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# Partitive objects in negative contexts in Northern Italian Dialects

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**Abstract:** In this article we analyze partitive objects under negation (NPOs) in the Northern Italian dialectal (NID) domain and discuss their diachronic and synchronic relation with both partitive constructions and partitive articles. We take into exam the areal distribution of the phenomenon, its syntactic variation and the different factors that regulate this variation. The main claim of the paper is that NPOs in the NIDs are a special type of grammaticalized partitive constructions, where negation licenses a silent quantifier and the preposition expresses extraction from a ‘whole’. In other words, the development of NPOs is similar to that of partitive articles, but they have not lost the partitive meaning. This explains why they appear only with plurals and singular mass nouns.

**Keywords:** partitive, negation, Italian dialects, indefinites

## 1 Introduction

The goal of this article is twofold: to provide an overview of the variation patterns in the syntax of partitive objects under negation (Negated Partitive Objects: NPOs) in the Northern Italian dialectal domain, and to analyze them in a diachronic perspective comparing them with two different syntactic items: true partitive structures (TPSs) and the so-called “partitive articles” (PAs). The phenomenon we intend to investigate is exemplified in (1)<sup>1</sup>:

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<sup>1</sup> If not stated otherwise, all the examples are taken from the ASIt, Atlante Sintattico d’Italia (‘Syntactic Atlas of Italy’) database (<http://asit.maldura.unipd.it/>). The database does not have positive versions of the sentences in (1), so that it is not possible to provide minimal pairs. Notice however that direct objects are not normally introduced by ‘of’ in positive sentences in these dialects:

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- (1) a. La Spezia, Ligurian  
*Te= ne= te= cati mai di pomi*  
 you= not= you= buy never of.the.PL apples
- b. Frontale di Sondalo, Lombard  
*Te= n= crompesc mai de pòm*  
 you= not= buy never of apples  
 ‘You never buy apples.’

The sentences in (1) were produced as translations of a sentence with a bare indefinite plural object. Notice that, while the Lombard variety of Frontale di Sondrio displays the simple preposition *de* ‘of’, the Ligurian variety of La Spezia has the conflated form of the preposition plus what looks like the definite plural article *di* ‘of the’ (in Ligurian the simple ‘of’ is *de*). So, the NIDs can be split into two types: the French-like type, where NPOs display the bare preposition<sup>2</sup> and those that have the preposition plus the definite article. Analogous forms have been analyzed for French by Ihsane (2013) as containing an agreement marker, and not a true definite article.<sup>3</sup> We will discuss this type of variation, since it is relevant when comparing NPOs with both TPSs and PAs. The article has the following structure: in 1.1, we distinguish the three types of syntactic items we take into consideration. In Section 2, we present the microvariation data of NPOs in Northern Italian dialects. In Section 3, we discuss the historical development of NPOs in the context of the grammaticalization process from TPSs to PAs. In Section 4 we propose a formal analysis explaining the relation of NPOs with both TPSs and PAs. Section 5 contains an account of the variation observed in the Italo-Romance domain, which is the main point of our investigation, although we will occasionally refer to standard French and Italian for comparison. Section 6 summarizes and concludes the analysis.

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- (i) a. La Spezia, Ligurian  
*Ch 'i=mangia e patate?*  
 who he=eats the potatoes
- b. Frontale di Sondrio, Lombard  
*Chi ch' à mangià i tartufo?*  
 who that has eaten the potatoes  
 ‘Who does eat/has eaten the potatoes?’

<sup>2</sup> We use the term *preposition* for descriptive purposes and will be more precise about the nature of this element when we analyze the construction formally.

<sup>3</sup> See Section 1.1 for discussion.

## 1.1 Distinguishing NPOs from TPSs and PAs

TPSs are nominal expressions that encode a ‘part-whole’ relation, crucially where the ‘whole’ is defined as a closed set of elements. Some authors distinguish between real partitives, where the ‘whole’ is a definite or presupposed amount or set from which the ‘part’ is extracted, and pseudopartitives, where the nominal representing the “whole” only indicates a kind of entity, as in *a bottle of wine* or *a bag of apples* (cf. Hoeksema 1996; Koptjevskaja-Tamm 2001; Luraghi 2012). In Romance languages the DP encoding the ‘whole’ is introduced by the preposition corresponding to ‘of’, that is the preposition corresponding to genitive case assignment inside a DP. We provide two examples in (2) from French, where the ‘whole’ is represented by the definite mass noun *ce vin* in (2a) and the indefinite bare *vin* in (2b):

- (2) a. *un verre de ce vin* [Partitive]  
       a glass of this wine  
       ‘a glass of this wine’  
       b. *un verre de vin* [Pseudopartitive]  
       a glass of wine  
       ‘a glass of wine’

PAs are semantically a completely different type of items. Unfortunately, the current label ‘Partitive Article’ generally used in the literature is misleading, to say the least. PAs do not encode a ‘part-whole’ relation where the ‘whole’ is a predefinite set, but are interpreted as indefinite determiners, which can be assumed to supplement the paradigm of singular countable Ds (like Italian *un/una* ‘a’) with forms for indefinite (singular) mass nouns and plural countable nouns (cf. Cardinaletti and Giusti 2016 among many others). They appear with singular mass nouns and countable plural nouns with indefinite interpretation even under other prepositions, as shown in (3)(but not under the preposition *di*).<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> One of the problems in assuming that *di* is just a determiner of a different type is precisely that it cannot co-occur with the preposition *di*:

- (i) \**Ho parlato di dei ragazzi.*  
       have.1SG talked of di.the.PL boys  
       ‘I talked about some boys.’

A quick google search also confirms that cases like these are not found, while other prepositions are perfectly compatible with PAs. So, PA *di* is neither a real preposition nor a regular determiner.

This suggests that the item *de/di* is not a regular preposition in these cases, since, for instance in Italian, the preposition *di* is not compatible with other functional prepositions, like those in (3), in other contexts:

- (3) a. *Lo= preparo con del vino.*  
 it= prepare with *di.the.SG* wine  
 ‘I prepare it with some wine.’  
 b. *Ho parlato a degli amici.*  
 have spoken to *di.the.PL* friends  
 ‘I have spoken to some friends.’  
 c. *Sei stato visto da delle persone.*  
 are been seen by *di.the.PL* people  
 ‘You have been seen by some people.’

Romance languages display some variation regarding the existence and the obligatory use of PAs. For instance, Ibero-Romance, Romanian and Romansh lack PAs. On the other hand, in French indefinite mass nouns and plural countable nouns in argument position must be introduced by the PA:

- (4) a. *Je veux \*(de la) viande.*  
 I want of the.F.SG meat  
 ‘I want (some) meat.’  
 b. *Il= y= a \*(des) hommes.*  
 it= there= has of.the.PL men  
 ‘There are (some) men.’  
 (Bossong 2016: 69)

In these contexts, languages like Spanish present bare nouns, while in Italian PAs are optional and alternate with bare nouns (or even with DPs with a definite determiner, the so-called “expletive determiner”).

