

# Weak (in)Definiteness and Referentiality

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O artigo apresenta as principais questões acerca dos chamados “definidos fracos”, os exemplos que motivaram sua investigação, bem como a diversidade de exemplos e de teorias para explicá-los. Discorre sobre as soluções para os “definidos fracos”, seus limites e a possibilidade (ou necessidade) de unificação. Além disso, introduz os trabalhos apresentados no encontro (Florianópolis, 20 e 21 de agosto, 2012.) “Weak (In)Definiteness and Referentiality” e que foram incluídos neste volume temático, mostrando como eles se relacionam com o tema da definitude fraca.

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## Introduction

One of the topics of the international cooperation project CAPES- COFECUB entitled “Bare Nouns in Brazilian Portuguese: the syntax- semantics interface”<sup>1</sup>, coordinated by professor Carmen Dobrovie-Sorin in France and Roberta Pires de Oliveira in Brazil, is the distinction definite versus indefinite and its relation to bare noun phrases. The conference “Weak (In)Definiteness and Referentiality”, held in Florianópolis, SC, Brazil, in August 20 and 21, was a way of achieving a better understanding of the relations between (in)definiteness, referentiality and the interpretation of noun phrases. The conference was preceded by three mini-courses, all of which were directly linked to the main topic of the conference: Gregory Carlson talked about generics, Claire Beyssade discussed the solutions to weak definites, and Pascal Amsili lectured on presuppositions.<sup>2</sup>

Most of the papers in this special issue of *Revista da ABRALIN* were selected from the presentations during the Conference. Carlson *et al*, Aguilar-Guevara & Zwarts, and Beyssade’s papers were written in English for this journal, with the purpose of introducing the main theoretical trends. Since they will be published also in a special issue of *Recherches Linguistique de Vincennes*, organized by Claire Beyssade and Roberta Pires de Oliveira, in this volume we publish their Portuguese translations.

The theme of the conference, around which all the papers gravitate, is the idea of weak referentiality. Poesio (1994) was the first to identify a class of examples of definite descriptions, which he called “weak definite”, characterized by the absence of uniqueness; lacking, therefore, the hallmark characteristic of the definite phrase headed by the definite article. Other authors found different types of examples, rising at least two intermingled issues: do weak definites differ from “normal” definite phrases?; can all the examples of weak definiteness be unified, or are we dealing with heterogeneous phenomena? There is no consensus about either. In the first section, we introduce the examples that have been labeled “weak definite” so far. In the second section, we briefly summarize some of the most important solutions: the relational view, and the indefinite definite proposal, which groups two distinct approaches the pseudo-incorporation view, which appear in Carlson *et al*’s paper in this volume, and the kind solution, presented in Aguilar & Zwarts’ paper also in this volume. We briefly discuss two approaches the aim of which is a unified theory, one of which is Claire Beyssade’s proposal, one of the authors in this dossier. The third section briefly shows how the papers in this volume are linked to the theme of weak referentiality. In the conclusion, we balance the possibility of a unified theoretical approach.

## 1 Weak Definites

The content of the definite article is one of the greatest themes in semantics. Classically, there are two approaches: the quantificational and the presuppositional views represented by Russell (1905) and Frege (1892) respectively, the fathers of modern logic. According to Russell the definite article does not denote an individual, but it is a quantifier. Thus, the nominal phrases in sentences in (1) are of the same semantic type, though they differ with respect to their contents:

.

(1) a. The book is on the table.

b. A book is on the table.

.

Without going into the details, in Russell's account, (1.a) states that there is one and just one book that is on the table; whereas in (1.b) the existential quantification asserts that there is at least one book on the table. In Frege's view, only (1.a) carries a presupposition – the presupposition that there is one and just one book –, and the nominal phrase is of type  $\langle e \rangle$ , i.e. it denotes an individual – that particular book –, whereas in (1.b), the nominal phrase is quantificational, and the sentence receives the same treatment as in Russell. Be it one way or another, in both classical approaches, the definite article conveys (either semantically or pragmatically) that there is a unique referent that satisfies the definite noun phrase. Both theories need some sort of domain restriction to single out the referent.

