



On the structure of NPs

– A local account for German and Mandarin Chinese –

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On the structure of NPs



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Introduction

The topics:

- structure of nominal complexes (NCs \approx NP/DP)
- two languages: German (Ger) and Mandarin Chinese (MC)
- combination of “specifying elements” (DET, PreGens / DEM, Mods, CL) with the head N
- Two puzzles:
 - Ger puzzle: determiners and prenominal genitives
 - MC puzzle: modifiers, classifiers, demonstratives

The general questions we are dealing with:

- cross-linguistic consequences for NC structure
- structural consequences for NP-DP debate

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Complexity

NCs in German can be morphosyntactically **simple** or **complex**,

- (1) {[Luise] / [* (Die) Behandlung]} war erfolgreich.
Luise / the treatment was successful

and even **recursive**:

- (2) a. mit [des Vaters Bruders Witwe] (DECOW)
with the.GEN father.GEN brother.GEN widow.DAT
'with the father's brother's widow'
b. Ich wähl [Doris ihrem Mann seine Partei].
I vote Doris.DAT her.DAT husband.DAT seine.ACC Partei.ACC
'I am voting for Doris's husband's party.'

(cf. Karnowski & Papel 2004: 181 and Zifonun 2003: 100)

Q1: account for simple, complex and recursive NCs



Distribution

In German, the prenominal position can be occupied by an element in the genitive (**PreGen**) – similar to **English** prenominal genitives (3).

- (3) Jacobs Behandlung des Patienten
Jacob's treatment of the patient

When the prenominal position is occupied by an element in genitive, the **determiner cannot appear**.

- (4) * [Jacobs die] Behandlung des Patienten
Jacob.GEN the treatment of the patient
(5) * [die Jacobs] Behandlung des Patienten
the Jacob.GEN treatment of the patient

Their **complementarity** suggests that determiners and prenominal genitives occupy the **same position** or at least “have **something in common**”.

Q2: account for complementarity between PreGen and DET



Case

Arguments of relational nouns can be realised as **Pre-** or **PostGens**.

- (6) a. Jacobs Freund b. der Freund Jacobs
Jacob.GEN friend the friend Jacob.GEN

For **nominalisations** (relational nouns), the arguments bearing **structural case** (NOM or ACC w.r.t. V) are realised in GEN in the **nominal domain**.

- (7) Jacob behandelt den Patienten.
Jacob.NOM treats the.ACC patient.ACC
(8) a. Jacobs Behandlung
Jacob.GEN treatment
b. die Behandlung Jacobs
the treatment Jacob.GEN
c. Jacobs Behandlung des Patienten
Jacob.GEN treatment the.GEN patient.GEN



But arguments with **lexical case** (e.g. DAT in (9) (Schumacher et al. 2004: 813)) cannot be realised as GEN.

- (9) Kannst [du] [mir] [meinen Wutausbruch] verzeihen?
can you.NOM me.DAT my.ACC outburst.of.anger.ACC forgive
'Can you forgive (me) my tantrum?'

- (10) die Verzeihung des Königspaars (DECOW)
the forgiveness the.GEN royal.couple.GEN
'the royal couple's forgiveness'

- (11) die Verzeihung der Sünden (DECOW)
the forgiveness the.GEN sins.GEN
'the forgiveness of the sins'

- (12) * die Verzeihung {dem Täter / des Täters}
the forgiveness the.DAT offender.DAT the.GEN offender.GEN
Intended: 'the forgiveness of the offender'

Q3: account for case patterns



Interpretation

How we interpret the genitive phrases (i.e. θ -roles) **depends on the head noun**.

- (13a): Agent and Patient
- (13b): Experiencer

- (13) a. [Jacobs]_{AG} **Behandlung** [des Patienten]_{PAT}
 Jacob.GEN treatment the.GEN patient.GEN
 'Jacob's treatment of the patient'
- b. [Jacobs]_{EXP} **Begeisterung**
 Jacob.GEN exaltation
 'Jacob's exaltation'



Both (structural) arguments of a noun can be realised either as **PreGen** (14b) or as **PostGen** (14c).

