SENSITIVITY TO UNDERINFORMATIVITY
WITH ROMANIAN BARE PARTITIVES

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Abstract. This study presents Romanian bare partitives (BPs) in contrast to other bare partitive constructions and it shows that they share features with generalized partitives. The study also investigates the generation of scalar implicatures (SIs) by Romanian bare partitives in comparison to overt partitive structures in which the upper nominal contains a part quantificational noun. The Neo-Gricean and Post-Gricean approaches to SIs make opposite predictions with respect to these constructions. Through an experimental approach, the study finds that BP constructions in Romanian give rise to SIs about half of the time overt part noun partitive structures do. The results provide support for the Post-Gricean approach to SIs, according to which scalar implicature are not elicited easily because they come with extra computational costs. A second factor that lowers the rate of SI responses for BPs is their atelic, process interpretation.

Keywords: Bare partitives, Scalar implicatures, Underinformativity.

1. INTRODUCTION

Research partitivity chartered a vast territory, revealing a wide range of partitive structures. This paper focuses on Romanian bare partitives (henceforth BPs) and experimentally investigates their interpretation in pragmatically marked contexts. Thus, it relates two domains whose interaction has so far remained unexplored, namely Romanian BPs and scalar implicatures.

In the Gricean theory of pragmatic inferentiality (Grice 1975), scalar implicatures are inferences generated based on the evaluation of the informational strength of terms ordered on scales of informativity such as <all, some> (Horn 1972). While the proposition in (1), which includes the most informative term on the scale, namely *all*, entails (2), which contains the less informative term *some*, sentence (2) pragmatically implies the negation of the more informative term (*some* implies *not all*) (3).

(1)   All birds have flown away.
(2)   Some birds have flown away.
(3)   Not all birds have flown away.

The reasoning that supports scalar implicatures of this type is connected to Grice's Maxim of Quantity. The latter enjoins the speaker to be informative. If the informationally

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stronger term had applied, the speaker would have been compelled by the Maxim of Quantity to use it. Since the Speaker did not use it, it follows that *all* does not hold.

Partitive constructions can also give rise to scalar implicatures. For instance, partitive constructions in which the upper DP includes an overt part noun (*o parte din* "a part of") can also be related to the informativity scale <*tot* "all", *o parte din* "a part of">. Example (4a) entails (4b) but the latter example, which includes a partitive structure, pragmatically implies (4c):

(4) a.   A   băut tot laptele   de pe masă.
          has drunk all milk-the of on table
          "He drank all the milk on the table."
     b.   A   băut o parte din   laptele   de pe masă.
          has drunk a part DIN milk-the of on table
          "She drank a part of the milk on the table."
     c.   Nu a   băut tot laptele de pe masă.
          not has drunk all milk   of on table
          "She did not drink all the milk on the table."

Full partitive constructions typically involve a quantifier and a nominal complement serving as a restrictor (more on this in section 2.1). However, Romanian also has a bare partitive structure in which the outer nominal is absent (Crăiniceanu 2010, Tănase-Dogaru 2024). The Romanian BP structure may also give rise to scalar implicatures. Sentences with bare partitive objects in which the preposition *din* is followed by a mass noun elicit scalar *nu tot* "not all" implicatures. (5a) implies (5b). These implicatures are cancellable as can be seen in (5c).

(5) a.   A băut **din lapte**.
          has drunk DIN milk
          "She drank of the milk."
     b.   **Nu** a   băut **tot** laptele.
          not has drunk all milk-the
          "I did not drink all of the milk."
     c.   A băut   din lapte, chiar tot laptele.
          has drunk DIN milk even all milk-the
          "He drank (some) of the milk, even all of the milk."

Scalar implicatures have been studied extensively and the two main directions in the literature (Mazzagio *et al.* 2021, Bleotu 2021a, De Carvalho *et al.* 2016) are the Neo-Gricean and Post-Gricean approaches. In the Neo-Gricean approach (Levinson 2000), the meaning of scalar terms embeds the implicature, which is generated automatically when the terms are mentioned. Being default inferences, scalar implicatures do not incur processing costs. It is the semantic reading of scalar terms, devoid of an implicature, that is costlier because it requires an extra inferential move, namely the cancellation of the implicature (De Carvalho *et al.* 2016). By contrast, according to Relevance Theory, a Post-Gricean approach (Sperber and Wilson 1986), scalar implicatures are not drawn by default. They are explicatures, instances of "pragmatic enrichment" of meaning influenced by relevance and processing

optimisation considerations, thus incurring a computational cost (Carvalho *et al.* 2016: 2). The literature on the processing of scalar implicatures supports the second approach. For instance, in reaction time studies, it was found that scalar implicatures take more time to be elicited than the semantic meanings of scalar terms (Bott *et al.* 2012). Moreover, populations with limited computational resources such as young children register a delay with respect to SIs. This has been widely documented in the acquisition literature (Noveck 2001, Stoicescu *et al.* 2013, 2015, Bleotu 2019). For instance, 4- to 6-year-old typically developing and dyslexic Romanian-speaking children drew scalar implicature infrequently with the quantifiers *unii* and *câţiva* "some" (Stoicescu *et al.* 2013, 2015).

