The Semantic Import of (C)overt D

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1. Introduction
1.1. The problem

Languages that lack articles allow bare nouns (BNs) to be arguments without functional superstructure. These BNs are translated into English as indefinite or definite. Lithuanian (Baltic) and Innu-aimun (Algonquian) BNs display these properties.

(1) a. Žmogus   atvyko.   b. Atvyko   žmogus.   Lt
       žmog-us   atvyk-o   atvyk-o   žmog-us
       human-m.Nom.sg arrive-Past.3sg[1]   arrive-Past.3sg human-m.Nom.sg
       'The/a man arrived.'   'A/the man arrived.'
       ('the' slightly preferred)   ('a' strongly preferred)

    c. Atîk^u pimût-eu.   d. Pimût-eu   atîk^u.   IA
       caribou   walk-3   walk-3   caribou
       'A/the caribou was walking.'   'A/the caribou was walking.'

These facts elicit the following questions. First, are bare NPs associated with covert functional superstructure in all contexts (cf. Longobardi 1994, Progovac 1998), in no contexts (cf. Chierchia 1998, Bošković (2008), Bošković and Gajewski to appear), or in some contexts (cf. Franks and Pereltsvaig 2004, Ajíbóyè 2006)? Second, if BNs are at least sometimes associated with functional superstructure, what semantics is this functional superstructure associated with?

In answer to the first question, we claim that in some (perhaps most) contexts, BNs are associated with functional superstructure (D). However, in some contexts, they are simply NPs (cf. Franks and Pereltsvaig 2004; Ajíbóyè 2006). In answer to the second question, we claim that the semantics of the covert D varies. In Lithuanian, D is definite, but in Innu-aimn it is not definite. However, D always involves domain restriction.

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[1] Abbreviations used: Acc.- Accusative, conj – conjunctive morphology, Dat- Dative, det - determiner, f - feminine, Gen - Genitive, IA - Innu-Aimun, Ins - Instrumental, Loc - Locative, Lt - Lithuanian, m - masculine, n – nominalizer, neg - negation, Nom - Nominative, o – object, Past - past tense, partc - participle, pl - plural, pref - prefix, Pres - present tense, refl - reflexive, s – subject, sg – singular, tr - transitivizer.

1.2. Assumptions

Determiners vary cross-linguistically in their semantics. Thus D may encode definiteness, specificity (Samoan; Mosel and Hovdhaugen 1992), or deixis (Salish; Matthweson 1998, Gillon 2009).[2] In search for a covert D, we first consider if there are any universal features of D. We argue that the only universal feature is domain restriction (following Gillon 2009).

1.2.1. English

As is well known,[3] the English D *the* encodes definiteness. *The* is usually used in familiar contexts, whereas, in novel contexts, the indefinite article[4] *a* or BNs are used instead. Within a particular context, the English D the must be used for unique/maximal referents. English *the* is associated with familiarity and/or uniqueness.[5]

1.2.2. Skwxwú7mesh

In contrast to languages like English, Salish DPs generally do not distinguish between novel and familiar contexts (Matthewson 1998, Gillon 2006). In particular, Skwxwú7mesh DPs can be used in familiar and novel contexts (2).

(2) Na   kw'áy'   ta/ti/kwa/kwi   s.huhupit.[6]   (familiar/novel)
    rl   get.hungry   det   rabbit
    'The/a rabbit is hungry.'

Skwxwú7mesh DPs do not assert or presuppose the uniqueness of the referent in the context (3).

(3) Mí7shit-[t]s   chexw   ta   lapát.
    bring-1sg.o   2sg.s   det   cup
    'Bring me the cup.'
    (literally: 'bring me a cup')
    Consultant's comment: "You're not asking for a specific one."

Thus, Skwxwú7mesh determiners do not encode definiteness. Then, what can D encode? Is there anything universal in the semantics of D?

1.2.3. Universal feature of D: domain restriction

The interpretation of DPs is sensitive to the context in which they are uttered (Westerståhl 1984; von Fintel 1994, 1998, 1999; Martí 2003; Giannakidou 2004; Etxeberria 2005, among others). This is because DPs (usually)[7] cannot refer to all individuals in the world that match the NP description.

(4) a.   The rabbits were nibbling carrots.   b.   The rabbit was nibbling a carrot.

In (4) above, an unpronounced element (C) restricts the domain to the relevant rabbits. C is introduced by *the*, as shown in (5).

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[2] This is not meant to be an exhaustive list.

[3] As the facts are well known, we do not replicate the data here.

