

LINGUISTICS

ON THE STATUS OF THE *THAT/THE* CONTRAST IN PRESENT-DAY ENGLISH

ALMO SEPPÄNEN

University of Gothenburg

1. The pairs *one/a(n)* and *that/the* represent two examples of a phenomenon traditionally understood in terms of a lexical split, i. e. a case where what was originally one word — a numeral or a demonstrative pronoun — has split into two items, the original cardinal/pronoun and the indefinite/definite article. Noting this formal separation, traditional accounts have at the same time commonly recognized that the original identity of the two items, so far from being completely obscured, is still reflected in the very close relationship between them, whatever the precise nature of that relationship may be. In some recent syntactic work the closeness of that relationship has come to be emphasized to a point where the two words come to be seen not as two independent items but merely as two forms of what is still just one item. This view was first advanced by Perlmutter in his study of the indefinite article and its relationship to the cardinal *one* (1970), and has in turn led to similar analysis of the definite article and the demonstrative pronoun *that*, proposed in somewhat varying formulations by Thorne (1972, 1982) and Lyons (1975, 1977). In a paper published earlier (1982), I have proposed a different view of the *one/a(n)* contrast, arguing that the identity of the two words cannot be maintained in a description of present-day English. In the remarks that follow I shall pursue the same line of reasoning, applying it now to the question of the status of the definite article *the* in relationship to the demonstrative *that*.

2.1. In view of the significance which Perlmutter's treatment of the *one/a(n)* contrast has had for the description of the *that/the* relationship, it will be necessary to examine briefly Perlmutter's data and his interpretation of them. The starting-point of his analysis is his observation that the choice of *one* vs. *a(n)* seems to be determined purely by stress: *one* is always stressed, *a(n)* is always unstressed, as in the following examples from his paper:

- (1) (a) There are only *two* boys in the room, not five.
 (b) There are only *two* *boys* in the room, not any girls.
- (2) (a) There is only *one* boy in the room, not five.
 (b) *There is only *one* *boy* in the room, not any girls.
 (c) There is only *a* *boy* in the room, not any girls.

As (2b) is obligatorily replaced in English by (2c), Perlmutter suggests that there is a rule in English grammar which obligatorily changes the unstressed cardinal *one* to *a(n)*. This treatment is said to have several advantages over the more traditional view. In particular, it seems to offer an explanation of the common distribution of *one* and *a(n)*: their occurrence in front of singular count nouns (*a boy, one boy*) as against plural countables (**a boys, *one boys*) and uncountables (**a blood, *one blood*). Among the many more specific facts quoted by Perlmutter in support of his thesis, perhaps the most striking is the occurrence of the two forms in contexts where they are said to be the only forms possible, not replaceable by any other numerals, quantifiers or determiners. These contexts, according to Perlmutter (1970 : 235), include the position before fractions:

- (3) (a) one seventh, two sevenths, a seventh
 (b) *some sevenths, *few sevenths

and the following rather special expressions (1970 : 235—236):

- (4) (a) It was $\left. \begin{matrix} \text{one} \\ \text{a} \end{matrix} \right\}$ hell of a mess.
 (b) I didn't like it at all — not $\left. \begin{matrix} \text{one} \\ \text{a} \end{matrix} \right\}$ bit.

Concerned with stressing and distribution, Perlmutter does not explicitly examine the semantic aspect of the question but it is tacitly implied throughout his discussion that there is no semantic difference between the two forms (apart from the influence of stress, perhaps). Viewing thus *a(n)* altogether as a form of *one*, Perlmutter concludes that there is no indefinite article in English, the contrast traditionally described in terms of the definite and indefinite articles being seen as a contrast between the presence of the definite article and its absence, in *a table* | *the table* no less than in *tables* | *the tables* and *coffee* | *the coffee*.

2.2. An analysis along the lines suggested by Perlmutter has a great deal of appeal, especially as it seems to account for the semantic contrast of *a(n)* and *the* in an intuitively satisfactory way, and of course because it obviously tallies with the familiar historical facts. Nevertheless there seem to be several facts which indicate that the analysis actually fails to capture the relationship of *one* and *a(n)* correctly. As I have elsewhere argued the point

at length (1982), it is neither possible nor necessary to repeat here the argument in full, and I will content myself with merely pointing out that even the basic facts which the analysis sets out to describe are more complex than assumed by Perlmutter. So far as the stressing is concerned, it is to be remembered that we find not only unstressed *a(n)* and stressed *one*, but also the exceptional cases where *a(n)* is stressed and *one* is unstressed.

