

THE PROPER APPROACH TO DEFINITE ARTICLES

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1. INTRODUCTION

Contrary to accepted wisdom, proper names can very well combine with definite articles:

- | | | |
|-----|--------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| (1) | a. the Seine, the Erie, the Atlantic | water bodies |
| | b. the Milky Way, the Broadway | former definite descriptions |
| | c. the Kennedys, the Netherlands | plurals |
| | d. the Bronx, the Ukraine | idiosyncratic cases |

Two sides to the puzzle:

- (morpho)syntactic: why do some but not all proper names have the definite article and how is this reflected in their syntax?
- semantic: what is the interpretation of the proprial article and how does it relate to the regular definite article?

Majority view, in both syntax and semantics: the proprial article is a semantic fluke

My proposal: **the proprial article is structurally and semantically identical to the regular definite article, which is itself a marker of definiteness rather than its semantic source:**

- the differences lie in the predicate
- & in the feature [proper] (independently motivated by dedicated proprial articles)

2. APPROACHES TO THE STRUCTURE AND COMPOSITION OF PROPER NAMES

Two types of approaches: simplex (simple meaning, simple structure) and complex

Syntactic and semantic complexity are not always taken to coincide

2.1. Semantics

Two views on the semantics of proper names:

Direct reference (Frege 1892, Marcus 1961, Kaplan 1979, Kripke 1980, Salmon 1986, also Abbott 2002, 2004, Leckie 2013, Rami 2014, Jeshion 2014a, b, 2015, Schoubye 2016, etc.): (in an argument position) *Alice* rigidly denote the individual Alice

Predicativism/quotation theories (Burge 1973, Geurts 1997, Thomsen 1997, Elbourne 2002, Matushansky 2005, 2006a, b, 2008, 2015b, Fara 2001, 2014, etc.): proper names are definite descriptions consisting of a null definite article and a restriction that is a **naming predicate**:

- (2) $[[\text{the Alice}]] = \lambda x [x \text{ IS CALLED } [\text{ælis}]]$

I obviously subscribe to the latter view

Matushansky 2008: proper names can appear in the predicate position

Further cross-linguistic evidence from Arabic, German, Greek, Icelandic, Hungarian, Korean, Latin, Pima, etc.

- (3)
- | | |
|----|--|
| a. | Renowned Victorian author Lewis Carroll was born [PRO Charles Lutwidge Dodgson]. |
| b. | Her uncle's death had made [her Lady Anne] and [her father Lord Holbrook]. |
| c. | In the end of the 20 th century the city was renamed St. Petersburg. |

Given the independent evidence for the existence of predicate proper names, it is reasonable to assume that their argument uses are derived by normal means

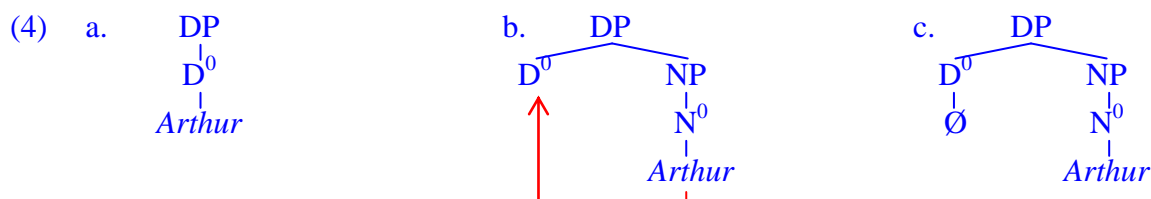
For other evidence see Sloat 1969, Geurts 1997, Anderson 2003 et seq., Matushansky 2008 et seq.

2.2. Syntax

Three approaches:

- WYSIWYG (no structure): proper names are Ds
Obvious problem: proprial articles
- head-movement (Longobardi 1994, 1999, Borer 2005, etc.)
- null determiner (Sloat 1969, Ghomeshi and Massam 2009, Fara 2015, etc.) or, as an alternative (Matushansky 2008), m-merger, Local Dislocation, conflation, etc.

