Hakha Lai Definites

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ABSTRACT

This paper uses fieldwork data to investigate definite expressions in Hakha Lai, a Kuki-Chin language spoken in western Burma/Myanmar and southern Indianapolis. Previous investigations of definite expressions (Hawkins 1978, Heim 1982, Roberts 2003, Schwarz 2009, and others) have posited properties such as *uniqueness* and *identifiability* as well as anaphoric reference as key features of definiteness. In an analysis of German definite articles, Schwarz (2009) proposes that definite expressions can be divided into two categories, *weak definites*, correlated with the semantic uniqueness of a referent, and *strong definites* which are correlated with anaphoric reference. Hakha Lai has two postnominal adjuncts, *kha* and *cu*, whose behavior is consistent with Schwarz's *weak* and *strong* definites. This data from Hakha Lai expands upon previous research on definite expressions cross-linguistically and investigates the relationship between definiteness and its morphosemantic representations in natural language.

1 Introduction

Languages such as English and Spanish have a dedicated article whose purpose is to mark a nominal referent as 'definite'. However, the semantics of definite expressions in natural languages remains elusive. Researchers have argued that definiteness is correlated with several functional semantic features ranging from *uniqueness, identifiability, individuality* (Lyons 1999), discourse *familiarity* (Heim 1982), or combinations of these features (Schwarz 2009). English, for example, has a definite article *the*, which denotes that the referent nominal is uniquely identifiable, or is discourse familiar (Roberts 2003). The definite article in English is contrasted with an indefinite article, which is often used to denote that an expression is not definite but can also be used to indicate cardinality (usually that there is only one of something). While some languages like English have dedicated articles, other languages with definiteness marking function under a different set of criteria. To investigate the morphosemantic properties of definite nominal expressions, linguists have looked at definite expressions across several languages (Hawkins 1978, Heim 1982, Roberts 2003, Schwarz 2009, Arkoh and Matthewson 2013, Kieviet 2017, Jenks 2018). In investigating languages which have definiteness marking on nominals, these researchers have found that different languages appeal to different features to fulfill their criteria for definiteness.

This paper investigates one such definiteness marking system by using field data from Hakha Lai, a Tibeto-Burman language spoken in Chin State (in western Burma/Myanmar) and a community of over 10,000 (Berkson et al. 2019) in southern Indianapolis. Hakha Lai has two primary overt markers of definiteness: the postnominal adjuncts *kha* and *cu*, which operate under distinct criteria, *kha* being used for unique referents and *cu* being used for previously mentioned referents. Using a framework established in Schwarz (2009), and utilized in other work (Arkoh and Matthewson 2013), this paper analyzes the semantic function of these two particles in order to contribute to the body of research on definiteness marking in nominals.

The paper begins with the introduction in Section 1. Section 2 discusses previous research on definiteness marking in nominals, with a special focus on Schwarz 2009's notions of *weak* and *strong* definiteness. It also discusses previous investigations of the two relevant articles in Hakha Lai in Barnes (1998), Bedell (2001) and Baclawski (2012). Section 3 describes the semantic behavior of the definite articles *kha* and *cu* with special reference to Schwarz's notions of *weak*/*strong* definiteness. Section 4 concludes the paper.

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2 Previous Research

Definiteness has long been an ill-defined feature of nominal expressions, warranting investigations of syntax, semantics, and pragmatics. Many attempts have been made to define *definiteness*, several of which intersect and diverge in their definitions. Early work by semanticists such as Frege (1892) and Strawson (1950) concluded that definite expressions contain a semantic feature which establishes their *uniqueness*. In contrast, later studies done by Christophersen (1939), Kamp (1981), and Heim (1982) linked definite expressions to the common ground between speaker and addressee, essentially recognizing definites as *anaphoric* expressions.

