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FAMILIARITY CONSTRAINTS ON WEAK DEFINITE DPS

ABSTRACT

Weak definite DPs have been characterized as definite DPs lacking the uniqueness presupposition usually associated with the definite determiner and suffering distributional restrictions that depend on the lexical information conveyed by the NP and on the prototypicality of the activity denoted by the VP. This paper tackles the latter issue. We propose a unified analysis of the definite determiner, by which the determiner conveys a presupposition of uniqueness and of familiarity also in weak DPs. Appealing to the notion of weak familiarity (Roberts 2003), we can thus account for prototypicality restrictions, which turn out to depend on the accessibility of familiar situations in a conversational or conventional background.

KEYWORDS

Weak definites, prototypicality, uniqueness, weak familiarity.

1. Weak definites

A number of recent works in formal semantics raise the issue of the interpretation of definite DPs in sentences like (1)–(3).

- (1) Lola is reading *the newspaper*.
- (2) My husband is at *the hospital*.
- (3) John was feeling sick and he called *the doctor*.

Relying also on psycholinguistic evidence, Carlson and Sussman (2005); Carlson *et al.* (2005) argue that the definite expressions in italics in the sentences (1)–(3) are not interpreted as regular definite DPs, but that they are rather ‘weakened’ in their meaning.

To start with, despite being realized by singular definite DPs, these nominal expressions do not refer to unique or salient individuals in discourse; rather, they allow for a plurality of referents. The main piece of empirical evidence provided by the authors is the availability of sloppy readings in coordinated elliptical sentences. The sentence (4b) is a felicitous utterance in a context where (4a) is also true: for (4b) to be true, it is not necessary that Lola and Alice read the same newspaper, nor different tokens of the same newspaper issue.

- (4) a. Lola is reading *The Times*, and Alice is reading *The Guardian*.
b. Lola is reading the newspaper and Alice too.

A second defining property of weak definite expressions is that their distribution depends on restrictions that have been linked to the ‘prototypicality’ of the event or situation in the denotation of the VP in which the definite expressions appear. Contrary to *the newspaper*, the definite DP *the book* in (5b) cannot receive a weak interpretation. Accordingly, it does not allow for sloppy readings. (5b) entails that Lola and Alice are reading the same book or different tokens of the same book, and the sentence cannot describe a situation where Alice and Lola are reading different books (5a).

- (5) a. Lola is reading *Animal Farm*, and Alice is reading *1984*.
b. #Lola is reading the book and Alice too.

Finally, an additional property of weak DPs is the fact that the VP in which they appear receives an interpretation that goes beyond its strict compositional meaning. This property has been defined as a “semantic enrichment” of the compositional meaning of the VP (Carlson and Sussman 2005). As observed also by Aguilar-Guevara and Zwarts (2011), the sentence in (1) means not only that Lola read the newspaper, but, additionally, that she read the newspaper in order to read the news. Therefore, (4b) does not allow for a sloppy reading, and thus a weak definite interpretation, if Alice and Lola are

reading the newspaper for some other purpose than that of reading the news. Thus, (6b) would be infelicitous in a context where (6a) is true.

- (6) a. Lola is reading *The Times*, and Alice is reading *The Guardian*.
 b. ?? Lola is reading the newspaper to look for job announcements, and Alice too.

The enriched meaning conveyed by the use of weak expressions affects the truth conditions of sentences. Let me give another example. If the DP *the hospital* in (7) is interpreted as referring to a specific hospital, the sentence would express a true proposition if either (b) or (c) are true. In its weak reading, however, (7) is true only in case (c) is true.

- (7) a. My husband is at the hospital.
 b. #My husband is at the hospital to visit a friend.
 c. My husband is being held at the hospital to be healed.

At the end of this descriptive survey, we may conclude that the question raised by weak definite DPs is twofold. On the one hand, it concerns the interpretation of the definite determiner and its contribution to the semantics of the whole nominal expression: why and how does the definite determiner loose the uniqueness presupposition that, since Russell (1905), is associated to its semantic content? And is the presence of sloppy readings a convincing piece of evidence for this argument? On the other hand, an explanation is needed also to account for the distributional properties of these expressions, that is, their restriction to VPs that denote ‘prototypical’ situations or events. The two issues should be ideally related, since the distribution and interpretation of weak DPs should be made dependent on the semantics adopted for the definite determiner. My aim in this paper is precisely to defend an analysis for the definite determiner that may also derive the constraints that guide the interpretation of definite DPs in their weakened interpretation.

To this purpose, let me conclude this rapid survey by introducing the two issues in more detail, and by considering also the solutions offered by previous analyses.

(i) The uniqueness presupposition of the definite determiner.

When considering the lack of uniqueness presupposition attested by examples like (4) above, the first theoretical choice that one has to face is to decide if to treat the definite determiner as an ambiguous determiner, or if its weak interpretation can be made dependent on additional operations that have the effect to make the uniqueness effect disappear. The former option is suggested by Carlson and Sussman (2005), who analyze the definite determiner as a marker of indefiniteness in these constructions. There are several theoretical problems that

make this proposal unappealing, the first being the fact that it predicts a systematic ambiguity of the definite determiner, which is unattested in other contexts. It seems to me that a better solution would be to give a unified semantics to the determiner, and to attribute its weakened interpretation to the restricted environments in which it appears. But then, where does weakness come from?

One possibility is to attribute the non-specific, weakly referential interpretation of the definite DP to the type of entity to which it refers. This line of analysis is defended by Aguilar-Guevara and Zwarts (2011), who recently suggest to analyze the definite DP in (1)-(3) as denoting the name of the kind (Krifka 2003; Dayal 2004). Assuming that the domain of individuals is sorted into kinds and objects, the definite determiner in (1)-(3) refers to unique individuals of the kind sort. The authors have to assume a specific mechanism of semantic composition between the kind-denoting expression and the verbal predicate, which in fact makes weak DPs similar to bare nouns in semantically incorporated structures (McNally and Espinal 2011; see also sec. 4).

The other option is to assume that the definite determiner always refers to object-level entities, and attribute the apparent loss of uniqueness presupposition in elliptical sentences to specific interpretive constraints. Following this line of analysis, weak interpretations are due to the possibility of referring to unique individuals that are participants to distinct minimal situations or events (Löbner 1985). A non-ambiguous semantics for the definite determiner along these lines has been recently defended, in relation to weak definite expressions of the type we are interested in, by Corblin (2011) and Schwarz (2012). Although Corblin (2011) does not discuss elliptical sentences, he gives some evidence in support to his analysis drawing on data of anaphora resolution, showing that the referents of weak DPs are possible antecedents for anaphors. As we will see, however, data from anaphora resolution are still a bit fuzzy and their interpretation is unclear. In this respect, the proposal by Schwarz (2012) offers an escape hatch, combining the object-level analysis of DPs with an intensional analysis at the level of the VP, which ends up denoting a kind of event.

(ii) Prototypicality and semantic enrichment.

