

Interpretation of DPs

Do native speakers have intuitions they ‘should’ have?

Research MA Thesis

Research MA Program:

‘Linguistics: The Study of the Language Faculty’

Utrecht University

Zuzanna Grądzka

4162943

June 30, 2019

Supervisors:

Dr. Manuela Pinto

Prof. Mara Frascarelli

Content

Abstract	4
1. Introduction.....	5
2. Interpretations of subject DPs	7
2.1. Generic reading	9
2.2. Existential reading	10
2.3. Definite and specific reading	11
3. Theories on the DP-structure.....	13
3.1. The syntactic approach.....	14
3.2. The semantic approach	17
3.3. Grande Grammatica Italiana di Consultazione.....	19
4. Readings of DPs in Italian	20
5. This study.....	23
5.1. Research Questions	23
5.2. Hypotheses	24
6. Methodology	24
6.1. Method	24
6.2. Participants	26
7. Results	26
7.1. Generic reading	26
7.2. Existential reading	29
7.3. Specific definite reading	32
7.4. Specific indefinite reading	35
7.5. Non-specific definite reading	38
7.6. Non-specific indefinite reading	41
8. Discussion	44
8.1. Consistency in the interpretations	44
8.1.1. Generic reading	45
8.1.2. Existential reading	46
8.1.3. (Non-)specific (in)definite reading	46
8.2. Research Questions	47
9. Conclusion	48
10. References.....	49

11. Appendix.....	52
11.1. Items of AJT.....	52
11.1.1. Generic reading.....	52
11.1.2. Existential reading.....	54
11.1.3. Specific definite reading.....	56
11.1.4. Specific indefinite reading.....	58
11.1.5. Non-specific definite reading.....	60
11.1.6. Non-specific indefinite reading.....	62
11.1.7. Fillers	64

Abstract

Even though getting a correct meaning of a DP seems quite easy, in the case of plural DPs, it is a complicated task, in which a crosslinguistic variation on three levels has to be taken into consideration. First, not all languages show a morphosyntactic realization of articles, as it is the case in English. Second, some languages allow various positions of subjects in the sentence and others can put subjects only in preverbal position. Finally, not all languages show a one-to-one mapping between form and semantic interpretation of DPs. To correctly understand the meaning, the speaker must then acquire not only the morphosyntactic cues (e.g. determiners), but also their semantics (e.g. specific vs. generic reading). Within this thesis, the following readings of DPs in subject position in Italian have been studied: (i) generic, (ii) existential, (iii) specific definite, (iv) specific indefinite, (v) non-specific definite and (vi) non-specific indefinite. According to the current theories (e.g. Renzi et al., 1991; Longobardi, 1994, 2001, 2003; Chierchia, 1998), these readings can be expressed in different ways, for example, by using subjects with or without articles and by putting them in preverbal or postverbal position of the sentence. The research questions of this thesis read as follows: What is the native-like interpretation of DPs in subject position in Italian? To which extent is the interpretation affected by the type of verb, by the position of the subject and by the presence vs. absence of article? To examine these questions we draw on Renzi et al. (1991), Longobardi (1994, 2001, 2003), Chierchia (1998) and test their predictions.

In order to answer the research questions of this thesis, 224 native speakers of Italian completed an Acceptability Judgment Task in which the following conditions were manipulated: (i) the type of verb used, (ii) the position of the subject and (iii) the presence or absence of article with subject.

The analysis of the results shows that native speakers of Italian do not confirm the generic, existential, specific definite, specific indefinite, non-specific definite and non-specific indefinite interpretations in the way it is argued by Renzi et al. (1991), Chierchia (1998) and Longobardi (1994, 2001, 2003). In general, it can be observed that Italian native speakers have a clear preference for preverbal DP subjects and they use this form with all readings studied in this thesis. The only exception is the existential reading for which native speakers accept also preverbal BN subjects, however to a lesser extent than preverbal DPs. Both the conditions studied in this thesis, the position of subject and the type of verb used, seemed to influence the

results of interpretative judgments of Italian speakers. Contrary to what was expected, postverbal subjects are not accepted by native speakers of Italian. Moreover, a lot of variations in all types of examined subjects and in all types of readings can be discerned.

1. Introduction

The interpretation of a Determiner Phrase (DP)¹, *the babies*, in a sentence such as *The babies cry every time their milk is over*; is an easy task for an adult speaker of English. Without much effort a native speaker would say that in this sentence the DP in subject position refers to a specific subset of babies and not to all babies in the world. At first sight, getting a correct meaning of a DP seems thus quite easy. Nevertheless, in the case of plural DPs in subject position, it is a complicated task, since a crosslinguistic variation on three levels plays a role in this process. First, not all languages show a morphosyntactic realization of articles, as is the case in English. Second, some languages permit various positions of subjects in the sentence. Finally, not all languages show a one-to-one mapping between form and semantic interpretation of DPs. To correctly understand the meaning of a DP, the speaker must then acquire not only the morphosyntactic cues (e.g. determiners) and their distribution in the sentence, but also their semantics (e.g. specific vs. generic reading).

In the past years, one of the variables that various studies with diverse theoretical approaches aimed to examine is the role that first language (L1) plays in the acquisition of a second language (L2) (e.g. Yu, 1996; Brown, 1998; Nazary, 2008; Mounhanna, 2009; Falk et al., 2015; for an overview see Slabakova, 2008). One of the structures at syntax-semantic interface that was studied is the distribution and the interpretation of definite articles (e.g. Serratrice et al., 2009; Ionin & Montrul, 2010; Chrabszcz & Jiang, 2014; Cho & Slabakova, 2014, 2015; Ionin et al., 2015; Sun, 2016; Nordanger, 2017). However, a gap in previous research that still has to be filled in is that the theories (e.g. Chierchia, 1998; Longobardi, 1994, 2001, 2003) that are used to define the baseline to test the L2 acquisition of the interpretation of DPs have never been tested empirically. For this reason, we cannot be sure whether the ‘norms’ we use are actually in line with what happens in real life. The aim of this thesis is to fill this gap and test empirically the native-like interpretations of DPs in Italian.

¹ In this thesis this term will be used to indicate nouns with and without articles.

Within this thesis, the following readings for DPs in subject position in Italian will be studied: (i) generic, (ii) existential, (iii) specific definite, (iv) specific indefinite, (v) non-specific definite and (vi) non-specific indefinite. According to Chierchia (1998), Longobardi (1994, 2001, 2003) and Renzi, Salivi & Cardinaletti (1991) these readings can be expressed in different ways, for example, with or without the use of articles or in preverbal or postverbal position of the sentence. This thesis will present data which contradict the expectations made on the basis of these theories.

Examination of various readings of plural DPs is a relevant research subject since we want to understand whether there is any empirical evidence for the descriptions of the phenomenon we have (e.g. Renzi et al., 1991; Longobardi, 1994, 2001, 2003; Chierchia, 1998). Furthermore, it is important to investigate this phenomenon in order to be able to understand how you move from one language to the other and how these constructions can be acquired.

In general, languages differ in the manner in which the different readings are encoded in grammar. Some languages do not lexicalize various interpretations by means of determiners, but they use other strategies, such as specific morphemes or word order.

This thesis aims to find an empirical basis for the distribution and interpretation of plural subject DPs in L1 Italian. The research questions read as follows: What is the native-like interpretation of plural subject DPs in Italian? To which extent is the interpretation affected by the nature of the verb (transitive, unergative, unaccusative), by the position of the subjects and by the presence vs. absence of the article? To examine these questions, we examine three different accounts of the distribution and interpretation of plural subjects DPs, i.e. Renzi et al. (1991), Longobardi (1994, 2001, 2003) and Chierchia (1998.) and we seek to find empirical evidence for the claims suggested therein. In so doing, we hope to be able to provide an empirical basis for the theoretical claims suggested by these approaches.

In chapter 2, the definitions of the types of readings will be provided, in order to specify the scope of this research project. In chapter 3, three theories of the DP-structure will be presented. Chapter 4 will discuss how the readings at issue are realized in Italian. In chapter 5, the objectives of this research project and the research questions will be given. Chapter 6 will deal with the methodology of the research. In chapters 7 and 8, the results and the discussion will be presented and, finally, the conclusion will follow.

2. Interpretations of subject DPs

In general, languages can be divided into three groups, according to the manner in which the different readings of DPs are encoded in grammar.

Some languages (e.g. Polish) do not have articles, and this means that the distinction between the readings at issue is not lexically realized. Polish rather relies on morphosyntactic means (see **Błąd! Nie można odnaleźć źródła odwołania.** and **Błąd! Nie można odnaleźć źródła odwołania.** below for examples of generic and specific definite readings). However, in addition to morphosyntactic means these languages can also use word order and thus to postpone the subject to a postverbal position to convey the indefinite interpretation (see (3) for an example of indefinite reading) (Szwedek, 1974; Rutkowski, 2002).

(1) Generic reading

<i>Koty</i>	<i>piją</i>	<i>mleko.</i>
cat.PL	drink.3PL	milk.SG
“Cats drink milk.”		

(2) Specific definite reading

<i>Koty</i>	<i>mojej cioci</i>	<i>nie chciały</i>	<i>jeść.</i>
cat.PL	my.F aunt.SG	not want.3PL.PST	eat.INF
“The cats of my aunt didn’t want to eat.”			

(3) Indefinite reading

<i>Przy</i>	<i>oknie</i>	<i>stał</i>	<i>mężczyzna.</i>
by	window.SG	stand.3SG.PST	man.SG
“A man was standing by the window.”			

Other languages (e.g. English, Dutch) have articles which can be omitted, and, in this way, various readings are conveyed for a DP. For example, the generic reading is expressed through a bare noun (BN) (see example **Błąd! Nie można odnaleźć źródła odwołania.** below) whereas, in the specific definite reading, the use of an article is mandatory (see example **Błąd! Nie można odnaleźć źródła odwołania.**). In contrast to Polish, in English and Dutch it is not possible to realize the subject in postverbal position. Despite of the fact that the most Germanic languages are subject to the verb second requirement (V2) (they place the finite verb of a sentence in second position with a single constituent preceding it), English is

exceptional because it predominantly uses SVO order (Subject Verb Object). As a consequence, the subject of a clause in English is always preverbal (Newby, 1987).

(4) Generic reading

Fishes swim.

(5) Specific definite reading

The elephants are small.

Finally, languages such as Italian have articles (as the previous group), but they are used in a different way. Italian syntax requires subject DPs in preverbal position to be governed by a lexical element (Renzi et al., 1991). As a consequence, plural DPs in preverbal subject position must be preceded by a determiner, independently of the interpretation (generic or specific) assigned to the DP. Examples **Błąd! Nie można odnaleźć źródła odwołania.** and **Błąd! Nie można odnaleźć źródła odwołania.** show that the same construction can bear both the generic and the specific definite reading. The two readings in Italian are disambiguated by the context. Furthermore, subjects in Italian can also show up in postverbal position. According to Renzi et al. (1991) postverbal DPs are allowed to omit determiner and get the specific indefinite reading (see (8)).

(6) Generic reading

I *leoni cacciano.*

the.PL.M lion.PL hunt.3PL

“Lions hunt.”

(7) Specific definite reading

I *gatti di mia zia mangiano patate.*

the.PL.M cat.PL of my.SG.F aunt.SG eat.3PL potato.PL

“The cats of my aunt eat potatoes.”

(8) Specific indefinite reading

*Ho visto barche in mezzo al mare.*²

Have.1SG see.PP boat.PL in middle of the.SG.M sea.SG

“I have seen boats in the middle of the sea.”

² Renzi, L., Salvi, G., & Cardinaletti, A. (Eds.). (1991). *Grande grammatica italiana di consultazione: I. La frase: I sintagmi nominale e preposizionale* (Vol. 1). Il mulino, 374.

So, according to some studies (e.g. Chierchia, 1998), Italian does not allow preverbal subjects without determiners. Nevertheless, this thesis will reveal that, in some readings, it is possible to have a BN in preverbal position (e.g. Longobardi, 2003). In this respect, Italian acts as Polish and allows the realization of subjects in both preverbal and postverbal positions (Renzi et al., 1991).

The claim that the DP-structure is aimed, among other things, to permit diverse interpretations of nouns has been broadly discussed in the literature (e.g. Longobardi, 1994, 2001, 2003; Chierchia, 1998). To this extent, the determiner, i.e. constituent showing up on the D head, plays an important role. D^0 can be used to express definiteness, the existential reading and the generic interpretation of the complement NP (Noun Phrase). These interpretations and their underlying theories will be examined in the next sections in detail.

2.1. Generic reading

The first type of interpretation to be discussed in this thesis is the **generic reading** of DPs. Portner (2011) argues that generalizations are verbalized by sentences which mainly summarize events, situations, etc. Sentence **Błąd! Nie można odnaleźć źródła odwołania.** gives an example of such a sentence, since it expresses that there is a strong tendency in the world for this situation to be true, due to the fact that there is a cat or some cats eating milk. This kind of sentences does not refer to any particular situation which was taking place at the moment of the utterance.

(9) *Cats eat milk.*

In contrast to generic sentences, certain sentences directly refer to a particular situation such as in **Błąd! Nie można odnaleźć źródła odwołania..** This kind of sentences expresses a claim of what happened in a particular situation and do not generalize about occurrences of this type.

(10) *This morning, a cat ate some milk.*

Chierchia (1998) concentrates on another aspect of the generic reading which is relevant for the subject at issue. In uttering a sentence like (9), the speaker also generalizes to a certain extent about cats as a class, in other words s/he does not refer to any particular cat (such as by uttering sentence (10)**Błąd! Nie można odnaleźć źródła odwołania.**). Usually, sentences

such as (9) are understood as discussing some characteristics of the whole class of entities involved (in the above-mentioned example, cats), also referred to as kinds. From an intuitive point of view, kinds are seen as regularities, which occur in nature in general. To any natural property such as the property of being a cat corresponds a kind, a “cat-kind” in this case. Any natural kind has a corresponding property of belonging to that **kind**. The term “natural kind” does not necessarily refer to just a biological or even a well-established kind. Artifacts, such as chairs or cars, or complex things, such as intelligent students or spots of inks, can also denote kinds to the extent that a sufficiently regular behavior can be imputed to them (Carlson, 1977; Krifka et al., 1995). Therefore, what counts as a kind is not set by the grammar, but by the shared knowledge of a community of speakers. Consequently, it remains relatively vague and it varies depending on the context. However, lexical nouns identify kinds whereas complex nouns may or may not identify kinds.

Concluding, a generic sentence expresses general information about a class. The speaker does not have any specific group or individual in mind, but every individual that forms a part of this class. The speaker expresses then a piece of information that is true for every representative of that kind (Chierchia, 1998).

2.2. Existential reading

The following type of interpretation to be examined within this thesis is the **existential reading** of DPs. McNally (2011) claims that the term ‘existential sentence’ should refer to a specialized or non-canonical construction which expresses a proposition about the presence or the existence of something or someone. Sentence **Błąd! Nie można odnaleźć źródła odwołania.** is considered existential since it is specialized and entails nothing more than the existence of one even prime number.

(11) *There is one even prime number.*

According to Barwise & Cooper (1981), the existential reading is the interpretation of an indefinite NP as an existential quantifier. The indefinite NP in **Błąd! Nie można odnaleźć źródła odwołania.** has an existential interpretation since the logical paraphrase involves an existential quantifier (“There is an x”). The existential quantifier is a logical operator of predicate logic that enables to express that at least one entity in the universe of discourse has a particular property defined in the sentence.

(12) *John ate an apple.*

Even though, to a certain extent, there is variation across languages in the structure, semantics and pragmatics of existential sentences, in general, they also share some important characteristics (Longobardi, 2003).

According to Longobardi (2001, 2003), one of the characteristics of the existential interpretation in Italian is that with a stage level predicate (something that is true at a temporal stage of its subject) a BN subject obtains an existential reading (as in **Błąd! Nie można odnaleźć źródła odwołania.**). However, as it can be observed in **Błąd! Nie można odnaleźć źródła odwołania.**, a BN subject can also obtain a generic reading when a relevant DP-external operator is present such as habitual aspect or a quantificational adverb (*sempre* ‘always’, *spesso* ‘often’).

(13) Existential reading³

<i>Elefanti</i>	<i>di</i>	<i>colore</i>	<i>bianco</i>	<i>hanno</i>	<i>creato</i>	<i>in</i>
	<i>passato</i>	<i>grande</i>	<i>curiosità.</i>			
elephant.SG	of	color.SG	white.M	have.3PL	raise.PP	in
past	big		curiosity.SG			

“White-colored elephants raised a lot of curiosity in the past.”

(14) Generic reading⁴

<i>Elefanti</i>	<i>di</i>	<i>colore</i>	<i>bianco</i>	<i>possono</i>	<i>creare</i>
	<i>grande</i>	<i>curiosità.</i>			
elephant.PL	of	color.SG	white.M	can.3PL	raise.INF
big		curiosity.SG			

“White-colored elephants may raise a lot of curiosity.”

2.3. Definite and specific reading

Heim (1982) claims that the study of **definiteness** begins with a hypothesis that the definite and indefinite articles transparently correspond to two primitive blocks of linguistic structure

³ Longobardi, G. (2003). A parametric mapping theory. *From NP to DP: Volume 1: The syntax and semantics of noun phrases*, 55, 241.

