

A syntactically-driven approach to indefiniteness, specificity and anti-specificity in Romance¹

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In this paper we present an original approach to analyze the compositionality of indefinite expressions in Romance by investigating the relevance of their syntactic distribution in relation to their meaning. This approach has the advantage of allowing us to explore the question of how syntactic structure can determine the meaning of different forms of indefiniteness. To that end, we postulate a common derivation for bare plurals, bare mass and *de* phrases, whereby an abstract operator DE is adjoined to definite determiners and shifts entities into property-type expressions. Quantificational specificity is proposed to be derived from a syntactic structure in which weak quantifiers select for indefinite DE -phrases, no matter whether *de* is overt at Spell-Out or not; these quantifiers turn properties into generalized quantifiers. The anti-specificity meaning of some indefinites is derived by adjoining in the syntactic structure an abstract operator ALG that encodes the speaker's epistemic state of ignorance to a quantifier encoded for specificity, and it turns a generalized quantifier into a modified generalized quantifier. The paper also brings some general predictions on how indefiniteness is expressed in Romance, as it provides extensive support from five Romance languages: Brazilian Portuguese, Catalan, French, Italian and Spanish.

KEYWORDS: anti-specificity, Brazilian Portuguese, Catalan, French, indefiniteness, Italian, Spanish, specificity

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1. INTRODUCTION

The aim of this paper is to provide a new, unified, syntactically-driven analysis to the compositionality of indefiniteness, specificity and anti-specificity in Romance, with a special reference to Brazilian Portuguese (BP), Catalan (C), French (F), Italian (I) and Spanish (S). Our central research question is: what does the syntactic distribution and meaning of indefinite expressions in Romance reveal about their syntactic structure?

More specifically, we look at data such as those exemplified in (1)–(3) from I and BP.

- (1) *Indefiniteness*
- (a) Ho visto **(dei) ragazzi**. (I)
 have seen *dei* boys
 ‘I saw boys.’
 (Cardinaletti & Giusti 2016: 58 exx. (1a), (4b))
- (b) Eu vi **meninos**. (BP)
 I saw boys
 ‘I saw boys.’
- (2) *Specificity*
- (a) Ho visto **dei ragazzi**. (I)
 have seen *dei* boys
 ‘I saw some boys.’
- (b) Eu vi **uns meninos**. (BP)
 I saw some boys
 ‘I saw some boys.’
- (3) *Antispecificity*
- (a) Ho visto **alcuni ragazzi**.² (I)
 have seen some boys
 ‘I saw some boys.’
 (Cardinaletti & Giusti 2016: 59 ex. (4c))
- (b) Eu vi **alguns meninos**. (BP)
 I saw some boys
 ‘I saw some boys.’

[2] Note that *alcuni* appears to be ambiguous between an antispecific and a specific reading, the latter being the only possible one when the indefinite is in object position of subject experiencer psychological verbs, e.g.

(i) Adoro *alcuni* vini italiani. Soprattutto il Barolo ed
 like some wine Italian above.all the Barolo and
 il Nero d’Avola.
 the Nero d’Avola (I)
 ‘I like some Italian wines, namely the Barolo and the Nero d’Avola.’

We take these languages and these indefinite expressions as representative of the phenomena that we want to explore in this paper.

First, we investigate how indefiniteness is derived and expressed: either by means of *des/de* in F, *dei/di* in I or by means of bare plurals indefinites and bare mass nouns, both in argument position and in left-dislocated structures, in BP, C and S (Dobrovie-Sorin & Laca 1996, 2003; Gutiérrez-Rexach 2010; Leonetti 1999; de Swart 2006; Dobrovie-Sorin & Beyssade 2012; Laca 2013; Cardinaletti & Giusti 2016, 2017; and others).

Second, we investigate how a specific indefinite reading is derived and expressed, due either to the presence of a quantifier expression (e.g. *uns* in BP) that introduces the reference to a quantized DP (Krifka 1989, 1992) or to the identification of the referent via a semantic function (e.g. a choice function, Reinhart 1997, Winter 1997; or a Skolem function, Steedman 2003, 2006) that guarantees a specific referential interpretation for *des/dei* phrases (Dobrovie-Sorin & Beyssade 2012, Cardinaletti & Giusti 2016).

Third, we investigate how an anti-specific reading is derived and expressed (e.g. the existential quantifiers *algun(i)* (I)/*algún((o)s)* (BP, C, S)/*quelqu(es)* (F); see Eguren & Sánchez 2007; Martí 2008a, b, 2009; Alonso-Ovalle & Menéndez-Benito 2010; Giannakidou & Quer 2013; Jayez & Tovena 2013; Etxeberria & Giannakidou 2017; and others). This reading has also been associated with semantic evidentiality (Jayez & Tovena 2013), in the sense that the epistemic agent does not know (Alonso-Ovalle & Menéndez-Benito 2013) and has no direct evidence of which entity or entities satisfy the description provided by the sentences, or (s)he does not want to make explicit to the interlocutor the fact that (s)he has this knowledge.

Our specific goal is to address the following two fundamental questions: (i) What is the syntactic structure of the various indefinite expressions in (1)–(3), despite their superficial forms observed in the Romance languages here considered? and (ii) How can the different readings in (1)–(3) be derived in grammar at the syntax–semantics interface? We understand that this syntactic–semantic approach has the advantage of allowing us to reveal how syntactic structure can determine the meaning of different forms of indefiniteness.

To address these questions we are going to propose an analysis that explains the availability of the aforementioned indefinite in Romance as follows: (i) indefiniteness is derived by adjoining an abstract operator *DE* to a definite *D*(eterminer), with the result that it shifts a definite reading to an indefinite one, and turns an entity into a property-type expression; (ii) quantificational indefiniteness is derived by merging a quantifier that is lexically encoded for specificity (e.g. specific quantifiers such as *certain*s in F, *cierto* in S, and non-specific quantifiers such as *plusieurs* in F, *varios* in S) with an indefinite *D*, with the result that it turns a property into a generalized quantifier;³ and (iii) anti-specificity is

[3] As mentioned above, we acknowledge that specificity may also be the output of applying an abstract (Skolemized) choice function to an indefinite expression with the result that its referential

derived by adjoining an abstract operator *ALG* to a quantifier with an interpretable specificity feature, with the result that a modified generalized quantifier is obtained: *ALG* shifts its meaning by eliminating the reference value of the individuals quantified over and by considering an alternative set whose value is not available to the speaker in the world being described.⁴ We also aim to show (iv) that the role of the operator *DE* with respect to definiteness is parallel to the role of *ALG* with respect to specificity, the difference being that the former applies to definite DPs and shifts their definiteness to indefiniteness, while the latter applies to specific QPs and shifts their specificity to anti-specificity.⁵

As will be seen, our analysis postulates a syntactically-driven indefiniteness hierarchy that accounts for the compositionality of the various meanings presented in (1)–(3). The paper is structured as follows. Section 2 presents the background assumptions on which we build the analysis just exposed.

Section 3 provides a new account of indefiniteness that builds on definite plural count nouns, analyzed by means of a morphosyntactic *PLURALIZER* feature adjoined to *D* (Cyrino & Espinal 2020), and on definite mass nouns, over which an operator *DE* cancels definiteness (Hypothesis 1). This operator is spelled-out as *de* in some Romance languages and in some constructions, among which we refer to left-dislocated structures. With this approach we account for the data in (1). In this section we also address the question of why singular indefinites behave differently in Romance (Dobrovie-Sorin, Blean & Espinal 2006, Espinal 2010, Espinal & McNally 2011).⁶

Section 4 presents a new syntactic analysis of quantificational indefiniteness and specificity according to which a quantifier (*Q*) lexically encoded as being either specific or non-specific is merged with an indefinite *D* in complement position (Hypothesis 2). We support this hypothesis in combination with both plural count nouns and mass nouns. We resort to scopal specificity (as expected from QPs), referential specificity and epistemic specificity to account for the data in (2), as well as for other specific readings of *F des* and *I dei* phrases in preverbal position.⁷

Section 5 shows how anti-specificity is syntactically built up by means of an operator *ALG* that adjoins to a *Q* encoding specificity and gives as output another *Q* deprived of specificity (Hypothesis 3). This operator is spelled-out in most Romance languages as *alc-/alg-*, but in *F* it is instantiated as *quelqu-*, thus

interpretation is guaranteed (von Stechow 2011, Dobrovie-Sorin & Beyssade 2012). However, this is not the main goal of our analysis of specificity.

[4] See the notion of speaker's ignorance (Farkas 2020) also present in Alonso-Ovalle & Menéndez-Benito (2013).

[5] The existence of operators that apply to certain structures and have the effect of canceling certain properties also have parallels in the verbal domain. See, for example, Kratzer (2004), who postulates that a *TELIC* operator creates *TELIC* predicates by applying to *ATELIC* verb stems.

[6] Singular indefinites require different strategies, and in many Romance languages the morphosyntactic ways to express indefiniteness sort singular count nouns separately from singular mass and plural count nouns (Dobrovie-Sorin et al. 2006, Cardinaletti & Giusti 2018, and others).

[7] The specific reading of an indefinite *des/dei* phrase can also be the output of applying a (Skolemized) choice function to a non-empty set and mapping this set onto a constant term. See footnote 3 above.

accounting for the data in (3). We show that, being syntactically adjoined to Q, ALG may have scope interactions with other quantifiers and, in spite of being semantically anti-specific, it may occur in syntactic topic position (Ettxeberria & Giannakidou 2017).

We conclude the paper with Section 6.

