



Multiple Determiners in Magahi: A Case Beyond Agreement

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Abstract: The paper proposes that Magahi, a modern Indo-Aryan language, presents the phenomenon of multiple determiners in the syntax of modification and argues that the phenomenon is not a simple case of agreement in definiteness in the noun phrase whereby the additional determiner carries a similar semantic feature. I present examples that contest the possibility of it as a case of concord or agree. For the semantic motivation of the phenomenon, following Plank (2003) & Kumar (2020), the paper claims that the definite determiner /-wa/ in Magahi is not an exclusively dedicated definiteness morpheme, and therefore, the language needs an additional linguistic element. I claim that the additional determiner weakens the definiteness of the definite determiner /-wa/, creating a projection problem in the overall referentiality of the NP. By further describing the individual semantics of the determiner on the noun and the adjective, the paper claims that the determiner on the adjective exudes the semantics of specificity that can co-occur with the numeral. However, the determiner on the noun has the semantics of familiarity or identifiability. The paper further provides an exhaustive account of semantic and structural description and motivation of the phenomenon.

Keywords: Multiple determiners, Definiteness, Agreement, Noun phrase, Indo-Aryan, Magahi.

About the Author



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1. Introduction

The treatment of multiple determiners/definiteness spreading in the literature is indistinct due to the lack of exhaustive typological work on the phenomenon (Alexiadou, 2014). The problem is also due to the lack of unanimously agreed notions of definiteness and specificity (Ihsane & Puskas, 2001). There is a lack of fixation of the semantic features of the determiner/article in the strict sense, i.e., whether it consists of the features like +/- specificity, +/- uniqueness, +/- familiarity, +/- identifiability, +/- novel, +/- presupposition, +/- focus, etc. Simpson



& Biswas (2016), in the case of Bangla, claim that there are two kinds of definiteness in Bangla which are achieved through different linguistic strategies. Simpson (2017) further generalizes that many languages employ two strategies for two different kinds of definiteness; the bare noun and the bare classifier to denote the semantics of uniqueness and anaphoric reference, respectively. The semantics of the definite marked noun exudes the semantics of familiarity/identifiability/anaphoric reference (Lyons, 1999).

The basic idea behind having a definite determiner is to presume the semantics of presupposition/familiarity. A definite determiner works to establish a common ground for the interlocutors to establish the fact that the object in question must be referentially established. Once the common ground is established by a definite determiner, it is accessed by the interlocutors and, therefore, the identification of the object is not denied. However, once the language presents an additional determiner in a nominal phrase, it brings complexities on the levels of semantics, syntactic and pragmatics.

Considering the basic fabrication of the nominal phrase, an NP usually requires a determiner (in/definite) for grounding the noun (referentially) in a discourse (also see Mackenzie, 2019 for the diachronic account of Spanish 'from multiple determiners to just one'). In its structural manifestation, the determiner can either be overt or covert, depending upon the kinds of languages (See Longobardi, 1994 & Chierchia, 1998). Longobardi (1994) argues that argumenthood is the product of the syntactic presence of the determiner. The noun phrase, according to this perspective, is seen and termed as a determiner phrase (DP). The understanding and the pattern are drawn based on the structural similarity between NP and IP or CP. Additionally, apart from the structural similarities that we notice in the case of NP and VP (Abney, 1987; Szabolsci, 1984; 1987; Horrocks & Stavrou, 1987), there are semantic motivations as well. Higginbotham (1985) argued that a noun as part of its lexical entry has an open position and therefore has multiple references or no reference. The open position must be bound for the noun to participate in the conversational domain. This can be achieved through various linguistic categories like determiner, classifier, demonstrative, possessive, etc. However, the idea doesn't accommodate the possibility of having two determiners for the single NP projection. The presence of more than one determiner in the single NP has commonly been known as the phenomenon of multiple determiners, definiteness spreading, and double definiteness in the literature (Alexiadou, 2014).

The multiple occurrences of the determiner have raised the question about the semantic features of the definiteness of the definite determiner. Various researches indicate the fact that what is 'definite' is not definite (Lyons, 1999; Barker, 2004; Gundel *et al.*, 1993; Sproat & Shih, 1991 among others). The paper builds further on this line of inquiry to understand the case of multiple determiners with the novel data, Magahi.

The phenomenon of definiteness spreading can be defined as the presence of more than one determiner or determiner-like elements in a single noun phrase. This phenomenon is well attested in languages like Greek, Hebrew, Albanian, Aromanian, Romanian, Scandinavian, etc. (Alexiadou, 2014). The phenomenon is mostly found in the syntax of modification (Plank, 2003; Campos & Stavrou, 2004; Alexiadou, 2014, *etc.*). In some languages, it is also found in the case of superlative construction (Kayne 2004, in the case of French; mentioned in Alexiadou, 2014). The syntactic structure of multiple determiners in the case of Greek is [Det-N+ Det-Adj.+ Det-Adj.]. There can be more than one adjective in a single nominal string (Alexiadou & Wilder, 1998). However, in the case of Greek, the additional determiner is mandatory only when adjectives follow nouns.

