The Definite Article in Spanish as a Polysemous Category

Anastasia Khain

University of Deusto
anastasiahain@deusto.es

The present paper investigates the semantic structure of the definite article in Spanish, traditionally characterized as meaningless, from a Cognitive Linguistics perspective. After a brief overview of the role of the definite article as an element of the Spanish grounding system, it will be argued that the category of the definite article is polysemous, has radial structure, and it is organized around prototypical centres. It will be demonstrated how the senses, which are motivated by family resemblances and interrelated through categorizing relationships of elaboration and extension, are linked in a polysemy network. Moreover, it will be held that the various senses of the definite article constitute a continuum, since expressions grounded by the definite article can run the gamut from profiling a unique entity of the type to denoting the whole class of entities.[1]

Keywords: *cognitive linguistics, cognitive grammar, article, definite, article, Spanish, polysemy, network, metonymy, family resemblance*

1. Introduction

Although the category of the definite article in Spanish—as a part of the broader category of articles usually included in the class of determiners— has been widely studied in traditional linguistics (Abad Nebot, 1977; Alarcos Llorach, 2000; Álvarez Martínez, 1986; Leonetti, 1999), there is no consensus between different theoretical approaches on its status and

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functions. Within the framework of Cognitive Linguistics, there are some recent accounts of the definite article for teaching Spanish as a foreign language (Alonso Raya et al., 2006; Chamorro et al., 2006; López García, 2005; Montero Gálvez, 2011). Nevertheless, in all these accounts different uses of the definite article are represented in a piecemeal fashion; it is not explained why various meanings of the definite article are associated with the concrete forms (*el/la/los/las*), apart from indicating gender and plurality. Though it seems that López García (2005) and Montero Gálvez (2011) take into consideration prototype theory, which originated in psycholinguistics (Rosch, 2009), they only mention which use can be regarded as prototypical, without going further. The work of López García (2005) provides some initial insights regarding the role of the Spanish definite article within one's cognitive system, for what he makes use of the notions "figure" and "ground", pertaining to the field of Cognitive Grammar. Montero Gálvez (2011) looks for one essential value of the definite article which could encompass all other values, following the method of the "operational grammar" of Spanish (developed by J. P. Ruiz Campillo, A. Castañeda, and others), which situates itself within the cognitive framework. The textbooks *"Gramática básica del estudiante de español"* (Alonso Raya et al., 2006) and *"El ventilador"* (Chamorro et al., 2006), that also tackle the topic from a Cognitive Grammar perspective, make use of the concepts of actualization and identification respectively. Being incipient attempts, however, none of these works takes into consideration the important theoretical premises of Cognitive Linguistics, such as family resemblance, the concept of motivation, the role of metonymy and metaphor in semantic change, to name a few.

Meanwhile, the account of different meanings of a polysemous item as motivated and interrelated conceptually is central to Cognitive Semantics (Valenzuela, Ibarretxe-Antuñano, & Hilferty, 2012, pp. 53–54). From the very beginning, Cognitive Linguistics has paid a considerable attention to the study of the phenomenon of "association of two or more related senses with a single linguistic form" (Taylor, 1995, p. 99). In its analysis of polysemy, Cognitive Linguistics rejects the classical theory of categorization and traditional assumptions about "necessary and sufficient conditions" by introducing an approach based on the experimental results of prototype

theory which presupposes graded categorization (Lakoff, 1987; Rosch, 2009; Taylor, 1995; Vicente & Falkum, 2016). Furthermore, the notion of polysemy in Cognitive Linguistics, due to the continuum between lexicon and grammar (Langacker, 2008, pp. 18–20), has been expanded from lexical items to grammatical notions, that has given rise to the proliferation of the research on polysemy within the cognitive linguistic framework, e.g.: the analysis of there-constructions (Lakoff, 1987), various accounts of the preposition over (Brugman, 1983; Lakoff, 1987; Taylor, 1995; Tyler & Evans, 2003; Tyler & Evans, 2004), of the German preposition *über* (Meex, 2001), the past tense in English (Taylor, 1995), the case in Icelandic (Smith, 2001). Although providing the explicit semantic description of grammatical constructions, given their composite nature and more schematic character in comparison with lexical items, often seems to be quite complex, such an approach gives valuable insights into the structure and functioning of these assemblies. Grammatical units are intrinsically meaningful, just as lexical items are, so the phenomena to which lexicon is subject are applicable to grammar too.

The aim of this paper is to propose a semantic analysis of the definite article in Spanish from a cognitive linguistic perspective, representing it as a radially structured polysemous category, whose senses are linked by categorizing relationships and form a network. The present analysis is based on the usages of the definite article (anaphoric, generic, emphatic, etc.) that are listed in the Curricular Plan of Cervantes Institute (PCIC by its initials in Spanish), which thoroughly describes conventional uses of linguistic categories in Spanish (Instituto Cervantes, 2017). Some complementary examples are taken from the fundamental work on Spanish grammar *Manual de la Nueva gramática de la lengua española*
issued by the Real Academia Española (Real Academia Española [RAE], 2010).

So, in the next sections of this paper I propose to account for the semantics and structure of the definite article in Spanish. In Section 2 the notion of ground and the role of the definite article as a grounding element will be outlined. In Section 3 it will be accounted for the polysemy of the definite article, defining its prototypical centres and making explicit categorizing relationships of elaboration and extension that underlie its

structure. Finally, in Section 4 the category of the definite article will be represented as a network of senses.

2. Article as a grounding element

Before examining the role of the definite article in the conceptual system of Spanish, it is necessary to emphasize that the nonmodular view of language defended by Cognitive Grammar supposes that it is closely tied to categorization processes and other general mental abilities which, in consequence, are manifested in the proper linguistic organization. The human conceptual system in Cognitive Linguistics is equated with language itself and linguistic meanings–with conceptualizations, which people make encompassing the real or any imagined world (Langacker, 2008; Talmy, 1988). Within one language, one and the same situation (i.e. conceptual content) can be construed in a number of different ways depending on the level of specificity/schematicity, focusing, the degree of salience, and perspective adopted (Langacker, 1986, 2008). That phenomena affect the meaning of linguistic expressions and thereby reveal the dynamic nature of conceptualizations.

   Linguistic meanings are apprehended by the principal conceptualizers—the speaker and the hearer—who interact in discourse. "For the speaker and hearer, the speech event in which they participate, and their immediate circumstances (e.g. the time and place of speaking)" Langacker (2008) uses the term "ground" (p. 78). Grounding, as an aspect of conceptual organization, establishes a connection between the interlocutors and the conceptual content referred to (i.e. profiled) by linguistic expressions through different grounding strategies. Expressions can profile either a thing or a relationship. "Thing" is a conceptual schema postulated for nouns (understood in a broader sense of Cognitive Grammar) which includes both lexical nouns and nominal expressions. A schema, for its part, is an abstracted representation of the commonality of specific instantiations valid for all instances and independent of any specific conceptual content. Thus, for all nouns, a schematic description that represents their abstract commonality is [THING]. Nouns of any degree of complexity instantiate this schema: for example, [MOON], [TOOTHBRUSH], [MOONLESS

NIGHT], etc. (Langacker, 1986, 2008). The specific content for any "thing" is provided by its type specification, that is, noun designates (i.e. profiles) a type of thing. Now then, to discern the noun from an innumerable array of entities pertaining to its type, it should be related to the ground by means of grounding elements. As Langacker writes:

> A grounding element specifies the status vis-à-vis the ground of the thing profiled by a nominal. . . . Through nominal grounding . . . , the speaker directs the hearer's attention to the intended discourse referent, which may or may not correspond to an actual individual. . . . If left ungrounded, this content has no discernible position in their mental universe and cannot be brought to bear on their situation. It simply floats unattached as an object of idle contemplation. (p. 259)

In regard to the term "referent" it should be said that Cognitive Grammar distinguishes various kinds of reference on different levels of conceptual organization and for the purpose of linguistic description the reference at the discourse level is relevant; the entity that is referred to can be a real-world object or a virtual one (Langacker, 2008, pp. 269–272).

Basically, the ground functions as an implicit point of reference at every moment of the interaction (Langacker, 2008, p. 78). To some degree, grounding always remains a subjective process and, in principle, any entity can be singled out for discourse purposes. The speaker and the addressee—the conceptualizers—act as subjects of conception and what is conceptualized as the object of conception corresponding to the expression's profile.
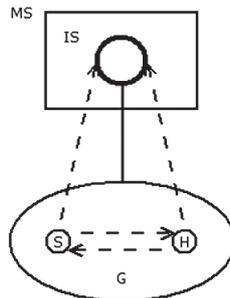

Figure 1

IS = immediate scope; MS = maximal scope; S = speaker; H = hearer; G = ground

Adapting four diagrams made by Langacker (2008, p. 261), the meaning of a nominal regarding the ground can be represented by figure 1, where the ground (G) is enclosed in ellipse and indicates the interaction and the presence—either explicit or implicit—of the speaker (S) and the hearer (H) in the context of discourse. They select some conceptual content as the basis for an expression's meaning (its "maximal scope", abbreviated as MS in the diagram) focusing on a part of it. The directing of attention is indicated by means of dashed lines. In this cognitive operation, the interlocutors are guided by the perceptual phenomenon which is known in gestalt psychology as figure/ground organization (which should be distinguished from the discussed above Langackerian term "ground"). This phenomenon, originally applied to visual perception but expanded to other fields including linguistic, is the distinction made between what is foregrounded ("figure") and backgrounded ("ground") in our visual perception. Applying this to linguistic phenomena, the content foregrounded in relation to the maximal scope is the "immediate scope" (IS) of an expression, or the general locus of attention. Within the immediate scope, the specific focus of attention is the profiled entity. The entity is represented as a circle serving to depict a noun which, according to Cognitive Grammar, is conceptualized as "thing" (Langacker, 2008; Mihatsch, 2009). Bold lines are used to indicate its profiling. A solid line from the ground to the thing means the connection established between them through a grounding element. Both focusing and scope as its component, according to Cognitive Grammar, are matters of selection (pp. 57-65). Therefore, they are subjective and changeable for communicative purposes. As a result of their choice, one and the same situation can be conceived in different ways.

