A feature-based approach to relativisation in predicative nominals

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Introduction In a restrictive relative construction (1), the nominal phrase (the Head) is connected to the clause-internal gap. It is generally assumed that the prenominal article, as Determiner, plays a role in licensing the construction (Kayne 1994; Bianchi 1999 a.o.). Few have considered the predicative context (2) that precludes D (Longobardi 2005).

(1) The culprit [$_{CP}$ that __ ran away].   (2) John was the culprit [$_{CP}$ that __ ran away].

I demonstrate that the predicative relative constructions (PRCs) serve as the gateway to an essential connection between the head noun and the relative, free from concerns of D. I establish the connection via feature checking and show this method to have an array of advantages.

Background 1.<u>Articles in predicates are not D.</u> Predicates denote abstract properties, not identifiable entities. The articles (*the/a*) in predicate nominals do not bring in reference, hence qualifying the nominals in argument positions, for which reason they are not determiners *à la* Longobardi (1994, 2005). Predicative nominals thus showcase a numeral-classifier-noun hierarchy (Borer 2005), where the articles situate at Num marking (in)definiteness (Yang 2025). 2.<u>Part-sighted theories.</u> Two extant approaches to relativisation, the head-raising approach (HRA) and the Matching approach (MA), both consider the role of the external determiner. Under HRA, the Head originates in the relative (RC) and raises to [spec CP]. It specifies that an external D c-selects the CP, projecting an argument and licensing the RC-internal D$_\emptyset$ (which may incorporate to the external D) (3) (Kayne 1994; Bianchi 1999 a.o). MA establishes the connection via identity: the Head matches identical copies in the RC and licenses their deletion at the interfaces (Munn 1994; Salzmann 2017 a.o) (4) (strikeouts for LF deletion).

(3) [$_{DP}$ the [$_{CP}$ [$_{DP}$ [D$_\emptyset$ 3 culprits]] that everyone chased t_{DP}]]. 3>∀, ∀>3

(4) [$_{DP}$ the 3 culprits [$_{CP}$ [~~D$_\emptyset$ 3 culprits~~] that everyone chases [D$_\emptyset$ 3 culprits]]]. 3>∀, ∀>3

Both methods predict that the complex Head can assume narrow scope in the RC-internal position (trace having the effect of copy at LF for HRA), but this effect is lost in PRCs (5). The contrast is striking if the copies inside RC are argumental duplicates of the complex Head. It is unviable for the LF to delete the complex modifier in the lower copy in PRCs, as in (6), since why the covert syntax reacts differently to predicates lacks theoretical motivation. More to the disadvantage of HRA, no external D exists in PRCs, calling for re-analysis of RC-licensing.

(5) They are the 3 culprits that everyone chased. 3>∀, **?*∀>3**

(6) They are [the 3 culprits [[D$_\emptyset$ 3 culprits] that everyone chased [D$_\emptyset$ ~~3~~ culprits].

3.<u>Unreliable binding.</u> Backward anaphor binding is used as evidence for complex lower copies (7a), but it runs into difficulties with examples such as (7b). Moreover, binding does not depend on c-command such as in (8); therefore, it cannot reliably validate complex lower copies.

(7) a. the picture of himself$_i$ that John$_i$ hates [picture of himself]

   b. *Mary likes the picture of himself$_i$ that John$_i$ hates [picture of himself] (Douglas 2016:22)

(8) a. This is [the picture of herself$_i$]$_j$ that was t_j most to Mary$_i$'s taste (Salzmann 2006: 24)

   b. Every man who saw him$_i$ hated Bill$_i$. (Safir 2014: 118)

Against this backdrop, we must reconsider the content inside RC and redefine its connection with the Head based on PRCs whose Heads only supply predicative information.

Proposal Assuming Full Interpretation (Chomsky 1986), the complex modifiers not interpreted in PRCs must be absent at LF. Therefore, I propose that the Head **noun** is minimally connected to the RC via feature checking on a complementation configuration, freeing relativisation from reliance on an external D or complex copies. In the proposed approach, the gap in an RC is created by movement of an abstract feature item bearing <Cat(egory):D/N>. It moves into the complex left-periphery of the clause (Bošković 2024) to seek Lexical (<Lex:__>) and Number (<Num: __>) values, which are two essential features for LF and PF convergence. N supplies

