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Indefinite determiners in two northern Italian dialects A quantitative approach

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Ca' Foscari University of Venice

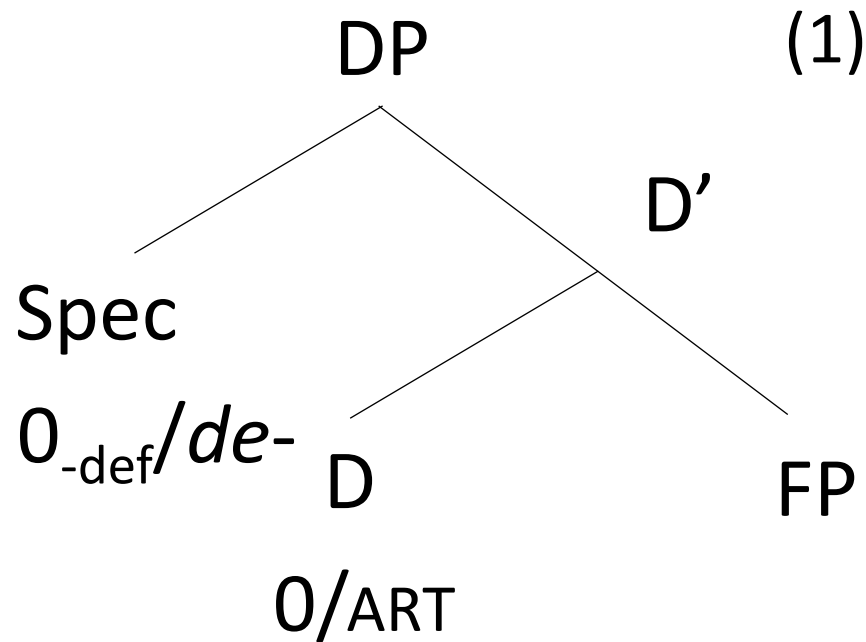
Going Romance 34

Special session on **Preposition-determiner interactions in Romance**

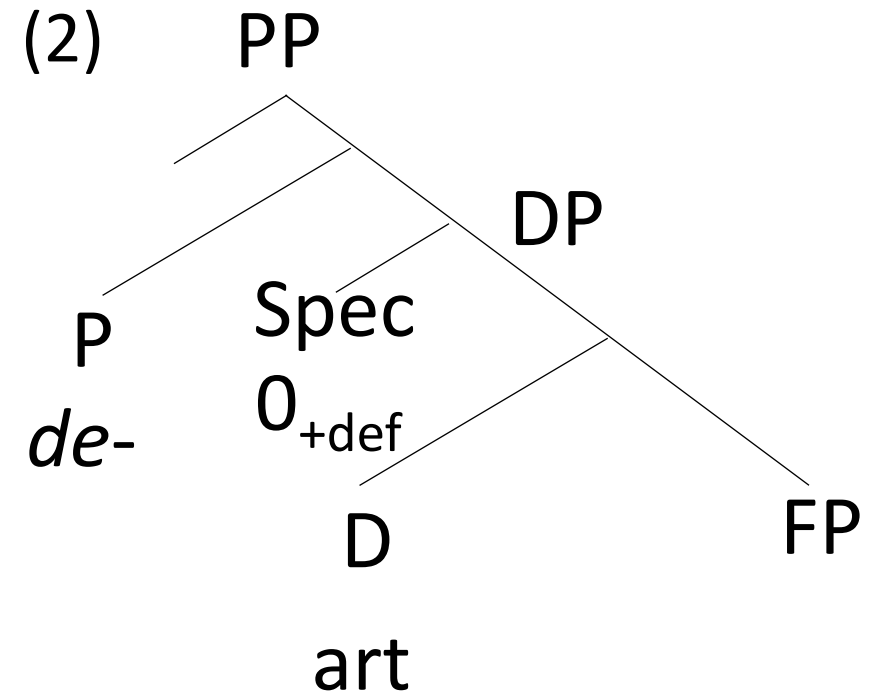
November 25, 2020



The syntactic hypothesis (Cardinaletti and Giusti, 2012; 2015; 2016)

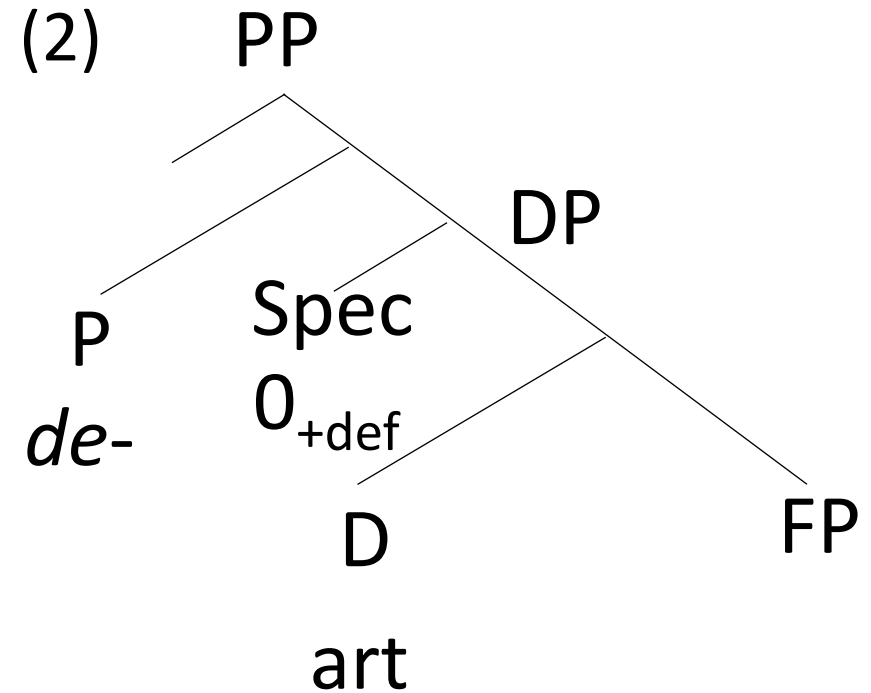
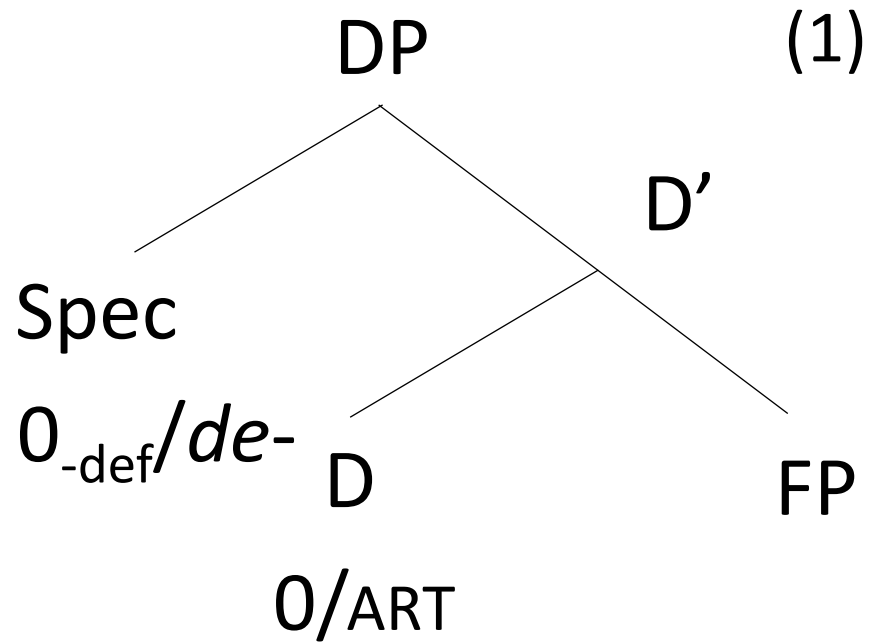


