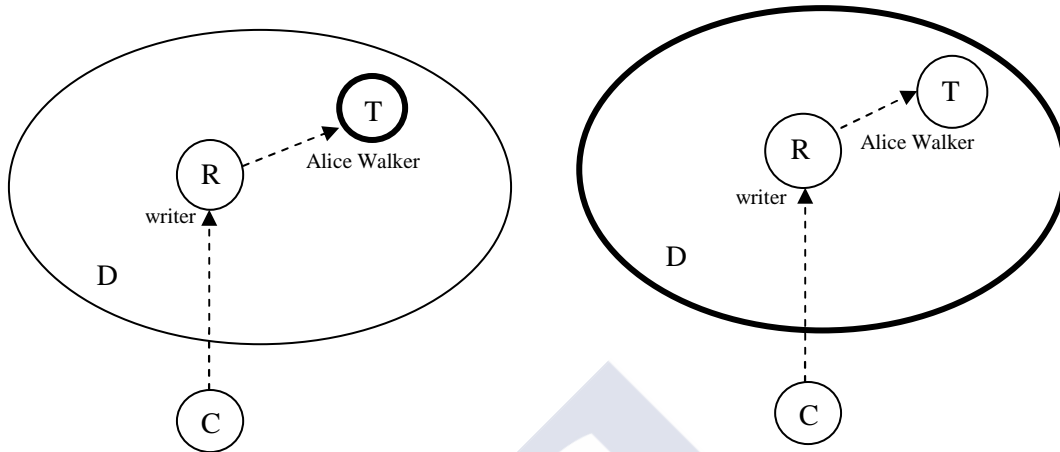


## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

**Figure 7. Selection of the target element    Figure 8. A prototypical close apposition**

**following to the reference point**

**model**



Using the reference point model, we can somehow reconcile Keizer's (2005, 2007a) thesis that the first noun is always the head with Acuña-Fariña's (1996) proposal that in this specific case the proper noun, the second noun, is the head. It cannot be said that the first noun functions as the head of the structure at any moment, but it is true that in the process of the creation of a close apposition of the Det (definite article) + N (common) + N (proper) type, it enjoys a certain degree of 'head' prominence. However, this position is abandoned when the target word, that is, the proper noun, is reached. It functions as the head of the whole structure, causing the retreat of the first noun into the background as a modifying element. Therefore, the following could be considered to be the prototypical close appositionive schema.

(1) (Det) RP<sub>(N, common)</sub> H<sub>(N, proper)</sub> (Mod)

It has been argued that the reference point word signals the head of the structure. So, why can the common noun not be the head of the structure? If we consider that the

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

common noun is the head, and advocate a Det + N (head) + N (modifier) structure, we are effectively pointing out that the definite article is the reference point. But this is not possible, given that it does not offer any semantic link, that is, it does not evoke an array of semantic possibilities from which we can choose one and use it as the head of the whole structure. The target element of a reference point must be “identified by virtue of being located in the reference point’s dominion” (Langacker 2009: 47), and definite articles do not have the linguistic possibility of evoking a dominion. In short, the definite article does not enjoy “semantic prominence”, one of the main features of reference point organization, as we have seen. Therefore, the weak functional meaning of the definite article does not allow it to function as a reference point.

It has been also pointed out that close apposition is a grammatical relation and as such, the figure/ground organization influences its analysis; at the same time, this also explains the internal syntactic organization of prototypical close appositions advocated in the present work. Figure/ground organization can be addressed in a more technical way in such cases: “[t]he technical term for ‘figure within a profiled relation’ is TRAJECTOR (...). The less prominent entity in the relation is termed LANDMARK (...)” (Van Hoek 1995: 316). If we apply these notions to a close apposition like *the writer Alice Walker* we can see how N1, the common noun, is the landmark, and N2, the proper name, is the trajector. Moreover, as we have seen, *the write Alice Walker* means *the Alice Walker who is a writer*. If we then change the appositive structure and the noun phrase into a clause, the result is: *Alice Walker is a writer*. The proper name becomes the subject of the clause, a fact which supports the N2 headedness of *the writer Alice Walker* because “the grammatical relation subject is defined in CG as ‘trajector’ of a profiled process (Langacker 1987a: 231). The subject is therefore the nominal that

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

functions as the figure within the processual relation profiled by the verb” (Van Hoek 1995: 317). Hence, the head within the close appositive becomes the subject within the clause, and in both cases the proper noun is the relevant element.

So, prototypical close appositions of the type *the writer Alice Walker* are best described as grammatical constructions which show a clear N2 head structure. The reference point model clarifies that the semantic prominence of each noun leads us to this conclusion given a taxonomic organization of the words.

### 4.3 The members of the CA network

The aim of this section is to analyse the range of constructions commonly classed as close appositives. All the members that make up the close appositive family encompass commonalities and differences, which itself proves their uniqueness as specific constructions. Additionally, this analysis will demonstrate the distinct functional roles of this varied group of constructions.

#### 4.3.1 The *my sister Cath/ my sister the dancer* types

Perhaps at first glance a comparative analysis of the types of constructions *my sister Cath* and *the writer Alice Walker* might be seen as a waste of time, in that both are composed of the same constituents, in the same constituent order. However, a careful study of their syntactic structures reveals that their internal configurations are of two different constructions with distinct linguistic possibilities. A specific internal organisation for *the writer Alice Walker* has been proposed in the preceding section. This is in part due to the fact that one of the traces of constituency that seems evident in this construction type links the definite article and the proper noun. Moreover, the

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

determiner-proper noun links show that this construction means ‘[the Alice Walker] who is *a* writer’, which is a good indicator that meaning, the main target of linguistic use, is once again the main source of difference between two instances of the same construction. The natural association of the determiner and the proper noun in *the writer Alice Walker* is not possible for *my sister Cath*, one of the reasons being that there is not even a thread of constituency indicating that this phrase means ‘my Cath who is *a* sister’. As a logical consequence, in a structure such as *my sister Cath* nothing links the determiner and the last noun, and the only possibility is that *my* relates to *sister* unequivocally.

It must be noted here that the Possessive + N (common) + N (proper) construction allows a wider range of tokens in N1 position. Remember that the Det (def. art.) + N (common) + N (proper) construction only allows words related to professions in line with social reference function (*\*the friend Alice Walker*). However, the possessive close appositive construction includes among its members a more variegated group of words (*my friend Judit, my aunt Carmen, my dog Boss*, etc). Therefore, the possibilities of usage are more extensive, and the unique social reference function disappears. In fact, the combination of words with a social referent, such as *writer, doctor, pilot*, etc. and with a possessive determiner within the same close appositive construction sounds somewhat strange. Consider, for example, the *\*my dentist Ana* structure. A loose appositive construction would probably sound better than a close apposition here. Thus, in addition to differences in their meaning, these two structures show different selection options with respect to the N1 position.

Meaning links the possessive determiner and the common noun unambiguously, but could it be asserted that it relates to *sister* only? Apparently, this is not so clear. Keizer (2007a: 45 ff.) contends that a structure like (2) is the most adequate

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

representation for the majority of close appositive types, including the one with possessive determiners:

(2) Det [[N] N<sub>p</sub>]

However, even though the same internal structure is alleged for CAs with a possessive and those with a definite article, it is also considered that definiteness and possessiveness show different features. The main reason for this is the decisive difference between *the writer Alice Walker* and *my sister Cath* in terms of grounding. Keizer seeks an intermediate position between, Burton-Roberts (1975) and Acuña-Fariña (1996). Burton-Roberts analysed *the writer Alice Walker* as a [Mod + Head] structure and, rather surprisingly, kept the same analysis for the *my sister Cath* structure, despite the fact that the possessive does not point to the proper noun in the latter (see section 3.3.3). He reaches this conclusion by means of a model that allows him to invoke different derivational transformations and the same surface outcome in order to achieve his purpose. On the other hand, Keizer's account comes closer to Acuña-Fariña's (1996) analysis in that she does not rely on derivations; the central idea is that since the possessive does not have scope over both nouns and points only to the common noun, this is the head of the structure. Thus, Keizer (2007a) recognises that the possessive feature of the determiner does not affect the last noun and that the head of the structure is the first noun. However, she restricts the differences between *the writer Alice Walker* and *my sister Cath* to a difference in grounding, and, what is more, one that is not reflected in constituency terms. She supports her position in the following way:

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

(...) I believe that it is important to differentiate the features of definiteness and possessiveness. This will be achieved by analysing the possessive pronoun not as a determiner (with scope over the NP as a whole), but as a modifier or specifier of the first noun only. After all, definiteness and possessiveness are features of a different nature: definiteness is primarily a pragmatic feature, reflecting the speaker's assumptions about the (un)identifiability of the referent for the hearer, while possessiveness is a semantic feature, reflecting a property of the intended referent –or, more accurately, relation between this referent and some other entity (...). It seems therefore plausible to assume that these two functions are performed by different linguistic elements.

Differentiating between the features of definiteness and possessiveness in this way also makes it possible to treat both types of close appositions in a similar way (Keizer 2007a: 46-7).

Keizer's desire to find a unique structure for all the different types of close apposition may lead her to conclude, somewhat radically, that they are all internally equal. But, as was shown with the previous specific case of *the writer Alice Walker*, it is also possible, following the reference point model, to see the Poss + N + N construction as having a different syntactic organization.

The main difference with respect to the Det + N + N construction is that here the reference point word is the possessive determiner *my*. Consider the following:

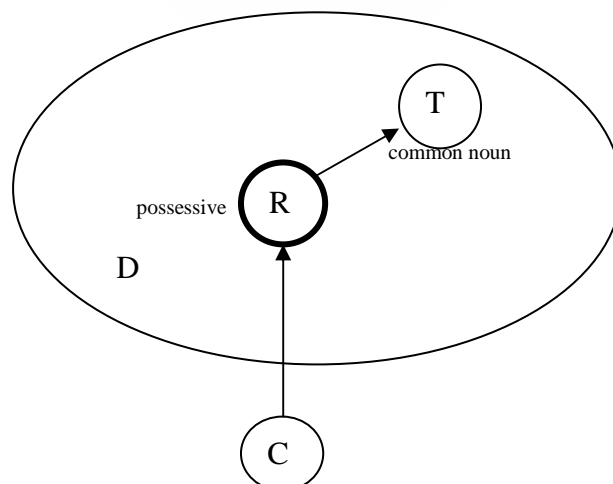
(...) I ascribe the basic and universal nature of possessives to the pairing of an essential image-schematic ability with a fundamental conceptual archetype, in fact, with several such archetypes. The image-schematic ability is not that of mere association (conceptual co-occurrence), but rather the intrinsically asymmetrical reference-point relationship. What all possessive locutions have in common, I suggest, is that one entity (the one we call the possessor) is invoked as a reference point for purposes of

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

establishing mental contact with another (the possessed), (...) Langacker (1993: 8).

The possessive determiner deserves the reference point label because of its anchoring features. It acts like a seed containing properties from which something may germinate. In this specific case, the possessive determiner offers an array of possibilities of possession. It makes implicit reference to other linguistic elements which may be used as the target of the conceptualizer. Langacker (p.24) refers to this phenomenon as “the reference point dominion” which “provides a context with respect to which an expression is interpreted (...)”. Therefore, the possessive *my* offers a specific and concrete context in which the speaker can easily choose the target word. Figure 9 illustrates the internal links between the possessive reference point and the target element, the common noun:

**Figure 9. Internal links in a reference point-target relation of a [Poss + N (common) + N (proper)]**



As can be seen, the functioning here is the same as in the case of the *the writer Alice Walker* construction, but on this occasion the reference point is the possessive

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

determiner. “C invokes R as a reference point to mentally access T, [this] is posited for all possessives, constituting their schematic characterization” (Langacker 2009: 84).

The reference point analysis leaves us with a Poss + N (head) + N (modifier) structure which does not clarify if in a NP + NP configuration like that, the referent of the entire phrase must be identifiable only through the first NP. I consider that that is the case in loose apposition. Lekakou & Szendrői (2007) offer a more solid objection against the double NP analysis of CA (see also Burton-Roberts (1975); section 3.3.3). As we have seen, they argue in favour of an endocentric structure with two heads which project the third, superordinate, NP via ‘R-role identification’. On this view, if both NPs are referents, close apposition will not be possible when they pick out the same referent. However, reference to the same individual is not incompatible with a formal construal of the same individual from two comparable angles, since referential coherence is usually constructed in this way (Levy 1979: 193). It is therefore useful to take into account the distinction between identical reference and identical denotation. The latter would be sensitive to Lekakou & Szendrői constraints on ‘NP synthesization’, and would also violate Goldberg (1995) *Principle of the No Synonymy of Form* (Bolinger 1968: 127; Givón 1985; Langacker 1985; Wierzbicka 1988), whereas the former would not. This would explain why *\*the Bard Shakespeare*, and *\*my Bard Shakespeare* are ungrammatical. Their restrictions on usage depend mainly on the existence of two referential NPs. However these problems are solved if we abandon both the traditional theory (two equal, referential heads) and Keizer view that in a NP + NP construction, if the head is inside the first NP, this must identify a referent by itself.

It seems, then, that in a structure like *my sister the dancer*, where *my* refers to *sister* and not to *dancer*, the most adequate solution is simply to assume *sister* as the profile determinant, as the reference point model also suggests. As a consequence, *the*



## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

*dancer* must be a predicative, modifying phrase. The idea of a predicative NP with a definite determiner without referential powers is of course not new. In *Saul was the prey of obscure emotions* or *Gareth, the heir to a huge state, was not a happy soul*, such NPs are unproblematic (the first example having a copula that mediates between the two NPs, and the second not even that). I am, then, simply claiming that they may occur inside “integrated NPs” (Huddleston & Pullum 2002: 1350 ff.).

In sum, the difference between the construction under analysis and the CA prototype is that in *my sister Cath* the head element is located in N1 position. The grounding element, the possessive determiner, is the constituent that makes the difference. Its semantic prominence establishes it as the reference point of the construction, contrary to the definite determiner in *the writer Alice Walker*, causing the reorganization of the functions of the CA constituents into a clear N1 head- N2 modifier structure.

### 4.3.2 The *Alice Walker the writer* type

The taxonomic links between this construction and its family member *the writer Alice Walker* are undeniable. Both involve the very same types of words: a definite article, a common noun (designating a profession) and a proper noun (a family name); and both have a similar meaning (in both cases Alice Walker is *a* writer). But these chains of resemblances are not enough to justify treating them as two identical structures. Moreover, if we take into account examples like *Kermit the frog*, we realize that differences are even more prominent in comparison with the CA prototype. Thus, the *Kermit the frog* structure could be considered as a subtype within the N (proper) + Det (def. art) + N (common) type as we will see in section 4.3.2.1. Thus, as in all families,

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

similarities affect basic elements but a closer analysis reveals differences which make all families of constructions rich and varied.

Such differences must be analysed. In the first place, the syntactic connection between the definite article and the proper noun argued for *the writer Alice Walker* is not present in *Alice Walker the writer*, with the definite article relating to the common noun only. This is also an indication of the fact that the reference point model does not apply to this type of CA, as was the case with the *the writer Alice Walker* construction. In the second place, even though these constructions make reference to the same feature of the same individual, their connotations are sometimes rather different. Consider example (3) as an example of the *the writer Alice Walker* type and (4) and (5) as examples of the *Alice Walker the writer* type:

- (3) When receiving his Oscar, *the actor Tom Hanks* left his mark on the room with a speech that touched the audience so profoundly that he received the best ovation of the night.
- (4) In an interview for the BBC, Alan Smith was surprised when *Martin Reese the astronomer* told him about his latest discoveries.
- (5) Hey, you, yes you at the bar, it's you, Barbara, the girl who broke more hearts at high school, yes, *Barbara the heartbreaker*.

It seems to me that examples (4) and (5) have certain features that distinguish them from the proper noun + definite article + common noun construction. In the case of (4), the close apposition is a good instance of what could be considered a hybrid between close apposition and loose apposition. I do not contend *Martin Reese the*

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

*astronomer* should carry a comma or any other type of punctuation mark, but, simply, that the example sounds less forced and more natural when a sort of demarcating use of tonicity after the proper noun is used. In the case of example (5), not only can it be argued that it constitutes a better contrast with example (3) but also that its meaning is noticeably different. To begin with, the common noun in (5) does not denote a professional occupation, as was considered to occur in prototypical close appositions. In fact, Keizer (2007a: 46) points out that “it may be argued that (...) the second element may lose its discourse connection to become more of a general characterization, serving as a nickname or as a part of the proper noun: *Edward the Confessor*, *William the Conqueror* or *Charles the Simple*”. In (5), *the heartbreaker* indicates the personality of an individual and not her professional occupation. The use of common nouns with no social reference within a close apposition has become a prolific and widespread in English. These are normally used in order to identify a person by means of his/her most salient feature; features like a strong character, being of an open nature or a conciliatory character are the source of many such structures, as with *Margaret the peacemaker* or *Catherine the troublemaker*. A particular feature of this type of structure is the capitalization of the common noun. When, with the passing of time, the common noun remains linked to the proper noun, it acquires a naming or appellative function. In fact, it could be considered as a kind of surname. Moreover, in the case of *Barbara the heartbreaker*, the linguistic environment changes as a consequence of the meaning implied by the whole structure. Personality – used in order to refer to one person – does not have the same social relevance as a profession. In this sense, meaning changes, as we have seen, but so too do the possibilities for reversibility, in that *?the heartbreaker Barbara* does not sound as natural as *the writer Alice Walker*.

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

An important characteristic of the *Alice Walker the writer* pattern is that it seems to be able to extend the range of common nouns that can appear in this type of CA. Notice that in (5) *the heartbreaker* (in *Barbara the heartbreaker*) is not a profession, but, in some way or another sounds as if the profession of the girl in question were heartbreaking. In this way, predicative NPs can be used to denote the fact that it is perfectly common to refer to an individual by means of the attribute that defines him or her to perfection. The widespread use of this type of construction is an *emergent* property that developed from one of the most basic meanings of most prototypical close appositions, that is, to identify people by profession. Thus, in saying *Barbara the heartbreaker* it could be suggested that Barbara's main occupation in life has been to break hearts. This property is emergent because the other close appositive types do not have it. It is, therefore, specific to the *Alice Walker the writer* type, and must be *listed* (Goldberg 1995).

Now consider the structure of this pattern. In the first place, the construction *Barbara the heartbreaker* is used to refer to an individual named *Barbara* and not to somebody known from a previous context that has been identified as *the heartbreaker*. As a consequence, it makes sense to take the proper noun as the head of this type of construction, as well as in its reversed family member the *the writer Alice Walker* construction. However, in this specific case the head of the construction occupies the N1 position (N (proper) (head) + Det (def. art.) + N (common)). Differences in meaning, then, are in tune with differences in syntactic structure. These minimal variations, including simple word order rearrangements even inside the NP, cause meaning change (Bolinger 1968: 127; Langacker 1985; Wierzbicka 1988; Goldberg 1995: 3, 67). In the second place, the dependent character of *the heartbreaker* makes the use of the proper noun obligatory because if we leave it out, *the heartbreaker* will have

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

to acquire referential specificity to select a referent (it is certainly not the same to say *Barbara the heartbreaker would not have problems in a situation like that* and *the heartbreaker would not have problems in a situation like that*). Therefore, the bipartite character attached to the notion of apposition ([NP + NP]) seems to be confirmed in this type of construction.

It must be noticed here that while other CAs can be integrated in existing nominal paradigms, this is impossible for the type currently under analysis (Acuña-Fariña 1996: 40). Thus, one can imagine *the small dog*, *the brown cat*, *the great Alice Walker*, and *the writer Alice Walker* as all exhibiting a [Det + Premodifier + Head] schema. We can also draw a paradigm schema for *my sister the dancer*, *my sister in the bank*, *my sister here*, and *my sister Cath*. However, no schema can be delineated for *Alice Walker the writer*: *Alice Walker the writer*, \**Alice Walker writer*, \**Alice Walker in the conference*, \**Alice Walker here*. In this respect, the representational map of this specific construction is characterised by the fact that the internal features of the structure do not always point in the same direction. Even so, such a peculiarity is not a problem for the perfect co-existence of these different structural tendencies. Moreover, if we think of these structural biases as *activation paths* (on the neural basis of meaning, see Feldman 2006: 105 ff., and references therein; see also Langacker 2006: 141), then this means that the entire collection of activation paths must be considered to influence the meaning and the structure of the construction. The difference between many CAs and more obviously endocentric NPs such as *the red car* or *the woollen jumper* is that the activation paths of the former splash outwardly more, creating a more blurred overall map, while those of the latter are both more unidirectional and more strongly canalized due to the fact that they conform to an extremely frequent NP form (of the kind that is usually assumed to be the default for all NPs in X-bar accounts).

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

So just as in *the writer Alice Walker* neither noun is as profiled as the entire NOM constituent, so in *Alice Walker the writer* the otherwise clear formal internal structure of the construction is less profiled than the composite name meaning that it evokes.

### 4.3.2.1 The *Kermit the Frog* type

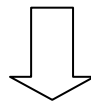
It is clear that this instance of close apposition must be included within the N (proper) + Det (def. art.) + N (common) type described in the section above. However, its internal and meaning features suggest that its analysis varies with respect to *Alice Walker the writer*. Its reversibility is one of the main differences with respect to the other instances of the type; all the examples that have been analysed so far could be reversed, in fact, the *Alice Walker the writer* construction is considered to be the result of the changing of positions of the nouns in the quintessential close apposition *the writer Alice Walker*. Yet, reversibility is not found among the constructional features of this specific structure (*Pegasus the horse*, \**?the horse Pegasus*; *Rizzo the Rat*, \**?the Rat Rizzo*; *Rowlf the Dog*, \**?the Dog Rowlf*). It seems as if this pattern projects a fossilized structure, that is, a structure that does not allow changes (\**the Frog Kermit*). Another important characteristic of this specific example is the fact that the common noun does not even make minimal allusion to a possible profession (like in *Barbara the heartbreaker*, not to mention *Alice Walker the writer*), and, as already mentioned, the profession of one individual is one of the most basic meanings of prototypical close appositions; the meaning that we infer from examples like *Kermit the Frog*, though, has nothing to do with professions. Maybe this is an aspect of the growing character of the close appositionive network: from a social role (*the writer*) to the most salient feature (*the heartbreaker*) and as far as explicit ordinary reference (*the frog*). These three different

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

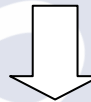
---

instances imply an undeniable linguistic reality that cannot be denied, the fact that one same-form construction can imply different meanings. Consider the following schema:

CLOSE APPPOSITION: proper noun + definite article + common noun
<i>Alice Walker the writer</i>
social referent (profession)



CLOSE APPPOSITION: proper noun + definite article + common noun
<i>Barbara the heartbreaker</i>
most salient characteristic



CLOSE APPPOSITION: proper noun + definite article + common noun
<i>Kermit the Frog</i>
ordinary reference

The example under analysis here demonstrates that, at the same time that the CA construction evolves, the fossilization of its structures becomes more prominent, that is, the further the construction expands the more fossilized it becomes. With respect to the type involved here, *Kermit the Frog*, and those types most closely related to it, *Alice Walker the writer* and *Barbara the heartbreaker*, it could be contended that fossilization is a consequence of the type of common noun used in U2 position. The prototypical CA

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

character of *writer* and its social reference provides the *Alice Walker the writer* type with more possibilities of syntactic ordering and constituent order. In the case of *Barbara the heartbreaker*, these possibilities decrease but there is still a minimal chance of syntactic reordering. In our society professions and social roles can be almost as specific and personal as proper names. Indeed, there is only one president (*President Obama*) with respect to a country, and only one pope (*Pope Francis I*) with respect to the world (see section 4.3.3). The final step in the fossilization of the N (proper) + Det (def. art.) + N (common) structure is *Kermit the Frog*. It shows a fixed constituent order more than obvious, as we have seen. This ‘fixity’ can be seen as the result of a gradual expansion of close apposition. The main cause of this fixity is the use of a common noun, *frog*, which evokes a meaning so unspecific that it would be impossible to identify the referent to which it makes reference, contrary to *writer* and *heartbreaker*. In addition to this, *frog* evokes neither a profession nor a social role. Therefore, the proper noun must be used in the first place, in that it is the one responsible for the identification of the referent of the whole structure.

### 4.3.3 The *King Henry VIII* type

One of the main features of the close appositive construction in general is that it evokes a social referent (see Acuña-Fariña 2009; see also section 3.3.7). This feature is maximized in the use of the *King Henry VIII* structure, whose social referent is unique if we are talking about a particular country, or even with respect to the whole world, as in the case of *Pope Francis I*. More specifically and with respect to the construction at issue here, its structure depends to such a great extent on its use in the media that it is sometimes considered as belonging only to the language of the media. In fact, the same structure has been in common use since Middle English (late 11<sup>th</sup> century; e.g. *Mater*



## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

*Latimer*), a period in which ‘the media’ and the journalists, strictly speaking, did not exit (see Biber & Gray 2011).

Even so, the most disconcerting feature of this type of CA structure is the non-use of the determiner which, although of a different nature, is present in the rest of the CA members (*the writer Alice Walker, my sister Cath, a friend John who’s ....*). Were it not for the lack of the determiner, this structure would be identical to the CA prototype, *the writer Alice Walker*. This is disconcerting in that singular common nouns require a determiner in order to be used grammatically (*\*cat ate the food vs. the cat ate the food*). On the other hand, whenever a proper noun is premodified, a determiner must obligatorily be used (*John drank two bottles of water vs. \*Thirsty John drank two bottles of water vs. A thirsty John drank two bottles of water*). However, in *King Henry*, where *Henry* is premodified by a common noun, there is no determiner and the construction is perfectly grammatical.

The omnipresent determiner of the CA construction allows certain types of grammatical tests with respect to members of the CA group. One such test is reversibility option which was taken to be one of the main tests that structures must pass before they were considered appositions. The non-use of the definite article implied that the syntactic possibilities of this structure are reduced and reversibility is the main affected feature (see Matthews 1981: 227-229; or section 3.3.4). The lack of the determiner in *King Henry* does not facilitate the reversibility of the nominal elements (*\*Henry King*), which itself causes the fossilization of the structure. This fossilization implies that the structure has acquired some idiosyncratic features that reduce the number of nouns that can be used in the U1 position. One can say *King Henry* but not *Sovereign Henry*, or *Mount Everest* but not *Mountain Everest* (see Matthews 1981: 228;

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

or section 3.3.4). In this respect, the structure is also a good illustration of the use speakers make of language, in that language can be seen here to influence the structure of some constructions. If language had a strict, perfectly delineated design, any noun could occupy the N1 position.

The lack of the determiner is perhaps one the most outstanding issues relating to this construction, due to the fact that the *King Henry* structure may be accompanied by a determiner, *the King Henry*, although its use is not very common, at least in Anglo-Saxon languages (German *König Heinrich*, in Danish *Kong Henry*, in Dutch *Koning Henry*), on the contrary, in Romance languages the determiner is obligatorily used (Spanish *el rey Enrique*, Galician *o rei Enrique*, Catalan *el rei Enric*, French *le roi Henri*, Portuguese *o rei Enrique*). If the determiner is included in this construction, the external similarities between the resulting structure and that of *the writer Alice Walker* are extremely obvious. However, when possible constituents are added to the nominal group their internal links are quite different. Consider the following examples:

- (6) Raul Castro receives *former US President James Carter*.
- (7) Raul Castro receives *former US President*.
- (8) \*Raul Castro receives *former US James Carter*.
- (9) *US President Barack Obama* says he is open to arming rebel fighters.
- (10) *US President* says he is open to arming rebel fighters.
- (11) \**US Barack Obama* says he is open to arming rebel fighters.
- (12) *US First Lady Michelle Obama* waves to the photographers as she goes for a walk in downtown Marbella.

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

(13) *US First Lady* waves to the photographers as she goes for a walk in downtown Marbella.

(14) \**US Michelle Obama* waves to the photographers as she goes for a walk in downtown Marbella.

