



## Determiners and relative clauses

Paola Benincà

paola.beninca@unipd.it

University of Padua

DOI to be assigned

**Abstract:** In the present paper, I consider first the behaviour of singular count nouns, showing that, in the limited set of contexts in which they are found, a specific kind of modification is in many cases necessary. The modification is represented by a variant of a kind defining relative clause. I briefly outline the main syntactic and semantic characteristics of kind-defining relatives; I then consider bare plural count nouns and singular mass nouns; I use the Left Dislocation construction as a test that permits us to explore the composition of the DP, and to localise the position of a silent operator. I show that, in this context too, the modifiers that permit the determiner to be omitted can be semantically interpreted as corresponding to a kind-defining relative. Finally, I examine the so-called partitive DPs introduced by *di*+article, which are often considered in the literature to be semantically equivalent to bare nouns, and I show that they are instead different, both semantically and syntactically; incidentally, this permits us to point out a minimal difference between French and Italian.

**Keywords:** *Bare nouns, kind-defining relative clauses, silent quantifiers.*

**Resumen:** En el presente artículo se trata primero el comportamiento de sustantivos singulares contables y se muestra que en el conjunto limitado de contextos en que estos aparecen, una clase de modificación específica es necesaria en muchos casos. Esta modificación se representa mediante una variante de cláusula relativa definidora. Tras brevemente perfilarse las principales características sintácticas y semánticas de las relativas definidoras, se abordan los sustantivos plurales contables escuetos y los sustantivos no contables singulares. La construcción de dislocación a la izquierda se utiliza como diagnóstico para la exploración de la composición del SD, así como para la localización de la posición del operador nulo. Se muestra que, también en este contexto, los modificadores que permiten la omisión del determinante pueden recibir la interpretación semántica de una relativa restrictiva. Finalmente se examinan las estructuras conocidas como SDs partitivos introducidos por *di*+artículo, que han sido frecuentemente consideradas en la bibliografía como semánticamente equivalentes a sustantivos desnudos, y se muestra que en realidad son diferentes, tanto en el plano semántico como en el sintáctico. Además, esto nos permite señalar una mínima diferencia entre el francés y el italiano.

**Palabras clave:** *Sustantivos escuetos, cláusulas de relativo definidoras, cuantificadores nulos.*



*Resumen:* No presente artigo, considero primeiro o comportamento de nomes contáveis singulares, demonstrando que, no número limitado de contextos em que surgem, um tipo específico de modificação é, em muitos casos, necessário. A modificação é representada por uma variante de uma oração relativa de tipo restritivo. Apresento brevemente as principais características sintáticas e semânticas das relativas de tipo restritivo; considero, em seguida, nomes simples contáveis plurais e nomes massivos singulares; uso a construção da deslocação à esquerda como um teste que nos permite explorar a composição do DP e localizar a posição de um operador silencioso. Demonstro que, também neste contexto, os modificadores que permitem que o determinante seja omitido podem ser semanticamente interpretados como correspondendo a uma relativa de tipo restritivo. Finalmente, examino os chamados DPs partitivos introduzidos por *di*+artigo, que são frequentemente considerados na literatura como sendo semanticamente equivalentes aos nomes simples, e demonstro que, pelo contrário, eles são diferentes, quer semântica quer sintaticamente; incidentalmente, tal permite-nos destacar a diferença mínima entre o francês e o italiano.

*Palavras-chave:* Nomes simples, orações relativas de tipo restritivo, quantificadores silenciosos.

## 1. Introduction

In this paper<sup>1</sup> I want to go deeper into a subject that I touched upon many years ago (Benincà 1980), and which has recently become clearer to me while studying an apparently unrelated topic.

In the old article I had studied some aspects of the behaviour of bare nouns in Italian, showing that in some contexts, namely when the noun was accompanied by a modifier, it was possible to have a zero determiner; I argued that this was possible because a null operator was inserted in the apparently empty position.

The modifiers that triggered this process were listed, but the reason for why precisely those elements were involved remained obscure.

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<sup>1</sup> I want to dedicate this paper to Andrew, to express my old affection and my admiration for the wonderful work he has been doing in linguistics since I met him many years ago. In particular, the subject I have chosen for this paper intends to tell Andrew that I find any page he has written about relative clauses among the most clear, penetrating, thought-provoking that I have ever read on this fascinating topic.

