

# Grading and hedging by *gewiss*<sup>1</sup>

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## 1. Introduction

In this paper the analysis of the German specificity marker *gewiss* proposed by Ebert, Ebert and Hinterwimmer (in press) (henceforth: EEH) will be extended to include two types of examples that have been set aside in EEH. In these examples *gewiss* occurs with proper names or abstract mass nouns instead of ordinary count nouns, and it appears to be a hedging device instead of a specificity marker.

Consider the examples in (1). In (1a) an appropriately inflected form of *ein gewiss* (roughly: ‘a certain’) is combined with a noun phrase headed by a count noun. This is the standard use of *gewiss* indicating specificity, which is analyzed in EEH. The addition of *gewiss* forces the indefinite DP to take scope over the intensional operator *suchen* (‘search’). Thus the sentence would be false in a situation where Peter is content with any CD whatsoever. Moreover, *gewiss* signals that, in addition to *Peter*, the speaker is able to identify the mentioned CD. The plain indefinite, without *gewiss*, does not require speaker-identifiability and is compatible with a reading where the indefinite DP takes scope under

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*suchen*, and is thus weaker than the variant with *gewiss* in the sense that it is true in more possible circumstances than the *gewiss*-variant.

(1) a. Peter sucht schon seit Stunden nach einer (gewissen) CD.

‘Peter has been looking for a (certain) CD for hours.’

b. (Ein gewisser) Peter wollte dich sprechen.

‘(A certain) Peter wanted to talk to you.’

c. Kein Kind verlässt diese Schule ohne (ein gewisses) Verständnis der Mathematik.

‘No child leaves this school without (a certain) understanding of mathematics.’

Matters are different in (1b) and (1c). In (1b), by adding the plain indefinite determiner *ein* as well as by adding the complex indefinite determiner *ein gewisser* to the proper name the speaker signals that she takes it not to be common knowledge – shared by speaker and hearer – who the individual called *Peter* is. There is no commitment made by the speaker concerning the hearer’s acquaintance with the individual called *Peter*. The variant with an unmodified proper name, in contrast, requires the speaker to know something about that individual (beyond the information provided in the sentence itself), and in addition, this variant would be infelicitous if the hearer has no idea who the speaker is talking about – the hearer must have some information to identify the individual the speaker is talking about in a non-trivial way (with respect to some property not entailed by the sentence). Comparing the variant with an unmodified proper name (*Peter*) to the two indefinite variants (*ein Peter* / *ein gewisser Peter*), the speaker commitments associated with the indefinite variants are intuitively weaker than the ones associated with the unmodified proper name, since in the latter case the speaker is committed to the assumption that it is common knowledge between her and the hearer who the individual under consideration is.

Turning to (1c), *gewiss* surprisingly induces a kind of down-grading or hedging effect. The sentence with the *gewiss*-variant (*ein gewisses Verständnis* 'a certain understanding') differs from the one with the bare mass abstract noun *Verständnis* ('understanding') in requiring a lower degree of understanding in order to be true than the one with the bare noun. Since understanding something to a particular degree entails understanding it to all lower degrees, the proposition denoted by the *gewiss*-variant is weaker than the one denoted by the bare noun variant (in the sense that it is true in a superset of possible worlds). At the same time the *gewiss*-variant looks like a way of hedging by the speaker trying to avoid the use of the bare noun *Verständnis*.

Taking these facts together, the contribution of (*ein*) *gewiss* in the non-standard cases (occurring with proper names or abstract mass nouns) appears at first sight distinct from its contribution in the standard cases (occurring with ordinary count nouns). When occurring with count nouns, the *gewiss*-variants involve stronger speaker commitments than the plain indefinite variants, which are the natural alternatives – the use of *eine gewisse CD* requires speaker-identifiability whereas the use of *eine CD* does not. When occurring with abstract mass nouns as well as proper names, however, the *gewiss*-variants involve weaker speaker commitments than the variants with a bare proper name or a bare abstract mass noun, which appear to be the natural alternatives in these cases – the use of *ein gewisser Peter* (and of *ein Peter*) does not require it to be common knowledge between the speaker and the hearer who the individual under consideration is, and the use of *ein gewisses Verständnis* does not require the same degree of understanding as required when using *Verständnis*.<sup>2</sup>

It is well known that English *a certain* and French *un certain* behave similarly – they can also be combined with abstract mass nouns and proper names in addition to ordinary count nouns, and the resulting interpretations are similar to the ones in (1b) and (c) (cf. Houghton 2000, Jayez and Tovenca 2002, 2006, in press, and Martin in press), and it is very

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<sup>2</sup> The plain indefinite *ein Verständnis* is marginal in German, cf. section 4.

unlikely that we encounter the same homonymy in all three languages. We will aim at a unified explanation for all three uses combining EEH's analysis of *gewiss* as a specificity marker with independently motivated assumptions about proper names and abstract mass nouns.

In a nutshell, we will argue as follows: The bare variants, which are the natural alternatives of the *gewiss*-variants when combined with proper names and abstract mass nouns, don't pattern with plain indefinites, which are the natural alternatives in the case of count nouns, and instead pattern with definites. We will suggest a predicative analysis of proper names such that their unmodified form is associated with a covert definite determiner giving rise to existence and uniqueness presuppositions. For abstract mass nouns we will argue that the bare form includes a covert determiner providing a contextually fixed standard, analogous to the covert degree morpheme *pos* postulated for the positive form of gradable adjectives.

Corresponding to definite descriptions it is no surprise that the bare variants of proper names and abstract mass nouns induce stronger speaker commitments than the respective *gewiss*-variants. The same pattern can be observed for count nouns when considering definite variants. Beyond, proper names combined with plain indefinites lack speaker-identifiability in the same way count nouns do when combined with plain indefinites. Abstract mass nouns, however, are marginal when combined with plain indefinites and, if acceptable, turn into count noun like items, as do concrete mass nouns.

In this paper we will focus on the effects of the specificity marker *gewiss*. A full analysis of abstract mass nouns is beyond the scope of this paper and will be the topic of future research. We also have to leave open issues of accenting, since a satisfactory

explanation would require a comparison of *gewiss* and its close relative *bestimmt*, cf. EEH and section 2.<sup>3</sup>

The paper is structured as follows: In section 2, we will summarize the main points of EEH's analysis of *ein gewiss* combining with ordinary count nouns. In section 3.1 we sketch the basics of a predicative theory of proper names, and in section 3.2 we show that EEH's analysis combined with this theory offers a natural account of the meaning of sentences containing a proper name modified by *ein gewiss*. In section 4.1 we outline our view on the interpretation of abstract mass nouns, and in section 4.2 we extend EEH's analysis such that it can be applied to sentences where *ein gewiss* is combined with abstract mass nouns. Section 5 concludes the paper.

