On the Structure of NP in Serbo-Croatian: Evidence from Binding

Miloje Despić
miloje.despic@huskymail.uconn.edu
University of Connecticut

Introduction. The structure of NP in Serbo-Croatian (SC) has been a subject to a lot of controversy in the literature. On the one hand, authors like Progovac (1998) and Bašić (2004) support the Universal DP Hypothesis (UDPH) by assuming that all languages, including article-less languages like SC, have overtly or covertly realized DP. Bošković (2005), on the other hand, adopts the view that languages without articles, like SC do not project DP. The aim of this paper is to present an argument against the existence of DP in SC based on certain binding facts in this language. The explanation of the facts crucially depends on full adoption of Kayne's (1994) view of syntax, a theory commonly assumed by UDPH proponents.

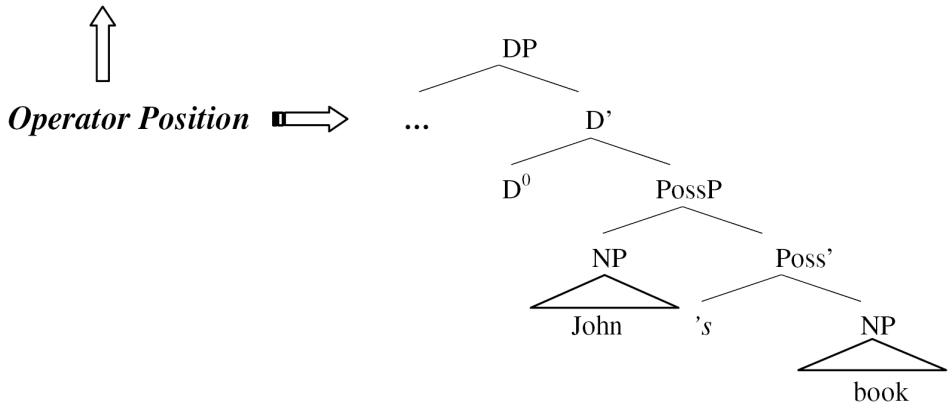
The problem. Kayne (1994) accounts for English (1)-(2) by adopting the structure in (3). Following Szabolcsi's (1983) analysis of Hungarian possessives, he assumes English possessors are preceded by an empty D. He takes SpecDP in (3) to be an operator position, which although essential to binding of a pronoun qua variable, is irrelevant to Conditions A/B/C of the binding theory. So, in English, the possessor phrase, when an operator phrase, moves up in LF to SpecDP making the operator binding of the pronoun in (4)-(5) possible, since it can c-command out of DP from this position, according to Kayne's definition of c-command. (6) is excluded as desired because *every girl* doesn't c-command *herself* from Spec of what is in (3) labeled as PossP. When it moves to SpecDP in LF it does come to c-command *herself*, but it still can't license the reflexive since this position is relevant only for operator-variable binding. Significantly, SC counterparts of (1)-(2) ((7)-(8)), have exactly the opposite grammaticality status, which is unexpected under the assumptions of the UDPH proponents, who usually take the structure in (9) (Bašić 2004), in one or the other form, to be the correct structure for SC NPs. Here, adjectives, possessives and demonstratives are all in Specs of different projections headed by null elements.

The proposal. (7)-(8), and the contrast with English can be accounted for if we adopt Kayne's proposal that Specs can c-command out of the phrase they are Specs of, which immediately suggests that there can be no null DP projected above the possessor in SC (7)-(8). So, instead of (9), we argue for (10), where all prenominal elements modifying the noun and agreeing with it (in case, number and gender) are positioned in the multiple Specs of NP (see Bošković, 2005). Thus, possessives in (7)-(8) are in Specs of subject NPs, and due to the lack of DP they *do* c-command out of the subject, inducing Condition C/B violations; exactly opposite from (1)-(2). Also, contrary to what (9) predicts, (7) does not improve even when a demonstrative - an indicator of DP projection in (9), is overtly present ((11)). This further argues in favor of (10) over (9); both *ovaj* and *njegov* c-command out of the subject because they are (multiple) Specs of the same subject NP, and not of different projections. Moreover, there is a difference between (12) and (13); in (12) the quantifier, similarly to adjectives, agrees with the noun and is by our assumption in SpecNP, while in (13) it has the non-agreeing *frozen* form, and heads QP (Franks, 1994), taking the whole NP with the possessor in SpecNP as its genitive complement. (13) is then better because the possessor doesn't c-command out of the subject.

Conclusion. Our proposal, together with Kayne's observation that Specs c-command out of the phrase they are Specs of, correctly predicts the binding data in SC. Also, it provides evidence against the claim that DP is universally present.

(1) His$_i$ father considers John$_i$ highly intelligent. (2) John$_i$'s father considers him$_i$ highly intelligent.

(3) [$_{DP}$ …[$_{D'}$ D^0 [$_{PossP}$ John [$_{Poss'}$'s [$_{NP}$ book]]]]].



(4) Every girl's father thinks she is a genius.

(5) Every girl's father thinks he knows what's best for her.

(6) *Every girl's father admires herself.

(7) *Njegov$_i$ prijatelj voli Marka$_i$.
His friend loves Marko
'His$_i$ friend loves Marko$_i$.'

(8) *Markov$_i$ prijatelj voli njega$_i$.
Marko's friend loves him.
'Marko$_i$'s friend loves him$_i$.'

(9) [$_{DP}$ **ovaj** [$_{D'}$ D^0 [$_{PossP}$ **njegov** [$_{Poss'}$ Poss^0 [$_{\alpha P}$ **veliki** [$_{\alpha'}$ α^0 [$_{NP}$ **sused**]]]]]]].
This his big neighbor

(10) [$_{NP}$ *Demonstr.* [$_{N'}$ *Poss.* [$_{N'}$ *AP*[$_{N'}$ N]]]].

(11) *[$_{NP}$ Ovaj [$_{N'}$ njegov$_i$ [$_{N'}$ prijatelj]]] voli Marka$_i$.
This3psg his 3psg friend loves Marko-Acc
'This friend of his$_i$ loves Marko$_i$.'

(12) *[$_{NP}$ Mnogi [$_{N'}$ Dejanovi$_i$ [$_{N'}$ prijatelji]]] su došli na njegovo$_i$ venčanje.
Many-Nom-masc Dejan$_i$'s-Nom-masc friends-Nom-masc are-3pl came to his$_i$ wedding

(13) ? [$_{QP}$ [$_{Q'}$ Mnogo [$_{NP}$ Dejanovih$_i$ [$_{N'}$ prijatelja]]]] je došlo na njegovo$_i$ venčanje.
Many-Nom Dejan$_i$'s-Gen-masc friends-Gen-masc is-3sg came to his$_i$ wedding
'Many of Dejan$_i$'s friends came to his$_i$ wedding.'

References

[1] Bašić, Monika 2004. Nominal subextractions and the structure of NPs in Serbian and English. MA Thesis: University of Tromsø.

[2] Bošković, Željko 2005. On the locality of left branch extraction and the structure of NP. *Studia Linguistica* 59, 1-45.

[3] Franks, Stephen 1994. Parametric properties of numeral phrases in Slavic, *NLLT* v. 12, 4, 599-677.

[4] Kayne, Richard 1994. *The Antisymmetry of Syntax*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

[5] Progovac, Ljiljana 1998. Determiner phrase in a language without determiners. *Journal of Linguistics* **34**, 165–179.

[6] Szabolcsi, Anna 1983. The possessor that ran away from home. *The Linguistic Review* 3, 89-102.