

DETERMINATION OF THE INDETERMINATE BARE NOUN IN KARBI

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ABSTRACT

Nouns refer either to objects (i.e. things which are bounded in space, e.g. cars) or masses (i.e. things that tend to exist in space as something unbounded, i.e. water). Thus, semantically nouns constitute two broad groups. In a language like English this semantic distinction is grammatically encoded so that a *car*-type noun and a *water*-type noun have different grammatical behaviour. For instance, a *water*-type noun is already an NP; a *car*-type noun is not (e.g. *Water is transparent*; **Car is expensive*). However, in a language like Karbi, a Tibeto-Burman language spoken in different parts of Assam (a north eastern State of India), all nouns are NPs at the same time. But depending on the semantic context involved the bare noun (i.e. the noun as NP) in Karbi may designate any number of instances of the concerned kind (i.e. one or more than one) and also can have either a generic or non-generic reference. The main purpose of this paper is to show how the bare noun in Karbi is grammatically determined. For grammatical determination Karbi employs a set of imprecise quantifiers which are either inherently indefinite or definite. For precise quantification of the bare noun Karbi employs numerals along with classifiers and measure terms, which are, however, reference-independent. Thus it is the word order involved that determines the reference of a precisely quantified NP.

KEYWORDS: Cognitive Linguistics, Categorization, Prototypical Categories, Countability, Bare Noun, The Karbi Classifiers, Grounding, Discreetness