All these examples demonstrate that the pre-pre-modifiers do not accompany the head of the construction, that is, the proper noun, as happens in *the famous writer Alice Walker* (*the famous Alice Walker*; see section 4.2). On the contrary, and as seen in these examples, the pre-pre-modifier accompanies the common noun, modifier of the head proper noun. Another relevant point with respect to the possible modifiers that may appear in this construction is that the construction only allows a reduced number of adjectives. Only those words related to nationalities, governmental, royal or noble issues are allowed. The fact that only a certain and specific group of adjectives can be used here indicates that the common noun has some kind of salience (similar to the common noun in *the writer Alice Walker*, which is the reference point).

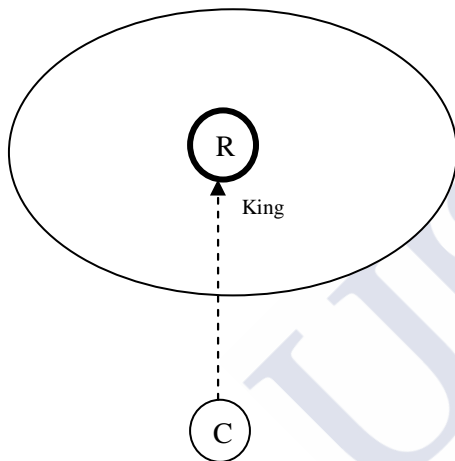
In light of the previous evidence that the *King Henry* structure shows some peculiarities with respect to the other members of the CA family, it will be useful now to say something about its internal constituency, which seems to be a rather unproblematic. The *King Henry* construction has an N (common) + N (proper) internal structure whose functions are modifier and head, respectively. As briefly mentioned above, the similarities between this structure and *the writer Alice Walker* are evident. By virtue of this similitude, it could be asserted that *King Henry* is the result of the deletion of the definite article. This deletion is possible as a consequence of the title connotations that the common noun *king* has acquired, which confer on the noun a

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

certain type of grounding function. Given these changes, the internal constituency of this type of structure can also be explained using the reference point model, which we previously applied to the CA prototype. Therefore, as in the relation established between the nominal elements in *the write Alice Walker*, the common noun *King* is the reference point word which is evoked in order to achieve the target of the communicative act, that is, the common noun, *Henry*, as Figures 7 and 8 illustrate:

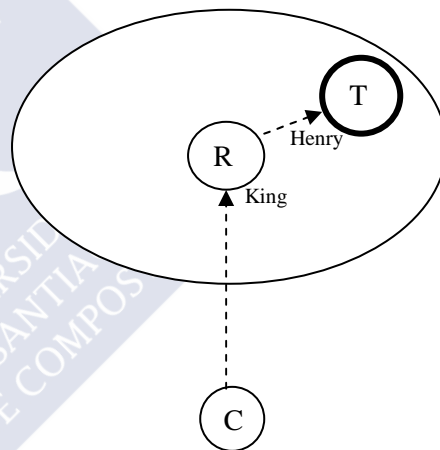
**Figure 10. Selection of the reference**

point in *King Henry*



**Figure 11. Selection of the target**

element in *King Henry*



Thus, it can be contended that *King Henry* shows a clear U2 headedness, as with the CA prototype, *the writer Alice Walker*. The proper noun is the head, premodified by a common noun which shows no determiner, a fact which can easily be explained by taking into account the social connotations that it has acquired. The lack of the determiner then is unproblematic as regards the headedness analysis of this structure.

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

### 4.3.4 The *the word 'courtesy'* type

One of the main tenets of Construction Grammar is that constructions develop specific functions and contain specific meanings. In that sense, it cannot be denied that this type of close apposition is as clear an illustration as one might find of a tight meaning-form correspondence, and as Lee (1952: 270) has pointed out this CA is “almost unavoidable, for clarity’s sake, in any usage involving words being talked of as words”. As we have already noted, a binominal structure was traditionally the principal idea in dealing with close appositions, and it is mainly for this – its binominal appearance – that the construction has been treated as a prototypical close apposition. However, this ‘binominalism’ cannot be counted among the features of the *the word 'courtesy'* type. As Lee notes, in any careful examination the *omission test* will be used to reveal appositions, because in this way the issue of whether both nominal structures develop the same function, if they were functionally equivalent, can be addressed. However, when applying the omission test to the construction under analysis here, the omission of one of the nominal elements leads to an ungrammatical structure or to a change in meaning. Thus, in *the word 'peace' should be present during all the discourse, the word should be present during all the discourse* does not have the same meaning as in *the word 'peace'*, and *\*peace should be present during all the discourse* is completely ungrammatical. On occasions, the omission test does yield something akin to syntactic equivalence. For instance, in *the word 'freedom' is a noun*, we can derive *freedom is a noun*. But, even in these cases, to assert that *the word is a noun* has the same kind of meaning as in *the word 'freedom' is a noun* is surely wrong. Therefore, the metalinguistic meaning of these constructions is only achieved by means of a factor external to the construction itself. So, in *the word 'freedom' is a noun*, the predicate *is a*

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

*noun* makes it easy to understand *freedom* metalinguistically; in *the word 'freedom' is not necessary, freedom is not necessary* is certainly not intended.

With respect to its headedness, this construction has a clear N1 centre, and as a consequence all the modifiers and complements included in the sentences where this type of CA appears must refer to the first noun. Clear examples of such N1 headedness are easily found in languages like Spanish with rich inflectional systems. For example, when N1 and N2 differ in gender, agreement is established with N1 (*me gusta el nombre* (masc) *Catalina* (fem) *porque es muy sonoro* (masc)/ 'I like the name Catalina because there is a certain musical ring to it'). Moreover, it is clear that, contrary to *the writer Alice Walker*, in *the word 'courtesy'* we do not use the article to refer to the second nominal member: *the 'freedom' that is a word*. At the same time, with the meaning conferred by the *the word 'freedom'* construction and its semantic differences with respect to *the writer Alice Walker*, it must be pointed out that the reference point model cannot be applied to this construction in the same way as to the definite article + noun (common) + noun (proper) construction. Used as a syntactic test to reveal the internal syntactic organization of grammatical structures where possible (in the previous case, for example, the common noun functioned as the reference point of the proper noun-head element), the reference point model cannot be applied to the *the word 'courtesy'* construction. The selection restrictions of this construction clearly point out that N1 deserves head status. Those restrictions are the only possible test permitting us argue in favour of a syntactic structure of the form (definite article + N (head) + N). From a functional and cognitive point of view, there are two other characteristics of this construction that define it clearly: its 'fixity', allowing only the definite determiner *the* (*\*this word courtesy, \*two words courtesy*), and its closed fixed form, which allows its identifiability as such, as a specific construction.

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

Therefore, the *the word 'courtesy'* type is an example of a CA member which shows a clear N1 headedness structure given meaning connotations as well as a fixed, fossilized syntactic organization.

### 4.3.5 The 'a friend John [*who's in linguistics*]' type

Until now we have been dealing with close appositions with a clear 'definite' character. However, not all types of structures included under the label CA share this feature. The main interest of this pattern is that it is the only kind of indefinite CA. One of the main issues with close appositive constructions is that they use definite elements as determiners, an idea contrary to Keizer (2007a: 32 ff.) who uses this construction to reject this quasi-obligatory definite character of the determiner. Together with the indefinite article *a*, the pattern also occurs with indefinite *this* and *that* (Givón 1993: vol II; 204 ff.). Examples (15)-(18) below are drawn from Keizer's corpus:

- (15) I have *a friend John who's in Linguistics with me*.
- (16) He also has to put up with *a sappy elder brother Robert* who is forever mooning about some girl or other and *a sister Ethel* who has all the brisk no-nonsense superiority of a true Wodehouse gel.
- (17) Oh, I remember I was talking to *this bloke Mark* some sort of ... this really old friend of mine.
- (18) We had a lecture by *that guy Rene Weis over there*.

In the analysis of this pattern, two features of this pattern that must be taken into account. The first is that such a type of construction is severely constrained. This can be appreciated in two different ways: first, the common nouns involved in this pattern

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

contain “very low lexical information” (Burton-Roberts 1975: 398), words like *friend*, *child*, *guy*, *chap*, *bloke*, plus a number of others. The second is that reversibility is possible although it implies the abandonment of the CA construction in favour of the LA one: *He also has to put up with Robert, a soppo elder brother who is (...)*. The second important feature is that when selectional restrictions affect the construction, they affect the first noun only. This indicates that even though reversibility is an option, not all instances of this type of CA construction allow it (as already discussed with *Kermit the Frog*). Reversibility is impossible in cases where its use results in strings of the form *???I have a John*, which are clearly ungrammatical (without elaborate pragmatic remediation). This suggests a clear N1 centre and this clear N1 headedness in turn constitutes another argument in favour of the thesis that close appositions are not double-headed constructions, at least not generally.

On a deeper analysis, considering differences in the use of one type of determiner or another reveals the division of the construction into two subtypes: those which include *this* or *that* as determiners and those with an indefinite article. As already seen, the first difference between both subtypes implies reversibility; those with an indefinite article become ungrammatical if the nominal elements exchange positions. Another important difference has to do with ‘fixity’, and this involves *this* and *that*. To great extent, the *this-that* subtype involves semantically vague nouns such as *chap*, *lad*, *bloke*, *fellow* and *guy*. Specific constructions like *this guy Mark*, *this bloke John* and *this chap Eric* are characterized by a very particular discourse function: they introduce an individual by his/her name together with a common noun which indicates that the individual in question is not well-known to the addressee. Notice that for this very specific functional role the indefinite article *a* is normally prohibited (*\*a guy John*, *what does he think he’s doing?* *A* would sound odd instead of with *this/that* in (17) and (18)



## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

above). The construction is thus completely frozen. Maybe this state of having been frozen is more deliberate/ functional than it seems. In fact, a certain degree of distance could be the very reason for using the construction. For example, in saying *this guy Smith, is he coming or not?*, the speaker could be indicating that he is not close to the individual referred to, and may even be implying an attitude of rejection rather than plain unfamiliarity in *stricto sensu*. It seems plausible that the construction is the result of a grammaticalization process whereby the third degree of familiarity and/or the distance that it encodes were routinized after the form provided by the non-restrictive version (*this guy, comma, John, comma* → *this guy John*). This transition from LA to CA perfectly illustrates the *inheritance links* between these two types of appositive structures (Goldberg 1995: 72-74). However, inheritance does not mean that the ‘heir’ receives all the features of the source construction. Thus, when inheritance occurs, the new construction develops a highly specific profile. In the case here, the new pattern does not inherit the openness of loose apposition, which would allow the insertion of any kind of modification (*this guy we met the other day, John; that guy over there at the counter, John*), on the contrary, the construction *this guy John* does not even accept adjectival premodifiers easily. In fact, it sounds better if the whole NP is used as a topic separated from the sentence by means of intonational marks (*??this shallow girl Eve, she is always gossiping!; ??that interesting chap Eric, is he coming?*). In the same way, PPs are not easily allowed without intonational detachment inside the NP itself: *\*this chap in the library Eric*. To conclude, then, I consider that the ‘distancing’ effect of this type of structures is unique to them, an emergent property developed during the transition from LA to this particular type of CA, as a function of its degree of conventionalization or fixity.

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

The second subtype can be seen in examples (15) and (16) above. It differs from other types of CA mainly in that it is usually employed with first names only (but bear in mind *my sister Cath* and *Kermit the Frog*). If it is compared with the prototype, *the writer Alice Walker*, we find that a first difference lies in the fact that prototypical close appositions require a full name to identify an individual by his/her profession (*the writer Alice Walker* vs. *\*the writer Alice*). In that respect, the pattern under analysis could be seen as an extension of this more classic type which has developed its appellative and identification function to the maximum. It must be taken into account that it even admits quantification: *well, I have two friends John who are in linguistics* (notice: *\*two John friends*, *\*two friend Johns*). This means that, apart from having a clear N1 centre, the referential power of the proper noun is not going to be among the features of this construction. The proper noun *John* does not point to any referent; it is used to denote a characteristic that may be shared by an indefinite set of individuals, and this characteristic is that they share something in common: a name.

It is interesting to note that all the examples that Keizer (2007a) uses in her account of “indefinite appositions” occur in object position and are followed by relative clauses (as in (15) and (16) above). It is possible that her oral corpus contains a greater variety of cases and that we are simply not aware of them. But in fact this combination, [*V a friend X who's ...*], is a typical recursive schema in conversation. Moreover, starting off a sentence with a string *??A friend John who's in linguistics can do that*, would be very strange. This is a consequence of the grounding system. The structure *I have a friend John who's in linguistics with me* has as its grounding element *I have*, an element outside the NP itself, which is an inheritance from the parent construction *my friend John* provided via the possessive determiner. *I have* is actually very similar to a possessive determiner (*my*) in terms of grounding the reference of *a friend John* in the

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

discourse. In that way, the reference point model, previously applied to the Poss + N + N construction, may explain the internal structure of this type of indefinite CAs. The verb *have* is used as the reference point for the target element *friend*, which, as noted above, functions as the head of the construction.

### 4.3.6 The *we women, you men* type

This type of structure is considered to be a classic example of close apposition. Together with the appositive analysis that some grammarians offered, authors such as Postal (1966: 201-225), Burton-Roberts (1975: 393), and Huddleston (1984: 233 ff) have also put forward the theory that the first constituent in this type of structure must be considered a type of article. Postal defends such a view on the grounds that, at least superficially, in certain configurations personal pronouns such as *we*, *you*, and *us* have “the same privileges of occurrence” (Hockett 1955: 99 ff.) as ordinary determiners. Thus, just as one can say *you boys are always acting wrongly*, one can also say *the/these/those boys are always acting wrongly*. Postal also contends that this construction cannot be included within the appositive family because it can be found in question and negative structures where ‘apposition’ is not allowed. Such an assertion, however, cannot stand because it is clear that he means here loose appositives rather than close appositions, given that such restrictions do not apply to the latter. In this way, the *we women* construction cannot be accounted according to Postal’s proposal. In fact, if personal pronouns could occur in the same place as determiners, examples (19), (20), (21) and (22) would not be ungrammatical. On the contrary, if we replace the pronoun by the definite article *the*, these strings are rendered perfect:

(19) a. \*I teacher

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

b. \*you teacher

c. \*he teacher

d. \*they teacher

(20) \*I teacher who Sue prefers.

(21) \*She teacher who Sue prefers. Compare: We/you teacher who Sue prefers.

(22) \*Greatest ones don't do that. Compare: The Greatest ones don't do that.

Postal's theory that pronouns act like determiners, then, is not supported by the evidence. In all the constructions mentioned above, the U2 position must be filled with a whole noun phrase (*\*you teacher* vs. *you the teacher*), in order to be grammatical. The use of the pronoun does not just allow a bare common noun, as in the case with 'true' determiners. So, if personal pronouns, in this type of construction, do not emulate determiners, then the notion of close apposition is the most appropriate one to refer to these structures given, that pronouns develop the same functions as prototypical NPs. As a consequence, the *we women* construction must be analysed as a close apposition, in that it is made up by two NPs. Delorme & Dougherty (1972:11) consider that the relationship between examples like *you, girls*, and *you girls* "provide[s] evidence that stress, intonation, pauses, etc. are not necessarily revealing in specifying underlying constituent structure or semantic interpretation". However, this idea is also problematical, as the following paradigm illustrates (Acuña-Fariña 1996, 2006b):

- |                     |                    |
|---------------------|--------------------|
| (23) a. *I the girl | g. we the girls    |
| b. *you the girl    | h. you the girls   |
| c. *she the girl    | i. *they the girls |
| d. *I a girl        | j. we girls        |

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

- |                |                |
|----------------|----------------|
| e. *you a girl | k. you girls   |
| f. *she a girl | l. *they girls |

With respect to this paradigm, we can understand why the singular forms are wrong: if U2 is used in order to specify who is meant by U1, then with a singular referent, the speaker and hearer need no further specification in that they use a pronoun implies that they surely know the antecedent, a fact which makes the ‘apposition’ non-essential. However, there seems to be no strong reason why the third person singular cannot be further specified, since one can distinguish among several third parties in a given context. Besides this, the reason why the third person plural is also wrong is not easy to explain, especially since in the objective case we do find such forms in informal spoken English (I don’t like *them doctors*).

Inserting punctuation marks between U1 and U2 solves most, if not all, of these forms (that is, transforming them into LAs; see Huddleston & Pullum 2002: 374). Taking these structures into account, several rules could be stipulated, but the fact remains that these constructions only admit first and second person plural personal pronouns and the accusative third person plural. This almost whimsical use of the pronouns is incompatible with both the determiner view and the CA view. In a nutshell, the construction must be learned and stored as such. As such, what must be learned does not amount to much: only four fixed personal pronouns (*we, you, us, them*) and a fixed set of nouns (names of professions and a few generic nouns like *men, women, boys* and *girls*). As a consequence recognisability is not a problem, due to the limited productivity of the construction (*we women/men/doctors/linguists/singers/actors, etc.*).

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

As regards the issue of headedness, the fact that the pronoun has superior indexical power than the noun in U2 position suggests that it is the head; after all, in the context of an office in which both men and women are present, saying ‘*we men* are lazy’ does not entail that men in general are lazy but it that part of ‘*we*’ is necessarily so, the speaker at least. However, in addition to Postal (1966), Huddleston & Pullum (2002: 374) also take the opposite view contending that *we*, *you* and *us* are “personal determinatives” (...) “exactly parallel to other definite determiners such as demonstratives and the definite article *in*, for example, permitting the universal quantifier as a predeterminer”. Thus, one can truly say *all we supporters of a federal Europe*, but not *\*all we will win the argument*. Whether that is enough on its own for the determiner thesis to hold is a moot point, especially given the restrictions shown in (19)-(22) above. In a constructionist framework, the determiner thesis and the appositive thesis can simply be seen as reflecting simultaneous features of the same construction, with neither of the two managing to coerce it into a pristine necessary-and-sufficient kind of superordinate form. Whatever their internal structure, however, the recognizability of the whole construction is never in great danger. Its neat formal specifications make for easy categorization, and categorization is all that is needed for it to become an effective symbolic package including the meaning (which is, of course, the ultimate goal). In other words, once again their internal structure need not be resolved. In this sense, the rigid formal make-up of the construction makes it similar to other “syntactic nuts” (Culicover 1999) such as the *let alone* construction (Fillmore et al. 1988) which have a peculiar syntax, usually a mixture of closed morphology and the possibility of open variables which may be filled productively (Jackendoff 2008: 15). This affords them a private space inside the close appositive network of constructions.

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

### 4.4 Close appositions and their network structure

The constructions examined thus far demonstrate that they build among them a constructional community characterized by (1) a superficial N + N schematic make-up, (2) which means that U1 *is* U2, and (3) that all the possible structures included under the label close apposition make up a static relation between N1 and N2 (Varantola 1993). These three specific features are so inherent to the notion of close apposition that no other construction shows them all. This fact greatly constrains the CA conceptual space *a priori*, that is, its syntactic and categorical features turn it into a legitimate object of linguistic study.

That conceptual space is even more circumscribed in that there are a number of important additional features that most of the individual constructions also share. The first is that these constructions are semantically restrictive (*my sister Cath*, for instance, is not just any sister). The second is that most of them are short, fixed NP formulas which require little recognition and processing time. The third and probably the most important characteristic is that, adopting Hawkins' (2004: 32 ff.) terminology somewhat loosely, those CAs considered prototypical (*the writer Alice Walker, my sister Cath*) construct NP by Det. More narrowly, they start with a classic determiner which projects NP at the top of the structure, thus facilitating the CRD ('constituent recognition domain') by EIC ('early immediate constituency'). Coupled with the form, there is no doubt that all these constructions also project one referend at the top too not two or more. All restrictions on the expansion of the constructions, their fixity, testify to this: as we have seen, if the moment the first noun of a structure like *the writer Alice Walker* receives even minimal elaboration, the language-users' processing system begins to activate a referential path, and this is incompatible with another active referential path 'under the same roof' (*\*the writer of the century Alice Walker vs. the writer of the*

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

*century, Alice Walker*). This is a general requirement of the structure of nominal phrases, not just of apposition, but the fact that in close appositives there is at least a semblance of binominal constituency has generally made it possible to regard CA and apposition in general precisely as the exception to the general rule. This view (that CA has two or more referential heads) cannot be sustained. In addition to the classic objections of Burton-Roberts (1975), which are aimed specifically at appositive constructions (see section 3.3.3), the ungrammaticality of (24) below illustrates the *i-within-i* principle which, according to Chomsky (1981), is not allowed within arguments in general (see Williams 1982). In (24) the whole NP cannot have the same referential index as one of its parts. Only a cross-illocutionary move such as the one that LAs usually provide can salvage such forms (Doron 1992; Acuña-Fariña 2006a: 13):

(24) \*[His<sub>i</sub> own worst enemy]<sub>i</sub> lost the election again.

(25) John<sub>i</sub>, [his<sub>i</sub> own worst enemy]<sub>i</sub>, lost the election again.

This requirement that only one referential pole is possible at the top is important. It is often noted that grammars tend to avoid underspecification and structural ambiguity for processing reasons. For instance, when discussing categorical squishes like the *-ing* form in *I am tired of that feeding the animals all day* (with the *-ing* string a mixture of clause and NP), Aarts (2007: 233) points out that languages tend to avoid true hybridity because “cases where the categorial scales are perfectly balanced are presumably hard to process mentally”. Aarts is of the opinion that in cases of intersective gradience (understood as the existence of strings which display properties of two different categories which are therefore said to converge), one can always “count” the opposing properties and decide on a specific constituent structure for a specific analysis.



## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

In the present work I argue in favour of the idea that close appositive structures are mono-headed binominal constructions (although headedness is not perfectly clear in some constructions). At the same time, I contend that headedness is not as static a position as the overall form of close apposition happens to be. In light of this, the pattern *the writer Alice Walker* is analysed as a nominal structure with two nominal elements and one nominal head. Likewise, the idea that this structure, as well those of its sister structures, shows a superficial fixed structure which does not allow too much modification is also accepted. However, it also seems to me relevant here to voice the opinion that its internal configuration is more varied than has sometimes been posited. The use of a construction like *the actor Tom Hanks* or *the writer Alice Walker*, or any of those structures made up by a Det + common noun + proper name requires the use of a mental path whose final destination is the profile determinant of the whole construction. At the same time, this path offers cues to arrive at the final meaning of the structure. In the same way, the *my sister Cath* construction supports the internal variation of some constructions of the close appositive network. This construction requires a mental process which suggests a certain degree complexity in the internal constituency of some CA structures.

However, some of the members of the close appositive family show a fixed, static configuration. This is the case with *Alice Walker the writer* whose internal structure is clear but ‘shallow’ in that the entire phrase projects a name at the top which demotes the internal structure of the construction and promotes the top itself. Likewise, in the *we women* pattern, a rich internal constituency is incompatible with the insurmountable difficulties of deciding which N is the profile determinant. Be that as it may, I take the line that these indeterminacies are part of the close appositive network character. As such, such indeterminacies do not matter much because all these

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

constructions are rather fixed, extremely well-demarcated constructional schemas which are recognised directly as such short, sharply delimited phrasal forms which are processed as *avalanches* (MacWhinney 2001), as rigid neural routines.

In other words, as far as CA headedness is concerned, it appears to me that, just as close appositions differ in headedness, they also show different internal elaboration. Some of them show an important degree of internal complexity (*the writer Alice Walker, my sister Cath*) but others are characterized by their fixed character (*we women, Kermit the Frog*). Those appositive constructions which contain an initial determiner, it seems, are the ones showing more internal complexity. Therefore, it could be said that the prototypical close appositive schema ((Det) RP<sub>(N)</sub> H<sub>(N)</sub> (Mod)) is the result of an inheritance process from the NP schema (Det + N) which allows a certain degree of internal complexity, and that this complexity disappears once fossilization affects the CA construction. Thus, componentiality can be seen as a means of reaching meaning, but, when meaning can be reached safely anyway, componentiality is not obligatory. In the grammar of the NP, meaning amounts to the activation of one referent, and as long as the close appositive constructions we have examined stick to their strict formal specifications, they all project single unambiguous referents. So, meaning, the *sine qua non* of language, is not in danger. The forms which are in danger are those idealized, strict syntactic structures that had to stick to a perfect delineated paradigm.

The grammar of English makes sure that, despite poor internal elaboration and even conflicting attracting schemas exerting their influence on the same form (as in *the writer Alice Walker* construction or the *we women* construction), the different kinds of CAs all remain unique patterns with unique, if not very different, functional jobs. Apart from this, the rigidity of each pattern is also correspondingly unique. Thus, the pattern

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

*the writer Alice Walker* shows an external make-up which only allows words that designate professions and the like in U1 position, and involves full names or family names as U2s. Its reversibility is one of its main features but, at the same time, this means that the resulting construction acquires a different functional range of application and an extended type frequency, which leads to the use of this construction with words that are not strictly professions: *Barbara the heartbreaker*. But the use of this pattern goes further, because it has spread in such a way that N2 may be fulfilled by a common noun which has nothing at all to do with a profession: *Kermit the Frog*. Moreover, it seems that the further the extension goes, the more fixed it becomes, that is, a construction like *Kermit the Frog* does not allow reversibility in any sense, and its internal complexity wholly disappears. In the case of a different construction such as *my sister Cath*, the use of a profession is possible, but a CA construction would not be the most appropriate pattern, or at least it would not be as acceptable as a LA one (compare ??*my dentist Ana Martínez* / *my dentist, Ana Martínez*). Strings such as ??*my writer Alice Walker*, ??*your teacher Tom Harald*, or ??*his astronomer Martin Rees* are decidedly odd (compare *my favourite writer, Alice Walker*). This pattern is perfectly and naturally used when family nouns, or one of a few generic nouns like *friend, colleague, classmate* are used in U1 position. As a consequence of the obligatory use of a possessive determiner demanded by this construction (*\*the sister Cath*), reversibility is not possible. The pattern *the word 'courtesy'* is as closed and fixed as one can possibly expect: its main and unique meaning is a metalinguistic one which implies that the first element must be a metalinguistic noun such as *word* or *expression*. Reversibility is not possible either. The *a friend John who's ...* pattern might appear to be the indefinite counterpart of *my friend John*, yet the differences between these two constructions outweigh the similarities. In the first place, *friend* can exist in the two patterns, but the

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

range of nouns allowed by each construction in general is very different: *a bloke Mike who ...* / *\*my bloke Mike, a chap John-something* / *\*his chap John*). In the second place, the contexts where these two patterns appear are quite different too, the *a friend John who's ...* pattern usually occurs in informal English with only two or three fixed introductory formulas: *I know a guy X who ...*, *I have a friend X who ...*. The pattern is expandable by definition since the extra predication that must attach to the proper noun is the one giving it discourse grounding. The (sub)type *this guy James Woods* involves a very small number of nouns in N1 position: *chap, lad, bloke, fellow* and *guy* are perhaps the most frequent. This means that its type frequency is drastically reduced, a fact which contributes to the fixed character of the construction. Finally, the *we women* construction only allows a very specific set of words, the personal pronouns: *we, you, us* and *them*. Therefore, its type frequency is almost null, contributing to the freezing of the construction. Except for construction types *the writer Alice Walker* and *Alice Walker the writer*, none are reversible a clear indicator of the absence of true functional equivalence, which is traditionally considered as one of the main tests for appositive identification.