⁴ Longobardi, G. (2003). A parametric mapping theory. *From NP to DP: Volume 1: The syntax and semantics of noun phrases*, 55, 241.

of well-fixed and each with a different meaning. Following this hypothesis, definiteness is strictly associated with the definite article (*the*, *il* “the.SG.M”, *i* “the.PL.M”), whereas indefiniteness is correspondingly associated with the use of the indefinite article (*a*, *un* “a.SG”, *dei* “a.PL.M”).

Russel (1905) argues that a simple sentence with either definite or indefinite DP has the following truth conditions: sentence **Błąd! Nie można odnaleźć źródła odwołania.** is true if there is exactly one girl and if this girl left. In all other cases, sentence **Błąd! Nie można odnaleźć źródła odwołania.** is false (for instance, if there is no girl or there are multiple girls or if the specific girl did not leave). Sentence **Błąd! Nie można odnaleźć źródła odwołania.** is true if there is at least one girl that left and, respectively, it is false if no girl left.

(15) *The girl left.*

(16) *A girl left.*

According to Russel, the main and most important difference between definiteness and indefiniteness is a difference in truth conditions. The author claims that substituting a definite article with an indefinite one leads to a strong assertion. Namely, sentence **Błąd! Nie można odnaleźć źródła odwołania.** entails sentence **Błąd! Nie można odnaleźć źródła odwołania.**, but sentence **Błąd! Nie można odnaleźć źródła odwołania.** does not entail sentence **Błąd! Nie można odnaleźć źródła odwołania..** Sentence **Błąd! Nie można odnaleźć źródła odwołania.** also makes an additional claim, namely that there is only one girl. In this manner, definiteness refers to one single entity.

We turn now to the concept of specificity. **Specificity** is a semantic-pragmatic notion that, among other things, distinguishes between different interpretations of indefinite NP (von Heusinger, 2011). The notion is related to the communicative or pragmatic notion of “referential intention”. A speaker intends to refer to a particular referent that the speaker “has in mind”. Specificity thus indicates an entity with concrete characteristics which is known to both speaker and listener (Frascarelli et al., 2012).

(17) Specific definite reading

Ho lasciato il computer a casa.

have.1SG leave.PP the.SG.M computer.SG in house.SG

“I left the computer at home.”

(18) Non-specific definite reading

Oggi tutti gli studenti usano il
computer.

today every.M the.PL.M student.PL use.3PL the.SG.M
computer.SG

“Nowadays every student uses the computer.”

(19) Specific indefinite reading

Maria è simpatica: una babysitter così non si
trova più.

Maria be.3SG nice.F a.SG.F babysitter.SG such not one
find.3SG more

“Maria is nice: you can't find such a babysitter anymore.”

(20) Non-specific indefinite reading

Sto cercando una babysitter nuova.

Be.1SG look.PRESP a.SG.F babysitter.SG new.F

“I am looking for a new babysitter.”

The above-presented sentences (from **Błąd! Nie można odnaleźć źródła odwołania.** to **Błąd! Nie można odnaleźć źródła odwołania.**) reveal the combination of two features discussed in this section, specificity and definiteness. In sentence **Błąd! Nie można odnaleźć źródła odwołania.**, the referent of DP (*the computer*) is known to both speaker and listener, and it has some specific characteristics which the speaker has in mind. In example **Błąd! Nie można odnaleźć źródła odwołania.**, *il computer* is definite since every student has his own computer. Nevertheless, the referent is not specific either for the speaker or for the listener. In **Błąd! Nie można odnaleźć źródła odwołania.**, *una baby-sitter* is not concrete (it refers to babysitters as a category) and, therefore, it is indefinite, even though a babysitter has some specific

characteristics which the speaker has in mind. Finally, in sentence **Błąd! Nie można odnaleźć źródła odwołania.**, *una babysitter* is indefinite and also non-specific (it does not have any specific characteristic).

An important claim is thus that definiteness and indefiniteness do not occur “alone” in Italian. These notions always combine with specificity (specific vs. non-specific).

3. Theories on the DP-structure

There are two major approaches, a syntactic and a semantic one, which are identified in the theoretical literature dedicated to the cross-linguistic differences in the interpretations of DPs. According to Longobardi (1994, 2001), the internal structure of a NP involves the presence of the functional projection of D (the determiner), even if this constituent is not overtly realized. So not only languages with overt determiners, but also languages with BN share the same internal structure, whereby the functional projection DP selects a complement NP. Longobardi argues that the difference between, for instance, a language like English and a Romance language consists in the fact that in the latter N-to-D movement occurs in the overt syntax, whereas in the former it occurs at LF. Longobardi (1994) claims that only DPs and not NPs can function as arguments.

Chierchia (1998) suggests an alternative approach to the analysis of DPs in which the cross-linguistic differences are explained from a semantic point of view. Chierchia claims that definite articles in Romance languages encode a slightly different semantic meaning than English definite articles. He argues that the definite article in both English and Romance lexicalizes maximality. For instance, the DP *the tigers* in **Błąd! Nie można odnaleźć źródła odwołania.** denotes the maximal set of tigers in the discourse (the tigers that have been already mentioned or the ones which are visually present, etc.) and it is possible to get the same reading in **Błąd! Nie można odnaleźć źródła odwołania..** Nevertheless, in Romance languages, the same form also encodes a kind-formation: the DP *le tigri* in **Błąd! Nie można odnaleźć źródła odwołania.** can denote either the maximal salient number of tigers (with definite/specific reading) or the entire category/kind of tigers (the generic/kind reading). This argument is supported by the fact that plural DPs behave the same with a true kind reading and with a generic reading. With the kind predicates such as *be common*, English requires BNs

as in sentence **Błąd! Nie można odnaleźć źródła odwołania.**, whereas Romance languages require definite plurals as in **Błąd! Nie można odnaleźć źródła odwołania..**

(21) *The tigers eat meat.*

(22) *Le tigri mangiano carne.*
the.PL.F tiger.PL eat.3PL meat.SG

“The tigers eat meat.”

(23) (#*The*) *tigers are common in this area.*

(24) *Le tigri sono comuni in questa zona.*
the.PL.F tiger.PL be.3PL common.PL in this.F area.SG
“(The) lions are common in this area.”

3.1. The syntactic approach

Let us consider the syntactic approach in more detail. According to Longobardi (1994), BNs with indefinite interpretation are restricted to lexically governed positions. Longobardi claims that BNs are not exactly ‘bare’ since they are in fact embedded in a full-fledged DP-structure, with an empty D head. The presence of the empty D head provides an explanation not only for the restricted distribution, but also for the indefinite interpretation of BNs. Longobardi maintains that an empty D head is associated with an existential reading (see also Longobardi, 2001, 2003). In addition, the empty D head is just like any other empty category and, as such, it must be lexically governed. Therefore, BNs with an indefinite reading are restricted to the lexically governed positions.

BNs also convey other interpretations. They involve “generic DPs” and proper names which are not restricted to lexically governed positions. Longobardi accounts for these BNs by arguing that N-to-D movement occurs either in the overt syntax or at LF. The N-to-D movement has two effects. The first effect is that BNs are no longer distributionally restricted to the lexically governed positions since a noun fills the D-position. The second effect is that the DP is no longer existentially interpreted, due to the fact that the D is not empty anymore, so it gets the generic reading.

The proposal of an empty D-position is also motivated by the theoretical claim that only DPs can function as arguments (see also Szabolcsi, 1987, 1994; Stowell, 1989), such as mentioned above. Due to this claim, NPs are predicates or “propositions” and D converts them into

arguments. Szabolcsi indicated that in this case typical Ds, such as articles, are similar to complementizers and both are “subordinators”. Longobardi (1994) claims that D has an individualizing or singularizing function: it has the ability to pick out a single instance of what is described by a NP. This function is associated with the similar (however not identical) assumption that D has the function of mediation between the description (predication) provided by the NP and a specific entity in the real world which the description is applied to.

Longobardi (2001) describes the functional structure of determiners. For this purpose, Longobardi divides all natural languages in five subclasses:

(25)

- a. Languages with no BNs (French)
- b. Languages with stricter BNs (apparently the rest of Romance languages: Spanish, Italian, etc.)
- c. Languages with freer BNs (English and perhaps most of Germanic languages)
- d. Languages with indefinite bare singulars and only a definite lexical article (Icelandic, Celtic, Hebrew)
- e. Languages with ambiguous bare singulars (i.e. article-less languages: Russian, Czech, Latin, Polish)

According to Longobardi, natural languages differ according to the possibility of omitting determiners. The most restrictive type of natural language is represented by French in which the D-position has to be filled by a nominal arguments and is often superfluous for non-arguments (Szabolcsi, 1987; Stowell, 1989, 1991; Longobardi, 1994). French BNs can occur as predicates, idiomatic expressions, exclamations and vocatives, in addition to certain propositional complements, however, these NPs are not allowed to have the canonical argument functions.

Another macrotype is exemplified by the rest of the Romance languages and by most of the Germanic ones. These languages display exactly the same asymmetry between arguments and non-arguments as French does, however, only with respect to singular count nouns. This macrotype can be subdivided into two types represented by the Romance languages (with the exception of French) and by the Germanic languages. The use of BNs in Romance and Germanic languages differs in their syntactic distribution and semantic interpretation. The first

difference can be observed in the position of BNs within the structure. While Romance languages only permit BNs in complement position and never as preverbal subjects, English BNs can also occur in argument positions. As claimed by Longobardi (2003), the difference in the semantic interpretation of BNs is the following: in Romance languages the possible interpretation is the indefinite one; in many cases the existential one and sometimes the generic one, however, the last case only occurs if the sentence at issue independently provides an external operator for generic reading. The latter is impossible for Italian BNs where a noun necessarily denotes the kind itself, as it can be observed in **Błąd! Nie można odnaleźć źródła odwołania..** On the contrary, in English BNs can have a generic interpretation which refers to a kind ('kind-referring'), as it can be seen in **Błąd! Nie można odnaleźć źródła odwołania..**

(26) *Tomatoes were introduced in Europe after 1492.*

(27) **Pomodori furono introdotti in Europa dopo il 1492.*
 tomato.PL be.3PL.REM introduce.PP in Europe after the.SG.M
 1492

"Tomatoes were introduced in Europe after 1492."

In the kind-denoting sentences in Romance languages, the use of a definite article is obligatory, as it can be seen in **Błąd! Nie można odnaleźć źródła odwołania..**

(28) *I pomodori furono introdotti in Europa dopo il 1492.*
 the.PL.M tomato.PL be.3PL.REM introduce.PP in Europe after
 the.SG.M 1492

"Tomatoes were introduced in Europe after 1492."

In all these languages, the singular count nouns can be used without determiners only as non-arguments.

Nevertheless, most natural languages probably do not permit bare singulars to be arguments. Some of these languages give bare singulars the same interpretation as in English, German or the Romance languages with indefinite NP. In these cases, the noun receives a generic or existential interpretation. Some examples of this kind of languages are: Icelandic, Welsh and Irish, Hungarian, Hebrew and Arabic.

The last language type includes the languages which allow all types of determinerless nominal arguments, including bare singulars, and corresponding to the definite and the indefinite interpretation of Western European languages. Most Slavic and Latinate languages are the typical examples of these languages. Assuming the correctness of this claim, these languages would not have definite or indefinite articles, but only a much more complex semantic structure of the DP-structure. The expectation seems to be fulfilled and in this case it is assumed that if a language allows bare singulars it also allows plural BNs.

The difference between languages of type (25)d and of type (25)e is that, with the former the interpretation of BNs is limited to the indefinite interpretation, whereas with the latter, the interpretation is extralinguistic since the meaning of the noun is determined by a pragmatic process.

3.2. The semantic approach

As said above, Chierchia's (1994) alternative approach to the DP-structure concentrates on the semantics of this structure and argues for the existence of a dedicated parameter, the Nominal Mapping Parameter (NMP) that offers a theoretical account of the cross-linguistic differences between languages in the distribution of NPs and their interpretations. According to Chierchia, the best way to classify languages is to observe their flexibility in allowing BNs in argument position. The NMP divides natural languages into three groups, as it can be observed in **Błąd! Nie można odnaleźć źródła odwołania..**

(29) Nominal Mapping Parameter

NP [+arg -pred] e.g., Classifier languages like Chinese

NP [-arg +pred] e.g., Romance languages like Spanish or Italian

NP [+arg +pred] e.g., Germanic languages like English

Chierchia argues that languages without determiners such as Chinese allow NPs to be arguments and, in this manner, NPs can occur as BNs in argument position. Nevertheless, in the languages of the second group, such as Italian or Spanish, NPs can only behave as predicates. In order to be converted into arguments, NPs require a determiner. Finally, in the last group of languages, for example English, NPs can either be arguments (in this case they occur as bare) or predicates (when the NP is preceded by a determiner). In this manner, the languages of the last group are the 'union' of the previous two groups. Nevertheless, according

to Chierchia, there is a cross-linguistic variation within the groups. Some Romance languages (e.g. Italian) allow BNs in a lexically governed position such as in (30).

- (30) *Mangio biscotti per la colazione.*
eat.1SG cookie.PL for the.SG.F breakfast.SG
“I eat cookies for breakfast.”

According to Chierchia, BNs in subject position are ungrammatical in Italian (see also Longobardi, 1994; Renzi et al., 1991), therefore, definite plurals can be interpreted as both generic and specific, opposite to the situation occurring in English. This study will show contradictory results for Italian in this respect.

One of the questions that is relevant for the present research is the following: why is English unable to use definite plurals for the same purpose as Italian does? Chierchia argues that the answer can be found in the principle of economy, so-called “Avoid Structure Principle”. According to this principle, when a bare NP and a DP have the same meaning, the simpler structure (the bare NP) would always be the preferred one. For this reason, to express the generic reading in English, the use of bare plurals is the correct option; the generic reading of definite plurals is blocked by bare plurals. In Italian, definite plurals get both the generic and the definite/specific reading.

3.3. Grande Grammatica Italiana di Consultazione

Renzi, Salivi & Cardinaletti (1991) is a third approach that have to be considered in the context of this study as it introduces a novel aspect to the study of DPs, namely their position in the sentence. Renzi et al. (1991) argue that there exist two forms of articles in Italian (determiners): definite and indefinite. According to Renzi et al., three types of NPs can be distinguished in Italian from the semantic point of view: definite (*i cani*, ‘the dogs’), indefinite specific (*dei cani*, ‘dogs’) and indefinite non-specific (*dei cani*, ‘dogs’)⁵. A definite NP is known to both the speaker and the listener. The indefinite specific NP is known only to the speaker and not to the listener while the indefinite non-specific NP is unknown to both the speaker and the listener.

⁵ Nevertheless, Renzi et al. (1991) claim that the definiteness of a NP does not depend necessarily on the use of the article. The absence of a definite article does not block the definite reading and in this manner the two types of indefinite NPs can have also a definite reading.

But most importantly, Renzi et al (1991) claim that the position of the NP in the sentence can also be important to determine the degree of definiteness of a noun: the preverbal position is, in general, reserved for the noun that is already known (see (31) and (32)**Błąd! Nie można odnaleźć źródła odwołania.**) . As for the generic reading, Renzi et al. suggest that either the indefinite or the definite article can be used, even though the second option seems to be more plausible. The authors indicate that BNs can have, in some cases, the same interpretation as nouns with indefinite articles. However, they claim that the use of plural BNs in Italian is only possible in three cases: with BNs as subjects, but only in postverbal position (see (33)), with BNs in object position and with BNs in a prepositional phrase (PP). For this reason, Renzi et al. claim that the use of BNs as subjects in preverbal position is impossible in Italian, with the exception of some literary styles (see (34)).⁶

(31) Specific definite reading⁷

<i>Il</i>	<i>padre</i>	<i>di</i>	<i>Carlo</i>	<i>è</i>	<i>malato.</i>
the.SG.M	father.SG	of	Carlo	be.3SG	sick.M
“The Carlo’s father is sick.”					

(32) Specific indefinite reading⁸

<i>È</i>	<i>arrivato</i>	<i>un</i>	<i>nostro</i>	<i>amico</i>	<i>a</i>	<i>Roma.</i>
be.3SG	arrive.PP	a.SG.M	our.SG.M	friend.SG	to	Rome
“A friend of ours arrived in Rome.”						

(33) *Ho visto barche in mezzo al mare.*⁹

Have.1SG	see.PP	boat.PL	in	middle of the.SG.M	sea.SG
“I have seen boats in the middle of the sea.”					

(34) *Soldati sperduti correveano per le strade.*¹⁰

soldier.PL	lost.PL.M	ran.3PL.PST.IPFV	for	the.PL.F	street.PL
“Lost soldiers ran through the street.”					

⁶ The literary styles will not be examined in this paper.

⁷ Renzi, L., Salvi, G., & Cardinaletti, A. (Eds.). (1991). *Grande grammatica italiana di consultazione: I. La frase: I sintagmi nominale e preposizionale* (Vol. 1). Il mulino, 367.

⁸ Renzi, L., Salvi, G., & Cardinaletti, A. (Eds.). (1991). *Grande grammatica italiana di consultazione: I. La frase: I sintagmi nominale e preposizionale* (Vol. 1). Il mulino, 366.

⁹ Renzi, L., Salvi, G., & Cardinaletti, A. (Eds.). (1991). *Grande grammatica italiana di consultazione: I. La frase: I sintagmi nominale e preposizionale* (Vol. 1). Il mulino, 374.

¹⁰ Renzi, L., Salvi, G., & Cardinaletti, A. (Eds.). (1991). *Grande grammatica italiana di consultazione: I. La frase: I sintagmi nominale e preposizionale* (Vol. 1). Il mulino, 375.