- (5) There are many millions more ... who live in communities in which English has a special status (whether or not as an official national language) as a, or the, language for academic work. (Strang 1968: 17 - 18)
- (6) He gave me one *pound*, not one *dollar*.
 If you had stayed there one *month*, instead of one *week*, you might have been able to do all that you had planned to do.

As regards the use of *one* and *a(n)*, it is similarly an oversimplification of the facts to claim that the two items have the same distribution. The 'awkward' cases here are represented by a number of different types of items, including even some traditionally classed as uncountables, which can pattern with the indefinite article but not with *one* (or higher cardinals).

- (7) (a) That will take *a few* years.
A good many more will be needed.
 (b) He greeted me with *a warmth* that was puzzling.
A good knowledge of Italian is essential for the job.

Furthermore, in the special construction illustrated below, *a(n)* occurs in front of ordinary countables without being here replaceable by *one*, and the same usage can even be found with uncountables and proper names.

- (8) What shall we do with *this fool of a father of his*?
 Is it *that drunken brute of a first husband of hers* again?
- (9) (i) Whoever invented *this darned nuisance of an Esperanto* deserves to be hanged.
 (b) How do you like *this quiet little hamlet of a New York of ours*?

What is more, even the claim of *one* and *a(n)* occurring in contexts where no other items are possible, as in (3—4), turns out to be false when examined against further data.

- (10) How could some tenths (a few hundredths) of a millimetre make such a difference?
- (11) (a) It was the same hell of a mess again.
 (b) I don't like it at all — not the least bit.

Finally, the assumed identity of *one* and *a(n)* must be examined from the

semantic point of view since the data from stress and distribution alone can never justify a treatment of *one* and *a(n)* as variants of the same item if these two forms are not semantically equivalent. While it may be true that the two forms are in many cases "completely interchangeable" (Perlmutter 1970: 23), the crucial question to ask is whether such interchangeability is fully general, or whether there are contexts where they in fact contrast. The following pair of sentences seem to me to provide evidence that *one* and *a(n)* can indeed contrast.

- (12) (a) A boy could do that.
 (b) One boy could do that.

In these sentences, *one boy* can obviously be given a specific or generic sense, and the same may also be true of *a boy* in the first sentence. However, when *one boy* is taken to be generic, (12b) is roughly equivalent not to (12a) but to 'a boy could do that alone'. It thus appears that *one* and *a(n)* can in fact contrast with each other, leading in at least some contexts to different semantic interpretations of the sentence in which they occur. This possibility is an indication that the two items must be distinguished even in the lexicon of the language.

Without going further into the arguments involved we can thus conclude that the identification of *one* and *a(n)* as the stressed and unstressed variants of the same item is derived from an insufficient examination of the facts both as regards the relationship of *one* and *a(n)* to stress and their distribution and as regards the semantics of these items. When more attention is paid to the concrete facts, then the description is forced to accept the historical split of *one* into two separate items as an established fact, and to treat *a(n)* as an item in its own right, distinct from *one* both formally and semantically.

3.1. After our brief examination of the indefinite article, let us now turn to the definite article and the slightly varying analyses of its relation to the demonstrative pronoun *that* which have been proposed in recent literature. The question is taken up by Thorne in a study which treats the *that/the* relationship as an analogue to Perlmutter's description of the *one/a(n)* contrast (1972). Thus, Thorne starts with the observation that *that* and *the* exhibit an "exceptionally high degree of correlation" as regards their distribution, which suggests that "they are not so much different words as different surface forms of the same underlying word" (1972: 565). Thorne finds in fact that the only factor that influences the choice of one rather than the other is stress: *the* does not normally take stress, whereas *that* always takes "some degree of stress" (1972: 565), as in (13):

- (13) (a) Just look at *thát* moon.
 (b) *Just look at *thè* moon.
 Just look at *the* moon.

Closely connected with these facts is the question of meaning. Here Thorne finds that attempts to discover a semantic distinction between the two forms have in general not resulted in more than the statement that *the* is the unstressed form of *that*, and he concludes that it is a mistake to assume that the phonological distinction is accompanied by a semantic distinction.

Following so far very closely Perlmutter, Thorne actually goes further in that he proposes a description which is more abstract and more comprehensive, deriving *that/the*, and similarly *this*, from an underlying demonstrative adverb in the following manner:

- (14) (a) man who is there
 → man there
 → there man
 → that man
 → the man
 (b) man who is here
 → man here
 → here man
 → this man

All in all, the treatment of *that/the* is then clearly parallel to the analysis of *one/a(n)* proposed by Perlmutter, as is pointed out by Thorne himself. Similarly, the analysis leads to the same conclusion that contrasts like *a man/the man* are not treated in terms of the +/—Definite opposition and that the surface articles are indeed completely dropped from the postulated underlying structures.

