Why Rose is the Rose: On the use of definite articles in proper names

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1 Introduction

The goal of this paper is to examine the use of definite articles with proper names, both cross-linguistically and intra-linguistically and provide a morpho-syntactic analysis of it. The first question to consider is whether article absence or article presence is the default case. The second question is when and how the alternative arises.

I will presuppose here that names in argument positions are definite descriptions (see Geurts 1997, Elbourne 2002, and Matushansky 2005a,b, to appear) and summarize some arguments in favor of this view. As a result, the default is instantiated by languages that do have definite articles with proper names in argument positions:

(1) O   presidente nomeou   **a**   **Maria** ministra.
     the-M.SG president   named-3SG the-F.SG Maria minister

     The president named Mary the minister.   European Portuguese

What needs to be explained, therefore, are languages like English, where proper names, despite being definite, are generally not accompanied by a definite article. Within such languages, however, some lexical classes of proper names may require a definite article:

(2) a. the Clintons   English
     b. the Alps, the Hebrides
     c. la Seine, le Rhône   French

These lexical semantic classes are not the same across languages: some (countries, weekdays, etc.) require an article in one European language and not in another:

(3) a. *(la) France, *(le) Christ, *(le) nord   French
     b. (*the) France, (*the) Christ, (*the) North   English

(4) a. *(el) lunes   Spanish
     b. *(le) lundi   French

c. (*the) Monday, (*the) France   English

A hypothesis accounting for the distribution of definite articles with proper names cross-linguistically should be applicable intra-linguistically as well, and also account for the appearance of the definite article with certain types of modification (see section 3.1 for details).

Another issue that needs accounting for is morphology: in many languages, the definite article appearing with names of people (the so-called *preproprial article*) differs from the regular definite article (e.g. in Tagalog (cf. Himmelmann to appear), Malagasy and Maori (Campbell 1991), Catalan, some Polynesian languages (cf. Anderson 2002), etc.). For some languages, this fact cannot be explained by syntax alone.

1.1   Naming constructions

It can be argued (Matushansky (2005a,b, to appear)) that with verbs of naming exemplified in (5), proper names function as predicates:

(5) a. Call me Al.

   b. I dub thee Sir Lancelot.

   c. Long John Silver was nicknamed Barbecue.

Cross-linguistic evidence strongly suggests that verbs of naming appear with a small clause complement. The first argument comes from languages where the definite article is obligatory with proper names in argument positions.[1] Even in such languages, unmodified proper names appear without an article in naming constructions, as in the following examples from Modern Greek (due to Dimitra Papangeli):

(6) **Naming constructions**

   a. Vaftisa   to   Yani   Petro
      baptised-1SG the-ACC Yani-ACC Petro-ACC

      I baptized Yani Petro.   Modern Greek

   b. O   Yanis   vaftistike   Petros
      the-NOM Yanis-NOM baptise-PASS.3SG Petros-NOM

      Yani was baptized Petro. (passive)   Modern Greek

   Whereas the proper names in argument positions (the object in (6a), the subject in (6b)) appear with a definite article, the proper name in the naming construction is bare (unless additional modification is present – the issue that will be discussed in section 3.1). This can be likened to the omission of the definite article in the predicate position in English (Stowell, 1991):

(7) a. The queen appointed her lover treasurer of the realm.

   b. Anne's death made George (the) king of England.

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[1]I will not discuss here cases where the definite article disappears because a possessive (*our dear Angelina*), a quantifier (*every Fanny*), a demonstrative (*this Rover of yours*) or an indefinite determiner (*a Mr. Smith*) are used; this caveat extends to other instances below where a definite article is said to be required with proper names – I am primarily concerned with definite proper names here.

Other languages where proper names require an article in argument positions but not with naming verbs include colloquial Icelandic, Northern Norwegian and Northern Swedish (see Delsing 1993), Catalan, Tagalog, the Uto-Aztecan language Pima, and Albanian, as well as various dialects of German and Italian (see Matushansky 2005a,b, to appear for details).

This correlation is certainly suggestive, but not much of an argument on its own, given that naming constructions not involving verbs can also force article absence, as in (8b) from Maori (Biggs 1969, 30 via Anderson 2002):

(8) a. Ka hariruu   a   Mere ki a   Rongo
         ASP shake-hands ART Mary with ART Rongo
         Mary shakes hands with Rongo.   Maori

     b. Tońoku iŋoa ko   Vero
         my   name FOCUS Vero
         My name is Vero.   Maori

Could article absence be correlated with lack of referentiality rather than with predicate interpretation? Alternatively, might definite proper names be for some reason more likely to appear without an article in non-argument positions? Support for the latter view comes from vocative constructions, where the article must be absent in some languages (English) but not in others (French), even if proper names appear without an article in the vocative in both languages. However, case marking in Modern Greek provides further evidence in favor of the view that proper names with verbs of naming are predicates.

In Modern Greek, small clauses with a nominal predicate exhibit Case-agreement: the case on the small clause predicate is the same as that on the small clause subject. Thus, when passivization renders the small clause subject Nominative, this is reflected in the case of the small clause predicate:

(9) a. Theoro   to   Yani   ilithio   ECM
         consider-1SG the-ACC Yani-ACC idiot-masc-ACC
         I consider Yani an idiot.   Modern Greek

     b. O   Yanis   theorite   ilithios   passive
         the-NOM Yanis-NOM consider-PASS.3SG idiot-NOM
   Yani is considered an idiot.   Modern Greek

Examples (9) illustrate Case-agreement in a small-clause complement of an ECM verb. Examples (6) above demonstrate that the proper name in a naming construction behaves like a small clause predicate: the case on it is the same as that on the object of naming.

Modern Greek is not the only language where proper names are subject to case agreement in the naming construction. Other languages in this category include Latin, Icelandic and Albanian.

