Articles as Categorical Markers

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Articles as Categorical Markers

Takafumi OGATA

1. Introduction

Behaviors of articles are sometimes difficult to explain, thus the need of an ad hoc explanation for them tends to arise. Although a large number of studies have been conducted on articles, this paper will examine articles from a different angle, i.e. from the viewpoint of category, and it will try to provide a unified explanation for nouns with articles. The aim of this paper is to clarify how a noun carries properties such as countability, definiteness, specificity by adding articles. Through the discussions presented in this paper, the generating processes of proper nouns and generic nouns are also given.

The paper is organized as follows. I first outline two kinds of backgrounding processes developed in Ogata (2006). The two processes are demonstrated through tautological expressions. I then present a description of two noun decision processes in section 3. Sections 4 to 6, discuss the issues with three kinds of nouns; Type A, Type B, and Type C. Section 7 considers proper nouns and in section 8 an overall diagram of articles is given.

2. *Internal Backgrounding* and *External Backgrounding*

Categories have boundaries in nature in order to discriminate them from other categories. However, their boundaries are not clearcut but fuzzy or fluid, thus the boundaries shrink or expand depending on the situations of the sentences. Then when we need to clarify the boundary of the category, we should redefine the category using a process. In this paper the process consists of two kinds of backgrounding: internal backgrounding and external backgrounding. A category is redefined by backgrounding nonmembers of the category. Through this process the members of the category are fixed, that is to say, the boundary of the category is established.

Tautological expressions are characterized by redefining the categories of their repeated nouns (cf. Ogata 2006.). In this section we shall briefly look into the comprehension of tautological expressions, focusing on backgrounding.

The definition of a category is made by two sorts of backgrounding. The first one is a backgrounding of other categories, which I term *external backgrounding*. In (1) the category *law* is redefined by external backgrounding, implying that *law* is quite different from other categories such as *rule, arrangement, promise,* etc. The second one is a backgrounding of some potential members of the category by describing the

characteristics of the redefined category members, which I term *internal backgrounding*.
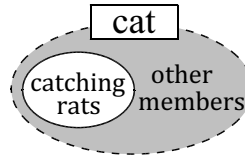
The category *cat* in (2) is redefined by internal backgrounding. Cats which do not catch rats are excluded from the category *cat*. In other words, they are backgrounded, and ratcatchers are foregrounded.

(1) The law is the law.　　　　　　　　(2) Cats are cats only if they catch rats.

(1)'　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　(2)'

Tautological expressions are constructed in order to redefine the category of their nouns. From another point of view, they are emphatic expressions because of the repetition of the same word or phrase. In (1) and (2), the nouns, *law* and *cats*, are emphasized by the repetition in each sentence. In order to emphasize something, something should exist exclusively. Viewed in this light, emphasis undergoes a backgrounding process because emphatic expressions have to exclude others by a backgrounding process while foregrounding the thing(s) to be emphasized. Tautologies are a kind of emphatic expression, for this reason they undergo the process of backgrounding. Nouns with articles will be accounted for in the following sections from the viewpoint of the two types of backgrounding.

3. Nouns with articles: two kinds of decision processes

It is often said that nouns are divided into two groups: countable and uncountable, mass and unit, etc. However these properties are not a property of nouns per se. In fact they are different kinds of usages. Most nouns can be either countable or uncountable as shown in (3). Even proper names can be countable like common nouns as shown in (4).

(3) a. There is *space* for three cars in this garage.

　　　b. Is there *a space* for the car in the firm's car park?　　　　　　(Ishida 2002: 21)

(4) a. *A Mrs Robertson* was trying to contact you this morning.

　　　b. She is *the second Mrs White* ── the first one died.　　　　(Quirk, *et al*. 1985:289)

Of course, there would naturally be a general tendency for particular kinds of nouns to prefer one of two usages. But a tendency is just a tendency. It is natural to think that the distinction of countable/uncountable is not intrinsically determined as well as the distinctions of specific/nonspecific and definite/indefinite.

If these properties are not of nouns per se, then how are the properties acquired? In this paper it is

suggested that they are determined in two decision processes. The first process is a category decision process in which a noun is classified from the point of categorical view. The argument of this paper is constructed on the basis of category instead of using the distinction of noun countability. This enables us to provide the most acceptable explanation with regard to articles concerning generic use, forms of proper nouns, etc. The second process is a definiteness decision process in which it is determined whether a noun is definite or indefinite.

The properties of nouns are determined in these processes, but what should be noticed here is that not all properties are distinguished by using articles. For example, the distinction between specific and nonspecific is not visible simply by choosing one of the articles, and we are able to judge the specificity of a noun only by context. In the following two sections we will consider the decision processes.

3.1. Category Decision Process（CDP）

In the Category Decision Process（henceforth, CDP）, nouns are classified in the light of category as illustrated in（5）. First they are placed in two classes based on whether they are associated with categories. An ellipse stands for a category and a small circle is a member of the category. If they are related to categories, they are further broken down into two groups according to a type of backgrounding: internal backgrounding and external backgrounding. The type of internal backgrounding falls into two groups on the basis of number: singular and plural.

