

KINDS AND (IN)DEFINITENESS:
BRAZILIAN IN THE LIGHT OF UNDER-REPRESENTED LANGUAGES

ESPÉCIES E (IN)DEFINITUDE:
O BRASILEIRO À LUZ DAS LÍNGUAS SUB-REPRESENTADAS

Ensaio Teórico e Relato de Pesquisa

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ABSTRACT The paper investigates four Brazilian (Br) nominal phrases, one of the eight languages of the project "In(definiteness) from the perspective of underrepresented languages," based on Dayal's questionnaire (forthcoming). It concludes that in Br they do not have the same distribution nor the same interpretation. Its contribution is a step-by-step model for the interpretation of these phrases. The model starts from a lexicon with atomic predicates. It proposes a type-change called K-Change that transforms atomic predicates into the kind. The bare singular denotes the kind and is indefinite. The definite denotes ordinary individuals but can also denote the kind. The article presupposes contextual salience and is quantized, which blocks access to instances. The bare singular carries no presupposition, and instances are available. The bare plural carries a presupposition of plurality. The plural morpheme corresponds to the sum that can be accessed internally by other operands, while the indefinite maintains scope relations between constituents. This model should also explain, in general terms, the nominals in Portuñol and Terena, which are languages with articles and bare singular and plural. From the perspective of bare languages, that is, without articles, nominals denote individuals and kinds, validating the basic assumptions in the theoretical approach, and (in)definiteness and genericity are not universal in the nominal phrase, which raises questions about its logical form.

KEY-WORDS (In)definiteness. Kinds. Sums. Formal semantics

RESUMO O artigo investiga quatro sintagmas do Brasileiro (Br), uma das 8 línguas do projeto "In(definitude) da perspectiva das línguas sub-representadas", cuja base é no questionário de Dayal (no prelo). Conclui que no Br eles não têm a mesma distribuição, nem a mesma interpretação. Sua contribuição é um modelo de deriva passo a passo a interpretação desses sintagmas. O modelo parte de um léxico com predicados atômicos. Propõe uma mudança de tipo chamada Mudança-K que transforma predicados atômicos na espécie. O singular nu denota a espécie e é indefinido. O definido denota indivíduos ordinários, mas pode denotar espécies. O artigo pressupõe saliência contextual e é quantizado, o que impede o acesso às instâncias. O singular nu não carrega pressuposição e as instâncias estão disponíveis. O plural nu carrega pressuposição de pluralidade. O morfema de plural corresponde à soma que pode ser acessada internamente por outros operados, enquanto que o indefinido entretém relações de escopo entre constituintes. Esse modelo deveria explicar em linhas gerais os nominais no Portuñol e no Terena também, que são línguas com artigos e singular e plural nus. Da perspectiva das línguas nuas, isto é, sem artigos, os nominais denotam indivíduos e espécies, validando a assumpção teórica do modelo apresentado, e a (in)definitude e a genericidade não são um universal no sintagma nominal, o que coloca a questão sobre a sua forma lógica.

PALAVRAS-CHAVES (In)definitude. Espécies. Somas. Semântica formal

RESUMO PARA NÃO ESPECIALISTAS O artigo investiga quatro sintagmas - o definido ('a rosa'), o indefinido ('uma rosa'), o singular nu ('rosa') e o plural nu ('rosas') -, com base em Dayal (no prelo) como parte do projeto "A (in)definitude da perspectiva de línguas sub-representadas" (Pires de Oliveira, 2022) que investiga oito línguas: três românicas, o Brasileiro (Br), o Espanhol RioPlatense e o Portuñol; duas Macro-Jê, Rikbaktsa e Mebengokre; duas Aruak, Terena e Mebengokre, e uma Tupi, Kaiowá <https://indefinidos.paginas.ufsc.br/>. A aplicação de Dayal ao Br rejeita a hipótese de que o singular nu é um plural nu. A terceira seção distingue tipos de indefinitude e modos de referir à espécie. O definido e o indefinido são quantizados, enquanto os nomes nus não são. O singular nu é genérico e o plural nu é um indivíduo plural. Os nominais nus não são aceitos em RioPlatense, mas são em todas as demais. O Br, Portuñol e Terena tem artigos e nominais nus. O singular nu nas línguas nuas não tem a mesma interpretação do que no Br, porque denota indivíduos ordinários e espécies e não indica (in)definitude. As línguas nuas mostram que (in)definitude não é um universal no sintagma nominal, o que coloca uma questão.

Contextualizando a pesquisa

The paper presents original data from Brazilian (Br) which was gathered using Dayal's (forthcoming) questionnaire as part of the project "(In)definiteness from the perspective of under-represented languages" (Pires de Oliveira, 2022a)¹. The project compares eight languages: three Romance languages, Br, RioPlatense Spanish (RPS), and Portuñol; two Macro-Jê languages, Rikbaktsa and Wapichana; two Aruak languages, Terena, Mebengokre, and one Tupi, Kaiowá. The first section briefly introduces Dayal's (no prelo) questionnaire, and the methodology therein. The second section applies it systematically to four nominal phrases in BrP the nucleus of which is a count noun²: the definite ('a rosa', the rose), the indefinite ('uma rosa', a rose), and the bare nouns, the bare singular, ('rosa', *rose), and the bare plural ('rosas', roses). Those are nominal phrases that are not headed by an article (Dayal, 2011). The literature on Br is extensive (Ferreira, 2022) among others because of the so called bare singular, 'rosa', which is ungrammatical in English, *rose. Chierchia (1998, 2021) predicts that bare singulars are ungrammatical like in English, or they are plural phrases. If this is so, then in Br the bare singular should behave as the bare plural. The section shows that each one of these phrases has its own contribution.

