1. Observations about definite descriptions

For languages with definiteness marking:

- Semantic theory is preoccupied with anaphoric uses of definites.
- There are certain conceptual types of nouns for which the definite article is (almost) obligatory — and these types of definites are not anaphoric.
- In almost all languages there are splits of marking definite NPs — one split separates the domain of demonstratives from other definite NPs, another one separates morphologically marked definites from unmarked ones.
- In most cases, definite articles developed from demonstratives.
### Conceptual noun types and their respective unmarked determinations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>[-U]</th>
<th>[+U] conceptually unique</th>
</tr>
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</table>
| **sortal nouns**  
girl book water  
✓ indefinite  
✓ absolute  
logical type: <e,t> | individual nouns  
pope; Jeanne; she  
✓ definite  
✓ absolute  
logical type: <e> |

<table>
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</thead>
</table>
| **relational nouns**  
daughter part kin  
✓ indefinite  
✓ possessive  
logical type: <e,<e,t>> | functional nouns  
mother mouth amount  
✓ definite  
✓ possessive  
logical type: <e,e> |

### Conceptual noun types — definite and possessive determination

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### Conceptual noun types — indefinite and absolute determination

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mother mouth amount  
© indefinite  
© absolute  
logical type: <e,e> |

### Concept types and determination

- The conceptual type of a noun or pronoun is **lexically fixed** (modulo polysemy): The meaning of a sortal/relational/individualfunctional [pro]noun is a sortal/relational/individualfunctional concept.

- **However:** When an NP is formed, the noun concept may undergo **conceptual shifts**,  
  - (overtly) by being combined with modifiers or arguments  
  - (covertly) by undergoing a general meaning shift (e.g. metonymy)  
  - (covertly) by being merged with contextual information on its referent

- Simple determination ( = definite / indefinite / possessive / absolute without further semantic content) **fixes the conceptual type of the NP token**. Determination may coerce a type shift of the CNP (common noun phrase = operand of determination).
Definite determination

- Definite determination means: “Construe the NP token as a conceptually unique description, i.e. as [+U]!”.
- The meaning/function of definite determination is the same for singular, plural, and mass CNPs.

Definiteness is not a matter of extensional/accidental uniqueness nor of familiarity.

Indefinite determination

- Indefinite determination means: “Construe the NP token as a sortal description, i.e. as [–U]!”.
- The meaning/function of indefinite determination is the same for singular, plural, and mass CNPs.

[Possessive and absolute determination will be disregarded in this talk, but see Löbner 2011.]

Congruency and type shifts

- If the CNP is [–U], definite determination coerces a type shift [–U] → [+U]
  
  - In particular, definite determination coerces a type shift on sortal CNPs for anaphoric and deictic DDs

- If the CNP is [+U], indefinite determination coerces a type shift [+U] → [–U]
  
  - cf. indefinite uses of individual or functional concepts

- Determination is (in)congruent iff the CNP is (not) of the resulting type.
  - A NP is semantically definite iff the CNP is [+U].
  - A DD is pragmatically definite iff the CNP is [–U].

Levels of type shifts

Level 0
- a. choice of a lexical meaning variant
- b. compositional modification: attributes, complements, adjuncts

Level 1
- general conceptual shifts applying across semantic subclasses of meanings (such as “artefact”, “institution”, “profession”, “attribute”, “property”)

Level 2
- merging the concept for the referent of an NP with extralinguistic information

Pragmatic enrichment

Congruent definite determination: individual and functional CNPs

- If the CNP is [+U], definite determination is semantically redundant.
  
  - CNP = lexically [+U] individual or functional noun (cf. the pope and mother examples)
  
  - CNP = lexically [–U] sortal or relational noun plus a modifier that turns a [–U] concept into a [+U] concept, such as
    - adjectival only
    - superlatives, last, next, favourite (Partee & Borschev), ordinals
    - [+U] appositions, number 2, word ‘kinezumi’, rumour that …
    - autophoric DDs: SC with “establishing relative clause”

- artefacts-in-exclusive-use-possessives my | the toothbrush
1. Observations

Incongruent definite determination: sortal and relational CNPs

If the CNP is [−U], definite determination is semantically functional; it inevitably involves a type shift [−U] → [+U] (logically: <e,t> ↦ e).

