SPECIFICITY, DEFINITENESS, AND MODIFICATION

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Abstract: This paper focuses on complex DPs which contain a PP modifier. The matrix D shows agreement with the embedded D with respect to specificity in such DPs. However, this happens only in some instances but not always. The paper proposes that not all nominals encode specificity in the grammar and that the instances in which agreement obtains are those in which both the matrix and the embedded D encode specificity as a morpho-syntactic feature. The agreement relation within modified DPs in such cases is thus a consequence of syntactic Agree. With all the other instances the specificity of the DP is decided at a semantic/pragmatic level, and depends on contextual factors, as well as on the epistemic state of the speaker. The two DPs are independent from each other with respect to how their specificity is computed and no agreement relation is expected to hold between the two.

Keywords: specificity, definiteness, modification, prepositions, Agree

1. Introduction

This paper intends to contribute to a better understanding of the notion of specificity. Traditionally, specificity is assumed to be a property of indefinites. However, various authors have claimed that specificity and definiteness are independent from each other (van Heusinger 2002, Ihsane and Puskas 2001, among others) and have identified a coherent semantic and pragmatic core related to specificity which cuts across the definite/indefinite distinction. In this view, specificity incorporates the intention of the speaker to indicate that an expression is referentially anchored to another object of discourse (van Heusinger 2002). In this paper I side with this latter body of literature and I ask the question of the extent to which specificity is encoded in the grammar. The empirical focus of the paper is on complex DPs which contain a PP modifier, like in (1), and (2). The contrast in (1) shows an interesting pattern of agreement: if both the main D and the embedded D are definite, the string is grammatical, as in (1.a) but if the main D is definite and the D within the PP is indefinite, as in (1.b), the result is considerably degraded. It thus seems that the two Ds have to agree in definiteness:

(1)   a.   *The man near the elephant* looked tired.
        b.   ??*The man near an elephant* looked tired.

In contrast, if the main DP is indefinite, there are no constraints on the D within the PP, which can be either definite or indefinite.

(2)   a.   *A man from a shelter* was talking to the reporter.
        b.   *A man from the shelter* was talking to the reporter.

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The paper will make the following claims:

(i)   the relevant feature with respect to which agreement obtains is not definiteness, but specificity.

(ii)   specificity and definiteness are independent from each other (von Heusinger 2002, Ihsane and Puskas 2001, among others) and the notion of specificity does not always have a morpho-syntactic correlate.

(iii)   specificity is a morpho-syntactic feature of prepositions, and of definite Ds. Thus, definite DPs that contain PPs and in DPs that are objects of Ps will encode specificity as a morpho-syntactic feature, but for all other DPs specificity is a semantic/pragmatic notion that depends on contextual factors and/or on the epistemic state of the speaker.

(iv)   agreement in specificity will obtain within a DP whenever both the matrix D and the embedded DP encode specificity in the syntax and the two [spec] features enter syntactic Agree. On the other hand, if the two nominal domains get their specific/non-specific interpretation via independent mechanisms (one by virtue of bearing a morpho syntactic [spec] feature and one via semantic/pragmatic inferences), no agreement is expected to obtain.

The structure of the paper is as follows: in section 1, I discuss evidence that the exact feature involved in the agreement relation observed in (1) is not definiteness but specificity; in section 2, I introduce the theoretical ingredients of the proposal; section 3 shows an implementation of the analysis, and section 4 presents the conclusions.

2. The agreement feature

Let us start by observing more contrasting examples like the ones in (1), which seem to suggest that there is an agreement relation between the matrix D and the embedded DP. Such instances can be observed both in English and in Romanian.

(3)   a.   The chalet up the mountain is about to collapse.
       b.   ??The chalet up a mountain is about to collapse.
(4)   a.   [Statuia   din   parcul   municipal] stă   să cadă.
                 statue-DEF from park-DEF municipal stands to fall
                 'The statue from the municipal park is about to collapse.'
       b.   ??[Statuia   dintr-un parc   municipal] stă   să cadă.
                    statue-DEF from a park municipal stands to fall
                 '??The statue from a municipal park is about to collapse.'