On the basis of what we have seen so far, the major distinction between Chierchia's approach and Longobardi's approach boils down to argument structure and particularly to the presence of a DP projection. Chierchia (1998) claims that the DP is not always realized above the NP. In contrast, Longobardi (1994, 2001) assumes that the DP is always present in the structure, even though it sometimes remains empty (as already mentioned in section **Błąd! Nie można odnaleźć źródła odwołania.**). According to Longobardi NPs are predicates and D converts them into arguments. Conversely, Chierchia claims that in some languages NP can have the function of an argument. Renzi et al. (1991) add an important point to the discussion by arguing that the position of DPs can affect the definiteness of a noun. This claim will be examined in detail within this thesis. For the purpose of this study we will first rely on three theories presented above. However, as we will see below, our empirical results will not completely support them.

4. Readings of DPs in Italian

We turn now to examine the interpretative aspects of DPs in Italian as predicted by Longobardi's (1994, 2001, 2003), Chierchia's (1998) and Renzi et al.'s (1991) theories.

The first interpretation under examination the **generic reading** of DPs. Since N has to be governed, we obtain as a consequence the impossibility of having BNs. This implies that plural DPs are ambiguous and depending on the context they may have a generic or definite reading. While in English BNs are used, Italian expresses this reading through a definite article (see example (35) below). This is because BNs in ungoverned positions are argued to be very rare¹¹ in Italian (e.g. Chierchia, 1998; Longobardi, 1994, 2001).

(35) Generic reading

<i>Le</i>	<i>fragole</i>	<i>sono rosse.</i>
the.PL.F	strawberry.PL	be.3PL red.PL.F
“Strawberries are red.”		

According to Longobardi (2001, 2003), BNs are the structure that must be used to express the **existential reading** in Italian (see (36)**Błąd! Nie można odnaleźć źródła odwołania.**). This claim

¹¹ Specially Chierchia (1998) claims that BNs in ungoverned positions are ungrammatical in Italian. Renzi et al. (1991) assume that BNs in preverbal position are not correct, except for some special cases and literary styles. Longobardi (2003) claims, on the contrary, that there are readings in which the use of a BN is mandatory and perfectly grammatical in Italian.

sounds controversial since – as we said above - BNs in ungoverned positions should be ungrammatical in Italian (e.g. Renzi et al., 1991; Chierchia, 1998). Nevertheless, it seems that they do occur in Italian, but they have a different distribution than BNs in English. Indeed, sentence (36) is perfectly fine and it gets an existential interpretation.

(36) Existential reading

<i>Elefanti</i>	<i>di</i>	<i>colore</i>	<i>bianco</i>	<i>hanno</i>	<i>creato</i>	<i>in</i>
	<i>passato</i>	<i>grande</i>	<i>curiosità.</i>			
elephant.PL	of	color.SG	white.SG.M	have.3PL	create.PP	in
past		big.SG	curiosity.SG			

“White-colored elephants raised a lot of curiosity in the past.”

The **specific definite** and **non-specific definite** interpretations are expressed in Italian in the same way as in English. Renzi et al. (1991) claim that the definite article has to precede the noun to express the definite specific and definite non-specific interpretation (see (37) and (38)).

(37) Specific definite reading

<i>Le</i>	<i>figlie</i>	<i>di</i>	<i>Giovanni</i>	<i>stanno andando</i>	<i>in</i>	<i>centro.</i>
the.PL.F	daughter.PL	of	Giovanni	be.3PL go.GER	in	center.SG

“The daughters of Giovanni are going into the center.”

(38) Non-specific definite reading

<i>Gli</i>	<i>informatici</i>		<i>lavorano</i>	<i>in</i>	<i>telelavoro</i>	<i>due</i>	<i>giorni a</i>
		<i>settimana.</i>					

the.PL.M IT specialist.PL work.3PL in telework.SG two day.PL a week.SG

“The IT specialists work in telework two days a week.”

Another aspect in which Italian differs from English is the way of expressing the **specific indefinite** and **non-specific indefinite** reading. In contrast to English, plural indefinite articles are available in Italian and, according to Renzi et al. (1991), in order to express the indefinite specific and indefinite non-specific reading in Italian, the plural indefinite article must be used (see example (39) and (40)).

(39) Specific indefinite reading

Dei bambini che hanno partecipato alla festa
 sono andati via prima della torta!
 a.PL.M child.PL that have.3PL attend.PP at the.SG.F party.SG
 be.3PL go.PP away before of the.SG.F cake.SG

“Children who attended the party have left before the cake!”

(40) Non-specific indefinite reading

Dei rifugiati lavorano in nero per non essere
 identificati.
 a.PL refugee.PL work.3PL in black.SG.M to not be.INF
 identify.PP

“Refugees work in black in order not to be identified.”

Table 1 below gives an overview of the mapping between interpretation (the six interpretations under examination in this thesis), form and distribution of subject plural nouns in Italian, as predicted by Renzi et al. (1991), Longobardi (1994, 2001, 2003) and Chierchia (1998). The results of the study contradict some of these claims.

	Preverbal subject		Postverbal subject	
	D + N	BN	D + N	BN
Generic reading	+	-	+	-
Existential reading	-	+	-	+
Specific definite reading	+	-	+	-
Specific indefinite reading	+	-	+	-
Non-specific definite reading	+	-	+	-
Non-specific indefinite reading	+	-	+	-

Table 1. DP-structures used in Italian for the six interpretations under examination

5. This study

The main goal of this thesis is to give an empirically based description on how native speakers of Italian get the (i) generic, (ii) existential, (iii) specific definite, (iv) specific indefinite, (v) non-specific definite and (vi) non-specific indefinite interpretations of plural phrase in subject position. For this purpose, the theories of Chierchia (1998), Longobardi (1994, 2001, 2003) and

Renzi et al. (1991) will be used. The variables that we will examine are thus the presence (referred as DP) vs. absence (referred as BN) of the definite article and the preverbal vs. postverbal position of the subject. Since the position of the subject partly depends on the nature of the verb, we will consider transitives, unaccusatives and unergatives as three different categories.

5.1. Research Questions

The research questions of this thesis read as follows:

1. How do Italian speakers encode the generic, existential, specific definite, specific indefinite, non-specific definite and non-specific indefinite interpretations of plural subject DPs?
- 1.2. To which extent does the position of subject (preverbal vs. postverbal) affect various interpretations of subjects?
- 1.3. To which extent does the presence vs. absence of a determiner affect the interpretation of a subject?
- 1.4. To which extent is the interpretation affected by the nature of the verb (transitive, unergative, unaccusative)?

This study intends to contribute to the understanding of how plural subject DPs are interpreted in Italian by providing empirical data based on a survey conducted with 224 informants.

5.2. Hypotheses

Based on the arguments stressed in the above-described literature, the following assumptions are made.

With respect to the **generic reading**, it is assumed that Italian speakers (i) accept DPs and (ii) reject BNs (e.g. Chierchia, 1998; Longobardi, 1994, 2001, 2003). It is expected that (iii) the position of the subject (preverbal vs. postverbal) does not influence whether a sentence is accepted or not (since, according to Renzi et al. (1991), Italian permits both positions in various situations. It is predicted that (iv) some BNs are accepted in postverbal position, because postverbal BNs are grammatical in Italian and in some cases the postverbal BN can express a generic reading (Renzi et al., 1991).

Regarding the **existential reading**, L1 speakers are expected to (i) accept BNs and (ii) reject DPs. As is claimed by Longobardi (2003), the existential reading in Italian is only possible with BNs and it is not possible to get this interpretation when a noun is preceded by an article. Likewise, in this case it is not expected that (iii) the position of the subject influences the acceptance of a sentence.

Regarding the **specific definite, specific indefinite, non-specific definite and non-specific indefinite readings**, (i) DPs are expected to be accepted, whereas (ii) BNs are expected to be rejected. The reason for this hypothesis is that the use of article (definite or indefinite) is necessary to get the definite or indefinite interpretation (Renzi et al., 1991). Following this line of thought, (iii) BNs shall always be incorrect and, therefore, they are expected to be rejected also in postverbal position.

6. Methodology

6.1. Method

In order to answer the research questions of this thesis (cf. section **Błąd! Nie można odnaleźć źródła odwołania.**), the participants of this study completed an Acceptability Judgment Task (AJT).

In total, 216 test-items (for 54 different contexts) and 36 fillers (for 18 contexts) have been tested. Every participant had to evaluate 72 test-items and 36 fillers. Since 108 items are quite a lot, the test was divided in three sessions. All participants were divided into three groups and every group had to evaluate different items (a so-called “across subjects” evaluation): only one of three possible items was presented in each category. Participants were thus asked to evaluate maximally two sentences with the same context (randomized).

Each item of the AJT was preceded by a sentence that provided the context for the following target sentence. The participants were instructed to rate the acceptability of each sentence, in the context of the preceding sentence, using a Likert scale from 1 ('totally unacceptable/unnatural') to 7 ('perfectly acceptable/natural')¹². In total (three sessions altogether), this task takes about 45 minutes to be completed.

¹² It was decided to use a 7-point rating scale and not a 4-point scale, since it allows to distinguish subtler differences between participants' responses.

The items of the AJT tested six interpretations: the generic (36 items), the existential (36 items), the specific definite (36 items), the specific indefinite (36 items), the non-specific definite (36 items) and the non-specific indefinite (36 items). The items of each interpretation are divided into three categories (12 items per category), based on the type of verb used: **transitive** (*scrivere* “write”; *mangiare* “eat”; *dire* “say”), **unergative** (*lavorare* “work”; *dormire* “sleep”; *parlare* “speak”) and **unaccusative** (*andare* “go”; *cadere* “fall”; *arrivare* “arrive”). The items with the same verb tested for each category are distinguished by the formal features of the subject, namely: **preverbal DP**, **preverbal BN**, **postverbal DP** and **postverbal BN**. An example of one category is presented in (41) below.

(41) Generic reading (c.f. 11.1.1)

A: *Quali tematiche possono essere affrontate nella tesi di laurea, secondo il regolamento di Roma Tre?*

“Which topics can be addressed in the degree thesis, according to the rules of Roma Tre?”

a. B: *I laureandi scrivono la tesi in base ad uno dei temi studiati nei corsi universitari.*

“**The graduates** write their thesis on the basis of one of the themes studied in the university courses.”

b. B: *Laureandi scrivono la tesi in base ad uno dei temi studiati nei corsi universitari.*

“**Graduates** write their thesis on the basis of one of the themes studied in the university courses.”

c. B: *Scrivono la tesi i laureandi in base ad uno dei temi studiati nei corsi universitari.*

“Write their thesis **the graduates** on the basis of one of the themes studied in the university courses.”

d. B: *Scrivono la tesi laureandi in base ad uno dei temi studiati nei corsi universitari.*

“Write their thesis **graduates** on the basis of one of the themes studied in the university courses.”

The list of all the items used in this study can be found in the Appendix.

The AJT was loaded on the online platform *LimeSurvey*. The participants had to use a link to access the test and to answer the questions of the first part. The links to the second and third part of the AJT were sent via e-mail to them after 7 and 14 days from the day they received the first link. The responses were automatically recorded. The participants had unlimited time to complete the test.

6.2. Participants

The participants in this study were native speakers of Italian. In total, they were 224 participants (190 female and 34 male). The age varied between 18 and 60 years ($M = 20.18$, median=19). 51 participants of this group were bilingual, but for all of them Italian was the first and dominant language. All the participants had at least some knowledge of other languages (Chinese, Arabic, Russian, Polish, English, French, German, Spanish or Romanian).

7. Results

The following chapter presents all the results of the above-introduced study. The results are presented separately for each interpretation. Discussing the results, the verb type used in the test item (transitive, unergative or unaccusative) and the subject type (DP vs. BN) are considered. Additionally, the subject position is also taken into consideration (preverbal vs. postverbal).

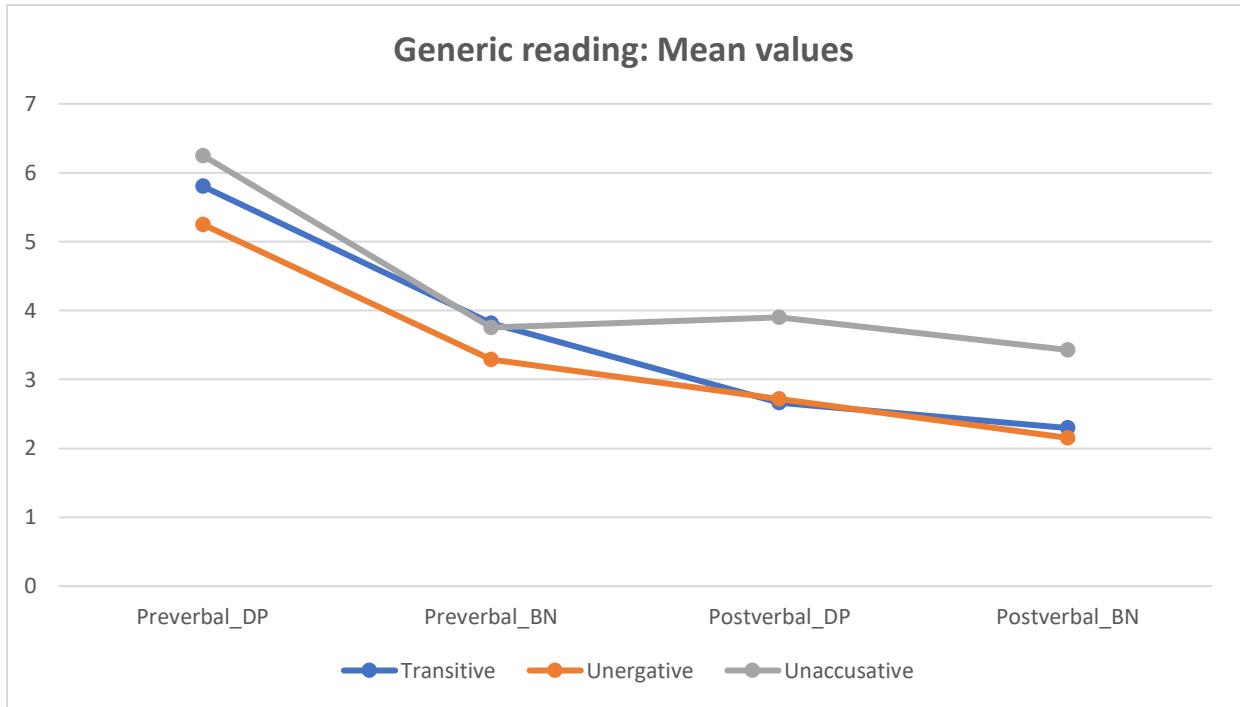
7.1. Generic reading

Table 2 below presents means and standard deviations (in brackets) of items intended for the **generic reading**.

	Preverbal subject		Postverbal subject	
	DP	BN	DP	BN
Transitive	5.80 (1.56)	3.81 (1.95)	2.66 (1.59)	2.29 (1.56)
Unergative	5.25 (1.89)	3.29 (1.83)	2.72 (1.64)	2.15 (1.43)
Unaccusative	6.25 (1.34)	3.75 (1.80)	3.90 (1.80)	3.43 (1.93)

Table 2. Generic reading: Mean values and Standard Deviation of interpretive judgments

Graph 1 presents mean values of items with **generic reading**.



Graph 1. Generic reading: Mean values of interpretive judgments

In our model for generic interpretation we observe a significant effect related to the type of subject with all types of verbs: transitives ($F(3, 892) = 199.4, p < 0.001$), unergatives ($F(3, 892) = 139.5, p < 0.001$) and unaccusatives ($F(3, 892) = 124.8, p < 0.001$). More in detail:

The post hoc Tukey Honest Significant Differences (THSD) test shows that preverbal DP subjects (example (42) below) are the most preferred form with all types of verbs (transitives: $M = 5.80, SD = 1.56, d = 2.00; d = 3.14; d = 3.51, p < 0.001$; unergatives: $M = 5.25, SD = 1.89, d = 1.96; d = 2.53; d = 3.10, p < 0.001$; unaccusatives: $M = 6.25, SD = 1.34, d = 2.50; d = 2.35; d = 2.82, p < 0.001$).

(42) A: *Sono preoccupata perché non so come potrò finire il progetto dopo la nascita di mio figlio...*

B: *Ma no: i bimbi appena nati dormono la maggior parte del tempo!* (c.f. 11.1.1)

“A: I’m worried because I don’t know how I can finish the project after my son is born...

B: But no, **the newborn babies** sleep most of the time!”

The post hoc THSD test also reveals that preverbal BN subjects (example (43)(43)) are significantly more accepted than postverbal subjects with transitive verbs ($M = 3.81, SD = 1.95, d = 1.15; d = 1.51, p < 0.001$) and with unergative verbs ($M = 3.29, SD = 1.83, d = 0.57; d = 1.14, p = 0.002; p < 0.001$), but not with unaccusative verbs ($M = 3.75, SD = 1.80, d = -0.15; d = 0.33,$

$p = 0.80$; $p = 0.19$). However, it must be said that in all cases the use of preverbal DPs is by far the preferred strategy.

(43) *Non capisco com'è possibile che, anche se si sa che fast-food significa "junk food"...*

... **giovani** mangiano spesso le schifezze di McDonald's. (c.f. 11.1.1)

"I don't understand how it is possible that even if we know that fast-food means "junk food" ...

... **young people** often eat McDonald's crap."

