University of Pennsylvania Working Papers in Linguistics

Volume 14
Issue 1 *Proceedings of the 31st Annual Penn Linguistics Colloquium*

Article 26

4-23-2008

A syntactic analysis of nominal and pronominal associative plurals

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Abstract
An associative plural is a nominal expression that refers to a group by naming its most salient member (1). The

construction is used to introduce a new group into discourse, a group that is understood to be inherently (or contextually) associated with its named protagonist.

(1) Pa-hulle (Afrikaans, den Besten 1996:16)

Dad-them

'Dad and Mum' or 'Dad and his folks'

In this paper, I argue for an analysis of associative plurals as phrasal expressions where the protagonist and the group are two separate syntactic entities. Namely, I suggest that associatives are headed by a non-descriptive nominal with group semantics. The reference of this group is determined through its association with the protagonist. The protagonist is a referential modifier which starts out in a modifier projection and moves to the specifier of DP. I begin by showing that associative protagonists share a number of syntactic and morphological properties with other types of referential modifiers such as demonstratives, personal pronouns and certain types of possessives. I go on to demonstrate that languages employ different strategies in spelling out the functional features of the non-descriptive group nominal, and that the apparent surface diversity of associative marking can be derived from the same syntactic structure. Finally, I suggest that my analysis of associatives can be extended to personal pronouns in their associative, anaphoric, and non-canonical interpretations.

A Syntactic Analysis of Nominal and Pronominal Associative Plurals

Masha Vassilieva*

1 Introduction

An associative plural is a nominal expression that refers to a group by naming its most salient member (1). The construction is used to introduce a new group into discourse, a group that is understood to be inherently (or contextually) associated with its named protagonist.

(1) Pa-hulle (Afrikaans, den Besten 1996:16)
Dad-them
'Dad and Mum,' 'Dad and his folks'

In this paper, I argue for an analysis of associative plurals as phrasal expressions where the *protagonist* and the *group* are two separate syntactic entities. Namely, I suggest that associatives are headed by a non-descriptive nominal with group semantics.[1] The reference of this group is determined through its association with the protagonist. Syntactically, the protagonist is a referential modifier which starts out in a modifier projection and moves to the specifier of DP.[2] My suggested syntactic structure of (1) is as in (2).

(2) $[_{DP}\ [_{DP2}$ **Pa**$]\ D^{\circ}\ [_{NumP}\ Num^{\circ}$ [**+pl**$]\quad [_{XP}$ ~~DP2~~ $X^{\circ}\ [_{NP}\ N^{\circ}$ [**+hum**$]]]]]$

In (2), the protagonist DP *Pa* 'Dad' moves to the specifier of DP; the functional features [+hum] and [+pl] are spelled out by the morphological component as *hulle* 'them'.

The paper is organized as follows. In section 2, I provide evidence for my suggested analysis of associative protagonists as referential modifiers. In section 3, I focus on the features of the group referent. In section 4, I extend my analysis of nominal associatives to personal pronouns. Section 5 summa-

*I would like to thank Michael Daniel, Ivan Derzhanski, Stefan Dyła, and Edith Moravcsik for sharing their ideas and data with me.

[1]See Panagiotidis (2002) on pronouns as non-descriptive nominals.

[2]The protagonist DP could also be generated in a predicative small-clause configuration (post-nominally); nothing in my analysis hinges on the distinction. For arguments that referential modifiers such as demonstratives *move* to their final positions see Giusti (2002).

rizes the analysis.

2 Associative Protagonists and Other Referential Modifiers

Referential modifiers such as personal pronouns, demonstratives and some types of possessors share certain properties related to their high position within the nominal phrase. Namely, by virtue of sitting in the specifier of DP, they can license silent determiners and typically precede numerals. In this section, I will show that associative protagonists have the same properties. Moreover, I will show that associative protagonists often display signs of adjectivization, which is an argument in favor of treating them as modifiers rather than heads of an associative plural construction.

