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**A Restrictive/Non-Restrictive  
Distinction in Possessive Nominals**

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## **1. Introduction**

Kayne, (1994) provides an analysis that unifies the properties of relative clauses with those of Nominal Possessives, and Adjectival constructions, in that all these construction involve a  $D^\circ$  and a CP. There is however no systematic proposal as to how his structural account could capture the various relationships expressed in possessive nominals. We propose rephrasing Kayne's hypothesis in the light of the leading ideas of Kayne (1998), that the Restrictive/Non-Restrictive distinction found in Relative Clauses corresponds to the Inalienable versus Alienable distinction of the Nominal Possessive constructions in French, hereby giving new evidence for the hypothesis according to which the two constructions are configurationally related. We propose to extend this distinction to adjectives, hereby giving new evidence in favor of Kayne's analysis. This enables us to account for several previously unaccounted or even unnoticed facts. Our hypothesis suggests that the very same phenomena are at stake in various domains of the grammar which involves distinct Grammatical Categories. We discuss in the conclusion some consequences potentially relevant for the general architecture of the grammar, in the light of the minimalist program sketched in Chomsky (1995), and many subsequent works.

## **2. On the Restrictive vs Non-Restrictive Distinction**

### **2.1. Restrictive vs Non- Restrictive Relative Clauses**



in the literature. <sup>2</sup>As Kayne notes following Emonds, (1979), stacked relatives are only possible if all are RRC, or if all are restricted but the last:

- (4) a. Le livre qui est sur la table, que j'ai lu hier  
(the book that is on the table, that I read yesterday)  
b. \*Le livre, qui est sur la table que j'ai lu hier  
(the book, that is on the table which I saw yesterday)

We would like to relate the ungrammaticality of (4.b) to the fact that NRCC can modify a relational noun such as 'soeur', as opposed to RRC (see section 3.1 and footnote (2)):

- (5) a. Sa soeur, que Jean admire, est toujours présente  
(his mother, that Jean admires, is always present)  
b. \*Sa soeur que Jean admire, est souvent présente  
(his mother that Jean admires, is always present)

Note finally that a NRRC cannot be used to modify a quantified antecedent such as 'tout le monde' (everyone), as illustrated in (6):

- (6) \*Jean a parlé à tout le monde, qu'il connaissait  
(Jean spoke to everyone, that he knew)

## 2.2 Restrictive vs Non-Restrictive Possessive Constructions

Our analysis in terms of overt movement of the distinction between NRRC and RRC suggests that there is much more structure above DP than what is usually assumed in the literature. This point was already suggested by the properties of Possessive Nominals (see in particular Kayne (1993), (1994). Extending Szabolcsi's (1981), (1994)'s analysis of Hungarian Noun phrases, Kayne (1994) proposes that the structure of a Possessive Nominal like (7) is close to that illustrated in (8):

- (7) la table/mère de Jean  
(lit. 'the table/mother of Jean')  
(Jean's table/mother)
- (8) [ DP la [CP [NP table/mère<sub>i</sub>] de [IP Jean e<sub>i</sub>] ] ] ]

This amounts to saying that Possessive Nominals with 'de' have a structure

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<sup>2</sup> See also section 32 below, where it is suggested that the movement illustrated in (3.b) might be triggered by PF features not accessible to semantic interpretation.

akin to that of RRC, and that the possessed noun has moved into the Spec of 'de', now interpreted as a nominal complementizer. Kayne's analysis of possessive constructions raises the question of whether Possessive Nominals, akin to NRRCs exist. We would like to claim that they do, and that they correspond to Possessive Nominal's constructions involving the element 'à', illustrated by (9):

- (9) la table à Jean  
 (lit. 'the table to Jean')  
 (Jean's table)

Let us suggest, extending our analysis of NRRC to NRR Possessive Constructions (NRRPC), that the structure corresponding to (9) involves an overt movement of the N to Spec CP as in (10):

- (10) [ DP la [ CP[NP table<sub>i</sub>] à [IP [NP Jean e<sub>i</sub>] ]]] ]

