

# **THE SYNTACTIC AND SEMANTIC MANIFESTATIONS OF THE DETERMINER PHRASE (DP)**

## **Abstract**

This paper sets itself to explore the syntactic and semantic manifestations of The Determiner Phrase [DP], projecting it as an umbrella term covering the areas of partative-/ z possessive-/ and kind constructions. These terms would duly be defined and exemplified when the portions pertaining to them are discussed. A survey of the syntactic and semantic material available in traditional grammar(s) and the grammars of current usages would be presented. The shortcomings of these grammars in connection with these areas would be pinned down. In an emphatic sense, my thesis in this study is that the DP has been inadequately handled and that what is needed is a kind of a unified and unifying treatment of this grammatical phenomenon, a treatment that is ,eventually, apt to examine the behaviour of the DP in the relevant syntactic and semantic environment. The paper ends by presenting a more perceptive way of handling the items relevant to the phrase .All these details make it imperative that we look at the manifestations of the DP, with semantic and syntactic eyes, hence the importance and justification of this study. It is worth mentioning that exemplification pertaining to specified sources are given. However, all the examples in section 3 of this study are mine unless specified not to be so.

## 1. Foreword

This study covers the grammatical areas of partitives, of /z possessives and kind – constructions. These manifestations could be, thus, exemplified:

### 1. • Partitives:

*a spot of trouble*  
*a scrap of advice*  
*a pinch of salt*

- of /z<sup>1</sup> possessives:  
*A friend of Jim's*  
*Two of Jim's friends*  
*Two friends of Jim's*

- Kind – constructions:

<i>This kind of job</i>	(initial position)
<i>A job of this kind</i>	(final position)
<i>Jobs of this kind</i>	(bare or null plural)

## 2. Treatment of the DP: A Survey of Available Material(s)

Grammarians differ in handling the manifestations of the DP. Most of them isolate *of /z possessive* as something that can be discussed under the grammatical subtitle of the *genitive*, referring to the 's (pronounced /z/) as 'genitive inflexion' (Onions, 1971 : 89). Most of those (traditional) grammarians also deal with the kind-construction independently of partitives. However, some improvement occurs with the various versions written by the co-authors of **A Comprehensive English Grammar**. Those authors pair themselves off, later, to write *A Student's Grammar of the English Language* (Greenbaum & Quirk) and *A Communicative Grammar of English* (Leech and Svartvik). The improvement organically shows in the synthesizing of the relevant material.

Zandvoort (1972:91-92) maintains that in groups with *kind of*, *sort of* (examples: *this kind of tool* / *that sort of speech*) *kind of* and *sort of* are often subordinated in meaning to the following noun, hence the addition of the plural end to the last word of the group (these kind of tools / those sort of speeches). He also recognizes that *kind* and *sort* take the plural ending after *all* (all kinds of men / all sorts of people), that they are preceded by other qualifiers (*These*

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<sup>1</sup> **z** here refers to what Lyons terms (1968:297) as 'inflexional suffix' - s'.

kinds of tools / *those* sorts of speeches) and that a genitive – ending would be added to the last word of the group ( those kind of people's notions of honesty).Zandvoort assumes that when *kind* and *sort* are of equal importance with the following noun, they are realized to take a plural ending , with the following noun being usually in the singular (what kinds of cherry flourish best in this region ?)

Not using the words 'partitives' or 'classifiers' Zandvoort enlists the construction in terms of *herd* [(p.95): a *herd* of deer], in terms of *brace* and *gross* [(p.101): several *brace* of partridges, ten *gross* of buttons] and in terms of *dozens* and *scores* [(p.102) : some *dozens* of aeroplanes, *scores* of people].Calling such classifiers as *numerative(s)*, he extends his list to cover *hundreds* , *thousands*, *millions* [of] , *a pair of* ,*a bit of* , *a piece of* : *thousands of* mosquitos /... *a pair of* tongs /... two pairs of trousers/*twenty heads of* cattle ( game , sheep, oxen) /... *a piece of* luck / various bits of news.

Of /z possessive receives in Zandvoort (p.115) an orphan reference suggesting its irreplaceability by an *of-adjunct*: vicar of St. Andrew's.

