

# The Name of the Adjective

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**Abstract:** On the basis of data from English, French, Hebrew and Spanish, this paper argues that (apparent) adjectives which function as nominals belong to two distinct classes. One small class consists of true nouns that are homophonous with adjectives but are not derived from them. The other one consists of true attributive adjectives which modify a null N, and whose range of interpretations cross-linguistically depend on the conditions on the licensing and identification of null Ns in a given structure and in a given language. We further claim that while the former group can appear in any context where nouns are typically licensed, the latter group is restricted to strong environments. This, we argue, is because referential *pro*, the assumed head of N-ellipsis structures, is always definite.

**Keywords:** adjectives, nouns, null pronoun, determiners, morphology, strong/weak reading, N-ellipsis.

## 1. Introduction

This paper addresses the occurrence of (apparent) adjectives as nominals illustrated in (1). That the expressions in (1) are, indeed, nominals in some sense is beyond dispute, as indicated by the presence of articles as well as, at times, plural morphology. But are the lexical heads of the expressions in (1) indeed nouns? Could at least some of them be adjectives which modify a null or elided null N?

1. a. (the) American(s); the rich (English)
- b. le(s) jeune(s); un petit; mon rouge (French)  
      *the(.pl) young(.pl) a small my red*
- c. (ha.)xolim; (ha.)zaqen; (ha.)kxulim (Hebrew)  
      *(the.)sicks.m (the.)old.m.sg (the.)blues.m*
- d. el ciego; los mojados; una roja (Spanish)  
      *the blind; the.pl wet.pl a.f.sg red.f.sg*

An accompanying question concerns the interpretation of the expressions in (1), as well as the source of inter-language variation in the domain of (apparent) adjectives which function as nominals.

In what follows, we will show that adjectives which function as nominals do not constitute a uniform class, and that two cases need to be distinguished. On the basis of data from English, French, Spanish and Hebrew, we will argue that some apparent lexical 'adjectives' are indeed nouns (henceforth *Noms(A)*) which happen to be homophonous with adjectives. In the languages that we investigated, the set of *Noms(A)* is restricted. Interpretationally, they encode lexical meanings which may be related to, but which are clearly not directly derived from, the adjectival meaning. There are only scattered cases in which *Noms(A)* are arguably derived morphologically from adjectives, and none of them represent productive rules of word formation.

The larger, productive class of adjectival expressions which occur in nominal contexts, we argue, are true attributive adjectives. They are constructed in a nominal phrase, where they modify a null pronominal N, i.e. *pro* (and see also, among others, the works of Corblin 1990, 1995, Lobeck 1995, Sleeman 1996, Kester 1996). In turn, the range of interpretations that such a *pro* can receive, as well as cross-linguistic variation in its interpretation will turn out to depend on how it is identified and licensed in a given structure in a given language.

## 2. First attempt at differentiating *Noms(A)* and regular adjectives: English

In English, *Noms(A)* have clearly different properties from regular adjectives, and the nominal behavior of *Noms(A)* is easy to show – these are the only cases which may occur without a definite article or with a plural marking, the latter possible in English only for nouns and never for adjectives. They represent a very restricted class of lexical items. To the best of our ability to ascertain, there are only a handful of derivational suffixes in English which are systematically homophonous between N and A: forms suffixed with *-(ia)n* as in (2a), and forms suffixed with *-ist* as in (2b). The other large (although not productive) class consists of bare stems, as in (2c):<sup>1</sup>

2. a. an American; two Russians; the Barbarians; three Franciscans; a Freudian
- b. a communist; three pragmatists; the Baptists; behaviorists
- c. a Greek; three Czechs; the Arabs

There is little reason to believe that the forms in (2a-b) are actually derived from adjectives. Thus observe the existence of forms such as those in (3), which have no adjectival correlate:

3. a. (a) librarian(s); (a) physician(s); (a) comedian; (an) electrician; \*very historian; \*a logician office
- b. \*very linguist; \*specialist dishes; \*botanist enough; \*florist displays

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<sup>1</sup> Another case of an affix which, as far as we can tell, is perfectly ambiguous between a nominal and an adjectival reading is *-i*, as in (i):

- i. (An) Israeli; (an) Iraqi; (a) Saudi; (a) Pakistani

The affix is new (it is not included in most lists of English affixes), and seems restricted to names of relatively recent countries. Lacking further information about its source and distribution, we relegate it to a footnote.

As for the forms in (2c), note that they carry no categorial information, and as such, may very well be category-less roots which inherit their category from their syntactic environment, thereby obviating the need to derive the Nom(A) from an adjective (cf. Fu, Roeper and Borer 1996/2001; Marantz 1997; Borer 2005).<sup>2</sup> While a scattering of nouns with overt adjectival suffixes are attested, they do not even amount to a sub-regularity (cf. (4a-d)) and appear to be completely absent for some adjectival endings (cf. (4e-h)):<sup>3</sup>

4. a. \*a frantic; \*three hectics; \*an Icelandic  
(but note: a Catholic; a heretic; a fanatic, a psychic, a psychotic)
- b. \*a destructive; \*three oppressives; \*a compulsive; \*an obsessive  
(but note: a manic-depressive; also an adjective)
- c. \*a reliant; \*a consistent; \*a persistent  
(but note: a patient, an adolescent)
- d. \*the reliables; \*the verifiables; \*an edible (but note: a variable)
- e. \*the Japanesees; \*a Portuguese
- f. \*the Spanishes; \*an English; \*three Polishes
- g. \*the beautifuls; \*a harmful; \*three gracelesses
- h. \*a virtuous; \*the industriouses; \*a repetitious

It is clear that the English Noms(A) in (2) do not mean an entity with whatever property would be denoted by the homophonous adjectives, but rather, describe the affiliation of individuals. Thus *Greeks* cannot mean, in any conceivable context, objects which originate in Greece, or which have the property of being Greek (e.g., *Greek works of art*). While the relationship between the adjective and the Nom(A) here is not idiosyncratic, the Nom(A) meaning represents a restricted set of objects with the relevant property. Cases of straightforward idiosyncrasy are attested as well, at times with *pluralia tantum*:<sup>4</sup>

5. a. the rapids (in rivers); my shorts (pieces of clothing); blinds (window coverings)
- b. a patient; a variable; edibles; a departed

These properties contrast with those of English expressions such as *the poor*. First, neither plural (definite or indefinite) nor the indefinite article are possible, as illustrated by (6a). In fact, the definite article *the* is obligatory (and note specifically that *these* and *those* are excluded). Second, the forms are oblivious to the existence of adjectival suffixation of all sorts, as

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<sup>2</sup> It is possible that phonological information informs the insertion of bare roots in adjectival and nominal environments, respectively. Thus note that roots ending in sibilants do not make good Noms(A) (*French, Dutch; Welsh*). However, while this may explain the failure of sibilant final suffixes such as *-ish* or *-ese* to acquire a nominal function (see (e-f)), such an explanation clearly does not generalize to the other cases in (), making a pure phonological explanation of the failure of homophony in these cases unworkable.

<sup>3</sup> Note the grammaticality of *three roomfuls*, *three spoonfuls* which we take to be compounds, rather than affixed forms, given their measurement function.

