

## Discourse and Projection Properties of Nonrestrictive Adjectives

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Nonrestrictive adjectives (NRA) are adjectives that are not essential to the determination of reference. In (1), the speaker uses the underlined NRA to say that all of their dogs are sick, so the NRA is not essential in determining which dogs the speaker intends to refer to.

(1) [I have five dogs, but they aren't feeling well.] I need to take my sick dogs to the vet.

(2) [...] I need to take my dogs, who are sick, to the vet.

NRAs are often said to make a side comment about the referent, like appositive relative clauses (ARCs), as in (2). Both NRAs and ARCs exhibit “independence of truth values” (Potts 2005), in that the asserted meaning can be true or false independent of whether the not the NRA or ARC is true or false. However, I will show that the informational structural properties of NRAs and appositives, although similar, differ in several ways. While ARCs are often thought to contribute new but supplementary content, NRAs behave more like presuppositions on many—but not all—diagnostics. Ultimately, I show that NRAs do not fit neatly in existing meaning taxonomies.

Unsurprisingly, NRAs, like ARCs, contribute not-at-issue meaning. They are not directly deniable, and typically projects out of embedding environments, as in (4).

(4) I pet the white dogs. Did you pet {the other, black dogs/the other dogs, which are black}?  
=> all other dogs are black

However, NRAs do not exhibit the robust “antibackgrounding” requirements of ARC(s) (Potts 2005), as seen in the contrast between (5a) and (7). Nor do they exhibit the “strong contextual felicity” (Tonhauser et al. 2013) of strong presuppositions, as in the contrast (5b) vs. (6).

(5) {a. Mary's dog is sick./b. Mary is very stressed.) Her sick dog...

(6) #(John is sick.) Mary is sick too. (requires CG entail someone else, e.g. John, is sick)

(7) (#Mary is sick.) Mary, who is sick, ... (CG cannot entail Mary's dog is sick)

NRAs are also sensitive to the entailments of local contexts (Esipova 2019), where ARCs are not. For example, in (8a), the inference that all non-blue books are red (which would normally be triggered by the underlined NRA) is locally entailed by the antecedent of the conditional, and thus does not project. Using an ARC here would be infelicitous (8b).

(8) If all of the books are either blue or red, then it will be easy to separate the blue books from {a. the other, red books / b. #the other books, which are red}.

At the same time, NRAs are more resistant to local accommodation under logical operators than standard (weak) presuppositions. While the continuation in (9a) indicates that the speaker is negating the presupposition triggered by *finished* in (9), the continuation in (9b) is infelicitous, showing that it is impossible for the speaker to negate the inference triggered by the NRA—that all of the other books are red.

(9) John couldn't possibly have finished reading the other, red books this morning...

a. He hasn't even started reading them! / b. # The other books are yellow!

In the talk, I will present further details on the informational structural differences between NRAs, ARCs, and presuppositions, and discuss the implications for theories of (not-)at-issueness more broadly.

### References

- Esipova, M. 2019. *Composition and projection in speech and gesture*. NYU dissertation.
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