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Introduction

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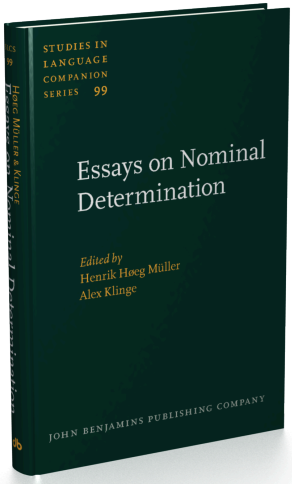

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Introduction

Henrik Høeg Müller and Alex Klinge

This is a volume which brings together scholars of diverse theoretical persuasions who all share an interest in capturing the role that determination plays in nominals. There is a long tradition of exploring the role of determination in reference assignment and the interplay of determination with quantification. One of the primary functions of determination is to guide reference assignment, and in this way determination plays a central role in providing a link between thought, language, communication, and the world. The diversity of theoretical persuasions represented reflects the observation that different theoretical frameworks may be brought fruitfully together by a shared interest in research questions.

1. The issues

Determination may be approached at all interface levels between morphology, syntax, semantics and pragmatics. Thus, linguistic forms and structures of potential interest to scholars of language span at least articles, possessives, demonstratives, quantifiers, numerals, adjectives, nouns, and the phrasal projections that they head. In addition, the role of determination is absolutely central in discourse management.

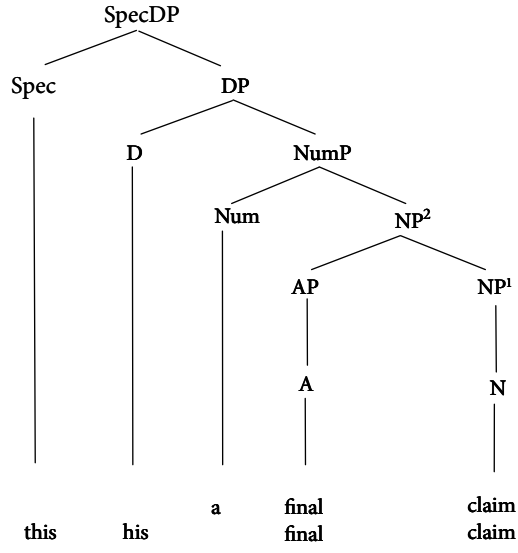
Nominal determination has always been a central subject of attention in the linguistics literature. In particular, articles and demonstratives have been studied extensively. Important work has been published in German(ic) linguistics for instance by Hodler (1954) and Abraham (1997), in English linguistics by Christophersen (1939), Jespersen (1942) and Hawkins (1978). In Romance linguistics, Wilmet (1986), Renzi (1976) and Korzen (1996) constitute standard references in the field. More universally-oriented approaches are found in for instance Longobardi (1994), Kamp and Reyle (1993), Chiercia (1998), C. Lyons (1999) and Zamparelli (2000). Noteworthy collections of articles on the topic of determination have also been published, such as Auwera (1980), Vogeleer & Tasmowski (2006) and Stark, Leiss & Abraham (2007). A contribution which in many ways stands out as a landmark, however, is Abney (1987), which set in motion an entirely new direction in research which changed focus from articles and demonstratives to uncovering functional layers in nominal structure.

Certain issues seem to recur throughout the literature such as the diachronic perspective on the development of definite articles from demonstratives through a process of grammaticalization, the layers of functional projections, overt and covert functional categories, cross-linguistic variation, and the role of D-projection in nominals.

