

**SPECIFIC IS NOT DEFINITE\***

*Tabea Ihsane* ([Tabea.Ihsane@lettres.unige.ch](mailto:Tabea.Ihsane@lettres.unige.ch)) and  
*Genoveva Puskás* ([Genoveva.Puskas@lettres.unige.ch](mailto:Genoveva.Puskas@lettres.unige.ch))

**1. INTRODUCTION**

In this paper, we propose a structure for the left periphery of nominals that is parallel to the one discussed by Rizzi (1997) for the left periphery of the clause. The observation that definite DPs are not necessarily specific leads us to make a structural distinction between a functional projection in which specificity is checked and another one where definiteness appears. The projection hosting the [+/-definite] feature syntactically corresponds to the clausal Finiteness Phrase, the lowest projection of the left periphery, whereas the [+specific] feature characterises a projection parallel to the clausal Topic Phrase, in that it hosts information which has already been introduced in the discourse. Building on the notions of specificity and definiteness, we argue that they trigger DP-internal movement. In specific DPs, be they definite or indefinite, the determiner checks the specificity feature. Other elements, like demonstratives, may also move to the specificity projection. On the basis of data which show that different types of elements can be emphasised, we also argue for a Focus Phrase. Dominating the various projections mentioned, we postulate a Determiner Phrase, parallel to the clausal Force Phrase.

The paper is organised as follows: Section 2 is devoted to the Definite Phrase and the Topic Phrase. First, the difference between definite and specific nominals is addressed. We propose that (in)definite articles are generated in the Definite Phrase and that it is the projection TopP which hosts the feature [+specific]. When the reading is specific, the article moves to Top<sup>0</sup>. When demonstratives are involved, as they contribute to the specific reading of DPs, we argue that they reach TopP. The Focus Phrase postulated to account for the stress displayed by some elements is dealt with in Section 3. In Section 4, the Determiner projection is discussed on the basis of Hungarian examples of possessives. In Section 5, we address the checking of the specificity feature at the clause level. Section 6 briefly mentions potentially problematic examples. Section 7 is the conclusion to this paper.

**2. DEFINITE PHRASE AND TOPIC PHRASE****2.1. Specific is not definite**

Since the landmark paper by Enç (1991), it is widely assumed in the literature that specificity is necessarily correlated to definiteness. With respect to the notion of definiteness, Enç argues that “names, pronouns, and definite descriptions are definite NPs”. Adopting Heim’s theory of definiteness, Enç works on a formalism which “ensures that all definites are specific (...). The analysis proposed here predicts that there will be no non-specific definite NPs” (1991:9). However, this generalisation seems too strong, since we observe that definite DPs can have a non-specific reading. The French examples in (1) below are ambiguous between the specific and the non-specific reading:

---

\* Part of this paper was presented at the *Motivating Movement* conference, in Jordanstown, Ulster. We would like to thank the audience for valuable comments and questions, in particular Aria Adli, Ellen Brandner, Nomi Erteschik-Shir, Phoivos Panagiotidis, Ivy Sichel and Balázs Surányi. We also thank Enoch Aboh, Eric Haeberli and Ur Shlonsky for the fruitful - and friendly - debates.

- (1) a. J' ai pris le train. French  
 I have taken the train  
 'I took the train.'  
 b. Jean a raté le bus.  
 John has missed the bus  
 'John missed the bus.'

In (1a) above, the definite DP *le train* 'the train' can get a specific interpretation, as predicted by Enç. But it can also be interpreted as a non-specific DP, where the referent of the DP *le train* is not pre-established in the discourse. In this case, the sentence describes the event of 'a taking of train', the train being any, non-specified train. It seems thus that the two properties, namely definiteness and specificity, cannot be collapsed into one, nor is there a necessary correlation between the two.

Giusti (1997) also mentions that a noun phrase with non-specific interpretation may contain a definite article. She gives the following Italian example:

- (2) Scommetto che non troverai mai la segretaria di un onorevole che sia disposta a testimoniare contro di lui.  
 'I bet you'll never find the secretary of a deputy who is-SUBJ willing to witness against him.'

Here, the DP *la segretaria di un onorevole* 'the secretary of a deputy' appears with the definite article *la* 'the'. However, it is not interpreted as referring to a particular person pre-established in the discourse. The two notions of definiteness and specificity are two distinct properties. In order to make our claims explicit, we will therefore use the following definitions:

- (3) a. *Definiteness*: selects one object in the class of possible objects  
 b. *Specificity*: relates to pre-established elements in the discourse

In our definition of definiteness, we follow in part Heim (1982), who argues that in an intuitive way, the description part of definite descriptions "serves to narrow down the range of things that can felicitously be referred to" (1982:231).<sup>1</sup> As for specificity, we adopt a somewhat standard approach of the notion, as it is discussed for example in Enç (1991), who assumes that "specificity involves a weak link, that of being a subset of or standing in some recoverable relation to a familiar object" (1991:22) (see also, among others, Cardinaletti and Starke, 1995; Knittel, 1998 and the references therein). The definitions in (3) above make a clear-cut distinction between two properties that are standardly interrelated. Note, for example, that Enç's analysis which defines definiteness as identity of the referent of an NP with a pre-established referent includes in itself the notion of specificity.

