The morphosyntax of derived proper nouns

Samuel Jambrović, University of Toronto

samuel.jambrovic@utoronto.ca

- You can pause the video at any time if you would like to read the information on each slide or take a closer look at the proposed structures.

- I will be available on both Zoom and Skype for the duration of the poster session. Please feel free to contact me using video, audio, or chat, whichever format you are most comfortable with!
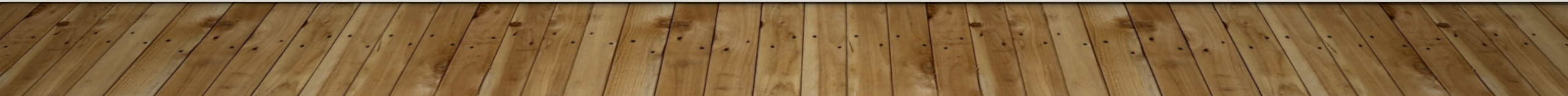
Zoom Details:

https://utoronto.zoom.us/j/9295419536

Meeting ID: 929 541 9536 (No Password)

Skype Details:

Username: samjambrovic

Research Questions

- RQ #1: Do derived proper nouns (*Child, Wonder Woman*) have the same roots as their common noun counterparts (*child, wonder woman*)?

- RQ #2: If so, what is responsible for their more "regular" morphosyntactic behavior?

  (1) a. The {children/*childs} are playing in the park.

  b. The {Childs/*Children} are coming over for dinner.

- RQ #3: Why is variability possible with certain types of derived proper nouns (like the team names in 2) but not others (like the surname in 1)?

  (2) a. the Toronto Maple Leafs   b. the Minnesota Timberwolves

Theoretical Assumptions

- Proper nouns and common nouns differ at the N-level (Adger 2003, Anderson 2007, Ghomeshi & Massam 2009, Longobardi 2005, Matushansky 2006, Thomsen 1997).

- Key evidence: the behavior of proper nouns in non-argument positions, where the use of a determiner is ungrammatical (Anderson 2004:441, Borer 2005:84).

  (3) a. Αυτός είναι ο Βασίλειος. 'This is Basil.' (lit. 'He is the Basil.NOM.')

  b. Τον λένε (*τον) Βασίλειε. 'They call him Basil.' (lit. 'Him they call (*the) Basil.VOC.')

  (4) This is a (*the) Bronx-type environment.

- Conclusion: the determiner cannot be responsible for [proper] or [name] as a feature on the noun.

RQ #1: Do derived proper nouns have the same roots as their common noun counterparts?

- First, it is theoretically desirable that they do: there is a clear connection between *Wonder Woman* and the common nouns *wonder* and *woman*.

- However, the variable behavior of derived proper nouns in certain contexts indicates there may be two sets of spell-out and interpretive instructions, which opens the possibility of different roots (Harley 2014).

  (5) a. For every Superman figure, the store sells two Wonder {Womans/*Women}.

  b. Attention has increasingly turned to the Wonder {Women/?Womans} of European leadership.

- In 5a, *-s* and plurality are linked, while in 5b, *-en* and plurality are linked.

- Is it possible to reconcile the data with the argument for identical roots?

RQ #2: What is responsible for the more "regular" morphosyntactic behavior of derived proper nouns?

- Many researchers argue for a difference at the N-level between proper nouns and common nouns (Adger 2003, Anderson 2007, Ghomeshi & Massam 2009, Longobardi 2005, Matushansky 2006, Thomsen 1997). However, their analysis does not extend to the level of roots.

- In my proposed system, proper nouns are the result of a distinct categorizing head (or flavour of n), n_{proper}, which I argue triggers movement to D and prevents any intervening functional projections.

- Assuming that the DP is a phase (Citko 2014, Radford 2004), higher functional projections cannot access any idiosyncrasies of the root after the DP has been closed, hence *the Childs* vs. *the children*.

# RQ #3: Why is inflectional variability possible with derived proper nouns?

- If *Maples Leafs* and *Timberwolves* have the same roots as *maple leaves* and *timberwolves*, any differences in their morphosyntactic behavior must be due to the attachment site of functional projections like Num, either low or high (see structures on next slide).

