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Bare nouns across time and the determiner systems

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Definiteness across domains: Bare nouns. University of Wuppertal, March 4–6, 2023

Intro	Data landscape	Subject vs. Object	Singular vs. Plural	Determiner Type	Lexicons and readings
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OUTLINE

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Data landscape

Subject vs. Object

Singular vs. Plural

Determiner Type





INTRO: A DIACHRONIC WINDOW INTO BNS

Given: In English, the quantitative signature of bare nouns (dramatically) changes across time.

Singular vs. Plural

Determiner Type

Goals:

Data landscape

Intro

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• Track the historical decrease in BNs:

Subject vs. Object

- in relation to syntagmatic factors: syntactic function, nominal number & nominal type;
- in relation to paradigmatic factors: competition with various determiners.
- Project the findings onto the theory of BNs and determiner systems.







DATA SOURCES

A collection of historical treebanks of English:

- The York-Toronto-Helsinki Parsed Corpus of Old English Prose (YCOE)
- The Penn-Helsinki Parsed Corpus of Middle English, second edition (PPCME2)
- The Penn-Helsinki Parsed Corpus of Early Modern English (PPCEME)
- The Penn Parsed Corpus of Modern British English, second edition (PPCMBE2)
- ► Penn-BFM Parsed Corpus of Historical French (PPCHF)







DATA FILTERING

Excluded:

- Quantifiers incompatible with articles in Modern English (every, each etc.);
- ► NPs with possessives (either nominal or pronominal);
- NPs in non-finite clauses;
- ▶ The noun *man* because of its overwhelming frequency.¹

¹On its most frequent spelling.





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Subject vs. Object

Singular vs. Plural

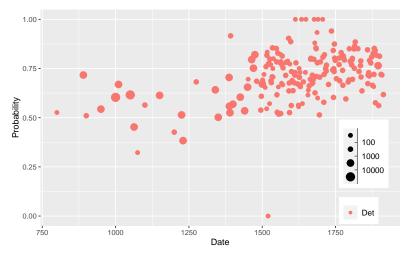
Determiner Type





Intro	Data landscape	Subject vs. Object	Singular vs. Plural	Determiner Type	Lexicons and readings
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SETTING THE STAGE: GENERAL DISTRIBUTION



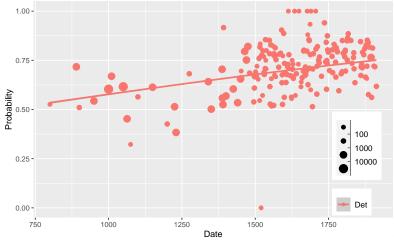




Intro	Data landscape	Subject vs. Object	Singular vs. Plural	Determiner Type	Lexicons and readings
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SETTING THE STAGE: GENERAL TREND

 $P(\text{Det} = yes | \text{Date} = d) = \frac{e^{\alpha + \beta * Date}}{1 + e^{\alpha + \beta * Date}} : \alpha = -0.556^{***} \text{ and } \beta = 0.0008^{***}.$







Intro 0000	Data landscape 000	Subject vs. Object ●○	Singular vs. Plural 000	Determiner Type 0000	Lexicons and readings

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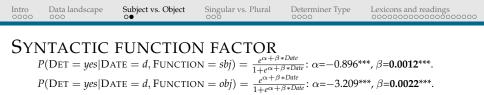
Subject vs. Object

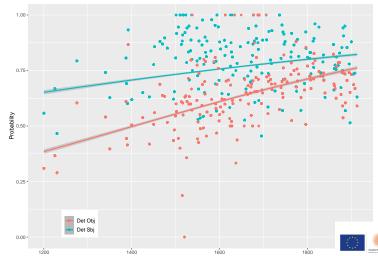
Singular vs. Plural

Determiner Type









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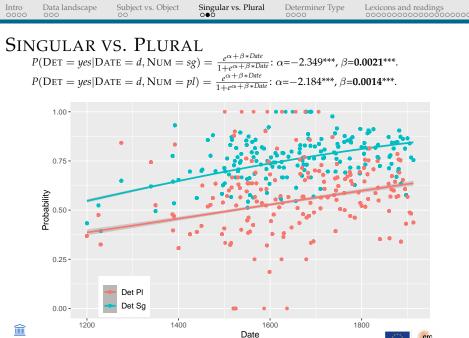
Subject vs. Object

Singular vs. Plural

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Intro Data landscape Subject vs. Object Singular vs. Plural Determiner Type Lexicons and readings

Interim discussion I: Syntactic function & number

Generalization 1: The change (disappearance of bare nouns) spreads **faster with objects than with subjects**. Despite the initial "disadvantage", the objects "catch up".

