



The development of the indefinite article in Medieval and Golden-Age Spanish

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**The Development of the
Indefinite Article in Medieval
and Golden-Age Spanish**

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Abstract

Unitary cardinals are a common source for indefinite markers. This thesis is a quantitative diachronic study of the development of Spanish *un*, from its cardinal value to its use as an indefinite article. Based on a corpus comprising texts from the thirteenth to the seventeenth century, I present an analysis and chronology of the main changes undergone by *un* throughout this period, notably its increasing use as a marker of non-specific indefinites, and its further incorporation in generic noun phrases and predicates.

Additionally, I demonstrate that the development of the plural indefinite determiner *unos* is, with a few restrictions, parallel to that of its singular counterpart, not only in its increasing frequency, but also in its introduction into new contexts. Furthermore, I present a comparison between *un* and *algún* in terms of specificity and conclude that although there are evident links between them, both being indefinite determiners derived from Latin $\bar{U}NUS$, they have always had different functional domains.

Finally, I show that one of the consequences of the incorporation of *un* into generic contexts is the rise of the so-called impersonal *uno*, and explain that this event is crucial to explain the disappearance of another generic pronoun, *omne*, whose last examples are found in the sixteenth century, that is, precisely the moment where the first instances of impersonal *uno* occur.

To Fer

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¿Qué quieres, hija, deste número de uno? Más inconvenientes te diré dél, que años tengo acuestas.

La Celestina, p. 206

Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Objective

When first approaching a Spanish Medieval document, one can immediately notice that bare phrases (BPs) occur in contexts where in Modern Spanish a determiner would be required. It is well known that the emergence of the articles in Romance is largely responsible for this contrast. However, while the formation of the definite article on the basis of Latin demonstratives has been widely studied, to the point that every historical grammar of the Spanish language contains a detailed account of it, the indefinite article has received rather modest attention, probably due to the fact that, until recently, most Spanish grammarians did not even consider that *un*, let alone *unos*, were true articles.

A notable exception is Lapesa, who in his seminal paper ‘*Un, una, como artículo indefinido*’ (2000 [1974]) convincingly argued for the need to distinguish

between the unitary numeral and the indefinite article. Interestingly, Lapesa's argumentation relied heavily on diachronic facts:

Así como *el, la* partieron de *ille, illa*, pero no son ya demostrativos, sino artículos de continuidad, así también *un, una*, numerales en su origen y adjetivos indefinidos en una etapa intermedia, aunque no han perdido tales valores, son hoy artículos de novedad y relieve en la inmensa mayoría de los casos. (p. 484)

In the light of Lapesa's work, and also taking into account Givón's (1981) research on the quasi-universal process whereby unitary numerals become indefinite markers, the development of the Spanish indefinite article has been commented on by Leonetti (1988) and Elvira (1994), whose papers, although very insightful, are not — nor do they intend to be — exhaustive.¹

In this context, the main objective of this research is to provide a detailed account of the evolution of Spanish *un*, from its original numeral value to its use as an indefinite article. The analysis will be focused on Medieval and Golden-Age Spanish, since, as I will demonstrate, the grammaticalization of the indefinite article reached its peak in the late fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, with the incorporation of *un* into generics and predicates, both changes being further consolidated in the seventeenth century.²

Although the results of this work are likely to be of most interest to specialists in historical linguistics, I hope I can also contribute to a better understanding of

¹It must be said that recently, when my research was already well advanced, a longer work on the grammaticalization of the indefinite article was published by Garachana (2009). Throughout this thesis, I will comment on the coincidences and differences of our results.

²This, of course, does not mean that from the seventeenth century onwards there have been no changes in the use of *un*, but only that, when inquiring about the grammaticalization of the indefinite article, the most profound changes are to be found before. In this sense, consider the words of Penny (2002: 5), according to whom:

Although we are far from understanding all the factors which hasten or restrain linguistic change, it seems fairly certain that at some places and times change is more rapid than at other places and times; that is to say that in the history of a particular variety there will be changing rates of innovation.

Modern Spanish indefinite determiners. After all, their distribution today is the result of an array of changes that took place during the history of the language.

1.2 The Corpus

The corpus on which this research is based is divided into three time periods, roughly corresponding to the second half of the thirteenth, the fifteenth and the seventeenth centuries. I have considered different types of prose, including narrative texts, chronicles, scientific prose, treaties, legal and notarial documents, for, as we know, linguistic change is often associated with a particular genre. The texts of my corpus are:³

First Period

Documentos lingüísticos de España (see document) = [DLE13; document, page]
Lapidario (1250) = [Lapidario, page]
Calila e Dimna (1251) = [Calila, page]
Fuero Real (1251-1255) = [Fuero, page]
General Estoria. Segunda parte (c. 1275) = [GEII, volume, page, line, column]

Second Period

Textos para la historia del español (see document) = [THE, page]
Documentos lingüísticos de España (see document) = [DLE15, document, page]
Cárcel de amor (1483-1492) = [Cárcel, page, line]
Crónica de los Reyes Católicos. Guerra de Granada (1482-1490) = [Reyes, page]
Gramática Castellana (1492) = [Gramática, page]
La Celestina (c.1499) = [Celestina, volume, page]

Third Period

³In this list, I have given in parentheses the date of the composition or first publication of the texts, and then in brackets the abbreviation used to refer to the text and the information provided for each example. The dates given are taken either from the critical edition employed, or in the case of medieval documents from the *Diccionario filológico de literatura medieval española* (Alvar & Lucía Megías, 2002). Note that in the case of *Textos para la historia del español*, I quote by the critical presentation. Additionally, in *Documentos lingüísticos de España*, I have kept neither the long nor the sigma-shaped *s*.

Documentos lingüísticos de la Nueva España (see document) = [DLNE, document, page]

La vida y hechos de Estebanillo González, hombre de buen humor. Compuesto por él mismo(1646) = [Estebanillo, volume, page]

Criticón. Tercera Parte (1657) = [Criticón, page]

Carta Atenagórica (1690) = [Carta, page]

Respuesta a Sor Filotea de la Cruz (1691) = [Respuesta, page]

Alboroto y motín de los indios de México (1692) = [Alboroto, page]

In order to achieve quantitative compatibility, for every text I have taken a sample of fifteen thousand words, with the exception of the *Documentos lingüísticos de España* from the second half of the fifteenth century, as the number of words of the documents did not always reach the chosen sample size. Therefore, I have complemented the sample with eleven documents of this period taken from *Textos para la historia del español*, which account for nine thousand words. The same has been done with the *Respuesta a Sor Filotea* (11440 words), which was complemented with a fragment of 3560 words of the *Carta Atenagórica*.

The extent of the corpus is 225,000 words, in which I have documented 1325 cases of *un*, and 457 of *algún*. I have also found 234 of the negative determiner *ningún*, and 387 cases of pronominal *uno*, although they were not analysed, but only used in order to exemplify certain phenomena linked in certain ways to the grammaticalization of the indefinite article, such as the rise of the generic or impersonal variant of *uno* (see section 8.6).⁴

Note that for the third period I have included texts from New Spain. In this way, I intend to account for possible differences regarding the use of the indefinite article in Peninsular and American Spanish. However, with one probable exception (see section 8.1.7), I have not found any evidence of dialectal variation.

⁴Unless otherwise stated, *un* and *algún* are used as cover terms to refer to all grammatical ([+/- Mas], [+/- Pl]) and graphical variants of these two determiners, including, in the case of *un*, the Roman numeral I. Also, when referring to ‘indefinite article’ I mean both singular and plural forms.

On the other hand, I will, against common practice, refer to the time intervals analysed as first, second and third period, instead of thirteenth, fifteenth and seventeenth centuries, even if, as stated before, the texts included were written in the second half of these three centuries.⁵ This decision was motivated by the fact that some of the works that comprise the corpus only survive in late witnesses. For instance, in the case of *Calila e Dimna*, the earliest manuscript dates from the late fourteenth century. This is also the case of the second part of the *General Estoria*. Thus, it seems to me that to refer to a strict temporal interval was not appropriate, since it is likely that these texts contain some features of a later stage of the language than those of the year in which they were first composed.⁶

Finally, in order to complement my data, I have resorted to additional sources, notably to the *Corpus Diacrónico del Español (CORDE)*, but also to some other texts that could not be included in my corpus, either because of their date of composition, such as *Diálogo de la lengua* (1535 = [*Diálogo*, page]) and *Menosprecio de Corte, alabanza de aldea* (1539 = [*Menosprecio*, page]), or because they were in verse, such as the *Poema de Mio Cid* (1207 = [*Cid*, verse]). Additionally, I have often reproduced examples given in the bibliographical references, especially in the chapter devoted to Latin and the Romance languages (chapter 5). In every case, the source form which the example was taken is stated in the preceding paragraph. For all the bibliographical details concerning the principal and additional corpora, see Appendix A.

1.3 Structure of the Dissertation

This dissertation comprises seven chapters, in addition to this introduction. In chapter 2, I provide a detailed review of grammaticalization, since the development of the indefinite article constitutes a clear instance of this type of change. I begin

⁵With the exception of *Estebanillo*, whose princeps edition dates from 1646.

⁶See note 3 of chapter 7 (pp. 172) for a discussion of the impact of this on my results.

by discussing the antecedents of grammaticalization studies and the mechanisms involved in it. Further, I comment on the role of frequency in language change and conclude by assessing the hypothesis of unidirectionality.

Chapter 3 is divided into two parts. The first part is dedicated to the concept of definiteness. Here, I shall present a general discussion of the main theories of definiteness, and provide a succinct overview of how definiteness and indefiniteness are marked cross-linguistically. The second part of the chapter deals with the concept of specificity: section 3.3 discusses the various definitions of the term, while section 3.4 focuses on the role of specificity in the development of indefinite markers.

Chapter 4 is devoted to the treatment of the article in the Hispanic grammatical tradition. The chapter begins with an overview of the definition of article in the grammars of Spanish, from Nebrija to the Grammar of the Real Academia Española of 1931. Then, in section 4.2, I concentrate on the well-known debate led by Alonso (1951 [1933]) and Alarcos (1999 [1968]), on the one hand, and Lapesa (2000 [1973]) on the other, about whether *un* should or should not be considered an article.

The fifth chapter of this dissertation aims to offer succinct overview of the Latin antecedents and Romance panorama of the indefinite article. Section 5.1 reports on the use of $\bar{U}NUS$ in Latin, from its numeral sense to its first manifestations as an incipient indefinite marker. Additionally, some general data about the descendants of $\bar{U}NUS$ in Romance languages other than Spanish are given. Next, in section 5.2, I discuss the use of three indefinite pronouns, namely $QU\bar{I}DAM$, $\check{A}L\check{I}QUIS$ and $CERTUS$, for, as we will see in this thesis, their evolutions are closely linked with the grammaticalization of the indefinite article. In section 5.3, I comment on distributives in Latin and Romance. Lastly, section 5.4 focuses on the expression of impersonality in Latin, and the creation of impersonal pronouns in Romance. As will be explained in chapter 8, the rise of impersonal *uno* in Spanish coincides

with the incorporation of *un* into generic contexts.

Chapters 6, 7, and 8 constitute the main part of this dissertation, since they contain the results of my analysis. Chapter 6 deals with what I have labelled ‘conservative cases of *un*’, or in other words, the non-grammaticalized instances of the numeral, that is, the examples in which it reproduces the original use of *ŪNUS* in Latin as described in chapter 5.

Chapter 7 focuses on the restrictions on the appearance of *un*. First, the results of the frequency analyses are given and compared with those of *algún*. Then, in section 7.2, the form *unos* is analysed, and support is given in order to prove that it is indeed a true plural indefinite article. Further, in section 7.3, I provide a general description of the use of BPs in Spanish; additionally, the restrictions on the appearance of *un* imposed by the type of noun, syntactic function, and word order (section 7.4) are discussed. The chapter concludes with an account of the insertion of *un* in predicates, which, as we will see, constitutes one of the last stages of its grammaticalization.

Chapter 8 deals with the interpretation of *un* in Medieval and Golden-Age Spanish. Emphasis is placed on the specificity analysis, for, as Givón has claimed, it is one of the most relevant factors behind the development of indefinite markers. Thus, not only shall I give a detailed description of the various factors that favour one or the other interpretation, but I shall also compare the results of my analysis with previous studies on the subject, such as Elvira (1994) and Garachana (2009), and with my own results for *algún*. The second part of this chapter concerns the generic interpretation of *un*. Here, I give a diachronic analysis of the subject, and provide evidence in favour of distinguishing between taxonomic readings and indefinites occurring in characterizing sentences. Lastly, in section 8.6, a brief note on the grammaticalization of impersonal or generic *uno* is given.

Finally, chapter 9 constitutes the conclusion of this research. There, I offer a unified account of the grammaticalization of the indefinite article, in the light

of the conclusions reached in all the previous chapters, and give an outline of outstanding problems and future research.

Chapter 2

Grammaticalization

The aim of this chapter is to offer a review of the main characteristics of grammaticalization, since the process whereby the Latin numeral $\bar{U}NUS$ originated the Spanish indefinite article is an instance of this type of change.¹

The chapter is composed of six parts: first, I shall discuss the origin of the term *grammaticalization*; in the second section, I will explain the fundamental issues of grammaticalization as a framework and discuss some differences between functionalism and other approaches to linguistic change; the third section deals with the mechanisms involved in grammaticalization, with special attention to reanalysis; in section four I discuss the parameters proposed by Lehmann in order to measure the degree of grammaticalization of a given structure; section five is devoted to the relevance of frequency and routinization in grammaticalization;

¹There has been a long debate on whether grammaticalization is a theory or not. This issue will not be addressed here, as we use the term ‘grammaticalization’ mainly to refer to a specific type of linguistic change. For a detailed discussion on this subject see the papers collected in Campbell (2001a), Haspelmath (2004), and Heine (2003).

finally, in section six I discuss the hypothesis of unidirectionality and review two opposing positions about it.

2.1 Antecedents

Although the boom in the studies of grammaticalization is relatively recent, the intuition about the movement towards abstraction as a frequent path in language change has a long history in linguistics.²

The antecedents of grammaticalization go back as far as the eighteenth century, to the work of the French empiricist Étienne Bonnot de Condillac, who in his *Essai sur l'origine des connaissances humaines* (1746) proposed that grammatical complexity and abstract vocabulary were historically derived from concrete lexemes, and that tense suffixes and other verbal inflections could be traced back to independent words. He also suggested that the personal endings of the verb were the result of agglutination of personal pronouns, and that forms indicating verbal tense derived from the coalescence of a temporal adverb with the stem.

Soon after, John Horne Tooke, whose work was first published in 1789, argued that in its original state, language was concrete. Furthermore, he distinguished between 'necessary words', that is, nouns and verbs, and 'secondary words', which include prepositions and conjunctions. According to him, secondary words are created on the basis of necessary words by means of abbreviation and mutilation.

During the nineteenth century, the German linguist Franz Bopp used the notion of change as movement from lexical to grammatical in his research on comparative grammar. As Heine explains (2003: 576), although much of his work on etymologies is inaccurate, Bopp's work remains important as he was the first to introduce this notion of change which was later employed by many others, notably Wilhelm von Humboldt, for whom grammatical structure developed from a

²For a complete account of the history of grammaticalization studies, see Heine (2003: 576-77) and Hopper & Traugott (2003: 18-21).

previous stage in which only concrete ideas could be expressed (see also Hopper & Traugott 2003).

Later, at the end of the nineteenth century, the Neogrammarian Georg von der Gabelentz argued that grammatical structures resulted from two competing tendencies, one towards ease of articulation and another towards distinctness. However, his main contribution was the idea of the cyclical nature of change.

The legacy of the Neogrammarians is fundamental to modern linguistic theory, as not only did they turn linguistics into a science by treating language as a purely natural object that could be studied like any other natural phenomenon, but they also established the grounds for typology as the search for universals by means of comparison among different languages.

After the Neogrammarians, and with the rise of structuralism, the emphasis of linguistic theory was placed on synchrony, leaving the diachronic perspective to some extent aside. For Saussure, given that speakers have no diachronic awareness of their language, a proper explanation of the grammatical system should not be given on the basis of diachronic facts. Saussure established the distinction between synchrony and diachrony, which was to be crucial in the development of twentieth-century linguistic theory. According to him, these two dimensions do not form a system between themselves: while synchrony is the connection between simultaneous elements, diachrony is the substitution over time of an element (see Fischer 2007: 60-3).

As pointed out by Weinreich et al. (1968: 121), Saussure 'views heterogeneity within the language custom of a community not as a subject of systematic description, but as a kind of tolerable imprecision of performance'. This idea was later adopted by Bloomfield who, although he admits that the differences between the language of individuals are important, believes that they have to be ignored by means of abstraction, for the sake of the construction of a theory of language. Interestingly, he also says that linguists must later correct the results of their

investigation, by taking variation into account. However, according to Weinreich et al. (1968), he does not provide an explanation of how such correction should proceed.³

The term *grammaticalization* was first introduced by Meillet (1958 [1912]) who, in his article ‘L’Évolution des formes grammaticales’ defined it as ‘l’attribution du caractère grammatical à un mot jadis autonome’. Meillet was, however, not interested in the typological implications of grammaticalization; rather he thought of it as a tool to explain certain changes in Indo-European. In accordance with the Neogrammarian tradition, he distinguished three kinds of words, namely ‘principal words’, ‘accessory words’, and ‘grammatical words’, between which he recognized a gradual transition effected through what he considered to be the two most important types of grammatical change: grammaticalization and analogy (see Lehmann, 2002: 2-4).

Almost half a century after Meillet’s first mention of grammaticalization, Kurylowicz (1976 [1965]) defined it as the ‘increase of range of a morpheme advancing from a lexical to a grammatical or from a less grammatical to a more grammatical status’. Although today the term *grammaticalization* is used to cover a wide range of changes that do not necessarily conform to the definition of ‘increasing in grammatical status’, the definition proposed by Kurylowicz is still widely accepted and quoted frequently in the literature.

The next important period in grammaticalization studies started in the 70s and was initially related to the paradigm of locality (Anderson 1971), which suggested that local expressions are ‘basic’, and that they can be used as templates in

³The theoretical irrelevance of variation, as defended by Saussure and Bloomfield, is echoed by Chomsky (1965), who defines the tasks of linguistic theory as follows:

Linguistic theory is concerned primarily with an ideal speaker-listener, in a completely homogeneous speech-community, who knows its language perfectly and is unaffected by such grammatically irrelevant conditions as memory limitations, distractions, shifts of attention and interest, and errors (random or characteristic) in applying his knowledge of the language in actual performance. (p.3-4)

See Weinreich et al. (1968).

Discourse → Syntax → Morphology → Morphophonemics → Zero

Figure 2.1: Givón’s evolution chain (1971: 12)

the development of other linguistic expressions. More important was the work of Talmy Givón, who brought back diachrony as a major element of linguistic theory by defending the idea that the understanding of the structure of language could not be achieved without looking at its past stages. In order to reflect the cyclical nature of language evolution, he proposed the evolution chain shown in Figure 2.1, which ultimately led to his famous phrase ‘today’s morphology is yesterday’s syntax’. The influence of Givón’s line of thought was such that, in Heine’s words (2003: 576), it ‘opened a new perspective for understanding grammar’.

Since then, there has been an increasing interest in grammaticalization, mainly from the fields of historical linguistics and typology. These different perspectives have contributed to the emergence of new definitions of the term, aimed at describing more accurately its properties and limits.

2.2 Characteristics and Implications

Although views on grammaticalization are not entirely homogeneous, it is possible to recognize some basic postulates underlying most of the research in the area, namely, that language is a historical product and therefore diachronic explanations are relevant to account for its present structure, and that the development of linguistic categories is unidirectional, leading from concrete/lexical to abstract/grammatical meanings (Heine 2003: 577).

Grammaticalization has been defined by Heine as a process whereby expressions for concrete meanings are used in specific contexts for encoding grammatical meanings. Its goal is to describe the ‘the way grammatical forms arise and develop

through space and time, and to explain why they are structured the way they are' (Heine 2003: 595).

Studies in grammaticalization have been carried out mainly from the perspective of functional linguistics. Roughly speaking, 'functionalism' refers to usage-based approaches to grammar, according to which language is shaped by its use. Taking this into account, it is not surprising that functional explanations tend to include both language-internal and language-external considerations. Likewise, functionalism assigns to diachrony a fundamental role in explaining the structure of language (see Mithun 2003: 554-55).

The functional orientation of grammaticalization as a framework has several consequences with respect to the way topics such as the motivation of change, language acquisition and universals are treated, especially when contrasting it with the most influential theory of language of the twentieth century, that is, generativism.⁴

A central concept of generative grammar is that of a genetically endowed Universal Grammar, composed of a set of principles common to all languages which determine the fundamental structure of language, and a set of parameters whose particular setting in a given language is responsible for variation.⁵

The theory of the existence of a highly specified Universal Grammar comes from the problem of acquisition. The hypothesis is that children cannot acquire grammar based only on primary linguistic data, and therefore there must be an innate predisposition that allows them to acquire language (Roberts 2007).⁶

⁴For a generativist account of language change see Kroch (2001), Lightfoot (1991, 2003), and Roberts (2007).

⁵Lightfoot's account of language change is based on the assumption of parameter resetting, according to which change is abrupt and occurs as a response to shifts in simple data occurring in unembedded domains. New parameter setting usually triggers a chain reaction which is then manifested in a cluster of simultaneous surface changes (Lightfoot 2003: 498).

⁶By contrast, within the grammaticalization framework the notion of innateness is severely questioned. Consider for instance the following quote by Bybee (2002: 165):

One of the strongest implications of the grammaticalization theory is that because all grammatical categories and constructions are derivable from experience with language, there is no reason to suppose that they are innate. In fact, the notion

As defined by Kroch (2001: 699), in the generative approach, language change is regarded as a ‘failure in the transition across time of linguistic features’. As this failure takes place during language acquisition, children are the protagonists of language change.

By contrast, in grammaticalization theory change is not necessarily derived from language acquisition but rather as a consequence of the need to fulfil communicative functions (Harris & Campbell 1995: 45). Although it is recognized that children play an important role in language change, it is also accepted in some cases that it is more likely that adults are the initiators of the process, especially in the cases that involve use of complex inferences (see Traugott 2003: 626).

This claim is supported by sociolinguistic studies, where it has been long recognized that children continue to develop their language throughout their lives, notably so in their pre-adolescent years, when they frequently reconstruct their language on the model of their peer-group (see Weinreich et al., 1968: 145). Moreover, the role of young adults has proved to be fundamental in maintaining and replicating innovations in speech communities (see also Hopper & Traugott 2003: 44).

A fundamental notion in grammaticalization studies is that of the *cline*. As Hopper & Traugott (2003) explain, forms do not shift abruptly from one category to another, but rather go through a series of small transitions that seems to be similar across languages. There is both a diachronic and synchronic dimension of the term cline: diachronically, it refers to the pathway along which forms evolve; synchronically, it refers to a continuum, that is, ‘an arrangement of forms along an imaginary line at one end of which is a fuller form of some kind, perhaps “lex-

of innateness of grammatical rules is incompatible with the gradual, usage-driven nature of grammatical change. Innate rules and categories would be unchangeable over time and over generations, or if change occurred, an abrupt shift from one discrete category to another would be required.’

content item → grammatical word → clitic → inflectional affix

Figure 2.2: Grammaticality cline (Hopper & Traugott 2003: 7)

ical”, and the opposite end a compacted and reduced form, perhaps grammatical’ (Hopper & Traugott 2003: 6).⁷

A classic example of the cline is that of grammaticality (figure 2.2), in which the further to the right an item is placed, the more grammatical it is. Accordingly, the further to the left an item appears, the more lexical it is.⁸

Of course, the placement of a given item in the cline is not always easy to establish. This difficulty is partly due to the fact that the boundaries between the categories represented in the cline are not clear-cut. The non-discrete nature of grammatical categories is a definitive feature of this approach to language change. Moreover, according to Hopper & Traugott (2003: 7), ‘the study of grammaticalization has emerged in part out of the recognition of the general fluidity of so-called categories’ (see also Fischer 2007: 57).⁹

Very much in relation with the concept of cline, we find the terms *grammaticalization scale* and *grammaticalization channel*, which are defined by Lehmann (2002: 22) as follows: ‘**grammaticalization scale** is a theoretical construct along which functionally similar sign types are ordered according to their degree of grammaticality as measured by certain parameters’; ‘**grammaticalization channel** is a frequently recurring route which signs with a given function may take when

⁷Note that the concept of the cline is not compatible with the idea of change as parametric variation, put forward by Lightfoot (see Traugott 2003: 626).

⁸According to Joseph (2003: 475), the term *cline* is completely arbitrary, for there are free words that have a grammatical function, such as pronouns, and there are morphemes that have no grammatical function at all, such as *-al* in *syntactic* and *syntactical*. For him, ‘there is no necessary correlation between an item’s place in the cline and its degree of grammatical involvement.’ See also Janda (2001) for a strong criticism of the concept of cline.

⁹Note that under this approach it follows that the members of a certain category under the process of grammaticalization tend to be affected to different degrees: while the prototypical ones are usually more affected by the changes, the less central ones may remain immune (Company 2003: 4).

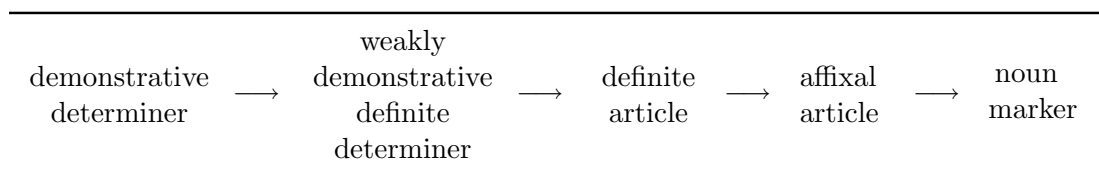


Figure 2.3: Grammaticalization channel of definite markers
(Lehmann, 2002: 49)

they are grammaticalized in language change.’ Note that while the relation of elements in the grammaticalization scale is panchronic, the relation among the elements in a grammaticalization channel is diachronic.¹⁰

In figure 2.3, we present a very common path by which definite markers evolve. The interesting thing is that this pathway is found in unrelated languages. In fact, typology studies have shown that there is an important number of universal highly constrained paths that lead to the development of grammatical constructions. For instance, as Bybee (2002: 149-50) shows, the most common paths for the development of future tense morphemes in the languages of the world are the movement and the volition paths, represented in figure 2.4.

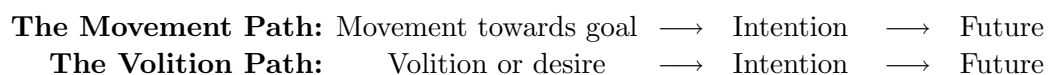


Figure 2.4: The development of the future (Bybee, 2002: 149-50)

Interestingly, not only grammaticalization paths are shared cross-linguistically, but also the lexical meanings that in the first place are susceptible of grammaticalization are to a large extent common across languages. As Heine et al. (1991) have demonstrated, these terms are largely culturally independent and are related with basic aspects of the human relation with nature and space. It is therefore

¹⁰Heine prefers the term ‘grammaticalization chain’ which, according to him, reflects the fact that grammatical change usually shows an overlap in the sense that the source structure does not lead linearly to the target structure, but rather it involves an intermediate stage in which both forms coexist. This proposal is captured in the ‘overlap model’, which can be represented as $A > AB > B$ (Heine 2003: 589-90). I will come back to this in section 2.3.

only natural that one of the most prolific sources for grammaticalization is the human body (Bybee, 2002: 151-52).

Finally, as we have seen in the preceding pages, ever since Kurylowicz's, the most common definition of grammaticalization has been given in terms of lexical items acquiring a more grammatical meaning. However, it is now clear that often it is not lexical items but in fact whole morphosyntactic strings or constructions that are grammaticalized (Bybee 2002: 146).¹¹

2.3 Mechanisms

2.3.1 Analogy and Reanalysis

The standard view in grammaticalization studies is that there are two basic mechanisms of grammaticalization: analogy and reanalysis. Broadly speaking, analogy is a relation of similarity (Anttila 2003: 428); it refers to 'the process whereby patterns undergo limited adjustments that assimilate them to clearly related patterns' (see also Haspelmath 1998: 327). In an analogical process, the surface of the structure changes without modifying the rules of use of the structure; it is a mechanism of rule generalization (Hopper & Traugott 2003: 39, 63-68). By contrast, reanalysis implies the reinterpretation of the value of the form. It is, according to Langacker (1977: 58), 'a change in the structure of an expression or class of expressions that does not involve any immediate or intrinsic modification of its surface manifestation'.

Although both reanalysis and analogy are important, most authors consider reanalysis to be the main mechanism of grammaticalization, and in general, of morphosyntactic change. This is why in this chapter we will focus on it.¹²

¹¹See also Traugott (2003) for examples.

¹²The relevance of reanalysis in morphosyntactic change is expressed as follows by Langacker (1977: 57): 'not all diachronic developments in the domain of syntax involve reanalysis [...] but this is clearly a major mechanism of syntactic evolution which we must understand in depth if we

Following Harris & Campbell (1995: 50), reanalysis can be defined as ‘a mechanism which changes the underlying structure of a syntactic pattern and which does not involve any modification of its surface manifestation’. Reanalysis operates in the internal structure of the construction, by inducing at least one change in the constituency, the hierarchical structure, the category labels, or the grammatical relations of a construction.¹³

Although reanalysis does not have any effect on the superficial structure of constructions, this does not mean changes at this level cannot occur, or even trigger, some cases of reanalysis. However, these changes need to be attributed to mechanisms other than reanalysis itself. Likewise, while reanalysis is primarily a syntactic phenomenon, semantic change is often attested (Harris & Campbell 1995: 61).

The role of ambiguity as a trigger of reanalysis has received a lot of attention. According to Timberlake (1977), ambiguity is a condition *sine qua non* of reanalysis. The problem with Timberlake’s proposal is that ambiguity has been used in the linguistics literature for denoting different phenomena. For instance, a common definition of ambiguity is that a structure is ambiguous when it has more than one possible meaning. Another perspective is that for structural ambiguity to exist it is necessary that each of the possible readings is otherwise available in the language. However, as Harris & Campbell show, there are numerous examples of reanalysis in which it is not clear that the structure in question has more than one reading. Similarly, it is well known that reanalysis can result in a structure that was not previously available in a given language. Taking this into account, these authors leave out the conflictive term *ambiguity* and state that the condition

wish to understand how syntactic change occurs.’ However, the fact that reanalysis is taken to be the most relevant mechanism of morphosyntactic change does not imply that analogy is not important. In fact, as Hopper & Traugott (2003: 64) explain, the products of analogy, as they are overt, are sometimes the only evidence of an ongoing change. For an insightful discussion of the role of analogy in change, see Anttila (2003) and Fischer (2007).

¹³Harris & Campbell’s definition is based on those given by Langacker (1977) and Timberlake (1977).

for reanalysis to occur is that the construction in question is open to two analyses, one of which is applicable to all the tokens, and the other only applicable to a subset of the tokens. Note that, as stated by Harris & Campbell (1995: 72), ‘the new potential analysis may be entirely new to the language or only new to this context or environment.’

An important concept in order to understand how reanalysis proceeds is that of *exploratory expression*. An exploratory expression is an expression whose primary motivations can be as varied as emphasis, reinforcement, clarity, and even errors or afterthoughts. Most of these expressions are never repeated, but there are a few that are somehow reanalysed as obligatory, therefore losing their marked status, and later being grammaticalized. Thus, as Harris & Campbell (1995: 75) state, ‘exploratory expressions are not a mechanism of change, but are sometimes the *basis for reanalysis*’.

An example of this type of expressions is provided by English *shall*. In Old English, the complements of verbs of ordering and wishing were in the subjunctive, as shown in example (1) given by Visser (1963-1973, apud Harris & Campbell, 1995: 73, ex. 30):

- (1) Ic ðe lange bæd þæt ðu þone wæl-gæst
 I.NOM you.ACC long ask.PRET that you.NOM that.ACC body-ghost
 wihte ne grette... [*Beowulf*, 1994b-1995]
 at.all NEG approach.SUB
 ‘I long asked you that you not approach that spirit at all...’

In the beginning, the verb *shal* (‘shall’) was added to the complement in order to strengthen the sense of obligation of the predicate of the subordinate clause. In accordance with the existing rules, in the complement clause *shal* appeared in the subjunctive (*solde/shulde* ‘should’), while its complement was in the stem form, as in (2) (Visser, 1963-1973, apud Harris & Campbell, 1995: 74, ex. 31):

- (2) he bisehte þat heo him solde helpen [*Layamon*,
he.NOM beseech that they.NOM him.DAT should.SUBJ help
6595]

‘He begged that they should help him’

Gradually, *should* became a common way of strengthening the subjunctive mood with verbs of ordering and wishing, and later, due to repetition, it lost its initial force and became a fixed expression in these contexts (3) (Visser, 1963-1973, apud Harris & Campbell, 1995: 74, ex. 33):

- (3) prescribing ... that he **should lie** in bed all day [*Virginia Woolf, Orlando*]

On the other hand, since Timberlake (1977: 141), it has been traditionally accepted that reanalysis is followed by an actualization process. While reanalysis can be defined as ‘the formulation of a novel set of underlying relationships and rules’, actualization is ‘the gradual mapping out of the consequences of reanalysis’. In other words, while reanalysis can be regarded as an abrupt change, its effect, that is, the actualization of the change, is gradual.

As pointed out by Harris & Campbell (1995: 79-80), the idea that reanalysis is distinct and must precede actualization is supported by two observations. First, in some changes it seems that a structure must be reanalysed in its original context before it can be extended to new contexts. For instance, in Tibeto-Burman, **ma* (‘not’) initially occurred in two types of disjunctive yes/no questions, namely the A-not-A structure shown in example (4) from Cantonese, and a sentence-final negative tag (Harris & Campbell 1995: 79, ex. 39).

- (4) nee zek-mu-zek in̩ ah?
 you smoke-not-smoke *in̩ ah*
 ‘Do you smoke?’

In many Tibeto-Burman languages, negative **ma* was reanalysed as a yes/no

question marker. Interestingly, some of these languages made a further change whereby **ma* became also a marker of content questions. The fact that the extension in the use of **ma* only occurred in a subset of the languages shows that the reanalysis of **ma* as a yes/no question marker was prior to its extension as a content question marker, and that these two changes are, at least partially, independent.

Second, there are several cases where reanalyses have not yet been followed by all the sorts of actualization that the grammar of the language in question would lead us to expect (Harris & Campbell 1995: 77-81). A clear example comes from Gã, in which the comitative verb ‘be with’ used in a serial verb construction was reanalysed as coordinating conjunction, as shown in (5) (Lord 1973: 288, apud Harris & Campbell 1995: 79, ex. 40):

- (5) kòfi kè áma tsè dzí ówúlà ágó
 Kofi and Ama father is Mr. Ago
 ‘Mr. Ago is the father of both Kofi and Ama’

Given that *kè* has been reanalysed as ‘and’, we would expect plural agreement when the complex NP is the subject of the sentence.¹⁴ However, as shown in (6), this is not the case. This demonstrates that although reanalysis has taken place, actualization has not yet been completed (Lord 1973: 288, apud Harris & Campbell, 1995:80, ex. 40).

- (6) mì kè lè tá
 I and him sit.SG
 ‘He and I sit’

As stated by Harris & Campbell (1995: 82), the boundaries of actualization are not entirely clear. With this in mind, these authors have proposed a three stage scheme in order to understand the complete process by which reanalysis is

¹⁴Gã has verbal agreement with the subject.

completed:

Stage A: Input: The input structure has all the superficial characteristics of the input analysis.

Stage B: Actualization: The structure is subject to multiple analyses; it gradually acquires the characteristics of an innovative analysis, distinct from that of stage A.

Stage C: Completion: The innovative structure has all the superficial characteristics of the innovative analysis.

The authors explain that reanalysis is accomplished between the first and the second stages. Note that not all cases of reanalysis reach step three, as they may never acquire all the formal characteristics of the innovative analysis.

The relation between grammaticalization and reanalysis is a frequently discussed topic. For instance, for some researchers the linguistic phenomenon labelled as grammaticalization can be reduced to reanalysis (see the papers collected in Campbell 2001a). According to them, grammaticalization has no status of its own, but is rather an epiphenomenon in that ‘it merely involves other kinds of changes and mechanisms of change which are well understood and are not limited to cases involving grammaticalization: sound change, semantic change, and reanalysis’ (Campbell 2001b: 117).

At the other extreme, we find Haspelmath, who in his article ‘Does grammaticalization need reanalysis?’ argues that grammaticalization and reanalysis are disjoint classes of linguistic phenomena. According to him (1998: 315), ‘the large majority of syntactic changes are instances of “pure” grammaticalization and should be explained within the framework of a theory of grammaticalization, without reference to reanalysis. A minority of syntactic changes are due to reanalysis, and they must be explained in different terms.’

Haspelmath further claims that there are at least five major differences between grammaticalization and reanalysis, namely (1998: 325-26):

- 1) In reanalysis there is no need for movement from more lexical to more grammatical.
- 2) During reanalysis, items do not contract new grammatical relationships, but rather their hierarchical relations change in abrupt fashion. Thus, unlike grammaticalization, reanalysis is abrupt and not gradual.
- 3) Reanalysis is potentially reversible, whereas grammaticalization is irreversible.
- 4) Reanalysis presupposes structural ambiguity while grammaticalization can emerge without any kind of ambiguity.
- 5) Reanalysis needs to be explained as a result of language acquisition, while grammaticalization is better regarded as a process resulting from language use.

As Campbell (2001b) has rightly pointed out, a weakness of Haspelmath's proposal is that his definition of reanalysis does not coincide with the most commonly accepted one, such as that proposed by Harris & Campbell (1995), which we previously referred to. For instance, he does not accept the idea that reanalysis is followed by actualization. According to him, the fact that grammaticalization has often been explained in terms of reanalysis relies on a bipartite conception of reanalysis, as composed by an abrupt phase followed by a gradual process during which the consequences of reanalysis are mapped upon language. Nonetheless, he recognizes that if the reanalysis-actualization model were correct, the hypothesis that grammaticalization and reanalysis are two disjoint phenomena, on the basis of the contrast between gradual and abrupt change, would be invalid.

As we have seen, the relation between reanalysis and grammaticalization is the subject of an interesting debate. Here, we have succinctly commented on two

opposing positions: one according to which grammaticalization has no status of its own and is better explained in terms of reanalysis, and the other which defends the view that they are different types of change and that most instances of grammaticalization do not involve reanalysis. However, the most extended view on this issue, and the one with which I agree, is presented by Hopper & Traugott (2003: 58-59). According to them, reanalysis is the most important mechanism of grammaticalization and that most cases of it involve at least one reanalysis. By contrast, there are numerous examples of reanalysis that do not have anything to do with grammaticalization, such changes in word order, which have morphosyntactic effects but do not conform to the principle of unidirectionality.¹⁵

2.3.2 Metaphor and Metonymy

When speaking about the mechanisms of change involved in grammaticalization, reanalysis and analogy are usually the first to come to mind. However, it is now commonly accepted that there is another set of semantically motivated mechanisms that are fundamental to the understanding of grammaticalization. These are metaphor and metonymy, which, as stated by Anttila (2003: 431), are the reflection of ‘the two central factors in any relevant conception of cognition’, that is, similarity and contiguity, respectively’.

Metaphor has long been recognized as one of the major causes of meaning change. The definitions of metaphor are diverse, but they generally coincide in that it involves ‘understanding and experiencing one thing in terms of another, and directionality of transfer from a basic, usually concrete meaning to one more abstract’ (Hopper & Traugott 2003: 84). Metaphorical processes involve mapping

¹⁵This position is compatible with the one expressed in Harris & Campbell (1995: 92): ‘In our approach, the process of grammaticalization involves reanalysis in the sense defined above. Grammaticalization is one type of macrochange, consisting minimally of one process of reanalysis, but frequently involving more than one reanalysis.’ Note that the later position adopted by Campbell (2001b) is different. As for word order, it is important to say that for some researchers (cf. Meillet 1958 [1912], Bybee 2002) the fixation of word order is indeed an example of grammaticalization.

from one conceptual domain to another. This mapping is not random, but motivated by analogy and iconicity, which explains the existence of identical metaphors cross-linguistically.

Metaphorical processes have usually been discussed in terms of the lexicon. However, recently it has been recognized that they also play an important role in other types of change, specifically in grammaticalization. A common example is the development of body parts as locatives and the extension of spatial terms to temporal constructions, such as the preposition *back*, and the construction *being behind for something*, respectively.

Conversely, metonymy is a process whereby one conceptual entity provides access to another entity in the same domain. The main difference between metaphor and metonymy is that metaphor implies a semantic transference of meaning based on perceptual similarity, while metonymy is a semantic transfer through contiguity.

As explained by Hopper & Traugott (2003: 90), metonymy is behind the semanticization of conversational inferences. One example is the development of *be going to*: while in the motion verb the direction of motion must be anchored both in the subject and the speaker's view point, in the auxiliary it can be anchored in the 'speaker's subjective viewpoint alone', as in example (7) from Langacker (1990: 23, apud Hopper & Traugott, 2003: 92).

(7) An earthquake is going to destroy that town.

For Hopper & Traugott (2003: 86-87), both metaphor and metonymy can be regarded as strategies for solving a communication failure. However, they do it in different manners: on one hand, metaphor tends to specify something more complex through an element absent from the immediate context; on the other hand, metonymy operates by specifying the meaning of an element already present in the context. While metaphor usually solves problems related to representation,

metonymy is correlated with the expression of the speaker's attitudes. That is why metonymy and not metaphor is the cognitive process that triggers reanalysis.

Finally, it is important to say that Hopper & Traugott consider analogy and reanalysis to be mechanisms of change, while metaphor and metonymy are regarded as causes or motivations. As Olga Fischer explains (2007: 122), this view is a consequence of the fact that metaphor and metonymy operate at the level of meaning, and in their approach semantic change precedes syntactic change. However, I agree with Fischer that this distinction obscures the similarities among these four processes, which should instead be recognized as mechanisms that simply operate at different levels of abstraction.

2.3.3 Other Mechanisms

We have seen that grammaticalization has an important number of effects on the constructions involved, which are due to the different mechanisms of change. According to Heine (2003: 579), grammaticalization involves four different processes, which do not coincide with those proposed by Hopper & Traugott. These are desemanticization, extension, decategorialization, and erosion.¹⁶

Desemanticization or bleaching is semantic reduction, loss in meaning content, both in the case of a lexical item being used with a grammatical meaning, or of a grammatical form with more than one function losing one of them; **extension** is the use of an item or construction in the process of being grammaticalized in contexts in which it did not normally appear before; **decategorialization** is the loss of the morphosyntactic properties of the original form, such as the loss of independent word status, cliticization, and affixation; finally, **erosion** or phonetic reduction refers to the loss in phonetic substance, motivated by an increase in

¹⁶Taking these mechanisms into account, one may get the impression that grammaticalization is a process of loss. Although this is true, it is also important to consider that it also implies a gain, in the sense that the item or construction that undergoes grammaticalization acquires the features characteristic of the new construction.

frequency of use.¹⁷

As we can see, each of these mechanisms is related to a different level of language, that is, semantics, pragmatics, morphosyntax, and phonetics, respectively. Again, the fact that none of these changes is confined to grammaticalization is used as an argument for the ‘epiphenomenon’ status of grammaticalization (see Campbell 2001b). The response of Heine to his critics is that ‘to the extent that jointly they are responsible for grammaticalization taking place, they can be said to constitute different components of one and the same general process’ (Heine 2003: 579). Heine (1993: 48-53) proposes the following three-stage model known as the ‘overlap model’ in order to describe the evolution that follows the mechanisms previously described:

- i. There is a linguistic expression A that is recruited for grammaticalization.
- ii. The expression acquires a second use pattern, B, with the effect that there is ambiguity between A and B.
- iii. Finally, A is lost, that is, there is now only B.

Finally, it is important to say that stage iii is not reached in all cases. However, when it does happen, the innovative form B is conventionalized. In other words, ‘it turns into a new grammatical category’ (Heine 2003: 579).¹⁸

2.4 Parameters

As we have seen, grammaticalization can be defined as a process whereby an item or a construction becomes more grammatical. But, what does ‘more grammatical’

¹⁷For a detailed explanation of extension, see Harris & Campbell (1995). Note that while Harris & Campbell emphasize the syntactic manifestation of this mechanism, Heine is concerned with the pragmatic aspect, that is, he claims that it refers to the use of a form in a context where it could not be used before.

¹⁸Note the great similarity between this model and Harris & Campbell’s description of reanalysis. Again, this raises the question of the extent to which grammaticalization differs from reanalysis.

Table 2.1: Lehmann's parameters (2002: 110).

Axis Parameter	Paradigmatic	Syntagmatic
Weight	Integrity	Structural scope
Cohesion	Paradigmaticity	Bondedness
Variability	Paradigmatic variability	Syntagmatic variability

mean? According to Lehmann (2002), the relationship between the speaker and the sign can be expressed in terms of autonomy: the more freedom with which a sign is used, the more autonomous it is, and therefore the less grammaticalized. Therefore, in order to determine to what extent a sign is grammaticalized we need to measure its degree of autonomy, which is itself dependent on three factors: weight, cohesion, and variability. In the process of grammaticalization, cohesion increases, while weight and variability decrease.¹⁹

Lehmann further proposes two sets of parameters which are the result of relating these three criteria of grammaticalization to the two Saussurian axes, the paradigmatic and the syntagmatic one (table 2.1).

Paradigmatically, weight or integrity refers to the phonological substance and semantic size of a sign. A consequence of grammaticalization is the decrease of weight: a decrease in the phonological integrity of a sign is called attrition or erosion, and a decrease in the semantic integrity of a sign is desemanticization or bleaching. Paradigmaticity is the degree of integration of a sign into a given paradigm, and its dependence on it. The clearest sign of paradigmaticity is the sheer size of the paradigm. Finally, paradigmatic variability has to do with the freedom with which a sign can be chosen, which is of course constrained by the context. As Lehmann (2002: 110-28) points out, there are two possibilities for choosing a sign: either we choose another element from the same paradigm, or

¹⁹Lehmann defines these factors as follows: weight is the property that differentiates the sign from the members of its class and 'endows it with prominence in the syntagm'; cohesion refers to the extent to which a sign contracts relations with other signs; variability is 'a momentary mobility or shiftability with respect to other signs' (Lehmann 2002: 109).

we do not choose any member, leaving the whole category unspecified. When a category cannot be left unspecified any more, we talk about obligatoriness, which is the inverse of paradigmatic variability. Cases of a category becoming obligatory are very common, the generalization of both the definite and indefinite articles being classic examples.

From the syntagmatic perspective, structural scope refers to the structural size of the construction to which the grammaticalized item belongs: the more grammaticalized a sign is, the less structural scope it has. On the other hand, the process whereby the scope is reduced is called *condensation*. Bondedness is the degree to which a sign relates to or is dependent on the other signs with which it has a syntagmatic relation, and varies from juxtaposition to merger, with respect to the degree of grammaticalization: an increase in cohesion is called coalescence. Lastly, syntagmatic variability refers to the degree of freedom with which a sign can be moved with respect to the constituents in a given construction. The process responsible for the loss of variability in linear ordering of the clause is fixation (Lehmann 2002: 128-46).

Table 2.2 is intended to show how these parameters correlate and the results that the corresponding processes have, depending on the degree of grammaticalization of the sign in question.

We previously explained that one of the main characteristics of functional approaches to linguistic change is the relevance of diachrony in the explanation of synchronic phenomena. In this sense, Hopper (1991) has proposed that in the course of grammaticalization some lexical meanings are lost while others are promoted, these being relatively abstract meanings that are salient in the context where grammaticalization first took place. Interestingly, traces of such meanings are usually retained by the resulting grammatical form. This phenomenon, called *persistence*, is fundamental to grammaticalization as it is only in the light of the earlier meanings that later constraints on the structure can be explained. As

Table 2.2: Degree of grammaticalization (Lehmann, 2002: 146)

Parameter	Weak	Process	Strong
integrity	bundle of semantic features; possibly polysyllabic	attrition	few semantic features; oligo- or monosegmental
paradigmaticity	item participates loosely in semantic field	paradigmaticization	small, tightly integrated paradigm
paradigmatic variability	free choice of items according to communicative intentions	obligatorification	choice systematically constrained, use largely obligatory
structural scope	item relates to constituent of arbitrary complexity	condensation	item modifies word or stem
bondedness	item is independently juxtaposed	coalescence	item is affix or even phonological feature of carrier
syntagmatic variability	item can be shifted around freely	fixation	item occupies fixed slot

Bybee & Thompson (2007 [1997]: 275) point out, while in most cases formal distinctions imply functional differences, sometimes contrasts and distributions are better approached in terms of persistence, as they might reflect a ‘lexically arbitrary residue of formerly productive patterns’.²⁰

On the other hand, Hopper & Traugott (2003: 115-24) identify three kinds of processes that contribute to the generalization and decategorization of grammaticalized forms. These are: *specialization*, *divergence*, and *renewal*.²¹

First, specialization refers to the process whereby the number of formal choices available is reduced as certain of them are grammaticalized. For instance, it is well known that in Old French a variety of nouns, such as *gout*, *point*, *mie*, and *gote* were employed as reinforcements of *ne* to imply a small quantity. All of these forms are documented in the sixteenth century, but by the beginning of the modern

²⁰As Hopper & Traugott (2003: 98) argue, the notion of persistence forces us to reconsider the notion of bleaching as a fundamental parameter of grammaticalization. Furthermore, bleaching might be confined exclusively to the last stages of grammaticalization.

²¹Note that these processes are not mutually exclusive. Specialization and divergence were first discussed in Hopper (1991).

period *pas* and *point* had become the predominant ones. In present-day French, although it is still possible to find both forms, *point* is only used emphatically, *pas*, by means of specialization, has fully grammaticalized as a general negator.²²

Second, in the course of grammaticalization, the original lexical form might remain unaffected and evolve as an ordinary lexical item would. This procedure, called divergence, is explained by the fact that grammaticalization begins in very specific contexts, where the form in question begins to develop a new meaning. However, the same form used in all other contexts remains autonomous and is therefore subject to other changes. Note that under an approach where change is regarded as A uniformly $> B$, divergence has no place. Rather, it is necessary to understand change in terms of variation and substitute the above model for $A > A/B > B$. Two clarifications must be made: first, that it is possible for A to disappear; second, that in the case where divergence occurs, the coexistence of A and B can last for a very long period, and hence the model would more accurately be $A > A/B (> B)$.

Finally, renewal is the process by which new forms are recruited to express an existing meaning in order to gain expressiveness, often through the use of periphrases. Interestingly, innovative forms do not always occupy the same constituent slot that the previous form did. For instance, the spoken English negator *no way* behaves very differently from its competitors, such as *n't* (*<not*).²³

Before concluding this section, let us turn to an important notion in grammaticalization, which is very much in relation with persistence and divergence. As we previously explained, when new forms arise from grammaticalization, the source form may remain in the language in such a way that both the conservative and the innovative form coexist for centuries. The effect is what Hopper (1991: 22) has called *layering*, that is, the existence of formal diversity in a single functional

²²This is proved by the fact that in some contexts it can appear in isolation while still conveying the negative force it once merely reinforced: *pas moi*, *pourquoi pas?*, etc.

²³Intensifiers and negative constructions are especially prone to renewal.

domain; it is, according to Hopper & Traugott (2003: 125), ‘the synchronic result of successive grammaticalization of forms which contribute to the same domain.’

2.5 Routinization and Frequency

The role of frequency in grammaticalization has attracted much attention in recent years. Considering that grammaticalization studies are mainly carried out under the postulates of functionalism, according to which grammar is shaped by use, it is only natural that one of the most important mechanisms of this language-shaping, that is, repetition, constitutes a major interest in the field (see Bybee & Thompson 2007 [1997]: 269).

Bybee (2003: 602) points out that grammatical morphemes show a higher text frequency than lexical morphemes, as a consequence of the increase in the number of contexts in which they appear as a result of grammaticalization. For her, increasing frequency is not only a result of grammaticalization, but might in fact also be a mechanism, in that it instigates the changes involved.

There are two main methods to account for frequency: token frequency and type frequency. Token frequency refers to the occurrences of a particular item in a text, for instance, in the *Mio Cid*, *un* occurs 51 times, *algún* 3 times, and *ningún* 5 times, and therefore *un* has the highest token frequency of them all. On the other hand, type frequency refers to the number of different lexical items that a pattern or construction can be applied to. For example, in English, the most frequently used pattern to express past tense is the suffix *-ed*, and therefore its type frequency is very high. As Bybee (2003: 605) explains, type frequency can also be measured in the case of grammaticalized constructions, by counting the number of different lexical items with which the construction undergoing change is used. One of the characteristics of grammaticalization is the increase in the number of the contexts where the construction in question can be used. Consequently, as

grammaticalization advances, so does type frequency (see also Bybee & Thompson 2007 [1997]).

The importance of repetition in grammaticalization has been emphasized by Haiman in his work ‘Ritualization and the development of language’ (1994). Haiman argues that grammaticalization bears a resemblance to ritualization, and he further describes four aspects of ritualization, all of them involving an increase of frequency, which are also found in linguistic change. These are: *habituation*, whereby cultural practices and objects are emptied of their meaning, *automation*, which leads to reanalysis of former individual units as a single chunk, *reduction* of form, and finally, *emancipation*, which occurs when the original instrumental function of a practice acquires a symbolic function inferred from the context in which it occurs.

By applying Haiman’s proposal, Bybee (2003: 604-21) explains the decisive role that repetition has in the changes involved in grammaticalization. First, desemanticization or bleaching, which ultimately leads to the generalization of the grammaticalized form, is a consequence of habituation. Second, as recent studies suggest, frequently used items more readily undergo phonological change than those with low frequency; in most cases, these phonological changes are reductive. Third, frequency is also related to an increase in autonomy. Grammaticalized constructions with high frequency tend to have a more opaque meaning compared to the source from which they originated. The fact that they often appear in the input ensures them a strong representation and thus a high degree of autonomy, as they do not need to be understood in term of their lexical source. Fourth, the autonomy of grammaticalized constructions contributes to the acquisition of new pragmatic functions which develop in the contexts where the construction is frequently used. Finally, high token frequency has a conservative effect which consists in an increase of lexical strength that allows a construction to resist analogical levelling. As explained by Bybee & Thompson (2007 [1997]), this effect,

called *entrenchment*, is due to the fact that a high frequency token is more likely to be strong in memory and, consequently, it is less likely to be replaced by a new form created with a regular pattern.

A typical example is the maintenance of frequently used irregular verb patterns, such as *kept*, but entrenchment can also be found in syntax. According to Givón (1979), the conservative effect can be responsible for the fact that pronouns often show a more conservative behaviour than full NPs, with which they are both diachronically (grammaticalization of NP may originate pronouns) and synchronically related (they often occupy the same position). One sign of the conservative effect of pronouns in English is that, in contrast with NPs, they keep the opposition between nominative and dative/accusative. Givón also claims that pronouns sometimes reflect an earlier word order. According to him, an example of this is the case of Spanish, where accusative clitics are still preverbal, reflecting an older word order pattern, namely OV. However, it must be pointed out that this is not a very convincing example, since Old Spanish clitics were frequently post-verbal, specially in verb-first constructions where they were always post-verbal (Penny, p.c.).²⁴

Summarizing, frequency has major consequences in most instances of grammaticalization. It not only allows a structure to enter into a grammaticalization chain, but once the process has started, it can act in two fashions. Sometimes, it triggers the semantic and phonological reduction of the construction. On other occasions, it might act as a preservative force, as it ensures the conservation of a series of features that otherwise might have disappeared. Finally, in order to account for the decisive role of repetition, Bybee (2003: 603) proposes a new definition of grammaticalization as a ‘process by which a frequently used sequence of words or morphemes becomes automated as a single processing unit’.

²⁴The bibliography on the placement of clitics in Old Spanish is abundant. Among many others, see Rivero (1993), Fontana (1993), Castillo Lluch (1996), Matute Martínez (2004), and Bouzouita (2008).

2.6 Unidirectionality

Throughout this chapter we have discussed the notion of the cline and its implication of unidirectionality. The principle of unidirectionality refers to the claim that grammatical change follows a cline from a more lexical or concrete meaning towards a state of less autonomy, more abstractness, and more grammatical function, and that changes in the other direction are not possible.²⁵

Unidirectionality has been recognized as one of the most important principles of grammaticalization for a long time: not only is it present in Meillet's first definition, but even in the nineteenth century Bopp and Humbolt argued that inflexions are the result of changes involving the fusion of formerly independent lexical items (see Haspelmath 1999).

Nonetheless, although the basic intuition of unidirectionality was already present in these early works, it was not until the 1970s, with the rebirth of grammaticalization theory, that the hypothesis of unidirectionality acquired the importance that it currently has. As stated by Haspelmath, the first explicit reference to unidirectionality is found in Givón's (1975 apud Haspelmath 1999: 1047) discussion about the change from serial verbs to prepositions:

One may offhand argue that an opposite process to the one outlined above, i.e., a process of prepositions becoming semantically enriched until they turn into verbs, is at least in theory possible There are a number of reasons why such a process should be extremely rare.

Givón pointed out that the large majority of grammatical changes follow a cline from a more lexical or concrete meaning towards a state of less autonomy, more abstractness, and more grammatical function. The same idea was expressed

²⁵There seems to be a common idea that only functionalist oriented linguists argue that most instances of grammatical change are unidirectional. In this context, it is interesting to consider the following quote from Roberts (2007: 347): 'Although a few isolated cases of degrammaticalization have been observed [...], grammaticalization appears to be a pervasive phenomenon, and strongly tends to follow certain 'pathways'.' As we will see at the end of this section, Roberts's view is very similar to the position taken by Hopper & Traugott (2003)

by Langacker (1977: 104), and later by Lehmann in *Thoughts on Grammaticalization* (2002), in which he argues emphatically for the non-existence of degrammaticalization, where ‘degrammaticalization’ refers to a grammatical change from more grammatical to less grammatical, that is, in the opposite direction to the grammaticalization cline.²⁶

Since then, unidirectionality has been defended by many scholars not only as a defining property of grammaticalization, but as principle of grammatical change. However, new research has shown that there are in fact a number of cases where grammatical change seems to proceed inversely to what is predicted by it.²⁷

The question then is how to address this fact: either we argue that those examples are wrong, or we accept them as true counterexamples, in which case unidirectionality as a principle is downgraded to a strong tendency of grammatical change.²⁸

One of the most vehement defences of unidirectionality is found in Haspelmath’s paper (1999) *Why is Grammaticalization Irreversible?*. Here, the author turns to Keller’s (1994) theory of linguistic change as an *invisible hand process*, according to which linguistic change is the result of countless similar individual actions of speakers that, although it is not their intention, result in a linguistic

²⁶In his book, Lehmann comments on some examples that have been proposed as cases of degrammaticalization. For instance, he refers to the case of Latin case inflection being substituted by prepositional constructions in the Romance languages. For Lehmann (2002: 18) this does not threaten unidirectionality, for, according to him, ‘[f]or degrammaticalization to obtain, analytical forms would have to be historical continuants of synthetic forms; but this actually never happens.’

²⁷Some examples cited by Campbell (2001b) as instances of degrammaticalization are:

- 1) Middle Swedish *-s* from genitive inflection to phrasal clitic in Modern Swedish
- 2) Estonian question marker: *-s* > *es* question marker, from suffix to independent word
- 3) English prepositions such as *down* and *off* to nouns (*a down*, in American football), adjectives (as *in down time*, *down side*) and verbs (as *they downed one*, in hunting)

For more cases of degrammaticalization, see Janda (2001).

²⁸Given that grammaticalization is defined as a movement from the more lexical towards the more grammatical end of the cline, it is, by definition, unidirectional. What is interesting then is whether unidirectionality is indeed a principle of all grammatical change or, in other words, if ‘degrammaticalization’ occurs.

change. Keller (1994: 95-107) further proposes that language is based on a series of maxims that determine the way speakers use language. These maxims are condensed and named by Haspelmath (1999: 1055) as follows:²⁹

1. **Hypermaxim:** talk in such a way that you are socially successful, at the lowest possible cost
2. **Clarity:** talk in such a way that you are understood
3. **Economy:** talk in such a way that you do not expend superfluous energy
4. **Conformity:** talk like the others talk
5. **Extravagance:** talk in such a way that you are noticed

The maxims of economy, clarity, and conformity are by no means new. In fact they have long been recognized as principles of communication. What is interesting about Keller's proposal is the idea that through language, humans not only intend to be understood with as little effort as possible, but also seek to be socially successful. Haspelmath (1999: 1057) argues that without the pursuit of social success through language, the maxim of extravagance would not have any place, and therefore expressions such as *by means of a hammer* instead of *with a hammer*, which tend to be obscure and violate the maxim of conformity, could not be explained. As Keller (1994: 92) explains, these maxims operate within a certain set of conditions ('ecological conditions'), which in a way influence the choices made by the speaker. In Haspelmath's proposal (1999: 1054-55) these maxims are:

- a. **Grammar as unconscious processing:** Linguistic units are ordered along a continuum from maximally free/ conscious/ deliberate to maximally rule-

²⁹It is important to note that Keller's theory is developed independently from grammaticalization.

bound /unconscious/ automated. Items at the left end are fully lexical elements, and items at the right end are fully functional or grammatical.

