Explorations on partitive and indefinite forms in Occitan and Franco-Provençal in a comparative framework

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Linguistic variation depends on which pieces of the universal conceptual space and of an invariant repertory of interface primitives, the language-specific lexicon is able to externalize.

The following discussion adopts a strong minimalist model excluding many of the guiding principles and assumptions characterizing canonical cartographic approach, in the spirit of a model meeting the two conditions of acquirability and evolvability (Chomsky et al. 2018).

1. Introduction

In this contribution partitive/ indefinite forms of objects (and subjects) will be investigated in Franco-Provençal and Occitan varieties of Piedmont, also in comparison with other Romance systems.

We find variation in the use of the preposition *de/di* (*DE*) 'of' and the definite article. In particular, the proposition *de/di* (DE) 'of' does not introduce the usual possessive or partitive reading but an indefinite reading, as in the case of bare partitives/Partitive articles of Italian varieties. In negative contexts, these sequences can be generally associated with the wide vs narrow scope of negation.

We will consider North Piedmont, Lombard-Alpine area and Rumansh varieties:

- ✓ the dialect of Trecate (cf. Baldi and Savoia 2021)
- ✓ Lombard-Alpine varieties (Semione and Casaccia)
- ✓ The dialect of Coazze and Cantoira (Franc-Provençal, Piedmont)
- ✓ The dialect of Pomaretto (Occitan, Piedmont)
- ✓ Romansh: Donat and Muster

We will begin by examining two system, one of Italian type and one, that of Trecate, which restricts the occurrence of the definite article

This contribution aims at proposing some reflections on the phenomena concerning the externalization of indefinite reading:

➢ The nature and occurrence of the preposition *di:*
➢ Partitive in negative sentences in Northern Italian dialects: *mia+di*
➢ Indefinite quantification in some Northern Italian and Romansh varieties avoids *prepositional article*

An important issue is the occurrence of the partitive form also as a subject, triggering the agreement with the verb even if introduced by DE.

In the current literature, the problem is (partially) solved by assuming that DE+Art becomes an article, in turn. Actually, the head of a partitive agrees with the NP in the DE-phrase, as in *alcuni di quelli*. If we assume that DE is the preposition also in DE+Art+noun constructs, the question of the agreement shows up.

We will discuss this point and, to this end, we will provide examples of PA in subject contexts.

2. Semione (Blenio Valley, Canton Ticino)

The Lombard-Alpine dialect of Semione admits PAs only with count nouns in positive sentences

(1) a. u   vest   d   i   dɔn   (k i tʃitʃarava)
       have.1SG seen   of ART.PL women that SCl chatted
       'I saw some women chatting'

  a'. u   vest d   i   oman (im pjatsa)
       have.1SG   seen of ART.PL men (in the square)
       'I saw some men (in the square)'

  b. u   bu ′vy *(um pu) ad viŋ / d akwa
       have.1sg   drunk   some   of wine/ of water
       'I drank some wine/ water

(2) a. u   mia   veʃt dɔn   / ɔmaŋ
        have.1sg NM   seen women / men
        'I did not see women/ men'

   a'. a   n   ved-ja   mia (a)d dɔn
        SCl   Part   see-1sg   NM of women
        'I have not seen women'

   b.   a   bev-ja   mia viŋ
        SCl.1sg   drink-1sg   NM   wine
        'I do not drink wine'

   b'. a   n   bev-ja   mia ad viŋ
        SCl.1sg   Part   drink-1sg   NM of wine
        'I do not drink wine'

(3)　　ad dɔn a ŋ vɛɲ tant-i
　　　of women SCl of.them come.3PS many
　　　　'many women are coming'

We see that
- ✓ The preferred interpretation of PAs is specific and presuppositional
- ✓ With NM *mia* indefinites are realized as bare nouns in the scope of negation
- ✓ The occurrence of the partitive quantifier *n* triggers DE 'of' followed by the bare noun with narrow reading in the negation scope

3. Piedmontese dialects: Trecate

In some Piedmontese dialects, such as that of Trecate, in (4)-(6), negation is introduced by a negative marker NM that selects a DE phrase including a bare plural count noun or a bare mass noun. In these varieties we find a distribution similar to that of French, where PAs introduce indefinite forms in positive contexts, in (4a,b), whereas in negative contexts indefinite forms are bare nouns selected by the partitive DE, in (5a,b), triggering the narrow reading of the indefinite within the scope of negation, in (6).

