Idiomatic adjectives as an argument against HEAD Raising

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1 Background

- There has been much research on relative clauses and the connection between the head noun and the relativized element in particular (Salzmann 2006, 2017 for an overview)

1. John met the girl who Peter dated.

- According to one prominent proposal - the Raising Analysis - this connection is established through movement (Vergnaud 1985; Kayne 1994; Bianchi 1999)

2. DP
   \[ D^o \]
   \[ the \]
   \[ NP \]
   \[ CP \]
   \[ girl \]
   \[ who \]
   \[ DP_k \]
   \[ D^o \]
   \[ t_i \]
   \[ C^o \]
   \[ TP \]
   \[ Peter dated t_k \]

- The moved material is generally taken to correspond to an NP, that is, to a phrase

- In a series of publications (Cecchetto & Donati 2010, 2015; Donati & Cecchetto 2011), Cecchetto and Donati outline a modified version of the Raising Analysis, called HEAD Raising, where the moved material corresponds to an N° only, that is, to a head

3. DP
   \[ D^o \]
   \[ the \]
   \[ NP \]
   \[ CP \]
   \[ girl \]
   \[ who \]
   \[ DP_k \]
   \[ D^o \]
   \[ t_i \]
   \[ C^o \]
   \[ TP \]
   \[ Peter dated t_k \]

- HEAD Raising has to make an additional assumption for cases where the head noun contains an NP that is evidently phrasal, namely when the noun contains a modifier
John met the nice girl who Peter dated.

- Additional assumption: modifiers are merged after N° is moved out of the relative clause.

- Claims of this talk:
  - There are modifiers whose reconstruction properties are incompatible with this additional assumption, namely idiomatic adjectives.
  - There is no adequate way to fix or modify the additional assumption in such a way that the behavior of idiomatic adjectives can be captured.
  - HEAD Raising is too restrictive and must be rejected.
  - Idiomatic adjectives also pose a problem for the Raising Analysis in general.

2 Idiomatic adjectives in German

- German possesses a number of idiomatic adjectives, that is, adjectives that are subparts of an idiom.

(6) kalter Kaffee cold coffee ‘outdated information’
unbeschriebenes Blatt blank sheet of paper ‘someone unknown’
heiβes Eisen hot iron ‘controversial topic’

(7) dicke Bretter bohren to drill thick blanks ‘to have a tedious task’
große Töne spucken to spit big tones ‘to talk big’
eine ruhige Kugel schieben to push a quiet bowl ‘to have it easy’

(8) jemandem schöne Augen machen to make someone beautiful eyes
   ‘to flirt with someone’
etwas auf die lange Bank schieben to push something down the long bench
   ‘to procrastinate’
etwas an die große Glocke hängen to hang something on the big bell
   ‘to spread information’
sich mit fremden Federn schmücken to adorn oneself with someone else’s feathers
   ‘to take false credit’
• Apart from their non-compositional meaning, idiomatic adjectives behave like typical idiom chunks: they cannot be replaced by synonymous items and the whole idiom is fixed.

(9) a. *kälter Kaffee* ['kafe] cold coffee ‘outdated information’
    *kühler Kaffee* cool coffee *‘outdated information’*
    *kälter Kaffee* [ka'fe:] cold coffee *‘outdated information’*

b. *dicke Bretter bohren* to drill thick blanks ‘to have a tedious task’
    *schwere Bretter bohren* to drill heavy blanks *‘to have a tedious task’*
    *dicke Leisten bohren* to drill thick blanks *‘to have a tedious task’*

c. *jemandem schöne Augen machen* to make someone beautiful eyes
    ‘to flirt with someone’
    *jemandem attraktive Augen machen* to make someone attractive eyes
    *‘to flirt with someone’*
    *jemandem schöne Augen herstellen* to produce someone beautiful eyes
    *‘to flirt with someone’*

• NB 1: idiomatic adjectives belong to a broader group of idiomatic modifiers

(10) *der Stein des Anstoßes* the stone of the initiation ‘the cause’
    *Schnee von gestern* yesterday’s snow ‘outdated information’
    *das Gelbe vom Ei* the yellow of the egg ‘the very best’

• NB 2: idiomatic modifiers are not a peculiarity of German, they can also be found in English

(11) *the devil’s advocate, red herring, French exit, the tip of the iceberg, old hat*
    *to give someone the cold shoulder, to get cold feet, to take sth. down the wrong pipe*

3 Reconstruction of idiomatic adjectives

• Idiomatic adjectives can be contained in head nouns and retain their idiomatic reading

(12) a. *Wir müssen auch die dicke Bretter bohren, die noch vor uns liegen.*
    we must also the thick blanks drill which still before us lie
    ‘We have to get the tedious tasks done that are still ahead of us.’

b. *Er hat ihr schöne Augen gemacht, die sie sofort erwiderte.*
    he has her beautiful eyes made which she immediately replied
    ‘He flirted with her to which she immediately responded.’