The third section presents a model that generates the different interpretations of the noun phrases under investigation. They are all Determiner Phrases, DPs. So they denote an

¹ All the information about the project can be found at <https://indefinidos.paginas.ufsc.br/>

² We leave the discussion about mass nouns to another paper.

individual. The proposal is a step by step derivation, in a Carlsonian approach (Carlson, 1977), but it is linguistically oriented (Bach, 1986). That is, objects are organized into classes through language. Thus, the minimal level of information conveyed by a noun is that it denotes an atomic predicate. It assumes that DPs are structured into layers of composition. The bare singular seems to be grammaticalized to express genericity, suggesting some sort of incorporation (see Sağ 2022 for Turkish). It conveys the minimal information: one is talking generically. It is an indefinite. Number neutrality is derived from the nature of kinds. Bare singulars denote singular kinds, and are derived by a K-shift that shifts atomic predicates into kinds. The definite article is the overt manifestation of the ι (iota) operator and it carries a presupposition of unicity in context (Heim; Kratzer, 1998). Kinds have the property of being kinds. Thus, it ranges over ordinary individuals or over kinds (Dayal, 2004), and carry salience in discourse, which for kinds, translates as it presupposes a taxonomy. The definite phrase is bounded, i.e. it is quantized. Boundaries block the access to the realizations. Plural inflection corresponds to sums of individuals, and it interacts with negation and intensional operators. Many issues are left in need of a better understanding.

In the conclusion, the model should work for languages with articles and bare nominals, such as Portuñol (Polakof et al, 2024; Polakof; Custodio, 2025), and Terena (Quadros-Gomes et al, 2022). It predicts that in these languages bare singulars are specialized for kinds. This is not the case for bare languages that are number marking, such as Rikbaksa (Tsaputai et al, 2024), Kaiowá (Guerra Vicente; Ramirez, 2024), Mebengokre (Mendonça 2025), and Wapishana (Guerra Vicente et al, 2020). In those language, the bare nouns are definite, indefinite, and generic; bare singulars are semantic plural. It shows the same pattern as Karitiana (Mülle; Bertucci, 2012, among others), and the question is: what is the logical form of such bare nouns?

1. Dayal's (forthcoming), a guide into (in)definiteness and genericity

Dayal's questionnaire (forthcoming) on (in)definiteness and genericity revises the most well-known tests in the literature with the aim to investigate bare languages, i.e. those languages that do not have articles. It starts with a brief introduction to the methodology, which consists of gathering the speakers' judgments about the match between what the sentence says and the context where it is uttered. For instance, the first context involves pointing to a particular rose in a bucket that is full of roses, all of them identical, while uttering sentences (1b) or (1c). English is used as metalanguage when in italics, as in (1a), and

[X] holds for the determiner under investigation or its absence. English is the object language in (1b-c). The evaluation # is in the original, and it indicates that in English, (1c) is not felicitous in this context:

- (1) a. *I'll take [X rose]*
 b. I'll take [that rose]
 c. # I'll take [the rose]

In a language without articles, but with demonstratives, it verifies whether the demonstrative is doing the job of the definite. The context of the bucket full of roses, all of them identical, is a context of anti-uniqueness (Dayal; Jiang, 2023). If the noun phrase fails it, as it does in (1c), then this is one evidence that the phrase might be definite.³ The questionnaire has four sections, each one with several sub-sections. It explores 53 situations. Each situation is evaluated with respect to at least two sentences, as illustrated above in (1).⁴

The first section, “Setting the baseline”, determines whether a language has definite or/and indefinite articles, and whether the noun phrase is semantically plural. It has three sub-sections: (i) definite or demonstrative? (exemplified in (1)); (ii) indefinite or numeral?; (iii) morphological or semantic plural (exemplified in (2)). If a noun phrase is accepted with reciprocals, it is semantically plural because there must be more than one individual for the predicate to apply:

- (2) a. *[XP] licks each other.*
 b. * [The dog] licks each other.
 c. [Dogs] lick each other.

The reciprocal is ungrammatical with singular terms. Thus, ‘the dog’, in (2b), denotes a singular dog. The bare plural, ‘dogs’, in (2c), is grammatical, indicating that it is semantically plural.

The second section, “Bare Nominals as kind terms”, tests reference to kinds, and generic statements. The first test is the combination with kind predicates, as exemplified in

³ See Trebisacce; Polakof (in press) for some results and methodological discussions raised by the project.

⁴ Methodologically, it takes at least two sessions to collect the data in (1), since each sentence must be evaluated in isolation. Notice that to be exhaustive this context should be tested with the definite, the demonstrative, and the bare phrases in Br. Thus, it generates a corpus of more than 300 pairs of sentence-evaluation.

(3). Kind predicates do not compose with proper names, which denote ordinary individuals, as in *John is extinct:

- (3) a. *[XP] is/are extinct.*
- b. *[Dinosaurs] are extinct.*
- c. *[The dinosaur] is extinct.*

Both the bare plural and the definite phrase are acceptable. Thus, the definite phrase sometimes denotes a particular ordinary individual, as (2b), sometimes the kind, as in (3c). The author comments that in English neither the indefinite phrase, ‘a dinosaur’, nor the definite plural, ‘the dinosaurs’ refer to kinds. The indefinite has the taxonomic interpretation, that is, it denotes a subkind of dinosaur; the definite plural only denotes ordinary individuals.

The third section, “Bare Nominals as definites”, verifies whether the bare nominal, singular and plural, can be classified as definite. Definiteness is a bundle of properties: it requires uniqueness, maximality, deixis, and anaphoricity. The anaphoricity tests whether the bare noun can recover a referent that was already introduced in the context (Heim, 1982):

- (4) a. *A boy and a girl walked into the room. [Girl] was wearing a red shirt, [boy] was wearing a white shirt.*
- b. *A boy and a girl walked into the room. [The girl] was wearing a red shirt, [the boy] was wearing a white shirt.*

Finally, the last section, “Bare Arguments as indefinites”, investigates noun phrases as arguments in storytelling, partitive specificity, negation, opacity, scope, and differentiate scope.⁵ The questionnaire is not meant for English, but it would be fruitful to apply it systematically, to the bare plural. For instance, neo-Carlsonians predict that only the narrow scope reading should be available for the bare plural in (5a-b), however Partee (1985) claims that at least (5b) might have intermediary scope⁶:

- (5) a. *Every student read every article on current topics.*
- b. *All the schoolboys want to meet policemen.*

⁵ See Navarro (2025), Polakoff et al (2024), Simão (em preparação).

