Referentiality and the noun

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Abstract

This paper argues that nouns and names, as such, do not refer. Apparently-referring nouns and names have been converted lexically to determiners. Thus nouns and names participate in reference by virtue of dependency on a determiner, either in the syntax, as part of a determiner phrase, or lexically, by conversion. Determiners may be partitive (referring to a subset) or non-partitive (generic), and definite or non-definite; and various combinations of these subcategories may be expressed either by presence of an independent determiner or by conversion of a noun to a determiner. So, in English, for example, *the cows* is definite and partitive; but converted *cows* may be either non-definite (partitive or not) or definite non-partitive (generic). Apparently-referring nouns and names in English are paralleled in some other languages by expressions with a distinct determiner. In French, for instance, conversion is sparing and nouns typically appear with an accompanying determiner: So non-definite partitive *cows* corresponds to *des vaches* in French, and definite non-partitive *cows* to (one sense of) *les vaches*. Greek is intermediate in recourse to conversion. Presence of a determiner and conversion are considered to be alternative strategies (syntactic vs. lexical) for permitting nouns to participate in reference. In the absence of these, nouns are predicative, and languages again vary in how predicativity is expressed – though arguably again involving a determiner. Non-singular predicative nouns are often converted to a non-referential determiner. Singulars may or may not be accompanied by a singular non-referential determiner: compare Greek *Ine δikiγoros* ('S/he is lawyer') with English *She is a lawyer*.

What follows concerns a topic intimately connected with early work of Torben Thrane, notably what was published as Thrane (1980). That particular volume originated in work done largely when Torben was a student of John Lyons, who had also been my PhD supervisor. I therefore thought it might be appropriate to pursue here some consequences of remarks of our former supervisor on the semantics of nouns. These emanate from that same period.[1]

1. Introduction

My starting point is a quotation from Lyons (1977: 208), namely:

> ... reference is an utterance-bound relation and does not hold of lexemes as such, but of expressions in context. Denotation, on the other hand, like sense, is a relation that applies in the first instance to lexemes and holds independently of particular occasions of utterance. Consider, for example, a word like 'cow' in English. Phrases like 'the cow', 'John's cow', or 'those three cows over there' may be used to refer to individuals, whether singly or in groups, but the word 'cow' alone cannot.

Lyons' term 'lexeme' is used to distinguish between 'word' as a 'vocabulary-word' and 'word' in the sense 'word-form' (p.19). Thus *find* and *found* might be said to be forms of the lexeme that may be cited as 'find'.

I'm going to interpret what Lyons says here as a claim about word classes, given that there is distributional support for it. The claim is simply that, even in use in context, nouns denote but don't refer. In order to take part in reference they must be part of a determiner phrase. What I

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mean by 'take part in reference' can be elucidated by recourse to another quotation from further down on the same page in Lyons' book:

> ... the reference of phrases which contain 'cow' is determined, in part, by the denotation of 'cow'. For example, the phrase 'this cow' may, in certain circumstances, be understood by the hearer to mean "the object near us which belongs to the class of objects which the lexeme 'cow' denotes".

The referent may be identified with the help of the denotation of 'cow', but the noun 'cow' does not refer. Let's now look at the consequences of this claim about word classes.

I represent the syntactic relation between the word classes realized as *the* and *cows* in the phrase *the cow* as in (1):

(1)

```
    D
    ⋮ ╲
    ⋮   ╲ N
    ⋮     ⋮
    ⋮     ⋮
   the   cows
```
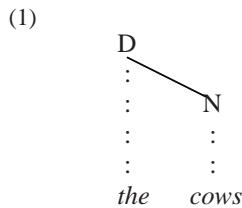
Here *the* is represented, in a simple dependency-based notation, as a head with a dependent noun to its right. Here and throughout I shall use this simple notation to focus on what is essential to what is being discussed. For fuller representations of the relevant area see Anderson (2007).

It is the presence of *the* in (1) that permits reference to be made, specifically definite reference, in this case. And it is the determiner that allows the noun to function as part of an argument of a predicator. Compare in this respect (2) and (3):

(2) The cows are grazing over there

(3) Daisy and Bessie are cows

The predicative nominal after the copula in (3) is not referential, though the subjects in both of (2) and (3), as well as the adverb in (2), are referential. I'll come back to the status of names such as those in (3) later; here the forms refer, and are definite. With regard to all these non-predicatives the speaker assumes the hearer can identify the referent.

In contrast with (3), both the nominal expressions in the equative construction in (4) are referential:

(4) Daisy and Bessie are the cows grazing over there/The cows grazing over there are Daisy and Bessie

Here two arguments are asserted to be referentially identical. And, given appropriate discourse conditions, the two phrases can be reversed. The presence of the determiner again allows nouns to participate in reference rather than simply being predicative – as is the final noun in (3).

Definiteness may be either generic or what I shall call 'partitive', as illustrated by the singular subjects in (5) vs. (6):

(5) The cow has four stomachs

(6) The cow you bought is barren

In the partitive (6) the speaker refers to an individual cow that is assumed to be identifiable by the hearer. In (5) the speaker refers to an individual type that is characterized by the sense of 'cow'. The sense determines the set that can legitimately be denoted by 'cow'. Reference here is to the individual members of the whole denotative set.

