

Issues about (in)definites and bare nouns

TerraLing user meeting

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- Some determiner systems (based on fieldwork/languages I worked on), how to adjust our current definitions, expand these, and further explore these.
- Squib 1: Samoan (Polynesian.)
 - The definite/familiar vs indefinite distinction does not hold.
 - .. explore a possible link to 'existence determiners' (Lillooet (Salish) (? (Salish), ? on augments in Nata (Bantu))?) (+ think about how to do so)
- Squib 2
Languages with a clear "definite" article, where the definite article has other uses than definiteness/familiarity.
 - Malagasy (Western Austronesian) ?, ??, ?, ?.
 - A link to relative clauses? (Maasai ?). In particular ? for Malagasy and nominalizations.

0.1 Samoan articles: puzzling distribution

Data drawn from UCLA fieldmethods database on Samoan (2007/2008¹, Vincent Homer's squib (Nov 2007) *The Samoan Articles*, ?, ?, and ?.

- Background.
 - (1) "VSO", Prep, N POSS, Postverbal Case markers (\hat{H} abs), Ergative-Absolutive Case marking.
 - a. VSO: TOP/PRES C_T S.CL Neg (Adv) T(AM) "Vp" (FOC) S O PP/CP
 - b. Postverbal scrambling (*syntax of post (and pre) predicate domain poorly understood*).
- (Form of) Two 'articles': in complementary distribution:
le_{sg}/∅_{pl} and se_{sg}/ni_{pl}.²

¹Thanks to John Fruean for sharing his language with us. Most standard Samoan orthographic conventions are followed, where ' is ? . I will use ŋ instead of g, annotate length with : . A

²A third article [si] (sg) [ni na(:)i] (pl) = 'D. dear', which also has a diminutive form, not discussed here

- No indefinite article.
- – the articles occur in the leftmost position of DPs: "D" (or D1 > D2).)
le_{sg/0pl} (somehow) presupposes existence, not (in)definiteness/specificity/familiarity
se_{sg/nipl} –(roughly) in intentional contexts, no presupposition of existence, NPI, free choice.
 – question: what could this tell us about the building blocks of determiner systems.
 – concretely: TerraLing Dataset, and how to further develop the dataset.

Which elements must have an article, which elements can be bare? (regardless of context/meaning)

(2) Articles obligatory:

le_{sg}: count, *mass*, generic (predicate external DPs);
 nominal copula constructions: predicate nominals (possibly only *se*), "equatives" (possibly *se*) and *le_{sg}*
 Demonstratives. *ART* Dem *N* and *ART* *N* (Art) Dem)
 Possessives: ART POSS (clitic) N; Art... N ... POSS DP

(3) No article (for predicate external DPs): ^a.

- Proper names (but (?can/?must) get *se*)(under negation).
- Pronouns (preverbal pronouns, postverbal pronouns, clitics, locative pronouns)
- Vocatives
- "pseudo-incorporated" objects. ? (possibly in postverbal focus position) lack the D article (but are phrasal, i.e. can have relative clause modifiers, or adjectival modifiers).

(4) No article for O in V + O "compounds."

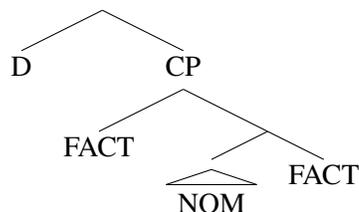
^anot understood: *ai* 'who' is bare; but *a:* 'what' is preceded by *le*

- Nominalization: *le* nominalizes different sizes of verbal projections.
 (lit: the [pig's not having been well fed]).

(5) 'o *le* le: fafapa-ina lelei o *le* pua'a (6.23)
 PRES/TOP *LE* NEG feed-INA good POSS LE pig
 the fact that the pig is not well fed

'o *le* le: fafapa-ina lelei o *se* pua'a (6.23)
 PRES/TOP *LE* NEG feed-INA good POSS *SE* pig
 the fact that no pig is well fed

(6)



FACT is the predicate taking a nominalization as its subject, and raises to Spec, CP ?. (See ? for Maasai nouns, and among others ? for nominalizations (add refs))

– add property definition(s) for predicate nominals do they require an article

– add property definition(s) for articles in possessive constructions.

Ask for each form: a. can be bare yes/no b. can have an article yes/no c. must have an article yes/no

– develop property definitions for nominalizations. Minimally:

Can an "article" be used as a nominalizer? yes/no

0.2 Interpretation

- **le** DPs can have the (expected) definite interpretations.

