

The interpretations of coordinated bare nouns in French

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In this paper, we will show that the widespread assumption according to which French is a language with no bare nouns is too strong: French does have bare nouns in the form of coordinated bare nouns (CBNs), which must be subdivided into coordinated bare singulars (CBSs) and coordinated bare plurals (CBPs). We will argue that the absence of an overt determiner is licensed, in both cases, by the presence of the conjunction *et*: the conjunction is able to spell-out a [+Plural] feature, which is crucial for the licensing of bare nouns in the languages discussed (cf. Delfitto & Schrotten (1991)). By looking in detail at their interpretational properties, we will show that French CBPs have all the properties associated with non-coordinated BPs as they exist in languages like English and Italian, a fact for which we will try to propose an account.

1 Background

As it follows from the representative overview of Longobardi (2001), French is not a language that is traditionally associated with the discussion of bare nouns, that is nouns used in argument position without a determiner. Longobardi observes that within the languages that have both a definite and an indefinite determiner, three groups must be distinguished. This is illustrated by the hierarchy in (1), which goes from languages that are particularly restrictive (French) to languages that allow bare nouns more freely (English).

- (1) The hierarchy of Longobardi (2001):
 - Languages with *freer* bare nouns (English and perhaps most of Germanic)
 - Languages with *stricter* bare nouns (apparently the rest of Romance: Spanish, Italian...)
 - Languages with no bare nouns (French)

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The notions ‘freer’ and ‘stricter’ refer both to the distribution and the interpretation of bare nouns.¹ Bare nouns in English are free with respect to their distribution, because they can be used both in subject and in object position, while they are free with respect to their interpretation, because they allow both for existential and for generic readings².

- (2) a. John was eating *biscuits*.
b. *Politicians* have occupied the building.
c. John hates *cats*.
d. *Cats* are mammals.

Italian bare nouns are stricter, because they are possible in a subset of the cases in which freer bare nouns of languages like English are allowed. Stricter bare nouns can only be used in object position³, and they only allow for an existential reading.⁴

- (3) a. Gianni mangiava *biscotti*.
b. *Politici* hanno occupato il palazzo.
c. *Gianni odia *gatti*.
d. **Gatti* sono mammiferi.

In French, bare nouns are totally excluded (even when they are modified).

- (4) a. *Jean a mangé *gâteaux*.
b. **Politiciens (corrupus)* ont occupé le bâtiment.
c. *Jean aime *chats*.
d. **Chats* sont des mammifères.

Delfitto & Schrotten (1991) have suggested that the main reason of the sharp contrast between French and the other languages concerns the difference in place where the plural number affix is realized: in English and Romance languages like Italian, the plural affix is systematically realized on the noun, while in French the plural affix is not systematically realized on the noun itself, but only on an external element (often the determiner).

(5) Delfitto & Schrotten (1991):

¹ In languages like English and Italian, bare nouns can correspond to plural nouns or singular mass nouns. Singular count nouns cannot be used bare in either of these languages. In this paper, we will not discuss singular mass nouns, but we will concentrate mainly on plural nouns.

² As we will see in section 3 and 4, generic readings must be further subdivided into so-called ‘definite’ and ‘indefinite’ generic readings (cf. Longobardi (2002)). The reading referred to here corresponds to the definite generic reading, the only reading of the two whose availability depends on inherent properties of the bare noun and not on the presence of other elements in the linguistic context, as is the case with indefinite generic readings (see *infra*).

³ Italian bare nouns can be used in subject position when they are modified/focalized: *Politiciens (corrupus) ont occupé le bâtiment*.

⁴ Italian excludes definite generic readings (see note 1).

- “[In French] (...) there is no phonological evidence for the presence of the number affix on the noun (the orthographic *-s* is no longer phonologically realised (...), cf. *étudiants*, *garçons* (...)).”
- “BPs do not exist in this language, and bare nouns cannot be interpreted since there is no number affix which can be raised to the D-position at LF.”

Although it is not entirely true that French doesn't have bare nouns at all – they are possible in expressions like *chercher querelle* / *avoir faim* / etc. – these cases are considered as exceptions or idiomatic expressions. However, there exists at least one case that cannot be considered as an exception, because it is fairly productive in French: namely coordinated bare nouns (CBNs) of the form *N et N*.

