

Subsectivity and adjective position

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This paper focuses on adjective order in English, Polish and French. It argues for a Classifier Position (following Rutowski 2007) high in the NP structure where non-subsective (non-predicative) adjectives receive their interpretation. The analysis shows that differences in adjective nominal order between the three languages are fully predicted by the presence of this position. This analysis is also built upon work by Truswell (to appear) which shows that subsective adjectives always occur higher in the structure than intersective adjectives.

1) $[_{DP} D^0 [_{XP} AdjP^*_{subsective} X^0 [_{NP} AdjP^*_{intersective} N^0]]]$ (Truswell, to appear)

The analysis presented in this paper modifies Truswell's proposal to include a position for non-subsective adjectives:

Proposed Modifications to Truswell

2) $[_{ClassP} [_{\Gamma y} [_{AP} [_{\Gamma x} [_{AP} N]]]]]]]$
 non-subsective subsective non-subsective (intersective)

The proposed analysis also differs from Truswell in the way that adjectives receive their interpretation. For Truswell, adjectives enter the derivation with their subsective or intersective interpretations intact. Under the current proposal, adjectives receive their interpretations in the syntax and are not included in the lexicon. This effect can be seen in the behavior of the word 'poor' in all three languages. Whenever 'poor' occurs high in the structure it receives a 'pitiable' interpretation which is argued to be non-subsective.

3) The poor little poor girl

 The pitiable little impoverished girl

 #The impoverished little pitiable girl

The differences in orders between the three languages are based on movement requirements across the languages. All non-subsective adjectives need to be licensed by the nominal. In Polish, this requirement is satisfied overtly through movement of the NP into SPEC[ClassP]. In French and English, this movement is not overtly seen. French and English differ in the directionality of adjectives within the NP. In French, adjective projections are rightward.

In sum the analysis explains the difference in the ordering of elements with the NP across the languages. Polish adjectives in the Classifier position always occur postnominally. English does not have overt movement so the Classifier adjective always occurs on the outermost adjectival position. The French order is derived by the lack of movement and the opposite directionality of adjectives within the NP (see Alexiadou 2001).