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A three-way distinction in definiteness: sortal, individual, and functional concepts in Réyoné

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Abstract: This article offers a case study of a definiteness split in a language in which three different types of nominal expressions are available for definite descriptions. The article contributes ample empirical data and comprises a close investigation of the patterns found in Reunion Creole (*Réyoné*), the language under study. Réyoné displays one kind of contrast also found in other languages which is frequently analyzed in terms of semantic versus pragmatic definiteness (following Löbner) or uniqueness versus familiarity (following Schwarz). What sets Réyoné apart from other languages though, is that it features a determiner that is dedicated to functional concepts. The language thereby distinguishes individual from functional concepts: the former type (*the sun; the News*) is exclusively expressed by bare noun phrases, while functional concepts – definite descriptions with functional head nouns (*prefect of y; head of y*), including a subtype of bridging reference, as well as compositionally created functional relations such as superlatives – are realized by *lo*-marked noun phrases. These facts offer strong support for Löbner’s theory. The article also discusses demonstrative descriptions, which have already been reported to play a role in certain definiteness splits, and which are obligatory with sortal concepts in Réyoné. It is argued that demonstratives are pragmatic definites.

Keywords: definite descriptions; definiteness split; functional concepts; demonstrative descriptions

1 Introduction

While languages such as English are usually considered to have one definiteness marker (a definite article), some other languages use different expressions to encode different types of definiteness. Definiteness splits in languages of the world have

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received an increasing amount of attention in recent years. In order to describe such situations, authors generally adopt either Schwarz's (2009) theory of definiteness or Löbner's (1985, 2011) theory of definites and concept types.¹ The semantic splits that have been described all seem to constitute a two-way distinction: globally speaking, the contrast concerns "familiarity" versus "uniqueness" in Schwarz's theory, and "pragmatic definiteness" versus "semantic definiteness" in Löbner's. The first term of each refers to a context-dependent type of definite, appearing in anaphoric and deictic uses, realized by what is frequently called the "strong" form. The second, whose expression is often referred to as the "weak"² form, denotes a type of definite that relies on general knowledge. It appears notably in expressions referring to globally unique entities (e.g., *sun*; *moon*) and in "larger situation uses" (Hawkins 1978), such as the definite description *the church* uttered by a speaker in an unknown village.³ Languages generally use either bare nouns phrases (BNPs) or NPs containing determiners⁴ consisting of a phonologically weak or morphologically reduced form to encode semantic definiteness/uniqueness, and NPs containing a stronger form – often called a "strong article" – to encode pragmatic definiteness/familiarity. The first analysis, by Ebert, dates back to 1971, and was followed by other descriptions mostly for German; Hawkins (1978) and Löbner (1985) developed Ebert's ideas. Definiteness splits are found in typologically very distinct languages (see Note

1 For studies in terms of Schwarz's (2009) theory, see for instance Schwarz (2009) for German; Biswas (2012) for Bangla; Schwarz (2013) for Mauritian, Hausa, and Lakota; Arkoh and Matthewson (2013) for Akan; Cisneros (2019) for Mixtec; Royer (2022) for Chuj. For descriptions following Löbner's (1985, 2011) theory, see Breu (2004) for Upper Sorbian; Wespel (2008) for Mauritian and Haitian; Zribi-Hertz and Jean-Louis (2014) for Martinican; Egedi (2017) for Coptic; Dvořák (2020) for Czech; Sachliyan (2020) for Bulgarian and Macedonian. Also see Studler (2011) who describes Swiss German and includes proximal demonstratives, specialized for deictic uses, in her discussion.

2 The term *weak form* (or *weak article/weak determiner*) is not to be confused with so-called "weak definites" even if there is a relationship (see below). Also note that some authors use similar terms to refer to other kinds of distinctions: Roberts (2003) for instance, uses the terms "strong" versus "weak" to refer to anaphoric uses of definites versus other kinds of uses.

3 Hawkins (1978) describes this type of use of the English article as a – possibly first mention – use in contexts where the referent is not physically present in the situation; speaker and hearer share either specific knowledge (for instance, when talking about *the gibbet*, speaker and hearer both being inhabitants of Halifax, a town which has a gibbet at the top of Gibbet Street) or general knowledge (i. e., knowledge about the existence of certain types of objects in certain types of situations allowing expressions such as *the bridesmaids* when at a wedding, or *the church* when arriving at a village the speakers have never been to).

4 We use the term "determiner" in a broad sense, for any grammatical item that modifies the head noun ("operator" in Rijkhoff's [2002] terms); we call "noun phrase" what many linguists call "determiner phrase" and "common noun phrase" the noun plus its (possible) restrictive modifiers (see Abbott 2014). "Bare noun phrase" refers to a complete NP that does not contain any (overt) determiner.

1); below are some examples from Fering, Akan, and Mixtec. The sentences in part (a) of the examples illustrate pragmatic definiteness (anaphoric use; NPs in bold represent strong forms) and the sentences in part (b) exemplify semantic definiteness (larger situation use; NPs transcribed in bold contain weak forms).

- (1) a. *Oki hee an hingst keeft. *A/ De hingst*
 Oki has a horse bought the_{weak} the_{strong} horse
haaltet. (strong D-article)
 limps
 ‘Oki has bought a horse. The horse limps.’
- b. (Talking about the family dog):
A hūnj hee tuswark. (weak A-article)
 the_{weak} dog has toothache
 ‘The dog has a toothache.’
 (Fering, Ebert 1971: 83)
- (2) a. Context: Beginning of conversation.
*Mò-tʰ-ò èkùtú (*nú). Èkùtú *(nú) yè*
 1SG.SUBJ-buy-PAST orange (*FAM) orange *(FAM) be
dèw pápá (familiar article)
 nice good
 ‘I bought an orange. The orange was really tasty.’
- b. *Mò-rò-kò gúá mù* (bare)
 1SG.SUBJ-PROG-go market in
 ‘I am going to (the) market.’
 (Akan, Arkoh and Matthewson 2013: 11)
- (3) a. *isyā'ní [tyà juáàn] kólō*
 kill.COMPL the.SG.M Juan male.turkey
 ‘Juan killed a turkey.’
 # *káchí nā ñà kú'vì vā kólō* (bare; indefinite)
 say.IPFV 3.HUM COMP sick.IPFV FOC male.turkey
 ‘They say that a turkey was sick.’
 √ *káchí nā ñà kú'vì vā [tyí kólō]* (definite article)
 say.IPFV 3.HUM COMP sick.IPFV FOC the.AML male.turkey
 ‘They say that the turkey was sick.’
- b. Context: A man is visiting a Mixtec village, many of which have one church.
ìsyīnī ì (#ñà) vēñù'ū (bare)
 see.COMPL 1SG the.INA church
 ‘I saw the church.’
 (Mixtec, Cisneros 2019: 27)

Judging from the available data⁵ concerning definiteness splits, it seems that languages which admit BNPs with a definite reading in argument position will use these, at a minimum, in the following contexts: with nouns denoting unique entities; in generic expressions; and in so-called *weak definites*. Weak definites are expressions such as *the hospital* in the sentence *They took her to the hospital*, where *the hospital* does not refer to a particular hospital that has been mentioned before or that is unique in the context. Languages that do not admit BNPs in argument positions often use a reduced form of the strong determiner in the aforementioned contexts, like German for instance.

Reunion Creole or *Réyoné* (sometimes also called *Reunionese*), a French-related creole language of the Indian Ocean, displays a contrast similar to the languages cited in (1)–(3) and Note 1. We will illustrate this with some examples from oral data.⁶ The data show that bare noun phrases are the usual expression for generic NPs and proverbs:

- (4) *M'i koné mang nana vitamin.*
 1sg.i know mango have vitamin
 'I know mangos have vitamins.'

- (5) *Annatandan, kabri i manz salad.*
 meanwhile goat i eat salad
 Lit.: 'Meanwhile, [the] goat[s] eat salad.' (Proverb meaning 'That's all well and good but in the meantime, the problem remains unresolved.')

BNPs are also found with expressions referring to unique entities such as *sun* or *moon*:

- (6) a. *Gazon i yinm solèy*
 grass i⁷ like sun
 'Grass likes the sun.'
 b. *Zordi, solèy i pwak.*
 today sun i burn
 'Today, the sun burns.'

⁵ See references in Note 2.

⁶ The examples in this work stem either from a corpus of spontaneous speech additionally judged for acceptability by native consultants, or from acceptability judgments that have been adapted or constructed for semantic tests. The corpus data (approximately 23,000 transcribed words) were collected between 2011 and 2014 and published in our PhD thesis (Albers 2019). They were recorded within the familial circle of some helpers and thus concern a register as spoken in informal/private situations. The consultants and speakers include male and female speakers aged between 23 and 60 who are mainly, but not exclusively, from the lowlands of the island.

⁷ This preverbal item, which we gloss as 'i', is obligatory with certain tenses; it is considered a finite marker by some (Bollée 2013), or a 'predicate marker' by others (Watbled 2015).

In addition, many occurrences of BNPs are found in “larger situation” use. For instance, the definite description found in (7) relies on general knowledge about situations shared by the speakers: when a domestic animal is ill, one can call upon a vet.

- (7) Talking about an animal:
Anvoy sa vétérinér.
 send DEM veterinarian
 ‘Send it to the vet.’

Acceptability judgments show that in all of the preceding contexts, the determiner *-la* is infelicitous or triggers a different interpretation of the NP:

- (8) *M'i koné mang -la nana vitamin.*
 1SG.i know mango DET_{SORT} have vitamin
 ‘I know the/that/those/ mango(s) have vitamins. #I know mangos have vitamins.’
- (9) *Gazon i yinm solèy -la*
 grass i like sun DET_{SORT}
 ‘Grass likes this (kind of) sunshine.’
- (10) *Anvoy sa vétérinér -la.*
 send DEM veterinarian DET_{SORT}
 ‘Send it to that/the vet (we talked about).’

Moreover, BNPs are generally infelicitous in deictic as well as in anaphoric use; the following examples from the corpus data are judged unacceptable without a determiner by all our consultants.

