

Bare nouns in teleological situations

What licenses Article Drop in German

Giuliano Armenante

University of Potsdam

armenante@uni-potsdam.de

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- 2 The Data: Goal-oriented situations
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 - TBNs are inherently unique wrt stereotypical situations
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 - Discourse structure and QuD
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- 5 Bare Nouns in PPs: A Unified Analysis?

Introduction: Bare nouns in German

Bare nouns in German

Article Drop (AD) is much more wide-spread in standard German than what commonly assumed

- Not only associated with indefinite or predicative interpretation
- Not restricted to plural/mass nouns or coordinated structures

Focus: *Goal-oriented situations:*

- (1) Du musst noch den Garten umgraben. **Schaufel** steht
 You must still the garden dig. Shovel stands
 in Schuppen.
 in+Det shed
 'You still have to dig up the garden. A/the shovel is in the
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Mit-bare-PPs:

- (2) Ich hab ein Haus **mit Wintergarten** besichtigt.
 I have a house with wintergarden visited
 'I visited a house with a wintergarden.'

Introduction

Preview:

- NPs in German may occur bare when topicalized
- Topicalized Bare Nouns (TBN) denote the inherently unique means to achieve a backgrounded goal linked to the TBN-clause via QuD
- Constructions with TBNs exhibit double modal structures, with TBNs relativized to teleological situations akin to Anankastic conditionals

The Data: Goal-oriented situations

The Data

AD may target singular count nouns providing the tool or means to complete a situationally salient task.

- (3) Du musst noch den Boden fegen. Besen steht im Keller.
You must still the floor sweep. Broom stands in+Det
basement
'You still have to sweep the floor. A/the broom is in the basement.'

Topicality seems to facilitate AD in goal-oriented situations:

- (4) Context: You still need to dig up the garden...
- a. **(Eine/die) Schaufel** steht im Schuppen.
A/the shovel stands in+Det shed
 - b. Im Schuppen steht #**(eine/die) Schaufel**.
in shed stands a/the shovel

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No case restriction:

- (5) **Schaufel** findest du im Schuppen.
 Shovel.Acc find you in shed
 'You can find the shovel in the shed.'

Some instances of topicalized bare nouns do not superficially involve any tool-task relations.

- (6) Komm rein! Jacke kannst du hier aufhängen.
Come in jacket can you hear hang
'Come in! You can hang the jacket here.'

Some other instances seem to involve contrastiveness.

- (7) From the KiDKo Corpus (A corpus of spontaneous discourse data from informal, oral peer group):
- a. **Rock** würde ich anziehen.
skirt would I wear
'I would wear a/the skirt.'
 - b. **Couch** würd ich als Erstes kaufen.
Couch would I as first buy
'First, I'd buy a/the couch.'
 - c. **Ausweis** muss man trotzdem zeigen, oder was?
ID must it nevertheless show or what
'You have to show your ID anyway, don't you?'

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- (8) Ich würde #(einen/den) **Rock** anziehen.
I would a/the skirt wear

Towards an Analysis

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Three Key ingredients:

- AD involves entities that are **inherently unique** in some stereotypical situation (Šimík 2018)
- double-modal structure, with the shovel-proposition **teleologically restricted** to the addressee's goals (cf. Condoravdi & Lauer 2016; Von Stechow & Iatridou 2005)
- **Topic-structure as a window into the Question under Discussion** (QuD). QuD helps identify a suitable means to achieve the addressee's goals

TBNs are inherently unique wrt stereotypical situations

Šimík (2018) observes that BNs in Czech correlate with **inherent uniqueness**, while demonstratives with accidental uniqueness:

- (9) Situation s_1 : Teacher (T) with pupils in a classroom. T addresses one of the students:
- a. ‘Smaž { **tabuli** / #tu tabuli }, prosím.’
 erase.IMP blackboard / DEM blackboard please
 ‘Erase the blackboard, please.’

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 ‘Erase the blackboard, please.’
- (10) Situation s_2 : A and B are having a conversation, A is holding a book (the only book in the situation), B says (without any salient pointing gesture and without having talked about the book ever before):
- a. Dej / Ukaž mi { tu knihu / #**knihu** }.
 give/show.IMP me DEM book book
 ‘Give/show me the book.’

Šimík models inherent/accidental uniqueness as a pragmatic inference not triggered by the bare noun itself. This should arise as "part of our knowledge about topic situations".