Case-marking in languages without Case-agreement is revealing as well, in that with naming verbs the case on the proper name is the general predicative case, as shown by languages as diverse as Hungarian (data due to Veronika Hegedüs), Syrian Arabic and Russian:

(10) a. **okos-nak** tart-om   a   laíny-om-at
         clever-DAT keep-1SG the daughter-1SG-ACC
         I consider my daughter clever.   Hungarian: ECM

    b. a   laíny-om-at elnök-nek jelölt-em
       the daughter   1SG-ACC **president-DAT** nominated-1SG
       I nominated my daughter president.   Hungarian: nomination

We conclude that naming verbs project a small clause structure:

(11)
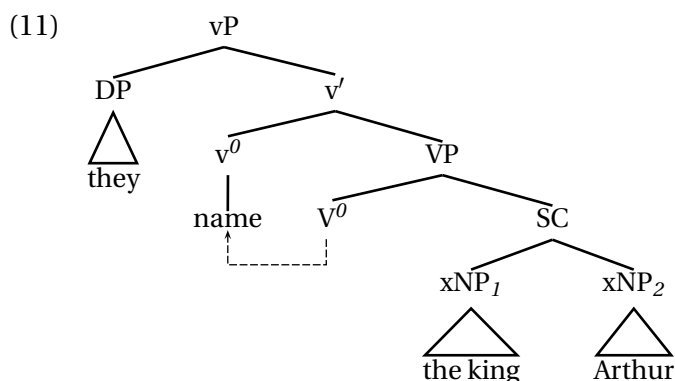
Other evidence for this conclusion stems from the fact that proper names appear as both primary (ECM, raising) and secondary (depictive) predicates, and the presence of such predication markers in the naming construction as the copular particle in Korean and the particle *yn* in Welsh (see Matushansky 2005a, b, to appear, for details).

A sample lexical entry for a proper name is provided in (12); the argument slot for a naming convention is motivated by (a) the need to distinguish between naming small clauses and all others and (b) the fact that the same person can bear different names in different circumstances – again the reader is referred to Matushansky (2005a,b, to appear) for details:[2]

(12) $\llbracket Alice \rrbracket = \lambda x \in D_e.\lambda R.$ x is a referent of alıs by virtue of the naming convention R

It is easy to see that the meaning in (12) cannot be derived from the meaning of a proper name in an argument position. If *Alice* in an argument position directly refers to Alice (as in the so-called *direct reference* theories, such as Kripke 1980), the meaning in (12) cannot be derived at all. If *Alice* means *the individual named* alıs (cf. Kneale 1962, Burge 1973, Kleiber 1981, Geurts 1997, Recanati 1997, Pelczar and Rainsbury 1998), then to derive the meaning in (12) we would need a function of the kind in (13):

(13) $\lambda x.\lambda y.\lambda R.y$ is a referent of whatever phonological string used to identify x by virtue of the naming convention R

Leaving aside the fact that it is not clear whether (13) works (it permits for *Alice* in a predicate position to actually mean *Miss Liddell*, if the context is compatible with such a naming convention), it reverses the relationship found between predicate and argument meanings for common nouns: it is standardly assumed that the meaning of

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[2]It should be noted that the meaning of proper name predicates in naming constructions allows us to discard the class of hypotheses with artificial predicates making reference to the denotation of a proper name, like $\lambda x.x = Alice$ or with abbreviated definite descriptions such as *Aristotle = "the one who Aristotelizes"*. Neither of such artificial predicates gives us the right meaning in naming constructions.

a DP in an argument position is derived from the meaning of the corresponding NP predicate. If proper names can enter syntax as predicates, as do common nouns, then, by Occam's razor, it is preferable to derive the meaning of a proper name in an argument position from the meaning that it has in the predicate position. This means that if names in argument positions are definite (as they are commonly assumed to be; see Geurts (1997) and Elbourne (2002) for further evidence that proper names in argument positions are definite descriptions), their syntax and compositional semantics should not be any different from those of definite descriptions.

We therefore conclude that bare proper names should be treated as (certain) bare nouns (see Stvan 1998 and Carlson and Sussman 2005): it is the absence of the overt definite article that must be explained. Evidence in favor of this view comes from the behavior of definite acronyms and abbreviations as described by Harley (2004).

Acronyms are distinguished from abbreviations in that in acronyms the initials are read out as if they were a word. On the basis of Cannon (1989), Harley claims that while acronyms disallow the article, abbreviations require it:

(14)   a.   (*the) NATO, (*the) AIDS, (*the) OPEC   acronyms
        b.   *(the) CIA, *(the) NSF, *(the) LSA   abbreviations

However, some abbreviations, such as names of universities and media networks, take no article:

(15)   (*the) MIT, (*the) NBC

As Harley observes, *both of these groups of exceptions are part of a principled, though restricted, category of English nouns which behave, in certain contexts, like full noun phrases.* In particular, they belong to the lexical classes that often appear without an article in the singular (Stvan, 1998):

(16)   Categories of bare singular nominals   (Stvan, 1998)
        a.   social or geographical institutions (at school, in camp, on shore)
        b.   media (on film, in shot)
        c.   temporal interruption events (at lunch, on break)
        d.   certain *untethered metaphors* (on target)

In certain lexical classes, both abbreviated proper names and common nouns can appear without the definite article.[3] This provides some indirect support for a theory calling for article omission rather than article insertion: since we do not have a theory of article insertion for common nouns, it is undesirable to postulate one for proper names.

To reformulate the problem, what I claim is that proper names enter syntax with essentially the same semantics as common nouns (modulo an additional argument slot for the naming convention). This means that we expect them to have the same syntax as common nouns – which is in fact the case, with every determiner other than the definite article:[4]

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[3]The correlation cannot be directly extended towards non-abbreviated proper names: most lexical semantic classes of regular proper names requiring an article are geographical (in English).

[4]I leave aside here what Gary-Prieur (1991, 1994) calls the metaphoric use of the proper name:

(17) a. There are **relatively few Alfreds** in Princeton.

   b. **Some Alfreds** are crazy; some are sane.   (Burge, 1973)

(18) a. There are **two Aristotles**.   (Elbourne, 2002)

   b. **Which Aristotle** do you mean?

   c. I meant **that Aristotle**.

   d. **The Aristotle** standing over there?

   e. No, **the other Aristotle**.

(19) a. There's **a Mr. Smith** to see you, sir.

   b. **This Rover of yours** has overturned the garbage again!

The question is then when and why can the definite article (and the definite article only) be omitted with definite proper names. To answer this question we need to turn to environments where proper names must appear with an article in a language like English, which normally doesn't have definite articles with proper names.