- b. Basic discourse meanings:** Certain meanings of linguistic units are universally much more basic to speaking than others, i.e. they need to be conveyed much more frequently than others.
- c. Frequency and routinization:** Frequent occurrence of a cognitive event leads to a greater ease of processing (routinization, automation); i.e. less attention is necessary to execute the same task.

According to Haspelmath, grammaticalization can arise as a result of the maxim of extravagance. The process is as follows (Haspelmath 1999: 1057-58):

- a) A speaker motivated by the extravagance maxim expresses a grammatical meaning through a lexical construction.
- b) He is imitated by other speakers who wish to be extravagant as well
- c) As the construction is adopted by the members of a community, it acquires the features of the grammatical tool it stood for at the beginning of the process.
- d) Later, the construction becomes the normal way of expressing that particular functional meaning.
- e) Therefore, it is used by all the members of the community, who are then acting in accordance with the maxim of conformity.

Haspelmath (1999: 1059-60) attributes unidirectionality to the fact that, in order for the opposite process to occur, it would require a speaker to use a grammatical tool where he would normally use a lexical construction. This does not happen for two reasons:

First, it would contradict the maxim of clarity, as lexical items tend to be more explicit than functional tools, without any other maxim to justify this violation.

While extravagance can impose itself over conformity and, in doing so, allows the replacement of a grammatical tool by a lexical construction, it is not the case that conformity leads to the reverse process (the replacement of a lexical construction by a functional one). According to Haspelmath, this asymmetry between the possible effects of the maxims of extravagance and conformity lies at the root of unidirectionality.

Second, one of the main differences between lexical and grammatical meaning is the degree of accessibility the speakers have to them: while speakers can define a lexical meaning in a relatively easy way, they are generally unable to explain a grammatical meaning. Thus, even if a speaker wanted to replace a lexical item by a functional element, he probably would not be able to do so successfully.³⁰

Haspelmath (1999: 1060) further argues that if by ‘some miracle’ these two obstacles were overcome, the further development and generalization of the grammatical element supplanting a lexical one would be possible. However, ‘since the reverse of step (a) [the use of a grammatical item in the place of a lexical one] is impossible, steps (b)-(e) [imitation by other speakers and further generalization] have no opportunity of ever occurring’.

Although Haspelmath’s explanation of unidirectionality is innovative and has interesting points, there are some issues that need to be further investigated. For instance, he oscillates between categorically denying the existence of any examples against unidirectionality (1999: 1060), and accepting the existence of counterexamples, indicating that they are ‘extremely restricted’ (1999: 1046). Moreover, as Campbell (2001b) points out, the two reasons that Haspelmath brings forward as explanations of unidirectionality are polemic: first, the maxims of conformity and extravagance do not seem to be opposed, and therefore no asymmetry can be derived from them, since for an innovation made by one speaker to become generalized other speakers need to follow him in his extravagance by acting under

³⁰This idea is also found in Bybee (2002: 155).

the maxim of conformity; second, there is no absolute consensus about the fact that speakers cannot manipulate grammatical items. Actually, there are examples of extension after reanalysis involving grammatical categories that could not have happened if Haspelmath's claims were true (see Harris & Campbell 1995: 97-119).

This brings us back to our initial question, namely, how to account for degrammaticalization. If unidirectionality is a defining property of grammatical change, it follows that counterexamples simply do not exist. This rather radical position seems to be the one assumed by Haspelmath (1999) and Lehmann (2002). If, on the other hand, we consider that unidirectionality is a testable hypothesis, then the consequence of finding counterexamples is that instead of being an absolute universal, unidirectionality is regarded as a very strong tendency that is characteristic of most instances of grammatical change. This second position, which seems to me to be the right one, is defended by Hopper & Traugott (2003: 132), as we can see in the following quote:

Robust though the evidence of unidirectionality is, nevertheless it cannot be regarded as an absolute principle. Some counterexamples do exist. Their existence, and their relative infrequency, in fact help to define our notion of what prototypical grammaticalization is.³¹

2.7 Summary

In the previous pages, I have reviewed the main characteristics of grammaticalization. On the basis of the work of some of the most renowned researchers in the field, I have made an attempt to explain some of the virtues and weaknesses of this approach to language change.

In section 2.1, I have discussed the antecedents of grammaticalization studies, from their origins in the work of the Neogrammarians, to the work of Meillet,

³¹Not all researchers believe that the examples of degrammaticalization are infrequent. For instance, Janda (2001) suggests that probably between 25 and 33% of all cases of grammatical change go against unidirectionality.

who introduced the term, and the later research carried out by authors such as Kurylowicz and Givón.

In section 2.2, I have commented on some of the differences between functionalist and generativist approaches to language change, and offered a definition of the main concepts used in grammaticalization studies, such as *cline*, *grammaticalization channel* and *scale*.

Section 2.3 is devoted to the explanation of the main mechanisms involved in grammaticalization, namely, analogy and reanalysis, on the one hand, and metaphor and metonymy, on the other. Here, I have also presented an overview of the debate on the relation between grammaticalization and reanalysis, and concluded with a description of desemanticization, extension, decategorialization, and erosion, as defined by Heine (2003).

Then, in section 2.4 I have explained the three parameters proposed by Lehmann (2002) for measuring the degree of grammaticalization of a given construction. These are weight, cohesion and variability. Section 2.5 is concerned with the preponderant role of frequency in linguistic change.

Finally, section 2.6 focuses on the hypothesis of the unidirectionality of linguistic change (from less grammatical to more grammatical), and reviewed some arguments both in favour and against its universal validity.

The study of grammaticalization has been fundamental to a better understanding of linguistic change. Of course, there is still a large amount of research that needs to be done, especially with respect to controversial issues such as its relation to reanalysis and directionality.

Some of the most serious criticisms of grammaticalization derive from the fact that its scope is more limited than some researchers have claimed. Frequent though it is from a cross-linguistic perspective, grammaticalization is only one type of linguistic change, and there are many instances of change that do not have anything to do with it (see Joseph 2003: 475 and Traugott 2003: 644).

Nevertheless, in the specific case of the emergence of the indefinite article, grammaticalization provides an accurate model to describe and explain the cluster of changes undergone by $\bar{U}NUS$ from Latin to Spanish.

Chapter 3

(In)definiteness and Specificity

Definiteness and indefiniteness are properties of NPs. Broadly speaking, a definite NP refers to an object that is assumed to be known by the hearer, while an indefinite NP introduces a new referent into the discourse. Although many languages do not mark this contrast explicitly, in many cases the definite/indefinite distinction is expressed by means of articles. In English, for instance, definites are characterized by the presence of *the*, while indefinites are typically marked with *a* and *sm*.¹

However, there is much more to say about this subject. In fact, the contrast in the meaning of the definite and indefinite descriptions has been widely discussed in the philosophical tradition and, with the growing interest in formal semantics, it has become one of the most explored issues in linguistics.

This chapter is divided into three parts. In the first, I shall give an overview of some of the most influential works on the meaning of definiteness and indefi-

¹*Sm* is the standard way of representing the unstressed, weak variant, in Milsark's (1977) terms, of *some* that functions as a plural counterpart to *a*.

nitens, such as those of Russell (1905), Strawson (1950), Christophersen (1939), Hawkins (1978), and Heim (1988). In the second part, I offer a succinct panorama of definite and indefinite markers in natural languages, based on Dryer's typological studies, as presented in *The World Atlas of Language Structures* (2005a & b). The third part of this chapter concerns the notion of specificity: in section 3.3, I will first give an overview of the various definitions of the term, and later I will explain the role of specificity in the grammaticalization of indefinite markers.

3.1 Definiteness

3.1.1 Uniqueness

In his seminal paper, 'On Denoting', Bertrand Russell distinguishes three kinds of denoting phrases: those which 'may be denoting, and yet not denote anything', like *the present King of France*; those which denote one definite object, such as *the present King of England*; and those which denote ambiguously, such as *a man* (Russell 1905: 479).

According to Russell, both definite and indefinite NPs are of a quantificational nature and therefore they can be interpreted by means of symbolic logic. For him, the main characteristic of NPs containing the definite article is that their referent is unique. In other words, when using a definite description, there must be one and only one referent satisfying the predicate in question.

The difference between indefinite and definite description is that while the former just asserts the existence of the referent, the second asserts, in addition to its existence, that the referent is unique (see Abbott, 2004 & 2006). So, for instance, an NP such as *the present king of England* denotes a certain individual, while an NP such as *a man* does not denote a particular man, and therefore its meaning is comparable to that of 'any man' (Heim 1988: 5).

One of the advantages of Russell's uniqueness theory is that it accurately explains the contrastive use of the definite article in examples such (1):

- (1) Did you meet **an owner of the bar** or **the owner of the bar**? (adapted from Abbott 2006: ex.3).

Another argument in favour of Russell's account are examples such as (2), where the first and second instances of the indefinite NP are interpreted as having two different referents.

- (2) Sam admires **a Spanish poet** and Joseph admires **a Spanish poet**.

Finally, uniqueness explains the contrast in truth-conditions between sentences (3a) and (3b): only the second implies that Borges did not write any novel, which is predicted by the existential nature of indefinites (Heim 1988: 7).

- (3) a. Borges didn't write **La invención de Morel**
 b. Borges didn't write **a novel**.

An important criticism of Russell's account of definite descriptions as quantified expressions is the one presented in Strawson's paper 'On Referring' (1950). Here, the author discusses examples such as *the king of France*, in which there is no referent that correspond to the denotation of the definite NP.²

As we have seen, in Russell's uniqueness account, a sentence such as *the king of France is bald* states, in virtue of its definite subject, that there is one and only one king of France, and that all entities which are king of France are bald. However, as one of its entailments, namely that there is actually an individual such that he is king of France, is false, then the whole sentence is regarded as 'plainly false'.³

²Those which, in Russell's words, 'may be denoting, and yet not denote anything'.

³See Chapman (2000: 59 ff.) for an accessible explanation of Russell's and Strawson's theories. See also Caton (1959).

In contrast, for Strawson this sentence would be neither true nor false. In fact, the question about its veracity would not even arise because there is no such individual as the king of France (Strawson 1950: 330). More importantly, according to Strawson, the proposition that there exists a unique individual such that he is the king of France is not entailed by the sentence in question, but rather presupposed by it.

At the end of his paper, Strawson (1950: 342) briefly discusses the cases in which indefinites are used not solely to state existence but where they in fact refer to a particular or unique individual whose identity is deliberately not stated by the speaker. When discussing the possible uses of the indefinite article, he argues that it can be employed

when, although a definite reference *could* be made, we wish to keep dark the identity of the individual to whom, or to which, we are referring. This is the *arch* use of such a phrase as ‘a certain person’ or ‘some one’; where it could be expanded, not into ‘some one, but you wouldn’t (or I don’t) know who’ but into ‘some one, but I’m not telling you who’.

As we will see, Strawson’s intuition about this special use of indefinites will later be revived as a fundamental element in the prolific research on the distinction between specific and non-specific indefinites.

3.1.2 Familiarity

Familiarity is, together with uniqueness, the most influential theory about definiteness. The term ‘familiarity’ was introduced by Paul Christophersen, who in his book *The Articles: A Study of their Theory and Use in English* (1939) proposed that the prerequisite for the appropriate use of the definite article was that both the speaker and the hearer are able to identify the referent, based on previous acquired knowledge:

Now the speaker must always be supposed to know which individual he is thinking of; the interesting thing is that the *the*-form supposes that the hearer knows it too. For the proper use of the form it is necessary that it should call up in the hearer's mind the image of the exact individual that the speaker is thinking of. If it does not do that, the form will not be understood. (Christophersen 1939: 28)

The theory of familiarity has the advantage of explaining the use of the definite article in situations where the referent is not necessarily unique. It also accounts for the very common cases where definite NPs are anaphoric to indefinites, as in (4), where the indefinite article is used to introduce a new entity into discourse. Once introduced, the referent belongs to the speaker-hearer's mutual knowledge and therefore all subsequent references are introduced by means of a definite NP.

- (4) Once upon a time there lived **a king** who owned a beautiful castle. **The king** was unhappy because he was alone.

However, this account of the definite/indefinite distinction has also some weaknesses. For instance, as Christophersen (1939: 73) himself points out, the role of familiarity is not evident in cases such as 'the author [of a certain book] is unknown', where the referent is explicitly not identifiable neither by the speaker, nor by the hearer.⁴

3.1.3 Hawkins's Location Theory

Based on evidence from the speech acts they perform, Hawkins gives a pragmatically oriented theory of contrast between definites and indefinites in what is usually known as the *Location Theory* of the definite article. Hawkins' interest in giving a usage-based account of the contrast of definiteness and indefiniteness is evident in the next quote:

⁴See Hawkins (1978: 100-01).

[T]he reason why definiteness and indefiniteness have the logical meanings they do is on account of their usage functions. It is because they perform the acts they do that their logical meanings have to be the way they are. If they were otherwise these particular acts could not be performed. Furthermore, these logical meanings cannot be successfully discovered without constant reference to the full range of usage possibilities (Hawkins 1978: 89).

As Hawkins observed, the definite article is used in a wider range of contexts than the ones discussed in the uniqueness and familiarity theories. Apart from the well-known anaphoric cases (example 4), the definite article appears also in what Hawkins calls *visible* and *immediate situational uses*, as in ‘pass me the milk’ or ‘beware of the dog’ (uttered in a context where the dog is not visible to the hearer) respectively, and *larger situational uses*, as in ‘the president was murdered!’. Hawkins (1978: 117) later merges *large visible* and *immediate situation uses*, on the basis that, even when the referent of the NP is within the potential field of vision of the hearer, there is nothing in the meaning of *the* which instructs the hearer to see it. Thus, we will refer to this joint category simply as *immediate situation uses*.

What distinguishes immediate situation uses from larger situation uses is, as Hawkins (1978: 122) says, that ‘in the first, the referent may or may not be visible, and may or may not be known on the basis of either prior specific or general knowledge. In the second, the hearer must have specific or general knowledge of the referent.’ On the other hand, the notion of ‘general knowledge’ is also fundamental to explain the associative uses of the definite article, as in (5):

- (5) John supports a football team. **The striker** is the best player in the world.

What seems to happen in examples such as (5) is that the mention of a NP, in this case a football team, triggers a number of associated notions that can be referred to by means of a definite NP (Hawkins 1978: 123).

According to Hawkins, (1978: 167-68), when using a definite article, the speaker performs the following acts: he introduces a referent to the hearer; he instructs the hearer to locate the referent in question in a shared set of objects; and he refers to the totality of objects within this shared set, which satisfy the referring expression. Additionally, for these acts to be successful, the following appropriateness conditions should be met:

- 1) Hearer and speaker must share the set of objects in which the definite referent is to be located (*set existence condition*).
- 2) The hearer must be able to infer from previous discourse or from the utterance situation to which particular set the speaker is referring (*set identifiability condition*).
- 3) The referent must in fact exist in the inferred set (*set membership condition*).
- 4) (i) There must not be more elements in the shared set than those that satisfy the descriptive predicate apart from those referred to by the definite description; and (ii) the number of referents referred to by the definite description must not exceed the number of the appropriated kind in the shared set; and (iii) the hearer must know or be able to infer that the intended object has the property that is used to refer to it in the descriptive predicate (*set composition conditions*).

As Hawkins suggests, there is a strong link between the definite article and the universal quantifier in that both state that the quantified sentence holds of all objects within the domain of quantification. However, while the universal quantifier refers to all objects in an absolute sense, the definite article does so within a pragmatically restricted set, i.e. it refers, not universally, but ‘inclusively’. In sum, the function of the definite article can be defined as follows (Hawkins 1978: 161):

sentences with the definite article thus assert that the sentence quantified holds only of all objects in some pragmatically delimited domain of quantification, and that they logically presuppose that there are such objects, while pragmatically presupposing that the hearer can locate them in some shared set.

Contrary to what one may think, objects referred to by means of the indefinite article can belong to the speaker-hearer shared set. Actually, as we can see in the next set of Hawkins's (1978: 173-74) examples, referents of indefinite descriptions can be located in immediate situation sets (6a), larger situation sets (6b), association sets (6c), and they can even refer back to objects introduced in previous discourse (6d):

- (6) a. Pass me **a bucket**.
b. **A member of parliament** has just died.
c. Fred went into a disused house and **a window** fell on his head.
d. **Some students** were standing outside the factory gate. Bill kept his eye on them. After a little while **a student** came up to him and asked him his name.

Note, however, that a student in (6d) does not necessarily refer back to the set designated by *some students*. This is because the indefinite article seems to be neutral to the appropriateness conditions that govern its definite counterpart. The interpretation of indefinites is, according to Hawkins, entirely dependent on the context, and therefore the following three possibilities can arise (Hawkins 1978: 174-75):

[t]he context may force the indefinite referent to be assigned to some speaker-hearer shared-set; it may force the indefinite referent not to be assigned to some potentially available set; or it may leave the indefinite reference vague in this respect.

In the location theory, what characterizes the indefinite article is that it cannot refer to all objects satisfying the referring predicate, but only to a subset of them.

In other words, while the definite article refers inclusively, the indefinite article does so exclusively.

The use of the indefinite article is also subject to certain appropriateness conditions. These are (Hawkins, 1978: 187):

- 1) The referent will not be locatable in the speaker-hearer shared set if either (i) the hearer cannot understand the reference as excluding at least one member from the set satisfying the referring expression within the shared set; (ii) the object in question does not belong to the shared set; (iii) the pragmatics of the remainder of the sentence forces a non-locatable interpretation even if the referent is potentially located in a shared set.
- 2) The referent will be optionally locatable in the shared set if (i) the object is indeed part of the shared set, and (ii) the exclusiveness condition is satisfied within the shared set, and (iii) the pragmatics of the remainder of the sentence does not force a decision on whether the object is locatable or not within the shared set.
- 3) The referent must be locatable in the speaker's and hearer's shared set if conditions 2(i) and 2(ii) are met, and the pragmatics of the remainder of the sentence forces a location reading.

Finally, for an indefinite description to be interpreted in terms of truth-conditions, two referential requirements must be fulfilled, namely existence and exclusiveness. If any of these requirements is not fulfilled, the sentence to which the indefinite belongs cannot be interpreted in terms of truth-conditions, and therefore it is neither true nor false (Hawkins 1978: 191).⁵

⁵Thus, Hawkins coincides with Strawson's interpretation of *the present king of France is bald*.

3.1.4 Extended Novelty-Familiarity-Condition

Another very influential account on the contrast between definiteness and indefiniteness is Irene Heim's, which is largely inspired by the theory of familiarity. According to Heim (1988: 298), the semantic and pragmatic conditions that determine the choice between definite and indefinite NPs are novelty and familiarity. By using a definite expression, the speaker signals that the referent of the NP is familiar to the hearer, while the use of an indefinite implies that a new referent is being introduced.

In contrast to Russell's account, Heim (1988: 229) treats both definite and indefinite NPs as referential. Moreover, she denies that indefinites are inherently quantified, and argues that they introduce variables whose quantificational force is always contributed by the context in which they occur (Heim 1988: 122).

The framework under which Heim develops her theory of definiteness is known as *File Change Semantics*. Very simply put, File Change Semantics establishes an analogy between discourse and file-keeping.⁶ Following the Novelty-Familiarity Condition, when a new variable is introduced by means of an indefinite, a new file is created. On the other hand, definites need to be interpreted as referring to a previously introduced variable, whose card, which is already in the file, contains information that corresponds to the description given in the NP. Note that the card must be updated with the relevant information provided in each subsequent appearance of the referent in question. This process is summarized under the rule: 'For every indefinite, start a new card; for every definite, update a suitable old card' (Heim 1988: 276).

However, the description given above only fits some instances of the definite article. Specifically, of the various uses described by Hawkins (1978), only the anaphoric and the visible situation use can be fully accounted for. In order to

⁶As Heim (1988) explains, this analogy was previously succinctly explored by Karttunen (1976).

overcome this deficiency, Heim (1988: 372) resorts to Lewis's concept of 'accommodation', which, in her terms, is defined as 'an adjustment of the file that is triggered by a violation of a felicity condition and consists of adding to the file enough information to remedy the infelicity.'

In virtue of accommodation, a new card can be linked by cross-reference to other cards already in the file. In other words, cross-references create bridges connecting 'the new discourse referent to the network of discourse referents that is already established' (Heim 1988: 373). Consequently, all uses of the definite article (including the associative-anaphoric one) and its contrast with the indefinite article can now be explained by means of a single principle, namely, the Extended Novelty-Familiarity-Condition.⁷

Lastly, it is important to say that the notion of definiteness that I will employ in my analysis corresponds to that of familiarity, as defined by Christophersen (1939) and further developed by Heim, according to which definite NPs are those whose referent is known by the hearer, while indefinite NPs introduce new referents into discourse.

3.2 Definiteness: The Typological Perspective

3.2.1 Markers of Definiteness

As we have seen in the previous pages, the main function of articles is to signal definiteness and indefiniteness. However, not all languages mark this distinction. A typological panorama on this issue is presented by Dryer (2005a & b). For the definite article, he offers a sample of 566 languages whose distribution is presented in table 3.1.

⁷A weakness of Heim's approach is that, as she herself recognizes, it is not clear '[w]hat explains the requirement that accommodated cards must be connected by bridges of this sort to the previous file.' (Heim: 1988: 375) For a criticism of Heim's theory, see Hawkins (1991: 415-16).

Table 3.1: The Definite Article (Dryer, 2005a: 154)

Pattern A:	Definite word distinct from demonstrative	197
Pattern B:	Demonstrative word used as definite article	56
Pattern C:	Definite affix on noun	84
Pattern D:	No definite article but indefinite article	41
Pattern E:	Neither definite nor indefinite article	188

According to these data, almost 35% of the languages in the sample mark definiteness with a word different from the demonstrative, as in English, Spanish, and Lakota, a language from the Sinouan family where definite article demonstratives can co-occur, as shown in (7) (Ingham 2001: 16, *apud* Dryer 2005a: 154):

- (7) wic 'asa ki he
 man the that
 'that man'

Pattern A is frequent in Western Europe, Central Africa, New Guinea and Mesoamerica, but infrequent in Asia, and almost all of North and South America. In some of these languages, the use of the definite article is restricted to anaphoric uses. For instance, in Mangarrayi (Australia) a definite noun previously mentioned is marked by adding the prex *gi-* to the distal demonstrative stem.

Languages in which a demonstrative is used to mark definiteness are less common, accounting for only a 10% of Dryer's sample. Geographically, they are disseminated all over the world, but are common in North America and almost absent from the south of the continent. An interesting feature present in some languages of pattern B is that, although the word marking definiteness is identical to the demonstrative, it occurs in a different position within the NP. In Swahili, for example, the demonstrative follows the noun when used in its original function, but precedes it when it functions as a definite article. The exact reverse situation is observed in the Uto-Aztecan language Ute.

Definiteness is expressed by means of an affix in nearly 15% of the languages

in the sample (pattern C). Such languages are common in Scandinavia, northern Russia, the Middle-East, and in the west of North America. In (8) I present an example of Egyptian Arabic (Gary and Gamal-Eldin 1982: 59, *apud* Dryer 2005a: 155):

- (8) ʔit-ʔajjar-a gaaja
 theplane-F.SG. come
 ‘The plane is coming’

The least common pattern is D, which corresponds to languages that only mark indefinite NPs. It is mainly found in an area between Turkey and the Caucasus, in Iran and in New Guinea. Example (9) is from Tauya, a language from the Madang province in Papua New Guinea (MacDonald 1990: 108, 122, *apud* Dryer 2005a: 155):

- (9) fanu ʔafa
 man INDEF
 ‘a man’

Finally, the languages with neither definite nor indefinite articles (pattern D) correspond to a third of the sample. An example of this kind of language is Polish, where BPs can be interpreted as definite or as indefinite, depending on the context (Bielec 1998: 270, *apud* Dryer 2005b: 159):

- (10) Anna je jablko
 Anna eats apple
 ‘Anna eats an/the apple’

3.2.2 Markers of Indefiniteness

Now, let us turn to the indefinite article. The sample presented by Dryer (2005b) includes 473 languages whose distribution is shown in the next table:⁸

⁸I will not comment on pattern E in table 3.2 as it is identical to E in table 3.1.

Table 3.2: The Indefinite Article (Dryer, 2005b: 158)

Pattern A:	Indefinite word distinct from numeral for ‘one’	91
Pattern B:	Numeral for ‘one’ is used as indefinite article	90
Pattern C:	Indefinite affix on noun	23
Pattern D:	No indefinite article but definite article	81
Pattern E:	Neither indefinite nor definite article	188

Pattern A, with roughly 20% of the sample, corresponds to languages such as English, in which the indefinite article is expressed by a word different from the numeral ‘one’. Another example is Kobon (Papua New Guinea), where the indefinite article is *ap* and the numeral ‘one’ is *añi* (Davies 1981: 61 *apud* Dryer 2005b: 158).

- (11) *nibi* *ap*
 woman INDEF
 ‘a woman’

A fifth of the sample is constituted by those languages in which the numeral ‘one’ is used as a marker of indefiniteness, Spanish being of course the most relevant example to us. The same situation is reflected in German, where a sentence such as (12) would be ungrammatical without the numeral ‘one’ (Dryer 2005b: 158):

- (12) *Ich habe einen Hund gekauft*
 I have one dog bought
 ‘I have bought a/one dog’

According to Dryer, while in written language the interpretation *einen* in (12) is ambiguous between numeral and article, in spoken German the form would be stressed when corresponding to English ‘one’.⁹

Other languages present further phonological differences which help to distinguish between ‘one’ and the indefinite article. For instance, in Dutch the numeral *een* is pronounced with a full vowel [en], while the indefinite article is pronounced

⁹See also Lyons 1999: 34-5.

with a reduced one [ən].

The ascription of a given language to either pattern A or B depends on how sharp these phonological differences are. In Dryer's sample, Dutch is catalogued as a language of type A, because the distinction between [en] and [ən] has been lexicalized, while German is classified as a type B language, because the difference in stress has not yet yielded two neatly differentiated forms.

Another interesting example is Turkish: in the NP, *bir* as a numeral precedes prenominal adjectives, but when it acts as an indefinite article it is placed after the adjective (Kornlt 1997: 275 *apud* Dryer 2005b: 158).¹⁰

Similarly, in Remo, spoken by the Munda people in India, *muy* 'one' is prenominal as numeral, but postnominal as indefinite article (Fernandez 1967: 127, 117, *apud* Dryer 2005b: 158):

- (13) a. *muy kaylabay gisiŋ*
 one black chicken
 'one black chicken'
 b. *bire muy*
 stone a
 'a stone'

In some cases, the presence of 'one' is obligatory, but there are also cases, such as Lezgian (Caucasus region of Russia and Azerbaijan), where it is optional. According to Dryer (2005b:158), this phenomenon is partly conditioned by the prominence of the referent: if the NP introduces a referent that will be relevant throughout the text, 'one' is required, while the noun is often left unmarked when the referent in question will not be further mentioned (see Givón 1981).

The majority of languages in pattern B mark only singular NPs. However, there are a few cases where 'one' also occurs with plurals. Here, the numeral seems to have lost its original meaning and therefore, in Dryer's (2005b: 158)

¹⁰In Turkish definiteness is indicated only when the NP is a direct object. See Lyons (1999: 50).

opinion, these are ‘[t]he clearest instances of the numeral for “one” being used as an indefinite article.’ In (14) I present an example of Lavukaleve, spoken in the Solomon Islands, where *ro* ‘one’ marks singular and plural indefinites, and in the later case it takes plural inflection (Terrill 2003: 80, apud Lyons 1999: 158):¹¹

- (14) kanege rovo
 family INDEF-PL
 ‘some families’

Languages marking indefinites by means of affixes (pattern C) are less frequently attested. In (15) I present an example from Korowai (New Guinea, Indonesia), where the affix *fekha* is attached to specific indefinites (van Enk and de Vries 1997: 75, apud Dryer 2005b: 158):

- (15) uma-t-do abül-fekha khomilo-bo
 tell-3PL.REAL-DS man-INDEF die-3SG.REAL-PERF
 ‘They told that a certain man had died’

Finally, the last pattern, representing 17% of Dryer’s sample, corresponds to languages that do not have an indefinite article but have a definite one. For instance, in the North American language Kutenai, there is a definite article *ni?*, but indefinite NPs are unmarked. However, the presence of *ni?* is not obligatory and, when absent, the interpretation of the NP is ambiguous between definite and indefinite.

3.3 Specificity

One of the most interesting properties of indefinites is that they can have both specific and non-specific readings. But what does having a ‘specific reading’ mean? There are mainly three definitions of specificity, namely scopal, partitive, and

¹¹This is also the case of Spanish *unos*, which we will discuss in detail in chapters 7 and 8.

epistemic.¹²

The definition of specificity in terms of scope is well rooted in the semantics tradition. According to it, the ambiguity between specific and non-specific arises when the indefinite appears in a sentence containing another quantified expression or an intensional operator, such as the modal verb in the example below, which induce an opaque context.¹³

- (16) Luisa **quiere** comprar **un departamento**.
- a. Tiene tres recámaras y está en la colonia Roma.
 - b. Lleva meses buscando uno pero aún no encuentra nada que le convenza.

For an indefinite to have a specific interpretation, it must have wide scope, that is, its interpretation must be independent of the operators in the sentence, and thus the existence of a referent can be inferred, as in (16a). On the other hand, if the indefinite has narrow scope with respect to the operator, the existence of the referent is not necessarily entailed, and therefore the interpretation of the NP is non-specific, as in (16b). While the specific interpretation can be paraphrased as ‘there is an apartment such that she wants to buy it’, the interpretation of the non-specific variant corresponds to something like ‘she wants that there is an apartment such that she buys it’.

Another definition of specificity is that of ‘partitive specificity’, according to which an indefinite is specific if it refers to a previously introduced set (Enç 1991).¹⁴ This notion of specificity is sustained by observations of Turkish ac-

¹²For an explanation of these three definitions of specificity see Farkas (2002), Kamp & Bende-Farkas (2006), Leonetti (1990, 1999, 2004), and von Heusinger (2002).

¹³Opaque contexts are characterized by two properties: a) the substitution of one expression for another with the same referent cannot be made, without changes in the truth conditions of the sentence; b) the existential generalization fails (Quine, 1953, 1960). See also Givón (1978).

¹⁴The definition of specificity in terms of partitivity has strong links with Milsark’s (1977) proposal on strong and weak quantifiers. Very simply put, this distinction is based on the definiteness effect, that is, whether a certain determiner can or cannot appear in an existential construction: strong (definite) determiners are ungrammatical while weak determiners are not (e.g. There is *the/a wolf at the door). This notion is, however, incomplete for, as Milsark also

cusatives: as Enç points out, in Turkish, indefinite NPs in object position are never ambiguous between a specific and a non-specific reading, even in the presence of intensional operators, for specific objects are always marked with accusative case, as shown in examples (17) and (18). When the accusative case is employed, the sentence can only be interpreted as saying something about a referent that has previously been introduced into discourse (Enç 1991: ex.14 and 15).¹⁵

- (17) Ali bir kitab-i aldı.
 Ali one book-Acc bought.
 'A book is such that Ali bought it.'
- (18) Ali bir kitap aldı.
 'Ali bought some book or other.'

As Enç (1991:8) explains, the concept of partitive specificity is related to the notion of familiarity:

[b]y this account, non-specific indefinites are novel in a sense more absolute than specific indefinites. A specific indefinite is only required to obey the Novelty Condition, which states that its discourse referent must be distinct from previously established discourse referents. In contrast, the discourse referent of a non-specific indefinite is further required to be unrelated to previously established referents

explained, there are some weak determiners, such as *some* and *many*, that are susceptible of having both strong and weak readings. In the case of *some* the weak interpretation corresponds to the unstressed variant, while the strong or quantificational interpretation conveys a partitive reading, as shown in (i). Note that in the weak reading, the determiner only contributes to establish the number of entities referred to, whence the tag 'cardinal readings'.

- (i) Would you like some ('sm') tea?
 Some (of the) senators voted against the President's proposal.

As for the indefinite article, Milsark's distinction is reflected as follows: the weak interpretation corresponds to non-specifics, and the strong interpretation corresponds to specifics and generics. Although the weak/strong distinction and the specific/non-specific one are in many aspects linked (specially in Enç's terms), there are important differences between them, and they should be kept apart. This is, however, beyond the scope of this research. For a discussion of this topic see Abbott (2004) and the bibliography suggested there.

¹⁵Since Enç's paper (1991), Direct Object Marking (DOM) has been considered a mark of specificity. However, as I will explain in section 8.1.7, in Modern Spanish specificity does not fully account for the use of the preposition *a* before direct objects.

Although in the rest of this thesis I will not discuss partitive specificity further, I am interested in the idea of definiteness as a continuum where specifics would be ‘less indefinite’ than non-specifics. The reason why I find this idea appealing is because, as we shall see, the grammaticalization of the indefinite article advances along a chain towards less specificity.¹⁶

We have said that the clearest environment in which the specificity ambiguity arises is opaque contexts. However, there are some cases in which indefinites, even in the absence of operators such as negation, intensional verbs, and so on, are, for some linguists, ambiguous. In order to illustrate this fact, consider the classic example of Fodor & Sag (1982: 356).

(19) A student in the syntax class cheated on the final exam.

According to Fodor & Sag (1982: 356), a sentence such as (19) has two interpretations: one *quantificational* (non-specific), if the speaker intends ‘to assert merely that the set of students in the syntax class who cheated on the final exam is not empty’, and another *referential* (specific), if he is ‘intending to assert of some particular student, whom he does not identify, that this student cheated’.¹⁷

This type of specificity is called *epistemic specificity*.¹⁸ According to this criterion, an indefinite NP is specific if the speaker has a particular entity in mind, and thus the indefinite can be paraphrased with ‘a certain’.

¹⁶See section 3.3.

¹⁷The specificity distinction in epistemic terms is reminiscent of the contrast between referential and attributive uses of definites, proposed by Donnellan (1966: 283), who argued that definite NPs had two uses, namely attributive and referential, which he defined as follows:

[a] speaker who uses a definite description attributively in an assertion states something about whoever or whatever is the so-and-so. A speaker who uses a definite description referentially in an assertion, on the other hand, uses the description to enable his audience to pick out whom or what he is talking about and states something about that person or thing.

Note that in both cases the intention of the speaker to refer to a particular referent, and his audience’s ability to realize who this referent is, are fundamental.

¹⁸See Kamp & Bende Farkas (2006) for a formal account of epistemic specificity, within the DRT (Discourse Representation Theory) framework.

It must be pointed out that as Leonetti (1999: 858) explains, the definition of specificity in terms of ‘having a particular referent in mind’, leads to the impression that for an NP to be interpreted specifically, the referent must be known by the speaker. This is, however, inaccurate, as what matters is the speaker’s intention to refer to a certain entity, even if he is not in a position to give further information about its precise identity.

In this context, the concept of specificity proposed by von Heusinger (2002) seems particularly suitable to account for the fact that the speaker’s certainty about the identity of the referent is not indispensable for getting a specific interpretation. Instead, he argues, what really matters is that the referent is functionally linked either to the speaker, or to another referential expression in the sentences, such as the subject or the object.¹⁹

As for my analysis, I will refer to specificity in scopal terms. Consequently, I will take as specific those NPs in which the referent is presupposed to exist, regardless of whether the speaker is or is not certain of its identity. In contrast, non-specific readings arise when the presupposition of existence is suspended, due to the presence of an operator inducing referential variability, such as conditionals, imperatives, futures, interrogatives, intensional verbs, habitual predicates, and negation.²⁰

¹⁹von Heusinger’s proposal, known as *relative specificity*, is useful to explain cases where an indefinite is clearly specific but the speaker is not capable of identifying it. Such a case is discussed in Higginbotham (1987: *apud* von Heusinger 2002: 262): ‘Suppose my friend George says to me, “I met with a certain student of mine today.” Then I can report the encounter to a third party by saying: “George said that he met with a certain student of his today”, and the specificity effect is still felt, although I am in no position to say which student George met with.’ Note that for von Heusinger, the lexical item *certain* is a mark of specificity.

²⁰Intensional predicates include verbs such as *querer*, *buscar*, *obligar*, *permitir*, *intentar*, etc., and adjectives like *necesario*, *obligatorio*, *imprescindible*. They share the non-factive character and in contrast to other triggers of opacity such as interrogation or conditionality, they do not have sentential scope (see Givón (1978) and Leonetti (1999: 863)). Thus, in the following example, only the indefinite in square brackets can receive a non-specific interpretation (Leonetti 1999: 862: ex. (185b) and (186 b)).

- i) Sugerimos a un amigo que hiciera [un viaje por el extranjero].
- ii) En un ascensor del bloque B es necesario [un motor nuevo].

It is important to stress that the choice of the definition of specificity has a great impact on the analysis, and consequently on the explanation of the development of the indefinite article. While from an epistemic perspective a sentence such as *Mataron a un hombre* could be specific if it is asserted of a particular man (e.g. *Mataron a un hombre. Se llamaba Juan*) or non-specific if it is only intended to assert that the set of murdered men is not empty (e.g. *Mataron a un hombre, no sé a quién*), from a scopal view the indefinite is necessarily specific, as there are no opacities whatsoever. In this context, scopal specificity is more restrictive than epistemic, for if an indefinite is non-specific scopally, it would be, in most cases, also non-specific epistemically, but not vice versa. Thus, an analysis of the same corpus from these two perspectives might give very different results: the number of non-specifics is bound to be lower if specificity is considered scopally rather than epistemically.

To conclude, the fact that I have chosen a scopal definition of specificity is not random; on the contrary, it is motivated by the nature of this research. My corpus includes more than 1300 examples of *un* and over 450 of *algún*. In some cases, it is fairly evident that the speaker intends to refer to a certain entity, but in others, although its existence is not in doubt, it is not obvious whether the speaker has in mind a clear representation of the referent's identity. In this context, I believe that a definition able to provide a clear-cut distinction between specific and non-specific indefinites is desirable in corpus studies, for it limits the bias resulting from the researcher's interpretation and allows the analysis to be reproducible.²¹ Of course, this does not mean that all the specific examples in my corpus are the same. On the contrary, as I will show in the course of my analysis, there are important contrasts between them that are relevant to the development of *un*. However, these contrasts are, in my view, better explained in terms of other

²¹I am aware that the analysis of specificity in scopal terms also requires a good amount of interpretation. However, by limiting the contexts where ambiguity arises, I seek to minimize uncertainty.

notions, such as saliency, which, although it is certainly related to specificity, must be distinguished from it.²²

3.4 The Role of Specificity in the Rise of the Indefinite Article

3.4.1 Givón's Referentiality Scale

In his groundbreaking paper 'On the Development of the Numeral "one" as an Indefinite Marker' (1981), Givón presents evidence illustrating the different stages that unitary cardinals undergo on their way to become indefinite articles.²³

In order to illustrate this process, Givón takes the case of spoken Hebrew, where there is a growing tendency to mark indefinite NPs whose referent is pragmatically relevant. So, in an example such as (20) the numeral 'one' is employed, while in (21) the noun remains bare as it is not the identity of the referent that matters but rather its kind. Note that in both cases the interpretation of the indefinite would be specific in terms of scope, as there is no opacity involved (Givón 1981: ex. 1 and 2).

- (20) ba hena ish-**xad** etmol ve-hitxil le-daber ve-hu...
 came here man-*one* yesterday and-started to-talk and-he [Referential]
 'A man came in yesterday and started talking and he...

²²Interestingly, Givón (1978) describes as 'non-definite' those specific indefinites in which, although the verbal expression implies that the speaker is committed to the existence of the referent, he leaves its identity unspecified. According to Givón, one might infer that in these cases what really matters is the 'genus affiliation' of the referent. For Givón, non-definites are a subcategory of specific indefinites, and not a distinct category. In contrast, Rouchota (1994) distinguishes five uses of indefinites: attributive, referential, specific, generic, and predicative, where 'attributive' corresponds to non-specific, and 'referential' corresponds to specific uses in which the speaker expects the hearer to be able to identify the referent.

²³Notice that in Givón's work, the term *referentiality* is employed to refer to *specificity*.

NP is entirely dependent of the use of ‘one’: if the noun is marked with ‘-*xad*’ it is interpreted as specific and vice versa, as shown in the following set of examples (Givón 1981: ex. 37 and 38). Note that in languages such as English where the indefinite article has spread to non-specifics, this disambiguation tool is futile.

- (23) u mexapes isha-(**a**)*xat* [Referential]
 he looking for woman-one
 ‘He is looking for a (specific) woman’

- (24) hu mexapes (lo) isha [Non-referential]
 he looking (for-him) woman
 ‘He is looking for a woman (a member of the type)’

Additionally, in the scope of future, the weakened numeral is affixed to specific nouns, as shown in the example below, although there is still variation in this context as for the insertion of *-xad* (Givón 1981: ex. 43 and 44).

- (25) tavo elexa isha maxar ve... [Ambiguous]
 will-come to-you woman tomorrow and
 ‘A woman will come to you tomorrow and...’

- (26) tavo elexa isha-(*a*)*xat* maxar ve... [More referential]
 will-come to-you woman-*one* tomorrow and
 ‘A certain woman will come to you tomorrow and...’

Finally, as the grammaticalization of *-xat* as an indefinite article is yet in its early stages, it is not found in generic contexts, where only definites and BPs are allowed.

The case of spoken Hebrew represents an example of a language where the numeral ‘one’ is on its way to becoming an indefinite marker. Such a process is attested in numerous languages and to different extents. According to Givón, the

early stages are illustrated by Hebrew, Mandarin, Sherpa, Turkish, Neo-Aramaic, Persian, and other languages, where only specific indefinites are marked. Spanish and Italian are in an intermediate stage, for *un* is not generalized in predicates where, according to him, ‘only referential nouns are marked’ (Givón 1981: 48). Lastly, the last stages of this process can be found in English, French and German, where both specific and non-specific are marked, as can be seen in the following set of examples adapted from Givón (1981: ex. 55-64):²⁴

- (27) a. John is **a teacher**.
 b. John is **a teacher** I met last year.
- (28) a. I am looking for **a book** on math, do you have any?
 b. I am looking for **a book** on math, but I can’t find it.
- (29) a. A horse is **a four-legged animal**...
 b. **A horse** I was riding yesterday fell and...
- (30) a. We’re going to see **a movie** tomorrow; we’re not yet sure which.
 b. We’re going to see **a movie** tomorrow; we got the tickets in advance.
- (31) a. If **a man** shows up, let him in, but if a woman, don’t.
 b. If **a man** shows up wearing a funny hat and he gives you the password...

The evolution of ‘one’ as an indefinite marker follows, in Givón’s proposal, the scale in figure 3.1, where the environments at the top would be the last to admit the presence of ‘one’.

Two predictions are obtainable from figure 3.1: first, that the scale is implicational, in the Greenbergian sense, and therefore if a language marks indefinites in a given context, it means it will also do so in all the environments lower in the

²⁴Note that this classification is based strictly in the semantic interpretation, and it does not take into account other consequences of grammaticalization such as phonetic erosion. This explains the contrast between Givón’s scale and the Dryer’s classification discussed in 3.2, where English, having two different forms for the article and the numeral, would be ‘more grammaticalized’ than German and French.

predicate nouns objects in future scope	>	generic subjects	>	objects in modal scope objects in NEG scope indefinite object
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Figure 3.1: The grammaticalization of the indefinite article (Givón, 1981)

quantification	>	referentiality/ denotation	>	genericity/ connotation
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Figure 3.2: ‘One’: from numeral to indefinite article (Givón, 1981)

scale; second, that the scale is a reflection of the degree of referentiality, which implies that although all the environments are non-referential, those to the left are ‘somehow less referential than those lower on the scale (to the right)’ (Givón 1981: 50).

The high number of unrelated languages where indefinite markers descend from ‘one’ raises the question of what are the properties of this numeral that makes it so prone to acquire this new function. In order to answer this question, Givón offers another scale (figure 3.2) which claims to illustrate the gradual progression of ‘one’ from its numeral value to the indefinite article:

As Givón (1981: 51) explains, this scale can be interpreted as another instance of semantic bleaching along another implicational set, namely, that ‘having quantity implies existence/reference’, and that ‘having existence/reference implies having connotation/genericity’. In this context, the bleaching would proceed by eliminating two semantic features of ‘one’: in the first transition in figure 3.2, quantification would be bleached out, and in the second, the requirement of existence would be removed.²⁵

²⁵This diagram is useful from an explicative perspective but it is not clear to me what he means by ‘having quantity implies having existence’. As we know, the numeral ‘one’, like every numeral, can be under the scope of an operator that triggers referential ambiguity, and thus lack existence.

Definite > Ref-indefinite > Non-referential > Generic

Figure 3.3: Referentiality scale (Givón, 1984: 407)

Until this point, Givón's (1981) evolutionary chain for the development of the indefinite article states that this process advances from referential to non-referential nouns. In more detail, we are told that that referential (specific) indefinites are the first to be marked, and that generics precede predicates. However, in the scale of 3.1 there is no unified account of where non-specifics stand, for the author treats non-specific indefinites differently depending on the nature of the opacity that triggers the non-specific reading.

Nonetheless, this issue can be solved by taking into consideration another scale of referentiality proposed by Givón in a later work. This scale is presented in figure 3.3; notice here, in contrast with his previous account (1981), he does set apart non-specifics from generics (Givón 1984: 407).²⁶

Since we know from the scale in 3.1 that predicates are more resistant than generics to admit the insertion of the indefinite article, by merging figures 3.1 and 3.3 we get the following modified grammaticalization channel for the development of the indefinite article.²⁷

Ref-indefinite > Non-referential > Generic > Predicate

Figure 3.4: Modified indefinite article grammaticalization chain

Interestingly, Givón argues that coding devices in languages are used to mark contiguous points in the scale, and very seldom do they leap over sections or

²⁶As stated previously, referentiality corresponds roughly to specificity. Givón (1984: 423ss.) distinguishes between being semantically referential (i.e., presupposed to exist) and 'pragmatically specific' (i.e., the referent exists and its identity matters) and concludes that pragmatic specificity is more important than semantic specificity in the grammaticalization of 'one'.

²⁷I have deleted 'definites' from the scale, since I am interested in this scale for its implication in the evolution of *un*. For the definition of the term 'grammaticalization channel', see section 2.2.

create gaps. In other words, the same device may be employed to mark specific and non-specific indefinites, non-specific and generics, and so on. In the case of Hebrew, *-xad* would mark only one point of the scale (i.e. referential indefinites), while in English the indefinite article would cover all the points.

Finally, in order to answer the question raised earlier about the properties of ‘one’ that enable it to become a marker of indefiniteness, Givón (1981) argues that numerals are neutral with respect to definiteness, and therefore they are useful for introducing new entities into the discourse. When a new referent is being introduced, the hearer is not expected to be able to identify it, for he is provided only with information about the class to which the new referent belongs. Then, in this situation the speaker seeks to perform two tasks: on one hand, ‘introduce a new argument as *referential/existing*’, and on the other hand, ‘identify it by its *generic/type* properties.’ The unitary cardinal is the best candidate to perform such a role, for, as stated by Givón (1981: 52):

First, like all quantifiers it implies existence/referentiality. But further, in *contrastive* use it implies also ‘one out of *many*’, ‘one *out of the group*’ or ‘one *out of the type*’. It thus introduces the new argument into discourse as both existing/ having referentiality, and as ‘member of the type (x)’. And those are precisely the two requirements for the introduction of a referential argument into discourse.

Since Givón’s research, there have been a number of language-specific studies aiming to provide evidence of whether the scale proposed by the author accurately describes the process whereby indefinite determiners arise. In the following pages, I will comment on three such papers, dealing with languages that represent different stages of this development, namely Macedonian (early stage) Italian (intermediate stage), and English (advanced stage).

3.4.2 Macedonian

In his study of Macedonian *eden*, Weiss (2004) challenges the idea that Macedonian has an indefinite article, and proposes that the numeral ‘one’ might still be at the *statu nascendi* of this grammaticalization process that could be represented by means of a grammaticalization channel in 3.5. According to Weiss, at this moment, *eden* is still at the second stage, since non-specific indefinites are only exceptionally marked.

numeral one > indefinite pronoun/determiner > indefinite article

Figure 3.5: The grammaticalization channel of Macedonian *eden* (Weiss, 2004)

Traditionally, the distinction between *eden* as a cardinal and as an indefinite article has been made in terms of stress, the unstressed variant of course being the one corresponding to the article. However, Weiss claims that this criterion is not the determining factor, not only because it fails in written texts, but also because, as Himmelmann has suggested (2001, *apud* Weiss) numerals are not necessarily stressed.

In present-day Macedonian, there is an increasing tendency for *eden* to be used with specific indefinites as a tool to mark discourse prominence, and it seems to be particularly frequent to emphasize a special or unusual element among a set of similar referents. In view of this, it is not surprising that in many cases, *eden* co-occurs with relative clauses, whose function is precisely to express the unusual or unique characteristics of the referent in question. Note that, as Weiss suggests, what is at play here is the singling-out capacity of the unitary cardinal, which, as we will see in 5.1, is the prime feature of Indo European **oinos*.

The fact that *eden* is primarily used with prominent specific indefinites shows that its grammaticalization as an indefinite article is at an early stage, for as Weiss

(2004: 144) explains: ‘[c]ontrary to this, a “true” indefinite article is no longer associated with such discourse-organizational properties, but may establish a new referent, including the most ephemeral one.’

An interesting feature of *eden* is that it is commonly found in generics, and can under certain circumstances occur in predicates, that is, the last stages of the evolutionary chain of indefinite markers as defined by Givón (1981). Given that *eden* routinely appears with specific indefinites and generics, it is expected that it will also mark non-specific indefinites. This, however, is not the case: *eden* is systematically excluded in all the non-specific inducing contexts.

The question then is what is the underlying factor governing the use of *eden*? According to Weiss, in the case of Macedonian, specificity turns out not to be the most relevant issue in the grammaticalization of the indefinite marker. Rather, the distribution of *eden* seems to be constrained by a syntactic fact, namely, the ‘further specification of the NP by attributive modifiers or relative clauses’ (Weiss, 2004: 157). This hypothesis is supported by two facts: first, the use of *eden* in predicates is restricted to specificational predicates, which require the presence of modifiers; second, although still unnatural, for most speakers the presence of a relative clause improves the acceptability of non-specific indefinites in opaque contexts such as conditionals, imperatives, and questions.

To conclude, it should be borne in mind that, as Weiss himself acknowledges, although the case of Macedonian seems to differ from Givón’s grammaticalization chain, there are obvious links between specificity and noun specification by means of modifiers. After all, if a speaker is in a position to give a detailed characterization of an entity, the chances are that he has a particular referent in mind, hence a + specific one. Thus, although further research is needed, it seems that the case of Macedonian *eden* can be assimilated to Givón’s general proposal.²⁸

²⁸This definition of specificity corresponds to the epistemic approach. Note, however, that all specific indefinites in epistemic terms are also specific in scopal terms. Recall that the discrepancy between these definitions is found in the opposite direction: not all specifics in

3.4.3 Italian

Another very interesting study on the grammaticalization of indefinite articles is presented in Stark (2002). Here, the author analyses three narrative texts dated from the thirteenth to the sixteenth centuries, in order to explain the evolution of Italian *un* and its distribution with respect to other indefinite determiners.

According to Stark, in Old Italian the presence of *un* is mostly attested with prominent references which are subsequently referred back to in the text; *un* is indeed mostly employed with this type of indefinite. However, this ‘cataphoric potential’ property is not exclusive to *un*; in fact, in 25% of cases, BPs are used with referents subsequently reintroduced. As the author explains, this reflects the often forgotten fact that generic expressions, which at the time were mainly expressed by means of BPs, can be topics, and on numerous occasions they are the head of a chain of anaphoric mentions. Consequently, despite the close link between specificity and topicality, one must refrain from identifying these two features as equivalent.

The case of Italian *un* basically confirms Givón’s proposal: Latin *ŪNUS* goes from being a numeral to becoming a determiner almost exclusively used with specific indefinites in Old Italian. Notably, at this moment, *uno* and *alcuno* exhibit a sort of complementary distribution in terms of specificity, the first being specialized in specific indefinites, and the second in non-specific ones.²⁹ Finally, from the fourteenth century on, there is a gradual spread of *uno* to non-specific contexts, which coincides with the specialization of *alcuno* to negative environments.³⁰

scopal terms are specific in epistemic ones (see section 3.3).

²⁹In this sense, Stark argues that Givón’s scale can be refined by adding an intermediate stage in which the indefinites are marked with different lexical elements with respect to discourse-pragmatics categories. Actually, as we explained earlier, Givón does account for this possibility in his book of 1984, where he explains that languages can code with different tools the various points in the referentiality scale (see figure 3.3). Stark only refers to Givón’s (1981) paper.

³⁰As Stark explains, in Modern Standard Italian singular *alcuno* is almost exclusively found under the scope of negation with the meaning of ‘nobody’ or ‘none’.

3.4.4 English

As Hopper & Martin (1987) explain, in Old English there were at least two devices with which new referents were introduced into discourse. On the one hand, very prominent participants were preceded by *sum*. Crucially, the NP with *sum* had numerous subsequent mentions in the text and on many occasions its referent was human. On the other hand, *an* was employed to introduce less prominent referents, human and non-human, which could support subsequent mentions, but to a lesser degree than those introduced by *sum*, and occasionally, appeared in isolation (i.e., without further anaphora). The disparity between *sum* and *an* in terms of specificity is also manifested in that, as an analysis of Latin glosses suggests, the translating convention at that time was to translate QUĪDAM with *sum*, and ŪNUS with *an*.

The quantitative analysis carried out by Hopper & Martin (1987) reveals a steep increase in the frequency of *an* from the tenth to the fourteenth centuries, where the number of words needed to find fifty occurrences of *an* dropped from 27,000 to 4,000. This period is followed by a plateau which lasted until the eighteenth century, when another increase in frequency is observed.

From a qualitative perspective, the increase in frequency of *an* was accompanied by a growing number of cases where *an* introduces an NP which is not anaphorically referred back to. For these authors, these data suggest ‘a lessening of the referential [specific] strength of the indefinite NP.’ Indeed, while in Old English the indefinite is further mentioned in 56% of cases, by the twentieth century this proportion has fallen to 10% of cases, proving that during its evolution as an indefinite article *an* has taken over some functional domains previously occupied by BPs.

Additionally, *an* has expanded its use in subject position: while in Old English *an* appeared only exceptionally in this function, in Modern English almost a third

of all occurrences are subjects. Notice that according to Hopper & Martin (1987: 300), these results are compatible with the declining role of *an* as a presentative marker, for the cases where it appears in subject position are, in their words, ‘not typically presentative in the sense of introducing significant new participants, but are more usually found when new topics are casually introduced and then dropped with little or no subsequent mention.’

In sum, the development of the English indefinite article comprises two phases. First, during the Old English period, *an* becomes the default specific indefinite marker, as *sum* gradually specializes in plural NPs; this is a change towards specificity. Second, from the fourteenth century on, persistence (i.e., the number of subsequent mentions) stops being a constraint upon the use of *an* and in this sense it expands into the domain of BPs; this is a change towards non-specificity.³¹

3.5 Summary

In the preceding pages, I have presented a condensed review of some of the most influential theories on the subject of definiteness and specificity.

In section 3.1, I first discussed Russell’s (1905) uniqueness theory, according to which both definites and indefinites entail existence, but definites, in addition, require the referent to be unique. Then I presented Strawson’s (1950) critique of Russell’s interpretation of sentences in which the definite description makes reference to non-existent entities, and his claim about uniqueness not as an entailment but rather as a presupposition.

I also discussed Christophersen’s (1939) account in which what licenses the use of the definite article is that the hearer is familiar with the referent. In contrast,

³¹Notice that, as Mustanoja explains (1960: 260-01), in Old English neither *an* nor *sum* occurred in predicates. Moreover, in the case of *an*, its generic use in Middle English is ‘by no means firmly established’. In fact, according to this author, ‘it is not until early ModE that the principles now governing the use of the indefinite article are more consistently observed.’ Notice that these data give further support to Givón’s (1981) thesis.

indefinites serve to introduce new referents into the discourse.

On the other hand, according to Hawkins (1978), the contrast between definiteness and indefiniteness can be understood in terms of whether the description refers to all the possible referents in a given context or not. In Hawkins's location theory, definites are said to refer 'inclusively' while indefinites do so 'exclusively'.

I also presented Heim's (1988) file change semantics framework which relies on the concept of familiarity introduced by Christophersen. Here, the author makes an analogy between discourse and file-keeping, where, following the Novelty-Familiarity Condition, the use of indefinites leads to the creation of a new card, while a definite NP requires a suitable old card to be updated. Interestingly, in Heim's account both definite and indefinite descriptions are taken to be referential, in contrast to the standard view inspired by Russell, where only definites are referential and indefinites are quantified expressions.

The second part of this chapter, section 3.2, consists of a brief picture of definite and indefinite markers across languages. Based on Dryer's (2005a, b) data, we showed the different possibilities in which definiteness and indefiniteness are expressed, either by means of independent words, affixes or no marker at all. Note that the transition from Latin to Spanish represents a shift from Dryer's Patter E to A, in the case of definites, and from E to B, in the case of indefinites.

The third part of the chapter (section 3.3) deals with the notion of specificity. First, I have presented an overview of the main definitions of specificity, that is, scopal, partitive and epistemic, and explained the motivations for choosing the scopal approach in my analysis. Then, I have commented on Givón's (1981, 1984) proposal according to which the grammaticalization of indefinite markers on the basis of unitary numerals is a universal process whose stages are largely determined by the degree of specificity of the NP. Finally, I have commented on the papers of Weiss (2004), Stark (2002) and Hopper & Martin (1987), concerning the grammaticalization of the indefinite article in Macedonian, Italian and English

respectively, and showed that, although there are some language-specific elements, Givón's thesis provides an adequate general model for explaining the creation of indefinite markers from a cross-linguistic perspective.

Chapter 4

The Article in the Spanish Grammatical Tradition

A common debate in the Hispanic grammatical tradition is the question of the meaning of the article, and whether the category is constituted by a single element, namely, the definite article, or is a bipartite system formed by two opposite elements, *el* and *un*, whose function is to establish if the noun they modify is definite or indefinite.

In the following pages, I will present an overview of the main approaches to the Spanish article. For this purpose, I will offer a revision of the principal grammars and works about the article in Spanish, starting with Nebrija's *Gramática castellana*, from 1492, and finishing with the works of Alonso, Alarcos and Lapesa on this subject.

4.1 From the early grammars to the RAE grammar of 1931

The concept of the article has always been central to the grammatical tradition. One of the most ancient reflections on the nature and function of the article was given by the Greek grammarian Dionysius Thrax, who defined it as a declinable part of the sentence that could precede or follow the noun.

Latin grammarians were fully aware of the inexistence of the article in their language, as can be verified in the phrases of Quintilian and Donatus, presented in (1a) and (1b) (Ramajo 1987:ch. 3):¹

- (1) a. Noster sermo articulos non desiderat [Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria*, 1, 4]
- b. Latini articulum non adnumerant [Donatus, *Ars major*, I, 1-3]

The lack of a Latin article implied that the grammarians of the Romance languages had to turn to other sources in order to describe the role of weakened Latin demonstratives whose behaviour matched that of ἦ, ὅ, and το in ancient Greek, and *ha* in Hebrew.

As stated by Ramajo (1987), the first grammars of Spanish can be divided into three groups, according to their definition of the article: first, those who consider that the article expresses the gender of the noun, such as Nebrija, Busto, Juan de Luna, Fray Diego de la Encarnación and Zumarán; second, those for whom the article serves to distinguish the case of the nouns, such as the anonymous grammar of 1555, Miranda, Saulnier and Fabre; and finally, those who emphasize the role of the article in the determination of nouns, such as Villalón and Correas.

¹Lambert argues that the phrase from Quintilian should be interpreted as follows: ‘Nous, Latins, noun n’avons pas besoin de mots spéciaux pour remplir le rôle d’articles; nos articles, car nous en avons tout aussi bien que les Grecs, sont disséminés au autres parties du discours’ (Lambert 1904: 48, *apud* Ramajo 1987: ch. 3).

4.1.1 Nebrija

Inspired by the Hellenic grammatical tradition, in his grammar of 1492 Nebrija (1992 [1492]: 241) defines the article as follows:

Todas las lenguas cuantas he oido tienen una parte de la oración: la cual no siente ni conoce la lengua Latina. Los griegos la llaman *artion*, los que la volvieron de griego en latín llamaron *le articulo*: que en nuestra lengua quiere decir *artijo*: el cual en el castellano no significa lo que algunos piensan que es una cojuntura o *ñudo* de los dedos: antes se an de llamar *artijos* aquellos *uessos* de que se componen los dedos. Los cuales son unos pequeños miembros a semejança de los cuales se llamaron aquellos *articulo* que añadimos al nombre para demostrar que *genero* es.

