

Relative clause types

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Contents

- Traditional distinction R / NR
- The limits of the R / NR dichotomy
- Possible solutions (integrating problematic examples)

I/ The traditional distinction: Restrictive (R) vs. Non-restrictive (NR)

- Possible ambiguities
- Basic definitions and their implications
- Differences and characteristics
- Cases in which the distinction clearly applies.

Ambiguous examples

I.1 The necessity to posit a distinction

- Potentially ambiguous examples; very distinct meaning:

The + plural N:

The children(,) who were tired(,) went to bed. (Larreya & Rivière)

The + singular N:

The necklace(,) which her mother gave her(,) is in the safe. (Quirk)

Basic definitions and their implications

1.2. Definitions: a) the French tradition

Déterminatives vs. appositives

- Extension: restricting the extension (R) or extension unchanged (NR)

Les enfants(,) qui dormaient(,) n'ont rien entendu.

Give me the necklace which is in the bottom drawer.

- Referent identification: contextual or situational identification (R) vs. identification through the RC (NR)

1.2. Definitions: b) the English tradition

The terms « restrictive vs. non-restrictive » refer to extension, but the definitions themselves are closer to referent identification or are mixed.

- Referent identification: Biber
 - Restrictive: serves to identify the referent of the head noun
 - Non-restrictive: the referent is already identified; RC = incidental information
- Mixed definitions: Quirk
 - Restrictive: when the reference of the head is a member of a class which can be identified only through the modification that had been supplied.
 - Non-restrictive: when the referent of the head is unique or a member of a class that has been independently identified.

1.2. Definitions: their implications

- R: Distinguishing property → Contrast

The children who were asleep heard nothing.

- NR: additional / unessential information, sometimes adverbial meaning

My brother, who has lived in America for over 30 years, can still speak Italian.

Differences and characteristics of each type

1.3. Differences

Classical types of RCs: *The + N*.

All the characteristics stem from the definitions in terms of referentiation or extension. Sometimes used as distinction criteria.

- *The children(,) who were tired(,) went to bed.*
- *The necklace(,) which her mother gave her(,) is in the safe.*
- Punctuation: commas
- Prosody: tone unit boundaries & pauses

1.3. Differences

- *The children(,) who were tired(,) went to bed.*
- *The necklace(,) which her mother gave her(,) is in the safe.*
- Semantics: one vs. two messages (+/- autonomous utterances)
- Suppressibility
- Anaphoric vs. cataphoric *the* (pinpointing operation)

1.3. Differences

- *The necklace, which /?that /* ∅ her mother gave her, is in there.*

The necklace which /that /∅ her mother gave her is in there.

- *This is the reason why this agreement is a problem.*

- Types of relative pronouns:
 - ∅ with R only
 - *That* mainly with R (rarely with NR)
 - WH- with R or NR
- Other relative words or phrases (H&P 1059)

I.4. Characteristics:NR or R (H&P 1060-)

- *They interviewed Jill, who / - she had lent money to the victim (H&P)*
- *It might clear up, in which case would you mind hanging the washing out? (H&P)*
- *and – which makes it even more a headache – it will make it possible to dodge taxes altogether*
- *those ties that you wear that your sister knits for you*
- *A stranger came into the room who looked like Oswald.*
- Replaceability (NR)
- pragmatics: illocutionary force and truth value (NR)
- Preposing (NR)
- Stacking (R)
- Postposing (R)

In which cases does the distinction (clearly) apply?

1.5. The role of the content of the RC

- Contrastive RC (\emptyset + pl N): R

Students who work hard pass their exams

- Continuative RCs: NR

I gave it to John, who passed it onto Mary.

- Generic statements: R or NR depending on information expressed in RC

Rabbits, which are herbivorous, live mainly in temperate zones.

Les Alsaciens qui boivent de la bière sont obèses. / The Alsacians who drink beer are obese.

1.6. The role of the antecedent: NR

- Already determined antecedents: NR

- Proper names

Jill, who is my best friend, helped me a lot.

≠ I meant the Paris that's in Texas.

- Unique referents (possessive + singular N)

My husband, who is an engineer, travels a lot.

- Antecedents determined by other modifiers

the younger of the two soldiers, who was carrying a long gun, moved over to the cabinet

- Clausal (and other) antecedents: NR

He said he'd drafted the report, which I knew to be untrue.

She is really helpful, which you should be when you are a social worker.

