ARGUMENTAL REMNANTS WITH NOMINAL ELLIPSIS?

ALEXANDRA CORNILESCU
University of Bucharest
ALEXANDRU NICOLAE
„Iorgu Iordan − Al. Rosetti" Institute of Linguistics, Bucharest
University of Bucharest

1. Introduction

1.1. *Aim*

This squib starts from the following empirical problem related to nominal ellipsis. A classical claim of the literature on nominal ellipsis (Lobeck 1995, 2005[1], Sleeman 1996[2], Llombart-Huesca 2003[3], Ticio 2010[4] among many) is that nominal ellipsis affects the whole NP constituent, so that no argument of the nominal head can be left behind. Here are some examples from the languages studies:

(1) a. **I talked with these students of physics and with* ***these of chemistry****.*
b. **The destruction of Rome was as cruel as* ***the one of Cartage****.*

[1] "Ellipsis must also include N and its complements" (Lobeck 2005: 153).

[2] Without providing ungrammatical examples, Sleeman (1996: 30–31) claims that the gap in nominal ellipsis should be a maximal projection, and thus complements of the head noun should get deleted along with the head. However, she provides grammatical examples with argumental remnants, and does away with them by claiming that they are not bona fide arguments. "A possible counterargument to the claim that in noun ellipsis constructions the gap is a maximal projection is that for example in (67) the complement PP seems to be dominated by N', because it is a complement of the empty head of the NP. Therefore it seems that the gap is not maximal here:

(67) *Ce fut le premier bombardement de la partie sud de la ville, mais déjà* ***le troisieme [] de la partie nord****.*
'It was the first the first bombardment of the southern part of the city, but already the third of the northern part.'

In my opinion this is only an apparent counterexample. In recent literature (e.g. Grimshaw 1990) it is proposed that only a certain type of noun (complex event nominal) has syntactic arguments, i.e. arguments dominated by N'." (Sleeman 1996: 31)

[3] "Another important property of NP-ellipsis is that it must apply to the entire NP and, therefore, the complement of the noun cannot be left out of the elision" (Llombart-Huesca 2002: 64).

[4] Ticio (2010) makes a similar claim, but, at the same time, acknowledges that examples like (i) look as if the remnant nominal is an argument.

(i) *Compramos varios libros de matemáticas y* ***alguno*** **[e]** **[*de física*]**$_{\text{obj}}$ (Ticio 2010: 180)
(we)bought several books of mathematics and some of physics

To account for the many cases of this type, she invokes a 'stylistic operation' (Ticio 2010: 182) which would move the argument out of the NP to some adjunct position above the ellipsis site. The disadvantage of Ticio's operation is that is does not apply when the head noun is overt: "[n]ote that I assume that stylistic rules do not follow the locality constraints stated for overt syntax" (Ticio 2010: 182).

BDD-V887 © 2012 Editura Universității din București
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.31 (2026-11-22 23:56:40 UTC)

c. **I met the student of physics, but I didn't meet the one of chemistry.*
(English, apud Llombart-Huesca 2002: 64–65)

d. **Although* [NP *Max's* [[N' e] *about Sue*]] *was amazing, Bill's story about her was virtually incredible*.
(English, apud Lobeck 2005: 153)

e. **Compramos tus libros sobre Chomsky y tú compraste mis* [] *de Postal.*
(we)bought your books about Chomsky and you bought my [] of Postal
(Spanish, apud Ticio, 2010: 198)

Surprisingly, all counterparts of the above examples are grammatical in Romanian, although it is not clear whether the exact counterparts of these structures contain arguments of the noun in Romanian:

(2) a. *Am vorbit cu aceşti studenţi de la fizică şi cu* ***aceia de la chimie****.*
b. *Distrugerea Romei a fost la fel de nemiloasă precum* ***cea a Cartaginei****.*
c. *L-am cunoscut pe studentul de la fizică, dar nu l-am cunoscut pe* ***cel de la chimie****.*
d. *Povestea Mariei despre Vasile a fost incredibilă, iar* ***cea a Ioanei despre Gheorghe*** *a fost la fel de interesantă.*
e. *Am cumpărat cărţile tale despre Chomsky, iar tu ai cumpărat-o* ***pe a mea despre Postal.***

There are, however, numerous clear cases in which what gets deleted is a head noun with argument structure, and what survives is an argument remnant. As can be seen in (3), the head noun can be omitted with its arguments being pronounced: in (3a), it is the argument of an unaccusative deverbal noun which survives as a remnant; in (3b), the object of a transitive deverbal noun as well as the *de către* by-phrase surface as remnants; similarly, the deadjectival noun *solidaritate* 'solidarity' preserves both its arguments under ellipsis (3c):

(3) a. *Plecarea lui Ion m-a întristat,*
departure.DEF GEN John CL.ACC.1SG=has sadden
însă ***cea a lui Vasile*** *m-a bucurat*
but *CEL* GEN Vasile CL.ACC.1SG=has gladden
'John's departure made me sad, but Vasile's departure made me happy.'

b. *Citirea legii de către Iliescu a fost solemnă*;
reading.DEF law.DEF.GEN by Iliescu has been solemn
cea a amendamentului de către Vadim *nu a fost înălţătoare*.
CEL GEN amendment.GEN by Vadim not has been uplifting
'The reading of the law by Iliescu was solemn; the reading of the amendment by Vadim was not uplifting.'

c. *Solidaritatea studenţilor cu profesorii este impresionantă.*
solidarity.DEF students.DEF.GEN with teachers.DEF is impressive
În schimb, ***aceea a avocaţilor*** ***cu*** ***infractorii***
by contrast that GEN lawyers.DEF.GEN with criminals.DEF
e uneori dubioasă
is sometimes fishy
'The solidarity of students with teachers is impressive. By contrast, the (solidarity) of lawyers with criminals is sometimes fishy.'

BDD-V887 © 2012 Editura Universității din București
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.31 (2026-11-22 23:56:40 UTC)

The determiner that heads the ellipsis-DP plays no part in determining acceptability: it may be either definite (3) or indefinite (4), even if definite constructions are predicted to be more frequent (see Grimshaw 1990):

(4) *o încercare* *de fraudă şi* ***una de încetare a*** ***neregulii***
an attempting of fraud and one of stopping GEN disorder.GEN
'an attempt of fraud and an attempt to stopping this disorder'

For reasons of space, in the present squib we will only consider instances of ellipsis headed by a definite determiner, more precisely, by the adjectival article *cel* ('the').