Schibsbye notices (1965:100) that the countables cannot be used to indicate a countable concept and that they require the addition of a countable to do so: a *spell of* work / a *stroke of* good fortune / a *piece* or a *set of* furniture. He recognizes (p.103) a number of words (*trousers*, for example) that are specified by attaching *pair* to them: a pair of *fieldglass* /...two pairs of *scissors*. Other words of this type are *bellows*, *drawers*, *pincers*, *scales*, *shears*, *spectacles*, *tongs*, *tweezers*, *whiskers*, etc. A concept of countability is attached to 'uncountable' nouns by being linked with certain countables: a fair *amount* of justice/ a *fit* of shivering/ a *flutter* of strange excitement/ a *piece* of bad memory, a *pang* of jealousy/ an *act* of kindness/.

Schibsbye notes (p.101) the use of the singular after *kind of* - construction. Examples: That is the *sort of* horse I prefer / He was the *type of* man who thought best. He also argues (p.107) that the words *manner* / *kind* / *sort* "may be used with reduced significance content: / there is no *sort of* use in knocking /.He maintains that in formal English, *manner* with this value has no plural suffix after *all* :/ The letters of the alphabet had to represent the sounds of *all manner* of other languages .../'In colloquial speech', he maintains, the same holds good of *kind* and *sort* after *these* and *those* : / those *sort of* chaps / these *kind of* people /.

Onions (1971:90), who does not mention the term 'of /z possessive' speaks of 'a peculiar idiom in: This is an old book of my *mother's*. He suggests that the idiomatic construction could well be regarded as 'elliptical' – a plural being understood: This is an old book of my *mother's books*.

Recognizing that both count and noncount nouns enter constructions denoting *part of a whole*, Greenbaum and Quirk (1990:pp.70-72) relate partitive expressions followed by an *of-phrase* to (a) *quantity* and (b) *quality*.

(a) *Quantity Partition*: This kind of partition is generally expressed by a count noun of partitive meaning:

i. Of noncount nouns ; eg :

a *piece of* cake

an *item of* clothing

two *pieces of* cake

several *items of* clothing

However, with some nouns, specific partitives occur: a *blade of* grass / some *specks of* dust / two *slices of* meat / bread / cake.

- ii. Of plural count nouns. These tend to have partitives relating to specific sets of nouns :  
 eg: a *flock of* sheep / pigeons                      two *flock of* sheep / pigeons  
      a *series of* concerts / lectures                      two *series of* concerts / lectures
- iii. Of singular count nouns :eg:  
      a *piece of* a leather belt                              two *pieces of* a broken cup  
      a *page of* a book    two *acts of* a play

(b) *Quality Partition* :This partition is expressed most commonly with *kind* and *sort* ; eg:

Count	a new <i>kind of</i> computer one <i>sort of</i> silktie	several new <i>kinds of</i> computers two sorts of silktie(s)
Noncount	a delicious <i>kind of</i> bread a fashionable <i>sort of</i> wallpaper	some delicious <i>kinds of</i> bread fashionable <i>sorts of</i> wallpaper

Other quality partitives include *type*, *variety*; *blend* especially with *coffee* and *tobacco*.

Greenbaum and Quirk suggest (ibid:72) that a noncount noun can be given count characteristics and that *two coffees* in 'appropriate contexts' could mean either 'two cups of coffee' or 'two types of coffee'. They also recognize that quantity partitives may express **precise measure**; eg: a *yard of* cloth/two *kilos of* potatoes /or **fractional partition**; eg: He ate *a quarter of* that (*joint of*) beef. Many English nouns, they maintain, simulate the plural only by partitive constructions; eg: some information /some *pieces of* information // his anger / his *bursts of* anger.

Later, Greenbaum and Quirk speak of (pp.125-127) the *of-partitives* where the final part is a personal noun or pronoun preceded by a determiner; eg:

<div style="display: inline-block; vertical-align: middle;"> <div style="font-size: 4em; vertical-align: middle;">{</div> <div style="display: inline-block; vertical-align: middle; text-align: center;"> <i>Some</i>  <i>Some students</i>  <i>Some of the students</i>  <i>these students</i>  <i>them</i> </div> </div>	are doing well
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They list *each of* / *one of* / *any of* / *either of* / *none of* / *neither of* / (the students) as being used with singular count partition. On the other hand, they show all of *both of* / *some of* / *many of* / *more of* / *most of* / (a) *few of* / *fewer, -est of* / (our supporters) being used with plural count partition and *some of* / *a great deal of* / *much of* / *more of* / *most of* / (a) *little of* / *less of* / *least of* / *any of* / *none of* ? <sup>2</sup> (Beethoven's music) with noncount partition. Greenbaum and Quirk explain that, as well as *one*, **cardinal numerals** are used in *of*-

