A Morphological Account of Definite Nouns in Danish

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Introduction

- Two ways of marking definiteness in Danish

(1) Definite suffix on noun (= definite noun)

a. hest**en**
horse.DEF
'the horse'

(2) Prenominal definite article

a. **den** røde hest
DEF red horse
'the red horse'

- Delsing (1993) derives (1) by head movement (og N to D)
- Problems with the head movement analysis:
  - Unsupported assumptions about the structure of Danish noun phrases
  - Fails to capture distribution of definite nouns
- Present proposal: definite forms are morphologically derived

Structure of the talk

1. Delsing's head movement analysis applied to Danish
2. Problems with the head movement analysis
3. A morphological analysis of definite nouns
4. Conclusion

1 Delsing's head movement analysis

Definite nouns: head movement of N to D (Delsing, 1993, 74)

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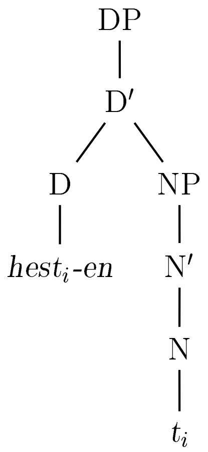

Prenominal definiteness marking: An attributive adjective blocks head movement of N to D, and definiteness spelled out as a lexical article in D (Delsing, 1993, 75)

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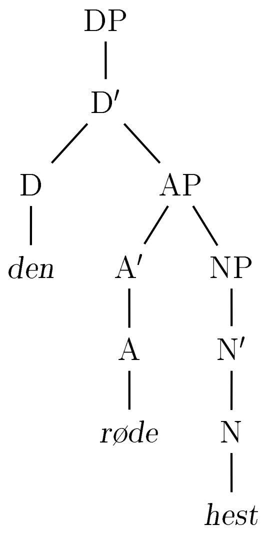

2 Problems with the head movement analysis

1. Problematic assumptions about DP-internal structure
2. Constraining head movement
3. Morphological gaps in the distribution of the definite suffix

2.1 Internal structure of DP

Delsing's analysis:

- AP is the complement of D
- NP is a right-hand specifier of AP

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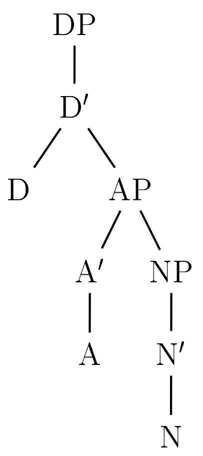

Problems

- Multiplies subcategorization: D can take NP, AP or DegP (Degree Phrase) complement
- Specifiers are uniformly to the left in Danish, including Spec-IP (subject position), and Spec-CP (fronted *wh*-phrases).
- Obscures the fact that APs, but not NPs, are optional

2.2 Constraining head movement

Nothing prevents A from moving to D:

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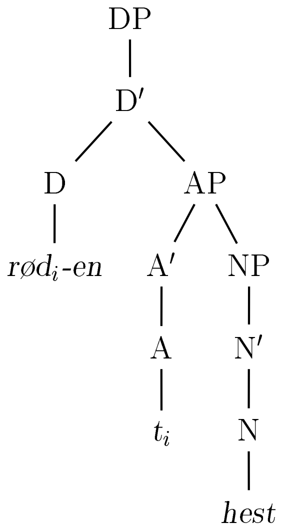

But the result is ungrammatical:

(7) rød**en** hest
red.DEF horse

2.3 Morphologically defined gaps

Nouns derived from present participle forms

(8) a. studere-nde
study-PRPRT
'*studying/student*'

b. en studerende
a studying
'*a student*'

(9) a. ***studere-nde-en**
study-PRPRT-DEF

b. den studerende
the study-PRPRT
'the student'

Proper names – except when preceded by plural morphology!