Although Nebrija (1992 [1492]: 235-37), does not talk about *un* as opposed to *el*, he recognizes that it can sometimes convey the meaning of QUĪDAM or *cierto*:

Este nombre *uno* o es para contar i entonces no tiene plural por quanto repugna a su significacion salvo si se juntasse con nombre que no tiene singular . como diciendo *unas tiseras. unas tenazas. unas alforjas.* quiero decir *un par de tiseras. un par de tenazas. un par de alforjas.* o es para demostrar alguna cosa particular. como los latinos tienen *quidam* i entonces tomase por *cierto* i puede tener plural como diciendo *un ombre vino. unos ombres vinieron.* Quiero decir que vino *ciert ombre* i vinieron *ciertos ombres*.

This has led Kukenheim (1932: 125-26) to point out that Nebrija, by asserting the equivalence of *un* and QUĪDAM, was on his way to distinguishing between *el* and *un* as expressing definiteness and indefiniteness. However, I agree with Ramajo (1987: ch. 3) that Nebrija's definition is more concerned with explaining the plural uses of *un* than in establishing an opposition with *el*.

4.1.2 Correas

It is only in the next century that the first real attempt to describe the opposition between *el* and *un* in terms of definiteness was made. In his *Arte de la lengua*

castellana, Gonzalo de Correas (1954 [1626]: 143) defines and explains the role of Spanish articles as follows:

Los articulos se ponen con los nombres apelativos ó generales para significar zierta rrelazion, demostrazion i notizia, i singularidad i genero universal: i ansi no se ponen con los nonbres propios, si no es en caso de distinzion, i haziendolos apelativos ó universales. Cuentanse con el nonbre, primera parte de la orazion, porque le aconpañan, i tienen calidades de nonbres en significazion, generos i numeros: no es el articulo parte de por si como le hazen en Griego, sino especie de nonbre. Con exemplos declararare mas su fuerza i uso. Quando digo *dame aca el libro*, se entiende aquel singularmente de que tiene noticia el criado á quien le pido: *el Rrei lo manda*, se entiende el nuestro; i si hablamos de otro, aquel de quien se habla; *el leon es rrei de los animales, la raposa es astuta*, se entiende tan universalmente abrazado el genero i linaxe todo, como si el mundo no tuviese mas de un leon, i una raposa. Mas si dixesemos *dame un libro, un rrei, un leon, una rraposa*, se entiende una qualquiera sin determinazion zierta: lo mismo que si no se pusiese articulo, ni el indefinido *un*, una.

Indeed, as we see in the preceding paragraph, Correas notes with clarity the contrast between NPs containing *el* and *un*, and even recognizes the similarities between NPs containing *un* and BPs. Moreover, in his *Trilingüe de tres artes de las tres lenguas castellana, latina, i griega, todas en romanze*, first printed in 1627, Correas (1984 [1627]: 136) refers explicitly to *un* as an ‘artículo indefinito’, as opposed to *el*, which he calls an ‘artículo demostrativo’(boldface added):²

Uno por todos los generos, i numeros sinifica la unidad primera de los nonbres numerales: i demas deso es mui usado por **nonbre, o artículo indefinito** haziendo demostrazion, o rrelazion de persona, o cosa, no determinada, sino vaga, lo contrario del **artículo demostrativo**, que denota cosa zierta.

Notice that this is the first time in which *un* is referred to explicitly as an indefinite article. Interestingly, in his *Arte de la lengua española castellana* (Cor-

²I quote from the edition of Taboada Cid (1987) which is based on the part dedicated to Spanish from the *Trilingüe*.

reas 1954 [1626]: 177), published only one year before, Correas only refers to *un* as ‘nonbre indefinito’ in contrast with *el*, which he calls simply ‘articulo’. Apart from these details, the texts are almost identical, as it can be seen in the next quote (boldface added):

Uno por todos los xeneros i numeros sinifica la unidad primera de los nombres numerales, i demas deso es mui usado por **nonbre indefinito** haziendo demostrazion ó relazion de persona ó cosa, no determinada sino vaga, lo contrario del **articulo** que denota cosa zierta;

4.1.3 San Pedro

More than a century after Correas, we find the grammar of Benito de San Pedro (1769) which, although in general terms it follows the grammatical tradition established by Nebrija, incorporates some innovative ideas from different sources such as the grammar of Port-Royal. San Pedro’s is, according to Lázaro Carreter (1949: 188), the first modern grammar of the eighteenth century. One of the innovations of San Pedro’s work is that he defines the article as a bipartite category formed by two opposite forms, namely *el* and *un*:³

Los géneros en nuestra España se distinguen por los artículos *el, la, lo,...* o *un, una*. (San Pedro: 126, *apud* Lázaro Carreter 1949: 188)

The grammar of Port-Royal, published in 1660, had a great impact on the concept of determination that prevailed, not only in the Hispanic grammatical tradition, but also in general linguistic theory. According to its authors, the creation of the articles in the Romance languages emerged as a response to the necessity to determine the vague meaning of common nouns. The article is perceived as a grammatical tool whereby the referent of the noun it is attached to

³According to Lázaro Carreter (1949), San Pedro’s grammar is the first to do so. However, as I have just shown, Correas already referred to *un* as as ‘indefinite article’. Nonetheless, it is important to say that Lázaro Carreter is partly right, for in Correas’s *Trilingüe*, in the chapter devoted to the article only *el* is discussed, even if in a later chapter dedicated to the numeral he does oppose *el* to *un*.

is distinguished from the other members of its category; in other words, it limits the extension of the noun (see part II, cap. VII).

It is usually assumed that the grammar of Port-Royal was the first to establish the opposition between definite and indefinite articles; in this opposition, the definite article would unequivocally determine the referent, while the indefinite article would determine it in an incomplete fashion (Lázaro Carreter 1975: 348).⁴ However, as we just said, the opposition between *el* and *un* in terms of definiteness was stated before in Correas's *Trilingüe*, which, nonetheless, probably had a smaller impact than Port-Royal.

4.1.4 RAE (1771, 1854)

The grammar of the *Real Academia de la lengua* (1771) refers to the article as a part of the sentence whose main duty is to establish the gender of nouns. Further on, it adds that when the article is used with count nouns it shows that the object is definite and, on the other hand, when the article is omitted the noun in question is interpreted as indeterminate or indefinite:

Los nombres comunes unas veces admiten artículo, y otras no. Admiten artículo quando se usan en sentido definido, ó determinado, como: los hombres son mortales: porque el sentido de esta proposición comprehende á todos los hombres; pero si se dixese: hombres hay ambiciosos, y hombres moderados, se omite el artículo, porque el sustantivo común hombres está en sentido indeterminado, sin determinar quales son los ambiciosos, ni quales son los moderados. Si decimos: dame los libros, ponemos artículo, porque el que los pide, y el que los ha de dar saben de qué libros determinados se trata, pero si decimos: dame libros, no se pone artículo, porque el que los pide, no habla de ciertos y sabidos libros, sino de qualesquiera que sean (RAE 1771: 52-53).

⁴According to Alonso (1951 [1933]: 182), the idea of the opposition between the definite and the indefinite articles was generalized in the nineteenth century as a consequence of what he considers 'the pedagogic vice of symmetry.'

The subsequent editions of 1772, 1781, and 1796 do not show important changes with respect to the definition of the article, nor do they consider *un* an indefinite article. It is not until 1854 that the Real Academia Española includes a definition of the indefinite article, whose function is described as follows (see García Cervigón 2003):

[la función de *un* es] como verdadero artículo, indicar el género y número gramatical de un objeto, sin asignarle cualidad alguna, como no sea la de unidad (RAE 1854: 6).

According to the RAE (1854: 9), the function of *un* is so similar to that of *el* that it is fully justified to consider it an article:

no repugna en casos semejantes llamar artículos á las voces *un* y *una*, *unos* y *unas*, cuyas funciones se parecen mucho á las de *el* y *la*, *los* y *las*, y aun en singular son á veces idénticas.

The RAE recognizes that along with the indefinite article, *un* is also a numeral adjective when the idea of cardinality is highlighted, and an indefinite pronoun when *uno* is not accompanied by a noun but instead behaves like one itself. Finally, it refrains from considering *un* an article in cases such as *Juan es un angel* or *Qué ruin espectáculo para un Madrid!* In both cases *un* is, according to the 1854 edition, an adjective (García Cervigón 2003).

4.1.5 Bello

As happens with so many subjects in the study of Spanish grammar, Bello's grammar of 1848 can be considered a milestone with respect to the definition of the article in Spanish, for it serves to put an end to the very deep-rooted idea of the article's function being to establish the gender of the noun, suggested by Nebrija and followed by the RAE. Bello denies such a hypothesis on the basis of a series of examples where the form *el* is used before feminine nouns starting with an *a*, such as *el alma*. For Bello (1988 [1848]: §267), the article is in fact a weakened

demonstrative whose function is to express that the noun it accompanies is known to the participants in the discourse:⁵

juntando el artículo definido a un sustantivo, damos a entender que el objeto es determinado, esto es, consabido de la persona a quien hablamos, la cual, por consiguiente, oyendo el artículo, mira, por decirlo así, en su mente al objeto que se le señala.

Although in the chapter devoted to the article, Bello refers exclusively to *el*, he later refers to *un* as an ‘artículo indefinido’, as opposed to its numeral use.⁶ According to him (1988 [1848]: §190), *un* as an indefinite article is used when the referent of the noun is unknown to both speaker and hearer. When *un* is an indefinite article, it has a plural, unlike its use as a numeral, whose meaning is precisely that of singularity:

Uno, una, carece de plural si se limita a significar la unidad. Puede tenerlo en los casos siguientes:

1. Cuando es artículo indefinido; se le da este título siempre que se emplea para significar que se trata de objeto u objetos indefinidos, esto es, no consabidos de la persona o personas a quienes hablamos: *un hombre, una mujer, unos mercaderes, unas casas*.

Bello’s definition of the article in terms of whether the referent is known or unknown to the hearer will be fundamental to the following approaches to the problem in the Hispanic grammatical tradition, as it sets the basis of the differentiation that future grammarians will make between definite and indefinite NPs.⁷

⁵The use of *el* before feminine nouns beginning with *a* is commented on since early grammars. For instance, in the anonymous grammar of 1555 (1977 [1555]: 8), we read:

Este articulo masculino, alguna vez se pone por el articulo femenino, en aquellas dictiones que comiençan por vocal, como *el alma, el agua*, Loqual se haze, por que la pronunciacion sea mas suaue [...].

⁶Just as Correas did.

⁷Note that Bello’s definition of the definite article in terms of whether the referent is known to the the hearer is in many respects very similar to the theory of definiteness in terms of *familiarity* developed by Christophersen (1939) and revived by Heim (1988).

4.1.6 Lenz and Gili y Gaya

Years later, in *La oración y sus partes* (1925), Lenz argued that the function of the article is to signal whether the noun it introduces is a ‘determinate’ or an ‘indeterminate’ one. For him, this semantic contrast is expressed in Spanish by three different possibilities, namely, BPs, which are characterized by complete lack of determination, NPs with an indefinite article and NPs with a definite article.

Taking into account its historical evolution, Lenz claims that the definite article in the Romance and Germanic languages is a determinative pronominal adjective that agrees with the noun in gender and number. From a semantic perspective, it presents the noun it accompanies as previously existing in the mind of the hearer. The indefinite article has the same grammatical status as an adjective, but in contrast to the definite article it denies all determination, indicating to the hearer that the noun refers to any token of the category (Lenz: 1925: §176):

significa la expresa negación de toda determinación, advirtiéndolo al interlocutor que puede pensar en cualquier ejemplar de la especie indicada por el sustantivo.

Note that Lenz’s definition of the indefinite article implies, as Alonso (1951 [1933]: 192-93) has already noted, that all NPs with indefinite articles are interpreted as non-specific, which is clearly not true. This same mistake is made by Gili y Gaya (1964: §183), who, following Lenz, defines the role of *un* as follows: ⁸

[las frases nominales con *un*] significan que nuestro interlocutor puede pensar en cualquier individuo o grupo de individuos entre los de la especie designada por el sustantivo.

In fact, the same idea is also found in Lenz and the grammars of RAE discussed so far. In all of them the use of *un* is interpreted as to signal that the NP refers

⁸As many other grammarians, Gili y Gaya is not keen on the use of *un* in certain contexts such as enumerations or appositions, where, according to him, the use of *un* is a result of the influence of French and English. This position is shared by Salvador de Madariaga, who, as stated by Sacks (1980), once wrote in a letter: ‘I am at war with the parasite *un, una*, imported from English into Spanish’ (Letter to Sacks, dated March 14, 1974).

to ‘any’ individual of the kind. This is clearly wrong as it fails to account for the cases where an indefinite NP with *un* designates a particular (specific) referent, which, although it may be unknown to the hearer, is not so for the speaker.⁹

4.1.7 RAE (1931)

In contrast to the 1854 edition, the 1931 edition of the RAE’s grammar (§77-79), defines the definite article as a part of the sentence whose main function is to circumscribe the extension to which the noun is to be considered. While *el* can only refer to objects known by the speaker and the hearer, the indefinite article *un*, also called the generic or indeterminate article, designates an object unknown to the hearer.

On the other hand, the 1931 RAE’s grammar argues that in some cases, the indefinite and the definite articles are identical: this is so when it is used in a generic context such as *un hombre cauto no acomete empresas mayores a sus fuerzas*. In these contexts, the distinction between the definite and indefinite article is, according to the RAE, irrelevant.¹⁰ Note that later, in the *Esbozo* (1973: §2.9.4), the RAE insists on the differentiation between the indefinite article and the numeral: *un* is considered a numeral when it is opposed, explicitly or implicitly, to other numeral quantifiers, as in *Más vale un toma que dos te daré*.

4.2 On the grammatical status of *un*

4.2.1 Alonso

One of the most important works ever written about the problem of the Spanish article is undoubtedly Amado Alonso’s ‘Estilística y gramática del artículo en

⁹See section 3.3.

¹⁰This was already suggested in the 1854 version. However, it is not entirely true, because it implies that the generic use of *el* and *un* have the same interpretation, which is false. I will discuss the generic use of *un* and its differences with generic *el* in section 8.5.

español' (1951 [1933]). In this text, Alonso examines the different contexts in which the Spanish article appears in order to offer an elaborate description of its grammatical function and its differences to other determiners, especially with *un*.

The linguistic category of *article*, he says, is the result of a deeply rooted logical conception of human language which implies that the concept of determination is necessarily present in men's minds. According to this, a language like Latin, which lacked articles, created them from weakened pronouns once it felt the necessity of expressing determination in an explicit manner. However, as Alonso notes, it is evident that the use of the article changes within a language over time and therefore the meaning of articles cannot be considered as stable, nor is it identical among different languages. Moreover, there are many languages that lack an indefinite article and in those in which it does exist, it is usually created later than the definite article. For all these reasons, Alonso concludes that there is no general grammatical category of *article* and that the capacity of articles to determine in a definite manner, while being a feature shared among articles in different languages, is not its idiomatic essence. This essence, he says, must be determined with reference to particular languages, taking into account the particular use of the articles in each language.

Alonso claims that the concept of 'determination' as it is usually understood, namely, to specify or distinguish an object from its peers or consider it known both to speaker and hearer, is not useful in describing the behaviour of the Spanish article. For example, in Spanish we say that *alguien se quitó el sombrero*, even if that person has many hats, and it is possible to say both *extendió la mano* and *extendió una mano*. Also, by saying *He visto en la calle a un hombre y una mujer furiosos*, the use of the definite article does not imply that the hearer will be able to identify precisely to which street the speaker refers. These two arguments are used by Alonso as proof that determination is not the basic function of *el*.

According to him, the main function of the Spanish article is to emphasize the

independence or autonomy of the object denoted by the noun it modifies. The article is nothing more than a phonetically reduced demonstrative pronoun which has lost its stress and its relationship to the other members of the demonstrative paradigm.

For the article to be a true definite determiner, it should be opposed to an indefinite determiner.¹¹ However, from Alonso's point of view, *un* is not an indefinite article: it has, he says, kept its pronominal value and even, in some cases, its numerical one. Moreover, *un* is still a stressed word, by contrast with *el/la*. He accepts that in Spanish the article is part of a bilateral system; but the counterpart of the definite article is not *un*, but the absence of any means of determination, that is the BP. In fact, he claims, the contrast between *el* and *un* is not semantic, but merely pragmatic.

Alonso argues that the main difference between NPs with articles and BPs is that the second refers not to the individual, but to the class as a whole from a qualitative and not a quantitative perspective. In other words, while a NP with an article refers to 'existing' things, the BPs refer to 'essential' things:¹²

Echando mano de la pareja de conceptos filosóficos esencia-existencia, diremos que el nombre con artículo se refiere a objetos existenciales, y, sin él, a objetos esenciales. Con artículo, a las cosas; sin él, a nuestras valoraciones subjetivas y categoriales de las cosas. (Alonso 1951 [1933]:

¹¹Alonso argues that Spanish grammars only included the definition of the indefinite article in the eighteenth century, and that this was only in imitation of foreign models, especially French. Again, this is not entirely true (Cf. Correas's *Trilingüe*).

¹²Lázaro Carreter (1975: 353) argues that it is not always true that BPs refer to essential objects, as the following examples prove:

- i. Vi que vaciaban los sacos sobre **cubierta**, extendiendo toda la arena hasta cubrir toda la superficie de los tablones [Galdós]
- ii. Los asientos estaban ocupados, y había público de pie en **pasillos** y **estrado**.

In all these examples, Lázaro Carreter claims, the article is optional. However, it is difficult to admit that its absence causes the effects described by Alonso. For all these reasons, it seems to Lázaro Carreter that the arguments of Alonso regarding the contrast between the use and absence of the article are invalid when they are contrasted with a wider range of examples than that offered by Alonso: his examples seem to be selected to prove his theory regardless of the more common use of Spanish.

162)

According to Alonso, the variation between the presence and absence of the article also has a stylistic effect: where both possibilities are grammatically correct, the use of the article highlights the logical reference to the real object, while its exclusion lends an emotive tone to the reference.¹³

With respect to the contrast between *un* y *el*, Alonso points out that it is usually accepted that these two forms express indefinite and definite reference, where definiteness implies that the hearer can identify the referent. Alonso tries to prove two things: first, that, although *un* is frequently an indefinite pronoun, it can never be a true article; second, that in the cases where *el* and *un* actually act as opposites, the contrast between them can never be described as an opposition between definiteness and indefiniteness. In the following paragraphs we will review Alonso's main arguments against the existence of a Spanish indefinite article.

First, he claims that in contrast to the definite article *el*, which through its development in the history of the Spanish language has lost both meaning and phonetic substance, *un* has kept its original meaning. Alonso proposes seven 'proofs' that, in his opinion, show that *un* is not a content-free word:¹⁴

- 1) Except in Murcia, *un, una* is always stressed: *ún toro, úna vaca*. Consider for example the contrast between *un día* (stressed) and *hundía* (unstressed). The fact that *un* is still a stressed word implies that it is not grammaticalized and therefore it still has a lexical meaning.¹⁵
- 2) *Un* is synonymous with *cierto* in past tense sentences when it modifies time related names and with *algún* in future ones: *Un/Cierto día salieron padre*

¹³Alonso says: 'la ausencia (de artículo) va acompañada de un conato de la emoción y de la voluntad por hacer descollar sus intereses sobre la organización racional de la expresión' (Alonso 1951 [1933]: 173).

¹⁴By 'content-free' he simply means that it does not have semantic content.

¹⁵He says: '[a]duzco el acento sólo como manifestación de que *un* no está gramaticalizado, vaciado de significación léxica' (Alonso 1951 [1933]: 184).

e hijo; Un/Algún día lo verás. This shows that *un* has a lexical meaning and therefore cannot be an article.¹⁶

- 3) *Un* is correlated with *otro* in distributive structures. In these constructions, *un* can be accompanied by a definite article, which would be impossible if it were itself an article.
- 4) The opposite of *un* is *ningún*, not *el*.
- 5) *Un* combines with the relative pronoun *que* to form ponderative or cogitative structures: *una blanca que deslumbra.*
- 6) *Un* can be used on its own, in the absence of other nouns like any other adjective: *los amigos se separaron. Unos se fueron hacia arriba y otros hacia abajo.*
- 7) *Un* can be pronominalized: *uno ha traído una carta para usted.*

All these facts show, according to Alonso, that *un* cannot be an article, but rather it has a pronominal meaning which makes it closer to *alguno* than to *el*. In fact, Alonso continues, *el* and *un* behave as opposites only in the communicative situation of an unknown entity being introduced into the discourse: while the first mention is made by means of a NP with *un*, the subsequent mentions of the referent are made with a NP containing *el*. This ‘presentative’ function of *un*, is, according to Alonso (1951 [1933]: 186), a consequence of its numeral status; the noun *un* modifies indicates the kind to which the referent belongs. Therefore, the NP *un estudiante* can be paraphrased as ‘one individual of the student kind’.

In Spanish, the classification of a noun as a member of a category is made by means of *un* with count nouns, and with a BP with mass nouns: *Eso es un anillo/*

¹⁶This remark from Alonso is extremely interesting because it proves the author’s intuition about the ambiguity of *un* in terms of specificity and its relation with past tense and future. We will discuss this issue in chapter 8.

Eso es agua. If the noun refers to people, there is a relative freedom in the use or absence of *un*, but while the use of the article *soy un soldado* answers preferably the question *¿quién eres?* the BP *soy soldado* answers the question *¿qué eres?* As we have seen, according to Alonso, *un* has two principal functions: to present and to classify. However, he says, it is the classificatory one which is the basic and foremost function of *un*.

In conclusion, for him *un* is never an article: Spanish has only one article, namely *el*, whose main function is not to attribute a definite meaning to the reference, but to assert its independence and actual existence. Finally, referring to the meaning of *un*, Alonso (1951 [1933]: 194) concludes:¹⁷

un y *una* constituyen simplemente el procedimiento de introducir nominalmente un objeto que antes no estaba en la esfera de lo común de atención de los dialogantes, y se hace con el expediente y rodeo de declarar a qué clase empírica de objetos pertenece el nuevo individuo. Una vez dentro de la esfera de atención, ya se le sigue nombrando con *el*, *la*, en cuanto objetos consabidos en su existencia, según la función propia del artículo.

4.2.2 Seco, and Fernández Ramírez

The links between demonstratives and definite articles have been pointed out on several occasions. For example, Seco (1968: 46) defines the definite article as a special kind of demonstrative that indicates that the referent is part of the attention field of the hearer, but without specifying its spatial or temporal situation. It is, in his words, an ‘uncoloured pronoun’.¹⁸

¹⁷It is interesting that although Alonso firmly denies the article nature of *un*, his conclusion about its function is in fact very similar to that offered by those linguists who do accept that *un* is an article. See Bello (1988 [1848]), Lapesa (2000 [1973]) and Leonetti (1999), among others.

¹⁸Seco (1968: 46) notes that in some situations, demonstratives also lose their spatial deictic properties, as in the following example:

- i. Los riesgos más tristes, por ser los más insidiosos, nos llegan de nuestros semejantes, de aquellos que juzgamos nuestros amigos, nuestros hermanos [Palacio Valdés].

On the other hand, for him the numeral *uno* can be used as an indefinite, and in that case it has a plural form. This indefinite *uno*, when it is an adjective, contrasts with the definite article and therefore is known as an *indefinite article*. *Un* oscillates between its numeral and article function. In conclusion, according to Seco (1968: 51), the articles *el* and *un* are nothing more than determinative adjectives whose main feature is to precede nouns and express whether or not they are determined.

The contrast between NPs containing the article and BPs was again highlighted in the grammar of Fernández Ramírez (1987: §143), first published in 1951, according to whom the variation between the presence and absence of the article has to do with the knowledge of the identity of the referent. For him, this is a natural consequence of the article's origin as a demonstrative pronoun. In fact, he claims, there are so many similarities in the use of the article and the demonstrative that there are good reasons to consider the article a member of the demonstrative system. However, there is an important difference between them: while the article is always a secondary term and can only be a primary term when it is grouped with a noun or a prepositional or relative complement, the demonstratives can appear in isolation, without any class of adjuncts.

Like Alonso (1951 [1933]), Fernández Ramírez (1987) highlights the opposition between NPs containing an article and BPs which are characterized by giving a qualitative and not quantitative description, that is, the referent is not actualized but is rather presented in its essence. Also in coincidence with Alonso, Fernández Ramírez does not consider *un* to be an indefinite article, but again he does recognize its opposition to *el*, specifically with respect to the way they introduce or present entities:

las lenguas modernas marcan con artículo aquello sobre lo que existe un previo estado de conciencia y con un pronombre indefinido las cosas no supuestas (Fernández Ramírez 1987: §143).

4.2.3 Alarcos

More than thirty years after Alonso first published his text ‘Estilística y gramática del artículo en español’, Emilio Alarcos Llorach (1999 [1967]) reintroduced and developed the main arguments of the former linguist regarding the non-existence of an indefinite article in Spanish and in favour of the opposition between *el* and BPs.

According to Alarcos (1999 [1967]), one of the most important characteristics of the article is its dependence, that is, its incapacity to perform on its own any function in the sentence. In this sense, the graphic independence of the article has led to confusion: *el* is in fact a morphological sign that determines in a certain fashion the NP with which it is associated and, at the same time, presupposes the existence of the referent expressed by the noun.

In order to determine the basic value of the article, it is necessary, in the opinion of Alarcos (1999 [1968]: 230-34), to contrast its use with the employment of BPs. For example, the presence of *el* is mandatory in subjects like *el perro ladra* or objects like *lecciones al niño*, but optional in subjects containing plural NPs, such as *ladran perros*. Considering these examples, Alarcos proposes that the presence of the article is governed by the lexical or morphological characteristics of the NP, and that the opposite of NPs containing a definite article in Spanish are BPs and not NPs with *un*.

On the one hand, proper names are generally incompatible with the article, but on the other hand, only NPs with articles can replace a proper name. Thus, Alarcos concludes that proper names include in their basic meaning the meaning of articles and therefore the role of *el* might be to convert common names into proper names.

For him, the difference between proper and common names is that while the former have unique referents, the latter do not identify, but rather classify an

entity among others. Therefore, the basic function of the article, Alarcos (1999: §14) argues, consists of turning a classifying name (*nombre clasificador*) into an identifying one (*nombre identificador*). Note that for Alarcos, one of the basic roles of the article is *nominalization*:¹⁹

Cuando un artículo se antepone a elementos cuya función habitual no es la del nombre, el papel de aquél evidentemente consiste en trasponer tales elementos a la función que el nombre desempeña en la oracion.

This idea has been refuted by Lázaro Carreter (1975: 352) who argues that in phrases such as *tres tintos*, *ese alto*, *mi pequeña*, the numeral, demonstrative and possessive also serve as nominalizers and therefore nominalization cannot be considered to be the main role of the article.

In the opinion of Alarcos (1999 [1967]: 227), the idea according to which the definite article signals that the referent is known has led to the identification of *un* as an indefinite article, mainly due to the fact that it serves to introduce new entities into the discourse. According to this point of view, there is a continuum of determination in Spanish, starting with the definite article, followed by the so-called indefinite article, and concluding with BPs as the most indefinite means of referral: *el libro* - *un libro* - *libro*.

From Alarcos's perspective, the traditional distinction among the three varieties of *un*, namely as a numeral, as an indefinite pronoun, and as an indefinite article, has no real justification as these variants share a common meaning: they all singularize the noun they appear with. Furthermore, the distinction between numeral and indefinite uses is also irrelevant since in both cases *un* acts as a quantifier (Alarcos 1999 [1968]: 275 and 1994: §167).

Inspired by Alonso, Alarcos argues that the tonicity of *un* and its independence from the noun are proof of the inadequacy of considering it an article. Moreover, *un* cannot be an article since it can be used as a noun, in which case, it can

¹⁹See also Alarcos (1999 [1967]: 233).

appear with an article and even be modified by adjectives, as in *Ha comprado unas preciosas*. Also, when *uno* is preceded by an article, it usually opposes *el otro*, as in *El uno era grande, el otro era pequeño*. Finally, another important difference between *el* and *un* is that *un* can co-occur with *cualquiera*: *un libro cualquiera / Uno cualquiera*.

According to Alarcos (1999 [1968]: 276-79), from a functional perspective, *un* should be considered an adjective for two reasons: first, it is an autonomous element when it functions as an attribute (*todos somos uno*); second, it is an adjacent element to the noun in the structure of the NP (*quiero un libro*).

As an adjective, *un* normally appears before the noun and disallows the presence of the article.²⁰ Regarding its semantic value as a numeral, *un* should only take singular values and accept plurals solely in the case of the *pluralia tantum* nouns. However, it is clear that in Spanish *unos* combines with all kinds of plural nouns: these are precisely the indefinite uses of *un*. It is important to say that in Alarcos's view, in the case of singular NPs, it is impossible to discriminate between the numeral and the indefinite value of *un*. In other words, a sentence like *hay un libro* can be interpreted in three ways: as a numeral (*hay **un** libro y no dos*); with an indeterminate value, that is, as a classifier or presenter (*hay **un** libro y no una pluma*); or with an indefinite value (*hay **un** libro cualquiera*).

According to Alarcos (1999 [1968]: 280), in the case of mass nouns, the distinction between singular and plural is often stylistic: the singular does not really quantify and the plural is usually used only to express the subdivision of the entity expressed by the noun. For example, there is no real difference between *el vino de Rioja* and *los vinos de Rioja*, nor is there between *el beneficio fue extraordinario* and *los beneficios fueron extraordinarios*.

For him, with count nouns, while the plural expresses a variable quantity of

²⁰Alarcos classifies *un* among what he calls 'class II adjectives' together with *algún*, *cierto* and the possessive pronouns.

entities, the singular states the class to which the noun refers.²¹ Singular count nouns are incapable of referring by themselves to a particular entity; for this task they require the presence of a determiner.

Additionally, in Alarcos's (1999 [1968]: 282) view, the morphological opposition between singular and plural does not truly correspond to the opposition between unity and plurality, but rather to the one between non-plurality and plurality. In the case of count nouns, non-plurality corresponds to 'one unit', while in the case of mass nouns it corresponds to a set. Furthermore, both mass and count singulars are on their own indifferent to any kind of segmentation. In fact, the true singularization (*singularización o indicación de unidad*) can only be achieved by the use of the lexical quantifier *un*.

In conclusion, for Alarcos (1999 [1968]: 283) *un* is functionally not an article but rather a class II adjective, whose main function is that of singularizing the referent. In this respect, *un* behaves exactly like other indefinite quantifiers such as *algún* and *cierto*. When it is used as a plural, *un* refers to a unitary set (*conjunto unitario*) of elements or varieties that is distinguished from others that belong to the same semantic field or class, and therefore its singularization function is also attested.

4.2.4 Alcina & Blecua, and Martínez

The theses of Alonso and Alarcos about the article were echoed to different extents by many Spanish linguists of the second half of the twentieth century. For example, in their grammar Alcina & Blecua (1975: §3.4.0.1) restrict the term 'article' exclusively to *el*. They agree with Alonso (1951 [1933]) that the independence of *un* with respect to the noun it precedes constitutes a notable difference between *el* and *un*. According to them, the behaviour of *un* before nouns has coincidences not only with the article but also with other pronouns in adjectival function and

²¹In contrast, the plural of mass nouns expresses varieties of the kind denoted by the NPs.

conclude that the opposition known/unknown is only one of the many oppositions expressed by the article: in any case, say the authors, in explaining this contrast one should also consider BPs.

As a numeral, *un* distinguishes one token of a set without adding any kind of additional determination. This original meaning allows it to move directly to the other two implied connotations of *un*. These are: the value of *undifferentiation* which leads to the indetermination or indefiniteness of the token selected, on the basis that all the members of the set are equal, as in (2a); the value of *typification*, in which the selected token is taken as the prototype of its class, as in (2b) (Alcina & Blecua 1975: 4.6.6.-4.6.8).

- (2) a. arrancóse una chambre y unas enaguas [Palacio Valdés, *Marta y María*, 125]
 b. la palidez subió tanto de punto, que realmente parecía un cadáver [Palacio Valdés, *Marta y María*, 210]
 Proponte que me vuelva un Castelar o un Cánovas del Castillo, y me vuelvo [Pardo Bazán, *Insolación*, 106]

It is the nature of the noun preceded by *un*, together with the context in which it appears, that determines whether *un* has a numeral or an indefinite value. With count nouns, these two values are so intimately bonded that it is often difficult to distinguish one from the other. However, the numeral value is highlighted with the appearance of other numerals, and the indefinite is used especially when an unknown or new entity is introduced into the discourse.

Finally, according to Alcina & Blecua, *un* is sometimes used with a ponderative value, when it appears as a reinforcement of negation (3a), or with abstract or mass nouns followed by adjectives or relative clauses (3b):

- (3) a. Señor presidente, estoy dispuesta a no decir una sola palabra que pueda comprometer a mis amigos [Palacio Valdés, *Marta y María*: 302]
 b. esas cogidas al anochecer, acaso con un cielo lívido [Azorín, *Castilla*: 51]

In conclusion, Alcina & Blecua (1975) refrain from calling *un* ‘indefinite article’, although they recognize its role as an indefinite marker. According to them, the indefinite value of *un* is an extension of its numeral value.

Along the same line as Alonso and Alarcos, Martínez (1989: 47-48) denies the existence of an indefinite article. For him, the fact that *un* is incompatible with *el* is proof that these two linguistic unities belong to different categories. Martínez describes *un* an adjective which always precedes the noun with which it agrees in gender and number. In contrast with singular BPs that only designate the kind to which the referent belongs, *un* refers to an existing entity. On the other hand, in comparison to the article (*el*), it implies that the referent is unknown and has not been previously mentioned and therefore, there are not enough elements in the discourse to determine the identity of the referent with more precision. Finally, *un* can also be pronominalized, and in these cases, it can refer anaphorically to a previously introduced referent, as in *necesitábamos un coche y adquirimos uno*.

Like Alarcos, Martínez recognizes that, in the singular, it is difficult to distinguish between *un(o)* as an indefinite adjective and *un(o)* as a numeral. According to him (1989: 49), in a sentence such as *compró un lápiz*, *un* expresses quantity but at the same time it presents the object as one not previously identified. The quantification is given by the singular and the indeterminacy is principally provided by *un*. Singularity and indeterminacy, he argues, are both features of the meaning of *un*: this can be demonstrated by the possibility of highlighting any of them by means of the context, as shown in (4):

- (4) a. No compré un lápiz, sino dos. [Singularity]
 b. No compré un lápiz sino una pluma. [Indefiniteness]

For Martínez (1989: 51), these two values are only contextually differentiated and are not two different linguistic elements. The fact that *un* is the only cardinal numeral that cannot co-appear with *el* is, in his perspective, a proof of this:²²

²²It is not clear to me how the fact that *un* is the only numeral that disallows the presence of

- (5) a. Compré dos lápices / los dos lápices.
b. Compré un lápiz / *el un lápiz.

4.2.5 Lapesa

The debate about the grammatical status of *un* was addressed in 1973 by Lapesa, who in his article ‘*Un* como artículo indefinido en español’ (2000 [1973]: 477-87) replies to the arguments first proposed by Alonso and later developed by Alarcos concerning the inadequacy of considering *un* as an indefinite article. As we will see in the following pages, Lapesa, on the basis of arguments related to the evolution of *un*, insists on the role of this form as an indefinite marker and on its use as a counterpart of *el*.

According to Lapesa, the fact that grammars before the Port-Royal grammar did not recognize the existence of the indefinite article does not imply that it did not exist. The grammarians of the fifteenth to seventeenth centuries were immensely influenced by the Classical and Hebrew traditions and therefore they were familiar with the concept of definite articles. In contrast, the use of the unitary numeral before nouns, not as a quantifier but as an indefinite, had no precedents in these ancient languages. Moreover, the formal identity between *un* as an indefinite determiner and the numeral added difficulty to its recognition as an article. However, he adds, the opposition between *el* and *un* was so obvious that even Correas recognized it in his grammar.

For Lapesa (2000 [1973]: 480), the fact that *un* is a stressed word is not sufficient reason for it not to be an article: the history of Spanish is full of examples of a stressed word that in the course of time becomes unstressed and vice versa, without any modification in its grammatical function. In the case of *un*, its stress might be a result of its ‘presentative’ character, that is, its use in introducing new

the article should prove the non-existence of the indefinite article.

entities into discourse, often accompanied by an expressive prominence.²³

Lapesa recognizes that the opposition between *el* and *un* is not the only one relevant in the way nouns are presented; BPs play, undoubtedly, an important role. However, in order to give a detailed account of the problem, it is also necessary to consider other means of determination such as the demonstratives, possessives, numerals, and even indefinite pronouns.

Based on the work of Gustave Guillaume on the value of the article in French, and the concept of ‘actualization’ introduced as such by Charles Bally, Lapesa proposes that *el* and *un* share a number of characteristics regarding their possibilities to co-appear with other determiners.²⁴ For example, they are both incompatible with existential indefinites (6a), and they reject prenominal possessives but accept postnominal ones (6b).

- (6) a. **el/un ningún hombre*
 **el/un hombre ninguno*
 **el/un algún hombre*
 **el/un hombre alguno*
 b. **el/un su hombre*
 el/un hombre suyo

²³Notice that the stressed nature of *un* is not unquestioned. Consider the next quote from Trujillo (1987: 357-58):

El que *un* pueda ser tónico, especialmente en posición inicial de grupo fónico y ante pausa o en posiciones en las que el énfasis del contexto —como la poesía— lo piden, no quiere decir que lo sea funcionalmente. También es tónico el artículo en posición inicial de grupo fónico, como lo sabe cualquiera que haya hecho experimentos espectográficos. Pensar que en *le espera un señor*, *un* es tónico, supone un absoluto desinterés por los hechos lingüísticos y un total desprecio por la verificación científica.[...] En todo caso, además, *un* no se opone a *ún*, ya que, semánticamente, no se diferencian; lo que quiere decir, y es bueno saberlo de una vez, que ni en *un* ni en *el* es relevante el acento, por lo que no se trata de una diferencia funcional, ni se puede aducir como prueba de tal. *Un* y *el* son funcionalmente indiferentes al acento, por lo que sus realizaciones pueden ser fuertes o débiles, según el contexto. Se trata de una cuestión fonológica y es fonológicamente como hay que resolverla, ya que los datos fonéticos sólo pueden confundir en cuestiones como estas, que, siendo tan minúsculas, pueden utilizarse como pruebas sin el debido control.

²⁴‘Actualization’, in Bally’s terms, consists of identifying a concept with a ‘real’ representation. It is determining the extension of the noun. See Bally (1965: 77).

On the other hand, *el* and *un* differ in their compatibility with demonstratives and the free-choice universal *cualquiera*: while *un* rejects demonstratives in any position (7a) and *cualquiera* in a prenominal position (7b), it can combine with a postnominal *cualquiera* (7c); *el* can appear with postnominal demonstratives (7d) but cannot be combined with *cualquiera* in any position (7e).

- (7) a. *Un este hombre
 *Un hombre este
 b. *Un cualquier hombre
 c. Un hombre cualquiera
 d. El hombre este
 e. *El cualquier hombre
 *El hombre cualquiera

Similarity and differentiation can both cause incompatibility between linguistic forms. According to Lapesa, the incompatibility between *el* and *un* is due to the fact that both are determiners that presuppose the existence of the referent; in other words, they are the two members of an opposition.²⁵ For this same reason, they are incompatible with *ninguno* as this quantifier implies the non-existence of the referent. *Un* and *algún* cannot co-appear because they are very similar, not only diachronically, but synchronically as well. The same happens in the case of *el* in combination with prenominal demonstratives. The possibility of *el* appearing with postnominal demonstratives and of *un* appearing with postnominal *cualquiera* is due to the fact that in these examples *el* and *un* function as ‘empty terms’ that can therefore be complemented by a ‘full term’ in a postnominal position.

About the possibility of *un* appearing on its own, Lapesa argues that if a sentence like *compró uno* can be used as a paraphrase of *compró un libro* it is only because in the latter example *un* is an indefinite quantifier and not an

²⁵Note that this is not entirely accurate, for as I have previously explained, non-specific indefinites do not presuppose existence. See section 3.3.

article. *Un* as an article is, like *el*, an empty determiner that cannot perform on its own the function of a NP: only full determiners can do so, sometimes with formal variations, such as *algún* vs. *alguno*. That is why the sentences **compró el* and **compró un* are ungrammatical as paraphrases of *compró el libro* and *compró un libro*, respectively.

For Lapesa, the strongest argument against *un* being an article is its connection with the numeral and indefinite paradigms.²⁶ The link between the indefinite article, the numeral and the indefinite adjective is so evident that even the grammars that defend the existence of the indefinite article recognize that the limits between these three categories are difficult to establish. A parallel similarity exists between demonstratives and the definite article; however, the differentiation in their form has led to a clear distinction between these two classes of determiners. On the contrary, the formal identity between the different variants of *un* makes it hard to distinguish one from the other.

According to Lapesa (2000 [1973]: 484), the difference between Latin and the Romance languages is that the mother tongue only distinguishes between ‘virtual’ and ‘actual’ nouns by means of determiners that express quantity, possession, indefiniteness, distance, and so on, whereas the Romance languages have two grammatical instruments without any semantic content, whose function is in turn to actualize a hitherto ‘virtual noun’.

Just as the definite articles *el* and *la* derive from Latin demonstratives *ILLE* and *ILLA*, the numeral *ŪNUS* has evolved into a marker of indefiniteness, whose main function is to introduce new referents into discourse. Finally, as Lapesa says (2000 [1973]: 487):

[c]omo actualizador vacío, *un*, *una* tiene por único oponente a *el*, *la*. Ambos tienen posibilidades e incompatibilidades comunes o paralelas para la combinación con actualizadores llenos. Ambos se han de-

²⁶Notice that these similarities are predicted by persistence, as defined by Hopper (1991). See section 2.4.

sarrollado en el transcurso de los siglos, a costa del sustantivo sin actualizador, en circunstancias contextuales comunes. Aunque la extensión de *el, la* esté más avanzada y su independencia respecto de los demostrativos sea mayor que la de *un, una* respecto de numerales e indefinidos, ambos desempeñan función de artículo.

4.3 Summary

In the preceding pages I have offered a review of the different viewpoints on the article in the Hispanic grammatical tradition. First, section 4.1 focuses on the different approaches to the explanation of the article's function in early grammars, including those of Nebrija, Correas, and San Pedro. I have also commented on the definition of the article in the grammars of the RAE, and the work of Bello and Lenz. Also in this section I have shown that in contrast to Alonso's (1951 [1933]) claims, the term 'indefinite article' was first used in Spanish in Correas's *Trilingüe*.

Section 4.2 provides an overview of the main arguments of Alonso against the article status of *un*, and the influence that his view had on the grammatical tradition of the twentieth century (cf. Seco 1968, Fernández Ramírez 1987, Alarcos 1999 [1967] & 1999 [1968], etc). Finally, at the end of this section, I have discussed Lapesa's response to Alonso and Alarcos.

As we have seen, the debate about the function of *el* and the adequacy of calling *un* an indefinite article is far from solved. As for my view on this subject, in general terms, I agree with Lapesa's analysis. This seems to me to be a consequence of the diachronic nature of my research. It is true that the differentiation between numeral and article is not always straightforward. However, it is my belief that the fact that its linguistic evolution is not so advanced is not an obstacle to recognizing that *un* has acquired, over the course of time, innovative values with respect to the numeral that legitimize its inclusion in the Spanish article paradigm. In this

sense, it is worth recalling Lapesa's (2000 [1973]: 487) words:

Cierto que la extensión de *un, una* está más retrasada que la de *el, la*; pero es innegable que son paralelas.

Chapter 5

Latin Antecedents and Romance Panorama

In the following pages, I shall present a very brief survey of the origin and use of the indefinite article, existential and impersonal pronouns in Latin and Romance. The text is divided into four main sections: in the first, we describe the main characteristics of $\bar{U}NUS$ in Latin and explain its use in the Romance languages; in the second section, we review the indefinite pronoun paradigm of Latin, with special attention to those items that, by form or meaning, are related to the evolution of the indefinite article, that is $QU\bar{I}DAM$ and $\check{A}L\check{I}QUIS$; the third deals with distributive forms; finally, the fourth section is devoted to the problem of impersonality. There, we analyse the way in which Latin expressed the idea of an indeterminate subject, and then we proceed to describe the formation of Romance impersonal or generic pronouns.

5.1 ŪNUS

5.1.1 ŪNUS in Latin

The Latin unitary numeral ŪNUS descends from *OINOS.¹ According to Ernout & Meillet, it was originally used to express exclusivity, as in ‘only one’, ‘the only’, and only later it came to designate the unitary numeral.²

As the unit (1a) ŪNUS replaced the root *SEM (from which SEMEL), but with the nuance of ‘only’, it was supplanted by SŌLUS, or at least reinforced by it, as in ŪNUS SŌLUS (1b). Notice that ŪNUS was also frequently used to express identity, that is, with the meaning of ‘one and the same’, either on its own or connected with IDEM (1c). (Lewis & Short 1956 [1879] sv; Ernout & Meillet 1959: 748).³

- (1) a. mulieres duas pejores esse quam **unam** [Plautus, *Curculio*, I, 33]
 Pompejus ... plus potest **unus**, quam ceteri omnes [Cicero, *Epistulae ad Atticum*, 6, 1, 3]
uno exemplo ne omnes vitam viverent [Plautus, *Miles Gloriosus*, 3, 1, 132]
- b. **unus** est **solus** inventus, qui... [Cicero, *Pro Sestio*, 62, 130]
- c. exitis quidem omnium **unus** et **idem** fuit [Cicero, *De Divinatione*, 2, 47, 97]

The individualizing meaning of ŪNUS made it very common as a correlative to ALIUS and ALTER, and in this case it could be also plural. Also frequent, were

¹Latin cardinals ŪNUS, DUO and TRES are inflected. For more information about cardinals and their morphology, see Grandgent (1907: 37) and Lindsay (1895: 66).

²The fact that the cardinal value of ŪNUS is secondary explains that the ordinal and distributive numerals PRĪMUS, SINGULĪ and SEMEL do not descend from it (Ernout & Meillet 1959: 748).

³From a typological perspective, it is interesting to note that while Greek and Armenian preserved *sem- with the meaning of ‘one’, the Italic and Slavic languages used *OINO (e.g. Prussian *ains* and Slavic *inŭ*). Note that the form *OINO is also attested in the Greek word which means ‘one on a dice’ (Meillet 1977 [1928]: 45). On the other hand, regarding the evolution from *OINO to ŪNUS, Palmer (1954: 217) argues that although oi- was preserved in Old Latin, by the time of Plautus it had been monophthongized to Ū-, judging by Plautus’s pun of LYDUS and LUDUS, which derives from LOIDOS. For more information about cardinals and their morphology, see Grandgent (1907: 37) and Lindsay (1895: 66).

the contrapositions of ALIUS to ALIUS, ALTER to ALTER, and ŪNUS to ŪNUS (2a). These constructions are notably frequent in the *Vulgate*, as we can see in (2b) (Diez 1973 [1876]: 77; Plater 1926: 73; Roby 1875: 490):

- (2) a. **unus** et **alter** adsuitur pannus [Horatius, *Ars Poetica*, 15]
Alius alium percontamus: quoja navis? Quid vehit? [Plautus, *Stichus*, 370]
Alteri apud **alteros** formidinem facere. Pro metu repente gaudium mutatur: milites **alius alium** laeti appellant [Sallus, *Belli Jugurthini*, 53]
- b. Tunc duo erunt in agro: **unus** assumitur, et **unus** relinquitur [*Vulgate*, Matthew, 24:40]
Tunc crucifiguntur cum eo duo latrones: **unus** a dextris, et **unus** a sinistris [*Vulgate*, Matthew, 27:38]
Et dixit **unus** verba huiusmodi et **alius aliter** [*Vulgate*, Kings, I, 22:20]
Duo viri erant in civitate una, **unus** dives et **alter** pauper [*Vulgate*, Samuel, II, 12:1]

The origin of the Romance indefinite article can be traced as far back as the works of Plautus and Cicero, where there are some examples in which the cardinal value of ŪNUS is weakened. In these cases, ŪNUS is said to be used as an alternative expression to QUĪDAM, for it serves to introduce new prominent entities into discourse, as in (3a). Notice that, although less frequent, there are also some examples in which ŪNUS is better translated by ‘any’, as in (3b), whose English translation is ‘(I) who speak about these matters as a (any) father’ and ‘like an (any) ordinary soldier’, respectively (Ernout & Thomas, 1953: 193).⁴

- (3) a. Est huic **unus** servus violentissimus [Plautus, *Truculentus*, 243]
Unum conclaue concubinae quod dedit miles [Plautus, *Miles Gloriosus*, 140-1]

⁴The use of ŪNUS as a synonym of QUĪDAM is commented on by numerous authors. See, for example, Bourciez (1923: 98), Elcock (1960: 71), Nyrop (1903: 356 and 1925: 170), and Rohlf (1968: 113).

Ibidem **una** aderit mulier lepida [Plautus, *Pseudolius*, 948]

Unam adspicio adulescentulam [Terentius, *Andria*, 118]

- b. Sicut **unus** pater familias his de rebus loquor [Cicero, *De Oratore*, 1, 29]

tamquam **unus** manipularis [Cicero, *Epistulae ad Atticum*, 9, 10, 2]

This use of $\bar{U}NUS$ is extremely frequent in the Vulgate, as shown in (4). Thus, although it is far from being obligatory, it is precisely in this weakened variety of $\bar{U}NUS$ that the origin of the Romance indefinite article is to be found.⁵

- (4) Accedens **unus** scriba [Vulgate, Matthew 8:19]

Accessit ad eum **una** ancilla [Vulgate, Matthew, 26: 69]

5.1.2 $\bar{U}NUS$ in Romance

Latin cardinals were preserved, as we can see from how $\bar{U}NUS$ evolved in some of the daughter languages: Rumanian, *unu*, French, Provençal and Catalan *un*, Italian, Spanish, and Galician *uno*, and Portuguese *um*. The flexion in numerals is, as in Latin, very limited, the descendants of $\bar{U}NUS$ being the only ones to have a feminine form, together, in some cases, such as Portuguese, with the descendants of DUO (Meyer-Lübke 1923 [1890-1906]: II, 96).

We have already explained how in Latin the numeral $\bar{U}NUS$ was used in certain contexts as a synonym of $QU\bar{I}DAM$, leading to the formation of the indefinite article in the Romance languages. In this sense, $ILLE$ and $\bar{U}NUS$ had analogous evolutions, the first being the seed of the later Romance definite marker and the second of the indefinite one. However, as Meyer-Lübke (1923 [1890-1906]: III, 231) points

⁵According to Diez (1973 [1876]: 17), it is important to distinguish between $\bar{U}NUS$ placed before and after the noun: while prenominal $\bar{U}NUS$ (ia) resembles more closely the Romance indefinite article, when it appears after the noun it preserves its cardinal sense (ib):

- (i) a. habet ibi ecclesiam majorem et **unam capellam** [Mabillon, *Annales ordinis S. Benedicti*, I, 629]
 b. calicem argentum, **capsilam unam** communem de serico [*Diplomata, chartae, epistolae, et alia monumenta ad res franciscas spectantia*, 20 an. 475]

out, the evolution from $\bar{U}NUS$ to indefinite article is later than the formation of the definite article.

The generalization of the indefinite article in Romance is related with the diminishment of contexts where BPs could appear. Evidently, the presence or absence of the indefinite article is determined by certain conditions. As in the case of the definite article, it does not appear before proper nouns and those denoting unique entities, geographic, time-related and abstract nouns (see Meyer-Lübke 1923 [1890-1906]: III, 180-88). There are also a number of syntactic conditions that favour the use of BPs. For instance, in object and predicates (5a), after prepositions (5b), in comparisons (5c), and in NPs which refer to quantities (Meyer-Lübke 1923 [1890-1906]: III, 215-26; 232-34):

- (5) a. luá **muieri** donami **cavallo da cavalcare** [*Le canto novele antiche*, 10]
buona pulcella fut Eulalia [*Sainte Eulalie*, 1]
ben dicho sea **rey que faz tales bondades** [Berceo, *Vida de Santo Domingo de Silos*, 214]
fez ali **rapida oraçã** [Gomes de Amorim, *O Amor da Patria*, 214]
- b. în foc, în mină andò in **camera** [*Le cene di Antonfrancesco Grazzini detto il Lasca*, 143, 11]
le quel descendit en **barbe** [*Psautier d' Oxford*, 2]
tornar a **poblado** [Berceo, *Vida de San Millán*, 115]
entrou em **terceiro quarto** [Gomes de Amorim, *O Amor da Patria*, 217]
- c. Ca **foale în brumă** [*Psaltirea Coresi*, 113, 83]
come **abate in alto si digrada** [*La Divina Commedia*, Purgatorio, 22, 133]
il ensemment cume **espus eisanz de sa chambre** [*Psautier d' Oxford*, 18, 5]
como faz **buen pastor** [Berceo, *Vida de Santo Domingo de Silos*, 20]
vermelho **como tomate maduro** [Gomes de Amorim, *O Amor da Patria*, 19]
- d. atunce se sculâ multă **mulțime de Turci** [Cuv. Bătr., 1, 402, 13]

nelle sue crudeltà avea **gran parte di giustizia** [*Le nouvelle di Franco Sacchetti*, 3]

alumer **plenté de tortiz** [*Le Romane de Guillaume de Dole*, 1797]

se lanzó al campo **muchedumbre de infieles** [Trueba, *Las hijas del Cid*, 53]

Negation is another context where the indefinite article may or may not be present. According to Meyer Lübke (1923 [1890-1906]: III, 241-2), in early times Romance languages showed a preference for the exclusion of $\bar{U}NUS$, especially if the negation was to be taken as a generalization:

- (6) a. non avea **membro que tenesse fermo** [*La Divina Commedia*, Inferno, 6, 24]
 b. **femme** ne puettant amer l'oume con li hom fait la femme [*Aucassin und Nicolette*, 14, 18]
 c. **meller cavalliers** nom pot sener Espaza [*Le Roman de Flamenca*, 30]
 d. aunque no me parece que **caballero** deba dejar su caballo [*Amadis*, 34b]
 e. nom ficou **pedra** sobre **pedra** [*Romanceiro Portuguez*, IX, 439]

However, there are some examples where the article is present, often as a reinforcement with the sense of 'not even a', as we can see in (7):

- (7) a. non si udiva ronzare nemmen **una mosca** [Verga, *Novelle 1889*, 169]
 b. la soe manantise ne priset mie **un gant** [*Charlemagne*, 363]
 c. por quanto Boorz dizia, nom dava Lionel **uma palha** [*A historia dos cavaleiros da mesa redonda e da demanda do Santo Graal*, 128]

In the case of appositions, there seems to be a good deal of variation with respect to the use of the article, as it is shown below. Note that in the Italian example there is variation even in the same sentence, the NP *schiaivo cartaginese* being the only one that is not preceded by *un* (Meyer-Lübke 1923 [1890-1906]: III, 236):

- (8) a. Livio Andronico **uno schiavo greco**, Nevo **un Campano**, Ennio **un Magno Greco**, Plauto **un Umbro**, Terenzio **schiavo cartaginese** furono i primi poeti latini [*Lehrbuch der italienischen Sprach*, from 1860]
- b. fut la pucele de molt halt parentet, **Filie ad un conte de Rome** [*La Vie de Saint Alexis*, 9]
 detreit à Lalice, **une citet molt bele** [*La Vie de Saint Alexis*, 17]

The incorporation of the indefinite article into these contexts is dissimilar among the Romance Languages, not only with respect to the date of appearance, but also to the extent to which variation between the presence and absence of it is allowed. For instance, while in all cases the indefinite article was introduced last after prepositions, Rumanian differs from the other languages in the sense that, with the exception of *cu*, the article is still generally absent in this context.

The indefinite article was first generalized in French. In fact, there are examples of *un* from the earliest documents, even in predicates, putting French ahead of its Romance counterparts in the grammaticalization of $\bar{U}NUS$, from its numeral value to its new role as a marker of indefiniteness (Foulet 1930: 170; Meyer-Lübke 1923 [1890-1906]: III, 236):⁶

- (9) Ad **une** soede lo roveret tolr lo chief [*Saint Eulalie*]
 Si fut **uns** sire Rome la citet [*La Vie de Saint Alexis*, 13]
 D'altre part est Turgis de Turtelse, Cil est **uns** cuens, si est la citet sue [*Chanson de Roland*, 917]
 Nicolete est **une** caitive que j'amenai d' estrange ierre [*Aucassin et Nicolette*, 6, 15]

⁶In Old French, the indefinite article was declinable: it was *uns* for the subject case (cas sujet), and *un* for the object case (cas régime) (Foulet 1930: 55):

- (i) **Uns chevaliers de Cornuaille** / le roi apele isnelement [*Le Male Honte*, 1st version, 138-9]
 Seigneur, oiez et escoutez / **un fablel** [*Le Male Honte*, 2nd version, 1-2]

Starting from the thirteenth century, the indefinite article expanded notably in French, to the point that by the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries it was already widely used after prepositions, as is shown in example (10) (Meyer-Lübke 1923 [1890-1906]: III, 234):⁷

- (10) le mestayer de la Herissaie ne fu remis et restitué en sa première santé que par **une** cholère de voir son valet et Jean couper [*Le propos rustiques de Noel du Frail*, 1, 281]
avec **un** depit tant contre la maitresse que contre la Damoiselle [*L'Heptaméron*, 2, 27]

Moreover, in the seventeenth century its absence was formally censured by Maupas in his Grammar, where he explicitly prefers ‘j’ai acheté un cheval’ to ‘j’ai acheté cheval’. By then, according to Brunot & Bruneau (1949: 223), the current use of *un* was already established.⁸

By contrast, the indefinite article is very rare in the first Italian documents, and the earliest Rumanian texts, dating from the sixteenth century, do not contain any instances of it. In fact, according to Diez (1973 [1876]: 17), Vlach is still the most restrictive Romance language regarding the expansion of the indefinite marker.

In the previous pages, we have seen that Latin *ŪNUS*, due to its individualizing value, frequently appeared in opposition to *ALTER* in phrases with distributive value. These constructions have prevailed in the Romance languages, as we can see in the next examples (Meyer-Lübke 1923 [1890-1906]: III, 192-93; Rohlfs 1969: 39):

- (11) a. ne **in** ne l’**auter** vuleven [*Surselvische Märchen*, 19, 2]
b. annunziava il viaggio **di uno**, il matrimonio **dell’altro** [Serao, *Addio Amore*, 66]
c. en **un** leu halt, en l’**autre** bas [*Roman de Enéas*, 1425]

⁷See also Foulet (1930: 61) and Nyrop (1925: 170).

⁸Although the fact that people still needed to be told to use it suggests otherwise.

- Vos l'amez a **une partide** je a **l'autre** [*Méraguis de Portlesguez*, 628]
- d. en **una man** y en **la otra** [Trueba, *Las hijas del Cid*, 26]
Una lloraba, **la otra** parecia consolarla [Coloma, *Pequeñeces*, 234]
- e. **hum** e **o outro** corno [Camoëns, *As Lusíadas*, 2, 72]
chaman **hums** Mafamede e **os outros** Sanct-Jago [Camoëns, *As Lusíadas*, 3, 113]
començaromse a catar **uns aos outros** [*A historia dos cavaleiros da mesa redonda e da demanda do Santo Graal*, 17]

Again, there is a certain degree of variation with respect to the presence of the definite article before the terms of the opposition. Modern French differs from the other languages in that *le* is generally required before both terms. In contrast, other western Romance languages seem to be more flexible and often reject the article in the first member or even in both:

- (12) a. **Les uns** chantent et **les autres** dansent.
b. **Unos** cantan y **otros** bailan.
Unos cantan y **los otros** bailan.
c. **Os uns** cantam e **os outros** dançam.
Uns cantam e **os outros** dançam

Finally, as noted by Meyer-Lübke (1923 [1890-1906]: III, 381), there is also variation in whether the verb appears in singular or in plural form. This phenomenon is clearly exemplified in the next pair of sentences, both from the *Divina Commedia*:

- (13) **l'una** e **l'altra** gente é diretata [*Divina Commedia*, Purgatorio, 14,108]
l'una parte e **l'altra** avranno fame di te [*Divina Commedia*, Inferno, 15, 71]

5.1.3 Plural ŪNUS in Romance

One of the most interesting aspects in the evolution of the indefinite article in the Romance languages is that, in some cases, it developed a plural form. As stated by Ernout & Meillet (1959: 748), the plural use of Latin ŪNUS is ancient, although it was always infrequent. Some examples from Lewis & Short (1956 [1879]: s.v.) are given in (14). In (14a), the plural is justified by the pluralia tantum *nuptias*; in (14b) by its opposition to ALTER; in (14c) the combination with the cardinal is translated as ‘only six days’, in accordance with the exclusivity value of ŪNUS.⁹

- (14) a. nam satis credo, si advigilaveris, ex **unīs** geminas mihi conficies nuptias [Terence, *Andria*, 4, 1]
 b. adductus sum tuis **unīs** et **alteris** litteris [Cicero, *Epistulae ad Atticum*, 14, 18. 1]
 c. Quia, ruri dum sum ego **unos** sex dies [Plautus, *Trinummus*, 129]

The origin of the plural use of the descendants of ŪNUS is not straightforward. According to Meyer-Lübke (1923 [1890-1906]: III, 65), once ŪNUS was employed, not as a numeral, but to highlight a member of the set without any further specification (similarly to QUĪDAM), it began to be used also to refer to ‘any’ member of the set. In other words, ŪNUS took, in some contexts, the value of ĀLIQUIS and therefore it was capable of having a plural.

