

Theoretical overview of articles and nominal phrases in Albanian

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Abstract

One of the units that syntax defines between words and sentences, and intuitively each of the speakers recognizes the existence, is the phrase (syntagma). The phrase can be defined as a sequence of linguistic elements having the same distribution in the sentence with the category that constitutes the starting point and being the basic element and not the eliminated one. In generative grammar the division of words becomes in the lexical categories that are the phrases heads and non lexical categories constituting the determinants. The determinants include articles, connectors, forming word participles. This paper will be a theoretical overview in particular on definite and indefinite articles on nominal phrases. Through structural analysis of nominal phrases, relying on its material in the Albanian language examples, but without leaving aside the comparison with other languages it will be tried to find out the mechanisms that determine the nominative phrase constructive models, in which the definite article is realized or avoided. It will be analyzed the anaphoric and situational reference, the definite articles in nouns, the article absence in defined nominal phrases and the cases when the Albanian speaker construct the nominal phrases without an article. It will be tried to prove that indefinite article "a" is an autonomous element being always in front of the noun and not in a morphological opposition about gender and declensions, that the definite and indefinite articles exclude each others, etc. All this will conclude in an unstudied part of generative theory of Albanian noun phrases.

Keywords: Albanian noun phrases, determinant, article, definite, indefinite.

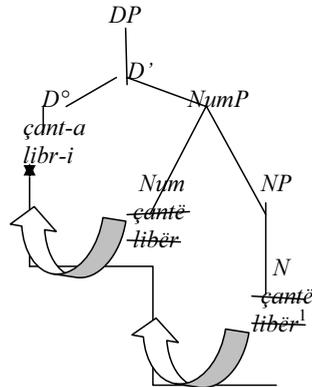
Introduction

Except the expression of the eminence, the definite article of Albanian keeps also the categorial information of number, genre and function of the name: *shtëpi -a*, *shtëpi-ve*, *djal-i*, *djem-të,etj*. Those are included in the determinant class and hold the position of the (NP) nominal phrase's specifier. In *libri* the diagram presentation would be:



In this occasion the name moves in front of the definite article leaving a sign in the place it had (Mita, 2005, 20). In the derivation of the eminent name is included a moving rule that lifts the name from its position N (the zero position) to the head position D (determinant), where in fact the article gets projected. Through this movement the N gets incorporated with the suffix in D. The layers of its adaption

that are included at N before being controlled in the middle position Number (Num), position in which firmly passes the N before arriving in D.



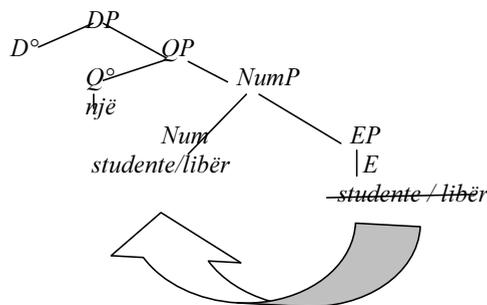
The movement of N is done by the rules of *move α*, as we preliminarily accept that the maximal projection of N is a tuition (determinant) D of the head.

We would stop in the presentation of a diagram of the same NP but in different languages:

a) *the book*, b) *le livre*, c) *il libro*, d) *der Buch*.

As it can be noticed, according to this kind of reasoning, the diagram is the same for Albanian, English, French, Italian and German for the NP that contains a head N and a determinant definite article.

The indefinite article *një* that presents an autonomous element that stays always before N, does not present morphological opposition in relation with the gender and the case : *një vajzë / një djalë; një vajzë / një vajzë / një studenteje*, etc. It is represented in the tree diagram as a suffix of the projection of the quantitative Q, dominated from DP (Turano & Rrokaj 2007 53)



The definite article is used when the speaker is in condition to distinguish the referent to which the NP, that holds the article, is directed. The distinguish of the referent can happen by using different strategies: by returning on the linguistic contest (the ekzoforic reference, Ex: by returning to an element included in the previous discourse = anaphoric), or through the reference of the class of the referents of which the NP speaks, or by using non-linguistic methods for the attraction of attention (or “pre-

linguistic”) as pointing, moving the body, direction of the look or referring to the mutual knowledge that belongs to the speaker as to the interlocutor). E.G.