⁶ See Dayal (2012) for a review that compares scope to other alternatives. See Le Bruyn;de Swart (2022) for intermediary readings.

Thus, even for a well studied language such as English, the questionnaire might bring to light semantic distinctions. The next section applies it to Br.

2. Applying Dayal's questionnaire to Br

The literature on bare nouns in Br is extensive (Ferreira, 2022) probably due to the fact that it was considered the only Romance language that accepts both bare singulars and bare plurals.⁷ As pointed out by Schmitt; Munn (1999, 2002), almost immediately after its publication, Chierchia (1998) does not predict a language with articles, bare plurals, and bare singulars, unless the bare singular is just a bare plural. Chierchia (2021) leads to the same prediction, bare singulars are ungrammatical or, if grammatical, they denote the same as the bare plural (Pires de Oliveira 2024). If the bare singular is just the bare plural without the plural morphology, then they should behave exactly alike in Dayal's questionnaire. Although some of the differences between the bare singular and the bare plural have already been investigated by Pires de Oliveira; Rothstein (2011), they gain a new perspective when they are compared to the definite and the indefinite phrases.

The methodology of data collection was introspection, and informal interviews with native speakers. It focuses on four basic nominal phrases: the definite, ('a rosa'), and indefinite ('uma rosa') phrases, bare singulars ('rosa'), and bare plurals ('rosas'). We discuss some of the contexts, but the table below summarizes all the findings. We also other contexts that are not in Dayal (forthcoming) in order to examine with more fine-grained tests the behavior of these phrases. Besides the acceptability of the noun phrase in a particular context, its interpretation is also taken into account.

With reciprocals, the definite is ungrammatical, the indefinite may be accepted if one gets a generic interpretation. Both bare nouns are fine. Thus, they convey semantic number:

- (6) a. * O cachorro lambe um ao outro.⁸
The dog licks one to+the other.
- b. ? Um cachorro lambe um ao outro.
A dog licks one to+the other

⁷ Polakoff et al. (2024) shows that this is also the case of Portuñol, and Quadros Gomes et al (2024) shows that Terena has articles, bare singulars and bare plurals.

⁸ In order to save space, the examples are glossed word by word and a translation is offered at the end of the sentences that are compared.

- c. Cachorro lambe um ao outro.
Dog lick one to+the other
- d. Cachorros lambem uns aos outros.
Dogs lick ones to+the+s others
'Dogs lick each other.'

Although Dayal does not provide a definition of semantic plural, she claims that “the precise differences may not align straightforwardly with a simple singular-plural distinction”. Indeed, there are different ways of expressing that more than one individual is involved in an event, for instance, collective nouns such as ‘orquestra’ (orchestra), institutions such as ‘University of Santa Catarina’, groups like ‘The Doors’. Thus, perhaps the absence of morphology leads to a difference of meaning, even if in the end the truth conditions boil down to the same: it is a property of dogs that they lick each other.

We know that the definite phrase, in (7a), denotes a particular ordinary individual, because the sentence is a contradiction: the same individual cannot be at the same time sleeping and running around⁹. However, the bare nouns in (7b-c) are not contradictory:

- (7) a. # O cachorro está dormindo enquanto o cachorro está correndo.
The dog is sleeping while the dog is running around
- b. Cachorro está dormindo enquanto cachorro está correndo.
Dog is sleeping while dog is running
- c. Cachorros estão dormindo enquanto cachorros estão correndo.
'Dogs are sleeping while dogs are running.'

Thus, both the bare nouns fail the test of maximality which is one of the tests for definiteness.

Only the indefinite phrase is not kind-denoting; (8d) only has the taxonomic reading where a subkind of dinosaurs is extinct:

- (8) a. O dinosauro está extinto.
'The dinousaur is extinct'
- b. Dinossauro está extinto.
Dinosaur is extinct.

⁹ This is one of the tests Heim;Kratzer (1998) present to distinguish quantifier phrases from determiner phrases.

- c. Dinossauros estão extintos.
'Dinosaurs are extinct'
- d. Um dinossauro está extinto.
'A dinosaur is extinct.'

The definite, the bare singular and the bare plural are kind-terms.¹⁰

Although both bare phrases pass the tests for storytelling, they do not seem to convey the same information:

- (9) a. Há muitos anos, velha vivia nessa casa.
Many years ago, old lady lived in this house
- b. Há muitos anos, velhas viviam nessa casa.
'Many years ago, old ladies lived in this house'

Both can be about where old women lived, but (9a) can be about just one old lady, though this reading is not very natural. (9a) sounds lawlike as expressing that this is the place where they had to live, while (9b) is a generalization about old ladies, they used to live in that house.

Another test in the storytelling context is exemplified in (10), where there is a contrast between the bare nouns. The bare singular (10a) sounds like a newspaper lead, implying singularity, exceptionality, though the speaker might not know who the referent is. The definite is marked because it presupposes that the participants know who the teacher is, and that there is just one teacher, (10b). The plural form, (11c) carries that the speaker does not know who they are, implies that it is more than one, and is natural in this context, as the indefinite which is about one teacher:

- (10) Por que o diretor está chateado?
Why is the principal upset?
- a. #Professora deu uma nota ruim pro aluno. Os pais estão reclamando.
Teacher gave a bad grade for the student. The student's parents are complaining.
- b. #A professora deu uma nota ruim pro aluno.
The teacher gave a bad grade for the student.

¹⁰ See Pires de Oliveira; Rothstein (2011) for an extensive comparison between the bare singular, the bare plural and the bare mass nouns.

- c. Professoras deram notas ruins pro aluno.
Teachers gave bad grades for the student
- d. Uma professora deu notas ruins pro aluno.
A teacher gave bad grades for the student.

The same contrast between the bare nouns appear in (11). The sentence with the bare singular, in (11a), is somewhat marked, and can be followed by either the singular or the plural pronouns. However, when recovered by the singular form, 'ela', in (11a), the interpretation is of one individual. The plural form must be followed by a plural pronoun:

(11) O que você está vendo lá fora?