- (11) *Ou wa son figir ladsì la, té.*
 2SG see POSS.3SG face on.it INTERJ INTERJ
 {#Figir / Figir -la} i di pa mwin riyin.
 face face DET_{SORT} i say NEG 1.SG nothing
 ‘You see his face on it. I don’t recognize the / that face.’
- (12) Context: The speaker’s sister is just arriving. To everybody (about her sister):
M'i di té! {#Tantine / Tantine -la} lé zoli, in.
 1sg.i say INTERJ woman woman DET_{SORT} COP pretty INTERJ
 ‘I say hey! This woman is pretty, isn’t she.’

These data reveal a definiteness split similar to those encountered in other languages: in generics, with globally unique entities, and in larger situation use, the strong form (*N-la*) is infelicitous, while in deictic and anaphoric expressions, *N-la* is naturally used and the weak form (BNP) mostly infelicitous. However, languages differ as to their strategies for expressing definiteness and the exact contrasts that

the different expressions encode. One thing distinguishes Réyoné from other languages: it features a third form. In addition to bare noun phrases and NPs with *-la*, NPs with a preposed determiner *lo* also express definiteness.

- (13) *Li na gro gale po fé lo béton mon kaz.*
 3SG have big stone PREP make DET_F concrete POSS.1SG house
 ‘He has big stones to make the concrete of my house.’

In this article, we will argue that the three expressions signal three different types of reference retrieval, and that each of them essentially realizes one of Löbner’s concept types (individual, functional, sortal, see Section 3.1), with *lo* being specialized for functional concepts.

The focus of this work is limited to the use and interpretation of different types of NPs.⁸ As concerns the notion of definiteness, we assume that definite NPs are referring expressions that presuppose the uniqueness of their referent relative to the common ground of both speaker and hearer.⁹ Since definiteness applies at the level of the noun phrase, definite NPs include certain pronouns and proper names, but this article is concerned with descriptive NPs – i.e., definite descriptions – only. These may or may not include determiners (and thus comprise bare noun phrases¹⁰), considered “definite articles” or not. The term “definite article” is used here only informally, as a proper name for elements such as “the” in English. The referent of a definite description is the unique entity in the common ground that satisfies the descriptive content of the NP, possibly enriched with pragmatic factors.

The rest of the article is organized as follows: Section 2 presents the noun phrase in Reunion Creole. Section 3 first introduces Löbner’s concept types and then closely examines which types of nominal expressions in Réyoné are compatible with each of

⁸ We consider semantics an independent combinatorial system (cf. Jackendoff 2002) and conceive compositionality as non-concatenative (cf. Blutner et al. 2003; Jackendoff 2002; Pagin 2005).

⁹ In this article, referents are thought of as mental representations rather than as individuals denoted in the physical world (Jackendoff 2002).

¹⁰ In some languages, where these can have a definite reading. Some authors (cf. Šimík and Demian 2020) find that BNPs are different from descriptions with articles; they assume that BNPs are existential and free of presuppositional semantics. In their experiment, the effect of uniqueness/maximality of BNPs in Russian and other languages seems smaller than the one of definite NPs in languages with articles. For instance, something like *The boat sank* was “felt to be similarly (in) appropriate as a description of a picture in which there are two boats, one of which sank (violation of uniqueness), as (in)appropriate it was to use it as a description of a picture where the (single) boat sank, but a/the water-scooter sank, too, which violates Grice’s (1975) maxim of quantity”. In this article, it is not assumed that all definites – neither BNPs nor NPs with determiners – have the same uses. For instance, NPs with weak articles, or BNPs in Akan are only good for a subtype of definite descriptions and are most probably infelicitous in the example by Šimík and Demian. We assume that uniqueness and reference retrieval are assured in various ways (cf. Section 3.1).

the concept types. Section 4 summarizes and discusses the findings, i.e., the definiteness split that we observe between semantic and pragmatic definites, and the properties of an expression dedicated to functional concepts. Section 5 presents some issues. In Section 6, we discuss pragmatic definiteness realized by demonstratives, and in Section 7, we outline two cases of definite descriptions situated on a frontier and show how Réyoné's definite expressions are situated on the scale of definiteness. Section 8 summarizes the results.

2 The noun phrase in Réyoné

Réyoné is a French-related creole language with possible influence from Malagasy and Eastern Bantu languages. While French has an article system (in essence, definiteness, number, and gender are marked on determiners; BNPs are extremely restricted), Malagasy and Bantu have systems for marking definiteness which are quite different. BNPs tend to play an important role; the presence/absence of elements such as determiners, augments, or noun class prefixes in the NP is sometimes related to familiarity (Paul 2009) or specificity (van de Velde 2019).

Regarding the properties of bare noun phrases in Réyoné, they may occupy the same positions as other NPs, including argument positions, whether subject or object. A peculiar phonological constraint affects BNPs, which require a minimal phonological weight. Unlike other nouns, monosyllabic nouns consisting of a light syllable cannot form a BNP so some phonological material is added:

- (14) a. *Mon kaz nana {soval/ #lo soval/ kabri/ #lo kabri}.*
 POSS.1SG house have horse DET_F horse goat DET_F goat
 b. *Mon kaz nana {*ra/ lora}.*
 POSS.1SG house have rat rat
 ‘At my place, there are horses/goats/rats.’

This additional syllable found in the allomorphic form of certain nouns is homophonous with the prenominal determiner *lo* and has the same diachronic source but has none of the characteristics of a determiner and seems to be part of the stem.¹¹ We will write the determiner as a separate word here (as in 14a), while we will write the long form of nouns as one word (as in 14b). BNPs may be mass or count; when count, they are not semantically specified for number, though in many contexts they are pragmatically interpreted as plural. They can have a generic, a definite, and an indefinite reading.

¹¹ In particular, it has no specifications for definiteness or number and is strictly adjacent to the noun (cf. Albers 2020).

As for determiners, they precede the common noun phrase (CNP) (while restrictive modifiers mostly follow the noun), except for *-la*, which is a postposed clitic attached to the noun phrase. We find an indefinite determiner/number word *in* ‘one’/‘a’, plural and mass quantifiers such as *détrwa* ‘several’ or *inta* ‘much’/‘many’, a demonstrative *sa*, as well as the determiner *lo* illustrated in example (13). There is also the plural word *bann*, a clitic which may appear with *sa*, *-la*, and *lo* but which doesn’t usually occur with numerals. The demonstrative *sa* can figure adnominally and pronominally. In pronominal occurrences, it can be used as a third person pronoun which may refer to humans. Like in other French-related creoles (Syea 2017: 75), *sa* has to be combined with *-la* when occurring adnominally, in most varieties of Réyoné. As a consequence, *-la* has sometimes been described as part of a discontinuous demonstrative (Bollée 2013; Cellier 1985); however, in a very big majority of cases, *-la* occurs without the demonstrative *sa*. We will discuss its uses, interpretation, and status in Sections 3.3 and 6. The pronominal clitic *lo* is traditionally described as a definite determiner (Chaudenson 1974; Chaudenson 2007; Staudacher-Valliamée 2004), sometimes as some kind of noun marker (Cellier 1985). We will analyze the exact semantic contribution of this determiner in Section 3.4. For a certain variety of Réyoné, pronominal *lo* seems to imply a singular reading of the NP in which it appears – we will return to this point in more detail in Section 3.4.3. Note that there is a pronominal item, *la*, which is sometimes considered to be a feminine form of *lo* because it has developed from the French feminine article. However, Réyoné – at least the variety present in our data – does not have grammatical gender. This pronominal form *la* is a prefix attached to some nouns and it is not specified for definiteness.

As was illustrated in examples (4)–(13) in Section 1, bare NPs, NPs containing *lo* and those featuring *-la* can receive a definite reading (as defined in Section 1). In the next section, we will show that they signal different ways of referring and instruct the hearer as to how the referent should be retrieved.

There are different topolectal varieties of Réyoné, and in certain types of discourse, speakers make extensive use of code-switching with French.¹² This phenomenon also concerns noun phrase structure. For instance, other pronominal items such as */le/*, corresponding to the French definite plural determiner *les*, are frequently found in certain kinds of discourse; in some varieties or registers, the determiner *lo* might have number and gender, and uses distinct from those described here. The data in this article concern an informal variety spoken within a private circle of family and friends (see Note 6 above for information on the data).

¹² Réyoné speakers are bilingual and speak the creole language alongside its lexifier language French; from a sociolinguistic point of view, diglossia still exists, with French having high prestige and Réyoné low prestige.

3 Concept types and determination

As shown in the examples from the corpus data in Section 1, a clear split can be observed in Réyoné: semantic definiteness seems to be encoded by BNPs, used for instance in “larger situations” or NPs referring to unique entities, while deictic and anaphoric contexts, associated with pragmatic definiteness, require the determiner *-la*. However, this cannot be the whole story: we must ask ourselves what the third expression might contribute.

- (15) *Mwin la pran lokar. {#Sofér -la / #Sofér / Lo sofér} la*
 1SG PRF take bus driver DET_{SORT} driver DET_F driver PRF
domann amwin mon kart.
 ask 1SG.OBJ POSS.1SG card
 ‘I took the bus. The driver asked me for my card.’

The example in (15) contains an NP relying on bridging reference, known to be a kind of definite description situated on the frontier between the two types of definiteness (at least in certain languages, see Section 3.4.4). However, our claim is that the three expressions encode different concept types, following the framework of Löbner’s (1985, 1998, 2011) concept types.