- (14) a. [Jacobs]_{AG} **Behandlung** [des Patienten]_{PAT}
 Jacob.GEN treatment the.GEN patient.GEN
- b. {[Jacobs]_{AG} / [des Patienten]_{PAT}} **Behandlung**
 Jacob.GEN the.GEN patient.GEN treatment
- c. die **Behandlung** {[Jacobs]_{AG} / [des Patienten]_{PAT}}
 the treatment Jacob.GEN the.GEN patient.GEN

Asymmetry: It is not possible to interpret the **PreGen** as **patient** and the **PostGen** as **agent** ((15) vs. (14a)).

- (15) * [des Patienten]_{PAT} **Behandlung** [Jacobs]_{AG}
 the.GEN patient.GEN treatment Jacob.GEN
 Intended: 'Jacob's treatment of the patient'

Q4: account for asymmetry



Prenominal Datives

In some German varieties (e.g. Alemannic and Swabian): a **dat NC** can precede a **possessive determiner** and its N head (16).

- (16) Das ist [dem Fischer seine Frau]. (Sternefeld 2015: 221)
 this is the.DAT fisher.DAT his.NOM wife.NOM
 'This is the fisher's wife.'

The **DAT NC cannot follow** the N head, it can only precede the possessive determiner.

- (17) * Das ist [seine Frau dem Fischer].
 this is his.NOM wife.NOM the.DAT fisher.DAT
 Intended: 'This is the fisher's wife.'

The possessive determiner agrees with N in **case, number, and gender** (16).

(cf. Tappe 1989: 2–3; Demske 2001: Sec. 4.3.4; Zifonun 2003: 102; Karnowski & Pafel 2004: 181–184; Sternefeld 2015: 220–221)



NC with PreDat can appear in the **preverbal position** in declarative sentences (18) and **cannot be divided** (19), i.e. it behaves as one **constituent**.

(cf. Karnowski & Pafel 2004: 181; Machicao y Priemer 2018)

- (18) [Klaus sein Händler] **hat** auch noch ein paar. (DECOW)
 Klaus.DAT his.NOM dealer.NOM has too still a pair
 'Klaus' dealer also has some.'
- (19) a. * Klaus **hat sein Händler** auch noch ein paar.
 Klaus.DAT has his.NOM dealer.NOM too still a pair
- b. * Sein **Händler hat Klaus** auch noch ein paar.
 his.NOM dealer.NOM has Klaus.DAT too still a pair

Q5: account for PreDats (and PreGens)



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Locality

Locality: Restriction on dependency relations between structures (e.g. subcategorisation). Local relations are restricted to a specific domain.

(cf. Muysken 1982: 64)

In (1): X^0 is in a local relation with its arguments **YP** and **ZP**, and can have access to their properties. But has X^0 no direct access to the properties of YP's or ZP's constituents (α or β) nor Z^0 to the properties of YP.

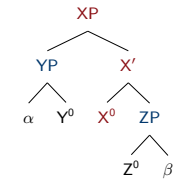


Fig. 1: Locality

(cf. Pollard & Sag 1987: 73, 143–145; 1994: 23; Sag 2007: 403 a.o.)

With respect to NCs:

- ▶ internal structure (relation between N^0 and its arguments)
- ▶ selection of NCs



Verbs select **properties of the noun** (number, s-selectional properties, etc.), but they do not select for **particular determiners** (e.g. indef., def., or poss.).

(Baltin 1989: 3–4; Chomsky 2007; Bruening 2009: 28–29; Sportiche 2005: 41; Chomsky et al. 2019: 22)

- (20) Jacob **ate** {a / the / my} **steak**.
- (21) a. er [...] **versammelte** [seine Mönche] um sich (DECOW)
 he gathered his.PL monks.PL around him
 'He gathered his monks around himself.'
- b. *Er [...] **versammelte** [seinen Mönch] um sich.
 he gathered his.SG monk.SG around himself
- c. [...] er [die Familie] **versammelt** (DECOW)
 he the.SG family.SG gathered
 'He gathered the family.'

versammeln requires a complement denoting a plurality, either morphosyntactically realised (21a) or not (21c).



That is different w.r.t. CPs. The **properties of C** are selected by a verb, but not the **properties of D**.

(cf. Bruening 2009, 2020)

- (22) a. John declared [_{CP} **that** Sally was insane]. (Baltin 1989: 3)
 b. *John declared [_{CP} **for** Sally to be insane].
 c. *John was waiting [_{CP} **that** Sally left].
 d. John was waiting [_{CP} **for** Sally to leave].