The determiner in (1) is both definite and partitive, as indicated by the subscripts in (1)', where, as a determiner, it is also marked as redundantly ref(erential):

(1)'

$$D^{ref}_{def,part}$$

```
  :
  :        N
  :        :
  :        :
 the      cows
```
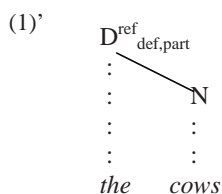
The distinction between partitive and non-partitive will be important in what follows, along with definite vs. non-definite. The determiner is associated with both a partitive vs. non-partitive distinction and a definite vs. non-definite one, the latter illustrated by *the cow* vs. *a cow*, for instance. I shall not attempt here to give the same recognition to subcategories of classes other than the determiner.

As concerns what is being claimed here, however, the reader may well already be thinking something like 'But what about the form *cows* in (7) and (8)?':

(7) Cows eat grass

(8) Cows are grazing over there

This form too may be either partitive or not, and it participates in reference, though indefinite reference in the case of the partitive (8). Here what is referred to is a specific but not necessarily definite subset of the denotata of the noun.

Where is the determiner in these expressions, however? These sentences seem to call into question both the notion that the determiner in (1) is syntactically the head of the phrases we have been looking at and the claim that nouns don't refer. The determiner apparently may be absent, and referentiality does not seem to depend on its presence. From the point of view of my claim, I accept that the form *cows* in (7) and (8) refers. Indeed, the reference in (7) is definite, despite the absence of an article. The form in this instance refers to the set denoted by the word 'cow'. And, as I've said, the form in (8) is partitive. But I don't think that the forms in (7) and (8) are simply a noun like the forms in (5) and (6). In §2 I approach why I think this, rather indirectly, with a look at lexical structure and how it might be represented.

2. Conversion

Lexical items may be derived one from the other. It is commonly recognized that among the mechanisms of word-formation that signal derived status there is one that has been covered by various terms, such as 'conversion' or 'zero-derivation'. The other mechanisms of affixation and internal modification of the base are illustrated in (9) and (10), respectively:

(9) baker, *agentive noun* ($\Leftarrow$ bake, *verb*)

(10) feed, *causative verb* ($\Leftarrow$ food, *noun*)

Unlike in these, conversion is not signalled by the form of the word, as evidenced in the agentive noun (11), but is manifested by distribution:

(11) cook, *agentive noun* ($\Leftarrow$ cook, *verb*)

The agentive noun from *bake* is marked by a suffix, but in the case of the *cook* verb the suffixed form is pre-empted in present-day English by the derived instrumental for an appliance in (12) – or, in the English I grew up with, for an apple that's fit only for cooking:

(12) cooker, *instrumental noun*

In English such verb-to-noun conversions are widespread.

Common too are noun-to-verb conversions, such as that in (13):

(13) gaol, *goal-based verb* ($\Leftarrow$ gaol, *noun*)

Compare with it the prefixed-derived verb in (14):

(14)   imprison, *goal-based verb* ($\Leftarrow$ prison, *noun*)

In these circumstances, the directionality of the derivation may indeed be uncertain in particular cases, particularly if the item concerned is prototypically neither verb nor noun – as with, say, *blaze*. And indeed different speakers may differ in the structure of their mental lexicons in this respect. But usually, the formations follow regular patterns in which directionality is transparent from the meanings, so that, for instance, *cook* is a noun defined by a particular activity, as is *baker*.

Table 1 provides some examples of common types of verb-to-noun conversions (from Colman /Anderson 2004).

Type	Examples
agentive	cook, spy
resultative	win, guess
goal	drop, dump
patient	smoke, drink
actional	run, climb, smoke

Table 1. Some verb-to-noun conversions in English

Table 2 shows some noun-to-verb conversions (from Clark/Clark 1979).

Type	Examples
locatum-based	newspaper the shelves, rouge the cheeks
goal-based	pot the begonias, table, garage, field, ground, seat, can
duration-based	winter in California, overnight at the White House
agent-based	police the park, clown, soldier, butcher
translative-based	cripple the man, crumb the bread; the trail forked
instrument-based	bicycle, nail, knife

Table 2. Some noun-to-verb conversions in English

In table 1 the derived nouns are subcategorized in accordance with the role they perform in relation to the verb – apart from the last, actional noun. And in table 2 the derived verbs are subcategorized in terms of the role of the corresponding noun that they absorb; the verb is based on a noun in a particular relation.

Ignoring, for the moment, this last observation concerning the relevance of semantic roles associated with the valency of the verbs involved, we can represent the structural relation between the word classes involved in the lexical relationship as in (15) and (16) respectively:

(15)   N
       |
       V

(16)   V
       |
       N

These are lexical representations in which the head is the derived category and the dependent the base. The head and the dependent in such lexical representations do not differ in sequence, unlike in the syntactic representation in (1), where dependency involves a difference in position. But it is the head category in (15) and (16) that, as in syntactic expressions, determines the distribution of

the whole. That is, headhood is characterized by this property, whether or not difference in linear position is involved. It is, however, the dependent in (15) and (16) that determines the phonological form, just as in affixation it is the dependent that supplies the base (as in *baker*).