## 2. Background: EEH's Analysis of *ein gewiss*

As shown in detail in EEH (Ebert, Ebert and Hinterwimmer in press), indefinites modified by *gewiss* (henceforth: *gewiss*-indefinites) (i) require that the speaker is able to identify the individual introduced by the indefinite DP in some non-trivial way, i.e. via some information not entailed by the sentence itself (but not necessarily via naming), and (ii) always take widest scope over all operators contained in the sentence.<sup>4</sup> Consider the sentence in (2), adapted from EEH, ex. (23):

(2) Wenn morgen wieder alle Kinder ein gewisses Pferd reiten wollen, haben wir ein

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<sup>3</sup> When occurring with count nouns and proper names *gewiss* cannot carry an accent, but when occurring with abstract mass nouns it can – *eine GEWISSE CD*, and *ein GEWISSER Peter* are not acceptable, but *ein GEWISSES Verständnis* is a perfect contrast to (*volles*) *Verständnis* '(full) understanding'.

<sup>4</sup> In EEH, *gewiss*-indefinites are compared to indefinites modified by the specificity marker *bestimmt* which is close in meaning but not identical to *gewiss* and is translated into English by *certain*, too. For reasons of space, we do not discuss *bestimmt* in this paper.

Problem.

‘If tomorrow again all children want to ride a certain horse, we will have a problem’.

The sentence in (2) only has a reading in which the indefinite takes scope over all three operators contained in the sentence, i.e. the universally quantified DP, the conditional operator and the intensional operator *wollen* (‘want’): There is one specific horse that the speaker can identify in some way, and if all children want to ride this horse, there is a problem.

Based on a wealth of similar observations, EEH argue for an analysis of *gewiss*-indefinites according to which the existential quantification is supplemented by the requirement that the speaker knows the answer to the question who or what the referent of the indefinite is (cf. Abusch and Rooth 1997). Following Aloni (2001, 2008)<sup>5</sup>, EEH assume that identity questions can be answered by providing an element of a salient conceptual cover (henceforth: CC) instead of providing a name, where CCs are sets of individual concepts (i.e. functions from possible worlds to individuals) that are constrained in a particular way: Given a domain of individuals  $D$  and a set of worlds  $W$ , for each world of  $W$ , each element of  $D$  is identified by exactly one concept in that world, as shown in (3) (from Aloni 2008, definition 3). Consequently, different CCs whose domains are identical are different ways of conceiving of one and the same set of individuals.

(3) Given a set of possible worlds  $W$  and a universe of individuals  $D$ , a conceptual cover

CC based on  $(W, D)$  is a set of functions  $W \rightarrow D$  such that:

$$\forall w \in W: \forall d \in D: \exists! c \in CC: c(w) = d$$

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<sup>5</sup> In EEH as well as in the current paper, we do not employ Aloni’s dynamic system, but a simplified static version as it occurs in the first chapters of Aloni (2001) and in Aloni (2008).

Aloni (2008) adds a special index  $n \in N$  to the variables in her meaning language ranging over CCs, and defines a *conceptual perspective*  $g_\varphi$  in a model  $M$  as a function from indices in  $N$  to CCs. Sentences are then interpreted with respect to assignments under a perspective, where an *assignment under a perspective*  $g_\varphi$  is a function mapping variables  $x_n$  to concepts in  $g_\varphi(n)$ , rather than individuals in  $D$ . Quantification under conceptual covers is defined as shown in (4a) (Aloni 2008, Definition 4). Following Groenendijk and Stokhof (1984), Aloni assumes that a constituent question with respect to a world of evaluation  $w$  denotes the true exhaustive answer to that question in  $w$ , i.e. the set of worlds where the set of individuals that satisfy the respective question predicate is the same as in the world of evaluation. A single *wh*-question is thus interpreted as shown in (4b) in Aloni’s system (see Aloni 2008, Definition 6):

$$(4) \quad \text{a. } [[\exists x_n \phi]]_{M,w,g_\varphi} = 1 \text{ iff } \exists c \in g_\varphi(n) : [[\phi]]_{M,w,g_\varphi[xn/c]} = 1,$$

where the interpretation of an indexed variable  $[[x_n]]_{M,w,g_\varphi} = g_\varphi(x_n)(w)$  is the value of a concept  $g_\varphi(x_n)$  in world  $w$ , i.e. an individual.

$$\text{b. } [[?x_n \phi]]_{M,w,g_\varphi} = \{v : \forall c \in g_\varphi(n) : [[\phi]]_{M,w,g_\varphi[xn/c]} = [[\phi]]_{M,v,g_\varphi[xn/c]}\}$$

A question like  $?x_n P x_n$  thus ‘*groups together the worlds in which the denotation of  $P$  is identified by means of the same set of elements of the conceptual cover selected for  $n$* ’ (Aloni, 2008). The question in (5a) is thus interpreted as shown schematically in (5b). Note that by uttering (5a) the speaker is not claiming that she is able to provide the name of the winner, but only that she is able to provide some contextually appropriate means of identification, with naming being just one option:

$$(5) \quad \text{a. I know who the winner is.}$$

b.  $K_a(?x_m \cdot x_m = \iota y. \text{winner}(y))$ ,

where  $a$  is the speaker,  $[[K_a(?x_m \phi)]]_{M,w,g\wp} = 1$  iff  $\text{Bel}(a, w) \subseteq [[?x_m \phi]]_{M,w,g\wp}$

and  $\text{Bel}(a, w)$  is the set of worlds compatible with what  $a$  believes at  $w$ .

Following EEH, the meaning contribution of *gewiss* indicating that the speaker is able to identify the respective individual with respect to some contextually salient CC is made at the level of conventional implicatures (henceforth: CIs) in the sense of Potts (2005). According to Potts, CIs are elements that, although syntactically fully integrated, are interpreted at a level distinct from the level of the at-issue (main) assertion, and they function as comments on the at-issue core of the assertion. A typical example is a nominal appositive like *a confirmed psychopath* in (6):

(6) Sheila believes that Bill, a confirmed psychopath, is a mentally stable person.