3.1 Löbner’s theory of concept types and determination

Löbner’s (2011) proposal is that of a distinction between two types of definiteness, but he more precisely distinguishes four concept types based on two binary features which are [U] for uniqueness and [R] for relationality. A noun in the lexicon is basically specified for one concept type out of four, following these features:¹³ [+/-U] and [+/-R]. Only one type of noun is primarily a unary predicate term of type ⟨e,t⟩: only “sortal” nouns like *chair* or *flower*, presenting the features [-U] and [-R] are. Other nouns might have a feature of inherent uniqueness. This is the case of individual nouns of type ⟨e⟩ which include proper names, but also expressions for unique entities such as *pope*, *US president*, or *moon*. Functional nouns, such as *president*, *mother*, and *author*, terms for unique parts such as *head*, as well as abstract aspects or dimensions such as *top*, *age*, or *size* additionally take a possessor argument: there can only be one mother or size per individual. So *mother*, for instance, is to be taken as a function (type ⟨e,e⟩), mapping one individual to another in an unequivocal way. Thus they also have a [+U] feature. Individual and functional concepts naturally occur with the definite article in English. Finally, relational nouns like *brother* or *friend* are binary predicate terms ([-U] feature; type ⟨e, ⟨e,t⟩⟩). Note

¹³ Löbner conceives of these features not as meaning components in the sense of feature semantics, only as descriptive abbreviations (cf. Löbner 2011: 282).

Table 1: Concept types and features, adapted from Löbner (2011).

	[+U]	[-U]
[+R]	functional $\langle e, e \rangle$ <i>capital; price; subject</i>	relational $\langle e, \langle e, t \rangle \rangle$ <i>brother; hand; friend</i>
[-R]	individual $\langle e \rangle$ <i>sun; pope</i>	sortal $\langle e, t \rangle$ <i>flower; dog</i>
	SEMANTIC DEFINITENESS	PRAGMATIC DEFINITENESS

that while proper names are individual constants, nouns such as *pope* are individual concepts, and they have a situational argument (we can conceive of them as functions from circumstances of evaluation to individuals). Thus they are more precisely of type $\langle s, e \rangle$. Poesio and Rieser (2011) suggest the following representation: $\lambda x. (x = j)$ for proper names versus $\lambda s \lambda x. (x = \text{pope}(s)(x))$ for nouns representing individual concepts. In order to stick to Löbner’s representation, we will continue to write types like $\langle e \rangle$, or $\langle e, e \rangle$ but we assume that each of the four types contains a slot for a situational argument.¹⁴ Table 1 summarizes the properties of Löbner’s noun classification. Nouns of [-U] type, since they are not inherently unique, require (extra)linguistic context to acquire uniqueness and shift them to type e – in other words, they participate in pragmatic definiteness while [+U] noun types create semantic definites.

Note that a certain number of shifts can be applied to lexical concept types and that in principle, any noun can be converted into any concept type (also see Section 3.2). Thus, sortal nouns in the lexicon can very well be the lexical head of an expression realizing semantic definiteness. This is particularly the case of NPs referring to kinds, a certain type of situational use (cf. Section 3.2), and different types of shifts (for instance, superlatives, cf. Section 3.4.2; polysemy; metonymy; etc.), “configurational uses of nouns” (cf. Section 3.5). The overall interpretation of a definite noun phrase – augmented by contextual information in certain cases – is always that of an expression of type e . Thus, definite descriptions are individual terms rather than quantifier phrases.

In the following sections, we will consider each concept type and examine in detail how the Réyoné data fit within this theory.

3.2 The expression of individual concepts in Réyoné

Felicity judgments show that nouns representing individual concepts have to occur in BNPs in Réyoné, whether the entity referred to is globally unique as in (16) or unique in the community, as in (17), where *volkan* denotes a unique place on the island:

¹⁴ For instance, $\langle s, e \rangle$; $\langle e, \langle s, t \rangle \rangle$; $\langle e, \langle s, e \rangle \rangle$; $\langle e, \langle e, \langle s, t \rangle \rangle \rangle$.

- (16) *La travay ziska {solèy/ #lo solèy/ #solèy -la} la tonbé.*
 PRF work until sun DET_F sun sun DET_{SORT} PRF fall
 ‘They worked until the sun went down.’
- (17) *M’i sar {volkan/ #lo volkan/ #volkan -la}.*
 1SG.i go volcano DET_F volcano volcano DET_{SORT}
 ‘I’ll go to the volcano.’

The examples show that BNPs are the only felicitous expression with individual nouns; both *lo* + N and N-*la* are excluded – unless the concept undergoes a shift, i.e., a change of conceptual type. As already mentioned in the previous section, concept types are created by the lexical properties of nouns but can actually be shifted and new concepts may be created. For instance, indefinite determiners shift functional nouns from [+U] and [+R] to [-R] and [-U], hence to sortal concepts, for example in “a good mother”.¹⁵ In principle, any noun can be shifted to any concept type. To illustrate this, consider the following example. (18a) was found in our corpus; (18b) is not ungrammatical but instead of referring to our unique God, the NP including *-la* refers to one of several divinities.

- (18) a. *M’i sa pa fé krwa m’i krwa bondyé*
 1SG.i FUT NEG make believe 1SG.i believe god
po giny in fanm.
 PREP get INDF woman
 ‘I won’t pretend that I believe in God to get a woman.’
- b. *M’i sa pa fé krwa m’i krwa bondyé -la*
 1SG.i FUT NEG make believe 1SG.i believe god DET_{SORT}
po giny in fanm.
 PREP get INDF woman
 ‘I won’t pretend that I believe in that god to get a woman.’

Among individual nouns, Löbner also lists nouns like *weather* or *temperature* (“abstract terms for certain aspects of the world” [cf. Löbner 2011: 284]). Nouns of this class have to appear bare in order to yield the correct interpretation, in Réyoné. The example below is an utterance from the corpus; felicity judgments show that neither *lo* nor *-la* are acceptable unless a very different reading is conveyed. *Zinformasyon-la*

¹⁵ For Löbner (2011), each kind of determiner is natural with certain kinds of CNPs; for instance [+U] CNPs naturally occur with singular definite determiners, in English (which are actually redundant here, as Wespel [2008] states). For instance, *beginning of the conference* naturally takes *the*. Löbner hypothesizes that “incongruent determination”, i.e., involving determiners or plural markers that are not natural with the lexical meaning of the CNP, is a marked option; it always implies coercion. This latter type of determination is less frequent and tends to involve phonologically fuller forms.

is perfectly grammatical, however the expression would not refer to *The News*, i.e., a television or radio broadcast, but translate into ‘information’ and refer to a particular piece of information mentioned in the preceding discourse or at hand.

- (19) *Dann télé mon frère, ou gard pa {zinformasyon /*
 in TV POSS.1SG brother 2SG watch NEG news
#lo zinformasyon / #zinformasyon -la} don ?
 DET_F news news DET_{SORT} INTERJ
 ‘On the TV, bro, you don’t watch the news, or what?’

We will assume that *zinformasyon* in Réyoné is polysemous¹⁶ and has two different meanings which correspond to two different noun types – individual and sortal – in the lexicon.¹⁷

Definites in larger situation (cf. Note 3) as well as in “immediate situation” uses – which are similar in that they presuppose shared world knowledge – are also considered as individual concepts by Löbner (1985: 310). He gives the example of Mary and John, who always have a bottle of water beside their bed, and refer to it by using a definite without even looking at the bottle. They might utter “would you pass me the water”, referring to “Mary’s and John’s bedroom bottle”, so to speak. Indeed, in Réyoné, such definites, which are able to figure as a first mention, are encoded as BNPs – both *lo* N and *N-la* are unacceptable in these cases:

- (20) Talking about an animal:
Anvoy sa¹⁸ {vétérinér / #lo vétérinér / vétérinér #-la}.
 send DEM veterinarian DET_F veterinarian veterinarian DET_{SORT}
 ‘Send it to the vet.’
- (21) Talking about his daily life when he was young (without previous mention of *manzé*):
Falé prépar {manzé / #lo manzé / #manzé -la} bonér.
 must.PST prepare meal DET_F meal meal DET_{SORT} good.hour
 ‘One had to prepare the meal early.’

¹⁶ To illustrate this with some examples from English, consider for instance *child*, which has a relational reading being *direct descendant of*, and a sortal reading meaning *nonadult*; or *moon* having an individual reading *moon of the earth*, and a relational reading *natural satellite of*.

¹⁷ Note that Löbner assumes that there is no clear borderline between polysemy and a certain kind of shift: “Level-1 shifts are components of a dynamic lexicon. They enable a division of labor between storing lexical meanings and deriving further meanings by general procedures. If the same shift occurs repeatedly with a lexical item, storing its result may become more economic than repeated shifting. As a result, there is no clear borderline between polysemy and level-1 shifts” (Löbner 2011: 310).

¹⁸ The demonstrative *sa* is also used as a third person pronoun (translated ‘he/she/it’).

To conclude, the situation is quite straightforward with respect to individual concepts: these are exclusively encoded by BNPs.

3.3 The expression of sortal concepts in Réyoné

As already mentioned above, sortal nouns are not able to refer by virtue of their descriptive content alone; they rely on context and therefore fall under pragmatic definiteness. We will examine here the two main types of context, namely deictic and anaphoric uses.

3.3.1 Deictic uses (“visible situations use”)

In deictic use, sortal nouns typically occur in *la*-determined phrases. In the examples below, the sortal concepts expressed are not felicitous as bare noun phrases, and *lo* + N phrases are rejected, or judged to be less good by our consultants.¹⁹

- (22) *Ou wa {#foto/ #lo foto/ foto -la} ?*
 2SG see photo DET_F photo photo DET_{SORT}
 ‘You see that/the photo?’
- (23) *Ou la pa mèt sa tro pré térla ? {#Palmis /*
 2SG PRF NEG put DEM too near here palm.tree
#Lo palmis/ Palmis- la} ?
 DET_F palm.tree palm.tree DET_{SORT}
 ‘Haven’t you put it too close to here? The/this palmetto?’
- (24) *Trap {#boutèy/ #lo boutèy/ boutèy -la} pou mwin syouplé.*
 fetch bottle DET_F bottle bottle DET_{SORT} for 1SG please
 ‘Pass me the/that bottle, please.’
- (25) The speaker wants to draw the attention to an insect on the floor:
Pangar {#bébèt/ #lo bébèt/ bébèt -la} va pik aou.
 attention insect DET_F insect insect DET_{SORT} FUT sting 2SG.OBJ
 ‘Attention, the/that insect will bite you.’

