

Du/des NPs in French:

A comparison with bare NPs in English and Spanish

Anne Carlier, Sorbonne Université, EA STIH

 Anna.Carlier@sorbonne-universite.fr

The article system and the non-universality of the paradigmatic oppositions

ENGLISH	+ singular	- singular
+ definite	definite article < distal demonstrative	
- definite	indef. sg article < 'one'	∅
		= ?
e.g. FEHRING (Ebert 1971)	+ singular	- singular
+ definite	strong definite article / weak definite article	
- definite	indef. sg article < 'one'	∅
		= ?
FRENCH	+ singular	- singular
+ definite	(strong definite article <i>ce</i>) / weak definite article <i>le</i> < <i>ille</i>	
- definite	indef. sg article <i>un</i> < <i>unus</i>	<i>de</i> + definite article

Dobrovie-Sorin, Carmen & Brenda Laca. 2003. Les noms sans de terminant dans les langues romanes. In Danièle Godard (ed.). *Les langues romanes. Problèmes de la phrase simple*. Paris : Ed. CNRS.

Outline

- Introduction
 - State of the art: English Bare Plurals, Spanish Bare Plurals, *du/des*-NPs
 - Hypothesis
- Analysis
- Results and Discussion
- Conclusion

English: Bare plurals are kind-denoting

Greg CARLSON (1977)

Observation In their existential use, English bare plurals do not establish a stable discourse referent (narrow scope, cannot serve as a proper antecedent for an anaphoric expression)

Hypothesis A unified analysis of English bare plurals
Bare plurals are KIND-denoting

- | | | | |
|-----|----------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------|
| (1) | a. <i>Dogs are barking</i> | STAGE-LEVEL PREDICATE | > existential reading |
| | b. <i>Dogs bark</i> | INDIVIDUAL-LEVEL PREDICATE | > generic reading |

Romance languages: Bare plurals are property-denoting

Laca (1990), McNally (1995), Dobrovie-Sorin & Laca (2003)

Observations

- Romance bare plurals do not occur freely as a preverbal subject, whether in their existential reading or in their generic reading (exception: Brazilian Portuguese)

(2) SPANISH

a. ***Perros** *están ladrando.*

b. ***Perros** *ladran.*

- They are incompatible with predicates bearing on the species as a whole.

(3) a. ENGLISH: **Whales** *are nearly extinct.*

b. SPANISH: ***Ballenas** *están casi extintas.*

- Existential bare plurals are similar to predicative bare plurals.

(4) SPANISH: *Brutus y Rex son perros.* ‘Brutus and Rex are dogs’

Hypothesis: Bare plurals in Romance are PROPERTY-denoting

Romance languages: Bare plurals are weak indefinites

Carmen Dobrovie-Sorin (2009):
back to a more referential conception of bare plurals

Bare plurals are WEAK INDEFINITES:

- they are VP-internal
- they have invariably narrow scope
- they denote a sum of individuals

Du/des-NPs in French and bare NPs in Romance

- **Observation:** Same structural position in the article system as Spanish bare NPs

	+ singular	-singular
+ definite	weakened demonstrative	weakened demonstrative
- definite	weakened unity numeral	de + definite article
ENGLISH	<i>I bought a lamb</i>	\emptyset lamb/ \emptyset lambs
SPANISH	<i>Compré un cordero</i>	\emptyset cordero / \emptyset corderos
FRENCH	<i>J'ai acheté un agneau</i>	<i>de l'agneau / des agneaux</i>

- **Hypotheses** (Dobrovie-Sorin & Laca 2003)
 - *Du/des* NPs are the almost perfect counterpart of bare nouns in other Romance languages
 - This is however only the case for the indefinite use of *du/des* NPs, but not for their partitive use.

Du/des-NPs in French: indefinite vs partitive use

Galmiche (1986), Kleiber (1988), Bosveld-Desmet (1998), Ishane (2006)

(5) FRENCH

- | | |
|--|---|
| a. Des élèves étaient malades. | ‘(some) students were sick’ |
| b. Des verres sont vides / ébréchés. | ‘(some) glasses are empty / chipped’ |
| c. Des tomates sont vertes. | ‘(some) tomatoes are green’ |
| d. Des basquetteurs sont petits. | ‘(some) basketball players are short’ |
| e. Des lettres ne sont pas arrivées. | ‘(some) letters did not arrive’. |
| f. <i>Dans ce champ, du maïs était pollué.</i> | ‘In this field, (some) corn was polluted’ |

- The predicate is not existential
 - Individual-level, e.g. *être vert*, *être petit*
 - Stage-level, temporary stage, e.g. *être malade*
 - Negated predicate, e.g. *ne pas être arrivé*
- The predicate is able to isolate a subset of individuals or substance, since it expresses an unexpected situation with respect to the subject.
- Partitive *du/des*-NPs are not VP-internal, do have wide scope over negation (Dobrovie-Sorin & Laca 2003)

Du/des-NPs

Observations

- They do not behave like bare plurals
 - ≠ KIND-referring
 - ≠ PROPERTY-denoting
 - ≠ WEAK INDEFINITES
- They display similarities with *un*-NPs

Hypothesis of this contribution

- *Du/des* are ordinary indefinite determiners, on a par with the singular indefinite article
- In contrast with *un*, they do not specify the spatial boundaries of the referent.
- Implications for the distinction of weak and strong indefinites

Analysis of French *du/des*-NPs

Features

- Syntax and information structure: do they occur in preverbal position?
- Scope phenomena: wide versus narrow scope
 - Intensional contexts
 - Negation
 - Quantifiers
- Aspect: do they induce (a)telicity?
- Anaphora: lexical or referential anaphora?

