

## What Determiners can do: Data from Mopan Maya

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Key to Glosses: 1, 2, 3 = Person; A = Actor/ Set A person-marker series; AOR[ist]; ART[icle]; B=Undergoer/Set B person-marker series; CL\_ANIM. = Numeral Classifier for animates; DISC[course particle]; DUR[ative]; DX = Demonstrative (\_MAN = Manner; \_TEXT = Anaphoric); ECHO = prosodic echo vowel; INCH[oative]; INT[ensifier]; INTR\_INC = Intransitive Incomplete; NOM[inalizer]; PASS[ive]; PL[ural]; PREP[osition]; QUOT[ative]; TR = Transitive (\_COMPL = Completive; \_INC = Incomplete; \_IMP = Imperative)

Mopan (Mayan, Yukatekan subfamily) is a predicate-initial, relatively head-marking, relatively polysynthetic language of the split intransitive type (Danziger 1996). Various forms are used to introduce noun phrases:

- (1) Table 1. Mopan noun-introducers with example nouns.\*

Nouns introduced by <i>ix</i>		Nouns introduced by <i>aj</i>		Nouns introduced by <i>a</i>	
<i>ix ch'up</i>	woman	<i>aj ma'ätan</i>	widower	<i>a winik</i>	man
<i>ix kolool</i>	partridge	<i>aj much</i>	toad	<i>a yuk</i>	antelope
<i>ix tz'unu'un</i>	hummingbird	<i>aj woyotz</i>	anteater	<i>a k'änb'ul</i>	pheasant
<i>ix ib'</i>	black bean	<i>aj kuul</i>	palm heart	<i>a p'uul</i>	jug

\*Orthography of the Academia de las Lenguas Mayas de Guatemala (England and Elliott 1990).

Number marking is optional. The three forms are in complementary distribution in pre-nominal contexts, but elsewhere they differ in distribution: while the MASC {aj} and FEM {ix} have identical syntactic privileges of occurrence, {a} is very differently distributed (see below). We therefore refer to the masc. and fem. together as “gender markers” (GM) and we use the term “article” (ART) for {a}. All three forms fulfill Grinevald’s (2004:1021) definition of Noun Classifiers, but unlike most Noun Classifiers, they are not used for reference tracking (see Aikhenvald 2000; 329; Contini-Morava & Kilarski in prep); unlike most Determiners they do not indicate definiteness (Ghomeshi et al. 2009). Instead, they help specify the status of discourse referents as entities rather than as predicates (cf. Jacobsen 1979, Jelinek 1995). They are also used to indicate the position of referents on an agency/animacy continuum, allowing for the indication of natural gender when that is deemed useful.

The gender markers can be productively added to Active Intransitive verb stems to render the Agent of the action (see e.g. Ulrich, Ulrich and Peck 1978). (A transitive verb must first be intransitivized through object-incorporation, see *puut-ja'* ‘water-draw’ in example (2)). Gender is not specified in the person-marking pronouns, so using a masc. or fem. GM to render the Agent of an Active Intransitive helps provide information about the natural gender of sentence participants. For ex. in (2), the speakers have instructed a young woman to go and fetch water, and they have told her husband to go and chop wood. They then remark:

- (2) Using agentivity to add gender. [ED data]

<i>Tan-Ø</i>	<i>xa'ak-oo'</i>	<i>u</i>	<i>meyaj</i>	<i>kut'an-oo'</i> .
Be_ongoing-3B	DISC-3B_PL	3A	work	QUOT-3B_PL
<i>Tan-Ø</i>	<i>ix</i>	<i>puut-ja'a.</i>		
Be_ongoing-3B	FEM	draw-water-ECHO		
<i>Tan-Ø</i>	<i>aj</i>	<i>si'-i.</i>		
Be_ongoing-3B	MASC	chop_firewood-ECHO		

“So they’re busy working”, they said. “**Mistress water-drawer** is busy. **Mister woodchopper** is busy.”