Although the members of the close appositive family develop different functions and their respective forms are extremely constrained leading to unique form-meaning ensembles, the close apposition network exists because the constructions are nevertheless interconnected to a very high degree. Apart from the overarching N + N schema, the predicative BE relation and the semi-static construal of CAs, the density of the ties that link all these constructions contributes to the conceptual, formal, and even ontological reality of the overall construction. These taxonomic ties (Goldberg 1995) connect all the constructions and define a region in grammatical space by means of the

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

sheer density of the ties. Thus, for instance, the constructions *the writer Alice Walker* and *Alice Walker the writer* share the fact that they express occupations. If, in the case of *we women* and *my sister Cath* we choose to say *we doctors* and *my sister the dancer*, then these constructions may also code occupations and the like. With respect to constructions such as *my sister Cath*, *Alice Walker the writer*, and *a/this guy Ritchie*, all are connected by the fact that they contain proper nouns. The constructions *the writer Alice Walker* and *Alice Walker the writer* are reversible, and thus, practically identical formally. The constructions *my sister Cath* and *a friend John who...* share the same type of common noun in U1 position. The construction *we doctors* is linked to *we the doctors* and this in turn to *John Martin the doctor*. Finally, for the present purposes, the constructions *my sister Cath*, *Alice Walker the writer*, *a/this friend John*, and *the word 'freedom'* all share a feature which is considered to represent the prototypical schematic structure of CA at large: a [NP + NP] form where the first NP is the referential centre and profile determinant of the whole phrase. However, even though the [NP + NP] schema preserves the binomial appearance, this does not mean that the two NPs are truly equifunctional (Lekakou & Szendrői 2007). Viewing meaning as a collection of activation paths helps explain the connection between one CA and the rest: the differences between the various constructions are as real as their commonalities, which are to be seen as shared (parts of) activation paths only.

Differences and commonalities, then, together create the CA space, but above them all there is something which characterizes all these constructions, and that is their *meaning*. For instance, the almost identical *the writer X* and *X the writer* are consistently different with respect to their discourse functions: as already noted, the contrastive interpretation that is so natural for *X the writer* is hardly natural for *the writer X*; the latter is very common in journalistic texts involving communication

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

between two individuals with little shared knowledge; the former rests on some sort of lexicalised familiarity with the referent in question, and is more like a title. The important point here is that the formal specifications of each construction is associated with a conventional interpretation. Therefore, given that these parent specifications and the shared features mentioned at the beginning of this section cannot account for the specific meaning and function of each construction, these must be listed.

We must now focus on the conceptual space that emerges from the fruitful linkage of the different formal spaces, and ask in particular whether it captures a polysemous or a monosemous category. As previously seen, the majority of the close constructions examined here are rather fixed, highly conventionalised schemas with little or no ‘drifting’ potential, that is with little room for peripheral branching. Take *the singer Elaine Paige*. The first noun cannot easily reach its maximal expansion without intonational detachment (*\*the singer that played Florence Elaine Paige*; compare *the singer that played Florence, Elaine Paige*) and premodification of the phrase is severely limited in that it works best if aimed at the proper noun (which makes it a very limited option in practice). The same can be said of the type *Amancio Ortega the businessman*: *Amancio Ortega the businessman who revolutionized the fashion world* sounds bad without intonational breaks. The ring of a conventionalised title demands no peripherality pretensions. The apparent combination of two types that yields *my sister the dancer Cath* does not easily admit even a single extra word, such as a first name or a last name: ???*my sister the dancer Cath Willow* (if pronounced in one phonological phrase). The defective paradigm that integrates the *we boys* construction, which we saw in section 4.3.6, is even more constrained, in that only the first and second person plural forms and the third person plural accusative are admitted. In short, the CA map is rather reined in by the overarching schema that captures all the members and the distance

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

between the schema and the instances leans to the minimal. This usually signals a monosemous schematic category.

### 4.5 Conclusions about the close appositive phenomenon

Traditional grammar treated close apposition as a construction exhibiting a double-headed structure. This idea cannot be rejected out of hand because such a structural distribution is evident in structures like *my sister the dancer* and *Alice Walker the writer*. However, this does not mean that the [NP + NP] constituency entails two referential heads. There is no such a thing as a double headed nominal structure in the grammar of English. Moreover, two or more referential paths are never projected in integrated noun phrases, appositive or not. Therefore, the CA network comprises such a variegated group that it veers away from the mathematical idea of uniformed structures. I contend that close apposition instantiates nominal constructional diversity, a fact which would single it out as one of the best examples supporting the idea that linguistic structures are not mathematical operations. In this sense, they are more like biological entities than mathematical ones.

Moreover, if constructions are considered as primitive components of grammar, they must be recognized as symbolic units. The recognition of this symbolic character is well described by Goldberg & Jackendoff (2004), who contend that: (1) constructions may have **unusual syntax**, as in:

- (26) Our friends won't buy this analysis, *let alone* the next one we propose (*let alone* construction),
- (27) *One* more pseudo generalisation *and/or* I'm giving up (*NP and/or S* construction),

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

(2) but, that they may also have **standard syntax**, although some **special meaning** is attached to the construction, a fact which implies special restrictions. In (28) below the special meaning is the resultative:

(28) Fred watered the plant flat,

(3) and, finally, they also have **standard syntax**, but the standard syntactic position is occupied by a **special element** that signals the construction:

(29) Bill belched his way out of the restaurant (*way* construction).

(30) We're twisting the night away (*time-away* construction)

If we apply these three features to the different CA constructions, most of them fall under form number 3 (with the *we boys* type perhaps corresponding to number 1). This is probably because the clear overall nominal form of the constructions, and the three main parent specifications that feed into this form constrain it a great deal. The fact that most of these constructions are semantically restrictive, short, easily activated NP formulas which project only one referent (like ordinary NPs) helps constrain the network too. Then, various features conspire to create segments which, even when internally unstable, are nevertheless externally stable: the lack of excessive drift, the strong conventionalization of each of the forms, their relative frequency of occurrence, their long entrenchment in the language, and the existence of conflicting and competing sanctioning noun phrase schemas exerting their influence on the constituency and maybe even on the origin of some of these constructions. Their external stability is granted from the top, by the construction as a whole, which must be listed with a subtly



## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

specialised functional role, and must enjoy a place in the representational organization of the language system as a whole.





### **Binominal noun phrases: *your brat of a brother***

#### **5.1 Introduction**

This last chapter will focus on the analysis of a type of structure which is included within the NP category and which perfectly exemplifies the variety and diversity of this category as proposed in the present study. Structures composed of a Det + N + *of* + a + N are considered to be binominal constructions (see Aarts 1998), given that they contain two nominal elements. Other structures exist that contain two nominal elements, such as the close appositions examined in chapters 3 and 4. However, the main difference is that in binominal noun phrases both nominals are joined together by the preposition *of* which renders the construction, at first sight, more prototypically a NP than classic close appositions. Let us first consider the following examples:

- (1) An angel of a girl
- (2) The fool of a fellow
- (3) Your brat of a brother
- (4) That idiot of a prime minister
- (5) This idiot of a filmmaker
- (6) One hell of a beating
- (7) Each and every jewel of a national park
- (8) Those fools of a crew

As we might expect, the structures under analysis in this chapter have been the subject of differing opinions by a variety of linguists, from N1 headedness put forward by

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

Poutsma (1926) to the N2 headedness of Aarts (1998) and Keizer (2007a). For now, we will set this issue to one aside, a detailed account of these different points of view being given in section 5.3.

Consider the role of definiteness and indefiniteness in these binominals. It is sometimes concluded that this type of structure can only be indefinite. In fact, the ICE-GB corpus only contains examples with indefinite articles. (9)-(10) (taken from Keizer 2007a: 86) illustrate this:

- (9) Then they'll be like rats in a pit until he makes sense, and you gave him *one hell of a beating*.
- (10) Well he has *an absolute beast of a ball*.

However, this does not mean that binominal NPs can only allow indefinite articles in the first determiner (from now on Det1) position. As seen in examples (1)-(8), definite articles, possessive pronouns and demonstratives like *this* and *that* can also be used. On the contrary, the second determiner (henceforth Det2) position can only be filled with the indefinite article *a*. The fixed indefinite Det2 character is a key feature in the analysis of structures like *your brat of a brother*, as we will see in section 5.4.

With respect to the nouns, there are not too many restrictions as to which type of noun can be used or not (see sections 5.3 and 5.3.4; Keizer 2007a), with the only exception that the first noun (N1) must have an evaluative character (with respect to this evaluative character, see section 5.4.2 for a different point of view; also see Aarts 1998: 121). Another characteristic feature is that the nominal elements used in this construction are usually common nouns, even though examples with proper nouns are

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

also possible in both the N1 and the N2 position, though not very common, as in (11)-(13):

(11) A Kate Moss of a wine

(12) A Hitler of a man

(13) That fool of a John

As for the position of the second noun (N2), the only restriction is that it can never be filled by a pronoun, hence examples like (14) are not grammatical. It is also considered that mass nouns are not possible in this position, as shown in example (15) (see Keizer 2007a: 92; section 5.3.4):

(14) \*that jerk of him

(15) \*a wonder of gold

Therefore, binominal structures are open constructions with a few idiomatic cases, the most common one being *that hell of a problem*, with many semantic variations within the scarce grammatical constraints which affect the construction.

### 5.2 The external form of binominal noun phrases

As briefly noted in the previous section, this type of structure is composed of a determiner, a noun, the preposition *of*, the indefinite article *a* and another noun. In order to further understand the different possible syntactic analyses of these five grammatical elements, each will now be described in detail.

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

### 5.2.1 The Det1 position

The Det1 position, contrary to the Det2 position, allows a varied range of different elements. The Det1 function may be developed by:

- indefinite articles (*a hell of a problem*)
- indefinite determiners (*one hell of a beating*)
- distributive determinatives (*each and every jewel of a national park*)
- definite determiners (*the hell of a problem*)
- possessive pronouns (*your brat of a brother*)
- demonstratives (*this rag of a dress, that fool of a professor*)

One important feature of the Det1 position is that the number of the determiner is singular in the great majority of the examples. However, given the variable character of linguistic expressions, there are always exceptions to rules, and this is the case here. Thus, with the aim of being exhaustive, the following instances must be taken into account:

(16) Those fools of a crew

(17) Those idiots of a family

(18) Those fools of a royal family

As can be seen, the Det1 position may be filled by a demonstrative in its plural form. Given this plurality, such examples cause us some problems when analysing their internal syntactic structure with respect to the singular instances. However, we will leave this issue for then moment and return to it in section 5.4.

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

Definite determiners are also used in the Det1 position of the Binominal Noun Phrase (henceforth BNP) construction. As in ordinary NPs, this means that the whole structure is definite. However, as BNPs can be considered not to form part of the prototypical NP schema, the fact that the Det1 position is filled by an indefinite determiner like *a* or *one* does not imply that the whole structure is indefinite. Consider these two examples:

(19) An angel of a girl

(20) A giant of a man

At a first sight, and given the use of the indefinite article, these two examples do not seem to make reference to a very specific girl or man. Yet the fact is that, due to the use of an evaluative noun in N1 position, the whole construction seems to make reference to a known and specific referent. Therefore, for the time being, I consider that BNPs always imply a definite referent.

### 5.2.2 The N1 position

Even though it is often thought that this type of structure is not widely used (see section 5.3.3 and Aarts 1998), one can find many different examples of the BNP construction which include all manner of nouns in the N1 position. As already mentioned, the main feature of the first noun in this construction is that it must offer an evaluative description (as for this evaluative feature, see section 5.4.2). As such, the nouns that can be found in this position are typically *jerk*, *wretch*, *scoundrel*, *mess*, *sexist*, *prince*, and the like, that is, all those nouns which seem to be used as an attribute in a copular structure. Consider (21)-(24):

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

- (21) A fool of a chairman
- (22) A chairman who is a fool
- (23) A sexist of a director
- (24) A director who is a sexist

In fact, Quirk *et al.* (1985: 1284-1285) consider that this type of structure shows a clear predicate relation between the two nominal elements, and consequently, it allows a perfect transformation of the BNP into a copular sentence.

The absence of a restricted group of nouns that can be used in the BNP construction indicates its open nature. Therefore, since the main meaning associated with the form of the prototypical NP construction is one of reference (both definite and indefinite), the one linked to the BNP construction is that of predicational reference. By now it is clear that BNPs are constructions which imply an evaluative singular reference, with some exceptions which show plurality as we will see in section 5.4.3.

### 5.2.3 The *of* “element”

The preposition *of* in binominal noun phrases develops, at first sight, a function similar to that used in common NPs with a PP complement, as in *the author of a book*. However, given the different analyses provided by different authors, its role may vary, and hence one can conclude that its role differs quite differently from that of a common NP. Thus, the syntactic function of *of* may not be that of a typical preposition (see sections 5.3.3, 5.3.4 and 5.4).



## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

### 5.2.4 The Det2 position

The second determiner used in binomial noun phrases is perhaps the most idiomatic feature of this type of structure. This is a consequence of the fact that only the indefinite article is allowed in this position. Consider these examples:

(25) That mess of a theory

(26) \*That mess of that theory

(27) This rag of a dress

(28) \*This rag of the dress

It looks like the grammatical features of the BNP construction wholly depend on the function developed by the indefinite article *a* in the Det2 position. Its obligatory character is, at least, an important feature to take into account given that none of the possible constituents of a common NP are obligatory. For the moment we will leave this issue, as it will be dealt with in section 5.4.

### 5.2.5 The N2 position

This is the most open position in this type of construction. In fact, this openness renders the N2 position as the most prototypical one with respect to traditional NPs given that almost any type of noun can develop this role.

## 5.3 Different analyses of the construction

The following sections aim to present the different possible analyses of the BNP construction. As already noted, the main debate about BNPs was around headedness, that is, the question of which of the two nouns is the head of the whole construction.

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

Poutsma (1926) discussed this problem but did not solve it. From his point of view, if BNPs can be paraphrased, it can be suggested that the first noun is the head. Thus, if a BNP like *the greatest traveller of a prince* turns into ‘He was the greatest traveller as princes go’ or ‘He was the greatest traveller in the person of a prince’, there is no other possibility than accepting the N1 headedness. In that way, the second noun is the complement of the preposition *of* that is considered to be “of a merely constructional force” (Poutsma 1926: 769). However, the issue was not so straightforward, and other instances of the BNP construction did not fit in his analysis. Thus, *that fool of a policeman* resembles a common NP premodified by an adjective (see McCawley 1988, and section 5.3.1), and in fact *that foolish policeman* conveys the same meaning as the BNP. Consequently, in this case, the noun in the N1 position functions as the modifier of the head in the N2 position, according to Poutsma.

Poutsma’s analysis actually captures the basic linguistic debate about BNPs. In fact he reaches the conclusion that both N1-headedness and N2-headedness are possible. Linguists like Abney (1987) clearly contend that the underlying structure of BNPs is one where the only possible location of headedness is in the N1 position, with no room for exceptions: the BNP construction is a common NP with an *of*-phrase as complement. As well as in Poutsma (1926), this conclusion resolves around syntactic mimicry, with the difference that in this case it concentrates on preserving the ‘uniformed’ syntactic pattern of prototypical NPs. A somewhat different approach is that of Krusinga & Erades (1932) who are of the opinion that there is no point in arguing about headedness in this type of construction. They maintain a neutral position in which neither of the two nouns dominates over the other, leading to the conclusion that BNPs are actually appositive constructions (under the supposition that appositions are double-headed structures).

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

The following sections provide four of the most important analyses of BNPs. In the line with what we have seen above, there are those who propose N2 as the only possibility for headedness (McCawley 1988). Others contend exactly the contrary, that N1 is the head (Napoli 1989). Yet others argue in favour of N2 as the head and N1 as part of a complex premodifier (Aarts 1998; Keizer 2007a). Using different arguments and different grammatical perspectives, these works draw an exhaustive structural map of the BNP construction.

### 5.3.1 BNP as a modifier-head structure

In this section we will look at the analysis proposed by McCawley (1988) for BNPs. The most salient feature of his analysis is that nouns in the N1 position “‘mimic’ adjectives’ (McCawley 1988: 740). The main idea is that N1 is in a predicate position with respect to N2. Consider the following examples taken from McCawley:

- (29) a. This sentence is difficult to translate.  
b. This sentence is a bitch to translate.

- (30) a. This is a difficult problem.  
b. This is a bitch of a problem.

These examples illustrate the mimicry effect of nouns in a predicate position. The adjectives in the a. examples are mimicked by the b. counterparts. The pre-nominal position commonly occupied by adjectives is now fulfilled by the combination of a common noun, the preposition *of* and the indefinite article *a*. The combination of these three elements allows for the creation of a new construction which conveys the same

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

meaning as the original adjective, that is, “[b]oth *difficult* and *bitch* here serve semantically as **modifiers** of *problem*” (p. 740, emphasis added). Moreover, both the noun and the adjective precede the modified N2. This is the first hint of what McCawley’s final analysis of BNPs will be; if N1 is a modifier, it is in need of an element to be modified. This pre-conclusion weighs in favour of a modifier-head structure for BNPs.

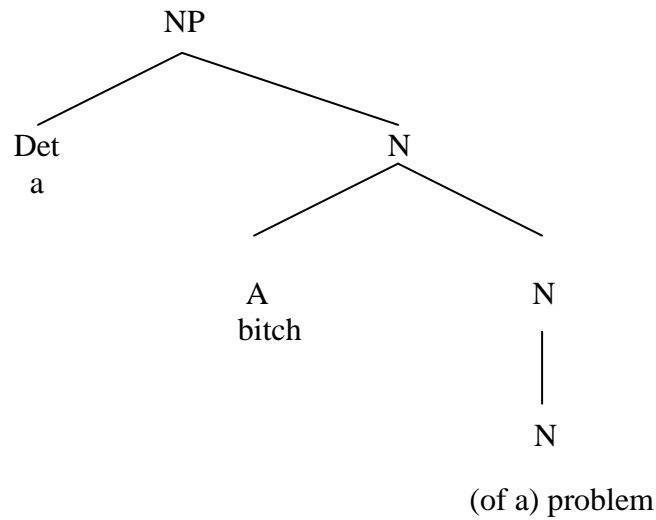
As hinted above, the use of a noun in a predicate position causes the emergence of a different construction. The essence of such a difference is that, in this specific case, the resulting construction contains two more elements: a preposition and an indefinite article which are not present when using the adjective in the same position. Contrary to what might be thought, the addition of these two elements “serve[s] to put the AN<sup>14</sup> into a surface configuration such as the noun permits: it is preceded by an article and followed by what appears to be a prepositional phrase” (p. 740). In McCawley’s words “an AN has a meaning of a type that is normally expressed by an adjective but nonetheless belongs to the lexical category N” (p. 741). In such a situation, the noun in the N1 position gives rise to a “compromise between the semantic and the syntactic demands of the AN” (p. 741). As a result, two different analyses of the same structure are possible. In the first of these N1 functions as a common adjective, and in which case the preposition *of* and the indefinite article *a* are ignored, as in (31a); in the second possible analysis, N1 is treated as what it is, a common noun, *of* as a preposition and Det1 and Det2 as articles (31b):

---

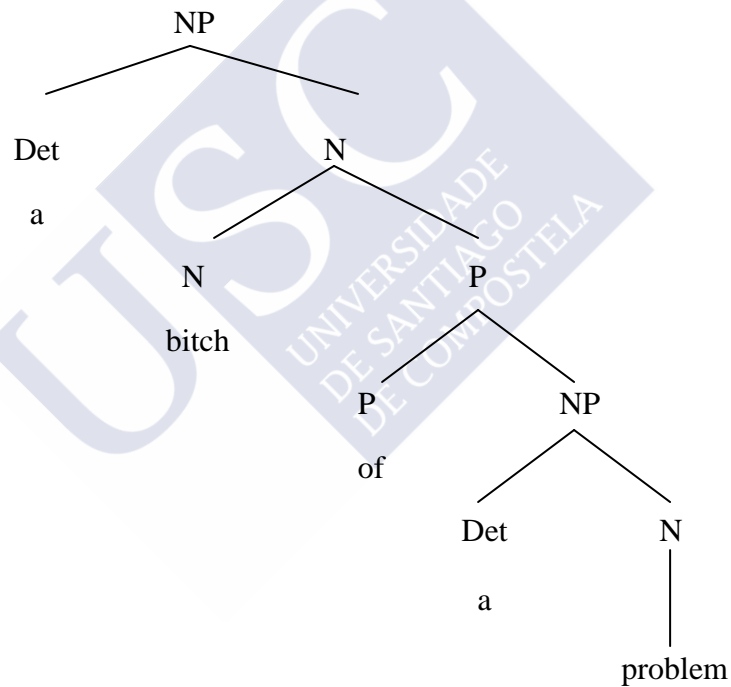
<sup>14</sup> AN stands for Adjective Noun, a notion taken from Ross (1973).

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

(31) a.



b.



At first blush, the syntactic tree in (31b) could easily be misunderstood and N1 considered the construction. However, McCawley rushes to clarify that “it is really *problem* that is the head” (p. 741), in doing so directly pointing out that its internal syntactic organization is as shown in (32):

(32) Det1 + N1 (Modifier) + *of* + *a* + N2 (Head)

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

A further reason for this analysis is number in both of the nouns in BNP structures. The relevance of this feature is that plurality causes alterations in the BNP construction which lead to ungrammatical instances. Examples like the ones in (33) are considered to deviate from the BNP construction:

- (33) a. ?Finnegans Wake and Ulysses are bitches of books to read.  
b. \*Finnegans Wake and Ulysses are a bitch of books to read.  
c. \*Finnegans Wake and Ulysses are bitches of a book to read.  
d. \*Finnegans Wake and Ulysses are a bitch of a book to read.  
e. ?Finnegans Wake and Ulysses are both a bitch of a book to read.

The main reason for considering these examples ungrammatical, or at least grammatically dubious is that contrary to the previous ones they contain plural nouns. The use of these plural nouns makes it possible to delete both determiners, in which case the essence of the BNP construction disappears, and what's more, the grammatical validity of these structures is affected. McCawley's stance as to the ungrammaticality of such examples hinges on the fact that "a plural form of either word defeats the illusion that the other word is the semantic or the syntactic head, as the case may be" (p. 743). This analysis is based on syntactic mimicry, that is, if it is not possible for the N1 constituent to mimic the adjective construction in common NPs, then the structure is not possible. Thus, in the specific case of the examples in (33), none of the structure in (31a and b) can be applied to these examples. As a consequence, the success of the mimicry is compromised. Moreover, if "the constituents of the particular example render one of the two structures [(31a and b)] blatantly ill-formed, it is unacceptable" (p. 743). Therefore, N1 functions semantically as an adjective, and as such it cannot be plural. On

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

the other hand, N1 is a noun with regards to syntax. This implies that the noun in the first nominal position definitely develops a modifier function, in which case it is not allowed to show a plural form.

On the whole, and following the analysis developed so far, BNPs are nominal constructions with two nouns. The N1 position develops, with no exception, a modifier function with respect to N2, which is considered to be the head of the whole construction. However, McCawley's analysis does not solve what we can consider the most essential and intricate part of BNPs, that is, both Det positions and the preposition *of*. Their roles within the construction are not specified, neither their syntactic links with the nouns nor simply their syntactic organization and functions. The only reference to these elements is that they are avoided when N1 is treated as an adjective, or they are given the same distribution as a common NP with a PP modifier/complement. For this reason, this analysis seems to be incomplete.

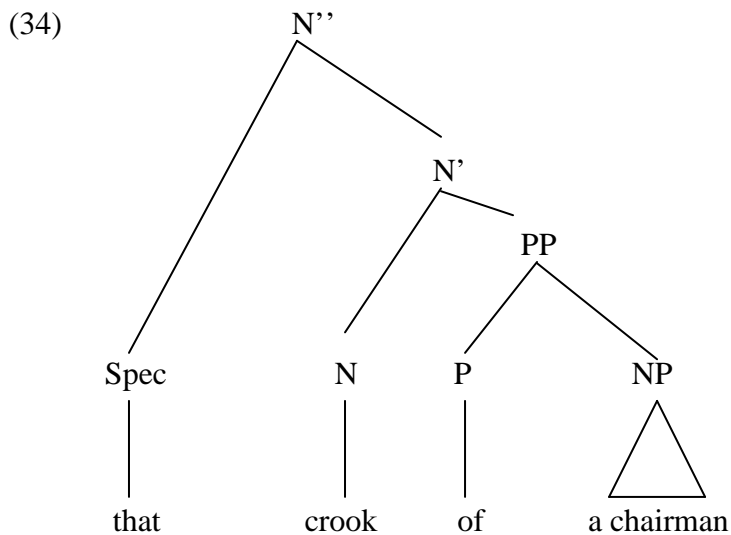
### 5.3.2 BNP as a head-modifier structure

On different lines from McCawley (1988), Napoli (1989) begins the analysis of BNPs with this radical assertion (Napoli 1989: 210):

I will show here that the English NP [*that crook of a chairman*] is syntactically and semantically **an ordinary NP** (emphasis added).

As an ordinary NP, *that crook of a chairman* shows this structure:

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition



Moreover, BNPs can appear in all the positions where prototypical NPs occur. Likewise, these structures can undergo NP movement, trigger Subject-Verb agreement, they are non-propositional, and they behave like Referential Expressions with respect to the Binding condition in the Generative Grammar framework (see Haegeman 1991). All these shared functions are considered by Napoli as constituting a definite solution for yielding to structural NP commonality.

From the perspective of Generative Grammar, the framework used by Napoli, the common NP status of *that crook of a chairman* is also due to its internal structure. Hence, this type of structure “break[s] down into a specifier, a noun and a PP” (pp. 211). Again, this analysis seems to be possible in view of the fact that the specifier position allows for the use of the same elements as in ordinary NPs: determiners, numerals, quantifiers, demonstratives, etc., with the demonstratives *that* and *this* and the indefinite determiners *a* and *one* being the most common in BNP structures. It might be added that the fact that the BNP construction only allows for the use of these specific elements in the Det1 position seems to indicate that there exist some sort of restrictions in this construction which are not present in ordinary NPs. This could, then,



## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

be seen as a descriptive sign of the exceptional character of this type of NP. For now, consider these examples taken from Napoli (1989), instantiating what she considers to be all the possible specifiers in BNP structures:

- (35) That gem of a centerfielder
- (36) This rag of a dress
- (37) A wretch of a boy
- (38) (He's) one prince of a friend

Even though the analyses of Napoli and McCawley diverge quite significantly, both observe that BNPs can only be singular<sup>15</sup>, which stems from the fact that quantifiers filling the specifier position can only be singular. Compare these examples:

- (39) \*Some wretches of boys
- (40) \*Most wretches of boys
- (41) Every wretch of a date

One strange conclusion of Napoli's analysis is her contention that when a possessive is used in the specifier position it "belongs semantically to the NP of the PP" (p. 212).

This happens in:

- (42) Your brat of a brother
- (43) Her prince of a husband

---

<sup>15</sup> Exceptions are possible, as in *those fools of a crew* as we will see in section 5.4.

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

For all these semantic and syntactic reasons, Napoli posits that the Det1 position cannot be anything other than a specifier.

When dealing with BNPs, one significant point of discussion is the group made up by the preposition *of*, the indefinite article *a* and the second noun. As might be guessed from the above syntactic tree, this group can only be analyzed as “a PP, where *of* is the P and *a chairman* is its NP object” (p. 212). One of Napoli’s main reasons for this conclusion is that the preposition *of* in BNPs develops the same function as a transitive preposition. For the sake of clarification, consider these examples:

(44) We talked **of** John

(45) That crook **of** a chairman

A comparison is made between the preposition *of* in example (44) and the ones used in the BNPs in examples (42) and (43), and “[i]n the interest of non-proliferation of homophonous items that have similar distribution” (p. 212), this leads to the conclusion that both prepositions develop the same function.

Another feature in favour of the PP analysis is the obligatory indefinite character of the second nominal. This obligatory nature of the indefinite article is considered to favour such an analysis, given that “indefinite determiners in English introduce only NPs” (p. 214). However, this argument seems weak since the definite article *the* can only indicate that the whole construction is an NP and this does not allow its use in the Det2 position in BNPs. So, the reason why *a* is the unique possibility in this position must be of a different nature.

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

Napoli uses as an argument the possible complex character of N2. The N2 position cannot be premodified or postmodified, but complex nominals are allowed within the BNP construction. Consider these examples:

(46) that jerk of a physics teacher

(47) that bitch of a two-bit hooker

Finally, a significant feature of BNPs is that this construction does not allow for the use of “an AP sister of the N inside the PP. In fact, it resists all kinds of sisters to varying degrees” (p. 214), as these examples show:

(48) \*That creep of a professor with tenure

(49) ??That creep of a teacher of physics

Therefore, with no room for exceptions, the [*of* + *a* + N2] segment within BNP structures cannot be anything other than a common PP complement of the N1 head, even despite the obvious restrictions that this implies.

