Preposition-Determiner interactions in Eastern Romance
Daniela Isac, Concordia University

Definite DPs in Eastern Romance (ER) languages –Romanian, Megleno-Romanian, Istro-Romanian, Aromanian, have a peculiar property: the definite article can be null if these DPs are objects of prepositions that assign Acc. case, in spite of the fact that all these languages have an definite article which must be overt otherwise.

(1) *Dusi* **la preftu** *acasî*   *(Arom/Arvantovlaxica, PP 1996:200)*
     went to priest   at.home

     'He went to the priest's house'

(2) *seara,*   *armasirî* **la preftulu'** *(Arom/Arvantovlaxica, PP 1996:202)*
     evening.def, stayed   at priest.def

     'in the evening, they stayed at the priest's house.'

Different lexical Ds? This seems to show that the inventory of Ds in ER should be enriched with null definite Ds, in addition to overt ones. However, this would be problematic, since bare Ns are commonly analyzed as existential or generic indefinites in Romance (Longobardi 1994, 2001, 2005). Moreover, if the two Ds were independent lexical items in ER, we would expect all definite DPs to be possibly headed by either the overt or the null D, contrary to fact (all definite DPs that are not objects of Ps must be headed by an overt D in ER)

Incorporation? In Mardale's 2006 view, the definite D of P-objects incorporates into P, a syntactic process which is made possible by the fact that these DPs lack a NumP: in the presence of NumP, D lowers to Num and gets spelled out on the N which has raised to Num, but if NumP is absent, D incorporates into P. While Mardale's analysis can explain the dependency between P and the covertness of the definite D, it cannot account for those ER languages in which the definite article can be null on objects of Ps, but can also be overt.

Proposal. I will propose instead that the (c)overtness of the definite D in ER is the result of the following two post syntactic rules:

(3) *M-merge*: Definite D m-merges with the closest head in its c-command domain that it enters an Agree relation with.

(4) *Spell-Out*: The definite article is spelled out on the head that definite D m-merges with iff that head bears a [def] feature. Otherwise, the definite article is null.

Several comments are in order with respect to the rules above: (i) I am assuming, together with P&T 2004 that Ps are merged DP internally, and then they raise to the Spec,D (ii) I assume that D has two unvalued features: [def] and Case, which I take to be a [T] feature, following P&T 2004. D thus established two Agree 'chains': one with N, which has a valued [def] feature, and one with P, which contains a valued [T] feature. Thus, according to (3), D can m-merge either with N or with P; (iii) I am adopting a general definition of m-merge as an operation that reanalyzes two heads as one in the morphological component. Crucially, the input to the m-merge rule in (3) consists of two *heads* in a particular relationship–*Agree*; (iv) While D can m-merge either with a head in its definiteness valuation chain or with a head in its Case, i.e. T chain, the spell out rule allows only heads that are part of the definiteness valuation chain to host the overt definite article.

Analysis. The structure I propose for objects of Ps is given in (5).

(5) $[_{DP}$ P $[_{D'}$ D $[_{PP}$ ~~P~~ $[_{NumP}$ ... N ...$]$ $]$ $]$ $]$

Given that P is closer to D than N, D will undergo m-merge with P, according to the rule in (3). Moreover, given that P has no [def] feature, the definite article will remain phonologically null, according to the Spell-out rule in (4).

Overtly definite objects of Ps include an additional periphery projection (Contr(astive)P), compared to bare objects of P. The presence or absence of a periphery projection is pre-determined by the features of the items in the numeration: if a subconstituent within the DP bears an uninterpretable [c] feature, the DP will contain a head with matching a [c] feature in its left periphery, i.e. a Contr head. I propose that the Num head may contain a [c] feature in ER languages that allow unmodified definite objects of P to be headed by an overt D. The structure I propose for overtly definite objects of Ps in ER is thus the following:

(6) $[_{DP}$ PP $[_{D'}$ D $[_{ContrP}$ $[_{NumP}$ ... N ...$]$ $[_{Contr'}$ Contr $[_{PP}$ P ~~NumP~~$]]]]]$

The presence of a ContrP allows the heads that D enters Agree with, i.e. P and N, to be in a different configuration. In particular, N is closer to D than P, given that the Contr head attracts NumP to its Spec. Hence, D will m-merge with N according to the rule in (3) and will be spelled out on N according to the rule in (4). One question that arises regards the semantic difference between bare definite objects of Ps and overtly definite ones. I propose that bare objects of P express *familiarity* (i.e. they refer to an individual that is in some sense familiar, either by being linked to an old referent, or by being perceptually accessible to the discourse participants, or by being 'globally familiar in the general culture' (Roberts 2003). In contrast, overtly definite objects of Ps express *uniqueness* (i.e. they refer to things that can be uniquely identified in a particular or general context). The uniqueness flavour of overtly definite objects of Ps is not due to the feagtures of D, but is related to the presence of the ContrP: objects of P that contain a ContrP uniquely identify a referent, to the exclusion of other possible referents that are not uniquely identifiable. One argument supporting the proposal that overtly definite DPs express uniqueness has to do with objects of Ps that are modified. Modifiers add properties and as such increase the identifiability of the referent. If our analysis is on the right track, we expect such objects of P to always contain an overt definite D. This expectation is borne out in all ER languages.

Conclusions and consequences. (i) null definite D and overtly definite D are not separate lexical items in ER; (ii) the covertness of the definite D is the result of two post-syntactic rules, a morphological rule and a phonological Spell-out rule; (iii) these two rules yield the correct outcome not only for objects of P, but also for regular DPs which are not objects of P. According to these rules, definite D must always be spelled out on N in regular definite DPs because in the absence of P, D enters Agree with only one item in the DP, i.e. with N, and hence D will be spelled out on N in these cases. This indicates that the encliticization of the definite D on N in ER is not the result of D-lowering (Dobrovie-Sorin & Giurgea 2006); (iv) Familiarity and uniqueness are at the core of the two most influential theories about definiteness. While both of these theories claim to be able to account for all the uses of definite descriptions, this paper proposes that ER offers evidence that uniqueness and familiarity play distinct roles in the analysis of definiteness.

Selected References

Dobrovie-Sorin, C. and I. Giurgea 2006. The Suffixation of Definite Articles in Balkan Languages', in *Revue roumaine de linguistique* LI, 73-104. **Mardale, A. 2006.** Why *on table* is *on the table*? Notes on the definite article's incorporation with prepositions in Romanian. In Beata Gyuri (ed.), *Proceedings of the First Central Europe Student Conference in Linguistics*, 1-12. **P&T: Pesetsky & Esther Torrego. 2004**. Tense, Case and the Nature of Syntactic Categories. In J. Guéron and J. Lecarme (eds.), *The Syntax of Time*, pp. 495-538. MIT Press.