An alternative analysis was proposed by Heim in her 1982 dissertation. In Heim's theory the definite and the indefinite noun phrases are semantically equivalent since both introduce free variables. They differ with respect to the role they play in the discourse: indefinites introduce individuals into the discourse – in her terms, they open a new file card – whereas the definite recovers a referent in a file card that is already in the common ground, i.e. it is familiar. Thus, the definite phrase presupposes the referent of the definite phrase – i.e. it presupposes that there is a book in example (1.a) – and is an instruction for the hearer to find the file that matches the index. The notion of uniqueness is, then, derived by the fact that in order to interpret a definite phrase, the hearer must identify one particular file card.<sup>3</sup>

Poesio (1994) was the first to introduce a series of examples that challenges the view that the definite article conveys uniqueness; he labeled this class of examples "Weak Definites". Carlson & Sussman (2005) and Carlson *et alii* (2006) introduced another type of examples, which they called "weak definite" or "indefinite definite", and other authors came up with other examples, in particular Barker (2005), and Lyons (1999). We review some of these examples in the next sections.

## 1.1 The relational weak definite

Below are Poesio 1994's examples:

(2)

a. John got the data from the student of a linguist.

b. The village is located on the side of a mountain.

c. I usually have breakfast at the corner of an intersection.

.

Two points should be stressed with respect to the sentences in (2): (i) all the definite phrases in (2) have the same structure – the head noun is a relational noun and the complement is an indefinite phrase –, this is an essential element in Poesio’s theoretical account; (ii) there is no way of retrieving a unique referent appealing to some sort of contextual function (domain restriction will not work here). One can felicitously utter (2.b) even if it is not familiar to the speaker and the hearer on which side of the mountain the village is. An intersection normally has four corners, and there is no need for the speaker to know in which corner he has breakfast. Weak definites can be used in a situation in which neither the speaker nor the listener has any previous acquaintance with a specific intersection or corner, neither is there an implication that the intersection in question has only one corner.

One could imagine that (2.a) is solved by some sort of function which selects the salient individual in the context or from a given set, and uniqueness would then be rescued. Donazzan, in this volume, assumes this solution. Although her paper is mainly devoted to examples similar to those raised by Carlson & Sussman (2005) and Carlson *et al* (2006), she discusses the case of a teacher who sends one of her pupils to the corner of a classroom, and claims that there is a particular corner which may be contextually recovered. This is certainly the case, but then it is no longer an example of weak definite. If the weak definite were solved by recovering a particular individual via some function, then the sentence in (2.a) should be synonymous of:

.  
(3) John got the data from the student who studies with a linguist.

.  
But (3) is not synonymous of (2.a). The reading Poesio has in mind for (2.a) can be paraphrased as: there is a linguist, and there is a student of that linguist, such that John got the data from that student. Essentially, neither the speaker nor the hearer has to identify a particular individual in order to interpret the sentence. This meaning is just not available for (3). Thus, it seems that weak definites, according to Poesio’s seminal paper, are not to be related to with any sort of domain restriction.

The class of examples in (2) not only defies the idea of uniqueness which seems to characterize the definite determiner phrase, but also calls into discussion the famous generalization about there-sentences, first mentioned by Milsark (1977), and which is taken to be a test for definiteness, as shown in Lee’s paper in this volume. Milsark argues that there is a contrast between strong noun phrases and weak ones: only the latter can appear in there-sentences, as shown below:

.  
(4) a. There is a student in the garden.

b. \* There is the student in the garden.

.  
Strong determiners presuppose the set denoted by the noun – student in (4.a) – whereas weak determiners introduce individuals into the discourse. Poesio shows that his examples in (2) do not show the same behavior as the definite phrase, since in contrast to (4.b), the example in (5) seems to be natural in there constructions:

.  
(5) There is the student of a linguist in the garden.

.  
Being acceptable in *there*-constructions may be taken as a diagnostic that the weak definite is in fact an indefinite. However, this does not seem to be the case, since (2.a) does not convey the same information as (6):

.  
(6) John got the data from a student of a linguist.

.  
Thus, neither definite nor indefinite, what is this phrase?