Non leggo libri / dei libri / i libri / *di libri
«I don't read books»



La copertina dei libri
«The cover of the books»

The syntactic hypothesis (Cardinaletti and Giusti, 2012; 2015; 2016)



Anconetano

Ho leto de(i) libri
I have read *de*(ART) books

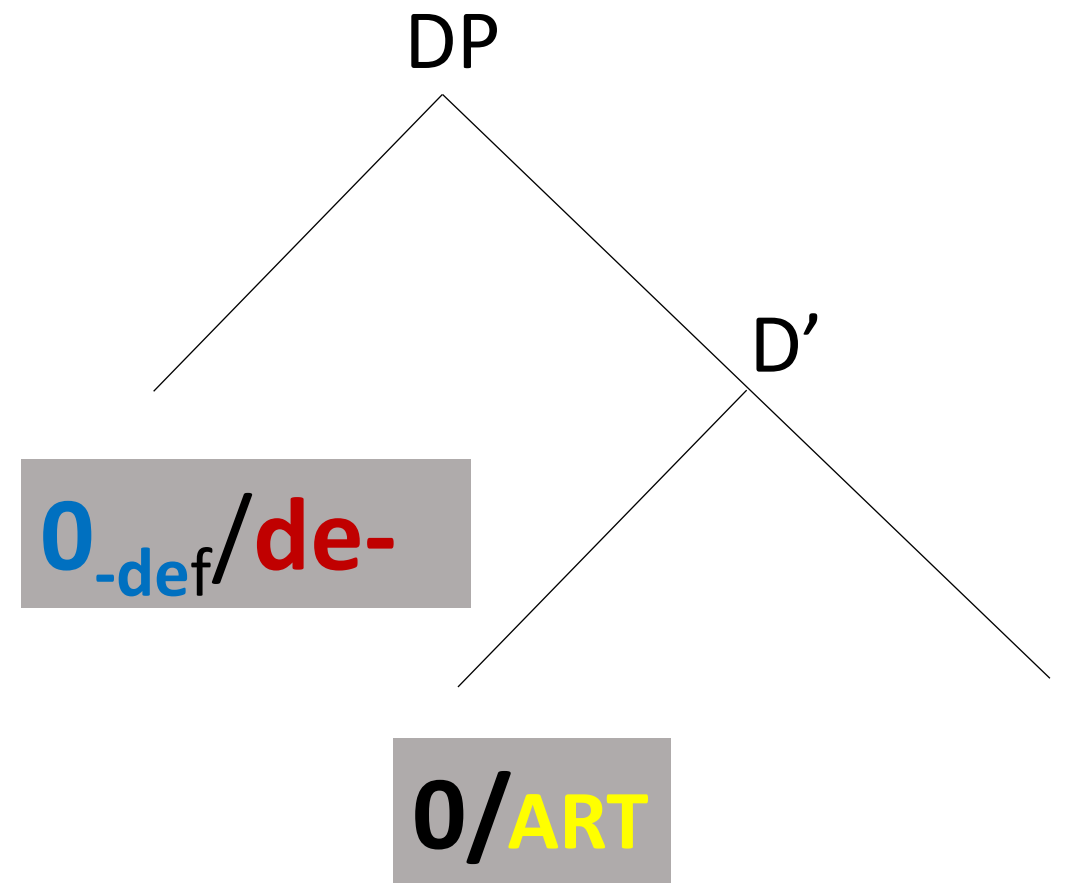
la cupertina d(e)i libri
the cover *d(e)*ART books

tanti d(e)i libri
many *d(e)*ART books

The diatopic distribution of indefinite determiners in Italo-Romance (Cardinaletti and Giusti, 2018; 2020)

Italian dialects (2018) and regional informal Italian (2020) generally present a high degree of optionality and specialization among the four possible combinations

The four determiners (ZERO, ART, di, di+ART) display clear tendencies in the distribution and specialization of meaning



