

The Use of Definite Articles in Romance Languages

Diffusion or Independent Development

by

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A Thesis Presented in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

Approved April 2019 by the
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ARIZONA STATE UNIVERSITY

May 2019

ABSTRACT

Over the centuries, definite articles in Romance languages have expanded their use to include generic, collective, and abstract nouns, essentially becoming noun markers. This usage is not confined to just a few languages, either, but is found in most, if not all, Romance languages, major and minor. This thesis examines the question of how this came to be, whether through diffusion from one language to all others, or through independent parallel development. I first trace the history of definite articles in three major Romance languages, French, Spanish, and Italian, starting with the emergence of the definite article in Late Latin as it derived from Classic Latin demonstratives. It includes an analysis of the use of definite articles in six works of literature, one in each language from the late thirteenth century, and one in each language from around the year 1500. The results show definite articles were used more frequently than expected in the earlier Spanish work, perhaps hinting at diffusion from Spain. Nevertheless, placing these results in historical context, I argue that this use arose through independent parallel development through the process that gave birth to definite articles in the first place - grammaticalization.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank my committee chair Elly van Gelderen for the help and insight she has given me over the many months I have been working on this thesis, as well as how patient she has been throughout this process. I also must thank Dr. Danny Law of the University of Texas-Austin whose comments at the Linguistics/TESOL Symposium in February 2018 gave me the inspiration for this thesis.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Romance languages share many features in common, some of which differ quite a bit from their parent language Latin. One of these features is the article, both definite and indefinite. Some, such as French and Italian, have also developed a partitive article, while in others, such as Spanish and Portuguese, the lack of an article often serves the same function as the partitive. While the use of articles differs somewhat from language to language, there are general rules that apply to all of them. One of the most interesting is the use of the definite article with generic, collective, and abstract nouns, as seen in the following table. The definite articles are in italics.

Portuguese	<i>A</i> linguagem é mais importante que <i>a</i> técnica.
Galician	<i>A</i> linguaxe é máis importante que <i>a</i> técnica.
Spanish	<i>El</i> lenguaje es más importante que <i>la</i> técnica
Catalan	<i>El</i> llenguatge és més important que <i>la</i> tècnica.
Occitan	<i>Lo</i> lengatge es mai important que <i>la</i> tecnica.
French	<i>Le</i> langage est plus important que <i>la</i> technique.
Romansh	<i>Il</i> linguatg è pli impurtant che <i>la</i> tecnica.
Sardinian	<i>Su</i> limbazu est prus importante de <i>sa</i> tennica.
Italian	<i>Il</i> linguaggio è più importante della tecnica.
Romanian	<i>Limbajul</i> este mai important decât tehnica.
English	Language is more important than technique.

Table 1: Comparison of same sentence in ten different Romance languages, Rudder (2012, p. 206) italics

are mine

Definite articles are normally used to specify a particular person or thing, but in the sentences above there is nothing particular about the nouns at all, they are used in a general sense. In every single one of the above languages, definite articles are used with both nouns, even though they are used in a generic or abstract sense. Neither “language” nor “technique” refers to a specific language or technique, but rather language and technique in general.

There are three ways to explain this similarity in usage. It could have been inherited from the parent language, but we know that this is not the case. Classical Latin had no articles at all, though they did start to develop in late Vulgar Latin. Their use was much more restricted in Vulgar Latin than in modern Romance languages, however.

Another way is through diffusion by language contact. The use with generic nouns could have developed in one language, and then spread to others. It is known that Romance languages borrowed vocabulary from each other, and so may have borrowed syntactic usages as well. The third way is through independent parallel development. The same usage could have developed in each language independently, though how that may have happened will be discussed in 1.2 below.

1.1 Diffusion

Diffusion is the process by which linguistic innovations spread throughout space and time. The classic model of diffusion is the wave model. In this model, an innovation starts at some place, and spreads outward to neighboring communities. It is often compared to the spread of ripples in water (Wolfram & Schilling-Estes 2003). Modern research has shown that this model is not the best, however, as time and distance are not the only factors in linguistic diffusion.

A newer model, based on the processes observed in the natural sciences, is the gravity model, or hierarchical model. In this model, an innovation spreads from a center of heavy population density to other high density centers, and from these centers to regions of increasingly less density, until rural areas, last of all, adopt it (Wolfram 2003). Several studies have shown this model to be a better fit to observed changes in time. For example, Trudgill (2014) discusses the diffusion of th-fronting, or the change of the interdental fricatives represented by -th- in English to the labiodental fricatives /f/ and /v/, in Great Britain. This innovation was first noted in London in the 1850's. From here, it spread out fairly slowly, so that by 1960, it was found in larger cities in the Southeast, and by the 1970's it was found in smaller cities in the Southeast, as well as larger cities in the Southwest and the Northeast coast. By 1980, it was found as far north as Glasgow, though it was still absent in Liverpool and Wales (Trudgill 2014). This follows the hierarchical model, as the innovation first spread to nearby larger cities, and then to smaller cities and larger cities further away.

A weakness of the hierarchical model is that it only includes population and distance as factors. Physical geography can impede or further the spread of an innovation. The similarity between dialects can also be a factor, as it appears to be easier to adopt changes from a more similar dialect than from a more distinct one (Wolfram & Schilling-Estes 2003).

The one thing required in any diffusion model is, of course, time. It takes time for an innovation to spread throughout a population and in physical space. Many modern studies use populations of different ages as a proxy for time, as younger speakers are more likely to pick up an innovation than older speakers (Wolfram & Schilling-Estes

2003). In a historical study, of course, we must look at documents over time to determine the spread of linguistic change.

Diffusion is usually studied in the context of change within a language, or even within a single dialect. But the same processes are found in language contact situations. There are certainly differences between internally motivated innovations and those that are externally motivated. However, as Thomason 2003 points out, these are differences “of degree, not of kind” (688).

Language contact occurs in varying degrees. Superficial contact can lead to borrowing lexical items, while more intense and sustained contact is required for changes in syntax, morphology, or phonology. One scenario in which this type of sustained contact occurs is one in which a minority language exists alongside a majority, dominant language (Thomason 2003). This scenario certainly does exist in many countries where Romance languages are spoken. Romansh, spoken in Switzerland, has been influenced by German over the centuries, and in the modern language predicate adjectives do not agree with their subject for gender, as is common in other Romance languages (Thomason 2003).

Thomason (2003) also points out that the boundary between dialect and language is frequently fuzzy at best. It is not uncommon for speakers of two different languages who live near each other, at a national boundary for instance, to have more contact with each other than with others who live further away and speak the same language. Before the standardization of Romance languages, there was a dialect continuum of these languages, such that any two neighboring dialects were more mutually intelligible than dialects further away, though geography did sometimes break up this continuum (Heap 2006). This would mean that the Poitevin dialect of French would be closer to the

Limousin dialect of Occitan than it would to the Picard dialect of French. Under these circumstances, diffusion could work across languages much the same as it would within the same language.

1.2 Independent Development

In addition to diffusion through contact, languages may develop similar usages independently. But how could this happen? How could the ten languages in Table 1 all independently develop the same usage? To understand how they all came to use definite articles in this way, we must first understand how definite articles developed in Romance languages at all. Definite articles in Romance languages developed from Classical Latin demonstratives. The exact details will be given in later chapters, but here we will discuss the process that led to it – grammaticalization.

Grammaticalization is a theoretical framework that explains phenomena commonly observed in many languages, the shifting of words from more lexical to more functional usage. According to Heine (2003), this process is characterized by semantic bleaching, generalization, decategorialization, and, frequently, phonetic reduction. Semantic bleaching refers to the loss of semantic meaning as the word gains a more functional role. Generalization occurs when the word is used in more and more constructions, decategorialization refers to the word shifting categories, and phonetic reduction is the shortening of the word in some way, even if it is only a vowel reduction.

A classic example of grammaticalization in English is the use of “be going to” with a verb as a structure indicating future tense. In this structure, it no longer has its original meaning indicating movement, so has undergone semantic bleaching, it came to be used in environments where it would not previously have been used, and so

generalized, is used as an auxiliary rather than as a full verb, and so has undergone decategorialization, and is now frequently pronounced, and written, “gonna” (Smith 2011).

Key to the process described above is reanalysis, which, while not at all unique to grammaticalization, is absolutely necessary for it to happen. In the above example, not only was the meaning reanalyzed, from verb of motion to future auxiliary, but the structure was reanalyzed as well. The infinitive marker “to” was detached from the verb, and attached to the preceding verb, which has allowed the phonetic reduction to take place. This only occurs with verbs, and not when “to” is used as a preposition (Smith 2011). **“I’m gonna Flagstaff”* is not grammatical in English.

