

On the Indefinite Readings of Kannada Bare Nominals

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1. Introduction

Bare nominals in determinerless languages are commonly known to occur in definite, kind, as well as indefinite contexts (e.g., Dayal 1999, 2004; Jenks 2015, 2018; Ahn 2019; Deal and Nee 2018; Despić 2019). One type of analysis is that they are ambiguous between all three uses, each usually arising via a suitable type-shifting operation (Partee 1986). See Gerstner and Krifka (1987); Wilkinson (1991); Diesing (1992) for some examples of this view. A competing view is that they are ambiguous between definite and kind uses only, with indefinite readings arising via kind uses through special mechanisms like (pseudo-)incorporation (Dayal 2011) or Derived Kind Predication (Chierchia 1998; Dayal 2004).

Here, we focus on bare nouns in Kannada, a South-Asian Dravidian language, which — as we will see — are also descriptively compatible with all three of definite, kind, and indefinite uses. Lidz (2006) even discusses a partial analysis of Kannada bare nouns in direct object positions that views them as ambiguous between definite and (wide- and narrow-scoped) indefinite readings in episodic contexts, in line with the first of the two types of analyses discussed above. However, in this paper, we will defend an analysis for the bare nominal in Kannada more along the lines of Dayal’s (1992; 1999; 2004) account for Hindi, claiming that they are not in fact *true* indefinites. Contra Lidz (2006), we propose that indefinite bare nouns in Kannada are restricted to narrow-scope readings only, and incompatible with wider-scope (or ‘specific’ readings, though this term is more controversial; see von Heusinger 2002). To demonstrate that this is so, we look carefully at the Kannada data said to be (non-trivially) intermediate- or wide-scoping in Lidz (2006), and show that these are better analyzed as hearer-old definite uses of the bare noun instead. We additionally show that in utterances where bare nouns appear as Direct Objects (DOs) in Kannada, neither accusative marking on (inanimate) bare DOs nor higher syntactic positions force the alleged “specific” readings of the DOs, once again in contrast to Lidz (2006). Instead, the morphological and syntactic markers are simply indicative that a definite reading may be more preferred.

The remaining sections are organized as follows. Section 2 introduces the reader to the Kannada data in more detail, establishing the kind, indefinite, and definite readings of the bare noun. In Section 3, we revisit the empirical generalizations made with respect to bare noun indefinites in Lidz (2006) with the goal of examining whether the reported wide-scoped readings may indeed be maintained as such. We will find that these readings are better interpreted as expressing hearer-old definiteness instead, calling into question any analysis of Kannada bare nouns that treats them as fully ambiguous between definite and indefinite readings. However, Kannada bare nouns may still be associated with narrow-scoped indefinite readings in several contexts, which need to be explained. Section 4 briefly discusses the range of possible analyses to explain the narrow-scoped readings of bare nouns in Kannada, followed by our own recommendations — although due to constraints of space, we will not be able to develop these recommendations in considerable detail here. Section 5 summarizes the main results and concludes.

2. Various uses of the Kannada bare nominal

In the following subsections, we provide data that establish the various readings that can arise with Kannada bare nominals, given appropriate contexts.

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2.1. *Definite uses*

First, (1) – (2) show that bare nominals (singular and plural) in Kannada can have definite readings in (larger or immediate situation) uniqueness contexts (Russell 2005; Roberts 2003; Evans 1977; Löbner 1985; Kadmon 1990), and in anaphoric contexts (Christophersen 1939; Heim 1982; Kamp 1981) respectively. In both cases, the definite picks out a uniquely identifiable referent.

- (1) a. **Suurya** iDii dina hora-ge-e bandilla.
Sun all day out-DAT-EMPH came-NEG
'The sun did not come out all day.'
b. **Naayi(-gaLu)** iDii dina mane-ge bandilla.
Dog(-PLU) all day home-DAT came.NEG
'The dog(s) didn't come home all day.'
- (2) Nenne naanu ondu ungura konDukonDe. Ivattu **ungura** ello kaLedu hoytu.
Yesterday I.NOM one ring bought today ring somewhere lost went
'Yesterday I bought a ring. Today, the ring has gotten lost somewhere.'

They may also felicitously occur in covarying "donkey sentences" like in (3), once again patterning with standard anaphoric definites and unlike indefinites.