Two parameters / isoglosses in three AIS maps

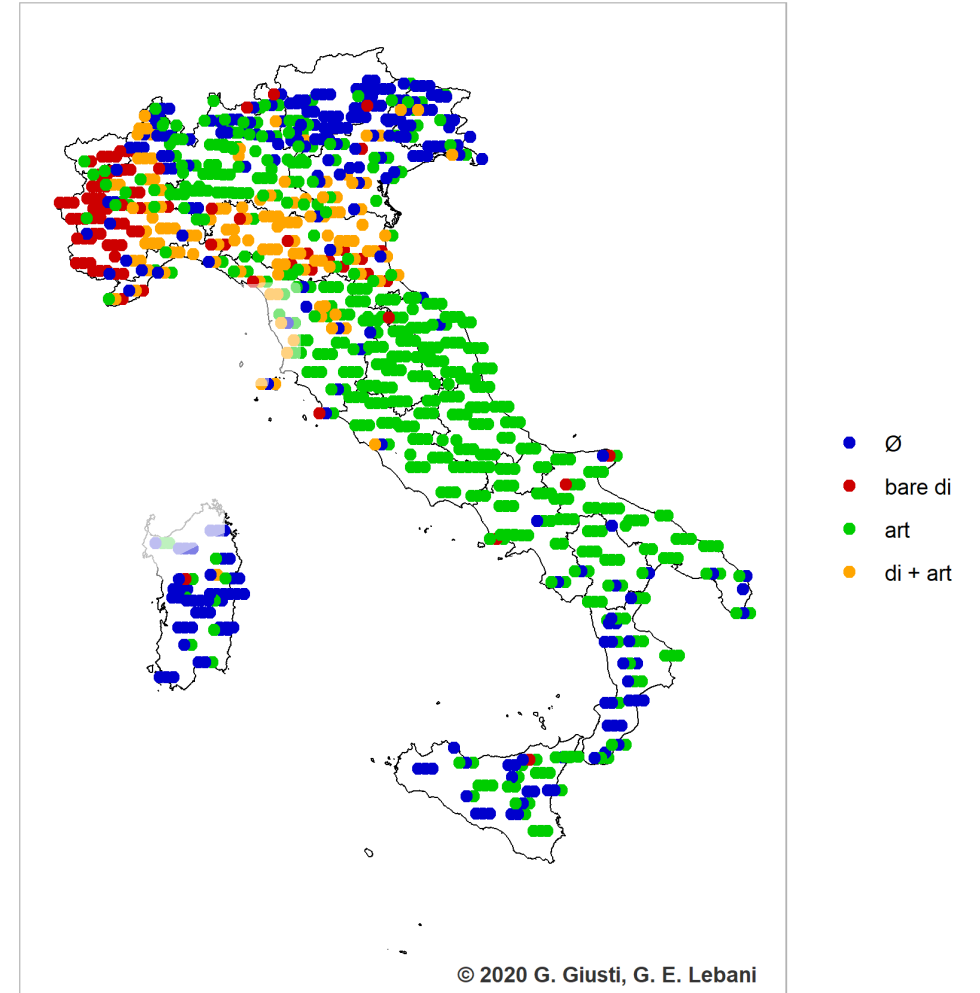
Lateral areas in the North, the extreme South and the islands, maintain the bare determiner with no concord in D → bare nouns

In the center spreading north-south, we find an innovative concord with the null determiner with indefinite interpretation → ART for indefinite meaning

An independent innovation, overt *de* in Spec DP spreading east-west → bare *di*

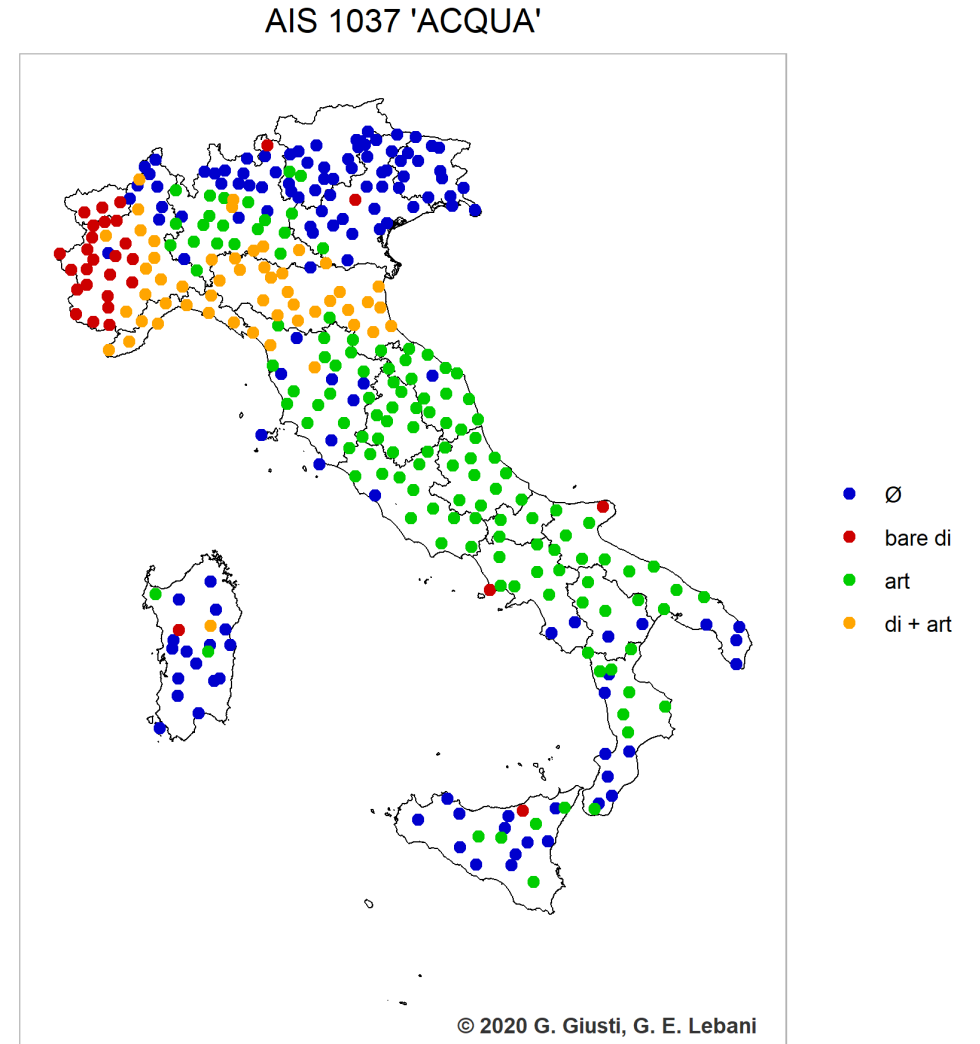
The crossing area of *di* and ART → is the «partitive determiner» *di+ ART*.

