

EXPLETIVE PRONOUNS AND EXPLETIVE ARTICLES*

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1. Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to review the notion of expletiveness associated with the category D(eterminer). The terms expletive pronouns and expletive articles have been traditionally assumed in the generative literature basically in relation to the following phenomena: the English pronoun *it* in subject position of meteorological verbs (1), the subject pronoun *it* of raising verbs with a finite clausal complement (2), the pronoun *there* in existential sentences (3), the definite article that specifies common count nouns in inalienable constructions (in languages such as French, Vergnaud & Zubizarreta 1992) (4), and the definite article that specifies proper names (in languages such as Italian, Longobardi 1994) (5).

(1) *It* is raining / snowing / is cold.

(2) *It* seems that Facebook has lost a lot of money in the stock market.

(3) *There* has been an air crash in Germany.

(4) Les enfants ont levé *la* main. (V & Z 1992: 596, ex. (1a))

the children have raised the hand

‘The children raised their hand.’

(5) *Il* Gianni mi ha telefonato. (Longobardi 1994: 622, ex. (24b))

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the Gianni me has called

‘Gianni called me up.’

Considering these data, the most immediate questions one should ask are as follows: why should languages have expletive pronouns and expletive articles? What does it mean to claim that a pronoun or an article is expletive? Does expletiveness imply uninterpretability? I will here defend the hypothesis that expletive pronouns and expletive articles are the instantiation of a category D that denotes an *identity function*,¹ which combines with an additional semantic or pragmatic constraint responsible for its meaning.

The rest of Section 1 introduces some distinctions between expletive pronouns and expletive articles.

1.1. Expletive pronouns

To my knowledge the concept of expletive pronoun was first introduced in the generative literature as a consequence of the Extended Projection Principle (EPP; Chomsky 1982), a linguistic hypothesis which postulates that clauses must contain an NP or a DP in subject position (i.e., in the specifier of TP or IP). The EPP states that, regardless of whether the main predicate assigns a meaningful theta role to a subject or not, a subject must always be present syntactically. Thus, verbs that are not associated with agentive external subjects still require a dummy or expletive pronoun (e.g., *it*, *there* in English; *ello* ‘it’ in popular Spanish spoken in the Dominican Republic, Bosque & Bruccart 2019), as exemplified in (6) and (7).

- (6) a. *It* is raining / snowing / is cold. = (1)
 b. *There* is snow on the front door.

¹ In formal semantics of natural language an identity function is a function that always returns the same value that was used as its argument (Winter 2016). To take an example, the English copula *is* in *is hungry* denotes an identity function for $\langle e,t \rangle$ functions: the function of type $\langle \langle e,t \rangle \langle e,t \rangle \rangle$ that maps any $\langle e,t \rangle$ function to itself.

c. *There* seems to be a problem with the heater.

(7) a. *Ello* está lloviendo.

it is raining

b. *Ello* hay maíz.

it have.there corn

‘There is corn.’

c. *Ello* parece que no hay azúcar.

it seems that not have.there sugar

‘It seems that there is no sugar.’

Notice that expletive pronouns are morphosyntactically deficient: the nominal *there* in (3) and (6b,c) lacks a locative content and does not participate in case-checking relations, while English *it* in (1) and (2) and Caribbean Spanish *ello* in (7) are neuter pronouns. The grammatical subjects in italics in (6) and (7) owe their existence to a syntactic principle (the EPP) that basically states that they need to be inserted for syntactic reasons. This suggests that expletive pronouns in subject position have no semantic counterpart. They encode neither thematic information (i.e., they do not saturate any thematic argument of the predicate), nor a referential reading (i.e., they do not refer to any individual), nor any sort of deictic information (although expletive *there* in (6b,c) and expletive *ello* in (7b,c) have the function of turning the sentence into athetic one). In other words, the existence of expletive pronouns has been presumed in the generative literature to be a purely syntactic phenomenon, with no semantic counterpart. However, in this paper I show that expletive *it* is associated with a semantic constraint imposed by those verbs that do not select for an external thematic argument, while expletive *there* has pragmatic import, since it guarantees that novel information appears towards the end of the clause.

Furthermore, I put forward a generalization that seems to apply not only to expletive *there*, but also to expletive articles in inalienable constructions (4): the so-called expletive item requires a DP associate, with which an agreement relation (either Agree, Chomsky 1995, 2000, 2001; Pesetsky & Torrego 2004; or Reverse Agree, Zeijlstra 2012) or a semantic dependency constraint (Vergnaud & Zubizarreta 1992, Espinal & Cyrino 2017a) is established.

1.2. Expletive articles

In contrast to expletive pronouns, which are morphosyntactically defective, expletive articles are to be associated with Gender, Number and Case features.² Accordingly, the definite article can be expletive in Romance as well as in German and Greek, but not in English, since in English the definite article does not have grammatical features (Longobardi 1994, Brugger 1993, Kolliakou 2004).

(8) a. On *leur* a lave *les* mains. (V & Z 1992: 599, ex. (9))

we to.them washed the.FEM.PL hands

‘We washed their hands.’

b. *Der* Hans ist angekommen. (Longobardi 1994: 653, ex. (88b))

the.NOM.MASC.SG Hans has arrived

‘Hans arrived.’

Most significantly, I would like to put forward the hypothesis that, of the various possible interpretations usually associated with definite articles across languages (uniqueness, maximality, familiarity, saliency) expletive articles are sometimes associated with a semantic dependency constraint (which encodes a binding relationship between the definite article and a c-commanding constituent that has the semantic

² Note that Guéron’s (1983, 1985, 2006) analysis of inalienable constructions starts from the observation that the article in French shows morphosyntactic similarities with a third person clitic pronoun.

property to which the definite article is sensitive) and other times with a pragmatic constraint (that highlights the familiarity or saliency of the referent). Only those languages in which the *definite* article shows a dependency reading to another DP in a local domain and an identity function that maps the same value that was used as its argument have the possibility of triggering an expletive reading.

To sum up, in the following sections I show that the terms expletive pronoun and expletive article have been postulated in the literature for DPs with no thematic role assigned by the verb, DPs that simply introduce an Agree relation with a postverbal DP, and definite articles that lack the inherent semantic content typically associated with definiteness. In this sense, expletive items encode not the formal semantic operation function associated with *iota* (according to which D shifts the semantic type of its nominal complement from a property $\langle e,t \rangle$ to an entity $\langle e \rangle$; Russell 1905, Partee 1987), but rather an *identity function* that maps functions of type T (which stands for any semantic type in the ontology) onto functions of type T (type $\langle T,T \rangle$). Furthermore, I show that some expletive pronouns and expletive articles are associated with a pragmatic constraint: in the case of *there*-clauses the associated DP is discourse novel (cf. definiteness effect), whereas in the case of expletive articles with proper names the referent of the personal proper name is familiar or context salient.

