Data Availability Statement: All relevant data are within the paper and its Supporting Information files.

Competing Interests: The Author(s) declare(s) no conflict of interest.

Indefinite DPs in the Gallo-Romance of Piedmont, in some Marginal Northern Italian Varieties and in Romansh[*]

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Abstract:

This article investigates indefinite DPs in some Romance varieties spoken in border contexts between linguistic groups. Specifically, we will consider Occitan and Franco-Provençal varieties of western Piedmont, the western Ligurian dialects, the Lombard-Alpine dialects, and Romansh, also in comparison with other North-Italian systems. The central issue is the nature of the construcs *DE + article/Bare Noun* of Italian varieties, where the preposition *de/di* (DE) 'of' does not introduce the usual possessive or partitive PPs, but DPs with indefinite reading. In negative contexts, such phrases mostly require the narrow scope interpretation. We argue that *DE + bare noun* constructs, as generally bare partitives, are based on the lexical properties of the preposition DE.

Keywords: *Di-complements, Indefinite DPs, Negative Markers, Partitives, Romance Varieties*

1. Introduction[1]

In this contribution, we will focus on indefinite DPs introduced by the preposition DE 'of' in dialects spoken in marginal areas of the Romance domain. We will investigate the constructs corresponding to the Partitive Articles (PAs) in which the preposition DE is followed by the definite article in Italian *(ho visto) dei ragazzi*, or in French *(j'ai vu) des garçons*. In these contexts, the preposition *de/di* is not preceded by the noun designing the possessum (genitive) or the part of a whole (partitive) and introduces DPs giving rise to the indefinite reading (Pinzin and Poletto 2022). In negative contexts, these sequences can be generally associated with the wide vs narrow scope of negation. More specifically, we will examine constructs where DE precedes bare plural count nouns or bare singular mass nouns (DEBN) or PAs, possibly in alternation with bare nouns. In all varieties a generic interpretation can be also obtained using definite plural count nouns or singular mass nouns (cf. Pinzin and Poletto 2022), as in standard Italian, a solution that we will give as always available. We have two main objectives, namely to analyze the properties of constructs with DE and bare names in expressing indefinite reference and clarify the relationship between negative markers and indefinite partitive structures *de + bare nouns*. The varieties we will examine, are spoken in peripheral or contact contexts in the continuum with the northern Italian dialects:

✓ Lombard-Alpine varieties (Semione and Casaccia)
✓ The dialects of Coazze and Cantoira (Franc-Provençal, Piedmont)
✓ The dialect of Pomaretto (Occitan, Piedmont)
✓ The western Ligurian dialects (Airole, Olivetta S. Michele, Pigna)
✓ The Romansh varieties of Donat and Disentis

2. Some key points

In the PAs in Italian, illustrated in (1), the definite article precedes the count noun in (1a) and the mass nouns in (1b). (2a) and (2b) provide the corresponding negative forms. We note that PA + mass nouns in the scope of negation are not natural for some speakers (cf. also Cardinaletti and Giusti 2016):

(1)	a.	hanno	visto	dei	ragazzi
		'They.have	seen	(some)	boys'
	b.	hanno	comprato	del	vino
		'They.have	bought	some	wine'

(2)	a.	non hanno	visto	dei	ragazzi
		Neg they.have	seen	(some)	boys
		'They did not see boys'			
	b.	non hanno	comprato	del	vino
		Neg they.have	bought	(some) wine	
		'They did not buy wine'			

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[1] For the sake of clarity, we list here some of the main abbreviations used in the glosses: ART = Article, F = Feminine, M = Masculine, NM = Negative Marker, Part = Partitive clitic, PL = Plural, PP = Past Participle, SCl = Subject Clitic, SG = Singular.

Chierchia (1997), Storto (2003), Cardinaletti and Giusti (2016) note that in Italian, PAs admit two possible interpretations, (3a) and (3b), according to the indefinite quantifier *de-i* is out of the scope of negation, wide scope reading, in (3a), or it is in the scope of negation, narrow scope reading, in (3b).

(3)   a.   there are some boys that they have not seen
                  [∃x [¬ [$_I$ hanno visto   [$_{PP}$ [$_{DP}$ x

(3)   b.   they haven't seen any boys
                  [¬ [∃**x** [$_I$ hanno visto   [$_{PP}$ [$_{DP}$ x

This double possibility is excluded with mass nouns, as in (4), that systematically trigger the narrow scope reading.

(4)   Non beve   del vino   (che è) troppo forte
        Neg (s)he.drinks   some wine   (that is) too strong
        '(S)he doesn't drink too strong wine'

In the place of DA constructions, we can find bare nouns in Italian, which trigger the narrow scope reading, as in (5a, b).

(5)   a.   non hanno visto ragazzi   [¬ [∃**x** ...
                  'They didn't see boys'
        b.   non ha bevuto vino
                  '(S)he didn't drink wine'

An important difference separates Italian from French, insofar as French excludes bare nouns and selects only "obligatory narrow scope with respect to other operators" (Storto 2003: 317), as in negative contexts. In the latter, French resorts to the use of the negative marker (NM) *pas* followed by the bare noun introduced by *de*, as in (6), with narrow scope reading.

(6)   il ne voit pas de garçons
        'He does not see (of) boys'

Finally, definite plurals with generic or kind content, largely used in spoken Italian and in dialects, on a par with lexical indefinite like *alcuni* and *qualche*, in negative contexts combine with the wide scope reading over negation (Beghelli and Stowell 1997), as in (7):

(7)   non ho visto i ragazzi/alcuni ragazzi   [∃x [¬ ...
        'I didn't see the boys/some boys'
        Non ho bevuto il vino/un po' di vino
        'I didn't drink the wine/some wine'

The scope properties of *di + article + noun* can derive from the reading associated with generic plurals, which, as we saw, only admit the narrow scope with negation. In Italian, *di* also makes the wide scope reading available, by the relational content of *di*, introducing a partitive reading. The latter, lacking the quantifier expressing the first argument of the relation, the 'part',

gives rise to a double possibility: the interpretation associated with the definite plural or the one associated with a part. In other words, the interpretation depends on the lexical properties of *di* and those of the other elements it combines with.