2   Conditions on definite article omission

To explain the disappearance of the definite article with definite proper names in certain languages and/or certain environments, we need to first consider cases where definite article omission is impossible. These cases fall into one of three categories:

- If the proper name is restrictively modified

- If it belongs to particular lexical classes (e.g., names of ships or mountain chains require a definite article in English)

- If it contains certain inflectional morphology (e.g., the plural affix)

Before we examine each of these cases in more detail, we must note that a proper name that does not fall into any of these categories may still require a definite article. For example, country names in English generally do not appear with an article, except for a few countries such as *the Ukraine* (*the Matterhorn* is likewise exceptional among mountains). Conversely, a proper name from a lexical semantic class that requires an article may be exceptional in that it does not take one: mountain names in Norwegian usually take a (suffixal) definite article, but some individual peaks (e.g., *Glittertind*) do not (the Linguist List 3.932).

2.1   Modified proper names

A limited survey of languages (English, French, Hebrew, Dutch) suggests that cross-linguistically, restrictively modified proper names force a definite article (on the role of modification in the appearance of an article in English and French see also Sloat

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(i) a. She is **a veritable Mary Poppins**.

   b. St. Peterburg was considered **the Venice of the North**.

1969, Kleiber 1981, Gary-Prieur 1991, 1994, 2001, Jonasson 1994, Kayne 1994, Paul 1994, Gärtner 2004 and Borer 2005).[5] The contrast in (20) shows that while a restrictive/non-appositive relative clause requires the appearance of an article before the proper name it modifies, a non-restrictive/appositive one disallows it:

(20) a. This is not ***(the) Elisabeth I know**.

   b. I was introduced to **(*the) Elisabeth, whom I was already prepared to admire**.

Likewise, non-appositive adjectives generally require the appearance of an article (definite or indefinite), while appositive ones don't:[6]

(21) a. The letter was in fact addressed to ***(the) older Miss Challoner**.   restrictive

   b. The audience was confronted by ***(a) furious Barbara Smith**.

   c. The gifts were sent by ***(the) charitable Miss Murray**.

(22) Il y   avait là   Marie de Magdala et   ***(lÕ) autre Marie**. restrictive
      it there was there Mary of Magdala and the   other   Marie.
      'There were there Mary Magdalene and the other Mary.'

(23) a. (*The) Barbara, **furious**, expressed her views with vehemence.   appositive

   b. Then I ran into (*the) Rosalind, **as unlikely to forgive and forget as ever.**

ÊWhile non-appositive relative clauses are always restrictive, non-appositive APs may be non-restrictive also (i.e., the sister of a non-restrictive relative clause has the same referent as its mother):[7]

(24) **The industrious Chinese** built the Great Wall of China.

The subject can be interpreted as denoting a subset of the Chinese (the restrictive reading of the AP) or the totality of the Chinese people, who are all then presupposed to be industrious (the non-restrictive (and non-appositive) reading). In English, most non-appositive APs force the appearance of an article with proper names. While restrictively interpreted proper names, as in (21a, b), require an article, with a non-restrictive AP, the presence of the article depends on the choice of adjective in ways that I do not yet fully understand:[8]

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[5]Kayne (1994) treats the appearance of the definite article on proper names modified by relative clauses as an argument in favor of a head-raising analysis of relative clauses. Paul (1994) and Gärtner (2004) argue for treating this modification in the terms of spatio-temporal parts. Sloat (1969), Gary-Prieur (1991, 1994, 2001), and Jonasson (1994) are largely descriptive. Borer (2005, chapter 3) claims that in all uses of proper names except when singular and bare they are in fact common nouns.

[6]I thank an anonymous reviewer for drawing my attention to the difference between the use of the term (non-)restrictive in application to relative clauses and to APs.

[7]It is important to distinguish restrictive modification from modifiers that form an integral part of a proper name (exemplified by the first proper name in (22)). One way of differentiating between them is (the lack of) semantic import: *New York* is no longer new, and *Li'l Kim* may not be little (at the moment of speech or ever – the name could have been given ironically). The line is difficult to draw in cases like (22), where the proper name appears to be decomposable – I contend that the lack of the definite article shows that no real restrictive modification takes place.

[8]The different behavior of restrictive vs. non-restrictive modification in English but not in French is also observed by Noailly 1991, who suggests that the obligatory appearance of the definite article with

(25)   a. ... for neither **young Meltham** nor Squire Green were there. (Anne Brontë,
            Agnes Grey, p. 189 of the Penguin Classics edition, 1988)

       b. Here was a wonderful instance of consideration from **the thoughtless Miss
           Murray**. (ibid.)

While dropping the article in (25b) results in ungrammaticality, adding a definite article to (25a) would lead to a restrictive interpretation of the adjective. This contrasts with French, where both restrictive and non-restrictive modification require the article (Noailly 1991, but see Gary-Prieur 1994 for some apparent counterexamples).

This difference between English and French requires an explanation – however, it is not the only issue where it comes to non-restrictive modification. There exists a special class of obligatorily non-restrictive APs (such as *dear* or *poor*) that do not force the appearance of the definite article. If a proper name in an argument position is modified by an adjective from this class, the definite article is obligatory in French, ungrammatical in English and a demonstrative must be used in Dutch (in the latter two cases, the definite article is possible if the AP is interpreted restrictively):

(26)   a. We will talk to **(*the)/our dear/poor Thomas** about it.   English

       b. **Le pauvre Paul** était presque aussi pâle que Sophie.
           the poor   Paul was almost   as   pale that Sophie
           Poor Paul was almost as pale and trembling as Sophie.   French

       c. **Die/*de/*Ô arme Paul** is zijn baan kwijt.
           that/the   poor Paul is his job   missing
           Poor Paul has lost his job.   Dutch

The different behavior of English, French and Dutch is the reason why we leave non-restrictive non-appositive modification of proper names aside here.[9] Otherwise, the behavior of modified proper names shows that the internal syntax of the DP containing a proper name plays a role in its ability to drop the definite article: cross-linguistically, a restrictively modified proper name can no longer appear bare.