(1) To vivlio to kokkino to megalo
the book the red the big

The big red book. Greek (Alexiadou, 2014:19)

(2) u ləl-ka kurṭ-wa kene həi Magahi
that.DEM red-DEFshirt-DEF where be.PRS
Where is my red shirt.

The paper presents similar syntactic instances in the Magahi language (2). Moreover, it critically engages with the explanations offered in the literature for the phenomenon. Taking a closer look at the semantics of definiteness and definite description and the available syntactic and semantic motivations for the phenomenon, the article explores the possibilities that can be endorsed to explain the phenomenon in the concerned language. The



article borrows its core understanding regarding the anatomy of the noun from the linguists and philosophers like Tylor (2002), Higginbotham (1985), Chierchia (1998), Julien (2005), Borer (2005), Abney (1987) among others. Drawing from the basic proposition that a noun needs referentiality, I focused on the legitimacy and semantics of the determiner from the perspective of the requirement and presence of double determiners in the nominal phrase. The paper examines whether such a phenomenon can be understood as a case of agreement whereby the adjective agrees with the noun in definiteness along with other nominal features like gender and number. It further explores and argues that the presence of the additional determiner presents the projection problem whereby it creates the possibility of the non-existent or weak reading of the 'uniqueness' or 'familiarity' feature of the definite determiner.

The paper, following Plank (2003), has tried to see the semantic and structural motivation for the additional determiner. The lack of a dedicated definiteness marker might facilitate the occurrence of multiple determiners. In establishing this argument, the paper borrows the analysis of the /-wa/ particle from Kumar (2018, 2020) whereby he proposes that definite determiner /-wa/ must be seen as a 'bare classifier'.¹ This terminology justifies the particle's overall functional role in the language.

The structure of the paper is as follows: section 2 discusses the basic facts about the language, i.e., its nominal structure, definite and novel reading of the noun, the syntactic position of the adjective, etc. Section 3 explores the possible conflation within the NP and its role in the explanation of the phenomenon; the presence of the marked adjective in the predicative position is a rare phenomenon in the typology of multiple determiners. Section 4 describes the agreement in NP beyond the definiteness, i.e., in gender, number and person. It explores the possibility of 'agreement' as the explanation of the phenomenon and concludes that the language does not employ agreement in the case of definiteness. Section 5 further works to find out the individual semantics of the determiners, and it is claimed that the two differ in semantic feature attribution. The section also works to provide the possible semantic motivation for the phenomenon.

2. Noun in Magahi

A brief background of the language is needed to set the tone right. The language belongs to the Modern Indo-Aryan languages, primarily spoken in the southern part of the river Ganga, Bihar, India. The language is interesting for its multiple agreement system in the verbal domain. However, the nominal structure and its semantic are not unnoticed domains. Few scholars have tried to understand the syntax and semantics of the NP.

Magahi is politically regarded as the dialect of Hindi, the officially recognized language of the province, Bihar, India. Genetically, Hindi and Magahi both share the common parent language, Sanskrit. Grierson (1903) identified Magahi, Bhojpuri and Maithili as Bihari languages. Languages of Bihar have been the subject of interest for its overall agreement system. The phenomenon of a multiple agreement system has been described and analysed by Yadav (1996) and Bhattacharya (2016). Grierson (1903) and Aryani (1965) have deliberated on the nominal form and function of Magahi.

- (3) tu kiṭəb-wa kene rəkʰ ɖelhi he
 you book-DD where kept give.2nd be
 Where have you kept the book.
- (4) kuḍriya babu kene rəkʰəṭʰin he
 spade-DD father where kept.3H be
 Where has father kept the spade?
- (5) ʈor ɣhər-wame ego sāp ɣhusləu he əbʰi
 your home-DD in.PP one.CL snake enter.2 be now
 A snake has entered your home right now.
- (6) gaye ego ɣhrelu jənavər hovə həi
 cow one.CL domestic animal happen be
 The cow is a domestic animal.

¹The idea is developed based on the Cheng & Sybesma (1999) analysis of Cantonese classifier. Also, Simpson (2016, 2017) discussed the semantics of the bare classifier in different languages including Bangla, a sister language of Magahi.



Grierson (1903) first noticed that there are three forms of the noun in Magahi and Bhojpuri, however, he has not deliberated anything on the semantic import of different forms. Later, in 1965, Aryani produced a grammar of Magahi where he has discussed the different forms of the noun. He has analysed the semantics of these affixes as redundant and claimed that these affixes are used for phonological reasons. Later, Verma (2003) describes the semantics of particle /-wa/ as a definite determiner. She says that the translation (when translated into English) of the marked noun implies some sort of definiteness.