Heim (1982) sought to explain the pragmatic and semantic function of definite and indefinite expressions according to a dynamic semantic system called File Change Semantics which considered the continually updated common ground knowledge of the speaker and addressee. Subsequent work by Roberts (2003), Schwarz (2009), and others have utilized this file change model in analyzing definite expressions, particularly in evaluating definite expressions as anaphoric.

Roberts (2003), which built upon the work done by Heim (1982), interpreted the two prevailing *uniqueness-* and *anaphoricity*-based analyses and established a delineation between two types of definite expressions. Referencing Heim (1982), Roberts argues that definite expressions are licensed by the existence of a corresponding discourse referent which is unique among all referents in the discourse. This type of uniqueness effect is referred to by Roberts as *strong familiarity*. Examples of strong familiarity are found in second reference to a referent in a subsequent sentence, much like anaphoric expressions. Roberts contrasted this type of familiarity with *weak familiarity*, in which the uniqueness effect does not come about as a result of the uniqueness in the local discourse context, but is rather a result of uniqueness in a larger context. Examples of *weak familiarity* include expressions such as *the table* where there is only one table present in a room. This analysis also applies to expressions such as *the sun* or *the President*. These are sometimes referred to as "larger situation" or "global" definites (Hawkins 1978). The work by Heim and Roberts informed much subsequent research on individual languages and the formal structures used to perform these semantic functions. Several examples of this work will be discussed in the next section.

Two of the key sources for investigations of definiteness marking in languages other than English are Schwarz (2009) and Arkoh and Matthewson (2013). Schwarz (2009) uses data from German to investigate two definite articles. Schwarz states that these two articles perform two different types of definiteness marking: *weak* definiteness and *strong* definiteness, utilizing the framework found in Roberts (2003). In Schwarz's analysis, weak definiteness is correlated with a *uniqueness* feature on the referent. *Strong* definiteness is correlated with anaphoric reference, often a referent which has already been previously mentioned in discourse. In German, there are two dedicated morphemes, one for strong definites, and one for weak definites. Example (1) below provides two minimally contrastive examples of the use of two types of definite articles in German.

(1) a. Hans ging **zum** Haus   (Schwarz 2009:7)
       Hans went to-the$_{weak}$ house
       'Hans went to the house.'

   b. Hans ging **zu** **dem** Haus
       Hans went to the$_{strong}$ house
       'Hans went to the house.'

In example (1a), the definite article surfaces in a contracted form *zum*, composed of the preceding preposition *zu* and the definite article *dem*. In example (1b), contraction of the preposition and the definite article is disallowed. The minimal semantic difference between the two forms is that in (1a), the referent nominal *Haus* 'house' is unique in the wider discourse context (there is only one unique house to be referred to) while in

example (1b), the nominal referent *Haus* is being referred to anaphorically (the house was referred to previously in the discourse). This example from German provides a key example of natural language establishing a semantic distinction between two types of definiteness and marking the distinction with overt morphophonological forms.

Recently, there have been more studies on other languages, such as Akan, a Niger-Congo language spoken in Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire. Arkoh & Matthewson (2013) concerns the Akan definite article *nʋ*, which appears in postnominal position following a nominal referent if the referent was previously mentioned in discourse. Example (2) below illustrates the usage of *nʋ* in Akan.

(2) Context: Beginning of conversation.   (Arkoh & Matthewson 2013:2)

Mò-tɔ́-ɔ̀	èkùtú	**(*nʋ́)**.	Èkùtú	***(nʋ́)**	yɛ̀	dɛ̀w	pápá
1SG.SUBJ-buy-PST	orange	(*FAM[2])	orange	*(FAM)	be	nice	good

'I bought an orange. The orange was really tasty.'

In example (2), the definite article *nʋ* is or is not allowed to follow the nominal referent based on its status in the discourse. In the first sentence, *èkùtú* 'orange' is mentioned for the first time and is a new entry in the discourse and therefore, indefinite. The presence of *nʋ* is disallowed. In the second sentence, *èkùtú* 'orange' is mentioned a second time and is now a definite referent with anaphoric reference. In this instance, *nʋ* is obligatory. Arkoh & Matthewson otherwise report that weak definite expressions surface as bare nominals, meaning that there is no overt marking of definiteness and therefore no observable contrast with indefinite referent nominals.