3. Indefinite DPs in diverse types of dialects: the data

Our data focus on a set of dialects encompassing various types of constructs. More precisely, we will consider the following occurrences of indefinite DPs:

✓ Dialects with PAs in positive contexts and *DE + Bare Nouns* (DEBN)
✓ Dialects with PAs in positive contexts and, in negative contexts, bare nouns
✓ Dialects with DEBNs in all contexts, positive and negative

It is of note that in all the dialects that we will examine, except for those of Liguria, the negation is realized by a minimizer of the type of *mia/pa*. This NM can precede bare nouns introduced by DE providing a narrow scope reading of the indefinite.

3.1 Semione (Blenio Valley, Canton Ticino)

The Lombard-Alpine dialect of Semione (Canton Ticino) admits PAs only with count nouns in positive sentences, as in (8a, a'). In the case of mass nouns a quantifier like *um pou* 'a little' is required, which introduces a partitive with a bare noun, as in (8b).

(8)   a.   u   vest   d   i   dɔn   (k   i   tʃitʃarava)
            have.1SG   seen   of   ART.PL   women   that   SCl   chatted
            'I have seen some women chatting'
      a'.   u   vest   d   i   oman (im pjatsa)
            have.1SG   seen   of   ART.PL   men (in the square)
            'I have seen some men (in the square)'
      b.   u   bu ′vy *(um pu)   ad viŋ/d akwa
            have.1SG   drunk some   of wine/of water
            'I have drunk some wine/water'

In negative contexts, we find bare nouns, as in (9a, b), or partitive structures with *DE + bare noun*, where the NM introduces the partitive both with count and mass nouns in (9a', b') usually doubled by the partitive clitic *n* 'of it/them', Part.

(9)   a.   u   mia   veʃt   dɔn   /ɔmaŋ
            have.1SG   NM   seen   women/men
            'I did not see women/men'
      a'.   a   n   ved-ja   mia   (a)d   dɔn
            SCl   Part   see-1SG NM   of   women
            'I have not seen women'
      b.   a   bev-ja   mia   viŋ
            SCl.1SG   drink-1sg NM   wine
            'I do not drink wine'

b'.	a	n	bev-ja	mia ad viŋ
	SCl.1SG	Part	drink-1SG	NM of wine

'I do not drink wine'

We see that:

✓ The preferred interpretation of PAs is specific and presuppositional
✓ With the NM *mia*, the indefinite is realized as a bare noun in the scope of negation
✓ The occurrence of the partitive quantifier *n* triggers *(a)d* 'of' followed by the bare noun with narrow reading in the negation scope

3.2 Piedmontese dialects: Trecate

In some Piedmontese dialects, such as that of Trecate (Novara), negation is introduced by a NM that selects a DE phrase including a bare plural count noun or a bare mass noun. In these varieties we find a distribution similar to that of French, where PAs introduce indefinite forms in positive contexts, in (10a, b), whereas in negative contexts indefinite forms are bare nouns selected by the preposition DE, in (11a, b). In the glosses PP indicates the Past Participle, and is associated with the Thematic Vowel, its specialized exponent, in analytic forms.

(10)	a.	ɔ	vist	d-i	dɔn	/	d-i	ɔm
		have.1SG	see.PP	of-ART.PL	women	/	of-ART.PL	men

'I have seen (some) women/men'

	b.	ɔ	bi'v-y	d a	vvik
		have.1SG	drink-PP	of-ART.SG	wine

'I have drunk (some) wine'

(11)	a.	ɔ	vist	mia ad	dɔn	/d	ɔm
		have.1sg	see.PP	NM of	women	/of	men

'I have not seen women/men'

	b.	i	bev-a	mia	ad	vik
		SCl	drink-1SG	NM	of	wine

'I don't drink wine'

In negative contexts, the reading of the indefinite is within the scope of negation, as illustrated in (12). We can think that the mechanism that obliges the narrow interpretation is the bare/indefinite nature of nouns, which makes free definite reading impossible.

(12)   [¬ [∃x [$_I$ beva [$_{vP}$ [$_{VP}$ [$_N$ mia (x) [$_{⊆P}$ ad [$_{NP}$ vik]]]
        'I do not drink wine'

We also find indefinite subjects introduced by DE, at least in existential clauses such as (13a, b). Since in these dialects also post-verbal subjects trigger a complete agreement (cf. Manzini and Savoia 2005), in (13) the verb agrees with the indefinite plural DP introduced by DE.

(13)   a.   in-j-u   mia   ad dɔn   / d ɔm
              aux-there-3PL   NM   of women   / of men
              'There are no women/men'
        b.   in-u   ɲ-y   mia   d dɔn   / ad ɔm
              aux-3PL   come.PP   NM   of women   / of men
              'No women/men have come'

We note that, in the examples in (13), the 3pl inflection –*u* is regularly realized in contexts where the subject is introduced by the preposition *(a)d* (Baldi and Savoia 2022).

3.3 Piedmontese Franco-Provençal (Coazze and Cantoira) and Occitan (Pomaretto)

A different distribution characterizes Franco-Provençal and Occitan varieties, such as those of Coazze (Sangone Valley), and Pomaretto (Germanasca Valley), where the indefinite (non-presuppositional) is realized by the sequence *de + bare nouns* in any context, where DE is followed by bare plurals in the case of count nouns and bare singulars with mass nouns. Thus, these dialects, unlike French, also use *de + bare nouns* in positive contexts. Like French and Trecate, they select the partitive with bare nouns in contexts of the negative marker. In other words, these dialects exclude PAs, occurring instead in French, Italian and several Northern Italian dialects (cf. Baldi and Savoia 2022, Pinzin and Poletto 2022). The data for Coazze illustrate this distribution, in (14a, b) for objects and (16) for subjects in positive sentences, and in (15a) and (15b) for negative sentences, where the NM is *pa*.

(14)   a.   i   εi   v-y   d dɔn-e   / d ɔm
              SCl   have.1SG   see.PP   of woman-FPL / of man.MPL
              'I have seen women/men'
        b.   i   εi   b-y   d viŋ
              SCl   have.1SG   drink-PP   of wine
              'I have drunk wine'

(15)   a.   i   εi   pa   v-y   d dɔn-e / d ɔm
              SCl   have.1SG   NM   see-PP   of woman-FPL / of man.MPL
              'I have not seen women/men'
        b.   i   εi   pa   b-y   d viŋ
              SCl   have.1SG   NM   drink-PP   of wine
              'I have not drunk wine'

(16)   a j   ø   d dɔn-e k   i   drøm-unt
                 SCl   has   of woman-FPL that   SCl.PL sleep-3PL
                 'there are women that are sleeping'
                                                                        (Coazze)

The Franco-Provençal dialect of Cantoira (Lanzo Valley) shows a similar distribution, as illustrated by the data in (17a, b) for positive contexts, (18a, b) for negative contexts, with the NM *ɲiŋ*, and (19) for the subject.