Notice that in the examples above the main DP is definite. In contrast, if the main DP is indefinite, there are no constraints on the embedded D, which can be either definite or indefinite. Again, this kind of variability with indefinites can be noticed both in English and in Romanian.

(5)   a.   a book from a library
       b.   a book from the library

(6)   a.   [O statuie din parcul   municipal] stă   să cadă.
                 a statue from park-DEF municipal stands to fall
                 'A statue from the municipal park is about to collapse.'
        b.   [O statuie dintr- un parc municipal] stă   să cadă.
                 a statue from a park municipal stands to fall
                 'A statue from a municipal park is about to collapse.'

2.1 Agreement in definiteness?

What the examples above seem to suggest is that an agreement relation with respect to definiteness seems to obtain between the matrix D and the embedded DP if the main D is definite, but not if the main D is indefinite.

On closer inspection, however, it seems to be possible sometimes to have an indefinite determiner embedded under a definite D.

(7)   a.   *The area under the sink* was dirty.
        b.   *The area under a sink* must be kept clean.
(8)   a.   [Geamurile   din şcoala   noastră] sunt murdare.
                 windows-DEF from school-DEF our   are dirty
                 'The windows in our school are dirty.'
        b.   [Geamurile   dintr- o şcoală] trebuie spălate.
                 windows-DEF from a school must   washed
                 'The windows in a school must be washed.'

This indicates that the relevant feature with respect to which the two Ds enter agreement is not definiteness but something else.

2.2 Specificity

I propose that the agreement relation between the main D and the embedded DP is with respect to specificity, rather than definiteness.

I will follow van Heusinger (2002), Partee (1972), among others in assuming that specificity and definiteness are independent properties: while definiteness expresses familiarity (the discourse referent associated with the definite DP must be in the domain of discourse prior to the utterance of the DP), a specific DP indicates that it is "referentially anchored" to another discourse object (van Heusinger 2002). Unlike a definite DP, which is linked to a previously introduced discourse object in the sense that its referent must be identical to this already existing discourse referent, specificity involves a weaker link to a previously established referent, that of being a subset of, or standing in some recoverable relation to a familiar object.

According to Partee (1972), specificity distinctions can be traced back to the distinction between referential readings and attributive readings of DPs proposed by Donellan (1966). The subject DP in (9) is ambiguous between an attributive reading and a referential one:

(9)   The murderer of Smith is insane.

<div align="right">(Donellan 1966)</div>

Under an attributive reading, Smith's murderer, whoever might turn out to fit that description, is insane. Under a referential reading, the speaker states something about a particular individual, namely that he is insane. Partee (1972) equates the attributive-referential distinction discussed by Donellan (1966) with the specificity distinctions usually made in the domain of indefinites.

(10)   John would like to marry a girl his parents don't approve of.

<div align="right">(Partee 1972: 416)</div>

Under a specific reading, similar to Donellan's (1966) referential use, John has a particular girl in mind and the fact that his parents don't approve of her is descriptive information about that girl. Under a non-specific reading, equated with Donellan's (1966) attributive use, no particular girl is meant. Under a non-specific/attributive reading, the disproval of his parents is not part of the description of a particular girl that John wants to marry, but an attribute John will consider while looking for a girl to marry.

I will thus adopt a view in which specificity is a feature that cuts across the definite-indefinite distinction and propose that the agreement relation between the main D and the embedded DP in (1), (3), and (4) is with respect to specificity, rather than definiteness. In other words, both the main definite D and the embedded DP can in principle be interpreted as either specific or non-specific, but the grammatical strings are only those in which both DPs have the same value for specificity, i.e. either they are both specific or they are both non specific. This is summarized in (11).

