

A syntactically-driven approach to indefiniteness, (anti-)specificity and partitivity in Romance

M.Teresa Espinal (Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona)

Sonia Cyrino (University of Campinas)

1. In Romance, indefiniteness, (anti-)specificity and partitivity are expressed in different ways:

(1) Indefiniteness

a. <i>Ho visto (dei) ragazzi.</i> [I]	b. <i>Eu vi meninos.</i> [BP]
have seen dei children	I saw children
'I saw children.'	'I saw children.'

(2) Specificity

a. <i>Ho visto dei ragazzi.</i> [I]	b. <i>Eu vi uns meninos.</i> [BP]
have seen dei children	I saw some children
'I saw some children.'	'I saw some children.'

(3) Anti-specificity

a. <i>Ho visto alcuni ragazzi.</i> [I]	b. <i>Eu vi alguns meninos.</i> [BP]
have seen some children	I saw some children
'I saw some children.'	'I saw some children.'

(4) Partitivity

a. <i>Ho visto alcuni dei ragazzi.</i> [I]	b. <i>Eu vi alguns dos meninos.</i> [BP]
have seen some of the children	I saw some of the children
'I saw some of the children.'	'I saw some of the children.'

Note that (1) to (4) contain plural expressions in I(talian) (some exs. come from Cardinaletti & Giusti 2016) and B(razilian) P(ortuguese). The semantic literature has been very active on these topics. Still, to our knowledge, a common analysis that accounts for how these different meanings are constrained syntactically has not yet been provided. In this paper, we aim to present a syntactically-driven analysis that explains the availability of the indefiniteness, (anti-)specificity and partitivity readings in Romance, which, we propose, can be derived in a compositional way.

2. We assume, following Cyrino and Espinal (2019), that within the nominal domain, by default, the PLURALIZER in Romance is syntactically adjoined to D (i.e., a categorized *d* root) and is syntactically opaque; hence, the newly formed object has the same label as its host (D). This is represented in (5):

(5) [_D PLURALIZER D]

In our proposal, indefinite expressions as (1) are derived by adjoining an operator DE to the structure in (5), as in (6), which shifts a definite reading of the pluralized nominal to an indefinite one, and introduces a type-shifting from ⟨e⟩ type to ⟨e,t⟩ type expressions.

(6) [_D DE [_D [_i PLURALIZER: PL] D_{def}]]

This operator can be overtly or covertly instantiated at the time of vocabulary insertion (*des/de* in F(rench), *dei/di* in I, and bare plurals in BP, C(atalan) and S(panish)) (Nevins 2012). In our presentation we will address the fact that an overt *de* conveying indefiniteness can also precede definite mass nouns in F and I (Cardinaletti & Giusti 2018).

3. Quantificational specificity (expressed by *uns*, among other quantifiers) is obtained by postulating a quantifier Q that is inherently specific (e.g., *certain*s in F, *cierto* in S, *un* in Romance) or non-specific (e.g., *plusieurs* in F, *varios* in S), which selects a DE-phrase (7) and turns a ⟨e,t⟩ type expression into a generalized quantifier of type ⟨⟨e,t⟩, t⟩.

(7) [Q Q [_D DE [_D [_i PLURALIZER:] D_{def}]]]

Note that the Q head hosts determiners/quantifiers that can also be modified by a PLURALIZER, in such a way that their singular and plural number marking is guaranteed.

4. The anti-specificity reading (associated with *alcuni* (I) / *algun(o)s* (BP, C, S); Giannakidou & Quer 2013, Etxeberria & Giannakidou 2017 / *quelques* (F)) is derived by adjoining an abstract operator ALG to this Q that encodes specificity, with the result that ALG introduces referential vagueness and shifts its meaning by means of an anti-singleton function (Alonso-Ovalle & Menéndez-Benito 2011). This operator turns a closed set onto an open set of entities, and type-shifts a generalized quantifier into a modified generalized quantifier (type ⟨⟨⟨e,t⟩, t⟩, ⟨⟨e,t⟩, t⟩⟩).

