
The book reviewed is structured as follows: it contains six major chapters preceded by Acknowledgements, List of abbreviations, Source abbreviations and a short Introduction, ending with Conclusions, References and Index.

The Introduction of the book (pp. 1–5) sets the main assumptions on which the argumentation is based. To begin with, the underlying hypothesis that “Syntax feeds Logical Form” implies that the interpretation of an utterance derives from its syntactic structure and vice versa; on the basis of a rich analysis of Nominal Expressions, Giusti sets her goal to provide an account in which syntactic arguments are given in support of semantic analyses (filling thus a gap in the literature, as it is more often the case that semantic arguments support syntactic analyses). Giusti introduces the pretheoretical concept of “Nominal Expression” (=NE): just like “clause”, NE refers to the entire nominal constituent without committing to an actual syntactic label of the highest projection (e.g. DP, NP). With the goal of establishing a relation between the semantics of nominal expressions and the morpho-syntactic expression of (in)definiteness, Giusti endeavours “to find a synthesis (in the Hegelian sense) between a thesis represented by mainstream syntactic accounts that assume a universal syntax-semantics mapping and take the semantic analysis of article languages as a starting point for a syntactic proposal holding for all languages (the DP-hypothesis, Longobardi 1994) and an antithesis consisting in more minimalist accounts that analyse article-less languages as structurally defective (DP-languages vs. NP-languages, cf. Corver 1990, Chierchia 1998, Bošković 2005, 2008, a.o.)” (p. 2). The main proposal, which will be argued for throughout the book, is that definite descriptions have a null operator in all languages, which (like many null elements) may establish a relation with an overt head – the article is such a head. The remainder of the introduction briefly introduces the contents of the book.

As directly transparent from its title (“Some basic tools of analysis”), chapter one (pp. 5–50) introduces the minimalist toolkit and the technicalities thereof which will be exploited in the analyses that follow. The chapter starts by discussing the minimalist principles of Economy and Full Interpretation, and examines the linguistic phenomena which are apparently problematic for these principles, namely expletives, case and different forms of grammatical redundancy (feature sharing/agreement); Giusti argues that these phenomena are not vacuous; rather, they ensure the syntactic representation of semantic relations. The following consistent part of the chapter introduces the toolkit necessary for building syntactic structure; the inner workings of Merge are discussed with reference to the clausal structure. The tripartite structure of clauses (CP/IP/VP) is introduced in a moderate cartographic framework. Moving to NEs, Giusti argues for a parallel tripartite structure, but insists on the fact that clauses and NEs are not isomorphic. The last part of the chapter is devoted to phases; pursuing further the incomplete isomorphism hypothesis, Giusti argues for a mono-phasal analysis of NEs, in contrast to clauses, which have a bi-phasal structure (Chomsky 2000 and ssq.).

Chapter two (“Articles at the interfaces”, pp. 51–81) reviews the logico-semantic analyses on the basis of which the mainstream syntactic accounts are built. After a brief but extremely useful introductory section (§2.1 The Semantic Tradition) in which Giusti presents the semantic descriptions of NE denotations, and the main semantic analyses (Frege and Russell) and their shortcomings, the author moves on to the syntactic accounts springing from these analyses. It is shown that the mainstream view on determiners is based on three independent assumptions: a one-to-one syntax-semantics mapping (= syntactic categories are directly mapped onto the corresponding LF semantic
types), a generalised notion of determiner (stemming from Abney’s seminal work which locates determiners in a high functional head, D), and a unified notion of determiner (which merges heterogeneous elements in the class of “determiners”). The three syntactic accounts which have been very influential in the literature are the following: Longobardi’s “narrow” Russellian approach, which assumes a uniform structure made up of an NP realizing the variable and the DP responsible for the closure; Chierchia’s neo-Carlsonian approach, based on the Nominal Mapping Parameter; and Boškovič’s NP/DP-parameter. With respect to Boškovič’s account, Giusti sets up a list of correlations predicted by this account (e.g. only article-less languages allow Left Brach Extraction and adjunct extraction from NEs, etc.), shows that none of them is a bidirectional conditional, and brings evidence against all of them. As all the mainstream analyses (which are based on the independent assumptions reported above) make a number of false predictions, at the end of the chapter Giusti lays the groundwork for a novel analysis of the left edge of NEs which does not imply the following: (i) the definite operator or other quantifiers are functional heads of the NE extended projection; (ii) the highest head of the NE is (labelled as) D; and (iii) determiners constitute a homogenous class. These ideas are developed in the chapters that follow.