<sup>4</sup> Frequently, it appears, the plural morpheme itself acts to convert adjectives or even bare roots to nouns, suggesting that it has a derivational, and not only an inflectional function. We set this matter aside here. We also set aside the question of why, *-able*, in particular, among adjectival suffixes, appears more amenable to this derivation (with thanks to an anonymous reviewer for pointing out this correlation):

- i. a. \*a movable; \*a floatable; \*a breakable; \*an inflatable; \*a valuable, \*a rich
- b. BUT: movables; floatables; breakables; inflatables; valuables; riches

illustrated by (6b). Finally, to the best of our ability to tell, the construction is entirely productive and allows any adjective that can be plausibly predicated of humans:<sup>5,6</sup>

6. a. The poor(\*s); the sick(\*s); \*a pretty; \*three sads, \*these wise(es); \*those lucky
- b. The enabled; the silken; the beautiful; the English; the manic; the oppressive; the ugly; the happy; etc.

Expressions such as those in (6) are most commonly interpreted as having a generic force. As is typically the case for generic interpretations, they can range over pluralities, most typically human groups or possibly kinds (i.e., all those who are sick, all who are poor, etc.).

Alternatively, at least sometimes, they can be interpreted as referring to a mass kind, as in (7) (we are grateful to an anonymous reviewer for pointing this to us):<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Some comments are in order concerning the scope of the phenomenon that we are considering here. Specifically, we are excluding from consideration all cases which appear to be clearly elliptical, in referring back to an extremely recent or salient antecedent. For instance, after ordering tea in a restaurant, having the waiter ask 'cold or hot'? Or, presented with two shirts, being asked 'the blue or the red?' (We are informed by native speakers that in answering the latter, 'the blue' is not felicitous, and 'the blue one' is required.). Likewise, in Hebrew and French, we set aside cases of obviously elliptical use, as in Hebrew (i) (and see Glinert, 1989, pp. 110-111 on some other relevant cases of ellipsis), and French in (ii):

- i. ha-tmarim ha-ele yeqarim, qne zolim  
the-dates.m the-these expensive, buy cheaps.m  
'These dates are expensive, buy cheap ones.'
- ii. a. Mets le vase sur la table – non pas le cassé, l'autre.  
'Place the vase on the table – not the broken (one), the other (one).'
- b. De ces chiens, je préfère le tondu.  
'Among these dogs, I prefer the shorn (one).'

It is within this class, we believe, that one also finds elliptical uses following numerical and quantificational expressions such as those in (iii), pointed to us by an anonymous reviewer:

- iii. a. Dan Brown has written many books but I only read one/two
- b. I only read one book by Dan Brown but he has written several/three

And likewise ordinals, superlatives, and expressions such as *following*, *previous*, *other*, *another*, and *same*, all requiring an extremely salient and recent antecedent, unlike the cases discussed, e.g., *the poor*, *the sick*, etc. For some discussion of the distribution of such elliptical cases see Halliday and Hasan (1976) as well as Ronat (1977).

Finally, we are excluding the use of 'adjectives' as labels for themselves, as in (iv):

- iv. a. There are lots of blues in this paint store – I didn't expect that.
- b. I hope I can do some good.

See, in particular, section 4 for some relevant discussion.

<sup>6</sup> A notable exception is the impossibility of using adjectives which have Nom(A) homophones in this group, to wit, the expressions in (i) can only have a Nom(A) interpretation, and cannot refer to, e.g., the American or Russian collective, on a par with, e.g., *the Welsh*, or *the English*:

- i. The American; the Russian; the behaviorist

Short of appealing to a blocking effect of some kind, we have no account for this fact at this time.

<sup>7</sup> There are some exceptions to this generalization, to wit, 'the Good, the Bad and the Ugly' as a film title with a singular reference.

7. a. (he is trying to achieve) the impossible  
b. the blue overcame the yellow;  
c. (he wanted to fully control) the unexpected

Given the observed tendency of Noms(A) to refer to humans (and see also below, in French and Hebrew), it may appear at first sight that Noms(A) and forms such as those in (6) do have something in common. The similarity, however, is a misleading one. We already observed that many Noms(A) do not, in fact, refer to humans, nor clearly are all cases of the type illustrated in (7). In what follows we will argue that the syntax of these expressions is very different. Specifically, while Noms(A) are true nouns, we will suggest that the lexical expressions in (6)-(7) are true adjectives which modify a *pro* as in (8). In the absence of licensing features for such a *pro* in English, it is interpreted as generic rather on a par with so-called arbitrary PRO, or, possibly, the covert benefactive in sentences such as (9) (and see Epstein 1984, Lebeaux 1984 and subsequent literature for the argument that the covert object of *easy* in (9) is a universal/generic *pro* which controls the infinitival null subject):<sup>8</sup>

8. *the A* [<sub>N</sub> *pro* ] (henceforth *Adj-pro* constructions)
9. It is easy *pro-universal* [PRO to leave]

Once other languages are considered, we will find that unpredictable meanings of Noms(A) persist, but in the presence of overt identifiers for *pro*, the generic restriction vanishes.

### 3. French and Hebrew

At first glance, it appears dubious that French or Hebrew actually have a distinction between what we referred to above as Noms(A) and *Adj-pros* as in (8). We will argue, however, that both do exhibit the relevant distinction, allowing the forms in (10a) to be true nouns with the relevant interpretation as per glosses (our Noms(A)) (see also Marandin 1996, 1997 for French), but restricting the forms in (10b) to adjectives in French (see also Corblin 1990, 1995, Lobeck 1991, 1993, 1995 and Sleeman 1996 for a *pro* analysis of NP-ellipsis in French). Similarly, the forms in (11a) in Hebrew may be Noms(A) (with the relevant interpretation), but not so the forms in (11b) which may only be adjectives:<sup>9,10</sup>

10. a. *jeune; aveugle; mort; marié; sauvage*  
*youth; blind man; dead man; groom; savage*

<sup>8</sup> Cases of arbitrary *pro* or PRO in classical contexts with mass reference are difficult if not impossible to construct, as these are typically interpreted as human. If, however, Epstein (1984) is correct in arguing that these all reduce to a benefactive control, this may follow from constraints on null benefactives, and would thus fail to apply to *Adj-pro* contexts which are otherwise licensed.

<sup>9</sup> In view of (10b), the class of adjectives that can appear with a determiner and without an overt noun in French is, we believe, less restricted than previously claimed in the literature (see, for instance, Sleeman 1993, Marandin 1997), and includes ‘classifying’ adjectives that are not clearly colors (*rouge* ‘red’), ordering (*précédent* ‘preceding’, *suivant* ‘next’) or measuring (*grand* ‘tall’, *petit* ‘small’).

<sup>10</sup> Note that while in French, *marié*, lit. ‘married’, is a Nom(A), meaning “groom” or “bride”, depending on agreement, in Hebrew *nasuy*, lit. ‘married’, is an *Adj-pro*, meaning a “married one”. Clearly, then, the selection of a particular lexical item as a Nom(A) or *Adj-pro* is not a universal one, nor would we expect it to be.