In the following sections I develop the ideas summarized in Table 1.

Types of expletives	Formal properties	Constructions
1. Expletive pronoun <i>it</i>	-Identity function: $\langle T,T \rangle$ -Semantic constraint: no thematic role	<i>It</i> with meteorological verbs and raising verbs. (1), (2)
2. Expletive pronoun <i>there</i>	-Syntactic Agree -Identity function: $\langle T,T \rangle$ -Pragmatic constraint: the associated DP is discourse novel	<i>There</i> clauses. (3), (6b,c)
3. Expletive article (in Romance)	-Identity function: $\langle T,T \rangle$ -Semantic dependency	Definite article in inalienable constructions. (4), (8a). Long weak definites ³

³ Long weak definites can be exemplified by (i) (Poesio 1994):

	constraint	
4. Expletive article	-Identity function: $\langle T, T \rangle$ -Pragmatic constraint: familiarity, saliency	Definite article with personal proper names. (5), (8b) Polydefinites ⁴ Short weak definites ⁵

The present chapter is organized as follows. Section 2 shows that expletiveness should not be confused with syntactic optionality in spite of the fact that one could naively hypothesize that if a constituent is expletive it might also be optional. Section 3 deals with expletive pronouns in subject position and I point out the structural similarities between *there*-clauses and *se*-anticausatives. In Section 4 I show the similarities between the definite article occurring in inalienable constructions and so-called long weak definites on the one hand, and so-called expletive negation on the other. In Section 5 I focus on the expletiveness of the definite article that precedes personal proper names. Similar properties are described in Section 6 for Greek polydefinites, and in Section 7 for so-called short weak definites. According to this analysis, expletive pronouns and expletive articles deserve a specific interpretation depending on specific formal properties listed in Table 1. Thus, the existence of expletive pronouns and expletive articles is justified not

(i) I hope the cafe is located on *the corner* of a busy intersection.

As pointed out by Barker (2005) this example can be used in a situation in which neither the speaker nor the hearer have any previous acquaintance with a specific intersection or corner, nor is there any implication that the intersection in question has only one corner. Long weak definites have been described as showing a specific cluster of properties: they denote non-uniqueness, manifest narrow scope with respect to other operators, have a restricted distribution to postverbal position, usually occur with relational nouns and with a PP expressing the possessor, and may occur in existential/presentational constructions (Espinal & Cyrino 2017a). In Section 4 they are argued to behave similarly to the definite article in inalienable constructions. ⁴Polydefinites refer to a Greek construction, exemplified in (i) (Lekakou & Szendrői 2012, Tsiakmakis et al. 2021):

(i) *i asimenia i pena*
the.NOM silver the.NOM pen
'the silver pen'

in which, within a DP structure, both the noun and the adjective show a definite article. In Section 6 they are argued to behave similarly to the definite article that specifies personal proper names.

⁵ Short weak definites, exemplified in (i):

(i) read *the* newspaper, take *the* train, play (*the*) piano

refer to an eventual weak reading of a definite DP and its contribution to a 'familiar' kind of activity (Schwarz 2014), which is exclusively dependent on whether certain stereotypical information encoded on the object noun is activated at the time of utterance interpretation (Espinal & Cyrino 2017b). In Section 7 they are argued to behave like definite articles that specify personal proper names and definite articles in polydefinite constructions.

only for syntactic reasons, as usually put forward in the generative literature, but also for interface requirements.⁶ Finally, in Section 8 I argue that the definite article of generic definites is not to be considered expletive, since it is to be translated as an iota operator, not as an identity function. Section 9 concludes the chapter.⁶

2. Expletiveness vs. syntactic optionality

The notion of expletiveness might be correlated with syntactic optionality under the assumption that items that are optional might be considered as having no meaning. In other words, if the optionality of a constituent is possible at all in a given syntactic context, this constituent would be expected not to contribute to or constrain the contents of the proposition in which it appears.

Theoretically speaking, however, optional constituents should not exist in the theory of grammar, since they are presumed to violate two general principles: the Principle of Full Interpretation, which states that every symbol of grammar must be interpreted, and the Principle of Economy, which prohibits insertion of useless material and requires the least costly choice among the possible structures, procedures and number of operations (Chomsky 1995).

The aim of this section is to show that the apparent optionality of the definite article, possible in some languages (and in some constructions), must not be confused with semantic expletiveness. In order to address this issue I consider the Brazilian Portuguese data in (9), (10) and (11) (Espinal & Cyrino 2017a: 3-4, exs. (4)-(6)). The DP in italics in

⁶ I leave out of this study the non-referential definite articles that are characteristic of so-called Idiomatic Phrases of the sort illustrated in *kick the bucket* ‘die’ (Nunberg et al. 1994), whose main characteristics are that the definite article cannot be replaced by a different determiner and that the expression as a whole, but not the DP, is mapped to a figurative meaning. Notice that referent availability of the DP, syntactic flexibility of the definite article and metaphorical interpretation of the complement N define Idiomatically Combining Expressions like *spill the beans* ‘divulge secrets’. For further details on the properties of these expressions and their differences see Espinal and Mateu (2019).

(9) has a strong referential reading (Abney 1987; Longobardi 1994, 2001, 2005; among others), the possessive definite in (10) has a non-unique weak reading (see footnote 3; Poesio 1994, Barker 2005), and the definite article of inalienable possession constructions in (11) has a dependent expletive reading (Vergnaud & Zubizarreta 1992).

- (9) O Pedro visitou (os) vizinhos brasileiros ontem.
 the Pedro visited the.PL neighbor.PL Brazilian.PL yesterday
 ‘Pedro visited the Brazilian neighbors yesterday.’
- (10) A mão do bebê agarrava (o) dedo do cirurgião.
 the hand of.the baby grasped the finger of.the surgeon
 ‘The baby’s hand grasped the finger of a surgeon.’
- (11) Menino não gosta de lavar (o) rosto de manhã.
 boy not like of wash the face of morning
 ‘Boys don’t like to wash their faces in the morning.’

Note that in Brazilian Portuguese the definite article of any of these DP may not be overtly expressed (Schmitt & Munn 1999, Munn & Schmitt 2005, Cyrino & Espinal 2015, i.a.). This notwithstanding, full DP structures have been postulated in this language for canonical argumenthood (i.e., for constituents that behave both as syntactic and semantic arguments), which means that true syntactic optionality of the syntactic category D does not exist. In other words, Brazilian Portuguese has optional articles at a morphophonological stage, but it does not have optional Ds in syntax.

Several questions can be raised in relation to this issue. First, why are expletive definite articles used at all in some languages, as opposed to simply using a pure bare singular with an NP structure? The reason appears to be syntactic: “syntactically represented definiteness is the crucial property of DP that makes DP, in contrast to NP, complete for the interface purposes, and hence a phase” (Despić 2015: 219). And this is

why expletive articles cannot be claimed to be syntactically optional: a category D (perhaps with a null realization) is obligatory.