• Importantly, idiomatic adjectives can also reconstruct

(13) a. *Wir sprachen mit ihm über die dicke Bretter, die er noch bohren will.*
    we spoke with him about the thick blanks which he still drill wants
    ‘We talked to him about the tedious tasks that he wants to deal with.’

b. *Die schönen Augen, die er ihr machte, wurden ihm zum Verhängnis.*
    the beautiful eyes which he her made became him to the fatality
    ‘That he flirted with her turned out to be fatal for him.’
Also in that respect, they behave identically to other idioms

(14)  
\begin{align*}
\text{a. } & \quad \text{Parky pulled the strings that got me the job.} \\
\text{b. } & \quad \text{The strings that Parky pulled got me the job.} \\
& \quad \text{(McCawley 1981: ex. 57b & 59)}
\end{align*}

That idiomatic adjectives can reconstruct into the relative clause is evidently a problem for HEAD raising, as the structure in (15) for sentence (13b) illustrates

- The head noun \textit{die schönen Augen} in (13b) contains an NP consisting of the adjective \textit{schönen} and the noun \textit{Augen}.
- The raised material is only the noun \textit{Augen}; the adjective \textit{schönen} is merged after the noun \textit{Augen} is moved out of the relative clause.
- The adjective \textit{schönen} is at no stage of derivation part of the relative clause, so it should not be able to reconstruct.
- Consequently, (13b) is predicted to lack the idiomatic reading inside the relative clause.
- But the adjective reconstructs into the relative clause.

(15)  
\begin{center}
\begin{tikzpicture}
\node (DP) {DP}
\node [below left = 1cm of DP] (D) {D°}
\node [below right = 1cm of DP] (NP) {NP}
\node [below left = 1cm of NP] (schönen) {schönen}
\node [below right = 1cm of NP] (Augen) {Augen}
\node [below left = 1cm of Augen] (DP_k) {DP_k}
\node [below right = 1cm of Augen] (C) {C°}
\node [below right = 1cm of C] (er ihr t_k machte) {er ihr t_k machte}
\node [below left = 1cm of Augen] (t_i) {t_i}
\node [below left = 1cm of Augen] (D_t) {D_t}
\node [below left = 1cm of Augen] (die) {die}
\node [below left = 1cm of Augen] (N_i) {N°_i}
\node [below left = 1cm of Augen] (CP) {CP}
\node [below left = 1cm of Augen] (C_p) {C°_p}
\node [below left = 1cm of Augen] (DP_k) {DP_k}
\node [below left = 1cm of Augen] (C_p) {C°_p}
\node [below left = 1cm of Augen] (er ihr t_k machte) {er ihr t_k machte}
\node [below left = 1cm of Augen] (t_i) {t_i}
\node [below left = 1cm of Augen] (D_t) {D_t}
\node [below left = 1cm of Augen] (die) {die}
\node [below left = 1cm of Augen] (N_i) {N°_i}
\node [below left = 1cm of Augen] (CP) {CP}
\node [below left = 1cm of Augen] (C_p) {C°_p}
\node [below left = 1cm of Augen] (er ihr t_k machte) {er ihr t_k machte}
\end{tikzpicture}
\end{center}

4 Three non-solutions

- In order to capture that idiomatic adjectives can be reconstructed into a relative clause, HEAD raising could resort to the following three solutions:
  - \textit{ADJECTIVE RAISING}: the adjective is raised out of the relativized element.
  - \textit{ADJECTIVE EXCORPORATION}: the noun and the idiomatic adjective form a complex head that is raised out of the relative clause; after that, the adjective excorporates.
  - \textit{NON-SYNTACTIC RECONSTRUCTION}: the adjective gets visible inside the relative clause by some non-syntactic mechanism.

- I will argue that all three approaches are empirically inadequate.
4.1 Against adjective raising

- **ADJECTIVE RAISING**: the adjective is raised out of the relativized element

\[(16)\]

```
DP
  | D°
  die  AP_m  NP
  | schönen  N°_i  CP
  Augen
```

- The idea that the idiomatic adjective is moved out the DP faces four problems
- **First**, it requires that DPs with an idiomatic adjective can be affected by movement in the first place
  - Although DPs in German can be targeted by movement (resulting in so-called *split-NPs*; cf. Ott (2012) for a recent overview), movement cannot target DPs containing idiomatic adjectives (Ott 2012: 46; Nolda 2007: 89-90)

\[(17)\] a. *Frauen, hat er mir [schöne t_i] vorgestellt.*
  women has he me beautiful introduced
  ‘He introduced beautiful women to me.’

b. *Augen, hat er ihr [schöne t_i] gemacht.*
  eyes has he her beautiful made
  ‘He flirted with her.’