I thank Guglielmo Cinque, Nicola Munaro and Christina Tortora for comments and suggestions.





Studying a particular type of relative clause, the kind-defining relatives (*definitorie* in Italian: see Benincà 2012, Benincà & Cinque forthcoming), I have realised that the modifiers licensing an operator in place of the missing determiner all semantically correspond precisely to a kind-defining relative clause.

In the present paper, I will first illustrate the contexts that license a null determiner in Italian, distinguishing the various cases; I will consider first the behaviour of singular count nouns, showing that, in the limited set of contexts in which they are found, a specific kind of modification is in many cases necessary. The modification is represented by a variant of a kind defining relative clause.

I will then briefly outline the main syntactic and semantic characteristics of kind-defining relatives, in particular in post-copular relative clauses; I will then consider bare plural count nouns and singular mass nouns; I will use the Left Dislocation construction as a test that permits us to explore the composition of the DP with and without a definite article, and localise the position of a silent operator. I will show that, in this context too, the modifiers that permit the determiner to be omitted can be semantically interpreted as corresponding to a kind-defining relative.

The so-called partitive DPs introduced by *di*+article are often considered in the literature to be semantically equivalent to bare nouns. I will show that they are instead different, both semantically and syntactically; this will permit us to point out what seems to be a minimal difference between French and Italian, in this respect.

### 1.1. Determinerless singular count nouns

Bare nouns have limitations, which are less strong with plural count nouns and singular mass nouns than with singular count nouns, as the following examples show: in (1) we have bare nouns in direct object position, and in (2) subjects of unaccusative verbs; in parallel contexts, bare count singular nouns are impossible (1c) and (2c):

- (1) a. Ho comprato fiori.  
I-have bought flowers  
b. Ho bevuto latte.  
I-have drunk milk





- c. \*Ho comprato giornale.  
I-have bought newspaper
- (2) a. Sono arrivati fiori.  
are arrived flowers
- b. E' stato versato latte.  
is been spilt milk
- c. \*E' arrivato ragazzo.  
is arrived boy

The preverbal subject position is in any case forbidden for bare singular and plural, count and mass nouns (see section 3).

Bare singular count nouns are possible – in post-verbal position – only in negative sentences or in yes-no questions, but again with stronger limitations than bare non-singulars (plural and mass nouns)<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> The structures exemplified in (3) appear frequently in idiomatic expressions, as in

- (i) a. Non c'era anima viva.  
not there.was living soul 'There was nobody'
- b. Dar carta bianca  
to-give white paper 'to give full power'

See Renzi (2001, 427-434), who also suggests that in some cases the bare object noun is incorporated in the governing verb; see for example:

- (ii) a. Non ho aperto libro.  
not I-have opened book 'I haven't studied at all'
- b. Non ha detto parola.  
not he.has told word 'He didn't speak'

See also Longobardi (1994), who in fn 6 compares the productivity of the negative context for the licensing of bare singulars in French (studied by Kayne 1981) with the limitations that are found in Italian. French needs a preposition *de* to properly govern the bare singular noun; in Italian the kind-defining relative has the same result: with this addition, the negative context is fully productive in Italian too.

A recent, very interesting, paper by Kayne (2009) on definite and indefinite articles takes the position of assuming that the numeral "one" does not exist as a primitive of human language; all languages have the indefinite article "one", which in some contexts licenses a silent SINGLE, which gives the numeral interpretation. He concludes that "Like negation, definite articles and indefinite articles are found in all languages, sometimes silent, sometimes not." I wonder how to account for (or interpret) the fact that 1) if a language has one single article, this is a definite article; 2) all languages (I know of) have a pronounced word that means "one SINGLE", not all languages have a pronounced article "one".