The ART may be omitted in some syntactic contexts while the GMs remain in place. For example, in (3) *kolool* ‘partridge’ is a fem. noun and all the others are not gendered, i.e. would normally occur with the ART. Here the GM is retained whereas the ART is omitted before the names of the birds and retained before the names of the mammals that are more desirable as game. Note that all the nouns in the list are equally indefinite and non-referential.

(3) Discourse salience, not indefiniteness, motivates dropping ART but not GM. [ED data]

<i>Ix</i>	<i>kolool,</i>	<i>k’ānb’ul,</i>	<i>kox</i>	<i>etel</i>	<i>a</i>	<i>kek’enche’</i>
FEM	partridge	pheasant	cojolito (game bird)	with	ART	wild pig
<i>etel</i>	<i>a</i>	<i>yuk-u</i>	<i>le’ek-∅</i>	<i>kuchi</i>	<i>in</i>	<i>k’ati</i>
with	ART	antelope-ECHO	Be_3EMPH-3B	DISC	1A	want
<i>tz’on-oo’</i>		<i>pere</i>	<i>ma’</i>	<i>yan-∅</i>	<i>kut’an</i>	
shoot-3B_PL		but	NEG	exist-3B	QUOT_3	

“**Partridge**, pheasant, cojolito [type of game bird], and **wild pig**, and **antelope**, those are what I really want to hunt, but they aren’t there!” he said.’

The ART also does not encode “neuter” gender. (4) is from a story in which a man marries a toad-woman. In Mopan the word *much* ‘toad’ is classified masc. and routinely appears with the masc. GM {aj} (see e.g. (12) below). When referring to the toad-woman however, there is a contradiction between the grammatical gender of ‘toad’ and the natural gender of the referent, resolved in (4) by introducing *much* ‘toad’ with the ART and not with the masc. GM. If {a} ART encoded ‘neuter’ gender semantics, it would have been as inappropriate as was the masc. {aj} for representing the natural gender of the woman-toad.

(4) ART for toad-woman, (‘toad’ is normally masculine). [ED data]

<i>Te’i</i>	<i>ka’</i>	<i>uchi</i>	<i>u</i>	<i>t’an</i>	<i>a</i>	<i>much-u</i>
there	again	AOR	3A	speak	ART	toad-ECHO

‘There **the toad** spoke again.’

Perhaps the major distributional difference between the ART and the GMs is that the ART can serve to introduce discourse elements that translate into English as relative clauses. These include demonstratives, formed from the ART plus a deictic element (Danziger 1994):

(5) ART used to introduce a relative clause. [Ulrich & Ulrich 1982:54.48]

<i>Ket-∅</i>	<i>u</i>	<i>chäk-äl</i>	<i>a</i>	<i>chuuk</i>	<i>etel</i>	<i>a</i>	<i>kum-u</i>
Be_equal-3	3A	red-NOM	ART	charcoal	with	ART	pot
<i>wa</i>	<i>p’uul</i>	<i>wa</i>	<i>jaay</i>	<i>a</i>	<i>walak-oo’</i>	<i>u</i>	<i>chuw-ik-∅-i</i>
or	jug	or	dish	ART	HABIT-3B_PL	3A	burn-TR_INC-3B-ECHO

‘The redness of the coals was the same with pots, or jugs, or dishes **that they used to fire.**’

Use of the ART instead of a GM can also help to avoid or demote construals of agency. In (6) the gender-marker is used to derive the Agent of an Active intransitive stem (see also (2)), whereas in (7) the ART with the same Active intrans. stem denotes the nominalized action itself (or in other cases the ‘cognate object’ of the action e.g. *sing/song*):

(6) Use of GM to derive Agent of Active Intransitive. [ED Data]

<i>K’as-aj-oo’</i>	<i>aj</i>	<i>pax-a</i>
Be_bad-INCH-3B_PL	MASC	play_music-ECHO

‘**Musicians** have become evil.’