This operation, which amounts an extension of Vergnaud's raising analysis of RC to nominal constructions is, in our terms subject to further overt movement of the remnant NP [Jean e<sub>i</sub>] outside DP, as illustrated in (11.a), followed by further movement of whole DP, as illustrated in (11.b):

- (11) a. [NP Jean e<sub>i</sub>] <sub>j</sub> [ DP la [ CP[NP table<sub>i</sub>] à [IP [NP e<sub>i</sub>] <sub>j</sub>]] ]  
 b. [ DP la [ CP[NP table<sub>i</sub>] à [IP [NP e<sub>i</sub>] <sub>j</sub>]] ] <sub>k</sub> [NP Jean e<sub>i</sub>] <sub>j</sub> [DP ] <sub>k</sub>

In (11.a) the NP following the complementizer like element 'à' is not in the scope of the article, much as the VP is not in the scope of the article in the NRRC in (3.a). Note that, as expected under the present analysis, 'à' is clearly intonationally set off in (12.a), where 'voisin de table' is not inalienably possessed by 'Jean' while this is not the case with 'de' in (12.b):

- (12) a. le voisin de table à Jean  
 (lit. 'the neighbor at the table to Jean')  
 b. le voisin de table de Jean  
 (lit. 'the neighbor at the table of Jean')

That is, while NRRPC pattern with NRRC, Restrictive Relative Possessive Nominals (RRPN) pattern with RRC.

### 3. On the Restrictive vs Non-Restrictive Distinction

#### 3.1 On Restrictive vs Non Restrictive Possessive Nominals

Our general hypothesis captures in structural terms the traditional intuition according to which Possessive Nominals are related to Relative Clauses (cf. Benveniste (1960a), among others). We would like to draw a parallelism between the restrictive vs. non restrictive interpretation of relative clauses, and the inalienable and alienable interpretations of Possessive Nominals : While in RCC the head of the relative forms a complex predicate bound by  $D^{\circ}$  (a relation which can be mediated by a ‘that’ complementizer in English), while in NRRC the  $D^{\circ}$  bounds the Noun alone and the NRRC is predicated and the whole relative clause is predicated of the whole DP. (cf. McCawley (1981); Stowell (1981); and Larson & Segal (1995), for a brief survey of what is at stake

We would like to suggest NRRCs, just like NRRPCs, express a permanent (inalienable) relation between two entities. This is not the case of RRCs and RRPNs which express a non-permanent (alienable) relation. Note moreover that the observation that NRRC does not allow indefinite in Possessive Nominals, as illustrated in (13):<sup>3</sup>

- (13) a. \*un livre à un enfant  
(‘a book to a child’)  
b. ? un livre à l’enfant  
(‘a book to the child’)  
c. \*le livre à un enfant  
(the book to a child)  
d. le livre à l’enfant  
(‘the book to the child’)

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<sup>3</sup> Example (13) is reminiscent of (i) below :

- (i) un mur, qui est rouge, s’est écroulé  
(a wall which is red, felt apart)

where ‘un’ needs to be interpreted as a partitive. Note that the hypothesis according to which NRRC expresses a permanent (inalienable) property is supported by (ii) below:

- (ii) ?\* le mur, qui est en face de moi à ce moment-ci, est rouge  
(the wall ,which is in front of me à ce moment précis, is red)

If one assumes that DP raising expresses the fact that NRRCs do not form a new NP, that is, are not part of the Noun Phrase, then the constraint on stacking follows. See for a configurational approach, Kayne (1994)’s Chapter 3 according to which stacking of NRRC is blocked by illicit movement of a predicate out of a left branch (in the terms of the present analysis, by illicit movement of something (the NRC) contained in a Specifier).