- b. rondelet; énérvé; joyeux; lent; excessif; faible  
*slightly fat; edgy joyful; slow; unmoderate; weak*
11. a. ca'ir; šote; zaqen; xakam  
 youth; fool/village idiot; elder (lit. old) sage (lit. wise)  
 b. nasuy; arok; yašar; raze  
 married; long; straight; thin

The plurality test that was relevant in English cannot be used in French or in Hebrew. As both plural nouns and adjectives modifying a plural noun must bear a morphologically identical plural agreement, both the putative Noms(A) and the adjectives in the putative *Adj-pros* (with a plural *pro*) would be marked as plural:

12. a. jeunes; aveugles; morts; mariés ; sauvages  
 youth.pl blind.pl dead.pl groom.pl savage.pl  
*youths blind men dead men grooms savages*  
 b. rondelets; énérvés; joyeux; lents; excessifs; faibles  
 fat.pl edgy.pl joyful.pl; slow.pl; unmoderate.pl weak.pl
13. a. ce'ir.im; šot.im; zqen.im; xakam.im  
 youth.pl fool.pl/village idiots elder.pl (lit. olds) sage.pl (lit. wise(s))  
 b. šbur.im; 'aruk.im; yešar.im; raz.im  
 broken.pl long.pl straight.pl thin.pl

Furthermore, the obligatoriness of a definite article and the impossibility of the indefinite article attested in English are absent. Thus in French, where the articles distinguish between definites and indefinites and between plurals and singulars all forms in (10) can take the full array of articles, and neither (14a) nor (14b) need to be interpreted as generic (although, of course, the plural definite forms may be thus interpreted):

14. a. Noms(A): un jeune; le jeune; les jeunes; des jeunes  
 a youth; the youth; the.pl youth.pl; indef.pl youth.pl;  
 b. Adj-pro: un faible; le faible; les faibles; des faibles  
 a weak; the weak; the.pl weak.pl ; indef.pl weak.pl

Hebrew does not have an indefinite article, and its definite article is not marked for number. When we consider the distribution of (bare) indefinites and definite expressions in the context of the paradigms in (11)-(13) we note that both are possible for Noms(A) and for *Adj-pros* alike, for both singular and plural forms. As in French, generic reading is not necessarily attested for the *Adj-pros* (although see below for more discussion of this point):<sup>11</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Attributive adjectives in Hebrew agree with the modified nouns in gender, number and definiteness (cf. (i)), allowing the article in (), at least prima facie, to be associated both with a definite nominal and with a modifying adjective which agrees with a definite null N. We set this issue aside here for reasons of space.

- i. ha.simla \*(ha).yafa; ha.migdal \*(ha.)gaboha;  
 the.dress-f the.pretty-f; the.tower-m the.tall-m  
*the pretty dress the tall tower*  
 ha.smal.ot \*(ha.)yaf.ot; ha.migdal.im \*(ha.)gboh.im  
 the.dress.pl-f the.pretty.pl-f def.tower.pl-m def.tall.pl-m  
*the pretty dresses the tall towers*

15. a. ha.ca'ir; ha.ce'ir.im; ha.iver; ha.ivr.im  
           the.youth the.youth.pl the blind man the blind man.pl  
       b. ha.nasuy; ha.nesu'.im; ha.mupta; ha.mupta'.im  
           the.married the.married.pl the.surprised the.surprised.pl

As there appears to be no obvious distinction between Noms(A) and *Adj-pros* in French and Hebrew, can we really maintain that, like in English, they represent two distinct classes? As it turns out, a closer scrutiny of the distribution of the forms in (10) and (11) in French and Hebrew respectively reveals some important differences. While our Noms(A), in both languages, have a distribution identical to that of common nouns, *Adj-pros* turn out to be restricted to strong environments.

Suppose we consider first French nominals with the indefinite plural *des* article, which, for common nouns, may receive either a weak (existential) or (under certain conditions) strong (partitive; presuppositional) reading (Milsark 1974, de Hoop 1992, Bosvelt-de Smet 1997). Thus (16), for instance, is ambiguous between a reading where the subject wants to buy any pair of shoes (the weak reading, asserting existence), and another reading where there are some specific shoes that the subject wants to buy (the strong reading):

16. Elle veut acheter des chaussures. (weak/strong readings)  
       she wants buy *des* shoes  
       '*She wants to buy shoes*'

Non-existential readings indefinites may give rise to, and that are subsumed under the notion of strong reading that we will accept here following de Hoop (1992), include the referential reading (*A dog bit me yesterday*) (Fodor and Sag 1982), the partitive reading (*Few participants were French*) and the generic reading (*Boats float*). *Des*-indefinites in French can accordingly have a strong reading (Bosvelt-de Smet 1997):

17. a. Des amis (que je n'avais pas vu depuis 10 ans) m'ont appelée hier. (referential)  
       indef.pl friends (that I neg had not seen for 10 years) me have called yesterday  
       '*Some friends (that I had not seen for 10 years) called me yesterday*'  
       b. Paul a réparé des bicyclettes (mais pas toutes) (partitive)  
       Paul has repaired indef.pl bicycles (but not all)  
       '*Paul repaired some bicycles (but not all)*'  
       c. Seuls des spécialistes peuvent résoudre ce problème (generic)  
       only indef.pl specialists can resolve this issue  
       '*Only specialists can solve this issue*'

As it turns out, Noms(A), for instance *des jeunes*, are ambiguous in exactly the same way, and both a strong and a weak readings are available, as illustrated by (18a) (strong reading) and (18b) (weak reading, existential context):

18. a. Des jeunes que je ne connaissais pas m'ont aidé. (strong referential)  
       *des* youths that I did not know helped me  
       '*Some youth that I did not know helped me out*'  
       b. Il y a des jeunes qui fument dehors. (weak)  
       there is *des* youths who smoke outside  
       '*There are youths who are smoking outside*'

This is not the case for our *Adj-pros*. Here, indefinites can only get a strong reading. They are felicitous in the strong presuppositional context in (19a) but are excluded in the weak, existential contexts in (19b):<sup>12</sup>

19. a. Des énérvés que je voyais manifester ont mis le feu aux voitures (strong)  
       des edgy.pl that I saw demonstrate have put fire to the cars  
       ‘*Edgy individuals that I was watching demonstrate put the cars on fire*’  
   b. \*Il y a des énérvés dans la manifestation. (weak)  
       there are des edgy in the demonstration

Other relevant contexts exhibit precisely the same behavior. Noms(A) can occur in the scope of negation with the article *de*, an environment which licenses only weak readings, but not *Adj-pros*, as illustrated by (20):

20. a. Elle n’a pas rencontré de jeunes. (weak)  
       she did not meet de youth.pl  
       ‘*She did not meet any youth*’  
   b. \*Ils n’ont pas interrogé d’énérvés. (weak)  
       they did not interrogate de edgy.pl

When negation occurs with the article *des*, which, in opposition to *de*, licenses strong readings, both Noms(A) and *Adj-pros* are licit:

21. a. Elle n’a pas rencontré des jeunes. (strong reading)  
       she did not meet des youths  
       ‘*She did not meet some (of the) youths*’  
   b. Ils n’ont pas interrogé des énérvés. (strong reading)  
       they did not interrogate des edgy.pl  
       ‘*They did not interrogate (some of the) edgy ones*’

