INTRODUCTION

- A unified theory of short and long weak definites
- The distinction between weak and strong readings doesn’t come from the determiner interpretation but rather from the noun interpretation.

Claims :
  a) definite article only contributes a weak uniqueness presupposition, where uniqueness depends on existence (cf Coppock & Beaver, 2012).
  b) Weak DDs are used to refer to or to name types. A type groups together indistinguishable objects. The use of the weak definite determiner is licensed in contexts where differences between tokens are erased.

1) IDENTIFY WEAK DEFINITES

a) WDs : a subclass of determiners
• Definites vs indefinites
  (1) a. Take a book !
      b. Take the book !

• Strong vs weak indefinites (Milsark, 1977)
  (2) a. Cats are playing in the garden. (existential)
      b. Cats are intelligent (generic).
      Weak = existential Strong = specific

• Strong vs weak definites
  (3) a. John took the train and he made a transfer in Berlin.
      b. The village is located on the side of a mountain.

b) Characterizing properties
• No uniqueness presupposition : cf (3)

• Narrow scope only
  (4) a. Every man was reading the newspaper. (not necessarily the same newspaper)
      b. Every man was reading the book. (necessarily the same book)

• VP ellipsis, allowing sloppy interpretations
  (5) a. Anna read the newspaper and John did, too. (different newspapers)
      b. Anna read the book and John did, too. (* different books)

• With WD, the issue of the strict or exact reference of NP is not relevant.
  (6) A : You should go to the hospital.
      B : Which hospital do you mean?
      « An addressee who asked that would have misunderstood. » (Heim, 2011)

And in the case of short weak definites :
• Lexical restrictions, disallowing synonyms, hyponyms, hyperonyms... (not always)
  (7) a. être/aller au lit (‘be/go to bed’) / * être/aller au canapé (be/go to the sofa)
      b. take the train, the bus, the car…

• Semantic enrichment : stereotypical interpretations, routines
  (8) Bob is at the pub (to drink / not to do some plumbing)
How account for weak readings of DD? (i) Revisit the presupposition associated with the; (ii) study coercion from a token interpretation to a type interpretation.

2) REVISITING THE UNIQUENESS PRESUPPOSITION

a) Binding uniqueness to existence (cf Coppock and Beaver, 2012)

• Difference between a and the (mainstream)

(10) ‘A N’ is a DP which asserts the existence of its referent and doesn’t convey any presupposition. ‘The N’ doesn’t assert anything, but conveys the presupposition that its referent exists and is unique.

• Counter-examples
- Attributive DDs which challenge the existence presupposition

(11) a. Napoleon was the greatest French soldier.
    b. 1000 is the biggest even number.

(11a-b) are false and not without truth value. ⇒ No presupposition of existence.

- Exclusive DDs which challenge the uniqueness presupposition

(12) a. John is the sole/only author of this paper. [1 author]
    b. John is not the sole/only author of this paper. [more than 1 author]
    c. Is John the sole/only author of this paper? [one or more than 1 authors]

The anti-uniqueness effect: at first glance, a disappearance of uniqueness presupposition, but in fact, this is the existence of the DP which is problematic.

• Solution

→ Definites presuppose a weak form of uniqueness:

(13) If there is an F, then there is only one.

To account for DPs in predicate position, they assume:

(14) Both the definite article and the indefinite article are fundamentally identity functions on predicates, without any existence implication. The existence component of a definite or indefinite description comes into play when it is used referentially [...].

The two articles [a and the] differ only in that
- the former (the) triggers a weak uniqueness presupposition
- the latter (a) lacks this weak uniqueness presupposition.

To account for DPs in argument position, they assume:

(15) The meaning of argumental definites and indefinites can be derived from the predicative meanings using the same general mechanisms that introduce existence. Existence is generally at-issue with argumental indefinites and presupposed with argumental definites.

To sum up:

- Definites only trigger a weak uniqueness presupposition.
- The weak uniqueness presupposition hypothesis accounts for the fact that
  a) Some attributive definites (in predicate position) don’t presuppose existence
  b) Anti-uniqueness effects arise with some argumental definites.
- The uniqueness presupposition is not independent of existence.

b) From pluralities of tokens to uniqueness of a type

• New proposal (Beyssade, 2013)

(16) The DD ‘the N’ presupposes that if there is an N, then there is only one N.
a. The DD ‘the N’ presupposes that if N refers to a token, then if there is an N, there is only one N.
b. The DD ‘the N’ presupposes that if there are more than one N, then N doesn’t refer to a token.

