Weak vs. Strong Definite Articles - Meaning and Form Across Languages

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Workshop on Definiteness Across Languages

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http://www.florianschwarz.net/DefMex.pdf
Meanings and Forms of Definite Descriptions

- Background: recent work on multiple realizations of definiteness within languages

- Crosslinguistic Questions:
  - Variation in form?
  - Variation in meaning (and meaning contrasts)?

- Broader implications:
  - Role of context in interpretation
  - Mechanisms for quantificational covariation
  - Noun phrase structure in natural language
Plan for Today

- Review of **Weak vs. Strong Article Contrast** in German(ic)
- Sketch of analysis in Schwarz (2009)
- **Cross-linguistic** exploration:
  - Variation in **Form**
  - Variation in **Meaning Contrast**
  - An **Additional Dimension of Variation** or a more **gradient analysis**?
Definites and Uniqueness

Attempt at unified theory #1:

**Context:** Standing in an office with exactly one table.

(1) The table is covered with books.

**Intuitive Idea:**
Definites pick out an individual with a unique property

**Challenge:**
To what extent does uniqueness have to hold?
Definites and Anaphoricity

Attempt at unified theory #2:

(1')

a. There is a table and a chair in my office.
b. The table is covered with books.

Intuitive idea:
Definites pick out an individual that has been introduced by a previous expression

Challenge:
What about cases where there is no antecedent?
Two Types of Definites (Schwarz, 2009)

- Both analyses are needed
- Corresponding phenomena instantiated by different definite descriptions forms in various languages
- More complex picture that can more easily integrate otherwise problematic cases, based on empirical motivation

(also see Birner & Ward, 1994; Poesio & Viera, 1998, a.o.)
Several Germanic languages / dialects have long been known to have two full article paradigms, e.g:


(2) **Example:** The definite article paradigms in Fering

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>m.Sg.</th>
<th>f.Sg</th>
<th>n.Sg.</th>
<th>Pl.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A-article</td>
<td>a</td>
<td>at</td>
<td>at</td>
<td>a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D-article</td>
<td>di</td>
<td>det</td>
<td>det</td>
<td>dön</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Ebert, 1971, p. 159)
If certain independent morphological conditions are met, there are two forms for preposition-article sequences:

(3) a. \textit{Hans ging zu dem Haus.}
    Hans went to the\textit{strong} house
    ‘Hans went to the house.’

b. \textit{Hans ging zum Haus.}
    Hans went to the\textit{weak} house
    ‘Hans went to the house.’

(a.o Hartmann, 1978; Haberland, 1985; Cieschinger, 2006)
Terminology

Descriptively, the two forms correspond to two distinct definite articles, as in Fering.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Form</th>
<th>Article Type</th>
<th>Gloss</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>zum</td>
<td>weak</td>
<td>P-the\text{weak}</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>zu dem</td>
<td>strong</td>
<td>P the\text{strong}</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table: Terminology for the German Article Forms
A Contrast in Meaning

Our central concern:

The two forms contrast in meaning

(4) 

In der Kabinettsitzung heute wird ein neuer Vorschlag

In the cabinet meeting today is a new proposal

✓ vom / #von dem Kanzler erwartet.

by-the\textsubscript{weak} / by the\textsubscript{strong} chancellor expected

‘In today’s cabinet meeting, a new proposal by the chancellor is expected.’
Uniqueness and the Weak Article

(5)  # In der Kabinettsitzung heute wird ein neuer Vorschlag
In the cabinet meeting today is a new proposal
vom Minister erwartet.
by-the weak minister expected
‘In today’s cabinet meeting, a new proposal by the minister is expected.’