(10) a. den Maria (jeg kender)
the Maria (I know)
'the Maria that I know'

b. ***Maria-en** (jeg kender)
Maria-DEF (I know)

(11) a. (to) Maria-er
(two) Maria-PL
'(two) Marias'

b. Maria-er-ne
Maria-PL-DEF
'the Marias'

The head movement analysis cannot capture these morphologically defined gaps

3 A morphological analysis of definite nouns

Morphology Morphological rule of definite noun formation (DNF):

(12) $\mathrm{N} + \textsc{def} \rightarrow \mathrm{D}$

(13) $[hest]_{\mathrm{N}} + \textit{-en} \rightarrow [hest\text{-}en]_{\mathrm{D}}$

- definite nouns are determiners (category D)
- feature matching and percolation
  - gender and number
  - subcategorization of of N is passed on to D
- unification-based formalization (e.g. HPSG, Pollard and Sag (1987))

Syntax DP structure:

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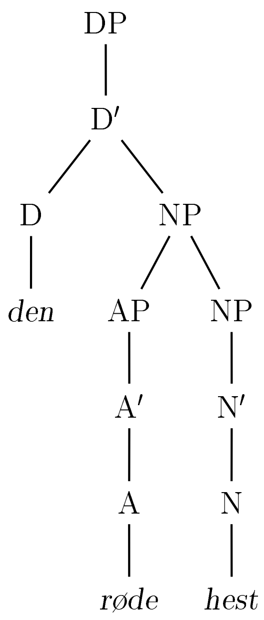

- NP is the complement of D
- AP is left-adjoined to NP

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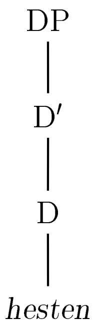

- *hesten* enters the syntax as a determiner
- Pronouns and unmodified proper names also project non-branching DPs

3.1 Accounting for the distribution of definite nouns

1. The two definiteness markers do not co-occur:

(16) *__den__ (røde) hest**en**
the (red) horse.DEF

Account:

- The definite article takes a NP complement.
- *hesten* heads a DP
- The two cannot combine

Note that pronouns can also not occur with a determiner[1]

(17) *den hun
the she

2. The definite suffix does not co-occur with attributive adjectives

(18) *røde hest**en**
red horse.DEF

Account:

- APs adjoin to NPs.
- *hesten* projects a DP.
- The two cannot combine

Again, pronouns seem to behave similarly:

(19) *høje hun
tall she

[1]Unlike definite nouns and pronouns proper names *can* appear with determiners, but only when used in the sense 'someone called X'. We assume that this involves semantic type shifting (from $<e>$ to $<e,t>$) paralleled by a syntactic category shift (from D to N), see Thomsen (1997).

3. When no modifier is present only the suffixed definite form is possible:

(20) a. hest**en**
horse.DEF

b. ***den** hest
DEF horse

Account:

- The existence of a lexical form blocks a synonymous phrasal form (Poser, 1992).
- *hesten* blocks *den hest*
- When the two are not synonymous there is no bloking effect:

(21) dén hest
that horse

The demonstrative *dén* ('that') is homophonous with the definite article, except for stress.

4. Morphological gaps in the distribution of the definite suffix

A. Present participle forms

(22) a. *studere-nde-en
study-PRPRT-DEF

b. den studerende
the study-PRPRT
'the student'

Account:

- Morphologically, *studerende* is a non-finite verbal form.[2]
- The Definite Noun Formation Rule applies to noun stems only
- The rule cannot apply to *studerende*

[2] In most cases the syntactic category of a word is identical to its morphological category, but we assume that the two *can* differ, as in the case of *studerende*, which is morphologically a verbal form, but functions as a noun in the syntax.

B. Proper Names

(23) *Maria-en
Maria-DEF

Account:

- Proper names are category D
- The Definite Noun Formation Rule applies to noun stems only
- The rule cannot apply to *Maria*

However, overt number morphology licenses morphological definiteness marking:

(24) Maria-er-ne
Maria-PL-DEF
'the Marias'

Account:

- Plural morphology indicates category change (from D to N)
- This allows the plural marked form *Mariaer* ('Marias') to undergo the Definite Noun Formation Rule, yielding the morphological definite form *Mariaerne* ('the Marias')

Summary of analysis and comparison with Delsing (1993)

- Definite noun forms are determiners derived by a morphological rule (DNFR), and not by head movement as in Delsing (1993).
- The definiteness marker *-en* is treated as an affix, whereas Delsing treats it as a clitic[3]
- The distribution of definite nouns follow from their catagorical status together with standard assumptions about the internal structure of DP (Ds take NP complements, APs adjoin to NPs. No head movement is involved.
- Morphological gaps in the distribution of the definite suffix arise when the rule of definite noun formation fails to apply to a form that is not a noun morphologically.

[3]Mikkelsen (1998) shows that the definiteness marker *-en* passes five of the six criteria for affixhood proposed in Zwicky and Pullum (1983). The sixth criteria (relative ordering) is inconclusive.

4 Relative Clauses

5 Conclusion

References

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