➤ **The endoforic reference (anaphoric)**

(1) *Po shihja një film. kur filmi mbaroi...*

The referent of the film is included in the pervious conversation; it will be said that *një film* and *film* are co-referents as they guide at the same referent: *një film* is the precedent of *film*.

➤ **The egzoforic reference**, that happens between three modalities:

A. With a visible NP between the reference of the same knowledge:

- (2) a. *Mbesa është nisur.*
 b. *Kanarina iku nga kafazi.*
 c. *Mësuesi sot mungon.*

B. With a distinguished NP and between non linguistic tools:

- (3) a. *Hape derën!*
 b. *Ngrije librin nga toka!*

C. With a NP that shows a class :

- (4) a. *Ariu i bardhë është specie në zhdukje.*
Arinjte e bardhë janë specie në zhdukje.
 b. *Hekuri oksidohet.*
Metalet përçojnë rrymën elektrike.

Special occasions of the last type of the referent are:

1. NP that have “one single referent” *diell, hënë, etc.*

- (5) *Dielli lind në 06.45 minuta.*
Hëna lahet në det.

2. NP that show inalienable or alterable belonging:

- (6) a. *M’u thye dora.*
 b. *Kam humbur çelësat.*

In some special cases it is possible to avoid definite articles despite that NP is definite (so the referents are visible upon the base of one of the mentioned strategies):

a) in a list of NP:

- (7) *Shtëpi, oborre dhe rrugë ishin të zbrazura.*
Libra, fletore e lapsa kishin mbuluar dyshemenë.

b) with NP couples connected from their semantic perspective: *atë e bir, burrë e grua, etj. P.sh.*

- (8) a. *Burrë e grua punonin që nga mëngjesi deri në darkë.*
 b. *Atë e bir dilnin që pa gdhirë*

The determined article with the proper nouns

In Albanian, the Personal Nouns (PN) are mostly used as they’re eminent, but also non eminent. PN are special names, characterized from the fact that they put you on the referent in the direct way, with some original act of designation. In this sense PN

constitute in their essence distinguished NP. Lets give a scheme of the most common occasions with a PN of humans and country PN.

In general it is seen that when PN are accompanied from a postnominal modifier (adjective), the definition is necessary: E.G. *Desantila* and *Tirana*, but *Desantila e bukur*, and not **Desantilë e bukur* and *Tirana e zhurmshme* and not **Tiranë e zhurmshme*, but if the modifier is pronominal, than we would have *e mjera Desantilë*, *e bukura Tiranë*, and in this occasion is the modifier that has the definite article *e mjer-a*, *i bukur-i*.

Even with a possessive pronoun, a PN must be distinguished: *Desantila ime*, *Tirana ime*, while without the definion we would have **Desantilë ime dhe* **Tiranë ime*.

➤ The define of Nouns of humans

The Albanian differs from the other languages where PN of humans are normally used with a definite article (m. and f.) EG: *Bill*, *Barbara*; *fr.Pièrre*, *Mariè*, *it. Giacomo*, *Paola*.

- (9)
- a. *Mary told me...*
 - b. *Mariè m'a dit...*
 - c. *Maria mi ha detto...*
 - d. *Maria më tha...*

The human surnames at all are defined in Albanian: (*Ismail*) *Qemali*, (*Shejnaze*) *Juka*, (*Preng*) *Jakova*. Only some surnames are undefined (it's about those surnames that have a finite accent): (*Petro*) *Marko*, (*Ismail*) *Kadare*. In the case where it's about distinguished surnames, we can make them defined: *Markoja*, *Kadareja*.