(4) a. ɔ   vist d- i   dɔn   / d- i   ɔm

     have.1SG seen of-ART.PL women /of-ART.PL men

     'I have seen (some) women/ men'

    b. ɔ   bi'vy   d a   vvik

     have.1SG   drunk   of- ART.MSG   wine

     'I have drunk (some) wine'

(5) a. ɔ   vist   mia   ad dɔn   / d   ɔm
      have.1SG   seen NM   of women /of   men
           'I didn't see women / men'

    b.   mi bev-a   mia   ad   vik
         I   drink-1SG   NM   of   wine
         'I don't drink wine'

(6)   [⌐ [∃x [$_I$ beva [$_{vP}$ [$_{VP}$ [$_N$ mia (x) [$_{⊆P}$ ad [$_{NP}$ vik]]]

             'I do not drink wine'

We find indefinites introduced by DE also as subject, triggering a complete agreement in these dialects, in (7)

(7) a. in-j-u   mia   ad dɔn   / d ɔm
       AUX-there-3PL   NM   of women   / of men
       'There are no women/ men'
   b. in-u   ɲy   mia   d dɔn   / ad ɔm
       AUX-3PL   come NM   of women / of men
       'No women/ men have come'

4. Franco-Provençal (Coazze and Cantoira) and Occitan (Pomaretto)

A different distribution characterizes Franco-Provençal and Occitan varieties, such as those of Coazze (Sangone Valley) and Cantoira (Lanzo Great Valley), and Pomaretto (Germanasca Valley), where the indefinite (non-presuppositional) is realized by the sequence *d+bare nouns* in any context.

These dialects, like French and Trecate, select the partitive with bare nouns in contexts of the negative marker, here *pa*, but unlike French, it uses *d+bare noun* also in positive contexts, for objects, and for subjects. In other words, these dialects lack PAs with the definite article, occurring instead in French, Italian, and several Northern Italian dialects (cf. Baldi and Savoia 2021), and use bare plural or mass nouns introduced by *of* in all contexts.

Stark and Davatz (2022) distinguish between FP A, with Pas, and FP B (Southern area of Franco-Provençal) including the Swiss and Aosta Valley varieties. Their experimental investigation showed that also these speakers can variably present fully-fledged PAs. This is also in the case of negative contexts, where bare nouns would be however expected.

A cartographic solution with # moving to the head Div is proposed, a sort of inversion between the inflectional head and the position of partitive element-

Franco-Provençal: Coazze

(8) a. i   ɛi   vy   d dɔn-e   / d ɔm
       SCl   have.1SG   seen   of women-FPL/ of men
                 'I have seen women/ men'

   b. i   ɛi   by   d viŋ
       SCl   have.1SG   drunk of wine
       'I have drunk wine'

(9) a. i ɛi pa vy d dɔn-e / d ɔm
   SCl have.1SG NM seen of women-FPL/of men
   'I did not see women/ men'

   b. i ɛi pa by d viŋ
   SCl have.1SG NM drunk of wine
   'I did not drink wine'

(10) a j ø d dɔn-e k i drøm-unt
   SCl has of women-FPL that SCl.PL sleep-3PL
   'there are women that are sleeping'

Coazze

Franco-Provençal: Cantoira

(11) a. dʒ   e   ɲiŋ vyʼu ət fymɛll-əs / d   ɔm
        SCl   have.1SG   NM seen of woman-FPL/ of men
                'I did not see women/ men'

   b. dʒ   e   ɲiŋ   by   ət viŋ
        SCl   have.1SG   NM   drunk of wine
                'I did not drink wine'