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<sup>2</sup> This expression of **none of** where I have put a question mark can hardly serve a partition reality.

partitives: Three *of my friends* are coming to dinner. **Ordinals**, likewise, are used with both count and noncount expression; eg:

*A / one quarter of his books ... / ... five-sixth of her free time .../*

*Half* as a **predeterminer** is realized without a preceding determiner, eg:

I saw half the {performance  
                                {players.

In *of*-partitives or otherwise pronominally, **half** may have a determiner; eg:

I saw { half  
          a half  
          one half } of the { performance  
  {players.

Leech and Svartvik (1975:pp.44-51) speak of the DP constructions under the subtitles of "Group Nouns", "Partitions", "Division of Objects and Substances", "Abstractions", and "Amount or Quantity".

They explain that we may refer to objects as belonging to a *group* or *set*; eg:

A { group  
     number } of stars / a small *group of stars* / a large *group of stars*.

A special group noun is used with certain kinds of objects, examples: a *herd* (of cattle) / a *flock* (of sheep) / a *crew* (of sailors) etc.

They also show that parts of objects can be referred to by *Part Nouns* like *part* contrasted with *whole*, *half*, *a quarter*, *two-thirds*, etc. and also by *Unit Nouns* like *piece*, *slice*; eg:

a *slice of* the cake, *half (of)* the cake, (a) *quarter of* the cake.

Mass nouns (sometimes called 'non-count' (=noncount) nouns) whether liquid or solid: *oil*, *water*, *butter*, *wood*, *leather*, *iron*, *rock*, *glass*, etc. are always singular:

There are two *bottles of* milk in the refrigerator.

Leech and Svartvik argue that some mass nouns should 'really' be count, because the substance is divisible into separate things: *furniture*, thus, consists of *pieces of* furniture, *grass* of separate *blades* of grass, *hair* of separate *strands of* hair (or hairs), *wheat* of separate *grains of* wheat. Mass nouns can, accordingly, be subdivided by the use of nouns like *part*:

*Part of* the butter has melted.

In addition, many countable *Unit Nouns* may be used to subdivide notionally a mass into separate 'pieces'. The co-authors, thus, suggest that *piece* and *bit* (informal) are general – purpose unit nouns, which can be combined with most mass nouns: eg: a *piece of* / bread / paper / land. They also speak of *unit nouns* that typically go with particular *mass nouns*:

a <i>blade of</i> grass	a <i>sheet of</i> paper
a <i>block of</i> ice	a <i>speck of</i> dust
a <i>pile of</i> rubbish	a <i>bar of</i> chocolate

*a lump of sugar*

*a load of hay*

These unit nouns, as shown, are linked to the other noun by *of*.

Leech and Svartvik also maintain that one way to divide a mass into separate pieces is by measuring it off into *length*, *weight*, etc.:

Depth	<i>a foot of water</i>	Area	<i>an acre of land</i>
Length	<i>a yard of cloth</i>	Volume	<i>a pint of beer</i>
Weight	<i>an ounce of tobacco</i>		<i>a quarter of milk</i>
	<i>a pound of butter</i>		<i>a gallon of oil</i>
	<i>a ton of coal</i>		

Referring to *species nouns* [ie kind-construction], Leech and Svartvik recognize that nouns like *type*, *kind*, *sort*, *species*, *class*, *variety* may be used to divide a mass or a *set of* objects into ‘types’ or species; eg:

Teak is a *type* of wood. / A ford is a *make* of car. / A tiger is a *species* of mammal.

The singular or plural of a count noun following a plural species may be used:

I like most kinds of  $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{cat.} \\ \text{cats (more informal).} \end{array} \right.$

It is shown that we tend to **premodify** the species noun rather than the noun which follows:

*a Japanese make of car* (not \* *a make of Japanese car*)

*a delicious kind of bread*

*a strange species of mammal*

Leech and Svartvik also note that when the second noun is a count noun, it usually has no indefinite article.

