

# NPs and DPs

EGG 2021 — Introduction to Syntax

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## 1 So far ...

### *Yesterday's class*

Yesterday we looked at binding and c-command

- Binding conditions are generalisations about coreference of nominals
- Principle A: Anaphors must be bound in their domain.
- Principle B: Pronouns must be free in their domain.
- Principle C: R-expressions must be free.
- C-command is a useful tool to capture structural relations!



Today, we'll look at the structure of noun phrases.

## 2 The structure of noun phrases

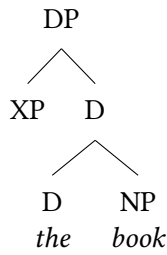
### *Noun phrases or determiner phrases*

So far, I've (mostly) represented noun phrases with the label 'NP'

- More commonly, however, nominals are called **DP** — 'determiner phrase'
- The structure of a phrase like *the book* looks as in (1)

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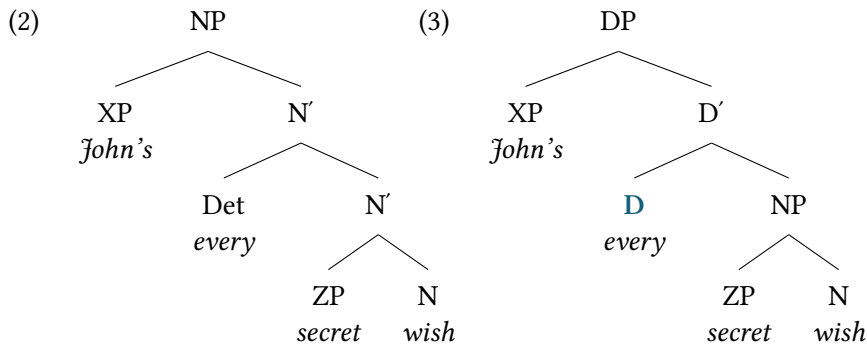
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(1) *the book*

- In (1), the determiner (D) is *the*
  - It is the **head** of the DP, takes NP as its complement
  - Other Ds are: *these, those, a, ...*
  - These are in **complementary distribution**
- *\*these the books, \*the a book*
- Today, we'll look at some of the evidence and controversy surrounding this idea

### Arguments for DPs: phrase structure

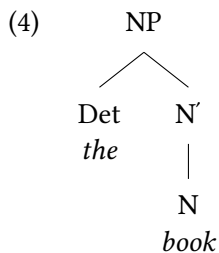
One argument for DP has been that additional structure is necessary

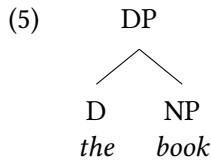


- The problem with (2) used to be that phrases can have only one specifier (cf. Salzmann 2020)

Carnie (2013: 208) mentions another phrase structural argument

- In X-bar-theory, everything other than the head of XP must be phrasal





These arguments are **theory-internal** arguments. They are based on theoretical aspects of X-bar theory. This means that if we don't use X-bar theory (any more), we can question the their validity.

### Arguments for DP: possessors and possessive agreement

Hungarian possessives show agreement, have several positions for possessors

- Possessors can appear in the **nominative** or **dative**
- They control **agreement** in person and number on the possessed noun

(6) Hungarian

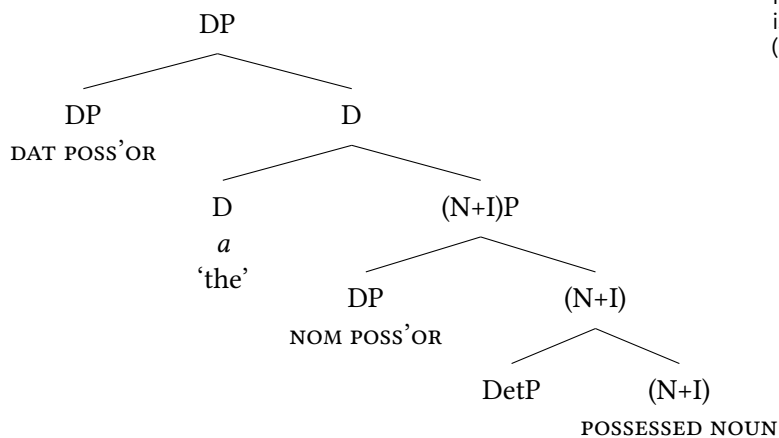
*Mari*            (\*a)  
 Mari.NOM      the  
*bicikli-je*  
 bicycle-3SG.POSS  
 'Mari's bicycle'

(7) Hungarian

*Mari-nak*      \*(a)  
 Mari-DAT      the  
*bicikli-je*  
 bicycle-3SG.POSS  
 'Mari's bicycle'

- There seems to be a **parallels** to the clause!
- Different 'subject' position
- Agreement with a functional head?