These investigations of English, German, and Akan have illustrated several essential variables for the investigation of definiteness marking on languages. First, definiteness as a semantic feature of nominals has been historically correlated with the uniqueness of a referent, either due to its uniqueness in a larger context, or due to its previous mention in discourse. The first type has been named *weak* while the second type has been named *strong*. Second, it has been shown in various investigations of natural languages (such as Schwarz 2009, and Arkoh & Matthewson 2013, among others) that languages make a distinction between these two types of definites, either in their ability or inability to take part in morphophonological processes (as seen in German) or in the presence or absence of a dedicated definite article (as seen in Akan). These features are considered in the investigation of definiteness marking in Hakha Lai. The next section introduces the language of investigation and discusses previous studies on definiteness marking in the language. It then turns to the findings based on the data obtained in collaboration with two native speakers of Hakha Lai.

3 Hakha Lai Definite Expressions

Hakha Lai is a Tibeto-Burman language spoken in Chin State in western Burma/Myanmar and by a sizeable community in southern Indianapolis, Indiana (Eberhard, Simons, and Fennig 2020). The data contained herein were gathered over the course of several elicitation sessions with two fluent speakers originally from Chin State now living in Indianapolis, a male speaker in his early 20's from Thanthlang village, and a female speaker in her early 20's from Lawngtlang village. This section presents the findings of this investigation based on the data obtained in collaboration with these two native speakers. It first discusses previous studies on Hakha Lai definite articles and then moves to a discussion of the demonstrative system, from which these two definite articles in question, *kha* and *cu* have been derived. The focus then turns to the findings of this investigation, noting the behavioral features of Hakha Lai definite articles in relation to previous investigations of definite articles.

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[2] FAM - familiarity

Thus far, there have been few studies done on Hakha Lai definites. One notable previous study is Barnes (1998), which used data gathered in elicitation sessions with a native speaker to investigate the Hakha Lai demonstrative system. Because there is often overlap in demonstrative and definite marking systems in languages and it is the case that the two definite marking particles in Hakha Lai, *kha* and *cu*, are historically derived from demonstratives, Barnes's investigation provides some insight into definiteness marking in Hakha Lai. While Barnes (1998) makes several key important observations about definiteness marking in Hakha Lai, this analysis is not grounded in previous theoretical work, as the current investigation attempts to be.

Another study, Bedell (2001), used a Hakha Lai translation of the Bible as a corpus to investigate the demonstrative system. Bedell notes a preponderance of the demonstratives *kha* and *cu*, likely due to their function as definite articles in addition to their conventional demonstrative usage. Neither Barnes nor Bedell categorized these two particles as definite articles, but as will be shown in this paper, their semantic function parallels that of other definiteness marking expressions in other languages, particularly those described in Schwarz (2009). One more study of note is Baclawski (2012), which investigated Hyow, a Southern Kuki-Chin language. He states that in Kuki-Chin languages, demonstratives have grammaticalized to mark topicality, focus, and tense. Baclawski (2013) is a summation of his research on deixis in Kuki-Chin, wherein he claims that the preposed demonstrative is used for spatial reference and the postposed demonstrative is used for anaphoric reference.

The two articles investigated herein, *kha* and *cu*, perform several functions in Hakha Lai. Before focusing on their respective roles in definiteness marking, it is worth discussing their deictic functions within the demonstrative system. Deriving definite articles from demonstratives is a common process in the world's languages (Dixon 2003). Table 1 below presents the members of the Hakha Lai demonstrative system.