A recent study of a Hungarian suffix is also a good example of grammaticalization. This suffix, which Halm (2018) calls a “negative affective demonstrative” (p. 360). According to this study, affective demonstratives have similar functions to regular demonstratives, but also indicate “exclamativity, speaker-hearer solidarity and evaluative predication” (Halm 2018, p. 360). This suffix also happens to have the same form as the third person singular possessive suffix, meaning that what looks like “its idiot” actually means “that total idiot”. The study shows that the use as a demonstrative is a more recent development, as the first uses of it historically only go back to the late nineteenth century. It appears to develop from a construction with “the world” as possessor, and meaning “the biggest idiot in the world”, though generally not literally. The possessor was simply dropped from the construction, which occurred frequently when the possessor was understood from context. The form without a possessor, and without an obvious antecedent, was then reanalyzed to mean “that big

idiot.” The original construction with “the world” as possessor still exists, with a superlative meaning (Halm 2018). Other than the optional phonetic reduction, this example does show grammaticalization, as there was semantic bleaching in the loss of even an implied possessor, generalization in use when it came to be used with positive adjectives, giving it an ironical meaning (Halm 2018), and decategorialization, as the suffix in this use is no longer a possessive at all.

A cline of general word types has been developed to explain the movement frequently seen in grammaticalization. Words generally move from content words to grammatical words to clitics to inflectional affixes (Hopper & Traugott 2003). In the Hungarian example, the possessive affix could not move further along the cline without disappearing, which can happen. This loss of a word and its consequent replacement, on a larger scale, is called the linguistic cycle (Van Gelderen 2011).

All Romance languages developed from Late Latin, and so inherited the development of articles, both definite and indefinite. It is possible that all of them continued to follow the same path of development, at least in regards to definite articles, after they developed into separate languages.

1.3 Thesis

While much has been written on the development of definite articles within individual Romance languages, I have not found a cross-linguistic study comparing their development between languages. This paper contributes to the literature by comparing the development of definite articles in three different Romance languages over time. In this paper, I explore the question of whether definite articles in early Romance languages developed into general noun markers through drift and independent development or not.

While a complete study of all Romance languages, even all the major ones, is beyond the scope of this paper, I believe I have discovered something about the history of definite articles that could lead to an answer to the above question. I will look at the development of definite articles in three Romance languages: French, Spanish, and Italian. These languages have the earliest written records, with French going back to the ninth century, and Spanish and Italian each going back to the tenth century.

A more comprehensive study could fully answer this question. If we can discover a geographic pattern in time, we could claim diffusion as the cause. If the Romance languages see similar rates of development over time, we will know it was independent development. With only three languages, however, a definitive answer is not really possible.

In this study, I analyzed extracts from six different texts, three from the late thirteenth century and three from about 1500. One from each time period was in French, one in Spanish, and one in Italian. I examined all nouns in these texts, comparing the numbers with definite articles to the total that could have a definite article, i.e. the total number of nouns with a definite article and the number of nouns with no determiner. I will then compare the texts from the same time period to each other, as well as texts in the same language, but different time periods. If there is no remarkable difference between texts from the same time period, then this would point towards independent development. If there is a remarkable difference, we still cannot rule out independent development in the absence of a geographic pattern. It is thus beyond the scope of this study to determine definitively if it is diffusion. I will also compare the environments in which definite articles occur, either with a modified noun or following a preposition. I

will also look at the use of definite articles with possessive pronouns.

In the following chapters, I discuss demonstratives in Latin, and the development in Late Latin of the early definite article. I then look separately at French, Spanish, and Italian, briefly discussing in each section first the reinforcement of demonstratives, and then the development of the definite article, with especial attention to when each one started using definite articles with generic or abstract nouns. After these three chapters, I will discuss the results of my analysis and determine if the evidence points to the innovation of the definite article as noun marker as being due to independent development, or if diffusion is a possibility. Translations are mine, unless otherwise noted. Glosses are mine.

CHAPTER 2

LATIN

2.1 Demonstratives and Definite Articles

What exactly are definite articles, and how do they differ from demonstratives?

Definite articles and demonstratives are both part of a class of words known as determiners, so called because they make the noun phrase they modify more specific.

Other classes of words can be classified as determiners, but this can change from language to language, as it is a grammatical category, rather than a semantic one.

Regardless, demonstratives and definite articles are semantically related (Lyons 1977).

Demonstratives point out the noun in spatial terms, in relation to the speaker (Lyons 1977). This is known as *deixis*, which also includes temporal reference (Lyons 1995). English demonstratives are *this* and *that*, and the corresponding plural forms *these* and *those*. *This* indicates something near the speaker, while *that* indicates something further away (Lyons 1977). Other languages have different systems, including Latin, which I will discuss in more detail in 2.2 below. The actual use of demonstratives in individual languages can differ, but always includes spatial reference (Lyons 1977).

Definite articles are a bit more difficult to define. The concept of definiteness itself can be difficult to define, and not all languages have a grammatical or semantic category of definiteness (Lyons 1995). In general, definite articles refer to a noun previously mentioned, or specified in some other way. The idea behind a definite article is that both speaker and listener understand which noun specifically is being discussed, without specifying it in space (Penny 1991). Both the speaker and listener understanding what is being discussed is shared cognition (Maiden 1995), which I will discuss in more

detail in 5.2. As with demonstratives, the actual use of definite articles in individual languages can differ considerably.

How does a demonstrative become a definite article, then? This occurs through grammaticalization, and has been observed in many languages (Faingold 1993, Smith 2011). Among these languages are English and other Germanic languages, as well as the Romance languages (Lyons 1977). As mentioned above, they are both determiners, and so belong to the same larger class of words. They both specify nouns in some way, and both in a sense mark definiteness (Lyons 1977). Demonstratives, however, point out a noun in space. It is in this way that demonstratives make a noun definite. Definite articles lack spatial reference, however. They do not use or need deictic reference to mark a noun as definite (Lyons 1977). If a demonstrative expands its use to include more than just deictic reference, it would take on the role of a definite article. If it were then to eventually lose its deictic reference altogether, it would then become a definite article. As it expands to other uses, it would naturally be used more and more frequently, while the strictly deictic use could be reinforced, either with another word, or in some other way. This appears to be what happened in Late Latin.

2.2 Classical Latin

As stated above, Classical Latin did not have articles, definite or indefinite. It did, however, have a very rich system of determiners, sometimes all called demonstratives. In addition to the true demonstratives, proximal, medial, and distal, there were also demonstratives used for emphasis, identity, and anaphoric reference (Penny 1991). The masculine nominative form of these demonstratives are listed in the following table:

proximal	medial	distal	intensive	identity	anaphoric
hic	iste	ille	ipse	idem	is

Table 2: Latin demonstratives (Penny 1991)

The first three are true demonstratives, referring to space relative to the speaker. Proximal refers to nouns near the speaker, medial to nouns near the listener, and distal to nouns away from both speaker and listener (Penny 1991). The others are determiners, but do not have any spatial reference. The intensive demonstrative is used to emphasize the noun, the identity demonstrative has a meaning similar to *the same* in English, while the anaphoric demonstratives indicate that the noun has been or will shortly be mentioned in the conversation or text (Penny 1991). These latter were most often used as third person pronouns in Classical Latin, as third person pronouns often have the same type of reference. The identity demonstratives, formed by adding *-dem* to the anaphoric demonstratives, were also frequently used as pronouns. Other demonstratives could be used as third person pronouns to differentiate when necessary (Wheelock 1992).

1) Huic cōnsiliō palmam dō

This.dat.s counsel.dat palm branch.acc give.1s.pr

I give a palm branch to this counsel

Terence, cited in Wheelock 1992, p. 42

2) Nōn est locus istīs hominibus in hāc terrā

Not be.3s.pr place.nom that.dat.pl person.dat.pl in this.ab.f. land.ab

There is no place for those people in this land

Martial, cited in Wheelock 1992, p. 42

3) Virtūtem enim illīus virī amāmus

Valor.acc truly that.gen.s man.gen.s love.1pl.pr

Truly we love the valor of that man

Cicero, cited in Wheelock 1992, p. 42

4) Ipse signum suum et litterās suās

recognōvit

Himself seal.acc.s his own.acc.neu.s and letter.acc.pl his own.acc.f.s

recognize.3s.past

He himself recognized his seal and his letters

Cicero, cited in Wheelock 1992, p. 63

5) Omnēs idem sentiunt

All.nom.pl same.neu.s feel.3pl.pr

All men feel the same

Cicero, cited in Wheelock 1992, p. 51

6) Id solum est cārum mihi

3s.neu.nom alone.neu.acc be.3s.pr dear.neu.acc 1s.dat

It alone is dear to me

Terence, cited in Wheelock 1992, p. 51

2.3 Late Latin

Several changes occurred in the Late Latin period. These changes took time, naturally. Sylvia's *Peregrinatio ad Loca Santa*, written between 380 and 540, shows that demonstratives were still largely used as such, though the use of certain demonstratives had started to increase. There is still a wide variety of demonstratives used, as well. As mentioned above, demonstratives were also frequently used as third person pronouns, and

so to distinguish between these two uses, those demonstratives used in that capacity are in italics, as well as the corresponding word in English. The following examples are all from this text.

