BACK TO UNIQUENESS PRESUPPOSITION:
THE CASE OF WEAK DEFINITES

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February 2013

INTRODUCTION

Two classes of weak definites in works on English and Romance Languages.
• **CLASS 1 :** Poesio (1994), Barker (2005), Milner (1982), Flaux (1992, 1993), Corblin (2001)

(1) a. I've got this data from <u>the student of a linguist</u>.   (Poesio, 1994)
 b. The baby's fully-developed hand wrapped itself around <u>the finger of the surgeon.</u> (Barker, 2005)
 c. Je connais   <u>la fille d'un fermier.</u>   (Milner, 1982)
  I know   the daughter of a farmer
 d. J'ai rencontré <u>la fille d'un fermier</u>.   (Flaux, 1992)
  I met   the daughter of a farmer
 e. Le médecin a plâtré <u>le bras de Jean.</u>   (Corblin, 2001)
  The doctor plastered John's arm.

• **CLASS 2 :** Carlson et al. (2005, 2006, 2013), Klein et al. (2009), Aguilar & Zwarts (2010), Aguilar & Schulpen (2012), Corblin (2011), Aurnague (2012)

(2) a. Jacqueline took <u>the train</u> from Paris to Moscow. She had a transfer in Berlin. (Carlson et al., 2005)
 b. Anna is reading <u>the newspaper</u> and Mary too.   (Aguilar & Zwarts, 2010)
 c. Mary went to <u>the psychiatric hospital</u>.   (Aguilar & Schulpen, 2012)
 d. Pierre va à <u>l'école</u>.   (Corblin, 2011)
  Pierre go À the school
  Pierre goes to school.
 e. Le plat est <u>au four</u>.   (Aurnague, 2012)
  The dish is À the oven
  The dish is roasting in the oven.

The issues:
• Is there **a unity** behind these two classes of examples?
    Yes : these NPs don't presuppose the uniqueness of their referent.

• But is it possible to propose **a unique analysis** to account for both classes of examples?
(Q1) « We will be discussing instances that usually differ from the examples examined by Poesio and Barker, and will leave unresolved the question of whether their examples should be subsumed under our analysis. » (Carlson et al., 2006: 179)

• What is the semantic contribution of the definite determiner in **weak and strong** NPs ? Do we have to assume that the strong definite determiner conveys a uniqueness presupposition while the weak definite determiner don't ?

(3) <u>The Ohio State University</u> is in Columbus (Roberts, 2003)

Our thesis:
- (1) and (2) are two different constructions, but in which the NP refers to a type, not to a token.

- close to Aguilar-Guevara & Zwarts' proposal. : « weak definites NPs are expressions that refer to the same kind individuals that definite generics refer to »
- but different : we give up the idea that definite determiners trigger a uniqueness presupposition.

The core idea of our proposal is to challenge the traditional idea that definite determiners trigger a uniqueness pressupposition. And not only for the case of weak definites, but also in the case of strong definites. We propose that definite determiners are associated with a weaker presupposition, which binds uniqueness to existence (of tokens). And we will show how uniqueness in the case of strong definite NPs and non uniqueness in the case of weak definite NPs are derived in context.

Outline   1. Survey of the data
2. Available analyses and their limits
3. Our proposal
Conclusion

1. DATA SURVEY
1.1 Long weak definites
Poesio (1994)
- a relational noun (*student, side, corner...*)
- an *of-* complement
- an embedded indefinite DP.

(4)   Def N of Indef-sg N
(5)   a. John got these data from the student of a linguist.
b. The village is located on the side of a mountain.
c. I usually had breakfast at the corner of a major intersection.
(6)   a. John got these data from the student.
b. John got these data from the student who studies with a linguist.
c. John got these data from the student with a brown jacket.
d. John got these data from the student of Chomsky.

Barker (2005)
(7)   a. The baby's fully-developed hand wrapped itself around the finger of the surgeon.
b. In the center of the room is a large stone cube, about 10 feet on a side. Engraved on the side of the cube is some lettering. – Zork 2.
c. People were saying that a plane had hit the side of the other tower.
d. Remove all the objects to discover the really cool artifact that the archaeologists found buried in the corner of the Pharaoh's tomb!
(8)   Barker's generalization
« Possessive definite descriptions allow weak interpretations with a wide range of lexical items, both singular and plural, as long as **the nominal predicate is relational** and the preposition involved is **the true genitive *of*.** They take modification without giving up their ability to give rise to weak readings, suggesting a high degree of productivity. They often but **not always occur with an indefinite** possessor (object of the genitive *of*), and they often but not always have a generic flavor. » (Baker, 2005: 15)

Flaux (1991)
(9)   J'ai rencontré la fille d'un fermier.   (Flaux, 1992)
I met   the daughter of a farmer
(9') a. J'ai rencontré la fille d'un certain fermier.
I met the daughter of a particular farmer
b. J'ai rencontré une fille de fermier.