➤ The place PN's articles

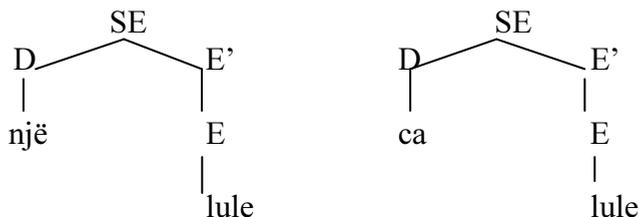
PN of places are accompanied from the article in the most of the occasions: *Franca*, *Spanja*, *Amerika*, *Afrika*, *Europa*, *Atlantiku*, *Paqësori*, *Korabi*, *Tomori*, *Taraboshi*, *Danubi*, *Drini*, *Shkumbini*, *Ohri*, *Myzeqeja*, *Shampanja*, , *Sazani*, *Korsika*, *etc*. In all these NP [Definite Article [N]] if they are accompanied with an appointment of a geographic feature, the head of NP becomes the geographic label. Those P gets generated in the Known Syntagma¹ or the complementary if NP and in the first occasion they are modified by a definite article (DA), while on the second occasion thy are not: *liqeni i Ohrit*, *ishulli i Korsikës*, *Oqeani Paqësor*, or *lumi Danub*, *mali Korab*, *etj*.

The conditions of the article usage may vary if the NP that shows a region or a state or if it is included a PP anticipated from P *në*. In both these occasions it's not used, as in the following examples: *në Vlorë*, *në Greqi*, *në Brazil*, *etc*.

It must be reminded that in the cases when N is accompanied from a modifier, the article cannot be avoided: *Shkodra e lashtë*, *Vjena klasike*, *Europa plakë*, *etc*.

While the usage of the definite article shows that the interlocutor is able to spot the referent shown by the NP, between the undefined article *një* (and the insulating article *ca*) the speaker puts in the conversation a referent, about which its not asked to the interlocutor to make the difference from the class it is part.

¹ Josif Mita, *Hyrje në sintaksën gjenerative*, Shpresa, Prishtinë 2005, pg 22.



The indefinite NP shows one or some (in the definite article case) members unseen from the referents class that get pointed from the NP. E.G.

(10) *Këto lule t'i la një nxënës*

A special usage of the indefinite article is in the cases like:

(11) *Një nxënës i rregullt nuk vjen pa detyra.*

The (11) sentence corresponds to the sentence: *Nxënësit e rregullt nuk vijnë pa detyra.*

In the sentences of this case, the interpretation of the indefinite NP is similar with that of the defined NP, in which the article shows in reality a referents class. From this use of the indefinite article it can be achieved in the interpretation that *një nxënës i rregullt* shows an accepted member of the class of the *nxënësve të rregullt*.

The perspective of the reference of the indefinite article can be separated in two kinds: "specific" and "nonspecific", in both the cases the interlocutor is not asked to distinguish the referent about which the NP speaks, but in the "specific" usage there is only a referent that is separated from the speaker and that clears out the NP description, while in the "non specific" usage are some non distinguished referents from the speaker that clear out the description of the NP.

The difference between the two types can be shown with some tests:

a) NP with a non specific article that can be a pronoun with *të tillë*, the one with the specific article can be a pronoun only with the clitic forms:

(12) a. *Desha të marr një roman shqip, por nuk gjeta të tillë.*

b. *Desha të marr një roman shqip që kam parë herën e shkuar, por nuk e gjeta / *por nuk gjeta të tillë.*

b) Only a NP with a non specific article can be accompanied from the determinant *çfarëdo*:

(13) a. *Kërkoj një libër çfarëdo.*

b. *Kërkoj një libër çfarëdo *që e kam lënë që vjet këtu.*

With a determined N, as a proper N, the usage of the indefinite article is possible only if it is a proper N, categorized again when as not a proper N, so to be able to interpret a proper N as a "member of the class of the proper N-s". This is possible for example when a proper N gets modified from an adjective:

(14) a. *Një Arditië kaq të gëzuar nuk e kisha parë ndonjëherë.*

b. *Nuk më kish rënë rasti të shihja një Agim aq punëtor.*

The presence of the adjective *të gëzuar* allows to be imagined that there exists a class made from some *Ardita* (one *e trishtuar*. one *e gëzuar* and so it goes on).

