

Solving a puzzle: discontinuous DPs and the syntax of definiteness in (old) Romanian

1. The puzzle. On the basis of the examination of a rich corpus of old Romanian (=OR) data (16th-18th centuries), we document and propose an analysis of discontinuous DPs, which are residually attested in this stage of Romanian. What is puzzling about OR is that discontinuous DPs are available even when the DP is definite, as illustrated by (1) below:

- (1) [A **duhului** **svântu**]_i dă-ne [DP _{t_i} **darurile**]
AL.INV spirt.DEF.GEN holy give.IMP.2SG=CL.DAT.1PL gifts.DEF.ACC
'Give us the gifts of the holy spirit' (old Romanian; FT.1571-5:2')

Data like those in (1) stand in need of an analysis, as the availability of discontinuous DPs has been traditionally related to the absence of articles.

2. The analysis

2.1 Background. The (un)availability of discontinuous DPs has been generally related in traditional scholarship and in more recent work in generative grammar (e.g. Bošković 2005, 2009, Bošković and Gajewski 2011) to the absence of articles; in a nutshell, there is a distinction between NP-languages (Latin) and DP-languages (Romance), and syntactic discontinuity is available only in the former type, as the barrierhood effect instantiated by the projection of the DP-layer is absent in NP-languages. By contrast, Ledgeway (2012, 2018) argues that the availability of discontinuous DPs (and other hyperbata), along with edge-fronting, is related to the head-directionality parameter: the existence of head-finality in a given grammar allows for the fronting to the edge of DP-internal constituents and, upon reaching the DP-edge, for their further movement to different left-peripheral positions in the clausal domain, giving rise to discontinuous DPs (cf. Szabolcsi 1983 for Spec,DP as an escape hatch). The gist of Ledgeway's analysis is that fronting to the DP-edge is based on the availability of short, antilocal movement; assuming Kayne's (1994) antisymmetric model, head-final structures are derived from corresponding head-initial structures by moving the complement across the head to a derived inner specifier (i.e. roll-up movement). Defined as such, roll-up movement is by default an antilocal type of movement, hence the relation between movement to the DP-edge (and syntactic discontinuity) and head-finality.

2.2 What the old Romanian data actually show. Before addressing the OR data, it is important to stress that edge-fronting and discontinuous DPs are residually attested in medieval Romance varieties (Giusti 2010; Poletto 2014; Iovino 2016; Ledgeway 2018, Nicolae 2019), in the same interval in which (i) head-final structures are still residually attested (witness (2), featuring a DP-internal heavy XP preceding its associated head, a structure derivable via roll-up movement, not via edge-fronting, cf. Zwarts 1974, Williams 1982) and (ii) (definite and indefinite) articles had already emerged in the Romance languages.

- (2) [DP a [AP **iubitorilor de Dumnezeu]** *episcopi*]
AL.F.SG loving.DEF.GEN of God bishops
'of the God-loving bishops' (old Romanian; Prav.1780:44)

However, the presence of (definite) articles has been generally shown to disallow both syntactic discontinuity and fronting to the DP-edge. (For example, with reference to old Italian (viz. Tuscan), Poletto (2014:78) remarks that 'when an XP is preposed in front of N, the N never has a definite determiner'.)

Let us now turn to the OR puzzle illustrated by (1) above. From the onset, it is obvious that data of this sort are clear counterexamples to the NP-/DP-parameter analysis of syntactic discontinuity; it is important to note that DPs with definite determiners other

than the definite article (e.g. demonstratives) may also be discontinuous. On the other hand, the corpus analysis I have undertaken has shown that DPs whose determiner is the indefinite article may not be discontinuous. Thus, all things being equal, it appears that the availability of discontinuous DPs is tightly related to the determiner of a given DP: some determiners (the definite article; demonstratives) freely allow syntactic discontinuity, while others (the indefinite article) do not. An accurate syntactic analysis of this phenomenon should therefore capitalise on the syntax of definiteness.