Most illustrations of conversion use lexical categories, as in (13) and (14). I am going to suggest that conversions are not limited to such cases. Specifically, in (7) and (8) a noun has been converted in the lexicon to a determiner, as schematically represented in (17):
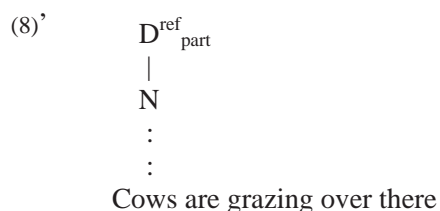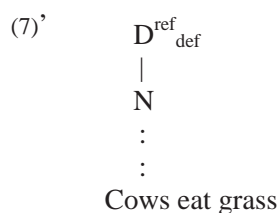
(17)
$$
\begin{array}{c}
D \\
| \\
N
\end{array}
$$
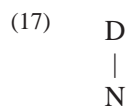
Assuming that the noun has undergone conversion to a determiner conforms to the distributions we can observe: a noun is predicative or dependent on a determiner, and it is non-referential, unless it occurs in a position where we expect a determiner phrase, in which case the noun participates in reference, by virtue of conversion. A noun achieves participation in reference by being governed by a determiner, either syntactically, as in (1), or lexically, as in (17).

In these terms, (7) and (8) do not violate the assumption that nouns as such do not refer. And they are of course in conformity with the analysis of determiners as heads that take a dependent noun as a complement. Head status for determiners is also consistent with the further observation that there are determiners that lack a dependent, those items traditionally referred to as 'pronouns' – as in (18):

(18)   They are grazing over there

As expected, heads are obligatory in their construction, and the dependent may be optional, depending on the identity of the head. Pronouns are determiners without a syntactic dependent. And they are not necessarily 'pro-' any other syntactic category; they may indeed be deictic. In their anaphoric function they might be said to be pro-determiner phrase, but (as Apollonius Dyscolus observed in *De pronomine*) not pro-noun.

I noted that the subject of (8) is not definite, but is only partitive. The subject of (7), on the other hand, is generic – non-partitive and definite. Both definiteness and partitiveness are otherwise properties of determiners. On my proposal these nouns are converted into determiners. We might therefore represent the subjects of (7) and (8) as in (7)' and (8)', respectively:

(7)'
$$
\begin{array}{c}
D^{\text{ref}}_{\text{def}} \\
| \\
N \\
\vdots \\
\text{Cows eat grass}
\end{array}
$$

(8)'
$$
\begin{array}{c}
D^{\text{ref}}_{\text{part}} \\
| \\
N \\
\vdots \\
\text{Cows are grazing over there}
\end{array}
$$

Each bears only one of the subscripts that are associated with (1)'. In these plurals only the combination is associated with a syntactically distinct determiner.

The proposal that the nouns in (7) and (8) are converted into a determiner may be rather unorthodox, but it is consistent with the distribution of nouns: predicative, or in determiner-phrase

position. In the latter case, they are dependent on a determiner, syntactically or lexically, and only then are they apparently referring. And quite a lot of plausibility accrues to this suggestion from some cross-linguistic comparisons. This is what I take up next. To keep the discussion within manageable proportions, I shall in general, as in the preceding, invoke only the minimally specified simple determiners usually called 'articles'. These are diachronically deictics and numerals/quantifiers that have undergone further grammaticalization. The article is a default where the independent presence of a determiner of a particular character is obligatory.

3.   Comparatively speaking

Consider now equivalents of (7) and (8) in some other languages. And let's look firstly at (7). Expressions equivalent in reference to (7) in various languages, indeed, regularly contain an independent syntactic determiner, as with the subject in (19), from French:

(19)   Les exercices corporels maintiennent l'appétit
         the exertions bodily   maintain   the appetite

The same is true with mass nouns. As is familiar, they often pattern with plurals. So we have, as well as the post-verbal phrase in (19), that in the first example in (20), again from French:

(20)   J'aime le poisson/mu aresi   to psari
         I like the fish   /me pleases the fish

I've added to it an example from Greek, with initial dative/genitive and post-verbal accusative. These sentences are ambiguous: the definite post-verbal determiner phrase may be partitive or generic. In this respect the English glosses in (20) are misleading; considered as phrases of English they are partitive. A generic interpretation lacks the definite article in the less literal English gloss of (20) in (21), as with the plural in (7):

(21)   I like fish

But the post-verbal element in (21) is nevertheless definite; as with the generic interpretation of those in (20), it refers to whatever is denoted by the word 'fish'. The lexical representation for (7) given in (7)' therefore seems to be appropriate.

   French and Greek are ambiguous between partitive and non-partitive definiteness. (7) and (8) illustrate that English, on the other hand, is ambiguous between partitive non-definite and non-partitive definite. This is distinguished in French and Greek. The equivalents of *cows* in (7) would be (22) and of (8), (23):

(22)   les vaches/i aγelaδes

(23)   des vaches/aγelaδes

But, as (23) shows, only in French is partitivity necessarily given overt expression. Similarly, with mass nouns we have the partitives in (24) compared with the generics of (20):

(24)   du poisson/psari

Compare (20) and (24) with (25) from English, repeated from (21), where again the expression is ambiguous between partitive non-definite and non-partitive definite – though *some* may be used as a disambiguator:

(25)   fish

The French non-definite partitives in (23) and (24) are expressed by a syntactic determiner. That in (8) is lexical, expressed distributionally. And this is also the case in Greek, as shown in (23) and (24). All this suggests that the representation in (8)' is appropriate for the expressions (8) and (25). In Greek, only the non-definite partitive is lexical. In English both the non-definite partitive and the definite non-partitive – i.e. generic – are expressed lexically.