(11) *Inherent Uniqueness*

For any property P , entity x and situation s_t , such that

$$P(s_t)(x) = 1,$$

x is **inherently uniquely identifiable** in s_t iff

$$\forall s[s \approx s_t \rightarrow \exists! y[P(s)(y)]]$$

All situations that are like s_t are such that there is exactly one entity with property P in those situations.

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(13) *Accidental Uniqueness*

For any property P , entity x and situation s_t , such that

$$P(s_t)(x) = 1,$$

x is **accidentally uniquely identifiable** in s_t iff

$$\exists!z[P(s_t)(z) \wedge \neg\forall s[s \approx s_t \rightarrow \exists!y[P(s)(y)]]]$$

Exactly one entity is P in s_t and it is not the case that all situations that are like s_t are such that there is exactly one entity with property P in those situations.

- The likeness relation \approx is an accessibility relation introducing a restriction on the situations quantified over by two conversational backgrounds, a generic modal base f and a stereotypical ordering source g :

$$(14) \quad \forall s[s \in \text{BEST}_{g(s_t)}(\cap f_{GEN}(s_t)) \rightarrow \exists!y[P(s)(y)]]$$

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- The epistemic modal base $f_{\text{Dox}_{sp}}$ ranges over doxastic situations compatible with what the speaker believes in $g(t)$.
 \rightsquigarrow $\{s: \text{the shovel is in the shed in } s\}$, $\{s: \text{gardening gloves are in the shed}\}$, ...

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 $\rightsquigarrow \{s: \text{the shovel is in the shed in } s\}, \{s: \text{gardening gloves are in the shed}\}, \dots$
- The stereotypical ordering source g , ranking situations based on what is reasonable to expect from $g(t)$.
 $\rightsquigarrow \{s: \text{the shovel is not rusty in } s\}, \{s: \text{there is no storm threatening my garden in } s\}, \dots$

- Inherent uniqueness of the entity is relativized to stereotypical sub-situations of the topic situation
- Important caveat: the situations picked will always be the largest possibly stereotypical situation where a given task is completed.
→ In case of plurality of (sub-)eventualities, no plural interpretation arises for the bare noun:

(16) Context: A father speaking to his two kids:

a. Ihr musst noch den Garten umgraben.

You.2PL must.2PL still the garden dig.

#**Schaufel** steht im Schuppen.

Shovel stands in+Det shed.

'You still have to dig up the garden. The shovel is in the shed.'

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Two further situation restrictions need to be factored in:

- The situations compatible with the desires of the speaker (Sp wants Ad to fulfill a task)
- The situations compatible with the goals achieved by the addressee

- Shovel-sentences resemble the so-called Harlem-sentences or Anankastic conditionals (Condoravdi & Lauer 2016; Goebel 2020; Von Stechow & Iatridou 2005)

- (17) If you want to go to Harlem, you have to take the A train.
Intended: *'Taking the A train is necessary to get to Harlem (in an optimal way).'*
- (18) You still have to dig up the garden. *Schaufel steht im Schuppen.*
Intended: *'Using the shovel is necessary to dig up the garden.'*

- Following Condoravdi & Lauer (2016), shovel-sentences just like Anankastic conditionals come with a double modal structure:

(19) MUST(want(p)), MUST(q)

with p the goal and q the means to achieve it.

(20) Anank: MUST_{f,g} [*want_{sp}*(Ad, Harlem)] [MUST_{f',g'} [A-Train]]

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- However, in shovel-sentences, the order in the antecedent is reversed:

- (21) WANT(must(p)), MUST(q)
with p the goal (=digging up the garden) and q the means to achieve it (=shovel).
- (22) Shov: WANT_{sp} [*must_{f,g}*(Ad, dig-garden)][MUST_{f',g'}[Shovel]]

- Basic semantics for WANT.
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$$(23) \quad \text{WANT}_{sp}[\text{must}_{f_{Dox,sp},BEST_g}(\text{Ad, dig-garden})]$$

$$[\text{MUST}_{f'_{Hist},BEST_{g'_{EP,Ag}}}[\text{Shovel}]]$$

(24) WANT_{sp}[*must*_{f_{Dox,sp},BEST_g}(Ad, dig-garden)]
 [MUST_{f'_{Hist},BEST'_{g'EP,Ag}}[Shovel]]

(24) $WANT_{sp}[must_{f_{Dox,sp},BEST_g}(Ad, dig-garden)]$
 $[MUST_{f'_{Hist},BEST_{g'_{EP,Ag}}} [Shovel]]$

