

The noun phrase (Dana Louagie, ULiège, F.R.S.-FNRS, KU Leuven & FWO Research Foundation Flanders)

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1. Introduction

This chapter¹ discusses noun phrases (NPs) in Australian languages, focusing on two points which can be regarded as defining features for NPs: syntactic unithood (section 1), and the presence of determiners (section 2). Australian languages are often thought of as not having NPs in the classic sense, but rather flexibly ordered sets of nominal elements that are loosely associated, perhaps only in terms of joint reference (see e.g. Blake 1983; Heath 1984, 1986; Harvey 1992; Baker 2001: 411; Evans 2003: 227-234; Rijkhoff 2002: 19-22; Evans & Levinson 2009: 441). An example is Warrongo, which is argued to have “non-configurational” NPs (Tsunoda 2011: 341), in the sense that the different elements of nominal expressions do not form a single syntactic unit. One bit of evidence for this is word order: as illustrated in (1a-c), the demonstrative, noun and adjective can occur in different orders (see also *ibid.*: 347).

(1) Warrongo (Maric; Tsunoda 2011: 688, 596, 348)

- a. *gaya-na-Ø ngaygo / mayga-lgo yarro-wo yamba-wo jarribara-woyani-yal.*
father-KIN-ACC 1SG.GEN tell-PURP this-DAT camp-DAT good-DAT come-
PURP
'I will tell my father to come to this good camp.'
- b. *ngaya bori-Ø ngona-Ø gagal-Ø wajo-n ngaya yori-Ø*
1SG.ERG fire-ACC that-ACC big-ACC burn-NFUT 1SG.ERG kangaroo-ACC
goyba-lgo bori-wo
throw-PURP fire-DAT

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‘I made a big fire so that I could throw a kangaroo to the fire.’

- c. *jarribara-Ø* *yarro-Ø* *banggo-Ø*
good-NOM this-NOM hollow-NOM
‘This nice hollow.’

Another piece of evidence used in the grammar is that elements which belong together referentially do not always occur contiguously. This is illustrated in (2), where a co-referential noun and adjective are ‘split’ by the main verb. Such characteristics have played a prominent role in the development of the theoretical concept of non-configurationality, which has also found its way into the general typological literature (e.g. Jelinek [1984]; papers in Marácz & Muysken [1989]; Austin & Bresnan [1996]; Baker [2001]; Rijkhoff [2002: 19-22]; Pensalfini [2004]; see also Evans & Levinson [2009: 440-442]). See chapter 35 for more discussion of non-configurationality in Australian languages, particularly in the verbal domain.

(2) Warrongo (Maric; Tsunoda 2011: 349)

- yinda* *gagal-Ø* *wajo-ya* *bori-Ø*.
2SG.ERG big-ACC burn-IMP fire-ACC
‘Make a big fire.’

A second characteristic of Warrongo is that it does not have a clearly identifiable category of determiners, nor does it have a dedicated determiner position (Louagie 2020: 205-206, 236). For instance, there are no obligatory markers for definiteness or the like, and it seems that a bare noun can be definite or indefinite (Tsunoda 2011: examples throughout). Also, elements that could be analysed as having a determining function, like demonstratives, have no fixed position in the nominal expression (see 1a-c).

In contrast to languages like Warrongo, there are also languages with nominal expressions that look very much like ‘classic’ NPs. An example is Arrernte (Wilkins 1989: 102-103), where the elements in the NP have a fixed order, as shown in the template in (3a) and illustrated in (3b) and (3c). Fixed ordering demonstrates that there is a clear internal structure for nominal expressions, which points towards syntactic unithood. Further evidence for syntactic unithood comes from case marking, in the sense that case is marked only once per phrase (as can be seen in the examples). Arrernte also has at least one clear

determiner, viz. the 3rd person pronoun, which has a fixed position in the NP, is obligatory for definite NPs, and absent in indefinite NPs (compare (3b) and (3c)) (ibid.: 165).

(3) Mparntwe Arrernte (Arandic, Pama-Nyungan; Wilkins 1989: 102, 129, 194)

a. Template:

[Classifier Noun]_{Hd} Adj.P Quant.P Demonstrative 3pnDef -CASE

b. **Artwe itne no ahel-irre-ke artwe mperlkere ikwere.**

man 3PL.S no angry-INCH-PST.COMPL man white 3SG.DAT

‘The men didn’t become aggressive towards the white man.’

c. **Artwe kngerre nyente-Ø irrp-intye-ke.**

man big one-NOM(s) go into-DO COMING-PST.CONT

‘One big man came in.’

