

NP Ellipsis without Focus movement/projections: the role of Classifiers

1. Aims and goals. In the recent literature on NP ellipsis (NPE), the view has prevailed that NPE should be analysed in terms of movement to a focus projection DP internally (see e.g. Ntelitheos 2004, Corver & van Koppen 2006, among others). In this paper we propose an alternative analysis which dispenses with the stipulation of such a focus projection. Specifically, we propose that NPE in a number of languages is licensed by the presence of a classifier phrase in the DP. Focus is actually a side effect of the construction and not the trigger. Building on Bernstein's (1993) analysis of ellipsis in the Romance languages, we show that classifiers, in different guises, can account for NPE in the Germanic languages (German, Dutch and English) as well. For English, we assume, following Borer (2005), that *one* is actually a classifier and not a pronoun as proposed by Barbiers (2005) and others, thereby explaining the need for overt number marking in English NPE with *one*-insertion. Support for our hypothesis that focus may only be a side effect of NPE comes from German examples which strongly suggest that the morphosyntactic requirements licensing NPE should not be captured in terms of focus since they also appear in non-elided structures where focus is not mandatory.

2. Data. Three different sets of cross-linguistic data show that NPE licensing depends on classifiers: (i) indefinite determiners in NPE in Spanish and Italian (cf. Bernstein 1993, (1)), (ii) agreement on adjectives in NPE in the Germanic languages (Dutch, German) (2), and (iii) English NPE with and without *one*-insertion (Barbiers 2005) (3).

- (1) a. Un/*Uno libro grande è sulla tavola. (Italian)
 a book big is on-the table
 ‘a big book is on the table’
 b. Uno grande è sulla tavola.
 ‘a big (one) is on the table’
- (2) a. ein lila/ lilanes Kleid (German)
 a lilac/lilac-agr dress
 c. *ein lila/ ein lilanes
 a lilac-agr (one)
- (3) a. Talking about cars, I prefer a red *(one). (English)
 b. Talking about wine, I prefer Australian (*one).
 c. (Talking about new books,) I have two *(ones)
 d. (Talking about books,) I have two new *(ones)

3. NPE in Spanish/Italian. Following Bernstein (1993) and Picallo (2006), among others, we assume that the final vowel, *-o/-a*, on Spanish and Italian indefinite determiners in NPE (1) is a classifier. In line with their proposals, we analyse this as heading a classifier phrase above the NP, and below number phrase (4). The interpretable content of the classifier is a function that applies to nouns. In the languages under discussion, the presence of [CLASS] is manifested as formal gender on the noun but in other language families, this grammatical entity may surface with other linguistic tools. In NPE, this classifier does not attach to the noun itself, since it is deleted at PF, but targets the indefinite determiner instead, not being able to attach to NumP (cf. Bernstein 1993). In Spanish and Italian, the classifier on the indefinite determiner can also be argued to encode partitivity, since *uno* is also the form appearing in partitive constructions, exemplified for Spanish in (5) (cf. Marti 2003). In NPE, the agreement on the adjective is the same as on the indefinite determiner (as opposed to the agreement on the noun in regular sentences). The base structure we propose for Romance NPE is thus as in (4) (with strikethrough indicating deleted material).

- (4) [DP D [NumP Num [FP Adj [ClassP ~~-o/-a~~ [NP ~~NP~~]]]]]
- (5) a. *un problema grave* - ‘a serious problem’
 b. *uno* [e] *grave* - ‘a serious one’ NPE

4. NPE in German (and Dutch). Previous accounts of NPE in German and Dutch suggested that NPE in these languages is either licensed by (i) morphological features, e.g. the strong endings of the adjective and/or determiner (e.g. Lobeck 1995) in German NPE, and the specification for [neuter] in Dutch NPE (Barbiers 2005), or (ii) information-structural features, i.e. [focus] in Dutch NPE (Corver & van Koppen 2006). Here we provide further evidence for the view that the crucial features are the morphological features (i), in particular in German NPE. We follow Barbiers (2005) in the assumption that [gender] rather than [focus] licenses Dutch NPE (contra Corver & van Koppen 2006 and similar accounts). If, however, morphological features such as gender and number license NPE, a link can be established to NPE in the Romance languages. Thus, the [gender] and, presumably, [number] marking could be viewed in these languages as instantiation of classifiers, on the basis of Borer’s (2005) and Picallo’s (2006) systems. NPE in Dutch and German then receive an analysis similar to (4) above.

5. NPE in English. The situation in English NPE is complicated by the strategy of *one*-insertion with adjectives in NPE. However, in contrast to other Germanic languages, English does not have [gender] or [number] specification on adjectives. From the distribution of NPE without *one*-insertion (e.g. NPE with quantifiers, possessives, and demonstratives) we can observe that (inherent) plural is a crucial factor for the licensing of NPE (e.g. *I’ll have these* vs. *I’ll have this *(one)*). Likewise, in NPE with *one*-insertion, number must be marked on *one* (cf. (3)d). If we apply Borer’s (2005) claim that English does have a classifier phrase, which also hosts *one*, to English NPE, we can derive the distribution of *one*-insertion, as well as the licensing of NPE by means of classifiers. *One* can thus be inserted directly into the classifier phrase, rather than being base-generated in N (as in Barbiers’ 2005 account). This hypothesis is supported by the observation that *one* bears number marking, and that it can also co-occur with numerals (e.g. *two* in (3)d). Thus, as in other Germanic languages where NPE has to be licensed by morphological features, English NPE is also derived by means of a classifier, marking [number] rather than [gender]. The specification for partitivity can also be captured with *one*, since e.g. Barbiers (2006) claimed that *one* in English is specified for [atom/partitivity]. Thus, *one* patterns exactly like the classifiers in Romance NPE.

6. Focus revisited. Barbiers (2006) assumes that *one* is also specified for [focus]. The focus feature triggers movement of the AP to a focus projection. Thus, *one* indirectly causes the adjective to be focused. While this creates a link between the properties of the adjective and of *one*, the question arises whether this analysis extends to other Germanic languages as well, since German (and Dutch, to some extent) shows the same inflectional patterns in non-elided and elided clauses (cf. (2)) (i.e. both weak and strong endings), but shows only the strong endings in NPE. While an analysis in terms of movement could account for focus in NPE, the optionality of focus is hard to capture otherwise, since focus is not obligatory in regular sentences with strong endings (and maybe not even in NPE). We thus suggest that [focus] is not a separate feature, which is projected in the syntax, but rather that the potential focus on the adjective is due to the partitivity necessary for NPE (cf. e.g. Sleeman 1996). We will show that in systems such as Borer’s (2005) and Picallo’s (2006) where the NP structure contains Classifier Phrases, partitivity can be associated with the presence of such a projection. Classifiers introduce division and create individuals, and generate structures with an interpretation close to that of partitive NPs (cf. (5)). The focus requirement is, we argue, a by-product of the structure and its semantic interpretation, since a proper part relation (i.e. partitivity) already induces a contrast to the whole set (cf. Rooth 1992). Hence, focus need not constitute a separate feature. Syntactically, as the adjective is separated from the noun by the ClassP, and NP deletion can proceed without problems at PF, no focus movement of the adjective out of the deletion domain is required.