CBNs do not belong to colloquial spoken French (although they are not totally excluded from it), but they are perfectly acceptable in more formal and written registers. CBNs show up in two different types: as coordinated bare plurals (CBPs), illustrated by (6), and as coordinated bare singulars, illustrated by (7).

- (6) Dans cette classe, *garçons et filles* sont intelligents.
 ‘In that class, boys and girls are intelligent.’
- (7) J’ai rencontré *ami et collègue* à l’aéroport.
 ‘I met friend and colleague at the airport.’

This means that, at least from a formal point of view, it is not true that French doesn't allow for BNs, because (6) and (7) show that they exist in coordinated form. The question is to what extent the properties of CBNs, and more in particular those of CBPs, are comparable to those of non-coordinated bare nouns of languages allowing for stricter or freer BPs. Interestingly, this relation has been studied recently by Heycock & Zamparelli (2002), who propose an analysis of CBNs in English and Italian. In the next section, we will turn to their main observations and we will look at the predictions that are made for CBNs in French.

2 English / Italian CBNs

Just as is the case for French, English and Italian CBNs have to be subdivided into CBPs and CBSs. Let us start by looking at the former. Heycock & Zamparelli (2002) (H&Z) observe that CBPs allow for two types of interpretations: a **definite** interpretation and an **existential** interpretation. These two interpretations are illustrated by (8) and (9) respectively.

- (8) We had to set the table for the queen. We arranged one crystal goblet_i, one silver spoon_i, two antique gold forks_j and two platinum knives_k. *Forks_j and knives_k* were set on the right of the plate. [H&Z (2002)]

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- (9) a. Market day in town. *Customers and onlookers* walked about the stands.
b. Giornata di mercato in città. *Clienti e curiosi* gironzolavano per i banchi. [H&Z (2002)]

The CBP *forks and knives* in (8) is definite, in the sense that is anaphoric and refers back to the forks and knives introduced in the previous sentence. The CBP *customers and onlookers* in (9) is existential in the sense that its referents do not have been introduced earlier in the context.

As for the availability of the definite reading, CBPs differ from non-coordinated BPs, which do not allow it. This is illustrated in (10) as for English, but it is also true for Italian.

- (10) [...] **Forks*, were set on the right of the plate. [H&Z (2002)]

The existential reading in (9), however, is available for non-coordinated BPs as well, as was already shown by (2ab) and (3ab).

Descriptively speaking, the preceding observations can be summarized as follows.

- The definite reading is special, in the sense that it is “proper” to CBPs (for a reason that has of course to be explained).
- The existential reading of CBPs is shared with non-coordinated BPs (it is “borrowed” in some sense).

The notion ‘borrowed’ should be understood in the following way: if a language has existential bare nouns as in (11a), (11b), in which these bare nouns are just coordinated, is automatically available as well.

- (11) a. There were *forks* on the table.
b. There were *forks and knives* on the table. [H&Z]

The idea that only the definite reading is proper to the CBN, seems to be confirmed by the behaviour of CBSs in Italian and English. In these languages, bare singulars only exist in coordinated form, which means that the existential reading is not independently available in the way it is with CBPs. As expected within this reasoning, CBSs only allow for the definite reading.

- (12) a. He gave me a key, a letter for the landlord, and some instructions. I have to give *key and letter* to the tenant, and read the instructions myself. [H&Z (2002)]
b. Market day in town. #*Customer and onlooker* walked about the stands.

2.1 French CBNs

We are now in a position to look at the behaviour of CBNs in French. Let us first look at French CBSs. Just as in Italian and English, French doesn't allow for bare singulars in non-coordinated form. This predicts that French CBSs should only allow for the definite reading, "proper" to the coordination.

As shown by example (13a), CBSs allow indeed for the definite/anaphoric reading, while (13b) shows that the existential reading is excluded.⁵

- (13) a. Un chien noir et un chat gras se battaient dans notre jardin. *Chien et chat* avaient l'air sale. [H&Z (2000)]
'A black dog and a fat cat were fighting in the garden. Cat and dog looked filthy.'
b. Jour de marché en ville. #*Client et curieux* se promenaient autour des étalages.
'Market day in town. Customer and onlooker walked about the stands'

Whether CBSs really behave like definites can be made even more clear when it is taken into account that singular definites in a language like French allow for two other readings, next to the anaphoric one: namely, singular definites allow for generic and Kind-readings, as illustrated respectively by (14a) and (14b).

- (14) a. *Le dauphin* est un mammifère.
'The dolphin is a mammal.'
b. *La baleine* sera bientôt en voie d'extinction.
'The whale will soon be extinct.'