As briefly discussed above, there appears to be some small degree of variation in the internal structure of BNPs. This seems to be caused by the use of a possessive in the Det1 position, which for Napoli is the specifier position. As we have seen, the possessive is semantically linked to N2, contrary to *that*, *this*, *a*, *one* and *the* used in the same position. In this case, the ‘special’ semantic link of the possessive seems to determine the use of the indefinite article in the Det2 position.

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

- (50) Your jerk of a brother
- (51) that fool of [a/ \*the] student
- (52) \*That creep of your doctor

Napoli contends, from these examples, that the definite determiner in the Det2 position as in (51) and the use of a possessive in the same position in (52) render these structures grammatically impossible. However, the possessive feature of (50) implies that the brother is ‘yours’. It seems that this indicates:

[...] the requirement that the NP following *of* be indefinite is not a semantic requirement but some sort of morphosyntactic requirement (Napoli 1989: 214).

Napoli supports such a view by resorting to what she considers the two possible ways in which the *your*-BNP structure can be used. On the one hand *your jerk of a brother* could imply that “your brother falls into the class of jerk brothers, not just into the class of jerks” (p. 214). In this case “the possessive goes with the overall NP and not with the NP following *of*” (p. 214) and it can be maintained that the use of an indefinite determiner in the Det2 position is semantically motivated. On the other hand, example (50) could mean that “you have a brother who is a jerk in some other capacity” (p. 214). Consider this example:

- (53) *Your jerk of a brother* left me high and dry.

In this sentence, *your brother* is considered to be a jerk in his facet as a lover, not as a brother. “So here the possessive adjective goes only with the NP following *of*” (p. 215).

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

More evidence in favour of the [*of* + *a* + N2] sequence as a PP complement is that N2 cannot have any sister of any type, which is considered by Napoli to be a morphosyntactic requirement rather than a semantic one. Consider these two examples:

(54) ?? That creep of a teacher of physics

(55) That jerk of a physics professor

Thus, the complex nominal example (55) “is better than the analytic construction [in example (54)] that corresponds to it semantically” (p. 215).

By way of an interim summary here, and even though, as Napoli herself admits, the evidence is not great, it must be concluded that given the absence of unfavourable evidence to the contrary, in *that crook of a chairman* “*of* is a P and (...) it forms a PP with the NP following it” (p. 215). Moreover, the evidence also allows for the conclusion that the elements that occur in N1 position “are only those that can appear as the head of regular NPs” (p. 216). Nevertheless it must also be noted that Napoli fails to recognize that only those nouns that seem to be able to develop an evaluative function with respect to the N2 can be used in the N1 position (see section 5.4). Also, she contends that these elements can only be “N[s] or N[s] plus [their] AP sister[s]” (p. 217). All this evidence and the conclusions thus drawn seem to lead us to only one possibility, that BNPs fit exactly and uniquely with the structure shown in (34) above.

Now let us consider the relation between the N1 head and the PP complement. Labelled as a null P, the preposition *of* can introduce “non-prepositional arguments of a head N” (p. 221). Likewise, prepositional objects of a nominal head contain a preposition which is selected by the head. On the contrary, when the PP following N1 is

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

not an argument of the N, the prepositions that can be used are more varied. In the face of this information – that the use of the preposition *of* as the unique possibility within BNPs, and the syntactic tree in (34) – “this *of* introduces an argument of the head N” (p. 221).

Thus, it is considered that a predicate relation is established between N1 and N2. Napoli posits that “the head N of our NP functions as a predicate taking the NP following *of* as its subject role player” (p. 223) in which case the determiner in the Det1 position, the specifier in her terms, “specifies the entire NP” (p. 222). As is well known, the element in the Det2 position is always *a*, but in the Det1 position the determiner may vary. This implies that when the determiner is definite “the entire NP is interpreted as definite” (p. 222). Examples (56) and (57) illustrate this explanation:

(56) Some people consider GB a mess of a theory.

(57) \*Some people consider GB that mess of a theory.

“(…) the position following *GB* must be filled by a predicate. And we see that it is the initial specifier on our NP that determines whether or not it is easily interpreted as a predicate” (p. 223). For this reason, Napoli asserts that “the initial specifier serves as the specifier for the entire NP” (p. 223).

This predicate relation between the N1 head and the NP following *of* must be based on a comparison with the selectional restrictions of copular sentences. To begin with, this predication relation involves some specific selectional restrictions, one of them being the fact that a predicate must take only one role player. In this specific case

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

“the NP following *of* must be [the] subject role player” (p. 223). Another important feature is that, as well as being in a copular sentence, the N1 head and the NP following *of* “must match each other for semantic gender and/ or number” (p. 223). The predication relation within BNPs is also maintained in that the N1 head “bear[s] the same semantic relationship to the NP following *of* that the corresponding predicate bears towards its subject role player in indisputable cases of predication constructions” (p. 223). Another important fact is that the predicate position of N1 must be supported by its evaluative character; the more evaluative, the easier it is to consider it a predicate. Thus, in the BNP construction “only head Ns that give an evaluative judgement of the NP following *of* can appear” (p. 224) in N1 position, although it is also possible to find the following examples:

(58) A hell of a story

(59) A whale of a story

(60) A Hitler of a man (repeated here for convenience)

The nouns used in the N1 position in examples (58)-(60) are not evaluative *per se*, but as a consequence of metaphorical extension or association as in the case of *hell* and *whale*, or because of acquired connotation, as with *Hitler*, these words are allowed to be used in an evaluative sense. On closer inspection, we realize that Napoli is aware of the fact that only a specific type of nouns is allowed in the N1 position, yet she does not consider this feature relevant for the analysis of BNPs.

That the NP following *of* is the subject role player in a predicate relation implies some changes at the level of the overall NP. That is, if the BNP is used referentially, the overall reference is “that of the NP following *of* as predicated of by the head N” (p.

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

224). Thus, at the semantic level, when pointing out the main element for the elaboration of meaning:

(...) the NP following *of* is the crucial one in determining the referent of the overall NP (Napoli 1989: 224).

In essence, N2 is considered to be the semantic head within a BNP construction given that it “satisfies selectional restrictions put on the overall NP from external context” (p. 224). This is illustrated here:

(61) I'd like to marry *a flower of a girl*.

However, it could be contended that this example also allows going further with the head-modifier analysis and thus that it would be more logical and appropriate to talk of only one head, semantically and syntactically. We can appreciate in the above sentence that the intention is to marry a girl, not a flower. For this reason, the selection restrictions of this sentence are definitely satisfied if *girl* is considered the head in both senses (see section 5.4.2)

On the contrary, the following example seems to favour Napoli's analysis:

(62) \*a crook of unspeakable stupidity of a chairman

This sentence argues in favour of the idea that the PP *of a chairman* is an argument of the N1 head given that “in regular NPs we have a strong preference for such PP modifiers to follow arguments of the head N” (p. 227). In this way, “the preference to place post-head modifiers after arguments in regular NPs becomes a requirement in our



## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

construction” (p. 227). Another important issue relating to the ungrammaticality of a structure such as the one in example (62) is that the head N1 in BNPs must be “adjacent to the head N of the NP following *of* with only the minimal intervenors” (p. 227). The main function of this adjacency is not to disturb the “intricate semantic relationship” (p. 227) between N1 and N2. Thus, this construction only allows for the use of what are considered minimal intervenors, that is, the preposition *of* and the indefinite article *a*. In that respect:

(...) *of* is the null P and *a* is the indefinite specifier used purely as a grammatical word when the nominal it introduces is predicative (as contrasted to its semantic role with referential NPs). Thus both intervenors here are grammatical formative intervenors and not semantic intervenors (Napoli 1989: 227).

With Napoli’s analysis we come to the conclusion that language must be analysed as a fixed, static system where all possible types of constructions must stick to a uniformed design. BNPs should therefore be considered common NPs with an internal form and an external one. Semantics plays its role on its own and syntax acts separately. *Your brat of a brother* is a traditional NP. Such a conclusion is not easily acceptable, given that the great majority of its elements do not develop their standard roles: a syntactic head which is a predicate, a preposition *of* which does not have a grammatical role, a Det2 position which only allows for the use of the indefinite article *a*, etc. For all these reasons, it would be more fitting to consider BNPs as part of the NP network but as atypical instances that constitute a specific construction, one which is different from that of ordinary NPs.

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

### 5.3.3 BNP as a modifier phrase-head structure

I will now move on to discuss Aarts' (1998) analysis of BNPs. If the main problem with the BNP construction is the fact that there is no consensus about its internal structure, and if there is a constant tug-of-war about how to divide this type of structure into segments, Aarts (1998: 118) is of the opinion that:

(...) there are phenomena that pose serious problems for a grammar that places too rigid and dogmatic an emphasis on the segmentation into constituents.

Thus, even though there is “the need for syntactic theory to be firmly based on phase structure and constituency” (p. 118), there are also groups of examples in languages that seem to escape any structural uniformity. Aarts sees our BNP construction as one such group, and as such, this construction “will be seen to be intractable as regards a straightforward phrase structure treatment” (p. 118).

Despite the difficulty in classifying BNPs, Aarts considers that the semantic and syntactic features of a structure like *a hell of a problem* are so interesting that they must be analysed. However, the only common ground amongst linguists about the semantic characteristics of BNPs – and this seems to be the only feature for which Aarts is in agreement with McCawley (1988) and Napoli (1989) – is the subject-predicate relationship between N1 and N2. Provided that N1 shows a property of the referent of N2 and that this relationship is “internal to a nominal projection” (p. 118), the fact that the subject expression follows the predicate is one of the several signs indicating the exceptional grammatical character of the BNP construction. With respect to the syntactic features of the construction, the problem lies also in the identification of the

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

head of the structure. The misleading character of the head element is the main source of the problem because on a first look it seems clear that this construction is a common NP with a PP complement, in which case N1 is the head; and yet, from Aarts's perspective, "it can in fact be shown that N2 functions as the head in BNPs, both syntactically and semantically" (p. 119). Thus, his analysis is in the line with McCawley's with respect to headedness, and it with that of Napoli in the case of the semantic head.

As regards the role developed by the preposition *of*, one of the most discussed issues of BNPs, Aarts distances himself from all previous analyses, and contends that "while it looks like a preposition, it can be shown that it does not introduce a typical PP complement to N1" (p. 119). It is here that the most remarkable aspect of Aarts's analysis is to be found: the treatment of the preposition *of* in the following structure:

(63) [NP a [hell of a] problem]

Before getting involved in a detailed study of Aart's analysis, it is worthwhile considering a general description of the elements that can be used in the BNP construction according to Aarts. As for the Det1 position, it sounds odd if the definite determiner *the* is used in this position, even though in some combinations its use is grammatically correct:

(64) \* The lout of a businessman

(65) The rascal of a landlord

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

In relation to the N1 position, this can be filled by proper nouns as well as common nouns:

(66) a Kate Moss of a wine (repeated here for convenience)

With respect to the second nominal, the N2 position must be preceded by the indefinite article *a*. As already seen, the Det2 position should be obligatorily fulfilled by the indefinite article *a*, which would indicate that BNPs could only be singular. However, contrary to Napoli and McCawley, Aarts considers that plurality is possible, and in such cases the determiner preceding N2 would be zero as in:

(67) Those fools of doctors

Another important feature is that N2 can never be a pronoun:

(68) \*Those bullies of them

With respect to these examples and the special features they show, Aarts (p. 121) contends that “BNPs are infrequent...” and that the most common sequence in this type of construction is the *hell of a* construction. Following Austin (1980), this sequence involves a simile or a metaphor and for this reason could be called ‘figurative’. This contrasts with the ‘literal’ type, *that miser of a manager*, in which N2 is assigned to N1. Being part of the ‘figurative’ group, BNPs can belong to idiomatic coinages, where we find examples like *a hell of a ...*, *a heck of a ...*; or to free coinages, *a skyscraper of a man*, *a rat of a schoolkid*. It must be noted that the idiomatic examples are fixed in the

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

sense that, for example, N2 cannot be pluralized, \**those hells of problems*. As far as premodification is concerned, not all types of adjectives are allowed as premodifiers in idiomatic cases. Thus, *an absolute hell of a problem* is correct but *a dreadful hell of a problem* is not possible. On the contrary, literal examples do not show any type of problem with respect to premodification of N1, as in, *that useless prude of a counsellor*. In the case of N2, premodification shows no problems, as in *a hell of a nice guy*. This demonstrates that “the left-hand portion of BNPs is more fixed than the right-hand portion (...)” (p. 122).

Going more deeply into the internal architecture of BNPs from both a semantic and a syntactic point of view, Aarts addresses the headedness problem. His first consideration is that in order to identify the head of the overall construction “we might ask which of the two nominals in these constructions satisfies the selectional restrictions imposed on the construction as a whole” (p. 123). The selectional-restriction test is perhaps the one that first comes to mind for this type of grammatical problem. However, “selectional restrictions are known to be an unreliable test for determining headedness (...)” (p. 124). Thus, it would be more useful to look for an alternative way of establishing the head in a BNP construction. Aarts proposes the following criteria:

- First, using a semantic criterion, the element which the overall phrase is a ‘kind of’ must be the head of the BNP structure.
- Second, the head element can be found by looking at the morphosyntactic locus of the structure. If pluralization is the most important inflection in NPs, and if we pluralize a structure like *that fool*

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

*of a doctor*, the resulting structure would indicate the head element.

However, this does not seem to solve much of the problem since both nouns take the plural *-s* mark, *those fools of doctors*.

- The third criterion applies to the subcategorizand role, that is, the element that is subcategorized with regard to its complements. In this case, N1 seems to exhibit all the features for developing this role, given that the following PP could be considered as its complement. Despite this, such an analysis would be wrong because “the *of*-phrase in BNPs in no way resembles what are normally analyzed as PP complements” (p. 128). As a general observation, it must be pointed out that “in BNPs there is no semantic relationship between N1 and the following *of*-phrase” (p.128). In light of this, N1 cannot be the subcategorizand of the structure, and as such it cannot be the head of the overall phrase.
- A fourth criterion would be to identify the governor element, that is, that unit which determines the morphosyntactic form of a sister unit. But this criterion is of no help here, in that “neither N1 nor N2 can be said to determine the morphosyntactic shape of any of its neighbouring constituents” (p. 130).
- The fifth and final criterion is based on the fact that the head element is the obligatory one. This might lead us to consider that N2 is the head. However, this is not a convincing solution because, in context, the identification of the head in BNPs does not seem so straightforward. Consider these examples:

(69) I consider Istanbul a wonder of a city.

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

(70) I consider Istanbul a city.

(71) I consider Istanbul a wonder city.

Examples (69)-(71) indicate that “N2 cannot occur as a ‘bare nominal’” (p. 131). Therefore, in literal cases of the BNP construction both N1 and N2 can be left out. It can only be certainly contended that it is in the idiomatic cases (*a hell of a problem*) where the N2 is obligatory.

According to Aarts, all these tests and criteria lead us to conclusion that even though none definitively identify the head in BNP structures, “other [tests] offer support for the contention that N2 is the head in BNPs” (p. 131).

We turn now to the role of the first determiner in BNP structures. The discussion around this position hinges on the question of which nominal accompanies the first determiner. On a first reading it seems reasonable that Det1 determines N1, but, since first readings are not very reliable with BNPs, a deeper analysis is required. Aarts takes a strong line here, arguing that the Det1 “position must be construed to enter into a relationship with N2, not N1” (p. 131). Additionally, if Det1 specifies N2, this means that the BNP is definite, in which case “Det2 should not be taken to specify N2” (p. 132) due to its obligatorily indefinite character.

Hence, if the Det1 position shows an exceptional link with N2, the modifiers of N1 seem to exemplify also the divergence of BNPs from ordinary NPs. Consider the following example:

(72) This oceanic barge of a woman

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

(73) Some shrinking violet of a civil servant

(74) A curate's egg of a book

As might be expected, the N1 premodifiers in these examples modify N1. However, there are some examples of BNPs that diverge from this 'obvious' expectation.

(75) Another bitchy iceberg of a woman

In light of examples such as (75), we must accept that on some occasions there exists "the possibility that modifiers that immediately precede N1 modify N2" (p. 133). However, there is still the possibility that in some BNPs it is not clear which nominal is modified by the modifier preceding N1:

(76) A crescent-shaped jewel of an island

(77) The clumsy oaf of a newscaster

(78) That senseless maniac of a driver

In essence, "the highest specifier in BNPs, Det1, determines N2, (...) [and] pre-N1 modifiers sometimes modify N1, sometimes N2" (p. 134).

Our next concern is the detailed analysis of the [*of* + *a* + N2] sequence, so characteristic of BNPs, and in fact this serves as the persuasive element in the final conclusion of Aart's approach. His analysis starts from the premise that this sequence can never be the complement of N1. In support of such a thesis, consider these examples:



## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

(79) The destroyer of education of a minister

(80) This manipulator of people of a mayor

In these two examples, the sequences *of education* and *of people* are clear complements of *destroyer* and *manipulator* respectively, “[...] but this being so, *of a minister* and *of a mayor* cannot also complement [both N1 in examples (79) and (80)], because *destroyer* and *manipulator* are two-place predicates, which take only one internal argument. As we have seen, these data militate against the N + PP analysis of BNPs, [...]” (p. 134). Were this not enough to demonstrate that the PP analysis is not the most appropriate one, there is yet more evidence, such as the movement of the PP complement. Consider these examples:

(81) A monster of a machine

(82) \*[of machine]<sub>i</sub>, it was [a monster t<sub>1</sub>]

(83) \*[a monster t<sub>1</sub>] was delivered [of a machine]<sub>i</sub>

This example does not allow movement, a fact which clearly indicates that the sequence cannot be considered a complement of N1. If we compare this type of structure with *of*-NP sequences which are complements to a head noun, we see that movement is possible:

(84) A copy of the exams regulations

(85) [a copy t<sub>1</sub>] was received [of the exams regulations]<sub>i</sub>

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

There is indeed further evidence to suggest that the [*of* + *a* + N2] string does not form a constituent, and this relates to coordination. In a BNP construction we cannot coordinate two *of*-NP sequences, as shown in example (86), given that the resulting structure is ungrammatical:

(86) \*She called him a bastard [of a husband] and [of a father]

On the contrary we can say:

(87) They sent us a copy [of the exam paper] and [of the exam regulations]

Example (87), as a grammatical example of a PP complement of a noun, allows for the coordination of more complements of the head.

Finally, the PP complement analysis falls apart if topicalization is taken into account. If the [*of* + *a* + N2] string in BNPs were a common PP complement of N1, stranding the preposition would be possible. Compare these two examples, in which (88) shows an NP structure with a PP complement and (89) a BNP structure:

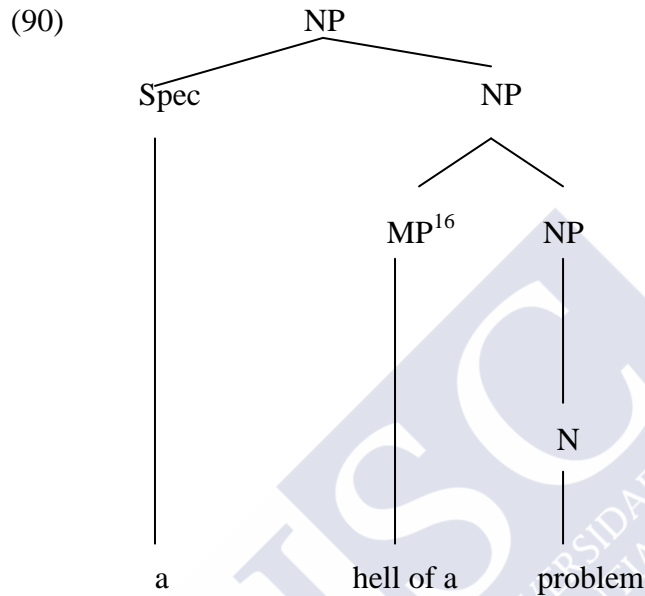
(88) The exam paper, they sent us a copy of

(89) \*An exam, we had to take a bitch of

By virtue of this evidence, “*hell of a* is treated as a **complex modifier** parallel to *hellish*” (p. 136, emphasis added).

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

According to Aarts, the, it was a forgone conclusion that the resulting structure of BNPs would be the one instantiated in (90), in view of the fact that “*of*-NP sequences in BNPs have a different status from *of*-NP sequences in NPs involving regular nominal complements” (p. 136):



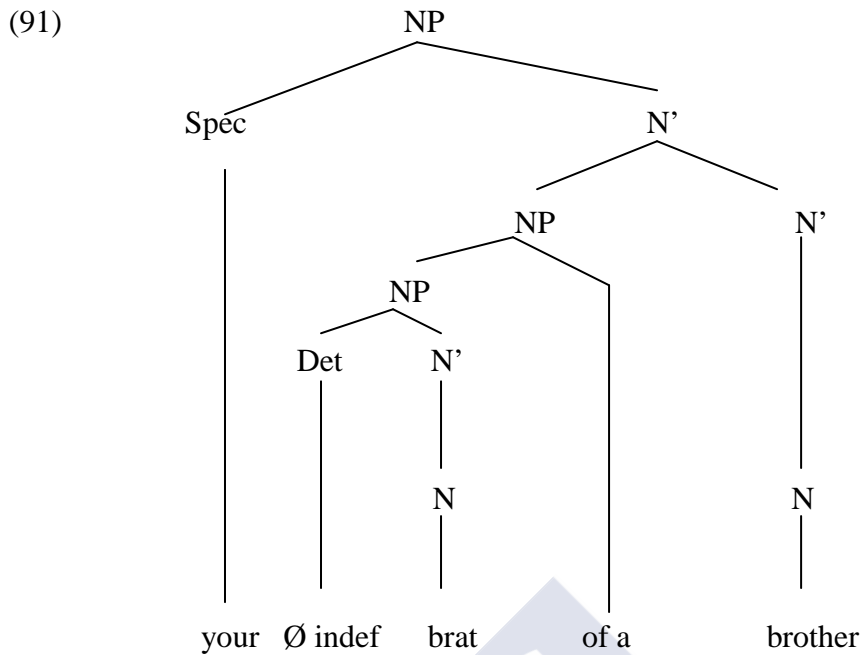
This structure obliges us to compare it to an NP premodified by an Adjective Phrase (AP), in which case it can be contended that “both *NI of a* sequences and APs as modifiers occur in structurally the same position” (p. 148).

Now, consider this structure:

---

<sup>16</sup> MP stands for Modifier Phrase

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition



The most intriguing element here is the node made up by *of a*. It does not seem very logical to put these two elements together. However, this formation can be considered “as a syncategorematic formation in adjunct position. There is some evidence for treating this string as a unit, and this concerns the fact that in many BNPs the *of a* sequence seems to have become dysfunctional, and can often be left out altogether” (p. 150) as in:

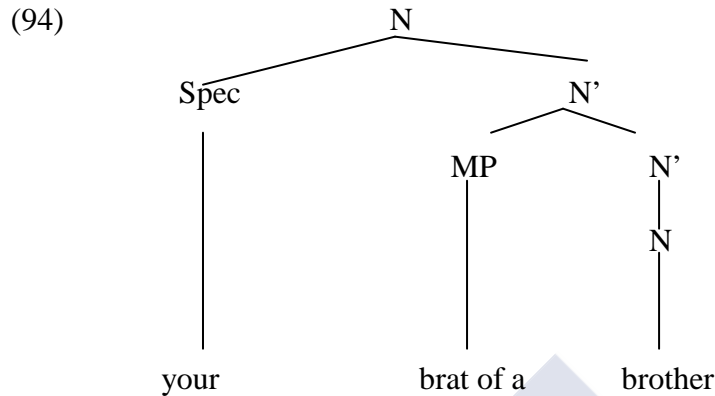
(92) A simpleton of a judge

(93) A simpleton judge

These two examples illustrate the adjunct position posited by Aarts. Even so, there are some instances of the BNP construction which do not allow this analysis. In such cases, “*of a* seems to function as a pragmatic marker, which signals that phrases that contain it should receive an evaluative reading” (p. 150) on the view that *a barge woman* is not equivalent to *a barge of a woman*.

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

The above syntactic trees, (90) and (91), lead to the following analysis for structures like *your brat of a brother*:



Some objections might be raised about the MP *brat of a*, the most obvious one being that as a modifier it is atypical. However, there are instances of other NPs, like *a number of problems* and *these sorts of ideas*, where the strings *number of* and *sorts of* are considered as modifying phrases. Moreover, putting together N1 + *of* + *a* could also reflect “the way we process BNPs. The question is ‘how’?” (p. 151).

The analysis in (94) could be explained as a process of grammaticalization. BNPs show idiomatization (*a hell of a problem*) and phonological reduction (/hɛləvə/), two features of grammaticalization (Hopper & Traugott 2003: 64-65). “The trigger for this grammaticalization process could be the fact that N1 has at some point in time lost its ability to assign a theta role. This resulted in a realignment of *of a* with N1” (p. 152). Aarts considers this hypothesis very attractive, but he is also conscious of the difficulties of finding evidence in its favour.

Hence, it seems more plausible to think of BNPs in terms of processing. Using Kajita’s (1977) dynamic model of syntax as a basis, Aarts is also of the opinion that

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

“certain syntactic groupings are rearranged” (p. 152). Consider these examples from Kajita as a way of illustrating this process of grouping:

(95) Those people are far from innocent.

(96) [AP [Adj. far] [PP from innocent]]

(97) [AP [Adv. far from] [Adj. innocent]]

(98) [AP [Adv. hardly] [Adj. innocent]]

Under this grouping process “the string *far from* is reinterpreted as an adverb” (p. 153), a fact which is supported by instances like (99):

(99) It far from exhausts the relevant consideration.

It is argued that the main “factor for reinterpretation is the existence of what Kajita calls a ‘head-nonhead conflict’ (i.e. a conflict between *innocent* and *far*)” (p. 153). The problem of the MP *brat of a* could be resolved by applying this ‘head-nonhead conflict’ to BNPs, in such a way “that an NP like [(100)] is reinterpreted as in [(101)], by analogy to [(102)]” (p. 153):

(100) [NP a [fool [PP of a solicitor]]]

(101) [NP a [fool of a] solicitor]

(102) [NP a [foolish] solicitor]

In answer to the question of how we process BNPs, Aarts formalises “Kajita’s idea of head-nonhead conflict by looking at BNPs in the context of a theory of parsing”

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

(p. 153). Assuming left-to-right processing, as postulated in Hawkins (1994), the sequence in (103) would be parsed as in (104):

(103) Det1 N1 of Det2 N2

(104) [NP Det [N' N1 [PP *of a* N2]]]

Aarts' hypothesis is that "when the N2-head is reached, backtracking ensues and the structure is reanalysed as in [(105)]" (p. 154):

(105) [NP Det [N' [MP N-*of a*] [N' N]]]

What leads Aarts to this conclusion is that the structure in (103) "is semantically uninterpretable" (p. 154), that is, backtracking is necessary because "[e]ssentially, [(103)] is a garden path structure" (p. 154). This parsing analysis and consequent conclusion is, in Aarts' opinion, a better solution than the grammaticalization hypothesis for the analysis of *brat of a*, *hell of a* as a complex modifier, as a MP, given that it "does *not* assume that the N1 + PP analysis (...) is available at any time, merely that the grammar initially erroneously assigns this structure to BNPs" (p. 154-155, emphasis in the original).

The principal aim of Aarts's paper was to show that in BNP structures the N2 element is the head and that the N1 element is the modifier of the structure. However, in consideration of Heine's *et al*'s hypothesis (1991: 233), and the conclusions he draws therein, it seems that syntax might more usefully be viewed in a different way.

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

Syntax, then, should be seen as a flexible system, in which there may be a tension between desiring to arrange elements rigidly into categories and constituents and recognising the possibility of unexpected configurations, or of shifts in patterns taking place diachronically or synchronically (Aarts 1998: 155).