3.2. A treatment of the definite article which is very similar to Thorne's, and which is indeed connected with Thorne's analysis, is presented by Lyons in an article which examines the whole phenomenon within a wider context (1975). In his paper Lyons deals with the early phases of ontogenesis of reference, and develops an approach to the definite article in the course of his discussion of the role of deixis in reference in general. On the central question of the deictics and their meaning, Lyons advances the view that the distinction between the two series of deictics is to be understood in terms of the marked/unmarked contrast (1975: 72–73). Just as *bitch* is marked for sex, as opposed to the unmarked term *dog*, so the deictics *this* and *here* are marked, in contrast to the unmarked terms *that* and *there*: the opposition is proximal vs. non-proximal, not proximal vs. distal (or distal vs. non-distal). Inherently neutral, the unmarked terms can — in a way which Lyons views as normal with the marked/unmarked opposition — receive a marked interpretation "when there is an explicit or implicit contrast with the proximal term in the opposition", being then understood "to imply or presuppose remoteness

from the speaker" (1975 : 73). The two interpretations correlate with stress: generally it can be said that the marked *that* is associated with stress, whereas the unmarked *that* is unstressed (1975 : 73)¹.

On this interpretation of the facts we can thus speak of two different uses of *that*, the unstressed *that*₁ and the stressed *that*₂: the second is similar to *this* in that both of these items, when used in NP's, convey to the hearer information about the deictic location of the referent (Lyons 1975 : 78), whereas such is not the case with the unstressed *that*₁ (cp. Lyons 1977 : 651). As to the exact relationship between the two uses of the word, it might be thought that we are dealing here with a case of polysemy, but that is not at all the way the situation is analyzed by Lyons. It is in general Lyons's conviction that the marked/unmarked interpretation of a term is not appropriately described in terms of polysemy (Lyons 1975: 73; 1977:308). What we are dealing with is thus an instance of contextual interpretation, whereby an item inherently unmarked for a certain feature (*dog* for sex, *that* for remoteness from the speaker) may be interpreted as implying that feature by virtue of its contrast with a marked term (cp. maleness in *Is it a dog or a bitch?* and remoteness in *Do you want this book or that one?*). Unmarked for the feature of proximity, *that* is inherently identical with the article *the*, which is similarly unmarked for proximity. Hence, referring to the origin of the form *the*, Lyons can characterize it as a manifestation of what "presumably" was "a purely phonological rule based on stress" (1975 : 74). On the issue of the relationship of the definite article and the demonstrative *that*, Lyons is then in fundamental agreement with Thorne in that in his analysis too, the deep level may be assumed to contain only the form *that*, which in unstressed positions may then be weakened to *the*².

3.3. The question of the relationship of *that* and *the* is reconsidered by Thorne in a later study (1982), which itself is heavily influenced by Lyons's discussion of the case. On the relationship of *that* and *the* to stress, Thorne now says that in cases where the stress must fall on the determiner, it can be *that* but not *the*:

(15) I prefer $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{thát} \\ *the \end{array} \right\}$ dress to this dress.

¹ The exact nature of Lyons's view of the relationship of the two uses of *that* to stress is in fact not fully clear to me from the wording used by him; the interpretation here offered follows Thorne's account of Lyons's analysis (1982 : 484), but would appear to be an oversimplification. Cp. also Lyons 1977 - 646 : 657.

² It might of course be maintained that the weak form *the* must in any case be entered in the lexicon in order to specify its phonological shape. This is, of course, what is traditionally done in lexicography, where the entry for an item will also specify the various weak forms of that item whenever such forms exist. But even if this approach is applied to *the*, it is clear that *the* is then given only as the reduced form of *that*, instead of being given an entry of its own.

I prefer $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{ány} \\ *the \end{array} \right\}$ dress to this dress.

On the other hand, when the main stress falls on the noun, the determiner can be either *that* or *the*:

(16) Give me $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{that} \\ the \end{array} \right\}$ book.

In such cases, the resulting noun phrases are said by Thorne to be "completely interchangeable" (1984 : 477). In fact the semantic identity of *that* and *the* can be found even in cases where *that* is heavily stressed: thus *Give me thát/the book* and *Listen to thát/the old fool* are described by him as "rhetorical variants"³, fully comparable to the rhetorical variants *It was one/a hell of a mess* and *I didn't like it at all — not one/a bit* (1982 : 477).