2. BACKGROUND ASSUMPTIONS

The linguistic literature, especially the semantically-oriented part of it, has been very active in terms of the various readings outlined in Section 1. Still, to our knowledge, a common analysis that accounts for how these different meanings appear and are built syntactically has not yet been provided. Our paper aims to fill this gap by contributing in a novel way to the structure of indefinite expressions at the syntax–semantics interface. In order to do that, we first present some assumptions.

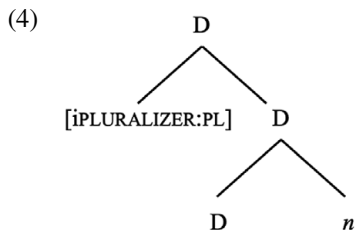
First, we assume that a nominal expression in Romance needs a DP structure (Abney 1987) in order to be a syntactic and a semantic argument (Longobardi 1994, Chierchia 1998, Dobrovie-Sorin et al. 2006, Ghomeshi, Paul & Wiltschko 2009, Dobrovie-Sorin & Beyssade 2012, and others). This assumption follows from an attempt to explain the restricted distribution of bare arguments in Romance, in particular bare count singular nominals in object position and all sorts of bare nominals in subject position. An overt D has been postulated to correlate with an iota function (Partee 1987) that turns property-type expressions (the denotation of bare common nouns) into entity-type expressions (the denotation of DPs). We also assume a multilayered DP structure (Zamparelli 1995/2000, Ihsane 2008, Martí-Girbau 2010), but ours builds over the D head and the Q head, as will become explicit in Sections 3–5.

Second, bearing in mind Heim's (2011) assumption for languages without articles, according to which nominal expressions are simply indefinites, we assume that in languages with articles DPs in argument position are definite (i.e. there are no indefinite articles), and definiteness is shifted to indefiniteness by a dedicated grammatical process (an abstract operator that in some languages and in certain constructions takes the lexical exponent *de* at the time of lexical insertion).⁸

Third, note that examples (1)–(3) contain plural expressions. We assume, following Cyrino & Espinal (2020), that within the nominal domain, the PLURALIZER in Romance is syntactically adjoined to D (alternatively, a categorized *d* root), as in (4), and it is syntactically opaque; hence, the newly formed object has the same label

[8] According to Heim (2011: 1006), in languages without articles 'the ambiguous DPs ... are simply indefinites. They are semantically equivalent to English indefinites but have a wider range of felicitous uses because they do not compete with definites and therefore do not induce the same implicatures'. See also Seres (2020), Šimik & Demian (2020) and Seres & Borik (to appear) for experimental investigations that support the claim that semantically all nominals in Russian are indefinites and that any definiteness effect that might be inferred is of a pragmatic nature. Further exploration of the implications of this assumption is beyond the scope of this paper.

as its host (D). As noted above, we are also assuming that the lowest D is definite, and it selects a nominal expression, represented in (4) by *n*.



According to this proposal, Number in Romance does not project a morphosyntactic functional head.⁹ Furthermore, on the basis of puzzling data on plural marking in a variety of Romance languages (i.e. lack of plural agreement and partial plural marking; plural marking on pronouns, clitics and possessives; plural marking on relatives; etc.), Cyrino & Espinal (2020) hypothesize that the PLURALIZER in unmarked cases is a modifying feature on D, and instantiations of plural marking within the nominal domain should be conceived as the output of morphophonological concord, a post-syntactic operation. As will become clear in Section 3 this syntactic structure – based on head modification – is the one on which our analysis of indefinite expressions in Romance is built.

Fourth, we assume a distinction between indefinite quantitative vs. partitive *de* (preposition) (Milner 1978; Storto 2003; Ihsane 2008; Martí-Girbau 2010; Cardinaletti & Giusti 2016, 2017; and others). We acknowledge that etymologically both uses of *de* derive from the Latin preposition *de*, which has a spatial meaning (i.e. it denotes a distancing from a source or origin). Additionally, we acknowledge that from the partitive construction the so-called partitive article (a contraction of the preposition *de* plus a definite article or *preposizione articolata*, Chierchia 1997) was reinterpreted as the expression of indefiniteness in various Romance languages (e.g. Middle French, Carlier 2007, Carlier & Lamiroy 2014) following a grammaticalization chain (Heine 1992).¹⁰

Fifth, we share with Martí (2008b) the insight that an indefiniteness hierarchy and a decompositional analysis of the existential import of *S unos* and *algunos* are to be postulated in the nominal domain. However, our proposal differs from hers in that it focuses not on the lexical semantics of these indefinite quantifiers but on the syntactic hierarchical instantiation of functional elements conveying (in)definiteness, specificity and anti-specificity. We show in Table 1 a summary of only those aspects that we consider important for the reader interested in the topic of

[9] See Borer (2005), Wiltschko (2008), Alexiadou (2019) and references therein for analyses of number that rely on the projection of a functional head.

[10] The conceptual shift from partition to indefiniteness is not specific to F, and it has also been described for S (Rigau 1999), I (Storto 2003) and C (Martí-Girbau 2010).

Martí (2008b, 2009)	The present analysis
Scope: Spanish and Brazilian Portuguese	Scope: Spanish, Brazilian Portuguese, Catalan, French and Italian
The potential wide scope readings of indefinite expressions above the negation layer and the layer that introduces existential quantification over events is addressed by means of a semantic hierarchy.	The syntactic derivation of indefinite expressions is addressed by means of a syntactic hierarchy: DEFINITENESS < INDEFINITENESS < SPECIFICITY < ANTI-SPECIFICITY.
Focus on the lexical semantic differences between <i>unos</i> and <i>algunos</i> . <i>Alg-</i> is context-sensitive, and it introduces a relationship with a previously established discourse entity. It is therefore the highest element in the indefinite hierarchy.	<i>Unos</i> is a quantifier that can be specific while <i>algunos</i> encodes speaker's ignorance. <i>ALG</i> is the highest constituent in the indefiniteness hierarchy because it cancels <i>SPECIFICITY</i> .

Table 1
Martí's (2008b, 2009) analysis vs. the present analysis.

indefiniteness from both a semantic and a syntactic perspective, and that differentiate Martí's approach from ours.

In sum, in our study we argue that different indefinite readings are constrained by different functional categories, and in this syntactically-driven hierarchy we postulate a parallel between the derivation of anti-specific *alg*-phrases from Qs that encode specificity and the derivation of indefinite *de*-phrases from definite Ds. The latter is addressed in the following section.

3. INDEFINITENESS

Romance languages have different ways of expressing indefiniteness. F requires an overt indefinite marker *de* preceding definite plural count nouns and definite mass nouns.¹¹ The situation in I appears to show greater variation, as will become clear below. Still, the definite article in the two languages introduces a definite interpretation by means of which it denotes a function that takes a property and yields the unique object that has that property, whereas *de* – preceding what looks like a definite plural count noun or a definite mass noun – entails an existential reading, also entailed by bare nouns.¹² Consider the F and I definite vs. indefinite minimal

[11] From a diachronic perspective, the preposition *de* originally denoted the displacement of an element from a source or an origin (Carlier 2007). This historical origin is what motivated the fact that, in the literature, the *deldi* markers of indefinites in F and I have been referred to as introducing 'bare partitive constructions' (Chierchia 1997, Zamparelli 2008). However, we follow Delfitto (1993), Storto (2003), Cardinaletti & Giusti (2016), among others, who argue that the constructions exemplified so far do not convey partitivity, but pure indefiniteness.

[12] The syntactic account we provide below does not aim to account in detail for those semantic differences that appear to distinguish F from I (e.g. *dei* is claimed to take wide scope easily, unlike

pairs illustrated in (5)–(8), which show that *de* preceding a definite article conveys indefiniteness.

- (5) (a) J'ai vu les garçons. (F)
I.have seen the boys
'I saw the boys.'
- (b) J'ai vu **des** garçons.
I.have seen *de*.the boys
'I saw boys.'
- (6) (a) Jean a bu l'eau. (F)
Jean has drunk the.water
'Jean drank the water.'
- (b) Jean a bu **de l'eau**.
Jean has drunk *de* the.water
'Jean drank water.'
- (7) (a) Ho visto i ragazzi. (I)
have seen the boys
'I saw the boys.'
- (b) Ho visto (**dei**) ragazzi. (= ex. (1a) above)
have seen *dei* boys
'I saw boys.'
- (Cardinaletti & Giusti 2016: 58 exx. (1a), (4b))
- (8) (a) Ho bevuto l'acqua.¹³ (I)
have drunk the.water
'I drank the water.'
- (b) Ho bevuto (**dell'**) acqua.
have drunk *de*.the water
'I drank water.'

Other languages, such as BP, C and S, most commonly resort to bare plurals and bare mass nouns to refer to indefinite nominals in object position. See the S examples in (9), in which the expressions in bold denote a non-specific set of individuals (in the case of the bare plural) or a non-specific amount of matter (in the case of the bare mass noun).¹⁴

des in French; Chierchia 1997, Storto 2003, Zamparelli 2008, Dobrovie-Sorin 2021). We agree with Cardinaletti & Giusti's (2018) claim that the variation of different forms characteristic of some I dialects (see also Giusti 2021) vs. the higher homogeneity found in F (although see Stark & Gerards 2021 for different varieties in Francoprovençal) can be captured in terms of coexisting grammars in the former (Kroch 1989, Egerland 2009).

[13] See Cardinaletti & Giusti (2020) for the possibility of an indefinite reading associated with the definite articles in (7a) and (8a) in informal Italian.

[14] Concerning indefinite singular count nouns, Romance languages are well known to require an overt indefinite quantifier *un* 'a' both in postverbal and in preverbal position (Longobardi 2001, 2005), unless in the particular case of objects of 'have'-predicates that allow bare nominals (Dobrovie-Sorin et al. 2006, Espinal 2010, Espinal & McNally 2011).