Second, why should languages with optional articles even allow optional expletive articles (as illustrated in Brazilian Portuguese)? The answer to this question is that optionality and expletiveness are independent phenomena. That is, optionality is a morphophonological property (with respect to which within the Romance paradigm Brazilian Portuguese is at one end, since it allows optionality of the definite article almost always, and French is at the other, since it never allows it), whereas expletiveness is a semantic / pragmatic phenomenon.

Third, if the assumption that expletiveness must be associated with lack of semantic import or uninterpretable features were correct, why should languages have expletive pronouns and expletive articles at all? I argue, along with Kayne (2016), against the idea that expletive elements are uninterpretable, that is, against the idea that they contribute nothing to the interpretation of sentences in which they occur (Chomsky 1995, Groat 1995). I show, instead, that expletive pronouns as well as expletive articles encode, beyond an *identity function*, sometimes a semantic constraint and other times a pragmatic constraint. Thus, expletive *it* is the subject of a verb that does not select for an agentive external subject; expletive *there* is always linked to an associate DP that is non-definite and introduces new information; finally, expletive definite articles do not encode a presupposition of uniqueness, but are sometimes associated with a formal feature that guarantees a semantic binding dependency constraint (e.g., in inalienable constructions and long weak definites), and on other occasions they are associated with a pragmatic constraint on familiarity (Christophersen 1939, Hawkins 1978, Heim 1982, Kamp 1981) or saliency (Lewis 1979; von Stechow 1997, 2013) (e.g., in combination with proper names, polydefinites and short weak definites).

Overall, the conclusion is that expletive definite articles contribute to the interpretation of the sentences in which they occur and are not devoid of (semantic or pragmatic) meaning.

3. Expletive pronouns in subject position

As advanced in the introduction, what is interesting about expletives at the clausal domain is that neither can they be omitted nor does their insertion lead to ungrammaticality. Their existence is strictly related to the requirement that any sentence has a subject (EPP; Chomsky 1982), to Case assignment and feature checking (Giusti 2015), as well as to agreement (Deal 2009).

First, consider the pronoun *it* in subject position of meteorological and (pseudo) copular and raising verbs in English. *It* is claimed to occupy a subject position when no nominal expression is inserted in the clause that can compete for it. Thus, consider (12).

(12)a. *It* is snowing.

b. *It* seems [that...]

c. *It* is possible [that...]

Example (12a) shows the insertion of *it* because no argument is selected by this verb and the sentence requires a subject. (12b-c) show the insertion of *it* because the subject position is related to a *that*-clause, and clauses cannot be assigned Case. *It* is assumed to absorb the nominative Case and to transfer its third Person singular feature to the tensed verb.

Semantically speaking, *it* in none of these examples saturates any thematic requirement of the verb. Meteorological verbs are well-known for not selecting any thematic argument. Raising verbs (e.g., *to seem*), as well as the copular verb that combines with the modal adjective *possible* select for propositions. In any of these cases

it introduces an identity function over propositions that returns as output the same value that was used as input.

$$(13) \quad \llbracket it_{EXPL} \rrbracket = \lambda p_{\langle t \rangle}. p_{\langle t \rangle}$$

Second, consider the following *there*-sentences (Giusti 2015: 16, exs. (15a-c)):

- (14)a. *There* occurred [a terrible accident].
 b. *There* are [three women] working in the team.
 c. *There* is [a mess] here/there.

There occupies a subject position when there is a theme nominal expression in the same clause that is associated with that position: *a terrible accident* in (14a), *three women* in (14b) and *a mess* in (14c). *There* has been treated as an element essentially visible only to the EPP feature of T. This means that (i) T must have an EPP feature which (prior to *there*-insertion) is unchecked;⁷ and (ii) *there* must be a non-case-marked nominal while Case is assigned via Agree to the associate of *there* within an appropriate local domain.

In relation to the latter claim it is relevant to consider the analysis by Deal (2009), who argues that *there* insertion does not target predicates at random: the vP of an unaccusative verbal root may contain expletive *there* only in the event that it does not contain an agentive or causative component (Deal's Causative Hypothesis). Consider the data in (15) (Deal 2009: 2, exs. (2a,b)), which shows that *there* is incompatible with both unergative and transitive verbs.

- (15)a. **There* laughed a man in the hallway.
 b. **There* melted a block of ice in the front yard.


What is interesting about Deal's approach is that it questions the longstanding assumption in generative syntax that expletives originate in subject position (as daughter

⁷ This EPP feature has been called a D-feature (Chomsky 1995), a Number feature (Chomsky 1981), a Case feature (Travis 1984) or a Person feature (Chomsky 2000, 2001).

of S or Spec,TP; Emonds 1970; Milsark 1974; Stowell 1978; Burzio 1986; Lasnik 1995; Chomsky 1995, 2000, 2001). In fact, Deal shows that *there* is not freely merged in Spec,TP and can only be inserted at the edge of a vP that lacks an external DP or an event argument. In other words, if an argument (nominal or eventive) must be projected in Spec,vP, *there* cannot be inserted. Thus, contrary to (15a), (16a) is grammatical, which has the structure in (16b), where *there* – *a man* are associated via Agree.

(16)a. There is a man laughing.

b. [TP *there*_{EXPL} T [vP *there* [v BE] [AspP [Asp prog] [vP *a man* [v] [v_{laugh}]]]]]




With regard to this contrast and the structure in (16b) I would like to make three additional claims. First, notice the parallel with *se*-anticausatives, where an expletive *se* is related by agreement to an internal DP argument. Consider the Catalan example in (17a) and its structure in (17b) (following Schäfer 2017: 133, (8)), which shows that—like *there* in (16b)—*se* lacks a c-commanding antecedent and cannot be separated from an internal argument with which it relates by an Agree relation.⁸

(17)a. S' ha enfonsat un vaixell.

se has sunk a boat

‘There is a boat sunk.’

b. [TP T [VoiceP *se*_{EXPL} [Voice] [vP v [v_{sink}] *un vaixell*_{THEME}]]]



This suggests that *there*, parallel to the *se* morpheme in *se*-anticausatives, is an expletive specifier linked to a full DP that has thematic content.

Second, *there*-insertion is not separate from the well-established definiteness

⁸ See Tsiakmakis et al. (2023) for an analysis of the distribution and interpretation of expletive voice with a special reference to Greek anticausatives.

restriction, as extensively pointed out in the literature. *There*-insertion basically allows an indefinite argument in the scope of a vP-level existential closure. That is, *there*-insertion is a means of circumventing the EPP requirement that otherwise forces English subjects to appear high, towards the left periphery of the sentence. Thus, indefinite subjects remain structurally low, providing a way of introducing discourse novel material towards the end of the clause, in alignment with information structural organization. This means that, in fact, *there*-insertion has a pragmatic import, since it appears to be the only way available in English of licensing unambiguously non-definite interpretations of subjects.