(11)

main D	embedded D
definiteness, specific	definite, specific
definiteness, specific	*definite, non-specific
definiteness, non-specific	indefinite, non-specific
definiteness, non-specific	*indefinite, specific

Let us now apply the specific/non-specific distinction proposed above to the definite DPs that display agreement. Recall that agreement is observed only when the matrix D is definite. I will first discuss cases in which both the matrix D and the embedded DP are definite, then cases in which the matrix D is definite but the embedded DP is indefinite, and finally cases in which the matrix D is definite and the embedded DP contains a null D.

(i) definite matrix D–definite embedded DP

If the proposal above that definite DPs show agreement with respect to specificity with em-bedded DPs is on the right track, we expect certain restrictions regarding the

interpretation of these DPs. In particular, we expect only interpretations in which both the matrix D and the embedded one are specific, or both are non-specific, but not interpretations in which one of the Ds is specific and the other one non-specific. Indeed, the string in (12) for example can mean that the rule of the game is to touch whatever statue from whatever nearby park (both the matrix D and the embedded DP are non-specific), or a particular statue from a particular park (both the matrix D and the embedded DP are specific), but not a particular statue from whatever nearby park, or whatever statue from a particular park.

(12)   Regula   jocului   este să atingi [statuia   din   parcul   alăturat].
        rule-DEF of.game-DEF is   to touch   statue-DEF from park-DEF nearby
        'The rule of the game is to touch the statue in the nearby park.'

Similarly, (13) can be interpreted either as the teacher, whoever he/she might be, from whatever vocational high school, or a particular individual teacher that the speaker has in mind, from a particular, referentially anchored, vocational high school, but it cannot mean a particular teacher from whatever vocational high school, or a teacher, whoever he/she might be, from a particular vocational high school that the speaker has in mind.

(13)   profesorul   de la / din   liceul   profesional
        teacher-DEF of at / from high school-DEF vocational
        'the teacher from the vocational school'

The same agreement in specificity can be observed in the English examples involving definite DPs. The DP in italics in (14) can be interpreted as a particular bear from a particular forest (both the main D and the DP within the PP modifier are specific), or as whatever individual has the attribute of being a bear and of being from some forest, whatever that may be.

(14)   The bear in the forest might be vicious.

What (14) cannot mean is that a particular bear from any forest might be vicious or that any random bear from a particular forest might be vicious.

Before moving on to other cases, which involve a matrix definite D and an embedded indefinite D, let me discuss a context which is potentially problematic for my proposal that the matrix (definite) D and the embedded DP must agree in specificity. Such contexts include an intensional verb like to believe, to seek, to look for, to want, to wish. Such verbs interact in a special way with the referential index of a DP in their scope. The interpretation of (15) is that the subject is looking for the janitor, whoever he/she might be, and thus the definite DP is interpreted as attributive or non-specific.

(15)   Caut   portarul.
        look for.1SG janitor-DEF
        'I'm looking for the janitor.'

One way to account for the non-specific interpretation of the DP *portarul* 'the janitor' is that its referential index is bound by the intensional verb *caut* 'to look for', instead of being linked to a discourse item (van Heusinger 2002).

When the object of an intensional verb is a modified DP, we seem to get the same attributive/non-specific interpretation for this object.

(16)   Vreau   să întâlnesc [portarul   de la şcoala   fiicei   mele].
         want-1SG to meet   janitor-DEF of at school-DEF daughter-DEF my
         'I want to meet the janitor from my daughter's school.'

(16) can be paraphrased as 'I want to meet the janitor from my daughter's school, whoever he might be' and thus the definite DP *portarul de la şcoala fiicei mele*/'the janitor from my daughter's school' seems to have an attributive/non-specific reading. This seems problematic to my proposal, as it seems to indicate that the matrix DP *portarul* 'the janitor' is interpreted as non-specific, even though *şcoala fiicei mele*/ my daughter's school' is specific.

I will claim that even though the DP portarul in (15) is indeed interpreted as non-specific, the definite DP *portarul de la şcoala fiicei mele* 'the janitor from my daughter's school' in is not, and that the presence of the modifier *de la şcoala fiicei mele* 'from my daughter's school' is responsible for this difference in interpretation between the objects in (15) and (16). The type of specificity that is relevant for the interpretation of the modified DP object in (16) is that of relative specificity (van Heusinger 2002).

