

The comparative syntax of Albanian: on the contribution of syntactic types to propositional interpretation

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Reviewed by Cedric Boeckx

Summary by the author

The main focus of this dissertation is on the existence of a systematic relationship between syntactic structure and propositional interpretation. The exploration of this relationship is in this thesis done by highlighting what Albanian, a language that has received relatively little scholarly attention in the generative paradigm, has to tell us about UG.

Within the theory of UG, syntactic constituents are made up of smaller constituents and may combine with other constituents to compose yet others. That is, syntactic relations are hierarchical and compositional. Within the Principles and Parameters framework, it is generally assumed that initial syntactic relations reflect semantic relations and that languages differ from each other in the way they instantiate these semantic relations. On the assumption that semantics is compositional, that is, the meaning of an expression is a function of the meaning of its parts, it follows that propositional interpretation is determined by the semantics of the syntactic constituents that it consists of.

The thesis starts with an examination of the effects of direct object clitic doubling in Albanian and Greek on propositional interpretation. Crucially, the thesis argues that direct object doubling clitics in these languages are operators that license topichood. More technically, I claim that direct object clitic doubling unequivocally marks direct object DPs as [-Focus], which in analogy with the [+Focus] feature on phrases, is in this dissertation defined as an operator feature.

The investigation of direct object clitic doubling in Albanian and Greek parallels a discussion of scrambling in Germanic. I argue that scrambling in Germanic is an operation that yields the same effect as direct object clitic doubling in Albanian and Greek. Consequently, clitic doubling and scrambling of direct

object DPs do not induce specificity, presuppositionality and/or strength, as has been claimed for doubling in Romance or for scrambling in German/Dutch (Sportiche 1992). I argue instead that the locus of specificity/presuppositionality/strength is the D-position, which for noun phrases underlies argumenthood. In addition, I show that in apparent cases of optional doubling/scrambling, there is in fact no optionality.

Dealing with issues of syntactic representation, I discuss in particular how the view that direct object clitic doubling and scrambling mark their associated DPs as unambiguously [-Focus] may be implemented successfully within the minimalist framework by preserving Sportiche's basic assumption that clitics head their own maximal projections as well as the clitic parameters that he establishes.

Other issues relating to the discussion of clitic doubling patterns treated in the thesis concern the structure of restrictive relative clauses (RRC) and an account of certain asymmetries of direct object clitic doubling in such clauses, as well as the structure of clitic left dislocated constructions.

In Albanian and Greek RRCs, clitic doubling of the associate of the relative clause is licit when the latter is indefinite and illicit when it is definite. This phenomenon is illustrated through the Albanian examples (1a) vs. (1b).

- (1) a. Lexova një libër që e mora në bibliotekë.
read-I a book that it_{cl,acc} got-I in library
'I read a book that I got from the library.'
b. Lexova libr-in që (*e) mora në bibliotekë.
read-I book-the that it_{cl,acc} got-I in library
'I read the book that I got from the library.'

I show that this asymmetry and others in the distribution of direct object clitic doubling in RRCs in Albanian and Greek derive from structural differences

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between two types of RRCs and more specifically from differences relating to the position of the associate of the relative clause. While in one type of RRCs the associate (or its head) raises from inside the relative clause (the so-called “promotion” or “head-raising” analysis, advocated in Schachter (1973), Vergnaud (1974), Kayne (1994)), there is yet another type of RRCs where the associate of the relative clause is generated inside a matrix clause (Chomsky 1973, 1977).

The explanation of several other asymmetries that arise with clitic doubling patterns elicits an exploration of noun phrases. On the assumption that a given syntactic construction cannot be systematically ambiguous, my basic working hypothesis is that semantic interpretations for noun phrases are fundamentally dependent on their internal structure. I justify with new evidence Longobardi's (1994) claim that only DPs but not NPs may function as syntactic arguments. In addition, I claim that NPs, on the other hand, invariably translate as predicates at LF. Consequently, they do not translate as variables or restricted quantifiers. These claims are prompted by evidence gathered from investigating count bare singular noun phrases as well as bare plurals. Count bare singulars are found frequently across Balkan and Mainland Scandinavian languages and sporadically also in Romance and other Germanic languages.

The discussion of count bare singulars in Balkan and Mainland Scandinavian languages undertaken in this dissertation sheds new light on a number of issues. These issues concern syntactic and semantic asymmetries of terms in differing grammatical relations, phrase structure and clausal positions, as well as the contribution of nominal constituent types to event reference and more generally to compositional semantics. The discussion of count bare singulars ultimately accounts for certain asymmetries observed in clitic doubling patterns.