(17) a. dʒ   e   vy'-u   ət fymɛll-əs   / d ɔm
          SCl   have.1SG   see-PP   of woman-FPL   / of man.MPL
          'I have seen women/men'
      b. dʒ   e   b-y   ət viŋ
          SCl   have.1SG   drink-PP   of wine
          'I have drunk wine'

(18) a. dʒ   e   ɲiŋ   vy'-u   ət fymɛll-əs   / d ɔm
          SCl   have.1SG   NM   see-PP   of woman-FPL   / of man.MPL
          'I have not seen women/men'
      b. dʒ   e   ɲiŋ   b-y   ət viŋ
          SCl   have.1SG   NM   drink-PP   of wine
          'I have not drunk wine'

(19)   ət fymɛll-əs   u   dyərm-unt
          of woman-FPL   SCl.PL   sleep-3PL
          'women are sleeping'

(Cantoira)

Stark and Davatz (2022) distinguish between Franco-Provençal A, with PAs, and Franco-Provençal B (Southern area of Franco-Provençal) including Swiss and Aosta Valley varieties. Their experimental investigation showed that also these speakers can variably present fully-fledged PAs. This is also in the case of negative contexts, where bare nouns would be however expected. Stark and Davatz refer to the analysis of Ihsane (2008), in turn assuming the cartographic representation of DPs proposed by Borer (2005), where the #P (Number Phrase) embeds the Div(ider)P, the phrase of the classifier, and the NP. The analysis of Stark and Davatz assumes that the definite article is inserted in the position # and then lowered to the position of the partitive element *de* identified with a type of Divider.

Occitan dialects are in turn characterized by the use of *DE + bare nouns*, as exemplified by the data from Pomaretto (Germanasca Valley), both in the positive sentences in (20a, b) and in the negative ones in (21a, b). In negative contexts, the partitive is introduced by the NM *pa*. Finally, (22a) and (22b) illustrate the occurrence of the bare partitives as indefinite subjects.

(20) a. ai   vi:t   də dɔnn-a   / d ɔm
          have.1SG   see.PP   of women-FPL   / of men
          'I have seen women/men'
      b. ai   bə'g-y   də viŋ
          have.1SG   drink-PP   of wine
          'I have drunk wine'

(21) a. ai   pa   vi:t   də dɔnn-a   / d ɔm
          have.1SG   NM   see.PP   of women-FPL   / of men
          'I have not seen women/men'
      b. ai   pa   bə'g-y   də viŋ
          have.1SG   NM   drunk-PP   of wine
          'I have not drunk wine'

(22)   a.   də dɔnn-a   a   dørm-əŋ   də d lai
                of women-FPL SCl.FPL   sleep-3PL   there
                'Women are sleeping'
        b.   ʎ   a   bjɛn   də dɔnn-a
                SCl   have.3SG   a.lot   of woman-PL
                'There are many women'

<div align="right">(Pomaretto)</div>

(22a) illustrates the pre-verbal occurrence of the indefinite, like in (19). In these cases, not particularly frequent, the indefinite is interpreted as partially/contextually given, as observed by Ihsane (2022: 254), which traces back these subjects to "a degree of *referential* givenness that allows them to function as preverbal subjects". In (22b) the canonic existential structure with the postverbal subject and partial agreement is exemplified. In these dialects, the postverbal position characterizes focalized subjects (cf. the discussion in Section 3.6).

3.4 Casaccia (Lombard-Alpine, Bregaglia Valley)

The Lombard-Alpine variety of Casaccia presents only bare nouns, as in (23a, b). In negative contexts either the normal NM *mia* combines with bare nouns, as in (24a, b), or the specialized NM *brik-at* is inserted, immediately before the bare noun, as in (25a, b).

(23)   a.   j(e) a   avˈd-y   don-a-ŋ   / omaŋ
                SCl have.1SG   see-PP   woman-F-PL   / man.PL
                'I have seen women/men'
        b.   j   a   baˈv-y   viŋ
                SCl   have.1SG   drink-PP   wine
                'I have drunk wine'

(24)   a.   j(e) a   mia   avˈd-y   don-a-ŋ   / omaŋ
                SCl have.1SG   NM   see-PP   women-F-PL   / man.PL
                'I have not seen women/men'
        b.   j   a   mia   baˊv-y   viŋ
                SCl   have.1SG   NM   drink-PP   wine
                'I have not drunk wine'

(25)   a.   j(e) a   avˈdy   brik-at don-a
                SCl have.1sg   seen   NM-DE   women-F
                'I have seen no women'
        b.   j a   baˈvy   brik-at viŋ
                SCl have.1SG   drunk   NM-DE   wine
                'I have drunk no wine'

According to a possible analysis, *brik-at* includes the minimizer *brik* 'little piece' and the preposition DE, as suggested in the glosses of (25). (26) provides examples of indefinite DPs as subjects. (26a, b) show the structures where the subject, in Topic, is doubled by the partitive clitic *n*. In the context of a post-verbal 3rd person subject, we find partial agreement, in the 3rd singular, with the verb and the SCl, as typically in northern Italian dialects (Manzini and Savoia 2005).

(26)   a.   (da)   don-a-ŋ   a   nn   e   rivɛd-a   brik(-at)
              of   women-F-PL   SCl   Part   be.3PS   arrived-f   NM
              'no women have arrived'
       a'.   l   e   ɲ-i   brik-at   don-a
              SCl   be.3PS   come-PP.MSG   NM-DE   woman-F
              'no woman has come'
       b.   da viŋ   a   nn   e   kroˈd-a   dʒo   brik
              of wine   SCl   of-it   be.3PS   fall-PP   down   NM
              'no wine has fallen'

We remind that *bri(k)* is the minimizer in negative scope in some of these Alpine dialects, as in (27).