What do you see outside?

a. # Mulher está dando brinquedo para criança. Ela está dizendo para tomar cuidado./Elas estão dizendo para tomar cuidado.

Woman is giving toy to child. She is telling to take care. They are telling to take care.

b. Mulheres estão dando brinquedos para crianças. *Ela está dizendo para tomar cuidado./Elas estão dizendo para tomar cuidado

Women is giving toy to child. She is telling to take care. They are telling to take care.

This shows that the bare singular is compatible with singular and plural individuals, while the bare plural only accepts plural individuals (even when there is just one in the context).

The definite phrase cannot be recovered by the plural pronoun, even if the generic interpretation is available, while the bare singular is compatible with both:

(12) a. Baleia é mamífero. Ela/Elas amamenta.

Whale is a mammal. She/They breastfeed

b. A baleia amamenta. Ela/*Elas amamenta.

The whale is a mamal. She/They breastfeeds.

Both bare phrases may introduce entities into the discourse domain, and can be anaphoric to previously introduced referents, (13). Thus, behave as indefinites, and as definite:

(13) a. Tinha menino e menina na sala. Menino jogava carta.

- Had boy and girl in+the room. Boy played cards.
- b. Tinha menino e menina na sala. Meninas jogavam carta.
Had boy and girl in+the room. Girls played cards.
- c. Tinha muitos meninos e meninas na sala. Meninos jogavam carta.
Had many boys and girls in+the room. Boys played cards.
- d. Tinha muitos meninos e meninas na sala. Menino jogava carta.
Had many boys and girls in+the room. Boy played cards.
'There were many boys and girls in the room.

The difference between the singular and plural forms in the pairs in (13), is that the singular form (13a) and (13d) implies that playing cards is the activity that the group of boys were doing, while the plural form (14b-c) can be about some of the girls that were introduced before by the bare singular, 'menina', and some of the boys that were introduced by the quantifier phrase, 'muitos meninos'. They are specific but non-maximality is natural with the bare plural, while it is not with the bare singular.

The sentences in (14) are grammatical, but their felicity changes if we change the context. Consider contexts A and B from Dayal's section 3.3. In context A, there is a bunch of flowers and just one single rose to which the speaker is pointing while he utters one of the sentences in (14), $|N|=1$, that is, the cardinality of the noun is one. In context B, there is a bunch of flowers, including several roses, and the speaker is pointing to one of them while he utters the sentence, $|N|>1$. The definite, (14a) is not felicitous in context B, because it requires uniqueness:

(14)		Context A	Context B
a.	Vou levar a rosa Go take the rose	Yes	No
b.	Vou levar rosa Go take rose	Yes#	Yes
c.	Vou levar rosas Go take roses 'I will take roses'	No	Yes

(14b) is compatible with context A, but it has an interpretation that is not the same as the definite, that is why the Yes is marked #: the sentence with the bare singular is acceptable

because there are other sorts of flowers, thus the speaker conveys the sort of flower that he wants, that happens to be just one. Thus, the result is the same, since the speaker gets the only rose, but it is achieved via different paths. In particular, the bare singular is not referring deictically, but conveying the sort of flower that is wanted. In a context with a bucket with roses only, such as the context for sentence (1), (14b) does not work, but the plural form does, (14c). Moreover, although in context B, with either (14b) or (14c), the speaker may get some of the roses, the meaning might not be the same. With (14b), the speaker conveys the sort of flower that he wants, with (14c) the speaker individualizes the roses and considers more than one of the roses. Neither one of them refers deictically, only the definite phrase. As Dayal claims that if “the bare nominal can be used in this context (context B) it is not a definite with respect to this property, i.e. the ability to refer deictically”. Thus, only the definite phrase can refer deictically.

The main differences between the nominal phrases appear in section 4, where indefiniteness is tested. All the sentences in (15) can be about a situation where Maria hasn't bought any book. Dayal describes it as a situation where negation has scope over the existential, as represented: $\neg > \exists$. They differ with respect to allowing or not other interpretations.

- (15) a. A Maria não comprou um livro. $\neg > \exists$ or $\exists > \neg$
The Maria not bought a book
- b. A Maria não comprou livros. $\neg > \exists$ or $\neg_{\text{plural}}$
The Maria not bought books
- c. A Maria não comprou livro. $\neg > \exists$
The Maria not bought book
‘Maria didn’t buy a book.’

The indefinite phrase, in (15a), is ambiguous, because it also has a wide scope reading: $\exists > \neg$. It says that there is a book that Maria hasn't bought. For example, she had a list of books to buy, and she didn't buy one of them. This is called wide-scope, because the noun phrase moves higher than negation. Neither (15b) nor (15c) have wide scope readings, but the bare plural, in (15b) might be represented as a negation of plurality, according to which she bought one book; he didn't buy books, she bought just one. Although (15b) is natural in a context of correction, i.e. someone said that she bought books, but this is wrong, and the speaker of

(15b) wants to correct what was said before, it can be used to describe this situation, in particular if prosody stress plurality. This might be analyzed as a metalinguistic negation, a topic to be investigated, but (15b) is felicitous in a context where Maria bought just one book, as shown in (16):

- (16) a. Maria não comprou um livro. * Comprou um só.
Maria not bought a book. Bought one only.
- b. Maria não comprou livros. Comprou um só.
Maria not bought books. Bought one only.
- c. Maria não comprou livro. * Comprou um só.
Maria not bought book. Bought one only.
'Maria didn't buy a book. She bought just one.'

The bare singular does not interact with negation, nor does it deny the plurality.