7) In *ea* ergo die et in *ea* hora, qua auertarent Persae
aquam

In 3.f.s.ab then day.s and in 3.f.s.ab hour.s that divert.3pl.past Persian.nom.pl
water.acc

On *the* day and *the* hour in which the Persians diverted the water

8) *Illa* autem aqua, quam persae auertarent

That.nom.f however water.nom which Persian.nom.pl divert.3pl.past

The water which the Persians diverted

9) *hii* fontes quos uide

This.m.pl.nom fount.pl.nom which see.2s.pr

The fountains which you see

10) Sedens i *eadem* spelunca, quae in *ipsa* ecclesia est

sitting in same.f.s cave.s that in self.f.s church.f.s be3s.pr

He sat in *the very* cave that is in *the* church

from Faingold 1993, p. 31, translations in original

In the above passages, there are five different demonstratives used. Faingold calls *ea* (see 1 above) and a similar form *eo* innovations (Faingold 1993). They are in fact ablative forms of *is* (Wheelock 1992). Their use in this text may very well be an innovation, of course. Please note that in some cases the case of the noun was difficult to determine, and in this case has not been given in the gloss.

Forms of *hic* are used with some frequency in Sylvia's text, though they are the least used of the demonstratives in this text (Faingold 1993), and later fall out of use entirely. Their use as proximal demonstratives was replaced by *iste*. Those Romance languages that kept the three-way distinction, such as Spanish, generally used *ipse* for the medial demonstrative (Penny 1991).

Not only was *hic* lost, but anaphoric *is* was replaced by *ille* (Penny 1991). As (11) and (12) below show, by the seventh and eight centuries, *ille* had expanded its use to the point of being a functional definite article in most dialects. As it was also the default third person pronoun, it was reinforced when used as a demonstrative (Penny 1991). As each language reinforced the demonstratives in their own way, this will be discussed under each language individually.

The definite article derived from both the nominative and accusative forms of the Latin demonstratives. As the three languages to be studied all derived their definite article from *ille*, and as *iste* has the same declension, the following table shows the nominative and accusative forms of *ille*:

	Singular			Plural		
	Masculine	Feminine	Neuter	Masculine	Feminine	Neuter
Nominative	ille	illa	illud	illi	illae	illa
Accusative	illum	illam	illud	illōs	illās	illa

Table 3: Declension of *ille* in nominative and accusative cases (Wheelock 1992)

Ipsa only differs in the neuter singular, which is *ipsum* (Wheelock 1992).

An inscription said to be from the seventh century shows the further development of Latin demonstratives. The following is taken from this inscription. Words in parentheses

are reconstructed, as the edges of the rock have broken away

11) vt ipsos mancipios jn jvra iemento (peter)e debeas ut tibi fraudem non fa
(cian)t illas cupas collige calas

and self.m.pl servant.m.pl in oath ask must.2s.pr and 2s.dat fraud no do.3pl
that.f.pl cask.pl collect stored

and that you should take an oath of the servants so that they do not deceive
you. Collect the barrels which are stored.

from Pountain 2000, p. 14, translation in original

In the above passage, only forms of *ipse* and *ille* are used. In fact, these are the only demonstratives used in the entire inscription. Pountain 2000 notes that these demonstratives are used more frequently than in more literary texts, and that they seem to be used with “the anaphoric or the defining function of the Romance definite article” (Pountain 2000, 17).

In the following passage from the eighth century, only forms of *ille* are used, and its use has expanded beyond that found in (11). Its use is so frequent as to be a functional definite article, rather than a demonstrative.

12) et illas cappas et illos sarciles, et illa calceamenta de illos teloneos superius nominatos

and that.f.pl cape.pl and that.m.pl cloth.pl and that.f.s footwear of that.m.pl
tollhouses above named

and the capes and the pieces of cloth, and the footwear from the toll-houses mentioned
above

from Chrodegangus' De Vestimenta Clericorum, cited in Faingold 1993, p. 33,

translation in original

While (11) and (12) show that the use of *ille* has definitely expanded from (7-10), it is not used with every noun, as shown in (13) below

13) *illa* media pars cleri qui seniores fuerint annis singulis accipiant cappas novas

that.f.s middle part clergy who elders be3.pl.sub year.pl single receive.3pl

cape.pl new.pl

Let *the* middle part of the clergy who are the elders receive the new cloaks

every year

from Chrodegangus' *De Vestimenta Clericorum*, cited in Faingold 1993, p. 34

translation in original

Most modern Romance languages derive their definite articles from *ille*, as the above passages show. But not all of them did. As (11) shows, both *ipse* and *ille* were used, and a few Romance languages derived their definite articles from *ipse*. These forms were found in early Southern Italian dialects, Sardinian, and medieval Catalan (Rudder 2012), though now they are only found in Sardinian and the Balearic and Costa Brava dialects of Catalan (Plank 1984).

Another difference between Classical Latin and the modern Romance languages is the case system. Classical Latin had five productive cases: nominative, accusative, genitive, dative, and ablative (Wheelock 1992). As Classical Latin developed into later Vulgar Latin, certain phonetic changes caused a loss of distinction in the case system. Specifically, the loss of final *-m* and the loss of distinction between long and short vowels often caused what had been three distinct forms of a word to merge into one single pronunciation. At the same time, there was a growing tendency in Vulgar Latin to

use prepositions to indicate grammatical function (Price 1971). This removed the need for the case system, while the phonetic changes removed the case distinctions. Not all Romance languages lost case entirely. Old French had two cases, nominative and oblique, but this distinction was only found in masculine nouns (Price 1971). The only modern Romance language to retain case is Romanian, which has two productive cases, nominative/accusative and dative/genitive, and a third case, the vocative, only used with some nouns (Mallinson 1990).

CHAPTER 3

FRENCH

Old French is often divided into two periods, early and late. The early period covers from the middle of the ninth century to the end of the eleventh. There are few texts from this time period. Later Old French covers the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, as French started to become a literary language, while Middle French covers the fourteenth, fifteenth, and sixteenth. These limits are somewhat arbitrary, of course, and certainly do not represent firm boundaries (Pope, 1934).

3.1 French Demonstratives

Demonstratives in French derived from Latin demonstratives. As already stated, by Late Latin, the demonstrative *ille* was already losing its value as a demonstrative. To reinforce its demonstrative use in Northern Gaul, it was common to use another word with both *ille* and *iste*. This was in fact the pattern throughout the Latin-speaking world, though each emerging language chose its own deictic particle. In Northern Gaul, this particle was *ecce*, meaning lo! or behold! (Price 1971). In Old French, this had given rise to new demonstratives, as shown in the table below.

	Singular		Plural	
	Masculine	Feminine	Masculine	Feminine
Proximal Nom.	cist	ceste	cist	cestes
Oblique	cest		cez	
Distal Nom.	cil	cele	cil	celes
Oblique	cel		cels	

Table 4: Demonstratives in Old French (Price 1971)

As Old French retained nominative case for masculine nouns, there was a separate demonstrative for nominative case, but it was the same form for both singular and plural, as seen in the above table. By the twelfth century, *cez* had replaced the other plural forms. This change brought it into line with other determiners, such as *les*, *mes*, *tes*, and *ses*, which do not distinguish gender in the plural, and was probably due to analogy with them. It also led to a loss of proximal-distal distinction in the plural, however (Price 1971).

One feature of the late Old French period was a loss of final consonants when the following word began with a consonant, as well as loss of pre-consonantal “s” in the same word (Pope 1934). This can still be seen in some French numbers today, for example *j’en ai huit* and *huit heures*, where the “t” is pronounced, and *huit jours*, where it is not. The loss of plural –s in these positions, which was complete by Middle French, may have hastened the end of the two-case system in Old French, though it seems to have been falling apart even earlier. This change in pronunciation also affected the masculine demonstratives, giving *ce* when the following word began with a consonant, from both *cest* and *cel*. The only time a proximal-distal distinction could be maintained was in feminine singular nouns and masculine singular nouns beginning with a vowel. It did not take long before it was lost entirely (Price 1971).

Starting in the fourteenth century, the demonstratives were reinforced by either *-ci* or *-là*, meaning “here” and “there” respectively. The writings of Froissart, a chronicler from the fourteenth century, include the following:

14) “*cel endroit chi*”

that place here

“this place”

Froissart, cited in Price 1971, p. 126

Note that *-chi*, the Picard form of *-ci*, is used with distal *cel*. Already the demonstratives have lost a deictic distinction, and each dialect was choosing one form over the other as its demonstrative determiner. In Parisian French, and so Modern Standard French, *cest* remained (Price 1971).

3.2 French Definite Articles

As stated above, Old French had two cases, and this was reflected in their articles, as well as their demonstratives. The Old French articles appear in the following table. The one main distinction from Modern French is the masculine nominative article *li*, used for both singular and plural (Price 1971). The oblique articles appear to derive from the accusative forms of *ille*, while the nominative form likely derives from the nominative masculine plural form, *illi*.

	Singular		Plural	
	Masculine	Feminine	Masculine	Feminine
Nominative	li	la	li	les
Oblique	le		les	

Table 5: Definite articles in Old French by case, number, and gender (Price 1971)

The nominative-oblique distinction is only found in masculine nouns in Old French.

There were three general classes of masculine nouns. With all three classes, the oblique plural ended in *-s*. The first class included those nouns that marked the nominative singular with final *-s*. The second included nouns that, while marking the oblique plural with final *-s*, used the same form for the other three. The third class included nouns

which had a unique nominative singular, while the oblique singular was still the same as the nominative plural. By analogy, many nominative singular nouns from the second and third classes were also written with final –s. A few nouns ending in -s or -z were invariable (Price 1971).