It is widely assumed that the definite articles of Germanic and Romance languages developed from demonstrative pronouns and that at some stage in the process of grammaticalization, the articles parted ways with the demonstratives and joined up with cardinal numerals to form categories of articles overtly expressing a definite-indefinite contrast. Formal and distributional synchronic facts are however not univocal. While the so-called definite and indefinite articles seem to be in complementary distribution, certain morphological and distributional observations question the traditional assumption. If definite and indefinite articles form a category with members in complementary distribution, how do we account for data such as German *der eine Arm*, Old French *l'un braz*, and Danish *den ene arm*? Have the different points of origin of the definite and indefinite articles in fact been retained, i.e., are they projections of the same or of different functional categories? While the definiteness and indefiniteness are clearly to be interpreted as constituting contrasting semantic values of a 'definiteness' feature, the position that the indefinite article and definite article together form a formal category has been challenged. Some writers, e.g., Vangsness (1999) and Wood (2003), have argued in favour of a position where the definite and indefinite articles are in different syntactic projections and thus not in the same formal category.

Another issue which has surfaced in recent years (see e.g., Olsen 1989, Bernstein, this volume, Klinge, this volume) is that the morphological perspective suggests fundamental synchronic similarities in the make-up of demonstrative pronouns and definite articles, i.e., morphological decomposition leaves us with a root *d-* in German *der*, *die*, *das* forms irrespective of whether they distribute as determiners or pronouns – they may be distinguished only through focus accent. In our quest to establish how they are different, have we overlooked what Romance and Germanic demonstrative pronouns, demonstrative determiners and definite articles still share? Similarly, the so-called indefinite article still has clear affinities with quantifiers and numerals. For instance, the indefinite article is in complementary distribution with other quantifiers and numerals, and it cannot co-occur with plural N-heads, cf. **Ich habe eine viele Bücher gekauft*. This is unexpected if *ein* is merely a marker of indefiniteness, but expected if *ein* is still a numeral (see C. Lyons 1999).

Assigning indefinite articles, definite articles, demonstrative determiners, and other morphological material to different categories calls for a nominal structure with explicit layers of projections onto which the morphemes map. Such a structure is manifested as a series of projections. So for English nominal strings such as *this his final claim* and *a final claim*, at least SpecP, DP, NumP, and NP projections might be postulated, as in the following partial representation.



However, cross-linguistically there is substantial variation across languages in terms of which functional categories are overtly realised and in terms of mapping between lexical material and functional categories. Thus, for instance, in the string *Look at this painting*, the demonstrative determiner *this* is associated with definiteness, but in the string *I met this strange guy on the subway last night* the demonstrative determiner will be interpreted as non-specific and non-definite. This duality of interpretation is not found in Romance demonstratives, so in Spanish *Me encontré con ese hombre* the demonstrative determiner *ese* can only receive a definite interpretation.

In cross-linguistic perspective, several issues arise. What is the inventory of functional categories? Is the inventory universal? To what extent do we accept covert categories? And how do we identify them? Radford (2004: 141) argues that the string *Italians love opera* has two nominals with covert determiners, i.e., they are both DPs. That this should be so is supported by the fact that they coordinate with DPs with overt determiners, e.g., *Italians love* [*opera*] *and* [*the finer things in life*]. However, certain examples are not so clear. In a stage-level predicate constructions such as *Beavers are running in the yard* (from Bosque 1996: 71, and cf. Carlson 1977), such coordination is hardly as straight forward, cf.?*Beavers and the grey squirrels are running in the yard*. Do we then draw the conclusion that *beavers* is not a DP or that it is a DP with a covert D? Much effort has been invested in uncovering possible functional categories in the nominal domain (see, for instance, Zamparelli 2000 and Bernstein 2001). However, as pointed out in Stark et al. (2007: 17) " … research for a finite list of indispensable functional categories inside nominals has not yielded a definite result shared by everyone … " Moreover, the issue is clouded by the fact that syntactic configurations and

morphemes which are not obviously determiners can have functions which are comparable to those of determiners (see for instance Abraham 1997 and Leiss 2007).

