

Indefinite determiners across Italo-Romance varieties: optionality and variation

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1. Seven types of indefinite determiners in Italo-Romance

1.1 indefinite singular *un(o)/una* cf. AIS: 533 “a tree”; 181 “a handsome man”:

- (1) a. Ho raccolto una violetta.
[I] have picked a violet
b. Ho raccolto (*un) fieno.
[I] have harvested (*a) hey
- (2) a. *Ho raccolto une violette.
b. He recogito unas violetas. (Spanish)
[I] have picked one.f.pl violets
c. Le am dat niște violete unor fete. (Romanian)
[I] cl.dat have given one.acc violets one.dat.pl girls

1.2. Zero determiner, only with mass and plural count:

- (3) a. *Ho raccolto violetta.
[I] have picked violet
b. Ho raccolto fieno, ho raccolto violette.
[I] have harvested hey, [I] have picked violets

1.3. Definite article with indefinite interpretation only with mass and plural count (Rohlf's 1968:119; Renzi 1997:163):

- (4) a. Ho raccolto la violetta. (only acceptable with definite interpretation)
[I] have picked the violet
b. Ho raccolto il fieno, ho raccolto le violette. (ambiguous)
[I] have harvested the hey, [I] have picked the violets

1.4. Bare di “of”, only with mass and plural count:

- (5) a. sei fyse d'acqua (Piedmontese; Berruto 1974: 57);
if there was DI water
b. anda sarkà d viualte (AIS 637, 153 Giaveno (Turin))
to-go to-pick DI violets
- (6) a. di bon vino (Tuscan; Rohlf's 1968:117)
DI good wine
b. di belle patate
DI nice potatoes

1.5. So-called “partitive article” with mass and plural count:

- (7) a. Ho raccolto una /*della violetta.
[I] have picked a / DI-art violet

3. Specialization for different indefinite meanings

3.1. Italian

- (15) a. Ho bevuto vino / Ho raccolto violette zero determiner zero D
 [I] have drunk wine / [I] have picked violets
- b. Ho bevuto il vino / Ho raccolto le violette zero determiner overt D
 [I] have drunk the wine / [I] have picked the violets
- c. Ho bevuto del vino / Ho raccolto delle violette overt determiner overt D
 [I] have drunk DI-art wine / [I] have picked DI-art violets

3.1.1. Indefinite object of telic vs non-telic events

- (16) a. Ho tagliato erba (*in un'ora) / (per un'ora)
 [I] have mowed grass in an hour / for an hour
- b. Ho raccolto more (*in un'ora) / (per un'ora)
 [I] have picked blackberries in an hour / for an hour
- (17) a. Ho tagliato l'erba (#in un'ora) / (per un'ora)
 [I] have mowed the grass in an hour / for an hour
- b. Ho raccolto le more (#in un'ora) / (per un'ora)
 [I] have picked the blackberries in an hour / for an hour
- (18) a. Ho tagliato dell'erba (in un'ora) / (??per un'ora)
 [I] have mowed DI-art grass in an hour / for an hour
- b. Ho raccolto delle more (in un'ora) / (??per un'ora)
 [I] have picked DI-art blackberries in an hour / for an hour

- *Optionality in the standard*: the indefinite interpretation of the zero determiner (16) and of the definite article in (17) in non-telic contexts.
- *The optionality dissolves in colloquial registers*: e.g. (17) is preferred in the Center, (16) is preferred in Sicily.
- *Some specialization*: “saliency” = zero det + overt D, “small quantity” = overt det + overt D

3.1.2. Scope properties (cf. Chierchia 1998, Delfitto and Schrotten 2001, Storto 2003, Zamparelli 2008, Giusti and Tovena 2012):

- (19) a. Non ho invitato ragazzi alla festa ma solo ragazze. $\neg\exists$
 [I] did not invite boys at the party, but only girls
- b. *Non ho invitato ragazzi alla festa perché erano antipatici. $*\exists\neg$
 [I] did not invite boys at the party, because there were obnoxious
- (20) a. Non ho invitato i ragazzi alla festa ma solo (delle / le) ragazze. $\neg\exists$
 [I] did not invite the boys at the party, but only (di-art / the) girls
- b. #Non ho invitato i ragazzi perché erano antipatici. $\#\exists\neg$
 [I] did not invite the boys at the party, because there were obnoxious
- (21) a. Non ho invitato dei ragazzi alla festa, ma solo (delle) ragazze. $\neg\exists$
 [I] did not invite DI-art boys at the party, but only DI-art girls
- b. Non ho invitato dei ragazzi alla festa perché erano antipatici. $\exists\neg$
 [I] did not invite DI-art boys at the party, because there were obnoxious

