

Feature sharing in the nominal domain

Introduction. In this presentation several aspects of the syntax and semantics of the so-called Spanish comparative qualitative binominal noun phrase (C-QBNP) are examined. Spanish comparative QBNP has the following structure: *Def-N/A de Def-N* (1), and involves at some level of abstraction DP-internal predication –i.e., (1) can be roughly paraphrased as (2), with (1b) having the semantic composition of (2b'). Villalba (2007) argues that the underlying structure of C-QBNP is as in (3a), where the DP subject *el doctor* 'the doctor' stands in a predication relation with the DP predicate *imbécil* 'the idiot'. The mediation of the small clause is necessary for complying with the Linear Correspondence Axiom (LCA) (Kayne, 1994), and is done by means of the Relator head R, a functional head that takes the predicate and its subject as its dependents, with one sitting in the specifier position of the RELATOR PHRASE and the other occupying the RELATOR's complement position (den Dikken, 2006). Villalba argues further that the predicate inverts around its subject in the course of the syntactic derivation and lands finally in Spec,FocP (3b), where the interpretable phi-features of the DP predicate can probe the interpretable phi-features of the DP subject, match and agree hold, and valuation of the phi-features of the DP predicate takes place. Finally, the D head is merged and the final DP is constructed (3c): once more, the uninterpretable phi-features of the D head probe the interpretable phi-feature of the DP subject, without the intervention of the inverted predicate, which has become inactive after the agree operation. Therefore, valuation takes place and the determiner ends up agreeing with the subject and the predicate (Villalba, 2007). This is what is known as the definiteness agreement effect (DAE).

The problem. The definiteness agreement effect, a point first made by Español-Echevarría (1997, 1998), is quite puzzling, and it establishes that a NP headed by a definite DET must contain a second definite DET N –i.e., in Spanish when a definite determiner appears in initial position (N₁) the post-prepositional nominal (N₂) has to be definite (4). However, this is not always the case: e.g. when a demonstrative appears in N₁, we may encounter an indefinite N₂ (5a), and in some contexts the DP subject in C-QBNP can be headed by an indefinite article or a bare plural (5b-c). Notice that the definiteness agreement effect is not found in other Spanish constructions featuring *de* (6), nor is it a property of copular constructions that the predicate nominal and its subject must agree in definiteness (7) (den Dikken, 2006). In addition, we find gender mismatches in Spanish comparative QBNP (8-9) (Casillas Martínez 2003; Español-Echevarría 1998).

The analysis. This paper examines the definiteness agreement effect in Spanish C-QBNP from a Minimalist perspective in terms of the operation Agree. We first explore five possible analyses and evaluate them with respect to the characteristics of comparative QBNP. The five analyses are: (a) agreement, (b) incorporation and word formation, (c) reentrancy and constrained based approaches, (d) semantic composition, and (e) definiteness spreading. We then provide an analysis of Spanish C-QBNP in terms of feature sharing á la Pesetsky and Torrego (2007). These authors argue that agreement creates a single formal object, rather than merely transferring a value from one object to another object. Agree, then, takes two occurrences of a feature and turns them into two instances of a single feature (Danon, 2008). Thus, (10a) will have the representation in (10b), where feature sharing is indicated by coindexation on the feature. In this syntactic representation we end up with a chain of nodes sharing the [+def] feature. Like Pesetsky and Torrego (2007), we will assume the thesis of radical interpretability –i.e., each feature must receive a semantic interpretation in some syntactic locations (Brody, 1997). Finally, we compare the definiteness agreement effect in Spanish with the Hebrew construct state (CS) construction (11), which involves spreading of the definiteness value of the embedded DP to the entire clause. It will be argued that given the similarities between both constructions (Spanish comparative QBNP and Hebrew genitive construct state) a unified account is tenable.