The second issue raised by weak DPs concerns their restriction to VPs denoting prototypical events. The general observation is that, in languages that allow bare noun arguments, the restriction to prototypical situations is found also for bare nouns. Therefore, most previous analyses, starting from Carlson and Sussman (2005), derive the restrictions of weak definite DPs from the same pragmatic factors that account for prototypicality in incorporated and

semantically incorporated structures.¹ When provided, formal accounts take for granted that a discourse external, non-compositional principle supersedes the availability of these expressions. The proposal by Corblin (2011) is more explicit in this sense. In his analysis, the possibility of weak interpretations depends on the information stored in the lexicon and shared by the speakers and the association of an entity to an activity in the denotation of the VP is mapped explicitly into the lexical entry of the NP, and in particular in its functional *qualia* structure (Pustejovsky 1995).

All previous proposals, in my opinion, capture an important generalization. The fact that only NPs which are lexically related to the verb as participants of prototypical events or in virtue of standard usages and functions allow weak readings indeed suggests that their weak interpretation should rely on a specific inferential mechanism. While I do agree with the general observation that a pragmatic mechanism is relevant for establishing the set of prototypical situations allowing weak DP, I would like to explore the possibility of a more principled explanation for the restriction of this set. Namely, I will explore the possibility that the accessibility of referents in the case of definite expressions is determined by the specific compositional semantics of the DP, that is, by the semantics of the definite determiner.

I will thus rejoin the proposals outlined above in assuming that the definite determiner preserves its uniqueness presupposition also in its weak interpretation. Besides a presupposition of uniqueness, however, the definite determiner conveys also a presupposition of familiarity (Roberts 2003), and I will show that, assuming that the familiarity presupposition can be enforced by pragmatic principles, it may suffice to explain the prototypicality constraints on weak readings across languages.

I will argue, in particular, that the issue of prototypicality is a crucial one for understanding the semantics of weak DPs, but that the relevance of semantic enrichment can be questioned. My argument will rely partly on the evidence provided by weak definite descriptions in Italian. In Italian, weak DPs are in fact less constrained than in English, and VPs that have weak definite DPs as arguments do not necessarily have a semantically enriched interpretation. The assumption that semantic enrichment is not a mandatory property of these structures will allow me to adopt a broader notion of prototypicality, based on the notion of familiarity, which encompasses also the cases where the interpretation is not directly driven by the information stored in the lexical entry of the NP. On this basis, I will try to go beyond a descriptive account and

1. See *e.g.* Carlson (2006) and Schwarz (2012), who explicitly quotes Mithun (1984)'s definition of noun incorporation as restricted to expressions denoting an activity that «is recognized sufficiently often to be considered noteworthy».

I will show that prototypicality restrictions can be derived from the semantics of the definite determiner.

The paper is organized as follows. In section 2, I will introduce the data about Italian weak DPs, and I will show that they can be grouped into (at least) two distinct sub-classes on the basis of their interpretation in terms of prototypicality and semantically enriched meanings. It will appear that semantic enrichment is found only with a sub-class of weak definite DPs, and that, in order to account for the distributional restrictions of weak definite DPs in a more general way, the only relevant criterion is the prototypical interpretation of the situations denoted by the VP in which they appear. To account for empirical data, in section 3 I will outline my proposal, which consists in assuming an inferential principle that I will define developing on the notion of weak familiarity (Roberts 2003). In section 4, I will then discuss the implications that the broadening of the domain of weak DPs has on previous analysis. My aim, however, is not to defend a specific denotational domain for weak DPs. Rather, I will discuss the implications that each proposal may have for solving the issue of interpretive restrictions. I will argue that, if semantic enrichment is not mandatory, this empirical fact somewhat weakens the arguments of the analysis, assumed, more or less explicitly, by both Aguilar-Guevara and Zwarts (2011)'s and Corblin (2011), by which pragmatic reasoning is licensed primarily by information stored in the lexical entry of the NP. On the other hand, it will also appear that in the proposed analysis weak DPs crucially rely, for their interpretation, on existential instantiation of the DP or the VP in episodic sentences, an option rejected by the semantic incorporation hypothesis. I will thus review the advantages and shortcomings of this assumption in section 5.

In a more general perspective, however, my argument is that, despite the theoretical choice that one may prefer, familiarity is indeed a necessary ingredient for understanding the constraints on the distribution of weak definite DPs across languages. The advantage of this solution, I will argue, also resides in the fact that, since familiarity can be entailed by the semantics of the definite article, prototypicality restrictions can be accounted for in a more principled way.

2. Weak definite DPs in Italian and semantic enrichment

2.1. Weak readings of Italian definite DPs

It is well known that in Italian, as in most Romance languages, definite DPs can receive a range of interpretations, from object-level definite expressions to kinds and names of kinds. In the episodic sentence in (8), the definite DP *il leone* 'the lion' may be interpreted only as referring to a previously mentioned, unique individual in context. This is the most standard reading of defi-

nite expressions across languages, since it is assumed that this interpretation is directly linked to the semantics of the definite determiner.²

- (8) Gli spari hanno fatto fuggire il leone.
 the shots made.PF escape the lion
 The shots have made the lion run away.

On the other hand, the definite article may also be interpreted as a generic determiner (Dobrovie-Sorin and Laca 2003; Chierchia 1998). In the generic statements in (9) and (10) below, both the singular and the plural definite DP refer to the kind LION, and not to a specific individual or group of individuals. The definite singular refers to the name of the kind, whereas the plural DP in (10) refers to the kind understood as the maximal abstract individual which is represented by all its actual instances (Krifka *et al.* 1995).

- (9) Il leone ha una folta criniera.
 the lion have.PRES a thick mane
 The lion has a thick mane.
- (10) I leoni hanno una folta criniera.
 the lions have.PRES a thick mane
 Lions have a thick mane.

In recent analyses, it has been suggested that kind-related readings of definite DPs are not constrained to generic statements. One relevant case is that of plural definite DPs that, in episodic sentences, are not interpreted as referring to contextually salient individuals, but receive an existential reading. An example is the definite DP *i leoni* in (11) below. The sentence (11) does not mean that the kind LION invaded the park; for one thing, kinds are abstract entities, and even if we may identify the kind with the maximal sum of all the individuals that are specimen of the kind at a certain time (Chierchia 1998), for (11) to be true it is not necessary that all the lions in the world gathered in the Serengeti. In fact, it suffices that a sufficiently large number of lions (probably larger than usually admitted in the park) gathered in the Serengeti for the proposition to be true.

- (11) I leoni hanno invaso il Serengeti quest'estate.
 the lions invade.PF the Serengeti this summer
 Lions invaded the Serengeti this summer.

There is however a feeling that, even if the DP receives an indefinite-like reading, what is conveyed by (11) is indeed the presence of the kind LION in the park, which is inferred by the presence of some specimen or others of the kind. In other words, even if the DP in (11) refers to individual lions, the predi-

2. Russell (1905); see also Heim (2011).

cation is about the kind. Building on this intuition, in recent works (Zamparelli 2002; Donazzan and Gritti 2013) the definite DP in (11) is analyzed as related to the kind-referring DP in (10), and the existential reading is derived by some type of existential instantiation at the VP-level.

In this paper, we will be concerned with a second case in which definite DPs receive a non-regular, indefinite-like reading, which can be found more frequently with singular DPs or with DPs that, like the ones in (17) and (18), albeit having not strictly speaking singular referents can be argued to be similar to *pluralia tantum* in Italian.³

A first relevant example is the singular definite DP *il giornale* ‘the newspaper’ in (12).⁴

- (12) In questi giorni, non ho letto il giornale.
 in these days NEG read.PF the newspaper
 These days, I did not read the newspaper.