1.2. *Preliminary remarks*

In previous work (Cornilescu, Nicolae 2010a, 2010b, 2012), we have put forth a Topic-based PF-deletion account of nominal ellipsis (henceforward, NomE) in Romanian, providing evidence for the following claims:

(i) The syntax of DPs headed by elided nouns *systematically differs from that of full DPs* in as much as ellipsis presupposes the activation of DP-left periphery projections. Thus, ellipsis is a "periphery construction"[1] involving the valuation of pragmatic (P-)features.

(ii) Ellipsis is a *discourse anaphora phenomenon*, relating the *ellipsis site* to *an antecedent* in the discourse, with the two of them sharing a *common topic* (see also López 2000). From a morphosyntactic perspective, anaphoricity is linked to *definiteness*, and there is substantial evidence that, at least in Romanian, NomE is a unitary phenomenon and that the ellipsis site is always licensed by a *covert definite determiner*. The covert definite determiner is a manifestation of the anaphoric tie linking the ellipsis site and the antecedent. The claim that ellipsis site are definite descriptions, i.e. *what is elided is a definite DP*, has also been argued for by Elbourne (2008), from an entirely semantic perspective.

(iii) The pragmatic features essential in the interpretation of ellipsis in our account are [anaphoric] (=[a]) and [contrast] (=[c]), borrowed from López (2009), which trigger particular syntactic operations, in addition to signalling specific interface effects. *Anaphoricity* requires establishing a suitable syntactic/semantic relation with an antecedent. *Contrastivity* is a feature assigned to any constituent that opens up a domain of quantification (in the sense of alternative semantics, cf. Rooth 1985, Bűhring 2003), and it entails Focus Fronting (i.e., movement to Focus in the terminology adopted by Merchant, 2001), an operation which will be motivated on syntactic grounds. Recourse to notions like Topic and Focus is in line with the analysis of ellipsis as a periphery construction.

(iv) It follows from (i) to (iii) that ellipsis (which in our account is conceived of as PF-deletion) is induced by the *feature composition of the ellipsis site*, and should thus be obligatory when the appropriate feature composition obtains. The ellipsis site is marked as anaphoric [+a], as a consequence of the relation with the antecedent which the surface gap signals, and, as already mentioned, the elided DP is definite for the same reason. The feature specification of the elided constituent is therefore [+def, +a]. While [+a] is a P-feature (as well as [+c]), cyclically valued at the periphery of each phase if López (2009) is right, definiteness is a morphosyntactic feature with an important role in the narrow syntax of DPs. In the case of DPs, anaphoricity depends on definiteness, in the sense that only a [+def] D may assign the

[1] The notion *periphery* is used in the sense of Rizzi (1997): a *periphery construction* is one in which left peripheral projections are active/activated.

BDD-V887 © 2012 Editura Universităţii din Bucureşti
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.31 (2026-11-22 23:56:40 UTC)

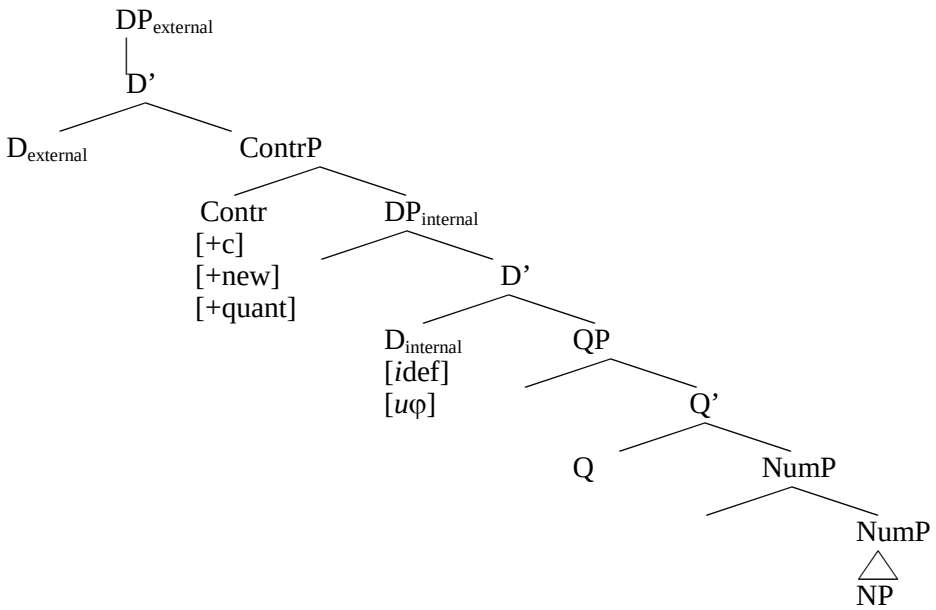
[+a] feature to its complement. The essential aspect of the syntax of nominal ellipsis in our analysis is the valuation of the definiteness feature of the D-head in the ellipsis site.

(v) The comparison of the ellipsis-DP with the antecedent must also lead to the identification of a *remnant*, that is, a (presumably) non-identical part, a constituent which supplies new information contrasting with the antecedent, and which is thus interpreted as a contrastive focus [+c]. In our interpretation [+c] is a quantificational periphery feature, which always triggers occurrence of the contrastively focused constituent at the left periphery of the DP. The remnant either merges at the periphery (by Focus Merge) or moves to the higher contrastive focus position leaving the ellipsis site behind. This movement to check [+c] is known as Focus Fronting (see Merchant, 2001).