Meyer-Lübke (1923 [1890-1906]: III, 65) distinguishes two types of plural ŪNUS. On the one hand, we find cases where the plural is used with nouns that refer to objects considered collectively or in pairs (*pluralia tantum*), such as Spanish *unas tijeras*, *unos zapatos*, and Portuguese *uns braços*, *umas chinellas*. We

⁹These examples can be translated as:

- a I’m pretty sure that if you carry on with your efforts, instead of one marriage you’ll present me with two [Trans. by Betty Radice, *The Comedies*, Penguin’s edition, 1976: 71]
 b I was persuaded by both your letters.
 c While I am in the countryside for six days only.

also find cases such as *unes lettres, uns dens, unes bottes* in Old French, and *unas letras, unas toallas* in Provençal. In these two languages, these kinds of examples were common throughout the Middle Ages, but were later replaced by the partitive. The French plural is only preserved in opposition to *les autres* (*les uns...les autres*) and in *quelque-uns, quelque-unes* (see also Nyrop 1903: 356, 1925: 170).¹⁰ In Italian, the corresponding plural form for the indefinite article is also expressed by means of the partitive, and in certain contexts, the indefinite pronoun *alcuni* or a plural BP. However, the plural use of *uno* with *pluralia tantum* is found in the Veneto dialect, as in *une braghe* (Rohlf's 1969: 39; Tekavčić 1972: 141-42). On the other hand, we find what Meyer-Lübke (1923 [1890-1906]: III, 65-66) calls 'true plurals'; these are the cases where plural $\bar{U}NUS$ is found in NPs denoting an indefinite number of entities, in a similar fashion that $\check{A}L\check{I}QUIS$ does. For this author, the difference in meaning between plural $\bar{U}NUS$ and $\check{A}L\check{I}QUIS$ is that in the first case the idea of unity, derived from the original value of $\bar{U}NUS$, is preserved. In other words, the referent, though plural, is conceived as a tight group. Among the Romance languages, the plural indefinite article is found predominantly in the Iberian varieties, that is, in Spanish (15a), Portuguese (15b), Galician (15c), and Catalan (15d):¹¹

- (15) a. Vinieron **unos** policías a buscarte
 b. Eu quero comprar **uns** discos do Chico Buarque

¹⁰In Old French the partitive construction often appears without the article, that is, with the preposition *de* by itself (Diez 1973 [1876]: 41):

(1) ne manga **de pain** ne but **de vin** [*Chanson des Saxons*, II, 157]

¹¹There are some instances of 'true plurals' in Old French and Provençal, such as the following examples taken from Meyer-Lübke (1923 [1890-1906]: III, 65):

OFr: il sist en l'ombre d'uns pomiers [Partén, 2364]
 unes roches [*Recueil de chartes originales de Joinville*, 314] il fierent uns cous si granz
 [*Meraugis de Portlesquez*, 4508]

Prov: Guillems ren als non atendia mais si trobes unas menestras [*Le Roman de Flamenca*, 1972]

- c. Losada pide a El Correo Gallego que aclare **unhas** acusacións
- d. Avui es la festa d'**uns** amics

It is widely believed among Romanists that in examples like (15), the plural $\bar{U}NUS$ is not an indefinite article, but rather an indefinite adjective. Consider, for instance, Diez (1973 [1876]: 18), remarks:

L'article indéfini, conformément à l'idée qu'il représente n'a pas de pluriel. Cependant comme *unus* en qualité de pronom peut passer à ce nombre, l'espagnol et le portugais ont pris l'habitude de lui accorder comme article la même faculté: *leo unos libros; ha humas pessoas*; déjà dans le *PCid: unos preciosos escaños* (v. 1770); toutefois il peut aussi être supprimé'.

Note, however, that Diez's statement about the optionality of the plural indefinite article is not accurate. While it is true that in Modern Spanish plural nouns can more easily appear without any determiners, the presence of *unos* is obligatory in preverbal subjects (16). Moreover, the meanings of plural BPs and those determined by *unos* are not equal, for while BPs are always non-specific, *unos N* is ambiguous between specific and non-specific readings (Laca 1996, 1999; McNally 2004. See chapter 8).

- (16)
- a. Vinieron **unas personas** a buscarte.
 - b. ?Vinieron **personas** a buscarte.
 - c. **Unas personas** vinieron a buscarte.
 - d. ***Personas** vinieron a buscarte.

In the following chapters, we will explain in detail our position on whether Spanish *unos* is or is not an article. At this point, let us just say that, in our view, the fact that *un* can occur with plural NPs is one of the strongest arguments in favour of the existence of an indefinite article in Spanish, a subject that, as shown in chapter 4, has long been at the centre of debate between some of the most prominent Spanish linguists of the twentieth century.

Finally, another interesting feature of $\bar{U}NUS$ in Romance is the fact that, used in combination with other cardinals, it conveys an approximative value. This phenomenon is attested in Old French (17a), Italian (17b), Spanish (17c) and Portuguese (17d), but, whereas in the first two cases *un* is always singular, the other two languages prefer the plural form (Meyer-Lübke 1923 [1890-1906]: III, 237; Nyrop 1925:170):

- (17) a. Agee d'**un trente cinq** ans [Noël du Fail, *Propos rustiques de maistre Léon Ladulfi*, II, 173]
 b. era alto **un sei o sette metri** [*Decameron*, Introduction]
 la strada correva diritta **un sessanta passi** [Manzoni, *I Promessi Sposi*]
 c. con **unos XV** a tierras firió [*Cid*, 2019]
 d. alugou a casa a Pedro Limbado, que n'ella morava com sua filha e **uns tres serviçaes antigos** [Gomes de Amorim, *O Amor da Patria*, 241]

As Meyer-Lübke (1923 [1890-1906]: III, 237) explains, the approximative use of $\bar{U}NUS$ might derive from the fact that the speaker, uncertain about the precise number of referents, resorts to $\bar{U}NUS$, which, in virtue of its opposition to *ILLE*, imprints a value of uncertainty to the whole NP.

5.2 Indefinite Pronouns

5.2.1 Latin Indefinites

As stated by Elcock (1960: 97-103), Latin indefinites comprise a vast and varied repertory of items, most of which can function both as pronouns and as adjectives. Among them, we find *QUIS*, *QUĪDAM* and *ĀLIŪS*, which, as stated by Ernout & Thomas (1953: 193-95), not only differ in the contexts of appearance but also in the degree of emphasis, *QUIS* being the most neutral and *QUĪDAM* the most

emphatic (see also Roby 1875: 482).¹²

The enclitic form **QUIS**, which in (18) can be paraphrased as ‘someone who’, has a limited use, and often appears in subordinate clauses with hypothetical meaning, after **SI**, **NISI**, **CUM** and sometimes **NE**.

(18) filiam **quis** habet, pecunia opus est [Cicero, *Paradoxa*, 6, 44]

On the other hand, **QUĪDAM** (from **QUIS** + particle **DAM**) is especially used in reference to something or someone that, although known by the speaker, is not necessarily named. For this reason, **QUĪDAM** is, according to Ernout & Thomas (1953: 194), ‘le moins indéfini des indéfinis’. Notice that it can also appear in combination with **ŪNUS** as shown in (19b):

(19) a. video esse hic in senatu **quosdam** qui tecum una fuerunt [Cicero, *In Catilinam*, 1, 8]
quidam de collegis nostris [Cicero, *Epistulae ad familiares*, 11, 21, 5]
 b. est enim eloquentia **una quaedam** de summis virtutibus [Cicero, *De Oratore*, 3, 14, 55]

More common is **ĀLĪQUIS** (from **ALI-** < **ALIUS** ‘other’ + **QUIS**), which corresponds to English ‘some/any’, or ‘someone’. It refers to an unknown entity, whose existence is nevertheless taken for granted, and is often used in subordinated sentences, where it is opposed to **OMNIS**, **NIHIL**, **NULLUS** and **MULTUS**, or in combination with **ŪNUS**, as in **ŪNUS ĀLĪQUIS** and **ĀLĪQUIS ŪNUS** (Ernout & Thomas 1953: 194):

(20) est tamen hoc **aliquid**, tametsi non est satis [Cicero, *Caecilium divinatio*, 47]

¹²There are many other indefinite pronouns, such as **QUISPIAM**, **QUISQUAM**, and **ULLUS**. However, I will not comment on them further, as their evolution is not directly related with the rise of the indefinite article. For a complete review of the Latin indefinite paradigm see Elcock (1960: 100), Ernout & Meillet (1959: 21-22), Lloyd (1987: 92) and Roby (1875: 482).

ego quoque **aliquid** sum [Cicero, *Ad Familiares Epistulae*, 6, 18]
 iste se **aliquem** putat [Seneca, *De Ira*, 3, 37, 3]
 si sit **aliqua** res publica..., sin autem nulla sit (Cicero, *Ad Familiares Epistulae*, 4, 8]
 si unum **aliquid** affert [Cicero, *De Oratore*, 3, 136]
 in **aliqua** una re [Varro, *De Lingua Latina*, 7, 31]

Notice that ĀLĪQUIS can also appear in conditional or negative environments, which are usually associated with QUIS, as shown in the next examples (Lewis & Short, 1956 [1879]: s.v.; Plater & White 1926: 73):¹³

- (21) si quando **aliquid** tamquam **aliqua** fabella narratur [Cicero, *De Oratore*, 2, 59]
 sed omnino omnia, ne **aliquid** vos timeretis [Cicero, *Pro Milone*, 24, 66]
 ne alicui dicerent [*Vulgate*, Lucas 8, 56]

In sum, although QUĪDAM and ĀLĪQUIS are both indefinites, they contrast with respect to the feature of specificity (at least from an epistemic perspective). While QUĪDAM is mainly used to introduce specific indefinites, ĀLĪQUIS can introduce non-specific ones (see Lyons 1990: 149; Pinkster 1990: 95-96; Stark 2002. See chapters 3.3 & 8).

5.2.2 Romance Indefinites

The evolution of indefinite pronouns from Latin to Romance is an intricate process in which some forms disappeared, others were created, and the smallest group remained unchanged.

QUĪDAM did not survive in the Romance Languages. However, already in Latin the adjective CERTUS was sometimes employed in a similar fashion to QUĪDAM (22). According to Lewis & Short (1956 [1879]: s.v.), in these cases CERTUS was

¹³ĀLĪQUIS can also appear with a partitive genitive construction, with the meaning of ‘a certain number of’, ‘a few’. This same meaning can be expressed by ALIQUOT.

used to refer to something ‘whose existence is given, but whose nature is not more definitely designated, or comes not into consideration’ (see also Ernout & Thomas, 1953: 194).

- (22) insolentia **certorum** hominum [Cicero, *Pro Marcello*, 16]
certi homines ad eam rem periti [Cicero, *Pro Sestio*, 18, 41]

In Romance, CERTUS was maintained in Italy (*certo*) and in the Iberian Peninsula (Sp. *cierto*, Ptg. *certo*), but Gaul preferred CERTANUS (‘certain’). Southern Gaul is, in Elcock’s (1960: 100) words, a ‘meeting-place of two different currents’, with Provençal and Catalan having both *cert* and *certá*. Finally, Italy is the only language that produced a compound form (*certuno*) from CERTUS and ŪNUS.

As we previously explained, the meaning of ‘some/any’ and ‘someone/anyone’ were mainly expressed in Latin by ĀLĪQUIS. In the Romance languages, however, it is more common to find forms derived from *ALICUNUS (<ĀLĪQUIS-ŪNUS): Italian *alcuno*, French *aucun*, Catalan *algú*, Spanish *alguno*, Galician, *algún*, and Portuguese *algum*. In Rumanian this compound is unknown and in its place forms such as *neștine* (<NESCIO QUI NE) are used, although this pronoun is restricted to regional use (Haspelmath 1997: 131).

Interestingly, in Italian (23a), Spanish (23b), and Portuguese (23c), when an existential quantifier is under the scope of a negation and appears postposed to the noun, it acquires a negative meaning (Diez 1973 [1876]: 391; Meyer-Lübke 1923 [1890-1906]: III, 825):

- (23) a. **non** hai tu spiritu di pietate **alcuno**? [*Divina Commedia*, Inferno, 13, 36]
 b. la escuridad de la noche no les dejó ver cosa **alguna** [*Don Quijote*, 1, 20]
 jamás habemos vencido batalla **alguna** [*Quijote*, 1, 20]
 sin duda **alguna** [*Quijote*, 1, 20]

c. eu **no** lhe perguntarei cousa **alguma**¹⁴

On the other hand, it is important to say that the negative value of *aucun* in French is a rather recent development. In fact, *aucun* can be found with its original positive value until the sixteenth century, and there are even some later examples, like these from Molière (Meyer-Lübke 1923 [1890-1906]: III, 99).

(24) Il y en a **d’aucunes** qui prennent des maris seulement pour se tirer de la contrainte de leurs parents [Molière, *La Malade imaginaire*, I, II, 6]
ce que **d’aucuns** maris souffrent paisiblement [Molière, *L’École des femmes*, 54]

However, with the exception of legal documents, the original *aucun* has been completely supplanted by *quelque* (25a), which by contrast with the former, can only be used as an adjective. The corresponding pronominal form is *quelqu’un*, to which there is an analogous Italian pronoun *qualcuno*, shown in (25b) (Diez 1973 [1876]: 78).

(25) a. **quelques** écrivains ont traité ce sujet
quelqu’un est venu a te voir
b. mandatemi **qualcuno**

5.3 Distributives in Latin and Romance

In Classical Latin, distributive sense was expressed by *QUISQUE*, specially in the genitive, and often preceded by *ŪNUS*. *ŪNUS QUISQUE* ‘every single’ was used in initial position, where *QUISQUE* alone was impossible due to its enclitic character (Ernout & Thomas 1953: 198, Roby 1875: 487). However, during the fourth century, *CATA*, a Latin borrowing from Greek *κατά*, started to propagate, as it is

¹⁴Note that in Portuguese the use of the initial negation *no* is not mandatory (Schulte (p.c.))

possible to observe in Christian documents (Elcock, 1960: 98), as shown in (26):¹⁵

- (26) et sacrificium faciet super eo **cata** mane mane [*Vulgate*, Ezekiel, 46:14]
 faciet agnum et sacrificium et oleum **cata** mane mane holocaustum sem-
 piternum [*Vulgate*, Ezekiel, 46:15]
 semper cata Pasca [*Peregrinatio ad loca sancta*]
 ut cata mansiones monasteria sint [*Peregrinatio ad loca sancta*]

The distributive CATA was commonly linked in the west to $\bar{U}NUS$, giving rise to the pronoun *CATA $\bar{U}NUS$ from which the following Romance forms derive: Old Italian *catuno* and *caduno*, French *chacun*, Provençal *cadün*, *cadun*, Modern Italian *ciascuno*, Spanish *cada uno*, and Portuguese *cada um*. It is important to say that, according to Elcock (1960: 98-99), the Spanish invariable adjective *cada* is a medieval back-formation from the pronominal expression. In Old Spanish, the descendants of the distributives CATA $\bar{U}NUS$ and $QUISQUE ET \bar{U}NUS$ were often mixed, resulting in forms such as *quis cada uno* and *cascuno*:

- (27) **Quis cada uno** dellos bien sabe lo que ha de far [*Cid*, 1136]
 Ca se dolió **cascuno** mucho de coraçon [Berceo, *Vida de Santo Domingo de Silos*, 385]

Modern Gascon has a similar form, *quiscadû*, where the *i* is due to the influence of *quî*. The Latin distributive $QUISQUE$ left a trace in Sardinia in Old Logoudorian *kis*. Apart from these languages, it survived uncompounded only in southern Gaul, as we can see in the Provençal forms *quecs*, *quec*, for masculine and *quega*, *quegas*, for feminine. In the same region, we find $\bar{U}NUSQUISQUE$: *uniskis*, *unukis*; Provençal masculine *usquecs*, and feminine *unaquega*. However,

¹⁵Latin had specific distributive forms for the cardinals corresponding to ‘one’ and ‘three’. These were $SINGULI$ and $TERNI$, respectively. An example of $SINGULI$ is given below (Ernout & Thomas 1953: 176-7; Roby 1875: 487):

cum **singulas** binae ac ternae naves circumsteterant [Caesar, *Commentarii de Bello Gallico*, 3, 15, I]
 ‘with two and three ships surrounded each one [of ours]’

it is more common to find compound forms where the two elements are reversed, resulting in QUISQUE ŪNUS: Gascon *quiscum*, and *quisquedun*, the second deriving from QUISQUE et ŪNUS. A similar case is Old French *chascun* which later became *chacun* in Modern French, from where the modern *chaque* derived, by means of backformation (Elcock 1960: 97-98). Finally, the Italian *ciascuno* has often been described as a borrowing from French, in spite of its initial affricate. The same hypothesis should explain the case of Old Italian *ciascheduno*. However, as Elcock (1960: 99) explains, ‘the very existence of this latter makes it seem more probable that both are in reality the product of a native mixture of CATA UNUS with *CISQUE (ET) UNUS’.

5.4 Generic Pronouns

Latin lacked a pronoun capable of expressing the idea of an indeterminate subject, such as Spanish *uno* or French *on*. Rather, as Ernout & Thomas (1953: 144-46) explain, for this task it employed different grammatical strategies such as the passive voice (28a), the third person singular (28b), the second person singular (28c), certain indefinite pronouns, such as *quis* (28d), the present participle in dative case (28e), the pronoun *se* after or with a general infinitive (28f), the first person plural (28b), and some impersonal expressions or fixed phrases, such as *non licet*, *solet dici*, *parendum est* (see also Roby 1875: 492):

- (28) a. in totis aedibus...**bibitur**, **estur**, quasi in popina [Plautus, *Poenulus*, 834-835]
 b. Neque vero mihi quicquam praestabilius videtur quam posse dicendo...hominum mentes...impellere quo **velit** [Cicero, *De Oratore*, 1.30]
 c. Si stimulus pugnīs **caedis**, manibus plus dolet [Plautus, *Trinummus*, 768]
 d. Si **quis** hoc fecerit.
 e. quod est oppidum Thessaliae primum **venientibus** ab Epiro [Caesar,

- de Bello Civili*, 3.80.I]
- f. Melius est ire **se** ipsum [Roby, 1875: 492]
- g. Quae **volumus** ea credimus libenter [Caesar, *de Bello Civili*, 2.27.2]

In the Romance languages, some of these constructions persist, but more interesting for us is the development of two so-called ‘impersonal’ or generic pronouns derived from Latin HOMO and ŪNUS. In the following paragraphs, we will give an overview of the evolution of these pronouns in the Romance languages. The justification for including a description of the pronouns derived from HOMO, instead of focusing solely in *uno* is that, as we will see in chapter 8, in Spanish these two forms are intimately connected, not only because their context of appearance is identical but also because the disappearance of the first coincides with the first documentations of the second (see among others Pozas, 2008, and Company & Pozas, 2009).

5.4.1 HOMO

The use of the descendants of HOMO with an indefinite value seems to have its origins in late Latin, where it is possible to find some instances in which the referential meaning is bleached, and therefore its interpretation is somewhat close to that of an indefinite pronoun (Kärde 1943: 7):

- (29) Semper debet **homo** paratus humilitati ad alciora conscindere [*Vita Wandregiseli*, 141 ca. A.D. 700]

Although in this example HOMO has not yet grammaticalized, it seems very probable that these are precisely the contexts in which the seed of the indefinite pronouns such as *on* lies. Let us not forget that in many languages the development of indefinite pronouns starts with the generic use of nouns with a general meaning, such as ‘man’, ‘person’, and the unitary numeral ‘one’ (Haspelmath

1997: chapter 2; Lyons 1999: chapter 3).

Another hypothesis about the origin of the pronouns derived from HOMO is that of Ernout & Thomas (1953: 145). According to these authors, their origin could be in constructions in which HOMO was used as a reinforcement of NEMO, as we can see in (30):

- (30) Tunc id dicere audes quod **nemo** unquam **homo** antehac vidit nec potest fieri? [Plautus, *Amphitryon*, 566]

Although at first HOMO had only an emphatic value, with time it appeared also in positive sentences in which, even in the absence of NEMO, it preserved an indefinite meaning:

- (31) Ubi **homo** desiderium suum compleri videt [*Peregrinatio Aetherae*, 13,1]

The hypothesis according to which the grammaticalization of HOMO began in Latin is reinforced by the fact that in several Romance languages there was, at some point, an indefinite pronoun derived from it. That is the case of Italian, Spanish and Portuguese, and also of French and Catalan, where *on* (32a) and *hom* (32b) respectively, are still in use:

- (32) a. **On** peut imaginer notamment d'exiger l'inscription auprès de la municipalité, sur la base également de l'adresse fiscale réelle des familles [*Le Monde*, 8-09-2006]
 b. Com por mantenir-se viva una llengua minoritària, la catalana, si **hom** assumeix la 'in-diferència' d'escriure en català o castellà [*L'escriptura femenina*, 208]

As Meyer-Lübke (1923 [1890-1906]: III, 106) explains, in French, *homme* was used in documents from early times with an indefinite sense, which, judging by the variation between presence and absence of the article, must have evolved from the generic uses. While the variant with an article is the most common in the

Livres des rois and the *Dialogues du pape Grégoire* (33a), the BP is found mainly in epic literature (33b):¹⁶

- (33) a. **l'um** t'apele [*Livres de rois*, 12.2]
l'um li cuntad [*Livres de rois*, 7.2]
tut issi frad **l'um** des boes [*Livres de rois*, 37.6]
ke **l'om** por soi fesist orison (*Dialogues du Pape saint Gregoire*, 23.3)
de la queile chose doit **l'om** penser [*Dialogues du Pape Saint Gregoire*, 27, 18]
- b. ço set **hum** bien [*Chanson de Roland*, 308]
bien i poet **hoem** veir [*Charlemagne*, 442]
Pur sun seignur deit **hum** sufrir destreiz [*Chanson de Roland*, 1010]
Soz ciel n'at **home** plus en ait de meillors [*Chanson de Roland*, 1442]

In Provençal, there are some instances of indefinite *hom*, especially in early documents. As in French, there is variation in the presence of the article, as we can see in example (34). However, it seems that the pronoun was always infrequent, probably in part due to the frequency of other constructions able to express an indefinite subject, such as the reflexive, and the second and third person plural.

- (34) **l'om** nol laiset a salvament annar [*Poëme sur Boece*, 69]
molt val lo bes que **l'om** fai et jovent [*Poëme sur Boece*, 102]
so-l plaz don **hom** la castiu [*De troudabour Uc Brunec*, 1, 32]

Italian *uomo* was also used as an indefinite in early texts (35), particularly in two dialectal groups: to the north in Lombardy, and to the south in the Abruzzi, Naples and Sicily.

- (35) ma **uomo** lodarebbe ad uno quello che biasimerebbe ad un altro; quando uno basso uomo misprende, uomo lili torna ad ira [*Fatti di Cesare*, 24]
alcuna legge dice che **uomo** non uccida cittadino danato, anzi lo'nvii l'uomo in esilio [*Fatti di Cesare*, 25]
non e'giusto aver ciò che **uom** si toglie [*Divina Commedia*, Inferno, 13.105]

¹⁶For more on the origin of French *on*, see Anglade (1965:174), Foulet, (1930), Kärde (1943: ch. 1), and Reid (1938).

dal loco ingiù dov'**uom** s'affibbia il manto [*Divinna Commedia*, Inferno, 31.66]

quanto **uom** più va su, e men fa male [*Divina Commedia*, Purgatorio, 4.90]

Se l'**omo** avesse pustule [*Bagni di Pozzuoli*, 32]

Finally, an indefinite variant *homem* is sporadically registered in Medieval Portuguese documents, as shown in the following examples (36), all from the fourteenth century.

(36) o que **homem** diz [*A historia dos cavaleiros da mesa redonda e da demanda do Santo Graal*, 30]

que te **homem** non pedio [*A historia dos cavaleiros da mesa redonda e da demanda do Santo Graal*, 31]

que per força vos homem mate [*A historia dos cavaleiros da mesa redonda e da demanda do Santo Graal*, 31]

As we have seen, the indefinite use of the descendants of HOMO seems to be a common feature of the Western Romance languages. However, whereas in Catalan and French the pronouns that result from the grammaticalization of HOMO are still very much alive, in Provençal, Italian, Portuguese, and Spanish, these forms are no longer in use.

Considering this, Meyer-Lübke (1923 [1890-1906]: III, 108) has argued that it is important to reflect upon the extent to which these indefinite pronouns are imitations of French *on*. This view is shared by Nyrop (1923: 368), for whom the use of HOMO as an indefinite in the Romance languages other than French could have been motivated by the strong influence this language had on the rest during the Medieval period. This is, however, a rather unconvincing idea, since not only the grammaticalization of indefinite pronouns on the basis of nouns meaning 'man' is widely attested from a typological perspective, but also, as I have already said, there is enough evidence confirming that this process began in Latin. Thus, it

seems to me that an explanation of the development of these pronouns in Catalan, Portuguese and Spanish as a result of the influence of French is unnecessary.

5.4.2 $\bar{U}NUS$

Apart from its development as an alternative expression to $QU\bar{I}DAM$, which would later result in the creation of the indefinite article in the Romance languages, $\bar{U}NUS$ continued to be a cardinal numeral, and as such could appear in pronominal function (e.g. *tradidit uni*). However, in Latin $\bar{U}NUS$ was never employed to express the existence of an indeterminate subject, in the way French *on* does.

The so-called impersonal use of the descendants of $\bar{U}NUS$ is therefore a Romance creation. According to Meyer-Lübke (1923 [1890-1906]: III, 109-10), the main domain of the form is the Sursilvan Rhaeto-Romance, spoken in the Canton des Grisons, where the pronoun *ins*, derived from the numeral *in*, is very well established:

- (37) **ins** po patertgar [*Surselvische Märchen*, 3, 14]
 pardagava co **ins** stopi far [*Surselvische Märchen*, 8, 4]
 co savess **ins** esser leghers cura ch'**ins** sa chigl ei finiu cun **ins** sin quest
 mund [*Surselvische Märchen*, 20, 14]

The impersonal use of *uno* is also very widespread in Italian (38a). Finally, in Galician (38b), there are some instances where pronominal *un* closely resembles the Spanish generic pronoun *uno* (38c) (Carvalho Calero, 1966: 132):

- (38) a. It: al casinò, **uno** può perdere anche la camicia.
 b. Gal: non está **un** pra leiras.
 c. Sp: Hay cosas que debe **uno** hacer.

Finally, it is important to say that in these three languages, the pronoun can have gender agreement. This is especially common when the generalization stated in the sentence only applies to females, but can also occur when the speaker, a

woman, is using the pronoun as a substitute for the first person.

- (39) a. lo so che e' tardi, ma **una** non può essere sempre in orario.
 b. **unha** tamén ten os seus dereitos [Cabalhero, 1966: 132]
 c. El tal don Pablo es un punto filipino, un tío de mucho cuidado.
 Cuando mira para **una**, parece como si la desnudara. [*Colmena*, 62]

5.5 Summary

This chapter constitutes a condensed review of the Latin antecedents and Romance panorama of $\bar{U}NUS$, the indefinite and generic-impersonal pronouns. First, in section 5.1, I have discussed the use of $\bar{U}NUS$ in Latin and in Romance. Here, I showed that the first stages of the grammaticalization of the indefinite article take place in Latin, where $\bar{U}NUS$ is occasionally used as a substitute for $QU\bar{I}DAM$. Additionally, I explained that the main uses of $\bar{U}NUS$ in Latin were adopted by the Romance languages, in which the indefinite article developed further.

In section 5.2, I have provided some general data about the indefinite pronouns $QU\bar{I}DAM$, $\check{A}L\check{I}QUIS$, and $CERTUM$ in Latin and explained how these forms evolved in Romance. Then, in section 5.3 we commented on the expression of distributivity in Latin, and Romance. Finally, section 5.4 deals with the expression of impersonality in Latin and the grammaticalization of two impersonal or generic types of pronouns in Romance derived from $HOMO$ and $\bar{U}NUS$.

Here we conclude our brief revision of the Latin antecedents and Romance panorama of $\bar{U}NUS$, the indefinites, and the generic or impersonal pronouns. In the following chapters, we will concentrate in the analysis of our corpus, in order give an accurate picture of the main features and changes of the indefinite paradigm in Medieval and Classical Spanish.

Chapter 6

The Conservative Uses of *Un*

Throughout this study, I have said on different occasions that a common source of indefinite markers are unitary cardinals. Additionally, I have explained that the differentiation between the cardinal and the article is not evident in languages such as Spanish, in which the grammaticalization of the former has not produced a formally distinct element, and in this sense it is legitimate to ask, as in fact many grammarians have, if there is any sense at all in this distinction.¹

On the understanding that this task is by no means easy, I have attempted to classify the occurrences of *un* in my corpus into two categories: one, that I have labelled *conservative*, in which *un* reproduces the usage pattern of Latin *ŪNUS*, and another, named *innovative*, which includes the grammaticalized instances of *un* that represent a departure from the original value. In this chapter, I will analyse the conservative uses of *un* and explain the few changes it underwent during the period covered by this research. The results of the analysis of frequency globally

¹See Dryer's table, pattern B. For the discussion of whether one should distinguish between the indefinite article and the numeral, see also sections ?? and 4.2.

and per century are presented in table 6.1.

Table 6.1: Conservative *un* per period

1st	2nd	3rd	Total
25.67% (67/261)	31.74% (93/293)	18.55% (143/771)	22.79% (303/1325)

As we can see, out of the 1325 cases in the corpus in which *un* acts as a determiner, 22.79 % of the examples correspond to instances where it behaves like Latin $\bar{U}NUS$. This result is rather revealing in that it shows the measure to which the new role of *un* as a presenter of new referents had extended in Medieval and Classical Spanish. Moreover, taking into account the data for each century, we can confirm that the innovative function of *un* was more or less established at least from the thirteenth century, since only 25.67% of the instances of *un* in that period decisively convey a cardinal meaning. This reinforces the hypothesis that the rise of the indefinite article must have taken place in late Latin, and started its consolidation in the early stages of Romance (see Bassols de Climent 1956: §218).

With respect to the evolution of *un*, the increase and later drop in the percentages from the thirteenth to the seventeenth century is most likely a mere reflection of textual variation. As in many cases, the textual genre plays a fundamental role in the explanation of linguistic phenomena. In the case of the conservative uses of *un*, the texts with the highest proportion are *DLE13* and *Fuero Real*, with a 71.88% and 70% respectively (6.2). This is hardly surprising considering that legal discourse has always been recognized as the most conservative genre. Moreover, laws express generalizations and they rarely, if ever, refer to specific participants. In other words, there are no new salient discourse referents to introduce, and therefore *un*, as a replacement of $QU\bar{I}DAM$, plays a modest role. Additionally, in legal documents, there seems to be a marked preference for *algún* over *un*,

explaining the overall low frequency of both cardinal and article *un* in them.²

Table 6.2: Conservative *un* per period

	Text	Conservative
1st	DLE13	71.88% (25/34)
	Fuero	70% (8/11)
	Lapidario	18.87% (10/53)
	GEII	18.18% (10/56)
	Calila	9.62% (14/108)
2nd	Cárcel	16.25% (13/80)
	Celestina	32.91% (26/79)
	Gramática	46.88% (30/64)
	Reyes	28.85% (15/52)
	Legal	43.75% (9/18)
3rd	Criticón	17.58% (29/165)
	DLNE	34.64% (62/179)
	Estebanillo	9.46% (21/222)
	Alboroto	13.58% (11/81)
	Sor Juana	16.13% (20/124)

It is important to say that although *DLE13* and *Fuero Real* both come from the thirteenth century, an explanation of their high index of conservative uses of *un* in terms of their date is, in my opinion, out of place, for in the same century *Calila* has the second lowest incidence of conservative *un*, only after *Estebanillo* (table 6.2). We may conclude that in this case textual genre plays an important role: legal documents show a higher incidence of cardinal *un* than narrative texts.

I have already said that the main criteria governing the conservative/innovative distinction is whether the function performed by *un* in a given example was or was not commonly fulfilled by $\bar{u}NUS$. As explained in chapter 5, in Latin, the numeral $\bar{u}NUS$ meant ‘only’, ‘the same’, and was commonly found in opposition to *ALTER* and in combination with *CATA*. These uses are preserved in Romance and together they form the conservative category. Their distribution in the corpus is presented in table 6.3.³

²See section 7.1 for a discussion.

³Note that plural *unos* is found since the earliest documents in opposition to *otros*. Naturally,

Table 6.3: Type of conservative *un* per period

	Cardinal	Vs. Other	Cada un
1st	55.22% (37/67)	32.84% (22/67)	11.94% (8/67)
2nd	73.12% (68/93)	24.73% (23/93)	2.15% (2/93)
3rd	86.71% (124/143)	13.29% (19/143)	0% (0/0)
Total	75.5% (228/303)	21.19% (64/303)	3.31% (10/303)

6.1 Cardinal *un*

It is normally accepted that what distinguishes cardinal *un* from the indefinite article is that in the cardinal reading the emphasis is put on the fact that the number of elements referred to equals 1, while in the article, although singularity is also asserted, what is highlighted is, first, the class to which the referent belongs, and second, that the referent is not familiar to the hearer. As Leonetti (1999: 836) explains, the cardinal and the indefinite readings of *un* depend on the contexts, so that a sentence such as *sólo un hombre podrá ayudarnos* can be interpreted in three ways, depending on what the focal element under the scope of *sólo* is. The possible interpretations are:⁴

- a Cardinal: where the focal element is the quantifier *un*, in which case the sentence can be paraphrased as ‘the maximal amount of men that can help us is one’. Here *un* opposes to all other cardinals.
- b Indefinite article in its non-specific reading: where the focal element is the noun *hombre*, in which case the NP *un hombre* would oppose to *una mujer*, *un niño*, etc.
- c Indefinite article in its specific reading: where the focal element is the com-

in these cases, cardinality is irrelevant. This is also the case in other Romance languages, such as French where, as explained in section 5.2, this construction is the only environment where plural *un* is allowed.

⁴By ‘indefinite’ reading I simply mean the interpretation of *un* as an indefinite article. Naturally, as has been traditionally recognized, cardinals are indefinites, for they refer ‘exclusively’, and they are neutral, in some accounts of definiteness with respect to the feature [+/- Def]. See Lyons (1999), Hawkins (1978).

plete NP *un hombre*, in which case the paraphrase would be ‘there is only a certain man who can help us’.

The clearest examples of cardinal *un* are the cases in which it is represented by means of the Roman numeral I. This kind of example is specially frequent in the older Spanish documents, and in fact in the corpus they are only found in texts of the thirteenth century, specifically in legal documents such as *DLE13* and *Fuero Real*, as it can be seen in (1).

- (1) El prior sobredicho le dio **.I. pedaço de heredat**, que es entrmino de Cuezc, ont son aladannos: de la una parte el sobredicho Martin Gonçaleç, & de la otra part tierra que dio Maria Gonçales por anniuessario a los clerigos de Sant Vicent [*DLE13*, 60, 3]
 et otrossi le dio en camio don Martin Gonçalez **.I. pedaçuelo de tierra** con los salzes, ont son aladannos: de la una part salzera del prior por el ospital, & de la frontera de susi parral de don Martin Gonçales [*DLE13*, 60, 23]
 & delant que nos de el que labrare con buyes o con bestias mayores por cada iugo **.I. morauedi**, con quantos iugos de buyes ode bestias labrare tantos morauedis [*DLE13*, 286, 10]
 & el que non laurare con buyes o con bestias & ouiere de .L. morauedis arriba, peche **.I. morauedi** a la moneda prieta [*DLE13*, 286, 18]
 Ninguna mugier bibda non case del dia que muriere so marido fata **.I. anno complido** [*Fuero*, 61]

Also in the oldest documents it is possible to find the unapocopated form *uno* as a determiner. As Elvira (1994) suggests, in such cases, the cardinal value is highlighted, as shown in (2):

- (2) & esta colonia coiala un jurado & **uno alcalde** & **uno fiador** [*Fuero de Madrid*, 72 CORDE]

Other clear instances of cardinal *un* are the examples in which it is explicitly contrasted with another cardinal as in (3a). Note that the contrast need not be

with another cardinal, but with any plural quantifier, as happens in (3b).

- (3) a. Et aun faz mas, que si la muelen et la de tiempran con agua, et untan con ella la tina, sana a **una uez** o a dos que lo fagan [*Lapidario*, 76]
De una ave llamada Rocho, que nace en el índico mar de oriente, se dize ser de grandeza jamás oyda y que lleva sobre su pico fasta las nuves no sólo **un hombre** o diez, pero un navío cargado de todas sus xarcías y gente [*Celestina*, 79]
Calisto: ¿Cómo? Yo te lo diré; mayor es la llama que dura ochenta años que la que en un día passa, y mayor la que mata **un ánima** que la que quemó cient mil cuerpos [*Celestina*, 92]
Enel latin tres consonantes pueden silabarse con **una vocal** antes della como enestas diciones scrobs. por el hoio. strips. por la planta [*Gramática*, 153]
Toparon luego un raro sujeto que, no contentándose con **una ojeada**, les echó media docena. Y aunque aquí todos andabam muy despiertos, éste les pareció desvelado [*Criticón*, 658]
Pero temiendo se me alzara a mayores con el caballo y a mí me diera media docena de muertos por el alquilé dél (porque como se había salido con no quere sustentarlo también se saliera con lo que se antojara), callé y sufrí, consolándome con que mi nuevo amo comía cada día **una comida muy tenue**, y el señor su criado comía tres y bebía trescientas [*Estebanillo*, 244]
- b. ¿**Un mur** es o muchos? [*Calila*, 210]

Finally, the cardinal reading is also evident in those cases where an amount or measurement is stated, as in (4):

- (4) & el otro omne que matare carne o comprare aganacia pora matar que de del carnero **vna libra**, & del puerco **vna libra**, & del gamo **vna libra**, & del cierbo, Ij. libras, & de la vaca tres libras, & del cordero que ualiere una quarta, media libra; & que cuegan enel forno del palacio todos, & que de cada uno de .XXX. panes vno [*DLE13*, 286, 39]
Et la muger que lo beuier, uedar la el empreñamiento. Et el beuer della, es peso de **una dragma**, o mas o menos, segund la complession de la muger, et la ora et el tiempo en que fuer [*Lapidario*, 220]

E como quiera que, segúnd avemos dicho, del vn real al otro avía espacio de **vna legua**; pero los más días el Rey yva a visitar aquel real, e lo mandaua proveer de gentes & de lo que era neçesario [*Reyes*, 413]

Francisco: enbiamé **una libra de chocolate**. El cura [*DLNE*, 135, 357, note 4]

Arriméme a un esclavo negro, tan limpio de conciencia que lavaba media docena de menudos con **una ración de agua**. [*Estebanillo I*, 63]

Por no hablar a poco más o menos en lo que quería deicr, dejé la pluma y envié a comprar **una cuartilla de maíz que**, a razón de cincuenta y seis reales de plata a la carga, me costó siete y, dándosela a una india para que me la volviese en tortillas a doce por medio real como hoy se venden, importaron catorce reales y medio y sobrando dos [*Alboroto*, 116]

As previously stated, one of the main functions of *ŪNUS* in Latin, and according to Ernout & Meillet (1959) its basic one, was to render the meaning of exclusivity (as in ‘only’), often in combination with *SŌLUS*. This use was also inherited in Spanish, and in the corpus there are 62 cases, a sample of which are presented in (5). Note that in Medieval Spanish *solo* could precede or follow *un*, whereas in Modern Spanish it normally appears after *un*, as in *un solo hombre* or postnominally, as in *un hombre solo*.

- (5) Fue preso en el amor de Melibea, muger moça muy generosa, de alta y sereníssima sangre, sublimada en próspero estado, **una sola heredera** a su padre Pleberio, y de su madre Alisa muy amada [*Celestina*, 82]

No quedó ahora ni **una sola batea de lodo** (menos donde se reconoció que se necesitaba de terraplén) que no se llevase a donde pareció conveniente, para que con esto mantuviesen el beneficio de esta limpieza por muchos años [*Alboroto*, 106]

De tal manera, que los tiros de las espigardas & ballestas, & de todo género de artillería, que **sola vna ora** no çesauan de se tirar de la vna parte a la otra, dende adelante no se vido ni oyó, ni se tomaron armas para salir a las peleas que todos los días antepasados fasta aquel día se acostunbrauan tomar, salvo la gente del real que continava yr a las guardas del campo en los lugares que solían estar [*Reyes*, 419]

Un manjar solo contino presto pone hastío. Una golondrina no haze

verano. **un testigo solo** no es entera fe. Quien **sola una ropa** tiene presto la envegece [*Celestina*, 206]

Finally, as in Latin, *un* can express co-occurrence and identity either by itself (6a) or preceding *mismo* (6b) (cf. ŪNUS, ŪNUS IDEM. See Ramírez Fernández 1987: §3).⁵

- (6) a. e mellizos son aquellos hermanos o ermanas que naçen de **vn parto a vn ora** [*GEII*, 2, 166, 24a]
 & assi como diximos que la .c.k.q. son una letra por que tiene **una fuerça**: assi por el contrario dezimos agora que la .i.u. son cuatro pues que tienen cada dos fuerças. por que la diversidad delas letras no esta en la diversidad delas figuras: mas en la diversidad dela ponunciacion [*Gramática*, 125]
 Y como no tenía interés que me moviese, ni límite de tiempo que me estrechase, el continuado estudio de una cosa por la necesidad de los grados, casi a **un tiempo** estudiaba diversas cosas o dejaba unas por otras [*Respuesta*, 449]
- b. E assi lo hazen los griegos que de **una mesma parte** .os. & .to. usan por pronombre & por articulo: entre los cuales & los latinos tuvo nuestra lengua tal medio & templança: que siguiendo a los griegos puese articulos sola mente a los nombres comunes [*Gramática*, 243]
 todos a **un mismo tiempo**, excedieron aquellas llamas a las de Pala-

⁵Regarding the expression of co-occurrence, by means of the unitary cardinal, the obvious example is the formulaic expression *en uno* found in abundance throughout the Medieval period in legal documents. Some examples of my corpus are given below (see also Elvira, 1994).

mas ayuntémosnos todas **en uno** et quiçá arrancaremos la red el libramos emos las unas a las otras [*Calila*, 203]

Conocida cosa sea atodos los omnes que esta carta vieren y oyeren, como yo ffrey Ferran Ordonne, magistro de Calatraua, **en uno** con don Gomez Gonçalvez, comendador mayor, & con frey Ospinel, clauero [*DLE13*, 283, 5]

E todos en uno fagan escreuir todas las cosas que recibiere, mueble e rayz, priuileios et cartas de la iglesia [*Fuero*, 10]

Et ayuntados en uno estos dos nombres agios e graphos, fazen este terçero nombre que diximos agiographo [*GEII*, 1, 5, 21a]

This construction is a continuation of the Latin construction IN ŪNUM (see Lewis & Short, 1956 [1879]: s/v):

Fibrenus divisus aequaliter in duas partes latera haec alluit, rapideque dilapsus cito **in unum** confluit [Cicero, *de Legibus*, 2, 3, 6]

cio por más unidas [*Alboroto*, 126]

Veo que un huevo se une o frie en la manteca o aceite y, por contrario, se despedaza en el almibar; ver que para que el azúcar se conserve fluida basta echarle una muy mínima parte de agua en que haya estado membrillo o otra fruta agria; ver que la yema y la clara de **un mismo huevo** son tan contrarias, que en los unos, que sirven para el azúcar, sirve cada una de por sí y juntos no [*Respuesta*, 459]

6.2 *Un* in Opposition to *otro*

6.2.1 *Un N....otro N*

Recall that one of the most common contexts of appearance of $\bar{U}NUS$ was in opposition to $ALTER$, and that this construction is present from the earliest documents in all Romance languages. In the corpus, I have registered 64 instances of the *un...otro* construction, some of which are presented in (7) (see table 6.3). Note that in some cases the noun after *otro* is elided.

- (7) Et este nombre a por que camia entre dia et de noche de muchas colores, ca **una uegada** se camia de color blanca, **otra** amariella, **otra** negra, **otra** uerde, et assi de todas colores [*Lapidario*, 69]
Un dolor sacó **otro**, un sentimiento otro [*Celestina*, 336]
 Sería quitar a **un santo** por poner en **otro**; acompañeos Dios, que yo vieja soy; no he temor que me fueren en la calle [*Celestina*, 209]
 Reí[a]me yo de todos estos disparates, y por **un oído** me entraba su reprehensión y por **otro** me salía; y finalmente fueron tantas mis rapacerías y inquietudes que me vinieron a ehar del estudio poco menos que con cajas destempladas [*Estebanillo*, I, 43]
 Yo de mí puedo asegurar que lo que no entiendo en **un autor** de **una facultad**, lo suelo entender en **otro** de **otra** que parece muy distante; y esos propios, al explicarse, abren ejemplos metafóricos de otras artes [*Respuesta*, 450]

As for the evolution of this structure, the occurrences are distributed as follows:

there are 22 cases in the thirteenth century, 23 in the fifteenth and 19 in the seventeenth (table 6.3). These results show that this construction, already well established in the ancestor language and still very much in use in Modern Spanish, has enjoyed a remarkable stability throughout the history of the Spanish language.

6.2.2 *El un N*

It has often been noted that one of the changes in the NP from Medieval to Modern Spanish is the disappearance of the *el un N* construction. As pointed out by Camus (2009) and Company (2009), in Medieval Spanish *un* could combine with the definite article just as all other cardinals do in Modern Spanish (*los dos compadres, los tres mosqueteros* and so on). Some examples are presented in (8):

- (8) et don Martin Gonçalez le dio al prior en camio por esta tierra sobredicha, las dos partes de la tierra que fue de Martin de Vezana, que es como uan de Cuezna aluado, ont son aladannos: de **la una part** tierra de Dia Sanchez de Uelascor, & de la otra part de la tierra de don Martin Gonçalez [*DLE13*, 60,20]
 e quando quieren ensalendar, diz que salen a ello a somo dell agua tan irados como saeta, e assi uan yrados que a las uezes alçan se tanto com qui uuela, e que passan todas las uelas de la naue del un cabo al otro [**GEII**, 1, 182, 27a]
 E como quiera que, segúnd avemos dicho, **del vn real** al otro avía espacio de vna legua; pero los más días el Rey yva a visitar aquel real, e lo mandaua proveer de gentes & de lo que era neçesario [*Reyes*, 4, 13]
 Halléme dos días antes con carro, carreta y criada y mucha mercancía, y en el que de presente me hallaba compré un saco de pan y un rocín viejo y cargado de muermo, **el un ojo** ciego y el otro bizco a puras nubes, y que se acordaba del asalto de Matrique por el Príncipe de Parma [*Estebanillo*, 2, 33]

It must be said that, with four exceptions, all the cases found show the pattern *un vs. otro*. In this sense they must be understood as a continuation of the Latin

ŪNUS...ALTER construction that, as Meyer-Lübke (1923 [1890-1906]: III, 192-93) explains, is reproduced in Romance with a certain degree of variation regarding the presence of the definite article, whence its inclusion in the conservative category is justified (see also Fernández Ramírez 1987: §5).

According to Camus (2009), the *el un N* construction, although never very common, was in use until the eighteenth century, and can be occasionally found in later documents, specially in those with an archaic flavor.

As for my data, they basically confirm Camus's thesis: I have registered 32 cases of *el un N*. Of them, 53.12% (17/32) of the cases belong to the first period, 28.12 % (9/32) to the second, and 18.75% (6/32) to the third, showing a steady decrease in this usage (6.4).

Table 6.4: *El un* per period

1st	2nd	3rd
53.12% (17/32)	28.12% (9/32)	18.75% (6/32)

Once more, genre plays a predominant role (6.5): 64.71% of the cases belonging to the first period are found in legal documents (*DLE13* and *Fuero*), which, as we have noted, are known for their conservative discourse. Moreover, more than half of the cases (18/32) correspond to the NP *la una part(e)*, suggesting it had become a formulaic expression. On the other hand, 4 of the 6 examples from the third century belong to *Criticón*, where the construction is used in the expression of antithesis, one of the predominant figures in Gracián's prose.

Recall that in the corpus there were a few cases that did not fit the pattern *(el) un...(el) otro*. Some of them are presented in (9), together with additional data from Camus — (2009) in (9a) and Company (2009) (9c):⁶

⁶Note that the example from Camus comes from *Calila*, a text in which I have not found any examples. This mismatch comes from the fact that Camus and I have analysed different parts of the text. Recall that I have only considered 15000 words, while, according to CORDE, the text consists of 75235.

Table 6.5: *El un N* per text

	Text	Conservative
1st	Calila	—
	DLE13	47.06% (8/17)
	Fuero	17.65% (3/17)
	GEII	23.53% (4/17)
	Lapidario	11.76% (2/17)
2nd	Cárcel	22.22% (2/9)
	Celestina	—
	Gramática	—
	Reyes	66.67% (6/9)
	Legal	11.11% (1/9)
3rd	Criticón	66.67% (4/6)
	DLNE	—
	Estebanillo	16.67% (1/6)
	Alboroto	—
	Sor Juana	16.67% (1/6)

- (9) a. al rey çerrava **el un ojo**, et dezía que era vizco, porque non barruntase el rey que avía con Helbed ninguna cosa [*Calila*, 289]
- b. y bueltos los oios **al vn lado dela mesa**, vi vn vieio anciano sentado en vna silla, echada la cabeça sobre vna mano en manera de onbre cuydoso; y ninguna destas cosas pudiera ver segund la escuridad dela torre sino fuera por vn claro resplandor, que le salía al preso del corazón, que la esclarecía toda [*Cárcel*, 92, 159]
- c. vimos venir **al un soldado** de los que habíamos puesto en la playa [Bernal, 16]
- d. Cuántas veces lloramos con el que llora y a un mismo tiempo nos estamos riendo de su necesidad!; que con **el un brazo** estaba jurando al paje que le había dado entrada [*Criticón*, 546]

There is something very interesting about these examples: in them the construction *el un N* has a partitive reading (or exclusive in Hawkins's terms), so (9a) could be paraphrased as *uno de los ojos*, (9b) as *uno de los lados de la mesa*, and so on. Furthermore, in the example from Bernal Díaz del Castillo, partitivity is explicitly marked with the PP in *de los que habíamos puesto en playa*.

This is surprising, taking into account the fact that in Modern Spanish the combination of definite article plus the rest of the cardinals does not have this

nuance. On the contrary, by uttering *los once ministros de la Suprema Corte aprobaron el decreto* it is implied that the Court is made up of eleven members, all of whom approved the decree. This interpretation is a natural consequence of the inclusive character of the definite article: as proposed by Hawkins (1978), the main property of definite determiners is that they refer to all entities in a given context (see section 3.1.3). So why should it be that in the cases presented in (9) the definite article placed before *un* does not lead to an inclusive reading?⁷

The disappearance of *el un N* has been explained in terms of the incompatibility of *un*, in its innovative function as an indefinite article, with the definite determiner *el* (Camus 2009, Company 2009). It seems clear that in these cases *un* is not an indefinite article, but rather preserves its numeral interpretation, in view of which I have included *el un N* in the conservative category. However, given its partitive interpretation, it is not accurate to identify the construction with Modern Spanish DefArt + Card, for their interpretation in terms of inclusiveness is, as I have shown, radically different.

As Lapesa explains, (2000 [1992]: 489-95), in Old Spanish the combination of the definite article with cardinals could be interpreted in two ways: on the one hand, it could refer to all entities in a given set, as it does in Modern Spanish

⁷In relation with this, consider the following set of examples adapted from Buring (1998: 155, ex. 48):

- (i) There were seven girls in the park.
 - a. The (seven) girls were blond.
 - b. # Seven were blond.
 - c. # The four were blond.
 - d. THREE were blond.
 - e. SEVEN were blond. (These seven girls need to be different from those previously introduced)

These grammaticality contrasts are of course due to the indefinite nature of cardinals. Recall that following Heim (1988), indefinites do not refer to familiar referents, but rather introduce new ones. Therefore, the reference to a group of entities already introduced is only possible by means of a definite determiner, as in (a), so that (b) is unacceptable; (c) is also impossible because a smaller group of four has not been introduced and in consequence it cannot be referred to with a definite determiner. Finally, (d) in its partitive interpretation shows that in order to introduce a subset of the familiar referent a new indefinite NP must be used. This is because only the original set with all its members has been introduced and can therefore be referred back with a definite description.

(10a); on the other hand, it could have a partitive interpretation (10b). Notice how these two uses coexist in (10c):⁸

- (10) a. Quinze dias conplidos duraron en las bodas, / Hya çerca de **los .X.V. dias** yas van los fijos dalgo [*Cid*, 2251-52]
 b. Diz e ocho trebeios, **los nueve d'una color** e *los nueve dotra* [*Açedrex*, 366, 24-5]
 Destos .ijj. mill marcos **los dozientos** tengo yo [*Cid*, 760, 3231]
 c. Los cinco de los seis cabreros se levantaron [*Quijote*, I, 13, fol, 46]

It must be pointed out that I have not found any examples where *el un N* has an inclusive reading, as the ones of (10a). On the contrary, all the cases I have come across have a partitive interpretation. In this sense, there seems to be a contrast between the combination of the definite article with *un* and with the rest of the numerals.⁹

Although, given the lack of a representative number of examples, I am not in a position to propose a definite solution on this puzzle, I believe the explanation needs to be sought in relation to the distributive *(el) un....(el) otro* construction, which, as I have said, is by far the most common context in which *el un N* appears. Note that in this case the definite article before *un* does not induce an inclusive interpretation, but rather a distributive one. In fact, the only difference between examples (8) and (9) is that in (8) the number of elements in the set over which the predication is effected is explicitly stated in the remaining of the sentence, whereas in (9) the number of elements in the set is omitted. After all, as pointed out by Leonetti (1999: 859), in the construction *un...otro*, the NP with

⁸Notice that the reference to all the members of the set was also achieved by means of *todo* + cardinal, as in the next example (Lapesa 2000 [1992]: 494):

Sé que puedo ser, no sólo los que les he dicho, sino todos los doze Pares de Francias, y aun todos los nueve de la fama [*Cervantes, Quijote*, 1, 5, fol. 16]

⁹Lapesa does not offer any cases of inclusive *el un N* although he does not explicitly deny their existence.

un is implicitly partitive. In other words, in both cases, *el un N* refers to only a subset of the elements comprising the set to which the sentence refers. In (8) these elements are all individually mentioned, because their identity is relevant in that particular context, as in *ont son aladannos: de la una part tierra de Dia Sanchez de Uelascor, & de la otra part de la tierra de don Martin Gonçalez*. Notice that in most cases of *el un...el otro* the total number of elements in the set is two, although this is not necessarily so.¹⁰ By contrast, in (10) the number and identification of elements comprising the set from which the referent of *un* is picked is irrelevant and therefore omitted, although on some occasions it can be inferred on the grounds of common knowledge, as in (9a) and (9b): tables usually have four sides (unless they are round in which case they don't have any sides), and most people have a pair of eyes and a pair of hands.

The link between *el un N* and partitivity can be illustrated by comparing the two examples in (11), in which the parallelism between *el un N* and a overtly partitive structure such as *una de las* is made evident.

- (11) a. Ela tierra que nos li diemos en cambio dela otra que el nos dio, es cerca del su palacio; aladannos: **dela una parte** don Diego Lopez de Salzedo; [*DLE13*, 100, 11]
- b. Gerundio en el castellano es **una delas diez partes de la oracion**. la cual vale tanto como el presente del infinitivo del verbo de donde viene & esta preposicion .en. por que tanto vale leyendo el virgilio aprovecho: como en leyendo el virgilio aprovecho [*Gramática*, 253]

A comparison in CORDE of the frequencies of these two constructions in their feminine variant, yields the results shown in table 6.6, which show that the reduction in the use of *la una N* coincides with the rise in the number of *una de las N*.

¹⁰This is the case in all our examples, but it does not necessarily have to be like this. For instance, in Modern Spanish we could say, speaking about a triangle: *un lado mide 5 cm, (el) otro 10 cm y (el) otro 12 cm*. Note that both instances of *el* are optional. For partitivity in Spanish, see Sánchez López (1999).

Table 6.6: *La una N* vs. *una de las N*

	La una N	Una de las N
1st	58.33% (14/24)	6.66% (1/15)
2nd	29.16% (7/24)	26.66% (4/15)
3rd	12.50% (3/24)	66.66% (10/15)

In sum, I have shown that, in accordance with Lapesa (2000 [1992]), *el un N* had a different interpretation from that of DefArt + cardinal + N in Modern Spanish, in that while the former had a partitive or exclusive meaning, in the second the definite article triggers an inclusive interpretation. Furthermore, *el un N* was most commonly used in opposition to *el otro N*, and in the rare cases where this opposition is not explicit, one infers the existence of other members of the set to which the referent of *el un N* belongs.

As for its disappearance, it is most probably due to more than one cause: on one hand, as has been previously proposed, the grammaticalization of *un* as an indefinite article could have played a role, in the sense that *un* became strongly associated with indefiniteness, resulting in its incompatibility with definite determiners. If in Spanish the grammaticalization of *un* as an indefinite article had produced a distinct form (as happened in English), it is possible that the *el un N* structure would have survived.¹¹ On the other hand, given the partitive interpretation of *el un N*, there is a strong possibility that its disappearance is connected also with the generalization of the partitive construction *uno de los N* which is still in use in Modern Spanish.¹²

¹¹See Rigau (1999: 316) for more on the combinatory possibilities of Spanish determiners.

¹²It is important to say that the disappearance of the partitive interpretation of the definite article + numeral (other than *un*) construction is related to its ambiguity. As stated by Lapesa (2000 [1992]: 496):

El cardinal sin artículo tenía la ventaja de que nunca subrayaba la idea de totalidad, mientras que con él era anfibológico en muchos casos, ya que no sólo podía indicar la parte, sino también el todo [...]. La lengua resolvió esta duplicidad incómoda eliminando paulatinamente el artículo en las indicaciones de la cantidad parcial.

Notice that in contrast with *el un*, in the case of the rest of the numerals, only the partitive variant was eliminated.

6.3 *Cada un N*

According to Eberenz (2000: 411-13) the behaviour of *cada* has been more or less stable through the history of the Spanish language, apart from the fact that it seems to be more frequent today than in the Middle Ages. In (12), some examples taken from Barra (1992: 361) are given.

- (12) de **cada parte** siento muchas crueles sañas [*Rimado*, 1141b]
 La leona en el primero parto pare çinco abortones e dende en **cada parto**
 mengua el número (*HOriente*, 86/11)
 los diversos actos de **cada libro** parti por capitulos [*Villena*, 48/39]

As Barra explains, *cada* is very commonly followed by a noun related to the concept of time, such as *día*, *año* and so on. Their high frequency led to the creation of formulaic expressions, among whom the we find *cadaldía* ('every day'), discussed extensively in the literature. Note that in the opinion of Malkiel (1948: 396, n.47), the *l* is epenthesis, similarly to that in *peldaño* from *PEDĀNEU. See the next example from Barra (1992: 361):

- (13) Andamos **cadaldia** mas compuestos [*Apolonio*, 522c]

The most noticeable change regarding *cada* is that in Medieval Spanish the compound *cada un* could function as a determiner. This construction is now ungrammatical, as *cada uno* can only be pronominal.

Although its frequency of use was never high, *cada un(o) + N* is found from the earliest documents onwards. In the corpus, we have recorded 10 cases, 8 from the thirteenth century and two from the fifteenth century (6.3). I have not found any cases for the seventeenth century, which confirms the thesis of Eberenz (2000: 411), according to which the decay of the form took place before the fifteenth century, when the last examples are found. *Cada un(o) + N* is mainly found in legal documents, and, in the opinion of Eberenz, it must have been restricted to

written discourse, where it was used with an emphatic flavour. In (14), I present some examples. Note that in the last case, the preposition *en* does not add any special nuance (see Barra 1992: 361).

- (14) Et dizen que dos cosas están bien a **cada un ome**: la una es religión et la otra es riqueza [*Calila*, 96]
 Et mandó que todo el pueblo en uno, et **cada uno omne** por sí recibiesse et obedeciesse los mandamientos de su Rey, et que lo amassen, et quel temiessen, et quel guardassen, tan bien su fama et su ondra como su cuerpo mismo [*Fuero*, 6]
 porque lo suso dicho se pueda mejor guardar, por esta mi carta mando a vós las dichas justicias: que de aquí adelante cada uno en su juramento, **cada un ser** fagades pesquisa e inquisición e sepades quién e quáles personas son las que labran la dicha moneda o llevan oro o plata o cobre para labrar [*THE*, 238]
 alos a rrendadores & fieles & cojedores [...] que tenedes o toujeredes cargo de cojer & recabdar, en rrenta o en fieldad o terçeria o en mayordomja o enotra manera qualquier, las rrentas delas mjas alcaualas este presente ano & de aqui adelante en **cada vn anno** [*DLE15*, 248, 333]

On the other hand, in medieval documents, there are sporadic instances of plural *cada unos*, both as a determiner and as a pronoun. As the form is not found in my corpus, I present some examples from CORDE.

