

DP/NP distinctions in Kwa languages

Imke Driemel¹, Abigail Anne Bimpeh², Reginald Duah¹

¹Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, ²Leibniz-Zentrum ZAS

Introduction. Debates about the syntactic status of determiners range from positing DP shells across all languages (Abney 1987, Szabolcsi 1987, Longobardi 1994, Salzmann 2020) to a parameterized view where only a subset of languages have the DP layer (Chierchia 1998, Dayal 2004, Bošković 2005, Despić 2015) to the rejection of DP structure in all languages (Bruening 2009, 2020, 2022). This talk will approach the DP/NP question from a novel perspective assuming that languages reflect the type of definiteness in their syntactic size. Reasons to believe that this is the case come from languages where anaphoric definites are realized with a determiner (1a,2a), while uniqueness based definites like *moon*, *sun*, *pope* are realized as bare nouns (1b,2b).

(1) *Akan (Kwa), spoken in Ghana*

a. Mè-tò-ò àtààdéé bí ònórà. àtààdéé ***(nó)** yé fè.
1SG-buy-PST dress INDEF yesterday dress DEF COP nice
'I bought a dress yesterday. The dress is nice.' (Bombi 2018)

b. *Context: The beginning of a documentary on the solar system...*

Ewia ***(nó)** yé nsoroma.
sun DEF is star
'The sun is a star.' (Owusu 2021)

(2) *Ewe (Kwa), spoken in Ghana and Togo*

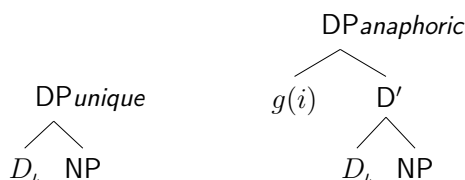
a. Me tù nyɔnuvi kple ɲutsuvi aɖe. Me ga kpɔ ɲutsuvi
1SG met woman.DIM and man.DIM INDEF 1SG REP see man.DIM
***(la)** ɲukeke la me.
DEF day.break DEF inside
'I met a boy and a girl. I saw the boy again the next day.' (fieldwork)

b. *Context: The beginning of a documentary on the solar system...*

ɲɔ **(ɔ)** nye ɣleti.
sun DEF is star
The sun is a star. (fieldwork)

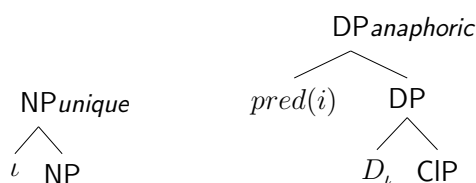
Hypotheses. Schwarz (2009) proposed that both types of definites constitute DPs and result from D denoting an ι -operator, but that anaphoric definites come with an index merged in the specifier of DP, see $g(i)$ in (3), in contrast to uniqueness based definites. Under this theory, the bare nouns in (1b,2b) would receive a zero determiner. Both types of definites, however, are of the same size.

(3) Schwarz (2009):



In contrast, Jenks (2018) proposes that weak definites constitute NPs, where an ι -type shift creates uniqueness, but strong definites are DPs, see (4). The analysis is based on languages like Mandarin, which show a contrast between bare nouns and DPs wrt. the two types of definites.

(4) Jenks (2018):



Under Jenks' account, we should expect size effects between unique and anaphoric definites. Under Schwarz's account, there should be no size differences in bare argument languages such as Akan and Ewe.

New diagnostic. Kwa languages like Akan and Ewe have productive resumption patterns. For Akan in particular, it has been observed that the tail of a movement dependency can be realized as a gap if it corresponds to an indefinite argument (5a). This is contrasted with movement of definite arguments which leave behind a pronoun. We illustrate the latter point with (5b), though note that Saah (1994) did not provide a context.

(5) a. *Context: Students A and B talk about renting uniforms at school. A asks: 'Will you ask the headmaster?' B says:*


Daabi. ɔkyerɛ̀kyeɛ̀ni_i na me-be-bisa ____i kane.
 no teacher FOC 1SG-FUT-ask first
 'No. I will ask a (random) teacher first.' (Georgi and Hein 2021)

b. [ɔbaa no]_i na me huu no_i
 woman DEF FOC I saw 3SG.RES
 'It's the woman I saw.' (Saah 1994)


Georgi and Hein (2021) argue that resumption in Akan comes about via partial lower copy deletion: chain reduction for movement chains only deletes NP. Non-

specific indefinites are NPs, hence the gap (6a). For DP-arguments the D head remains, spelled out as a pronoun (6b).

