

The structure of definite complex nominals (in Danish)

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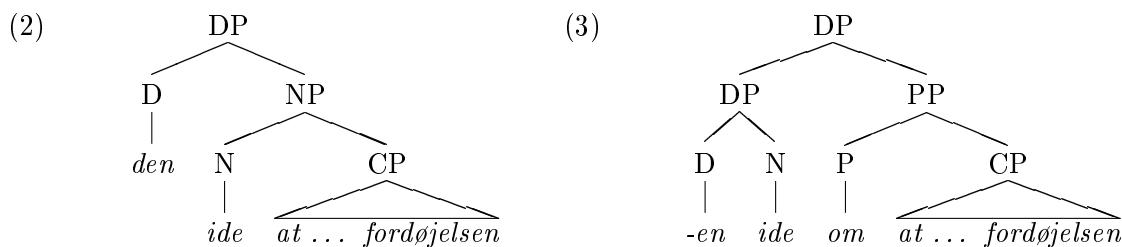
The structure of determiner-noun-CP sequences like *the idea that ginger aids digestion* remains understudied. Abney (1987), for instance, only mentions these in passing (pp. 62, 63, 64, 76). Grimshaw (1990:94–101) discusses them in more detail, but, like Abney, makes no commitments about their phrase structure. A previously unnoticed fact is that in Danish the realization of such DPs interact with definiteness marking. On this basis we argue that, at least in Danish, there are two different structures available, one in which the CP forms a constituent with N to the exclusion of D and one in which it does not. This structural distinction, we argue, reflects a difference in interpretation.

Danish displays two patterns for non-relative postnominal CPs:

- (1) a. **den** ide at ingefær gavner fordøjelsen
 DEF idea that ginger aids digestion.DEF
 b. ide-**en om** at ingefær gavner fordøjelsen
 ide-DEF about that ginger aids digestion.DEF

In (1a), the CP immediately follows N and definiteness is realized as a prenominal article. In (1b), the CP is preceded by an obligatory preposition (typically, but not always, *om*) and definiteness is realized as a suffix on N. The opposite patterns (DEF N P CP, N-DEF CP) are ungrammatical.

In general, the definite suffix is found when D is sister to a minimal N and the prenominal article elsewhere (Hankamer & Mikkelsen 2002, 2005). We therefore propose that (1a) has the structure in (2), while (1b) has the structure in (3):



In (2), D is not sister to a minimal N, and is consequently realized as a prenominal article. In (3), D and N are sisters, accounting for the definite suffix. The PP is attached high, as are all post-nominal PPs in Danish (Hankamer & Mikkelsen 2005, 2008). These structures allow us to explain the contrast in (4):

- (4) a. ***den** ide som han fremlagde at ingefær gavner fordøjelsen
 DEF idea that he put-forth that ginger aids digestion
 b. ide-**en** som han modsagde **om** at ingefær gavner fordøjelsen
 idea-DEF that he challenged about that ginger aids digestion

(4a) is impossible because a relative clause could not intervene between N and its sister. In (4b), on the other hand, since the PP attaches high, it may attach outside of a relative clause.

Hawkins (1978:130–149) identifies definite DPs that can be used without prior familiarity with the referent (referent-establishing definites), in contrast with anaphoric definites. Corpus data indicate that definites like (1a) are referent-establishing, while definites like (1b) are anaphoric. The Danish facts thus suggest a possible structural distinction underlying Hawkins' categorization: CPs in referent-establishing definites form a constituent with N, while CPs in anaphoric definites do not.

Abney, Steven (1987) *The English Noun Phrase in its Sentential Aspect*, MIT Dissertation. **Grimshaw**, Jane (1990) *Argument Structure*, MIT Press. **Hawkins**, John (1978) *Definiteness and Indefiniteness: A Study in Reference and Grammaticality Prediction*, Croom Helm.