The *një* and *ca* as insulating articles

The usage of the *një* article is limited with a N so-called countable, used in singular (*një lule, një student, një çantë, një libër, një bletë, një telefon, një shtet etj.*). With the N of the mass and countable in plural, is used for the un-eminent the article *ca* (in the morphological aspect identical with the undefined quantitative): E.G. *ca qumësht, ca vaj, ca bukë, ca lule, ca studentë, ca gra, etc.*

The insulating article is used even with abstract N; that means that they show an imperceptible entity physically, that as so, are not countable:

- (15) *Duhet një vullnet i madh.*
Nevojitet një përkushtim i pakufi.
Lipset një punë e jashtëzakonshme.

The usage of *një* with the N of mass and with the uncountable abstracts, it is interpreted as a categorization case. E.G.

- (16) a. *Kemi gjetur një verë shumë të ojetër.*
 b. *Shquhet për një inteligjencë të spikatur.*

një verë and *një inteligjencë* shows one "kind of wine" and "one kind of intelligence", so in a subset of a set shown by N, so it is allways present a modifier which allows to be seen the subsets of the set defined from *vera* and *inteligjenca*.

The insulating article can be included in a PP and be preceded by a preposition: *për ca libra, me ca qumësht, nga ca pemë, etc.*

The absence of the article at the indefined NP

With mass N and countable N in plural, the presence of the insulating article alternates with its absence:

- (17) a. *Do (ca) verë?*
 b. *Kam dalë me (ca) shoqe.*

Indetermined NP without an article are excluded if they are in the position of the subject. To be seen the difference between (18a) and (18b) or (18c) that are ungrammatical without an article:

- (18) a. *Jam marrë me punë.*
 b. **Punë më kanë penguar / Ca punë më kanë penguar.*
 c. **Më kanë penguar punë. / Më kanë penguar ca punë.*

In the impersonal it is possible to be used NP without an article in the position of the post verbal subject:

- (19) a. *Nuk ka më kafe. / A ka kafe?*
 b. *U shpërndanë libra për të gjithë.*
 c. *Dëgjohen zëra gjithë ditën.*

Indefinite NP, without an article, can be found in the position of the subject even with impersonal verbs, and in pre-verbal position, if they form a constituent accompanied by types of modifiers as in:

- (20) a. *S'ka nxënës të këtij lloji.*
 b. *Nuk duhen drejtuar pyetje që nuk janë ndërtuar saktë.*

In addition, as it was seen even for determined NP, the article might be absent when some NP get coordinated in one line:

- (21) *Shtëpi, oborre dhe rrugë ishin të zbrazura.*
Libra, fletore e lapsa mbushnin kishin mbuluar dyshemenë.

The nominal phrase without articles

There are other special cases, except the cases that were seen in the previous paragraphs, in which some NP are without articles. It's about different cases from those seen till now. In general the article is absent:

➤ *with an NP used as a title or vocative :*

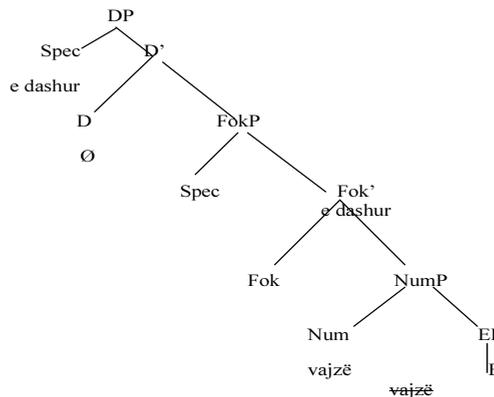
(shq) Profesor! E dashur vajzë!

(fr.) Professeur! Chere fille!

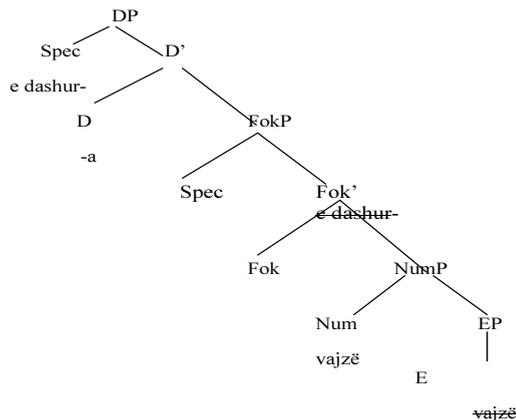
(it) Professore! Cara ragazza!