- (3) a. ??Non è arrivata ragazza.  
not is arrived girl
- b. ??Non si è presentato studente.  
not himself.is presented student
- c. ??Non ho visto studente.  
not I-have seen student
- (4) a. Non si sono presentati studenti.  
not themselves.are presented students
- b. Non ho comprato oro.  
not I-have bought gold

Sentences such as (3a-c) are better if an adjective, or a PP, is added:

- (5) a. ?Non è arrivata ragazza col bagaglio intatto.  
not is arrived girl with the luggage undamaged
- b. ?Non si è presentato studente preparato.  
not himself.is presented student prepared
- c. ?Non ho visto studente attento.  
not I-have seen student attentive

The same sentences become perfect if a relative clause expands the adjective or the PP giving them explicitly the function of predicates:

- (6) a. Non è arrivata ragazza che avesse il bagaglio intatto.  
not is arrived girl that had the luggage intact
- b. Non si è presentato studente che fosse preparato.  
not himself.is presented student that were prepared
- c. non ho visto studente che stesse attento.  
not I-have seen student that were attentive

The post-nominal adjective, as well as the PP, of (5) is interpreted as a reduced relative, which appears explicitly in the corresponding versions in (6).

The semantic interpretation of the N must be 'indefinite non-specific'. The relative clause obligatorily has the subjunctive mood; the relative is only apparently a restrictive, as I will now show.

## 2. A profile of kind-defining relative clauses<sup>3</sup>

Modern Standard Italian has a system of relativization which uses lexical *wh*-pronouns or abstract *wh*-elements; *wh*-movement in restrictive relatives on the subject or on the object leaves a gap that cannot be bound by a clitic:

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<sup>3</sup> For more details see Benincà & Cinque (forthcoming), and references cited there.



- (7) Il ragazzo che (\*l')hai conosciuto parte domani.  
the boy that (him).you-have met, leaves tomorrow

When a PP is relativized, standard Italian uses relative pronouns; in colloquial standard and regional Italian, as well as in the dialects, headed relative clauses, when a DP or a PP is relativized, are introduced by a bare complementizer, *che*, which can co-occur with a resumptive clitic expressing the grammatical function of the *wh*:

- (8) Il ragazzo che gli ho dato il libro si chiama Mario.  
the boy that to.him I.have given the book is called Mario

Non-restrictive relative clauses in the colloquial style have a resumptive clitic copying the *wh*:

- (9) Mario, che nessuno lo sopporta, non sarà invitato.  
Mario, that nobody him can stand, will not be invited

The clitic in the relatives on the subject cannot be exemplified with Italian, which lacks subject clitics, but with northern Italian dialects: see (6a), in contrast with (6b), from Paduan:

- (10) a. Un professore che (\*el) gaveva dedicà la vita ala scola se gà ritirà (*restrictive*)  
a teacher that had devoted his life to school has retired  
b. Mario, che el gaveva dedicà la vita ala scola, se gà ritirà (*non-restrictive*)  
Mario, that he.had devoted his life to school, has retired

Some apparently restrictive relative clauses admit, in colloquial Italian, a clitic copy of the *wh*: both the following sentences are apparently restrictive, but (11a) cannot have a clitic copy, while (11b) is perfectly grammatical:

- (11) a. \*Ho conosciuto un ragazzo che non lo conosci mai abbastanza.  
I have met a boy that you don't know him ever enough.  
b. Mario è un ragazzo che non lo conosci mai abbastanza.  
M. is a boy that you don't know him ever enough.

(11b) belongs to the kind-defining relative class; these relatives do not have the function of narrowing down the reference of the head noun, which can remain undetermined, but that of providing the features which characterize the class they belong to. What they have in common with non-restrictive relatives is precisely that the function of the relative has nothing to do with reference of the head, since the non-restrictive is headed by a referential head, and the kind-defining does not need to identify the reference of the head.





The basic context is that of a post-copular relative clause<sup>4</sup>, which forms, together with the head noun, the predicate of a copular structure.<sup>5</sup>

There are various characteristics which show that these relative clauses, despite their appearance, are not restrictive. Among other things, they admit the post-verbal negative adverb *mica* (see (13)), and their verb can have genuine epistemic interpretation (see (14)).