- (3) Katte(y)uLLuva pratiyobba raita-noo **katte**-ge ooTa haaktane.
donkey.having every farmer-EMPH donkey-DAT food gives
'Every farmer who has a donkey feeds the donkey.'

2.2. *Kind uses*

In addition to the definite reading, the bare noun can also be shown to have generic or kind readings. They are capable of appearing with kind-level predicates as in (4). Generic readings may also arise in out-of-the-blue habitual contexts or with individual-level predicates, as seen in (5) – (6) respectively.

- (4) **Naayi** ondu saamanya-(v)aada praaNi.
Dog one common-COP animal
'The dog is a common animal.'
- (5) **Naayi** bogaLatte.
Dog barks
'The dog barks.'
- (6) **Naayi-ge** mooLe kanDre bahaLa ishTa.
Dog-DAT bone towards very like
'Dogs really like bones.'

2.3. *Indefinite uses*

In (7) – (8), we see uses of the bare nominal that are best interpreted as indefinite when uttered out-of-the-blue. In particular, note that in (8) where the bare noun co-occurs with negation, the negation operator must scope above the indefinite. This is in line with our main claim in this paper that indefinite uses of the bare noun is restricted to narrow-scope only, a point taken up in more detail in Section 3.

- (7) Room-alli ili ide.
Room-LOC mouse COP-PRES
'There is a mouse in the room.'
- (8) HoragaDe, hoovu araLutt-illa.
Outside flower blooming-NEG
'It is not the case that a flower is blooming outside.'

Further, we observe that in cases like (9), a definite reading fails to arise despite presence of a potential antecedent. The bare noun nonetheless gets what appears to be a non-specific indefinite reading.¹

- (9) RoomgaLalli ondu tumba chennagittu. 1920-alli ondu raatri Nehru **room**-alli malagidda.
Of.the.rooms one very good.was 1920-LOC one night Nehru room-LOC slept
'One of the rooms was very nice. In 1920, Nehru slept a night in #the room/a room.'

Finally, we note that Kannada bare nouns may also have predicative uses, as in (10).

- (10) Moti **naayi** aadruo bekkina haage aaDatte. (Tanna.paaDi-ge taanu kootiratte.)
Moti dog being.still cat-GEN like behaves (its.own.self-DAT it sits)
'In spite of being a dog, Moti acts like a cat. (It keeps to itself.)'

3. Are there wide-scope indefinite uses of the Kannada bare nominal?

In this section, we evaluate whether the indefinite uses of Kannada bare nouns extend to both wide-scope and narrow-scope interpretations — as expected under an existential quantifier based type-shifting account/choice-functional account and according to what has been claimed in Lidz (2006), or whether they are restricted to narrow-scope interpretations only, grouping Kannada with several other determinerless languages that have more recently been claimed to pattern in this way, e.g., Dayal (2004) for Hindi, Deal and Nee (2018) for Teotitlán del Valle Zapotec, and Collins (2019) for Tagalog. A careful consideration of the data will lead us to rule in favour of the latter view.

3.1. Lidz (2006)

Lidz (2006) comprises of one of the few existing theoretical discussions of bare singular direct objects in Kannada. It makes the key starting assumption that bare singulars in Kannada are *true* indefinites — i.e., they may receive wide- and narrow-scoped existential readings, and builds upon this assumption to argue that the morphology associated with these items and their syntactic positions may separately determine if they are narrow-scoped (Lidz uses the term “non-specific”) or wide-scoped (“specific”) indefinites.² When (inanimate)³ bare singulars appear as direct objects without case-marking as in (11), Lidz argues that they can be specific or non-specific indefinites. But when the bare singular is case-marked as in (12), only specific readings are said to be allowed.

- (11) Rashmi **pustaka** tarlilla.
Rashmi book did.not.bring
'Rashmi did not bring a book.'
- (12) Rashmi **pustaka**-(v)anna tarlilla.
Rashmi book-ACC did.not.bring
'There was a book that Rashmi did not bring.'

Similarly, higher syntactic position of the bare singular is also said to force specific indefinite readings, even in the absence of ACC-marking.