The definite article is one member of the Spanish grounding system. It is an overt grounding element, unlike proper names, whose grounding is in many cases intrinsic, because "the very meanings of such expressions imply the identifiability of their referents" (Langacker, 2008, p. 272). As in the case of the English definite article examined by Langacker (2008, p. 275), in the structure of a nominal the Spanish definite article also tends to occupy the most external position owing to its conceptual weight: it provides the minimal information about the nominal itself, merely specifying the status of the profiled thing within the immediate scope, since the central semantic

content is supplied by nominals. Nouns specify the type of thing is being referred to, while the meaning of the article is very schematic—it designates a "thing", but used alone fails to identify it. That is why the definite article cannot stand alone as a full nominal, functioning only with the type description provided by a noun (p. 286). The schematic meaning of the definite article can be represented by its constructional schema [DEFART], while its pairing with a noun at the higher level of organization—as the schema [DEFART N]. Its instantiations are specific expressions, as [EL LIBRO], [LA MESA], [EL SOL], etc.

So, the definite article--in order to fulfil the function of directing attention to the desired entity by indicating its relation to the ground—requires an additional element or elements to specify the type of that entity (see Langacker (1986, 2009) for discussion about constructions and "elaboration sites"):

(1) [DEFART […]] $\rightarrow$ [DEFART N] $\rightarrow$ [EL LIBRO]

Alternatively, from the opposite perspective, an ungrounded nominal, representing the abstracted commonality of the type, requires a mental operation of bounding in the case of count nouns or discerning any portion of the type in the case of mass nouns within the immediate scope with a view to directing attention to it. By using the combination of these two strategies—descriptive and deictic—the profiled entity can be distinguished from an open-ended range of potential referents in our mental universe for immediate discourse purposes (Langacker, 2008, pp. 276-278). But what kinds of entities can be grounded by the definite article in Spanish? Since the definite article cannot act independently, from here on out I will analyse the schema [DEFART N], composed of the definite article and a noun, in which the profiles of the definite article and the nominal correspond.

3. The polysemous character of the definite article

Almost any linguistic item is polysemous. This is what claims Cognitive Linguistics contributing to the discussion of polysemy by regarding it not simply as a linguistic phenomenon but as a conceptual one. The analysis and characterization of multiple related meanings of a linguistic unit, for whose

description the term "polysemy" is used, has undergone a drastic change with the rejection of the classical theory of categorization in Cognitive Linguistics. The Aristotelian view of "necessary and sufficient conditions" for making dichotomous judgements about category membership has been replaced with a model of graded categorization known as prototype theory (Lakoff, 1987; Rosch, 2009). In accordance with it, category membership is determined by similarity to one or several prototypical centres. Thus, some members can be more central and others more peripheral; all of them form a radially structured category being related—using the Wittgensteinian notion—in a family resemblance structure (Taylor, 1995, Chapter 3,6). Hence, cognitive linguists argue that the meaning of any linguistic item can be arranged in a network of senses, which are organized around a prototype (or prototypes) and linked by categorizing relationships. Such an approach permits to overcome the limitations of the dictionary view of semantics by postulating that the different senses of an item are motivated by family resemblances to prototypical meanings and that the knowledge of how the linguistic unit is used resides not in any single sense but in the entire network (Lakoff, 1987; Langacker, 2008, p. 38).

Nevertheless, this sense enumerative approach has been criticised as giving rise to the "polysemy fallacy"—an indefinite proliferation of senses (Vicente & Falkum, 2016), and besides, it has not been clear how the senses are individuated (Sennet, 2016). The variety of polysemy tests elaborated to distinguish between ambiguity, vagueness, monosemy, homonymy, and polysemy have not given satisfactory results (Lewandowska-Tomaszczyk, 2007; Riemer, 2005). It has been proposed, then, that boundaries between these notions are fuzzy (Lewandowska-Tomaszczyk, 2007; Taylor, 1995). Recently, in order to shade some light to the problem of "separate meaning", Tyler and Evans (2003) have suggested a methodology of "principled polysemy" for sense division, illustrating it with the example of the English preposition over. Their approach is based on two criteria: (i) "a distinct sense must involve non-spatial meaning or a different configuration between the TR [trajector] and LM [landmark] than found in the proto-scene"; (ii) it should be context independent (Tyler & Evans, 2003, pp. 42–43). This attempt to avoid the exaggeration of distinct meanings so far seems to be the only one that allows "sense division to follow directly

from the representation of meaning, since a word has as many senses as it requires separate definitional representations" (Riemer, 2005, p. 156). Therefore, the method adopted in this paper is the analysis of the senses of the definite article, dependent on conceptual representations they demand, taking for granted that linguistic categories are not different from other kinds of conceptual categories.

3.1. The central sense

Starting with the analysis of the semantic structure of the definite article in Spanish, it is logical, firstly, to define its primary sense as a core from which other senses can be derived by means of categorizing relationships.

There is no clear agreement on which criteria for the identification of the prototype should be used. It is often described as the best example of a particular category. Taylor (1995) proposes that a prototype can be characterized in terms of its semasiological salience (p. 262). While some researchers associate the frequency of occurrence of an item with its degree of centrality in the whole category, Taylor supposes that the perceived frequency of central members is rather a consequence of their central status (p. 52). According to Rosch (2009, p. 44), there are several factors such as earlier acquisition by children, greater association, better inference, etc. that can act as potential sources of prototypes; anyway, they all contribute to an item to be particularly salient. Geeraerts (1985) also sees the prototypical member as distinct in structural weight among the other members within a category (pp. 136-138). With respect to the semantic change, Geeraerts notes that due to the logical preponderance of central senses it is possible to derive from them other senses (p. 139). On this issue, he coincides with Lakoff (1987), who shares the viewpoint that the central category member can function as a generator or generative prototype to define the category. Particularly useful for the present discussion is the revealing observation made by Langacker (2008), who highlights the role of the experiential basis in the linguistic organization: "The prototypical meaning consists of an experientially grounded conceptual archetype" (p. 34). This means that, initially, we develop basic abilities to apprehend physical objects and only later extend some of them to other domains of experience. Following this standpoint, Tyler and Evans (2003, p. 47) propose two criteria—linguistic

and empirical—to define the primary sense for a concrete case of spatial particles, which conceptualize stable spatial relations within a language and constitute a closed word class. While to date there is a series of empirical studies, as for the linguistic evidence, it was described by Langacker and includes: (1) earliest attested meaning, (2) predominance in the semantic network, (3) relations to other spatial particles, (4) grammatical predictions, and (5) use in composite forms. The latter is rejected by Tyler and Evans (2003, p. 48).

Although Tyler and Evans are cautious in the conclusions regarding applying the same criteria to other than spatial particulars categories, the definite article is characterized by similar properties: (i) it is part of closed word classes; (ii) as a grounding element, it specifies the status of the profiled thing in relation to the ground, that is, the position of the entity in question in our mental universe. Therefore, it seems that the four linguistic criteria can be employed in the case of the definite article. Since "one likely candidate for the primary sense is the historically earliest sense" (Tyler & Evans, 2003, p. 47), some historical hints can serve as a justification for defining the definite article's prototype, which, as mentioned before, should be experientially grounded. In the Romance languages, similarly to English (p. 286), the definite article has appeared from the Latin demonstrative *ille / illa / illud* due to various grammaticalization processes. Then, as a result of the evolution of the demonstrative pronoun to the definite article, its deictic meaning was lost (RAE, 2010, pp. 263–264). This fact not only supports the importance of our bodily experience in the physical domain for the way we categorize other domains, which are grounded in it, but permits us to conclude that deictic senses were the first ones of the definite article, that is, were referring to specific entities existing as real-world objects. Moreover, young children are likely to deal with individual instances that "experientially more basic and salient than abstract types" and still are not able to make generalizations (Radden, 2009, p. 201). With respect to predominance in the semantic network, it is the criterion of uniqueness in a particular domain involved in the derivation of other senses which will be discussed further on. Likewise, it will be seen later that the definite article's central member is the only sense for which grammatical predictions are valid; this property of prototypes was already noticed by Lakoff (1987). As

for relations to other articles, or more broadly, to other grounding elements, this point due to space limitations will not be discussed in the paper. Here it is merely worth mentioning that López García (2005) in his account of the Spanish article from a Cognitive Grammar perspective considers that el is the prototype of the entire category of the articles in Spanish with regard to the indefinite article *un* and *lo*, which he treats as a neutral article (p. 90).