(12) a. dʒ e vy′u ət fymɛll-əs / dɔm

  SCl have.1SG seen of woman-FPL / of men

  'I have seen women/ men'

 b. dʒ e by ət viŋ

  SCl have.1SG drunk of wine

  'I have drunk wine'

(13) ət fymɛll-əs u dyərm-unt

  of woman-FPL SCl.PL sleep-3PL

  'women are sleeping'

A similar distribution characterizes Occitan dialects, as the data from Pomaretto illustrate in (14):

(14) a.   ai   vi:t   də dɔnn-a   / dɔm
            have.1SG   seen of women-FPL   / of men
      'I have seen women/ men'
  b. ai   bə'gy   də viŋ
      have.1SG   drunk   of wine
                'I have drunk wine'

(15) a. ai   pa   vit   də dɔnn-a   / d ɔm

      have.1SG NM   seen   of women-FPL   / of men

         'I did not see women/ men'

  b. ai   pa   bə'gy də viŋ

      have.1SG NM   drunk of wine

         'I did not drink wine'

(16)   də dɔnn-a   a   dørməŋ   də d lai
       of women-FPL SCl.fPL sleep-3PL   there
       'women are sleeping'

Cf.   ɲ   a   bjɛn   də dɔnn-a
       of.them   have.3sg   a.lot   of woman-pl
       'there are many women'

5. Romansh varieties: neither PAs nor DE

Donat (Sutsilvan)

(17) a. jau   vets   (bɪtʃ   /   niɲ-as) don-as

         I   see.1SG   NM   /   no-FPL women-FPL

      'I (do not) see women/ I see no women'

   b. jau bef (bɪtʃ   /   niɲ) vɪɲ

         I   drink (NM / no) wine

      'I (do not) drink wine/ I drink no wine'

(18)   don-as   e-ʎ   niɲ-as

             women-FPL is-SCl none-FPL

             'there are no women'

Disentis (Sursilvan)/ Trun

(19) a. jau ai   (bu) vi´u dun-a-s / umaŋ-s
         I   have.1SG   NM seen women-F-PL / men-PL
      'I did not see women/ men'

   b. jau bib-əl   (bu) vɪŋ
       I   drink-1SG   NM wine
       'I do not drink wine/ I drink no wine'

   c.   iʎ a (bu) dun-a-s / umaŋ-s
           SCl-has (no) women-FPL/ men-PL
           'there are no women/ men'

(20) a. iʎ ai ve´ɲiu afɔŋ-s
      it is come boy-PL
    'I did not see women/ men'

  b. ni la wɔra ain afɔŋ-s
     out there are-3PL boy-PL
    'There are boys out there'

6. Casaccia (Bregaglia Valley, Lombard-Alpine)
The Lombard-Alpine variety of Casaccia presents only bare nouns. In negative contexts either the normal NM *mia* combines with bare nouns or the specialized NM *brik-at* is inserted, immediately before the bare noun, as in (22a',b'), (23b).

(21) a. j(e) a   av´dy   don-a-ŋ / omaŋ
          SCl have.1SG seen   women-F-PL / men.PL
              'I have seen women/ men'
       b.   j   a   ba´vy   viŋ
             SCl have.1SG   drunk   wine
             'I have drunk wine'

(22) a. j(e) a   mia   av´dy   don-a-ŋ / omaŋ
      SCl have.1SG   NM   seen women-F-PL/ men.PL
          'I did not see women/ men'
      a'. j(e) a   av´dy   brik-at   don-a
      SCl have.1SG   seen   NM-DE   women-F
          'I saw no women'

      b.   j   a   mia   ba´vy   viŋ
           SCl have.1SG   NM   drunk   wine
            'I did not drink wine'
      b'.   j   a   ba´vy brik-at   viŋ
           SCl have.1SG   drunk NM-DE   wine
              'I drank no wine'