As it is the case for the English example in (1), the definite DP in (12) need not refer to a specific newspaper for the sentence to be true. The meaning conveyed by the sentence is rather that the speaker did not read any instance of newspapers in the latest days. The weakness of the DP can be verified if we apply the test of sloppy readings, which has been used as a test for establishing the descriptive class of weak DPs in English (Carlson and Sussman 2005; Aguilar-Guevara and Zwarts 2011; see also section 1). The sentence in (13b) can be uttered felicitously in a context where (13a) is also true, and Maria and Lara did not read the same newspaper.

- (13) a. Maria ha letto *La Repubblica* e Lara ha letto *Il Corriere*.
 Maria read.PF *La Repubblica* and Lara read.PF *Il Corriere*
 Maria read *La Repubblica* and Lara read *Il Corriere*.
 b. Maria ha letto il giornale, e anche Lara.
 Maria read.PF the newspaper and also Lara
 Maria read the newspaper and Lara too.

Prototypicality restrictions are relevant in Italian as well. As for the weak interpretation of the definite DP, (12) contrasts with (14), where a weak reading is not available, as attested by (15a)-(15b) vs (13a)-(13b).

3. Cf. also Carlson and Sussman (2005) for similar cases in English, like *comics* and *cartoons*.

4. The acceptability judgments for the Italian data were collected on a panel of 10 native Italian speakers, all of which had been living, for at least 20 years, in the same geographical area corresponding to the North-East (8) and North-West (2) of Italy. Except for the answers of one speaker, the judgments are quite uniform. Of course, a statistically more significant inquiry is still needed in further research.

- (14) In questi giorni, non ho letto #la rivista.
 in these days NEG read.PF the magazine
 These days, I did not read #the magazine.
- (15) a. Maria ha letto *Oggi* e Lara ha letto *Gente*.
 Maria read.PF *Oggi* and Lara read.PF *Gente*
 Maria read *Oggi* and Lara read *Gente*.
 b. #Maria ha letto la rivista, e anche Lara.
 Maria read.PF the magazine and also Lara
 Maria read the magazine and Lara too.

Finally, as it is the case in English, the VP *leggere il giornale* “to read the newspaper” in (12) may also have a non-compositional, enriched meaning, by which Maria and Lara read the newspaper in order to read the news, and it entails this enriched meaning in its weak interpretation.

What is interesting for the present purpose, however, is that weak DPS in Italian do not need to convey enriched meanings in all cases. Some relevant examples are given in sentences (16)-(18) below.

- (16) Esco a bere il caffè al bar.
 go out to drink the coffee at-the bar
 I’m going out to have a coffee at the bar.
- (17) Pietro ha guardato i cartoni animati tutto il pomeriggio.
 Pietro watch.PF the cartoons all the afternoon
 Pietro watched cartoons all the afternoon.
- (18) Invece di studiare, Maria ha passato il pomeriggio a leggere i fumetti.
 Instead of study Maria spend.PF the afternoon to read the comics
 Instead of studying Maria spent the afternoon readings comics.

In the sentence (16), the definite DP *il caffè* “the coffee”, as the English translation also suggests, receives a count interpretation. Nevertheless, the VP *bere il caffè* allows for sloppy readings in coordinated elliptical sentences, since it is clear that, if (19) is true, both Maria and Lara cannot have drunk exactly the same cup of coffee.

- (19) Maria ha bevuto il caffè al bar, e anche Lara.
 Maria drink.PF the coffee at-the bar, and also Lara
 Maria drunk a coffee at the bar and Lara as well.

Finally, the weak reading of the DP also suffers some restrictions. In the sentence (20), where coffee is replaced by herbal tea, the DP is not felicitous under a weak interpretation, nor is the definite DP in (21) and (22).

- (20) ?? Maria ha bevuto la tisana al bar, e anche Lara.
 Maria drink.PF the herbal tea at-the bar, and also Lara
 Maria drank the herbal at the bar and Lara as well.

- (21) Pietro ha guardato #il film tutto il pomeriggio.
 Pietro watch.PF the movie all the afternoon
 Pietro watched #the movie all the afternoon.
- (22) Invece di studiare, Maria ha passato il pomeriggio a leggere #i gialli.
 Instead of study Maria spend.PF the afternoon to read the detective stories
 Instead of studying, Maria spent the afternoon reading #the detective stories.

I take the presence of these ‘prototypicality’ restrictions as evidence that the weak DP in (16) cannot be licensed only by a functional dependency. In the case where relational dependencies are overtly marked by *e.g.* possessives, acceptability is straightforward for all NPs.⁵

- (23) Maria ha bevuto la sua tisana al bar.
 Maria drink.PF the her herbal-tea at-the bar
 Maria drank her herbal tea at the bar.

However, contrary to what has been observed for DPs such as *il giornale* ‘the newspaper’ in (12), there is no salient functional or non-compositional meaning associated with the VP. When uttering (16), the speaker expresses nothing more than his/her intention to drink a coffee at the bar. Therefore, we may conclude that in Italian definite DPs can also receive a weak reading that satisfy the standard tests established for English weak DPs, in that they do not refer to unique entities and are subject to distributional restrictions. However, with respect to English, Italian allows a wider group of DPs to get a weak definite interpretation; many of these DPs, like *il caffè*, despite being subject to distributional restrictions, do not display enriched meanings.

5. The possible use of possessives raises the issue of the cross-linguistic variation, which was pointed out by one reviewer. Italian weak definite DPs are very often realized by indefinite DPs or BNs in determiner languages like English; in other cases, such as in French, they seem to alternate with relational definites both in habitual (i) and episodic (ii) sentences.

(i) Je bois toujours mon/#le café au bar.

I always drink my/#the coffee at the bar.

(ii) Pierre n’a pas bu son/#le lait ce matin.

Pierre did not drink his/#the milk this morning.

Relational definites suggest by themselves the existence of habitual and recurrent activities related to the subject of the possessive pronoun, and they are not weak in the sense intended in this paper. The existence of habitual situations and activities is accommodated with respect to specific individuals; the referent of the weak DP is easier to recover, since it has not to be found in conventional or prototypical situations. The issue of cross-linguistic variation in the choice of the realization of particular expressions of course remains open; however, I do not assume any language dependency for the principle of (weak) familiarity encoded by the definite article. In French as well, weak definite DPs are in many cases allowed (iii).

(iii) Jean a regardé les dessins animés toute l’après-midi.

John watched cartoons for the whole afternoon.

2.2. Enriched meanings and implicated meanings

At this point, I would like to be more precise about what is intended as an enriched meaning of the VP and why the presence or absence of enriched meanings is relevant for the analysis of weak definite expressions.