So, in order to represent the central sense of the definite article *el*, in figure 2, I have transformed two graphical representations which López García uses to show the contrast with the indefinite article (pp. 91-92). As he points out, "these two situations reproduce a prototypical use of el and *un*: *una mesa* means any element from the set of tables, while *la mesa* means that same element ones it is known which one it is" (p. 92).[2]

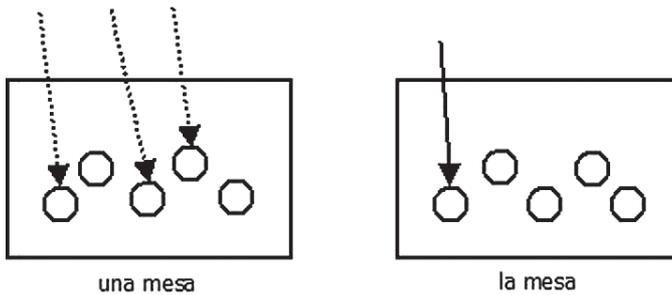una mesa   la mesa

Figure 2

Following the criteria given above, it can be posited that the next example represents a prototypical deictic meaning of the definite article:

(2) *Ahí está la mesa*. (PCIC)
    'The table is there.'

In (2), the singular definite article is used to pick out a location relative to the speaker with the help of the additional grounding element (*ahí*). For Cognitive Grammar, there is no problem with exophoric reference, since

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[2] "Estas dos situaciones reproducen un uso prototípico de *el* y *un: una mesa* significa un elemento cualquiera del conjunto de las mesas, mientras que *la mesa* significa ese mismo elemento una vez conocido" (López García, 2005, p. 92). This and further translations from Spanish are made by the author of the paper.

no discrete boundary can be imposed between linguistic and extralinguistic meanings (Langacker, 2008, p. 37). So, the following use is also based on the extralinguistic situation, referring to a concrete entity in physical space.

(3) *Puedes cerrar la puerta, por favor?* (PCIC)
    'Can you close the door, please?'

Guided by considerations similar to those expressed by Lakoff (1987) in his analysis of deictic there-constructions (pp. 482-485), it can be assumed that various deictic uses of the definite article form a prototype-based subcategory with respect to the whole category.

Due to general human cognitive capacities, in the process of engaging the world, the use of the definite article has transcended immediate reality and physical experience and has been extended to other—more abstracted—levels of mental construction. By the same fashion as with the spatial deictic use, the definite article can be applied to other domains of experience, such as mental-physical space, which is construed subjectively:

(4) *Hoy he recibido la carta*. (RAE, 2010, p. 263)
    'Today I have received the letter.'

In this case, the definite article does not refer to a concrete location in space but rather to an abstract location in conceptual space. Similarly, it can be expanded to the domain of time as well (about the deictic temporal use of the definite article see RAE, 2010, pp. 270-271). Here it is necessary to clarify that the term "domain" refers to the conceptual content evoked by an expression's meaning, understood as any kind of conception or realm of experience (Langacker, 2008, p. 44). The term is similar to "idealized cognitive model" used by Lakoff (1987), "mental space" proposed by Fauconnier (1997), and Fillmore's "frame" (1982). The context of discourse also can be regarded as a cognitive domain (Langacker, 2008, p. 45).

Given that Spanish and English are both Western European languages, although they differ in some aspects as in expressing reference to mass nouns and in generic reference (for more details see Whitley, 1986), the central sense of the definite article in Spanish is quite akin to the "basic function" of the English definite article the (Whitley, 1986, p. 154), about which Langacker (2008) writes: "By grounding . . . with the definite article,

the speaker directs the hearer's attention to a particular instance of this type, presumed uniquely identifiable by virtue of being the sole instance clearly evident in the current discourse context" (p. 265). Therefore, bearing in mind the criteria of Tyler and Evans (2003) suggested to avoid proliferation of senses, it would seem that the definite article in its prototypical meaning encompasses not only deictic senses but also includes other domains of experience where the entity in question can be regarded as unique present. It can be postulated, then, that the prototypical sense of the Spanish definite article in singular form is a *specific entity* which refers to a particular object in a domain—not necessarily spatial—uniquely apparent for both speaker and hearer.

Interestingly, when the context of discourse is the domain by virtue of which a *specific entity* is identified as such, there are various factors that sanction the use of the definite article. Since deixis basically functions as a reference point, this phenomenon is closely connected with anaphora. Though related, traditionally anaphora and deixis have been characterized as separate forms of reference. Within the Cognitive Linguistics framework, it is suggested to see them as a gradation. In particular, Consten (2003) proposes a unified explanatory model of domain-bound reference, concept emerged from Langacker's notion of current discourse space which is understood as "everything presumed to be shared by the speaker and hearer as the basis for discourse at a given moment" (2008, pp. 59, 281, 466) and which consists of discourse frames updated by the interlocutors at each stage of the unfolding discourse. It would seem that the concepts of current discourse space and discourse frame can be regarded as the maximal scope and the immediate scope respectively in the textual set of domains (matrix), though Langacker himself does not refer to them in this way. The current discourse space provides a basis against which to interpret the next discourse fragment. As for deictic and anaphoric references, Consten (2003) demonstrates that they should be treated analogously because both are interpreted with respect to a reference point, with the only difference that the deictic referent is located in the nontextual domain while the anaphoric one is situated in the textual domain (p. 236). This idea is supported by the claim of Cognitive Grammar that there is no discrete boundary between linguistic and extralinguistic knowledge, since they form a gradation

(Langacker, 2008; van Hoek, 2010).

   Coreference is acceptable when its referent is accessible within the immediate context—the current discourse space (Langacker, 2008; van Hoek, 1995). An anaphoric expression grounded by the definite article implies that its antecedent has already been singled out in the previous discourse frame, that is, that just a single instance of the specified type is available for anaphoric purposes within the current discourse frame. Moreover, Langacker (2008, p. 314) and van Hoek (1995, p. 313), analysing pronominal anaphor, argue that the reference point should be sufficiently prominent within the discourse so that the conceptualizer can make mental contact with that entity, that is, to single it out. Since the entity profiled with the definite article is the only instance of its type within the relevant scope (Langacker, 2008, pp. 328, 497), it counts as a specific entity, being the prototypical use of the definite article, as in (5). The only difference with the previously discussed deictic uses is that they have not necessarily been the focus of attention in the previous discourse.

   (5) *Quiero comprar un sofá. El sofá tiene que ser muy cómodo*. (PCIC)
       'I want to buy a sofa. The sofa has to be very comfortable.'

The reference point phenomenon is cross-sentential, since no sharp division between syntax and discourse is assumed by Cognitive Grammar (van Hoek, 1995, p. 325). The principal concern, therefore, is conceptual connectivity between elements seen as a continuum (p. 332). (5) is an example of strong semantic connectivity, because the referent is specified by the same type description. The degree of connectivity with the reference point affects whether the domain-bounded reference—both deictic and anaphoric—is direct or indirect (Consten, 2003). Thus, in (6) it is not referred to the antecedent explicitly:

   (6) *Viajaremos a Marruecos. El viaje será en barco*. (PCIC)
       'We will travel to Morocco. The trip will be by boat.'

The reference can be either inter-, as in (6), or intrasentential, as in (7):

   (7) *Cogió un libro y miró el índice*. (PCIC)
       'S/he took a book and looked at the contents.'
If anaphora is indirect, the conceptual connectivity is weaker, but still

the referent is accessible for the correct interpretation in the discourse. In (7), the notion [LIBRO] functions as the cognitive domain for [ÍNDICE] relative to which the meaning of [ÍNDICE] is understood (Langacker, 1986, p. 4). [LIBRO], thereby, being situated on a more fundamental level of the conceptual hierarchy, is as a presupposed conception for the characterization of [ÍNDICE] as a part in relation to the whole (the phenomenon of metonymy will be discussed in Section 3.4.1). Since the conception [LIBRO] has been already introduced in the expression, the specific interpretation of [ÍNDICE] is readily possible—hence it is grounded by the definite article and a more basic concept functions as the immediate scope. Yet, it should be said that such construal of the meaning is conventional, that is, follows conventional patterns of categorization, and is not the only possible one.

The reference point model (Langacker, 2008; van Hoek, 1995) also provides a basis for the interpretation of the less frequent endophoric uses of the definite article where the profiled entity in the current discourse frame is specified in greater detail in the immediately subsequent discourse, due to that its grounding by the definite article is possible in advance:

(8) *Dibujó la cara de un niño.* (PCIC)
    'S/he drew the face of a child.'

(9) *Y entonces Olga le dio la carta que había estado escribiendo durante toda la mañana.* (RAE, 2010, p. 269)
    'And then Olga gave him the letter she has been writing throughout the whole morning.'

The adjacent to the grounded element discourse frame functions as the reference point providing a background for its interpretation. Moreover, this type of constructions supposes that at the corresponding level of composition the figure (profiled entity) precedes the ground (scope of interpretation) in the linear string. As regards the whole composite structure, in both cases, the grounded entity in question is the profiled complement specified by its modifier which is part of the unprofiled base (for the notions of "complement" and "modifier" in Cognitive Grammar see, e.g., van Hoek, 1995). Thus, due to the asymmetry of reference point relationships, the only instance of the specified type is available for the identification in the current

discourse space.

