

Assignment 5

DUE: THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 9

The Bulgarian Definite Article

This assignment concerns the morphosyntactic behavior of the definite article in Bulgarian, a South Slavic language with about 9 million native speakers.

The ISO 9 transliteration standard used below differs from the IPA in the following symbols: c=[ts], č=[tʃ], š=[ʃ], ž=[ʒ], and ä=[ə] or [ɤ].

Part One: Forms

The examples in this part of the assignment will help you determine the various forms of the Bulgarian definite article and the conditions under which each of them is realized.

(1) *Masculine nouns*

GLOSS	INDEFINITE	DEFINITE
brother	brat	brata
chair	stol	stola
father	bašta	baštata
gambler	komardžija	komardžijata
judge	sādjija	sādjijata
man	māž	māža
onion	luk	luka
painter	bojadžija	bojadžijata
pope	papa	papata
teapot	čajnik	čajnika
voivode	vojvoda	vojvodata
window	prozorec	prozoreca

(3) *Feminine nouns*

GLOSS	INDEFINITE	DEFINITE
(gun) barrel	cev	cevta
earth	zemja	zemjata
idea	ideja	idejata
love	ljubov	ljubovta
motherland	rodina	rodinata
room	staja	stajata
song	pesen	pesenta
spring	prolet	proletta
valor	doblest	doblestta
water	voda	vodata
woman	žena	ženata
youth	mladost	mladostta

(2) *Neuter nouns*

GLOSS	INDEFINITE	DEFINITE
child	dete	deteto
menu	menju	menjuto
sea	more	moreto
taxi	taksi	taksito
tree	dārvo	dārvoto
village	selo	seloto

(4) *Plural nouns*

GLOSS	INDEFINITE	DEFINITE
brothers	bratja	bratjata
ends	kraišta	kraištata
men	māže	māžete
peoples	narodi	narodite
seas	moreta	moretata
women	ženi	ženite

What are the forms of the definite article in Bulgarian? What factors condition the appearance of each form? Justify your answers by reference to the data above and provide a formal account of how (singular and plural) definite nouns are formed.

Does your analysis allow you to understand the variation in form that the definite article exhibits in the examples below? First, (5) through (8) show pairs of nouns which are homonymous but differ in meaning and gender—how does your analysis account for the form of the definite article in each case?

- (5) a. gaz (masculine) 'gas (state of matter)' → gaza 'the gas'
- b. gaz (feminine) 'gas (fuel)' → gazta 'the gas'
- (6) a. med (masculine) 'honey' → meda 'the honey'
- b. med (feminine) 'copper' → medta 'the copper'
- (7) a. prax (masculine) 'powder' → praxa 'the powder'
- b. prax (feminine) 'dust' → praxta 'the dust'
- (8) a. prăst (masculine) 'finger' → prăsta 'the finger'
- b. prăst (feminine) 'soil' → prăstta 'the soil'

Second, certain nouns have two distinct plural forms which are in free variation, as (9) and (10) show. Interestingly, there are two definite plural forms for these nouns as well. How does your analysis explain the variation in form exhibited by the definite article?

- (9) a. kolena 'knees', kolene 'knees'
- b. kolenata 'the knees', kolenete 'the knees'
- (10) a. ramena 'shoulders', ramene 'shoulders'
- b. ramenata 'the shoulders', ramenete 'the shoulders'

Part Two: Distribution

The data in this part of the assignment concerns the structure of nominal phrases in Bulgarian and the position of the definite article within nominal phrases. The following are examples of nominal phrases that contain a noun or a noun and at least one adjective:

- (11) a. kniga
'a book'
- b. interesna kniga
'a interesting book'
- c. nova interesna kniga
'a new interesting book'

The following examples show the corresponding nominal phrases containing the definite article:

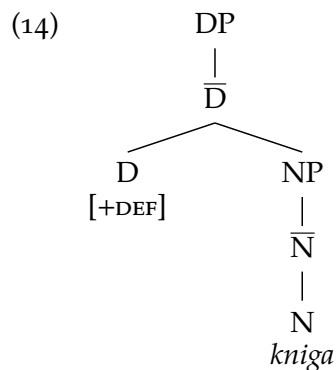
- (12) a. knjigata
 'the book'
 b. interesnata kniga
 'the interesting book'
 c. novata interesna kniga
 'the new interesting book'