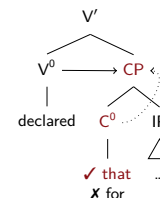


Fig. 2: Selection of CP

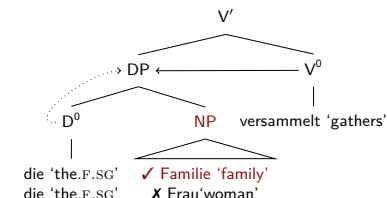


Fig. 3: Selection of DP

(Di Sciullo & Williams 1988; Grimshaw 1991; van Riemsdijk 1998; Sportiche 2005)



“For purposes of category selection (subcategorization), case assignment, (non-anaphoric) agreement, and semantic role assignment, a lexical head has access only to the signs it selects via some feature (e.g. ARG-ST [...]), i.e. the elements that it is connected to via a grammatical relation [...]” (Sag 2012: 149)

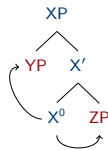


Fig. 4: Selectional Localism

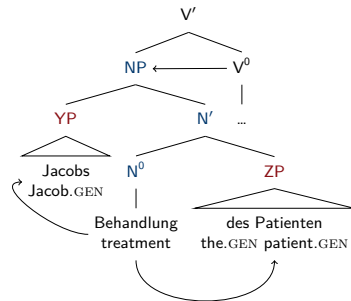


Fig. 5: Local NP



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HPSG:

(cf. Pollard & Sag 1987, 1994; Müller & Machicao y Priemer 2019)

- deeply formalised constraint-based framework
- declarative, i.e. non-derivational (no proper “movement”)
- lexicalist approach: constraints on affixes, words, phrases are stored in an organised lexicon.
- organisation of lexicon: inheritance hierarchy (generalisations)



Constraint on **Count nouns**:

- Count nouns select for a DET(P) in its specifier (a valence feature).
- This element can be simple (a DET) or complex (a PreGen).

(23) Sample entry for count-nouns

$$\begin{bmatrix} \text{CAT} & [\text{HEAD } \textit{noun}] \\ \text{SPR} & \langle \text{DETP} \rangle \end{bmatrix}$$

- *-ung* nominalisations are a subtype of count nouns with arguments.

(24) a. **Behandlung*

b. **Behandlung* { [Jacobs]_{AG} / [des Patienten]_{PAT} }

c. *die Behandlung* { [Jacobs]_{AG} / [des Patienten]_{PAT} }

Verbs selecting NCs do not select NPs (→ N') but DPs (→ NP).

(cf. Longobardi 1994: 612–613; Chierchia 1998b: 342; Adger 2004: 253; a.o.)

(25) a. *I bought [_{N'} car].

b. I bought [_{NP} the [_{N'} car]].



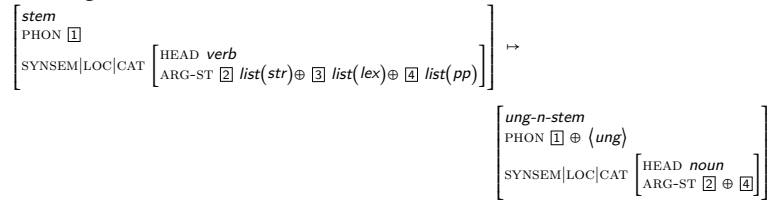
The regularities w.r.t. to **structural case assignment** can be accounted for locally. → no need of possessive case or semantic genitive

(Hartmann & Zimmermann 2003; Partee 1997; Olsen 1991)

(26) **Case Principle** (simplified) (Przepiórkowski 1999; Meurers 1999)

- ▶ In the **verbal domain**, the first element with structural case in the ARG-ST list receives nominative, all further elements in the list with structural case receive accusative.
- ▶ In the **nominal domain**, elements with structural case in the ARG-ST list receive genitive.

(27) LR: *-ung* nominalisation



Case → no arguments with lexical case (**no datives**)



For the asymmetry ...