Scalar implicatures have been explored for adult Romanian as well. It was found that sentences with overt quantifiers and epistemic adverbs generally elicit a high number of scalar implicature responses. For instance, Stoicescu *et al.* (2015) reported high rates of implicatures drawn by adult speakers of Romanian exposed to sentences with the quantifiers *câteva* and *unele* "some" in contexts involving underinformativity (77%). The same results were replicated for adults by Bleotu (2021a) (mean rate 75% with *unii* "some", 74% with *câţiva* "some"). Using the best description/shadow playing paradigms, Bleotu et. al. (2021a,b) also found rates of over 65% scalar implicature answers provided by adults with the epistemic adverb *poate* "maybe". Yet Bleotu *et al.* (2022) found lower rates of implicatures with combinations of epistemic adverbs and quantifiers embedded under epistemic adverbs (49%).

So far, scalar implicatures have not been investigated in relation to partitive structures in either Romanian or other languages. The current paper aims to fill this gap by asking whether Romanian bare partitive structures elicit scalar implicatures at rates higher or lower than overt partitive structures do. The rationale for the study is the following: if SIs are generated by default, as in the Neo-Gricean framework, they should be successfully drawn irrespective of the type of partitive construction involved. If the Post-Gricean approach to SIs is on the right track, it predicts that SIs are computationally costly and the frequency of their generation will vary with the type of structure and how necessary the SI is in the interaction between the partitive structure and the context in which it is presented. As will be shown below, both overt and bare partitives encode the partitive relation in Romanian. However, overt structures are likely to make partitivity more salient than BPs, making scalar implicatures easier to derive with overt than bare partitive structures (according to the Post-Gricean approach). To answer the research question, an experimental study was conducted, involving Romanian-speaking adults in two tasks, in which they were asked to evaluate underinformative sentences with bare and part noun partitives.

The paper is structured as follows. In section 2, we focus on partitive structures, with the various subsections delving into the characteristics of several partitive structures without an outer nominal. I discuss true partives (section 2.1) in contrast to related structures in which the upper nominal is absent (2.2) such as generalised partitives (section 2.2.1), faded partitives (section 2.2.2.), Italian "bare partitives" (section 2.2.3). In section 3, Romanian bare partitives are presented, and shown to share features with generalised partitive constructions. Section 4 presents the experimental study, the research question (section 4.1), method (section 4.2), results and discussion (sections 4.3 and 4.4). Section 5 concludes the study.

2. PARTITIVE STRUCTURES

Partitivity (i.e. the part-whole relation) is expressed in a wide range of constructions intra- and cross-linguistically. A full classification of partitive structures can be found, for instance, in Falco and Zamparelli (2019), and, for Romanian, in Tănase-Dogaru (2024). It mainly includes: canonical partitives (*four of the cats*), indefinite partitives (*four of some cats he fed*), proportional partitives and percentages (*half of the animals*, *50% of the animals*), the *among* semi-partitive construction (Hoeksema 1984) (*five among the cats*), superlative partitives (*the fastest of the cars*), double-noun partitives (*two volumes of your work*), bare partitives (*dei ragazzi* lit. "of the boys"), covert partitives (*Four cats live in the basement. One (of them) is black.*) (Falco and Zamparelli 2019: 3-6).

Since the paper is concerned with the interpretation of bare partitives in underinformative contexts, it is necessary to delineate the properties of the latter in contrast to the class of standard/true partitives.

2.1. True partitives

"Proper"/"true"/"canonical" partitives (Giusti and Sleeman 2021: 23, Tănase-Dogaru 2024, Tănase-Dogaru 2017) are binominal constructions which express the part-whole relation. The outer nominal denotes a subset and the lower nominal denotes a superset. Typically, the subset is expressed by a quantifier (6a) or a measure noun (6b). In English, as can be seen below, the two nominals are linked by a preposition - this goes for other Germanic and Romance languages as well.

(6)   a.   four of the/those/his students
         b.   a glass of the milk which you warmed

Generally, the subset DP is indefinite, while the superset DP is definite. This observation was formulated as a *partitive constraint*, which emphasizes the obligatory definiteness of the superset DP (Selkirk 1977) - as can be seen in (7).

