Determination, Bare Arguments, and Discourse Salience in Mopan Maya

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In the absence of a semantics of definiteness, the Mopan (Mayan) article *a* (ART) explicitly delineates its associated phrase as an entity:[1]

(1) ki'-Ø   u   peek   **a**   pax
    be.good-3B   3A   noise   **ART** **play_music**
    'The sound of **the/a music-playing** is good.'

ART alternates in distribution with a pair of gendered noun classifiers and a paradigm of person-markers that may specify Agentive (example 2) or Possessive (example 3) relationships with their associated lexemes:

(2) k'as-aj-oo'   **aj**   **pax**
    be_bad-INCH-3.PL **CLF.M** **play_music**
    '**Musicians (masculine)** have become evil.'

(3) Tan-Ø   **u**   **pax**
    be_continuing   **3A**   **music-playing**
    '**His/her music-playing** continues.'

ART thus encodes both entity specification and explicit denomination of the relevant entity as Undergoer (not Actor or Possessor) of the lexical event. These encodings relate closely to specific typological properties of Mopan (Danziger 1996, 2008). Overall, the semantics of determination is not universal, but corresponds to language-particular motivations.

References: Danziger, E. 2008. A person, a place or a thing? In M. Bowerman & P. Brown (eds.), *Crosslinguistic perspectives on argument structure,* 29-48. Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum. • Danziger, E. 1996. Split intransitivity and active-inactive patterning in Mopan Maya. *IJAL* 62(4): 379-414.

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[1] Glosses follow **http://www.eva.mpg.de/lingua/resources/glossing-rules.php** . In addition, A = Actor/ Possessor case-role marker; INCH=Inchoative.