In (6), the view that Bill is a confirmed psychopath is not ascribed to the subject of the sentence, *Sheila*, but is instead the speaker's view. In addition, even when negated the sentence continues to convey that the speaker considers Bill to be a confirmed psychopath. Based on these observations Potts concludes that CIs are scopeless (i.e. always take widest scope) and are unambiguously tied to the speaker, and he argues for a multidimensional theory of meaning with basic at-issue types  $e^a$ ,  $s^a$  and  $t^a$ , and basic CI-types  $e^c$ ,  $s^c$  and  $t^c$ . While there is no constraint on the combinatorial possibilities of the at-issue types, CI-types are only allowed to enter into one type of composition: They take at-issue types as arguments and return CI-types. CI-meanings are thus always interpreted at the highest level and function as comments on the at-issue proposition. In (6), for example, the nominal appositive is interpreted as the predicate  $\lambda x. \text{confirmed\_psychopath}(x)$  applying to the (at-issue) individual



*Bill* and returning the (CI-)proposition that Bill is a confirmed psychopath. The complete sentence (ignoring the contribution of the temporal adjunct-PP) is interpreted as shown in simplified form in (7), where the bullet • indicates the separation of the at-issue content from the CI-content (i.e. the two propositions are not to be understood as being conjoined).

(7) believe(mentally\_stable\_person(bill))(sheila) • confirmed\_psychopath(bill)

Taking everything said so far together, *ein gewiss* is thus interpreted as shown in (8) (adapted from EEH, ex. 62, with minor modifications)<sup>6</sup>. Note that, for reasons irrelevant for the purposes of this paper, *ein gewiss* is analysed as a complex determiner (see EEH for details).

(8) [[ein gewiss]] =  $\lambda P. \lambda Q. \lambda s. \exists x[P(x)(s) \wedge Q(x)(s)] \bullet K_{\alpha}(\iota y_n. y_n = \iota y. P(y)(s) \wedge Q(y)(s))$

On the at issue-level *ein gewiss* takes two predicates as arguments and maps them to a proposition which is true if there is an individual  $x$  satisfying the two predicates in the situation/world  $s$  to which the proposition is applied. On the CI-level, a proposition is added as a comment on the at-issue core stating that the speaker can identify the unique individual satisfying the two predicates in  $s$  with respect to some salient CC, i.e. in some non-trivial way.

The requirement that there must be a unique individual satisfying the two predicates in  $s$

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<sup>6</sup> First, in EEH the knowledge ascription is expressed by  $K_{\alpha}(\uparrow_n x)$ , where  $\uparrow_n x =_{\text{def}} \iota x_n. x_n = x$ . Secondly, in EEH the main focus is on the comparison of *bestimmt* and *gewiss*: It is shown that *bestimmt* basically makes the same meaning contribution as *gewiss* insofar as it requires identifiability by some salient individual, but since that meaning contribution is made on the at-issue level, neither widest scope nor *speaker*-identifiability is required. Therefore, what is given as the definite description  $\iota y. P(y) \wedge Q(y)$  in (8) is given as a simple variable in EEH. This variable can either be bound by the existential quantifier (in the case of *ein bestimmt*) or remain free and be resolved to the contextually most salient individual in E-type fashion (in the case of *ein gewiss*), thus requiring the indefinite to take widest scope.

forces the indefinite to take widest scope<sup>7</sup>: If, for example, in (2) above, the *gewiss*-indefinite took scope under the universally quantified DP, such that for each child  $z$  there is a potentially different horse  $x$  that  $z$  wants to ride, as shown in simplified form in (9a)<sup>8</sup>, the second argument of *ein gewiss*, which is also interpreted on the CI-level, would contain a variable  $z$  to be bound by the universally quantified DP. Assuming with Potts (2005) that binding from the at-issue level into the CI-level is not possible, such a reading cannot be derived because there would be a free variable in the CI-component that cannot be resolved. If the *gewiss*-indefinite takes widest scope, in contrast, this problem does not arise and the sentence is interpreted as shown in simplified form in (9b):

- (9) a.  $\forall z[\text{child}(z)(s) \rightarrow \exists x[\text{horse}(x)(s) \wedge \text{want}(z)(\lambda s'. \text{ride}(x)(z)(s'))(s)]] \rightarrow$   
 $\text{have\_problem}(\text{we})(s) \bullet K_{\alpha}(?y_n.y_n = \iota y. \text{horse}(y)(s) \wedge \text{want}(z)(\lambda s'. \text{ride}(y)(z)(s'))(s))$
- b.  $\exists x[\text{horse}(x)(s) \wedge \forall z[\text{child}(z)(s) \rightarrow \text{want}(z)(\lambda s'. \text{ride}(x)(z)(s'))(s)]] \rightarrow$   
 $\text{have\_problem}(\text{we})(s) \bullet K_{\alpha}(?y_n.y_n = \iota y. \text{horse}(y)(s) \wedge \forall z[\text{child}(z)(s) \rightarrow$   
 $\text{want}(z)(\lambda s'. \text{ride}(y)(z)(s'))(s)] \rightarrow \text{have\_problem}(\text{we})(s))$

The same reasoning applies to other examples: Whenever some operator takes scope over a *gewiss*-indefinite, there is a variable to be bound by that operator in the CI-component, and since that variable cannot be bound from the at-issue component, the resulting interpretation would be deviant. The account of EEH thus automatically accounts for the fact that *gewiss*-indefinites must take widest scope.

Note finally that EEH deviate from Potts' (2005) system in assuming *ein gewiss* to be a dotted type (namely  $\langle\langle e^a, st^a \rangle, \langle\langle e^a, st^a \rangle, st^a \bullet st^c \rangle\rangle$ ) making a meaning contribution both at the

<sup>7</sup> For the purposes of this paper, we remain neutral with respect to the entirely independent question of how island-violating wide-scope readings of indefinites are derived. See Endriss (2009) for a critical discussion of existing proposals and a novel suggestion.

<sup>8</sup> For the purposes of this paper, we make the simplifying assumption that indicative conditionals are interpreted as material implications, and we do not spell out the semantics of *want*.

CI-level and the at-issue level, which is not allowed in Potts' system (see EEH and the references cited therein for independent reasons to allow for this possibility).

Summing up, EEH's analysis accounts for the fact that *gewiss*-indefinites containing count nouns require speaker-identifiability and, in addition, must take scope over all operators in the sentence. In the next section, we will see how this analysis in combination with a particular analysis of proper names accounts for the contribution of *ein gewiss* in cases where its complement is a proper name.

### **3. Proper Names Modified by *ein gewiss***

#### *3.1 The Predicative Analysis of Proper Names*

According to the standard assumption in semantics and philosophy of language proper names are directly referential expressions, i.e. their sole contribution to the proposition is the individual bearing the respective name. There is another prominent line of research (starting with Quine 1960 and Burge 1973) according to which proper names are predicates functioning as the complements of either overt or covert determiners (Larson and Segal 1995, Geurts 1997, Elbourne 2005, Matushansky 2006, Graff Fara ms.). Empirical arguments for the predicative analysis are: (i) in languages such as classical Greek and (colloquial) German proper names are optionally preceded by a definite determiner (in Bavarian German this is obligatory), and (ii) even in languages such as English, where referentially used proper names must occur bare, there are cases of proper names occurring as arguments of quantificational determiners, as in (10) (from Burge 1973: 429).