Spanish bare plurals and preverbal subject position

The naked noun constraint (Suñer 1982)

An unmodified common noun in the preverbal position cannot be the surface subject of a sentence under conditions of normal stress and intonation.

(2) SPANISH

a. ***Perros** *están ladrando*.

b. ***Perros** *ladran*.

(7) SPANISH

a. ***Ratones** *salieron del armario*.

‘Mice came out of the closet.’

b. *Salieron* **ratones** *del armario*.

‘There were mice coming out of the closet.’

c. **Ratones asquerosos** *salieron del armario*.

‘Disgusting mice came out of the closet.’

d. **RATONES** *salieron del armario*.

‘MICE came out of the closet.’

e. **Ratones** *salieron del armario, pero arañas no*. ‘Mice came out of the closet, but no spiders.’

Syntactic constraints: in subject position of unaccusative verbs when the subject follows the verb (7a-b-c)

Information-structural constraints: preverbal subject position remains possible in the case of narrow focus by prosodic prominence (7d) or contrastive focus (7e).

French *du/des*-NPs and preverbal subject position

Syntactic conditions of use: preverbal subject position

- Unaccusative verbs or verb constructions

(8) **Des** *paquets arrivaient sans arrêt.* (Ch. Akerman) 'Packets were arriving all the time'

(9) **Du** *carburant manquait aux stations* (Perec) 'Fuel was lacking at the stations'

(10) **Des** *chambres furent mises à leur disposition* (J. Verne) 'Rooms were made available to them'

- Transitive verbs

(11) **Des** *enfants sonnaient les cloches.* (M. Déon) 'Children were ringing the bells.'

(12) **Du** *sang teignit le sac.* (R. Char) 'Blood stained the bag'

(13) *Nous prenions conscience que l'exploitation familiale représentait, en fait, une formule par laquelle, dans des cas, **des** enfants n'accédaient même pas au certificat d'études, où **des** femmes et **des** gosses servaient de main-d'œuvre à tout faire, où **des** couples, écrasés de fatigue, ne s'adressaient plus la parole. En termes clairs, **des** hommes et **des** femmes gâchaient leur vie pour maintenir intacte une structure sociale considérée, a priori, comme une panacée.* (M. Debatisse)

'We realized that family farming was, in fact, a formula whereby, in some cases, children did not even have access to the certificate of studies, women and children were used as handymen, couples, crushed by fatigue, no longer spoke to each other. In short, men and women were wasting their lives to keep intact a social structure considered, a priori, as a panacea.'

Information structure : no narrow scope constraint

French *du/des*-NPs and preverbal subject position

Rigid word order in French? E.g. all-focus: SV in French, VS in Spanish (Lahousse & Lamiroy 2015)

(14) *Suena el teléfono.*

(15) *Le téléphone sonne; Il y a le téléphone qui sonne.* ‘The phone rings’

However, *du/des*-NPs are possible in preverbal subject position even if they have the status of topic.

(16) *Je suis revenu ce matin. Il était huit heures. On dansait encore. Des marchandes commençaient à apparaître en papillotes sur la porte de leur magasin. **Des** boutiques n’étaient pas ouvertes. Les étalages étaient encore couverts de serge verte.* (Goncourt)

‘I came back this morning. It was eight o’clock. They were still dancing. Merchants began to appear in papillote on the door of their store. Shops were not open. The displays were still covered with green serge.’

(17) ***Des** peuples, comme les Romains, dont la vie nationale ne fut qu’une longue injustice féroce organisée, ont triomphé, des siècles durant.* (P. Bourget)

‘Nations, such as the Romans, whose national life was nothing more than a long and fiercely organized injustice, triumphed for centuries.’

According to Sorin & Laca (2003), preverbal subject possible for partitive use of *des*.

However, *des* in (16) and (17) does have an indefinite reading, not a partitive one.

French *du/des*-NPs and preverbal subject position

- The partitive reading of *du/des* is barely attested in preverbal subject position

(18) FRENCH

*Les marronniers se sont garnis de bourgeons achetés chez le confiseur. **Des** feuilles sont fraîches comme de petites langues ; d'autres ont un air vieillot, ridées, comme des fronts de nouveau-nés ; mais les branches des plus hauts arbres sont encore fines comme des cheveux.*

(J. Renard)

'The chestnut trees have garnished themselves with buds bought from the confectioner. Some leaves are as fresh as little tongues; others look old-fashioned, wrinkled, like foreheads of newborns; but the branches of the tallest trees are still as thin as hair.'

