

Anti-specificity and D-linking with Spanish *algún/algunos*: a unified approach

THE PROPOSAL. The Spanish *alg*-indefinites determiners *algún* and *algunos*, the singular and the plural version of each other, are known to exhibit conflicting behavior. In the singular, it is claimed to be an anti-specific indefinite (Giannakidou & Quer (GQ) 2013, Alonso Ovalle & Menendez-Benito (AM) 2010), requiring that the speaker has more than one individual in mind. In the plural, on the other hand, *algunos* appears to be D-linked and partitive-like (Gutiérrez-Rexach 2001, 2010, Martí 2008, 2009). This results in an ambiguity analysis, which is undesirable. In this paper, we document thoroughly the distribution and interpretation of the two variants, and propose that the *alg*-indefinite remains anti-specific in both uses. We offer a unified analysis of anti-specificity as *referential vagueness* following GQ (2013), Giannakidou and Yoon (2016), and present new data showing that apparent differences between the singular and the plural follow from NP-ellipsis, familiarity of the domain, and the way vagueness interacts with plurality.

THE PUZZLE. Singular *algún* is an anti-specific determiner conveying referential vagueness. This is obvious in the example below (similar indefinites can also be found in Italian, Greek, Catalan, Korean, Romanian, German, Basque, etc.):

- (1) Ha llamado algún estudiante. #Era Pedro.
have called some student was Pedro
'Some student called. #It was Pedro.'

The use of *algún* conveys that the speaker cannot identify who the student is (in opposition with the Spanish run-of-the-mill indefinite *un*), and considers possibilities. GQ and AM treat this as a presupposition; GQ formulate it as referential vagueness:

- (2) *Referential vagueness as anti-specificity*
(i) A sentence containing a referentially vague indefinite α will have a truth value iff:
 $\exists w_1, w_2 \in W: \llbracket \alpha \rrbracket^{w_1} \neq \llbracket \alpha \rrbracket^{w_2}$; where α is the referentially vague indefinite.
(ii) The worlds w_1, w_2 are epistemic alternatives of the speaker.

AM talk about 'anti-singleton condition'. The idea in both AM and GQ is that *algún* can only be used if there are more than one epistemically accessible values to the speaker. We think of this condition as a *felicity condition*, the direct opposite of Ionin's 2006 felicity condition of specificity (which forces the indefinites to refer uniquely). The condition expresses epistemic indeterminacy:

- (3) *Referential vagueness as non-unique intention*
 $\llbracket \text{algún NP VP} \rrbracket$ is defined in a context c if the following felicity condition is fulfilled:
 $\llbracket \text{algún NP VP} \rrbracket$ is not intended by the speaker s to refer to exactly one individual x in c .

The similarity with (2) and AM's anti-singleton condition is obvious. *Algún* contributes by adding the felicity condition of referential vagueness, plus the ordinary denotation of the indefinite:

- (4) a. $\llbracket \text{algún NP VP} \rrbracket$ will be felicitous iff:
 $\exists w^1, w^2 \in M(s): \llbracket \text{algún} \rrbracket^{w^1} \neq \llbracket \text{algún} \rrbracket^{w^2}$; and w_1, w_2 epistemic or doxastic alternatives of the speaker, i.e., worlds compatible with the speaker's beliefs or knowledge.
b. $\llbracket \text{algún} \rrbracket = \lambda P_{\langle et \rangle} \lambda Q_{\langle et \rangle} . \exists x [P(x) \ \& \ Q(x)]$

Plural *algunos* has been claimed to be partitive like in that it must be linked to an antecedent set (cf. Gutiérrez-Rexach 2001, 2010; Martí 2008, 2009). Consider the following scenario, from Martí (2009):

- (5) {Teachers A and B are on an excursion with [a group of children, of whom they are in charge]_K.
Teacher A comes to teacher B running;}
(a) Teacher A: ¿Te has enterado? [*Algunos* niños]_{K, #J} se han perdido en el bosque.
(b) Teacher A: ¿Te has enterado? [*Unos* niños]_{K, J} se han perdido en el bosque.
'Have you heard? *Unos/algunos* children got lost in the forest.'

Martí claims that in choosing *algunos*, the speaker intends to refer to the set of children that were salient previously (i.e. the children the teachers are in charge of, indicated as K); and argues that *alg-* gives rise to a partitivity implicature:

- (6) $\llbracket \text{alg-} \rrbracket = \lambda R_{\langle et, \langle et \rangle \rangle} . \lambda P_{\langle et \rangle} . \lambda Q_{\langle et \rangle} . R(P \cap C)(Q)$; Implicature: $R(P \cap C)(\{x: Q(x) = 0\})$

But if the *alg-* element creates the contextual dependency via C in the plural, why not also in the singular? Why isn't the singular D-linked? To get out of the dilemma, Martí would have to argue that there are two *alg-*, one that contributes C and combines only with the plural, and one that contributes referential vagueness and combines only with the singular. But without having an explanation of why the C effect is

lost in the singular, and why it is lost with some plurals as we show, such an explanation cannot be convincing. AM, on the other hand, suggest that the anti-specificity effect ('epistemic' effect in their terminology) is lost in the plural. This is empirically not true. Take the following example.