In order to illustrate this notion of specificity consider the example in (17), from Hintikka (1986), and discussed in van Heusinger (2002). The DP 'a certain woman' in (17) is interpreted as specific, in spite of the fact that it takes narrow scope with respect to the universal quantifier 'every' (there is a specific woman for each man).

(16)   According to Freud, every man unconsciously wants to marry a certain woman –
         his mother.

Such DPs are related to other discourse items by a contextually salient relation which links new discourse objects (women, in (17)) to familiar ones (men). Given that *a certain woman* is referentially anchored to a quantified expression (*every man*), the dependency between *a certain woman* and *every man* can be understood by using the concept of co-variation (Farkas 1997). The value of 'woman' co-varies with the value of 'men', so when the reference for 'man' is fixed as part of the process of interpreting the universal quantifier, the reference for 'woman' gets anchored to a fixed referent and is interpreted as specific.

Similarly, in (16) the referent of *portarul* 'the janitor' is interpreted relative to an already familiar discourse object, i.e. *şcoala fiicei mele* 'my daughter's school'. Given the view adopted in this paper according to which specificity involves a link to a previously established referent (either being a subset of, or standing in some recoverable relation to a familiar object), *portarul de la şcoala fiicei mele* 'the janitor from my daughter's school' in (16) will be interpreted as specific, since the referent of this expression stands in some recoverable relation to a familiar object, i.e. *şcoala fiicei mele* 'my daughter's school'.

The precise relation between the referent of *portarul de la şcoala fiicei mele* 'the janitor from my daughter's school' and the referent of *şcoala fiicei mele* 'my daughter's school' could be characterized as associative anaphora (each school is uniquely correlated with a janitor). While in most cases of associative anaphora the discourse old referent is left implicit, in cases like (16) it is explicitly expressed as the DP within the modifier. The reason why the object DP in (16) is interpreted as having wider scope than the intensional verb 'want' is that the discourse object associated with the object DP is referentially anchored to another discourse item, that is familiar (the referent of the embedded DP *şcoala fiicei mele* 'my daughter's school'), and inherits the scopal range of its anchor.

  (ii) definite matrix D –indefinite embedded DP

  The specificity agreement between the main DP and the DP within the PP modifier can also account for the examples in (7.b) and (8.b), repeated below for convenience, where we see a mismatch in definiteness between the main D and the embedded DP.

(18) *The area under a sink* must be kept clean.
(19) [Geamurile dintr-o şcoală] trebuie spălate.
    windows-DEF from-a school must washed
    'the windows in a school must be washed'

Even though the two DPs don't agree in definiteness, they do agree with respect to specificity. Thus, the DP in italics in (7b)/(18) is interpreted either as the area that is referentially anchored to a particular sink (both DPs are specific), or as the area in general under the sink in general (both DPs are non-specific). Similarly, (8b)/(19) can mean either that the windows from any school, whatever they may be, must be washed, or that the particular windows of a particular school that the speaker has in mind must be washed.

  (iii) definite matrix D–bare embedded N

  The same pattern of agreement with respect to specificity is confirmed by Romanian examples involving bare nouns after the preposition. Unlike English, Romanian objects of prepositions cannot bear the overt definite article unless they are modified.

(20) a.   sub masă
      under table
      'under the table'
   b.   *sub masa
       under table-DEF
      'under the table
   c.   sub masa albă / din colţ
      under table-DEF white / from corner
      'under the white table/the table in the corner'

The null determiner of the bare object of preposition can be either definite of indefinite, and more importantly for our discussion, either specific or non-specific. Thus, (20a) can be interpreted either as the area under a particular table, or as the area under any table. If such a PP acts as the modifier of a definite noun, as in (21), we get the same two

interpretations which are predicted to be possible under the assumption that an agreement relation with respect to specificity obtains between the main DP and the DP within the PP modifier.