Generalization 2: The change (disappearance of bare nouns) spreads **faster with singulars than with plurals**.

The relative acceleration, in both cases, can arguably be related to the timing of the spread of different types of determiners and the interaction between the types of determiners and function & number parameters.





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DETERMINER TYPE:

Classification:

- ► *def*: all D that begin with a consonant (þ, ð, *t*, *d*, *s*, *or c*.)
- ▶ *indef*: all D that begin with an *a* or *e* or (any form of) *one*.²

► bare

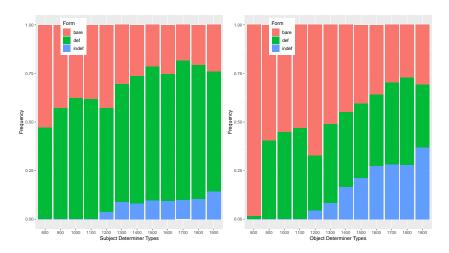
²The annotation (almost always) distinguishes between one as a numeral and as a determiner.





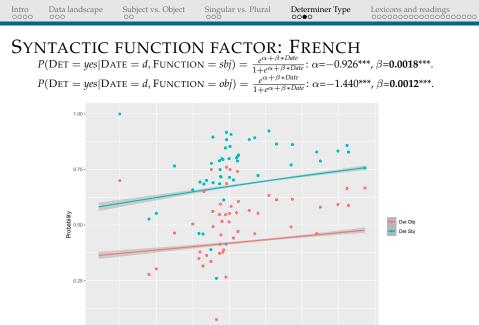
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DETERMINER TYPE:









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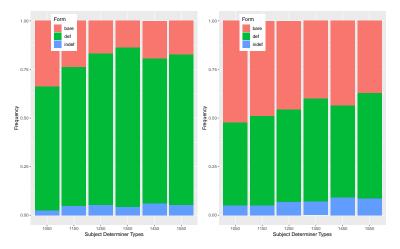
1200 Date 1400

1000

1600

Intro Data landscape Subject vs. Object Singular vs. Plural OCO

DETERMINER TYPE: FRENCH







Intro	Data landscape	Subject vs. Object	Singular vs. Plural	Determiner Type	Lexicons and readings
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Intro O000 Data landscape O00 Subject vs. Object Singular vs. Plural Oterminer Type O000 Lexicons and readings

Singular BNs as objects: the 800s, Freq > 5

#	noun	
6	ge+dyld	
7	god	
8	men	
14	menn	
7	weorc.	"work"
7	wisdom	
23	yfel	"evil"

(1) gif hwa adulfe pytt if someone dug pit

"If someone dug a pit" (ID cocura,CP:63.459.22.3317) (A retelling of Exodus 21:33-34 "If a man opens a pit, or digs a pit and does not cover it over, and an ox or a donkey falls into it, the owner of the pit shall make restitutior,"²





²Source: https://bible.knowing-jesus.com/topics/Pits

Singular BNs as objects: the 900s, Freq > 10

#	noun	
15	anwald	"jurisdiction"
11	betonican	"a betony"
32	blod	-
13	drenc	"a drink"
11	eced	"vinegar"
22	fird	"an army"
20	fri+d	"peace"
12	god	•
13	men	
11	pipor	
14	sealt	
15	So+d	"truth"
15	w+ater	
26	yfel	"evil"

 (2) Darius fird gegaderode Darius army gathered
"Darius gathered together an army/a force" (coorosiu,Or_3:9.69.9.1346)





Intro Data landscape Subject vs. Object Singular vs. Plural Determiner Type Lexicons and readings

Singular BNs as objects: the 900s, Freq > 10

(3) ne magon we næafre gereccan done yflan mon clæanne not may we never tell the/that evil man pure & untwifealdne, don ma de we magon hatan obbe and undivided, that more rel we may call or habban deadne mon for cwucone. have dead man for alive "Nor may we ever account the evil man pure and undivided, any more than we may call or hold a dead man for a live one."³(coboeth,Bo:36.109.25.2151)

³Translation from Discenza (2012, 42).