(7)   *four of some journalists

However, it was shown (Abbot 1996, Tănase-Dogaru 2017) that it is possible for the second DP to be introduced by an indefinite, as can be seen in (8) below. Hence the partitivity constraint was extended: the inner DP should denote an individual (be it an entity or a group) (Ladusaw 1982 *apud* Oosterhof 2005b: 85).

(8)   one of a number of counterexamples

                                    (Abbott 1996 *apud* Tănase-Dogaru 2017, ex. 12b)

Another property of standard partitives is that they denote proper partitivity (the subset being properly included in the superset). That is why Tănase-Dogaru (2017: 5) states that seemingly similar constructions such as *both of the divorcing spouses* are not actually partitive.

2.2. Partitives without un upper quantifier

We have seen in section 2.1 that full partitive constructions generally include a quantifier and a nominal complement acting as a restrictor. As shown above, semantic, as well typological studies have unveiled two main tendencies - the restrictor nominal has to be definite, while the quantifier has to be indefinite and not accompanied by a noun phrase. Seržant (2021) explains these tendencies by pointing to certain constraints. Using a definite NP upstairs to refer to the subset would make the downstairs superset nominal unnecessary since a definite nominal is fully referential and no extra information from the other nominal is necessary to determine reference. Using an indefinite upstairs, however, does rely on the extra information provided by the lower nominal to complete the full referential profile. The absence of the noun from the higher constituent is accounted for in terms of the need to avoid redundancy - there is no need to repeat upstairs the information offered by the lower nominal. Seržant (2021) argues that these tendencies also result in the formation of constructions in which the quantifier is omitted. Such constructions include *faded partitives*, which have been extensively discussed for Dutch, structures dubbed *generalized partitives*, found to be very frequent cross-linguistically (e.g. Finnish, Ancient Greek, Lithuanian - see Seržant 2021 for further references), as well as the bare partitives typical of Italian and French - Falco and Zamparelli 2019). In the following sections, we will describe some of their main properties, aiming to offer some background to the discussion of Romanian bare partitives. It is beyond the scope of this paper to present a comprehensive overview of these structures, and unfortunately, we will not be able to do full justice to the vast literature on (bare) partitivity.

2.2.1. *Generalized partitives*

Generalized partitives (Seržant 2021) are partitive structures in which the upper determiner is absent and only the lower restrictor DP is present, and which are interpreted as "some of x". These structures, also called *independent partitives* (Seržant 2014a) or *bare partitives* (Hoeksema 1996a), do encode the part-whole relation (Seržant 2021, Sleeman and Giusti 2021; although see Sleeman and Luraghi 2023: 12 for a different view), and are illustrated for Lithuanian in (9a). Semantically, they are said to bear a strong similarity to structures with an indefinite quantifier (9b). Given their indefinite meaning, they are more likely to occur in object rather than subject positions (Dahl 2000: 50, Seržant 2021).

Seržant (2021: 891) states that generalized partitives "encode low individuated referents" and that is why they contain low-individuated nominals such as plural (9a) or mass nouns for the superset (9c).

(9) a. Mačiau   jo   kolegų.
         see.PST.1SG 3SG.GEN colleague.GEN/PART.PL
         "I saw [some] of his colleagues."
     b. Mačiau   keletą   jo   kolegų.
         see.PST.1SG some.ACC   3SG.GEN colleague.GEN/PART.PL
         "I saw some of his colleagues." (ex. 14 in Seržant 2021: 890)
     c. Nusipirkau   pien-o
         buy.PST.1SG milk.GEN.SG
         "I bought (some) milk." (ex. 1 in Seržant 2014: 258)

Seržant (2014: 261) argues that generalized partitives contain vague implicit quantifiers. An argument to this effect is that they may be selected by verbs that necessarily take quantified arguments, for instance Lithuanian verbs which incorporate quantifiers (*už-si-kąsti duonos* "to eat bread a little bit", where *už* is a quantifier meaning "a little bit"). The interpretation of the vague quantifier cannot be "one member of a set" (Seržant 2014: 263).

With generalised partitives, the subset is unlikely to be referred to in subsequent discourse by anaphoric pronouns because it is "extremely discursively backgrounded" (Seržant 2012: 117) and because of its low level of individuation (Seržant 2021: 891). Consequently, generalised partitives are mainly selected by verbs that admit object deletion (Seržant 2021).

Generalized partitives should be distinguished from "faded" (de Hoop 2003)/"bare" (Le Bruyn 2007) Dutch partitives to be discussed in section 2.2.2, even though the latter also express only the lower restrictor DP.

