

NP MYTHS

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There are several myths pertaining to the internal structure of noun phrases that pass from one paper to another without critical evaluation:

- (i) **DP are arguments (and predicates are not DPs)**, NPs cannot be arguments
- (ii) Slavic languages (without articles) allow **Left-Branch Constraint violations**
- (iii) The lack of the definite article with proper names is due to **N-to-D movement**
- (iv) **DPs (NPs) are phases**

(i)-(iii) can be disproven by casual consideration of the data; (iv) is impossible to prove or to disprove because diagnostics for phases conflict.

1. TIM'S SLEIGHT-OF-HAND

Stowell 1989, 1991: **arguments are uniformly DPs, while predicates are NPs.**

1.1. Bare predicates 1: English singleton offices

Nouns denoting office permit definite article omission in the predicate position in English on the precondition that at each time there is a **unique occupant of the office** in question:

- (1) a. The people elected Nixon (^{??}the) president.
b. His crony was appointed (?the) ambassador to the UN.
c. Charles has become (the) Prince of Wales.

Problem: most predicative noun phrases must have a determiner:

- (2) a. *The constituents elected Dick Nixon congressman.
b. *John is doctor.
c. *I consider Bill good lawyer.

Hypothesis (Stowell 1991): most nouns **denote properties of kinds** (cf. Carlson 1977) and require an article to start denoting properties of individuals.

Contemporary support (McNally and Boleda 2004): relational adjectives denote properties of kinds: they are intersective and can be predicative (exx. from Levi 1978:254):

- (3) a. The process by which compounds are formed is transformational.
b. Her infection turned out to be bacterial, not viral.

If a relational adjective denotes a property of a kind, so does the noun it combines with.

An article is needed to convert the property of a kind into a property of individuals.

Stipulation: since *president*-class nouns denote **singleton kinds**, they can be predicated over their single member without conversion (or their subject is type-raised).

1.2. Bare predicates 2: Indefinite article drop with "role" nouns

In German (and many other languages) profession-denoting nouns permit article omission in the predicate position:

- (4) Hans ist (ein) Zahnarzt.
Hans is (a) dentist
Hans is a dentist.

- [-referential] singleton kinds: English *president* (Stowell 1989, 1991)
- [-referential] superlatives: Norwegian (Borthen 1998, 2000, 2003, see also Vikner 2001), but not in Romance predicate superlatives (where it is the definite article that distinguishes superlatives from comparatives)
- [-referential] proper names (Matushansky 2005a, 2006a, 2006b, 2008)
- vocatives (I don't know whether common nouns and proper names diverge here)
- coordinated bare singulars in some European languages (Heycock and Zamparelli 2003, Roodenburg 2004)

Lexical semantic:

- **kinds** (Germanic vs. Romance bare plurals and mass; adjectival nominalizations – Chierchia 1998, Zamparelli 2002b, 2002a, Dayal 2004, Farkas and Swart 2007)
- **proper names** (languages with preproprial definite articles)

Some singulars (Stvan 1998), including time adverbials (*next week*) and musical instruments (*to play (the) guitar* vs. *to play the piano*), can be bare (but see Carlson and Sussman 2005).

The list is not exhaustive.

The whole thing has an **OT flavor** to it: the definite article can disappear when uniqueness is inherent to the NP or locally determined and preferably in non-argument positions.

1.4.2. Full definites

If the definite article is indicative of the presence of a DP-layer, DPs can be predicates:

NB: Obviously, these definites have no existential presupposition.

- (8) a. *Anne's death made George (the) king of England.*
b. *I consider him the best tennis player in the history of England.*

Possessives and even quantifiers and demonstratives can also appear in the predicate position (see Partee 1986):

- (9) a. *The marriage made George **my father-in-law**.*
b. *The house has been **every color**.*
c. *My hair has never been/become/turned **this color** before.*
d. *This dress is **the wrong shape**.*
e. ***Which kind of doctor** are you?*

Claiming that the predicates in (9) are not DPs is nonsensical.

1.4.3. Full indefinites

English singular predicates usually appear with an article.

In languages with bare predicates some predicates are not bare, especially when modification is added:

- (10) a. *Julie était *(un) génie.* ok if *genius* is understood as an occupation or social function
Julie was a genius
Julie was a genius.
- b. *Carmen est ??(un) médecin espagnol.*
Carmen is a doctor Spanish
Carmen is a Spanish doctor.

Even NPs containing cardinals can function as predicates (exx. from Stowell 1991):

- (11) a. *?I consider John and Bill two (of my) friends.*
b. *I consider John and Bill two of my closest friends.*

If indefinites are NPs, then NPs are not restricted to the predicate position.

1.4.4. Bare indefinites

Setting aside bare plural and mass nouns in episodic environments, strongly non-specific (“incorporated”) bare singulars (Schmitt and Munn 1999) can appear in argument positions.

And of course, in a lot of languages there are no indefinite articles.