- (5) a. Italian  
*Voglio (delle/le) mele.*  
 want of.the.F.PL/the.F.PL apples  
 ‘I want (some) apples.’  
 b. Spanish  
*Quiero carne.*  
 want meat  
 ‘I want (some) meat.’  
 (Bossong 2016: 69)

The fact that definite determiners need not refer to a definite element but can be generics or non-specific is well known since Longobardi's (1994) work on the DP layer. From now on, we refer to this type of determiner as "additional marker" to be theory-neutral. We will discuss this problem further in Section 4.

It has been pointed out by many authors that the optionality of PAs in Italian is a complex phenomenon, since the conditions for their appearance are subject to a high degree of variation (cf. Luraghi 2012 among many others).<sup>5</sup> Here

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5 In Italian the presence of the PA has been linked to the interpretation of the indefinite object as specific or d-linked (Battye 1991). In (ia) it is expressed only the kind of food that will be prepared for dinner, while in (ib) the speaker refers to a specific and known subset of an indefinite set of steaks:

- (i) a. *Stasera facciamo bistecche.*  
 tonight do.1PL steaks  
 'Tonight we will cook steaks.'  
 b. *Stasera facciamo delle bistecche.*  
 tonight do.1PL of.the.F.PL steaks  
 'Tonight we will cook some steaks.'  
 (Battye 1991: 4)

In other varieties, however, PAs do not necessarily require a specific or d-linked interpretation, as already noted by Battye (1991) for the variety of Genoa, where PAs can be used even if the noun does not refer to a specific amount/set of something, exactly as in French:

- (ii) a. Genoa, Ligurian  
*Staseja gε du manzu.*  
 tonight there.is of.the.M.SG beef  
 b. modern French  
*Ce soir on= fait des biftecks.*  
 this evening IMPERS= makes of.the.PL steaks  
 'Tonight we will cook beef/steaks.'  
 (Battye 1991: 5)

The same holds for Venetian. However, although in Venetian PAs are perfectly grammatical, they cannot be associated with individual level predicates, so that in the following minimal pair (iiia) with a bare nominal can mean both 'I am no vegetarian' and 'I am eating some meat' while (iiib) is not ambiguous and can only mean 'I am eating some meat':

- (iii) a. Venice, Venetan  
*Magno carne.*  
 eat meat  
 'I am no vegetarian / I am eating (some) meat.'

it is important to point out that in languages like French it is possible to distinguish PAs from TPSs (and especially pseudopartitives) because PAs always correspond to the conflated form *de* plus the additional marker.

Finally, French and some Northern Italian dialects we consider here display indefinite objects introduced by ‘of’ under sentential negation (NPOs). For some authors NPOs are a type of pseudopartitives. For instance, Hoeksema (1996: 16) considers the English example in (6a) and the French one in (6b) as cases of the same construction, which he labels ‘bare partitive’:

- (6) a. *Tarzan (...) ate of the offering of food which...*  
 b. *Elle n’a pas mangé de carottes.*  
 she not has not eaten of carrots  
 ‘She didn’t eat any carrots.’  
 (Hoeksema 1996: 15–16)

However, as Hoeksema acknowledges, the presence of *de* without the additional marker in French examples like (6b) is strictly linked to the presence of negation, an observation already made by Kayne (1975: 30–31.), since the corresponding positive sentence is ungrammatical and the grammatical version must have the form *des*:

- (7) \**Elle a mangé de carottes.*  
 she has eaten of carrots

In French NPOs are clearly different from PAs, as they do not show the conflated form of *de* plus the additional marker like PAs, i. e., the only element marking the NPO is the preposition *de*. However, as we have shown in (1a), there are Northern Italian dialects where NPOs contain the additional marker. This clearly shows that they are different from pseudopartitives, since the latter in these dialects are introduced by the simple form of the preposition ‘of’. Finally, NPOs are also

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- b. *Magno dela carne.*  
 eat of.the.F.SG meat  
 ‘\*I am no vegetarian /OK I am eating (some) meat.’

These sparse observations show that there is variation in the Northern Italian domain according to: a) whether the nominal expression introduced by the PA is d-linked/specific or not; b) the type of predicate (individual or stage level) it can be combined with; c) the type of strategy used in the cases in which PAs are not possible, i. e., either bare nouns or nouns introduced by definite articles. Furthermore, PAs manifest themselves with mass nouns as well as with plurals, and one should also check for differences between these two subtypes, since, as we will see, they are also found with NPOs.

different from TPSs, since with NPOs there is no lexical nominal expression specifically encoding the ‘part’, and the ‘whole’ is not a closed set and always has an indefinite interpretation. A rather compelling distributional argument that shows that NPOs do not pattern either with TPSs or with PAs is their distribution: in the Italo-Romance domain the dialects that possess PAs do not necessarily allow for structures like (1) or (6b) (while it might be the case that the reverse is indeed true). For instance, NPOs are only found in some of the Northern Italian dialects, more consistently in the Gallo-Italic group, while there exist many more dialects that allow for PAs (in different contexts) which however do not display NPOs. Hence, they cannot be instantiations of the same phenomenon. Furthermore, dialects with TPSs do not necessarily have NPOs either; for instance TPSs are found also in the Southern Italian domain, but NPOs and PAs are not. In what follows, we will argue that NPOs, differently from PAs, have a property in common with pseudopartitive structures: they express extraction from a ‘whole’.

## 2 Partitive Objects under Negation in NIDs

In this section we describe, from a comparative and microvariationist point of view, the phenomenon of NPOs across the Northern Italo-Romance domain. The data come from the database of the ASIIt project (*Atlante Sintattico d'Italia* ‘Syntactic Atlas of Italy’). The dialect sentences of the database were collected as translations of standard Italian sentences, grouped in general and specific questionnaires (see Benincà and Poletto 2007 for a description of the field methods used for the database). The positive side about having such a database is that the stimulus sentences are always the same for all the dialects; the problem is that not all variables we might want to investigate are present in the data pool. Our main reason for using the ASIIt corpus is that it provides a large set of comparable positive and negative sentences with indefinite objects for a considerable amount of dialects.<sup>6</sup> In any case, another large collection of comparable data from the Italo-Romance domain, the corpus of Manzini and Savoia (2005: III, 285) confirms that varieties with NPOs do not display a similar construction in positive contexts. We have selected eight sentences from all the questionnaires available in the ASIIt: they all contain a sentential negation and an indefinite count plural or mass singular noun in object position. Two of these sentences contain a plural, two contain a true mass noun as the object (*carne*

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<sup>6</sup> At April 2018 the data set included tagged sentences from 409 Speakers representative of 289 inquiry points for a total of 77.210 tagged items, i. e., sentences (2.263.924 total words).