2.2.2. *Faded partitives without overt upper determiners*

In Dutch *faded partitives*, the upper determiner may also be absent and they can include both mass (10a) and plural nouns (10b), as do generalized partitives. However, there are structural and semantic differences. The downstairs nominal is preceded by the demonstrative *die*, not a definite article (Giusti and Sleeman 2021: 25), and is selected by the preposition *van* "of". They can occur without (10a-b) or with an overt upper determiner (10d).

Faded partitives have indefinite meaning (Zwarts 1987, de Hoop 2003: 194). Thus, those that contain a plural lower noun are similar to bare plurals in their compatibility with existential sentences (10b,c), where they occur in subject position and have relatively similar interpretations (Oosterhof 2005b).

(10) a.   Van die hete soep windt Jantje   op.
          of   that hot soup tenses John-DIM up
          "That kind of hot soup usually/normally excites little John."

                                                            (de Hoop *et al.* 1990: 83)

     b.   Er   lagen van die   dikke boeken op de tafel.
          there lay   of   those thick books on the table
          "There were thick books lying on the table."

     c.   Er   lagen dikke boeken op de   tafel.
          there lay   thick books   on the table
          "There were thick books lying on the table."

                                               (ex. 36a,b in Oosterhof 2005b: 76)

     d.   Er   lagen drie van die   dikke boeken op de tafel.
          there lay   three of   those thick books   on the table
          "There were three thick books lying on the table."

                                                (ex. 37a in Oosterhof 2005b: 76)

As seen above, faded partitives can be found in subject positions, but this happens only infrequently. They are most frequently found in object positions (Oosterhof 2005a). In object position, they do not only have the faded partitive reading. In fact, they are ambiguous between an NP/faded partitive reading (i) and a PP/ordinary partitive reading (ii).

(11) Els at van die   smerige bonbons. (ex. 38 in Oosterhof 2005b: 76)
      Els ate of   those filthy   bonbons
          (i) "Els ate filthy bonbons."
          (ii) "Els ate some of those filthy bonbons."

There is some controversy as to whether faded partitives encode the partitive relation. According to Sleeman and Luraghi (2023), in these constructions, partitivity has been semantically bleached such that "there is only a vague hint to a possible part-whole relation" (Sleeman and Luraghi 2023: 5). In contrast, other authors (Oosterhof 2005b, Le Bruyn 2007) argue that partitivity is present in the semantics of faded partitives, but the latter differ from canonical and generalized partitives in the way in which the superset referent is identified and its properties. For instance, de Hoop (2003: 196) argues that, while, with true partitives, the superset is contextually identified and bounded, with faded partitives, it is unbounded and it is information known to the hearer, not necessarily part of current discourse (the "you know" meaning – Giusti and Sleeman 2021). Contra de Hoop (1998), Oosterhof (2005b) argues cogently that the superset that the *van die* faded partitive denotes can also be determined pragmatically in the previous context, and is not necessarily part of the knowledge of the hearer. Moreover, the superset nominal in faded partitives denotes a well-known/well-established kind (Broekhuis, Keizer and den Dikken 2003: 556) *apud* Oosterhof 2005b: 83). According to Oosterhof (2005b: 85), the preposition *van* instantiates a function which "decomposes a kind into its individual instances."

Additionally, Le Bruyn (2007) claims that faded/bare partitives are specialised for the expression of proper partitivity in contexts in which the notion of quantity is not salient, as can be seen in (12). Thus, bare partitives in Dutch tend not to express improper partitivity felicitously (they cannot refer to the entire superset or the whole amount of something) (13) and they cannot be used in contexts in which the quantity of the relevant stuff is prominent (14).

(12) "Context: When Aunt got ill Floddertje decided to make a nice pot of soup. She soon
      noticed that the soup got lumpy and saw no other solution than to take the mixer. You
      can imagine the consequences…Indeed, the soup got spread all over Aunt's kitchen
      and covered the nice white walls."

      Ondanks alle moeite die Floddertje deed om het geklieder op te kuisen vond tante
      Despite all effort that Floddertje did   to the mess   up to clean found aunt
      weken nog steeds **van die soep** in alle hoeken van de keuken.
      weeks later still   of   that soup in all   corners of the kitchen
      "Despite all the effort Floddertje put into cleaning up the mess Aunt weeks later still
      found some of that soup in all corners of the kitchen."
                                                              (ex. 1 in Le Bruyn 2007)

(13) ?Floddertje was zo van slag   dat tante uiteindelijk zelf   van die soep moest
      Floddertje   was so off stroke that Aunt finally   herself of   that soup must
      opkuisen.
      clean
      "Floddertje was so off her stroke that Aunt eventually had to clean up some of the
       soup herself."
                                                              (ex. 38 in Le Bruyn 2007)

(14) ?Het was een enorme klus maar dezelfde   dag nog kuiste Floddertje van die soep op.
      It   was a   huge   job but   that same day still cleaned Floddertje of that soup up
      "It was a huge job but the very same day Floddertje cleaned up some of that soup."