(23) a. (da) don-a-ŋ   a   nn   e   rivɛd-a brik(-at)

   of women-F-PL SCl   of-them   be.3 arived-F   NM

   'no women have arrived'

   a'. l   e   ɲi   brik-at don-a

      SCl is   come.MSG   NM-DE women-F

      'no woman has come'

   b. da viŋ   a   nn   e   kro´da dʒo   brik

      of wine   SCl   of-it be.3   fallen down   NM

      'no wine has fallen'

c. d aw-a   je nn   a   bavyd-a brik(at)
   of water-F SCl of-it   have.1SG drunk-F NM
   'I have drunk no water'
 c'. d aw-a   je nn   a   mia   bavyd-a
   of water-F SCl of-it   have.1SG   NM   drunk-F
   'I have drunk no water'

I remind that *bri(k)* is the minimizer in negative scope in some of these Alpine dialects, as in (24)

(24) So   bri   ki   tʃaˊmɛ
      Know.1sg NM who   call
      'I do not know who
      'I don't know who to call'   Campodolcino

Meyer-Lübke (1935) connects *bri* to a French form with the sense of 'little thing'

7. A scheme

BN = Bare (Count/Mass) Noun, , PA = Partitive Article, NM+di+BN; in negative sentences, NS = narrow scope $\neg\exists$, WS = wide scope, $\exists\neg$

(25)

	Positive sentences		Negative sentences	
	BN	PA	BN	PA
Italian	+	+	+ NS	+ NS/WS
San B. Po	-	+	-	+ NS
Trecate	-	+	d+BN	-
Semione	-	+	+NS	-
Fr.-Pr/Occ.	d+BN	-	d+BN	-
Romansh	+	-	+ NS	-
Casaccia	+	-	(brik-at)+NS	-

8. Partitives in negative contexts

Following the literature, the negation is an operator that takes in its scope the arguments or the event introduced by the verb. The interaction between negation and arguments is proved by the many instances of the interplay between negative elements and (pro)nouns.

A typical case is the reordering of clitics in negative imperatives, and the connected selection of the form of clitics in many Romance languages phenomena, for instance, Manzini and Savoia (2005, 2007, 2017).

The standard syntactic approach to the structure of negation (in Romance) (Pollock 1989) assumes that negation adverbs such as *pas* in French fill the Spec position of a NegP projection generated below the I position targeted by the verb. The head of NegP can in turn be filled by a negative clitic like *ne* in French, whose higher inflectional position depends on movement, i.e. cliticization.

In other languages, no negative head is present. Belletti (1990) applies the same theory to Italian, by moving the negative head, originating in the Neg position, to a higher a clitic position.

The link between negative elements and argumental structure of vP is analyzed in Poletto (2017):
'[…] all negative markers occurring in languages with discontinuous negation start out as a unit, […] first merged inside the vP, […] definitely in an argumental one.', i.e. the category NegP:

(26)
[FocusP NO [MinimizerP mica [ScalarP non [ExistentialP (ni)ente]]]]

The Movement from this position should explain the different distribution with respect to other adverbials.

A more complex set of data, involving Northern Italian dialects, is considered by Zanuttini (1997) who proposes that there are several Neg positions. Specifically, a Neg position is generated above I, while below I there are three Neg positions.

The inflectional Neg position hosts negative clitics in languages like Italian which do not require a sentential negation adverb. On the contrary languages which require a sentential negation adverb generate it in one of the lower Neg positions; if a clitic combines with the adverb, it is generated in the head of the relevant Neg position and moves to the inflectional domain by cliticization.

For Zanuttini (1997) preverbal clitic negations are associated with two different structures, according to whether they negate alone or they combine with a negative adverb. In turn the lower Neg positions, Neg_2, Neg_3 and Neg_4, occur within the aspectual adverbial series, while they do not interact in any significant way with either the temporal or the modal series. Neg_1 corresponds to the negative clitic position in the inflectional domain in (27).