<Lex> upon merge, but <Num> is only created after Num merges. Use *a girl that gives a lot* to illustrate (9): the subject (SU) moves from [spec vP] to the left-periphery above TP directly. It undergoes A'-movement but nevertheless agrees with T (A-property); hence its landing site exhibits mixed A and A' properties, labelled A/A'P. Feature checking proceeds as described with T getting <Num> from SU, confirming inflection. In the case of a relativised object (OB), it goes to a pure A'-position above the mixed A/A' projection: [OB A' [A/A' [T [t_{OB} vP..]]]] (see Bošković (2024) for

(9)

independent motivation for the split left-periphery). Feature checking guarantees that the LF obtains only minimally necessary interpretive substance. It is simpler than deletion under identity and defines a more intrinsic connection between Head noun and the relative.
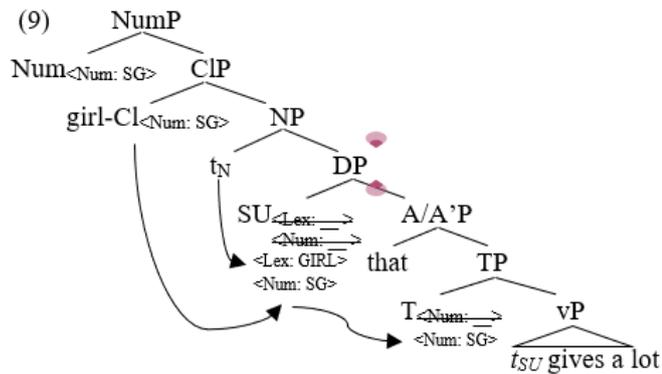
More Advantages I provide **a holistic solution** to RC-idiosyncrasies based on feature interactions. 1.Labelling the SU/OB-A'P/A/A'P merger: I hypothesise that the A'-heads seek categorial values (i.e., bearing <Cat:__>) from SU or OB. By virtue of their movement, the resulting merger is labelled with the prominent feature they share, hence DP/NP (NP in predicate relativisation: *John is not the man that he was*). 2.Solving (anti)-that-trace effects: *that* is obligatory in subject relativisation (10a) but must be absent in subject wh-questions (10b). It is optional in object relativisation (11a) and object wh-questions (11b).
(10) a. the book [SU *(that) [*t* fell off]]   b. What did you see [(*that) *t* fell off]?
(11) a. the book [OB (that) [Bill bought *t*]]   b. What did you see [(that) Bill bought *t*]?
The effects bear no relation to traces at [spec TP]. The overt *that* is a PF requirement for subject relativisation, viz. a non-interrogative exponent for A/A'. Therefore, it runs into feature conflict with a wh-subject; OB and wh-object are both away from A/A' and can give way to relaxed realisation of *that* at A/A'(this head is non-interrogative in object questions, with <Wh> on A').
3.Banning wh-extraction and double relativisation: feature checking between SU/OB and their host heads cancels the minimal distance a whP can move. For a wh-subject (12), it cannot share feature with A/A', so their merger is unlabelled. Conjecturing that A' projects DP after taking <Cat:D> from OB, there will be two DPs above the whP, whose movement will not cross any projection distinct from the landing site, hence still too short to attain (Bošković 2015, *i.a.*). Wh-objects runs into the same problem with only A'P above it (13).
(12) * <who> [DP OB [DP A' [? <who> [A'/AP (that) [TP [? <who> <OB> v…]]]]]]
(13) * <what> [A'P A' [? <what> [DP SU [DP that [TP [? <SU> <what> v…]]]]]]
Double relativisation out of the same clause causes more prominent interface non-convergence, because both SU and OB obtain Lex from the Head noun, resulting at LF, e.g, *book wrote book*.
(14) *book   [OB   [A'P A' [SU   [A'/AP A'/A [TP [? <SU> <OB> wrote…]]]]]]
      [Lex:book] [Lex:book]   [Lex:book]
4.Deriving articles in conjunction: Relative construction conjunction demands an article on each side, e.g., *He is an actor that acts and **a** producer that invests*, contrasting with that of simple predicate nominals, e.g., *He is an actor and producer*. The former is therefore suspected to display DP-level coordination (Li 2001). Now with the *article* being exponent of Num and RCs requiring <Num> for PF convergence, obligatory *articles* become a natural consequence.
Conclusion The study fills the gap of relativisation in predicate nominals. The feature-based approach captures the intrinsic connection between N and its relative, recasting many RC-centred puzzles under natural and intuitive solutions.

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