To sum up, the above-discussed uses of the singular definite article in Spanish are examples of its prototypical meaning because in every case they profile a *specific entity* that—although identifiable by virtue of various factors—fulfils the criterion of uniqueness in a particular domain, whichever the nature of the domain is.

3.2. A secondary prototype?

Since the meaning of the definite article, as of other grounding elements, is schematic, according to Langacker (2008) it lies "toward the grammatical pole of the lexicon/grammar continuum" (p. 263). The schematic description of the definite article valid for all instances can be represented as [DEFART], and it is schematic in relation to different uses of el, la, los and las in specific contexts which instantiate this schematic pattern. On the other hand, as a lexical unit, the definite article can profile nominals (understood in a broader sense) of any degree of symbolic complexity and can vary in the degree of semantic specificity/schematicity, which will be addressed further below. It could be argued the structure of the definite article is subject to the same cognitive phenomena of schematization and categorization which are inherently manifested in the conceptual organization of other linguistic categories.

Categorizing relationships are those that underlie the network structure of a polysemous item. Basically, they can be of two types—elaboration and extension (Geeraerts, 1985, p. 140; Langacker, 2008, p. 17). If the prototype of an item undergoes a process of semantic specialization or semantic generalization—as schematization can be carried out in two directions—it constitutes an "elaboration" (instantiation). If the instantiation conflicts in some degree with the schema, the relationship is one of "extension" (Langacker, 2008, pp. 17, 170). It is interesting that the categorizing structure instantiated by an extension can be regarded as a prototype at a local level (Langacker, 2009, p. 4).

We have seen that the prototypical meaning of the singular definite article in Spanish can be accounted for in brief terms as profiling of a specific entity within the immediate scope. The main criterion for its identification is its status relative to the current discourse space of the speaker-hearer

interaction. To be grounded by the definite article the entity should be a unique referent of the specified type in the immediate discourse context (Langacker, 2008, pp. 259–291). However, in some cases the profiled entity can be unique by its very nature—it is when the proper type description guarantees its uniqueness (Langacker, 2008, p. 286; the grounding of proper names will be addressed further below). It could be said that in this case the assessment is made not only regarding the immediate scope but also regarding the maximal scope, that is, the whole conceptual content evoked for the interpretation of an expression. As the entity is identifiable regardless of the immediate context, a relationship of semantic specialization from the prototypical meaning is given. In figure 3, the elaboration of the prototype is indicated by a solid arrow.
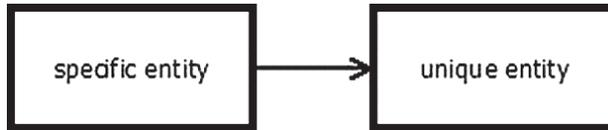

Figure 3

In the following examples, it is not necessary to distinguish between maximal and immediate scope; the profiled entities are identified in absolute terms, being unique per se:

(10) *El sol saldrá mañana a las 6.24.* (RAE, 2010, p. 268)
   ‘The sun will rise tomorrow at 6:24 am.’

(11) *La Tierra* (PCIC)
   ‘Earth’

(12) **Una madre de Juan* (PCIC)
   ‘A mother of Juan’

The importance of the criterion of uniqueness for the identification of the status of the profiled entity in the context of a discourse is reflected in divergence of researchers regarding the "essential" semantic value of the definite article in Spanish. Thus, for example, while Leonetti (1999) sees as more fundamental the notion of identifiability, Montero (2011) tends

to think that inclusiveness is the principal semantic characteristic of the definite article. Such discrepancy, probably, is owed to the close correlation existing between uniqueness within a domain in the immediate context of discourse and uniqueness within all domains in the matrix. The uniqueness, thereby, is rather a question of domains, which depends on whether the referent is identified in relative or in absolute terms. A clear differentiation sometimes results quite problematic, as the proper distinction between immediate and maximal scope is always established subjectively. Moreover, judgements in absolute terms are dubious from the philosophical point of view. Though objectivist semantics takes for granted that there is one correct account of reference, Cognitive Linguistics ties the act of cognizance of the external world with human bodily experience, thus postulating that the human conceptual system is its product and "there is no direct connection between human language and the world" (Lakoff, 1987, p. 206). In addition, despite the fact that a conception can indeed have a unique referent in the world (often established by convention), it is not impossible that in some imagined world, that could be conceived in any moment, it would not be so. One more observation is that even if the entity is unique, we often tend to discern various kinds, states, phases, stages, etc. of that entity (see Section 3.4.1).

Given the complexity of the issue, as Taylor (1995) points out, "it is in many cases tantalizingly difficult to decide if two uses of a linguistic form instantiate two different senses, or whether they represent two exemplars, one perhaps more central than the other, of a single sense" (p. 100). Considering that the boundary between the two senses is fuzzy, it can be agreed that their semantic separateness "might be more a matter of points on a continuum than of a dichotomy" (p. 102). As for the methodology proposed by Tyler and Evans (2003), regarding *specific entity*, a slight shift in the semantic representation of *unique entity* can be observed—the assessment is made relative to the maximal scope instead of the immediate scope. Therefore, the sense *ofunique entity* can be considered as a distinct sense.

Moreover, *unique entity and specific entity*can be regarded as conceptually related centres of the definite article's category. Thus, Geeraerts (1985), unlike Rosch, argues that a category can contain more

than one prototypical centres which are mutually related. The same view is held by Taylor, who maintains that many categories "exhibit a polycentric, rather than a monocentric structure, i.e. category membership is a function of similarity to one of several prototype representations" (1995, p. 99). So, the proposal here is to consider the semantic value of *unique entity* as a secondary prototype of the category of the definite article. The prototypicality of the two senses in represented in figure 3 by means of heavy lines. The interconnectedness of the two prototypical meanings lies, on the one hand, in the extendability of the uniqueness of *specific entity*, identified within the immediate scope, to the whole conceptual content, and as a result, its conversion into *unique entity*; and on the other hand, in the shrinking of unique entity to the scope of current discourse space, getting closer to the notion of *specific entity*. Anyway, judgements of this sort are relative and to a large extent are matters of established conventions.

3.3. A particular way of conceptualization: possession

In Spanish, as in other Romance languages, body parts and some other relations of possession are conceptualized with the definite article, instead of using a possessive pronoun as in English or German. Therefore, the question to consider here is not so much why they are grounded by the definite article but rather why they are not grounded by possessive pronouns, as in (13).

(13) *Me duele* [*mi] *la cabeza* (PCIC)
    'My head hurts.'

(14) *Berta levantó* [*su] *la mano* (RAE, 2010, p. 352)
    'Berta raised her hand.'

In English, for example, such expression as (15) normally would indicate that the hand in movement does not belong to the actor (Langacker, 2008, p. 184). In Spanish, however, this body part is understood as belonging to the conceptualizer (i.e. the subject of conception). The difference in grounding, according to Langacker (2008), lies in conventionally established elaborations of the general constructional schema in various languages. In figure 4, I reproduce, almost unchanged, Langacker's diagram (p. 185)
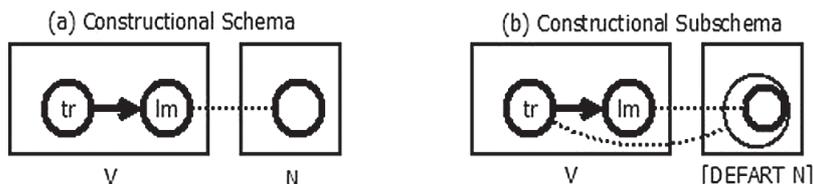
illustrating a similar example in French (15):

Figure 4

(15) *Je lève la main.* (Langacker, 2008, p. 184)
'I raise my hand.'

In (4a) the general pattern is sketched: the verb (V) profiles a relationship which elements are the trajector (tr)—the most prominent participant— and the landmark (lm), a secondary focus of the expression; the landmark of the verb is a schematic thing which at the higher level elaborates a nominal (N). The dotted line indicates the correspondence between the landmark and the nominal's profile. In accordance with this schema, (14) would be grounded by a possessive pronoun. But Spanish presupposes an additional correspondence by default, that is illustrated by the subschema (4b): the trajector is equated with the conceptualizer whose profiled body part corresponds to the landmark of the profiled relationship. Moreover, the body part and the conceptualizer are related in a part-to-whole relationship. This more specific subschema constitutes a usual interpretation of such expressions, unless other elements present within the immediate context are to be understood as the landmark of the profiled relationship. The conceptualizer, previously identified as the profiled trajector, constitutes for the profiled body part the background against which it should be interpreted. Therefore, the body part in question is grounded by the definite article (represented in figure 4 by its constructional schema [DEFART N]). Likewise, even though there is more than one instance of the body part is available, it can be grounded by the definite article:

(16) *Se dio un golpe en el brazo* (RAE, 2010, p. 272)
'S/he struck her/his arm.'

Presumably the use of the definite article in these cases is also motivated by

the extralinguistic situation (see Section 3.1). Besides that, the profiled body part is specific for other reasons: the subject and the object of conception overlap, the object of conception being the subject's part.

So, the Spanish language presumes the more specific interpretation of the general constructional schema as the conventionally established pattern. Relevant here trajector/landmark alignment and part-whole relationship, both are epiphenomena of figure/ground perception that underlies our conceptualization processes. The whole-part relation, moreover, plays an important role in the phenomenon of metonymy.

