

On Partitives in the Northern Italian Dialects

J. Garzonio – C. Poletto

Università Ca' Foscari Venezia - Goethe Universität Frankfurt

Aim of the talk

- The aim of this talk is twofold
 - A) we provide a survey of possible interesting partitive structures in the Northern Italian Dialects;
 - B) we then concentrate on an idea that can account for partitives in negative contexts and as a reflex also in quantificational ones.

Northern Italian dialects display a distribution which is at first similar to the one of (Northern) standard Italian and therefore more restricted than French:

- | | | | |
|-----|----|---------------------|------------------|
| (1) | a. | Je mange *(du) pain | French |
| | b. | Mangio (del) pane | Standard Italian |
| | c. | Magno (del) pan | Venetian |

Investigating NIDs might help us to see how the partitive article spreads in a language according to different semantic and syntactic types.

Partitives as non-specific

The partitive cannot be used for a specific nominal expression, it is incompatible with a restrictive relative but compatible with a kind-defining relative (see Benincà & Cinque (2013)).

- (2) a. *Magno del pan che go comprà ieri
b. *Magno dele patate che go cusinà ieri
c. Magno solo che del pan che sia fresco e bon
d. Magno solo che dele patate che sia bone e frite ben

Battye (1991)

Battye (1991) claims that partitive articles in Northern Italian varieties can also be used when the mass noun is non specific.

(3) Staseja gε du manzu Genova
 tonight there=is of-the beef

However, it is not possible to have a partitive in cases like «he eats meat» meaning 'he is not vegetarian'.

Property denoting partitives

In Venetian the distinction does not only have to do with specificity but also with property denoting:

- (4)
- a. Magno pan
'I generally eat bread' (i.e. I am a bread-eater)
 - b. Magno del pan
'I am eating some bread'
 - c. Magno patate (i.e. 'I am a potato-eater')
 - d. Magno dele patate
'I eat some potatoes'

Two analyses for Italian

- Part Ds are real partitives with an empty Q and a null partitive N (Chierchia (1998)):

$[_{D1} \emptyset [_{N1} N [+part] [_{PP} di [_{DP} i [_{N} folletti]]]]]$

- Part Ds are simply plural indefinites like in French (Storto (2001)):

$[_{DP} dei [_{N} folletti]]]$

Chierchia (1998) assumes that partitive articles in Italian are real partitives, i.e. compositionally derived by P+D, with a null “determiner” (i.e. quantifier) on top of the P, and into which P+D incorporates. He states that they are presuppositional like real partitives:

- (5) a. Non ci sono folletti (existential or locative)
- b. Non ci sono dei folletti (only locative)
- c. Non ci sono alcuni folletti (only locative)

However, Storto (2001) argues that the meaning of the partitive article is not derived by the composition of the partitive preposition and the definite article, since:

- a) they do not have the same existential presupposition as real partitives and
- b) they do not license free interpretations in possessives.

There is not only semantic but also syntactic evidence that partitives are not a morphological composition of P+D and they are therefore to be treated as plural indefinites, where the two elements are not analyzed as two different elements anymore.

Di is not a P

The partitive article can also occur after a preposition:

- (6) a. *i bandii sparavan da di barkoin*
the outlaws shoot from of.the boats
- b. *i surdatti dormivan in e de brande*
the soldiers slept in of.the cots

→ Since prepositions like *da* 'from' and *in* 'in' usually do not select for a P, the following form cannot be interpreted as a normal preposition.

Ihsane's cartographic approach

Since Italian partitives also seem not to be compositional, we could apply Ihsane's cartographic approach to Italian varieties as well to proof the distribution of the three semantic and syntactic types she identifies for French.

Hence, the question up to now has been: is Italian similar to French or not?

By looking at Northern Italian dialects, we hope to shed more light on a partly independent question, namely the one about the various possible systems, i.e. on the range of variation.

Partitives in the ASIt

1.7 Avendo mangiato troppa torta, Gianni si e` sentito male

1.12 Ne ho viste poche, di case cosi' belle

1.43 Per aver mangiato troppe fragole, oggi stai male

2 .37 Dei libri che avevi ordinato ne arriveranno solo tre

2.40 Non mangia mai frutta, quella ragazza

2.49 Non comprano mai frutta, le mie sorelle

2.61 Non compri mai mele

2.68 Non mangiamo mai frutta

2.77 Non leggete mai dei libri

4.2 Non mangio la carne

4.4 No mangiamo mai pesce

4. 13 Di persone così ce ne sono molte.

4. 24 Vende solo caffè.

4.55 Quanti ne hai visti?

4.60 Paolo ha meno caramelle di Mario.

4.70 Gianni ha più caramelle di Mario.

5.22 Quanti studenti provano l'esame stavolta!

5.27 Sapessi di quanti argomenti ha parlato!

5.31 Quanta confusione avete fatto!

5.35 Quante mele marce ho trovato!

5.56 Quanti articoli ha scritto!

5 65 Sapessi quanti ci sono cascati!