Adnominal	Functions	Gloss
mah	general demonstrative	
hi	proximal demonstrative	'this'
kha	medial demonstrative; definite article	'that'; 'the'
khi	distal demonstrative	'that (over there)'
cu	remote demonstrative; definite article; topic marker	'the'

Table 1. *Grammatical elements in the Hakha Lai demonstrative paradigm*

In Hakha Lai, demonstrative phrases often appear in a 'circumnominal' configuration in which a general demonstrative *mah* appears in prenominal position while the spatial deictic demonstrative element appears in postnominal position. It is also possible for the same spatial deictic to appear both in prenominal and postnominal positions, and for the postnominal spatial deictic to appear alone. Examples (3-4) illustrate the circumnominal structure, while example (5) shows the postnominal spatial deictic configuration.

(3) **mah** uico **hi** a-lian
    DEM dog this 3SG-be.big
    'This dog is big.'

(4) **hi** uico **hi** a-lian
    this dog this 3SG-be.big
    'This dog is big.'

(5) uico **hi** a-lian
    dog this 3SG-be.big
    'This dog is big.'

The semantic difference between these three forms has not yet been thoroughly investigated but will be the subject of future research. These examples each show that postnominal position contains deictic information about the nominal referent. Each of the three primary spatial deictic demonstratives, *hi, kha, khi*, can appear in these configurations. The fourth demonstrative, *cu*, is used for referents which are not visible.

3.1 The basics of Hakha Lai definites

Now that the features of the demonstrative system have been established, it is possible to discuss the specifics of the two definite articles derived from these demonstrative forms. The examples contain both a context of usage and an example utterance which is felicitous in the context. Contexts were defined by the researcher and presented to the two speakers. In some cases, speakers were given sentences and asked to alter a given context so that the sentence would be felicitous. Much of the methodology of this research is based on Bochnak and Matthewson (2020). Before proceeding, however, it should be noted that although definite expressions in Hakha Lai can be marked overtly with *kha* and *cu,* definite expressions in Hakha Lai regularly surface as bare nominals, meaning that there is no overt definiteness marking. Example (6) below presents an instance in which a referent is definite but does not have any overt marking.

(6) Context: the speaker is going to a store that they frequently go to

dawr=ah	ka-kal	lai
store=LOC	1SG-go	FUT

'I will go to the store.'

In example (6), the store in question is known to the speaker and addressee as it is a store that the speaker regularly goes to. In this case, the uniqueness of the store is established as part of the "larger situation" and is therefore classified as a *weak* definite. There is no overt marking on the nominal, thus establishing that weak definites can surface as bare nominals.

In addition to bare marking on nominals, definite expressions in Hakha Lai can also be marked with two members of the demonstrative paradigm which are classified here as definite articles based on the distributional behavior illustrated in the following examples. This section introduces the two articles in question, *kha* and *cu*, and the following sections examine their usage in closer detail. The first definite article, *kha*, is historically derived from the medial demonstrative, also *kha*. Examples (7) and (8) provide contexts in which *kha* is obligatory due to the addressee's ability to identify the referent. In neither of these examples would the medial demonstrative be felicitous.

(7)
ka-ttawh	lo	mi	tu	**kha**	a-thaw	deuh	men	lai
1SG-find	NEG	REL	NMZR	**DEF**	3SG-be.good	must	maybe	FUT

'The one that I didn't find must have been the good one'

(8)
Amah	**kha**	ka-hal	lai
3SG.PRO[3]	**DEF**	1SG-ask	FUT

'I will go ask him'

In (7), the addressee is presumed to have seen the item that was not found, thus they are *familiar* with it, even though it hasn't been mentioned previously in discourse. In example (8), the addressee is presumed to be familiar with the individual who is referred to by the third person singular pronoun, either because they know them personally or because they have seen them. These contextual restrictions fit within the definition of *weak* definiteness as defined by Schwarz (2009).