3.4. Extensions

Such conceptual mechanisms as metonymy and metaphor are the sources for the extended senses of a polysemous item and provide explanation for their motivation (Lakoff, 1987) within the radial network.

3.4.1. Metonymy

According to Panther and Radden (1999, p.1), "metonymy is a cognitive phenomenon that may be even more fundamental than metaphor". Though widely studied in recent years, different approaches to metonymy have not been unproblematic (Barcelona, 2009; Blank, 1999; Gibbs, 1999; Koch, 1999; Lakoff, 1987). Within the Cognitive Linguistics framework, in general, it is agreed to consider "metonymy" as a mapping between two entities within one conceptual domain, in this sense distinguishing it from "metaphor" which operates between two domains. Thus, (17) is an example of metonymy creator for creation, where the target and the source concepts pertain to the same domain, while (18) is a metaphorical expression which involves a projection of features of one conceptual domain onto another.

(17) *Tiene un Picasso en su casa*. (PCIC)
    'S/he has a Picasso at her/his house.'

(18) *Luis es un lince*. (PCIC)
    'Luis is very clever.'

Metonymy is a basic characteristic of human cognition (Lakoff, 1987) and

underlies our thinking processes: its manifestation in language is just a reflection of such conceptual status (Gibbs, 1999, p. 62; Panther & Radden, 1999, p. 2).

One of the more ubiquitous metonymies in natural languages is the whole for part metonymy. Our ability to think metonymically permits to infer whole from parts and parts from wholes (Gibbs, 1999). That is rooted in the very form of human cognition and in the cognitive mechanism of categorization that permits to classify entities in our mind. Therefore, metonymy as a linguistic phenomenon "in all cases . . . relies on extralinguistic world knowledge" (Blank, 1999, p. 171). Moreover, it is a reversible process (Panther & Radden, 1999). The substitution of the whole for a part or a part for the whole, by some scholars, is referred to as synecdoche, which in its turn is considered to be either a subcategory of metonymy or a concept independent from it (e.g., Gibbs, 1999; Taylor, 1995); here I prefer the former.

The whole for part metonymy contributes to the polysemy of the definite article in Spanish by referring to the category by means of one instance, and conversely. In figure 5, a dashed arrow indicates that the metonymic relation maintained between the two senses is an extension.
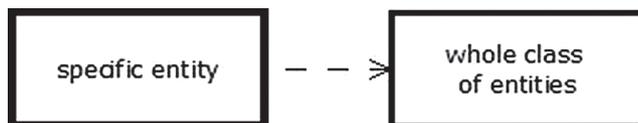

Figure 5

Thus, in the following examples by virtue of the metonymic extension, instead of being referred to a particular entity in a domain, the singular definite article designates the whole category:

(19) El bolígrafo se usa para escribir. (PCIC)
     'The pen is used for writing.'

(20) El dinosaurio se extinguió en el Cretácico (RAE, 2010, p. 289)
     'The dinosaurs were extinct in the Cretaceous.'

(21) La gaviota se alimenta de peces. (RAE, 2010, p. 289)
     'The seagull feeds on fish.'

In these cases, the nominal grounded by the definite article does not refer to any particular entity in the world: its referent is virtual. Virtual referents are those that "figure in tacit mental constructions, and while they correspond to actual occurrences, they cannot be identified with them" (Langacker, 2008, p. 534), though they do have referents at the discourse level. The profiled entity is a general characterization of the specified type; the statement in such cases applies to all instances of the category. Thus, the metonymy instance for type, as Radden (2009) denominates it, permits to construe a kind of generic reference where the type is invoked by means of an instance.

Generalizations can be carried to different degrees. Thus, a metonymic process category for subcategory (as a kind of the part for whole metonymy) is activated when generic reference allows for exceptions (Radden, 2009, p. 201). In contrast with (21), the generalization grounded by the plural definite article (to be discussed in Section 3.5) does not necessarily include all members of the category but a representative part of them as a subcategory.

(22) Las gaviotas se alimentan de peces. (RAE, 2010, p. 289)
      'Seagulls feed on fish.'

In some cases, as it is for (21) and (22), generic references grounded by the singular definite article and by the plural definite article can be used interchangeably. As Radden (2009, p. 199) points out that "the borderlines between characterizing generalizations and direct reference to a kind are far from clear-cut." This example can be considered as an overlapping of categories, that within the prototype theory are said to have fuzzy boundaries, contrary to the classical view of categorization (Lakoff, 1987; Taylor, 1995).

The metonymy category for subcategory gives rise to another kind of generic reference which neither applies to all instances of the type. In (22), a subcategory of the entire category is invoked by means of the most typical, representative member:

(23) Una gaviota se alimenta de peces. (RAE, 2010, p. 289)
      'A seagull feeds on fish.'

In (23), the referent of the entity grounded by the singular indefinite article is virtual since it does not refer to any particular instance of the type. The statement reflects the prototypical conceptual organization of the human brain: by referring to a prototypical member, judgements about other members of the specified category are made, although the generalization in this case is not absolute. (22) and (23), both invoking a subcategory of the whole category, can overlap conceptually. Moreover, there are case where generalizations grounded by the singular indefinite and the singular definite articles also can overlap, as (19) with (24):

> (24) *Un bolígrafo se usa para escribir*. (PCIC)
>   'A pen is used for writing.'

The examples discussed above demonstrate a close conceptual interdependence of instance and type. Due to such metonymic thinking—as nominal expressions in Spanish are construed by means of the dual strategy (see Section 2)—the type specification is inherent to its instance's construal (Langacker, 2008; Radden, 2009). Leaving the indefinite article out of the scope of this paper, figure 6 illustrates this conceptual interrelatedness between the metonymic extensions of the definite article: a dotted line indicates correspondence from singular to plural form, the dashed arrows mean extensions. As boundaries between generalizations are vague and give rise to overlaps, my proposition is to see them as a continuum.
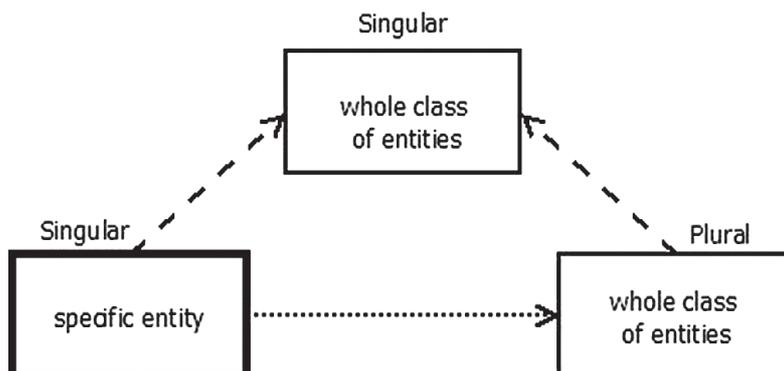

Figure 6

Langacker (2008) describes metonymy as a shift in profile: profiling of one entity instead of another associated with it in some domain (p. 69). The choice of profile, therefore, plays a crucial role in the process of metonymic extension. If we take a closer look to the structure of nominals grounded by the definite article, we will see that its metonymic senses are owed to such shift in profile.

As already mentioned, nominal reference in discourse is achieved by the combination of the descriptive and deictic strategies (Langacker, 2008, pp. 276–277). Through the descriptive strategy, the noun provides the type specification, while the deictic strategy singles out the intended referent belonging to the specified type by means of grounding and directs attention to it. The type fulfills a classificatory function and represents the abstracted commonality of all instances. As nouns conceptually are divided into two major classes, count and mass nouns, they differ in their semantic behavior (Langacker, 2008, pp. 128–132). In the case of count nouns, an instance is construed as a discrete and bounded entity. On the contrary, mass nouns are not inherently bounded, any portion of a mass counts as an instance of the type, including its maximal extension (Langacker, 2008, p. 291). The maximal extension tends to be the most usual reference in the case of mass nouns (a mass noun normally is construed as unique entity).

Since one and the same situation can be perceived in various ways, alternating figure/ground selection (Langacker, 2008; López García, 2005), in principle any noun can be construed either as count or mass, it depends on how a particular thing is conceptualized (Langacker, 2008, pp. 142–145). Preference for a particular construal is influenced by established conventions. Now then, if, in the case of count nouns, instead of a particular instance its type is profiled, a shift in profile will be accomplished. The result will be a virtual instance which subsumes the abstracted commonality of all instances of the type. It could be said that the count noun will be construed as a mass noun. That is the case for (19), (20) and (21). As for mass nouns, construed as an undifferentiated whole in its reference to the maximal extension, they themselves constitute the entire type. Therefore, the shift in profile is to be done in the opposite direction: from the type to instances of the type. Due to this metonymic shift, a mass noun designating the type is construed as having multiple instances; however, in order to

be distinguished from the uses of the mass noun as unique (the maximal extension) and specific entity (a specific portion of a mass within the immediate scope), an instance should be provided with a finer-grained description:

(25) *un agua muy clara* (PCIC)
     'a very clear water'

(26) *brillaba un sol espléndido* (PCIC)
     'a splendid sun was shining'

As it has been observed, the metonymic extensions of the definite article are owed to the shift in profile of nominals: from instance to type and vice versa. Moreover, the choice of profile itself is based on the metonymic part-whole relationship. But the metonymic processes in the semantics of the definite article presuppose not only a shift in profile, they also entail a shift in construal -- count nouns are conceived as mass nouns and vice versa.

