

Reference to kinds in pseudo-partitives

1. Background. Carlson (1980) observed that kind-initial DPs (*that kind of animal*) allow both subkind (1a) and existential readings (1b) and proposed that both readings rely on a canonical DP-internal syntax and a uniform denotation of the taxonomic N (N_{tax}) *kind* :

- (1) a. That kind of table is common/rare/widespread. (generic/subkind)
 b. I have that kind of table at home. (existential)

$$(2) \llbracket kind \rrbracket = \lambda Q \lambda x_k (\forall z^\circ \square [R'(z, x) \rightarrow Q(z)])$$

Wilkinson (1995) hypothesized that the existential reading corresponds to a pseudo-partitive configuration (minimally updated in (3b)) and envisaged two semantic compositions, one based on Carlson's denotation of *kind* and another one based on the denotation in (4), which directly captures the 'intransitivity' (lack of complement) of the *kind* (labelled *kind*₂) that occurs in pseudo-partitives:

- (3) a. $[_{DP}[_{D^o}that] [_{NP}[_{kind}] [(of) table]]$ is rare/widespread. (canonical DP \Rightarrow subkind reading)
 b. $[_{DP}[_{D^o}\emptyset] [_{NP}[_{DetP}that kind] (of) [_{NP}table]]]$ (pseudo-partitive \Rightarrow exist. reading)

$$(4) \llbracket kind_2 \rrbracket = \lambda x_k. kind_2(x_k)$$

Dobrovie-Sorin (2024) provided evidence (based on agreement data in Romanian) in favor of Wilkinson's pseudo-partitive hypothesis but she also brought up the atypical behavior of the Romanian *fel* 'kind', which allows the existential reading (e.g., *Am acest fel de masă acasă* corresponding to (3b)), but is unacceptable or at best marginal on the subkind reading (*??Acest fel de masă e rar/foarte răspîndit*, corresponding to (3a)). Given this behavior neither of the two denotations shown in (2) and (4) can be adopted for *fel*. Dobrovie-Sorin proposed an analysis on which (i) *fel* denotes a 2nd order property $\lambda K_{\langle e, t \rangle} quality(K)$ and (ii) **the syntax of taxonomic pseudo-partitives involves a null functional head $Qual^o$** , which constitutes the driving force of the semantic composition.

2. Existential readings and reference to kinds. The Romanian *tip* 'type' differs from *fel* in allowing reference to kinds (5a) as well as modification in existential readings (5b):

- (5) a. Acest vechi **tip/*fel** de masă a revenit la modă.
 This old **type/*kind** of table has come back at fashion
 'This old type of table has come into fashion again'.
 b. Ieri am cumpărat acest **nou tip/*fel** de aspirator.
 yesterday have.1SG bought this **new type/*kind** of vacuum cleaner.
 'Yesterday I bought a vacuum cleaner of this new type'

What is the denotation of *tip* (or more generally *type* crosslinguistically)? Can we choose between (6)a-b, based on Carlson's (2) and (6)c, based on Wilkinson's (4) ?

- (6) a. $\llbracket type_1 \rrbracket = \lambda P. \lambda x_{type}. \forall z_0 \square [R'(z, x) \rightarrow P(z)]$ [create new abstract entities]
 b. $\llbracket type_2 \rrbracket = \lambda P. \lambda x_k. [type'](x) \& \forall z_0 \square [R'(z, x)] \rightarrow P(z)]$ [create predicates over kinds]
 c. $\llbracket type_3 \rrbracket = \lambda x_k. [type'](x)]$

Because it results in a proliferation of kind-level entities we will not adopt (6)a and we will assume (6)b for subkind readings. Remains the more difficult case of the existential readings. Carlson's uniform analysis is invalidated by agreement data that signal a pseudo-partitive configuration for existential as well as for quantificational generics (7), the representations of both of which involve variables over individuals (respectively bound by \exists or by GEN). For reasons of space, agreement in existentials is not illustrated here:

- (7) Acest nou tip de masină nu se lasă condusă ușor.
 DEM_{SG.MASC} new type_{SG.MASC} of car_{SG.FEM} not REFL let driven_{SG.FEM} easily.
 'This new type of car isn't easy to drive.'

In (7) the feminine on the participle is not expected for a canonical DP structure (in which the masc.sg *tip* is the head) but predicted by a pseudo-partitive structure, in which it is the gender of the lexical N *masină*_{SG.FEM} 'car' that controls the agreement on the past participle. The modifier *nou* 'new' clearly indicates that the pseudo-partitive structure does not force *tip* to lose its ability to introduce kind-level

variables. Compare *fel*, which could appear in (7) but only without the modifier. The impossibility of the modifier is predicted by the fact that *fel* does not supply kind-level variables.