In Old French, articles were used only to specify a particular individual person or item. They were very often not used with geographic names or specific groups, as these were already definite enough. The following examples from the *Chanson de Roland* show this.

15) Passet Girunde

pass.3s Girunde

“He crosses the Gironde” (a river)

cited in Price 1971, p. 116, translation in original

16) Franceis murrunt e France en ert hunie

French die.Fut.3pl. and France of-it be.Fut.3s shamed

“The French will die and France will be shamed”

cited in Price 1971, p. 116, translation in original

Similar to Vulgar Latin, which never used the demonstrative/article with abstract nouns, Old French also did not use the definite article with abstract nouns, unless they were individualized, or tied to a specific person (von Wartburg, 1934).

17) “avoec se mesla jalousie,

with ref.3 mix.3s.Past jealousy

desesperanche et derverie”

despair and ?

“With (which) was mixed jealousy, despair, and ?”

- Feuillé, cited in von Wartburg 1934, p. 32

Notice the lack of articles with the abstract nouns *jalousie* (jealousy), *desesperanche* (despair) and *derverie* (meaning uncertain). Compare to the following passage, also from Old French:

18) “la grant pesance de son cuer

the great weight of 3s.poss heart

ne la dolor ne la grant peine”

neither the pain nor the great grief

“The great weight of his/her heart, neither the pain nor the grief”

- Vair Palefroi, cited in von Wartburg 1934, p. 32

In the above passage, the articles are used, because these belong to *son cuer* (his or her heart). By very late Old French, the use of definite articles had already started to generalize. Abstract nouns resisted this generalization the longest, until about the end of Middle French. As late as the seventeenth century, it was possible to find abstract nouns used without an article (Price 1971).

19) “Avarice est cause de beaucoup de maux”

Avarice be.3s cause of many of evils

“Avarice is the cause of many ills.”

Nicolas de Troyes, 16th century, cited in Price 1971, p. 117

20) “Pensée est la grandeur de l’homme.”

Thought be.3s the.f.s grandeur of the.m.s man

“Thought is the grandeur of man.”

Partitive articles and indefinite articles also show a similar pattern in Old French. In earlier Old French, partitive articles are not used. The preposition *de* is used with nouns that are objects of verbs referring to eating and drinking. *De* plus the definite article was only used when a particular quantity is meant.

21) “But del vin k’il a el champ trové”

Drink.3s.Past of-the.m.s wine that he has in-the.m.s field found

“He drank some of the wine he found in the field”

Chanson de Guillaume, cited in Price 1971, p. 118, translation in original

By the sixteenth century, the partitive article had followed the pattern of the definite article. By late Middle French, definite articles had generalized to become mere “markers” of the noun (Price 1971).

3.3 Definite Articles with Prepositions and Possessives

As seen in (21) above, certain prepositions contracted with the definite article. These prepositions are *à*, *de*, and *en*. They contracted with the masculine singular and plural articles to give *al*, *as*, *del*, *des*, *el*, and *es* respectively (Price 1971). Later phonetic changes involving /l/ before a consonant gave for the singular in Late Old French *au*, *dou* (now *du*), and *ou* respectively (Price 1971, Huchon 2002). During the early Modern French period, *ou* merged with *au*. The plural form *as* changed to *aux*, an analogy based on the singular *au*, while *es* is only used in a few fixed academic phrases, such as *docteur-ès-lettres* (Price 1971). As stated above, the definite article contracted with *de* gives the partitive article. The plural partitive article *des* also functions as a plural indefinite article (Price 1971).

Possessives in French had two forms, a stressed form and an unstressed form. In Old French, the stressed forms were, in the masculine oblique singular, *mien*, *tuen*, *suen*, *nostre*, *vostre*, and *lor* or *lour* (Huchon 2002, Price 1971). The first three had special feminine forms, but these did not survive Old French. By Middle French, the feminine forms were simply the masculine forms with the feminine marker -e. Not only that, but *tuen* and *suen* became *tien* and *sien* as early as the Late Old French period, an analogy based on *mien* (Price 1971). When used alone, these are true pronouns, not determiners, and are accompanied by the definite article. In Old and Middle French, they could function as adjectives as well, and could be accompanied by a determiner, for example, *un mien ami*, meaning “a friend of mine” (Price 1971). It was also possible to use the definite article with the stressed form, i.e. *le mien ami* (Huchon 2002). These forms could be found as late as the nineteenth century in literature, but were considered archaisms (Price 1971). The unstressed forms have always been used as determiners, and have never combined with other determiners (Huchon 2002, Price 1971).

CHAPTER 4

SPANISH

4.1 Spanish Demonstratives

Spanish retained the three-way deictic contrast of Latin, with proximal, medial, and distal demonstratives. As stated earlier, the old Latin proximal demonstrative *hic* was lost, and replaced with the old medial demonstrative *iste*. In Old Castilian, and other Iberian dialects, the former emphatic demonstrative *ipse* then filled the role of the medial demonstrative (Penny 1991). The distal demonstrative *ille* had of course expanded its use and become a definite article. In order to distinguish the demonstrative use from its new use, *ille* was reinforced with *accu*, a deictic particle similar in meaning to other particles used in other areas, such as *ecce*, *atque*, and *eccu*. In the medieval period, *accu* can be used with the other demonstratives, but is always used with *ille* (Penny 1991). The forms found in early Castilian are given in the following table:

	Proximal	Medial	Distal
Masc singular	est(e) <i>or</i> aquest(e)	es(se) <i>or</i> aques(se)	aquel
Masc plural	estos <i>or</i> aquestos	essos <i>or</i> aquessos	aquellos
Fem singular	esta <i>or</i> aquesta	essa <i>or</i> aquessa	aquella
Fem plural	estas <i>or</i> aquestas	essas <i>or</i> aquessas	aquellas
Neuter (pronoun only)	esto <i>or</i> aquesto	esso <i>or</i> aquesso	aquello

Table 6: Demonstratives in Old Castilian (Penny 1991)

In the thirteenth century, final -e frequently deletes, hence the alternate forms in the masculine singular. By the end of the thirteenth century, the forms with -e become dominant, and the forms without -e soon disappear entirely (Penny 1991).

In the Medieval period, the long and short forms were both used, as in the following passages from the *Poema de Mio Cid*, from the early thirteenth century

22) Con aquestas mys duenas de quien so yo seruida

With these my ladies of who am I served

Together with these my ladies by whom I am served

23) Que aun con mis manos case estas mis fijas

That still with my hands marry.1s.subj these my daughters

That I may still marry off these my daughters with my own hands

from Pountain 2000, p. 60, translation in original

The above passages are from a poem, and so possibly the longer or shorter forms were used as needed to obtain the right number of syllables per line. Both lines do have fourteen syllables, and this is done through the choice of the longer or shorter form.

The longer forms were used as late as the mid-sixteenth century, as shown in the following passage from the play *Eufemia*, by Lope de Rueda

24) ¿Qué parte eres tú para pedirme aquesso, cortabolsas?

What part are you for to-ask-me that, cuts-purses

What business is it of yours to ask me that, you cutpurse?

from Pountain 2000, p. 147, translation in original

In Modern Spanish, the longer forms of the proximal and medial demonstratives are no longer used, and the medial forms only have one -s- due to orthographic changes (Penny 1991).

4.2 Spanish Definite Articles

As with French, the definite article in Spanish developed from *ille*. While there is

definitely agreement as to the origins of the plural forms of the definite article, there seems to be some debate as to the origin of the singular forms. The plural forms developed from the accusative, and some claim the singular forms did as well, while others claim they developed from the nominative (Penny 1991, Pharies 2007). Penny (1991) admits that the expected masculine singular form derived from the accusative, *elo*, never occurs. The following is from a land transaction involving the Abbot of San Millan in the twelfth century

25) ke nos aiudes fer el portal del palacio
 that us help.2s.pr make the portal of-the palace
 that you help us make the portal of the palace

from Faingold 1993, p. 35

From early on, the masculine singular form is *el*, the form that would be expected from nominative *ille*. The feminine singular would be the same whether it derived from nominative *illa* or accusative *illam*.

The -ll- of *ille* reduced to -l-, though *el* was often written *ell* before a word beginning with a stressed vowel (Penny 1991). Third subject pronouns also derive from *ille*, but, because these were stressed, they did not undergo any phonetic reduction (Pharies 2007). The following table shows the forms in pre-literary Castilian:

Masculine singular	Feminine singular	Masculine plural	Feminine plural
el or ell	ela or el or ell	elos	elas

Table 7: Definite articles in Old Castilian (Penny 1991, Pharies 2007)

The feminine singular lost the final -a when the following word began with a vowel (Plank 1984, Pharies 2007). Because definite articles are unstressed, the initial e- was lost

early on in forms with another vowel (Penny 1991). This led to the feminine definite article having two very different forms, *la* and *el* (Plank 1984, Penny 1991, Pharies 2007). The latter of course corresponds to the masculine article, but historically is an allomorph of the feminine article (Pharies 2007). It was originally used before all words beginning with a vowel, as seen in (26) and (27) below, but after the sixteenth century had become restricted to words beginning with a stressed /a/ (Penny 1991, Pharies 2007). In Modern Spanish, feminine *el* is used only before nouns, and not adjectives, beginning with a stressed /a/, see (29) and (30) (Plank 1984).