4.1. In the previous sections we have given an account of the salient features of analyses which treat the article *the* as a weak form of *that*. Proceeding now to a closer examination of the different aspects of those analyses, let us begin with the derivation of *the* from the adverb *there* proposed by Thorne. Here it seems to me that the proposal is beset with problems which make it altogether unacceptable. Most fundamentally such a derivation can never be applied to all uses of the definite article, because the article is frequently found in cases which are inherently incompatible with a restrictive relative clause. Such cases include above all proper names and a number of generics, but also certain types of phrases with non-generic common nouns. I shall offer a few illustrations of all these cases.

(17) (a) We crossed *the Thames* near Henley.

(b) *The wolf* is threatened with extinction.

What do you think of *the English*?

His essay on *the sublime* and *the beautiful* is still a classic.

Could *the rich* and *the poor* ever come to an agreement on this?

(c) This is now *the third time* I'm telling you that he isn't at home.

What is *the name of the capital of Hungary*?

Second, even in cases where a restrictive relative is not in principle excluded, the derivation suggested may run into difficulties. For instance, if the relative

³ At the end of his second paper Thorne actually voices an entirely different view, maintaining that the relationship between marked and unmarked terms must be stated in the lexicon, and that the phonological differences between *that/the* and *one/a(n)* have semantic and pragmatic implications. But so far as I can see, Thorne's own account of *that* and *the* effectively rules out such a treatment. The crux of the matter is that for Thorne *the* is always unmarked, and *that* is marked when it is stressed but unmarked otherwise, so that *that* and *the* are interchangeable in *Give me the book/Give me that book* (1982 : 479 - 480). But if this is so, then the marked interpretation of *that* seems to be nothing but a semantic reflex of contrastive stress, and hence should not appear in the lexical entry.

clause is retained, in a full or reduced form, the article must in any case be present: e. g. we must have forms like *the fellow who was there*, *the tree over there*, *that box (which is) there*, etc., rather than zero forms like **fellow who was there*, **tree over there*, **box which is there* etc. But as Thorne utilizes an underlying *fellow who is there* to derive the surface form *the fellow*, it is not easy to see how *the fellow who is there* could be derived in any natural way; (*fellow who is there*) *who is there* would give the desired result but is surely too implausible. Besides, it could lead to further problems, such as the doubling of the article: if we opted to apply Thorne's transformation to both relative clauses, the result would be **the the fellow*.

Finally, even if such derivations are somehow constrained so as to avoid problems of the kind just noted, one is still forced to question their semantic adequacy. Consider from this point of view the following cases.

- (18) (a) The box is there ← (box which is there) is there
 (b) The box is not there ← (box which is there) is not there

As the underlying forms are either tautologous (18a) or contradictory (18b), the derivation leads us to expect that the same is true of the surface forms derived from them; yet that is clearly not the case. To be sure Lyons, noting that the derivation might appear to make cases like (18a) tautologous,⁴ argues that such need not be the case because "the basically deictic distinction of 'this': 'that' and 'here': 'there' is extended to a variety of non-deictic dimensions" (1977: 656). But this explanation seems to me unsatisfactory because in point of fact the assumed underlying form of (18a) is tautologous (and hence not comparable to *The dog* (unmarked) *is a dog* (marked), with which Lyons wants to compare it).

All in all, whether the derivation of the definite article proposed by Thorne is examined by considering its potential scope of application or by considering its formal or semantic adequacy, it must be regarded as highly questionable. In the present context, however, it is not the whole derivation which is crucial but only its last step, i.e. the change *that* → *the* presented by Thorne as parallel to Perlmutter's rule *one* → *an*. As the objections raised above are all concerned with the abstract source of the demonstratives *that* and *this*, we can simplify the suggested derivation by dropping the earlier more abstract levels and assume that the underlying deepest level of *the N* is in fact simply *that N*. In this way we can consider the crucial issue, the identification of *that*

⁴Lyons assumes that the derivation might also appear to make *The cat is here* contradictory, but this case seems to be less clear. The point is that if there is a 'neutral' sense of *there* which underlies the article in *the cat*, then *The cat is here* need not be contradictory any more than *That dog is a bitch* is. The problem is that the assumed underlying form (*cat that is there*) *is here* does seem to involve contradiction — an observation which I interpret as suggesting that the 'neutral' sense of *there* does not in reality exist in English.

and *the*, free from the problems that seem to beset the more abstract levels of the description suggested by Thorne.