The objects in the above examples (3, 4 & 5) are definite. The interlocutors are aware of the particular 'book, spade, and house'. Examples (5) and (6) are of particular interest. In (5), the object 'ghər-wa' (house) shares the common shared experiences of the interlocutors. However, 'sāp' (snake) is unmarked, since it has appeared for the first time in the shared cognition of the interlocutors. Similarly, in (6), the subject is unmarked, i.e., bare. If the bare noun is in the subject position, it yields generic or kind reading, and if it is in the object position, or lexically governed position (Longobardi, 1998), it exudes the semantics of specific indefinite.²

The basic idea is that the definite determiner establishes a common ground where the interlocutors access the established information. This activation is prompted by linguistic categories like definite determiner /-wa/ in Magahi, 'the' in English, and classifier '-ta' in Bangla and Oriya. Following Higginbotham (1985), the open position of the lexical item (noun) is taken care of by either determiner or classifier; thus, providing referentiality to the noun. As per the syntactic and semantic requirement, an NP usually has one referential index. Now, the subsequent questions that interest the language enthusiasts are: why do some languages allow the double presence of the determiner,³ what are the possible structures where the multiple determiners are seen, do the languages which allow such structures are related in some ways, do double or multiple presences of the definite determiner bring any change in the interpretational value of the nominal, and what could be the possible syntactic and semantic motivations for the presence of the extra determiner?

The paper is an effort to probe the relevance as well as explanations of some of these questions. At this juncture, we are going to see how Magahi can be considered as the language that allows multiple determiners. Once we consider that the definite determiner /-wa/ provides the semantics of referentiality, it can be seen how Magahi allows the simultaneous presence of the categories that are definite in the single NP.

In Magahi, when a noun participates in a discourse, it comes with a functional suffix, the definite determiner /-wa/. Similarly, when an adjective comes to modify the noun in the attributive position, it is marked with a bound morpheme which is believed to have the semantics of definiteness (Yadav, 1996 and Alok, 2014). The structure of multiple determiners in Magahi is [Adj. -Det. + Noun -Det.]

(7) həmmər ləl-ki kiṭəb-wa kiḡhər h-e
 i.GEN red-DD book-DD where be.PRS-1S
 Where is my red Book? [Lit. Where is my the red the book.]

In the above example, a determiner on the adjective can be noticed in addition to the one on the noun. Though the literature on Indian languages does not offer much with regard to the syntax and semantics of the additional determiner in the nominal, Yadav (1996) in the case of Maithili, notices that there are two kinds of adjectives- definite and indefinite. Indefinite adjectives are the unmarked ones (bare adjective). This observation though is only limited to Maithili (Yadav, 1996), a similar linguistic construction can be noticed in other sister languages of Maithili, i.e., Magahi and Bhojpuri.

Now, if we accept the proposition that the suffix on adjectives exudes the semantics of definiteness, the next question would be to deal with the interpretational import of the suffix in the nominal. If there is no interpretational value added to the nominal, it might be the case of an expletive determiner and/or a case of agreement. Further, in the case of agreement, we cannot simply deny the existence of the semantics of the additional

² In this work, 'kind' and 'generic' words have been used alternatively to the places where the distinction is not subject to the specificity. Notwithstanding, there is a distinction between the two concepts (Krifka, 1995) whereby specifically the 'kind' reading is subject to the predicate whereas the generic is subject to a generic operator.

³ Many languages do not allow the multiple presence of the determiner. English does not allow the double presence of definite determiner in the single noun phrase, e.g., *Marry's the cow



determiner; though, the meaning can be subsumed under a broader concept of concord. To treat such a phenomenon as an agreement is still a consideration if the additional determiner inherits the semantics and its independent existence cannot be questioned. Notwithstanding, as an expletive, it needs a proposition that can justify the loss of semantics when it occurs in a linguistic environment where similar semantics already exists. It might be the case that one linguistic particle downplays itself in the lieu of the availability of the other; for example, when a determiner co-occurs with the proper name and generic reference.

Nevertheless, what if there is an interpretational import of the particle in the nominal. What kind of semantics does it invoke in the already definite determiner-modified nominal? Once the object is referentially established, it is accessed by the interlocutors' shared cognition.

Literature favored the idea of agreement over its expletive status and the possibility of additional semantics of the determiner. The sequence of determiners has also been understood as the cluster of the case and phi-features (Stavrou, 1996). In Hebrew, the phenomenon of multiple determiners is treated as a case of agreement. Moreover, Magahi seems to be known for its multiple agreement system. Alok (2014) treated the case of marked NP (Adj.-DD + N- DD) in Magahi as a case of Agree (though he does not refer to the phenomenon as multiple determiners). The interpretational import by determiners in the NP in terms of phi-features has been discussed in the section below.