A further issue which ranks high in the discussion of nominal determination is the semantic contribution of determiners. What do we mean by definiteness? Is definiteness a semantic primitive? Does the definite article encode uniqueness or identifiability (cf. the discussion in Abott 2004)? Is uniqueness or identifiability part of the meaning of the definite article in *Many students take the train to go home for Christmas*? Does the definite article only become an exponent of definiteness because it distributes into D-position in a nominal? We saw above that the demonstrative determiner *this* is not necessarily associated with definiteness.

The contribution of determiners may also be approached in terms of their contribution to discourse management. They may be seen as processing signals which assist the hearer in identifying the referent the speaker has in mind. Prince (1979), Heim (1988), Ariel (1990), and Gundel et al. (1993) have stimulated interest in the correlation between determiners and how we cognitively access referents in discourse. A question which still remains open is whether discourse management lies at the heart of the semantics of determiners, or whether it is a function which they have acquired as a result of some other semantic content? Did the definite article arise because it facilitated discourse management? However, while identifiability is clearly part of the understanding of the way the definite article is used in discourse, examples abound which show that identifiability is not an inherent semantic feature, cf. *Beware of the dog*.

2. An overview of the contributions to this volume

The contributions to this volume address a number of the issues raised above. They fall roughly into five main areas of concern, viz. the conceptual level of determination; the emergence and function of articles; their semantic contribution to nominal interpretation; the morphology and syntax of determiners; and, finally, the interplay and contrasts between articles, demonstratives, and possessives.

Peter Harder addresses the relation between conception and coding in the way the domain of nominal determination is structured. Contrasting insights from formal and functional approaches, Harder considers the grounding function of determination in terms of a combination of arbitrary and motivated relations between form and content.

Michael Herslund, Elisabeth Stark, Marc Wilmet and Iørn Korzen all address the emergence and basic functions of articles. In his contribution, Herslund takes his point of departure in the emergence of article systems and argues that the functions and values of definite and indefinite articles are different, given that definite articles were derived as pronominal heads and indefinite articles were derived as quantifiers or classifiers. Elisabeth Stark similarly takes an historical approach in that she considers the emergence from Latin of two distinct Romance determination systems coding nominal classification in terms of contoured and non-contoured referents. The two systems

of nominal classification are anchored in the rigid article system in the case of the central Romance languages Italian and French, whereas the more flexible article system of Spanish and Romanian has to be supplemented by differential object marking. Marc Wilmet argues in favour of treating French *de* as an article in its own right. His argument draws on aspects of definition, historical facts, distribution and the paradigm of articles. Iørn Korzen draws a typological distinction between endocentric and exocentric languages. The former are languages which have relatively heavy lexical and informational weight in the centre of the predicate, i.e. in the verb, such as Danish, whereas the latter are characterized by having a relatively heavy lexical and informational weight in nominal arguments, such as Italian. This typological difference leads to the prediction that informational prominence of nominal arguments is also reflected in a more fine-grained system of determination, whereas low prominence of nominal arguments should be reflected in a less intricate determination system and a greater likelihood of noun incorporation. Korzen tests these predictions by contrasting Italian and Danish.

Roberto Zamparelli, Manuel Leonetti and Henrik Høeg Müller investigate semantic implications of the presence vs. absence of determiners. Zamparelli offers an analysis of the absence of determiners in singular predicate nominals which refer to professions, roles and other relations. Zamparelli argues that while singular count nouns are normally licensed by the presence of a determiner, nouns that form bare predicates have an impoverished set of features, in particular they have no set value for gender, so they may be licensed by entering into an agreement relation with the subject of the predication. The article by Leonetti investigates the effects produced by the coda on definiteness and connects such effects to other constrains on the licensing of postverbal subjects. One central claim is that it is a clash between definiteness and Focus structures that underlies the definiteness effect. Müller contrasts two distinct manifestations of Spanish syntagmatic compounds, viz. one with the structure *N1 prep. def.N2* and *N1 prep. ØN2*. Müller's point of departure is that the definite article attributes to *N2* either a referential reading or a prototype reading, while the zero determiner brings about an interpretation either in terms of a mass or a concept.