- 1a. el imbécil del doctor ‘the idiot of the doctor’
 1b. el imbécil de Juan ‘the idiot of John’
 2a. \Rightarrow el doctor es (un) imbécil ‘the doctor is (an) idiot’
 2b. \Rightarrow Juan es (un) imbécil ‘John is (an) idiot’
 2b’. S
 $\lambda PP(j). \lambda xI(x)$ which reduces first to $\lambda xI(x)(j)$ and then to $I(j)$
- \wedge
 Juan es imbécil
 $\lambda PP(j)$ $\lambda PP. \lambda xI(x)$ which reduces to $\lambda xI(x)$
 \wedge
 es imbécil
 λPP $\lambda xI(x)$
- 3a. $[_{RP} [_{DP} \text{el doctor}] [_{R'} [_{DP} \text{imbécil}]]]$
 3b. $[_{FocP} [_{DP} \text{idiotía}] [_{Foc'} R+Foc(de) [_{RP} [_{DP} \text{el doctor}] [_{R'} t_R t_{DP}]]]]]$
 3c. $[_{DP} \text{el}] [_{FocP} [_{DP} \text{imbécil}] [_{Foc'} R+Foc(de) [_{RP} [_{DP} \text{el doctor}] [_{R'} t_R t_{DP}]]]]]$
 4a. *el imbécil de un doctor ‘the idiot of a doctor’
 4b. *un imbécil del doctor ‘an idiot of the doctor’
 4c. *el imbécil de doctor ‘the idiot of doctor’
 5a. ese imbécil de doctor ‘that idiot of a doctor’
 5b. el imbécil de un doctor que conocí ayer ‘the idiot of a doctor that I met yesterday’
 5c. los imbéciles de doctores que conocí ayer ‘the idiots of doctors that I met yesterday’
 6a. el coche del doctor ‘the car of the doctor’ (lit.)
 6b. un coche del doctor ‘a car of the doctor’ (lit.)
 7a. el doctor es un imbécil ‘the doctor is an idiot’
 7b. *el doctor es el imbécil ‘the doctor is the idiot’
 8a. esa mierda de libros ‘that shitty of books’
 8b. ese espanto de puerta ‘that fright of door’
 9a. el rata del doctor ‘the stingy of the doctor’ (lit.)
 9b. la rata del doctor ‘the evil of the doctor’ (lit.)
 10a. el imbécil del doctor ‘the idiot of the doctor’
 10b. $[_{DP} D.DEF_i \text{el imbécil}.DEF_i] [_{DP} D.DEF_i \text{el doctor}.DEF_i]$
 11. tmunat ha-nasi ‘picture the-president’ (the president’s picture)

Selected References. Casillas Martínez, L. D., 2003. “Gender mismatches in Spanish and French N_1/A de N_2 affective constructions: Index agreement vs. Morphosyntactic concord.” In J.-B. Kim, and S. Wechsler, eds., *The Proceedings of the 9th International Conference on HPSG*. Stanford, California: CSLI, 1-17. ~ Danon, G., 2007. “Definiteness spreading in the Hebrew construct state.” *Lingua* 118, 872-906. ~ Den Dikken, M., 2006. *Relators and Linkers. The Syntax of Predication, Predicate Inversion, and Copulas*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press. ~ Español-Echevarría, M., 1997. “Definiteness patterns in N/A of a N contexts and DP-internal XP-movement.” *MIT Working Papers in Linguistics* 31, 145-169. ~ Español-Echevarría, M., 1998. “N/A of a N DP contexts: Predicate raising and subject licensing.” In A. Schwegler, B. Tranel, and M. Uribe-Etxebarria, eds., *Romance Linguistics: Theoretical Perspectives*, 67-80. Amsterdam: John Benjamins. ~ Kayne, R., 1994. *The Antisymmetry of Syntax*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press. ~ Villalba, X., 2007. “True and spurious articles in Germanic and Romance.” *Cuadernos de Lingüística del I.U.I Ortega y Gasset* 14, 121-134.