[4] *A* is not a determiner (that is, it does not occupy D). See Gillon (2006) for discussion.

[5] We are purposely remaining agnostic as to the nature of *the*; however, Gillon (2009) argues that *the* is better analyzed as encoding uniqueness, rather than familiarity. The familiarity effects arise from domain restriction.

[6] The period between the s and the h indicates that they are pronounced as /s/ and /h/ respectively, rather than as 'sh' or /ʃ/.

[7] If it just so happens there is only one referent, then a DP can refer to all of the individuals that match the NP description (e.g. *the sun*).

(5) $[\![\text{the}]\!] = \lambda P \max(\lambda x \, [P(x) \wedge C(x)])$ (max ensures uniqueness)

Domain restriction is also relevant for the Skwxwú7mesh determiners. If a referent is already in discourse, a DP will continue to refer to that referent (6)a. The denotation of the Skwxwú7mesh *ta* is provided in (6)b.

(6) a. Chen   nam   ch'áatl'am kwi chel'áklh.   S-en   menkw'ách-nexw   ta míxalh.
          1sg.s   go   hunt/track det yesterday   n-1   just look-tr   det bear
              S-en   men   kw'élash-t   ta míxalh.
              n-1   just   shoot-tr   det bear
          'I went hunting. I saw a bear$_i$. I shot the bear$_{i/*j}$.'

     b. $[\![\text{ta}]\!] = \lambda P \, f(\lambda x \, [P(x) \wedge C(x)])$ (f = choice function)

In sum, overt D may vary in its semantics. Thus, we hypothesize that semantics of the covert D will vary, too; however, D, overt or not, will always introduce domain restriction.

1.3. Hypothesis

We hypothesize that BNs are sometimes DPs and sometimes NPs. Further, we hypothesize that DPs are not always definite. Lithuanian has definiteness: Lithuanian BNs can be associated with definite interpretations without any particular conditions (§4.1). Innu-aimun, on the other hand, lacks definiteness (§4.2). However, D is always needed in anaphoric contexts, and it behaves much like D in Skwxwú7mesh. Further, the default for Lithuanian BNs is DP (§3.1), whereas the default for Innu-aimun is NP (§3.2).

This paper has the following structure. In §2, we provide diagnostics for the presence of D, as well as for the semantics of D. In §3, we examine the syntax of BNs in Lithuanian and Innu-aimun. In §4, we examine the semantics of BNs in both languages. In §5 we provide our proposal. In §6, we discuss some implications of our analysis.

2. Diagnostics for the presence and semantics of D
2.1. Diagnostics for the presence of D

First, the ability to take wide or narrow scope is evidence for the presence or absence of structure. Less structure is usually associated with the ability to take narrow scope (see, e.g. Borthen 2003). If this generalization holds true, we expect that if BNs take narrow scope, they are reduced (perhaps merely NPs), or if they take wide scope or escape scope, they have functional superstructure.

Second, if D is associated with domain restriction (Gillon 2006; cf. Westerståhl 1984; von Fintel 1994, 1998, 1999; Martí 2003), and BNs are DPs, anaphoric use is expected. Two BNs in a stretch of discourse should be able to refer to the same entity. Not only they should be able to be used anaphorically, but they will have to. Any subsequent use of the same bare noun should involve reference to the same entity (7).

(7) The cat and the dog$_i$ were fighting. The dog$_{i/*j}$ was winning.

Finally, if BNs are DPs, they will obey the law of contradiction (Russell and Whitehead 1910-13, Barnes 1969, Löbner 2002), because DPs are of type *e* (8).[8]

(8) #The cat was large and the cat wasn't large.

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[8] There are potentially counterexamples to this. See Chung and Ladusaw (2004) and Gillon (2006) for determiners that do not change the type of the NP to *e*. These determiners have a very different semantics from the kind of determiner we are looking for in Innu-aimun and Lithuanian, however: they never receive definite interpretations and they never allow the nominal to take wide scope. We ignore this kind of determiner as a potential candidate.

2.2. Diagnostics for the semantics of D

If we discover that there is a covert D, we will also want to know what interpretation this D has. Are covert Ds always definite? Or can they also be like Skwxwú7mesh determiners? Testing for uniqueness will disambiguate between truly definite and not definite covert determiners.

2.3. Summary

We claim that languages can vary with respect to the overtness of their determiners, as well as the semantics of the (c)overt determiners.

