

Definiteness marking in Germanic (Schoorlemmer 2012)

Laura Becker (laura.becker@uni-leipzig.de)

December 13, 2016

1 Introduction

The phenomenon

- Germanic languages show a high degree of variation with respect to the interaction of the definite article and adjectival modification.
- On the other hand, both the free standing article and the suffixed article are available to a different extent in different languages.
- The paper offers a unified account, capturing the similarities by the same syntactic structure. At the same time, it accounts for variation by the ordering of operations.

The analysis

Four patterns can be distinguished in the presence of an attributive adjective.

The paper proposes a unified account:

- The presence of an adjective triggers movement of D, so that the latter has two copies.
- The cross-linguistic variation is accounted for by the form of the article and the ordering of two post-syntactic operations.

2 The data

These will be the relevant patterns:

1. double determination; free form + suffix (Swedish, Norwegian, Faroese)
2. no double determination; free form (Dutch, German)
3. no double determination; free form (Danish)
4. no double determination; suffix (Icelandic)

2.1 Double determination (Swedish, Norwegian, Faroese)

–**adj**: the definite article is realized as a suffix on the noun

+**adj**: the definite article is realized both as free form and as suffix

- | | | | | |
|-----|--|-----|--|-----------|
| (1) | <i>hus-et</i>
house-DEF
'the house' | (2) | <i>det stora hus-et</i>
DEF big house-DEF
'the big house' | Swedish |
| (3) | <i>skort-a</i>
shirt-DEF
'the shirt' | (4) | <i>den gule skjort-a</i>
DEF yellow shirt-DEF
'the yellow shirt' | Norwegian |
| (5) | <i>kettlingur-in</i>
kitten-DEF
'the kitten' | (6) | <i>tann svartu kettlingur-in</i>
DEF black kitten-DEF
'the black kitten' | Faroese |

The doubling of the determiner is not grammatical with the reading relevant here if no adjective is present. Example (7) shows that for Swedish:

- | | | |
|-----|---|---------|
| (7) | * <i>det hus-et</i>
DEF house-DEF
'the house' | Swedish |
|-----|---|---------|

2.2 No double determination (German, Dutch)

–**adj**: the definite article is realized as free form

+**adj**: the definite article is realized as free form

- | | | |
|------|------------------|---------|
| (8) | das (große) Haus | German |
| (9) | het (grote) huis | Dutch |
| (10) | the (big) house | English |

2.3 No double determination (Danish)

–**adj**: the definite article is realized as suffix on the noun

+**adj**: the definite article is realized as free form

- | | | | | |
|------|--|------|--|--------|
| (11) | <i>hest-en</i>
horse-DEF
'the horse' | (12) | <i>den røde hest</i>
DEF red horse
'the red horse' | Danish |
|------|--|------|--|--------|

2.4 No double determination (Icelandic)

–**adj**: the definite article is realized as suffix on the noun

+**adj**: the definite article is realized as suffix on the noun

- | | | |
|------|---|-----------|
| (13) | <i>(góði) maður-inn</i>
(good) man-DEF
'the good man' | Icelandic |
|------|---|-----------|

2.5 Summing up the patterns

pattern	ADJ absent	ADJ present	attested in
1	DEF N	DEF A N	German, Dutch, English
2	N-DEF	DEF A N-DEF	Swedish, Norwegian, Faroese
3	N-DEF	DEF A N	Danish
4	N-DEF	A N-DEF	Icelandic

- Pattern 2 will be shown to morphologically reflect its syntactic derivation.
- All other patterns are argued to be derived in the same way.
- The differences are contributed to a different ordering of post-syntactic operations in morphology (Chain Reduction and Local Dislocation).

3 Accounting for the double definiteness pattern (e.g. Swedish)

Since the doubling of the definite article is not grammatical without the adjective, it should be the adjective that licenses the doubling of the determiner.

→ What are the contexts in which the adjective triggers determiner-doubling?

3.1 Deriving the structure of the DP

In order to derive the structure of the DP, we will look at the contexts that trigger the doubling of the definite article.

(i) Predicative vs. attributive adjective

Predicative adjectives cannot trigger double determination.

- (14) *(*det) hus-et är stort.*
 DEF house-DEF is big
 ‘The house is big.’

Swedish

→ What is the difference between attr. and pred. adjectives that can account for this?

Interpretation

- Attributive adjectives can have a restrictive reading.