The postverbal negative polarity element *mica* is possible in non-restrictive relative clauses and impossible in restrictive relative clauses:

- (12) a. Hanno invitato Mario, che non conosco mica.  
they have invited Mario, whom I don't know NEG  
b. \*Hanno invitato il ragazzo che non conosco mica.  
they have invited the boy that I don't know NEG

Interestingly, kind-defining relatives behave like non-restrictives:

- (13) a. Questi sono i libri che non ho mica ancora letto.  
these are the books that I haven't NEG yet read  
b. Mario è un uomo che non esita mica a rischiare.  
Mario is a man that doesn't hesitate NEG to risk

The possibility of using a modal in genuinely epistemic readings in Italian is admitted in non-restrictive but not in restrictive relatives, as shown in (14):

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<sup>4</sup> Jiménez-Fernández (2012) develops a very interesting analysis of semantic and pragmatic aspects of copular structures, in particular the relation between individual level / stage level predicates, on the one hand, and the possibility for their subjects to be topics, on the other. His conclusions have indirect but precise relevance for the present issue; I will hopefully deal with them in future work.

<sup>5</sup> In Benincà and Cinque (forthcoming) we present some phenomena of English dialects that are only found with this class of relatives, in particular contact relatives on the subject; another interesting context is described in Radford (1981: 270-1) as a rule of relative clauses apparently restricted to un-tensed (infinitival) relatives:

- (i) a. He is looking for someone on whom to put his trust.  
b. He is looking for something about which to complain.  
c. \*He is looking for something which to complain about.  
(cf. I have discovered the thing which they have complained about).

Probably the - still mysterious - reason of this phenomenon does not directly have to do with the un-tensedness of the relative clause but with the kind-defining nature of the interpretation of the head, which is induced by the un-tensed verb.



- (14) a. Il/Un ragazzo che deve partire presto la mattina arriva sempre stanco  
(*restrictive: deontic interpr. only*)  
the/a boy that has to leave early in the morning always arrives tired
- b. Mario, che deve partire presto la mattina, arriva sempre stanco  
(*non-restrictive: both epistemic and deontic interpretation*)  
Mario, who has to leave early in the morning, always arrives tired

If we insert an apparent restrictive clause in a DP which is the predicate of a copular structure (as in 15), the epistemic interpretation becomes possible (or, in other cases, obligatory, for semantic reasons, as in (15b)):

- (15) a. Mario è un uomo che deve alzarsi molto presto la mattina  
(*epistemic or deontic interpretation*)  
Mario is a man that must get up very early in the morning
- b. Mario è un uomo che deve amare molto i suoi figli.  
Mario is a man that must love his children very much (*only epistemic interpretation*)

The cases we have seen above, where a bare singular noun was admitted, in the post-verbal position of negative and interrogative contexts were precisely determined by a kind-defining relative, in explicit or reduced form. This kind of relative will play an interesting role also in bare plural count nouns.

### 3. Bare plurals and mass nouns

Bare plural and mass nouns, differently from singular count nouns, do not need a negative or interrogative context to be licensed; like bare singular nouns, though, they can only appear in post-verbal position, unless they are modified in the way that we will see.

Subjects of unergative and intransitive verbs cannot be bare, neither in preverbal nor in post-verbal position<sup>6</sup>:

- (16) a. \*Passeggiano ragazzi.  
they-walk boys
- b. \*Ragazzi stanno vendendo fiori.  
boys are selling flowers
- c. \*Ragazzi camminano nel parco.  
boys they-walk in the park

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<sup>6</sup> There are narrative contexts and tense-moods that render these cases more acceptable, possibly if the bare noun is in some sense given as part of a list of features characterising a situation. This interesting aspect is not relevant at the moment.







The preverbal position is not permitted even for bare subjects of unaccusatives:

- (17) a. \*Fiori sono arrivati ieri a casa di mia madre.  
flowers are arrived yesterday  
b. \*Pesce è stato pescato nell'Adriatico.  
fish has been fished in the Adriatic sea

As direct objects, bare plural count nouns and bare singular mass nouns are perfectly grammatical:

- (18) a. Ho comprato fiori.  
I have bought flowers  
b. Ho versato latte.  
I have spilt milk

The ungrammatical sentences in (16-17) become perfectly grammatical if we add a kind-defining specification:

- (19) a. Fiori di grande bellezza sono arrivati ieri a casa di mia madre.  
flowers of great beauty are arrived yesterday at my mother's home  
b. Pesce di scarso pregio è stato pescato nell'Adriatico.  
fish of low quality has been fished in the Adriatic sea
- (20) a. Passeggiavano ragazzi dall'aspetto curioso.  
walked boys of curious look  
b. Ragazzi dall'aspetto curioso vendevano fiori / camminavano nel parco.  
boys of curious look sold flowers / they-walked in the park

### 3.1. Operators of bare nouns

Bare plural count nouns (and singular mass nouns) have, then, less restrictions than bare singular count nouns; they are nevertheless impossible in preverbal position (see (16-17)), unless they are modified, as in (19-20).

