

Indefinites in Generic Contexts in European Portuguese

Fátima Oliveira* & Fátima Silva*

Faculdade de Letras da Universidade do Porto
Centro de Linguística da Universidade do Porto

Via Panorâmica, s/n, 4150-564 Porto, Portugal

moliv@letras.up.pt
mhenri@letras.up.pt

Abstract

The main goal of this work is to describe how singular and plural indefinites without modification in preverbal subject position behave in generic contexts and how they relate to bare nouns in European Portuguese (EP).

In what concerns the distribution of bare nouns (BN) in subject preverbal position without modifiers, a contrast between Germanic and Romance languages has been noticed: plural count nouns and mass nouns are grammatical in English, but not in French and they are quite restricted in Italian, Spanish and EP.

Based on the criteria established by Dowty (1979) for distinguishing states from events and on the distinction proposed by Cunha (2004) between phase and non phase eventualities, we establish a correlation between the distribution of BN and Indefinites in preverbal subject position in EP and different types of predicates.

Having summarized the patterns obtained by the data description, we combine (following Duarte et al. 2002 and Oliveira et al. 2006) the predicate value of each of the considered predicates and their corresponding subject value, in order to account for the properties of the BNs and Indefinites preverbal subjects in EP, namely with respect to the generic contexts that allow them. It will be showed that both indefinites and BNs behave differently in such position depending on their singular or plural form.

Key words: Indefinites, bare nouns, generic context, types of predicates

Resumo

O principal objectivo do presente trabalho consiste em descrever como se comportam os indefinidos sem modificação em posição de sujeito pré-verbal em contextos genéricos e como se relacionam com os nomes simples em Português Europeu (PE).

No que se refere à distribuição dos nomes simples em posição de sujeito pré-verbal sem modificadores, foi assinalado um contraste entre as Línguas Germânicas e as Línguas Românicas: os nomes contáveis plurais e os nomes massivos são gramaticais em Inglês, mas não em Francês, e são bastante restritos em Italiano, Espanhol e PE.

Baseadas nos critérios estabelecidos por Dowty (1979) para a distinção entre eventos e estados e na distinção proposta por Cunha (2004) entre eventualidades faseáveis e não faseáveis, estabelecemos a correlação entre a distribuição de nomes simples e de indefinidos em posição de sujeito pré-verbal em PE e diferentes tipos de predicados.

Tendo sintetizado os padrões obtidos na descrição dos dados, combinamos (seguindo Duarte et al. 2002 e Oliveira et al. 2006) o valor de predicado de cada um dos predicados considerados e o correspondente valor de sujeito, no sentido de estabelecer as propriedades dos nomes simples e dos indefinidos em posição de sujeito pré-verbal em PE, nomeadamente no que diz respeito aos contextos genéricos que os autorizam. Será demonstrado que tanto os indefinidos como os nomes simples se comportam de modo diferente nessa posição em função da sua forma singular ou plural.

Palavras-chave: Indefinidos, nomes simples, contexto genérico, tipos de predicados

* FLUP-DEPER / CLUP (Research Unit supported by FCT (FEDER/POCTI-U0022/2003))

Resumen

El principal objetivo del presente trabajo consiste en describir cómo se comportan los indefinidos sin modificación en posición de sujeto preverbal en contextos genéricos y cómo se relacionan con los nombres escuetos en portugués europeo (PE).

En lo que se refiere a la distribución de los nombres escuetos en posición de sujeto preverbal sin modificadores, se ha señalado un contraste entre las lenguas germánicas y las lenguas románicas: los nombres contables plurales y los nombres masivos son gramaticales en inglés, pero no en francés y de uso bastante restringido en italiano, español y PE.

Basadas en los criterios establecidos por Dowty (1979) para la distinción entre eventos y estados y en la distinción propuesta por Cunha (2004) entre eventualidades estructuradas en fases y no estructuradas en fases, establecemos la correlación entre la distribución de nombres escuetos y de indefinidos en posición de sujeto preverbal en PE y diferentes tipos de predicados.

Habiendo sintetizado los patrones obtenidos en la descripción de los datos, combinamos (siguiendo a Duarte et al. 2002 y a Oliveira et al. 2006) el valor de predicado de cada uno de los predicados considerados y el correspondiente valor de sujeto, en el sentido de establecer las propiedades de los nombres escuetos y de los indefinidos en posición de sujeto preverbal en PE, sobre todo en lo que se refiere a los contextos genéricos que los autorizan. Se demostrará que tanto los indefinidos como los nombres escuetos se comportan de modo diferente en esa posición en función de su forma singular o plural.

Palabras clave: Indefinidos, nombres escuetos, contexto genérico, tipos de predicados

Table of Contents

1. Introduction
2. Criteria for the semantic distinction of predications
3. Types of predicates and distribution of Indefinites in EP
4. Types of predicates and distribution of Bare Nouns in EP
5. Data Analysis
6. Conclusion
7. References

1. Introduction

The main goal of this paper is to see how singular and plural indefinites without modification in preverbal subject position behave in generic contexts and how they relate to bare nouns (hereafter BN) in European Portuguese (hereafter EP).