- (9) Encontraron **cadáveres** / **lodo**. (S)
 found corpses mud
 ‘They found corpses/mud.’

However, note that even in those languages that usually express indefiniteness by means of bare plurals (e.g. BP, C, S), an overt marker *de* may show up following those quantifiers and nouns that select indefinite complements. Thus, collective and measure nouns also select for indefinite plural complements preceded by an overt marker *de*.¹⁵

- (10) (a) um pouco **de cadeira(s)** / **de água** (BP)
 a little *de* chair(s) *de* water
 ‘a few chairs, a little (amount of) water’
 (b) un ejército **de trabajadores** / una miga **de pan** (S)
 a army *de* workers a crumb *de* bread
 ‘an army of workers/a breadcrumb’

The indefinite marker *de* also shows up in fronted indefinite expressions, as illustrated in the clitic left-dislocation examples in (11) for C. Note that this indefinite expression is associated with the object of either a quantifier, a cardinal or a transitive verb.

- (11) (a) **De bisbes**, en van assistir diversos/cinc. (C)
de bishops *en* PAST attend several/five
 ‘Bishops, {several/five} attended (the meeting).’
 (b) **D’aigua**, en beuré quan arribi a la font.
de.water *en* drink.FUT when arrive at the spring

Concerning indefinite mass nouns and indefinite plural count nouns, it is also of interest to highlight the microvariation to be found in Italo-Romance varieties (Cardinaletti & Giusti 2018): bare *di* + null article (12a), null *di* + null article

In F, a language that does not allow bare nominals, indefinite *un* alternates with *de* phrases in the following way: the quantifier *un* is allowed in both positive and negative sentences, but only *de* guarantees a narrow scope interpretation in negative sentences. See Kayne (1975, 1981), Tovena, Déprez & Jayez (2004) and Ihsane (2008) for *de*-NPs in this language.

For the particular case of BP, which allows bare singulars in all argument positions, see Schmitt & Munn (1999), Munn & Schmitt (2005) and Cyrino & Espinal (2015), among others. [15] See Jackendoff (1977), Selkirk (1977) and posterior works (Stavrou 2003, Alexiadou & Stavrou 2020, and others) for the similarities between quantifier expressions (*many children*) and other expressions among which there are quantifier-like nouns (*a number of students*), cardinal nouns (*dozens of T-shirts*), measure nouns (*a pile of books*) and partitive nouns (*a slice of bread*).

(12b), null *di* + definite article (12c) and *di* + definite article (12d), which are all interpreted as conveying indefiniteness.

- (12) (a) Sei fyse **d'aqua.** / Anda sarkà **d**
 if there.was *di*.water go look.for *di*
viulatte. (Italo-Romance)
 violets
 'If there was water.../Go look for violets.'
- (b) Ho raccolto **fieno.** / Ho raccolto **violette.**
 have harvested hay have picked violets
- (c) Ho raccolto **il fieno.** / Ho raccolto **le**
 have harvested the hay have picked the
violette. (amb.: DEF and INDEF)
 violets
- (d) Ho raccolto **del fieno.** / Ho raccolto **delle violette.**
 have harvested *di*.the hay have picked *di*.the violets
 'I harvested hay./I picked violets.'
- (Cardinaletti & Giusti 2018: exx. (3b), (5a, b), (4b), (7))

All the preceding data support the hypothesis that *de* in the Romance languages under study is a marker of indefiniteness. Furthermore, it shows that *de* may or may not be overtly realized. To account for this variation in the expression of indefiniteness (a marker *de* – either overt or covert – in combination with a definite article – either overt or covert – followed by a plural count noun or a mass noun) we propose our first hypothesis.

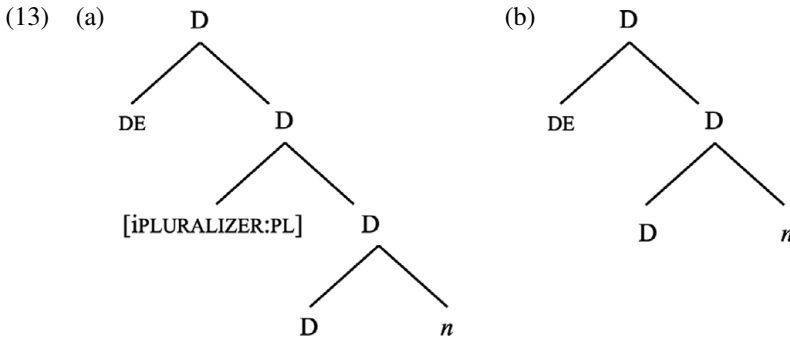
Hypothesis 1

In Romance the indefinite interpretation associated with nominal expressions is composed by merging an abstract operator DE to a definite D .

In the case of indefinite bare plurals the operator DE adjoins to a pluralized D , as represented in the structure in (13a).¹⁶ In the case of indefinite mass nouns we assume the structure in (13b).

[16] See also Cardinaletti & Giusti (2016, 2018), who assume that bare plurals (and *dei*-expressions) in Italian must be DPs. These authors postulate an indefinite operator in Spec,DP, while the head D is assumed to host the functional features of gender and number associated with N (Giusti 2015).

Note that if *de* were a Specifier of DP it should be able to take a phrasal form (i.e. the specifier of a head is a maximal projection). However, *de* in Spec,DP never obtains such a form. Therefore, we postulate that our abstract operator DE is a head adjoined to D , following independent argumentation developed in Cyrino & Espinal (2020).



Structure (13a) must be read as follows. The definite *D* (i.e. a definite article) is modified twice: first it is pluralized, by being merged with [iPLURALIZER:PL] (see Section 2), and second it is deprived of definiteness by being merged with *DE*. Structure (13b) shows that the definite *D* can also be modified only once, when number does not play a role. These syntactic structures account for the various indefinite nominal expressions discussed in this section, with the proviso that at the time of Allomorph Selection (i.e. Vocabulary Insertion) some Romance languages in some structures have available an overt *de* that is phonologically sensitive to the vocabulary item for the (pluralized) definite article it combines with, while others opt for zero insertion (Nevins 2012). By means of this analysis we provide a new, unified derivation of indefinite expressions, no matter whether they take the form of *de* phrases, bare plurals or bare mass nouns.

At the level of logical form, *DE* – parallel to *IDENT* (Partee 1987) – shifts an entity $\langle e \rangle$ into a property $\langle e, t \rangle$, and is of type $\langle e \langle e, t \rangle \rangle$. According to this synchronic analysis of indefiniteness in Romance, *DE* is neither a partitive preposition nor a partitive article but rather an operator that cancels the iota operator associated with the definite article ($DE: \iota(x)[P(x)] \rightarrow P(x)$). This analysis predicts that under the effects of this type-shifting operation introduced by *DE*, a definite nominal expression is shifted into an indefinite expression with a property-type denotation. Henceforth, we will refer to indefinite expressions as ‘*DE*-phrases’.

Two predictions follow from our analysis of *DE* as an operator of type $\langle e \langle e, t \rangle \rangle$. On the one hand, since *DE*-phrases denote properties they should only be able to have an anaphoric relationship with property-type denoting clitics. On the other hand, since *DE*-phrases denote properties they should only be able to license a narrow scope reading. Both predictions are borne out.

In constructions that contain indefinite complements and dislocated indefinite expressions, a dedicated indefinite clitic (*ne/en*) is needed for anaphoric reference in those languages that have another series of clitics for reference to definite

plural accusative nominals (Kayne 1975 for F, Cordin 1988 for I, and Todolí 2002 for C).¹⁷

- (14) (a) Puis il chercha **des timbres**, mais il n'**en** trouva pas. (F)
 then he looked.for *des* stamps but he NEG.CL found not
 'Then he looked for stamps, but he didn't find any.'
 (Carlier 2020: ex. (40), from J.-P. Manchette)
- (b) **De** la **viande**, nous **en** mangeons de moins
de the meet we *en* eat of less
 en moins.
 to less
 'Meat, we eat less and less.'
- (15) (a) (**Di**) **ragazzi** Gianni **ne** ha visti. / **ne** ha visti cinque. (I)
de boys Gianni *ne* has seen *ne* has seen five
 'Boys, Gianni saw {some/ five}.'
- (b) (**Di**) **acqua**, Gianni **ne** ha bevuta troppa.
de water Gianni *ne* has drunk too much
 'Water, Gianni drank too much.'

See, in particular, the minimal pair in (16), which contrasts an indefinite with a definite dislocated constituent.

- (16) (a) **De vestits, en** tinc a l'armari. (C)
de dresses *en* have in the.closet
 'I have dresses in the closet.'
- (b) **Els vestits, els** tinc a l'armari.
 the dresses them have in the.closet
 '(My) dresses, I have them in the closet.'

It is important to emphasize that the clitic *ne/en* does not convey a partitive meaning in any of the above examples, it simply resumes a DE-phrase.¹⁸ Indefinite plural count nouns and mass nouns being property-type expressions (as follows from the structures in (13) above), the only possible clitic that is allowed in this context is a property-type anaphora (Espinal & McNally 2011, Laca 2013).¹⁹ By

[17] In the literature, *des*-phrases in F have been assumed to denote properties (Dobrovie-Sorin & Laca 2003, Bosveld-de Smet 2004, Corblin, Marandin & Sleeman 2004), exactly like bare plurals in S and C (McNally 1995; Dobrovie-Sorin 1997; Dobrovie-Sorin et al. 2006). Note also that in I bare plurals and bare mass nouns are allowed in sentence-initial position, since *di* is optional.

[18] See Kayne (1975), who extensively shows the use of F *ne/en* in non-partitive constructions.

[19] Catalan is interesting because, even in the case of left-dislocated bare nominal objects unmarked for number of 'have'-predicates (see footnote 14), a marker of indefiniteness is also required, as illustrated in (i).