## 1.2 Indefinite definite

Carlson & Sussman (2005) and Carlson *et alii* (2006) introduced a different type of weak definite or indefinite definite, exemplified below. This class of examples cannot be in *there*-constructions, as shown in (8):

(7) a. Mary went to the store.

b. Open the window.

c. I took the train to come here.

(8) \*There is the store Mary went.

The main characteristic of the definite phrases in (7) is the fact that they do not presuppose uniqueness or familiarity, as can be seen from the ellipsis test. Compare (9.a) and (9.b):

(9) a. Mary went to the store, and Bill did, too.

b. Mary went to the desk, and Bill did, too.

Only (9.a) shows a sloppy reading, according to which Mary has gone to “Stop and Shop” and Bill, to “Target”, for example. In (9.b), they both have to go to the same desk. This pair of examples shows another property of this type of weak definite: they are lexically restricted. This is not the case with Poesio’s relational weak definites, where the structure must be fixed, but not the lexical items. Indefinite definites give rise to “enriched meanings”: *to go to the store* is to go shopping. Moreover, they cannot be modified as shown in (10):

.  
(10) Mary went to the new store, and Bill did, too.  
.

In sentence (10), Mary and Bill must have gone to the same store, only a strict reading is possible. Modification is possible, as shown by Aguilar-Guevara and Zwarts (2011) if the modifier maintains,

according to their analysis, a kind denotation – both (11.a) and (11.b) have a weak reading, where John was internee for medical treatment:

.

(11) a. John is in the hospital.

b. John is in the psychiatric hospital.

.

Carlson et alii (2006) explicitly claim that “in a given event expressed by a weak definite, there is not necessarily any unique object picked out.” Their main argument concerns example (7.c): the speaker may have taken different trains in her journey, she may have changed trains many times, and this situation can still be truthfully described by (7.c). Thus, there is no need of a unique referent, nor have the interlocutors to be familiar with some referent.

### 1.3 Other types of weak definite

Barker (2005) generalized Poesio’s examples to possessive constructions, including examples such as:

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(12) The child held the finger of the surgeon.

.

Though Barker proposes that there is just one definite article *the*, he claims that the whole definite construction in (12) does not presuppose uniqueness. The sentence in (12) does not imply that the surgeon has just one finger, nor is it necessary that there is one finger salient in the situation for (12) to be felicitous. Notice that the structure in the examples in (2) has an indefinite article in the second noun, whereas in (12) the article is definite in both occurrences.

Barker stresses Poesio’s remark that weak definites are very natural in *there* constructions. If being natural in *there* construction is a property of weak definite, then Lyons (1999) rightly points out the existence of another type of weak definite, which he calls “extremely reading” use, exemplified in (13):

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(13) There is the most intriguing girl in the garden. (Lyons 1999: 247)

.

Zielke’s paper in this volume studies the extremely reading case in three languages, Turkish, German and Spanish.

Table 1 compares these different types of examples called weak definite in literature with respect to their defining properties:

	Relational	indefinites	extremely
<i>There</i> -construction	✓	No	✓
Fixed structure	✓	No	✓
Semantic enrichment	No	✓	no
Lexically restricted	No	✓	no
Allow modification	✓	No*	✓
Lack of presupposition of uniqueness	✓	✓	no
Genitive DP	✓	No	no
Sloppy reading	✓	✓	no

Figure 1. TABLE 1 4

The first question that comes to mind is: aren't we dealing with heterogeneous phenomena? Is a unified theory possible?

## 2 Solutions

Carlson *et alii* (2006) explicitly state that their theoretical account covers only the indefinite definite; Poesio (2004) and Barker (2005) claim that their approaches are explanations only for the relational or possessive definite. However, some authors have claimed that a unified theory is possible, among them Beysade (in this volume), and Corblin (in press). In the first section, we briefly review Poesio's and Barker's solutions to the relational definite. The second section contrasts Carlson *et alii* (2006) and Aguilar-Guevara & Zwarts' (2011) approaches to the indefinite definite. Finally, in the last section, sketches of unified theories are presented. The aim is not to present a full account of each proposal, but to enumerate them and to evaluate the possibility of a unified treatment for the weak definites.