According to the post hoc THSD test the difference between postverbal DPs and BNs is not significant with transitives ($d = 0.37$, $p = 0.10$). Nevertheless, postverbal BNs were significantly more rejected with unergatives ($M = 2.15$, $SD = 1.43$, $d = -0.57$, $p = 0.003$) and with unaccusatives ($M = 3.43$, $SD = 1.93$, $d = 0.47$, $p < 0.02$) than postverbal DPs (unergatives: $M = 2.72$, $SD = 1.64$; unaccusatives: $M = 3.90$, $SD = 1.80$). The generic reading was elicited with postverbal subjects with examples like these:

(44) *Abbiamo bisogno di comprare una nuova casa, ma costa troppo ...*

... e cadono **i soldi** dal cielo solamente nei sogni. (c.f. 11.1.1)

"We need to buy a new home, but it costs too much ...

... and falls **the money** from the sky only in dreams."

(45) A: *Mi viene proprio il mal di testa a sentire tutte queste volgarità.*

B: *Sono d'accordo. Dicono persone troppe parolacce quando si arrabbiano!!!* (c.f. 11.1.1)

"A: I just get a headache because of listening to all these vulgarities.

B: I agree. Say **people** too many swear words when they get angry!!!"

In our model for generic interpretation we also observe a significant effect related to the type of verb with all types of subjects: preverbal DPs ($F(2, 669) = 21.6$, $p < 0.001$), preverbal BNs ($F(2, 669) = 5.313$, $p = 0.005$), postverbal DPs ($F(2, 669) = 39.03$, $p < 0.001$) and postverbal BNs ($F(2, 669) = 39.9$, $p < 0.001$).

The post hoc THSD test shows that preverbal DPs are significantly most accepted with unaccusatives ($M = 6.25$, $SD = 1.34$), $d = 0.44$; $d = 1.00$, $p = 0.01$; $p < 0.001$. However, also the difference between the other two types of verbs is significant. Preverbal DP subjects are significantly more accepted with transitives ($M = 5.80$, $SD = 1.56$) than with unergatives ($M = 5.25$, $SD = 1.89$), $d = 0.55$, $p = 0.001$.

According to the post hoc THSD test preverbal BNs are significantly less accepted with unergatives ($M = 3.29$, $SD = 1.83$) than with unaccusatives ($M = 3.75$, $SD = 1.80$) and with transitives ($M = 3.81$, $SD = 1.95$), $d = -0.46$; $d = -0.52$, $p = 0.023$; $p = 0.01$. The difference between unaccusatives and transitives is not significant, $d = -0.06$, $p = 0.94$.

Regarding the postverbal subjects, both DP and BN subjects with unergatives (DP: $M = 2.72$, $SD = 1.64$; BN: $M = 2.15$, $SD = 1.43$) and with transitives (DP: $M = 2.66$, $SD = 1.59$; BN: $M = 2.29$, $SD = 1.56$) are significantly more rejected than with unaccusatives (DP: $M = 3.90$, $SD = 1.80$; BN: $M = 3.43$, $SD = 1.93$), $d = -1.18$; $d = -1.24$; $d = -1.28$, $d = -1.13$, $p < 0.001$. The difference between transitives and unergatives is not significant either with postverbal DPs ($d = -0.06$, $p = 0.93$) or with postverbal BNs ($d = 0.14$, $p = 0.63$).

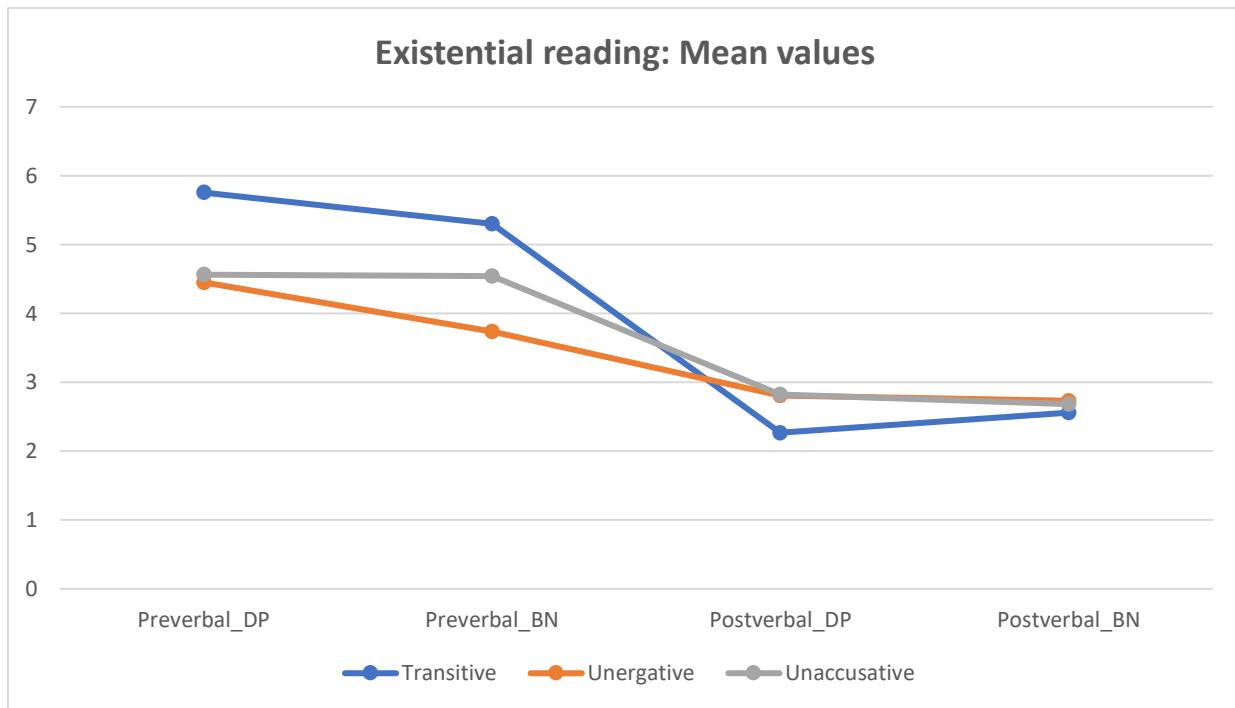
7.2. Existential reading

The next type of interpretation that we are going to examine is the **existential** one. Table 3 below presents mean values and standard deviations of items with existential reading.

	Preverbal subject		Postverbal subject	
	DP	BN	DP	BN
Transitive	5.75 (1.29)	5.30 (1.76)	2.27 (1.54)	2.56 (1.83)
Unergative	4.45 (1.94)	3.74 (2.12)	2.81 (1.74)	2.73 (1.82)
Unaccusative	4.56 (1.97)	4.54 (1.83)	2.82 (1.63)	2.68 (1.55)

Table 3. Existential reading: Means and Standard Deviation of interpretive judgments

Graph 2 presents means of items with **existential reading**.



Graph 2. Existential reading: Mean values of interpretive judgments

In our model for existential reading we observe a significant effect related to the type of subject with all types of verbs: transitives ($F(3, 892) = 280.9, p < 0.001$), unergatives ($F(3, 892) = 41.12, p < 0.001$) and unaccusatives ($F(3, 892) = 78.91, p < 0.001$).

The post hoc THSD test shows that – also in this case - preverbal DP subjects (example (46) below) are the most preferred option with transitives ($M = 5.75, SD = 1.29, d = 0.45; d = 3.47; d = 3.20, p = 0.02; p < 0.001; p < 0.001$) and with unergatives ($M = 4.45, SD = 1.94, d = 0.71; d = 1.64; d = 1.72, p < 0.001$). Conversely, the difference between preverbal DPs ($M = 4.56, SD = 1.97$) and preverbal BNs ($M = 4.54, SD = 1.83$) is not significant with unaccusatives, $d = 0.02, p = 1.00$. Hence, we see that the participants prefer preverbal DPs/NPs for this reading. With unergatives and unaccusatives the results are above chance level.

(46) A: *Cosa si potrebbe cucinare per tuo fratello adesso che sta in ospedale?*

B: *Beh, i pazienti operati mangiano di norma cose leggere.* (c.f. 11.1.2)

“A: What could you cook for your brother now that he is in the hospital?

B: Well, **the operated patients** usually eat light things.”

The post hoc THSD test shows also that preverbal BN (example (47)) are more accepted than postverbal subjects with transitive verbs ($M = 5.30, SD = 1.76, d = 3.04; d = 2.75, p < 0.001$), with unergatives ($M = 3.74, SD = 2.12, d = 0.93; d = 1.00, p < 0.001$) and with unaccusatives (M

= 4.54, SD = 1.83, d = 1.72; d = 1.86, $p < 0.001$). The preverbal BNs are accepted with transitives, are above chance with unaccusatives, but the results of preverbal BNs with unergatives are at chance.

(47) A: *Perché secondo te Luigi non vuole mai uscire con noi?*

B: *Guarda, persone che soffrono di depressione dormono molto, ma comunque sono sempre stanche.* (c.f. 11.1.2)

“A: What do you think, why Luigi never wants to go out with us?

B: Look, **people suffering from depression** sleep a lot, but still they are always tired.”

Postverbal subjects are **not accepted** in this reading and the difference between verb types is not significant (transitives: d = -0.29, p = 0.23; unergatives: d = 0.08, p = 0.97; unaccusatives: d = 0.14, p = 0.84). The existential reading with postverbal subjects was elicited with examples like the following:

(48) *Loro sono molto timidi e non si sa mai cosa pensano, invece ...*

... dicono **le persone che non si vergognano** semplicemente la propria opinione.

(c.f. 11.1.2)

“They are very shy and you never know what they think, instead ...

... say **the people who are not ashamed** simply their own opinion.”

(49) A: *Sai, quanto si guadagna in questa ditta?*

B: *Arrivano stipendi dei manager a più di 10.000 euro.* (c.f. 11.1.2)

“A: Do you know how much you earn in this company?

B: Arrive **managers salaries** at more than 10.000 euros.”

In our model for existential interpretation a one-way ANOVA shows a significant effect related to the type of verb with preverbal DPs ($F(2, 669) = 37.76, p < 0.001$), with preverbal BNs ($F(2, 669) = 37.67, p < 0.001$) and with postverbal DPs ($F(2, 669) = 8.33, p < 0.001$). No significant effect of type of verb is found with postverbal BN subjects ($F(2, 669) = 0.60, p = 0.551$).

The post hoc THSD test shows that preverbal DP subjects are significantly more accepted with transitive verbs ($M = 5.75, SD = 1.29$) than with unergatives ($M = 4.45, SD = 1.94$) and with unaccusatives ($M = 4.56, SD = 1.97$), $d = 1.19$; $d = 1.30, p < 0.001$. The difference between unergatives and unaccusatives is not significant, $d = -0.11, p = 0.78$. The same pattern is observed with postverbal DPs. Postverbal DPs are significantly more rejected with transitives

($M = 2.27$, $SD = 1.54$) than with unergatives ($M = 2.81$, $SD = 1.74$) and with unaccusatives ($M = 2.82$, $SD = 1.63$), $d = -0.55$; $d = -0.54$, $p = 0.001$. The difference between unergatives and unaccusatives is not significant, $d = -0.01$, $p = 1.00$.

According to the post hoc THSD test preverbal DPs are significantly more accepted with transitives ($M = 5.30$, $SD = 1.76$) than with unergatives ($M = 2.74$, $SD = 2.12$) and with unaccusatives ($M = 4.54$, $SD = 1.83$), $d = 1.57$; $d = 0.76$, $p < 0.001$. The difference between unergatives and unaccusatives is also significant. Preverbal BNs are less accepted with unergatives than with unaccusatives, $d = -0.80$, $p < 0.001$. The results with unergatives are at chance level.

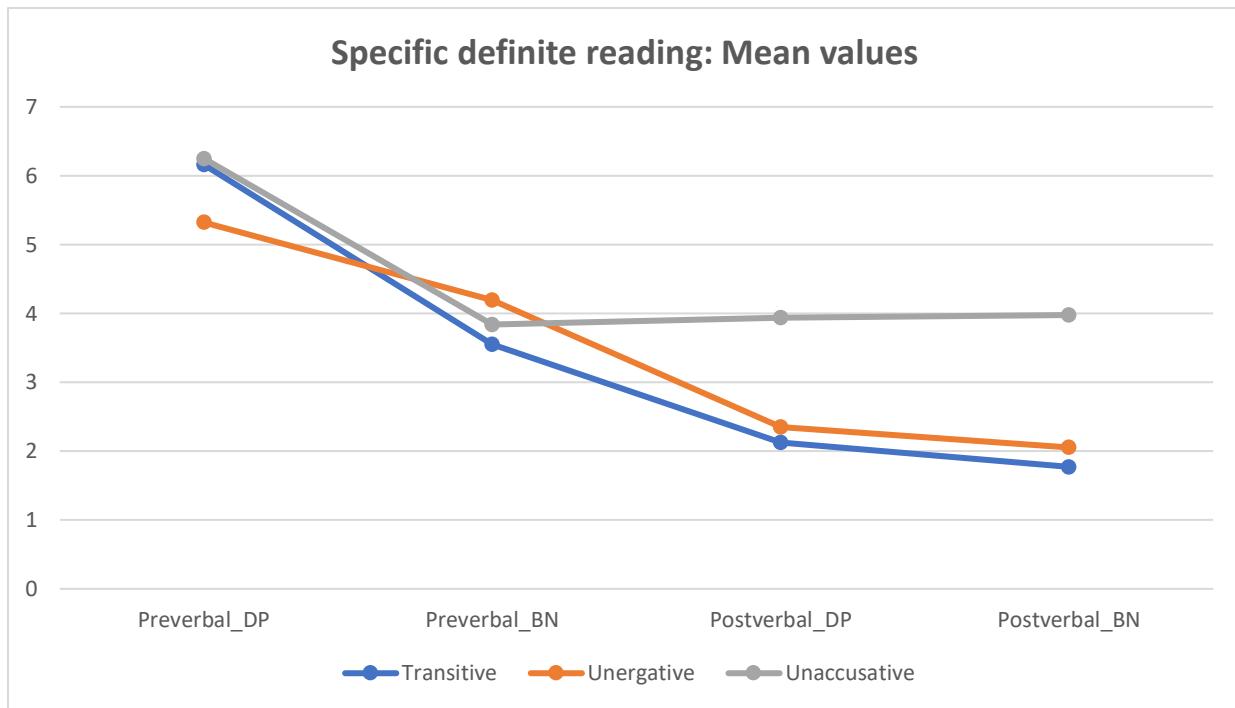
7.3. Specific definite reading

In table 4 the results of the interpretations for the **specific definite readings** are presented.

	Preverbal subject		Postverbal subject	
	DP	BN	DP	BN
Transitive	6.16 (1.33)	3.55 (1.98)	2.12 (1.36)	1.77 (1.26)
Unergative	5.32 (1.84)	4.19 (1.92)	2.35 (1.42)	2.05 (1.43)
Unaccusative	6.25 (1.24)	3.84 (1.74)	3.94 (1.87)	3.97 (2.35)

Table 4. Specific definite reading: Means and Standard Deviation of interpretive judgments

Graph 3 below presents mean values of items intended for **specific definite reading**.



Graph 3. Specific definite reading: Mean values of interpretive judgments

In our model for specific definite reading we observe that the type of subject is a significant effect with all types of verbs: transitive verbs ($F(3, 892) = 389.6, p < 0.001$), unergative verbs ($F(3, 892) = 193.4, p < 0.001$) and unaccusative verbs ($F(3, 892) = 90.11, p < 0.001$).

The post hoc THSD test shows that preverbal DP subjects are preferred with all types of verbs: transitives ($M = 6.16, SD = 1.33, d = 2.61; d = 4.04; d = 4.39, p < 0.001$), unergatives ($M = 5.32, SD = 1.84, d = 1.13; d = 2.97; d = 3.27, p < 0.001$) and unaccusatives ($M = 6.25, SD = 1.24, d = 2.41; d = 2.31; d = 2.28, p < 0.001$). The specific definite reading with preverbal DP subjects was elicited with examples like this:

(50) *Le lezioni di letteratura sono di solito lunghissime, invece ...*

... i professori del mio corso dicono tutto in poche parole. (c.f. 11.1.3)

“Literature lessons are usually very long, instead ...

... the professors of my course say everything in a nutshell.’

The post hoc THSD test also shows that preverbal BNs (example (51)) were significantly more accepted than postverbal subjects with transitives ($M = 3.55, SD = 1.98, d = 1.42; d = 1.78, p < 0.001$) and with unergatives ($M = 4.19, SD = 1.92, d = 1.84; d = 2.14, p < 0.001$). The difference between preverbal BNs ($M = 3.82, SD = 1.74$) and postverbal subjects (DP: $M = 3.94, SD = 1.87$;

BN: M = 3.97, SD = 2.35) is not significant with unaccusatives ($d = 0.098$; $d = 0.13$, $p = 0.94$; $p = 0.87$). In all three the cases the results are at chance level.

(51) *Nella famiglia di mia madre sono tutti molto organizzati e precisi, invece ...*

... **parenti di mio padre** arrivano in ritardo ad ogni appuntamento. (c.f. 11.1.3)

“In my mother’s family they are all well organized and precise, instead ...

... **relatives of my father** arrive late for every appointment.”

