

# Introduction: The syntax of nominals and noun phrases

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The noun phrase was long a neglected area within research in modern syntactic theory. Studies tended to focus instead on the clause and less attention was paid to the internal structure of the noun phrase. The early studies would often take an interest in the properties of noun phrases only in so far as they interacted with clausal morpho-syntax. Nominalisations were then subject to some early studies, as in Chomsky (1970) and work inspired by it.

A major boost of interest in the morpho-syntax of noun phrases came with the appearance of Abney in (1987) and preceding that, but with less of an immediate impact than Abney, Szabolcsi (1981, 1984, 1987). There is a sense in which this development also was the result of approaching noun phrases from a clausal perspective. Work leading up to *Barriers* (Chomsky 1986) had established the idea that clauses were headed by functional categories, at this stage just C and I. Much of the early work on noun phrases then set out with the aim of establishing whether a functional head analysis of noun phrases was also motivated. The answer in this literature was positive and the DP-hypothesis was established; the determiner was assumed to head the noun phrase. The 1990s saw a period of intense work on noun phrases within generative grammar and further functional heads were posited, see for instance Ritter (1991), Valois (1991), Bernstein (1993), Cinque (1994) and Longobardi (1994), to mention but a few. Less attention was paid to noun phrases within theories other than Government and Binding, but a notable exception is the analysis proposed within Head-driven Phrase Structure Grammar by Netter (1994).

Interestingly, one of the earliest articles proposing that noun phrases were headed by determiners was based on Norwegian (Hellan 1986). However, the details of this analysis were quite different from those of the analysis later proposed by Abney

(1987) and adopted in the literature. The Scandinavian languages more generally came to play an important role in the DP literature. One major factor in this was the fact that in all Scandinavian languages, a noun marked for definiteness, such as Swedish *hästen* ‘horse.DEF’ can function as a full referential noun phrase, with a distribution very similar to that of *the horse*. If definiteness is to be captured through a functional node, D, then the question of how to analyse definite nouns arises; as nouns, they might be expected to occur under N in the tree structure, but they also carry the definiteness feature associated with the D head node. The general conclusion in the DP literature was that just as the functional nodes at clausal level – I or C – are associated with finiteness features and hence houses the finite verb, so a definite noun is found under D. In such analyses issues arise around the so-called double definiteness: if the definite noun is in D, where is the free definite determiner when the two co-occur, as in Norwegian and Swedish? In models that do not assume a close mapping between functional features and constituent structure, the conclusion was not quite so obvious. In such approaches, the feature +DEF can make its contribution to the semantics of the phrase from the node under N. Both types of analysis of Scandinavian noun phrases can be found; Delsing (1993a) is an analysis of Swedish noun phrases which does assume that definiteness has to be associated with a functional category, that is to say that the definite ending, or the word of which it is a part, occupies the D head of a DP. Börjars (1994; published as 1998), on the other hand, proposes an NP analysis of Swedish noun phrases in which the definite noun is found under N.

Regardless of what choice is made with respect to the position of the definite noun, Scandinavian noun phrases offer further interesting problems with respect to feature distribution. The adjectives are inflected for what has traditionally been termed WEAK versus STRONG, but which could also be referred to as DEFINITE versus INDEFINITE. In the Mainland Scandinavian languages, the presence of an adjective also generally requires the presence of a syntactic determiner. This is then an issue that has to be considered in any analysis of Scandinavian noun phrases, but there are also studies dedicated specifically to the analysis of the adjectival features, such as Delsing (1993b), Kester (1996) and Börjars & Donohue (2000) for instance.