### 2.1 Relational nouns

Though Barker (2005) extends Poesio's examples of the relational definite, which he renames as possessive definite, their theoretical explanation for the phenomenon is not exactly the same, even though both reject the ambiguity solution - according to which there are two definite determiners *the* -, and both rely on the fact that *of* introduces a relation. Thus, their solutions require a possessive structure.

Without going into the details of the implementation, Poesio's solution relies on De Jong (1987) and Zucchi (1993) insight that presuppositional noun phrases are barred from *there*-constructions. In his approach, presuppositions are rendered as contextual variables or parameters. Thus, *the student* in (4.b) has a parameter that must be set by the context, and this is the reason why it is blocked from a *there* sentence. Parameters may be set by the context or they may be anchored; if they are anchored, then they receive a value from some file card index, and the contextual variable is replaced by a constant: "an anchored parameter can be replaced by its non-parametric value" (2004: 291). Anchoring the parameter may only happen when we have a relational noun. When the

contextual parameter is anchored, the presupposition of uniqueness (or familiarity) is cancelled.

Here is a sketch of how this solution works. First, *of* has to be a lexical possessive, i.e. it requires an argument, thus it is relational. This is crucial. In (14), the weak reading is not available because *of* is not lexically a possessive:

.

(14) ??I don't want to steal the book of a library (294, example 37)

.

Thus, *the student* in (2.a) is a relational noun and is interpreted as student (x, D), where D is a parameter. In (2.a), this parameter is anchored since it is equated to the variable in the predicate *linguist*, which is a sortal noun - linguist (y). Replacing D by y, results in *student* (x, y), which cancels the presupposition and allows the combination with *there*. This is not the case with (3), because *student* is not relational in this example and the parameter must be set by the context. Thus, we expect that this definite phrase cannot be in *there*-construction, as it seems to be the case:

.

(15) \*There is the student who studies with a linguist in the garden.

.

Weak definites need relational nouns. Poesio notices that this is also true for cases of bridging or associative definites.<sup>5</sup>

Barker has a different explanation which relies on two different ways of composing the relational definite. He associates the uniqueness presupposition to the first semantic component in the semantic derivation, and proposes two derivations for the definite phrase:

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(16) a. the (corner (of-the-intersection))

b. (the · corner) (of-the-intersection)

.

(16.a) derives the strong reading according to which there is one and only one particular corner of the intersection. In (16.b), the definite determiner preserves uniqueness, not of an individual, but of the relation between corners and the intersection. A successful use of a possessive definite description, then, is one that provides enough information for the listener to reliably pick out the intended kind of object: it's about the corner of the intersection the speaker is talking about, not the road junction. In other words, "what the speaker has in mind is a unique, specific relation, and that specificity is what the definite determiner is marking." (Barker, 2005: 110).

None of these analysis can describe the indefinite definite.

## 2.2 Indefinite definites: Kinds and Incorporation

Recently, two solutions were proposed for the case of indefinite definites: semantic incorporation and kind denotation, which are classical solutions to bare noun phrases. Carlson (1977) was the

first to introduce the idea that bare plurals in English denote the kind, and van Geenhoven's (1998) analysis of Icelandic was seminal in appealing to semantic incorporation as a solution to bare nouns. Carlson (2006) restricts the idea of incorporation to bare nouns which are not productive in the language. Thus, incorporation cannot be the explanation for bare nouns in Chinese, nor for bare plurals in English. It is probably also not a solution for the bare singular in Brazilian Portuguese either.<sup>6</sup> Let's see these solutions.

### 2.2.1 Semantic Incorporation

Carlson & Sussman (2005) and Carlson *et alii* (2006) do not present a thoroughly worked out solution for the indefinite definite, though they sketch such an approach, which is further developed in Carlson *et al's* paper in this volume. They argue that the indefinite definite shows the same properties of bare singulars in English, as exemplified below:

.  
(17) John is in prison.  
.

Bare singulars are very restricted in English. Moreover, they are semantically enriched – (17) conveys that John is a prisoner. They are not only lexically restricted, they are also governed by a particular lexical item – *John is in hospital* is not grammatical and *John is in front of the prison* is not semantically enriched. Like the indefinite definite, bare singulars cannot be modified – *John is in a big prison* does not mean that he is a prisoner –, and they do not combine with *there*-constructions; finally, they show sloppy identity in elliptical constructions.