(26) *saco el pie del estribera*

take.3s.past the foot of-the stirrup

(He) took his foot from the stirrup

(27) *que es del otra part*

that is of-the other side

that is on the other side

from *Poema de Mio Cid*, cited in Pharies 2007, p. 117

Some dialects, however, used *la* with every feminine noun, as shown in the following passage, written in the mid thirteenth century:

(28) *La alma he perdida, el cuerpo despreciado*

The soul have.1s.pr lost, the body despised

I have lost my soul and despised my body

from Berceo's *Los Milagros de Nuestra Señora*, cited in Pountain 2000, p. 66

translation in original

This was written in the dialect of La Rioja, which differed in many respects from other

Castilian dialects (Pountain 2000). The use of *la* with all feminine nouns may be one difference. The later restrictions on the use of *el* with feminine nouns may be due to dialect mixing and leveling as Castilian spread further south during the Reconquista.

As stated above, *el* is no longer used in front of feminine adjectives, and only with feminine nouns beginning with stressed /a/. This is seen in the following examples:

29) *la alta voz y la áspera manera de las muchachas de la alta sierra*
the high voice and the coarse manner of the girls from the high
mountains

The high voice and coarse manner of the girls from the mountains

30) *el agua*
the water
water

from Plank 1984, p. 338

Spanish also developed a neuter article *lo*, used only in the singular, which developed from the Latin neuter form *illud* (Pharies 2007). In Spanish, it is used to make abstract nouns from adjectives, i.e. *lo importante*, meaning “the important thing” or “what’s important” (Rudder 2012)

Old Castilian did not use definite articles with generic, abstract, or collective nouns, nor was it used with geographic place names, like rivers. By the sixteenth century, definite articles were used much as they are today (Penny 1991).

4.3 Definite Articles with Prepositions and Possessives

Just as in French, certain prepositions contract with certain definite articles. The prepositions *de* and *a* only contract with *el*, giving *del* and *al* respectively. This is true of

Modern Spanish, and was generally true of Old Castilian, though some dialects, such as that of La Rioja, seem to have allowed other contractions, as in (31) below

(31) firmemientre lo creo, enna su mercet fio

firmly it believe. 1s.pr., in-the his/her mercy trust. 1s.pr

Firmly I believe, in her mercy I trust

from Berceo's *Los Milagros de Nuestra Señora*, cited in Pountain 2000, p. 66

translation in original

The word *enna* is a contraction of *en* and *la*, not found in most other Castilian dialects, and not in Modern Spanish.

The above passage also shows another feature of Old Castilian that has not survived into Modern Spanish – the use of definite articles with possessives, and this was not limited to La Rioja, as (32) below demonstrates

(32) Ya doña Ximena la mi mugier tan complida

Oh lady Ximena the my wife so excellent

“Oh Doña Jimena, my most excellent wife”

from *Poema de Mio Cid*, cited in Pountain 2000, p. 60, translation in original

As seen in (22) and (23) above, it was also possible to use demonstratives with possessives. As with the use of the longer versions of *este* and *esse*, sometimes the use of definite articles with possessives in poetry was dependent on metrical concerns (Pountain 2000).

In addition to the short possessive forms, *mi*, *tu*, and *su*, and their corresponding plural forms, Spanish also developed longer forms, *mío*, *tuyo*, and *suyo*, along with corresponding feminine and plural forms, that were used as pronouns, or as adjectives

following the noun. The first and second person plural possessives were the same in either position. The forms *su* and *suyo* covered third person singular and plural (Penny 1991). When used alone, they typically require the definite article. By the late Old Castilian period, the use of the definite article with the short forms was lost, so that by the beginning of the sixteenth century the construction was very rare (Penny 1991). The longer forms could be used with a definite article or other determiner as in (33) below, though the construction is very rare in Modern Spanish

(33) el cuero suyo escurece la nieve

the skin 3.poss.m darkens the snow

“Her skin darkens the snow”

from Rojas's *La Celestina*, cited in Lacarra 1995, p. 15

CHAPTER 5

ITALIAN

Latin developed into many different dialects in Italy, some of which can easily be considered separate languages today, such as Neapolitan, Sicilian, or Milanese (Grandgent 1927, Rudder 2012). Modern Standard Italian developed from the literary Italian of the Renaissance, which was largely based on the Tuscan dialect, with some influence from other dialects (Migliorini 1960/1966). In the following sections, therefore, I mostly trace the development of demonstratives and definite articles in Tuscan, with some discussion of other dialects.

5.1 Italian Demonstratives

Southern and central Italian dialects continued the three-way distinction of Latin demonstratives, while northern dialects followed the French pattern of reducing the system to two. The particle *ecco*, derived itself from Latin *ecce*, meaning “behold”, was used to reinforce the demonstratives, and was usually used with all demonstratives. Following the pattern in Iberia, the more southerly dialects replaced Latin *hic* with *iste*, and *ipse* moved into its place. In Tuscany, while the three-way contrast also prevailed, the medial demonstrative was derived differently. The Tuscan demonstratives are therefore

	Proximal	Medial	Distal
Masculine singular	questo	codesto	quel <i>or</i> quello
Feminine singular	questa	codesta	quella
Masculine plural	questi	codesti	quei <i>or</i> quegli
Feminine plural	queste	codeste	quelle

Table 8: Demonstratives in Tuscan dialect, and Standard Italian (Grandgent 1927, Maiden 1995)

The medial demonstrative was derived by placing the second person pronoun *te* in front of *iste*. The particle *ecco* was placed in front of that, giving *cotesto* or *codesto*, as seen in the above table. In the modern language, the medial demonstrative has fallen out of use, and is considered archaic (Maiden 1995). A form of the proximal demonstrative that was not reinforced used to exist (*sto, sta, etc.*), and is still used in set phrases such as *stanotte* and *stasera*, meaning tonight and this evening (Grandgent 1927). See 5.2 for the differences in the distal masculine forms. Also note that the singular forms derive from the accusative, while the plural forms derive from the nominative, the opposite of Spanish.

The above forms have remained unchanged since at least the thirteenth century, as seen in (34) and (35) below, both from a thirteenth century poem.

(34) Di questo mar

Of this.m.s sea

“of this sea”

Latini 1260's/1951, p. 99

(35) quel paese ismagiato

that.m.s country enchanted

“that enchanted country”

Latini 1260's/1951, p. 104

5.2 Italian Definite Articles

According to Grandgent (1927), the modern definite articles in Italian developed from early *ello, ella, elli, and elle*, attested mostly after certain prepositions. As the definite articles were unstressed, the initial vowel fell off, giving *lo, la, li, and le*. Before

a vowel, they could all reduce to *l'*. In the central dialects, including Tuscan, a second set of masculine articles developed from *ello* and *elli*. Some used *el* for the singular and *ei* for the plural; in Tuscan, it was *il* and *i*. As the distal demonstratives were reinforced forms of the definite article, multiple forms also developed in the masculine singular and plural. The forms of the definite article in Tuscan were thus

Masculine singular	Feminine singular	Masculine plural	Feminine plural
il <i>or</i> lo	la	i <i>or</i> gli <i>or</i> li	le

Table 9: Definite articles in 13th century Tuscan dialect (Grandgent 1927, Maiden 1995)

These are the forms in Modern Standard Italian, except for *li*, which dropped out altogether by the nineteenth century (Migliorini 1960/1966, Maiden 1995). The form *gli* developed from *li* in front of a vowel, and is pronounced /ʎ/. It is now the plural form of *lo*, and can be used in front of a consonant, where it is pronounced /ʎi/ (Maiden 1995). Originally, *il* and *i* were only used after a word ending in a vowel, and before a word beginning with a consonant. Even then, they were not used before words beginning with sC (Grandgent 1927, Maiden 1995). They were not syllabic (Grandgent 1927), and even in the modern language *il* is frequently pronounced *l'* following a vowel (Maiden 1995). Undoubtedly one form would be chosen over the other for that purpose in poetry, as with Spanish demonstratives.

As early as the late thirteenth century, the use of *il* and *i* spread. They came to be used at the beginning of a sentence, where they had never been used before. They even started to be used with words beginning in sC, though that did not last long (Migliorini 1960/1966). The following examples are from Latini's mid-thirteenth century work *Il Tesoretto*, and show the masculine articles in use at the time.