French *du/des*-NPs and preverbal subject position

Surprisingly, our empirical observations are diametrically opposed to the findings of Dobrovie-Sorin & Laca (2003):

- *Du/des*-NPs in their partitive reading are barely attested in preverbal subject position.
- Conversely, *du/des* in their indefinite reading occur in preverbal subject position with a variety of verbs, even when their referent has the status of sentence topic.

However, the preverbal subject position is generally constrained for indefinite NPs, importance of spatial location (Dobrovie & Beyssade 2004, Carlier 2005):

- | | | | |
|------|----|---|-------------------------------------|
| (19) | a. | ?? <i>Un homme</i> est blond. | 'A man is blond' |
| | b. | ?? <i>Du sucre</i> est en morceaux. | 'Sugar is in cubes' |
| (20) | a. | <i>Un homme</i> était là, sur le seuil. | 'A man was there, on the threshold' |
| | b. | <i>De l'herbe</i> était là, sous mes pieds. | 'There was grass under my feet' |

French *du/des*-NPs and scope phenomena

- Intensional contexts
- Negation
- Quantifiers

Bare NPs have invariably narrow scope

Indefinite singular NPs (*un*-NPs) can have either wide scope or narrow scope

Du/des-NPs do not align with Bare NPs.

Scope phenomena in intensional contexts

In contrast to indefinite singular NPs, English and Spanish bare plurals do not interact with intensional predicates, and have invariably **narrow scope**.

(19) ENGLISH

- a. Minnie wishes to talk to *a young psychiatrist*.
- b. Minnie wishes to talk to *young psychiatrists*.

(20) SPANISH (Dobrovie-Sorin & Laca 2003)

- a. María quiere *un libro* que describe_{INDIC}/describe_{SUBJ} la conquista de México.
- b. María quiere *libros* que *describen_{INDIC}/describan_{SUBJ} la conquista de México.
'Maria wants a book/books that describe(s) the conquest of Mexico.'

Scope phenomena in intensional contexts

French *Des*-NPs: empirical evidence for **wide scope**

(21) FRENCH

«Giscard veut parler à **des intellectuels de gauche**. Edgar et moi donnons un déjeuner à l'Hôtel de Lassay. Il a suggéré, entre autres noms, le vôtre.»

Je reste sans voix.

*Pétrie de l'antagonisme pouvoir-opposition cher aux Français, je me vois mal trinquant à table avec le champion de la droite. La tradition républicaine, après les têtes coupées, exige la non-communication absolue entre les deux clans. (G. Halimi, *Le lait de l'oranger*)*

“Giscard wants to talk to *left-wing intellectuals*. Edgar and I are having lunch at the Hotel de Lassay. He suggested, among other names, yours.”

I am speechless.

Filled with the power-opposition antagonism dear to the French, I see myself as having a hard time toasting at the table with the champion of the right. The republican tradition, after the heads cut off, requires absolute non-communication between the two clans.’

Scope phenomena with negation

In contrast to indefinite singular NPs, English bare plurals do not interact with negation, and have invariably **narrow scope**.

ENGLISH

- Indefinite singular NPs

(22) *A cat is in the room*

A cat is not in the room

Therefore a cat is in the room and a cat is not in the room

Narrow scope: 'there is a cat in the room and it isn't the case that there is a cat in the room'

Wide scope: 'there is a cat in the room and there is a cat not in the room'

- Bare plural NPs

(23) *Cats are in the room*

Cats are not in the room

Therefore cats are in the room and cats are not in the room

Narrow scope: 'there are cats in the room and it isn't the case that there are cats in the room'

~~Wide scope: 'there are cats in the room and there are cats not in the room'~~

Scope phenomena with negation

SPANISH : Bare plurals have narrow scope (Dobrovie & Laca 2003)

- (24) a. *Llegó una carta y no llegó **una** carta.* **wide scope / narrow scope**
b. *Llegaron cartas y no llegaron cartas.* **only narrow scope**

FRENCH: *Des*-NPs are compatible with narrow scope

- (25) *Je ne suis pas le fils d'un mandarin, hélas! **Des** perles ne boutonnèrent point les devants de mes chemises.*
'I am not the son of a Mandarin, alas! Pearls did not button the front of my shirts.' (R. Crevel)
(= it isn't the case that pearls buttoned the front of my shirts)

Scope phenomena with negation

FRENCH: *Des*-NPs are more likely to have wide scope (Dobrovie-Sorin 2020, Le Bruyn & al., talk at GR)

- (26) ***Des Juifs*** *ne voulaient pas sortir de leurs maisons. Ils ont été tués sur place.* (F. Milewski)
'Some Jews did not want to leave their homes. They were killed on the spot.'
- (26') ***Des Juifs*** *ne voulaient pas sortir de leurs maisons et des Juifs acceptaient de quitter leurs maisons.*
'Some Jews did not want to leave their homes and some Jews agreed to leave their homes.'
- (27) *L'inquiétude rampe et s'infiltré. **Des** boutiques n'ont pas ouvert. D'autres, qui avaient ouvert, ferment.*
(M. Déon)
'Worry crawls and infiltrates. Some shops have not opened. Others, which had opened, are closing.'
- (27') ***Des boutiques*** *n'ont pas ouvert et **des boutiques** ont ouvert.*
'Some shops have not opened and some shops have opened'
- (28) *La salle voûtée était grise, des ronds de verre marquaient les tables jonchées d'écorces de pistache. **Des** hommes buvaient dans un coin, d'autres jouaient aux tarots.* (F. Cavanna)
'The vaulted room was grey, glass circles marked the tables strewn with pistachio bark. Some men were drinking in a corner, others were playing tarot cards.'
- (28') ***Des hommes*** *buvaient dans un coin et **des hommes** ne buvaient pas dans un coin.*
'Some men were drinking in a corner, and some men were not drinking in a corner.'