### 5.3.4 BNP as a construction with two different underlying representations

The final section on the different analyses made of BNPs will discuss Keizer's (2007a) study. A book about English NPs could not ignore such a construction given that, as seen in the previous sections, a morass of problems resolves around its internal structure. Keizer considers the paraphrasing of BNPs into copular sentences (Quirk *et al.* (1985: 1284-1285), the N1 predicate position (Napoli 1989: 222; Den Dikken 2006), the correspondence of N1 + *of* + *a* with an adjective, and the idea that N2 determines the overall phrase (Quirk *et al.* 1985: 1285; Napoli 1989: 224; Aarts (1998: 124). All these aspects of the BNP construction lead her (2007: 87) to propose:

(...) two (...) underlying representations, whereby the differences in interpretation will be accounted for in terms of a difference in the scope of the predicative noun.

These two underlying representations are based on the fact that Keizer agrees with Den Dikken (2006: 162-165) in his contention that BNPs are of two different types. In Den Dikken's terms BNPs are divided into Comparative Qualitative Binominal Noun Phrases as in example (106), and Attributive Qualitative Binominal Noun Phrases, as in (107):

(106) A jewel of a village



## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

(107) An idiot of a doctor

It is considered that a comparison is drawn in example (106) between the village, the referent of the structure, and the property described in N1, that is, jewel. On the other hand, in example (107) the property of being an idiot in the N1 position is ascribed to the referent in the N2 position in his or her facet as a doctor. These two different interpretations lead Keizer to the conclusion that two different relationships are established between N1 and N2, predicate and subject respectively. Moreover, the functions cannot be interchanged and it is always N1 which ascribes a property to N2, and as such it must always be the predicate. It is worth pointing out that even though Keizer agrees with this distinction, she states that she is “not sure that it is justified to assume two completely different underlying structures” (p. 87), and for this reason she uses the term underlying representations instead of underlying structures.

Bearing in mind this idea that the BNP examples can be divided into two different underlying representations, it will be useful for us here before arriving at any final conclusions, to examine Keizer’s description of BNPs in some detail.

Based on the fact that the ICE-GB Corpus only contains BNPs with an indefinite article in Det1 position, as noted above in section 5.1, Keizer is of opinion that the great majority of examples must include the indefinite article *a* in Det1 position. In fact, it could be considered that the use of *a* is the prototypical use in Det1 position in BNPs. She is also aware, though, that elements like possessive pronouns can also be used in this position. However, its use implies certain special characteristics. In the case of the possessive pronoun, it “notionally determines the second noun” (p. 88) as shown in (108)-(109):

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

(108) Her nitwit of a husband

(109) Her husband is a nitwit

Demonstratives like *that* and *this* are also possible for the Det1 position in binominal constructions. But its use implies certain special features which are not shown when the indefinite article *a* is used. In particular and apart from the usual anaphoric function of demonstratives, *that* “is perfectly acceptable when the binominal is first-mentioned” (p. 88) as in (110):

(110) Many years ago I was singing in school, and *that idiot of a principal* got so mad at me that he yelled ‘I wish you’d get lost and spent the rest of your life singing to the walls’.

In the case of *this*, and also apart from its anaphoric use, this demonstrative acquires an ‘introductory’ use when included in BNPs. Example (111) includes an instance of this use:

(111) A few of us were admiring one of the guy’s new pocket knife. While one guy had it open and holding it up, *this idiot of a supervisor*, trying to be a smartass, grabbed onto the blade. He startled the guy holding it and he brought the knife down. The idiot got a nice slash on his palm and had to have stitches. Good leader material.

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

An exceptional function of Det1 in BNPs is also that of the indefinite determiner *one*. It “has a reinforcing function, strengthening the evaluative force of the first noun” (p. 89).

Consider example (112):

- (112) Then they’ll be like rats in a pit until he makes sense, and you gave him  
*one hell of a beating.*

Although the definite article *the* is the most frequent determiner in common NPs, its use in BNPs renders it special with respect to the general characteristics of this construction. In essence, it “can be used when the binominal is used to refer to some identifiable entity” (p. 89). In example (113), the fellow has already been introduced when he is explicitly mentioned:

- (113) When I heard her dismiss the footman, I stepped up to him and asked  
him, what little lady that was? And held a little chat with him about what a  
pretty child it was with her, and how genteel and well-carriaged the lady,  
the eldest, would be: how womanish, and how grave; and *the fool of a  
fellow* told me presently who she was...

Finally, Keizer considers that on some occasions it is possible to find quantifiers in BNPs, especially with singular nouns in the N1 position, as here:

- (114) So the EPA and the NPS suffer the first because the Conservatives would  
be happy if every national forest was open to logging interests and *each  
and every jewel of a national park* was ready for privatization.

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

Aside from those features of BNPs that we have seen in the preceding sections, Keizer, on the whole, advocates that these Det1 elements show exceptional features when used in BNPs. It is my impression that that ‘exceptionality’ is a hint that BNPs represent the varied character of the NP category as a construction by itself. I will return to this issue in section 5.4.

As with other advocates of plural BNPs as a grammatical option, Keizer considers that the obligatory use of the indefinite article *a* in the Det2 position is merely assumed in most accounts, as she herself also accepts, but with the exception of “when N2 is plural, (...) a bare plural is used” (p. 90), as in (115):

(115) Those wretches of boys

As regards the N1 position, the noun must be singular. However, as seen, “for some (British) speakers a plural is acceptable” (p. 90). Consider the following examples:

(116) ?Those fools of policemen

(117) Those Chinese chopsticks of knitting needles

However, there are some examples which indicate that the plural form is less grammatical than the singular one, and these seem to be those which take the form of a quantifier. Again, this is, of course, a matter of idiolectal discrepancy, given that for American speakers only the singular form is possible; on the contrary, British speakers generally consider the following examples to be acceptable:

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

(118) We discovered *two absolute jewels of islands*.

(119) Over the years we have had *several gems of centerfielders*.

(120) They have *two horrid little monsters of children*.

As hinted in previous sections, the N1 position could be fulfilled by a proper noun, as in example (121):

(121) A Miss Havisham of a piano

Keizer considers that this use highlights “the non-referential nature of N1” (p. 90). It is clear that N1 makes no reference to the person denoted by the proper noun.

As for the N2 position, some constraints seem to affect it. Typically, a count noun occupies this position but it is also possible to find examples with proper nouns, as in (122). What seem to be wholly excluded from this position are mass nouns. In a footnote, Keizer contends that if a mass noun is included in the N2 position “a qualifying reading will be triggered” (p. 92), as in example (123). Apart from the qualifying reading which Keizer advocates, it must be pointed out that the use of a mass noun does not allow for the use of the indefinite article *a* in the Det2 position. In such cases, the essence of the BNP construction seems to be lost:

(122) That creep of a James

(123) A jewel of glass

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

To my mind, the use of proper nouns in the N2 position, after an indefinite article, could be seen as a means of tackling the problem of the N1 + *of* + *a* from a different perspective and considering it as a unit. This issue will be dealt with in more depth in section 5.4.

As far as modification is concerned, only premodifiers are allowed, in which case both nouns show the same restrictions. Premodifiers of N2 have scope only over N2; however, for premodifiers of N1 two possibilities exist. Thus, if these have “an intensifying function, [they] will be interpreted as having scope over N1 only” (p. 92) as in example (124). On the contrary, if the “function is descriptive, it may have scope over the construction as a whole” (p. 92), as in example (125):

(124) The great fool of a young doctor

(125) A crescent-shaped jewel of a South Sea island

Lastly, the constituent *of* is, as in most other analyses, the major source disagreement, and consequently the element which causes most discussion. If *of* is considered to develop the same role as a common preposition (Napoli 1989), then the head of the construction is N1. On the other hand, if it is not given the status of a preposition, it must form part of a complex modifier (Aarts 1998), in which case the head is N2. Therefore, the role of the preposition *of* in BNP structures depends on the analysis of headedness in binominal constructions.

The headedness problem should be dealt with by paying special attention to semantic criteria, given that “semantic selection is really the only semantic criteria that are in some way relevant to these constructions” (p. 95). Due to the importance of

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

semantics when dealing with headedness in BNPs, the obligatory and omissible character of the nominal elements must be studied in depth. Given the predication relation between the two nouns, “one may expect (...) to be possible for either element to be used independently” (p. 95). Consider the following examples:

(126) She doesn't want to talk to *this idiot of a prime minister*.

(127) She doesn't want to talk to this idiot.

(128) She doesn't want to talk to this prime minister.

It seems that these criteria do not resolve the headedness problem to any great extent. However, on closer inspection we realize that when BNPs are used in a metaphorical sense, as in examples (129)-(131), below, “it is the second noun which satisfies the selection restrictions of the verb, while the first noun is used figuratively. This means that on a literal use only N2 can replace the construction as a whole” (p. 95).

(129) I met *a colourless little mouse of a woman* yesterday.

(130) \*I met a colourless little mouse yesterday.

(131) I met a woman yesterday.

It is also possible to find examples such as those in (132)-(134), where the second nominal does not contain relevant information, in which case it is more semantically useful to resort to N1, and where the informational content of N2 would in any case be implied:

(132) I detest *that rotten little fig of a human being*.

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

(133) I detest that rotten little fig.

(134) ? I detest that human being.

“This clearly suggests that N2 functions as the semantic head of the construction, with N1 fulfilling a predicative (modifying) function” (p. 96). Therefore, it seems that exceptions to the rule, such as metaphoric uses of BNPs, are helpful in solving the problem of headedness in the light of these facts. Being explicit or implicit, the semantic relevance of the second noun in BNPs is obvious.

As for the syntactic criteria, it seems that the traditional tests are not very helpful in the case of BNPs, as already seen in section 5.3.3. In the same vein as Aarts (1998), Keizer considers that “subject-verb agreement and establishing the morphosyntactic locus are largely irrelevant: since the two nominal parts typically agree in number, both parts show number agreement with the verb (...)” (p. 96). As regards extraposition and topicalization, these tests are not helpful either. Even though Napoli (1989) concludes that the [*of* + *a* + N2] sequence cannot be extraposed, in Keizer’s opinion this “does not prove that they are complements; it may, for instance, simply be due to the fact that this string does not form a constituent” (p. 97). Finally, concord must be an alternative test, but this also seems to be of little use when applied to BNPs, in that it throws up the same basic problem as the subject-verb agreement test, due to the fact that neither of the nominals differs in (syntactic) number.

With regard to pragmatic criteria, pronominalization seems to be the most appropriate tests for identifying the head in BNP structures. It can be asserted that “(...) not surprisingly, both definite and indefinite pronouns can be used to refer back to the binominal expression as a whole” (p. 99), as the following examples show:



## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

(135) We employed *a plonker of a plumber* to do the bathroom.

(136) *He* really made a mess of things.

(137) I'm afraid we employed *one*, too, for our kitchen.

With respect to the indefinite pronoun *one*, its use bolsters the idea of an N2-headed structure. Consider this example:

(138) We had *an absolute beast of a party*; the next *one* won't be so good, I'm sure.

If the indefinite pronoun takes as its antecedent the head of the structure, then example (138) clearly indicates that “it is N2 which functions as the head of a binominal construction” (p. 100). Moreover, *one* cannot be used to replace the N1 element, as shown in examples (139) and (140):

(139) He had *a hell of a time* getting from one part of the country to the other.

(140) \*I had (a) *one* of a row because I refused to even try.

In view of the preceding examples, we can only conclude that “(...) the behaviour of binominal constructions with regard to pronominalization can best be accounted for by assuming N2 to be the head of the construction” (p. 100-101).

As further evidence for the view that N2 is the head, Keizer points out that the use of possessive determiners in the Det1 position “notionally (i.e. semantically) specifies the second noun” (p. 101). Additionally, “since one and the same elements

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

cannot be marked twice for the possessive, the second noun in these constructions cannot have its own possessive postmodifier” (p. 101). This is shown in examples (141)-(143):

(141) Her jerk of a brother

(142) Her brother is a jerk

(143) \*Her jerk of a brother of hers

These examples also illustrate that “generally speaking the first determiner specifies the second noun rather than the first” (p. 101). In fact, when the N2 element is a proper noun, it is not possible to use an indefinite article in the Det1 position, contrary to the case with the Det2 position, which preserves its indefinite character. Consider the following examples:

(144) \*A creep of a James

(145) \*An angel of a Rebecca

The ungrammaticality of these examples serves as evidence for the rather obvious fact that “whereas the first determiner specifies the second noun, the second determiner does not” (p. 101).

However, this theory cannot account for examples with a demonstrative determiner. In examples such as (146), “Det1 seems to specify N1, both syntactically and semantically” (p. 101).

(146) *Those prejudiced fools of a jury* were totally unreliable.

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

In fact, when the BNP structure is used anaphorically, those examples which contain *that* in Det1 position seem to allow the demonstrative to specify either noun. Consider:

- (147) ‘That would have been all right,’ he went on, ‘but, just as *he* was about to throw the dynamite, the fish swam away and what do you think *that idiot of a boy* did?’

Here, both *that idiot* and *that boy* are possible. However, with *boy* the definite determiner *the* is preferred. Thus, the identifiability of the referent in this example depends on the use of *that* even though its function is not the typical one that it has in common NPs. In this specific example, the demonstrative has “the pragmatic function of intensifying the evaluative judgment given by the speaker” (p. 102). In any case, the function of *that* [in BNPs] is to strengthen the force of the speaker’s judgement. This strengthening function of *that* is, however, not exclusive of BNPs, given that its use can be also be found in common NPs which contain evaluative adjectives, as in *that idiotic boy*. This, according to Keizer, leads us to the conclusion that “[t]his can best be accounted for by assuming that the ‘N1 + *of* + *a*’-string functions as a modifier of the second noun” (p.102).

As already hinted, this particular use of *that* can also be found for the indefinite determiner *one*. In BNPs as well as in common NPs, *one* does not have a numerical meaning, “it has a reinforcing function, strengthening the evaluative force of the modifying first noun” (p. 102) as in example (148):

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

(148) Loudest. This is *one beast of a system*. Whether you like your music loud or louder, the Mustang GT audio system is designed to deliver *mucho* ear-blistering *musico* directly to your supplicating eardrums.

All in all, then, such examples seem to favour the idea that:

(...) N2 functions as the syntactic and semantic head of the constructions, at least, where the first determiner takes the form of an article, a possessive pronoun or the indefinite determiner *one*.

Keizer leaves as an open question the problem posed by structures like *those fools of a crew*. The plural form of the determiner is the major issue in this structure, given that, if Det1 specifies N2, then there is a tacit problem of number incongruence which leads to ungrammaticality (see section 5.4).

Keizer's analysis leads her to the conclusion that in BNP structures N2 is the head, and allows her to state the following:

This means that headedness can still be seen as essentially a semantico-pragmatic notion, supported by formal and discourse evidence, instead of an independent syntactic notion without a semantic or pragmatic basis.

Examples like *a wonder of a city*, *a crescent-shaped jewel of an island* and *a fool of a doctor* support and illustrate this conclusion. Their degree of complexity of these three examples moves from a fairly straightforward to more complex. In *a wonder of a city*, *city* is the overall referent and *wonder* describes the head. By contrast, *an absolute jewel of a crescent-shaped island* has a more intricate structure. Applying

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

Keizer's idea that BNPs can show two different types of underlying representations, this example exemplifies one of these two possibilities here.

(149) [NP [Det a] [ExtN [A crescent-shaped] [ExtN [MP jewel of an] [N-head island]]]]

That is, “while N2 allows us to identify the type of entity referred to (*an island*), N2 compares this island to a jewel. The outer ExtN further describes this jewel of an island as crescent-shaped” (p. 106). The other possible underlying representation can be found in examples of the type *a fool of a doctor*. In this case the underlying structure is as shown here:

(150) [NP [Det a] [ExtN [[MP fool of a] [N-head doctor]]]]

This structure is considered to represent an attributive binominal construction in which “the MP *fool of a* does not modify the referent, but the property described by N2. This results in the attributive interpretation, according to which the property described by N1 evaluates the professional ability of the referent; not the referent him- or herself” (p. 107).

The as yet unsolved BNP structure *those fools of a jury* seems to threaten the possibility that all the members of the BNP construction conform to a unique internal configuration. In light of the fact that the agreement test aligns this structure with N1-headedness (*those fools of a jury were totally unreliable*), it appears that there is no possibility of structural homogeneity here. However, this seems to be a problem for NPs in general given that those ordinary NPs which include a collective noun do not

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

allow for the use of a plural demonstrative determiner; *\*those jury were a bunch of prejudiced fools*. Moreover, the use of the singular demonstrative *that* with such words as collectives (*jury*) is at least grammatically dubious; *?that jury were a bunch of prejudiced fools*. The only grammatical possibility seems to be the definite determiner *the*, which is unmarked for singular and plural: *the jury were a bunch of prejudiced fools*. In this way, “rather than the incompatibility of a plural determiner and a singular noun, it is the nature of the demonstrative which excludes these examples” (Keizer 2007a: 108). Indeed, once Det1 is applied to N1, it is considered to reinforce the speaker’s subjective evaluation, as dealt with previously in this section. And since the goal of using a BNP is to express an evaluative judgement, the idea of the incompatible nature of the demonstrative with such examples strengthens the reinforcing function given that “number agreement between Det1 and N1 may be interpreted as a way of expressing this crucial pragmatic relation” (p. 108).

On the whole, Keizer’s view is that all examples showing a BNP structure form a “homogeneous group and one and the same overall analysis” (p. 108) regardless of some problematic cases. In any case, these problematic examples do in themselves serve to undermine the homogeneous structural pattern, but rather are to be considered this only means that they must be considered as non-prototypical. Thus, in the BNP construction, headedness is located in the N2 position, and N1 is part of a complex modifier.

### 5.4 A constructional analysis of binominal noun phrases

The works analysed in the preceding sections can be used as the point of departure for a new syntactic analysis of BNPs. In the following sections, I will explore the notion

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

that BNPs are members of the NP category, a fact which strengthens the idea of diversity within grammatical categories. BNPs form part of the NP network, which includes the most common to the most unusual structures of the NP category. That said, it should not be expected that this type of structure must always conform to the prototypical NP configuration. In that way, the following analysis holds that categories are composed more by exceptions than prototypes.

### 5.4.1 Structural parallelisms

If we can establish a parallelism between two similar structures we may in this way arrive at a comfortable solution to the problems posed by BNPs. One approach to explaining the use of *hell of a* would be to draw a comparison between BNPs like *a hell of a problem* and what Brems (2003) considers ‘measure nouns’ (also MN), such as *a lot of problems*. The outstanding feature of these two structures is that both allow phonological reduction leading to changes in the morphology of their most characteristic constituents, that is, *hell of a* and *a lot of*. These two strings can be spelled as *helluva* and *lotta*, respectively. Given that both structures suffer the same linguistic changes, it could be contended that both of them undergo the same process of changing due to similar internal dynamics. In view of the fact that both structures belong to the NP category and considering the network approach to language (Taylor 1995; see also Rosch 1973, 1978; Lakoff 1987; Aarts, Denison, Keizer & Popova 2004; and Aarts 2007), it makes sense to think that, given the closely related position of these two structures in the network, their structural changes exert a mutual influence. As already seen, syntactic mimicry (see McCawley 1988; also section 5.3.1) allows the establishment of a grammatical similarity between the function of *hell of a* and an adjectival premodifier, *hellish*. It sounds more logical to establish this mimic effect

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

between *hell of a* and *a lot of*, provided that both are closely related to each other. They do indeed contain the same elements, and there is no need to change the nature of the constituents that make up the structure, as in the case of the adjectival premodifier. Thus, the relation between *a hell of a problem* and *a lot of problems* seems to be affected by the fact that “[c]onstructions which are closely related to each other (...) prime each other more rapidly than those which are further apart in the network” (Trousdale<sup>17</sup>). As such, I am of the idea that within the NP network *a lot of* is closer to *hell of a* than the use of NP premodifiers.

It is usually considered that behind the change from *a lot of* to *lotta* there is a process of grammaticalization of which *a lot of* “is included to represent the fully grammaticalized predecessor of the MNs [(Measure Nouns)] (...)” (Brems 2003: 309). Instances like *sorta* and *kinda* whose origins are *a sort of* and *a kind of* respectively, can also be found. It has been demonstrated that this type of structure undergoes a previous process of delexicalization prior to a process of grammaticalization (Brems 2003). Other instances that illustrate such a process are *a bunch of*, *heap of* and *pile of*, showing different degrees of grammaticalization.

Whether *hell of a* has suffered a process of actual grammaticalization remains to be demonstrated. This is not the place for such a demonstration, yet it cannot be denied that, considering instances such as *a helluva problem*, it is possible to argue in favour of the hypothesis that this phonological reduction resembles that of *lotta*.

The specific case of *helluva* is also discussed by Trousdale<sup>18</sup>, who also shows how this structure has suffered a process of constructional change. Under the assumption that all constructions are organized in a network, which implies that

---

<sup>17</sup> These notes have been taken from a course given by Trousdale in Vigo, April 2012.

<sup>18</sup> These notes have been taken from a course given by Trousdale in Vigo, April 2012.



## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

“instances of use form part of the network; [that] the network is dynamic and constantly evolving through the interplay between language structure and language use; [and that] conventionalization of patterns occurs when tokens are used frequently” (Trousdale<sup>19</sup>), it can be concluded that new constructions emerge in the network due to language use. In this light, the *hell of a* construction undergoes a process of constructionalization after which it is considered the “*hell* micro-construction” (Trousdale<sup>20</sup>). As such, it has gone from being a constitutive binominal construction to an evaluative binominal construction, thence to become a degree modifier construction, according to Trousdale. This also allows him to note that “the H micro-construction becomes aligned with other ‘ex’-binominals (e.g. *a lot of*, and *a shred of*) (...)”. Therefore, the phonological reduction of *hell of a* and the fact that it evolves into a micro-construction are indicators of the internal distribution of *a hell of a problem* in particular, and of BNPs in general. At the same time, this highlights the secondary relevance of N1 vis-à-vis the primary position of N2 within the BNP construction. Brems (2003) and Trousdale lead me to think that only those elements which are semantically weak undergo processes of change such as grammaticalization (preceded by a process of delexicalization) and constructionalization, a fact which weighs in favour of the idea that semantic strength determines the main constituent among the possible constituents of a construction. In fact, the delexicalization process could be seen as a process suffered by those elements which are semantically weak within a specific construction, as is the case in BNPs.

As seen in section 5.3.2., Napoli (1989) considers that BNPs are common NPs. However, *a chair of a kitchen*, a common NP, and *a hell of a problem*, a BNP, show perhaps more differences than similarities. Having considered the special functions of

---

<sup>19</sup> These notes have been taken from a course given by Trousdale in Vigo, April 2012.

<sup>20</sup> These notes have been taken from a course given by Trousdale in Vigo, April 2012.

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

the determiners, the role of the *of* element and the function developed by N1 in BNPs, we cannot maintain that these two structures fall within exactly the same construction. If we take into account their productivity, we realize that they differ in this feature too: while common NPs show a high degree of productivity, the BNP construction reveals only a semi-productive pattern. Moreover, if we look at certain instances of the BNP construction like *a hell of a problem*, it must be contended that its degree of productivity is almost null. Additionally, common NPs show a bottom-up configuration while BNPs are a clear example of a top-down configuration and a fixed, frozen form.

On the whole, the phonological reduction, the structural similarity between *lotta* and *helluva* and the low degree of productivity of BNPs (null on some occasions) are all indicative of binominal constructions which point in the direction of a N1-modifier and N2-head structure. This is perhaps indicative of a highly entrenched instance of language, whose idiosyncratic character could be used as an argument against the idea that the rest of the (not so highly entrenched) examples of the BNP construction do not fit the modifier-head internal configuration argued for in the present section. For this reason, the following sections aim to demonstrate that BNPs, even though they belong to the NP category, do not share the ordinary NP configuration.

### 5.4.2 The headedness issue

All parts of the present work thus far have dealt with the headedness question within grammatical structures. The literature, as we have seen, includes an extensive and varied range of points of view, including the opinion that certain structures are headless instances of the language (Dryer 2004; see section 2.5.2). BNPs look like ordinary NPs but they actually deviate from the general NP norm. It is in principle quite shocking

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

that two structures can develop the same syntactic function even when their internal configurations are so different. Yet the fact that their syntactic roles are the same within a higher structure, a clause for example, could indicate that the main element in both constructions is the same. That is to say, nouns are the heads in the general category of NPs, and hence in BNPs nouns must also be the main element. It simply happens that in this construction we have two nouns. The present section will sketch out some ideas as means of arguing for the theory that the second noun is a more appropriate candidate for the head position.

The previous section has introduced the idea that those structures belonging to the BNP construction are instances of a modifier-head configuration, given certain special features. It is true that *a hell of a problem* shows a highly entrenched status in the language, a fact which favours this specific configuration. However, the modifier-head organization can also be applied to the other the instances that fall within the BNP label. Obviously, the evidence previously used in order to support this syntactic organization cannot be applied to all these other examples, but other reasons exist that support the modifier-head structure here.

To begin with, special attention should be paid to the positional features of nouns in the N1 position in BNPs and the restrictions they show. Only those common nouns showing some type of evaluative character can be used in this position. It is also possible to find proper nouns developing this role but only those which, given certain social repercussions, have acquired some evaluative characteristics related to the most outstanding feature of the specific referent. Thus, it is possible to find well-known examples, such as (151) and (152), both repeated here for convenience:

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

(151) A Hitler of a man

(152) A Kate Moss of a wine

On the contrary, the following examples are not possible:

(153) \*A chair of a woman

(154) \*A plate of a child

The main problem with (153) and (154) is that *chair* and *plate* do not offer any possibility of evaluation of *woman* and *child*, respectively. Both N1s are useless for the purpose of using a BNP. The evaluative target of its use is not achieved given that the use of these elements does not provide any possibility for the description of N2. On the contrary, in:

(155) Your turtle of a sister

the best known and characteristic feature of N1 is applied to N2, that is, the slowness of a turtle is applied to the way somebody walks or in some other way behaves; whereas in example (156):

(156) \*Your lampshade of a son

no feature is automatically applied to ‘your son’, given that the noun used in the N1 position does not have any noteworthy feature that can be used to evaluate the noun in the N2 position.

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

With respect to this evaluative feature of the first noun, it must be pointed out here that we should abandon the idea that one of the main features of the N1 is that it must be evaluative. It would be more adequate to think that the evaluative features are given by the construction itself and not by the noun. In this sense, it might be thought that any noun could be used in the N1 position, a fact that would not explain the ungrammaticality of examples like (153), (154) and (156). However, if BNPs are compared with other evaluative constructions like attributive sentences, this idea does seem more appealing. Take the following examples:

(157) The brat broke the plates

(158) Your brother is a brat

In example (157), *brat* is used as what it is, a common noun with no sense of evaluation. On the contrary, *brat* functions as an attribute in example (158) acquiring some sort of evaluative character. Thus, in the same way as the meaning of the attributive sentence construction changes the features of the noun, the same happens in the BNP construction. It is the construction which provides meaning, and in this specific case the meaning is evaluative. Moreover, and with respect to the noun in particular, just as it is not grammatical to say:

(159) \*Your brother is a lampshade

it is not possible to accept examples (153), (154) and (156) as grammatical. Therefore, those nouns used in the N1 position are not evaluative *per se*; the construction is the thing which is evaluative.

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

This conclusion leads us once again to the idea that language is about meaning, and that all the possible linguistic structures contained in a grammar are there in the service of what speakers want to communicate, that is, the meaning they want to convey. In this specific case, language offers the possibility of using two different structures, a copular sentence with an attribute and a BNP. Consider the following examples:

(160) Your sister is slow

(161) Your sister is a turtle

These two examples of copular sentences code roughly the same meaning as the BNP, even though the constructions used are different. It can be contended that the BNP construction is the nominal counterpart of copular sentences with an NP attribute, a feature not possible in a common NPs (\*a turtle sister). I do not deny, then, that a predicate relation exists between the two nouns (Quirk *et al* 1985; McCawley 1988; Napoli 1989; Aarts 1998 and Keizer 2007a). As previously noted, this is the only point where linguists seem to be in agreement about BNPs, although, their explanations for this BNP feature diverge quite significantly depending on the framework. In the present section, this predicate relation is considered to be evidence in favour of a modifier-head structure of BNPs. Consider this diagram:

(162) that **jerk** of a **doctor**

that **doctor** is a **jerk**

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

This switching of positions supports the idea that Det1 accompanies N2, and I would dare to suggest that Det2 determines N1, a feature that would explain the obligatory indefinite character of Det2.