Roughly speaking, nouns classified *category* correspond to common nouns, and nouns classified *noncategory* correspond to proper nouns. But it should be noted that the distinction between category and noncategory is completely different from the one between common nouns and proper nouns. In fact proper nouns are generated even if they are classified in the group of category（See section 5）.

（5）Category Decision Process

In the category group, the internal backgrounding subgroup is approximately equivalent to countable nouns, and the external backgrounding subgroup is roughly equivalent to uncountable nouns. Another look at this classification will show that they are different in respect of individuation. The internal backgrounding subgroups have constituent members in their categories, but the external one has no member in a category. In the former, a noun of each group is taken as a collective entity of constituent members, while a noun of the latter category is regarded as a homogeneous entity which is not individuated. The individuated category of internal backgrounding is divided into two subsets according to the number classification of nouns. In the first subset only one member is foregrounded, in other words all except one are backgrounded*[1]. The member can be either specific or nonspecific to the

CDP
category
internal backgrounding
1.singular
2.plural
external backgrounding
3. zero article

noncategory
external backgrounding
zero article
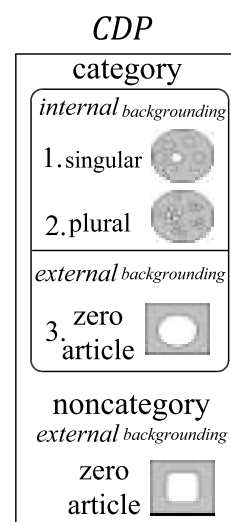
speaker. The form of this type is [a/an __ ϕ] (a/an + singular noun). In the second subset, plural members, but not all, are foregrounded and others are backgrounded. The form is [ϕ __ <s>] (zero article + plural noun).

On the other hand the external backgrounding subgroup emphasizes that the category definitely differs from other categories not withstanding category constituents. The form of this type is [ϕ __ ϕ] (zero article + singular noun). I don't use *boundedness*, a concept of cognitive linguistics, to discriminate between two backgrounding subgroups because the concept cannot clarify the great variety of usages of articles. Using the backgrounding processes of a category opens the way for a plausible usage explanation for articles such as a generic usage, proper nouns, etc.

Finally let us have a look at the noncategory type whose nouns are not relevant to categories. They are drawn in a rounded rectangle instead of an ellipse as shown in (5). A rounded rectangle stands for one and only one entity irrelevant to categories. Although the noncategory type is a source of proper nouns, it is just one of the sources of proper nouns. There are four types of proper nouns which will be discussed in sections 5 and 6.

3.2. Definiteness Decision Process (DDP)

The Definiteness Decision Process (henceforth, DDP) determines whether a noun phrase is definite or indefinite after the process CDP as shown in (6). A noun is definite when the entity is uniquely identifiable to the hearer, and a noun is indefinite when it is not identifiable to the hearer. Only the category outputs of CDP can be indefinite in the process of DDP. The forms of category outputs of CDP remain unchanged after the indefinite decision in the process DDP (1. [a/an __ ϕ], 2. [ϕ __ <s>], 3. [ϕ __ ϕ]). In this paper there is no inherent article to indicate that a noun is indefinite. The article *a/an* is simply used for a singular foregrounded member in a category, thus I shall use the term *singular article* for the article *a/an*.

If a nominal is determined to be definite in DDP, one of two articles are added: the definite article *the* or the zero definite article. The definite article *the* is added to the category outputs of CDP. In the case of singular internal backgrounding, the singular article *a/an* is replaced with the definite article *the* in the process of DDP. However it is implied that the noun is a single foregrounded member of the category. Other category outputs, plural internal backgrounding and external backgrounding, have zero articles, thus they are also replaced with *the* in the same way. The definite article *the* developed originally from a

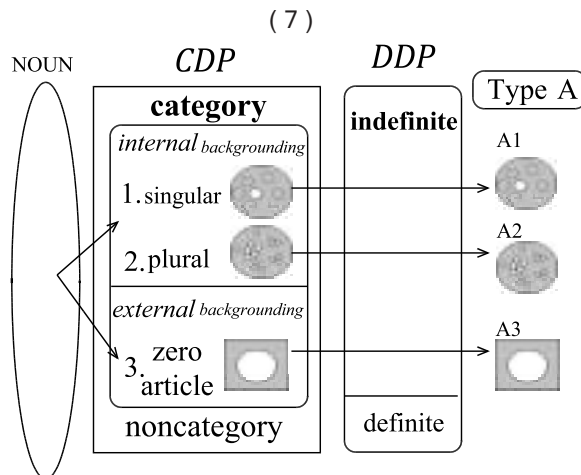(6) Definiteness Decision Process

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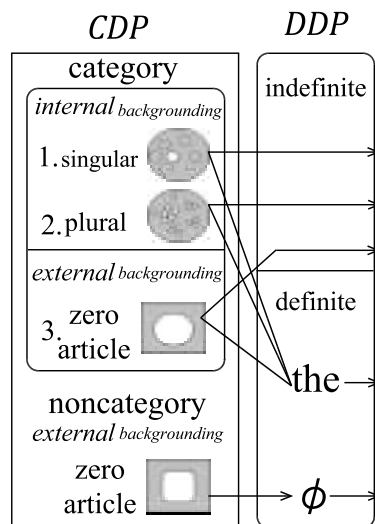
demonstrative pronoun and the singular article *a/an* derives from the numeral 'one'. The definite article is entirely different from the singular article, and that is why these two articles belong to different decision processes.

