

Real and Spurious Articles in Germanic and Romance*

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Abstract

Den Dikken 2006 makes the strong claim that comparative qualitative binominal NPs involve a (spurious) indefinite article in Germanic, but a definite one in Romance. He connects this fact to the structural deficiency of the nominal projections involved, which must be NumPs. In this article this analysis is challenged for Romance, where strong direct and indirect evidence exists that undermines both Den Dikken's claim that a spurious definite article exists in Romance QBNPs, and the hypothesis that the subject must be a NumP in this construction. Rather, it will be argued that the presumed syntactic restrictions on the realization of the subject DP in Romance QBNPs follow from informational partition: the inverted predicate is interpreted as focus, whereas the subject receives a background interpretation. Further support for this pragmatic analysis will come from the consideration of another construction involving predicate inversion, namely the so-called *lo-de construction* in Spanish.

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Table of contents

1. Qualitative binomial noun phrases	3
1.1. The Empirical Bases of Den Dikken's Analysis of QBNPs	3
1.2. The Structure and Derivation of QBNPs	5
2. From Germanic to Romance: Problems for the NumP hypothesis	7
2.1. Typological variation	7
2.2. The internal variation	9
2.3. Agreement	10
2.4. Quantifiers	11
2.5. Demonstratives	12
2.6. Interim conclusions	13
3. A new proposal: Information Packaging within the DP	13
3.1. Referentiality restrictions in Romance QBNPs	13
3.1.1. Universal quantifiers	13
3.1.2. Monotone increasing and monotone decreasing quantifiers	14
3.1.3. Excess quantifiers	15
3.1.4. Bare plurals	15
3.2. The roots of the referentiality restriction: information structure in QBNPs	16
3.2.1. Information packaging in Romance QBNPs	16
3.2.2. Analysis	18
4. Extending the analysis: Spanish lo-de construction	20
4.1. Basic properties of the lo-de construction	20
4.1.1. Predication structure	20
4.1.2. Constituency	20
4.1.3. Islandhood	21
4.2. The referentiality restriction	21
5. Conclusions	22
References	23

1. Qualitative binomial noun phrases

In his recent book *Relators and Linkers* (Den Dikken 2006), Marcel den Dikken offers the most complete and satisfactory analysis of *qualitative binomial noun phrases* (henceforth QBNPs), also widely known as (one type of) the *N of a N* construction (see among others Doetjes and Rooryck 2001, Español-Echevarría 1997, Español-Echevarría 1998, Hulk and Tellier 2000, Napoli 1989).¹ Here we have some examples from different languages:

- (1) a. a jewel of a village
b. die idioten vaneen doktoren (Dutch; Den Dikken 2006)
those idiots of a doctors
c. quell' ignorante del dottore (Italian; Napoli 1989)
that ignoramus of-the doctor
d. el idiota del médico (Spanish)
the idiot of-the doctor

These DPs are called *comparative* QBNPs, because a comparison is established between the subject of the predication—in the English example, *village*—and the predicate—in the English example, *jewel*. The example in (1a) can thus be paraphrased as “the village is *like* a jewel”.

Let us consider the properties of QBNPs in some detail (1.1), and then the structure and derivation that Den Dikken argues for (1.2).

1.1. The Empirical Bases of Den Dikken's Analysis of QBNPs

The first key property of QBNPs concerns the presence of the indefinite article preceding the subject of the predication:

- (2) a jewel of *a* village

¹ A related construction exists, *attributive* QBNPs in Den Dikken's 2006 terms: *an idiot of a doctor*. Leaving aside the comparative interpretation, there is a reading where the property of being an idiot is ascribed to the doctor in his or her capacity of a doctor, so that he or she is an idiotic *doctor*, but not necessarily an idiotic *person*. We refer the reader to Den Dikken 2006 for a detailed comparison of the two constructions. Since we will not consider the attributive construction in this article, we will use the label QBNPs to refer to *comparative* QBNPs for the sake of simplicity.

Den Dikken argues that the properties of this element are not those typical of a real article, so that it should rather be considered a *spurious article*. His main empirical evidence concerns number agreement. Even though English only allows singular nouns after this element, Dutch does allow plural nouns as well. Crucially, the singular article *een* ‘a’ must be inserted regardless of the number of the following noun (Den Dikken reports similar facts from several German dialects):

- (3) a. die idiot vaneen doktor (Dutch)
 that idiot of a doctor
 b. die idioten vaneen doktoren
 those idiots of a doctors

On these grounds, Den Dikken claims that the indefinite article in Germanic QBNPs should be considered spurious (a point that we will challenge in 2).

