



Universität  
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Doctoral Program in Linguistics



UFSP Sprache und Raum

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International Exploratory Workshop

# Partitivity in Romance and beyond

## Introduction

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## Research questions – problems to solve

1. Terminology – Semantics - Syntax:  
What are we talking about - what are we comparing? **WHAT?**
2. Geographical distribution – ‚white areas on the maps‘ – missing data? **WHERE?**
3. Correlations? Explanations?  
Genetic relationship – language contact – independent evolutions (polygenesis)? **WHY?**



## Research questions – problems to solve

1. Terminology – Semantics - Syntax:  
What are we talking about?

A. Partitive articles:

(1) *J'ai bu du vin.*

**mass indicators:** i.e. denotation of the respective nominal as sets of sets of portions, unbounded and unspecified quantities of a substance (cf. Krifka 2013).

Compatible, e.g., with the denotation of the whole set:

(2) *J'ai bu du vin hier, à vrai dire, tout ce qu'il y avait.*



## Research questions – problems to solve

1. Terminology – Semantics - Syntax:  
What are we talking about?

A. Partitive articles:

(1) *J'ai bu du vin.*

### Research questions (examples):

Are they obligatory with singular mass nominals wherever they are attested?

What is their precise syntax - distribution in the clause?

Do they have precisely the same semantics as e.g. partitive (as against accusative object) case in Finnish?



## Research questions – problems to solve

1. Terminology – Semantics - Syntax:  
What are we talking about?

B. Partitive and pseudo-partitive constructions (Koptjevskaja-Tamm 2001, Ihsane 2013)

(3) *J'ai bu un verre de vin* (pseudopartitive)

(4) *J'ai bu un verre de ce vin* (partitive)

**Subset indicators:** i.e. denotation of an (un)specified subpart of a definite (partitive) or indefinite (pseudo-partitive) substance - incompatible with the denotation of the whole set?

(5) *?J'ai bu un verre de vin hier, même tout ce qu'il y avait.*



## Research questions – problems to solve

1. Terminology – Semantics - Syntax:  
What are we talking about?

B. Partitive and pseudo-partitive constructions (Koptjevskaja-Tamm 2001, Ihsane 2013)

(3) *J'ai bu un verre de vin* (pseudopartitive)

(4) *J'ai bu un verre de ce vin* (partitive)

### Research questions (example):

Semantics comparable to partitive cases?

What is their interaction / distribution with partitive pronominals (incompatible with partitive articles!)?



## Research questions – problems to solve

1. Terminology – Semantics - Syntax:  
What are we talking about?

C. Partitive pronominals (Ihsane 2013)

- (6) *J'en ai bu un (verre de vin)* (pseudopartitive)
- (7) *J'en ai bu un verre (de ce vin)* (partitive)
- (8) *J'en ai bu (du vin)* (mass)
- (9) *J'en ai bu un (vin particulièrement bon)* (real quantitative, count)



## Research questions – problems to solve

1. Terminology – Semantics - Syntax:  
What are we talking about?

C. Partitive pronominals (Ihsane 2013)

### Research questions (examples):

What is their precise syntax? What do they pronominalize?

Do they (always) co-occur with partitive articles? With partitive cases?

What is their historical relation with the expression of partitivity, and how do we have to analyze them in modern varieties (see first question)?





## Research questions – problems to solve

2. Geographical distribution – ‚white areas on the maps‘ – missing data? **WHERE?**



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## Research questions – problems to solve

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E.g. Catalan: ‚Partitive‘ *de* with N-pronominalization of indefinite quantified and modified direct object DPs, singular or plural:

(10) *Tens cintes blaves? [...] en tinc quatre de grans i tres de petites.*

(‘Do you have blue ribbons? [...] I have four big ones and three small ones’)

(cf. Bossong 2008: 117f.)



## Research questions – problems to solve

2. Geographical distribution – ‚white areas on the maps‘ – missing data? **WHERE?**

E.g. Occitan, more precisely Gascon dialects, Languedocian, Provençal:

Data available?

Some hints, e.g. in Languedocian:

Obligatory (?) ‘partitive’ *de* with indefinite direct object DPs:

(11) *Dounàs-me de pan [...] d’amellas*  
(‘Give me (some?) bread [...] some almonds’)  
(Thérond 2002: 86)



## Research questions – problems to solve

2. Geographical distribution – ‚white areas on the maps‘ – missing data? **WHERE?**

E.g. Occitan, more precisely Gascon dialects, Languedocian, Provençal:

Data available?

Some hints, e.g. in Provençal, see Bossong (2008: 142) on Northern Occitan dialects with a true partitive article (Limousin, Auvergne - empirical evidence?):

(12) *Demander del pan, de la carne e del vin*  
(‘to ask for bread, meat and wine’)



## Research questions – problems to solve

2. Geographical distribution – ‚white areas on the maps‘ – missing data? **WHERE?**

E.g. Francoprovençal (cf. ALAVAL, Kristol in print)

Apparently obligatory (?) ‘partitive’ *de* with indefinite direct object DPs:

(13) oe kɔ̃tra a t'ʊ fo fɪɛ **de te**

*Euh contre la toux il faut faire DE thé...* (Kristol in print: 7)

But: ‘Francoprovençal A’: with fully fledged partitive article:

(14) Sg. masc. *dy* (*dɛ*) fem. *dla* (*dɛ*)

Pl. masc. *de* fem. *dle* (*dɛ*)



## Research questions – problems to solve

2. Geographical distribution – ‚white areas on the maps‘ – missing data? **WHERE?**

E.g. Northern Italian dialects:

Partitive articles attested, but what is their syntactic status (obligatory)? See question 1!



## Research questions – problems to solve

### 3. Correlations? Explanations?

Genetic relationship – language contact – independent evolutions (polygenesis)? **WHY?**

- A. ‚Differential argument marking‘, complementary distribution with DOM (in Romance; Körner 1987, Iemmolo 2011)
- B. Explicit marking of non-individuation, complementary distribution with ‚agglutinative‘ (sigmatic) plural marking on nominals (in Romance, Stark 2008, 2013)
- C. Language contact - morphosyntactic borrowing?





## Next steps

- a. Creation of an online ‚partitivity platform‘ - please send us pdfs of your ppt or handouts by January 15th!
- b. Publication enterprise: Information via mail in January with the general question ‚yes or no‘, contact with a publishing house (Benjamins/de Gruyter) / interesting series, peer-review etc: Zurich.
- c. ‚Submission‘ and unofficial research groups (e.g. Switzerland) should meet in spring / summer...