(27)   so   bri   ki   tʃá m-ɛ
       know.1SG   NM   who   call-PP
       'I don't know who to call'

                                                                        (Campodolcino)

Meyer-Lübke (1935) connects *bri* to a French form with the sense of 'little thing'.

3.5. Romansh varieties: neither PAs nor DE

Romansh varieties do not show PAs but introduce indefinite DPs as bare plurals, similar in this to the Friulian dialects, as documented in Baldi and Savoia (2022: Section 6). The relevant distribution is illustrated for Donat (Sutsilvan) and Disentis (Sursilvan). (28a, b) exemplify indefinite objects with and without the NM and (28c) the occurrence of an indefinite subject in Topic position. In any case the polar element *niɲ* 'none' can be used. The data from Disentis are comparable. (29a, b) illustrate count and mass nouns in object position; (29c, c') illustrate indefinite post-verbal subjects.

(28)   a.   jau   vets   (bɪtʃ   /   niɲ-as)   don-as
              I   see.1SG   NM   /   no-FPL   woman-FPL
              'I (do not) see women/I see no women'
       b.   jau bef   (bɪtʃ / niɲ) vɪŋ
              I drink.1SG   (NM / no) wine
              'I (do not) drink wine/I drink no wine'
       c.   don-as   e-ʎ   niɲ-as
              woman-FPL   is-SCl   none-FPL
              'there are no women'

                                                                   (Donat (Sutsilvan))

(29)   a.   jau   ai   (bu) viˈ-u   dun-a-s   / umaŋ-s
              I   have.1SG   NM see-PP   woman-F-PL   / man-PL
              'I did not see women/men'
       b.   jau bib-əl   (bu) vɪŋ
              I drink-1SG   NM wine
              'I do not drink wine/I drink no wine'

c. iʎ   a   (bu)   dun-a-s   / umaŋ-s
    SCl   have.3SG   (NM)   woman-F-PL   / man-PL
    'there are no women/men'

                                                                 (Disentis (Sursilvan))

3.6. A summary table

We can schematize the different types of distribution that we have observed in table (30), in which BN = Bare (Count/Mass) Noun, NM + di + BN in negative sentences, NS = narrow scope ¬∃, PA = Partitive Article, WS = wide scope, ∃¬.

(30)	Positive sentences		Negative sentences	
	BN	PA	BN	PA
Italian	+	+	+NS	+NS/WS
Semione	-	+	+ NS	-
Casaccia	+	-	(*brik-at*) + NS	-
Trecate	+	-	DBN	-
Fr.-Pr./Occ.	DBN	-	DBN	-
Romansh	+	-	+ NS	-

A generalization shows up, whereby the availability of DE + BN excludes DA, both in positive and in negative sentences. BNs and PAs are generally in complementary distribution, even if their coexistence is attested, for instance in Italian. Italian PAs are characterized by introducing both narrow and wide-scope readings in negative contexts. This possibility is however excluded by the other constructs with BNs and DE + BN.

4. Partitives in negative contexts

According to the literature, the negation is an operator that takes in its scope the arguments or the event introduced by the verb. The interaction between negation and arguments is proved by the many instances of the interplay between negative elements and (pro)nouns. A typical case is provided by the phenomena concerning reordering and specialized forms of object clitics in negative contexts in many Romance languages (cf. Manzini and Savoia 2005, 2007, 2017). A classic syntactic approach to negation in Romance assumes that negation adverbs such as *pas* in French fill the Spec position of a NegP projection generated below the I position targeted by the verb (Pollock 1989). The head of NegP can in turn be filled by a negative clitic like *ne* in French, whose higher inflectional position depends on cliticization. In other languages, no negative head is present, as, for instance, in Romansh or in Occitan and Franco-Provençal. Belletti (1990) applies the same theory to Italian, by moving the negative head, originating in the Neg position, to a higher clitic position. In this line, Poletto (2017: 82) concludes that "all negative markers occurring in languages with discontinuous negation start out as a unit, […] first merged inside the vP, […] definitely in an argumental one", i.e. the category NegP, as in (31).

(31)   [FocusP NO [MinimizerP mica [ScalarP non [ExistentialP (ni)ente]]]]

The movement from this position should explain the different distribution with respect to other adverbials. A more complex set of data, involving Northern Italian dialects, is considered

by Zanuttini (1997) who proposes that there are several Neg positions. Specifically, a Neg position is generated above I, while below I there are other Neg positions. The inflectional Neg position hosts negative clitics in languages like Italian which do not require a sentential negation adverb. On the contrary languages which require a sentential negation adverb generate it in one of the lower Neg positions; if a clitic combines with the adverb, it is generated in the head of the relevant Neg position and moves to the inflectional domain by cliticization.

In a Romance language such as Italian, the negative clitic combines with a negative argument or adverb (*niente* 'nothing', *mai* 'never', etc.) to yield a single logical negation. Haegeman and Zanuttini (1991) explain this phenomenon on the basis of a Neg Criterion, whereby the negative clitic in the head position of a NegP requires a Neg operator in its Spec and vice versa. The head-Spec configuration is, in turn, read as an agreement relation, yielding a single negation *interpretation*. This analysis presupposes that *niente, mai* and generally *n*-words, including minimizers like *mia*, are negative quantifiers. A large body of literature on Romance languages argues for a different conclusion whereby Romance *n*-words are negative polarity items (Rizzi 1982; Laka 1990; Longobardi 1992; Acquaviva 1994; Garzonio and Poletto 2008).

In other words, *n*-words have no intrinsically negative properties but are simply existential as in Poletto 2017, or free variables in the terms of Heim (1982), interpreted in the scope of the negation. More precisely the more reasonable conclusion is that the negative lexical elements, both clitic heads, and NMs, are not the lexical exponent of the negation operator but express its scope.

Based on the preceding discussion we assume that:

* *n*-words are *indefinite nouns* and not negative quantifiers;
* NMs either coincide with negative arguments such as 'nothing' or are bare nouns;
* Treating them as nominal elements, connected to the internal argument of the predicate, explains their ability to introduce the partitive, or their sensitivity to the person ($1^{st}/2^{nd}$ vs. 3rd) of IA itself;
* We assign sentential negation adverbs to a nominal, argument-related category, tentatively an indefinite quantifier.