On the basis of the distinction discussed above, we would like to argue that the ambiguity we observe in (1a,b) results from the combination of the definiteness property with either a specific or a non-specific property. There is clear evidence from some languages that the two are distinct. Hungarian is a case in point and offers a contrast to the examples in (1). In (4) below, the specific and non-specific interpretations are available and are dependent on the position of the definite DP. Whereas the non-specific reading is favoured when the DP appears post-verbally (4a), only the specific reading obtains when the DP is fronted to the Topic position (4b):

<sup>1</sup> We depart, on the other hand, from the necessary correlation she postulates between definiteness and context.

- (4) a. Anna lemaradt a vonatrol. Hungarian  
 Anna down-stayed the train-from  
 ‘Anna missed the train.’  
 b. A vonatrol lemaradt Anna.  
 the train-from down-stayed Anna  
 ‘Anna missed the train [specific].’

Although (4a) retains the ambiguous interpretation, that is either specific or non-specific, the same DP can only be interpreted as specific in the Topic position (4b). As topic is generally associated with ‘givenness’, ‘old information’ (Reinhart, 1982; Krifka, 1991; Partee, 1991 among others), the restriction to specific DPs is not surprising. What is crucial, though, is that the same DP can be interpreted as non-specific in other syntactic contexts as seen in (4a). It shows that a definite DP is not necessarily specific, and that the two properties are independent.

We propose that these properties are syntactically realised by two separate features. Assuming a split DP, in which each feature appears in a different functional projection, we propose that the feature [+specific], which realises specificity, appears on a head  $Top^0$ , whereas the feature [+definite], which corresponds to definiteness, is hosted on a different head,  $Def^0$ . We assume that the difference between the DPs in (4a) and (4b) lies in the presence versus absence of the [+specific] feature: the DP in (4b) is [+specific] which enables it to be licensed in the clausal Topic position, independently of its definiteness. The projections in which these features appear are discussed in the next sections.

## 2.2. The Definite Phrase (DefP)

The definite article is standardly assumed to occupy the head of a Determiner Phrase (Abney, 1987, Szabolcsi 1987). In order to account for the elements that we argue to be dissociated in DP, we adopt an articulated structure of DP, containing several functional projections, very much in the way the left periphery of the clause is split into a discrete set of projections. We propose that the definite article heads the lowest projection of the left periphery which we label Definite Phrase (DefP). We will argue that it corresponds to the clausal Finiteness Phrase (FinP) postulated by Rizzi (1997). Note that the presence of such a projection in nominals is also postulated in Haegeman (2000).

According to Rizzi, FinP is the projection of the left periphery which is directed downwards. In other words, it contains specifications which match those of the inflectional system. In the same vein, the choice of the article reflects certain properties of the nominal system. The first argument is that the determiner selects the nominal domain. For example, mass nouns are restricted in their selection: a mass noun can only be selected by a null indefinite article:

- (5) John bought (\*a) rice.

The second argument has to do with the respective properties of FinP and DefP. Finiteness is traditionally considered to anchor the event in time and determines the truth conditions of the proposition containing the predicate. Temporality is distinct from morpho-syntactic tense marking which appears in the Tense Phrase (TP) of the verbal system. Correspondingly, definiteness relates to nominals in the sense that it determines the presupposition of existence of the entity represented by the nominal. We can consider it as an “existence-anchor”. It appears that the presupposition of existence as a property of definiteness does not necessarily correspond to the morpho-syntactic reflex of definiteness in

the nominal system. The Swedish example below illustrates the double realisation of the definite mark:

- (6) det store huset (Granfeldt, 1999) Swedish  
the big house-the

In (6), definiteness appears twice: as a definite article *det* ‘the’ and as a morpheme *-et* on the noun. This suggests that the definite article is independent from the morpheme *-et*, which realises an inflectional head of the nominal system.

The head of DefP, Def<sup>0</sup>, is characterised by the feature [+/-definite]. [+definite] is realised as the definite article and [-definite] as the indefinite article. As seen above, the feature [-definite] is not always phonologically realised. Giusti (1997) observes that the feature [+definite] need not be realised either. In Rumanian, some prepositions enforce the absence of the definite article:

- (7) Merg la profesor(\*ul). Rumanian  
I’m going to professor-(\*the)

In (7), the post-nominal definite article *-ul* ‘the’ is ungrammatical. Nevertheless, the NP is definite. We will therefore propose that the article is generated under Def<sup>0</sup> as a possible realisation of the feature [+/-definite].

### 2.3 The Topic Phrase (TopP)

As we argued above, specificity is distinct from definiteness. Therefore, we claim that specificity is encoded in a different functional projection. As this projection contains old information, i.e. information pre-established in the discourse (Enç, 1991), we propose that it corresponds to the clausal Topic Phrase. If, as assumed, the highest projections of the left periphery are linked to the discourse, it seems coherent to propose a structure in which the Topic Phrase is higher in the structure than the Definite Phrase:

- (8) TopP > ...> DefP

The head of TopP is endowed with a feature [+specific] which licenses specific elements such as some definite articles and demonstratives. We return to the various licensing processes below.