The results of postverbal subjects, both DPs and BNs, are not significantly different with all verb types: transitives ($d = 0.35$, $p = 0.07$), unergatives ($d = 0.30$, $p = 0.23$) and unaccusatives ($d = 0.04$, $p = 1.00$). The results of postverbal subjects with transitives (DP: M = 2.12, SD = 1.36; BN: M = 1.77, SD = 1.26) and unaccusatives (DP: M = 2.35, SD = 1.42; BN: M = 2.05, SD = 1.43) show rejection. The results with unaccusatives are at chance (DP: M = 3.94, SD = 1.87; BN: M = 3.97, SD = 2.35). The specific definite reading with postverbal subjects was tested with examples like the following:

(52) A: *Ho saputo che c’è stato un rinnovamento nel Dipartimento di tuo marito mentre era in congedo.*

B: *Sì, e parlano i colleghi di Mario benissimo del loro Direttore.* (c.f. 11.1.3)

“A: I heard that there was a renewal on your husband’s department while he was on leave.

B: Yes, and speak **Mario’s colleagues** very well of their director.”

(53) A: *Mamma mia, fra poco non mi rimane nessun capello in testa! Perché ne perdo così tanti?*

B: *Sai, cadono di più capelli tinti perché si indeboliscono.* (c.f. 11.1.3)

“A: O my god, soon I have no hair left on my head! Why I lose so many?

B: You know, fall more **hair dyed** because they get weaker.”

In our model for specific definite reading a one-way ANOVA shows a significant effect related to the type of verb with all types of subjects in two positions: preverbal DPs ($F(2, 669) = 26.3$, $p < 0.001$), preverbal BNs ($F(2, 669) = 6.57$, $p = 0.002$), postverbal DPs ($F(2, 669) = 89.03$, $p < 0.001$) and postverbal BNs ($F(2, 669) = 105.3$, $p < 0.001$).

The post hoc THSD test shows that preverbal DPs are significantly less accepted with unergatives (M = 5.32, SD = 1.84) than with transitives (M = 6.16, SD = 1.33) and unaccusatives

($M = 6.25$, $SD = 1.24$), $d = -0.84$; $d = -0.93$, $p < 0.001$. The difference between transitives and unaccusatives is not significant, $d = -0.09$, $p = 0.80$.

Regarding preverbal BN subjects, the difference between transitives ($M = 3.55$, $SD = 1.98$) and unaccusatives ($M = 3.84$, $SD = 1.74$) is not significant, $d = -0.29$, $p = 0.23$. The difference between unergatives ($M = 4.19$, $SD = 1.92$) and unaccusatives is also not significant, $d = 0.35$, $p = 0.12$. Only the difference between transitives and unergatives is significant, $d = -0.64$, $p = 0.001$.

Regarding postverbal subjects, the post hoc THSD test shows that postverbal subjects with unaccusative verbs (DP: $M = 3.94$, $SD = 1.87$; BN: $M = 3.94$, $SD = 2.35$) are significantly less rejected than with transitives (DP: $M = 2.12$, $SD = 1.36$; BN: $M = 1.77$, $SD = 1.26$) and with unergatives (DP: $M = 2.35$, $SD = 1.42$; BN: $M = 2.05$, $BN, SD = 1.43$), $d = 2.20$; $d = 1.92$, $p < 0.001$. Indeed, with unaccusatives postverbal BNs are **not rejected**: their M scores 3.97. The difference between transitives and unergatives is not significant, $d = -0.28$, $p = 0.20$.

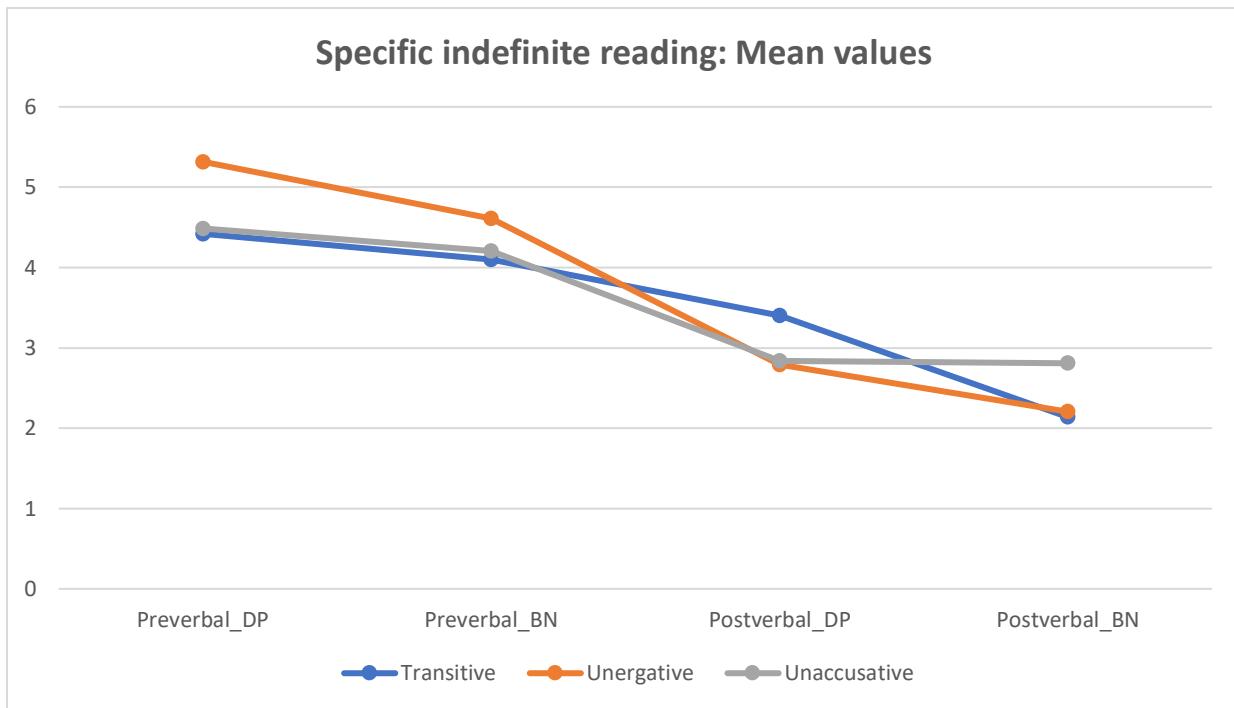
7.4. Specific indefinite reading

In table 5 all the means and the standard deviations for the **specific indefinite reading** are presented.

	Preverbal subject		Postverbal subject	
	DP	BN	DP	BN
Transitive	4.42 (2.14)	4.01 (1.96)	3.40 (2.10)	2.14 (1.29)
Unergative	5.32 (1.72)	4.61 (1.82)	2.79 (1.80)	2.21 (1.53)
Unaccusative	4.49 (2.11)	4.21 (1.94)	2.84 (1.59)	2.81 (1.61)

Table 5. Specific indefinite reading: Means and Standard Deviation of interpretive judgments

Graph 4 below presents mean values of items with the specific indefinite reading.



Graph 4. Specific indefinite reading: Mean values of interpretive judgments

Our model for the specific indefinite reading shows a significant effect related to the type of subject with all types of verbs: transitive verbs ($F(3, 892) = 63.41, p < 0.001$), unergative verbs ($F(3, 892) = 163.6, p < 0.001$) and unaccusative verbs ($F(3, 892) = 52.88, p < 0.001$).

The post hoc THSD test shows that preverbal DP subjects (example (54) below) are significantly the most preferred ones with unergatives ($M = 5.32, SD = 1.72, d = 0.71; d = 2.53; d = 3.11, p < 0.001$). With transitives and with unaccusatives the results attested for preverbal DPs (transitives: $M = 4.42, SD = 2.14$; unaccusatives: $M = 4.49, SD = 2.11$) are not significantly different from those of preverbal BNs (transitives: $M = 4.01, SD = 1.96$; unaccusatives: $M = 4.21, SD = 1.94$), $d = 0.32; d = 0.28; p = 0.28; p = 0.36$.

(54) A: *Non c'è modo di svegliare questi ragazzi!*

B: **Dei giovani che hanno ballato tutta la notte dormono pure durante un bombardamento!** (c.f. 11.1.4)

“A: There is no way to wake these kids up!

B: **A.PL.M young people who have danced all night sleep also during a bombing!**”

The difference between preverbal BNs (example (55)) and postverbal subjects is instead significant with all types of verbs (transitives: $M = 4.01, SD = 1.96; d = 0.71; d = 1.96, p < 0.001$;

unergatives: $M = 4.61$, $SD = 1.82$; $d = 1.82$; $d = 2.41$, $p < 0.001$; unaccusatives: $M = 4.21$, $SD = 1.94$; $d = 1.37$; $d = 1.40$, $p < 0.001$).

(55) A: *Mamma, mi dispiace tanto, ma si è rotta la tazza con la rosa.*

B: *Ma com'è possibile?!! Cose più belle ti cadono sempre dalle mani!* (c.f. 11.1.4)

“A: Mom, I'm so sorry, but the cup with the rose broke.

B: But how is it possible?!! **Most beautiful things** always fall from your hands!”

According to post hoc THSD test postverbal BNs are significantly more rejected than postverbal DPs with transitives ($d = -1.25$, $p < 0.001$) and with unergatives ($d = -0.58$, $p = 0.002$). The difference between postverbal BN ($M = 2.81$, $SD = 1.61$) and DP subjects ($M = 2.84$, $SD = 1.59$) is not significant with unaccusatives, $d = -0.03$, $p = 1.00$. Specific indefinite reading was elicited with postverbal subjects with examples like the following:

(56) A: *Prendi solo un'insalata?! Non vuoi anche carne o un po' di pane, almeno?*

B: *No, grazie: mangiano delle persone che conosco solo verdura e hanno una linea perfetta!* (c.f. 11.1.4)

“A: You take only a salad?!! Don't you want even meat or a little bread, at least?

B: No, thanks: eat **a.PL.F people that I know** only vegetables and have a perfect line!”

(57) A: *Quando finiscono le lezioni quest'anno?*

B: *Dipende. Sono già arrivati docenti del mio Dipartimento a fine corso!* (c.f. 11.1.4)

“A: When do the lessons end this year?

B: It depends. Have already arrived **teachers of my department** at the end of the course!”

In our model for the specific indefinite reading we also observe a significant effect related to the type of verb with all types of subjects: preverbal DPs ($F(2, 669) = 14.05$, $p < 0.001$), preverbal BNs ($F(2, 669) = 4.52$, $p = 0.011$), postverbal DPs ($F(2, 669) = 7.29$, $p = 0.001$) and postverbal BNs ($F(2, 669) = 13.81$, $p < 0.001$).

The post hoc THSD test shows that preverbal DP subjects are significantly more accepted with unergatives ($M = 5.32$, $SD = 1.72$) than with transitives ($M = 4.42$, $SD = 2.14$) and unaccusatives ($M = 4.49$, $SD = 2.11$), $d = 0.90$; $d = 0.83$, $p < 0.001$. The difference between transitives and unaccusatives is not significant, $d = 0.07$, $p = 0.93$. However, the results of preverbal DPs with unaccusatives and transitives are only above chance level.

All the results of preverbal BNs are above chance level. The difference between unergatives ($M = 4.61$, $SD = 1.82$) and transitives ($M = 4.01$, $SD = 1.96$) is significant according to the post hoc THSD test, $d = 0.51$, $p = 0.01$. The difference between unaccusatives ($M = 4.21$, $SD = 1.94$) and other types of verbs is not significant, $d = 0.41$; $d = -0.11$, $p = 0.06$; $p = 0.82$.

Regarding postverbal DP subjects, the post hoc THSD test reveals that they are significantly more rejected with unergatives ($M = 2.79$, $SD = 1.80$) and with unaccusatives ($M = 2.84$, $SD = 1.59$) than with transitives ($M = 3.40$, $SD = 2.10$), $d = -0.55$; $d = 0.60$, $p = 0.005$; $p = 0.002$. The difference between unergatives and unaccusatives is not significant, $d = -0.05$, $p = 0.96$.

Finally, postverbal BN subjects were significantly more rejected with unergatives ($M = 2.21$, $SD = 1.53$) and with transitives ($M = 2.14$, $SD = 1.29$) than with unaccusatives ($M = 2.81$, $SD = 1.61$), $d = -0.60$; $d = -0.67$; $p < 0.001$. The difference between transitives and unergatives is not significant, $d = -0.07$, $p = 0.88$.

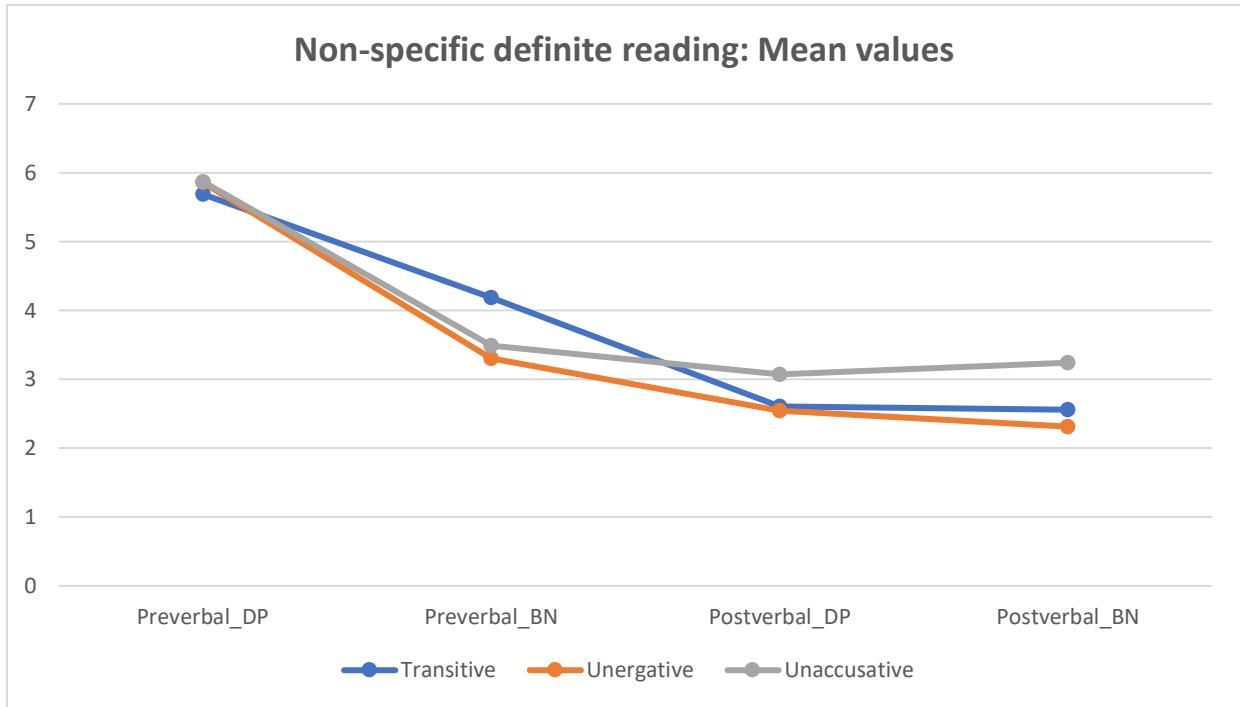
7.5. Non-specific definite reading

Table 6 presents means and standard deviations for the **non-specific definite reading**.

	Preverbal subject		Postverbal subject	
	DP	BN	DP	BN
Transitive	5.69 (1.43)	4.18 (1.86)	2.61 (1.53)	2.56 (1.64)
Unergative	5.86 (1.80)	3.30 (1.79)	2.54 (1.54)	2.31 (1.45)
Unaccusative	5.87 (1.46)	3.49 (1.79)	3.07 (1.79)	3.24 (1.78)

Table 6: Non-specific definite reading: Mean values and Standard Deviations of interpretative judgments

In graph 5 mean values of items with the **non-specific definite interpretation** are presented.



Graph 5. Non-specific definite reading: Mean values of interpretive judgments

In our model for the non-specific definite reading we observe a significant effect related to the type of subject with all types of verbs: transitives ($F(3, 892) = 188.8, p < 0.001$), unergatives ($F(3, 892) = 217.4, p < 0.001$) and unaccusatives ($F(3, 892) = 131.6, p < 0.001$). More in detail:

The post hoc THSD test shows that preverbal DP subjects (example (58) below) are always the preferred option: transitives ($M = 5.69, SD = 1.43, d = 1.50; d = 3.08; d = 3.13, p < 0.001$), unergatives ($M = 5.86, SD = 1.80, d = 2.55; d = 3.32; d = 3.54, p < 0.001$) and unaccusatives ($M = 5.87, SD = 1.46, d = 2.38; d = 2.80; d = 2.63, p < 0.001$). They are always accepted (see mean values).

(58) A: *Mi arrabbio sempre quando guardo i programmi politici. I loro discorsi sono sempre falsi.*

B: *Eh, sì, i politici dicono le cose come fa comodo a loro!* (c.f. 11.1.5)

“A: I always get angry when I look at political programs. Their speeches are always false.

B: Eh, yes, **the politicians** say things as it suits them!”

The post hoc THSD test shows also that preverbal BN (example (59)) are significantly more accepted than postverbal subjects with transitives ($M = 4.18, SD = 1.86, d = 1.58; d = 1.63, p < 0.001$) and with unergatives ($M = 3.30, SD = 1.79, d = 0.76; d = 0.99, p < 0.001$), but **not** with unaccusatives ($M = 3.49, SD = 1.79, d = 0.42; d = 0.25, p = 0.05; p = 0.43$). Notice that the

results of preverbal BN with transitives are above chance level, while the results with unergatives and unaccusatives are at chance.

(59) A: *Le persone depresse hanno spesso difficoltà a comunicare il loro malessere.*

B: **Depressi** parlano solamente con le persone che sanno entrare in sintonia con loro.