- **Second**, the relevant movement steps in (16) preserve the original order between adjective and NP
  - However, with split NPs, the original order between the adjective and noun must NOT be preserved

\[(18)\] *Schöne, hat er mir [t_i Frauen] vorgestellt.*
  beautiful has he me women introduced
  ‘He introduced me to beautiful women.’

\[(19)\] a. *Frauen, hat Peter schönen, bisher nur [wenige t_i t_k] gesehen.*
  women has Peter beautiful so.far only few seen

b. *Schöne, hat Peter Frauen, bisher nur [wenige t_i t_k] gesehen.*
  beautiful has Peter women so.far only few seen
  ‘Peter has so far only seen a few beautiful women.’
• **Third,** the movement of the noun in (16) is required for reasons of relabeling, whereas the movement of the adjective is optional
  - This then predicts that it should be fine to strand the adjective together with the determiner in SpecCP of the relative clause
  - But this option is totally out, independent of the idiomatic status of the adjective

  \[ \text{(20)} \]
  a. \*Die Frauen, [die schönen ti], er ti sah, kannte er nicht.  
  the women which beautiful he saw knew he not  
  ‘He didn’t know the beautiful women he saw.’

  b. \*Die Augen, [die schönen ti], er ihr ti machte, wurden ihm zum Verhängnis.  
  the eyes which beautiful he her made became him to the fatality  
  ‘That he flirted with her turned out to be fatal for him.’

• **Fourth,** if it is fine to extract N° out of an NP for reasons of relabeling in (16), then it should be equally possible to extract D° out of a DP for reasons of relabeling, contrary to fact

  \[ \text{(21)} \]  
  *I ate [DP [D° what]], [CP C° you cooked [DP ti food]].*

• NB: the following alternative solution suggests itself (cf. 22)
  - the adjective is split off the NP in the base position of the DP
  - the NP is relabeled to N°
  - the moved DP in SpecCP contains only N°
  - N° is moved outside the relative clause and relabels the structure
  - the adjective moves from the TP-internal position above N°

  \[ \text{(22)} \]

• Importantly, movement of the adjective is optional, so the adjective is predicted to be able to strand inside the relative clause
• However, split NPs are not available as relativized elements (Haider 2010: 4)

  \[ \text{(23)} \]  
  *Die Frauen, die ich nur [schöne ti] kenne, wurden ihm vorgestellt.  
  the women which I only beautiful know became him introduced  
  ‘Only the beautiful women that I know were introduced to him.’
4.2 Against adjective excorporation

- **ADJECTIVE EXCORPORATION**: the noun and the idiomatic adjective form a complex head that is raised out of the relative clause; after that, the adjective excorporates

(24)

```
DP
  | NP
  die
  A
  schönen
  N
  Augen
  CP
  C
  C
  TP
  er ihr tk machte
```

- This analysis has two advantages
  - It captures that nominal modification via adjectival incorporation is cross-linguistically well-attested (Dahl 2004: 225-236; Dahl 2015; Rießler 2016)
  - It also captures that German possesses idiom doublets where the idiomatic adjective can either form an NP with the noun or a complex N°-head

(25)

a. *Schwarzes Meer* ‘Black Sea’
   a’. *Schwarzmeerflotte* ‘Black Sea Fleet’

b. *Rotes Kreuz* ‘Red Cross’
   b’. *Rotkreuzschwester* ‘Red Cross nurse’

c. *Silberne Hochzeit* ‘silver wedding anniv.’
   c’. *Silberhochzeit* ‘silver wedding anniv.’

d. *Blaues Blut* ‘nobility’
   d’. *blaublütig* ‘noble’

e. *Tüpfelchen auf dem i*‘icing on the cake’
   e’. *i-Tüpfelchen* ‘icing on the cake’

- Despite its attractiveness, the analysis faces one serious problem
  - The examples in (25) all involve doublets whose idiomatic meanings are identical
  - However, there are doublets where the idiomatic meanings differ

(26)

a. *dicker Kopf* ‘hangover’
   thick head
   a’. *Dickkopf* ‘stubborn person’
   thick-head

b. *Hohes Haus* ‘parliament’
   high house
   b’. *Hochhaus* ‘high-rise building’
   high-house

  - When *dicker Kopf* is used as a head noun, then structure (24) predicts that its meaning corresponds to *Dickkopf* in the relative clauses, contrary to fact

(27) *Der dicke Kopf, den du hast, kommt von dem vielen billigen Lambrusco gestern.*

the thick head which you have comes of the much cheap Lambrusco yesterday

‘The hangover you have is due to the cheap Lambrusco yesterday.’

