Argument Ellipsis, Classifier Phrases, and the DP Parameter

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This thesis investigates two theoretical consequences of a point of typological variation, namely, the presence/lack of Determiner Phrase (DP) in a langauge. I argue that the availability of Argument Ellipsis (AE) is directly tied to the lack of DP in a given language, and that (numeral) Classifier Phrases (CLP) and DP cannot co-occur in the same language.

In chapter 2, building on Bošković's (2008a, 2012) claim that languages without articles lack DP, I investigate the status of DP in Mandarin Chinese (MC). I examine previous literature and show that claims regarding the existence of DP in MC are not supported and provide evidence that the DP projection is indeed missing from the nominal structure of MC. In chapter 3, I examine the null argument paradigm in MC and argue that the phenomenon of AE, in which the argument is elided in the PF component, is independently attested in MC. In chapter 4, I propose a new theory of AE, where the licensing condition on AE is tied to the absence of DP. In other words, AE may only occur in languages without the DP projection. I propose that the lack of DP makes VP (rather than *v*P) a phase in these languages. As a consequence, the direct object of the verb, which is the complement of a phase head, may be elided in the PF component, resulting in the phenomenon of AE. In chapter 5, I explore the second consequence of the lack of DP: its relation with numeral classifiers. Examining various languages, I establish a correlation between the existence of a numeral Classifier (CL) system and the lack of DP, which states that numeral CLPs do not co-occur with DP in the same language. I also examine CLP systems in Japanese and MC as case studies to capture certain differences in their nominal domains.

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Table of Contents

Chapter 1: Introduction ……...1
1.1 Linguistic Variation and Language Typology ……..1
1.2 Organization of the thesis ……5

Chapter 2: On the Lack of DP in Mandarin Chinese ……..8
2.0 Introduction ……...8
2.1 Determiners as projections ……9
2.1.1 The Determiner Phrase (DP) and the Universal DP Hypothesis ……10
2.1.2 Abney's (1987) arguments for DP ……...11
2.2 The generalizations in Bošković (2012) ……16
2.2.1 Negative Raising ……..18
2.2.2 Adnominal Genitive ……20
2.2.3 Majority Superlative Reading ……..22
2.2.4 Focus Morphology ……...25
2.2.5 Quantifier Scope ……...……...27
2.2.6 Radical pro-drop ……..29
2.2.7 Number Morphology ……...30
2.2.8 The interpretation of possessors ……...31
2.2.9 Focus Adjacency ……..32
2.2.10 Classifiers ……...34
2.2.11 Left Branch Extraction ……...35
2.2.12 Adjunct Extraction from TNP ……36
2.2.13 Scrambling ……37
2.2.14 Interim conclusion ……39
2.3 Against the Existence of DP in Mandarin Chinese I – the free word order ……40
2.4 Against the Existence of DP in Mandarin Chinese II – the binding paradigm ……...43
2.4.1 Despić's (2011, in press) paradigm ……43
2.4.2 The Paradigm in Mandarin Chinese ……45

2.4.3 The DP Status in Japanese ……...51
2.4.4 Interim Summary ……54
2.5 Against the Existence of DP in Mandarin Chinese III – relative clauses ……...55
2.5.1 Relative clauses in English ……..55
2.5.2 Relative clauses in MC ……58
2.5.3 Relative clauses in Japanese ……61
2.6 On the (Non)-Existence of DP ……63
2.6.1 Two Competing Views ……64
2.6.2 The functions of D(P) ……..66
2.7 Examining previous DP analysis of Mandarin Chinese ……71
2.7.1 Introduction ……..71
2.7.2 Previous Analysis ……72
2.7.2.1 Tang (1990a,b) ……..72
2.7.2.2 Li (1998, 1999) ……78
2.7.2.3 Simpson (2001) ……88
2.7.3 interim conclusion ……95
2.8 Conclusion ……..95
2.8.1 Implications ……..97

Chapter 3: Argument Ellipsis in Mandarin Chinese ……99
3.0 Overview ……99
3.1 The Null Argument Paradigm in Mandarin Chinese ……100
3.1.1 The Null Argument Paradigm ……100
3.1.2 Previous Analyses ……..102
3.1.2.1 The Topic-variable analysis ……104
3.1.2.2 VP ellipsis analysis ……107
3.1.3 Discussion ……..112
3.2 The existence of Argument Ellipsis in Mandarin Chinese …….....117
3.2.1 Argument Ellipsis in Japanese and Korean ……...118
3.2.2 Similar behavior with Japanese and Korean ……..126
3.2.3 Argument Ellipsis is NOT VP ellipsis in disguise ……133
3.2.4 Additional evidence for Argument Ellipsis in Mandarin Chinese …….136