Chapter three (“On feature sharing and feature spreading”, pp. 83–126) starts to practically develop the conceptual assumptions presented in the previous chapters. With the working hypothesis that feature sharing results from the application of Merge, it is shown that there are at least two other types of feature sharing besides Agreement (resulting from a Probe-Goal relation), namely Concord and Projection. Adopting the two basic relations in predicate logic, Selection and Modification, Giusti adopts the hypothesis that Merge operates to satisfy these two basic relations. Selection is satisfied either by head-comp or by spec-head, depending on the argument structure of the head; modification merges an extended projection as a modifier of a given head. A head merges as many times as necessary in order to ensure that selection and modification between it and all the arguments and modifiers take place. Thus, Agreement represents the relation between a head and its arguments, Concord is the relation between a modifier and a modified head, and Projection builds up the extended projection by recursively remerging a head as many times as necessary. Next Giusti sets out to apply these theoretical assumptions to empirical material drawn from a variety of languages (English, Italian, Czech, Romanian, Bulgarian, and Latin). In the first section (§3.1) it is shown that the arguments of N are assigned Genitive Case through agreement; here Giusti adopts and adapts the feature sharing mechanism put forward by Pesetsky and Torrego (2001, 2004). The following section (§3.2) argues that modifiers do not agree, but only concord with the modified head, and concord is established in a spec-head configuration; a very useful distinction is that between two different spec-head configurations: a spec-head configuration which determines concord, and one which is established as a consequence of a probe-goal relation, which attracts the goal into the spec of the probe. The final section (§3.3) is devoted to projection; it is shown that articles are segments of a scattered N, bundled with Case, the highest feature in the nominal hierarchy. I would like to highlight the fact that, through her insightful proposal that a head remerges as many times as necessary in order to satisfy selection and modification, Giusti veritably contributes to the current theoretical debate on the status of head movement; in Giusti’s analysis, head movement does satisfy the Extension Condition, a genuine counterargument to Chomsky (2001).

Pursuing the hypothesis that all (so-called) determiners display a behaviour that is different to various extents to the behaviour of articles, chapter four (“On the different nature of so-called determiners”, pp. 127–164) starts by introducing the syntactic diagnostics which single out functional categories (cf. Abney 1987 and much ssq. work); thus, functional categories: constitute closed classes, can be sisters only to one kind of category, can be phonologically/morphologically dependent, are usually inseparable from their sister projection, display a high degree of cross-linguistic variation (and micro-variation), may be phonologically null, are subject to syntactic conditions on merger, and lack substantive content. Except for articles, which observe all of the characteristics above, other determiners (quantifiers, demonstratives, possessive adjectives, and pronouns) are shown throughout the chapter to behave differently from articles and from one another; hence, they cannot be taken to be members of the same class of linguistic units. An important
proposal advanced in this chapter, substantiated with empirical and theoretical arguments, is that not only pronouns and demonstratives are inherent indexicals, but also proper names. The hypothesis that articles represent segments of scattered Ns with which other D-like elements merge, defended throughout the book, correctly predicts not only the co-occurrence of articles and other D-like elements within the limits of the very same NE, but also the conditions and patterns of co-occurrence. Section 4.2 represents a thorough discussion of demonstratives; Romanian long/strong demonstratives (=those which display the suffixal augment -a: acesta ‘this’, acea ‘that’) are discussed at length and their distribution and syntax is contrasted with that of Spanish demonstratives. However, I believe that the discussion is incomplete, as short/weak demonstratives (=those without the augment -a: acest ‘this’, ace ‘that’) are not discussed. Cornilescu (2005) introduced a syntactic distinction between long/strong and short/weak demonstratives: the latter are heads, while the former are phrasal; this distinction appears to have consolidated diachronically (Nicolae 2015). It would be thus interesting to see how Romanian short/weak demonstratives fit Giusti’s analysis, under the assumption that they are heads, not phrases.