- deictic use: The deictic gesture maps the sort described by the [−U] CNP to a particular individual of the sort. Note that “what Speaker points to” is an individual concept (in deictic uses enriched with the sortal information on the value of the function provided by the CNP)

- anaphoric use: The sentential and wider context of the antecedent plus the sentential context of the anaphoric definite NP yield an individual concept for the referent.

(8) Reinhold met a yeti. He took a picture of the snowman.

individual concept: “the x such that:
- Reinhold met x; x is a yeti; (= antecedent context)
- x is a snowman, x is photographable” (= anaphor context)

2. Concept types

Functional concepts and definiteness (1)

(9) a. Reinhold claims he saw [the footsteps] of [a yeti] in the snow.
   = Reinhold saw [the yeti footsteps] in the snow.
   ≠ Reinhold saw [the Yeti footsteps] in the snow.

b. Reinhold claims he saw [the footsteps] of [the yeti] in the snow.
   = Reinhold saw [the Yeti’s footsteps] in the snow.

(10) special case: definite associative anaphor (DAA):

a. “How much is this?” – "[The price] is attached on the back."
   b. I’ve bought a car, but something’s wrong with [the clutch] of [the car].

Functional concepts and definiteness (2)

- The [U] value of a NP with possessor complement is the minimum of the [U] values of the possessor concept and the possessor concept.

- If the possessorum is a functional concept (FC), it inherits its [U] value from the possessor concept.

- Referential transparency of FCs

if the possessum is an FC, it inherits the total determination from the possessor concept, i.e. being (in)definite, possessive, deictic, anaphoric, quantifying, generic etc.

3. Uses

A functional CNP in absolute use (i.e., with no explicit possessor specification) with definite determination has an implicit [+U] possessor.

(10) special case: definite associative anaphor (DAA):

a. “How much is this?” – "[The price] is attached on the back."
   b. I’ve bought a car, but something’s wrong with [the clutch] of [the car].

A functional CNP in absolute use with indefinite determination has a [−U] possessor.

(11) a. [A father] [of a student] came to my office hours the other day.
   b. [A father] [of the student] came to my office hours the other day.

With functional CNPs in absolute use, explicit definite determination is pragmatically not redundant, as it entails that the possessor argument is [+U].
1. Observations
2. Concept types
3. Uses
4. The scale
5. Splits

Evidence for the proposed theory of definiteness

- Statistical evidence:
  Congruent uses of definite and indefinite determination are more frequent than incongruent uses.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concept Type</th>
<th>Congruent</th>
<th>Incongruent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>sortal</td>
<td>[U]</td>
<td>[U]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>relational</td>
<td>[U]</td>
<td>[U]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>individual</td>
<td>[U]</td>
<td>[U]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>functional</td>
<td>[U]</td>
<td>[U]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>indiv. (p.n., p.p.)</td>
<td>[U]</td>
<td>[U]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

50%

from: Horn, Kimm & Gerland (to appear)

Psycholinguistic evidence:
Incongruent determination requires more processing time.
(work in progress, Peter Indefrey)

Typological evidence:
Incongruent determination receives more salient marking. Some options:
- Incongruent uses are marked, while congruent uses are not
- Congruent uses receive reduced marking as compared to incongruent uses.
- Definiteness splits:
  > Existence of definiteness marking entails marking of pragmatic definiteness.
  > Certain types of semantically definite NPs are left unmarked

4. The scale of uniqueness / definiteness

deictic definites
< anaphoric definites
pragmatic definites
< semantic definites

autophoric NPs
< definite associative anaphors (DAA)
< lexical IC, complex IC (SC with superlative, etc.)
< proper names
< personal pronouns

Types of definite NPs

deictic anaph. autoph. DAA IC proper names pers.pron.

pragmatic def. semantic definiteness

Grammatical distinctions

general nouns proper names pers.pron.

with adnominal demonstratives
5. Definiteness splits

Adnominal demonstratives

- The standard uses of adnominal demonstratives — deictic and anaphoric — require a [–U] CNP for enabling the deictic choice.