‘meat’ and *pesce* ‘fish’), but there also four sentences where the object is the singular collective *frutta* ‘fruit’, which behaves as a singular mass nouns regarding this phenomenon. In (8) we provide the whole set of stimulus sentences we have extracted from the database for all Northern Italian dialects available<sup>7</sup>:

- (8) a. *Non comprano mai frutta, le mie sorelle.*  
not buy.3PL never fruit the my sisters  
‘My sisters never buy fruit.’
- b. *Non compri mai mele.*  
not buy.2SG never apples  
‘You never buy apples.’
- c. *Non mangiamo mai frutta.*  
not eat.1PL never fruit  
‘We never eat fruit.’
- d. *Non leggete mai dei libri.*  
not read.2PL never of.the.M.PL books  
‘You never read books.’
- e. *Non mangiamo mai pesce.*  
not eat.1PL never fish  
‘We never eat fish.’
- f. *Non mangio la carne.*  
not eat.1SG the meat  
‘I do not eat meat.’
- g. *Carlo non mangia la frutta.*  
Carlo not eats the fruit  
‘Carlo does not eat fruit.’
- h. *Carlo non ha mangiato la frutta.*  
Carlo not has eaten the fruit  
‘Carlo has not eaten fruit.’

The phenomenon has a “leopard-spot” distribution in the whole Gallo-Italic domain (with a strong presence in Ligurian)<sup>8</sup> and is completely absent in

<sup>7</sup> Unfortunately, most of the sentence contain the element *mai* ‘never’ in addition to the negative marker. Since the pool of dialects is very large, retesting all the sentences without ‘never’ is beyond the scope of this article. In any case we have not found significant differences between sentences with the adverb and those without it.

<sup>8</sup> Gallo-Italic (or Gallo-Italian) is a term traditionally used by Italian dialectologists to indicate the varieties spoken on territories inhabited by Gauls before the Roman conquest. Main Gallo-Italic varieties are Piedmontese, Ligurian, Lombard and Emilian. They share many features with the other Northern Italian Dialects (presence of nominative clitics, degemination of consonants



Venetan, in Friulian and in Tuscan, which display regular PAs whether negation is present or not.<sup>9</sup> Figure 1, taken from Garzonio and Poletto (2018), shows the distribution of NPOs in the dialectal translations of *Non compri mai mele* ‘You never buy apples’.

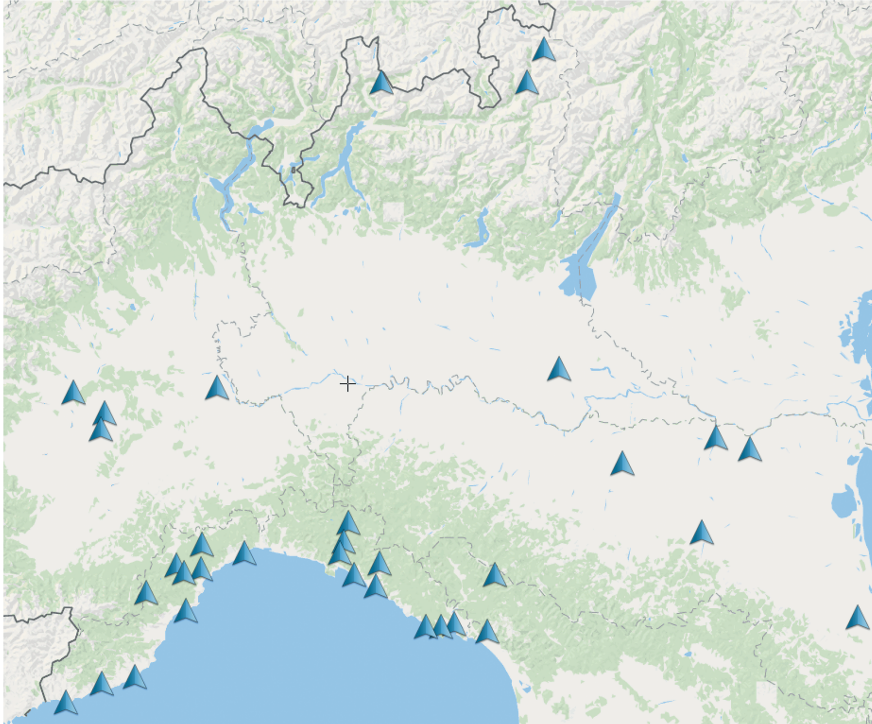


Figure 1: NPOs in NIDs.

and voicing of intervocalic occlusives) and are characterized mainly by some diachronic phonological processes, like the loss of most final vowels and generalized apocope. See Savoia (1997) for a recent classification of Italo-Romance varieties.

<sup>9</sup> It must be pointed out that in the dialects that do not have NPOs it is still possible to translate some of these examples with an object introduced by *di*. Consider the following example in standard Italian:

- (i) *Non mangio della carne.*  
 not eat.1SG of.the.F.SG meat  
 ‘I am not eating some meat.’

Similar sentences can be interpreted as stage level predicates. In the latter case, we interpret this as evidence that similar examples contain a PA and not a NPO.

In the following subsections, we present the different types we have singled out based on the ASIt data.

## 2.1 Varieties with generalized ‘of’ plus the additional marker under negation

In these varieties indefinite count plural and singular mass object NPOs are always introduced by ‘of’ conflated with the additional marker, expressing the number and in some cases also the gender of the noun. This type is found across the whole Gallo-Italic domain.

(9) a. Carpi, Emilian

*I= n= compren mai dla fruta el me sureli.*  
 they= not= buy never of.the.F.SG fruit the my sisters  
 ‘My sisters never buy fruit.’

b. *Te= n= comper mai di pom.*  
 you= not= buy never of.the.PL apples  
 ‘You never buy apples.’

(10) Riva presso Chieri, Piedmontese

a. *A= catu mai dra fruta, ar me surele.*  
 they= buy never of.the.F.SG fruit the my sisters  
 ‘My sisters never buy fruit.’

b. *Et= cate mai di pum.*<sup>10</sup>  
 you= buy never of.the.PL apples  
 ‘You never buy apples.’

In other words, in these varieties it is not possible to distinguish NPOs and PAs by means of their morphosyntactic realization.

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**10** Notice that in these varieties the simple preposition ‘of’ is respectively *ed* and *(a)d*:

- (i) a. *quell ed mei* (Carpi)  
 something of better  
 b. *chicosa ad mei* (Riva presso Chieri)  
 something of better  
 ‘something better’

## 2.2 Varieties with generalized ‘of’ without the additional marker

These varieties are similar to the ones described in the previous section, in the sense that the NPO has just one possible morphosyntactic realization. However, the object is introduced by the simple preposition corresponding to ‘of’ and there are no conflated forms with the additional marker. These varieties present the same structure of NPOs of modern French. This type is found mainly in the North-Western varieties (Ligurian and Piedmontese).

(11) Riva presso Chieri, Piedmontese

a. *A= cato mai ed fruta le mie seure.*

they= buy never of fruit the my sisters

‘My sisters never buy fruit.’

b. *I t= cate mai ed pom.*

you= buy never of apples

‘You never buy apples.’

(12) Cicagna, Ligurian

a. *E= n= acatu mai de fruta e me so.*

they= not= buy never of fruit the my sisters

‘My sisters never buy fruit.’

b. *Nu= t= acati mai de meie.*

not= you= buy never of apples

‘You never buy apples.’

There is only one sentence for which we have translations in varieties of this type with a conflated ‘of’ plus the definite article, (8d). As we will see in Section 2.3, this is the only sentence that displays an object introduced by ‘of’ even in varieties that completely lack NPOs. Thus, it can be hypothesized that in similar cases we are dealing with a PA and not with a partitive construction of some type.