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[3] PRO – Pronominal form

The second definite article, *cu*, has previously been associated with other semantic and pragmatic functions in Hakha Lai. First, it has been identified as a non-spatial deictic demonstrative used to make reference to non-visible referents and as a topic marker (Barnes 1998). Hay-Neave (1953) refers to it as an absolutive case marker. Chit Hlaing and Hlun (2003) merely refer to it as a determiner. The overlap in features makes analyses of *cu* more ambiguous than *kha.* It is possibly the case that there are multiple *cu* particles in Hakha Lai, each performing a distinct function. However, this investigation only addresses its function as a postnominal definite article.

As a definite article, postnominal *cu* fulfills the function of referring to a referent previously mentioned in discourse. Example (9) below show how *cu* is utilized in Hakha Lai to mark anaphoric reference.

(9) Liang=nih   doctor pa   party=ah   a-sawm.   [Anih   **cu**]
     Liang=ERG   doctor MASC party=LOC   3SG-invite.   3SG.PRO   **DEF**
     ka-rem   lo
     1SG-be.friendly   NEG
     'Liang invited a doctor to the party. I don't like him (the doctor).'

In example (9), the doctor and the referent for the pronoun in the following sentence are co-indexed. Because the same referent appears in the previous sentence, and thus, previously in discourse, the pronoun is obligatorily accompanied by the *strong* definite, *cu*.

The next section discusses how *kha* and *cu* fit into the larger definiteness framework established by Roberts (2003) and Schwarz (2009). It also discusses the specifics of Hakha Lai definite articles and the ways in which they do not adequately fit within this framework.

3.1 Weak definites and *kha*

The postnominal article *kha* is associated with many semantic features, most of which can be covered by "experience with the referent". This means that *kha* is used when the addressee has seen the referent or has otherwise had experience with an animate or concrete referent. This requires that the speaker knows that the addressee has had these experiences, often by being present at the time. However, although this seems to imbue these referents with a kind of "larger situation" uniqueness feature, *kha* cannot be used with so-called larger situation definites. For example, the expressions below in examples (10-11) would not be felicitous.

(10) ˀthlapa **kha**
      moon   **DEF**
      'the moon (which you are familiar with)'
(11) ˀarti   **kha**
      sun   **DEF**
      'the sun (which you are familiar with)'

For the sun and the moon, there is some level of familiarity; however, it is not based on personal experience and cannot be considered sufficient to license the presence of *kha*. The expressions *thlapa* 'the moon' and *arti* 'the sun' surface as bare nominals. Thus, although *kha* appears to be associated with weak definiteness, it does not seem to pattern like other languages such as English or German in which a definite article is used for *weak* definite expressions. Either *kha* is not truly a weak definite marker or it is performing another grammatical function. This will need to be investigated in future work.

In examples (12-13) below, the speaker intends to go to a store and informs the addressee. The presence of *kha* is determined by the addressee's knowledge of the referent. In the context of (12), even though the referent is definite to the speaker, the addressee does not know which market the speaker intends to go to, only that they are going to a market. This warrants bare nominal definite marking.

(12) dawr=ah   ka-kal   lai
     store=LOC   1SG-go   FUT
     'I am going to a store.'

In example (13), the speaker is aware of the fact that the addressee has been to the store before and in mentioning it, the addressee is aware of which store the speaker is going to, thus making it a familiar definite referent.

(13) dawr=ah   **khan**   ka-kal   lai
     store=LOC   **DEF**   1SG-go FUT
     'I am going to the store.'

In example (13), the speaker has chosen to use *kha,* thus signaling to the addressee that the addressee knows which store the speaker is going to, the specific store that the addressee has been to before. The weak definite article surfaces here as an allomorphic variant *khan* triggered by the presence of the locative marker in the nominal phrase. This referent 'store' is identifiable by the addressee, which fulfills the criterion of Schwarz's weak definiteness.

    A further example illustrates a different level of identifiability based on experience. In this context, the speaker has gone to a forest to see a church and tells the addressee about it. The knowledge of the addressee influences the choice of usage of *kha* in examples (14) and (15) below. In example (14), the addressee has never heard of the church in the forest, and thus, *kha* is disallowed. The referent *biakinn* 'church' surfaces as a bare nominal in this case as an indefinite nominal.