(c.f.11.1.5)

“A: Depressed people often have difficulty communicating their discomfort.

B: **Depressed** speak only with people who know how to tune into them.”

No significant difference is found between postverbal subjects, which are rejected with transitives ($d = 0.05, p = 0.99$) and unergatives ($d = 0.23, p = 0.46$), whereas with unaccusatives they are at chance ($d = -0.17, p = 0.72$). The non-specific definite reading was elicited with examples like these:

(60) *Perché ti stupisci così tanto che Leo sia qui oggi? ...*

... arrivano **gli amici** sempre nel momento del bisogno! (c.f. 11.1.5)

“Why are you so surprised that Leo is here today? ...

... arrive **the friends** always in times of need!”

(61) A: *Ho fame! Dove si può mangiare qualcosa di buono?*

B: *Mangiano spesso studenti di quest'università nella pizzeria qui vicino.* (c.f. 11.1.5)

“A: I’m hungry! Where can you eat something good?

B: Eat often **students of this university** at the nearby pizzeria.”

In our model for the non-specific definite reading a one-way ANOVA shows a significant effect related to the type verb with preverbal BNs ($F (2, 669) = 14.62, p < 0.001$), with postverbal DPs ($F (2, 669) = 7.112, p = 0.001$) and with postverbal BNs ($F (2, 669) = 19.53, p < 0.001$). No significant effect of type of verb is found with preverbal DP subjects ($F (2, 669) = 0.944, p = 0.39$).

The post hoc THSD test shows that preverbal BN subjects are significantly more accepted with transitives ($M = 4.18, SD = 1.86$) than with unergatives ($M = 3.30, SD = 1.79$) and with unaccusatives ($M = 3.49, SD = 1.79$), $d = 0.88, d = 0.70; p < 0.001$. The difference between unaccusatives and unergatives is not significant, $d = 0.18, p = 0.54$. The results of transitives are above chance level and the results of unergatives and unaccusatives are at chance.

According to the post hoc THSD test postverbal subjects are significantly less rejected with unaccusatives (DP: M = 3.07, SD = 1.79; BN: M = 3.24, SD = 1.78) than with transitives (DP: M = 2.61, SD = 1.53; BN: M = 2.56, SD = 1.64) and unergatives (DP: M = 2.54, SD = 1.54; BN: M = 2.31, SD = 1.45), $d = 0.46$; $d = 0.53$; $d = 0.68$; $d = 0.93$, $p = 0.007$; $p = 0.002$; $p < 0.001$; $p < 0.001$.

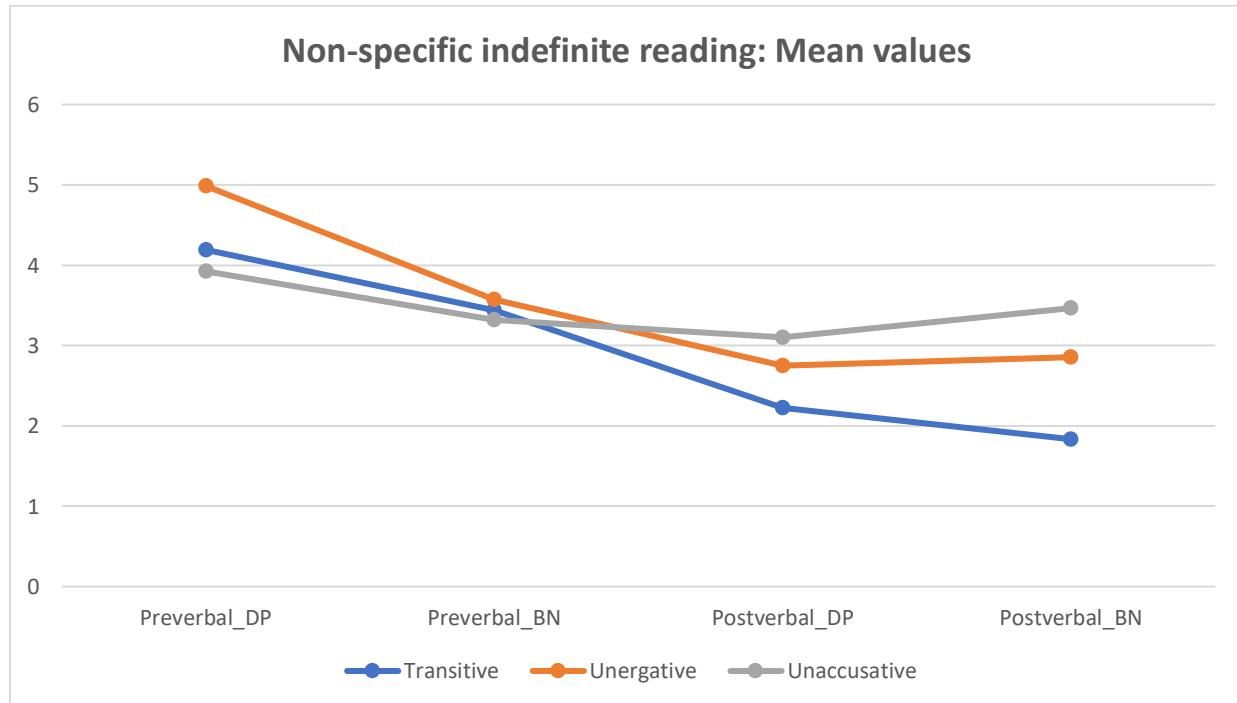
7.6. Non-specific indefinite reading

Finally, the results referring to the **non-specific indefinite reading** are summarized in table 7 below.

	Preverbal subject		Postverbal subject	
	DP	BN	DP	BN
Transitive	4.19 (2.19)	3.44 (2.05)	2.22 (1.56)	1.86 (1.31)
Unergative	4.99 (1.89)	3.57 (1.86)	2.75 (1.79)	2.85 (1.81)
Unaccusative	3.92 (1.86)	3.32 (1.83)	3.10 (1.82)	3.47 (2.08)

Table 7. Non-specific indefinite reading: Means and Standard Deviation of interpretive judgments

Graph 6 presents mean values of items with the **non-specific indefinite reading**.



Graph 6. Non-specific indefinite reading: Mean values of interpretive judgments

In our model for the non-specific indefinite reading we observe that the type of subject is related to a significant effect with all types of verbs: transitive verbs ($F (3, 892) = 80.67$, $p <$

0.001), unergative verbs ($F(3, 892) = 70.36, p < 0.001$) and unaccusative verbs ($F(3, 892) = 7.488, p < 0.001$).

The post hoc THSD test shows that preverbal DP subjects are preferred with transitives ($M = 4.19, SD = 2.19, d = 0.75; d = 1.97; d = 2.36, p < 0.001$) and unergatives ($M = 4.99, SD = 1.89, d = 1.42; d = 2.24; d = 2.13, p < 0.001$). With unaccusatives preverbal DP subjects ($M = 3.92, SD = 1.86$) are significantly more accepted than preverbal BNs ($M = 3.32, SD = 1.83$) and postverbal DPs ($M = 3.10, SD = 1.82$), $d = 0.60; d = 0.82, p = 0.005; p < 0.001$. The difference between preverbal DPs and postverbal BNs ($M = 3.47, SD = 2.08$) is not significant, $d = 0.46, p = 0.05$. However, the results of preverbal DP show acceptance with unergatives and are above chance with transitives and with unaccusatives. The non-specific indefinite reading with preverbal DP subjects was elicited with examples like this:

(62) A: *Ieri ero proprio stanca morta, ma quando sono andata a letto il sonno non veniva...*

B: *Succede purtroppo. Delle persone cadono dal sonno e comunque non si addormentano facilmente.* (c.f. 11.1.6)

“A: Yesterday I was really tired, but when I went to bed I didn't sleep ...

B: It happens unfortunately. **A.PL.F people** fall out of sleep and in any case do not fall asleep easily.”

The post hoc THSD test shows also that preverbal BNs (example (63)) are significantly more accepted than postverbal subjects with transitives ($M = 3.44, SD = 2.05, d = 1.22; d = 1.61, p < 0.001$) and with unergatives ($M = 3.57, SD = 1.86, d = 0.82; d = 0.72, p < 0.001$). The difference between preverbal BNs ($M = 3.32, SD = 1.83$) and postverbal subjects (DP: $M = 3.10, SD = 1.82$; BN: $M = 3.47, SD = 2.08$) is not significant with unaccusatives ($d = 0.22; d = 0.14, p = 0.62; p = 0.86$). In all three the cases, the results are at chance level.

(63) *La prima volta che sono entrata in ospedale mi sono spaventata da morire. Ho visto che...*

... **persone** dormivano con gli occhi aperti! (c.f. 11.1.6)

“The first time I entered the hospital I was scared to death ...

... **people** slept with their eyes open!”

The difference between postverbal subjects, both DPs and BNs, are not significant with all types of verbs: transitives ($d = 0.39, p = 0.11$), unergatives ($d = -0.10, p = 0.93$) and with

unaccusative ($d = 0.36$, $p = 0.18$). The results of postverbal subjects with transitives (DP: $M = 2.22$, $SD = 1.56$; BN: $M = 1.86$, $SD = 1.31$) and unaccusatives (DP: $M = 2.75$, $SD = 1.79$; BN: $M = 2.85$, $SD = 1.81$) show rejection. The results with unaccusatives are at chance (DP: $M = 3.10$, $SD = 1.82$; BN: $M = 3.47$, $SD = 2.08$). The non-specific indefinite reading with postverbal subjects was tested with examples like the following:

(64) *A me piace tanto mangiare delle cose buone, ma so che non a tutti interessa ...*

... mangiano **delle persone** solo per vivere! (c.f. 11.1.6)

“I like eating good things so much, but I know that not everyone is interested ...

... eat **a.PL.F people** just to live!”

(65) A: *Hai capito di cosa parlava quella ragazza che ha parlato per due ore nell'incontro di oggi?*

B: *Mah!! Parlano giovani molto, ma in realtà non dicono niente.* (c.f. 11.1.6)

“A: Did you understand what that girl who spoke for two hours in today’s meeting spoke about?

B: Mah!! Talk a lot **young people**, but in reality they don’t say anything.”

In our model for the non-specific indefinite reading a one-way ANOVA shows a significant effect related to the type of verb with preverbal DPs ($F(2, 669) = 17.35$, $p < 0.001$), with postverbal DPs ($F(2, 669) = 14.64$, $p < 0.001$) and with postverbal BNs ($F(2, 669) = 48.8$, $p < 0.001$). The type of verb is not a significant effect with preverbal BN subjects ($F(2, 669) = 0.956$, $p = 0.385$).

The post hoc THSD test shows that preverbal DPs are significantly more accepted with unergatives ($M = 4.99$, $SD = 1.89$) than with transitives ($M = 4.19$, $SD = 2.19$) and with unaccusatives ($M = 3.92$, $SD = 1.86$), $d = 1.06$; $d = 0.79$, $p < 0.001$. The difference between transitives and unaccusatives is not significant, $d = 0.27$, $p = 0.33$.

Regarding postverbal DP subjects, they are significantly more rejected with transitives ($M = 2.22$, $SD = 1.56$) than with unaccusatives ($M = 3.10$, $SD = 1.82$) and with unergatives ($M = 2.75$, $SD = 1.79$), $d = -0.88$; $d = -0.53$, $p < 0.001$; $p = 0.004$. The difference between unaccusatives and unergatives is not significant, $d = 0.35$, $p = 0.08$.

Regarding postverbal BN subjects, the post hoc THSD test shows that postverbal BNs with unaccusatives ($M = 3.47$, $SD = 2.08$) are significantly less rejected than with unergatives ($M =$

2.85, SD = 1.81) and with transitives ($M = 1.86$, SD = 1.31), $d = 0.61$; $d = 1.63$, $p = 0.001$; $p < 0.001$. Postverbal BNs with transitives are significantly more rejected than with unergatives, $d = -1.01$, $p < 0.001$.

8. Discussion

The basic issue addressed in this study concerns the intuitions of native speakers of Italian with regard to the following interpretations of DPs: (i) generic, (ii) existential, (iii) specific definite, (iv) specific indefinite, (v) non-specific definite and (vi) non-specific indefinite. In the previous chapter, all the results of the study conducted for this purpose have been presented. In this chapter, these results will be discussed in the light of the research questions, the hypotheses and the predictions.

8.1. Consistency in the interpretations

Table 8 below gives an overview of results of the AJT which tested the preferences in form (with or without article) and in distribution (preverbal vs. postverbal subject position) of nominal phrases by native Italians in order to express the six interpretations under examination.

	Preverbal subject		Postverbal subject	
	D + N	BN	D + N	BN
Generic reading	+	+/-	-	--
Existential reading	++	+	-	-
Specific definite reading	+	+/-	-	-
Specific indefinite reading	+/-	+/-	-	-
Non-specific definite reading	+	+/-	-	-
Non-specific indefinite reading	+	+/-	-	-

Table 8. Results of AJT: The tendencies of DP-structures used in Italian for the six interpretations under examination

The most important results of this thesis is that **preverbal DPs are always preferred** with all types of interpretations. Nevertheless, they are never accepted with the maximal value. We observe rather a norm of 5-6 (in some cases of 4-5). This result shows that the native speakers have some optionality in this area of their mother tongue.

Another important result of this thesis is that **postverbal subjects are not accepted** in Italian, neither with DP subjects nor with BNs. Moreover, **preverbal BN subjects** are always **more accepted than postverbal subjects** (both DPs and BNs), which is contradictory to the expectations. However, we observe that in this study the intuitions about preverbal BNs are not categorical and give rise to optionality. The only exception is the existential reading, where native speakers also accept preverbal BN subjects, although to a lesser extent than preverbal DPs.

8.1.1. Generic reading

With regard to the **generic reading** and based on the arguments presented in the literature, it was expected that the native speakers would accept DPs and reject BNs. Furthermore, it was also expected that the position of the subject would not influence acceptability. Moreover, BNs in postverbal position were thought to be accepted in some cases.

The results of the study do not confirm the above-mentioned hypotheses, since – as said above - the preferred strategy to express the generic reading with all verb types is the preverbal position for DP subjects (which are significantly preferred with unaccusatives and significantly more accepted with transitives than with unergatives).

Hence, the results of our AJT show that the position of the subject **does have** an influence on whether the sentence is accepted or not. Postverbal DP subjects, which ‘should’ have been accepted like preverbal DPs are instead rejected with unergatives and transitives, while they are at chance with unaccusatives. Another interesting observation is that there is no difference between postverbal DPs and postverbal BNs with transitives, as they are both rejected.

Preverbal BN subjects were expected to be rejected. However, the results of AJT are at chance level, which points to **optionality** for BNs in preverbal subject position.

Furthermore, postverbal BN subjects are rejected with items intended for generic reading with transitives and unergatives, whereas with unaccusatives both DPs and BNs are at chance in postverbal subject position, again pointing to a case of optionality.

8.1.2. Existential reading

Based on the literature, the expectation was that Italian native speakers would accept BNs and reject DPs, in the context of the **existential reading**. Moreover, regarding this matter, it was expected that the position of the subject would not influence acceptability.

As in the case of the generic reading, also for the existential reading, the present results do not confirm the hypotheses, since the verb type has an impact on the results. With transitives the preferred option is (once more) the preverbal DP subject. However, also preverbal BN subjects are accepted with transitive verbs.

With unergative verbs the preferred way to express the existential reading also is the preverbal DP option. The results with preverbal BNs are at chance; however, the difference between preverbal BNs and postverbal subjects (both DPs and BNs) is significant. Native speakers thus prefer preverbal BN to postverbal subjects.

Finally, with unaccusatives no difference can be observed between preverbal subjects forms. Both DPs and BNs are accepted with this reading, but only above the chance level, which means that the intuitions are not categorical.

Regarding postverbal subjects, they are rejected (or less often accepted) with all types of verbs. The position of the subject thus influences acceptability. It was expected that postverbal BNs would be accepted with existential reading, but the results of the study contradict this hypothesis.

To conclude, the results of the present AJT contradict Longobardi's (2003) theory, showing that Italian native speakers use both forms of preverbal subjects to express the existential reading.

8.1.3. (Non-)specific (in)definite reading

Based on the argumentation from the literature, in the **specific definite**, **specific indefinite**, **non-specific definite** and **non-specific indefinite reading**, native speakers were expected to accept DP subjects (both in preverbal and postverbal position) and reject BN subjects (in preverbal and postverbal position).

We have observed the same pattern in the interpretative judgments of specific definite/non-specific definite reading and in the interpretative judgments of specific indefinite/non-specific

indefinite readings. This was expected since definiteness, and not the specificity, can be expressed in Italian with the use of articles.

Preverbal DP subjects are accepted and are judged as the preferred option for **specific definite** and **non-specific definite reading**. The results of preverbal BN subjects are around chance level, which shows optionality with regard to the use of this form. Regarding postverbal subjects, both DPs and BNs are rejected with transitives and unergatives; with unaccusatives the results are at chance.

Regarding the **specific indefinite** and **non-specific indefinite** readings, preverbal DPs are only accepted with unergatives; with unaccusatives and transitives and preverbal DPs results are above the chance level. Hence, once more, showing optionality. The difference between preverbal DP and BN subjects with transitives and with unaccusatives is not significant. This means that both forms could be used for these readings. Postverbal subjects are not accepted with the readings at issue. No difference between BNs and DPs is detected with **non-specific indefinite reading**. With **specific indefinite reading** postverbal BNs were more rejected with transitives and unergatives, but no difference is found with unaccusatives.