Enriched meanings and prototypicality restrictions have first been discussed extensively in the literature about incorporation and pseudo-incorporation. Prototypicality has been defined as one of the hallmarks or ‘meaningful bounds’ of incorporation (Carlson 2006). Various authors then also noticed that bare NPs complements of verbs or prepositions usually convey a non-compositional, additional meaning across languages.⁶ For expressions like *to be in prison*, for instance, it has been suggested to describe enriched meanings as pragmatic inferences attached to the conventional meaning associated with the bare NP. In other words, if prisons are places conventionally associated with the function of holding prisoners, the fact that John is in prison triggers the pragmatic inference that he is there as a prisoner. It may be tempting, then, to adopt the same argument for weak DPs in VPs such as *to be at the hospital*, and thus to derive the distributional restrictions of weak DPs from the lexical information conventionally associated to the NP, leaving the determiner aside. In this section, I will argue that this explanation is neither a sufficient nor a satisfactory one. To start with, it is an argument which goes in the direction of analyzing weak DPs on a par with bare or indefinite NPs, and I argued explicitly for the disadvantage of an ambiguous definition for the definite determiner in section 1. Secondly, this line of analysis could not explain the weak readings of those DPs that do not contribute an enriched meaning for the VP, like the ones we introduced in (16)–(18) above.

An analysis of enriched meanings in terms of pragmatic inferences is defended explicitly by Stvan (1992). Stvan (1992) discusses bare NPs complements of prepositions and develops an analysis of their enriched meanings in terms of (generalized) conventional implicatures (Levinson, 2000). In her paper Stvan is particularly careful in determining the type of implicated meaning that bare NPs convey and she shows that it should be described as a conventional rather than a conversational implicature. Some of her arguments can be applied also to weak DPs. First, like conventional implicatures and unlike conversational ones, the meaning attached to weak DPs cannot be negated in a subsequent sentence. This property is implied by examples like (6a)–(6b), where the implicature is indirectly negated by the clause *to look for job announcements* in the same sentence. A more explicit example is given below: if the sentence (24), under a weak reading of the DP, conventionally implicates (a), then a weak reading in (b) should be infelicitous, and indeed it is.

6. See, among others, Stvan (1993, 1992), Gehrke and Lekakou (2013).

- (24) Mary is at the hospital.
 a. She is hospitalized.
 b. Mary is at #the hospital, but she is not hospitalized.

Conventional implicatures are non-detachable, in the sense that the implicated meaning is conventionally associated with a specific expression. The meaning is non-detachable if an utterance with the same conventional force cannot replace the original one without losing the implicated meaning. Again, this property is attested by the fact that weak DPs are constrained to specific lexical NPs, and they cannot be freely substituted by synonymous words. However, it is also a meaning that, more generally, may be made dependent from the denotation of the whole DP, as shown in (25). The sentences with the indefinite DP in (a) and with the definite DP interpreted in its ‘strong’ reading in (b), can be true in a situation where both (c) and (d) are true: conversely, if the definite DP receives a weak interpretation, (b) can be true only if (c) is true.

- (25) a. Lola is reading a newspaper.
 b. Lola is reading the newspaper.
 c. Lola is reading the news.
 d. Lola is looking for job announcements.

Now I will apply the tests to weak definite DPs in Italian, in order to check more carefully the pragmatic nature of the implicatures associated with the enriched meanings of the VPs. First, let’s consider the case of the weak DP *il giornale* ‘the newspaper’. (26) is parallel to the English example in (25). The infelicity of the weak reading of the DP in (b) can be explained if (26) conventionally implicates (a).

- (26) Oggi Maria ha letto il giornale.
 oggi Maria read.PF the newspaper
 Today Maria read the newspaper.
 a. Maria read the news.
 b. Oggi Maria ha letto #il giornale, ma non ha letto le notizie.
 Today Maria read #the newspaper, but she did not read the news.

Let’s consider now *bere il caffè* ‘drink the coffee’ in sentences like (16) and (19) above. I argued, in section 2.1, that no salient enriched meanings are associated with this VP. However, it may also be argued, quite correctly, that drinking a coffee can also be seen as an activity charged with some conventional meaning in a particular social background. For Italian speakers, drinking a coffee is a recurrent activity, and is often naturally associated with breakfast or, more generally, with the intent of getting awake when sleepy.⁷ Is this inference

7. Thanks to Ana Aguilar-Guevara for pointing out this fact to me. A similar and relevant remark was raised also by one anonymous reviewer, who asked if ‘coffee’ can be

strong enough, however, to be a pragmatic inference conventionally associated with the meaning of the VP? Testing the inferences in (27) shows that this is not the case. Even if we suppose that the sentence in (27) implicates (a), which is one of the possible inferences stemming from (27), the weak reading of the DP is not affected in (b), where (a) is negated.

- (27) Esco a bere il caffè al bar.
 go out to drink the coffee at-the bar
 I'm going out to have a coffee at the bar.
 a. I am sleepy and I need to get awake.
 b. Esco a bere il caffè al bar, ma non perché ho bisogno di svegliarmi.
 I'm going to have a coffee at the bar, but not because I want to wake up.

The example in (27) is meant to show that, even if one may argue that drinking a coffee and watching cartoons also implicate an additional meaning (coffee is drunk as breakfast or to wake up, cartoons are watched for leisure, etc.), this enriched meaning can be characterized, at best, only as a conversational implicature.

More precisely, on a descriptive ground we may attempt at dividing weak definites in Italian into two groups. One group, call it Group 1, is made of NPs which can be arguments of VPs that have a non-strictly compositional, enriched meaning. NPs of this group denote media (newspaper, radio), institutions (school, hospital, university), professions (doctor, lawyer, plumber) or places that are conventionally related to a social routine (Vandeloise 1987), which associates the place to an activity (the seaside, the cinema, the museum). Indeed, these NPs have in common the property, captured by the analysis of Corblin (2011), of including in their lexical entry an additional meaning, or *qualia*, which specifies a salient functional use or teleologic component. Thus, *reading the newspaper* is understood as *reading the news* in virtue of the fact that the newspaper is defined, conventionally, *qua* the daily vehicle of news.

However, weak readings in Italian are also extended to NPs that denote a more heterogeneous set of entities, which may be gathered in a residual Group 2. Strictly speaking, these NPs may be also associated to standard usage

associated to any activity that has something to do with taking a pause at the bar, possibly drinking something else than a coffee. According to my informants' intuition, while *bere il caffè* "drink the coffee" is indeed associated with coffee-drinking, to express the generic intent of having a pause at the bar Italian speakers would rather make use of the *indefinite* article, cf. (i) below.

- (i) Chiamami uno di questi giorni, magari andiamo a bere un/il caffè e ne parliamo.

Call me one of these days, maybe we can drink a/the coffee together and talk it over. While the analysis of (weak) indefinite expressions as the one in (i) is clearly beyond the reach of this paper, I am not sure that the indefinite expression can support an analysis in terms of incorporation either.

events in their lexical entry, but their functional component is less salient. For instance, magazines and comics are primarily designed to be read, and probably their function is to inform or entertain the reader, but these functional *qualia* are not salient enough to make surface as conventional meanings associated to them. Accordingly, these NPs, when they interpreted as weak definites, do not display enriched meanings. But then, where do their restrictions come from? And how can we account for the fact that, in this case, the referent of the NP is made accessible to the hearer?

3. Familiarity constraints on weak readings

I have shown in section 2 that not all Italian weak definite DPs display the whole set of defining properties outlined in section 1. If one tries to find an encompassing definition, however, the common property of Italian weak definite DPs is that they are restricted to a set of activities and situations which may still be defined prototypical situations and events. I will use here the notion of prototypicality in a specific sense, borrowed in part from the literature on semantic incorporation: prototypical situations are situations sufficiently established as recurrent and habitual routines to be considered part of the common ground or of the conventional knowledge shared by speaker and hearer, and to be sometimes judged “nameworthy” in their own respect (Mithun 1984).⁸ Leaving aside the issue of morphological or semantic incorporation, I will suggest that prototypical situations are, in a more general sense, *familiar* situations in the shared knowledge of speaker and hearer.