As it is well known, Romance and Germanic languages accept singular indefinites in such position as seen in (1)-(3), but they differ in the case of plurals. English only accepts bare plural, French only accepts explicit plural indefinite (*des*) and EP accepts, in some restricted cases, a plural indefinite as the examples in (1')-(3') illustrate.¹

- (1) A bird flies.
- (2) Un oiseau vole.
- (3) Um pássaro voa.
- (1') Birds fly.
- (2') Des oiseaux volent.
- (3') #Uns pássaros voam.

In what concerns the distribution of bare nouns in subject preverbal position without modifiers, a contrast between Germanic and Romance languages has been

¹ It should be noted that EP and Spanish have a plural indefinite form (*uns, unos*), contrasting with other Romance languages in this respect.

noticed: plural count and mass nouns are grammatical in English as in (4), but not in French (see (5)) and they are quite restricted in Italian, Spanish and EP as shown in (6).

- (4) a. Students are dancing in the rain.
b. Water is good for health.
- (5) a. *Enfants jouent dans la rue.
b. *Café se boit chaud.
- (6) a. Baleias são mamíferos de grandes dimensões.
Whales are mammals of big size
b. *Baleias são inteligentes.
Whales are intelligent
c. Água é uma substância essencial à vida.
Water is a substance essential to life
d. ?Água é rara no deserto.
Water is rare in the desert

Hence, in general, Romance languages deal with the absence or limited distribution of BNs by resorting (i) to plural indefinite in Spanish and EP (see (7)) or partitive determiners in the case of French (see (8)) for existential readings, and (ii) to the singular or plural definite determiners for generic values, as seen in (9).² In generic contexts plural indefinites seem to be possible in some cases in French (Kleiber 1981, Corblin 1989, Heyd 2006, Dobrovie-Sorin & Beyssade 2004), they also seem to be acceptable in some cases in Spanish, having a group interpretation (Laca & Tasmowski-De Ryck 1996)³ and EP accepts plural bare nouns in some generic contexts.

- (7) Umas crianças bateram à porta.
'Some' children knocked at the door
- (8) Des élèves étaient malades.
'Some' students be-imp sick
- (9) a. A(s) baleia(s) é/ são mamífero(s).
The whale(s) is/are mammal(s)
b. La(s) ballena(s) es/ son mamífero(s).
c. La/les baleine(s) est/ sont un/des mamifère(s).

In these languages, except for mass nouns, bare singular arguments are very rare and lexically restricted as seen in (10)-(11).⁴ But a singular definite determiner is a quite common strategy for the expression of kind terms in these languages, as the examples in (12) show.

- (10) a. *Baleia é mamífero.
Whale is mammal
b. *Ballena es mamífero.
c. *Baleine est mamifère.
d. *Balena è mamífero.

² In these contexts Romance languages are distinct from English only in the case of plural definite determiners, as the singular definite determiner is also available for generic readings in English.

³ It should be noted that all but one of the examples suggested by the authors exhibit modified nouns.

⁴ Brazilian Portuguese is an exception to this generalization (see Müller 2002, Müller, & Oliveira 2004, Oliveira 2007, Schmitt & Munn 1999, Schmitt, & Munn 2002).

- (11) a. * Vimos baleia.
 (We) saw whale
 b. *Hemos visto ballena.
 c. *Nous avons vu baleine.
 d. *Abbiamo visto balena.
- (12) a. O lince ibérico está em vias de extinção.
 The lynx Iberian is about to be extinct
 b. En España se está extinguiendo el zorro.
 c. Le gorille est en voie d'extinction.
 d. In questo paese, hanno riuscito ad estermiare il tigre.

Carlson (1977), in his seminal work, has shown the importance of predicates for the interpretation of subject DPs and sentences and since then it is rather common to consider their interrelation as elaborated by Chierchia 1995, Kratzer 1995, Krifka *et al.* 1995, Kiss 1998, among others. So it has been pointed out that the nature of the predicate, that is Individual-level or Stage-level or even Kind-level, and its aspectual value (stative/eventive) (Oliveira & Cunha 2003) are crucial factors for the distinctions specific/non-specific and generic/existential or habitual readings.

In this paper we will present some of the analogies and discrepancies between indefinites and bare nouns in EP. To do so we first present some main criteria for the distinction of the relevant semantic concepts, we then continue with types of predicates and distribution of Indefinites and BNs in EP to conclude with the data analysis allowing us to put forward some conclusions.

2. Criteria for the semantic distinction of the predications

As pointed out previously, the semantic nature of the predicates is relevant for understanding the different behaviour of Indefinites and BNs in subject position. In order to make it clear, we will present briefly in this section some of the most significant criteria to differentiate not only Individual-level and Stage-level predicates but also phase eventualities from non-phase eventualities.