The first piece of evidence comes from Bulgarian. Bulgarian is unusual among Slavic languages in that it has a definite marker. The marker usually surfaces attached to the end of the left-most element of the noun phrase (3a-b), except when the left-most element is a demonstrative (3c). The presence of a demonstrative, however, does not preclude the definite marker from appearing on the next element (3d).

(3) a. kniga**ta** (book-def) ‘the book’
b. krasiva**ta** nova kniga (beautiful-def new book)
c.* tazi**ta** kniga (this-the book) ‘this book’
d. tezi dve**te** knigi (these two-def books) ‘these two books’

Associatives in Bulgarian behave just like demonstratives: they do not surface with a definite marker (4a-b) but do not stop it from occurring on the next element (4c). Note that a similar pattern can be observed with personal pronouns (4d).[3]

(4) a. Peš-ov-i (Peter-adj-pl) ‘Peter & family’ (associative)
b. Peš-ov-i-**te** (Peter-adj-pl-**def**) ‘Peter’s relatives’ (possessive)
c. Peš-ov-I trima-**ta**
Peter-adj-pl three-def
‘Peter and his family, all three’
d. nie trima**ta**
we three.def
‘us three’

Franks (2001) explains the distribution of overt definite marking in Bul-

[3]All examples in (4) were provided by Ivan Derzhanski (p.c.).

garian thus: the marker is realized on the head of D's complement. The demonstratives (and, presumably, personal pronouns) are in the spec of DP; therefore, they do not occur with a definite marker but do not stop it from surfacing on the next element.[4] The fact that associative protagonists exhibit *the same syntactic behavior as pronouns and demonstratives* provides the first piece of evidence for the idea that associative protagonists are referential modifiers located in the specifier of DP.

Note that in the examples (3d), (4c), and (4d), demonstratives, associatives and pronouns *precede* numeral quantifiers. This is, of course, expected if all these elements sit in DP while the numerals are in the NumberP (5).

(5) [$_{DP}$ we/these/Peter…. [$_{NumP}$ three … [$_{NP}$ …]]]

Again, associatives pattern with other referential modifiers, providing further support for my analysis. Note that pronouns and associatives must[5] precede numerals in many other languages besides Bulgarian (6-8).

(6) Hiroko-tati / watasi-tati san **nin** (Japanese, Hiroko Yamakido, p.c.)
Hiroko-pl / I-pl CL three
'Hiroko & Co / us, three in all'

(7) XiaoQiang-men[6] / wo-men **san**-ge (ren) (Chinese, Li 1999:79-80)
XQ-pl / I-pl 3-/CL (person)
'XQ&Co/us, three in all'

(8) Lankotovi / oni **trije** (Slovenian, Lanko Marušič, p.c.)
Lanko-poss.pl / they three-masc.pl
'Lanko & Co, three in all'

Additional evidence that associative protagonists are associated with the upper portions of DP comes from Tok Pisin, an English-based Creole spoken in New Guinea. This language uses the same plural marker *•l* (<all) to form regular and associative plurals, but associatives *precede* it (9a), while regular nominals *follow* it (9b). Under my analysis of associatives, the difference in word order follows from the syntactic status of associative protagonists as referential modifiers. The protagonist is in the specifier of DP and is *fol-*

[4]Whether or not one accepts Franks' (2001) analysis, the generalization still stands: associative protagonists behave in the same way as other referential modifiers.

[5]For lack of space, I do not provide the ungrammatical examples where the word order is reversed (*numeral … we/Peter/them).

[6]For speakers who form associatives with *–tamen* 'they' instead of *–men*, the same generalizations apply. I thank my fellow SUNY students Ruiqin Miao, Chih-Hsiang Shu and Zheng Xu for this information.

lowed by the plural marker (Num°) (10a=9a). The regular plural nominal is in the NP, *preceded* by the plural marker (Num°) (10b=9b).