- There’s only one chancellor, but several ministers.
- The weak article seems to require uniqueness
Anaphoricity and the Strong Article

- Uniqueness is *neither sufficient nor necessary* for the\textit{strong}.
- the\textit{strong} becomes available if there is an *antecedent* (6)

(6) a.  \textit{Hans hat gestern einen Minister interviewt.}  
Hans has yesterday a minister interviewed  
‘Hans interviewed a minister yesterday.’

b.  \checkmark \textit{In der Kabinettsitzung heute wird ein neuer Vorschlag von dem Minister erwartet.}  
In the cabinet meeting today is a new proposal by the minister expected  
‘In today’s cabinet meeting, a new proposal by the minister is expected.’
Initial Assessment

The two articles differ in the way they relate to their context:

- $\text{the}_{\text{weak}}$ comes with a uniqueness-requirement
  
  $(\checkmark \text{the}_{\text{weak}} \text{ chancellor vs. } \#\text{the}_{\text{weak}} \text{ minister})$

- $\text{the}_{\text{strong}}$ is anaphorically dependent on an antecedent
  
  $(a \text{ minister } \ldots \text{the minister})$
Bridging

Definites can relate back to the context in indirect ways, e.g., in bridging uses Clark (1975); Hawkins (1978); Prince (1981):

(7) a. John was driving down the street.
    b. The steering wheel was cold.

    b. The author is French.

How do German articles map onto bridging contexts?
Bridging Contrast

(9) *Der Kühlschrank war so groß, dass der Kürbis problemlos im Gemüsefach untergebracht werden konnte.*

The fridge was so big that the pumpkin without a problem stowed could

‘The fridge was so big that the pumpkin could easily be stowed in the crisper.’

**Part-Whole Relation**

(10) *Das Theaterstück missfiel dem Kritiker so sehr, dass er in seiner Besprechung kein gutes Haar am Autor ließ.*

The play displeased the critic so much that he in his review no good hair to pieces in his review.

**Producer Relation**
Covariation

(11)  *Jeder Student, der ein Auto parkte, brachte einen Parkschein am / #an dem Rückspiegel an.*

‘Every student that parked a car attached a parking pass to the rear view mirror PART

(12)  *Jeder, der einen Roman gekauft hat, hatte schon einmal eine Kurzgeschichte vom / von dem Autor gelesen.*

‘Everyone that bought a novel had already once read a short story by the author.’
Sketch of the Analysis

- Core definite article encodes **Fregean uniqueness** relativized to situations (→ weak article denotation)
- Strong article involves additional **anaphoric element**
- Bridging effects based both on situation structure and nature of nouns
- Two mechanisms that can give rise to covariation

(see Schwarz, 2009, for full details)
Denotations

(13) a.  
\[ \lambda s_r \lambda P. \lambda y. \forall x [P(x)(s_r) \& x = y] \]

\[ \text{the}_{\text{strong}} \]

b.  
\[ \lambda s_r \lambda P. \forall x [P(x)(s_r)] \]

\[ \text{the}_{\text{weak}} \]
Core Features

- **Uniqueness** plays essential role
- Relativized to *situation pronoun*, introduced with D-head
  - topic situation
  - resource situation
  - covarying situation
- Two mechanisms that can give rise to covariation
  - indirectly, through *quantification over situations*, and
  - directly, through *(dynamic)* binding
- Implications for analysis of *domain restriction*:
  either through situations, or direct binding of individual variable (no C-variable)
Semantic Unification - Purely Structural Account?

Hanink (to appear); Grove & Hanink (to appear)

- Just one definite article after all?
- Put all the variation in the structure
- Distributed Morphology account of contraction
- Welcome avenue for refinement of analysis, but
  - How does this relate to languages with full article paradigms?
  - What are the implications for article contrast in languages that use bare NPs for weak-article correlates?
  - **Also:** Grubic (2016) on Ngamo provides evidence for relational strong article variant, favoring multiple lexical entries.
Another can of worms:

- Article contrast interacts in complex ways with relative clauses
- (Overly) simplistic generalization:
  Restrictive relatives require strong article on head noun
- But other subtypes of RCs may exhibit further variation
- Even the simple generalization is hard to capture
  (see Grove & Hanink, to appear, for a recent proposal)
- Difficult terrain requiring further work, but important to include in cross-linguistic picture!

(see Wiltschko, 2013; Hofherr, 2013; Simonenko, to appear, a.o.)
Main empirical questions:

- What other languages employ the same (or similar) contrasts?
- What variation exists in the formal expression of the contrast?
- What variation exists in terms of the semantics/pragmatics of the contrast?
Substantial uniformity in meaning contrast between definite forms across a fair number of languages, with
- interesting variation in form that seems crucial for understanding interplay of formal and semantic ingredients
- only very minor variation in meaning/use

Second class of languages
- Potentially different contrast, due to another dimension of variation?
- Or do we need a more gradient account of variation after all?