- (15) a. et por que lo ayan mas libre e mas seguro, diemosles ende nuestro privilegio plomado, onde mandamos a **cada unos de vos** que dedes al cabildo sobredicho, o a qui ellos mandaren, todos los derechos e todas las infurciones e los pechos e todas las otras cosas que vos devedes dar a la casa de Sancta Maria de Valcuerna [*Documentos de Alfonso X dirigidos a Castilla la Vieja*, 1272, CORDE]
 b. Et nos, los sobredichos abbat et conuiento, la sobredicha donacion, en la forma et manera que sobre escripta es, con acciones de gracias la rescebimos et aceptamos, et prometemos por nos et por uuestros successores en perpetuo de fazer tener, observar et compler todas et **cada unas cosas** sobre escriptas, et a esto fazer et compler

obligamos todos et **cada unos bienes del dicho monesterio**, conjuntamente et diuisament [*Documentos de la Colección Diplomática de Irache*, 1385, CORDE]

- c. Vigila para que las doncellas, niñeras y demas cumplan **cada unas** sus obligaciones [*La Moda Elegante*, 1884, CORDE]

Diachronically, a search in CORDE confirms that the form never had a high frequency compared to its singular counterpart. Moreover, it suggests that its use dropped dramatically in the sixteenth century. From that moment, *cada unos* is rarely attested, as it can be seen in table 6.7.

Table 6.7: *Cada unos* per period

	Masculine	Feminine
13th c.	198	32
14th c.	93	55
15th c.	167	19
16th c.	11	15
17th c.	2	2
18th c.	2	0

With respect to meaning, as far as I can see, the plural does not add any nuance to the singular variant. In this sense, it may well be all a matter of agreement: *unos* agrees in number and gender with the noun designating the set over which the distributive operation is effected (*cosas, bienes, vos, doncellas, niñeras*). Taking this into account, we could explain *cada unos* as a type of *ad sensum* agreement.¹³

Interestingly, the majority of the examples found in CORDE correspond to

¹³In Modern Spanish, *cada unos N* is ungrammatical. Nonetheless, at least in Mexican Spanish it can be marginally found in colloquial speech with time measures, where the use of *unos* is explained by its approximative character (see section 7.2), which helps to highlight that the interval within which a certain event occurs is variable or simply unspecified, as in the following examples, taken from the internet:

Problema - se frena PC **cada unos segundos**.

P 680C Funciona bien pero **cada unos minutos** se apaga sola.

As previously noted, these examples are marginal and are not acceptable to all speakers. Note that the standard construction would be *cada ciertos segundos* or, probably more frequently used, *cada unos cuantos segundos*.

the model *cada unos de N*, and of these, the most frequent case by far is *cada unos de vos* and *cada unos de nos*. Note that in contrast to the plural (15a) which is rather rare, the singular form *cada uno de nos* (16a) and *de vos* (16b) is extensively documented in legal documents throughout the period that concerns us.

- (16) a. Que fazes o que locura es esta que te trae? Et uaron, **cada uno de nos** teme por si [*GEII*, 1, 180, 2a]
- b. mandé dar esta mi carta para vós e para cada uno de vós en la dicha razón, por la qual vos mando a todos e a **cada uno de vós** en vuestros logares e jurediciones que luego vista fagades cojer e cojades todos los maravedís que montan en la mitad del pedido [*THE*, 167] e a **cada uno de vós** o a otra qualquier persona o personas que por mí o por vós, o en otra qualquier manera tienen dicho mi alcáçar, salud e gracia [*THE*, 174]

Lastly, the *ad sensum* agreement hypothesis is strengthened by comparing the two cases in (17), one from the thirteenth and the other from the seventeenth century, where the contrast in grammatical number does not have any effect of the meaning of the formulaic expression *cada uno (de) por sí*.

- (17) a. Dantes encara pleno poder sobre feyto de pasqueros et de lavores de nuestros terminos, de todos o en partida, et de quallesquiere otras cossas que a los anteditos procuradores nuestros bien visto lis sera et fer querran con todos los sobreditos logares et de **cada unos por si** o con lures procuradores [*Garcetón, alcalde de Ansó*, 1299, CORDE]
- b. ver que la yema y la clara de un mismo huevo son tan contrarias, que en los unos, que sirven para el azúcar, sirve **cada una de por sí** y juntos no [*Respuesta*, 1691]

6.4 Summary

The previous pages are devoted to the analysis and explanation of the use and main changes that *un* in its cardinal reading underwent during the period of this study. I have shown that all the main uses of Latin $\bar{U}NUS$, as discussed in 5, were inherited by Spanish, and that their frequencies have been diachronically quite stable. On the other hand, it has been demonstrated that at least since the thirteenth century the majority of instances of *un* have not had a strong cardinal reading, suggesting that the new function of *un* as a presenter of new entities into the discourse was already well established at that stage. Furthermore, a comparison of frequencies by texts suggests that the proportion of conservative *un* is more related to the genre of the texts in question than to their date. I have also discussed the two most important losses in the structure of the NP involving the cardinal *un*. These are:

1. The *el un N* structure, which has been usually analysed as yet another case of definite article plus cardinal, its disappearance being due to the grammaticalization of *un* as an indefinite article. I agree that in this construction *un* is not an article. Nonetheless, I have also shown that the interpretation of *el un* is radically different from the interpretation of the definite article with the rest of the cardinals in Modern Spanish. *El un N* has always a partitive interpretation and should be analysed in relation to the well known opposition between $\bar{U}NUS$ and $ALTER$, and its descendants in the Romance languages. It is the singling out capacity of $\bar{U}NUS$ and not its cardinality what lies at the root of this construction. Finally, although the rise of the indefinite article must certainly have contributed to the disappearance of *el un*, I believe that the generalization of *uno de los N* as the partitive structure par excellence may have also played a part.
2. The form *cada unos*, both as a determiner and as a pronoun, which is occa-

sionally found in medieval documents. Given that no semantic distinctions were identified between this form and singular *cada uno*, I have, in the absence of further evidence, regarded its temporary existence merely as a matter of number agreement.

Chapter 7

The Distribution of *un(os)*: Syntactic Restrictions

The aim of this chapter is to explain some of the most important restrictions in the grammaticalization of the indefinite article. The chapter is organized as follows: first, I comment on the frequency of use of *un*, not only diachronically, but also in relation with textual variation, and compare its evolution with that of *algún*, with which, as explained in chapter 5, it has some common features. In the second part of the chapter, I deal with the form *unos* and demonstrate how its evolution mirrors that of its singular counterpart. Then, I analyse the restrictions on the use of the indefinite article, singular and plural, with respect to the type of noun, syntactic function, and word order. Finally, in the last section, I give a detailed account of the difference of meaning derived from the presence and absence of *un(os)* in predicates and then describe its insertion in this syntactic function.

7.1 Frequency of Use of the Indefinite Article

The use of *un* as an indefinite article is well documented from the very first texts, as shown in the following example from *Disputa del alma y el cuerpo*, where, as Lapesa (2000 [1973]: 484) rightly points out, *un* already functions as a marker of indefiniteness, and not as a numeral.

- (1) **Un** sábado esient, domingo amanezient
 vi **una** vision en mio leio dormient
 Eram' ase, eoamt que so **un** l[uzie]lo
 iacie **un** cuerpo de uemne muerto [*Disputa del alma y el cuerpo*]

Here *un* indicates that the referent has not been mentioned before; it is a novelty marker (cf. Heim 1988). However, in contrast to the definite article whose frequency is already high in old Castilian documents, the indefinite article generalized at a slower rate. In table 7.1, I reproduce the results of Lapesa (2000 [1973]) for a quantitative study of the determiners in texts of different centuries.¹

Table 7.1: Frequency of determiners(Lapesa, 2000 [1973])

	BP	DP	DefArt	IndefArt	OtherD
Mio Cid	41.06%	58.94%	39.06%	1.26%	18.62%
Quijote, II	32.50%	67.50%	29.90%	5.10%	32.50%
Borges	19.74%	80.26%	46.15%	8.20%	25.89%
Cela	27.33%	72.67%	40.06%	13.35%	19.25%
Diosdado (A)	28.20%	71.80%	35.10%	13.50%	23.20%
Diosdado (D)	22.10%	77.90%	28.70%	16.60%	32.60%

The first thing to note is the decrease in frequency of BPs from *Mio Cid*, where 41.06% of nouns were left undetermined, to the prose of Borges, where this type of phrase accounts only for 19.74%. Of course this increase in frequency of determiners is not entirely due to the generalization of the indefinite article, for

¹The table has been adapted. For instance, I have left out the results of *Disputa* for as Lapesa himself recognizes, the small extent of the poem does not allow us to make any generalizations. With respect to the play of Ana Diosdado *Olvida los tambores*, '(A)' stands for stage directions, and (D) stands for dialogue.

other determiners, notably the definite article, have also increased in frequency. However, as Lapesa explains, of all determiners, the indefinite article is the one whose frequency has increased the most in the documented history of Spanish Language. Indeed, in *Mio Cid* the indefinite article accounted for only 1.26% of phrases, and its proportion versus the definite article was 26:1. Four centuries later, in the first part of the *Quijote*, published in 1605, the indefinite article had quadrupled its frequency and the proportion with respect to the definite article reduced to 6:1. Interestingly, this proportion is roughly the same in the prose of Borges. Finally, in *La Colmena* this proportion falls even more to a 3:1, and it is even smaller in the play *Olvida los tambores*, where there are only 2.6 cases of *el* for each of *un* in the stage directions, and 1.7:1 in the dialogue.

Lapesa's results prove at least two things: first, that the frequency of the indefinite article is susceptible to the type of discourse, dialogue being the register most prone to its appearance; second, that in the centuries that have passed since the copying of *Mio Cid*, the indefinite article has expanded greatly, with the sharpest rise occurring in the transition from Medieval to Golden-Age Spanish. In (2) I give some examples of the use of the indefinite article in the works analysed by Lapesa (2000 [1973]).

- (2) Myo Çid don Rodrigo trae grand ganancia, /diçe de **vna sierra** & legaua a **vn val** [*Cid*, 973-74]
 En buelta con el entraron al palacio / e yuan posar con el en **vnos preçiosos escaños** [*Cid*, 1761-62]
 Y fue, a lo que se cree, que en **un lugar** cerca del suyo había **una moza** labradora de muy buen parecer, de quien él **un tiempo** anduvo enamorado, aunque, según se entiende, ella jamás lo supo ni le dio cata dello [*Quijote*, 1, 44, CORDE]
 El mozo se quitó la montera, y, sacudiendo la cabeza a una y a otra parte, se comenzaron a descoger y desparcir **unos cabellos** que pudieran los del sol tenerles envidia [*Quijote*, 1, 318, CORDE]
 A **una señora** silenciosa, que suele sentarse al fondo, conforme se sube a

los billares, se le murió **un hijo**, aún no hace un mes [Colmena, 119]
Doña Celia está planchando **unas sábanas** cuando suena el teléfono [Colmena, 242]

As for my data, shown in table 7.2, in accordance with Lapesa's claim, the frequency of the indefinite article in my corpus is tripled from the first period analysed to the third, and again the sharpest change is located between the end 15th and the end 17th century, where it goes from 200 cases to 628 cases.

Table 7.2: Indefinite article per period

1st	2nd	3rd
18.98% (194/1022)	19.57% (200/1022)	61.45% (628/1022)

These data are even more significant when compared with the frequencies of *algún* in the corpus. In contrast with the indefinite article whose frequency increased notably from Medieval to Golden-Age Spanish, the number of examples of *algún* show a completely different pattern (table 7.3). There are 157 cases in the first period, 183 in the second, and only 117 in the third.

Table 7.3: *Algún* per period

1st	2nd	3rd
34.35% (157/457)	40.04% (183/457)	25.61% (117/457)

As shown in figure 7.1, during these centuries, while *un* tripled its use in a clear sign of consolidation of its new grammatical status of indefinite article, the frequency of *algún* remained more or less stable, with small shifts between the three periods that are most probably the result of the composition of the corpus.²

²Note that the reduction in the number of cases of *algún* in the third period is not, at least in my corpus, due to the rise of *alguien*. Interestingly, in the fragments selected for this period there are no cases of this pronoun. In fact, the only case of *alguien* that I have registered in the corpus appears in Nebrija's *Gramática*, where the grammarian mentions the use of this pronoun which he describes as old-fashioned: 'sola mente los antiguos dezían alguien por alguno y alguna, como

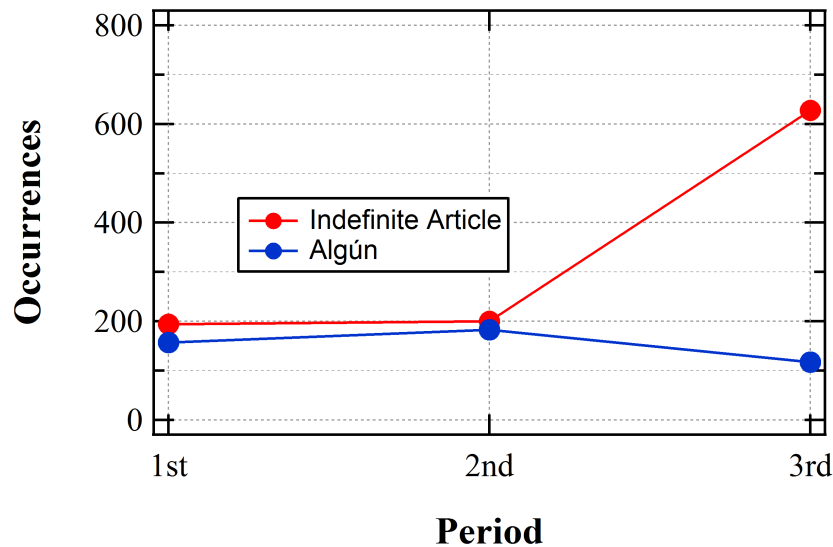


Figure 7.1: Frequency of indefinite article and *algún*

Now, going back to the case of *un*, if we analyse the frequencies per text (table 7.4), we can see that there is a strong correlation between genre and the number of appearances of the indefinite article. For instance, in the first period analysed, *un* is most common in narrative prose (*Calila*), followed by chronicle (*GEII*), and scientific prose (*Lapidario*), and it is rather uncommon in legal documents such as *Fuero* and *DLE13*.³

quien'. In all the texts, *alguno* and *algún omne* remain the most frequent constructions for the expression of modern *alguien*. It seems that the cause of this reduction is related to the fact that for the third period there are no legal documents, where *algún* tends to be most frequent. Notice that this indefinite determiner is also very frequently employed in non-narrative prose, such as *Lapidario* (27 cases) and *Gramática* (59 cases). The fact that in the seventeenth century there are neither legal nor non-narrative texts is surely the best explanation for the reduction of cases in comparison with the two previous periods. For the origin of rise of *alguien*, see the classic work of Malkiel (1948), Meyer-Lübke (1923 [1890-1906]: III, 105), Elcock (1960: 100), Alvar & Pottier (1983:§109), Barra (1992: III: 4), Eberenz (2000: ch. XIII), and Penny (2002:148). For Portuguese *alguém* and Galician *alguén*, see Mattoso Câmara (1972) and Carvalho Calero (1966).

³As stated in the corpus section (1.2), *Calila* and *GEII* only survived in manuscripts from the fourteenth century. Consequently, one is tempted to attribute the fact that they are the two texts with the highest number of indefinite articles to the date of the copies. However, as I will show next, in the three periods analysed, narrative texts are consistently the ones with the highest number of *un*. It is therefore not easy to evaluate the weight that each of these two factors (i.e. date of copy and genre) have in my results. With this in mind, I have compared the frequency of *un* in the first and second part of the *General Estoria* using CORDE. Mind that for the first part the oldest surviving manuscript, which actually was produced in the *Scriptorium*, dates from c.1270 (see Alvar & Lucía Mejías, 2002:45). If the date of the copy was the reason for the high number of *un* in my results, one would expect that the first part of the *General Estoria* contained a lower number of *un*. This is not the case. Only taking into account masculine

The modest use of the indefinite article in legal documents, particularly in the *Fuero* is another proof of the disparity between *un* and *algún*. While in this text, there are merely three cases of the *un*, it is precisely here that we find the highest number of *algún* in the whole corpus: 85 cases. The notable preference for *algún* is due to the fact that this quantifier is better suited than *un* to the expression of laws, for, as we will see in 8, its default reading is non-specific.⁴ The density of conditionals, negations, imperatives and other opacity inducers are the cause of *algún* and not *un* being the indefinite per excellence in this type of texts. Some examples are given below:

- (3) Si **algún lego** touiere préstamo alguno de la elesia o de monasterio pora su uida, [et] por alguna cosa que faga ouiere de perder lo que a, aquel préstamo torne al monasterio o a la elesia de qui lo tenía [*Fuero*, 11]
 Et si **alguna cosa** entregare o peyndrare por ssí o por su mandato, tómelo todo doblado aquél a qui lo tomó [*Fuero*, 14]
 Si **alguna mugier bibda**, o que aya auído sennor, o amigo casare después de muerte de su padre o de su madre sin uoluntad de sus hermanos, non sea deseredada por ello [*Fuero*, 60]
 Otrossí si la mugier se fuera de casa a su marido o se partiere dél por razón de fazer adulterio, pierda las arras maguer que non sea prouado que cumplió la maldat que quiso por **algún embargo**, pues que non fincó por ella de lo complir [*Fuero*, 64]

This pattern is repeated in the second period: again, legal documents do not contain many cases of *un* (against 37 cases of *algún*); narrative texts (*Celestina* and *Cárcel*) present the highest number of *un(os)*, followed by the chronicle genre (*Reyes*) and other prose (*Gramática*). Finally, in the third period, again, narrative

singular *un*, we get that the number of cases for each one thousand words is 1.7261 (960 cases in 556163 words) in the first part, and 1.7069 (426 cases in 249564 words) in the second. On the basis of these results, it seems to me that the preponderant factor is genre and not that the copy of the GEII dates from the fourteenth century.

⁴Or at least it indicates the uncertainty on the part of the speaker about the exact identity of the reference. Recall that in our definition of specificity the certainty of the identity of the reference is not required for imparting a specific interpretation.

Table 7.4: Indefinite article per text

	Text	Article
1st	Calila	48.45% (94/194)
	DLE13	4.64% (9/194)
	Fuero	1.55% (3/194)
	GEII	23.20% (45/194)
	Lapidario	22.16% (43/194)
2nd	Cárcel	33.50% (67/200)
	Celestina	26.50% (53/200)
	Gramática	17% (34/200)
	Reyes	18.50% (37/200)
	Legal	4.5% (9/200)
3rd	Criticón	21.66% (136/628)
	DLNE	18.63% (117/628)
	Estebanillo	32% (201/628)
	Alboroto	11.15% (70/628)
	Sor Juana	16.56% (104/628)

texts show the highest frequency of *un* (*Estebanillo*, *Criticón*), and *un* is also well documented in the letters of Sor Juana and in the *DLNE*. Note that although the percentages in this table may lead to the impression that *un* is rare in *Alboroto*, once we look at the number of cases we can see that, although in contrast with narrative texts of the third period the frequency is low, it still has more cases of *un* than any of the other texts studied from previous periods. Thus, we may conclude that the frequency of the indefinite article varies not only diachronically but also with respect to genre.

7.2 The Form *unos*

As stated in section 7.2, one of the features that sets Ibero-Romance languages apart from the rest of Romance is the existence of a plural form for the indefinite article, namely *unos*, which appears from the very first documents, as can be seen in the following set of examples from the *Cid*:⁵

⁵These examples give the lie to the claim of Santana Herrera (1982), according to whom there are no cases of *unos* in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.

- (4) Todos los dias a myo Çid aguardaban / Moros de las fronteras & **vnas yentes estrannas** [*Cid*, 839-41]
 En buelta con el entraron al palaçio, / E yuan posar con el en **vnos preçiosos escaños** [*Cid*, 1761-62]
 Con **vnos .XV.** a tierras firio, / Commo lo comidia el que en ora naçio [*Cid*, 2019-20]
 Calças de buen paño en sus camas metio, / Sobrellas **vnos çapatos que a grant huebra son** [*Cid*, 3084-85]
 Firiessen en los escudos **vnos tan grandes golpes** [*Cid*, 3673] [E]s leydo, dat nos del vino; / [A]la **vnos peños**, que bien vos lo dararan sobrelos [*Cid*, 3734-35]

Recall that although the plural form of *ŪNUS* was known in Latin, its use was, according to Ernout & Meillet (1959), infrequent. In early times, other Romance languages presented such a form, but in most cases it was completely lost or remained solely in fossilized expressions such as French *les uns... les autres*, or *quelques-uns* (see section 5.1.2). In contrast, Spanish not only preserved the plural form, but extended its use to the point that it became a true indefinite article whose development mirrors that of its singular counterpart.

There are basically three types of *unos*:⁶

On the one hand, it is used with *pluralia tantum*. This use of *unos* is inherited from Latin and is well documented throughout the history of Spanish language (see chapter 5). In the corpus, I have noted ten cases, some of which are shown below:⁷

⁶Two of these types of *unos* were defined by Nebrija, who in his grammar explains:

Este nombre uno o es para contar: & entonces no tiene plural: por quanto repugna a su significacion: salvo si se juntasse con nombre que no tiene singular. como diziendo unas tiseras. unas tenazas. unas alforjas. quiero dezir un par de tiseras. un par de tenazas. un par de alforjas. o es para demostrar alguna cosa particular. como los latinos tienen quidam. & entonces tomase por cierto et puede tener plural, como dizindo un ombre vino. *unos ombres* vinieron. quiero dezir que vino cierto ombre & vinieron ciertos ombres' [Gramática, 237]

Recall that, as explained in section 7.2, this distinction is also made by Meyer-Lübke (1923 [1890-1906]: III, 65).

⁷Observe that some of the nouns given in (i) are not *pluralia tantum* ('only plural') in the

- (5) Una cosa te diré por que veas qué madre perdiste, aunque era para callar, pero contigo todo passa. Siete dientes quitó a un ahorcado con **unas tenazicas de pelar cejas**, mientras yo le descalcé los çapatos [*Celestina*, 1123]
- El alcaýde no estaua en la çibdad aquel día que era ido a **unas bodas** a Vélez Málaga, e aquel caballero Martín Galindo, peleando con los moros, fué ferido de una cuchillada en la cabeza [*Reyes*, 7]
- Iten, un hierro de herrar con su benta. Iten, **unas espuelas grandes**. Iten, un rollo de gerga de nueve baras. Iten, unos estribos de palo. Iten, un gancho de yerro pequeño [*DLNE*, 140, 369]
- y sacando de un estuche **unas muy finas y aceradas tijeras**, empezó a dar cuchilladas cortando coronas reales, cercenando faldas de sitas por verginzoso lugar y desjarrerando caballos [*Estebanillo*, 1, 53]
- Aquella noche hice provisión de esponjas y estopas, y a la mañana, quitándole a mi faraute unos grandes calcetones de paño que traía debajo de **unas botas**, que le pudieran servir de calzones, le metí en la una dellas todas las esponjas y estopas en lugar de escaipín y calcetón, y como quien calafetea navíos se las caladeteé muy apretadamente [*Estebanillo*, 2, 234]

On the other hand, we find the ‘true plurals’ in which *unos* is effectively used as a marker of indefiniteness of plural NPs. In these cases, the function of *unos* is to introduce a new referent into the discourse. There is no quantification whatsoever: the sole function of *unos* is to indicate that the referent of the noun it precedes had not been mentioned before, and in this sense it fulfils, just like *un*, the novelty condition stipulated by Heim (1988) for the indefinite article, as can be seen in the following examples.

- (6) Desçi puso en este libro lo que trasladó de los libros de India: **unas questiones que fizo un rey de India que avía nonbre Diçelem**; et al su alguazil dezian Burduben [*Calila*, 102]
- Avn fallamos otros exiemplos, segunt que alli cuenta Plinio, que **unos marineros que yuan sobre mar que leuauan un joglar consigo**, e por uentura que el joglar non salie de tan buen sentido en la naue nin

strict sense, as the singular noun does exist (*bota*, *espuela*). However, they are usually referred to in pairs, and in this sense they behave like *pluralia tantum*.

de fazer tan buena jogleria como era mester, despagaron se mucho del los marineros [*GEII*, 1, 184, 26b]

Vi más encima dela torre vn chapitel sobrel qual estaua vn águila que tenía el pico y las alas llenas de claridad, de **vnos rayos de lunbre que por dentro de la torre salían a ella** [*Cárcel*, 90, 117]

Y aun la una le levantaron que era bruja, porque la hallaron de noche con **unas candelillas** cogendo tierra de una encrucijada, y la tuvieron medio día en una escalera en la plaça puesta, uno como rocadero pintado en la cabeza [*Celestina*, 198]

Acudían a mi tienda infinidad de Adonis a la añagaza de la criada, y, cayendo en la red sin ser Martes, despachaba ella su mercancía y yo la mía; pero entre tanta abeja que acudía a los panales, pegados los panales en la trasera, solían venir **unos zánganos y moscones que me llevaban más de una traspuesta que yo ganaba en veinte asomadas** [*Estebanillo*, 2, 29]

y apenas lo oí cuando empecé a matar a mi madre con instantes e inoportunos ruegos sobre que, mudándome el traje, me enviase a Méjico, en casa de **unos deudos que tenía**, para estudiar y cursar la Universidad [*Respuesta*, 446]

Notice that in the examples above, the highlighted NPs have a group interpretation. As noted by Villalta (1995), Laca & Tasmowsky (1996), and Gutiérrez-Rexach (2003), one of the most interesting properties of *unos* is that it introduces a group variable. Consequently, when in subject position, *unos N* is incompatible with distributive and reflexive predicates, as shown in example (7) taken from Villalta (1995: 7): in (7a) the preferred interpretation is that there is only one lottery ticket, while (7b) is pragmatically odd as the reflexive imposes a distributive reading, and it seems hard to imagine a group of men putting on the same shirt. Additionally, *unos* is also incompatible with partitive readings, (7c), and it cannot be the subject of individual-level predicates (7d).⁸ None of these restrictions

⁸Individual-level predicates are those which denote permanent characteristics (John is intelligent). They are opposed to Stage-level predicates, which denote transitory characteristics (John is angry). See Carlson (1977).

applies in the case of *algunos*.⁹

- (7) a. Unos / Algunos hombres compraron un billete de lotería.
 b. # Unos / Algunos hombres se pusieron una camisa.
 c. Compré *unos / algunos de los libros que nos recomendaron.
 d. En esta clase, *unos/ algunos niños son inteligentes.

The group interpretation of *unos* seems to be already established in Medieval Spanish. For instance, in (8) it seems that the natural interpretation is that the doves passed by together, and that they, as a group, have one leader called *la collarada*.¹⁰

- (8) Et a poca de ora pasaron por y **unas palomas que avían por cabdillo et por señora una paloma que dezían la collarada** [*Calila*, 203]

Moreover, in the corpus, I have not found any examples of *unos N* with reflexive constructions, nor have I found any cases of it in partitive structures. There is one single case of pronominal *unos* with overt partitivity (9), but given that it is an isolated case, no conclusions can be drawn out from it.¹¹

- (9) En la ley, que es la primera destas tres ordenes como auedes oydo, cuentan **unos de los sabios desta estoria** los cinco libros de Moysen que son: el primero el Genesis [*GEII*, 1, 5, 5b]

In contrast, in the three periods analysed there are plenty of cases of overt partitivity with *algunos* both as a determiner (10a) and as a pronoun (10b), confirming once more that although *un(os)* and *algun(os)* share a number of features, there are important differences between them which have been well defined since early times.

⁹This idea is not new. Recall that in chapter 5 we saw that according to Meyer-Lübke (1923 [1890-1906]: III, 65-6) the difference between plural $\bar{U}NUS$ and $\bar{A}L\check{L}IQUIS$ is that in the first case the idea of unity, derived from the original value of $\bar{U}NUS$, is preserved

¹⁰For an analysis of the evolution of *unos* from a semantic perspective, see LeBruyn (2010).

¹¹In the corpus, I have registered 83 cases of plural pronominal *unos*. The detailed analysis of these data is beyond the scope of this thesis and will be carried out in further research.

- (10) a. Traydor es quier que mate a so sennor, o lo firiere, o lo prende, o lo mete en el manero a mala parte, o lo manda, o lo conseia fazer, o quien **algunas cosas destas** faze o a fijo de sennor natural o a aquel que deue regnar, demientre que non salliere de mandado de su padre [*Fuero*, 147]
 Esta parte fue hallada para que con ella & con este verbo .e.as.ove. se suplan **algunos tiempos delos que falta el castellano del latin** [*Gramática*, 259]
- b. E si el comendador & los alcaldes **algunas delas partidas** se agrauieren, que se puedan echar al magistro & allj se fine so pleyto [*DLE13*, 283, 12]
 E pelearon con los moros por las calles, desde la mañana fasta la noche, por muchas delas partes de la çibdat, en las quales peleas murieron muchos moros, & **algunos de los cristianos** [*Reyes*, 9]
 porque sobre sólidas bases no es tanto de admirar la hermosura de una fábrica, como la que sobre flacos fundamentos se ostenta lúcida, cuales son **algunas de las proposiciones de este sutilísimo talento**, que es tal su suavidad, su viveza y energía, que al mismo que disinte, enamora con la belleza de la oración, suspende con la dulzura y hechiza con la gracia, y eleva, admira y encanta con el todo [*Carta*, 412]

It must be pointed out that, as commented on by Villalta (1995), Laca & Tas-mowski (1996), and Gutiérrez-Rexach (2003), the restrictions imposed by *unos* are cancelled when it is explicitly contrasted with *otros* (cf. *unos hombres compraron un billete de lotería, otros no; unos hombres se pusieron una camisa, otros un pantalón; unos niños son inteligentes, otros no*, etc.).¹² I have found only two example of *unos N* in contrast with *otros*, which are presented in (11).

- (11) e yua la una conpanna dellos a **los unos pescadores** e la otra a los otro [*GEII*, 1, 186, 39b]

¹²Villalta (1995) rightly points out that the ban on distributive readings is also cancelled in the presence of the distributive form *cada uno*, as in *unos estudiantes publicaron un artículo cada uno*, and in this sense there is a clear contrast between the group interpretation imposed by *unos* and inherently collective nouns, which systematically reject it: **el equipo publicó un artículo cada uno*.

Pues no ha sido olvido sino advertencia, porque allí, como era una conversación sucesiva, fueron llamando **unos discursos** a otros, aunque no fuesen muy del caso [*Carta*, 435]

The scarcity of this construction is due to the fact that the explicit contrast with *otros* is usually made with pronominal *unos*. This structure is found abundantly throughout the corpus and in fact it is the most common context for this plural pronoun to appear, either on its own, or preceded by *los*.¹³

- (12) Los cristianos, viendo que ninguna resistencia les era fecha, perdido el cuidado que convenía tener en guardar la horden de guerra, derramáronse **vnos** de otros por el camino que boluía a Alhama, con la caualgada que trayan [*Reyes*, 191]
las unas a parte de Septentrion, que es a la estrella que llaman Trasmontana, et las otras a parte de mediodia [*Lapidario*, 18]

There is a third type of *unos* in which it neither precedes a *pluralia tantum* noun, nor serves to introduce a new referent into the discourse. This use of *unos*, which has been commented on by several grammarians, gives an approximative nuance to a quantity, when in combination with a cardinal (13a) or with *cuantos* (13b).¹⁴

- (13) a. **Unas veinte mil personas** acudieron al concierto de Leonard Cohen en París.
 Me parece que el hijo de Lucía tiene **unos diez años**.
 Tepoztlán está a **unos cuarenta minutos** de la Ciudad de México.
- b. He leído **unas cuantas novelas de Coetzee**.
Unos cuantos votos definieron la elección.
 Faltan **unos cuantos minutos** para el final del primer tiempo.

Although this construction is well established in Modern Spanish, in my cor-

¹³In contrast, the only case of *los unos N* in the whole corpus is the one presented in (11). For DefArt + *un* see 6.2.2

¹⁴See among others, Bello (1988 [1848]: §863) and Alarcos (1994: §168).

pus, I have only found three cases, all from the seventeenth century (14). However, this does not mean that *unos* + cardinal was unknown before, for as we know there is an example of this construction in *Mio Cid* verse 2019 (con *vnos* .XV. a tierras firio).

- (14) Yo la obedecí **unos tres meses** que duró el poder ella mandar [*Respuesta* 458]
 entretanto, se subieron **unos cuantos soldados** a las azoteas con tercerolas y, sin duda alguna para espantarlos, comenzaron a dispararles con sola polvora [*Alboroto*, 122]

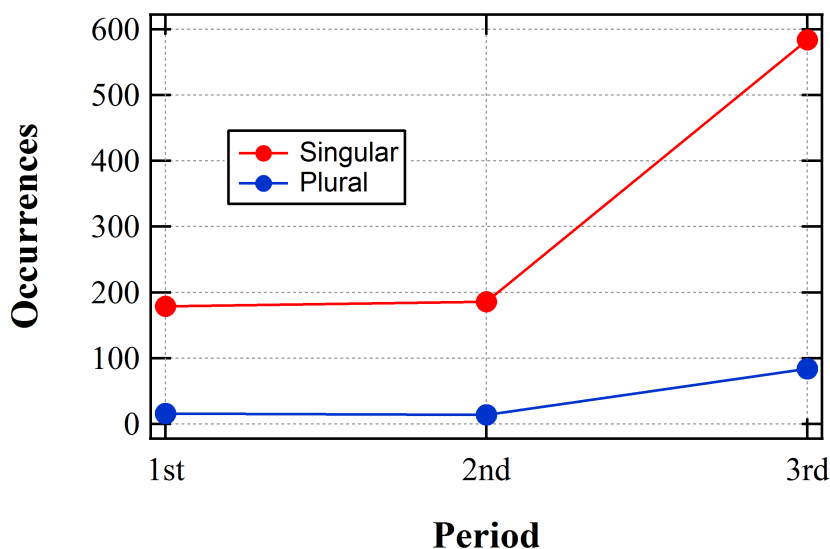
Recall that as stated in section 7.2, the combination of plural $\bar{U}NUS$ and cardinals is also found in Latin. However, as can be seen in the following set of examples from Lewis & Short (1956 [1879]:s/v), in Latin this combination did not have an approximative nuance but rather an exclusive one, in accordance with the original meaning of $\bar{U}NUS$. The radical change in the interpretation of plural $\bar{U}NUS$ + cardinal from Latin to Spanish is a clear sign of the grammaticalization of *unos* and its consolidation as an indefinite marker and, by extension, a marker of uncertainty.

- (15) Tres **unos** passus [Plautus, *Bacchides*, 4, 7, 34]
 ‘three single steps, only three steps’
unae quinque minae [Plautus, *Pseudolus*, 1, 1, 52]
 ‘five single mines, only five mines’
 ruri dum sum ego **unos** sex dies [Plautus, *Trinummus*, 1, 2, 129]
 ‘while I am in the countryside for six days only’

On the other hand, from a diachronic perspective, we have seen that *unos* is attested in very early documents. In my corpus, I have found instances of it from the first period onwards, and although its frequency is significantly lower than its singular counterpart, there is a sustained increase in the number of cases from Medieval to Golden-Age Spanish, as shown in table 7.5.

Table 7.5: Indefinite article per period

	Singular	Plural	S/P
1st	91.75% (178/194)	8.25% (16/194)	11:1
2nd	93% (186/200)	7% (14/200)	13:1
3rd	92.99% (584/628)	7.01% (44/628)	13:1
Total	92.75% (948/1022)	7.23% (74/1022)	12:1

**Figure 7.2:** Frequency of *un* and *unos*

Crucially, the proportion of cases of the singular versus the plural indefinite article is almost constant throughout the period analysed, confirming that the singular and plural forms for the indefinite articles increase their frequency at approximately the same rate. Moreover, as illustrated in figure 7.2, the inflection point in the rise of both forms is located in the transition from Medieval to Golden-Age Spanish.¹⁵

These data are fundamental, for one of the main claims that I will be defending in this thesis is that, contrary to the opinion of many Spanish grammarians (cf. chapter 4), *unos* is a true plural indefinite article. Not only does it serve to introduce new referents into the discourse, but its diachronic evolution runs in

¹⁵As can be seen in figure 7.2, the rise in the frequency of *un* is steeper than that for *unos*. It is not rare for grammatical change to advance faster in singular than in plural forms, and the case of the indefinite article is a good example of this tendency.

parallel to that of its singular counterpart.¹⁶ In this sense, it is worth emphasizing once more the statement from Dryer (2005b) according to whom from a typological perspective, ‘the clearest instances of the numeral for ‘one’ being used as an indefinite article are in languages in which it can occur as a marker of indefiniteness in plural NPs, where the singularity inherent in the original meaning of ‘one’ is clearly absent’. This is the case of Spanish.¹⁷

7.3 Type of Noun

7.3.1 BPs in Old Spanish

As stated in the last section with reference to Lapesa’s work, in the Romance languages, the generalization of both the definite and the indefinite article happened at the expense of BPs. In other words, it is possible to observe an increase in the frequency of *un*, directly related to the rising number of restrictions placed upon the acceptability of nouns without determiners. The appearance of BPs in Old Spanish was favoured by a number of conditions such as generic contexts (16a), prepositional phrases (16b), relative clauses (16c), negation (16d), comparisons (16e), appositions (16f), and some grammatical functions such as objects (16g) and predicates (16h), as shown in the next set of examples taken from Meyer-Lübke (1923 [1890-1906]: III), Lapesa (2000 [1973]), and Company (1991).¹⁸

- (16) a. quiso que fuese buena en todas bondades que **duenna** lo deuia ser
 [*Setenario*, 10,10]
 Son **aves pequeñas** papagayo e orior [J. Ruiz, 1615]

¹⁶As shown in Laca & Tasmowski (1996), *unos* lacks quantificational force.

¹⁷In the rest of this thesis, I will analyse together both the singular and the plural forms of the indefinite article, and in each case I will compare their behaviour with respect to a number of factors.

¹⁸For an excellent review of the use of BPs in Modern Spanish see the compilation of papers in Bosque (1996a), specially, Bosque (1996b), Garrido (1996), and Laca (1996), this last in particular for plurals. For an explanation of how the use of the articles, definite and indefinite, can be regarded as a tool to distinguish mass nouns from count nouns, see Garrido (1991 [1986]).

- b. En traron sobre **mar**, en las barcas son metidos [*Cid*, 1627]
 Dos mato con lança & v. con el espada [*Cid*, 2389]
- c. dixo él a Sant Pedro e a Sant yague e a Sant Ioan e a Sant Andrés,
 que eran **apóstolos** en que él más fiaua [*Setenario* 112, 5-8]
- d. essa noch myo Çid **Taio** non quiso passar [*Cid*, 3044]
 no me ha de quedar **médico** en toda la ínsula [*Quijote*, 2, 47]
- e. como faz **buen pastor** [Berceo, *Silos*]
- f. Las Indias, **refugio y amparo de los desesperados de España**
 [Cervantes, *Celoso extremeño*, 148]
- g. tú llevas **daga** para acreditarte, yo llevo **espada** para defenderte con
 ella [*Quijote*, 1, 27]
- h. Piden a sus fijas a myo Çid el Campeador/ por seer **reynas de**
Nauarra & de Aragon [*Cid*, 3399]

On the other hand, in Medieval Spanish there was an important correlation between BPs and the properties of the noun. According to Lapesa (2000 [1974]: 452), the absence of determiners was related to the semantics of the noun, which, in most cases, belonged to one of the following categories: nouns expressing occupations, craftsmanship, or kinship, as in (17a), collective nouns, as in (17b), abstract nouns (17c), and mass nouns, as in (17d). All the examples are from Lapesa (2000 [1974]: 453).

- (17) a. ayúntense **privados** con los procuradores [Ayala, *Rimado*, 224]
cristiano vino a mi puerta /cuitada de me engañar [*Romancero*,
 Primav. 132]
- b. sediendo **christianismo** en esta amargura [Berceo, *San Millán*, 382]
- c. me conuiene más que ante **cauallería** [*Amadis*, I, IV, 42, 232]
- d. **Latón**, que es **cobre tinto**, lábrase mejor [*Astronomía*, I, 163]

For Lapesa, these nouns have in common that they lack an individualized reference. In fact, according to him, the main difference between Medieval and Modern Spanish is that in the former the use of determiners did not mark the difference between ‘virtual’ and ‘actual’, but instead the contrast between individualized

and non-individualized reference.¹⁹

In the same line as Lapesa (2000 [1974]), Company (1991:88-90) reports that in a corpus of Medieval and Golden-Age documents, 64% of BPs correspond to abstract nouns, while 12% of the cases are mass nouns. She additionally reports 3% of the cases for nouns with unique reference, which as we know behave very similarly to proper names, as in (18a). Finally, 18% of the cases are constituted by nouns denoting kinship or origin, all sharing the feature [+hum], and the grammaticalized noun *omne* in its generic-impersonal sense (18b). All examples in (18) are from Company (1991: 88-90).²⁰

- (18) a. omillos a los santos & rogo a Criador [*Cid*, 2928]
 Ca dize en Santa Escritura que el comienço de la sabiduria es el temor
 [Zifar, 255/13]
- b. pero non puede omne la muerte escusar [*Fernán González*, 210a]
 Non puede ser non yerre omne en grande razon [Hita, 949c, 1308c,
 1007c]

It is important to note that although the characterization above is useful to describe the felicitous use of BPs in Medieval Spanish, there has always been variation. As Lapesa (2000 [1974]: 453) explains, from the very first documents

¹⁹‘Virtual’ is defined by Lapesa (2000 [1973]: 481) as ‘conceptual, essential or categoric’, and ‘actual’ means ‘with reference to entities that exist or act in a certain place’. This definition relies heavily in Bally’s (1965) concept of actualization. As Bosque (1999a: 6) explains, in this view, the main function of determiners is to restrict the reference of the noun. This view contrasts with the more recent conception of determiners put forward in formal semantics according to which common nouns are predicates (in contrast to proper names that are referential expressions denoting individuals), and as such they cannot refer. According to this view, determiners have a deictic function which links a property and an individual, and in doing so, they create referential expressions out of predicates. Here, one must point out the insightful comments of Alonso (1951 [1933]: 167) with respect to bare nouns, where he points out that ‘[e]l nombre sin artículo es predicado psicológico, aunque sea sujeto gramatical’, and gives as an example the following verses from Romance de la Jura de Santa Gadea, which, as he rightly points out, does not mean ‘que unos (algunos) villanos te maten y no que unos (algunos) hidalgos’ but ‘que los que te maten sean villanos y no sean hidalgos’.

Villanos te maten, rey
Villanos, que no hidalgos

²⁰According to Company (1991: 108), the definite article only became generalized before mass and abstract nouns in the fifteenth century.

it is possible to find examples of the definite and indefinite article with abstract and mass nouns, and it was not until well into the seventeenth century that, with some survivals, the system changed and replaced the old opposition between individualized and non-individualized by the opposition between virtual and actual. In this context, consider example (19) taken from Company (1991: 97), where it is shown how in the same text there is variation with respect to the use of the article, in this case the definite article, with the same noun in the same context.²¹

- (19) a. **Moros** son muchos, ya quieren reconbrar [*Cid*, 1143]
Moros le reçiben por la seña ganar [*Cid*, 712]
 b. Los **moros** son muchos, derredor l çercavan [*Cid*, 2390]
 Los **moros** yazen muertos, de bivos pocos veo [*Cid*, 618]

The examples of (19a) are specially revealing with respect to how the distribution of BPs has changed from Medieval to modern Spanish, for as we know, BPs can no longer appear in preverbal subject position. In fact, as I will later explain, subject, and more specifically, preverbal subject, was the function that first generalized the use of both definite and indefinite articles.²²

7.3.2 The Mass/Count Distinction

Although in the Hispanic grammatical tradition the opposition between concrete and abstract nouns has been more widely discussed, it is now accepted that the differentiation between mass and count nouns is much more important, as it has a number of syntactic consequences.

In Bello's (1988 [1848]: §123) terms, mass nouns denote things that can be

²¹Company (1991) quotes by the palaeographic edition of Menéndez Pidal, and emphasizes that in the critical edition, he omitted fifty-two instances of the definite article that appear in the palaeographic version.

²²Note also that in (19) the BP *moros* is interpreted referentially. In contrast, as explained by McNally (2004), in modern Spanish plural nouns without determiners unambiguously denote properties. For a different approach, see Chierchia (1998) according to whom bare nominals in Romance denote not properties but kinds.

divided ad infinitum without losing their defining properties, such as *agua*, while count nouns are those which cannot be divided without ceasing to be what they are, as in the case of *árbol*.²³ In other words, while *un poco de agua* is still *agua*, *un pedazo de árbol* is not an *árbol* (Bosque 1999a: 8). Note that in this, plural count nouns behave very much like mass nouns: if two men are Spaniards, then each of them is also a Spaniard. Indeed, plural count nouns share an important number of features with mass nouns, which derive from the fact that in both cases the reference is cumulative.²⁴

It is well known that mass and count nouns behave very differently with respect to quantification. As explained by Bosque (1999a: 8-9), while quantification over count nouns contributes cardinality (the number of entities over which quantification is effected, i.e. *dos niños*, *algunas casas*), when mass nouns are quantified we obtain a quantity, not a number (*mucho vino*, *demasiada sal*).

Consequently, in general, mass nouns do not take cardinal quantifiers, but do combine with other indefinites, as in *mucho cerveza*, *poco trigo*, *algún tiempo*. However, as shown in the next example (20), under certain conditions, a noun usually interpreted as a mass one, can be quantified both with cardinals and with *unos*:²⁵

- (20) Me quiero comer **un pan**.
 Hay **cinco cervezas** en el refrigerador.
 Ayer, me tomé **unos vinos** con mis colegas.

²³Literarily, ‘Los apelativos de cosas materiales o significan verdaderos individuos, esto es, cosas que **no pueden dividirse sin dejar de ser lo que son**, como *árbol*, *mesa*; o significan cosas **que pueden dividirse hasta el infinito, conservando siempre su naturaleza y su nombre**, como *agua*, *vino*, *oro*, *plata*’ (Bello 1988 [1848]: §4, 103) (boldface added).

²⁴Thus, as stated by Bosque (1999b: 13), ‘la gramática asimila en alguna medida la estructura interna de las porciones o las partículas que componen los nombres de materia a las series de entidades delimitadas y pluralizables que constituyen las clases denotadas por los nombres contables.’ For more on the similarities between count plurals and mass nouns see Garrido (1996).

²⁵For a detailed account of the syntactic difference between count and mass nouns see Bosque (1999a: 1.2.2).

Nonetheless, in all the above cases we obtain a count interpretation, not a mass one. This process is called *mass to count shift* or *recategorization* and consist in converting a mass noun into a count noun.²⁶

There are two main interpretations given to recategorized phrases. First, and according to Bosque (1999a:15) the default category, is that of ‘type’, as in *tres aguas* meaning ‘tres tipos de agua’. The other interpretation is connected with the notion of units, so in the example above, *cinco cervezas* could be paraphrased as ‘five cans/pints/bottles of beer’. The first is denominated *syntactic recategorization* while the second is called *lexical recategorization*.

Let us now discuss the contrast between count and mass nouns in the corpus. The results of the analysis are given in table 7.6. Note that the label *Mass* refers to mass nouns that have been recategorized as count nouns.

Table 7.6: Mass/count distinction per period

	Count	Mass
1st	90.21% (175/194)	9.79% (19/194)
2nd	86.50% (173/200)	13.50% (27/200)
3rd	88.22% (554/628)	11.78% (74/628)
Total	88.26% (902/1022)	11.74% (120/1022)

As expected, the large majority of cases are count nouns, with almost 90% of the total number of cases. There is a small rise of recategorized mass nouns in the second period analysed, but this rise is not sustained, for in the third period the percentage drops. Note that the number of recategorized mass nouns in the third period is nonetheless higher than that of the first period, which may imply that diachronically *un* has extended its domain of use. Again, what seems clear is that the frequency of the indefinite article increased notably in the transition from Medieval to Golden-Age Spanish and that this rise reached all categories of

²⁶As Bosque (1999a: 9) explains, the inverse process (transforming a count noun into a mass, that is *count to mass shift*) noun is also possible: *Hay sofá para cinco*. I will not discuss this issue further, and therefore in this thesis ‘recategorization’ refers solely to mass nouns interpreted as count nouns. Note that throughout this thesis, I will use the term ‘recategorization’ instead of ‘mass to count type shift’, for the former is the term commonly found in the Hispanic tradition.

nouns.

Now, recall that, as stated by Bosque, there are two types of recategorization: one with a type interpretation and another with a cardinal one. In my corpus both types of recategorization are found, as shown in (21) and (22).

- (21) Esto fue por **una sabiduría que yo fallé al furtrar**, et es cosa muy encubierta et sutil, de guisa que al furtrar, ninguno non sospechava de mí tal cosa [*Calila*, 110]
 Piedra es muy liuiana et ligera de quebrantar, por que se quebranta muy de rafez con que quier. Et fallan sobrella **una color** que semeia al poluo que esta sobre las paredes del molino [*Lapidario*, 28]
 Echava de sí en bullendo **un olor de almizque**; yo hedía al estiercol que llevaba dentro en los çapatos [*Celestina*, 319]
 Y doña Ana le avia dicho que qué remedio le daría para que su marido se hiziera simple y no la estubiera matando a zelos, que ia tenia unos sesos de asno tostados y hechos polvos; y que le buscase **una yerba**, porque le parecia que los sesos solos no arian operacion [*DLNE* 132, 352]
 son pocos los que se escapan de una pobreza eterna o de **una hambre perdurable** [*Estebanillo*, I, 38]
 pensando hablar romance, hablaba **un latín tan corrompido** que ni yo lo entendía ni nadie lo llegaba a entender [*Estebanillo*, II, 25]
- (22) Sabida cosa sea a quantos esta carta uieren e oyeren, que nos don Ferrando, por la gracia de Dios abbat de Sant Millan, con otorgamiento de nuestro conuento cambiamos con don Diago Lopez de Salzedo **una tierra en Quintaniella de Bon** por otra que el nos dio y [*DLE13*, 100, 70]
 Desí dixo el ximio: -Yo sé **un lugar en esta çibdat por do entraremos al alçaçar** [*Calila*, 319]
 Busqué **un pan fiado** para que se desayunasen, siendo ya las nueve de la noche, y hartándolos de agua los volvía a la estala tan tristes que me persuadí que habían sabido de mi pérdida, y no la hubieron de ignorar pues ayunaron de sentimiento della a pan y agua [*Estebanillo*, 2, 32]

Note that in the case of syntactic recategorization, it is very common to find adjectives and/or relative clauses that reinforce the type interpretation, that as

Garachana (2009: §4.3.4.1) says, have a valorative nuance.²⁷ It is important to say that both in this author's corpus and in mine, these are the most frequent uses of *un* with recategorized mass nouns. Here, we must also consider the cases where *un* precedes a mass noun which receives a intensity reading reinforced by *muy*, as in the next examples (Leonetti, 1999: 845).

- (23) Menos, que es **un muy necio callar** el de toda la vida [*Criticón*, 793]
y así no fuera razón oponer ésta a las que el autor dice, antes bien fuera
una muy viciosa argumentación y muy censurable [*Carta*, 436]

There is also a very interesting use of *un* + N which is reported by Keniston (1943: §20.32) and Meyer-Lübke (1923 [1890-1906]: III, §180), where the indefinite article is used in comparisons in combination with a mass noun as in the examples below.

- (24) La muchacha, señor, es como **un oro** [Rue 266, 24, *apud* Keniston 20.32]
todos sobre yeguas blancas como **una nieve** [Hit 59, 15, *apud* Keniston
20.32]
blanco como **una leche** [Caballero, Nov. 232, *apud* Meyer-Lübke, 1923:
III, §180]

In these examples, in contrast with the ones previously discussed, the insertion of *un* does not lead to a recategorization: *un oro* does not refer to a type of gold, nor does *una nieve* refer to a type of snow, but to gold and snow in general. However, in Old Spanish these examples are marginal and in a large majority of the cases the article was left out (e.g. *es como oro*, *blanca como leche*). In fact, in my corpus I have not noted any instances of this construction which, furthermore, has not survived to modern Spanish.²⁸

Finally, there are also cases of recategorization plural mass nouns, as in (25).

²⁷For Garachana (2009: §4.10) there is only one type of recategorization, namely lexical.

²⁸As Meyer Lübke (1923 [1890-1906], III) shows, this use is also found in Portuguese:

(i) o rapaz fez vermelho como un lacre [Diniz, Pup. 7, *apud* Meyer-Lübke, 1923 [1890-1906]: III, §180]

Note that plurality of mass nouns always implies recategorization, for one of the defining properties of mass nouns is precisely the lack of plural.²⁹

- (25) Esta piedra es fallada en el monte que cerca la Casa del Templo, en **unos logares que a y que semeian cueuas**, et qui entra dentro siente cuerno calentura de banno el como olor de fumo [*Lapidario*, 23]
 Tú, señora, sabrás que caminando vn día por **vnas asperezas desiertas**, vi que por mandado del Amor leuauan preso a Leriano, hijo del duque de Guersio, el qual me rogó que en su cuyta le ayudasse [*Cárcel*, 101, 331]
 Compraba polvos de romero y revolvíalos con cebadilla y, haciendo **unos pequeños papeles**, los vendía a real a todos los estudiantes novatos, dándoles a entender que eran polvos de la nacardina y que, tomándolos por las narices, tendrían feliz memoria [*Estebanillo*, 1, 41]
 Y esta declarante le dixo que sí, y la dicha Josepha le dio a esta declarante **un papel en que estaban unos polbos de color blanco**, pero no supo la materia de que eran [*DLNE*, 139, 366]

In the whole corpus I have only found nine cases of *unos* with mass nouns. These are distributed as follow: there are two cases for the first period, one for the second, and six for the third. Therefore, there is an important rise of plural recategorization in the third period, where the number of examples triples those of the first period. These numbers fit well with the initial frequency table, according to which the general frequency of *un* and *unos* rose dramatically between the second and third periods studied. Consequently, I believe the increase of *unos* + mass noun is due to this general increase in frequency.³⁰

It must be pointed out that once again there are important differences between *un* and *algún* with respect to mass nouns, for the later can precede this type of nouns without triggering type shift, as in *algún interés* or *alguna esperanza* (see Fernández Ramírez, 1987: 190). In this sense, the impossibility of the indefinite article to appear with mass nouns shows the extent to which the original cardi-

²⁹See Leonetti (1999: 844).

³⁰Garachana (2009: 448) reports the first example of *unos* + mass noun in the fifteenth century. As I have shown, in my corpus, there are a few earlier examples.

nality value of $\bar{U}NUS$ prevails. As explained in section 2.4, this phenomenon called *persistence* is a defining element of grammaticalization.

Nonetheless, as stated by Garachana (2009: 444), the small number of cases of *un(os)* + mass noun represents a substantial departure from the original state. This is especially evident in the case of syntactic recategorization where the resulting interpretation of type has a valorative nuance, and which in Medieval Spanish was mainly expressed by means of BPs.

On the other hand, from the earliest documents it is possible to find *un* in combination with *poco*. Together they form a lexicalized expression with partitive interpretation, which therefore quantifies mass nouns. In the corpus, I have found nine instances of *un poco* + mass nouns (26a). Note that *un poco* can also be an adverbial modifier as in (26b). Interestingly, in the corpus there are still some cases of *algún poco* + mass noun (26c), which in Modern Spanish has been supplanted by the preferred lexicalized *un poco*, and there is also one case of plural *algunos pocos* (26d). I have not found any cases of *unos pocos*; however, a search in CORDE reveals that although infrequent, this construction is documented at least since the thirteenth century, where there are almost thirty cases (26e). However, in contrast with the singular *un poco de*, the plural form *unos pocos* has not been lexicalized. Note that there is an evident contrast between the singular and the plural forms, for the singular quantifies mass nouns and the plural quantifies count or at least recategorized nouns.³¹

- (26) a. Et dixo Iacob Alquindi, en el libro de los tossicos, que, qui moliere della peso de dos dragmas, et la diere a beuer al que ouiere beuudo

³¹There is also a marginal use of the partitive plural construction *unos pocos de*, as in the next example:

- (i) Señores, ahora tomo **unos pocos de polvos** de mi Señora Doña Perlinpinpin [*Engaños a ojos vistas y diversión de trabajos mundanos*, 10-1, CORDE]

Note that as Leonetti (1999: 846) explains, in the case of plurals it is not clear that *pocos* functions as a true indefinite quantifier.

- limadura de fierro, con **una poca de agua**, et camiare, sacar gelo ha [*Lapidario*, 223]
- y asentándose en dos sillas bajas junto al fuego, hiciéronme avivar la lumbre con un poco de carbón, a cuya brasa puso el italiano un crisol con **un poco de oro** y una candileja de plomo [*Estebanillo*, 1, 53]
- b. Mira la nobleza y antigedad de su linaje, el grandísimo patrimonio, el excelentísimo ingenio, las resplandecientes virtudes, la altitud y ineffable gracia, la soberana hermosura, de la qual te ruego me dexes hablar **un poco** [*Celestina*, 100]
- c. Yo, ignorando esta jerigonza avascuenzada, por no ser práctico en ella y por ser tan joven, que en el mismo mes que estábamos cumplí trece años, bien empleados pero mal servidos, pensando que la primera era ser de los guzmanes de la primer hilera, y el esguazar darme **algún poco de dinero** [*Estebanillo*, I, 66]
- d. Al ruido que hicieron aquellos tiros, acudieron el alférez José de Peralta y **algunos pocos soldados que estaban cerca al cuerpo de guardia** y al estruendo y gritería de los indios [*Alboroto*, 122]
- e. Et a cabo de algunos días, tornó a ella et díxol que avía fallado un omne muy sabidor et quel dixiera que si oviesse **unos pocos de cabellos de la barba de su marido**, de los que están en la garganta, que faría con ellos una maestría que perdiessse el marido toda la saña que avía della [*Lucanor*, 160, CORDE]

Before concluding this section, it is important to point out that *un* can also appear with mass nouns when it precedes what Bosque (1999a: 18) calls ‘quantificational nouns’ (*nombres cuantificativos*), which can be further divided into ‘counter nouns’ (*sustantivos acotadores*), such as *pedazo*, *barra*, *loncha* or *gajo*, and nouns of measure, such as *kilo* and *libra*. These expressions are well documented throughout the corpus, as can be seen in the following set of examples.³²

- (27) Et non debes tú, fijo, [mandar matar al çerval] pues fuistes pagado del lobo çerval et te fiaste por él, et non te erró fasta el día de oy, nin viste

³²Many of these counter nouns are ambiguous between an object and a measure interpretation. Such is the case of *vaso* (*un vaso de agua*, *un vaso de vidrio*), *barra*, etc. (Bosque 1999a: 24). Note that in these examples *un* has a strong cardinal value and therefore they have been grouped in the conservative category, discussed in chapter 6.

dél sinon fidelidat et lealtad, et diziendo tú dél en medio de tu corte grant bien, et fazerle esto por **un quarto** de carne que non vale nada [*Calila*, 312]

¿Cómo al cabo?, ni aun al principio; que si con otros para conocerlos es menester comer **un almud de sal**, con éste doblada, porque él lo es mucho [*Criticón*, 658]

Francisco: embiame bara y media de baieta de la tierra y bara y media de ruan de China. El cura [Otra nota] Francisco: embiame **una libra de camaron**, un pescado de qualquier género que aiga, **un real de frixoles**. El cura. [Otra nota algo separada de la anterior] Francisco: embiarás dos mulas y costales en casa de don Bernardino por **dos cargas de trigo**. Y embiame **una libra de chocolate** y otra de azucar [*DLNE*, 135, 358]

Había embarcado un gentilhombre romano que iba en la dicha faluca **un medio tonel de vino**, que por ser amabile o angelical lo llevaba de presente a un amigo suyo napolitano [*Estebanillo*, 2, 264]

7.3.3 The Abstract/Concrete Distinction

The opposition between concrete and abstract nouns has a long history in the grammatical tradition. As defined by Bello (1988 [1848]: §4, 103), abstract nouns are those which refer to qualities attributed to objects, but which are considered to be independent of them.³³ As the reader can see, this definition is not straightforward. In fact, as Bosque shows, although a definition of abstract nouns has been attempted by almost every grammarian in the Hispanic tradition, a unified definition has not been achieved to the extent that in their grammar, Alonso & Henríquez Ureña (1940: II, 45) conclude that ‘por la misma naturaleza del asunto, es imposible trazar la división entre los nombres concretos y los abstractos.’³⁴

³³He says: ‘Los sustantivos no significan sólo objetos reales o que podamos representarnos como tales aunque sean fabulosos o imaginarios (*verbigracia, esfinge, fénix, centauro*), sino objetos también en que **no podemos concebir una existencia real, porque son meramente las cualidades que atribuimos a los objetos reales, suponiéndolas separadas o independientes de ellos** [...]. Las cualidades en que nos figuramos esta independencia ficticia, puramente nominal, se llaman *abstractas*, que quiere decir, separadas; y las otras, *concretas*, que es como si dijéramos inherentes, incorporadas’ (Bello 1988 [1848]: §4, 103). (Highlight added)

³⁴A clear example of this difficulty arises when abstract nouns are defined as those which are perceived by the intellect in opposition to concrete nouns which are perceived by the senses,

Nonetheless, given the preponderant role that Lapesa (2000 [1974], 2000 [1973]) gives to this factor in the development of the articles, I have analysed my corpus according to this criterion. For this, I have considered ‘concrete’ nouns to be those designating physical matter, such as *mesa*, *persona*, and *agua*. The definition of ‘abstract’ would then be a negative one: abstract nouns are those which are not concrete, such as *esperanza*, *justicia*, *dolor*, etc. The results are shown in table 7.7.

