

### Article drop and Case marking in Romanian

**The data:** in Romanian, the definite article is not overtly realized if the extended nominal projection consists only of  $D_{+def}$  and N and occurs in the complement position of (most) accusative-taking prepositions. Ex. (1) shows that the absence of the article does not reflect an underspecified structure, with no D (as proposed in Hill & Mardale 2021): since count bare singulars are excluded with locative Ps in episodic, non-modal environments (see ex. (2); cf. Dobrovie-Sorin 2013 on bare singulars in Romanian), (1) can only be interpreted as definite.

- (1) Au pus cărțile pe masă/\*pe mas-a.  
have.3PL put books-the on table / on table-the  
'They put the books on the table/\*on a table.'
- (2) Au pus cărțile pe [ {mas-a / \*masă} de joc].  
have.3PL put books-the on table-the / table of game  
'They put the books on the game table.'

Ambiguity arises in the plural, because bare plurals are less restricted, being allowed after prepositions, see (3). The ambiguity only holds if the DP consists in the noun alone, otherwise the definite article is obligatory for a definite interpretation, see (4):

- (3) Câine-le doarme în cutii.  
dog-the sleeps in boxes 'The dog sleeps in boxes / in the boxes.'
- (4) Câine-le doarme în cutii de lemn / în cutii-le de lemn.  
dog-the sleeps in boxes of wood in boxes-the of wood  
'The dog sleeps in wooden boxes / in the wooden boxes.'

I conclude from these data that the ambiguity in (3) is structural: D may be either the  $D_{+def}$  that is 'dropped' (remains covert) if the extended N-projection consists only of  $D_{+def}$  and N, or the null D used with bare plurals and mass nouns (Longobardi 1994). Ex. (5) shows that article drop is sensitive to abstract structure: if N is elided, the rule does not apply, although there is a single word in the extended nominal projection. Ex. (6) shows that it is not just the complement of D that must contain only the N head, but the entire extended projection is required to consist only of  $D_{+def}$  and N:

- (5) Stă în ultim-ul vagon → Stă în ultim-**ul** / \*în ultim.  
stays in last-the coach stays in last-the in last  
'(S)he's sitting in the last coach (of a train)' → '(S)he's sitting in the last one'
- (6) pe [toate {cărți-le /\*cărți }]  
on all books-the books 'on all the books'

**A previous account and its problems:** as the article drop rule does not affect the interpretation, it seems reasonable to place it at the level of PF. The fact that the rule is structure-sensitive can be captured in the framework of Distributed Morphology, where structure-sensitive rules may apply at the early stage of the PF derivation, before Vocabulary Insertion (see Embick & Noyer 2001). An analysis of article drop in terms of PF-rules was proposed by Dobrovie-Sorin (2007): first, a rule of complex head formation applies, which assigns  $X^0$ -status to constituents of the form  $[F^0 [L^0]]$ , where  $F^0$  is a functional head and  $L^0$  is a lexical head; this rule applies twice, first assigning an  $X^0$  status to  $[D_{+def} N^0]$ , then to the whole complex  $[P [D_{+def} N^0]]$ . Then, a rule applies that deletes the definite article whenever it is governed by a preposition that belongs to the same complex  $X^0$ .

I show that this account makes the wrong prediction for cases when P combines with a coordination of DPs. As the complement of P is phrasal, P cannot form a complex head with D+N, therefore article drop should not apply. However, if one of the conjuncts consists only in  $D_{+def}$  and  $N^0$ , even if it is not adjacent to P, article drop applies (in (7), deletion of P before the second conjunct cannot be assumed, because *între* 'between' cannot take singular DPs):

- (7) Distanța [între [[cas-a mea] și [oraș(\*-ul)]] e de 20 de kilometri  
distance-the between house-the my and city(\*-the) is of 20 of kilometers

‘The distance between my house and the city is 20 km.’