(13) a. Turin, Piedmontese

*I= lese mai dij liber.*

you= read never of.the.M.PL books

b. Cicagna, Ligurian

*Nu lesé mai di libri.*

not read never of.the.M.PL books

‘You never read books.’

## 2.3 Varieties without NPOs

As mentioned above, the areas where NPOs are not attested are Venetan, Friulian and Tuscan domains. The alternative strategy used for indefinite objects under negation can either be a bare noun or a DP with a definite determiner, and the choice probably depends on the properties of definite determiners in the various dialects, i. e., whether they can be expletive determiners or not in these contexts<sup>11</sup>:

(14) Cirvoi, Venetan

- a. *Le me sorele no le= compra mai fruta.*  
 the my sisters not they= buys never fruit  
 ‘My sisters never buy fruit.’
- b. *No te= cio mai pon.*  
 not you= buy never apples  
 ‘You never buy apples.’
- c. *No magnon mai fruta.*  
 not eat never fruit  
 ‘We never eat fruit.’
- d. *No ledè mai libri.*  
 not read never books  
 ‘You never read books.’

(15) Florence, Tuscan

- a. *Le= un= comprano mai frutta, le mie sorelle.*  
 they= not= buy never fruit the my sisters  
 ‘My sisters never buy fruit.’
- b. *Te un= tu= compri mai mele.*  
 you not= you= buy never apples  
 ‘You never buy apples.’

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<sup>11</sup> In some cases ‘of’ conflated with the determiner appears in the sentence corresponding to (8d), but these occurrences seem triggered by the Italian stimulus sentence. In any case, we interpret them as cases of PAs, which are normally present in these varieties:

- (i) Farra di Soligo, Venetan  
*No ledè mai dei libri.*  
 not read.2PL never of.the.M.PL books  
 ‘You never read (some) books.’

- c. *Un si mangia mai frutta.*  
 not REFL eats never fruit  
 ‘We never eat fruit.’

Since the sentences from the ASIt seem to convey an individual level interpretation due to the presence of the adverb *mai* ‘never’, one would have to make a detailed inquiry of different contexts to figure out the distribution of bare nouns and of expletive definite determiners, which we intend to undertake in future work. For the moment, we can hypothesize that the alternation between a null determiner and an expletive definite article might be related to the type of predicate. The distribution of the article probably also depends on the bare noun being a plural or a mass noun, since in Venetian there is a preference for the usage of the article with mass nouns more than with plural nouns with stage level predicates.

(16) Venice, Venetan

- a. *Ti= ga tolto anche ?(el) late?*  
 you= have taken also the milk?  
 ‘Have you taken (some) milk as well?’  
 b. *Ti= ga tolto anche (i) pomi?*  
 you= have taken also the apples  
 ‘Have you taken (some) apples as well?’

While in (16a) the usage of the null determiner is only possible with a contrastive reading or in a list, in (16b) the presence of the article signals a true definite DP, i. e., the apples must already be part of the discourse, implicitly or explicitly. The variation found in the ASIt and attested by (17) might indicate precisely that the speakers have interpreted the sentences in a different way.

(17) Alte Ceccato Montecchio, Venetan

- a. *Me soree no le= compra mai fruta.*  
 my sisters not they= buy never fruit  
 ‘My sisters never buy fruit.’  
 b. *No magnemo mai la fruta.*  
 not eat never the fruit  
 ‘We never eat fruit.’

## 2.4 Varieties with obligatory ‘of’ and optional conflated additional marker

Some Ligurian dialects apparently oscillate between the French type of NPOs and the same structure as PAs: while the preposition corresponding to ‘of’ is obligatory, the presence of the conflated additional marker encoding number (and gender) is optional.

### (18) La Spezia, Ligurian

- a. *I= ne= cato mai de fruta, e me soele.* [‘of’]  
 they= not= buy never of fruit the my sisters  
 ‘My sisters never buy fruit.’
- b. *Te= ne= te= cati mai di pomi.* [‘of’ + D]  
 you= not= you= buy never of.the.M.PL apples  
 ‘You never buy apples.’
- c. *A= ne= mangemo mai de fruta.* [‘of’]  
 we= not= eat never of fruit  
 ‘We never eat fruit.’
- d. *A= ne= lezé mai di libri.* [‘of’ + D]  
 you= not= read never of.the.M.PL books  
 ‘You never read books.’

### (19) Casarza, Ligurian

- a. *E me soe e= nu= l= acatu mai de fruta* [‘of’]  
 the my sisters they= not= it= buy never of fruit  
 ‘My sisters never buy fruit.’
- b. *Nu= ti= acati mai de meie.* [‘of’]  
 not= you= buy never of apples  
 ‘You never buy apples.’
- c. *Nu= mangemu mai da fruta.* [‘of’ + D]  
 not= eat never of.F.SG fruit  
 ‘We never eat fruit.’
- d. *Nu= lezei mai di libbri.* [‘of’ + D]  
 not= read never of.the.M.PL books  
 ‘You never read books.’

We noticed that with plural nouns the conflated additional marker is found more frequently.<sup>12</sup> This variation in the form of NPOs is interesting because normally the form of the other constructions we are comparing, i. e., TPSs and PAs, is stable in the same variety: as already discussed, in French for instance NPOs are always introduced by the simple *de*, while PAs always contain the definite determiner. A possible explanation is that this optionality represents a diachronic step in the grammaticalization of PAs, which derive from TPSs as standardly assumed in a way that we discuss in Section 3.

## 2.5 Varieties with optional NPOs

Other varieties that present total optionality regarding the presence of indefinite objects introduced by ‘of’ under negation are scattered throughout the Gallo-Italic domain. In general, it is possible to observe that the preposition is optional in negative contexts, but its presence is again connected to the mass noun/plural status of the object. We have found two main patterns:

- a. The plural has the preposition ‘of’ (with (21) or without (20) the conflated additional marker) and the singular with mass interpretation only displays the definite article.
- b. The plural has the preposition ‘of’ (usually without the additional marker) and the singular with mass interpretation is bare (22).

(20) Frontale di Sondalo, Lombard

- |   |               |
|---|---------------|
| a. <i>Li= la= crompa mai la fruta, li mia soréli.</i> | [D (sing)]    |
| they= it= buy never the fruit the my sisters          |               |
| ‘My sisters never buy fruit.’                         |               |
| b. <i>Te= n= crompesc mai de póm.</i>                 | [‘of’ (plur)] |
| you= not= buy never of apples                         |               |
| ‘You never buy apples.’                               |               |
| c. <i>Noàntri ne la= mènghia mai la fruta.</i>        | [D (sing)]    |
| we not it= eat never the fruit                        |               |
| ‘We never eat fruit.’                                 |               |
| d. <i>A= n= lesgef mai de libri.</i>                  | [‘of’ (plur)] |
| you= not= read never of books                         |               |
| ‘You never read books.’                               |               |

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<sup>12</sup> This is exactly the opposite pattern in the distribution of the article with respect to the Venetian variety exemplified in (16), which shows that in order to understand the variation we observe a detailed investigation of the properties of expletive definite articles in each dialect must be carried out.