Giuseppe Longobardi, Judy Bernstein, Alex Klinge, Naoki Fukui & Mihoko Zushi and Helle Dam discuss various interface phenomena between morphology, syntax and semantics. Longobardi's article presents a preliminary suggestion as to how some of the crosslinguistic variation which is observable in the syntax/semantics mapping of nominal arguments, such as the well-known N-to-D raising differences between Italian and English, may be accounted for in terms of a parameter based on the presence of a Person head in the traditional D position of DPs, and whether such a Person head is strong, as in Italian, or weak, as in English. While Longobardi points out that his contribution revolves around preliminary observations and tentative conclusions, the postulation of a Person head certainly offers a highly promising solution to some of the outstanding problems. Judy Bernstein develops the idea that English words like *the*, *they*, *this* and existential *there* share an initial *th-* morpheme which is identified as a

3rd person marker unspecified for number and gender. Contrary to a strong tradition, she argues that only the person feature, not the definiteness feature, is associated with the D heading of the functional DP projection. Klinge takes a wider perspective and discusses the pan-Germanic *þ-* root, with the three modern variants /θ/, /d/, /ð/, as in Icelandic *þessi*, German *der* and English *the*, as a morpheme contrasting in terms of fundamental ostensive processing instructions with a pan-Germanic *hw-* root, with the modern variants /w/ and /v/, as in Icelandic *hvað*, German *was* and English *what*.

In their article, Fukui & Zushi point out that while much discussion of DPs since Abney has concentrated on the similarities between DPs and clauses, a number of substantial differences have been glossed over. They seek to pin down the differences and go on to formulate an analysis according to which the differences arise because nominals have a single-layered internal structure as against a dual-layered internal structure in clauses. The analysis points to a way ahead in the development of the original DP analysis proposed by Abney. Dam investigates semantic processing of three types of nominalization, viz. deverbal nouns, nominalized infinitive phrases and nominalized complementizer phrases. She argues that in these nominalizations the presence of a definite article instructs the hearer to construct an entity, whereas the nominalized complement of the article semantically denotes a situation. Dam shows how the semantic merger of entity and situation features takes place.

Georges Kleibert and Thorstein Fretheim & Aba Appiah Amfo consider the semantic and pragmatic interplay and contrast between articles, demonstratives and possessive determiners. Kleibert is specifically interested in the difference between the definite article and the possessive determiner across discourse contexts where an associative anaphoric relation is established. He argues that the two items are in competition in associative discourse contexts but one central difference is that the possessive determiner introduces two entities, viz. the entity anaphorically picked out by the determiner and the determined entity. The introduction by the possessive determiner of two related entities results in individuated interpretation relative to the associative antecedent whereas the definite article has to rely on a prototypical relation with the associative antecedent.

Fretheim & Aba Appiah Amfo take their point of departure in a critique of the scalar implication that a definite determiner such as *the* can always substitute for demonstratives such as *this* and *that* which follows from Gundel et al's Givenness Hierarchy. The Givenness Hierarchy model predicts that the meaning of the definite article *den N* (that N) should be different from that of the pronoun *den* (that). Fretheim & Aba Appiah Amfo show that, on the contrary, in Norwegian the semantics encoded in the definite article and the pronoun is the same. In contrast to Norwegian, the Niger-Congo language Akan has segmentally identical but semantically distinct definite determiners and pronouns. However, in spoken Norwegian, they show that the formal identity between the preposed definite article *den* and the distal demonstrative *den* are two distinct linguistic phenomena which cannot be conflated.

This volume offers many approaches to nominal determination and the correlations between internal nominal architecture and semantics, and it proposes a range of new analyses of well-known problems, but it also raises new questions and points to new areas which may prove interesting topics for future research both in functional and formal paradigms.

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