The notion of familiarity has been first introduced in the work by Heim (1982), who considers familiarity as a presupposition triggered by definite descriptions. In Heim’s account, as well as in more recent developments (Corblin 1987; Roberts 2003), familiarity has been developed with respect to the semantics of nominal expressions. My purpose here is to suggest that the presupposition of familiarity triggered by a definite description can be transferred, if conditions are met, up to the denotational domain of the VP of which the definite DPs are arguments.

To this effect, I will assume that the notion of familiarity relevant for weak DPs is a weakened familiarity condition (Roberts 2003), and that the interpretation of weak DPs is driven by the two principles in (28).

- (28) (i) Weak definite determiners share the semantics of ‘strong’ definite determiners: they convey a presupposition of uniqueness and of existence of their

8. That is to say, the notion of prototypicality that I will assume is not the one defined in cognitive psychology, cf. e.g. Rosch (1977), which has been introduced in semantics by the Prototype Theory.

referent (Russell 1905; Strawson 1950), together with a strong presumption of familiarity (Corblin 1987).

- (ii) The presupposition of uniqueness cannot be satisfied without satisfying familiarity (Roberts 2003).

In the remainder of this section, I will develop in more detail my proposal, and I will discuss the relevance of each of the two assumptions outlined above.

3.1. Recovering familiar referents

The notion of weak familiarity should be understood as relative to a conversational background. Weakly familiar entities in a discourse background are entities that are accessible not by virtue of linguistic information (being linked to a discourse antecedent), but more generally because they are entailed by the common ground, that is, by the shared knowledge of speaker and hearer. Due to this entailment, the existence of familiar entities can be accommodated easily even when not explicitly asserted in the preceding discourse.

According to the definition in Roberts (2003), given a conversational context *C*, a definite NP presupposes that it has as antecedent a discourse referent *x* which is:

- (29) a. Weakly familiar in *C* (*i.e.* entailed by *C*)
- b. Unique among discourse referents in *C* to satisfy the descriptive content of the NP

Familiarity, however, can be understood also as a more general conversational principle. This is one of the implications of the definition proposed by Corblin (1987) for the *presumption of familiarity*, by which “en utilisant un défini, le locuteur indique que la description fournie par le GN est suffisante pour permettre à son interlocuteur d’identifier l’individu particulier dont il a l’intention de parler”.⁹ The hypothesis that I want to develop here is that this conventional meaning, which is attached to the definite expression and which is due to the semantics of the definite determiner, is precisely what guides the interpretation of weak definite DPs and restricts them to VPs that denote prototypical situations.

Let me be more explicit. The condition of weak familiarity, as formulated in (29) is sufficient to explain the felicity of the definite DP *il giornale* “the newspaper” in (30).

9. “When using a definite [expression], the speaker states that the description conveyed by the NP is sufficient for the hearer to identify the specific individual that he/she is addressing.” The presumption of familiarity, stated in these terms, can be derived by a pragmatic principle based on the hearer-oriented Maxim of Quantity, “Make your contribution sufficient”, *cf.* Horn (1984); Levinson (2000).

- (30) Oggi mi sono fermato all'edicola, come mi avevi detto. Ma poi
 today CL stop.PF at-the newsstand as CL tell.PF but then
 tornando ho dimenticato il giornale su una panchina al parco.
 come-back.GER forget.PF the newspaper on a bench at-the park
 Today I stopped at the newsstand, as you recommended. But then, on my way
 back, I forgot the newspaper on a bench at the park.

In (30), the referent for the definite expression *il giornale* 'the newspaper' has not been directly introduced in the discourse, but its existence is entailed by the context created by the first sentence, that is, the fact that I stopped at a newsstand. The newspaper here is not a weak definite expression in the sense specified in section 1, but it is weakly familiar since it refers to an individual indirectly introduced in the discourse, that is, the sample of newspaper that I am supposed to have bought at the newsstand.

Let's see now what happens when the presupposition of familiarity is not satisfied by entailment for the DP in the common ground C. The use of the definite DP is predicted to be infelicitous. Indeed, if (31) is uttered out of the blue, the use of the definite expression is not felicitous anymore. The hearer cannot recover a referent for the definite expression from the preceding context, even in an indirect way, since churches are not places where newspapers can be usually found or acquired.

- (31) Oggi mi sono fermato in chiesa. Ma poi
 today CL stop.PF in church but then
 tornando ho dimenticato #il giornale su una panchina al parco.
 come-back.GER forget.PF the newspaper on a bench at-the park
 Today I stopped at the church. But then, on my way back, I forgot #the newspaper
 on a bench at the park.

However, (31) can still be a felicitous use of the definite determiner if both speaker and hearer share the information that the speaker has the habit of going out in order to buy a newspaper every day. How is this conversational, non-conventional implicature justified?

Hearer and speaker also share the conversational principle which is triggered by the presumption of familiarity of the definite determiner, by which the hearer expects that the definite expression is used efficiently and the information given is sufficient in order to identify a referent for it. Thus, after extending the common ground to a conversational context C, the hearer makes a further move and, in cases where there is no referent for the DP in C, it opens up the common ground also to the existence of habitual activities of which he has access, where the existence of a unique, definite DP can be entailed. Roberts (2003) herself suggested that the shared conversational background C that satisfies weak familiarity presuppositions should include knowledge of habitual or recurrent activities. This possibility is mentioned explicitly when

discussing the felicitous use of the definite determiner in the sentence (32) (from Birner and Ward 1994).

- (32) Johnny, go stand in the corner.

In (32), as argued by Roberts, the felicity of the definite expression is obviously not due to the presence of a unique corner in the room, but rather to the existence of a unique corner where kids usually stand when they are bad. In other words, there is just one relevant entity in the context that is the participant to the event described by the predicate and the referent of the DP. Its identity can be recovered by shared knowledge about habitual situations.

We may now take a step further, and suppose that familiarity is not necessarily restricted to the shared knowledge of individual habits or routines. It may be entailed by a more conventionalized knowledge. Let's consider now the sentence in (33). Contrary to the definite DP in (30) and (31), the definite DP *the newspaper* in (33) is easily interpreted as a weak definite DP independently of a specific conversational background.

- (33) Oggi mi sono fermato al parco e ho letto il giornale seduto su una panchina.
 today CL stop.PF at-the park and read.PF the newspaper sit on a bench
 Today I stopped at the park and I read the newspaper sitting on a bench.

Why is it so? An explanation in terms of familiarity presupposition would say that, since the possibility of attributing to the newspaper a referent directly or indirectly introduced in the discourse is not given, the definite DP in (33) is understood as the participant of a conventionally familiar situation. To read the newspaper is indeed a familiar, quite standard situation in the shared knowledge of English and Italian speakers. The fact that it is the familiarity of situations which is relevant can be appreciated also if we put the situation in context. While a park is one of the standard frames for prototypical situations of reading the newspaper, a church is arguably less so. This is probably the reason why the DP in (34) is indeed less acceptable.