All of the BNP constituents show special and unique functions, but the element that perhaps seems to develop the most unusual role is the indefinite article *a* in the Det2 position. To begin with, if we assume that Det2 determines N1, this entails a configuration in which the determiner is postponed to its nominal head, which sounds completely ungrammatical in English. However, we are not dealing with a common NP. Rather, the question to ask at this juncture is: how we can argue for this theory on grammatical grounds?

As a first approximation, consider the interchange of positions when transforming a BNP into a copular sentence. Whenever an attribute is used in a copular sentence, it is always preceded by the indefinite article *a*. Hence:

(163) This theory is **a mess**

(164) That director is **a sexist**

(165) Your brother is **a jerk**

(166) The chairman is **a crook**

These sentences are all counterparts of the following BNPs:

(167) This **mess of a** theory

(168) That **sexist of a** director

(169) Your **jerk of a** brother

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

(170) The **crook of a** chairman

My aim here is to illustrate that, given that exceptional features are acquired by the elements once used in the BNP construction, its most characteristic string (N1 + *of* + *a*) also shows a particular and extraordinary organization which is extended to the whole construction.

Another point to bear in mind is that the reference of the overall structure is not indefinite. The BNP construction is only used when the speaker makes reference to a very specific and well known referent. So, it seems illogical to maintain that, if N2 is considered to be the head of the structure and the overall reference is definite, the indefinite article *a* determines the second nominal. It can even be contended that its position is merely syntactical with respect to N2, in the sense that, semantically, Det2 has nothing to do with N2. Hence, Det1 determines N2 and there is no other possibility than to accept that N1 is determined by Det2.

The potential for referentiality of the BNP construction suggests that it is always definite and concrete. In fact, the overall construction projects definiteness. The idea is that BNPs simply do not allow indefinite reference. Even in examples like the following, indefiniteness is not appreciated:

(171) An angel of a girl

This example includes not only the constructional indefinite Det2 but the indefinite article *a* in the Det1 position. Yet it implies a very concrete reference. The overall



## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

meaning of this structure makes reference to a well known girl, unlike common indefinite NPs. On light of this, I contend that the BNP construction involves definite reference as one of the main characteristics of the construction.

The definite character of the BNP construction can also be supported by means of ungrammatical examples:

(172) \*A creep of a James

No word can be more specific than a proper noun, hence the use of *James* in this example argues in favour of the constructional definiteness of BNPs. Example (171) is grammatical even though *a* is used in the Det1 position because, grammatically, an indefinite article may accompany a common noun. On the contrary, example (172) is ungrammatical because of the definite character of the proper noun, which cannot be determined by an indefinite article. In addition, the definite character of the overall construction increases the ungrammaticality of this specific structure.

### 5.4.3 Agreement in special cases of the BNP construction

We turn now to the question of agreement in BNPs. This section is intended as additional evidence in favour of the modifier-head structure proposed in the previous sections. Hence, in this specific case, we will deal with the structure *those fools of a crew* which is a good illustration of the problem at hand, and also shows the complexity of the BNP phenomenon.

*Those fools of a crew* could be considered the exception within the exception, that is, BNPs are exceptions to the common NP category, and *those fools of a crew* is an exception within the BNP construction given that Det1 and N1 show a plural form.

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

At first glance seems impossible to include this structure within the structural explanation offered in the previous section, in that Det1 and N2 do not show number agreement, \**those crew*. Therefore, should this structure be given a new and different configuration to that of the rest of BNPs? The present work argues in favour of the idea that all syntactic structures show exceptions to the norm. Thus, if *those fools of a crew* does not fit the modifier-head structure of BNPs, this is not necessarily a major problem for the theory as a whole. However, my intention here is to demonstrate that all BNPs show a modifier-head internal organization. The exceptional character here lies in the fact that even when the first determiner does not fit the singular form of the N2 head, exceptionally, it does conform to the general internal structural form of the BNP construction.

Another important issue related to exceptionality within grammatical categories is that those exceptional structures tend to exhibit special uses that must also be included within the description of the construction. Moreover, these uses also highlight the most characteristic features of the prototypical structure; thus *those fools of a crew* could help us to show and confirm the head element in BNPs.

As seen in Aarts (1998) (see section 5.3.3) and Keizer (2007a) (see section 5.3.4), the traditionally applied syntactic and semantic criteria are not very useful when dealing with the internal syntactic configuration of BNPs. This is why agreement is a relevant on resolving the issue. And if we are to consider agreement, it is almost unavoidable that the agreement hierarchy developed by Corbett (1979, 2004, 2006) be taken into account. Therefore, in this section Corbett's agreement hierarchy will be used with the aim of solving the headedness dilemma of the BNP construction. The

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

hierarchy is represented in the following schema, where “these four positions represent successively less canonical agreement (...)” (Corbett 2006: 207):

attributive > predicate > relative pronoun > personal pronoun
---

Corbett (p. 207) explains the agreement hierarchy in the following terms:

For any controller that permits alternative agreements, as we move rightwards along the Agreement Hierarchy, the likelihood of agreement with greater semantic justification will increase monotonically (that is, with no intervening decrease).

If we apply this hierarchical organization to *those fools of a crew*, the structure falls under the attributive position, where syntactic agreement is the rule to follow, given that the more rightwards we move, the more semantic the agreement relation becomes. It seems that our structure fits the hierarchy, in that the first determiner agrees in number with the first noun. So, considering the external appearance of this structure, one must accept that Det1 accompanies N1. The problem, though, is still not solved. The formally singular N2 shows the special feature of being semantically plural, a feature which complicates the analysis of the structure.

In this respect, and considering the role of semantics in modelling syntactic structure proposed throughout the present work, the plural meaning of the second noun, and consequently the N2 position in the general BNP construction – considered the head *locus* in the BNP construction – is the feature that must be taken into account in order to resolve the internal structure of *those fools of a crew* and that of BNPs in

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

general. Therefore, the feature values of the whole construction can be determined if N2 is considered the main element of the structure, in which case we must talk of semantic rather than syntactic agreement. Moreover, as confirmed by Reid (1991) “collective nouns in the singular (...) trigger plurality on the verb more frequently than do individual nouns (...)” (Berg 1998: 34). It is for this reason that we can find instances such as the following:

(173) *Those fools of a crew* were drinking all the night long.

(174) Besides, once this business is concluded you shall be able to live together in the open, free of *those fools of a royal family*.

(175) I totally agree with you!!! *Those idiots of a jury* letting the monster get way with murder of that poor innocent little girl!!!

Another important factor relating to the proposed semantic agreement in *those fools of a crew* is the physical distance that exists between Det1 and N2. This is also discussed by Corbett (2006: 236), who argues that “as the distance between controller and target increases, so does the likelihood of semantic agreement”. The structure *those fools of a crew* seems to fit this distance requirement. It is possible, then, to include this example among the semantic agreement instances given that between the Det1 and N2 there exist three elements. On this view, we can only conclude *those fools of a crew* exhibits the modifier-head structure posited for the BNP construction in general.

Finally, by way of conclusion, we can considered that the most prominent issues relating to BNPs, that is, the analysis of the string N1+ *of* + *a* and the headedness issue, have been addressed in such a way that the N1-modifier-N2-head organization seems to

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

be the most appropriate analysis for BNPs. This has been achieved through an approach which differs from the usual means of eliciting syntactic structure. The comparison made between our construction and similar structures can be considered to be a good method of analysis since, from the present point of view, all the structures of the language are mutually connected on some level, and thus it seems logical that the closest will tend to exert the greatest influence on each other; the present case shows its most direct influence to be from the structure of *a lot of*. Its evolution, and consequent phonological reduction, explains the internal organization of *a hell of*, which at the same time establishes the basis for further analyses of examples which not yet so entrenched, such as *your brat of a brother* or *an angel of a girl*. These structures are additionally explained by noting the role played by each individual constituent of the BNP construction. The extraordinary use of the indefinite article in the Det2 position, the role of N1 with an evaluative tone without a preceding indefinite article, and the resulting syntactic link between Det1 and N2, all point to the conclusion that the second noun is the head of the whole construction. Additionally, the agreement features of special instances of the BNP construction, such as *those fools of a crew*, provide a type of test that, in the light of the failure of traditional ones, seems to speak in favour of the N1 modifier-N2 head structure too. In this specific case, exceptions to the norm, always present in the language, help us to explain the internal syntactic structure of the BNP construction which at the same time exemplifies the varied character of language.



### Summary and conclusions

The intention of this dissertation has been to argue for the view that English Noun Phrases do not follow a straightforward, syntactic design. Traditionally considered as the easiest and simplest of all the constructions of language, the NP structure has turned out to comprise quite a varied group of forms. As a consequence, the NP category has provided an excellent illustration of the richness of language.

Chapter 1 included an exhaustive description of the NP construction. With the aim of setting out the most basic elements of the construction, section 1.1 provided a description of the Noun Phrase from a rather descriptive point of view. Section 1.2 dealt with the essential distinction between the head of the NP construction and the possible dependents that it may include, which themselves split into complements and modifiers. An accurate distinction between the head element and its possible complements was a crucial element in the further development of the present work. Section 1.3 sought to establish the notion, from the very beginning, that diversity within language is one of its most characteristic features, and thus all possible elements that could be used in the analysis of the NP construction were set out. A review of the variation found in the position of the noun, as well as in all the possible constituents that could function as dependents, was also provided in this section. In addition, this section included a description of the position of the determiner and all its possible variations. Finally, the section closed with some references to cross-linguistic examples which support this idea of diversity within the NP construction. Examples from Galician, Spanish, Portuguese, French and German were useful to demonstrate

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

that, despite its simple appearance, NPs are more complex than might be thought at a first glance.

In this way, chapter 1 served to cover all the theoretical preliminaries necessary for the rest of the study. Chapter 2 opens with an introduction, section 2.1, which discussed the headedness issue. The central point here revolved around the necessity of a head element within grammatical structures, and NPs in particular. However, the main discussion did not concentrate on whether heads are necessary or not in syntax, given that the great majority of linguists agree that they are. Different opinions here tend to concern the location of the head element within an NP. There were also those who contended that the noun is always the head (Matthews 1981; Huddleston & Pullum 2002), as well as some who posited that the head element is located in the position of the determiner (Hudson 1984; Abney 1987; Longobardi 2001; Taylor 2002; Alexiadou, Haegeman & Stavrou 2007). Given this diversity of opinion on such a crucial element within a construction, an extended historical and theoretical map of the different grammatical frameworks that had analysed the NP construction was needed. Thus, section 2.2 included a conventional analysis of NPs. Taking as a basis the endocentric theory (Bloomfield 1933) for the syntactic analysis of linguistic expressions, and the fact that lexical elements are the heads within these endocentric constructions, authors like Hockett (1958) contend that constructions must contain the same characteristics as their head, and the head, in NP constructions, could not be any element but the nominal one.

From a quite different perspective, section 2.3 presented the generative point of view. As a first step, it was contended that, in fact, until the 80s, generative grammarians considered that the noun was the head (Chomsky 1965). However, Jackendoff (1977) set a new theory, the X-bar theory, which drastically changed the



## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

generative position. With respect to phrasal categories, X-bar theory contends that all phrasal categories share similar features. In this way, there is no need for the existence of four different phrase structure rules to analyse the projections of nouns, verbs, adjectives and prepositions. Rather, they all share the same underlying structure. Under this view, a new element acquires a central status, and that element is the Specifier. It is considered to be the one responsible for the creation of a syntactic category. This theory was the basis for a further development of the DP-hypothesis (Abney 1987), which posits that the determiner is the head in a [Det + N] structure. This new analysis established the idea that the structure of an NP is parallel to that of a sentence. Such a parallelism lies in the fact that the highest functional projection dominates the lexical element. Thus Abney's DP analysis rejects the N as the head of the set [Det + N]. As a consequence of this new analysis, a new syntactic category, Determiner Phrase (DP), appeared in linguistics. DPs are considered as projections of the noun. The DP hypothesis is also supported by Giorgi & Longobardi (1991: 133), who developed the Argument Uniqueness Principle in order to argue for DP structure. With this principle they contend that "only one argument may occur in each Spec position". It applies to syntactic structures which follow the X-bar theory. All in all, the generative approach only allows functional elements to project syntactic categories.

Section 2.4 provided a discussion of the issue from the perspective of Cognitive Grammar. Under the main tenet that language is about meaning, cognitive grammarians reject the central position of syntax in linguistic analyses. All linguistic elements contain meaning, even the most functional ones. In this way, given that determiners contain meaning, they are considered to be the head in a [Det + N] structure. Cognitive Grammar defines the head of a structure as that element whose profile corresponds to the profile of the whole structure (Langacker 1991). When

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

dealing with grammatical constructions and in particular with NPs, analyses from the cognitive point of view contend that it is essential to take into account the grounding function. In fact, this is treated as the main function within the elaboration of an NP (Langacker 2004) and also as the final step. It must be noted that the functional element is the one determining the transformation of a noun into an NP via the grounding function. This means that for Cognitive Grammar the determiner is in some sense the central element within an NP. Taylor (2002: 346-349) also considers that grounding is the main process in the formation of an NP. But, although the determiner is the crucial element in the creation of an NP, it cannot project an NP by itself. Thus, a relation of co-dependence is established between the functional and the lexical element. However, this co-dependency is not equitable and the determiner is again given more prominence when elaborating an NP. It can be concluded that Cognitive Grammar provides the determiner with a more relevant position in the elaboration of NPs in view of the fact that it is the grounding constituent and as such the 'profile determinant' of the whole structure. But, it must also be said that its relevance is not of the same degree as that assigned to it within the generative framework.

Section 2.5 included two syntactic analyses of the NP structure which deviate from the previous ones. Section 2.5.1 dealt with the work of Ball (2004), who contends that Noun Phrases are exocentric structures where both elements, the determiner and the noun, are heads, the main reason why this theory is called bi-polar. Neither of the elements is dependent on the other. From the semantic point of view, Ball considers that the noun is the most important element. As for the syntactic one, the determiner is considered as the element which differentiates a noun from a verb. In this theory, the meaning of the whole NP depends on the equal contribution of the noun and the

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

determiner. The content of the noun is projected by the determiner given that as a lexical category it cannot create a syntactic category by itself.

Section 2.5.2 presented the work of Dryer (2004), which provides an analysis which is wholly different from all those preceding it. The main idea is that Noun Phrases are headless structures. This analysis begins with the fact that some languages have NPs but do not have nouns among their constituents, as is the case with Nkore-Kiga, a Bantu language spoken in Uganda. Dryer explores six possible approaches in order to demonstrate his theory. Thus, he considers ellipsis; the noun as the modifier; modifiers as the head; determiners as the head; headlessness; that all NPs are headless structures. Having considered all these possibilities, he concludes that the final one is the most satisfactory and that the notion *head* is not really necessary.

Section 2.6, the last section of chapter 2, presented the framework to be used in the present work. Taking Cognitive Grammar (Langacker 1987a, 1991) and Construction Grammar (Goldberg 1995, 2006) as frames of reference, this section argued in favour of the idea that the most appropriate analysis of an ordinary NP is that which takes the noun to be the head. In order to set out the theoretical basis of Construction Grammar (cf. 2.6.1), section 2.6.1.1 offered some general theoretical preliminaries regarding the constructional framework. Then, section 2.6.1.2, dealt with the grounding function of the determiner in relation to the act of communication. The context of communication is strengthened when the participants share a coordinated mental reference (Fauconier 1985), and as previously seen, the use of the determiner guarantees the sharing of the same context by speakers and hearers. However, before using the determiners, language users need to fix in their minds a certain number of lexical elements which evoke the different types within the context of discourse. Those are called the *onstage elements*, and are related to the current discourse space (CDS)

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

(Langacker 2004). When speakers and hearers share the same CDS, a frame is created which reflects the immediate scope of attention for the participants. Whenever a new discourse is created, the discourse space must be updated, which provokes the use of different linguistic types, that is, of new lexical elements in order to set a new context of communication in the mental references of both speaker and hearer. As can be appreciated, context is of great importance in the creation of meaning, and even though determiners are essential for the grounding of the referential elements, they cannot create meaning on their own. The use of the determiners depends on the lexical elements which construct the discourse space and provide the act of communication with meaning.

Such a theory can be applied directly to the NP construction if we pay attention to the informational status of the referents in the context. The constituents used in the formation of an NP depend on the informational features of the noun. Thus, the use of a definite or indefinite determiner depends mainly on this information. As a consequence, the direction of encoding is from noun to determiner.

Section 2.6.1.3 looked at the notion of meaning in relation to the NP construction. In terms of Cognitive Grammar, conceptualization is the elaboration of meaning of a grammatical category or linguistic element. In this respect, the section provided an explanation of the internal syntactic organization of NPs, looking at the meaning of the whole construction. From a constructionist perspective, the NP construction offers a schematic meaning, that of a determined entity. The construction offers a generalization, and its general meaning is specified once the nominal element is used. That is, the schematicity of the NP construction is specified by means of lexical elements which are the basic building blocks of meaning which we use to categorize the world (Aitchison 1987, 1989). This section also dealt with the idea of

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

subcategorization. This notion supports N-headedness in the sense that whenever a verb needs to be subcategorized, it depends on the content of the lexical word which is subcategorized, not on its grounding features. Thus, the meaning of the expression depends on the lexical items which make up the discourse frame, which at the same time select their own dependent elements, as is the case with determiners. Therefore, the semantic content of lexical elements seems to be the main guiding feature when developing grammatical categories (Zwicky 1985; Jiménez-Juliá 2000), and NPs in particular. That means that the noun must be considered the head in ordinary NP structures given its semantic strength.

Section 2.6.2 focussed on some changes in the cognitive model as regards the NP construction. To begin with, section 2.6.2.1 considered the position of the noun with respect to discourse frames. If the discourse frames influence the meaning of determiners, and if these frames are the product of the nouns within the mental spaces, then their use depends mainly on the nouns. This is further supported by Figure 3 (p. 88), in which it is shown that the semantic features of the determiner are not directly projected in the highest structure. Thus, its semantic features are taken into account once we deal with the noun, but not with the NP. Both the semantic features of the noun, influenced by the semantics of the determiner, and also its syntactic features, that is, as head of the NP, are projected in the higher structure.

Finally, section 2.6.2.1.1 is devoted to the individual analysis of the determiner. It is considered as a schema, that is, a device of grammatical description. Langacker<sup>21</sup> points out that a schema is a template that represents sets of expressions, whose abstracted commonality is only observable at certain levels of specificity. A determiner, then, represents an abstract commonality for the type of lexical element

---

<sup>21</sup> These notes were taken from a course imparted by Langacker in Madrid, March 2008.

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

which requires a template. As previously seen, the grounding function of the determiner provides it with head status, according to many authors (for example, Taylor 2002). However, it is difficult to accept the idea of a schematic constituent that projects such a specific structure as an NP. The schematicity of the determiner could be solved by taking into account the fact that, to a certain degree, the lexicon contains more abstract schemata from which actual items can “inherit” properties (Jackendoff 2002). So, determiners, having a certain degree of semantic content, can be considered as part of the lexicon, as additional meaningful complements for the proper lexical items.

Grammatical constructions may be expressions (of any size), or schemas abstracted from expressions in order to capture their commonality (Langacker<sup>22</sup>). From the point of view of Construction Grammar, constructions are in need of specificity. In the specific case of NPs, the specificity of the NP is due to the use of a noun, not that of a determiner. Furthermore, the commonality of a grammatical construction like an NP is that the noun uses the determiner as a template. The syntactic role of the noun, then, is the governing position within an NP, that is, the head.

The commonality of a construction can be also recognised in less prototypical elements. Thus, an NP may contain an adjective or an *-ing* form in the syntactic position of the noun. This is possible given that the [Det + N] construction is adapted to the adjective or the *-ing* form providing them with the syntactic capacities of NPs. The constructional meaning of prototypical NPs is adapted to the novel element until it fits. The non-prototypicality of the novel lexical items, and the fact that the structures they project are grammatical, show the varied character of the NP construction.

---

<sup>22</sup> These notes were also taken from a course given by Langacker in Madrid, March 2008.

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

Given that variety seemed to be an option for the NP category, chapter 3 dealt with the close appositive construction. The main goal of this chapter was to provide the reader with some theoretical background to this grammatical construction as a preparation for chapter 4. Thus, after a brief introduction in section 3.1, section 3.2 offered a theoretical account of the main differences between close apposition and loose apposition. Loose apposition has often been considered by grammarians to be the only possibility for this category. Thus, taking semantics into account, Bitea (1977) considers that loose apposition is apposition *par excellence* (cf. 3.2.2). In a similar vein, Koktová (1985) sees pragmatics as offering the main arguments in favour of the idea that only those structures which contain two nominal elements separated by a punctuation mark can be considered true appositions (cf. 3.2.3), and it is clear that these are only loose appositions. Next, section 3.2.4 considered Meyer's (1989) contention that in order to provide an exhaustive analysis of the notion of apposition one must take into account the semantic and pragmatic features of the construction, but that the analysis would not be complete if syntactic criteria are not also considered. Finally, section 3.2.5 discussed the study by Acuña-Fariña (1999). He posits that too many structures are included under the appositive label, leading to an unclear definition of the notion. He goes on to propose a new analysis which redefines the notion. Section 3.2.6 then concluded that loose appositions have managed to occupy a relatively dominant place in the literature, and that the close appositive type was in need of a more exhaustive study and analysis. Thus, section 3.3 was devoted to a study of the different analyses that have been made of the CA construction.

This section begins with a very brief introduction to the main points of discussion relating to CAs (cf. 3.3.1), that is, which of the two nominal elements is the head of the construction. Following this, various works are discussed in chronological

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

order. Thus, section 3.3.2 considered Hockett's classic (1955) analysis, which contends that given the difficulties in identifying the head and the attribute in this type of structures, the most satisfying solution is to treat CA as an endocentric construction with two heads. Hence, headedness in close appositive structures is found in both nominal elements. In section 3.3.3 the analysis of Burton-Roberts (1975) is described, one of the main analyses that reject the CA label. The central point of this analysis is that the [Det + N + N] structure is a common NP. Applying the generative dictates of the 70s, that is, underlying structures, derivations and surface structures, Burton-Roberts concludes that the surface structure of a CA is the result of a derivation process whose point of departure is an underlying NP modified by a relative clause. Therefore, the distinctiveness of CA is drastically rejected in light of the fact that the internal constituency and constituent links within a [Det + N (common) + N (proper)] structure are the same as in prototypical NPs. Section 3.3.4 moved on to Matthews's (1981) analysis, in which CAs are treated as an undifferentiated construction with respect to coordination and dependency – complementation and modification. These better known notions influence the identification and subsequent characterization of apposition. He concludes that the notion of apposition is a type of construction which cannot be described following actual instances of the type, given that they show such indeterminacy in their form, and that only a paradigmatic case (Det + N (common), Det + N (common) e.g. *your brother, the poet*) can be elucidated, the rest of the examples relate to it by means of formal resemblances, which are considered to be indeterminate. Section 3.3.5 offered Meyer's (1991, 1992) account of CAs. His main assertion is that CAs are gradable units and that using only syntax is not the best method to explain the grammatical properties of this type of structure. Rather, the best approach takes into account semantics, pragmatics and syntax in the analysis. Thus, he



## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

concludes that CA is simply a special case of modification inside the habitual NP mould. Section 3.3.6 described Keizer's (2007a) work, in which an analysis of the CA construction is provided. The main conclusion of her study is that the CA construction is not a modifier-head structure, as maintained by (Burton-Roberts 1975). Using traditional tests like omission and reversibility, she argues in favour of a head-modifier structure based on the fact that NP1 does not have the same referential power as NP2, which is the reason why N1 is considered the head of the whole apposition. In this account, the type of element used in the determiner position is given great relevance. As a consequence, the different types of close apposition structures have the same structure but different internal links. Thus, the *the writer Alice Walker* structure is considered a head-modifier structure with a determiner having scope over the two nouns, but in the case of *my sister Cath*, the possessive pronoun is not considered a determiner but a modifier or specifier with scope only over the first noun. Finally, section 3.3.7 dealt with Acuña-Fariña's (2009) analysis of CAs from a constructional point of view. A CA like *the poet Burns* is considered as the "prototypical" close apposition construction. It is assumed to constitute a 'rich ecological niche' which relates to the rest of the different types of close appositions. As for its internal structure, it is considered to be the result of a fusion process of two NP structures, a *the* + modifier + proper noun, and a *the* + head noun + modifier. The result is a construction with no clear head and with its own specific constraints. Its main features are its social referential role and its hybrid structure, easily identifiable from the top (despite poor internal elaboration). This undeniable NP origin and the indeterminate form of the nominal group make this structure an inchoate NP.

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

Chapter 4 presented an analysis of the CA construction in which the constructional links between ordinary NPs and the different types of CA structures were highlighted in order to better understand the heterogeneous group of instances that make up this construction. After a brief introduction to the heterogeneity of CAs caused by the different but similar instances that fall under the CA label (cf. 4.1), section 4.2 dealt with the CA prototype, the *the writer Alice Walker* structure. This section concentrates on the fact that the [Det (def art) + N (common) + N (proper)] structure does not have a poor internal structure. Considering the traditional tests and criteria, resulting in analyses that wavered between N1 headedness or N2 headedness, this section posits that the structure best fits in a [Det + N (modifier) + N (head)] analysis when dealing with prototypical close appositions. This analysis was supported by the reference point model (Langacker 1993, 2009), through which it was demonstrated that in this specific case the common noun *writer* is the reference point of the structure, given its salience as a basic level concept. N2 headedness was also supported by the trajector/landmark organization of grammatical relations. These notions once applied to a close apposition like *the writer Alice Walker*, meant that we could contend that U1, the common noun, is the landmark and U2, the proper name, is the trajector. Given this analysis, CAs were considered to be hybrids, structures which emerge from inheritance and taxonomic ties and having their origin mainly in NPs. Moreover, this hybridism was supported by the unique properties of CAs which are themselves a by-product of this emergence (Goldberg 1995).

Section 4.3 comprised a discussion of all the main subtypes of CA. Section 4.3.1 dealt with the *my sister Cath/ my sister the dancer* types. Establishing a line of comparison between these types and the prototypical *the writer Alice Walker*, it was found that the CA [Det (poss) + N (common) + N (proper)] structure does not show a

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

modifier-head structure, but a head-modifier one. The main reason this lies in the possessive and the meaning it conveys. Thus, applying the reference point model, it could be posited that the possessive determiner is the reference point element given its anchoring features. It offers an array of possibilities of possession due to the implicit reference to other linguistic elements which may be used as the target of the conceptualizer. Section 4.3.2 dealt with the *Alice Walker the writer* type. Given its resemblance to the CA prototype, it could be considered that both of these show the same internal constituency. However, the [N (proper) + Det (def art) + N (common)] type is better fit under an analysis in which the head element is located in the N1 position. This CA type may allow in N2 position nouns that do not make reference to profession or social role, and thus examples like *Barbara the heartbreaker* and *Kermit the Frog* are included in this type of CA. The fact that the example *Kermit the Frog* is included in the [N (proper) + Det (def art) + N (common)] meant that a new section was necessary, and thus section 4.3.2.1 was concerned with the analysis of this structure. Reversibility was an option for *Alice Walker the writer*, but it is not possible for *Kermit the Frog*. Meaning was also important in the analysis of this type. One of the main characteristics of CAs is that they make reference to a profession or social role, but in the case of *Kermit the Frog*, none of these is achieved, as mentioned. N2 makes reference to an ordinary referent, *frog*. Thus, meaning and reversibility lead to an analysis where the fixity of the structure is the most salient feature, which also implies the obligatory use of the proper noun in the first place, since it is the one which identifies a unique individual. Section 4.3.3 presented the *King Henry VIII* type. The feature of social reference of CAs is taken to extremes with this type. Resorting to the reference point model as the most useful means of analysing CAs, it was shown that the common noun *King* is the reference point word evoked in order to achieve the

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

target of the communicative act, that is, the proper noun, *Henry*. Hence, this type shows a modifier-head structure. Section 4.3.4 then presented the *the word 'courtesy'* type. Given that within the constructionist model constructions develop specific functions and contain specific meanings, this type is as clear an illustration of the meaning-form correspondence as one might find. Its metalinguistic meaning favours a clear N1 centre, and, as a consequence, whenever this type is included in a sentence all the modifiers and complements must refer to the first noun. Section 4.3.5 went on to analyse the '*a friend John [who's in linguistics]*' type. The main interest of this pattern is in that it is the only kind of indefinite CA. There were also two main features to take into account, namely, that this type is severely constrained and that when selection restrictions affect the construction, they affect the first noun only. This implies that reversibility is not an option for all the instances of this type, and as a consequence it shows clear N1 headedness. At the same time, this type could be divided into two different subtypes: those which include *this* or *that* as determiners; and those with an indefinite article. Section 4.3.6 discussed the *we women, you men* type. The fact that the pronoun has a greater indexical power than the noun in U2 position guarantees its position as head here. Authors such as Postal (1966) and Huddleston & Pullum (2002) consider that the pronoun develops the same function as a determiner. This determiner theory cannot be completely rejected, and along with the appositive theory, it is considered that both are helpful from a constructionist framework, in the sense that neither of them manage to force the *we women* type into a strict, necessary-and-sufficient kind of superordinate form. Whatever its internal structure, the recognisability of the whole construction is never in great danger. Its formal specifications make for easy categorization, and this is all that is needed to reach the symbolic package, which includes the meaning. In other words, once again its internal

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

structure need not be resolved, and at the same time these features guarantee a space for the *we women* type within the close appositive map.

