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Using Small Clauses to Solve the Split DP Paradox

Split DPs as in (1) are constructions in which a constituent appears to have been broken up into two parts: a topicalized part (TOP) and a remnant (REM).

- (1) *Franse boeken heeft hij twee in de kast.*
French books has he two in the cupboard
'As for French books, he has two in the cupboard.' (SoDNL)

Split DPs seem to be a syntactic anomaly due to their paradoxical properties suggesting the DP split and unsplit at the same time. Unsplit here means there is no split at all: two autonomous DPs rather than one DP. On the one hand, split DPs are sensitive to islands and connectivity effects thereby indicating movement and a split (e.g., Van Hoof 1997). On the other hand, there are cases in which TOP and REM cannot be reconstructed into one underlying constituent due to REM containing for example a noun (e.g., Fanselow 1988; Van Riemsdijk 1989) thereby indicating separate base-generation and no split.

Various attempts have been made to solve the split DP paradox. Previous analyses include subextraction (Tappe 1989; Van Riemsdijk 1989), Distributed Deletion (Fanselow & Ćavar 2002), combinations thereof (Fanselow 1988; Nakanishi 2005; Puig-Waldmüller 2006), and more recently an analysis on Labeling Theory (Ott 2011). Drawing on the most important insights of these theories, I propose a more powerful approach to analyze split DPs: a Relator Phrase (i.e., small clauses, cf. Den Dikken 2006) posited within the DP. The RP posits TOP and REM in a predication configuration, in which TOP functions as a predicate because it has a strict kind-denoting property, and REM functions as the subject to this predicate.

- (2) [DP [QP [NumP [RP [nP REM] [R' R [nP TOP]]]]]]]

Ultimately, properties of movement are captured, because TOP is base-generated inside the DP in the verbal domain, and it has to obligatorily move out. Properties of separate base-generation are captured, because TOP and REM cover two different noun slots (i.e., there are two nPs). The actual split is due to the Relator endowed with a [+Link]-feature which requires its complement to move due to its topicality status (following McNay 2005; 2007).