2.1. Individual-level predicates and Stage-level predicates

In EP the distinction between these predicates can be observed in the context of a. durative and locative temporal adverbials; b. quantification over situations; and c. the scope of the aspectual operator *passar a*.⁵

Based on these criteria it is possible to distinguish an Individual-level predicate like *ser alto* (to be tall) from a Stage-level predicate like *estar doente* (to be ill). Although Portuguese, similarly to Spanish, also uses the distinction *ser / estar* for this purpose, this is only relevant in the cases the predicates are built with such verbs. Therefore, it is worthwhile to use such criteria in order to see that Individual-level predicates are not acceptable with durative and locative temporal adverbials, as in (13)-(14), whereas Stage-level predicates are adequate in such contexts as shown in (17)-(18). Moreover, Individual-level predicates do not admit quantification over situations, as example (15) illustrate, where it is under the scope of expressions like *sempre que* (everytime). In this case, Stage-level predicates are perfectly appropriate, as seen in (19). The two types of predicates behave also differently in another context but with the opposite relation: Individual-level predicates accept to be under the scope of the aspectual verb *passar a*

⁵ The translation of *passar a* is not easy in English. The most approximate is *to become*.

while Stage-level predicates do not accept such context, as the comparison between (16) and (20) show.

- (13) *O João foi alto na semana passada.
[The] John was tall last week
- (14) *O João foi/era alto às duas da tarde.
[The] John was/be-Imp tall at 2 o'clock of afternoon
- (15) *Sempre que o João é alto, joga na equipa de basquetebol.
Every time [the] John is tall, (he) plays in the team of basketball
- (16) O João passou a ser alto (desde que foi para a praia todos os Verões).
[The] João has become tall (since (he) went to the beach every summer)
- (17) A Maria esteve doente na semana passada.
[The] Mary was sick last week
- (18) A Maria esteve/estava doente às duas da manhã.
[The] Mary was/ be-Imp sick at 2 o'clock in the morning
- (19) Sempre que a Maria está doente, toma chá de limão com mel.
Every time [the] Mary is sick, (she) takes lemon tea with honey
- (20) *A Maria passou a estar doente. (non-habitual reading)
[The] Mary has become sick

2.2. Phase states and non-phase states

According to Cunha (1998, 2004), EP exhibits an interesting distinction between states. This means that some states are always stative, the 'non-phase states', whereas others can occur in contexts that reveal they are close to events, the 'phase states'. This can be shown using criteria based in Dowty (1979) for distinguishing states from events. So, in what follows we present such criteria applying it only to states in order to confirm the above mentioned distinction.

The relevant criteria we use are the following: progressive construction, imperative, agent-oriented adverbials, complement clauses of verbs like *persuadir* (to persuade), habitual reading of present tense and finally the possibility of occurrence in the main sentence of embedded temporal sentences.

It is usually assumed that states do not occur in Progressive constructions. But, as the contrast between (21) and (22) show, some states, the phase ones, may occur in such construction:

- (21) *O Rui está a ser português.
[The] Rui is being portuguese
- (22) O Rui está a ser cuidadoso.
[The] Rui is being careful

In what concerns Imperative, normally only used with events, some states do occur in that construction as seen in (24), in contrast with (23):

- (23) *Rui, sê português!
Rui, be portuguese
- (24) Rui, sê cuidadoso!
Rui, be careful

Agent-oriented adverbials are supposed to combine only with events and they are precluded for states. Nevertheless, such adverbials are allowed in (26) with a phase state:

(25) * O Rui foi propositadamente português.

[The] Rui was deliberately portuguese

(26) O Rui foi propositadamente cuidadoso.

[The] Rui was deliberately careful

Another test usually used for the distinction events/states is the possibility, for events but not for states, of occurrence in complement clauses of verbs like *pedir* (to ask)/*persuadir* (to persuade). As example (28) illustrate the phase state *ser cuidadoso* (be careful) is allowed in this context whereas the non-phase state *ser português* (be Portuguese) is not.

(27) *A Maria pediu ao Rui para ser português.

[The] Mary asked [to] Rui to be Portuguese

(28) A Maria pediu ao Rui para ser cuidadoso.

[The] Mary asked [to] Rui to be careful

The habitual reading of Present tense only takes place with events. Using the co occurrence with *habitualmente* (habitually) as a way to test such generalization, we see that a phase state (see (30)) is possible in such context:

(29) * O Rui é habitualmente português.

[The] Rui is usually portuguese

(30) O Rui é habitualmente cuidadoso.

[The] Rui is usually careful

Finally, only phase states, like events, can occur in the main sentence of embedded temporal sentences. Here, again, the example (32) shows that a phase state is perfectly accepted:

(31) *Quando nasceu, o Rui foi português.