- (21) Borgo San Martino, Piedmontese
- a. *Al me surèli ai= creumpu màj la frùta.* [D (sing)]  
 the my sisters they= buy never the fruit  
 ‘My sisters never buy fruit.’
- b. *At= creumpi màj di pum.*<sup>13</sup> [‘of’ + D (plur)]  
 you= buy never of.the.PL apples  
 ‘You never buy apples.’
- c. *A= mangiùmna màj la frùta.* [D (sing)]  
 we= eat never the fruit  
 ‘We never eat fruit.’
- d. *A= lesìj màj di libbar.* [‘of’ + D (plur)]  
 you= read never of.the.PL books  
 ‘You never read books.’
- (22) Ferrara
- a. *I= n= compra mai fruta, il mie sureli.* [Ø (sing)]  
 the= not= buy never fruit the my sisters  
 ‘My sisters never buy fruit.’
- b. *T= an= compri mai di pum.* [‘of’ + D (plur)]  
 you= not= buy never of.the.PL apples  
 ‘You never buy apples.’
- c. *I= n= magna mai fruta.* [Ø (sing)]  
 we= not= eat never fruit  
 ‘We never eat fruit.’
- d. *A= n= lezz mai di libar.* [‘of’ + D (plur)]  
 you= not= read never of.the.PL books  
 ‘You never read books.’

Once again, we observe that the variation between the presence and the absence of the additional marker must be related to the general properties that definite articles have in each variety, in particular to the so-called expletive interpretation, where the definite article has no ‘familiarity’ semantics.<sup>14</sup>

**13** In this dialect the simple preposition ‘of’ is *d*:

(i) *Agn= è tanti d perseuni ’csi.* (Borgo San Martino, Piedmontese)  
 there= is many of people such  
 ‘There are many such people.’

**14** Our hunch is that definite articles can be used in these cases only if they can be used as expletive articles in the sense of Longobardi (1994). This prediction can only be checked by



## 2.6 A brief summary

Although the syntax of NPOs in the Northern Italian domain is rather varied, we can still formulate the following empirical generalizations on the basis of the ASIt data:

- a. In some varieties negative contexts trigger the presence of the preposition corresponding to ‘of’ with indefinite direct objects.
- b. When the presence or absence of this preposition is mandatory, the presence of the conflated additional marker is independent and appears to be based only on the semantic properties of the definite article in the variety under investigation (i. e., whether there exists an expletive article or not).
- c. When there is internal variation regarding the presence of this preposition, the mass singular vs. countable plural opposition becomes relevant. In general, the plural is very frequently connected to the presence of both the preposition and the (conflated) additional marker. This is not the case in those dialects that do not have NPOs marked by the preposition.

## 3 The development of NPOs and PAs

Before turning to our analysis, in this section we discuss the diachronic development of NPOs and PAs in Italo-Romance, comparing it with the development of PAs in French, which has been recently examined by Carlier (2007), and Carlier and Lamiroy (2014). We cannot summarize the whole literature on French PAs and NPOs here and only underline that there are three main lines of thought. The first is the one going back to Foulet (1965: 65) who assumed that in Old French PAs emerged from cases of a null quantifier in the structure. This idea has been exploited by Rowlett (1998: 66) for NPOs. He considers them a type of pseudopartitives, for which the null quantifier is actually not null, but corresponds to the negative marker *pas* (or to *point* or *mie* in older stages), which has moved from within the object position to the NegP in the sentence structure.

(23) [NegP *pas* [V [~~*pas*~~ [de N]]]]

According to this view, NPOs encode a type of ‘part-whole’ relation, where the ‘part’ is a negated minimizer and the ‘whole’ is an indefinite mass or plural entity. In this sense they are distinct from TPSs, which are characterized by a

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means of a large scale study, which is currently being carried out at the university of Frankfurt through a research project in collaboration with the university of Zurich.

closed set for the ‘whole’, which is clearly d-linked either through a demonstrative or some pragmatic device.

The second line of thought, developed by Kupferman (1994, 1998) relates the emergence and presence of PAs with a specific type of transitive verbs, the so-called fragmentation verbs, like *boire* ‘to drink’, which encode the partition of the object. Following Kupferman’s idea, PAs can be considered as case markers selected by these verbs.<sup>15</sup> It is indeed true that in Old French the vast majority of objects introduced by *de* are found with this type of verbs, although this is by no means mandatory. On the other hand, when one tries to provide a precise definition of “fragmentation” and tests the properties that define this type of value of a verb, the task is by no means an easy one.

Finally, Carlier (2007) rejects both the original analysis with a null quantifier proposed by Foulet as well as the one of PAs as case markers proposed by Kupfermann on the basis of a number of arguments against the two ideas. According to her proposal, the Old French *de* has an ambiguous status between full preposition and determiner, in the sense that it does not relate to the verb or a noun, as prepositions do, but only to the internal nominal expression. Objects introduced by *de* are used in Old French when the predicate presupposes an indefinite partition of a contextually specific set or amount of something (as already pointed out by Foulet 1965: 69), i. e., they were TPSs. For this reason, they usually appear with fragmentation verbs.<sup>16</sup>

- (24) a. *verse [...] del vin qui n= estoit pas troblez*  
 pours of.the.M.SG wine that not= was not cloudy  
 ‘He pours [...] the wine that was not cloudy’  
 (Foulet 1965: 69, Chrétien de Troyes, *Perceval*, 728–729)
- b. *Seignors, du vin de qoi il burent avez oi*  
 lords of.the.M.SG wine of which they drank have heard  
 ‘Lords, you heard about the wine they drank’  
 (Carlier 2007: 13, Bérout, *Tristran & Iseut*, 2133–2134)

The fact that in examples like (24b) *de* selects the oblique form of the relative pronoun can be considered evidence that it still behaves as a preposition. At this stage there are cases of nouns introduced by *de* in existential predicates, like (25). It is debatable that in (25) *de sains moines* is a subject, as suggested by

<sup>15</sup> In an analysis of this type, PAs can be considered as Differential Object Markers, encoding the non-complete affectedness of the object. See Luraghi (2012), among many others, on the development of this intuition.

<sup>16</sup> Notice that this is not obvious, since we have no clear definition of a test to single out fragmentation verbs.

Carlier (2007: 14)(see also Luraghi 2012: 12), since the existential predicate is a form of the verb ‘have’. However, this example could be an instance of the bridge context for the next stage of the process, where the partition meaning disappears and only the indefinite quantity is expressed.

- (25) *De sains moines i= a de sa contree qui [...] l’ostelerent*  
of saint monks there= has of his land that him=lodged  
‘There are some monks from his land that lodged him’  
(Carlier 2007: 22, *Aiol*)

In the Middle French stage the ambiguity is resolved, with *de* entering into the paradigm of determiners, combining with the definite article encoding phi-features:

“From the point of view of its meaning, this insertion into the paradigm of articles results in loss of meaning (the notion of a contextually specified partition object fades away) but also in enrichment (the notion of indefiniteness emerges). The loss of the prepositional status and the concomitant desemantization lead to an extension of the conditions of use. The partitive is still dominantly used in object position, but not only with verbs of the group *boire*, *manger*, etc. Moreover, the partitive also appears in other syntactic positions, including those introduced by a preposition.” (Carlier 2007: 33).