- (34) Oggi mi sono fermato in chiesa e ho letto #il giornale seduto su un banco.
 today CL stop.PF in church and read.PF the newspaper sit on a bench
 Today I stopped at the church and I read the newspaper sitting on a bench.

Even if the definition of weak familiarity given by Roberts (2003) is probably weak enough to cover also the cases such as (33), I will treat the pragmatic reasoning triggered by weak definite readings as a strategy which entails the widening of the context C in (29) as a last resort.

When possible referents are not accessible among the set of referents which are, directly or indirectly, entailed by C, the presumption of familiarity forces the hearer to widen the context to accessible familiar situations (C') of which the DPs are meant to be the unique participants.

- (35) If the condition of familiarity in C fails, then widen the common ground to C', which is a proper superset of C comprising also familiar situations, and find a referent x to NP which is:
- a. Weakly familiar in C' (*i.e.* entailed by C')
 - b. Unique among discourse referents in C' to satisfy the descriptive content of the NP.

The definition in (35) preserves the original idea that the definite determiner has both a familiarity and a uniqueness presupposition. It is easy to show that the definition in (35) is sufficiently weak to account for all the occurrences of weak readings discussed up to now, which share the minimal common property of being the participants of situations that are prototypical in being familiar situations in a shared background of habits, dispositions and conventions. While the extension of the background is enough in order to cover prototypicality restrictions of weak definite DPs belonging to both Group 1 and Group 2, the semantic enrichment proper to Group 1 DPs can be treated as part of the lexical meaning of the NPs of this group.

This analysis in terms of familiarity, in other words, turns out to be compatible with the explanation of enriched meanings in terms of functional *qualia* proposed by Corblin (2011). I will not follow Corblin's proposal, however, when functional *qualia* become the triggers of the inference that allows to recover the referent of the DP. In my mind, it is the presupposition of familiarity associated with the definite article that is responsible of this. The advantage of the proposal outlined above is precisely that the extension of the background, which ensures the interpretations of weak DPs in familiar situations, is prompted by the semantics associated with the definite article, which is the other common feature of these nominal expressions.

3.2. Uniqueness and familiarity

As mentioned in the preceding section with respect to example (32), Roberts (2003) also suggested that the notion of familiarity and contextual entailment could cover also shared knowledge about habits and dispositions. I will take her example as a start to make two observations, which have to do with the uniqueness presupposition associated with the definite expression.

The most natural interpretation of (32) shows that the VP has an enriched meaning attached to it, and the account for the interpretation of the definite expression proposed by Roberts (2003) crucially makes use of this enriched meaning. It is also worth noting that the enriched meaning, in the proposed analysis, does not derive from a functional use conventionally associated with corners, but rather from the existence of familiar situations of standing in a corner, where standing in a corner is associated with a punishment. Why is this reading so salient, however? Why cannot (32) just mean, as a default

option, that Johnny has to stand in the corner where he is going to stand, or (36) mean that John stood in the corner where he actually stood (a)?

- (36) Johnny stood in the corner.
a. Johnny stood in the corner [the one in which he stood].

In other words, we may object that, supposing that there is only one relevant corner involved in the event, bridging from situations should in principle be available, and yet this is clearly not the case. Moreover, this should not be the case indeed, since it would predict that definite DPs would be allowed in almost all contexts, and the semantic contribution of the definite determiner would be reduced to presupposing, at best, uniqueness. An answer to this objection, and to its undesirable consequences, is given by the second principle assumed under (28) in section 3, which says that the presupposition of uniqueness cannot be satisfied without contextual entailment. This condition is precisely what ensures that bridging from events and situations is not a freely available mechanism, but that it is restrained to contextually accessible events and situations, where contextually accessible events and situations are those that are entailed by the shared knowledge of speaker and hearer about recurrent, habitual or prototypical situations.¹⁰

A second point that is worth noticing about (32) is that, so far, the account given by Roberts says that in a specific conversational background there is a unique corner which is concerned with kid's punishment in the shared knowledge of speaker and hearer. Under this interpretation, sloppy readings would not be possible: (37) would be true only in a situation where both John and Mary stood in the same corner (a). But this is too strong a requirement; the sentence is indeed a felicitous utterance also in the context (b), where it is true that Mary and John actually stood in two different corners.

- (37) John stood in the corner the whole morning, and Mary as well.
a. Mary and John stood in the corner where kids usually stand when they are bad.
b. Mary was sent to the corner by her teacher for the whole morning, and John was sent to the corner by his mom for the whole morning.

10. An observation in the same spirit has been pointed out by one of the reviewers, who suggests that uniqueness may be a byproduct of the specificity of the situation and therefore it arises as a *de re* reading once a relevant situation has been provided. It seems to me that this observation is in line with the present proposal, and is indeed accounted for by (28ii), who states that the presupposition of uniqueness is satisfied only if familiarity is also satisfied. In (32), once we have widened the conversational context in order to have access to familiar situations of a kid standing in the corner, we are allowed to infer the existence of a unique corner as a participant to a specific situation, even if the context of the situation itself provides more than one potential referent to this expression and even if the corner itself is not a familiar one (*cf.* also the discussion in the following paragraph).

More generally, as we have seen throughout the preceding sections, sloppy readings are possible with all weak definite DPs. At this point, then, the problem would be to combine the uniqueness presupposition with the possibility of sloppy readings in elliptical sentences. The question can be addressed also in the following way: are sloppy readings in elliptical sentences a strong piece of evidence for the absence of the uniqueness presupposition? In the following section, I will discuss the hypothesis that sloppy readings are in fact possibly due to the existence of a plurality of situations each involving unique participants, and that, once familiarity is satisfied, bridging from events may still be part of the interpretational mechanism.

4. Uniqueness and sloppy readings

The hypothesis of deriving the existence of unique participants from the events to which they took part is assumed in the analysis of Corblin (2011), who proposes to link the uniqueness of the referent to the temporal and event coordinates of the VP. The essence of this proposal is known to the literature at least since the work of Löbner (1985), but it has been explicitly criticized by Aguilar-Guevara and Zwarts (2011) and Schwarz (2012). Aguilar-Guevara and Zwarts (2011) base most of their arguments on the data of sloppy readings¹¹, while Schwarz (2012) argue mainly against assimilating the uniqueness effect of weak DPs to the ‘co-varying’ reading of definite expressions. In the following, I will try to make a contribution to the debate by considering anaphora resolution.

4.1. The incorporation hypothesis

As remembered in section 1, the core idea of the proposal defended by Aguilar-Guevara and Zwarts (2011) is that the definite determiner denotes in a domain which is sorted into objects and kinds (Dayal 2004). When referring to object-level entities, it presupposes the uniqueness of its referent in a context

11. The authors report also an additional argument, borrowed from Carlson and Sussman (2005), which has to do with the possibility of multiple referents for singular definite DPs in sentences like (i) below.

(i) John took the train from Paris to Wien.

Given that there is no train going directly from Paris to Wien, strictly speaking John had to take at least two trains during his trip; however, the sentence in (i) still felicitously describes this situation. As already argued by Roberts (2003) for similar examples, however, it is indeed possible that, in this case, the train does not refer to the actual vehicle or kind of vehicle, but rather to the path covered by the trip by train. Uniqueness then would concern the path, and not the train. A hint in this direction can be the infelicity of using weak DPs in cases where

unique paths are not presupposed, as in (ii).