Let us specify that this pattern concerns exclusively Hawkins’s so-called “visible situation uses”, i.e., contexts where the referent has to be present in the situation, and

¹⁹ In some other varieties or registers (that we do not consider in this article) such as language in the media, where influence from French and code-switching is very common, *lo* + N seems more frequent and might sometimes appear in deictic use (the French preposed determiner *le* – which has uses similar to English *the* – would be an adequate form in the contexts of examples [22]–[23]).

perceptible for the hearer. In these cases, reference retrieval relies entirely on the physical presence of the referent, excluding resort to general knowledge. That is different from immediate situation uses such as an utterance containing the NP *the water* when referring to the bedroom bottle, or the text *Beware of the dog* written on a gate. Note though, that referents in visible situations are not limited to visible objects (see Löbner 1985):

- (26) a. *Ou la antann dézord ?*
 2_{SG} PRF hear noise
 ‘Did you hear any noise? / #Did you hear the/that noise?’
- b. *Ou la antann dézord -la ?*
 2_{SG} PRF hear noise DET_{SORT}
 ‘Did you hear the/that noise?’

3.3.2 Anaphoric contexts

In this article, the term “anaphoric expression” refers to a coreferential expression whose interpretation depends entirely upon the interpretation of its antecedent – thus on the linguistic context – the referent of the expression being supplied by the antecedent. This is not the case of repeated proper names, for instance, nor of multiple mentions of individual concepts such as *the sun*. Indeed these do not depend upon any previous mention to refer unequivocally to one particular referent because they refer by their own semantics, and are definite in a first mention use. Dayal and Jiang (2023), in a counterproposal to Jenks’s (2018) work on Mandarin, consider that there is a problem with Jenks’s theoretical assumptions based on Schwarz’s theory (his principle *Index!*). The index is indeed interpreted as an indexical property relativized to an assignment function $\lambda x[x = g(1)]$, for instance the property of being a student and of being identical to a previously introduced individual. Since the claim is that Mandarin strong forms (i.e., demonstrative expressions) include an index that is absent in definite bare nouns, *Index!* would require strong forms to be used whenever they can, argue Dayal and Jiang. Yet in some cases considered as anaphoric by Dayal and Jiang, it is not the strong form that is used; the authors cite second mentions of *the President* or *the sun* (Dayal and Jiang 2023: 153). However, in the theory used in the present work, these are functional and individual expressions respectively; thus they are not anaphoric in the sense adopted here. The infelicity of strong definites in this kind of case is thereby entirely consistent with Löbner’s theory.

As already shown by example (11) above, in Réyoné, BNPs are infelicitous in anaphoric expressions like the following:

- (27) *In madam la rantré. Madam #(-la) té i port*
 INDF lady PRF come.in lady DET_{SORT} PST i carry
in tant.
 det basket
 ‘A woman came in. The woman carried a basket.’

In (28) we see that while the referent of *tantine-la* is interpreted with respect to an antecedent, the BNP in (28b) cannot not refer back to the previous indefinite expression but instead is interpreted with respect to the speaker’s family circle:

- (28) *M'i wa in fanm èk in boug i ariv térla...*
 1SG.i see INDF woman and INDF man i arrive here
 ‘I see a woman and a man are arriving here ...’
- a. *m a koz èk tantine -la.*
 1SG FUT speak with girl DET_{SORT}
 ‘I will talk to the girl.’
- b. *m a koz èk tantine*
 1SG FUT speak with girl
 ‘I will talk to my girl-friend / wife.’

It would seem then that the only expression compatible with anaphoric reference is an NP including *-la*. However, the picture is slightly more complex.

To begin with, our youngest consultants allow *lo* in most anaphoric expressions;²⁰ the others do not, but admit them in a particular case, namely contrastive/partitive topics, which will be discussed in Section 7.

On another note, animal characters in Réyoné folktales are referred to by BNPs.

- (29) *Soval i arriv [...] Soval i nétway basin prop minm é la li*
 horse i arrive horse clean pond clean INTS and then 3.SG
mèt a kriyé (Konper lièw, torti, basin lo rwa, Andoche 2014)
 put to shout
 ‘Mr Horse arrives [...] Mr Horse cleans the pond from top to bottom and starts shouting.’

We propose that animal names in these tales are proper names (as is the case in some other languages which also display bare forms in such contexts²¹).

²⁰ Note that the judgments of these younger consultants (aged 20–30) do not seem very stable. We suggest that this might be a new contact-induced use here, as in French, the definite determiner *le* is used in almost any kind of definite description as well as generic NPs, except with most proper names.

²¹ Kihm (2007) for instance assumes this for Kriyol. Greenberg (1978) points out that in some Bantu languages an animal name, when used to designate a character in a folktale, uses the bare, i.e., non-

To summarize, we have shown that anaphoric expressions require postnominal *-la*. Certain BNPs (individual concepts) might co-refer with previous expressions but they are not anaphoric – not in a sense where their interpretation would depend on that expression. Two exceptions to this will be discussed in Sections 5 and 7.

3.4 The expression of functional concepts in Réyoné

Following Löbner, functional concepts of type $\langle e, e \rangle$ may be created in various ways, in particular through functional nouns such as *president*, *head*, or *size*, superlatives or certain adjectives such as *only*, and relational nouns in definite plural NPs. We will discuss each of these in Sections 3.4.1, 3.4.2 and 3.4.3 respectively. Functional concepts pertain to semantic definiteness; what differentiates them from individual concepts is the additional possessor argument slot. We will show that Réyoné distinguishes the two concept types, the determiner *lo* being dedicated to functional concepts.

3.4.1 Functional nouns

As for functional nouns like *father*, *lid*, or *manager*, the situation in Réyoné is as follows. In the spoken corpus data, we find functional nouns with both BNPs or *lo*-NPs – this contrasts with individual nouns, which necessarily figure in BNPs (see Section 3.2). Felicity judgments confirm that both expressions are felicitous in the examples below involving functional nouns (one and only goalkeeper of a team; one and only lid per pot). The two types of NP have no difference in meaning: *lo* simply is optional in some contexts (but not in others, see below).

- (30) *Adir té {lo gardyin / gardyin} lékip Saint-Louis.*
 Adir_{PST} DET_F goalkeeper goalkeeper team Saint-Louis
 ‘Adir was the goalkeeper of the Saint-Louis team.’
- (31) a. *{Kouvértir / Lo kouvértir} mon marmit ousa i lé ?*
 lid DET_F lid POSS.1SG pot where i COP
 ‘Where is the lid of my cooking pot?’
- b. *M'i trov pa {kouvértir / lo kouvértir} marmit -la.*
 1SG.i find NEG lid DET_F lid pot DET_{SORT}
 ‘I can’t find the lid of this cooking pot.’

prefixed form of a noun (while in other contexts, the form used depends on the general rules for the use of the two forms [Greenberg 1978: 61]). Proper name use of animal names can probably be assumed in many cases (see for instance the English tale *The Wind in the Willows* by Kenneth Grahame, where animal names appear without determiners).

Identificational sentences with *sa* (as an “identificational demonstrative” [Diessel 1999]), or the specialized copula *sé* require *lo*:

- (32) *Ali sé {#géran / lo zéran} Super-U Saint-Lé.*
 Ali COP manager DET_F manager Super-U Saint-Leu
 ‘He is the manager of the Super-U (supermarket) of Saint-Leu.’

Lo is also not optional in functional NPs with an implicit/noun-phrase external possessor. In the examples above, the possessor argument is part of the NP (*lékip Saint-Louis/marmit-la*). In some of the world’s languages, this specification of the possessor argument of functional expressions is syntactically obligatory. In others, functional descriptions with implicit arguments are grammatical but are distinguished from ones with noun-phrase internal arguments. In Haitian, for instance, Wespel (2008) shows that “incomplete” functional expressions contain the post-nominal determiner *la* while expressions that specify the argument noun-phrase internally are realized by BNPs. In Réyoné, in the case of the former (noun-phrase external argument), *lo* appears to be obligatory:

- (33) a. *{Dosyé / Lo dosyé} kanapé -la la fine kasé.*
 back DET_F back sofa DET_{SORT} PFR TEL break
 ‘The back of this/the sofa is broken.’
 b. A.: *Kosa i ariv kanapé -la ?*
 what i arrive sofa DET_{SORT}
 B.: *{#Dosyé / Lo dosyé} la fine kasé.*
 back DET_F back PRF TEL break
 ‘What’s up with that/the sofa ? The back is broken.’

- (34) Talking about an acquaintance:
{#Mari / Lo mari / Son mari} lé morisyin.
 husband DET_F husband POSS.3SG husband COP mauritian
 ‘The husband / her husband is Mauritian.’

- (35) *Ala mon bèl marmit ; soman, m’i trov pa {#kouvértir /*
 PRST POSS.1sg pot only 1SG.i find NEG lid
lo kouvértir}.
 DET_F lid
 ‘Here is my big pot; I just don’t find the lid.’

In summary, in the context of lexically functional nouns, Réyoné determiner *lo* is either obligatory (this is the case in NPs with noun-phrase external possessor arguments and identificational sentences), or optional (elsewhere), while it is infelicitous with individual concepts.

3.4.2 Compositionally created functional concepts

Functional concepts can also be created compositionally. For instance, CNPs with superlatives or adjectives such as *only* or *same* are also functions, following Löbner. Superlatives shift sortal nouns from [-U] and [-R] to [+U] and [+R] – i.e., to functional concepts. In Réyoné, superlatives always appear either with a possessive or with the determiner *lo* in the corpus data;²² felicity judgments show that BNPs or NPs with *-la* are not admitted:

- (36) Talking about the football players of the Saint-Louis team:
Zibel lé ankor la-minm, li, Zibel lé pompyé Saint-Louis,
 Zibel COP still there-INT 3SG Zibel COP fireman Saint-Louis
 {#*pli vyé / lo pli vyé / #pli vyé -la*}, *la.*
 CMP old DET_F CMP old CMP old DET_{SORT} INTJ
 ‘Zibel is still there, he is, Zibel is a fireman in Saint-Louis, the oldest one, see.’
- (37) *Sé sa *(lo) pli inportan, in.*
 COP DEM DET_F CMP important INTJ
 ‘That’s the most important (thing).’
- (38) **(Lo) pli ti loto la tonm an-pann.*
 DET_F CMP small car PRF fall in-breakdown
 ‘The smallest car is already broken.’
- (39) *Zibèl i tonm *(lo) pli vyé zouér futbol lékip Saint-Louis.*
 Zibel i fall DET_F CMP old player football team Saint-Louis
 ‘Zibel is the oldest football player of the Saint-Louis team.’