Scope phenomena with quantifiers

In contrast to indefinite singular NPs, English and Spanish bare plurals do not interact with quantifiers, and have invariably **narrow scope**.

(29) ENGLISH (CARLSON 1977)

- a. *Everyone read **a book on caterpillars**.*
- b. *Everyone read **books on caterpillars**.*

(30) SPANISH

- a. *Todos leyeron **un libro sobre las orugas**.*
- b. *Todos leyeron **libros sobre las orugas**.*

This is also the case for French *du/des-NPs*.

(31) FRENCH

- a. *Tous les participants du workshop ont lu **un livre de statistiques**.*
- b. *Tous les participants du workshop ont lu **des livres de statistiques**.*

Scope phenomena with quantifiers

The ambiguity for indefinite singular NPs is in most cases resolved by the context. But, crucially, the indefinite singular NP as such is compatible with wide scope reading as well as with a narrow scope reading.

(31) FRENCH (CARLSON 1977)

*Tous les matins on ramasse **un colibri mort** dans la cage.* (A. Daudet)

‘Every morning we pick up a dead hummingbird from the cage.’

(32) *Pendant des mois, tous les soirs **une** splendide Hispano m’attend à la sortie du Jockey, dans laquelle **un** chauffeur impassible doit me conduire au Claridge... pour souper avec **un ministre plénipotentiaire d’Amérique du Sud**... immensément riche. Tous les soirs **un appartement** est rempli de fleurs, **un** délicieux souper se prépare, et... tous les soirs j’envoie **une** amie qui a moins de ... scrupules que moi. **C’était pourtant un homme charmant**, et que j’aurais pu aimer, peut-être, s’il n’y avait pas eu tout ce fric ! Pouah ! Faire ça pour de l’argent !* (A. Prin)

‘For months, every evening a splendid Hispano awaits me at the Jockey’s exit, in which an impassive driver must drive me to the Claridge... for dinner with a plenipotentiary minister from South America... immensely rich. Every evening an apartment is filled with flowers, a delicious dinner is prepared, and... every night I send a friend who has less ... scruples than me. He was a charming man, and I could have loved him, perhaps, if it hadn’t been for all that money! Ugh! Doing this for money!’

Scope ambiguity: an overview

	Indefinite singular NPs	Bare plurals (English/Spanish)	<i>Du/des</i> -NPs (French)
Intensional predicate	✓	✗	✓
Negation	✓	✗	✓
Quantification	✓	✗	✗

Telic vs atelic aspect

Referential properties of the direct internal argument, i.e. the direct object of transitive verbs or the subject of unaccusative verbs can have an impact on aspect (Dowty 1991; Krifka 1992; Tenny 1994; Jackendoff 1996):

- Indefinite singular NPs in the direct internal argument position place a boundary on the verbal process, and induce telicity;
- Bare NPs in the same syntactic positions do not have a bounding effect, and induce atelic aspect.

ENGLISH Bare NPs

- (32) a. Mary ate **an** *apple* in one minute / *for five minutes.
b. Marie ate *apples* *in one minute / for five minutes.
c. Marie drank *coffee* *in one hour / for one hour.
- (33) a. **An** *ambulance* arrived in five minutes / *for five minutes.
b. *Ambulances* arrived *in five minutes / for two hours.

SPANISH Bare NPs

- (34) a. *María se comió una* **manzana** en un minuto / *por un minuto.
b. *Marie comió manzanas* *en un minuto / durante cinco minutos.
c. *Marie bebió café* *en una hora / durante una hora.

FRENCH *du/des*-NPs

- (35) a. *Marie a mangé une* **pomme** en une minute / *pendant une minute.
b. *Marie a mangé des* **pommes** *en une minute / pendant cinq minutes.
c. *Marie a bu du* **café** *en une heure / pendant une heure.

Referential vs lexical anaphor

Anaphoric pronouns

ENGLISH (Carlson 1977: 425-426)

- | | |
|--|---------------------|
| (36) a. <i>Kelly is seeking a unicorn</i> | |
| b. <i>Kelly is seeking a unicorn, and Milly is seeking it too.</i> | REFERENTIAL |
| c. <i>Kelly is seeking a unicorn, and Milly is seeking one too.</i> | LEXICAL |
| d. <i>Kelly is seeking unicorns, and Milly is seeking them too.</i> | LEXICAL |
| (37) a. <i>Harriet caught a rabbit yesterday, and Ozzie caught it/one today.</i> | REFERENTIAL/LEXICAL |
| b. <i>Harriet caught rabbits yesterday, and Ozzie caught them today.</i> | LEXICAL |
| c. <i>Dad drank beer slowly, and I drank it fast.</i> | LEXICAL |

SPANISH (Laca 2000: 902)

- (38) *Porque Usted quema **libros**, y Sánchez Bolín **los** escribe.* (M. Vasquez-Montalbán)
'Because you burn books, and Sanchez Bolin writes them.'