It still seems that the necessity of a negative or interrogative context for singular count nouns has to be based on Kayne's (1981) analysis: there is a variable (an Empty Category) that has to be properly bound by a c-commanding operator. To account for the difference between singular and plural count nouns, one can hypothesize that singular nouns have – at least – two silent functional heads whose features have to be bound (interpreted) by a c-commanding operator: one is bound by person agreement, and this is the reason why it has to be in post-verbal position, the other needs to be licensed by an operator (provided by a negative or interrogative context). The difference between singular and plural bare nouns could be linked to the fact that bare



plurals appear to have only one silent category, which can be properly governed and bound by verbal agreement; and the post-verbal position (of unaccusative subjects and direct object) is sufficient to allow the noun to appear without a determiner.

Trying to understand more on the nature of these silent elements, we can first observe that a difference between singular and plural is that singular is necessarily determined for Number (it corresponds to ONE), while plural is not; it is underdetermined with respect to 'how MANY' the referents of the N are, but, observing data, also with respect to MANY itself: the referent of a plural bare noun can also be just ONE. The Number feature licensed by plural morphology in a bare plural is then 'at least one', or else 'NON-NULL', 'not Ø'.

- (21) a. Ieri è arrivato S. Y.: nel nostro dipartimento ci sono dunque ora anche  
yesterday S.Y. has arrived: in our department there are then now also  
**studenti stranieri**  
students from abroad
- b. Abbiamo comprato il libro di A. R., quindi abbiamo comprato libri, questo semestre.<sup>7</sup>  
we have bought A.R.'s book, then we have bought books this semester
- c. Ho Franca, quindi ho amici/amiche.  
I have F., I have then friends (masch. or fem.)

Let us hypothesize that this NUMBER 'NON-NULL' feature is a silent quantifier, and observe its behaviour comparing it with other overt quantifiers.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Even though the referent is not necessarily a plurality of elements, the verb is plural. A similar related fact can be observed with plural verbal agreement, which unnecessarily refers to a plurality of subjects, as shown in (i):

- (i) a. Ti hanno cercato: era tuo fratello.  
'They have been looking for you, it was your brother.'
- b. Hanno telefonato tante volte, era sempre la stessa persona.  
'They have been calling many times: it was always the same person.'
- c. Hanno bussato alla porta: era Giorgio. 'They have knocked at the door: it was George.'

This is a syntactic phenomenon, since it happens only with transitive and unergative verbs, as shown in (ii):

- (ii) a. \*Sono venuti alle 5 di mattina: era tua madre.  
they have come at 5 in the morning: it was your mother
- b. \*Sono spariti con i soldi: era il cassiere.  
they have disappeared with the money: it was the cashier

In traditional terms, the unaccusative verb governs the deep subject position, to which it transmits the relevant features to a referential *pro*, which has to be plural.





This quantifier differs minimally from the quantifier which accompanies the visible determiner *di*+article: its value is indeed '> ONE', as shown by the following variants of (21):

- (21) a'. Ieri è arrivato S. Y.: nel nostro dipartimento ci sono dunque ora anche  
yesterday S.Y. has arrived: in our department there are then now also  
(?\*degli) studenti stranieri  
(of the) students from abroad
- b'. Abbiamo comprato il libro di A. R., quindi abbiamo comprato (\*dei) libri, questo semestre.  
we have bought A.R.'s book, then we have bought books this semester
- c'. Ho Franca, quindi ho degli amici/delle amiche.  
I have F., I have then (of the) friends (masch. or fem.)

If the silent quantifier shares some properties with lexical (pronounced) quantifiers, we will be able to demonstrate its presence in bare plural count nouns.