As for adjectives creating functional concepts, some seem to require the presence of the determiner (for instance *sèl* ‘only’ see [40]), while others such as *last*, *next*, *same* do not, at least not with units of time in expressions such as *minm moman* ‘same moment/time’; *dérnyé minit* ‘last minute’; *promyé kou* ‘first time’.

- (40) a. {*Lo sèl garson Misyé Payet/ #sèl garson Misyé*
 DET_F only boy Mister Payet only boy Mister
Payet} la maryé.
 Payet PRF marry
 ‘Mr. Payet’s only son has got married.’
- b. *Èl la maryé sanm {lo sèl garson Misyé Payet/*
 3F.SG PRF marry with DET_F only boy Mister Payet

²² As very few examples were found in the spoken data, we additionally checked some written tales (Andoche 2014).

#sèl garson Misyé Payet}.
 only boy Mister Payet
 ‘She married Mr. Payet’s only son.’

3.4.3 Functional expressions and plurality

Whether *lo* encodes – or at least pragmatically produces – a plural reading or not, is subject to several factors amongst which are variation, register, co-occurrence with other determiners in the NP, and, as we will demonstrate, lexical concept types.

Lo can occur in NP pluralized by *bann*, dual number (as in *lo dékoté zorèy* ‘the two ears’), or a numeral thus in NPs with a plural interpretation. In literature or other formal registers, even *lo* + CNP alone does not seem to be specified for number and can refer to pluralities. In more spontaneous registers – and in the absence of the determiners listed above – *lo* triggers a singular reading of the NP in which it appears, for most but not all of our consultants.

- (41) *Lo kok i sant. {L'i/ #Zot i} sant ninport-kèl lér.*
 DET_F cok i sing 3SG.i 3PL i sing any hour
 ‘The cock sings. It sings at any hour. / #They sing at any hour.’

Surprisingly, however, there are some contexts where *lo* + CNP is judged perfectly felicitous by all of our consultants in NPs referring to plural entities, including those who do not admit it in (41) above. More surprisingly still, the plural determiner *bann* – which is a highly grammaticalized plural word otherwise able to figure in any count NP (cf. Albers 2021) – is clearly infelicitous in these same contexts as illustrated by the following example drawn from the corpus data:

- (42) *Lo femèl {lo pat/ #bann pat} té pli rèd.*
 DET_F female DET_F leg PL leg PST CMP straight
 ‘The legs of the female were straighter / As for the female, her legs were straighter.’

This can be explained when we consider the lexical properties of the noun involved: ‘leg’ in the sense of ‘the legs belonging to an animal’ is a functional concept, just as ‘head’ or ‘mouth’.²³ In (42), *pat* denotes a plurality, but one that must be conceptualized as a unit. The following examples show that functional expressions denoting

²³ This has also been pointed out by Löbner (“Relational nouns, when used in the plural with the definite article, also give rise to functional concepts – cf. *her arms, his parents, the Members of Parliament*. They assign to the additional object the totality of the objects which stand in the relevant relationship to it” [Löbner 1985: 297]).

pluralities behave like other functional nouns: bare nouns are only admitted in NPs that contain the explicit possessor argument. If the argument is fronted (like in [43c]), for instance, *lo* is required, and the same happens if the argument has to be retrieved from the surrounding discourse. As for *bann*, it seems infelicitous in any position.

- (43) a. *{Fénèt / lo fénèt} kaz -la lé vér.*
 window DET_F window house DET_{SORT} COP green
 ‘The windows of that / the house are green.’
- b. *M’i yinm la kaz mon tonton. {#Fénèt/ lo fénèt} lé vér.*
 1SG.i like la.house POSS.1SG uncle window DET_F window COP green
 ‘I like my uncle’s house. The windows are green.’
- c. *Kaz -la {#fénèt/ lo fénèt / son fénèt} lé*
 house DET_{SORT} window DET_F window POSS.3SG window COP
vér.
 green
 ‘As for that house, the windows are green.’
- d. *#Bann fénèt kaz -la lé vér.*
 PL window house DET_{SORT} COP green
 ‘The windows of that / the house are green.’
- e. *M’i yinm la kaz mon tonton. #Bann fénèt lé vér.*
 1SG.i like la.house POSS.1SG uncle PL window COP green
 ‘I like my uncle’s house. The windows are green.’

The example in (43b) amounts to a so-called “bridging context”. We suggest that many, but not all, cases of bridging reference rely on functional concepts; we will discuss bridging in the next section.

3.4.4 Bridging

In Löbner’s (1998) view, associative anaphora, i.e., definites in bridging contexts, are functional expressions.²⁴ Given that crosslinguistically, languages do not seem to pattern the same way, and that language-internally, definites in bridging contexts are frequently split in two or more expressions,²⁵ it might be expected that there are more fine-grained distinctions. We assume that in at least a subset of bridging contexts, functions are directly (i.e., lexically) created: those that contain functional

²⁴ Note that functional concepts are called FC2s in this article.

²⁵ Schwarz (2009) shows that in German, two kinds of bridging are distinguished by weak and strong forms of the article; he refers to them in terms of whole-part relationship versus producer-product relationship. Arkoh and Matthewson (2013) claim that Akan bare NPs and determined NPs operate the same distinction. Barlew (2014) shows that while in most cases, bridging is not possible in Bulu, in the few cases it can be done, the determiner is optional.

nouns. In Réyoné, bridging reference is not possible in all the contexts where it can be found in English. Some contexts require BNPs and in some very rare cases, postnominal *-la* is found;²⁶ with functional nouns though, *lo*-determined CNPs are either the preferred or the only possible expression.

- (44) *Mwin la pran lokar. {#Sofér / Lo sofér / #Sofér -la} la*
 1SG PRF take bus driver DET_F driver DET_{SORT} driver PRF
domann amwin mon kart.
 ask 1SG.OBJ POSS.1SG card
 ‘I took the bus. The driver asked me for my card.’
- (45) *M'i yinm la kaz mon tonton. {#Fénèt/ lo fénèt} lé vér.*
 1SG.i like la.house POSS.1SG uncle window DET_F window COP green
 ‘I like my uncle’s house. The windows are green.’

3.5 Relational nouns

Löbner (2011) assumes that relational nouns such as *brother* or *arm* are of type ⟨e,⟨e,t⟩⟩; they have a possessor argument that has to be saturated but they should lack uniqueness – one might have three brothers. Therefore, a definite NP containing such a noun is predicted to depend on context for its referential interpretation. However, these nouns, which are mostly of non-alienable possession (kinship terms; body parts) do not, crosslinguistically, behave as expected. Indeed, they seem to be treated as if they had an inherent [+U] feature.

- (46) a. *C'est le fils de Martine.* (French) / *Es el hijo de Tina.* (Spanish) / *He is the son of the late Rev. John Tillett.*
 b. *J'ai mal au genou.* (French) / *Me duele la rodilla.* (Spanish)
 ‘My knee hurts.’ (lit.: ‘The knee hurts [me].’)²⁷

Their “configurational use”²⁸ thus seems rather systematic and could be encoded lexically. In Réyoné, these nouns figure in bare NPs as the following examples from corpus data show:

²⁶ We hypothesize that these actually correspond to so-called recognitional uses, which are crosslinguistically realized by demonstratives.

²⁷ Other examples include *The crossing ... He was waiting on the corner*; *Ich hab ein Loch im Zahn* (German) ‘I have a hole in my tooth’ (lit.: ‘I have a hole in DET_{weak} tooth’); *I damaged the wing of your car*. We thank two anonymous reviewers for the first examples; the third stems from Beyssade (2013: 134).

²⁸ Löbner (2011) assumes that in sentences such as “She put her hand on his knee”, an abstract type of situation, a configuration, is described, and reference by the relational nouns is unique relative to the abstract configuration.

- (47) *Garson Michel i okip ali.*
 son Mickael *i* occupy 3SG.OBJ
 ‘Michael’s son looks after him/her.’

- (48) *Lafré -la i koz èk zonou, li.*
 cold DET_{SORT} *i* talk with knee 3SG
 ‘This cold weather affects my knee.’ (lit.: ‘This cold weather talks to knee.’)

However, when one precise member is picked out, BNPs are infelicitous; *-la* is obligatory in this context, as the following example from our corpus illustrates. Additionally, some sort of gesture is required. The noun has been shifted to a sortal concept (i.e., it has lost its relational properties) here; the intended referent is picked out with the help of the deictic context.

- (49) *Sé (sa) zonou #(-la) ou di amwin i fémal, Fabrice ?*
 COP DET_F knee DET_{SORT} 2.SG say 1.SG.OBJ *i* hurt Fabrice
 ‘It’s this knee, you say, that hurts, Fabrice?’

4 Discussion

In the previous sections, we studied in detail the definiteness split encountered in Reunion Creole. It was shown that the three expressions available for definite descriptions signal three different types of reference retrieval, which have been analyzed within the framework of Löbner’s (1985, 2011) concept types, roughly resulting in the overall picture in Table 2.

More precisely, individual concepts (unique entities, abstract terms such as *The News*, sortal nouns in larger and immediate situation use) are exclusively realized by BNPs – neither *lo* nor *-la* are acceptable in this context, unless the noun undergoes a shift and a very different reading is conveyed. Sortal concepts, of type ⟨e,t⟩, are signaled by the postnominal determiner *-la*: in visible situations, i.e., deictic reference,

Table 2: Concept types in Reunion Creole.