- Is there independent motivation for this proposal? Yes!

- *Maple Leafs* is derived from the proper noun *Maple Leaf*, the national symbol of Canada, not from the common noun *maple leaf*. The official team name reflects this fact: *Toronto Maple Leaf Hockey Club*.

- *Timberwolves* is derived directly from the common noun *timberwolf*. Unlike *Maple Leaf*, *Timberwolf* as a proper noun is not meaningful on its own, nor does it appear in larger compounds like **Timberwolf Team Store*.

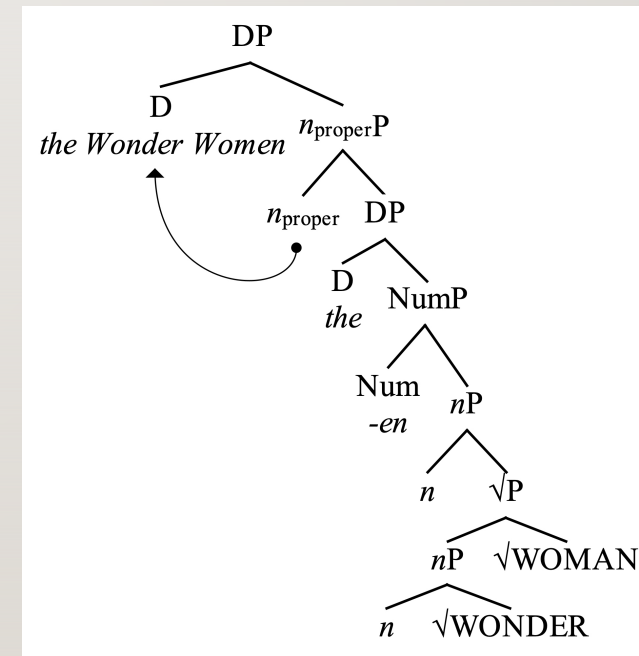# The Maple Leafs   vs.   The Timberwolves
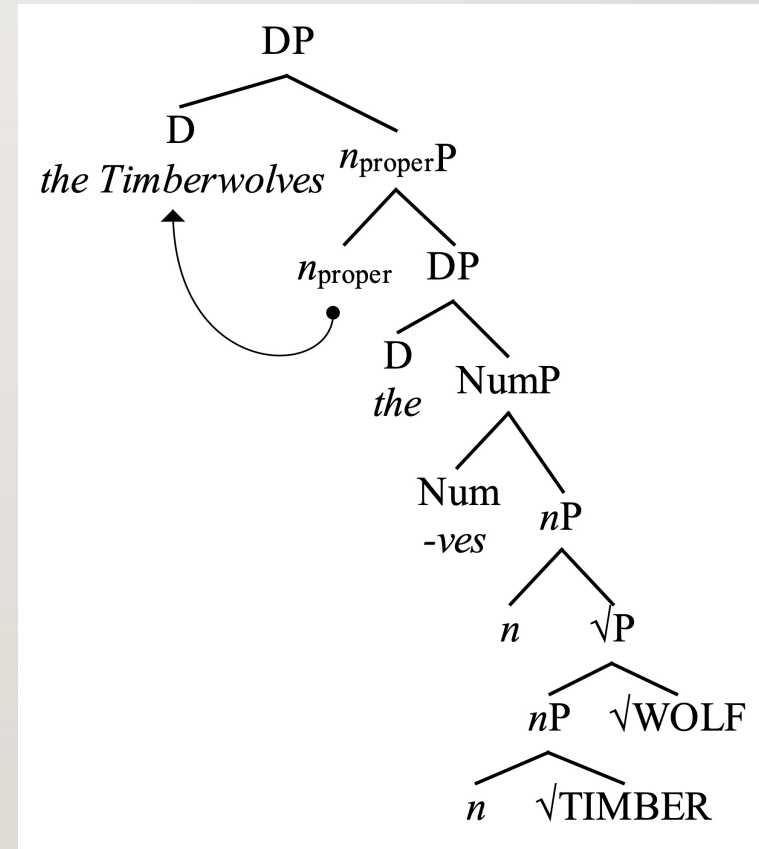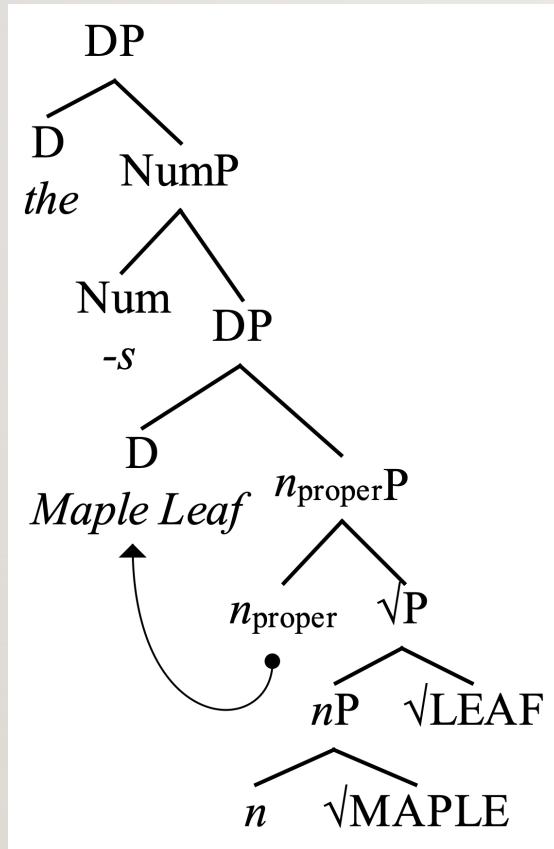
Wonder Womans vs. Wonder Women

