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1997

The Structure of the Serbian Noun Phrase

by

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**Approved by
Dissertation Committee:**

This Dissertation is dedicated to the memory of

Milovan and Nedeljko Zlatić

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The Structure of the Serbian Noun Phrase

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In this dissertation I examine the internal syntax of noun phrases in Serbian. Based on headedness tests and word order patterns, I show that noun phrases in Serbian, a language with no articles, are headed by a Noun and not by a functional category, Determiner. I claim that headedness is a language specific property, related to the presence/absence of definite/indefinite articles in a given language.

I show that the semantic class of determiners employed in Serbian corresponds to a syntactic category, Adjective. I further show that the semantic notion of a quantifier corresponds to two syntactic categories in Serbian, an adjective or a noun, and not to a functional category, Q(uantifier). I point out that there is no empirical evidence that Serbian inflectional affixes, marking number, gender and case form their own functional projections. Thus, the functional

categories used by many researchers working in a derivational framework to account for word order variation, cannot be used to account for word order in the Serbian noun phrase. Rather, I show that a non-derivational theory, such as Head Driven Phrase Structure Grammar, is more suitable for explaining both the word order and agreement facts pertaining to the Serbian noun phrase.

I also discuss in this dissertation the argument structure and case-assigning properties of nouns. I illustrate how the semantic distinction between process and result nominals is reflected morphologically and syntactically in Serbian. I show that binding relations are sensitive to this semantic distinction, whereby only subjects of process nominals count as obligatory binders of reflexives, paralleling the obligatory binding of reflexives by clausal subjects. An argument-structure based binding theory is proposed that accounts for these facts. With respect to case, I distinguish between structural and inherent case. In particular, I show that genitive case, assigned by nouns, is structural in Serbian; all other cases assigned by nouns are inherent. Nominalization and word order facts provide the evidence for this distinction.

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