One other point to consider is that apart from being a mechanism of semantic change, metonymic substitution is also an important cohesive device at the discourse level. There are many works that examine referential functions of metonymy which occurs due to figure/ground effects in discourse (Al-Sharafi, 2004; Gibbs, 1999; Koch, 1999; Littlemore, 2015; Warren, 1999, to name a few). Al-Sharafi (2004) goes even further and argues that:

> In reality, all types of reference are metonymic, in the sense that there is a process of substitution in referencing and there is a process of signification in substitution. This view is even more plausible if we take into consideration that 'cognitive reference' is primary while 'textual reference' is secondary, because for a thing to be present in text is a special case of it being present in cognition at large. So in a sense whatever we find in a text stands in a part – whole relationship to what is in cognition. This is a proper metonymic relation. . . . This is a fundamental process of metonymic interpretation in which one form stands for another form. (pp. 112-113)

From this point of view, the types of domain-bound reference discussed in Section 3.1 are metonymic. Moreover, metonymy seen as a process

of substitution also integrates ellipsis. Although Ullmann in his theory of metonymy distinguishes between metonymy and ellipsis, considering the latter as a relation based on spatial contiguity in the text, within the Cognitive Linguistics framework such distinction seems to be superfluous; most recent researchers, therefore, admit that ellipsis is motivated by metonymy (Al-Sharafi, 2004; Barcelona, 2009). Within the metonymic form for form relation ellipsis could be defined as a relation "where an empty slot stands for a previously mentioned form" (Al-Sharafi, 2004, p. 114), or rather as "substitution by zero" (Halliday & Hasan, 1976, pp. 142–145).

Taking that into account, it is possible to put forward that nominal ellipsis grounded by the definite article forms a kind of metonymic extension within the polysemous network (figure 7). The extension tends to occur with the prototypical meaning and its correspondent plural forms. Semantically, then, ellipsis can stand for specific or unique entity.
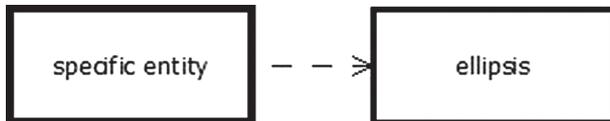

Figure 7

In (27) and (28), the definite article as a part of the correspondent nominal expression takes on the meaning of the whole. Nevertheless, because of its incapacity to stay as a full nominal, the definite article can only function accompanied by complements (in the sense of Langacker).

(27) Compra el nuevo. (PCIC)
    'Buy the new one.'

(28) La séptima sinfonía de Beethoven me gusta más que la octava (RAE, 2010, p. 273)
    'I like Beethoven's Seventh Symphony more than the Eighth.'

Basically, ellipsis accomplishes the same as other metonymic references function: it permits to infer a great amount of information in the process of interpreting a text because words themselves, in fact, are in a stand-for relation with respect to the world of concepts.

3.4.2. Metaphor

In contrast to metonymy, metaphor in Cognitive Linguistics is understood as a mapping between two conceptual domains, a source one and a target one (Lakoff, 1987; Langacker, 2008; Taylor, 1995), as in (18). Cognitive Linguistics from its very outset has been marked by the focus on conceptual metaphors by which abstract concepts are defined in terms of physical experience. But bearing in mind that lexicon and grammar are viewed as a continuum, it is reasonable to assume that the phenomenon of metaphor is manifested also on the grammatical pole, likewise metonymy, which is present at various levels of conceptual organization. The concept of grammatical metaphor, however, has been introduced and developed within another framework—Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) (Taverniers, 2003). It was postulated as complementing lexical metaphor, because SFL also assumes a continuum between lexicon and grammar, however, diverging with Cognitive Linguistics in other fundamental issues. By SFL grammatical metaphor was defined as "variation in the expression of a given meaning, rather than variation in the meaning of a given expression" (Taverniers, 2003, p. 7). The term has been coined by cognitive linguists afterwards, notwithstanding their understanding of the notion is not the same (Panther & Thornburg, 2009).

Thus, nominalization, relevant for the present analysis of the definite article, first has been regarded as grammatical metaphor within the systemic-functional framework (Heyvaert, 2003; Taverniers, 2003). Even though Panther and Thornburg (2009, pp. 13–14) argue against its analogous interpretation in Cognitive Linguistics, they admit that the English present participle taken as an example from Taverniers (They started a letter writing campaign) within the cognitive linguistic perspective is also considered as a kind of metaphor which could be denominated activities are substances (p. 13). Their definition of metaphor thereby is as follows:

> It is sufficient to define conceptual metaphor as a case of structural similarity, i.e. a set of correspondences (mappings) between two conceptual structures (source and target). The relation between source and target can be seen as iconic (isomorphic): the target meaning is, mostly, conceptually organized in the same way as the source meaning, although certain correspondences may be blocked due to

the inherent conceptual structure of the target meaning. (Panther &
Thornburg, 2009, p. 16)

Therefore, Panther and Thornburg, examining a set of correspondences
in the structure of the source and the target domain of the nominalization in
question, affirm that one of the metaphorical mappings is blocked because
activities have limited duration, while substances are stable across time (pp.
13-14). But according to Langacker (2008), nominalization presupposes the
suspension of the verb's sequential scanning and the imposition of summary
scanning on the verbal process with its consequent atemporalization
by a shift in profile (pp. 125, 412-413). As he points out, "Semantically,
the nominalization consists in the conceptual reification of this activity,
producing an abstract thing . . . which is profiled by the noun" (p. 332).
Taking this into account, it can be argued that the metaphorical mapping in
that case has been accomplished completely.

Notwithstanding Langacker regards the shift in profile from the
relationship to a thing as metonymy (p. 119), if we bear in mind the criteria
adduced by Panther and Thornburg (2009) and recall that metaphor is
characterized "by the conceptualization of one cognitive domain in terms
of components more usually associated with another cognitive domain"
(Taylor, 1995, pp. 132–133), it will be possible to argue that we deal with
grammatical metaphor. Thus nominalizations, through reification of
processual relationships, function grammatically as nouns. Consequently,
when nominalizations are grounded by the definite article, they can be
considered the definite article's metaphorical extensions because they profile
things. The meanings they can acquire, as in case of ellipsis, are specific and
unique entity.

Spanish admits various kinds of nominalizations; only some of them are
grounded by the definite article:

(29) [El] *florecer de las plantas* (PCIC)
     'the flowering of plants'

(30) *No sabemos el cuándo ni el dónde.* (PCIC)
     'We do not know when or where'

In (29) and (30), the nonprocessual relationships are construed in such

a way that profile abstract things. "Nominalization products seem to reify relational concepts (i.e. processes and qualities), which can then be manipulated metaphorically like a physical object" (Mihatsch, 2009, p. 94). As an observation, it can be added that nominalized expressions resemble mass nouns in the sense that they demonstrate the same as mass nouns properties like the absence of inherent bounding and spatial discontinuity.

However, the degree to which relationships are reified may vary. This is owed to the fact that nouns themselves comprise a prototypically structured category whose members have different degrees of nouniness (Lakoff, 1987, p. 64; Taylor, 1995, p. 193). Therefore, there are nominalizations that have been transformed into full-fledged lexical nouns (RAE, 2010, pp. 246, 494); others are marginal, situated far away from the centre, have complex structure and can fail to exhibit nominal behavior in some cases. For this reason, depending on the degree of reification, it may be even unclear whether a relationship or a thing is profiled. As relationships are grounded not through nominal but clausal grounding (see Langacker, 2008), such uncertainty results in the optional grounding by the definite article:

(31) [(el)] *ser de otro país* (PCIC)
     'to be from another country'

(32) *Me preocupa [(el)] que no me lo haya dicho todavía.* (PCIC)
     'I am worried that s/he has not told it to me yet'

According to the traditional explanation, the grounding of the (31) and (32) is optional because there is an alternation with the construction *el hecho de* (Instituto Cervantes, 2017; RAE, 2010, p. 821). Although this issue requires a further investigation, considering the type of structure that undergoes nominalization in each case, my hypothesis is that the grounding by the definite article is optional when the process is not fully reified and it is unclear to which pole it is closer to. So, for these reasons, the nominalization per se is a gradual process and may give rise to overlapping of senses (grounded vs. ungrounded) in the process of approaching to the prototypical noun.

One more question to consider is a special case of nominalization that involves a change in the choice of trajectory/landmark alignment and

thereby in profiling. In (33), the profiled qualities are reified instead of indicating stable relationships with their trajectors:

(33) *el inepto de tu hermano, la buena de María* (PCIC)
     'your inept brother, good María'

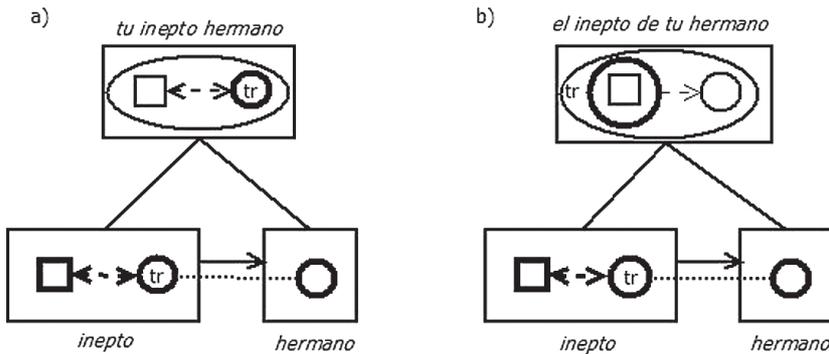Diagrammatically it is shown in figure 8:

Figure 8

While an adjective normally profiles a nonprocessual relationship conferring trajector status on the actor (figure 8a), in figure 8b, there is a case of topicalization by conferring focal prominence on the nominalized quality. Consequently, the alternate constituency of 8b is derived by transformation (Langacker, 1986, p. 35). The trajector and the landmark have been inverted by the nominalization of the adjective, that resulted, moreover, in the increase of prominence of the reified quality.