Interestingly, the distribution of the definite article with modified proper names finds a strong parallel in the behavior of the Danish free-standing (as opposed to affixal) definite article examined by Delsing (1993), Embick and Noyer (2001) and Hankamer and Mikkelsen (2002, 2005). As examples (27) show, in Danish, a definite suffix is used with a bare noun; when the noun is modified by an AP, the free-standing definite article must be used. (Both the definite suffix and the free-standing definite article manifest concord with the number and gender of the head noun.)

(27)   a. hest-en

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modification in French is purely syntactic – a conclusion that is (unconvincingly) argued against in Gary-Prieur 1994. Noailly 1991 claims that English non-restrictively modified proper names appear without an article, which leaves examples like (25b) unexplained.

[9]A possibly correlated fact is the ability of the French definite article to appear with a proper name to indicate familiarity, contempt, or disdain (Grevisse 1980, Gary-Prieur 1994). Since neither English nor Dutch definite articles have this property, this may explain the grammaticality of (26b) as opposed to the ungrammaticality of (26a, c). However, such expressive adjectives as *damned*, *stupid*, and *bloody* (which are also obligatorily non-restrictive; see Potts (2003) for a discussion) appear to require an (expressive) demonstrative in all the three languages.

       horse-DEF
       the horse

  b. * den hest
      the horse

  c. den *(rôde) hest
      def red   horse
      the red horse   Danish

With proper names, nouns from some lexical semantic classes, deverbal nouns and some singleton exceptions, the use of the definite suffix is blocked (Mikkelsen 1998, Hankamer and Mikkelsen 2002, 2005):

(28) a. en studerende
          a student

      b. den (stakkels) studerende
          the poor   student

      c. * studerende(e)n
          student.DEF
          the student   Danish: deverbal noun

(29) a. skæg, *skæg-(g)en: fun
      b. id, *id-en: deed, action   Danish: lexical exceptions (Mikkelsen 1998, 62)

Hankamer and Mikkelsen (2002, 2005) argue that the alternation is morphological in nature and cannot be accounted for by syntactic mechanisms such as head-movement (contra Delsing 1993 and Embick and Noyer 2001). Their actual account consists of a lexical rule (the D-rule) that produces a combination of the noun and the definite suffix, which, they claim, is syntactically a determiner and therefore functions as D^0.

A head-movement analysis is inapplicable also because this process of inflecting a noun for definiteness can be disrupted by modification. If a noun is modified by a restrictive relative clause, the free-standing article is obligatory (for the majority of the speakers), but if it is modified by a non-restrictive relative, only the suffixal article must be used:

(30) a. hest-en   som vandt lôb-et
          horse-DEF that won   race-DEF
          the horse, which won the race [all speakers]
          the horse that won the race [some speakers]

      b. den hest   som vandt lôb-et
          the horse that won   race-DEF
          the horse that won the race [all speakers]   Danish

Hankamer and Mikkelsen (2002, 2005) propose that this pattern can be accounted for by adopting the general assumption that appositive relatives (and presumably APs) are adjoined to DPs while restrictive ones are adjoined to NPs.[10]

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[10]Hankamer and Mikkelsen (2005) propose that some speakers allow a restrictive interpretation of the relative clause in (30) because they have access to a mechanism whereby a relative clause that is

Since the intervention effect is so similar in the two cases (restrictive modification requires a DP-external article), similar analyses are highly desirable. However, while I agree with Hankamer and Mikkelsen in their proposal that the pattern is to be accounted for in the terms of morphology, I disagree with their implementation (see Matushansky 2006). Before proposing an alternative account of both phenomena, I would like to provide some further evidence in favor of the morphological nature of article absence with definite proper names.

2.2 Lexical classes and morphology

As with the Danish definite suffix, the existence of lexical exceptions to the ability of proper names to appear without the definite article also suggests that this ability is not a syntactic phenomenon. First of all, there are such singleton exceptions as *the Gambia* or *the Ukraine*, which do not follow the common pattern of English country names and require the definite article. If Late Insertion (Halle and Marantz 1993, 1994, Marantz 1993) is assumed (as it is here), syntactic processes are not expected to be sensitive to a particular lexical choice (see Embick and Noyer 2001 and Hankamer and Mikkelsen 2002, 2005 for a similar argument).[11]

Then there are lexical semantic classes of proper names that require the definite article. As mentioned above, these classes differ across languages: for example, names of ships require the definite article in English and in French, but names of countries only do so in French:

(31) a. *(the) Lusitania, *(the) Titanic   English
      b. *(le) Lusitania, (*le) Titanic   French

(32) a. (*the) France, (*the) Morocco   English
      b. *(la) France, *(le) Maroc   French

Lexical semantic classes are not expected to have syntactic idiosyncrasies. What they are known to have are *morphological* idiosyncrasies: for example, in Latin, names of rivers are obligatorily masculine, while names of trees (common nouns) are obligatorily feminine, and that irrespective of the declension class (Bennett, 1918). That the presence or the absence of the definite article depends on the lexical semantic class of the proper name also suggests that we are dealing with a morphological process.

A special kind of a lexical semantic class is a particular biological gender. Thus in French, names of famous singers and actors can appear with a definite article only if they are women (Gary-Prieur 1994) and in some Italian dialects feminine but not masculine proper names must appear with a definite article (Elena Guerzoni, p.c.).

The hypothesis that the behavior of the definite article with proper names is not a syntactic phenomenon is further supported by the fact that the morphological process of pluralization blocks article absence: plural proper names (including *pluralia*

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adjoined (at surface structure, or at the end of (overt) syntax) to DP can be interpreted as adjoined to NP for semantic purposes.

[11]A classical exception is the selection by a verb of a particular preposition (*depend on, look at*). It can be argued that a preposition is a functional item composed solely of formal features – preposition selection is then akin to complementizer selection (the selection of the feature [α finite], as opposed to the selection of the lexical item *that* or the lexical item *for*).

tantum ones, as in (33b)) require a definite article (Borer 2005, see also Gary-Prieur 2001).[12]

This means that some lexical semantic classes of proper names with an obligatory definite article (mountain chains, islands, etc.) are exceptional because of the plural suffix rather than their lexical semantics.