The second major property of QBNPs is, according to Den Dikken 2006, the set of structural restrictions imposed to the subject. First, the subject shows number disagreement with respect to the whole DP (4a), and does not agree with the verb (4b):

- (4) a. die twee ramp(*en) van een feiten (Dutch)
 those two disaster(s) of a facts
 b. die ramp vaneen feiten ?komt/*komen zeer ongelegen (Dutch)
 those disaster of a facts comes/come very inconvenient

This behavior leads Den Dikken to argue that the subject of QBNPs must be big enough to contain a Number Phrase, independent of that of the whole DP.

Second, the subject cannot host material arguably located in a high position within the (extended projection of the) DP, namely quantifier phrases, as the ungrammaticality of the following examples suggests:²

² Den Dikken 2006 argues that a similar rationale applies to the impossibility of having *wh*-extraction of the subject or of its being a *wh*-phrase *in situ* (Den Dikken’s examples (65b,e)):

- (i) a.*[What/Which sentence] does Brian think that is a wonder of (a) *t*?

- (5) a. *die ramp(en) van (een) allefeiten (Dutch)
 those disaster(s) of a all facts
 b. *die ramp van (een) ieder feit (Dutch)
 those disaster of an every fact

This restriction, Den Dikken claims, shows that the subject must be clearly smaller than a full DP, and together with the evidence regarding agreement, he concludes that the subject must be a Number Phrase (henceforth I will refer to this proposal as the *NumP Hypothesis*).³

1.2. The Structure and Derivation of QBNPs

On the bases of the empirical evidence reviewed in the previous section, Den Dikken 2006 assumes that both the subject and the predicate are Number Phrases (NumP) mediated by a *Relator*, lexicalized by *a* —which should then be considered a *spurious* article:⁴

- (6) [RP [NumP village] [R' R(=a) [NumP jewel]]]

Here, the Relator is considered a functional head necessary for articulating the subject-predicate relation, along the lines set forth in Kayne 1994, Den Dikken 1998, Bennis et al. 1998, among others.⁵

This structure feeds predicate inversion in the following way. First, a functional

-
- b.*[Who] thinks that is a wonder of what?

We will turn to these examples in 3.2, where their ungrammaticality will be argued to follow from informational restrictions.

³ Den Dikken extends this conclusion to the predicate, as well, but we will not be concerned with the internal structure of this element in the present article.

⁴ It must be emphasized that, for Den Dikken 2006, relators are abstract functional heads that can be lexicalized by several elements: Tense, *be*, *of*, *a*, etc.

⁵ To do justice to Den Dikken's 2006 proposal, it must be said that one of his main points is demonstrating that this general structural pattern of predication mediated by a Relator is shared by QBNPs (*a jewel of a village*) and *attributive* QBNPs (*an idiot of a doctor*), with a crucial difference regarding the relative position of the subject and the predicate: whereas the former involve a subject-relator-predicate structure plus *predicate inversion* — that is, raising of the predicate NumP over the subject—, the later are in an underlying predicate-relator-subject configuration.

projection is created headed by the nominal copula *of* (a *linker* in den Dikken’s terms). Second, the relator *a* incorporates to F for checking some formal feature —the author considers its exact nature irrelevant—, and later on the predicate NumP *jewel* raises to Spec,FP, again for feature-checking purposes. This yields the following structure:⁶

(7) [FP [NumP *jewel*]_j [F’ LINKER(=*of*)+RELATOR(=*a*) [RP [NumP *village*] [R’ t_i t_j]]]]

Finally, this FP is selected by a nominal functional head —in the case at hand, one headed by the indefinite article *a(n)*:

(8) [DP *a* [FP [NumP *jewel*]_j [F’ *of+a* [RP [NumP *village*] [R’ t_i t_j]]]]]

Den Dikken extends this analysis to Romance QBNPs as well, but noting the mysterious appearance of a *definite* spurious article as the relator. Consider thus the representation of the Italian example (9):

(9) [DP *quello* [FP [NumP *ignorante*]_j [F’ *de+el* [RP [NumP *dottore*] [R’ t_i t_j]]]]

Here the only difference is the realization of the relator as the (masculine singular) definite article *el* ‘the’, instead of the (masculine singular) indefinite article *un*, which leads to ungrammaticality:

(10) **quell’ignorante d’un dottore*
 that-ignoramus of-a doctor

So then, we can summarize Den Dikken 2006 account of QBNPs in three main points: (i) the existence of a spurious (in)definite article, (ii) the size restriction on the subject to NumP —*the NumP Hypothesis*—, and (iii) the existence of predicate inversion. Whereas, we agree with the later point, which we will not discuss, we will show in 2 that the NumP Hypothesis, and the existence of a definite spurious article in Romance, which is just a corollary of it, cannot stand scrutiny when Romance QBNPs are considered in some detail.