*a strange kind of mammal* rather than *a strange kind of a mammal*

They argue that in *informal* English, there is a mixed construction in which the determiner, if any, and the verb are plural although the species noun is singular:

**These** *kind of* dogs are easy to train. (informal)

**This** *kind of* dog is easy to train. (more formal)

The co-authors also realize that *abstract nouns* (ie – concrete NPs) combine with *part nouns*, *unit nouns*, *species nouns*, and *measure nouns*, and can be either count or mass, even though these notions cannot be understood in a physical sense.

This is the way they illustrate *partition*, *division*, *measure*. (Note that the bracketed items are optional).

*Partition: Part of his education was at Cambridge*

*Division:*

Unit Nouns	a (good) <i>game of</i> chess	a (sudden) <i>fit of</i> anger
	a (sudden) <i>burst of</i> applause	an (interesting) <i>item of</i> news
	an (excellent) <i>piece of</i> research	a (long) <i>spell of</i> hard work
	a (fine) <i>piece of</i> work	a (useful) <i>bit of</i> advice (informal)

Measure Nouns	three <i>months</i> of hard work
Species Nouns	an (exciting) <i>type</i> of dance a (strange) <i>kind</i> of behaviour

### 3. Unifying Analysis

The problem with the preceding syntactic presentation of *partitives*, *of / z possessive* and *kind – construction* is that it looks at each of these manifestations as being independent of the other. I would, therefore, like to argue, in this paper, that these manifestations are dovetailed, that they have to be treated as a unified syntactic structure, and that they, as Zamparelli has synthesized, undergo the same transformational rule of *copy-deletion movement* developed in Chomsky's "A Minimalist Program for Linguistic Theory".

Now to examine these manifestations here are some illustrative examples.

- a. *three of the girls*  
*a flash of lightning* (partitives)
- b. { *three of co-authors of Brian's*  
*three of Brian's co-authors* (of / z possessives)
- c. *this kind of behaviour*  
*a behaviour of this kind* (kind-construction)

#### 3.1 Partitives

Partitives are being defined as nouns that refer to *part* of a whole and that they are specifically useful when we want to refer to *pieces* of an uncountable substance , or to a limited number of countable items (eg: ... a box of matches...) (Partitives , 2008: Int .1)<sup>3</sup>.

Examining *partitives* closely, one could safely suggest that predicative phrases can be fronted in English:

Of those co-authors, I have made an acquaintance of only one

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<sup>3</sup> Some other definitions are,thus,suggested:

- The partitive refers to the selection of *part/ quality* out of a group / amount ... (Examples: many of my friends/the youngest of the children) (Partitives, 2008:Int.2).

- Noun 1.partitive: a word such as "some" that is used to indicate a part as distinct from a whole.

- Adj 1. partitive (Romance Languages) relating to or denoting a part of a whole or a quantity that is less than the whole: "a partitive construction". (The Free Dictionary, Thesaurus, 2008:Int.3).

In his perceptive article on Quantifier Scope, Rinehart talks (1997:357) of the oddness of WH partitives:

\* I wonder which girl sang with one of which boys.

It is also quite discernible that WH-partitives cannot be topicalised or left –dislocated:

\*Of whom did you meet three?

### **3.2 Of /z possessives**

It is easy to notice that the possessive-construction is a subpart that *presupposes* that “Brian”, in the given example, has more than three co-authors. The construction cannot be removed from its predicative phrase:

\*Of Brian’s ,I often visit a co-author.

Moreover , the construction fails to take the definite article *the* without a qualifying relative clause

*The* three of Brian’s co-authors [that you greeted yesterday] are fascinating.

Shaverry assumes (1980:619) in his article “A more general theory of definite descriptions” that the definite article *the* requires for its argument <sup>4</sup> a noun denoting a set with a unique maximal element , a “largest element” , technically called *supremum*.

### **3.3 Kind-Construction**

Obviously, the examples, given in this respect, denote that there are two *orders* pertaining to the kind-construction :*initial-kind* and *final-kind* and that the construction is a combination of a noun ie a *content* noun and a noun representing a special *class* ie ‘kind’, ‘type’, ‘sort’, ‘variety’, ‘species’, etc.

