

A Morphosyntactic Analysis of Definiteness Morphology in Swedish Determiner Phrases

In Swedish determiner phrases definiteness can be realised both pre-nominally with a definite article and post-nominally with a definite suffix on the head noun. This paper provides a unified semantic and morphosyntactic analysis of the pre-nominal and post-nominal definiteness marking occurring in both unmodified and modified noun phrases, and offers an analysis of the variation in restrictive relative clauses.

Data The analysis accounts for five patterns of definiteness morphology:

DPs with unmodified noun:

- (1) mus
mouse.DEF
'the mouse'
- (2) den mus
DEF mouse.DEF
'the mouse'
Contrastive or deictic interpretation

DPs with modified noun:

- (3) den lilla mus
DEF little mouse.DEF
'the little mouse'
- (4) lilla mus
little mouse.DEF
'the little mouse'
*Referent must be uniquely identifiable
w.r.t. common ground*

Restrictive relative clauses:

- (5) den mus(en) som åt osten
DEF mouse(.DEF) that ate cheese.DEF

Analysis The analysis motivates the morphosyntax with two semantic features: uniqueness [+unique] and specificity [+specific]. Uniqueness is defined as a presupposition that the entity referred to exists and can be uniquely picked out (Roberts 2003). Specificity denotes that a member of an existing discourse group is picked out (Enç 1991); this has a domain restricting function. The analysis is couched within the framework of Distributed Morphology (Halle and Marantz 1993). Vocabulary items for Swedish definiteness morphology are as follows:

- (6) D $\begin{bmatrix} +\text{specific} \\ \pm\text{unique} \end{bmatrix} \leftrightarrow \text{den}$
- (7) D $\begin{bmatrix} -\text{specific} \\ +\text{unique} \end{bmatrix} \leftrightarrow \emptyset$

The [+unique] feature is copied from D to N, via *Agree*. The dissociated [+unique] feature is realised as **-en**.

- (8)

D	(A)	N
$\begin{bmatrix} -\text{specific} \\ +\text{unique} \end{bmatrix}$		$[+\text{unique}]$
\emptyset		-en
- (9)

D	(A)	N
$\begin{bmatrix} +\text{specific} \\ +\text{unique} \end{bmatrix}$		$[+\text{unique}]$
den		-en
- (10)

D	N
$\begin{bmatrix} +\text{specific} \\ -\text{unique} \end{bmatrix}$	$[-\text{unique}]$
den	\emptyset

DPs with unmodified nouns: When post-nominal only definiteness marking is exhibited (1), uniqueness is presupposed without domain-restriction (8). When a DP with an unmodified noun has double-definiteness marking (2), a deictic or contrastive interpretation results, as the domain-restricting [+specific] feature implies a comparison set (9).

DPs with modified nouns: Double-definiteness marking (3) is exhibited because Sw adjectives introduce a comparison set which necessitates domain-restriction (9). Post-nominal only definiteness marking (4) occurs in semantic environments in which the modified noun denotes uniquely w.r.t. common ground (Simonenko 2013:136). In these cases, the adjective does not introduce a comparison set, so domain-restriction is not required (8).

Restrictive Relative Clauses: Post-nominal definiteness marking is described as optional in restrictive relative clauses (Börjars 1998:52). We propose that an restrictive relative clause subtype is ungrammatical with **-en**. In this subtype, the DP cannot be [+unique] independently, because the relative clause itself restricts the possible referent to be unique (10).

Comparisons are made between this analysis and alternative approaches (e.g., Julien 2005, LaCara 2011, Simonenko 2013, Hofherr 2013). A number of approaches to the Swedish pattern have treated pre- and post- nominal definiteness marking as exponents of one ‘definite’ feature, hence the term ‘double definiteness’. The paper reconsiders the viability of a ‘doubling’ analysis given the semantically conditioned aspects of the Swedish distribution. Furthermore, Swedish data is compared to morphological differences between definites observed cross-linguistically, e.g. German (Schwarz 2009), and Akan (Arkoh and Matthewson 2013).

References

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