On Italian *di*+art nominals
Cross-linguistic and cross-categorial explorations

Paolo Morosi
Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona

Aim and main goals. This talk compares Italian *di*+art nominals with Romance bare nouns (BNs) and French *des*-phrases. Despite their assumed unified structure (Cardinaletti & Giusti 2016, *et seq.*; Espinal & Cyrino 2022a,b), we show that – like *des*-phrases – *di*+art DPs are referentially stronger than BNs (Dobrovie-Sorin & Beyssade 2012; Carlier 2021) in that they can introduce stable discourse referents. Yet, in contrast to their French counterparts, *di*+art nominals are also referentially bounded, since they can specify the spatial limits of their referents. We argue that the above differences, and the resulting contrasts these nominals are involved in derive from a unique account: they are due to the specific, referentially-anchored readings contributed by choice functions (CH(f)s).

The comparison. As for the contrasts between BNs and *di*+art expressions, we point out that BNs never convey specific readings, while *di*+art DPs easily do (1). Furthermore, *di*+art nominals, in contrast to BNs, can appear unmodified in preverbal subject position (2), they can yield wide scope readings when interacting with intensional predicates (3), negation (4), and quantifiers (5); they function as coreferential antecedents for pronominal anaphora (6), and they are compatible with telic aspect (7).

(1) a. *Oggi ho incontrato **dei ragazzi** che mi avevano presentato ieri.*
    b. **Oggi ho incontrato **ragazzi** che mi avevano presentato ieri.*
      'Today I met some children someone introduced me yesterday."   (Pinzin & Poletto 2021: 4-5, (10-11))

(2) a. ***Dei bambini** suonavano le campane.*
    b. ****Bambini** suonavano le campane.*
      '(Some) children were ringing the bells.'

(3) a. *Gianni cerca **dei professori** che sappiano/sanno l'inglese.*   Narrow / Wide scope
    b. *Gianni cerca **professori** che sappiano/#sanno l'inglese.*   Narrow / #Wide scope
      'Gianni is looking for some professors that know English.'

(4) a. *Non ho letto **dei libri.***   Narrow / Wide scope
    b. *Non ho letto **libri.***   Narrow / #Wide scope
      'I didn't read some / any books.'

(5) a. *Tutti gli studenti hanno letto **dei libri.***   Narrow / Wide scope
    b. *Tutti gli studenti hanno letto **libri.***   Narrow / #Wide scope
      'All the students read (some) books.'

(6) a. *Luca ha letto **dei libri**$_i$ e anche Claudia **li**$_i$ ha letti.*   Coreference
    b. *Luca ha letto **libri** e anche Claudia **ne** ha letti.*   #Coreference
      'Luca read (some) books and also Claudia read them.'

(7) a. *Ho raccolto **delle more** (in un'ora) / (??per un'ora).*
    b. *Ho raccolto **more** (*in un'ora) / (per un'ora).*
      'I picked up (some) blackberries (in an hour) / (for an hour).   (C&G 2018: 143, (12b)-(14b))

Considering these differences, a comparison with French *des*-phrases – a language that does not allow argumental BNs – is revealing. As Carlier (2021) has recently observed, *des*-phrases behave differently from BNs regarding their ability to occur in preverbal subject position; to convey wide scope readings when interacting with intensional predicates and negation; and to function as coreferential antecedent for pronominal anaphora. However, differently from Italian *di*+art nominals and in parallel to BNs, they can only license narrow scope readings in the presence of other quantifiers; and they are (generally) incompatible with telicity. To account for this behavior, Carlier (2021) argues that *des*-phrases are referentially stronger than BNs: they can introduce stable discourse referents, allowing them to function as preverbal subjects, as coreferential antecedents, and to enter scope relations with intensional predicates and negation. Nevertheless, on a par with Romance BNs, *des*-phrases cannot specify the spatial limits of their referent. Such referential unboundedness prevents them from entering scope interactions with quantifiers and to appear in telic contexts (see Table 1 for a summary of such contrasts).

Proposal and discussion. Extending Carlier's (2021) line of reasoning to Italian, we defend that, in contrast to *des*-phrases, Italian *di*+art nominals are referentially strong, but also referentially bounded. As for *referential strength,* we reason that – especially due to the coexistence of BNs in the grammar – this is the property that allows *di*+art to specialize for the expression of specificity (although a non-specific interpretation is not excluded). We subscribe to a definition of specificity in terms of von Heusinger's (2011, 2019) notion of 'referential anchoring', according to which a specific reading is brought about by

the anchoring of a referent to another sentence-internal element (e.g., the subject, quantified expressions, or the speaker). More concretely, we assume that the specific readings allowed by *di*+art are the result of the application of a semantic CH(f) (Reinhart 1997; Winter 1997; von Heusinger 2011 a.o.), since CH(f) express referential specificity (Winter 2001). A CH(f) takes a non-empty set as its input and returns a specific (sub-)set of individuals which are members of the initial set. This assumption not only explains why *di*+art nominals can enter scope interactions with other operators, but it also accounts for an empirical observation that, to our knowledge, has gone unnoticed: *di*+art expressions apparently escape scope islands. Since, as (8) shows, CH(f)s can be existentially bound in all scope sites, *di*+art is able to interpretatively scope out of the relative clause and above the universal quantifier (8a).

