Indefinite Articles and Licensing of Bare Nominals in Two Slavic Varieties

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This paper addresses the rise and the status of the indefinite article in Resian, an endangered Slavic variety spoken in the province of Udine, and analyzes it within the broader question of nominal syntax-semantic map.

The Resian data are somewhat intricate since Resian distinguishes overtly between modified (2) and unmodified nominal expressions (1), independently of their status as either definite or indefinite, and requires the obligatory use of a determiner only with modified nouns (2). The relevant nominal expressions (NE) are underlined.

(1)   Matë   <u>otroke</u>?   (non-specific indefinite, plural)
        have$_{2PL}$ children
        'Do you have children?'

(2)   Wsën našën judin   awgurawamö <u>ne lipe fjëšte</u>.   (non-specific indefinite, plural)
        to.all our   people wish1PL   a$_{PL}$ nice holidays
         'We wish happy holidays to all our people!'

Besides, the above asymmetry intersects with another asymmetry that concerns the definiteness status of a NE: whereas unmodified indefinite NEs require the mandatory use of an indefinite determiner (with the exception of plural non-specific indefinites), the definite unmodified NEs are always bare. The distributional facts of Resian NEs are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1   Distribution of unmodified and modified NEs in Resian

	UNMODIFIED NOUNS		**MODIFIED NOUNS**	
	Singular	**Plural/Dual**	**Singular**	**Plural/Dual**
Definite	Bare	Bare	Definite determiner	Definite determiner
Indefinite Specific	Indefinite determiner	Bare/Indefinitedeterminer	Indefinite determiner	Indefinite determiner
Indefinite non-specific	Indefinite determiner	Bare	Indefinite determiner	Indefinite determiner
Kind-denoting (generic)	Bare	Bare	Definite determiner	Definite determiner

First, based on two types of criteria (semantic and syntactic), I claim that Resian has a fully-fledged indefinite article. Semantically wise, Resian indefinite determiners occur in non-referential contexts, which Givon (1981) further partitions into predicative (3), generic (4) and non-referential in the scope of negation or modals (5) (see also Geist 2013). Or in line with Chierchia's (1998), a language lexicalizes ∃ if an indefinite article is able to function generically (4) and have a narrow

scope reading (6). As regards the syntactic criterion, the use of the indefinite article is obligatory in all contexts, except for the plural non-specific indefinites (Table 1).

(3)   Ko   si   bil   ä   <u>dan mali</u> […]
        when aux$_{1SG}$ was I   a   small
        'When I was a child[…].

(4)   [...] ni   so   paršly pošlušet ano vïdet kako se   paraćawa <u>no tražmišjun.</u>
           they aux came   hear   and see how imp. make   a   program
           'They came to hear and see how a program is made.

(5)   […] litus   be   tëli radë organizät   <u>no ğito</u> za poznät kakë lipë mëstu
            this.summer would$_{1PL}$ like gladly organize   a   trip to know   some nice place
            'This summer we would like to organize a trip in order to get to know some nice places.'

(6)   Skorë wsaka ïša   ma <u>no televižjun</u>, aliböj <u>no radio</u> [...]
        almost every house has a television or   a radio
        'In almost every house there is either a television or a radio […]'   every house > ∃

        Second, I claim that the asymmetry between modified and unmodified NEs is only apparent (and accidental), since licensing conditions on definite and indefinite NEs differ in Resian. The definite D has to be licensed either by Merger of the definite article in the head of D (and hence the obligatory use of the definite article with definite modified NEs), or by the presence of the appropriate lexical material, endowed with (pro)nominal features in a local relation with D (Spec-head), and hence the use of bare definite NEs. On the other hand, the indefinite article is always mandatory. Null bare indefinites have fixed semantics; occur only as plural/mass and non-specific, and are therefore possible only if under or within the scope of the licensing operator.
        Lastly, considerations on nominal syntax-semantics map in Resian will be extended to Molise Croatian. It has been claimed that this variety has a full-blown indefinite article (Breu 2005), whereas it has no definite articles. Furthermore, there exists no asymmetry between modified and unmodified nominal expressions of the sort encountered in Resian. These facts will be revisited in view of the mechanisms responsible for the licensing of determinerless nominals.

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