Theoretical Questions:
- What is the best analysis, allowing for variation as necessary?
- If there are multiple contrasts, how are they related?
Caveat:

Not all of these cases have been looked at to exactly the same extent and there thus may be more variation than apparent here. But I tried to only include relatively well-documented cases that so far have essentially yielded complete overlap with the German contrast.

Two systematic distinctions between definites:

- Contrast between two overt forms
- Bare nouns vs. overt form

(cf. the distinction between Type I and Type II splits in Ortmann, 2014)
Overt Contrasts

- (West-)Germanic
- Icelandic (Ingason, 2016)
- Possibly Hausa, Lakhota (see Schwarz, 2013, for references)
Bare vs. Overt Contrasts

- Akan (Arkoh & Matthewson, 2013)
- Korean (Cho, 2016; Ahn, 2016)
- Mauritian Creole (Wespel, 2008)
- Czech (ˇ Simík, 2015)
- Thai & Mandarin (Jenks, 2015)
- Upper Silesian (Ortmann, 2014)
- Upper Sorbian (Ortmann, 2014)
- Ngamo (Grubic 2016)
- Cases currently under investigation:
  - ASL (Irani & Schwarz, 2016)
  - Lithuanian (Sereikaite, 2016)
Some Illustration

- The following slides provide illustrative pairs of examples from languages where the contrast has been studied in some detail.

- Mostly using *bridging contrast* for illustration.
  - Most subtle (and perhaps surprising) part of contrast.

- But contrast holds systematically between anaphoric and unique definites in all these cases.
Illustration: Akan (Arkoh & Matthewson, 2013)

**Weak**  
Yè-hú-ù dàn dádáw bí w`ô èkùràsí hó ñkyênsìdán  
1pl.subj-see-Past building old Ref at village there roof  
(#nó / #bi) é-hódwòw  
(Fam / Ref) Perf-worn-out  
‘We saw an old building in the village; (#the / #a (certain)) roof was worn out.’  
(Arkoh & Matthewson, 2013, p. 14)

**Strong**  
Àsáw nó yè-è ɔhín nó fèw árá mà ð-kyê-è  
dance Fam do-Past chief Fam beautiful just Comp 3sg.subj-give-Past  
ðkyìrëfô nó àdzí  
trainer Fam thing  
‘The dance was so beautiful that the chief gave the trainer a gift.’  
(Arkoh & Matthewson, 2013, p. 15)
Illustration: Mauritian Creole (Wespel, 2008)

**Weak**  
Mo fin visite enn lavil dan provins. Lameri ti pli ot  
I ACC visit one village in province town-hall PST more high  
ki  legliz.  

than church  

‘I visited a village in the province. The town hall was higher  
than the church.’  

(Wespel, 2008, p. 155; source: O.M.22.)

**Strong**  
Li fin kontan liv la ek aster li envi zwen loter la.  
she PST love book DEF and now she want meet author DEF  

‘She was fond of the book and now she wants to meet the  
author.’  

((Wespel, 2008, p. 156); source: O.M.2.8.)
## Illustration: ASL (Irani & Schwarz, 2016)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Weak</th>
<th>IX(_a) CAR, POLICE STOPPED WHY (#IX(_a)) MIRROR BROKEN.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘The car was stopped by the police because the mirror was broken.’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong</td>
<td>JOHN BUY IX(_a) BOOK. #(IX(_a)) AUTHOR FROM FRANCE.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘John bought a book. The author is from France.’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Illustration: Korean (Cho, 2016)

**Weak**  
Gyeolhonski-e gatda. *Sinbu-ga/#ku sinbu-ga* paransek-ul
Wedding-to went bride-NOM/#that bride-NOM blue-ACC
ipeotda.
wore

‘(I) went to a wedding. The bride/#that bride wore blue.’