Intro Octo Data landscape Subject vs. Object Singular vs. Plural Determiner Type Lexicons and readings

Singular BNs as objects: the 1000s, Freq > 30

#	noun	
44	dea+d	
33	fri+d	"peace"
56	god	
45	hlaf	"bread"
46	lac	"an offering"
77	lif	"life"
42	man	
47	martyrdom	
65	Men	
36	mynster	"monastery"
49	riht	"a right"
45	sunu	"a son"
42	unriht	"a sin"
42	w+astm	"a fruit"
53	W+ater	
35	weorc	"work"
62	wif	"a woman"
38	win	"wine"
43	wundra	"a miracle"
64	yfel	"evil"





Intro Data landscape Subject vs. Object Singular vs. Plural Determiner Type Lexicons and readings

Singular BNs as objects: 1100s, Freq > 5

#	noun	
6	a+das	
11	bearn	"a child"
7	dea+d	
6	feoh	"money"
11	fri+d	
6	gafol	"a tax"
10	gislas	"a hostage"
8	god	-
7	here	"an army"
6	lif	"life"
10	man	
16	yfel	"evil"
-		





Intro Data landscape Subject vs. Object Singular vs. Plural Determiner Type Lexicons and readings

Singular BNs as objects: 1100s, Freq > 5

(4) He him nalde neowne biscop hadian he him not.want new bishop ordain "He didn't want to ordain him as a new bishop."

(cochad,LS_3_[Chad]:39.26)





Subject vs. Object Singular vs. Plural

Determiner Type

Lexicons and readings

Singular BNs as objects: 1200s, Freq > 10

noun				
+ting				
blisse		#	noun	
blod		13	mihte	"power"
child		18	Mon	"man"
dea+d		14	pine	"pain"
god		14	so+d	"truth"
leaue		13	sunne	"sun"
lif	"life"	14	witt	
luue	"love"	11	word	
man				
mann				
	+ting blisse blod child dea+d god leaue lif luue man	+ting blisse blod child dea+d god leaue lif "life" luue "love" man	+ting blisse # blod 13 child 18 dea+d 14 god 14 leaue 13 lif "life" 14 luue "love" 11 man	+ting blisse # noun blod 13 mihte child 18 Mon dea+d 14 pine god 14 so+d leaue 13 sunne lif "life" 14 witt luue "love" 11 word man

(5) he sunne atend he sun kindled "(that) he kindled the sun"

Data landscape

 (6) he luue+d us mare +tenne animoder child. he loves us more than any.mother child
"he loves us more than any mother loves her child" (CMANCRIW-2,II.290.749)





Intro Data landscape Subject vs. Object Singular vs. Plural Determiner Type Lexicons and readings

Singular BNs as objects: 1300s, Freq > 10

#	noun	#	noun
12	+ting	12	nede
15	conseil	15	pees
15	grace	13	penaunce
15	ĥarm	13	power
17	lijf	14	self
18	MAN	32	synne
11	Merci	11	werre
15	mercy	18	wickednes
19	Mesure	20	witnessyng
11	mete	12	ydolatrie
14	Mon	17	yuel





Intro Octo Data landscape Subject vs. Object Singular vs. Plural Determiner Type Lexicons and readings

Singular BNs as objects: 1400s, Freq > 10

	#	noun
noun	11	mede
bataile	47	Mercy
charite	11	mervayle
cher	19	mete
drede	11	mynde
fruyt	47	nede
good	15	pees
Grace	23	power
harm	11	reste
homage	19	sege
Ioye	16	sorow
joy	18	sorwe
leue	12	soth
lif	34	synne
lyf	12	werre
Man	19	WYN
	12	yeme
	bataile charite cher drede fruyt good Grace harm homage Ioye joy leue lif lyf	noun 11 bataile 47 charite 11 cher 19 drede 11 fruyt 47 good 15 Grace 23 harm 11 homage 19 Ioye 16 joy 18 leue 12 lif 34 lyf 12 Man 19





Singular BNs as objects: 1500s, Freq > 10

#			
	noun	#	noun
11	Answer		
19	good	24	Power
	0	17	selfe
21	grace	16	Treason
13	Masse		
40	moret	14	tyme
	mercy	17	Vsurie
12	Money	12	
13	nede		water
		11	Witness
15	Occasion	13	word
25	Order		

