

# Definiteness without determiners

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In German, countable nouns in the singular generally need an article. However, in the construction in (1)–(2), the initial noun phrase, henceforth NP1, may systematically occur bare:

- (1) [*Ursache der Flut*]<sub>NP1</sub>      waren [*heftige      Regenfälle*]<sub>NP2</sub>.  
cause    of-the flood    were heavy      rains  
'The cause of the flood was heavy rains.'
- (2) [*Gastland der Leipziger Buchmesse*]<sub>NP1</sub> war diesmal [*Frankreich*]<sub>NP2</sub>.  
guest-country    of-the Leipzig Book Fair      was this\_time France  
'The guest country of the Leipzig Book Fair was France this year.'

Clauses (1)–(2) belong to so-called specificational copular clauses. According to Higgins (1979), in such clauses NP2 specifies the “value” of the description given in the pre-copular NP1. Specificational sentences have a fixed information structure with NP1 as topic and NP2 as focus (Mikkelsen 2011). The syntactic subject is NP2, since the copula verb agrees with NP2, and not with NP1 as shown in (1). The subject NP2 is clearly referential; the denotational status of NP1, however, is controversial. It does not denote an individual but rather a property as shown by the pronominalization test in (3). NP1 pronominalizes with the property anaphor *es* ‘it’/das ‘that’ as opposed to the gendered pronoun *er* ‘he’ referring to an individual (Geist 2006).

- (3) a. – *Sieger*<sub>i</sub> war Arthur Techtow. ‘The winner was Arthur Techtow.’  
      b. – *Nein, es/das*<sub>i</sub>/\**er*<sub>i</sub> war nicht Arthur T. ‘No it/that/he was not Arthur T.’

The predicate NP1 in specificational clauses differs from predicate NPs in predicational clauses in its existential presupposition (u.a. Declerck 1988: 14 ff.). In (5a) *Sieger* can be paraphrased as “there is a unique person *x* who has won”. Since the existence of *x* is preserved under negation in (5b) the existential entailment has the status of a presupposition. My collected data reveal that only inherently unique nouns, which according to Löbner (2011) comprise individual concepts (e.g., *Kursleiter* ‘head of course’, *Tagungsort* ‘conference venue’) and functional concepts (*Sieger* ‘winner’, *Ursache* ‘cause’) may occur bare. In my presentation I will discuss an analysis of bare definite NPs in specificational clauses as a type of unique (‘weak’) definites in the sense of Cheng, Heycock and Zamparelli (2017) and Schwarz (2009).

**Selected References:** • Cheng, L. L.-S., C. Heycock & R. Zamparelli. 2017. Two levels for definiteness. In M. Y. Erlewine (ed.), *Proceedings of GLOW in Asia XI*, Vol. 1. USA: MIT, 79–93. • Geist, L. 2006. *Die Kopula und ihre Komplemente. Zur Kompositionalität in Kopulasätzen*. Tübingen: Max Niemeyer. • Löbner, S. 2011. Concept types and determination. *Journal of Semantics* 28(3). 279–333. • Schwarz, F. 2009. *Two types of definites in natural language*. PhD thesis, MIT.