Although we used the notation [+specific] above, we do not necessarily assume that all features are binary. Actually, we should raise the question of what it exactly means to be [+ or - feature]<sup>2</sup>. In the case of definiteness, it seems that languages have a binary system of determiners, which are either definite or indefinite. There is no such thing, to our knowledge, as non-definiteness (in the sense of not being specified for either definite or indefinite). Therefore, a binary system of features adequately describes this property of articles. Specificity, on the other hand, does not seem to fit so directly into a binary system as described above: elements may be specific, in which case they are related to the discourse; otherwise, they are non-specific, which means that they are not related to the discourse, in an under-specified way. This asymmetry in the two features raises in turn the question of the syntactic realisation of the relevant (set of) features. If we compare the system with that of the clausal structure, we realise that this is also what we can observe in the left periphery:

<sup>2</sup> Thanks to Ivy Sichel for raising this point.

sentences are either finite or infinitive, in a binary setting (recall that we argued that the determiner heads a functional projection parallel to the clausal FinP). On the other hand, the elements which appear in the left periphery, say in the Topic position, do not have this strict binary nature: it is not the case that a phrase is either a Topic or an “in-Topic”, that is either discourse related or discourse-banned. The non-Topics simply have no relevant connection to the discourse. Therefore, we assume that although the two features seem to function in a parallel way, and that DPs should be endowed with any of the four possible feature combinations, the syntactic realisations will not be strictly parallel. In other words, a non-specific article will not have to raise to a Top<sup>0</sup> head marked for [-specific]. This might amount to saying that there is no [-specific] feature as such. To avoid any misinterpretation, we adopt the label [non-specific].

Given that specificity and definiteness are distinct and that we associate these properties with syntactic features, the four possible feature combinations are given in the table below:

(9)

	[+definite]	[-definite]
[+specific]	[+def, + spec]	[-def, +spec]
[non-specific]	[+def, non-spec]	[-def, non-spec]

It turns out that there is empirical evidence for the four possibilities illustrated in (9). Consider (10).

- (10) a. L'étudiant est venu voir la professeur. French  
 the student is come to-see the professor  
 'The student came to see the professor.'
- b. Jean a raté le train.  
 John has missed the train  
 'John missed the train.'
- c. Un étudiant est venu voir la professeur.  
 a student is come to-see the professor  
 'A student came to see the professor.'
- d. L'étudiant a acheté un livre.  
 the student has bought a book  
 'The student bought a book.'

In (10a), the DP *l'étudiant* 'the student' is definite. It preferably has a specific reading, in that it is easily interpreted as pre-established in the discourse. As discussed in Section 2.1, *le train* 'the train' in (10b) is definite and can be non-specific. In (10c) *un étudiant* 'a student' is indefinite and can be interpreted as specific, again on the basis of being pre-established in the discourse; and finally in (10d), *un livre* 'a book' is indefinite and has a favoured non-specific reading.<sup>3</sup> Note that Diesing (1992) also argues in favour of a distinction between indefinites, split into presuppositional and non-presuppositional indefinites (see also Milsark 1974).

<sup>3</sup> It is interesting to note that objects tend to have a non-specific reading whereas subjects are more easily interpreted as specific. This falls in line with the notion of subjects being “topics”, and the idea that a topic functions as notional subject about which the VP is predicated (see e.g. Rothstein, 1983; Williams, 1980). It also calls to mind the recent proposals about two subject positions in some languages, the higher one being related to “subject-of-predication” (Cardinaletti, 1997; Ordoñez, 1997).

Syntactic evidence for a distinction between specific and non-specific definites can also be found in German. In the examples below (E. Brandner, p.c.), the definite article *der* ‘the’ can either be contracted with the preposition *zu* ‘to’ yielding *zur* ‘to-the’, as in (11a), or appear as a separate word (11b):

- (11) a. Anna geht zur Schule. German  
 Anna goes to-the school  
 ‘Anna goes to school.’ (non-specific)  
 b. Anna geht zu der Schule.  
 ‘Anna goes to the school.’ (specific)

The distinction between specific and non-specific definites can be attributed to different feature sets. These features appear on different functional projections. Under the assumption that features need to be checked and that checking can be a movement triggering operation, the immediate conclusion is that the different interpretations result from different DP structures. Let us come back to (10a,b) to illustrate the point.

As proposed in the previous section, the definite article is generated in  $\text{Def}^0$ . In (10a), the definite article *le* ‘the’ comes with a set of features [+definite, +specific]. The feature [+definite] is checked locally, whereas the [+specific] feature needs to be checked in  $\text{TopP}$ . Therefore, this article moves to  $\text{Top}^0$ . In (10b), *le* ‘the’ is a realisation of the feature [+definite] without the specific feature. Therefore, it remains in  $\text{Def}^0$ . The corresponding resulting structures are given in (12):

- (12) a.  $\text{TopP}$   
 $\bar{3}$   
 $\text{Top}'$   
 $\bar{3}$   
 $\text{Top}$   $\text{DefP}$   
 [+spec]  $\bar{3}$   
 $le_i$   $\text{Def}'$   
 $\bar{3}$   
 $\text{Def}$  ...  
 [+def]  
 $t_i$  *étudiant*
- b.  $\text{TopP}$   
 $\bar{3}$   
 $\text{Top}'$   
 $\bar{3}$   
 $\text{Top}$   $\text{DefP}$   
 $\bar{3}$   
 $\text{Def}'$   
 $\bar{3}$   
 $\text{Def}$  ...  
 [+def]  
 $le$  *train*

The parallel with the clausal left periphery raises the question of the recursivity of Topic Phrases. However, recent work on the clausal CP-domain shows that the notion of Topic is in need of further refinement, and that it may well turn out that what was initially proposed as a recursion of the Topic projection is more like a Topic domain, with distinct projections (see Haegeman, 2000; Poletto, 1997; Puskás, 2000b; Rizzi, 1999-2000). To the extent that DP-internal TopP checks the specificity feature, there is no evidence for a recursion of Topics.