The authors conclude that the indefinite definite should be treated the same way as the bare singular, which amounts to say that the definite article in the weak definite does not act in the same way as when it is in a definite description, though it may have the same semantics. In the paper in this volume, Carlson *et alii* clarify the role of the definite determiner, and the semantic structure of the weak definite.

.  
'Weak' definites should in fact not be subsumed under a more general semantic treatment, but form a distinguished class of (apparent) definite descriptions on their own that shares a semantics with (at least) bare count singulars, and probably not with definites. (Carlson *et alii*, 2006: 179)  
.

Thus, weak definites behave like bare singulars, and the same semantic account should be given for both constructions. The literature on bare singulars, in languages where the bare singular is lexically restricted (Spanish and Romanian, for instance)<sup>7</sup>, claims that they are semantically incorporated. "Weak definite NPs function exactly like bare singulars. They show all the earmarks of semantic incorporation." (Carlson, 2006: 8)

Semantic incorporation was designed to account for cases where the noun phrase is restricted, lacks some of its usual features (has no overt determiner, or no case morphology, for instance), and gives rise to an "enriched meaning".<sup>8</sup> Lazaridou-Chatzigoga & Alexandropoulou in their paper on Greek bare nouns discuss semantic incorporation in more detail. Roughly speaking, a semantically incorporated noun denotes a property which is combined with the property denoted by the verb, engendering a compound predicate. Thus, in (7.a), *Maria went to the store*, *the store* is not in fact an argument of the predicate *to go to*, and it does not refer to an individual, it is rather a predicate that combines with the predicate *to go to* and generates a different predicate which has a

particular meaning: to go to + the store = to go shopping.

But why does English need the definite article in the examples in (7)? Why the bare singular is not used in these constructions? What is exactly the role of the definite article in incorporation? These are questions that are clarified in the paper in this volume. In principle, this approach cannot explain the cases of possessive definites.

### 2.2.2 Kind reference

Aguilar-Guevara & Zwarts (2011) also deal with the examples of the indefinite definite, and their paper in this volume presents their approach in detail. They argue that weak definite phrases do not denote specific objects, but instantiations of specific kinds. It is certainly the case that the definite determiner has to denote the kind as in *the dodo is extinct*; the so called definite generic. Thus, in their approach, uniqueness is preserved at the kind-level: the definite determiner denotes a particular and unique kind. In a nutshell, Aguilar-Guevara & Zwarts propose that *store* in (7.a), *Mary went to the store*, denotes the kind store. Their analysis relies on Dayal's (2004) proposal that in the lexicon nouns are ambiguous between denoting a set of individuals (=object level) and kind interpretations. Thus, the lexicon is sorted out into individuals and kinds. Moreover, they propose a "usage" predicate *U* that denotes the set of all the stereotypical events associated with a particular noun. *U* (e, store<sub>k</sub>) gives us the stereotypical events related to the kind store, i.e. the enriched meaning of going shop. The *U* predicate explains why the weak reading only happens with some nouns: not all nouns have stereotypical usages. The kind noun *store<sub>k</sub>* is then instantiated into the individual (object level) stores, but since the instantiations are not existentially closed, they can explain the lack of uniqueness for the instantiations. Thus, (7.a) is paraphrased as: There is an event whose agent is Mary and this is an event that involves the kind store as theme and the stereotypical events in which the kind store is involved, and this kind has instantiations. As a result, uniqueness is just for the kind.

But now we have lost the relation with the bare singulars in English, unless we also want to say that the bare singular denotes the kind. Moreover, it is unclear how this analysis could be applied to the relational weak definites. Finally, this approach predicts that the definite generics and the weak definites have the same behavior.

## 2.3 Unified treatments?

In the previous analyses, the authors make clear that their aim is not a unified account of both the relational definite and the indefinite definite. Though both types of examples are called weak definite, perhaps because they share the property of lacking the presupposition of uniqueness, they may constitute different phenomena.