(21)   ursul   din   pădure
         bear-DEF   from   forest
         'the bear in the forest'

(21) can be interpreted either as a particular bear from a particular forest (both DPs are specific) or as the bear in general from the forest in general (both DPs are non-specific), but not as a particular bear from any forest, or as any bear from a particular forest.

        I am now in a position to clarify something that I have left vague so far. Notice that the contrasts involving definite DPs, like those in (1) for instance, include a grammatical string and a string marked as unacceptable. If the discussion above is on the right track, these contrasts are actually sharper in the sense that they involve a grammatical string and an ungrammatical one. What the question mark is meant to capture in an example like for instance, repeated below, is that the (b) string is ungrammatical under non-agreeing specificity settings for the matrix DPs and the embedded DP, but grammatical otherwise.

(22)   a.   the chalet up the mountain
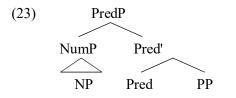   b.   ??the chalet up a mountain

Thus, the string *the chalet up a mountain* in (22b) is ungrammatical if the specificity setting for the matrix D is different from the specificity of the embedded DP, i.e. if *the chalet* is interpreted as specific, whereas *a mountain* is interpreted as non-specific. However, if both are specific or if both are non specific the string is grammatical. In fact, the same observations apply to the string in (22a). The string is grammatical only if both 'the chalet' and 'the mountain' are interpreted as specific, or both are non-specific. The reason why we chose to mark this with a question mark only in the (b) strings in examples like (1) is that definites are typically interpreted as specific, while the default interpretation of indefinites is non-specific. Thus, when two definites combine, as in the (a) strings, the default interpretation, in the absence of any contextual clues, is that both definites are specific, hence they will both agree. In contrast, when a definite combines with an indefinite, as in the (b) strings in these examples, the default specific interpretation associated with the definite clashes with the default non-specific interpretation of the indefinite, and hence agreement is violated.

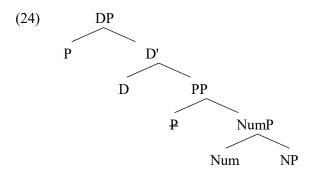## 3. Towards an analysis: Theoretical background

        This section contains a presentation of the main theoretical assumptions that are relevant for the analysis I will propose.

        First, I will assume together with Ross (1967), Jacobs and Rosenbaum (1968), Sproat and Shih (1991), Kayne (1994), Larson (1999), Alexiadou (2001), Cinque (2010), etc. that the relation of modification between the PP and the noun is one of predication,

and that the PP is the complement of the Pred head, while the nominal phrase sits in the Spec,Pred. Also, in keeping with most of the generative literature on the structure of DPs, I am assuming that the DP contains a NumP, and that the exact constituent that sits in Spec,Pred is NumP rather than NP.

(23)
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            PredP
           /    \
        NumP    Pred'
        /\      /    \
       /  \    Pred   PP
      NP
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Second, I will follow Pesetsky and Torrego (2004) in assuming that prepositions are merged DP internally in a position that is analogous to the position occupied by T within the CP. By analogy with T, which is merged lower than CP, Ps are also assumed to be merged lower than D. Similar to T, which checks C features, P agrees with D and is attracted by a [uT] feature on D.

(24)
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            DP
           /  \
          P    D'
              /  \
             D    PP
                 /  \
                P̶    NumP
                    /   \
                  Num    NP
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Pesetsky and Torrego's (2004) view on head movement is borrowed from Matushanski (2006), who proposes that head movement and phrasal movement are similar, in the sense that they both target the specifier position of the attracting head. The P head in (24) thus targets the Spec of D. According to Matushansky (2006), heads that move to the specifier of the attracting head Spec,H can further undergo morphological merger (m-merger) with H itself. This process is triggered by some attracting heads but not all. For Pesetsky and Torrego (2004) who discuss English prepositions, the movement of prepositions to the specifier of D is not followed by m-merger. I will adopt the same view for English, but for Romanian prepositions I will assume in contrast that m-merger of the preposition with D does take place.