(33) a. the Clintons
      b. the Alps, the Hebrides

To the best of my knowledge, neither non-inflectional affixation nor case affixes on proper names interfere with the absence of an article.[13]

2.3 Article absence

In sum, there appears to exist a relation between the head of a definite noun phrase and the definite article that can license the absence of the article if the N^0 is a proper name. The article must be overt if the proper name is modified, pluralized or lexically marked as requiring an overt definite article (either a singleton exception or a member of one of language-specific lexical semantic classes).

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[12]Borer (2005) also notes that if a name is syntactically and semantically singular, this requirement does not apply:

(i) a. Peaches, my neighbor's cat, is dying/*are dying.
     b. Bones, also known as Dr. McCoy, is a good friend of Captain Kirk's.
     c. Athens is a nice city.

For English, one could have argued that *-s* is not a suffix here, but such a proposal would lack the generality necessary to explain the fact that the same effect obtains in other languages.

Furthermore, when a modifier is part of the proper name, the appearance of the article is not warranted:

(ii) Long Sally, New York, Little RichardÉ

Such cases as *the White House* and *the Big Apple* could be treated as singleton exceptions, similar to *the Ukraine.*

[13]A suffixal definite article is obligatory in Swedish (feminine) hypocoristics (Teleman et al. (1999) via Björn Rothstein, p.c.; I am also grateful to Elisabeth Engdahl for a discussion):

(i) a. Birgitta – Gittan (Gitta-DEF)
     b. Margareta – Maggan (Magg-DEF)   Swedish

This suggests that the diminutive suffix can affect the behavior of the definite article – however, in French and Spanish, a proper name appearing with an article (*la Maria*) is generally used pejoratively or familiarly (Grevisse 1980, Gary-Prieur 1994). This latter fact suggests that the presence of the article is related to the hypocoristic use of the proper name rather than to the presence of the affix – a hypothesis supported by the fact that full names used hypocoristically also appear with an article in Swedish:

(ii) Sten-en (Sten-DEF), Björn-en (Bjorn-DEF), Margareta-n (Margareta-DEF)   Swedish

Since this paper adheres to the Distributed Morphology approach (Halle and Marantz 1993, 1994), one could object that the diminutive suffix could be introduced in syntax, like the plural one. Even then, article absence would still have to be a lexical property of the suffix, since the diminutive suffix triggers the presence of the definite article in Swedish, but not in English, French or Dutch.

It is easy to see that article absence cannot be conditioned by one of the following:

- Linear adjacency, because rightward modification by relative clauses or PPs also disrupts it.

- N-to-D movement (Longobardi 1994, 1999 et seq.), because modification should not disrupt head-movement (or at least it does not do so in clear cases of head-movement in the extended VP). Same for NP-to-[Spec, DP] movement.

- Not c-selection or f-selection, because all proper names are nouns, because modification should not affect f- or c-selection, and because different lexical semantic classes of proper names behave differently.

- Not selection of a (lexical) feature because modification should not play any role and there should not be singleton exceptions.

To determine the mechanism of article absence, we need to take into consideration the effect of both modification and lexical semantics. The influence of the lexical semantics leads us to believe that the omission of the definite article with proper names is morphologically conditioned, as if the article were an affix, while the intervention effect due to modification suggests that syntax must also play a role. In the next section we will see how to reconcile these two apparently conflicting requirements.

3   M-merger

Elsewhere (Matushansky, 2006) I propose that "head-movement" consists of two operations: (a) movement of a head to the specifier of the attracting head, as in (34b), and (b) m-merger, as in (34c):

(34)   a.
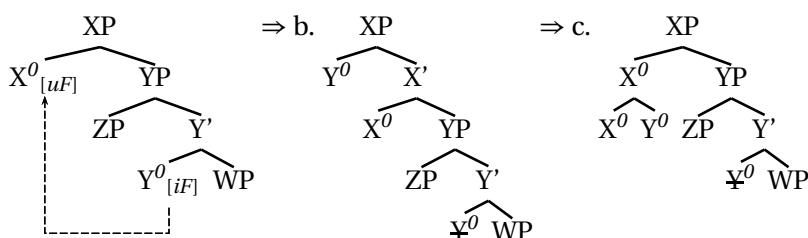
M-merger is a strictly cyclic morphological operation that takes two syntactic heads in a certain configuration and returns one syntactic head. It is subject to strict locality: nothing may intervene between Y^0 and X^0 in (34b): neither a Spec nor a modifier. As a result, the movement of heads is not a special movement operation that is exempt from c-command, but just a case of Move-α, and most of its special syntactic properties are accounted for. Most importantly, m-merger can occur in absence of prior movement if the configuration is right. I propose that the distribution of the definite article with proper names can be explained by m-merger.

3.1 Article absence as m-merger

We observe that a proper name and its article are in the required configuration for the proper name to m-merge with the definite article:

(35)

```
           DP
          /  \
        D⁰    NP
             /  \
           N⁰
```
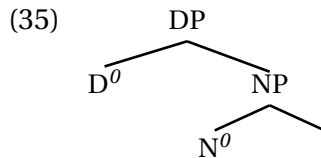
Let us suppose that in some languages m-merger between the definite article and the noun is obligatory in the presence of the feature [+proper] (to be made more explicit below):

(36) **Preproprial m-merger constraint (English)**
M-merge ($D_{[def]}$, $N_{[+proper]}$)

As a result of m-merger, D becomes an affix on N and thus can be conditioned to become null or to take on a special morphological form. The first process results in the lack of a definite article with proper names (as in English), while the second gives rise to special preproprial articles (as in Catalan).

Under the standard assumption that nominal modifiers such as APs and relative clauses adjoin to N', modification disrupts the very local relation between D^0 and N^0. As a result, m-merger becomes impossible and thus modified proper names require an overt definite article, which appears as the syntactic head D^0.

A constraint such as (36) requires that the feature [+proper] be present in syntax and morphology. Evidence in favor of special morphological properties of proper names (i.e., the morphologically detectable feature [+proper], which can be argued to have as semantic correlate the presence of the naming relation R argument slot) comes from the special behavior of proper names with respect to several morphological processes:

- In Dutch, proper names form part of a small group of nouns that take the Genitive case marking.