(25) $\forall s''[s'' \in WANT(sp, s_t),$
 $\forall s'[s' \in BEST_{g(s'')}(\cap f_{Dox}(s'')) \cap$
 $\cap \lambda s''' . dig-up(s''')(GARDEN)(Ad)]]$
 $\rightarrow \forall s[s \in BEST_{g'_{EP,Ag}}(\cap f'_{Hist}(s''))]$
 $\rightarrow \exists ! y[SHOVEL(s)(y)] \ \& \ in(SHED)(y)(s_t)]$

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(26) All the desire-situations of the speaker in which all the most stereotypical situations consistent with the speaker's beliefs in which the addressee digs up the garden are such that all their possible continuations in which the addressee's goals are eventually realized in an optimal way are such that the addressee uses the shovel that is located in the shed.

- In order to arrive at a compositional interpretation, I'm assuming that the bare noun denotes a property ι -shifted into an entity (Partee 2002)
- Note that the shed is here evaluated wrt further-restricted stereotypical situations accessible from the topic situation, as opposed to the main predicate of the clause
 - ↪ It's the tool needed to typically achieve such a goal to be unique, not the shed kept by the speaker in her shed!
 - ↪ Native speakers report that the sentence is compatible with more than one shovel in the shed in the actual world, which is compatible with our truth-conditions.

- Unfortunately, there is still an obvious problem with this analysis: how do we get from "[...], you need to use a shovel" to "the shovel is in the shed"?

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- One last piece of the equation: the QuD

Discourse structure and QuD

(27) The Problem:

- a. p ="the addressee digs up the garden"
- b. q ="the shovel is in the shed"
- c. q' ="the addressee uses the shovel (to achieve p)"

- The Anankastic analysis leads us from p to q' , not q !

Discourse structure and QuD

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- This is somewhat reminiscent of biscuit conditionals!

Biscuit conditionals vs shovel sentences

(28) If you're hungry, there are biscuits on the sideboard.

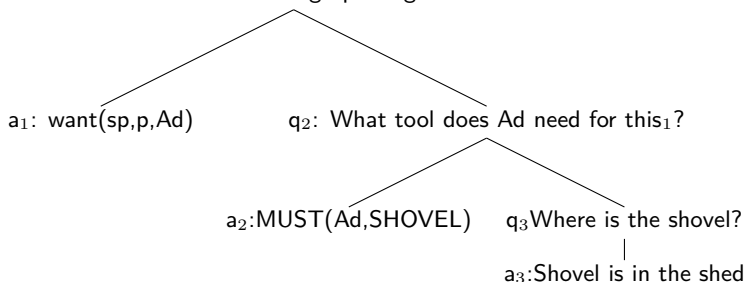
- In both shovel clauses and BCs (Austin 1958; Biezma & Goebel 2023; Goebel 2020) the truth of the consequent does not depend on the truth of the antecedent - the biscuits are on the sideboard regardless of whether the addressee is hungry.
- Similarly, the shovel is located in the shed regardless of whether the garden is being dug up.
- Moreover, shovel clauses share some of the inferences arising with BCs: for example, there is an implied permission, for which the addressee is allowed to take the shovel in the shed to complete the task.

- QuD analysis of discourse structure (Büring 2003; Roberts 1996; Schwarz 2009): discourse structured following incremental steps towards answering a more general question through more specific ones.
- The QuD mediates between q' and q , with q 's topic situation derived from an extension of the superquestion (Schwarz 2009, p. 166)
- topicalized bare nouns make this strategy visible to the discourse participants, highlighting the topic-focus structure of the sentence

- (29) *You still have to dig up the garden...*
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- (29) *You still have to dig up the garden...*
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- (30) You still have to dig-up the garden

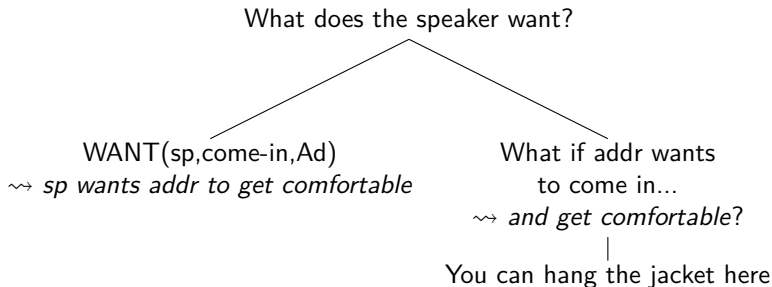


with SHOVEL relativized to s_2 .