**Strong**  
Jonathan-un eojebam-e sesigan dokseorul haetda. *ku
Jonathan-TOP yesterday night-at three hours reading did. ku
soseolchayk-i/ #soseolchayk-i jaemi-itdago saengakhaetda.
*novel-NOM/#novel-NOM interesting thought.*

‘Jonathan read for three hours last night. (He) found the novel interesting’

(Cho, 2016, p. 6)
Illustration: Thai (Jenks, 2015)

**Weak**

rót khan nán thúuk tamrúat sàkàt phró? màj.dâj tít
car CLF that ADV.PAS police intercept because NEG attach
satikə wáj thîi thábian (#baj nán).
sticker keep at license CLF that
‘That car was stopped by police because there was no sticker on
the license.’

**Strong**

p̄oōl khít wâa khoɔn bòt nán pró? màak, mëɛ-wâa kháw
Paul thinks COMP poem CLF that melodious very, although 3P
cà màj chîop náktɛɛNkɛo #(khon nán).
IRR NEG like poet CLF that
‘Paul thinks that poem is beautiful, though he doesn’t really like
the poet.’

(Jenks, 2015, p. 109)
Illustration: Icelandic (Ingason, 2016)

**Weak** (Context: The speaker is annoyed that she always loses. There is only one winner per round.)

\[
\text{Alltaf etter hverja umferð eru spilin gefin aftur af allways after each round are cards.the given again}
\]

\[
[D_P \text{hinum ópolandi sigurvegara}]. \text{by}
\]

\[
[D_P \text{HI-the weak intolerable evaluative winner}]
\]

‘Always after each round, the cards are dealt again by the intolerable winner.’

(Ingason, 2016, p. 131)

**Strong** (Previous discourse: Mary talked to a writer and a terrible politician.)

She got no interesting answers from ...

\[
... \text{þessum} / \# \text{hinum hræðilega stjórmálamanni.}
\]

\[
... \text{this} / \# \text{HI-the weak terrible evaluative politician}
\]

(Ingason, 2016, p. 168)
Weak

Tai ka darė musu Prezidentė, tai turės daryti naujas prezidentas.

That what do.PST our president.SG.F.NOM that have.FUT do-to new.NOM.M.SG president.NOM.M.SG

‘Things that our president did have to be done by the new president as well.’

Strong


‘We bought a new avant-garde painting. For the merits to avant-garde, the new artist received a premium.’
A Basic Generalization:
(Framed in terms of Analysis in Schwarz (2009))

A ‘more’ in meaning corresponds to ‘more’ in form

- German articles are ‘reduced’ forms
- Full Germanic paradigms: complexity of forms
- Null vs. overt form
Two Interesting New Variants

- **Icelandic (Ingason, 2016)**
  - Same form (suffix) in most contexts
  - Certain adjectives block D-lowering
  - Free form only expresses weak article
  - Demonstrative ‘fills in’ for strong article

- **Lithuanian (Sereikaite, 2016)**
  - Suffix on adjectives marks strong forms (also appears on Demonstratives)
  - Noun phrases with ‘short-form’ adjectives seem to have both indefinite and weak article definite readings
  - Syntactic arguments for DP-layer despite apparent lack of articles
    (cf. Serbo-Croatian)
The Form-Meaning Mapping

- How best to account for form-meaning pairings?
- Key choice-points in analysis of article contrast:
  - just one definite article, with added structure for ‘strong articles’
  - Two separate lexical entries
  - No meaning for definite article per se, mere signal of unambiguity / type-shift (Löbner, 1985)
Bare NPs expressing Weak Article Definites

Perhaps most common case cross-linguistically:
Bare nouns used for ‘weak article definites’

Key Questions:
- What is the structure of definite bare NPs?
- How do the ‘weak and strong article definites’ relate in these cases?
- Do the bare noun phrases have additional indefinite interpretations?
To D or not to D?

- Weak article definites expressed by bare NPs: Null D or purely semantic type-shift?

- (At least) two ways in which article contrast literature bears on this issue:
  - Analysis of definite articles (and contrast between different forms) constrains options for analysis of bare NPs
  - Variation in bare NP interpretations would support existence of Null D’s (assuming type-shifters are universal)

- **Initial evidence**: at least some languages (Akan, Lithuanian, ASL) display genuine definite/indefinite ambiguity for bare nouns (contra Dayal 2016), suggesting null definite D’s exist.