- (15) The blue cars are being sold today.
 → the (blue (cars))

- Predicative adjectives, however, are necessarily interpreted non-restrictively.

- (16) The cars are blue.
 → blue (the (cars)), * the (blue (cars))

- Therefore:

Attributive adjectives in definite DPs must be c-commanded by a definite D in order to be interpreted in the domain of a definite D.

Inflection

- In most Germanic languages, the inflection of attributive adjectives is sensitive to the "strong-weak" distinction, while the one of predicative adjectives is not, e.g. in Swedish:

attributive

predicative

(17) *ett stor-t hus*
 INDEF big-N.SG.**str** house
 'a big house'

(19) *ett hus är stor-t.*
 INDEF house is big-N.SG
 'A house is big.'

(18) *det stor-a hus-et*
 DEF big-**wk** house-DEF
 'the big house'

(20) *hus-et är stor-t.*
 house-DEF is big-N.SG
 'The house is big.'

- Adjectival inflection is assumed to be an Agree-operation:

The adjective is a Probe that needs to have the interpretable features in its search domain.

- Therefore:

If the inflection of the adjective is sensitive to definiteness, the adjective must c-command a definite D.

→ A potential problem?

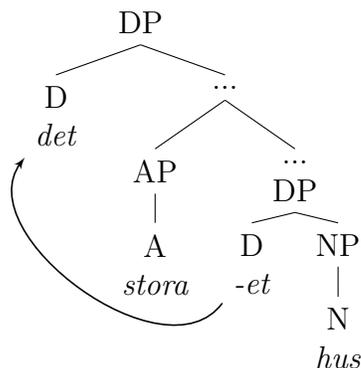
From the interpretation requirement it follows that attr. adjectives should be c-commanded by a definite D.

At the same time, inflection requires it follows that attr. adjectives should c-command a definite D.

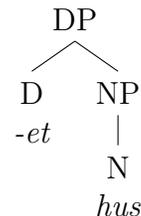
→ The solution of this approach:

Definite DPs containing an adjective have two D-copies, definite DPs without adjectives only have one:

(21) structure for (18)

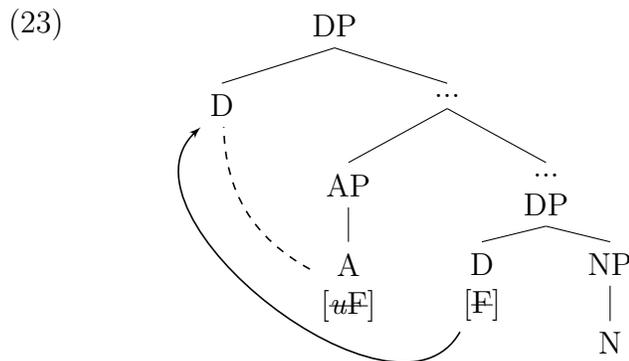


(22) structure for *hus-et* 'the house':



The syntactic derivation of double definiteness

- AP is merged, the adjectival Probe looks down its c-command domain for interpretable features to agree with.
- It finds the definite D, which licences the weak inflection on the adjective.
- The adjective in turn needs to be c-commanded (licensed) by D.
Licensing here is understood in a general way, referring to the syntactic configuration in which the licenser must c-command the licensee.
- D is internally merged above A to satisfy this requirement.
- The adjective gets licensed.
- The two copies of the determiner will be spelled out as definite article and definite suffix.



(ii) Other contexts that trigger double determination

Numerals and weak quantifiers are environments that trigger the doubling of the definite article in Swedish:

- (24) *de många/tre bil-ar-na*
 DEF many/three car-PL-DEF
 ‘the many/three cars’

Also, restrictive relative clauses trigger (optional) doubling of the definite article.

- (25) *den mus-en som vi såg*
 DEF mouse-DEF REL we saw
 ‘the mouse that we saw’

Optionality of the doubling is accounted for by the fact that the relative clause can either be merged above D, which then triggers movement of D to be licensed. Or, it is merged below D, being licensed by D without movement.

(iii) Contexts that do not trigger double determination

Postnominal modifiers do not trigger the doubling of the def. article:

- (26) *Gris-en med lång svans grymtade.*
 pig-DEF with long tail grunted
 ‘The pig with the long tail grunted.’

