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1997

The Structure of the Serbian Noun Phrase

by

Larisa Zlatić, B.A., M.A.

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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.

Table of Contents

Chapter 1 Introduction	1
1.1 The Issues of Noun Phrase Structure	1
1.2 Competing Analyses of Noun Phrase Structure	3
1.2.1 The DP Analysis.....	4
1.2.2 The NP Analysis.....	11
1.3 Criteria for Headedness.....	15
1.3.1 Zwicky 's (1985) Criteria	17
1.3.2 Hudson's (1987) Criteria	20
1.4 Organization	23
Chapter 2 Introduction to the Serbian Noun Phrase.....	25
2.1 Overview	25
2.2 Elements of the Noun Phrase	26
2.2.1 Types of Prenominal Elements	26
2.2.2 Neutral Order.....	27
2.2.3 Scrambling	35
2.3 Means for Expressing (In)definiteness.....	42
2.3.1 Determiners	44
2.3.1.1 Demonstratives.....	45
2.3.1.2 The Determiner Jedan 'One'	51
2.3.1.3 The Determiner Neki 'Some'	55
2.3.2 Definite vs. Indefinite Adjectives.....	58
2.3.3 Genitive NPs vs. Possessive Adjectives.....	62
2.3.4 Genitive vs. Accusative NPs	67
2.3.5 Word Order (Theme-Rheme)	69
2.3.6 Summary	72
2.4 The Noun as the Head of the Noun Phrase	73

Chapter 3 The Structure of the Serbian Noun Phrase	80
3.1 An Outline of the HPSG Framework	81
3.1.1 The Lexicon.....	82
3.1.2 Grammatical Relations	86
3.1.3 Universal Principles and Immediate Dominance Schemata	91
3.2 Proposed Noun Phrase Structure.....	98
3.3 Syntactic Category of Prenominal Elements.....	105
3.3.1 Determiners & Adjectives are Non-Distinct Categories	105
3.3.2 Demonstratives are Nouns or Adjectives	108
3.3.2.1 Demonstratives as Adjectives	108
3.3.2.2 Demonstratives as Nouns	110
3.3.3 Universal Quantifiers	120
3.3.4 Possessives	122
3.3.4.1 Possessives are Adjectives	123
3.3.4.2 Possessive Adjective Formation.....	126
3.4 Agreement	130
3.4.1 Concord	130
3.4.2 Definiteness Agreement	134
3.5 The Role of the Quantifier in the Noun Phrase.....	137
3.5.1 Adjectival Quantifiers	138
3.5.2 Noun Quantifiers.....	142
3.5.2.1 Quantifiers as Inflected Nouns.....	142
3.5.2.2 Quantifiers as Uninflected Nouns	146
3.5.2.3 Comparison with Previous Accounts	161
3.5.3 Noun Phrases with Numerals 2,3 and 4	170
3.6 Summary and Conclusions.....	176
Chapter 4 Argument Structure And Case Assigning Properties of Nouns	178
4.1 Introduction	178

4.2 Theories of Argument Structure.....	179
4.3 Distinguishing Process from Result Nominals in Serbian	185
4.3.1 Morphological Distinctions.....	185
4.3.2 Syntactic Distinctions.....	189
4.4 Expressing Arguments in Serbian.....	193
4.5 Case Assigning Abilities of Nouns	202
4.5.1 Nouns as Proper Case Assigners in Serbian.....	203
4.5.2 Structural vs. Inherent Case: Evidence from Nominalization.	210
4.6 The Argument Structure of Serbian Nouns.....	216
4.6.1 Argument Structure and Linking.....	217
4.6.2 Linear Precedence Rules	224
4.6.3 Motivation for ARG-S: Binding	227
4.6.4 The Status of Agentive PPs.....	230
4.7 Summary and Conclusions.....	235
Chapter 5 Some Syntactico-Semantic Processes in the Serbian Noun Phrase... 237	
5.1 Introduction	237
5.2 Anaphor Binding.....	238
5.2.1 Binding Facts.....	238
5.2.2 Formulating a Binding Theory	248
5.2.2.1 Inadequacy of Existing Binding Theories.....	248
5.2.2.2 An Account	257
5.3 Left branch extraction	265
5.3.1 The Relevant Facts	266
5.3.2 An Agreement Approach to Left Branch Extraction	275
5.3.2.1 The Filler-Gap Agreement Principle.....	275
5.3.2.2 Formalizing the Account.....	276

Chapter 6 Concluding Remarks	284
References	288
Vita	304