2. The architecture of the DP

Since in our analysis ellipsis-DPs involve merger or movement of the remnant in a Focus position above the determiner, ellipsis-DPs (i.e. DPs containing ellipsis sites) should be viewed as periphery or *edge constructions*. In agreement with Chomsky (2009), we accept that one property shared by phases (at least CP, *v*P, and DP) is that they have peripheries, i.e. syntactic positions devoted to the valuation of P-features. Like Butler (2004) and López (2009), we assume that periphery projections are all quantificational and/or modal. Adopting a split-D hypothesis (Aboh 2004, Giusti 2005, Laenzlinger 2005, Cornilescu, Nicolae 2011a), the **DP-periphery** is the space between a lower (*internal*) agreement Determiner, and a higher (*external*) deixis Determiner. Building on Rizzi (1997), Ihsane and Puskás (2001) correctly assume the existence of the following functional projections between the two D positions: $D_{external}$ > TopP > FocP > $D_{internal}$ …, stressing the CP/DP analogy. Our assumptions are minimally different; the P-features opted for are, as announced, [+a] and [+c] (cf. López 2009), of which only [+c] entails movement or merger at the left periphery. Thus, for the limited purpose of this analysis, we simply assume the existence of one nominal periphery projection, a contrastive *focus* phrase, specified as [+c, +quant, +new], in the space between the two D positions, as illustrated in (5), below:

(5)



BDD-V887 © 2012 Editura Universității din București
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.31 (2026-11-22 23:56:40 UTC)

Since we are only interested in ellipsis with argumental remnants, irrespective of the determiner (definite or indefinite) which precedes the remnant arguments (see (3) and (4)), for the sake of brevity we will only consider definite DP ellipsis with remnant arguments introduced by the adjectival article[1] *cel* ('the').

We start by illustrating the derivation of an overt structure with *cel* (section **3.2**), then turn to the derivation of elliptical structures with adjectival remnants preceded by *cel* (section **3.3**), extending the discussion of arguments as remnants (section **4**).

3. Nominal ellipsis in definite DPs: ellipsis with lexical remnants

3.1. *Ellipsis is based on double definite structures*

We have claimed that ellipsis is uniformly licensed by a covert definite article (see section **1.2**, especially claims (ii) and (iv)), so that the elided constituent is in fact a definite DP. Romanian provides direct empirical evidence for this claim, since all instances of definite DP-ellipsis are paralleled by double definite constructions. We will mention for illustration ellipsis headed by *cel* (6), by the demonstratives *acesta / acela* (7), and the definite quantifier *toţi* 'all' (8).

(6) a. *om**ul*** *cel bun*
man.DEF *CEL* good
'the good man'
b. *cel bun*
CEL good
'the good one'

(7) a. *om**ul*** *acesta / acela bun*
man.DEF this / that good
'this / that good man'
b. *acesta / acela bun*
this / that good
'this / that good one'

(8) a. *toate fete**le***
all girls.DEF
'all the girls'
b. *toate*
all
'all'

In all of these examples, the elided constituent bears the suffixal definite article, highlighted in the examples. Given these facts, a natural assumption is that the underlying structure of the DPs in (6)–(8) is as shown above in (5), with the suffixed definite article holding the lower ($D_{internal}$) position. It is the valuation of the definiteness feature of this article which ensures the insertion of the anaphoricity feature, and then the ellipsis of the anaphoric lower DP. The remnant, which is contrastive, moves out of the ellipsis site to occupy a position

[1] Traditional Romanian grammars (GLR, 1966, I: 107–108) label postnominal *cel* the "adjectival article" since it is frequently used in front of adjectives.

BDD-V887 © 2012 Editura Universității din București
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.31 (2026-11-22 23:56:40 UTC)

above the lower D, and below the higher definite D, which is inserted as a means of typing the phrase.

Since in the remainder of the paper we only refer to ellipsis headed by *cel*, it is appropriate to specify that ellipsis *cel* is the same as the adjectival article *cel* (cf. (6) above) in that both select focused lexical phrases (APs, PPs) (9)-(10) alongside of focused lexical quantifiers (11), as in the following examples.

(9) a. *flori**le*** (*cele*) *galbene*
flowers.DEF *CEL* yellow
'yellow flowers'
b. *cele galbene*
CEL yellow
'the yellow ones'
c. **galbene**le***[1]
yellow.DEF

(10) a. *cărţi**le*** (*cele*) *de pe masă*
books.DEF *CEL* DE on table
'the books on the table'
b. *cele de pe masă*
CEL DE on table
'the ones on the table'

(11) a. *elevi**i*** *cei doi din primul rând*
pupils.DEF *CEL* two in first.DEF row
'the two pupils in the first row'
b. *cei doi din primul rând*
CEL two in first.DEF row
'the two ones in the first row

The distribution of ellipsis *cel* and of the adjectival article *cel* sharply contrasts with that of the freestanding definite article *cel* (12), which selects lexical quantifiers, and is in complementary distribution with the suffixal definite article (cf. (12) vs. (13)/(14)), occupying the lower position ($D_{internal}$) in (5), as opposed to the adjectival article *cel* and to ellipsis *cel*, which occupy the higher D-position (i.e. $D_{external}$) in representation (5). In particular, the freestanding definite article *cel* may not immediately precede adjectives (13) and nouns (14):

(12) ***cei** doi elevi*
CEL two students
'the two students'

(13) a. ****cel** frumos copil*
CEL beautiful child
b. *frumos**ul** copil*
beautiful.DEF child
'the beautiful child'

(14) a. ****cel** copil*
CEL child

[1] For the exclusion of suffixed definite adjectives as remnants in ellipsis, see the discussion in Cornilescu, Nicolae (2012: 1097-1101; footnote 26).

BDD-V887 © 2012 Editura Universității din București
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.31 (2026-11-22 23:56:40 UTC)

b. *copil**ul***
child.DEF
'the child'

3.2. ***Deriving the adjectival article construction (AAC)***

We have established that the same definite article *cel* occurs in the AAC and in the ellipsis structure (see the preceding discussion, surrounding examples (9)-(14)), therefore in understanding the latter we will start with the former, illustrating the derivation of the overt head structure of (15), where the modifier introduced by *cel* is an adjective:

(15) *măr**ul*** *cel roşu*
apple.DEF *CEL* red
'the red apple'

Our analysis relies on the split-D hypothesis presented in section 2. Adjectives are known to merge in different positions in the DP, according to their interpretation (cf. also Svenonius 2008, Cornilescu 2009). In previous work (Cornilescu 2007, Cornilescu, Nicolae 2011a), we have shown that adjectives in the AAC have in their scope DPs, merging in a periphery position. Specifically, DP-periphery adjectives directly merge in the space between the external and the internal D positions. The adjectives in the AAC are endowed with a quantificational focus feature [+c], which allows them to merge as specifiers of the ContrP in the left periphery of the DP (16a). As for the head NP, recall that the adjectival article construction is a double definite construction. Hence, there is definite-NP raising to the specifier of NumP (see Cinque 2004 for NP-raising in Romance). In this position, i.e. as the specifier of the highest projection below D, the NP agrees with D, valuing the latter's definiteness feature (see Cornilescu, Nicolae 2011b).