- The same happens in German. However, "if a proper name is modified by an inflecting determiner or adjective then the head noun cannot inflect for genitive but appears instead in the basic (nominative singular) form". (Spencer, to appear)

- Vocative case marking is generally restricted to a sub-class of nouns, which must contain (a sub-class of) proper names but may also extend to other lexical semantic classes (such as kinship terms)

Moreover, in Latin special morphology is associated with some lexical semantic classes of proper names (Bennett, 1918):
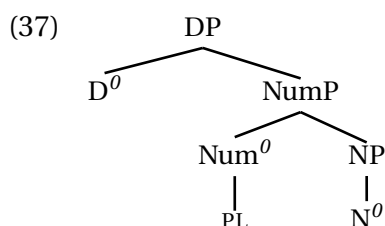
- Names of towns and small islands (and a small group of other nouns) permit Locative without a preposition (realized as a dedicated case in the 1st and 2nd declensions, as Ablative in others).

- Ablative of names of towns and small islands (and a small group of other nouns) can be used without a preposition to denote the departure point (others require the preposition *ab*).

- With proper names of towns, small islands, and peninsulas (and two more nouns), Accusative works as the directional case, otherwise *ad* is required.

The first phenomenon is analogous to Dutch and German Genitive. The last two phenomena can be analyzed as m-merger of the directional preposition and the proper name. We therefore conclude that proper names are special with respect to morphology, and this can be achieved while keeping their syntax regular.

3.2 Affixation

Having explained how m-merger provides the mechanism for the absence of the definite article with proper names and how it predicts that modification should block this absence, we can now demonstrate that affixation can also play a role. Assuming that number affixes are heads in the NP projection, they would naturally intervene between the determiner and the noun:

(37)

$$
\begin{array}{c}
\text{DP} \\
\diagdown \\
\text{D}^0 \quad \text{NumP} \\
\diagdown \\
\text{Num}^0 \quad \text{NP} \\
| \qquad | \\
\text{PL} \qquad \text{N}^0
\end{array}
$$

However, matters are more complicated, since N^0 probably moves to Num^0, which would restore the required locality. Even if it does not,[14] NumP should be present in the singular as well as in the plural – but only the overt plural affix blocks the m-merger of the definite determiner and the noun.

We have to propose therefore that the ability of a morpheme (root or affix) to block m-merger with the article is a lexical property of that morpheme (i.e., certain morphemes are exceptions to the rule of obligatory m-merger between a proper name and the definite article or block the percolation of whatever features on the stem that allow for such m-merger). Since such exceptions to morphological operations are quite common cross-linguistically, nothing special needs to be said about them.[15]

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[14]Although N-to-Num movement could explain the combination of the stem with the plural suffix in English, this account cannot be extended to languages where plural suffixes appear on attributive APs and/or articles, as is the case in Romance.

[15]As observed by Borer 2005, in some dialects of Arabic the definite article appears with proper names that are morphologically derived from some types of nouns, such as *al-faDl* (literally, Õthe virtueÕ) and from adjectives. While this kind of exception cannot be directly handled by an appeal to the lexical class of 'bare' proper name, I note that the morphology of a noun is frequently affected by its derivation: for example, Russian nouns null-derived from adjectives retain their original declension pattern (Halle and Matushansky, 2006).

3.3   Constraining the system

As discussed above, some lexical semantic classes of proper names require the definite article. This means that we need either to develop a way for m-merger to be constrained to apply to a sub-class of proper names only, or to prevent it from applying to certain sub-classes. One example of forcing m-merger to apply to a particular sub-class only is the gender restriction on article absence with proper names in some dialects of Italian, where only feminine proper names appear with an article. This can be easily included into the conditions on m-merger:

(38)   **Preproprial m-merger constraint (Italian M)**
       M-merge ($D_{[def]}$, $N_{[+proper][-F][+person]}$)

Since only [-feminine] proper names trigger m-merger, only [+ feminine] proper names appear with an article. This kind of a constraint is fully expected if m-merger is an operation of the morphological component, as argued by Matushansky (2006): morphological operations may be constrained by morphological features.

The situation becomes more complex if we need to block m-merger from applying to some lexical semantic classes of proper names (and preserve the intuition that something formally unites proper names in a particular lexical semantic class). If there is a feature [+proper] that results in m-merger of the proper name and the definite article, adding another lexically conditioned feature (especially one as odd as [ship]) will not formally block m-merger.

One possibility is to reconsider where the default lies – it might be that the general view is incorrect: it is not that proper names of ships, rivers, etc., are exceptional in that they block m-merger of the definite article, but rather that proper names of people, (in English) countries, etc., are special in that they are subject to preproprial m-merger. If so, constraints on m-merger have the form in (38) rather than (36), and some proper names are not subject to it (singleton exceptions). For this approach to work, it must be the case that proper names that generally appear without an article form congruent classes from the point of view of lexical semantics (e.g., names of people, book, play or movie titles, names of cities, etc.). Since the composition of a full list of entities that have names is beyond the scope of this article we will leave this question open. A major advantage of constraining preproprial m-merger by additional features is that we can easily deal with lexical semantic classes. We have already noted that such sub-classes can constrain other morphological rules: while postulating features such as [city] seems somewhat counter-intuitive, some such provision should be made to deal with the Latin cases discussed in section 4.1. Given that m-merger is a morphological operation, there is nothing surprising in that certain stems (and affixes) are subject to it and others should be exempted from it.

3.4   Blocking m-merger

An alternative way of accounting for the fact that some lexical semantic classes of proper names must appear with the definite article, while others cannot do so, is to say that the feature [±proper] is divorced from semantic content, just like gender features can be: e.g., German diminutives in *-chen* are syntactically neuter. Some proper

names can then be viewed as formally [-proper], which would account for singleton exceptions.[16]

One clear disadvantage of this approach is that it cannot link the presence of the definite article with the lexical semantics of the proper name, and thus cannot account for the fact that proper names with an obligatory definite article belong to certain lexical semantic classes. This problem can be resolved if the lexicon contains a list of redundancy rules that mark the relevant lexical semantic classes as exceptional to preproprial m-merger (or subject to it) by assigning the [+proper] feature to them. Under this view, [+proper] becomes a purely formal feature, essentially encoding the presence of the overt definite article.

