Definiteness Marking in the Bulgarian

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1 Introduction

Much work in lexicalist theories of grammar argues for the validity of a theoretical distinction between (postlexical) clitics and affixes, corresponding to syntactic *vs.* lexical modes of composition (*eg.* Zwicky and Pullum 1983). An analysis of Bulgarian definiteness marking (DEF) in Embick and Noyer 2001 (henceforth E&N), couched in the framework of Distributed Morphology (Halle and Marantz, 1993), claims that distribution of the article—frequently analysed as an affix—must be stated in syntactic terms. E&N observe (following Franks 2001) that Bulgarian possessive clitics (henceforth POSS) are always linearly adjacent to DEF. According to the view promoted in E&N, this distribution leads lexicalist accounts of the affix into a paradox, as the appearance of POSS adjacent to DEF suggests one mode of composition (*ie.* lexical), while its inherent properties as a (postlexical) clitic suggest another (*ie.* syntactic). This reasoning leads E&N to argue against a syntactic/lexical split for Bulgarian, supporting the conclusion that without the split, the clitic/affix distinction has no theoretical consequence. We argue that this reasoning is invalid, and more importantly, that an analysis of POSS is, in fact, compatible with a lexicalist treatment of DEF.

After discussing the approach to Bulgarian DEF advocated in E&N's account and outlining the argument against the clitic/affix distinction (§2), we point out three non-trivial drawbacks to the E&N proposal (§3). We then present an alternative lexicalist treatment that avoids these drawbacks, and naturally accounts for the relevant data (§4). We conclude that the issue of whether the lexicalist distinction between clitics and affixes is empirically supported is still an open one.

2 E&N: Bulgarian DEF as head lowering

2.1 The core data and analysis

In contemporary standard Bulgarian, DEF appears at the right edge of the first adjective or noun in a nominal phrase (1a–d).

(1)   a.   kniga-ta
            book-DEF
            'the book'

        b.   interesna-ta   kniga
            interesting-DEF book
            'the interesting book'

        c.   xubava-ta interesna   kniga
            nice-DEF interesting book
            'the nice interesting book'

        d. *xubava interesna-ta   kniga
   nice   interesting-DEF book

Adverbs cannot host DEF, even when they appear first in the nominal phrase (2a). DEF must appear instead on the leftmost adjective or noun (2b).

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(2) a. *mnogo-to interesna   kniga
         very-DEF interesting book
         'the very interesting book'

  b. mnogo interesna-ta   kniga
      very   interesting-DEF book
      'the very interesting book'

E&N account for the distribution in (1) and (2) with a post-syntactic *Lowering* [1] operation, which lowers DEF from D to the head of its complement. The analysis crucially relies on a structure for DP (following Abney 1987) in which prenominal modifiers (*ie.* APs) are sisters to D, instead of adjuncts to the nouns they modify.

(3)
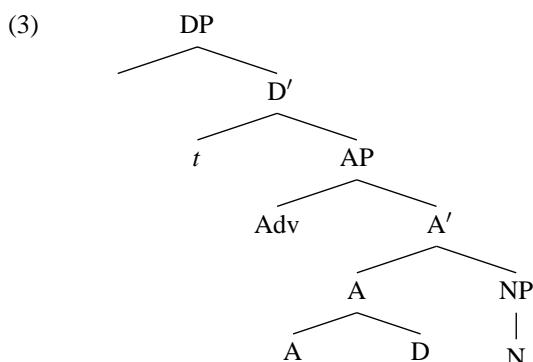
The facts in (2) fall out of the assumption that adverbs appear in the specifier of AP (as illustrated above). Since the *Lowering* mechanism targets heads, adverbs are invisible to the operation.