Count bare singulars have a predicate-modifying and hence non-specific interpretation which is strongly reminiscent of the type of semantics associated with noun incorporation structures; they are property-denoting expressions. Indeed my thesis argues that the distinction specific vs. non-specific only makes sense in terms of a distinction between individual denotation vs. property denotation. That is, specific readings arise when noun phrases denote individuals and non-specific readings arise when noun phrases denote properties. Since count bare singulars may occur as direct objects, and given that the direct object position is acknowledged as a major argument position, the view that count bare singulars denote properties leads to the idea that many natural language predicates may take both individuals or properties as their internal argument. The so-called event-related reading of propositions containing count bare singular or existential bare plural objects is associated precisely with their function as predicates, not as arguments.

A variety of facts converge in showing that, syntactically, count bare singulars and existential bare plurals are **not** DPs with a morphologically null D, but NPs altogether lacking a syntactic D-projection. In other words, I propose that the semantic distinction between generic and existential bare plurals is due to a difference in their internal structure.

Importantly, my thesis argues that clitics carry a D-feature, which is why they may double only DPs, not NPs, and that specificity, presuppositionality or strength related effects often attributed to clitic constructions are only epiphenomenal, straightforwardly derived through the need to feature-match. Here, I obviously depart from the view that an NP is exclusively a complement of D and more generally from the recent Chomskyan implication that once a functional projection is available at least within a given language, it is always present/syntactically active in that language even though at times it may be inert/morphologically empty. Note, however, that this does not entail that there are no DPs with morphologically null Ds.

Although the study of noun phrases carried out in my thesis presents additional evidence for the idea that at least some fundamental aspects of the interpretation of noun phrases depend on their internal structure, another of its main goals is to show how differences regarding the distribution of DPs and NPs relate to initial phrase structure positions, the structure of the clause and the semantics associated with certain positions in it. More specifically, I argue that while DPs may be projected either in specifier or complement positions, NPs are exclusively projected in complement positions.

Finally, a detailed study of non-active morphology in Albanian and its effects on propositional interpretation is presented. I make the following crucial claim: Non-active morphology is an operation that affects the lexical meaning of a predicate by changing either the aspectual template associated with it or the pairing of a name (a constant) with the aspectual template of a predicate. That is, non-active morphology is **not** an operation that solely affects the number of arguments in the argument structure of a predicate without affecting its lexical meaning. I show that the range of readings that non-active morphology in Albanian yields can be formally and uniformly derived under the proposal that non-active morphology operates on the lexical semantic frames of verbs, not on their lexical syntactic frames. More specifically, relying on the model of lexical meaning proposed in Pustejovsky (1991), I claim that non-active morphology operates on the event structure of verbs. The detailed proposal is formulated as follows: When non-active morphology is affixed to a predicate, it shifts the event type associated with the predicate into a lower event type by suppressing either the initial subevent or the name (the constant) that is associated with this initial subevent. Since the notion of agent is related precisely with this initial subevent (Davis &

Demirdache 1995), non-active morphology de facto suppresses agenthood.

Review by Cedric Boeckx

Kallulli's thesis is an important contribution to the syntax of Albanian, and offers an interesting hypothesis concerning the syntax-semantics interface. Kallulli's overall aim is to show that in at least three domains the mapping between syntactic structure and semantic form is transparent. The three domains are: (i) clitic doubling, (ii) bare singular count nouns, and (iii) non-active verbal morphology.

The chapter on clitic doubling deals with several important issues. Although it mainly concentrates on the semantic contribution of clitic doubling, it also raises interesting questions related to optionality, clausal complementation, scrambling, clitic left dislocation, and the format of interrogative and relative clauses.

Like Greek, Albanian constitutes a serious counterexample to 'Kayne's Generalization' since the clitic double is not introduced by a Case-marker, as shown in (1).