In Italian the development of PAs is similar. In Old Italo-Romance varieties it is possible to find examples where ‘of’ plus the definite article is used to introduce direct objects. Luraghi (2012: 14) points out that in most cases these constructions have to be interpreted as TPSs, since the referenced entity is contextually definite, as in (26a). However, from the end of the thirteenth century, we also find cases like (26b) where the noun introduced by ‘of’ plus the definite article is the subject of an existential predicate with an indefinite interpretation (in this case under negation):

- (26) a. *Ela mançà del pomo qe li= de un serpente*  
she ate of.the.M.SG apple that her= gave a snake  
‘She ate of the apple that a snake gave her’  
(Luraghi 2012: 14–15, Uguccione da Lodi, ca. 1210, Lombard)
- b. *che del ben non vi= sia*  
that of.the.M.SG good not there= is  
‘that there is not some good’  
(Luraghi 2012: 15, Ubertino del Bianco d’Arezzo, 1269, Tuscan)

In Tuscan varieties, the attestation of PAs derived from ‘of’ plus a form that looks like the definite articles becomes more robust from the end of the fourteenth century

(at the end of a significant change in the language during the previous century; cf. Poletto 2014).

- (27) a. *E lo santo vescovo bevve del*  
 and the holy bishop drank of.the.M.SG  
*vino temperato coll' acqua*  
 wine tempered with.the water  
 'The holy bishop drank some wine softened with water' (*Leggenda di S. Ilario*, 1373, Tuscan)
- b. *uno serpente uccise Archemoro lassato nel prato*  
 a snake killed Archemorus left in.the field  
*a colliere dei fiori*  
 to collect of.the.M.PL flowers  
 'A snake killed Archemorus when he was left in a field collecting flowers'  
 (Francesco da Buti, *Commento al Purgatorio*, 1395, Tuscan)

Furthermore, before the completion of the grammaticalization process of PAs at the end of the fourteenth century, Old Italo-Romance varieties display also cases like the following ones:

- (28) a. *non ebbono [...] punto di vino*  
 not had not of wine  
 'They had no wine'  
 (Garzonio 2008: 120, Giovanni Villani, *Cronica*, 1348, Tuscan)
- b. *là no se= sente miga de male*  
 there not REFL= feels not of pain  
 'There one does not feel any pain'  
 (Garzonio 2008: 128, Barsegapé, *Sermone*, 1274, Lombard)

In these examples the object is a complex item formed by a minimizer, which was already used as negation during this stage (*punto* 'point', *miga* 'crumble'), and a PP headed by 'of. We interpret similar examples as the contexts from which NPOs emerged. What is relevant here is the categorial ambiguity of the minimizer between a quantity noun and a postverbal negative adverb. This suggests that the reanalysis of the partitive preposition as a determiner (i. e., the ambiguity of this P) is linked to the ambiguity of the quantificational item expressing the 'part' of the partitive relation. We will take this idea into consideration for our proposal in Section 4.

We have mentioned that in French PAs and NPOs are distinguished because the former present conflation with what looks like a definite article, while the latter

correspond to the simple P *de*. However, as we have seen in Section 2, in NPO contexts in the Gallo-Italic domain we can find the conflated form typical of French PAs. A similar variation regarding the form of PAs is observable across the domain of Romance languages that have PAs. While in French and in Italian the PA is always the conflated form, there are also cases of the converse, where the PA is the simple ‘of’, as in central Occitan varieties (and Gascon, where furthermore PAs are optional). Compare the examples in (29a) and (29b) with the one with the conflated form in (29c):

- (29) a. Provençal Occitan  
*Vòli d’ oulivas.*  
 want of olives  
 ‘I want (some) olives.’
- b. Gascon  
*Manjar (de) carn.*  
 eat of meat  
 ‘To eat meat.’  
 (Bossong 2016: 69)
- c. Lemosin, Northern Occitan  
*Minge de la sopa e dau pan,*  
 eat of the soup and of.the.M.SG bread  
*de las figas e daus melons.*  
 of the.F.PL figs and of.the.M.PL melons  
 ‘I eat soup and bread, figs and melons.’  
 (Sauzet 2014: 2)

Something similar happens in Gallo-Italic. For instance, the *Sprach- und Sachatlas Italiens und der Südschweiz* (Jaberg and Jud 1928–1940) maps 636–637 (*andare a cercare delle mammole* ‘go and collect some violas’) display translations with a simple P in the Piedmontese area. Compare (30a) and (30b), which is a close Gallo-Romance variety, with the other varieties with a conflated form.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Notice that the sentences of this atlas are not contextualized, and there might be differences concerning the contexts so that PAs are visible only in some. In any case, there is no Southern Italian dialect with a PA. The Southern dialects display either a bare plural or a definite article.

- (i) a. Monte di Procida, Neapolitan  
*ì a ccsrkà rə bbyols*  
 go to search the violas
- b. Vico del Gargano, Apulian  
*yò a ffà vyols*  
 go to make violas

- (30) a. Villafalletto, Piedmontese  
     ...*d vyulatte*  
     of violas
- b. Valdieri, Cisalpine Occitan  
     ...*d viulettes*  
     of violas
- c. Sonico, Lombard  
     ...*de le viæle*  
     of the.F.PL violas
- d. Vas, Venetan  
     ...*de le viole mamole*  
     of the.F.PL violas
- e. Radda in Chianti, Tuscan  
     ...*delle viol'a mammole*  
     of.the.F.PL violas

This is a very interesting parallelism regarding the distribution of PAs and NPOs, suggesting that the two constructions developed in a parallel way from TPSs and definitely have something in common. For this reason, in our analysis we will consider NPOs as an intermediate stage in the grammaticalization process of PAs, which has been maintained independently by some of the Romance varieties that have PAs.

## 4 A broad view of Partitives

As we have seen above, there are at least three lines of thought concerning the development of TPSs into PAs and NPOs. In what follows we would like to present all the intuitions from the three analyses put forth above and combine them to develop a more specific structural analysis. The three points we intend to take over into our analysis are a) Foulet's intuition that some TPSs contain a null quantifier; b) Carlier's intuition that the preposition in these constructions is

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- c. Mangone, Calabrian  
     *yire a ttrovare vyole*  
     go to find violas
- d. Baucina, Sicilian  
     *iri a ccirkari i vyoli*  
     go to search the.PL violas

not a true preposition because it does not have two relations (one to the selecting verb and one to the DP it takes as its complement) but only one, i. e., the one internal to the nominal expression; c) Kupfermann's intuition that the "fragmentation" semantics must somehow be encoded in the syntax, i. e., TPSs and NPOs must share some structural properties that PAs lack. We implement this into the internal structure of these three types of nominal expressions with the idea that NPOs constitute an intermediate structure between TPSs and PAs, sharing some properties with both of them.