AIS 637 | 1037 | 1343



Three interpretations of narrow scope indefinites

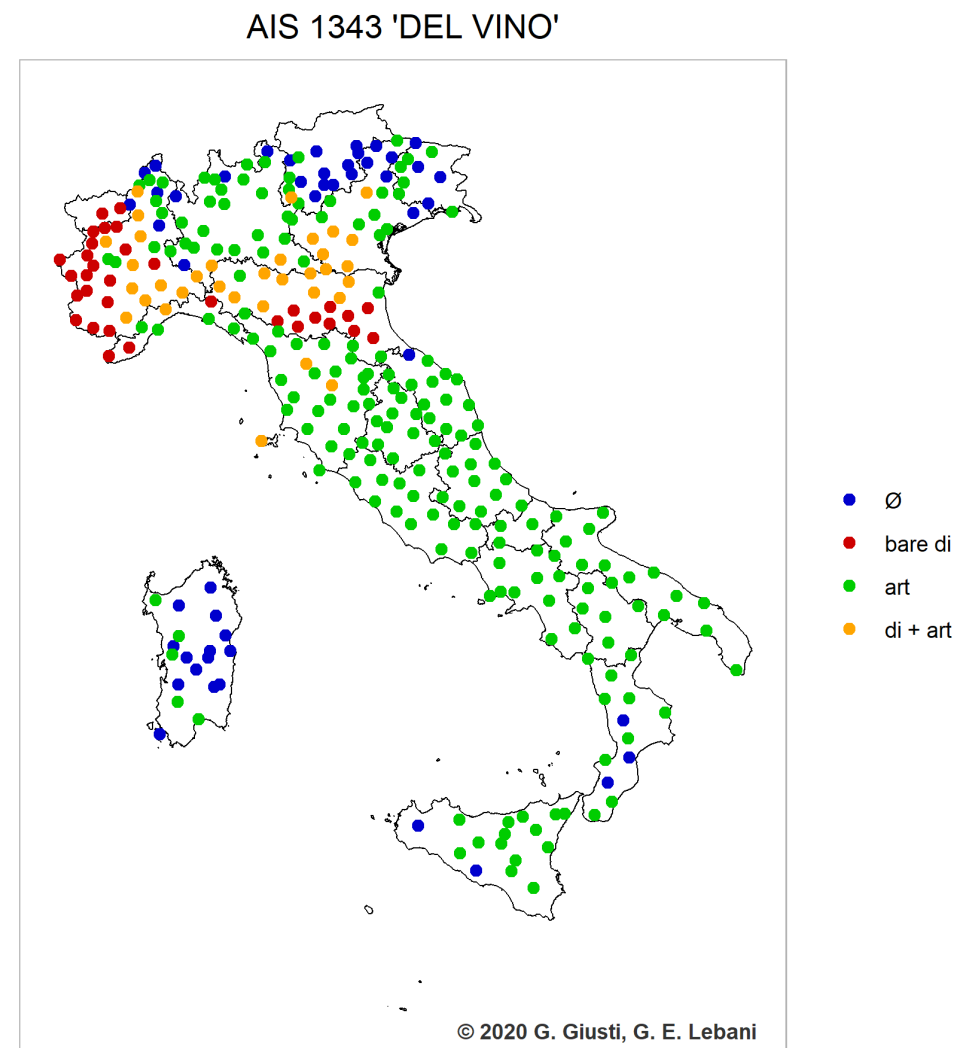
AIS map 1037 “[if there was] water” favors **unmarked indefinite quantity** → displays more coherent areas



Three interpretations of narrow scope indefinites

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AIS map 1343 “[go to the cellar] to take wine” favors **salient interpretation** → **ART is more widespread**
small quantity → *di*+ART is more widespread than in 1037



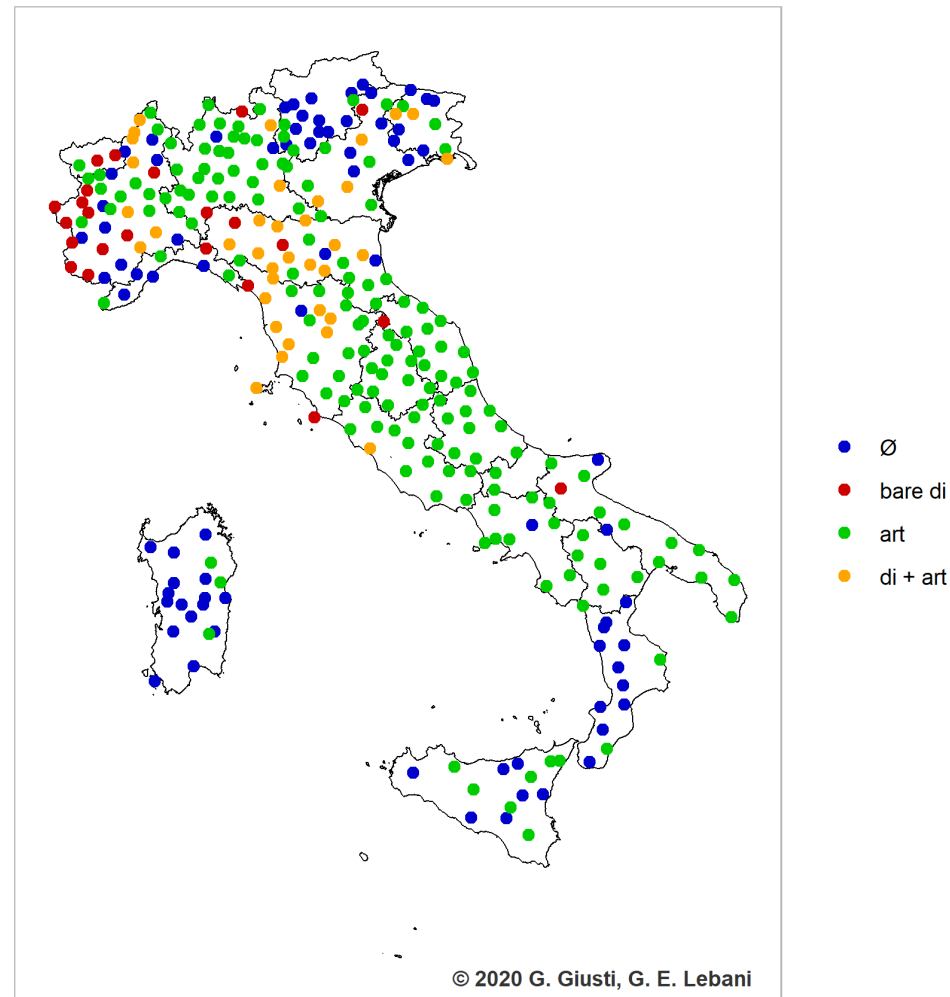
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AIS map 1343 “[go to the cellar] to take wine” favors **salient interpretation** → **ART is more widespread**
small quantity → *di*+ART is more widespread than in 1037

AIS map 637 “[to look for] violets” favors **small quantity** → ***di*+ART is more widespread**, bare *di* appears at peripheral points;
saliency → art more widespread than 1037

AIS 637 'DELLE MAMMOLE'