- (22) a. Non ho bevuto del vino ma (del) succo di frutta. ↯∃
 I did not drink DI-art wine but (di-art) fruit juice
- b. *Non ho bevuto del vino perché era acido. *∃↯
 I did not drink DI-art wine because it was sour

3.2. Variation in the dialect of Ancona

- (23) a. Se ce fosse l'acqua / *acqua / *de acqua. (AIS 1037)
 if there was the water / water / DI water
- b. Vago a pià 'l vî / *vî / *de vî. (AIS 1343)
 [I] go and take the wine / wine / DI wine
- c. 'Ndam a cercà le viulette/ *viulette / *de viulette (AIS 637)
 let's go and look for the violets / violets / DI violets

Cardinaletti and Giusti (2015b, 2016):

- (24) a. Se ce fosse l'acqua / *de l'acqua
 if there was the water / DI-art water
- b. Vago a pià 'l vî / *del vî
 [I] go and take the wine / DI-art wine
- c. 'Ndam a cercà le viulette / de le viulette
 let's go and look for the violets / DI-art violets
- (25) a. *Nun ho 'n vitato dei fioli ala festa, ma solo dele fiole. *↯∃
 [I] did not invite DI-art boys at the party, but only DI-art girls
- b. Nun ho 'n vitato dei fioli ala festa perché erane 'ntipatici. ∃↯
 [I] did not invite DI-art boys at the party, because they were obnoxious
- (26) Nun ho 'n vitato i fioli ala festa, ma solo le fiole. ↯∃
 [I] did not invite the boys at the party, but only the girls

- If narrow scope interpretation of *di+art* is not allowed in Anconetano (25a), it is expected that in this dialect, *di+art* be incompatible with mass nouns, (cf. (22b) above in Italian).
- AIS does not report *di+art* in the Ancona area because the questionnaire in the three AIS maps favor narrow scope interpretation.

4. Variation across dialects in three AIS maps

4.1. AIS map 1037 “if there was water”

In map 1037, we observe the following distribution:

- The zero determiner is present in the North (north-eastern Piedmont, northern Lombardy, the whole of Veneto, and the whole of Istria), in the South of Italy (southern Campania, southern Apulia, southern Calabria, Sicily), and in Sardinia. It is absent elsewhere.
- The definite article with indefinite interpretation is widespread: three attestations in the province of Trento (330 Mortaso, 331 Stenico, 323 Predazzo), a compact area from southern Lombardy to the border with Veneto (360 Albisano (Verona)), interrupted by a large area of *di+art* in Emilia Romagna, restarting in the rest of central and southern Italy, where the zero determiner is present again. Definite articles are found spotlike in Sicily and Sardinia.

- Bare *di* is limited to Val d’Aosta and western Piedmont (from 122 Saint Marcel (Aosta) down to 182 Limone Piemonte (Cuneo)) with only two attestations towards East: one in northern Lombardy (209 Isolaccia (Sondrio)) and one in central Veneto (354 Romano (Vicenza), where zero is also given as a second option), and one attestation in Sardinia (943 Macomer (Nuoro)).
- *Di+art* is present in the so-called Gallo-Italic varieties: from eastern Piedmont and Liguria down to the whole Emilia and Romagna, with 2 cases in Northern Tuscany (520 Camaiore (Livorno), 532 Montespertoli (Firenze)) and one in Sardinia (937 Nuoro).

The four different forms seen in (12) distribute along two crossing axes.

- The North-South axis is defined by the distribution of the zero determiner at its extremes versus the definite article in its core part.
- The Northwest-Northeast axis is defined by the presence of *di* either by itself or combined with the definite article in the area where the two axes intersect.

(27) Diatopic distribution of the different values of the two parameters in (14)

| | | |
|------|--------|--------|
| | 0+0 | |
| | 0+art | |
| di+0 | di+art | di/0+0 |
| | 0+art | |
| | 0+0 | |

Innovations (overt D and overt det) are in the central areas.