With intensional verbs, such as 'quer' (want) the indefinite phrase, (17a), has two readings, either the intensional verb scopes over it, and then João wants a cake, but he does not have a specific one in mind, or the indefinite scopes over the intensional verb, and then there is a cake that he wants, because, for instance, he saw it in his way back home. Both bare nouns seem to be interpreted inside the want-verb, nonetheless the bare plural in (17b) gets the interpretation of more than one:

- (17) a. O João quer comprar um bolo. Want > $\exists$ or $\exists$ > Want
'João wants to buy a cake.'
- b. O João quer comprar bolos. Want > $\exists$ (plurality)
'João wants to buy cakes.'
- c. O João quer comprar bolo. Want > $\exists$
João wants to buy cake
'João wants to buy a cake.'

(17b) implies that João wants more than one cake, an information that is not conveyed by (18c), even if it may be about more than one.

The bare singular cannot occur in context of uniqueness, where the only possibility is the definite phrase, (18a-b):

- (18) a. # Sol está entre as nuvens.
Sun is between the clouds
b. O sol está entre as nuvens.
'The sun is between the clouds.'

When combined with episodic predicates, the bare singular is interpreted as about the type of thing that is involved in the event, (19a); whereas the definite is about one ordinary individual, crucially (19b) is not about the kind reading:

- (19) a. Gambá destruiu o lixo essa noite. Kind
Skunk destroyed the garbage last night
b. O gambá destruiu o lixo essa noite. Ordinary individual
'The skunk destroyed the garbage last night.'

In (20) the noun phrase is combined with a accidental property, to be blue (Dobrovie-Sorin;Pires de Oliveira, 2010). Even in this context, the bare singular is generic, (20a), the definite is interpreted as an ordinary individual, and the bare plural is a generalization about the blue bottles:

- (20) a. Garrafa azul tem gargalo estreito.
Blue bottle has narrow neck.
b. A garrafa azul tem gargalo estreito.
'The blue bottle has narrow neck.'

Thus, in Br, they seem to be in distribution: the bare singular denotes the kind, very rarely the ordinary individual; the definite refers to ordinary individuals, and sometimes denotes the kind.

The table below summarizes the results for the definite and indefinite singular phrases, 'a rosa' (the rose) and 'uma rosa' (a rose), respectively, for the Bare Singular (BS), 'rosa' (*rose), and for the bare plural, BP 'rosas' (roses) from applying Dayal's questionnaire. The first column is the test, the second is an example with X standing for the nominal phrase, adjusting them for plurality. The evaluation has three values: yes, no, +/- . The symbol # to the right of the evaluation, as in Yes#, means that it conveys some other information. For instance, the bare singular and the bare plural have narrow scope with respect to negation, but

only the plural has the interpretation that negation applies to the plurality. Thus, both have the value No for the wide scope reading with negation, but with the bare plural, negation might operate over plurality, No#.

		Def	BS	BP	Ind
Semantic number	X lambe um ao outro.	No	Yes	Yes	+/-
Kind-Terms					
Kind-level Predication	X está em extinção.	Yes	Yes	Yes#	No
Generic Statements	X amamenta.	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Definite					
Uniqueness	X dorme e X corre.	Yes	No	No	No
Maximality	Maria comprou um carro. Precisou trocar X.	Yes	+/-	No	No
Anaphoricity	Uma menina e um menino entraram. X estava de azul	Yes	Yes#	Yes#	No
Non-contrastive Deixis	Vou levar X (one X only)	Yes	Yes#	No	No
Contrastive Deixis	Vou levar X (more than one X)	No	Yes	Yes#	Yes
Indefinite					
Storytelling	Era uma vez X que morava na vila.	No	Yes#	Yes	Yes
Partitive Specificity	Tinha muita criança na sala. X estava jogando carta	No	Yes#	Yes	Yes
$\exists > \neg$	Maria não comprou X	Yes	No	No#	Yes
$\neg > \exists$		No	Yes	Yes	Yes
$\exists > \text{want}$	João quer encontrar X	Yes	No	No#	Yes
$\text{want} > \exists$		No	Yes	Yes#	Yes
Intermediate $\exists$ scope	Todos os alunos leram todos os artigos sobre X.	No	No	Yes#	Yes
Differentiated Scope	João matou X a tarde inteira.	No	Yes	Yes	No

Table 1 Br through the lens of Dayal (forthcoming)

The results show that the bare singular, the bare plural, the definite and the indefinite phrases do not convey the same information. The definite phrase is, of course, definite, and it is also kind-denoting. We assume that the indefinite is a quantifier, because of the interaction with other operators. At least in Br, the bare nominals are not definite, because they cannot refer deitically, they look indefinite, though they may have specific readings. The bare plural may denote subkinds; the bare singular cannot. The bare singular does not interact with other expressions, it is naturally interpreted as about the sort of entity that is involved in the event.

It does not seem to apply directly to ordinary individuals. The bare plural is not sensitive to the type of predicate. It gives sums. The bare nouns are do not show scope interactions, but the plural form interacts with negation and want-verbs. The bare singular is interpreted generically, even when in contexts of narration of a story. The definite denotes a particular individual, and it is kind denoting with generic predicates. It does not allow access to individuals.

3. A theoretic approach to the nominal phrases in Br

Without further assumptions, Chierchia (2021) predicts that if a language has bare singulars and bare plurals, such as Br, then the bare singular is the bare plural. However, the application of Dayal's questionnaire does not support the claim. Moreover, the bare singular in Br does not work as the definite phrase either. The section proposes a step by step derivation from the meaning of the Noun, which is the nucleus of the DPs under investigation, up to the individual. The literature on the theme is wide: Partee (1987), Carlson (1977), Krifka et. Al (1995), Chierchia (1998, 2021), Dayal (2004, 2011), Landman (1989), Landman; Rothstein (2012a,2012b), Rothstein (2010, 2017), Pires de Oliveira; Rothstein (2011), Pires de Oliveira (2022b, 2024), among others.