¹ Note that examples like (9) are not descriptively incompatible with an alternative definite analysis — as long as there are appropriate constraints on the bare singular's definite interpretation. We believe that whether or not the definite reading can arise depends on uniqueness considerations within *suitable* referential domains. A precise characterization of which domains count as *suitable* is beyond the scope of the current paper, but see Srinivas and Rawlins (to appear) for more detailed discussion of this point.

² Lidz (2006) acknowledges that bare nouns (ACC-marked/unmarked) may additionally receive definite readings.

³ ACC-marking is claimed to be obligatory with animate bare singulars, and does not contribute to disambiguating specific from non-specific readings in such nouns. But see footnote 6 for some further clarification.

- (13) Naanu chennaagi **pustaka** oodide.
 I well book read
 ‘I read a (non-specific) book well.’
- (14) Naanu **pustaka** chennaagi oodide.
 I book well read
 ‘I read a specific book well.’

Based on the above empirical generalizations and some further observations pertaining to scope properties of case-marked *vs.* unmarked bare objects, Lidz argues for a choice-functional analysis for case-marked “specific” bare DOs like in (12). He terms this “inherent specificity”, as opposed to “positional specificity” of unmarked bare objects arising due to higher syntactic position — like in (14) — which he analyzes in terms of Diesing’s (1992) Mapping Hypothesis. While he briefly considers whether the readings identified as specific indefinite may in fact be definite readings (following Dayal, 2004 for Hindi), he ultimately rules against this possibility.

In the following subsections, we clarify the discussion of the Kannada bare DO data in Lidz (2006) in two ways. First, in §3.2, we provide data showing that neither the presence of ACC-marking nor higher syntactic position of the DO forces the so-called “specific” reading of the bare DO. Instead, a more accurate characterization is to say that both these factors only bias against a non-specific interpretation; however this bias can be overridden given appropriate contextual support (or lack thereof). Next, in §3.3, we develop our main point of conflict with Lidz (2006), *i.e.*, that the so-called specific indefinite readings of the bare singular are in fact hearer-old, scopally-inert definite readings. The arguments given in Lidz (2006) against such a view will be shown not to hold up under closer scrutiny.

3.2. ‘Non-specific’ readings of ACC-marked and syntactically higher bare nominals

The analysis of indefinite direct objects in Kannada proposed in Lidz (2006) is based on three generalizations. First, in inanimate bare DOs where ACC-marking is optional, the presence of such marking forces a specific reading of the DO. Second, even among inanimate DOs that aren’t case-marked, those appearing in a higher, pre-adverbial syntactic position necessarily receive specific readings. Third, in animate and plural bare DOs in which ACC-marking is claimed to be mandatory, these judgements do not hold in quite the same way. Specifically, even ACC-marked animate bare objects and bare plural objects may receive non-specific readings. In this sense, there is a fundamental divide between how accusative marking is interpreted in bare singular inanimate DOs on the one hand (where it forces specific reading), and bare plurals/animates on the other (where it does not force specific reading). Such a divide calls for a principled explanation but this proves to be a challenge, as discussed in Lidz (2006); Section 6.

In this section, we revisit the Kannada data pertaining to these judgements. We make some observations that lead us to soften the first two of the above generalizations by a good measure. In particular, we will present data showing that both ACC-marking and higher syntactic positions of (inanimate, animate, or plural) bare DOs only lead to a preference for specific readings, but crucially do not force them. In claiming thus, we do away with the distinction between inanimate *vs.* animate/plural bare DOs with respect to how accusative marking is interpreted, thereby precluding the need to explain such a phenomenon. Additionally, this clarification and the one to be made in §3.3 will together allow us to state the behavior of bare DOs in Kannada much more simply — *i.e.*, Kannada bare noun DOs are ambiguous between definite and non-specific indefinite readings (in episodic contexts), with ACC-marking and syntactic position acting as soft constraints towards the preferred interpretation.

3.2.1. Non-specific readings of ACC-marked inanimate bare DOs

(15) – (16) below show that case-marked inanimate singular bare DOs in Kannada often receive non-specific readings when uttered out-of-the-blue without additional contextual support, calling into question the choice-functional analysis in Lidz (2006) which assumes that existential closure applies only at the root, thereby forbidding narrowest scope interpretations.