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I met a farmer daughter

The definite NP behaves, to some extent, as an indefinite NP. But what is really more important is that the definite description is interpreted as an attributive one, the Speaker higlhights the fact that the person she met has a specific property, the property to be a farmer daughter.

Corblin (2001)
(10) a. J'ai abîmé <u>l'aile de ta voiture</u>.
          I damaged the wing of your car
      b. Le médecin a plâtré <u>le bras de Jean.</u> = (1e)
          The doctor plastered John's arm.

Long weak definites are NP of type (11) in which
          1) N1 is interpreted as a relational noun
          2) the number of referents of N1 of NP2 is small
(11)   Def N1 of NP2

These constraints explain the lack of weak readings in the following examples :
(12)   a. *^{w} The student with a red hat
        b. *^{w} I found this money behind the brick of a wall.
        c.   Jean s'est cassé (*^{w} la dent / ^{okw} le bras)
              John broke   (his tooth / his arm)

1.2 Short weak definites
Carlson & Sussman (2005), Carlson, Sussman, Klein & Tanenhaus (2006), Klein, Gegg-Harrison, Carlson & Tanenhaus (2009)

(13)   a. Mary went to <u>the hospital.</u>
        b. I'll read <u>the newspaper</u> when I get home.
        c. Open <u>the window,</u> will you please?
        d. Fred listened to the Red Sox on <u>the radio</u>.

- No genitive DPs.
- Important lexical restrictions but nevertheless a productive construction, not idioms.

(14)   a. He went to the hospital. *vs.* *^{w} He went to the building.
        b. I'll read the newspaper. *vs.* *^{w} I'll read the book.
        c. They listened to the radio. *vs.* *^{w} They listened to the tape recorder.
        d. You should see the doctor. *vs.* *^{w} You should see the nurse.

Corblin (2011, 2013) and Aurnague (2012)
Corblin : Weak definites associated with the prepositions "à", location verbs and animate subjects : "telic definites".
Aurnague : "routine sociale" (Vandeloise 1987), corresponding to cases in which a place, or an object is associated with an activity.

(15)   a. Pierre va à l'école.   (Pierre goes to school)
              Pierre go À the school
        b. Pierre est à la plage.   (Pierre is at the beach)
              Pierre is À the beach
        c. Pierre est au piano.   (Pierre is playing piano)
              Pierre is À the piano

Beyssade and Simatos (to appear)
Weak definites including body parts, expressing inalienable possession.

(16)   Jean s'est cassé le bras / la jambe / le doigt. (Jean broke his arm / leg / finger)
        Jean REFL broke the arm / the leg / the finger

- lexical restrictions on verbs or prepositions associated with the DD.
(17)   a. Marie a levé le bras.   (Marie raised her arm)
           Mary raised the arm
        b.* Marie a lavé le bras.   (Marie washed her arm)
           Marie washed the arm

These NPs share two semantic properties :
- a negative one: no uniqueness presupposition.
- a positive one: possibility of sloppy interpretations in VP ellipsis

(18)   a. John got these data from the student of a linguist and Mary too. (not necessary the same
                                                                                      student)
        b. John got these data from the student and Mary too.   (necessary the same student)
(19)   a) Anna read the newspaper and John did, too.   (not necessary the same newspaper)
        b) Anna read the book and John did, too.   (necessary the same book)

- These NPs can be glossed by complex NPs including an of-complements, expressing a kind of possession : *The student of a linguist, Mary's arm, Peter's school...*
Corblin (2013) assumes about short weak definites that :
(Q3)   « they exhibit some **typical properties of relational definites**: they do not refer to an old
        discourse referent, and they emerge only with lexical heads which can be associated with
        roles, functions in the broad sense (*school, hospital*)."

Even if it seems difficult to assume that body parts express a role or a function, it seems that with short definites, there is always some kind of semantic enrichment, wich can be made explicit by transforming them in long weak definites, including an *of*-complement or a possessive.

2. ANALYSES AND THEIR LIMITS
2.1 Hypothesis 1: two different syntactic analyses (cf. Dobrovie-Sorin (2001), Barker (2005))
• Barker (2005)
(20)   The corner of the intersection

Two distinct ways of composing the meaning of the definite description, with
f = [[*the*]], g = [[*corner*]] and h = [[*of the intersection*]].