The sub-table of 3 might clarify these cross-linguistic observations a bit.

a. **French**

		definite
		les
partitive	*des / ___*	*les*

b. **Greek**

		definite
		i
partitive	___	*i*

c. **English**

		definite
		——
partitive	___	*the*

d. **Latin**

		definite
		——
partitive	___	——

Table 3. Plural articles in four languages

A horizontal line inside a box indicates there need be no syntactic expression of determination; there may be only the result of conversion.

Very generally in French, as shown in a. of table 3, the referentiality of a noun – i.e. its government by a determiner – is signalled by the presence of a distinct determiner, rather than being the result of conversion, lexical dependence of the noun. What I'm suggesting comparatively is that, in English, shown in c., some of the time the same function as is served in general by the syntactic determiners of French is carried out via conversion to determiner in the lexicon. Greek is revealed in b. as in this respect intermediate, in being less dependent on conversion than English but less insistent than French on syntactic expression of determination. At the other extreme from French are languages, like Latin (d.), which lack articles, so that, in the absence of deixis or full quantification, distinctions in referentiality involve conversion, and thus differentiation is by distribution and/or context. This, of course, is a consequence of conversion in general.

4.   The singularity of being singular

There is a final relevant aspect of these distinctions carried by determiners to be considered. All of the generics we've encountered thus far have been definite; all non-partitives have been definite. Indeed, I've identified genericness with non-partitive definiteness. This applies to singular, plural and mass expressions. Recall (5), (7), and (21):

(5)   The cow has four stomachs

(7)   Cows eat grass

(21)   I like fish

What, then, do we make of the subject of (26)?

(26)   A cow is a peaceful animal

Elsewhere, this article is generally associated with singular partitivity, but here it seems to be 'generic' in some sense.
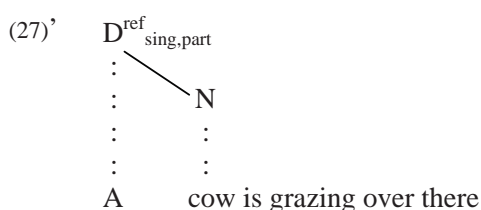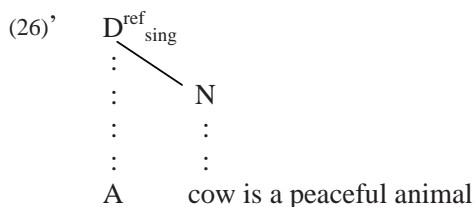
A genuine singular partitive referring to a specific member of the set denoted by *cow* is illustrated by the subject of (27):

(27)   A cow is grazing over there

Such a singular non-definite partitive must be given an overt marker in English – the indefinite article, at a minimum. (26) seems to be the non-partitive equivalent of (27); the subject does not

refer to a specific cow. But it too requires the indefinite article. And it is not definite: it does not refer to the whole set of or a definite member of the set denoted by *cow*.

The subject of (26) is neither partitive nor definite, but simply singular, and therefore count. As a singular of this particular character, it refers to any entity meeting the sense requirements associated with *cow*, not a specific member of the denotative set. We might represent this distinction as in (26)' vs. (27)':

(26)' D^{ref}_{sing}
$$
\begin{array}{ll}
\vdots & \\
\vdots & \diagdown \;N \\
\vdots & \quad \vdots \\
\vdots & \quad \vdots \\
A & \quad \text{cow is a peaceful animal}
\end{array}
$$

(27)' $D^{ref}_{sing,part}$
$$
\begin{array}{ll}
\vdots & \\
\vdots & \diagdown \;N \\
\vdots & \quad \vdots \\
\vdots & \quad \vdots \\
A & \quad \text{cow is grazing over there}
\end{array}
$$

By virtue of having simply singular as a positive feature, the indefinite article in (26)' is able to fill the empty slot in all the tables for singulars corresponding to those in table 3 for plurals in the previous section. This slot is defined by the absence of both definiteness and partitivity.

The singular article in English is unique among its overt determiners in allowing the interpretation in (16)'. But converted plurals and mass nouns can also manifest it. The 'gap' in table c. in 3, for instance, and the corresponding one for mass nouns are also filled. Thus we can attribute such an interpretation to (28):

(28)   Cows are easily frightened

A non-specific reading is favoured in 'affective' and 'opaque' contexts, such as (29) to (31):

(29)   I didn't find a hotel

(30)   Did you buy bread?

(31)   She wants to avoid problems

And a non-specific referential interpretation may be insisted on by the use of *any*:

(32)   I didn't find any hotel

(33)   Did you buy any bread?

(34)   She wants to avoid any problems

These are determiners, syntactic or lexical, that refer to an entity (or entities) that meets the sense requirements associated with the dependent noun, but is neither a definite nor a specific member of the set denoted by that noun, nor does it refer to the set as a whole. However, further consideration of these begins to go beyond the bounds of the present exercise, concerned with the non-referentiality of the noun. And a pressing consideration now confronts us.