In keeping with these assumptions, the so-called negative concord is in fact the expected state of affairs. Thus there is a single instance of the negation at the interpretive level, as in the example in (32a), from a Piedmontese dialect where the negative clitic and the negation marker are combined; the latter is also the negative argument 'nothing'. The variables introduced by the negative clitic and by the NM are interpreted in the scope of the same Neg (and existential closure) operator, as in (32b).

(32) a. a   n   t   drɔm-i   næinta
          SCl   Neg   SCl   sleep-2SG   NM
          'You do not sleep'
      b. [¬ [∃x,y [$_{Cl}$ a [$_{Neg}$ n (x) [$_{Cl}$ t [$_I$ drɔmi   [$_N$ næinta (y)
          'You do not sleep'

                                                                    (Oviglio)

As shown by (32a, b), NMs may coincide with the negative argument 'nothing', as in many Northern Italian dialects, especially in Piedmontese varieties (cf. Zanuttini 1997; Manzini and Savoia 2005; Baldi and Savoia 2022). Another major class of sentential negations derives from

bare nouns, including minimizers: *mi(c)a* or *briza* 'crumb', *bu(ka)* 'piece', *pa* 'step', as in the cases of *mia* of the Trecatese, *pa* of the Occitan, *bitʃa* or *bu* of Romansh, etc. As well-known, already Meyer-Lübke (1899: 693-694) proposes that sentential negation adverbs originate in a partitive construction: Old French examples such as (33) show the 'negative adverb' *mie*, a bare noun 'minimizer', overtly co-occurring with the partitive. Similar data are documented for Old North Italian varieties (Poletto and Garzonio 2009).

(33)   de s'espee   ne   volt   mie   guerpir
       of his sword   not   he.wanted   not   to abandon
       'He didn't want to abandon his sword'

                                                              (Chanson de Roland 465)

The interaction between the negation and the case assignment to the internal argument of the verb is found in Northern Italian dialects. In the Piedmontese variety of Trecate, in (34), the negation triggers the partitive even in the presence of a definite interpretation. As we see, the partitive enclitic –*na* introduces the IA as a partitive construct selected by the NM *mia*.

(34)   (a mmarju)   tʃam-um   -na   mija
               the Mario   call-1PL   of.him   not
               'We are not calling Mario'

                                                                          (Trecate)

In French, negative environments require indefinite DPs to be introduced as bare count plurals and bare mass singulars preceded by *de*, otherwise excluded in the absence of nega-tion, as in (35) (Kayne 1984). We have seen the same distribution in Sections 3.2 and 3.3 for north-eastern Piedmontese dialects and Occitan and Franco-Provençal dialects.

(35)   Je   *(ne)   veux   pas   de   cadeaux
       I   not   want   not   of   gifts
       'I (don't) want gifts'

Kayne (1984) proposes a structure including a non-lexicalized negative quantifier Q fol-lowed by the partitive *de cadeaux*, yielding a structure of the type in (36).

(36)   *je ne veux pas* [Q [*de cadeaux*]].

In our analysis, NMs such as *mia, pa* are specialized minimizers co-occurring with the negative operator. Thus, in the case of a sentence like *i beva mia ad vik* 'I don't drink wine' from (11b) for Trecate, we can assign to the NM the lexical entry in (37a), where *x* is the variable, without recourse to silent Q elements, implying the negation operator as in (37b).

(37)   a.   [$_N$ mia/pa (x)]
       b.   [$_¬$ $\exists$x [$_I$ i beva ... [$_{VP}$ [$_{N/Q}$ mia (x) [$_{PP}$ ad vik]]]...   'I doesn't drink wine'
                                                                          (Trecate)

Bare nouns introduce existential readings in the scope of the negative operator, associated with a kind-level denotation (Chierchia 1997). The idea that n-words of the 'niente' type are

existential elements is discussed in Poletto (2017: 83), who proposes a theory of negation whereby negation asserts that "something exists, and that it is the minimal entity on a scale" defined by minimizers.

Summing up:

✓ the sentential negation marker is a nominal element related to the internal argument of the verb (with which it can lexically coincide);
✓ the NM can form a partitive structure with the internal argument.

5. Syntactic analysis

Needless to say, PAs raise the question of their relation with true partitives, i.e. *due/ alcuni dei ragazzi* 'two/some if the boys'. Chierchia (1997: 88) analyses partitives as DPs in which the quantifier in D combines with a silent N [parts] selecting the PP introduced by *di* 'of', as in (38).

(38)   [$_{DP}$ three [$_{NP}$ [*parts*] [$_{PP}$ of [$_{DP}$ the boys]]…

In the bare partitives like '… dei ragazzi', *dei* absorbs the silent specification of the part-whole relation and moves to the D position of the DP. In other words, in these contexts *dei* ends by lexicalizing D, as in (39) (*ibidem*, 90).

(39)   [$_{DP}$ dei $_{[parts]}$[$_{NP}$ [parts] [$_{PP}$ de [$_{DP}$ i ragazzi]]…

This analysis involves a silent syntactic category that provides *dei* with a derived interpretation, to the effect that *dei* is no longer the usual preposition *of* + *article* with possessive or partitive reading as in (40a, b), but realizes a different syntactic object.

(40)   a.   il libro della ragazza
                 'The book of the girl'
         b.   molti di quei libri…
                 'Many of those books…'

With a spirit not much different, Cardinaletti and Giusti (2016) propose that PAs are to be treated as neither a partitive preposition nor a quantifier but as a plural indefinite determiner. Cardinaletti and Giusti (2016: 59) differentiate bare nouns, quantifiers, partitives, and PA in structural terms, so contrasting (11a) and (11b):

(41)   a.   ho   visto   [$_{DP}$ dei [$_{NP}$ ragazzi]]
                 I.have   seen   de.art boys
         b.   ho   visto   [[$_{QP}$ alcuni [$_{DP}$ pro]] [$_{PP}$ de [$_{DP}$ [$_{D}$ i] [$_{NP}$ ragazzi]]]]
                 I.have   seen   some   of   the   boys

In (41a) the indefinite *dei* realizes quantificational properties occurring in the complementary distribution with quantifiers. Cardinaletti and Giusti support a structural difference between the indefinite *dei*, treated as a PA, and the genitive/partitive *dei*, treated as a true preposition (+ article). For instance, PAs may be embedded by another preposition, like in

con dei libri/con del vino 'with some books/with some wine', a possibility excluded for genitives and partitives.[2]

Another proposal concerning pseudopartitives introduced by the preposition *di/de* 'of' in Italian and French, is formulated in Manzini (2019), whereby in these contexts the preposition does not embed the DP, as in usual PPs, but it is inserted inside the DP and the probe is the case feature K of DP. Zamparelli (2008: 319) characterizes the partitive *di* 'of' as an operator selecting two arguments, the specifier [a copy of NP inside DP] and the complement [a full DP], that "returns the denotation of its specifier minus the denotation of its complement". Substantially, *di/of* identifies the residue from the whole *specifier + complement*. A point that must be stressed, is that the relation between the complement of the preposition *di/de* 'of' and its head can involve the agreement, as in the cases in (42).