(21)   a. $f(g(h))$ = the (corner (of-the-intersection))   Strong definite with uniqueness
        b. $(f \bullet g)(h)$ = (the • corner) (of-the-intersection)   weak definite

(22)   « What could it mean for a relation to satisfy uniqueness?
   •   In the case of a non-relational definite description, e.g., *the man*, a successful use is one that
        guides the attention of the listener to reliably pick out the intended individual:it's the man
        I'm talking about, not the woman, not the dog.
   •   Analogously, in the relational case, e.g., *the corner of a busy intersection*, the relational
        predicate *corner* describes the connection between the referent of the NP as a whole (the
        corner) and the object it stands in relation to (the busy intersection). Now, there are many
        different kinds of relations that could connect an object with its possessor: ownership, part-

whole, familial relations, physical proximity, etc. 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 the side of the box I'm talking about, not the bottom, not the top. 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)

→ Barker doesn't give up the idea of a uniqueness presupposition associated with « the ». There is still uniqueness, but not uniqueness of reference. Rather, what is unique is the contrastive selection of one relation over another.

Limits
Constraint of the nouns compatible with (21b) : the weak interpretation of « the N1 of NP » emerges only when N1 is a relational noun.
How to explain weak readings of *read the newspaper, go to the beach...*?

2.2 Hypothesis 2: two different definite determiners
Milner (1982)
(23)   « Sometimes, forms which are morphologically definite behave syntactically and semantically as indefinites » (Milner, 1982: 357)

Carlson et al. (2009)
(24)   a. « '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 al., 2006 : 179)
b. In weak definite NPs, the definite article does not act as a morpheme. Weak definite NPs function exactly like bare singulars. « They show all the earmarks of **semantic incorporation.** » (Carlson, 2006: 8)

(25)   a. the "standard" definite article which triggers a double presupposition
b. an expletive article

→ Weak definites are comparable with bare singulars:
- They are in complementary distribution: go to school / *^{w} go to the school
$*^{w}$ listen to radio / listen to the radio
- They are non-specific, rather than specific in import
- They are interpreted as narrow-scope indefinites, showing no scoping interactions with other logical operators in the same sentence
- They convey a number-neutral interpretation, which is an existential interpretation and never a generic one.
- Like bare singulars, weak definites may be analyzed as cases of incorporation.

This analysis explains both the lack of the uniqueness presupposition (number neutrality) and the semantic enrichment of meaning, which is a very typical feature of incorporated structures.

Limits
- Why WD are used at all, as opposed to simply using a bare singular?
- How to account for lexical restriction associated with WD?

(26)   « ...it is a much more difficult challenge then to go back and outline the precise role that 'restriction' plays in the semantics of the constructions that would count as incorporated, semantically » (Carlson, 2006: 12)

→ a systematic ambiguity between weak and strong interpretations of definite DPs.

Carlson et al. (2013)

(27) A weak definite would have a similar syntax as a strong definite, but a different compositional structure

Syntax : [$_{VP}$ read [$_{NP}$ [$_{Art}$ the] [$_N$ newspaper]]]

Compositional structure : DEF (read '(newspaper'))

The definiteness is not associated with the NP, but it *is* associated with the V-N (or P-N) combination. It expresses something like a "familiar" type of activity, one whose cultural currency is independently established and encoded in the grammar in this way—one already presumed known. (...) We conceive of these structures as an example of something corresponding to name creation—in this case the "naming" of "familiar" activities. This approach provides us with the beginnings of a principled approach for understanding why the definite article may appear in some instances ("(be) in the slammer") but not in others ((be) "in jail"), as with proper names.

A new analysis : the definite determiner is no more an expletive.

2.3 Hypothesis 3: Entity refering *vs.* kind refering nouns (Aguilar-Guevara & Zwarts)

(28) They argue that

- Weak definites do not denote specific objects but instantiations of specific kinds and that uniqueness is given on the kind-level.
- They capture the idea of stereotypical enrichment with a two-place predicate U.

Propositions describe events (cf. Parsons (1990))

(29) a. John went to the hospital.

b. $\exists e[\text{go-to}(e) \wedge \text{Agent}(e)=\text{john} \wedge \exists!x[\text{hospital}(x) \wedge \text{Goal}(e)=x]]$

c. $\exists e[\text{go-to}(e) \wedge \text{Agent}(e)=\text{john} \wedge \exists x_i[R(x_i,\text{hospital}_k) \wedge \text{Goal}(e)=x_i \wedge U(e,\text{hospital}_k)]$

(30) $\lambda e[U(e,\text{hospital}_k)]$ is the set of all stereotypical events for hospitals and $\lambda e[\text{go-to}(e)]$ the set of all go-to events. If the intersection of both sets is non-empty, that is, there exists an event e such that e is a go-to event and in e a hospital is used in its stereotypical function, then this e renders U true and the weak reading is available.