(8) *Tutti i professori hanno sentito la notizia che <u>degli studenti</u> hanno copiato.*

a. $\exists f[CH(f) \land \forall x[\text{professors}(x) \rightarrow \text{heard}(x,\text{the news that } f(\text{students}) \text{ copied})]]$ – *widest scope: specific reading of the indefinite*

b. $\forall x[\text{professors}(x) \rightarrow \exists f [CH(f) \land \text{heard}(x,\text{the news that } f(\text{students}) \text{ copied})]]$ – *intermediate scope: non-specific reading of the indefinite*

c. $\forall x[\text{professors}(x) \rightarrow \text{heard}(x,\text{the news that } x\text{'s students copied})]$ – *narrowest scope: bound variable interpretation of the indefinite*

As for *referential boundedness*, this property correlates with telicity (Krifka 1989, 1992). Also in this case referential specificity is at play. Despite the lack of a quantificational structure providing referential boundaries, if the referent of *delle more* in (7a) is specific (i.e., referentially anchored), then the speaker has in mind a specific set of blackberries s/he picked. Hence, no proper subpart of *delle more*specific constitutes the same specific set denoted by *delle more*specific; and the sum of *delle more*specific + *delle more*specific cannot give, as a result, the same specific set (i.e., the same specific quantity of blackberries). That is, when *di*+art nominals are interpreted specifically, their reference is quantized (Krifka 1989): they refer to a specific quantity known by – i.e., referentially anchored to – either the speaker or the subject. Consequently, they can appear in telic contexts (see also Ihsane 2021 with respect to minor examples in which French *des*-phrases are just barely compatible with telicity). What is more, our hypothesis also explains why *delle more* in (7a) is also (marginally) compatible with an atelic aspect: in this case, *delle more* gets the (dispreferred) non-specific interpretation. Its reference is thus not quantized (or bounded), but cumulative, as it is always the case with BNs.

The present proposal also accounts for the "small quantity" meaning, which – despite the lack of a quantificational structure – is generally associated with *di*+art (C&G 2016*, et seq.*). Such quantity meaning is implied by *di*+art's bounded reference, as attested – although not discussed in the literature – by their ability to generate quantity-based scalar implicatures (as it is usually the case with quantitative elements like *some* Chierchia 2017, a.o.). When a speaker utters a specific *di*+art nominal as in *Dei miei amici sono venuti* 'Some friends of mine came' (and not the universally quantified *Tutti i miei amici sono venuti* 'All my friends came'), it generates the scalar implicature that 'not all students came'. When not at issue, (i) implicatures do not arise in downward-entailing environments and (ii) they can be easily cancelled (Grice 1975, Rett 2020). As expected, this is what happens with *di*+art nominals, as shown in (9).

(9) a. *Non ho letto **dei libri**.* b. *Ho letto #(**dei) libri**. In realtà, ne ho letti moltissimi.*
     INT. 'I didn't read any book.'   'I read some books. In fact, I read lots of them.'

In (9a), when the nominal is interpreted under the scope of negation (i.e., non-specifically), its quantitative meaning disappears (i.e., the speaker didn't read *any* book). Hence, the quantity-based scalar implicature does not arise under negation, a prototypical downward-entailing context. Conversely, in upward-entailing environments, *di*+art – in contrast to other nominals that do not carry any quantitative meaning, like BNs – can be substituted by a stronger, entailing element of the quantity scale <*di*+art/some, a lot, most, all>, as attested in (9b). This shows that the implicature is indeed present and can be cancelled.

	BNs	*Des*-phrases	*Di*+art
Specificity	-	+	+
Pre-verbal subject	-	+	+
Coreferential anaphora	-	+	+
W.S. with intens. preds.	-	+	+
W.S. with negation	-	+	+
W.S with Qs	-	-	+
Telic aspect	-	-	+

Table 1. Romance BNs, French *des*-phrases, and Italian *di*+art nominals.

Sel. Ref. <u>Cardinaletti, A. & G. Giusti</u>. 2016. The syntax of the Italian indefinite dei. *Lingua* 181, 58-80. <u>Carlier, A. 2021</u>. Du/des-NPs in French: A comparison with bare nouns in English and Spanish. In: Sleeman, P. and Giusti, G. ed. *Partitive Determiners, Partitive Pronouns and Partitive Case*. Berlin,

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