When (he) was born, [the] Rui was portuguese

(32) Quando chegou àquela zona da cidade, o Rui foi cuidadoso.

When (he) arrived to that part of the town, [the] Rui was careful.

The above distinction between phase and non-phase states based on criteria used to distinguish events from states fully demonstrates such distinction is justifiable. Moreover, it also shows that phase states do behave, in some contexts, closer to events than to states.

3. Types of predicates and the distribution of indefinites in EP

In this section we combine the different predicates and the aspectual distinction event, phase state and non-phase with indefinites in subject position in order to establish what are the fundamental possibilities and restrictions of co-occurrence.

3.1. Kind-level predicates

In the context of Kind-level predicates, singular and plural indefinites are only allowed in a taxonomic reading as shown in (33a, b). A definition context is also possible but only for singular indefinite as the contrast (33c)-(33d) shows.

- (33) a. Uma baleia está extinta.
A whale is extinct
b. Umas baleias estão extintas.
'Some' whales are extinct
c. Uma baleia é uma espécie em vias de extinção
A whale is a species about to be extinct
d. * Umas baleias são uma espécie em vias de extinção
'Some' whales are a species about to be extinct

3.2. Non-phase Individual-level predicates

Combined with these predicates, singular and plural indefinites are only allowed in existential reading for the singular indefinite or group reading for the plural one admitting, in this case, a possible contrast with another group of children (see (34a-b)). Interestingly, a singular indefinite is possible in a generic context as in (34c), but not a plural indefinite (34d).

- (34) a. (?) Uma criança é alta.
A child is tall
b. (?) Umas crianças são altas.
'Some' children are tall
c. Uma criança é alta quando/se os pais são altos.
A child is tall whenever/ if the parents are tall
d. * Umas crianças são altas quando os pais são altos.
'Some' children are tall when the parents are tall

3.3. Phase Individual-level predicates

In this context, singular and plural indefinites are allowed in existential or group reading as in (35a-b). But in generic contexts singular and plural indefinites behave differently: the singular is allowed (see (35c-d)) but not the plural (see (35e-f)). In these contexts the constructions illustrated in (35c) and (35d) should be differentiated. In the first case we get a generic reading based on a restriction to some situations and in the second case we get another reading on the basis of a phase predicate like *ser inteligente* (be intelligent) which can be paraphrased by "every time a child behaves in an intelligent way".

- (35) a. Uma criança é inteligente.
A child is intelligent
b. Umas crianças são inteligentes
'Some' children are intelligent
c. Uma criança é inteligente quando/se sabe enfrentar as dificuldades.
A child is intelligent when/if (she) knows (to) face the difficulties
d. Sempre que uma criança é inteligente resolve os problemas
Every time a child is intelligent, (she) solves the problems

- e. ??Umas crianças são inteligentes quando enfrentam as dificuldades
‘Some’ children are intelligent when (they) face [the] difficulties
- f. ??Sempre que umas crianças são inteligentes resolvem os problemas.
Every time ‘some’ children are intelligent (they) solve the problems

3.4. Stage-level predicates

These predicates can be stative and eventive. The stative ones can also be, like the individual level predicates, non-phase and phase predicates. With respect to events, it is important to consider the episodic contexts and also the habitual ones. In what follows, we first present the stative predicates followed by the eventive ones.

3.4.1. Stative non-phase predicates

Singular and plural indefinites in subject position are only allowed with an existential reading as the examples (36a) and (36b) show.

- (36) a. Uma criança tem 40° de febre.
A child has 40° of fever
- b. Umas crianças têm 40° de febre.
A child has 40° of fever

3.4.2. Stative phase predicates

Combined with stative phase predicates singular and plural indefinites behave differently. They are both acceptable in a non habitual (episodic) context as seen in (37c)-(37d) but in habitual contexts only the singular indefinite is allowed (see (37a-b)).

- (37) a. Um turista adora viajar (sempre que tem tempo).
A tourist loves travelling (whenever (he) has time).
- b. ??/*Uns turistas adoram viajar (sempre que têm tempo)
‘Some’ tourists love travelling (whenever (they) have time)
- c. Um turista detestou a viagem.
A tourist hated the trip
- d. Uns turistas detestaram a viagem.
‘Some’ tourists hated the trip

3.4.3. Event predicates

Depending on several factors, among which the tense of the sentence, an episodic reading or a habitual reading is available for event predicates. The latter is favored in EP, similarly to other languages like English, by the simple present tense.

So, in episodic contexts, both singular and plural indefinites are allowed in an existential reading as examples (38)-(39) illustrate:

- (38) a. Um elefante invadiu o campo.
An elephant invaded the field
- b. Um professor trabalhou muito.
A teacher worked a lot
- c. Uma mulher discutiu política.
A women discussed politics

- (39) a. Uns elefantes invadiram os campos.
‘Some’ elephants invaded the fields.