* ‘The hangover such that you are stubborn is due to the cheap Lambrusco yesterday.’
4.3 Against non-syntactic reconstruction

- NON-SYNTACTIC RECONSTRUCTION: the adjective gets visible inside the relative clause by some non-syntactic mechanism

\[(28)\]

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{DP} \\
\downarrow \\
\text{NP} \\
\downarrow \\
\text{AP} \\
\downarrow \\
\text{schönen} \\
\downarrow \\
\text{Augen} \\
\downarrow \\
\text{DP}_k \\
\downarrow \\
\text{D°} \\
\downarrow \\
\text{die} \\
\end{array}
\]

Irrespective of how the mechanism is eventually formulated, its applications requires minimally that the affected relative clause is well-formed

- However, there are idioms with idiomatic modifiers where this condition is not fulfilled because the noun requires the presence of the adjective

\[(29)\]

- Crucially, the examples in (29) are available as head nouns

\[(30)\]

a. Das halbe Hemde, mit dem du dich hier mit dem Hemde anlegst, kann jeder schlagen. 
   ‘Everyone can beat this wimp you’re messing up with.’

b. Das ist abzulesen an den fröhlichen Urständ, die dieser Begriff feiert.
   ‘This can be deduced from the fact that this concept rears its head again.’

- Before non-syntactic reconstruction, the relative clauses in (30) look minimally as in (31)

\[(31)\]

a. [CP du dich hier mit dem Hemde anlegst]

b. [CP dieser Begriff die Urständ feiert]

- Problem: the relevant relative clause internal DPs (dem Hemde and die Urständ) in (31) are not independently available so that the relative clauses are not well-formed
5 A problem for the Raising Analysis

- NPs containing an idiomatic adjective cannot be split, that is, the noun cannot be moved away from the adjective (cf. 17)
- Moreover, the NP-constituent containing the noun and the idiomatic adjective cannot be moved away from other DP-internal material either
- Evidence: idiomatic DPs that require the specification of some number feature

(32)  

a.  *eine / die heilige Kuh schlachten*  
   'to break a/the taboo'

b.  *heilige Kühe schlachten*  
   'to break taboos'

c.  *zwei / viele / ein paar heilige Kühe schlachten*  
   'to break two/many/a few taboos'

d.  *Merkel schlachtet heilige Kuh.*  
   'Merkel breaks a taboo.'

[e.  *Merkel macht reinen Tisch.*  
   'Merkel tells the plain truth.']*  

- The idiomatic reading is lost once the NP-constituent consisting of adjective and noun is moved away from the numeral

(33)  

a.  *[DP Heilige Kühe] hat Merkel ti geschlachtet.*  
   'Merkel broke taboos.'

   'Merkel broke two/many/a few taboos.'

   'Merkel saw two beautiful women.'*

- Under relativization, however, the immovable NP-constituent consisting of adjective and noun can move all of the sudden

(34)  

*Die heilige Kuh, die Merkel schlachtete, war die Grenzöffnung 2015.*  
   'The taboo Merkel broke was the opening of the borders in 2015.'
This problem disappears if the Matching Analysis is adopted (Salzmann 2017; Pankau 2018).

Under the Matching Analysis, head noun and relativized element are connected via ellipsis, so the restriction on immovable items is irrelevant.

Adopting the Matching Analysis predicts that the idiomatic reading of the adjective-noun constituent should be available both in the main clause and in the relative clause.

This prediction is borne out.

\[(37)\] a. *Merkel schmückt sich mit den fremden Federn, mit denen sich auch Altmaier schmücken will.*

*Merkel takes false credit for what also Altmaier wants to take false credit.*

b. *offene Worte wählen* to choose open words ‘to tell the plain truth’

b’. *Peter wählte die offenen Worte, die Maria nie zu wählen gewagt hätte.*

*Peter spoke in an open way that Mary would never dare to speak.*
6 Conclusions

- The material that the head noun and the relativized element share can be phrasal
  → HEAD Raising only allows sharing of heads and is therefore too restrictive
- The material that the head noun and the relativized element share can be material that is
  immovable
  → the Raising Analysis requires the shared material to be movable and therefore has a
  problem (yet another one)
- The Matching Analysis faces none of these two problems and is therefore preferable

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