That our general analysis is on the right track is supported by the fact that NRRPC favors strongly inalienable possession, as illustrated by (14), inspired from Kayne (1994):

- (14) a. \*la conférence à hier  
(the conference to yesterday)  
b. la conférence d'hier  
(the conference of yesterday)

Note that one can hardly speak of 'possession' in (14.b) where the relation between 'conférence' and 'hier' seems reducible to predication, as already expressed by Benveniste's concept of 'appartenance'.<sup>4</sup> It is conceivable, from the point of view developed in the text, that 'à' in NRRPC is associated with an empty element. This element moves to some higher position in a structure like (11.a), perhaps to allow long distance movement of 'Jean' in Spec CP, and further movement of the whole DP further up, much in the spirit of Kayne 1993's analysis of auxiliary selection.<sup>5</sup> If it is right that 'avoir' is the spell-out of 'être+a' as his analysis suggests, implementing the intuition of Benveniste (1960a), then it is not inconceivable that 'à' is the spell-out of 'de+à'. This might in turn explain why 'à' is, in Possessive Nominals, restricted to human possessor (Kayne (1975), Milner (1978), Tremblay (1989), Bonneau & Pica (1996), among others), while no such a restriction seems to be observed with NRRC. This is illustrated in (15) which shows that the DP following 'à' cannot be an inanimate:

- (15) \* le pied à la table  
(the foot of the table)

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<sup>4</sup> See Benveniste (1962), who uses examples like 'la couleur de la forêt' (the color of the forest). Of interest here is the concept of 'non-possessable Noun', clearly related to natural elements in some Amerindian languages (see Crowley (1996) and Richards (1973), among many others. See also Bonneau & Pica (1996)). Kayne develops an analysis according to which what Benveniste calls 'appartenance' constructions have to be analyzed in terms of relative clauses. From this point of view the fact that we do not find structures like (i) might be reducible to stacking constraints on NRRCs:

- (i) \*l'imbécile de Jean de Paul  
(lit. 'the imbecile of Jean of Paul')

On the other hand it is conceivable that the ungrammaticality of such structures derives from some interpretative principles. We leave this topic aside, for further research.

<sup>5</sup> On the fact that 'à' might not be in the same position as 'de', see Kayne (1998: 160, note 43), and Kayne (1975). A parallelism between 'de' and 'à' and 'avoir' and 'être' is already suggested in Milner, (1982).



The ungrammaticality of (15) strongly suggests that inalienable possession is associated with the concept of a permanent and active process, as strongly argued for in Bonneau & Pica (1996). The analogy we draw between RC and Possessive nominals allows us furthermore to account for the following contrast reminiscent of (4) of section 1, above:

- (16) a. la voiture de Pierre de Jean  
(‘the car of Pierre of Jean’)  
(‘the car of Pierre’s that John has’)  
b. \* la voiture à Pierre de Jean  
(‘the car to Pierre of Jean’)

Example (16) shows that the stacking properties observed with RRC versus NRRRC (see Emonds (1979)) can be reproduced within Nominal Possessive Constructions: While RRPC, that is constructions with ‘de’, do stack, constructions with NRRPC do not. More precisely NRRPC stacking is subject to the very same conditions that usual RRCs, as illustrated by (17), which should be compared with (4) above:

- (17) a. \* la voiture à Pierre à Jean  
(‘the car to Pierre to Jean’)  
b. ? la voiture de Pierre à Jean  
(‘the car of Pierre to Jean’)  
(the car of Pierre’s that Jean has)

Example (17.a) which involves stacking of two NRRPC is out as expected, while (17.b) which involves a RRPC followed by a NRRPC is marginal at best, as expected in the present framework. That is (17.b) is akin to (18) where a Non-Restrictive Relative Clause follows a Restrictive Relative Clause :

- (18) Je viens de lire le livre qui parle de nos ancêtres, que Paul m’a donné  
(I just read the book which speak about our ancestors, that Paul gave me)

### **3.2 On Restrictive vs Non Restrictive Possessives in French**

The analysis of stacking we have proposed above seems compatible with the following paradigm :

