

Definiteness in languages without articles: focus on Lithuanian and Latvian

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Definiteness can be defined as a morpho-syntactic category expressing the pragmatic condition of identifiability of a referent of a noun phrase. Identifiability has to do with whether or not a referent is familiar and therefore identifiable to the hearer.

European languages use a wide variety of means to express the contrast between definiteness and indefiniteness. The phenomenon is mostly associated with the presence of definite or indefinite articles such as preposed *the* or *a* in English. However, the standard varieties of the Baltic languages – Lithuanian and Latvian – use two different adjective endings to signalize the contrast.

One of the aims of the thesis is to analyze the opposition of definite and non-definite adjective forms in Lithuanian and Latvian and to determine whether definiteness expressed by the definite adjective differs from definiteness rendered by definite articles of article languages, e.g. German. The poster presentation introduces the thesis in its essential subject areas.

LITHUANIAN

juod-a black-NOM.SG.F. IDEF 'a black hat'	skrybėlė hat	vs.	juod-oji black-NOM.SG.F. DEF 'the black hat'	skrybėlė hat
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LATVIAN

meln-a black-NOM.SG.F. IDEF 'a black hat'	cepure hat	vs.	meln-ā black-NOM.SG.F. DEF 'the black hat'	cepure hat
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versus GERMAN

ein ART.NOM.SG.M.IDEF 'a black hat'	schwarz-er black-NOM.SG.M. IDEF	Zylinder hat
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vs.

der ART.NOM.SG.M.DEF 'the black hat'	schwarz-e Black-NOM.SG.M. DEF	Zylinder hat
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Abbreviations

ART – article, DEF – definite, F – feminine, IDEF – indefinite, M – masculine, NOM – nominative, SG – singular

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