3. Adjectival definiteness and the definite noun

Surviving the semantics of both particles at both positions seems a questionable proposition if only they have similar semantic features. If they both contribute, it is reasonable to think that the proposition sets to establish prominence condition (Tsakali, 2008); however, such condition presupposes the fact that a single presence of the definite determiner might have novel reading to some extent. It might also presuppose the fact that a definite determiner on the adjective can stand on its own, standing on the nominal feature of the adjective.⁴ However, not all adjectives behave like a noun in either of their formal or functional roles. The phenomenon of multiple determiners, as it has been observed, is found in the syntax of adjectival modification in the concerned language. We must also see whether the system is obligatory and if it is what is the possible conflation that NP allows considering the additional determiner in NP/DP. Is it only possible in the case of an attributive adjective or are there other structural possibilities? Greek allows the mandatory presence of an additional determiner only when it follows the noun.

Below are some of the syntactic possibilities of the marked adjective in Magahi.

- (8) soniya-ke ləl-ka juṭ-wa kenne həi
soni-of.POSS red-DD shoe-DD where be.PRS.3NH
Where is Soni's red shoe?
- (9) ?soniya-ke lal juṭ-wa kenne həi
soni-of.POSS red shoe-DD where be.PRS.3NH
- (10) ?soniya-ke lal-ka juṭa kenne hi
soni-of.POSS red-DD shoe where be.PRS.3NH
- (11) soniya lal juṭa k'həridṭəi
soni red shoe buy.FUT.3NH
Soni will buy a red shoe.
- (12) soniya-ke juṭwa lal-(*ka) həi
soni.DD-PP shoe.DD red.DDbe.PRS
Soni's shoe is red.

⁴ Adjective as a category is not neatly defined. Many linguists have argued that the characteristic of property concept, which is the chief function of adjectives, is also expressed by either noun or verb depending on the discourse and the language. Payne (1997: 63) finds that there is no formal and functional definition of adjectives which suffice the cross-linguistic differences; he puts it in between noun and verb. Dixon (2010) tries to differentiate adjective with other syntactic categories like noun, verb, etc., and suggested four basic types of adjectives which are found in the languages. These are; (a) adjectives having similar properties as of verb, (b) adjectives having similar properties as of a noun, (c) adjectives share grammatical properties with noun and verb, and (d) adjectives have grammatical properties both different from noun and verb (Dixon, 2010: 112-113).



(13)	*okər	motəkə	həi
	His/her	thick.DD	be.PRS

If you notice the requirement of double determiners as a syntactic and semantic construct, it is only possible in the case of adjectival modification that too in the linear positioning whereby the adjective precedes the noun (see examples 8 & 12). In other instances where either the noun or the adjective is unmarked, we get infelicitous constructions (examples 9 & 10). Native speakers believe that such constructions are not completely unacceptable; however, they added that a marked noun will better suit the purpose.

It is important to understand the syntactic and semantic motivations for such constructions. The above examples illustrate the structural requirement of the presence of the determiner on the adjective. Example (9) needs explanation regarding the presence of the determiner on the noun and the absence of it on the adjective. It is not a directly acceptable proposition for many native speakers. The determiner on adjective cannot be dropped in the presence of the definite determiner on the noun. This brings us to an interesting equation where we engage with the overt presence of the determiners on both positions. The favourable account is (8) and (11); however, examples like (9) and (10) present challenges to the existing explanatory model of the phenomenon. The paper deals with this problem at a later stage. Example (12) is another interesting prospect to look at, particularly important for the school of thought which believes that the attributive adjective is not a base generated construct rather a surface realization of the reduced relative clause/ small clause. The (non)/intersective adjectives and non-allowance of determiner with adjective at the predicative position are particularly interesting for this school of thought. Magahi though usually (in most of its speech instances) does not allow the marked adjective at the predicative position, there are some possibilities where we can notice such constructions.

(14) Context- The interlocutors were flying a kite. Children use small sticks to hold the thread for the kite. Since the stick was small and one of the children was having a problem with holding the stick, he says

ləkəri, bərəkə	leṭe	həl	tə	tik	hələu
stick big.DD	take.IMPF	be	then	good	be.PRF

If you had taken the bigger stick, it would have been better.

Magahi offers the structural possibilities that can further either complicate the forwarded discussion on the explanation of the phenomenon or might provide a different slant from where we can proceed in a certain direction. This line of inquiry however is not the focus of the present paper.

The paper though keeps [Alexiadou's \(2014\)](#) spirit of respecting diversity and treating the phenomenon independently in different languages, it forwards towards seeking a common explanation that can ultimately unravel the cognitive processing of the information in the lexicon.

4. Agreement in NP/DP and multiple determiners

The motivation for the presence of the determiner /-kə-/ is the definiteness of the noun. So, if the noun is accompanied by a definite determiner, the preceding adjective needs to have a determiner. Moreover, every instance of the adjective in the attributive position possibly requires a determiner.