(9) a. pater **•l** (priest pl) 'the priest and his congregation'
b. **•l** pater (pl priest) 'the priests'
(10) a. [$_{DP}$ **pater** [$_{NumP}$ **p**l [$_{NP}$]]] (associative)
b. [$_{DP}$ [$_{NumP}$ **pl** [$_{NP}$ **pater**]]] (plural)

So far I have been comparing associative protagonists to *closed-class* referential modifiers such as demonstratives and pronouns, yet associatives have two further properties in common with *denominal* modifiers.

Firstly, associatives often surface with the same morphological markers as prenominal possessives and certain denominal adjectives. The Bulgarian examples in (11) come from Ivan Derzhanski, p.c.; the Georgian examples in (12) are from Rudenko (1940:263)[7] (12a-c) and Daniel (2000a:40-1) (12d).

(11) a. Peš-**ov**-i (Peter-adj-pl) 'Peter and family'
b. Peš-**ov**-i-te (Peter-adj-pl-def) 'Peter's family'
c. berez-**ov**-i (birch-adj-pl) 'birch-wood', 'made of birch'
(12) a. tsver-i**an**-i (lit. beard-IAN-Nom) 'bearded' (with beard)
b. dz^{h}ol-i**an**-i (lit. wife-IAN-Nom) 'married' (with wife)
c. ghud-os**an**-i (lit. hat-OSAN-Nom) 'with hat', 'wearing a hat'
d. Giorgi-**an**-eb-i (lit. George-AN-pl-Nom) 'George & his family'

Secondly, associative protagonists may be restricted in their complexity, just as prenominal possessors are in some languages. For example, while prenominal possessors can be complex in English (e.g., *my old friend's car*), they must be simple in Bulgarian (14). Similarly, while languages like Afrikaans allow full phrases as associative protagonists (13), Bulgarian protagonists must be simple. For example, certain kinship terms in Bulgarian, such as *majka* 'mother' must occur with a possessive enclitic in order to pick out a specific individual (14a). Consequently, no associative can be formed from *majka*: with an enclitic, it cannot be adjectivized; without an enclitic, it cannot be referential (14b).

(13) Piet en Koos-hulle (den Besten 1996:15)
P. & K. – them
'Peter and Koos (and one or more others)'

[7]These examples were given in Georgian alphabet in the source; I used the transliteration table in the book to the best of my ability, but would not vouch for its IPA-compatibility.

(14) a. majka mu (Moloshnaya 1987:7)
mother his
'his mother'
b. maic-in dom
mother-adj house
'maternity ward/hospital'

In this section, I argued that associative protagonists are referential modifiers rather than heads of an associative plural construction. I showed that associatives consistently pattern in their *syntactic* properties with other referential modifiers such as demonstratives and personal pronouns. Namely, they generally precede numerals and license empty determiners. Both of these properties, I suggested, have to do with the high structural position of associative protagonists (as well as demonstratives and pronouns). In addition, there is some *morphological* evidence that associative protagonists are (bare) modifiers. Namely, associatives in some languages show signs of adjectivization and may be restricted in morphological complexity.

3 Features of the (Silent) Group Referent

From the examples discussed so far we can see that languages form associative plurals in a variety of ways. Afrikaans adds the pronoun *hulle* 'they' to the proper name (1), while Bulgarian (4), Slovenian (8), and Georgian (11) add a possessive marker (or an adjectivizer) to the stem which is then followed by a plural marker. Japanese (6) and Chinese (7) add a regular plural marker which is also used to derive plural pronouns from their singular counterparts. In this section, I will show that variation in morphological realization can be derived from the same syntactic configuration.

The syntactic analysis I outlined in section 1 treats associative plurals as complex phrases headed by unnamed (silent) nominals with group semantics. While the group referents are 'silent' (in the sense that they have no concept-denoting/descriptive features), they still have all the functional features usually associated with nominals, such as [gender] and [number]. I suggest that language-specific variation in the spell-out of these features is responsible for the variety of morphological forms that associative plurals take.

One logical possibility for languages is to not spell these features within the noun phrase at all. This is arguably what we find in languages where the only overt trace of plurality is found in verbal agreement rather than in the associative form itself. For example, in Maltese (15) and Talitsk dialect of Russian (16) there is no associative marking on the noun.