I.6. The role of the antecedent: R

- Antecedents with *no, any, every*: R
No candidate who scored 40% or more was ever failed.
- Superlatives (without N) + \emptyset or *that* (H&P): R
She ran the fastest that/ \emptyset she's ever run.
- Interrogative prepositions (H&P): R
where can we go for lunch that is not too expensive?
- *All* + \emptyset
All I know is that they came here for a week.

II/ The limits of the dichotomy

- Problematic examples
- How to describe them?

Problematic examples

II.1. Generic statements: restriction without identification

Les Alsaciens qui boivent de la bière sont obèses.

The giant panda, which is to be found in the remote parts of China, lives exclusively on bamboo shoots.

II.2. Non-contrastive examples (The + N)

You are going to learn the English language. That is what you were brought here for. (Turning to the audience) The English language. The most beautiful language in all the world. The language that has brought hope and civilization to people everywhere. The one true language, OUR language!

He sounded like the clergyman he was.

11.3. Characteristically problematic antecedents

- The + sing N (unique referent)

All this I gave to the mother who needed me.

- A + sing N / Ø + plural N

Suddenly, in a downstairs window that was brilliantly illuminated by a street lamp not six yards away, Billy caught sight of a printed notice...

You are going to learn how to be civilized people, civilized Indians, Indians who can earn an honest living, Indians that the American people can be proud of, not shamed by

- Indefinite antecedents (*every, no, any*)

No candidate who scored 40% was ever failed

How to characterise problematic examples?

II.5. NR vs. Pb cases: information packaging

- Information packaging: primary vs. secondary message (H&P)

She had two sons(,) who were studying law at university(,) and a daughter(,) who was still at high school.

A: Have you been to Paris? B: Yes, often. I have a brother who lives there.

- Explains another part of the message

All this I gave up for the mother who needed me.

- Message coming in second position

I gave it to John, who passed it onto Mary.

II.6. R vs. Pb cases: identification vs. description / definition

- Identification (referentiation) vs. description

They only take in overseas students who they think have a lot of money.

I blow my nose, (...) snot stain(s) a forty-five-dollar handkerchief from Hermès that, unfortunately, wasn't a gift.

- Defining

He is not a visitor to the West, but a citizen there, an American; as American as the Americans who despise him, the Americans who fear him, the Americans who love him

⇒ depends on speaker's intention.

Qualification may be used for description/definition or for referentiation.

III/ How to integrate problematic cases?

- Neutralised opposition
- Gradient or continuum
- New categories
- New definitions
- Reduction of categories

III.1. A « neutralised » opposition

- Biber *et al.* (1999)

- With indefinite NPs: no difference in meaning

I caught a bus in the square(,) which just happened to have Collioure on the front.

And there's another one in the market which I can't remember the name of which costs a lot more

III.2. New categories

- Dubois-Charlier (1999)
 - *apposées (appositives)*
 - *déterminantes*
 - *qualifiantes* : qualify the referent of the antecedent (justify the use of the antecedent at that place in that context)
A bright baby face, eyes that widenend with enthusiasm...

III.3. Gradient or continuum

- Quirk *et al.* (1985): gradient: telescoped RCs
All this I gave up for the mother who needed me
- Khalifa (1999): continuum / gradient
 - Distinction works best in the context: THE + plural noun, in Subject position, in a generic statement. Varying parameters → less efficient dichotomy
 - Semantic continuum based on contrastiveness

III.4. New definitions

- Cotte (2000)

- « Relatives constitutives » vs. « relatives qualificatives »

Depending on whether the RC is cognitively built in the same time as the antecedent or after it.

I won't read any book that has been badly reviewed.

She said she was forty, which I don't believe.

III.4. New definitions

- Huddleston & Pullum (2002): an enlarged « restrictive » category:
 - *Integrated vs. Supplementary*: tightly vs. loosely integrated into the matrix construction in terms of
 - prosody
 - Syntax: *integrated* = part of the NP / *supplementary* = separate constituent
 - meaning: *integrated* = integral part of the meaning of the [superordinate] clause / *supplementary* = separate unit of information (parenthetical or additional).
 - Allows inclusion into *integrated* type of problematic examples
- Merle (2012)

III.5. Restriction of categories

- Loock (2013): PRA / PRD
 - only one *type* of RC (*déterminative*), with different *uses* in discourse
 - The “PRA”: a R RC with elided antecedent
 - Sheldon, [a/the guy] who is a theoretical physicist, has no social skills.*
 - Advantages: universality + simplification

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