- (10) a. There are relatively few Alfreds in Princeton.  
b. Some Alfreds are crazy; some are sane.

Taking these facts at face value, a proper name such as *Alfred* denotes a predicate of the form  $\lambda x. x \text{ is called Alfred}$  combining as a complement with a definite determiner, where the determiner may be overt in colloquial German and Greek and is covert otherwise (Elbourne 2005, Matushansky 2006, Graff Fara ms.). In most cases the uniqueness presupposition associated with the definite determiner will not be satisfied (there are many people called *Alfred* in the actual world), which is the same problem as the one encountered with ordinary nouns such as *table* in *John cleaned the table* (there is a huge number of tables in the actual world). The standard way to account for non-unique definite descriptions consists in assuming that they are incomplete requiring an additional contextually provided restriction in the form of an intersecting covert predicate (see Stanley and Szabo 2000 and the references cited therein for arguments that such a restriction is associated with all determiners). As argued by Matushansky (2006) and Graff Fara (ms.), the same strategy can be applied to cases of proper names that have a non-singleton extension. In (11), for example, the proper name *Fred* is analysed as a definite description with a covert determiner and an additional covert predicate, e.g.  $\lambda x. x \text{ drives a red Porsche and } x \text{ is a fan of Igor Stravinsky}$ , such that the definite description denotes the unique individual that has the property of being called Fred, driving a red Porsche and being a fan of Igor Stravinsky (let us assume that there is only one such individual in the world of evaluation).

(11) Yesterday, I talked to Fred about the new recording of *The Rite of Spring* by Ivan Fischer.

With these assumptions in place, let us turn to examples where a proper name occurs as the complement of the complex determiner *ein gewiss*.

### 3.2 Proper Names as the Complements of "ein gewiss"

The effects imposed by *ein gewiss* on proper names are manifest in the example in (12). We will consider three contrasts: (i) bare proper names vs. plain indefinites (*Maria* / *eine Maria*), (ii) bare proper names vs. *gewiss*-indefinites (*Maria* / *eine gewisse Maria*), and (iii) plain indefinites vs. *gewiss*-indefinites (*eine Maria* / *eine gewisse Maria*).

(12) Seltsamerweise war jeder von meinen Kollegen schon einmal mit einer (gewissen) Maria verheiratet.

‘Strangely enough, each one of my colleagues has already been married to (a woman named/a certain) Maria.’

Using a bare proper name instead of a plain indefinite, the speaker commits herself, first, to being able to identify the referent of the proper name and, secondly, to believing that the hearer is able to identify the referent. Otherwise, the use of a bare proper name would not be felicitous. We argued in the previous section that bare proper names come with a covert definite determiner presupposing existence and uniqueness of the referent. For standard definite descriptions it is well-known that they cannot be replaced by an indefinite description even though every context satisfying the presuppositions of the definite determiner entails the existence of the respective entity, cf. (13).

(13) Maria wanted to climb \*a/the highest mountain in Bavaria.

Starting with Heim (1991), various researchers have argued for the existence of a pragmatic principle dubbed *Maximize Presuppositions!* (henceforth: MP) enforcing the use of the presuppositionally stronger among two (or more) alternatives whenever the respective

presuppositions are satisfied in a given context (Percus 2006, Sauerland 2008, Singh 2011).

Let us adopt the version of MP proposed by Percus for concreteness (although others would work as well for our purposes):

*Maximize Presuppositions!* (Percus 2006, p. 16):

- i. Alternatives are only defined for lexical items. For any lexical items, the alternatives consist of all *presuppositionally stronger* items of the same syntactic category.
- ii. Do not use a sentence  $\phi$  if a member of its Alternative-Family  $\psi$  is felicitous and contextually equivalent to  $\phi$ , where the Alternative-Family of a sentence is the set of sentences that you get by replacing at least one alternative-associated expression with an alternative.

Being of the same syntactic category the definite determiner *the* is an alternative to the indefinite determiner *a*, and is presuppositionally stronger presupposing existence and uniqueness, while *a* does not presuppose anything at all. Hence, since any context entails the existence of a unique highest mountain in Bavaria, the variant of (13) with an indefinite instead of a definite description is never felicitous.

With this in mind, let us now turn to the sentences in (12). Assuming that the covert definite determiner coming with a bare proper name counts as much as an alternative to the indefinite determiner as its overt counterpart, we make the following prediction: Whenever there is a salient property such that the context entails the existence of a unique individual having that property in addition to the property of being called *Maria*, MP blocks the option of employing the indefinite determiner instead of the covert definite one – MP blocks *eine Maria* while licensing *Maria*. In other words, whenever both speaker and hearer have some common knowledge enabling them to identify the respective individual at the point where the

sentence is uttered, the bare proper name has to be used. Using the proper name in combination with the indefinite article thus indicates that the speaker presumes that, at the point when the sentence is uttered, there is no common knowledge enabling both her and the hearer to identify the respective individual.

Let us now turn to the contrast between bare proper names and *gewiss*-indefinites (*Maria / eine gewisse Maria*). Both bare proper names and *gewiss*-indefinites require that the speaker is able to identify the referent, but unlike bare proper names, *gewiss*-indefinites are neutral where the hearer is concerned.<sup>9</sup> This effect can be explained by combining the predicative analysis of proper names (cf. section 3.1) with the regular interpretation of *ein gewiss* (cf. section 2), according to which the speaker-identifiability requirement of *ein gewiss*, in belonging to the CI-level, is part of the assertion instead of being presupposed. Thus, in the *gewiss*-variant it is asserted that the speaker is able to identify the respective individual in some non-trivial way.

Since we assume *ein gewiss* to be a complex determiner, it is of the same syntactic category as the definite determiner. Therefore the definite determiner (in its overt as well as in its covert version) counts as an alternative to *ein gewiss*. Since the definite determiner is presuppositionally stronger, we expect the use of *gewiss*-indefinites to be blocked under the same conditions as those blocking the use of the plain indefinites, which is what we find. Analogous to the case of plain indefinites, MP thus provides an explanation for why using *gewiss*-indefinites indicates that it is not common knowledge of speaker and hearer who the referent is.

