A Morphological Account of Definite Nouns in Danish

In this paper we argue against the head movement analysis of definiteness marking in Danish put forth in Delsing (1993), and propose an alternative analysis where definite forms like *hesten* (horse.DEF) are determiners derived in the lexicon by a morphological rule.

Delsing proposes that definite forms like *hesten* are derived by head movement of N to D followed by cliticization of D to N. As shown in (1), the enclitic article cannot occur with an attributive adjective, and Delsing argues that this is due to the adjective blocking head movement of N to D. Definiteness is instead realized as a lexical article in D (2). We present three arguments against this analysis.

(1)	*hesten	røde	(2)	den røde hest
	horse.DEF	red		the red horse

First, Delsing assumes a non-standard DP structure where AP is the complement of D and NP a right-hand specifier of A. In this structure nothing prevents A moving to D, yielding the ungrammatical **røden hest* (red.DEF horse), and Delsing has to stipulate that adjectives cannot move to D in Danish. Second, the distribution of the postnominal definiteness marker *-en* is sensitive to the morphological properties of N. There are present participle forms like *studerende* (student) that function as nouns in the syntax, but cannot take the definite suffix (**studerende.en*). Also, proper names cannot occur with the definite suffix except when the proper name contains overt number morphology. These facts are problematic for Delsing's analysis where the distribution of *-en* is determined exclusively by syntax. Third, relative clauses affect the realization of definiteness. In the absence of any modifiers the prenominal definite article is impossible, and only the definite suffix can be used. When a relative clause is present either definite article is possible. In Delsing's analysis the prenominal definite article results from N failing to move to D. To account for the relative clause facts under Delsing's analysis it would have to be shown that a relative clause optionally blocks head-movement of N to D.

We propose an alternative analysis, adopting the more standard DP structure where D takes an NP complement and APs left-adjoin to NP. To account for the distribution of definiteness marking in Danish we propose that a definite form like *hesten* is the output of a morphological rule that combines a noun with the definite suffix to yield a determiner (N + DEF $\rightarrow$ D). The rule specifies that the determiner inherits the number, gender and subcategorization of the N. In particular a derived D like *hesten* cannot take a NP complement, since the N *hest* (horse) cannot take an NP complement. The reason *hesten* cannot occur with adjectives is that there is no NP for AP to adjoin to. In accord with the standard assumptions about DP structure, the prenominal definite article *den* is simply a transitive D taking an NP complement. Since APs left-adjoin to NPs, APs may occur with prenominal definite articles. When no adjective is present only the definite form *hesten* is possible. Following Poser (1992), we argue that the lexical item *hesten* blocks the phrase *den hest*.

This analysis avoids the problems presented above for Delsing's (1993) analysis. First, no head-movement is involved so the problem of constraining this movement appropriately does not arise. Second, the distribution of the definite suffix is governed by a morphological rule, which allows us to account for morphologically determined gaps in the distribution of the definite suffix. Third, the distribution of definiteness marking in DPs containing a relative clause is accounted for if we assume that relative clauses adjoin to DP, not to NP in Danish. We show that this assumption is independently supported by the distribution of relative clauses with respect to proper names and pronouns.

Delsing, Lars-Olof (1993) *The Internal Structure of Noun Phrases in the Scandinavian Languages.* Ph.D. thesis, University of Lund.

Poser, William (1992) *Blocking of Phrasal Constructions by Lexical Items.* In Ivan Sag & Anna Szabolcsi (eds.) *Lexical Matters*, Stanford: CSLI.