1.5. Conclusion

Article drop tends to occur in non-argument positions and with non-referential NPs.

This, however, is a **tendency**; bare NPs can also appear in argument positions.

Definite and quantified DPs can appear in predicate positions.

There is no causal relation involved in the projection of the DP layer and argument status.

NB: Every move towards “the presence of a strong determiner does not mean the presence of a DP” amounts to a shift towards the semantic definition of syntax.

2. LEFT BRANCH CONDITION IN SLAVIC

Ross 1967: “No NP which is the leftmost constituent of a larger NP can be reordered out of this NP by a transformational rule”.

Standard reinterpretation: **Nothing can be extracted out of a Left Branch of an NP.**

Uriagereka 1988, Corver 1990, 1992: languages without articles allow violations of the Left Branch Condition (a necessary, but not sufficient condition):

- (12) a. Cuiam_i amat Cicero [t_i puellam]? Latin
whose loves Cicero girl
Whose girl does Cicero love?
- b. Kakuju_i ty kupil [t_i mašinu]? Russian
what you bought car
What car did you buy?

Explanations differ, but what is important is that putative Left Branch Condition violations may not involve movement out of the left branch at all:

- (13) Na sledujuščij ostan'tes' trolleybus! Pereltsvaig 2008
for next stay-IMP-PL trolleybus
Stay for the NEXT trolleybus!

The preposition is pied-piped with the linearly first constituent inside the DP.

The preposition need NOT be a phonological clitic, as proposed by Corver 1992 – pied-piping occurs with phonologically heavy prepositions as well (Bašić 2004, Pereltsvaig 2008) and a non-constituent may be fronted (Pereltsvaig 2008):

- (14) a. Protiv sovetskoj on vystupal vlasti. Pereltsvaig 2008
against Soviet he demonstrated regime
It is against the SOVIET regime that he demonstrated. or
It is AGAINST the Soviet regime that he demonstrated.
- b. Ja prosto probovala vot èti češkie s supinatorami pokupat' tufli.
I simply tried here those Czech with arch-supports to-buy shoes
I simply tried to buy those here Czech shoes with arch-supports.

Whatever the generalization is due to, this is not extraction out of the Left Branch.

This is relevant, for instance, for the discussion of the obligatory ellipsis in sub-comparatives (Kennedy and Merchant 2000, Kennedy 2000, 2002).

3. N-TO-D MOVEMENT IN ROMANCE AND GERMANIC

All purported instances of N-to-D in Romance and Germanic are questionable, but the most questionable one is **article omission with proper names**.

3.1. The grandeur that was Rome

Longobardi 1994, 1999 et seq.: Italian proper names may appear with the definite article. The variation may be stylistic, grammatical, or dialectal:

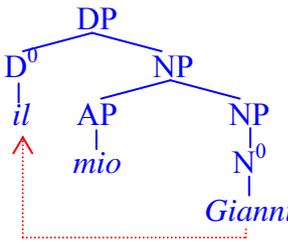
- (15) a. Petrarca è uno dei miei poeti preferiti.
 Petrarch is one of my poets favorite
 b. Il Petrarca è uno dei miei poeti preferiti.
 the Petrarch is one of my poets favorite
Petrarch is one of my favorite poets.

Longobardi's proposal: The variation is due to the presence/absence of N⁰-to-D⁰ movement:



Longobardi presupposes that the preproprial definite article is expletive, but this assumption is not essential for the syntactic side of his analysis.

Possessive adjectives are also claimed to show the effect of N-movement:

- (17) a. il mio Gianni
 the my Gianni
my Gianni
 b. Gianni mio
 Gianni my
my Gianni
 b. *mio Gianni
 my Gianni
 d. il Gianni mio
 the Gianni my
MY Gianni (as opposed to others')
- (17') 

(17a) is the underlying order, (17b) results from N-to-D movement. (17c) is ungrammatical since D⁰ must be filled, and (17d) has a contrastive interpretation, showing that the AP *mio* is post-nominal underlyingly (which makes it irrelevant to the paradigm).

The same effect can be observed with adjectives:

- (18) a. l'antica Roma
 the+ancient Rome

- b. *antica Roma
ancient Rome
- c. Roma antica
Rome ancient
Ancient Rome

Longobardi explains the absence of this Italian pattern in English, etc., by proposing that in other languages the N-to-D movement happens after Spell-Out.

3.1.1. Against N-to-D movement in Italian

The list of adjectives showing the contrast above is extremely small (Longobardi 1994): possessives, ordinals, the adjectives *vecchio* ‘old’, *giovane* ‘young’, *antico* ‘ancient’, *scorso* ‘last’, *solo* ‘only’ and perhaps a few more.

When a proper name is modified, the article is generally obligatory, and further modification of proper names modified by adjectives like *antico* restores the definite article:

NB: In fact, Google comes up with quite a few hits for *la Roma antica* without further modifications as well.

