

DP-internal modification: Ordering ordinals and superlatives in Dutch and German

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Ordinals are said to occur high in the DP-spine, before other adjectives (see a.o. Cinque 2010, Svenonius 2008, and the works cited in both). Dutch data from the Corpora from the Web (COW; Schäfer 2015, Schäfer & Bildhauer 2012) show that the ordinals and superlatives can occur in either order:

- (1) a. *De tweede hoogste berg* ‘the second highest mountain’ (7,180 occurrences)
b. *De hoogste tweede berg* ‘the highest second mountain’ (1,807 occurrences)

How can we account for the cooccurrence of both these orders from a cartographic perspective? On the basis of Dutch corpus data and German compound distribution, I propose that further refinements are needed in the cartography of DP, for three reasons: (i) Superlatives and ordinals can occur in either order in Dutch; (ii) this is not the result of focus movement but rather an effect of scopal interaction; (iii) ordinals can modify not only nouns but also superlatives, and can be situated inside the superlative’s extended projection. (2a,b) represent the readings for (1a,b) respectively:

- (2) a. [second] [highest mountain] b. [highest] [second mountain]

An analysis for (2b) could be (3): *highest* originates lower but moves over *second* into a landing site for focused adjectives, call it Spec of KindP (see Svenonius 2008):

- (3) [_{KiP} highest [_{Ki}⁰ [_{SortP} second [_{Sort}⁰ [_{NP} highest [_n⁰ [_{VP} table]]]]]]]

However, there is no evidence to assume that either order is the result of focus movement: (i) there is no special focus intonation required; and (ii) focus movement would predict ambiguities to arise due to reconstruction possibilities. No such ambiguities arise.

There is a **second** possible reading for (1a), which is unavailable for (1b):

- (4) [second highest] mountain

In this reading, mountains are ranked according to their highness.¹ The superlative *highest* is thus directly modified by the ordinal. Along the lines of Corver (2005), for this reading I propose the structure in (5):

- (5) [_{DP} de [_{FP} [_{SupP} **tweede** [_{Sup} [_{Sup} **hoog-ste**] [_{AP} hoog]]] [_F F [_{NP} berg]]]]]

In (5), the superlative morpheme is the head of the SuperlativeP. The ordinal is in the specifier of this projection (the intensifier *aller-* also goes in this position). The ordinal has no such slot available and cannot be modified in the same way. The German equivalent of (1a), *der zweite höchste Berg*, can **only** have the reading in (2a). For (4), German requires compounding (see 6a), corroborating the close relation between the ordinal and the superlative in this reading. The reverse is not possible (6b).

- (6) a. *der zweithöchste Berg* b. **der höchstzweite Berg*

To conclude, any cartographic attempt at defining the predetermined locations for prenominal modifiers needs to take into account the following facts: (i) Superlatives and ordinals can occur in either order in Dutch; (ii) this word order alternation should not be analyzed in terms of focus movement but rather as the effect of scopal interaction between the different modifiers; (iii) not only can ordinals modify nouns, they can additionally occur as the modifier of a superlative and be located directly inside its extended projection, while the superlative cannot be located in the extended projection of the ordinal, as is corroborated by the distribution of German compounds.

Selected references:

Corver, N. (2005). Double comparatives and the Comparative Criterion. *Revue Linguistique de Vincennes* 34: 165-190; Schäfer, R. (2015). Processing and Querying Large Web Corpora with the COW14 Architecture. In: *Proceedings of Challenges in the Management of Large Corpora (CMLC-3)* (IDS publication server). 28–34; Schäfer, R. & Bildhauer, F. (2012). Building Large Corpora from the Web Using a New Efficient Tool Chain. In: *Proceedings of the Eighth International Conference on Language Resources and Evaluation (LREC’12)*. 486–493; Svenonius, P. (2008). The position of adjectives and other phrasal modifiers in the decomposition of DP. In L. McNally & C. Kennedy (Eds.), *Adjectives and adverbs: Syntax, semantics, and discourse* (pp. 16–42). Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

¹ There is another construction in Dutch: *op één na hoogste*, or more abstract, *op CARD na SUPL*. I will not consider this construction here.