- (7) *Algunos alumnos han llegado tarde. #Eran María, Pedro y Mónica.*
Some students arrived late. They were María, Pedro y Mónica.

In this case, the speaker knows exactly who the students are, as the subset {María, Pedro y Mónica} is invariable, and it therefore violates vagueness. However, as we note above, referential vagueness is real with the plural. To see this point further, take the following example, similar to the one in (7):

- (8) *Algunos alumnos han llegado tarde. Eran María, Pedro y no sé quién más.*
Some students arrived late. They were María, Pedro, and I don't know who else.

The reason why the sentence in (8) improves when compared to the one in (7) is due to the addition of *no sé quién más* 'I don't know who else' which signals speaker ignorance, and now allows the students to be proper subsets of the total set of students that arrives late.

OUR ANALYSIS. The null hypothesis is that *alg-* is the element introducing referential vagueness in both the singular and the plural. For the D-linked reading, we show that it matters whether what *algunos* combines with is an elliptical plural or not, or whether it is in the topic position. In ellipsis, the plural is anaphoric, responsible for the familiar indexing. The discourse dependence effect, in this case, thus, is not due to *alg-* but to the presence of an elliptical anaphor, see example (9), from Gutierrez-Rexach (2011):

- (9) *Se han salvado doce pasajeros_K. Algunos_K estaban durmiendo en el momento del accidente.*
CI aux saved twelve passengers algunos were sleeping in the moment of the accident
Twelve passengers were saved. Algunos were sleeping at the time of the accident.

In the second sentence of this example, the NP [pasajeros 'passengers'] is not overt, but we can assume that it is elided under *algunos*. We have, then, NP ellipsis which requires an antecedent. Following standard assumptions about NP ellipsis we argue that an anaphoric pronominal is present:

- (10) $\llbracket \text{algunos} \rrbracket = \text{algunos} + \text{pro}_I$, where *I* is a familiar property variable, i.e. *I* must be in $\text{dom}(g)$.

The elliptical *pro* is an NP anaphor, indicated here with a familiar index, on a par with English one-anaphora (*Mary bought the yellow T-shirts, and Ariadne the blue ones*, cf. Kester 1996b,a; Saab 2018; cf. also Alexiadou & Gengel 2011; Corver & van Koppen 2011). The presence of this familiarity indexed *pro* forces *algunos* to pick up the index that comes with it. In Spanish, nominal ellipsis is licensed with a null *pro_I* (not with *one*) and it is possible with both adjectives and indefinite determiners. Since null *pro_I* is allowed with indefinite determiners generally, it seems only reasonable to assume it in the case of *algunos* in (9). In other words, the context dependency of *algunos* has nothing to do with *alg-*, but everything to do with the elliptical NP anaphor. The domain for *algunos* is fixed because of *pro*, but the vagueness variation requirement still holds:

- (11) **Referential Vagueness condition for plural *algunos*:**
*A sentence containing plural *algunos* designated here as α_{PL} will be felicitous iff:*
 $\exists w_1, w_2 \in M(s): \llbracket \alpha_{PL} \rrbracket^{w_1} \neq \llbracket \alpha_{PL} \rrbracket^{w_2}$

Here the alternatives to α are plural entities; a consequence of referential vagueness for plurality is that the speaker needs to consider at least two pluralities. Given that the domain is fixed, this creates the partitive effect: in the domain *D* previously introduced (via *pro*) of possible values, if α is a singular, the values assigned to α will be individuals in *D*. If we have a plural α_{PL} , the values assigned to α_{PL} will be pluralities in *D*, which means that with *algunos* we are looking at subdomains *D'* in *D* ($D' \subset D$).

Without ellipsis, in the case of *algunos NP* where we have an overt domain (as in (7) and (8)), the idea of anaphoric *pro* is not applicable. Here, we argue, discourse dependency will depend on whether the NP domain is topical or not. Details aside, saying that a domain is 'topical' implies that the domain is discourse given, i.e., a set under discussion, or familiar (the precise understanding of givenness is not crucial here). A topical/given NP domain is a familiar one, just as in the elliptical case as we showed above.

SUMMARY: In this paper, we propose a unified analysis of the Spanish *alg*-indefinites, without denying its anti-specific nature in both the singular and the plural (pace AM). We show that domain givenness and vagueness co-exist in this indefinite, and that the two properties are not mutually exclusive.