(15)	okər	bərə-ki	motə-ki	bəhini-ya	ailə	həi
	his	eldest.DD.F	fat-DD.F	sister-DD	came	be.PRS.NH
	His eldest fattest sister has come.					

Such a structural demand makes the explanation more complex. One can reason it as a case of agreement, considering the motivation such as psychological, or physiological need. We have examined the essentials of agreement and mulled over the possibility of whether this case can be interpreted as the true case of agreement, following concord and/or agree.

Moreover, we need to find the interpretable feature of the marker concerning the kind of agreement that they hold. The marker on adjective does not only carry the semantics of definiteness but it also has gender and number value. The marker /-kə-/ has two allomorphs /-kə/ and /ki/ and their occurrence depend upon the last



sounds of the words (adjective).⁵ We need to understand this fabric to further engage with the concept of agreement even in the case of definiteness. In (15), adjectives and nouns agree in number and gender. A number, like a gender, is an intrinsic semantic feature of the noun. In Magahi, the plural is overtly marked by the suffix /-ən/. In the case of plural noun reference, the suffix can be noticed on both the adjective and the noun. Gender is though not a neatly defined linguistic category is structurally substantiated by the last sounds of the word. So, words ending with /-a/ would be masculine and words ending with the sound /-i/ would be feminine in maximum cases (Kumar, 2018).

- (16) kəmjɔr-k-ən əḍəmi-ən ke kəhela ləile he
 weak-DD-PL man-DD-PL of why bring be.PRS.NH
 Why have you brought weak men?⁶

Gender is structurally invisible on the adjective in the case of plural reference (compare 15 and 16). The above examples presumably seem to be the case of agreement whereby the adjective agrees with the noun in number, gender, and definiteness.⁷ However, can we equate the value of the definiteness feature on par with the intrinsic semantic features of the noun like number and gender?

Unlike number and gender, definiteness is not an intrinsic semantic feature of the noun. Definiteness is not about the object's orientation with regard to its categorizations; it is more about the discourse. There are probably two motivations for the occurrence of the definite determiner in the nominal: one is pragmatic, and another is referentiality. The syntactic and semantic manifestations of the determiner have been researched by many linguists like Abney (1987), Longobardi (1994), Chierchia (1998, 2000), Higginbotham (1985), Lyons (1999), Taylor (2002) among others. Definiteness is more of a pragmatic need for successful communication. It is a linguistic tool that can be used as a code by the interlocutors for achieving an accessible communication goal. Notwithstanding, this explication of the system of definiteness is nowhere simply in confrontation with the agreement system, i.e., it still can be the part of the concord or agreement system. There is no theoretical impossibility of retaining the pragmatic information/value by various categories in a clause or a phrase. The only question that can be raised at this point is the variability in values held by the definiteness markers on the adjective and the noun. If they do not hold identical values, straightforward concord/agreement status of the definiteness spreading in these languages cannot be justified in simple terms.

An agreement, as specified in Halle & Marantz (1993), is the copying of features. Though it is not clear whether agree or agreement involves the same mechanism, the feature matching phenomenon remains intact. Agree (Chomsky, 2001) is an operation between a probe and a goal, where the probe carrying some uninterpretable and unvalued formal features looks for a goal that carries matching interpretable and valued semantic features in its c-commanded domain. The features on the goal then check off the uninterpretable features on the probe by valuing it at the level of LF. The adjective has the uninterpretable definiteness feature along with number and gender, and it must look for a goal (noun) to be interpreted. Agree eliminates the uninterpretable feature on the probe by valuing and deleting it, hence it deletes the number, gender and definiteness features (semantic) from the adjective (probe). For this design to work, there must be an active probe and goal with similar semantic features.⁸

There are supposedly two objections to this theory with the phenomenon in Magahi. There are instances where the noun in the constituent like [Adj. -ka + N -wa] lacks the overt definiteness marker, and therefore, it is difficult to have an active goal with admissible clarity in terms of having an overt representation of the definiteness feature.

- (17) pəḍiṭ-ji-ke tʃʰotka tʃʰora bəḍmas həi
 saint-H-GEN small.DD son goon be.PRS.3NH
 The youngest son of the saint is a goon.

⁵ The information regarding the gender is decoded on a number of elements in both nominal and verbal phrase in different languages. Gender is an intrinsic semantic feature of the noun which is either the subject of biological (sex) or physical (shape/size/rigidity/softness, etc.) orientation. Small size and soft objects are treated as feminine. In many languages, including Hindi, the last sound of the word also decides its gender, for example, the words ending with sound /-i/ are usually feminine.

⁶ Assimilation rules apply when the plural marker /-n/ gets attached to the marked noun e.g.,
 əḍəmi+/-wa/= əḍəmiya (+ən) = əḍəmiy-ən

⁷ In the case of the plural noun, adjective takes neutral form, i.e., masculine only.

