In Support of a DP-analysis of Nominal Phrases in Croatian

Beginning with Abney's (1987) DP-Hypothesis, many linguists have provided empirical evidence for the presence of a DP in various languages. While the head of a DP is occupied by articles in languages that overtly employ them, the focus of recent discussions on languages without articles (such as Russian, Polish, SerbBoCroatian1) is whether there is a DP on top of NP in these languages. The different proposals range from an elaborated DP structure (cf. Progovac 1998, Dimitrova-Vulchanova and Giusti 1998, Leko 1999, Rutkowski 2002, Bašić 2004, Pereltsvaig 2007) to the complete omission of the DP layer in favour of a simple NP analysis (Zlatić 1998, Trenkić 2004, Bošković 2005, 2008, 2009).

This paper argues for a split DP-analysis of nominal expressions in Croatian. I will critically review the main arguments that have been brought in favour of an NP analysis (optionality of determiners, unavailability of a DP-head, adjectival nature of determiners) and will show that they are inconclusive. Instead I will show that Croatian nominal expressions do indeed host a D head. This is contrary to the NP approach in Corver (1992), Zlatić (1998) and Bošković (2005, 2008, 2009), who take determiners to appear either as specifiers of the noun or in a position adjoined to NP. It is also contrary to the DP approach in Progovac (1998) and Leko (1999), who propose that determiners appear in the specifier position of various functional categories projected above NP.

1. Revisiting the pro-NP arguments. SerBoCroatian does not have overt articles, which typically occupy the D0 structural position in languages that have one, therefore the projection of DP on top of NP is not necessary. Determiners that are potentially used instead of articles (prenominal possessives, demonstratives, quantifiers) are optional, since determiners can be omitted without influencing the grammaticality of the sentence (1a), and are claimed to be “morphologically adjectives in SC” for various reasons (Zlatić 1998, Bošković 2005, 2009, 2011). However, the demonstrative determiner onaj in (1b) has effects on the interpretation of the nominal expression. In contexts like (1b), the sentence is unacceptable if the demonstrative determiner onaj is omitted:

(1) a. (Onaj) student voli Mariju.
   That student loves Mary

b. *(Onaj) razgovor sa svećenikom, dok je još bio dijete, pretvorio se u sjećanje.
   *(That) conversation with priest, while he was still a child, turned itself into memory.

   “The conversation with the priest, when he was still a child, came to be a mere memory.”

c. *ovaj onaj moj prvi crveni kožni putnički kovčeg
   this my first red leather suitcase

Therefore, I claim that the adverbial clause in (1b) creates a particular referential context which makes the demonstrative determiner obligatory. The demonstrative determiner onaj cannot be treated as an adjectival adjunct, because adjuncts are always optional and they can iterate (cf. Richards 2008), while the demonstrative onaj obviously does not behave in that manner (1b, c). Besides, adjuncts do not c-select the phrase to which they adjoin (ibid.) However, as shown in (2), some determiners impose strict restrictions on the selected noun:

(2) a. nekoliko ključeva / hlaća / *ključa / *mlijeka
   several keys-G.Pl. / trousers-G.Pl. / *key-G.Sg. / *milk-G.Sg.

b. svaki rezept / *svaki rezept-i
   each prescription-N.Sg. / *each prescriptions-N.Pl.

My investigation of quantifiers and numerals will show that they display head properties and accordingly must occupy the head position of their own functional projection. For example, in (3), the quantifier mnogo (many) assigns genitive case to the noun knjiga (books), which itself obligatorily carries a [+plural] grammatical feature:

1 The term SerBoCroatian stands for Serbian, Bosnian and Croatian (Aljović 1999).
(3) **mnogo knjiga**  
many books-G.Pl.

In order to function as a case assigner, the quantifier **mnogo** (many) must govern the noun **knjiga** (books). By definition, governors are heads within the GB framework. Regarding the adjectival status of determiners in SerBoCroatian, I will provide a range of arguments for the view that determiners and adjectives are distinct categories with different morphological (inflection, derivation) and syntactic properties (modification, distribution, thematic structure) (cf. Frleta 2005). For instance, descriptive adjectives are gradable, whereas determiners are not\(^2\), as shown in (4a, b) (ibid.):

(4) a. lijep - lijepši - najljepši  
"beautiful- more beautiful - the most beautiful"  
b. taj - *tajiji - *najtajiji / moj - *mojiji - *najmojiji  
"that - *thater- *thatest / my - *myer - * the myest"

2. **Genitive Constructions/Argument Supporting Nominalizations (ASNs).** In order to support the view that nominal expressions in languages with and without articles are fundamentally different, Bošković (2008, 2009, 2011) claims that the latter do not allow ASNs with two lexical genitives. According to Bošković (2011:2), an ASN comparable to German (5a) is not possible in Croatian, as it disallows two nominal genitive arguments:

(5) a. Hannibals Eroberung Roms  
Hannibal-GEN conquest Rome-GEN  
b. Kolumbovo otkriće Amerike  
Columbus-POSS.NOM discovery America-GEN

First, Croatian has ASNs equivalent to (5a), see (5b). Second, note that -s in (5a) is a possessive marker and not a genitive (cf. Strunk 2004), just like -ov in (5b). The unavailability of two structural genitives within the DP is a cross-linguistic fact (Alexiadou 2001). Given the inability of the noun **otkriće** 'discovery' to assign two structural genitives, the noun **Kolumbo** moves to a prenominal position, where it agrees with the head noun and receives nominative case via Spec-head agreement (Kuna 2003). Following Kuna’s proposal, which provides evidence for the existence of functional PossP projection above NP (and of the DP-internal NP-movement), I propose an elaborated split-DP structure in Croatian. In the ASN-construction in (5b) the possessive suffix -ov qualifies as a D-head, being followed by AgrP, which is headed by the overt agreement marker -o. Following Alexiadou (2001), Birtić (2008) and Alexiadou, Iordăchioaia and Soare (2010), I will show that, in addition to the above functional projections, the ASNs in Croatian also include NumP, ClassP and AspP, thus having the following structure: [DP [AgrP [NumP [ClassP[nP [AspP [VP]]]]]]]. I adopt an articulated structure of DP proposed by Ihsane & Puskás (2001), where the left periphery of DP contains the projections TopP (realizing the feature [+/-specific]), the projection DefP (hosting the feature [+/-definite]) and the FocP, to which emphasized elements can move. The postulation of a split-DP for Croatian nominals allows for the explanation of word order variations within the DP, where any deviation from the neutral word order involves the emphasis of the moved element. Besides, it also captures the definiteness/specificity features of the nominal constructions of the type neki Markovi prijatelji 'some Marco’s friends’, which is [+definite], but [-specific].


\(^2\) Exception: the indefinite quantifiers **puno** (a lot / much /many) and **malo** (little) take, due to their scalar nature, the comparative and superlative forms analogous to their English counterparts (puno, više, najviše (much, more, the most) / malo, manje, najmanje (little, less, the least)).