⁶ We make abstraction of the presence of a null predicate SIMILAR that Den Dikken 2006 argues for, since it is irrelevant for the issues discussed in the present article.

2. From Germanic to Romance: Problems for the NumP hypothesis

Den Dikken 2006 extends his analysis of QBNPs to Romance, so that he claims that in Romance languages like Spanish, QBNPs must have an spurious article as well, even though it is realized as the *definite* article. This allows him to maintain that the subject and the predicate must also be (at most) NumPs in Romance QBNPs, which permits a unified analysis for this construction. Yet, successful as it seems for Germanic QBNPs, this analysis runs into trouble when extending to Romance, where things are far from being as simple as Den Dikken assumes. In this section, we will first review strong direct and indirect evidence that undermines both Den Dikken's claim that a spurious definite article exists in Romance QBNPs, and the hypothesis that the subject must be a NumP in this construction.

2.1. Typological variation

As Den Dikken 2006 acknowledges in a footnote, he has no answer for the fact that the spurious article must be indefinite in Germanic, but definite in some Romance languages (Spanish, and Italian; also Catalan, Galician, and Portuguese), and necessarily null in others (French; also Romanian). Consider:

- (11) a. quell' ignorante del dottore (Italian)
that ignoramus of-the doctor
b. el idiota del médico (Spanish)
the idiot of-the doctor
- (12) a. Cet imbecile de/*d'un/*du médecin (French; Den Dikken 2006)
that imbecile of/of-a/of-the doctor
'That imbecile of a doctor'
b. Afurisitul de copil/de copitul/de un copil (Romanian; Visan 2003)
bloody-the of child/of child-the/of a child
'That bloody child!'

Why should this be so? If the answer had to do with language-internal variation, as he suggests, we would admit that his 'nearly parametric' generalization—indefinite spurious article in Germanic vs. definite spurious article in Romance—is, at best, an incomplete

description of the facts.

To make things worse, consider in this respect the behavior of possessives in Spanish versus Italian and Catalan:

- (13) a. el idiota de su primo (Spanish)
the idiot of his cousin
b. quella carogna del tuo dottore (Italian; Napoli 1989)
that scoundrel of-the your doctor
c. l'idiota del seu cosí (Catalan)
the-idiot of-the his cousin

Den Dikken considers that the possessive appears somewhere below Num, and the definite article is spurious. Yet, note that neither Italian nor Catalan allow prenominal possessives without the definite article:

- (14) a. *una carogna de tuo dottore (Italian)
a scoundrel of your doctor
b. *l'idiota de seu cosí (Catalan)
the-idiot of his cousin
(15) a. È *(el) tuo dottore (Italian)
is the your doctor
b. És *(el) seu cosí (Catalan)
is the his cousin

Conversely, Spanish doesn't admit the definite article in the same context:

- (16) a. *el idiota del su primo (Spanish)
the idiot of-the his cousin
b. Es (*el) su primo (Spanish)
is the his cousin

Standardly, this contrast has been associated with the weak character of Spanish possessives, which must raise to the head of the DP, becoming a special kind of article (see among others Giusti 2002, Picallo and Rigau 1999). Notwithstanding, the NumP hypothesis cannot explain

this behavior, and Den Dikken should assume that in Italian/Catalan the definite determiner is spurious in (16b-c), and that QBNPs mysteriously license a possessive without article in these two languages. Subsequently, the NumP hypothesis forces us to assume that, against all evidence, possessives must be analyzed in a completely different way in QBNPs than in any other construction in these two languages.