3.5. Elaborations and continuum of senses
It is widely maintained, within the framework of Cognitive Linguistics, that different senses within a polysemous category grouped around prototypical centres are motivated, being linked by categorizing relationships (Geeraerts, 1985; Lakoff, 1987; Langacker, 2008; Taylor, 1995). In the previous section, I have discussed metaphorical and metonymic extensions of the definite article in Spanish. Another type of possible relationship constitutes elaborations from a more central meaning—either by specialization or by

generalization—because "schematization can be carried to different degrees, depending on the diversity of the elements it is based on" (Langacker, 2008, p. 17). Thus, it can be argued that proper names grounded by the definite article constitute elaborations from the prototypical meaning of unique entity. It seems that there is an interconnection between the common nouns' semantic value of unique entity and proper nouns, that denote unique entities by their conventional label easily identifiable in our mental universe. This point will be addressed below.

We have seen that, in the case of the prototypical meanings, the defining uniqueness of an entity—either with respect to the immediate or to the maximal scope—are a subjective and rather relative matter. By the same token, in the case of metonymic and metaphorical extensions, the boundaries between distinct senses (various kinds of generic reference) have been said to be fuzzy, as well as giving rise to overlaps between different linguistic categories (definite vs. indefinite grounding; relationship vs. thing). Bearing this in mind, it could be suggested that the variable grounding of proper names by the definite article can be seen as a continuum, by regarding proper nouns as a kind of prototype category where the grounding of the prototypical proper name is intrinsic.

In Spanish, some proper nouns do not require any separate grounding element, because "the very meanings of such expressions imply the identifiability of their referents" (Langacker, 2008, p. 272). The use of the article is unnecessary because by virtue of its type description there is only one instance identifiable independently of the immediate discourse context (although within the maximal scope). Such proper nouns have intrinsic grounding and can be considered prototypical (Fernández Leborans, 1999, p. 80):

(34) María, Antonio (PCIC)

(35) Madrid, París, Alcalá de Henares (PCIC)

Other proper nouns in Spanish are always used with the definite article. Moreover, in (36) the article is integral part of the proper noun and is written starting with capital letter:

(36) La Coruña, El Escorial, La Habana (PCIC)

(37) el Ebro, los Pirineos, el Teide (PCIC)

Additionally, there are proper names whose grounding by the definite article is optional:

(38) la China / China, el Japón / Japón, las Canarias / Canarias (PCIC)
    'China, Japan, the Canaries'

The reasons for the presence, absence or alternation of the definite article are not clear in all cases and up to now the use of the definite article with proper nouns has been determined by established conventions (RAE, 2010). Supposedly, it is a matter of continuum throughout the historical processes of grammaticalization. As Alarcos Llorach (2000) points out: "Nevertheless, in these three cases, the reference of the proper noun is the same: they accomplish the identification of the designated object in the situational context of the interlocutors" (p. 68).[3] So, if proper nouns represent unique entities identifiable per se, the uniqueness provided by the definite article to common nouns is often not absolute (Langacker, 2008, p. 291). Alarcos Llorach describes the role of the definite article in the following manner: "The common noun with article turns into identifier just as it is the proper noun" (2000, pp. 68–69).[4]

Even though proper nouns are said to be unmistakably identifiable against the background of an expression, the dimensions of our mental universe and complexity of the human conceptual system make thinking in absolute terms problematic. Thus, proper names designating individuals, as in (34), obviously pertain to more than one person, and that is why in practice they entail the narrowing of the scope of our attention in order to identify the referent. Given that, it not surprising that proper nouns with intrinsic grounding can undergo a process of generalization and therefore treated as

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[3] "Sin embargo, en los tres casos la referencia del nombre propio es la misma: cumplen la identificación del objeto designado en el campo de situación de los hablantes" (Alarcos Llorach, 2000, p. 68).

[4] "El sustantivo común con artículo se convierte en *identificador* como lo es el nombre propio" (Alarcos Llorach, 2000, pp. 68-69).

common nouns. Again, in such cases an overlap of categories takes place. Analogously to the common noun's type, which has multiple instances, the type description of a proper noun, designated by the name itself, presupposes the existence of more than one instance of its type (Langacker, 2008, pp. 316–318). Taking this into account, it is inconsistent to state that proper nouns lack lexical meaning (see, e.g., Fernández Leborans, 1999). Paradoxically, when grounded by the definite article, the proper noun becomes more prominent (in fact, it is the alternative constituency that makes the item more salient):

(39) *la Ana a la que yo me refiero* (PCIC)
      'the Ana I am referring to'

In (39), the name itself designates the type of entity it Is referred to and is thought of as having many instances, so it is specified by narrowing the focus of attention. The emphasis can serve various purposes, including a derogatory one, as in (40):[5]

(40) *Se presentó la Ana (esta) como si nada*. (PCIC)
      '(This) Ana showed up as if nothing had happened'

Moreover, a proper noun can behave not only as a count noun but also can be construed similar to mass nouns, as a whole, making possible to discern various "patches" of its type:

(41) *la España franquista* (PCIC)
      'Francoist Spain'

Thus, the subcategory of proper nouns in the continuum of the definite grounding, when treated as common nouns, semantically approaches to the meaning of specific entity, referring to a concrete instance of the specified type which, in this case, is the proper noun itself. Yet, semantically it is more salient than a grounded by the definite article common noun. This owes to the assumption that proper nouns are more salient than common nouns (Cook, 2003, p. 161). The situation is depicted schematically in figure

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[5] Also, the use of the definite article with proper names in rather typical in colloquial speech in some regions in the south of Spain and in Latin America.
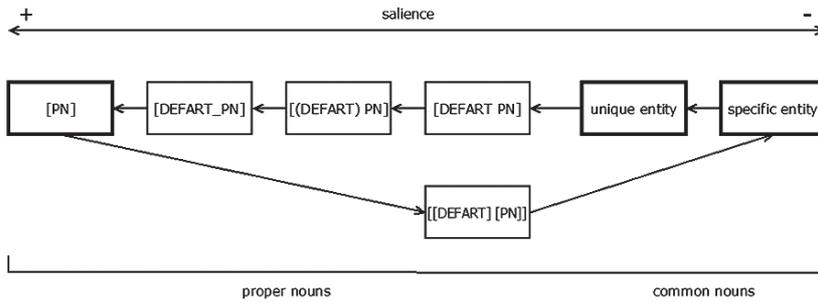
Figure 5

Proper nouns are designated abbreviately by their constructional schemas [PN], [DEFART_PN], [(DEFART) PN], [DEFART PN], and [[DEFART] [PN]]—corresponding to the examples (34,35), (36), (38), (37) and (39, 40, 41) respectively. Solid arrows are used for elaborations. Bold lines indicate prototypical meanings. It is assumed that the elements on the left are more salient than the elements on the right. From the notion of unique entity, an array of elaborations is expanded continuously towards the prototypical proper noun whose grounding is intrinsic. Proper nouns whose grounding is optional are less salient than those which incorporate it in the phonological form, nevertheless, they are more salient than proper nouns that do require the article because otherwise some of them run the risk to not to be considered as such. For example, various confusions can take place: between the proper noun los Alpes and a rarely used common noun alpes, which means "very high hill"; between los Pirineos and the plural form of the adjective pirineos, etc. The meanings such (39), (40), and (41), through generalization, elaborate the proper name's prototype, approaching to the prototypical meaning of specific entity and producing an overlap of proper names and common nouns. The depicted in figure 5 meanings form between themselves a continuum with blurry boundaries.

An analogous to the process of semantic generalization of proper nouns with intrinsic grounding is the process of specialization of indefinite nouns resulting in their particular cognitive salience. Such elaboration consists of bringing a nominal closer to the semantic value of unique entity. Since definite nouns are assumed to be more salient than indefinite nouns (Cook,

2003, p. 161), the profiled entity Is grounded by the definite article contrary to the conventional pattern:

(42) *No es una película, es la película*. (PCIC)
     'It is not a movie, it is (one of) the best movie(s).'

(43) *La Paceña es la cerveza*. (RAE, 2010, p. 265)
     '*La Paceña* is a great bear.'

Omitting a detailed semantic characterization of the indefinite article, the elaboration structure will be abbreviated as its constructional schema [INDEFART N], so the process can be represented as follows:
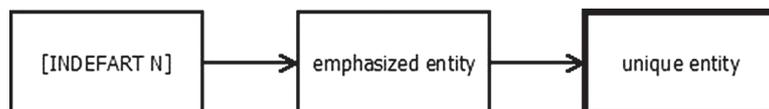

Figure 6

In figure 6, through specialization, the emphasized entity tends to approach the semantic value of unique entity but fails to do it due to the lack of structural weight. Hence the emphasized entity can never be equal to the profiling of unique entity, nevertheless, always remaining in constant movement towards it. The conceptualizers are aware that its status as a unique entity is artificial. So, this is one more example of overlapping of categories.

