

HOW UNIVERSAL IS DP?

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That all argument noun phrases, as opposed to at least some non-arguments, require a dedicated position (often identified with the categorial label D) has been suggested by Szabolcsi (1987) for Hungarian, Longobardi (1994, 2005) for Romance. The question whether this is a universal property has remained more controversial: Germanic (at least English) has been claimed to be subject to such a constraint by certain scholars (Stowell 1989, 1991), but to lack it altogether by others (e.g. Chierchia 1998). The presentation will try to address the universality issue in an empirically careful but also principled fashion. It will be argued that both English and Scandinavian suggest the general presence of D in argument nominals, modulo a secondary parametric difference with Romance, independently pointed out since Longobardi (1994). Then it will be asked why D should be necessary precisely with arguments. The answer suggested by some of the phenomena analyzed will be that a specific conceptual category, Person, is required in natural languages for denoting individuals (but not properties). On these grounds the crucial prediction will be made -and successfully tested- that in languages such as Japanese where Person is not encoded in the grammar, but is only part of the conceptual-intentional system, argument noun phrases will be able to appear without a D category, more in line with Chierchia's (1998) expectation.