## 2.4. Demonstratives

In the previous section, we have seen that some articles reach the Topic Phrase to check their [+specific] feature. As demonstratives are very often pre-nominal, we propose that they exhibit the same behaviour.

In the literature (Greenberg, 1966; Hawkins, 1983), it has been proposed that demonstratives, on a par with numerals and adjectives, are noun modifiers generated in the inflectional system, a position adopted here. We also assume that these modifiers are generated in a universal word order, partially reported in (13a). Adopting (13a), based on Hawkins (1983), implies that all other word orders involving demonstratives, numerals and adjectives are derived orders. (13b) and (13c), from German and English respectively, illustrate the universal word order (13a).

- (13) a. **Universal base order**  
 Demonstrative > Numeral > Adjective > Noun
- |    |       |      |         |        |         |
|----|-------|------|---------|--------|---------|
| b. | Diese | fünf | grossen | Häuser | German  |
| c. | These | five | large   | houses | English |
- (*Aboh, 2000, his (3)*)

Although (13b,c) might be derived orders, given that there is no article, we follow Giusti (1994) among others, and assume that demonstratives are generated in the specifier position of the highest projection of the inflectional system, i.e. immediately below the projections forming the left periphery of nominals. (14) represents the structure we adopt<sup>4</sup>. FP stands for Functional Phrase.

- (14)
- ```

      DP
     / \
    3   D'
   Spec / \
        D   FP
       / \  / \
      3   Dem 3   FP
           / \  / \
          Nral 3   NP
                / \
               Adj NP   (Aboh, 1998)
  
```

In some languages, the demonstrative and the article can co-occur. In Irish and Hungarian the co-occurrence of the demonstrative and the definite article is obligatory.

<sup>4</sup> As the functional projection NumP postulated by Ritter (1991), and widely adopted in the literature, is not relevant in our discussion, it is omitted in (14) and in subsequent examples.

- (15) \* (an) fear mór téagartha groí seo Irish  
 the man big stocky cheerful this  
 ‘this big stocky cheerful man’ (McCloskey, 1998)
- (16) a. Ez a lány Hungarian  
 this the girl  
 ‘the girl’  
 b. \* Ez egy ház  
 this a house

In (16a), *ez* ‘this’ precedes the definite article *a* ‘the’. On the basis of the ungrammaticality of (16b), we tentatively propose that demonstratives are licensed by a [+definite] Def<sup>0</sup> (but see Section 6 for additional discussion). The above assumptions imply that the order in (16) must be derived by movement: the demonstrative does not occupy its base-position but has moved to a position to the left of the article.

Two questions immediately arise on the basis of (16): what is the landing site of the demonstrative and what triggers this movement? As an answer to the second question, we claim that since demonstratives are linked to the discourse, they move to the left periphery of nominals (Ihsane, 2000b). Concerning the landing site of demonstratives, their contribution to the specific interpretation of DP suggests that they reach the projection where specificity gets checked, i.e. the nominal TopP discussed in Section 2.3. Note that (16) supports our claim that the Definite Phrase is lower in the left periphery than the nominal TopP hosting *ez*.

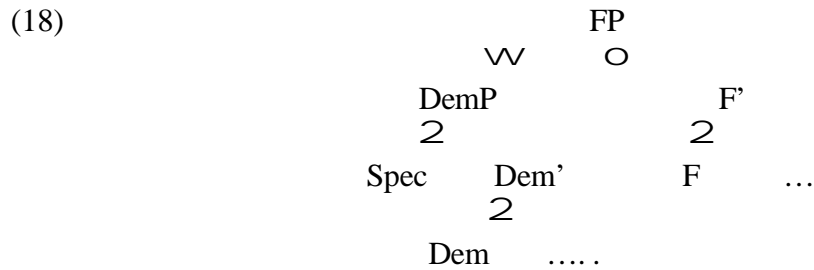
In short, to account for (16), we assume that the demonstrative, which is endowed with the features [+specific, +definite], moves from its base position through DefP to TopP to check its [+specific] feature. In the course of the derivation, the [+definite] feature is checked. Whether this movement is an instantiation of X<sup>0</sup>- or XP- movement has to be determined. Example (17), from Syrian Arabic, suggests that the demonstrative may head-move.

- (17) a. hal-be:t (Cowell, 1964) Syrian Arabic  
 this-the-house  
 ‘this house’  
 b. han-n«swa:n (Cowell, 1964)  
 these (those)-the women  
 ‘these women’

The bi-morphemic element *hal* (*ha* + *l* ‘dem + def’) in (17a) is an illustration of incorporation, suggesting that the head of DemP extracts and moves through Def<sup>0</sup>. Further evidence for this analysis comes from the assimilation of *-l* in (17b) to the following consonant, a property of definite articles (Cowell, 1964). As demonstratives, numerals and adjectives sit in the specifier position of functional projections, they are maximal projections, implying that their head can extract<sup>5</sup>:

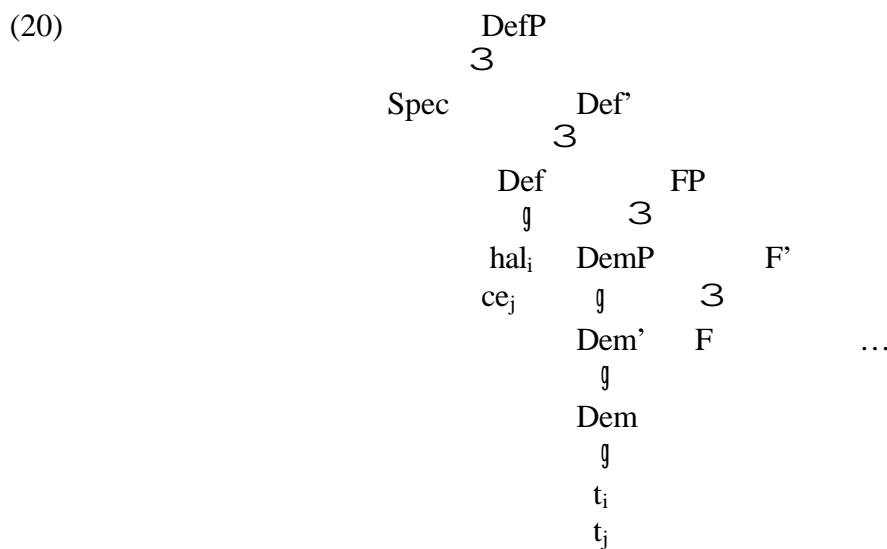
<sup>5</sup> See also Shlonsky (2000) who, in addition to (18), proposes that some demonstratives can also head a projection which is in a complement position.





A similar account has been proposed by Bernstein (1997) for French. Consider (20) which is the representation of (17a) and (19).

(19) ce bâtiment French  
 'this building'



[adapted from Bernstein, 1997]

(20) is compatible with the analysis proposed here if we assume that *hal* 'this + the' and *ce* 'this' further head-move to Top<sup>0</sup> to check their feature [+specific]. In (16) however, nothing excludes the possibility for the demonstrative to move as a maximal projection through the specifier of the Definite Phrase to the specifier of the Topic Phrase<sup>6</sup>. We leave the question open for further research. Independently of the type of movement illustrated – X<sup>0</sup> or XP-movement - demonstratives reach TopP to check their feature [+specific].

### 3. FOCUS PHRASE

In addition to the Definite Phrase and the Topic Phrase, we propose that the left periphery of nominals includes a Focus Phrase, to which emphasised elements such as numerals and possessive modifiers can move (Knittel, 1998; Ihsane, 2000a).

Recall from (14) that numerals are generated in the inflectional system, i.e. below the projections forming the split DP. Numerals can be emphasised as (21b) shows. We propose that (21b) is, to some extent, similar to (16): an element generated in the inflectional system

<sup>6</sup> In a snowballing account, we could propose that the movement of DefP to Spec,TopP checks the feature [+specific].

moves to the left periphery to check a feature, here a [+focus] feature in the Focus Phrase (Brody, 1990; Puskas, 2000a)<sup>7</sup>.

- (21) a. egy könyv Hungarian  
 'a book/one book'  
 b. EGY könyv  
 '(exactly) one book'

As (21) is not specific, it suggests that the projection hosting the [+focus] feature is lower than the nominal TopP. The specific variant of (21) supports this claim: in (22), the emphasised numeral is preceded by the definite article.

- (22) a. az EGY könyv Hungarian  
 the ONE book  
 b. \* EGY az könyv  
 ONE the book

According to our analysis, the definite article in (22) moves from Def<sup>0</sup> to Top<sup>0</sup> when it is specific and the numeral moves to the specifier of the Focus Phrase to check its feature [+focus]. As the emphasised numeral follows the definite article, TopP must dominate FocP. The Focus Phrase in turn dominates the Definite Phrase, which is the lowest projection of the left periphery, as the properties it shares with the clausal Finiteness Phrase attest (see Section 2.2). The structure of the nominal left periphery (23a) is therefore parallel to the one of the clausal split CP, which is partially reported in (23b).

- (23) a. ... TopP > FocP > DefP  
 b. ... TopP > FocP > FinP

The structure given in (23) raises at least one important theoretical issue, both at the level of the clause and at the level of nominals: one might wonder whether an element which has to move to TopP to check its specific feature has to – or even is allowed to – move through FocP. Given locality considerations, the answer should be yes. First, under standard assumptions of a Head Movement Constraint (HMC), a head should obligatorily move through Foc<sup>0</sup>. Secondly, as both spec,TopP and spec,FocP are A-bar positions, skipping the latter to reach the former would also lead to a violation of locality. However, to conclude that [+specific] elements move through FocP would be inappropriate: by definition, the Topic Phrase and the Focus Phrase host elements with incompatible meanings, topics represent old information whereas foci correspond to new information. This implies that one element cannot have the set of features [+specific, +focus]. One way out of the dilemma is to consider that movement to TopP and movement to FocP represent two different types of movement: the former is referential and the latter quantificational (Cinque, 1990), which implies that they do not induce locality effects. Although Cinque discusses maximal projection chains, we could extend the proposal of non-interfering positions to heads (see Roberts, 1994).

<sup>7</sup> On the basis of examples such as (i), we assume that focalised numerals are not necessarily specific:

(i) J'ai acheté DEUX livres. French  
 I have bought TWO books  
 'I bought TWO books.'

In (i), *DEUX livres* 'TWO books' can mean any two books, especially when the reading is contrastive. In addition, in our view, (i) does not *imply* a partitive reading and therefore can be non-specific.

Not only numerals can be focalised but also possessive modifiers. Knittel notes (1998:88-9) that in Hungarian possessive modifiers may be realised phonetically or not, and that when they are overt they are necessarily emphasised. Consider (24).

