

(In)definiteness of pronouns

Studies of anaphora rarely make reference to well-known semantic criteria for NPs (e.g., definiteness, specificity, presuppositionality) because pronouns seem to be, by definition, definite, specific and presuppositional. However, there are cases in which pronouns cannot be considered so. Carlson (1977) noted that plural pronouns *they/them* can stand for bare plurals, and that paraphrasing them as definite descriptions does not lead to the correct interpretations

(1) Fred hates *carpenter ants* because **they** destroyed his garage. [**they** = (some) carpenter ants]

(2) *Racoons* are cute, but **they** often carry rabies. [**they** = racoons]

In (2), for instance, the pronoun can be paraphrased as neither *the racoons* nor *the racoons that are cute* (i.e., E-type). A related phenomenon is the “weak” partitive construction, as discussed in Wilkinson (1995).

(3) You think that *racoons* are rare, but actually you find **many of them** in this neighborhood.

Carlson and Wilkinson both argue that these pronouns stand for whatever bare plurals denote; uniformly kind-referring for Carlson and either kind-referring or property for Wilkinson (the difference between them reflects their views on bare plurals). I find their explanation less than satisfactory for the following reasons. (A) It remains mysterious why *they/them*, which is otherwise definite, can be used only in these contexts. (B) There are certain cases where pronouns cannot stand for bare plurals: *There*-insertion (** there were them in the garden*) and in a predicate position (*Geniuses are rare, but *I consider Sue and Joe them*). [The second point goes against Déchaine and Wiltchko (2002, to appear), who argue that *they/them* can be used predicatively.] (C) French shows the almost identical pattern. Definite plural pronoun *ils/elles* can be used existentially (in the French counterpart of (1)), and the partitive clitic *en* can mean strong or weak, just as the English *of them* partitive does. However, French does not allow bare plurals (or bare NPs in general). Thus, the question remains unanswered why the two languages dramatically differ in the full-fledged DPs but share the same strategy in the pronoun system.

I will offer an alternative analysis of these Bare Plural pronouns (henceforth BP pronouns) based on Elbourne’s (2002) theory of “pronouns-as-Definite-Determiner-plus-NP-ellipsis” and Chierchia’s (1998) Cross-linguistic Semantics. Looking at these two theories independently, one would surely find that they are unsuitable for the problems at hand. Elbourne argues, reviving the Postal analysis of pronouns as determiners, that pronouns are definite determiners stranded after the process of NP ellipsis. It is rather obvious, however, that the observations in (1)-(3) make such an analysis look implausible. In the Chierchian framework, English and French belong to different language groups; the former is [+arg,+pred], and the latter [-arg,+pred]. These featural differences are supposed to explain the distributional differences of bare plurals and mass nouns in the two languages. Then how could one account for the loss of the differences between the two languages **only** in the context of BP pronouns? The main ingredients of my analysis are the following. **(I) The lack of appropriate NP anaphora:** English has two types of NP anaphora, namely NP ellipsis (aka N’-deletion) and *one(s)*, as exemplified in (4). However, both types, which are largely in complementary distribution (cf. Sleeman 1996), require that there be some ‘left-over’ material, such as a determiner, or an adjective. Hence, neither type can be a substitute for *they* in a sentence like (1), as shown in (5).

(4) *Bats* are common around here. I saw big [_{NP} **ones**] / some [_{NP} **e**] this evening.

(5) Fred hates *carpenter ants* because **[_{NP} **e**]/*[_{NP} **ones**]* destroyed his garage.

[In the presentation, I will offer a tentative solution for this pattern, using Lobeck's (1995) theory of Ellipsis.] (II) **Avoid Structure of Chierchia:** In Chierchia's system, the reason why English definite plurals cannot be generic or refer to a kind is an Economy Principle called *Avoid Structure*. It provides that type-shifting be applied as early as possible. English has the semantic operation that creates a kind from a property (i.e., his "down" \cap operation), it must apply at the level of an NP, and the use of *the*, which entails projecting a DP, is blocked. However, (II) does not apply to pronouns because of (I): If there were an NP pronoun, the \cap would apply, and (II) would block the projection of DP. Without such a pronoun, however, (II) does not apply, and the DP pronoun *they/them* must be used. With the Elbornean syntax and semantics, we arrive at the following interpretation for the BP pronoun *they/them*.

(6) $[[_{\text{DP}} \text{they } [_{\text{NP}} \text{e}_i]]]^{\text{s}} = \lambda w. \max(x). [\text{PL}(g(1))](x)(w) = \lambda w. \text{the totality of the entities with the property } g(1) \text{ in } w = \lambda w. \text{the extension of the kind corresponding to the property } g(1) \text{ in } w.$

In short, BP pronouns are definite both in their syntax and semantics, and we arrive at Carlson's semantics of *they/them* (= kind-reference) via the French-style derivation. The existential and the generic readings of *they/them* are derived via D(erived) K(ind) P(redication) and Predicativisation of Chierchia (1998), respectively. The detailed computations will be provided in the presentation. The proposed analysis explains why BP pronouns must have the shape that they do, and why the difference between English and French disappears in the pronoun system. The ban against using BP pronouns in the *there*-insertion is explained with a few additional assumptions. The \exists -reading comes from \exists -closure, rather than DKP. Without DKP, bare plurals in *there*-insertion need not (hence must not) go through the \cap . They remain as properties and get \exists -closed. Kinds are, on the other hand, individuals and hence cannot be existentially closed. The Predicativisation of a kind for the purpose of \exists -closure is blocked (e.g., a definite NP is banned in the French *il y a...* existential). Hence, * *there were them in the garden*.

The current proposal can be extended to partitives. Following Chierchia (1997), I assume the structure of *many of them* to be (7), with a phonologically null 'part' NP.

(7) $[_{\text{QP}} \text{many } [_{\text{NP}} \text{part } [_{\text{PP}} \text{of } [_{\text{DP}} \text{them } [_{\text{NP}} \text{e}_i]]]]]$

In the ordinary 'strong partitive', *them* denotes a contextually salient plural entity. In the BP partitive, it denotes a salient kind via the derivation outline above. The notion of 'parts of a kind' is taken as 'realizations/instances of a kind'. In other words, 'part' yields a property out of a kind without appealing to Predicativisation. With this analysis and the proposal outlined above, it is correctly predicted that, unlike BP plurals themselves, BP plural partitives are allowed in *there*-insertion, as long as the quantifier is weak, as shown in (8).

(8) You think that *racoons* are rare, but actually there are **many of them** in this neighborhood.

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