(In)definiteness without articles in two Bantu languages & the NP/DP hypothesis
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1. Introduction. Chierchia (1998) sparked controversy over properties of nominals in languages without definite and indefinite articles: do they possess covert articles, or are they truly lacking? If articles are present but silent, it is reasonable to expect systematic ambiguity between definite and indefinite readings. Dayal (2004, 2011, 2017) argues that this is not the case in Hindi; key indefinite readings are absent. Dayal proposes that while the semantics converts bare Ns into definites, indefinite readings are derived mainly through use of the numeral 'one' as shown in (1)a, or via pseudo-incorporation of direct objects as in (1)b.

(1) a. ek   laRkaa aur ek   laRkii kamre meN aaye. laRkii baith-gayii. [Hindi; Dayal 2017: 87]
       one boy   and one girl   room in   came girl   sat-down
       'A boy and a girl came into the room. The girl sat down.'

    b. anu puure din cuuhaa pakaRtii   rahii   [Hindi; Dayal 2011:131]
       Anu whole day mouse catch-IMP   PROG
       'Anu kept catching mice (different ones) all day'
       (incorporation yields the number-neutral *mouse-catching* sense for mouse$_{sing}$)

This paper shows that Xhosa and Shona nominals are systematically ambiguous for [+/-definite]. We argue that unlike in Hindi, D is present though the contrast is unmarked.

2. The evidence. Shona & Xhosa Ns introduce new discourse referents (see (2)a), and pass the tests of partitive specificity in (3), referential specificity (4), and intermediate scope (5), like true indefinites.

(2) a. Mu-komana ne-mu-sikana va-ka-pinda   mu-mba.   [Shona]
        1boy   and-1-girl   2SA-PST -enter 18LOC-room.

    b. Mu-komana   a-ka-gara   pasi.
        1-boy   1SA- PST-sit   down
        'A boy and a girl entered the room. The boy sat down.'

(3) a. Ba-be-ba-ninzi   a-ba-ntwana e-gumb-ini.   [Shona]
        2SA-be.AUG-2many 2-2-children LOC-room-LOC

    b. I-nkwenkwe ne-ntombi ba-be-dlala   a-ma-khasi.
        9-9boy   and.9-9girl 2SA-be-play   6-6-card.
        'There were many children in the room. A boy and a girl were playing cards.'

(4) U-m-fundi kwiklasi yam u-kopile.   NguJohn.   [Xhosa]
     1-1-student in.9class 9my 1SA-cheated   Cop.1aJohn
     'A student in my class cheated. It was John.'

(5) Mu-kadzi w-ese a-ka-tora   ma-zai ma-iri kubva ku-sheshe   [Shona]
     1-woman 1-each 1SA-PST-take   6-egg 6-two from   17LOC-9hen

    y-a-i-kandira   mu-mu-nda   m-ake.
     9SA-PST-REL-nest   18LOC-3-farm   3-3sPOSS
     'Every woman took two eggs from a hen nesting in her farm.'

On the other hand, Xhosa and Shona nominals may express anaphoricity (2)b, uniqueness (6), bridging (7), and combine with kind-level predicates (8), like definites.

(6) a. I-langa li-yakhanya namhlanje. [Xhosa] b. Zuva ri-ri kuvaima nhasi. [Shona]
      5-5sun 5SA-shine today   5sun 5 SA-be infin.shine today
      'The sun is shining today.'   'The sun is shining today.'

(7) U-Helen u-theng-e i-moto. I-vili lo-ku-qhuba li-nomonakalo. [Xhosa]
      1-1Helen 1SA-buy-PST 9-9car. 5-5wheel 5of-to-turn 5SA-be.broken
      'Helen bought a car. The steering wheel was defective.'

(8) I-Dinosaur i-tshabale-le. [Xhosa]
      9-9dinosaur 9SA-buy-PST
      'The/*a dinosaur is extinct.'

Table 1and 2 summarize key results for English, Hindi, and Xhosa/Shona:

Table 1

Test of indefiniteness	English Sing.indef	Hindi bare NP$_{sing}$	Xhosa/Shona bare NP$_{sing}$
a. Introduce referents	√	X	√
b. Partitive specificity	√	X	√
c. Referential specificity	√	X	√
d. Intermediate scope	√	X	√

Table 2

Test of definiteness	English Sing.def	Hindi bare NP$_{sing}$	Xhosa/Shona bare NP$_{sing}$
a. uniqueness	√	√	√
b. anaphoricity	√	√	√
c. bridging	√	√	√
d. generic statements	√	√	√

3. Analysis. To account for the contrasts between Hindi and these Bantu languages, we argue that Xhosa and Shona have the DP projection. This is unexpected from the standpoint of Chierchia (1998), Dayal (2004, 2011) who argue that absent contrasting definite/indefinite articles, D(P) is absent. We conclude that both the representation of nominal expressions and their WYSIWYG-ness may vary across languages. A discourse like (9) suffices to show the learner that [+/-definite] D is present, though the contrast is unmarked.

(9) I-nkwenkwe ne-ntombi ba-ngena e-gumb-ini. [Xhosa]
      9-9boy   and.9-9girl 2SA-entered LOC -room-LOC.

    I-ntombi y-a-xelela i-nkwenkwe ukuba i-hlal-e phantsi.
    9-9girl 9SA-PST-tell 9-9boy that 9SA-sit-SUBJ down
    'A boy and a girl entered the room. The girl told the boy to sit down.'

Syntactic tests provide converging evidence: Xhosa and Shona differ from DP-less languages like Serbo-Croatian (Boskovic 2008) in having limited extraction from nominals, contingent on object marking. As Branan & Davis (2018) note w.r.t. Chichewa, this recalls Van Urk & Richard's (2015) proposal that both unlocking by agreement and occupancy of a phase-edge are required for extraction. In Shona and Xhosa, DP's edge is occupied by a projection of N.

(10) a. Mu-vakidzani w-angu mu-pfumi a-ka-tenga [DP moto iyi i-dzva <moto>]. [Shona]
        1-neighbor 1-my 1-wealthy 1SA-PST-buy 9car 9this 9-new
        'My wealthy neighbor bought this new car.'

    b. *Idzva....   c. *Iyi…   d. ?Moto….*(i-)…
        new...   9this   9car   *(9OM)