- (i) (a) Porto vestit. (C)
 wear dress
 'I'm wearing a dress.'

contrast, definite DPs show an anaphoric relationship with entity-type pronouns such as the accusative *els* ‘them’, illustrated in (16b).

Let us now move on to our second prediction. As commonly claimed in the literature (Dobrovie-Sorin & Laca 1996, 2003; Cardinaletti & Giusti 2016), those Romance languages that allow bare plurals only license a narrow scope interpretation of the bare plural under negation, even if they are topicalized (Laca 2013), as illustrated in (17b), the reason being that property-type expressions are weak and therefore do not allow wide/strong readings. Our analysis in (13) provides a syntactic explanation for this weakness.

- (17) (a) No vi **estudiantes**. (S) * \exists - \neg - \exists
 not saw students
 ‘I didn’t see any students.’
 (b) **Estudiantes** no vi el miércoles pasado. (S) * \exists - \neg - \exists
 students not saw the Wednesday past
 ‘I didn’t see any students last Wednesday.’
 (c) Non ho visto **ragazzi**. (I) * \exists - \neg - \exists
 not have seen boys
 ‘I didn’t see any boys.’

In F, where the presence of *de* does not alternate with a bare plural, the unmarked interpretation is also narrow scope (18a) (Delfitto 1993, Cardinaletti & Giusti 2016), exactly like S bare plurals in (17a, b). In I, where bare plurals alternate with *dei* phrases in object position, different forms convey differences in meaning: the bare plural only licenses a narrow scope interpretation under negation (17c), whereas the *dei* phrase is ambiguous between a wide and a narrow scope reading (18b) (Chierchia 1997: 91 ex. (35c), Zamparelli 2008, Cardinaletti & Giusti 2016, Giusti 2021).²⁰

- (18) (a) Je n’ai pas vu **d’ étudiants étrangers**.²¹ (F) * \exists - \neg - \exists
 I NEG.have not seen *de* students foreigner.PL
 ‘I didn’t see any foreign students.’

- (b) **De vestit**, només **en** porto els diumenges.
de dress only *en* wear the Sundays
 ‘Dress(es), I only wear them on Sundays.’

See Déchaine & Wiltschko (2002) for the hypothesis that F *en* is a pro-NP, and Gerards & Stark (2021) for the hypothesis that *en* pronominalizes a DivP whose head is *de*, while Martí-Girbau (2010) and Ihsane (2021a) regard *en* as a quantitative pronoun. However, contrary to the latter two hypotheses, the example in (i) clearly shows the absence of ‘division’ introduced by *de*, therefore supporting the idea that both the dislocated bare nominal and the clitic do correspond to property-type expressions.

[20] In the next section we address the potential strong reading of *des/dei* indefinites in F and I.

[21] A *JL* referee is interested in our analysis of *de* phrases under the scope of negation in an example such as (18a). Even though *de* phrases have been analyzed as *de* + articleless NPs (Kayne 1975: 30), the fact that Contemporary F is a language that lacks bare NPs in argument position (Bouchard 2002) suggests that these articleless NPs are DPs with null Ds. Furthermore, the fact that *de* phrases have been claimed to represent a kind of Negative Polarity Item (Kayne 1981, Tovena et al. 2004, Ihsane 2008; also in Genovese, Battye 1990) also suggests that what makes *de* phrases a sort of NPI is not the indefinite operator DE itself, but the existence of some formal feature on the D head that is semantically sensitive to the negative operator. We leave this topic for future research.

- (b) Non ho visto **dei ragazzi** (I) $\exists \neg / \neg \exists$
 not have seen *dei* children
 'I didn't see any boys./Some boys, I didn't see.'

Recall that the operator *DE* applies to plurals and mass nouns, and cannot repair the wide/strong indefinite reading, for which *un((o)s)/um(s)* is available in Romance. This raises the question of why we observe differences in scope among the Romance languages under study here. We hypothesize that the existing differences derive not from different formal properties of the operator *DE* (to which we uniformly assign the syntactic structure in (13)) and the semantic type $\langle e, \langle e, t \rangle \rangle$, but from the co-existence of alternating forms in the languages analyzed. In BP, C and S bare plurals have narrow scope under negation because *un((o)s)/um(s)* indefinites have additional formal features and take a default wide scope.²² In F *de* phrases take a narrow scope reading with respect to negation, and it alternates with *un*, which takes a wide scope reading; *des* phrases cannot take narrow scope with respect to sentential negation in Standard F because they are specified differently from *de* phrases, even though they can be interpreted in the scope of negation in some F dialects (Stark & Gerards 2021).²³ In I, bare plurals take narrow scope under negation, while singular *un* and *dei* phrases have a default wide scope, without excluding a narrow scope, as also occurs in some I dialects (Cardinaletti & Giusti 2018).

We therefore predict that, in spite of the fact that *de* is overtly instantiated in (18) but not in (17), a *DE* operator is responsible for the indefinite, weak reading of both bare plurals and *de/des/dei* indefinites.

To sum up, in this section we have argued that indefiniteness in Romance is syntactically encoded by means of a *DE* operator adjoined to a definite (pluralized) D. Semantically, this operator cancels the effects of the iota operator introduced by the definite article, turning an entity into a property, with the predictions that pronominalization by *en* and narrow scope readings are expected. This operator may be instantiated overtly as *de* in all the Romance languages we have considered.

4. QUANTIFICATIONAL INDEFINITENESS AND SPECIFICITY

In this section we have two goals. First, we aim to show that weak quantifiers select for indefinite *DE*-phrases at syntax, no matter whether *de* is overt at Spell-Out or not. Second, we show that indefinite expressions may convey either scopal specificity (as expected from quantificational expressions), referential specificity (as expected

[22] Martí (2008a: 10; 2009) analyzes *unos* in S as a positive polarity item, a hypothesis that predicts that it 'cannot normally [emphasis added: Espinal & Cyrino] scope under negation'. We return to this issue in Section 4.

[23] Dobrovie-Sorin (2021) analyzes *des* in F as a positive polarity item. Still, this author shows that with this type of expression wide scope is marginally possible with respect to negation and intensional predicates, but not in combination with quantifiers. See also Carlier (2020).

when the referent of an indefinite is functionally dependent on some discourse participant or on another expression in the sentence), or epistemic specificity (as expected when the referent of the indefinite expression is dependent on the speaker's knowledge). In other words, we propose a novel analysis whereby the specificity seen on indefinite expressions can be derived from a syntactic structure in which weak quantifiers select for indefinite *DE*-phrases, no matter whether *de* is overt or not; these quantifiers turn properties into generalized quantifiers.

In (10a), repeated here as (19a), we have illustrated the possibility that an overt *de* introduces the indefinite complement of a quantifier and this happens in languages (e.g. BP, C, S) that usually express indefiniteness by means of bare plurals, thus following the same pattern found in F (19b).

- (19) (a) um pouco **de** cadeira(s) / **de** água (BP)
 a little *de* chair(s) *de* water
 'a few chairs, a little (amount of) water'
 (b) **beaucoup de** cigarettes / **beaucoup d'**argent (F)
 many *de* cigarettes much *de*.money
 'many cigarettes, much money'

If we consider C, we find that only weak quantifiers (those allowed in existential sentences, Milsark 1974) select for indefinite *DE*-phrases, although some of them require an overt *de* preceding the indefinite complement, others have an optional *de*, and still others lack an overt *de*, as illustrated in (20).²⁴

- (20) (a) Hi ha **una mica de** pa. (C)
 there has a little *de* bread
 'There is a little bit of bread.'
 (b) A la caixa forta, hi ha **bastants (de)** diners.
 in the safe there has a lot of *de* money.PL
 'In the safe there is a lot of money.'
 (c) Hi ha **certes** amistats que més valdria
 there has certain.PL friendships that more would.be.worth
 no tenir.
 not have
 'There are certain friendships that one is better off not having.'

[24] Note that in this language the uninflected quantifier *tot* 'many' is weak and selects an indefinite phrase, whereas the inflected strong quantifier *tot* 'all' is strong and selects a definite complement. As expected, only the former may occur in an existential construction. Consider the minimal pair in (i).

- (i) (a) A l'arbre de Nadal hi ha **tot de** regals. (C)
 at the.tree of Christmas there has many *de* presents
 'Under the Christmas tree there are many presents.'
 (b) *A l'arbre de Nadal hi ha **tots els** regals.
 at the.tree of Christmas there has all the presents
 IT CAN ONLY MEAN: 'All presents are located under the Christmas tree.'

Incidentally, Kayne (1975: 120) already postulates a structure that contains a covert marker *de* for the structures in (21), and Gerards & Stark (2021: 11) mention the existence of overt *de* phrases after numerals in colloquial varieties of F, as in (22), an example originally from Bauche (1951).

- (21) (a) [NP une [de fleur]] (F)
 (b) [NP des [de fleurs] rouges]

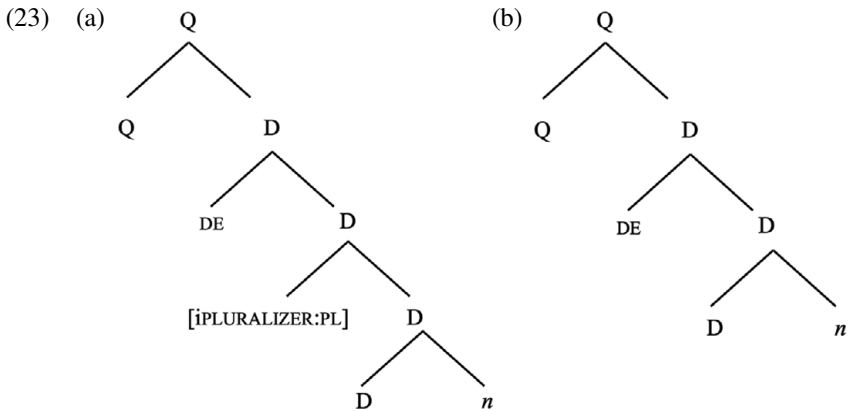
- (22) J'ai deux [de bonnets]. (F)
 I.have two de caps
 'I have two caps.'