- (7) The duke Maurice made **answere** to th'emperour, that if the councel were not fre he would not come at it. (EDWARD-E1-P2.292.30)
- (8) and receyued from him **answere** of dirision, as affermyth the Englysshe booke. (FABYAN-E1-P2,578.118)





Singular BNs as objects: 1600s, Freq > 10

#	noun		#	noun
14	Care	10		noun
6	Fire	10	Power	
-		7	Reason	
10	Good	7	self	
7	hold	7		
12	leave	•	selfe	
9		7	time	
-	Money	8	use	
18	notice	11	water	
7	occasion		water	
6	order	6	way	
-		12	word	
6	Part			





Intro Data landscape Subject vs. Object Singular vs. Plural Determiner Type Lexicons and readings

Singular BNs as objects: 1700s, Freq > 10

#	noun
26	Answer
30	Care
23	Leave
38	Life
28	Notice
19	Occasion
12	Room
15	Sail
11	Sense
21	Sight
17	Tea
14	use
17	witness

(9)

and apply it when you have occasion. (ALBIN-1736,4.77)





Singular BNs as objects: 1800s, Freq > 10

#	noun
12	care
14	good
12	hold
20	life
18	Notice
16	Part
40	place
15	Power
11	strength
11	time
22	witness





 Intro
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Singular BNs as objects: 1900s, Freq > 1

noun
attention
corn
criticism
hold
part
place
produce
time
work





SINGULAR BNS AS SUBJECTS

Data landscape

Subject vs. Object

 (10) swa swa scearp sweord +da wunde tosceat on tu so as sharp sword the/that wound cuts on you
"just as a sharp sword cuts this wound on you" the 800s (cocura,CP:60.453.14.3268)

Singular vs. Plural

Determiner Type

- swa swa bearneacen wif acen+d bearn so as pregnant woman brings.forth child
 "just as a pregnant woman brings forth a child" the 900s (coboeth,Bo:31.70.10.1306)
- (12) cyning beo unrihtwis king was unjust
 "the king was unjust" the 1000s (coaelive,+ALS[Pr_Moses]:123.2933)
- (13) and werede +te croune oppon his heuede, as neuer kyng dede bifore; and wore the/that crown upon his head as never king did before the 1400s (CMBRUT3,23.699)
- (14) For tyme is maad for man, and not man for tyme. the 1400s (CMCLOUD,20.117)
- (15) We schal wyte +tat **myracle of Crist** was wroht here. **the 1400s** (CMWYCSER,362.2415)



for thou haste done the moste worshyp that ever ded **knyght** in tl **the 1400s** (CMMALORY,196.2977)



SINGULAR BNS AS SUBJECTS

- (17) If ever **war** can be justified, surely the present is the case. (WOLLASTON-1793,23.181)
- (18) as if **old age** had brought a disposition to cling to the remnant of the once inconveniently large family (YONGE-1865,184.627)
- (19) and freedom is everything. (WILDE-1895,43.113)
- (20) Although both **farmer** and **gardener** have to practise the same principles of cultivation for outdoor crops, the gardener, even with these, will devote far more attention to detail, (WEATHERS-1913,1,1.21)





INSTEAD OF ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSIONS I

Subject vs. Object

If we adhere to a version of blocking principle (in G. Chierchia's formulation, or as Heim's Maximize Presupposition!), we must conclude that

Singular vs. Plural

Determiner Type

- ► the competition is "contained" within one of the competing grammatical options (in the sense of Kroch (1989)).
- otherwise, we would expect an "overnight" (near) disappearance of (singular) BNs

	Grammar no-det	Grammar det
def presupposition is not satisfied	bare	def indef
det presupposition is satisfied	bare	det def



Data landscape



Intro Data landscape Subject vs. Object Singular vs. Plural Determiner Type Lexicons and readings

INSTEAD OF ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSIONS II

More generally, diachronic quantitative data emerges as one more – in addition to synchronic distribution patterns – source of falsifiability for the theory of nominal (non) determination.





Intro 0000	Data landscape	Subject vs. Object 00	Singular vs. Plural 000	Determiner Type 0000	Lexicons and readings
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- Martineau, France, Paul Hirschbühler, Anthony Kroch, and Yves Charles Morin. 2010. Corpus MCVF annoté syntaxiquement, (2005–2010), dirigé par France Martineau, avec Paul Hirschbühler, Anthony Kroch et Yves Charles Morin.