(36) in tutti li animali

in all.m.pl the.m.pl animal.pl

in all the animals

(37) lo freddo per calore, e 'l secco per l'omore

the.m.s cold for heat, and the.m.s dry for the.m.s wet

the cold for heat, and the dry for wet

Latini 1260's/1951, p. 88-9

The above show that *li* was the preferred masculine plural, at least in front of a vowel, while *lo* was preferred in front of a consonant. The form *il*, reduced to *'l*, is used after a vowel, and before a consonant. In front of a vowel, *lo* reduces to *l'*. The following is from less than twenty years later, in 1277

(38) Il marito è morto

The.m.s husband be.3s.pr dead.m.s

The husband is dead

from Castellani's *Nuovi testi*, cited in Miglorini 1960/1966, p. 104

Here we see the form *il* at the beginning of a clause, where it had not occurred in the earlier work. The modern rule is that *lo* and *gli* are used with masculine nouns beginning with a vowel and sC, /ʃ/ (derived from earlier /stʃ/), /ts/ and /dz/ (both spelled z), /ɲ/ (spelled gn), as well as a few other rare words borrowed from Greek or English (Maiden 1995). The forms *il* and *i* are used elsewhere. In the spoken language, *lo* is used most frequently in front of vowels, where it reduces to *l'*, and sC, while *gli* is generally used in the same environments.

There are phonetic reasons for *lo* being used with words beginning with sC. These words used to epenthesize /i/ at the beginning when the preceding word ended in a consonant (Maiden 1995). A similar process occurred in other Romance languages, like French and Spanish which epenthesized /e/, but in these languages it was not dependent on the phonetic environment (Penny 1991, Pope 1934). In the modern language, the /i/ only epenthesizes following a preposition or some other word that ends in a consonant, and even then is largely restricted to the written language. Using *lo* rather than *il* with these words means there is no need for epenthesis. Similarly, the masculine indefinite article, normally *un*, becomes *uno* before a word beginning with sC (Maiden 1995). While from a phonetic standpoint, *i* could easily be used with words beginning in sC, and indeed it has been used in this environment in the past, it is regarded as the plural form of *lo*, and therefore used where it is (Migliorini 1960/1966).

In medieval Italian, the purpose of the definite article was to pick out one entity from a set, and so was not usually used with nouns that referred to unique entities and abstract or generic nouns. Certain fixed expressions reflect this earlier stage of use (Maiden 1995). By the late medieval period, this had already started to change, as seen in (39) below

(39) e il sol montava
and the.m.s sun rise.3s.imp
and the sun rose

Dante, cited in Maiden 1995, p. 118

Even at this early date, we see a unique noun with a definite article. Abstract nouns, as in French, resisted the use of the definite article quite a bit longer, as seen in Bembo's *Gli*

Asolani from the first decade of the sixteenth century

(40) due lodando Amore

two praise.pr.part love

two praising love

Bembo 1505/1808, p. 15

According to Maiden (1995), the concept of “shared cognition”, present in demonstratives as well as the definite article, came to dominate their use, until every noun that was “part of the common universe of experience of interlocutors” requires a definite article, other than personal names (p. 120). It is very possible similar processes occurred in other Romance languages.

5.3 Definite Articles with Prepositions and Possessives

As in French and Spanish, many prepositions in Italian contract with a following definite article. In Italian, however, it is not just two or three prepositions, and not just with certain definite articles. It is so common in Italian, that Migliorini (1960/1966) gave the construction a name, the “articulated preposition”. The prepositions that regularly contract are *di*, *da*, *a*, *in*, *con*, and *su* (Maiden 1995, Migliorini 1960/1966). It is in fact from some of these articulated prepositions that we see the early forms of the definite article. The preposition *in* gives the forms *nel*, *nello*, *nella*, etc., and in early records is sometimes written *in ello* (Grandgent 1927, Migliorini 1960/1966). The preposition *di* gives *del*, *dello*, *della*, etc. The other prepositions attach to the articles which take the form of *-l*, *-llo*, *-lla*, *-i*, *-gli*, and *-lle*. The preposition *con* loses its final *-n* before attaching, though it does not always contract in the modern language. Formerly, the preposition *per* also contracted with the definite article, but in the modern language this is

no longer the case, and has commonly been avoided in writing for centuries. Historically, a final -i following a vowel was often replaced in writing by an apostrophe (Migliorini 1960/1966), as, for example, in the well-known family name of de' Medici.

As in French, the preposition *di* when contracted with a definite article can be a partitive article, though this use is mainly found in northern dialects of Italian. Elsewhere, the bare noun is preferred for partitive and indefinite plural use. It appears to be a fairly recent development in Italian, though traces appeared as early as the thirteenth century (Maiden 1995).

Many early Italian dialects, including Tuscan, developed two forms of possessives, just as French and Spanish, with one exception. The short forms, which only existed for the singular possessives, attached to the end of the noun as clitics, while the long forms most often preceded the noun, and are also used as pronouns (Grandgent 1927, Migliorini 1960/1966). The long forms appear quite early on, as the phrase *la sua sancta misericordia* is found in an Umbrian manuscript from the eleventh century (Migliorini 1960/1966, p.65). They could be used with other determiners, in addition to the definite article. This use has become required with most nouns, while the clitics have fallen out of use, not appearing in writing after the sixteenth century (Grandgent 1927, Migliorini 1960/1966).

CHAPTER 6

ANALYSIS

6.1 Texts Analyzed

I analyzed six texts, three from the late thirteenth century, and three from about 1500, one each in French, Spanish, and Italian. The early French text is the second part of the *Roman de la Rose*, written in the 1270's by Jean de Meun. This was a continuation of a poem written several years earlier by Guillaume de Lorris (Morton 2015). As with most works from that time period, it is a poem, a very long poem. It discusses themes of love, among other topics. The lines are about eight syllables each.

The early Spanish text is also a poem, written no earlier than 1250 by an unknown writer, almost certainly a monk from the monastery San Pedro de Arlanza. It is called the *Poema de Fernán González*, and is an epic poem detailing the history of Spain from the Gothic invasions to the Moorish invasion and the later beginnings of the Reconquista, especially the feats of the Castilian count Fernán González. It is not very historically accurate, but that does not matter for my purposes here. This poem has seven syllables to a half line, so fourteen syllables to a line (Llorach 1982). The poem is also divided into strophes of four lines each.

The early Italian text is again a poem, or rather over two hundred sonnets, all connected as one work. It is called *Il Fiore*, and was inspired by the first part of the *Roman de la Rose* (*fiore* is Italian for flower). It also discusses themes of love. It was written in the 1280's, and has been attributed to Dante, though this is not universally accepted (Petronio 1951). The lines in this poem have about eleven syllables each.

From about 1500, the French work I chose to analyze is *Les Épitres de l'Amant*

Vert by Jean Lemaire de Belges. This work consists of two poems written to Margaret of Austria, wife of Philibert of Savoy and the author's patron, in about 1505. They were love poems written from the perspective of her parrot, whence the title which translates to Letters from the Green Lover (Frappier 1948). The lines in this poem have ten syllables each.

The later Spanish work is *La Celestina* by Fernando de Rojas. This is a play written in 1499. It is about a man who is so desperate to win a woman's affections that he goes to see a witch. It is described as a tragicomedy, and has elements of a parody (Lacarra 1995).

The later Italian work is *Gli Asolani* by Pietro Bembo of Venice. It was first published in 1505, and revised by the author himself about 1525, and was republished in 1530. Even though the author was Venetian, he wrote in Tuscan, and was very influential in the spread of Tuscan as a standard form for written Italian (Gottfried 1954). It is a work of prose that features six young people talking about love.

The above works are of various lengths, with *Les Épitres de l'Amant Vert* being the shortest, at about a thousand lines. I therefore analyzed approximately a thousand lines from the poetic works, and approximately five thousand words from the other two.

6.2 Methodology

In order to determine if diffusion might be the source of this change in use of the definite article, I took texts from two different time periods. The first time period is the late thirteenth century. This was the earliest I could find longer works in Italian, as most literature written in Italy before this time was in French or Occitan (Migliorini 1960/1966). The second time period was about 1500. These works were all written over

two hundred years later than the earlier works, and were therefore likely show some change in the use of definite articles. The specific works were chosen due to ease of access. They were either in the ASU Library, or available from an electronic source.

As stated in 1.3, the purpose of this study was to determine if the current use of the definite article in modern Romance languages might be due to diffusion. If the percentages for the total number of nouns with a definite article are similar in each time period, it is safe to say it is due to independent development through grammaticalization, and not diffusion. If, however, one language is noticeably higher in one of the time periods, especially the late thirteenth century, diffusion is at least possible.

I counted every noun with a definite article, and every bare noun, without any article or other determiner. Certain other words, especially quantifiers, normally preclude the use of articles as well, and so these were not counted. This includes nouns modified by numbers. Occasionally, a noun modified by a quantifier was used with a definite article, especially in Bembo's work. These were counted, otherwise, they were not.

Sometimes, definite articles were used in phrases that were more pronominal than nominal. For example, *l'uon* was used in *Il Fiore* as an indefinite pronoun, like “one” in English or *on* in French. In other cases, it was used with long form possessives as pronouns, or with “one” and “other” to refer to some vague or even unknown referent. In these cases, I did not count the words used with a definite article.

I photocopied pages from the texts or printed them from an electronic source, and then marked the nouns used with a definite article in green, and those used without any article or other word that would have blocked the use of an article in pink. I then counted the number of nouns on each page, and added them together for the total number in each

work. I then divided the number of nouns with a definite article by the total number of nouns, both those with a definite article and those that were bare, to find the percentage for each work.