While languages like Warrongo have attracted the most attention in the literature, it is definitely not the case that they constitute the majority of Australian languages, rather on the contrary (Louagie & Verstraete 2016; Louagie 2017a, 2020). This chapter argues for a different perspective and aims to demonstrate the diversity across Australian languages in this domain. I first discuss the question of syntactic unithood (section 2), and then focus on the presence of determiners (section 3).

2. Syntactic unithood

The example of Arrernte shows that not all Australian languages conform to the received idea of flexible and unstructured nominal expressions, as found in Warrongo and other ‘classic’ examples like Kalkatungu (Blake 1983) or Wubuy (Nunggubuyu; Heath 1986: 377-381). The question to be discussed in this section is where other Australian languages are situated.

The answer is nuanced, and perhaps surprising: there are sizeable sets of languages like Warrongo and like Arrernte (28/100 and 16/100 respectively in the sample-based study in Louagie & Verstraete [2016]), but the largest set is actually in between the two extremes. The basic idea here is that languages usually have a range of construals (i.e. structural assemblies of elements that jointly establish reference to a discourse participant) for the nominal domain, only some of which correspond to NPs in the classic sense. In languages like

Arrernte, classic NP construal is the only or the main type of construal available, whereas it is only one of the options for languages in between, and for languages like Warrongo it is marginal at best. Even for such languages, however, there may be some evidence for classic NP construal in a small corner of the nominal domain. For instance, while Bininj Gun-wok is very much like Warrongo in terms of its nominal expressions (e.g. flexible order), there is at least one NP construction which jumps out, viz. a construal with an indefinite marker in fixed initial position (Evans 2003: 244; see also section 2.1). More generally, I would like to argue in this section that it is more interesting to look at the different types of construals languages have available and how they interact, rather than at the mere presence or absence of classic NPs as a typological trait. The rest of this section outlines the reasoning behind this argument, which is based on previous work (Louagie & Verstraete 2016; Louagie 2017a).

In the first three sections, I provide evidence for the availability of NP construal as at least a structural option in the majority of languages, discussing word order (section 2.1), case marking (section 2.2) and 2nd position markers as diagnostic criteria (section 2.3). Section 2.4 looks at how these three parameters interact on a language-by-language basis and discusses the implications for typologising the nominal domain in Australian languages. Section 2.5 then discusses how this ties in with discontinuous nominal expressions, arguing that these are a separate construal type (and not, as sometimes assumed, evidence for the structural absence of NPs in a particular language). Section 2.6, finally, discusses some open questions related to this topic.

2.1. Word order in the NP

Only a minority of Australian languages have fixed word order in NPs, whereas the rest have more flexible types of ordering (see Louagie & Verstraete [2016: 36-42, 61-64] for more details). The first group can easily be categorised as having ‘classic’ NP units, as was the case for Arrernte above. The reverse is not true, however: not all languages with flexible word order necessarily lack NP structure. Quite on the contrary, in fact: in a large part of these languages, the specific type of flexibility involved actually provides evidence for syntactic unithood. There are two types of languages for which this is the case.

The first type concerns patterns of flexibility in which word order differences actually correlate with semantic differences. In other words, while there may be a flexible order of

word classes, there is a fixed order in terms of functional roles. This means that NPs have a clear internal structure and therefore are syntactic units. This was first demonstrated by McGregor (1990) for Gooniyandi, who argues that NPs in this language follow the functional template in (4a). Contrasting examples are given in (4b-e). In (4b), the nominal *nyamani* ‘big’ has a Quantifier function (i.e. referring to a quantity) when preceding the head, while in (4c), it has a Qualifier function (i.e. describing a property of the referent) when following the head. Similarly, the nominal *thiwa* ‘red’ has a Classifier function (denoting a subtype) in (4d), and a Qualifier function (describing a property) in (4e). Similar analyses have been proposed for a number of other Australian languages, for instance, Gaagudju (Harvey 2002: 315-320), Kayardild (Evans 1995: 235; Round 2013: 133-135), Martuthunira (Dench 1994: 189-198) and Bardi (see Bower [2012: 335-336] on restrictive versus unrestrictive use of modifiers). I suspect that more Australian languages belong to this category than we are currently aware of, but this is often hard to tell because nominal templates in reference grammars are usually provided in terms of word classes without further reference to functional differences.