- Demonstrative determination turns a [–U] CNP into a [+U] NP.

  *Demonstrative determination inevitably requires a level-2 type shift, i.e. reference draws on extralinguistic information.*

- Historically, anaphoric uses of demonstratives emerge from deictic uses.

- Some languages have separate anaphoric determiners (e.g. Lakhota, Hausa. Lyons 1999: 53ff).

- Adnominal demonstratives have the same range of application as pragmatic definiteness, i.e. [–U] CNPs.

### Split type A: no definiteness marking

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>deictic</th>
<th>anaph.</th>
<th>autoph.</th>
<th>DAA</th>
<th>IC</th>
<th>proper n.</th>
<th>pers. pron.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>demonstratives</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>zero definites</strong></td>
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<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

(13) **Japanese** (similarly: Chinese, Russian, Latin)

- a. *sono hon wa nani?* (deictic, anaphoric)
  
  *DEM* book TOP what
  
  *'what's about this book?'

- b. *kinō katta (*sono)* hon wa tsumarai (autophoric)
  
  *yesterday bought DEM book TOP boring
  
  *'the book I bought yesterday is boring'*

- c. *kinō hon o katta, (*sono)* tairou wa oboe- (DAA)
  
  *remember-NEG
  
  *'I bought a book yesterday. I don’t remember the title'*

### Split type B: demonstratives extended to semantic definites

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>deictic</th>
<th>anaph.</th>
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<th>IC</th>
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**Polish Upper Silesian** [Czardybon 2010], West Slavic: Upper Sorbian [Breu 2004]

(14) a. *Dej mi ta flaszk-a.* (deictic)
  
  *give me that/the bottle

- b. *Dziy pryndzy paczka przisz-i a* jo ta *paczka lodebra-i-a* (anaphoric)
  
  *day before parcel arrived and I the parcel collected

- c. *tyn doktor co mie dzisiej* (autophoric)
  
  *the doctor who me examined

- d. *…chalpa … (tyn) dach* (DAA)
  
  *… house. … (the) roof

### Split type C: definite article different from demonstratives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>deictic</th>
<th>anaph.</th>
<th>autoph.</th>
<th>DAA</th>
<th>IC</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>definite article</strong></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>zero definites</strong></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**English**

(15) a. *Is the dog yours?* (deictic)
  
  *autophoric

b. *the dog* that attacked me the other day (DAA)
  
  *IC (with article)

c. *… a car … the clutch …* (IC)
  
  *IC (without article)

d. *The station* is 10 minutes from here. (DAA)
  
  *IC (with article)

e. *I’ll see her at school / at lunch.* (IC)
  
  *IC (without article)

f. *(*The) John* is visiting us tomorrow. (proper name)
Split type D1: demonstratives, strong def, weak def, no proper names, zeros

demonstratives
  deictic anaph. autoph. DAA IC proper n. pers. pron.
  full definites weak definites zero definites

Standard German (cf. Schwarz 2009)

(16) a. Am / An dem Tag, als ich geboren wurde, ...
  autophoric
  on the day when I was born

b. Er ist am / (an dem) Kopf verletzt.
  DAA
  he is at the head injured

c. Ich gehe jetzt zur / (zu der) Post.
  IC
  I go now to the post office

d. Das ist das Buch "vom / von Peter.
  proper name
  that is the book of (the) Peter

Split type D2: demonstratives, strong def, weak def, proper names, zeros

demonstratives
  deictic anaph. autoph. DAA IC proper n. pers. pron.
  strong definites weak definites zero definites

German dialects: weak def = weak article, or contraction   [Studler 2004]
North Frisian: weak “a-article”, strong “d-article” (Fering)   [Ebert 1971]

Alemannic (Switzerland, Studler [2004])

(17) a. De Paul het es Ross gchouft. ...
  proper name
  the the weak P. has a horse bought. …

b. de sterschcht Maa vo de Wäut
  IC, IC
  the weak strongest man of the weak world

Split type D3: demonstratives, strong def, weak def, no proper names, zeros

definites
  deictic anaph. autoph. DAA IC proper n. pers. pron.
  strong definites weak definites zero definites

Standard Dutch (cf. Ortmann, to appear) also: Swedish (Stroh-Wollin 2003)

strong die–dat vs. general de–het
def. determiner vs. suffix (plus det.)