Recognising the role that Scandinavian noun phrases could play in the development of a new DP analysis, in 1992, Anders Holmberg organised a workshop on Scandinavian noun phrases, the contributions from which were published as Holmberg (1992). Between them, the contributors to this volume produced a large number of papers and theses on the topic from different theoretical perspectives throughout the early 1990s. Other early works were Andersson (1987) and Perridon (1989), the latter being a study of the historical development of the definite ending in particular. More recently, detailed theoretical and typological studies – including a wealth of dialect data – have been provided by Vangsnes (1999), Julien (2005) and Dahl (2007a, b). The treatment of Scandinavian definite nouns remains at the centre

of some theoretical debates as between Embick & Noyer (2001) and Hankamer & Mikkelsen (2005, and also 2002).

Less work has been carried out on the general structure of Finnish noun phrases – and we are aware of no such work on Saami – though Juvonen (2000) provides a study of the possible emergence of a dedicated definiteness marker in Finnish through the grammaticalisation of demonstrative determiners (a similar argument is made for Estonian by Börjars & Hiietam 2003). Toivonen (2000) provides an account within Lexical-Functional Grammar of the expression of possession in Finnish. Given the scarcity of theoretical work on Finnish noun phrases, we are pleased to include in this volume an article by Pauli Brattico within which the distribution of case markers inside the Finnish noun phrase is used as evidence in favour of a Kaynean analysis in which Case is assigned not to phrases but to words.

It is of course not only in Finnish that demonstrative markers have played a role in the development of a definite article – the bound definiteness marker in the Scandinavian languages developed from a free demonstrative. Given this history, it is interesting to consider the phenomenon described by Janne Bondi Johannessen and by Tania Strahan in this volume. The two articles, which complement each other neatly, describe the demonstrative use of personal pronouns, which is present in all the Scandinavian languages, but which varies subtly between the standard languages and also among their varieties. Strahan provides analyses within Lexical-Functional Grammar of this use of personal pronouns in a number of varieties, whereas Johannessen focuses on the pragmatic conditions under which they are used.

There is also a substantial literature on certain detailed aspects of the Scandinavian noun phrases. Possessive constructions in Norwegian provide complex data that influences how noun phrases are analysed. The constructions are dealt with in many of the studies of Norwegian that we have mentioned here, but an early, thorough study is Fiva (1987). The definiteness associated with the possessive has been questioned by Koptjevskaja-Tamm (2003), and the history and current morpho-syntactic status of the genitive *-s* has been discussed by Delsing (1991b, 1999, 2001, 2002), Norde (1997, 2001, 2006) and Börjars (2003).

The role of (in)definiteness naturally figures in most, if not all, of the accounts provided for Scandinavian noun phrases, but there are also some detailed studies of its semantics and distribution, for instance Dyvik (1979), Vangsnes (2001) and Nivre (2002). Studies of quantification and pseudo-partitives have been provided by Delsing (1991a, 1993a), Kinn (2000) and Hankamer & Mikkelsen (2008). The so-called *what-for* construction, present in some Scandinavian languages and also in some Continental West-Germanic languages, has provided material for a number of detailed studies, for instance Corver (1990), Börjars (1992) and Leu (2008). These constructions also figure in Øystein Vangsnes' contribution to this volume, but his study has the broader aim of understanding the morpho-syntactic and semantic properties of question determiners. He argues that noun-phrase-internal

*wh*-expressions develop from modifiers into determiners and that there is a semantic change associated with this development, from ‘kind-querying noun phrases’ to ‘token-querying noun phrases’.

Scandinavian noun phrases have played an important role in the study of noun phrases and DPs; there are examples of general studies as well as very detailed narrow ones, there are analyses within many different theories – Government and Binding, Minimalism, Distributed Morphology, Head-driven Phrase Structure Grammar and Lexical-Functional Grammar – and there are comparative and dialect studies. Nevertheless, the contributions to this volume show that there is still work to be done: extending analyses to include Finnic languages, incorporating pragmatics into analyses, where the emphasis so far has been mainly on morpho-syntax, and also re-visiting properties that link noun phrase structure to clause structure, such as *wh*-movement. This introduction has if nothing else provided a wealth of references which can form the starting point for further studies.

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