Referential vs lexical anaphor

Anaphoric pronouns

FRENCH

- (39) *Est allé à plusieurs reprises sous le feu de l'ennemi chercher **des blessés** entre les tranchées françaises et allemandes et **les** a ramenés.* (H. Bordeaux)
'Went several times under enemy fire to seek some wounded persons between the French and German trenches and brought them back.'
- (40) *Puis il chercha **des timbres**, mais il n'**en** trouva pas.* (J.-P. Manchette)
'Then he looked for stamps, but he didn't find any.'

SPANISH VS FRENCH

- (41) a. *Pedro ha visto **cucharas** en la cocina, y María **las** ha visto también en la dispensa.*
a'. *Pedro ha visto **tres/unas cucharas** en la cocina, y María **las** ha visto también en la dispensa.*
b. *Pierre a vu **des cuillères** dans la cuisine et Maria **les** a vues aussi dans le garde-manger.*
'Peter has seen spoons in the kitchen, and Maria has also seen them in the pantry.'

Contrary to English and Spanish bare NPs, French *du/des*-NPs establish a discourse referent. This discourse referent will serve as an antecedent for a referential anaphora.

Referential vs lexical anaphor

Subject ellipsis

ENGLISH (Carlson 1977)

- (41) a. *A building will collapse in Berlin tomorrow, and a building will burn down in Boston the day after.*
b. *A building will collapse in Berlin tomorrow, and ___ will burn down in Boston the day after.*
- (42) a. *Buildings will collapse in Berlin tomorrow, and buildings will burn down in Boston the day after.*
b. *Buildings will collapse in Berlin tomorrow, and ___ will burn down in Boston the day after.*

SPANISH (Laca 2000: 902)

- (43) a. *En esta ciudad nacieron y murieron **tres hombres célebres**.*
b. *En esta ciudad nacieron y murieron **hombres célebres**.*
'(Three) Famous men were born and died in this city.'
- (44) a. *Entran y salen **varias mujeres**.*
'Several women come and go.'
b. *Entran y salen **mujeres** entre dos compras o entre dos embotellamientos de coches.*
'Women go in and out between two purchases or between two car jams.' (M. Vázquez Montalbán)
- (45) *En 1945 surgió **petróleo** en Chiapas y un año después volvió a surgir en Yucatán.*
'In 1945, oil emerged in Chiapas and a year later emerged again in Yucatan.'

Referential vs lexical anaphor

Subject ellipsis

FRENCH

- (45) a. *Un* voyageur descendit et *un* voyageur monta.
b. *Un* voyageur descendit et ___ monta.
- (46) a. *Des* voyageurs descendirent et *des* voyageurs montèrent
b. *Des* voyageurs descendirent et ___ montèrent. (A. Lubin)
'A traveler/Travelers came down and _ came up'
- (47) *Un peu plus loin, les rangs s'écartent d'eux-mêmes pour ne point bousculer un cheval blessé. [...] Du sang coule jusqu'au sabot et ___ tache la poussière de la route.* (M. Genevoix)
'A little further on, the ranks move away from themselves so as not to overwhelm an injured horse. (Some) blood flows to the hoof and stains the dust of the road.'
- (48) *Il y a des Péruviens qui vivent à Cerro de Pasco, 4 360 m d'altitude : plus de 4 km au-dessus de l'océan, au-dessus de toute vie normale. [...] Des enfants naissent là, et ___ meurent vraisemblablement, à plus de 4 km au-dessus du niveau de la mer.*
'There are Peruvians living in Cerro de Pasco, 4,360 m above sea level: more than 4 km above the ocean, above all normal life. ... Children are born there, and probably die, more than 4 km above sea level.'

Contrary to English and Spanish bare NPs, French *du/des*-NPs establish a discourse referent, which is available for zero anaphor in the case of subject deletion

Results and discussion

	Indef Sg NPs	<i>du/des</i> -NPs FRENCH	Bare nouns	
			ENGL.	SPANISH
Preverbal subject position	✓	✓	✓	✗
Wide Scope – Intensional Predicate	✓	✓		✗
Wide Scope - Negation	✓	✓		✗
Wide Scope - Quantifier	✓	✗		✗
Telic Aspect	✓	✗		✗
Referential anaphor	✓	✓		✗

From a synchronic viewpoint

Du and *des* are similar to Spanish Bare NPs:

- Telicity
- Scope ambiguity with respect to quantifiers

Hypothesis: *du/des* do not specify the spatial boundaries of their referent.

- *Du/des*, since they are void of quantificational content, combine with quantifiers

(49) SPANISH (Laca 2000: 902)

a. Emigraron **técnicos por miliares**.

b. *Emigraron **muchos técnicos** por miliares.

‘Technicians / A lot of technicians emigrated by thousands.’