In contemporary standard Bulgarian, demonstratives (*eg. tazi* 'this') are in complementary distribution with DEF, and are assumed to appear in the specifier of DP. [2]

(4) a. tazi kniga
         this book
         'this book'

  b. *tazi-ta   kniga
       this-DEF book

  c. *tazi kniga-ta
       this book-DEF

2.2   An argument against the clitic/affix distinction

Previous analyses of Bulgarian DEF (Franks, 2001, among others) have argued that it is an inflectional affix, based on its lexical and phonological properties. There are lexical gaps in the distribution of DEF; it cannot be realized on certain kinship terms (but not all: see 5d), in what look to be otherwise definite contexts.

(5) a. majka mu
         mother his.CL
         'his mother'

  b. *majka-ta   mu
       mother-DEF his.CL

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[1] *Lowering*: post-syntactic adjunction to the structurally closest head (occurs before *Vocabulary Insertion*).

[2] As observed by Caink (2000), colloquial Bulgarian allows for co-occurrence of the demonstrative with DEF inflection (*cf.* 4c). A fuller treatment of those facts appears in Dost and Gribanova (in preparation).

c. xubava-ta mu majka
   pretty-DEF his.CL mother
   'his pretty mother'

d. djado-to   mu
   grandfather-DEF his.CL
   'his grandfather'

With the exception of certain kinship terms, possessive clitics (POSS) appear adjacent to DEF (see Franks 2001). By extension, we can be assured that the kinship term in (5a) appears where DEF would normally be required, especially given the presence of DEF on the adjective in (5c). The illicitness of overt DEF inflection in (5b) looks conspicuously like a lexical gap, which is a hallmark property of affixes, not clitics (Zwicky and Pullum, 1983).

There is also phonological evidence that supports the categorisation of DEF as an affix: DEF takes part in word-level phonological processes, while clitics, including POSS, do not. For example, word final devoicing is bled when DEF is attached.

(6) a. bratvočed → [bratvočet] 'brother'
     b. mâž → [mâš] 'husband'

(7) a. bratvočed-ât → [bratvočedât] 'the brother'
     b. mâž-ât → [mâžât] 'the husband'

Clitics do not participate in the same process. In (8b), word-final devoicing still occurs, despite the addition of POSS.

(8) a. mâž [mâš] 'husband'
     b. mâž ì [mâši] 'her husband'

Additional evidence from word-level stress placement (*eg.* (9)), which is affected by DEF, supports the same conclusion; DEF behaves like an affix, while POSS does not. This difference between DEF and POSS is expected on the view that POSS is a clitic and DEF is an affix.

(9) [xúbost] 'beauty'
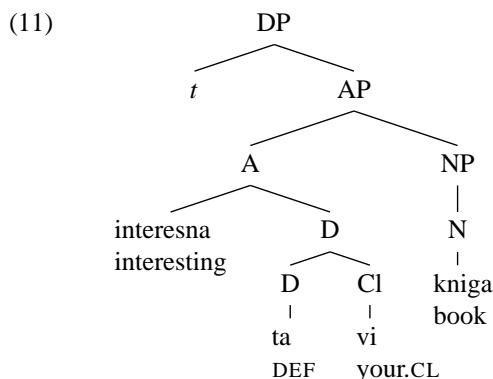   [xubostá] 'the beauty'

Despite empirical support for the affixal status of DEF, the obligatory linear adjacency of POSS and DEF is used to argue against the possibility of lexical composition for the affix.

(10) a. interesna-ta   vi   kniga
        interesting-DEF your.CL book
        'your interesting book'
     b. *interesna-ta   kniga vi
        interesting-DEF book your.CL

The basic argument for treating DEF and POSS identically with respect to composition can be outlined in the following way:

- On an approach that distinguishes between clitics and affixes, DEF is an *affix* (and therefore composed lexically) and POSS is a *clitic* (and therefore composed syntactically).
- **But** POSS always appears adjacent to DEF.
- This appears to lead to a contradiction: if DEF and POSS are distinct in terms of their compositional properties (affix/clitic), why should they have to be adjacent?
- Therefore, the clitic/affix distinction must be irrelevant; all composition is purely syntactic.