Rules of contraposition

\[ p \rightarrow q \quad \text{is equivalent to} \quad \neg q \rightarrow \neg p \]

\[ p \rightarrow (q \rightarrow r) \quad \text{is equivalent to} \quad \neg (q \rightarrow r) \rightarrow \neg p \]

When there is no token satisfying the DD, we are in a classical case of presupposition failure (no existence and thus no uniqueness of the referent of the DD). The sentence is neither true nor false.

When there are more than one tokens satisfying the DD, there is a coercion (a type shifting) from token to type. If the coercion is possible, this gives rise to a weak reading of the DD.

a. I damaged the wing of a car / of your car.
b. Marie s’est cassé le bras. ‘Mary broke her arm’
c. I usually had breakfast at the corner of a major intersection.

Weak readings are an alternative to presupposition failure, when there are more than one tokens that satisfies the DD in context.

• Issues
When is the coercion from token to type possible? Are there some contexts where the coercion from token to type is impossible?

[In a context where there are three books on the table]
A : Please, give me the book.
B : Which one?

3) FROM TYPES TO STEREOTYPES
When can weak readings emerge?
⇒ Lexical constraints/restrictions on weak readings in the litterature.

A) The case of long weak DDs
• Barker (2005) : « the nominal predicate is relational and the preposition involved is the true genitive of »

The corner of the intersection
Two distinct ways of composing the meaning of the definite description, with \( f = [[\text{the}]] \), \( g = [[\text{corner}]] \) and \( h = [[\text{of the intersection}]] \).

\[ f(g(h)) = \text{the (corner (of-the-intersection))} \quad \text{Strong def. with uniqueness} \]
\[ (f \ast g)(h) = \text{(the \ast corner) (of-the-intersection)} \quad \text{Weak definite} \]

⇒ Two syntactic analyses but only one determiner. The noun has to be relational. There is still uniqueness, but not uniqueness of reference. Rather, what is unique is the contrastive selection of one relation over another.

b) The case of short weak DDs
A productive construction, but with important lexical restrictions concerning the choice of noun, verb and preposition.

a. Read the newspaper / *w read the book
b. Check the calendar / *w read the calendar

c. Aller à l’école / *w aller vers l’école (go to school / go towards school)

• Aguilar & Zwart (2010)
They define a Stereotypical Usage Relation \( U \) and a kind lifting rule.

\[ U(e, K) \text{ if the event } e \text{ is a stereotypical usage of the kind } K. \]  

\[ \text{Kind Lifting Rule} \]
If \( V \) is a transitive verb (or verb-preposition combination) with an internal argument \( \text{Arg} \) and \( V \) has the meaning \( \lambda e \lambda i [V(e) \land \text{Arg}(e) = x_i] \), then \( V \) also has the meaning \( \lambda x_i \lambda e [V(e) \land R(\text{Arg}(e), x_i) \land U(e, x_i)]. \)

Weak readings are available when the intersection between the denotation of the verb and the denotation of the stereotypical uses of the kind associated with the noun is not empty.

\[ \begin{align*}
\text{Check}(e) & \quad U(e, C) \\
\text{Read}(e) & \quad U(e, C)
\end{align*} \]

(a) to check the calendar  
(b) to read the calendar

• Corblin (2011, 2013), Aurnague (2012)
They highlight the fact that weak readings emerge with the combination of the preposition à and a noun which is associated with an activity or an institution in which a typical activity is performed. “Routine sociale”.

\[ \text{être/aller au lit, au téléphone, au four, au réfrigérateur, à l’école, à l’hôpital, à la mer, à la plage, à la montagne, au balcon, à la fenêtre... (Aurnague)} \]

• Carlson et al. (2013, 2014)

\[ \begin{align*}
\text{a. } [VP \text{ read } [NP [Art the] [N book]]] & \quad \text{Strong definite} \\
\text{b. } \text{read’ (DEF (book’)).} & \\
\text{a. } [VP \text{ read } [NP [Art the] [N newspaper]]] & \quad \text{Weak definite} \\
\text{b. } \text{DEF (read’ (newspaper’))}
\end{align*} \]