(4) Gooniyandi (Bunuban; McGregor 1990: 253, 260, 265, 272)

a. Template :

(Deictic)^(Quantifier)^(Classifier)^Entity^(Qualifier)

b. *nyamani* *gamba*

big water

‘a lot of water’

c. *yoowooloo* *nyamani*

man big

‘a big man’

d. *thiwa* *goornboo*

red woman

‘a white woman’

e. *jiga* *thiwa*

flower red

‘a red flower’

The second type of flexibility that provides evidence for unithood is flexibility that is restricted in some way. One example of this is when one or both edges of the NP are preserved despite the flexible order of some other elements. For instance, in Mayi, there is a fixed slot for determining elements (viz. demonstrative, personal pronoun or interrogative) at the left edge, while qualifying nominals can occur either immediately preceding the head or following it, as shown in the NP template in (5a) and the examples in (5b-c). As one of the edges of the NP is clearly demarcated, there is evidence for a clearly delineated NP.

(5) Mayi (Mayi; Breen 1981: 63, 61; own glossing for b)

a. Template:

dem/pron/interr – num – N.qual – N.head – N.qual

b. *waṭi* *panya* *tyalu-ŋku*

that woman small-ERG

‘that small woman’

c. *waṭi* *miṭan* *yalmir* / *kun̄kun-kali* *ṇanti-ṇanti-ŋu*

that tall man spear-? hold-hold-PRS

‘that tall man is holding a spear’

Other types of flexibility provide evidence against unithood, in particular instances of flexibility where word order is relatively free and does not provide evidence for boundaries. Warrongo is a good example of this, as shown above. In fact, about one third of Australian languages is of this type, although the degree to which word order is free varies considerably depending on the language (see Louagie & Verstraete 2016: 41-42). In addition, several languages in this group do allow (minor) NP construals with fixed order, as discussed for Bininj Gun-wok above (see also section 2.4).

2.2. Case marking

Case marking on nominal expressions is another criterion for determining phrasehood. Overall, there are three options in Australian languages (see also Blake 1987: 78-91), only one of which can really tell us something about syntactic unithood, viz. phrasal marking. Phrasal marking is the situation where case (or anything else for that matter, e.g. number) is marked only once for the whole phrase. This is illustrated in (6) from Umpithamu, showing the dative marker on the final element of the NP, thus marking the *whole* NP as having a

dative role. In the majority of languages with phrasal marking, case is marked at one of the edges of the NP (Louagie & Verstraete 2016: 64-69), as in (6), and consequently also marks the boundary of the NP; in others case is marked on the head or it has a variable position (e.g. in Gooniyandi [McGregor 1990: 277]).

(6) Umpithamu (Middle Paman; Verstraete 2010)

<i>mayi</i>	<i>wirrki-ku</i>	<i>iya-n=antyampa</i>
veg.food	sugarbag-DAT	go-PST=1PLEXCL.NOM

‘We went for sugarbag.’

The other options attested in Australian languages are word marking, as in (7) from Guugu Yimidhirr, where each co-referential element is marked for ergative case, and no marking, as in (8) from Gaagudju. Both are neutral with respect to the question of unithood. Word marking could either mean that there is agreement within the phrase (i.e. a unit), or that there is no phrase at all but rather separate (though co-referential) elements which are each marked for their role in the clause. No marking speaks for itself: if there is no marker, there is no evidence either way.

(7) Guugu Yimidhirr (Yimidhirr-Yalanji-Yidinic; Haviland 1979: 102)

<i>Nhanu-umu-n</i>	<i>gudaa-ngun</i>	<i>warrga-al</i>	<i>nganhi</i>	<i>dyinda-y.</i>
2SG.GEN-MU-ERG	dog-ERG	big-ERG	1SG.ACC	bite-PST

‘Your big dog bit me.’

(8) Gaagudju (Gaagudju; Harvey 2002: 262)

<i>magaarra</i>	<i>djirriingi</i>	<i>ma-n-deeba=yu</i>	<i>djaamu</i>	<i>nowo-ngiirla-da</i>
that:I	man	III<3M-send.PST.PFV=3F.IO	tucker	3M-aunt-MIN

‘That man sent tucker to his aunt.’