4.2. AIS map 1343 “[to go to the cellar] to take wine”

The context favors saliency and small quantity of the object

- The definite article is much more widespread than in map1037:
 - it alternates with the zero determiner in the extreme North and South and in Sardinia,
 - and with *di+art* in the areas where this form was attested with “water”.
 - saliency is not definiteness, cf consistent bare *di* in Val d’Aosta and western Piedmont.
- *di+art* is more widespread than in map1037;
 - it is present in one place in Trentino (341 Tiarno di Sotto (Trento)) and resumes from south-eastern Veneto 373 Montebello (Vicenza), 372 Raldon (Verona), 393 Fratta Polesine (Rovigo) down to central Tuscany (550 Castagneto Carducci (Pisa), and 570 Elba (Livorno), where only the zero determiner was attested in map 1037.”

To conclude, parallel to what we observed for Italian above,

- some areas seem to have more than one indefinite determiner specialized for different nuances of indefiniteness.
- This is not the case of the dialects where *di+art* is predominant (e.g. in Emilia and Romagna, where very few instances of the definite article are found with “wine” (cf. (38a) and (39a) below), and *di+art* consistently appears with “water”).

4.3 AIS map 637 “[to go and look for] violets”

The context ensures a narrow scope interpretation of the plural indefinite; it is compatible with saliency interpretation of violets and may favor the small quantity interpretation.

- The zero determiner is more restricted than in 1037 “if there was water” and wider than in 1343 “take wine”: it is present in the whole Piedmont through Liguria down to one point in

Tuscany, and one in Veneto, it spreads down to the border with Emilia. In the South, it spreads all over Sicily and Calabria and appears in a couple of places in Campania and Apulia.

- Bare *di* has the same distribution as in 1037 “if there was water” displaying some isolated points: one in Veneto (325 Cencenighe (Belluno)), one in western Emilia (412 Carpaneta (Piacenza)), and one in Liguria at the border with western Emilia (179 Rovegno (Genova)).
- *Di+art* is more extended with count plural than with mass singular, esp. in the horizontal axis where the plural is attested in 2 points in Lombardy (229 Sonico (BS), at the border with Trentino, and 278 Solferino (Mantova), at the border with southern Veneto); 4 points in Veneto: 345 Vas (BL), 374 Teolo (PA), 381 Cerea (VR) and 385 Cavarzere (VE)); and 3 points in Friuli: 326 Claut (PD), 328 Tremonti di Sotto (UD) and 367 Grado (GO).
- The definite article expressing indefiniteness is present all over the place, interspersed with all of the other three forms, as is the case with “take wine”.

To conclude

- AIS map 637 favors a small quantity interpretation which competes with the core notion of existential indefiniteness, which in turn may be salient or not.
- In areas in which more than one form is possible, the different realizations appear to distribute as in Italian, namely
 - the core notion of indefiniteness is expressed by the zero determiner (zero determiner in SpecDP and covert features in D),
 - the salient indefinite by the definite article (a zero determiner in SpecDP and overt features in D),
 - the small quantity by *di+art* (overt *di* in SpecDP and overt D).
- The areas which do not allow for more than one indefinite form confirm the distribution of bare *di* in the North-West, of *di+art* in Emilia and Romagna, of the zero determiner at the very further North and South, and of the definite determiner elsewhere.

5 Micro-variation

5.1. Variation at specific points

| | | | |
|----------|--------------------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| (28) | 107 Trasquera (Verbania) | 147 Cavaglia (Biella) | |
| AIS 1037 | <i>Akwa</i> | <i>d l'eva</i> | |
| 1343 | <i>a to vin</i> | <i>a gavà dal vin</i> | |
| 637 | <i>dal viol</i> | <i>i avyuletti</i> | |
| (29) | 175 Vicoforte (Cuneo) | 133 Vico Canavese (Torino) | |
| AIS 1037 | <i>d r eva</i> | <i>d ewa</i> | |
| 1343 | <i>a pyé del vin</i> | <i>par piar d vin</i> | |
| 637 | <i>Violüta</i> | <i>fyure vyulette</i> | |
| (30) | 319 Cedarchis (Udine) | 328 Tramonti di Sotto (Udine) | |
| AIS 1037 | <i>Age</i> | <i>aga</i> | |
| 1343 | <i>a cíóli l vin</i> | <i>a tweli l vin</i> | |
| 637 | <i>Violes</i> | <i>da las violes</i> | |
| (31) | 550 Castagneto Carducci (Pisa) | 551 Chiusdino (Pisa) | 532 Montespertoli (Firenze) |
| AIS 1037 | <i>ll akwa</i> | <i>l akwa</i> | <i>dell akwa</i> |
| 1343 | <i>per piglià l vino</i> | <i>per piglià l vino</i> | <i>a pigliàr il vino</i> |
| 637 | <i>delle viole mammole</i> | <i>le vyol ammammole</i> | <i>le viol ammammole</i> |