(15) Brian gew. (Corbett 2000:191)
Brian came.PL
'Brian and his family/friend(s) came.'
(16) Moj brat tam tože žili. (Bogdanov 1968:69, in Urtz 1994:31)
my brother there also lived.PL
'My brother and his family also lived there.'

Another logical possibility is for the plural feature to be spelled on the protagonist via a concord mechanism. This is what we find in Bulgarian (4a) and Slovenian (8) where plural concord markers attach to the adjectivized protagonists. In languages where protagonists show no signs of adjectivization, plural morphemes may attach directly to the protagonist, resulting in surface identity between regular and associative plurals (17).

(17) Mehmet-ler (Turkish, Lewis 1967:26)
Mehmet-PL
i. 'Mehmets' (2+ people by the same name) <= REGULAR PLURAL
ii. 'Mehmet and his family' <= ASSOCIATIVE

A third possibility is for the plural feature to be realized as a separate word (Tok Pisin (9)) or an independent concord marker (Miya (18), from Schuh 1998:252, 251, 243, 253, 253, 257).

(18) a. **níy** Kàsham 'Kasham & Co' <= ASSOCIATIVE
b. **níy** Kasham 'Kasham's (ones)' <= INDEPENDENT GENITIVE
c. **níy**kin təmakwiy 'these sheep' <= DEMONSTRATIVE
d. tə́makwìy **niy** Vaziya <= NOMINAL POSSESSOR
sheep.pl pl Vazya 'Vazya's sheep'
e. tə́makwìy **niy**tlə́n <= PRONOMINAL POSSESSOR
sheep.pl pl.they 'their sheep'
f. sə̀be kárka**niy** <= ADJECTIVE
people tall.pl 'tall people'

A fourth scenario is found in languages which mark associativity by adding a group-denoting word to their protagonist. The pronoun *hulle* 'them' in Afrikaans (1), as well as the group-words of Peking Chinese (19) and Firzroy Crossing Kriol (20) spell out the features [+plural] and [+human].

(19) Rénzi yīhuo (lit. Renzi people)'Renzi and others' (Daniel 2002:46)
(20) Rosan-mob 'Rosanne and her friends'(Moravcsik, p.c.)

Daniel (2000a:47-48) observed that group expressions used as associative

markers tend to show signs of phonetic reduction when compared to their independent lexical counterparts, which is a tell-tale sign that we are dealing with lexicalization of functional heads. For example, the Chinese plural pronoun *tāmen* 'they' is pronounced in a neutral tone in associatives (*Xiao-Qiang-tamen* 'XQ & Co'). In Bengali, *ora* 'they' shows signs of phonetic reduction when used in associatives (*Smith-ra* 'Smith & Co').

Finally, a conjunction may be used to mark associativity in such languages as Maori (21), Basque (22), and Afrikaans (23).

(21) a. Mere maa (Moravcsik, p.c.)
Mary and/with 'Mary & Co' <= associative
b. tekau maa tahi (Campbell 1995:332)
ten and one 'eleven' <= 'and'

(22) a. Miren-eta etorri dira. (Hualde 2003:852, 168)
M.-and come aux.3A.PL
'Miren and all have come.'
b. Mariak eta Xanetak idektzen dituzte begiak.
Maria-erg and Janet.erg open.impf AUX eyes
'Maria and Janet open their eyes.'

(23) Pa en dié[8] (Den Besten 1996:16)
Dad and those 'Dad and that one/those'

These languages, I suggest, spell out the head X° of the phrase XP where protagonists are generated:

(24) a. $[_{DP}\ [_{XP}$ [DP-protagonist] **X°**] D° $[_{NumP}$ Num° $[_{NP}$ N°]]]]
b. [Pa **en** dié (=23)

Since the nature of the relation between the protagonist and the group (s)he represents is determined by context, I suggest that the semantic value of X° is determined along the same lines as Burton (1995:14-5) proposed for possessive constructions such as *Mary's cat*:

(25) (the cat:) cat'(x) & R(x,Mary)]

The cat and Mary in (25) stand in some unspecified relationship; this un-

[8]'True' conjunctions differ from associative plurals in Afrikaans: they stress the right-hand conjunct while associatives stress the element on the left (Den Besten 1996:16). Note that one of the possible interpretations of (23) involves just two people; therefore, the word *die* 'them' cannot be viewed as a conjunct. Cf. *John 'n them* in some English dialects which can refer to John and just one other person.

specified relationship is represented as a (free) variable over relations. This variable is interpreted in the same way as other free-variables, i.e. via deixis. Whatever mapping relation between individuals and cats happens to be salient in the discourse, it will potentially furnish a value for the relationship between Mary and the cat. In the absence of contextual evidence, there is a preference for the relation to be understood as 'ownership'. Burton attributes this preference to the default value of R which can be overridden by context.

Similarly, the identity of the group represented by the protagonist can be determined from the context, or, in the absence of contextual evidence, the group will be interpreted as 'inherently associated' with the protagonist (i.e. X & X's family).[9] The group referred to by an associative plural is 'a group *with* the protagonist', where *with* may (or may not) indicate inclusion (26).

(26) Kerry-tati (Hiroko Yamakido, p.c.)
Kerry-PL
'(Kerry and) his associates/supporters'

In this section, I suggested that, while languages differ in the way their morphological component handles the functional features [pl] and [hum] in phrases with non-descriptive NPs, all associative-marking strategies can be accommodated within the same *syntactic* structure.

4 Associative Pronouns

4.1 Associative Interpretation of Certain Personal Plural Pronouns

No analysis of associatives can be complete without a discussion of certain semantic similarities between associative plurals and personal pronouns. As is well known, plural personal pronouns are interpreted differently from other plural nominals; namely, while every element in 'chairs' is a chair, not every element in 'we' is a speaker. Rather 'we' is interpreted as 'speaker + speaker's associate(s)'. The interpretation of plural pronouns, therefore, is quite similar to that of associative nominals. Can this semantic similarity result from the similarity of syntactic structure?

Panagiotidis (2002) proposes an analysis of personal pronouns that is very similar to the analysis I suggested for associative plurals. He argues that

[9]Note that a similar analysis can be suggested for demonstratives. Their default interpretation is locative (i.e. 'this cat' means 'the cat near speaker'), but in certain situations 'this' can indicate temporal or emotional proximity. Essentially, 'this' can be viewed as suppletive realization of 'near me'; for a discussion of person-based demonstratives see Lyons (1999).

all pronouns consist of two *functional* shells (a DP layer and a Number P layer) and one *lexical* NP layer (27). All pronouns are definite descriptions; [person], as a uniquely-referential feature, is presumably a special type of deictic (definite) feature.

(27) [$_{DP}$ D° [person] [$_{NumP}$ Num° [number] [$_{NP}$ N° [gender]]]]

The structure in (27) is similar to the analysis I suggested for associatives: the construction is headed by a non-descriptive nominal, and there is a referential element in DP. However, the role of person features as 'associative protagonists' requires further clarification.

It is commonly assumed that person features are responsible for the 'special' interpretation of plural pronouns: to be '1st person' means 'to include the speaker'. In other words, the part-whole interpretation is supposed to be a special property of person features, rather than of the syntactic structure itself. Note, however, that person features cannot be held responsible for the 'associative' interpretation of 3rd person plural pronouns (28).

(28) Q: And what became of **John**?
A: Oh, **they** moved to DC two years ago. (they = John + family?)

