Gender agreement and mismatches: the syntactic structure of quantified and superlative partitives

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1. Introduction

The problem: acceptability of gender mismatches in partitive constructions

Superpartitive partitives: German = French

1a. die Studenten der Studierenden
1b. des Studenten der Studierenden

2a. studenten en l'etudiants de les etudiants
2b. étudiants de l'etudiants des étudiants

“Of the students is German.”

→ How to explain this contrast?

2. Theoretical background

Existing studies on the syntactic structure of partitives (e.g. Jackendoff, 1977; Sleeman & Kester, 2002; Falco & Zamparelli, 2019)

But: focus on quantified partitives (see examples in 2)

→ Only study that also addresses superpartitive partitives (see examples in 1): Sleeman & Hinsøe (2016)

Building on Huls & Tellier, 2000; Sleeman & Kester, 2003

Sleeman & Hinsøe’s (2016) analysis raises some questions:


2. Movement of preposition? What motivates this?

3. How to extend the proposal to German? German = genitive case marking instead of preposition

4. Quantified vs. superpartitive partitives

Difference between quantified (8) and superpartitive (9):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(8)</th>
<th>(9)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>QP</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q</td>
<td>PredP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>un NP</td>
<td>Pred'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[u: m]</td>
<td>CLASSIFIER Pred  DP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>de D  NP</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>les étudiants</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[u: m.pl] [u: m][i: pl]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

→ Superpartitive headed by a DP

→ D = referential projection; links superpartitive to its referent in discourse

4.1 Superpartitive partitives: French = German

- Possible in superpartitive partitives because of referential DP

4.2 Quantified partitives: French <> German

Gender mismatch accepted in German (13), but not in French (12):


References

- For abbreviations, see the Glossa.