Adopting Pesetsky and Torrego's (2007) model which distinguishes between valuation and interpretability of features, the syntactic analysis that I propose has the following main ingredients: (i) the D^o-head is endowed with an interpretable, but unvalued definiteness feature ([*idef*][*unvalued*]); (ii) supplying a value for this [*idef*][*unvalued*] feature (i.e. feature valuation) may be ensured either via *Agree* or via *Merger*; (iii) if feature valuation is ensured by *Agree* (and no subsequent movement to D/Spec,DP), the D^o-position remains empty; (iv) if feature valuation is ensured by *Merger*, the D^o-position is filled by a determiner. Consequences: (a) determiners of the indefinite article type (or the freestanding definite article of Romance languages other than Romanian) directly merge in D^o; their presence in D^o blocks movement to Spec,DP, most probably due to a constraint of the *Generalized Doubly-Filled COMP* Filter type (Koopman 1996), which prevents the simultaneous lexicalization of the specifier and of the head of maximal projections. (b) By contrast, the Romanian definite article, which is a suffix, enters the syntactic derivation at the same time with the noun, and values the [*idef*][*unvalued*] of D^o via *Agree* (Nicolae 2015; Ledgeway 2017), with no subsequent movement to D^o/Spec,DP; hence Spec,DP is free to host constituents displaced to the DP-edge and serve as an escape hatch for extraction feeding discontinuous DPs. Direct empirical evidence that the suffixal definite article does not lexicalize the D-position is provided by the 'low definite article' construction (3) of OR (Cornilescu and Nicolae 2011): in this construction, non-DP-initial nouns suffixed by the definite article are preceded by DP-internal non-definite adjectives (which may potentially take over the definite article but do not); this distribution clearly indicates that the suffixal definite article values the [*idef*][*unvalued*] feature of D^o via *Agree*, with no subsequent movement to D^o.

- (3) de mari și de [DP putearnice fapte^{le} lui]
of great and of strong deeds.DEF his.GEN
'of his great and strong deeds' (old Romanian; Clst.1700-50:13^r)

To sum up, the old Romanian data investigated here provide evidence for an analysis of discontinuous DPs based on the head-directionality parameter, not on the NP-/DP-parameter, and on the distinct syntax of different types of determiners: some determiners lexicalize D^o and block movement to the edge and subsequent extraction, while others value D^o's features via *Agree* and do not undergo movement to D, allowing therefore Spec,DP to host constituents displaced to the edge and serve as an escape hatch. The complete disappearance of discontinuous DPs in the passage from old to modern Romanian is, of course, the effect of the generalisation of a head-initial grammar.

References: Bošković, Ž (2009). 'More on the no-DP analysis of article-less languages'; Bošković, Ž. (2005). 'Left branch extraction, structure of NP, and scrambling'; Bošković, Ž., Gajewski, J. (2011). 'Semantic correlates of the NP/DP parameter'; Cornilescu, Alexandra, Nicolae, A. (2011). 'On the syntax of Romanian definite phrases: Changes in the patterns of definiteness checking'; Giusti, G. (2010). 'Il sintagma aggettivale'; Iovino, R. (2016). 'Osservazioni diacroniche sulle espressioni nominali discontinue dal latino alle lingue romanze'; Kayne, R. (1994). *The Antisymmetry of Syntax*; Koopman, H. (1996). 'The Spec Head configuration'; Ledgeway, A. (2012). *From Latin to Romance. Morphosyntactic Typology and Change*; Ledgeway, A. (2017). 'The Romanian definite article in a comparative Romance perspective'; Ledgeway, A. (2018). 'On the decline of edge-fronting from Latin to Romance'; Nicolae, A. (2015). 'The parameter of definiteness: Diachronic and synchronic evidence'; Nicolae, A. (2019). *Word Order and Parameter Change in Romanian*; Pesetsky, D., Torrego, E. (2007). 'The syntax of valuation and the interpretability of features'; Poletto, C. (2014). *Word Order in Old Italian*; Szabolcsi, A. (1983). 'The possessor that ran away from home'; Williams, E. (1982). 'Another argument that passive is transformational'; Zwarts, F. (1974). 'On restricting base structure recursion in Dutch'.