Weakness and strength across the nominal domain

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This talk explores a new approach to the syntax of the nominal domain.

Empirically, it takes off from the elementary observation that (singular count) nouns in languages like English, German, and Italian require the presence of determiner categories (articles, demonstratives, wh-determiners, possessives and the like), cf. Stowell (1991), Longobardi (1994), while nouns in languages like Bosnian-Serbo-Croatian, Czech, Polish, Russian and Ukranian do not. The former are subject to Ross' (1967) Left Branch Condition (LBC), i.e. disallow determiners to undergo movement out of the noun phrase, while the latter famously permit Left Branch Extraction out of the noun phrase (Corver 1990, Bošković 2005 *et seq*). The same cooccurrence is attested diachronically e.g. in the transition from Latin to modern Romance or Old Norse vis-à-vis modern Germanic. This basic syntactic division correlates with varied ("rich") case and gender morphology on both nouns and determiners on the one hand (nominal concord), and their sparsity or absence on the other.

Analytically, the approach builds on my (Blümel 2024, under revision, submitted) idea to carry over Chomsky's (2015) notion of weak and strong T to the root-categorizing nominal element n (Borer 2005), couched within the framework of Labeling Theory. Strong and weak n underlie nominal structures in the two mentioned classes of languages and capture their syntactic pattern in a unified fashion and without additional assumptions, providing a natural place for the concomitant morphological differences.

During the talk I will address additional issues against the backdrop of the perspective developed: How to think of the correlation between the availability of articles and the LBC (*i.a.* Uriagereka 1988), how to think of languages like Mandarin Chinese which neither have articles nor allow LBE, and how to analyze APs and their behavior.

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