It is important to note that the number of bare nouns does include indefinite nouns, or nouns that today would use a partitive article, not a definite article. Normally in such studies, the number of actual constructions involving a certain usage is compared to the total number of constructions where said usage would be possible. In this study, the total does include nouns which would not take a definite article in the modern language. This is due to the difficulty of determining when a noun is being used in a definite sense, or an indefinite sense, especially in languages I am not completely familiar with. I decided it was better to use the same method of comparison across all three languages than to use a method which could only be imperfectly applied to some.

This is also the reason why the study focuses on all nouns, rather than the collective and abstract nouns discussed in the introduction. Determining whether a noun is collective or not, or even abstract or not, involves judgments I did not feel I was qualified to make, especially in Italian, where I often had to use a dictionary just to determine if a word was a noun or not. So again, to apply the same method to all three languages, I counted all nouns, rather than risk misidentifying nouns. If the percentage of nouns with a definite article increases significantly, it is safe to assume that more types of nouns are taking definite articles, even if indefinite nouns are included in the total.

I did not take the partitive article into consideration, either, as only the later French text showed any use at all of a partitive article, and even then only sporadically. As the partitive article developed through an increased use of the definite article (Price

1971), I counted the few uses in that text as definite articles.

I did not count proper nouns, such as names of people or places. While names of places may be accompanied by a definite article, especially in the modern language, it is not a hard and fast rule in all three, and I decided it would be best to not include them. The various words for “God” were also not included where they obviously referred to the Christian God as an individual, rather than a concept.

I also counted uses of nouns with a preposition and nouns modified by an adjective, prepositional phrase, or relative clause. The purpose for these counts was to determine the effect, if any, of these constructions on the use of a definite article. Some nouns did of course occur in a prepositional phrase modified in some way, so there is some overlap between the two totals.

Not counted in any of the above categories are nouns used with possessives. I counted nouns used with possessives and definite article, and those used without. If some other article or determiner was used, the noun was not counted. As with the other nouns, the total was written on each page and then added up to obtain the total for each work. I then divided the total with a definite article by the complete total to obtain the percentages. These nouns were not counted as part of the above nouns as the rules governing the use of articles with possessives differs greatly from language to language, and I wanted to compare them specifically cross-linguistically and over time.

The part of the later Spanish work that I analyzed contained a long list of nouns, which I removed from the final count. This list alone, which was less than a single page, contained over one hundred nouns, or more than a tenth of the total. Nearly all of them were bare nouns. This list is not typical of the work as a whole, nor of the language as a

whole. The original numbers as well as the revised numbers are given below. The later French work also contained a shorter list of nouns, which I also removed from the final count, for similar reasons. Again, both the original and revised numbers are given below.

6.3 Data

Following are several tables with the counts for each work.

13th Century French	Nouns w/ def article	Total nouns	Percentage
Total	236	683	35
Nouns in PP	105	330	32
Modified Nouns	84	184	46
Possessives	0	115	0
13th Century Spanish			
Total	508	1109	46
Nouns in PP	195	399	49
Modified Nouns	204	384	53
Possessives	32	129	25
13th Century Italian			
Total	252	822	31
Nouns in PP	109	325	34
Modified Nouns	71	179	40
Possessives	51	129	40

Table 10 – Raw numbers and percentages from the late 13th Century texts

1500 French (original)	Nouns w/ def article	Total nouns	Percentage
Total	364	977	37
Nouns in PP	134	403	33
Modified Nouns	197	448	44
Possessives	6	232	3
1500 French (revised)			
Total	363	911	40
Nouns in PP	133	396	34
Modified Nouns	197	410	48
Possessives	6	232	3
1500 Spanish (original)			
Total	408	997	41
Nouns in PP	186	416	45
Modified Nouns	138	310	45
Possessives	4	162	2
1500 Spanish (revised)			
Total	402	870	46
Nouns in PP	184	342	54
Modified Nouns	135	288	47
Possessives	4	159	3
1500 Italian			
Total	297	609	49
Nouns in PP	173	339	51
Modified Nouns	145	270	52
Possessives	82	103	80

Table 11 –Numbers and percentages from c. 1500 texts

	Late 13 th Century			c. 1500		
	French	Spanish	Italian	French	Spanish	Italian
Total	35	46	31	37/40	41/46	49
Nouns in PP	32	49	34	33/34	45/54	51
Mod. Nouns	46	53	40	44/48	45/47	52
Possessives	0	25	40	3	2/3	80

Table 12 – Comparison of percentages from all texts

The most surprising result is the total numbers from the early Spanish text, which are similar to the later Spanish text. In fact, the original totals from the later Spanish text are noticeably lower than the early text. The other two languages definitely increased, though the French totals did not increase greatly.

Regarding the possessives, the use of definite articles with possessives dropped dramatically in Spanish, while the exact opposite occurred in Italian, where the percentage doubled. The use of definite articles with possessives in French remained very low. In the following chapter, these results are discussed in more detail.

CHAPTER 7

DISCUSSION

7.1 Totals

While the early French and Italian totals are close, the early Spanish totals are noticeably higher, at 46 percent, compared to 35 and 31 percent for French and Italian respectively. It is in fact the same as the later total for this language. Other than this being indicative of Castilian at the time, why might this be? As noted in section 6.1, the *Poema de Fernán González* is different in significant ways from the other two works. The *Poema* is a historical epic, while the other two are treatises on love and other subjects. This could easily affect what types of nouns are used. It is very possible the French and Italian poems used more abstract nouns than the Spanish poem did, as they dealt with more abstract subjects. The *Poema* did use collective nouns, as did the French *Roman de la Rose*. The Italian *Il Fiore* did not seem to have many collective nouns. This could easily have had an effect on the total percentage of nouns with a definite article, as at this time period collective and abstract nouns rarely had articles.

Another possible effect could be the structure of the *Poema*. It contained fourteen syllables per line, while the other two contained fewer syllables. This certainly explains why there are more nouns in the approximately thousand lines I analyzed in the *Poema*, but might also explain why there are more definite articles. Just as longer and shorter versions of the demonstratives could be used for metrical reasons, so could definite articles with possessives, as noted by Pountain (2000). And if definite articles were used with possessives for metrical reasons, they could easily have been used without a possessive for the same reason. How much of an effect this would have on the total is

hard to determine, as it is also possible the other languages could have done the same thing.

Another possible effect could be personal style. Each writer uses the language a little differently, especially in regards to optional features. As the use of the definite article was optional with certain types of nouns, such as collective nouns or abstract nouns, it is possible that one writer might simply use the definite article more often than another. Register could also play a role, as a higher register uses more formal language, which may very well use optional features more sparingly than a lower register that reflects a more informal language. One way a future study could account for this and other effects would be to use a wider variety of texts, by different authors, and about different subjects. This would also account for different types of nouns being used in different works.

As for the later texts, the French *Épitres de l'Amant Vert* shows a significantly lower total, at 40 percent, compared to 46 and 49 percent for Spanish and Italian respectively. While this represents an increase from the *Roman*, it is nothing comparable to the increase from the early *Fiore* to the later *Asolani* in Italian, which increased from 31 to 49 percent. Why this difference? Again, we have to look to the works themselves. The *Épitres* are poems, as stated in 6.1, while the Spanish *Celestina* is a play and the Italian *Asolani* is a prose work. Poetry tends to be a little looser in its syntactic structure than prose, especially when the metric structure is strict. It is not impossible that poetry might also be looser in its use of definite articles in Romance languages for the same reasons. Again, looking at different texts by different authors in different types of literature would give a clearer picture of where the languages actually stood at the time

regarding the use of definite articles.

In all three later texts, and occasionally in the earlier ones, I noticed several cases where the first noun of a series would have a definite article, but not the following nouns, though they appeared to be definite as well. Huchon (2005) notes that this was common in French as late as the sixteenth century, even where the gender of the nouns was different, and was apparently also true of Spanish and Italian as well.

7.2 Prepositional Phrases

The reason I counted nouns used in prepositional phrases is I noticed several set phrases involving a preposition and a bare noun. I wanted to see how this might affect the use of definite articles over all. The French texts show a lower percentage of nouns in a prepositional phrase with a definite article than the overall totals, at 32 percent for the earlier *Roman* and 34 percent for the later *Épîtres*, compared to 35 percent and 40 percent for the totals respectively. This indicates that nouns in a prepositional phrase are somewhat less likely to have a definite article than nouns generally.

The same cannot be said for Spanish and Italian, however. The earlier texts show 49 percent and 34 percent for these languages respectively, while the overall totals are 46 percent and 31 percent respectively. So in the *Poema*, as in the *Fiore*, nouns in a prepositional phrase are a little more likely to have a definite article. In the later texts, the *Celestina* shows a rate of 54 percent, noticeably higher than the 46 percent overall total, and the *Asolani* shows a rate of 51 percent, compared to an overall total of 49 percent. Please note that the original count of the *Celestina* shows a rate of 45 percent compared to an overall of 41 percent, a difference more in line with the *Asolani*, though the numbers are much lower. It would seem that in Spanish and Italian nouns in prepositional

phrases are no less likely to have a definite article than nouns generally. This could have to do with the fact that Old French used the preposition *de* as a partitive marker (Price 1971), unlike Spanish and Italian. The true partitive article is still rare in the later *Épitres*, which could explain its low rate as well.