(27) [Neg_2 [$_{TAnterio}$*already* [Neg_3 [$_{AspTerminative}$ *no longer* [$_{AspContinuative}$ *still* [$_{AspContinuative}$ *always* … [*well* [Neg_4

In a Romance language such as Italian, the negative clitic combines with a negative argument or adverb (*niente* 'nothing', *mai* 'never', etc.) to yield a single logical negation. Haegeman and Zanuttini (1991) explain this phenomenon on the basis of a Neg Criterion, whereby the negative clitic in the head position of a NegP requires a Neg operator in its Spec and vice versa. The head-Spec configuration is, in turn, read as an agreement relation, yielding a single negation interpretation.

This analysis presupposes that *niente, mai* and the like – i.e. *n*-words – are negative quantifiers.

A consistent body of literature on Romance languages argues for a different conclusion, namely that Romance *n*-words are negative polarity items (Rizzi 1982, Laka 1990, Longobardi 1992, Acquaviva 1994, Garzonio and Poletto 2008).

In other words, *n*-words have no intrinsically negative properties but are simply existential, or free variables in the terms of Heim (1982), which are interpreted in the scope of the negation or other polarity operator.

- We surmise that *n*-words are *negated indefinites* and not negative quantifiers.
- *Sentential negation adverbs* either coincide with negative arguments such as 'nothing' or are bare nouns.
- Treating them as nominal elements, connected to the internal argument of the predicate, accounts for their triggering of the partitive, or their sensitivity to the person ($1^{st}/2^{nd}$ vs. 3rd) of IA itself.
- We assign sentential negation adverbs to a nominal, argument-related category, tentatively an indefinite quantifier.

Manzini and Savoia (2011) conclude that a negative clitic is a nominal element that introduces a variable within the scope of a negative (or other modal) operator – i.e. it is a negative polarity item.

In other words, negation can be treated as an operator 'introducing a quantification over the internal argument' of the elementary event VP'. (Manzini and Savoia 2017: 92).

If the negative clitic is a negative polarity argument, it must itself be read in the scope of a sentential negation operator.

Under the set of assumptions introduced, the so-called negative concord is in fact the expected state of affairs: the variables introduced by the clitic and by the adverb are both interpreted in the scope of the same Neg (and existential closure) operator(s). Thus there is a single instance of the negation at the interpretive level, as in the example in (28) from a Piedmontese dialect where the negative head and the negation marker are combined

(28) *Oviglio*
[⊢ [∃x,y [$_{Cl}$ a [$_{Neg}$ n (x) [$_{Cl}$ t [$_I$ drɔmi   [$_N$ næinta (y)
'you do not sleep'

In several Northern Italian dialects, notably Piedmontese ones (cf. also Zanuttini 1997), the sentential negation adverb coincides with the negative argument for 'nothing'. The examples in (29) are ambiguous between the argumental and sentential negation interpretations; since the verb can be construed both transitively and intransitively, the negative item can fill the internal argument slot, or can have a reading equivalent to a sentential negation.

(29) a. a   n   ɛl   vig   nɛinta
          I   not   him   see   not
          'I don't see him'
      b. u   n   maɲdʒa   nɛinta
          he   not   eats   nothing/not
          'He doesn't eat (anything)'

                                              Oviglio

Bare nouns are another major class of sentential negations, including minimizers: *mi(c)a* or *briza* 'crumb', *bu(ka)* 'piece', *pa* 'step', as exemplified in (30).

(30) a.   *Trun* (Grisons)

ɛlts   dɔrmɐŋ bʊk(a)

they   sleep not

'They don't sleep'

b.   *Pramollo*   (Piedmont)

a   drøm   pa

he   sleeps not

'He doesn't sleep'

d.   *Finale Emilia*   (Emilia)

i   n   dɔram   briʑa

they not   sleep   not

'They don't sleep'

The common lexicalization of the negation adverb and of negative arguments is recognized in the historical literature, specifically in connection with what is taken to be a 'grammaticalization' process changing the negative argument into a functional category Neg (Roberts and Roussou 2003).

Meyer-Lübke (1899: §693-694) proposes that what we describe as sentential negation adverbs originate in a partitive construction: Old French examples such as (31) show the 'negative adverb' *mie*, a bare Noun 'minimizer', overtly co-occurring with the partitive. Similar data are documented for Old North Italian varieties (Poletto and Garzonio 2009).