Table 1. (C)overt determiner semantics

	Overt	Covert
Definite	English the	Lithuanian ∅
Non-definite	Skwxwú7mesh ta	Innu-aimun ∅

3. The syntax of BNs in Lithuanian and Innu-aimun

Table 2. Diagnostics for the presence of D: Lithuanian and Innu-aimun

Test	NP	DP	Lt BNs	IA BNs
scope	narrow	wide	wide	both
potential anaphoric use	✗	✓	✓	✓
obligatory anaphoric use	✗	✓	✓	✗
law of contradiction	✗	✓	✓	✗

3.1. Lithuanian
3.1.1. Scope

BNs in Lithuanian prefer to take wide scope. This is consistent with a DP structure.

(9) Kiekviena moteris bučiavo vaiką.
    kiekvien-a moter-is buč-iavo vaik-ą
    every-f.Nom.sg woman-f.Nom.sg kiss-Past3sg child-m.Acc.Sg
    'Every woman was kissing a child.'
    Out of the blue context:
    (i) every woman kissed a particular, same child   (wide; DP)
    (ii) ??every woman kissed a different child   (??narrow)

For example, the most natural interpretation of example (9) above would be wide scope. However, in the right context (e.g., an ice-cream commercial being filmed on a playground), a narrow scope interpretation becomes available.[9] Note that the default interpretation is wide, however, and that this is associated with a DP structure.

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[9] To unambiguously force the narrow scope interpretation, grammatically overt means are necessary, such as adding *po* 'per'.

  (i) Kiekviena moteris bučiavo po vaiką.
    kiekvien-a moter-is buč-iavo po vaik-ą
    every-f.Nom.sg woman-f.Nom.sg kiss-Past3sg per child-m.Acc.Sg
    'Every woman was kissing a child each.'

3.1.2. Anaphoric use: optional

In some cases, BNs can refer to two different referents. (This appears to be fairly marginal, however.) Below, *medžiu/medį* 'tree' can introduce two different referents within the same story. This is consistent with an NP structure.

(10) a. Jis   pamatė   dygliakiaulę   tupinčią
         jis   pa-mat-ė   dygliakiaul-ę   tup-inč-ią
         he.Nom.sg   pref-see-Past.3sg   porcupine-f.Acc.sg   sit-Pres.Partc-f.Acc.sg
                 po   medžiu.   (novel)
                 po   med-žiu
                 under   tree-m.Ins.sg
         'He saw a porcupine sitting under a tree.'

   b. Vienas   bebrų   graužė   medį.   (novel)
       vien-as   bebr-ų   grauž-ė   med-į
       one-m.Nom.sg   beaver-m.Gen.pl chew-Past.3pl   tree-m.Acc.sg
       'One of the beavers was chewing down a tree.'

3.1.3. Anaphoric use: obligatory

In texts, nouns are used to introduce new referents and to refer back to a previously introduced referent. In the story *Plikas medžiotojas* 'The bold hunter', *peruką* 'wig' is used in both ways. In (11), *peruką* introduces a novel wig to the story, and in (12) it refers back to that same wig. This is consistent with a DP structure.

(11) Tad   nusipirko   tikrų   žmogaus   plaukų   peruką.
     tad   nu-si-pirk-o   tikr-ų   žmog-aus   plauk-ų   peruk-ą
     hence   pref-refl-buy-Past3sg real-m.Gen.pl   man-m.Gen.sg   hair-m.Gen.pl   wig-m.Acc.sg
     'Hence he bought himself a wig made of real human hair.'   (novel)

(12) Kas   čia   juokinga,   kad   pametei   peruką?   (familiar)
     kas   čia   juokinga   kad   pamet-ei   peruk-ą
     what   here   funny   that   lose-Past3sg   wig-m.Acc.sg
     'What's so funny about losing the wig?'

If the bare noun is associated with a D, anaphoric use is expected.

3.1.4. Law of contradiction

The law of contradiction is obeyed, as expected, if BNs are DPs. If the example below were not interpreted as contradictory, then the nouns would not have to be DPs.

(13) #Katė   buvo   didelė   ir   katė   buvo maža.
       kat-ė   buvo   didel-ė   ir   kat-ė   buvo maž-a
       cat-f.Nom.sg   bePast big-f.Nom.sg   and cat-f.Nom.sg   bePast small-f.Nom.sg
      #'The cat was big and the cat was small.'

3.2. Bare nouns in Innu-aimun
3.2.1. Scope

Innu-aimun BNs prefer to take narrow scope. This is consistent with an NP structure. However, they may (when forced to by the context), also take wide scope, which is consistent with a DP structure.