(6) a. $[_{NP} \text{ɔkyerɛ̀kyeɛ̀ni}]_i$ na me-be-bisa $[_{NP} \text{ɔkyerɛ̀kyeɛ̀ni}]_i$ kane (5a)



b. $[_{DP} [_{NP} \text{ɔbaa}] \text{no}]_i$ na me huu $[_{DP} [_{NP} \text{ɔbaa}] \text{no}]_i$ (5b)



In our fieldwork, we applied the resumption test to indefinites and the two types of definites in Ewe and Akan with different outcomes, shown in (7).

| | indefinite | anaphoric | unique |
|----------|------------|-----------|---------|
| (7) Akan | gap | pronoun | gap |
| Ewe | pronoun | pronoun | pronoun |

The results from Akan provide evidence for the DP/NP account proposed by Jenks (2018). Unique definites are NPs, thereby leaving a gap. For Ewe, we conclude that nominal arguments are always DPs but the determiner displays a zero allomorph. This assumption aligns with the observation that the determiner seems to be optional for unique definites in Ewe (2b).

Outlook. A number of syntactic diagnostics have been proposed for detecting the presence versus absence of D-layers, including Left Branch Extraction, double genitives, binding, neg raising, and others (Bošković 2005, 2008, 2009, Bošković and Gajewski 2011, Despić 2013). We will apply these diagnostics in Ewe and Akan to see in how far they track with our results from resumption.

References

- Abney, S. P. (1987). *The English Noun Phrase in its Sentential Aspect*. PhD thesis, MIT.
- Bombi, C. (2018). Definiteness in Akan: Familiarity and uniqueness revisited. In Maspong, S., Stefánsdóttir, B., Blake, K., and Davis, F., editors, *Proceedings of SALT 28*, pages 141–160. Linguistic Society of America.
- Bošković, Željko. (2005). On the locality of left branch extraction and the structure of NP. *Studia Linguistica*, 59:1–45.
- Bošković, Željko. (2008). What will you have, DP or NP? In Elfner, E. and Walkow, M., editors, *Proceedings of NELS 37*, pages 101–114. GLSA, Amherst.
- Bošković, Željko. (2009). More on the no-DP analysis of article-less languages. *Studia Linguistica*, 63:187–203.

- Bošković, Željko. and Gajewski, J. (2011). Semantic Correlates of the NP/DP Parameter. In Lima, S., Mullin, K., and Smith, B. W., editors, *Proceedings of NELS 39*, pages 121–134. GLSA, Amherst.
- Bruening, B. (2009). Selectional asymmetries between CP and DP suggest that the DP hypothesis is wrong. In MacKenzie, L., editor, *University of Pennsylvania Working Papers in Linguistics 15.1: Proceedings of the 32nd Annual Penn Linguistics Colloquium*, pages 26–35. University of Pennsylvania, Pennsylvania.
- Bruening, B. (2020). The Head of the Nominal is N, Not D: N-to-D Movement, Hybrid Agreement, and Conventionalized Expressions. *Glossa: a journal of general linguistics*, 5:15. DOI: 10.5334/gjgl.1031.
- Bruening, B. (2022). Hebrew nominals do not require functional structure above the NP. *Glossa: a journal of general linguistics*, 7:1–45. DOI: 10.16995/glossa.5763.
- Chierchia, G. (1998). Reference to kinds across languages. *Natural Language Semantics*, 6:339–405.
- Dayal, V. (2004). Number marking and (in)definiteness in kind terms. *Linguistics and Philosophy*, 27:393–450.
- Despić, M. (2013). Binding and the Structure of NP in Serbo-Croatian. *Linguistic Inquiry*, 44:239–270.
- Despić, M. (2015). Phases, Reflexives, and Definiteness. *Syntax*, 18:201–234.
- Georgi, D. and Hein, J. (2021). Asymmetries in Asante Twi A'-movement: On the role of noun type in resumption. In Farinella, A. and Hill, A., editors, *Proceeding of NELS 51*, page 223–236, Amherst, MA. GLSA.
- Jenks, P. (2018). Articulated Definiteness without Articles. *Linguistics and Philosophy*, 26:287–350.
- Longobardi, G. (1994). Reference and Proper Names: A Theory of N-Movement in Syntax and Logical Form. *Linguistic Inquiry*, pages 609–665.
- Owusu, A. (2021). Definite indefinite stacking in Akan. Handout, Triple A 8, University of Singapore.
- Saah, K. K. (1994). *Studies in Akan syntax, acquisition and sentence processing*. PhD thesis, University of Ottawa.
- Salzmann, M. (2020). The NP vs. DP debate. Why previous arguments are inconclusive and what a good argument could look like. Evidence from agreement with hybrid nouns. *Glossa: a journal of general linguistics*, 5:83. DOI: 10.5334/gjgl.1123.
- Schwarz, F. (2009). *Two types of definites in natural language*. PhD thesis, University of Massachusetts Amherst.
- Szabolcsi, A. (1987). Functional categories in the noun phrase. In Kenesei, I., editor, *Approaches to Hungarian*, volume 2, pages 167–89.