

Classifiers as morphosyntactic licensors of NP Ellipsis: English vs. Romance

Artemis Alexiadou & Kirsten Gengel (Universität Stuttgart)

1. Aim of the paper. In the recent literature on NP ellipsis (NPE), the view has prevailed that NPE should be analysed in terms of movement to a focus projection DP internally (see e.g. Ntelitheos 2004 for Greek, Corver & van Koppen 2006 for Dutch; among others). In this paper we argue against this hypothesis and suggest that focus is not primarily involved in the licensing process of NPE. We show that NPE in a number of languages is licensed by the presence of a classifier phrase in the DP, which constitutes the morphosyntactic licensor of NPE. Building on Bernstein's (1993) analysis of ellipsis in the Romance languages, we show that classifiers, in different guises, can account not only for Romance NPE (Spanish/Italian) but also for English NPE with (optional) *one*-insertion. For English, we assume, following Borer (2005), that *one* is actually a classifier and not a pronoun as proposed by Barbiers (2005) and others, thereby explaining the need for overt number marking in English NPE with *one*-insertion. Moreover, we argue that classifiers encode the concept of division/partitivity, which we take to be the semantic licensing principle of NPE (following Sleeman 1996 and others).

2. Data. Two sets of cross-linguistic data show that NPE licensing depends on classifiers: (i) indefinite determiners in NPE in Spanish and Italian (cf. Bernstein 1993; (1)) and (ii) English NPE with and without *one*-insertion ((2); cf. Barbiers 2005).

3. NPE in Spanish/Italian. Following Bernstein (1993) and Picallo (2006), among others, we assume that the final vowel *-o/-a* on Spanish and Italian indefinite determiners/numerals in NPE (1) is a classifier. In line with their proposals, we analyse this vowel as heading a classifier phrase above the NP, and below number phrase (cf. (3)). In NPE, this classifier does not attach to the noun itself, since this is deleted at PF, but moves from the ClassP via NumP to D, taking up the Number affix in Num. The indefinite determiner/numeral *un-* is base-generated in Spec,NumP, according to Bernstein (1993) and Valois (1991). After cliticizing onto the *un-* in Spec,NumP, the by now complex form *uno* moves to D. In NPE, the agreement on the adjective is the same as on the indefinite determiner (which, in NPE, bears agreement instead of the noun). The structure and derivation we propose for Romance NPE is thus as in (3) (with strikethrough indicating deleted material).

4. NPE in English. The interpretable content of the classifier is a function that applies to nouns. In the Romance languages above, the presence of [CLASS] is manifested as formal gender on the noun. In other languages, the classifier may surface with other linguistic tools. English, for instance, does not have [gender] or [number] specification on adjectives. From the distribution of NPE without *one*-insertion (e.g. NPE with quantifiers, possessives, and demonstratives) we can observe that plural is a crucial factor for the licensing of NPE (e.g. *I'll have these* vs. *I'll have this *(one)*; cf. Lobeck 1995). Likewise, in NPE with *one*-insertion, number must be marked on *one* (cf. (2)d). Applying Borer's (2005) claim that English has a classifier phrase which hosts the indefinite article *a* (unlike *un-* in NumP in the Romance languages above) and also hosts *one*, to English NPE, we can derive both the distribution of *one*-insertion and the licensing of NPE by means of classifiers. Given that *one* bears number marking, and that it can also co-occur with numerals (e.g. *two* in (2)d), it Agrees with Number. Thus, English NPE is also derived by means of a classifier, marking [number] rather than [gender]. While *one* parallels the final vowel *-o/-a* in that both elements are classifiers, the two patterns differ in that the classifier in Romance, being an affix, moves up to Number to cliticize onto the determiner in NumP, while English *one* does not move.

5. Partitivity. In systems such as Borer's (2005) and Picallo's (2006) where the NP structure contains Classifier Phrases, partitivity can be associated with this Classifier projection. Classifiers introduce division and create individuals, and generate structures with an interpretation close to that of partitive NPs. The claim that classifiers encode partitivity is supported by Spanish (4) (cf. Martí 2003) and Italian, since *uno* is also the form appearing in partitive constructions. Thus, the final vowel on *un-* in Spanish and Italian NPE can be argued to provide the semantic licensing requirement of NPE as well. In English, the specification of NPE for partitivity can also be captured with *one*. Barbiers (2006) claims that *one* in English is specified for [atom/partitivity]. In this respect, following Borer's (2005) analysis of *one*, English *one* patterns exactly like the classifiers in Romance NPE. In particular, this analysis of English *one* accounts for the data in (2). The absence of ClassP (and absence of *one*) gives rise to a mass interpretation (as in (2)b). If ClassP also marks [number] (as in Borer's system), *one*-insertion should be generally possible, as shown in (2)d. Concerning the difference between the examples in (2)c and (2)d, we assume that the adjective as a modifier requires the local encoding of [number] and partitivity in the structure and thus causes *one*-insertion.

Examples

(1) a. Un/*Uno libro grande è sulla tavola. (*Italian*)
a book big is on-the table
'a big book is on the table'

b. Uno grande è sulla tavola.
'a big (one) is on the table'

(2) a. Talking about cars, I prefer a red *(one). (*English*)

b. Talking about wine, I prefer Australian (*one).

c. (Talking about new books,) I have two (*ones)

d. (Talking about books,) I have two new *(ones)

(3) [_{DP} D [_{NumP} Un- Num [_{FP} Adj [_{ClassP} -o/-a [_{NP} NP]]]]]

(4) a. **un** *problema grave* - 'a serious problem'

b. **uno** [e] *grave* - 'a serious one' NPE

c. **uno** *de tus problemas* - 'one of your problems' partitive

Selected References

Barbiers, S. 2005. Variation in the morphosyntax of 'one'. *Journal of Comparative Germanic Linguistics*.

Barbiers, S. 2006. Constant and variable properties of 'one'. DGfS/GLOW Summer School.

Bernstein, J. 1993. *Topics in the syntax of nominal structure across Romance*. Ph.D. Thesis, CUNY.

Borer, H. 2005. *In Name only*. Oxford University Press.

Corver, N. & M. van Koppen. 2006. Let's Focus on Noun Ellipsis. *GLOW Handout* (available online).

Lobeck, A. 1995. *Ellipsis*. Oxford University Press.

Martí, L. 2003. Contextual Variables as Pronouns. *Proceedings of SALT 13*.

Ntelitheos, D. 2004. *Syntax of Elliptical and Discontinuous Nominals*. MA Thesis, UCLA.

Picallo, C. 2006. On Gender and Number. Stuttgart.

Sleeman, P. 1996. *Licensing Empty Nouns in French*. Ph.D. Thesis, Amsterdam.

Valois, D. 1991. *The Internal Syntax of DP*. Ph.D. Thesis, UCLA.