- **In addition**: Lithuanian may involve null strong determiners!
Variation in Meaning

- Data considered so far exhibits uniform semantic contrast
- But there is some variation in article contrasts
- Illustration of fairly minor variations:
  - Variation in anaphoric uses
  - Variation in situational uniqueness
  - Variation in situational bridging
- More substantial variation: Haitian Creole
Discourse Anaphoric Chains

- Common discourse development in narrative texts:
  - Introduce character with indefinite (*Once upon a time, there was a fisherman*)
  - Pick it up with strong article (*The-strong fisherman*)
  - Later resort to weak article (at least for main character(s))
- Icelandic (Anton Ingason, p.c.): keep using strong form

**Note:** Consistent with formal analysis, purely pragmatic difference in choice amongst possible forms?
Strong for (certain) Situational Uniques

Akan vs. German: Different ways of getting to family dog:

(14) **Context:** You and your spouse own one dog. While your spouse is away, someone breaks into your house and you are telling them about it on the phone. You say:

a. *Der Einbrecher ist zum Glück vom/#von dem Hund* 
   the burglar is luckily *by-the*weak/#by the*strong* dog chased
   verjagt worden
   been
   ‘Luckily, the burglar was chased away by the dog.’ (German)

b. Òwìfò nù, bòdòm nù ká-á nú-dú árá má
   thief FAM dog FAM follow-PAST 3SG-OBJ-on just so
   ò-gúán-ìì
   3SG-SUBJ-run-PAST
   ‘The thief, the dog chased away.’ (Akan)

Arkoh & Matthewson (2013)
(Mauritian Creole possibly similar; Wespel (2008, pp. 189-90))
Strong for Salient Uniques - A Challenge?

Not necessarily...

- What strong article definites require is that there be a **contextually salient** value for *i*.
- General **contextual salience** can be sufficient for pronoun use:

(15) a. After a long day at job with obnoxious boss, to spouse: 
*Do you know what he₁ did today?*

b. One parent to the other, while away, about their son: 
*Is he₂ walking yet?*

- So Akan could fill *i* in (14b) through similar contextual means.

**Remaining question**: Why does Akan differ from most languages, which seem to prefer the weak article here? (role of indefinite bare NPs?)
Situational Bridging in Amern

Wespel (2008) cites Amern data showing strong article use for situational / part-whole bridging:

(16) \( \text{Vör worən en də näldər kerək on wolən os äns} \)
we were in DEF of-N church and wanted us once
\( di \) \( \text{altöörs bekikə} \).
DEF.PL\( _{ströng} \) altars look-at

‘We were in the church of Waldniel and wanted to have a look at the altars.’

(Heinrichs 1954:99)

A challenge? Not necessarily
Relational nouns can serve usual role in relational bridging.
Variation with relational nouns

- Other languages have been reported to display variation precisely with this type of bridging.
- Ortmann (2014): Upper Sorbian exhibits generational variation: Strong article tón not obligatory in cases like:

  (17)  *Moje awto jo dórbjato do reparatury, (tón) motor be kaput*
  ‘My car needed repairing, the motor was broken’

- Book-author bridging requires strong article for all speakers.
- Judgments reported to be hard for Upper Silesian.

**Question:** What’s behind variation (and change) here?
The basic semantics can account for the considered cases.
From this perspective, we then seem to be dealing with pragmatic variation of sorts.
This requires exploration and explanation, but doesn’t necessarily undermine the weak/strong analysis.
Haitian Creole exhibits a contrast that seems to go substantially beyond weak vs. strong (with bare vs. ‘marked’ forms)

No Bridging contrast (like Amern) (all with overt correlate (as opposed to Null) form)

But in addition:
- Overt form with basic ‘larger/immediate situation’ uses
- Bare form only with ‘complete functional descriptions’
- Relation of ‘la’ to domain of only, superlatives
Haitian Creole

**Weak**

Yè, _mwen viste yon vil provens_. _Meri a pi wo ke _legliz_ _la_.