(8) [Q ALG [Q [iPLURALIZER: {SG,PL}] [Q Q [D DE [D [iPLURALIZER:] D_{def}]]]]]]

5. Finally, partitivity is analyzed as a *part* (QP) - *whole* (plural definite DP) bi-relational structure whose head is an abstract RELATOR (den Dikken 2006), spelled-out by *de* in all the languages we investigate. The output of this analysis is an indefiniteness hierarchy that is syntactically grounded.

(9) [RP QP [R RELATOR [DP [D [iPLURALIZER:PL] D_{def}] [NP]]]]]

6. We highlight that the role of the operator DE with respect to definiteness is parallel to the role of ALG with respect to specificity; whereas indefiniteness builds on definiteness, anti-specificity builds on specificity. This is a desirable result since the existence of operators that apply to certain structures and have the effect of cancelling certain properties have also parallels in the verbal domain (see, among others, Kratzer 2002, who postulates that a TELIC operator creates telic predicates in interaction with the lexical meanings of atelic verb stems).

7. There are several empirical and theoretical arguments that support our proposal. We hereby present a selection of them.

(i) Fronted indefinite expressions as well as Clitic Left Dislocations must be accompanied by *de* in languages such as C, I and F.

(10) a. *De bisbes, en van assistir diversos.*
de bishops en PAST attend several
 ‘Bishops, several of them attended.’
 b. *(Di) ragazzi Gianni ne ha visti.*
de boys Gianni ne has seen
 ‘Boys, Gianni saw some.’

(11) a. *De galetes, en Joan n’ha menjat cinc.*
de biscuits D Joan en.has eaten five
 ‘Biscuits, Gianni ate five.’
 b. *Des biscuits, Jean en a mangé cinq.*
des biscuits Jean en has eaten five
 ‘Biscuits, Jean ate five.’

(ii) When full quantified indefinites (with an overt or a covert Q) are topicalized, accusative definite clitics must be used, as illustrated in (12) for C and I, which show their specificity value.

(12) a. *Unes galetes de llimona, en Joan*
some biscuits of lemon D Joan
*les/*n’ ha menjades*
them/en has eaten
 b. *Dei biscotti, Gianni li/*ne ha mangiati*
dei biscuits Gianni them/ne has eaten

(iii) The two types of indefinites in (13) cannot be coordinated (Ihsane 2008) because, whereas the former has an indefinite reading (structure (6)), the latter corresponds to a partitive expressions (structure (9)).

(13) a. *beaucoup de cigarettes*
many de cigarretes
 b. *beaucoup des cigarettes*
many of.the.pl cigarretes

(iv) *De-* is not a partitive article (cf. Chierchia 1998, Arsenijevic 2006, Carlier 2007, Zamparelli 2008, Wilmet 2008; and in support of Kayne 1977, Delfitto 1993, Storto 2003, Ihsane 2005, C&G 2016). If *de-* were an article, (14a) should be grammatical, because articles can precede cardinals, (14b).

(14) a. **Dei dieci ragazzi sono arrivati.*
dei ten boys are arrived
 b. *Sono arrivati i dieci ragazzi.*
are arrived the ten boys
 ‘The ten boys arrived.’

(v) *Un* is not an (indefinite) article either, but an existential quantifier (Dobrovie-Sorin and Beyssade 2012; a.o.). If it were an article, it should show scopelessness, but *un* may have wide and narrow scope with respect to other quantifiers and operators. Furthermore, if *un* were an article, it should be excluded from the specifier position of overt partitive indefinites. However, unlike the definite article and similar to other quantifier expressions, *un* is allowed in such a position.

8. Although an indefiniteness hierarchy has been postulated in the semantic literature (Martí 2008, 2009) to account for the various meanings of indefinite expressions, we emphasize that our syntactically-driven analysis provides a more comprehensive understanding of the compositionality that indefinite expressions have at the syntax-semantics interface.

Selected References: Cardinaletti, A. & Giusti, G. 2016. The syntax of the Italian indefinite determiner *dei*. *Lingua* 181: 58-80. Cyrino, S. & Espinal, MT. 2019. On the syntax of Number in Romance. *Studia Linguistica*. DOI: 10.1111/stul.12123. Dobrovie-Sorin, C. & Beyssade, C. 2012. Redefining indefinites. Dordrecht, Springer. Den Dikken, M. 2006. Relators and linkers. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.