⁸ Alok (2014) in the pursuit of understanding the agreement between the noun and the adjective proposed that 'Agree' relation exists in NP in the case of Magahi. It might be the case with number and gender; however, definiteness cannot be accounted through Agree.



(18) Context- There is a conversation happening between the son and the father. The son is asking his father to bring a big bat for him. However, he is not asking for any bat. The son is specifying the physical attributes of the bat (trying to draw attention to the one important specific attribute that he wants in the bat), and it is not the case where they have earlier seen a bat in the market and have agreed to buy it, as it is in the case of (19). The bat is not identifiable or unique or familiar in the case of (18).

papa,	e-go	bərəka	bæt	leṭe	əibə
father,	one-CLA	big.DEF	bat	bring.IMPF	come
ka					
Q.TAG					

Father, bring me a big bat, won't you!

In (17), the presence of /-ka/ on the adjective being the probe has no overt active goal where this can be valued and deleted. However, if kinship terminologies do not require an overt determiner because of the familiarity features, one can subsequently argue that the noun 'ḡhōra' (boy) carries the semantics of definiteness and therefore active to value the definiteness feature on the adjective. We still shall not be able to deny the ambiguity in the interpretation. Moreover, without an overt determiner, we have no other mechanism to find out whether the goal is active or not, hence, a crash in the derivation is the resultant. The second objection to Agree is the example (18). We can see an active probe on the adjective (/ -ka/ marker on adjective), however, the common noun /bæt/ (bat) without any overt determiner does not have the semantics of definiteness. In such a situation, the probe fails to get any overt and active goal, therefore, is not valued and deleted. Example (18) is substantial for us at this juncture due to the interpretational possibilities it offers to the determiner on the adjective. It gives a sense of the reading of indefinite specific at the outset.

In (17), we notice a bare noun modified by a determiner-marked adjective. One can argue that the noun in the case like (17) recovers the definiteness feature from the definite determiner-marked adjective. Though this assumption will not help to justify the case of Agree in the language, it substantially helps to the claim that both adjectives and nouns hold the identical semantic feature, and, therefore, the phenomenon of multiple determiners can be treated as a case of agreement in Magahi. If this is to be the case, then, in (18), we expect the common noun to recover its semantics of definiteness from the determiner-marked adjective, and thus the whole NP must be definite. Since such is not the case, there are two possibilities: firstly, numeral (without its partitive form) blocks the operation of the recoverability of definiteness from the adjective, thus, indicates the concurrence of definiteness and indefiniteness in a single noun phrase. Conceptually, such a concurrence cannot be validated, because the same object cannot be referentially established and be novel in a communication discourse. Secondly, the concurrence of conceptually two contrasting conceptions is still permeated in the presence of the definite determiner-marked adjective and the numeral if it indicates that the semantic value of the determiner on adjective is not exactly of definiteness. If this holds ground, a few things follow. The semantic interpretation of the determiner on adjective is not vacuous either in the case of the overt presence of the definite determiner on the noun, or the overt presence of the numeral in the NP. What follows up is the conclusion that the two determiners on the adjective and the noun are not the same with regard to their interpretations. If we agree with the above explanation, an agreement relation cannot be justified in the nominal for the definiteness.

However, the broader question is whether there is any semantic motivation for the presence of the marker /-ka/ on the adjective in the presence of the particle /-wa/ on the noun. In the case of a common noun, the determiner on the adjective functions as a specificity marker. In [Adj.- /-ka-/ + N- /-wa/] form, either we can settle with the understanding that marker on the adjective has vacuous semantics, or it has a specificity marker that further contributes to the overall semantics of NP. In the case it survives the specificity feature on the marked NP (N-DD), the follow-up procedure would be to engage with the unsettled discourse of definiteness of the definite determiner on the general level, and inspection of the semantics of /-wa/ in the particular case.

Linguists debated on the interpretation of adjectives based on their syntactic positioning in a phrase, clause, or sentence (Bolinger, 1967). The prenominal position renders a fleeting property to the noun compared to the post-nominal position of the adjective. Though it is observed that the phenomenon is found in the syntax of modification, in the predicative position, the adjective is unmarked in languages.



Magahi acts erratically on the question of the presence of the determiner on the predicative adjective. This behaviour though unpredictable is inconspicuous in understanding the syntax and semantics of the determiner.

(19) *həmmər sətwa ləki he
my shirt.DD red.DD be.3NH
My shirt is red.

(20) Context- On the eve of a festival, the younger brother is looking for new clothes in the box. When he picks out the red shirt, his elder brother exclaims that the red shirt belongs to him. The speaker pauses after the marked noun, and then uttered the marked adjective.

? həmmər sətwa, ləki he
my shirt.DD red.DD be.PRS.3NH
The red one is my shirt.

(21) həmmər ləl(ki) sətwa kene he
I.GEN red (DD) shirt.DDwhere be.PRS.3NH
Where is my red shirt?