Interestingly, there are many languages that allow alternation between phrasal marking and one of the other options. At the very least, this means that construal as a syntactic unit (i.e. NP) is available as an option, i.e. in those cases with phrasal marking. Depending on how other characteristics of nominal expressions play out (e.g. fixed word order), there may also be construal as NP throughout, with word marking definitely being agreement. Alternations between word marking and phrasal marking are often not equally divided within the language: one is usually more common than the other, and for several languages, there are

indications that the less common pattern only occurs in specific contexts (e.g. only with certain case markers, or in contexts of contrast). This could indicate that different construals are at play: see McGregor (1989) for a detailed investigation of Gooniyandi, including an alternative analysis, and Louagie & Verstraete (2016: 42-44, 65-70) for more examples and references. More details about other aspects of case marking in Australian languages can be found in Chapter 29.

2.3. 2nd position markers as diagnostics

Another useful, but less pervasive piece of evidence is the occurrence of nominal expressions in so-called diagnostic slots. Several Australian languages have 2nd position auxiliaries, clitics or pronoun forms (see also Chapter 53), which can serve as a diagnostic, in the sense that all elements that precede such a 2nd position element can be taken to form a syntactic unit. This is illustrated in (9) from Wambaya, where a three-element NP precedes the 2nd position auxiliary and can thus be considered one syntactic unit. Obviously, this does not tell us anything about the status of nominal expressions in other positions of the clause; it only shows evidence for construal as an NP in this particular case.

(9) Wambaya (Mindi; Nordlinger 1998: 132)

<i>Garndawugini-ni</i>	<i>bugayini-ni</i>	<i>galalarrinyi-ni</i>	<i><u>gini-ng-a</u></i>	<i>dawu.</i>
one.I-LOC	big.I-LOC	dog.I-LOC	3SG.M.A-I.O.-NFUT	bite
'One big dog bit me.'				

2.4. Interaction of criteria: different construals

The previous sections discussed three diagnostics for NP status. While word order can provide evidence either way, phrasal marking and occurrence in a diagnostic slot only provide positive evidence (i.e. their absence is not evidence against unithood), and they only do so in the particular cases studied (i.e. not necessarily for *all* nominal expressions throughout the language).

When combining the different criteria on a language-by-language basis, an interesting picture emerges. At least three groups of languages can be distinguished (Louagie &

Verstraete 2016). The first includes languages like Arrernte, where all evidence points towards unithood (fixed or restricted flexible order, and phrasal case marking throughout), and the main (or only) option is construal as an NP. In the 100-language sample used in Louagie & Verstraete (2016), this subset comprised 16 languages.

The second group (49/100 in Louagie & Verstraete [2016]) includes languages where the evidence is somewhat less straightforward, but which also seem to have NP construal as a major option: these are languages with fixed or restricted flexible order, but any type of case marking (alternating phrasal and word marking, just word marking, or no marking). As a consequence, these languages probably have a wider range of construals available than the languages of the first group. An example is Guugu Yimidhirr, which has restricted flexible order: elements with a determining function (like a personal or possessive pronoun) can be placed at either edge, while adjectives (incl. numerals) have a fixed position following the head noun, as illustrated in (10a-c) (Haviland 1979: 104). Case is marked either on the right edge of the NP (10a), or on each element (10b-c).

(10) Guugu Yimidhirr (Yimidhirr-Yalanji-Yidinic; Haviland 1979: 103, 119, 102)

a. **Bula** **dyiiral** **gudhiirra-mu-n** *yarrba* *gurra-y*: ...

3DU.NOM wife two-*mu*-ERG thus say-PST

The two wives spoke thus: 'Come, we'll go!'

b. **Bidha-al** **nyulu** *galga* *yii* *warraa=gurra-y*.

child-ERG 3SG.NOM spear.ABS this.ABS bad=CAUS-PST

The child ruined this spear.

c. **Nhanu-umu-n** **gudaa-ngun** **warrga-al** *nganhi* *dyinda-y*.

2SG.GEN-*mu*-ERG dog-ERG big-ERG 1SG.ACC bite-PST

'Your big dog bit me.'

The third group (28/100 in Louagie & Verstraete [2016]) concerns languages like Warrongo and Bininj Gun-wok, which have flexible order and are otherwise not clearly structured. Interestingly, several of these languages in some cases also allow phrasal marking and/or they can have multi-word expressions preceding a 2nd position diagnostic slot. This means that these languages at least have NP construal as an option, in particular contexts (e.g. when there is phrasal marking or a fixed-order construction). Usually,

however, this is not the dominant construal, and it may even be a very marginal one (as in the Bininj Gun-wok example discussed in the section 2.1).