- b. Uns professores trabalharam muito.
'Some' teachers worked a lot
- c. Umas mulheres discutiram política.
'Some' women discussed politics

On the contrary, in habituality contexts two readings are possible: the predicate *invadir os campos* (invade the fields) induces preferably an existential reading but the predicate *discutir política* (discuss politics) only allows a generic reading. In the later case only the singular is allowed as the contrast between (41a) and (41b) show.

- (40) a. Um elefante invade os campos todos os anos.
An elephant invades the fields every year
- b. Uma mulher discute política (raramente).
A woman discusses politics (rarely)
- (41) a. Uns elefantes invadem os campos todos os anos.
'Some' elephants invade the fields every year
- b. ??Umas mulheres discutem política raramente.
'Some' women discuss politics rarely

4. Types of predicates and the distribution of bare nouns in EP

In this section we will pursue the same general plan as in the previous one. We will present the possibilities of combination of BNs with different types of predicates in EP, starting with Kind-level predicates, followed by Individual-level and Stage-level predicates.

4.1. Kind-level predicates

Singular and plural BNs are generally disallowed in the context of Kind-level predicates, although some EP speakers accept them in definition contexts.

- (42) *?Baleia é uma espécie em vias de extinção.
Whale is a species about to be extinct
- (43) *?Baleias são uma espécie em vias de extinção.
Whale are a species about to be extinct
- (44) * Baleia está extinta.
Whale is extinct
- (45) *Dinossauro era herbívoro
Dinosaur is herbivorous
- (46) */?Elefantes estão extintos.
Elephants are extinct
- (47) * Dinossauros eram herbívoros.
Dinosaurs were herbivorous

4.2. Non-phase individual level predicates

The combination of BNs with non-phase individual level predicates is not possible (see (48)-(49)), contrary to what happens to DPs with a lexical D (definite plural /

indefinite singular), where kind and characterizing readings are available. (see Oliveira *et al.* 2006)

(48) *Arranha céus é alto.
Skyscraper is high

(49) *Arranha céus são altos.
Skyscrapers are high

4.3. Phase individual-level predicates

What was said about non-phase individual level predicates is also the case for BNs combining with phase individual-level predicates: they are not possible, contrary to what happens to DPs with a lexical definite D, where kind, existential and characterizing readings are available (cf. Oliveira *et al.* 2006).

(50) *Criança é inteligente.
Child is intelligent

(51) *?Crianças são inteligentes.
Children are intelligent

4.4. Stage level predicates

As mentioned before, in this part we make a distinction between stative and non stative predicates, considering non-phase and phase states and episodic and habitual readings for the events.

4.4.1. Stative non-phase predicates

These predicates exclude BNs as the following examples show:

(52) *Criança tem 40° de febre.
Child has 40° of fever

(53) *Crianças têm 40° de febre.
Children have 40° of fever

4.4.2. Stative phase predicates

BNs are not allowed with stative non-phase predicates (see (54)-(55)), unless they are under the scope of a habituality operator, as in (56)-(57). This operator is supplied by the phase state in the simple present tense, which seems to operate the same way it does for events and supporting the distinction made previously for phase and non-phase states (see section 2.2 above). So, in these habitual contexts, a characterizing reading is obtained.

(54) *Turistas detestaram a viagem.
Tourists hated the trip

- (55) *Turista detestou a viagem.
Tourist hated the trip
- (56) Turistas adoram viajar.
Tourists love travelling
- (57) Turista adora viajar.
Tourist loves travelling

4.4.3. Event predicates

In episodic contexts singular BNs are not allowed in EP as examples (58)-(60) clearly show. However, plural BNs are possible displaying an existential reading, as shown in (61)-(63). In habituality contexts only plural BNs are allowed and two readings are available: an existential one and a generic one as in (64)-(65) respectively.⁶

- (58) *Elefante invadiu o campo.
Elephant invaded the field
- (59) *Professor trabalhou muito.
Teacher worked a lot
- (60) *Mulher discutiu política.
Woman discussed politics
- (61) Elefantes invadiram os campos.
Elephants invaded the fields
- (62) Professores trabalharam muito.
Teachers worked a lot
- (63) Mulheres discutiram política.
Women discussed politics
- (64) Elefantes invadem os campos todos os anos.
Elephants invade the fields every year
- (65) Mulheres discutem política raramente.
Women discuss politics rarely

4.5. Summary of the data description

In Table 1, we summarize the distribution of BNs and Indefinites in preverbal subject position in EP.⁷

⁶ It should be noted that singular BNs are possible in habituality contexts in very rare cases like news headlines.

⁷ ‘BS’ should be read as ‘bare subject’ and ‘IS’ as ‘indefinite subject’. ‘#’ is used for ‘possible in generic context’ and ‘♦’ for ‘taxonomic reading’.