The basic idea is that a DP is a syntactic structure the nucleus of which is a noun, which is in argument position, that is, it fulfills the valency of a predicate. The last section shows that the four phrases we investigate are DPs. A DP denotes an individual (Chierchia 1998, 2021). However, the task is to give a step by step derivation of these phrases from the terminal nodes, which for all of them must be the Noun 'cachorro'. Thus, the syntactic structure is something like (21d) where the parentheses represent that the element might not be there:

- (21) a. O cachorro é um animal.
 b. Cachorros são animais.
 c. Cachorro é um animal.
 d. [_{DP} (Det) [_{NumP} (Number) [_{NP} Noun]]]

Each one of the elements in (21d) needs clarification. Both Number and Determiner can be morphologically null, but that might have different interpretations. Borik; Espinal (2012) argue that in Spanish the definite generic has no number projection and that allows kind-

denotation. Thus, ‘o cachorro’ is ambiguous between a determiner phrase where there is number, and it is singular, and another where there is no number. Schmitt;Munn (1999, 2002) claim that there is no number for the bare singular in (21c), which is number neutral for them. Moreover, for them in (21c) there is a null determiner, that is a definite article that is not pronounced. If the bare plural in (21b) is like the bare plural in English, then there is a shift (not a null determiner) from plural predicates into the kind, called down, represented from now on as $\cap$. Thus, the Determiner can be overtly given, can be null and not be there at all, so a shift applies to save the derivation (Chierchia 1998 for bare plurals in English). Number might be null or it might be binary (singular and plural) or ternary (singular, plural, number neutral). And the foundational question about the meaning of the Noun, the nominal radical, has received different answers.

In Chierchia (2021), for instance, the nominal projection, little n , denotes: the set of atomic individuals, the set of sums of individuals, and the kind derived via $\cap$. Thus, ‘dinosaurs’, exemplified in (3b) above, denotes the kind as the maximal sum of individuals across worlds. It is unclear how this model generates the kind reading of the definite article, in (3b), ‘the dinosaur’. Perhaps along the lines of Chierchia (1998), where the noun is massified, and then a group is built with the top of the lattice structure. At last but not least, this model does not generate a distinction between (24b-c). The model we propose generates the definite generic in English and in Br, and the bare nouns in English and in Br.

The trivial fact that underlies our proposal is that words in natural languages express the way things are conceptualized by a certain culture, given the minds that humans have. There might be concepts that are universal, but there is plenty of room for variation (Matthewson;von Fintel 2008). Taxonomies are normally associated with natural kinds, which express the scientific knowledge about the world, but they are present in our everyday conversation expressing our ordinary way of seeing things (Bach 1986). They structure concepts hierarchically in such a way that the sub-kind inherits the properties of the kind, but not vice-versa. Thus, taxonomies can be different depending on the language. However, the way they are structured is the same (at least by hypothesis). That parrots are relatives expresses an organization of the concepts according to which parrots and humans belong to the same class of things, those that have soul constitute a system of beliefs. They can be wrong and very often need to be rectified. For instance, if a river is something that has no life, then there is no meaning in killing a river, and there is. Thus, Airton Krenak is reconceptualizing rivers as living beings. This is better given our aims at a community but

this is beyond the domain of semantics, the aim of which is to explain the possibility of conceptualizing in different ways.

The approach is Carlsonian, because it relies on kinds, ordinary individuals, and stages of those ordinary individuals, and the notion of Realization. Kinds are realized by individuals in their stages: $R(x,y)$ is x realizes y . Although a particular dog can only be at a particular place at this particular moment, in its dog stage, the dog kind happens in all the dogs at a particular point in time, as graphically represented below, at t_1 , and only in them:

dog kind
 dog a
 dog b
 dog c
 t_1

Figure 1 – kind and its realizations

Kinds are realized by all the individuals that have the property that ties them and only them together. Not this individual, but what makes this individual a realization of the dog kind. This is linguistically oriented because there is no assumption that all languages have the dog kind; they do, if they have a word that corresponds to our concept of dog.

Thus ascribing the property N to an individual is knowing that he/she realizes the kind N :

(22) $\text{Kind}_{\text{def}} = \text{Something is the } N\text{kind if it is realized by all the individuals, and only those, that have the } N\text{property.}$

Thus, kinds are realizations of ordinary individuals. But they are not the ordinary individuals, because they have the property of genericity at a point in time. The dog kind is more than the sum of the ordinary individuals; it is what ties them together. The naming of a property organizes the into ordinary individuals (or the stages of the individuals), and kinds

Let's assume that cognitively individuals have precedence over generic concepts. Thus, the nominal radical, N , denotes the set of atoms that are N , as represented in (23a):

- (23) a. $||[N\text{Noun}]|| = \lambda x: x \text{ De. } x \text{ belongs to the } N\text{kind. (following Saĝ 2022)}$
 b. $||[N\text{cachorro}]|| = \lambda x: x \text{ belongs to the dog kind}$

The nominal radical combines with number morphology. The absence of morphology $\emptyset$ corresponds to the identity function; plural infection corresponds to the star operator $*$ (Link 1983, Chierchia 2021):

$$(24) \quad ||[\text{NumP Noun}]|| = \emptyset \text{ or } -s \text{ (plural morphology)}$$

$\emptyset$ = identity function

$-s$ = $*$

Number is a function from sets of individuals into sets of individuals. Assume composition applies to branching nodes. So far, the derivation results into a set of predicates. Thus, there must be something that turns the predicate into an individual. Consider that the bare plural in Br is exactly like the bare plural in English in Chierchia (2021). The derivation of (22c) is straightforward: the Noun denotes a set of atoms, Number is an operation of plurality that returns the sums, and then $\cap$ down applies and generates the only maximal sum of individuals across all alternatives, aka kind as plurality:

$$(25) \quad ||[\text{DP cachorros}]|| = [\text{DP} \cap [\text{NumP} -s [\text{cachorro}]]]$$

$||\text{cachorro}|| = \lambda x: x \text{ belongs to the dog kind}$

$||* \text{ cachorro}|| = \lambda x: x \text{ is a sum of individual that belongs to the dog kind}$

$||\cap * \text{ cachorro}|| = \lambda Px. \iota x Pwx, \text{ if } Px \text{ is cumulative}$

