

## **'A pleasant three days in Philadelphia': arguments for a pseudopartitive analysis.**

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(1) I spent **a pleasant three days** in Philadelphia last spring.

Modern English sentences with the structure in (1) above pose a problem for the current analysis of the indefinite article, inspired by Perlmutter (1977). This analysis holds that *a(n)* is not an indefinite article but a "cardinal" article: a reduced form of the numeral *one* which resides in the Specifier position of #P and indicates singularity. In the construction in (1), which I shall call AANN (*article + adjective + number + noun*), the article *a(n)* and the numeral *three* co-occur in a single noun phrase. This is impossible under an analysis where both *a(n)* and *three* are proponents of the same structural location, Spec,#P — especially since the two elements bear conflicting feature values for [ $\pm$ sg]. To my knowledge, this problem has not been directly addressed in the literature.

In addition to posing a problem for current accounts of the indefinite article, the AANN construction has several other selectional idiosyncrasies which need accounting for: AANN requires the obligatory presence of both an adjective and a numeral following the indefinite article (see A2 on page 2); the adjective may receive either an "emphatic" reading or a "descriptive" reading (A3) — in this study I focus on the latter. Descriptive AANN seems to occur freely only with nouns which measure something: time, distance, or a substance of some sort (A4). Finally, the (number+noun) phrase contained in descriptive AANN receives a collective or "group" reading (A5).

In this paper, I demonstrate that these idiosyncratic properties of the AANN construction can be captured, and a Spec,#P account of the indefinite article can be maintained, if we adopt an analysis of AANN as having a pseudopartitive structure; in other words, I propose that the underlying representation of sentence (1) is "*I spent **a pleasant period of three days** in Philadelphia last spring*". To motivate this approach, I provide evidence for two points: (i) AANN exhibits the set of properties that Keizer (2007) identifies for the pseudopartitive (shown in B); and (ii) partitive-type structures containing a low number phrase also display these properties. This second point is critical, since all previous analyses of the pseudopartitive have considered number-marking to occur strictly above the measure phrase (e.g. Keizer 2007, Rutkowski 2007, Stickney 2010). To represent these phrases syntactically, I adopt Stickney's (2010) analysis of the pseudopartitive as a monophrasal structure containing a semi-lexical Measure Phrase (MP); however, I modify this structure by positing a second #P below MP. I argue that the addition of a low #P is important not only empirically but also theoretically, since the values of [ $\pm$ sg] and [ $\pm$ atomic] vary independently in the MP and the NP (compare *a piece of cake* ~ *pieces of cake*; *a group of men* ~ *groups of men*). Intermediate functional structure is therefore required to mediate atomicity and plurality between these two categories.

In short, I propose that all pseudopartitives consist of a single clause of the form shown in (Fig 1), where #P<sub>1</sub> determines number on M<sup>0</sup>, and #P<sub>2</sub> determines number on N<sup>0</sup>. Given this analysis, it becomes a straightforward matter to account for the AANN construction: this is simply a special form of pseudopartitive where the light 'measure' noun is left covert. The adjective in AANN serves as a licenser for the empty category in M<sup>0</sup>, in the same way that adjectives are argued to license empty N<sup>0</sup> in "substantive adjective" phrases like *the rich [e]*; *the poor [e]*'. This role as licenser accounts for the obligatory nature of the AANN adjective. Limitation on the range of the AANN construction is accomplished in two ways: first, I argue that the use of AANN is only licensed when the measure phrase is semantically-bleached enough to permit omission; specifically, descriptive AANN is permissible in those cases where the measure word serves only to mark the subsequent plural NP as "collective", and bears no semantic content of its own (in Landman's (1989) terminology, the semantic content of the measure noun is [ $\uparrow$ ] ). Second, I suggest that an AANN paraphrase is unavailable where the corresponding full pseudopartitive is infelicitous (due to failure of the high adjective to appropriately modify N1): thus *a pleasant (period of) three days* is permitted, but *a tasty (set of) three muffins* is ruled out, since '*pleasant*' may modify '*period*', but '*tasty*' cannot reasonably modify '*set*'. The final structure for AANN is shown in (Fig 2) on the following page.