- (28) a. [Jacobs]_{AG} **Behandlung** [des Patient]_{PAT}
 Jacob.GEN treatment the.GEN patient.GEN
- b. {[Jacobs]_{AG} / [des Patient]_{PAT}} **Behandlung**
 Jacob.GEN the.GEN patient.GEN treatment
- c. die **Behandlung** {[Jacobs]_{AG} / [des Patient]_{PAT}}
 the treatment Jacob.GEN the.GEN patient.GEN
- d. * [des Patient]_{PAT} **Behandlung** [Jacobs]_{AG}
 the.GEN patient.GEN treatment Jacob.GEN
 Intended: 'Jacob's treatment of the patient'

... we use linking constraints:

- ▶ the elements in the ARG-ST list of the noun are linked with the valency lists SPR and COMPS



asymmetry between agent and patient + optionality of arguments N domain:

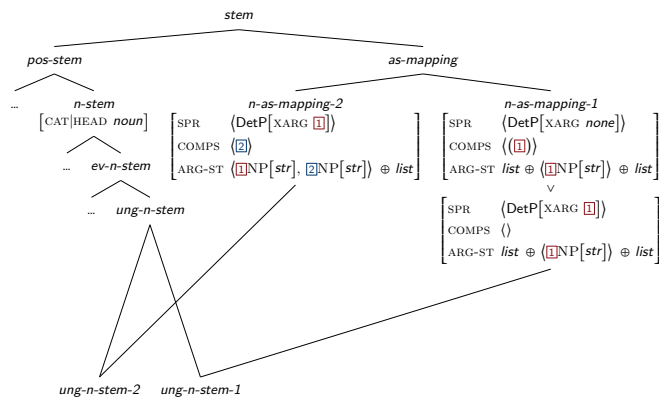


Fig. 6: Mapping ARG-ST to valency



Complementarity between determiners and PreGens by means of XARG

(cf. Sag & Pollard 1991; Sag 2007)

Account for **complex** and **recursive** structures (and parallel to **PossDat**)

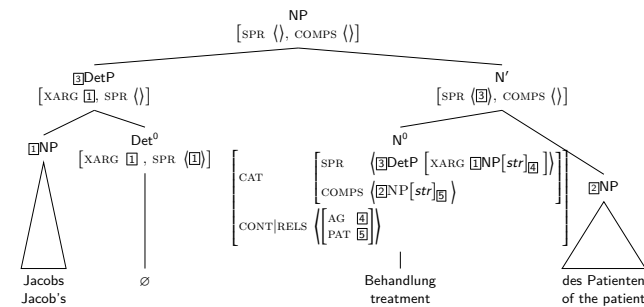


Fig. 7: NP analysis



Recursive structures:

- (29) a. **Ihres Vaters Vaters Schwester Mann** (DECOW)
 your father.GEN father.GEN sister.GEN man
 'your father's father's sister's husband'
- b. **Einschüsse auf [Peters Bruders Harley]** (TAUTOO)
 bullet.holes on Peter.GEN brother.GEN Harley
 'bullet holes on Peter's brother's Harley'
- c. **mit [des Vaters Bruders Witwe]** (DECOW)
 with the.GEN father.GEN brother.GEN widow.DAT
 'with the father's brother's widow'
- d. **Maria ist [des Sohnes Gottes Mutter].** (DECOW)
 Maria is the.GEN son.GEN God.GEN mother
 'Maria is god's son's mother.'
- e. **Ich wähl [Doris ihrem Mann seine Partei].**
 I vote Doris.DAT her.DAT husband.DAT seine.ACC Partei.ACC
 'I am voting for Doris's husband's party.'

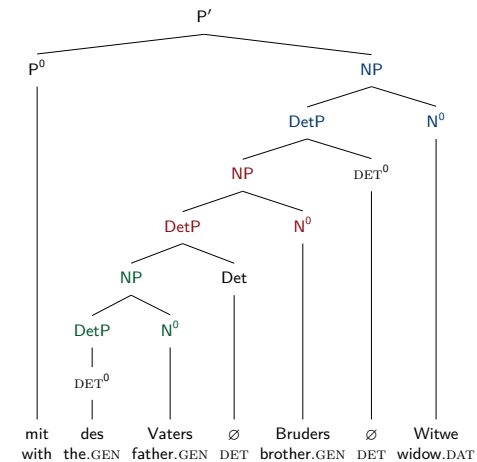


Fig. 8: Recursive structure



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- Q1: **complex and recursive PreGens** → local selection of DETP as specifier
 In the case of PreGens: phonologically empty DET, selecting PreGen and identifying it with an argument of N
- Q2: **complementarity** between PreGen and DET → only one specifier is selected
- Q3: Case Principle (and LR) accounts for **case realisation** w.r.t. structural vs. lexical case
- Q4: θ -role and **distribution asymmetry** is accounted for by means of *as-mapping-constraint*
- Q5: **PreDats** can be analysed with the same structure as **PreGens** but with a different DET (i.e. possessive DET)
 - (possessors as arguments)