(ii) John took ??the taxi/a taxi to reach the hotel.

of evaluation. On the other hand, since kinds are unique entities in the world, when the definite determiner refers to a kind its uniqueness presupposition is satisfied in all possible contexts.

In order to obtain a compositional meaning and to account for the distributional and interpretive properties of weak definites, Aguilar-Guevara and Zwarts (2011) implement the analysis with some additional assumptions. First, in order to account for the fact that in coordinated elliptical sentences there are no individual instantiations of the kind to which the definite determiner can refer, they have to assume that kinds are not instantiated existentially in episodic sentences, but that they are rather introduced directly as arguments of the realization relation R (McNally and Espinal 2011), *cf.* (38).

- (38) Lola is reading the newspaper.
 $\exists e[\text{read}(e) \wedge \text{AG}(e) = \text{Lola} \wedge R(\text{Th}(e), \text{newspaper}_k)]$

The rule in (38) has the effect of introducing events which do not have existentially quantified participants which may function as discourse referents. The hypothesis of semantic incorporation also implies that verbs that take object-level and kind-level entities as arguments, like *to read* in (38), have ambiguous denotations. A lexical rule has then to apply and lift the object-level verb to a kind-level meaning, *cf.* (39), from Aguilar-Guevara and Zwarts (2011).

- (39) Kind Lifting Rule: If V is a transitive verb with interpretation $\lambda x_i \lambda e[V(e) \wedge \text{Th}(e) = x_i]$, then V has also the meaning $\lambda x_k \lambda e[V(e) \wedge R(\text{Th}(e), x_k) \wedge U(e, x_k)]$

In order to account for the constrained distribution of VP with weak definite DPs as arguments, it is also necessary to restrict the Kind Lifting Rule to DPs that, besides denoting a kind, are also standardly associated to a set of stereotypical usage events. Stereotypical usages are related to kinds through the two-place predicate U . The felicity of the weak reading is then subject to the condition that the set of events denoted by the verb has a non-empty intersection with the set of usage events of the kind. An example of semantic composition of kind-denoting DPs and kind-level verbs is given in (40). Assuming that the kind *Newspaper* is conventionally associated with a set of usage events of reading the news, $U(e, N)$ associates the kind to a set of events where newspaper instantiation are used in ways that are stereotypical for it (40a). The semantic composition of the kind-level DP with the kind-level verb *to read* (40b) meets the felicity requirements (40c), and yields a VP whose meaning implies the stereotypical information associated with the object.

- (40) Read the newspaper
 (a) $\text{newspaper}_k = N \wedge U(e, N)$, where $\lambda e.U(e, N) \supset \lambda e.\text{READ-THE-NEWS}(e)$
 (b) $\text{read}_k = \lambda x_k \lambda e[\text{READ}(e) \wedge R(\text{Th}(e), x_k) \wedge U(e, x_k)]$
 (c) $\lambda e.U(e, N) \cap \lambda e.\text{READ}(e) \neq \emptyset$

I can see two main problems with this proposal. On the one hand, as I have argued extensively in the previous sections, the restriction to stereotypical events is too strong to cover all empirical data. Relying on stereotypical usage events becomes a problem if semantic enrichment is not guaranteed. If we look again at the Italian examples in (19) and (20), there is no way to predict that the weak reading in (20) is ruled out, since presumably coffee and herbal tea are both related to the set of stereotypical usage events of drinking. However, only the former conveys a weak reading when associated to the verb *to drink*. Assuming that the felicity of the definite determiner relies on familiarity as a conversational principle, as suggested in this paper, allows to avoid encoding felicity requirements in the lexical entries of incorporating verbs and incorporated objects, a move whose predictions, as we have seen, may be too strong.

Secondly, as observed also by Beyssade (2012), a principled explanation is needed also to explain why kind readings are only a default, and reference to an individual is always preferred as soon as an antecedent is available in the context. This problem can be appreciated by considering the resolution of anaphora. The contrast between (41) and (42) may illustrate this point. The first sentence in (41) is a statement expressing a characterizing property of saxophones, and we may suppose that the DP in the first sentence refers to the name of the kind sax (Krifka *et al.* 1995). The anaphoric pronoun in the second sentence, then, is predicted to be infelicitous, since it cannot refer back to an instantiation of the kind or to a particular object.

- (41) The sax was invented by Adolphe Sax. #However, it is out of tune.

The first sentence in (42), on the contrary, is an episodic sentence where the DP may receive a weak interpretation. If the DP is interpreted as referring to an object-level entity, in its ‘strong’ interpretation, an anaphoric relation can easily be established between the DP and the pronoun in the second sentence. However, under the weak reading of the DP, an anaphoric relation should be ruled out, since the relation *R*, as defined in (39), prevents instances of the kind to be instantiated existentially and thus to be directly accessible as discourse referents. The low acceptability of (42), reported by Aguilar-Guevara and Zwarts (2011), shows that, when the sentence is uttered out-of-the-blue, the weak interpretation of the DP in (42) is indeed the default one.

- (42) Alice did a solo on the saxophone. ?She did not realize that it was out of tune.

However, if possible antecedents are provided, also indirectly, in the context, the strong reading of the DP is clearly preferred, and the anaphoric interpretation of the pronoun is straightforward.

- (43) Every kid picked an instrument to play at the recital. Alice did a solo on the saxophone_i. She did not realize that it_i was out of tune.

A further example is (44), where the definite DP in the VP *read the newspaper* receives a strong interpretation.

- (44) Alice stopped at the newsstand. Then, she read the newspaper_i on her way back home. It_i brought bad news.

The interpretation of *the newspaper* in (44) is similar to the one of the weak DP discussed in the example (30) in section 3. In this case, I argued that the strong reading of the DP is accounted for by appealing to the presupposition of familiarity conveyed by the definite determiner. It appears then that an account in terms of familiarity presupposition can indeed answer also this question. If the widening of the conversational context to extra-linguistic information is a move that is prompted by the non-availability of directly accessible discourse referents, this predicts that the referential interpretation of the DP is preferred when an antecedent is accessible in the linguistic or conversational context, and habitual or conventional situations are evoked only when the existence of a unique referent is more difficult to accommodate.

4.2 More on anaphora resolution

Another problematic issue is that the impossibility for weak DPs to be antecedents of anaphoric relations in episodic sentences is not uncontroversial. For one thing, acceptability judgments are not always clear-cut. The Italian sentence (45) is, for most speakers, a perfectly acceptable utterance, whereas the contrast between (45) and (46), where the antecedent is found in a generic statement, is quite sharp.

- (45) Maria ha bevuto il caffè_i al bar, ma non lo_i ha pagato.
 Maria drink.PF the coffee at-the bar but NEG CL pay.PF
 Maria drank the coffee at the bar, but she didn't pay it.

- (46) Maria beve il caffè_i, ma oggi non #lo_i ha pagato.
 Maria drink.PRES the coffee but today NEG CL pay.PF
 Maria drinks coffee, but today she didn't pay #it.

The problem of anaphoric binding has been brought up also in the analysis recently defended by Corblin (2011), which he develops focusing on French definite DPs in prepositional phrases, cf. (47)–(48).

- (47) Pierre est allé à l'école aujourd'hui.
 Pierre go.PF to the school today
 Pierre went to school today.

- (48) Marie est à l'hôpital.
 Marie is.PRES at the hospital
 Marie is at the hospital.