Interestingly, the use of true *Adj-pros* contrasts with what we may refer to as *Adj-en* forms, and which appear, at first sight, to involve bare 'nominal' adjectives (i.e. with no overt head N) and which are possible in weak contexts:

22. a. Il y en a des énérvés à la manifestation.  
       there is of.it des edgy.pl at the demonstration  
       ‘*There are edgy ones (out of a presupposed group of individuals) in the demonstration*’  
   b. Ils n’en ont pas interrogé d’énérvés.  
       they not of.it have interrogate de edgy.pl  
       ‘*They did not interrogate edgy ones (out of a group)*’

In actuality, the grammaticality of (22) only serves to emphasize the ungrammaticality of true *Adj-pros* in these contexts. In (22), the appearance of a 'bare' nominal adjective emerges as

<sup>12</sup> *Des*-adjectives are possible in existential constructions, as in (19b), with a taxonomic reading only, where they assert the existence of a type (e.g. an edgy type of individuals) rather than individuals themselves. Taxonomic readings of *des-NPs*, more generally, are usually favored by a weak context in French (Bosvelt-de Smet 1997). We have no explanation for this fact, and will leave it aside here.



a result of *en*-cliticization, and there is little reason to assume the existence of a null pronominal N. Without offering a full analysis of *en*-cliticization, it is clear that what follows the adjective in these cases is either a phonologically null copy left by the movement of *en* itself, or alternatively, a partitive null PP or its copy, however licensed. Under any scenario, we do not expect the construction to display the properties of a definite N pronominal. The contrast, thus, nicely highlights the prohibition on weak contexts specifically for true null N heads, but not otherwise. Turning now to Hebrew, we find identical effects, with Noms(A) having the distribution of common nouns, and *Adj-pros* allowed exclusively in strong contexts.

As is true for numerous languages (including Spanish, Italian, the Slavic languages, some Germanic languages), Hebrew does not allow weak expressions in a pre-verbal position, thereby providing us with a structural test for the distribution of weak/strong readings. (23a) has a strong reading, and (23b) only has a generic interpretation (negative contexts for non-generic occurrences nicely highlight the strong partitive reading in these cases):

23. a. šloša sparim (lo) yikatbu ha.šana 'al zihum 'avir  
 three books (not) write.pass.fut this.year about pollution air  
*'Three predictable books (of a set) will (not) be written this year about air pollution' (e.g., they are contracted already)*  
 b. sparim 'al zihum 'avir nimkeru be-šana še-abra  
 books about pollution air sold.past last year  
*'Books about air-pollution used to sell last year'*

In turn, the subject in Hebrew may occur post-verbally freely if any constituent is fronted. In such post-verbal contexts, both weak and strong expressions are allowed, but bare plurals must receive an existential interpretation. (24a-b) thus contrast with (23a-b):

24. a. ha.šana (lo) yikatbu šloša sparim 'al zihum 'avir  
 this.year (not) write.pass.fut three books about pollution air  
*'Three (predictable) books will (not) be written this year about air-pollution'*  
 (either synonymous with 23a) or weak, under straightforward numerical reading)  
 b. be-šana še-abra nimkeru sparim 'al zihum 'avir  
 last year sold.past books about pollution air  
*'Last year some books about air-pollution were sold'*

Armed with these descriptions, consider the distribution of Noms(A) and *Adj-pros*:

25. Noms(A), pre-verbal subject:  
 a. šloša ce'irim (lo) nixnesu la.bar lištot  
 three youths (not) entered to-the.pub to drink  
*'Three(of the) youths (didn't) entered the bar to have a drink' (strong reading only)*  
 b. ce'irim šatu ba.bar ha.ze be-šana še-'avera  
 youths drank in-the.bar the.this last year  
*'Young people drank in this bar last year' (generic, i.e., it was the trendy place to drink for youngsters)*  
 26. Adj-pro, pre-verbal subject:  
 a. šloša razim (lo) niknesu la.bar lištot  
 three thin(s) (didn't) entered to-the.pub to drink

- 'Three (of the) thin guys entered the bar to drink.'* (strong reading only)
- b. razim šatu ba.bar ha.ze be-šana še-'abra  
thin(s) drank in-the.bar the.this last year  
*'Thin types drank in this bar last year'* (generic, i.e., it was the trendy place to drink for thin people)
27. Noms(A), post-verbal subject:
- a. ha.boqer (lo) ni<sup>k</sup>nesu šloša ce'irim la.bar lištot  
this morning (not) entered three youths to-the.pub to drink  
*'This morning three youths (didn't) entered the bar to drink.'* (strong and weak reading)
- b. ba.bar ha.ze šatu ce'irim be-šana še-'abra  
in-the.bar the.this drank youths last year  
*'Young people drank in this bar last year'* (weak reading only)
28. Adj-pro, post-verbal subject:
- a. ha.boqer (lo) ni<sup>k</sup>nesu šloša razim la.bar lištot  
this morning (not)entered three thin(s) to-the.pub to drink  
*'Three thin guys entered the bar to drink'* (strong reading only)
- b. \*be-šana še-'abra šatu razim ba.bar ha.ze  
last year drank thin(s) in-the.bar the.this last year

As expected, in the strong pre-verbal contexts, no difference is attested between Noms(A) and *Adj-pros*, and both exhibit a generic reading when plural and bare. However, post verbally, where bare plurals may only be weak indefinites, Noms(A) are possible, as in (27) but *Adj-pros* are blocked, as in (28).

Further evidence comes from the impossibility of *Adj-pro*, vs. the acceptability of Nom(A), in existential contexts, both affirmative and negative (we note that bare singulars in Hebrew only have a weak interpretation):

29. a. yeš šloša ce'irim/\*šloša razim ba.xeder  
exist three youths/\*three thin (ones) in the room
- b. 'eyn ce'irim/\*razim ba.xeder  
Neg.exist youths/\*thin (ones) in the room
- c. yeš 'eyze ca'ir/\*'eyze raze ba.xeder  
exist some youth/some thin (one) in the room

Finally, in an interesting illustration of the shared property here between French and Hebrew, we note the following:

30. a. 'ani ma'adifa razim  
I prefer thin(s)
- b. Je préfère les fins/\*des fins  
I prefer the thin(s)/indef.pl thin(s)  
*'I prefer thin ones'*

What appears at first sight as a contrast between French and Hebrew is in actuality exactly what is expected, once we recall that objects of psych verbs require a generic reading of a plural object, and that generics in Hebrew are bare plurals, but definite plurals in French. Of course,

*Adj-pros* in English, being generic and obligatorily accompanied by a definite article, have the distribution of strong nominals as well, thus patterning in this respect with French and Hebrew.