- |         |                                                     |           |
|---------|-----------------------------------------------------|-----------|
| (24) a. | Az én ház-am<br>the my house-poss.1sg<br>'MY house' | Hungarian |
| b. *    | én a ház-am<br>my the house-poss.1sg                |           |

The analysis proposed for (22a) also applies to (24a): the article head-moves from Def<sup>0</sup> to Top<sup>0</sup>, and the possessive moves to the Focus Phrase to check its [+focus] feature<sup>8</sup>. As it was the case in (16), the definite article is obligatory in (24). This suggests that the possessive, contrary to the demonstrative, does not contribute by itself to the specific reading. In (24), it is the definite article which checks its [+specific] feature, not the possessive. Contrary to Knittel, we do not assume that in Hungarian the possessive pronoun moves to TopP (1998:108).

Hungarian is not the only language in which possessive modifiers may be emphasised. Consider (25).

- |         |                                                                                              |              |
|---------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|
| (25) a. | Only MY house was sold not yours.                                                            |              |
| b.      | Seulement MA maison a été vendue pas la tienne.<br>only MY house has been sold not the yours | French       |
| c.      | Ze ziet ZYN eus geren en t'eure niet.<br>she sees HIS house 'gladly' and the hers not        | West Flemish |

In (25), the possessives *MY*, *MA* and *ZYN* are emphasised, suggesting that they have a focus feature.

#### 4. DETERMINER PHRASE (DP)

In Section 2.2, we argued that the left periphery of the DP contains a Definite Phrase, which corresponds to the clausal FinP. It is dominated by the Focus Phrase and the Topic Phrase. In this section, we would like to propose that the Topic Phrase is in turn dominated by another functional projection, which we will call Determiner Phrase (DP), in a very general sense.

We will again take Hungarian data as empirical evidence for this structure. In Hungarian possessive constructions, the possessor can appear with a nominative case (26a) or dative case (26b):

- |         |                                                                         |           |
|---------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|
| (26) a. | [A lány] könyve<br>the girl-nom book-poss<br>'the girl's book'          | Hungarian |
| b.      | [A lánynak] a könyve<br>the girl-dat the book-poss<br>'the girl's book' |           |

We assume contra Szabolcsi 1994, and following Knittel 1998, that in (26a), the definite article *a* 'the' which precedes *lány* 'girl' does not determine the possessee but the

<sup>8</sup> The base position of the possessor is not relevant here. We assume that it can be compared to a type of subject which suggests that it is generated in the specifier of the lexical projection NP (Alexiadou & Wilder, 1998).

possessor. When the possessor appears with the nominative case as in (26a), the definite article is not expressed. On the other hand, when the possessor appears with dative case, as in (26b), it is followed by a definite article, hence the two occurrences of *a* 'the'. Both Szabolcsi and Knittel adopt two different structures for these constructions: the nominative possessor (26a) appears lower than the dative possessor, which precedes the definite article (26b). As the details of the analyses are not relevant in our discussion, we refer the reader to the authors. In our view, the dative possessor shows the existence of a functional projection dominating TopP. Consider (27).

- (27)            *A lánynak ez a könyve*                                            Hungarian  
                  the girl-dat this the book-poss  
                  ‘this book of the girl’s’

Recall that in our analysis, the demonstrative moves to TopP. As *a lánynak* ‘the girl-dat’ is not necessarily specific, we assume that it is not in Spec,TopP, even in the eventuality that *ez* ‘this’ and *a* ‘the’ formed a complex head similar to the one discussed in Syrian Arabic (17). We propose that the dative possessor sits in the specifier of the Determiner Phrase postulated. The idea of a projection dominating TopP is supported by possessor extraction. The possessor can be extracted from the DP, but only when it appears with the dative case:

- (28) a.        *A lánynak vettem meg a könyvét.*                                            Hungarian  
                  the girl-dat bought-I part the book-poss.  
                  ‘I bought the girl's book.’  
       b. \* *A lány vettem meg a könyvét.*  
                  the girl-nom bought-I part the book-poss.

Following Szabolcsi, we assume that the position which is occupied by the dative possessor is an escape hatch, which allows the possessor to extract. So the dative possessor can either stay in DP or extract to a higher position in the clause from this position. The nominative possessor, on the other hand, is not licensed in this higher position, and extraction cannot take place (see Knittel for an account where the dative possessor is generated in the highest specifier position).

## 5. SPECIFICITY AND MOVEMENT TO THE CLAUSAL TOPP

The articulated DP structure that we propose here makes the distinction between two features, namely [specific] and [definite]. In our view, this enables us to account for the combination [+definite, non-specific] we observed in (1), and which is attested in languages like French or Hungarian. Our analysis accounts for the apparent ambiguity of DPs between specific and non-specific. Since the definiteness feature is checked independently of the specificity feature, the latter is not necessarily in correlation with the former.

Thus what seemed to be ambiguous is the result of two sets of feature combinations, hence of two internal structures for the DP. The presence versus absence of the feature [specific] determines the interpretation of the DP. In addition, it gives a straightforward explanation for the obligatory specific interpretation of DPs in the clausal Topic. Topic being a specificity checking position, only DPs which carry a feature [+specific] are licensed in this position. This is overtly realised in Hungarian (4b). We would like to propose that in other languages, this movement can take place at LF. Thus, the ambiguous examples of French (1) can be distinguished into two LF structures. Consider the relevant example again, given below as (29):

- (29) J'ai pris le train. French  
 I have taken the train  
 'I took the train.'

The DP *le train* 'the train' is interpreted as either specific or non-specific. (30) illustrates the two representations which correspond to the two interpretations.