In the case of *E dashur vajzë* for the Albanian, we have to do with a case of the focus of the adjective. In the focused position, the adjective deprives the N from its determined article. In its essence, if it's focused, the adjective, gets the element of the eminence (Turano & Rrokaj, 2007, 62). In the above example, the adjective is not put before the definite article, because the N is not used as defined, and for this reason we have *e dashur vajzë* and not *e dashura vajzë*. We are representing the diagrams for both the cases:

(22) a.



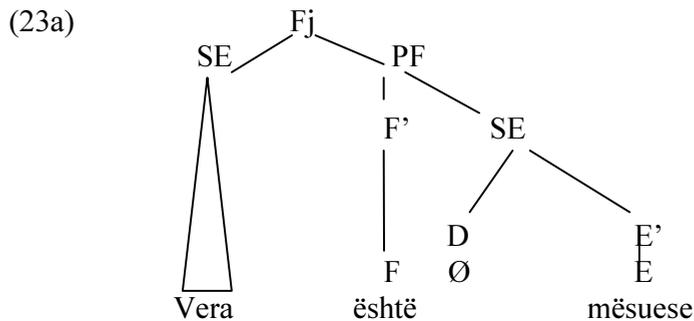
b.



➤ **With a NP in the function of the noun determinant nominal part, of the apposition or of the determined verb.** In both the cases the NP has not a referential function, but shows characteristics that point to the referent they are connected to (in this sense they have the same function that an adjective would have):

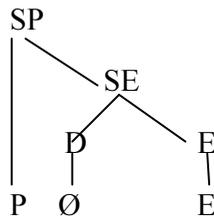
- (23) a. *Vera është mësuese.*
 b. *Vera, mësuese e letërsisë...*
 c. *E kanë emëruar mësuese.*

The diagram for one of the examples is:



(In the (23b) the isolated apposition *mësuese e letërsisë* gets as an extension in the NP because it expands the information for the head N.

- in exclamations: *! , Ndihmë! , Zjarr!*
 ➤ when the NP is found inside of an PP the appearance is: PP=[P[NP[D Ø E]]]



A. *për + NP*: (*flas për sport, (luaj për fitore, (i pazoti për punë, (i etur për para, (marr) për ndihmë, (veproj) për interes, (përplas) për mur, etc.*

B. *me + NP* (shows a manner and answers in general to an adverb): *me dije = diturisht, me aftësi = aftësisht, me trimëri = trimërisht, me qetësi = qetësisht, me maturi = maturisht, etc.*

C. *në + NPh* (shows a location)): *në rrugë, në shkollë, në kinema, në stadium, në mal, në shkollë, në shtëpi, në shtrat, në teatër, në tren, në poltron, në kishë, në punë, etc.*

D. Idioms and in special in unions with verbs. E.G.: *kam dijeni, mbaj qetësi, kall frikë, jap kënaqësi, bëj dritë, vë zjarr, mbaj shënim, fitoj kohë, ndërroj jetë, ndryshoj program, etc.*

As a conclusion it can be said that the proper N are definite NP, which makes them to be used mostly with indefinite articles. When they get accompanied from postnominal modifiers, definite article is obligatory, when the modifier is an adjective and in the prenominal position, they put off the indefinite article and is the adjectives that gets

the article.

At the N of humans and places definite article is always present. They don't get avoided even when the N is accompanied from a modifier.

When N are accompanied with the denomination of the geographic feature, the head of the NP are no longer them, but the geographic label, they become the name that is generated in the known Syntagm as the tuition of the NP and in the first case they have the definite article, while in the second not.

The indwfinite article puts in discussion a referent, about which the interlocutor is not asked to make the difference from the class it is part of.

The *një* and *ca* used with mass N and abstracts that are uncountable separate an ethnicity physically not percieveable.

This article might be missing in the NP used as vocatives, in the NP when it is used as an eminent verb, in the apposition, in the predicative determinant, in exclamations inside one PP and in a logical phrase.

To sum up this not exhaustive commentary, we would highlight once again that the study of the nominal phrases includes the study of all its components and into them, the articles. This work is an effort to explain the position of one of the players in the "chess game" of the Albanian language.

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