8.2. Research Questions

For the sake of easiness, the research questions of this thesis are repeated below:

1. How do Italian speakers encode the generic, existential, specific definite, specific indefinite, non-specific definite and non-specific indefinite interpretations of plural subject DPs?
- 1.2. To which extent does the position of subject (preverbal vs. postverbal) affect various interpretations of subjects?
- 1.3. To which extent does the presence vs. absence of a determiner affect the interpretation of a subject?
- 1.4. To which extent is the interpretation affected by the nature of the verb (transitive, unergative, unaccusative)?

After the analysis of results, it can be concluded that Italian speakers do not encode the generic, existential, specific and definite readings of plural DPs as proposed in the literature (cf. Chapter 3).

In general, it can be observed that Italian native speakers have a clear preference for the use of preverbal DP subjects with all the readings examined in this thesis. The only exception is the existential reading, that native speakers also accept with preverbal BN subjects, however to a lesser extent than with preverbal DPs.

This means that the results of this study contradict Longobardi's (2001, 2003) claim that the only way to express the existential reading in Italian is the use of BN, and they also contradict the theories proposed by Renzi et al. (1991) and Chierchia (1998) that argue that BNs in ungoverned positions are not grammatical in Italian. These scholars argue then that BNs should be accepted in postverbal positions, whereas the present study shows that postverbal BNs are rejected or accepted, but only at chance level with all the readings examined.

Both the conditions studied in this thesis, the position of the subject and the type of verb used, seemed to influence the results of interpretative judgments of Italian speakers. As mentioned above, postverbal subjects are not the preferred option by native speakers of Italian not even with unaccusatives. In some cases they are at chance level. As for the second condition, the type of verb used, it also seems to influence the results. We have observed that interpretative judgments of sentences with unaccusatives often differ from interpretative judgments of sentences with the other two types of verbs studied in this thesis.

Two alternative explanations of the results can be given. First, that the norms were always like we have observed in the study, only that it was never tested empirically before. Second, that we may observe evidences for diachronic variation, which can take place because of the influence of other languages, especially English.

The results of the study conducted show that Italian native speakers do not confirm the expectations for the generic, existential, specific and definite interpretations based on what is argued by the current literature. This thesis provides empirical evidence for a better understanding of how plural nominal phrases in subject position are interpreted in Italian.

9. Conclusion

The aim of this thesis was to empirically test the following readings of DPs in subject position in Italian: generic, existential, specific definite, specific indefinite, non-specific definite and non-specific indefinite. The DPs were tested in two positions (preverbal vs. postverbal) and

with and without article. The type of verb used in the sentence was also taken into consideration (transitive, unergative, unaccusative). The data was compared to the predictions made by Renzi et al. (1991), Longobardi (1994, 2001, 2003) and Chierchia (1998). The main research question was: How do Italian speakers encode the generic, existential, specific definite, specific indefinite, non-specific definite and non-specific indefinite interpretations of plural subject?

The results of the study show unexpected patterns. Most importantly we observe that preverbal DPs are always preferred with all types of interpretations. However, they are never accepted with the maximal value, which shows that native speakers have some optionality in this area of their mother tongue.

Another important result of this thesis is that postverbal subjects are not the favorite option in Italian, neither with DPs nor with BNs. Moreover, preverbal BN subjects are always more accepted than postverbal subjects. However, preverbal BNs are not accepted nor rejected in this study.

According to the results, native speakers have optionality with the existential reading of DPs. With this kind of interpretation native speakers have preference for preverbal DP subjects, but also accept preverbal BNs, however to a lesser extent. This is an important finding, since it is not in line with previous theories.

Summarizing, originality of this thesis consists in providing a solid empirical basis for a well-studied phenomenon that, as far as we know, was not yet empirically validated. Our results are new and original, and they are based on a wide investigation of hundreds of Italian informants.

We believe that this study may give a significant contribution to this research area by providing data that show that the intuition of Italian native speakers is not in line with the present theories. Undoubtedly, this issue requires further research.

10. References

- Barwise, J., & Cooper, R. (1981). Generalized quantifiers and natural language. In *Philosophy, language, and artificial intelligence* (pp. 241-301). Dordrecht: Springer.

- Brown, C. A. (1998). The role of the L1 grammar in the L2 acquisition of segmental structure. *Second Language Research*, 14(2), 136-193.
- Carlson, G. N. (1977). Reference to kinds in English. *PhD thesis, University of Massachusetts*.
- Chierchia, G. (1998). Reference to kinds across language. *Natural language semantics*, 6(4), 339-405.
- Cho, J., & Slabakova, R. (2014). Interpreting definiteness in a second language without articles: The case of L2 Russian. *Second Language Research*, 30(2), 159-190.
- Cho, J., & Slabakova, R. (2015). A feature-based contrastive approach to the L2 acquisition of specificity. *Applied Linguistics*, 38(3), 318-339.
- Chrabaścz, A., & Jiang, N. (2014). The role of the native language in the use of the English nongeneric definite article by L2 learners: A cross-linguistic comparison. *Second Language Research*, 30(3), 351-379.
- Falk, Y., Lindqvist, C., & Bardel, C. (2015). The role of L1 explicit metalinguistic knowledge in L3 oral production at the initial state. *Bilingualism: Language and cognition*, 18(2), 227-235.
- Frascarelli, M., Ramaglia, F., & Corpina, B. (2012). *Elementi di sintassi*. Caissa Italia.
- Heim, I. (1982). *The Semantics of Definite and Indefinite Noun Phrases*, Doctoral dissertation, University of Massachusetts, Amherst.
- Ionin, T., & Montrul, S. (2010). The role of L1 transfer in the interpretation of articles with definite plurals in L2 English. *Language Learning*, 60(4), 877-925.
- Ionin, T., Grolla, E., Santos, H., & Montrul, S. A. (2015). Interpretation of NPs in generic and existential contexts in L3 Brazilian Portuguese. *Linguistic Approaches to Bilingualism*, 5(2), 215-251.
- Krifka, M., Pelletier, F. J., Carlson, G. N., Ter Meulen, A., Chierchia, G., & Link, G. (1995). Genericity: an introduction. In G.N. Carlson & F.J. Pelletier (Eds.) *The generic book*, 1, 1-124.

- Longobardi, G. (1994). Reference and proper names: A theory of N-movement in syntax and logical form. *Linguistic inquiry*, 609-665.
- Longobardi, G. (2001). *The structure of DPs: Some principles, parameters, and problems*. In M. Baltin and C. Collins (Eds), *The Handbook of Syntactic Theory* (pp. 562-601). Blackwell.
- Longobardi, G. (2003). A parametric mapping theory. *From NP to DP: Volume 1: The syntax and semantics of noun phrases*, 55, 239-254.
- McNally, L. (2011). Existential sentences. In Von Heusinger, K., Maienborn, C., Portner, P. (Eds.), *Semantics: An International Handbook of Natural Language Meaning*, 2, 1829-1848. Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter Mounton.
- Mouhanna, M. (2009). Re-examining the role of L1 in the EFL classroom. *UGRU Journal*, 8, 1-19.
- Nazary, M. (2008). The role of L1 in L2 acquisition: Attitudes of Iranian university students. *Novitas-Royal*, 2(2), 138-153.
- Newby, M. (1987). *The structure of English: a handbook of English grammar*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Nordanger, M. (2017). The encoding of definiteness in L2 Norwegian: A study of L1 effects and universals in narratives written by L1 Russian and L1 English learners.
- Portner, P. (2011). Genericity. In Von Heusinger, K., Maienborn, C., Portner, P. (Eds.), *Semantics: An International Handbook of Natural Language Meaning*, 2, 1153-1185. Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter Mounton.
- Renzi, L., Salvi, G., & Cardinaletti, A. (Eds.). (1991). *Grande grammatica italiana di consultazione: I. La frase: I sintagmi nominale e preposizionale* (Vol. 1). Il mulino.
- Russell, B. (1905). On denoting. *Mind*, 14(56), 479-493.
- Rutkowski, P. (2002). Noun/pronoun asymmetries: evidence in support of the DP hypothesis in Polish. *Jezikoslovlje*, 3(1-2), 159-170.
- Slabakova, R. (2008). Meaning in the second language. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.

Stowell, T. (1989). Subjects, specifiers, and X-bar theory. *Alternative conceptions of phrase structure*, 232-262.

Stowell, T. (1991). Determiners in NP and DP. In K. Leffel & D. Bouchard (Eds.) *Views on Phrase Structure* (pp. 37-56) Dordrecht: Kluwer.

Sun, G. (2016). The acquisition of English articles by second language learners: The sequence, differences, and difficulties. *SAGE Open*, 6(1), 2158244016635716.

Szabolcsi, A. (1987). Functional categories in the noun phrase. *Approaches to Hungarian*, 167–190. Szeged: JATE.

Szabolcsi, A. (1994). The noun phrase. In F. Kiefer and K. Kiss (Eds.), *The syntactic structure of Hungarian*, 27, 179–274.

Szwedek, A. (1974). Some aspects of definiteness and indefiniteness of nouns in Polish. *Papers and studies in contrastive linguistics*, 2, 203-211.

Von Heusinger, K. (2011). Specificity. In Von Heusinger, K., Maienborn, C., Portner, P. (Eds.), *Semantics: An International Handbook of Natural Language Meaning* 2, 1153-1185. Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter Mounton.

Yu, L. (1996). The role of L1 in the acquisition of motion verbs in English by Chinese and Japanese learners. *Canadian Modern Language Review*, 53(1), 191-218.

11. Appendix

11.1. Items of AJT

11.1.1. Generic reading

A: Quali tematiche possono essere affrontate nella tesi di laurea, secondo il regolamento di Roma Tre?

- B: I laureandi scrivono la tesi in base ad uno dei temi studiati nei corsi universitari.
- B: Laureandi scrivono la tesi in base ad uno dei temi studiati nei corsi universitari.
- B: Scrivono la tesi i laureandi in base ad uno dei temi studiati nei corsi universitari.
- B: Scrivono la tesi laureandi in base ad uno dei temi studiati nei corsi universitari

A: Credo che a Roma i cuochi lavorino molto nei ristoranti, con tutti i turisti!

- B: I cuochi lavorano più il fine settimana che nei giorni feriali.
- B: Cuochi lavorano più il fine settimana che nei giorni feriali.
- B: Lavorano i cuochi più il fine settimana che nei giorni feriali.
- B: Lavorano cuochi più il fine settimana che nei giorni feriali.

La vita dei leoni si basa su un ménage di tipo familiare, in particolare ...

- ... le leonesse vanno a caccia per alimentare i cuccioli.
- ... leonesse vanno a caccia per alimentare i cuccioli.
- ... vanno a caccia le leonesse per alimentare i cuccioli.
- ... vanno a caccia leonesse per alimentare i cuccioli.

Non capisco com'è possibile che, anche se si sa che fast-food significa "junk food" ...

- ... i giovani mangiano spesso le schifezze di McDonald's.
- ... giovani mangiano spesso le schifezze di McDonald's.
- ... mangiano spesso i giovani le schifezze di McDonald's.
- ... mangiano spesso giovani le schifezze di McDonald's.

A: Sono preoccupata perché non so come potrò finire il progetto dopo la nascita di mio figlio...

- B: Ma no: i bimbi appena nati dormono la maggior parte del tempo!
- B: Ma no: bimbi appena nati dormono la maggior parte del tempo!
- B: Ma no: dormono i bimbi appena nati la maggior parte del tempo!
- B: Ma no: dormono bimbi appena nati la maggior parte del tempo!

Abbiamo bisogno di comprare una nuova casa, ma costa troppo ...

- ... e i soldi cadono dal cielo solamente nei sogni.
- ... e soldi cadono dal cielo solamente nei sogni.
- ... e cadono i soldi dal cielo solamente nei sogni.
- ... e cadono soldi dal cielo solamente nei sogni.

A: Mi viene proprio il mal di testa a sentire tutte queste volgarità.

- B: Sono d'accordo. Le persone dicono troppe parolacce quando si arrabbiano!!!
- B: Sono d'accordo. Persone dicono troppe parolacce quando si arrabbiano!!!

- B: Sono d'accordo. Dicono le persone troppe parolacce quando si arrabbiano!!!
- B: Sono d'accordo. Dicono persone troppe parolacce quando si arrabbiano!!!

A: Sarà a 1 anno già chiacchierava mentre Matteo, a 15 mesi ancora non dice una parola!

- B: Le bambine parlano di solito prima dei maschietti, lo sai!!
- B: Bambine parlano di solito prima dei maschietti, lo sai!!
- B: Parlano le bambine di solito prima dei maschietti, lo sai!!
- B: Parlano bambine di solito prima dei maschietti, lo sai!!

Mi rendo conto che anche oggi non sono stato puntuale... ma non è la colpa mia: ...

- ... i treni arrivano sempre in ritardo!
- ... treni arrivano sempre in ritardo!
- ... arrivano i treni sempre in ritardo!
- ... arrivano treni sempre in ritardo!

[11.1.2. Existential reading](#)

A: Ho saputo che è successa una cosa molto spiacevole ieri per il tuo Dipartimento!

- B: Eh, già: studenti del primo anno hanno scritto una lettera al rettore per lamentarsi delle aule troppo piccole.
- B: Eh, già: gli studenti del primo anno hanno scritto una lettera al rettore per lamentarsi delle aule troppo piccole.
- B: Eh, già: hanno scritto studenti del primo anno una lettera al rettore per lamentarsi delle aule troppo piccole.
- B: Eh, già: hanno scritto gli studenti del primo anno una lettera al rettore per lamentarsi delle aule troppo piccole.

Lo sciopero prolungato dei maestri ha causato diversi disagi il mese scorso ai genitori che lavorano. Però, quantomeno ...

- ... baby-sitter senza contratto hanno lavorato molto durante la chiusura degli asili.
- ... le baby-sitter senza contratto hanno lavorato molto durante la chiusura degli asili.
- ... hanno lavorato molto baby-sitter senza contratto durante la chiusura degli asili.
- ... hanno lavorato molto le baby-sitter senza contratto durante la chiusura degli asili.

A: Il dipartimento di lingue sembrava vuoto l'altro giorno!

- B: Docenti di letteratura inglese sono andati numerosi ad un congresso internazionale.
- B: I docenti di letteratura inglese sono andati numerosi ad un congresso internazionale.
- B: Sono andati numerosi docenti di letteratura inglese ad un congresso internazionale.
- B: sono andati numerosi i docenti di letteratura inglese ad un congresso internazionale.

A: Cosa si potrebbe cucinare per tuo fratello adesso che sta in ospedale?

- B: Beh, i pazienti operati mangiano di norma cose leggere.
- B: Beh, pazienti operati mangiano di norma cose leggere.
- B: Beh, mangiano i pazienti operati di norma cose leggere.
- B: Beh, mangiano pazienti operati di norma cose leggere.

A: Perché secondo te Luigi non vuole mai uscire con noi?

- B: Guarda, le persone che soffrono di depressione dormono molto, ma comunque sono sempre stanche.
- B: Guarda, persone che soffrono di depressione dormono molto, ma comunque sono sempre stanche.
- B: Guarda, dormono molto le persone che soffrono di depressione, ma comunque sono sempre stanche.
- B: Guarda, dormono molto persone che soffrono di depressione, ma comunque sono sempre stanche.

A: A Roma, per due fiocchi di neve hanno chiuso le scuole....Non capisco perché!

- B: Guarda, le persone non abituate cadono per strada e possono farsi molto male!
- B: Guarda, persone non abituate cadono per strada e possono farsi molto male!
- B: Guarda, cadono le persone non abituate per strada e possono farsi molto male!
- B: Guarda, cadono persone non abituate per strada e possono farsi molto male!

Loro sono molto timidi e non si sa mai cosa pensano, invece ...

- ... le persone che non si vergognano dicono semplicemente la propria opinione.
- ... persone che non si vergognano dicono semplicemente la propria opinione.
- ... dicono le persone che non si vergognano semplicemente la propria opinione.
- ... dicono persone che non si vergognano semplicemente la propria opinione.

I libri per bambini descrivono spesso cose magiche ...

- ... infatti, gli animali nelle favole parlano come gli uomini.
- ... infatti, animali nelle favole parlano come gli uomini.
- ... infatti, parlano gli animali nelle favole come gli uomini.
- ... infatti, parlano animali nelle favole come gli uomini.

A: Sai, quanto si guadagna in questa ditta?

- B: Gli stipendi dei manager arrivano a più di 10.000 euro.
- B: Stipendi dei manager arrivano a più di 10.000 euro.
- B: Arrivano gli stipendi dei manager a più di 10.000 euro.
- B: Arrivano stipendi dei manager a più di 10.000 euro.

[11.1.3.Specific definite reading](#)

A: Lo sai che questa mattina non c'era nessuno nella stanza degli assistenti?!

- B: Le segretarie che cercavi stanno scrivendo un rapporto importante.
- B: Segretarie che cercavi stanno scrivendo un rapporto importante.
- B: Stanno scrivendo le segretarie che cercavi un rapporto importante.
- B: Stanno scrivendo segretarie che cercavi un rapporto importante.

Hai visto che bel risultato?? Facevi male a pensare che il lavoro non stesse procedendo velocemente come volevi: ...

- ... i dipendenti di cui ti lamentavi lavorano molto di più di quanto pensi.
- ... dipendenti di cui ti lamentavi lavorano molto di più di quanto pensi.
- ... lavorano i dipendenti di cui ti lamentavi molto di più di quanto pensi.
- ... lavorano dipendenti di cui ti lamentavi molto di più di quanto pensi.