The pronoun 'they' is interpreted 'associatively' when it refers to a group that has not been previously identified. The pronoun is used in a context when there is a *singular* antecedent. The relation between the antecedent and the rest of the group is understood as inherent association (a preference generally not found with other types of pronouns).[10] In other words, all hallmark properties of an associative construction are present, and indicate that at least some personal pronouns can be analyzed along the same lines as nominal associative plurals, namely, as in (29):

(29) [$_{DP}$ [$_{DP2}$[11] speaker] D° [$_{NumP}$ [plural] [$_{NP}$ [N°]

The D° has no definite index in (29) since the group has not been previously identified; the only referential feature is that of the protagonist in the specifier of DP. The resulting group is interpreted as referential by virtue of its

[10]Similarly, the pronouns 'we' and 'you' can be interpreted associatively, as in '**Mary**$_{\mathbf{i}}$ where are **you**$_{\mathbf{i}}$ living now?' – 'Oh, **we**$_{\mathbf{i+j}}$ moved to DC last year.'

[11]I have no clear evidence as to whether the pronominal protagonist in the specifier of DP is a phrase or a feature; see van Koppen (2005) for an analysis of person features as sitting in the specifier of NumP and (sometimes) causing singular agreement with the verb.

association with a referential protagonist.

In this section, I suggested that my analysis of associative plurals can be extended to personal pronouns when the latter are interpreted associatively (i.e., they are interpreted as unidentified groups associated with a singular antecedent). In the next session, I will discuss some advantages of extending this analysis to all plural personal pronouns.

4.2 Extending the Analysis to Anaphoric Plural Pronouns

While personal pronouns can have an associative interpretation, they are more frequently used to refer to previously-identified groups. These *anaphoric* pronouns, presumably, have an index feature in D° pointing to a plural antecedent. This feature is, clearly, not the person feature since an anaphoric 'we' refers to a group, not to the speaker. The person feature must then be in some other position. If this other position is the specifier of DP, then the structure of an anaphoric 'we' in (30) is minimally different from that of an associative 'we' in (29).

(30) $[_{DP}\ [_{XP}$ speaker] $D_{\mathbf{i}}^{\circ}\ [_{NumP}$ [plural] $[_{NP}$ [N°] (i=I + Mary)

The fact that no language has different forms for associative and anaphoric personal pronouns provides some support for treating these pronouns as structurally identical. Furthermore, my suggestion that pronouns may have two positions for referential elements (spec DP and D) is helpful in explaining some non-canonical interpretations of plural pronouns, namely, the situations in which 'we' refers to an entity that *excludes* the speaker, as in the following examples from English (31a,c,e) and Russian (31b,d).

(31) a. How are we feeling today?
b. Ne zabyvaem oplačivat' proezd!
neg forget -1pl.pres pay.inf fare
'Let us not forget to pay for the tickets!'
c. Oh, we are in trouble! (as gleefully uttered by Mr. Filch (the caretaker) when he catches a misbehaving student in the movie 'Harry Potter and Chamber of Secrets')
d. My idjom, a ja stoju. (Norman 2002)
we are-going, but I am-standing
'We are departing, and I am still standing here.' (spoken by a ship's crew member who was late for boarding and now is watching from the shore as his ship is sailing away)
e. We sure are grumpy today! (e.g. an office worker about his boss)

In (31a-c), the pronoun 'we' has two referential elements in DP. One is the index on D° pointing to the addressee; the other is the person feature in the specifier of DP which indicates emotional (rather than actual) involvement of the speaker. The interpretation is something like 'my you'. Similarly, the real referent of (31d-e) is 3rd person, and the pronoun is spelled out as 'we' because of the presence of the protagonist in the specifier of DP.[12] For lack of space, I cannot go into the analysis of non-canonical pronouns in greater detail here; for a fascinating discussion of ranked interpretations of inclusive and other pronouns see Cysouw (2005).

4.3 On the Absence of Associative Markers in Personal Pronouns

In the previous two sections, I suggested that my analysis of associatives can be extended to personal pronouns. As a possible counterargument, one might point out that plural pronouns rarely surface with associative markers. While there are languages like Japanese which use the same (regular) plural marker with pronouns and associatives (32), most language are like Basque (33) in displaying no morphological similarity between associatives and pronouns.