Wilkinson recognizes (1995:391) that initial kind DPs may be seen in what he terms as *There – Sentences*:

\*There are those pictures in the gallery

There are those kinds of pictures in the gallery (*semantically*: “There are pictures of those kinds ...”).

Williams argues (1983:439) that these nominal constructions function predicatively:

Jill has been every kind of nurse in her lifetime.

(\*Jill has been every nurse...)

This construction can also occur with **quantifying adverbs**.

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<sup>4</sup> The noun phrases of predicates are called *arguments* (Langendoen , 1971:97)



This kind of problem usually demands a lot of thinking.(= can mean: most problems demand a lot of thinking).

Wilkinson treats (ibid.:1995:395) *initial-kind* in the structure *that kind of school* as a *modifier* of the content noun. Portee (1987:127), on the other hand, extends modification to what he calls 'size -nominals' ie 'size', 'colour', 'length', etc.:

That *length of* the robe is hard to measure.

Zamparelli, on the other hand, argues (1998:6) that, semantically speaking, *a kind* is always *a kind of something*, and [that] nouns like 'size', 'length' or 'style' always select ... an appropriate semantic type [for object]

This size of water... (Zamparelli's example)

The final kind-construction, as Zamparelli suggests, (1998:2) depends on the *determiner* that introduces it. He maintains that with an *overt* determiner the kind reading is blocked and that only with what he terms as 'null plural' [ie 'bare plural'] determiner can the DP denote a *kind* as in the following Zamparellian examples :

?? The best car of that /these kind(s) is / are widespread.

Zamparelli (1998:5-6) notices that the DPs ' That kind ' ' that size' in final position cannot be pronominalised with *it* as shown by his examples:

\*As for that kind ,an animal of it was first described by Darwin

\*As for this unual size , a skirt of it has just been made

Zamparelli questions (ibid: 4) Wilkinson's treatment of the particle 'of'. He argues that 'of' is "sometimes meaningful and sometimes meaningless."<sup>5</sup>

It is obvious that the definite article *the* with the kind-construction, both in *initial* and *final* position is anti-anaphoric <sup>6</sup>, hence the oddity of the sentences in which it occurs with the idea of anaphoric reference:

?The car of that kind was destroyed

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<sup>5</sup> In English Transformational Grammar , Jacobs and Rosenbaum assumes(1968:136-137) that noun phrases seem to have prepositions attached to them ,that they are deleted from surface structures and that they appear when sentences are *nominalised* :

The army destroyed the fortress.

The army's destruction *of* the fortress.

Prepositions also appear when sentences undergo the passive transformation: the fortress was destroyed *by* the army.

<sup>6</sup> Anaphoric means *referring back* (see a perceptive discussion of the term *anaphora* in Huddelston,1976:251-255. "An anaphoric word refers to some word already mentioned or implied by the situation." (Zandvoort,1972:101). Anti-anaphoric means not referring back.

The oddity of the sentence in which it occurs, Zamparelli argues (1998:15) would be dispelled when an ‘ordering relation’ is being introduced :

The second/heaviest/only/car of that kind was destroyed.

What about constructions like “ The kind ‘Tiger’ ” ? Giusti (1991:346) argues that ‘tiger’ as a *bare noun* cannot go in the argument position of nouns , possibly for reasons of case which he sees to be linked to higher DP projections .In this connection, Krifka et al (1995:69) note that such a possibility (of a bare noun occupying an argument position) is only open to nominals indicating “well –established kinds” as suggested by “The coke bottle” but not “The green bottle”.

### 3.4 The Related Manifestations of the DP: Syntactic and Semantic Behaviour

Examining the syntactic and syntactic behaviour of the DP, one would elegantly notice the similarities that govern its syntactic and semantic operations. One would, thus, see that

- i. there must be a relation between the *part-/unit-/kind-/and possessive* noun and the *content* noun that follows ‘of’ :

{	a <i>flash</i> of lightning	partitives
	an <i>acre</i> of land	
{	a <i>book</i> of Jim’s	of/z possessives
	a <i>friend</i> of Brian’s	
{	this <i>kind</i> of commodity	kind-construction
	a <i>commodity</i> of this kind	

- ii. In all these manifestations , the ‘of’ of the DP functions as a linking device relating the *part-/unit-/kind-/* noun to the content noun(s) following it.
- iii. Looking with semantic eyes, we realize that these constructions *presuppose* a unique set after ‘of’:

*a kind of tiger* presupposes a particular kind of tigers within a larger set  
*a kind of car* presupposes a particular *make* within a larger set of cars

- iv. The of + content noun construction cannot be fronted or left-dislocated. Hence , the sentences in which they *predicatively* occur would be unacceptable when this construction is topicalised:

{	She drank a <i>glass</i> of water.
	*Of water, she drank a glass

{ I like *grains of* wheat.  
\*Of wheat, I like grains

{ I saw a friend *of Jim's* .  
\*Of Jim's , I saw a friend

{ She bought a *kind of* car  
\*Of car , she bought a kind

- v. A cleft-sentence test (which isolates the constituent NP <sup>7</sup> (=noun phrase) to the right of a (be) form) shows that all the manifestations of the DP construction pass the test.

{ What he drank was a *glass of* water (partitives)  
What I like was *a grain of* wheat.

{ What I saw was *a friend of* Jim's (of/z possessives)  
What I bought was *a car of* Jill's

{ What they sold was *a kind of* car (kind-constructions)  
What he exported was *a commodity of* this kind

- vi. In all the constructions of the DP, the noun before 'of' functions as a modifier qualifying the content noun coming after it.

### 3.5 Restrictions and Derivation

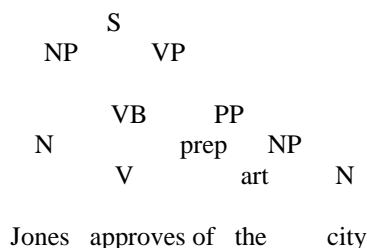
The manifestations of the DP, already suggested, betray similarities that realize them as being related structures. Thus, we have very well seen (in 3.4) that the determiner **restrictions** specific to the kind-construction, in its two orders (ie initial and final position) could be attributed to the constraints of a *derivation* akin to that of *of / z possessives* and to a special anti-anaphoric discourse property.

All these manifestations of the DP (ie partitive, of / z possessive and kind-/size-/constructions), are also shown to be *elliptically derived*. Following Chomsky's copy-deletion

<sup>7</sup> However, the cleft-sentence transformation isolates 'of the city' in the following sentence (Jacobs and Rosenbaum, 1968:140).

Jones approves of the city  
as a different constituent ie a pp (prepositional phrase)

\* What Jones approves is of the city



theory of movement, Zamparelli (1998:10) projects what he calls “the ellipsis analysis” which is realized by copying up a subpart of the definite noun phrase and getting partitives, of/z possessives or kind-constructions, “depending on which copy we choose not to pronounce...”. However, this choice seems to be influenced by syntactic factors. Note that, in the following examples of the elliptical analysis, the overstricken items are ‘not pronounced’:

Two <del>co-authors</del> of [Brian’s co-authors]	partitive
Three co-authors of [Brian’s <del>co-authors</del> ]	of / z possessive
A lion of [ that kind <del>lion</del> ]	kind-construction(final position)

### Conclusions

The inadequate treatment of the structures of the DP in traditional grammar(s) and ,even, in more perceptive grammars of current usages<sup>8</sup> (such as Greenbaum and Quirk’s *A Student’s Grammar of the English Language* and Leech and Svartvik’s *A Communicative Grammar of English*) raises serious questions (as regards their syntactic and semantic operativeness ) that have to be answered .These structures of the DP (ie partitives,of/z possessives and kind-constructions) have been ineptly presented in fragments in the folds of grammar books ,isolated from each other or their usages recounted under different labels.Conversely,a working analysis, presented by this paper, has aptly shown that these manifestations are organically related, a thing which explains their unique syntactic and semantic behaviour .Moreover, some other perceptive conclusions of this study project that these structures commonly share restrictions relevant to them all, that they are all **elliptically derived by a copy-deletion transformational movement rule** and that the **Residue Phrase (RP)** ,as a result of this transformation, realizes itself as the DP in its various manifestations.

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<sup>8</sup> Widdowson (1979:33) makes a useful distinction between *usage* ‘ a projection of the language system and code’ as codified in dictionaries and grammars and *use* the actual use of language in communication .Hatim and Mason suggest (1990:33) that translation is “an exercise in *usages* rather than in *use*, in *language –as-system*, rather than in *language –as- communication* .

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