Meanwhile, the definite zero article is added only to the noncategory output of CDP. The first letter in the noun is capitalized when the definite zero article is added in the process of DDP. Since the noncategory output is a uniquely identifiable individual entity irrelevant to categories, there is no need to add the apparently redundant definite article *the* to show the entity is definite. In the following sections, we shall now look more carefully into the comprehension of nouns with articles*[2].

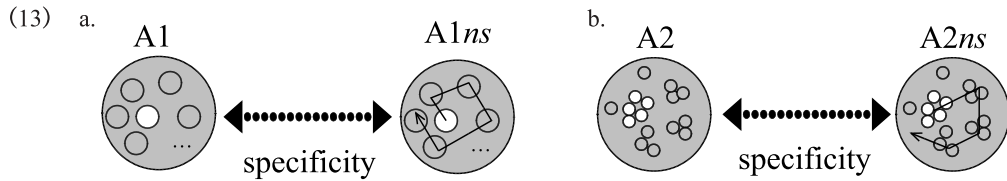## 4. Type A: CDP（*category*）and DDP（*indefinite*）

The nouns will be called Type A when they make choices of *category* in CDP and *indefinite* in DDP. In other words, a noun is associated with a category when the speaker imagines that the hearer cannot identify the member（s）. There is no inherent indefinite article such as a singular article or a definite article. Thus the noun forms of the outputs are the same ones as in CDP.

There are three outputs of Type A: A1, A2, and A3, which is diagrammed in（7）. A1 has only one foregrounded member in the category by the process of internal backgrounding. A noun phrase of A1 is a singular noun and contains a singular article *a/an*. A2 has more than one foregrounded members in the category by the same backgrounding. The speaker also imagines that the members are not identified by the hearer. Nouns of A3 are singular nouns and have zero articles, and they are also indefinite, i.e. not identifiable by the hearer. The whole category of A3 is foregrounded by backgrounding other categories without individuation in the category. This leads to acquiring a generic meaning of a noun of A3. A noun acquires its generic meaning when the whole category in question is foregrounded. Some examples of type A are shown in（8）.

（　）

5

（8） a. It is a picture of a man trying to paint a picture of a sunset.

─ R. P. Warren, *All the King's Men*.

b. They say that when good Americans die they go to Paris.

─ Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Grey*.

c. Power, then, for them creates reality, it creates truth.

─ George Orwell, *1984: A Novel*.

However it should be noted that material nouns and abstract nouns do not always fall into type A3 by backgrounding other categories. Those nouns can be classified as type A1 or A2 when the speaker thinks that there exist individualized members in the category of the nouns. Some abstract nouns are countable nouns, i.e. are included in either type A1 or A2. （9） is a list of some abstract count nouns.

（9） address, effect, election, hour, idea, issue, method, minute, month, plan, problem, remark, scheme, shock, suggestion, week, year （Berry 1993:7）

Moreover when the meaning of an abstract noun is a type, an action, or a possessor, it falls into type A1 or A2 as shown in （10）. （cf. Yamaguchi 1991:194）

(10) a. It is a *pity* that they were ever got over. ─ Jane Austen, *Emma*.
b. We went back to the house in a *hurry*. ─ Wilkie Collins, *The Moonstone*.

Material nouns are also included in type A1 and A2 when their meaning is a type, a product, or a part as shown in （11）. （cf. Yamaguchi 1991:194）

(11) a. I understand you have had a *fire* up there, too. ─ M. R. Rinehart, *The Circular Staircase*.
b. Toss up a *copper* for it as well. ─ H. D. Thoreau, *Walden*.

Furthermore, we find a degree of variation in type A1 and A2 regarding specificity. Even if a noun phrase is indefinite to the hearer, it can be either specific or nonspecific to the speaker. For example, *a doctor* in (12a) is nonspecific to the speaker as well as to the hearer. On the other hand, *a doctor* in (12b) is specific to the speaker while it is indefinite and nonspecific to the hearer. In English there is no notation system to discriminate between specific and nonspecific. Thus an indefinite noun is used when it is indefinite regardless of the specificity of the noun. This also applies to the plural type A2. （13） indicates the specificity difference.

(12) a. I want to meet a doctor, but Mary doesn't want to meet one. <nonspecific indefinite>

b. I want to meet a doctor, but Mary doesn't want to meet him. <specific indefinite>

（Murata 1986:342）

(13) a.

In (13), the types, A1*ns* and A2*ns*, carry the lowest degree of specificity. In these types the focus moves all over the category changing foregrounded members because of nonspecificity. By focus moving, the whole category of a noun is foregrounded, and the noun phrases of A1*ns* and A2*ns* acquire a generic meaning. This focus moving does not occur in type A3 because there are no individuated members in the category A3.

The singular article *a/an* simply indicates one member of the category. Thus, if plural nouns are correlated with a single entity, the meaning of the singular article is "one and the same".