- (1) a. Ev-a i dërgoi An-ës lule
Ev-the CL.Dat sent An-the.Dat flowers
'Ev sent An flowers'
b. E pashë Jan-in
Him.Acc saw.I Jan-the.Acc
'I saw Jan'

Kallulli's main concern is not to account for this departure from the better-known cases of clitic doubling, but rather to show that clitic doubling has a consistent interpretive correlate, best expressed in terms of topichood or defocusing. Relatively few works have concentrated on the precise interpretive effects of clitic doubling (but see Gutiérrez-Rexach 1999). When the issue is addressed (see, e.g., Sportiche 1992, Uriagereka 1995), the notion of specificity is often appealed to. For Greek, Anagnostopoulou and Giannakidou (1995) have shown that specificity is not adequate, and have instead proposed the notion of prominence. For Bulgarian, it has been argued that topichood is involved in clitic doubling (see Franks and King 2000 for references). Kallulli's discussion is part of this research program. On the basis of various tests such as possible answers to questions and the like, she shows that doubled material is necessarily defocalized in Albanian. This fact has important consequences in various domains. For instance, in the area of sentential complementation, Kallulli shows that clitic doubling of an argumental CP correlates with factivity, which is expected under her account given that factivity, like topichood, involves presupposition (in this case, presupposition of the truth of the factive complement). Kallulli also argues that Albanian clitic doubling (and also Greek, to which she extends her proposal) is on a par with Germanic-type (clause-internal) scrambling. That is, scrambling

correlates with defocusing. Incidentally, Kallulli observes (p. 49 n. 36) that scrambling in Germanic appears to depart from clitic doubling in also being able to express 'contrastive focus.' Kallulli offers an interesting speculation to the effect that clitics involved in doubling structures by their very nature are incapable of bearing stress, which is required for (contrastive) focusing. By contrast, scrambled elements may bear stress, and are therefore able to bear focus.

Kallulli notes that *ceteris paribus* we expect doubling clitics to be unable to associate with interrogative words, under the standard view that wh-words are foci. The expectation is largely borne out, with one important exception: Doubling of D-linked wh-phrases is possible (as it is in Romanian, Bulgarian, Greek, and many other languages; see Boeckx 2001 for an overview).

- (2) cil-ët libra I solli Ana?
Which-the books CL brought Ana
'Which books did Ana bring'

Kallulli argues that cases of clitic doubling with D-linked wh-phrases are instances of concealed relative clauses (i.e., they are not mono-clausal structures). In this respect, it may be worth noting that resumptive pronouns in languages that make productive use of them are very frequent in relative clauses, but not in interrogatives. As originally observed by Doron (1982) (for Hebrew, but the pattern in more general, see Boeckx 2001), resumption under wh-movement is restricted to D-linked wh-phrases.

- (3) a. eyze student nifgašta (ito) (Hebrew)
Which student you-met with-him
'Which student did you meet'
b. *mi nifgašta Ito
Who you-met with-him
'Who did you meet with'

Kallulli's claim may be extended to such cases. Resumption would then be restricted to (sometimes concealed) relative clauses.

With respect to relative clauses, Kallulli discusses an interesting restriction on the head of the relative: if a clitic occurs inside the relative clause, the head must be indefinite, as shown in (4). (See the examples in (1) in Kallulli's summary.)

- (4) a. lexova një libër të cil-in
read-I a book agr which-the
e mora në bibliotekë
CL got-I in library
'I read a book which I got from the library'
b. *lexova libr-in të cil-in
read-I book-the agr which-the
e mora në bibliotekë
CL got-I in library
'I read the book which I got from the library'

Kallulli provides arguments against Alexiadou and Anagnostopoulou's (2000) analysis of this restriction

for Greek, where it is made to follow from a head-raising analysis of relatives (see, e.g., Kayne 1994). In particular, she argues that the indefinite restriction in (4) is best captured if the antecedent of the relative pronoun is assumed to be base-generated outside of the relative clause. For relative clauses introduced by *që* 'that' she argues that a head-raising analysis is correct. Kallulli thereby accounts for an asymmetry between 'wh-relatives' and 'that-relatives.' Whereas the former shows the indefinite restriction with clitic doubling, the latter only optionally does so. The reason for this optionality according to Kallulli is that *që* is ambiguous between a complementizer (in which case, no indefinite restriction arises), and a relative pronoun (which then correlates with base-generation of the antecedent). Kallulli's dual analysis of relativization in Albanian should prove useful in debates concerning the representation of relative clauses. In particular, it should have repercussion for issues of reconstruction, as it predicts asymmetries between the two types of relatives. More generally, her analysis of relative clauses provides a good illustration of her attempt to account for various options made available in Albanian without appeal to optionality. By showing that very often apparent optionality has semantic (or structural) correlates, she contributes to the minimalist goal to show that optionality is only apparent.

Having discussed the nature of 'D' elements (clitic, referential expressions, topic), Kallulli then turns to the status of bare singular count nouns in Albanian, illustrated in (5).