	Predicate	BS	IS
Singular	Kind level (Uma) baleia está extinta	*	OK♦
	Non Phase I-level (Uma) criança é alta	*	EX/#
	Phase I-level (Uma) criança é inteligente	*	EX /#
	Non Phase S- level (stative) (Uma) criança tem 40° de febre	*	EX /#
	Phase S-level (state, habituality) (Um) turista adora viajar.	OK	EX##
	Event (Episodic) (Um) elefante invadiu o campo	*	EX
	Event (habituality) (Um) elefante invade o campo todos os anos	*	EX
	Plural	Kind level (Uns) elefantes estão extintos.	*
Phase and non-phase [i-level] (Uns) elefantes são inteligentes. (Umas) crianças são altas.		*	EX/*
Non Phase S- level (stative) (Umas) crianças têm 40° de febre		*	EX/*
Phase S-level (state, habituality) (Uns) turistas adoram viajar		OK	*/EX?
Event (Episodic) (Uns) elefantes invadiram o campo		EX	EX
Event (habituality) (Uns) elefantes invadem o campo todos os anos		EX	EX

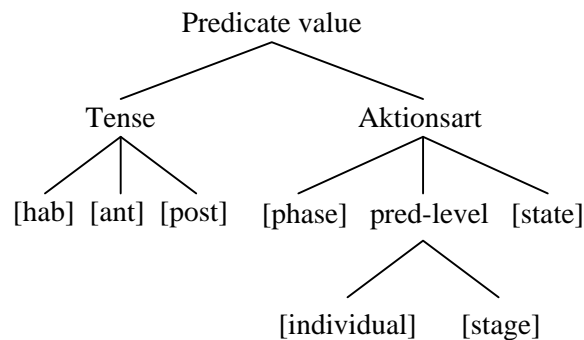
Table 1: summary of the data description

5. Data analysis

In this section, we will provide a data discussion based on the relation established between predicate values and subject values in relation to Indefinites and Bare Nouns.

5.1. The feature geometry

Based on Oliveira *et al.* (2006) where it is assumed that the relevant readings of BNs are obtained by the combination of *Aktionsart* and *Tense* features with the higher node features of the BNs, we will extend this to indefinites in subject position. So, we first take the feature geometry proposed in Oliveira *et al.* (2006) and displayed below.



This feature geometry allows a lexical characterization of predicates based on an *Aktionsart* classification according to some main distinctive features as described in section 2 above (see (66)-(71)), and it also accounts for the present tense, ‘*imperfecto*’ and past tense as shown in (72)-(74).

- (66) *kind-level*, e.g. (*estar*) *extinto* [*to be extinct*]: [+ state], [- ind], [- stage]
 (67) *individual-level* non-phase, e.g., (*ser*) *alto* [(*to be tall*): [+ state], [+ ind], [- stage], [- phas]
 (68) *individual-level* phase, e.g., (*ser*) *cuidadoso* [*to be careful*]: [+ state], [+ ind], [- stage], [+ phas]
 (69) *stage-level* state non-phase, e.g., (*estar*) *avariado* [*to be broken*]: [+ state], [- ind], [+ stage], [- phas]
 (70) *stage-level* state phase, e.g., *gostar* [*to like*]: [+ state], [- ind], [+ stage], [+ phas]
 (71) *stage-level* event, e.g., *comer* [*to eat*]: [- state], [- ind], [+ stage]
 (72) present tense: [+ hab], [- ant], [post]
 (73) past tense: [hab], [+ ant]
 (74) *imperfecto* (tense value): [+ hab], [+ ant]

Based on Duarte et al. 2002 and Oliveira et al. 2006, we will try to relate predicate and subject values in order to account for the properties of the BNs and indefinites preverbal subjects:

5.2. The combination of predicate value and subject value

The combination of predicate value and subject value displayed in table 2 allows the comparison between BNs and Indefinites and their respective interpretations in similar contexts. It is quite clear that they do not behave the same way not only in what concerns their possible occurrence but also their possible interpretations.

Reading	subject value/predicate value	BS	IS
generic characterizing	subject: [-plural], [+count], [<i>specific</i>] predicate: [+state], [+stage], [+phase], [+habitual] (<i>Um</i>) <i>turista adora viajar</i>	OK	OK Gen
	subject: [-plural], [+count], [<i>specific</i>] predicate: [-state], [+stage], [+phase], [+habitual] (<i>Uma</i>) <i>mulher discute política</i>	*	OK Gen
	subject: [-plural], [+count], [<i>specific</i>] predicate: [+state], [-stage], [+phase] (<i>Uma</i>) <i>criança é inteligente</i>	*	OK Gen
	subject: [+plural], [+count], [<i>specific</i>] predicate: [+state], [-stage], [-phase] (<i>Umas</i>) <i>crianças têm cara de anjinho</i>	*	OK *Gen
	subject: [+plural], [+count], [<i>specific</i>] predicate: [+state], [-stage], [+phase] (<i>Uns</i>) <i>elefantes são inteligentes</i>	*	OK *Gen
	subject: [+plural], [+count], [<i>specific</i>] predicate: [+state], [+stage], [+phase], [+habitual] (<i>Uns</i>) <i>turistas adoram viajar</i>	OK	OK *Gen
kind	subject: [+plural], [+count], [<i>specific</i>] predicate: [+state], [-stage] (<i>Uns</i>) <i>elefantes estão extintos</i>	*/?	OK♦