A post-syntactic *Lowering* analysis is proposed to account for the distribution of DEF and POSS: POSS right-adjoins to D in the narrow syntax, and the entire complex undergoes *Lowering*.

(11)

```
                        DP
            ┌───────────┴───────────┐
            t                       AP
                          ┌─────────┴─────────┐
                          A                   NP
                  ┌───────┴───────┐           │
              interesna           D           N
              interesting    ┌────┴────┐       │
                             D        Cl     kniga
                             │         │      book
                             ta        vi
                            DEF      your.CL
```

As the tree in (11) indicates, this treatment views both DEF and POSS as syntactically composed; both items are positioned via post-syntactic *Lowering*. On such a view, no distinction between clitics and affixes need exist.

3 E&N: Enumerating drawbacks

To counter the proposal put forth in E&N, we discuss three drawbacks to the analysis and argumentation contained therein. The first problem relates to the structure for DP proposed in Abney 1987. Hankamer and Mikkelsen (2005) discuss theoretical objections to this structure, noting that the A head does not pass the criteria for headedness of an NP (as explicated in Zwicky 1985). A is not obligatory in the phrase; it is not unique in the phrase; and it does not modify the features of the N it modifies.

There is also an empirical objection to the Abney 1987 structure: Bulgarian attributive adjectives can take PP complements.[3]

(12) a. polučena-ta   sâs   mâka stipendija
        received-DEF with pain   scholarship
        'the scholarship received with pain'

   b. verni-jat   na demokratični-te idei   prezident
        faithful-DEF to democratic-DEF ideas president
        'the president (who is) faithful to democratic ideas'

To accommodate (12) on the Abney structure, A would need to select for two complements (NP and PP), presumably requiring a ternary branching structure (a move that has been typically disfavoured in standard derivational approaches).

A second problem regards E&N's argument against the clitic/affix distinction, discussed above. There, linear adjacency of DEF and POSS is tacitly assumed to be equivalent to identical modes of composition; this is not necessarily a valid assumption, nor is it explicitly discussed. Indeed, in §4, we develop an account that argues that maintaining the clitic/affix distinction leads to no theoretical contradiction whatsoever.

A third, empirical problem is that DEF participates in word-level phonological processes (*cf.* (7), (8)) while POSS does not. By eliminating the distinction between clitics and affixes, the E&N account also eliminates a natural way to account for this distinction.

In summary, the E&N account faces three challenges. Firstly, the adoption of an Abney 1987 structure for the Bulgarian DP raises theoretical and empirical concerns, because A does not fit the criteria for head of a phrase, and because the structure cannot license complement-bearing APs (as in (12)) for Bulgarian. Secondly, the argumentation against the clitic/affix distinction in E&N tacitly relies on a questionable assumption: namely, that linear adjacency of DEF and POSS corresponds to identical modes of composition. Lastly, a consequence of the proposed elimination of the clitic/affix distinction is that there appears to be no natural way to account for the difference in phonological behavior between POSS and DEF.

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[3]Examples in (12) are taken from Franks 2001.

4   Analysis

We now present an alternative analysis of DEF placement within Bulgarian DPs, that addresses the issues raised in the previous section. In doing so, we demonstrate the viability of a lexicalist approach to these particular data, placing the issue of whether a lexicalist set of assumptions can be maintained back on the table.

The key aspects of the analysis we present here are: (*a*) words bearing overt DEF marking (henceforth DEF-inflected) are composed lexically, and (*b*) the observed patterns are predicted by the interaction of lexical and syntactic constraints. The theoretical mechanisms of E&N's framework are maintained for our analysis of POSS.[4]

We assume an uncontroversial structure for Bulgarian DPs; determiners (D) select for NP arguments, and prenominal modifiers (*eg.* AP) adjoin to NP. We also assume that demonstratives (*eg. tazi*) instantiate D, and possessive adjectives (*eg. moja*) instantiate APs (see (17) for a representative tree structure).