To account for these data, we postulate that weak quantifiers and cardinals select for indefinite DE-phrases, as postulated in our second hypothesis.

Hypothesis 2

The quantificational reading of indefinite expressions is obtained by a quantifier that selects for a DE-phrase.

Accordingly, we postulate that the DE-phrase is merged in the complement position of a quantifier, as represented in (23). Structure (23a) represents quantified indefinite plural count nouns, whereas structure (23b) represents quantified indefinite mass nouns.



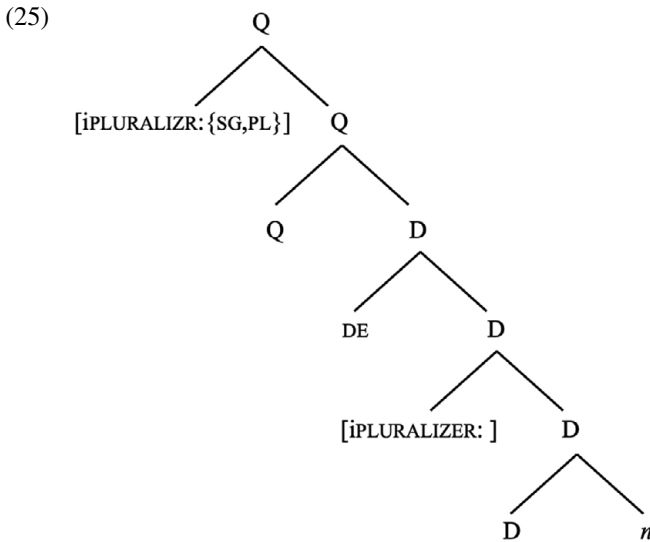
Two caveats are in order here. First, recall that in the Romance paradigm there are two sets of languages: those that have a quantifier *un* (for singular and plural) and those that lack this vocabulary item (for the plural). For both groups of languages, we postulate the same structure. The Q head in (23a) hosts different quantifiers, some of which encode specificity (F *certain*s; S *ciertos*) or non-specificity (F *plusieurs*,

beaucoup; *S varios, muchos*, cardinals), while still others (BP, C and S *uno((o)s)*) can generally be interpreted either as specific or as non-specific (Enç 1991: 4).²⁵

Second, the Q head hosts quantifiers that can also be modified by a PLURALIZER, in such a way that their singular and plural number marking is guaranteed. Recall from Section 3 that DE-phrases are plural in default cases. Therefore, we postulated in structure (13a) of that section that the modifying feature of the definite determiner was [iPLURALIZER:PL]. We now postulate that Q may also be modified by an interpretable pluralizer feature, which is valued for singular or plural: [iPLURALIZER:{SG,PL}]. In this kind of structure, the two pluralizer features must match in value, otherwise the derivation would crash, as illustrated in (24) for Catalan.

- (24) (a) *bastants de diners* / **diner* (C)
 a lot.PL *de* money.PL money
 ‘a lot of money’
 (b) *molts d’anys* / **any*
 many *de*.years year
 ‘many years’

Hence, the DE-phrase in this case must be unvalued for this modifying feature, as represented in (25): [iPLURALIZER:].²⁶



[25] See Ledgeway (2012) for the emergence of specificity and non-specificity together with the rise of functional categories from Latin to Romance.

[26] An advantage of our analysis, which highlights the undeniable role of syntax in the composition of meaning, is that it solves some semantic puzzles concerning the expression of plurality such as the one observed in the literature by Martí's (2008b: 26) (i.e. 'it is somewhat puzzling that plurality appears twice in the hierarchy, once for nouns and once for the quantifiers; the question to be investigated is whether it would be possible to have plurality occur only once').

Semantically, in (23a, b) and (25) the Q turns the property-denoting DE-phrase into a generalized quantifier, and therefore it is of type $\langle\langle e,t \rangle, \langle\langle e,t \rangle t \rangle\rangle$. This function is what accounts for the fact that while indefinite DE-phrases have narrow scope (see Section 3), those indefinite expressions that are existentially quantified admit wide and narrow scope.

Two predictions follow from this analysis of quantificational indefinites that should be contrasted with the predictions that follow from our analysis of indefiniteness in the previous section. On the one hand, it is expected that both wide and narrow scope readings are available, in combination with other quantifiers and operators. On the other hand, since quantifier expressions denote sets of sets it is expected that they might introduce a discourse relationship with entity-type anaphors. Both predictions are borne out.

Specific quantifiers (e.g. BP *certo(s)*, S *cierto(s)*, F *certain(s)* ‘some, certain’) entail the existence of a specific set of individuals x (as illustrated in the standard analysis: $\lambda P.\lambda Q.\exists x[P(x)\wedge Q(x)]$). Consider the examples in (26), which show a specific quantifier in subject position that entails wide scope with respect to the negative operator.²⁷

- (26) (a) **Ciertos problemas** no tienen solución. (S) $\exists\neg$
 certain.PL problems not have solution
 ‘Some problems don’t have a solution.’
 (b) **Certos políticos** não ajudam o povo. (BP) $\exists\neg$
 certain.PL politicians not help the people
 ‘Some politicians don’t help the people.’
 (c) **Certains enfants** ne peuvent pas aller à l’école. (F) $\exists\neg$
 certain.PL children NEG can not go to the.school
 ‘Some children can’t go to school.’

By contrast, indefinite expressions introduced by BP, C and S *un(o)s* in object position, in sharp contrast with indefinite bare plurals (17), are generally interpreted as specific or as non-specific and license both a wide and a narrow scope interpretation with respect to negation.²⁸

[27] See von Heusinger (2011) for a review of the various notions behind the concept of specificity: discourse linking (Pesetsky 1987), partitivity (Enç 1991), presupposition (Yeom 1998, Geurts 2010), topicality (Cresti 1995, Portner 2002), weak and strong quantifiers (Diesing 1992, de Hoop 1995), referential anchoring (von Heusinger 2002) and epistemic specificity (von Heusinger 2002).

In line with Krifka’s (1989, 1992) work, Ihsane (2021a) has recently introduced a notion of epistemic specificity that links to scopal epistemicity: the specific interpretation of *des* phrases in F is due to a quantity that is known by the subject, thus making their reference quantized.

[28] The indefinite *un* in Romance originates from the Latin numeral *ŪNUS*. This item did not undergo a parallel diachronic development in all Romance languages (Carlier 2013), and it emerged later than the definite determiner (Stark 2002; Ledgeway 2012: 82–89).

A number of semantic studies deal with *unos* in S (in contrast to singular *un*, and in contrast to plural *algunos* ‘some’). See Villalta (1994), Sánchez (1999), Gutiérrez-Rexach (2001, 2003, 2010), Alonso-Ovalle & Menéndez-Benito (2003, 2008, 2010, 2011), Eguren & Sánchez (2007), López Palma (2007), Martí (2008a, b, 2009), and Leonetti (2012), among others.

- (27) (a) Não falei com **uns deputados**. (BP) $\exists \neg / \neg \exists$
 not spoke with some deputies
 ‘There were some deputies I didn’t talk to./I didn’t talk to any deputies.’
- (b) No vaig veure **uns estudiant**s. (C) $\exists \neg / \neg \exists$
 not PAST see some students
 ‘There were some students I didn’t see./I didn’t see any students.’
- (c) No encontré **unos locales adecuados**. (S) $\exists \neg / \neg \exists$
 not found some premises suitable
 ‘There are some suitable premises I didn’t find./I didn’t find any suitable premises.’

Since scope ambiguity is a characteristic of quantifier expressions (but not of pure indefinites), our proposal, namely that the indefinite expressions headed by *un(o)s* have a quantificational status, rather than having an article status, as commonly claimed in traditional grammars, has the advantage of accommodating these facts more naturally.

The second prediction relates to referential anchoring in discourse. When quantified and cardinal indefinites are left-dislocated, accusative definite clitics – but not the clitic *en/ne* – must be used in those languages that have the two series of pronouns (e.g. C, F and I), as illustrated in (28). The reason behind this difference is that, whereas *DE*-phrases denote properties, quantifier expressions refer to sets of sets. The definite pronoun usually requires a strong antecedent with which it is coreferential. However, when the antecedent is a quantitative expression, it is considered a weak antecedent of the pronoun (Enç 1991), as such a quantitative expression is referentially anchored to a salient discourse participant or another discourse referent (von Heusinger 2011), and it is resumed by an entity-type anaphora.

- (28) (a) **Unes quantes galetes**, te **les/*en** pots menjar. (C)
 some biscuits you them/en can eat
 ‘You can eat some biscuits.’
- (b) On a **plusieurs enfants**, on **les/*n** aime pareil. (F)
 we have several children we them/en love the.same
 ‘We have several children, we love them the same.’
- (c) **Molte cose le** abbiamo lasciate nella vecchia casa. (I)
 many things them have left in.the old house
 ‘We left many things in the old house.’

In Section 3, we saw that our proposal predicted the use of a dedicated clitic *en* to refer to left dislocated indefinites (see (14), (15) and (16a) above). Given that in (28) we find quantified indefinites, we do not expect the same clitic. Therefore, by

Note also that in BP and S the expressions *um certo* and *un cierto* ‘a certain’ are also available (see Eguren & Sánchez 2007 for S). From a syntactic perspective, the existence of this combination of quantifiers indicates recursion of the quantifier that encodes specificity.

postulating a syntactic and a semantic difference between *DE*-phrases and quantificational indefinites, our proposal also explains the choice of the clitics *en/les* for different types of indefinite expressions.