By assumption, in periphery structures, the internal D has an EPP feature, allowing [Spec, DP] to function as an escape hatch. This is why, after valuing the definiteness of the internal D in the AAC (16b), the definite NP is attracted to the internal [Spec, DP] position (see the derivations in (17)). After valuation of the definiteness feature of the internal D, the uninterpretable definiteness feature of the NP is marked for deletion and thus *no longer available* for further Agree operations.

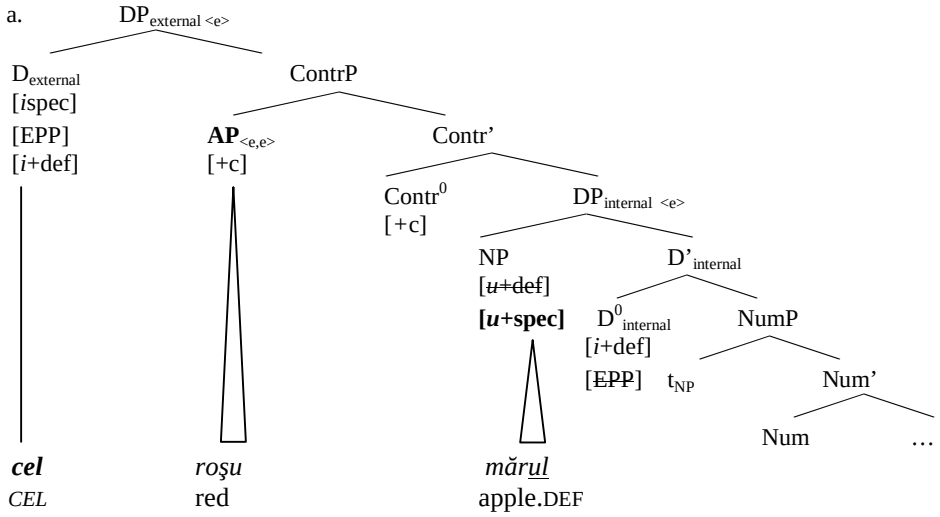
(16) a. [$_{DP}$ ***cel*** [$_{ContrP}$ *roşu* [$_{DP}$ *măru**l***]]]
CEL red apple.the
b. [$_{DP}$ *măru**l*** [$_{D}$ ***cel*** [$_{ContrP}$ *roşu* [$_{DP}$ t_{NP}]]]
apple.the *CEL* red
'the red apple'

The AP, marked [+c], merges as the specifier of ContrP, whose head Contr is [+c], as in (16a)=(17a). Since the NP has used its [*u*+def] feature, there is *no definiteness agreement between the AP and the NP* so that the AP cannot become definite through agreement and hence it cannot value the interpretable definite feature of the external D. The definite article ***cel*** merges as a last resort, in a configuration which actually satisfies its c/s-selectional requirements for a [+quant] complement (= ContrP). The definite NP subsequently raises to the left of ***cel***, as in (16b)=(17b). The reason cannot be the need to get rid of its [*u*+def] feature, since this feature has been used to value the [*i*def] feature of the internal D. We claim that the definite NP raises out of the [Spec, $DP_{internal}$] position because it is attracted by an interpretable

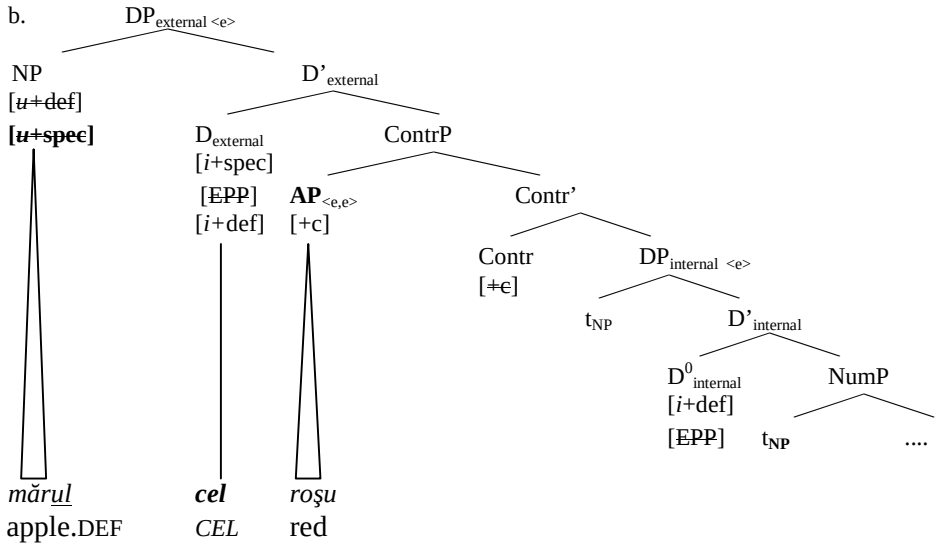
BDD-V887 © 2012 Editura Universităţii din Bucureşti
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.31 (2026-11-22 23:56:40 UTC)

unvalued *specificity feature*, i.e. [*i*spec], in the external D, a feature introduced by the definite article ***cel***. It is known (see Vasilescu 2005/2008) that *cel*-modifiers are emphatic because of their final focused position, and have an identifying role with respect to the DP they modify. In other words, *cel*-modifiers introduce an identifying property of the head noun. Specificity of the referent [*u*+spec] of the DP is induced by the presence of this identifying property. As always, specificity is tied to the contextual information available to the speaker (see Ihsane, Puskás, 2001).

(17) a.



b.