Furthermore, it should also be noted that expletive *there* cannot be focalized or stressed: the only constituent that can be heavy (prosodically speaking) and simultaneously discourse novel is the associate constituent, which in the following example from Milsark (1974) remains outside the VP and is definite.

- (18) Suddenly there [_{VP} flew [_{PP} through the window]] [_{DP} *that shoe on the table*]
 (Milsark 1974: 246)

Third, comparable to the *se* morpheme in *se*-anticausatives, the nominal *there* is syntactically an external argument, but since *there*-clauses lack an external thematic argument, *there* cannot be considered a semantic argument of the verb in the vP projection. Instead, *there* is thematically inert and is associated with a type-neutral identity function over propositions which passes the denotation of its sister to its mother, as represented in (19).⁹ This meaning is motivated because in *there*-clauses there is no local argument slot to be saturated and there is no c-commanding antecedent.

- (19) $\llbracket there_{EXPL} \rrbracket = \lambda p_{\langle t \rangle} . p_{\langle t \rangle}$

⁹ By contrast, the *se* morpheme in anticausatives is considered an expletive DP, merged as specifier of a Voice Phrase (Schäfer 2008; 2017; Alexiadou et al. 2015; i.a.), which introduces an identity function over predicates of events (Wood 2014; 2015).

Overall, this discussion supports the conclusion that expletive pronouns in subject position obey interface requirements and, admittedly, they are not devoid of meaning,¹⁰ since they are associated in all cases with a formal identity function, and in the case of expletive *there* it is even associated with a pragmatic constraint: the associated DP is discourse novel.

4. Expletive articles in inalienable constructions and long weak definites

In this section I focus on expletive definite articles in inalienable constructions and so-called long weak definites. Following Espinal and Cyrino (2017a), I first show the similarities between expletive definites and long weak definites, and then I argue for an analysis in terms of polarity sensitivity (Ladusaw 1980, Giannakidou 1998), in common with other polarity items such as the so-called expletive negative marker.

Consider the Spanish examples in (20) and (21) (Espinal & Cyrino 2017a: 2, exs. (3) and (2)). In (20) *la cara* ‘the face’ and *el móvil* ‘the cell phone’ illustrate the expletive reading of definite DPs in inalienable constructions (Vergnaud & Zubizarreta 1992). In (21) *el dedo* ‘the finger’ and *la rueda* ‘the wheel’ illustrate the weak reading of definite DPs in possessive constructions (Poesio 1994, Barker 2005).

(20)a. Pedro se lavó *la cara* esta mañana.

Pedro CL washed the face this morning

‘Pedro washed his face this morning.’

b. Pedro perdió *el móvil* esta mañana.

Pedro lost the cell this morning

¹⁰ The claims made in this section also apply to *pro*-drop languages such as Catalan, Italian, and Spanish, languages where a pronominal subject must be non-overt if unstressed, the only difference being that in these languages the lexicon does not have an overt expletive pronoun but little *pro*. See, however, the special use of the neuter pronoun *ello* ‘it’ in Dominican popular Spanish illustrated in (7) (Bosque & Bruccart 2019).

‘Pedro lost the cell phone this morning.’

(21)a. La mano del bebé cogía *el dedo* del cirujano.

the hand of.the baby took the finger of.the surgeon

‘The hand of the baby grasped the finger of the surgeon.’

b. El conductor perdió el control del vehículo cuando explotó

the driver lost the control of.the vehicle when exploded

la rueda del camión.

the tire of.the truck

‘The driver lost control of the vehicle when the tire of the truck exploded.’

Expletive articles have been identified with non-denoting determiners and lack of uniqueness (Vergnaud & Zubizarreta 1992). Empirically speaking, the meaning of the DPs in italics *la cara* ‘the face’ in (20a) and *el móvil* ‘the cell phone’ in (20b) corresponds to Pedro’s face or to Pedro’s cell phone, thus suggesting that the definite article is bound to the DP subject. On the other hand, (21a) is true if the hand of the baby grasped not a specific finger but *a/some* finger of the surgeon, thus suggesting that the overt definite DP *el dedo* ‘the finger’ has a dependent reading with respect to the possessive PP *del cirujano* ‘of the surgeon’; similarly, (21b) also shows a postverbal subject with a bound definite DP: the definite expression *la rueda* ‘the tire’ is interpreted as a bound variable, meaning *a/some* non-specific tire of the truck.

On theoretical grounds, recall that Vergnaud and Zubizarreta (1992) argue that French expletive articles are non-denoting determiners, in the sense of non-referentially unique determiners, and Beyssade (2013) (following Coppock & Beaver 2012) claims that French expletive articles are not semantically empty but rather convey weak uniqueness: the definite article triggers not a uniqueness presupposition but only a weaker

presupposition, in which uniqueness depends on existence.¹¹ The common intuition these authors have is that expletive articles in combination with inalienable nouns and long weak definite constructions do not presuppose uniqueness of token objects.

In relation to the attributed lack of uniqueness, it should be noted that the definite article of both inalienable and long weak possessive constructions may occur in existential/presentational sentences in Romance, a possibility excluded from DPs with a strong reading (i.e., DPs with a strong and quantificational denotation). Consider the Spanish minimal pair in (22).

(22)a. Hay *la* mano de un niño bajo los escombros.

has.there the hand of a child under the rubble

‘There is a child’s hand under the rubble.’

b. *Hay *cada* mano de un niño bajo los escombros.

has.there each hand of a child under the rubble

Furthermore, the definite article of both inalienables and long weak definites has a narrow scope interpretation with respect to other operators and quantified expressions. Thus, the example in (23) makes clear that weakness must be associated with boundness: every child raised his own hand.

(23) *Todos los niños_i levantaron la_i mano.*

every the children raised the hand

‘Every child raised his hand.’

The narrow scope interpretation of the bound definite is even more evident when we consider its occurrence in downward entailing contexts, such as in negative environments,

¹¹ Beyssade (2013: (23)) formulates this hypothesis as in (i):

- (i) a. The definite description ‘the N’ presupposes that if N refers to a token, then if there is a N, there is only one N.
 b. The definite description ‘the N’ presupposes that if there are more than one N, then N doesn’t refer to a token [but to a type <MTE>].

or in conditional and interrogative sentences. Consider the Catalan data in (24) and (25) (Espinal & Cyrino 2017a: 7, exs. (13) and (14)).