(18) a. In dat gedicht wilde ik die liefde vergelijken ...
  anaphoric vs. IC
  in the poem would I the strong love compare …

b. Jij was die vrouw die ik zag (Google)
  autophoric
  you were the strong woman who I saw

c. Dit is de vrouw die Osama verdedigte (Google)
  autophoric
  this is the strong woman who Osama defended

Split type E: demonstratives, strong def, weak def, preproprial article, zeros

demonstratives
  deictic anaph. autoph. DAA IC proper n. pers. pron.
  strong definites weak definites preproprial zero definites

Swedish

(19) a. det witte hus-et ‘the white house’ SC
  DEF white house-DEF

b. witte hus-et ‘the White House’ IC

Swedish and Norwegian dialects

reduced 3rd person pronouns a–n with proper names as “preproprial” articles
are “obligatory with persons’ given names” (Dahl 2007: 91)

a. Brita n Erik
  proper name
1. Observations about definite descriptions revisited

For languages with definiteness marking:

- There are certain conceptual types of nouns for which the definite article is (almost) obligatory: individual and functional nouns.

  Exceptions are due to incongruent, i.e. indefinite, uses of [+U] nouns (cf. (2) and (8) above). These decrease in frequency in the following order:

  \[
  \text{FN} < \text{IN} < \text{proper names} < 3\text{rd person} < 2\text{nd, 1st person}
  \]

  To the extent that there are incongruent uses, marking definiteness with these subtypes of nouns is functional even if semantically redundant.

  > The more frequent the incongruent uses are, the more likely the congruent uses will be marked as definite.

1. Semantic theory is preoccupied with anaphoric uses of definites (Russell, GQT, DRT, File Change Semantics, Heim & Kratzer).

- These are theories restricted to definites with sortal nouns/CNPs: \([-U][-R]\)

  Probable reasons:

  - By far the most general nouns are sortal.
  - Only with \([-U]\) nouns, definiteness marking is semantically fully functional.
  - Linguistics preferably uses written data — where anaphoric uses by far prevail.
  - While relational nouns enjoy increasing attention in linguistic theory, individual and functional nouns are hardly recognized as noun classes of their own.

1. For semantic definites, definiteness marking is semantically redundant.

Further reasons for the existence of definiteness marking of semantic definites:

- Indicating indexicality is functional even for semantically unique CNPs (> situational argument for IC, FC)
- Analogy pressure towards a uniform syntactic structure of NP/DP motivates explicit determination for all general nouns.
- Often articles carry nonsemantic functions: marking of case, number, gender, or noun class
Splits

- A universal split separates pragmatic from semantic definites.
  - additional splits
    - within pragmatic definites:
      - deictic vs. anaphoric
    - within semantic definites
      - autophoric vs. other semantic definites
  - general nouns vs. proper names and personal pronouns
  - proper names vs. personal pronouns

In most cases, definite articles developed from demonstratives.

- Most general nouns are sortal (type $<$e,t$>$).
- Demonstratives take sortal nouns and yield definite NPs — they map a [–U] CNP on a [+U] NP.
- In the course of grammaticalization of definiteness markers from demonstratives, the following steps are involved:
  - demonstratives are getting used without a deictic gesture (cf. anaphoric uses, also “anamnestic” uses [Himmelmann 1997])
  - deictic distinctions are neutralized (cf. anaphoric uses)
  - the requirement of [–U] input is dropped (first: autophoric uses, later “abstract situational uses” [Hawkins 1978] with IN and FN)
- Finally, demonstratives-turned-definiteness-markers admit [±U] CNPs and just mark the result as a [+U] NP.

Selected references


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