

### How can we account for *du*-DPs?

French has several forms that correspond to the contraction or amalgamation of a preposition and a definite article, cf. amalgamated *du* (*de* + *le*) and *des* (*de* + *les*) vs. non-amalgamated *de la*. When combined with mass nouns, these forms may be interpreted as either a PP or a DP giving rise to ambiguous sentences (cf. (1)) (cf. Foulet 1965:69, Milner 1978, Kupfermann 1979, Bosveld-de Smet 2004, Ihsane 2005, Carlier 2007). In the literature, these forms and the structures in which they appear are discussed either from a rather morphological or a syntactic perspective. The focus either lies on amalgamation in *du*-PPs and only little is said about amalgamation in *du*-DPs; or there is a strong effort to explain the syntactic facts of *du*-DPs leaving aside the details of amalgamation. This leads to analyses that are not entirely compatible with each other. In essence, morphological proposals have problems to accurately describe *du* and *de la* in (1b) where *du* cannot be analyzed straightforwardly as preposition-article amalgam or inflected preposition. But also syntactic accounts have problems with *du*-DPs: There is no consensus with respect to which functional heads *le* and *de* realize respectively, and, in order to get the correct linear order or a structure where both elements are adjacent to each other, unmotivated movement operations are stipulated. I will argue that, in bare partitives, *du* as well as *de la* are cumulative exponents for several functional heads within the DP layer (cf. (5)) and propose an analysis based on the notion of spanning (cf. Svenonius 2012).

- (1) *Il a goûté du cognac.*  
 a. PP-reading: ‘He has tasted (some) of the cognac.’ (real partitive)  
     = an undetermined part/amount of a well-determined (quantity of) cognac  
 b. DP-reading: ‘He has tasted (some) cognac.’  
     = an undetermined quantity of an undetermined quantity of cognac

From a morphological point of view, amalgamation is interesting, because there is a certain mismatch between the syntactic structure and the exponence of this structure. While there is a broad consensus in the literature that a phonological analysis is not an appropriate explanation for the amalgamated forms in (2a,b) (Bonami & Tseng 2010, Cabredo Hofherr 2012), there is an ongoing debate with respect to whether *du* expones only one syntactic head or two syntactic heads with subsequent contraction of these heads. Bonami & Tseng (2010) and Cabredo Hofherr (2012) argue that *du* is to be analyzed as an inflected preposition, i.e. as one syntactic head that combines features of P and D. Empirical evidence for assuming two syntactic structures come from different behavior in coordination: *de la mère et la fille* ‘of the mother and the daughter’ is fine, because both P and D are transparent for syntax. Thus, P has either wide scope over the coordinated DP or, as Cabredo Hofherr (2012) assumes, we are dealing with PP-coordination with deletion of the second preposition under identity. In contrast, *\*du père et le fils* ‘of the father and the son’ is ungrammatical, because *du* – being a inflected preposition – is not transparent for syntax, i.e. there is only one syntactic head and, thus, P is not independent from D (cf. Cabredo Hofherr 2012). Svenonius (2012) argues, instead, for one syntactic structure and states that the amalgamated and non-amalgamated forms are evaluated post-syntactically against each other. His core assumption is that the portmanteau morphs *du/des* block an equally fully specified sequence of two separate morphemes due to a general principle that, all else being equal, fewer exponents are favored over more exponents.

- (2)
- |    |   |     |                     |                               |                      |
|----|---|-----|---------------------|-------------------------------|----------------------|
| a. | <span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 0 2px;"><i>du</i></span> <i>père</i>   | vs. | <i>*de le père</i>  | e.g. Cabredo Hofherr (2012)   | Svenonius (2012)     |
|    |   |     |                     | [PP P <sub>infl</sub> [NP N]] | [PP P [DP D [NP N]]] |
| b. | <span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 0 2px;"><i>des</i></span> <i>amis</i>  | vs. | <i>*de les amis</i> | [PP P <sub>infl</sub> [NP N]] | [PP P [DP D [NP N]]] |
| c. | <span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 0 2px;"><i>de</i></span> <span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 0 2px;"><i>la</i></span> <i>mère</i> |     |                     | [PP P [DP D [NP N]]]          | [PP P [DP D [NP N]]] |