4.1   Generating DEF-*inflected words*

We claim that the presence (or absence) of the DEF affix on a particular word is morphosyntactically encoded by a Boolean-valued feature: DEF.[5,6] The suffixation of the DEF affix to a morphological stem is the result of a lexical rule, formulated in (13).

(13)   **DEF-inflection lexical rule:**

$$
\begin{bmatrix} \text{PFORM} & \boxed{1} \\ \text{CATEGORY} & \boxed{2}\left(\text{A} \vee \text{N}\right) \\ \text{DEF} & - \end{bmatrix} \Rightarrow \begin{bmatrix} \text{PFORM} & F_{DEF}\left(\boxed{1}\right) \\ \text{CATEGORY} & \boxed{2} \\ \text{DEF} & + \end{bmatrix}
$$

An input stem with a particular phonological form ($\left[\text{PFORM} \ \boxed{1}\right]$), a particular syntactic category ($\boxed{2}$; restricted to A,N), and the specification $\left[\text{DEF} \ -\right]$ yields an output whose syntactic category remains unchanged, and is specified $\left[\text{DEF} \ +\right]$. Restricting the input's DEF value appropriately blocks iterative application of the rule (*cf.* *kniga-ta-ta*). The resulting phonological form is the value of the stem (*ie.* $\boxed{1}$) run through a function F_{DEF}, which pairs input stems with their appropriate suffixed forms and is defined over the set of all $\left[\text{DEF} \ -\right]$ adjectives and nouns.

To illustrate, an input form like *kniga* ('book') yields the DEF-inflected output *kniga-ta*, as in (14).

(14) $\begin{bmatrix} \text{PFORM} & kniga \\ \text{CATEGORY} & \text{N} \\ \text{DEF} & - \end{bmatrix} \Rightarrow \begin{bmatrix} \text{PFORM} & knigata \\ \text{CATEGORY} & \text{N} \\ \text{DEF} & + \end{bmatrix}$

The input *kniga* meets the requirements of the rule in (13); it is a $\left[\text{DEF} \ -\right]$ noun. The output's PFORM value is simply the output of F_{DEF} on *kniga* (the PFORM of the input). The input syntactic category does not change, and the resulting word is specified $\left[\text{DEF} \ +\right]$. Note the lexical rule in (13) does not apply to words that are not of category A or N; affixation of DEF to adverbs and/or demonstratives is lexically blocked under the current approach. We differ from the E&N analysis, in which the gap is derived, *viz.* *Lowering* skips specifier positions (see §2.1).

4.2   Constraining the appearance of DEF-*inflected words*

In this section we present an analysis of the syntactic licensing of Bulgarian definite DPs. The intuition we pursue is that the lexicon produces DEF-inflected words, and the syntactic component of the grammar licenses structures containing those words. We argue specifically that the licensing of definite

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[4]A plausible objection to the analysis here concerns the added complexity of assuming both a pre- and post-syntactic component of the grammar. We do not address this issue here, though readers should consult Dost and Gribanova (in preparation) for a proposal that eliminates post-syntactic operations.

[5]In addition, we claim that words that are *inherently* definite (*eg.* demonstratives) are also marked positively for the feature, a point which will be addressed further in §4.2.

[6]A similar approach is taken by Popova (2000), within HPSG.

DPs results from the interaction of a constraint on the mediation of the DEF feature hierarchically with a constraint on the linear realisation of morphosyntactically definite elements within NP.

We claim that DEF-inflected words (*ie.* words marked $\left[\text{DEF} \ +\right]$) instantiate phrases that are marked positively for the feature (henceforth DEF-*marked* phrases). That is, a DEF-marked phrase is licensed just in case it contains a DEF-inflected word (and vice versa). To ensure this, we propose the constraint in (15).

(15) **DEF-passing:**
A mother is marked $\left[\text{DEF} \ +\right]$ iff: *exactly* one daughter is marked $\left[\text{DEF} \ +\right]$.