Finally, another important set of assumptions that I will incorporate into the analysis is Pesetsky and Torrego's (2007) *theory of valuation*, which distinguishes between interpretable and uninterpretable features on the one hand, and valued and unvalued features on the other. By combining the two properties of valuation and interpretability, Pesetsky and Torrego (2007) propose a fourfold feature typology, as follows: (a) uninterpretable, valued features [uF: val]; interpretable, valued features [iF: val]; (c) uninterpretable, unvalued features [uF:]; interpretable, unvalued features [iF:].

While in Chomsky's (2000; 2001) theory, the derivation is driven by the need to delete uninterpretable features, in Pesetsky and Torrego's (2007) approach, Agree is always initiated by a head with an unvalued feature (uninterpretable or interpretable).

In what follows I will show how an analysis that relies on these theoretical assumptions can account for the data presented in section 1.

4. Implementation of the analysis

The literature is not consistent about whether specificity is a morpho-syntactic feature or not. Leonetti (2004) for instance claims that specificity is not encoded in the grammar at all, while other authors assume that specificity is a morpho-syntactic feature that plays a role in the syntactic computation. Moreover, among those who believe that specificity is a morpho-syntactic feature, some argue that this is so only in some cases. For Ihsane and Puskas (2001), for example, specificity is a morpho-syntactic feature only when it is valued as "+".

In the present proposal, specificity will be assumed to be encoded as a morpho-syntactic feature in two types of heads: definite Ds, which will be assumed to bear an uninterpretable and unvalued [spec] feature, as also proposed in Cornilescu and Nicolae (2011a, b, 2012), and Ps, which will be assumed to have an interpretable and valued [spec] feature. Moreover, not all definite Ds bear a [spec] feature in the proposal made in this paper, but only those definite Ds that select a PredP. This amounts to saying that there are two types of DPs that bear a [spec] feature in the syntax: definite DPs that contain a modifier, as well as DPs that are so-called objects of Ps.

With all the other DPs I will assume that specificity plays no role in the syntactic computation and that specific or non-specific readings arise exclusively as a consequence of contextual and pragmatic factors. There are three such factors that can lead to a specific interpretation of a DP according to Farkas (1994: 2002)
(i)   The epistemic state of the speaker: a DP is interpreted as specific if the speaker has a particular individual in mind as the referent of that DP. This is called 'epistemic specificity'. To illustrate, the DP in italics in (25) is interpreted as specific to the extent to which the speaker intends to refer to a particular student.

(25)   (You see smoke rings rising behind the woodshed)
        There is *a student of mine* smoking behind the shed.

(Farkas 1994)

(ii)   Wide scope: a DP is interpreted as specific if it is able to escape "scope islands". For example, the DP in italics in (26) has a specific interpretation when it assumes wider scope than the quantified expression 'every student of mine' and thus escapes the island indicated with square brackets.

(26)   Every colleague of mine heard [the rumour that *a student of mine* had been
        called before the dean].

(Fodor and Sag 1982)

(iii)   Partitivity: a DP is interpreted as specific if the DP denotes an arbitrary member of a familiar set (En̦c 1991). The DP in italics in (27) is interpreted as specific given its partitive relation with the set denoted by the missing students.

(27)   John found *two of the missing students*.

To these three types of specificity one can add a fourth one, relative specificity, as proposed by Hintikka (1986), Higginbotham (1987), Enç (1991) and von Heusinger (2002). As mentioned above, DPs displaying relative specificity are linked to a previously established discourse item by a contextually salient relation. In (17) for example, repeated below, the DP 'a certain woman' is interpreted as specific by virtue of it being related to a familiar discourse object; once the reference for *man* is fixed as part of the process of interpreting the quantifier 'every', the reference for *a certain woman* is simultaneously fixed by virtue of it being related to the former. The resulting interpretation is that there is a specific woman for each man.

(28)   According to Freud, every man unconsciously wants to marry a certain woman – his mother.