If French CBSs really behave like definites, it is expected that these generic and Kind-readings show up with them as well. Examples (15a) and (15b) show that French CBSs do indeed allow for exactly the same readings.

- (15) a. [...] *Baleine et dauphin* sont des mammifères.⁶
'Whale and dolphin are mammals.'
b. [...] *Baleine et dauphin* seront bientôt en voie d'extinction.
'Whale and dolphin will soon be extinct.'

The parallelism between (14) and (15) shows that it is plausible to consider French CBSs as definites, which means that, as far as CBSs are concerned, H&Z's observation seems correct from a descriptive point of view.

Let us turn now to the behaviour of French CBPs. Within the light of the idea sketched in section 2 –i.e. that the definite reading is "proper" to the CBN, while the existential reading is shared with non-coordinated BPs– a strong prediction can be made given that French, contrary to Italian and English,

⁵ (13b) is only appropriate with a definite reading in a context in which earlier mention has been made of a particular client and a particular curious person.

⁶ An appropriate context facilitates the availability of these interpretations for CBSs: lack of space prevent us from giving it here.

doesn't have non-coordinated BPs, it is predicted that French CBPs only allow for the definite reading, and **exclude an existential reading**.

The question is whether this prediction is true. According to H&Z it is. The examples in (16) and (17) show that French CBPs allow for a definite/anaphoric reading. (16) is definite in the same way as (8) above (the referents of the CBP have been mentioned earlier in the context). (17) is slightly more complicated: although the *marins et passagers* haven't been mentioned earlier, their presence follows from the earlier introduction of a ship. Cases like these are generally referred to as 'bridging'.⁷

(16)[...] *Chiens et chats* avaient tous l'air très sale. [H&Z]

(17)Un navire transportant des réfugiés vient d'arriver à Puglia. *Marins et passagers* étaient Albanais, le capitaine était Italien. [d'après H&Z (2002)]

'A refugees' ship just arrived in Puglia. Sailors and passengers were Albanian, the captain was Italian.'

According to H&Z, an existential CBP like (18) would be excluded.

(18)Jour de marché en ville. ??*Clients et curieux* se promenaient autour des étalages. [judgment of H&Z (2002)]

'Market day in town. Customers and onlookers walked about the stands'

However, according to native speakers, the judgement of (18) is wrong: the example is perfectly acceptable. This doesn't represent some confusion about one particular example. Although one could think that (18) is grammatical for a reason similar to that which renders (17) acceptable, namely that the presence of 'marché' makes it possible to interpret the CBP by bridging. The examples (19)-(20) show that this is not necessary and that French CBPs do allow for existential readings as well.

So, in (19) the context is such that nothing announces the presence of books and journals: this means that the CBP is used totally out of the blue.

(19)L'inspecteur Williams se rendit dans cette chambre de bonne sans avoir aucune idée de ce qu'il allait y découvrir. Il eut un peu de peine à trouver l'interrupteur. Il n'y avait pratiquement aucun meuble dans la pièce, mise à part une table. *Livres et revues* jonchaient le plancher. [d'après Fabienne Martin (p.c.)]

'Inspector Williams went into the room without having a clue of what he would find there. He had some trouble finding the switch of the light. There was almost no piece of furniture in the room, except for a table. Books and journals were all over the floor.'

The same is true for the CBP in (20), which has not been mentioned earlier.

⁷ We will come back to the availability of other definite readings in section 4.

- (20) Les voyageurs ne pouvaient pas bouger dans le métro ce matin.
Chômeurs et cégétistes avaient envahi les rames pour se rendre à une manifestation.
‘The passengers couldn’t move their body in the subway this morning.
Unemployed and trade-union members had entered the carriages in order to go to a manifestation.’

As we have argued in Roodenburg (2003), the availability of existential readings for French CBPs does not correspond to what is expected within the reasoning sketched above, and that underlies H&Z. Before we will try to explain this situation, we will first take a closer look on the non-definite properties of French CBPs and the relation they have with those of non-coordinated bare nouns. This is what we will do in the next two sections.

3 Properties of French CBPs

As shown in the preceding section, French CBPs behave like non-coordinated BPs in languages like Italian and languages like English as for the availability of the existential reading. This raises the question whether there are more parallels. We will answer this question in two steps: in subsection 3.1, we will take a closer look at *stricter* bare nouns, which allow for other readings next to the existential one, and check whether French CBPs have them as well. In subsection 3.2, we will look at some semantic properties characterizing BPs as opposed to indefinites, and confront them to French CBPs.