- (15) HuDuga tanna mane-a munde **rangoli-anna** biDisuttiral-illa.
 boy his.SELF house-GEN front chalk.design-ACC drawing-NEG
 ‘The boy was not drawing a chalk pattern in front of his house.’ (¬ > indefinite)
- (16) Pratiyobba hengasuu aa nerehore-alli **mane-anna** koLL-alu bayasiddaLu.
 Every woman that neighborhood-LOC house-ACC buy-INF wished.3.SG.F
 ‘Every woman wished to buy a house in that neighborhood.’ (∀ > wish > indefinite)

To see that the above examples indeed allow for non-specific interpretations, we can observe that they permit ‘ignorance continuations’ which would not be compatible with specific interpretations:

- (17) a. Pratiyobba hengasu-u alli **mane-anna** koLL-alu bayasiddaLu.
 Every woman-EMPH there house-ACC buy-INF wished.3.SG.F
 ‘Every woman wished to buy a house there.’
- b. Aadare yaava mane-anna konDukoLLabeeku emba nirdhaara obbaru maaDiral-illa.
 but which house-ACC must.buy COMP. decision anyone had.not.made
 ‘But none of them had decided which house to buy.’

3.2.2. *Non-specific readings of syntactically higher inanimate bare DOs*

(18) – (19) show that even bare inanimate, singular DOs that appear at syntactically higher, pre-adverbial positions may yet be interpreted as non-specific in certain contexts.

- (18) Naan-u mane-ge hoodaaga maavinahaNN(-anna) chennaagi tinn-alu bayasidde.
 I-NOM house-DAT when.had.gone mango well eat-INF wished
 ‘When I went home, I wished to eat mangoes well.’
- (19) Naanu hoov-anna aidaidu nimishakkuu kittkonDu ajji-ge tandukoDuttidde.
 I flower-ACC five.five minutes.in plucked grandmom-DAT brought.gave.1.SG
 ‘Every five minutes, I plucked a flower and brought them to my grandmother.’

In fact, in the above examples, the bare DO may be simultaneously both case-marked and at a higher syntactic position. As per the account in Lidz (2006), there are technically two different mechanisms that might independently force a specific reading of the bare DO in such a case — namely the choice functional reading triggered by the ACC-marking, or the quantificational reading triggered by the VP-external position of the DO as per Diesing’s Mapping Hypothesis. Yet, as indicated in the examples, it is the non-specific reading of the DO that seems to be most readily available in out-of-the-blue contexts. Thus, in this subsection, we have seen data that warrants softening the generalization regarding the effect of case-marking and higher syntactic position on the interpretation of the bare DO — these cues bias towards a specific reading, as seen in (12) and (14), but do not by any means force such a reading.

3.3. *Restrictions on specific indefinite readings*

The goal of this section is to demonstrate that the so-called “specific” readings of Kannada bare nominals — available in both case-marked and non case-marked DOs as reported in Lidz (2006) — are not due to a wide-scoped existential quantifier, but are instead instances of definiteness where the referent is unique and hearer-old. Convincing evidence to this end would call into question the claim that bare DOs have *true* indefinite readings in addition to definite, and instead put Kannada into the camp of languages in which indefinite readings of bare nouns have already been identified to be constrained only to narrow-scope: e.g., Hindi (Dayal 1999, 2004), Teotitlán del Valle Zapotec (Deal and Nee 2018), and Tagalog (Collins 2019). Below, we present several empirical observations which together indicate that bare DOs in Kannada are better interpreted as definite than specific/wide-scoped indefinite.

First, we claim that what Lidz (2006:13) described as indefinite readings with intermediate scope, as in (20), are better accounted for by bridging definite descriptions.⁴ In the absence of prior knowledge that every student had been assigned a specific book, (20) only has either a reading where no student read any book (the non-specific reading), or one where no student read a unique, **hearer-old** book.

- (20) Pratiyobba vidyarthi pustaka(-vanna) ood-al-illa.
 Every student book(-ACC) read-INF-NEG
NOT: ‘For every student, there was a book the student did not read.’
BUT: ‘Every student did not read the book (that they had been assigned).’

To further convince ourselves that this is the case, we can observe that the continuation shown in (21) is odd following the utterance in (20). The oddness would be unexpected if an intermediate-scope existential reading for the bare direct object was in fact available.

