

## On the edge of DP: the left periphery and the structure of arguments

Recent works propose that the noun phrase, like the clause, can be divided into three domains, following the cartographic approach to syntactic structures (Cinque 2002, Belletti 2004, Rizzi 2004b), (1). The Vorfeld corresponds to the interpretative part of the structure, the so-called left periphery (see Rizzi 1997 for the clause and Aboh 2003 for nominals).

This paper concerns the syntax-semantics interface of nominal expressions. The main ideas are that (i) nominals have an extendable telescopic left periphery whose size is related to the feature content of the nominal expression, and that (ii) the size of these noun phrases corresponds to three types of arguments, namely the canonical types  $\langle e \rangle$  and  $\langle \langle e, t \rangle, t \rangle$  and properties functioning as arguments (McNally 1995, 1998, Van Geenhoven 1996, Dobrovie-Sorin 1997). In other terms, syntactic arguments of different types have different internal structures. The more complex the interpretation, the more complex the structure.

The analysis is based on French *un*-NPs ‘a-NPs’, which can denote speaker’s reference (Kripke 1977) (2), have a covert partitive reading (3) or have an undetermined meaning, in the sense that they denote a property and have an ‘*any*-flavour’ (4). We refer to the first type as SRefP (for speaker’s reference), to the second as QPs and to the third as PropP, for Property Phrase.

To define syntactic arguments, we refine Longobardi’s (1994) assumption that they are DPs and propose that arguments must be constituted by *at least one* layer of the nominal Vorfeld (5). What this implies for *un*-NPs is that PropPs project only the lowest projection of the nominal Vorfeld, that QPs project PropP and QP and that SRefPs project PropP, QP and SRefP (6). The interpretation of *un*-NPs thus primarily results from the piling up of different layers, i.e. from different internal structures, and not from their position in the sentence, contrary to what is often proposed for indefinites in the literature (Diesing 1992 for example).

The analysis extends to *du/des*-NPs ‘of.the-NPs’ in French, which are traditionally considered as existential or partitive (Bosveld 1998). What this suggests is that existential *du/des*-NPs can be of two kinds, PropPs (7) or SRefPs (8), whereas partitive *du/des*-NPs are QPs (9). In other words, *du/des*-NPs can be of any of the three types of arguments postulated. Further consequences concern the structure of partitive noun phrases in general. As the quantificational reading of partitive *du/des*-NPs is due to the projection of the QP layer – and not to the presence of a partitive PP – it predicts that not all partitive noun phrases are quantificational. This is supported by examples like (10). In (10)a, *deux des professeurs du département* ‘two of.the professors of the department’ can mean any two professors of the department, i.e. it is a PropP. In (10)b, *deux des filles* ‘two of.the girls’ refers to two specific girls, i.e. it is a SRefP. This means that the partitive PP can be attested with any of the three types of arguments.

If the analysis presented here is on the right track, it has broader theoretical consequences, related for example to what is/is not in the syntax. Indeed, whether *un chien* ‘a dog’ in (2) and (4) is referential or not has an impact on the syntax, more precisely on their distribution and their scope properties. For example, the undetermined reading illustrated in (4), i.e. PropPs, are excluded from negative contexts. In (11), *un fantôme* ‘a phantom’ and *un livre* ‘a book’ must encode Speaker’s reference to be grammatical. Such evidence supports the idea that the syntax manipulates features and not words/lexemes, and therefore the fact that syntactic trees become more and more complex. It also suggests that the semantics of predicates has to be refined (Dobrovie-Sorin and Beyssade to appear).