- By analogy, the jacket sentence involves an antecedent setting up the question answered by the bare noun sentence.
- While in BCs the question is explicitly provided by the if-clause, while here there is a more indirect link arrived at via a Gricean rescuing strategy that hinges on the maxim of relevance:

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- While in BCs the question is explicitly provided by the if-clause, while here there is a more indirect link arrived at via a Gricean rescuing strategy that hinges on the maxim of relevance:

(31)



- Caution: This is still work in progress!

Bare nouns and topicality

How does this analysis compare to Geist (2021)?

- (32) Geist (2021) on specificational copular constructions:
- relationality: specificational NPs in initial position are topics linked to a salient (elided) possessor via bridging.
 - uniqueness: specificational topics denote functional concepts and thus are inherently unique (cf. Löbner 2011)
- It seems to me that bare nouns such as *shovel* need not denote functional nouns. They are sortal nouns which are not inherently unique. In this respect, they differ from Geist's specificational topics.

- Note, however, that sortal nouns may occur as specificational topics in special cases:

- (33) Eine Fahrgemeinschaft ist ein Ensemble, das gemeinsam ein Stück aufführt, dessen Inhalt keiner der Beteiligten vorher kennt. **Bühne** ist die Autobahn. Regisseur der Zufall. (Geist 2021, p. 20)
- 'A car pool is an ensemble that performs a piece together, the content of which none of the participants knows beforehand. The stage is the motorway. The director is chance.'

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'A car pool is an ensemble that performs a piece together, the content of which none of the participants knows beforehand. The stage is the motorway. The director is chance.'

- One striking difference from the other SCC-cases is that the sortal noun cannot occur bare post-copular this time:

(34) #Die Autobahn ist **Bühne**.
'The motorway is the stage.'

- Topicality may have a more active role in AD's licensing than generally assumed. Geist leaves this as an open question, though conceding: *This suggests that topicality per se supports a shift of the non-unique sortal concept to a unique one. [...] At this point it is not particularly clear why a concept shift from [-unique] to [+unique] is easier for topics than for non-topics* (Geist 2021, p. 20).

Bare Nouns in PPs: A Unified Analysis?

■ Bare nouns in PPs seem to denote kinds

- (35) Ich habe ein Haus mit (einem) Wintergarten
I have a house with wintergarden
besichtigt.
visited.
Bare-PP: 'The type of house I visited is one with a
wintergarden".'

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 I have a house with wintergarten
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 wintergarten".'

- Unlike TBNs, bare PPs don't seem to be able to introduce referents into the discourse:

- (36) Follow up on (35)
- #...Er war eher alt und aufgeräumt.
 He was rather old and untidy.
 - #...und beide waren frisch renoviert.
 and both were freshly renovated.

■ Modifiers to bare PPs leads to degradation:

(37) We have a house with...

(38) Wir haben ein Haus mit...

a. ??(einem) Loch im Dach.

a hole in+Det roof

b. ??(einem) Garten hinter der Terrasse.

a garden behind the patio.

c. ??(einem) Kirschbaum im Garten.

a cherry tree in+Det garden

- Wintergarden-sentences seem to involve type/feature-readings:
the type of house that p/a house coming with a PP-feature.

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- This is more prominently elucidated by the model-test.

(39) Speaking of a house-model recently purchased but no longer produced...

- a. Was für ein Auslaufmodell hast du gekauft?
What for a discontinued model have you bought?
'What kind of discontinuous model did you buy?'
- b. Ich hab ein Haus mit (*einem) Wintergarten
I have a house with
gekauft.
a wintergarden bought
'I bought a house with a wintergarden.'

- No analysis for mit-bare-PPs yet
- Working Hypothesis: mit-bare-PPs are akin to TBNs, in that they are sensitive to situations:
→ bare PPs are relativized to head nouns-situations

(40) ...For all typical situations s consistent with what is known in s_t and restricted to house-situations, there is some x , such that $\text{house}(s_t)(x)$ and there is some y , such that $\text{wintergarden}(s)(y)$...

- More extreme working hypothesis:
Prepositions introduce quantification over situations:

(41) [[*NP* Head-Noun **mit** Bare-PP]]

(42) Schaufel (dafür) steht im Schuppen.
shovel (that+for) stands in+Det shed

(43) [WANT(must(p)), für(da₂)(TBN)(q)]

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- More to follow!

Thank you!



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