Advantages:

a) The noun phrase is not definite, it is a bare noun, which can be analyzed as incorporated.
b) The V and the N form a constituent by themselves \( \Rightarrow \) the two items must be adjacent, no modifiers.
c) The definiteness is associated with the V-N combination.

\[ \text{“It expresses something like a “familiar” type of activity, one whose cultural currency is independently established and encoded in the grammar in this way—one already presumed known. (…) the language will encode some such familiar activities this way and it is only partially predictable which ones will be selected. We conceive of these structures as a an example of something corresponding to name creation— in this case the “naming” of “familiar” activities. This approach provides us with at the beginnings of a principled approach for understanding why the definite article may appear in some instances (“(be) in the slammer”) but not in others ((be) “in jail”), as with proper names.” (Carlson et al., 2014).} \]
Naming sport by nominalization:

(30) a. lancer le javelot ⇒ le lancer (de / du) javelot
b. Names of sport : le saut à la perche (pole vault), le lancer de javelot (javelin throw)

How to account for weak readings of PP?

(31) a. Go to the hospital
b. DEF([pp to' hospital’])
b’. DEF [vp go’( to’ hospital’)]

The DEF could scope over the incorporated P-N form or the V-P-N form.
It is a challenge to provide a detailed analysis of an article meaning that would be able to combine with nominals, PPs, and VPs and retain a single sense.

4) SOME PREDICTIONS
Various consequences follow from the present proposal. In contexts where weak readings appear:

1. Definites and indefinites may alternate
2. The definite determiner is used to shift from tokens to the type which groups tokens together and presents them as indistinguishable. ⇒ flavour of genericity since a kind also groups together tokens whose differences are deleted to highlight the property they all have in common: their belonging to the kind. But the difference is that kinds are defined in the lexicon, while types may be built in context.
3. There are other ways to build type-reference, rather than token-reference.

(32) John and Mary wear the same T-shirt.
4. Types are singletons, thus the principle « maximize presupposition » applies.

(33) a. * a father of the victim / the father of the victim (Heim)
b. *a student of a linguist / the student of a linguist

CONCLUSION
To summarize, we have argued for two ideas
(a) The definite article only contributes a weak uniqueness presupposition
(b) The semantic contribution of the (singular) definite determiner is the same, in strong and weak uses. But weak readings appear in contexts where reference to tokens is out and reference to type is a way to escape to presupposition failure.

Is there a relationship between weak/strong definiteness and semantic/pragmatic definiteness such as defined by Löbner?

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<td>[+R]</td>
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<td>father head age</td>
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<td>subject (gramm.)</td>
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Table 1 : typology of nouns, proposed by Löbner (2011).

The type distinction corresponds to the basic types distinguished in first-order predicate logic:
• individual nouns correspond to type e (individual terms),
• sortal nouns to type <e,t> (one-place predicate terms),
• relational nouns to type <e, <e,t>> (two-place predicate terms),
• and functional nouns to <e,e> (one-place function terms).
Nouns of any type can be shifted to any other type by various mechanisms such as determination or modification. For example, use of an inherently unique noun with indefinite determination will coerce a shift of the lexically individual or functional concept to a sortal or individual concept; possessive use of nonrelational nouns will shift the respective concept to a relational or functional one; modification of sortal concepts with superlatives yields individual concepts, and so on. (Löbner, 2011)

When the unicity comes from context ⇒ pragmatic definiteness
When the unicity comes from the Lexicon ⇒ semantic definiteness
Strong definites = pragmatic definiteness
Weak definites = semantic definiteness. WD are used to name a type.

Definite determiners may be used either to make an anaphoric reference, or to name something (a token or a type).
Zribi-Hertz et Jean-Louis have shown that Martinikè has developed a marker of pragmatic definiteness-(LA) and two Name markers (ll(a)- and lê). In French, the same form is used in both case : le.

(34) a. Le Jeannot, tu sais ce qu’il m’a dit ?
   b. Jean a pris le train.

REFERENCES
CARLSON, Greg, KLEIN, Natalie, GEGG-HARRISON, Withney, TANENHAUS, Michael K., to appaer. Weak definites as a form of definiteness: experimental investigations, Recherches Linguistiques de Vincennes 42.