Protocols for indefiniteness (Giusti, 2021)

- a. noun class (mass, count, finer distinctions)
- b. type of sentence (generic/habitual vs. episodic)
- c. **polarity** (**positive**, **negative**, open)
- d. **telicity** (**telic** vs. **atelic**)
- e. narrow vs. wide scope
- f. specialization (saliency, small quantity)
- e. V+N collocation

The questionnaire (cf. Giusti, 2021 for details)

- **11 multiple choice items** with indefinite direct objects (singular mass vs. count plural), with different tense / aspect / polarity, in different pragmatic contexts.
- **2 substitution tasks**, open questions asking to substitute a singular mass noun with a plural count noun.
- **6 open comments on possible differences in interpretation**, in case more than one possible choice has been provided.
- **4 multiple choice items for pragmatically coherent sentences**, in which the participant is asked to judge coherence of statements with a follow-up causative clause.
- **3 open questions on the linguistic attitude** of the participant (confidence on their judgments, their normative / descriptive attitude, their personal appreciation of the experience of completing the task).

Distribution of indefinites across contexts in **informal Italian** (Cardinaletti and Giusti, 2020; Giusti, 2021)

The **diatopic distribution** of determiners in informal Italian mirrors the scenario displayed by the dialects

- ZERO prevails in the lateral areas (North-East vs. South-West) but is also present in all other areas
- *Di*+ART prevails in the Gallo-Romance area (especially Emilia Romagna)
- ART prevails in the Center-South but also in Emilia-Romagna.
- Bare *di* does not appear at all

Distribution of indefinites across contexts in **informal Italian** (Cardinaletti and Giusti, 2020; Giusti, 2021)


The distribution across contexts confirms the generalizations build on the AIS maps of C&G 2018, (except for bare *di*):

- Core indefiniteness favors ZERO and / or ART
- Negative polarity [-exist] favors ZERO over ART
- Salient interpretation [+exist] favors ART over ZERO
- *Di*+ART conveys small quantity interpretation, and is more possible in wide scope interpretation and with telic predicates [+exist] than in narrow scope contexts or with atelic predicates [\pm exist]

Pilot adaptations to contemporary dialects, term papers by the Comparative Syntax classes (2018, 2019, 2020) - overview of results

Indefinite determiners in object position Core +; Specialized meaning (+); unattested -	ZERO	ART	bare di	di+art
Campomolino, Vittorio Veneto (TV)	+	(+)	-	(+)
Friulian: Castions, Pocenia, Gonars (UD), Morsano (PN)	+	+	-	(+)
Adria, Badia Pol., Polesella, Fratta Pol., Pontecchio Pol, Rovigo (RO)	+	+	-	(+)
Genova	+	+	(+)	(+)
Piacenza	(+)	+	(+)	+
Forlì, Cesena, Rimini	-	+	-	+
Ancona	-	+	-	(+)
Altamura (BA)	-	+	-	-
Torre del Greco, Casalnuovo, Casoria, Soccavo, Bagnoli, Pozzuoli, Santa Lucia, San Ferdinando, Vasto Napoli, Somma Vesuviana, Frattamaggiore (NA)	(+)	+	-	-
Galati (RC)	+	+	-	-
Lecce	+	(+)	-	-

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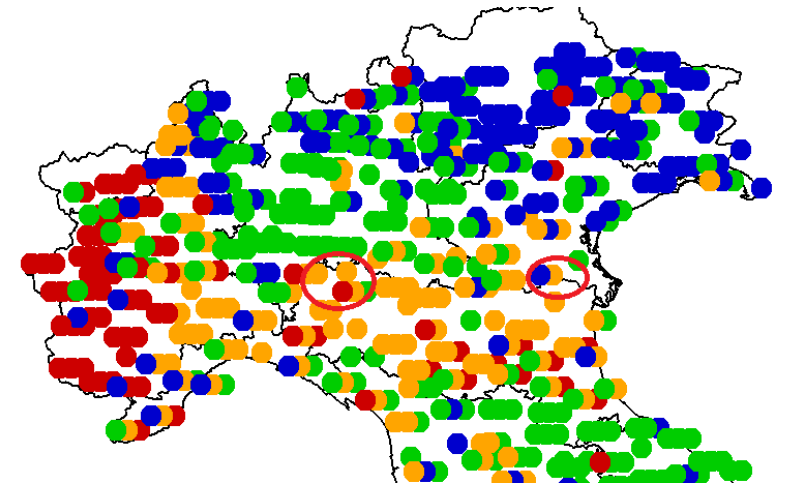
Our goal in this talk

To provide a quantitative analysis of the variation and optionality in the distribution of the four determiners in two northern Italian dialects located at the crossroads of the two isoglosses, one in the middle (Piacenza: Molinari, 2018; 2020) and one on the eastern edge (Rovigo: Zanaga, 2019) of the *di*-isogloss:

- viz **positive vs. negative clauses**
- viz **telic vs. atelic predicates**

NEG and ATEL diagnose core indefinites and [-ex]

POS and TEL diagnose specialized meanings and [+ex]

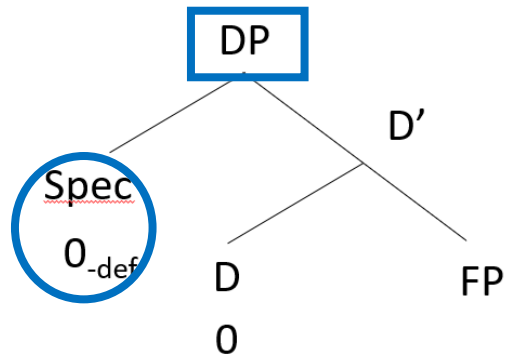


Hypothesis

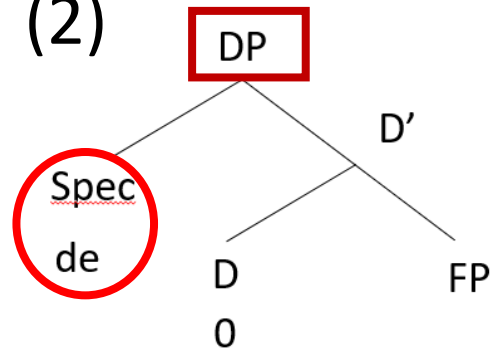
Less marked contexts favor less marked combinations (and *vice versa*)