If we apply the tests outlined in section 1, we can see that the definite DPs in (47)-(48) display the defining properties assumed for weak DPs. They allow for multiple referents in elliptical sentences (49), and are available only for a restricted class of NPs (50a vs 50b). Moreover, they also display enriched meanings: (47) naturally entails that Pierre went to school in order to attend class, and (50a) means that Marie went to the store in order to do some shopping.

- (49) Pierre est allé à l'école aujourd'hui, et Marie aussi.
 Pierre go.PF to the school today and Mary also
 Pierre went to school today, and Mary as well.

- (50) a. Marie est allée au supermarché.
 Marie go.PF to-the supermarket
 Marie went to the store.
 b. Marie est allée à #la librairie.
 Marie go.PF to the bookshop
 Marie went to the bookshop.

Corblin (2011) argues explicitly against an intensional analysis for the DPs in the previous examples, and defines these weak definites as 'para-intensional' definites. He supports his claim with two main arguments, which are construed upon the evidence provided by anaphora resolution. First, he argues that, as it is the case for the Italian weak definites discussed in (45), the definite DP *l'hôpital* in (48) can be easily be the antecedent of an anaphoric pronoun, cf. (51).

- (51) Marie est à l'hôpital. Comme il n'est pas loin, je vais la voir souvent.
 Marie is.PRES at the hospital since it is not far I go CL see often
 Marie is at the hospital. Since it is not too far, I go to see her often.

Even if one may argue that the acceptability of (51) is not perfect, the accessibility of the antecedent in an episodic sentence is definitely easier, according to the author, than that of a DP which is embedded in a generic or characterizing sentence. The sentence (52a) is interpreted as a characterizing sentence (Corblin 2011:64). Referring back to the referent of the DP in (52a) with an overt demonstrative is ways less acceptable than in (52b).

- (52) a. Pierre pêchait le saumon. #Ce saumon était gros.
 Pierre fish.IMP the salmon. This salmon was big
 Pierre used to fish salmon. #This salmon was big.
 b. Pierre était à l'hôpital. Cet hôpital était grand.
 Pierre is.IMP at the hospital. This hospital was big
 Pierre was at the hospital. This hospital was big.

Once it is referred back by the pronoun or the definite expression in the second sentence, the definite DP loses all the potential of its weak inter-

pretation, and is re-interpreted as a specific and unique hospital, unique as the participant of the event of Pierre being hospitalized.

Another clue for the existence of object-level entities is the possibility of questioning explicitly the identity of the referent of the DP. As reported by the author, asking which the hospital where Pierre is hospitalized is turns out to be a felicitous follow-up to (52b). In this respect, the episodic sentence contrasts again with a generic statement, *cf.* also the Italian examples in (53).

- (53) a. Maria suona il piano. #Davvero? Che piano?
 Maria play.PRES the piano Really Which piano
 Maria plays the piano. Really? Which one?
 b. Maria ha suonato il piano alla festa. Davvero? Che piano?
 Maria play.PF the piano at the party Really Which piano
 Maria played the piano at the party. Really? Which one?

The question (53b) can be felicitously uttered if somebody is wondering which piano was available in the relevant situation. On the other hand, as expected if the referent for the DP is a kind-level entity, the answer to the question in (53a) could bear only on sub-types of pianos (grand piano or upright piano, for instance). Examples of this kind suggest indeed that episodic sentences do involve existential instantiation, be it either at the VP level, as suggested recently by Schwarz (2012), or at the level of the singular instances of individuals in the denotation of the DP.

VP level instantiation is the solution outlined in Schwarz (2012), which involves incorporation of the referent of the DP into the verb phrase, but crucially makes its existence guaranteed through the instantiation of the situations of which it is a participant. This analysis predicts that the referents of weak definite DPs are not directly accessible for anaphoric pronouns, but they are still unique as participants to the events that are parts of the situation denoted by the VP and instantiated by the sentence. I will not go into the details of Schwarz (2012) analysis here, but let me point out an empirical fact that may support this idea. The fact that the referent of the DP in (52b) or (53b) can be made accessible through reference to a situation may be supported by the fact that, in French, another possibility is to co-index the antecedent not only with the masculine pronoun *il*, which agrees in gender with the NP *hôpital* in (51), but also with the non-agreeing neutral pronoun *ce*, which may in fact refer to a situation, *cf.* (54).¹²

- (54) Marie est à l'hôpital_i. Comme ce_i n'est pas loin, je vais la voir souvent.
 Marie is.PRES at the hospital since it.NEUT is not far I go CL see often
 Marie is at the hospital. Since it is not too far, I go to see her often.

12. Thanks to Pascal Amsili for this empirical observation.

Supposing that the definite DP refers to a unique participant to the situation denoted by the VP, or to each of the minimal events that are part of it, allows to keep the uniqueness presupposition part of the semantics of the definite article also in ‘weakened’ interpretation, in line with the definition in (35).

5. Conclusions and further issues

In this paper, I defended a unified analysis of weak and strong definite expressions, based on the claim that the definite article bears in both cases a presupposition of familiarity and of uniqueness.

The claim that uniqueness is relevant for weak DPs has been defended by several authors, who derived the sloppiness of referential properties assuming that the DP turns out to be, at some stage of the derivation, (pseudo-)incorporated into the VP. In section 4, I have shown that, if anything, the anaphora facts which have been evoked as an argument in support of this claim are quite fuzzy. Of course, rejecting a parallel analysis between definite DPs and incorporated bare nouns leaves the prototypicality of BNs to be explained, since in the case of bare nouns the familiarity presupposition clearly cannot be derived in the same way. It would be interesting then to see if there is some support to the hypothesis, which falls out as a consequence of the proposed analysis, that there are two distinct phenomena involved. It is worth to note, in this respect, that incorporated and pseudo-incorporated bare nouns behave differently also because they do not necessarily refer to entities that have a salient functional *qualia* in their lexical meaning (see the example of child-looking reported by Dayal 2011), and because their distribution seems in some cases, as in Romance languages, to be dependent on the type of verb they combine with, rather than on the lexical category of the NP (Dobrovie-Sorin *et al.* 2006; McNally and Espinal 2011).

Regardless of which solution one may choose with respect to this specific issue, however, I believe familiarity to be a required notion, which helps also to understand the choice of the interpretation of weak and strong DPs in context. My contribution in this paper is then to suggest that the unified analysis of the definite determiner in its strong and weak reading, which has been the concern of much of the existing work on the topic, may be pushed further, by considering all the semantic content associated to this functional item in its stronger interpretation.

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RÉSUMÉ

Les GN définis « faibles » ont été décrits comme étant déficients par rapport à la présupposition d'unicité du déterminant défini, et comme subissant des restrictions lexicales quant au type lexical du GN argument du verbe et à la « prototypicalité » de l'activité dénotée par le GV. Dans ce travail, nous nous concentrons sur cette dernière caractéristique et nous avançons l'hypothèse que le déterminant défini déclenche toujours une présupposition d'unicité et de familiarité dans un contexte conversationnel élargi, ce qui nous permet d'expliquer les contraintes de prototypicalité en faisant appel à la notion de familiarité faible (Roberts 2003).

MOTS-CLÉS

Définis faibles, prototypicalité, présupposition d'unicité, familiarité faible.