7.3 Modified Nouns

Modifying a noun can serve a similar function to determiners. “Little green apples” may not be less generic than “apples”, but the phrase is certainly more specific, much as the phrase “those apples” is much more specific than “apples”. Did increased specificity have an effect on how likely a definite article was to be used with a noun phrase?

In the earlier texts, it does appear to make a noticeable difference. In the *Roman*, the percentage is 46, compared to 35 percent overall, in the *Poema*, it is 53 percent compared to 46 percent, and in the *Fiore*, it is 40 percent compared to 31 percent. It certainly appears that modified nouns are more likely to have a definite article than nouns overall, even in Spanish, where the overall percentage is already fairly high.

The later texts tell a different story, at least for Spanish. In the *Celestina*, the percentage of modified nouns with a determiner is 47, which is only slightly higher than the overall total at 46 percent. In both French and Italian, the differences are more like the earlier texts, though the numbers are higher. In the *Épitres*, modified nouns with a determiner account for 48 percent of the total, while the overall total is 40 percent. In the *Asolani*, the rate is 52 percent compared to the 49 percent overall total, showing that in both languages modified nouns were more likely to have a definite article, especially French. In the original count of the *Celestina*, however, the totals are 45 percent and 41

percent, with a difference similar to the *Asolani*. So while in French and Italian, a modified noun appears more likely to appear with a definite article than an unmodified noun, as well as mid thirteenth century Spanish, the case is not so conclusive for Spanish around 1500.

7.4 Nouns with Possessives

The results show that French has rarely used definite articles with possessives. In fact, in the approximately thousand line passage I analyzed from the *Roman*, there is not a single instance of this usage, and it only rarely occurs in the later *Épitres*. It is possible definite articles could be used with possessives in thirteenth century French, but it would seem to be very rare, just as it was rare in the later text.

Spanish saw a large decrease in the use of definite articles with possessives. In the *Poema*, about a quarter of possessives were used with definite articles. By the time of the *Celestina*, it had dropped to about 3 percent, very close to the rate in the *Épitres*, with only four possessives appearing with a definite article. Of these four, only one was used with the short form of the possessive, in a phrase that appears to be a fixed formula. This of course is expected, from what Penny (1991) said on the subject, though he did not touch on the frequency of the use of definite articles with the long forms.

Italian is the only language which saw a real increase in the use of this construction. In the *Fiore*, the rate of use was 40 percent, the same as the rate for modified nouns, also at 40 percent. By the time of the *Asolani*, its use was nearly universal at 80 percent. This shows the very different path that possessives took in Italian compared to French or Spanish, where the short form became the near universal form for possessives, while the long form dominated in Italian, and increasingly came to require

the definite article for general use.

7.5 Conclusion

While this study cannot definitively answer the question of diffusion or independent development, I will here give my thoughts based on the data and what is known about the history of these languages. Above I discussed some reasons for questioning the results. Here I will assume they are accurate. At first glance, it appears that Spanish first developed an expanded use of definite articles. From there, it seems to have spread to Italy and France. Is this consistent with the history of these languages, however? What influence did Spanish have on French and Italian during the time periods in question?

During the thirteenth century, French was actually the most influential language. As the Spanish kingdoms took back more and more land from the Moors, more and more people from north of the Pyrenees moved south, both to establish religious institutions, and to settle. From the eleventh century to the end of the thirteenth, French influence was very strong in the Iberian Peninsula (Penny 1991). The very name of the language and people comes from French, as *español* replaced former *españón* (Penny 1991, p. 225). In 4.1, I discuss the deletion of final -e in the demonstratives during the thirteenth century. This affected many other words as well, and may have been due to French influence, showing that the influence went deeper than simple lexical borrowing. Even after the thirteenth century, Spanish continued to borrow many military terms from French, though the influence began to wane (Penny 1991).

French influence in Italy was also strong during the twelfth and especially the thirteenth centuries. The Normans conquered Sicily during this time period, bringing

their language with them. In Northern and Central Italy, French literature became very popular, and many Italian writers wrote in French. Of those who chose to write in Italian, many were heavily influenced by French, in syntax as well as vocabulary. This influence also began to wane during the fourteenth century as Italian asserted itself as a literary language (Migliorini 1966).

Of course, if Spanish was the source of the expanded use of the definite article, its influence need not have been felt in the thirteenth century, but rather later, during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Spanish influence was minimal in Italy during the fourteenth century, and increased in Southern Italy during the fifteenth century, as the Aragonese had taken over Sicily and Naples. It was not until the sixteenth century that there were any Spanish influences on syntax. This is also the century when Italian borrows the most words from Spanish (Migliorini 1966).

French was heavily influenced by Italian during the sixteenth century (Huchon 2005, Von Wartburg 1934) and to a much lesser degree by Spanish (Huchon 2005). During earlier centuries, French was most heavily influenced by Occitan and other regional languages, as well as Latin (Huchon 2005, Von Wartburg 1934). The idea then that this particular innovation could have spread from Spain to Italy and France by 1500 through hierarchical diffusion is highly unlikely.

Wave diffusion is a possibility in a dialect continuum, however, as there is no dominant variety (Heap 2006). Under this analysis, it is possible for the usage to have spread from Spain through France and into Italy, though this does not account for the significantly lower usage in France in 1500, nor can it account for the use in Romanian, which is physically separated from the other Romance languages.

Could it have been independent parallel development, then? And if so, how could it have developed independently in at least the ten Romance languages in Table 1? In 2.3, I discussed how during the Late Latin period certain demonstratives became definite articles. This was during a time period when Latin was spoken throughout much of Western Europe, and perhaps even in the region that later became Romania. All Romance languages derived from local dialects of Late Latin, and all developed definite articles. So there was already a general change in the status of these demonstratives, and this change could have continued throughout the following centuries in all of these languages. The same process that led to definite articles could also lead to these same articles becoming general noun markers, which is what we see in their use with collective, generic, and abstract nouns. And this could have happened throughout all the Romance-speaking world, as well.

As discussed in 2.1, demonstratives become definite articles by losing their spatial reference, and retaining their function of specifying something known to both the speaker and hearer (Penny 1991). This occurs through grammaticalization. As definite articles became noun markers, they also grammaticalized further. Through being used with generic, collective, and abstract nouns, they generalized their use. This generalization indicates that they have lost their function of specifying something in those cases, and so have undergone further semantic bleaching. While they did not undergo further phonetic reduction, they were decategorized as well, through losing their status as a full article.

In 5.2, I discussed the concept of shared cognition. Maiden (1995) discusses this idea in relation to Italian, and Penny (1991) states that the hearer as well as the speaker knows what is being referred to when a definite article is used. Maiden (1995)

specifically states that shared cognition came to dominate the use of definite articles, that any noun known to both speaker and listener came to be used with a definite article. This is reanalysis of the article's function, and led to it being used as more of a noun marker than a definite article, though, as in the Hungarian example in Halm 2018, the original use is still present in Romance languages. Thus a further step in grammaticalization has occurred in the development of definite articles in Romance languages, and this may very well have happened independently in each language, just as it seems to have arisen independently among speakers of Late Latin.

I must note here that the *form* of the definite article does appear to have spread through diffusion. In modern Romance languages, only Sardinian and remote dialects of Catalan retain forms of the definite article derived from Latin *ipse*. That fact alone points to diffusion, as these forms are found only in remote locations. But we know that *ipse*-derived forms did exist elsewhere at one time. Early records show *ipse*-derived articles in Southern Italy and in Catalan generally (Plank 1984, Rudder 2012). Over time, these regions replaced their original *ipse*-derived forms with the more common forms derived from *ille*, and this almost certainly occurred through diffusion from neighboring areas. Vocabulary items spread more easily and rapidly than syntactic structures, so this in no way supports diffusion for the use of definite articles, though it does not detract from it, either.

While I was unable to fully answer the question of whether the modern use of definite articles spread through diffusion or independent development, this study does contribute to the literature through a cross-linguistic study, which hopefully others may improve on in the future. I do feel that the weight of evidence lies with independent

development through continued grammaticalization, as history would favor a diffusion from French, rather than Spanish, and independent development is probable.

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APPENDIX

Parts of Texts Analyzed

62 Bembo, P. (1808). “Gli Asolani” [PDF file]. Minetti, P. (Ed.) *Opere del Cardinale Pietro Bembo: Volume Primo*. Milano: La Società Tipografica de' Classici Italiani. (Original work published 1505) Retrieved from:

<https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=nyp.33433022653798;view=1up;seq=15>
Analyzed pages 1 – 26

De Lorris, G. & J. De Meun. (1965). *Le Roman de la Rose*. Vol. 3. New York: Johnson Reprint Corporation.

Analyzed pages 74 -113, specifically lines 8224 – 9240

De Rojas, F. (1995). *La Celestina*. M.E. Lacarra (Ed.) Madison: Hispanic Seminary of Medieval Studies.

Analyzed pages 9 – 23, starting with dialogue

“Il Fiore.” (1951). in G. Petronio (Ed.) *Poemetti del 200*. Torino: Tipografia Temporelli. Analyzed pages 181 – 241

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