### 3.1.1. Left dislocation of bare plural and mass nouns

Let us begin by observing the behaviour of some quantified objects, to which we apply Left Dislocation:

- (22) a. Ho venduto alcuni gioielli.  
I have sold some jewels
- b. Abbiamo salvato tre cani randagi.  
we have rescued three stray dogs
- c. Ho bevuto tè.  
I have drunk tea

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<sup>8</sup> In this respect Italian and French differ; in French bare plural are not possible not even in the contexts in which Italian admits them; as noted in Kayne 2004, in these – as in other, related, cases – French must have *de*+article:

- (i) a. Gianni ha comprato libri.  
G. has bought books
- b. Gianni beveva birra.  
G. was drinking/drank bier
- (ii) a. \*Jean a acheté livres.  
a'. Jean a acheté des livres.
- b. \*Jean buvait bière.  
b'. Jean buvait de la bière.

In Italian the correspondent of (iia') is also possible, but semantically different from (ia): the latter is true even if G. bought just one book, while the correspondent of (iia'), *Gianni ha comprato dei libri* is true only if Gianni bought at least two books. See also below, where I will go back to this issue.



We can create LD structures placing in the left periphery either the whole DP, including the Quantifier (as in (23)), or the sole N (as in (24-25)):

- (23) a. Alcuni gioielli, li ho venduti.  
some jewels, them.I-have sold  
b. Tre cani, li abbiamo salvati.  
three dogs, we have rescued them  
c. Un po' di tè, l'ho bevuto.  
a little of tea, I have drunk
- (24) a. (Di) gioielli, ne ho venduti alcuni.  
(of) jewels, of-them.I have sold some  
b. (Di) cani, ne abbiamo salvati tre.  
(of) dogs, of-them.we-have rescued.  
c. (Di) tè, ne ho bevuto.  
(of) tea, of-it.I-have drunk
- (25) a. (\*Di) alcuni gioielli, li ho venduti.  
(of) jewels, them.I have sold some  
b. (\*Di) Tre cani randagi, li abbiamo salvati.  
(of) three dogs, them.we-have rescued  
c. (\*Di) un po' di tè, l'ho bevuto.  
(of) a little of tea, it.I-have drunk

When the whole DP is dislocated, a resumptive object clitic is obligatory; when N only is dislocated, it can be preceded by the preposition *di*, and the resumptive clitic is the partitive *ne*. The preposition *di* cannot appear when the resumptive clitic is the object clitic, and the Q is moved with the Noun, as shown in (25). I take this alternation more generally to indicate that the partitive clitic is correlated with the presence of a partitive trace governed by the Quantifier, which is not moved to the left periphery. If the silent NON-NUL Quantifier behaves like a lexical Quantifier, namely if it can both stay *in situ* and move with the N, we expect to have the same alternation, as in the following cases, with bare plural nouns; in (26) we have bare plural nouns in object position, which in (27) are Left-Dislocated:

- (26) a. Ho venduto gioielli.  
I have sold jewels  
b. Abbiamo salvato cani.  
we have rescued dogs  
c. Ho bevuto tè.  
I have drunk tea
- (27) a. (Di) gioielli, ne abbiamo venduti.  
(of) jewels, of-them.we-have sold





- b. (Di) cani, ne abbiamo salvati.  
(of) dogs, of-them.we-have rescued
- c. (Di) tè, ne ho bevuto.  
(of) tea, of-it.I-have drunk

We have hypothesized that bare plural and mass nouns contain a silent quantifier 'NON-NULL'; this quantifier should be able both to move with the N and to stay in place; the examples in (27) would then be all cases in which the Q does not move, because - as I have shown above with examples (24-25) - *di* can only appear when the Q is in place, and only in this case the resumptive clitic is the partitive *ne*. If we force the noun to appear alone on the left (without *di*) with an accusative clitic - entailing, on the basis of the examples with overt Q shown above in (23), that the silent Q is dislocated with the N - we get quite bad results:

- (28) a. \*Gioielli, li ho venduti.  
jewels, them.I-have sold
- b. \*Cani, li abbiamo salvati.  
dogs, them.we-have rescued
- c. \*Tè, l'ho bevuto.  
tea, it.I-have drunk

