

### Latvian classificatory adjectives as definite predicates

In Latvian, there are no articles, but adjectives may carry a definiteness marker /-ai/ [Kalnača, Lokmane 2021: 160].<sup>1</sup>

- (1) a. *balt-s kreklis*  
white-NOM shirt  
'a white shirt'  
b. *balt-ai-s kreklis*  
white-DEF-NOM shirt  
'the white shirt'

However, when the adjective is CLASSIFICATORY, or kind-referring, the marker is used independently of definiteness of the referent. It is debated what classificatory adjectives are (see [Morzycki 2016: 48] for discussion), but it is suggested that these must refer to 'well-established kinds' [Trugman 2005]. It is a property of a noun phrase rather than an adjective itself. (2b-c) are examples of classificatory adjectives, (2a) is not.

- (2) a. *balt-s lācis*  
white-NOM bear  
'a white bear'  
b. *balt-ai-s lācis*  
white-DEF-NOM bear  
'a / the polar bear'  
c. *balt-ā teja*  
white-F.DEF.NOM tea  
'(the) white {unfermented} tea'

The marker is preserved even in the scope of indefinite quantifiers (3).

- (3) *bez saistības ar kād-iem semantisk-aj-iem vai pragmatisk-aj-iem*  
without relation to any-PL.DAT semantic-DEF-PL.DAT or pragmatic-DEF-PL.DAT  
*valodas apguves jautājumiem.*  
language acquisition question-PL.DAT  
'unrelated to any semantic or pragmatic questions of language acquisition.'

Latvian National Corpus

Concerning the classificatory adjective marking in Lithuanian, [Rutkowski, Progovac 2006] propose a syntactic account where classificatory adjectives are said to be base-generated in Spec,NP. The N head then moves to some hypothetical ClasP, and the marker is required to licence the trace. However, it doesn't explain why the same affix marks definiteness as well.

In my talk I would like to entertain an alternative, semantic explanation. The idea is that

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<sup>1</sup>Data is gathered via elicitation, unless stated otherwise.

Trugman's 'well-establishedness' is a sort of predicate definiteness, i. e., availability of the predicate expressed by the adjective-noun pair in the discourse. Indeed, common concepts (4a) require the marker, while uncommon ones don't (4b).

- (4) a. *šodien uz ielas atradu elektrisk-o (\*-u) tējkann-u*  
 today on street found electric-M.DEF.ACC (INDEF) kettle-ACC  
 'Today I found an electric kettle in the street.'
- b. *šodien uz ielas atradu elektrisk-u (\*-o) zirnekl-i*  
 today on street found electric-M.INDEF.ACC (DEF) spider-ACC  
 'Today I found an electric spider in the street.'

Classificatory NPs thus act similarly to global uniques. The latter also carry the definiteness marker in Latvian (5).

- (5) *kad uzsākās bads, saprātīg-ai-s Anglijas karalis lika audzēt kukurūzu*  
 when started famine, smart-DEF-NOM England king ordered grow corn  
 'When the famine started, the smart king of England ordered to grow corn.'

The question is how to formalize the intuitions about 'definite predicates'. I suggest that it can be seen as identifiability of the kind [Chierchia 1998], parallel to identifiability of the unique individual. For a monosemic analysis, non-standard semantics of classificatory adjectives would be needed. It is also unclear whether predicates in Latvian can become definite from context, like individuals, and why if not. Resolving these questions will both shed some light on the nature of classificatory adjectives and provide a new dimension to studies of definiteness.

## References

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