ZERO > bare *di* = ART > *di*+ART

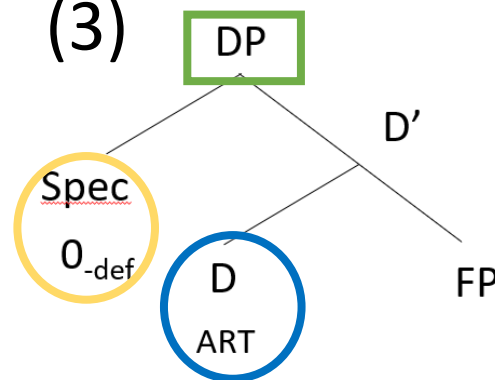
(1)



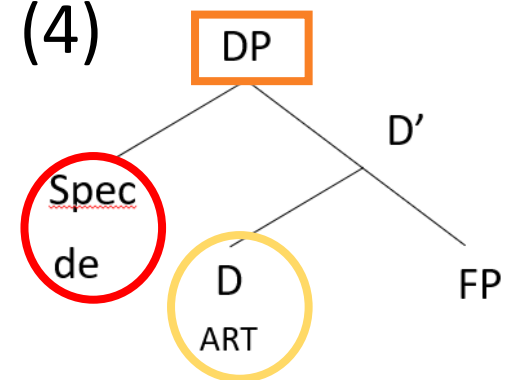
(2)



(3)



(4)



Expectation 1

Higher degree of optionality in Piacentino where *di* and ART are equally unmarked and the more marked *di*+ART is present in core indefiniteness environments (map 1037)

Expectation 2

Higher degree of specialization of meaning in Rodigino where ZERO > ART > *di*+ART are hierarchically ordered with respect to complexity

Expectation 3

Different rates of occurrences of **optional** determiners respect the hierarchy:

less complex > more complex

NEG > POS / ATEL > TEL

Methodology

- Participants: $n = 31$ $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} 16 \text{ from Piacenza (Age: 18-30 (5); 31-60 (6), 61+ (5))} \\ 15 \text{ from Rovigo (Age 18-30 (9); 31-60 (5); 61+ (1))} \end{array} \right.$
- Questionnaire \rightarrow Task: to judge acceptability of sentences
 - Rodigino: on-line questionnaire (Zanaga, 2019)
 - Piacentino: face-to-face interview (in the target dialect: Molinari, 2019; 2020)
- 17 items, each presented in 5 variants: $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \bullet \text{ ZERO (i.e. no determiner)} \\ \bullet \text{ } di \\ \bullet \text{ ART} \\ \bullet \text{ } di+\text{ART} \\ \bullet \text{ } certo \text{ (filler)} \end{array} \right.$
- If more than 1 variants were acceptable \rightarrow follow-up question: *do the selected variants correspond to different interpretations?*

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- We focus on the 11 items that are specified for Aspect

negative

positive

atelic

telic

1. Nella sua varietà, un vegetariano direbbe:

	Non mangio	0/la/di/della/certa carne.
--	------------	----------------------------

2. Ora sostituisca 'carne' con 'patate':

3. Nella sua varietà, un astemio direbbe:

	Io non bevo	0/il/di/del/certo vino.
--	-------------	-------------------------

4. Ora sostituisca 'vino' con 'superalcolici'.

5. Raccontando che cosa si può fare in montagna, si direbbe:

	Puoi raccogliere	0/le/di/delle/certe violette.
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Raccontando quello che ho fatto domenica per passare il tempo all'aria aperta, direbbe:

6.	Ho tagliato	0/l'/di/dell'/certa erba	per un'ora.
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7.	Ho raccolto	0/le/di/delle/certe more	per un'ora.
----	-------------	--------------------------	-------------

Sto sempre raccontando quello che ho fatto domenica [...], lei direbbe:

8.	Ho tagliato	0/l'/di/dell'/certa erba	in un'ora.
----	-------------	--------------------------	------------

9.	Ho raccolto	0/le/di/delle/certe more	in un'ora.
----	-------------	--------------------------	------------

Completi la frase: Mentre Gianni ppreparava la tavola in giardino ...

10. Maria è scesa in cantina	a prendere	0/il/di/del/certo vino ...
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... e nel frattempo, ...

11. Teresa è andata dal macellaio	a comprare	0/le/di/delle/certe bistecche.
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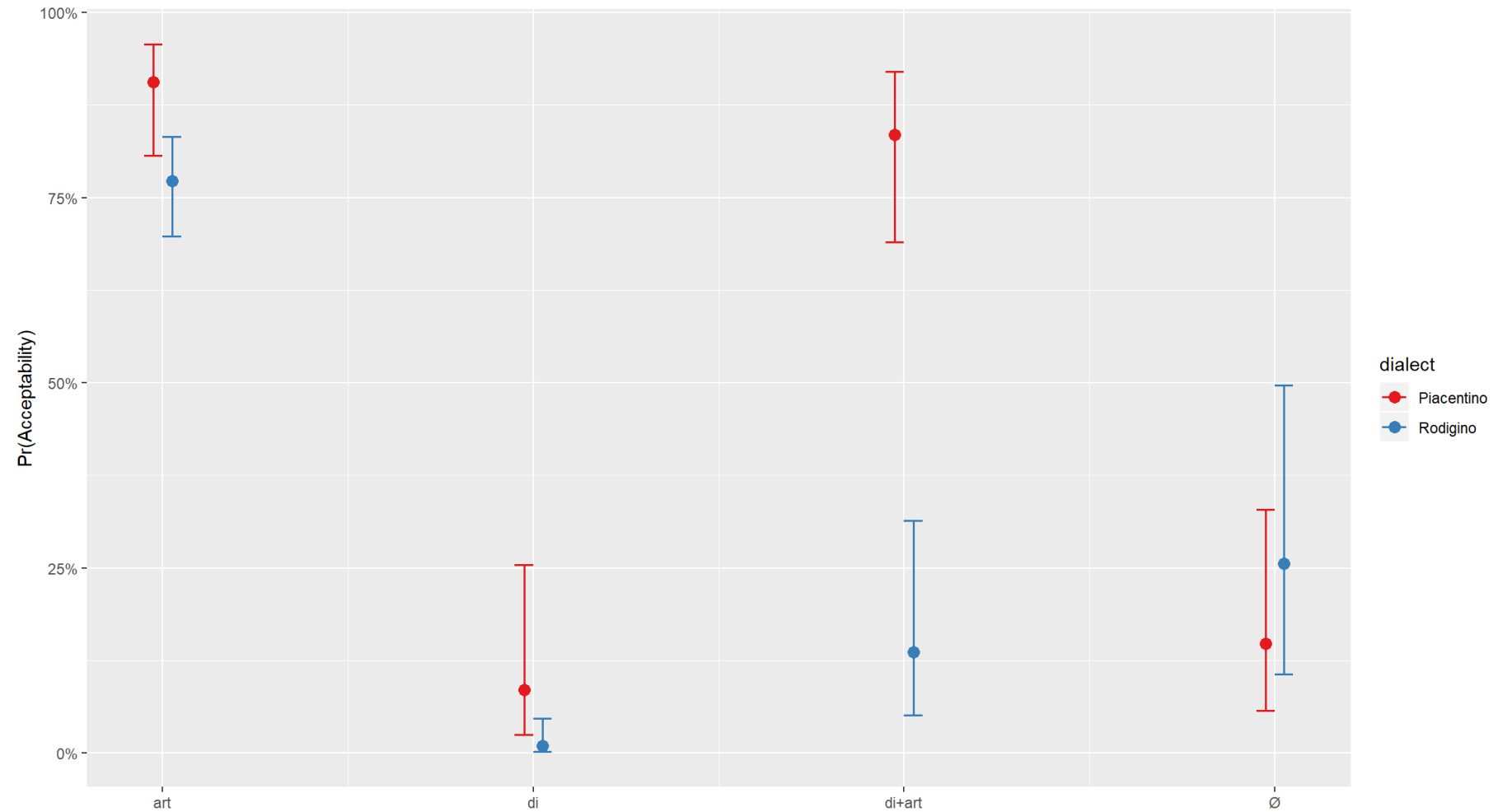
Statistical Analysis