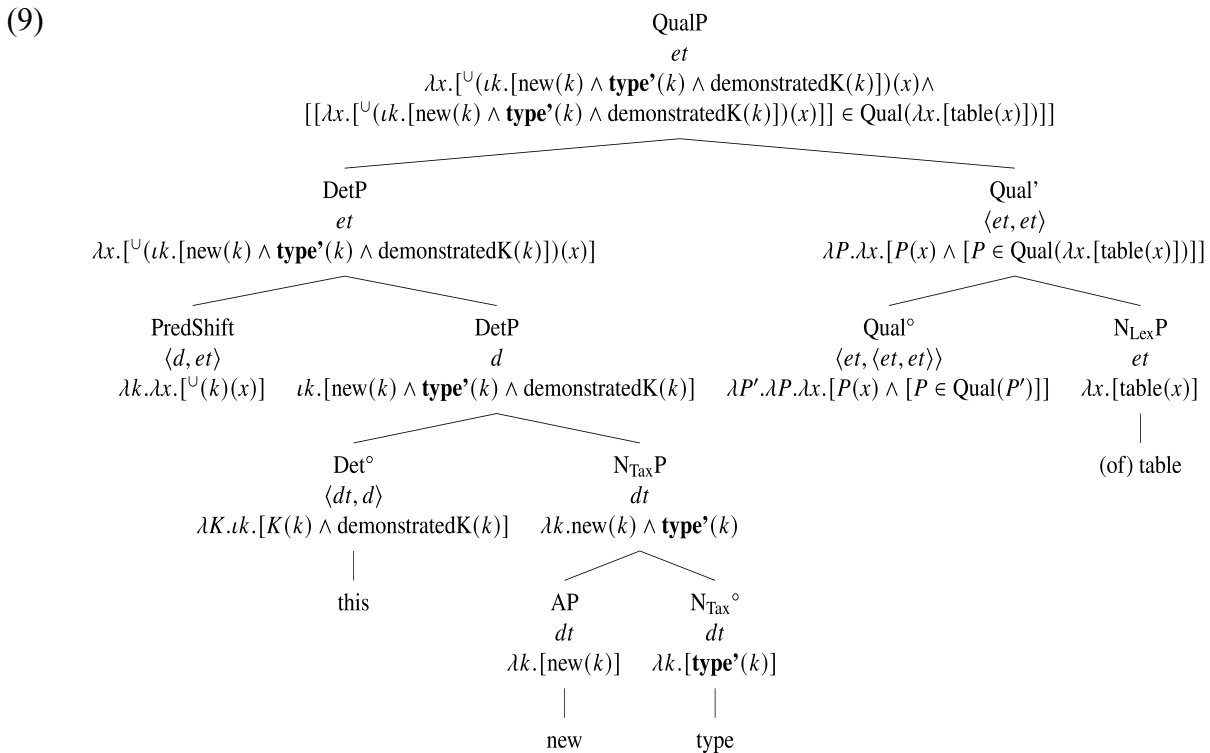
3. Wilkinson suggested that a semantic composition of taxonomic pseudo-partitives based on Carlson's denotation for *kind* (2) is possible provided that we use function composition and we allow the argument of *kind* to be fed in after *kind* has composed with *that*. This analysis can be straightforwardly extended to *type*₂:

(8) a. $\llbracket \text{that} \rrbracket = \lambda K_{\langle d, t \rangle} . \lambda x_d [K(x) \ \& \ \text{demonstrated}K(x)]$

b. $\llbracket \text{that} \circ \text{type}_2 \rrbracket = \lambda P_{\langle e, t \rangle} . \lambda x_d . [\text{type}'(x) \ \& \ \forall z_o \square [R'(z, x)] \rightarrow P(z)] \ \& \ \text{demonstrated}K(x)]$

This analysis - which relies on the non-trivial stipulations mentioned above - has the advantage of a 'uniform semantics' (the same denotation is used for both the subkind and the existential readings) for *kind/type*. However, this uniformity has a price: It seems difficult to make (6b) compatible with the semantic composition proposed by Dobrovie-Sorin for taxonomic pseudo-partitives (the resulting types cannot be combined using standard typeshifts). However, her analysis positing a null functional head *Qual*^o for *fel* is well motivated from the point of view of theoretical syntax, and her arguments apply equally well to *tip*. Furthermore, the existence of *fel*, which occurs in taxonomic pseudo-partitives but does not allow reference to kinds, and which cannot be captured by any of the previous analyses of the noun *kind* in English, makes the desire of a uniform approach based on English precedent less pressing.

4. Pseudo-partitives and reference to kinds. We therefore suggest that the semantic composition relying on *Qual*^o proposed by Dobrovie-Sorin for *fel* should be combined with the intransitive denotation of *tip* 'type' (6)c. This is shown in (9).



The derivation in (9) adopts the semantics of *type* in (6c) and combines it with the semantics of the demonstrative in (8a), in the syntactic structure of (3b). It requires typeshifting the kind to a predicate, but is otherwise syntactically and semantically well-behaved.

Selected References. G. Carlson (1980). Reference to kinds in English. *Garland*. • C. Dobrovie-Sorin (2024). Demonstratives and Kind-reference. h-out presented at *The 24th International Conference of the Department of Linguistics: Workshop on Special definites, demonstratives, and Pronouns*, University of Bucharest, November 15-16, 2024. • K. Wilkinson (1995). The semantics of the common noun *kind*. In: *Generic Book*, 383-397