The prediction of this analysis is that constituents that cannot either merge at or move a periphery position below *cel* (cf. (17)) cannot occur in the adjectival *cel*-construction. One example is offered by arguments of the noun, when the latter is relational. The arguments of the head, whether specifiers or complements, are excluded from the AAC:

(18) a. **dependenţa* ***cea*** *de tutun*
dependency.DEF *CEL* on tobacco

BDD-V887 © 2012 Editura Universităţii din Bucureşti
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.31 (2026-11-22 23:56:40 UTC)

b. **fi**ul*** ***cel*** *al lui Ion*
son.DEF *CEL* of Ion's

The reason for this exclusion is syntactic. Selected arguments merge inside the lexical N-projection to be thematically marked and they cannot escape the lexical projection of their head in the case of the AAC. Recall that the [Spec, DP] escape hatch (i.e. the position which facilitates movement to the periphery) must be occupied by the definite NP, which values the definiteness feature of $D_{internal}$ and which must be in an appropriate position (=[Spec, DP]) which allows it to move to the external [Spec, DP] position, i.e. to the left of *cel* (see again the derivations in (17)). To conclude, the arguments, c-selected and s-selected, are too low to get to a position above D, moving across the noun.

3.3. *What about ellipsis?*

Recall that the main assumption pursued in this paper is that definite ellipsis is based on double definite constructions because the ellipsis site is a definite DP, i.e. the lower definite DP in (5)/(17). If this assumption is right, the derivation of an ellipsis DP should be identical or quite similar to the derivation of a double definite structure (cf. (16), (17)). In the case of ellipsis, the lower NP/DP is definite and contextually anaphoric through its discourse relation with the antecedent. The feature composition [+def, +a] is sufficient to trigger PF-deletion, after the process of definiteness valuation in narrow syntax.

Differences in the derivational histories of ellipsis DPs have to do with the syntax of the remnant. The remnant either merges above the ellipsis site, in focus position, or moves there, possibly pied-piping more material. We will consider both cases, the second one being of interest for ellipsis with argumental remnants.

Consider first an instance of ellipsis with cardinal remnants, structure (19a) based on the double definite construction (19b)[1]

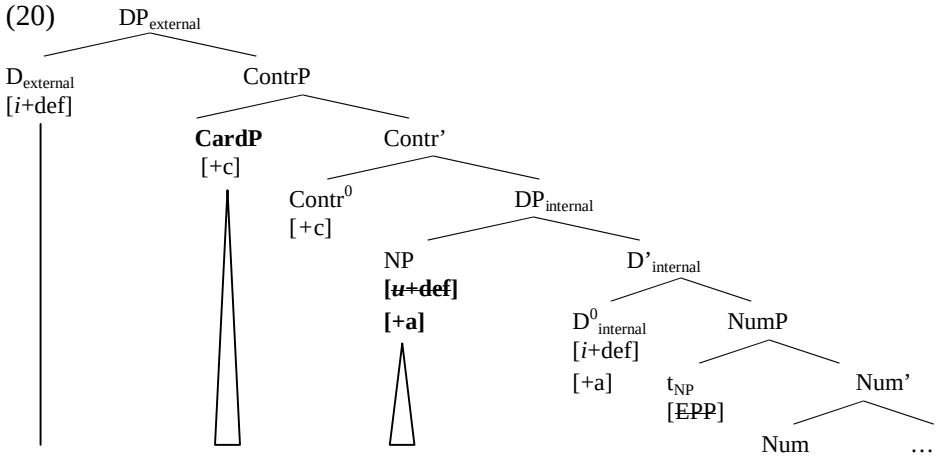
(19) a. *cei doi (de la bibliotecă)*
CEL two from library
'the two ones from the library'
b. *copii**i*** *cei doi (de la bibliotecă)*
children.DEF *CEL* two from library
'the two children from the library'

Given their inherent meaning, cardinals are quantificational and, since they make up scales, they are also inherently contrastive (i.e., they are [+quant, +c]), they qualify for merger in [Spec, ContrP]. Such being the case, if the lower DP is definite and anaphoric, it will delete in a representation like the following one:

[1] For arguments why *cei doi* (*CEL* two 'the two ones') does not immediately derive from *cei doi copii* (*CEL* two children 'the two children') but from *copii**i*** *cei doi* (chidren.DEF *CEL* two 'the two children'), an adjectival article construction, see Cornilescu, Nicolae (2012: 1102-1105).

BDD-V887 © 2012 Editura Universității din București
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.31 (2026-11-22 23:56:40 UTC)

(20)



Remark

An interesting confirmation for structure (20) is the existence in old Romanian of structures where definite NPs are preceded by indefinite quantifiers (cardinals included):

(21) a. *arătarea* [***a dooa*** *venire**ei***] *lui*] (Coresi)
showing.DEF the-second coming.DEF.GEN his
'the showing of his second coming'

b. *însă* [***cîte trei*** *morţi**i***] *nu sînt închipuiri* (Antim)
but each three dead-persons.DEF not are illusions
'but the three persons each are not illusions'

c. *omul eretic după una şi* [***a doao*** *învăţătur**a***] *leapădă-se* (N. Test.)
man.DEF heretical after first and second lesson renounce=REFL
'the heretical man gives up after the first and second lesson'

d. [***Al şaptele*** *mărturisitori**ul***] iaste Ioan Botezătoriul (Coresi)
seventh confessor.DEF is John Baptist.DEF
'The seventh confessor is John the Baptist'

e. *grăesc* [*toţi* ***patru*** *evanghelişti**i***] (Coresi)
speak all four evangelists.DEF
'All four evangelists are saying this'

The second case directly concerns the topic of this squib, namely **nominal ellipsis with argumental remnants**, and will be illustrated in the next section. Essentially, what appears below *cel* in this case is the whole NP containing the argument. It is the whole NP which moves to the periphery position, but only the nominal head undergoes PF-deletion, being invisible/inaudible/silent in the surface structure.

4. Nominal ellipsis with nominal arguments?

Romanian data pose a problem for the theory of NomE, since in Romanian the remnant of ellipsis can freely be an argument. This is true for arguments in complex event

BDD-V887 © 2012 Editura Universității din București
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.31 (2026-11-22 23:56:40 UTC)

structures (22a), as well as for subcategorized PPs (22c) and genitival arguments (22b), more generally.