(14) ramlak=ah   a-um   mi   biakinn   kan-hmu
     forest=LOC   3SG-be.at   REL   church   1PL-see
     'We saw a church in the forest.'

Because the church is not known to the addressee, the speaker would not be able to use *kha* here. In example (15), the addressee has at least heard of and is aware of the church in the forest, thus, when the speaker makes mention of the church it is accompanied by *kha*.

(15) ramlak=ah   a-um   mi   biakinn   **kha**   kan-hmu
     forest=LOC   3SG-be.at   REL   church   **DEF**   1PL-see
     'We saw the church (that you know of) in the forest.'

In example (15), the speaker is able to use *kha* because the addressee has knowledge of the church in question and is thus able to identify it referentially in context. According to the speakers, this knowledge can be based on rumors and widespread knowledge of the church, previous discussion of the church in question between the speaker and the addressee, or the possibility that the addressee has seen the church themselves, all of which render the church identifiable to the addressee and allow for the usage of *kha*.

    This section has established that the postnominal particle *kha* is a definite article and that it correlates most strongly with experience by the addressee (according to the knowledge of the speaker), which renders it uniquely identifiable. These criteria align with Schwarz's definition of *weak* definiteness. The requirements placed on the usage of *kha* tend to be related to the fact that the addressee is able to *pick out and identify* the referent because of its status in discourse. However, this is not the same as discourse familiarity, wherein a referent has been previously mentioned in discourse. This is reserved for *cu*. The weak definiteness of *kha* requires that upon referring to a referent with *kha*, the addressee is able to identify it precisely because of the experience and knowledge of its uniqueness in the discourse of the speaker and the addressee. The following examples illustrate the usage of *cu* to show the distinction between the two.

3.2 Strong definites and *cu*

The strong definite *cu* is restricted to second mentions of a referent in discourse. Upon first mention, the referent surfaces as a bare nominal, without any definiteness marking. Upon second mention, it can be accompanied by the article *cu*, illustrated in examples below.

   In example (16), the speaker is again telling the addressee that they intend to go to the store. The presence of *cu* here is licensed due to the fact that they had just been discussing the store in an immediately previous context.

(16) dawr=ah   **cun**   ka-kal   lai
       store=LOC   **DEF**   1SG-go   FUT
       'I am going to the store.'

In this example, *cu*, like *kha* surfaces in an allomorphic variant *cun* due to the locative case marking on the head noun referent. The speaker and addressee could have been talking about a store which just opened up or the speaker could have asked the addressee if they had ever been to the store. In both cases, the store in question is a definite referent, and when mentioned in the sentence above, it is marked with *cu* in order to denote that it is semantically co-indexed with the same store in the immediately preceding discourse. Presence of *cu* here is obligatory, as second mention of the same referent without *cu* would be infelicitous. In example (17), the speaker and addressee had been discussing a dog. When the addressee asks why the dog is acting more tired than usual, the speaker responds that the dog is sick, using *cu* since the dog had been previously mentioned in discourse.

(17) Context: addressee has asked why the dog is acting more tired than usual. The speaker replies:
       uico   **cu**   a-zaw
       dog   **DEF**   3SG-be.sick
       'The dog is sick.'

Typically, because Hakha Lai is a pro-drop language, the subject *uico* 'dog', would not be mentioned, but if it is, *cu* would be expected to accompany it.

   Another feature of strong definiteness discussed by Schwarz (2009) is its usage in marking part-whole relations, called bridging. In some cases, the uniqueness of a referent is established by the fact that it is in some way part of a previously mentioned referent. In languages such as German or English, this licenses the use of strong definite marking even though the referent itself had not been mentioned previously in discourse. Example (18) below provides an example from English:

(18) John was driving down the street the other day. **The** steering wheel was cold.   (Schwarz 2009:6)

In (18), although the steering wheel was not mentioned previously, the definite article is used because it is part of the act of driving mentioned previously. Example (19) below shows that Hakha Lai also allows for strong definite marking for referents based on part-whole relations.