Section 4.4 presented a theory based on the previous constructions, positing that all CA members form a network of [N + N] constructions, which means that U1 is U2 and that all the possible structures included under the CA label establish a static relation between N1 and N2 (Varantola 1993). Furthermore, this close appositive network is also characterized by semantic restrictiveness and a short, fixed nominal structure which facilitates recognition of it and thus reduces processing time. As for its headedness, all the members of the network are mono-headed whose head element varies depending on the particular meaning of each specific example. Variation affects the head position, but within the network some fixed examples (*Kermit the Frog*) as well as cases of indeterminacy (*we women*) can be also found. In other words, just as close appositions differ in headedness, they also show different internal arrangements. They range from an significant degree of internal complexity (*the writer Alice Walker, my sister Cath*) to instances with a frozen structure (*we women, Kermit the Frog*). Despite these differences, all the CA members are highly interconnected given that all of them contain several of the following features: they express occupations, contain a proper name, allow reversibility and/or show a [NP + NP] schematic structure.

Chapter 5 was concerned with binominal noun phrases as an example of the NP category which enlarges the number of constructions that 'look like NPs'. Section 5.1 offered an introduction focussing on the main features of BNPs, extensively revisited in section 5.2 as the preparation for a subsequent review of different analyses of this construction in the literature (cf. 5.3). Once again, the main point of discussion is the headedness issue. On the one hand, some consider BNPs as modifier-head structures

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

(McCawley 1988; cf. 5.3.1). The most salient feature of this analysis is the view that the noun in the N1 position emulates an adjective, and thus N1 is in a predicate position with respect to N2. Other writers analyse BNPs as ordinary NPs (Napoli 1989; cf. 5.3.2), and yet others posit that the N1, along with the *of* element and Det2, forms a modifier phrase which modifies the N2 head element (Aarts 1998; cf. 5.3.3). Finally, it is contended by some that BNPs show two different underlying structures (Keizer 2007a; cf. 5.3.4) based on the fact that BNPs are of two different types, Comparative Qualitative Binominal Noun Phrases and Attributive Qualitative Binominal Noun Phrases.

Finally, section 5.4 showed that a constructional analysis of BNPs is possible. To begin with, section 5.4.1 dealt with some structural parallelisms between the BNP structure *hell of a* and the MN (Measure Noun) *a lot of* (Brems 2003). Both allow phonological reduction leading to changes in the morphology (*helluva* and *lotta*, respectively). Such morphological changes are indicative of the internal structure of these structures. Thus, syntactic mimicry plays a role in the identification of the head in BNPs if the N2 headedness of MNs is adapted for BNPs, in which case the set [N1 + *of* + *a*] is similar to *a lot of* in the sense that it modifies N2. The phonological reduction of *a lot of* is explained by means of a process of grammaticalization. In the case of *hell of a*, it was considered that it underwent a process of constructionalization which caused the BNP to become a micro-construction (Trousdale<sup>23</sup>). Thus, the phonological reduction and the micro-construction status pointed towards a N1-modifier-N2-head structure for BNPs. In the same way, the productivity of BNPs as opposed to that of ordinary NPs also argues in favour of the modifier-head analysis of BNPs.

---

<sup>23</sup> These notes were also taken from a course given by Trousdale in Vigo, April 2012.

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

Section 5.4.2 dealt with the headedness issue. The main problem with BNPs when identifying the head element is that they contain two nouns. This section argued that a modifier-head structure is the most appropriate for this type of construction. Such an understanding of the structure was supported by the syntactic *locus* of nouns in the N1 position and the restrictions they show. Only common nouns with a possible evaluative character can be used in this position. It was posited that this evaluative character was in some way provided by the construction itself and not by the noun. The evaluative option was also related to the fact that BNPs are the nominal counterparts of copular sentences with an NP attribute. The attribute position, at the same time, establishes a line of comparison between the element that seems to develop the most unusual role in BNPs, that is, the indefinite article *a* in the Det2 position. The change of positions when transforming a BNP into a copular sentence demonstrates that the attribute is always preceded by the indefinite article *a*, which is maintained in the BNP even though it is postponed to its nominal head. The reference of the overall structure was also used as an argument in favour of the modifier-head structure. BNPs are only used when reference to a very specific and well known referent is made. Thus, there is no sense in maintaining that Det2 specifies N2 given the incompatibility of their different characters, indefinite and definite respectively. It was then contended that the Det2 position is merely syntactical with respect to N2. Therefore, the Det1 position is to determine the N2 position, and as a consequence it was contended that the N1 position is determined by the Det2 position.

Finally, section 5.4.3 set out some exceptional instances of the BNP construction. The structure *those fools of a crew* was used as an illustration of the complexity of BNPs. At the same time, its exceptional plural form supported the modifier-head analysis. In relation to its plural form, the agreement options in this

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

structure were analysed. The main problem with this example is that Det1 does not agree in number with N2 (cf. 5.4.2). However, it was concluded that even when the first determiner does not fit the singular form of the N2 head, it determines the second noun. This was demonstrated by means of the Agreement Hierarchy (Corbett 1979, 2004, 2006). Even though, externally, one must accept that Det1 accompanies N1, it was argued that the feature values of the whole BNP are better determined if N2 is considered the main element of the structure. Thus, the plural meaning of N2 prevails over the syntactic order of the structure in which Det1 specifies N2. Hence, we must talk of semantic agreement instead of syntactic agreement. In this way, the physical distance between Det1 and N2 was also taken into account, which strengthened the semantic agreement theory.

In sum, this dissertation has been an attempt to demonstrate that the structure of language, and that of NPs in particular, is richer and more varied than is usually assumed. All the constructions examined compose a heterogeneous ecological niche that is held together (as a category the NP) by the many criss-crossing patterns of similarities and differences that can be discerned within it. However, these can only be seen in all their individual complexity by avoiding the restrictions of theoretical prejudice and instead observing the whole diverse map of constructions for what it is: a networked category: the noun phrase.



## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

### Bibliographical references:

- Aarts, Bas. 1998. Binominal noun phrases in English. *Transactions of the Philological Society* 96 (1): 117-158.
- Aarts, Bas, David Denison, Evelien Keizer & Gergana Popova (ed.). 2004. *Fuzzy Grammar: A Reader*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Aarts, Bas. 2007. *Syntactic Gradience: the Nature of Grammatical Indeterminacy*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Abney, Steven P. 1987. The English noun phrase in its sentential aspect. Ph. D. thesis, MIT, Cambridge MA.
- Aitchison, Jean. 1987. *Words in the Mind*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Aitchison, Jean. 1989. (3<sup>rd</sup> edition). *The Articulate Mammal*. London: Unwin Hyman.
- Alexiadou, Artemis, Liliane Haegeman & Melita Stavrou. 2007. *Noun Phrase in the Generative Perspective*. Berlin and New York: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Allerton, David J. 1979. *Essential of Grammatical Theory*. London: Routledge.
- Acuña-Fariña, Juan Carlos. 1996. *The Puzzle of Apposition*. Santiago: Universidade de Santiago de Compostela.
- Acuña-Fariña, Juan Carlos. 1999. On apposition. *English Language and Linguistics* 31 (1): 59-81. Cambridge University Press.
- Acuña-Fariña, Juan Carlos. 2000. Reduced Relatives and Apposition. *Australian Journal of Linguistics* 20: 5-22.
- Acuña-Fariña, Juan Carlos. 2006a. A constructional network in appositive space. *Cognitive Linguistics* 17 (1): 1-37.
- Acuña-Fariña, Juan Carlos. 2006b. Polycentric apposition in English. In Peter Colliander (ed.), *Apposition in selected European languages*, 29-52. Copenhagen: Copenhagen Studies in Language.

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

- Acuña-Fariña, Juan Carlos. 2009. Aspects of the grammar of close apposition and the structure of the noun phrase. *English Language and Linguistics* 13 (3): 453- 481.
- Allerton, David J. 1979. *Essentials of Grammatical Theory: a Consensus View of Syntax and Morphology*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Anderson, John M. 1971. *The Grammar of Case: towards a Localistic Theory*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Anderson, John M. 1977. *On Case Grammar. Polegomena to a Theory of Grammatical Relations*. London: Croom Helm.
- Ball, Jerry T. 2004. A bipolar theory of nominal and clause structure and function. *Journal* (On-line/Unpaginated) (Unpublished).
- Baltin, Mark. 1989. Heads and Projections. In Mark Baltin and Anthony Kroch (eds.), *Alternative Conceptions of Phrase Structure*, 1-16. Chicago: Chicago University Press.
- Bernstein, Judy B. 2001. The DP hypothesis: identifying clausal properties in the nominal domain. In Mark Baltin & Chris Collins (eds.), *The Handbook of Contemporary Syntactic Theory*, 536- 561. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Bernstein, Judy B. 2008. Reformulating the Determiner Phrase Analysis. *Language and Linguistics* 2 (6): 1246- 1270.
- Biber, Douglas & Bethany Gray. 2011. Grammatical change in the noun phrase: the influence of written language use. *English Language and Linguistics* 15 (2): 223- 250.
- Bitea, Ioan N. 1977. An attempt at defining apposition in modern English. *Revue Roumaine de Linguistique* 22: 453- 477.
- Bloomfield, Leonard. 1933. *Language*. New York: Henry Holt.

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

- Bogacki, Bohdan Krzysztof. 1973. *Types de Constructions Appositives en Français*.  
Wrocław: Polska Akademia Nauk. Komitet Jezykoznzwtw, 73.
- Bolinger, Dwight. 1968. Entailment and the meaning of structures. *Glossa* 2 : 119-127.
- Boyland, Joyce Tang. 1996. Morphosyntactic change in progress: a psycholinguistic approach. Berkeley, CA: University of California dissertation.
- Brame, Michael. 1982. The head-selector theory of lexical specifications and the non-existence of coarse categories. *Linguistic Analysis* 10 (4): 321-325.
- Brems, Lieselotte. 2003. Measure noun constructions: An instance of semantically-driven grammaticalization. *International Journal of Corpus Linguistics* 8 (2): 283-312.
- Brown, Edward Keith & James Edward Miller. 1982. *Syntax: Generative Grammar*. London: Hutchinson.
- Burton-Roberts, Noel. 1975. Nominal apposition. *Foundations of Language* 13: 391-419.
- Burton-Roberts, Noel. 1986. *Analysing Sentences: an Introduction to English Syntax*. London: Longman.
- Burton-Roberts, Noel. 1993. Apposition. In N. Asher (ed.), *The Encyclopaedia of Language and Linguistics*, vol. I, 184- 187. Oxford: Pergamon.
- Bybee, Joan. 1985. *Morphology: A study of the relation between meaning and form*. Amsterdam, Philadelphia: John Benjamins.
- Cann, Ronnie. 1993. Patterns of headedness. In Greville G. Corbett, Norman M. Fraser, and Scott McGlashan (eds.), *Heads in Grammatical Theory*, 44-72. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Chomsky, Noam. 1957. *Syntactic Structures*. The Hague: Mouton.
- Chomsky, Noam. 1965. *Aspects of the Theory of Syntax*. Massachusetts: MIT Press.

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

- Chomsky, Noam. 1965b. (1<sup>st</sup> printing 1957). *Syntactic Structures*. The Hague: Mouton.
- Chomsky, Noam. 1970. Remarks on Nominalizations. In Roderick A. Jacobs and Peter S. Rosenbaum (eds.), *Readings in English Transformational Grammar*, 184-221. Ginn and Co., Waltham MA.
- Chomsky, Noam. 1981. *Lectures on Binding and Government*. Dordrecht: Foris.
- Chomsky, Noam. 1986. *Barriers*. MIT Press. Cambridge, Mass.
- Chomsky, Noam. 1996. (1<sup>st</sup> printing 1995). *The Minimalist Program*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press.
- Coene, Martine & Yves D'Hulst. 2003. *From NP to DP*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Corbett, Greville G. 1979. The Agreement Hierarchy. *Journal of Linguistics* 15, 203-224.
- Corbett, Greville G. 2004. The agreement hierarchy. In Francis Katamba (ed.), *Morphology. Critical Concepts in Linguistics*. Vol. 4. *Morphology: its Relation to Syntax*. London; New York: Routledge.
- Corbett, Greville G. 2006. *Agreement*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Croft, William. 2001. *Radical Construction Grammar: Syntactic Theory in Typological Perspective*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Croft, William & Alan D. Cruse. 2004. *Cognitive Linguistics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Culicover, Peter W. 1999. *Syntactic Nuts*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Curme, George O. 1947. *English Grammar*. New York: Barnes & Noble.
- Delorme, Evelyne & Ray C. Dougherty. 1972. Appositive NP constructions: we, the men; we men; I, a man; ETC. *Foundations of Language* 8 (1): 1-29.
- Den Dikken, Marcel. 2006. *Relators and Linkers. The Syntax of Predication, Predicate Inversion, and Copulas*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

- Doron, Edit. 1992. Appositive predicates. *Belgian Journal of Linguistics* 7: 23-33.
- Dryer, Matthew S. 2004. Noun phrases without nouns. *Functions of Language*, 11 (1): 43- 76.
- Dupont, Norbert. 1985. *Linguistique du Détachement en Français*. Berne: Peter Lang.
- Evans, Vyvyan; Benjamin Bergen & Jörg Zinken. 2007. *The Cognitive Linguistics Reader*. London: Equinox Publishing Ltd.
- Evans, Vyvyan & Stéphanie Pourcel (eds). 2009. *New Directions on Cognitive Linguistics*. Amsterdam, Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company.
- Fauconnier, Gilles. 1985. *Mental Spaces*. MIT Press
- Feldman, Jerome. 2006. *From Molecule to Metaphor: A Neural Theory of Language*. Cambridge, Mass: MIT press.
- Fillmore, Charles J. 1976. Frame semantics and the nature of language. In *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences: Conference on the Origin and Development of Language and Speech* 280: 20-32.
- Fillmore, Charles J. 1977. Topics in lexical semantics. In Roger W. Cole (ed.), *Current Issues in Linguistic Theory*, 76-138. Indiana: University Press.
- Fillmore, Charles J. 1982. Frame semantic. In *Linguistics in the Morning Calm*, 111-137. Seoul, Hanshin Publishing Co.
- Fillmore, Charles J. *et al.* 1988. Regularity and idiomaticity in grammatical constructions: The case of *let alone*. In Michael Tomasello (ed.), *The New Psychology of Language*, 243-269. Mahwah (New Jersey): Laurence Erlbaum Associates.
- Francis, W. Nelson. 1958. *The Structure of American English*. New York: Ronald.
- Fries, Charles Carpenter. 1952. *The Structure of English*. New York: Harcourt.

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

- Fuentes-Rodriguez, Catalina. 1989. De nuevo sobre la aposición. *Verba: Anuario Galego de Filoloxía* 16: 215-236.
- Fukui, Naoki. & Margaret Speas. 1986. Specifiers and Projections. *MIT Working Papers in Linguistics* 8: 128-172.
- Fukui, Naoki. 2001. Phrase Structure. In Mark Baltin & Chris Collins (eds.), *The Handbook of Contemporary Syntactic Theory*, 374- 406. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Geeraerts, Dirk (ed.). 2006. *Cognitive Linguistics: Basic Readings*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Giorgi, Alessandra & Giuseppe Longobardi. 1991. *The Syntax of Noun Phrases*. England: Cambridge University Press.
- Givón, Talmy. 1985. Function, structure and language acquisition. In Dan I. Slobin (ed.), *The Cross-Linguistic Study of Language Acquisition*, vol. 2, 1005-1028. Hillsdale, NY: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Givon, Talmy. 1993. *English Grammar: A Function-Based Introduction*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Givón, Talmy. 2001. *Syntax: An Introduction*. Vol. I and Vol. II. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Goldberg, Adele E. 1995. *Constructions: A Construction Grammar Approach to Argument Structure*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Goldberg, Adele E. 2006. *Constructions at Work: The Nature of Generalization in Language*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Goldberg, Adele E. and Ray S. Jackendoff. 2004. The English resultative as a family of constructions. *Language* 80: 532-537.

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

- Guillaume, Gustave. 1973. *Leçons de linguistique* (vol. 3) (*Grammaire particulière du français et grammaire générale*). Québec: Presses de L'Université Laval; Paris: Klincksieck.
- Hadlich, Roger L. 1971. *A Transformational Grammar of Spanish*. New Jersey: Prentice-Hall. I use the Spanish translation by Julio Bombín. 1973. *Gramática transformativa del español*. Madrid: Gredos.
- Haegeman, Liliane. 1991. *Introduction to Government and Binding Theory*. Blackwell.
- Haiman, John. 1994. Ritualization and the development of language. In William Pagliuca (ed.), *Perspectives on Grammaticalization*, 3-28. Amsterdam, Philadelphia: John Benjamins.
- Halliday, Michael A. K. 1985. *An Introduction to Functional Grammar*. London: Edward Arnold.
- Hannay, Mike & Evelien Keizer. 2005. A discourse treatment of English non-restrictive nominal appositions in functional discourse grammar. In J. Lachlan Mackenzie & M. Angeles Gómez-González (eds.), *Studies in Functional Discourse Grammar*, 159-194. Bern: Peterlang.
- Haugen, Einar. 1953. On resolving the close apposition. *American Speech* 28: 165- 170.
- Hawkins, John A. 1978. *Definiteness and Indefiniteness*. London: Croom Helm.
- Hawkins, John A. 1994. *A Performance Theory of Order and Constituency*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Hawkins, John A. 2004. *Efficiency and Complexity in Grammars*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Hay, Jennifer. 2001. Lexical frequency in morphology: is everything relative? *Linguistics* 39: 1041-70

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

- Heath, Jeffrey. 1999. *A Grammar of Koyra Chiini: the Songhay of Timbuktu*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Heine, Bernd, Ulrike Claudi & Friederike Hünemeyer. 1991. *Grammaticalization: A Conceptual Framework*. Chicago: Chicago University Press.
- Hengeveld, Kees & J. Lachlan Mackenzie. 2008. *Functional Discourse Grammar: a Typologically-Based Theory of Language Structure*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Herbert, Alan Patrick. 1935. *What a word!* London: Methuen.
- Heringa, Herman. 2011. *Appositional Constructions*. PhD Dissertation. The Netherlands.
- Hewson, John 1991. Determiners as heads. *Cognitive Linguistics* 2: 317-337.
- Hockett, Charles F. 1955. Attribution and apposition in English. *American Speech* 30: 99-102.
- Hockett, Charles F. 1958. *A Course in English Linguistics*. New York: Macmillan.
- Hopper, Paul J. & Elizabeth Closs Traugott. 2003. *Grammaticalization*. Cambridge Textbooks in Linguistics. Second Edition. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Huddleston, Rodney D. 1971. *The Sentence in Written English: A Syntactic Study Based on an Analysis of Scientific Texts*. Cambridge University Press.
- Huddleston, Rodney D. & Geoffrey K. Pullum. 2002. *The Cambridge Grammar of the English Language*. Cambridge University Press.
- Hudson, Richard. 1984. *Word Grammar*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Hudson, Richard. 1987. Zwicky on heads. *Journal of Linguistics* 23: 109-132.



## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

- Hudson, Richard. 1993. Do we have heads in our minds? In Greville G. Corbett, Norman M. Fraser and Scott McGlashan (eds.), *Heads in Grammatical Theory*, 265-291. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Hudson, Richard. 2004. Are determiners heads? *Functions of Language* 11 (1): 7-42.
- Jackendoff, Ray S. 1981. (1<sup>st</sup> printing 1977). *X-bar Syntax: A Study of Phrase Structure*. Cambridge: the MIT Press.
- Jackendoff, Ray S. 1993. *Patterns in the Mind*. New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf.
- Jackendoff, Ray S. 2002. *Foundations of Language. Brain, Meaning, Grammar, Evolution*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Jackendoff, Ray S. 2008. Construction after construction and its theoretical challenges. *Language* 84 (1): 8-28.
- Jakobson, Roman. 1971-1981. *Selected Writings* (vol. 2): *Word and Language*. The Hague: Mouton.
- Jespersen, Otto. 1958. (1<sup>st</sup> printing 1924). *The Philosophy of Grammar*. London: George Allen & Unwin.
- Jiménez-Juliá, Tomás. 2000. Núcleos en gramática constitutivo-funcional. *Verba* 27: 87-132.
- Kajita, Masary. 1977. Towards a dynamic model of syntax. *Studies in English Linguistics* 5: 44-77.
- Kaschak, Michael P. & Arthur M. Glenberg. 2000. Constructing meaning: The role of affordances and grammatical constructions in sentence comprehension. *Journal of Memory and Language* 43: 508-529.
- Kay, Paul and Charles J. Fillmore. 1999. Grammatical Constructions and Linguistic Generalizations: The What's X Doing? Construction. *Language* 75 (1): 1-33.

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

- Keizer, Evelien. 2005. The discourse function of close appositions. *Neophilologus* 89: 447-467.
- Keizer, Evelien. 2007a. *The English Noun Phrase. The Nature of Linguistic Categorization*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Keizer, Evelien. 2007b. *The English Noun Phrase: An empirical study*. UCL Survey of English Usage document. (<http://www.ucl.ac.uk/english-usage/projects/noun-phrase/report.htm>).
- Koktová, Eva. 1985. Apposition as a pragmatic phenomenon in a functional description. *University of East Anglia Papers in Linguistics* 23: 39-79.
- Kolliaku, Dimitra. 2004. Monadic definites and polydefinites: their form, meaning, and use. *Journal of Linguistics* 40: 263-333.
- Korzen, Iørn. 2006. Appositions (and similar constructions) in Italian. In Peter Colliander (ed.), *Appositions in Selected European Languages*, 93-140. Copenhagen Studies in Language 33.
- Kruisinga, Etsko & P. Erades. 1932. *A Handbook of Present-Day English, part II/2*. 5<sup>th</sup> edition. Groningeng: Noordhoff.
- Lago, Jesús. 1991. Un type special de modification non-restrictive: l'apposition. *Verba* 18: 487-519.
- Lakoff, George. 1987. *Women, Fire, and Dangerous Things: What Categories Reveal about the Mind*. Chicago: University of Chicago.
- Lakoff, George & Mark Johnson. 1980. *Metaphors We Live By*. Chicago: The University Press.
- Lambrecht, Knud. 1994. *Information structure and sentence form: topic, focus, and the mental representations of discourse referents*. Cambridge. Cambridge University Press.

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

- Langacker, Ronald W. 1985. Observations and Speculations on Subjectivity. In John Haiman (ed.), *Iconicity in Syntax*, 109-150. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Langacker, Ronald W. 1987a. *Foundations of Cognitive Grammar*. Vol. I: *Theoretical Prerequisites*. Stanford, Cal.: Stanford University Press.
- Langacker, Ronald W. 1987b. Nouns and verbs. *Language* 63: 53-94.
- Langacker, Ronald W. 1990. *Concept, Image and Symbol: The Cognitive Basis of Grammar*. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter.
- Langacker, Ronald W. 1991. *Foundations of Cognitive Grammar*, (vol. 2): *Descriptive Application*. Stanford, Cal.: Stanford University Press.
- Langacker, Ronald W. 1993. Reference-point constructions. *Cognitive Linguistics* 10 (2): 353-389.
- Langacker, Ronald W. 2002. Remarks on the English grounding systems. In Frank Brisard (ed.), *Grounding: The Epistemic Footing of Deixis and Reference*, 29-38. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Langacker, Ronald W. 2004. Remarks on nominal grounding. *Functions of Language* 11 (1): 77-113.
- Langacker, Ronald W. 2006. On the continuous debate about discreteness. *Cognitive Linguistics* 17(1): 107-151.
- Langacker, Ronald W. 2009. *Investigations in Cognitive Grammar*. Berlin and New York: Mouton de Gruyter. Cognitive Linguistic Research 42.
- Lago, Jesús. 1991. Un type special de modification non-restrictive: l'apposition. *Verba* 18: 487- 519.
- Lee, Donald W. 1952. Close apposition: an unresolved pattern. *American Speech* 27: 268- 275.

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

- Lekakou, Marica & Kriszta Szendrői. 2007. Eliding the noun in close apposition or Greek polydefinites revisited. In Richard Breheny & Nikolaos Velegrakis [red.] *UCL Working Papers in Linguistics*, 27. University of London: University College London.
- Levy, David. M. 1979. Communicative goals and strategies: between discourse and syntax. In Talmy Givón (ed.), *Discourse and Syntax*, 337-354. New York: Academic Press.
- Longobardi, Giuseppe. 2001. The structure of DPs: some principles, parameters, and problems. In Mark Baltin & Chris Collins (eds.), *The Handbook of Contemporary Syntactic Theory*, 562- 603. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Longrée, Dominique. 1987. Les Compléments du Nom en Latin Classique: Syntaxe, Sémantique et Pragmatique. *Cahiers de l'Institut de Linguistique de Louvain* 13 (1-2): 163- 230.
- Lyons, John. 1972. *Introduction to Theoretical Linguistics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Lyons, John. 1977. *Semantics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Mathesius, Vilém. 1975. A Functional Analysis of Present-Day English on a General Linguistic Basis. In Josef Vachek (ed.). Prague: Academia.
- Matthews, Peter H. 1981. *Syntax*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- McCawley, James D. 1988. *The Syntactic Phenomena of English*. Vol. 2. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- McGlashan, Scott. 1993. Heads and lexical semantics. In Greville G. Corbett, Norman M. Fraser and Scott McGlashan (eds.), *Heads in Grammatical Theory*, 204-230. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

- MacWhinney, Brian. 2001. Emergentist approaches to language. In Joan Bybee & Paul Hopper (eds), *Frequency and the Emergence of Linguistic Structure*, 449- 471. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Meyer, Charles F. 1987. Apposition in English. *Journal of English Linguistics* 20: 101-121.
- Meyer, Charles F. 1989. Restrictive apposition: an indeterminate category. *English Studies* 70: 147- 166.
- Meyer, Charles F. 1991. A corpus-based study of apposition in English. In Karin Aijmer & Beng Altenberg (eds.), *English Corpus Linguistics*, 166-181. London: Longman.
- Meyer, Charles F. 1992. *Apposition in Contemporary English*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Napoli, Donna Jo. 1989. *Predication Theory: A Case Study for Indexing Theory*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Norwood, J. 1954. The loose appositive in present-day English. *American Speech* 29: 267- 271.
- Ogura, Mieko. 1993. The development of periphrastic do in English: a case of lexical diffusion in syntax. *Diachronica* X: 51-85.
- Payne, John. 1993. The headedness of noun phrases: slaying the nominal hydra. In Greville G. Corbett, Norman M. Fraser, & Scott McGlashan (eds.), *Heads in Grammatical Theory*, 114- 139. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Pignón, J. 1961. L'Apposition. *FM* 29 (4): 252- 257.
- Postal, Paul. 1966. On So-Called Pronouns in English. In Francis P. Dinneen (ed.), *Nineteenth monograph on language and linguistics*, 201-224. Georgetown University Press Washington D C.