Once a clear distinction has been established between the syntactic distribution of Noms(A) and *Adj-pros*, we can return to the relevant examples and note that just as in English, it is Noms(A) which have an idiosyncratic or a restricted meaning. French *le petit* means “the child, the cub, the youngest”, and does not range freely over anything or anybody with the *petit* ‘small’ property.<sup>13</sup> Similarly *la mariée* refers to “the bride”, and not to any married woman. Hebrew shows similar effects. *Xole*, literally ‘sick’, does not range over anybody who is sick, but means “patient”; *šote*, literally ‘stupid’ does not range over anybody who is stupid, but rather means the societal medieval “fool” or “village idiot”; *xaxam*, literally ‘wise’, means “a sage”, etc. Entirely idiosyncratic readings are available as well, as in French *proche* and Hebrew *karov*, literally ‘close’, but as a noun “a kin, a relative” or Hebrew *leḥanim*, “linen”, literally ‘whites’, and French *la poudreuse* “powder snow”, literally ‘powdery’ or *la blanche* “heroine”, literally ‘white’. In contrast adjectives in *Adj-pros* have varied meanings including both persons and objects, with the latter exemplified by cases such as French *les mouillés* “the wet(s)”, *les rouges* “the red(s)”, *un sale* “a dirty”, *une chère* “an expensive(fem)”, and Hebrew’s *ha.vrudim* “the pink(s)”, *ha.metukim* “the sweet ones”, *ha.yaveš* “the dry”, and similar cases.

#### 4. More on *pro* in *Adj-pro* and otherwise

We will assume that the meaning of *pro* in *Adj-pro* constructions corresponds to that of (potentially overt) definite pronouns, where by definite pronouns we mean specifically those pronouns which Heim and Kratzer (1998) analyze as E-type pronouns, and which Elbourne (2000) analyzes as (pronominal) definite articles. We will further follow Heim and Kratzer (1998) in assuming that such pronouns are fundamentally interpreted on a par with definite descriptions, and just like definite descriptions, pick a unique (set of) contextually salient individual(s). The bottom line, then, is that the interpretation of a phrase such as *les cassés* or *des cassés* (in which *cassés* is a regular attributive adjective) is fundamentally like that of definite descriptions, and hence strong.<sup>14</sup> As such, we are not dealing with those pronominal cases which Heim and Kratzer (1998) identify as requiring an explicit antecedent, or with the cases enumerated in footnote 5, which we believe to be cases of ellipsis. Note, in this context, that the overt indefinite English pronoun *one*, need-not occur in strong environments, as illustrated by the grammaticality of (31).

31. a. I am looking for a competent one.
- b. There isn't a tall one in sight.

<sup>13</sup> *Petit*, ‘small’ just like *grand* ‘tall’, and other measuring adjectives, also has an *Adj-pro* use, in French, in which case it does range freely over anything and anybody small, as expected; see below.

<sup>14</sup> We note, interestingly, that at least in the context of *Adj-pro*, such a null pronoun may be either definite or specific, and that in the latter case it may be associated with an indefinite article as in *des cassés*. In turn, it is not clear that the distinction between specific (but indefinite) and definite is marked on pronouns altogether, whether overt or null, making the extension of the analysis of definite description to specific cases in the case of pronouns plausible. As we shall see directly, definite descriptions and specific readings (in pronominals as well as in lexical nominals) require a syntactic movement to D to be licensed.

It therefore emerges that the interpretation associated with the covert pronoun in *Adj-pro* constructions does not correspond to that of a putative covert indefinite pronoun with the properties of English *one*, and in fact, there is little reason to suppose that English, French or Hebrew have such an indefinite null pronoun. More strikingly, we will show in section 5 that Spanish does not have such an indefinite null pronoun either, although Spanish, like English, has an overt indefinite pronoun (*uno*, as we shall argue), as well as a definite *pro* and an *Adj-pro* construction, which, as in Hebrew and French, must be strong.

As is clear from the structures we have been proposing, our *pro* does not correspond to the entire DP, but rather, to some head within it, most likely N. It would appear legitimate at this point, then, to raise a question concerning the typology of null pronominals, focusing, specifically, on the question whether there is any particular reason to expect N-*pro* to behave like a D-*pro*. As we will proceed to show shortly, however, the question may very well turn out to be a moot one. A more careful consideration of the properties of *Adj-pros* in Hebrew will suggest that all definite (null) pronominal interpretations involve a 'lexical' *pro* terminal, effectively an N-*pro*, and that so-called D-*pro* is simply a case of a DP projection with nothing but a *pro* in it.

Another important point will emerge from the discussion of some properties of Hebrew null definite pronominals: although they must be strong, that 'strength' needs to be licensed in a particular structural position, specifically in D, thereby requiring the movement of such *pro* from what we assume is its base position in N. Without pursuing in great detail any particular theoretical mechanism that will ensure such movement, we note that a simple checking system, or alternatively, a range assignment system as in Borer (2005) will ensure the obligatoriness of such movement. We return to this matter below.

#### 4.1. Hebrew *Adj-pro* and Ramifications

Hebrew, it appears, presents a *prima facie* problem for the assumption that *Adj-pro* is strong. The relevant cases involve a comparison between the distribution of Hebrew (overt) bare singular nominals and bare singular *Adj-pros*. Bare singular nouns in Hebrew may only receive a weak interpretation (cf. Borer, 2005). Because weak interpretation is not available in Hebrew in the pre-verbal position, such bare singular nominals are blocked in those contexts, as illustrated by the contrasts in (32)-(33):

32. a. \*yeled (lo) yabo la.kaxat 'et ha.matanot  
       boy (not) come.fut to.take OM the.presents (OM=object marker)  
       b. 'eyze yeled (lo) yabo la.kaxat'et ha.matanot  
       some boy (not) come.fut to.take OM the.presents  
       'A (specific) boy will (not) come to take up the presents' (strong reading only)
33. a. ha.boker (lo) yabo yeled la.kaxat 'et ha.matanot  
       this morning (not) come.fut boy to.take OM the.presents  
       'this morning, a boy will (not) come to take the presents' (weak reading only)  
       b. haboker (lo) yabo 'eyze yeled la.kaxat 'et ha.matanot  
       this morning (not) arrive.fut some boy to.collect OM the.presents  
       'this morning, a boy will (not) come to take the presents' (strong, weak)

Suppose we assume, following the original intuitions of Diesing (1992), and Longobardi (1994), and adopting the specific execution in Borer (2005), that the reason for the obligatory weakness of Hebrew bare singulars is tied to the schematic structure in (34):<sup>15</sup>

34.  $[_{DP} e \ [_{#P} sg \ [_{NP} N \ ]]]$

In 34, *e*, heading D, is an open value, and must be assigned range, or effectively, be bound. As singulars may not typically be bound by a generic operator for reasons that we need not enter into in this paper, *e* in (34) may only be bound by an existential operator, and hence must be weak. On the other hand, the domain of the existential operator arguably excludes pre-verbal positions. It thus follows that bare singulars may not occur outside the domain of existential closure, i.e. they are excluded pre-verbally.