4.2. Proceeding next to consider the adequacy of the identification of *the* as a form of *that*, we may begin by considering the question of stressing. Having first maintained that the form *that* necessarily carries some degree of stress (1972: 565), Thorne in his later article follows Lyons in noting that *that* can be either stressed or unstressed.⁵ While the article *the* is normally unstressed, Thorne carefully notes in both of his papers that it can also occur in stressed positions, as in the following sentences.

- (19) (a) He is not á professor, he is thé professor.
 (b) He's thé man.
 (c) Visiting Stratford? You don't mean thé Stratford?

In a sense it is of course correct to say that such cases should be "treated as exceptions" (Thorne 1982: 484; cp. 1972: 565), but the crucial thing is that they seem to be 'exceptions' only in a statistical sense, whereas they are fully grammatical and in this way must be recognized as a regular — albeit low-frequency — feature of the normal structure of English. Significantly, the form of the article even in that case is *the*, not *that*, in sharp contrast to such weak forms as /həv/, /əv/, /v/, which under stress are regularly replaced by /hæv/, or even the weak form /ðæt/ of the complementizer which obligatorily reverts to /ðæt/ when stressed. In view of these facts it is clearly misleading to describe *the* as a weak form of *that*; rather the description must recognize it as a fact that both *that* and *the* can be stressed as well as unstressed, the article having distinct strong and weak forms for these two uses. The parallelism of this situation with that obtaining in the case of the indefinite article will be obvious.

4.3. Addressing ourselves next to the distribution of *that* and *the*, let us ask ourselves whether it is true that they have the same distribution, being distinguished only by the incidence of stress. From examples like the following it can be seen that such a description is not correct.

- (20) (a) She dyed her hair red the night she married *that Frank Henke*.
That Kaunas, I seem to remember, is the former capital of the country.
 (b) *That cider* — it is basically a West Country drink, isn't it?
 Is *that Sorbian* a real language that is spoken somewhere, or is it just like Esperanto?

⁵ In spite of appearances the two formulations need not necessarily be incompatible, as they may refer to different degrees of stress; in fact, both formulations seem to me to be essentially correct.

- (21) He could never forget *those dark eyes of hers*.
How is *that head of yours* today?

The cases illustrated in (20) and (21) are not identical, but they share the property that if *that* is replaced by *the*, the sentences become ungrammatical (omission of *that* is of course possible in (20), though not in (21)). It is clear then that we are here dealing with a case where *that* exhibits a distribution not shared by *the*. The opposite case where *the* is possible but not replaceable by *that* is less clear, but the following seem to me to be cases where *that* seems too unnatural to be at all accepted.

- (22) Three thousand? That's more like *the price of a car*, and you are only trying to sell me a bicycle.
If she ever marries, at least *the name of her husband* must be Ernest.
Tom is flying to America again next week — that'll be now *the third time* he visits New York in the course of four months.

What emerges from cases like these is the observation that it is misleading to describe *that* and *the* as if they were interchangeable, or mere stylistic variants, or even to claim that they have the same distribution. Rather, they both have their own distribution, each occurring in at least some contexts where it is not replaceable by the other one. As with the *one/a(n)* pair, so here too the identification of *that* and *the* as forms of the same word because of an assumed identity of distribution is thus based on an untenable view of the facts.

4.4. The third aspect of the analysis of *that* and *the* leading to their identification was their assumed lack of semantic contrast. This, if true, is clearly a far more important point than facts of stress and distribution, but the distributional differences just noted would clearly seem to suggest that there is a semantic difference between *that* and *the*. To examine this question more closely, recall first that in the analysis advanced by Lyons (1975) and Thorne (1982), the opposition *this/that* is viewed as an instance of marked/unmarked contrast similar to that between *bitch/dog*, where the unmarked term is interpreted as implying maleness or remoteness from the speaker merely when directly contrasted with *this* or *bitch* (cp. *Is that a dog or a bitch?*, *Do you want this knife or that one?*). To see whether such an account is adequate, compare now the following sets of sentences.

- (23) (a) I prefer Máry's *cát* to Péter's *dog*.
(b) The *hórse* cost us a lot more than the *dóg*.

- (24) (a) I prefer *ány* dress to $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{thís} \\ \text{thát} \end{array} \right\}$ dress.
(b) I prefer my *ówn* dress to $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{thís} \\ \text{thát} \end{array} \right\}$ dress.

- (c) In many countries English is *á*, or $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{thé} \\ \text{?thát} \end{array} \right\}$,
language of education.