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Complexity

As it is well known, NCs in MC can appear in argument positions **with or without a demonstrative (DEM)** or a **classifier (CL)**:

- (30) a. wo mai-le shu.
I bought-PFV book
'I bought {a/the book / ∅/the books}.'
- b. wo mai-le san ben shu.
1.SG buy-PFV three CL book
'I bought {the/∅} three books.'
- c. wo mai-le zhe shu.
1.SG buy-PFV DEM book
'I bought this book.'
- d. wo mai-le zhe san ben shu.
1.SG buy-PFV DEM three CL book
'I bought these three books.'

(cf. Cheng & Sybesma 1999; Chierchia 1998b)

Q1: account for bare and complex NCs



Combination

Similar to specifiers (different from modifiers),
DEM and CL **cannot be iterated** (31b).

(We limit ourselves to sortal and measure classifiers.)

- (31) a. zhe da de san ben guanyu yuyanxue de shu
DEM big DE three CL about linguistics DE book
'these three big books about linguistics'
- b. *zhe san xiang zhe liang ben shu
DEM three CL DEM two CL book
Intended: 'these three boxes of two books'

But the **combination** of DEM and CL is possible (31a).

Q2: What is the function of DEM and CL? How are they combined with N?



Modifiers

Modifiers in MC can have **different positions** within NCs,
and reveal a lot about NC structure.

(We limit ourselves to phrasal modifiers, cf. Paul 2005,
for a semantic distinction between lexical and phrasal modification, see Bücking 2009)

- (32) a. zhe san ben da de shu
DEM three CL big DE book
- b. zhe da de san ben shu
DEM big DE three CL book
- c. da de zhe san ben shu
big DE DEM three CL book
'these three big books'
- d. *zhe san da de ben shu
DEM three big DE CL book
Intended: 'these three big books'

It is not possible to **separate** NUM **from** CL.

Q3: account for strong connection between NUM + CL



Classifiers

Considering sortal and measure classifiers (CL_s , CL_m),
it is possible to **combine** (some subtypes of) **modifiers** with CL_m ,
while CL_s **does not allow modification**.

CL_m leads to different interpretations (33b).

- (33) a. wo mai-le [da de zhe san ben shu].
1.SG buy-PFV big DE DEM three CL_s book
'I bought these three big books.'
- b. wo mai-le [da de zhe san xiang shu].
1.SG buy-PFV big DE DEM three $CL_m \approx$ 'box' book
'I bought these three big boxes of books.' or
'I bought three boxes of these big books.' or
'I bought these three boxes of big books.'
Not possible: 'I bought three big boxes of these books.'

Q4: account for the different interpretations according to the CL subtypes



Ambiguities with CL_m

CL_m have lexical meaning that **can be modified**,
and can offer **further positions** to attach modifiers.

- (34) a. *da de zhe da de san ben shu.
big DE DEM big DE three CL_s book
'these three big books.'
- b. da de zhe da de san xiang shu.
big DE DEM big DE three $CL_m \approx$ 'box' book
'these three big boxes of books.' or
'three boxes of these big books.' or
'these three boxes of big books.'
Not possible: 'three big boxes of these books.'

Q5: account for the different structures according to the CL subtypes



Number

Depending on the combination of DEM, CL, Mod and N,
the NC can be interpreted either only as **sg**, or as **underspecified** (sg or pl).

- (35) a. wo mai-le shu.
I bought-PFV book
'I bought {a/the book / \emptyset /the books}.' bare: sg / pl
- b. wo mai-le zhe shu.
1.SG buy-PFV DEM book
'I bought this book.' DEM+N: sg
- c. wo mai-le zhe san ben shu.
1.SG buy-PFV DEM three CL book
'I bought these three books.' DEM+NUM+CL+N: pl
- d. wo mai-le zhe da de shu.
1.SG buy-PFV DEM big DE book
'I bought {this big book / these big books}.' DEM+Mod+N: sg / pl

Q6: account for singular-plural asymmetry



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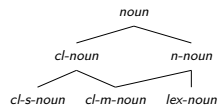
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MC: Local Analysis

Due to the different **positions** and **interpretations** of **modifiers**, according to the subtypes of CL (CL_s vs. CL_m), we assume that N and CL build a **“natural class”** that can be subdivided.

