

November 19, 2004

CLASS 20: THE STRUCTURE OF NOMINALS

NP = DP

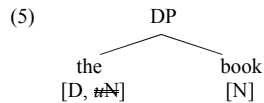
As alluded to in previous classes and handouts, **NPs are better thought of as DPs**:

- (1) a. **the / a / this / that / every / some / each** book (about syntax (with a blue cover))
- b. **the / these / those / many / most / all** books (about syntax (with a blue cover))
- c. * book (about syntax) **the / a / this / that / every / some / each** (about syntax)

In English the order in nominals is D > N, not N > D. From a typological perspective, English is **head-initial**: the head merges with a complement to its right. We haven't addressed **linear order** appropriately yet, and there are many open issues; but just consider V^N, v^V, T^v etc. So quite possibly, the same goes on in nominals: instead of determiners being specifiers of N (SpecNP), take **D to be the selecting head** and N/NP its complement (or **argument**):

- (2) [DP (Spec) D [NP ... N ...]]
- (3) a. **the** book — **the** books
- b. **a** book — **Ø** books
- (4) a. **Books** are on the table.
- b. * **Book** is on the table.

We can think of D as playing the same role that V plays: **D c-selects the nominal (N/NP)**.



The **agreement facts** within DP can then be captured analogously to the clausal domain:

- (6) a. a / the / this / each book
 - b. a / the / this / each... book
- Below (6) a: [D, uN, uNUM:] [N, SG]
 Below (6) b: [D, #N, #NUM: SG] [N, SG]

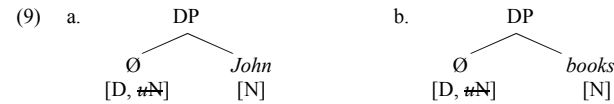
In fact, the DP-analysis captures quite a number of **interesting observations** about nominals:

- there seems to be an **agreement relationship** between D and N in terms of number ([NUM])
- Ds may occur on **either side** of their related Ns in different languages (head-complement)
- Ds (may) combine with a **complex constituent** (rather than just N, a fully complex NP)
- the **semantics of D** is related to familiarity, quantification, proximity (rather than θ-roles)
- English Ds occur in **complementary distribution** (articles, demonstratives, quantifiers...)

If the DP-analysis is on the right track, all **c-selectional features [N] will be changed to [D]**:

- (7) a. *appear, fall, sleep* ... [V, uD]
- b. *eat, like, kiss, play* ... [V, uD]
- c. *give, send, receive* ... [V, uP, uD]
- (8) a. v[uD...]
- b. T[uD*...]

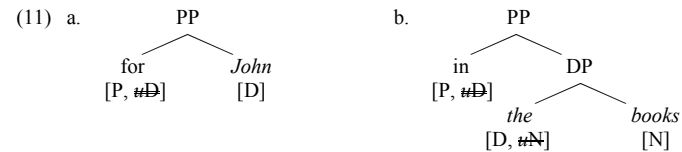
What about nominal arguments that are **bare nouns** or **proper names**...?



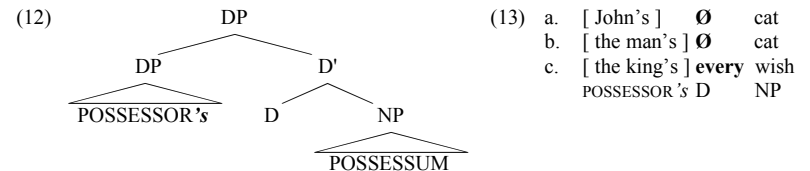
This way, even bare nouns like *books* or proper names like *John* **bear a D-feature**. Let's assume that this is the case—but continue employing a simple, non-branching representation:

- (10) a. *John* [D]
- b. *books* [D]

Analogously to selection by verbs, **prepositions also select for DPs** (exclusively). Let's represent this relation in the same way, with **P bearing an uninterpretable D-feature**:



For simplicity, let's thus just remain **agnostic about the exact nature of the D/N-feature**. What's more interesting and relevant is that we can get a handle on **possessive structures** — without going into more details on the **syntax of possession**, we'll work with this structure:



Something like the **clausal DP-hypothesis** could expand this approach further. Building on the observation that the nominal layer mirrors many of the properties found in the clausal layer (thematic relations/argument structure, agreement relations, and more), analogies could be extended further: v >> V = n >> N, **phi-features** within DP etc. (which we won't do here).