(5) a. For every Superman figure, the store sells two Wonder Womans.
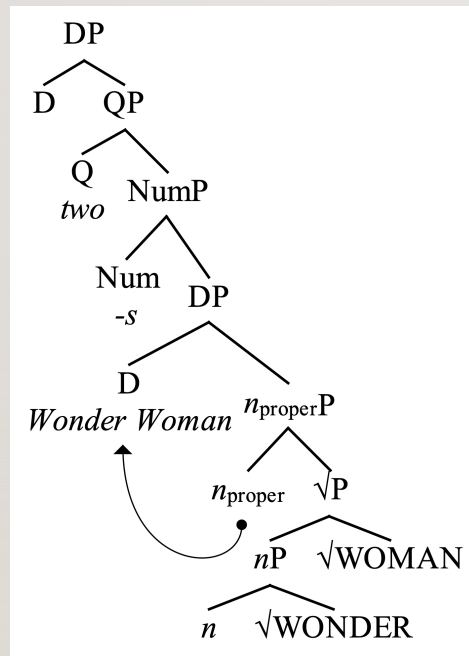
b. Attention has increasingly turned to <u>the Wonder Women</u> of European leadership.

Further applications

- Num is only one of many heads that may merge above the DP in another cycle of functional projections.

- Along with *n*, categorizing heads like *v* (*FedEx it*, *Google it*) and *a* (*Shakespearian*, *Draconian*) are possible.

- If *n* is the locus of gender (Ritter 1993), we can easily capture the following Spanish and Italian data without the need for different roots.

  (6) a. la garza 'the heron.FEM'   (7) a. il conte 'count.MASC' → i conti 'the counts.MASC'

      b. Garza → los Garza 'the Garzas.MASC'   b. Conte → le Conte 'the Contes.FEM'

- As proper nouns, *Garza* and *Conte* raise to D, and after the DP has been closed, *n* and then Num merge, (re)assigning gender and number.

Conclusions

- RQ #1: Do derived proper nouns have the same roots as their common noun counterparts?
  - Yes, which is both theoretically desirable and compatible with the data.

- RQ #2: What is responsible for the more "regular" morphosyntactic behavior of derived proper nouns?
  - A distinct categorizing head (or flavour of n), n_{proper}, that triggers movement to D and prevents any intervening functional projections.

- RQ #3: Why is inflectional variability possible with derived proper nouns?
  - The height at which functional projections like NumP merge (i.e. before or after DP has been closed).

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