

Constructions with and without an article

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Even in languages with a well-developed system of articles, such as Germanic and Romance languages, we find constructions in which the noun can appear without an article. This paper provides an overview of such bare constructions, and a roadmap for cross-linguistic variation in this domain. We find bare predication with capacity nouns in many languages (Dutch *Anna is advokaat*, French *Anna est avocat*), but not English, where the indefinite article has to be used (*Anna is *(a) lawyer*). Objects of *have*-predicates can be bare in Romance languages (Spanish *Anna tiene coche*) (cf. Espinal & McNally 2010), but typically not in Germanic languages (German *Anna hat *(ein) Auto*). The nominal complement of a general spatial preposition is often bare in English (*at school*), sometimes in Dutch (*op school*), but rarely in German (*in *(der) Schule*), where the definite article occurs in this environment.

Cross-linguistically then, bare nouns are sometimes in complementary distribution with the indefinite article (in predication, incorporation), and sometimes with the definite article (in prepositional complements). However, there is a third class of bare constructions which is neither definite nor indefinite, but plural or quantificational in nature. Here we find bare coordination (*mother and child*) (cf. Le Bruyn & de Swart 2013), and bare PPs like Dutch *per jaar* (= *each year*) (Le Bruyn, de Swart & Zwarts 2012).

The three classes are subject to different constraints on cross-linguistic variation, due to the interaction of lexicon, syntax and semantics. The plural and quantificational bare constructions require a special, often non-compositional (or not immediately transparent) semantics at the level of the construction as a whole. A language does or does not realize this special semantics in a particular configuration. Indefinite bare constructions rely on a special combinatoric semantics involving the property or kind denotation of the noun. Given that indefinites can be type-shifted to the property denotation of the common noun, they are the closest counterpart to be used when the language-specific grammar lacks the combinatoric rule. The definite bare constructions are underlyingly 'weak' definites (cf. Aguilar & Zwarts 2010), with a dropped article for a restricted set of nouns or noun classes. Under the assumption that drop of the definite article is governed by lexical rules, and these are to a large degree language-specific, we expect widespread cross-linguistic variation in the productivity of this process.

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