General syntactic consensus: proper names are structurally DPs:



First impression: syntax supports the predicativist view

But (some) syntacticians do not think so, hence the “expletive definite article”

2.3. Predicativist reconciliation

First stab: the structure in (4b) or (4c), with D^0 containing the iota operator

Complications:

- featural constraints on the realization of D^0
- morphologically conditioned realization
- the syntax of non-restrictively modified proper names

Eventual proposal: **the proprial definite article is a definiteness marker**

3. PHI-FEATURES AND AN OVERT D^0

Generalization: non-default phi-feature values trigger the realization of the definite article

English: **syntactically plural proper names require an overt definite article** (*Athens* is not plural in English):

- (5) a. the Campbells, the Yorks familial or political clan
b. the Beatles, the Rolling Stones, the Monty Pythons band, company
c. the Mets, the Mikes, the Tigers baseball or football team, Army regiment
- (6) a. the Alps, the Rockies mountain chains
b. the Hebrides, the Orkneys archipelagoes
c. the Netherlands conglomerate countries
d. the Pleiades, the Hyades constellations

This is true for all languages where I have looked

Moltmann 2013 distinguishes several categories for **proper names in German**:

- names of people: no overt article in standard German
- names of churches and palaces: no overt article
- most toponyms (cities, villages, countries, continents, churches, palaces): no overt article
- names of mountains, lakes, temples: obligatory definite article

Matushansky 2015a: German proper names are **bare iff they are not specified for number or gender features**

- names of people: (may) have no formal gender
- names of churches and palaces: neuter (default)
- most toponyms (cities, villages, countries, continents, churches, palaces): neuter
- names of mountains, lakes, temples: (the gender of the corresponding sortal)

All plural proper names have an overt definite article

Near-ideal **double dissociation**: **all non-neuter toponyms require an overt definite article and there is no toponym without the definite article that is not neuter**:

- (7) a. der Irak, der Jemen... masculine
 b. die Schweiz, die Türkei... feminine
 c. die USA, die Niederlande... plural
- (8) München, Berlin, Frankfurt am Main... no gender (neuter)

Now what about neuter toponyms with an obligatory definite article (names of sub-regions)?

- (9) a. das Saarland 'Saarland', das Baskenland 'the Basque country'...
 b. Deutschland 'Germany', England

Proposal: [neuter] can be a feature (cf. Percus 2011)

In French, names of cities are bare, but names of countries are (mostly) overtly definite:

- (10) a. à Paris, à Nice, à Londres... (apparent exceptions: Le Caire, La Rochelle...)
 b. la France, le Canada, l'Égypte... (exception: Israël)

Hasselrot 1943/1944, Edwardsson 1968, Lomholt 1983: complex gender agreement patterns, a high degree of speaker confusion and variation:

- (11) **Fondée** en 1869, Kemi est **devenu** un centre industriel important. E271
 founded.FSG in 1869, Kemi is become.MSG a center industrial important
Founded in 1869, Kemi became an important industrial center.

French city names do not have gender!

Romanian (Meyer-Lübke 1890, Hoffman 1989, Cojocaru 2003, Gönczöl-Davies 2008, etc.): **overt article in some cases and for some genders**

Nominative/accusative: only feminine proper names ending in *-a-* are marked for definiteness (seen on the final vowel):

- (12) a. Maria, Ilinca, etc.
 b. Ion, Vasile, Alexandru, Luca, Carmen, Mimi, Irinel, Alice, Milagros

Table 1: Romanian declension (simplified)

	indefinite M	definite M	indefinite F	definite F
NOM/ACC	un inginer	inginerul	o ingineră	inginera
GEN/DAT	unui inginer	inginerului	unei inginere	inginerei

Definite article is overt and marked for case, number and gender; **the noun declines as well**

Feminine proper names ending in *-a-* decline as definites

In the syncretic genitive-dative case all proper names are marked for definiteness: feminine proper names ending in *-a-* have a synthetic form with a case-marked definite suffix, but masculine proper names and feminine proper names ending in a consonant, *-i*, *-u*, etc., **have a periphrastic form with the definite article *lui***:

- (13) a. Mariei, Ilincăi, etc.
 b. lui Ion, lui Vasile, lui Alexandru, lui Luca
 c. lui Carmen, lui Mimi, lui Irinel, lui Alice, lui Milagros, etc.

With place names the same *lui* appears **after the name** under the same conditions:

The postnominal position of the definite article is due to an independent factors: the definite article is always realized on the first constituent in the NP (Grosu 1988, Dimitrova-Vulchanova and Giusti 1998, Dobrovie-Sorin and Giurgea 2006, among others)

- (14) a. România – României, Timișoara - Timișoarei
 b. Egipt – Egiptului, București - Bucureștiului

Gönczöl-Davies 2008

Empirical generalization: **the proprial article is overt when there are (more) features on it**

The features may vary from language to language

In English it is probably number and *inanimacy* (or number and count)

4. THE PROPRIAL ARTICLE AS THE ELSEWHERE REALIZATION

Generally asked question: what happens to D in anarthrous proper names?