- (5) Ana do të blejë biçikletë
 Ana wants agr buy bicycle
 'Ana wants to buy a bicycle'

She first establishes a parallel between Albanian and Norwegian, which also has bare singular count nouns, and develops a uniform analysis for both languages. She provides compelling arguments in favor of treating bare singular count nouns as bare NPs, not DPs (with a null D, for instance). In particular, she shows that bare singular count nouns always translate as properties in the semantics, that is, they behave as predicates, not as arguments. Building on Longobardi's (1994) influential proposal that D is required to turn an NP-predicate into an argument, she argues that an empty D head would fail to account for the predicate behavior of bare singular count nouns. Kallulli further claims that NPs undergo semantic incorporation into the verb to form a complex predicate, thereby bringing her proposal in line with Van Geenhoven's (1998) claim that indefinites in Inuit denote properties, and undergo incorporation (crucially, incorporation in Albanian does not take place in the syntax, as the bare singular count noun need not be adjacent to the verb it incorporates into; see Kallulli for discussion.) Kallulli finally shows that her NP treatment of bare singular count nouns straightforwardly accounts for why they cannot be doubled by a clitic, as clitics require a matching DP.

Taken together, the various arguments Kallulli provides in this chapter contribute to current debates surrounding the issue of the relation between internal structure and interpretation, the issue of functional architecture (in particular, she offers a clear case against projecting null heads in a language if other languages realize that head overtly in comparable circumstances), and finally to the issue of DP vs. NP and the role of D in argumenthood, which has recently been the subject of much discussion following Longobardi's (1994) and Chierchia's (1998) influential proposals.

The final chapter of Kallulli's thesis deals with non-active morphology and the structure of events. The distribution and range of interpretation of non-active morphology is quite complex, and I cannot hope to do justice to it here. Kallulli argues that the various readings induced by non-active morphology (stative, generic/potential, "suddenly" reading, and accidental causation) can be derived by assuming that non-active morphology is the reflex of an operation affecting the lexical entry of the verb it attaches to by altering either the aspectual template associated with the verb, or the pairing of a name with the aspectual template of a verb. In Levin and Rappaport-Hovav's (1995) terms, non-active affixation is a morphological operation that does not simply affect the lexical syntactic representation of verbs, but derives new lexical semantic representations. By adopting Pustejovsky's (1991) syntactic representation of event structure, Kallulli shows that non-active morphology suppresses agenthood by suppressing either the subevent that is associated with the agent or the name (constant) that is associated with this subevent. This is the only chapter where Kallulli fails to compare Albanian with other languages (although a comparison with a closely related language like Greek, which also has non-active morphology, would have been very useful).

Overall, Kallulli's dissertation is well worth reading. She touches on important current issues such as the semantic correlate of seemingly optional operations, the role of functional structure in the representation of argument structure, and the interpretive consequences of morpho-syntactic operations. Kallulli's work is probably best evaluated if read in parallel with the important work of Artemis Alexiadou and Elena Anagnostopoulou, in particular Alexiadou and Anagnostopoulou (1997) (for clitic doubling) and Alexiadou and Anagnostopoulou (1999) (for non-active morphology). Space limitations prevent me from comparing the claims made in these works with those made by Kallulli, but I urge the interested reader to do so.

Besides, I think the thesis would benefit from a more extensive discussion of some of the syntactic issues that arise in particular in the chapter on clitic doubling. For instance, Kallulli brings the structure of relative clauses to bear on the main issue of the relation between clitic doubling and topic-hood. But some aspects of relative clauses in Albanian fail to receive an

appropriate treatment. For instance, the status of the morpheme *të* in a sentences like (4) is not touched on.

Judging from (4), an adequate treatment of the complexity of the complementizer space in relative clauses in Albanian is sure to lead to a more refined characterization of the functional elements in that domain. It would be interesting to see to what extent Albanian offers evidence for a rich articulation of the COMP-domain along the lines of Rizzi (1997).

Finally, future extensions of the topics treated by Kallulli, especially in the last chapter of her thesis, would benefit from some discussion of the work on argument structure that came out of Hale and Keyser's (1993) study, and Halle and Marantz's (1993) Distributed Morphology model. For instance, recent work by Pytkänen (2000) has shown that a combination of the works just mentioned leads to a better understanding of the representation of causatives. It would be most welcome to see how a non-lexicalist approach fares with respect to the Albanian non-active morphology. Likewise, a discussion of Borer's (1994) syntactic treatment of aspectual alternation should figure in subsequent discussion of Albanian non-active morphology.

It is my hope that such issues will be tackled by Kallulli and others, for her thesis shows that Albanian provides an interesting testing ground for the nature of the interfaces.

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