(22) a. *distrugerea oraşelor şi chiar **cea** a satelor*
destruction.DEF cities.DEF.GEN and even *CEL* GEN villages.DEF.GEN
'the destruction of the cities and even that of the villages'
b. *venirea lui Ion şi **cea** a lui Gheorghe*
coming.DEF GEN Ion and *CEL*GEN Gheorghe
'Ion's coming and Gheorghe's'
c. *dependenţa de tutun şi **cea** de droguri*
dependence.DEF on tobacco and *CEL* on drugs
'the dependence on tobacco and the one on drugs'

It has often been claimed that NomE targets the *whole NP*, so that any NP-argument will be part of the ellipsis site. Such claims have been made by Lobeck (1995) and Llombart-Huesca (2002) for English, Ticio (2010) for Spanish, Sleeman (1996) for French, with examples of the following kind:

(23) **Compramos tus libros sobre Chomsky y tú compraste mis* [] *sobre Postal.*
(we)bought your books about Chomsky and you bought my [] about Postal
(Spanish, apud Ticio 2010: 198)

However, even for the languages quoted above the data are less than clear-cut. Ticio (2010, for Spanish) and Sleeman (1996, for French) supply the following counterexamples to the claim that arguments cannot be remnants in NomE.

(24) a. *Compramos varios libros de matemáticas y **alguno** **[e]** **[*de física*]**$_{obj}$*
(we)bought several books of mathematics and some of physics
(Spanish, apud Ticio 2010: 180)
b. *Ce fut le premier bombardement de la partie sud de la ville, mais déjà **le troisieme** **[]** **de la partie nord**.*
'It was the first the first bombardment of the southern part of the city, but already the third of the northern part.'
(French, *apud* Sleeman, 1996: 31)

In trying to account for the data, both authors argue either that the remnant DP is not projected as an argument, or at least, is not an argument at the point where ellipsis occurs. Thus, according to Sleeman (1996) the boldfaced genitive in (24b) above is ***not*** a θ-marked argument, but an *adjunct*, since *bombardement* is a result nominal and does not take syntactic arguments (Grimshaw 1990). In her turn, Ticio (2010: 182) invokes a 'stylistic operation' which would move the argument out of the NP to some adjunct position above the ellipsis site. Her proposal is in line with Sleeman's (1996) in that both researchers assume that, in apparent cases of ellipsis with argumental remnants, the remnant is in fact an adjunct (at least at the time when ellipsis is licensed).

We claim that NomE raises this problem because of a fundamental often-noticed disanalogy between verbal heads and nominal heads (Ross 1967, Dowty 1991, Baker 2003). Nouns need not/do not have arguments with the possible exception of complex event nominalizations (Grimshaw 1990). Therefore, in DPs, constituents that realize θ-roles

BDD-V887 © 2012 Editura Universităţii din Bucureşti
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.31 (2026-11-22 23:56:40 UTC)

alternatively project as arguments or as adjuncts. Accepting that internal arguments are in the first projection of the head, there is ample evidence for the argument/adjunct alternation in Romanian nominalizations containing adjectives. Consider first the following nominalizations with subcategorized PPs, and notice the position of the adjective:

(25) a. [[$_{NP}$*dependenţa* *de tutun*] [$_{AP}$ *nedorită*] $_{NP}$]
dependence.DEF on tobacco unwanted
b. [[[$_{NP}$ *dependenţa*]] [$_{AP}$ *nedorită*] $_{NP}$] [$_{PP}$ *de tutun*]] $_{NP}$]
dependence.DEF unwanted on tobacco
c. [[[*dependenţa* $_{NP}$] [$_{PP}$ *de tutun*] $_{NP}$] [$_{AP}$ *nedorită*]$_{NP}$]
dependence.DEF on tobacco unwanted
'the unwanted dependence on tobacco'

Standard expectations regarding word order are confirmed in (25a), where the PP complement is adjacent to the head and the adjunct is outside the first projection of the head. Example (25a) contrasts with (25b), where the adjective intervenes between the nominal head and the PP. Word order in an example like (25b), i.e. the intervening adjective, shows that the PP has been projected as an adjunct, outside the first projection of the noun. In principle, there is no reason why, on the model of (25b), one could not also assume an alternative structure for (25a), as in (25c), where the PP is outside the first projection of the head, being projected as an adjunct. Given this, one might assume that *languages differ in the extent to which they allow* ***the reanalysis*** *of an argument as an adjunct*.

Let us check how permissive Romanian is regarding the possibility of analysing (25a) as (25c). We will turn to the AAC again. Recall from the analysis of the adjectival article ***cel*** in section **3.2** above that the constituent that raises to the left of the definite article ***cel*** is a *full definite NP*, not just the head. Accordingly, we expect that the first two structures above, (25a) and (25b), feed the ***cel*** construction, a prediction which is borne out:

(26) a. *dependenţa* *de tutun* ***cea*** *nedorită*
dependence.DEF on tobacco *CEL* unwanted
'the unwanted dependence on tobacco'
b. *dependenţa* ***cea*** *nedorită de tutun*
dependence.DEF *CEL* unwanted on tobacco
'the unwanted dependence on tobacco'
c. **dependenţa* ***cea*** *de tutun (nedorită)*
dependence.DEF *CEL* on tobacco unwanted

Structure (26a) is unproblematic since it is apparent that ***cel*** is preceded by an NP and not by an N^0. Structure (26b) is licit in as much as the surface order with the intervening adjective clearly shows that the PP has been projected as an adjunct. In (26c), the noun alone represents the minimal maximal projection, since the AP and the PP are adjuncts; the NP alone occurs to the left of ***cel***, while the PP, considered an adjunct, undergoes FF, leading to the ungrammatical (26c). The ungrammaticality of (26c) proves that, pending evidence to the contrary, subcategorized PPs merge as **internal arguments,** as in (26a), which is why structure (26c) is not acceptable. As long as the adjective follows the PP, the PP will be interpreted as an argument, and as a result it cannot be extracted and focus-fronted in the ***cel*** construction.