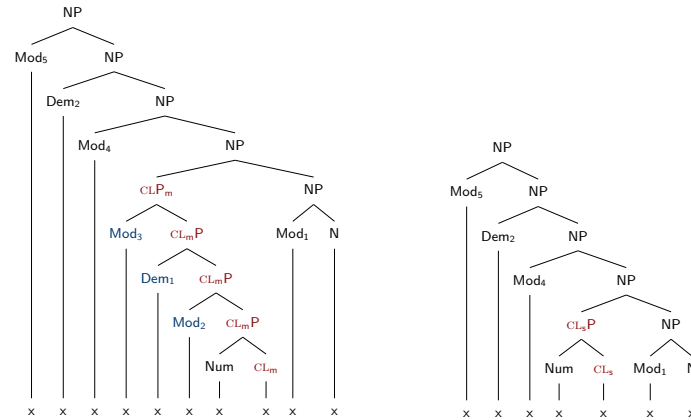
(36) Hierarchy of nominal HEAD Values



Phrasal modifiers and DEMS can attach only to elements of type *n-noun*.



Phrasal modifiers and DEMS select only elements of type *n-noun*.



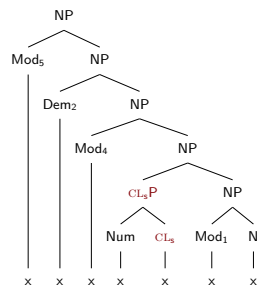
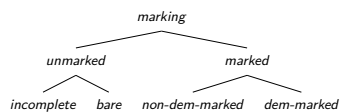
The modification of the noun (or CL) follows directly from the **NP structure**.



In contrast to Ger, where **only one specifier** is allowed (and required) we assume that MC shows more a **head-functor structure** in the combination of **modifying** and **specifying** elements **with N**. (Van Eynde 2006, 2020, 2021)

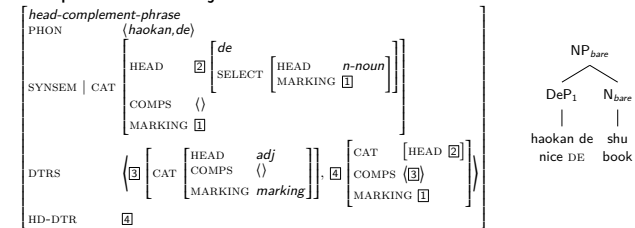
- ▶ the functor (e.g. Mod_1 to N) selects a head (*n-noun*),
- ▶ the properties of the head are projected (HEAD-FEATURE-PRINCIPLE)
- ▶ the MARKING value of the resulting phrase is determined by the functor

(37) Hierarchy of MARKING values

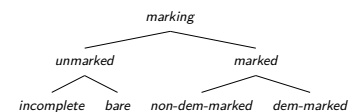


Why are several modifiers possible, but not several CLS or DEMS?

(38) Sample DeP for adjectives



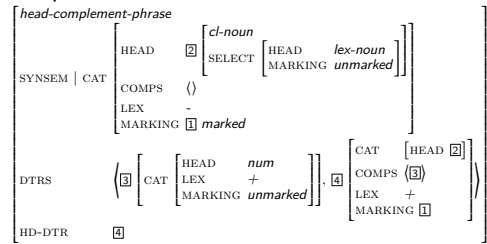
(39) Hierarchy of MARKING Values



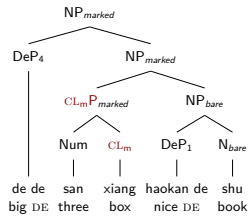
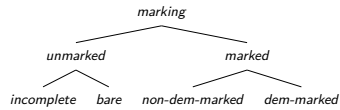


Why are several modifiers possible, but not several CLS or DEMs?

(40) Sample structure for CLP

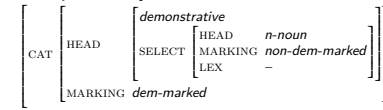


(41) Hierarchy of MARKING Values

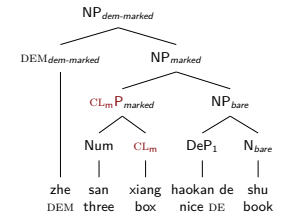
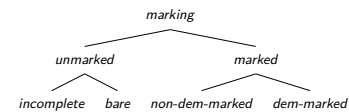


Why are several modifiers possible, but not several CLS or DEMs?