Yesterday I visit one town province _town-hall DEF_ more high than _church DEF_

‘Yesterday I visited a town in the province. _The town hall_ was higher than _the church_.’

(Wespel, 2008, p. 114; source: (E.F.36.9.))

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**Strong**

_Eli te renmen liv la, e kounye a li vle rankontre otè a._

Eli PST love book DEF and now DEF she want meet _author DEF_

‘Eli loved the book, and now she wants to meet _the author_.’

(Wespel, 2008, p. 114; source: (E.F.32.))
The contrast in Haitian Creole

(18) *papa Mari*  
‘the father of Mary’  
(NOT a possessive, according to Wespel, 2008)

(19) *Pyé se sèl gason nan fanmi li.*  
P COP only boy in family his  
‘Peter is the only boy in his family.’ (Wespel, 2008, p. 118; source: (E.F.76.20.a.))

(20) *Fanmi sa a, se yon gwo fami, men Pyé se sèl gason*  
family DEM DEF COP INDF big family but P COP only boy  
an.  
DEF  
‘This family is big, but Peter is the only boy.’ (Wespel, 2008, p. 119; source: (E.F.76.20.b.))

(parallel contrasts with superlatives)
At odds with weak/strong contrast a lá Schwarz (2009)
Weak article with global uniques is a core case for Schwarz (2009)
Are we dealing with a fundamentally different contrast?
(If so - how did it emerge from French, in contrast to, e.g., Mauritian Creole, with standard weak/strong distinction?)

Next: Sketch of an alternative analysis (building on Wespel 2008)
Wespel (2008): *la* indicates use of a ‘resource situation variable’

- **Variation**: *la* indicates that situation pronoun ≠ *topic* of its clause (i.e., free or bound from up higher Percus, 2000)
- Overt phrases within the DP (e.g., relatum DP, PP) can provide s-variable value directly, making *la* unnecessary: *papa Mari, plafon chanm mwen* (‘the ceiling of my room’)

- Interestingly, there is variation corresponding to situational uniqueness through common knowledge vs. anaphoricity

(21) a. *Kote manje mwen?*
   
   where meal my (relative to topic situation?)

   b. *Kote manje mwen an?*
   
   where meal my DEF (previous mention)

   ‘Where is my meal?’ (Valdman 1977a:116)
Additional Issues for Situational Analysis

- Required assumption: global uniques require situation pronoun
- Relation between ‘la’ and situations/intensional contexts:
  - Relation of presence of ‘la’ to *de re* readings?
  - *la* occurs on clauses in HC as well - another place for situation pronouns?
- Relation between Haitian and Mauritian ‘la’-correlates: different paths to similar but distinct systems: roughly: anaphoric individual variables vs. situation variables?
Further complications

- So far:
  - Pragmatic variations, including lack of bridging contrast, e.g., in Amern
  - Different contrast, with ‘strong article’ use even for global uniques
- A further set of languages, e.g., Bangla, Jinyun, possibly Cantonese
  - No bridging contrast
  - Bare form for certain larger situation uses, Bare Classifier (=strong?) for others?
- **Possibly related**: ‘general vs. specific definites’ in Cantonese and Lithuanian (Jenks 2016, Sereikaite 2016)
- **Question**: Is this one gradient spectrum after all?
Semantic vs. Pragmatic Uniqueness

An alternative gradient analysis (Löbner, 1985, 2011; Ortmann, 2014):
Semantic vs. Pragmatic Uniqueness

- **Semantic** uniqueness:
  unambiguous based on noun alone (context-independent)

- **Pragmatic** uniqueness:
  unambiguous based on (linguistic or extra-linguistic) context

[...] the distinction between semantic and pragmatic uniqueness is the basis of all conceptually governed article splits, in that a shift towards an IC [Individual Concept] or FC [Functional Concept] is overtly signaled.