In (23), where *dog* is not contrasted with *bitch* but with other terms, there is clearly no pressure to give this term the marked interpretation; quite the contrary, the sex-unmarked sense is clearly the natural interpretation of the word. In (24), the word *that* is used in a comparable context; if this word is inherently unmarked, we should thus expect the unmarked sense here. That, however, does not seem to be the case: in (24 a-b), *that* seems to imply remoteness from the speaker as clearly as *this* suggests proximity to the speaker, and in (24c), where that sense seems inappropriate, replacement of *the* by *that* makes the sentence unacceptable.

The upshot of this is then that an analysis which treats *that* as inherently unmarked makes false predictions about the interpretation of this word in sentences.⁶ It is quite true that the word *that*, when it is stressed, has the feature of deictic remoteness as part of its interpretation, but the examples considered strongly suggest that that feature is part of the inherent semantic make-up of this word.

Leaving stressed *that*, let us now consider the interpretation of the word when it is unstressed.

- (25) (a) She has come to be regarded quite generally as

$\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{the} \\ \text{?that} \end{array} \right\}$ ideal secretary.

I am sure Mr Moxton has many admirable qualities, but you'll have to admit that he doesn't precisely look like $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{the} \\ \text{?that} \end{array} \right\}$ answer to a young girl's prayers.

- (b) I would like to get a copy of this book when it comes out, but

I hope $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{the} \\ \text{?that} \end{array} \right\}$ price won't

be as prohibitive as it often is in such a case.

Whenever you post a letter, make sure that $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{the} \\ \text{?that} \end{array} \right\}$ address is written clearly and in full.

⁶ It is true that Lyons seems to anticipate this kind of objection when he states, speaking of *that* and *there*, that the "use of the strong forms of the demonstrative will always imply a contrast with the marked terms *this* and *here*" (1975: 73). But if we must assume that there is an 'implicit contrast' with *this* in (24) — a view which seems to me unacceptable in any case — then we would surely expect the same kind of implicit contrast in (23), imposing a marked interpretation on the word *dog*. As such an account is clearly inappropriate in (23), I see no reason why it should be accepted for (24).

While all the examples are fully normal with the alternative *the*, they clearly become problematic if this word is replaced by *that*, which seems to affect the interpretation, forcing us to look for a situation where the sentence in its new form might be appropriate. Again it seems therefore that *that* and *the*, even when they are unstressed, are semantically distinct — a conclusion which clearly suggests that the word *that* here too is marked for remoteness. Against this conclusion it might again be objected that there is an implicit contrast with *this* in (25), this contrast then being the source of the actual interpretation. It is not obvious that this objection can be rejected offhand, and the force of the argument based on these cases may thus be questioned. It seems to me, however, that a case can be found where such an objection cannot be raised. To examine the case in question we must first draw a broad distinction between two classes of determiners. For a starting-point, consider the following material.⁷

- (26) (a) — left-hand side of the road
 — eldest brother of John K. Simpson
 — northernmost province of Finland
 — distance between Edinburgh and Glasgow
- (b) — head of the baby
 — mother of Mary's husband
 — capital of England
- (27) — house in Boston
 — letter from Mary
 — description of the articles

Comparing the use of determiners with the two sets of nominal expressions illustrated in (26) and (27) it is easy to see that the usual set of determiners normally found with countable heads are possible in (27): *a/any/which/either ... house in Boston*, etc. With the nominals of (26), forms like *a/any/ which/ either ... left-hand side of the road (head of the baby)* are clearly semantically odd (for linguistic or factual reasons, cp. the a- and b- series), appearing to suggest that the baby has several heads, the road has several left-hand sides etc. In fact the only determiners that do not lead to this odd interpretation are *the*, *this* and *that*. Since even the occurrence of *this* and *that* in these contexts is far from obvious, let me give a few illustrations.

- (28) (a) He repeated *this last sentence* with the addition of violent adverbs.
This westernmost Cordillerian section exhibits grand and awesome scenery.

⁷ For a fuller account of the distinction and further illustrative material, cp. Seppänen 1974 : 312 - 322.

- (b) *That last stroke of the hoe* has cut off a beanstalk.
 Only the eyes of *that oldest man* were not anxious.

Let us adopt the term 'selective' to describe the determiners of our first group, which appear to have a meaning suggesting that the actual referent is selected from among a number of potential denotata; for the class consisting of *the*, *this* and *that*, we can then use the term 'non-selective'. It is necessary to add, however, that while these last items are non-selective in themselves, they become selective if they are given a greater degree of stress (contrastive stress): if we stress *the smallest state in the USA*, *that mother of Mary's husband*, *this eldest brother of John K. Simpson*, then the resulting string is just as odd as when it is preceded by an inherently selective determiner.

