

On indefiniteness, specificity and anti-specificity in Romance: a novel approach

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1. In Romance, indefiniteness, specificity and anti-specificity are expressed in different ways:

(1) Indefiniteness a. <i>Ho visto (dei) ragazzi.</i> [I] have seen dei children 'I saw children.'	b. <i>Eu vi meninos.</i> [BP] I saw children 'I saw children.'
(2) Specificity a. <i>Ho visto dei ragazzi.</i> [I] have seen dei children 'I saw some children.'	b. <i>Eu vi uns meninos.</i> [BP] I saw some children 'I saw some children.'
(3) Anti-specificity a. <i>Ho visto alcuni ragazzi.</i> [I] have seen some children 'I saw some children.'	b. <i>Eu vi alguns meninos.</i> [BP] I saw some children 'I saw some children.'

Note that (1) to (3) contain plural expressions in I(talian) (some examples come from Cardinaletti & Giusti 2016) and B(razilian) P(ortuguese). The semantic literature has been very active on these topics. Still, to our knowledge, a common analysis that accounts for how these different meanings are constrained syntactically has not yet been provided. In this paper, we aim to present a syntactically-driven analysis that explains the availability of the indefiniteness, specificity and anti-specificity in Romance, which, we propose, can be derived in a compositional way.

2. We assume, following Cyrino and Espinal (2019), that within the nominal domain, by default, the PLURALIZER in Romance is syntactically adjoined to D (i.e., a categorized *d* root) and is syntactically opaque; hence, the newly formed object has the same label as its host (D). This is represented in (4):

(4) [_D [_iPLURALIZER: PL] D]

3. Indefiniteness. In our proposal, indefinite expressions as (1) are derived by adjoining an operator DE to the structure in (4). This syntactic structure -based on head modification- is the one on which our analysis of indefinite expressions in Romance is built.

(5) [_D DE [_D [_iPLURALIZER: PL] D]]

The abstract DE operator shifts an entity $\langle e \rangle$ into a property $\langle e, t \rangle$, and can be overtly or covertly instantiated at the time of vocabulary insertion (*des/de* in F(rench), *dei/di* in I, and bare plurals in BP, C(atalan) and S(panish)) (Nevins 2012). We extend this analysis to indefinite mass nouns.

4. Quantificational specificity. The Q head in (6) 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). Q selects a DE-phrase (6) and turns an $\langle e, t \rangle$ type expression into a generalized quantifier of type $\langle \langle e, t \rangle, t \rangle$.

(6) [_Q Q [_D DE [_D [_iPLURALIZER: PL] D]]]

5. Anti-specificity. The anti-specificity reading (associated with *alcuni* (I) / *algun(o)s* (BP, C, S); Giannakidou & Quer 2013, Etxeberria & Giannakidou 2017 / *quelques* (F), Jayez & Tovena 2013) is derived by adjoining an abstract operator ALG to this quantifier, with the result that ALG introduces referential vagueness (Aloni 2011, Giannakidou & Quer 2013), and the

speaker's ignorance (Alonso-Ovalle & Menéndez-Benito 2013, Farkas 2020). Whereas indefinite expressions headed by the Q *un(o)s* may denote a specific set of individuals, the *alg*-component leads to elimination of this 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. The operator ALG type-shifts a generalized quantifier into a modified generalized quantifier (type $\langle\langle\langle e, t \rangle t \rangle, \langle\langle e, t \rangle t \rangle\rangle$).

(7) [Q ALG [Q Q [D DE [D [iPLURALIZER: PL] D_{def}]]]]

6. We highlight that the role of the operator DE with respect to definiteness is parallel to the role of ALG with respect to specificity; in other words, whereas indefiniteness builds on definiteness, anti-specificity builds on specificity. This is a desirable result since the existence of operators that apply to certain structures and have the effect of cancelling certain properties have also parallels in the verbal domain.

7. In this talk we discuss several empirical and theoretical arguments, as well as some predictions that support our proposal. We present below a selection of them:

(i) Two predictions follow from our analysis of DE as an operator of type $\langle e, \langle e, t \rangle \rangle$.

1. Since DE-phrases denote properties they should only be able to have an anaphoric relationship with property-type denoting clitics.
2. Since DE-phrases denote properties they should only be able to license a narrow scope reading.

Both predictions are borne out.

(ii) Two predictions follow from our analysis of quantificational specificity as a quantifier that selects a DE-phrase and is of type $\langle\langle e, t \rangle, \langle\langle e, t \rangle t \rangle\rangle$.

1. It is expected that both wide and narrow scope readings are available, in combination with other quantifiers and operators.
2. 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.

(iii) Two predictions follow from the present analysis of quantificational anti-specificity as an operator ALG that is of type $\langle\langle\langle e, t \rangle t \rangle, \langle\langle e, t \rangle t \rangle\rangle$.

1. Given that ALG is syntactically adjoined to Q, it can show scope interactions with other quantifiers.
2. In spite of being semantically anti-specific, ALG can occur in syntactic topic position.

Both predictions are borne out.

8. Our syntactically-driven analysis provides a comprehensive understanding of the compositionality that indefinite expressions have in Romance at the syntax-semantics interface. This analysis of indefiniteness, specificity and anti-specificity also has predictions for a syntactic analysis of standard partitivity.

Selected references:

Alonso-Ovalle, Luis & Paula Menéndez-Benito. 2013. Epistemic indefinites: are we ignorant about ignorance? In Maria Aloni, Michael Franke & Floris Roelofsen (eds.), *Proceedings of the 19th Amsterdam Colloquium*, 35–42. University of Amsterdam. Cardinaletti, A. & G. Giusti. 2016. The syntax of the Italian indefinite determiner *dei*. *Lingua* 181: 58-80. Cyrino, S. & M.T. Espinal. 2020. On the syntax of Number in Romance. *Studia Linguistica*, 74(1), 165-203. Dobrovie-Sorin, C. & Beyssade, C. 2012. *Redefining indefinites*. Dordrecht, Springer. Martí, Luisa. 2009. Contextual restriction on indefinites. In *Quantification, Definiteness and Nominalization*, A. Giannakidou and M. Rathert (eds.), 108–132. Oxford: Oxford University Press.