No such effects are expected, or attested, when the singular is accompanied by a number specification, by a quantifier, or, in a language that has indefinite articles, by a singular indefinite article. In such cases, the number specification itself, or alternatively, a quantifier or an article, may raise to D, thereby effectively binding it and licensing the structure. As expected, the emerging reading must be strong in the pre-verbal position, and the nominal, of course, is not a *bare* singular, as illustrated by, e.g., (32) above, and schematized in (35) with the Hebrew quantifier 'eyze, 'some', itself allowing both weak and strong readings in the appropriate context (cf. (33b)):

35. a.  $[_{DP} e \ [_{#P} 'eyze \ sg \ [_{NP} N \ ]]]$  (weak, existentially closed  $[_D e]$ )  
 b.  $[_{DP} 'eyze \ [_{#P} \text{~~'eyze~~ } sg \ [_{NP} N \ ]]]$  (strong)

With this description in mind, let us return to the Hebrew *Adj-pro*. Crucially, what we find is that they exhibit a behavior identical to that of bare singular nominals in the pre-verbal position. If not accompanied by a number or a quantifier (recall that Hebrew does not have an indefinite article), they are ruled out in that position, as illustrated by (36). However, unlike bare singular nominals, a singular *Adj-pro* is barred in post-verbal positions as well, hence giving rise to a contrast between (36b) and (33b) above:

36. a. \*raza (lo) nixnesa la.bar lištot  
       'thin.f' (not) entered to-the.pub to drink  
 b. \*ha.boker nixnesa raza la.bar ve-bikša le.hišhtameš ba.telefon  
       this morning entered 'thin.f' to-the.pub and-asked to.use in-the.telephone

We are now faced with a bit of a paradox. If, as we have asserted, *Adj-pro* is fundamentally like a definite pronoun, then we expect it to behave essentially like a definite description. But if so, there is no clear reason why it should be barred pre-verbally in Hebrew, or, for that matter, post-verbally where definite descriptions are otherwise licit. On the other hand, if a bare *Adj-pro* is, essentially, a species of bare singulars, it is not clear why it is not licensed in weak contexts, e.g., post-verbally with existential closure.

The paradox, however, can be resolved if we consider in greater detail the properties of Hebrew singulars, as well as those of Hebrew null pronouns. In Borer (2005) it is suggested that

<sup>15</sup> We are abstracting away here from aspects of nominal structure which are not directly relevant to the discussion. See Borer (2005) for a detailed discussion of the internal structure of nominal expressions.

the unavailability of bare singulars with a strong reading is not a syntactic or a semantic fact, but rather, a morpho-phonological fact. Specifically, it is proposed that a strong reading *can* be associated with singulars in Hebrew, when the singular noun itself raises to D, thereby obliterating the unbound [<sub>D</sub> *e*]. However, the resulting form does not spell out, strictly speaking, as a bare singular, but rather, as a singular with a specificity marking, as in (37). This specificity marking is associated with all strong occurrences of otherwise bare singulars, regardless of whether they are pre- or post-verbal, as (37b) illustrates:

37. a. yalda \*(.xat) nixnesa la.kafe lištót  
 girl \*(.*spc.f*) entered to-the.café to drink (spc=specific)  
 b. ha.boker nixnesa yalda(.xat) la.kafe lištót  
 this morning entered girl(.*spc.f*) to-the.café to drink

Concretely, and departing slightly from Borer (2005), suppose we assume that the derivation involves moving the entire NP, or possibly even a larger constituent, to [Spec, DP], thereby effectively binding [<sub>D</sub> *e*]. The circled syntactic representation in (38a) is spelled out as a bare singular (in this case *yalda* ‘girl’), while the circled syntactic representation in (38b) is spelled out as a singular plus a feminine specificity making (in this case *yalda.xat*):

38. a. [<sub>DP</sub> *e* [<sub>#P</sub> N.sg.f [<sub>NP</sub> ~~N~~ ]]]  
 ↓  
*yalda*  
 ‘girl’ (weak)  
 b. [<sub>DP</sub> [<sub>#P</sub> N.sg [<sub>NP</sub> N] ]] *e* [<sub>#P</sub> ~~N.sg~~ [<sub>NP</sub> ~~N~~ ]]]  
 ↓  
*yaldaxat*  
 ‘some (specific) girl’ (strong)

We now find out that singular ‘bare’ *Adj-pro* constructions *can* occur, both pre-verbally and post-verbally and with a strong reading, but only when accompanied with specificity marking, as the following cases illustrate:

39. a. raza.xat nixnesa la.kafe lištót  
 thin.f.*spc.f* entered to-the.café to drink  
 b. ha.boker nixnesa raza.xat la.kafe lištót  
 this morning entered thin.f.*spc.f* to-the.café to drink

The structure for the *Adj-pro* in such cases is a straightforward one, involving the movement of the entire constituent containing the adjective and the null N to [Spec,DP], and the resulting spellout of the configuration with a specificity marker:

40. [<sub>DP</sub> [<sub>#P</sub> *pro* [A [<sub>NP</sub> N]]] ] *e* [<sub>#P</sub> ~~*pro*~~ [~~A~~ [<sub>NP</sub> ~~N~~ ]]]]  
 ↓  
*razaxat*  
 ‘some (specific) thin one’ (strong)

It thus emerges that the asymmetry between singular nominals and singular *Adj-pro* is maintained, but only in post verbal positions. In such positions bare singular nominals, with a weak reading exclusively, are licit, i.e., they need not move to [Spec,DP]. An *Adj-pro*, on the

An obvious explanation for the contrast between (36) and (39): the ungrammaticality of a 'bare' *Adj-pro* in both pre- and post-verbal position does not emerge from the fact that they are not licensed syntactically or semantically in those contexts. Rather, it follows from the fact that *pro*, in these constructions, must move to D to bind it, on a par with the movement of overt nominal in cases such as (38). However following this movement, it must spell out in conjunction with specificity marking and cannot occur bare. As such, it is the equivalent of structures such as those in (41), in which an overt nominal accompanied by an adjective moves to [Spec,DP], resulting in specificity marking:

- If on the right track, note, it emerges that at least in Hebrew, *pro* must move to D to be licensed, and that once such movement takes place, it is subject to whatever universal or language specific requirements may apply to such movement. In Hebrew, such movement is associated with particular spellout requirements, involving the specificity marker *xad/xat*. In turn, note, the specificity marker is a phonological clitic and it requires a phonological host. In (41b), it is the adjective, which is phonologically overt, thereby supporting the specificity clitic. On the other hand, under the assumption that *pro* by itself is not an appropriate host for such a spellout, it emerges that the movement of a bare *pro*, without an adjective, to D in Hebrew should be illicit.