- (30) a. [<sub>TopP</sub> [+specific] le<sub>i</sub> [<sub>DefP</sub> t<sub>i</sub> [... [<sub>NP</sub> train ]]]]  
 b. [<sub>TopP</sub> [non-specific] [<sub>DefP</sub> le [... [<sub>NP</sub> train ]]]]

In languages like Hungarian, the [+specific] feature on DPs is checked in the clausal Spec,TopP, allowing specific DPs to be interpreted as Topics, that is discourse-related, - and ruling out non-specific DPs from that position (see Puskás 2000b for a discussion of Topic positions). The two interpretations of the French examples show the same properties. When the DP *le train* 'the train' in (29) is interpreted as non-specific, it does not have a [+specific] feature to check. On the other hand, in the case the reading is that of a specific DP, the interpretational properties of the DP are similar to that of its Hungarian counterpart: the DP is discourse-related. We propose that in this case, the equivalent of the overt feature-checking movement of the DP in Hungarian obtains covertly in French: the [+specific] DP undergoes covert Topic movement. Thus the two LF representations of (29) will be as in (31) below:

- (31) a. [<sub>IP</sub> J'ai pris [<sub>DP</sub>[non-specific] le train]  
 b. [<sub>Top</sub> [<sub>DP</sub>[+specific] le train] [<sub>IP</sub> J'ai pris e ]]

## 6. SOME FURTHER CONSIDERATIONS

In this section, we examine some problematic data with respect to the existential construction. It is well known that in existential sentences such as (32) only indefinite nominals are attested. The definiteness of *le livre* 'the book' in (32b) leads to ungrammaticality. In the same vein, the impossibility for the demonstrative to survive in such contexts suggests that *ce livre* in (32c) is not only specific but also definite.

- (32) a. Il y a un livre sur la table. French  
 'There is a book on the table.'  
 b. \* Il y a le livre sur la table.  
 there Y has the book on the table  
 c. \* Il y a ce livre sur la table.  
 there Y has this book on the table

The ungrammaticality of (32b) can be related to the intrinsic property of definites, which come with a presupposition of existence (see Section 2.2). As existential constructions assert existence (Keenan, 1987 cited in Enç, 1991), they typically exclude elements whose existence is presupposed. However, consider the following example:

- (33) There are the following counterexamples to Streck's theory...  
 (Pesetsky, cited in Enç 1991, her (46))

Although the DP is introduced by a definite article in the existential (33), the sentence is grammatical. But as Enç notes, "this particular kind of definite NP does not presuppose existence the way other definites do (compare \**There are the above counterexamples*)"

(1991:14). It seems that what looks like a definite DP is somehow stripped of its definiteness. Some types of modifiers force an indefinite interpretation of definite articles, that is they cancel the presupposition of existence of definite article by contributing to the assertion of existence. This is the case for the adjective *following* in (33). It also seems to be the case of the relative clause which characterises the definite DP in (34).

- (34)        il    y   a   le livre   que j'ai   lu   sur la table.        French  
               there Y has the book   that I have   read on   the table

In (34), the existential construction contains an apparently definite DP. The relative clause asserts the existence of the modified nominal and therefore forces the indefinite reading of the definite article (compare with the ungrammatical (32b)).

If demonstratives are [+definite, +specific] as proposed in Section 2.4, their ungrammaticality in existential contexts is expected. This was illustrated in (32c). However, consider (35), where the demonstrative is licit.

- (35)        (il y a)   ce gars (from Bernstein 1997:96)                                French  
               (there's) this guy  
               'a guy'

In our opinion, (35) is grammatical only when the DP is followed by a relative clause, as in (36):

- (36)        il    y   a   ce gars   qui   entre dans le   café                                French  
               there Y has this guy who enters in   the   café  
               'there's this guy who enters the café'

As it was the case for the definite article, the presence of the relative clause in (36) asserts the existence of the nominal *ce gars* 'this guy', suggesting that the demonstrative is not definite. The role of the relative is to characterise the noun in the same way as the adjective *following* in (33). We conclude that here again the existential construction licenses DPs which are void of any definite content.

## 7. CONCLUSION

In this paper, we proposed a distinction between the notions of specificity and definiteness using a feature related account. Assuming a split DP, we argued that the feature [+specific] is encoded on the functional head  $Top^0$  and the feature [+definite] on  $Def^0$ . This system of feature combination yields four types of DPs, each of which empirically supported. Different elements related to specificity can move to check the feature [+specific]. To support this claim, we discussed articles and demonstratives. We showed that possessive modifiers, on the other hand, are not specific but that in some languages, such as Hungarian, they can move to the Focus Phrase, another functional projection of the left periphery. Hungarian also provided evidence that the structure contains yet another projection, the Determiner Phrase, dominating the Topic Phrase. Thus the structure proposed for the nominal left periphery corresponds to the clausal one.