2.5. Discontinuity

Analysing the nominal domain in terms of a range of different construals is also a good way to deal with the question of discontinuity, which has often been regarded as evidence against phrasehood. In the classic interpretation, discontinuity is seen as a ‘variant’ of contiguous expressions. This is implied, for instance, in Hale’s (1983: 37-39) notion of a “merged” interpretation of a discontinuous structure (12a) which he analyses as equivalent or synonymous to the structure in (11) (ibid.: 39). Note that a discontinuous structure can also have an “unmerged” interpretation, in which the ‘modifying’ element has a predicative function (12b) (Hale 1983: 38-39; Schultze-Berndt & Simard (2011: 1026) argue that this may actually be marked prosodically).

(11) Warlpiri (Hale 1983: 38)

Maliki wiri-ngki Ø-ji yalku-rnu.

dog big-ERG PRF-1OBJ bite-PST

‘The/a big dog bit me.’

(12) Warlpiri (Hale 1983: 38)

Maliki-rli Ø-ji yarlku-rnu **wiri-ngki**.

dog-ERG PRF-1OBJ bite-PST big-ERG

a. ‘The/a big dog bit me.’

b. The/a dog big me and it was big.’

From the perspective of the proposal developed in the previous section it makes more sense to look at discontinuity as a separate construal. In other words, the presence of discontinuous expressions in a language does not necessarily provide evidence that other, contiguous expressions per definition could not form a syntactic unit (see also Croft 2007: 27-30). This is not just a theoretical argument: there is also good empirical evidence to regard discontinuity as a separate construal. For instance, discontinuous structures are far less common than contiguous ones, they often occur under specific formal constraints (e.g. usually involving only two-element expressions) and they usually have a clear function (e.g. marking contrastive focus). Example (13) illustrates one of the two functions of discontinuity

in Jaminjung, viz. contrastive argument focus. The discontinuous element *gujugujugu* ‘big’ highlights the contrast between the big tents used now and the smaller tents used earlier.

(13) Jaminjung (Mindi; Schultze-Berndt & Simard 2012: 1038)

<i>bulayi</i>	<i>yirra-ma-na</i>	<i>guju~gujugu</i>	<i>na</i>
fly/tent	1PLEXCL-have-IPFV	PL~big	now

‘We had big tents then.’

In other words, there is no unconstrained ‘splitting’ of NPs, and discontinuous expressions can really be seen as a separate construction type. This point has been argued extensively by McGregor (1997) for Gooniyandi and Schultze-Berndt & Simard (2012) for Jaminjung; see also Louagie & Verstraete (2016: 49-54) for some details and examples from other languages.

2.6. Questions

The arguments presented in this section have shown that a simple dichotomy between presence or absence of NPs is not the most useful typological parameter, and that it makes more sense to typologise languages in terms of the construals they have available in the nominal domain. However, it is not yet obvious what such an alternative typology would look like exactly. For instance, more research is needed to discover the range of available construals, apart from ‘classic’ NP structures. Some candidates are discontinuous structures, motivated alternations between phrasal and other marking of case and other features, motivated alternations between different types of word order, and dislocated nominal expressions. Another question that needs more research is how these different construals carve up the nominal domain in individual languages, and how they are distributed across languages. At the level of individual languages, finally, another point that remains to be investigated is whether nominal templates currently described in terms of flexibly ordered word classes could be re-analysed as representing a fixed template of functional rules, along the lines of McGregor’s analysis of Gooniyandi (see section 2.1).

3. Determiners

The presence of determiners, i.e. elements specialised in marking the identifiability status of the referent, is often regarded as a second defining characteristic of NP-hood (e.g. Himmelmann 1997: 11), in addition to the basic question of phrasehood. The two languages discussed in the introduction, viz. Warrongo and Arrernte, not only contrast in terms of phrasehood, but also in terms of the behaviour of elements with determining functions. In Warrongo, there is no clear-cut category of dedicated determiners: while the language does have elements that can mark the identifiability status of the referent (e.g. demonstratives), these do not have a fixed or dedicated position in the NP. About one quarter of Australian languages is like Warrongo in this respect, as shown in Louagie (2017b), on the basis of a sample of 100 languages.