42. a. axalti gvina axalnu gvina  
ate.1.sg cheese ate.1.pl cheese  
'I ate cheese' 'we ate cheese'

b. axalta gvina axaltem gvina/ axalten gvina  
ate.2.sg.m cheese ate.2.pl.m cheese/ ate.2.pl.f. cheese  
'you (m.sg) ate cheese' 'you (m.pl) ate cheese'

43. a. \*axal gvina  
ate.3.sg.m cheese  
(*'he ate cheese'*)

- b. \*axla gvina  
ate.3.sg.f. cheese  
(*'she ate cheese'*)
- c. \*axlu gvina  
ate.3.pl. cheese  
(*'they ate cheese'*)

It now turns out that the impossibility of pro-drop in Hebrew 3<sup>rd</sup> person is in fact explained directly by the assumption that, on a par with bare nouns, 3<sup>rd</sup> person pronouns must move to D, and thus fall under the specificity spellout requirement. In turn, 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> null pronouns appear to be excused from such a restriction. Suppose now that we assume that 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> person agreement, realized in these cases on the verb, and transmitted, or checked, by assumption, onto *pro*, are themselves a variant of specificity marking, an assumption which is plausible given the highly specific nature of 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> person discourse participants (and see Harley and Ritter, 2002 for some relevant discussion). If this is the case, then such marking would be expected to occur in complementary distribution with the specificity markers *xat/xad*, and more concretely, for Hebrew, it gives rise to the licensing of 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> *pro* without overt specificity marking, a possibility that is excluded for 3<sup>rd</sup> person null pronouns.<sup>16</sup> Note now that as adjectives never agree in person, the default person for *pro* in *Adj-pro* constructions must be 3<sup>rd</sup>. In that context, however, but not in the context of a bare 3<sup>rd</sup> person *pro*, the specificity marker may spell out on the adjective, which is of course phonologically overt, thereby allowing 3<sup>rd</sup> person *pro* to occur in contexts where it could not survive without modification.

Note now that while our analysis of *Adj-pro* crucially postulates *pro* as an N head, its extension gives rise to the strong possibility that *pro*, universally, is always an N head. Specifically, note that we must assume that in the absence of an article, in Hebrew, *pro* must move to D to be licensed. Suppose we extend this analysis to other languages as well – in the absence of an article, *pro* must move to D. If true, so-called D-*pro* have, in fact the structure in (44):

44. [<sub>D</sub> [<sub>#</sub> *pro* [<sub>N</sub> *pro* ]]] e [<sub>#</sub> ~~*pro*~~ — [<sub>N</sub> *pro* ]]

The difference between, e.g., Italian or Spanish on the one hand and Hebrew on the other hand now does not revolve around the existence of the structure in (44), but rather, around its spellout properties – in Hebrew, a special spellout requirement is in place, effectively blocking (44) in the absence of either 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> verbal inflection, or binding (cf. fn.17). No such extra restriction is present in Italian and Spanish, giving rise to free pro-drop.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>16</sup> The account of selective *pro* drop in Hebrew given in Shlonsky, 1997, follows, in some respects, a similar line to the reasoning given here. Like us, Shlonsky assumes that *pro* must be in D, and that the ungrammaticality of 3<sup>rd</sup> person null pronouns stems from their inability to support morphological affixation. The affixation under consideration, however, is person marking, not specificity marking.

<sup>17</sup> We note that 3<sup>rd</sup> person *pro* in Hebrew, although not licensed as a definite pronoun, is licensed as a bound variable in context such as those in (i):

- i. a. Rina ma'amina še-tacliāx  
Rina believes that-succeed.fut.3<sup>rd</sup>.f  
'*Rina<sub>i</sub> believes that she<sub>i</sub> will succeed*'
- b. kol gevev ma'amin še-yihiye populari 'im yirze



We end this section with an interesting puzzle – in both Hebrew and French, by no means related languages, *Adj-pro* may not occur with a universal distributive quantifier (44b), (45b) (although they are licensed with a non-distributive universal (44a), (45a) or with the negation of a distributive universal (44c), (45c)). While a full understanding of this fact awaits further investigation, we note that typologically, it lends support to our claim that the restrictions on *Adj-pro* constructions are general and their occurrences in unrelated languages trace their sources to similar grammatical factors:

45. a. kol ha.nesu'ot 'azvu  
all the.married.f(s) left.pl  
'All the married women left'  
b. \*kol nasu'a 'azva  
every married.f left.sg  
'\*Every married woman left'  
c. 'af nesu'a lo 'azva  
no married.f no left.sg  
'no married woman left'
46. a. Tous les faibles ont été secourus  
all the slow.pl have been rescued  
'All the weak ones have been rescued'  
b. \*Chaque faible a été secouru  
every weak has been rescued  
'\*Every slow one has been rescued'  
c. Aucun des faibles n'a été secouru.  
none of-the weak.pl neg-has been rescued  
'No weak one has been rescued'

## 5. Spanish *pro*, Spanish *uno*

The existence of *Adj-pro* forms with a large range of interpretations (thus contrasting with English) is dependent on two factors. *Pro* must be licensed in the language; and *pro* must be identifiable through gender and number distinctions on the article – if the article can express such distinctions – and/or through the modifying adjectives (Bernstein 1993, among others).

We are making the prediction that a language like Spanish, which licenses *pro* in both subject and object positions, and which has agreement features on both articles and modifying adjectives,

- 
- every man believes that-be.fut.3<sup>rd</sup>.m popular if thin.fut.3<sup>rd</sup>.m  
'Every man<sub>i</sub> believes that he<sub>i</sub> would be popular if he<sub>i</sub> becomes thin'  
c. 'af 'iša lo ma'amina še-tacliax  
no woman no believe that-succeed.fut.3<sup>rd</sup>.f  
'no woman<sub>i</sub> believes that she<sub>i</sub> will succeed'

If we follow, however, the logic of the structures here, it emerges that in exactly these cases movement to D is not required, and [<sub>D</sub> *e*] may thus be bound. The fact that *pro* IS licit in bound cases without movement to D raises the possibility that the properties of bound *pro* and bound pronouns in general are distinct from those of definite *pro* and definite pronouns in general (and see, in this context, Kratzer 2006). Note that we predict that *Adj-pro* constructions cannot have a bound variable reading – they involve, by definition, a definite pronoun which must move to D, thereby binding [<sub>D</sub> *e*] itself and barring its binding by an operator or an antecedent external to the DP.

will pattern with French/Hebrew in allowing *Adj-pro* with a variety of interpretations. As expected, Spanish does allow adjectives without an overt noun in numerous contexts, including some that seem as fair candidates for *Adj-pro* (e.g. *importante* ‘important’, *rojo* ‘red’, *alto* ‘tall’, *mojado* ‘wet’, etc.) and others that appear to be Noms(A) (e.g., *viejo* ‘old man/elderly’, *ciego* ‘blind man’, *católico* ‘catholic’, etc.).

To show that the constructions are indeed distinct, we need to show that some, but not all of these ‘bare’ adjectives, are systematically barred in weak contexts. By assumption, those that are thus restricted are *Adj-pro* constructions, and those that are not restricted in this fashion are Noms(A). As it turns out, the distinction does exist, marking the forms in (47a) as *Adj-pro* constructions, and the forms in (47b) as Noms(A).<sup>18</sup> We note that in terms of their meaning, the Noms(A) in (47b) are, as they were in French/Hebrew, restricted and cannot range over all objects with the relevant restriction:

47. a. \*No encontró importantes en la reunión.  
neg met important.pl at the meeting  
b. No encontró ciegos en la reunión.  
neg met blind.pl at the meeting  
‘He did not meet blind men at the meeting’

As expected, the ungrammaticality of the *Adj-pro* forms in (47a) contrasts with their grammaticality in contexts that allow a strong interpretation, as for instance with the article *unos* in the object position:

48. No encontró unos importantes en la reunión.  
neg met ones important at the meeting  
‘He did not meet (specific) important ones at the meeting.’