Apparently, the silent Q is prohibited from appearing in sentence initial position. In fact, if we enrich the DP with a kind-defining determination it is possible to have the silent Q in sentence initial position, as indirect evidence (the obligatory object clitic) suggests:

- (29) a. Gioielli che avessero qualche valore, li ho venduti.  
jewels that have<sub>subj</sub> some value, them.I-have sold
- b. Cani che avessero un aspetto mansueto, li abbiamo salvati.  
dogs that had<sub>subj</sub> a docile appearance, them.we-have rescued
- c. Tè che sia bevibile, non lo trovi al bar.  
tea which is<sub>subj</sub> drinkable, not.it.you-find at the bar

The subjunctive mood is obligatory (in standard Italian and in many regional varieties of Italian where the distinction indicative-subjunctive is robust). As argued for in Benincà and Cinque (forthcoming), the subjunctive mood is strictly related to the nature of this kind of relatives, which do not restrict the reference of the head, nor add a predication to a head by itself referential, rather it characterizes the head - which does not have to be referentially defined - as belonging to a certain class. Notice that the adjunction of a kind-defining relative to a bare plural preceded by *di* does not give the



possibility of having an object resumptive clitic; the clitic has to be *ne*, confirming that in any case the presence of *di* with the left dislocated bare noun says that the Q is in its place and governs a partitive position:

- (30) a. Di gioielli che avessero qualche valore, *ne*/\**li* ho venduti.  
of jewels that have<sub>subj</sub> some value, of them/them.I-have sold
- b. Cani che avessero un aspetto mansueto *ne*/\**li* abbiamo salvati.  
of dogs that had<sub>subj</sub> a docile appearance, of them/them.we-have rescued
- c. Di tè che sia bevibile, non *ne*/\**lo* trovi al bar.  
of tea which is<sub>subj</sub> drinkable, not of-it/it.you-find at the bar

The determination that renders a bare plural noun or a mass noun possible in sentence initial position is of the same kind of the determination that permits a bare singular count noun to occur, in a negative or interrogative context; as shown in (5-6), the determination has to be a kind-defining relative, in an explicit (ex. (6)) or reduced form (cf. ex. (5), slightly marginal). The same is observed for bare plural and mass nouns, as exemplified in (31), where the kind defining relatives used in (30) appear in a reduced form, and are also able to render the sentence initial bare plural and singular mass nouns perfectly grammatical:

- (31) a. Gioielli di qualche valore, *li* ho venduti.  
jewels of some value, them.I-have sold
- b. Cani dall'aspetto mansueto *li* abbiamo salvati.  
dogs of docile appearance, them.we have rescued
- c. Gioielli belli come questi *li* ho visti raramente.  
jewels beautiful like these, them.I-have seen rarely
- d. Tè bevibile non *lo* trovi al bar.  
tea drinkable not it.you find at the bar

We have observed detailed phenomena showing that bare nouns contain a silent quantifier NUMBER, which is interpreted as NON-NULL; when the bare noun is left dislocated, the operator can be *in situ*, where it governs a partitive empty position, or left dislocated together with the Noun; these two options have different empirical effects which can be directly observed in the corresponding cases with pronounced NUMBER quantifiers; in the first case, when the quantifier is *in situ*, the resumptive clitic is the partitive *ne*, in the second case, when the operator is left-dislocated, the resumptive form is an object clitic. The addition of a kind-defining relative clause, in an explicit or reduced form, to the bare nouns permits us to indirectly observe the behaviour of the silent quantifier in both contexts (sentence initial and *in situ*).





#### 4. Bare nouns and partitive PPs

It seems worthwhile to compare bare plural and mass nouns with so-called partitive DP, introduced by the preposition *di* 'of' and a definite article, which are often considered semantically equivalent to bare plural and mass nouns.

I would like to show that partitive DPs, despite the appearances, and differently from what happens in French (see Kayne 2003, 2004, Haïk 1982), are indefinite specific DPs, and thus are not equivalent to bare plurals (or singular bare mass nouns).