With empirical material drawn from a variety of languages, chapter five (“Articles as scattered Ns”, pp. 165-188) substantiates the claims that definite articles are scattered N-/A-heads, and that the manner in which scattering proceeds is specified in their paradigm. The first section of the chapter is devoted to the Romanian enclitic definite article; it is worth highlighting that, besides showing that the enclitic article is part of the nominal inflectional morphology, Giusti also proposes analyses for long standing puzzles involving the Romanian enclitic article, namely the suffixation of the article on indefinite quantifiers and the omission of the article on modifier-less nouns selected by prepositions (in spite of the definite interpretation of the NE). In the following section, Giusti changes the perspective and turns to the freestanding proclitic definite article of Italian; important evidence is brought to support the hypothesis that referential indexes and definite articles do not stand in a one-to-one relationship; rather, the referential index of the NE is interpreted at the left edge. Micro-variation in Scandinavian (Norwegian, Swedish, Danish, and Icelandic) is taken to show that the parametric choice in the marking of definiteness concerns the realisation of the bundle. The last section of the chapter looks at articles in German; it is shown that, in some cases, the article is inserted as a filler of the highest segment of the NE. As highlighted in the chapter conclusions, if the analyses proposed in this chapter are on the right track, then the hypothesis that referential interpretation is obtained with the help of a null ι-operator is also correct, a step further in Giusti’s proposal to unify the languages with and without articles.

In the last chapter of the book (“Articles as adjectival concord”, pp. 189–210), Giusti sets out to show that there are situations in which articles are inserted to realize Concord between a modifying adjective and a head noun, on the basis of material drawn from a variety of languages: Albanian, Greek, Italian, Romanian, and German. Comparing previous analyses and identifying their shortcomings, Giusti proposes a novel analysis of polydefiniteness by comparing three Balkan languages, Albanian, Greek and Romanian; it is shown that only in Albanian is the definite article part of the inflectional morphology of the adjective, while in Greek and Romanian polydefinite structures (at least a subset of them) are predicate structures. On the basis of their distinct inflectional features, the behaviour of the Italian demonstrative quel (‘that’) and of the pronominal adjective bel (‘handsome, nice’) shows that the scattering of a head is dependent on the respective head’s paradigm and on the general principles of economy; the phenomenon is labelled “Compensatory Concord” (= a segment of N is realised to compensate for the lack of overt concord on its Specifier). The study of adnominal adjectival declension in German is also analysed as a form of scattered morphology, and the classical strong/weak distinction is elegantly derived through the interplay between morphological specification of the head that hosts inflection and the hierarchical position of the inflected element.

The final part of the book is reserved for Conclusions (pp. 211–214); instead of summarising the content of the book (a correct approach, as there are interim conclusions for all the chapters, which summarise the empirical material analysed and highlight its theoretical importance), Giusti
puts into perspective the main results of the book, indicates the possible shortcomings and directions for further research.

By way of conclusion, I would like to insist on what I believe are the most important results of Giuliana Giusti’s book.

On the theoretical side, the main claim of the book is that definite articles should be kept distinct from other determiners; articles are part of the inflectional morphology of the N, and the definite interpretation of NEs does not directly result from the presence of articles. This proposal, splendidly argued for throughout the book from different angles, is extremely important in that it allows for a principled and unified treatment of languages with articles and article-less languages without resorting to parameters such as Bošković’s NP/DP-parameter. The special status of the definite article among determiners was highlighted in structural grammars (cf., for example, Guţu Romalo’s (1967) analysis of the Romanian article), and the interaction between nominal inflectional morphology and the realisation of definiteness has been also thrown into prominence by recent studies (with reference to Romanian, see Ledgeway 2017). Giusti’s claims, although distinct and differently argued for, are certainly in line with this (older, and yet surprisingly recent) perspective on the nature of the definite article.

On the empirical side, the book is impressive through the wealth of data (mostly from European languages) that it discusses; certain phenomena are thoroughly explored, while for other ones only sketchy suggestions are drawn on the basis of which full-fledged analyses can be developed.

All in all, the book reviewed is impressive from many points of view; I believe that many of the ideas expressed here will have an impact on the study of definite articles and nominal expressions more generally. It goes without saying that it is a must-read for any linguist interested in these particular topics.

REFERENCES

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Alexandru Nicolae
“Iorgu Iordan – Al. Rosetti” Institute of Linguistics of the Romanian Academy
Faculty of Letters, University of Bucharest