

---

## The Latin to modern Romance nominal domain: against *Minimal Search*-driven change

---

**Andreas Blümel**  
*Universität Göttingen*  
ablueme@gwdg.de

The intuition behind this offering is the classical one (cf. Schwegler 1990): Morphological richness of nominal inflection in Latin is related to the option of Left Branch Extraction/LBE (cf. (1) from Caes. *B.G.* 6.13.8), and the loss of morphological richness of nominal inflection yielded the Left Branch Condition/LBC characteristic of modern Romance, cf. (2) from Italian.

- (1) *qui summam<sub>i</sub> inter eos habet [t<sub>i</sub> auctoritatem]*  
*who highest<sub>ACC.FSG</sub> among them<sub>ACC</sub> has power<sub>ACC.FSG</sub>*
- (2) *chi>(\*[più alta]) fra di loro ha [la più alta autorità]* (Ledgeway 2012)  
*who more high among of them has the more high authority*  
'who has the highest authority among them'

Couched within Labeling Theory (Chomsky 2013, 2015), this paper suggests that the nominalizing functional head *n* (cf. Borer 2005) is parametrized as labeling-strong and -weak, correlating with rich vs. poor/absent morphological case/gender/declension class marking on nouns. The former corresponds to Latin and the latter to modern Romance, summarized in (3):

- (3) ***The Nominal Strength Parameter***  
a. strong *n*/*n<sub>str</sub>*: Latin                      b. weak *n*/*n<sub>wk</sub>*: Italian, Spanish, French

I show how this proposal captures in a uniform way the optionality of determiner categories in Latin and LBE on the one hand, and obligatory determiner categories in modern Romance and the LBC on the other. The diachronic passage, which morphologically corresponds to loss of nominal case inflection, is given in (4):

- (4)  $n_{str} > n_{wk}$

Next to its unifying nature, the current approach has important ramifications, two of which are: (a) It avoids the DP-hypothesis and its associated problems (cf. Bruening 2009 and contributions in Blümel & Holler 2020). (b) The syntactic derivations of complex nominals in *both* Latin and modern Romance appropriate *Minimal Search* qua Labeling Algorithm and the diachrony is attributed to lexical change. In this sense, this analysis casts doubt on *Minimal Search* as the driving force behind syntactic change (*pace* Kallulli & Roberts 2022; van Gelderen 2021).

**Selected References:** • Blümel, A. & A. Holler (2020). New perspectives on the NP/DP debate. *Glossa* Special Collection. • Bruening, B. (2009). Selectional asymmetries between CP and DP suggest that the DP Hypothesis is wrong. *UPenn working papers in linguistics*, 27–35. • Van Gelderen, E. (2019). Cyclical Change and Problems of Projection. *Cycles in Language Change*, OUP.