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<sup>9</sup> There is a wide-spread use of *ein gewiss* in combination with proper names occurring in situations where the speaker is well aware that her audience knows who the individual bearing the name is.

*Ein gewisser Barack Obama nutzte als einer der ersten Politiker Facebook für seinen Wahlkampf.*  
'A certain Barack Obama was one of the first politicians to use Facebook for his election campaign'.

Crucially, however, these cases have an ironic flavor: the speaker pretends that she does not assume it to be common knowledge who Barack Obama is. Such examples therefore do not constitute counterarguments against our claim that MP blocks the (literal) use of *ein gewiss* in cases where using the bare proper name was felicitous.

Let us finally consider the contrast between plain indefinites and *gewiss*-indefinites (*eine Maria / eine gewisse Maria*). First of all, there is a difference in scope options: plain indefinites preferably take narrow scope while the *gewiss*-variants must take wide scope. In (12) the narrow scope reading of the plain indefinite is true in a situation where for each of the speaker's colleagues there is a possibly different woman named *Maria* that he was married to. Similarly, the narrow scope reading of the plain indefinite in (14) is true in a situation where the only thing that Claudia cares about is that she gets to know *some* guy called *Detlev*, without having a particular Detlev in mind. In contrast, the *gewiss*-variants of (12) and (14) are only true in a situation where all of the speaker's colleagues were married to the same woman, and where there is a particular guy that Claudia wants to get to know, respectively. Hence *gewiss*-indefinites containing proper names behave just like ones containing ordinary count nouns as far as their scope-taking behavior is concerned.

(14) Claudia will endlich mal einen (gewissen) Detlev persönlich kennen lernen.

'Claudia finally wants to get to know (a person named/a certain) Detlev personally'.

In addition to scope-taking plain indefinites and *gewiss*-indefinites differ with respect to speaker-identifiability. Choosing the complex determiner *ein gewiss* adds information absent from the plain indefinite version even on its wide-scope reading: When using a plain indefinite the speaker does not commit herself to being able to identify the individual she's talking about, but when using a *gewiss*-indefinites she does. Consider the wide-scope reading of the plain indefinite in (14) and suppose Claudia has a hypothesis about the correlation of names and personal charisma, and the only information she gave to the speaker of (14) was that there is a guy called Detlev in her test set and she wants to meet him personally. In such a situation the speaker would not be licensed to refer to this individual by *ein gewisser Detlev*



because she does not have individuating information beyond what is entailed by the sentence itself. Therefore she has to use the plain indefinite *ein Detlev* .

Summing up, by combining the EEH analysis of *ein gewiss* with a predicative theory of proper names, we can (i) account for the contrast between bare proper names and plain indefinites as well as *gewiss*-indefinites – 'Maximize Presuppositions!' separates *Maria* from *eine (gewisse) Maria* – and we can (ii) account for the contrast between plain indefinites and *gewiss*-indefinites since, following EEH, speaker-identifiability is part of the meaning of *ein gewiss*, but not of the meaning of *ein*.

## **4 *Ein gewiss* in combination with abstract mass nouns**

### *4.1 Abstract mass nouns and gradability*

The second type of examples set aside in EEH are cases where *gewiss* occurs with abstract mass nouns. Surprisingly, when combined with abstract mass nouns, *gewiss* indicates gradability expressing in many, but not all, cases a kind of down-grading, thereby raising the question of what abstract mass nouns have in common with gradable adjectives and how to explain the effect induced by *gewiss* without postulating a distinct lexical item in these cases.

Abstract mass nouns have received far less attention in the philosophical and linguistic literature than concrete mass nouns, on the one hand, and gradable adjectives, on the other (but see Moltmann 2004, 2009, Nicolas 2010 and Yi ms.). The most prominent feature of gradable adjectives such as *tall*, *expensive*, *smart*, etc. is the context-dependence of the positive form. While a comparative construction such as (15a) is either true or false, irrespective of the context of utterance (assuming the denotations of the proper names to be fixed), a positive form, as in (15b), may be true in one context and false in another – Mary will count as tall, if the sentence is uttered in a region where the average height of people is

low, but she will not count as tall if the sentence is uttered in a region where people tend to be tall.

- (15) a. Mary is taller than Bill.  
 b. Mary is tall.

In the majority of approaches to the semantics of gradability adjectives are analyzed as relations between individuals and degrees (cf. Creswell 1977, von Stechow 1984, Bierwisch 1987, and Heim 2000), or functions from individuals to degrees (Kennedy 1997, 2007) (but see, e.g., Klein 1980, Barker 2002 and Moltmann 2009 for different views). Degree-based analyses involve, in addition to the familiar basic types *e*, *s* and *t*, a type *d* (*degree*), where degrees are abstract representations of measurement along some dimension, such as height, cost, etc. A set of totally ordered degrees constitutes a scale. In degree-based analyses, regardless of whether relational or functional, the adjective meanings must be combined with degree arguments in order to turn into predicates and combine with their subjects. Degree arguments may be provided by comparative or superlative morphology or measure phrases like *three inches*. If the adjective occurs in the bare positive form, as in (15b), the degree argument is supposed to be provided by a covert morpheme *pos* introducing a standard of comparison in the form of a free degree variable  $d_s$ , whose value is fixed by the context. The meaning of *pos* can be stated as in (16a), the meaning of *tall* as in (16b), and the meaning of *pos* applied to *tall* as in (16c). The sentence in (15b) is interpreted as in (16d), which can be paraphrased as ‘The degree to which Mary is tall is at least as high as the contextually fixed standard for tallness’.

- (16) a.  $[[pos]] = \lambda f_{\langle d, \langle e, \langle s, t \rangle \rangle \rangle}. \lambda x. \lambda s. \exists d[f(d)(x)(s) \wedge d \geq d_s]$   
 b.  $[[tall]] = \lambda d. \lambda x. \lambda s. [height(d)(x)(s)]$

c.  $[[\text{pos-tall}]] = \lambda x. \lambda s. \exists d[\text{height}(d)(x)(s) \wedge d \geq d_s]$

d.  $\lambda s. \exists d[\text{height}(d)(\text{Mary})(s) \wedge d \geq d_s]$

Abstract mass nouns such as *tallness*, *smartness*, *understanding*, etc., provide clear evidence that they are morphologically related to gradable adjectives like *tall* and *smart*, and (arguably) gradable verbs like *understand*, and that gradability is still retained in their denotations (Nicolas 2010, Yi ms.): First, they can be combined with determiners expressing measurement along the same scale as the one associated with the respective adjective or verb, as shown by the intuitive equivalence of (17a) and (17b) (cf. Yi ms.: 20). Secondly, in their bare form they show a behavior that is similar to the behavior of gradable adjectives discussed above. For example, (18a) may be true in a context where (18b) is false, just like (18c) may be true in a context where (18d) is false.