We will therefore abandon the hypothesis that [+proper] is a lexical property of a given stem, and examine two ways of incorporating the lexical semantics of the proper name into blocking the preproprial m-merger: one assimilated to modification and the other assimilated to affixation. We will demonstrate that both are theoretically inferior to the approach outlined in section 4.3.

3.4.1 Null nouns

Suppose proper names with articles contain an appropriate covert noun (so the *Thames* is underlyingly *the Thames river*, *the Pacific* is *the Pacific ocean*, etc., before spell-out). Since the covert noun is a common noun, it would be marked [-proper]. If it is the head of the entire construction, as in (39a), then the entire complex proper name will be [-proper]; if it is a modifier, as in (39b), it is an intervener in the same way overt APs, PPs and relative clauses are:[17]

(39) a. the Thames ~~river~~, the Titanic ~~ship~~

b. the ~~River~~ Thames, the ~~ship~~ Titanic

The existence of such minimal pairs as *Yucatan* (a Mexico state) vs. *the Yucatan* (Peninsula) lends support to the null noun hypothesis: the overt noun gradually passes from being implied to being null (the Linguist List 3.932).

Further suggestive evidence (due to Giorgos Spathas and Dimitra Papangeli) comes from Modern Greek: river names are masculine (as is the word for *river*), country names are (mostly) feminine (as is the word for *country*):

(40) a. o   Axios, o   Kifissos   rivers
           the.M Axios the.M Kifissos

---

[16]We might therefore expect common nouns to be marked [+proper]. This is not necessarily a problem, since unmodified noun phrases headed by some common nouns can also be bare while being definite in certain contexts (Carlson and Sussman 2005).

(i)   Sue took her nephew to college/to prison/to class.

[17]There are two exceptions to the generalization that the presence of an overt common noun results in the overt definite article: the nouns *lake* and *mount* (e.g., *Lake Tahoe, Mount Everest)*. We suggest that both nouns are probably better viewed as part of the proper name. This view is supported by the fact that *mount* is not readily used in isolation.

b. i   Elada, i   Jalia   countries
   the.F Greece the.F France

                                                        Modern Greek

If there is a covert noun there, the gender on the article is the gender of that noun (under the assumption that the gender of null nouns is constant). Unfortunately, counterevidence to this view comes from French, where river names require articles but their gender is not consistent:[18]

(41)   a. la Seine, la Marne
       b. le Rhône, le Danube, le Rhin   French

This brings us to the second possible hypothesis explaining the use of the definite article with certain lexical semantic classes of proper names. Perhaps the formation of river names in French is done via affixation. Since an affix does not have to be specified for gender, we do not predict a consistent gender for such proper names.

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[18]It should be noted that, alongside genuine definite articles with proper names, there are proper names historically containing the definite article that has been reanalyzed as part of the proper name (see fn. 7 for the same effect with modifiers). Such former definite articles are frequently spelled together with the noun they originally modified (Gary-Prieur 1994):

(i)   a. Levallois, Viget-Lebrun
       b. La Rochelle, le Corbusier, Le Pen   French

For masculine proper names preposition contraction allows to verify whether the definite article is a genuine article or part of the name. As is well-known, the prepositions *à* and *de* followed by the definite article *le* or *les* become *au/du* and *aux/des*, respectively. While *le* in (i) does not undergo contraction with the prepositions *à* and *de*, the definite article required by the lexical semantic class of the proper name must do so:

(ii)   a. à/de Levallois vs. *Auvallois/*Devallois   proper names with le
       b. à/de le Corbusier, *au/*du Corbusier   French
(iii) a. * à/de le Maroc vs. au/du Maroc   lexical semantic class
       b. * à/de le Rhône vs. au/du Rhône   French

As noted by an anonymous reviewer, there is some variation with singleton exceptions such as *Le Havre*: both (iv-a) and (iv-b) are permitted:

(iv)   a. à/de le Havre, à/de le Mans   singleton exceptions
       b. au/du Havre, au/du Mans   French

This fact suggests that such singleton exceptions can be reanalyzed along the lines of (i), with the sequence *le* progressively becoming a phonological part of the proper name.
However, it is also possible that article drop is sensitive to broader syntactic context, as demonstrated by the following contrasts:

(v)   a. pommes de terre du Pas de Calais, persil de la Drôme, carottes des Landes
       b. poireaux de Hollande, maïs doux dÕAquitaine, petits pois dÕAllemagne

As discussed above, when in argument positions, names of countries and many geographic regions require a definite article in French. However, while in (v-a) the definite article remains in the description of the vegetableÕs origin, in (v-b) it drops. Clearly, further refinements are necessary.

3.4.2 Null affixes

Since affixation may disrupt article absence (e.g., in the plural), it is possible that the morpheme intervening and blocking preproprial m-merger for names of ships, rivers, etc., is an affix rather than a full noun. Such an affix might or might not introduce a gender different from that of the proper name itself.

Suppose now that some names are morphologically complex, just like plurals, and that the null affix on such a name is [-proper]. As a result, the totality of the name becomes [-proper] (formally, rather than semantically, of course), and the environment for m-merger disappears. If the relevant null affix is specified for gender (like with river names in Modern Greek), the proper name in that category will be marked with a certain gender – otherwise, like in French, the gender will be non-consistent.

One problem with the null noun/affix approach is that it cannot be readily extended to other cases where the lexical semantic class of the noun plays a role. Even if it could, the same information information of belonging to a particular lexical semantic class would be present in two places: on the noun and on the null noun/affix – an obvious redundancy.

Another issue is how to distinguish non-derived proper names from those derived with a null noun/affix that is not marked [-proper]. Too many proper names can have two possible derivations – a clearly undesirable outcome.

Thirdly, this account cannot be easily extended to French nominal modification exemplified in (42). A proper name modified by a bare noun does not require an article unless the modifier is interpreted contrastively (Noailly 1991). It should be noted that the modifier in (42) is restrictive in that it singles out a particular aspect of Cicero:[19]

(42)   (*le) Cicéro orateur   French
       (ok if interpreted contrastively)

Finally, given the conflicting evidence from Greek and French, it seems likely that to make the null affix/noun proposal work, we would need to assume that both options are available – potentially in one and the same language.