- (21) a. Pratiyobba vidyarthi.uu pustaka ood-al-illa.
 Every student.EMPH book read-INF-NEG
 b. #Aadre yaaru yaava pustaka ood-al-illa anta innuu nama-ge tiLidilla.
 but who which book read-INF-NEG COMP still us-DAT is.not.known
NOT: ‘For every student, there was a book the student did not read, but we still do not know who didn’t read which book.’
BUT: #‘Every student did not read the book that they had been assigned, but we still do not know who didn’t read which book.’

The second piece of evidence for the claim that bare DOs in Kannada do not have wide-scoped indefinite readings comes from the observation that such a reading under negation cannot be obtained without the nominal modifier *ondu*, as illustrated in (22). Without the modifier *ondu*, the utterance below is simply contradictory, as would be expected both under a non-specific indefinite reading and a definite reading, but is unexpected under a specific/wide-scoped indefinite reading.

- (22) Rashmi heccukammi ella pustaka konDkonDlu, aadre #(ondu) pustaka konDkoLLalilla.
 Rashmi more.or.less all books bought but (one) book did.not.buy
Without *ondu*: #‘Rashmi bought almost all the books, but she didn’t buy a(ny) book/the book.’
With *ondu*: ‘Rashmi bought almost all the books, but there was a book she did not buy.’

This is consistent with what Dayal (1999) claims of Hindi bare nominals — that they are unable to take scope over negation and other intensional modifiers. Corresponding Kannada examples are shown in (23) – (24). When not case-marked, they are further unable to scope over adverbials, as shown in (25). In all three cases, the behavior of the bare noun differs from the behavior of the noun modified by *ondu*.

⁴ Lidz (2006) discusses the presence of the so-called intermediate-scope reading as conclusive evidence that what is being discussed is not the definite reading of the bare noun, since sentences containing definite descriptions like in (i) do not permit co-variation of the book with the boys. However, he ignores the possibility in which a portion of the definite description may simply be elided, as shown in (ii):

- (i) Every boy read the book.
 (ii) Each boy was assigned a book of his choice to read over break, and when school reopened, we were pleasantly surprised to find that every boy had in fact read the book (that he had chosen).

- (23) a. Anu pustaka(-vanna) ooduvud-illa.⁵
Anu book(-ACC) will.read-NEG
'Anu will not read any book.'
- b. Anu ondu pustaka(-vanna) ooduvudilla.
Anu one book(-ACC) will.read-NEG
'Anu will not read a (particular) book.'
- (24) a. Anu pustaka(-vanna) ood-alu ichchisuttaale.
Anu book(-ACC) read-INF wishes.3.SG.F
'Anu wishes to read any book.'
- b. Anu ondu pustaka(-vanna) ood-alu ichchisuttaale.
Anu one book(-ACC) read-INF wishes.3.SG.F
'Anu wishes to read a (particular) book.'
- (25) a. Anu poorti dina pustaka ooduttiddalu.
Anu full day book was.reading.3.SG.F
'Anu was reading books all day.'
- b. Anu idii dina ondu pustaka(-nna) ooduttiddalu.
Anu full day one book(-ACC) was.reading.3.SG.F
'Anu was reading a particular book all day.'

Moreover, bare singulars do not show properties generally associated with 'true' indefinites: namely, they are infelicitous without explicitly or implicitly established discourse referents in (26). This is once again parallel to what Dayal (1999) notes for Hindi.

- (26) a. (Discourse-initial) How was the party?
b. Party-*alli* tumba janar-iddaru. #(obba) huDuga #(ondu) huDugi jote dance maaDtidda.
Party-LOC many people-COP (one) boy (one) girl with dance doing.COP
'There were many people at the party. #The boy was dancing with the girl.'

The lack of partitive specific readings like in (26) is also noted in Lidz (2006), where it is argued that this is because Kannada bare nouns are only epistemically and scopally specific (by way of inherent and positional specificity respectively), but not partitively specific. But this line of reasoning sounds somewhat unconvincing, not least because it is unclear why instances of ACC-marked, inherently specific DOs must also always scope above negation and other intensional operators, if the only type of specificity to be satisfied is epistemic specificity. Taking the lack of partitive-specific readings to mean a general lack of specific indefinite readings is a simpler characterization of the data, and supplements the other evidence provided in this section towards showing the same.