Note that none of the following are acceptable:

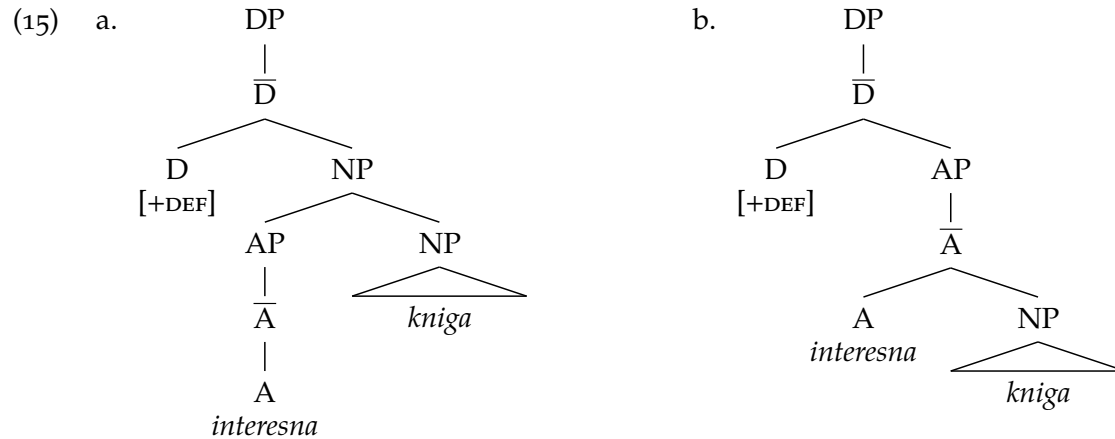
- (13) a. * interesna knjigata
 b. * nova interesnata kniga
 c. * novata interesnata kniga
 d. * nova interesnata knjigata
 e. * novata interesna knjigata
 f. * novata interesnata knjigata

State clearly and precisely the generalization that emerges about the distribution of the definite article within nominal phrases in Bulgarian.

The next step would be to construct an analysis that accounts for the distribution of the definite article based on (12) and (13). You can assume that Bulgarian is a consistently head-initial language. Furthermore, it might be best to treat the definite article as the head of a DP which bears a [+DEF] feature, as follows:



Your analysis will have to account for nominal phrases that contain adjectives as well. Two possible structures for such nominal phrases in Bulgarian are illustrated below. (15a) is the familiar structure we have been assuming for English; (15b) represents a structure in which D takes an AP as its complement and A, in turn, takes an NP as its complement. Develop two analyses of the placement of the definite article, one assuming the structure in (15a) and another one assuming the structure in (15b). Discuss in detail how each analysis accounts for the data in (12) and (13).



The following examples involve degree words that modify adjectives. Where does the definite article appear in these examples? (You can assume that degree words are left-adjoined to the APs they modify.) Note that the definite article can appear in no other position in these examples—how do your analyses account for its distribution in (16)? Can you build an argument for or against either of the structures in (15) based on the data in (16)?

- (16) a. mnogo interesnata kniga
'the very interesting book'
- b. prekaleno glupavata zabeležka
'the exceedingly stupid remark'
- c. izključitelno uspešnata pisatelka
'the extremely successful writer'

Extra Credit

The vast majority of adjectives in Bulgarian behave like *smel* 'brave' (plural *smeli*) in (17) with respect to their interaction with the definite article. However, there is a very small class of adjectives, which includes *serbez* 'bold' and exhibits a slightly different behavior, demonstrated in (18). Given the analysis you have developed so far, what can be said about the behavior of *serbez* and the examples in (18)?

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| <p>(17) a. smeli bežanci
'brave fugitives'</p> <p>b. mnogo smeli bežanci
'very brave fugitives'</p> <p>c. smelite bežanci
'the brave fugitives'</p> <p>d. *smeli bežancite
'the brave fugitives'</p> <p>e. pārvite smeli bežanci
'the first brave fugitives'</p> | <p>(18) a. serbez bežanci
'brave fugitives'</p> <p>b. mnogo serbez bežanci
'very brave fugitives'</p> <p>c. *serbez-a/-ta/-to/-te bežanci
'the brave fugitives'</p> <p>d. *serbez bežancite
'the brave fugitives'</p> <p>e. pārvite serbez bežanci
'the first brave fugitives'</p> |
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