(24)a. *No enguixaré la cama de cap jugador.*

not plaster.FUT the leg of any player

‘I won’t plaster the/any leg of any player.’

b. *No van veure la pel·lícula de cap director argentí.*

not PAST watch the film of any director Argentinian

‘They did not watch any films by any Argentinian director.’

(25)a. *Si enguixo la cama de cap jugador, ...*

if plaster the leg of any player

‘If I plaster the/any leg of any player...’

b. *Has vist la pel·lícula de cap director argentí?*

has seen the film of any director Argentinian

‘Have you seen a film/any films by any Argentinian directors?’

The crucial point is that the definite articles in *la cama* ‘the leg’, *la pel·lícula* ‘the film’ have a polarity sensitive status. This is shown by the fact that in (24) these definite DPs do not stop a syntactic operation of negative concord from applying between the postverbal negative polarity item *cap* ‘any’ and the preverbal negative marker *no*. In (25) they do not prevent a semantic dependency between the polarity item and the corresponding licensing (conditional or interrogative) operator. Moreover, in these examples the definite article can itself be interpreted as a polarity item: ‘I don’t want to plaster *any* leg of any player’ and ‘They did not watch *any* films by any Argentinian director’.

To sum up, expletive articles of inalienable and so-called long weak definite possessive constructions fail the uniqueness presupposition, in that they do not

presuppose uniqueness of tokens, and express a possessive relationship between a possessor and a possessee. I have shown that long weak definites and expletive definites may occur in presentational sentences, in the scope of quantifier expressions, and in c-command domains. I therefore conclude that expletive and weak articles are not devoid of meaning, since they have a bound interpretation. I postulate that the definite article of both constructions is bound to another constituent (either a subject, a dative clitic pronoun or a genitive/dative DP). This means that expletive definites with a (non-)relational noun in the head position, as well as long definites, are weak as long as they are bound (i.e., anchored, Poesio 1994). The semantic interpretation is such that the possessee is bound by the possessor, and this binding relationship is licensed by the principle of c-command: the possessor must c-command the possessee; hence, a c-commanding subject, reflexive pronoun or a dative pronoun c-commands the expletive article specified for phi-features.¹²

This analysis of definite articles in inalienable constructions and long weak definites consists in postulating that the Romance definite article comes in two variants: a lexical item that encodes a strong unique reading (the referentially unique variant, translated as an iota operator), and a lexical item that encodes a polarity variant, formally characterized with an abstract $[+\sigma]$ feature (Chierchia 2006, 2013) that encodes a bound reading (to be semantically translated by an existential operator) (Espinal & Cyrino 2017a).¹³

Notice that the hypothesis that the expletive article is polarity sensitive, characterized

¹² In order to circumvent the problem introduced by long weak definites where the prepositional complements that introduce the possessor do not c-command their specifiers, according to a classical definition of c-command (Reinhart 1976, 1983), Espinal and Cyrino (2017a) assume Kayne's (1993, 2000) proposal for possessive constructions, whereby prepositional possessors are higher than the possessee in the DP structure and the possessor is c-commanding the possessee at the beginning of the derivation.

¹³ Chierchia (2006: 559) postulates a $[+\sigma]$ feature to account for the fact that polarity items induce a process of domain widening. Thus, English *any* can be assumed to be a scalar term that bears the semantic feature $[+\sigma]$. The $[+\sigma]$ feature, associated with the scalar item, is uninterpretable and has to be checked in the syntactic representation of meaning by an interpretable abstract σ operator that can attach to some operator, the idea being that the feature $[+\sigma]$ linguistically encodes the need for an enriched interpretation (Chierchia 2006: 553-554).

by a formal [+σ] feature, has a parallel in so-called expletive negative markers, as has been recently analyzed in the literature.¹⁴ Being semantically dependent, the expletive article should be identified not with an iota function that turns properties into individual entities, but rather with a type-neutral identity function that on this occasion turns the property-type denotation of the complement noun into the same property-type denotation, as represented in (26).

$$(26) \quad \llbracket el_{EXPL} \rrbracket = \lambda P_{\langle e,t \rangle} . P_{\langle e,t \rangle}$$

This means that, if the complement NP denotes a property of type $\langle e,t \rangle$, the DP is also of type $\langle e,t \rangle$. Thus, reference to a token individual entity for the DP *el cap* ‘the head’, in the Catalan inalienable construction *Li vaig rentar el cap* lit. to.him PAST wash the head ‘I washed his head’, comes from the antecedent dative pronoun *li*, to which the definite article is bound.

Let us now move on to the various instances of Type 4 expletive articles, as introduced in Table 1.

5. Expletive articles with proper names

Longobardi (1994) introduced a morphosyntactic notion of expletive article after having observed that the definite article of many European languages can be shown to have two different functions, a substantive one and an expletive one. For a language with overt articles like Italian he assumes three different definite articles.¹⁵ On the one hand, there

¹⁴ The parallel with the expletive negative marker that appears in many natural languages in the subordinate clause of certain predicates and operators has been characterized by means of a semantic dependency constraint established between a constituent that has a semantic formal feature [+σ] that makes it dependent on another constituent to which a σ operator has been adjoined for exhaustification, as represented in (i). See Espinal and Tubau (2016a, 2016b) for details.

(i) $\alpha_{[\sigma]} \dots \beta_{[+\sigma]}$

¹⁵ See also Giusti (2015).

is the interpretable one, realizing the iota operator, as illustrated in (27). This example, like Brazilian Portuguese example in (9), has a strong referential reading.

(27) *La* bambina è contenta.

the girl is happy

On the other hand, according to Longobardi, there are two different expletive articles, one with proper personal names, which may trigger N-to-D movement in syntax (28), and one for kinds, which blocks N-to-D raising (29).

(28)a. Gianni mi ha telefonato. (Longobardi 1994: 622, exs. (24a,b))

Gianni me has called

b. *Il* Gianni mi ha telefonato. = (5)

the Gianni me has called

‘Gianni called me up.’

(29) *I* cani hanno quattro zampe. (Giusti 2015: 61, ex. (22a))

the dogs have four legs

‘Dogs have four legs.’

In this section I focus on the attributed expletiveness of definite articles in combination with proper names, and I leave for Section 8 the discussion against the supposed pleonastic status of the definite article in generic definite plurals and definite kinds. Hence, the object of inquiry in this section will be the minimal pair in (28a-b) in Italian, the contrast between (30a-b) in Catalan, and the contrast between (31a-b-c) in German (Giusti 2015: 185-6, exs. (53)).

(30)a. Theresa May va perdre les eleccions.

Theresa May PAST loose the elections

b. *La* Theresa May va perdre les eleccions.

the Theresa May PAST loose the elections

‘Theresa May lost the elections.’

(31)a. Maria hat Hans Johannes vorgestellt.