(42)   … molt-i$_{MPL}$/un pochin-i$_{MPL}$ di (que-i$_{MPL}$) biscott-i$_{MPL}$
         '… many/a little bit of (those) cookies'

In fact, a crucial point is the occurrence of the bare partitive form also as a subject, triggering the agreement with the verb even if introduced by DE, as in (43).

(43)   dei ragazzi [*specific reading*] non studiano
         'Some boys do not study'

In the current literature, as we have seen, the problem is (partially) solved by assuming that *de/di + Art* becomes an article or a quantifier, in turn. Actually, also the head of a true partitive can agree with the NP in the DE-phrase, as in (43). If we assume that *di/de* is the preposition also in *DE + Art + noun* constructs, the question of the agreement shows up.

Let us now consider the nature of *di/of*, the introducer of possessum-possessor/part-whole relation. We find a conceptual continuum from an occasional zonal possession in the sense of Belvin and Den Dikken (1997),[3] to an inalienable possession or to a part of a whole or a unit belonging to a set. In any case, the relation which holds is that of sub-set or part-whole, i.e. inclusion [⊆]. The relationship between possession (genitive/dative) and partitive – one element of a set – is intuitive; DE/inclusion encompasses partitives and genitives (Lorusso and Franco 2017). Our idea (cf. Baldi and Savoia 2022) is that the analysis of Chierchia whereby *di/of* externalizes a part-whole relation is able to account for the properties of PAs. Thus, we can treat *di/of* as the operator of inclusion, as in (44).

(44)   DE (di/ of) = [⊆]

[2] Actually, the combination of *di* (or other prepositions) with another preposition is independently well attested, as in locatives such as *su di lui, sotto di lui* 'on him, below him', *in sulla cima* 'on the top', etc. generally involving lexical/interpretive constraints (Franco, Manzini, and Savoia 2021; Savoia, Baldi, and Manzini 2020).

[3] Belvin and den Dikken (1997:170) observe that "entities have various zones associated with them, such that an object or eventuality may be included in a zone associated with an entity without being physically contained in that entity […] The type of zones which may be associated with an entity will vary with the entity". Hence, possession – on a par with location – can be understood as a type of 'zonal' inclusion (Manzini and Savoia 2011).

If we assume that PAs are nothing but an occurrence of DE, PA constructs, in comparison with typical possessives or partitives, appear to preserve only the including argument, as in (45) for '…dei libri'.

(45)   PA: [$_P$ di [⊆] [[$_{Art}$ i$_{MPL}$] libr-i$_{MPLwhole}$]]

We conclude that *di/de* introduces a sort of part from a whole reading, corresponding to the generic interpretation of the definite plural. As for the agreement with an element outside the DP, we conclude that the agreement can skip over the prepositional barrier, in the sense that Minimal Search is sufficient to determine the agreement between the head and the complement of *di/de* in partitive reading. In PA readings, we must admit that the indefinite can be identified as the semantically natural goal of an argument introduced by the verb.

Resuming the analysis in Baldi and Savoia (2022), PAs introduce a subset of a set of individuals or parts of a mass as the preposition DE normally does. The definite article, in itself, is in turn able to support a generic reading, as evidenced by its occurrence as a possible instantiation of the indefinite interpretation. This proposal is supported also by the fact that in many of these dialects, DE introduces a bare noun, thus excluding the problem represented by the definite determiner. In other words, there is not even a formal reason for changing DE into a type of determiner.

5.1. DE + *bare noun*

Differently from the dialect of Trecate in Section 3.2, in Franco-Provençal and Occitan dialects in 3.3, indefinite forms are expressed by bare plural/mass nouns, excluding the definite article: (i) indefinite forms are partitive constructs excluding a presuppositional reading; (ii) the sequence DE + *bare noun* determines the agreement of the verb, as in (16)-(19)-(22), suggesting that the plural inflection of the noun is somehow read by T/v. The lack of a definite article entails a narrow scope. Generic definite articles are otherwise usual.

It is interesting to dwell on the distribution attested in the Casaccia dialect. Indeed, we have supposed that *brik-at* in (25) combines the minimizer *brik* with the phonetic outcome *–at* from an original *de*. This analysis is supported by the fact that *brik-at* selects bare nouns, exactly as the sequence NM + DE in Trecate dialect in Section 3.2. A special and separate problem is that in this dialect in the context *brik-at don-a* 'no women' in (25a), the noun apparently lacks the feminine plural exponent *–ŋ*, realized in *don-a-ŋ* 'women' in the sentence *j a av'dy don-a-ŋ* 'I have seen women' in (23a). We know that in this dialect *–ŋ* occurs only on a nominal element in DP, on D if it is present, otherwise on the noun. The idea discussed in Manzini, Savoia, and Baldi (2020, 2021) is that *–a* is in turn a specialized realization of the plural. However, our idea is that *brik-at*, insofar as it selects bare plurals, admits in this case the most elementary form of plural of feminines, similar to what happens in dialects in Section 3 where the bare plural is introduced in the contexts with DE and the non-presuppositional/indefinite reading is triggered.