Arrernte, by contrast, has a determiner in the form of a 3rd person pronoun, which is obligatory in definite contexts and occurs in a fixed position at the right edge of the NP. These pronouns-as-determiners can also co-occur with a demonstrative and/or possessive pronoun, as illustrated in (14), in what is called a determiner ‘zone’ (Wilkins 1989: 102-103; Louagie 2017b: 16-18). In such zones, multiple determiners co-occur, each contributing their specific semantics but jointly ‘determining’ the NP (see Louagie [2017b] for details and references).

(14) Mparntwe Arrernte (Arandic; Wilkins 1989: 111)

Artwe kngerre nhenhe re kere aherre tyerre-ke.

man big this 3SG.A game kangaroo shoot-PST.COMPL

‘This big man shot a kangaroo.’

The presence of an obligatory determiner (whose absence marks the absence of the feature it encodes) is quite rare in Australian languages (see section 3.3), but the presence of a dedicated determiner slot or zone is not. According to counts in Louagie (2017b), about one quarter to one half of the 100 Australian languages in the sample used show evidence for such a slot – different percentages depending on the strength of the available evidence.

Before discussing determiner slots in more detail, it is important to emphasise, as also argued in section 2.1 above, the need to distinguish between the general semantics of an element and the functional role it takes in a particular NP. In this context, McGregor’s (1990) analysis of Gooniyandi is again pivotal: McGregor shows that a language can have a determiner position without having a category of elements specialised in such a position. For

instance, a demonstrative can occur in the determiner slot in Gooniyandi (as in (15a)), but it is not specialised in this position, as shown in (15b), where a demonstrative is used in a Qualifier role, following the head noun. Many of the languages with a dedicated determiner slot allow flexibility of this kind, but to varying degrees.

(15) Gooniyandi (Bunuban; McGregor 1990: 254, 268)

- a. *ngooddoo garndiwiddi yoowooloo gimangarna*
that two man bush:dweller
‘those two bushmen’
- b. *ngoonyjoo ngirndaji waranggila dina -yawoo*
tobacco this I:hold:it dinner-ALL
‘I keep this tobacco until dinner-time.’ (accompanied by lip-pointing at the actual object)

In the next sections, I briefly discuss the form of determiner slots in Australian languages that have them (section 3.1), class-function flexibility w.r.t. determiner slots (section 3.2), and optionality of determiners (section 3.3). These sections are based on a sample-based study, see Louagie (2017b) for the details and counts. I conclude with some questions that remain to be investigated (section 3.4).

3.1. Form of determiner slot

About one quarter to one half of Australian languages have a determiner slot: a dedicated position for determining elements, which is clearly delimited from the position of modifiers with other functional roles. This slot is always at the edge(s) of the NP, in four different types of NP templates, shown in (16).

(16) Determiner slots in Australian languages (Louagie 2017b: 10)

- a. determiner(s) – HEAD – modifier(s)
- b. determiner(s) – modifier(s) – HEAD – modifier(s)
- c. determiner(s) – HEAD – modifier(s) – determiner(s)
- d. determiner(s) ... modifier(s) – HEAD
(or HEAD – modifier(s) ... determiner(s))

(17) Uradhi (Northern Paman; Crowley 1983: 371, 377)

An example of type (16c), finally, can be found in Umpila, for which the NP template is provided in (18) below. In this template, the NP has two slots for determiners, one at each edge, only one of which can be filled at a time. Either slot can be filled by personal pronouns, demonstratives, quantifiers, or possessive pronouns, all of which can co-occur, except for the possessive pronoun.

(18) Umpila (Middle Paman; Hill 2018: 123)

with Determiner: [(Pron) (Dem) (Quant)], or [Poss.Pron]

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indefinite marker ‘one, a certain’, as in (19), which has a fixed initial position (in contrast with the numeral ‘one’, whose position is flexible [Evans 2003: 244]).

(19) Biniŋ Gun-wok (Gunwinyguan; Evans 2003: 681)

*“Njamed, **na-gudji** **nayin** ga-yo!” ba-mulewa-ni.*
 what M-one snake 3-lie.NPST 3PST-inform-PST.IPFV
“‘Hey, there’s a snake here!’ he’d say.”

3.2. Elements that function as determiners

Determiner slots as defined in the previous section can also be used to check which elements can function as determiners. Across Australian languages, these include some of the usual suspects, like articles, demonstratives and possessive pronouns, but also some less expected categories, like personal pronouns and quantifiers. There are, however, substantial differences in the degree to which these elements are specialised in determiner functions, depending both on the individual language, and on the type of element.