5.   The enigma of the predicative noun

This minimal characterization required for the subject of (26), neither partitive nor definite, may underlie the development of the predicative function of the indefinite article in English that we see in (35), or indeed in (26):

(35)   Daisy is a lawyer

The (post-verbal) noun in (35) is predicative, but it is accompanied by a determiner, even though above we associated determiners with conferring referentiality. In (35) the predicative noun is accompanied by an indefinite article that is apparently not referential, as it is in (26) and (27). In (27) the article is partitive; it refers to a particular individual. However, the indefinite article in (35) is not merely non-partitive and non-definite, as in (26), but it does not enter into any distinction of referential contrast, only one of number; there are no partitive or definite singular predicatives.

Apparent examples of partitivity, such as perhaps in the first sentence in (36), are equative, and so are reversible:
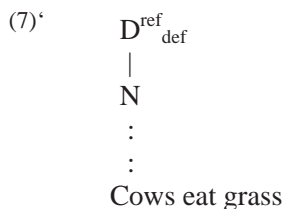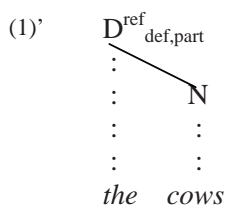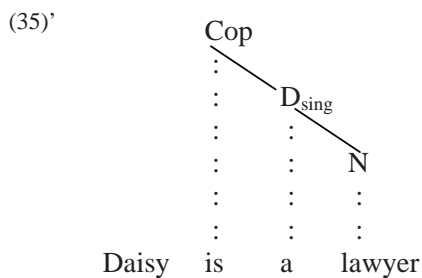
(36)   ?Daisy is one lawyer/One lawyer is Daisy

In so far as (36) is interpretable, which is easier if we add something like ... *I know* giving (36)', it is clearly equative, as again suggested by the reversibility:

(36)'   Daisy is one lawyer I know/One lawyer I know is Daisy

But the post-copular phrase in (35) does not make a reference; instead, the predication assigns a classification.

However, we have an article in (35). My suggestion here is that with the post-verbal noun in (35) we have what we might call an 'ultra-minimally-specified' determiner. As with the subject of (26)' the indefinite article, exceptionally for a determiner, signals only singularity; it is neither definite nor partitive. And the predicative in (35) goes one stage further: it lacks referentiality, as shown in (35)' – compared with (1)', (7)', or (8)':

(35)'

$$
\begin{array}{llll}
\text{Cop} & & & \\
\vdots & D_{sing} & & \\
\vdots & \vdots & N & \\
\vdots & \vdots & \vdots & \\
\vdots & \vdots & \vdots & \\
\text{Daisy} & \text{is} & \text{a} & \text{lawyer}
\end{array}
$$

(1)'

$$
\begin{array}{ll}
D^{ref}_{def,part} & \\
\vdots & N \\
\vdots & \vdots \\
\vdots & \vdots \\
\textit{the} & \textit{cows}
\end{array}
$$

(7)'

$$
\begin{array}{l}
D^{ref}_{def} \\
| \\
N \\
\vdots \\
\vdots \\
\text{Cows eat grass}
\end{array}
$$

(8)'

$$D^{ref}_{part}$$
$$|$$
$$N$$
$$\vdots$$
$$\vdots$$

Cows are grazing over there

This determiner is not merely non-specific but non-referential.

The presence of D is simply signalling a count noun that is normally, as here, in agreement with the subject – as with plural predicative nouns, where plurality is marked inflectionally. The nouns are in both cases distinguished as count rather than mass nouns. The agreement may be simply semantic, as with the collective subjects in (37), where the subject or the verb disagrees formally:

(37)   Jim and his wife/That family are a menace

Indeed, the predicative expression may be interpreted as asserting singularity

This secondary status for an indefinite article, as marker of singularity, is found in a number of languages. But we also find an apparently pure predicative noun in the same circumstances in other languages. Thus we lack in various languages an article, or any determiner, in an equivalent of (35). Thus, in Greek and French again, we have (38):

(38)   Ine   δikiγoros/ Il est avocat
        s/he.is lawyer/   he is lawyer

A singular predicative noun here lacks a determiner, as typically with plurals and mass predicatives, as we might expect. In (38) singularity is signalled only by the noun inflection, or its absence – though in spoken French this may not be apparent.

However, I associate the presence of number in (38), and in the case of plurals and mass nouns, with conversion to a minimal determiner. Thus not just singular predicatives with an overt indefinite article, as in (35), are dependent on an ultra-minimal determiner, but also other predicatives that lack a syntactically distinct determiner, whether they are singular, plural or mass. The derived determiner associated with the predicatives in (38), and in their plural and mass equivalents, also carries the grammatical gender present in some languages (see Anderson in press: ch.6).

Choice of (35) over (38) involves only the structural difference in (35)' vs. (38)', where the indefinite article in (35)' is not referential, in expressing singularity only, as is the converted nominative noun in (31)':

(38)'   Cop

$$\vdots \quad D_{sing}$$
$$\vdots \quad |$$
$$\vdots \quad N$$
$$\vdots \quad \vdots$$
$$\vdots \quad \vdots$$
        Ine   δikiγoros
        s/he.is lawyer

(38)' is also predicative and non-referential, but expressed by a noun converted to a non-referential determiner. Predicative position is generally associated with the absence of referential determiners, unless other factors supervene. It is a position denied to pronouns, for instance.

We arrive at an even more radical position than was assumed at the start of our look at referentiality and the noun. It's not just that the non-predicative syntax of nouns is determined by dependency on a determiner, lexically or syntactically: the syntax of nouns in general is associated

with such a dependency relation. What is distinctive about predicatives is that the governing determiner is ultra-minimal, non-referential.