Next, we consider what happens in the case of Romance languages such as F and I that do not have an overt quantifier *un(o)s* for the plural. If *des/dei* phrases are the overt spell-out of indefiniteness, as argued in Section 3, can these expressions convey a specific reading?

First, consider the facts in F. Even though a *de* phrase in object position is associated with a weak reading and may only have narrow scope (see ex. (18a) above), *des* indefinites have also been argued to be associated with a strong – albeit marginal – reading when they occur in sentence-initial position and combine with stage-level predicates (29a), appear in contrastive contexts (29b), are interpreted like *certain*s (29c) and lie outside the scope of negation (29d). The examples in (29a, b, c) are extracted from Dobrovie-Sorin & Beyssade (2012: 72 exx. (97), and footnote 3 on page 147), whereas (29d) comes from Carlier (2020: slide 21 ex. (26)).²⁹

- (29) (a) **Des élèves** étaient malades. (F)
des students were ill
 ‘Some students were ill.’
- (b) **Des enfants** tambourinaient sur leurs tables, tandis que
des children drummed on their tables while that
 d’autres criaient à tue-tête.
 de.others screamed out loud
 ‘Some children were drumming on their tables, while others were yelling at the top of their lungs.’
- (c) **Des élèves** étaient absents hier.
des students were absent yesterday
 ‘Some students were absent yesterday.’
- (d) **Des Juifs** ne voulaient pas sortir de leurs maisons.
des Jews NEG wanted not leave from their houses
 Ils ont été tués sur place. (F. Milewski)
 they have been killed on spot
 ‘Some Jews did not want to leave their homes. They were killed on the spot.’

Note that in the last example the definite pronoun *ils* has a discourse relationship with the antecedent *des Juifs*, which has wide scope with respect to negation.

[29] See also Galmiche (1986), Kleiber (1988) and Bosveld-de Smet (1998).

As noted by Dobrovie-Sorin & Beyssade (2012: 144), whereas the quantifier *certain*s in F gives rise to quantificational sentences with distributive and contrastive interpretations that convey an implicature of partitivity, such an inference is not drawn from *des* phrases, except in contrastive contexts such as (29b).

Postverbal indefinite *des* phrases in direct object position can be also associated with a specific reference in specificity-inducing contexts, such as the restrictive relative clause (see also Ihsane 2008, Carlier 2020).

- (30) Au restaurant, j'ai rencontré **des voisins** que tu connais
 at.the restaurant I.have met *des* neighbors that you know
 aussi: Paul et Eric (F)
 too Paul and Eric
 'At the restaurant I met (some) neighbors that you know too: Paul and Eric.'
 (Stark & Gerards 2021: 314 ex. (d.1))

This example suggests that the specific denotation of *des voisins* may be due to a covert existential quantifier (note that this expression would be translated with a quantifier *unos* following the so-called differential object marking *a* in S: *En el restaurante saludé a unos vecinos que también conoces: Paul y Eric*; Leonetti 2004).³⁰ Alternatively, the specific referential reading can be the result of applying a Skolemized choice function (i.e. a function that takes a set denoted by the descriptive content of the noun as its argument and yields an element or some specific elements from that set), thus relating the specific referential reading with the speaker's referential intent (von Heusinger 2002, 2007, 2011). A specific referential reading of the indefinite *des* phrase also predicts the possibility of an anaphoric relationship with an accusative pronoun. (See the contrast between (31) and (14a) in the previous section.)

- (31) Est allé à plusieurs reprises sous le feu de l'ennemi chercher
 is gone to several times under the fire of the.enemy seek
des blessés entre les tranchées françaises et allemandes
des wounded among the ditches French and German
 et **les** a ramenés. (H. Bordeaux) (F)
 and them has brought.back
 'He went several times under enemy fire to seek some wounded persons
 among the French and German ditches and brought them back.'
 (Carlier 2020: slide 27 ex. (39))

In I, *dei*-phrases allow both wide and narrow scope in postverbal position, exactly like what was observed for BP, C and S *un(o)s* in (27).

[30] In connection with the possibility of a quantificational reading, indefinite *des* expressions also admit a generic reading with so-called symmetric nouns (Corblin 1987; Dobrovie-Sorin & Beyssade 2012: 211–212), as in (i).

- (i) **Des soeurs** rivalisent souvent. (F)
des sisters compete often
 'Sisters often compete with each other.'

- (32) Non ho visto **dei ragazzi**. (= ex. (21) above) (I) $\exists - / \neg \exists$
 not have seen *dei* boys
 ‘There were some boys I didn’t see./I didn’t see any boys.’
 (Cardinaletti & Giusti 2016: 72 ex. (61a))

As mentioned for F *des* phrases, *dei* phrases in sentence-initial position are accepted with restrictions by native speakers. Thus, (33b) – with a non-specific reading – is preferred over (33a). However, *dei* phrases are assigned a specific reading when they occur in combination with causative verbs (34).

- (33) (a) ?**Degli studenti** devono finire l’esame in un’ora. (I)
degli students must finish the.exam in one.hour
 (b) Ci sono **degli studenti** che devono finire l’esame
 there are *degli* students that must finish the.exam
 in un’ora.
 in one.hour
 ‘There are students that must finish the exam in one hour.’
- (34) **Dei ragazzi** non mi hanno lasciato entrare. (I)
dei boys not me have let enter
 ‘Some boys didn’t let me in.’

Two analyses can account for the strong wide reading of indefinite *dei* phrases. On the one hand, one might postulate that the Q in the structures in (23) can be null.³¹ Note, however, that the coordination test in (35) (Chierchia 1997: 92 exx. (38b–d)) shows that an overt Q cannot be coordinated with a null Q. *Dei*, unlike *uno* and *molti*, cannot be considered itself a Q, even if it is associated with a small quantity meaning (Cardinaletti & Giusti 2018, Giusti 2021).

- (35) (a) **alcuni ma non molti** ragazzi (I)
 some but not many boys
 (b) ***uno o dei** ragazzi
 one or *dei* boys
 (c) ***dei ma non molti** ragazzi
dei but not many boys

On the other hand, one might postulate that the referential specificity of a *dei* indefinite is the output of a choice function that takes a set denoted by the descriptive content of the noun and assigns a specific element or some specific elements out of

[31] As noted by Chierchia (1997: 91 ex. (36a)), being existentially quantified, *dei* phrases admit generic interpretations, as in (i).

(i) **Dei bravi boy scout** aiutano le vecchiette ad attraversare la strada. (I)
dei good boy scout help the old at cross the road
 ‘Good boy scouts help old ladies to cross the road.’

that set. Being either quantificational or Skolem terms, in (36a) an anaphoric relationship is obtained between the two instantiations of the pronoun *loro*, the null pronoun in subject position of *hanno detto*, and the weak antecedent *dei marziani*. Similarly, in (36b) the indefinite expression *dei biscotti* is referentially anchored to a salient discourse referent or to some particular individuals that the speaker has in mind, thus allowing the definite pronoun *li* within the sentence.

- (36) (a) **Dei marziani** che sono atterrati nel mio giardino mi hanno
des martians that are landed in.the my garden me have
 detto che **loro** sono gli ultimi della **loro** specie. (I)
 told that they are the last of their species
 ‘Some Martians that have landed in my garden told me they are the
 last of their species.’
 (Zamparelli 2008: 306 ex. (16b))
- (b) **Dei biscotti**, Gianni **li/*ne** ha mangiati.³²
dei biscuits Gianni them/ne has eaten
 (Cardinaletti & Giusti 2016: 67 ex. (40a))

To sum up, in this section we have shown that weak quantifiers select for indefinite *DE*-phrases in Romance, no matter whether *de* is overt at Spell-Out or not. Second, we have shown that weak indefinite expressions (*des/dei* phrases) may convey either scopal specificity (as expected from their being quantificational indefinites), referential specificity and epistemic specificity (as derived from their being Skolem terms), which correlate with wide scope and resumption by means of entity-type clitics. Note that the possibility that *des/dei* phrases in F and I, but not bare plurals, can be associated with referential specificity derives from the fact that in these languages there is not a dedicated form *un(o)s* to encode quantificational specificity, unlike the set of vocabulary items of other Romance languages such as S, C and BP. We assume that this contrast is related to the different diachronic paths these languages took (see footnote 28).

5. ANTI-SPECIFICITY

In the previous section we have shown how our analysis of quantificational specificity builds on the syntactic analysis of indefiniteness discussed in

[32] Note the contrast in pronoun resumption between (36b) and (i).

- (i) **(Di) biscotti**, Gianni **ne** ha mangiati. (I)
di biscuits Gianni *ne* has eaten
 (Cardinaletti & Giusti 2016: 68 ex. (41a))

We account for this contrast by postulating that in (36b) either a covert quantifier (alternatively, a [quantity] formal feature; Pinzin & Poletto 2020) or a Skolem function guarantees reference a set of sets, resumed by the clitic *li*, whereas in (i) the bare plural (under the scope of a *DE* operator) denotes a property-type expression that can only be resumed by the clitic *ne*.

Section 3. In this section we focus on the derivation of quantificational anti-specificity.

Anti-specific indefinite quantifiers denote sets of sets, but the speaker presents himself/herself either as ignorant about which individuals are members of that set of sets, or as assuming that their identification is not relevant to the addressee at the time of the conversation. In either case the exact denotation of the indefinite expression is unavailable in context.

An anti-specific reading is normally associated with the examples presented in (3) for I and BP, here repeated as (37), and in (38) for F. These examples illustrate overt anti-specific quantifiers (see footnote 2, though).