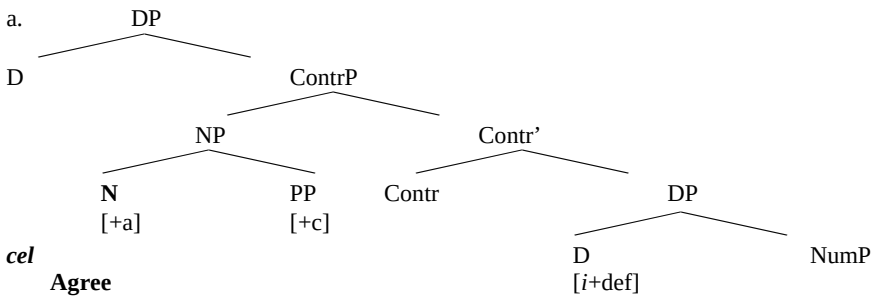
BDD-V887 © 2012 Editura Universității din București
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.31 (2026-11-22 23:56:40 UTC)

Consider the ellipsis cases now. Apparently, there are counterparts to all the structures in (26). What is required is to account for the contrast between the ill-formed AAC (26c), with a nominal argument following ***cel***, and the well-formed (27a), with the same argument following ***cel*** in the corresponding ellipsis construction.

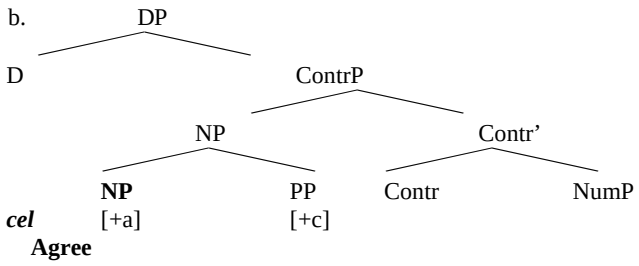
(27) a. ***cea*** *de tutun nedorită*
CEL on tobacco unwanted
'the unwanted one on tobacco'
b. ***cea*** *nedorită de tutun*
CEL unwanted on tobacco
'the unwanted one on tobacco'
c. *cea nedorită*
CEL unwanted
'the unwanted one'

To understand the well-formedness of (27a), we must assume that what underlies it is a structure like (26a); more specifically, it is the NP containing the [head + its complement] that moves to the [Spec, ContrP] position, above the determiner that licenses ellipsis, and below the external definite article ***cel***. This assumption explains the discrepancy between the AAC and the ellipsis construction. In the ellipsis construction the offending argument **is smuggled to the periphery in the larger head-complement constituent containing it**. In other words, the configuration of (27a), omitting irrelevant details, is (28a), where the PP is a complement of the head, not (28b), where the PP is an adjunct. Under these assumptions, (26c) is correctly ruled out; it feeds neither the AAC nor ellipsis. If (26c) had been available, the PP analysed as an adjunct could merge as a focus in the AAC, contrary to fact.

(28) a.



b.



The contrast between the adjectival article construction and the ellipsis construction with ***cel*** shows that one must accept the existence of NomE with argumental remnants, since it is not possible to reduce such cases to ellipsis with adjuncts, as attempted by Sleeman (1996) or by Ticio (2010).

BDD-V887 © 2012 Editura Universității din București
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.31 (2026-11-22 23:56:40 UTC)

At the same time, cross-linguistically, DP syntax is sensitive to an ***Argument/Adjunct Parameter***, which allows arguments to merge as adjuncts, as a last resort strategy. At least in Romanian, merger of an argument as an adjunct must be *overtly signalled*. The intervening adjective in examples like (26b) is a means of signalling the adjunct status of the following PP. Hence, in cases where the AAC is blocked, the insertion of an adjective is a repair strategy, since it will allow the subcategorized complement to be reanalyzed as an adjunct (see the contrast in (29) below). In contrast, the position next to the head indicates argument status of the θ-marked PP.

(29) a. **venirea* ***cea*** *a* *inspectorului*
arrival.DEF *CEL* GEN inspector.DEF.GEN
b. *venirea* ***cea*** *neaşteptată a* *inspectorului*
arrival.DEF *CEL* unexpected GEN inspector.DEF.GEN
'the unexpected arrival of the inspector'

5. Conclusions: significance of ellipsis with argumental remnants

In this squib, we have analyzed the behaviour of nominal ellipsis with subcategorized/argumental remnants, which is available in Romanian to a larger extent than in other languages (see section **1**). Cross-linguistic variation may reflect an ***Argument/Adjunct Parameter***, which determines to what extent arguments can alternatively be projected as adjuncts.

Ellipsis with subcategorized arguments as remnants provides good evidence for the operation Focus Fronting, which is one of the fundamental operations in licensing nominal ellipsis, as it has the role of enabling the remnant to escape the ellipsis site. C-selected constituents may appear at the left periphery only because they move there inside the head NP. Ellipsis with c-selected constituents provides good evidence that what moves to ContrP is a big NP containing the subcategorized constituent. This is in line with our previous results on the licensing of NomE (see Cornilescu, Nicolae 2012).

While in ellipsis cases, it is possible to move the [noun + internal argument] structure, the adjectival article construction requires movement of the argument alone, and this is impossible for locality reasons. Thus, under the focus analysis of ellipsis, one expects differences between DPs headed by overt nouns and ellipsis-DPs, and the expectation is borne out.

Acknowledgements

This work was possible with the financial support of the IDEI – PCE project 311/2011, "The Structure and Interpretation of the Romanian Nominal Phrase in Discourse Representation Theory: the Determiners" [Alexandra Cornilescu], and of the Sectoral Operational Programme for Human Resources Development 2007-2013, co-financed by the European Social Fund, under the project number POSDRU/107/1.5/S/80765 [Alexandru Nicolae].

REFERENCES

Aboh, Enoch, 2004, "Topic and focus within DP", *Linguistics in the Netherlands*, 21, p. 1-12.

Baker, Mark C., 2003, *Lexical Categories: Verbs, Nouns, and Adjectives*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

Büring, Daniel, 2003, "On D-Trees, Beans and B-Accents", *Linguistics and Philosophy*, 26, p. 511-545.