At first sight, data as the following could suggest that partitive DPs are pronominalised with *ne*:

- (32) Q.: Hai comprato delle riviste?  
 did you buy of-the magazines?  
 A: Sì, ne ho comprate.  
 yes, of-them.I-have bought

In (32) A can be an adequate answer to question Q, but only on pragmatic grounds. If we apply Left Dislocation, we see that *ne* is not the correct clitic copy of *di+art.* N, which behaves instead in the same way as a definite DP:

- (33) a. Delle riviste, \*ne/le ho comprate alla stazione.  
 of the magazines, of-them/them I-have bought at the station  
 b. Del succo di frutta, \*ne/lo berrei volentieri.  
 of the fruit juice, of-it/it.I would-drink with pleasure

(33 a, b) are to be compared with (34):

- (34) a. Riviste, ne ho comprate alla stazione.  
 magazines, of-them I-have bought at the station  
 b. Succo di frutta, ne berrei volentieri.  
 fruit juice, of-it.I would-drink with pleasure

*Di+art.* is also the only possibility to refer to indefinite specific entities:

- (35) Hai visto delle ragazze in bicicletta?  
 have you seen of-the girls in bicycle?

If the addressee understands it as referring to specific cycling girls, the answer to this question has to be (36a); if the answer is (36b) the speaker reveals, in the relevant contexts, that he has misunderstood the question (or that he is joking).





- (36) a. Sì, le ho viste.  
yes, them.I-have seen  
b. Sì, ne ho viste.  
yes, of-them.I-have seen

The same effect can be observed with mass nouns; the *di*+article partitive is not appropriate as direct object to get an individual level description, which requires instead a bare N:

- (37) a. Mario (è uno che) beve birra, ma non ne beve quasi mai.  
Mario (is a man that) drinks bier, but he drinks of-it almost never  
b. ??Mario (è uno che) beve della birra.  
Mario (is a man that) drinks of-the bier  
c. \*Mario (è uno che) beve della birra ma non ne beve quasi mai.  
Mario (is a man that) drinks bier, but he drinks of-it almost never

With the partitive *di*+art. in Italian we can only have a stage level or habitual interpretation, but not a genuinely individual level one.

The internal structure of *di*+art. probably contains an indefinite quantifier QUANTITY (NUMBER, or AMOUNT, depending on the count/mass class of the Noun), followed by the partitive preposition and the article, obligatory in Italian.<sup>9</sup>

Comparing Italian with French, Kayne (2004, 2012) underlines the difference of French and Italian with respect to the presence of the definite articles, which gives the minimal pair (38a, b):

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<sup>9</sup> It is tempting to connect this structure with other cases where the preposition *di* is related to NUMBER/AMOUNT in Italian:

- (i) a. Voglio più libertà / libri.  
I want more freedom / books  
b. Ne voglio \*(di) più.  
of-it.I-want (of) more

The same pattern is produced with *meno* 'less'. Possibly, this has something to do with the comparative nature of the quantification (where *di* has the function of English *than*). But another phenomenon - found in spoken Tuscan, and in some dialects (Emilian) - is represented by the quantifier *molti*, which can be preceded by *di*: *dimolto* 'very, much', *dimolti* 'many'). In modern Florentine (J. Garzonio, p.c.) this form is only used - very naturally - when *molto*, *molti* is accompanied by a silent N or a trace, not when the N is pronounced. This case has - at first sight - possible affinities with the partitive *di*+art., but the matter is still unclear to me.







- (38) a. \*Jean boit bière.  
 b. Giovanni beve birra.  
 John drinks beer

In French only (39) is possible:

- (39) Jean boit de la bière.  
 J. drinks of.the bier

It is not clear if (39) can have an individual level interpretation. If it does, the difference could reside in the semantics of the definite article, which is an existential operator in Italian but not in French.

## 5. Summing up

The aim of this brief analysis was to further reflect on the semantic features that are involved in the constructions with bare nouns, with respect to the referential features the head Noun is endowed with, in determinerless DPs on the one hand, and in relative clauses, on the other.

To demonstrate the presence of an operator in the functional structure of bare plurals and singular mass nouns I have used a test based on the different form of the resumptive clitic that appears with left dislocation of these nominal structures.

It seems that the impossible bare DPs are excluded because their status with respect to referential features is not complete; they can be rescued if, through the addition of a specific type of predicate, they are assigned to the 'classified' category, which means 'neither definite nor indefinite'.

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**Paola Benincà**

paola.beninca@unipd.it

University of Padova