	[+U]	[-U]
[+R]	functional ⟨e,e⟩ <i>lo</i> N	relational ⟨e,⟨e,t⟩⟩ - (systematically shifted)
[-R]	individual ⟨e⟩ bare noun phrase – SEMANTIC DEFINITENESS	sortal ⟨e,t⟩ <i>N-la</i> – PRAGMATIC DEFINITENESS

N-*la* is the only possible expression. The same is true for anaphoric reference (in a certain variety, possibly undergoing contact-induced change, *lo* is also acceptable in other anaphoric expressions, however). Relational nouns seem to appear systematically in “configurational uses”, i.e., shifted to individual concepts, and occur in BNPs. As for functional concepts, the determiner *lo* is obligatory with functional head nouns in certain cases – in identificational sentences as well as in NPs with noun-phrase external possessor arguments (among which are functional bridging contexts) – and is optional/might be omitted in other positions. Compositionally created functions, such as superlatives, also require *lo* (with some exceptions, notably modifiers with time units). Plural NPs containing relational nouns, which also give rise to functional concepts, are only compatible with *lo*; interestingly, they do not permit the plural determiner *bann*. As a result, Réyoné’s definite expressions distinguish functional concepts from individual concepts, which are strictly incompatible with the determiner *lo*. This will become even clearer with the following contrasts.

An expression containing a functional noun without an explicit noun-phrase internal possessor argument is sometimes interpreted as an individual concept: as well as *pope*, (*US*-)*president* is an individual concept, while *president* [of country *y*] is a functional concept. This distinction is formally reflected in Réyoné. Compare (50b) and (50c):

- (50) a. {*Préfé* / *Lo préfé*} *La-Rényon i koz in-ta.*
 prefect DET_F prefect *la-Reunion i talk a-lot*
 ‘Reunion’s Prefect talks a lot.’
- b. ...*koté Pari. {#Préfé / Lo préfé} i koz in-ta.*
 ...in Paris prefect DET_F prefect *i talk a-lot*
 ‘... in Paris. The prefect talks a lot.’
- c. *Alim pa la-télé. {Préfé / ?Lo préfé} i koz in-ta.*
 prefect DET_F prefect *i talk a-lot*
 ‘Don’t switch the TV on. The Prefect [of Reunion] talks a lot.’

These examples show a contrast involving *préfé*, a lexically functional noun that behaves as expected, as shown by (50a), an example that presents an NP with an explicit argument inside the NP. In (50b) and (50c), no possessor is specified within the NP. While in (50b), the argument is necessarily an explicit linguistic expression to be located in the preceding context, *préfé* in (50c) is necessarily understood as the “default” prefect, i.e., Reunion’s prefect (the NP refers unequivocally to one referent because it denotes a unique individual in the community, just like *the volcano*). We can represent the contrast in (50b)–(50c) in the following way, where (51b) expects one more argument:

- (51) b. [[*préfé*]] = $\lambda s \lambda y \iota x$ (x = prefect(s) (x) (y))
 c. [[*préfé*']] = $\lambda s \iota x$ (x = prefect(s) (x))

In a similar manner, definite NPs with an interpretation of inalienable possession – a kind of “default possession”, with the possessor argument being saturated – have to be bare or figure with a possessive; *lo* is excluded.

- (52) a. {*La-tèt / Lo tèt*} *mon papa lé bèl.*
la-head DET_F *head* POSS.1SG COP *big*
 ‘My father’s head is big.’ (lit.: ‘The head of my Dad is big.’)
- b. {*Tipol la lèv la-tèt / #lo tèt / son tèt*}
Paul PRF *raise* *la-head* DET_F *head* POSS.3SG *head*
 ‘Paul raised his head.’²⁹

Observe the difference in interpretation of the following minimal pair reflected in the translation:

- (53) Talking about a little girl:
- a. *Ousa i lé lo papa ?*
 where *i* COP DET_F *father*
 ‘Where is the father?’
- b. *Ousa i lé papa ?*
 where *i* COP *father*
 ‘Where is Dad?’

In summary, Reunion Creole displays a definiteness split between semantic and pragmatic definites, similar to some other languages, where definite BNPs in their definite reading realize individual concepts (type ⟨e⟩), while NPs comprising *-la* are required with sortal concepts, i.e., property denoting expressions of type ⟨e,t⟩. One thing sets Réyoné apart from other languages though: it features an expression (NPs including the determiner *lo*) dedicated to functional concepts, interpreted as ⟨e,e⟩. Individual concepts are thus formally distinguished from functional concepts. This contrast supports Löbner’s theory of definiteness, which permits a precise classification of different types of reference retrieval, in addition to the weak – strong distinction also present in other frameworks such as Schwarz’s (2009).

5 Issues

Since our explanation for the distribution of definite expressions in Réyoné is based on Löbner’s concept types, we would expect that the form specialized for functional concepts, i.e., *lo*, is excluded in any definite description that falls under pragmatic definiteness. Yet, this determiner is actually the form used in a specific type of

²⁹ Example (47b) is based on Zribi-Hertz and Glaude’s (2007: 276) example.

anaphoric NP, namely partitive topics, and in definite NPs with so-called “establishing relative clauses”, such as “*the woman he went out with last night*”, which Löbner classifies – not without some hesitation³⁰ – as pragmatic definites. We will propose that these two types of definite descriptions are actually situated on a frontier. Following Löbner (2011), pragmatic and semantic definiteness do not constitute two hermetic classes, but two ends of a scale. We will discuss the cases of partitive topics and establishing relative clauses in Section 7, and show how Réyoné definite NPs are situated on this scale of definiteness.

On the other hand, Löbner’s theory predicts that anaphoric expressions should feature exclusively the strong form, i.e., *N-la*. This is indeed the case (cf. Section 3.3.2) – with one exception. Indeed BNPs, are readily admitted (or preferred) in contexts such as the following – even if they contain an inanimate noun:

- (54) *Li la asté in zasyèt, {zasyèt / zasyèt -la} la kasé.*
 3SG PRF buy INDF plate plate plate DET_{SORT} PRF break
 ‘He bought a plate, the plate got broken.’

This example is not related to semantic definiteness – the noun represents a sortal concept and it is solely through the linguistic context that the correct referent can be recovered. Thus the BNP does not encode its usual semantic meaning here. We do not have a satisfactory explanation for the pattern in (54). The absence of *-la* somehow seems to be related to information structure and mental accessibility of the referent:³¹ the antecedent of the BNP in (54) is maximally salient: it introduces a new topic and is located very close to the anaphoric expression. Consider, however, the following examples with exactly the same preceding context which show the infelicity of a BNP in object position (55a), or as a subject of a static predicate/as a theme (55b):

- (55) a. *Li la asté in zasyèt. Son garson la kas {#zasyèt /*
 3SG PRF buy DET plate POSS.1SG boy PRF break plate
zasyèt -la}.
 plate DET_{SORT}
 ‘He bought a plate. His son broke the plate.’

30 “[One] could simply regard them as [...] semantic definites. The linguistic evidence, however, favours a classification as pragmatic definites” (Löbner 1985: 308).

31 Accessibility theory proposes that “context retrievals of pieces of information from memory are guided by signaling to the addressee the degree of accessibility with which the mental representation to be retrieved is held” (Ariel 2001: 30). A referring expression – for instance, an unstressed pronoun, a distal demonstrative, a short definite description – codes one specific degree of mental accessibility, cueing the hearer on how to retrieve the appropriate mental representation. The more salient the antecedent, the more highly accessible it is. Various factors play a role: salience of the antecedent, tight relationship between antecedent and anaphoric expression, thematic roles etc.

- b. *Li la asté in zasyèt – {#zasyèt / zasyèt -la}*
 3_{SG} PRF buy INDF plate plate plate DET_{SORT}
té sér.
 PST expensive
 ‘He broke a plate – the plate was expensive.’

It seems that the sentence with a bare anaphoric subject must “bring the narration forward”.³² This seems to parallel the null pronoun distribution in Réyoné, which is only found in two contexts: in impersonal constructions, where overt pronouns are infelicitous, and in narrative sequences, where they can be omitted in some special contexts like (54); a null pronoun would not be felicitous in the context of (55b). Further research is needed on this point.

Finally, we have to check the grammatical status of postnominal *-la*. Indeed, while the same form in close Mauritian Creole – a postnominal determiner of the same phonological form /la/ with the same diachronic source and largely the same distribution and semantics – is analyzed as a definite determiner (cf. Alleesaib 2012; Déprez 2007, 2019; Wespel 2008), the situation in Réyoné might be different since there is another definite determiner. Also, it has to be pointed out that researchers sometimes disagree with a previous analysis made for a determiner in a given language and argue that an element that had been described as a pragmatic definite is actually a demonstrative, or vice versa.³³ From a diachronic point of view, it is well known that demonstratives tend to weaken along a scale and occupy an increasingly larger range of contexts in a language.³⁴ Breu (2004) shows how, under influence of German, the demonstrative *tón* from Upper Serbian has grammaticalized, in Colloquial Upper Serbian, into a strong definite article. The article is used for deictic and anaphoric reference (but also found in bridging contexts and immediate situation

³² We thank an anonymous reviewer for this idea.

³³ It is largely because different criteria for differentiating demonstratives and definites underly their analysis. For instance, Himmelmann (2001) disagrees with the analysis that has been proposed for Fering or German, arguing that the strong articles are actually demonstratives because, in his words, these are “used only in anaphoric contexts” and that by the criteria he uses, they are “high-frequency demonstrative[s]” (Himmelmann 2001: 837). Ortmann (2014), on the other hand, considers that the unstressed form of Dutch determiners *die* and *dat* (traditionally labeled as [distal] demonstrative pronouns are strong articles as they “occur in a context of plain anaphoricity in which no deictic force is involved” [Ortmann 2014: 303–304]).

³⁴ A given form develops from a distal demonstrative toward a form signaling pragmatic definiteness including anaphoric uses and later appears in bridging contexts, then in situational uses, and finally in larger situation uses (cf. De Mulder and Carlier 2011; Egedi 2014; Hawkins 2004; Ortmann 2015). This diachronic scheme is reflected in synchrony in diverging cross-linguistic patterns: referential expressions of natural languages occupy these spaces in an implicational scale (cf. Egedi 2014; Ortmann 2015).

uses) while bare noun phrases are obligatory in generic NPs and with globally unique entities.