- 2 participants were excluded from the subject pool
 - 1 from Rovigo: incomplete answers
 - 1 from Piacenza: very low agreement → outlier
- Analysis: Firth Penalized logistic regression
 - Penalization required by (quasi-)complete separations in our data
 - Predictors: determiner (ZERO, ART, *di*, *di*+ART), dialect (Piacentino vs. Rodigino), clause polarity (positive vs. negative) and aspectual class of the predicate (telic vs. atelic)
 - all the 2-way and 3-way interactions involving the factors determiner and dialect
 - Goodness of fit:
 - $C = 0.907$
 - $X^2 = 670.4, d.f. = 10, p < 0.0001$

Results – Overall

Both dialects display high probability of ART, low probability of ZERO, and no probability of *di*.

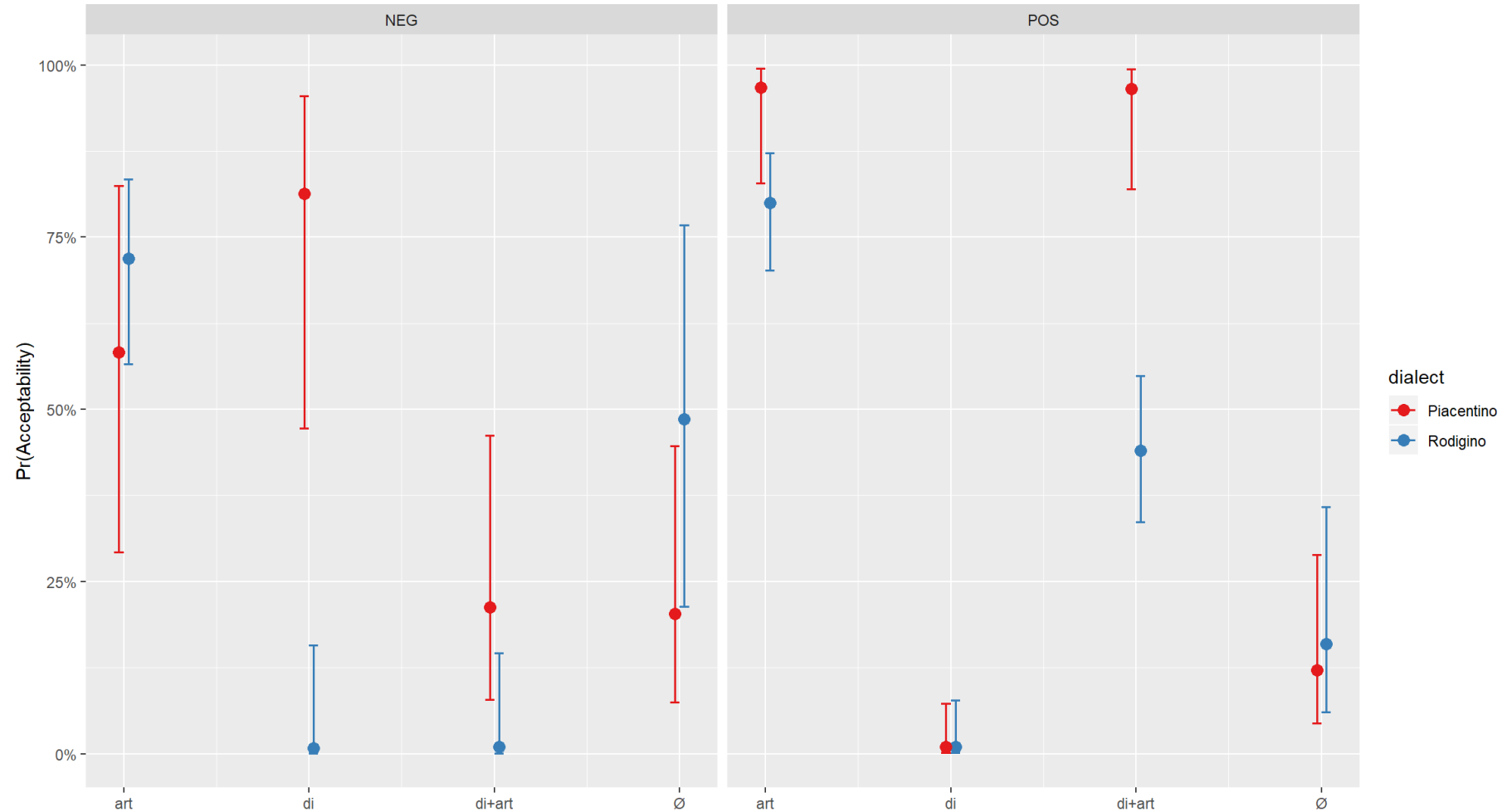
The only significant difference is in the probability of *di+art*



Polarity

Negative clauses display a significant difference in the probability of bare *di*

