To bind or not to bind: Motivating variation in the architecture of degree constructions

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The paper discusses factors at the semantic interface as a source of variation in clausal architecture. We conduct our analysis on the basis of clauses that involve degrees. Our starting point is Beck et al.'s (2004), degree abstraction parameter (DAP), rendered in (1). (Cf. also Beck et al. 2008, Kennedy 2008, Shimoyama 2008, a.o.).

(1) **DAP**: A language {does/does not} have degree binding in the syntax.

Binding is understood in the usual sense of the lambda-calculus, i.e. in terms of binder-variable configurations, which are crucial in the case at hand to create sets of degrees; Heim 2000 a.m.o. First, in relationship to the DAP we discuss additional empirical evidence for the possibility of having languages sensitive to degree binding. We thus add to the dichotomy between English/Japanese (with the former having and the latter lacking a positive setting of the DAP) with data from other languages and Romanian in particular, where relevant constructions that have been used as testing ground for the DAP show bad results by simply merging the necessary words (in the appropriate linear order etc.), but which become licit when the additional morpheme de (literally 'of') is merged to the derivation; cf. (2)-(3).

(2) *Cât e inteligent?   (3) Cât e de inteligent?

how is intelligent   how is DE intelligent

How intelligent is he?   How intelligent is he?

The morpheme appears across several degree constructions that involve degree binding (and is distinct from English 'of'-comparatives; cf. Corver 1997). It marks the extraction site of the degree variable. The argument we develop is that the morpheme in question is the realization of degree-binding when syntactic movement is involved, in essence, then, a conjunction of "syntactico-semantic" factors, that allows the positive realization of the DAP and has repercussions on the realization of degree questions, subcomparatives, and other constructions involving degrees.

Theoretically, we analyze this set of phenomena in line with architectural plans that do see a connection between LF and PF-representations, but one that is only applicable in that particular order (cf., e.g., Bobaljik & Wurmbrand 2008). Furthermore, we present an argument that it is the binding *dependency* that is marked by a functional morpheme (rather than just having, say a functional head in a high structural position). This offers extensions in other domains as well in which interesting functional morphemes have been discovered. More generally, we propose that variation rooted at the syntax-semantics interface is a crucial factor that can account for distinct realizations in clausal architecture.