(31)
de s'espee ne volt mie guerpir
of his sword not he.wanted not to abandon
'He didn't want to abandon his sword'
(Chanson de Roland 465)

The lexicalization of negation by adverbs and negative arguments in the historical literature is connected with the process of 'grammaticalization', which changes the negative argument into a functional category Neg (Roberts and Roussou 2003).

Garzonio and Poletto (2008: 63) explain the change of minimizers, Nouns denoting the smallest units of something, into functional elements 'classifier-like quantifier governing the DP', losing its nominal properties.

Interactions between the negation and case assignment to the internal argument of the verb is found in Northern Italian dialects. In Piedmontese varieties in (32), the negation triggers the partitive even in the presence of a definite interpretation.

(32) a. *Trecate* (Piedmont)

(a mmarju)tʃamum -ru/ -na mija

the Mario we.call him/of.him not

'We are not calling Mario'

b. *Cerano* (Piedmont)

Marjo tʃama -n mea

Mario call of.him not

'Don't call Mario!'

The preceding data shed light on the obviously connected phenomenon of French, which in negative environments allows for indefinite noun phrases (bare plurals and bare mass singulars) introduced by *de*; these same forms are not allowed in the absence of negation, as illustrated in (33) (Kayne 1984). The same phenomenon is fairly widespread in Northern Italian varieties, as shown in (34).

(33) Je   *(ne)   veux pas   de   cadeaux
     I   not   want not   of   gifts
     'I (don't) want gifts'

(34) al   beu   rɛŋ   de viŋ
     he   drinks   not   of wine
     'He doesn't drink wine'
                              Stroppo/ Macra (Piedmont)

Kayne (1984) proposes a structure including a non-lexicalized negative quantifier Q followed by the partitive *de cadeaux*, yielding a structure of the type in (35)

(35)   *je ne veux pas* [Q [*de cadeaux*]].

The presence of the empty Q quantifier means that the noun phrase as a whole is subject to the Empty Category Principle of Chomsky (1981); this in turn predicts the generalization that noun phrases of this type are restricted to the object position (but not in our varieties…)

In our analysis we treat NMs such as *rɛŋ* as a specialized minimizer co-occurring with the negative operator. Its lexical entry has the Logical Form in (36a), where x is the variable, without recourse to silent Q elements, and it simply implies the negation operator as in (36b).

(36)

a. [$_N$ rɛŋ (x)]

b. [⊢ [∃x [$_D$ al [$_I$ beu ... [$_{VP}$ [$_{N/Q}$ rɛŋ (x) [de viŋ]]]]...
'I does'nt drink wine''

Stroppo/ Macra

The elements that enter into the partitive construction seem sensitive to the constraints that restrict the occurrence of (object) bare nouns in Romance to plurals and mass singulars.

Bare nouns in Romance introduce existential readings in the scope of the negative operator, associated with a kind-level denotation (Chierchia 1998).

Bare count singulars are allowed only in negative (polarity) contexts, as in (37).

(37) a.   *(Non) si   muove   foglia
             not   M/P move.3sg   leaf
             'Not a leaf stirs'
      b.   *(Non) mosse   dito (per aiutarlo)
             Not   moved. 3sg finger (to help-him)
             'He didn't move a finger/ he hasn't done
             anything to help him'
      c.   *(Non) proferì   parola
             not   said.3sg   word
             'He didn't say a word'

The idea is that minimizers, like bare nouns, imply an indefinite reading in the scope of negation or other modality quantifications, as in (38)

(38) [⊢ [non x [$_I$ mosse [$_N$ dito]

Summing up:
➢ the sentential negation adverb is in reality a nominal element related to the internal argument of the verb (with which it can lexically coincide)
➢ the negative adverb can form a partitive structure with the internal argument
➢ Connecting the negative element to the nominal, argumental set of categories, its interaction with the argumental structure of the predicate is not surprising and in fact expected.