- (19) a. son livre à Jean  
           ('his book to Jean')  
           (the book that he has, that belongs to Jean)  
       b. son livre de Jean  
           ('his book of Jean')  
           (the book that he has, that is Jean's)

Let's assume that the structure of a possessive element like 'son' in (19.b) is akin to that of a Non-Restrictive Adjectival Relative Clause, as illustrated in (20):

- (20)  $[_{DP} D^{\circ} [ CP \text{son}_i [ de [ livre e_i ] ] ] ]$

The element 'son' can raise further to  $D^{\circ}$  in (20) where it acquires the  $\phi$ -features of  $D^{\circ}$ , and can be interpreted as a pronominal like element. While the stacking properties follows, that is, (19.b) is an example of stacking of two restrictive relative clauses and (19.a) an example of a RRCPC followed by a NRRPC, the judgments depend on the lexical item associated with the possessive. Hence, observe the following paradigm :

- (21) a. sa soeur à Jean  
           (his sister to Jean)  
       b. \*sa soeur de Jean  
           (his sister of Jean)

One natural question that arises at this point is whether a 'son' corresponding to a Non-Restrictive Adjectival Relative Clause do exists. We believe that it does - and corresponds to a structure like (22.b) & (22.c), which illustrates the fact that 'son' is not in the Scope of  $D^{\circ}$ :

- (22) a.  $[_{DP} D^{\circ} [ CP \text{son}_i [ \grave{a} [ IP [_{NP} \text{livre } e_i ] ] ] ] ]$   
           (Raising of 'son' in Spec CP) =>  
       b.  $[\text{livre } e_i] j [_{DP} D^{\circ} [ CP \text{son}_i [ IP \grave{a} [ [ e ] j e_i ] ] ] ]$   
           (Raising of the remnant DP outside Spec DP) =>  
       c.  $[_{DP} D^{\circ} ] [ CP \text{son}_i [ IP \grave{a} [ [ e ] j e_i ] ] [\text{livre } e_i] j [ ] ]$   
           (Raising of the whole DP)

We believe that this derivation where 'à' incorporates into 'son' corresponds to a meaning of a Non Restrictive Adjectival relative Clause within which 'sa' expresses inalienable possession.

Our analysis, which amounts to saying that there are two possessive adjectives 'sa' in French, corresponding respectively to a (restrictive) 'pronominal possessive' 'sa' and to a restricted 'reflexive

(adjectival) possessive', is supported by the fact that long distance possessives akin the Scandinavian 'sin' can be detected in French, as first observed in Bonneau & Pica (1996):

- (23) a. L'on<sub>i</sub> souhaite toujours que l'on dise du bien de sa<sub>i</sub> femme  
 (One always wishes that one praise (SUBJ) his (own) wife)  
 b. \*L'on<sub>i</sub> souhaite toujours que Paul dise du bien de sa<sub>i</sub> femme  
 (One always wishes that Paul praise (SUBJ) his (own) wife)

The contrast illustrated in (23) is, in our terms, blocked by a specific element 'Paul' in (b) reminiscent of similar contrasts with long distance 'soi', which can only be detected with bare quantifier antecedents in French (see Pica (1982), (1984)).<sup>6</sup>

If the analysis of so called 'adjectival possessives' is on the right track, one could say that 'sa' is a Non-Restrictive Possessives when it is associated with a relational Noun (such as body parts, kinship terms) or a Noun expressing social activities.<sup>7</sup> This might explain the status of (24b), where the NRRC precedes the RRC. This hypothesis also explains the status of (24.a). The possessive associated with the kinship term 'soeur' is interpreted as a NRRC, as is 'sa soeur à Jean', but NRRC do not stack.<sup>8, 9</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> See also Pica (1998). The analysis developed in the text suggests that there is a parallelism between Possession and Reflexivization, as suggested in Pica (1992).

<sup>7</sup> See the notion of 'Personal Sphere' in Bally (1926).

<sup>8</sup> Example (24.a) is nevertheless grammatical in some dialects of French - where 'à' is not intonationally set off. We interpret this fact as indicating that for some speakers the 'à + N' phrase is interpreted as a kind of doubling of the clitic-like element 'sa'.