2.2. *The internal variation*

However, things are even worse, for there is more language-internal variation in QBNPs than Den Dikken 2006 suggests. First, the subject in QBNPs can be headed by an indefinite article under certain conditions —a fact originally pointed out by Napoli 1989 for Italian, and acknowledged in a footnote by Den Dikken 2006:

(17) a. el idiota de un vecino que conocí ayer (Spanish)

the idiot of a neighbor that met yesterday

b. el fatuo de un famosísimo actor

the fatuous of a very.famous actor

(18) a. el maleducat d'un alumne que conocí ayer (Catalan)

the rude of-a student that met yesterday

b. el ximple d'un famós actor català

the fool of-a famous actor Catalan

Under Den Dikken's assumptions, this leads us to admit that the *indefinite* spurious article is available in Romance as well, alternating with the *definite* one. Yet this conclusion is bad news for his analysis in two respects: on the one hand, the presumed parametric approach to the Germanic-Romance contrast in QBNPs runs into big trouble once more; on the other hand, the distribution of definite and indefinite articles in this construction suspiciously parallels the conditions regulating the alternation of *true* definite and indefinite articles in Romance.

Second, in the very same context a bare plural is possible, while retaining the comparative interpretation (i.e. the examples are no instances of *attributive* QBNPs):

(19) a. los idiotas de vecinos que conocí ayer (Spanish)

- the idiots of neighbors that met yesterday
 b. els maleducats d'alumnes que vaig conèixer ahir (Catalan)
 the rude.PL of-students that PAST.1 meet yesterday

Again, this would imply *null* spurious articles are at hand in Romance languages like Spanish, Catalan, or Italian.

To end this paragraph, note that the presence of definite articles in this position puts Den Dikken 2006 in a contradictory situation when the recursivity of the construction is considered. Since the final result of the comparative QBNP is a DP — $[_{DP} a [_{FP} [_{NumP} jewel]_j [_{F'} of+a [_{RP} [_{NumP} village] [_{R'} t_i t_j]]]$ —, he will be forced to assume that the real article becomes spurious when the structure is inserted as the subject of another comparative QBNP, even though there is no empirical evidence for this divergent analysis in Romance. One could assume this drawback, and cope with examples like the following:

- (20) a. el muermo de tu vecino
 the bore of your neighbor
 b. el idiota del muermo de tu vecino
 the idiot of-the bore of your neighbor

However, such a move becomes indefensible for a DP headed by a demonstrative, unless one is tied to assume the existence of spurious demonstratives, one step that Den Dikken refuses to take up —sensibly, from our point of view:

- (21) a. ese muermo de tu vecino
 that bore of your neighbor
 b. el idiota de ese muermo de tu vecino
 the idiot of that bore of your neighbor

We will consider in more detail the issue of demonstratives in 2.5.

2.3. Agreement

Another unexplained fact concerning the presumed spurious article in Romance concerns agreement. Whereas, the typical spurious article *een* in Dutch shows no agreement with the

noun, the (in)definite article in the subject agrees in gender and number:

- (22) a. el idiota de un vecino que conocí ayer (Spanish)
the idiot of a neighbor that met yesterday
b. los idiotas de unos vecinos que conocí ayer
the.PL idiots of a.PL neighbors that met yesterday
c. la idiota de una vecina que conocí ayer
the.F idiot.F of a.F neighbor.F that met yesterday
d. las idiotas de unas vecinas que conocí ayer
the.F.PL idiot.F.PL of a.F.PL neighbor.F.PL that met yesterday
- (23) a. el idiota del vecino (Spanish)
the idiot of-the neighbor
b. los idiotas de los vecinos
the.PL idiots of the.PL neighbors
c. la idiota de la vecina
the.F idiot.F of the.F neighbor.F
d. las idiotas de las vecinas
the.F.PL idiot.F.PL of the.F.PL neighbor.F.PL

Was the article spurious like Dutch *enn* ‘a’, why should it agree with the noun? In other words, if the disagreement pattern cannot help us identify (definite) spurious articles in Romance, what should?

2.4. *Quantifiers*

Striking direct evidence against Den Dikken’s claim that the subject must be a NumP in Romance QBNPs follows from the presence of material that is standardly considered to be generated above NumP.