(14) a. Birds of *a* feather flock together.

b. We are of *an* age.   （Yamaguchi 1991:297）

The plural nouns *birds* and *we* in (14) create a correspondence relation to only one entity which is simply indefinite. Therefore a singular article bears the meaning of "one and the same". The noun phrase can be either specific or nonspecific to the speaker. To summarize the foregoing briefly, type A has three kinds of generic usages and no proper noun usage.

5. Type B: CDP（*category*）and DDP（*definite*）

5.1 Three basic schemas of Type B

Nouns of type B are definite nouns associated with categories.   They are classified *category* in CDP and *definite* in DDP. In DDP there are two kinds of definite article: the definite article *the* and the zero definite article. Type B nouns have the definite article *the* but not the zero definite article because we cannot distinguish the definite category use from the indefinite category use if they both take the zero definite article.

A noun phrase is definite if the speaker presumes that the hearer can identify the referent to which it is referring. From the viewpoint of category, there are two sets of category: the speaker category set and the hearer category set. The element(s) in the set union is definite and foregrounded by backgrounding other parts as illustrated in (15) [3].
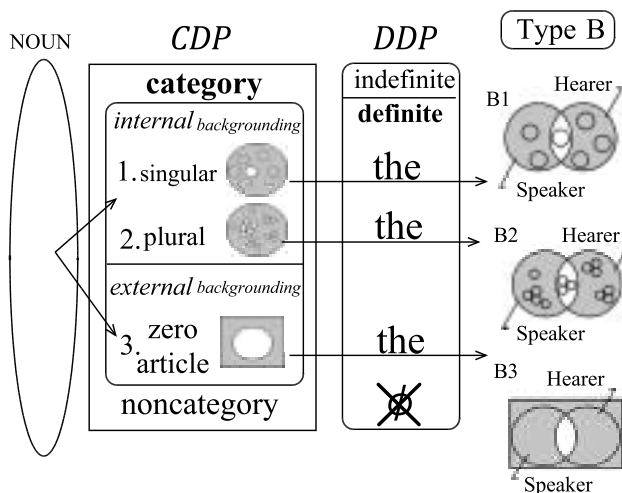
Type B is also divided into three subtypes: B1, B2, and B3. A noun of type B1 is a singular category definite noun. Only one member of the set union is foregrounded and becomes definite. A noun of B2 is a plural category definite noun. More than one member of the set union is foregrounded and becomes definite. In B3 there is no individuated member in the set union. But the portion of the set union is also foregrounded and becomes definite. （16） shows a few examples of Type B.

(16)   a.   How would the soldier feel when the battle was over?

—— William Shakespeare, *Julius Caesar*.

          b.   The streets are wide, and the fine trees that border them give a grateful shade.

—— W. Somerset Maugham, *Collected Short Stories*.

          c.   The water came out of the cellar with us and spread over the floor of the room.

—— Gaston Leroux, *The Phantom of the Opera*.

Type B has a special prototypical meaning usage. The members of the set union are prototypical members. In B1 only one prototypical member is selected and becomes definite. In B2 several prototypical members are selected and are foregrounded as shown in (17).

(17)   Knightley is quite the gentleman. —— Jane Austen, *Emma*.

However type B3 has no constituent member in the set union. Therefore the union consists of the prototypical characteristics or functions of the nouns instead of an individuated member. In (18) the prototypical

characteristics of *the scholar* is foregrounded.

(18)   The scholar in him may hesitate, like the father in Sheridan's play.

———— Matthew Arnold, *Essays in Criticism*.

5.2 *Of*-phrases and relational clauses

The definite article *the* is often added to the noun when it is modified by *of*-phrases or relational clauses. However it is not necessarily the case that the definite article *the* is added when modified by such expressions. This behavior of the definite article can be easily accounted for from the viewpoint of category.

(19)   a. I am studying the history of English Literature.

b. I am writing a history of English Literature.   (Keene and Matsunami 1969: 31)

(20)   a. You should drink medicine which is good for you.

b. You should drink the medicine which is good for you.   (Keene and Matsunami 1969: 34)

The difference between *the history* and *a history* in (19) can be explained by the categories to which they belong. In (19a), [history] is a category and it is identified by the property "of English Literature". On the other hand in (19b), [history of English Literature] is a category and there is no information to identify a member of the category. To put it another way, the phrase *of English Literature* is added to identify a member of the category in (19a), and it is added to clarify a kind of history (a subcategory of history) in (19b). The difference between *medicine* and *the medicine* in (20) is explained in the same way.

Let us have a look at another example (21). Even if the speaker bought only one book yesterday, a singular article can be used with the book.

(21)   Look, this is a book I bought two years ago, and this is a book I bought yesterday. Notice the difference.   (Keene and Matsunami 1969: 34)

In (21) [book I bought yesterday] is a category and *a book* is an arbitrary book which has the property of the book someone just bought yesterday.

5.3 Two variables

Type B has two individual variables. First the size of the union of sets varies greatly according to the situation as illustrated in (22). For example, if you say "Open the window" when the room has only one window, the hearer could identify the window easily with the help of the situation. The hearer has no option but to identify the sole window. The range of options is determined by the situation of the speaker and the

hearer.