The analysis of (20.a) in the text might be extended to (i), which is ungrammatical for most speakers.

- (i) \*Je connais la soeur qui est belle à Jean  
 (lit. 'I Know the sister who is beautiful to Jean')  
 (I know John's sister who is beautiful)

Compare with (ii), whose properties seem to pattern like other cases of stacking :

- (ii) la soeur de Jean qui est belle (RRC + RRC)  
 (the sister of Jean who is beautiful)

The marginal character of (iii) might be related to the ungrammaticality of (5.b), in the text.

- (iii) ?? la soeur qui est belle de Jean (RRC +RRC)  
 (the sister which is beautiful of Jean)

<sup>9</sup> The fact that the possessive adjective corresponds to two elements is also supported by the aspectual constraints studied by Godard (1986.), as reinterpreted in Bonneau & Pica (1996).

- (24) a. ? sa soeur à Jean  
 (his sister to John)  
 b. \*sa soeur de Jean  
 (his sister of Jean)

Before turning to other types of adjectival RCs, let us examine the ungrammaticality of (6) above, restated here as (25) :

- (25) \*Jean a parlé à tout le monde, qu'il connaissait  
 (Jean spoke to everyone, that he knew)

The generalization seems to be that a NRCC cannot have a quantifier within its scope. This would follow if the quantifier is stuck inside the relative clause itself. That this might be on the right track is indicated by the following contrast, inspired from Kayne (1975):

- (26) a. le voisin de table à chacun/tous (group reading only)  
 ('the neighbor at table to each/all')  
 (everyone's neighbor at the table)  
 b. le voisin de table de chacun/tous (group or quantificational reading)  
 (lit. the neighbor at table to each/all)  
 (everyone's neighbor at the table)
- (27) a. la mère à chacun/tous (group reading only)  
 (lit. the mother to each/all)  
 (everyone's mother)  
 b. la mère de chacun/tous (group or quantificational reading)  
 (lit. the mother of each/all)  
 (everyone's mother)

The group reading corresponds to a non quantificational interpretation according to which for all x there is only one person (next to him), or one mother. Put in syntactic terms, the quantifier is interpreted within the scope of the determiner associated with the 'head' of the relative clause. The quantificational reading on the other hand corresponds to an interpretation where the quantificational element can take scope over the D°, perhaps by overt movement to the Specifier of a Distributive Phrase as in Kayne (1998). These contrast pattern together with the contrast between (25) and (28):

- (28) Jean a parlé avec tout le monde qu'il connaissait  
 (Jean has spoken with everybody he knew)

This is reminiscent of our observation that in (3.a) the relative clause acts ‘as if’ it is not in the scope of the Determiner. Let us assume that the last movement (3.a) is triggered by PF features (related to word order). If this kind of feature is not accessible to semantic interpretation, we can derive the facts alluded to above in a straightforward fashion. In a more general way the parallelism between Relative Clauses and Possessive Nominals supports our claim that both constructions involve the same general mechanisms made available by UG.

#### 4. On Restrictive vs Non Restrictive Adjectives in French

If we assume as in Kayne (1994) (see also Smith (1964)) that adjectives involve RC constructions, we expect to find a restrictive vs. non-restrictive distinction in this syntactic area too. That is, we expect all adjectives to enter in a common structure, as illustrated in (29):

- (29)  $[_{DP} D^{\circ} [_{CP} [_{AP} grand_i ] [_{IP} [_{NP} pays ] e_i ]]]$  (RC + NRRC)  
 $[_{DP} D^{\circ} [_{CP} [_{AP} big_i ] [_{IP} country e_i ]]]$

One further expects that overt movement of the remnant NP outside DP, followed by movement of the whole DP, as illustrated in (30a) and (30b) respectively:

- (30) a.  $[_{NP} pays e_i ]_j [_{DP} le [_{CP} [_{AP} grand_i ] [_{IP} [_{NP} e_i ]_j ]]] \Rightarrow$   
 b.  $[_{DP} le [_{CP} [_{AP} grand_i ] [_{IP} [_{NP} e_i ]_j ]]]_k [_{NP} pays e_i ]_j [_{DP}]_k$

That this might indeed be the case is suggested by the following examples where ‘grand’ must be interpreted as ‘great’ in (31.b), hereby expressing an inalienable (non restrictive) property of ‘Paul’, while it is most naturally interpreted as ‘big’ in (31.a), where it expresses an alienable property:<sup>10 11</sup>

<sup>10</sup> See Bonneau & Pica (1996) for a larger class of examples.

<sup>11</sup> We would like to suggest that while (31.a) in the text illustrates stacking, (31.b) does not, as the ungrammaticality of (i) suggests.

- (i) \* le grand pays à l’homme que je connais  
 (The great country to the man that I know)

That is, as suggested in note (6) above ‘à+N’ seems, in some constructions, to play a mere role of identification of the relative clause Possessor, as in clitic doubling construction. Perhaps related is ‘mon ami à moi’ (‘my friend to me’). This suggests that the absence of stacking with NRC might be due to an interpretative according to which NRC establish a unique relation between two objects x and y and that inalienable relationship holds of two objects only (as

- (31) a. le grand pays de Paul  
 (the big country of Paul)  
 b. le grand pays à Paul  
 (lit. the great country to Paul)  
 (Paul's great country)

That is, we would like to suggest that a certain class of adjectives expresses inalienable properties when they are employed with social noun or kinship terms such as 'pays' 'mère' etc. , which are inherently non-restrictive (see Benveniste (1960b)). Interestingly this non-restrictive adjective seems to express permanent (non-specific) properties and are compatible with long distance reflexivization as illustrated by (32) where 'grand' must be interpreted as 'big' (non restrictive) in (32.b), not as 'great' (restrictive) in (32.a):<sup>12</sup>

- (32) a. On<sub>i</sub> souhaite toujours que les gens disent du bien de son<sub>i</sub> grand  
 pays  
 (One always wishes that people praise (SUBJ) his great country)  
 b. \*On<sub>i</sub> souhaite toujours que Paul dise du bien de son<sub>i</sub> grand pays  
 (One always wishes that people say praise (SUBJ) his big  
 country)

## 5. Conclusion

While the analysis developed in the text leaves many areas unexplored, it suggests clearly that the very same mechanisms are playing a role in what used to be considered distinct constructions of the Grammar. If the analysis developed in the text is on the right track, the very same Restrictive/Alienable versus Non-Restrictive/Inalienable distinction seems to play a role in various types of Relative Clauses, Possessive Nominals and Adjectival Constructions, as well as in the process of Reflexivization. We hope that our analysis, which puts to fore a number of hitherto unobserved empirical phenomena will shed some new light on the notion of alienability (and its alleged relationship with aspect), while making possible a better understanding of languages where the usual categorial distinctions of Indo-European languages seems masked (see among many others, Rodrigues

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opposed to part-whole relationship). We hope to be able come back to this topic in the next future.

<sup>12</sup> See on that matter which suggests some relationship between Possession and Reflexivization (as suggested in note 6), Pica (1982), Pica (1985) and Pica & Tancredi, (1988).

(1996)).

While the nature of the syntactic movement involved needs to be investigated in more detail (but see Kayne (1998)), the analysis developed in the text, according to which all interfaces interact with the very same syntactic level accounts in a straightforward way for interaction of phonological factors, such as intonation breaks and semantic interpretation.<sup>13</sup> As pointed out in the text, it remains to be determined which elements are visible for each interface (the Conceptual/Intentional and the Articulatory/Perceptual interfaces) and how sound and meaning are paired together. Precise answers to these questions are of crucial interest for a minimalist approach to language and its interaction with other faculties, whose exact nature still needs to be determined.

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<sup>13</sup> See for a discussion, Higginbotham (1995,) among others.

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