We assume the domain of the constraint in (15) to include the extended maximal projection of N (in the sense of Grimshaw (1991)). That is, DEF-passing applies to DPs and everything properly contained within DP. The constraint addresses the hierarchical organisation of DPs and only licenses a DEF-marked node if exactly one daughter of that node is either DEF-marked (in the case of a phrasal daughter) or DEF-inflected (in the case of a terminal daughter). DEF-passing bans structures in which a mother is $\left[\text{DEF} \ +\right]$ and no daughter is; structures in which a daughter is $\left[\text{DEF} \ +\right]$ and the mother is not; and structures in which the mother and multiple daughters are $\left[\text{DEF} \ +\right]$. Note that DEF-passing has nothing to say about the linear (*ie.* left-to-right) organisation of a syntactic object.

We claim further that within a DEF-marked NP, the DEF-marked daughter must be leftmost. This is formulated as the constraint in (16).

(16) **DEF-alignment:**
Within a $\left[\text{DEF} \ +\right]$ NP, the $\left[\text{DEF} \ +\right]$ daughter is leftmost.

Crucially, the constraint in (16) only applies within NP. The constraint has nothing to say about a DEF-marked DP. Rather the constraint requires a DEF-marked daughter to precede all other daughters in a DEF-marked NP. Note that the existence of such a daughter is ensured by the DEF-passing constraint in (15). DEF-alignment addresses the linear distribution of DEF-marked daughters within NP; it bans structures in which the DEF-marked daughter of (a DEF-marked) NP is not leftmost within its phrase.

In the case of "bare" nominals (see 1a), the lexical rule in (13) produces a DEF-inflected form; the DEF-passing constraint forces upward "percolation" of the feature; and the DEF-alignment constraint is (trivially) satisfied by the DEF-marked NP. For space reasons we confine our discussion of the analysis to more interesting examples, like DPs with prenominal modifiers, as in (17).[7]

(17)
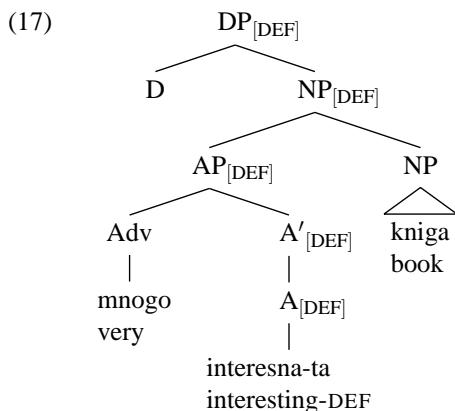
The lexical rule in (13) produces *interesna-ta* in the lexicon. By the DEF-passing constraint in (15) the A projects a DEF-marked AP. The NP is licensed by the DEF-alignment constraint in (16), as the DEF-marked daughter occurs leftmost. The DEF-passing constraint forces the $\left[\text{DEF} \ +\right]$ specification at DP. Note that the issue of why Bulgarian DEF appears to "skip" prenominal adverbs is resolved lexically; adverbs are not subject to the rule in (13).
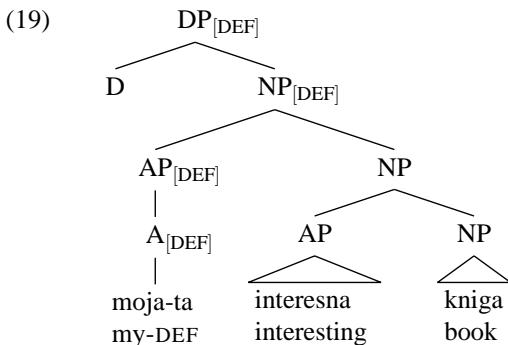
Recall from earlier (see example (4)) that overt demonstratives are in complementary distribution with DEF. This aspect of the data is predicted straightforwardly, as shown in (18).

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[7]For convenience, we abbreviate the specification $\left[\text{DEF} \ +\right]$ as [DEF] where appropriate.

