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1 Introduction

This dissertation explores the formal mechanisms that make restrictive modification by nominals (in short, RMN) possible. Focusing on Greek definite nominals and in particular on a construction known as the *polydefinite* construction (as named by Kolliakou, 2004), I examine the syntactic-semantic properties of the definite determiner. As shown below, the Greek definite determiner typically appears with count nouns, proper names (cf. 1), as well as generic subjects and objects (cf. 2):

- (1) I Elena kalese tus sinaðelfus tis sto eksoxiko tis.
 the.nom.f Elena.f invited.3s the.acc.pl colleague.pl her in-the.n cottage.n her
 ‘Elena invited her colleagues to her cottage.’
- (2) Ta ðelfinja latrevun ti musiki.
 the.n.pl dolphin.n.pl adore.3pl the.f.acc music.f
 ‘Dolphins adore music.’

The definite determiner can also appear multiple times in a nominal giving rise to the polydefinite nominal construction (also called *determiner spreading* by Androutsopoulou 1995). As shown in (3), polydefinites consist of the determiner and the noun, and one or more sequences of the determiner and an adjective:

- (3) To paljo to skalisto to pjano
 the.n old.n the.n carved.n the.n piano.n
 ‘the old carved piano’

The goals of this dissertation are to define the contribution of the Greek determiner in such nominals and offer a formal account that not only derives such constructions, but also uncovers the connections between two important properties of nominals, definiteness and restrictive modification by nominals.

Previously, the definite determiner has been argued to be a semantic expletive. For example, Roussou and Tsimpli (1994), who in their work discuss generic nominals, argue that the determiner is inserted for syntactic reasons only, since, as argued by Longobardi (1994), bare nominals are not allowed in non-lexically governed positions. Similarly, Lekakou and Szendrői (2007, 2008, 2010) who examine polydefinites, claim that the determiner is an expletive spelling out case, since it is also obligatory with proper names.

Both of these analyses provide us with interesting observations about the properties of generics and polydefinites. They also provide us with a syntactic argument concerning the distribution of the determiner. However, by stipulating that the determiner is a bare expletive, some substantial questions such as why there are constructions like polydefinites and definite generics and what they have in common remain unanswered. I argue that inflection is not the underlying reason for such constructions, since languages with no inflection may have some kind of polydefinites as well as proper names with the definite determiner (e.g. Scottish English etc.).

Additionally, an expletive account does not explain why Greek proper names can appear in predicative positions, as Lekakou and Szendrői (2010) also observe. Moreover, Roussou and Tsimpli's (1994) expletive account does not answer why the article is also obligatory on generic objects, while their analysis also predicts that bare objects should be possible. Finally, if the definite determiner were truly an expletive, then indefinite interpretations of definite generics should be possible. English bare plurals for instance, are ambiguous between generic and existential interpretations. If the Greek determiner solely occupied a syntactic position, an existential indefinite interpretation should be readily available. These are important observations that need to be accounted for.

This dissertation then explores the possibility that the Greek determiner is not a semantic expletive. The result of this study is that the determiner contributes partial definiteness, and this is why polydefinites, proper names and generics headed by the article are possible.

2 The Analysis

Recent analyses of definiteness have observed that the uniqueness requirement (Heim & Kratzer 1998) alone does not suffice cross-linguistically to pick out a unique individual (see for instance Chung & Ladusaw 2004, Giannakidou 2004, Gillon 2006, 2009, Paul 2009). Familiarity (Heim 1982), whether it is a derived or a primitive notion, has also been argued to play an important role.

In line with this conclusion, and through an examination of Greek and English definite nominals, I propose that definiteness involves both familiarity and uniqueness. Cross-linguistically, definiteness is encoded in different ways. I argue that in the determiner may spell out either both familiarity and uniqueness, or just one feature of definiteness, familiarity. In languages where the determiner spells out both features, a Definite Phrase (DefP) is projected. In languages where the determiner only spells out familiarity, familiarity and uniqueness map into two distinct syntactic projections, FamP and *i*P. Fam gives us the singleton set of contextual salient entities, and *iota* picks out the unique familiar entity.

In Greek, I propose that the definite determiner is underspecified for uniqueness, spelling out only familiarity. Greek definite nominals are predicative FamPs, and uniqueness is accomplished by *i*P which merges next. Considering polydefinites, they involve a matrix nominal consisting of the determiner and the noun and at least one modifying nominal containing the determiner and a nominalized adjective. I argue that this type of modification can be either restrictive or non-restrictive. Focusing on the restrictive modifying nominals, I propose that they determine a familiar individual. Hence, they form predicative FamPs and can therefore combine intersectively with the matrix FamP. From this singleton set of familiar entities, *iota* applies next and a unique familiar entity is determined. The polydefinite construction, or rather RMN, is thus predicted to be possible in languages with underspecified definite determiners. In contrast, in languages with fully specified definite determiners, such as Standard English *the*, RMN is successfully blocked. The determiner projects an argumental DefP and the predicative modifying nominal may not intersect with it.

Turning to the syntax of Greek nominals and RMN, I argue that the noun consistently moves to NumP. The modifying nominal can be ambiguous between a restrictive and a non-restrictive reading. Focusing on restrictive nominals, these are either prenominal or postnominal. For the postnominal word-order, I argue that restrictive nominals adjoin to nP. When they are prenominal, they bear contrastive or informational focus. The restrictive interpretation arises by moving them to a Focus projection, as also suggested in previous analyses (see, e.g., Kariaeva 2004, and Ntelitheos 2004). Restrictive nominals are found to be prosodically ‘small’, i.e., they primarily consist of an article and an acategorical root merged with *n*. Different types of nominals are argued to function restrictively. These are count nouns, proper names, demonstratives, and possessors. They are similar with respect to polydefinites, and they are thus treated as modifying FamPs which can intersect with matrix Fam.

Proper names and generics introduce a familiar individual or kind. They are FamPs and they are both headed by the underspecified definite article. In the case of proper names, *i*P merges with FamP and uniqueness arises. In the case of generic nominals, I argue that there is a generic operator (Carlson & Pelletier 1995) instead of *iota*. The Gen(eric) operator singles out a set of entities with specific properties. Thus, in generics a GenP is projected above the FamP. Since in both cases definiteness is mapped into two syntactic projections, RMN is now possible.

Finally, I also look at indefinite determiners and nominals, and show that indefinite nominals cannot function as restrictive modifiers, unless they are appositives. Restrictive modifying nominals are sets containing entities that are at least familiar to us. Since indefinite nominals introduce new entities indefinite RMN is not possible.

3 Conclusions

This dissertation studies the properties of the definite determiner and offers an account for what licenses RMN and other definite expressions, such as proper names and generics headed by the definite article. It is argued that the source for such phenomena follows from the semantic underspecification of the definite determiner, and in particular from the ways that definiteness is encoded within a language. When uniqueness and familiarity map into distinct syntactic projections, RMN is predicted to be possible. When both of these features are spelled out by a single vocabulary item, a single argumental nominal is projected and RMN is successfully blocked. In conclusion, this dissertation provides a simple and straightforward account of the distributional properties of the determiner. It also offers an alternative view for expletive determiners.

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