

The DP Category and Serbian Nominal Structure

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In this talk, I investigate nominal structure in Serbian, focusing on the issue of DP parameterization. Since the introduction of DP as a syntactic category in the late 1980s (Fukui and Speas 1986, Abney 1987), various investigators have questioned its universality on the basis of “article-less” languages, such as Japanese and Serbian. Two proposals have emerged. The Universal DP-Hypothesis holds that all languages project DP (Progovac 1998, Rappaport 2001, Bašić 2004, Cinque 2005, i.a.). The Parameterized DP-Hypothesis claims that languages without (definite) articles do not project DP (Fukui 1986, Corver 1992, Zlatić 1997, Bošković 2005, Despić 2011, i.a.). The second view holds, in particular, that: (i) D-like elements in DP-less languages are categorially adjectives/adjective-like elements and/or are NP-adjoined, and (ii) the lack of a DP projection has empirically verified syntactic implications for binding and extraction. In this talk, I examine data offered to support (i) and (ii) and show that it is not persuasive. Specifically, I offer counterarguments to the adjectival view of D-elements (morphological characteristics, copular constructions, stacking, word order and ban on modification of pre-nominal possessives) and to their claimed syntactic position as adjuncts (binding). I also show that two syntactic implications for extractability out of nominals (Left Branch Extraction and Adjunct Extraction) involve incorrect cross-linguistic generalizations and as such, require reexamination. I go on to offer new arguments in favor of the Universal DP-Hypothesis, examining a key syntactic point that has received little attention in the literature, viz., that lack of a DP projection in “article-less” languages will require an NP-adjunct analysis of relative clauses. I discuss apparent selectional dependencies between D-elements and relative clauses that strongly undermine this view. These findings thus support the presence of DP in “article-less” languages, and the broader claim of universality for the functional category set.