(42) Sample entry for demonstratives

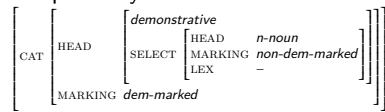


(43) Hierarchy of MARKING Values

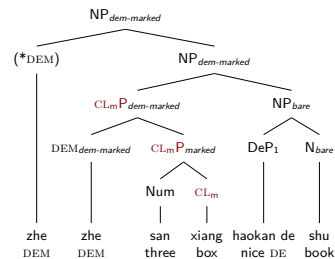
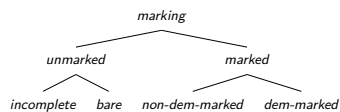


DEM can also combine with CL_m

(44) Sample entry for demonstratives



(45) Hierarchy of MARKING Values



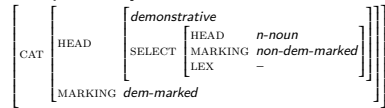
Why is the combination of DEM and N only sg (46c), but the DEM with a modified N sg or pl (46b)?

- (46) a. wo mai-le shu.
I bought-PFV book
'I bought {a/the book / ∅/the books}.' bare: sg / pl
- b. wo mai-le zhe da de shu.
1.SG buy-PFV DEM big DE book
'I bought {this big book/these big books}.' DEM+Mod+N: sg / pl
- c. wo mai-le zhe shu.
1.SG buy-PFV DEM book
'I bought this book.' DEM+N: sg



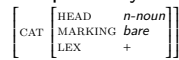
DEM can combine only with an element of type *n-noun* with value LEX –

(47) Sample entry for demonstratives



A bare noun has the value LEX +, but after the combination with a modifier it has the value LEX –

(48) Sample entry for n-nouns

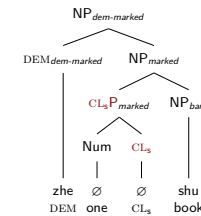


Number neutrality (sg or pl) follows from the number underspecification of N.



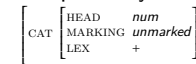
When a DEM combines with a “bare” N there is a number specification → 1

(49) wo mai-le zhe shu.
1.SG buy-PFV DEM book
'I bought this book.'



That is, a phonologically empty NUM is needed (combined with CL via *head-complement-phrase*).

(50) Sample entry for numerals



Introduction

Mandarin Chinese Puzzle

German Puzzle

MC: Local Analysis

Locality

MC: Summary

Ger: Local Analysis

Conclusion

Ger: Summary

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MC: Summary

Q1: **bare N** and **complex N** are allowed as NP structures.

Q2: MC treats DEM, CL, and Mod as **functors** (no specifier needed).

- iteration of Mods,
- no iteration of DEM and NUM+CL,
- combination of DEM and NUM+CL

Q3: NUM+CL is accounted for as a *head-complement-phrase*

Q4&5: CL_m and CL_s have **different structures**.

DEM and Mod can attach only to elements of type *n-nouns*, i.e. CL_m or N

Q6: **singular-plural asymmetry** in the combination with DEM, is solved by means of a phonologically empty NUM+CL_s – needed to specify the meaning of N to one.



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Conclusion

- ▶ The behaviour of prenominal elements in **MC and Ger** is **very different** hard to see how they could converge towards a **common analysis**
 - This approach gives a local (NP) account for both.
- ▶ Complex and recursive specifiers/functors were discussed and analysed.
 - ▶ **Ger** prenominal elements → **specifiers** (and modifiers)
 - ▶ **MC** prenominal elements → **functors**
- ▶ Two-way typology of languages – parallel to the **NP/DP parameter** proposed in the minimalist tradition

(Chierchia 1998a; Cheng & Sybesma 1999; Bošković 2008
Bošković & Gajewski 2011; Bošković et al. 2013)
- ▶ Many **independent properties** have been argued to follow from the absence of dedicated determiners in languages.
 - Reinterpretation of these findings in terms of the absence of a *specifier-head-phrase* (e.g. in MC, Serbo-Croatian, Turkish, Polish, Czech)



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