Table 7.7: Abstract/concrete distinction per period

	Concrete	Abstract
1st	80.93% (157/194)	19.07% (37/194)
2nd	66.50% (133/200)	33.50% (67/200)
3rd	77.55% (487/628)	22.45% (141/628)
Total	76.03% (777/1022)	23.97% (245/1022)

As we can see, throughout the period analysed there is an evident preference for concrete nouns. This comes as no surprise; after all, as stated by Lapesa (2000 [1973]), the generalization of the indefinite article occurs earlier with concrete than with abstract nouns, as, for this grammarian, only the former have an individualized reference.

However, the preference for concrete nouns is more likely to be a consequence of the fact that abstract nouns tend to be mass nouns, which, as we saw in the last section, unless recategorized, reject the presence of *un*. Nonetheless, one must not fuse these two categories, for there are certainly a few cases of abstract nouns that are nonetheless count nouns, as *problema*, *opinión*, *motivo* (see Bosque 1999a: 49). In (28), I present some examples of an abstract-count noun (28a), an abstract-recategorized noun (28b), a concrete-count noun (28c), and a concrete recategorized noun (28d).

according to which *olor* and *sabor*, would be concrete nouns (Bosque 1999a: 46). Another definition of ‘abstract nouns’ is given by Seco (1968: 12) for whom abstract nouns are ‘cualidades que no se pueden aislar de los objetos que las poseen’. For this grammarian, as for many others, mass nouns are a subset of concrete nouns.

- (28) a. ¿No va Cristo a hacer **un milagro**? Pues ¿qué mayor peligro? menos intolerable es para la soberbia oír las represiones, que para la envidia ver los milagros [*Respuesta*, 457]
- b. Et semeia al cristal, pero desdizel ya quanto, ca ha en medio **una escundat que semeia linna negra** [*Lapidario*, 219]
- c. Y acabando estas palabras, acabó con **un cuchillo** su vida [*Cárcel*, 194, 2071]
- d. Si aun siendo de carne, y muy sólida, desliza con riesgo de toda la persona (que sería menos inconveniente tropezar diez vezes con los pies antes que una con la lengua, que si allí se maltrata el cuerpo con la caída, aquí se descompone toda el alma), ¿qué será de **una masa tan fluida y deleznable**? ¿Quién la podrá gobernar? [*Criticón*, 665]

In sum, although my results confirms Lapesa's claim about the preference of *un* for concrete nouns, it seems that in the development of the indefinite article the opposition between concrete and abstract nouns is, as stated by Bosque (1999a: 47), irrelevant in grammatical terms, and that the differences usually associated with these types of nouns are a consequence of other properties that do impact upon the choice of determiners that can appear with a given noun, notably so the mass/count distinction.

7.3.4 Proper Names and Unique Reference Nouns

Recall that proper names are referential expressions denoting individuals, and thus do not require determiners in order to appear in argument positions.³⁵ Nonetheless, it is well known that in certain contexts, proper names can be preceded by a definite article, as in (29a) and (29b), an indefinite article, as in (29c), (29d) and (29e), an indefinite quantifier, as in (29f), a cardinal, as in (29g), or be pluralized

³⁵As stated in section 3.1.1, in Russell's (1905) analysis of definiteness, proper names are the prototypical definite expression. The use of articles before proper names has been commented on several times in the Hispanic grammatical tradition. See for instance Bello (1988 [1848]:§876), Hanssen (1913: §520), Lenz (1925: 175) Alonso (1951 [1933]: 188-9), García Diego (1951: 92), Fernández Ramírez (1987: §143, 152), Martínez (1989: 57) and Lapesa (2000 [1974]: §2).

as in (29h) (Fernández Leboranz 1999: 111-2):³⁶

- (29) a. Ya no es **el Maradona** que ganó el mundial del 85.
 b. Vino **la Juana** a buscarte.
 c. Conocí a **un (cierto) Luis Esparza** que dice ser tu pariente.
 d. Se siente **un Superman**.
 e. Ayer subastaron **un Pollock**.³⁷
 f. En México hay **muchas Lupitas**.
 g. En el directorio, hay al menos **doscientos Fernandos Ramírez**.³⁸
 h. Hay **Josés** a los que no les dicen Pepe.

According to Fernández Leboranz (1999: 112), in the examples above, proper names behave like common ones, in that they cease to be referential expressions and acquire a predicative function. Thus, in an example such as (29d), the noun Superman does not denote the superhero, but rather denotes whole class.³⁹

Interestingly, when the proper name is introduced by the indefinite article, the resulting NP shows the whole range of interpretations available to indefinites. In other words, they can be interpreted as specific, non-specific, generic and even be a predicate, as shown below (Heusinger & Wespel, 2007: 334-5; Fernández Leboranz 1999: 116).⁴⁰

³⁶This list is not exhaustive. For instance, proper names can also be preceded by demonstratives, often with a deictic value as in *ese Eugenio de quien tanto hablan, ¿quién es?*. (Fernández Leboranz 1999: 121). Notice that at least in Mexican Spanish, the use of demonstratives with proper names is very extensive in colloquial or familiar speech where the deictic value seems to me to be at least very weakened, as shown in the following example taken from a popular children's song:

Ay mamá mira a **esta María** siempre trae la leche muy fría yo así no la puedo tomar que la vuelva a calentar.

³⁷In this example, the indefinite proper name has a metonymic interpretation. I will not discuss this case further. See Fernández Leboranz (1999).

³⁸In Spanish, last names are not morphologically pluralized. Rather, plurality is marked in the determiner or in the first name: *los Ramírez, las Marías Rebollar, los Martí*, etc.

³⁹I will only discuss the use of the indefinite article + proper name. For other determiners, particularly the definite article, see Fernández Leboranz (1999: 112-15).

⁴⁰Following von Heusinger and Wespel (2007), I will refer to the combination of *un* + proper name as 'indefinite proper name'.

- (30) a. **Un Santiago Gómez** acaba de llamarte.⁴¹ [Spec]
 b. Prefiero hablar con **una Carmen** que con **una María**. [Non-spec]
 c. **Un López** no puede ser inglés. [Generic]
 d. Pedro es **un Santillana**. [Predicate]

There is another common use of the indefinite proper name, which requires that the proper name has a complement. Consider the examples below taken from the internet:

- (31) Ante el Real Madrid, vimos a **un Messi espectacular**.
 Con **un Messi brillante**, el Barcelona se adueña del clásico.
Un Messi triste recibe el cariño de los aficionados a su llegada a Barcelona.
Un Messi brillante fue el artífice de la goleada del Barcelona.
 Argentina arrasa a los EEUU (4-1) con **un Messi estelar**.

In these examples, the referent of the indefinite proper name is a specific individual, namely Lionel Messi, the Argentinian footballer who plays for Barcelona. Notice that here the indefinite article cannot be omitted without changes in the meaning. As explained by von Heusinger & Wespel (2007: 337), in an example such as (31) the indefinite proper name is interpreted as a manifestation of a given individual. Notice that, in these manifestation uses, a temporal anchor is often employed, reinforcing the idea that the description given by the NP is only one of the possible manifestations of the individual in question.⁴²

Finally, the use of the indefinite article before a proper name can trigger what is usually known as metaphoric uses, such as the ones in (32), taken from the internet. As Fernández Leboranz (1999: 116) explains, in these examples, an

⁴¹In modern Spanish, the specific variant of the indefinite proper name is often constructed with *tal*, or *cierto*: *un tal/cierto Santiago Gómez acaba de llamarte*.

⁴²This type of meaning is achieved not only with the indefinite article. As shown by von Heusinger & Wespel (2007), the definite article can serve the same purpose: *the generous Peter behaves differently*. According to these authors, the choice of one or the other depends, as expected, on whether the manifestation of the proper name is familiar or not. Thus, in a sentence such as *Tonight I will show you a Berlin that you have never seen before*, the indefinite article is obligatory. Notice that manifestation uses of proper names often have a contrastive effect.

individual is characterized in terms of the properties of another. Notice that in some cases, the metaphorical use of certain characters is so deeply rooted in the culture that it is even possible to do without the capital letter of the original proper name, in which case it has been completely recategorized as a common noun, as in (32a) (see Alonso 1951 [1933]: 188).

- (32) a. Mariana se cree **una Celestina** / **una celestina**.
 b. He aprendido a reconocer a **un Don Juan** en cuanto lo veo.
 c. Ese chico canta como **un Caruso**.
 d. El equipo necesita a **un Zidane**.

Let us now turn to our data. I have registered twenty-seven cases of indefinite proper names. Interestingly, they are all from the seventeenth century, and the large majority are found in the *Respuesta a Sor Filotea*. However, Garachana gives some earlier examples, the oldest from the fifteenth century. In (33) I present some of the cases found in my corpus.

- (33) a. Mordíanse, en llegando a esta ocasión, las manos algunos grandes señores al verse excluidos del reino de la fama y que eran admitidos algunos soldados de fortuna, **un Julián Romero**, **un Villamayor** y **un capitán Calderón**, honrado de los mismos enemigos [*Criticón*, 804]
 b. Veo a **una Cenobia**, reina de los Palmirenos, tan sabia como valerosa. A **una Arete**, hija de Aristipo, doctísima. A **una Nicostrata**, inventora de las letras latinas y eruditísima en las griegas. A **una Aspasia Miliesia** que enseñó filosofía y retórica y fue maestra del filósofo Pericles. A **una Hipasia** que enseñó astrología y leyó mucho tiempo en Alejandría. A **una Leoncia**, griega, que escribió contra el filósofo Teofrasto y le convenció. A **una Jucia**, a **una Corina**, a **una Cornelia**; y en fin a toda la gran turba de las que merecieron nombres, ya de griegas, ya de musas, ya de pitonisas [*Respuesta* 461]
 c. Quédese eso para **un temerario don Sebastián** y **un desesperado Gustavo Adolfo** [*Criticón*, 806]

In all these examples, the indefinite proper name presents what is commonly known as the ‘exemplar interpretation’. As stated by Fernández Leboranz (1999: 119), in this construction the referent of the NP is as a rule an individual that is in some way notorious, and therefore is susceptible of being use as a example. Notice that here there is no metaphor at all: in the NPs *un Julián Romero*, *un Villamayor y un capitán Calderón* refer to these soldiers, and not to others sharing a given property as in the metaphorical use. The justification of the indefinite article is that they are not any soldiers, but, as Gracián comments *soldados de fortuna*.⁴³

The same can be observed in the example from Sor Juana, where the nun cites a long list of exemplary women from classical and biblical sources as an argument to defend her own right to knowledge. As Leonetti (1999: 845) points out, the lack of the article does not eliminate the exemplary nuance in (33). In fact, some lines above, we find the following example, where there is variation in the use of the indefinite article. However, I agree with Garachana (2009: 445) that the presence of *un* adds expressivity and can be understood as yet another manifestation of the valorative nuance often rendered by *un*.

- (34) Veo tantas y tan insignes mujeres: unas adornadas del don de profecía, como **una Abigaíl**; otras de persuasión, como **Ester**; otras de piedad, como **Rahab**; otras de perseverancia, como **Ana**, madre de Samuel; y otras infinitas, en otras especies de prendas y virtudes [*Respuesta*, 461]

Lastly, in (33c), although it might at first sight look like a case of manifestation use, the preverbal adjective receives a non-restrictive reading that blocks this interpretation: it is not that *un desesperado Gustavo Adolfo* refers to a manifestation of the poet; rather, *desesperado* is here expressed as a defining characteristic

⁴³As explained by Fernández Leboranz (1999: 199), there is no consensus as to whether these exemplar uses are a subtype of metaphorical uses or not. This subject is, however, outside the scope of my research, but the reader is referred to the discussion presented by this author and the reference within.

of the referent, not a facet or a temporal state (cf. von Heusinger & Wespel 2007). It should be noted that in my corpus there are no instances of manifestation uses, nor I can find any in the examples provided by Garachana (2009).⁴⁴

As for metaphorical uses, I have recorded one case, also in the *Respuesta* given in (35a), and in (35b) I reproduce some other metaphorical examples offered by Garachana (2009: 85) (35b) and Keniston (1937: §20.31) (35c).⁴⁵

- (35) a. Pues si sintió vigor en su pluma para adelantar en uno de sus sermones (que será solo el asunto de este papel) tres plumas, sobre doctas, canonizadas, ¿qué mucho que haya quien intente adelantar la suya, no ya canonizada, aunque tan docta? Si hay **un Tulio moderno** que se atreva a adelantar a un Augustino, a un Tomás y a un Crisóstomo, ¿qué mucho que haya quien ose responder **ese Tulio**? [*Respuesta*, 413]⁴⁶
- b. en franqueza, Alexandre; en esfuerço, Hétor; gesto, de un rey; gracioso, alegre; jamás reyna en él tristeza. De noble sangre, como sabes; gran justador. Pues verle armado, **un sant Jorge** [*Celestina*, IV.167] porque era el ciego para con este **un Alejandro Magno** [LT, 47]
- c. Ella fue **una santa Catalina** [Pen 67, 11]

Recall that indefinite proper names are ambiguous with respect to specificity.

⁴⁴In contrast, consider this example with the one give in (12), repeated below.

- (i) Un Messi triste recibe el cariño de los aficionados a su llegada a Barcelona.

Here, the postnominal restrictive adjective leads to a manifestation reading: Messi arrives sad to Barcelona because he has lost two matches with the Argentinian National Team, but being sad not one of his permanent or defining characteristic.

⁴⁵Metaphorical uses are also common with nouns of unique reference, such as paradise, or hell. For instance, *Luis es un cielo/ un sol* or *Esta ciudad es un infierno*. I have not found any such cases in my corpus. On the other hand, Garachana (2009: ex.86) reports only one case, dated in the sixteenth century, which I reproduce below:

Que si bien lo consideramos, hermanas, no es otra cosa el alma del justo, sino **un paraíso**, adonde dice él tiene sus deleites [Moradas, 5]

⁴⁶Only *un Tulio* is metaphorical; *un Augustino*, *a un Tomás* y *a un Crisóstomo* are exemplary uses. Notice the interesting use of the demonstrative + proper name (*ese Tulio*) which is correlative with *un Tulio*: now that the indefinite proper name has been introduced, the anaphoric mention is made by means of a definite determiner *ese*.

In my corpus, I have not found any instances of non-exemplary specific uses, like the ones presented in (29c). However, this use is known at least since the sixteenth century, as proven by examples in (36) taken from Garachana (2009: ex 83). Here, the indefinite article serves, as it does with common nouns, to introduce a new referent into the discourse. As Garachana suggests, the function of the indefinite article highlights that the referent is unknown to the speaker.

- (36) a. A **un Berrio**, hermano de Delgadillo, embiaron por juez de residencia y alcalde mayor a la provjncia de Guaxaca [*DLNE*, 1529, 7.81]
 b. a **un Anton**, borzeguinero, prohibido y açotado por la Sancta Jnquisiçion [*DLNE*, 1529, 7.78]
 c. A **un Bernardo de Qujros** a venydo nueva que vuestra magestad hizo merçed del arcedianazgo [*DLNE*, 1562, 28.142]

As stated before, in Modern Spanish this nuance is more commonly expressed by means of *un tal*. However, this combination seems to be a later development as, according to Keninston (1937: 20.31.2), it is not found in the Castilian prose of the sixteenth century.

In sum, although an exhaustive search would be necessary to confirm this idea, my results, together with those of Garachana, suggest that the use of *un* with proper names is a late development that takes place only when the *un* has been decisively established as an indefinite article, that is, once the non-specific, generic, and predicative uses had been accepted.

7.4 Syntactic Function and Word Order

It is usually accepted that the emergence of articles in the Romance languages was at least partly motivated by the loss of the case system. According to this view, the definite article would have served originally to help to distinguish the subject from the other functions. This idea is supported by the fact that this is

precisely the function where the article was first generalized (Alonso: 1951 [1933]: 154; Lapesa 2000 [1974]; Garrido 1991 [1986]; Company, 1991).

In the following pages, I will discuss some of the constraints on the use of *un* in subject (S), object (DO, IO, PO) and adverbial phrases (AP); then, I will present the results of my analysis for function and position, as these two factors are, as we will see, closely linked. I will not talk about *un* in predicates, as this subject will be more extensively discussed in section 7.5.⁴⁷

7.4.1 Syntactic Function

In Modern Spanish bare subjects are very restricted: they are usually plural and postverbal NPs which are not the topic of the sentence, either because the sentence has athetic structure (37a,b), or because the NP functions as a contrastive focus, as in (37c), as shown in the following set of examples taken from Laca (1999: 907).⁴⁸

- (37) a. En los próximos días se van a poner en práctica **medidas** para reforzar el orden público [*El País*, 25-VII-90, 5]
- b. A usted lo van a matar a la mala. Van a arrastrar su cadáver por la calle **mujeres sin nombre** [Taibo II, *La vida misma*, 135]
- c. Debería preocuparse de que al menos robaran o nos pincharan **criminales españoles**. Yo siempre he sido muy patriota [Velázquez, Montealbán, *El delantero centro fue asesinado al atardecer*, 34]

⁴⁷PO (prepositional object) corresponds to Spanish *complemento de régimen*, such as *contar con alguien* or *acordarse de algo*. AC (adverbial complement) corresponds to the Spanish *complemento circunstancial*, or *aditamento* in Alarcos's terminology.

⁴⁸Thetic sentences are those lacking a bipartite structure of topic and comment that characterizes categorical sentences. As Leonetti (1999: 853) points out, they describe globally transitory events, processes, or states. For a detailed characterization of thetic vs. categoric in Spanish, see Gutiérrez-Rexach (2003:ch. 4). On the other hand, note that plural BPs in Spanish cannot normally be topics. There is, however, one exception to this rule, which is constituted by NPs with modifiers of the sort *así*, as in *Hombres así saben como salir de un apuro*, where the predication is valid for all the members of the class, i.e. they are interpreted (*parti*)generically. For other cases of bare preverbal subjects, see Laca (1999: 907ss). It is important to point out that although subjects and topics often coincide, one must not equate these categories, even if, as Givón (1976) proposes, subject agreement stems from the grammaticalization of topics.

Thus, apart from a short list of exceptions, subjects in Spanish, especially in preverbal position, require a determiner.⁴⁹ In the case of indefinite NPs, Garachana (2009: 435, table 3) shows that already in the thirteenth century the presence of *un* reached 89% of cases of her corpus, and by the sixteenth century this proportion had risen to more than 95%.⁵⁰

Similarly to subjects, indirect objects in Spanish tend to require a determiner. Indeed, as Laca (1999: 909) explains, although BPs are not categorically excluded from this syntactic function, they are very uncommon in the spoken register. Interestingly, the factors that favour its use are the same that favour the use of subjects without determiners, such as postverbal (in these cases final) position, contrastive focus, coordination, and the presence of adnominal complements, as in the examples below, all taken from this author.

- (38) a. Por su tono se notaba que no (le) estaba hablando a **subordinados**, sino a **amigos**.
 b. Un accidente puede ocurrirle incluso a **personas precavidas**.
 c. Daba clases de matemáticas a **adultos**.

The low incidence of BPs as indirect objects is also ancient. In Garachana's (2009) study, 89% of the cases for the thirteenth century have an indefinite article and by the sixteenth century there is not a single case of dative without a determiner. The fact that subjects and indirect objects are the functions that are most

⁴⁹As stated in the corpus section (1.2), in my analysis I only included NPs with *un* and *unos*, and therefore my results do not reveal the rate at which the indefinite article took over some functions previously carried out by bare NPs. This is why, in order to explain the extension of *un* to domains previously occupied by BPs I will build on the data given by Garachana (2009).

⁵⁰Garachana distinguishes between Peninsular Spanish and American Spanish. As dialectal variation turns out to be irrelevant, 93% (38/41) vs. 98% (46/47) respectively, I have added up these results and recalculated the percentage accordingly (84/88). It is worth pointing out that in these results, Garachana has considered all NPs with *un*, *unos* on the one hand, and BPs on the other. Although her results are very interesting in that they show how the indefinite article extended to domains previously occupied by BPs, they do not take into account the fact that other determiners, definite and indefinite, also contributed to the diminution in the number of BPs in the history of Spanish (cf. the example **moros/los moros** in *Mío Cid*, and in the case of indefinites the extension of *algun(os)*). This subject needs further research, which I hope to carry on in the future.

resistant to the appearance of BPs is not random, for as has been demonstrated in a number of typological studies, the subject and the indirect object are normally fulfilled by topical elements. In this sense, according to Givón (1976), there is good evidence to indicate that datives are at the higher end of the topicality hierarchy, just after nominatives.

On the other hand, direct objects are to the present day more flexible as to the inclusion of BPs (39a). The same is true for prepositional objects, especially those depending on the preposition *de* (39b), and other prepositional phrases acting as adverbial complements (39c).

- (39) a. Juan no tiene **amigos**.
 Voy por **pan**.
 Santiago dijo **cosas terribles** de ti.
 Necesito conseguir **trabajo**.
- b. Llenamos de **agua** las botellas.
 Este reporte carece de **validez**.
 Ya nadie cree en **milagros**.
- c. Vienen desde **lugares lejanos**.
 No salgas sola de **noche**.
 Llovió por **horas**.

In the case of the direct object, Garachana reports that by the thirteenth century, 78% of cases contained an indefinite article, and by the sixteenth century this percentage had risen to 98% of cases.⁵¹ Notice that although these percentages are very high, in the case of the thirteenth century they are considerably lower than what is reported for the subject and indirect object.

As for PO and AP, recall that as stated by Lapesa (2000 [1974]), prepositional phrases have consistently been one of the most favourable contexts for the appearance of BPs in the history of the Spanish language. In this sense, it is not

⁵¹Again, I have merged the results provided by Garachana (2009: table 3) for America (81/82) and Spain (62/64). The result is 143/146 cases, corresponding to 97.94% of cases.

surprising that of all grammatical functions these two are the last to incorporate *un* on a regular basis. Garachana (2009), who does not distinguish between them, reports that by the thirteenth century, 82% of indefinite prepositional phrases were preceded by *un*, and that by the seventeenth century this percentage was 94% (149/157).⁵²

Let us now discuss the results of my analysis, presented on table 7.8. The first thing to note is that during the period analysed the frequencies of *un* with respect to syntactic function remained more or less stable. Of course, *un* appears more frequently in some functions than in others, but the fact that it was not systematically excluded from any of them is relevant.

Table 7.8: Grammatical function per period

	S	DO	IO	PO	AC
1st	21.71% (38/175)	38.86% (68/175)	2.29% (4/175)	1.14% (2/176)	34.29% (61/175)
2nd	15.68% (29/185)	37.3% (69/185)	2.16% (4/185)	3.78% (7/185)	33.51% (62/185)
3rd	23.05% (130/564)	37.59% (212/564)	2.66% (15/564)	1.24% (7/564)	26.6% (150/564)
Total	21.32% (197/924)	37.77% (349/924)	2.49% (23/924)	1.73% (16/924)	29.44% (273/924)

Recall that the rise of the articles has been explained by the loss of the Latin case system, and that both the definite and the indefinite articles were earlier generalized in subjects and indirect objects than in other functions. What these results, together with the data from Garachana (2009), show is that already by the thirteenth century syntactic function alone did not determine the presence or absence of *un*.

As can be seen in table 7.8, *un* predominantly appears in direct objects. This comes as no surprise: indefinites are defined by the novelty condition, and the direct object is the function par excellence whereby new elements are introduced

⁵²61/62 in Peninsular Spanish, plus 88/95 in American Spanish.

into the discourse, often with an existential construction (see Givón 1976: 173). Some singular and plural examples of my corpus are presented in (40).⁵³

- (40) a. Avn fallamos otros exiemplos, segunt que alli cuenta Plinio, que unos marineros que yuan sobre mar que leuauan **un joglar** consigo, e por uentura que el joglar non salie de tan buen sentido en la naue nin de fazer tan buena jogleria como era mester, despagaron se mucho del los marineros [*GEII*, 1, 184, 27b]
 Avido este acuerdo, escriuió **vna carta**, mandándoles que luego entregase la çibdat a quien él mandase; e que seguraua sus personas & bienes para que fuesen do quisiesen. Los moros de la çibdat respondiéronle vna carta que dezía asy [*Reyes*, 178]
 Pero en esto ay **una cosa que deve ser proueyda** primero que lo cometas, y es ésta: estemos agora en que ya as forçado la prisión y sacado della a Laureola [*Cárcel*, 138, 1021]
 halló **una bolsita con nueve reales y unas llaves, que estaba tirada en el suelo**, y dentro de la dicha bolsita seis papeles escritos; y otro se alló despues en poder de Antonia de la Trinidad, portera; los quales exhibe ante su merçed, quien mandó se pongan en estos autos [*DLNE*, 151, 389]
- b. Gran sabor he de oir tus nuevas, mas fágolo por espantar **unos mures que ha en esta casa que me fazen grand enojo**, et nunca dexan cosa en el canastillo que me lo non coman et me lo royan [*Calila*, 210]
 E fallamos qve bien çerca della ay **vnos baños** en un hedeçio muy hermoso, donde ay agua manantial caliente de su natura [*Reyes*, 11] como los que más cerca atendían esto, veían a **unas mismas indias** venían todos los días y aun a tarde y a mañana para comprar maíz, ponderándolo lo mucho que llevaba cualquiera de ellas y no ofreciéndoseles que era para revenderlo en tortillas, presumían que sólo lo hacían para que faltase en la alhóndiga y tomar ocasión por esta causa para algún ruido [*Alboroto*, 117]

⁵³With respect to this issue, Givón (1976: 156) adds: ‘In contrast to subjects, accusative objects tend to show a large percentage of indefinites, and the slot is in fact a major one in which new arguments are presented in discourse. This is also a case slot where non-humans abound. Given the topicality hierarchies discussed above, it is likely that their frequency as discourse topics will be more lower than of subjects.’

Now, even if indefinites tend to appear as objects, there are many cases in which the indefinite is the subject of the predication. Again, this result is expected: first, because a new referent can be introduced into the discourse directly as a subject, and second, because indefinites, although less so than definites, can be topics. In (41), I give some singular and plural examples for each of the three periods analysed. Notice that in some cases, the indefinite is the subject of an embedded clause.⁵⁴

- (41) a. Cuenta otrossi Plinio que **un rey de Caria** que un dia, por prouar el entendimiento de los delphines, de quien le dizien tantas cosas, que mando tomar uno dellos uiuo e sano, e tal gele aduxieron por la mar al puerto [*GEII*, 1, 187, 4a]
y después desto miré que **vn negro vestido de color amarilla** venia diuersas vezes a echalle vna visarma y vi que le recebia los golpes en vn escudo que súpitamente le salía dela cabeçça y le cobria hasta los pies [*Cárcel*, 92, 154]
-En otro tiempo habíais de haber venido -le dixo **un viejo hecho al buen tiempo**-, cuando todos se trataban de vos y todos dezían vos como el Cid [*Criticón*, 664]
- b. Verdat es que aqui uinieron oy **unos omnes** ante que el sol se pusiesse, mas tan estrannos eran que nin los ui nunca si non aquella uez, nin sope quien eran, nin se aun agora quien son, nin dond uinieron [*GEII*, 1, 10, 20a]
Y al mismo tiempo veyan entrar **unas piedras** sin ruido ninguno por un rincon de la dicha terzer pieza, donde se havian pasado, las quales todas se encaminavan hazia la parte y lugar donde estava sentada dicha mujer vieja [*DLNE*, 156, 401]

As for indirect objects, we have seen that they were, with subjects, the first function to generalize the use of the indefinite article.⁵⁵ However, in table 7.8

⁵⁴As stated by Leonetti (1999: 855), the only requirement for an indefinite to be a topic is that it receives a strong reading, i.e. specific or generic. However, the author continues, non-specific indefinites can under certain circumstances (like modal contexts) be topicalized, as in the following example: *Con una cebolla, creo que será suficiente*. See also Givón (1976) and Lyons (1999: 233)

⁵⁵By 'generalized' I mean that the large majority of cases appear with it, although there are

we can see that indefinites very rarely act as indirect objects. This result closely matches the general trend according to which, cross-linguistically, datives tend to be definite or pronominal (see Laca 1999: 909). Some of the few examples in my corpus of *un* in datives are presented below:

- (42) Así que el lobo çeraval perseveró en aquel estado. Et fue conoçido por religioso, tanto que fue fecho saber a **un león que era rey de los vestiblos de aquella partida** [*Calila*, 307]
 Siete dientes quitó a **un ahorcado** con unas tenazicas de pelarcejas, mientras yo le descalcé los çapatos [*Celestina*, 196]
 Con casi nada, pues no fue sino sólo un amigo, quedó limpio de semejantes piratas nuestro Mar del Sur; habían éstos robado no sólo la población de las costas de Colima y de Sinaloa sino ensangrentando sacrílegamente sus impías manos, cortándoles las narices y orejas a **un sacerdote** [*Alboroto*, 97]

On the other hand, in my corpus, I have very few cases of PO, which is normal considering that there is a closed inventory of verbs that require such objects. I reproduce some examples in (43).

- (43) Bursia, rey de Bitinia, sin ninguna razón, no aquexándole pena como a mí, mató a su propio padre, Tolomeo, rey de Egipto, a su padre y madre y hermanos y mujer, por goçar de una **mançeba** [*Celestina*, 331]
 Tenía una desdicha que nos alcanzó a todos sus hijos, como herencia del pecado original, que fue ser hijodalgo, que es lo mismo que ser poeta; pues son pocos los que se escapan de **una pobreza eterna** o de una hambre perdurable [*Estebanillo 1*, 38]
 no pude ver las cañas y espigas de una macolla sino manchas prietas y pequeñísimas como las que dejan las moscas hasta que, valiéndome de **un microscopio**, descubrí un enjambre de animalillos de color musgo sin más corpulencia que la de una punta de aguja que sea sutil [*Alboroto*, 109]

Finally, there is a very high number of cases of *un* in AC; in fact, this function

some few exceptions to this, that I have discussed in a previous paragraphs.

comes second only to DO as the most common for indefinite NPs in the three periods analysed. At first sight it might seem as if my results contradict the well-known fact according to which prepositions favour the presence of BPs. This is not the case. While this is a statement about the likelihood of BPs to be accepted in different syntactic environments, my results do not take BPs into account. They simply reflect a frequency analysis of the functions that NPs with the indefinite article are most likely to perform. Again, topicality plays a major role in explaining this distribution: as I will discuss in chapter 8, one of the most important roles of the indefinite article is to introduce background (not salient, not topical) information into the discourse; therefore it is perfectly normal that a good proportion of the examples from the corpus are AC.⁵⁶ Some examples are given below.

- (44) E por que la estoria de Troya fizieran apostremas que todas las otras pintaronla fuera en **vn portal que era commo lugar apartado** [*GEII*, 2, 171, 22b]

De su natura es calient et humida; et fallan la en las mineras que a en tierra de Egipto, en **unos logares que son muy despoblados**, a que dizen Lexuncaz, et es tierra en que a muchos leones et otras bestias fieras [*Lapidario*, 73]

Pero los cristianos eran tantos & tan bien armados, que los moros, aviendo peleado todo el día & no pudiendo más sufrir la fuerça de los cristianos, se recogieron todos a **vna mezquita** grande, que estaba cercana al muro de la cibdad, e alli tiraban tantos tiros de espingardas e ballestas, que los christianos no podían llegar a los combatir, salvo con gran peligro [*Reyes*, 9]

Sepades que los deuotos & onestos religiosos prior & conuento del monasterio de nuestra sennora Santa Maria de Guadalupe seme querellaron & dizen que commo quier que segunt **vn priuillejio** non son obligados apagar portadgos nin rodas njn almozarifadgos nin aduanas nin otros derechos algunos delas cosas que lievan otraen para su proueymiento &

⁵⁶Again, one must not confuse topicality with specificity, even if there are strong links between these notions. Many indefinites that introduce background information are specific even if they are certainly not topical. See section 8.2.

mantenimiento [DLE15, 235. 310]

en el ínter se fue a nuestro aposento y se quitó la brizma pródiga, y, limpiando la bota lo mejor que pudo, se metió en ambas sus calcetones y volvió con lindos apetitos y con **un muy buen almuerzo** [*Estebanillo*, 2, 239]

en **una ocasión que, por un grave accidente de estómago, me prohibieron los médicos el estudio**, pasé así algunos días, y luego les propuse que era menos dañoso el concedérmelos, porque eran tan fuertes y vehementes mis cogitaciones, que consumían más espíritus en un cuarto de hora que el estudio de los libros en cuatro días [*Respuesta*, 460]

7.4.2 Word Order

Now, if we consider the position of indefinites with respect to the verb, we get very interesting results (table 7.9).

Table 7.9: Position per period

	Pre	Post
1st	6.82% (12/176)	93.18% (164/176)
2nd	15.68% (29/185)	84.32% (156/185)
3rd	9.75% (55/564)	90.25% (509/564)
Total	10.38% (96/925)	89.62% (829/925)

As shown on table 7.9, in the large majority of cases, *un* appears postverbally in the three periods analysed. As the reader can see, the number of preverbal indefinites rose sharply between the first and the second period, before plunging back to a number very close to the original level. However, this sudden rise does not alter the fact that for the three periods, there is an overwhelming tendency for indefinites to appear in postverbal position. It is very likely that this jump during the second period is a consequence of discursive phenomena related to the different texts comprising the corpus.

In the previous pages we have seen repeatedly how topicality is a preponderant element in the explanation of the syntactic distribution of indefinites. Given that preverbal arguments are more topical and that indefinites rank low in the

topicality scale, the low incidence of preverbal indefinites in preverbal position is a natural consequence of their lower topical status as compared to definites and personal pronouns.

This is especially interesting if we consider the case of subjects. In the corpus, subjects usually appear postverbally, with 79.19% (156/197) of the total occurrences. Indeed, as Givón explains (1978: 295), '[i]n many languages in which the notion of 'subject' is viable, there is a strong tendency for the subject nominal to appear first in the sentence. This reflects a more general tendency for the topic/theme ('old information') to appear before the new information.'

Taking this into account, and given that the Spanish unmarked order is SVO, the postposition of indefinite subjects can surely be interpreted as a reflex of the fact that indefinites are not 'natural topics'. One example of a preverbal and a postverbal subject are given below.⁵⁷

- (45) nuestra madre le decía [...] que **una tía mía** había dado leche al infante don Pelayo, antes que se retirara al valle de Covadonga [*Estebanillo*, 1, 42]
 Ahogáronse, entre mucho ganado, veinte y seis personas; arruinóse **un batán**; perdióse el trigo que estaba en loas trojes de los molinos, y en cantidad muy considerable [*Alboroto*, 102]

On the other hand, in the three periods analysed, a good number of the preverbal cases are constituted by AC, which are, as I have said before, background information (as opposed to topics). In fact, after subjects, AC are the most likely function to appear preverbally in the three periods analysed. As it is well known, this type of complements is more independent with respect to the verb and therefore their position is less fixed (cf. *Ayer vino Juan* vs. *Juan vino ayer*). Some

⁵⁷It is important to stress that these results must be taken only as an general indicator of the position of indefinite NPs, as they do not take into account relevant factors that explain some modifications to the prototypical word order, such as the difference between main and subordinate clauses.

examples of preverbal AC are given below:

- (46) et quenta que **un dia** treueiaua aquel ninno con aquel delphin, e tantol auie auezado a si que una uez que ouo el ninno treueiado assaz con ell en aquel seno de la mar daquella cibdat Massia de Ytalia, partiosse dek delphin, e salios ya del agua [*GEII*, 1, 184, 15a]
y en **una ocasión que, por un grave accidente de estómago, me prohibieron los médicos el estudio**, pasé así algunos días [*Respuesta*, 460]

Finally, throughout the corpus we find that indefinites in initial position are extremely rare, independently of their syntactic function. Out of the 1325 examples of *un* (both cardinal and article), only sixteen appear in absolute P1, and most of them are either are elliptical answers (47a), or proverbs (47b). Interestingly, twelve of these sixteen cases occur in *Celestina*. Notice that in (47b), all the highlighted NPs have an exclusivity reading and are therefore analysed as conservative.

- (47) a. ¿Quién? **Un mi enamorado** [*Celestina*, 105]
Sempronio: Pues, ¿quién está arriba? Celestina: ¿Quiéreslo saber?
Sempronio: Quiero. Celestina: **Una moça, que me encomendó un frayle** [*Celestina*, 106] ¿qué sientes? Melibea: **Una mortal llaga en medio del corazón que no me consiente hablar** [*Celestina*, 330]
- b. **Una alma sola** ni canta ni llora. **Un solo acto** no haze hábito. **Un frayle solo** pocas vezes le encontrarás por la calle. **Una perdiz sola** por maravilla buela [mayormente en verano]. **Un manjar solo contino** presto pone hastío. **Una golondrina** no haze verano. **Un testigo solo** no es entera fe [*Celestina*, 20]

7.5 The Indefinite Article in Predicates

As we anticipated in the last section, throughout the period studied here, the syntactic function in which there has been greatest change with respect to the use of the indefinite article is the predicate.⁵⁸

It is well known that in Spanish there is variation as to the use of the article in predicates. Traditionally, copulative sentences with the verb *ser* are divided into two groups, namely attributive (or predicational) and identificative (or specificational). In the first, the predicate indicates the class to which a referent belongs; in the second the predicate identifies an individual.

The presence and absence of determiners is said to differentiate these two types of predicates: while attributive sentences are constructed by means of bare nouns, identificative predicates require the presence of a determiner.⁵⁹ Consider the contrast between (48a) and (48b).

- (48) a. Ese señor es **abogado**.
 b. Ese señor es **un abogado**.
 c. Ese señor es **un abogado excelente**.
 d. Ese señor es **un abogado que trabaja en el despacho Roa**.
 e. Ese señor es **abogado penalista**.

While (48a) would be an adequate response for *¿qué es ese señor?*, it could not answer to the question *¿quién es ese señor?*, in which case we would use a sentence as (48b).⁶⁰ Notice that as a consequence of their function, identificational predicates are often accompanied by restrictive modifiers which help make the recognition of the referent more precise (48c) and (48d). In contrast, attributive

⁵⁸The issue of predicates in Spanish has been treated in numerous occasions and from very different perspectives. See among others Alcina & Blecua (1975), Bosque (1996b), Fernández Leboranz (1999), Portolés (1994) and Fernández Lagunilla (1983).

⁵⁹Notice that this distinction goes very well with the approach according to which common nouns are predicates, commented on in note 19, p. 185. See Laca (1999: 914).

⁶⁰Recall that the question test (*qué* vs. *quién*) for discerning attributive and identificative predicates is well established in the Hispanic grammatical tradition. See, for instance, Alonso (1951 [1933]: 187).

predicates tend to appear on their own, or with relational adjectives that, together with the noun, delimit a subclass to which the referent is said to belong (48e) (see Bosque 1996b: 57).⁶¹

Recall that, as explained in section 7.3, the indefinite article is often employed to provide valorative nuances. For instance, with mass nouns, in the presence of a valorative modifier the presence of *un* is obligatory:

- (49) a. Ayer bebimos **vino**.
 b. Ayer bebimos **mucho vino**
 c. Ayer bebimos **un vino extraordinario / muy rico**.
 d. *Ayer bebimos **vino extraordinario / muy rico**.

Similarly, the presence of valorative modifiers in predicates forces the presence of *un* as occurs in (48c), where its absence would result in an ungrammatical sentence (**Ese señor es abogado excelente*).⁶²

The valorative nuance with *un* goes even further in a very productive construction that is referred to in the literature as ‘emphatic *un*’ or ‘evaluative predicate’ as in *María es una mentirosa*. In his *Gramática*, Bello (1988 [1848]: §856a) described this construction in the following terms:⁶³

El artículo indefinido da a veces una fuerza particular al nombre con que se junta. Decir que alguien es *holgazán* no es más que atribuirle ese vicio; pero decir que alguien es *un holgazán* es atribuírselo como cualidad principal y característica.

⁶¹Nouns designating professions, occupations, or status-nouns (*diputado*) appear as a norm without determiners in predicates (see Fernández Lagunilla (1983), and Laca (1999: 914). As a matter of fact, as stated by Bosque (1996b: 64), many Spanish speakers (including myself) find that predicates with the indefinite article and without any adjectives are awkward: ?*Luisa es una dentista*. In this sense, recall that according to Lapesa (2000 [1974]), such nouns were reluctant to admit the article, not only in predicates, but in all syntactic contexts. See section 7.3.

⁶²Valorative use of *un* is referred to by Garachana (2009: 409) as ‘un ponderativo’. For this author, this category of predicates is a subtype of the attributives: when referring to ponderative predicates, she refers to them as ‘estructura esta última también clasificadora’. However, other authors, notably Lapesa (2000 [1974]: §10) and Bosque (1996b: 57ss) classify a predicate such as *un vino delicioso* as an identificational predicate, even if in the case of Lapesa there is an explicit recognition of its ponderative nuance. It is worth noting that Bosque (1996b: 64) cites *una buena enfermera* as an example of an identificational predicate.

⁶³See also Alonso (1951 [1933]: 187ss.), Martínez (1989: 57)

As Bello pointed out, in this type of predicates the quality referred to is understood in its maximal degree, and as a consequence, it is incompatible with gradation as in *Luis es { *un / Ø } holgazán, pero menos que tú*.⁶⁴ However, not all adjectives are felicitous in evaluative predicates, but only those which are described by Milner (1972, *apud* Bosque 1996b: 64) as ‘noms de qualité’.⁶⁵ This is why a sentence such as *?Luis es un médico* is awkward for many speakers, as it is too vague to be interpreted as an identificative predicate (cf. *Luis es un médico del hospital ABC*), and neither does it fulfil the requirements to be interpreted as an evaluative predicate. Notice that the evaluative interpretation is perfectly acceptable by adding valorative suffixes as *-ucho* (negative) and *-azo* (positive), as in (50) (Bosque 1996b: 64-5).⁶⁶

- (50) Luis es **un medicucho**.
Luis es **un medicazo**.

On the other hand, there are also cases in which the predicate with *un* must be interpreted in a metaphorical fashion. Such metaphoric predicates are, as Leonetti (1999: 853) explains, a special case of evaluative predicates, as in both cases the presence of the indefinite article is obligatory. Some examples are given in (51). Notice that in some cases there is no gender agreement, which reinforces the non-literal interpretation (Bosque 1996b: 66).⁶⁷

- (51) Luis es **una maravilla**.

⁶⁴However, they do take emphatic adjectives such as *verdadero*; e.g. *Luis es un verdadero idiota*. See (Leonetti 1999: 852)

⁶⁵Evaluative predicates usually have negative connotations. See Lipski (1978), DeMello, (1980), Sacks (1980) Fernández Lagunilla (1983), Portolés (1994), Bosque (1996b).

⁶⁶Portolés (1994) explains that there is another way of getting an evaluative predicate out of regular nouns, which is obtained by stressing the indefinite article. So, by saying *Luis es ún médico*, we are not simply saying that he is a doctor, but we are saying that he is a great doctor. In Portolés’s words (1994: 539), ‘El hablante al utilizarlo [the emphatic *un*] desea que su interlocutor infiera de *ún médico* las mejores propiedades que pueda tener quien se dedique a esta profesión.’ As the author adds, this reading is more evident when the predicate contains an element that favours this interpretation, such as *todo*: *Luis es todo ún médico*.

⁶⁷Recall that proper names can also be used metaphorically when introduced by the indefinite article. See section 7.3.4

Esa mujer es **un monstruo**.

Santiago es **un roble**.

Finally, with respect to the plural form *unos*, for some linguists its use in predicates is marked, for, according to them, it is clearly associated with evaluative and metaphoric predication, as can be seen in the examples above taken from Laca (1999: 916, ex. 43 & 44).

- (52) a. Son **unos pobretones**.
 Eran **unos vejestorios**.
 Son todavía **unos jovenzuelos**.
- b. Estas mujeres son **unas víboras**.
 Estos chicos son **unos verdaderos peces**.

Although it is true that the presence of *unos* is usually linked with evaluative and metaphoric readings, at least in Mexican Spanish, *unos* can appear also with non-evaluative predicates, as in (53), which is a common answer to the question *¿quiénes son Mario y Luis?*. Notice that the bare plural is also possible. In neither case is there an evaluative nuance.

- (53) Luis y Mario son **unos** / \emptyset **amigos míos**.

Now, as for the diachronic perspective, we have seen that in Spanish the use of the indefinite article is not as extended in predicates as in other languages. In fact, as explained in section 3.4.1, for Givón (1981), the generalization of the indefinite article in predicates is a proof that its grammaticalization has reached a very advanced stage.

It has been said on numerous occasions that in Medieval Spanish, the indefinite article did not occur in predicate position, as can be seen in the following examples from Lapesa (2000 [1974]: §10):

- (54) la llana es **figura de triángulo** [*Ajedrez*, 342, 34]

Era **vieja buhona destas que venden joyas** [J. Ruiz, 78]

Indeed, in my corpus the presence of *un* in predicates in the first period analysed is extremely rare (table 7.10). There are only three occurrences, one in which *un* is not really an article, but has the exclusivity value of $\bar{U}NUS$. Notice that the other two examples come from *Calila* and *General Estoria*, texts which, as explained in the corpus section, have only survived in manuscripts from the 14th century, which in this case, might be a relevant factor. Thus, it is safe to say that in thirteenth-century Spanish, the indefinite article was not yet (frequently) used in predicates.⁶⁸

- (55) a. En el nomne del Padre & del Ffijo & del Spiritu Sancto que son tres personas & **vn solo Dios** [*DLE13*, 105, 5]
 b. Et tú eres **un onbre tal**, que non guardas nin condesas [*Calila*, 211]
 c. Et pues que los ouo conseiado e ensennado como fizieren, tomo una soga uermeia tinta de la yerba a que dize el latin de la Biblia coco bístico, et es el coco bístico **una yerba que faze tintura de color uermeio muy fremoso**, e descendiolos por una finiestra que auie en el muro, allo o estaua la su casa ayuntada a ell [*GEII*, 1, 11, 32b]

Table 7.10: Predicate per period

1st	2nd	3rd	Total
1.71% (3/175)	7.57% (14/185)	8.87% (50/564)	7.25% (67/924)

The number of cases of *un* in predicates rises dramatically in the second period analysed, where it passes from 3 to 14 cases, the large majority of them with an evaluative reading (56). In (57), see the examples of Nebrija, where the grammarian explains the use of what he defines as ‘aumentativo’, and in doing so he employs the emphatic *un*.

⁶⁸In the case of (55b), the presence of *un* might be motivated by *tal*.

- (56) El cimientto sobre que estaua fundada era **vna piedra tan fuerte de su condicion y tan clara de su natural qual nunca otra tal iamas auia visto, sobre la qual estauan firmados quatro pilares de vn marmol morado muy hermoso de mirar** [*Cárcel*, 89, 105]
 y porque no sea sabido de quien los pena, que son malos cristianos, ques **vna mala señal** en el onbre, son tan deuotos cathólicos, que ningún apostol les hizo ventaia [*Cárcel*, 187, 1938]
 Cata que la embidia es **una incurable enfermedad** donde asienta; huésped que fatiga la posada, en lugar de galardón; siempre goza del mal ajeno [*Celestina*, 319]
- (57) Destos a las vezes usamos en señal de loor: como diziendo es **una mu-
jeraza**: por que abulta mucho. alas vezes en señal de vituperio. como diziendo es **un cavallazo**: por que tiene alguna cosa allende la hermosura natural & tamaño de cavallo [Gramática, 215]

It is also in this period that we find the first examples of metaphoric predicates in *Celestina*. I have found only cases with the verb *parecer* (58), although Garachana (2009: ex. 67) cites other cases in *Celestina* with *ser*, which I reproduce in (59):

- (58) Agora, visto el pro y la contra de tus bienandanças, me pareçes **un laberinto de errores, un desierto spantable, una morada de fieras**, juego de hombres que andan en corro, laguna llena de cieno, región llena de spinas, monte alto, campo pedregoso, prado lleno de serpientes, huero florido y sin fruto, fuente de cuydados, río de lágrimas, mar de miserias, trabajo sin provecho, dulce ponçoña, vana esperança, falsa alegría, verdadero dolor [*Celestina*, 338]
- (59) Aparejos para baños, esto es **una maravilla** [*Celestina*, I.111]
 Mas como es **un putillo**, gallillo, barviponiente, entiendo que en tres noches no se le demude la cresta [*Celestina*, VII.208]

As expected, in the third period, the presence of *un* is more consolidated than in the previous periods. I have found fifty cases, some of which are presented

in (60). The examples are divided into identificative (60a), evaluative (60b) and metaphoric (60c) uses.

- (60) a. -¿Quién eres tú, que undes más que llamas? -le preguntó el severo alcaide-. ¿Eres español?, ¿eres portugués?, ¿o eres diablo? -Yo soy **un reciente general** [*Criticón*, 805]

Volvieron en esto la atención a las desmesuradas voces acompañadas de los duros golpes que daba a las puertas inmortales un raro sujeto, que de verdad fue **un bravo passo** [*Criticón*, 805]

que no sabe si es cura o vicario y que le a visto en una carrosa, y que es **un hombre alto de cuerpo, cano, y que en el tiempo que estaba en San Agustin Tlaxco era blanco, pero ahora está algo colorado y moreno** [*DLNE*, 138, 365]

Demás, que yo nunca he escrito cosa alguna por mi voluntad sino por suegos y preceptos agenos; de tal manera, que no me acuerdo haber escrito por mi gusto sino es **un papelito que llaman El Sueño** [*Respuesta*, 471]

y el primer español que enocntre en ella fue **un alférez del tercio de Sicilia, llamado don Felipe Navarro de Viamonte** [*Estebanillo*, 1, 64]

- b. Aquél es de quién dizen que de puro bueno se pierde, y es **un perdido** [*Criticón*, 662]

Y al pronunciar estas palabras, volbio en sí; y enpezo luego a dezir que no le creyeran, que era **un embustero**, donde calificué yo más su espiritu. Y a los demas sacerdotes comenzo a dezir lo mismo [*DLNE*, 134, 355]

le dijo que qué modo de vivir era el suio, que bien decia su madre que era **una loca**, que fuese al quarto de la parrichia porque la necesitaba [*DLNE*, 155, 396]

Si dijeran: éste es **un malhechor**, transgresor de la ley, un alborotador que con engaños alborota al pueblo, mintieran, como mintieron cuando lo decían [*Respuesta*, 454]

¡Oh si todos -y yo la primera, que soy **una ignorante**- nos tomásemos la medida al talento antes de estudiar [*Respuesta*, 463]

- c. es un raro sujeto, de quien dizen es **un diablo**, y aun peor [*Criticón*, 660]

Parecía **un mar** el que hay desde la calzada de Guadalupe (en toda su longitud) hasta los pueblos de Tacuba, Tlanepantla y Azcapozalco, donde se sondeaban por todas partes dos varas de agua [*Alboroto*, 103]
parecióme que estaba en otro mundo y que sola aquella ciudad era **una confusa Babilonia**, siendo una tierra de permisión [*Estebanillo*, 1, 62]

Finally, with regard to plurals, I have documented only five cases, one in the second period and four in the third. It is worth noting that three of them are identificative (61a) and only two are evaluative (61b). These data support my claim that *unos* is not restricted to evaluative or metaphoric readings.

- (61) a. antes se an de llamar artejos aquellos uessos de que se componen los dedos. Los cuales son **unos pequeños miembros** a semejança delos cuales se llamaron aquellos articulos que añadimos al nombre para demostrar de que genero es [*Gramática*, 241]
esto no es más que **unos apuntamientos o reclamos para dar claridad a la respuesta**, que es ésta [*Carta*, 415]
y hallé que no eran sino **unas líneas espirales que iban perdiendo lo circular cuanto se iba remitiendo el impulso** [*Respuesta*, 459]
- b. Volvieron al otro día huyendo de otra, dezían, con dos agudas puntas en la frente. “¡Eh, que también es nada!” les respondió, “que sois **unos simples**” [*Criticón*, 659]
Quitá allá, que sois **unos necios** [*Criticón*, 801]

7.6 Summary

In the preceding pages I have given an overview of the main factors behind the distribution of the indefinite article in Medieval and Golden-Age Spanish.

As explained in section 7.1, although the presence of *un* and *unos* as tools to introduce new referents into the discourse is attested from the very first documents, an analysis of their frequency shows a steep rise in the transition from

Medieval to Golden Age-Spanish. The striking similarities in the tendencies reflected by the evolution of these two forms support the hypothesis that *unos* is a true plural indefinite article.

The appearance of *un(os)* is not only diachronically but also textually dependent, for it occurs mostly in narrative texts, and is scarce in legal documents, where *algun(os)* is always preferred. This result is twofold: on the one hand, it shows that the grammaticalization of the indefinite article is strongly constrained by the type of discourse; on the other hand, it shows that despite the widely defended claim according to which *un* and *algún* are synonymic expressions (cf. Alonso 1951 [1933]), each of them had from early times its own functional domain.

As for the restrictions associated with the type of noun, we have seen that combination of *un(os)* + *mass nouns* leads to recategorization, either syntactic or lexical, the former often with a valorative nuance. Both types of recategorization are attested from early times, and so are the lexicalized expression *un poco* and what Bosque (1996b) calls ‘quantificational nouns’. Naturally, in these last two constructions, mass nouns remain unchanged in sense.

With respect to the syntactic function, just as in the case of the definite article, *un* generalized first in subjects and datives, and was only later introduced into direct object and prepositional phrases (prepositional object and adverbial phrases). This development is the result of articles serving as topic markers in the Romance languages; recall that these two functions occupy the higher end of the topicality chain proposed by Givón. The function of the indefinite article is, in this sense, to mark the introduction of a new topic into discourse.⁶⁹

Nonetheless, at least since the second half of the thirteenth century, when my corpus begins, *un* can be found in all syntactic functions, although to different extents. In effect, in most cases, it appears in direct objects, this being a natural

⁶⁹See Garrido (1991 [1988]) for an account of the development of the articles as topic markers in Romance.

consequence of the role fulfilled by indefinites, that is, to introduce new referents into the discourse.

Additionally, the clear preference of indefinite subjects for postverbal position in the three periods studied is again linked to the concept of topic. As we know, although under certain circumstances indefinites can be topical (i.e. when they have strong readings), the fact that they tend to be postverbal derives from the fact that they are not ‘natural topics’.

The use of the indefinite article in predicates was unknown (or at least extremely rare) in the first documents. According to my data, its regular insertion in this syntactic context began around the fifteenth century. Then, during the third period analysed in my corpus, the number of predicates rises dramatically, from fourteen to fifty cases. Nonetheless, it must be pointed out that in terms of percentages this rise represents only 1.3% (from 7.57% to 8.87%). In this sense, I believe that the increase in the number of cases of *un* in predicates must be interpreted as a part of the general phenomenon discussed in section 7.1, in which the turning-point in the development of the indefinite article happened in the transition from Medieval to Golden-Age Spanish, where the frequency of *un(os)*, not only in predicates but in all syntactic functions, tripled.

Finally, the insertion of *un* in predicates in Spanish fits well into the model proposed by Givón (1981), according to which this is one of the latest stages in the grammaticalization of indefinite articles. However, in order to explain this development as a whole we must first analyse the semantic interpretation of *un*. This is our task in the next chapter.

Chapter 8

The Interpretation of *un(os)*: Specificity and Genericity

In section 3.4.1, I commented on Givón's proposal (1981) concerning the different stages involved in what seems to be a quasi-universal in the development of indefinite markers, and presented evidence from three languages, all of which confirm, to different extents, that the numeral 'one', in the process of becoming an article, is used earlier with specific indefinites than with non-specific ones.

The main aim of this chapter is to offer a complete review of the interpretation of the indefinite article in Medieval and Golden Age Spanish, with special emphasis on the specific/non-specific distinction, but also with reference to its generic interpretation.¹

The chapter comprises five sections. In the first, I analyse some of the main grammatical factors that are commonly associated with specificity. As we know,

¹The indefinite article can also appear in predicates, but this interpretation has already been discussed in section 7.4.

in Spanish, as in many other languages, there is no grammatical tool whose sole function is to mark specificity: rather, there is a series of elements that in one way or another are linked to the specific/non-specific distinction, such as tense, mood, the descriptive information of the NP, the position of adjectives, the mood in relative clauses, and differential object marking.

Then, in section 8.2, I introduce the notion of ‘discourse referent’ and analyse the relationship between saliency and specificity in the corpus. Section 8.3, deals with the results of my analysis in terms of specificity, not only from a diachronic perspective but also with respect to genre, and in section 8.4 they are compared with those of *algún*. Section 8.5 deals with the notion of genericity and the inclusion of *un* in this context. Finally, in section 8.6, I describe the impersonal use of *uno* and its links with the grammaticalization of the indefinite article.

8.1 Marks and Triggers of Specificity in Spanish

8.1.1 The Verb

Among the factors that favour a specific interpretation are the past and present tenses and the indicative mood and gerund, as they are all associated with the factive modality in which, as pointed out by Givón (1978: 110), ‘the speaker commits himself to the (past or present) truth of a certain proposition —and therefore also commits himself to the referentiality of the participating nominals’.²

It is therefore not surprising that in my corpus 18.67 % (107/573) of cases of specific *un* occur in sentences in which the verb is in present tense (1a), and 80.98% (464/573) are in past tense, either perfective (336/464) as in (1b) or imperfective (128/464) as in (1c). As predicted, future (1d) is rare, with only two cases (see table 8.1).³

²Evidently, present tense in its habitual interpretation is excluded from this claim.

³I have grouped the very few cases of compound tenses with their simple counterparts, as

Table 8.1: Tense per period

	PPerf	PImperf	Present	Future	Conditional
+Spec	58.64% (336/573)	22.34% (128/573)	18.67% (107/573)	0.35% (2/573)	0% (0/573)
-Spec	28.41% (50/176)	18.75% (33/176)	42.61% (75/176)	9.09% (16/176)	1.14% (2/176)

- (1) a. Et yo **sé un lugar apartado et muy viçioso do ha peçes et agua**, et ay **un galápago mi amigo** [*Calila*, 209]
Señora, Sosia es aquel que da bozes; déxame yr a valerle, no le maten; que no **está** sino **un pajezico** con él. Dame presto mi capa que está debaxo de ti [*Celestina*, 326]
- b. Et seyendo así una noche en su posada, **vio un ladrón** et dixo entre sí [*Calila*, 96]
Alfonso Gonçáles, escribano del consejo de la noble e leal villa de Madrit, me encomiendo en vuestra merced a la qual, señores, plega saber que **recebí una letra vuestra** [*THE*, 207]
Al entrar éste, **salió una fragancia tan extraordinaria, un olor tan celestial**, que les confortó las cabeças y les dio alientos para desear y diligenciar la entrada en la inmortal estancia [*Criticón*, 810]
- c. El fue así, que **andava una noche un ladrón** sobre **una casa de un omne rico**, et fazía luna [*Calila*, 109]
leuaua en la mano yzquierda **vn escudo de azero muy fuerte** y en la derecha **vna ymagen femenil entallada en vna piedra muy clara** [*Cárcel*, 87, 45]
iba en ella [...] **un fraile catalán que iba a Roma a absolverse de ciertas culpas, y un peregrino saboyardo que iba a confesar algunos pecados reservados a su Santidad** [*Estebanillo*, 2, 251]
- d. **Una cosa te diré** por que veas qué madre perdiste, aunque era para callar, pero contigo todo passa [*Celestina*, 196]

As for non-specifics, the results are as follows: in 42.71% (75/176) of the cases, the verb of the clause concerned is in the present (2a), in 28.41% (50/176) in the

they did not amount to a significant quantity. There are two present perfects and one pluperfect in the specific row. The same goes for the non-specific examples, where I found only one case of present perfect.

perfective past (2b), and in 18.75% (33/176) in the imperfective (2c). In contrast with the specific cases, the percentage of futures (2d) is higher, accounting for 9.09% (16/176), and there is a very low incidence of conditional, which represent only 1.14% (2/176) of the total (2e). It must be pointed out that the examples of non-specific *un* under the scope of future are found from the first period, where I have found four cases. This is important because it contradicts Givón's claim (1981) that this is one of the last contexts to accept the indefinite article. Thus, it seems that there is no reason to divide non-specifics depending on the operator that induces the ambiguity, for diachronically, at least in the case of Spanish, this distinction is not relevant.⁴

- (2) a. El que **mira un objeto**, interpuesto entre él y los ojos **un vidrio verde**, de necesidad, por teñirse las especies que el objeto envía en el color del vidrio que está intemedio, lo verá verde [*Alboroto*, 96]
- b. Mandóme a mí aunque ya tenía el ferreruelo puesto para ir a ver a los hidalgos del prendimiento de Cristo, que ensendiese **unos carbones** y calentase los hierros [*Estebanillo*, I, 47]
- c. cierta persona dixo que haviale dicho que con las lagañas de **un perro prietto unatadas en los ojos** se **beyan** los cuerpos de los difuntos, y que ella havia hecho la experiencia y los havia visto [*DLNE*, 131, 351]
- d. ¡Qué lástyma tan cruel para mí suplicaron tantos al rey por tu vida y no pudieron todos defendella, y **podrá vn cuchillo acaballa**, el qual dexrá el padre culpado y la madre con dolor y la hija sin salud y el reyno sin eredera! [*Cárcel*, 156, 1360]
- e. Y despues supo estaba con el ympedimento que dichos polbos havian caussado. Y asi messmo le dijo a esta declarante la dicha Josepha que despues que diesse los polbos, le **embiaria** a su casa a **un hombre, el qual le sacaria de aquel cuydado o de otro cualquiera** [*DLNE*, 139, 367]

⁴These facts support the modifications we made to Givón's (1981) first scale (figure 3.4). See section 3.3.

