Is there a null D in articleless languages?

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The paper pays attention to the way the two articleless languages, Vietnamese and Chinese, express definiteness to see whether Vietnamese nominals can exhibit anything new that we haven't already known from Chinese, and whether the DP-hypothesis can be extended to Vietnamese. Taking Cheng & Sybmesa (1999, 2005) as the point of departure, the main focus of this study is on the different interpretations of three types of nominals in Vietnamese and Chinese: (i) bare NPs, (ii) NPs made up of a classifier and a noun (Cl-NPs), and (iii) NPs comprising of a numeral, a classifier and a noun (Num-Cl-NPs). While Chinese preverbal bare nouns can be definite, the Vietnamese counterpart cannot be definite, as illustrated in (1). While Cl-NPs and Num-Cl-NPs cannot be definite in Chinese, they can certainly receive definite interpretation in Vietnamese, as shown in (2) and (3). In order to accommodate the cross-linguistic variation, we have come up with a more articulated nominal structure and propose that even article-less languages need a DP projection (though this kind of D may be null). This implies that contra Cheng & Sybesma, there is no structural parameters between article languages and classifier languages, i.e., they all share the same underlying structure, and the cross-linguistic variation lies in the size of the lexical elements. The proposed analysis argues against the no-DP approach (Boskovic 2009), and in favour of the syntactic underspecified approach (Ramchand & Svenonius 2008) to the variation in the expression of definite nominals across languages.

Examples:

Chinese	*Vietnamese*

(1a) Gou ai   chi   rou
     Dog love eat   meat
 'The dogs/ Dogs love to eat meat.'
     (Cheng & Sybesma 2005: 261)
	(1b) Chó thích ăn thịt
	     Dog like eat meat
	 '*The dogs/ Dogs love to eat meat.'
	         (Trinh 2011: 12)

(2a) ?Ta kan-wan-le   bu   dianying
 	
    He watch-finished-PERF CL   movie
 	
 'He finished watching a/*the movie.'
	(2b) Anh-ấy xem xong bộ phim rồi
	
	     He watch finish CL movie already
	
	 'He finished watching *a/the movie.'

(3a) Wo xiang jian   liang ge   xiaohai
    I   want   see   two   CL   kid
 'I would like to see two/*the two kids.'
	(3b) Tôi muốn gặp hai đứa nhỏ
	     I want meet two CL small
	 'I would like to see two/the two kids.'

References: Boskovic, Z (2009). "More on the no-DP analysis of article-less languages". Studia Linguistica 2: 187-204. **Cheng, L. & Sybesma, R. (1999).** "Bare and not-so-bare nouns and the structure of NP". Linguistic Inquiry, 30(4), 509-542. **Cheng, L & Sybesma, R. (2005).** "Classifiers in four varieties of Chinese". In: Cinque, G. & Kayne, R. (eds.) *The Oxford Handbook of Comparative Syntax*, pp. 259-292. New York: Oxford University Press. **Ramchand, G., & Svenonius, P. (2008).** "Mapping a parochial lexicon onto a universal Semantics". In: Biberauer, M. (Ed.). *Limits of Syntactic Variation*, pp. 219-245. Amsterdam: John Benjamins. **Trinh, T. (2011).** "Nominal Reference in Two Classifier Languages". In: Reich, I. et al (eds.), *Proceedings of Sinn und Bedeutung 15*, pp 1-16. Saarbrucken: Universaar – Saarland University Press.