(14) a. Kassinû ishkueu shuenime-pan   auâss-a.
         every   woman   kiss-3>3'pst   child-obv
         'Every woman kissed a child.' (narrow preferred; wide available only in certain contexts)

   b. Apûtût passu-k   mashk^u.
       neg past shoot.TA-1conj   bear
       'I didn't shoot a bear.'   (narrow preferred; wide available only in certain contexts)

Unlike Lithuanian, the default interpretation is narrow, and the default structure is NP.

3.2.2. Anaphoric use: optional

If BNs are always DPs, then all uses of BNs in a stretch of discourse refer to the same entity. In many cases, this expectation is met. In (15)a, *innuat* 'people' introduces a new referent. In (15)b, *innua* 'people' refers back to that same referent. This is consistent with a DP structure.

(15) a. Innu-at   nipâietshen-at.   (novel)
         person-pl   killTA.3>3'-pl
         'The Innu$_i$ have killed him.'

   b. Ek^u uîn ishkueu mâuât itenim-eu   tshetshî nipâi-â-ni-tî   innu-a.
       then   3   woman not   thinkTA-3>3'   so.that killTA-3>3'-obv-3   person obv
       'But, the woman did not think that the Innu$_i$ had killed him.' (text: Missus Hubbard; familiar)

However, BNs do not always refer back to already introduced referents. In (16)a, *mîna* 'berries' is used to introduce two different referents (two groups of berries). In (16)b, *mishtikua* refers to two different referents – a tree in one instance, and a group of trees in the second instance. This is consistent with an NP structure.

(16) a. Ni-mâut-en   mîna   mâk   Pun   iât   mâut-apan   mîna.
         1- gatherTI-1>3   berries and   Paul   even   pickTI-3>3past berries
         'I gathered berries$_i$, and Paul gathered berries$_j$ too.'

   b. Mueu   anite   mishtiku-a   auen   n-uâpam-âu…
       eat.3>3'   there   tree-obv   someone   1-seeTA-1>3
       'I saw someone [porcupine] eating a tree$_i$ there…
           … Nânâtuâkamenua   mishtiku-a.   (text: *Uâpush mâk umâtshâshkuk^u*)
               redup.break.in.two.3>3'   tree-obv
           '…They (the beavers) were chewing down trees$_j$.'

Thus, BNs have the ability to introduce new referents in some contexts and refer to the same entity in other contexts (in both languages). This is difficult to explain unless we posit two structures: NP for those BNs that introduce new referents (e.g. (15)a) and DP for those BNs that are anaphoric (e.g. (15)b). The difference between Innu-aimun and Lithunian is simply a difference in default – Innu-aimun BNs tend to be NPs (or are more freely NPs) and Lithuanian BNs tend to be DPs.

3.2.3. Law of contradiction

Unlike Lithuanian BNs, Innu-aimun BNs do not obey the law of contradiction. This is consistent with an NP structure.

(17) Tshinuashkushi-u   nâpeu   mâk   apû   tshinuashkushi-t   nâpeu.
    tallAI-3   man   and   neg   tallAI-3conj   man
    'There's a man who's tall and a man who isn't.'

4. The semantics of D in Lithuanian vs. Innu-aimun
4.1. Evidence for uniqueness in Lithuanian bare nouns

In familiar contexts, BNs refer to unique referents. For example, in (18), the BN *šuo* 'dog' cannot be used to refer to one of the four dogs on the postcard.

(18) Atviruke -   keturi   šunys.   #Šuo   loja.
    atviruk-e   ketur-i   šun-ys   šuo   loj-a
    card-m.Loc.sg   four-m.Nom.pl   dog-m.Nom.pl   dog-m.Nom.sg   bark-Pres.3sg
    Intended: 'There are four dogs on the card. One of the dogs is barking.'
    Actual: 'There are four dogs on the card. A (different) dog is barking.'
    Context: Explaining to a kid what is on a postcard, pointing out the barking dog

Instead, the interpretation is that of some other dog (e.g., outside the room we are in) happens to be barking. That is, when the interpretation cannot be unique, a new referent must be introduced (BN = NP). In order to force reference to a barking dog in the postcard, speakers can say (18), but only if they point to the (unique) barking dog. A demonstrative (along with the pointing gesture) could also be used, or something equivalent to "one of them".

The covert D in Lithuanian must therefore involve definiteness.

4.2. Evidence for no uniqueness in Innu-aimun bare nouns

Innu-aimun bare nouns never presuppose or assert the uniqueness of their referent. In novel contexts, Innu-aimun BNs do not presuppose or assert the uniqueness of their referent. In (21), the speaker is not obliged to eat all of the berries in the context.