We must now make some acknowledgement, however, of some further complexities in the area of predicative nouns. Such absence of a n overt determiner with predicative nouns as we find in (38) is indeed rather general in Greek – though even here there are classes of exceptions, notably when the predicative noun is 'modified' (see e.g. Holton *et al.* 1999: 283), as in (32):

(39)   Ine enas kalos δikiγoros
       he.is a   good lawyer

This is also true of French. And French is still more variable, as is illustrated by (40), with respectively a singular and a mass noun:

(40)   Cet animal est un tigre/C'est du poisson
       that animal is a   tiger/it's   fish

Indeed, there are in that language many exceptions to the pattern we see in (38). I do not investigate the factors involved here, beyond the observation that the determiners in (40) distinguish singular from mass, as is general in French.

In Greek, on the other hand, even non-definite partitive singulars may occur in frequently used locutions, particularly with 'cognate objects', without a syntactic determiner, as in (41):

(41)   γrafo   vivlio
       I'm writing a book

These differences between languages in the behaviour of predicative nouns appear to correlate with the behaviour of syntactic determiners, and particularly articles, generally – though what I have to say about this is even more speculative and informal.

Variability in the treatment of predicative nouns may reflect the low predicativity of nouns, compared with verbs and even adjectives. So, for instance, a notionally prototypical noun – say 'cow', denoting a concrete, stable, discrete entity – does not take a complement. Prototypical verbs, denoting actions or processes, do take a complement (including a subject) or indeed several complements. Nouns are marginal predicators. They occur more typically as part of a referential expression, in dependence on a determiner, lexically or syntactically.

In French this is very striking, in that the determiner is typically syntactic, as emerged from table 3. This perhaps makes a naked noun in French difficult to contemplate: expressions like (38) are very restricted in French, as we have seen. And in (40) determiners intrude into apparently predicative expressions: this suggests that both *un* and *du* are non-referential here. But specifically, if one could make the notion precise, the behaviour of singular predicatives may be seen to reflect how 'well' the indefinite article is 'established' in the language.

In French the definite and non-singular non-definite partitive articles (as well as non-specific *de*) can be said to be well established, in being distinct from all other determiners (though in themselves ambiguous). But the indefinite article is not formally distinguished from the numeral. The indefinite article in Greek is similar in this respect, but even less well established in other terms: absence of a determiner with singular predicative nouns is unremarkable, given that even the singular partitive in (41) is optionally not expressed syntactically. In English, only singular non-definite expressions always require a syntactic determiner, but the indefinite article itself is well-established, formally quite distinct from other determiners. The predicative noun conforms to that pattern, but in the form of a non-partitive, non-definite non-referential article whose presence reflects this well-established status. The typicality or not of the predicatives in (38) reflects the varyingly more marginal status of the indefinite article in the languages concerned, as well as the status of the other articles in the language – very well-established in the case of French.

Pursuit of this topic would involve investigation of the status and development of different articles in the languages concerned – and in others. And again I turn to what is more germane to our title.

6.   Definite reference and the name

In a similar way, Anderson (2007) argues that the definiteness of names in English and many other languages is associated with their conversion to a determiner with definite referentiality. Here I simply outline what is proposed there, including comparative evidence parallel to that invoked above. As will emerge below, the argument is again an interpretation of a discussion of John Lyons.

Although *Daisy* in (35) is to be interpreted as making definite reference to an individual identified by the name, this is not always the case with a name:

(35)   Daisy is a lawyer

Names are normally definite when serving as arguments, but as such they occupy positions associated with determiner phrases. And there are syntactic situations where they do not make definite reference, or any other kind of reference. As in the case of nouns, when names are the dependents of predicators, as with the subject in (35), they are referential. But once more there are indications that this is not a property of names as such. Let's look firstly at the English situation, before looking at some comparative evidence

Lyons draws our attention to what he calls 'nominations', of which he says (1977: 217):

> ... by saying that X nominates some person as John we shall mean that X assigns the name 'John' to
> that person. But 'assignment' is also ambiguous as between didactic* and performative* nomination.
> [The asterisks mark the introduction of technical terms – *JA*.]

Didactic nomination is illustrated by (42) and (43):

(42)   She is named/called 'Bluebell'

(43)   They gave her the name 'Bluebell'

Here the addressee is given information concerning the having or being given a name. In (44) we have performative nomination:

(44)   I name this ship 'Bluebell'

In none of (42) to (44) does 'Bluebell' refer to a name-bearing individual. Instead, as Lyons says, here the name is assigned to an individual, either in the form of the conveying of information or as the consequence of an event.

Further, when names are used as vocatives, as in (45) and (46), they do not make definite reference:

(45)   Daisy!

(46)   Come here, Daisy.

Daisy in (45) and (46) does not involve an act of reference; the speaker does not refer to Daisy. What we have is an act of address; the speaker identifies Daisy as the addressee. The speaker relies only on Daisy recognizing the name which she has been given by an act of nomination. That the name identifies Daisy can be used to assist in reference, as in (35), and this is its usual function; but in (45) and (46) the name is not used in this way.

So Lyons suggests that names may or may not have a referential function, in their case definite reference. Again I propose that referentiality reflects lexical conversion to a determiner – here, a definite determiner. And again, there is comparative evidence for distinguishing between names as used to make acts of definite reference from these other usages.