But, the following stand out:

- .. must occur with mass Ns

(7) 'o le pusi e fie'fie i **le** susu
PRES LE cat GEN like AT **le** milk
'The cat likes milk

- .. must occur with global uniques entities (*sun, moon, sky, clouds*)(need to check larger situation uniques president, minister, ..)

e oso **le** la:
GENR rise LE sun

'the sun rises'

- ... Generic interpretations:

(8) e 'ai e **∅** liona **∅** manu
E eat ERG **∅**(pl) lion **∅**(pl) animals
Lions eat animals (just like a mass Ns, the equivalent of English bare plurals take the plural variant of: le.)

(9) E 'ai- na **le** ŋata
GEN eat- NA LE snake
lit. the.sg /A.sg snake can be eaten/ Snakes are edible.

So far so good....

- However **le** DPs can also get an indefinite interpretation (in extensional contexts):
 - ...used to introduce new referents (in the context): → not definite/specific/familiar)

- (10) 'o le ulugali'i fa:nau I a la: tama 'o le teine 'o Sina
 PRES LE couple give.birth LE =a(poss) 3(du) child 'o LE girl 'o Sina.
 There was a couple who had give birth to a child of theirs, a girl called Sina. (MH. 6.37)

– ..can be interpreted as indefinite:

- (11) 'o lae 'ou te 'ai-a le maŋo
 O LEA 1st TE eat-A *H.abs* le mango
 I am eating a mango.

– can occur as the pivot in existential constructions (*i.ai*: possibly 'at there') which show the definiteness effect.

- (12) 'o lae iai le pusi i totonu o le fale
 O LAE IAI LE cat at inside O_{poss} LE house
 "There is a cat in the house".

– ... in possessive constructions:

- (13) E iai I a'u ta'avale
 GEN exist IE .A_{poss} 1st car
 lit. *my car exists*: 'I have a car'. *IE is the D of the head N, car, not of the possessive pronoun*'

- (14) le Distribution covers a definite and indefinite D.
 Syncretism?
 Is this a D with an existence presupposition?

0.3 *le* vs *se*

- le.sg scopes above negation. se, occurs in the scope of negation/ intensional contexts (examples from Homer, 2007.)

- (15) *Definite scopes above negation*
 e le:ai le ma:sima i luŋa o
 GEN NEG.exist LE salt at top of
 le laulau
 LE table
 The salt is not on the table'

- (16) se in scope of NEG
 e le:ai se ma:sima i luŋa o
 GEN NEG.exist SE salt at top of
 le laulau
 LE table
 There is no salt on the table'

- (17) *Definite in an intensional context*
 'o lea su'e e le tama:loa le fa'i
 PRES PROG look.for ERG LE man LE banana
 The man is looking for the banana

(18) *se* indefinite in an intensional context

'o lea su'e l e tama:loa **se** fa'i
PRES PROG look.for ERG LE man **SE** banana

The man is looking for s'm banana

- free choice. **se**

(19) 'Au mai (so) **se** niu!

take DIR (SO any coconut

Bring me any coconut [no matter which one]!

(20) tago (so) **se** mea

choose SO SE thing

Choose anything (you want) (speaker-doesn't-care-about (free choice-like?))

(21) Alu i **se** ou aiija e moe.

go to SE 2pl. family e moe.

Go to whoever your family is to sleep. (MH 6.53)

This seems to make a distinction between no commitment to existence/ or speaker-just-doesn't-care-about existence (free choice-like?)

Hypothesis (tentative) (**much remains to be sorted out**)

le: a existence determiner (a determiner/ 'article' with a presupposition of existence)^a

- **?**: speakers personal knowledge of the referent is required ('assertion-of-existence' D). vs **?belief-of-existence** determiners (augment in Nata)^b.

se: no commitment to existence, or speaker-doesn't-care-about existence (or specificity/reference ("free choice-like?)).

This will minimally require exploring the distribution of articles under negation (NegIndef, NPIs, PPI.). We made a first start on how to do this.

^a? on Lillooet (Salish), ? on augments in Nata (Bantu), and possibly many other Bantu languages.

^bin Nata, the augment disappears under negation

Good (but complicated) topic to explore: Salish, Bantu, Austronesian.

Can be build on some of the contexts in ?, ? and others

Historical development: Languages developed determiners over time. ?

?Cartography of the D region: forms.

	D1 _{familiar?}	.. > D2 _{existential}	.. > D3 _{?-existence}
Samoan	le	> le	> se
Nata	V-augment	V-augment	> <i>emptyset</i>
Lilloet			> ku
Malagasy	ny	<i>emptyset</i>	<i>emptyset</i>

Sometimes DPs headed by what clearly looks like a definite determiner are not definite/familiar but rather a D that heads a relative clause/ a nominalization.)