The Role of FocP in Left-Periphery Processes in Slavic

The proposed paper is a reexamination of the literature arguing for the existence/non-existence of a DP projection in the syntax of Slavic languages and a discussion of the role of FocP in left-periphery processes. The no-DP/Parameterized DP view has been explored in depth by Bošković (2005, 2009, 2010) in his work on Serbo-Croatian (SC), while the Universal DP analysis has been promoted by several scholars for various Slavic languages including Pereltsvaig (2006, 2007, 2013), Bailyn (2012) and Rappaport (2000).

In order for nominal elements to be considered arguments and also for them to express referentiality they are implicated in moves to higher positions within syntactic structure. It is because of this movement that Longobardi indicated that the relatively high DP was the probable structural location for definiteness in the syntax (as cited in Pereltsvaig (2013)). However, definiteness in Slavic is expressed primarily in terms of Topic-Comment structure or is indicated through anaphoricity as expressed by case agreement and in genitive partitive or negative constructions, not by a lexicalized expression of DP (Brun, 2001). In Topic-Comment structure, discourse-new information occurs at the end of an utterance and topics expressed as definite appear at the beginning of the utterance. This ordering can be altered by intonation to create a focus distinction. The fronting of a constituent creates contrastive focus often accompanied by intonational stress which also indicates definiteness. Fronting is a left-periphery process, implicating, once again, a syntactic position in the expression of definiteness.

Bailyn (2012) accepts DP for Russian but also notes that Slavic demonstrative pronouns, quantifiers, possessive pronouns and numerals can appear to be outside of NP as demonstrated by their 'extractability'. To address this, Rappaport (2000) designates a special role for the Spec position in DP. For him, instead of a null element occupying D in article-less languages, there is a parameterized feature that attracts elements to D. In these cases, it is not DP that is parameterized but rather the EPP function of the D head providing an 'escape hatch' for the leftward movement of elements to the edge of DP creating the possibility for the element to reach a phase edge and subsequently extract.

Bošković (2005) uses the possibility of left-branch extraction (LBE) in Slavic languages as part of the evidence for there being no null D to block extraction along with adjunct extraction and scrambling. Adjunct extraction is similarly a leftward movement of adjuncts out of the NP, and scrambling allows for relatively free word order among constituents. While scrambling is claimed for SC (and other Slavic languages), it is not entirely free word order. As Bailyn (2012) observed, demonstrative pronouns, quantifiers, possessive pronouns and numerals are "severely" restricted in ways that adjectives are not. For example, demonstratives must always precede predicative adjectives and numbers must always follow possessives, even in "free word order" Slavic languages.

In her work on Adjective Ordering Restrictions (AORs) in nominal structure, Kim (2019) develops a theory of nominative structure that formalizes the emergent nature of the functional head denotational types within nominal structure. Calling it a Split-DP model, she uses previous models of nominal structure to distinguish first external and internal DP space and then to subdivide the internal space into three areas, i.e., High Field, Middle Field and Low Field, with lexical meaning emerging in the Low Field and functional meaning assigned in the Middle and High Fields. Within each field, there is a different denotational type of DP: predicative nominals are of type $<et>$, quantificational nominals are of type $<<et>t>$, and referential/deictic nominals are of type $<e>$. Hierarchically, $DP_{predicative}$ is the base level, above which is the $DP_{quantificational}$ level, and the topmost level is $DP_{referential/deictic}$.

Within the Low Field, Kim theorizes a hierarchy of possible functional projections where nominal modifiers can appear. Briefly, these are (from lowest to highest): √P (root phrase where compounds and idiomatic expressions are generated) nP, SortP, PlP (plural phrases), UnitP, LocP, FocP . In this hierarchy, DemP occurs in the [Spec, LocP] position, NumP occurs in the [Spec, UnitP] position and different feature-checking Adjective Phrases (APs) occur respectively in [Spec, SortP] and [Spec, nP]. In this framework, what determines which types of modifier a noun has depends on from which Spec position and within which DP field they have emerged. For example, nominal modifiers that aren't referential or quantificational emerge somewhere within DP$_{predicative}$. For the issues at stake in the DP/no-DP debate, the leftward movement through the functional phrases (FPs) within DP$_{predicative}$ can give a possible account for the demonstrative phrase (DemP)'s position relative to the higher DP$_{quantificational}$ and DP$_{referential/deictic}$ categories (allowing a null DemP without abandoning DP altogether) as well as the role played by FocP (as mentioned above, the operative category for most Slavic extraction and definiteness syntax).

Word order dynamics can instantiate definiteness in Slavic. LBE affects contrastive focus by means of fronting. While, mechanically, at the level of syntax, the process may involve cyclic extraction from a phase, in terms of discourse, the result is focus. As such, LBE has a role in definiteness interpretations that is supported by both the positional nature of the extracted modifier and by the intonational context wherein that modifier emerges. In light of the possible function of FocP in an expanded DP structure, the issue with left-periphery processes may be re-examined.

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