

Determiner Omission in PPs

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The term "bare PP" describe a phenomenon where a determiner inside the NP complement of a PP is missing in spite of grammar rules requiring the presence of a determiner. They occur in many languages and have been dubbed an "irregular regularity". It has been claimed for languages such as German and English that a regular pattern for the distribution of the determiner cannot be identified (cf. Himmelmann 1998). In order to identify the factors which govern determiner omission and realization inside PPs, however, it is first necessary to distinguish Bare PPs (BPPs) from a broader set of Preposition-Noun combinations (PNCs). Despite their superficial similarity, we will make clear that the cases in (1-2) do not belong to BPPs, while the once in (3-5) do – which has nothing to do with the former being taken from English and the latter from German.

(1) He drove *by bus*.

(2) He is *in jail*.

(3) Der Müll darf die Grenze nur noch *mit Sondergenehmigung* passieren.
the junk may the frontier only with special.permit cross
The junk may cross the border only if a special permit is provided.

(4) Auf dem sechsten Platz landet Deutschland, *an dreizehnter Stelle* findet sich Großbritannien.
at the sixth position lands Germany on thirteenth place is.located UK
Germany ended in sixth position, Great Britain in thirteenth.

(5) Schweizer Truppen marschierten durch Tunnel *über deutsches Gebiet*.
Swiss troops marched through tunnels over German territory
Swiss troupes marched through tunnels through German territory.

The analysis will show that a combination of methods from theoretical and computational linguistics, where corpus data are automatically and manually annotated with pertinent linguistic information including morphology, syntax, and semantics and fed into Generalized Linear Mixed Models (GLMMs) allow the construction of classifiers, which again can be turned into grammar rules accounting for the realization or omission of the determiner. In contrast to recently popular black box models in machine learning, are particularly suitable to unearth the relevant linguistic properties of the construction.

The 07.12.2016 is Noam Chomsky's 88th birthday, and it is thus a proper occasion to discuss whether the analysis of BPPs should be called a 'discovery procedure' in the sense of Chomsky (1957).