Example (19) shows that the syntax of modification is not exactly the trigger since the adjective lacks a marker at the predicative position in the normal utterance unless otherwise specified. On a continuum, the language does not rigidly ask speakers to posit the determiner on the adjective in the case of the marked noun. The system is not obligatory; however, it does not mean it is optional. If a speaker is not using the determiner on the attributive adjective, there is an intentional semantic loss. Example (20) shows the deictic aspect of the marker. Its use is dominant when the object is within the eyesight of the interlocutors. Its irregularity on the adnominal position is further explored considering the sentences like (14) and (20). Additionally, it has been argued in the literature that the syntactic positions of the adjective have different semantic incorporation (Bolinger, 1967 & Levi, 1978).

One determining factor for the description of the multiple determiners' phenomenon is to see whether the determiner on the adjective has an interpretational import. If it has, we must look for a different explanation.

5. Interpreting definiteness and beyond

The explanation ensuing from (18) and (19) implies that there is an interpretable difference between the determiner on the adjective and on the noun. Further deliberation on the interpretational possibilities of the determiners is classified below

/-wə- / →

+ presupposition
+ uniqueness
+ familiarity
+ identifiability
+ disparagement
+ Nativization

/-kə- / →

-presupposition
-uniqueness
-familiarity
-identifiability
+deictic
+specificity



Distinctive features help us to understand the semantic values of the two sounds, morphemes, etc. With the feature distinction above, the idea of agreement cannot be advanced. The particle /-kə-/ does not have the semantics of presupposition as it is clear from (17), (18) and (19). In (18) & (19), we have learned that it has the semantics of specificity in a way that it acts as a deictic category. Observe the following examples

(22) Context- Father brought a few pens for his children. He kept all the pens on the table and asked one of the children to tell him which pen she wants. She responded by uttering only the marked adjective.

A. t̪orə ekərə-me-se kon-sa kələm t̪ahə həu
You.GEN. these-in-PP which-one pen want be.2

B. ləl-ki
red-DD/ the red one

The vocal response in (22b) is assisted with pointing a finger towards the object. The marked adjective cannot stand independently without a properly informed discourse. The two determiners not having similar interpretations is not a new case across languages; literature argues in the favour of a similar explanation of the phenomenon. Kolliakau (2004) argues that multiple determiners or DPs differ from single DP in receiving interpretation.⁹ As per Kolliakau's observation, multiple DPs render a more restricted and rigid reference. The understanding, however, can also be approached from a different perspective slightly contrary to Kolliakau's idea of multiple DPs. The presence of the determiner on the adjective might bring the question of novel reading of the definite determiner-marked noun to a certain extent. This phenomenon highlights the semantic weakness of the definite determiner /-wa/ in Magahi.

(23) Context- Person 'a' is sitting downstairs and working on something. Another person 'b' is taking the stair for the roof, and there is a study room on the first floor. (a and b are family members)

a. upər-se kiṭab-wa leṭe əibe ka
roof-from book-DD bring.IMPF come.2 QN
Will you bring the book from the roof?

b. kon wala?
Which one

a. piyər-ki
yellow-DD

The yellow one.

Person 'a' is asking whether 'b' can bring the book for him. Person 'b' is replying by asking which one, and then 'a' answers 'the yellow one'

In a perfect scenario, the book must be identified with the speaker and the hearer because of the use of the particle /-wa/ with the noun. It must capture the common cognitive specification, as the presumed definition of the definite determiner. However, when (23a) meets with a response like (23b), the semantic of the definite determiner /-wa/ becomes questionable to an extent. The object is familiar to the speaker but not to the hearer. Scholars like Lyons (1999) notes that there are cases of definite references in which the hearer is not completely familiar with the object. Under the notational feature of 'identifiability', it is assumed that the hearer is in a position to correctly identify the reference of the definite NP. However, the scope to license a definite determiner to NP in a position where the hearer might not be aware of the reference of the NP is still a possibility.

There is another way to understand this problem if we can extend the idea of the 'projection' problem in pragmatics. The projection problem in the case of presupposition only occurs when the meaning of some presupposition does not survive to become part of a more complex structure. To avoid such a problem, many languages, as we can argue, use the strategy of multiple determiners. This does not mean that the additional determiner on the adjective provides a similar semantic value to the NP as provided by the definite determiner on the noun. Campos & Stavrou (2004) noticed this distinction and emphasized the semantic contrast that is organised

⁹ Multiple DPs is a construct where more than one determiner in the NP works as functional heads. However, in the case of Kolliakou (2004) and others, the same determiner is seen on the adjective and the noun, thus, the interpretational effect is seen on the overall NP level.



around presupposition and focus distinction. The determiner on the noun gets presupposition and the determiner on the adjective receives focus value. Giannakidou & Stavrou (1999) observe that since a definite determiner has referentiality, the presence of two definite determiners should bring more than one referential index. However, in the concerned language, the NP has just one referential index emphasizing the different interpretational accounts of the determiners.