(18)

DP[DEF]
├─ D[DEF]
│ │
│ tazi
│ this
└─ NP
   △
   kniga
   book
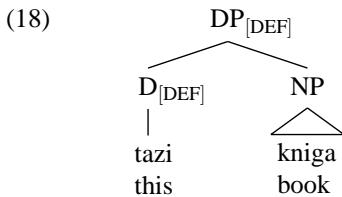
We assume that demonstratives are lexically specified as $\begin{bmatrix} \text{DEF} & + \end{bmatrix}$.[8] The DEF-marked DP in (18) is licensed by the demonstrative *tazi*. DP satisfies the DEF-passing constraint in (15), and the DEF-alignment constraint does not apply; its domain of application is restricted to (DEF-marked) NPs. Under our approach the complementarity of demonstratives with DEF-inflected words falls out of the (cardinal) uniqueness restriction of the DEF-passing constraint.

In cases where there are multiple AP modifiers to NP (see example (1c,d)) our analysis predicts that DEF-inflection should only appear on the leftmost adjective in the string, as (19) illustrates.

(19)

DP[DEF]
├─ D
└─ NP[DEF]
   ├─ AP[DEF]
   │ │
   │ A[DEF]
   │ │
   │ moja-ta
   │ my-DEF
   └─ NP
      ├─ AP
      │ △
      │ interesna
      │ interesting
      └─ NP
         △
         kniga
         book

Recall DEF-alignment only licenses a DEF-marked NP if its DEF-marked daughter is leftmost. In (19), if the adjective *interesna* were DEF-inflected (*ie. interesna-ta*), the DEF-alignment constraint would reject any further adjunctions of DEF-marked APs; they would result in a DEF-marked NP where the DEF-marked daughter was not leftmost. Instantiation of the DEF feature in (19) proceeds as with the other examples.

In §2.2 we discuss the fact that certain kinship terms in Bulgarian (*eg. majka*) never take the DEF suffix, despite occurring in definite environments. Under the current approach, this sort of behaviour is expected; idiosyncratic gaps in distribution are characteristic of affixes (Zwicky and Pullum, 1983). We claim that the relevant kinship terms are lexically banned as inputs to the DEF-inflection lexical rule in (13).[9] There are a few ways of accounting for such distributional gaps, including listing the exceptions and deriving the gaps by appeal to semantic and/or pragmatic factors. For space reasons, we will not do either at present.

In §2.2 we also discuss DEF's participation in word-level phonological processes like word-final devoicing and stress placement. Again, this behaviour is expected under the assumption that DEF is an affix; under the current approach these facts fall out from the assumption that DEF-inflection is a lexical process. The function F_{DEF} is the locus of such alternations; part of what it does in mapping stems to their appropriate output forms is word-level phonology. Note that the E&N approach requires additional machinery to account for how and/or why post-syntactic movement operations (*ie. Lowering*) should interact with word-level phonological processes (Embick and Noyer, 2001, p. 573). [10]

The alternative proposed in this section assumes lexical composition for Bulgarian DEF. We argue its appearance in DP results from the interaction between hierarchical mediation of a morphosyntactic feature (DEF), and a constraint on the linear organisation of DEF-marked NPs. Under the assumption that DEF is an affix, certain aspects of its behaviour also receive a natural explanation.

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[8]Note that the analysis does not account for colloquial Bulgarian, in which demonstratives co-occur with DEF. We address this issue in Dost and Gribanova (in preparation).

[9]Mayer (1988) notes that the relevant kinship terms may appear with DEF-inflection just in case they denote members of a class, rather than individuals, *eg. Majka-ta e radostna* ('the mother (of X) is happy'). While we have nothing to say about this at present, note that these data do not in principle present a problem for our analysis.

[10]For further discussion of this aspect of the problem, see Embick 1995.

4.3 Possessive clitics

We present an analysis of Bulgarian POSS that makes use of the *Lowering* operation, as defined by Embick and Noyer (2001). While we argue against a lowering analysis for the composition of DEF, we claim here that POSS adjoins to DEF-inflected words post-syntactically. Note that this approach is in line with lexicalist assumptions about the composition of postlexical clitics (see §2.2 for further discussion of the postlexical status of Bulgarian POSS).

