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DP-INTERNAL DEGREE QR IN NON-ADJECTIVAL MODIFICATION

The problem: The syntax of "N of an N" constructions in (1a) is subject to some controversy. Bennis et al. 1998, den Dikken 1995, 1998, and Español-Echevarría 1998 have argued that (1a) results from predicate inversion inside the DP. We will also adopt a movement approach but argue that "N of an N" is a modificational structure combined with DP-internal degree movement on a par with the adjectival construction in (1b). This approach explains the semantic properties of the construction and provides a trigger for the movement, as well as resolves the question of what the head of the construction is.

Scalarity: The nouns that appear before *of* in cases like (1a) are *scalar*, i.e. their lexical entry contains a degree variable slot (Matushansky 2001). Non-scalar predicates such as *French* or *doctor* are subject to scalarity coercion in degree-sensitive environments. The meaning of the adjective changes to "having the properties typically associated with being French", and this meaning shift is paralleled in the nominal domain when coercion is allowed. Contrasts between scalar and non-scalar predicates, nouns in (2) and adjectives in (3), show that scalarity is indeed the relevant dimension.

Movement: Examples like (4) (though not accepted to the same degree by all native speakers) show that the surface position of the extended AP in (1b) is due to movement. This movement is restricted to APs containing a degree operator, and licenses non-scalar DPs in the complement of *seem* even when covert, as in (5). In other words, DPs containing a degree-modified AP, as in (5b), behave like the scalar DP in (2a). Matushansky 2001 argues that *seem* requires QR of degree in its complement, in the same way verbs such as *ask* force wh-movement in their complement.
Having established the existence of DP-internal degree movement, we see that the analysis extends to scalar nouns. Indeed, not only does the fronted noun in (1a) license a non-scalar head noun, as in (6a), but its structure parallels that of degree modification in (6b). Moreover, as shown in (1b), in certain dialects DP-internal degree movement of the extended AP triggers *of*-insertion, which suggests that movement is to the same position.

Predication vs. modification: Bennis et al. 1998, den Dikken 1995, 1998, and den Dikken & Lipták 1997 propose that the fronted element in "N/A of an N" constructions starts out as the predicate. We will argue that the similarity to copular inversion that they note is due to independent factors. The fact that the DP in (1a) denotes a kind of a problem and the recursivity of "N of an N" constructions, as in (7a), which are puzzles for the predicative analysis, ensue naturally from the attributive analysis.

Other results: The prohibition against any determiners except *a*, as in (8a), also follows from parallelism with APs: since DP-internal degree movement in (8b) can be argued to be the first step of QR to the clause level, degree extraction out of a DP will naturally be blocked by the presence of a higher quantifier. The prohibition against mass nouns and plurals in "N of an N" construction in (9a) is paralleled in the adjectival domain in (9b). The fact that adjectives appear in the fronted position in the Romance languages and in Hungarian is also expected under the modification approach.

Definite "N of an N" constructions: Examples such as (10) can be shown to be cases of non-restrictive modification where the entire DP functions as an epithet. This claim is supported by the fact that the nouns forming epithets are necessarily scalar, as (11) shows (Milner 1978, but see also Ruwet 1982).
If the entire "N of an N" construction has the same distribution as the fronted NP, neither the predicative nor the modificational analyses is right. But the purported derivational connection is an illusion, since French in (12) and some dialects of Spanish (Español-Echevarría 1997) disallow the definite article in "N of an N" constructions, while allowing definite epithets and indefinite "N of an N". Moreover, in (13a) and (13b), the possessor cannot be part of the fronted NP because *my/mon idiot* are not legitimate epithets while the second noun is a relational noun, which requires a possessor. Also, in cases such as (13c), the fronted NP *big bear/mountain* is not a legitimate epithet.

Cross-linguistic micro-variation: Romance languages differ as to permitting articles in "N of an N", and if they do, which (definite or indefinite) articles they allow, and where. We will link the parameter to the intersective/non-intersective interpretation of the head noun and properties of nouns across languages.

Examples

(1) a.   [a beauty] $_i$ of a t $_i$ problem
     b.   [how beautiful] $_i$ (of) a t $_i$ problem
(2) a.   Miranda seems an idiot/*a doctor.
     b.   Miranda is even more of an idiot/?of a doctor than I thought.
     c.   Miranda is such an idiot/a doctor.   = "idiot to a high degree"/"typical doctor"
(3) a.   Belinda seems intelligent/French.
     b.   Belinda is even more intelligent/?French than I thought.
     c.   Belinda is so intelligent/French.   = "intelligent to a high degree"/"so typically French"
(4) a.   Miranda is a **more capable** doctor than anyone I know.
     b.   Miranda is **more capable** a doctor than anyone I know.
     c.   **More capable** a doctor Miranda has never met.
(5) a.   * Belinda seems a trained doctor.
     b.   Belinda seems a more trained doctor than anyone I know.
(6) a.   This seems $^{??}$(✓a beauty of) a problem.
     b.   This seems too much of a problem.
(7) a.   that asshole of an idiot of a doctor
     b.   * This doctor is an idiot an asshole.
(8) a.   * a beauty of every/the problem
     b.   * how beautiful (of) every/the problem
(9) a.   these idiots of *policemen/*populace/✓a police force
     b.   how clean *glasses/*water/✓a glass
(10) I went to see my dentist, but the idiot (of a doctor) didn't know what was wrong.
(11) I went to see my dentist, but ✓the idiot/✓the butcher/*the doctor didn't know what was wrong.
(12) *l' idiot/imbécile de médecin
(13) a.   mon/*l' idiot de cousin/médecin
     b.   my idiot of a brother-in-law/doctor
     c.   the [big bear/mountain] of a man

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