Generally given answer: **it is a special case and goes unpronounced:**

- allomorphy: [definite] → Ø in the context of [proper]
- head-movement: D attracts N_[proper]
- morpho-syntactic process: m-merge/conflate/collapse [D+N_[proper]]

Question: what are **the conditions on article omission** then?

Answer: they **are negative!**

“Realize D as zero/attract N to D/m-merge N and D when D has no features except [proper]”

No process can be triggered by an absence of features

- a head-movement account is untenable (e.g., for Romanian, case is unvalued on both D and N, and these are the unmarked values of case)
- an m-merger account is untenable unless phi-specification can block it

Zero can only be an Elsewhere case of allomorphy

5. FOR THE FORMAL ENCODING OF THE PROPER/COMMON DISTINCTION

Interim conclusion: **the overtness of the proprial article has nothing to do with semantics**

Reasonable proposal: the proprial article is special

Evidence for [proper]: **dedicated proprial articles**, e.g., in Catalan or Fijian (Alderete 1998):

- (15) a. la Maria
 DEF Mary
- b. l' Enric
 DEF Henry
- c.

en	Joan
DEF	John

Catalan, Gili 1967:26 via Ghomeshi and Massam 2009

However, even in Catalan there are anarthrous proper names:

The dedicated proprial article is generally [+human] (but see Pons-Moll and Torres-Tamarit 2016)

- city names: (*la/*na) *Barcelona*
- [-familiar]: see Wheeler, Yates and Dols 1999 for dialectal differences
- in vocatives (very common cross-linguistically)
- in the predicate position (very common cross-linguistically)

The picture is quite plausibly the same: **the proprial article is overt when there are (more) features on it**

So the feature [proper] is morpho-syntactically quite real, but cannot be used to treat the zero allomorph as a non-default case

6. THE SEMANTICS OF THE PROPRIAL DEFINITE ARTICLE

Standard wisdom: the definite article returns the unique entity corresponding to its restriction (definition from Heim and Kratzer 1998:75):

Variations: familiarity, GQ, etc.

- (16) $\llbracket \text{the} \rrbracket = \lambda f : f \in D_{\langle e, t \rangle}$ and there is exactly one x such that $f(x) = 1$. the unique y such that $f(y) = 1$

Can this definition be used for the proprial definite article?

Clear evidence for treating proper names as definite descriptions comes from modification

Matushansky 2015b: restrictive modification is impossible if the restrictively modified proper name is treated as entity-denoting

- (17)  *the more famous Francis Bacon*

What about non-restrictive modification then?

- (18) a. And who can resist **the adorable Jane and Michael Banks**?
b. I came across this little clip of **the great Maria Callas** on youtube.

Two options:

- **incidental non-restriction** (set intersection equals one of the two sets)
- **structural distinction** (non-restrictive modifier is structurally distinct)

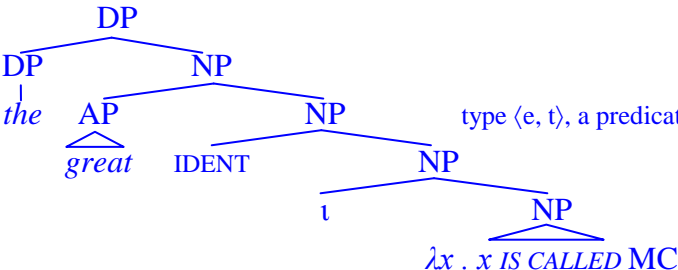
The former cannot be true:

- the DP *the famous Francis Bacon* is ambiguous, not vague
- non-restrictive modifiers are always higher than restrictive ones
- in Romance, genuinely non-restrictive APs are prenominal, restrictive APs must be post-nominal (same for proper names, see Noailly 1991)
- non-restrictive relative clauses have different syntax (but they attach to the DP)

Solution: the IDENT type-shift (Bach and Partee 1980, Partee and Bach 1984, Partee 1986) or the corresponding IDENT operator:

- (19) $\llbracket \text{IDENT} \rrbracket = \lambda x . \lambda y . x = y$

Treating IDENT as a syntactic node here is for expository purposes only:

- (20)  *the great Maria Callas*
- type $\langle e, t \rangle$, a predicate that can be intersected with (modified)
- type e , a referential proper name

Of course, if proper names are entity-denoting to begin with (cf. Longobardi 1994), it becomes easier, but what to do then with restrictive modification?