- (37) (a) Ho visto **alcuni ragazzi**. (I)
 have seen some.PL boys
 (Cardinaletti & Giusti 2016: 59 ex. (4c))
 (b) Eu vi **alguns meninos**. (BP)
 I saw some.PL boys
 'I saw some boys.'
- (38) J'ai vu **quelques garçons**. (F)
 I.have seen some.PL boys
 'I saw some boys.'

The indefinite nominal expressions in bold in (37) and (38) have been characterized in the literature as showing either lack of epistemic specificity (Haskell 1997, Farkas 2000), anti-specificity (Jayez & Tovena 2013) or referential vagueness (Aloni 2011, Giannakidou & Quer 2013). We align with Jayez and Tovena and claim that these quantifiers are anti-specific indefinite quantifiers, used to refer to an undetermined individual satisfying the descriptive content of the noun, thus reflecting the speaker's ignorance (Farkas 2020) regarding which individual satisfies the description provided by the sentence.³³

In F and I the contrast between specificity and anti-specificity, reflecting speaker's knowledge vs. speaker's ignorance, can be covertly expressed, as illustrated in the minimal pair in (39) for F.

- (39) (a) **Des étudiants** du cours de syntaxe ont triché à
des students of.the course of syntax have cheated at

[33] See Alonso-Ovalle & Menéndez-Benito (2013) for the claim that 'not knowing who' means that the speaker cannot identify the individual that satisfies the existential claim in a contextually relevant way. It also means that that individual is not the same in all the speaker's epistemic or doxastic alternatives, something that is in accordance with the referential vagueness postulated by Giannakidou & Quer (2013). The latter authors, together with Etxebarria & Giannakidou (2017), analyze plural *algunos* in a similar way to the singular *algún*. By contrast, Alonso-Ovalle & Menéndez-Benito (2010) argue that S *algún* introduces a modal (epistemic) effect, since it imposes an anti-singleton constraint on its domain of quantification, whereas its plural counterpart *algunos* blocks this epistemic effect due to the interaction with plurality. The contrast between *algún* and *algunos* is beyond the scope of the present paper.

l'examen. Je **les** connais: c'est Paul Dupond et
 the.exam I them know this.is Paul Dupond and
 Marie Schmidt. (F)
 Marie Schmidt

'Some students of the syntax class cheated in the exam. I know them.
 They are Paul Dupond and Marie Schmidt'

- (b) **Des étudiants** du cours de syntaxe ont triché à
des students of.the course of syntax have cheated at
 l'examen, **mais je ne sais pas qui c'est.**
 the.exam but I NEG know not who this.is
 'Some students of the syntax class cheated in the exam, but I don't
 know who they are.'

(Ihsane 2021a: 242 ex. (16))

Note that (39a) would be translated as *unos* in S, whereas (39b) would be translated as *algunos*.³⁴ In the former example the specific interpretation of the *des* phrase is due to the entailment that a set of individuals exists that is known by the speaker and that makes the reference of this expression quantized (Krifka 1989, 1992; Ihsane 2021a). By contrast, in the latter example the speaker is ignorant about who constitutes the reference of the set of students that cheated in the exam.

What is important for our purposes is the fact that in the above examples the indefinite quantifiers *alcuni/alguns/quelques*, as well as their covert counterparts in F and I, are used when the speaker is ignorant (Alonso-Ovalle & Menéndez-Benito 2013, Farkas 2020) or does not have the intent to refer to any particular set of individuals, and there is no referential anchoring in context to such a set. Hence,

[34] See the references in footnote 28 for the differences described in the literature between *unos* and *algunos* in S.

Dobrovie-Sorin & Beyssade (2012: 147–148) note that, to paraphrase the F indefinite expressions in bold in (i), 'one would not use *certaines* but rather *quelques*'

- (i) (a) **Des verres** sont vides. (F)
des glasses are empty
 'Some glasses are empty.
 (b) **Des fourchettes** sont sales.
des forks are dirty
 'Some forks are dirty.'

Galmiche (1986), Bosveld-de Smet (2004) and Carlier (2020) discuss the possibility that in very specific contexts the indefinite expressions in (i) can even get a partitive reading (e.g. among the forks, there are some that are dirty).

Similar data can be found in Italian also, as illustrated in (ii).

- (ii) (a) **Dei bicchieri** sono vuoti. (I)
dei glasses are empty
 (b) **Delle forchette** sono sporche.
delle forks are dirty

absence of specificity and absence of referential intent (von Heusinger 2000a, b, 2011) appear to be the hallmark of anti-specific indefinites. Consider in this regard the examples in (40). These examples show that it is false that *algunos* must be linked to a previously introduced context-sensitive set (Gutiérrez-Rexach 2001, 2010; Martí 2008b, 2009). (40a) can be part of the description of a village we do not know anything about, whereas (40b) can be the headline of a news about a Parliament meeting. In these situations, the domain, but not the set of entities being referred to by the indefinite expressions in preverbal subject position, can be assumed to be discourse linked (Pesetsky 1987).

- (40) (a) **Algunas tradiciones medievales** todavía se conservan. (S)
 some traditions medieval still CL kept
 ‘Some medieval traditions are still kept.’
 (b) **Algunos diputados** rechazaron la negociación.
 some deputies rejected the negotiation
 ‘Some deputies rejected the negotiation.’

In both examples the choice of *algunos* (versus other available indefinite quantifiers in the language) conveys the meaning that the speaker, even though (s)he might be able to identify the entities that satisfy the claim, does not want to make the hearer aware of this identification. It might also be the case that the speaker is ignorant about the reference of these entities. Our hypothesis concerning the speaker’s ignorance associated with indefinite expressions headed by the Q *algunos* is that they denote sets of individuals whose reference is not part of the speaker’s epistemic state. That is, whereas indefinite expressions headed by the Q *unos* may denote a specific set of individuals that are part of the speaker’s epistemic state, the *alg-* component leads to elimination of this specificity. Following Stephenson’s (2007) analysis of epistemic modals, we represent the meaning of *alg-* as follows (Stephenson’s judge is, for the present purposes, identified with the speaker): ALG forces to consider a world where some entities exist that is not part of the epistemic state of the speaker (or part of the shared knowledge with the hearer, for which the * symbol is used).³⁵

- (41) $\llbracket \text{ALG} \rrbracket^{c: w, t, s}: \lambda P. \lambda Q. \exists w' \in \text{Epist}_{w, t, s}. \exists x [P(x) \wedge Q(x)]_{w'} \longrightarrow$
 $\lambda P. \lambda Q. \exists w'' \notin \text{Epist}_{w^*, t, s}. \exists x [P(x) \wedge Q(x)]_{w''}$

[35] In our understanding the antispecificity of *algunos* should be distinguished from the potential non-specificity of *unos*. Only in the latter case the speaker’s ignorance is relative to the speaker’s epistemic worlds.

(i) $\llbracket \text{unos} \rrbracket^{c: w, t, s}: \lambda P. \lambda Q. \exists w', w'' \in \text{Epist}_{w, t, s} [\{x: P(x) \wedge Q(x)\}_{w'} \neq \{x: P(x) \wedge Q(x)\}_{w''}]$

Even though in the literature speaker’s ignorance is commonly analyzed as in (i), that is, in association with a variation requirement across epistemic worlds of the speaker (Alonso-Ovalle & Menéndez Benito 2013), this type of approach does not address the difference between non-specificity and anti-specificity.

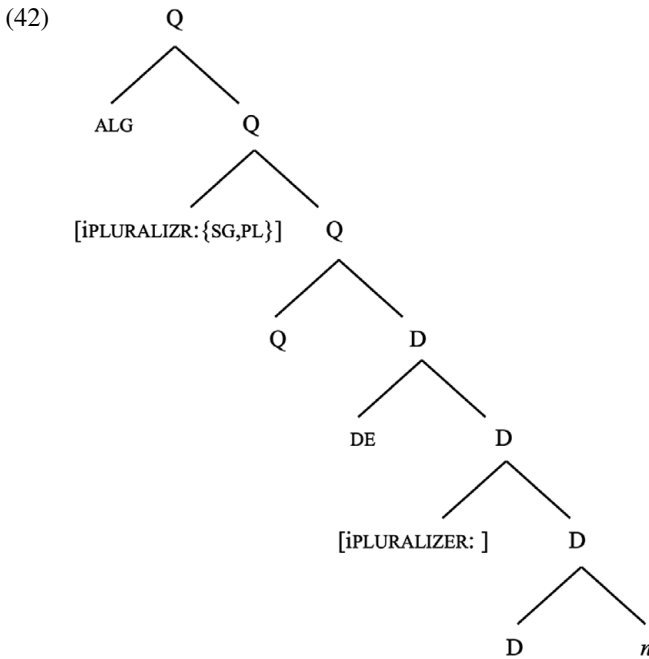
Supposing that $D_{(e)}$ contains three individuals $\{a, b, c\}$, then by using a specific *unos* the speaker knows and has the intent to refer to a specific subset of the set of possible combinations of the members of D (i.e. $\{\{a,b\} \wedge \{b,c\} \wedge \{a,c\}\}$ in w'). By contrast, by using *algunos* reference is made to a set of individuals in w'' that the speaker is ignorant about (i.e. it is not part of his epistemic state or the epistemic state shared with the hearer). Therefore, the set of individuals $D'_{(e)}$ referred to in w'' is distinct from D , which means that it can be larger than D or an unknown subset of D . Under this approach the referential vague indefinites in the previous examples introduce alternative values in the domain (i.e. indeterminacy of discourse referents) without an implicature of domain exhaustification.³⁶

From a morphosyntactic perspective we postulate our third hypothesis:

Hypothesis 3

The anti-specific reading of indefinite expressions is obtained by adjoining an operator *ALG* to a quantifier inherently valued for specificity, with the result that the modifying operator deprives the quantificational phrase of this property.