There are at least two proposals for a unified solution, both relying on weak familiarity<sup>9</sup> and aiming at a unified semantics for the definite article: Beyssade (in this volume) proposes that the nouns in the weak reading denote types (intensional entities), her account explores the idea of enriching the ontology, as already found in Aguilar-Guevara & Zwarts; Corblin (in press) understands that all examples of weak definite are cases of relational definites, thus extending the relational solution to all cases. He understands that all weak definites are relational nouns, which are turned into a function the denotation of which is a single individual. However, as already mentioned, it is unclear that the relational definites refer to a single individual. Both Poesio and Barker argue that this is not the case. Moreover, Roberts (2003) explicitly claims that her approach cannot deal with relational weak definites precisely because they do not refer uniquely. As explicitly discussed in several papers by Carlson and by Carlson *et alii* (in this volume), indefinite definites do not refer uniquely, as the train example shows. Moreover, it is unclear that nouns such as *train* are relational. If *train* is a relational noun, then, we expect *car* to be relational too, and if it is, then we expect it to have a weak reading, but (12) has no such reading:

.  
(18) John came with the car.  
.

The idea of a different entity to which the weak definite refers seems to be more promising, but it also faces several challenges, as we will see in the next section, when we discuss Beyssade's proposal.

None of these explanations can account for the example of extraordinary reading in (13), which may be an indication that this is a different phenomenon.

### 3 The papers in this issue

The papers presented during the conference dealt with topics directly raised by weak definiteness: the three papers given in Portuguese translation in this issue are theoretical approaches to weak definites. Carlson *et al*'s paper, "Definidos fracos, uma forma de definitude: investigações empíricas", discusses the results of different experiments. It shows that the normal definite description and the weak definite behave differently since only the weak definite denotes non-uniquely; moreover speakers interpret the weak definite as semantically enriched, and finally speakers interpret differently a weak definite and a weak indefinite – an indefinite phrase with a noun that raises weak readings when combined with a definite article. Thus, the definite article in a weak definite is not an expletive. Though the paper is mostly about the results of the experiments, which indeed call for an explanation, it also develops the authors' theoretical explanation. Their main claim is that the issue is not so much about choosing between incorporation or kind analysis – suggesting that the noun in the weak definite may be kind denoting –, but about the role of the definite article. Aguilar-Guevara & Zwarts adopt the traditional view on the definite article, it presupposes familiarity and uniqueness, i.e. it denotes a particular individual. Carlson and his collaborators claim that the semantic composition of the weak definite is not the same as that of the normal definite, which applies to the noun directly and returns the only individual who has that property. In the weak definite, the semantic structure is as below:

.  
(19) a. DEF (V (N))

b. the (read' (book'))  
.

The definite article combines with a VP, and it conveys the understanding that the situation denoted by the VP is familiar, in accordance with the results of the last experiment. No doubt there is a lot to be developed.

In "Definidos fracos denotam a espécie", Aguilar-Guevara & Zwarts discuss in detail their approach to weak definites. They claim that the weak definite and the generic definite share the same structure in the sense that in both the noun denotes a kind. Weak definites normally appear in the internal position, whereas the definite generic seems to be more natural in the external position. There are, however, a number of issues that this proposal raises. Though the authors claim that the noun denotes a kind, they adopt some sort of incorporation to avoid the existential closure of the instantiations of the kind which would allow for anaphora. But, why should there be instantiation of the kind? If there were instantiations of the kind, we would expect the sentence in (20) to have an existential interpretation, paraphrased as "some horses entered in America with the Spanish

Colonization. But (20) does not have such an interpretation:

.

(20) The horse entered in America with the Spanish Colonization.

.

Moreover, we have weak referentiality with the definite generic, as show in (21), but no semantic enrichment:

.

(21) John photographed the lion for the first time in his life and so did Mary.

.

Would there be the same mechanism to avoid access to the instantiations? How do we explain that there is no semantic enrichment when we have a definite generic? Finally, how do they explain the fact that anaphora with the kind is not possible:

.

(22) John went to the hospital, and Mary did too. ??It is a place to recover.

.

Beysade in “Reabilitando a pressuposição de unicidade” introduces a new class of weak definites, as exemplified in (23), and presents her hypothesis that weak definites refer to types, not tokens, and that the definite article carries a presupposition of existence from which uniqueness is derived:

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(23) Jean s’est cassé le bras / la jambe / le doigt.