4. Explaining non-specific indefinite readings of Kannada bare nouns

In the preceding sections, we have presented data that establish two main observations about bare DOs in Kannada. First, the bare DOs are not *true* indefinites in that their indefinite readings are constrained to narrow-scope only — they do not allow for wide- or intermediate-scoped indefinite readings. "Specific" readings previously associated with the bare DOs are better characterized by hearer-old definiteness. Second, while the presence of ACC-marking on the DO as well as its higher syntactic position bias towards a "specific" (definite) reading, these morpho-syntactic cues certainly do not force such a reading. We provided several examples in which bare DOs are best interpreted as non-specific indefinites, despite the presence of ACC-marking on them or their high position at LF.

Given these generalizations, several questions emerge. For instance, what is the mechanism by which indefinite readings arise in bare DOs such that they are restricted to narrow-scope only? Is this mechanism identical across all uses of the bare noun in Kannada, or does it differ along dimensions such as animacy/plurality/grammatical role/case-marking? What is the reason for definite readings being

⁵ Both ACC-marked and unmarked bare DOs can give rise to non-specific readings, as discussed in §3.2. However, this is more readily obtained in the unmarked DO; the case-marked DO biases towards a hearer-old interpretation.

preferred over across several contexts in which the bare noun is overtly case-marked and/or occupies a high position in the syntax? And so on. In this section, we will focus on the first two of these questions, and will only comment very briefly on the third in closing. We will not, however, be able to do justice to any of the questions in this short section, and leave open several unanswered issues.

4.1. *Non-specificity of non ACC-marked bare DOs*

Let us first begin by considering only those DOs which do not appear with overt ACC case-marking. In Lidz (2006), non-specific readings in such nouns is said to be a consequence of Diesing's (1992) Mapping Hypothesis, according to which the DO is located VP-internally and bound by existential closure inside the VP, thus accounting for its obligatory narrow-scope. As Lidz (2006) also notes, despite differences in implementation, this view essentially makes the same predictions as other accounts of semantic incorporation, be it van Geenhoven's (1995) proposal, the one by Farkas and de Swart (2003), Dayal's (2011; 2015) pseudo-incorporation account for Hindi, Chung and Ladusaw's (2003) Predicate Restriction-based proposal, or Aguilar-Guevara's (2010; 2014) proposal originally developed to explain non-specificity and non-uniqueness in English weak definites (Poesio 1994; Carlson and Sussman 2005). Independent evidence for the VP-internal status of these nominals comes from the number neutrality of the bare singular in atelic contexts (Dayal 2011, 2015), as seen in (18), and additionally in (27) – (28):⁶

- (27) Naavellaru **chapli** konDkoLakke hogta idiivi.
All.of.us slippers to.buy going are
'We are all going to buy slippers.'
- (28) Naanu **baTTe** ogiitidiini.
I.NOM clothes washing
'I am washing (multiple different) clothes.'

4.2. *Non-specificity elsewhere*

Could such an account that views non-specificity as a consequence of the VP-internal status of the noun in one way or other be carried over to explain non-specific readings in ACC-marked bare DOs as well? The lack of number-neutral readings in such nouns suggest the contrary:

- (29) Naanu **baTTe-anna** ogiitidiini.
I.NOM cloth-ACC washing
'I am washing a (single) cloth.'

Moreover, non-specific readings can appear in bare nouns in subject positions as well, as shown in (7). However, most semantic incorporation-like accounts are meant to account for non-specific readings in object positions only (given the requirement for VP-internal status of the noun). The subject-position bare nominals additionally also fail to give rise to number-neutral interpretations.

Similar lack of number-neutrality in Hindi case-marked bare singulars leads Dayal (1999, 2004) to denounce a unified account for non-specificity. She proposes that subjects/case-marked objects must be analyzed by appealing to a mechanism separate from pseudo-incorporation. In particular, she makes a further distinction between plurals *vs.* case-marked singular bare nouns, and proposes that while non-specific readings in the former arise via the kind reading using *Derived Kind Predication* (DKP),⁷

⁶ Such incorporation is more productive with inanimate nouns, but also occurs in some animates (e.g., *magu noDikoLLu*; 'watch a child'). This shows, contra Lidz 2006, that animate bare objects can sometimes appear without ACC-marking. However, these are not very productive. "Name-worthiness" (Dayal 2015) seems to be an important requirement in this case — i.e., the bare noun + predicate must denote a "well-established activity".