existential (habitual)	subject: [+plural], [+count], [<i>specific</i>] predicate: [-state], [+stage], [+habitual] (<i>Uns</i>) <i>elefantes invadem os campos todos os anos</i>	OK	OK
existential (episodic)	subject: [+plural], [+count], [<i>specific</i>] predicate: [-state], [+stage], [+anterior] (<i>Uns</i>) <i>elefantes invadiram os campos de arroz.</i>	OK	OK

Table 2: combination of subject value and predicate value

From the observation of the above table some comments can be drawn. In the first place it should be noted that, when the subject value is [+plural] and the predicate value is [-state], [+stage], the positive value for [*specific*] is assigned and the existential reading is obtained, as the examples (77)-(78) show.

- (77) *Elefantes invadem os campos todos os anos.*
Elephants invade the fields every year.
- (77') *Uns elefantes invadem os campos todos os anos.*
'Some' elephants invade the fields every year.
- (78) *Elefantes invadiram os campos de arroz.*
Elephants invaded the fields of rice.
- (78') *Uns elefantes invadiram os campos de arroz.*
'Some' elephants invaded the fields of rice.

Secondly, when the subject value is [-plural] and the predicate value is [-state], [+stage], the positive value for [*specific*] is assigned and the existential reading is obtained for indefinites, as (79)-(79') illustrate.

- (79) *Um elefante invadiu o campo.*
An elephant invaded the field.
- (79') *Um elefante invade os campos todos os anos.*
An elephant invades the fields every year.

Thirdly, the negative value for [*specific*] is assigned in two situations. First, when the predicate value is [+stage], [+phase], [+habitual], as in (80)-(82). However, plural indefinites do not get this reading. And secondly when the subject value is [-plural] and the predicate value is [+state] together with some sentence inducing habituality (when/if clause) for indefinites as (83)-(85) illustrate.

- (80) *Turista adora viajar.*
Tourist loves travelling.
- (81) *Um turista adora viajar*
A tourist loves travelling.
- (82) *Turistas adoram viajar.*
Tourists love travelling.
- (83) *Uma criança é alta quando os pais são altos.*
A child is tall when the parents are tall.
- (84) *Uma criança é inteligente quando sabe enfrentar as dificuldades.*
A child is intelligent when (she) knows to face [the] difficulties.
- (85) *Uma criança tem 40° de febre quando tem pneumonia.*
A child has 40° of fever when (she) has pneumonia.

6. Conclusion

The data presented above lead us to some final remarks in what concerns the main differences between Indefinites and BNs in subject position. In the first place, singular bare nouns are not allowed except in Stage-level predicates which are phase states in a habituality context; singular indefinites are allowed in existential or generic reading in generic contexts (see (86)-(88)). Secondly, plural BNs are only possible with existential reading or with Stage-level predicates which are phase (habituality) but plural indefinites are always existential, as shown in (89)-(92).

- (86) *Criança é inteligente
Child is intelligent.
- (87) Turista adora viajar
Tourist loves travelling.
- (88) Uma criança é alta quando os pais são altos.
A child is tall when the parents are tall.
- (89) Elefantes invadem os campos todos os anos.
Elephants invade the fields every year.
- (90) Turistas adoram viajar.
Tourists love travelling.
- (91) Uns elefantes invadem os campos todos os anos.
'Some' elephants invade the fields every year.
- (92) Umas crianças têm 40° de febre.
'Some' children have 40° of fever.

Indefinites also behave differently according to number. Singular indefinites occur in characterizing sentences and they are sensitive to basic and derived states getting an existential reading with events (see (93)-(94)). Plural indefinites have only an existential reading and they are not fully acceptable in habitual contexts.

- (93) Um turista adora viajar
A tourist loves travelling.
- (94) Um elefante invade o campo todos os anos.
An elephant invades the field every year.
- (95) Uns elefantes invadem o campo todos os anos
'Some' elephants invade the field every year.
- (96) ??Uns turistas adoram viajar
'Some' tourists love travelling.

7. References

- Carlson, G. (1977). *Reference to Kinds in English*. PhD dissertation, University of Massachusetts, Amherst.
- Carlson, G. & F. Pelletier (1995). *The Generic Book*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Chierchia, G. (1998). "Plurality of Mass Nouns and the Notion of 'Semantic Parameter'". In Rothstein, S. (ed.). *Events and Grammar*, Dordrecht: Kluwer, pp. 53-104.