We conclude that the approach where the preproprial m-merger is made available by the lexical semantic class of the proper name (rather than blocked by it) is preferable.

3.5   Summary

An analysis based on m-merger permits us to combine syntactic and morphological constraints on the behavior of definite articles with proper names. On the syntactic side, the article can be m-merged with the proper name under strict head-head adjacency, which can be interrupted by modification. On the morphological side, m-merger is like other morphological phenomena in that it can be conditioned by the

---

[19]One could object that the bare noun in (42) is a DP with a null article (rather than N0) because in the English counterpart of (42), Cicero the orator, a full DP seems to be present. If so, we must conclude that a DP modifier of a proper name is not an intervener for the purposes of article absence. One way of ensuring that it is not would be to have it attached above the DP. This, however, does not seem consistent with its restrictive interpretation and still requires us to explain why the definite article of this putative DP-modifier is absent in French.

lexical semantics of the stem (e.g., country names require preproprial m-merger in English and disallow it in French) and is subject to exceptions for certain roots (e.g., *the Sudan*) and certain affixes (e.g., the plural *-s*). Other morphological rules have the same kind of exceptions: e.g., in Russian, certain nouns (e.g., *kenguru* kangaroo) and morphological classes of nouns (e.g., surnames derived with the (Ukrainian) suffix *-enko*) cannot take any overt case marking, and in Latin, nouns denoting trees are all feminine.

While this view of the matter requires us to demonstrate that proper names that appear without the definite article form congruent sub-classes from the point of view of lexical semantics, the opposing point of view (section 4.4) requires us to postulate either null nouns or null affixes, with undesirable consequences.

Finally, the analysis proposed here has nothing to say beyond a simple statement of the fact about why it is only the definite article that can be m-merged with the proper name. A functionalist explanation is that being definite by default, proper names do not have the need to marked so – however, this view incorrectly leads us to expect proper names to behave the same superlative or ordinal DPs, and cannot readily explain why languages such as Catalan or Pima require a definite article with proper names. I leave the question as a topic for future research.

4   Preproprial articles

The m-merger operation allows us to account not only for the absence of the definite article with some proper names, but also for the fact that the definite article takes on a special form with proper names of people in some languages (most dialects of Catalan, some Scandinavian dialects, Tagalog, some Polynesian languages):

(43)   a. Catalan: preproprial *en/na* vs. regular *el/la* the.M/F
        b. Northern Norwegian: preproprial *ho/han* she/he
        c. Tagalog: preproprial *si/kay/ni* vs. regular *ang/sa/ng* the-SUBJ/LOC/GEN

As far as I have been able to ascertain, definite articles take on a special form with personal names only. This category is generally restricted to people but sometimes, as in Tagalog, also includes pets. A possible hypothesis is therefore that preproprial definite articles c-select (properly speaking, f-select) for [+proper] and [+person] ([+animate], for Tagalog) and m-merger is irrelevant.[20] Once again, modified proper names will permit us to distinguish m-merger from f-selection (and/or covert head-movement): if preproprial articles f-select (or attract) a particular feature ([+ person] or [+ animate]), this requirement should be satisfied despite modification, and a modified proper name should behave exactly like an unmodified one.

In Catalan, modification results in obligatory regularization of the definite article unless the modifier is part of the proper name (Coromina i Pou 2001, data due to Maria Núria Martí Girbau, p.c.):

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[20]Alternatively, the special preproprial D^0 attracts a [+proper][+person] N^0 (as per Longobardi's hypothesis). Unfortunately, this would predict the wrong word order, unless the N-to-D raising is covert. To avoid covert head-movement as an unnecessary complication of the theory, we prefer the c-selection hypothesis.

(44) el Pau que vam   conèixer a la festa
      the Pau that go-1PL meet   at the party
      the Paul that we met at the party   Catalan

Neither f-selection nor head-movement can be disrupted by modification, so we
conclude that the special preproprial article in Catalan is conditioned by m-merger. In
Tagalog, on the other hand, if a personal name is modified, the definite article may but
need not be regularized (Google data due to Norvin Richards, p.c.):

(45) si/ang dating Pangulong Marcos
      the   former President Marcos
      the former president Marcos   Tagalog

For those speakers of Tagalog for whom modification results in regularization, we
must conclude that in their dialect the preproprial article is conditioned by m-merger.
On the other hand, for those Tagalog speakers who use the special preproprial defi-
nite article for modified proper names as well, we assume that the special preproprial
article f-selects the feature [+animate] in addition to [+proper].

Neither f-selection nor head-movement can be disrupted by modification, so we
conclude that the special preproprial article in Catalan is conditioned by m-merger.
The same conclusion has to be drawn for those speakers of Tagalog for whom modi-
fication results in regularization. On the other hand, for those Tagalog speakers who
use the special preproprial definite article for modified proper names as well, we as-
sume that the special preproprial article f-selects the feature [+animate] in addition to
[+proper].

The fact that [+ person] or [+ animate] proper names are singled out by special
articles lends further support to the theory that preproprial m-merger is constrained
by the lexical semantic class, as argued in section 4.3.

5   Conclusion

On the basis of cross-linguistic data we can establish that proper names enter syntax
as predicates, just like common nouns (Matushansky, 2005a,b, to appear). This means
that the definite article that appears with some proper names in argument positions
is a regular definite article with standard semantics. As a result, languages where a
regular definite article appears with all proper names are the predicted option. An ex-
planation is required for languages where proper names can appear without an article
(such as English) or languages where the definite article appearing with proper names
takes on an unusual form (such as Tagalog).

Since (restrictive) modification triggers an obligatory definite article (Sloat 1969),
c-selection and head-movement cannot account for its absence. On the other hand,
m-merger (Matushansky, 2006) can be blocked by modification, and can yield both
the special form of the definite article with proper names and its absence. In addi-
tion, being a morpho-syntactic operation, m-merger can have exceptions and be con-
strained by the lexical semantics of the morphemes involved, as well as by the choice
of a particular morpheme. Conversely, we now have evidence that m-merger can occur
in absence of prior movement.

Hopefully, this analysis of proper names can be extended to other cases of missing definite articles, including bare singulars (Carlson and Sussman 2005), and possibly bare plurals and mass nouns.

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