

Eliminating D

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A common practice in generative grammar is to assume, in line with Abney (1987), Szabolcsi (1987) and much related work, that (in)definite articles encode D as suggested by (1).

- (1) a. (In)definite articles = D
b. [_{DP} [_D the [_{NP} nice boy]]]

The equation in (1a), and its syntactic representation in (1b), implies that D is a primitive syntactic category, arguably present in all languages (cf. Longobardi 1994), or subject to parametric variation (cf. Chierchia 1998). This view is not unproblematic, though. First, while most modern Romance and Germanic languages (e.g., French, English) have (in)definite articles, these were not present in the relevant source languages (e.g., Latin) or at earlier stages of their development (e.g., Old English). Accordingly, D is a derivative category in these languages. Second, many languages of the world (e.g., Sinitic, Kwa) do not have (in)definite articles of the Indo-European type, but encode definiteness by other syntactic devices that are not expressions of D (e.g., pre- vs. post-verbal position, classifiers, modifiers, see Cheng & Sybesma 1999, Aboh 2004a). In Kwa, for instance, bare nouns freely occur in argumental and non-argumental positions, where they can be interpreted as (in)definite or generic depending on context. These ‘radical’ bare noun languages therefore seem not to require D, unlike Germanic and Romance. Third, Bošković (2008, 2009) argues that the absence/presence of articles in languages correlates with very specific clausal properties of which some are summarized under (2).

Properties	Languages without article	Languages with article
Left-branch extraction	yes	no
Adjunct extraction	yes	no
Scrambling (e.g., long distance scrambling from finite clause)	yes	no
Multiple wh-fronting	yes	no
Clitic doubling	no	yes
Transitive nominals with two genitives	no	yes
Island effect in head-initial relatives	yes	no
Majority reading of MOST	no	yes
Negative raising	no	yes

Table 1: The DP/NP parameter (adapted from Bošković 2008)

These properties do not apply to all the relevant languages (e.g., Kwa), and may turn out to be language specific or areal, but they suffice to illustrate the correlation for some languages at least (e.g., Slavic). These facts would indicate that the differences between languages with articles and bare noun languages derive from clausal properties rather than from a mere parameter that regulates the pronunciation or availability of D cross-linguistically. Given this state of affairs, it is perfectly legitimate to ask:

- (3) a. What conceptual motivation do we have for postulating the category D as a syntactic category (independent of clausal properties)?
b. Why do (in)definite articles develop in some languages but not in others?

In addressing (3a) Szabolcsi (1987, 1994) argues, on the basis of Hungarian, that articles come in two types: D, a subordinator comparable to C, and Det, a nominal expression of

agreement comparable to INFL. D hierarchically precedes Det, but is selected from the lexicon in agreement with the definiteness and quantificational features of the noun phrase that are expressed by Det (4a). In addition, D has the property to turn the nominal predicate into an argument (see also Longobardi 1994). In terms of the cartographic approach to clause structure, Aboh (2004b) argues that, similarly to the clausal left periphery, the nominal periphery involves topic and focus projections (TopP and FocP) whose specifiers host topic and focused constituents (4b).

- (4) a. [DP [D [Nominal-Infl...[DetP [Det [...NP...]]]]]]
 b. [DP... [D... [NumP... [Num...[FP...[F...N...]]]]]]

As (4b) shows, TopP and FocP project between DP, the highest projection of the system, which expresses the interface between the discourse and the nominal expression, and NumP, the lowest projection, which links the D-system to the nominal I(nflectional)-system or INFL. NumP encodes the agreement features and certain referential features (e.g., number, deixis) that parallel those of the nominal INFL. In terms of this analysis, noun phrases involve covert predication of which the noun head functions as a predicate of the referent of the DP. This would mean that the nominal INFL (i.e., FP in the representation 4b) includes a subject position that may host the possessor in possessive constructions (see Campbell 1996).

According to these views therefore, D is a legitimate syntactic category on a par with C. But if D is the nominal equivalent of C, the question arises why the computational system allows such a redundant category.

This paper argues that there is no category D in the strict sense, but C, which may take the form of so-called articles when it heads a nominal predicate (Hiraiwa 2005). More explicitly, D is a mere label used to refer to a nominal C(omplementizer). This view has the immediate typological consequence that languages that develop (in)definite articles also seem to be those that have some form of (pro)nominal complementizers. While this fact could appear a pure accident when one focuses on Romance and Germanic only, a survey of genetically and typologically different languages shows that ‘radical’ bare noun languages (e.g., Gbe) systematically lack both (pro)nominal complementizers and (in)definite articles. Given this intimate link between the C-system and the articles assumed to realize D, I conclude that the development of (in)definite articles in languages where they are found is a reflex of the development of some expression of the C-system in the same languages (e.g., Latin vs. French).

This analysis is compatible with data from Gungbe, Hebrew, and Haitian where it is shown that certain functional items (e.g., definiteness or specificity markers) that typically occur within what is assumed to be the determiner system under current minimalist analyses also realize the C-system (Siloni 1995, Aboh 2004a). Finally, if D is the label for nominal C, we can reduce the number of phases to just two (i.e., C, p), where ‘little p’ stands for predicates in general (i.e., V, N, A).

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