This evidence supports the view that definite referential names in languages like English are names converted to a definite determiner. In Greek, for instance, the equivalent of (35) involves a name accompanied by a definite article, as in (47):

(47)   O Stefanos ine δikiγoros

      the Stephen is lawyer

As a regular argument the name is accompanied by a definite article. We might represent the structure of the subject expression in (47) as in (47)':

(47)' $D^{ref}_{def,sg,masc}$
      :
      :   O
      :   :
      :   :
      O   *Stefanos ine* δikiγoros
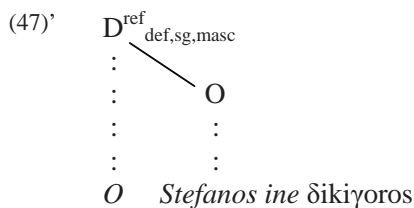
The 'O' marking the dependent of D is for onoma, given that 'N' is for noun. Like some of the Stoics, I believe that names and nouns belong to different word classes, associated with very different syntactic behaviour, as well as semantics (as again elaborated in Anderson 2007). But this is not the main point to be made here. What I'm pointing to is that Greek names have a definite article in those circumstances where a name in English apparently has definite reference. Compare now with (47) the Greek didactic nominations in (48) and (49), with no article accompanying the name:

(48)   Onomazome Stefanos

      I.am.called   Stephen

(49)   Me lene   Stefano

      me they.call Stephen

Stefano in (49) is the accusative form, vs. the nominative in (48). Similarly, the vocatives in (50) and (51) lack an article:

(50)   Stefane!

(51)   Ela   eδo, Stefane

      come here, Stephen

The form of the name in (50) and (51) is a dedicated vocative. Often in Greek it is identical in form to the accusative, however. In (48) to (51) we lack definite reference and the article that signals it.

We can parallel these examples from Greek with examples from the Mexican language Seri, drawn from Marlett (2008). First of all, let's look at the referential use of the name in Seri. To give us an idea of the relevant aspects of the structure of sentences, the example in (52) is an equative sentence not containing a name:

(52)   Hipíix   hiif   quij haa ha

      this.one my.nose the EQ   DEC
      ('This is my nose')

The last word is a declarative mood marker and that before it is the equative copula – which is absent when the preceding noun is predicative, as shown in (53):

(53)   hipíix   hast iha

      this.one stone DEC

Compare with (52) the sentence with a name in (54), with again the equative copula, but, most importantly, with the name accompanied by a form of the definite article:

(54)   Hipíix   Juan quih haa ha

     this.one Juan the   EQ   DEC

     ('This is Juan')

Interestingly, names, unlike nouns, cannot occur as the predicative in the construction illustrated by (53). This is one piece of evidence for not regarding names and nouns as belonging to the same word class. Names cannot be predicated – except figuratively, or metalinguistically.

More relevant here, however, is the occurrence of names in nominations and as vocatives. (55) is a didactic nomination:

(55)   «Pancho» mpah

     Pancho   s/he.is.called

As in Greek, there is no article with the name. The article in the phrase in (56), for instance, goes with the city word not the name:
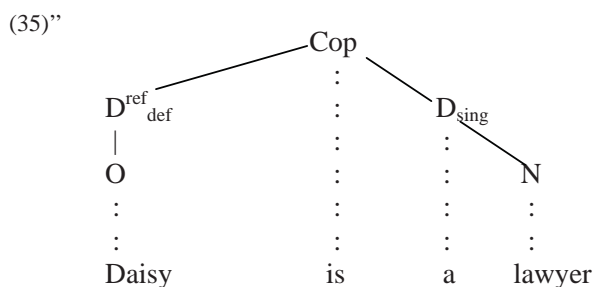
(56)   hezitim caacoj Londres hapáh quij

     city   London called the

     ('the city called London')

So too in the interrogative in (57) the vocative name lacks an article:

(57)   Pedro, ¿áz   intáho?

     Pedro, what did.you see.s/he/it/them

     ('Pedro, what did you see')

Again, as in Greek, these non-referential functions of the name are not accompanied by a determiner.

In English, we have the same semantic distinction and the same kind of distributional correlation for definite vs. non-referring names as in Seri and Greek, but the name expression in English is invariant. Nevertheless, the semantics and the distribution warrant the attribution of a converted status to the name in (35), as represented in (35)'', which extends, but does not necessarily complete, the representation for this sentence:

(35)''

$$
\begin{array}{cccc}
& \text{Cop} & & \\
& : & & \\
\text{D}^{\text{ref}}_{\text{def}} & : & \text{D}_{\text{sing}} & \\
| & : & : & \\
\text{O} & : & : & \text{N} \\
: & : & : & : \\
: & : & : & : \\
\text{Daisy} & \text{is} & \text{a} & \text{lawyer}
\end{array}
$$

This conversion is lacking in the case of the name occurrences in (42) to (46). Names, too, do not refer, unless governed by a determiner, and specifically a definite one. And again the determiner may govern either syntactically or lexically, as illustrated by Greek and Seri vs. English – and most other languages.