5.2 Variation inside specific areas

- (32) a. awa, 124 Selveglio (Vercelli)
b. d ayvi, 132 Ronco Canavese (Torino)
c. d éva, 123 Brusson (Aosta)
d. d éve, 122 Saint Marcel (Aosta)
e. d l'awa, 135 Pettinengo (Novara)
- (33) a. to vin, 124 Selveglio (Vercelli)
b. a gavar de vin, 132 Ronco Canav. (To)
c. pè cercé o vin, 123 Brusson (Aosta)
d. per ertsì de vén, 122 Saint Marcel (Aosta)
e. per pyé dal vin, 135 Pettinengo (Novara)
- (34) a. viole mammole, 124 Selveglio (Vercelli)
b. le violete, 132 Ronco Canavese (Torino)
c. de violette, 123 Brusson (Aosta)
d. de vyulette, 122 Saint Marcel (Aosta)
e. dal viulatti, 135 Pettinengo (Novara)
- (35) a. per tor vim, 343 Volano (Trento)
b. a tœr el vin, 340 Roncone (Trento)
c. a tœr del vi, 341 Tiarno di Sotto (Trento)
- (36) a. violes, 319 Cedarchis (Udine)
b. la vyoles, 327 Forni di Sotto (Udine)
c. da las violas, 328 Tramonti di Sotto (UD)
- (37) a. d l akwa, 456 Bologna
b. d l akwe, 446 Minerbio (Bologna)
- (38) a. a tor al ven, 456 Bologna
b. par tor dal ven, 446 Minerbio (Bologna)
- (39) a. al viol, 456 Bologna
b. dal viol, 446 Minerbio (Bologna)
- (40) a. akwa, 333 Viarago (Trento)
b. l akwa, 330 Mortaso (Trento)
- (41) a. a tœr vin, 333 Viarago (Trento)
b. a tœr al vin, 330 Mortaso (Trento)
- (42) a. viole, 333 Viarago (Trento)
b. le viole, 330 Mortaso (Trento)
- (43) a. akwa, 821 Vita (Trapani)
b. akwa, 824 Baucina (Palermo)
- (44) a. pi ppigghiari vinu, 821 Vita (Trapani)
b. pi pigghiari u vinu, 824 Baucina (PA)
- (45) a. violi, 821 Vita (Trapani)
b. i vyoli, 824 Baucina (Palermo)

- more than one form is available to the speakers of these dialects: one carries the unmarked value, while the other(s) convey some additional semantic / pragmatic interpretation flavors.

5.3 Lack of variation inside specific areas

- the extreme North especially the Grigioni area in Switzerland only displays the zero determiner;
- the extreme West of Val d'Aosta and Piedmont only displays bare *di*;
- the Center-South to northern Calabria and Apulia only displays the definite article.

6. Highlights

- The four most common indefinite determiners can be analyzed as having a unified structure including an indefinite determiner in SpecDP and nominal features in D, either can be null according to different parametric choices (12), (14).
- Only the standard language has true optionality (**both choices of the same micro-parameter**). In colloquial registers and in the dialect of Ancona, different forms have different meanings (and scope-taking properties).
- Ais map 1037 “if there was water” gives a clearer picture of the distribution of the four forms.

This allowed us to formulate the hypothesis that the overt/covert realization of the indefinite determiner in SpecDP and of the nominal features in D is related to two different parameters that interact diatopically.

- The realization of features in D regards the whole Italian territory and displays covert D only at the very northern and southern extremes, while overt D is found elsewhere from Lombardy to Calabria).
- The overt realization of the indefinite determiner in SpecDP characterizes Gallo-Italic dialects. It is found at the extreme North-West (Val d'Aosta, Piedmont, and partially Liguria) and spreads towards Emilia and Romagna. In the former area it combines with covert D yielding bare *di*, in the latter it combines with overt D yielding *di+art*.
- The other two AIS maps (1343 and 637) show that one area, more than one form is available. This raises the question whether even in the narrow scope interpretation, different nuances of indefiniteness may be realized by different forms of the indefinite determiner.
- This is confirmed by the variation found in specific points for the three different maps, and by the variation in specific areas for each separate map.

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