In sum, as shown in table 8.1, the most important contrast between specific and non-specifics in terms of tense is that, although both interpretations occur in sentences in all tenses (with the exception of the conditional), the past does indeed favour a specific interpretation, with more than 80% of cases (combining perfect and imperfect), while future is mostly associated with non-specifics.

In contrast to Givón's (1978) claim, present does not necessarily imply a realis modality, for almost half of non-specifics occur in sentences whose main verb is in the present tense. Note that this is expected, if we consider that, apart from the future, all other opacity-inducing operators such as conditionals, negation, imperative and so on are compatible with this tense.

On the other hand, non-personal verb forms are also frequent both with specifics, and non-specifics, with 17.32% (120/693) and 23.83% (56/235), respectively. There is, however, one important difference: whereas with specifics, the gerund is by far the most common form (3a), in the case of non-specifics it is the infinitive which accounts for the majority of the examples (3b):

- (3) a. y al cabo dellas, **hallando una pequeña choza de pastores cercana del camino**, me retiré a ella, adonde fui acogido y pude con sosiego descansar hasta tanto que el Alba se reía de ver al Aurora llorar a si defunto amante, siendo mujer y no fea ni mal tocada [*Estebanillo*, 1, 58]
- b. Y es tal la eficacia de deste licor que una sola gota basta a **inmortalizar a un hombre**, pues un solo borrón que echaba en uno de sus versos Marcial pudo hazer inmortales a Partenio y a Liciano [*Criticón*, 791]

With respect to mood, as predicted, the vast majority of specifics, 95.64% (548/573), occur in clauses whose verb is in the indicative (4).

- (4) El fue así, que **andava** una noche un ladrón sobre **una casa de un omne rico**, et fazia luna, et andavan algunos conpañeros con él [*Calila*, 109]
E diz que le fizieron **vna sepultura grande e alta e que paresçe avn**

oy dia [*GEII*, 2, 168, 30b]

As for non-specifics, although indicative is also more common, the percentage of cases in which the verb of the clause concerned is in subjunctive (5a) is higher, with 22.68% (39/172) of the cases. Such an increase is a consequence of the irrealis character of subjunctive. There are also four examples of imperatives, two of which are presented in (5b):

- (5) a. Et si ffolaren el poluo della, quando **fuere** molida, con **un cannuto**, en derecho de la candela, saldra della muy grand fuego, et quemara quanto fallar [*Lapidario*, 222]
E ante todas cosas, suplicamos a Vuestra Alteza que nos **mande** dar **vn nauío**, para que pasen algunos de nosotros allende, a ver sy nos quieren regebir, y si nos reciben bien; y sy no quisieren, préstenos su anparo & seguridat de Vuestra Alteza, & seamos sienpre suyos donde Dios quisiere [*Reyes*, 183]
- b. Pues búscame **un açadón** et cavaré en esta su cueva, et quiça sabré algo de su fazienda [*Calila*, 213]
Si tanto la salud de Laureola queréys y tanto su bondad alabáys, dad **vn testigo de su inocencia** como ay tres a su cargo, y será perdonada con razón y alauada con verdad [*Cárcel*, 151, 1280]

8.1.2 Opaque Contexts

As explained section 3.3, there are a number of contexts in which the presupposition of existence is suspended, leading to the non-specific interpretation of indefinites. Apart from the future, subjunctive and imperative, which I have already exemplified, opacity arises in hypothetical (6a) and habitual environments (6b), intensional verbs (6c), questions (6d), comparisons (6e), conditionals (6f) and negation (6g), and in all of them *un* is documented from early times. Some examples are given below:⁵

⁵In the corpus, there is a relatively low number of cases in which *un* is under the scope of negation, which might be motivated by the existence of the negative existential form *ninguno*

- (6) a. Et dixo Mahomath el sobredicho, que, qui la engastonare en aniello, et la pusiere en un uaso, o en **un bacin muy equal**, et lleno de uinagre, et firiere poco el aniello començara la piedra a bollir et de mouerse, et yr sa yendo en des uimdo fata que llegue al suelo [*Lapidario*, 891]
- b. estar yo estudiando y pelear dos criadas y venirme a constituir juez de su pendencia; estar yo escribiendo y venir **una amiga** a visitarme, haciéndome muy mala obra con muy buena voluntad, donde es preciso no sólo admitir el embarazo, pero quedar agradecida del perjuicio [*Respuesta*, 451]
- c. Discurrió luego en abrir algún resquicio por donde pudiesse entrar **un rayo de luz, una vislumbre de verdad** [*Criticón*, 655]
- d. A vista del elevado ingenio del autor aun los muy gigantes parecen enanos. ¿Pues qué hará **una pobre mujer**? Aunque ya se vio que una quitó la clava de las manos de Alcides, siendo uno de los tres imposibles que veneró la antigüedad [*Carta*, 434]
- e. Compré una carreta y dos caballos cerrados de edad y abiertos de espinazo, con más faltas que **un juego de pelota**, pero animales quietos y sosegados y que siempre buscaban su comodidad [*Estebanillo*, 2, 36]
- f. Si algún omne pusiere **una uinna** en tierra agena, quier defendiéndogelo el sennor quier no, pierda la uinna el que la puso et sea del sennor de la heredat [*Fuero*, 66]
- g. No se oía **un sí** ni **un no** entre ellos; en nada se contradexían, aunque dixeran la mayor paradoxa, ni porfiaban [*Criticón*, 662]

8.1.3 Descriptive Content of the NP

The descriptive content of the NP has often been identified as a relevant factor in the interpretation of indefinites. Recall that in epistemic terms, an indefinite is specific if by uttering it the speaker intends to refer to a particular entity. When a speaker is prepared to offer a detailed description of the referent, the chances are he has a certain entity in mind, as indeed is the case in the following set of

(< NEC + ŪNUS). In the corpus, I have registered 234 instances of Det *ningún*. This topic is, however, outside of the scope of this research. For a diachronic account of *ningun(o)* see Barra (1992), Eberenz (2000) and Camús (2009b).

examples, all with specific interpretation:

- (7) Et estando el cuervo un día en aquel árbol, vio venir **un omne muy feo et de mala catadura et muy despojado**, et traía al cuello una red et en la mano lazos et varas, et asomava faza el árbol [*Calila*, 203]
 Et avía **un árbol grande de muchas ramas et muy espesas**, et avía un nido de un cuervo que dezían Geba [*Calila*, 203]
 presento antel dicho ujcaro & fizo leer por mi, el dicho notario, **vna bulla del nuestro muy santo padre & papa Nicolao, de gracia por el fecha & dada ala dicha orden & monasterio de santa Maria del Parral & prior & frayres del**, escripta en pergamino de cuero, & **sellada con su sello de plomo pendiente en filos de seda a colores** [DLE15, 246. 329]
 vi salir a mi encuentro, por entre vnos robredales do mi camino se hazia **vn cauallero assí feroz de presencia, como espantoso de vista, cubierto todo de cabello a manera de saluaie** [*Cárcel*, 87, 4]

However, in the cases above the number of adjectives in the NP is not the determining factor for achieving a specific interpretation. Rather, in all cases specificity derives from the factual modality, which ensures the implication of existence. In fact, it is perfectly possible to find non-specific indefinites whose NP is rich in descriptive content, as in (8a), although the opposite scenario (*un*+ N) represented in (8b) is more frequent:

- (8) a. Et quisiemos et toviemos por bien de atraer en él **un capítulo de arávido en el que se mostrase un escolar discípulo en la fazienda de este libro**, et es este el capítulo [*Calila*, 98]
 b. Y diciendole que iba a llamar para que le confesara, la respondio: “sube, chuparé **un cigarro** y bajaré a confesarte [*DLNE*, 155, 397]

In sum, although the descriptive content does not determine *per se* the interpretation of the indefinite, at least in my corpus there is a tendency for specifics to be more accurately described than non-specifics.

8.1.4 *Cierto*

The appearance of *certain* in English and other languages with similar adjectives has long been considered one of the most reliable proofs of specificity, regardless of whether it appears alone or in combination with an indefinite article, as in *a certain*. In Spanish too, *cierto* is said to be an unequivocal mark of specificity. For instance, Gutiérrez-Rexach (2003: 242) has said that

[l]os adjetivos *cierto* y *determinado* pueden actuar como adjetivos en SSDD plenos no encabezados por determinantes patentes. Esta vacilación no incide en la posibilidad de obtener lecturas específicas.⁶

Not all cases of *cierto* are the same. Following Eguren & Sánchez (2007), we can identify three main types of *cierto*. Its original use is that of a qualifying adjective with the meaning of ‘true’, ‘sure’. This variant is well documented throughout my corpus, as can be seen in (9):

- (9) Et después que esto supiere de **cierto**, meta en cada un fecho et en cada un ofiçio aquel que entendiere que lo fará mejor, et así será seguro de non resçibir pesar en aquel fecho [*Calila*, 182]
 Celestina: El **cierto** amigo en la cosa incierta se conosce; en las adversidades se prueba; entonces se allega y con más desseo visita la casa que la fortuna próspera desamparó [*Celestina*, 194]
 I **cierto** assi es que no sola mente los enemigos de nuestra fe que tienen ia necesidad de saber el lenguaje castellano: mas los vizcainos. navarros. franceses. italianos. & todos los otros que tienen algun trato & conversacion en españa [*Gramática*, 109]
 El conde de Cabra, que estua en la villa de Baena, escriuió al Rey e a la Reyna que tenía aviso **cierto** que en la villa de Moclín no avía tanta gente para defender, & que avía buena disposiçión para la çercar [*Reyes*, 192]

⁶A very different view is presented in Eguren & Sánchez (2007) who, distinguish three types of *cierto*: adjective (*eso no es cierto*), indefinite determiner (*cierto político es un ladrón*), and intensional predicate (*se requiere una cierta cantidad de dinero*). The authors argue that while *cierto* as a determiner is always specific, when it functions as a prenominal predicate it has a non-specific interpretation, although they recognize that there are cases of specific *un cierto* (*un cierto pecado de nuestra educación es ese*). These are, according to them, traces from an older language state in which the sequence *un cierto* was specific, as in fact is the case in all the examples of my corpus.

Cierto is also found from the earliest documents as a mark of specificity both with singular (10a) and plural NPs (10b). In this role, *cierto* alternates with other adjectives, such as *determinado* (10c), which also convey a specific interpretation.⁷

- (10) a. Los regidores de la cibdad de Guadalajara fazemos saber a vós, Ruy Gómez de Toledo, que ante nós pareció Miguel de los Santos, vecino de Centenera, e se nos quexó por una petición que ante nos presentó de **cierto agravio** e fuerça que diz que le fazedes sobre la razón de un majuelo que le distes a medias, según más largamente la dicha su petición contiene [*THE*, 213]
- La .b. ante la la .c. en ninguna manera se sufre. ante la .d. ponese en algunas diciones peregrinas como bdelium que es **cierto arbol** & genero de goma. abdera que es ciudad de tracia [*Gramática*, 115]
- Murió mi madre de **cierto antojo** de hongos, estando preñada de mi padre, según ella decía [*Estebanillo*, 1, 39]
- b. el caudillo de Baça aconpañado de **çiertos caualleros moros**, se juntarron en el lugar acordado, a vista del real & de la çibdat [*Reyes*, 420]
- iba en ella un judío de Venecia, un esmaechazo milanés que salía a cumplir diez años de destierro, una dama siciliana que por ser antigua en aquella milicia iba a ser bisoña en la de Liorna, un fraile catalán que iba a Roma a absolverse de **ciertas culpas** [*Estebanillo*, 2, 251]
- c. Yo, en este íterin, en extremo alegre y dándole a Dios gracias repetidas por haberme concedido ver lo que sucede en **un determinado lugar** tan de tarde en tarde y de que hay en los libros tan pocas observaciones, que estuve con mi cuadrante y anteojo de larga vista contemplando al sol [*Alboroto*, 108]

Additionally, in the corpus I have also found five instances of *un cierto*, always specific, some of which are presented below in (11). Interestingly, all the cases are from *Criticón*, which is one of the latest texts in the corpus. Eguren & Sánchez (2007), however, present some earlier examples, mostly from the sixteenth century onwards, and one very early case from 1396, which I reproduce in (12):

⁷See section 5.2 for the use of Latin CERTUS and its descendants in Romance. For an account of the diachronic evolution of *cierto* in Spanish see also Eguren & Sánchez (2007).

- (11) Passaba **un cierto personaje** muy a lo estirado, echando piernas que no tenía. Púsosele a mirar uno de aquellos legañosos lince y reparó en que no llevaba criado, y con linda chança dixo [*Criticón*, 549]
 —Pues, ¿qué tiene que lo valga? [i.e. el cuervo] ¿Lo negro, lo feo, lo ofensivo de su voz, lo desazonado de sus carnes, lo inutil para todo? ¿Qué tiene de bueno? —¡Oh, sí, **una cierta ventaja que empareja todo esso**. —¿Cuál es, que yo no topo con ella? —¿Parécete que es niñería aquello de vivir trescientos años, y aún aún? [*Criticón*, 793]
 Abriéronse las inmortales puertas para que entrasse **un cierto héroe**, un primer ministro que en su tiempo no sólo no fue aplaudido, pero positivamente odiado [*Criticón*, 810]
 Llegaron, pues, a **un cierto escritor más celebrador que célebre**, y preguntáronle si era de aquel general las alabanças que en tal libro, a tantas hojas, había escrito, respondió [*Criticón*, 809]
- (12) las aves que nos clamamos grius, los quales se toman en **un cierto tiempo del Anyo** [J. Fernández de Heredia, *Libro de Marco Polo*]

As for the frequency of *un cierto*, a search in CORDE yields the following results: with one exception presented in (13a), there are no cases before the beginning of the fifteenth century, when six cases of *un cierto* and six of *una cierta* are found. The frequency raises dramatically for the following century: there are 336 cases of *un cierto*, 280 cases of *una cierta*, 9 cases of *unos ciertos* and 10 cases of *unas ciertas*. Finally, in the seventeenth century there are 210 cases of *un cierto*, 152 of *una cierta*; 5 cases of *unos ciertos*; and 4 cases of *unas ciertas*. In (13b), I present some plural forms from CORDE, as in my corpus there are no cases of *unos ciertos*.

- (13) a. entregaríades en el thesoro IIII mil morauedís de la moneda pequenna de la guerra por estos mill morauedís de la bona moneda fata **un cierto plazo** e so certa penna [Carta de otorgamiento, *Documentos de la catedral de León*, 1284, CORDE]
- b. Homero escribe que el sabio Ulises, vuelto a su casa, mató ciertas criadas por haberlas hallado con **unos ciertos hombres**, a causa que

no sólo habían hecho vergüenza a la casa, mas aun puesto la honra de su mujer en el peso de las lenguas [Juan Justiniano, *Instrucción de la mujer cristiana*, de J.L. Vives, 307, CORDE]

Confírmase esto con algunos indicios algo aparentes, y el primero, que por acá tenemos dos villas del mismo nombre que allá tuvieron **unas ciertas comarcas** en la Etolia, de donde salieron estas dichas naciones pelasgas, que, como es muy ordinario, si por acá poblaron algo, es de creer que sería haciendo memoria de las tierras de donde salieron [Andrés de Poza, *De la antigua lengua, poblaciones y comarcas de las Españas*, 51r, CORDE]

Halláronse ensartados muchos ostiones secos, y en algunos al comer se toparon menudas perlas y se vieron **unos ciertos pelos blancos**, que parecían de animal [*Historia del descubrimiento de las regiones australes hecho por el general Pedro Fernández de Quirós*, 271, CORDE]

In sum, it seems clear that the sharpest increase in frequency of *un cierto* occurred in the sixteenth century, which explains why in my corpus there are no cases before the seventeenth century.

To conclude this section, I would like to make a brief comment about the relation between *cierto* and *un*. As stated in chapter 4, ever since Nebrija, there has been a well-rooted idea that *cierto* and *un* are synonymous expressions. Recall for instance the statement of Nebrija (1992 [1492]: 235-37) who, when explaining the use of *unos* distinguishes between *pluralia tantum* and those which can be paraphrased with *ciertos*.

Later, Alonso (1951 [1933]) in his famous paper against the ‘article status’ of *un* claims that *un* and *cierto* are in some contexts synonyms. This position is also adopted by Alarcos (1999 [1968]: 283), for whom *un* is a class II adjective, like *cierto* and *algún*.⁸

However, we have seen in this section that there are deep semantic differences between *un* and *cierto*, for while *un* is (and always has been) ambiguous with

⁸See section 4.2.3.

respect to specificity, *cierto*, at least as a determiner, is inherently specific.

Moreover, as Eguren & Sánchez (2007) have shown that in Modern Spanish *cierto* is distinguished from other indefinites in that it conveys a sense of imprecision, which can be traced right from the sixteenth century, where it is commonly found in the chronicles of the New World (14). It is precisely this imprecision nuance which makes *cierto* a useful resource in the writing of these men attempting to describe things that they had never seen before. Taking this into account, we must reject Alonso's and Alarcos's claims that *un* and *cierto* are synonymous.

- (14) Comían **unas ciertas tortillas** hechas de las maçorcas tiernas del maíz, que se llama elotlaxcalli o xantlaxcalli; otra manera de tortillas, hechas de las maçorquillas nuevas de maíz, que se dize xilotlaxcalli. Otra manera de tamales comían hechos de bledos, que se llama oauhquiltamalli, etc. [CORDE, Fray Bernardino de Sahagún, Historia general de las cosas de Nueva España, 581]

8.1.5 Prenominal Adjectives

In Spanish, the position of the adjective with respect to the noun has been linked to the notion of specificity (Bosque 1996b & 1999b, Picallo, 1994).⁹ In contrast to English, where their position is fixed, in Spanish, evaluative adjectives can appear both before and after the noun, as shown in (15):¹⁰

⁹Picallo's paper is about Catalan, but most of her claims are, as Bosque shows, also relevant to Spanish.

¹⁰Following Picallo (1994), we can divide qualificative adjectives in two classes: **evaluative**, that is, those asserting evaluative properties (such as intelligent, beautiful, and so on), and **physical**, that is, those which designate external qualities such as colour, form, etc. Physical adjectives can only appear postnominally, as shown below.

el coche rojo / *el rojo coche

On the other hand, the position of intensional adjectives such as *posible*, and those which Bosque (1999b: 199) calls 'adverbiales circunstanciales' such as *futuro* and *lento* has no impact on the specific/non-specific interpretation of indefinites. Actually, in habitual contexts they appear, as a rule, prenominally, as can be seen in the following example:

Un presunto ratero siempre provoca miedo
 ??**Un ratero presunto** siempre provoca miedo.

- (15) Un libro **interesante** / Un **interesante** libro.

While postnominal adjectives are neutral with respect to specificity, prenominal adjectives force a specific interpretation. Consequently, in the following example taken from Bosque (1999: ex. 92), where the habitual context imposes a non-specific interpretation, only the postnominal adjective is licensed (16a). Furthermore, prenominal adjectives are ungrammatical in contexts that systematically block specific indefinites, such as donkey sentences (16b) (Gutiérrez Rexach 2003: 244, ex. 41 & 42).¹¹

- (16) a. ??Un **complicado artículo** te suele llevar horas de lectura / Un **artículo complicado** te suele llevar horas de lectura.
 b. Si un granjero tiene **un burro valioso**, no lo azota.
 * Si un granjero tiene **un valioso burro**, no lo azota.

As for my corpus, the number of cases where evaluative adjectives appear preminally is rather small. In (17) I reproduce two examples, both with specific interpretation. It must be said that, given that none of them occurs in an opaque context, we cannot say if, as occurs in Modern Spanish, prenominal adjectives can be employed as a tool to disambiguate the interpretation on *un*. Nonetheless, the fact that there are no cases of prenominal evaluative adjectives in non-specific indefinite NPs suggests that, as proposed by Picallo (1994) and Bosque (1996b, 1999b), this position was already linked to specific interpretations.

- (17) Salían della diuersos rayos de fuego, que leuaua encendido el cuerpo de vn onbre quel cauallero forciblemente leuaua tras sí, el qual con **vn lastimado gemido**, de rato en rato dezía [*Cárcel*, 87, 50]
 y, después de haberme mandado dar una ayuda de costa y **un imperial pasaporte**, me honró la Emperatriz con una carta para el Católico y poderoso Rey de España, su hermano y mi señor [*Estebanillo*, 2, 241]

¹¹Donkey sentences are sentences with an indefinite NP within a conditional or relative clause and a pronoun outside this clause that is anaphorically related to the indefinite (Heim 1988: 44).

On the other hand, it is well known that in Spanish as in other Romance languages, there is a group of adjectives whose meaning depends on their position. The peculiar character of these adjectives lies in that when used prenominal, they intensify, positively or negatively, the properties of the noun, as in the following set of examples taken from Bosque (1999b: 199, ex. 98):

- (18) a. Una verdadera alegría [=gran] / Una alegría verdadera [=cierta]
 b. Buen amigo[=gran] / Amigo bueno [=bondadoso]
 c. Gran jefe [=con grandeza] / Jefe grande [de tamaño]
 d. Nuevo libro [= recién aparecido] / Libro nuevo [=apenas usado]
 e. Pobre hombre [=miserable] / Hombre pobre [=sin recursos]
 f. Viejo profesor [antiguo en la profesión] / Profesor viejo [=anciano]
 g. Rara cualidad [= no frecuente] / Cualidad rara [=extravagante]

With respect to their effect on specificity, these adjectives act differently from evaluative ones, since in contrast with the latter, they do not force specificity when they appear before the noun. Note that in (19a) the indefinite in the habitual environment is non-specific even though the adjective precedes the noun, and in (19b) the relative clause in the subjunctive marks non-specificity, even if *buena* is prenominal.

- (19) a. **Un buen amigo** no te abandona cuando más lo necesitas
 b. Recomiéndame **una buena novela** que no tenga más de 200 páginas.

The behaviour of these adjectives with respect to specificity described for Modern Spanish is also observable in the corpus. As I show in the examples below, the prenominal position of such adjectives is not relevant in terms of specificity. In fact, *gran* and *buen* are by far the most common adjectives placed prenominal, and they appear equally in specific (20a) and non-specific NPs (20b).¹²

¹²In contrast with Bosque's claim, in the example (20a), prenominal *gran* (*gran ruzio*) refers to size (big), not grandeur.

- (20) a. Et començaron a dar saltos por la mar a derredor de la naue, e echauan por las narizes **un grant ruzio de agua** [*GEII*, 1, 181, 14b]
 Vendí mi pan, compré dos frascos de aguardiente, hice mi barraca, y para comprar ollas, sartenes, calderos, potes y tazas y tener qué dar de comer y beber, embauqué a todo el regimiento sin quedar soladado a quien no pidiese prestado; y como muchos pocos hacen un mucho junté **una buena cantidad, con la cual me volví a armar de nuevo** [*Estebanillo*, 2, 34]
- b. Para la muerte que a Dios devo, más quisiera **una gran bofetada** en mitad de mi cara; parece que ayer nascí según tu encobrimiento; por hazerte a ti honesta me hazer a mí necia y vergonçosa y de poco secreto y sin esperiencia y me amenguas en mi officio por alçar a ti en el tuyo [*Celestina*, 208]
 Dexemos cuydados ajenos y acostémonos, que es hora. Que más me engordará **un buen sueño sin temor** que quanto tesoro ay en venecia [*Celestina*, 211]

In sum, in my corpus, there seems to be a correlation between prenominal evaluative adjectives and specificity. Additionally, the placing of adjectives such as *gran* and *buen* has been, since medieval times, irrelevant in terms of specificity. However, given that in my corpus the presence of prenominal adjectives is rather small, these results are far from being conclusive.

8.1.6 Relative Clauses

In her paper ‘Referential Properties of Spanish NPs’, Rivero (1975) proposed that Donnellan’s (1966) distinction between referential and attributive uses was marked in Spanish by the distinction between indicative and subjunctive. Since then, the subject has been treated on numerous occasions and it is now commonly recognized that the mood in restrictive relative clauses is related to the interpretation of an indefinite NP: the indicative mood tends to mark specific interpretations, while the subjunctive tends to mark non-specific ones (see Leonetti 1990, 1999;

Pérez Saldaña 1999; Rivero 1975).¹³

As Penny (2002: 170) explains, the contrast between indicative and subjunctive in Spanish reproduces the Latin system in which mood in relative clauses was already linked to the interpretation of the referent in terms of specificity. Such contrast is patent in the corpus. In the case of specific *un*, out of the 693 total number of examples, 202 have a relative clause in the indicative, as in (21a). There is, however, one case in which the mood of the relative clause looks like a subjunctive and nonetheless the interpretation is specific (21b).

- (21) a. e arribaron en Africa en **vn puerto que es açerca de la çibdat de Cartago**, e salieron a tierra, e folgaron todo aquel dia [*GEII*, 2, 170, 40b]
 Después de hecha la guerra del año pasado, viniendo a tener el inuierno a mi pobre reposo, passanndo vna mañana quando ya el sol queria esclarecer la tierra, por **vnos valles hondos y escuros que se hazen en la Sierra Morena** [*Cárcel*, 87, 4]
- b. En aquella çibdat de Cartago auie **vn grant tenplo que fiziera fazer la reyna Dido a onrra dEscolapio quando poblara la çibdat** [*GEII*, 2, 171, 8b]

It must be kept in mind that the interpretation of *-ra* forms (< Latin pluperfect indicative), has suffered serious alterations in the history of the Spanish Language, which had taken it from having a pluperfect indicative value, in accordance to the Latin form, to acquiring a conditional value, and finally becoming an equivalent to the imperfect subjunctive *-se* forms (Penny, 2002: 204). However, in Medieval Spanish, *-ra* was still in the first stage of its evolution, where it preserved its pluperfect indicative value, whence the specific interpretation of (21b). Thus, in the example above, the verb of the relative clause is not a subjunctive. On the contrary, it is equivalent to a pluperfect indicative (i.e. *había hecho*).¹⁴

¹³For a critic view of Rivero's claim, see Rojas (1977).

¹⁴As Penny (2002: 204) explains '[a]lthough pluperfect *cantara* was almost completely displaced by *había cantado* in the early Golden Age, the *-ra* forms have preserved down to the

The effect of mood in the interpretation of the referent is best perceived in sentences containing opacity. In (22) I give some examples of such contexts: while in (22a) the indicative mood forces a specific interpretation, the subjunctive in (22b) forces a non-specific one.

- (22) a. Melibea: Lucrecia, amiga mía, muy alto es esto; ya me pesa por dexar la compañía de mi padre; baxa a él y dile que se pare al pie desta torre, que le quiero dezir **una palabra** que se me olvidó **que hablasse a mi madre** [*Celestina*, 331]
 le fue dicho que dicha doña Maria de Chaves que lo llamaban para que castigase a **una mulata llamada Maria Vaca que por mal nombre llamaban la Sunsa**, porque a un enfermo llamado don Juan de Chaves le avia llebado en una olla de agua cosida con yerbas, que despues de averla bebido desia el enfermo que se le avia serado la garganta [*DLNE*, 132, 352]
 el inquisidor lizenziado don Juan de Armesto mandó entrar en ella **un religioso que viene llamado**, del qual, estando presente, fue resibido juramento en forma de derecho, y so cargo dél, prometio de dezir verdad e guardar secreto en todo lo que dijere y fuere preguntado [*DLNE*, 156, 400]
- b. si ya no es que soñase como Hécuba, reina de Troya, que de su vientre había de salir **una llama que fuese voraz incendio de Galicia**; & prometemos por firme stipulacion por mantener aquella capiella arecha & conplida en su estado, con todas las cosas que y son dadas, & de cabtener y **una lanpada que arda cada noch** en la capiella sobredicha [*DLE13*, 105, 40]

Finally, the contrast between indicative and subjunctive in restrictive relative clauses is irrelevant in generic contexts and comparisons, as can be seen in the following examples, where the indicative in the original (23a) could be substituted by the subjunctive (23b) without any effect on the interpretation of the indefinite (Leonetti, 1999: 865-6). However, it must be pointed out that the indicative, particularly in the present tense, is by far the preferred mood in generic contexts, present a vestige of their former use, limited to relative clauses and only in literary registers.

due to its atemporal interpretation.

- (23) a. El **omne que a si mesmo da lugar** onestamente sirue [*Proverbios*, I, 8]
 commo **omne que se desespera de su vida** [*Proverbios*, 1, 6]
 b. El **omne que a si mesmo de lugar** onestamente sirue [*Proverbios*, I, 8]
 commo **omne que se desespere de su vida** [*Proverbios*, 1, 6]

8.1.7 Differential Object Marking

Differential Object Marking (from now on DOM) refers to the phenomenon attested in several languages whereby direct objects are morphosyntactically marked depending on a semantic feature. Indeed, in Modern Spanish, direct objects are introduced by the preposition *a* when the referent of the NP is human, as can be seen in example (24), taken from Laca (2006: 430, ex.11):¹⁵

- (24) a. te vio **a ti** / *te vio **ti**
 b. ¿A quien vio María? / *¿Quien vió **María**?
 c. Aquella mujer, **a quien** nunca había visto antes / * Aquella mujer, **a quien** nunca había visto antes
 d. Vio **a alguien** / *Vio **alguien**
 e. *No vio **a nadie** / *No vio **nadie**
 f. Vio **a María** / *Vio **María**

As Laca (2006) explains, DOM is found with human direct objects from the earliest documents, as shown by the following example from the *Cid*.

- (25) Minaya **a doña Ximena** & **a sus fijas** que ha, / E **alas otras dueñas que las siruen delant**, / El bueno de Minaya pensolas de adobar / Delos mejores guarnimientos que en Burgos pudo falar [*Cid*, 1424-1427]

¹⁵For an analysis of Spanish DOM see Laca (2006) and Leonetti (2004). This section is mainly based on Laca as she offers a complete diachronic treatment of the subject. However, both studies arrive at the same conclusion with respect to the DOM and specificity.

The origin of DOM in Spanish has been discussed from various perspectives. Following Laca (2002), we can distinguish three basic hypotheses. These are:

1. *Differentiation from the subject.*

According to Müller (1971) DOM is the result of a strategy whose goal is to avoid confusion between the subject and the DO, caused by the loss of the Latin case system. Given that animacy and definiteness are features prototypically associated with subjects, DOM would serve to mark those objects which are atypical with respect to animacy.

As Laca points out, although this approach accounts for the typological observation according to which DOM is governed by animacy and definiteness, it is unable to explain why DOM in Romance was first observed and most generalized with tonic personal pronouns, where the distinction between nominative and accusative is maintained.

2. *Analogy with the Dative.*

For Meyer-Lübke (1923 [1890-1906], III), the insertion of *a* before the DO stems from a process of analogy with the indirect object. Interestingly, as reported by Laca (2006), the formal identity between IO and DO introduced by *a* goes hand in hand with a merging of syntactic function, which in certain sentences with coordinated verbs, allows one NP to be the DO of one verb and the IO of another, as in (26).¹⁶

- (26) que tú volverás, como dices a **buscar**, a **ver** y **hablar a mi señora**, de cuya discreción y cortesía espero más que milagrosos favores [Quijote, 731, *apud* Laca 2006: ex. 8b]

On the other hand, in late Latin there are a number of cases where the

¹⁶The neutralization of the dative/accusative distinction is attested in a number of grammatical facts, including the unstressed pronominal forms for 1st and 2nd person, for which there is only one form, namely *me* and *te*, *nos* and (*v*)*os*.

verb oscillates between accusative and dative objects, particularly in the *acusativus cum infinitivo* constructions dependent on a main verb of causation and perception, as shown in the following examples, both taken from Müller (1971, *apud* Laca 2006: ex. 9):

- (27) a. *ecclesias [...] quod nos consecrare iussimus uel restaurare ad pontifice* [*Glossarium Mediae Latinitatis Cataloniae*, 989]
 b. *testificat Duran Raimo de Castro Mero de illo directum quod Durandus uiditprehendere ad Regimudo comite in Valle Senguiz* [*Glossarium Mediae Latinitatis Cataloniae*, ca. 1044]

There is also a correlation between DOM and the existence of verbs such as *auxiliare* and *servire*, which passed from requiring a dative object to requiring an accusative one in late Latin. Apparently, these kinds of verbs were a major factor in the dissemination of DOM by the thirteenth century.

3. *Topical Status.*

The third hypothesis about the origin of Spanish DOM considers the presence of *a* as a strategy for highlighting the DO, when its referent is an important or topical entity. An argument in favour of this claim is the fact that DOM is generalized in sentences with topic dislocation, whose function is precisely to mark the prominence of referent.

- (28) *Assi las escarniremos alas fijas de Campeador* [Cid, 2555]
A las sus fijas enbraço las prendia [Cid, 275]

According to Laca (2006), although it is difficult to elucidate which of the factors just mentioned played a larger role in the development of DOM, it seems clear that its evolution in Spanish reflects what is predicted by the animacy and definiteness scales proposed by Aissen (2000).¹⁷

¹⁷The version of the Aissen scale presented here has been slightly modified by Laca (2006).

Animacy: Human > Animate > Inanimate

Definiteness: Personal pronoun > Proper name > Definite || Universal > Indefinite existential || Bare nouns

As for indefinites, DOM has been considered on numerous occasions as an indicator of specificity. Recall for instance, that in the notion of partitive specificity, Enç (1991) proposed that only specific objects were marked with accusative case (section 3.3). This idea is allegedly supported by cases like (29) where in a classically opaque context involving an intensional verb, the DOM forces a specific reading.

- (29) Necesito **a un abogado** [specific]
Necesito **un abogado** [-specific]

However, at least in my dialect, a sentence such as (30) is perfectly acceptable, even if the relative clause in subjunctive forces a non-specific interpretation. The variant without the DOM is naturally also acceptable.

- (30) Estoy buscando **a un abogado que sea capaz de ganar este caso.**
Estoy buscando **un abogado que sea capaz de ganar este caso.**

This observation, together with the fact that the preposition *a* is obligatory in (31a) before the human indefinite pronouns *alguien* and *nadie*, give the lie to the hypothesis according to which DOM is determined by specificity. Rather, what seems to be behind the use of *a* in all these cases is that the referent of the indefinite is human (Leonetti, 2004: 82).¹⁸

- (31) a. Está buscando **a alguien.**

¹⁸The presence and absence of *a* may in some cases be accompanied by a difference in the interpretation of the sentence. As Leonetti (2004: 89-90, ex. 18) explains, in the following pair of examples, (a) is better translated as 'she was portraying a girl', while the most probable interpretation of (b) is 'she was drawing a girl'.

a. (ella) Estaba dibujando a una niña:
b. (ella) Estaba dibujando una niña.

- b. No está buscando a **nadie**.

Going back to the diachronic development of DOM, Laca (2006) argues that the marking of human indefinite objects is extremely rare before the sixteenth century. In *El Lazarillo de Tormes*, she reports one case with *a*, from a total sample of six, and in the *DLNE* corresponding to the sixteenth century, only six out of 53 cases are preceded by the preposition. Finally, the frequency of *a* before indefinites increases notably between the seventeenth and eighteenth century.¹⁹

Interestingly, this author suggests that while in Medieval and Golden-Age Spanish DOM was indeed linked to specificity, from the eighteenth century onwards, the absence of *a* blocks the specific interpretation, but its presence no longer warrants that the indefinite is specific. In other words, there is an inversion of the marking in terms of specificity.

Let us now turn to our corpus. I have counted 84 cases of [+Anim] DO, of which 67 are also [+Hum]. A first observation is that none of the 17 cases of [+Anim -Hum] is marked with *a*, which corroborates the view that the feature [+Hum] is indeed a relevant factor for DOM.

Of the 67 [+Hum] cases, 28 are preceded by *a*. From a diachronic perspective, I have the following results. In the first period analysed, there is only one case of DOM (out of 7 of [+Hum] DO), found in *Calila*. As shown in (32), the indefinite occurs in an opaque context motivated by the intensional verb and reinforced by the futurity adverb *cras* ‘tomorrow’. Nonetheless, in the text it is evident that it has a specific interpretation: the indefinite refers to the guest.²⁰

- (32) Dixo el huésped: -Posé una vez con un onbre en una çibdar, et cenávamos amos et feziéronme una cama. Et fuese el onbre a yazer con su muger, et avía entre nos un seto de cañas. Et oí dezir al omne que dixo a su muger:

¹⁹These results include all indefinite determiners, and not just the indefinite article. The specific frequencies for *un* are not given, except for the *Quijote*, where 15 of the 21 are marked.

²⁰It is worth noting that in the edition of Allen (1906) there is no DOM: conbidar **una conpañã** que yante comjgo [*Calila*, 85, 205]. Lacarra & Bleca do not report variants.

-Yo quiero cras conbidar a **una conpañã** que yante conmigo [*Calila*, 211]

In the second period, there is also only one case found, in *Cárcel*, and once more it is interpreted as specific (33). Finally, in the third period, out of the 43 [+Hum] cases, 26 are marked, which corresponds to 60.46%. Again, all of them are specific. In (34) I present some examples:

(33) Mandó a **vn capitán suyo** con cient onmbres darmas [*Cárcel*, 162, 1479]

(34) conbidó la madre de la despossada a **una señora llamada Maria de Medina, que viven en la calle de la Mersed**, en casa de Nicolas de los Reyes [*DLNE*, 137, 362]

Mas quiso mi fortuna que estando una noche los dos cenando y algo tristes y recelosos (porque uno de los perdidosos le había ganado el italiano), me enviaron a llamar a **unos amigos suyos**, para que se informasen si los había reconocido o sospechado algo [*Estebanillo*, 1, 158]

cayó una en el suelo, y después de muy bien pisada, la levantaron casi sin respiración, como dicen unos, o que persuadieron a **una vieja que allí estaba el que se fingiese muerta**, como afirman otros [*Alboroto*, 121]

Prosiguiendo la narración de mi inclinación, de que os quiero dar entera noticia, digo que no había cumplido los tres años de mi edad cuando enviando mi madre a **una hermana mía**, mayor que yo, a que se enseñase a leer en una de las que llaman Amigas, me llevó a mí tras ella el cariño y la travesura [*Respuesta*, 445]

Additionally, an interesting set of examples is found in Sor Juana's *Respuesta*:

(35) Veo **una Pola Argentaria**, que ayudó a Lucano, su marido, a escribir la gran Batalla Farsálica [...] Veo a **una Cenobia**, reina de los Palmirenos, tan sabia como valerosa. **A una Arete**, hija de Aristipo, doctísima. **A una Nicostrata**, inventora de las letras latinas y eruditísima en las griegas. **A una Aspasia Milesia** que enseñó filosofía y retórica y fue maestra del filósofo Pericles. **A una Hipasia** que enseñó astrología y leyó mucho tiempo en Alejandría. **A una Leoncia**, griega, que escribió contra el filósofo Teofrasto y le convenció. **A una Jucia, a una Corina, a una Cornelia** [*Respuesta*, 461]

Recall that in Aissen's (2000) definiteness scale, proper nouns appear in second place, only after personal pronouns. The use of an indefinite article with proper nouns has been discussed above (section 7.3), but what interests me here is the variation in the use of the preposition: the first case, the proper noun is unmarked while in the following occurrences, it is marked. Aissen's scale predicts that DOM would be used by proper nouns in an early stage, as in fact it did, for already in the *Cid* 96% of these cases are marked. The panorama is different where proper nouns are introduced by the indefinite article, for not only in the seventeenth century, but also in Modern Spanish, DOM is not generalized.²¹ As explained in section 7.3.4, it is not easy to provide a unified account of *un + proper noun*, but as far as I am able to see, at least in example (35) the presence/absence of DOM with proper names is a matter of stylistic variation, which has no effect whatsoever in the interpretation of the referent.

In sum, my results corroborate Laca's (2006) hypothesis that DOM is a marker of specific human indefinites in Medieval and Golden-Age Spanish. As the reader knows, my corpus does not go further, but based on my knowledge of Modern Spanish, where, as demonstrated in examples (30) and (31), DOM is not a reliable test for specificity, the hypothesis of an inversion of marking during the eighteenth and the following centuries seems to be a plausible one. From that moment on, the presence of *a* is largely motivated by the referent being [+Animate] and in particular [+Human].

I conclude this section with an open question related to dialectal variation. According to Laca (2006: 430-1), the acceptability of DOM with inanimate objects increases in the presence of a number of factors such as the lexical class of the verb and the presence of a secondary predication. So, while the examples of (36)

²¹Consider the following example from Google: *yo quiero (a) un Obama*, although here, in contrast with Sor Juana's example, *Obama* is used metaphorically. See section 7.3 for indefinite proper names.

are unacceptable, those in (37) are fine for certain speakers.²²

- (36) a. Cosechó la cebada /* a la cebada.
 b. Fotografió los árboles /?* a los árboles.
 c. El sol iluminaba la sacristía /?* a la sacristía
 d. Abandonaron los barquitos de papel /?* a los barquitos de papel
- (37) a. El girasol supera la cebada en rendimiento /? a la cebada
 b. La tormenta dejó los árboles sin hojas /? a los árboles.
 c. A la sacristía la traspasaba un buen sablazo de sol
 d. Los dejaban abandonados ?(a) los barquitos de papel /? a los barquitos de papel.

As Company (2002 apud Laca 2006) explains, in Mexican Spanish DOM seems to be expanding with inanimate objects. Indeed, as reported by two Mexican informants (whose judgements I fully share), in (37a,c,d) the marking is not only acceptable, but required, while in (37b) both options are accepted but the presence of *a* is slightly preferred.

Recall that in my corpus, only animate (more specifically, human) referents are marked. Now, when we take a closer look into the seventeenth century, we can see that the large majority (23/26) of the cases of DOM occur in Colonial Mexican texts.²³ Moreover, while in *Criticón* and *Estebanillo*, the proportion of marked DO is 16.67 % (1/6) and 20 % (2/5) respectively, in the three Mexican documents the percentages are 66.67% (6/9) for *DLNE*, 60% (3/5) for *Alboroto*, and 77%

²²DOM is more widely generalized with verbs that require human (or animate) participants, such as *saludar*, *insultar*, *castigar*, etc. (Leonetti, 2004: 84). For an analysis of DOM with inanimate objects, see García García (2007). There, the author suggests that the marking of inanimate objects is obligatory in sentences where the DO ‘is not outranked by the subject in terms of agentivity’. In other words, the marking of inanimate objects is more probable when the OD is highly salient. According to him, in these cases there is a symmetrical or reversible relation between subject and object, as for instance, with verbs such as *acompañar* and *sustituir*.

(i) En esta receta, **la leche** puede sustituir **a los huevos**.

²³As I said, in my corpus only humans are marked. However, DOM has been extended to animates in general. For instance, as Laca (2006) explains, the use of *a* with proper names is equally extended with non-human animates as with human referents. Cf. *Quiero mucho a Pedro/ a Job (my dog)*.

(14/18) in Sor Juana's letters. Given that in Mexican Spanish the generalization of DOM seems to be more advanced than in other dialects, can these results be an early sign of its faster rate of spread?²⁴

8.2 Discourse Referents, Anaphora, and Saliency

The relation between specificity and anaphora has been widely discussed since Karttunen's foundational paper 'Discourse referents' (1976). What Karttunen was interested in was to establish how the introduction of new individuals into discourse is coded and stored for future reference, and under what circumstances an indefinite NP introduces a discourse referent.²⁵

Consider (38) and (39), both taken from Karttunen:

- (38) a. Bill has **a car**.
 b. **It** is black.
 c. **The car** is black.
 d. **Bill's car** is black.
- (39) a. Bill doesn't have **a car**.
 b. ***It** is black.
 c. ***The car** is black.
 d. ***Bill's car** is black.

While in (38) it is perfectly appropriate to reintroduce the referent of (38a) by means of a definite expression, in (39) all of these possibilities are excluded. Such contrast is due to the fact that in (38a) the indefinite NP entails the existence of a car, that can therefore be later talked about, while in (39) the indefinite under the scope of negation does not. So, (39b, c, and d) are inappropriate since they

²⁴Given the size of the sample, it is impossible to make any serious claim. However, the effect of dialectal variation in DOM is certainly a topic worth investigating, both synchronically and diachronically.

²⁵As Heim (1988) acknowledges, her File Change Semantics framework owes much to Karttunen, who introduced the analogy between referents in discourse and 'records'.

refer back to a referent which does not actually exist.

As Karttunen (1976:366) explains, an indefinite NP introduces a discourse referent ‘just in case it justifies the occurrence of a correferential pronoun or a definite NP later in the text’. In general terms, one can say that in simple affirmative sentences such as (38), an indefinite NP will always introduce a discourse referent. By contrast, when in the scope of negation (39), modal verbs (40), and non-factive verbs (41), indefinites fail, in general, to establish discourse referents, and thus anaphora is ruled out, as in the examples below.

(40) John wants to catch **a fish**. * Do you see the fish from here?

(41) I doubt that Mary has **a car**. *Bill has seen it.

Stated like this, Karttunen’s discourse referent proposal seems to correspond to the specificity distinction: if an indefinite introduces a discourse referent only when existence is presupposed and therefore it can be further referred to by a definite description, then one can say that an indefinite introduces a discourse referent if and only if it is specific.²⁶

On the other hand, there seems to be agreement that topicality plays a major role in specificity. In his work on topic continuity, Givón (1983) introduces the notion of *persistence*, which measures the number of times that a referent is referred back to in the ten subsequent sentences after a given mention. According to him (1983: 17), the degree of accessibility of the referent in question determines the choice of NP that is used to refer back to it. With this in mind, he proposes the in figure 8.1, where the upper elements are the most accessible ones. Note that only specific indefinites rank in this scale.²⁷

²⁶Recall that in Russell’s (1905) account of definiteness, indefinites did not refer. As stated by Heim (1988: 15), if this was correct, indefinites could not serve as antecedents of anaphoric expressions, given that anaphoric expressions pick up the reference of their antecedents. As Karttunen shows, indefinites do serve as antecedents. This argument is used by Heim (1988) to support her thesis about indefinites as referring expressions.

²⁷A similar account is given in Ariel’s accessibility theory’ (1987). However, she does not

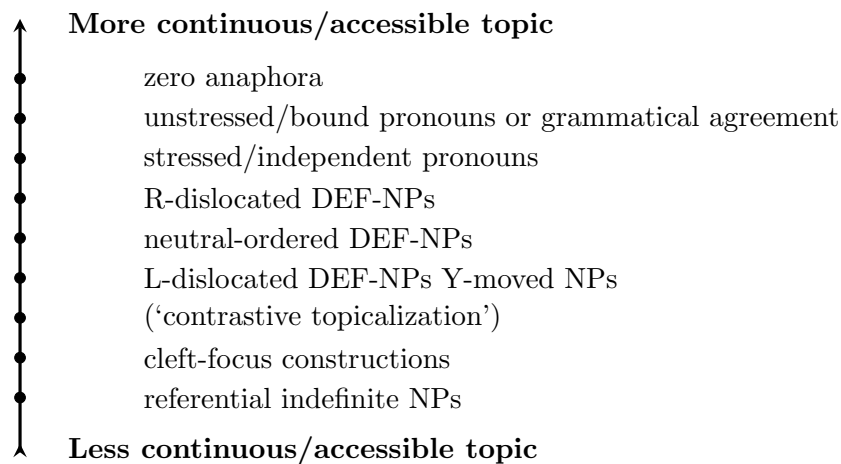


Figure 8.1: Topicality scale (Givón, 1983)

The role of topic saliency in the development of the indefinite article has been put forward by Hopper and Martin (1987) for English and by Stark (2002) for Italian. As explained in section 3.4, in both cases, the authors claim that at early stages *a(n)* and *un* respectively were mainly used to introduce highly salient referents.

In Medieval Spanish as well, *un* introduces highly salient referents, as can be seen in the following text from *Cabala*, where I have marked with indexes all the correferential elements of *un omne* and *un ladrón*.²⁸

- (42) Et esto semeja a lo que dizen que era **un omne muy pobre**^[i], et ninguno de sus^[i] parientes no le^[i] acorrién a le^[i] dar ninguna cosa. Et seyendo^[i] así una noche en su^[i] posada, vio^[i] **un ladrón**^[ii] et dixo^[i] entre sí^[i]: -En verdad, no hay en mi^[i] casa cosa que este ladrón^[ii] tome ni pueda llevar^[ii]; pues ¡Trabájese^[ii] quanto podiere!
- Et buscando^[ii] por casa qué tomase^[ii] vio^[ii] una tinaja en que avía un

include indefinites in her scale, and therefore I will not comment on her proposal. See Leonetti (2004) for a good explanation of topicality and (in)definiteness in Spanish.

²⁸For a very interesting analysis of the persistence of *un* in Medieval Spanish, see Elvira (1994), where the author demonstrates, in contrast to NPs introduced by *un*, BPs show an almost null topic continuity.

poco de trigo. Et dixo entre sí: ¡Por Dios!, non quiero^[ii] que mi^[ii] trabajo vaya de balde.

Et tomó^[ii] una sávana que traía cubierta e tendióla^[ii] en el suelo et vazió^[ii] el trigo que estava en la tinaja en ella para lo levar^[ii]. Et quando el omne^[i] vio que el ladrón^[ii] avía vaziado el trigo en la sávana para se^[ii] ir con ello, él^[i] dixo: -A esta cosa non ay sufrimiento, ca si se me^[i] va este ladrón^[ii] con el trigo, allegárseme^[i] ha mayor pobreza et fambre, que nunca estas dos cosas se allegaron a ome que non le llegasen a punto de muerte.

Et desí dio^[i] bozes al ladrón^[ii], et tomó^[i] una vara que tenía a la cabeçera del lecho, et arremetió^[i] para el ladrón^[ii]. Et el ladrón^[ii], quando lo^[i] vio, començó^[ii] a fuir, et por fuir cayósele^[ii] la sávana en que levava^[ii] el trigo. Et tomo^[i]la el ome, et tornó^[i] el trigo a su^[i] lugar [*Calila*, 96-97]

In the example above, the indefinite NP *un hombre* introduces a highly salient element which remains important throughout a long piece of text.²⁹ As predicted by the Givón scale, the immediate anaphoric references (when the referent is still highly accessible) are made by means of unstressed pronouns and grammatical agreement. Then, once that another salient element has been introduced (*un ladrón*) and given that both referents share the features [+Hum] and [+ Masc], it becomes less accessible and therefore the full NP *el omne* is used to disambiguate the reference.

On the other hand, the plural indefinite article *unos* is also used from early times to introduce salient discourse referents, as in (43) also from *Calila*, where I have also indexed all the correferential elements.

- (43) Et açertóse con **unos sabios**, cuidando que sabía tanto commo ellos^[i], et dixo una palabra en que herró. Et dixo uno de aquellos sabios^[i]: -Tu herraste en que dezías, ca devías dezir así.

Et dixo él: -¿Cómo herré, ca yo he decorado lo que era en una carta?

²⁹In Medieval Spanish it is not rare to find instances of existential *ser* in competition with *haber* which was already well established at the time. This construction is a continuation of the Latin existential construction of ESSE with nominative subject. For an explanation of the rise of existential HABERE in Latin and Romance, see Bourciez (1942: 252ss) and Bello (1988 [1848]: §108). For the specific case of *ser* vs. *haber* in Medieval Spanish, see Herrero Ruiz (2008).

Et ellos^[i] burlaron dél porque non la sabía entender et los sabios^[i] toviéronlo por muy gran neçio [*Calila* 92-93]

Again, once the referent is introduced with the indefinite NP, further mentions are made generally by means of definite NPs. In (43), the indefinite *uno de aquellos sabios* is licensed by its partitive nature: it is the set to which the referent belongs that has been introduced (i.e. what is familiar), not the referent itself.

Indeed, this capacity of the indefinite article to introduce salient referents is already found since the very first Castilian documents. Consider, for instance, the well known lines of the *Poema de Mio Cid* (cf. Lapesa 2000 [1973]):

- (44) **Vna niña de nuef años^[i]** a oio se paraua:
 “Ya Campeador, en buen ora çinxiestes espada!
 El Rey lo ha uedado, anoch del etro su carta,
 Con grant recabdo & fuerte mientre sellada.
 Non uos osariemos^[i] abrir nin coger por nada;
 Si non, perderiemos^[i] los aueres & las casas,
 E demas los oios delas caras.
 Çid, enel nuestro^[i] mal uos non ganades nada;
 Mas el Criador uos uala con todas sus uertudes santas.”
 Esto la niña^[i] dixo & tornos^[i] pora su^[i] casa [*Cid*, 40-49]

However, at least since the thirteenth century, there are plenty of cases where *un* introduces a less salient referent or background information that is never later reintroduced.³⁰ As we saw in the last chapter, already in the earliest period analysed *un* is found in adverbial complements (45). Note that although the referents are not salient they are nonetheless specific, showing that that even if there are close links between them, these notions must be kept apart.

- (45) Et fallan la otrossi en Espanna, en **unos montes que son çerca de Saragoça**, en **un logar que dizen Diche**, et otrossi en el monte que es

³⁰The term *background* is here used as the opposite to *salient*. I say ‘at least since the thirteenth century’ because my corpus only goes back to that point.

cabo Granada aque llaman Soler, en **unas cuevas que y a** [*Lapidario*, 22]

vi salir a mi encuentro, por entre **vnos robredales** do mi camino se hazia vn cauallero assí feroz de presencia, como espantoso de vista, cubierto todo de cabello a manera de saluaie [*Cárcel*, 87, 4]

pero no pudieron resistir que los moros no quitasen gran parte del agua, e lo que dexaron no se podía aver salvo con grand trabajo, porque convenía que peleasen los vnos entretanto que otros cogían agua para ellos e para sus caballos, por **vna mina que salía de la çibdat al río** [*Reyes*, 12]

Dióle a su magestad deseo de ir a caza de las grandes bestias que tienen virtud en la uña del pie izquierdo y, llegando a **un gran bosque**, en muy poco tiempo dio muerte a ocho [*Estebanillo*, 2, 232]

Now, I have said that at first sight Karttunen's account seems to imply that only specific indefinites can introduce discourse referents. However, as the author explains (1976: section 1.3), this is not the case. There are some examples where a non-specific indefinite establishes a temporal discourse referent that might license the appearance of correferential elements within a limited domain, namely, a conjoined complement sentence, as in the cases below. Notice that the second anaphoric expression is not licensed as it occurs outside this limited domain, which in the cases above is sentential:

- (46) You must write **a letter** to your parents and mail **the letter** right away.
 *They are expecting **the letter**.
 John wants to catch **a fish** and eat **it** for supper. *Do you see **the fish**?
 I don't believe that Mary had **a baby** and named **her** Sue. ***The baby** has mumps.

It must be said that the lifespan of temporal discourse referents can be less confined than in the cases above. This is especially so in the case of modals, where a non-specific indefinite can be referred back anaphorically for longer parts of discourse provided that the modality is maintained, as in (47a). Another similar case is found in sentences where a supposition is stated, generally by means of a con-

ditional structure (47b). Finally, a non-specific indefinite can be correferentially linked to other elements if a sentence has an habitual interpretation, as in (47c). Notice that without the adverbs *usually* and *always* the coreference would not be allowed. Again, in all these cases, the non-specific indefinite remains a temporal discourse referent as long as this modality is carried forward.

- (47) a. You must write a letter to your parents.
It has to be sent by airmail.
The letter must get there by tomorrow.
- b. Suppose Mary has **a car**. She takes me to work in **it**. I drive **the car** too.
 If Mary had **a car**, she could take me to work in **it**. I could drive **the car** too.
 I wish Mary had **a car**. She would take me to work in **it**. I could drive **the car** too.
- c. Harvey courts **a girl** at every convention.
She always comes to the banquet with him.
The girl is usually also very pretty.

Given that non-specifics can, under certain conditions, also be anaphorically linked to other members of the discourse, we must reject the idea of anaphora as a reliable diagnosis of specificity. Now, going back to my data, I have shown that specific indefinites are often the initiators of an anaphoric chain, as in the example (42). On the other hand, I have also shown that there are cases in which a clearly specific indefinite is not anaphorically linked to other expressions, as in (45). Now, let us show some examples, where as stated by Karttunen, a non-specific indefinite introduces a temporal discourse referent. It must be said that this type of example is not very frequent in my corpus.³¹

³¹Notice that in the example from *Respuesta* the indefinite is correferential with the pronoun *la*. This is relevant because, in numerous occasions it has been pointed out that pronominal anaphora to specific antecedents is done by *lo*, while non-specific referents need to be retrieved by means of the indefinite pronoun *uno* (Gutiérrez-Rexach, 2003: 239). Examples like this prove that this restriction is not categorical.

- (48) Mas asma de **un omne** que librase a otro de algunt mal o lo escapase de alguna cuita fasta que lo tornase en folgura en que era, si **este** atal deve aver gualardón, segund Dios [*Calila*, 107]
- Si algún omne pusiere **una uinna** en tierra agena, quier defendiéndogelo el sennor quier no, pierda **la uinna** el que la puso et sea del sennor de la heredat [*Fuero*, 464]
- suplicamos a Vuestra Alteza las quiera fazer. [Lo primero, darle] seguro & aparte, pues que lealmete os siruió. Lo segundo, **vna fusta** para que pasen él e todos los que con él están, así los de su casa como sus parientes y parciales; e que puedan vender todas las cosas que touieren de vender por preçio razonable, e lo que llevaren en **la dicha fusta** que sea seguro [*Reyes*, 183]
- Si veía **una figura**, estaba combinando la proporción de **sus líneas** y mediándola con el entendimiento y reduciendola a otras diferentes [*Respuesta*, 458]

Example (49) is interesting because the indefinite *un canastillo* in a habitual context fails, if we take the example literally (i.e. excluding the possibility of an error by the copyist), to introduce a temporal discourse referent.³² Indeed, in the next line the NP *un canastillo* appears again, also with an indefinite determiner. If this second *canastillo* referred to the same one already introduced, the normal procedure would be to use a definite determiner, as it is indeed the case in the following mentions (*el canastillo*, *lo*). What is interesting is that although logically we would expect that the two mentions of *un canastillo* should refer to the same item, the use of the indefinite *un* in the second NP seems to disallow this correferential interpretation. Note that the second mention does introduce a temporal discourse referent, as can be seen in the use of subsequent correferential definite descriptions.

- (49) Do yo nascí fue en casa de un religioso que no avía muger nin hijos. Et traíanle cada día **un canastillo** de comeres, et comía dello una vez et dexava lo que fincava et colgávalo de una sogá en **un canastillo**. Et yo

³²In Allen's edition the text is the same.

açecháva**lo** fasta que salía; desí veníame para **el canastillo** et non dexava
ý cosa de que non echase a los otros mures. Et punó el religioso muchas
veces de **lo** colgar en lugar que **lo** yo non pudiese alcançar, et non podía
[*Calila*, 210]

In sum, as shown in the preceding paragraphs, although saliency and anaphora are closely linked to the notion of specificity (prototypical specifics are salient and thus trigger an anaphoric chain), neither of them are per se conclusive as to whether an indefinite is specific or not: on the one hand, because background (i.e. non-salient) indefinites can be specific, and on the other hand because non-specifics may, under certain circumstances, introduce discourse referent and thus license anaphora.

Now that I have discussed the main phenomena related to the notion of specificity and given a particular description of how each of these facts is reflected in the use of *un(os)*, I will describe the distribution of specific and non-specific uses of *un(os)* throughout Medieval and Golden-Age Spanish.