## References

- Abney, S. P. (1987) "The English noun phrase in its sentential aspect". PhD dissertation, MIT, Cambridge, Massachusetts.
- Aboh, E. (1998) "On the Syntax of Gungbe Noun Phrases". Clearing house on Languages and Linguistics ERIC Documentation Reproduction service. No ED 420 209.
- Aboh, E. (2000) "DP licensing and snowballing movement". Handout *NP-Conference*, Antwerp.
- Alexiadou A. & Ch. Wilder (1998) *Possessors, Predicates and Movement in the Determiner Phrase*. Amsterdam / Philadelphia: John Benjamins.
- Bernstein, J. (1997) "Demonstratives and reinforcers in Romance and Germanic languages". *Lingua* 102: 87-113.
- Brody, M. (1990) "Some remarks on the focus field in Hungarian". UCL Working Papers 2: 201-225.
- Cardinaletti, A. & M. Starke (1995) "The typology of structural deficiency: On the three grammatical classes". *FAS Papers in Linguistics* 1: 1-55.
- Cardinaletti, A. (1997) "Subjects and clause structure". In L. Haegeman (ed.) *The New Comparative Syntax*, Harlow: Addison Wesley Longman.
- Cinque, G. (1990) *Types of A'-Dependencies*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press.
- Cowell, M. W. (1964) *A Reference Grammar of Syrian Arabic*. Washington: Georgetown University Press.
- Diesing, M. (1992) *Indefinites*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press.
- Enç, M. (1991) "The semantics of specificity". *Linguistics Inquiry* 22.1:1-25.
- Giusti, G. (1994) "Enclitic articles and double definiteness: A comparative analysis of nominals". *Linguistic Review* 11: 231-255.
- Giusti, G. (1997) "The categorial status of determiners". In L. Haegeman (ed.) *The New Comparative Syntax*, Harlow: Addison Wesley Longman.
- Granfeldt, J. (1999) "Sur la structure du DP dans les langues Scandinaves". Presentation in the DES seminar, Geneva.
- Greenberg, J. (1966) *Some Universals of Grammar with Particular Reference to the Order of Meaningful Elements*. In J. H. Greenberg ed., *Universals of Language* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.) Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press.
- Haegeman, L. (2000) "Remote possessors and possessor movement in West Flemish? Relating nominal periphery to clausal periphery". Talk given at the York *Periphery Conference*, Sept 2000.
- Hawkins, J. A. (1983) *Word order universals*. New York: Academic Press.
- Heim, I. (1982) "The Semantics of Definite and Indefinite Noun Phrases". PhD dissertation, University of Massachusetts.
- Ihsane, T. (2000a) "Three Types of Possessive Modifiers". *Generative Grammar in Geneva*, 1:21-54.
- Ihsane, T. (2000b) "That's a demonstrative: that's a head!" Presentation at the 5<sup>th</sup> *International Afroasiatic Linguistics Conference (CAL5)*, Paris, France.
- Keenan, E. (1987) "A Semantic Definition of 'Indefinite NP'", in E. J. Reuland and A. G. B. ter Meulens, eds., *The Representation of (In)definiteness*, Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press.
- Knittel, M.-L. (1998) "Structure morphosyntaxique des syntagmes nominaux possessivés du hongrois". In *La grammaire de la possession*, J. Guéron & A. Zribi-Hertz (eds): 83-128. Nanterre: Presses Universitaires de Paris 10.

- Krifka, M. (1991) "A Compositional Semantics for Multiple Focus Constructions". In *Proceedings from Semantics and Linguistic Theory I*, S. Moore and A. Z. Wyner (eds), 127-158. Cornell University Working Papers 10.
- McCloskey, J. (1998) Class lectures. UC Santa Cruz.
- Milsark, G. (1974) "Existential Sentences in English". PhD dissertation, MIT, Cambridge, Massachusetts.
- Ordoñez, F. (1997) "Word Order and Clausal Structure in Spanish and Other Romance Languages". PhD dissertation. CUNY.
- Partee, B. (1991) "Topic, Focus and Quantification". In *Proceedings from Semantics and Linguistic Theory I*, S. Moore and A. Z. Wyner (eds), 159-187. Cornell University Working Papers 10.
- Poletto, C. (1997) "Raetoromance Verb Second: split CP and subject positions". Talk given at the *Incontro di Grammatica Generative*. Pisa.
- Puskás, G. (2000a) *Word Order in Hungarian: the Syntax of A-bar Positions*. Amsterdam / Philadelphia: John Benjamins.
- Puskás, G. (2000b) "On Topics". Talk given at the *York Periphery Conference*, Sept 2000.
- Reinhart, T. (1982) "Pragmatics and Linguistics: an Analysis of Sentence Topics". Bloomington: Indiana University Linguistics Club.
- Ritter, E. (1991) "Two Functional categories in Noun Phrases: Evidence from Modern Hebrew". In S. Rothstein (ed.), *Perspectives on Phrase Structure* [Syntax and Semantics 26]. New York: Academic Press: 37-62.
- Rizzi, L. (1997) "The fine structure of the left periphery". In *Elements of Grammar*, L. Haegeman (ed.), 281-337. Dordrecht: Kluwer.
- Rizzi, L. (1999-2000). Class lectures. Geneva.
- Roberts, I. (1994) "Two Types of Head Movement in Romance". In N. Hornstein & D. Lightfoot (eds) *Verb Movement*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 207-242.
- Rothstein, S. (1983) *The Syntactic Forms of Predication*. PhD dissertation, MIT, Cambridge, Massachusetts.
- Shlonsky, U. (2000) "The form of Semitic noun Phrases". Ms. Geneva.
- Szabolcsi, A. (1987) "Functional categories in the noun phrase". In I. Kenesei (ed.), *Approaches to Hungarian*, 2, 167-89.
- Szabolcsi, A. (1994) "The Noun Phrase". In *The Syntactic Structure of Hungarian* [Syntax and Semantics 27], F. Kiefer & K. E-Kiss (eds): 179-274. San Diego: Academic Press.
- Williams, E. (1980) "Predication". *Linguistic Inquiry* 11, 208-238.