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A unified analysis of French *en* and *de*

Abstract

It has been observed that there is a close relationship between the pronominal clitic *en* and the “grammatical” preposition *de*: *en* is the pronominal counterpart of preposition phrases with *de*, cf. the following examples, taken from Hulk (1983: 167).

- (1) a. *J'ai parlé de ce problème.*
‘I spoke about this problem.’
b. *J'en ai parlé.*
‘I spoke about it.’
- (2) a. *Je suis fier de mon succès.*
‘I am proud of my success.’
b. *J'en suis fier.*
‘I am proud of it.’
- (3) a. *J'ai fermé la porte du bureau.*
‘I closed the door of the office.’
b. *J'en ai fermé la porte.*
‘I closed its door.’

To my knowledge, this descriptive fact lacks a unified syntactic analysis. I will try to show how such an analysis is possible by means of a shared case-feature, “genitive”. I will first give a descriptive picture of both forms; the data will be glossed and English translations will be given. I will then present the outline of a syntactic analysis in the framework of Lexical Functional Grammar (LFG).

The study has two wider goals. First, it is thought of as a pilot study for a vaster research project on case features in Romance, French and Italian in particular. Possible follow-up studies may concern the French preposition *à* and the clitics *lui* and *y* and their Italian equivalents. Second, the study is meant to prepare an extension of the LFG-fragment of French developed in Schwarze&Alencar (2016).

References

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