We come back to the bare plural in Br. For the bare singular, the route, if we consider just what we have, is the identity function for Number but then $\cap$ down is not defined for atomic predicates. Thus, it does not generate the bare singular, which is good for English, but we must find a solution for the bare singular in Br. One solution is to treat $\emptyset$ morphology as ambiguous between atomic and number neutral (Schmitt;Munn, 1999, 2002 for Br; Borik; Espinal 2012, for instance for the definite generic in Spanish), another is to propose a shift that shifts atomic predicates into their corresponding kinds. We believe that the latter is a better way of deriving the semantics for bare singulars in Br, because it predicts that it does not behave as the bare plural, while the number neutral view predicts that they should behave alike. It predicts that although the bare singular and the bare plural in Br may be co-extensive, they denote different individuals. Finally, even in a context where ordinary individuals are

salient because the predicate is episodic, example (19), or with accidental properties, example (20), the bare singular is interpreted generically. This is evidence that there might be some sort of incorporation of the bare singular as Sağ (2022) proposes for the bare singular in Turkish. Bare singulars always denote the kind; with two exceptions in story telling (examples 10-11) to which we come back. So we introduce a shift, call it the κ -shift that corresponds to $\emptyset$ morphology in the Determiner that shifts atomic predicates into their corresponding kinds, defined in (26e):

- (26) a. $||[\text{DP cachorro}]|| = [\text{DP } \kappa [\text{NumP } \emptyset [\text{NP cachorro}]]]$
 b. $||\text{cachorro}|| = \lambda x: x \text{ belongs to the dog kind}$
 c. $||=\text{cachorro}|| = \lambda x: x \text{ belongs to the dog kind}$
 d. $||\kappa \text{ cachorro}|| = \lambda Px. \iota x Pwx$, if Px is cumulative
 e. $\kappa P(x) = \lambda Px. \iota y P\text{kind}$
 $\lambda x x \text{ belongs to the } N\text{kind} \Leftrightarrow \iota y. N\text{kindy}$

κ shifts the predicate into the individual that is realized by all the individuals that have the N property, and only by them. English does not allow this shift at the DP level, though it seems to be in compounds such as ‘bug spray’. In English, the determiner is obligatory with singular predicates. Thus, in English, ‘dog’ does not denote the kind, it denotes the atomic predicate. In Br, ‘cachorro’ (baleia) denotes the atomic predicate or the kind, depending on where in the derivation it is processed (Sato 2008).

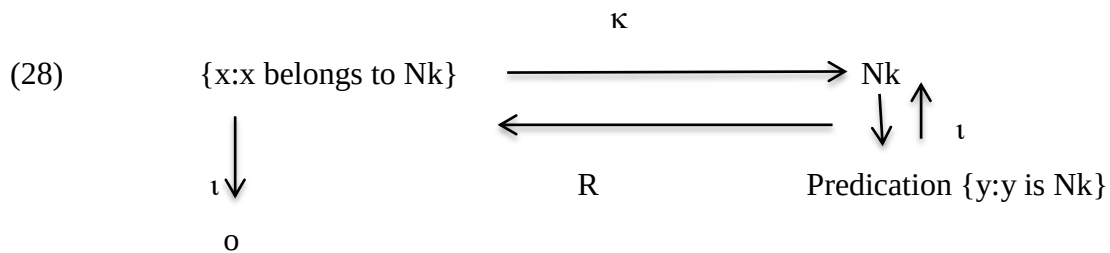
Semantic plurality is derived from what kinds are, they are a class. Consider reciprocals as exemplified in (6c), repeated in (27a). Heim et al (1991) treat reciprocals as requiring a group-denoting antecedent, a distributor, a reciprocator and a predicate (1991: 66). Let’s interpret ‘um ao outro’ (one to the other) in Br as a universal quantification over pairs of individuals that are different one from the other and requires that the predicate is reciprocal, as expressed informally in (27b):

- (27) a. Cachorro lambe um ao outro
 b. $\forall \langle x, y \rangle: x, y \text{ belongs to the dog kind, and } x \neq y. \text{ Reciprocal } L \langle x, y \rangle$

This description seems to be in accordance with the literature says about reciprocals. Since ‘cachorro’ denotes the kind in Br, thus it is a group-denoting antecedent.

The same reasoning explains the non-contradiction, example (7). If ‘cachorro’ denotes the kind, and if kinds are realized by individuals, then it denotes these individuals. There are situations where just one individual realizes that particular kind; in those, to refer to this individual using a kind term as the bare singular, as in examples (9a), (10a), (11a), is to declare that that particular individual represents the class, thus giving raise to lawlike statements or exceptional readings, as in the news (Menuzzi et al 1995). Bare singulars do not have any morphology except for the Noun. Thus, they do not carry any presupposition, and introduce kinds. They are indefinite.

If the definite article corresponds to the ι (iota) operator, defined as carrying a presupposition of a singleton that is salient in context and returning the individual (Heim; Kratzer, 1988, among others), then it derives an individual in particular, if the presuppositions of saliency and unicity are satisfied. Thus, (19b) for instance, pressuposes that there is one and just one skunk that is salient in the context. Thus, the definite article quantifies over the individuals, one and just one, and requires salience in context. One way to generate the definite generic is to assume that the lexicon is ambiguous between predicates of individuals and predicates of kinds (Dayal 2004). In our proposal, the kind predicate is derived from the atomic predicate, being a case of polysemy of a noun. The individuals are connected in the lexicon by operations: The set of atoms are shifted to the kind via κ , R shifts the kind into its realizations, and Predication shifts the kind into the kind predicate, i.e. the set of kinds N , and ι applies to atomic predicates



The definite is quantified and it pressuposes that there is one and just one individual with that particular property that is salient in the context. Given the lexicon above, there are two options for the ι , that, according to the data in the last section, are ranked. The default interpretation is about ordinary individuals. The kind interpretation happens if the ordinary interpretation is suspended, for instance, when combined with kind predicates. This is explained if ordinary individuals are primitive and the kind is derived from putting them together:

(29) $\|o \text{ cachorro}\| = \text{there is one and only one } x \text{ such that it is salient in the context and satisfies the predicate } \{x: x \text{ belongs to the Dogk}\}. \iota x. \text{Dog}x$
 $= \text{there is one and only one } y \text{ such that it is salient in the context and satisfies the predicate } \{y: y \text{ is the Dogk} \mid \{y: y \text{ is } N_K\} = 1\}. \iota y. \text{Dog}ky$

The quantization explains why the definite phrase does not give access to the realizations, thus blocking its occurrence in differentiated scope, for instance. The salience in the context indicates that there must already be a taxonomy in the background. If there is no, as when it combines with accessory predicates, the interpretation is of an individual.