                                                              (ex. 39 in Le Bruyn 2007)

      Bare partitives are felicitous with verbs of transaction and consumption because these
verbs are once-only verbs, in the sense that the object cannot be affected by the event more
than once. With these verbs, proper partitivity is very salient, hence their compatibility with
bare partitives (Le Bruyn 2007).

2.2.3. Italian "bare partitives"

      According to Sleeman and Luraghi (2023: 5–6), in Italian and French, there is a further
development of partitives into a "bare partitive" structure in which the higher determiner is
absent, and a preposition (*de* in French and genitive *di* in Italian) was combined with the
inner definite determiner resulting in an element also known as a partitive or indefinite article
(see Falco and Zamparelli 2019, Carlier 2007, Luraghi and Albonico 2021). These are
constructions with an indefinite interpretation (Zamparelli 2008: 304), in which "no pre-
existing whole is presupposed" (Sleeman and Luraghi 2023: 5–6).[1]
      Falco and Zamparelli (2019) claim that Italian bare partitives can appear in both
subject (15) and object (16) positions and can operate as substitutes of indefinites.

(15) Dei ragazzi sono qui.
      of.the boys are here
      "Some boys are here."

(16) Ho comprato della   birra.
      I bought   of.the beer
      "I bought some beer." (ex. 19 a-b in Falco and Zamparelli 2019)

      One approach to the bare partitive was to argue that *dei + N* structures are the
equivalent of *some of + N/alcuni dei + N* partitive structures. Chierchia (1998) suggested
that, in such structures, a vague numeral such as *alcuni* was ellided from the outer layer
(~~alcuni~~ *dei ragazzi* "some of the boys"), which would indicate that BPs are derived from real
partitives.
      However, several arguments were put forth against this approach. First, the *dei* phrase
in the construction does not have definite semantics, since no unique/familiar referent is
identified (Falco and Zamparelli 2019), and the existential presupposition is absent (Storto

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[1] Despite their seeming morphological similarity, the two bare partitive structures in French and
Italian do not behave identically. Italian *dei* nominals allow both narrow and wide scope readings,
while French *des* only admits the narrow scope reading (1). At the same time, in Italian, these
constituents are not subject to syntactic constraints, whereas in French, they are – for instance note the
ungrammaticality of (2) (Zamparelli 2008, Storto 2003).
      (1)   Tous les visiteurs ont lu des journaux.
            all the visitors have read of.the newspapers
            "All the visitors have read newspapers." (ex. 12a in Zamparelli 2008: 305)
      (2)   *Des visiteurs sont partis.
            of.the visitors are left

2003, Zamparelli 2008, Falco and Zamparelli 2019). Compare the English ungrammatical existential sentence with a definite logical subject in (17a) to the grammatical Italian *dei* sentence in (17b). Moreover, the structure in (18a) is not the equivalent of the structure in (18b) since the deletion of *alcuni* "some" leads to ungrammaticality.

(17) a. *There are the students.
      b. So   che ci   sono dei   folletti e   prima o poi   ne trovero`.
          I.know that there are of.the elves   and sooner or later I.will.find.them
          "I know elves exist, and sooner or later I'll find them."

(ex. 14 in Zamparelli 2008: 305)

(18) a. Alcuni dei   venti   ragazzi sono qui.
          some   of.the twenty boys   are here
          "Some of the twenty boys are here."
      b. *Dei venti   ragazzi sono qui.
          of.the twenty boys   are here (ex. 20 in Falco and Zamparelli 2019)

Second, Storto (2003) points out that such bare structures cannot be said to express proper partitivity. If they did, the sentence in (19) should be ungrammatical, which is not the case.

(19) [Dei   marziani che sono atterrati nel mio giardino]*i* mi hanno detto che loro*i* sono
      [of.the Martians that are landed   in my garden]*i*   me have told   that they*i* are
      gli ultimi della loro specie.
      the last   of   their species
      "Some Martians that have landed in my garden told me they are the last of their species."

(ex. 10 in Storto 2003)

Third, as Zamparelli (2008) points out, there are several dissimilarities between *dei* and *some/alcuni*: unlike *alcuni*, *dei* can co-occur with quantificational adverbs; moreover, the two elements have different behaviours with respect to generic contexts and *ne* extraction (for relevant examples see Zamparelli 2008: 307–308).

Zamparelli (2008) argues that BPs originate in definite nominals that refer to kinds and that they are partitives of a special sort. According to him, Italian BPs are to be analysed as embedding a kind-denoting definite to which a partitive operator has been applied, denoting a set of individuals that instantiate the kind (Zamparelli 2008: 310–311), similar to a plural noun. Formal details aside, the BP in (20) has the meaning *I met some instances of [the student-kind]*. This analysis explains the absence of the presupposition of existence (as kinds can be instantiated in a possible world, not obligatorily in the actual world - Zamparelli 2008: 313).