In short, we maintain the conclusion suggested by the discussion throughout this section – that sentential negation is a nominal element linked to the internal argument slot.

If so, the difference between it and conventional negative arguments is that the latter can satisfy the internal argument slot alone.

9. Some proposals

Differently from the dialect of Trecate in section 2, in Franco-Provençal and Occitan dialects indefinite forms are expressed by bare plural/ mass nouns, excluding the definite article: (i) indefinite forms are partitive constructs excluding a presuppositional reading; (ii) the sequence DE+*bare noun* determines the agreement of the verb, as in (8)-(13), suggesting that the plural inflection of the noun is somehow read by T/v.

The lack of a definite article entails the narrow scope. Generic definite articles are otherwise usual.

Resuming the analysis in Baldi and Savoia (2022), *de* introduces a subset of a set of individuals or parts of a mass as it normally does.

As an instantiation of the elementary part-whole relation, [⊆] (cf. Manzini and Savoia 2011, after Belvin and Den Dikken 1997), DE/inclusion encompasses partitives and genitives (Lorusso and Franco 2017).

Belvin and den Dikken (1997:170):

'entities have various zones associated with them, such that an object or eventuality may be included in a zone associated with an entity without being physically contained in that entity […] The type of zones which may be associated with an entity will vary with the entity'.

Hence, possession - on a par with location - can be understood as a type of 'zonal' inclusion (Manzini and Savoia 2011).

DE+*bare noun* gives rise to the agreement, however exactly as in partitives.

Against the proposals whereby PAs belong to the special category of 'plural indefinite determiners' (Cardinaletti and Giusti 2016) or are prepositional heads moving to a higher position (Chierchia 1998) is also the fact that in these dialects DE introduces a bare noun, thus excluding the problem represented by the definite determiner. In other words, there is no reason to change DE into a type of determiner.

Even if we consider these constructs true partitives, the question shoes up on how the agreement with the verb can be realized in contexts where DE+*bare noun* is the subject, as in (7)-(10)-(13) and in (23a,b) for Casaccia.

It is interesting to dwell on Casaccia's distribution. Indeed in the context *brik-at don-a* 'no women' the form of the noun is devoid of the feminine plural exponent *–ŋ*. We know that in this dialect *–ŋ* occurs only on a nominal element in DP, typically on D. The idea discussed in Manzini, Savoia and Baldi (2020, 2021) is that *–a* is in turn a specialized realization of the plural

Thus, *brik-at* selects the most elementary form of plural, which, by hypothesis, retains an original form of the feminine plural.

Something similar to what happens in dialects in section 2 where the bare plural is introduced in the contexts with DE and the non-presuppositional reading is triggered.

Coming back to the syntactic nature of the partitive structures, Lorusso and Franco (2017), addressing quantified NPs of the type *un centinaio di persone*, propose that P may or may not behave like a phase boundary.

Taking into account their insight, we maintain the idea that indefinite, partitive, and genitive constructs are based on the same elementary predicate [⊆], expressed by *de 'of'*, which introduces the super-set of individuals or parts to which the head noun belongs.

As to the issue of agreement, we retain the analysis in Manzini and Savoia (2018), and Baldi and Savoia (2022), in which:

- ✓ The agreement is treated as the result of the identification of phi-feature bundles specifying the same argument,
- ✓ i.e. denoting a single referent,
- ✓ a solution based on the minimal research mechanism perfectly in line with the recent revision of the model proposed by Chomsky.

We can wonder how to treat these sequences. The operation Merge gives rise to the amalgam where *di+art* gives rise to the indefinite reading, as in (39).

(39)
$< d_{\subseteq}, [_R \text{ fyməll-əs }_{FPL}]> \rightarrow [_{\subseteq/ FPL} [_{\subseteq} d][_R \text{ fyməll-əs }_{FPL}]]$

- ✓ the inflection *-əs*, the simple plural, merged to the noun, preserves its generic interpretation
- ✓ [d/ ət] introduces the part of this whole
- ✓ It is an elementary predicate and the agreement between the N/whole and its possessum/member is possible insofar as it yields a possible interpretation

So, nothing prevents features realized on T from agreeing with the features of a noun embedded under DE.