(17) a. Mary shows some/a lot of/little/a little liveliness.

b. Mary is somewhat/very/not very/a bit lively.

(18) a. Mary shows more liveliness than John.

b. Mary shows liveliness.

c. Mary is livelier than John.

d. Mary is lively.

At the same time, bare abstract mass nouns behave remarkably similar to bare concrete mass nouns (and bare plurals) insofar as their interpretation depends on the nature of the verbal predicate they combine with. For example, both receive generic interpretations when combined with stative evaluative predicates and receive existential interpretations when combined with episodic predicates, cf. (19a,b), (see Moltmann 2004 for a detailed discussion).

(19) a. Peter likes gold/generosity.

‘In general, Peter likes instances of gold/generosity.’

b. Peter has found gold/has experienced generosity.

‘There is a quantity of gold  $x$ /an instance of generosity  $x$  such that Peter has found/experienced  $x$ .’

Based on a wealth of similar observations Moltmann (2004) argues that abstract mass nouns do not refer to properties conceived of as abstract objects and instead refer to properties conceived of as kinds of *tropes*, just like concrete mass nouns refer to kinds of substances or stuff, and bare plurals refer to kinds of individuals (cf. Carlson 1977). Tropes are spatiotemporally concrete manifestations of a property in an individual, i.e. when Paul was sad yesterday evening, for example, there existed a concrete manifestation of the property of being sad in Paul located at the same time and place Paul was located when he was sad.

Ordinary verbal predicates cannot apply to kinds directly, but only indirectly via manifestations of the respective kind, as is evident from the paraphrases in (19a). Therefore kinds are assumed to exist only via their manifestations, where in the case of the kinds referred to by abstract mass nouns the manifestations are tropes. Let us combine the observations concerning the gradability of abstract mass nouns derived from gradable adjectives or verbs with Moltmann’s (2004) insights and assume that abstract mass nouns initially have denotations like the one given in (20) for *liveliness* (see Nicolas 2010 and Yims. for different views):

(20)  $\lambda d. \lambda p. \lambda s. I(\textit{liveliness})(d)(p)(s)$ ,

Where  $p$  is a variable ranging over tropes, and  $I$  means ‘instantiates’.

According to (20), the noun *liveliness* denotes a relation between tropes  $p$  and degrees  $d$  such that  $p$  instantiates (the kind) *liveliness* to degree  $d$ . From this perspective, the instantiation relation between tropes and kinds of tropes is a gradable one, analogous to the idea of a graded membership relation in Cognitive Science (cf. e.g. Hampton 2007) The rationale for considering the instantiation relation between tropes and kinds of tropes as being gradable is (i) that abstract mass nouns license degree modifiers (in the form of determiners), as do gradable adjectives (in the form of adverbs), indicating that the instantiations of the corresponding properties can be ordered with respect to the same scales that are associated with the adjective denotations from which the respective noun denotations are derived, and (ii) that this is reflected in the degree to which a given trope instantiates a given property (conceived of as a kind of trope).

A detailed account of how abstract mass nouns are derived from gradable adjectives is beyond the scope of this paper, but we tentatively assume that the link is established in the form of a rule like the one given in (21) (see Nicolas 2010 for a similar idea and Moltmann 2009 for an analysis which defines the meanings of gradable adjectives via tropes already):

$$(21) \quad \forall f_{\langle d, \langle e, \langle s, t \rangle \rangle \rangle} \forall x \forall d \forall s [f(d)(x)(s) \rightarrow \exists p \exists k [R(k, f) \wedge I(k)(d)(p)(s)]]$$

In words: “For all gradable adjective denotations  $f$ , individuals  $x$ , degrees  $d$  and situation  $s$  it is the case that if  $x$  has the property  $f$  to degree  $d$  in  $s$ , then there is a trope  $p$  and a kind (of tropes)  $k$  related to  $f$  such that  $p$  instantiates  $k$  to degree  $d$  in  $s$ ”.

When an abstract mass noun combines with a determiner such as *a lot* (whose denotation is given in (22a)), the trope argument as well as the degree argument is saturated, as shown in (22b) for the example *a lot of liveliness*. The denotation of the complete sentence *Alice shows a lot of liveliness* from (17a) above is given in (22c):

(22) a.  $[[a \text{ lot}]] = \lambda P_{\langle d, \langle p, \langle s, t \rangle \rangle} \cdot \lambda Q_{\langle p, \langle s, t \rangle \rangle} \cdot \lambda s. \exists p \exists d [P(d)(p)(s) \wedge d \geq d^* \wedge Q(p)(s)],$

where  $d^*$  is the contextually fixed standard for what counts as a high degree.

b.  $[[a \text{ lot of liveliness}]] = \lambda Q_{\langle p, \langle s, t \rangle \rangle} \cdot \lambda s. \exists p \exists d [I(\text{liveliness})(d)(p)(s) \wedge d \geq d^* \wedge Q(p)(s)]$

c.  $\lambda s. \exists p \exists d [I(\text{liveliness})(d)(p)(s) \wedge d \geq d^* \wedge \text{show}(p)(\text{alice})(s)]$

“There is a trope  $p$  and a degree  $d$  such that  $p$  instantiates *liveliness* to degree  $d$  and  $d$  is very high and Alice shows  $p$ ”

We propose to analyze bare abstract mass nouns in parallel to the analysis of gradable adjectives when occurring in the bare positive form. In the adjectival case a covert morpheme  $pos$  is postulated introducing a contextually fixed standard of comparison, cf. (16a) above.

Analogously, we assume that in the case of bare abstract mass nouns there is a covert determiner  $D_{pos}$  providing a contextually fixed standard of comparison at the level of determiner meanings, cf. (23):

(23)  $[[D_{pos}]] = \lambda P_{\langle d, \langle p, \langle s, t \rangle \rangle} \cdot \lambda Q_{\langle p, \langle s, t \rangle \rangle} \cdot \lambda s. \exists p \exists d [P(d)(p)(s) \wedge d \geq d_s \wedge Q(p)(s)]$

Thus the sentence in (24a) is interpreted as shown in (24b).