(20) Ho incontrato degli   studenti. (ex. 32 in Zamparelli 2008: 313)
      have met   of.the students

In another influential view (Storto 2003, Cardinaletti and Giusti 2017), bare partitives do not express true partitivity, and Italian *dei* and French *des* are merely indefinite lexical determiners.

Both Cardinaletti and Giusti (2017) and Zamparelli (2008) agree that the nominal in BPs does not have definite semantics. However, Cardinaletti and Giusti (2017) dispute the notion that it denotes a kind. They show that the kind-reading alleged by Zamparelli (2008)

occurs only in restricted contexts, in the obligatory presence of adjuncts, which impose a definitory reading. Otherwise, these structures only have an indefinite interpretation.

3. ROMANIAN BARE PARTITIVES

Romanian has a bare partitive structure in which the outer nominal is absent (Crăiniceanu 2010, Tănase-Dogaru 2024). There are, however, differences between this construction and other bare partitive structures. As shown by Tănase-Dogaru (2024), Romanian employs specialized partitive prepositions: *din* "part.of-in" and *dintre* "part.of-among." The lower DP lacks an overt definite article (*din orez* "of rice", *din băuturi* "from beverages") (Crăiniceanu 2010).

The preposition *din* "part.of-in" is used with bare partitives in object position and selects mass nouns (21a), bare singular count nous (25a) or bare plurals (21a). The preposition *dintre* "part.of-among" may be used with subject and object bare partitives and selects bare plurals and personal/demonstrative pronouns (21b).

(21) a.   A   băut din lapte/băuturi.
           has drunk DIN milk/beverages
           "He drank (some) of the milk/beverages."
     b.   Au demolat   dintre   clădiri/ele/acestea.
           have demolished DINTRE buildings/them/these
           "They demolished (some) of the buildings/them/these."

                                                      (ex. 1a in Crăiniceanu 2010)

Unlike French or Italian, Romanian does not have prenominal partitive articles (22). The preposition *de* is used for pseudo-partitivity (and cannot merge with the Romanian enclitic suffixal definite articles.

(22) *A mâncat de pâinea.
       has eaten   DE bread-the

The Romanian suffixal definite article (*orez*-(u)l "the rice") is not used on nouns selected by prepositions which assign the Accusative case (*din orezul* "from rice-the"), unless the nominals are modified (*din orezul din frigider* "from rice-the from the fridge") (Crăiniceanu 2010, Mardale 2006). Thus, the definite article cannot surface in bare partitive structures (23a) without modification (23b).

(23) a.   *A   mâncat din orezul.
           has eaten   DIN rice-the
           "He ate of the rice."
     b.   A mâncat din orezul   din frigider.
           has eaten   DIN rice-the from fridge
           "He ate of the rice from the fridge."

Despite the absence of the definite article in the lower DP of unmodified BP objects, it was noted that the lower DP is definite and referential (Crăiniceanu 2010). As seen above,

the lower nominal can bear the definite article if modified (23b). Additionally, demonstratives can also appear in the lower DP:

(24) Am mâncat din această prăjitură/din acești biscuiți.
      have eaten DIN this cake /DIN these biscuits
      "I ate of this cake/of these biscuits."

Another feature of Romanian bare partitives is that they encode true partitivity despite the absence of the higher quantifier; thus, the meanings of the bare partitive sentence in (25a) and the partitive with an overt part nominal in (25b) are very similar. The difference is that, with the bare partitive, the sentence is neutral with respect to quantity (Le Bruyn 2007, Crăiniceanu 2010) due to the absence of the upper nominal.

(25) a. A mâncat din prăjitură.
         has eaten DIN cake
         "She ate of the cake."
     b. A mâncat o parte din prajitură.
         has eaten a part DIN cake
         "She ate a part of the cake."