(22)
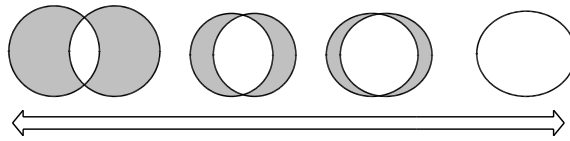
In (22), the leftmost figure contains two category sets which have little in common with each other. The definite entity/entities are selected from many available options. In the rightmost figure, the two sets are considered exactly equal. There is only one option in the situation of the hearer.

The equal sets of type B consist of three subtypes: B1*eql*, B2*eql*, and B3*eql*. The following are their diagrams and examples of the three subtypes.

(23)   a.

   b.

   c.
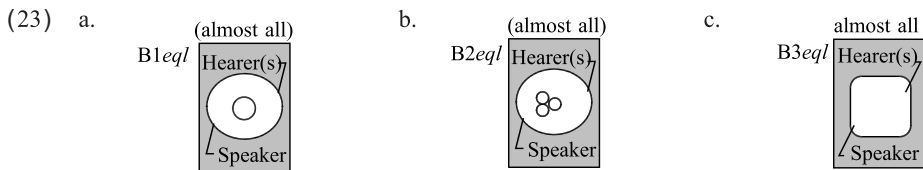
(24)   a. [B1*eql*]: the sun, the moon, the president, the weather, tell the truth (cf. tell a lie), etc.

   b. [B2*eql*]: the cliques, *those* at the top, the operations (when the speaker is addressing a special group of readers in the know). (cf. Martin and Rose 2003: 159)

   c. [B3*eql*]: the Panama Canal, the Atlantic Ocean, the Japan Sea, etc.

In (23a,b) all restricted categories are foregrounded and the category has only one member in (23a) and several members in (23b). In (23c) the category sets are changed into an individual entity which is uniquely identifiable to the speaker and the hearer. This is because categories are individuated when some portion is cut away from that which is not individuated. For example this occurs with a material or abstract entity. Nouns of B3*eql* are all proper nouns.

Nouns of the type B3*eql* do not have easily recognizable external boundaries. Since the boundaries are not quite distinct, then nouns are vividly individualized by the addition of the definite article *the* (cf. Hewson 1972:109). The categories in (25) take the type B3*eql*.

(25)   ocean, sea, river, canal, isthmus, peninsula, gulf   Hewson (1972:109)

The second variable is the numbers of hearers. The meaning of the noun is influenced by whether the

hearer is only one or almost all hearers in the community. When a noun is identified uniquely by almost all hearers in the community, the noun is considered as a proper noun. Thus proper nouns with the definite article *the* belong to either B1*eql*, B2*eql* or B3*eql*.

(26)　a. [B1*eql*]: the Castle (of Edinburgh), the Cabinet, the Bank of England,

　　　　b. [B2*eql*]: the United States, the Great Lakes, the Rocky Mountains, etc.

　　　　c. [B3*eql*]: the Mississippi River, the Monerey Peninsula, the Persian Gulf, etc.

5.4. Generic interpretations of Type B

　　Type B has other kinds of subtypes in which the meaning of a noun is generic. The subtypes are developed from B1*eql*, B2*eql* and B3*eql*. There are some similarities between the subtypes and the types of B1/2/3 *eql*. First, the whole category is foregrounded, and secondly there exist only limited members in the category (single entity for each B1 subtype and plural entities for each B2 subtype). There are also some differences between them. Firstly, in the former subtypes a member of the category is a subcategory whose number is quite restricted. Secondly, other subcategories still remain in the category and they are backgrounded in the former groups.

　　In (27a) the subcategory appears as a singular noun, irrelevant to countability or uncountability. In (27b) the subcategory occurs as a plural noun. Some examples of these are shown in (28) and (29). The whole category and one of the restricted numbers of subcategories are foregrounded in (28). In (29) the subcategories consist of plural members, thus the foregrounded subcategory occurs as a plural noun. When the whole category is foregrounded, a nominal has a generic meaning.

(27)　a.

B1/3*sub*　　almost all　Hearer(s)

Speaker

　　　　b.

B2*sub*　　almost all　Hearer(s)

Speaker

(28)　a. I was born and raised in the South, and I've lived in the North.

　　　　　　　　　　　　　　── Mark Twain, *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*.

　　　　b. They shine in the dark, perhaps, the tips. ── James Joyce, *Ulysses*.

　　　　c. He bid us turn, I think, to the left. ── Walter Scott, *Ivanhoe*.

(29)　a. The Hungarians fought alone and were crushed by the Russians. (a,b; Shobo 1996:148)

　　　　b. Hungarians liberated Cardinal Mindszenty, who took refuge in the United States Legation.

　　In (28) the foregrounded subcategories belong to the higher categories whose members are limited. For

11

example *the south* and *the north* in (28a) are the subcategories of the category *direction* which consists of only four members (north, south, east, and west). *The dark* in (28b) belongs to the category whose members are dark and light, and *the left* in (28c) is a member of the higher category whose members are right and left.

In (29a) *the Hungarians* refers to the people of Hungary and they are contrasted with other peoples. On the other hand *Hungarians* (=(29b)) also refers to the people of Hungary but they are not contrasted to other peoples. There simply exist some Hungarians there.