A: Sembra che i giovani oggi non escano più e passino tutto il tempo su internet!

- B: Non tutti! Le figlie del tuo amico Giovanni stanno andando in centro proprio adesso.
- B: Non tutti! Figlie del tuo amico Giovanni stanno andando in centro proprio adesso.
- B: Non tutti! Stanno andando in centro le figlie del tuo amico Giovanni proprio adesso.
- B: Non tutti! Stanno andando in centro figlie del tuo amico Giovanni proprio adesso.

Mi è piaciuto tantissimo ieri lo zoo, soprattutto l'acquario! Ma ho visto che ...

- ... i pesci grandi mangiano quelli piccoli....poverini!
- ... pesci grandi mangiano quelli piccoli....poverini!
- ... mangiano i pesci grandi quelli piccoli....poverini!
- ... mangiano pesci grandi quelli piccoli....poverini!

Oggi Luigi mi ha detto una cosa sorprendente. Pare che ...

- ... i criceti indiani dormono gran parte dell'inverno! Che strano!
- ... criceti indiani dormono gran parte dell'inverno! Che strano!
- ... dormono i criceti indiani gran parte dell'inverno! Che strano!
- ... dormono criceti indiani gran parte dell'inverno! Che strano!

A: Mamma mia, fra poco non mi rimane nessun cappello in testa! Perché ne perdo così tanti?

- B: Sai, i capelli tinti cadono di più perché si indeboliscono.
- B: Sai, capelli tinti cadono di più perché si indeboliscono.
- B: Sai, cadono di più i capelli tinti perché si indeboliscono.
- B: Sai, cadono di più capelli tinti perché si indeboliscono.

Le lezioni di letteratura sono di solito lunghissime, invece ...

- ... i professori del mio corso dicono tutto in poche parole.
- ... professori del mio corso dicono tutto in poche parole.
- ... dicono i professori del mio corso tutto in poche parole.
- ... dicono professori del mio corso tutto in poche parole.

A: Ho saputo che c'è stato un rinnovamento nel Dipartimento di tuo marito mentre era in congedo.

- B: Sì, e i colleghi di Mario parlano benissimo del loro Direttore.
- B: Sì, e colleghi di Mario parlano benissimo del loro Direttore.
- B: Sì, e parlano i colleghi di Mario benissimo del loro Direttore.
- B: Sì, e parlano colleghi di Mario benissimo del loro Direttore.

Nella famiglia di mia madre sono tutti molto organizzati e precisi, invece ...

- ... i parenti di mio padre arrivano in ritardo ad ogni appuntamento.
- ... parenti di mio padre arrivano in ritardo ad ogni appuntamento.
- ... arrivano in ritardo i parenti di mio padre ad ogni appuntamento.
- ... arrivano in ritardo parenti di mio padre ad ogni appuntamento.

[11.1.4. Specific indefinite reading](#)

A: Sto cercando un'ispirazione per una ricerca completamente nuova!

- B: Dei laureandi hanno discusso tesi interessanti nell'ultima seduta a cui ho assistito.
- B: Laureandi hanno discusso tesi interessanti nell'ultima seduta a cui ho assistito.
- B: Hanno discusso dei laureandi tesi interessanti nell'ultima seduta a cui ho assistito.
- B: Hanno discusso laureandi tesi interessanti nell'ultima seduta a cui ho assistito.

Alcuni pensano che le persone che scappano dai loro paesi non abbiano mai lavorato seriamente nella loro vita. Ma non è vero: ...

- ... dei rifugiati arrivati ieri dalla Siria avevano lavorato per anni in una multinazionale del petrolio.
- ... rifugiati arrivati ieri dalla Siria avevano lavorato per anni in una multinazionale del petrolio.
- ... avevano lavorato per anni dei rifugiati arrivati ieri dalla Siria in una multinazionale del petrolio.
- ... avevano lavorato per anni rifugiati arrivati ieri dalla Siria in una multinazionale del petrolio.

A: Non posso credere che siano avanzate così tante cose da mangiare dalla festa di compleanno!

- B: Dei bambini che hanno partecipato alla festa sono andati via prima della torta!
- B: Bambini che hanno partecipato alla festa sono andati via prima della torta!
- B: Sono andati via dei bambini che hanno partecipato alla festa prima della torta!
- B: Sono andati via bambini che hanno partecipato alla festa prima della torta!

A: Prendi solo un'insalata?! Non vuoi anche carne o un po' di pane, almeno?

- B: No, grazie: delle persone che conosco mangiano solo verdura e hanno una linea perfetta!
- B: No, grazie: persone che conosco mangiano solo verdura e hanno una linea perfetta!
- B: No, grazie: mangiano delle persone che conosco solo verdura e hanno una linea perfetta!
- B: No, grazie: mangiano persone che conosco solo verdura e hanno una linea perfetta!

A: Non c'è modo di svegliare questi ragazzi!

- B: Dei giovani che hanno ballato tutta la notte dormono pure durante un bombardamento!
- B: Giovani che hanno ballato tutta la notte dormono pure durante un bombardamento!
- B: Dormono dei giovani che hanno ballato tutta la notte pure durante un bombardamento!
- B: Dormono giovani che hanno ballato tutta la notte pure durante un bombardamento!

A: Mamma, mi dispiace tanto, ma si è rotta la tazza con la rosa.

- B: Ma com'è possibile?!! Delle cose più belle ti cadono sempre dalle mani!
- B: Ma com'è possibile?!! Cose più belle ti cadono sempre dalle mani!
- B: Ma com'è possibile?!! Ti cadono delle cose più belle sempre dalle mani!

- B: Ma com'è possibile?!! Ti cadono cose più belle sempre dalle mani!

Ti rendi conto subito quando uno studente non ha studiato come si deve: esita, cerca le parole, riparte mille volte... invece ...

- ... degli studenti preparati dicono le cose con naturalezza.
- ... studenti preparati dicono le cose con naturalezza.
- ... dicono degli studenti preparati le cose con naturalezza.
- ... dicono studenti preparati le cose con naturalezza.

A: Sai, che l'altro giorno una bambina ha detto a sua madre che le mie scarpe erano orribili?!!

- B: Succede: dei bambini di mia conoscenza parlano ad alta voce senza pensarci troppo.
- B: Succede: bambini di mia conoscenza parlano ad alta voce senza pensarci troppo.
- B: Succede: parlano dei bambini di mia conoscenza ad alta voce senza pensarci troppo.
- B: Succede: parlano bambini di mia conoscenza ad alta voce senza pensarci troppo.

A: Quando finiscono le lezioni quest'anno?

- B: Dipende. Dei docenti del mio Dipartimento sono già arrivati a fine corso!
- B: Dipende. Docenti del mio Dipartimento sono già arrivati a fine corso!
- B: Dipende. Sono già arrivati dei docenti del mio Dipartimento a fine corso!
- B: Dipende. Sono già arrivati docenti del mio Dipartimento a fine corso!

11.1.5. Non-specific definite reading

A: Ho letto questo testo sulla nuova legge già tre volte e come sempre non ci capisco niente!

- B: I politici, uomini e donne, scrivono spesso rapporti incomprensibili.
- B: Politici, uomini e donne, scrivono spesso rapporti incomprensibili.
- B: Scrivono spesso i politici, uomini e donne, rapporti incomprensibili.
- B: Scrivono spesso politici, uomini e donne, rapporti incomprensibili.

A: Com'è possibile che non ci sia nessuno nell'ufficio di assistenza della segreteria?

- B: Gli informatici lavorano in telelavoro due giorni a settimana.
- B: Informatici lavorano in telelavoro due giorni a settimana.
- B: Lavorano gli informatici in telelavoro due giorni a settimana.
- B: Informatici lavorano in telelavoro due giorni a settimana.

A: Quel locale non è mai vuoto, e bisogna sempre aspettare un po'! Come mai?

- B: Gli impiegati di questa zona vanno spesso in quel bar per prendersi un caffè.
- B: Impiegati di questa zona vanno spesso in quel bar per prendersi un caffè.
- B: Vanno spesso gli impiegati di questa zona in quel bar per prendersi un caffè.
- B: Vanno spesso impiegati di questa zona in quel bar per prendersi un caffè.

A: Ho fame! Dove si può mangiare qualcosa di buono?

- B: Gli studenti di quest'università mangiano spesso nella pizzeria qui vicino.
- B: Studenti di quest'università mangiano spesso nella pizzeria qui vicino.
- B: Mangiano spesso gli studenti di quest'università nella pizzeria qui vicino.
- B: Mangiano spesso studenti di quest'università nella pizzeria qui vicino.

A: Dobbiamo dividere le stanze nella nuova casa. Ma abbiamo dei dubbi se mettere le ragazze insieme o in camere separate.

- B: Le figlie delle mie amiche dormono nella stessa stanza. Secondo me va bene così.
- B: Figlie delle mie amiche dormono nella stessa stanza. Secondo me va bene così.
- B: Dormono le figlie delle mie amiche nella stessa stanza. Secondo me va bene così.
- B: Dormono figlie delle mie amiche nella stessa stanza. Secondo me va bene così.

Oggi durante la lezione di storia abbiamo parlato degli anni dal 1914 al 1918. Secondo me...

- ... i soldati della prima guerra mondiale sono spesso caduti a causa di errori pazzeschi!
- ... soldati della prima guerra mondiale sono spesso caduti a causa di errori pazzeschi!
- ... sono spesso caduti i soldati della prima guerra mondiale a causa di errori pazzeschi!
- ... sono spesso caduti soldati della prima guerra mondiale a causa di errori pazzeschi!

A: Mi arrabbio sempre quando guardo i programmi politici. I loro discorsi sono sempre falsi.

- B: Eh, sì, i politici dicono le cose come fa comodo a loro!
- B: Eh, sì, politici dicono le cose come fa comodo a loro!
- B: Eh, sì, dicono i politici le cose come fa comodo a loro!
- B: Eh, sì, dicono politici le cose come fa comodo a loro!

A: Le persone deppesse hanno spesso difficoltà a comunicare il loro malessere.

- B: I deppesi parlano solamente con le persone che sanno entrare in sintonia con loro.
- B: Depressi parlano solamente con le persone che sanno entrare in sintonia con loro.
- B: Parlano i deppesi solamente con le persone che sanno entrare in sintonia con loro.
- B: Parlano depressi solamente con le persone che sanno entrare in sintonia con loro.

A: Perché ti stupisci così tanto che Leo sia qui oggi? ...

- ... gli amici arrivano sempre nel momento del bisogno!
- ... amici arrivano sempre nel momento del bisogno!
- ... arrivano gli amici sempre nel momento del bisogno!
- ... arrivano amici sempre nel momento del bisogno!

[11.1.6. Non-specific indefinite reading](#)

Per qualcuno le innovazioni tecnologiche non favoriscono l'ispirazione! Pensa che ...

- ... degli scrittori scrivono ancora le loro opere a penna, piuttosto che con il computer.
- ... scrittori scrivono ancora le loro opere a penna, piuttosto che con il computer.
- ... scrivono ancora le loro opere a penna degli scrittori, piuttosto che con il computer.
- ... scrivono ancora le loro opere a penna scrittori, piuttosto che con il computer.

Purtroppo, alcuni immigrati scappano dai centri perché non vogliono essere rimandati in patria. E purtroppo ...

- ... dei rifugiati lavorano in nero per non essere identificati.
- ... rifugiati lavorano in nero per non essere identificati.

- ... lavorano in nero dei rifugiati per non essere identificati.
- ... lavorano in nero rifugiati per non essere identificati.

A: Sembra che in Italia siano relativamente pochi i cosiddetti “cervelli”!

- B: Dei laureati vanno all'estero per trovare un buon lavoro, oggigiorno.
- B: Laureati vanno all'estero per trovare un buon lavoro, oggigiorno.
- B: Vanno all'estero dei laureati per trovare un buon lavoro, oggigiorno.
- B: Vanno all'estero laureati per trovare un buon lavoro, oggigiorno.

A me piace tanto mangiare delle cose buone, ma so che non a tutti interessa ...

- ... delle persone mangiano solo per vivere!
- ... persone mangiano solo per vivere!
- ... mangiano delle persone solo per vivere!
- ... mangiano persone solo per vivere!

La prima volta che sono entrata in ospedale mi sono spaventata da morire. Ho visto che ...

- ... delle persone dormivano con gli occhi aperti!
- ... persone dormivano con gli occhi aperti!
- ... dormivano delle persone con gli occhi aperti!
- ... dormivano persone con gli occhi aperti!

A: Ieri ero proprio stanca morta, ma quando sono andata a letto il sonno non veniva...

- B: Succede purtroppo. Delle persone cadono dal sonno e comunque non si addormentano facilmente.
- B: Succede purtroppo. Persone cadono dal sonno e comunque non si addormentano facilmente.
- B: Succede purtroppo. Cadono dal sonno delle persone e comunque non si addormentano facilmente.
- B: Succede purtroppo. Cadono dal sonno persone e comunque non si addormentano facilmente.

A: Amore, perché tu non mi dici mai quello che pensi?

- B: Ma sai....dei romantici dicono parole d'amore con il cuore.

- B: Ma sai....romantici dicono parole d'amore con il cuore.
- B: Ma sai....dicono dei romantici parole d'amore con il cuore.
- B: Ma sai....dicono romantici parole d'amore con il cuore.

A: Hai capito di cosa parlava quella ragazza che ha parlato per due ore nell'incontro di oggi?

- B: Mah!! Dei giovani parlano molto, ma in realtà non dicono niente.
- B: Mah!! Giovani parlano molto, ma in realtà non dicono niente.
- B: Mah!! Parlano dei giovani molto, ma in realtà non dicono niente.
- B: Mah!! Parlano giovani molto, ma in realtà non dicono niente.

A: Sai già qualcosa sul nuovo progetto di ricerca che si svolgerà l'anno che viene?

- B: Dei messaggi arrivano da ore, ma non li ho ancora letti.
- B: Messaggi arrivano da ore, ma non li ho ancora letti.
- B: Arrivano dei messaggi da ore, ma non li ho ancora letti.
- B: Arrivano messaggi da ore, ma non li ho ancora letti.

[11.1.7. Fillers](#)

A: Ho sentito che la settimana scorsa sei andato al mare con Luca.

- B: No, con Gianni sono andato al mare.
- B: No, sono andato al mare con Gianni.

A: È vero che non vuoi collaborare con Lucia su questo progetto?

- B: No, non voglio collaborare con Sofia su questo progetto.
- B: No, con Sofia non voglio collaborare su questo progetto.

A: Mi piacerebbe chi mi raccontassi quella storia!

- B: No, di quella storia non ne voglio parlare.
- B: No, non ne voglio parlare, di quella storia.

A: Dove vai questa estate?

- B: Questa estate vado in montagna perché mi piace tanto.
- B: Vado in montagna, questa estate, perché mi piace tanto.

A: Secondo me, uscire con Maria è proprio pericoloso.

- B: No, uscire con Maddalena è proprio pericoloso.
- B: No, è proprio pericoloso uscire con Maddalena.

A: So che ieri sei tornato dalla Spagna dopo due settimane.

- B: No, ieri sono tornato dalla Germania dopo due settimane.
- B: No, è dalla Germania che sono tornato dopo due settimane.

A: Sembra che Giovanni non tornerà più al suo vecchio lavoro.

- B: No, è Emmanuele che non tornerà più al suo vecchio lavoro.
- B: No, Emmanuele non tornerà più al suo vecchio lavoro.

A: Secondo te, chi ha preso un bel voto all'esame?

- B: Giuditta ha preso un bel voto all'esame.
- B: Un bel voto all'esame, l'ha preso Giuditta.

A: Chi ha già visto il nuovo film di Tarantino?

- B: Paolo ha già visto il nuovo film di Tarantino.
- B: Il nuovo film di Tarantino, l'ha già visto Paolo.

A: Ho scoperto che la prossima settimana vai in montagna con Marco.

- B: No, con Samuele vado in montagna.
- B: Non, vado in montagna con Samuele.

A: Ho sentito bene che ti sei visto con Elena l'altro giorno?

- B: No, mi sono visto con Sara l'altro giorno.
- B: No, con Sara mi sono visto l'altro giorno.

A: Mi piacerebbe che tu mi comprassi quel paio di pantaloni!

- B: No, quei pantaloni non te li comprerò mai!
- B: No, non te li comprerò mai quei pantaloni!

A: Dove vuoi andare stasera?

- B: Stasera vorrei andare al cinema, perché è da tanto tempo che non ci vado.

- B: Vorrei andare al cinema, stasera, perché è da tanto tempo che non ci vado.

A: Secondo me, collaborare con Enrico è molto difficile.

- B: No, collaborare con Simone è molto difficile.
- B: No, è molto difficile collaborare con Simone.

A: Ho sentito che domani vai in Portogallo per dieci giorni.

- B: No, domani vado in Grecia per dieci giorni.
- B: No, è in Grecia che vado domani per dieci giorni.

A: Mi pare che Giuseppe non comprerà una macchina nuova.

- B: No, è Davide che non comprerà una macchina nuova.
- B: No, Davide non comprerà una macchina nuova.

A: Secondo te, chi ha mangiato tutte le caramelle?

- B: Pietro ha mangiato tutte le caramelle.
- B: Tutte le caramelle, le ha mangiate Pietro.

A: Chi ha già fatto l'esame di filosofia?

- B: Stefano l'ha già fatto, l'esame di filosofia.
- B: L'esame di filosofia, l'ha già fatto Stefano.