Hence, we postulate that, by adjoining to *Q*, the operator *ALG* cancels specificity. Consider the structure in (42).



[36] Note that domain exhaustification arises only in modal and generic contexts for free choice items. We leave outside this study the free choice reading that the indefinite *quelque* may have in F (Jayez & Tovena 2013), along with the free choice reading of *cualquiera* in S (Giannakidou & Quer 2013).

Both the Q that encodes specificity (see Section 4) and the operator ALG that cancels it can be null. To account for this variation, we claim that at the last stage of the mapping from syntax to phonology (Nevins 2012; i.e. at the stage of exponence and allomorph selection of Vocabulary Insertion), different languages make different choices for the ALG operator: while BP, C, I and S have the vocabulary item *alg-*, F has *quelqu-*, and both F and I can even have a null realization.³⁷

The syntactic structure in (42) represents the idea that whereas indefiniteness builds on definiteness (i.e. DE is adjoined to D, with the effect of canceling the definiteness of D), anti-specificity builds on specificity (i.e. ALG is adjoined to Q, with the effect of canceling the specificity of Q). In other words, by eliminating the reference value of the individuals quantified over, ALG behaves similarly to the operator DE that cancels definiteness at the lower determiner level and at the same time it introduces a higher layer in the syntactic indefinite hierarchy.³⁸

Two predictions follow from the present analysis of quantificational anti-specificity. First, because it is syntactically adjoined to Q, ALG can show scope interactions with other quantifiers. Second, in spite of being semantically anti-specific, ALG can occur in syntactic topic position.

The structure in (42) represents the idea that ALG is a structural modifier of Q. As such, indefinite anti-specific quantifiers admit wide and narrow scope with respect to other quantifiers, exactly like other quantificational expressions.

- (43) Ciertos editores no publicaron **algunos manuscritos**. (S)
 certain editors not published some manuscripts
 ‘Some manuscripts were not published by certain editors./Certain editors did not publish some manuscripts.’

We next show that anti-specific quantifiers may occur as topics.³⁹ This is something unexpected since, by definition, topics introduce a referential anchoring to a particular individual previously introduced in the discourse, and therefore are

[37] We leave this morphophonological realization outside our discussion, since it has no relevance in relation to the building blocks involved in an anti-specific reading.

[38] Note that our proposal differs from that put forth by Cardinaletti & Giusti (2006, 2016). Whereas they propose that *alcuni* is a quantifier external to the extended nominal projection, as in (i), we postulate that ALG is an operator head-adjoined to a quantifier that selects for an indefinite DE-phrase.

(i) Ho visto [_{QP} [_{Q'} *alcuni* [_{DP} Ø [_{NP} *ragazzi*]]]] (I)
 (Cardinaletti & Giusti 2016: 59 ex. (4c))

For those speakers of I (and maybe also BP and S; Martí 2008b) for whom *alcuni* may denote specificity (see footnote 2 above), speaker’s ignorance will not be part of the ALG operator.

[39] Note that the topic *des* phrase in (i), with no overt quantifier, also has an anti-specific reading.

(i) **Des** peuples, comme les Romains, ... ont triomphé, des siècles
des nations like the Romans have triumphed some centuries
 durant. (P. Bourget) (F)
 pendant
 ‘Some nations, such as the Romans, ... triumphed for centuries.’
 (Carlier 2020: slide 13 ex. (17))

expected to convey specificity (Cohen & Erteschik-Shir 2002). Consider in this respect the data in (44) (from Ettxeberria & Giannakidou 2017: 18 exx. (63) and (61)).

- (44) Context: A class of students is leaving on a summer camp. Instructor A knows all of them because they are former students. Instructor B doesn't know them at all because it is the first day of her new job. Instructor B says to instructor A:
- (a) **Algunos alumnos** han llegado tarde. Eran María, Pedro, y **no sé quién más.** (S)
 some.PL students have arrived late were María Pedro and not know who else
 'Some students arrived late. They were María, Pedro and I don't know who else.'
- (b) **Algunos alumnos** han llegado tarde. #Eran María, Pedro y Mónica.
 some.PL students have arrived late were María Pedro and Mónica
 'Some students arrived late. They were María, Pedro and Mónica.'

Note that in (44a, b) *algunos alumnos* is strictly speaking not D-linked (Pesetsky 1987) to a previous discourse antecedent: both speaker and hearer can make similar assumptions about the domain (that is, talking about students can be considered 'familiar' with respect to their most accessible context), but the set of students is not shared by speaker and hearer precisely because of the fundamental status of *algunos*. Still, this indefinite phrase constitutes the topic of the sentence: it is used to talk about a domain of individuals in the common ground that the sentence is about. This is proved by the fact that unaccusative verbs such as *llegar* 'to arrive' usually combine with postverbal indefinite subjects, but in these examples *algunos alumnos* occurs in preverbal position.⁴⁰

Therefore, we agree with Ettxeberria & Giannakidou (2017) that in (44a) the set of entities denoted by the indefinite expression is not context-dependent, and it contributes a presupposition of referential vagueness, since instructor B does not know the reference of all the individuals satisfying the existential claim. As such, it can be followed by an expression such as *y no sé quién más* 'and I don't know who

[40] Some relevant examples are given in (i):

- (i) (a) Han llegado alumnos. (S)
 have arrived students
 (b) Han llegado unos alumnos.
 have arrived some.PL students
 (c) Han llegado algunos alumnos.
 have arrived some.PL students
 'Some students have arrived.'

else' (44a) that overtly states the speaker's ignorance, but crucially it cannot be followed by a list of names that exhausts all the referents in discourse (44b). Thus, the coda in (44a) implies that the names of the students are a proper subset of the total set of individuals that arrive late, and it makes explicit that the speaker is not interested in (or he is ignorant of) the identity of the particular individuals that form that set. In this way the well-formedness of this example is due to the fact that the only possible interpretation it has is that there are various subpluralities of individuals available, and the coda guarantees reference to a set of individuals that is not identified by the speaker, instructor B. Note that this reading is not available in (44b).

Before we close this section, it should also be noted that, under the present analysis of anti-specificity, the operator *ALG* is at the top of an indefiniteness hierarchy to ensure that it cancels specificity by turning reference to a specific set of entities into reference to a set of individuals for which the reference value is not part of the speaker's epistemic state. In semantic terms it type-shifts a generalized quantifier (the one conveying specificity) into a modified generalized quantifier (conveying anti-specificity), and it is of type $\langle\langle e,t \rangle t \rangle, \langle\langle e,t \rangle t \rangle$.

Finally, note that Martí's (2009) claim that *algunos* contributes a partitive implicature (or partitive effect) follows straightforwardly from our proposal that *ALG* (in a sentence such as *Algunos alumnos han llegado tarde* 'Some students arrived late') not only entails the existence of a set x , but it also entails that the domain D' that x belongs to is either larger than D ($D \subseteq D'$) or an unknown subset of D ($D' \subseteq D$), thus conveying a partitive effect.

To sum up, in this section we have argued that *ALG*, which encodes speaker's ignorance, is an operator head-adjoined to a *Q* encoded for specificity. The output of this operation is a modified generalized quantifier deprived of specificity.

6. CONCLUSIONS AND FURTHER PREDICTIONS

In this paper we have addressed the expression of indefiniteness, specificity and anti-specificity in five Romance languages, namely BP, C, F, I, and S.

Our analysis postulates a new, unified, syntactically-driven approach to an indefiniteness hierarchy of functional heads that accounts for the compositionality of the various meanings associated with indefinite expressions.

We have argued that indefiniteness in Romance builds on definite plural nominals, and that an operator *DE* cancels definiteness by modifying a definite plural *D*. This operator *DE* semantically shifts entity-type expressions into property-type expressions, and morphophonologically speaking can be instantiated as *de* in some Romance languages and in some constructions, while in others it has a zero realization. We have extended this analysis to indefinite mass nouns.

We have introduced a new syntactic analysis of specificity according to which weak quantifiers are merged with indefinite *DE*-phrases. Semantically, they shift property type expressions into generalized quantifiers. In addition to scopal specificity, we have shown that some weak indefinites (i.e. F and I *des/dei* phrases) may

also license a strong referential or epistemic reading via a Skolemized choice function.

Building on specificity, we have also argued that in our syntactically-oriented approach, anti-specificity is created by means of an operator *ALG* that interacts with a *Q* that encodes specificity and cancels it. This operator semantically takes a generalized quantifier as input and yields a modified generalized quantifier as output.

We conclude by pointing out that, in addition to the general predictions on how indefiniteness, specificity and anti-specificity are syntactically structured and expressed in Romance, our analysis also makes interesting predictions for two unrelated phenomena: the expression of standard partitivity and pseudopartitivity in Romance.

Assuming that a partitive head is a bi-relational abstract functional head that mediates between definite nominal complements that denote the whole and nominal phrases that denote proper subparts (Barker 1998, Zamparelli 2008), we predict that in the specifier position of standard partitives only those quantificational structures (denoting either specificity or anti-specificity) are allowed, but not indefinite *DE*-phrases, since the latter are not quantificational. We also predict that in the complement position of pseudopartitives only an indefinite *DE*-phrase is allowed, but not quantificational structures. Both predictions appear to be borne out (Espinal & Cyrino 2021).

Overall, our syntactically-driven analysis is able to provide in a novel way a comprehensive understanding of the compositionality of meaning that different types of indefinite expressions have in Romance. Thus, it contributes to the ongoing discussion about the relevance of the study of meaning at the syntax–semantics interface.

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