(32) a. watasi 'I' → watasi-**tachi** 'we'
b. Hiroko → Hiroko-**tachi** 'Hiroko and her associate(s)'
c. gakusei 'student' → gakusei-**tachi** 'students'

(33) a. ni 'I' → gu 'we'
b. Miren → Miren-**eta** 'Miren &Co'
c. liburu 'book' → liburu-**ak** 'books'

I believe that personal pronouns rarely look like associatives for the same reason that pronominal possessives rarely look like nominal possessives (cf. *I/my*, but *Mary/Mary's*). It is quite common for pronouns to develop irregular, idiosyncratic, suppletive forms. They are closed-class elements and have no need of being structurally transparent.

Note that while pronouns often develop idiosyncratic forms, it is still possible to find evidence that they are derived by the same syntactic process as associative nominal plurals. We can find plural pronouns formed from their singular counterparts by adding a regular plural marker (Japanese (32)), a group word (34), a possessive marker (35), or a conjunction (36).

[12] I do not have a fully-worked-out story of how the features of the protagonist (in spec DP) and those of D° are 'pooled' together to be spelled out as 'we,' but my bet is on the conjunction-like properties of the associative linker X°.

(34) chung / bon / tsui tao (Vietnamese, Nguen 1996)
people/ gang/ clique I 'we'

(35) merav-tonch-əs (Armenian Romani, Boretzky 1985:49-50)
my-pl-prox 'we'

(36) nan-gal (<namgal) (m<um 'with') (Tamil, Caldwell 1987:402-3)
I-with-collective 'we'

Therefore, while pronouns tend to develop idiosyncratic forms, in some languages they are transparent enough to provide evidence for their being derived by the same processes as associative nominals.

4.4 Non-universality of Nominal Associatives

The final issue that I would like to address in this paper is the non-universality of associative nominal plurals. I have suggested that associatives and pronouns have the same structure, the only difference being the nature of the protagonist (noun vs. pronoun, respectively). If the structure is identical, then why do languages like English have (associative) pronouns but no associative nouns?

Moravcsik (2003:472) attributes the absence of nominal associatives in English to a hierarchy split. Associative formation in many languages appears to be sensitive to the so-called 'Animacy Hierarchy' shown in (37).

(37) 1/2 pronouns >> 3 pronouns >> proper names >> kin terms >> human definite nouns >> other animate >> inanimate

While English restricts its associative expressions to pronouns, Central Alaskan Yup'ik draws the line between proper names and the rest (Corbett 2000:107-8), Hungarian allows associative to be formed from pronouns, proper names, kin terms and title nouns, but not other definite nouns (Moravcsik 2003:472), while the split in Slovenian is between human definite and other animate nouns (Lanko Marušič, p.c.).

While descriptively useful, the hierarchy metaphor is not explanatory by itself, especially since languages frequently make *class-internal* distinctions. For instance, Bulgarian allows kin terms as protagonists only if they refer to older kin (38) (Ivan Derzhanski, p.c.) while Polish allows only masculine bases (Stefan Dyła, p.c.). In addition, there are exceptions to the hierarchy, e.g. Balkar protagonists can be proper names and some definite common nouns but not kinship terms (Moravcsik 2003:407).

(38) *kakini* (elder sister + family) vs. **bratovi* (brother + family)

It is probable that each hierarchy split has its own unique and complex explanation in each particular language, which is, of course, outside the scope of this paper. However, I would like to suggest, tentatively, that the divide between pronominal and nominal associatives may be attributed to the absence/presence of concept-denoting features,[13] while the other splits can be linked to the sensitivity of certain morphological processes to semantic and class features (cf. Matushanski 2006). I leave this issue for future research.

5 Summary

In this paper, I suggested that associative plurals are structurally similar to personal pronouns. Both are headed by a non-descriptive nominal with group semantics. Both contain a referential element (proper name or a person feature) in the specifier of DP. The relation between the two syntactic elements is that of contextual association.

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[13]Kratzer (2006) suggests that the noun-pronoun split is accounted for by the differences in structure between pronouns and associatives; however, this analysis does not account for the existence of 3rd person associative pronouns (which under her approach have the same structure as nouns).

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