(Ortmann, 2014, p. 296)
**Type Distinctions**

Lexical type-distinction between noun types

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Monadic</th>
<th>Polyadic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Non-unique</strong></td>
<td><strong>Sortal</strong> nouns</td>
<td><strong>Relational</strong> nouns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(pragmatic)</td>
<td><em>dog, stone</em></td>
<td><em>sister, finger</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>(e, t)</em></td>
<td>*(e, <em>(e, t))</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Unique</strong></td>
<td><strong>Individual</strong> nouns</td>
<td><strong>Functional</strong> nouns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(semantic)</td>
<td><em>Sun, prime minister</em></td>
<td><em>father, head</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>(e, e)</em></td>
<td><em>(e, e)</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(adapted from Ortmann, 2014)
A scale of uniqueness, ‘defined according to the degree of invariance of reference of nominal expressions’ (Ortmann, 2014):

(22) **Scale of Uniqueness**
deictic sortal noun < anaphoric sortal noun < SN with establishing relative clause < relational DAA* < part-whole DAA, non-lexical functional nouns, < lexical individual nouns/functional nouns < proper names < personal pronouns

(Ortmann, 2014, p. 314; adapted from Löbner (2011))

*DAA = Definite Associate Anaphora ≈ Bridging
Issues

- Are uniqueness-based type differences *well-motivated*?
- How can the measure for the uniqueness scale be *made precise in formal terms*?
- No meaning contrast between forms
- Compositionality Challenges
  - ‘unambiguous based on noun’ - not noun phrase!
- What is the *analysis of covariation*?
Definites in Contextually Supplied Situations

Sortal nouns of various sorts can be turned functional through appropriate contexts - variation on (6b) (where strong was required):

Context: Hans, who works at a ministry, and his wife are talking about what has been going on at work.

(23) (a) What happened to the proposal you drafted?

(b) Der Vorschlag wurde in der Kabinettssitzung gestern vom \textit{Minister} vorgestellt, aber 7 \textit{SPD-Minister} haben dagegen gestimmt.

‘The proposal was introduced by the minister in yesterday’s cabinet meeting, but 7 SPD-ministers voted against it.’
(23b) ‘The proposal was introduced by the\textsubscript{weak} \textsubscript{s\textsubscript{1}} minister in yesterday’s cabinet meeting, but 7 SPD-ministers voted against it.’

- There are several ministers in the topic situation
- Nonetheless, the\textsubscript{weak} minister is felicitous here
- It is interpreted relative to the contextually salient situation of Hans’ work place
- Does this result in different lexical entry? (if merely context-motivated type-shift, it should require strong article)
- \textbf{Aside:} Clearly different contrast than in Haitian Creole analysis, where resource situation would require ‘strong’ article
Potential Strength: Predicts Variation

- The posited scale provides a fairly fine-grained spectrum for language variation
- Applied both synchronically and diachronically (Ortmann, 2014)

**Prediction:** In principle, we should find cut-offs for article contrasts at each point of the scale.

**Questions:**
- Does variation fit on that scale, and
- is it as fine-grained as predicted?
Revisiting Haitian Creole

- Haitian Creole:
  - ‘father of Mary’ → no ‘la’
  - ‘sun’ → ‘la’

- uniqueness scale has global uniques on par with functional nouns with explicit arguments

- Any plausible addition of scale differences would lead to split predicting opposite direction for contrast

- ‘la’-related contrast with ‘only’ (and superlatives) not accounted for by split on uniqueness scale

- Finally, it’s not clear that there is as much fine-grained variation as uniqueness scale would predict

- If we have to add more fine-grained variation into article-semantics, another approach is needed.
Summary

- Article **contrast** found in **many languages**
- Semantically **largely uniform**, in line with Schwarz (2009)
- Analysis of contrast directly impacts perspective on definite bare NPs (suggestive evidence for **Null D**)
- **Additional variation** in article contrast **may require orthogonal account**
- Further work needed to assess full range of variation, and the need for gradient distinctions (e.g., Mainland Scandinavian, Bulu (Barlew, 2014))

**The good news:** We now have the tools in place for a more extensive cross-linguistic assessment (and we get to reap some of the fruit already at this workshop!)
Thank You!


Hofherr, Patricia Cabredo. 2013. Reduced definite articles with restrictive relative clauses. In Patricia Cabredo Hofherr & Anne Zrbi-Hertz (eds.), *Crosslinguistic studies on noun phrase structure and reference*, BRILL.