First, some languages appear to allow more flexibility than others overall. For instance, Arrernte does not seem to allow any flexibility, and there is a neat overlap between word class and functional role (as far as we can tell based on a grammatical description, of course). Gooniyandi, by contrast, is at the other extreme, with pervasive class-function flexibility, as shown in (4) and (15) above. Umpila shows moderate flexibility: only quantifiers are flexible between determiner and modifier functional roles (see example (23) below).

Second, some elements are in general more likely to occur in a determiner role than others. For instance, articles and interrogatives/indefinites are the most specialised elements, which always seem to function as determiners when used adnominally. Article-like elements are found in only a few Australian languages, for instance an article marking discourse topicality in Marra (Baker 2008: 139-140, 142-147), or third person pronoun forms in Arrernte and Nyulnyul (McGregor 2011: 124-125, 158-159). An example from Nyulnyul is given in (20), with *kinyingk* as definite determiner. Adnominal uses of interrogatives/indefinites are unfortunately not well-described in most grammars, but some examples can be found, as in the Kayardild example in (21).

- (20) Nyulnyul (Nyulnyulan; McGregor 2011: 158)
kinyingk bilabil bardangk-ukun riib arri layib
 DEF leaf stick-ABL bad not good
 ‘The leaves of that tree are poisonous.’

- (21) Kayardild (Tangkic; Evans 1995: 241)
ngaaka kiarrngka dangkaa
 which two man
 ‘which two men’

Personal pronouns and demonstratives almost always function as determiners when used adnominally, but in a few languages they do show flexibility between a determiner role and another role. For demonstratives, this was illustrated in (15) for Gooniyandi, with flexibility between determiner and qualifier roles. For third person pronouns, this can be illustrated with data from Djapu, in (22). The initial-position pronoun in (22) is a determiner marking definiteness, while the one following the head functions as number marker (see Morphy [1983: 47-48]; see also Louagie & Verstraete [2015: 177-178] for further discussion). A more detailed analysis of personal pronouns acting as determiners in Australian languages can be found in Blake (2001) and Louagie & Verstraete (2015).

- (22) Djapu (Yolngu; Morphy 1983: 48)
nhina nanya dhudakthu-n-a nunhi-yi dhäruk
 sit.UNM 3SG.ACC learn-UNM-IMM that.ABS-ANA language.ABS
walal mitjinarri-y walala-y
 3PL.NOM missionary-ERG PL-ERG
 ‘The missionaries are now learning this language.’

Possessive pronouns have a more mixed profile in terms of determiner function. While they still have a fixed determiner role in many languages, they can also take on other roles, and they are even excluded from determiner functions in a small number of languages. An example of the last type is Panyjima, where possessives have the same distribution as adjectival nominals, viz. immediately preceding or following the head, while demonstratives have a fixed initial position (Dench 1991: 186) in what I analyse as a left-edge determiner slot (Louagie 2017b: 9, supplementary materials). Incidentally, from a typological

perspective, possessive pronouns are perhaps the best-studied word class in terms of flexibility between determiner and other roles (e.g. Plank 1992; Lyons 1999: 130-134; Koptjevskaja-Tamm 2003; Willemse 2007). See Chapter 30 on possession more generally.

Quantifiers and logical modifiers like ‘other’, finally, are least likely to act as determiners. The information on logical modifiers is limited, but quantifiers mostly take on other functions than determination. There are some examples, however, where they are flexible between quantifying and determining functions. One example has already been discussed for Bininj Gun-wok in (19) above, which shows how the quantifier ‘one’ can function as an indefinite determiner. A further example is provided in (23) below, from Umpila (compare the NP template in (18) above). In Umpila, quantifiers usually function as determiners, “employing the quantificational semantics as an identification tool” (Hill 2018: 141), as in (23a). However, they sometimes also act as qualifiers, in which case they attribute a quantity as a descriptive feature to the referent (*ibid.*), as in (23b).

(23) Umpila (Middle Paman; Hill 2018: 135, 141)

- a. *pula pa’amu ku’unchi nhiina-na*
 3PL.NOM two old.woman sit-NFUT
 ‘those two old women sat.’
- b. *nganan/ kuunga nhi’ilama paa’i-na ngungku-lu*
 1PL.EXCL.NOM coconut one stand-NFUT DEM:DIST2-DM
 ‘Us lot (sat) by the lone coconut over there’

3.3. Optionality

A further notable characteristic of determiners in Australian languages is that they are rarely obligatory, in the sense that their absence does not necessarily entail that the feature they mark is also absent. Accordingly, it is usually the case that bare nouns can have a definite or indefinite, specific or non-specific interpretation. In Yir Yoront, for example, a noun with a determiner has a definite interpretation (24a), while a noun without a determiner can be interpreted as definite or indefinite (24b) (Alpher 1973: 281-282).