3.1 French CBPs vs. Romance BPs

In Longobardi (2002), a more fine-grained description of the differences separating languages has been made, allowing for stricter bare nouns like Italian and languages allowing for freer bare nouns like English. Most important point is the sharp distinction between *indefinite* generic readings and *definite* generic readings (cf. note 2 and 4 above); while both are available for English BPs, Italian BPs only allows for indefinite generic readings. In this subsection, we will look more closely on indefinite generic readings and their availability for French CBPs.

Romance BPs in languages like Italian can typically be interpreted, next to the existential reading, with an indefinite generic reading. As shown by Longobardi (2002), the indefinite generic reading is available under the following conditions.

- (21) *Indefinite generic reading*: Available with S-level predicates, provided the tense of the verb is habitual and/or a generalizing adverb is present.

According to this characterization, example (22) below doesn’t allow for a generic reading because, although involving a S-level predicate, nor has it

habitual tense, nor a generic adverb is present.⁸ On the contrary, (23a) and (23b) do have an indefinite generic reading, because they respectively have habitual tense and a generalizing adverb. (23c) shows why this generic reading is called indefinite: it is also obtained with indefinite NPs (whether they are plurals introduced by cardinal determiners or the so-called partitive article).

- (22) *Elefanti di colore bianco* hanno creato grande curiosità. ***Gen**
[Longobardi (2002)]
'White-colored elephants may have raised a lot of curiosity'
- (23) a. *Elefanti di colore bianco* possono creare grande curiosità. **Gen**
[Longobardi (2002)]
'White-colored elephants may raise a lot of curiosity'
- b. *Elefanti di colore bianco* hanno creato creare sempre/spessi grande
curiosità in passato. **Gen** [Longobardi (2002)]
'White-colored elephants may always/often raises a lot of curiosity in
the past.'
- c. *Degli/Due elefanti di colore bianco* possono creare grande curiosità.
Gen [Longobardi (2002)]
'[Degli]/Two white-colored elephants may raise a lot of curiosity'

If we compare the behaviour of Italian BPs to example (24), involving a French CBP as an argument of an S-level predicate with habitual tense accompanied with a generalizing adverb, we observe that the same indefinite generic reading is obtained.

- (24) Je ne peux pas croire que cet homme soit ministre et que son voisin soit
haut-fonctionnaire. *Ministres et haut-fonctionnaires* ne voyagent pas en
seconde classe. **Gen** [d'après Laca & Tasmowski (1996)]
'I can't believe that that man is minister and that his neighbour is
high-civil servant. Ministers and highly placed civil servants don't
travel second class'

According to Longobardi, the indefinite generic reading is also available to Italian BPs with a particular subset of I-level predicates: those which are 'eventive' in a certain sense.

- (25) a. *Cani da guardia di grosse dimensioni* sono più efficienti/aggressive.
Gen
'Watchdogs of large size are more efficient / aggressive.'
- b. *Degli/Due cani da guardia di grosse dimensioni* sono più
efficienti/aggressivi. **Gen** [Longobardi (2002)]
'[Degli]/Two watchdogs of large size are more efficient / aggressive.'

⁸ All the Italian BPs used in this and the following examples are modified by an adjunct, in order to circumvent the constraint, mentioned in section 1, that Italian BPs can only be used in subject position when modified/focalized.

The indefinite generic reading is available to French CBPs in this case as well.

- (26) [...] *Requins et piranhas* sont plus agressifs / efficaces. **Gen**
'Sharks and piranhas are more aggressive / efficient.'

The preceding observations clearly show that the behaviour of French CBPs is compatible with that of the behaviour of BPs as they exist in Romance languages like Italian, not only as for the availability of the existential reading (see section 2.1), but also as for the availability of the indefinite generic one.

However, this parallelism between French CBPs and Romance BPs only shows compatibility of properties; it doesn't allow us to conclude that French CBPs should be treated as BPs in these cases, because both the indefinite generic reading and the existential reading are available to indefinites as well. Nothing determines at this point whether French CBPs should be treated as indefinites or as BPs. We will turn to this question in the next subsection.