7. 3 Carlo non mangia la frutta

7.4 Carlo non ha mangiato la frutta

An example

(7) She never eats fruit, that girl

- A n'mangia mai **dra** fruta sa matotta Carcare
- Quelle figgie e nu mangie mei **de** fruta Casarza
- A nu mangia moi **Ø** fruta, cuella suena FinaleLigure

→ Variation across the domain: $de+D$, $de+Ø$, $Ø$

→ Is this variation related to other properties of the D system?

(8) You never buy apples

-Ten catti moi **i** mei Cairo Montenotte

-Nu ta cati mai **de** pumu Arzeno

-T'en cati mai **der** meire Pontivrea

-Nu ti catti mai **∅** pomme Borghetto Vara

-**De** meie ti nun acati mai Arenzano

→ Variation across the domain: D, de+D, de+∅,
∅ , left dislocation

- (9) a. Ti te n'catti mai d'meji Carcare
you buy never of apples
- b. A n'mangia mai dra fruta sa matotta
she not eats never of.the fruit that girl

→ Variation within the same dialect: with mass nouns we have de+D, with plurals de+∅.

A first survey shows that there are areas where the partitive surfaces in contexts where it is not possible in standard Italian (even the Northern variant) and which are similar to French like:

- A) Quantifiers like *(how) much/many* in central Rhaetoromance varieties;
- B) In Ligurian and Piedmontese in negative contexts.

We concentrate on these cases in this talk.

Negation + Partitive object (sing.)



Negation + Partitive object (plur.)



Central Rhaetoromance

In Central Rhaetoromance the wh-word meaning *how much/many* takes a partitive object in a way similar to *combien* in French:

- (10) a. Tan **de** libri aste pa lit?
how.many of books have=you *particle* read?
- b. Tan **de** smalz meteste pa tla turte?
how.much of butter put-you *particle* in.the cake?
- c. Tanc **ne** àste pa udü? S. Leonardo
how.many of.them= have you *part* seen

→ No difference is observed between plurals and mass nouns.

Central Rhaetormance II

The same occurs with the Q “much/many” if *tan* is used, but not with *trec*:

- (11) a. I à trec libri te tascia/I à tan **de** libri te tascia
I have many books in-the bag/many of books
b. I à lit tan **de** libri/trec libri
I have read many of books/many books

→ This means that the partitive depends on the properties of the Q used, not on general properties of the language.

Furthermore, cases of partitive are found with a sigmatic plural in Central Rhaetoromance:

- (12) Savëise *tan de Ladins* ch'al vir incër le Grup dl Sella?
'Do you know how many Ladins live around the Group of Sella?'

This means that there is no correlation between the absence of sigmatic plural and the presence of partitive articles.

Central Rhaetoromance

Although Central Rhaetoromance has Qs which require a partitive, it does not display split quantification:

- (13) a. *Tan meteste pa de smalz tla turte?
How.much put.you of butter in.the cake?
- b. *I à tan lit de libri
I have many read of books

→ The partitive is a necessary but not a sufficient condition for split quantification.

A detailed survey could tell us which quantifiers take a partitive more often and hence give us an insight into the internal structure of these elements. In other words, it could be that there exists an implicational scale in the types of Qs related to partitives.

Veneto

While in Italian the element *po'* is truncated, in Veneto elements like *poco* 'little' display an agreement phenomenon with the partitive noun:

- (14) a. un poca de farina 'a bit of flour'
b. un pochi de fasioi 'a bit of beans'

How come that there is agreement over the preposition?

French-like negative partitives

In Ligurian and Piedmontese dialects we find negation partitives (see Manzini and Savoia (2011)):

(15) Al mangia mia **ad** biscutin
he eats nothing of biscuits

Manzini and Savoia use these data to argue that so called negative adverbs are quantifiers of the object:

(16) al beu [Q ren] [de vin]

Rowlett's analysis

As Manzini and Savoia note, the idea is rather old, Meyer-Lübke already (1899:§693-694) proposes that *pas* originate in a partitive construction.

Rowlett proposes that French *pas* is actually a Quantifier which forms a constituent with the partitive and is then extracted out of the nominal expression.

→ He treats *pas* in the same way as *combien* or *beaucoup* because they are all subject to split quantification.

Rowlett's fundamental idea is that *pas* behaves like other Qs modifying the object DP, and as such is merged in the object position and then raised to Neg.

This goes hand in hand with Manzini and Savoia's idea that negative adverbs are nothing other than nouns.

In Rowlett's analysis the case of intransitive verbs, *pas* is attached directly to the VP.

This distinction can be avoided if Bayer's (2011) analysis is assumed: adverbial *nichts* is possible only with intransitive verbs and therefore is merged in the object position and then raised.

Hence, all negative markers could be hypothesized to be merged in the direct object position.

Hirschbühler and Labelle (1992)

counterarguments

H&L bring some arguments against the idea that *pas* is merged with the partitive: first of all *ne* and *pas* form a constituent.

(17) Pour ne pas qu'elle souffre, il la laisse
pressentir la vérité

In a cartographic framework this is not a problem, as *pas* can move to the specifier of the position where *ne* is sitting.