(24) a. Peter experienced generosity.

b.  $\lambda s. \exists p \exists d [I(\text{generosity})(d)(p)(s) \wedge d' \geq d_s \wedge \text{experienced}(p)(\text{peter})(s)]$

“There is a trope  $p$  and a degree  $d$  such that  $p$  instantiates *generosity* to degree  $d$  and  $d$  is above the contextually given standard and Peter experienced  $p$ ”

#### 4.2 Abstract mass nouns as the complements of ‘ein gewiss’

As already argued in the introduction, sentences such as the *gewiss*-variant in (1c) and, similarly, the *gewiss*-variant in (25) give rise to weaker speaker commitments if they contain *ein gewiss* than they do if they contain the bare version of the abstract mass noun. In the case of (25), for example, the speaker hedges her claim by adding *ein gewiss*, indicating that the degree to which Paul understands the addressee's problems is lower than it would be if she used the bare form of the abstract mass noun.

(25) Paul hat (ein gewisses) Verständnis für deine Probleme.

'Paul understands your problems (to a certain extent).'

Houghton (2000), Jayez and Tovenà (2002, in press) and Martin (in press) observed similar effects when combining French *un certain* and English *a certain* with abstract mass nouns. (French *un certain* and English *a certain* are close in meaning but not identical to German *ein gewiss*; see EEH, section 4 for discussion.). Jayez and Tovenà (2002), who sketch an analysis of abstract mass nouns in terms of tropes, too, suggest that by uttering a sentence such as (26) (=ex. 35a in Jayez and Tovenà, in press) "the speaker implicates that she is not sure that Yolanda showed courage to a high degree or in a strong form" (Jayez and Tovenà in press: 14). They assume this to result from the fact that "by indicating that Yolanda exhibited a particular degree or form of courage, the speaker implicates that, for all she knows, Yolanda did not show higher degrees or clearer forms of courage" (Jayez and Tovan in press: 14).

(26) Yolanda a montré un certain courage.

'Yolanda showed some courage.'

While the analysis we propose below is based on a similar intuition, the explanation sketched by Jayez and Tovenà (2002, in press) cannot be correct as it stands: As we have seen above, each episodic sentence containing a bare abstract mass noun triggers existential quantification over instantiations of the respective property – *Jolanda hat Mut.* ('Jolanda is courageous') is interpreted such that there is a Jolanda trope instantiating the courage property (conceived of as a kind of tropes) to a degree beyond the contextually fixed standard. Following Jayez and Tovenà, each such sentence should give rise to an implicature (cf. the quote above), which is clearly not the case. A more promising solution in a similar spirit is this: While the covert determiner  $D_{pos}$  which we assume to be present in the case of bare abstract mass nouns is associated with a degree at least as high as the contextually fixed standard, the determiner *ein gewiss* (and presumably *un certain* as well) is associated with a degree that is not specified with respect to such a standard, but of which it is required that the speaker can identify it in some way. Let us thus assume the following meaning for *ein gewiss* in its use as a complex determiner combining with abstract mass nouns, which is parallel to the meaning of *ein gewiss* in its uses as a complex determiner combining with count nouns and proper names (given in (8) in section 2), modulo the differences in the semantic types of the two arguments and the double existential quantification over tropes and degrees:

$$(27) \quad [[\text{ein gewiss}]_{a\text{-mass}}] = \lambda P_{\langle d, \langle p, st \rangle \rangle}. \lambda Q_{\langle p, st \rangle}. \lambda s. \exists p \exists d [P(d)(p)(s) \wedge Q(p)(s)]$$

$$\bullet K_{\alpha} (?d_n.d_n = id'. \exists p [P(d')(p)(s) \wedge Q(p)(s)])$$

The *gewiss*-variant of the sentence in (25) is thus interpreted as shown in (28):



(28) [[Paul hat ein gewisses Verständnis für deine Probleme]] =

$\lambda s. \exists p \exists d [I(\textit{understanding})(d)(p)(s) \wedge B(p)(\textit{paul})(s)]$

- $K_{\alpha} (?d_n, d_n = \textit{id}'). \exists p [ I(\textit{understanding})(d')(p)(s) \wedge B(p)(\textit{paul})(s)]$ ,

where  $B(p)(\textit{paul})(s)$  means ‘Paul is the bearer of  $p$  in  $s$ ’.

In a sentence containing a DP headed by *ein gewiss<sub>a-mass</sub>* it is not stated that the degree introduced by the existential quantifier is at least as high as the contextually fixed standard, and in most cases there is a less marked alternative available, namely the one involving the covert determiner  $D_{pos}$  (*ein gewisser Mut* ‘a certain courage’ vs.  $D_{pos}$  *Mut* ‘courage’). Thus the use of the *gewiss*-variant triggers the implicature that the degree introduced by the existential quantifier is lower than the contextually fixed standard (but see the dimension denoting nouns below). The reason is this: The speaker only states (at the CI-level, recall) that she can identify the respective degree in some way, but does not give any information regarding the question of how high the degree is on the respective scale. Hence, if it was above the contextually fixed standard associated with  $D_{pos}$ , it would have been more informative to employ  $D_{pos}$  – at least if it was not considerably higher than that standard, otherwise a determiner such as *viel* (‘a lot’) would be the obvious choice. At the same time, if the degree was considerably lower than the respective standard, a natural choice would be the determiner *wenig* (‘little’).<sup>10</sup> Hence, we predict that the use of *ein gewiss* in combination with an abstract mass noun implicates that the speaker knows that the respective property is instantiated in the respective individual to a degree that is a little, but not dramatically below the contextually fixed standard, while she either does not know whether it is instantiated to a higher degree as

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<sup>10</sup> *Viel* (‘a lot’), *wenig* (‘a little’) and *ein gewiss* are in complementary distribution, that is, *ein gewiss* cannot co-occur with a degree modifier. Contrary to the suggestion of one reviewer, cases where *ein gewiss* is combined with *bisschen* (‘bit’) as in *ein gewisses bisschen Verständnis* (lit. ‘a certain bit of understanding’) do not present counterexamples, since *bisschen* is no adverb and instead a noun like element which seems to have the status of a classifier.

well, or knows that it is not instantiated to a higher degree. This is in accordance with the intuition that it would be odd to use *ein gewiss* in a situation where one knows that the property under consideration is instantiated in an individual only to a degree considerably below the contextually fixed standard.

It is important to keep in mind that being able to identify the respective degree with respect to a conceptual cover does not mean being able to identify it by naming, which would of course be an absurd requirement with respect to degrees associated with the abstract scales under consideration – any contextually appropriate, non-trivial description, e.g. in (25) a description such as “The degree to which one needs to understand your problem in order to help you” will be perfect.

