

The Distribution of English Post-Adjectival Determiners  
 Sarah Felber (based on work with Dorian Roehrs)

Although English determiners usually precede adjectives, as in (1), when certain degree words are present, an indefinite article may follow the sequence degree word+adjective, as in (2).

- (1) a big sofa
- (2) too big a sofa

In one well-known analysis, Kennedy and Merchant (2000) propose that in (2), *too big* forms a Degree Phrase, which raises out of the DP:

- (3) [FP [DegP *too big*]<sub>i</sub> (of) [DP a [NP t<sub>i</sub> sofa]]]

In another type of analysis, exemplified by Abney (1987) and Lilley (2001), *too big* does not form a Degree Phrase to the exclusion of the article and the noun. Instead, the indefinite article may appear in one of two positions: above AP, when no degree word is present ((4)), and below AP in the presence of a degree word ((5)).

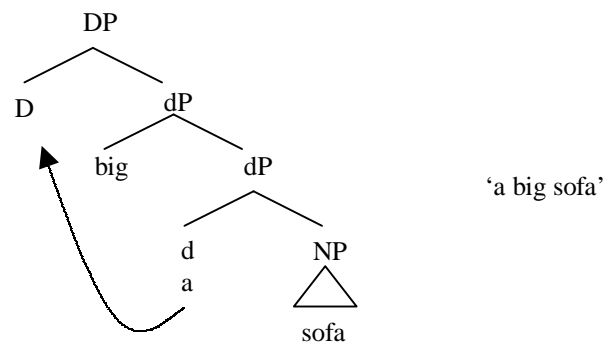
- (4) [DP a [AP big [NP sofa]]]
- (5) [DegP *too* [AP big [DP a [NP sofa]]]]

As pointed out by Felber and Roehrs (to appear), neither of these analyses is able to account for the fact that a post-adjectival determiner cannot be followed by a second adjective, as shown in (6).

- (6) \* *too big an ugly sofa*

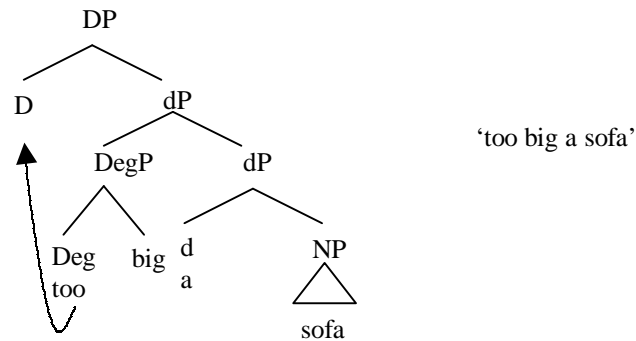
I propose a new analysis of (2) that correctly accounts for the ungrammaticality of (6). The proposal relies on the DP structure presented in Roehrs (2002), in which determiners start below adjectives in a dP projection, later moving into DP, as shown in (7). A licensing requirement mandates that the D position be filled.

- (7)



According to my analysis, D can be licensed in English either by a d element or by a Deg element. If Deg is present, it is structurally closer to D, and will move, leaving the determiner in d, as shown in (8).

(8)



If we assume (i) that all adjectives originate between D and d and (ii) that the determiner either moves all the way up to D or does not move at all, then the ungrammaticality of (6) is predicted.

Furthermore, I will argue that this movement analysis can account for the following contrast:

- (9) This is a big ugly sofa.  
 (10) a. \* This is too big, ugly a sofa.  
       b. This is too big and ugly a sofa.

#### References:

- Abney, Steven. 1987. The English noun phrase in its sentential aspect. Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, MIT.  
 Felber, Sarah and Dorian Roehrs. to appear. \*So weird a baffling construction. *Snippets*.  
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 Lilley, Jason. 2001. The syntax of Germanic post-adjectival articles. Talk given at the 16<sup>th</sup> Workshop on Comparative Germanic Syntax, McGill University.  
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