One significant case is the presence of *partitive/specific* quantifiers:

- (24) los idiotas de algunos/muchos (de los) alumnos
the.M.PL idiots of some.M.PL/many.M.PL of the.M.PL students

Here quantification is restricted to a specific set of students available from the context, either if we mark it explicitly by means of the partitive marker *de* ‘of’ or not. Crucially, when the

quantifier cannot obtain this partitive/specific interpretation, the construction becomes ungrammatical:

- (25) a. *los idiotas de algunos alumnos cualesquiera (Spanish)
 the.M.PL idiots of some.M.PL students whichever
 b. *los idiotas de algunos alumnos que conozcas
 the.M.PL idiots of some.M.PL students that know.SBJ.2SG

Here, the presence of the modifier *cualquiera* ‘any’, and the relative clause in subjunctive mood (SBJ) force the unspecific reading of the quantifier, yielding an ungrammatical result. Therefore, the contrast between (24) and (25), not only goes against the claim that quantifiers cannot appear in the subject of QBNPs —and, hence, against the claim it is a NumP—, but also suggest that the restrictions limiting the presence of quantifiers in this position ask for a semantic approach, rather than for a syntactic one (a point that we will develop in 3.2).

2.5. Demonstratives

As Den Dikken 2006 himself acknowledges in a footnote, his analysis cannot explain the presence of demonstratives within the subject, which are standardly assumed to be generated over NumP:

- (26) a. el idiota de ese primo tuyo (Spanish)
 the idiot of that cousin of.yours
 b. el lladre d’aquell alcalde (Catalan)
 the thief of-that mayor

The author is cautious enough to avoid suggesting the existence of a spurious demonstrative, but he has to admit that his hypothesis that the subject is a NumP cannot account for these data.

Note, to end this section, that example 26) has another alternative where the definite article and the (postnominal) demonstrative coexist (on this construction in Spanish see Brugè 2002, Roca 1997):

- (27) el idiota del muermo ese de tu vecino

the idiot of-the bore that of your neighbor

2.6. *Interim conclusions*

From the solid bulk of evidence just considered, it becomes clear that the analysis proposed by Den Dikken 2006 for Germanic QBNPs cannot be extended to Romance. Rather, we must conclude that the subject of QBNPs is not a NumP in Romance, neither there is such thing as a definite spurious article.

In the following section, a semantic approach will be pursued, which will be shown to account for the preceding empirical evidence in a simpler and more principled way, taking into account the informational role of the subject and the predicate in Romance QBNPs.

3. A new proposal: Information Packaging within the DP

Since Romance QBNPs don't fit the analysis involving an spurious article advocated for by Den Dikken 2006, we offer a different line of research where the empirical generalizations we have arrived at in 2 follow from an informational restriction on the subject of QBNPs. Namely, we will argue that the predication relation involved in this construction is restricted to highly referential individuals. Furthermore, it will be shown that this approach receives independent empirical support from a Spanish nominal construction —the *lo-de* construction; see Bartra and Villalba 2006a, Bartra and Villalba 2006b— that crucially involves predicate inversion, and parallels most properties of QBNPs.

3.1. *Referentiality restrictions in Romance QBNPs*

As shown in 2.4, even though the subject of Romance QBNPs admits the presence of quantifiers, they must receive a partitive/specific interpretation. In this subsection we will qualify in more detail this generalization, taking into account a wider set of quantifiers.

3.1.1. *Universal quantifiers*

In the case of universal quantifiers, a clear contrast exists between specific and non-specific ones. So, non-specific *todo* 'every' and *cualquier* 'any' are impossible, whereas specific *todos* 'all' and *ambos* 'both' are fine:

- (28) *el idiota de todo/cualquier alcalde
 the idiot of every/any mayor
- (29) a. los idiotas de todos los alcaldes
 the.M.PL idiots of every.M.PL the.M.PL mayors
- b. los idiotas de ambos alcaldes
 the.M.PL idiots of both mayors

3.1.2. Monotone increasing and monotone decreasing quantifiers

When considered under the perspective of the generalized quantifier theory, non-universal quantified phrases in exclamative sentences display a regular behavior: monotone increasing quantifiers (30) are fine, whereas monotone decreasing (31a) and nonmonotone quantifiers (31b) yield ungrammatical results.

- (30) los idiotas de algunos/muchos/varios alcaldes
 the.M.PL idiots of certain/many/several mayors
- (31) a. *los idiotas de menos de cuatro/pocos alcaldes
 the.M.PL idiots of less of four/few mayors
- b. *los idiotas de entre cuatro y seis alcaldes
 the.M.PL idiots of between four and six mayors

Interestingly, monotone increasing quantifiers are most easily interpreted partitively (32) in clear contrast with monotone decreasing (33a) and nonmonotone ones (33b) :

- (32) los idiotas de algunos/muchos/varios de los alcaldes
 the.M.PL idiots of certain/many/several of the.M.PL mayors
- (33) a. *los idiotas de menos de cuatro/pocos de los alcaldes
 the.M.PL idiots of less of four/few of the.M.PL mayors
- b. *los idiotas de entre cuatro y seis de los alcaldes
 the.M.PL idiots of between four and six of the.M.P mayors

If we tie partitivity to a specific or referential interpretation (ENÇ 1991), we can conclude that the behavior of non-universal quantifiers reproduces that of universal ones quite faithfully.

