Prenominal and postnominal positions in Romance languages are commonly associated with non-restrictive and restrictive modification respectively (Bouchard 1998, Alexiadou 2001, Demonte 2008) (1). However, not every adjective receives a non-restrictive reading when it changes from postnominal to prenominal position: some of them undergo a change of meaning, to a greater or lesser extent (2). In this talk I will reconsider the concept of restrictivity and the semantic mapping of (non-)restrictivity, (non-)intersectivity, and pre/postnominal position of adjectives in a Romance language such as Spanish. My claim is that only intersective adjectives present the non-restrictive/restrictive contrast —an idea already mentioned, but not developed in Siegel (1976)—, whereas non-intersective adjectives acquire another kind of reading in prenominal position in Spanish.

The intuition behind the notion of restrictivity is that of (3), as formalized by Piñón (2005): a modifier M restrictively modifies the head H only if the set of objects denoted by the modified head HM in a context s is properly included in that set of objects denoted by H in that context; whereas M non-restrictively modifies H only if the set of objects denoted by H in s equals the set of objects denoted by MH in s. A test for non-restrictivity in this sense can be found in (4). There have been some recent attempts to redefine this contrast in order to account for the differences between prenominal and postnominal positions (Katz 2008, Morzycki 2008, Martin 2011, a.o.). Most of them take into account pragmatic factors and propose that either non-restrictivity (Morzycki 2008) or prenominal position (Martin 2011) correlate with not-at-issue meaning. However, non-intersective adjectives in prenominal position can also be argued to be at issue (cf. 5a and 5b), since non-at-issue content has been claimed not to be directly deniable (Potts 2005).

As for the intersective/non-intersective distiction, intersective adjectives are those for which the entailment in (6a) holds, and, as such, are predicates. The label ‘non-intersective’ puts together a heterogeneous group of adjectives whose common syntactic features are lack of predicative uses and restriction to prenominal position in Romance languages (7). Different entailment patterns have been proposed for pure subsective adjectives (hável ‘skillful’), modals (presunto ‘alleged’), and privative adjectives (falso ‘fake’), but I argue, following Landman (2001), that all of them can be reduced to that of subsectivity, as defined in (6b). As such, it accounts for the entailment patterns of modals (a possible N may or may not be an N), privatives (a former N is not an N, but it was), or intensifying ones (a true N is an N in every possible world). Including indexes for worlds and times in the entailment pattern for non-intersective adjectives favors an analysis of prenominal position in terms of intensions.

Focusing on intensifying adjectives such as verdadero ‘true’, which are non-intersective and therefore the restrictive/non-restrictive contrast does not apply (see 4), I will show that the relation between syntax and interpretation in the case of adjectives in Romance languages is systematic only when applied to a subset of adjectives, namely, intersective ones. If time permits, I will also examine the reason why some adjectives have both an intersective and a non-intersective version.
(1)  a. Me encontré con los presuntuosos amigos de Marí.
    ‘I came across María’s pretentious friends’ (all María’s friends are pretentious)

    b. Me encontré con los amigos presuntuosos de Marí.
    ‘I came across María’s pretentious friends’ (the subset of María’s friends who are
    pretentious)

(2)  a. El buen padre dice sí cuando es sí y no cuando es no; el padre bueno solo dice sí.
    ‘A good father says yes and no when he has to; a father who is good only says yes

    b. Le dieron una verdadera paliza. ‘They gave him a true beating.’
    En la primera escena, el actor recibe una paliza verdadera.
    ‘In the first scene, the actor gets a true beating, not a pretended one.’

(3)  a. M restrictively modifies H in s iff \[ \lambda o[M_o(o) \land H_s(o)] \subseteq H_s \\ M_o \]
    b. M non-restrictively modifies H in s iff \[ \lambda o[M_o(o) \land H_s(o)] = H_s \\ M_o \]

(4)  a. Entrevistaré (solo) a los músicos guapos, no al resto de los músicos. ‘I’ll interview
    the handsome musicians only, not the other musicians’

    b. Entrevistaré (solo) a los guapos músicos, #no al resto de los músicos.

    c. Entrevistaré (solo) a los buenos músicos, no al resto de los músicos. (‘good
    musicians’) 

    d. Entrevistaré (solo) a los verdaderos músicos, no al resto de los músicos. (‘true
    musicians’)

(5)  a. Me encontré con los presuntuosos amigos de Marí. (1a)
    No, #los amigos de Marí no son presuntuosos. ‘María’s friends are not pretentious

    b. Me encontré con una verdadera periodista, A.P. (‘I came across a true
    journalist, A.P.’)
    No, A.P. es una periodista mediocre. ‘No, she is an average journalist’

(6)  a. Intersectivity: \[ \langle AN \rangle = \langle A \rangle \cap \langle N \rangle \]
    b. Subsectivity Prime: \[ \langle AN \rangle^{w,t} \subseteq \langle N \rangle^{w,t} \] (Landman 2001: 8)

(7)  a. # La paliza era verdadera. ‘The beating was true’

    b. # El sacrificio es cierto. ‘The sacrifice was true’

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