(7) Use of ART to derive Action of Active Intransitive [ED Data]

<i>B'aal-o</i>	<i>ilik</i>	<i>u</i>	<i>peek</i>	<b>a</b>	<b>pax</b>	<i>jun-tuul</i>
DX_MAN-3	INT	3A	noise	ART	play_music	one-ANIM_CL
<i>a</i>	<i>winik</i>	<i>yok'olja'</i>				
ART	man	upstream				

'It sounds just like **the music** of another man upstream'

Ex. (8) shows creative use of a GM to render enhanced animacy of unexpected objects: three walking-sticks that magically move on their own to help a hunter carry some meat:

(8) Creative use of gender marker to suggest agency. [ED Data]

<i>Ox-tuul-oo'</i>	<b>aj</b>	<b>kuch-b'äk'</b>	<i>a</i>	<i>xoolte'</i>
Three-CL_ANIM-3B_PL	MASC	carry-meat	ART	walking stick
<i>leek-oo'</i>			<i>a</i>	<i>b'e'</i>
be_3EMPH-3B_PL			ART	DX_TEXT

'Those walking sticks we've been talking about were [=acted as] three (living) **meat-carriermen**.'

Mopan fits many of the specifications of "omnipredicativity" (Launey 1994): apparent nouns and adjectives may be inflected as predicates without the addition of derivational morphology. Such inflection is like that of stative predicates, and uses the set of person-marking affixes that are also used to mark the Undergoer of a transitive action (cf. Danziger 1996). The third person non-plural of the B person-marker series is normally realized as zero. There is no overt copula, so bare nominals are phonologically indistinguishable from nominal predications (see 9-11):

(9) Omnipredicativity. [ED data]

<i>Inchech-e</i>	<i>tan</i>	<i>in</i>	<i>wil-ik-ech.</i>	<b>Winik-ech.</b>
2EMPH-ECHO	DUR	1A	see-TR_COMPL-2B	Man-2B

'As for you, I am looking at you. **You're (a) man.**'

(10) **winik-Ø**  
man-3B

**It's/ he's (a) man**

(11) **winik**  
man

**(a) man**

Thus, many lexical roots can function either as predicate or argument (Lois and Vapnarsky 2006, Danziger 2008), leading to potential ambiguity as to how a given word is to be interpreted. Presence of a GM or ART suggests that the following word or phrase is to be interpreted as an entity, often the discourse argument of the associated predicate, e.g. *aj much-u* 'masc. toad' in (12) (see similar arguments for Salishan languages, Jacobsen 1979, going back to Sapir & Swadesh 1939). In (13) the word 'toad' without determiner is understood as a predicate.

(12) Masculine toad. [Ulrich and Ulrich 1982:66.1]

<i>Bueno</i>	<i>te'ij-i</i>	<i>t-u-wich</i>	<i>karetera</i>	
DISC	there-ECHO	Prep-3A-face	highway	
<i>yan-Ø</i>	<i>b'in</i>	<i>jun tuul</i>	<b>aj</b>	<b>much-u</b>
exist-3B	HEARSAY	one CL_ANIM	MASC	toad-ECHO

'Well, there on the highway there was **a toad**.'

(13) Predicative toad. [ED data]

Pues yalt-e'-Ø kut'an yalt-e' a jok'-s-en  
 then try-TR\_IMP QUOT-3 try-TR\_IMP 2A exit-CAUS-1B  
 ix ch'up a b'e' pero **much-Ø**  
 FEM woman ART DX\_TEXT but be\_toad-3B

“Just try it” she said, “Try to get me out”, (said) that woman – but **she was a toad.**’

In the Mopan system of noun classification, the classic functions of reference tracking are not discernible, but another function, that of entitization, is paramount. Within the system, the gender-markers and the article have very different privileges of occurrence, but work together to divide semantic territory first along an axis of agentivity/animacy, and second along an axis of natural gender, otherwise absent in the grammar of the language. It is also possible that relative clauses in Mopan (as perhaps elsewhere, e.g. Tibeto-Burman, see Noonan 1997; DeLancey 2002) are formed through a process of entitization, and that this process takes place through use of a form that also participates contrastively with a system of noun classification.

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