It should also be added that the two subtypes, B1/3*sub* and B2*sub*, can appear in the same sentence as illustrated in (30).

(30)　　Mary went on holiday to *the mountains*, Joan to *the sea*, and Lily to *the country*.

<div align="right">(Sperber and Wilson. 1995: 222)</div>

Probably (27) might seem to be a special use of Type B, but in fact the category is simply doubly-backgrounded externally there. First the higher category externally-backgrounds other categories, and secondly the lower category (i.e. subcategory) externally-backgrounds other subcategories.

But why is the category backgrounded externally twice? This is because external backgrounding is the only way to foreground the whole category in order to acquire a generic meaning. There are two sorts of categories in each diagram of (27). Subsequently we need to background the two categories externally.

Furthermore two constructions are included in these subtypes. *By* followed by "the + noun" can mean "according to a form, period of time, number, amount, etc". This phrase generally describes some kind of rate. The second one is "preposition + the + body part". The nouns of these phrases are also an instance of B1*sub* as shown in (31).

(31)　　a. by the hour, by the day, by the week; by the dozen, by the hundred; by the pound, etc.

　　　　　b. on the forehead, on the cheek, on the mouth; by the toe, by the hair, by the shoulder; in the face, in the foot, in the body, etc.
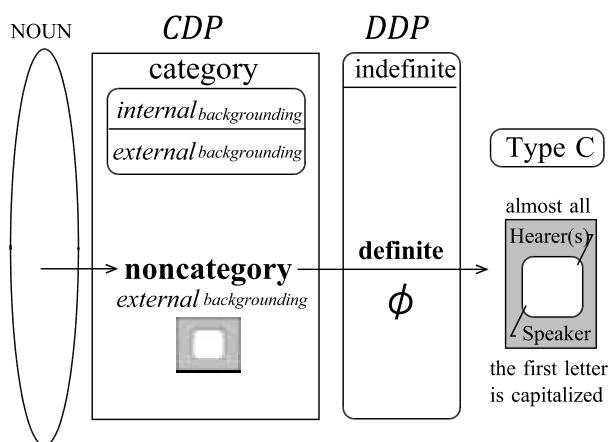
Type B has two subtypes of the generic usage (B1/3*sub*, B2*sub*) and three subtypes of proper nouns.

6. Type C: CDP (*noncategory*) and DDP (*definite*)

Nouns of Type C select *noncategory* in CDP and *definite* in DDP. The nouns take the zero definite article in DDP instead of the definite article *the*, and the first letters of them are capitalized. A noun of type C is a uniquely identifiable individual entity. Thus adding the definite article *the* is a kind of redundancy.

Subsequently, the zero definite article is chosen. The entity of type C is drawn in a rounded rectangle instead of an ellipse as shown in (32). Nouns of type C are proper nouns.

(32)

NOUN   *CDP*   *DDP*

category   indefinite

internal$_{backgrounding}$

external$_{backgrounding}$

noncategory   **definite**   Type C

external$_{backgrounding}$ ϕ almost all
Hearer(s)

Speaker

the first letter
is capitalized

Type C is contrasted with type B3*eql*. B3*eql* nouns are proper nouns in which it is very difficult subjectively to find any exterior boundaries. These are oceans, seas, rivers and such like. On the other hand type C nouns have rather distinct exterior boundaries while being subjective (cf. Hewson 1972:109). Here is a list of type C classes quoted from Hewson (1972:109).

(33)   street, avenue, square, road, place, crescent, bridge, mount, cape, lake, island, county, parish, point, bay, park

However there seems to be no clear distinction between input classes of B3*eql* and ones of type C. The tendency strengthens according to the criteria of either a distinct or an incomplete exterior boundary. The distinction is also subject to other factors. The first point to notice here is that nouns are classified based on a viewpoint of the speaker. Proper nouns will be discussed in further detail in the next section.

7. Proper nouns

7.1 Shifting to another type of proper noun

As previously stated in sections 5 and 6, there are four kinds of proper nouns. In three of them, B1*eql,* B2*eql* and B3*eql*, the unions of sets are the largest among the variants of B1 or B2 or B3. B1*eql* has the form of [the + singular noun], for B2*eql* [the + plural noun], and for B3*eql* [the + singular noun]. Their nouns are

originally common nouns and come to be used as proper nouns. However type B3*eql* is different from the other two types in that it is not correlated with categories and the noun is simply a unique entity. The fourth type of proper nouns is Type C whose form is [zero definite article + first-letter-capitalized noun]. This type is highly productive and is contrasted with type B3*eql*.

However this classification is not always predetermined, but is sometimes fluid. The definite article *the* is dropped from B1*eql* or B3*eql* proper nouns when they are regarded as genuine proper names. This involves a shift from the types B1*eql* and B2*eql* to the type C. The shift depends on individual variability, a speech community, the times, etc. But this shift is a directional one as shown in (34).

(34)   B1*eql*   Type C   b. B3*eql*   Type C

(35)   (i) the Oxford road   (ii) the Oxford Road   (iii) Oxford Road   (iv) Oxford

(Quirk, *et al*. 1985:294)

But it is very difficult to change type B2*eql* into Type C, because B2*eql* nouns are plural which indicate that they are associated with categories and thus they are not unique entities.