Now: **the iota operator (the semantics in (16)) does not correspond to the overt *the***

Objection: because it is a proper name!

Counter-objection: let's look at Catalan

- (21) a. en/*el Noam Chomsky
DEF.PN.MSG/DEF.MSG Noam Chomsky
Noam Chomsky
- b. el/*en famós Noam Chomsky non-restrictive
DEF.MSG/ DEF.PN.MSG famous.MSG Noam Chomsky
the famous Noam Chomsky
- c. *el famós en Noam Chomsky
DEF.MSG famous.MSG DEF.PN.MSG Noam Chomsky
the famous Noam Chomsky

Interim conclusion: **the meaning in (16) can be present without there being a proprial *the***

There exist a number of morphological and syntactic derivations based on a referential proper **name embedded in a larger NP structure** (cf. Boër 1975, Gary-Prieur 1991, 1994, Kleiber 1991, Jonasson 1992, see also Jeshion 2014a, b):

- (22) a. My daughter is such **a perfect little Ora**.
b. **Two Osama bin Ladens** came to the Halloween party.
c. Trafalgar Square is decorated by **an 18 foot Nelson**.
d. Putin is **a veritable Stalin**.

It seems unquestionable that **in all of these uses the reference of the proper name needs to be established**

In none of these cases does Catalan introduce an NP-internal proprial article (Coromina i Pou 2001:143-146)

With proper names, existential uniqueness can be present without there being an overt definite article

The proprial article itself is present only on the condition of existential uniqueness (see Matushansky 2008: predicate proper names are often bare)

7. THE SEMANTICS OF THE REGULAR DEFINITE ARTICLE

Non-restrictive modification is possible for common NPs as well:

- (23) a. **The industrious Greeks** built beautiful monuments. Solt to appear
b. **Her valuable books** were destroyed in the fire.

And the semantics in (16) cannot explain what happens in the predicate position:

- (24) Scott is not **the only author of *Waverley***. Coppock and Beaver 2012

Stowell 1991: inherently **singleton role predicates** are bare:

- (25) Jesse became **President/head of the department**.

But what about all the others?

Coppock and Beaver 2012, 2015: **the English definite article encodes only the uniqueness presupposition; existential force comes from elsewhere**

Other languages do not use the definite article in the predicate position at all

7.1. Double definiteness

There are three polydefinite structures that I am aware of:

- DP-apposition (Modern Greek, cf. Androutsopoulou 1995, Alexiadou and Wilder 1998, Kolliakou 2004, Lekakou and Szendroi 2007, etc.; cf. *Chomsky the linguist* and *Catherine the Great*, French superlatives (*l'étudiante la plus intelligente*))
 - doubling affixal articles (Norwegian and Swedish: Delsing 1988, Taraldsen 1990, Giusti 1993, Hankamer and Mikkelsen 2005, Schoorlemmer 2009, etc.)
- (26) *den hungriga mus.en* Swedish
 DEF hungry mouse.DEF
the hungry mouse
- definiteness agreement (Semitic: Borer 1988, 1999, Sichel 2002, Shlonsky 2004, Danon 2008, etc.; Albanian: Turano 2002)
- (27) *ha-baxura ha-intelligentit* Hebrew
 DEF-girl DEF-intelligent
the intelligent girl

Treating definiteness as a formal feature that can be uninterpretable makes it possible to have more than one DP-internal marker of this feature (like with gender or number)

7.2. Bare kind names

Known at least since Carlson 1977a, b: in Germanic, kind names are bare, unlike in Romance (see Zamparelli 2002 for an overview of the literature):

True for kinds that have the lattice structure (bare plurals and mass nouns), not under the taxonomic reading (*the Indian elephant*)

- (28) *I/*Ø pitbull sono impopolari in Inghilterra.* Zamparelli 2002
 DEF.MPL pitbull are unpopular in England
Pitbulls are unpopular in England.

Semantic explanations: Chierchia 1998, Dayal 2004, Farkas and Swart 2007, etc.

However, **adjectival kind names are not bare in Germanic** (cf. Glass 2014, McNally and de Swart 2015, de Swart, McNally and Richtarcikova [to appear], etc.):

- (29) a. **The creative** are more likely to be intrinsically (internally) motivated. Glass 2014
 b. **The familiar** is something dangerously wonderful

Adjectival modification is known to induce the presence of the article in proper names, but not in English kind names, in general

7.3. Exotic cases

Treating the definite article as a marker makes it possible for it to appear also on pronouns (in Fijian (Dixon 1988, Alderete 1998), Maori (Bauer 2003:109), Niuean (Massam, Gorrie and Kellner 2006), etc.)