This is explained by PPs being case licensors, while all other elements that trigger definite article doubling (adjectives, numerals, weak quantifiers, and restrictive relatives), are not. The account needs the latter to be licensed by a D that c-commands it, so they are licensees. The author assumes that elements cannot be licensees and licensors at the same time, which excludes the determiner doubling in case if postnominal PPs.

3.2 The morphological derivation of (double) definiteness

What is assumed:

- post-syntactic morphology module (DM)
- the following relevant processes take place post-syntactically:
 Vocabulary Insertion, Linearization, Local Dislocation in Morphology (following Embick and Noyer (2001: 562))
- **Linearization**
 translation of a hierarchical syntactic structure into a linear sequence
- **Local dislocation**
 post-syntactic movement operation, can manipulate the linear sequence of vocabulary items created by Linearization

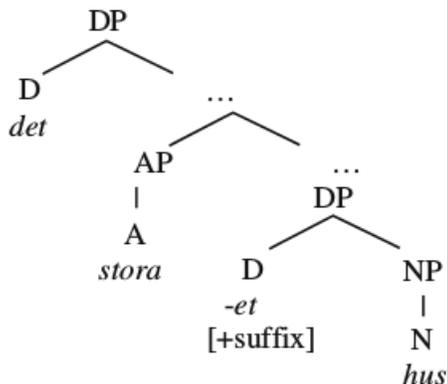
$$(27) \quad [X * [Y * Z]] \quad \rightarrow \quad [Y+X]_{Y^o} * Z$$

It affects only adjacent segments.

It is sensitive to idiosyncratic information of the vocabulary items.

Derivation of the modified def. DP

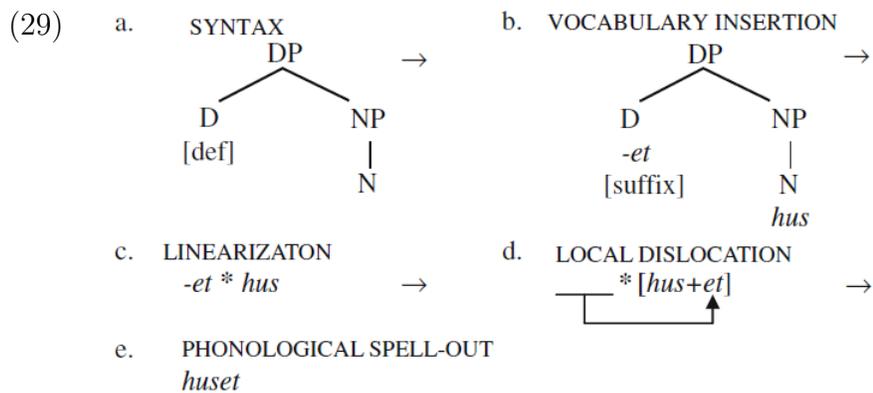
(28) VOCABULARY INSERTION



- a. LINEARIZATION
*det * stora * -et * hus*
 [+suffix]
 - b. LOCAL DISLOCATION
*det * stora * * hus + et*
 - c. SPELL-OUT
det stora huset
-

- Double spell-out of the copies takes place because one of the copies belongs to a larger word-unit. (Chain Reduction fails)
- Chain Reduction needs to take place after local dislocation. Otherwise, the lower copy would not yet be part of a larger unit yet and get deleted.

Derivation of the non-modified definite DP



4 The German-Dutch pattern

- (30) *het mooie boek*
 DEF.N.SG nice-WK book
 ‘the nice book’

Dutch

- (31) a. SYNTACTIC OUTPUT
 [DP_D[def][...[AP^A][...[DP_D[def][NP^N]]]]
 b. VOCABULARY INSERTION AND LINEARIZATION
*het * mooie * het * boek*
 c. LOCAL DISLOCATION
 N.A.
 d. CHAIN REDUCTION
*het * mooie * ~~het~~ * boek*
 e. PHONOLOGICAL SPELL-OUT
het mooie boek

Chain Reduction takes place because now, the lower copy is not part of a larger word (no suffix but a free form). The lower copy being deleted, only the higher copy is spelled out.

Also in Swedish, the indefinite article is a free-standing morpheme; predicted to not be doubled. Data supports this:

- (32) *ett stort hus*
 INDEF big house
 ‘a big house’

5 Danish

The pattern:

- (33) *den røde hest(*-en)*
 DEF red horse-DEF
 ‘the red horse’

With the same ordering of Vocabulary Insertion, Local Dislocation, and Chain Reduction, the definite suffix *-en* on the noun should not be deleted and spelled out.