Armed with this distinction, we are now ready to examine the use of non-selective determiners in a few crucial examples.

- (29) Do you know $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{the} \\ \text{this} \\ \text{that} \end{array} \right\}$ northern side of the Park?

Due to its meaning the nominal *-northern side of the Park* cannot be preceded by any selective determiners; similarly, the non-selective determiners *the*, *this* and *that* cannot in this context be made selective by heavy stress. What this implies is that when the string *the northern side of the Park* is used in a sentence, the referent is in that situation thought of as unique, with no implication of a contrast between actual referent and other potential denotata; that there is not even any implicit contrast of that kind is conclusively shown by the fact that all linguistic expressions of such a contrast lead to ill-formed sentences.

Having thus found a context where even an implicit contrast is excluded, let us now consider how the determiners are interpreted in that case.

- (30) (a) We have lived here in South Kensington the last 8 years or so, but before that we had a flat in Bayswater so we know the whole of $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{the} \\ \text{that} \\ \text{*this} \end{array} \right\}$ northern side of the Park quite well.
- (b) We have lived here in Bayswater for the last 8 years or so, so that we have certainly come to know the whole of $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{the} \\ \text{this} \\ \text{*that} \end{array} \right\}$ northern side of the Park quite well.

Given the basic geographical facts of London, with Bayswater on the northern

side of Hyde Park and South Kensington on the southern side of it, how are the differences in acceptability accounted for? For *the* which is not marked for proximity, there is no problem in either sentence, whereas *this* is appropriate in (30b) but unacceptable in (30a); in both cases this judgement follows directly from the feature +Proximity which is inherently part of the sense of *this*. By contrast, *that* is fully normal in (30a) but excluded from (30b); this is therefore a clear indication that even in this fully non-contrasting context, *that* is a marked form, having -Proximity as part of its semantic composition. For a similar case, consider the following.

- (31) In $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{this} \\ \text{that} \end{array} \right\}$ last chapter, I shall attempt to summarize the main conclusions of the study and to indicate some of the remaining problems.
- (32) (a) Having now reached the last chapter of the book, I shall attempt to summarize ...
 (b) When we come to the last chapter of the book, I shall attempt to summarize ...

It will be immediately clear that while both *this* and *that* are natural in (31a), they will require different contexts: *this last chapter* can appear in what is actually the last chapter, while *that last chapter* will be found outside that chapter. The article *the* is clearly not bound by any such factors, so that *the last chapter* can occur in both contexts. Again, therefore, if *this* and *that* are both treated as marked terms, in contrast to the unmarked *the*, all these facts have their natural explanation. A last pair of examples will illustrate the usage with proper names and generics.

- (33) (a) *The/These/Those Welsh* — they are music lovers, aren't they?
 (b) *The/This/That Tyrol* appears to be largely German-speaking.

Used with generics or with proper names, the determiners are again necessarily unstressed, precluding all contrasting of the actual referent with any others. But the meanings of the three versions are clearly different, and therefore require different contexts; compare, for instance, what choices I would have in (33a), depending on whether I uttered the sentences in Llandudno or at home in Gothenburg, or what forms an Englishman would select in (33b), depending on whether he was writing a postcard from Merano or telling his friends about his holiday when back in Sheffield.

The general conclusion from these facts seems clear. Even when *this* and *that* are unstressed, and used in contexts where they cannot at all be stressed, they seem to have an inherent +/—Proximity feature as part of their meaning, opposed to *the* which definitely lacks such a feature. With no contrast present,

either explicit or implicit, the +/—Proximity feature may appear redundant, and it might be maintained that relative deictic position is not offered as part of the information on the basis of which the hearer is expected to identify the referent (cp. Thorne 1982 : 480). Yet the information about the relative position of the referent is there, in *that* no less than in *this*, and it is precisely this fact which excludes *this* or *that* in certain contexts. With no difference between *this* and *that* on this fundamental point, both of them must be recognized as marked terms, opposed to the unmarked *the*. This is identical with the conclusion we arrived at earlier in our examination of the stressed occurrences of *that*. We can thus sum up our finding by saying that whether *that* is stressed or not, and whether it is used in explicit or implicit contrast with *this*, or without any such contrast, it is always semantically distinct from the article *the*.⁸

