

German weak definites and incorporation

Jette Fortmann & Werner Frey

Leibniz-Zentrum Allgemeine Sprachwissenschaft Berlin (ZAS)

fortmann@leibniz-zas.de, frey@leibniz-zas.de

The talk first demonstrates that German Weak definites (WDs) (*Max hat immer gerne die Zeitung gelesen* ['Max always liked to read the newspaper']) show different syntactic properties compared to regular singular definite descriptions independent of whether the regular definites are interpreted with singular or with generic reference. This fact will be documented with data concerning extraposition, positioning relative to sentence negation and verb preposing. The main concern of the talk is to argue that the distributional properties of WDs are best captured by the assumption that they are syntactically incorporated into the verbal complex of the German clause.

There is growing evidence for different languages that maximal phrases can be part of a complex verb (e.g. Barrie & Mathieu 2016). Importantly, only non-specific phrases can be incorporated. Following Ihsane & Puskas (2001) we assume that specificity and definiteness of noun projections are encoded by different functional projections. Furthermore, we assume the semantics for WDs developed in Krifka & Modarresi (2016) according to which a WD denotes a function which applies to the verb's event argument and yields the unique element of this event which satisfies the description of the WD. We argue that a WD has to occur inside the verbal complex because of the very fact that its interpretation is dependent on the verb.

Some further issues to be discussed are: (i) The thesis that WDs are syntactically incorporated into the verbal complex helps to understand why WDs and the verbs together always refer to an 'institutionalized' activity thereby getting an enriched meaning. The non-compositional meaning component is only possible because the WD and the verb constitute a close structural unit. (ii) The reduced possibility of anaphora to WDs does correspond to the WDs' status as not being full DPs (and thus not being regular arguments, Longobardi 1994). (iii) The verbs that allow for WDs are stage level verbs. Individual level predicates, that do not have an event argument, do not allow incorporation. (iv) The German preposition-article contraction is not a sufficient condition for the presence of a WD but presupposes that the nominal projection does not encode specificity (cf. Schwarz 2009, Rehn 2016).

References: • Barrie, M. & E. Mathieu. 2016. Noun incorporation and phrasal movement. *NLLT* 34. 1–51.
• Ihsane, T. & G. Puskas. 2001. Specific is not definite. *Generative Grammar in Geneva* 2. 39–54. • Krifka, M. & F. Modarresi. 2016. Number neutrality and anaphoric update of pseudo-incorporated nominals in Persian (and weak definites in English). *Proceedings of SALT* 26. 874–891. • Longobardi, G. 1994. Reference and proper names: A theory of N-movement in syntax and logical form. *Linguistic Inquiry* 25. 609–665.
• Rehn, A. 2016. The definite article and its positions in the structure of the DP: evidence from Irish English and Alemannic. *Caderno de Squibs: Temas em estudos formais da linguagem* 2(1). 54–66. • Schwarz, F. 2009. *Two types of definites in natural language*. Open Access Diss., University of Massachusetts Amherst.