(19) ramlak=ah   a-um   mi   biakinn   kan-hmu.   An
       forest=LOC   3SG-be.at   REL   church   3PL-see.   3PL.POSS
       biakinn   [innka   **cu**]   a-sen
       church   door   **DEF**   3SG-be.red
       'We found the church in the forest. The church's door was red.'

In example (19), *inn-ka* 'door' is followed by the strong definite, *cu,* via anaphoric part-whole bridging. The church is mentioned previously in discourse and thus, the door which is part of the church is also discourse

familiar. Schwarz finds that in German, bridging situations in some cases license the use of *weak* definites, though in example (19), presence of *kha* or a bare nominal would not allow for the same interpretation. Thus, further bridging examples in other contexts would be required to make a claim about bridging in Hakha Lai.

Examples (20) and (21) provide a minimal pair illustrating the difference in pragmatic usage of *kha* and *cu*. In example (20), the presence of *kha* implies that the addressee knows who the author is, a definite referent based on personal familiarity. In example (21), the presence of *cu* implies that the addressee understands the author to be the writer of the book previously mentioned, a definite referent based on part-whole bridging.

(20) ca   a-ttial-tu   pa **kha** ton ka-duh
   document   3SG-write-AGN[4] MASC **DEF** meet 1SG-want
   'I would like to meet the author (that you know).'

(21) ca   a-ttial-tu   pa **cu**   ton ka-duh
   document   3SG-write-AGN MASC **DEF** meet 1SG-want
   'I would like to meet the author (of this book).'

The choice of definite article in this context is influenced by the knowledge that the speaker has of the addressee's knowledge of the author. If the speaker believes that the addressee knows who the author in question is because they had just talked about them or because the addressee has read the book before, or because they possibly know them personally, then *kha* is licensed. If, however, the speaker believes that the addressee would have no specific reference for the author in question, they would opt to use *cu*, because the author is discourse relevant (anaphorically linked to the book) but does not have a specific reference for the addressee possibly because they have not heard of the author or the book before.

4 Conclusion

This paper has applied the *weak/strong* definiteness framework established by Roberts (2003) and Schwarz (2009) to two definite articles in Hakha Lai, *kha* and *cu* by making reference to field data gathered in collaboration with fluent speakers. The paper has also pointed out notable exceptions to the framework. For the most part, the behavior of Hakha Lai compares to other languages such as Akan and German in drawing this type of distinction between definites, something that English does not do with separate dedicated morphemes. In Hakha Lai, definite expressions can surface as bare nominals but can also be marked with *kha*, which establishes the addressee's familiarity with the referent nominal or *cu*, which marks that the referent nominal has been mentioned previously in the discourse situation. Because the uniqueness of a *kha*-marked nominal is established with a "wider situation" familiarity, it is comparable (though not entirely identical) to Schwarz's weak definiteness. As for *cu*, because it is obligatory on second mention of a referent and because it has also been shown to be utilized in cases of part-whole bridging, it can likely be classified as a strong definite. There is still the question as to whether or not *cu* is a topic marker or if there is a topic marker *cu* and a definite article *cu*. This will have to be investigated in future research. While there are situations where a nominal referent is definite either on account of uniqueness or anaphoricity, there are obviously contexts in which a nominal referent has both features which overlap. This current investigation does not address these types of definite expressions, but they will be the focus of future work. Further research must be done on these definites in Hakha Lai as they lead to other types of investigations on the semantic and pragmatic functions of similar morphemes, such as specificity marking or deictic demonstrative reference. This future research, like this paper, will contribute further to investigations of the meanings of definiteness and the methods by which definiteness is marked in natural languages.

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[4] AGN - agentive

Acknowledgements

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