5. In our examination, we have seen first of all that *that* and *the* can both be stressed as well as unstressed; second that they both have their own distributional patterns, each occurring in at least some contexts where it is not replaceable by the other; and third, that regardless of questions of stress or contrast, they are semantically distinct. These conclusions are in each case fully analogous to those revealed by an examination of the relationship between *one* and *a(n)*, and lead to the same result. When it is claimed that the articles *the* and *a(n)* even in purely synchronic terms are merely weakened forms of the demonstrative *that* or the cardinal *one* it is easy enough to find facts which seem to lend support to the thesis because of the very close connection which still exists between *that* and *the* and between *one* and *a(n)*. Yet, a closer examination of the relevant facts leads one to claim that both *the* and *a(n)* are independent items in their own right, distinct phonologically, grammatically⁹ and semantically from the words *that* and *one* from which they have historically developed.

⁸ It may be noted in this connection that Thorne in his second paper analyzes the opposition of *one/a(n)* as an instance of a marked/unmarked contrast, along the lines of the *that/the* relationship proposed by Lyons: *one* as a cardinal is marked, contrasting with *two, there* etc, and used to indicate counting, while *a(n)* is unmarked, indicating merely that the noun that follows is countable (1982 : 480 - 482). As far as the theme of the present paper is concerned, this is a fully acceptable view, because the marked/unmarked distinction here is one to be entered in the lexicon (cp. Thorne 1982 : 483). On the other hand it is clear enough, from examples like *a great many* etc (cp. example (7) above, and Seppänen 1982 for further material), that it is not fully correct to interpret *a(n)* as an indication of countability.

⁹ The grammatical distinction of the articles as against the demonstratives hinges on their being limited to the determiner position, whereas the demonstratives — and similarly other determiners — can also appear in an independent use. (Cp. the contrast of determiners vs. determiner pronouns in Strang 1968 : 128 - 129) Note however, that this distinction is not a valid argument against the analyses examined here since the reduction rules could be limited to pronominal position and could thus easily deal with the facts in a very simple and natural manner.

This conclusion is not startling, as it is basically nothing but a reaffirmation of what more or less clearly has been assumed in standard descriptions of English, and what indeed appears to be implicit in the traditional orthographic distinction of *that* and *the* and *one* and *a(n)*. Of greater interest is an examination of the kind of reasoning which lies at the root of the different analyses we have attempted to refute. Partly the reasons are to be sought in the assumption that the distinctions can be treated as mere surface variations of what still, at a deeper level, are unitary items; partly they are to be sought in an analysis which wishes to interpret the semantic differences involved in the analysis of *the*, *this* and *that*, and perhaps even the difference between *one* and *a(n)*, in terms of a marked/unmarked opposition. The second of these views is part of a very general approach to semantics, quite commonly assumed to be appropriate in the study of a number of semantic differences, but in practice usually somewhat problematic because of the vagueness of the crucial term 'contrast', particularly when it is further specified as 'implicit contrast'. In the present case, dealing with contrasts within the 'closed system' of the articles and demonstratives, these terms are less nebulous, and a critical examination of the case seems to lead one to a rejection of the analysis set up on such premises. The natural sequel of this study must be a more general critical scrutiny of the ways the marked/unmarked opposition is currently applied in semantic analysis. While such an examination must obviously be based on concrete material from the analysis of a wider range of facts, and must therefore be left to future work, it may be hoped that the present discussion may serve as a useful starting-point for such work.

REFERENCES

- Andersson, J. (ed.). 1982. *Language form and linguistic variation*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Bierwisch, M. and K. E. Heidolph (eds.) 1970 *Papers in linguistics*. The Hague: Mouton.
- Keenan, E. L. (ed.). 1975 *Formal semantics of natural languages*. Cambridge etc: Cambridge University Press.
- Lyons, J. 1975. "Deixis as a source of reference". In Keenan, E. L. (ed.). 1975. 61 - 83.
- Lyons, J. 1977. *Semantics*. Cambridge etc: Cambridge University Press.
- Perlmutter, D. 1970. "On the article in English". In Bierwisch, M. and K. E. Heidolph (eds). 1970. 233 - 248.
- Seppänen, A. 1974. *Proper names in English: a study in semantics and syntax*. Tampere: Department of English Philology.
- Seppänen, A. 1982. "English *a(n)*: an article or a numeral?". *Linguistische Berichte* 81. 32 - 51.
- Strang, B. M. H. 1968. *Modern English structure*. London: Methuen.
- Thorne, J. P. 1972. "On the notion 'definite'". *Foundations of language* 8. 562 - 568.
- Thorne, J. P. 1982. "A note on the indefinite article". In Anderson, J. (ed.). 1982. 475 - 484