⁷ DKP may be defined as below, following Dayal (2004):

- (i) *DKP*: If P applies to objects and k denotes a kind, then $P(k) = \exists x[\cup k(x) \wedge P(x)]$ (Dayal 2004 10a)

The \cup operation takes kinds and returns their instantiation sets in a given situation, and the existential in DKP necessarily takes narrow scope.

indefinite readings of bare singular subjects/case-marked objects arise by an *iota*-like type-shift where the type-shifter presupposes uniqueness but not necessarily familiarity. Under the latter explanation, non-specific interpretations are simply a consequence of the lack of familiarity of the referent. However, this account must grapple with several challenges — the main one being that non-specificity simply does not follow from assuming type-shifting by *iota* which is scopally-inert, and usually assumed to take widest-possible scope. Moreover, this analysis views definiteness in English (which Dayal assumes does presuppose familiarity) as being fundamentally different from definiteness in ‘determinerless’ languages. However, a (more) uniform analysis of definiteness may be *apriori* preferred. In what follows, we will discuss two alternative analyses of non-specificity in bare singular subjects/case-marked objects. The first questions the need to separately analyze singulars *vs.* plurals, and suggests extending Dayal’s DKP-based analysis to bare singulars as well. The second suggests a unified analysis for all non-specific bare nouns that builds on Chung and Ladusaw’s (2003) predicate restriction based proposal.

DKP for bare singular subjects/ACC-marked objects: Dayal (2004) rejects the idea that just as bare plurals have access to their instantiation sets, the bare singular also has access to singleton instantiations. One reason for this comes from the underlying assumption that bare singular kind terms in languages like Hindi must be similar to singular definite generics in English, but the latter do not seem to have access to their instantiations. This is why the singular definite in English cannot be used to generate indefinite meanings in episodic contexts like (30), unlike bare plurals like in (31):

- (30) The dog is barking. (Intended: A dog is barking).
 (31) Dogs are barking.

Bare singulars and plurals additionally contrast in the following way, such that the “different mice” reading arises only in the case of the bare plural but not the bare singular:

- (32) a. muuru ganTe tanaka room-ina oLage **ili-gaLu** bartidvu.
 three hours until room-GEN inside mouse-PLU kept.coming.in
 ‘For three hours, mice kept coming into the room.’
 b. muuru ganTe tanaka room-ina oLage **ili** bartittu.
 three hours until room-GEN inside mouse.SING kept.coming.in
 ‘For three hours, the mouse/#a different mouse kept coming into the room.’

According to Dayal, the “different mice” reading arises in (32-a) because the instantiation set of the bare plural scopes under the event distributivity operator (Lasnik 2013). If the bare singular had access to its instantiation set, it would be expected to show the same behavior, but this is not the case. Thus, Dayal concludes, since bare singulars do not have access to instantiation sets, DKP may not apply in their case.

However, we would like to suggest that these are perhaps not insurmountable problems. For one, it is plausible that the semantics of the bare singular in Kannada may not be entirely identical to that of the English singular definite generic. The Kannada bare noun seems to be inherently more ambiguous than the English singular definite, in that it is overall more amenable to kind/generic interpretations. For example, observe the contrast in (33) – (34) below, where the object position bare noun in Kannada receives a kind reading but the English definite singular is unable to do so.⁸

- (33) Nana-ge **huli** kanDre bhaya.
 I-DAT tiger towards fear
 ‘I am afraid of tigers’ (kind reading ✓)
 (34) I am afraid of **the tiger**. (kind reading ??)

⁸ In this, the Kannada bare singular seems more similar to the English weak definite, which can also lead to kind readings in object positions:

- (i) I am afraid of going to **the dentist**. (kind reading ✓)

It is also plausible that the difference between the bare singular *vs.* plural in (32) has to do with reasons other than how the indefinite reading arises in the first place. Observe that the same contrast arises with indefinite singulars in English, as shown in (35). However, in the presence of a contextually salient cover as in (36), the “multiple mice” reading may arise with the singular indefinite in English. Champollion (2016) suggests that this is because the *for*-adverbial itself does not encode a distributivity operator — this is provided by the contextually salient cover. The distributed reading with the bare plural in (32-a) and in (35-b) is said to arise due to an independent property of plurals, namely lexical cumulativity.