Jean Refl broke the arm / the leg / the finger

‘Jean broke his arm / leg / finger’

.

It is interesting to notice that some of her examples of body parts work in Brazilian Portuguese – for instance, *lavar o braço* (wash the arm), which is not allowed in French. Types are intensional entities, that denote singletons in a taxonomic structure – taxonomic structures, according to the author, are not lattice structures, a point that need clarification –, and the members of which are indistinguishable. Thus, though a type is related to its tokens, which are unique, they are also indistinguishable. According to this approach, when a type denotation is involved the distinction between definite and indefinite is erased in the sense that using one or the other gives the same truth conditions. However, this is a prediction that is not verified by the experiments presented in Carlson *et alii* (this volume). Their last experiment shows that speakers interpret differently a weak definite and a weak indefinite. Moreover, it is unclear why only certain nouns can denote the type, since all nouns should have, at least in principle, a type denotation. Thus, it is difficult to explain why *read the newspaper* raises a weak reading, but *read the magazine* does not, unless that is lexically marked. Moreover, there is no obvious way of deriving the enriched meanings, except by stipulation. Finally, according to her, if ‘the NP’ denotes more than one N, then the nominal phrase

does not denote a token. Thus, by inference it denotes a type. However, there are two cases of presuppositional failure: if there are no individuals, or if there are more than one individual. How are we to differentiate this last case from the type reading?

The other papers in this volume are organized concentrically from the weak definite core. Donazzan analyses cases of weak definites in Italian and argues for a non-ambiguity semantics for the strong and the weak definites, relying on Roberts' notion of weak familiarity. She shows that there is a class of weak definites in Italian, but more importantly some of the examples do not engender enriched meanings, though they are characterized by prototypicality, that is, they are lexically restricted:

(24) Esco a bere il caffè al bar. (example (14))

I-go out to drink the coffee at-the bar

'I'm going out to have a coffee at the bar.'

Though (24) is prototypical because the weak reading only happens with *caffè* (coffee), it shows no semantic enrichment. Thus, semantic enrichment is not a necessary feature of weak definites. Donazzan explores Roberts' idea of weak familiarity to claim that in all cases uniqueness is preserved. As we have already mentioned, that may not be the case; weak definites do not seem to refer uniquely, as Roberts herself makes clear in her paper with respect to the relational definites; but even if we restrict the analysis to the indefinite definite it is not clear that uniqueness is preserved (at least at the object level).

Basso & Vogt look at the issue of weak definiteness from a very original point of view: demonstratives. The authors wonder whether *there are* weak demonstratives; i.e. demonstratives which lack uniqueness, in the sense that they may be truthfully used in a situation to denote more than one individual. They come up with examples such as:

(25) John went to this doctor, and Mary did too. (pointing to one specialty in a list of medical specialties)

They show that the weak demonstrative passes the sloppy reading test, since John and Mary may have gone to different doctors of the same specialty. They also carry enriched meanings: John and Mary want medical treatments. Besides being a clear presentation of Aguilar- Guevara & Zwarts kind proposal, their paper turns out to be an argument in favor of this analysis, since they show that the only possibility for (25) is to interpret the demonstrative as a sub-kind (a specialty). The fact that the demonstrative cannot refer to the maximal entity is one of its characteristic; the relevant point is that this non maximal entity has to be a sub-kind. It is unclear whether we need the kind theory to explain this data, although it certainly shows that the N in a weak construction seems to denote a kind. Carlson & Sussman (2005), Carlson *et alii* (2006), and Carlson *et alii* (in this volume) anchor their theoretical claims about the weak definites on psycholinguistic experiments. Zielke investigates the behavior of second language learners of European Spanish, by speakers of Turkish and German, with respect to the so called "extremely reading", which was introduced in the literature by Lyons (1999). In (26), we have an example of the extremely reading in Spanish:

.  
(26) En esta librería hay los mejores libros.

in this book store there-are the best books.

'In this book store there are the best books.'

.