- Chierchia, G. (1998). "Reference to Kinds across Languages". *Natural Language Semantics*, 6, pp. 339-405.
- Cohen, A. (2001). "On the Generic Use of Indefinite Singulars". *Journal of Semantics*, 18:3, 183-209.
- Corblin, F. (2001). "Les indéfinis: variables et quantificateurs". *Langue Française*, 116, pp.8-32.
- Cunha, L. F. (1998). *As construções com o Progressivo em Português: uma abordagem semântica*. Master Dissertation.. Universidade do Porto.
- Cunha, L. (2004). *Semântica das Predicações Estativas. Para uma Caracterização Aspectual dos Estados*. PhD Dissertation. Universidade do Porto.
- Diesing, M. (1992). *Indefinites*. Cambridge, Mass: The MIT Press.
- Dobrovie-Sorin, C. & B. Laca (2003). "Les Noms sans Déterminant dans les Langues Romanes". In Godard, D. (ed.). *Les Langues Romanes*. Paris : Ed. du CNRS, pp. 235-281.
- Dobrovie-Sorin, C. & C. Beyssade (2004). *Definir les Indéfinis*. Paris: CNRS.
- Dowty, D.R. (1979). *Word Meaning and Montague Grammar*. Dordrecht: D. Reidel.
- Duarte, I., Freitas, M. J., Gonçalves, A., Miguel, M. & Rodrigues, C. (2002). "Geometria de Traços e Distribuição de Pronomes Sujeito em PE e em PB". Paper presented at 3.º *Workshop Português Europeu-Português Brasileiro*, Universidade de Lisboa. Ms.
- Heim, I. (1982). *The Semantics of Definite and Indefinite Noun Phrases*. PhD dissertation. University of Massachusetts, Amherst.
- Heyd, S. (2006). "Prédication et Interprétation Générique des Syntagmes Nominaux en Des en Position Sujet". In Corblin, F., S. Ferrando & L. Kupferman (dir.). *Indéfini et Prédication*. Paris : Presses de L'Université Paris-Sorbonne.
- Kleiber, G. (1981) . "Relatives spécifiantes et Relatives non spécifiantes", *Le Français Moderne* 49, pp 216-233.
- Kleiber, G. (2001). "Indéfinis: Lecture Référentielle et Partitive". In Kleiber, G., B. Laca & L. Tasmowski (eds.). *Typologie des GN*. Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, pp. 47-98.
- Kratzer, A. (1995). "Stage-Level and Individual-Level Predicates". In Carlson, G. & F. Pelletier (eds.). *The Generic Book*. Chicago: The Chicago University Press, pp. 125-175.
- Krifka, M., F. Pelletier, G. Carlson, A. ter Meulen, G. Link, & G. Chierchia, G. (1995). "Genericity: an Introduction". In Carlson, G. & F. Pelletier (eds.). *The Generic Book*. Chicago: The Chicago University Press, pp. 1-124.
- Laca, B. & L. Tasmowski-De Ryck (1996). "Indéfini et Quantification". *Recherches Linguistiques de Vincennes* 25, pp 107-128.
- Müller, A. (2002). "The Semantics of Generic Quantification in Brazilian Portuguese". *Probus* 14, pp. 279-298.

Müller, A. & F. Oliveira (2004). "Bare Nominals and Number in Brazilian and European Portuguese". *Journal of Portuguese Linguistics*, 3, pp. 11-36.

Oliveira, F. (2004). *Aspectos Semânticos das Frases Genéricas em Português*. FLUP. Ms.

Oliveira, F. (2007). "Bare Nouns in European and Brazilian Portuguese" *Actas del VI Congreso de Lingüística General*, Madrid, Arco Libros, 2207-2216.

Oliveira, F. & L. F. Cunha (2003). "Termos de Espécie e Tipos de Predicado". In Comissão Directiva do CLUP (org.). *Língua Portuguesa: Estruturas, Usos e Contrastes*. Porto: CLUP, pp. 57-78.

Oliveira, F., I. Duarte, M. J. Freitas, A. Gonçalves, M. Miguel & C. Rodrigues (2006). "Syntactic derivations and the interpretation of Bare Nouns in European Portuguese and Brazilian Portuguese". Paper presented at *II Romania Nova Workshop*, Universidade Federal de Alagoas.

Oliveira, F. & F. Silva (2007). "Indefinites in Generic Contexts in European Portuguese". In *17èmes Rencontres Linguistiques en Pays Rhénan*. Strasbourg: Université March Bloch (to be published).

Schmitt, C. & A. Munn, (1999). "Against the Nominal Mapping Parameter: Bare Nouns in Brazilian Portuguese". *NELS* 29.

Schmitt, C. & A. Munn (2002). "The Syntax and Semantics of Bare Arguments in Brazilian Portuguese", ms., to be published in *The Linguistic Variation Year Book*.