The bare singular denotes the kind which is the realization of other individuals, thus, they are inherently about more than one individual, since they are what ties individuals together into a concept. Its plurality is not that of a sum, but it is derived from the fact that they are a class of individuals. This is the reason why the bare singular does not interact with other operations, why it is inertial, and why existential readings are not as prominent as it is the case with the bare plural. The bare plural, on the other hand, allows for non maximal interpretations, can be about ordinary and as well as kinds. It allows for existential interpretations that must be low in the derivation, since its interaction with other operators is not the same as that of the indefinite phrase. It is scope inert as described in Dayal's questionnaire; however, it allows interaction with negation, and it strongly implies more than one.

Assume that the plural inflection corresponds to the star operation *. It applies to predicates and return the sum of the atoms. Assume the derivation we proposed above (25). It generates the reading that negation has wide scope. The bare plural is scope inert because it denotes the kind. However, it denotes the kind as a plurality of individuals. The relation between the individuals is not the same as that of Realization. The kind as plurality is a plural individual. Thus, it is homogenous and cumulative. The plural predicate denotes the semi-lattice structure closed under sum, that is the atomic individuals, that are sums of themselves, and all other sums, up to the supremum where all the individuals are summed together. Perhaps negation can spot operations that are internal in the DP, as represented in (30b). In that case, it does not deny the involvement of the kind, but it denies that the predicate is a sum, so we are back to the atomic realizations of the kind, that are not sums:

- (30) a. não comprou maçãs, comprou uma só.
 b. comprou não-plural maçã

This reading is more natural as a correction to some previous statement, as in (36a). However, it might work to describe a situation. One cannot do this with the bare singular without falling into a contradiction, as shown in the previous section.

The bare plural does not show de-re interactions with intensional verbs, but the theme of the desire is a plurality. Thus, in (17), where *wants* interacts with the determiner phrase ‘*bolos*’ (cakes), intensionality applies to a plurality. So if the exclusion of the atoms from the denotation of the plural is an implicature, with the intensional verb ‘*querer*’ (wants) the implicature is computed, as if it is an upward context.

A huge number of issues is behind the outlined model. It generates a language where the definite, the indefinite, the bare singular and the bare plural convey slightly different means. It also generates English by blocking the bare singular.

4. Br from the perspective of under-represented languages

The paper reports the results of an investigation of four nominal phrases in Br, the definite, the indefinite, the bare singular and the bare plural, as part of the project “(In)definiteness from the perspective of under-represented languages”, which relies on Dayal’s (forthcoming) questionnaire, presented in the first section. The application of Dayal to Br shows that these phrases do not convey the same information, though they are all kind denoting. In particular, the bare singular is generic, scope inert, tends to be maximal, and does not directly refer to particular individuals. This grammaticalization may be an indication of incorporation as Sağ (2022) has proposed for Turkish bare singulars. The bare plural may be generic or existential, is scope inert, but negation may apply to plurality, and the implicature of exclusion is obligatory. The definite phrase denotes individuals, and, in some contexts, the kind. We argue that the minimum information carried by a noun is that it denotes a set of individuals, precisely those that realize the kind denoted by the noun, and only by them. Thus, categorizing something as a dog is describing it as a realization of the dog kind. It derives kinds as singularity, that is the denotation of the bare singular and the definite generic, and the difference is due to the presuppositions associated with the article, and kinds as sums of individuals, that is the denotation of bare plurals in Br.

All the languages of the project accept bare nouns, except Rio Platense Spanish (Carranza et al 2023, Trebisacce et al 2024a, 2024b, Trebisacce 2024), where articles are obligatory. Thus, from that perspective, English is exotic, because it only accepts bare

plurals. Thus, they are marked. Moreover, Br is not the only Romance language that has articles, bare singulars and bare plurals. This is also the case of Portuñol (Polakof et al. 2024). Terena is also a language with articles and bare nominals, singular and plural (Quadros Gomes et al. 2024). The prediction is that the nominal system in these languages should be functioning as described in the last section for Br, with minor adjustments. For instance, it seems that Portuñol allows for wide scope interpretations (Polakof; Custodio, 2025). So it is not as grammaticalized as in Br.

The other languages of the project are bare languages: Rikbaktsa, Kaiowá, Mebengokre and Wapishana. They show that the bare singular is semantic plural. In Mebengokre (Mendonça 2025) the bare plural is restricted to human predicates; all other predicates are bare singulars. The prediction is that the bare singular is different from the bare plural even if both are semantic plural. The plurality of the bare singular should be derived from the kind denotation. Bare nouns in those languages may denote ordinary individuals or kinds. Thus, the distinction is needed and seems to be universal. Bare phrases are used in definite, indefinite and generic contexts. This is the same pattern described for other indigenous languages in Brazil, such as Karitiana (Müller; Bertucci, 2012, among others). From the perspective of these under-represented languages, definiteness, indefiniteness and genericity are not universals in the nominal domain. The question is then: what is the logical form of the DPs in these languages? Is the nominal phrase ambiguous among different sorts of operators (ι , $\exists$, $\cap$, κ), or is the logical form something different?

Conflict of Interest

The author(s) has no conflicts of interest to declare

Research involving Human Subjects

The project has been submitted to the ethics committee 69555923.4.0000.0121 .

Acknowledgments

Thanks to the entire project team, the reviewers of this article, and those who answered questions about the case. Caso seja necessário, incluir os agradecimentos nesta seção.

Sources of financing

A (In)Definitude da perspectiva das línguas sub-representadas. Projeto Pró-Humanidades número 420314/2022-9

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