(19) Mîna   ni-mîtsh-en. Passe   apû minuâ-kâu mîna.[10]
    berries   1-eat1>3   some   neg good-3pl   berries
        Apû   tût mitsh-amân nenû   ekâ   kâ   minuâ-t.
        neg   past eat-1conj   dem   neg   past   good-3conj
        'I ate berries. Some of the berries weren't good (=mouldy). I didn't eat the mouldy ones.'

This is expected, if novel instances of BNs only project an NP. However, in familiar contexts, uniqueness cannot be asserted or presupposed either (unlike in Lithuanian).

(20) Ni-mâut-a   mîna   mâk Pun   iât   mâut-apan mîna.   Mânî   kâtâ-pan   mîna.
    1-gather-1>3 berries and Paul   even   pick-3past berries Mary   hide-3past   berries
    'I gathered berries, and Paul gathered berries too. Mary hid (the) berries.'
    (the last group of berries can be any berries; could be different berries that Mary picked or berries Paul and/or I picked)

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[10] This example includes a discontinuous DP (*passe… mîna* 'some berries'). This is common in Innu-aimun and has no known effect on the semantics.

Mîna can refer to new berries (NP), or to a subset of the berries that were already introduced (DP). In the example below, *mashkuat* refers to all the bears in the context (DP). (This is exactly we would expect if the DP were definite.) However, the uniqueness/maximality can be canceled, for example, by adding 'one of them ran away'.

(21) Patetât tâu-at   mashku-at   mâk   kutuâsht atîku-at   uâpam-akâu
      five   exist-pl bear-pl   and   six   caribou-pl   see-1>3'pl
     'There were 5 bears and 6 caribou that I saw.'
          Ni-pâssueu-at   mashkuat.   Peik^u na   mashk^u tshîtshipâtâ-u
          1-shoot-1>3pl   bears   one   dem   bear   leave.by.running-3
          'I shot the bears.'[11]   'One of them escaped/ran away.'
          (implicates: all 5 bears)   (so I only shot 4 – cancels implicature)

The covert D in Innu-aimun must therefore lack definiteness.

5. Formal proposal

So far we've seen variation in BNs: sometimes BNs are DPs, and sometimes they are NPs; and DPs are not always definite.

Lithuanian has definiteness: Lithuanian BNs can be associated with definite interpretations without any particular conditions.[12] We argue that D is present when the bare noun receives a definite interpretation (however it arises). D = Def in Lithuanian.

(22) $[\![[_D \varnothing]]\!] = \lambda P \max(\lambda x [P(x) \wedge C(x)])$ (like English 'the')

Innu-aimun, on the other hand, lacks definiteness. However, D appears to be needed in anaphoric contexts, and it appears to behave like D in Skwxwú7mesh.

(23) $[\![[_D \varnothing]]\!] = \lambda P f(\lambda x [P(x) \wedge C(x)])$ (like Skwxwú7mesh 'ta')

That is, D does not necessarily encode only definiteness (contra Lyons 1999). We argue that the key role of D is to introduce domain restriction. Any other semantic content may be language specific.

Our claim that D is universal, but its semantics vary gives rise to a series of new questions.

Semantics. What universal factors determine the semantics of D? What is the range of semantic content that can fill D (other than domain restriction, uniqueness, deixis….)?

What are factors outside D which affect the interpretation of BN or DP? What language specific properties outside of the nominal domain interact with D (e.g., aspectual distinctions)? In what ways, if any, are these properties predictable?

Syntax. What are the levels of syntactic structure involved (e.g., discourse context (CP domain), classifiers (NP domain), suffixes (within NP)?

Acquisition. How are covert Ds acquired? Do speakers learn the semantic content of D via demonstratives?[13]

Phonology. How does the content of D interact with the prosodic tier?

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[11] There is no adequate English translation for this, as the maximality associated with *mashkuat* arises only via implicature.

[12] Note that in this paper, we address covert D in Lithuanian. Manifestations of D pertaining to special conditions (e.g., aspectual prefixation, the use of so-called definite or pronominal adjectives), although well documented in the literature (Sprauninė 2008, Stolz 2006, Holvoet & Tamulionienė 2006, among others), are yet to be addressed from a generative perspective.

[13] There is some evidence for this idea: Lithuanian demonstratives are definite and Innu-aimun demonstratives are not. Out of interest for space, we do not elaborate here.

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