Maria has Hans Johannes introduced

b. *Die* Maria hat *dem* Hans *den* Johannes vorgestellt.

the.NOM Maria has the.DAT Hans the.ACC Johannes introduced

‘Maria introduced Johannes to Hans.’

c. *Die* Maria hat *den* Hans *dem* Johannes vorgestellt.

the.NOM Maria has the.ACC Hans the.DAT Johannes introduced

‘Maria introduced Hans to Johannes.’

The question we need to answer is whether the definite articles that appear in combination with proper names are expletive at all. That is, what does it exactly mean to claim that they are expletives, beyond the fact that when we compare these examples with the corresponding ones in English no overt definite article occurs with proper names in this language.

The hypothesis I would like to put forward in this section, to explain the co-occurrence of definite articles with personal proper names, is that the definite article is expletive only in the sense that it cannot be translated as an iota operator. Crucially, it is semantically translated as an identity function, and it pragmatically encodes some familiarity (Christophersen 1939) with the entity referred to (on the part of both speaker and hearer), which is the most salient object in the situation described. In some languages (e.g., in Catalan) the presence of the definite article with person names also reflects an informal register. Thus, I argue that the definite article in combination with person names is not expletive.

Let us start from the assumption that proper names are rigid designators (Kripke 1980). Rigid designators are entity-type expressions, and in fact in (28a), (30a) and (31a)

each one of the proper names refers to an individual entity (type $\langle e \rangle$): it designates the same object in all possible worlds in which that object exists and never designates anything else.

Given this assumption, the definite article that occurs with proper names is inert, in the sense that it cannot be of type $\langle \langle e, t \rangle e \rangle$, which is exactly the type-shifting triggered by the iota operator (i.e., it combines with a predicate to form an entity). Rather, I follow the idea that the semantics of the definite article that combines with proper names is an identity function $\langle T, T \rangle$ that always returns the same value that was used as its argument: the definite article semantically introduces an identity function over entities. Hence, if the input is an expression of type $\langle e \rangle$ (i.e., the meaning of the proper name), the output is exactly the same expression, with the same type. That is, if the proper name *Gianni* in (28a) is of type $\langle e \rangle$, the DP *il Gianni* in (28b) is also of type $\langle e \rangle$.

$$(32) \quad \llbracket il_{EXPL} \rrbracket = \lambda x_{\langle e \rangle}. x_{\langle e \rangle}$$

Besides this semantic identity function, I would like to put forward the claim that when a definite article combines with a person name it introduces a special pragmatic import that should be identified with the notion of familiarity (Christophersen 1939) and saliency (Lewis 1979, von Heusinger 2013): the speaker must always be assumed to know which individual he is thinking of, and the hearer is assumed to know it too, within the parameters of the most accessible context or discourse, and the situational salience of the referred object.¹⁶

I therefore conclude that so-called expletive articles that occur with proper names are in fact not expletive, since beyond encoding a particular semantic identity function (of

¹⁶ See also Heim (1982, 1983), Green (1989), and Birner and Ward (1994), among others.

For the notion of saliency see Lewis (1979), Sgall et al. (1973), Egli and von Heusinger (1995) and von Heusinger (1997), among others. The idea is that a definite expression refers to the most salient element of a given set, which is very often the case when a proper name is preceded by a definite article.

type $\langle T, T \rangle$), they are used in accordance with a pragmatic constraint: they refer to a familiar / salient entity in the context of an utterance. This conclusion is in conflict with Longobardi's (1994: 652) claim that the expletive function of the article with proper names is a consequence of the "‘last resort’ nature of the kind-referring interpretation of proper names". I hold that the meaning of proper names should be distinguished from the meaning of kind-referring expressions, since proper names always refer to individual objects $\langle e^o \rangle$, never to kind entities $\langle e^k \rangle$. In addition, expletive articles with proper names are not licensed by a last resort operation, since they lexically encode a different function from the one corresponding to the iota operator.

Let us finally consider the Catalan examples in (33), which introduce the personal article *en/na*, only possible in combination with proper names used in the singular.

(33)a. *La Maria i en Pere.* (Central Catalan)

the.FEM Maria and D.MASC Pere

‘Maria and Pere.’

b. *Na Caterina i en Llorenç.* (Balearic)

D.FEM Caterina and D.MASC Llorenç

‘Caterina and Llorenç.’

In this situation the semantic type of each one of the conjoined DPs is still $\langle e^o \rangle$, which is consistent with the hypothesis that the article must be identified with an identity function over entity-type expressions. But, in addition, in all these examples pragmatic notions such as familiarity and saliency also become relevant because the presence of the article is a guarantee that the referent (a female and a male, respectively) is familiar to both speaker and hearer, and is easily identifiable among a set of accessible individuals.¹⁷

¹⁷ This situation should be contrasted with the one in (i), which shows the co-presence of proper names with plural definite articles.

(i) a. *Els Pujol.*
the.PL Pujol

6. The special case of polydefinites

In this section I consider the polydefinite construction of Modern Greek (Kolliakou 1995, Tsiakmakis et al. 2021), exemplified in (34) (Lekakou & Szendrői 2012: 108, ex. (1)).

- (34) a. *i* *asimēnia* *i* *pena*
 the.NOM silver the.NOM pen
- b. *i* *pena* *i* *asimēnia*
 the.NOM pen the.NOM silver
- ‘the silver pen’

These examples illustrate the phenomenon of article spreading within a DP structure, where a noun is combined with a restrictive adjective (either in prenominal or postnominal position) and both the noun and the adjective have their own article.¹⁸

Polydefinites have been claimed to be definite DPs that consist of DP subparts that are claimed to be expletive. But why can Greek Ds be expletive while English Ds, for example, cannot? In order to answer this question three properties are considered: (i) whether the language makes extensive use of morphological case marking, (ii) whether the language has articles appearing obligatorily with proper names and (iii) whether the language allows noun ellipsis. On the basis of these properties, Lekakou and Szendrői (2012: 139) introduce a four-way typology: “languages that have both morphological case

-
- b. *Les* *Joanes*.
 the.FEM.PL *Joana*.PL

In example (ia) the plural definite article combines with a last name and refers to all the individuals of a group or family named *Pujol*. In (ib) the plural definite article specifies a first name and refers to all the individuals named *Joana* in the discourse domain. The difference between these two examples is that only in (ib) morphophonological instantiation of the plural marker on the proper name is obligatory. In both cases the plural article encodes semantic plurality (i.e., maximality, Sharvy 1980) and, therefore, is not expletive.

¹⁸ Note that, crucially, there is no variant of the polydefinite construction with the indefinite determiner (Alexiadou & Wilder 1998; Lekakou & Szendrői 2012: 109, exs. (5)).