4.1 Simple DPs

For DPs that contain only a D and an N, I propose that specificity is not encoded in the morpho-syntax of these DPs and that a specific interpretation arises or not depending on the intentions of the speaker or on contextual factors as described above. This applies both to definite and indefinite simple DPs. Thus, any simple DP is potentially ambiguous between a specific and a non-specific interpretation, depending on whether one of the three types of specific interpretations can arise contextually or pragmatically (epistemic specificity, scopal specificity, or partitive specificity)
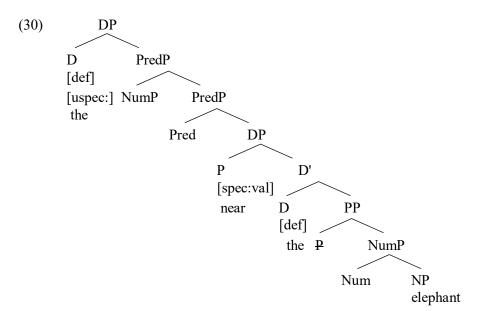
4.2 DPs with PP modifiers

Unlike simple DPs, whose specificity can be accounted for by semantic or pragmatic proper-ties, regardless of whether they are definite of indefinite, when a modifier is added, definite DPs show different properties with respect to specificity compared to indefinite ones.

4.2.1 Definite modified DPs

As illustrated in section 1, definite DPs including a PP modifier display agreement in specificity between the main D and the embedded D. When both Ds are specific or both are non specific, the string is grammatical, but when there is no agreement in specificity between the two the result is degraded.

(29)   Definite modified DPs

main D	embedded D
definite, specific	definite, specific
definite, specific	*definite, non-specific
definite, non-specific	indefinite, non-specific
definite, non-specific	*indefinite, specific

In order to account for the agreement in specificity that can be observed with definite DPs that are modified I propose the following structure:

(30)

An important observation about this structure is that definite Ds that head modified DPs select a PredP. As proposed above, this selectional feature singles out definite Ds that bear a [spec] feature and thus, in the structure above, the matrix D will bear a [spec] feature, but the embedded one will not.

Even though the D of the embedded DP does not bear a morpho-syntactic [spec] feature, the embedded DP contains another head that bears such a feature, namely P. Recall that in our view, which we adopted from Pesetsky and Torrego (2004), Ps are merged low, within the DP and then raise to the edge of D, as illustrated in (24). The embedded DP will thus be interpreted as specific or non-specific depending on the value for the [spec] feature on P. This is not surprising given the analogy proposed by Pesetsky and Torrego (2004) between P in a nominal domain and T in a clausal domain. Just as T encodes the finiteness of a clause through tense distinctions, P encodes the specificity of a nominal domain. Since the [spec] feature on the matrix D is unvalued, the matrix D will probe for a matching feature and will find the one on P. The value of the [spec] feature on
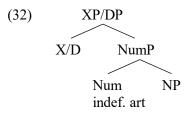
P will thus be shared by the matrix D. Crucially, both the matrix D and the embedded DP have the same source for the value of their [spec] feature, namely P. P values the [spec] feature of the matrix D and is at the same time the head that encodes the specificity of the embedded DP. This explains why in the cases summarized in table (29) there must be agreement with respect to specificity between the matrix D and the embedded D. The structure in (30) includes an embedded DP that is definite, but the same analysis can be extended to cases in which the embedded DP is indefinite. In both cases, the specificity of the embedded DP will be determined by the value of the [spec] feature on P and a syntactic Agree relation will obtain between the unvalued [spec] feature on the matrix D and the valued [spec] feature on P.