- (19) a. *(la) Mary Poppins francese
the Mary Poppins French
the French Mary Poppins
- b. *(la) Roma antica di Cesare
the Rome ancient of Caesar
the Ancient Rome of Caesar

If (19b) does not involve N-to-D (the article is overt), then the identical word order in (18c) also doesn't.

Simpler explanation: these are simply complex proper names: *Ancient Rome*, *Big Ben*, *Pliny the Younger*...

Possessives might involve non-restrictive (perhaps, expressive) modification.

Names of days of the week, holidays and months are claimed to behave like proper names:

- (20) a. Lo scorso giovedì/ Natale/ maggio e stato un giorno/mese terribile.
the last Thursday/Christmas/ May is been a day/ month terrible
Last Thursday/Christmas/May was a terrible day/month.
- b. *Scorso giovedì/ Natale/ maggio e stato un giorno/mese terribile.
last Thursday/Christmas/ May is been a day/ month terrible
- c. Giovedì/ Natale/ maggio scorso e stato un giorno/mese terribile.
Thursday/Christmas/ May last is been a day/ month terrible
Last Thursday/Christmas/May was a terrible day/month.
- d. Il giovedì/ Natale/ maggio scorso e stato un giorno/mese terribile.
the Thursday/Christmas/ May last is been a day/ month terrible
Last Thursday/Christmas/May was a terrible day/month.

But the adjective *scorso* ‘last’ appears without an article in English as well, perhaps due to its superlative semantics:

- (21) a. (*the) last Thursday/Christmas/May/week/month/year
- b. the last Thursday/Christmas/May/week/month/year of the millennium

Ordinals with names of sovereigns also appear without a definite article, but they have such a strange syntax in English that it's hard to see what to make of it:

The choice of a particular head noun may rule out the definite suffix:

- (28) a. *studerend-en
student-DEF
Danish: Hankamer and Mikkelsen 2005
- b. den studerende
DEF student
the student
- c. den fattige studerende
DEF poor student
the poor student

Proper names functioning as common nouns cannot occur with the postnominal article:

NB: This is part of a more general constraint: despite their definiteness, proper names appear without any overt definite articles. Restrictive modification yields the free-standing definite article.

- (29) Maria(*en) som har boet i København i mange år flyttede til Malmö i januar.
Maria.DEF that has lived in Copenhagen for many years moved to Malmo in January
Maria, who has lived in Copenhagen for many years, moved to Malmo in January.

In non-restrictively modified **plural proper names** the suffixal article reappears.

Finally, double definiteness is possible/required in some dialects:

- (30) a. *gamla mus-en
old mouse-DEF
Swedish: Hankamer and Mikkelsen 2005
- b. **den** gamla mus-**en**
DEF old mouse-DEF
the old mouse
- c. *den gamla mus
DEF old mouse

If this is N-to-D, it is not constrained as expected. The head-movement analysis is not ruled out but more work is needed.

3.3. Romanian

Romanian definite article is suffixal:

- (31) a. un om
a man
- b. om-ul
man-DEF
the man

Dobrovie-Sorin 1987, Grosu 1988, Cornilescu 1992: Romanian has N-to-D.

Giusti 1993: the cliticization of the article is constrained by linear order:

- (32) a. bătrînul om
old-DEF man
the old man
- b. om-ul bătrîn
man-DEF old
the old man

BUT the presence of an escape-hatch does not entail phasehood and the phenomenon is really strange.

In English plural and mass NPs allow degree inversion only if the indefinite article is present:

- (40) a. **How clean** *glasses/*water/✓a glass did you see t_i ?
b. St. George fought **so dangerous** *dragons/*crime/✓a dragon.

In other languages such is not the case (Bennis, Corver and den Dikken 1998, Troseth 2009):

- (41) a. Wat **een** twee mooie vazen staan er op tafel! Bennis et al. 1998
what a two beautiful vases stand there on table
What beautiful two vases are on the table!
b. Han opdraetter lige så fine får som sin far. Troseth 2009
he raises just as fine sheep as REFL-POSS father
He raises sheep just as fine as his father.

Only degree movement gives rise to this effect and overt extraction of degree operators out of the DP is ungrammatical.

4.2. No

Impenetrability: DPs are crucially not impermeable to Case:

- (42) a. Liza nabrala vosem' očkov.
Lisa gathered eight-NOM points-GEN
Lisa got eight points.
b. Liza ne nabrala ?(i) vos'mi očkov.
Lisa NEG gathered and eight-GEN points-GEN
Lisa didn't get (even) eight points.

(42) illustrates Genitive-of-Negation: under phrasal negation non-specific internal arguments turn genitive.

The fact that the head noun can be case-marked from outside the DP shows that the DP is not “enough of a phase” to be impermeable to such assignment. But in (42b) an unquestionable phase boundary is introduced between the DP and its case assigner (phrasal negation): the vP (but see Harves 2002 for an alternative proposal, where vPs are weak phases in the presence of negation).

4.3. Summary

If DPs are phases, we need a better definition of phases (cf. Boeckx and Grohmann 2007).

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