(8) Possessive phrases in Hungarian (Szabolcsi 1994)



There are many other versions of Hungarian DP structure. Éva Dékány is probably the expert on this topic (Dékány 2011, 2015, 2021).

### Arguments for DP: constituency

Adger (2003: 247) shows that determiners combine with constituents

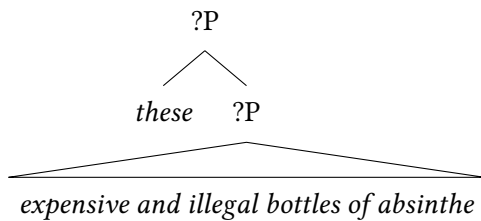
(9) Adger (2003: 247)

- a. These **expensive and illegal bottles of absinthe** are ...
- b. These **ones** are ...

→ So D combines with a **constituent**

? But does this tell us **where** D is in the structure?

(10) Adger (2003: 247)



### Interim summary

We just saw a couple of arguments that noun phrases can be relatively complex

- There need positions for determiners (*the, these, ...*)
- And (several) positions for possessors
- There is agreement inside the noun phrase, too: functional categories?

But the question remains — how is this to be represented?

?

Can we identify the **head** of the whole noun phrase? What do you think? Is the head the noun or a determiner? Do all languages have the same structure?

### Hybrid agreement in BCS (Bosnian–Croatian–Serbian)

In BCS, there is some in gender agreement with certain nouns

- Some nouns have different **natural** (semantic) and **grammatical** gender
- *vladika* 'bishop' is grammatically feminine, but its natural gender is masculine
- In certain structures, agreement can reflect either gender

(11) BCS (Puškar 2018: 304)

*On-e vladik-e su me juče posetil-e /*  
 those-F.PL bishop-PL are me yesterday visit.PTCP-F.PL  
*posetil-i*  
 visit-M.PL

‘Those bishops visited me yesterday.’

- Very roughly, Salzmann (2020) argues that the DP hypothesis is crucial here
- D is closer to the verb than N and can determine agreement
- Bruening (2020) shows a way of analysing hybrid agreement with NPs ...

Both Bruening (2020) and Salzmann (2020) are part of a special issue of the journal *Glossa* on the NP/DB debate. You can find all the papers here: <https://www.glossa-journal.org/issue/551/info/>

### Cross-linguistic variation in DP structure

Yesterday, we also saw that binding out of a noun phrase varies across languages

- (12) a. Mary<sub>i</sub>’s sister<sub>j</sub> likes herself<sub>\*i/j</sub>.  
 b. Mary<sub>i</sub>’s brother<sub>j</sub> likes herself<sub>\*i/\*j</sub>.

(13) Serbo-Croatian (Despić 2013: 245)

- a. \**Kusturicin<sub>i</sub> najnoviji film ga<sub>i</sub> je zaista razočarao.*  
 Kusturica’s latest film him is really disappointed  
 ‘Kusturica<sub>i</sub>’s latest film really disappointed him<sub>i</sub>.’
- b. \**Njegov<sub>i</sub> najnoviji film je zaista razočarao*  
 his latest film him is really  
*Kusturicu<sub>i</sub>.*  
 disappointed  
 ‘His<sub>i</sub>’s latest film really disappointed Kusturica<sub>i</sub>.’

- In (12), *Mary* does not c-command *herself* because it is in a DP
- Despić (2013) argues that *Kusturicin* and *Njegov* do c-command out of NP in BCS

### Where does this leave us?

There are both theory-internal and empirical arguments for DP/NP

- Arguments based on X-bar theory are not very strong (any more)
- Functional categories in the noun phrase: AGR, several positions for possessors

- Constituency tests show that determiners combine with a nominal constituent
- Empirical arguments can come from hybrid agreement, possessive structures, ...

#### DP or NP?

It is an open question how noun phrases are to be represented. Theory-internal arguments depend very much on current assumptions. To some degree, the same is true for empirical arguments (just have a look at Bruening 2020, Salzmann 2020 on hybrid agreement). One possibility is that **languages differ** in whether they have DPs or NPs. This has been explored by Željko Bošković in particular (see e.g. Bošković 2008, 2009, Bošković & Şener 2014).

### 3 Summary

#### *Summary and conclusions*

There is no consensus on how to represent noun phrases at the moment

- Up until the mid-1980s, everyone used NPs
- Abney (1987) argued at length for the **DP hypothesis**
- It's been widely adopted and is introduced in many textbooks
- But there is renewed debate about whether it is accurate or not ...



Today was based on parts of Adger (2003: Ch. 7), Salzmann (2020) and Bruening (2020).



Tomorrow, we'll look at movement or discuss your questions!

#### Abbreviations

3 = third person, AGR = agreement, BCS = Bosnian–Croatian–Serbian, DAT = dative, F = feminine, M = masculine, NOM = nominative, PL = plural, POSS = possessive, PTCP = participle, SG = singular.

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