(31) Kind Lifting Rule (KLR)

If V is a transitive verb (or verb-preposition combination) with interpretation $\lambda x_i \lambda e[V(e) \wedge \text{Theme}(e)=x_i]$ then V also has the meaning $\lambda x_k \lambda e[V(e) \wedge R(\text{Theme}(e),x_k) \wedge U(e,x_k)]$.

→ Ambiguity of verb meaning.

Advantages

• Uniqueness of the kind, but not uniqueness of instances

(32) John took the train from Munich to Hamburg.

$\exists e[\text{take}(e) \wedge \text{Agent}(e)=\text{john} \wedge \exists x_i[R(x_i,\text{train}_k) \wedge \text{Theme}(e)=x_i] \wedge$
$\text{Source}(e)=\text{munich} \wedge \text{Goal}(e)=\text{hamburg}]$

• Weak definites are truth-conditionally similar to indefinites. The only difference between them is in the truth value of U.

(33) a. John went to a hospital.

b. $\exists e[\text{go-to}(e) \wedge \text{Agent}(e)=\text{john} \wedge R(\text{Theme}(e), \text{hospital}_k)]$

c. $\exists e[\text{go-to}(e) \wedge \text{Agent}(e)=\text{john} \wedge \exists x[\text{hospital}(x) \wedge \text{Theme}(e)=x]]$

(34) a. John went to the hospital. (weak reading)

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b. ∃e[go-to(e) ^ Agent(e)=john ^ R(Theme(e),hospital$_k$) ^ U(e,hospital$_k$)]

c. ∃e[go-to(e) ^ Agent(e)=john ^ ∃x$_i$[R(x$_i$,hospital$_k$) ^ Goal(e)=x$_i$ ^ U(e,hospital$_k$)]

This analysis crucially lies on the claim that nouns are ambiguous and may denote either a property of object, or a property of kind (cf Dayal (2004)).

• Predicate U accounts for the fact there is not a systematic ambiguity between weak and strong interpretations.

(35) a. John is reading the calendar.   (only strong reading)
      b. John is reading the newspaper.   (weak or strong reading)

(36) Many verbs never combine with a weak definite, simply because their set of events does not overlap with the usage events of any kind. Other verbs (like *read*), only combine with the usage events of certain kinds (e.g. *newspaper*), but not of other kinds (e.g. *calendar*). » (A&Z, 2010: 192)

Problems
• **The anaphoric interpretation** of DDs is prefered over the weak interpretation, which only emerges as a default interpretation.

(37) We have a nurse and even a doctor in our small village. When she needed medical advice, Anna called the doctor.

• *The student of a linguist, the son of a farmer*: the predicate U cannot be used to account for the difference between weak and strong interpretations.

• Case of **body parts**.
a) Is *John's arm* a kind-denoting DP?
b) the restriction of the number of possible referents of weak DDs

(38) a. Jean s'est cassé le bras / la jambe / le doigt.   (Jean broke his arm / leg / finger...)
         Jean REFL broke the arm / the leg / the finger
      b. * Jean s'est cassé la dent, le cheveu.   (Jean broke a tooth, a hair)
         Jean REFL broke the tooth / the hair

c) How to use the U predicate to account for all cases of weak definites involving body parts. Anscombre (2012) proposes a very long but nevertheless incomplete list of such expressions in French to show that these expressions are not idioms, and that they illustrate a mecanism which is productive.

(39) *ne pas lever le petit doigt, tenir la jambe, avoir la main leste, avoir à l'œil, avoir l'œil, retirer une épine du pied, se mettre le doigt dans l'oeil, faire la sourde oreille, avoir l'oreille fine, tendre / prêter l'oreille, avoir la dent dure, froncer le sourcil, avoir le cheveu rare, lever le coude...* (Anscombre, 2012, p. 64)

3. OUR PROPOSAL
These analyses are partial and miss the most important point: weak definite descriptions are interpreted as **attributive descriptions**, rather than referential descriptions.