4.2.2   Indefinite modified DPs

Let us now consider indefinite DPs that contain a PP modifier. Recall that these DPs show no restriction with respect to the specificity of the matrix nominal or the embedded one, as summarized in table (31).
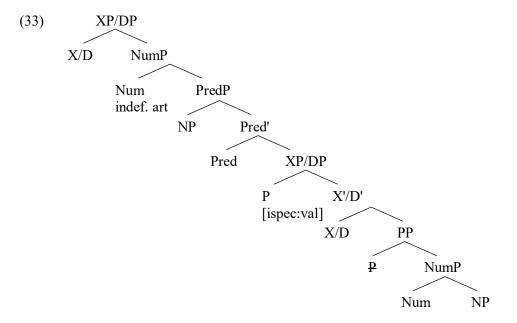
(31)

Indefinite modified DPs	
main D	embedded D
indefinite, specific	definite, specific
indefinite, specific	definite, non-specific
indefinite, non-specific	indefinite, non-specific
indefinite, non-specific	indefinite, specific

I will follow Ihsane (2008), Zamparelli (2000), Dobrovie Sorin et al. (2006), Tănase-Dogaru (2009), among others, in assuming that indefinite determiners are merged in the head of the NumP, rather than in the head of the DP. I will leave the question of whether indefinite determiners further raise to a higher head (as proposed by Dobrovie Sorin et al. (2006), or Ihsane (2008), for example) open, and I will label this higher projection to which the indefinite determiner might raise as XP. In Ihsane's (2008) view this XP might be a PropP, for indefinites that denote properties, a QP, for indefinites that are quantificational, or an SRefP, for indefinites that are referential according to the speaker.

(32)   XP/DP
             /\
         X/D   NumP
                 /\
             Num   NP
          indef. art

We could thus capture the fact that indefinites never encode specificity morpho-syntactically by positing that D heads can bear such a feature, but not Num heads cannot.

The structure of a modified indefinite DP will thus be as in (33):

(33)
```
                    XP/DP
                   /     \
                 X/D      NumP
                         /    \
                       Num     PredP
                    indef. art /    \
                              NP    Pred'
                                   /    \
                                 Pred   XP/DP
                                       /     \
                                      P      X'/D'
                                   [ispec:val] /  \
                                             X/D   PP
                                                  /  \
                                                 P̶   NumP
                                                    /    \
                                                  Num     NP
```

Depending on whether the embedded nominal is definite or indefinite, the respective article will be merged in the D head or the Num head. In both cases though, the embedded nominal will have its specificity determined by the [spec] feature on P. The matrix nominal phrase on the other hand contains no [spec] as a morpho-syntactic feature and therefore its interpretation with respect to specificity will be determined on the basis of contextual factors or of the epistemic state of the speaker. The result is that there are two different mechanisms that determine the specificity of the embedded nominal vs the matrix one (one is the result of a morpho-syntactic feature on P, and the other one is semantic/pragmatic) and the two nominal domains are independent from each other from the point of view of specificity. Hence, all combinations are predicted to be possible, and indeed they are, as shown in table (31).

5. Conclusions

In this paper an agreement pattern was identified within DPs that contain PP modifiers: with definite DPs the matrix D and the embedded one must agree with respect to specificity, while with indefinite nominals, no specificity restrictions can be observed. I proposed that the asymmetry between definites and indefinites is the outcome of the fact that not all nominals encode specificity as a morpho-syntactic feature. In particular, I proposed that specificity is a morpho-syntactic feature only with two types of heads: Ps and definite Ds. Given our view on prepositions as heads that are merged within the DP and then move to the edge of the DP, which we have adopted from Pesetsky and Torrego (2004), PP modifiers always encode specificity as a morpho-syntactic feature. On the other hand, not all definite Ds bear a [spec] feature in our view, but only those that select a PredP.

With modified definite DPs therefore [spec] is a feature of both the matrix D and the embedded nominal (which inherits it from the P). The agreement relation within modified definite DPs is thus a consequence of syntactic Agree. In order to account for the lack of agreement within indefinites, I proposed that the indefinite determiner is merged in a different position than the definite one, i.e. in the head of the Number phrase, and that Num heads do not bear a [spec] feature in the syntax. The specificity of indefinites is instead decided at a semantic and pragmatic level, and depends on contextual factors, as well as on the epistemic state of the speaker. The PP modifier within an indefinite will thus encode specificity in the syntax, as a feature on P, while the specificity of the main indefinite nominal will be computed semantically. The two nominals are independent from each other with respect to how their specificity is interpreted and hence no agreement relation is expected to hold between the two.

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