3.1.3. Excess quantifiers

As discussed at length in Bosque 1996, excess quantifiers such as *demasiado* 'too many' are inherently non-specific, as shown by their incompatibility with standard marks of specificity: modifiers forcing a particular reading (34) or partitivity (36):

- (34) a. *demasiados libros en concreto
too.many books in particular
b. *demasiados de los libros
too.many of the books

As expected, excess quantifiers are impossible in the subject of QBNPs:

- (35) *los idiotas de demasiados/excesivos alcaldes
the.M.PL idiots of too.many.M.PL/excessive.M.PL mayors

3.1.4. Bare plurals

A last piece of evidence comes from bare plurals supporting the generalization that the subject of QBNPs must be highly referential. It is a well-known fact that bare plurals cannot be interpreted specifically (36), but either unspecifically (37a) —as indicated by the subjunctive (SBJ)/indicative (IND) alternation in the relative clause— or generically (37b):

- (36) *Encontró libros en concreto
found books in particular

- (37) a. No encontré libros que le gustasen/*gustan
not found books that to.him/her like.SBJ.3PL/like.IND.3PL
b. No encontré libros (*en concreto), sólo revistas
not found books in particular only magazines

Again, this behavior finds a clear parallel in QBNPs, where bare nominals are impossible altogether:

- (38) *No hablé con los idiotas de alcaldes.
 not talk with the.M.PL idiots of mayors

3.2. *The roots of the referentiality restriction: information structure in QBNPs*

In the preceding section, we have provided strong evidence for the following empirical generalization:

- (39) The subject of QBNPs in Romance must be specific.

The question now is trying to derive this generalization from some basic property of the construction at hand. The answer that we are going to defend involves the informational packaging of the construction, particularly the fact that the subject in Romance QBNPs is interpreted as a topic, with respect to its predicate, which is in turn interpreted as focus. Once this claim is solidly grounded in 3.2.1, we will have the last link of the chain, and a principled explanation for the empirical generalization in (39): the subject of Romance QBNPs must be highly referential in order to be properly interpreted as a topic. Then, we will offer a formalization of this idea in 3.2.2, and we will show how this analysis straightforwardly extends to a related Spanish construction, proving its predictive coverage, in 4.

3.2.1. *Information packaging in Romance QBNPs*

Den Dikken and Singhapreecha 2004 and Den Dikken 2006 make the strong claim that predicate inversion over a subject is always an instance of A-movement that forces an information partition where the predicate is topic (i.e. old/presupposed information), and the postcopular subject, focus (i.e. new/contrastive information), and extend this generalization to the DP-level, on the basis of QBNPs:

- (40) that idiot [*topic*] of a doctor [*focus*]

We will show that in Romance languages the opposite situation holds: predicate inversion is an instance of A'-movement to a DP-internal Spec,FocusP (see Aboh 2004, Giusti 1996), which renders the subject DP part of the background:

- (41) l' ignorante [*focus*] del dottore [*topic*]
 the ignoramus of-the doctor
 (Italian; *idem* for Catalan/Galician/Spanish)

Empirical evidence for such an analysis is presented in the next paragraph, and a detailed analysis is offered in 3.2.2.

In Romance QBNPs, the inverted predicate is interpreted as focus with respect to the topic DP. Let us consider first the evidence that the predicate is interpreted as focus. One typical test involves contrast. Consider for instance a dialogue like (??), where the inverted predicate receives strong contrastive stress to obtain a corrective reading (we exemplify the tests with Spanish, but similar data obtain in Catalan, Galician and Italian; French and Romanian lack QBNPs with definite article, as discussed in Hulk and Tellier 2000 and Visan 2003, respectively):

- (42) No vio al IDIOTA del médico, sino al ASESINO del
 not saw to.the idiot of.the doctor but to.the murderer of.the
 médico
 doctor