7.   Conversion vs. syntax

It would be possible to give syntactic expression to the relation between noun/name and determiner that I have attributed to conversion (see here e.g. Longobardi 2001). Thus, the name could
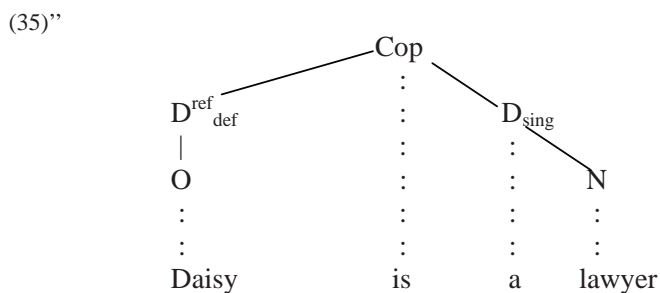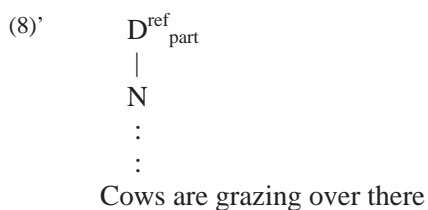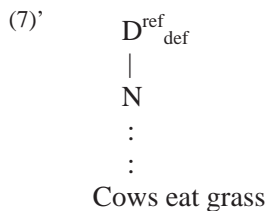
be moved into an unfilled determiner position. It is re-assigned to a governing head, as shown in (58):

(58) $D^{ref}_{def,part}$
         :
         :
         :   O
         :   :
         :   :
      Daisy$_i$ ⇐   *i*
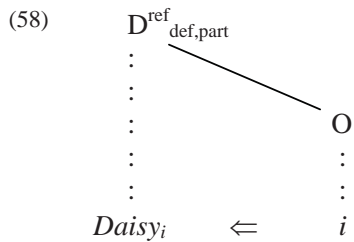
The name form is co-indexed with its original position, which bears its original lexical categorization, but it behaves like a determiner.

However, there are reasons for arguing that such an analysis is both unnecessary and undesirable. Consider what lexical and syntactic structure share and how they differ. I have suggested that both lexical and syntactic structures involve dependency relations. And this is motivated distributionally: in both kinds of structure it is the head of an expression that determines its distribution. In the lexically derived forms in tables 1 and 2 it is the head, whether noun or verb, that determines the distribution of the item. And in phrases it is the determiner head that imposes the distribution of the phrase it heads. Lexical representations resulting from conversion differ from syntactic structures in not involving serialization: the component categories of a derived form do not differ in sequence. On the other hand, it is this absence of serialization that permits the derivational relation to be expressed simply by a dependency relation. The re-assignment of category in (58) involves a more complex account, one that introduces an unnecessary and undesirable mechanism into syntax.

The representations in (7)' and (8)' and in (35)'' exhibit a familiar morphological relationship:

(7)' D^{ref}_{def}
          |
          N
          :
          :
       Cows eat grass

(8)' D^{ref}_{part}
          |
          N
          :
          :
       Cows are grazing over there

(35)''   Cop
                          :
          D^{ref}_{def} : D_{sing}
          | :   :
          O   :   :   N
          :   :   :   :
          :   :   :   :
        Daisy   is   a   lawyer

Such a derivational relationship was introduced in §2, where we saw that it can be realized by affixation, as in 'baker', or not, as in 'cook' the noun – or the examples just alluded to. Similarly,

derived determiner status for a noun may be marked by affixation, as with the derived determiner form *liburu-a* 'book-the' in Basque, or not, as generally, in Latin, or in the case of the English non-partitive definite (generic) of (7), for example:

(7)   Cows eat grass

The syntactic alternatives to derivation of a determiner (such as presence of an article) are more obvious and more easily delimited than with verbs and nouns (what we describe as 'paraphrases'), in that the determiner is a functional category rather than a lexical one. But lexical derivations allude to the same valency information in both cases.

The derivation of 'cook' the noun refers to the lexical information associated with the verb, specifically its valency, in that the subcategorization of the noun as agentive presupposes that the verb takes an agentive argument. Conversely, the verb in *pot the begonias* must include in its valency an accommodation of the status of the base of the derivation as constituting a goal for the directed action of the verb. Similarly, but more simply, lexical derivation of a determiner from a noun recognizes that the valency of determiners includes noun.

The mechanism of (58) is unnecessary to the expression of a conversion relation, which is adequately expressed lexically, as just described. And this mechanism is undesirable, not just by virtue of being more complex than a lexical account, but also because it introduces a damaging complication of the syntax. We have a more restrictive, and thus more interesting idea of what is syntax if we exclude from its capacities any potential for modification to category assignments. This traditional insight is re-formulated in Wasow (1977), for instance. On the view suggested here, there might be said to be a trading relationship established between lexicon and syntax: lexicon can provide a simple mechanism for change of category because it lacks serialization, and syntax can specify linearization most simply if it avoids re-assignment of categories. Of course, implementation of this simple distinction may be somewhat complicated by phenomena such as phrasal idioms and compounds, but, in my view, it is not thereby fundamentally compromised (see e.g. Anderson in press: §3.1).

Conclusion

Neither nouns nor names refer – except perhaps metalinguistically, as in (59):

(59)   'Prestidigitation'/'Marmaduke' is an unusual noun/name

Otherwise it is only when dependent on a determiner that they can participate in extralinguistic referential identification – and even in predication if the conclusions of §5 are just and generalizable. And this dependency relation may be syntactically or lexically mediated.

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