(50) FRENCH

a. mon potager me donne **des légumes en quantité** (G. Sénac de Meillhan)
lit. : ‘my vegetable garden gives me vegetables in quantity’

b. Tout le long du trottoir, **des tonneaux de bière** sont alignés **par centaines**. (B. Auroy)
lit.: ‘All along the sidewalk, barrels of beer are lined up by hundreds.’

c. J’ai reçu **des lettres en masse**, aujourd’hui. (J.-P. Sartre) lit.: ‘I received letters in mass today’.

d. Vous aurez **du bois mort en quantité**. (J. Verne) lit.: ‘You will have dead wood in quantity.’

From a synchronic viewpoint

Telicity

Correlation between (a)telicity and determination is due to a **transfer of the spatial properties of the internal direct argument** (i.e. the direct object of certain transitive verbs or the subject of certain unaccusative verbs) on the internal temporal structure of the verbal **predicate** (Krifka 1992)

- (51) a. *Peter is drinking **a glass of wine**.*
b. *Peter is drinking **wine**.*
- (52) a. *Pierre boit **un verre de vin**.*
b. *Pierre boit **du vin**.*
c. *Pierre mange **une pomme***
- (35) a. *Marie a mangé **une pomme** en une minute / *pendant une minute.*
b. *Marie a mangé **des pommes** *en une minute / pendant cinq minutes.*
c. *Marie a bu **du café** *en une heure / pendant une heure.*

Du/des NPs leave the spatial boundaries of the referent unspecified.

The *un-NP* conceives its referent as quantitatively bounded, although *un* as an indefinite article is not in itself a quantifier (cf. Heim 1982).

- Count nouns convey intrinsically an individuation principle allowing to distinguish individual instances

- *Un* conveys the grammatical feature of singular

→ *Un* + N delineates a single referent in accordance with the individuation principle, which amounts to a quantitative delimitation.

From a synchronic viewpoint

Scope ambiguity with respect to a quantifier

- *Du/des* do not interact with quantifiers because they convey any quantitative indication as to boundaries of their referent

(34) FRENCH

- a. Tous les participants du workshop ont lu ***un** livre de statistique*.
 - b. Tous les participants du workshop ont lu ***des** livres de statistique*.
- ‘All workshop participants have read a book/books on statistics’

From a synchronic viewpoint

Du and *des* are different from Spanish Bare NPs:

- Preverbal subject position
- Wide scope with respect to an intensional predicate
- Wide scope with respect to negation
- Referential rather than lexical anaphor

Du and *des* are similar to *un*:

- they are able to introduce a discourse referent that can be outside the scope of an intensional predicate or negation, and does not need to be VP-internal
- this discourse referent will serve as an antecedent for an anaphoric pronoun or for zero anaphor in the case of subject deletion.

From a diachronic viewpoint: Old French

Semantics: a partition from a contextually defined set

- (53) *Le gastel et le vin lor baille, .i. fromage lor pere et taille. Cil mangierent qui fain avoient, et **del** **vin** volontiers bevoient*
and of.the.M.SG wine readily drink-PST.3PL
'He brings them the cake and the wine, he prepares and cuts a cheese. They ate, since they were hungry, and they drank readily some of the wine.' (Chrétien de Troyes, *Erec*, 3170)
- (54) A son escorz menjot **lo** pain,
in his-M.SG lap eat-PST.3SG the-ACC.M.SG bread
a molt grant trait bevoit **le** vin.
by very big gulp drink-PST.3SG the-M.SG wine
'In his lap he ate the bread and he drank by enormous gulps the wine.' (*Enéas*, v. 3549))

From a diachronic viewpoint: Old French

- Semantics

Reference	Existential presupposition of a contextually defined referent, i.e. the carafe of wine that was just brought to the table
Quantity	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- A proper subset of the contextually defined referent- Its spatial boundaries are left unspecified

- Syntax: *de* as a genitive case marker, though an atypical one (Carlier 2007)
 - Does not establish a syntactic relationship with an external element, for instance the verb
 - Behaves as a preposition with respect to the embedded NP it governs, and conveys the feature of partition with respect to this NP

From a diachronic viewpoint: Middle French

- Semantics

	Old French	Middle French	
Reference	Existential presupposition of a contextually defined set		
Quantity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A proper subset of the contextually defined set - Its spatial boundaries are left unspecified 	QUANTITATIVELY UNSPECIFIED 	- SINGULAR
± Definiteness		INDEFINITE	- DEFINITE

	+ SINGULAR	- SINGULAR
+ DEFINITE	Weakened demonstrative	Weakened demonstrative
- DEFINITE	Weakened unity numeral	Partitive

From a diachronic viewpoint: partition > indefiniteness

- Partition > Indefiniteness, role of introducing a new referent

- Indefinite singular article (Pinkster 1988)

(55) *inter mulieres quae ibi aderant forte **unam** aspicio **adulescentulam***

among the women who are there, I see by chance a young girl (Ter. An. 118, cf. Pinkster (1988), Donatus)

(56) *Petrus uero sedebat foris in atrio ; et accessit ad eum **una ancilla** dicens: "Et tu cum Iesu Galilaeo eras!"*

