

## Adjectival focus operator in Norwegian and Swedish DP

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Norwegian (N.) and Swedish (S.) share the ‘double definiteness’ pattern where a pre-adjectival determiner *den/det* co-occurs with a suffixed definite determiner: *den gamle hund-en* (‘the old dog-def’, N.) and *den gamla hund-en* (‘the old dog-def’, S.). It is usually omitted with the so called ‘selectors’, such as *först* (‘first’), *vänster* (‘left’), *hel* (‘whole’) etc., ordinal numerals and superlatives, Dahl (2004). It can also be absent with other classes of adjectives. Cf.: *i bruna hus-et* (‘in the brown house’, S.) and *i det stora hus-et* (‘in the big house’, S.). In general, it seems that the omission is not restricted to a closed class of adjectives.

Although it has been often argued, starting with Delsing (1993), that the ‘double definiteness’ is a dummy-*den* insertion that happens when N-to-D movement is blocked by an adjective, I argue that *den/det* are not determiners but rather focus operators. First, as shown above, *den/det* can be omitted with an open list of adjectives. This presents a challenge for the intervention-repair accounts. Secondly, intuitively, *den/det* is present when the context contains relevant alternatives to the property denoted by the adjective. It is absent when either there are no relevant alternatives because the property is unique (‘selectors’) or if alternatives are not relevant. The latter happens when the nominal property clearly characterizes a singleton: in the context of deictic expressions such as *detta hus-et* (‘that house-def’, S.), in cases when it is known that there is just one entity having a property denoted by N, e.g. *stora rummet* (‘big room’ used when there is only one room under discussion), and in name-like uses (Dahl, 2004, 156-157).

Drawing on Heusinger (1997)’s adaptation of Rooth (1992) to focus in complex NPs, I propose to treat *den/det* as focus operator that introduces a contextually relevant set of alternatives to the property denoted by the adjective. It is a matter of world knowledge then to ‘fill in’ that set with the appropriate properties, such as ‘red’, ‘white’ and ‘rosé’ in the case of the color of wine. The alternative semantic composition of a focused adjective with a non-focused nominal tentatively proceeds along the lines of (Heusinger, 1997, 4) by combining every alternative in the set with the property denoted by the noun. The precise semantics of the focus operator as well as the motivations for its syntactic placement – namely whether it projects its own phrase in the left periphery of nominal expressions – are the questions of the ongoing research.

## References

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