The interest of the paper lies on the fact Turkish has no definite determiner, thus there is no formal distinction between the definite and the indefinite versions of the *there*-construction. The hypothesis was, then, that Turkish learners would have more difficulties interpreting the Spanish extremely reading examples than German learners. This hypothesis was not confirmed. In fact, both German and Turkish speakers had difficulties with the extremely reading. It is unclear whether the extremely reading belongs to the class of weak definites. As shown on table 1 above, the extremely reading presupposes uniqueness, though not familiarity. Thus, we need a better understanding of this phenomenon.

Semantic incorporation is commonly invoked as the explanation for bare nouns, in particular their role in languages where their use is restricted. One of the main features of semantic incorporation is number neutrality, which, in Carlson's model explains the lack of uniqueness of the weak definite. Relying on an extensive and original investigation of both oral and written corpora in Greek, Lazaridou-Chatzigoga & Alexandropoulou investigate bare singulars in this language to conclude, going against the strict view on incorporation, that they are not number neutral, but singular (in accordance with Dayal's recent (2011) analysis of Hindi), and that they are arguments - classically, incorporated nominal phrases are considered referentially weak. Here is an example from their corpora that supports their claim against number neutrality:

.

(27) Ehi ghamo sto dhiplano horio. #Enan

has wedding in.the next village one

stin eklisia ke enan sto dhimarhio.

in.the church and one in.the town.hall

'There is a wedding in the next village. One is in the

church and one in the town hall.'

.

If *ghamo* (wedding) were number neutral, the sequence should be acceptable, but it is not. Relying on the empirical support of their corpus analysis, their paper challenges the strict view of incorporation, a major theoretical contribution. The challenge is to explain how bare singulars can be at the same time arguments and semantically incorporated.

Lee's paper investigates the distinction between definite and indefinite noun phrases, looking at numeral noun phrases in Korean. Korean is a classifier language and the numeral may occupy two different positions: the noun may precede a numeral classifier consisting of a numeral expression and a classifier as in (28.a); or the noun may appear after a numeral classifier with a genitive marker, (28.b):

(28) a. [haksyang [sye meyng]]-i o-ass-ta.

student \_\_\_\_\_ 3 Cl-Nom \_\_\_\_\_ come-Past-Decl

b. [[sye meyng]-uy haksyang]-i o-ass-ta.

3 Cl-Gen \_\_\_ student-Nom \_\_\_ come-Past-Decl

‘Three students came.’

Traditionally these different number constructions were associated with definite and indefinite readings, respectively. The author shows that this is not the case, though both appear in *there*-construction. The post numeral classifier construction, where the numeral appears after the noun, may receive definite and indefinite interpretations; whereas the pre numeral classifier construction is definite.

The last paper is Foltran & Rodrigues’ discussion about the syntax- semantic of copular clauses in Brazilian Portuguese in which the predicate exhibits the unmarked form for gender and number, in spite of the feminine and feminine plural forms of subjects:

(29) a. Maria bêbada é chato.

Maria drunk-fem is boring-Neutral

b. Crianças é divertido.

Children is funny-Neutral

.

The authors argue that in (29) we have two different structures: (29.a) is a small clause, the subject of which is a situation, which asks for a neutral agreement; whereas in (29.b) the subject is a DP which lacks the agreement features. They contribute to the discussion because structures like (29.b) must be indefinite.

## Conclusion

The notion of weak definites is not self evident as the examples discussed in the papers during the conference clearly testify. One of the goals of the conference was precisely to clarify this notion, as a first step towards evaluating the best theoretical description. The topic of weak definites, and its relation to weak referentiality, is a fairly recent one and that is why some of the basic questions are still open, the most important of them being the possibility of unifying theoretically all the structures and examples discussed in the papers of this volume.

The only feature that apparently unifies all the examples that constitute the so-called “weak definites” is, from a descriptive point of view, the lack of the presupposition of uniqueness in the use of a definite description, except from the “extremely reading”, which lacks familiarity. But notice that some proposals – Corblin (in press) and Donazzan (this volume) – rescue the idea of uniqueness. So, what exactly characterizes the weak definite? Probably, the answer to this question leads to a unified or a non-unified theory of weak definites, and we hope that the papers here collected illuminate the search for such answers.

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