In line with Chomsky (2021) in eliminating the need for head movement, we see that (40a) yields the complex word *dɔnna* 'woman/ women', and (40b) combines the prepositional head DE and *dɔnna*.

(40) a. $< [_R \text{ dɔnn}], a_{FPL} > \rightarrow [_{FPL} \text{ dɔnn-a}]$

   b. $< \text{də}_\subseteq ,[_{FPL} \text{ dɔnn-a}] > \rightarrow [\text{də}_\subseteq [_{FPL} \text{ dɔnn-a}]]$

In the sentence in (41), the elementary predicate *də dɔnna* provides the agreement properties between the N/whole and a member of the whole, here realized by the plural features of the inflected verb, associated with Infl/T.

These features find in the features of *dɔnna* a possible referent, exactly like in the case of a partitive.

(41) CP   Infl/T$_\varphi$ v$_\varphi$ V

a$_{FPL}$ dørm-əŋ$_{FPL}$ [$_\subseteq$də [$_{FPL}$ dɔnn-a]]

The φ-features FPL of the NP are visible on the edge of the partitive and are available to be identified with the φ-features realized on Infl/T, the EA.

So, there is no v movement (Chomsky 2021) and the subject can be interpreted at the phase of Infl/T as suggested in (10c).

In other words, in the absence of a quantifier or a noun that introduces DE+N, the features of N can agree with the nominal features realized by the verbal head in Infl/T.

10. Indefinite nouns in varieties without partitives

In the varieties that lack partitive articles, we see that:
➤ Generic existentials do not use the PA
➤ They are introduced by some quantifier (mostly an evaluative) combining with the plural of count nouns or the singular of mass nouns
➤ In negative contexts, negation can license bare nouns
➤ In some dialects, bare forms are admitted only or preferentially for mass nouns
➤ Definite articles admit the indefinite interpretation

➢ Romance varieties use *certi* as a quantifier: a determiner with specific reference, as in (42).

(42)

t∫ɛrt-a-s   dun-a-s   en (bɪt∫) vaɲid-a-s
certain-F-PL women-F-PL are NM come-F-PL
'certain women have (not) come'

Donat

The consequence is that the negation of the quantification with *certi* gives rise to a wide scope interpretation ∃¬, i.e. it can take also negation in its scope

11. Some general points

Referring to the schema in (25), negation generally imposes a nonspecific reading, selecting the NS.

Bare nouns preserve their generic reading, both in plural (quantificational content = inflection) and in mass nouns (quantificational properties = aggregate/ set of parts content), independently of negation: $\neg \exists$.

As to NS/WS reading, negation favors the NS

As a consequence, in some dialects, bare nouns are inserted in negative contexts, as in Semione, thus excluding PAs, instead occurring in positive sentences. In Trecate the negative marker triggers the *partitive+bare noun*, while in Occitan e Franco-Provençal this same construct is retained in a negative sentence.

Based on the data examined, we conclude that NM does not imply DE+BN, as the data of Romansh and Bregaglia varieties demonstrate, where the minimizers *buka/ betʃ* and *mia* do not introduce partitive constructs.

Many elements would seem to suggest that, on the contrary, DE+BN implies the NM. But this possibility was also excluded during the discussion.

In fact, as mentioned by Cecilia Poletto and Francesco Pinzin there are some Western Ligurian dialects that introduce DE+BN, even if they lack the negative marker. I have some data from Western Ligurian varieties of Airole and Pignathat, actually, comply with this, as in the example in (43) concerning mass nouns:

(43) a   nu   bev-e   de   viŋ
      SCl   Neg   drink-3sg   of   wine
      'he does not drink wine'

Therefore, we must accept the idea that variation is in many cases not governed by implicational relations due to semantic or morpho-syntactic mechanisms.

The occurrence of DE+BN can be favored by the existence of NMs but it is a structural possibility independently associated with the expression of the indefinite reference in negative contexts.

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