Concerning the topical nature of the subject, note that typically, focus elements are disallowed in this position, like *wh-in situ* —see also footnote 2 for a similar restriction in Germanic—, and DPs associated with *sólo* ‘only’:

- (43) a. *No hablaste con el idiota de qué médico.
 not talked.you with the idiot of which doctor
 b. *No hablaste con el idiota de sólo aquel médico.
 not talked.you with the idiot of only that doctor

With this evidence in mind, we can offer now an explanation for the otherwise surprising referentiality restrictions imposed on the subject of Romance QBNPs discussed thoroughly in 3.1, and exemplified for the ease of reference in (44): since the subject of the must be interpreted as background, only discourse salient referents are allowed in this position.

- (44) a. *el idiota de todo/cualquier médico
 the idiot of every/any doctor
 b. los idiotas de todos los/ambos médicos
 the idiots of every the/both doctors

Only specific QPs (44b) can refer to a salient discourse participant, a fact that we are fully aware from their ability to be (clitic) left-dislocated, a typical backgrounding strategy —see Cinque 1990, Cinque 1983, Villalba 2000, among others:

- (45) a. *A todo/cualquier médico no lo conocerás.
 to every/any doctor not him will.know
 b. A todos los/ambos médicos no los conocerás.
 to all the/both doctors not them will.know

To sum up, the informational partition of Romance QBNPs doesn't conform to the patterns established by Den Dikken 2006 for Germanic, but rather demands the opposite distribution. Schematically:

	subject	predicate
Germanic	focus	topic
Romance	topic	focus

With this much in mind, we can now move to the detailed proposal for Romance QBNPs.

3.2.2. Analysis

In agreement with the data in 2, we assume the following underlying structure for QBNPs, where the subject DP *el médico* 'the doctor' stands in a predication relation with the predicate DP *idiota* 'the idiot':

- (46) [RP [DP *el médico*] [R' R [DP *idiota*]]]

The articulation of the small clause is done by means of the Relator head R à la Kayne.

Now the Focus head is merged, which bears a [foc(us)] feature, probing and attracting the predicate DP:

(47) [_{FocP} [_{DP} idiota] [_{Foc'} R+Foc(=de) [_{RP} [_{DP} el médico] [_{R'} t_R t_{DP}]]]]

Since we consider movement of the predicate to Spec,FocP to be a typical A'-movement in Romance (contra Den Dikken and Singhapreecha 2004), the inverted DP becomes an A'-intervener, which explains the well-known fact that QBNPs are islands for extraction (see Den Dikken 1998, Den Dikken 2006):

(48) *¿[De qué pueblo]_i conoció al idiota del alcalde t_i?
of which village met to.the idiot of.the mayor

Moreover, once in the Spec,FocP the uninterpretable phi-features of the predicate DP can probe the interpretable phi-features of the DP subject: matching and agree holds, valuation of the phi-features of the predicate DP take place, and we obtain the typical concordant pattern described in 2.3, and repeated here for the ease of reference:

- (49) a. el idiota del vecino (Spanish)
the idiot of-the neighbor
b. los idiotas de los vecinos
the.PL idiots of the.PL neighbors
c. la idiota de la vecina
the.F idiot.F of the.F neighbor.F
d. las idiotas de las vecinas
the.F.PL idiot.F.PL of the.F.PL neighbor.F.PL

Finally, the D head is merged and the final DP is constructed. Again, the uninterpretable phi-features of the D head probe the interpretable phi-features of the subject DP, without the intervention of the inverted predicate, which has become inactive after the agree operation. Valuation takes place, and the determiner ends up agreeing with both the subject and the predicate, as show in (49).

4. Extending the analysis: Spanish *lo-de* construction

In this section, we will show that the information-based approach developed in 3.2 straightforwardly extends to an independent nominal construction: the Spanish *lo-de* construction. We will follow Bartra and Villalba 2006a, Bartra and Villalba 2006b, and show that this Spanish construction shares the basic properties with respect to QBNPs, specially concerning predicate inversion. Then, we will show that the *lo-de* construction displays the same referential restrictions on the subject of the DP-internal predication that we have found in QBNPs. the referentiality restriction will be considered in , and in , we will finally apply the analysis in to the *lo-de* construction.