   The grammatical number of nouns also affects the semantics of definiteness in Spanish. As language is intimately tied with other fundamental human capacities, the meaning of the plural definite article in Spanish can be explained by taking a deeper insight into the nature of pluralization. Logically, only count nouns can be pluralized, while unique entities and proper nouns, in principle, are thought of as not having plural forms. Langacker (2008) argues that pluralization as a mental operation conceptually is situated at a higher level than the distinction between mass or count types of categories (p. 346). Moreover, to his mind, the category of mass nouns includes both mass nouns as such and plural nouns (Langacker,

2008 p. 130).[6] As he writes, the phenomenon of unitization of a mass "is basically the inverse of pluralization: instead of replicating a discrete entity to create a mass, it creates a discrete entity by bounding a mass" (p. 342). Mass nouns, when construed as conceptually bounded entities, as count nouns, can be replicated. The mental operation of pluralization is linked with categorization, as reduplication presupposes as a previous step the act of abstracting common properties. Pluralization, therefore, is grouping by means of multiplication of instances. So, the plural definite article profiles multiple specific entities either within the immediate scope, (44, 45), or within the maximal scope, (46), that is understood as referring to all instances of the type in all domains of the matrix. The relationship between immediate and maximal scope is one of elaboration (figure 7).

(44) Juán va con los pocos amigos que tiene. (PCIC)
    'Juan goes with the few friends he has.'

(45) los dos amigos (PCIC)
    'the two friends'

(46) La mayoría de los alumnos prefiere ir a clase por la mañana. (PCIC)
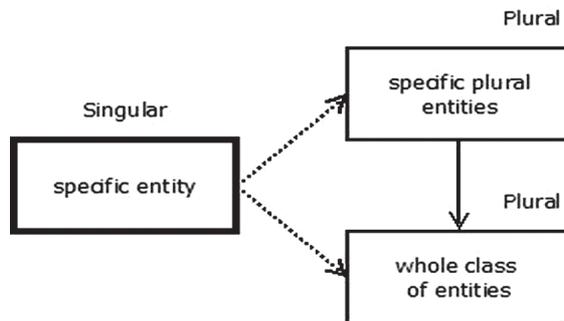   'Most students prefer to go to class in the morning.'

Figure 7

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[6] Interestingly, generative linguists have also recently come to the conclusion that mass nouns are inherently plural. For further discussion, see: Chierchia, G. 1998. Plurality of mass nouns and the notion of "semantic parameter." In S. Rothstein (Ed.), Events and grammar, 53–103. Dordrecht: Springer Science+Business Media.

As we have seen before, if the requirement of uniqueness for a proper
noun is not fulfilled it behaves as a common noun. When pluralized, proper
nouns acquire semantic values of common nouns in plural (figure 8). A
proper noun in plural is represented by its constructional schema, the dotted
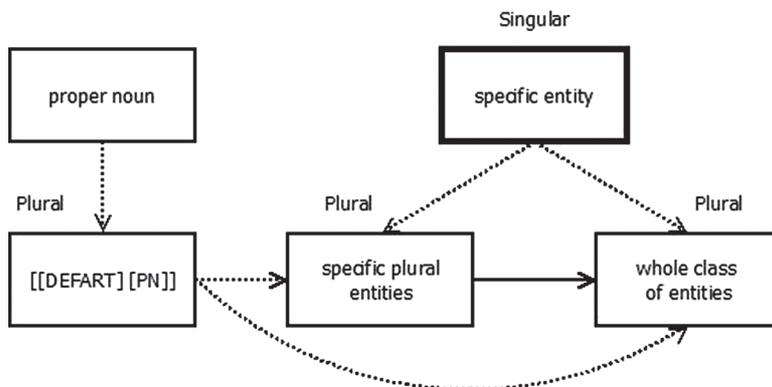lines indicate correspondences.

Figure 8

There is an observable tendency that only prototypical proper nouns, as
having intrinsic instead of overt grounding, are subject to such behaviour.
The interpretation of (47) and (48) is to be done against the immediate
or the maximal scope of an expression and will be feasible due to other
grounding elements that necessarily will evoke the rest of the conceptual
content.

  (47) l*os Fernández, los González* (PCIC)
     'the Fernandez, the Gonzalez'

  (48) *los Escipiones, los Borbones* (PCIC)
     'the Scipios, the Bourbons'

Thus, the above-discussed elaborations of the definite article, besides its
extensions, constitute a gradation giving rise to overlaps between different
categories. In addition, it can be observed that "boundary" meanings tend to
originate from the prototype of one category and approach the prototypical
meaning of the other.

4. A complete network of senses for the definite article in Spanish

The senses of the definite article in Spanish discussed in the previous sections form a polysemous network which is represented in figure 9.[7] The senses are motivated by family resemblances to the prototypical centres being linked by categorizing relationships of specialization, generalization, metonymy, and metaphor. Solid arrows indicate specialization or generalization while dashed arrows mean extensions, either metonymic or metaphorical. Dotted arrows mean correspondences to plural forms. Figure 9 shows that the definite article in Spanish can run the gamut from profiling a unique entity of its type to denoting the whole class of entities. By means of this polysemous network and the elicitation of conceptual relationships underlying the structure of the definite article, I hope to have shown that the various senses of the definite article constitute a coherent system, although I have not examined all of them due to space limitations. By proposing this kind of network, it is not claimed that these nodes exist as discrete meanings, quite the contrary, an attempt to show the continuous nature of their metamorphoses has been made. The postulated continuum between various senses of the definite article produces overlaps between different categories, demonstrating that their boundaries are fuzzy.

   The aforementioned accounts of the definite article from the cognitive linguistic perspective (Alonso Raya et al., 2006; Chamorro et al., 2006; López García, 2005; Montero Gálvez, 2011) have not taken into consideration the internal semantic complexity of the structure of the definite article. The analysis proposed in the previous sections demonstrates that the meaning of the definite article, which is polysemous, cannot be reduced to one essential value, as Montero Gálvez (2011) proposes. As a critique of her approach, Geeraerts's words are relevant here: "The senses within one cluster cannot be covered by a single definition but have to be related by devices such as family resemblance" (1985, p. 138). A similar view is held by Langacker who states that "a single abstract meaning does

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[7] Note that the indefinite article represented in the diagram by its constructional schema forms its proper polysemous network and this paper does not discuss its status.

not fully describe a lexical item's established semantic value" (2008, p. 38) because it is too schematic to be able to predict and explain the range of specific senses of an item. Thus, according to Cognitive Linguistics, the only possible characterization valid for all instances of the definite article is its constructional schema which is [DEFART], but it has no specific conceptual content. Therefore, following theoretical considerations of Langacker (2008), it is strongly argued that the meaning of the definite article resides not just in the prototype but in the entire polysemous network and the kinds of relationships that motivate its various senses.
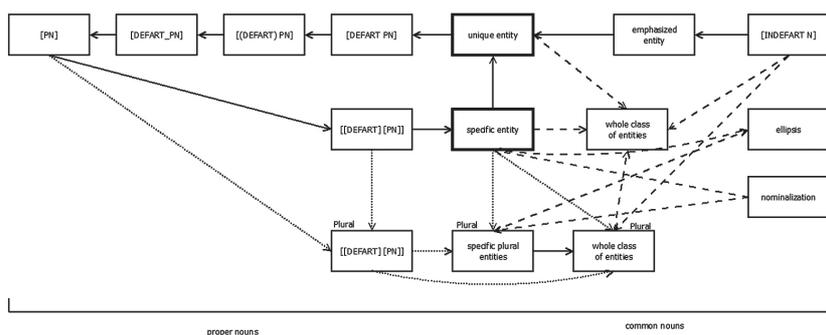

Figure 9

5. Concluding remarks

In this paper, the different uses of the definite article in Spanish, traditionally represented in a piecemeal fashion, have been analysed as motivated and interrelated by categorizing relationships of elaboration and extension. My primary purpose has been to outline the mechanisms that underlie the structure of the category of the definite article because, due to the continuum between lexicon and grammar, grammatical categories are subject to the same phenomena as lexical items. Given that the phenomenon of polysemy is also manifested on the grammatical pole of the lexicogrammatical continuum, it has been possible to argue that the definite article in Spanish is a prototype category with fuzzy boundaries. For the examination of the semantic role of the definite article, the notion of

ground and the role of the definite article as a grounding element have been considered. It has been shown that its various senses can be represented as a network and form a continuum, since expressions grounded by the definite article run the gamut from profiling a unique entity of the type to denoting the whole class of entities.

Postulating the continuum of the senses of the definite article, I have argued that the prototype of the definite article can be defined either relative to the immediate or the maximal scope. It has been discussed that its elaborations and extensions form a gradation that gives rise to overlaps between categories (definite vs indefinite grounding; count vs. mass noun construal; relationship vs. thing; proper vs. common nouns). The phenomena of metaphor and metonymy, moreover, have been examined as applicable to both meaning and form. For this analysis to be complete, however, deeper insights into the semantics of other elements in the Spanish grounding system are necessary: in particular, regarding the grounding of nouns by the indefinite article and in cases where the grounding is covert.

Acknowledgement

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