BANGLA DEFAULT CLASSIFIER REVISITED

The data. The Bangla (Bengali) default classifier *–Ta* has a puzzling behavior. First, it appears with both count (1a) and mass (1b) nouns. Second, its position relative to NPs correlates with (in)definiteness. Pre-nominal occurrence of *-Ta* results in an indefinite reading (1c). Definiteness is achieved through NP-fronting, as in (1a,b,d).

(1)   a. pakhi-*(Ta)   ghOre   Dhuklo   b. jOl-*(Ta)   poRe   gElo
          bird-Ta   room.at entered   water-Ta   drop-ppl   went
          'The bird entered a room.'   'The water fell down (the hand).'

      c. chO-*(Ta)   pakhi ghOre   Dhuklo   d. pakhi*ᵢ*   chO-*(Ta) t*ᵢ*   ghOre Dhuklo
          six-Ta   bird   room.at entered   bird   six-Ta   room.at entered
          'Six birds entered a room.'   'The six birds entered a room.'

Third, in the presence of a quantifier, the mass/count interpretation of the NP depends on the combination of the quantifier and *-Ta*. Quantifiers unspecified for mass/count (e.g., *a lot, much/many, some, most*) can occur without *-Ta* (2a). However, in the presence of *-Ta*, the NP receives a mandatory mass interpretation (2b). On the other hand, with quantifiers marked for count nouns (e.g., *every, few, each* etc.), *-Ta* is obligatory (3a) and the combination only allows for a count interpretation (3b).

(2)   a. rik   [*Onek*   pakhi **/** jOl]   dekh-lo
          Rick much/many   bird **/** water   saw
          'Rick saw many birds.'
          'Rick saw much water.'

      b. rik   [*Onek-Ta*   *pakhi / jOl]   dekh-lo
          Rick much/many-Ta *bird / water   saw
          'Rick saw much water.'

(3)   a. *rik   [*kOyek*   pakhi **/** jOl]   dekh-lo
          Rick few   bird **/** water   saw'

      b. rik   [*kOyek-Ta*   pakhi **/** *jOl]   dekh-lo
          Rick few-Ta   bird **/** *water saw
          'Rick saw some birds.'

Questions. If *-Ta* is a prototypical classifier, (I) what explains its occurrence with prototypical mass nouns (1a-b)? (II) what role does the placement of *-Ta* play in achieving (in)definiteness reading (1c-d)? (III) If *-Ta* is compatible with both count and mass nouns, as in (I), how is the obligatory mass/count interpretation with quantifiers determined (2b, 3b)?

Background. Borer (2005) proposes that nouns are not lexically specified for the count/mass distinction. Count NPs are the result of the functional projections of classifiers that individuate the lexical noun. The presence of such projections, namely ClP (=her DivP), results in count readings; mass reading is obtained in the absence thereof. The theory has considerable cross-linguistic support. The data presented above, however, challenges such an account. Specifically, it is problematic for the theory that *-Ta* co-occurs with mass nouns without any change of mass to count interpretation (1b) [I]. It is challenging for the account to explain (III) where in the presence of *–Ta*, the quantifier co-occurs only with mass nouns (2b) or count nouns (3b). Does the quantifier [specified count vs. unspecified] restrict such an option of co-occurrence (3a-b)? Furthermore, *-Ta* has been claimed previously to license NP-movement to [Spec, QP] for

specificity (Bhattacharya 1999). But here I argue, for established reasons, that it is a definite reading that (1b&d) obtains. How is this reading licensed under the given assumption?

Proposal. I propose that a functional head n^0 categorizes roots. An n^0_{count} maps the denotation of the root to one of a predicate of atomic individuals. The root is interpreted as a mass nominal when embedded under nominal structure, if no n^0 is present. I propose that *-Ta* is a degree determiner and not a classifier. Assuming both count and mass nouns to be predicates of type <e,t>, I propose that *-Ta* turns predicates of individuals into expressions of type <d,<e,t>>, whose measure along a particular scale is the degree (following Hackl 2001 for the meaning of *many*, a component of the meaning of *more*). A count noun is measured on a cardinality scale, while a mass noun is measured on a non-cardinality scale. With numeral quantifiers present, the scale will be one of cardinality. On the other hand, in the absence of a numeral quantifier, the degree variable is bound by an amount quantifier. In other words, it is ambiguous between two entities similar to English *more* which could be *-er-much* or *-er-many*. For the execution, I propose a Measure Phrase (MP) projected between nP and QP.

I show that Bangla has two types of quantifiers. One is a degree quantifier, as in (2a-b), which can occur both as adnominal and adverbial quantifiers and are underspecified for count/mass (Doetjes 1997). The other one is a quantifier that embeds a numeral (3a-b). Despite apparent similarity in the forms, the elements of the *unspecified* group (e.g., (2)) are non-compositional, while the *count-specified* group (e.g., (3)) is compositional. The latter can be divided into a degree quantifier and the numeral *ek* 'one' (4a), while the former isn't (4b).

(4)   a. *kOyek* 'few' = *kOy* 'how many' + *ek* 'one'.
       b. *Onek* 'much/many' ≠ *On* + *ek* 'one'

The degree quantifier, as in (2a), can appear regardless of *-Ta*, while the other one requires obligatory presence of *-Ta* for the expression of measure. The cardinality scale due to the embedded 'one', as in (3b), is compatible only with count nouns. In absence of 'one', the measure scale is only compatible with the mass nouns (2b). The availability of both prototypical count and mass nouns with post-nominal *-Ta* (1a-b) follows from this account. In the absence of any quantifiers, existential closure binds the degree variable; a null definite determiner binds the individual variable. The null definite determiner requires the NP to move to Spec, DP for licensing of the definiteness feature and hence we obtain definite readings in (1). This also explains the unavailability of (5a-b).

(5)   a. *-Ta jOl   b. *-Ta chele
          -Ta water   -Ta boy

Reference:
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