→ This is not the case.

Rather, the order of these operations is not inherent but underlies variation.

- Swedish: Local Dislocation before Chain Reduction
- Danish: Chain Reduction before Local Dislocation

- (34)
- a. VOCABULARY INSERTION & LINEARIZATION
*den * røde * -en * hest*
 - b. CHAIN REDUCTION
*den * røde * ~~-en~~ * hest*
 - c. LOCAL DISLOCATION
does not apply
 - d. PHONOLOGICAL SPELL-OUT
den røde hest

6 Icelandic

The pattern:

- (35) *góð-i maður-inn*
good-WK man-DEF
'the good man'

- (36) *góð-ur maður*
good-STR man
'a strong man'

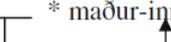
Icelandic does not have any free standing form for the definite article.

A context-sensitive rule for Vocabulary Insertion ensures that the suffix is inserted adjacent to the noun (and not into the position of the higher D)

The syntactic derivation for (35) is the same as seen for the other languages.

- (37) $[_{DP}D_{[def]} [\dots [_{AP}A] \dots [_{DP}D_{[def]} [_{NP}N]]]]$

The post-syntactic operations for (35) differ from the other languages.

- (38)
- a. VOCABULARY INSERTION & LINEARIZATION
 $\emptyset * góði * -inn * maður$
 - b. LOCAL DISLOCATION
 $\emptyset * góði * \text{---} * maður-inn$

 - c. CHAIN REDUCTION
does not apply
 - d. PHONOLOGICAL SPELL-OUT
góði maðurinn

7 Summing up

- The paper proposed a unified syntactic structure for definite DPs with a modifying adjective for 7 Germanic languages.
- The variation between the languages was accounted by (i) the form of the article (suffix vs. free form) and (ii) the ordering of Local Dislocation and Chain Reduction.

The ordering of the post-syntactic operations:

	① LocDis ② ChRed	① ChRed ② LocDis
free + sfx	Swedish, Norwegian, Faroese	Danish
free	German, Dutch	
sfx	Icelandic	

8 Discussion / questions

- what about English?
- what exactly are the features involved in Agree
- can we have a language with this syntactic structure of the DP and the following article pattern:
unmodified DP: DEF N
modified DP: A N-DEF

9 Appendix

Double definiteness in the CI-component

The structure given into the CI-component is the following:

(39) [DPD[...] [AP A]...[DPD] [NPN]]]

If the adjective has a restrictive reading, the higher copy is interpreted; if it bears non-restrictive reading, the lower one is interpreted.

Possessor doubling

The ordering of Local Dislocation and Chain Reduction in Swedish (and Norwegian, Faroese) on the one hand, and in Danish on the other can also be linked to double possessor marking.

(40) *Peter sit hus*
Per his.REFL house
'Peters house'

(41) *Peter sin bok*
Per his.REFL book
'Peters book' Norwegian

The account correctly predicts that the former should feature possessor doubling within the DP, while the latter should not.

Modified definites with *-ande* nouns in Swedish

(42) **studerand-en*
student-DEF

(43) *den studerande*
DEF student
'the student'

Swedish

The operation that places the suffix in its surface position must be sensitive to the vocabulary item inserted in N. This is the case, assuming Local Dislocation taking place after Vocabulary Insertion.

Definites with a numeral in Icelandic

Numerals in Icelandic always follow the noun if a definite article is present.

(44) *frægu bækur-nar þrjár*
famous books-DEF three
'the three famous books'

Deriving the pattern:

(45) [AN+DEF] NUM [AN+DEF]
↑

(46) a. [DPD_[def] [... [APA] ... [DPD_[def] [NP_N]]]

b. [DPD_[def] [... [num] ... [DPD_[def] [... [APA] ... [DPD_[def] [NP_N]]]]]

(47) [DP [... [APA] ... [DPD_[def] [NP_N]]]iD_[def] [... [num] ... [DPD_[def]ti]]]

However, if the head noun does not take the definite suffix, as in indefinite or demonstrative DPs, the numeral precedes both the adjective and the noun:

(48) (*þessar*) *þrjár frægu bækur*
(these) three famous books
'(these) three famous books'

Reference

Schoorlemmer, Erik. 2012. Definiteness marking in Germanic: morphological variations on the same syntactic theme. *Journal of Comparative German Linguistics* 15, 107–156.

and references therein