Plank (2003) has given a multidimensional perspective to the idea of multiple determiners. The one that appeals to the present analysis is that 'doubling (double presence of the definite determiner) is the combinational strategy for compensating the lack of special form for specific reference'. The noun determiner /-wa/ in the present case is not exclusively used for the referentiality or definiteness; however, it is its one of the chief semantic contributions in the NP. There are other functions of this determiner, as noticed by Kumar (2020). Apart from the mentioned semantic features, the article /wa/ has a lot of resembling functions of a noun classifier. Kumar (2018, 2020) has discussed its function as a classifier in a more detailed manner in the line of Cheng & Sybesma (1999).¹⁰ The information in (Kumar, 2020) clearly shows how the noun particle has many functions in the language to play, and it cannot be seen as a dedicated linguistic marker for definiteness. This line of functional inquiry is consistent with the explanation of the phenomenon of multiple determiners offered by Plank (2003). The multiple determiners phenomenon in the language seems to be the effort for a seamless conversation. The understanding accommodates the prospects like projection problem, weakening of the definite determiner in the presence of the additional determiner on the adjective, prominence condition, restrictive reading of the nominal in the presence of the marked adjective, etc. All these views encompass the interpretable possibility of both the determiners on their respective syntactic positions.

It is beyond the scope of the present paper to ruminate the explanation of the phenomenon in any restricted way.

6. Conclusion

The phenomenon of multiple determiners in the concerned language is found in the syntax of modification whereby the prenominal adjective and the noun are marked with determiners. We have explicated that the additional presence of the determiner on the adjective is not vacuous or semantically empty; it contributes to the overall semantics of the nominal. Unlike the typological characteristics of the phenomenon, Magahi doesn't have the same determiner on the adjective and the noun. The interpretational differences allow claiming that the phenomenon of multiple determiners in Magahi is not a case of agreement/concord. The paper claims that the semantic feature of definiteness cannot be treated on par with the intrinsic semantic features of the noun like gender and number, and therefore, although adjective and noun markers inflect for gender and number, it lacks a similar semantic value for definiteness. Further, it is observed that the distinction is focused around presupposition and deixis or specificity on the noun and the adjective, respectively. The determiner on adjective co-occurs with a numeral in the nominal, giving the reading of indefinite specificity. The paper looks forward to a structural account of the phenomenon considering the interpretational variability it presents.

¹⁰ The definite determiner is not regular with the abstract noun in Magahi, e.g., ?yədawa (memory), ?k^husiya (happiness), ?doštīya (friendship), etc. the acceptability of such construction on a few occasions and on a few abstract nouns limit any theory to strictly account for this fluidity. One account that can be extended is the multiple functions of the particle /-wa/, as indicated in unit 4. The organization of the abstract noun and the concrete noun in the lexicon differs following Schwanenflugel et al. (1996) 'context theory'; it says that abstract words do not have a context. Aikhenvald (2000) says that a classifier can be grammaticalized to a varying extent, and definiteness is an example of that. Adam & Conklin (1973) argue that the second criterion in the classification of [+ human] by the classifier is the reference to its social status. The definite determiner /-wa/, in the concerned language, has sociolinguistic implication as well. Denny (1986, Pp 125) talks about the three criteria for the description of a classifier: physical interaction such as handling, functional interaction such as using an object as a vehicle and social interaction such as interacting with a human compared to a low status one. By physical interaction, Denny means many things, but one of the essences is the reference of the object as hard/tough or strength, size, etc. Interestingly, as we have discussed the different allomorphs of the particle /-wa/, the distinction between the /-ya/ and /-wa/ is more than phonological. Its semantic naturally extends to the feminine, small, or soft entity and masculine, big, or hard entity, respectively. So, the distinction of the objects while being referred to in the discourse would be - 'dibbawa' (the big container) and 'dibbiya' (the small container). It has all the property of a classifier, be it quantification, classification, and referentialization.



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Appendix

- 1- First person
- 2- Second person
- 3- Thrid person
- Adj./ADJ- Adjective
- AP - Adjective Phrase
- AgrP - Agreement Phrase
- CLA - Classifier
- CP - Complimentizer phrase
- DD - Definite determiner
- Def/DEF- Definite
- DP - Determiner Phrase
- FUT - Future
- GEN - Genitive
- H - Honorific



I-A	- Indo-Aryan
IP	- Inflectional Phrase
IMPF	- Imperfective
NP	- Noun Phrase
N	- Noun
NH	- Non-honorific
NumP	- Number Phrase
PL	- Plural
POSS	- Possessive
PRF	- Perfective
QN	- Question
RC	- Relative clause
RRC	- Restrictive restrictive clause
REL	- Relative pronoun
SM	- Specificity marker
VP	- Verbal Phrase

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