Coming back to the syntactic nature of the partitive structures, we wonder how a partitive subject, a PA or DE + BN indefinite DPs can occur as subjects and legitimize the agreement, as already noted in the discussion around (43) in Section 5. In all these varieties indefinite subjects occur in postverbal position, like in Italian, and generally imply a partial agreement with the verb, which is in the 3rd singular. Moreover, in all these varieties, in the contexts with postverbal subjects, an SCl of 3rd singular person is inserted. This picture matches that of Franco-Provençal provided in Ihsane (2022), where the preverbal indefinite subject introduced by DE is generally excluded, except for particular contexts associated with a certain degree of givenness, where bare

partitives are specific. Substantially the same distribution is shown by all of our varieties. Some examples emerge in the existential contexts of Trecate in (13a, b), where the postverbal subject systematically agrees with the verb. Other cases are provided in (19) for Cantoira and (22a) for Pomaretto, where the discourse context favored the quasi-topical nature of the indefinite, and in (16) for Coazze, where the agreement is introduced by means of a relative element. Thus, the conclusions of Ihsane are substantially supported by our data.

Let us consider the agreement between a DP introduced by a preposition and the verb, independently of the type of subject. We remind that in the traditional approach to the subject in cartographic/GB models, EPP is associated with a DP that overtly or abstractly moves to the Spec of TP where its φ-features check the features of T. But, in the case of indefinite DPs introduced by PA or DE, i.e. prepositional structures, are involved. Naturally, if these occurrences of *di/de* are interpreted as articles or something similar, as proposed by Cardinaletti and Giusti (2016) there is no problem. Our idea is, on the contrary, that *de/di* is the true preposition and that agreement implies a different structural approach (cf. Pinzin and Poletto 2022: 52).

As to agreement, we retain the analysis of Manzini and Savoia (2018), and Baldi and Savoia (2022), in which:

✓ The agreement is treated as the result of the identification of phi-feature bundles specifying the same argument, i.e. denoting a single referent;

✓ A solution based on the Minimal Search mechanism is perfectly in line with the recent revision of the model proposed by Chomsky (2020, 2021).

We base on the insight of Lorusso and Franco (2017), whereby in quantified NPs of the type *un centinaio di persone*, P may or may not behave like a phase boundary. In this line, we maintain the idea that indefinite, partitive, and genitive constructs are based on the same elementary predicate [⊆], expressed by *de* 'of', which introduces the super-set of individuals or parts to which the head noun belongs. The operation Merge gives rise to the amalgam (Chomsky 2020, 2021) where *DE* gives rise to the indefinite reading, as in (46) for the indefinite ət fymɛll-əs 'of women' in (18a) and (19) for Cantoira.

(46) $< d_\subseteq, [\text{fyməll-əs}_{\text{FPL}}]> \rightarrow [_\subseteq d_\subseteq [_{\text{FPL}} \text{fyməll-əs}]]$

In (46), the inflection *-əs*, the simple plural, merged to the noun, preserves its generic interpretation, while *d/ət* 'of' introduces the part of this whole. We are induced to conclude that the properties of the embedded noun, the whole, are available to provide the interpretation of an argument of the verb, the object or the subject. In the latter case, we can think that Minimal Search is sufficient to allow features realized on T to agree with the features of the noun embedded under DE, as in the sentence in (19) ət fymɛll-əs u dyərm-unt 'some women sleep' for the Franco-Provençal of Cantoira.

In keeping with Chomsky (2019, 2021), there is no *v* movement and the subject can be interpreted at the phase of T by Minimal Search. Specifically, 'head raising' is seen as problematic insofar as it does not entail semantic effects and, structurally, it is counter-cyclic. In this sense, the approach to the agreement that we adopt is inspired by the idea of Chomsky, Gallego and Ott (2019: 238) that raising to the subject is an unnecessary operation, whereby "The features invoked in the technical literature to license applications of MERGE are typically *ad hoc* and without independent justification, 'EPP features' and equivalent devices being only the most obvious case". Chomsky (2019: 268) concludes that "The easy answer, which is in my recent

papers, is simply to drop the condition that Internal Merge (Movement) has to be triggered, so it's free, like External Merge". In this line, Chomsky (2021: 30 and 36 ff.), assumes that Merge operation can create the combination of morphemes in complex words:

The first step in a derivation must select two items from the lexicon, presumably a root R and a categorizer CT, forming {CT, R}, which undergoes amalgamation under externalization, possibly inducing ordering effects […]. With head-movement eliminated, *v* need no longer be at the edge of the *v*P phase, but can be within the domains of PIC and Transfer, which can be unified. E[xternal]A[rgumernt] is interpreted at the next phase. (*Ibidem*: 36)

The inflected forms [INFL [v, Root]] created by amalgamation is interpreted at Phase T, and *v* is not involved in the procedure. Following Chomsky (2019, 2021) in eliminating the need for head movement, ət fymɛll-əs realizes the φ-feature referring to the EA associated with the verb in the Phase C-T, as in (47).

(47)   CP   T$_φ$ v$_φ$ V
        u$_{PL}$ dyərm-unt$_{PL}$ [$_ɕ$ d [$_{FPL}$ fymɘll-əs]]

In the sentence in (47), the elementary predicate ət fymɛll-əs provides the agreement properties between the N/whole and a member of the whole, here realized by the plural features of the inflected verb, associated with T. In other words, in the absence of a quantifier or a noun that introduces DE + N, the features of N can agree with the nominal features realized by the verbal head in T.

Before concluding this section, consider briefly the varieties lacking partitive articles, such as those of Romansh in Section 3.5. We see that:

- Generic existential is introduced by some quantifier (mostly an evaluative) combining with the plural of count nouns or the singular of mass nouns;
- In negative contexts, negation can license bare nouns;
- In some dialects, bare forms are admitted only or preferentially for mass nouns;
- Definite articles admit the indefinite interpretation.

Romance varieties use a lexical element of the type of Italian *certi* as a quantifier: a determiner with specific reference, as in (48).

(48)   tʃɛrt-a-s   dun-a-s en (bɪtʃ) vaɲid-a-s
        certain-F-PL   women-F-PL   are NM come-F-PL
        'certain women have (not) come'

(Donat)

As a consequence, *certi* gives rise to a wide scope interpretation ∃¬.

6. Western Ligurian dialects: Bare partitives with bare nouns without NMs

Referring to the schema in (30), negation generally imposes a nonspecific and indefinite reading, selecting bare nouns, which preserve their generic reading, both in plural count nouns and in mass nouns, independently of negation. As a consequence, in some dialects, bare nouns are inserted in negative contexts, as in Semione, thus excluding PAs, which instead occur in

positive sentences. In Trecate the negative marker triggers the *partitive + bare noun*, while in Occitan e Franco-Provençal this same construct occurs in positive and negative sentences.