But Peter was sitting outside in the courtyard, and a maid came to him, saying, "You too were with Jesus of Galilee. (Matthew)

- Du/des-NP

(53) *Le gastel et le vin lor baille, .i. fromage lor pere et taille. Cil mangierent qui fain avoient, et **del vin** volantiers bevoient*

Reference	Establishes a discourse referent
Quantity	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- SINGULAR / Quantitatively unspecified- (Partition marker > proper subset)

From a diachronic viewpoint: Modern French

- *Du/des* establish a discourse referent > possibility of wide scope reading
- Persistence of its partitive meaning (refers to a proper subset of a set)
 - The so-called partitive use
 - (18) *Les marronniers se sont garnis de bourgeons achetés chez le confiseur. **Des** feuilles sont fraîches comme de petites langues ; d'autres ont un air vieillot, ridées, comme des fronts de nouveau-nés ; mais les branches des plus hauts arbres sont encore fines comme des cheveux.* (J. Renard)
'The chestnut trees have garnished themselves with buds bought from the confectioner. Some leaves are as fresh as little tongues; others look old-fashioned, wrinkled, like foreheads of newborns; but the branches of the tallest trees are still as thin as hair.'
 - Incompatible with generic interpretation
 - (3c) ****Des baleines** sont des mammifères.* 'Whales are mammals'
- However, a generic reading is possible under the same conditions as singular indefinite NPs, provided that the quantification is done on entity pairs (Corblin 1987). This entity pairing is established by a reciprocity marker.
 - (57) ***des langues parentes** sont en réalité une seule et même langue modifiée de manières diverses au cours du temps.* (A. Meillet)
'parent languages are in fact one and the same language modified in different ways over time.'

Conclusion

Bare plurals, three hypotheses:

- Kind-referring (Carlson 1977)
- Property-denoting (Laca 1990; McNally 1995; Dobrovie-Sorin & Laca 2003)
- Weak indefinites, having invariably narrow scope (Dobrovie-Sorin 2009)

Du/des-NPs, in spite of the same structural position within the article system (- DEFINITE, - SINGULAR), does not allow the same analysis.

		Indefinite NPs introduced by <i>un</i> , <i>uno</i>	French <i>du/des</i> - NPs	Romance bare NPs
Reference	Ability to establish a discourse referent	✓	✓	✗
Quantification	Ability to specify the referent's spatial boundaries	✓	✗	✗

Conclusion

Empirical adequacy

	Indef Sg NPs	<i>du/des</i> -NPs FRENCH	Bare nouns	
			ENGL.	SPANISH
Preverbal subject position	✓	✓	✓	✗
Wide Scope – Intensional Predicate	✓	✓		✗
Wide Scope - Negation	✓	✓		✗
Wide Scope - Quantifier	✓	✗		✗
Telic Aspect	✓	✗		✗
Referential anaphor	✓	✓		✗

Conclusion

Theoretical implications for the conception of indefinites

1) Dobrovie-Sorin & Beyssade (2003) distinguish three types of indefinites:

- Strong indefinites : always wide scope (e. g. *certain*s)
- Weak indefinites: always narrow scope (bare NPs), *du/des*-NPs
- Variable scope indefinites: indefinite singular NP *un*-NP

→ *Du/des*-NPs are not weak indefinites but variable scope indefinites

2) Diesing (1992)

- Strong indefinites are **quantificational**
- Weak indefinites are **non-quantificational**

→ *Du/des*-NPs, though void of quantificational content, may have wide scope, and, hence should be considered as strong indefinites

→ In the same way as singular indefinite NPs, they can have a referential interpretation (Fodor & Sag 1982)

- (55) ***Des amis de Charles*** nous avaient aidés pour un petit logement
'Some of Charles' friends had helped us with a small apartment' (Charlotte Delbo, *Auschwitz et après III :
Mesure de nos jours*)

Conclusion

Theoretical implications for the conception of indefinites

3) Dobrovie-Sorin (2009)

- Strong indefinites : refer to **primitive entities**
- Weak indefinites: refer to **sums**

Des-NPs refer to sums

Du-NPS refer to referents without any formatting whatsoever

(56) ***Du sang*** jaillit, ***un jet mince***, de cette boule de plumes, et aspergea quelques assistants. (M. Van der Meersch)

‘Blood gushed out of this ball of feathers, a thin stream, and sprinkled some of the assistants.’

However, in my view, they are not weak indefinites

The feature « ability to introduce a new discourse referent » is autonomous from features relating to spatial configuration of the referent and is crucial for defining *du/des* NPs as variable scope indefinites.

Thank you for your attention!

¡Gracias por su atención!

Merci de votre attention!