(40) « You should go to the hospital » can be used to say effectively that you should go to a hospital. No specific hospital need be intended as the referent. An addressee who asked "which hospital do you mean?" would have misunderstood. » (Heim, 2011)

Our proposal is very closed to Aguilar et Zwarts' analysis :

> • We assumed that in weak readings, the NP refers to a type and not to a token. It can be viewed as a variant of the distinction between kind-denoting NPs vs entity-denoting NPs
> • But contrarily to Aguilar and Zwarts, we give up the idea that the definite determiner is associated with a uniqueness presupposition.

Our idea is that the definite determiner doesn't trigger a uniqueness presupposition, but a **weaker presupposition,** from which the uniqueness of strong DPs and the non uniquenes of weak DPs can be derived.

3.1 Back to the uniquenes presupposition of the definite determiner
• **Revisit the current thesis** according to which definite descriptions presuppose the existence and the uniqueness of their referent.

1) Attributive DDs
(41)   1000 is the biggest even number.
(41) is false and not without truth value, as in the case of « presupposition failure ». Yet, there is no biggest even number, so in (41) the definite description doesn't convey any prespposition.

2) Weak definites
(42)   He took the train and he made a transfer at Berlin.   (two trains)
Uniqueness is explicitlely denied.

3) Explicit non uniqueness
(43)   a. Un ami de Pierre vendit sa voiture à un autre de ses amis. L'ami de Pierre partait au Canada et ne pouvait emporter sa voiture.
A friend of Pierre sold his car to another of his friends. Pierre's friend was moving to Canada and could not take his car with him.   (Corblin, 2001)
         b. Un ami de Pierre vendit sa voiture à un autre de ses amis. L'ami de Pierre en fut satisfait.
A friend of Pierre sold his car to another of his friends. Pierre's friend was satified with it.   (Corblin, 2001)

4) The anti-uniqueness effect studied by Coppock and Beaver (2012)
(44)   a. John is the sole/only author.   [1 author]
         b. John is not the sole/only author.   [more than 1 author]
         c. Is John the sole/only author?   [one or more than 1 authors]
The uniqueness of *the sole author* is not problematic (it is tautological).
But the existence of *the sole author* is problematic.

• **Claim: the definite determiner triggers a weaker presupposition**
Coppock and Beaver's proposal
(45)   Both the definite article and the indefinite article are **fundamentally identity functions on predicates, without any existence implication.** The existence component of a definite or indefinite description comes into play when it is used referentially [...] The two articles differ only in that the definite article presupposes weak uniqueness. (Coppock & Beaver)

(46)   If there is an X, then there is only one.

The existence presupposition is independent of uniqueness presupposition. **But the uniqueness presupposition is dependent on the existence.**

Variation from Coppock and Beaver's proposal
(47)   a. If X exist and is a token, then there is only one X.
         b. If there is not only one X, either X doesn't exist or X isn't a token.

And we will use the contrapositive of the statement to derive the weak readings of definite determiners.

3.2 How to derive strong and weak readings of definites?
• **Strong readings** correspond to cases where the existence of the referent of the DP is given in context, by the assertion of the event. The uniqueness presupposition directly derives from the combination of the assertion of existence with the weak presupposition given in (47).

•**Weak readings** correspond to cases where there isn't a unique referent for the definite description.
(48)   a. I damaged the wing of a car / of your car.
         b. Marie s'est cassé le bras / Mary broke her arm.
         c. The corner of a major intersection (cf. Poesio)

The only way to interpret the definite description in (48) is to interpret it as refering to a type.

> In weak DDs the definite article combines with a noun phrase (N0 or N') which is interpreted as a type-refering noun, not as a token-refering noun.

Consequences
1) In these contexts, definites and indefinites seem to give rise to the same interpretation.
Tokens are not unique, but the definite determiner is used to present them as indistinguishable
A type groups together entities which are identified with respect to a certain property.
(49)   No difference between {a, a, a} and {a}

2) Weak DDs have a 'flavour' of genericity
Types have instances, they don't have parts. Exactly as kinds.

3) Other NPs refering to a type and to several tokens
(50)   John and Mary wear the same tee-shirt.
         →   at least two differents T-shirts (as tokens)
                 but only one T-shirt (as type).

4) Contexts where the principle « maximize presupposition » applies.
(51)   * a father of the victim / the father of the victim   (Heim, 1991)
         * a student of a linguist / the student of a linguist

CONCLUSION
(a) The definite article only contributes a weak presupposition, where uniqueness depends on the existence.
(b) Weak DDs are used to refer to or to name types. A type groups together indistinguishable objects.
The weak presupposition given in (47) accounts for the facts that:
        • strong definites presuppose existence and uniqueness
        • weak definites don't presuppose uniqueness of tokens, but refer to a type
        • attributive definites (in predicate position) don't presuppose existence.

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