Towards the Demise of def_q_rel

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Semantic contrasts marked on NPs

- Number

- Discourse status (incl. definiteness, also demonstratives, topic v. focus)

- Possessive

- (in some languages) Quantifiers (some, every, most)

- English has a distinguished syntactic position 'determiner'

- English determiners express both quantifiers and discourse status

- This is not a linguistic universal

'Definite/indefinite' not really relevant in Mandarin, Japanese, Inupiaq, Nahuatl, ...

Norwegian: Definiteness marked with an affix, indefiniteness marked with an article

Romanian: Indefinites marked with an affix, definites with an article

Norwegian, Hebrew, Aramaic, Arabic: Adjectives agree in definiteness with head nouns

Definiteness isn't conflated with the quantifier in many languages, so the type def_q_rel doesn't work well cross-linguistically

We need access to the discourse status of a constituent -> feature

But this isn't news...

- Borthen & Haugereid 2005 propose features to encode cognitive status, specificity, partitivity, and universality

- Data from Norwegian, Turkish, English, Dutch

Proposal

- English 'the' introduces a quantifier, but not def_q_rel.

- Definiteness (or perhaps it generalization to cognitive/discourse status) is represented as a feature(s) of indices

Desiderata

- Definiteness information should be available in the MRS for further processing (e.g., MT).

- Definiteness information should be available for syntactic contraints.

- Likewise, there should be no demonstrative_q_rel.

Demonstratives

- Basic info: discourse status

- In some languages: further info about location of item (near speaker, etc.)