4.1. Basic properties of the *lo-de* construction

4.1.1. Predication structure

Syntactically, the *lo-de* construction is headed by the so-called “neuter article” *lo*, which combines with a gradable nonagreeing adjective, which in turn establishes a predication relation with a DP:

- (50) Me sorprendió *lo caro* *de la casa*.
to.me surprised LO expensive.MASC of the house.FEM
“I was surprised by how expensive the house was.”

4.1.2. Constituency

Bartra and Villalba 2006a, b observe that when the internal structure of *lo-de* is considered, constituency tests fail for the apparent PP headed by *de*, just as happens with QBNPs. The *de*+DP sequence neither can be subject to *wh*-movement (51) nor focalized (52):

- (51) a. *¿[De qué]_i te extrañó lo caro t_i?
 “What surprised you the expensiveness of?”
 b. *¿[De qué alcalde]_i conociste al idiota t_i?
 “What mayor did you meet that fool of?”
- (52) a. *[DE LA CASA]_i me extrañó lo caro t_i
 “Of the house, I was astonished by the expensiveness.”

- b. *[DEL ALCALDE]_i conoció Juan al idiota t_i
 “*Of a mayor, Juan met that fool.”

Following Den Dikken 2006, we take this behavior to indicate that *de* is not a true P in these constructions, nor is it forming a maximal projection with the DP.

4.1.3. Islandhood

Another property that makes *lo-de* constructions and QBNP similar is islandhood, as can be easily observed in the following examples, which correspond to *wh*-movement:

- (53) a. *_ζ[En qué asunto]_i te extrañó lo mezquino de su interés t_i?
 “Which matter did the meanness of his/her interest in astonish you?”
 b. *_ζ[De qué pueblo]_i conoció Juan al idiota del alcalde t_i?
 “Which village did Juan meet that fool of a mayor of?”

On the basis of these data, we can conclude that the Spanish *lo-de* construction can be analyzed along the lines suggested by Den Dikken 2006 for QBNPs, and assumed in 3.2.2, namely as involving predicate inversion. Now, it is time to turn our attention to the referentiality restrictions affecting the subject in this Spanish construction, which will be shown to parallel the ones found in QBNPs.

4.2. The referentiality restriction

As observed by Bartra and Villalba 2006a, Bartra and Villalba 2006b, there is a referential constraint affecting the subject of *lo-de*. Consider the case of nonspecific indefinite DPs (54a), bare plurals (54b), and NPI and downward entailing quantifiers (54c):

- (54) a. *No me sorprenderá lo caro de una casa cualquiera.
 “I will not be surprised by the expensiveness of any house.”
 b. *No me extrañó lo caro de casas.
 “I was not surprised by the expensiveness of houses.”
 c. *No me extrañó lo caro de ninguna casa/pocas casas.
 “I was not surprised by the expensiveness of no house/few houses.”

These authors do not offer an explanation for this behavior, but it obviously parallels the facts discussed in 3.1, and fall under the analysis proposed in 3.2: the informational partition within the *lo-de* construction is exactly parallel to that of QBNPs, namely the inverted predicate is focus and the subject forms part of the background. Again, the standard tests confirm that the subject DP cannot be focus: the subject cannot be a focused wh-element in situ nor be associated with the focus particle *sólo* ‘only’. Consider (we repeat the QBNPs examples for the ease of comparison):

- (55) a. *Te extrañó lo alto de qué niña.
to.you struck LO tall of which girl
b. *No hablaste con el idiota de qué médico.
not talked.you with the idiot of which doctor
- (56) a. *Te extrañó lo alto de sólo aquella niña.
to.you struck LO tall of only thatgirl
b. *No hablaste con el idiota de sólo aquel médico.
not talked.you with the idiot of only that doctor

5. Conclusions

The analysis proposed by Den Dikken 2006 for Germanic QBNPs, where the subject and the predicate are NumP and a spurious indefinite article occurs, doesn't extend to Romance. First, the subject of Romance QBNPs is not a NumP, but a full-fledged DP. Second, there is no such thing as a definite spurious article in Romance. Third, the restriction(s) on the size of the DP subject and on the elements appearing in this position are not syntactic, but follow from the information partition within QBNPs, specifically from the background nature of the subject. This pragmatic approach allows us to generalize the analysis to other DP-structures involving predicate inversion, such as the Spanish *lo-de* construction. Moreover, the proposal has proven helpful to unburden syntax of features that could receive an easier pragmatic explanation and to provide us with a deeper insight and a sharper formulation of the empirical and theoretical problems, which will pave the way to more elaborated and comprehensive hypotheses

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