As for Réyoné, some observations hint at an analysis of *-la* as a definite determiner. It seems more grammaticalized (towards a definite determiner) than, for instance, English *that*: it is a clitic that cannot occur without an element it attaches to; it has no proximity features; it may figure in some contexts where English demonstratives would not be felicitous, like in the following example:

- (56) *In tantine èk in boug la arivé. Tantine -la té i*
 INDF girl and INDF man PRF arrive girl DET_{SORT} PST *i*
port in tant.
 carry INDF basket
 ‘A woman and a man arrived. The/that woman was carrying a basket.’

Besides, *-la* co-occurs with the demonstrative *sa*, and demonstratives do not usually co-occur (while their co-occurrence with a definite determiner is rather common [Lyons 1999]).³⁵ However, in Réyoné, a *-la*-marked NP can be accompanied by a gesture, and it does pass the test of contrastive use (Lyons 1999): indeed, such an NP can occur in “contrastive” contexts in which the physical situation contains more than one referent corresponding to the descriptive content of the CNP. This shows that it is still a demonstrative determiner.

- (57) In front of a market stall with several pineapples:
M a prann zanana -la èk zanana -la.
 1SG FUT take pineapple DET_{SORT} with pineapple DET_{SORT}
 ‘I’ll take this pineapple and this pineapple.’

While BNPs are, crosslinguistically, largely attested as forms realizing semantic definiteness – or *uniqueness*, alternatively – only more recent descriptions (Czardybon 2017; Dvořák 2020; Jenks 2018; Šimík 2021) have suggested that demonstrative descriptions can be involved in definiteness splits and take over the role of signaling pragmatic definiteness (or *familiarity*). What has been described in these works is an opposition between bare noun phrases and demonstrative noun phrases. Jenks (2018), for instance, describes a definiteness split in Mandarin, which is considered an article-less language. He shows that bare noun phrases occur in “*unique definite environments*” (corresponding to Hawkins’s “larger situation use” and to some bridging environments), but that they are unavailable in anaphoric contexts, at least in object position (bare nouns may occur in subject position when they constitute a continuing

³⁵ Malagasy, a substrate language that possibly influenced Réyoné, has such a system, though (Dryer 2013). On the other hand, French has a reinforcer *là* (and another *ci*) which co-occurs with the demonstrative, as in *cette femme-là* ‘this woman’.

topic). What is required in these environments are demonstrative phrases, which are, following Jenks, capable of introducing an index. Jenks analyzes the opposition in Mandarin in terms of familiarity versus uniqueness within Schwarz's framework, and argues that the distinction is essentially the same as the one in German, the difference being that it is made without recourse to a definite article. Note that this situation might presumably be described within Löbner's theory of concept types; indeed, Jenks's examples show that individual concepts (such as *moon*) and functional concepts (such as *president*) are realized as bare noun phrases.

Such accounts for definiteness splits involving demonstratives are not uncontroversial. Besides, demonstratives are traditionally considered different from definites by semanticists and philosophers. We will discuss our assumptions in the next section.

6 Pragmatic definiteness through demonstrative NPs

Concerning the interpretation of demonstratives, we will assume that demonstrative and definite descriptions have very similar semantics (Elbourne 2008; Ionin et al. 2012; Roberts 2002; Wolter 2006) and we will consider demonstrative descriptions as a subtype of definite NPs. Furthermore, we will differentiate two types of use of demonstratives, uses that involve an accompanying gesture, and all others uses, where these NPs behave strictly like other pragmatic definites. *La*-marked NPs (as well as demonstrative NPs in English) are pragmatic definites with special uses; in all other uses – anaphoric; deictic without gesture – they simply realize pragmatic definiteness.

Traditionally, semanticists (following Kaplan 1989) assume that demonstratives are different from definites. Indeed, demonstratives, in contrast with definite descriptions, seem to be “rigidly designating” – once their referent is determined, it is understood as fixed in every circumstance of evaluation (Kaplan 1989). So, depending on the circumstance of evaluation, “The president of the US is/was a Republican” might be true or false depending on who happens to be the president at the time of evaluation, but the utterance “That man is a Republican”, uttered while pointing at Obama, will always be false – even in a counterfactual situation – because *that man* is a rigid designator and always refers to one particular entity, namely Obama. Thus, definite NPs would provide an intensional description (yielding an individual through the descriptive content of the CNP together with a circumstance of evaluation) while demonstrative NPs would only depend on the situation of utterance, not on the circumstance of evaluation. Thus their referent doesn't seem to vary across worlds and demonstratives seem to be incompatible with bound variable or co-varying interpretations. However, as Roberts (2002) shows, demonstratives may

have quantifier- or definite-description-like narrow-scope readings. In fact, scope behavior does not depend on the form – article or demonstrative – but on types of uses (Wolter 2003, 2006). Deictic descriptions, whether definite or demonstrative, do not have co-varying interpretations. Consider, for instance, example (58): if the definite (58a, in bold face) and demonstrative (58b, in bold face) descriptions are taken to be anaphoric, then they both are bound by the universal quantifier; if these descriptions are taken to be deictic, then they both are rigid (have “wide scope”). The deictic reading is possible for the definite description in (58b) for instance if the speaker’s dog is running around the room.

- (58) a. *Every dog in my neighborhood, even the meanest, has an owner who thinks **that dog** is a sweetie.*
 b. *Every dog in my neighborhood, even the meanest, has an owner who thinks **the dog** is a sweetie.*
 (Wolter 2003: 7³⁶)

As Wolter (2003: 17) shows, semantically unique definite descriptions, on the other hand, can take narrow scope under anything except negation – it seems then that it is more specifically these latter which are subject to the constraints on scope that are usually assumed for definite descriptions in general. Note indeed that typical examples contain expressions such as *king*, *president*, or *smallest*. We can thus say that rigid designation and scope behavior do not distinguish definite descriptions from demonstrative descriptions, but instead semantic definiteness from deictic reference on the one hand, and anaphoric reference on the other.

Demonstratives are sometimes said to be related to non-uniqueness. For instance, Dayal and Jiang 2023 assume, following Robinson (2005), that demonstratives require non-uniqueness; they give the following examples:

- (59) a. *#That sun is hot.*
 b. *Helen bought a car. #That steering wheel is dangerous.*
 c. *The match was interesting. #That umpire was unfair.*
 (Dayal and Jiang 2023: 157)

Consider the following examples, however:

- (60) a. Sitting in a car:
Volan -la lé danzéré.
 steering.wheel DET_{SORT} COP dangerous
 ‘The / That steering wheel is dangerous.’

36 We added the bold face to highlight the noun phrase.

- b. *Hélène la asté in volan nèv. Volan -la*
 Helen PRF buy INDF steering.wheel new steering.wheel DET_{SORT}
lé danzéré.
 COP dangerous
 ‘Helen bought a steering wheel. The / That steering wheel is dangerous.’

We would argue that the infelicity of the demonstrative in (59) is due to other factors: in (59a) the NP contains an individual noun, and (59b) and (59c) are bridging contexts (functional expressions). These are contexts known to require semantic definites; pragmatic definites, whether demonstrative or not, are indeed excluded. In other uses (deictic or anaphoric uses), demonstratives can be felicitous although the referent is unique in the situation. We assume that the particularity of demonstrative phrases is that they may figure with a gesture. It is the gesture that allows these forms to appear in so-called “contrastive” or “non-unique” contexts (*this pineapple and this pineapple*, see example 57) because it ensures uniqueness (only one referent with content P at time of gesture a,³⁷ in the common ground). Without a gesture – pointing, glancing, etc. – the demonstrative is just as infelicitous as a definite article, in such contexts. A demonstrative description refers uniquely (Roberts 2002; Wolter 2006) and it is a definite NP as defined in Section 1. We propose to distinguish demonstrative NPs accompanied by a gesture from all other uses of demonstrative NPs. The latter indeed behave exactly like other pragmatic definites: they do not presuppose a gesture; they are incompatible with functional and individual concepts; they are rigid designators and have wide scope when used deictically; they cannot figure in non-unique contexts. In the uses we are interested in – i.e., anaphoric and deictic uses without a gesture – demonstratives are simply pragmatic definites.

Note that in this respect, Réyoné is just like English (which also has demonstratives and thus pragmatic definites). However, the definiteness split is very different in Réyoné: indeed, since its determiner *lo* is reserved for functional expressions, the demonstrative *-la* is obligatory in many contexts, namely for sortal concepts in deictic and anaphoric uses.

7 Réyoné NPs on the scale of definiteness

Before we summarize how Réyoné definite expressions are situated on the scale of definiteness, we will discuss two cases of definite descriptions situated on a frontier: NPs with establishing relative clauses, and partitive topics.

³⁷ This is a simplification. See Roberts (2002) for a precise analysis including the interaction with pragmatics, and the notion of “demonstration” versus “gesture”.

Only certain nouns are lexically functional; ultimately, though, any definite description amounts to an individual concept,³⁸ in Löbner's theory. The difference between semantic and pragmatic definiteness is that in the latter case, the function has to be created with the help of the context. The two kinds of definiteness actually constitute not two hermetic classes, but two ends of a scale that stretches out from deictic expressions (on the pragmatic end of the scale) to proper names (on the semantic end) as follows:

- (61) deictic with sortal CNPs > anaphoric with sortal CNPs > sortal CNPs with establishing relative clause; functional CNPs with explicit definite possessor > definite associative anaphors > individual CNPs > proper names (adapted from Löbner 2011: 3208)

To illustrate how a function might be created, Löbner (1985) uses one of Hawkins's examples, that of an "establishing relative clause". This kind of definite description involves a certain type of restrictive relative clause, namely one whose content provides a functional link that ensures the uniqueness of the referent denoted by the relativized NP.