- (35) a. A mouse kept coming into the room for an hour. (single mouse)
 b. Mice kept coming into the room for an hour. (multiple mice)
 (36) A mouse kept coming into the room every five minutes for an hour. (multiple mice)

Such a lexical cumulativity-based explanation may also apply to Kannada bare plurals, especially given that the “multiple mice” reading can arise with the bare singular in Kannada in the presence of a contextually-salient cover as shown in (37).⁹ Thus, we take the observations in (33) to (37) to suggest that Kannada bare singular nouns also have access to their instantiation sets much like the bare plurals in Kannada and possibly unlike singular definites in English, and that any contrasts between bare singulars and plurals arise due to differences in number-dependent lexical properties. Needless to say, further investigation is needed to fully gauge the plausibility of this suggestion.

- (37) muuru ganTe tanaka aid.aidu nimishakkuu room-ina oLage ili bartittu.
 three hours until five minutes.for.EMPH room-GEN inside mouse kept.coming.in
 ‘For three hours, a mouse kept coming into the room every five minutes.’

The DKP-based analysis for (singular and plural) bare subjects/case-marked objects nevertheless differs from the incorporation account used to explain non-specificity in non-case-marked objects. So, we still end up with a non-uniform analysis for non-specificity across the range of uses of the bare nominal. Below, we briefly describe another suggestion which may be more amenable to a unified analysis.

A possible unified account: An alternative account may be one that views non-specific readings in subject/ACC-marked object bare nouns as arising through the compositional operation of Predicate Restriction (Chung and Ladusaw 2003), as defined in (38) following Rawlins (2013):

- (38) Where $\beta = \langle \beta_1 \dots \langle \beta_n, t \rangle \rangle$ such that $n \geq 0$
 $Restrict(A_{\langle e, \beta \rangle}, B_{\langle e, t \rangle}) = \lambda x \in D_e . \lambda y^1 \in D_{\beta_1} . \dots . \lambda y^n \in D_{\beta_n} . A(x)(y^1) \dots (y^n) \wedge B(x)$

Informally, this amounts to the $\langle e, t \rangle$ property restricting the domain of the predicate it combines with to only those entities that share that property. The compulsory narrow-scope of the bare noun is accounted for, since existential closure of the unsaturated argument is forced to occur at the event level (at the latest) while negation/modals/other quantifiers are interpreted outside the event (vP) domain. Furthermore, non-specific readings are no longer position-dependent — subject position indefinites are as amenable to *Restrict* as object bare nouns. This proposal also avoids additional ambiguity, and does not preclude a unified analysis of definiteness across languages. Differences between singular *vs.* plurals like in (32) may once again be explained by appealing to lexical properties of plurals such as cumulativity.

Finally, arguably the most attractive aspect of this proposal is the possibility of unifying the explanation for non-specific readings in “incorporated” non ACC-marked bare objects like in (27) – (28), and those in “unincorporated” subject/ACC-marked object bare nouns. The differences in number-neutrality are amenable to an explanation in which the height at which the bare noun is composed determines whether or not it is interpreted number-neutrally within a given context. In particular, subjects and ACC-marked objects compose higher at LF than their non ACC-marked counterparts, which are base-generated closer to the verb, owing to their closer relationship to it (termed *name-worthiness* in the incorporation literature; see Dayal, 2015 for a summary of the phenomenon). The latter thereby

⁹ The “multiple mouse” reading in (37) is unexpected under Dayal’s *iota*-analysis: *iota* always takes widest scope.

scope under verb plurality operators, giving rise to number-neutral readings. While we believe that this proposal holds much promise, it is once again clear that much further investigation is necessary.

5. Conclusion

In this paper, we have presented a range of data indicating that indefinite bare objects in Kannada are only compatible with narrow-scope, non-specific readings, and further that such uses are not limited simply to non ACC-marked, syntactically lower bare nouns. We considered previously proposed accounts in the literature that handle such non-specific nouns, which distinguish between incorporating vs. non-incorporating bare nouns and provide disparate accounts to account for the non-specific readings associated with each of them. We then sketched two suggestions towards a positive account: one building on Dayal's (2004) DKP-based analysis for bare plurals, and another building on Chung and Ladusaw (2003) that has greater potential for serving as a more uniform explanation for non-specificity of bare nouns that is at its core indifferent to differences in number/case-marking/grammatical role.

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