- (i) a. **mia* *asimēnia* *mia* *pena*
 a silver a pen
- b. **mia* *pena* *mia* *asimēnia*
 a pen a silver

and obligatory determiners on proper names (Greek), languages that have morphological case but no obligatory determiners on proper names (e.g. Standard German), languages that have determiners on proper names, but no morphological case marking (e.g. Catalan), and languages that have neither (English)". Notice that Greek and English are at the two extremes of this classification.¹⁹

Lekakou and Szendrői postulate a Def–D split, Def being the locus of semantic definiteness and D conceived as the locus of the morphosyntactic manifestation of definiteness in Greek. Thus, the relevant syntactic structure is formalized in (35).²⁰

(35) [Def [D [NP]]]

In (35) Def is assumed to be phonologically null but semantically full (translated as the iota operator), with a uniqueness presupposition in combination with the rest of the semantic properties usually attributed to the definite article (i.e., maximality, familiarity and saliency). On the other hand, D is believed to be phonologically overt but semantically inert and, consequently, is claimed to correspond merely to an identity function, distinct from iota. See the formula in (36) (from Lekakou & Szendrői 2012: 143, (60)).

(36) [Def [D [NP_{common noun}]]]

⟨⟨e,t⟩,e⟩ ⟨T,T⟩ ⟨e,t⟩

The reader will notice that this type of analysis of the definite article in polydefinites is close to the analysis of expletive articles in combination with personal proper names advanced in Section 5.²¹

¹⁹ Note that property (i) is consistent with what we discussed in the introduction, namely that expletive articles associated with the presence of morphological features on the definite article (cf. Guéron 1983, 1985, 1986). According to Lekakou and Szendrői (2012), though languages with polydefinites are necessarily languages with morphological case, the reverse does not hold.

²⁰ These authors further postulate that Def is merged with Kase, the highest active head within the nominal domain that hosts a feature [+arg] responsible for rendering the argument visible for the clausal predicate. For our purposes we leave out the category Kase in the structures below.

²¹ Consider also the Greek example in (i) (Lekakou & Szendrői 2012: 117, ex. (16)).

(i) *(O) Janis eftase stin ora tu.

Furthermore, it must be pointed out that polydefinites have also been claimed to be associated with contextual constraints that go beyond the uniqueness entailments of standard monadic definites. In this regard Kolliakou (2004) argues that polydefinites require appeal to some notion of contrast with alternative elements that are contextually salient, and pick out a proper subset of a set previously introduced in discourse. In other words, the meaning of a polydefinite differs from the meaning of a canonical monadic DP in that the discourse referent Y of a polydefinite is anaphorically related to an antecedent discourse referent X , such that $Y \subset X$.²²

All in all, I conclude that definite articles in polydefinite constructions are not devoid of meaning, since semantically they introduce an identity function and pragmatically they introduce pragmatic effects related to the notion of saliency in discourse.

7. The special case of short weak definites

In this section I consider the situation presented by short weak definites: definite DPs that occur in object position of a transitive verb (or a $V + P$ structure) and together with this V (or $V + P$) form a complex predicate that encodes some stereotypical information, usually associated with a typical or characteristic activity with respect to some accessible background knowledge. Consider the examples in (37) (Espinal & Cyrino 2017b: 129-130, ex. (1)).

(37) a. read *the* newspaper / go to *the* hospital (English)

the John arrived on.the time his
'Janis arrived on time.'

Recall that, if proper names are rigid designators of type $\langle e \rangle$, the definite article is inert and must semantically correspond to an identity function $\langle T, T \rangle$. Hence, according to Lekakou and Szendrői (2012: 143, (60)) they are associated with the structure in (ii), again leaving out the highest Kase category.

(ii) [D [NP_{proper name}]]
 $\langle T, T \rangle \quad \langle e \rangle$

²² See Campos and Stavrou (2004), who claim that polydefinite DPs imply a contrast and are organized around the presupposition/focus distinction. See also Tsiakmakis et al. (2021), who—building on work on resumption in relatives by Alexopoulou (2006)—argue that the preadjectival article is a resumptive pronoun bound by the c-commanding definite article in prenominal position.

b. agafar *l'ascensor* / mirar-se *al* mirall (Catalan)

take the.lift look.at.REFL to.the mirror

‘take the lift / look at oneself in the mirror’

It should be noted that some of these constructions may be used without an overt definite article, but never with an indefinite determiner.²³

(38)a. go to *the* hospital / go to hospital (English)

b. play *the* violin / play violin

c. anar a *l'escola* / anar a escola (Catalan)

go to the.school go to school

‘go to school’

The relevant questions once again are: what is the role of the definite article in these constructions? Does it have any contribution to meaning? And, are short weak definites associated with an expletive reading of the definite article?

Following Espinal and Cyrino (2017b), I hold the hypothesis that the so-called weak reading of the definite DP in these constructions cannot be dissociated from its contribution to a familiar kind of activity, which is exclusively dependent on whether certain stereotypical information encoded on the object N present in the DP is activated at the time of utterance interpretation. What this means is that the role of the definite article, in spite of being sometimes optional, is to convey the familiarity of the event kind (Schwarz 2014). Hence, the Catalan VP *anar a l'escola* ‘go to school’ is interpreted as conveying a weak reading for the DP because the meaning of the N contained in the DP is a property-denoting expression that activates a telic stereotypical information such that the purpose and function of people participating in the familiar type of activity of going-to-school is to be educated (Espinal & Cyrino 2017b: 142).

²³ These different options, with and without a definite article, have been claimed to be attributable to dialectal usages (American English vs. British English in (38a,b)), or to idiosyncratic differences.

Given the fact that all definite DPs that allow a short weak definite reading are regular DPs that also allow a strong (fully interpretable) unique reading, and that some definite DPs with a weak definite reading are bare nominals in some languages or in some varieties of a given language (as in the Catalan example *anar a escola* ‘go to school’), I put forth the hypothesis that the recovery of a familiar kind of activity (with respect to the common ground of both speaker and hearer), formulated in the so-called QUALIA structure of certain nouns (Pustejovsky 1995), is required for a felicitous use of the definite DP with a weak reading.

Once again this suggests that the definite articles that occur with short weak definites are not devoid of meaning, since semantically they introduce an identity function of type $\langle T, T \rangle$ and pragmatically a familiarity constraint. No matter whether the definite article is morphophonologically overt or not, the D turns the property-denoting expression (type $\langle e, t \rangle$ of the complement noun, e.g. *escola* ‘school’) into another property-denoting expression (also of type $\langle e, t \rangle$ of the whole DP, e.g. *l’escola* lit. the school) (see (26) above). Furthermore, when certain stereotypical telic information associated with the noun is activated, a weak reading may emerge, such that the V (or V + P) plus the object noun (e.g., *anar a l’escola/anar a escola* ‘go to school’) refers pragmatically to a familiar kind of activity, involving both an action and the theme of the event.²⁴

8. Non-expletive generic definites

Finally, I close this chapter by briefly considering the supposed expletiveness of the generic definite article in the Italian example in (39a). See the contrast between (39) and (40) (Brugger 1993: 17, ex. (44)).