BDD-V887 © 2012 Editura Universității din București
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.31 (2026-11-22 23:56:40 UTC)

Butler, Jonny, 2004, *Phase structure, phrase structure and quantification*, Ph.D. Dissertation, York University.
Chomsky, Noam, 2009, "On phases", in: Robert Freidin, Carlos P. Otero, Maria Luisa Zubizarreta, (eds.), *Foundational Issues in Linguistic Theory. Essays in Honor of Jean-Roger Vergnaud*, Cambridge, MA, MIT Press, p. 133-166.
Cinque, Guglielmo, 2004, "A phrasal movement analysis of the Romanian DP", in: Ana-Maria Minuţ, Eugen Munteanu (eds.), *Studia Linguistica et Philologica in honorem D. Irimia*, Iaşi, Editura Editura Universităţii "A. I. Cuza", p. 129-142.
Cornilescu, Alexandra, 2007, "Despre trăsăturile periferice şi cum le-am putea folosi", in: Rodica Zafiu, Camelia Stan, Alexandru Nicolae (eds.), *Studii lingvistice. Omagiu profesoarei Gabriela Pană Dindelegan, la aniversare*, Bucureşti, Editura Universităţii din Bucureşti, p. 43-56.
Cornilescu, Alexandra, 2009, "On the linearization of adjectives in Romanian", in: Danièle Torck, W. Leo Wetzels (eds.), *Romance Languages and Linguistic Theory 2006*, Amsterdam, John Benjamins, p. 33-52.
Cornilescu, Alexandra, Alexandru Nicolae, 2010a, "On nominal ellipsis and the valuation of definiteness in Romanian", *Bucharest Working Papers in Linguistics*, XII, 1, p. 93-125.
Cornilescu, Alexandra, Alexandru Nicolae, 2010b, "Providing syntactic arguments that ellipsis sites are definite descriptions", in: Rodica Zafiu, Adina Dragomirescu, Alexandru Nicolae (eds.), *Limba română. Controverse, delimitări, noi ipoteze* − (vol. I) *Gramatică; Lexic, semantică, terminologii; Istoria limbii române şi filologie*, Bucureşti, Editura Universităţii din Bucureşti, p. 37-50
Cornilescu, Alexandra, Alexandru Nicolae, 2011a, "Nominal peripheries and phase structure in the Romanian DP", *Revue roumaine de linguistique*, LVI, 1, p. 47-80.
Cornilescu, Alexandra, Alexandru Nicolae, 2011b, "On the syntax of Romanian definite phrases: changes in the pattern of definiteness checking", in: Petra Sleeman, Harry Perridon (eds.), *The Noun Phrase in Romance and Germanic. Structure, Variation and Change*, Amsterdam, John Benjamins, p. 193-222.
Cornilescu, Alexandra, Alexandru Nicolae, 2012, "Nominal ellipsis as definiteness and anaphoricity: the case of Romanian", *Lingua*, 122, 10, p. 1070-1111.
Dowty, David, 1991, "Thematic Proto-Roles and Argument Selection", *Language*, 67, 3, p. 547-619.
Elbourne, Paul, 2008, "Ellipsis sites as definite descriptions", *Linguistic Inquiry*, 39, p. 191-220.
Giusti, Giuliana, 2005, "At the left periphery of the Romanian Noun Phrase", in: Martine Coene, Liliane Tasmowski (eds.), *On Space and Time in Language*, Cluj Napoca, Clusium, p. 23-49.
GLR, 1966 – *Gramatica limbii române*, Edited by Al. Graur, Mioara Avram, Laura Vasiliu, Bucureşti, Editura Academiei Române.
Grimshaw, Jane, 1990, *Argument structure*, Cambridge, MA, MIT Press.
Ihsane, Tabea, Genoveva Puskás, 2001, "Specific is not definite", *GG@G (Generative Grammar in Geneva)*, 2, p. 39-54.
Laenzlinger, Christopher, 2005, "French adjective ordering: perspectives on DP-internal movement types", *Lingua*, 115, p. 645-689.
Llombart-Huesca, Amalia, 2002, "Anaphoric *one* and NP-ellipsis", *Studia Linguistica*, 56, 1, p. 59-89.
Lobeck, Anne, 1995, *Ellipsis: Functional Heads, Licensing, and Identification*, Oxford, Oxford University Press.
Lobeck, Anne, 2005, "22. Ellipsis in DP", in: Martin Everaert, Henk van Riemsdijk (eds.), *The Blackwell Companion to Syntax*, volume 2, Blackwell Publishing, p. 145-173.
López, Luis, 2000, "Ellipsis and discourse-linking", *Lingua* 110, p. 183-213.
López, Luis, 2009, *A Derivational Syntax for Information Structure*, Oxford, Oxford University Press.
Merchant, Jason, 2001, *The Syntax of Silence: Sluicing, Islands, and the Theory of Ellipsis*, Oxford, Oxford University Press.
Rizzi, Luigi, 1997, „The fine structure of the left periphery", in: Liliane Haegeman (ed.), *Elements of Grammar*, Dordrecht, Kluwer, p. 281-339.
Rooth, Mats, 1985, *Associations with focus*, Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Massachusetts, Amherst.
Ross, John Robert, 1967, *Constraints on variables in syntax*, PhD Dissertation, MIT.

BDD-V887 © 2012 Editura Universităţii din Bucureşti
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.31 (2026-11-22 23:56:40 UTC)

Svenonius, Peter, 2008, "The position of adjectives and other phrasal modifiers in the decomposition of DP", in: Louise McNally, Christopher Kennedy (eds.), *Adjectives and Adverbs: Syntax, Semantics, and Discourse*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, p. 16-42.
Ticio, M. Emma, 2010, *Locality Domains in the Spanish Determiner Phrase*, Dordrecht / Heidelberg / London / New York, Springer (initially presented as a doctoral dissertation: *On the Structure of DPs*, PhD dissertation, University of Connecticut, 2003).
Vasilescu, Andra, 2005/2008, "Pronumele", in GALR (*Gramatica limbii române*), Bucureşti, Editura Academiei Române, p. 181-288.

ARGUMENTAL REMNANTS WITH NOMINAL ELLIPSIS?

(*Abstract*)

Romanian poses an important empirical problem to a widely spread claim found in the literature on nominal ellipsis, namely the existence of argumental remnants. A classical claim in the literature is that ellipsis affects the entire lexical projection of the DP (i.e. the whole NP constituent) so that adjuncts (and specifiers) but not arguments can surface as remnants. In this squib, contrary to this widely spread belief, we discuss a series of instances of nominal ellipsis with argumental remnants, empirically proving that arguments can be remnants in nominal ellipsis. We then discuss the implications of this phenomenon for the theory of nominal ellipsis, arguing that argumental remnants provide good evidence for Focus Fronting in nominal ellipsis.

BDD-V887 © 2012 Editura Universității din București
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.31 (2026-11-22 23:56:40 UTC)