There are distinctions between quantifiers and *pas*:

- (18) a. Je n'ai pas l'intention d'acheter de livres
b. *J'ai beaucoup l'intention d'acheter de livres

They can be expressed in term of the fact that *pas* is a nominal element while *beaucoup* is the modifier of an empty nominal AMOUNT/NUMBER.

Also these differences can be explained in the same way: *pas* is a nominal element, *aucun* is like *beaucoup* a modifier.

- (19) a. Je ne crois pas qu'il ait acheté de livres
b. *Je ne crois qu'il ait acheté aucun livre

We believe that Rowlett's original idea is correct if combined with Battye (1991:38), who assumes that the partitive structure results from the presence of a null element (*namely AMOUNT/NUMBER*) which subcategorizes for a PP headed by *de*.

However, *pas* and *trop/beaucoup/peu* etc. are categorially distinct.

Kayne (2002) and ff. has proposed that there exist several empty functional nouns which are syntactically active. He proposes that empty functional nouns can be THING, PLACE, WAY, TIME, REASON, and crucially for us, NUMBER and AMOUNT. Kayne (2005:260) proposes «In all languages, modifiers with the interpretation of *many* or *few* necessarily modify NUMBER (or *number*)».

The hypothesis

Postverbal negative markers of the minimizer type are always generative in the *vP*, with transitive and intransitive verbs.

The difference between quantifiers and negation is that the negative marker is itself a quantity noun located lower than the functional one, while quantifiers are (higher) modifiers of an empty quantity noun.

[AMOUNT/NUMBER [*pas*] [PP]

[Q [AMOUNT/NUMBER [PP]]

I argument

A. It accounts for the etymological origin of the negative markers of the minimizer type.

The NIDs display a wealth of minimizers as negative markers *mia*, *brisa*, *bucca/ca* etc., which can only be explained if the negative marker must at some point have been able to move to an adverbial position starting from the object one.

In Old Italian varieties *mica* is actually still a polarity item:

(20) On sté de scisceri e **miga** de vin d'intrà.
one measure of chickpeas and a bit of
wine from the place.

(Old Milanese, from Vai 1996)

II Argument

It also explains why there is a determinerless partitive in these cases: this is usually the case with quantified expression of a certain type.

While universal Qs are generally associated to definite DPs with a definite determiner, other Qs are associated to nominal expressions without an overt determiner.

III argument

This also explains why in cases like *un poca di farina*, *poca* agrees with the complement of the PP: since the null *n* does not have its own agreement features, the features of its complement can raise in a way similar to the one of cases like:

- (21) Questo tipo di argomenti **i** vengo**no** dati di solito alla fine
this type of arguments are given usually at the end.

IV argument

In Occitan (Ramats, Chiomonte, Piedmont) *pa* is split from the postverbal subject or direct object:

- (22) a. L'ei pâ arrivá gî
it=is neg arrived people
'Nobody came'
- b. La m'a pâ vî gî
it me=has neg seen people
'Nobody saw me'

However, when it is in preverbal position, it occurs with the functional noun:

- (23) a. Pagî o minjá la soupo
neg+people has eaten the soup
'Nobody ate the soup'
- b. Pagî ou'm capî
'Nobody understands me'

To explain this pattern, we claim that *pa....gi* is a case of split quantification where the Q portion raises to an adverbial position but must leave the N portion below.

In the preverbal position the whole complex raises to get case and split quantification is not possible, otherwise the functional noun would c-command the Q and not otherwise.

Universal Qs

This is fundamentally different from the way universal quantifiers behave, when they are associated to a functional noun, the functional noun cannot be stranded:

(24) 'Everything has been done well.'

- a. Ha statu **tuttu fattu** bonu. (Palermo)
has been all done well
- b. Hannu statu **fattu** bonu **tutti-cosi**.
have been done well all-things
- c. *Hannu statu **tutti-cosi** fattu bonu.
have been all-things done well
- d. *Hannu statu **tutti/u** fattu bonu **cosi**.
have been all done well things

The difference between universal Qs and n-words and quantifiers of the *beaucoup* type is that universal Qs do not possess an empty AMOUNT or lexical *pas/mia* quantity noun, and are directly paired to the functional n THING/*cosi*, which cannot be stranded alone in the argumental position as it is not a complete argument.

Up to now we have seen that

- a) The presence of the article with negation is sensitive to the distinction between mass/plural (see Ligurian)
- b) The presence of partitives is not excluded from languages having a sigmatic plural (see Ladin dolomitan)
- c) The presence of a partitive does not automatically allow for split quantification (see Ladin dolomitan)

The presence of a partitive after the negative marker or a quantifier can be attributed to the presence of a functional quantity noun. The Q is the modifier or an empty AMOUNT/NUMBER, while *pas/mia* is itself the quantity noun.

This has consequences on the general view on sentential negation as originating in the object position.

Summing up

The Northern Italian dialects can be the testing ground to see how an “intermediate” system of partitive articles develops from the core cases to become a system of the French type.

Furthermore, they can be used to test specific cases of partitives induced by negation or a type of Qs.

Thank you!