3.2 French CBPs vs. BP-properties

In the recent literature on BPs, for example in Dobrovie-Sorin & Laca (2002), the behaviour of BPs is sharply distinguished from that of indefinites. The most important differences concern their behaviour with respect to scopal and aspectual properties.

For example, it can be shown that Romance BPs take narrowest scope with respect to other scope inducing elements in the sentence, while indefinites are ambiguous and typically are able to be interpreted with a wider scope. The examples (27) and (28), taken from Dobrovie-Sorin & Laca, show this contrast with respect to negation.

- (27) #Ho trovato *libri* e non ho trovato *libri*.
'I bought books and I didn't buy books.'
(28) Ho trovato *un libro* e non ho trovato *un libro*.
'I bought a book and I didn't buy a book.'

Example (27) is interpreted as contradictory, because the BP cannot escape the negation. Example (28), containing an indefinite NP, is not contradictory, because the indefinite is able to take wide scope and so escapes the negation.

A comparable contrast between BPs and indefinites is observed between the examples in (29) and (30), also taken from Dobrovie-Sorin & Laca. These examples involve a predicate that expresses an achievement/accomplishment when its object is an indefinite (29), while it expresses an activity when its object is a BP (30). For this reason, (29) is compatible with culminating adverbs like *in three hours*, expressing a delimited time, while (30) is compatible with non-culminating adverbs like *during hours*.

- (29) Ha stirato *molte camicie* in due ore/*per due ore in seguita.
'I ironed a lot of blouses in two hours/*during two hours.'
(30) Ha stirato *camicie* *in due ore/per due ore in seguita.

'I ironed blouses *in two hours/during two hours.'

If we turn now to French CBPs, we observe the following. French CBPs in examples like (31) show contradictory readings; this means that they tend to prefer narrowest scope.

(31) #J'ai trouvé *livres et articles* et je n'ai pas trouvé *livres et articles*.
'I found books and articles and I didn't find books and articles.'

With a CBP in object position, predicates like those in (32) express an activity, which is shown by their compatibility with adverbs like *during hours*.

(32) Comme chaque année, le 15 février, Jean a planté pendant des heures *bégonias et jacinthes* au fond de son jardin.
'Just like every year, on February 15, John has planted, begonias and hyacinths in his backyard for hours.'

The preceding observations show that French CBPs behave like BPs, rather than as indefinites.

However, an important remark must be made: it is not true that French CBPs behave exactly the same as BPs. Although the French CBP in (33) is most naturally interpreted with a narrow scope reading –meaning 'no matter which grammars and dictionaries'– a wide scope reading, in which is referred to a particular set of grammars and dictionaries, is not excluded.

(33) [...] Tous les linguistes consultent régulièrement *grammaires pédagogiques et dictionnaires*.
'All linguists regularly consult traditional grammars and dictionaries.'

Moreover, French CBPs are also compatible with adverbs like *in three hours*, which means that they can delimit the action expressed by predicates as those in (34).

(34) [...] Jean a planté *bégonias et jacinthes* en trois heures.
'John has planted begonias and hyacinths in three hours.'

However, we think that the facts in (33) and (34) do not imply that French CBPs do not behave like BPs; these facts can be explained in another way. As we already noticed in section 2, CBPs are ambiguous: next to the existential and indefinite generic readings, CBPs allow for definite/anaphoric ones. This opposes them to non-coordinated BPs, which do not allow for these definite readings.

It is this difference that can explain the behaviour of CBPs in (33) and (34); indeed, the CBPs in these examples can only be interpreted as definite/anaphoric. The wide scope reading in (33) is only available when an earlier mention has been made of *romans et articles*. In (34), the predicate is terminative when the *bégonias et jacinthes* refer back to earlier introduced begonias and hyacinths.

To conclude this section, we can say that the behaviour of French CBPs is compatible with that of ordinary BPs, not only because they allow for both existential and indefinite generic readings (subsection 3.1), but also as for the properties described in the present subsection.

However, this still cannot be our final conclusion; BPs in languages like Italian are called stricter and allow for a subset of the properties available to freer BPs that exist in languages like English. This means that the behaviour of French CBPs with respect to the properties described until now, is compatible with those of English BPs as well. As a consequence, we have to test whether French CBPs behave like Italian BPs or whether they behave rather like English BPs. We will turn to this question in the next section.

4 More on French CBPs: French CBPs vs. English BPs

As is made clear in Longobardi (2002), freer BPs typically allow for so-called definite generic readings, next to the existential and indefinite generic readings we saw in the preceding sections. The conditions under which the definite generic reading is available (as sketched by Longobardi (2002)), are given in (35).