3.2.4.1 Post-verbal duration/frequency phrases ……..136
3.2.4.2 Double object and dative constructions ……..140
3.2.5 Goldberg's typology of V-stranding VP ellipsis ……...148
3.2.6 Interim Conclusion ……153
3.3 Discussion ……154
3.3.1 The Theory of AE ……..154
3.3.2 Subject Ellipsis in MC ……...156
3.4 Conclusion ……158

Chapter 4: The Theory of Argument Ellipsis ……160
4.0 Overview ……...160
4.1 Previous Analyses ……161
4.1.1 Oku (1998) ……162
4.1.1.1 Review of Oku (1998) ……....162
4.1.1.2 Problems of Oku (1998) ……..165
4.1.2 Li (2006, 2008) ……....174
4.1.2.1 Review of Li (2006, 2008) ……..174
4.1.2.2 Problems with Li (2006, 2008) ……...179
4.1.3 Saito (2007) ……185
4.1.3.1 Review of Saito (2007) ……...185
4.1.3.2 Problems with Saito (2007) ……189
4.1.4 Ohtaki (2011) ……191
4.1.4.1 Review of Ohtaki (2011) ……191
4.1.4.2 Problems with Ohtaki (2011) ……..195
4.1.5 Conclusion ……199
4.2 On the Licensing Condition of Argument Ellipsis ……...201
4.2.1 Introduction ……201
4.2.2 The Proposals ……202
4.2.3 Phases and the DP/NP parameter ……...207
4.2.3.1 On the definition of phase ……...207
4.2.3.2 On the difference in the nature of Case assignment ……...211
4.2.4 Evidence from Turkish and Mandarin Chinese ……215

4.2.5 On subject ellipsis in Japanese, and PP and CP ellipsis ……217
4.2.6 Potential problem ……...225
4.2.7 Interim Conclusion ……225
4.3 On the Mechanism of Argument Ellipsis ……..226
4.3.1 Arguing against LF-copying ……..228
4.3.2 Shinohara's (2006) argument ……228
4.3.3 Non-reconstructing cases ……...231
4.3.4 Capturing the paradigm: deep anaphora ……....237
4.4 Discussion and Theoretical Implications ……..239
4.4.1 Why "Argument" Ellipsis? ……240
4.4.2 Relation to Saito's (2007) account ……241
4.4.3 Does every NP language allow AE? ……..243
4.5 Conclusion ……246

Chapter 5: Classifiers and DP ……248
5.0 Introduction ……...248
5.1 What is a classifier? ……..249
5.1.1 Different types of classifiers ……..250
5.1.1.1 Noun classes (gender systems) ……...250
5.1.1.2 Noun classifiers ……...253
5.1.1.3 Numeral classifiers ……..255
5.1.2 Classifiers to be discussed ……....….257
5.2 Classifiers and DP ……258
5.2.1 Previous analyses of classifiers ……..259
5.2.1.1 Chierchia (1998a,b) ……259
5.2.1.2 Cheng and Sybesma (1999, 2005) ……..261
5.2.2 On the Condition of Mutual Exclusiveness between Classifiers and DP ..262
5.2.2.1 The functions of articles and classifiers ……..263
5.2.2.2 Checking of the [___ def] feature …….....271
5.2.3 Classifiers are not a notational variant of articles ……..274
5.2.4 On Typology: evidence from WALS ……276
5.2.5 Re-examining the languages on WALS ……278

5.2.5.1 Kosraean ……279
5.2.5.2 Loniu ……...281
5.2.5.3 Tsimshian (coast) ……283
5.2.5.4 Vietnamese ……..283
5.2.5.5 Kana ……285
5.2.6 Interim conclusion ……287
5.3 Classifiers: a comparative study ……...288
5.3.1 Similarities and differences of Japanese and Chinese classifiers ……..288
5.3.2 Previous analysis and some potential problems ……290
5.3.3 New proposal ……293
5.3.3.1 *–de* is also a contextual case marker, not D^0 293
5.3.3.2 The Status of Classifiers in MC and Japanese ……....296
5.3.3.3 Classifier movement in Japanese ……299
5.4 Conclusion ……308

Bibliography ……...310