(24) Yir Yoront (Southwest Paman; Alpher 1973: 281-282)

- a. *wârtiyuwar ôlo*
 woman 3SG
 ‘she, the woman’
- b. *wârtiyuwar*
 woman
 ‘a woman/ the woman’

There are only a few exceptions to this general principle. Arrernte has obligatory determiners, as discussed above. Kuku Yalanji is similar, with third person pronouns as obligatory markers of definiteness (Patz 2002: 202). In Ngiyambaa, third person pronouns are also obligatory for definite NPs (at least in absolutive case), but they are not morphologically part of the NP. Instead, they are enclitic to the preceding element, even though they are functionally and syntactically part of the NP (Donaldson [1980: 128]; see more generally in Cysouw [2005] and Himmelmann [2014: 945-949] on such ditropic clitics). This is illustrated in (25).

(25) Ngiyambaa (Central New South Wales; Donaldson 1980: 128)

- a. *miri-gu=na bura:y gadhiyi*
 dog-ERG=3.ABS child.ABS bite.PST
 ‘The dog/ a dog/ (some) dogs bit the child.’ (*a child)
- b. *miri-gu bura:y gadhiyi*
 dog-ERG child.ABS bite.PST
 ‘The dog/ a dog / (some) dogs bit a child/(some) children.’ (*the child)

3.4. Questions

This section has provided an initial analysis of the syntactic status and general function of determiners, but many questions remain to be answered, especially concerning the semantics of determiners. Many grammars discuss the meanings of individual determining elements, especially of demonstratives (see also Chapter 31). However, more discourse-based work is needed to investigate the specific semantics of different determining elements and how this interacts with the different functional roles they take in the NP. In this respect, Stirling and Baker’s (2007) suggestion that at least some Australian languages have a

semantically distinct class of ‘topic determiners’ (i.e. elements which “manage topics” [ibid.: 7]) also warrants further investigation.

A second question has already been touched upon above, viz. whether there is a link between patterns of NP construal and patterns of determination. Himmelmann (1997: 156), for instance, argues for an implicational relation: languages without clearly structured NPs also lack strongly grammaticalised determiners (but not the other way around). A cursory glance at the data shows that this seems to largely hold for Australian languages, with a few potential exceptions (see, for instance, the example of Bininj Gun-wok in (19) above). This needs to be further substantiated, of course, and the analysis also depends on further research of the nominal domain in terms of nominal construals (see section 2.5).

4. Conclusion

In the nominal domain, Australian languages show more diversity than is sometimes assumed in the literature, and they cannot simply be put in the ‘no clear NP’ box. There is, in fact, a fair amount of languages that have clear NP structures and/or clear determiner slots. The main point of this chapter, however, is that we need to change the questions we ask when dealing with the nominal domain in Australian languages (or any languages, for that matter). The classic yes/no question about the presence of NPs does not really lead to interesting answers: a study of the full range of nominal construals a language has available and how these interact can provide a much more interesting picture. The same goes for determiners, where the focus should not just be on specialised determiners, but also on elements that can switch between different functions, and how these behave in different nominal construals.

In fact, this fits in with a more general issue that needs further investigation, viz. in how far Australian languages show class-function flexibility in the nominal domain, and how they differ amongst each other on this parameter. As mentioned in section 2.1, NPs may have a flexible order of word classes but a fixed order of functional classes. Similarly, languages can have a determiner slot without having specialised determiners (see section 3). This flexibility can be observed in other nominal domains as well: nominal classifiers in Arrernte, for instance, are not defined as a separate category but in terms of the position they have in classifying constructions (Wilkins 2000).

Finally, the focus of this chapter has been on simple NPs, but the domain of complex NPs opens up a whole range of other questions. Some of the classic work in this domain includes Dench & Evans' (1988) study on adnominal and multiple case marking, and Singer's (2001) work on 'inclusory constructions', which consist of a non-singular pronoun and an element referring to one member of the group identified by this pronoun. From the perspective of this chapter, taking complex NPs into account can add a further layer of complexity to analyses in terms of nominal construals.

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