We will start by taking up Carlier's observation that TPSs derive from a locative construction that has the meaning of 'taking away something', i. e., subtracting a portion from the whole. This property is analogous to inalienable possessive constructions, where we define a part and a whole. Since there is general consensus in the literature that possession expressions can be analyzed as small clauses (cf. Hulk and Tellier 2000; den Dikken 2006), we will adopt an idea first proposed by Sleeman and Kester (2002) and argue that the relation 'part/whole' in TPSs is expressed just like in inalienable possession through a small clause, of which the nominal expression representing the part is the specifier, the nominal expression representing the 'whole' is in the complement position and the preposition realizes the head (see also Alexiadou 2003 for the idea that the difference between alienable and inalienable possession lies in the respective positions of the possessor and the possessum). The semantic value of this head can correspond to the feature BELONG as proposed by Hulk and Tellier (2000):

- (31) [<sub>BELONGP</sub> [<sub>SpecBELONG</sub> [<sub>DP</sub> 'part']][<sub>BELONG°</sub> P] [<sub>DP</sub> 'whole']]

This has the advantage of formally encoding the semantics of TPSs through a specific structural configuration, i. e., the small clause. At the same time, it captures Carlier's intuition that the preposition is not selected by anything, either a verb or a noun in itself, since it is the realization of the head of a small clause. Carlier proposes that *de* is a marker of partition, and this is clearly the case in our structure, since the P is the realization of the head of a partitive small clause. This idea is also in accordance with recent treatments of PAs, as the one proposed by Cardinaletti and Giusti (2016) for Italian *del/dei*, which see them as indefinite articles. Since PAs represent the last step of the grammaticalization process of TPSs, here the small clause does not exist any longer, since the silent 'part' is not interpreted (and hence not projected) and the head of the small clause becomes the highest portion of a regular DP, as we will see below.

In addition to the small clause idea, we have to assume that real partitives contain a null AMOUNT (for mass nouns) or NUMBER (for plurals) functional light noun *n*. This null *n* is licensed through the presence of an adjectival Q in its

specifier (like *assez* ‘much’ in French) which provides the null *n* with one of the two values, either mass or countable plural.<sup>18</sup> Several authors have followed Foulet’s intuition (see Gross 1967; Milner 1978) in assuming the presence of the null quantifier. We would like to be more specific and say that the null AMOUNT/NUMBER sits embedded inside the nominal expression located in the Spec of the small clause, i. e., in the structural portion representing the part and can be modified by a lexical specifier, as in (32):

- (32) [<sub>BELONGP</sub> [<sub>SpecBELONG</sub> [<sub>QP</sub> [*assez*]<sub>[Q° AMOUNT]]] [<sub>BELONG°</sub> *de*] [<sub>DP</sub> ‘whole’]]]</sub>

In TPSs the nominal expression representing the ‘whole’ can be definite or indefinite, as Foulet already pointed out for Old French (although, as Carlier notices, the cases of indefinite ‘whole’ are less frequent).

If we now turn to the final stage of the historical reanalysis, i. e., PAs, we propose that these are regular DPs, so there is no small clause any longer. This corresponds to the semantics of PAs, which do not have any partitive interpretation, but simply a standard indefinite one. We adopt here Cardinaletti and Giusti (2016) proposal that PAs are actually normal DPs. As for the PA itself, it is clear that this is a bimorphemic element where the preposition is a type of Case marker. As for the additional marker element, there are two possibilities: we can exploit the fact that it is independently necessary to postulate the existence of expletive definite articles of the type already identified by Longobardi (1994) in his work on articles with proper nouns. As such, expletive articles are not referential, as already pointed out by Longobardi. The alternative is to adopt the cartographic view proposed in Ihsane (2013) and assume that the definite article appearing with PAs is actually an agreement marker and not a true article. In any case, PAs are made of two morphemes, one located in the IP-equivalent of the internal structure of D, which expresses phi-features, and the higher portion, historically derived from the preposition, which is a case marker. In our structure, however, even the higher morpheme of the article must be located rather low in the left periphery of the DP, in a position which does not encode ‘familiarity’, since the interpretation is the one of an indefinite. The structure of a PA is thus the following:

- (33) [<sub>KP</sub> [<sub>K°</sub> *de-*] [<sub>d°</sub> -l] .... [NP]]

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<sup>18</sup> Alternatively the null *n* could be formally licensed by an Agree procedure probing the N contained in the DP expressing the ‘whole’, which has the relevant features to type the null *n* as mass or as countable plural.



According to this view PAs do not have the syntax of real partitive expressions, which require a relation between two DPs, the part and the whole, and they just express indefiniteness (see Storto 2003 on this).

Suppose now that an NPO corresponds to an intermediate stage between the original structure of TPSs and the one of PAs, since it has a partitive meaning like TPSs, but the ‘whole’ is forcedly indefinite like in PAs and not d-linked as in TPSs. Suppose that what NPOs and PAs have in common is that the structure has already been reanalyzed as a regular nominal expression and is not a small clause any longer. On the other hand, what NPOs have in common with TPSs, is the presence of a null quantified AMOUNT/NUMBER, licensed by its measure specifier, which in the case of other pseudopartitives is the lexical quantifier *beaucoup* ‘a lot of’, *combien* ‘how many’, and in NPOs is the negative element *pas*. The presence of the preposition corresponding to ‘of’ is justified by the AMOUNT/NUMBER, which, being of nominal character assigns genitive to its complement. In other words, NPOs are in-between TPSs and PAs, since they share some properties with both. Here the core idea is that NPOs are still a special type of partitive expressions where sentential negation is the modifier of the silent AMOUNT/NUMBER, but they do not have the small clause structure typical of TPSs. As already proposed by Rowlett (1998) (see also Manzini and Savoia 2011), we surmise that the negative marker *pas* originates as part of the nominal expression, and in this sense it can be compared to those languages that express negation by means of negating the object. *Pas* is then moved out of the QP and attracted to the Spec of NegP via the usual probe-goal mechanism.<sup>19</sup>

(34) [<sub>NegP</sub> *pas* ... [<sub>QP</sub> [*pas*]<sub>[Q°</sub> AMOUNT [<sub>KP</sub> *de* [<sub>DP</sub> *vin*]]]]]

Since in cases of NPOs like (34) the quantifier has scope over its c-command domain, hence it requires the following nominal expression not to be definite, because a quantifier cannot have scope over a definite expression.<sup>20</sup> On the contrary, TPSs are complex structures that contain two DPs, one of which is under the scope of the quantifier, while the other is not c-commanded by it, and is definite, and generally d-linked. On the basis of this structural hypothesis, let us now turn to the different Northern Italian dialects that we have seen so far.

<sup>19</sup> The distinction between negation and quantifiers might have to do with the fact that the negative marker has a dedicated position in the clausal spine, while quantifiers do not, since they most probably exploit adverbial positions.

<sup>20</sup> A tentative proposal from the semantic point of view is that the null AMOUNT/NUMBER requires an indefinite nominal expression in its scope domain because it is not compatible with the ‘maximality’ component of the definite semantics. We will not develop here further, since our focus is on the syntactic properties of these constructions.