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

- Poutsma, Hendrik. 1904. *A Grammar of Late Modern English, Part I*. Groningen: Noordhoff.
- Poutsma, Hendrik. 1926. *A Grammar of Late Modern English, Part IA: The Verb and the Particles*. Groningen: P. Noordhoff.
- Prince, Ellen F. 1981. Toward a taxonomy of given-new information. In Peter Cole (ed.), *Radical Pragmatics*, 223- 255. New York: Academic Press.
- Pullum, Geoffrey. 1991. English nominal gerund phrases a noun phrases with verb-phrase heads. *Linguistics* 29: 763- 799.
- Quirk, Randolph *et al.* 1972. *A Grammar of Contemporary English*. London: Longman.
- Quirk, Randolph *et al.* 1985. *A Comprehensive Grammar of the English Language*. London: Longman.
- Radford, Andrew. 1988. *Transformational Grammar*. Cambridge University Press.
- Radford, Andrew. 1997. *Syntax: A Minimalist Introduction*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Radford, Andrew. 2004. *Minimalist Syntax: Exploring the Structure of English*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Reid, Wallis. 1991. *Verb and Number Agreement in English*. London: Longman.
- Roberts, Paul. 1962. *English Sentences*. New York: Harcourt, Brace and World.
- Roch, Eleanor. 1973. Natural categories. *Cognitive Psychology* 4: 328- 350.
- Rosch, Eleanor. 1978. Principles of categorization. In Eleanor Rosch & B. B. Lloyd (eds.), *Cognition and Categorization*, 27-48. Hillsdale NJ: Erlbaum. (Reprinted in Aarts *et al.* 2004).
- Siloni, Tal. 1997. *Noun Phrases and Nominalizations: the Syntax of DPs*. Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, cop.

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

- Smith, K. A. 2001. The role of frequency in the specialization of the English anterior. In Joan Bybee & Paul Hopper (eds.), *Frequency Effects and Emergent Grammar*, 361-82. Amsterdam, Philadelphia: John Benjamins.
- Sopher, H. 1971. Apposition. *English Studies* 52: 401- 412.
- Szabolcsi, Anna. 1987. Functional categories in the noun-phrase. In István Kenesei (ed.), *Approaches to Hungarian*, (vol. 2): *Theories and Analyses*, 167-89. Szeged: JATE.
- Taboada, Manuel. 1978. Relaciones sintácticas en el interior de la frase nominal. *Verba* 5: 315-340.
- Taylor, Charles V. 1985. *Nkore-Kiga*. (Croom Helm Descriptive Grammars). Cover, New Hampshire: Croom Helm.
- Taylor, John R. 1995. (2<sup>nd</sup> edition). *Linguistic Categorization. Prototypes in Linguistic Theory*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Taylor, John R. 2002. *Cognitive Grammar*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Van Hoek, Karen. 1995. Conceptual reference points: a cognitive grammar account of pronominal anaphora constraints. *Language* 71: 310- 340.
- Van Langendonck, Willy. 1994. Determiners as heads? *Cognitive Linguistics* 5: 43-59.
- Van Staden, Miriam. 2000. *Tidore: A Linguistic Description of a Language of the North Moluccas*. Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Leiden.
- Van Valin, Robert D. & Randy J. LaPolla. 1997. *Syntax: Structure, Meaning, and Function*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Varantola, K. 1993. Modification of nouns by nouns. Bad by definition? In H-J. Diller, S. Kohl, J. Kornelius, E. Otto, G. Stratmann (eds.), *Anglistik & Englischunterricht. The Noun Phrase in English. Its Structure and Variability*. Heidelberg: Winter.

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

Wierzbicka, Anna. 1986. What's in a noun? (or: how do nouns differ in meaning from adjectives?). *Studies in Language* 10: 353-89.

Wierzbicka, Anna. 1988. *The Semantics of Grammar*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

Williams, Edwin S. 1982. The NP cycle. *Linguistic Inquiry* 13: 277-295.

Zwicky, Arnold. 1985. Heads. *Journal of Linguistics* 21: 1-29.

Zwicky, Arnold. 1993. Heads, bases and functors. In Greville G. Corbett, Norman M. Fraser & Scott McGlashan (eds.), *Heads in Grammatical Theory*, 292-315. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.





### Resumen en castellano

El presente estudio tiene como finalidad analizar la Frases Nominales en la lengua inglesa. La Frases Nominales siempre han sido consideradas como una de las construcciones gramaticales más simples y fáciles de analizar. Pero una vez que se analizan a fondo, se concluye que tal construcción incluye un grupo muy variado de ejemplos. Así, la categoría gramatical Frase Nominal es un muy buen ejemplo para ilustrar la riqueza del lenguaje.

El capítulo 1, a modo de introducción para el presente estudio, proporciona una descripción de la construcción Frase Nominal. De tal modo que la sección 1.1 proporciona una descripción, desde un punto de vista descriptivo, de los elementos básicos que forman esta construcción. La sección 1.2 incluye las principales diferencias que existen entre el núcleo y los complementos de una Frase Nominal, lo cual es de vital importancia para el desarrollo del presente estudio. Dada la diversidad de la categoría, la sección 1.3 incluye todos los elementos que pueden ser utilizados en una Frase Nominal. Finalmente, la sección 1.4 cierra este primer capítulo haciendo referencia a ejemplos cross-lingüísticos (gallego, español, portugués, francés y alemán) los cuales proporcionan evidencia a favor de la diversidad dentro de la Frase Nominal lo que hace que esta construcción sea más compleja de lo que parece a primera vista.

Dada la teoría descriptiva sobre la Frase Nominal, el capítulo 2 trata el tema de la nucleidad dentro de esta construcción. La sección 2.1 gira alrededor de necesidad de determinar un núcleo dentro de toda estructura gramatical. La gran mayoría de los lingüistas postulan que los núcleos gramaticales son necesarios en sintaxis. En lo que no están tan de acuerdo es en localización del núcleo, y en este caso en particular, dentro de

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

la Frase Nominal. Unos señalan que el nombre es siempre el núcleo (Matthews 1981; Huddleston y Pullum 2002), otros defienden que el elemento principal se encuentra en la posición del determinante (Abney 1987; Longobardi 2001; Alexiadou, Haegeman y Stravou 2007). De modo que, dada esta variedad de conclusiones sobre un tema tan crucial en el estudio sintáctico de una construcción, el presente estudio incluye un análisis teórico e histórico de los distintos marcos gramaticales que estudian la Frase Nominal. Así, la sección 2.2 incluye el análisis desarrollado por Hockett (1958), que tomando la teoría del endocentrismo (Bloomfield 1933) y el hecho de que los elementos léxicos son los núcleos en estas construcciones endocéntricas, concluye que La Frase Nominal contiene las mismas características que su núcleo, esto es, el nombre.

La sección 2.3 ofrece el punto de vista de la gramática generativa. Hasta los años 80, los lingüistas generativos consideraban que el nombre era el núcleo (Chomsky 1965). Pero con Jackendoff (1977) se establece una nueva teoría, la teoría X-barras, que cambia drásticamente el punto de vista generativo. De este modo, todas las categorías frasales comparten una misma estructura en vez de cuatro distintas para nombres, verbos, adjetivos y preposiciones. Al mismo tiempo, un nuevo elemento adquiere una posición central dentro de esta teoría, esto es, el *Specifier*. Se considera que es el responsable en la creación de una categoría sintáctica. Este elemento proporciona la base para el desarrollo de la hipótesis DP (Abney 1987), que postula que el determinante es el núcleo en una Frase Nominal. Como consecuencia, la categoría Frase Determinativa aparece en el panorama lingüístico. Esta nueva hipótesis es compartida por lingüistas como Giorgi y Longobardi (1991: 133) los cuales desarrollan el *Argument Uniqueness Principle* como apoyo para esta nueva teoría. De tal modo que, desde el punto de vista generativo, solo los elementos funcionales pueden proyectar categorías sintácticas.

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

A continuación, la sección 2.4 incluye el punto de vista de la gramática cognitiva. Bajo la principal idea de que el lenguaje es significado, los gramáticos cognitivos rechazan la idea de que la sintaxis es central en los análisis lingüísticos. Todos los elementos lingüísticos contienen significado, incluso los más funcionales. Así es como también se considera, desde este punto de vista, que el determinante es el núcleo en la Frase Nominal. Para la gramática cognitiva, el núcleo de una estructura es aquel cuyo perfil corresponde con el perfil de toda la estructura. En el caso de las Frases Nominales, la función de *grounding* se considera como la principal en su elaboración (Langacker 2004; Taylor 2002) y como el paso final. Esta función la desarrolla el elemento funcional, esto es, el determinante, que es el encargado de transformar un nombre en una Frase Nominal, lo cual le confiere una posición central dentro de la estructura. Pero aunque el determinante se considere el núcleo, no puede proyectar una Frase Nominal por sí solo. Así que se establece una relación de co-dependencia entre el elemento funcional y el léxico. A pesar de esta co-dependencia, el determinante se sigue considerando como el elemento más relevante en la formación de una Frase Nominal. Se puede concluir, que la gramática generativa y la cognitiva, aunque son marcos muy opuestos, comparten la teoría del determinante como núcleo, pero cabe decir que la gramática cognitiva no proporciona a los elementos funcionales el mismo grado de importancia que la gramática generativa.

La sección 2.5 revisa dos análisis sintácticos de la Frase Nominal que difieren completamente de los vistos previamente. Así, la sección 2.5.1 incluye el trabajo de Ball (2004), que sostiene que las Frases Nominales son estructuras exocéntricas donde los dos elementos, el determinante y el nombre, se consideran núcleos. Esto es por lo que esta teoría se denomina *bipolar*. Ninguno de los elementos depende del otro. Desde el punto de vista semántico el nombre es el elemento más importante. En el caso del sintáctico,

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

el determinante es el elemento que permite diferenciar un nombre de un verbo. En esta teoría, el significado de la estructura depende de la igual contribución del determinante y del nombre. El contenido del nombre se proyecta a través del determinante dado que, como categoría léxica que es, no puede crear una categoría sintáctica por sí mismo.

La sección 2.5.2 presenta el trabajo de Dryer (2004). La idea central es que las Frases Nominales son estructuras sin núcleo. Este análisis parte de la idea de que algunas lenguas, aún teniendo Frases Nominales, no incluyen ningún nombre entre sus constituyentes. Dryer considera estos seis enfoques para demostrar su teoría. Así, tiene en cuenta la elipsis; el nombre como modificador; que los modificadores son núcleos; que el determinante es el núcleo; que son estructuras sin núcleo; y que todas las Frases Nominales carecen de núcleo. Considerando todas estas posibilidades, Dryer concluye que la última es la más adecuada y que la noción de núcleo no es realmente necesaria.

Finalmente, la sección 2.6 incluye el marco del presente estudio. Tomando la gramática cognitiva (Langacker 1987a, 1991) y la gramática de la construcción (Goldberg 1995, 2006) como marcos de referencia, esta sección defiende la idea de que el análisis más adecuado para las Frases Nominales ordinarias es aquel que considera que el nombre es el núcleo. Para sentar las bases teóricas de la gramática de la construcción (cf. 2.6.1), la sección 2.6.1.1 ofrece algunos preliminares teóricos sobre el marco construccional. A continuación, la sección 2.6.1.2, trata la función de *grounding* del determinante en relación con el acto de comunicación. El contexto de la comunicación se ve reforzado cuando los participantes comparten una referencia mental coordinada (Fauconier 1985), y como ya se ha visto, el uso del determinante asegura este compartimiento. Aunque, antes de usar los determinantes, los usuarios de la lengua necesitan fijar en sus mentes un cierto número de elementos léxicos que evoquen los diferentes tipos dentro de un discurso. Estos se consideran los *onstage elements* que

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

están relacionados con el *current discourse space* (CDS) (Langacker 2004). Cuando los hablantes y los oyentes comparten el mismo CDS, se crea un marco, esto es, el campo inmediato de atención para los participantes. Cada vez que un nuevo discurso se crea, el campo de discurso se debe actualizar, lo que provoca el uso de tipos lingüísticos diferentes, esto es, de nuevos elementos léxicos para crear un nuevo contexto de comunicación en las referencias mentales del hablante y del oyente. Como se puede apreciar, el contexto es de gran importancia en la creación del significado, y aunque los determinantes son esenciales para la función de *grounding*, non pueden crear significado por si solos. El uso del determinante depende de los elementos léxicos que construyen el espacio del discurso y proveen al acto de comunicación con significado.

Toda esta teoría se puede aplicar a la construcción Frase Nominal si ponemos atención al estado informacional de los referentes del contexto. Los constituyentes usados en la formación de una Frase Nominal dependen de las características informacionales del nombre. Así, el uso del determinante definido o indefinido depende de esta información. Como consecuencia, la dirección de codificación va del nombre al determinante.

La sección 2.6.1.3 trata la noción de significado en relación con la construcción Frase Nominal. En términos de la gramática cognitiva, la conceptualización es la elaboración del significado de una categoría gramatical o un elemento lingüístico. A este respecto, esta sección proporciona una explicación de la organización sintáctica de las Frases Nominales haciendo especial hincapié en el significado de la construcción. Desde un punto de vista constructorista, la construcción Frase Nominal ofrece un significado esquemático, el de una entidad *determinada*. Su significado general se ve especificado una vez que los elementos léxicos son usados. Esta sección también incluye la noción de subcategorización que sirve como apoyo a la idea de que el nombre

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

es el núcleo. Siempre que un verbo necesite ser subcategorizado, depende del contenido de la palabra léxica que es subcategorizada, no de sus elementos de *grounding*. Así que, el significado de una expresión depende de los elementos léxicos que crean el marco del discurso, que al mismo tiempo seleccionan sus propios dependientes, como es el caso de los determinantes.

La sección 2.6.2 propone cambios en el modelo cognitivo al respecto de la Frase Nominal. Para empezar, la sección 2.6.2.1 trata la posición del nombre en relación con los marcos de discurso. Si los marcos de discurso influyen en el significado de los determinantes, y si estos son el producto de los nombres sentados en los espacios mentales, entonces su uso depende de los nombres. Esto se apoya en el esquema (21) (página 88), donde se demuestra que las características semánticas del determinante no se proyectan directamente en la Frase Nominal. Esto significa que las características semánticas se tienen en cuenta cuando tratamos al nombre, no con la construcción Frases Nominal. De modo que, las características semánticas del nombre, influenciadas por las del determinante, al igual que sus características sintácticas, esto es, el núcleo de la Frase Nominal, se proyectan en la estructura Frase Nominal.

Para concluir este capítulo, la sección 2.6.2.1.1 incluye el análisis individual del determinante. Es considerado un *esquema*, esto es, un mecanismo gramatical de descripción. Un esquema es una plantilla que representa un grupo de expresiones, cuyos rasgos en común sólo se observa a ciertos niveles de especificidad. Así que, el determinante es un rasgo común abstracto del tipo de elemento léxico que requiera tal plantilla. Como ya hemos visto, la función de *grounding* del determinante le proporciona el estado de núcleo según autores como Taylor (2002). Pero es difícil aceptar que un constituyente esquemático proyecte una estructura tan específica como una Frase Nominal. La esquematicidad del determinante podría ser resuelta si tenemos

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

en cuenta que, hasta cierto punto, el léxico contiene esquemas más abstractos de los cuales los elementos pueden “heredar” propiedades (Jackendoff 2002). Así que, los determinantes, teniendo cierto grado de contenido semántico, pueden ser considerados como parte del léxico, como complementos adicionales con significado para los elementos léxicos propiamente dichos.

Las construcciones gramaticales pueden ser expresiones o esquemas abstraídos de expresiones con el fin de capturar sus rasgos en común (Langacker<sup>24</sup>). Desde el punto de vista de la gramática de la construcción, las construcciones necesitan especificidad. En el caso de las Frases Nominales, esta especificidad se debe al uso del nombre, no al del determinante. Además, los rasgos comunes de una construcción como una Frase Nominal es que los nombres usan el determinante como plantilla. Así que, la función sintáctica del nombre es la de núcleo dentro de la Frase Nominal.

Los rasgos comunes de una construcción pueden reconocerse en elementos no tan prototípicos. Así, una Frase Nominal puede contener un adjetivo o una forma en *-ing* en la posición sintáctica del nombre. Esto es posible dado que la construcción [Det + N] se adapta al adjetivo o la forma en *-ing* proporcionándoles las capacidades sintácticas de la Frase Nominal. El significado construccional de las Frases Nominales prototípicas se adapta a los nuevos elementos. La no prototipicidad de los nuevos elementos, y el hecho de que las estructuras que proyectan son gramaticales, muestra el carácter variado de la construcción Frase Nominal.

Dado que la variedad parece ser una opción para la categoría Frase Nominal, el capítulo 3 contiene un estudio de las construcciones apositivas restrictivas. El objetivo principal de este capítulo es proporcionar conocimientos teóricos para entender el

---

<sup>24</sup>Estas notas han sido tomadas en un curso impartido por Langacker en Madrid, en abril de 2008.

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

capítulo 4. Así, después de una breve introducción en la sección 3.1, la sección 3.2 ofrece una descripción de las mayores diferencias que existen entre aposición restrictiva (*La escritora Alice Walker*) y no restrictiva (*La escritora, Alice Walker*). La aposición no restrictiva es considerada como la aposición por excelencia, pero el presente estudio considera que la aposición restrictiva necesita un estudio más pormenorizado y exhaustivo. De este modo, la sección 3.3 tiene como finalidad estudiar los diferentes puntos de vista que existen sobre la estructura de esta construcción (cf. 3.3.1), en particular, cual de los dos nombres es el núcleo. La sección 3.3.2 incluye el análisis de Hockett (1955) en el que se considera que la aposición restrictiva es una construcción exocéntrica con dos núcleos. En la sección 3.3.3, se debate el análisis de Burton-Roberts (1975) quien postula que la estructura [Det + N + N] es una Frase Nominal común. A continuación, la sección 3.3.4 refleja el análisis de Matthews (1981) que señala que la construcción apositiva restrictiva es una construcción indiferenciada, esto es, que muestra rasgos similares a la coordinación, la complementación y la modificación. La sección 3.3.5 ofrece el análisis llevado a cabo por Meyer (1991, 1992). La idea principal es que la aposición restrictiva es graduable y el mejor modo de analizarla es teniendo en cuenta la semántica, la pragmática y la sintaxis de esta construcción. Así, el punto principal de este estudio es que la aposición restrictiva es un caso de modificación dentro del molde de la Frase Nominal. La sección 3.3.6 contiene el trabajo de Keizer (2007a) que propone que en la aposición restrictiva el núcleo se encuentra en el segundo nombre dado que el primero no tiene el mismo poder de referencialidad. Otro punto importante en este estudio es el papel que desempeña el determinante. Aunque se considera que todas las estructuras apositivas tienen la misma estructura, el determinante tiene distintas funciones, si en *la escritora Alice Walker* el determinante determina a los dos nombres, en *mi hermana Cath* el determinante funciona como un



## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

modificador que modifica solo al primer nombre. Para finalizar este capítulo, la sección 3.3.7 incluye el análisis de Acuña-Fariña (2009). Desde un punto de vista de la gramática de la construcción la estructura *el poeta Burns* se considera una aposición restrictiva prototípica. Esta se incluye dentro de un ‘*nicho ecológico rico*’ dentro del cual se relaciona con el resto de tipos de aposiciones restrictivas.

El capítulo 4 ofrece un estudio de la aposición restrictiva donde las relaciones construccionales entre las Frases Nominales comunes y los diferentes tipos de aposiciones restrictivas se resaltan para entender mejor el grupo heterogéneo que forman los ejemplos de esta construcción. La sección 4.1 incluye una introducción de la heterogeneidad de esta construcción. La sección 4.2 analiza el prototipo de aposición restrictiva, *la escritora Alice Walker*, donde se considera el núcleo de esta estructura se encuentra en el N2. Este resultado se ve reforzado por el *reference point model* (Langacker 1993, 2009) que demuestra que el nombre común es el *reference point* que tiene como *target* el nombre propio, esto es, el núcleo de la estructura. La nucleidad del N2 también se basa en la organización *trajector/landmark* de las relaciones gramaticales. El N1 sería el *trajector* y el N2 el *landmark*. Dado este análisis, las aposiciones restrictivas son consideradas híbridas. Estas estructuras emergen de los nudos hereditarios y taxonómicos que tienen origen en la Frase Nominal.

La sección 4.3 comprende el análisis individual de cada uno de los tipos de aposición restrictiva. La sección 4.3.1 trata la estructura *mi hermana Cath/ mi hermana la bailarina*. Estableciendo una línea de comparación entre esta estructura y el prototipo, se concluye que en este tipo el núcleo se encuentra en el N1, el nombre común. Los principales argumentos a favor de este análisis son que, una vez aplicado el *reference point model*, el determinante posesivo es considerado el *reference point* cuyo

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

*target* es el nombre propio, considerado el núcleo de la estructura. La sección 4.3.2 incluye el tipo *Alice Walker la escritora*. La similitud con el prototipo es más que obvia, lo cual llevaría a pensar que sus estructuras internas también lo son, pero en este caso de aposición restrictiva el núcleo se encuentra en el N1. La sección 4.3.2.1 contiene el análisis de *Kermit la rana*. Esta estructura es prácticamente igual a la anterior con la única diferencia de que esta no es reversible. El significado también es un punto clave en su análisis dado que no hace referencia a ninguna profesión o rol social, una de las principales características de las aposiciones restrictivas. Así, su estructura fija y su significado llevan a la conclusión de que el nombre propio es obligatorio en la posición de N1. La sección 4.3.3 analiza la estructura *King Henry VIII*. En este caso el núcleo se encuentra en el N2 siendo este el *target* del *reference point* *King*. La sección 4.3.4 incluye el análisis del tipo *la palabra 'cortesía'*. El significado metalingüístico de esta estructura favorece al N1 como núcleo. La sección 4.3.5 contiene la estructura *'a friend John [who's in linguistics with me]'*. Este es el único caso de aposición restrictiva indefinida. Además está severamente constreñido y las restricciones de selección solo afectan al N1 lo que hace que estructura no sea reversible lo cual implica que el N1 sea el núcleo. Finalmente, la sección 4.3.6 incluye un último tipo de aposición restrictiva, *we women, you men*. En este caso las características deícticas del pronombre hacen que este sea el núcleo de la estructura.

La sección 4.4 propone una teoría basada en las construcciones anteriores que sostiene que todos los miembros de la aposición restrictiva forman una red. Todas estas ejemplos muestran una estructura [N + N] que significa que N1 es N2 y que todas ellas establecen una relación estática entre estos dos miembros (Varantola 1993). Además, esta red también se caracteriza por sus restricciones semánticas y una estructura nominal corta y fija que facilita su reconocimiento y reduce el tiempo de procesamiento. En

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

relación a su nucleidad, todos los miembros de la red tienen un solo núcleo que varía dependiendo del significado de la estructura. La variación afecta a la posición el núcleo, pero dentro de la red también hay ejemplos fijos (*Alice Walker la escritora, we women*). En otras palabras, así como las aposiciones restrictivas difieren en el núcleo, también muestran elaboraciones internas diferentes. Van desde un grado importante de complejidad interna (*la escritora Alice Walker*) hasta aquellas que muestran un carácter esquemático (*we women*). Pero aparte de estas diferencias, todas ellas están masivamente interconectadas dado que todas contienen varios de los siguientes rasgos: expresan una ocupación, contienen un nombre propio, son reversibles y/o tienen una estructura esquemática de [N + N].

El capítulo 5 incluye el análisis de Frases Binominales (*your brat of a brother*) como un ejemplo de la categoría Frase Nominal que aumenta el número de construcciones que ‘parecen Frases Nominales’. La sección 5.1 ofrece una introducción con las características principales de este tipo de construcción revisados extensamente en la sección 5.2. La sección 5.3 incluye un análisis extenso de los distintos estudios hechos sobre esta construcción cuyo punto central de discusión es, de nuevo, el núcleo de la estructura. Así, las Frases Binominales son consideradas estructuras con un modificador (N1) y un núcleo (N2) (McCawley 1988; cf. 5.3.1). También son analizadas como si fuesen Frases Nominales comunes (Napoli 1989; cf. 5.3.2). Hay quien considera que el N1 forma con el elemento *of* y con el Det2 una frase modificadora que modifica al N2 considerado núcleo de la estructura (Aarts 1998; cf. 5.3.3). Y otros señalan que las Frases Binominales tiene dos estructuras subyacentes diferentes (Keizer 2007a; cf. 5.3.4).

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

Para finalizar, la sección 5.4 muestra que un análisis construccional de las Frases Binominales es posible. La sección 5.4.1 trata los paralelismos estructurales que existen entre *your brat of a brother* y *hell of a* (Brems 2003) como cambios en la morfología (*helluva* y *lotta*, respectivamente) provocados por una reducción fonológica. Esta reducción se explica mediante un proceso de construccionalización que hace que las Frase Binominal pase a ser una micro-construcción (Trousdale<sup>25</sup>). Así, la reducción fonológica y el estado de micro-construcción señalan que el análisis N1-modificador-N2-núcleo es el más adecuado.

La sección 5.4.2 estudia el tema de la nucleidad. El problema está en encontrar cual de los dos nombres es el núcleo. El presente estudio defiende una que esta construcción muestra una estructura de modificador-núcleo. Esta conclusión se basa en el *locus* sintáctico de los nombres en la posición N1 y las restricciones que muestran. Solo los nombres evaluativos pueden ser utilizados en esta posición aunque se sugiere que este carácter evaluativo puede ser proporcionado por la construcción. Al mismo tiempo, las Frases Binominales se relacionan con las oraciones copulativas con un atributo. La posición del atributo establece una línea de comparación con el Det2. Cuando una Frase Binomial se transforma en una frase copulativa el atributo siempre es precedido por el artículo indefinido *a*, el cual aparece en las Frases Binominales pospuesto al que sería su núcleo, N1. La referencia de este tipo de estructura también se usa como argumento a favor del N2 como núcleo. Las Frases Binominales solo se utilizan cuando se hace referencia a un referente muy conocido. De modo que, no tiene sentido mantener que un artículo indefinido determina a un N2 de carácter definido. Así, se concluye que el Det1 especifica al N2 y que el Det2 determina al N1.

---

<sup>25</sup> Notas tomadas en un seminario impartido por el profesor Trousdale en Vigo, en 2012.

## Quirky NPs with Special Reference to Close Apposition

---

La sección, 5.4.3 incluye algunos caso excepcionales de Frases Binominales. Estructuras como *those fools of a crew* muestran un plural excepcional que apoya el análisis de modificador-núcleo. En este sentido, se estudian la opciones de concordancia de esta construcción sobre las cuales se concluye que aunque el Det1 no concuerda con el N2 (cf. 5.4.2) se puede demostrar que el Det1 determina al N2 si seguimos la jerarquía de concordancia (Corbett 1979, 2004, 2006). Esto se explica si se tiene en cuenta el significado plural del N2 que prevalece sobre el orden sintáctico de la estructura. De este modo, se debe hablar de concordancia semántica en vez de concordancia sintáctica.

En conclusión, este estudio intenta demostrar que la estructura del lenguaje, y la de las Frases Nominales en particular, es más rica y variada de lo que se asume normalmente. Todas las construcciones analizadas componen un grupo que se caracteriza por los cruces de patrones de similitudes y diferencias que se distinguen entre ellos. Aunque estos solo se pueden observar en su complejidad evitando las restricciones de prejuicios teóricos y observando este diverso mapa de construcciones en su totalidad como lo que es: una red categorial: la Frase Nominal.