- (35) *Definite generic reading*: Can be obtained with S-level predicates without the presence of habitual tense and without a generalizing adverb.

The availability of the definite generic reading does depend on inherent properties of the bare noun, and not from elements in the linguistic context. According to this definition, an example like (36a), involving an English BP, allows for a generic reading. This is in contrast with the Italian BP of (36b), which does not allow a generic reading here; as we saw in section 3.1, Italian BPs can only be generic in the presence of habitual tense and/or a generalizing adverb. Example (36c) shows why this generic reading is called definite: in the Romance languages, including French, definite generic readings are typically available to plural nouns introduced by the definite article.

- (36) a. *White-coloured elephants* will undergo the Final Judgment tomorrow at 5. **Gen**
b. *Elefanti di colore bianco* passeranno il Giudizio Universale domani alle 5. ***Gen**
c. *Gli elefanti di colore bianco* passeranno il Giudizio Universale domani alle 5. **Gen**

If we now turn to French CBPs, as those in example (37), we observe that they have they can be interpreted generically as well, just like English BPs.

- (37) [...] *Eléphants blancs et cygnes noirs* subiront le Jugement Final demain à 5 heures. **Gen**

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Another instance of the generic reading shows up, according to Longobardi, when English BPs are subject of an I-level predicate (which ascribes them a permanent property). As shown by (38ab), only English bare nouns can be interpreted generically in this case, while Italian BPs cannot.

- (38) a. *Watchdogs of large size* are more hairy/intelligent. **Gen**
b. *Cani da guardia di grosse dimensioni* sono più pelosi/intelligenti.
??Gen

Example (39) shows that French CBPs behave like English BPs and allow for a generic reading with the same predicates.

- (39) [...] *Requins et piranhas* sont moins poilus/intelligents. **Gen**
'Sharks and piranhas are less hairy/intelligent.'

Finally, and this is perhaps the most striking case, another instance of the definite generic reading concerns the so-called Kind-reading. English BPs typically allow for Kind-readings, while Italian BPs do not allow them. This is shown by (40a) and (40b).

- (40) a. *White-colored elephants* grow larger as one drives north.
b. **Elefanti di colore bianco* diventano sempre più grandi man mano che si va nord.

With respect to the availability of the Kind-reading, French CBPs behave like English BPs.

- (41) *Loups et ours* deviennent plus grands à mesure qu'on avance vers le nord.
'Wolves and bears grow larger as one drives north.'

So, all the properties described in this sub-section indicate that the question we started with, namely whether French CBPs share the interpretational properties of freer BPs, must be answered positively. French CBPs allow for the following readings: **definite generic reading**, **indefinite generic reading**, **existential reading**. In this respect, French CBPs do not differ from English and Italian CBPs.⁹ In the final section, we will try to account for this range of interpretations and in particular for that of the French ones.

5 Consequences for the analysis of CBPs

Although the properties of French CBPs are by now clear from a descriptive point of view, we have indicated how their behaviour could be accounted for. It is important to remind ourselves that CBPs allow for a definite/anaphoric

⁹ Although we did not give systematic examples, this is confirmed by our informants. See also H&Z.

reading, next to the three readings summarized at the end of section 4, which are unavailable to non-coordinated BPs.

Although it has to be explained why a definite reading shows up with CBPs¹⁰, we do not go into this problem here, but we refer to Heycock & Zamparelli (2002) and to the ‘reply’ by Roodenburg (2003). Let us just accept as a fact that a definite reading shows up, and look what consequences this has for the analysis of CBPs, in English, Italian and French.

English CBPs represent the most simple case. Because English is a language that has freer bare nouns, only the definite/anaphoric reading has to be accounted for independently; the other readings (i.e. the (in)definite generic and the existential ones) follow from the fact that English has freer BPs.

In Italian, the situation is slightly different. Because Italian has stricter BPs, only the existential and the indefinite generic reading of CBPs are immediately accounted for. An independent account is needed for both the definite/anaphoric reading and the definite generic reading, because none of these readings are available to stricter BPs.

This is not real problem, however, because the definite generic reading can be explained in terms of definiteness as well; at this point, Romance languages like Italian differ from English by the fact that definite generic readings typically ask for the presence of the definite article (see (36c) above). This means that Romance definites not only allow for anaphoric readings, but also for definite generic ones. As a consequence, the behaviour of Italian CBPs is explained; Italian CBPs can be *Romance* definites.