8.3 Specificity: the Diachronic Perspective

The role of specificity in the evolution of Spanish *un* has been discussed previously on two occasions, first in Elvira (1994) and more recently in Garachana (2009). These two authors coincide in that the grammaticalization of *un* confirms the scale proposed by Givón (1981): in Medieval Spanish, they argue, *un* introduced specific referents, and only from the fifteenth century onwards was it extended to non-specific ones. Moreover, both authors coincide in that non-specific *un* in Medieval Spanish has an exceptional character.

Elvira does not provide a quantitative analysis, but Garachana (2009) suggests that until the fifteenth century, *un* was by and large specific, with more than 93% of the total number of cases. According to her data, this century marks

the consolidation of the non-specific values of *un*, during which the non-specific values increase to 45% of cases. Finally, for the sixteenth century Garachana reports that in the case of Spanish documents, the number of non-specific cases overtakes specifics with a 57% of cases. This, according her, is a clear sign of the consolidation of the non-specific value of *un*.³³

As for my data, the analysis of specificity is summarized in tables 8.2 and 8.3. In the first, the general results are given, while in the second, I provide the particular data for singular and plural *un*.

Table 8.2: General specificity per period

	+ Specific	- Specific
1st	84.57% (159/188)	15.43% (29/188)
2nd	77.05% (141/183)	22.95% (42/183)
3rd	70.56% (393/557)	29.44% (164/557)
Total	74.68% (693/928)	25.32% (235/928)

Table 8.3: Specificity of Sg. and Pl. *un* per period

	<i>Un</i>		<i>Unos</i>	
	+ Specific	- Specific	+ Specific	- Specific
1st	84.88% (146/172)	15.12% (26/172)	81.25% (13/16)	18.75% (3/16)
2nd	76.47% (130/170)	23.53% (40/170)	84.62% (11/13)	15.38% (2/13)
3rd	70.33% (365/519)	29.67% (154/519)	73.68% (28/38)	26.32% (10/38)
Total	74.45% (641/861)	25.55% (220/861)	77.61% (52/67)	22.39% (15/67)

According to these results, throughout Medieval and Golden-Age Spanish the majority of instances of *un* are specific. Nonetheless, in contrast to what has been reported in the two previous studies, from the very first period there are

³³However, her own percentages for American documents are significantly different, with 76% of specifics versus 24% of non-specifics. If we merge these two results, we get the following numbers: 62% of cases are specific and 38% are non-specifics. Notice that put like this, there is not a increase in the number of non-specifics from the fifteenth century to the next. On the contrary, there is actually a decrease of non-specifics, from 45% to 38%.

cases of non-specific *un*, accounting for 15.43% of examples.³⁴ This means that in the first period analysed one in six occurrences of *un* is non-specific. It is not a high proportion, but it is neither ‘exceptional’ nor should it be ignored. Such a number, low as it is, demonstrates that *un* could be non-specific.³⁵

As shown in figure 8.2, the percentage of non-specific indefinites grows at a gradual but steady pace: for the second period, this number increases to 22.95%, and for the third period, 29.44% of cases are non-specific. In other words, there is a consistent increase of approximately 7% (7.54 and 6.49) from one period to the next. Thus, as time goes by, specificity becomes increasingly irrelevant in the distribution of *un*.

It must be pointed out that in the three periods analysed non-specific *un* appears already in subject position, as well as in DO and in AC, these two being the most frequent functions, just as in the case of specific *un*. Thus, there seem to be no grounds to say that non-specific objects come first in the grammaticalization of the indefinite article. Again, at least on the basis of my data, it is better to give a unified treatment to non-specifics, in spite of Givón’s (1981) original segmentation

³⁴A statistical analysis is required to know how significant these data are. This task will be pursued in future research.

³⁵Recall that in these data I am only taking into account the cases where *un* is not clearly cardinal. If I included these cases, the total percentage of non-specifics would increase to 32.86%, and more importantly to 26.42% (65/246) for the first period. This difference is due to the fact that, as we know, cardinal *un* (like every other numeral) is and always has been ambiguous between specific and non-specific readings, so by considering these cases the percentage of non-specifics is bound to increase. I offer one example of specific and non-specific cardinal *un*, both from the first period. I have deliberately chosen two cases where *un* is represented by means of the roman numeral to eliminate any doubt about its cardinal status.

- [+ SP] El prior sobredicho le dio **.I. pedaço de heredat**, que es entrmino de Cuezc,
ont son aladannos [*DLE13*, 603]
- [-SP] Ninguna mugier bibda non case del dia que muriere so marido fata **.I. anno**
complido [*Fuero*, 21]

Notice that neither in Garachana (2009) nor in Stark (2002) is this distinction between conservative and innovative *un* made: they both analyse all instances of *un* as indefinite article (or at least neither explicitly says that cardinal examples have not been taken into account). Interestingly, both authors claim that in the thirteenth century *un*, both in Italian and in Spanish, only appeared with specifics, the non-specific reading being exceptional. What puzzles me is that even without having distinguished between these two values of *un*, they did not find more non-specific cases.

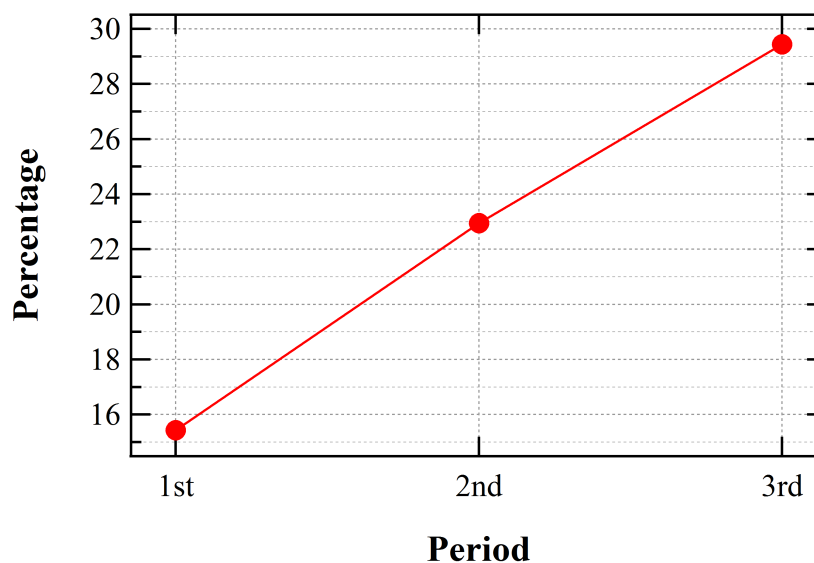


Figure 8.2: Non-specific *un*

(see figure 3.4).

On the other hand, with respect to the contrast between the singular and the plural forms of the indefinite article, once more we find that their developments are alike: the number of specifics vs. non-specific cases differ by only 3.16% globally, and with the exception of a small fall of plural non-specifics in the second period, the general trend according to which the number of non-specifics increases from Medieval to Golden-Age Spanish is maintained, as shown in figure 8.3. Once again these numbers must be taken as a general indication, for the number of cases of plural *unos*, specially in the case of non-specifics, is rather small.

In (50), I give one example of non-specific *unos*, and then in (51), I offer some more cases of specific (a) and non-specific (b) *un* for the three periods analysed.

(50) Lo que sólo he deseado es estudiar para ignorar menos: que, según San Agustín, **unas cosas** se aprenden para hacer y otras sólo para saber: *Discimus quaedam, ut sciamus; quaedam, ut faciamus* [Respuesta, 468]

(51) a. Estando la reyna Dido en Cartago muy poderosa e mucho onrrada, segunt ya oystes, Eneas, que escapara del destruymiento de Troya, traye consigo a su padre Anchises e **vn su fiio que dezien Ascanio**,

e queresse yr para Ytalia, e arribo en Çeçilia [*GEII*, 2, 170, 32b]

Acaesçió que **vn alcayde de los alcáçares de Carmona**, que llamauan Sancho de Ávila, & otro alcayde de Arcos Nicolás de Roxas, muy esforçados, quisieron salir por aquella puerta, a fin que saliessen en pos dellos algunos otro [*Reyes*, 8]

Y asi que pedia a este declarante fuese a conjurar aquel duende o lo que fuese. y con efecto éste fue a las oraciones a dicha cassa y se entró en una sala de donde estava **una mujer çiega llamada Juana, que no save su apellido**, y su marido Nicolas de Lescano y Manuela de la Rosa, i otra vieja que no save su nombre, y otra muchacha llamada Antonia [*DLNE*, 156, 400]

- b. Et si ffollaren el poluo della, quando fuere molida, con **un cannuto**, en derecho de la candela, saldra della muy grand fuego, et quemara quanto fallar [*Lapidario*, 222]

Penélope fue muger de Vlises, y siendo él ydo a la guerra troyana, siendo los mancebos de Ytalia aquexados de su hermosura, pidiéronla muchos dellos en casamiento, y deseosa de guardar castidad a su marido, por defenderse dellos dixo que la dexassen conplir **vna tela**, como acostunbrauan las señoras de aquel tienpo esperando a sus maridos, y que luego haría lo que [le] pedían [*Cárcel*, 194, 2079]

Discurrió luego en abrir algún resquicio por donde pudiesse entrar un rayo de luz, **una vislumbre de verdad** [*Criticón*, 655]

The evolution of the indefinite article in terms of specificity cannot be fully understood without reference to textual *genre*. Although there is no doubt that the number of cases of non-specific *un* increases diachronically, there are significant differences in the proportion of specific vs. non-specific interpretation among texts written in (broadly) the same period of time. For instance, as shown in table 8.4, it is clear that while in narrative prose such as *Calila* and *General Estoria*, there is a clear preference for specific *un*, laws such as *Fuero Real* contain proportionally more cases of non-specifics than narrative prose. In fact, the *Fuero Real* is the only document where non-specifics are more numerous than the specific variant, although the indefinite article is extremely uncommon in this document (and in

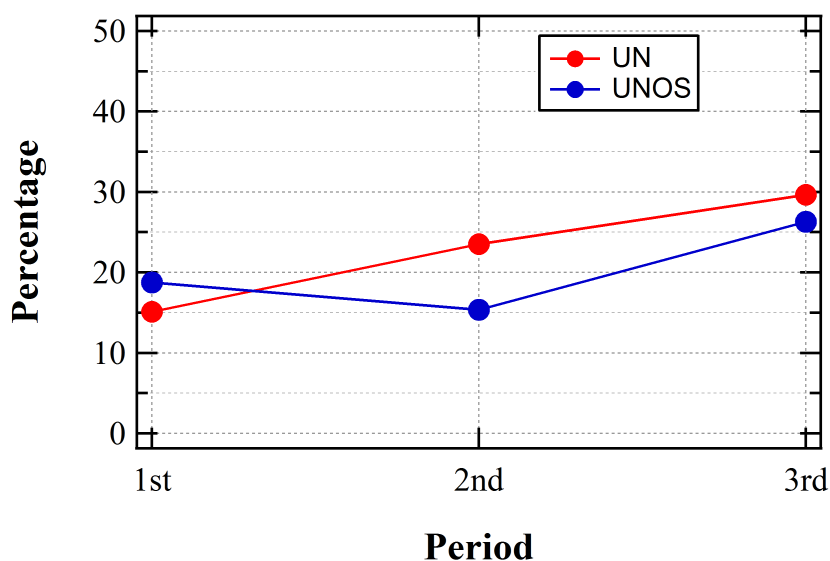


Figure 8.3: Specificity of *un* and *unos*

fact in all legal prose), where, as explained in section 7.1 *algún* is preferred.

Table 8.4: General specificity per text

		+ Specific	- Specific
1st	Calila	88.17% (82/93)	11.83% (11/93)
	DLE13	62.5% (5/8)	37.5% (3/8)
	Fuero	33.33% (1/3)	66.67% (2/3)
	GEII	95.45% (42/44)	4.55% (2/44)
	Lapidario	72.5% (29/40)	27.5% (11/40)
2nd	Cárcel	84.62% (55/65)	15.38% (10/65)
	Celestina	71.74% (33/46)	28.26% (13/46)
	Gramática	42.86% (12/28)	57.14% (16/28)
	Reyes	91.67% (33/36)	8.33% (3/36)
	Legal	100% (8/8)	0% (/8)
3rd	Criticón	61.06% (69/113)	38.94% (44/113)
	DLNE	80.73% (88/109)	19.27% (21/109)
	Estebanillo	72.25% (138/191)	27.75% (53/191)
	Alboroto	74.19% (46/62)	25.81% (16/62)
	Sor Juana	63.41% (52/82)	36.59% (30/82)

However, not all legal documents are the same. The *Fuero Real* is a collection of laws and as such they must be applicable to all men, whence the higher percentage of non-specific indefinites. On the contrary, *DLE* and *THE* are notarial documents that often describe particular events such as the selling of certain lands and other goods, and thus the number of cases of specific *un* is higher than in the

Fuero. Consider example (52):

- (52) Si en el primer día el reptado o el reptador non fuere uencido, a la noche o ante si amos quisieren o el rey lo mandare, los fieles sáquenlos del plazo et métanlos amos en **una casa** [*Fuero*, 146]
 Conoçuda cosa sea aquantos esta present carta veran & odran, como nos el cabillo dela yglesia de Sant Miguel de Alsaro, con consentimiento & con otorgamiento de don LopeGarçia, abbat desta mesma yglesia sobredicha, damos e otorgamos **vna vinna que nos auemos en las vinnas de Iohan de Françia** [*DLE13*, 126, 7]

The main point here is that there seems to be important differences between narrative and non-narrative prose with respect to the interpretation of indefinites. Such a contrast is not surprising: narrative texts (chronicle and fiction) tell the story of certain characters and their involvement in certain events, which the writer portrays as true. Therefore it is only normal that the NPs used to describe such referents have a specific interpretation, as in example (51a). In the corpus, the texts with the higher percentage of specific *un* are *General Estoria*, *Reyes*, and *Calila*.

In contrast, non-narrative prose such as *Lapidario* or *Gramática* do not deal with particular characters or events; rather they constitute objective descriptions of a specific matter about which generalizations are made. It is therefore expected that in such texts the number of non-specific indefinites is higher than in narrative works. One such example is given in (53).³⁶

³⁶The similarities in the language of *Gramática* and texts such as *Lapidario* have been discussed before. In particular, consider the following quote from Cano Aguilar (2008:106) who, when discussing the discursive tradition of the Renaissance Spanish grammars, says (emphasis added):

‘No obstante, hay que tener en cuenta también su inserción en tradiciones más amplias, en concreto, **la de prosa científica**, didáctica, pre-ensayística, presente en muy variados tipos de obras renacentistas, pero también anteriores (no olvidemos que algunos procedimientos de la lengua de nuestros gramáticos remontan a la de los **tratados alfonsíes**, y habría que investigar su deuda, si la hay, con los tratados doctrinales, médicos o de otro tipo de los siglos XIV y XV).’

- (53) Assi que dexando la g.i. en sus propias fuerças: con **una figura que añadamos para representar lo que agora escrivimos con g.i. cuando les damos ageno officio**: queda hecho todo lo que buscamos: dandoles toda via alas letras el son de su pronunciacion [*Gramática*, 139]

This of course does not mean that narrative texts do not contain non-specifics, but only that they are less frequent than in other type of prose. As usual, they occur in opaque contexts, such as questions, conditionals, or futures, and they are specially frequent in fragments with a highly moral content, such as proverbs or sayings, where reference is intended to be as general as possible, as in (54):

- (54) En esto tenés ventaja las hembras a los varones, que puede **un gran dolor** sacaros del mundo sin lo sentir, o a lo menos, perdéys el sentido, que es parte del descanso [*Celestina*, 337]
 Mordíanse, en llegando a esta ocasión, las manos algunos grandes señores al verse excluidos del reino de la fama y que eran admitidos algunos soldados de fortuna [...] ¡Y que **un duque**, un príncipe, se haya de quedar fuera, sin nombre, sin fama, sin aplauso! [*Criticón*, 804]
 Yo, aprovechándome del refrán que “a **un diestro un presto**”, me puse con tal presteza en la calle y con tal velocidad me alejé del barrio que yo mismo, con ser buen corredor, me espanté cuando me hallé en menos de un minuto a la puerta de la Judería [*Estebanillo*, 1, 49]

We have said that the evolution of the Spanish indefinite article seems to be closely linked to the notion of specificity. In the early documents, the majority of cases of *un* are specific. As its frequency increases, so do the non-specific cases, in such a way that by the late seventeenth century, the percentage of non-specific *un* almost doubles that of the first period. This is clearly conclusive evidence that the grammaticalization of the indefinite article shows a movement towards less specificity, where *un* becomes a marker of all types of indefinites and not only those prominent in the discourse.

However, in contrast to Garachana’s (2009) results, from the first period stud-

ied here there are a good number of non-specific examples. In my view, this discrepancy can be explained in terms of the composition of our corpora: while she has only considered narrative texts (*Calila* and *Crónica de veinte reyes*), I have included different types of prose. As I have demonstrated, genre is a major factor in the distribution of *un*, with narrative prose being a clearly favourable context for the appearance of specific indefinites, which explains the low incidence of non-specific *un* reported by this author for the thirteenth century

It must be said that Garachana does acknowledge the importance of *genre* in the number of specifics and non-specifics, but only from the moment when the grammaticalization of *the indefinite article* had reached an advance stage.³⁷ It is thus surprising that she has not included any other type of prose for the thirteenth century, even if she admits that this factor has a tremendous impact on the analysis of specificity.³⁸

8.4 The Specificity of *algún*

In the last chapter we saw that although there are a good number of similarities between *un(os)* and *algún(os)*, both being indefinite determiners, their trajectories in terms of frequency are very different. Such contrast is further confirmed by the

Table 8.5: Specificity of *algún* per period

	+ Specific	- Specific
1st	8.92% (14/157)	91.08% (143/157)
2nd	37.16% (68/183)	62.84% (115/183)
3rd	41.03% (46/117)	58.97% (69/117)
Total	28.45% (128/457)	71.55% (327/457)

results of the analysis in terms of specificity, which are shown in table 8.5.³⁹

Diachronically, the analysis of the specificity of *algún* shows an inverse tendency to that of the indefinite article: first, because globally it tends to be interpreted non-specifically, in 71.55% of cases; second, because as time goes by the number of specific cases grows dramatically, with the steepest increase occurring in the transition from Medieval to Golden-Age Spanish. The contrast in these trends is evident in figure 8.4, where the lines representing the evolution of these indefinite determiners seem to advance towards less differentiation.

Recall that the definition of specificity that I have adopted does not require the certainty of the speaker with respect to the identity of the referent. This is important because one of the peculiarities of *algún* is that it generally implies that the speaker does not know (or at least does not reveal) the exact identity of the referent. However, in my analysis such cases might be specific, provided that presupposition of existence is entailed, as it is in the following set of examples:

³⁷Her words are these (Garachana 2009: 425-6):

‘A partir del momento en que *un* se generaliza como marca de no accesibilidad del referente del sustantivo por él determinado, la proporción de empleos específicos e inespecíficos de *un* pasa a depender en gran medida del tipo de texto. En textos coloquiales —orales o escritos (en la medida en que un texto escrito pueda ser coloquial)—, en los que normalmente se hace referencia a entidades tangibles, lo esperable es una mayor presencia de lecturas específicas que de lecturas inespecíficas. En cambio, en textos de carácter más formal, en los que se trata acerca de temas abstractos, las lecturas inespecíficas pueden superar a las específicas.

³⁸The same can be said about Stark’s (2002) paper, where she also reports that in early periods Italian *un* was only used with specific indefinites. In effect, Stark’s results are based solely in narrative texts. The question then arises about whether in Italian, as in Spanish, *un* in non-narrative texts is found from earlier times than has previously been reported.

³⁹Note that these results should one be taken as a first approximation to the development of *algun(os)*, for in them I have not considered relevant factors such as the important difference in the interpretation of the between the singular and the plural. An in-depth analysis will be carried out in future research.

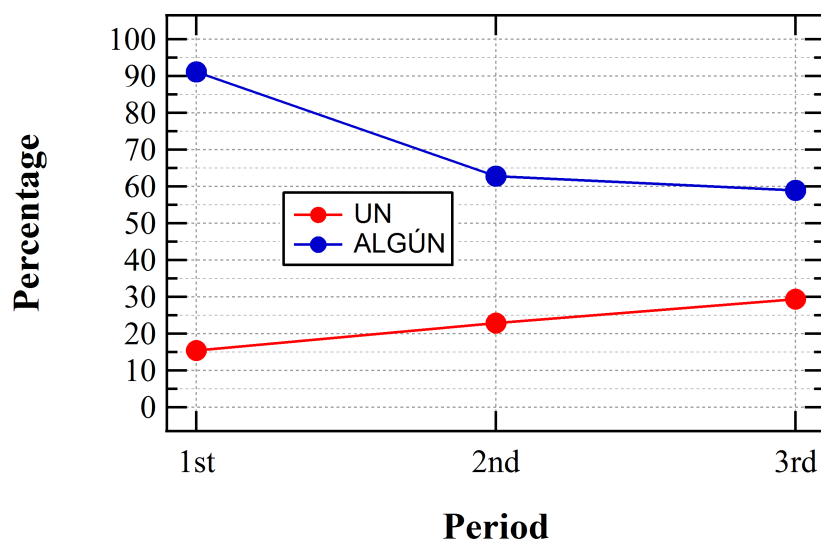


Figure 8.4: Specificity of *un* and *algún*

- (55)
- a. El fue así, que andava una noche un ladrón sobre una casa de un omne rico, et fazía luna, et andavan **algunos compañeros** con él [*Calila*, 109]
 - b. Enpero maguer que faga contra **alguna cosa destas que son sobredichas** non pierda su derecho del heredamiento que uiniere dotra parte, quier de sus hermanos, quier dotros estrannos [*Fuero*, 60]
 - c. Et **algunos sabios** dixeron que, qui la remoiasse en uinagre de uino, que se farie blanda como masa, et entonce podra fazer della ayn-tamiento que prestarie contra todo ponzon [*Lapidario*, 223]
 - d. E **algunos capitanes** decían que deuían quemar & dexar, porque segúnd el peligro grande que avía en la salida de la fortaleza a la villa, e segúnd el socorro que los moros esperauan tan presto, por lo tener tan çerca, era cosa peligrosa esperarlos con tan poca gente [*Reyes*, 8]
 - e. E los cristianos se apoderaron de la çibdat e de **algunas torres della**, de las quales los moros al principio se avían apoderado, e no las pudieron defender de los combates que los cristianos allí les dieron [*Reyes*, 10]
 - f. Esta parte fue hallada para que con ella & con este verbo .e.as.ove. se suplan **algunos tiempos delos que falta el castellano del latin** [*Gramática*, 259]
 - g. Sepan todos los que este presente aluala vieren, que por quanto es dubda & sospechan **algunas personas** que yo, don Enrique, conde de Njebla, enla mj villa de Sant Lucar de Barrameda defiendo &

- mando secretamente o en publico quelos desmos que deue auer nuestro sennor el rey [*THE*, 362, 477]
- h. No les agradó tan ruidosa desvergüenza a los que vieron a las indias atravesando calles y mucho más a **algunos caballeros particulares que casualmente se hallaban entones en el palacio** [*Alboroto*, 119]
- i. de suerte que solamete unos Ejercicios de la Encarnación y unos Ofrecimientos de los Dolores, se imprimieron por gusto mío por la pública devoción, pero sin mi nombre; de los cuales remito **algunas copias** [*Respuesta*, 474]

Notice that in many cases the NP has a partitive interpretation. For instance, in (55e) the natural interpretation is that there were some towers in the city that were not taken. The same is true for (55d), where the most probable scenario is that only some of the captains had that opinion, and its even clearer in (55b) where partitivity is explicitly expressed. However, partitivity is, in my view, less evident in other cases, notably in (55a), where it is not necessarily implied that the thief had other companions who were not there with him; rather, the use of *algunos* indicates simply numeric vagueness.⁴⁰

Then, in (55f) specificity is marked by the use of the indicative in the relative clause (*falta*). The example (55h) is interesting because the adjective *particulares* is an explicit sign of specificity, just like *certain*. Finally in (55g) the choice of the indefinite responds to the fact that the identities of the referents will be left untold, even if they are, most probably, known to the speaker.

On the other hand, we have seen that *algún* is most commonly non-specific (table 8.5). Some examples of it in opaque contexts are offered below. In all of them it is possible to recognize at least one mark or trigger of non-specificity discussed in the previous section, such as the subjunctive in (56a), the conditional in (56b) and (56c), the relative clause in the subjunctive in (56b) and (56e), the

⁴⁰See Fernández Ramírez (1987: §193).

intensional verb in (56c), and the imperative in (56d).

- (56) a. Tengo por bien que ssi los alcalles o los alguaziles prisieren **algun clerigo** por fecho que faga que sea dado asu prelado & el quel judque assi como deue [*DLE13*, 229, 51]
- b. Si **algún ome que fuere acusado** muriere ante que la sentencia sea dada, mandamos que sea quito del fecho que era acusado quanto en la pena del cuerpo et de la fama [*Fuero*, 141]
- c. Si **algund bien** quisieres hazerme, no lo tardes; si no, podrá ser que tengas tienpo de arrepentirte y no lugar de remediarme [*Cárcel*, 108, 465]
- d. dame **algún remedio** para mi mal y no estés burlando de mí [*Celestina*, 203]
- e. Discurrió luego en abrir **algún resquicio por donde pudiesse entrar un rayo de luz, una vislumbre de verdad** [*Criticón*, 655]

Finally, as we know, in Modern Spanish *alguno* functions as a negative polarity item when it is placed after the noun. The postposition of *alguno* with a negative sense is registered from my oldest documents. In the corpus I have found 58 cases. Some examples are provided below (57a). Interestingly, in Medieval Spanish the postnominal *alguno* is sporadically found without a negative sense. I have documented five such cases, all in *Fuero* and *DLE13* (57b).

- (57) a. Et mandó el rey a los sorteros que echasen suerte, et non dexó en toda la çibdat físico ni escantador nin **omne alguno de quien oviese esperança que le daría consejo en aquello que acaesciera al niño** [*Calila*, 321]
- E llamase verbo que en castellano quiere dezir palabra: no por que las otras partes dela oracion no sean palabras: mas por que las otras sin esta no hazen **sentencia alguna**: esta por ezelencia llamose palabra [*Gramática*, 245]
- no llegaban a cuarenta indios los de esta tropa, según dicen uniformes cuantos los vieron, ni hicieron **movimiento alguno** por un buen rato [*Alboroto*, 121]
- b. Pero, si el que non uiniere podier mostrar **embargo alguno** por que

non uino, como efermedat, o prisi3n, o avenidas de rri3s, o grandes nieves, o otros embargos derechos, et viniere ante 3l et mostrare raz3n derecha por que non fizo so mandamiento, non aya pena [*Fuero*, 9]
 Todo omne que desechare **ninno alguno**, et non ouiere qui lo tome pora criar, et muriere, el que lo desech3 muera por ello que, pues que fizo cosa por que muriesse, tanto es como si lo matasse [*Fuero*, 150]

The fact that all cases of positive postnominal *alguno* are from the thirteenth century suggests that by the fifteenth century its value as a negative polarity item had already been generalized.⁴¹

8.5 Generic *un*

The term ‘generic’ is commonly employed to refer to two phenomena: on the one hand, it can designate *kind referring NPs*, and on the other hand, it is used to describe a type of sentence where predication is not made about a particular episode, but rather expresses a generality. This type of sentences are called *characterizing* or *generic sentences* (Krifka et al., 1995).⁴²

In Modern Spanish, there are three types of NPs that can be interpreted generically, namely, those with a singular or plural definite article, as in (58a) and (58b), and those with a singular indefinite article, as in (58c).

- (58) a. **El elefante** se alimenta de hierbas.
 b. **Los elefantes** se alimentan de hierbas.
 c. **Un elefante** se alimenta de hierbas.

Although in this context these three forms seem to be interchangeable, there

⁴¹For the postnominal use of *alguno* as a negative polarity item see Alcina & Blecua (1975: 647); Barra (1994: ch.III, 4); Bello (1988 [1848]: §1143), Camús (2009: 3.3.3) Eberenz (2000:418); Fernández Ramírez (1987: §195); Gutiérrez-Rexach (2003:396); Hanssen (1913:§561); Keniston (1937: §13) Martínez (1989: 88); Meyer-Lübke (1923 [1890-1906]: III, §692).

⁴²Of course, these two types of genericity can occur in the same sentence, as is actually the case in example (58a). An example of a kind-referring NP in a non-characterizing sentence is *Man set foot on the moon in 1969*. See Krifka et al. (1995).

are several differences in the way that the generic interpretation arises in each of them, which are ultimately linked to the determiner employed. In the first case (58a), the singular definite NP refers to a kind as a whole, as a homogeneous class, as an individual, and thus it can be compared analogically to a proper name (Krifka et al., 1995: 65). In contrast, in (58b) the plural definite NP refers, not to kinds as individuals, but as a sum of individuals that are not necessarily homogeneous. Finally, in the case of (58c), the indefinite is not a kind-referring NP. Here, *un elefante* refers to a/any random representative member of the kind denoted by the noun, and the generic interpretation is completely dependent on the context.⁴³ In other words, indefinite generics can only occur in characterizing sentences, which enable us to infer that the predication is valid for any member of the given kind (Carlson 1980: §2.1.4.; Krifka et al. 1995: 10; Leonetti 1999: 873).

However, not all indefinite NPs in characterizing sentences are interpreted generically. Consider the following case where the highlighted NP is non-specific.

(59) Un conejo vive en **una madriguera**.

The explanation of this fine distinction lies in the fact that for an indefinite to be generic it has to be the topic of a characterizing predicate.⁴⁴ This constraint is reflected in the fact that in most cases generic *un* is the subject. In fact, for most authors (cf. Burton-Roberts 1976, Krifka et al. 1995), subjecthood is a *sine qua non* for generic indefinites. However, at least in the case of Spanish, this requirement does not hold, for indefinites in other functions can be interpreted as generics as in (60a), taken from Leonetti (1999: 878). Notice that their topical

⁴³As genericity is achieved by taking one stereotypical individual, indefinite generics are incompatible with kind-predicates, i.e. predicates about a kind as a whole, like *be extinct*.

⁴⁴In this sense, Lyons (1999: 233) explains:

Generics refer to entire ensembles, and these are likely to be familiar to a hearer even though particular instantiations of them might not be.' Notice that in some languages, such as Japanese, topics are required to be definite or generic.

status is demonstrated by the possibility of their being left-dislocated (60b).

- (60) a. Siempre admiro a **un buen músico**.
 No se trata así a **un hermano**.
 A **una foca** le gusta el pescado.
 Siempre me quedo atónito ante **un paisaje nevado**.
- b. **A un buen músico**, siempre lo admiro.
A un hermano, no se le trata así.
A una foca, le gusta el pescado.
 Ante **un paisaje nevado**, siempre me quedo atónito.

The expression of genericity in Spanish has greatly changed from medieval times to now. In the first place, in contrast to Modern Spanish, where BPs cannot be interpreted generically, in Medieval Spanish singular bare nouns were often employed for such a task, as shown in the following example from Lapesa (2000 [1974]: §20).⁴⁵

- (61) quiso que fuese buena en todas las bondades que **duenna** lo debía ser
 [*Setenario*, 1010]

In contrast to the definite article, whose generic use is well documented in old documents, the indefinite article was incorporated into this context at a slower rate. According to Kärde (1943: 31), *un* became available in generic NPs around the sixteenth century. The same chronology is given by Garachana (2009), with the exception of an isolated case found in the fifteenth century.⁴⁶

⁴⁵As explained in section 7.3, this subject has been studied by Lapesa (2000 [1974]) and Company (1991). As Bosque has noted (1996b), although neither of them explicitly states it, it seems that in Medieval Spanish only singular NPs could be generic, as all the plural examples they offer are existentially interpreted. Recall example (19), p. 186 from *Cid*, where the BP *moros* has an existential interpretation.

Additionally, in a previous study in which I studied the generic-impersonal use of *omne*, I did not find any case where the bare plural was generic. See Pozas (2008).

⁴⁶Keniston (1937: §20.2) denies that in the sixteenth century the indefinite article was used generically. However, as Kärde (1943: 31) points out, this claim contradicts the examples that this same author later gives to illustrate the development of indefinite *omne* in §27.57.

estar **un hombre** sin querer ni ser querido es el más enfadoso estado que puede ser en

In general terms, my data also support Kärde's hypothesis, in that the examples of generic *un* start to be numerically significant in Golden-Age Spanish: the largest proportion of generic *un* in my corpus, 77.77% (21/27), occurs in the third period analysed. Notice that since for an indefinite to be generic it has to appear in a characterizing sentence, generic *un* is commonly found in the expressions of laws, and moral norms (Burton-Roberts 1976: 187-88, Leonetti 1999: 876).

- (62) -Es muy plausible -dezía el Inmortal- el rumbo de la milicia: andan entre clarines y atambores; y los togados, muy a la sorda. Y assí veréis que obrará cosas grandes en mucho bien de la república un ministro, un consejero, y no será nombrado ni aun conocido, ni se habla de ellos; pero **un general** haze mucho ruido con el boato de sus bombardas [*Criticón*, 810] Dos términos tiene **una fineza** que la pueden constituir en el ser de grande: el término a quo, de quien la ejecuta, y el término ad quem, de quien la logra [*Carta*, 415]
Y añadido yo que le perfecciona (si es perfección la necesidad) el haber estudiado su poco de filosofía y teología y el tener alguna noticia de lenguas, que con eso es necio en muchas ciencias y lenguas: porque **un necio grande** no cabe en sólo la lengua materna [*Respuesta*, 463]

However, I have also identified six earlier cases: three for the first and three for the second period, some of which are given below:

- (63) Yenetatiz a nombre en griego la segunda piedra de la y. Et semeia al coraçon de **una aue a que dizen çarcoz** [*Lapidario* 221]
Aristóteles y Plinio cuentan maravillas de **un pequeño pece llamado Echenis**, quanto sea apta su propiedad para diversos géneros de lides [*Celestina*, 78]
De **una ave llamada Rocho, que nace en el índico mar de oriente**, se dize ser de grandeza jamás oýda y que lleva sobre su pico fasta las nuves no sólo un hombre o diez, pero un navío cargado de todas sus xarcías y gente [*Celestina*, 79]

la vida [*Los siete libros de Diana*]

Interestingly, the generic cases that I have found in the first and second periods correspond to ‘taxonomic interpretations’ that is, those kind-referring NPs which refer to a sub-kind. Notice that taxonomic interpretations are not restricted to indefinite NPs, as shown in the following example taken from Krifka et al. (1995: 70, ex. 114).

- (64)
- a. The dolphin is **a whale**.
 - b. The dolphin and the porpoise are **whales**.
 - c. **One whale**, namely the blue whale, is nearly extinct.
 - d. **Two whales**, namely the blue and the fin whale, were put under protection.
 - e. **This whale**, namely the blue whale, is nearly extinct.
 - f. **The whale that was most recently put under protection** is the blue whale.
 - g. **Every whale** (from the pygmy to the blue whale) is protected by law.

In fact, they display all the syntactic possibilities of any count noun. The ‘countness’ behaviour of sub-kind NPs is further reflected in the fact that when mass nouns are recategorized as count nouns, the default interpretation is a taxonomic one (e.g. *en Argentina se produce un vino excelente*, section 7.3.2). Thus, the examples above can be paraphrased as *una especie de ave llamada çaecoz*, *una especie de pez llamada Echenis*, and *una especie de ave llamada Rocho*.⁴⁷

Finally, recall that syntactic recategorization is already found from the early documents, as shown in (65):

- (65) E todos los que dichos son que non beuan al su comer synon de **vn vino** que sea blanco obermejo [1338, *Ordenamiento de las cortes celebradas en Burgos*, 454, CORDE]

⁴⁷Despite the existence of these examples, it must be kept in mind that in Medieval Spanish taxonomic kind referring NPs were typically bare, as in the example below:

(i) Latón, que es **cobre tinto**, lábrase mejor [*Astronomía, I, 163, apud Lapesa 2000 [1974]*]
See section 7.3.1.

Since syntactic recategorization yields taxonomic interpretations, it seems adequate to state that at least since the thirteenth century, *un* was marginally employed to introduce sub-kinds, both in characterizing sentences, as in (63), and in non-characterizing contexts as in (65).

There is, however, one example which seems to be non-taxonomic, which is presented below:

- (66) Et quando par fuere a dar deue seer par tan bien en linage como en bondat, et en casamiento, et en sennorío, et en fuerça, ca non es egualdat **un omne muy ualient** combaterse con omne de pequena fuerça [*Fuero*, 146]

This example seems to me to be a genuine exception to the claim according to which the generic interpretation is not available to indefinites in Medieval Spanish. However, in this case the superlative adverb *muy* is likely to be at least in part the cause of the appearance of *un*, for as we saw in section 7.3, the indefinite article often appears in these valorative constructions (cf. *un agua muy pura*). Notice that in the same sentence the second *omne* is determinerless, as was at that time the common practice in generic contexts.

In sum, leaving out taxonomic readings and one single exception, my data confirm the chronology proposed by Kärde (1943) according to which the extension of the indefinite article to generic contexts occurs around the sixteenth century.

Finally, as has been demonstrated by Laca & Tasmowsky (1996), the plural indefinite article *unos* can appear in generic sentences, as shown in the example below taken from these authors (199: 113, ex.6):

- (67) a. [No puedo creer que esos dos sean millonarios.] **Unos millonarios** no viajan en segunda clase.
 b. **Unas gotas de estricnina** bastan para envenenar a una familia entera.
 c. **Unas palabras inoportunas** tienen a veces consecuencias más graves

que un insulto.

However, as Laca & Tasmowsky (1996) recognize, this use of *unos* is heavily constrained, for the group interpretation inherent in this determiner must be justified by the context. Not surprisingly, I have not noted any instances of this rather unusual employment of the plural indefinite article.

8.6 A Note on Generic *uno*

Before concluding this chapter, I would like to call attention to the fact that the incorporation of the indefinite article into generic contexts coincides with the rise of the pronoun *uno* in its impersonal or generic sense. The first known example is found in the *Diálogo de la lengua*, written in 1535, a text in which there are at least ten cases of *uno* in its innovative function.

- (68) Quando en castellano queremos dezir que **uno** tiene bien de bivar, dezimos que tiene buena passada [*Diálogo*, 23]
 Y aun por esto es regla cierta que tanto aprueba **uno** quanto alcanza a entender [*Diálogo*, 38]
 Bien es verdad que lo usamos en otra significación, porque si vemos un cavallo muy grueso, dezimos que stá lisiado, y quando queremos dezir que **uno** quiere mucho una cosa, dezimos que stá lisiado por ella [*Diálogo*, 112]
 Correr, demás de su propia significación, que es *currere*, tiene otra y es ésta, que dezimos que se corre **uno** quando, burlando con él y mortejándolo, se enoja [*Diálogo*, 122]

Then, in *Menosprecio de corte y alabanza de aldea*, written only four years later, there are nearly 30 occurrences of *uno*, some of which are presented below.

- (69) No se niega que en la corte no haya ocasión para **uno** se perder, y que en su casa hay más aparejo para se salvar, mas al fin poco aprovecha al cortesano que mude la religión si no muda la condición [*Menosprecio*, 151]

El bien del aldea es que por solo y desacompañado que vaya **uno** a visitar al vecino, a oír su misa, a podar la viña, a ver la heredad, a reconocer el ganado y a requerir al yuguero, granjea su hacienda y no pierda nada de su honra [*Menosprecio*, 166]

El que quiere hacer merced de alguna cosa ha de mirar y tantear lo que da, porque es muy gran locura dar **uno** lo que no puede dar o dar lo que ha menester [*Menosprecio*, 204]

According to Kärde (1943:32) the high frequency of impersonal *uno* in Guevara's text indicates its consolidation as a preponderant element for the expression of impersonality in the Spanish language. Nonetheless, judging by its almost complete absence from my corpus, only three cases (70), it seems that the generalization of *uno* to all types of prose took a long time.

- (70) ¡Eh, señor!, acabá de entender que aquí no se mira la dignidad ni el puesto, sino la personal eminencia: no a los ditados, sino a las prendas; a lo que **uno** se merece, que no a lo que hereda [*Criticón*, 803]
- Señores, que tenga **uno** sesos en la cabeça, está bien, que es allí el solio del alma; pero lengua de sesos ¿a qué propósito? [*Criticón*, 665]

Notice that the rise of *uno* is also related to the disappearance of indefinite *omne* (< Lat. HOMINE), which was used throughout the medieval period.⁴⁸

- (71) Ca non se **deve omne temer** de malquerençia de todos aquellos a quien mal faze de una guisa, non deve ser desesperado de su ayuda, nin de su seso; mas el que conosçe las cosas pone a cada una en su lugar [*Calila*, 313]
E la causa por que la cobdiçia nos trae a todos estos males es porque, commo es dicho, es entrañable en nos & señorea nuestros mienbros, & mayor vitoria es **vençer omne** a sy mismo & moderar & templar su

⁴⁸For the use and disappearance of *omne* and impersonality in Spanish see among others Mëyer-Lübke (1923 [1890-1906]), Guillet (1925), Brown (1931), Keniston (1937), Kärde (1943), Malkiel (1948), Menéndez Pidal (1952), Lapesa (2000 [1974]), Carrasco (1988), Ricós (1992), Eberenz (2000), Pozas (2008), and Company & Pozas (2009). For *uno*, see also Llorente Maldonado de Guevara (1976), Ridruejo (1981), Leonetti (1988), Gómez Torrego (1992), and Muñiz Chacón (1994).

cobdiçia que non vencer omne a las cosas que son fuera del [*Proverbios*, 111]

Dize vna ley çeuil que mas graue crimen es **matar** a **omne** con venino que non con fierro, & por tanto mas pena meresçe [*Proverbios*, 148]

These two forms shared a number of features such as the generic interpretation, the affinity for infinitives, and the ability to be correferentially linked to other elements in the sentence.

In Medieval Spanish, this use of *omne* is especially frequent in moral prose. However, from the late fifteenth century on, it started to be used as a covert first person. With this new nuance it is well documented in the sixteenth century theatre, where it represents a feature of lower sociolects. Interestingly, impersonal *uno* has gradually developed this same value, although without the stigmatization that the use of *omne* in Golden-Age drama conveyed (Guillet, 1925). This explains why it is often found in correference with first-person elements, as in (72a), and can even show gender agreement when a female speaker utters a generalizing sentence that concerns solely women, as in (72b).

- (72) a. —A pesar de las ganas que **uno** tiene de irse, siempre da un poco de tristeza —dijo el sargento—. A **mí me** ha dado ahorita, muchachos, por primera vez. **Uno** se encariña con los lugares, aunque valgan poca cosa [*Casa verde*, 438]
- b. Muchas gracias tenemos que dar a Dios por haber nacido españolas. Si hubiéramos nacido en China, a lo mejor nuestros hijos se iban al limbo sin remisión. ¡Tener hijos para eso! ¡Con lo que **una** sufre para tenerlos y con la guerra que dan de chicos! [*Colmena*, 137]

8.7 Summary

In the present chapter, I have provided a diachronic analysis of the interpretation of the Spanish indefinite article in Medieval and Golden Age Spanish, with special

emphasis on specificity, but also with reference to the cases where *un* is interpreted generically.

In section 8.1, I have commented on some of the factors that contribute to the specificity or non-specificity of an indefinite, including the tense of the verb, the adjective *cierto*, the mood of relative clauses, the position of the adjective, and DOM. From this analysis we can conclude that, as Leonetti (1999: 865) has pointed out, although in Spanish there is not a grammatical tool which unequivocal signals specificity, there are a number of elements, such as the ones explained in this section, that favour one reading or another, and therefore can be considered as indirect marks of this feature.

In Section 8.2, the notions of ‘discourse referent’ and ‘saliency’ were introduced. Then, section 8.3, focused on the diachronic analysis of specificity, proving that, contrary to what has been suggested in previous accounts, *un* could be interpreted as non-specific since very early times. Nonetheless, it must be kept in mind that my results confirm a rise in the number of non-specifics, in such a way that by the third period analysed, the number of non-specifics is twice that of the first period.

In section 8.4, the results of the specificity analysis of *un* were compared with those of *algún* and it is shown that these two determiners displayed in the first period an almost complementary distribution in terms of specificity, which tends to become less salient as time goes by.

Finally, section 8.5 dealt with the incorporation of *un* into generic contexts. First, I introduced some theoretical elements in relation to genericity; then I presented the results of my analysis, which show that, excluding taxonomic readings, the incorporation of *un* into generics occurred around the sixteenth century. Interestingly, as explained in section 8.6, this development coincides with the first appearances of the pronoun *uno* in its generic-impersonal interpretation.

Chapter 9

Conclusions

The aim of this dissertation has been to provide a detailed analysis of the use of *un*, from its Latin origin to its use as an indefinite marker in Medieval and Golden-Age Spanish. Now, in the light of the results of all the preceding chapters, let us draw a final picture of how the Spanish indefinite article emerged.

As reported by Ernout & Thomas (1953) and Lewis & Short (1956 [1879]), in Latin *ŪNUS* was mainly used to express exclusivity, that is, with the meaning of ‘only one’ or ‘a single’, and conveyed therefore an individuation nuance with which it appeared in its use in opposition to *ALTER* (see chapter 5).

On the other hand, Latin indefinite pronouns *QUĪDAM* and *ALĪQUĪS* fulfilled almost complementary roles with regard to the knowledge the speaker had about the identity of the referent (section 5.2). While *QUĪDAM* was employed to refer to specific indefinites (as in ‘a certain’), *ALĪQUĪS* was mainly associated with non-specific indefinites.¹ In this context, it can be said that these indefinites could

¹Notice that in the case of *ALĪQUĪS*, this tendency for non-specificity is better understood in

be arranged in a specificity scale, with each of them at opposite extremes, and with $\bar{U}NUS$ in the centre, for, like all numerals, it was neutral with respect to this feature (see Pinkster 1990: 95).

Already in Latin, $\bar{U}NUS$ began to be used as a tool to introduce salient referents into discourse, and thus, it can be said that it became an alternative expression to $QU\bar{I}DAM$. With this value, $\bar{U}NUS$ appears in the works of Cicero, and is especially frequent in the Vulgate.²

After a period from which there is not yet much research done on the evolution of $\bar{U}NUS$, we get to Medieval Spanish, where my study begins. As explained in chapter 6, in Medieval Spanish *un* reproduces all the main features of its Latin antecedent: it is employed with an explicit cardinal sense in opposition to other quantifiers; it expresses exclusivity alone or in combination with *solo*; and it is also very frequently found in opposition with *otro*.

However, since the first period, these cases account for only a quarter of the total number of examples, showing the extent to which its new role had spread. In the remainder, what explains the presence of *un* is its innovative function to mark the novelty of a given referent in the discourse (see chapter 3).

The seed of this use is found in the cases where $\bar{U}NUS$ supplanted $QU\bar{I}DAM$, and therefore it is only natural that the referent is usually a salient element, which can be verified by the fact that in many cases it triggers a chain of anaphoric mentions.

But even in the early documents, *un* introduces not only salient referents. Indeed, at least from the late thirteenth century onwards, *un* also appears with non-salient or background elements which are nonetheless specific, as exemplified in section 8.2. This is demonstrated by the large number of cases where it appears in adverbial complements (section 7.4). Furthermore, also from the first period,

epistemic terms, for often it was employed with indefinites which exist, but whose identity is irrelevant (Lewis & Short 1956 [1879]: s.v.) See chapter 5.

²See chapter 5 for examples.

there are a few cases (1/6), in which *un* introduces a non-specific referent (section 8.3).³ All these facts demonstrate the inadequacy of an analysis according to which in Medieval Spanish *un* is taken to be a definitive marker of specificity. At best, we can say that during these centuries, *un* has a strong tendency to introduce referents whose existence can be inferred.

On the other hand, in early documents, *algún* is preferentially employed with non-specific referents (section 8.4). As a consequence, for the period of our study, *un* and *algún* display an almost complementary distribution with respect to specificity.⁴ At this stage, *algún* also opposes *cierto*, which is used with specifics, but unlike *un*, it is categorically excluded from non-specifics.

As times goes by, the frequency of use of *un* increases, as does the number of non-specific cases. With its definitive extension to non-specific contexts, *un* is on its way to becoming a true indefinite article, as it passes from being, in most cases, a salient NP introducer, to marking a wider range of indefinites, regardless of whether their existence can be inferred or not. Interestingly, as *un* extends to non-specific contexts, *algún* also increases its acceptability with specifics, showing that in late Medieval Spanish specificity has stopped being the governing agent in the configuration of indefinite determiners as a whole.

The extension of *un* in non-specifics licenses its extension to a new domain, namely generics, which is a feature of Golden-Age Spanish.⁵ This chronology is not random, for, as has been noted on several occasions, there are strong links

³And this is without considering conservative *un*, for which the proportion of non-specifics in the first period is as high as 61.02% (36/58) of the cases.

⁴As Stark (2002) reports, this was also the case in Italian. However, she argues that *un* did not appear with non-specifics, so in her study this opposition between *uno* and *alcuno* is categorical. In contrast, in my data there are in both cases a good number of counter-examples (15.43% of non-specific *un*, and 8.92% of specific *algún*)

⁵I am not considering taxonomic generics which, as I explained above, are found from the thirteenth century, as they are substantially different from the other type of genericity in Givón's scale. As I have explained, the fact that taxonomic readings are available in earlier periods may be due to the fact that the mechanism behind them is a type of recategorization, which, as we saw in section 7.3.2, is well documented with *un* from the earliest texts.

between these two categories.⁶ In fact, as I explained in section 8.5, in the case of indefinites genericity is not inherent in the NP, but contributed by the characterizing sentence. Thus, it might be said that generic indefinites are nothing more than non-specific indefinites that are the topic of a characterising predicate.

Recall that in Givón's scheme, predicates were the last context to admit the use of *un* (section 3.4.1). Interestingly, Givón's proposal relies largely on the case of Spanish, which as I explained is for him a prototypical example of a language with an intermediate degree of grammaticalization, mainly due to the fact that the indefinite article has not been generalized to all predicates. With this in mind, it seems appropriate to postulate that predicates come last in the evolutionary path. Unfortunately, this claim is not supported by the actual data, for as I have demonstrated, apart from some exceptional cases in the first period, predicate *un* starts to be used in the late middle ages and is consolidated during the Golden-Age period (section 7.5). Thus, predicates are at least contemporary with generics, not later than them.⁷ Such co-occurrence seems reasonable considering that predicates and generics share, as Burton-Roberts has shown, a good number of features. Specifically, they are both non-referential, in the sense that they do not refer to individuals but to concepts, to kinds.⁸

Now comes the time to evaluate Givón's chain in terms of the development of

⁶This chronology is proposed by Kärde's work (1943) and (involuntarily) supported by Keniston's examples (1937). My own data also coincide with Kärde in that non-taxonomic generic *un* is only present in the third period analysed.

⁷This fact is also noted in Leonetti (1988), a very short but extremely insightful paper in which, even without a corpus analysis, he reaches some conclusions that turned out to be accurately reflected in my results.

⁸In fact, Burton-Roberts (1976: 431) derives generic *a* from attributive *a*, so a sentence like *a beaver builds dams*, would have a deep structure like *to be a beaver is to build dams*. Thus, in his proposal, generic *a* can be analysed as a subjectless predicate. Additionally, consider also the well known analogy between characterising sentences and conditionals:

- (i) Un caballero no tiene memoria.
Si X es un caballero, X no tiene memoria.

These two sentences basically express the same concept. Note the attributive *un* in the protasis of the structure. See Burton-Roberts (1976) and Krifka et al. (1995: 50ss).

the Spanish indefinite article. We have seen that, for Givón (1981), the stages in the evolution of ‘one’ from numeral to indefinite article are as follows: first it is used to mark specific indefinites, then non-specific indefinites and only later does it become acceptable in generic sentences. He also argues that predicates constitute the very last context in which the indefinite article is accepted. Givón’s original scheme (figure 3.1, p. 83) is repeated below.

predicate nouns objects in future scope	>	generic subjects	>	objects in modal scope objects in NEG scope indefinite object
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In general terms, our results agree with Givón’s proposal: in the early documents, the majority of cases of *un* are specific. As its frequency increases, so do the non-specific cases, in such a way that by the seventeenth century, the percentage of non-specific *un* almost doubles that of the thirteenth. On the other hand, the extension of *un* to generics and predicates is indeed later than to non-specifics.

Nonetheless, some refinements are in order. In the first place, there is no justification to distinguish between different types of non-specifics, since all of them occur in the corpus since the first period (see section 8.1).

Second, as I have just said, there is no evidence that generic use of *un* is earlier than predicate use. Excluding taxonomic readings, in my corpus, generics are found only in the third period. However, following Kärde (1943), it is possible to date this change around the sixteenth century. On the other hand, with some exceptions, *un* starts to be used frequently in predicates in the last decades of the sixteenth century and increases in frequency in the subsequent centuries. Thus, it seems to me that both constructions can be considered to be features of Golden-Age Spanish.

With this in mind, we can propose a grammaticalization chain (figure 9.1) in which I intend to show the series of small transitions suffered by *un*, from its

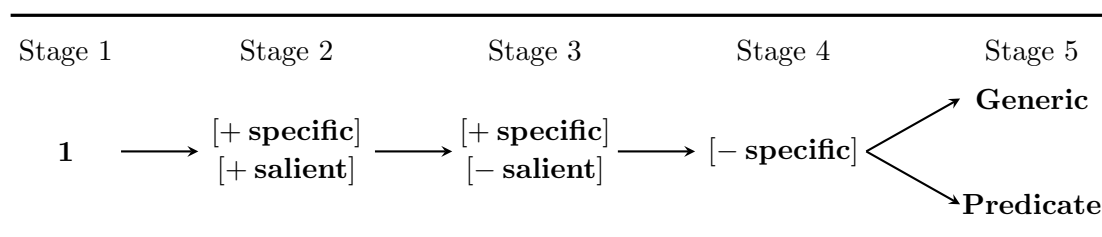


Figure 9.1: Grammaticalization chain of *un*

numeral status to its new role as an indefinite marker.⁹

According to this chain (figure 9.1), stage two is marked by the incorporation of $\bar{U}NUS$ into the domain of $QU\bar{I}DAM$, in which it marked only highly salient referents. In the following step, $\bar{U}NUS/un$ must have extended to non-salient specifics that constitute the link between stage 2 and 4: with specifics, non-salient *un* shares existence, with non-specifics, it shares non-topicality.

When our study begins in the late thirteenth century, the grammaticalization of the indefinite article had already reached the beginning of the fourth stage. Throughout the middle ages, we witness the gradual increase in the number of cases where it is interpreted as non-specific. Then, in the transition from Medieval to Golden-Age Spanish the process is completed: *un* is consolidated as a true indefinite article.¹⁰ Not only does its frequency triple, but specificity stops being relevant in its distribution. From then on, *un* marks all kinds of indefinites, independently of their referential status, including non-specifics, generics and even predicates.¹¹

Notice that as stated in chapter 2, grammaticalization can be regarded as a loss-win process. In the case of *un*, as time goes by, the innovative form loses its

⁹Notice that this scale is similar to the modified version of Givón's original proposal (1981), which I presented in figure 3.4, p. 84.

¹⁰By 'completed' I mean that the indefinite article has developed the whole range of values it has in today's Spanish. Of course, the final stage of the process would be reached with the mandatory presence of *un* in predicates, which as we know is not yet the case.

¹¹Recall that as stated by Bybee (2002), the increase in frequency is a key element of grammaticalization. See section 7.1.

cardinality value, but in turn it first acquires text organization properties as an introducer of salient referents, and then becomes a marker of indefinites.

Finally, *un* also develops pragmatic functions, as it is associated with evaluative nuances, not only with predicates (*Juan es un ladrón*) but also with count and mass nouns, where the presence of a valorative adjective imposes the presence of the article. Of course, the creation of the article does not mean that the original form is lost: the cardinal *un* has remained unchanged, as is shown both by the fidelity with which it reproduces the Latin usage pattern, and by the remarkable stability in its frequency of use, which as I showed in chapter 6, characterizes the three periods studied here. In this sense we can say that the grammaticalization of *unus* represents a process of divergence, not replacement, since the original form, with all its semantic features is kept in the language (Hopper 1991; Hopper & Traugott, 2003).¹²

Additionally, as I have demonstrated in chapters 7 and 8.1, against what has been commonly claimed in the Hispanic grammatical tradition, the plural form *unos* is a true plural indefinite article, whose evolution mirrors closely that of its singular counterpart.

One point remains problematic. Givón's proposal implies that at a given time, the presence of *un* unequivocally marked specific indefinites, since for him at the beginning of the grammaticalization process the weakened form of 'one' is exclusively employed with this type of referents. However, as we know, from the first period of our study *un* also appears with non-specifics. In principle, we could simply postulate that at an earlier stage of Romance, not examined in our study, this opposition indeed existed. For this to be true, when *ŪNUS* entered the grammaticalization process it would have had to completely lose its potential to appear with non-specifics, only to later regain it in its consolidation as an

¹²For the concept of divergence, see section 2.4.

indefinite article.¹³ The problem with this solution is that it is not difficult to find examples where $\bar{U}NUS$, even with a weakened cardinal sense, is necessarily interpreted as non-specific. Recall, for instance, the example from *De Oratore* (ex. (3b), chapter 5), which I repeat here as (1):

- (1) (mihi) qui sicut **unus pater familias** his de rebus loquor [Cicero, *de Oratore*, 1, 29]

Notice that neither is this one of the contexts where the numeral $\bar{U}NUS$ is expected to appear, nor does it introduce a salient referent; it is employed as a term of comparison, in a classic case of referential ambiguity. Interestingly, this example is widely cited in the grammars of Latin as a classic example of ‘indefinite article in the making’.¹⁴

Although a quantitative study of early Romance is required to assess whether bleached *un* was indeed used only with specifics, I am inclined to think that this restriction was never categorical. The predominance of specifics that we observe in Medieval Spanish is a consequence of $QU\bar{I}DAM$ not surviving in the Romance languages. As I explained in chapter 5, while $\bar{U}NUS$, like any numeral, was neutral with regard to specificity, $QU\bar{I}DAM$ and $AL\check{I}QU\check{I}S$ were each specialized with one type of indefinites.¹⁵ With the fall of $QU\bar{I}DAM$, $\bar{U}NUS$, which already in Latin was sometimes used in a similar fashion to $QU\bar{I}DAM$, extended its domain and became the default specific indefinite marker. However, this does not imply that $\bar{U}NUS$ lost its capacity to be non-specific. The increasing number of restrictions placed upon the appearance of BPs in Spanish, especially in thematic position, contributed to the increase in its frequency of use in this new role, where it was naturally associated with specific indefinites (as $QU\bar{I}DAM$ was). So while specific indefinites were mainly expressed by means of the descendant of $\bar{U}NUS$ (*cierto* was never

¹³Recall that all numerals, being indefinite quantifiers are ambiguous between these readings.

¹⁴Cf. Lewis & Short (1956 [1879]) and Ernout & Thomas (1953).

¹⁵At least if we consider an epistemic definition of specificity.

as common as *un*), non-specific indefinites had three possible realizations: either they were left bare, or they were introduced by the descendant of ALĪQUĪS, i.e. *algún*, or they were introduced by *un*. In other words, while in the case of specifics *un* only competed with *cierto*, in the case of non-specific indefinites, *un* had to overcome two rivals, which were deeply rooted in the non-specificity domain.¹⁶

In sum, although it is unquestionable that in the early stages of Spanish *un* appeared most frequently with specifics, I believe it is extremely unlikely that at any point it was possible to equate the contrast between \emptyset and *un* to the contrast between specific and non-specific indefinite.

Let us not forget that, important as it is, specificity was not the only factor involved in the extension of *un*. After all, as Lapesa has demonstrated (2000 [1974]), in Medieval Spanish the absence of determination was closely linked to the type of noun involved, and in particular to the distinction between individuated/non-individuated referents, which explains, among other things, the fact that mass and collective nouns were so resistant to the incorporation of both the definite and the indefinite article.

Finally, the grammaticalization of the indefinite article did not happen in isolation, but rather as a part of a larger process in which the Spanish indefinite NP went through an important number of changes (see Malkiel 1948). In particular, the generalization of *un* is closely linked with the decrease in frequency of BPs, and with the evolution of two other indefinite determiners, namely *algún* and *cierto*. Thus, although throughout the previous chapters we have provided some interesting notes concerning the development of these three forms, an in-depth

¹⁶Note that in early documents there are some cases where specific referents are undetermined, as in the example of *moros* in the *Poema de mio Cid*, (ex. (19), p. 186). However, as far as I can see, taking into account Lapesa's and Company's examples, these were not very common, at least from the thirteenth century on. Such a result is expected if we conclude that topicality was a major factor in the generalization of both the definite and indefinite article: given that specifics rank higher in a topicality scale than non-specifics, they must have been marked first. The example of *moros* is thus a residual case whose lack of determiner is explained by the other fundamental factor in the generalization of articles, i.e. the individual/non-individual distinction.

analysis, such as the one we have carried out for *un*, would certainly contribute to a better understanding of the reconfiguration of the Spanish indefinite paradigm. This task will be carried out in future research.

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Appendix A

Corpora

A.1 Main Corpus

First Period

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