

Evidence of articles in some Grassfields languages

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This study seeks to account for the presence and evidence of articles in four Grassfields languages (01 Ring language, namely Lamnso', 02 Mbam-kam (Ngemba) languages, Bafut and Awing and 01 Momo language, Meta'). It builds on empirical data collected from language consultants and extracted from documents to demonstrate that some Bantoid Grassfields languages exhibit articles as part of speech, contrary to what has been argued probably because of lack of sufficient evidential data or, perhaps by relying on the existence of noun classes in those languages. Furthermore, the proposal stresses that the article in this case should not be confused with the noun classes. The analysis unveils that the definite article agrees in class (agreement prefix) with the noun it specifies. Since the languages except for Awing, do not exhibit an indefinite article at the segmental level, an underlying zero / \emptyset / morpheme could be posited for it. In Awing, in addition to the zero morpheme, *mɔ* 'ɔ', could also be used to express indefiniteness. The stem of the definite article is either of V, CV or VC syllable structure depending on the language, preceded by an agreement prefix of CV structure in all cases. In some of the languages, the article concord prefix is often homographic with the noun class prefix of the noun it specifies giving room to homonymous reading. Syntactically, articles occupy an immediate post-nominal position in all four languages analysed.