- (62) *What's wrong with Bill? – Oh, **the woman he went out with last night** was nasty to him.*

In this example, the expression "go out with y" represents a function that links an individual (Bill, for instance) unequivocally to one unique y, because it is presupposed that one goes out with only one lady at a given time. This means that establishing relative clauses may imply shared world knowledge. However, establishing relative clauses should fall under pragmatic definiteness, since the function is created with the help of a discourse context and involves a sortal noun; also note that they are similar to anaphorics, as in "What's wrong with Bill? – Oh, he went out with a woman last night and the woman was nasty to him". One may argue, on the other hand, that the considered discourse that provides the functional link – i.e., the restrictive relative clause – is part of the CNP³⁹ and this is similar to superlatives or modifiers such as *first*. Regarding the form (weak or strong) that relativized NPs adopt in languages with definiteness splits, different patterns are observed. In Haitian, where some types of relative clauses are compatible with the strong determiner – which might figure once or twice, following the type of relative – establishing relative clauses require BNPs, i.e., the weak form (Wespel 2008). In West

³⁸ Which we have defined as functions from circumstances of evaluation to individuals, cf. Section 3.1.

³⁹ It does at least form a semantic unit with the noun. In a DP-analysis of phrases, Cabredo Hofherr (2014) proposes the following uniform syntactic analysis for RCs: [_{DP} D [_{NP} NP [_{CP} RC]]] (Cabredo Hofherr 2014: 202–203).

Germanic languages, while contrastive relative clauses are incompatible with reduced weak definite determiners, non-contrastive (including “establishing”) relative clauses are not. Besides, these display fine-grained distinctions,⁴⁰ as shown by Cabredo Hofherr (2014). To summarize, definite descriptions with establishing relative clauses have some characteristics of pragmatic definites and others of semantic definites; they seem to be situated in the middle of the scale of definiteness.

In Réyoné, appositive relative clauses do not seem to exist.⁴¹ NPs with restrictive relative clauses may contain the strong determiner, i.e., postposed *-la*, but establishing relative clauses may not (see below). In establishing relative clauses, the determiner *lo* appears to be obligatory with postverbal relativized NPs but may be omitted in NPs in preverbal position (as shown by examples 63 and 66).

- (63) *(Lo) tantine Bill la sort avèk yér té ozé.*
 DET_F girl Bill PRF go.out with yesterday PST tactless
 ‘The girl Bill went out with yesterday was tactless.’
- (64) *Ou koné *(lo) tantine Bill la sort avèk yér ?*
 2sg know DET_F girl Bill PRF go.out with yesterday
 ‘Do you know the girl Bill went out with yesterday?’
- (65) *M’i trouv pi *(lo) zafér ou la done amwin.*
 1SG.i find NEG DET_F thing 2SG PRF give 1SG.OBJ
 ‘I don’t find anymore the thing you gave me.’
- (66) *(Lo) zafér ou la done amwin m’i trouv pi.* (topicalized object)
 DET_F thing 2SG PRF give 1SG.OBJ 1SG.i find NEG
 ‘The thing you gave me, I don’t find anymore.’

Thus, NPs with establishing relative clauses pattern with semantically functional expressions (*lo* is obligatory or optional, according to the position of the NP it figures in).

As for relatives with *la*-determined head nouns, even though the information provided by the relative clause is restrictive, as it creates a subset from the set formed by the predicative content of the noun, it is not (taken as) sufficient for the retrieval of a referent. For (67) to be felicitous, there must be some “extra” context, be it linguistic

⁴⁰ Cabredo Hofherr proposes a refined classification of relative clause types that have been shown to influence article choice. She distinguishes the following relative clauses (RCs): Appositive RCs; Contrastive RC; Non-contrastive restrictive RCs, further divided into establishing and functional RCs which might be inferred or contain a functional head noun, and “maximalizing” RCs. Factors that favor weak determiners in restrictive RC are: atemporal intensional RCs (‘people who have black hair’), and RCs which contribute the arguments of the noun (‘the doubts that they have’) or modify an abstract noun as in ‘the point that is important’ (Cabredo Hofherr 2014).

⁴¹ Further research is needed on this point, though.

or non-linguistic: the NP might denote, for instance, the doctor whom the speakers have just been talking about, or the doctor whose office the hearer just walks out of; the content of the relative clause alone does not establish a functional relation here.

- (67) *[Doktér ou la vi] -la lé gabyé.*
 doctor 2SG PRF see DET_{SORT} COP good
 ‘That doctor you have seen is very good.’

Yet another kind of definite NP situated on a frontier is partitive topics, in Réyoné. As mentioned in Section 3.3.2, *lo*-determined CNPs are unacceptable or not very good in anaphoric contexts. However, all consultants admit them in particular cases such as the following, where the NP constitutes a contrastive/partitive topic:

- (68) A.: *Ou la vi bann lotisman banna la fé?*
 2SG PRF see PL housing projet 3.PL PRF make
 B.: *Landrwa lé dos mésoman, m'i yinm pa lo bann kaz.*
 place COP nice but 1SG.i like NEG DET_F PL house
 A.: ‘Have you seen the housing projects they’ve made?’ B.: ‘The place is great but I don’t like the houses.’

Lo + N is the preferred expression in this kind of context, and usually the only felicitous one: that is indeed the case when the topic contains a new (focused⁴²) element so that no antecedent corresponds to the precise lexical content of the CNP, like ‘little cousin’ here:

- (69) A.: *(Lo) bann kousin Billy, kwe la fé?*
 DET_F PL cousin Billy what PRF do
 B.: *{#Ti kousin / Lo ti kousin / #Ti kousin -la} La⁴³*
 small cousin DET_F small cousin small cousin DET_{SORT} PRF
maryé, m'i koné.
 marry 1SG.i know
 A.: ‘Billy’s cousins, how are they?’ – B.: ‘The little cousin got married, I know.’

We assume that *lo* signals the anchoring of an NP to another NP, not to a possessor argument here but in a partitive relationship with a previous NP.

Table 3 summarizes how Réyoné definite expressions are situated on the scale of definiteness.

42 Such contrastive topics actually contain a focused item (Krifka 1992), here *ti*: [Lo [ti]_F kousin]_T [la maryé]_C.

43 Note that *la* is a TAM marker here; this marker can follow the determiner *-la* as illustrated by example (54).

Table 3: Réyoné nominal expressions on the scale of definiteness.

Pragmatic definiteness ↓	Deictic with sortal CNP	N- <i>la</i>	↑ Semantic definiteness
	Anaphoric with sortal CNP	N- <i>la</i>	
	Partitive topics	<i>lo</i> N	
	Sortal CNPs with establishing relative clause	(<i>lo</i>) N / <i>lo</i> N	
	Functional CNPs with explicit definite possessor	(<i>lo</i>) N / <i>lo</i> N	
Functional CNPs with implicit definite possessor / Functional bridging	<i>lo</i> N		
	‘Configurational uses’ of relational nouns	BNP	
	‘Larger situations’ relying on general knowledge	BNP	
	Individual nouns	BNP	
	Proper names	BNP	

8 Summary

In this article, we have presented a case study of a definiteness split, similar to those already described for Fering, German, and other languages, which distinguish a context-dependent type of definite (pragmatic definites) from one that relies on general knowledge, involving for instance globally unique entities or “larger situation uses” (semantic definites). While the semantic splits that have been described for other languages all seem to constitute a two-way distinction, our study dealt with a three-way distinction. It was shown that Reunion Creole formally distinguishes three types of reference retrieval related to three concept types – sortal, individual and functional – in Löbner’s (1985, 1998, 2011) terms, with a determiner dedicated to functional concepts.

Three expressions are available for definite descriptions, in Réyoné: BNPs, NPs with postnominal *-la*, and NPs with a noun prenominal determiner *lo*.

Postnominal *-la* is a demonstrative; in this article, we have argued that apart from their ability to figure with a gesture in certain contexts, demonstrative determiners are not different from other forms encoding pragmatic definiteness: they are incompatible with functional and individual concepts; they have the same scope behavior as definite articles; they cannot figure in non-unique contexts without a gesture. We have assumed that demonstratives are pragmatic definites in the uses we are interested in (any use except those involving gestures). It was shown that in Réyoné, *-la* is obligatory in context-dependent definite descriptions containing sortal concepts (of type ⟨e,t⟩). In “visible situation” uses, i.e., deictic reference, N-*la* phrases are the only felicitous expression. The same is true for anaphoric reference; however, *lo* is preferred with partitive topics, which we argue is a case on the frontier between pragmatic and semantic definiteness.

Individual concepts, of type ⟨e⟩ – more precisely, of type ⟨s,e⟩⁴⁴ – are exclusively realized by BNPs; neither *lo* nor *-la* are acceptable in this context, unless the noun undergoes a shift and a different reading is conveyed (*the only God* vs. *that divinity*), or if we are dealing with a polysemous noun (*zinformayon* ‘The News’ vs. *zinformasyon-la* ‘that information’). Following Löbner (1985), individual concepts also include sortal nouns in “larger situation” and “immediate situation” uses; indeed, BNPs are the only felicitous expression here.

Languages with definiteness splits are reported to use one and the same expression for semantic definiteness, generally either BNPs or a reduced form of a strong determiner. Réyoné, on the other hand, distinguishes individual concepts (type ⟨e⟩) from functional concepts (type ⟨e,e⟩). The latter are signaled by a dedicated expression, namely *lo*-determined CNPs. This was shown by the infelicity of *lo* with individual or sortal concepts on the one hand, and its presence with functional concepts on the other. With functional head nouns, the determiner *lo* is obligatory in nominal predicates of identificational sentences and in NPs with noun-phrase external possessor arguments as in #(*Lo*) *mari lé morisyin* ‘The husband is Mauritian’; it can be omitted in other positions. Compositionally created functional concepts, such as sortal concepts with superlatives, always require *lo* (with some exceptions, notably modifiers with time units). Plural NPs containing relational nouns, which also give rise to functional concepts, are only compatible with *lo*, excluding even the plural determiner *bann*. In functional bridging contexts, *lo* N is also the only possible expression. Thus the patterns found with functional concepts contrast with individual concepts, which are incompatible with *lo* (*lo préfé* ‘prefect of y’ vs. *préfé* ‘Reunion’s prefect’/‘default prefect’).

These findings are strong support for Löbner’s (1985, 2011) theory; they also speak in favor of theoretic rationales defending a uniform analysis for demonstratives and definites (such as those proposed by Elbourne [2008]; Ionin et al. [2012]; Roberts [2002]; and Wolter [2006]).

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⁴⁴ All four types actually include a situational argument, cf. Note 14.

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