Furthermore if the entity is closer to the people in a given community, it would be easily grouped into Type C. The noun "church" is an example because the entity is uniquely identifiable by people in the community as in (36). However if it stands outside of community, for example in a foreign country, the definite article *the* is added as shown in (37).

(36)   Saint Peter's Cathedral, Westmingster Abbey, York Minister, etc.

(37)   the Vatican, the Sistine Chapel, the Alhambra, etc.

The point to be made here is that proper nouns could be reclassified into another type of proper noun according to the situation of the speaker.

7.2 Converting proper nouns

What appear to be proper nouns sometimes are used as common nouns.

(38)   a. Consumers buy *a Sony* if they think it is better than *a Dell*.

b. Not one was even close to *a Gogh* in reputation, importance, or value.

c. *Washington* was prepared to extend substantial assistance.

By metonymy they come to mean other entities connected the proper names. Those entities are members of some category, in other words they are strongly related to categories. None of the nouns in (38) are uniquely

identifiable entityies, but members of some category. Thus they do not fit into any proper noun type. The process of the change of the meaning by metonymy is not depicted in the diagrams in sections 5 and 6. This is because the process is applied to a noun itself before CDP and DDP.

This explanation is essentially identical to one for commonization of abstract or material nouns. *Coffee* in (39a) is different from *a coffee* in (39b) in that we hold differing views on what we call "coffee". *Coffee* lacks individuality while *a coffee* has a high degree of individuality. Using the ability to change viewpoints, we can convert proper nouns into common nouns.

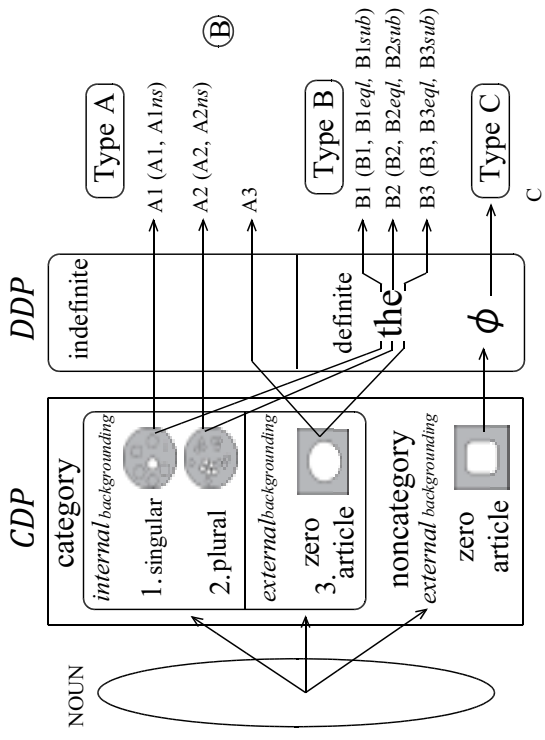(39)　a. I must teach you to make good *coffee* in a Chaptal coffee-pot.

—— H. De Balzac, *Eugenie Grandet*.

　　b. He ordered *a coffee* and a sandwich for himself.　—— C. Deuker, *Runner*.
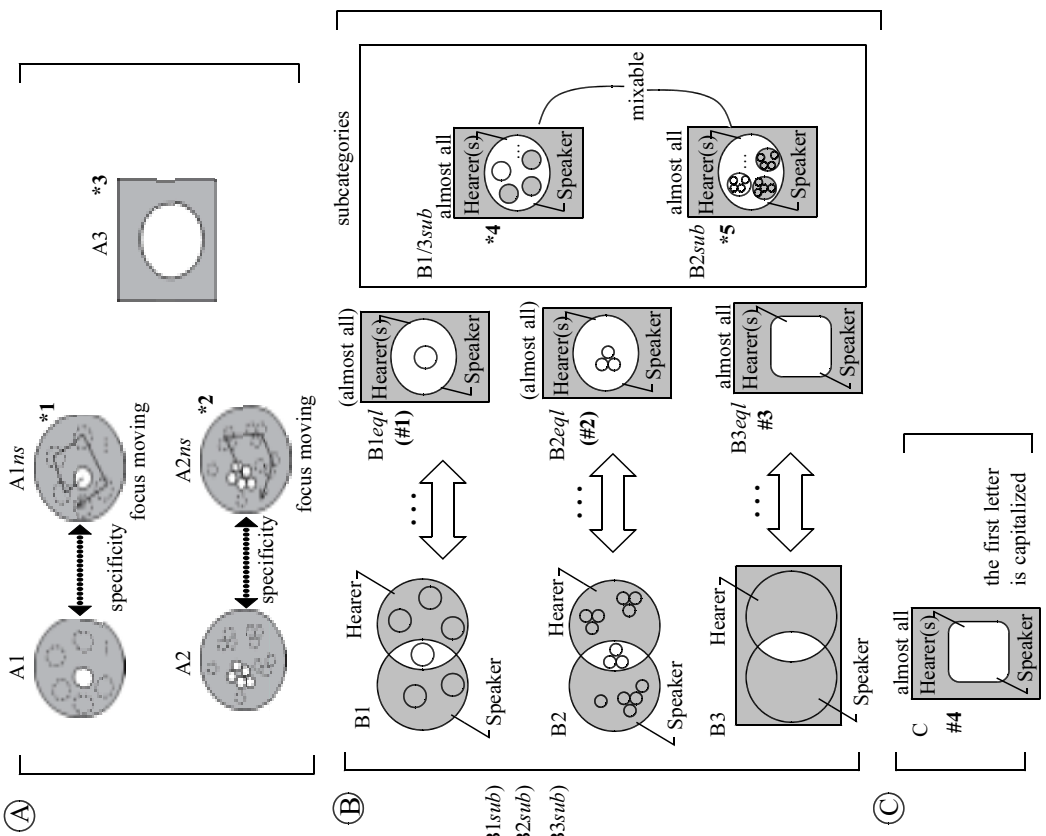