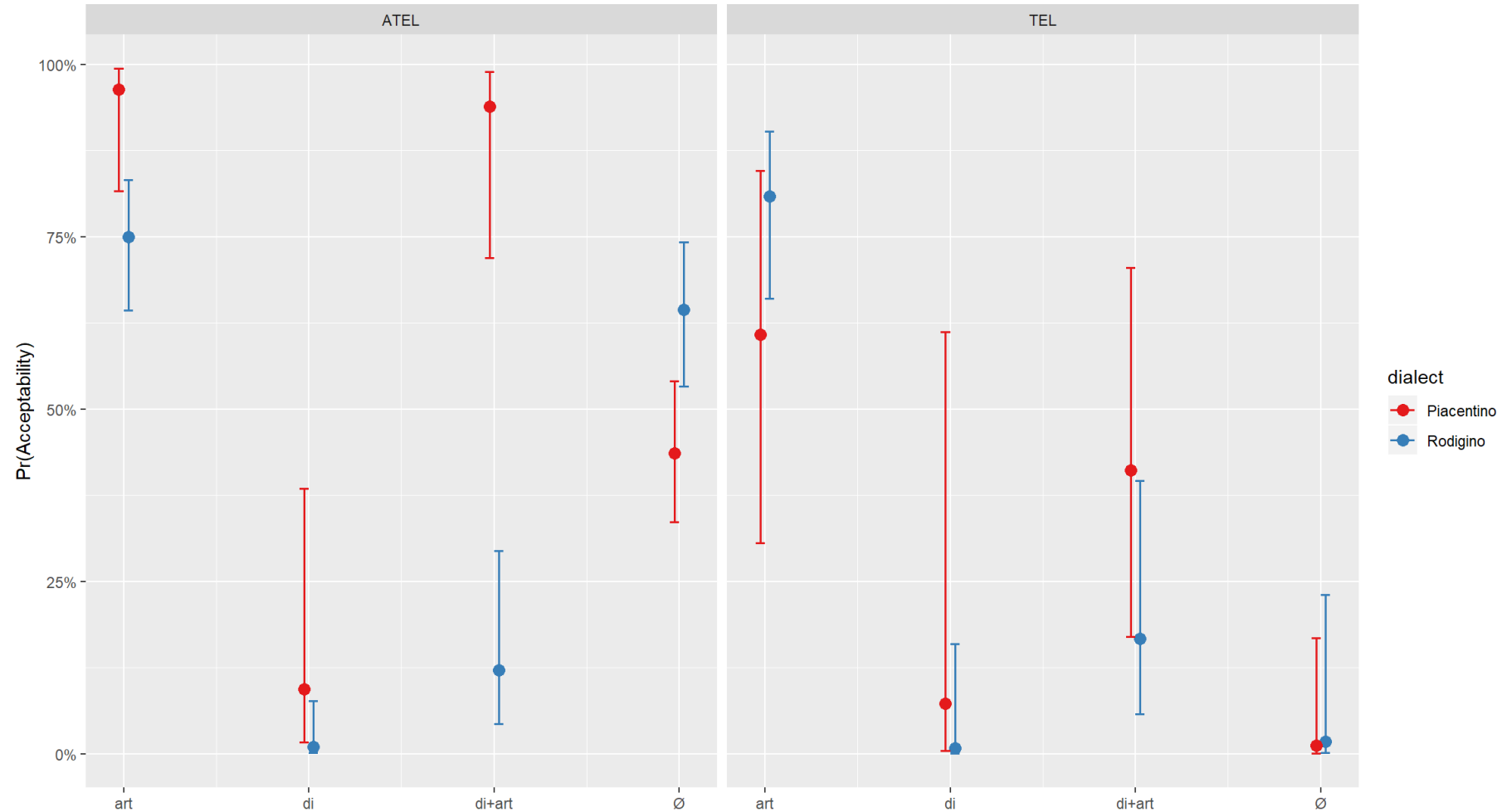
Positive clauses display a significant difference in the probability *di+ART*.



Noteworthy non-significant differences in both polarities regard the probability of ZERO (higher in Rodigino) and ART (higher in Piacentino).

Aspect

The only significant difference is found with *di*+ART in **atelic** predicates.



Noteworthy non-significant differences with ATEL predicates regard the higher possibility of ZERO in Rodigino and of ART in Piacentino. With TEL predicates ART has the same high probability in the two dialects, while ZERO and bare *di* have the same null probability.

Discussion

Piacentino

Core indefiniteness under NEG is equally expressed by bare *di* and ART (which are equally complex)

Core indefiniteness in POS / ATELIC contexts is equally expressed by *di*+ART or ART.

The object of TEL predicates is also equally expressed by *di*+ART or ART.

→ Higher degree of optionality

Rodigino

Core indefiniteness under NEG is preferably expressed by ZERO but ART is possible.

Core indefiniteness in POS / ATEL contexts is expressed by ART but ZERO and *di*+ART are also possible.

The object of TEL predicates also favors ART but also allows *di*+ART.

→ *di*+ART is specialized

Discussion – All expectations are confirmed

Expectation 1

Higher degree of optionality in Piacentino: 4 determiners in NEG clauses 3 determiners in POS (TEL and ATEL) with the exclusion of ZERO.

Expectation 2

Higher degree of specialization of meaning in Rodigino: ZERO > ART > *di*+ART are hierarchically ordered with respect to complexity: ZERO is preferred in NEG, ART is preferred POS/ATEL>TEL; *di*+ART is possible (but always low in probability) in POS/ATEL=TEL.

Expectation 3

The rates of occurrences of **optional** determiners respect the hierarchy: less complex > more complex
NEG > POS / ATEL > TEL

Thank you!

We also thank:

Anna Cardinaletti, co-coordinator of the VariOpInTA project (Variazione e Opzionalità in Italo-romanzo) and coauthor of most of the research we built on

Luca Molinari (for his work on Piacentino) Micol Zanaga (for her work on Rodigino), and all the students of the Comparative Syntax classes 2017-18; 2018-19; 2019-20 for their availability and enthusiasm (names and works in references). Without them the VariOpInTA project wouldn't be conceivable.

The VariOpInTA project is part of the «progetto di sviluppo di dipartimento di eccellenza *Multilinguismo, multiculturalismo, diversità linguistica e culturale per il benessere delle persone e della società*».

This work has been greatly inspired by the participation to PARTE – Partitivity in European languages, NWO, PI – Petra Sleeman.

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