## 5 An account of variation

The analysis above is based on French, where the structural distinction between the two sentences in (35) is the one between a normal DP (as in 35a) whose internal left periphery contains both the marker *d-* as well as the lower portion of the definite article (much as in Ihsane's (2013) proposal). The negative case is a quantified nominal expression, where there is still a null AMOUNT/NUMBER as there is in TPSs, although there is no small clause here as in TPSs. Furthermore, in NPOs, the visible modifier of the null AMOUNT/NUMBER, i. e., *pas*, has been extracted out of the specifier of the part containing the null AMOUNT/NUMBER to reach SpecNegP.

- (35) a. *Je bois \*de/du vin.* [Positive]  
 I drink of/of.the.M.SG wine  
 'I drink (some) wine.'
- b. *Je ne bois pas de/\*du vin* [Negative]  
 I not drink not of/of.the.M.SG wine  
 'I do not drink (some) wine.'

- (36) a. [<sub>TP</sub> [<sub>je</sub>] *bois* [<sub>VP</sub> *bois* [<sub>KP</sub> [<sub>K°</sub> *d-*] [<sub>d°</sub> *-u*] ... [<sub>NP</sub> *vin* ]]]]
- b. [<sub>TP</sub> [<sub>je</sub>] *ne bois* [<sub>NegP</sub> [<sub>pas</sub>]] [<sub>VP</sub> *bois* [<sub>QP</sub> [<sub>pas</sub>] [<sub>Q°</sub> AMOUNT] [<sub>KP</sub> *de* [<sub>NP</sub> *vin* ]]]]]]

Dialects that behave like French with respect to NPOs have the same structure as French, i. e., they have a negative marker originating in the object position, which is then raised to the NegP position and can license a null AMOUNT/NUMBER through its copy in the SpecQ position.<sup>21</sup> This is true independently of the final position reached by the negative marker: as proposed by Poletto (2016) all sentential negative markers are originated in the same position and then raise to different heights in the clausal spine due to their feature endowment, so in principle also higher negative markers can be originated within the object and then raised.

<sup>21</sup> Notice however, that some Ligurian dialects do not have an overt postverbal negative marker, although they have NPOs of the French type. Here we must assume that the postverbal negative marker is null. Cases of null negation have already been argued for in the NIDs; see for instance Benincà and Poletto (2005). It is however a fact that in the Venetan and Friulian areas where preverbal negation is the prevalent standard negative marker, so that some dialects are even strict negative concord languages, NPOs are never found. The other factor licensing NPOs of the French type is probably the possibility to license the null AMOUNT through its specifier.

Since Modern Italian and all the varieties of the North East of Italy do not have NPOs of the French type but have PAs for both negative and positive clauses, it is straightforward to assume that the structure of positive and negative sentences is similar. In other words, in standard Italian, and all the dialects that behave alike either there is no null or lexical postverbal negative marker or the null AMOUNT cannot be licensed through its specifier or both. The fact that in the following examples also (37b) is ungrammatical leads us to think that the second condition, i. e., that the null AMOUNT/NUMBER can be licensed through its specifier, is not met in standard Italian and all varieties that behave in the same way. Therefore, these varieties just use PAs in all contexts where it is possible:

- (37) a. *Non c'è (\*di) vino in questa bottiglia.*  
 not there-is of wine in this bottle  
 b. *Non c'è mica (\*di) vino in questa bottiglia.*  
 not there-is not of wine in this bottle  
 'There is no wine in this bottle.'

All varieties that do not have NPOs of the French type either use PAs or an alternative strategy, (for instance bare nouns).

Old Italo-Romance varieties, just like modern French and modern Gallo-Italic varieties which have NPOs, had the possibility to generate the postverbal negation (like *miga*) inside the object and it could in turn license the null AMOUNT/NUMBER through a spec-head Agree relation. Examples like (28b), repeated here as (38), are analyzed as in (39) according to the derivation we propose.

- (38) *lâ no se= sente miga de male*  
 there not REFL= feels not of pain  
 'There one does not feel any pain'

- (39) [<sub>NegP</sub> *miga* ]...[<sub>QP</sub> [<sub>SpecQ</sub> ~~*miga*~~] [<sub>Q°</sub> AMOUNT] [<sub>KP</sub> *de* [<sub>NP</sub> *male*]]]

Notice that even beyond this stage *miga* could still be used as a true quantifier:

- (40) *On sté de scisceri e miga de vin [...]*  
 one measure of chickpeas and *miga* of wine  
 'One measure (20 l) of chickpeas and a little of wine...'  
 (Lancino Curti 6.14, Lombard, end of the 15<sup>th</sup> century)

We are now left with two types of variation described in Section 2: varieties where NPOs are optional and varieties where the NPO must or can present the conflated additional marker, like in PA cases. In the case of the first ones, we have observed that the presence of NPO structures is more frequent with plural countable indefinites. This suggests that there is a difference between the silent AMOUNT and the silent NUMBER. Our hunch is that this concerns different licensing conditions for the two silent items. It appears that AMOUNT is “easier” to license than NUMBER, since in these varieties only NUMBER requires the full NPO structure licensing it through negation. This is probably in line with the semantics of the two quantifiers, as it is generally acknowledged that mass nouns are semantically (and if we are right also syntactically) less complex than plurals. We will not proceed any further along this line of thought, since it would require further data.

Finally, varieties with mandatory or optional conflated additional markers inside the NPO construction can be analyzed assuming that the grammaticalization of the NPO form is based on partitive structures where the conflated marker already lost the definite interpretation and only expressed phi-features of the noun. As we have observed in examples like those in (29) and (30) a similar variation regarding PAs exists in Gallo-Romance and in Piedmontese.

## 6 Conclusions

In this article, we have tried to provide an overview of the complex micro-variation of a specific construction, NPOs, inside the bigger realm of partitive constructions. We have noticed that among the Northern Italian dialects there are some that behave like French, in having a bare P ‘of’ introducing the object in negative sentences, while others use normal PAs or bare nouns in these contexts or even both, like standard Italian. We have proposed a structural formalization of the derivational cline of TPSs to NPOs and to PAs translating into structural terms Carlier’s (2007) idea that TPSs are derived from a motion structure of removal and have gone even further in equating TPSs to inalienable possession, which is standardly assumed to be a small clause, where the ‘part’ is in the specifier and the ‘whole’ is in the complement position, while the P lexicalizes the head of the small clause. In addition to this, we have embedded Foulet’s intuition that these structures must contain a null AMOUNT/NUMBER quantifier, which can be licensed by the overt quantificational modifier in its specifier. As for PAs, we have essentially adopted Ihsane (2013) and Cardinaletti and Giusti (2016) idea that here there is no partitive structure and that the P plus the article is an indefinite with a KP on top realized by the prepositional

element, which is, as often assumed in the literature, no more than a type of Case marker. From these two poles, we have proceeded to analyze the intermediate structure, i. e., NPOs, which have in common with PAs the fact that they are regular DPs and not small clauses, and with TPSs the presence of a null AMOUNT/NUMBER, licensed by its overt modifier. All variation we found can be accounted for by using these three structures and can be argued to derive from the possibility to a) have an overt modifier of AMOUNT/NUMBER, b) that this modifier can indeed license the null AMOUNT/NUMBER through a spec-head procedure, and c) that in some languages only NUMBER is licensed in this way.

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