Crăiniceanu demonstrates that there are numerous Romanian verbs which can select bare partitive direct objects - "all classes of verbs that describe events which involve a change in degree of a gradable property of their object occur with partitive noun phrases" (2010: 159): (i) (strictly) incremental verbs: *mânca* "eat" (21a), *citi* "read", *mătura* "sweep", *bea* "drink", *lua* "take", *examina* "examine" and (ii) scalar verbs: *topi* "melt", *goli* "empty", *seca* "dry" (26c). Such verbs permit object deletion (*Am mâncat* "I have eaten"). Giurgea (2013: 126) speculates that, since object BPs seem to occur only with certain verbs, there is selection by the verb of these structures.
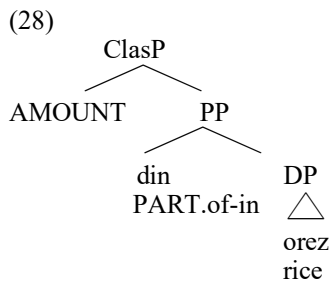
(26) a. Au demolat din clădiri *timp de un an*
         have demolished DIN buildings for a year
         "They demolished of the buildings for a year."
     b. Am citit Soniei din "Prinț și Cerșetor"
         have read Sonia.DAT DIN "Prince and Pauper"
         "I read of *Prince and Pauper* to Sonia."
     c. A secat din lac în lunile de vară.
         has dried DIN lake in months-the of summer
         "The lake dried partially during the months of summer."
                     (ex. 1a-c in Crăiniceanu 2010: 160)

Constructions with bare partitive objects have an atelic interpretation, as shown by example (26a) above, where the combination between the predicate and the durative adverbial of time *timp de un an* "for a year" is grammatical. In contrast, full partitive objects elicit a telic interpretation (27) (Crăiniceanu 2010: 161).

(27) A   mâncat mult/o   parte din   tort   *timp de zece minute/în zece minute.
      has eaten   much/a part   DIN cake time   of ten   minutes/in ten minutes
      "He ate a lot of the cake for ten minutes/in ten minutes."

Mardale (2006), and Crăiniceanu (2010) argued for the presence of a null D in the syntactic structure of Romanian BPs. Tănase-Dogaru (2024) proposed an analysis of constructions with bare partitive objects in which the lower DP is part of a PP selected by a silent classifier AMOUNT which projects a ClasP as in (28) below:

(28)

```
            ClasP
           /     \
    AMOUNT        PP
                 /   \
              din      DP
           PART.of-in   △
                       orez
                       rice
```

In conclusion, Romanian bare partitives share some of the properties of generalized partitives proposed by Seržant (2021). They express true partitivity, but, as shown above, they are associated to low individuation due to their neutrality towards quantity. They are based on the spatial "from Ground" metaphor as the preposition *din* suggests extraction from matter serving as Ground. They are selected by verbs that allow object deletion (*mânca* "eat", *bea* "drink", *lua* "take").

4. ROMANIAN BPs AND SCALAR IMPLICATURES

4.1. Research question

The research question we are going to ask is what type of partitive structure yields more implicatures with verbs of consumption? Two structures will be tested: verbs of consumption with (i) a direct object partitive with an upper part quantificational noun and a lower mass or bare noun (*a mânca o parte din orez* "eat a part of the rice") or with (ii) a bare partitive direct object based using the preposition (*a mânca din orez* "eat of the rice"). Assuming that the overt quantificational noun marking makes the partitive relation more salient and thus easier to compute than it happens with its bare counterpart, we predict that full marking will yield more scalar implicatures than bare partitives. This, in turn, would lend support to the non-default Post-Gricean approach to scalar implicatures, according to which the latter involve additional processing costs.

4.2. Design, method and participants

Two tasks were used to investigate the research question. Both were binary felicity judgment tasks. The participants were asked to assess the pragmatic felicity of test sentences with object bare partitives (Task 1) and object part noun partitives (Task 2), against the

background of videos in which a human character either completed a consumption event or stopped before the event culminated. The consumption events involved eating and drinking. In Task 1, the test condition thus focused on bare partitives. In Task 2, the test sentence included an overt part noun in the upstairs DP. Each task had four conditions illustrated with four items each. There were two eating and two drinking videos per condition. In the first condition, the full consumption condition, the character ate or drank something completely. In the partial consumption condition, the character started the consumption event but stopped before it was concluded (around the half-way point). In the control conditions, the acceptance or rejection of control intransitive sentences with the verbs *eat* and *drink* were expected. There were four control items per control condition. Seven fillers were also used to prevent the repetition of either yes- or no-answers in certain segments of the list. The item list, amounting to twenty-three items, was randomized.

The participants were told that they would watch a series of video recordings in which some characters would perform certain acts. They would hear a sentence (uttered by the experimenter), and they needed to say whether the sentence was a felicitous description of the event or not. The prompt did not make reference to the truth of the sentence rather to pragmatic felicity. The participants were also encouraged to comment on the test items and provide reasons for their assessment. After the prompt was given, a video was shown in which an agent started eating or drinking. In the full consumption condition, after the event ended, nothing was left in the container presented in the video (a cup or plate). If the event was not completed, the participants could see that the container still had some matter in/on it.