...and fits in with what happens with pronominal articles (Postal 1969):

- (30) *we linguists, you guys*

...and accounts for why it appears in DPs whose definiteness is semantically determined (cf. Löbner 1985):

What I want here is a connection to semantic agreement, where the presence of agreement morphology triggers the suitable constraint on the denotation

(31) the best answer, the only solution, the first proposal, the king

Article omission in Norwegian “attributive” superlatives (Borthen 1998, 2000, 2003):

- (32) a. Jeg tar alltid inn på dyreste hotell. Norwegian, Borthen 1998
 I take always in on expensive.SUP.DEF hotel
I always stay in the most expensive hotel.
- b. Jeg tar alltid inn på det dyreste hotellet.
 I take always in on DEF expensive.SUP.DEF hotel.DEF
I always stay in the most expensive hotel.

It is not impossible that in some language the definite article is the locus of the iota operator
 But in more familiar languages we see a variation that argues against this view

8. THEORETICAL IMPLICATIONS

If the definite article is only a marker of definiteness with no semantics, **then a null proprial article has no interpretation on both interfaces**

Does this mean that there is in fact no D there?

This question is also asked about languages that have no articles

Reasonable alternative: the definite article is only the locus of the uniqueness presupposition (Coppock and Beaver 2012, 2015)

But then why do you need it with singleton-denoting predicates, as in (31)?

9. APPENDIX: ALTERNATIVE DERIVATIONS FOR PREDICATIVE NON-RESTRICTIVELY MODIFIED PROPER NAMES

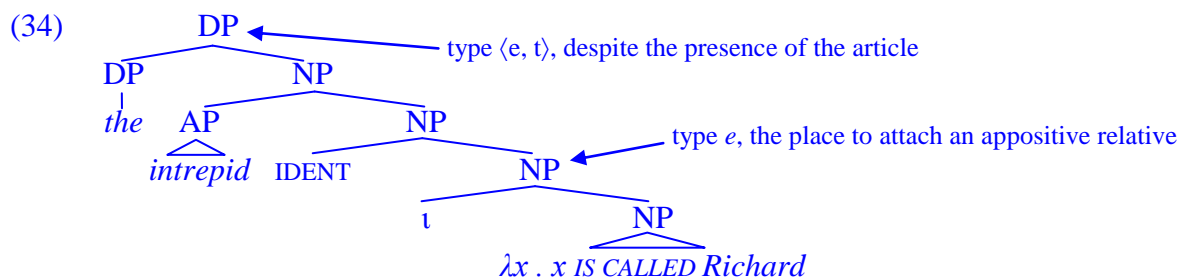
The Duke-of-York ι -IDENT sequence could be absent (this doesn’t preclude other syntactic differences)

Counter-objection: there is **evidence for NP-internal entity-denotation in non-restrictively modified proper names**:

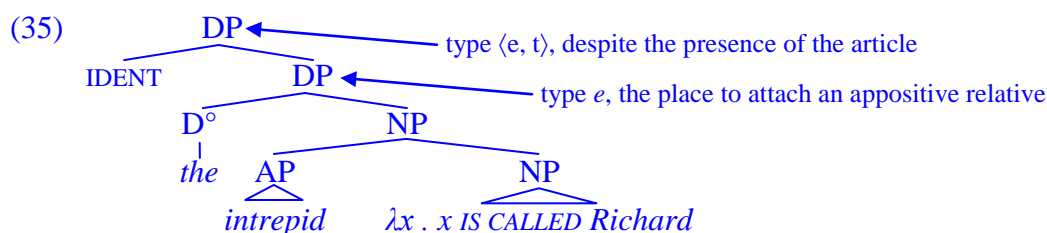
- (33) This boy was to become **the intrepid Richard Coeur-de-Lion**, who was rumored to not be afraid of anything.

Structure of the argument:

- the raising verb *become* takes a small clause as its complement, and therefore the modified proper name should be a predicate
- an appositive relative is only compatible with entity denotation (type e), therefore an e -type node μ
- st be present in the structure



Objection: It is, of course, possible that *the* corresponds to the iota operator (the semantics in (16)), the appositive relative is attached at the DP-level and there is IDENT on top of it



Counter-objection: **post-nominal appositive nominal modifiers** (*Jack the Ripper*). If *the* has the semantics in (16), how does it compose with its sister?

Further counter-objection: IDENT doesn't seem to be available in the predicate position (Fara 2001: #*The love of my life is tall, handsome, and John*)

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