²⁴ For the relationship between definiteness and (a)telicity beyond short weak definites, see Verkuyl (1972), Krifka (1989), Filip (1999), among others.

(39)a. Il virus ha sterminato [_{DP} *le* [_{NP} pantere nere]] (Italian)

b. Il virus ha sterminato [_{DP} *e* [_{NP} pantere nere]]

(40) The virus exterminated [_{DP} *e* [_{NP} black panthers]]

The English bare plural in (40) is ambiguous between a generic and an existential reading, which correspond respectively to the definite plural and the bare plural in (39) for Italian. In view of these data, Brugger claims that in a language like Italian a nominal expression with a generic kind reading has to be introduced by the definite article, and that in Romance the definite plural determiner can be expletive.

(41) Il virus ha sterminato [_{DP} *le* [_{NP} pantere nere]]

Now, the question to be asked is whether the definite article of generic statements in languages with articles is expletive at all. And, in reverse, in the case of languages that do not have articles (e.g., Hindi), are generic bare NPs definite?

(42) [_{DP} \emptyset_{the} [_{NP} N]]

As pointed out by Dayal (2017), the belief that morphosyntax and semantics are in strict correspondence is presumably the source of the view that in generic statements there exist pleonastic and null definite determiners (for languages such as Italian and Hindi, respectively). In other words, it looks as if the hypothesis of a pleonastic *le* or a null_{the} in generic definites is a theoretical decision driven by analogy with the language where the phenomenon was first studied, that is, English.

Having said that, I would like to point out that Brugger's (1993) proposal relies on a pair of assumptions that are dubious: (i) the assumption that *to exterminate* is a kind-level transitive verb that selects for kind arguments, and (ii) that (39a) and (40) have the same meaning. An additional problematic assumption, this time from Dayal (2004), is that the definite article in Romance languages is ambiguous between the iota operator and the

nominalization operator (i.e., nom/down (\wedge) operator for short; see Carlson 1980, Chierchia 1985, Partee 1987).²⁵

First, one should consider the fact that *to exterminate* entails the destruction of sums of individual entities, but neither the destruction of atomic entities nor that of kinds of individuals modelled as integral entities. This is illustrated in the Spanish example in (43), which is ill-formed.

- (43) #El virus ha exterminado la pantera negra.
 the virus has exterminated the panther black

Second, it is commonly assumed that the English generic bare plural in (40) has the same meaning as the definite plural in (39a). However, this idea cannot be correct, since only in (39a) does the definite plural refer to the maximal sum (Sharvy 1980) of individual entities that have the properties denoted by the modified NP *pantere nere* and, furthermore, this set of individuals is considered familiar or salient in context.

Third, following Chierchia (1998) and Dayal (2004), if the Italian generic definite plural were the realization of nom/ \wedge , the Derived Kind Predication rule that Chierchia postulates to derive an indefinite interpretation for English bare plurals would predict that an existential reading could also be inferred as well from definite plurals in general in Romance.²⁶ The problem with this account is that, for the existential reading to be obtained, Romance languages such as Spanish and Catalan choose by default a bare plural

²⁵ The iota operator maps any singleton set onto its member, that is, it maps P onto $\iota x[P(x)]$, the unique entity having that property. The nominalization operator maps properties onto property-correlates in the domain of entities, if these exist.

²⁶ Chierchia (1998: 364) derives an indefinite interpretation of bare plurals in English by means of a *Derived Kind Predication*, stated as (i):

(i) If P applies to objects and k denotes a kind, then $P(k) = \exists x [\cup k(x) \wedge P(x)]$

This rule accounts for the existential reading associated with the bare plural *lions* in argument position of a stage-level predicate such as *are ruining my garden*.

(ii) a. *Lions* are ruining my garden.
 b. ruining my garden (\wedge lions)
 \Leftrightarrow (via DKP) $\exists x[\cup \wedge \text{lions}(x) \wedge \text{ruining my garden}(x)]$

According to this rule the source of existential quantification over instances of the kind in episodic sentences is an automatic adjustment triggered by a type mismatch.

or an overt indefinite determiner, as illustrated in (44), not a definite plural, as argued in Borik & Espinal (2015).

- (44) a. El virus ha exterminado panteras negras.
 the virus has exterminated panthers black.PL
- b. El virus ha exterminado unas panteras negras.
 the virus has exterminated some panthers black.PL

Thus, it seems that we are obliged to conclude that the generic definite article in examples parallel to (39a) does not have the same meaning as the English bare plural in (40).²⁷ Furthermore, definite plurals in Romance are identified pragmatically with a familiar or salient set of individuals, whereas bare plurals cannot be identified in such a way.

A final consideration has to do with the meaning of the definite article in generic sentences of the sort exemplified in Spanish in (45) (from Borik & Espinal 2015).

- (45) a. *El colibrí es abundante en Costa Rica.*
 the hummingbird is common in Costa Rica
 ‘The hummingbird is common in Costa Rica.’
- b. *Los colibrís son abundantes en Costa Rica.*
 the.PL hummingbirds are common in Costa Rica
 ‘Hummingbirds are common in Costa Rica.’

What is important for our purposes is that (in contrast to the definite article in inalienable constructions, long weak definites, personal proper names, polydefinites, and short weak definites) the definite article of both (45a) and (45b) is translated not as an identity function but as an iota operator. As such, it is associated with a uniqueness presupposition of a kind entity in one case and with the maximal sum of entities that

²⁷ See Zamparelli (2002) for a contrasting view, with special reference to Italian.

instantiate the kind in the other, thus confirming the conclusion that generic definite articles are not expletive.

9. Conclusion

In this chapter I have argued that expletive pronouns and expletive articles are not devoid of meaning, thus supporting the conclusion that they are interpretable in grammar (by encoding an identity function) or beyond (by introducing some meaning enrichment), as argued with a special reference to negation in Tsiakmakis and Espinal (2022). Expletiveness does not correspond to meaninglessness, and must not be confused with morphophonological optionality. I have shown that expletive items always introduce an identity function that must be distinguished from the iota function. In addition, they introduce a semantic or a pragmatic constraint: (i) expletive *it* occurs when the verb does not assign a thematic role to the external subject, (ii) expletive *there* is interpreted via a pragmatic constraint on the associated internal DP, which must be discourse novel, (iii) expletive articles in Romance inalienable constructions and long weak definites are characterized by a formal feature that ensures their polarity sensitive semantic status, and (iv) expletive articles in combination with personal proper names, polydefinites and short weak definites always introduce a familiarity/saliency meaning that must be distinguished from the uniqueness interpretation of definite articles in regular DP structures.

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