As for French, however, there is a problem. Although the definite/anaphoric reading can be accounted for in the same way as in Italian –definites in French also allow for both anaphoric and definite generic readings– there is no way to account for the existential and the indefinite generic reading: contrary to Italian, French doesn’t have non-coordinated BPs. This situation is summarized in the following schema.

Readings	English	Italian	French
<i>Anaphoric</i>	Definite	Romance definite	Romance definite
<i>Definite generic</i>	Property of BP	Romance definite	Romance definite
<i>Indefinite generic</i>	Property of BP	Property of BP	Problem
<i>Existential</i>	Property of BP	Property of BP	Problem

In other words, the following question is raised.

(42) Why does French only allow for BPs in coordinated form?

We will argue in the next and final subsection that this question can be answered with the help of the hypothesis of Delfitto & Schroten (1991), that we have introduced in section 1.1.

¹⁰ More generally, with CBNs, because CBSs have a definite reading as well (see section 3.1).

5.1 How to analyse French CBPs

As was suggested in (5) above, the reason why French excludes non-coordinated BPs has to do with the proposal of Delfitto & Schrotten, namely that the plural affix is no longer realized on the noun in French. This means that BPs are subject to a constraint like the following.

- (43) Plural hypothesis: “For a ‘bare’ use to be possible, plural NPs must minimally contain material that is able to *lexically* realize the [+Plural] feature.”

We argue that this hypothesis can help to answer the question in (42) and give an explanation why CBPs are legitimate in French. There is a crucial difference between French CBPs and French BPs: CBPs contain an overt element that is able to spell-out a plural feature, namely the conjunction *et*.

In all the CBNs above, both with CBSs and with CBPs, plurality is involved: the CBNs all refer necessarily to two disjointed groups (CBPs), or to two different objects (CBSs). This is shown by (44a), which is agrammatical when the adjective *autres* forces the soldiers to be a part of the group of officers, and by (44b), which is agrammatical when the verb shows singular agreement.

- (44) a. **Officiers et autres soldats* répugnaient à cette besogne.
 ‘Officers and other soldiers didn’t like that task.’
 b. *Ami et collègue* *a / ont attendu à l’aéroport.
 ‘Friend and colleague has / have waited at the airport.’

This clearly indicates that *et* is able to spell-out of a [+Plural] feature.¹¹ Note furthermore that (43) is supported by the fact that CBNs are less acceptable when the conjunction *et* is replaced by the disjunction *ou*, which is less appropriate to spell-out [+Plural]. This is illustrated by (45), taken from Bouchard (2002), who quotes Curat (1999).

- (45) **Officiers ou soldats* y répugnaient.
 ‘Officers or soldiers didn’t like that.’

It should be stressed that the plural spell-out appears to be more important for the licensing of BPs than the mere presence of a plural feature. So, we do not claim that French BPs are excluded because they would not be specified for a number feature (*contra* Bouchard (2002)). That French nouns must have a plural feature is clearly shown by the contrast between CBSs and CBPs: CBSs

¹¹ It would be too strong to argue that *et* is inherently plural: this doesn’t seem to be true. In coordinations involving a single determiner (whose properties differ from the CBNs described here), *et* is able to join two nouns which refer to one single referent:

(i) Mon [collègue et ami] est / *sont arrivé hier.
 ‘My friend and colleague has / have arrived yesterday.’

can only be definite (For more on the contrast between French CBPs and French CBSs, see Roodenburg (2003)).

Conclusion

We have shown that French licenses bare nouns in the form of CBNs (subdivided into CBSs and CBPs), because the conjunction is able to spell out a plural feature. In this way, a general constraint to which all bare nouns in languages like English and Italian are subject (cf. Delfitto & Schrotten (1991)), can be satisfied. The existence of this constraint has been strengthened by a detailed look at the interpretations of French CBPs. This has revealed an important fact: the behaviour of French CBPs is surprisingly common to that of Italian-like BPs as for the availability of existential and indefinite generic readings, and to BPs in general as for special semantic properties concerning scope and aspect. The resemblance with English-like BPs for the availability of definite generic readings, is due to the fact that CBNs make a definite interpretation available (cf. Heycock & Zamparelli (2002)). This also accounts for the fact that both CBPs and CBSs allow for definite/anaphoric readings.

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