Based on the data summarized in (30), we conclude that the NM does not necessarily requires DE + BN, as the data of Romansh and Casaccia varieties demonstrate, where the minimizers *buka/betʃ* and *mia* do not introduce partitive constructs but bare nouns. Many elements would seem to suggest that, on the contrary, DE + BN implies the NM, whereby bare partitives require to be introduced by NMs. This relation, actually, is also excluded. In fact, there are some Western Ligurian dialects that introduce DE + BN, even if they lack a negative marker.[4] In these dialects, as in general in Ligurian dialects, negation is introduced by the clitic element *nu*. In (49) and (50) we show the data of the extreme-western dialects of Airole and Olivetta S. Michele. In these varieties, the indefinite constructs DE + BN are introduced both in positive and negative contexts, whereas the PAs including the definite article are excluded. (49a)-(50a) and (49b)-(50b) illustrate the occurrence of bare partitives with count and mass nouns respectively; (49c) and (49d) provide examples in which the indefinite preceded by *de* is the subject. In no case, the inflected PA is inserted.

(49)   a.   (nu)   ɔŋ   vist-u   de   fiʎø-i   / don-e
              Neg   have.1SG   seen-PP.MSG   of   boy-MPL/ woman-FPL
              'I have (not) seen boys/ women'
        b.   (nu)   ɔŋ   beˈv-y-u   de viŋ
              Neg   have.1SG   drunk-PP-MSG   of wine
              'I have (not) drunk wine'
        c.   (nu)   ɛ   ariv-a-u   (de)   fiʎø-i   / don-e
              Neg   be.3sg arrived-PP-MSG   of   boy-MPL / woman-FPL
              'Some boys/ women have arrived'
        d.   s   ɛ   vers-a-u   de viŋ
              Rifl   be.3SG shed-PP-MSG   of wine
              'Some wine fell'

                                                                    (Airole)

(50)   a.   (nu)   veg-i   də frem-e   / dʒuv-i
              Neg   see-1SG of   woman-FPL   / boy-MPL
              'I (do not) see boys/ women'
        b.   (nu) bev-i   də viŋ
              Neg drink-1sG   of wine
              'I (do not) drink wine'

                                                          (Olivetta S. Michele)

The data from Pigna in (51) illustrate an intermediate situation, where only negative contexts select DE + BN, while positive contexts introduce PAs. (51a) and (51b) illustrate PAs in positive sentences; (51a') and (51b') illustrate the negative contexts where the negative clitic combines with the bare partitive. In (51c) the occurrence of the indefinite subject introduced by *de* is exemplified in existential contexts with partial agreement with the postverbal subject.

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[4] Cecilia Poletto and Francesco Pinzin have drawn our attention to this aspect during the DiFuPaRo Project workshop at the University of Zürich on 24 June 2022.

(51) a. e   veg-u   de-e   ˈfemuɾ-e   / de-i   garsu-i
         SCl   see-1SG   of the   woman-FPL   / of the boy-MPL
         'I see boys/ women'

      a'. e   nu   veg-u   de   ˈfemuɾ-e   / de   garsu-i
          SCl   Neg   see-1SG   of   woman-FPL   / of   boy-MPL
          'I do not see boys/ women'

      b. e   bev-u   de- ɾ viŋ
         SCl   drink-1SG   of the wine
         'I drink some wine'

      b'. e   nu   bev-u   de viŋ
          SCl   Neg   drink-1SG   of wine
          'I do not drink wine'

      u   nu   l   ɛ   ariva-u   de ˈfemu ɾ-e / de garsu-i
      SCl   Neg   SCl   be.3SG arrived-MSG   of woman-FPL / boy-MPL
      'no women/ boys have arrived'

                                                                                    (Pigna)

These data can contribute to clarifying the nature of DE + BN constructs, as they are independent both from negation, in (49a, b) and (50a, b), and from NMs. The data of Airole in (49) and Olivetta in (50) coincides with those of Occitan varieties in (14)-(16) for Coazze. (17)-(19) for Cantoira, and (20)-(22) for Pomaretto, whereby DE + BN realizes the indefinite reading independently from the contexts. The difference involves the type of negation, a NM in Occitan and the clitic *nu* in Ligurian. The distribution of Pigna in (51) corresponds to that of Trecate in (10)-(11), with the difference that in the dialect of Trecate negation is introduced by the NM *mia*, while in Pigna the negation is realized by the negative clitic *nu*. Therefore, we are led to consider the DE + BNs as a specialized way of realizing the indefinite interpretation of nouns, relying on the generic reading of the bare noun and the properties of the preposition *de*. The latter introduces a part-whole interpretation that in itself creates the reference to an indefinite, unexpressed, whole. This reading is systematically in the scope of negation. In the case of Pigna, positive sentences admit the occurrence of PAs; however, in the scope of the negation is selected the indefinite form. At least the link between DE + BN partitives and negation can be observed: if in a dialect the bare partitive is admitted, it is selected in negative contexts.

It is interesting to compare our Ligurian (and Occitan) data with the realizations of indefinite objects provided in Pinzin and Poletto (2022). We see that these systems are only partially similar to those documented for western Liguria. More precisely, only the data of Pigna agree with those of Arenzano 1 (*ibidem*: 42), the informant of Arenzano that alternates PAs in positive sentences with DE + BN in negative sentences. The sentences produced by this informant, characterized as 'archaizing', and by our informant of Pigna highlight a continuum from the DE + BN constructs generalized (Occitan type) to the PA systems.

7. Conclusions

We must accept the idea that variation is in many cases not strictly governed by implicational relations due to semantic or morphosyntactic mechanisms. The occurrence of DE + BN can be favored by the existence of NMs but it is a structural possibility independently associated with the expression of the indefinite reference in negative contexts.

We have seen that the variation concerning the expression of indefinite nouns involves a set of syntactic constructs that in Romance varieties typically involve partitive structures intro-

duced by DE and bare nouns. The constructs introduced by DE lack the head noun that in the usual genitive/partitive introduces the possessum or the part of the zone of inclusion expressed by the noun embedded under DE. Despite this, we propose to consider these structures as genuine partitives and DE as the usual preposition 'of'. This means that in many languages indefinite DPs must or can be realized as partitive objects, or possibly subjects, introduced by the inclusion operator DE.

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