8. Overall diagram

An overall diagram of articles is shown in (40). Nouns with articles are broken down into three types. Type A is an indefinite category type with variation of specificity for the speaker. Type B is a definite category type which has many variants. Type C is a definite noncategory type whose constituent members are all proper nouns. There are five subtypes with a generic meaning whose schemas have a numbered asterisk. Moreover there are four subtypes of proper nouns which are also assigned a number with a sharp mark #.

(40)

NOUN

CDP

category
internal backgrounding
1. singular
2. plural
external backgrounding
3. zero article
noncategory
external backgrounding
zero article

DDP

indefinite

definite

the

φ

Type A
A1 (A1, A1ns)
A2 (A2, A2ns)
A3

Type B
B1 (B1, B1eql, B1sub)
B2 (B2, B2eql, B2sub)
B3 (B3, B3eql, B3sub)

Type C
C

generic use: *1, *2, *3, *4, *5
proper nouns: #1, #2, #3, #4

Ⓐ

A1ns *1
focus moving
specificity
A1

A2ns *2
focus moving
specificity
A2

A3 *3
A3

Ⓑ

subcategories

B1/3sub
*4
almost all
Hearer(s)
Speaker

B2sub
*5
almost all
Hearer(s)
Speaker

mixable

(almost all)
B1eql
(#1)
Hearer(s)
Speaker

(almost all)
B2eql
(#2)
Hearer(s)
Speaker

almost all
B3eql
#3
Hearer(s)
Speaker

Hearer
B1
Speaker

Hearer
B2
Speaker

Hearer
B3
Speaker

Ⓒ

the first letter
is capitalized

almost all
C
#4
Hearer(s)
Speaker

16

9. Conclusion

In this paper, I have attempted to demonstrate how articles are closely linked to the concept of category. From the viewpoint of category, the usages of articles can be accounted for in a natural way. Nouns are considered to be strongly connected with the concept of category in the nature of things. This is the reason why articles are highly related to categories. This justifies analyzing articles from the categorical point of view.

Notes

* I am grateful to Colin Painter for extensive stylistic suggestions. The responsibility for any remaining inadequacies is, of course, my own.

*1. Collective nouns can be followed either by a singular or a plural verb form (cf. Quirk et al. 1985, Yamanashi 1995, Ishida 2002). This difference can be shown in the schemas in (i). However, collective nouns do not have an expressive form to distinguish between two schemas. Therefore this information is not included in the diagram of (5).

(i)
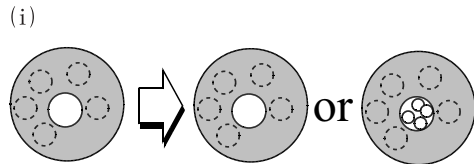
*2. Actually determiners other than articles are involved in the definiteness decision process (DDP) as illustrated in (i). The indefinite determiner consists of some, any, many, few, much, little, etc. The definite determiner consists of demonstrative adjectives (this, that, these, those) and genitive pronouns (my, our, your, his, her, its, and their), etc. But some determiners belong to both classes. For example, Murata (1986:342) states that the determiner *this* has also a specific indefinite use. However to simplify matters, let us restrict ourselves to the discussion of articles in this paper.

(i)

*3. As Murata (1986) pointed out, the definite article has also a specific/nonspecific distinction ((ii) (iii); Murata 1986:341).

(ii) <specific definite> I met a man in the street. *The* man asked me the way to the post office.

(iii) <nonspecific definite> Any dog loves *the* person who feeds it. (Guéron 1980:667)

However, this distinction exercises no significant effect on the meaning of a noun, thus it is not depicted in the diagram.

17
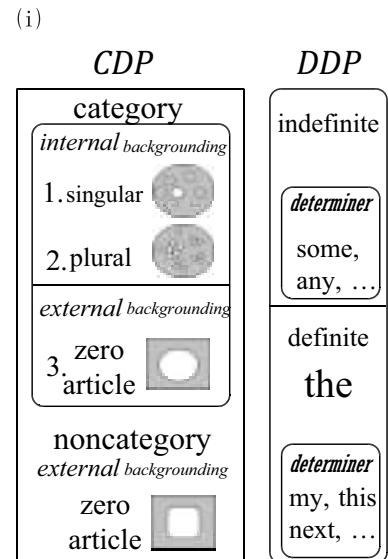
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