We assume that POSS is base-generated as a modifier to NP.[11] POSS then lowers to adjoin to the nearest DEF-inflected head within the structure, as shown in (20).

(20)
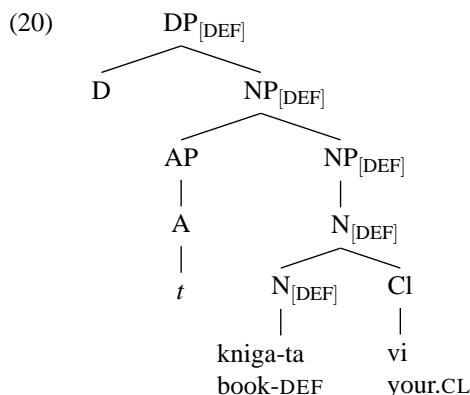
We claim the clitic *vi* is lexically banned as an input to the DEF-inflection rule in (13). The adjunction structure in (20) is licensed by the *Lowering* operation; POSS lowers to adjoin to the nearest DEF-inflected head. Under our approach, the fact that DEF and POSS occur linearly adjacent to each other results from the interaction of *Lowering* with DEF-alignment; the movement operation targets the nearest (*ie.* structurally highest) head, while the DEF-alignment constraint requires the leftmost (*ie.* first in linear order) head to be DEF-inflected. The two constraints conspire to derive the adjacency effects witnessed in the data. Under the current approach, a more interesting question (which we leave unanswered) is why POSS requires a morphosyntactically definite environment in order to be licensed at all.

5 Remarks

Embick and Noyer (2001) claims the distribution of Bulgarian DEF must be stated in syntactic terms. The analysis argues, on the basis of linear adjacency, that DEF and POSS must be composed identically and concludes the lexicalist distinction between (postlexical) clitics and affixes should not be maintained. In this paper, we present several drawbacks to this proposal. First the approach relies on a structure for Bulgarian DPs (in which AP is a complement to D) that we show to be problematic (see §3). Secondly, we address the fact that dispensing with the lexicalist clitic/affix distinction removes a natural explanation for DEF's behaviour with respect to distributional gaps and participation in word-level phonology (see §2.2). Third, we question the assumption made in Embick and Noyer 2001 that linear adjacency is a diagnostic for mode of composition. It does not seem at all obvious (without first assuming the correctness of the theory) that whether a morpheme composes lexically or syntactically should have a clear exponent in its surface order. We claim that adjacency effects do not make a suitable diagnostic for mode of composition.

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[11]We assume that possessor APs (both full and cliticised versions) precede other AP adjuncts to NP. However, examples like the following present something of a puzzle.

(*i*)   interesna-ta   moja kniga
         interesting-DEF my   book
         'my interesting book'

Examples like the one above seem to suggest that the constraints on possessor-adjunction are semantic and/or pragmatic rather than purely syntactic.

The approach we advocate in §4 assumes a more empirically tenable structure for Bulgarian DPs, in which prenominal modifiers (*eg.* AP) adjoin to NP and do not subcategorise for NP. The structure we propose naturally accommodates complement-bearing APs (see 12) with no additional stipulations. We predict DEF placement through the interaction of a lexical rule (DEF-inflection; 13) with syntactic constraints on the mediation of the DEF feature within DPs (DEF-passing; 15) and the linear realisation of DEF-marked elements within NP (DEF-alignment; 16). Furthermore, our approach naturally accounts for certain aspects of DEF's behaviour, by way of the clitic/affix distinction, that remain puzzling for an E&N type of approach. Because the analysis treats DEF as an affix, our approach predicts idiosyncratic gaps in its distribution, as well as its participation in word-level phonological processes.

We conclude specifically that Bulgarian definite DPs are certainly open to lexicalist analyses— we present one such analysis—and more generally that the clitic/affix distinction assumed by lexicalist theories probably shouldn't be abandoned.

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