

Chapter 6 Concluding Remarks

In this dissertation, I have examined the internal syntax of Serbian noun phrases with the main focus being to determine the head of the noun phrase. With the extension of the X-bar theory to functional categories (e.g. Chomsky 1986a, Abney 1987, Pollock 1989), and with the great importance given to functional categories in explaining word order variation (e.g. Fukui & Speas 1986, Ouhalla 1991, Chomsky 1995b) the task of identifying the head of the noun phrase is far from trivial.

The results of this dissertation are closer to Fukui & Speas' (1986) hypothesis about parametric variation of functional categories, than to Chomsky's (1995) hypothesis about their universality.¹⁰⁰ Specifically, based on word order facts and the results of tests for determining headedness (e.g. Zwicky 1985), I have shown that noun phrases in Serbian, a language with no articles, are headed by a Noun and not by a functional category, Determiner. I hypothesized that headedness of the noun phrase is a language specific property, related to the presence/absence of definite/indefinite articles in a given language. A goal for future research would be to further test this hypothesis and see whether there is a correlation between the absence of definite/indefinite articles and the lack of a syntactic category, Determiner. The preliminary data from non-articleless

¹⁰⁰Similar to Chomsky, Ouhalla (1991), working within a Principle & Parameters framework, assumes that every language has functional categories and that parametric variation arises only with respect to different ordering of functional heads in a given language.

languages such as Japanese (Gil 1987, Simon 1989) and some 'articleless' Slavic languages (Corver 1992), speak in favor of such a hypothesis.

I showed that the semantic class of determiners employed in Serbian (demonstratives and the indefinite determiners *jedan* 'one' and *neki* 'some') are categorially adjectives, and that the semantic notion of a quantifier corresponds to two syntactic categories, an adjective and a noun, and not to a functional category Quantifier. I emphasized that there is no empirical evidence that Serbian inflectional affixes, marking number, gender and case, form their own functional projections. Having no functional categories in the Serbian noun phrase, the word order cannot be explained via a feature-checking mechanism obtained through (overt or covert) movement of a lexical category to an appropriate functional category, as the minimalist theory of Chomsky (1995) suggests. Rather, I showed 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.

In this work, I have also discussed the issues of argument structure and case assigning properties of nouns. Regarding the first issue, I demonstrated that only process nominals have an argument structure whereas other nominals do not. I claimed that the argument structure must be distinct from both the VALENCE attribute, where grammatical functions are listed, and from the CONTENT attribute, where thematic roles of a predicate's arguments are encoded. By having an independent argument structure feature, I showed that it was possible to underspecify the argument structure of Serbian nouns, and get various

alternations of argument realizations, via simple linking rules that map elements on the argument structure to the corresponding grammatical functions. These linking rules are able to capture the observed alternation between prenominal possessive adjectives and postnominal genitive NPs for expressing agents or themes, without resorting to movement. Moreover, under the assumption that binding relations occur on argument structure, it became possible to define the notion of a binder for a reflexive in terms of the argument structure prominence, i.e., as the leftmost element on the ARG-S list. I showed that binding in Serbian NPs depends on the nature of the noun's argument structure. Specifically, binding relations are sensitive to the semantic distinction between process and result nominals, whereby only subjects of process nominals count as obligatory binders of reflexives, paralleling the obligatory binding of reflexives by clausal subjects. The extent to which anaphors in other Slavic languages are also sensitive to this distinction is put forth for future research.

With respect to case, I distinguished between structural and inherent case. In particular, I showed that the genitive case, assigned by nouns, is structural in Serbian; all other cases assigned by nouns are inherent. Nominalization, the distribution of NP complements of nouns, and the agreement and distribution of noun phrases introduced by uninflected quantifiers, provide the evidence for this distinction. This analysis can automatically be extended to other Slavic languages with show similar behavior with respect to case.

In this dissertation, I also discussed left-branch extraction, proposing an agreement-based analysis of this type of extraction. Specifically, I claimed that

only adjectival categories can be extracted from the containing noun phrase because they share CONCORD features with the head of the phrase from which they are removed. These agreement features identify a filler with the features of a gap. Nominal categories, not being in an agreement relation with the head of the phrase that contains the gap, cannot identify a filler-gap dependency, hence, they cannot be extracted. An agreement-based trace principle is proposed that accounts for the distribution of left-branch gaps.