Let us end this section by addressing some questions raised by the analysis.<sup>11</sup> First, there is the problem of property vs. dimension, which is well-known from adjectives. The adjective *tall*, for example, expresses a property when occurring in the bare positive form, and a mere dimension when combined with measure phrase (*Paul is (180m) tall.*, cf. (16)). When switching to abstract mass nouns there are two different lexical items corresponding to *tall*: the dimension is called *height* and the property may be called *tallness*. Such a lexical difference is rare and it only occurs if there is a measurable dimension; German examples would be *Schnelligkeit / Geschwindigkeit* ('quickness' / 'speed') and *Schwere / Gewicht* ('heavyness' / 'weight'). In cases like *Schönheit* ('beauty') or *Mut* ('courage') there is no additional dimension denoting expression because there is no measurable dimension. Thus you have to speak of *Mut* even if it is only *ein gewisser Mut*, which is lower than *Mut* per se. Accordingly, in our analysis a trope may instantiate the kind of *Mut* tropes (to a certain degree) even it is below the contextually given standard. This is one of the shortcomings of degree-based analyses in general and is found in the case of adjectives, too.

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<sup>11</sup> The problems discussed in this paragraph have been pointed out to us by the anonymous reviewers – many thanks again.

There is, however, empirical evidence that the 'double role' of (most) abstract mass nouns (and gradable adjectives) is not a mere artifact of degree-based theories. First, if you ask native speakers whether *Paula hat einen gewissen Mut* ('Paula has a certain courage') entails that she has courage, they mostly say that, yes, she has, agreeing at the same time that *ein gewisser Mut* is less than courage proper. In addition, if there is a distinct dimension denoting expression, *gewiss* preferable combines with the dimension denoting expression, not with the corresponding property denoting expression, – *eine gewisse Geschwindigkeit* ('a certain speed') is clearly preferred over *eine gewisse Schnelligkeit* ('a certain quickness'), cf. (29a). Beyond, when combined with a dimension denoting expression *gewiss* does not indicate down-grading – *eine gewisse Geschwindigkeit* need not be lower than the (contextually fixed) standard speed. This is predicted in our account by the fact that there is no less marked alternative available, since the corresponding property denoting expression is a different lexical item (*Schnelligkeit*). Dimension denoting abstract mass nouns also differ from the rest in not allowing for a bare form, which is easily explained by taking into account that they do not denote a property and thus cannot be headed by  $D_{pos}$  – *Geschwindigkeit* does not occur bare while *Schnelligkeit* and *Mut* do, cf. (29b).

- (29) a. Dieser Job erfordert einen gewissen Mut / eine gewisse Geschwindigkeit /  
 ?? eine gewisse Schnelligkeit.  
 'This Job requires a certain courage / speed/ quickness'.
- b. Dieser Job erfordert Mut / Schnelligkeit / ?? Geschwindigkeit.  
 'This Job requires a courage / quickness / speed '.

On the other hand, dimension denoting nouns may be combined with the plain indefinite *ein* if the sentence is generic in some sense, cf. (30), which is impossible for other abstract mass nouns (and also for dimension denoting nouns in non-generic contexts), cf. (31). If, however,

an abstract mass noun, regardless of whether dimension denoting or not, is modified by some specifying property, as in (32a), combination with a plain indefinite is fully acceptable. Since the same effect is found for concrete mass nouns, cf. (32b), it is probably due to switching from mass to count by specifying a sub-kind. The crucial question will then be the question of how properties specified by degrees relate to sub-kinds – does the relative clause in (32a) specify a degree of courage, or a sub-kind of 'courage? Or is the specification of a degree of courage one way of specifying a sub-kind of courage? The trope analysis conceiving of gradable properties as kinds of tropes can be seen as providing a link between grades and kinds. At the same time, by referring to graded membership of tropes it provides a link between grading and hedging. Due to limitations of space we have to leave these issues open in this paper.

(30) Ein Prozess hat immer eine Geschwindigkeit.

'A process always has a (particular) speed.'

(31) Dieser Job erfordert \*einen Mut / \*eine Schnelligkeit / ?? eine Geschwindigkeit.

'This Job requires a courage / quickness / speed'.

(32) a. Dieser Job erfordert einen Mut, \*(der an Dummheit grenzt).

'This job requires a (kind of) courage on the border of stupidity.'

b. Diese Stadt hat eine Luft, \*(die krank macht).

'This city has a (kind of) air that makes you sick.'

## 5. Conclusion

This paper focusses on two types of examples that at first sight seem to be problematic for EEH's analysis of the complex determiner *ein gewiss* as a specificity marker: sentences where *ein gewiss* is combined with proper names, and sentences where it is combined with abstract mass nouns. In both cases, the variant with *ein gewiss* gives rise to speaker commitments weaker than those associated with their salient alternatives (namely sentences employing bare proper names and bare abstract mass nouns, respectively). This is problematic because in the standard cases where *ein gewiss* is combined with an 'ordinary' count noun, it is the other way around: The salient alternatives (namely sentences with plain indefinite determiners) give rise to weaker speaker commitments than the *gewiss*-variants.

We have shown that the at first sight problematic uses of *ein gewiss* can be accounted for by combining EEH's analysis with independently motivated assumptions about proper names and abstract mass nouns. We have argued for a predicative analysis of proper names according to which (what appears to be) a bare form is actually the complement of a covert definite determiner. The fact that sentences with proper names combined with *ein gewiss* give rise to weaker speaker commitments than sentences with bare proper names can be explained as resulting from the application of the well-established pragmatic principle *Maximize Presuppositions!*

As for abstract mass nouns, we have argued for an analysis according to which they initially denote relations between degrees  $d$  and tropes  $p$  such that  $p$  realizes a property to degree  $d$ . These nouns can be combined with overt or covert determiners saturating the trope and the degree argument, and what appears to be a bare form is actually the complement of a covert determiner  $D_{pos}$  specifying the degree to which the corresponding property is instantiated as being at least as high as the contextually fixed standard. If an abstract mass noun is combined with *ein gewiss* instead of occurring in its bare form, the respective degree is specified as being identifiable by the speaker. If the speaker could have used the bare form in order to express a degree exceeding the contextually given standard, the *gewiss*-variant

triggers the implicature that the degree is (slightly) below the standard. This accounts for the diminutive flavor associated with *ein gewiss*. Dimension denoting nouns cannot occur bare and, accordingly, don't have a diminutive flavor when combined with *ein gewiss*.

As already mentioned in the paper, the two types of uses that are the main focus of this paper are also found with the English and French near equivalents of *ein gewiss*, namely *a certain* and *un certain*. However, extending our analysis to these two determiners requires an in-depth study of the data, since it was shown in EEH that *a certain* and *un certain* differ from *ein gewiss* with respect to scope possibilities and to the question of whether the identifiability requirement is tied to the speaker. We leave the issue of a cross-linguistically unified analysis as a subject for future research.

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