

Two categories of bare singular nouns: Evidence from French

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1. Introduction

- Main claim: bare singular nouns may be of two syntactic classes: Classifier Phrase (CIP) and Noun Phrase (NP), shown in French data.
- Unassociated with a CIP layer, NPs uniquely denote gradable properties.
- The CIP vs. NP distinction is shown in French data from verbal idioms and predicate nominals.
- Light verb idioms and bare predicate nominal are proposed to be NPs due to uniform syntactic properties.
- All bare nouns are subject to the same restrictions on modification.

2. Two classes of verbal idioms

- Several syntactic tests distinguish two broad classes of verbal idioms (Anscombe 1991).
- *Light verb idioms* are a small closed class of psychological and physiological predicates appearing uniquely with light verbs *faire* 'to do' and *avoir* 'to have.'

(1) Hubert a mal au dos
Hubert has pain in.the back
Hubert's back hurts

(2) Dolorès fait attention à son travail
Dolores makes attention to her work
Dolores is attentive to her work

- *Full verb idioms* are a much larger class, allowing a wide variety of verbs and substantive nominal, and have a greater degree of semantic transparency.

(3) Le directeur a demandé confirmation
The director has asked confirmation
The director asked for confirmation

(4) Hubert a trouvé inspiration
Hubert has found inspiration
Hubert found inspiration

2.1 Degree adverbs

- Light verb idioms (5) may be modified by degree adverbs (eg. *très* 'very,' *si* 'so,' *assez* 'enough'), but full verb idioms cannot (6).
- Since items like *très* and *si* are not VP-adverbs, they are necessarily modifying the bare noun.

(5) Jack fait {très / si / super / vraiment} peur à ses ennemis
Jack does {very / so / extremely / really} fear to his enemies
Jack is {very / so / extremely / really} feared by his enemies

(6) Armand a fait {*très / si / super / vraiment} preuve de sa loyauté
Armand has done {very / so / extremely / really} proof of his loyalty

2.2 Pseudopartitive articles in comparatives

- In comparatives, substantive nouns require degree items to be preceded by pseudo-partitive article *de* (7). The opposite is true of adjectives and prepositions (8).
- (7) Hubert a moins de biscuits que Dolorès
Hubert has fewer of biscuits than Dolores
Hubert has fewer biscuits than Dolores
- (8) Dolorès est moins paresseuse qu'Hubert
Dolores is less lazy than Hubert
Dolores is less lazy than Hubert
- Full verb idioms require the pseudo-partitive in comparatives (9); light verb idioms disallow them (10), patterning like adjectives.
- (9) Bill a trouvé plus *(d') inspiration que Carlotta
Bill has found more *(of) inspiration than Carlotta
Bill found more inspiration than Carlotta
- (10) Armand a plus (*de) peur que Bill
Armand has more (*of) fear than Bill
Armand is more afraid than Bill

2.3 Passivization

- Full verb idioms can be passivized fairly regularly (11), while light verb idioms cannot be passivized (12).
- (11) Ordre a été reçu par les agents
Order has been received by the agents
Order was received by the agents
- (12) * peur a été fait aux enfants
fear has been made to.the children

2.4 Article insertion

- Full verb idioms readily accept equivalent phrases containing a definite or indefinite article. Article insertion is only possible for light verb idioms when accompanied by modifiers.
- (13) Dolorès veut déposer (une) plainte
Dolores wants to file (a) complaint
Dolores wants to file a complaint
- (14) # Armand a une peur
Armand has a fear
- (15) Armand a une peur de l'échec
Armand has a fear of failure

Summary of differences between light and full verb idioms:

	Light verb idioms	Full verb idioms
Degree adverbs	Y	N
Pseudo-partitive <i>de</i> in comparatives	N	Y
Passivization	N	Y
Article insertion without modification	N	Y

3. CIPs and NPs

- Recall that in comparatives, pseudo-partitive *de* is required for argument nominals but not adjectives.
- Schwarzschild (2006): measure phrases combined with pseudo-partitives require ‘substance’ nouns to be measured along a dimension that is monotonic to the part-whole relation.
- I propose that pseudo-partitive article *de* corresponds with a ClassifierP (CIP) projection which provides a dimension of comparison, quantity.
- The function of CIP is to enable measurement by some unit (Cheng & Sybesma 1999).
- Light verb idioms are minimally NPs, whereas full verb idioms are minimally CIPs.
- For light verb idioms, the standard of measurement is one of *intensity*, not quantity.