References

- Bosveld-de Smet, Leonie M. 1998. *On Mass and Plural Quantification. The Case of French des/du-NP's*. PhD Thesis, University of Groningen.
- Carlson, Greg. 1977. A unified analysis of the English bare plural. *Linguistics and Philosophy* 1. 413–457.
- Cardinaletti, Anna & Giuliana Giusti. 2016. *The syntax of the Italian indefinite determiner dei*. *Lingua* 181. 58–80.
- Carlier, Anne. 2000. Les articles *du* et *des* en synchronie et en diachronie: une analyse de leur résistance à l'interprétation générique, *Revue romane* 35. 177-206.
- Carlier, Anne. 2005. L'*argument davidsonien* : un critère de distinction entre les prédicats 'stage level' et les prédicats 'individual level' ?. *Travaux de Linguistique*
- Carlier, Anne. 2007. From Preposition to Article: The Grammaticalization of the French *Partitive*. *Studies in Language* 31. 1-49.
- Corblin, Francis 1987. *Indéfini, défini et démonstratif*. Droz, Genève.
- Dobrovie-Sorin, Carmen & Brenda Laca. 2003. Les noms sans déterminant dans les langues romanes. In Danièle Godard (ed.). *Les langues romanes. Problèmes de la phrase simple*, 235-281. Paris : Editions du CNRS.
- Dobrovie-Sorin, Carmen & Claire Beyssade. 2004. *Définir les indéfinis*. Paris : Editions du CNRS.
- Dobrovie-Sorin, Carmen. 2009. Existential Bare Plurals: From Properties Back to Entities. *Lingua* 119. 296-313.
- Foulet, Lucien. 1965³ [1919¹]. *Petite syntaxe de l'ancien français*. Paris : Champion.
- Galmiche Michel. 1986. Note sur les noms de masse et le partitif. *Langue française* 72. 40-53.
- Heim, Irene 1982. *The Semantics of Indefinite and Definite Noun Phrases*. Ph.D. Thesis. University of Massachusetts, Amherst.
- Hopper, Paul J. & Elizabeth C. Traugott, 1993. *Grammaticalization*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Ionin, Tania, Silvina Montrul, & Hélade Santos. 2011. An Experimental Investigation of the Expression of Genericity in English, Spanish and Brazilian Portuguese. *Lingua* 121(5). 963-85.
- Ishane, Tabea. 2008. *The Layered DP. Form and Meaning of French Indefinites*. Amsterdam: Benjamins.
- Ishane, Tabea. 2013. *EN pronominalization in French and the structure of nominal expressions*. *Syntax* 16. 217-249.
- Jackendoff, Ray. 1996. The proper treatment of measuring out, telicity, and perhaps even quantification in English. *Natural Language and Linguistic Theory* 14(2). 305-354.
- Karlsson, Fred. 1983. *Finnish Grammar*. Porvoo, Helsinki, Juva: Werner Söderström Osakeyhtiö.
- Kleiber, Georges. 1988. L'opposition massif/comptable et les adjectifs. In Jean David and Georges Kleiber (eds), *Termes massifs et termes comptables*, 267-292. Paris : Klincksieck.
- Laca, Brenda 2000³. *Presencia y ausencia de determinante*. In Ignacio Bosque y Violeta Demonte (eds), *Gramática descriptiva de la lengua española* dirigida por Madrid : Espasa Calpe.
- Luraghi, Silvia & Seppo Kittilä. 2014. Typology and diachrony of partitive case markers. In Silvia Luraghi & Tuomas Huomo (eds), *Partitive Cases and Related Categories*, 17-62. Berlin: De Gruyter.
- McNally Louise 1995. Bare plurals in Spanish are interpreted as properties. In G. Morrill & R. Oehrle(eds.), *Proceedings of the 1995 ESSLLI Conference on formal grammar*, Barcelona: Spain, 197–222.
- Milner, Jean-Claude. 1978. *De la syntaxe à l'interprétation: quantités, insultes, exclamations*. Paris: Seuil.
- Pinkster H. (1988). *Sicut unus pater familias*: opmerkingen over het gebruik van *ille* en *unus* in verband met de ontwikkeling in de Romaanse talen. ([www.harmpinkster.nl/files/articles/Sicut_unus_pater_familias_\(1988\).pdf](http://www.harmpinkster.nl/files/articles/Sicut_unus_pater_familias_(1988).pdf))
- Scaliger, Julius-Caesar. 1540. *De causis linguae latinae*. Lyon: S. Gryphium.
- Serbat, Guy. 1996. *Grammaire fondamentale du latin*, Tome VI, 1: *L'emploi des cas en latin: nominatif, vocatif, accusatif, génitif, datif*. Louvain: Peeters.
- Suñer, Margarita. 1982. *Syntax and Semantics of Spanish Presentational Sentence-Types*. Washington: Georgetown University Press.
- Traugott, Elizabeth C. & Richard B. Dasher. 2002. *Regularity in Semantic Change*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Väänänen, Veikko. 1981. La préposition latine *de* et le génitif. In: Id., *Recherches et créations latino-romanes*. Napoli: Bibliopolis.
- Van Geenhoven, Veerle. 1995. Semantic incorporation: a uniform semantics for West Greenlandic noun incorporation and West Germanic bare plural configurations. In *Proceedings of CLS 31*, 171–186..
- Zribi-Hertz, Anne. 2006. Pour une analyse unitaire de DE *partitif*. In Francis Corblin, Sylvie Ferrando & Lucien Kupferman (eds), *Indéfini et prédication*, 141-154, Paris: PUPS.