In the videos in which the event culminated (the full consumption condition), the partitive sentence was underinformative, as all the matter had been consumed, which should have prompted the rejection of the test sentence if the scalar implicature was drawn. Rejection was thus coded as a target response in the full consumption condition. If the event did not culminate (the partial consumption condition), the partitive sentence was informative, hence the test sentence should have been accepted. Thus, acceptance responses were coded as on-target. Below are examples of the test sentences used in Task 1 and Task 2.

Task 1 Bare partitives
(29) Fata   a   mâncat din orez.
     girl-the has eaten   DIN rice
     "The girl ate of the rice."

Task 2 "A part of" constructions
(30) Fata   a   băut o parte din apă.
     girl-the has drunk a part   DIN water
     "The girl ate a part of the water."

The predicates used were the following: *a mânca (o parte) din orez* "eat (a part) of the rice", *a mânca (o parte) din prăjitură* "eat (a part) of the cake", *a bea (o parte) din apă* "drink (a part) of the water", *a bea (o parte) din lapte* "drink a part of the milk". The nominals used were both mass and bare nouns.

The participants were 26 Romanian-speaking adults recruited from the students at the University of Bucharest. They were divided into two groups and about half of them were engaged in the first task (N=14), while the remainder participated in the second task (N=12).

4.3. Results

Tables 1 and 2 present the results for the two tasks. As can be seen in Table 1, the results in the Bare Partitive construction are at the chance level (57%) in the underinformative full consumption condition, which means that the participants almost equally either accepted and rejected the test sentence. In all other conditions, the results were close to or at ceiling.

Table 1. Results (%) Task 1: Target performance with Bare Partitives

Full consumption	Partial consumption	Control-Accept	Control-Reject
57	100	95	95

All the results in Task 2 with the construction with a full part nominal in the upstairs DP were close to ceiling, as can be seen in Table 2. This includes the crucial underinformative, full consumption condition.

Table 2. Results (%) Task 2: Target performance with part noun constructions

Full consumption	Partial consumption	Control-Accept	Control-Reject
96	98	87	100

As far as the distribution of the responses is concerned, it was not bi-modal in the bare partitive task. This suggests that the participants did not generally hesitate between rejection and acceptance of the test item. About one third of the participants in the bare partitive task accepted the test item throughout (in all test items), hence giving responses that did not demonstrate they drew scalar implicatures.

4.4. Discussion

The results in the two tasks show that the full marking of partitivity (including an overt part noun in the higher DP) yielded a much higher percentage of scalar implicatures than bare partitives. It was somewhat surprising that there were not more SIs. The context in which the BP sentences were presented did not hinder a partitive interpretation of the BP. There were several factors supporting the partitive reading. The event was a clearly fragmentative event, and the portioning of the matter was evident. The boundaries of the initial mass and the extracted part were visually salient, and the referent of the lower superset DP was easily and deictically identifiable.

The low number of scalar implicatures responses supports the non-default approach to SIs proposed by Relevance Theory (Sperber and Wilson 1986). Scalar implicatures are triggered with more difficulty with bare partitives than with overt ones. If SIs involves an additional inferential step, this results in more computational costs, leading to SI avoidance. Moreover, the salience of the part-whole relation might play a part in how necessary the addition inference connected to the SI seems to the hearer. Awareness of a clear contrast between the part and the whole is crucial for SIs to be drawn. With BPs, the quantity related to the part is undetermined, and thus the complement/remainder of the whole becomes hard to pinpoint as well. Without a clear separation between the part and the complement, the contrast between the part and the whole is less salient with bare partitives than it is with part noun partitives, leading to fewer scalar implicatures.

Some comments made by the participants in the experiment reveal another factor that decreased the rate of SI responses. Some subjects explained that they accepted the BP test sentence in the underinformative condition instead of rejecting it because they felt that the sentence was true anyhow. The culminated event included the process (accomplishments entail activities: *A mancat tot orezul* "he has eaten all the rice" entails *A mancat din orez* "He has eaten of the rice"). BP sentences have atelic process interpretations. In the consumption event that was related to the full consumption test sentence, the process stage was visible and quite salient even though it was completed. If the participants focused on the process (interpreting the event along the lines of "there was eating of something"), thinking that the process was included in the full event, the acceptance of the BP test item was natural, leading to fewer responses with implicatures. This process interpretation is not available for the structure with an overt noun which has a telic reading (27). Thus, this factor did not lower the SI rates in the overt part noun task.

5. CONCLUSIONS

The study has shown that Bare Partitive constructions in Romanian do not give rise to SIs as frequently as overt part noun structures, which elicit a very high number of SI responses. The results provide support for the non-default approach to SIs, according to which scalar implicatures incur cognitive costs. Moreover, another factor that influenced the results is the atelic process interpretation of bare partitive sentences. The semantics of the bare partitive construction and their computational cost inhibit the generation of SIs.

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