**Proposal:** I maintain the idea that article drop operates in complex heads, but I limit the complex  $X^0$  to  $D+N$ , for which I use the PF-rule in (8), which assigns a word-level status to a DP consisting only of  $D_{+def}$  and  $N^0$ . This covers examples such as (6) under an analysis of pre-D universals as specifiers of the DP, which is independently supported by ex. such as (9)a, where the constituency [Q+Card] is indicated by the fact that Card cannot occur before  $D_{+def}$  by itself, see (9)b.

(8)  $[DP D_{+def} [N^0]] \Rightarrow [D_0 D_{+def} N^0]$

(9) a. [toți trei] copii-i                      b. \*trei copii-i  
    all three children-the                      three children-the

For the fact that article-drop occurs after accusative-taking prepositions, I propose (10):

(10) Article drop applies if D is not marked for case

Underlying this proposal is a novel analysis of case in Romanian. As is well-known, Romanian shows an alternation between inflectional and prepositional case marking (cf. Cornilescu 2001, 2003, Mardale 2007); article drop is found with prepositional case markers (see (11)a), which I analyze as K heads:

(11) a. O            văd    pe {fată/\*fat-a}    / b. Văd    fat-a  
    CL.ACC see.1SG DOM girl / girl-the    see.1SG girl-the    (a,b=) ‘I see the girl.’

Although inflectional case is usually marked only once in the DP, on the D, there are a number of situations of iteration of unambiguous case markers as well as a very limited case concord. This shows that DP-internal elements may bear a Case feature, but this feature differs from gender and number, where concord is fully generalized. This difference can be captured by Norris’s (2014, 2018) theory of concord, according to which DP-internal elements (D, A, N) are not born with a Case feature, but receive case from K via a case spreading mechanism. I propose that in Romanian case spreading only occurs with inflectional Ks. Thus, in (11)b the article is not dropped because it is marked for case. In (11)a, K is prepositional and therefore D is left case-less, hence the article is dropped, by (10). Given the fact that the choice between inflectional and prepositional K, for the object and adnominal structural cases, is triggered by various properties of the complement of K and is specific for each K, I propose that the K used in structural case environment there is a distinct K head carrying unvalued counterparts of the categorial features of the licensing head:  $uv^*$  (accusative),  $un^*$  (genitive),  $uT$  (nominative). I propose that the prepositions that trigger article drop select for DP rather than KP, analyzing the direct case (i.e. nominative-accusative) morphology found in such DPs as reflecting the unmarked form (e.g. *-a* in (2) is just FSG whereas *-a* in (11)b is FSG.ACC). For the few prepositions that do not trigger article drop, I propose that they select KP. This is obvious for those that take the dative, which is a marked case form (e.g. *grație munc-ii* ‘thanks work-the.FSG.DAT’). Among prepositions that take the direct/unmarked case, only *cu* ‘with’, *de-a* introducing names of games and *pe* in the collocation *a face pe...* ‘to feign, play the...’ do not trigger article drop. I propose that they select an inflectional accusative K.

A welcome consequence of the proposal in (10) is that it offers some motivation for the article drop rule: the morpheme that is dropped is poorer in terms of features, lacking Case.

Time permitting, I will show how the article drop rule can be implemented under the main analyses of suffixal definiteness marking in Romanian (via Agree – see Cornilescu & Nicolae 2011, Nicolae 2019, 2020, or via PF-lowering – see Dobrovie-Sorin & Giurgea 2006).

**References:** Dobrovie-Sorin, C. 2007. Article-drop in Romanian and extended heads. In G. Alboiu et al. (eds.), *Pitar Moș: A Building with a View. Papers in Honour of Alexandra Cornilescu*, 99-106; Hill, V., Mardale, A. 2021. *The Diachrony of Differential Object Marking in Romanian*, OUP; Norris, M. 2014. A theory of nominal concord. PhD diss., UC Santa Cruz; Norris, M. 2018. Unmarked case in Estonian nominals. NLLT: 523–562.