## A. Properties of AANN

(2) Both the adjective and the numeral are obligatory:

(a) \*I spent a pleasant weeks in Banff last summer.

(b) \*I spent a three weeks in Banff last summer.

(3) AANN may be emphatic...

(a) He held his breathe underwater for a staggering ten minutes.

(b) Terry Fox ran an astonishing 3000 miles on one leg.

...or descriptive:

(c) I ate a delicious three courses at my friend's restaurant this evening.

(d) Charles spent a delightful four hours at the waterpark.

(4) Descriptive AANN occurs most naturally with nouns which **measure**:

(a) ?? I ate a delicious three muffins at my friend's restaurant this evening.

(b) ?? Charles met a delightful four women at the waterpark.

(5) Descriptive AANN encodes collectivity:

**Situation:** I spent one day in Philadelphia in March, and then came back for a day in April and once again toward the end of June.

(i) I spent three pleasant days in Philadelphia.

(ii) #I spent a pleasant three days in Philadelphia.

**B. Sample test for pseudopartitivity<sup>1</sup>:** Only pseudopartitives allow extraposition of a PP complement to N2.

(a) **Pseudopartitive:** A collection of stories soon appeared **about the Occupy movement**.

(b) **Partitive:** \*A collection of the stories soon appeared **about the Occupy movement**.

(c) **Double-#P:** A collection of thirty stories soon appeared **about the Occupy movement**.

(d) **AANN:** An incredible thirty stories soon appeared **about the Occupy movement**.

FIG1: Analysis of the pseudopartitive.

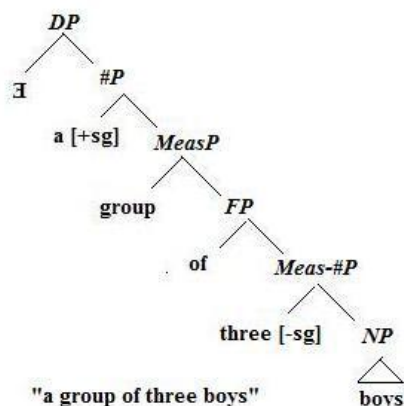
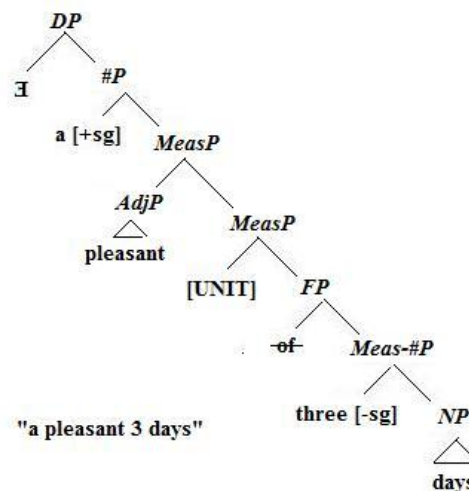


FIG2: Analysis of the AANN construction.



**References.** (1) Keizer, E. (2007). *The English Noun Phrase: the nature of linguistic categorization*. Cambridge University Press. (2) Landman, F. 1989. Groups, I. In *Linguistics and Philosophy*, vol.12. 559-605. (3) Perlmutter, D. M. (1970). "On the article in English". In *Process in Linguistics: a collection of papers*. Mouton. 233-247. (4) Rutkowski, P. (2007) 'The syntactic structure of grammaticalized partitives (pseudo-partitives)'. In *Penn Working Papers in Linguistics*, vol.13. 337-350. (5) Stickney, H. 2010. *The emergence of DP in the partitive structure*. Doctoral dissertation. UMass, Amherst.

<sup>1</sup> Keizer (2007) identifies five characteristics which distinguish pseudopartitives from partitives, only one of which is exemplified here due to space restrictions. The characteristics are: lack of a low determiner; impossibility of 'of'-phrase extraposition; possibility of complement-PP extraposition (*shown here*); optionality/omission of 'of'; unambiguous interpretation of restricted relative clauses.