4. Bare predicate nominals

- Although bare predicate nominals involve a very different class of nouns, they share defining syntactic properties with light verb idioms.
- Predicate nominals with articles (1) define subjects as having stable membership in an occupation. Bare predicate nominals (17) indicate a subject’s participation in associated activities, or possession of relevant skills/qualities.

(16) Antoine est un détective
 Antoine is a detective
 Antoine is a detective

(17) Antoine est détective
 Antoine is a detective
 Antoine is a detective

- Bare predicates have been described as *qualitative* (Kupferman 1991), *attributive* (Beyssade & Dobrovie-Sorin 2005), *characterizing* and *situation-descriptive* (Roy 2006).
- Bare predicate nominals (but not those with articles) are compatible with the same degree adverbs accepted in light verb idioms.

(18) Antoine est tellement détective
 Antoine is so detective
 Antoine is so detective-like

(19) Antoine est assez mécanicien pour réparer la voiture
 Antoine is enough mechanic for repairing the car
 Antoine is enough of a mechanic to fix the car

- Like light verb idioms, bare predicate nominals do not accept pseudo-partitive article *de* in comparatives.

(20) Colette est plus avocat qu'Antoine
 Colette is more lawyer than Antoine
 Colette is more lawyer-like than Antoine

(21) Ferdinand est plus artiste que Marianne
 Ferdinand is more artist than Marianne
 Ferdinand is more of an artist than Marianne

- The patterns are consistent with the claim that bare predicates are not labels of occupations, but qualitative descriptions or behavioral characterizations.
- Due to shared syntactic properties, bare predicate nominals are also NPs, like light verb idioms.

5. Properties of NumPs and NPs

- This is consistent with Beyssade & Dobrovie-Sorin's (2005) analysis of predicate nominals, which argues for bare predicates as NPs with property denotation.
- Two predication rules are given, corresponding with complement NPs and CIPs (NumP in original).

(22) Odile est une danseuse
 Odile is a dancer
 Odile is a dancer

(23) Odile est danseuse
 Odile is dancer
 Odile is a dancer

(24) $[[DP \text{ is CIP}]] = 1 \text{ iff } [[DP]] \in [[CIP]]$

(25) $[[DP \text{ is NP/AdjP}]] = 1 \text{ iff } [[DP]] \text{ has Property}_{NP/AdjP}$

- Analyzing both light verb idioms and bare predicate nominal as NPs explains their shared property acceptability of degree adverbs and intolerance of pseudo-partitive articles, properties of gradability.

6. Restrictions on modification

- All types of bare nouns show identical restrictions in the types of modifiers that are accepted.
- Bare nouns accept a wide variety of subtype or specificational PP and AdjP modifiers, and low degree adjectives.

(26) Marianne est trafiquant d'armes
 Marianne is smuggler of arms
 Marianne is an arms smuggler

(28) Michel a besoin de quitter Paris
 Michel has need of leaving Paris
 Michel needs to leave Paris

(27) Christine est bonne étudiante
 Christine is good student
 Christine is a good student

(29) Michel avait mauvaise conscience
 Michel had bad conscience
 Michel had a bad conscience

- Bare nouns do not accept 'evaluative' or high degree adverbs without the support of an indefinite or definite article

(30) M. Tabard est *(un) patron méchant
 Mr. Tabard is *(a) boss mean
 Mr. Tabard is a mean boss

(31) Colette est *(un) avocat extraordinaire
 Colette is *(a) lawyer extraordinaire
 Colette is an extraordinary lawyer

(32) Ferdinand avait *(une) peur étrange
 Ferdinand had *(a) fear strange
 Ferdinand had a strange fear

(33) Antoine cherchait *(une) énorme querelle
 Antoine searched for a enormous fight
 Antoine was looking for an enormous fight

- Since NPs and CIPs have the same restrictions on modification, neither contains the necessary structure to license evaluative and high degree adjectives.

7. CIPs and NPs cross-linguistically, remaining issues

- Bare predicate nominals and light verb idioms share similar syntactic properties across Romance languages (Constantinescu & Dogaru 2008).
- Cross-linguistically, NPs are expected to show certain distributional similarities to gradable adjectives.
- The CIP/NP distinction is not present in languages like English, which lacks bare nouns with NP-like properties. This is possibly related to the Free Agreement Parameter (Munn & Schmitt 2005).
- On the basis of Spanish and Romanian, Dobrovie-Sorin et al. (2005) argue that bare singulars are NPs whereas bare plurals are NumPs, to account for bare plurals as object arguments. The present French data suggests a further distinction among what they group as NPs.
- What properties of verbs determine whether they may merge with NPs, CIPs, or both?

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