In view of the generalizations we reached on French and Hebrew, the fact that Spanish licenses *Adj-pro* forms is not surprising (see also, Bosque 1989, Contreras 1989, Leonetti 1999, Cabredo Hofherr 2005, among others). As in French, *Adj-pro* in Spanish is licensed by both definite and indefinite articles (cf. (49)). The identification of *pro* through the gender and number information both on the article and the adjective allows N-*pro* to receive a variety of interpretations analogous to French and Hebrew (human/non-human, count/mass, feminine/masculine, etc.):

49. los mojados; la mojada; una mojada; etc.  
the.m.pl wets the.f.sg wet.f.sg a.f.sg wet.f.sg

There is, however, one feature of Spanish which distinguishes it from French, otherwise minimally different. For *Adj-pro* forms, we find that the singular indefinite masculine article *un* is impossible in Spanish. This contrasts clearly with Noms(A), where the article *un* is entirely licit, as illustrated by (50):

<sup>18</sup> Native speakers inform us that (a) is possible when the context provides a (referential) discourse antecedent. As it is the case in English, Hebrew and French, *Adj-pros* are licensed in elliptical contexts in Spanish, presumably through an antecedent associated with D (hence as a DP and not an NP) and see footnote 5 for some more discussion.

50. a. \*un importante (Adj-*pro*)  
       an important  
       b. un viejo (Nom(A))  
           an elder

Instead, *Adj-pro* forms must be constructed with *uno*, as in (51):

51. uno importante; uno mojado; uno vacío; uno recto; uno lleno  
       one important one wet one empty one straight one full

The ungrammaticality of the article *un* in *Adj-pro* constructions, although strongly supporting the distinction we postulate here between Noms(A), as in (50b), and *Adj-pro* constructions as in (50a), is nevertheless quite puzzling, especially when we consider the fact that if *pro* is replaced by an overt noun the article *un* is obligatory whenever an adjective occurs (as well as in the context of unmodified nouns in general, see below):

52. a. un hombre importante  
       a man important  
       b. \*uno hombre importante  
           one man important

To answer this puzzle, we suggest that the masculine singular indefinite article *un* in Spanish is unable to license *pro* because it is underspecified for gender and possibly also number features. In the absence of sufficient information on the article, the content of *pro* cannot be recovered.<sup>19</sup> *Uno* is rather akin to the third person inflection in Hebrew, which, as we have seen earlier, unlike 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> inflection, is not specific and hence cannot license *pro*. Although unambiguous in both cases, it is not morphologically specified for person, a characteristic which has been argued to correlate with failure to license. This situation in Spanish contrasts with that of Hebrew, however, which never marks agreement on articles (and which, at any rate, lacks an indefinite article) and where, possibly in consequence, adjectival morphology is sufficient to license *pro*.

In contrast, the feminine indefinite article is identical with the feminine numeral form, and is overtly marked for gender. As a result, it can license *pro* (53a). Similarly, the plural definite articles are overtly marked for gender and number, and can license *pro* (53b):

53. a. una importante; una mojada; una vacía;  
       a/one.fem important a/one.fem wet a/one.fem empty  
       b. los/las importantes; los/las mojados(/as); los /las vacíos(/as)  
           the.m.pl/f.pl important.pl ; the.m.pl/f.pl wet.m.pl/f.pl ; the.m.pl/f.pl empty.m.pl/f.pl

<sup>19</sup> Spanish does allow bare plural *Adj-pros* in clearly elliptical contexts as in (i) (as pointed out to us by a reviewer ; examples from Bosque 1989):

- i. a. Tengo que utilizar sacapuntas viejos o llegaron nuevos.  
       'I have to use old pencil-sharpeners, unless new ones arrive.'  
       b. Compré rojas porque blancas no quedaban.  
       'I bought red ones because there weren't any white ones left.'

This is a language specific fact for which we have no explanation, and which requires studying conditions on ellipsis which are different (see fn. 5).

What, now, is the role of *uno*, and why does it occur exactly in the context of an (apparently) bare adjective? Recall that it is ungrammatical in the context of regular nouns which are modified by adjectives (as in (51b)). It is also ungrammatical in the context of clear nouns in general (as illustrated by (54) and in the case of clear Noms(A), as in (54)).<sup>20</sup> It is thus hard to argue that *uno* is simply a more fully specified version of the article *un*:

54. \*uno médico; \*uno estudiante; \*uno coche; etc.  
       one doctor     one student     one car
55. \*uno viejo; \*uno ciego ; etc.  
       one elder   one blindman

We suggest, instead, that the properties of *uno* have a straightforward account if we assume that the proform modified by the adjective and heading the nominal construction in (51), is not a null N-*pro*, but rather, the overt proform *uno* itself, behaving very much like English *one* in *a tall one* or *a red one*. Importantly, and just like its counterpart English *one*, *uno* is not a *pro*, and thus does not need to be licensed. *Uno*-headed expressions are felicitous in weak contexts and with weak readings thereby contrasting with true *Adj-pro*. They can appear in existential sentences, as well as under the scope of negation, two contexts known to allow only weak expressions. The result is that unlike *Adj-pros*, *uno-Adj* forms (56a), (57a) do not contrast with Noms(A) (56b), (57b) in weak contexts:

56. a. Hay uno importante en mi clase de español.  
       'There is an important one in my Spanish class.'
- b. Hay un ciego en mi clase de español.  
       'There is a blind man in my Spanish class.'
57. a. El hombre no habló con uno importante.  
       'The man did not talk to an important one.'
- b. El hombre no habló con un ciego.  
       'The man did not talk to a blind man.'

Suppose, now we assume that *uno*, being a proform already marked for number, must move from its original position, N, to Num<sup>0</sup> to be licensed (through checking or range assignment). As a result, *uno* can never occur to the right of a modifying adjective (57). Thus an adjective like *importante*, for instance, can appear pre-nominally when modifying an overt noun (58), but not in the context of *uno*:

58. \*importante uno; \*feliz uno; \*largo uno; \*estupendo uno  
       an important one   a happy one     a long one   a wonderful one
59. a. un problema de salud importante  
       a problem     of health   important
- b. un importante problema de salud  
       an important   problem of health  
       `an important health problem'

<sup>20</sup> The phrases in (55) are, as expected, grammatical as *uno-Adj* constructions only, i.e. when *viejo* and *ciego* are not nominals but true adjectives, respectively 'old' and 'blind', in cases similar to (51) above.

Support for the movement of *uno* comes from its failure to occur with the indefinite article, thereby blocking the insertion of the article *un*, by assumption base-generated in Num<sup>0</sup> (see Roy, 2006, for discussion):

60. (\*un) uno importante; (\*un) uno largo; (\*un) uno estupendo  
       a one important a one long a one wonderful

Nor can *uno* occur with any other article or cardinal, as illustrated in (61):

61. \*los unos importantes; \*pocos unos importantes; \*tres unos importantes  
       the.pl ones important(s) few ones important(s) three ones important(s)

As such, it contrasts with English pronominal *one*, which may occur both with indefinite and definite articles, and which, by assumption, does not move to Num<sup>0</sup>:<sup>21</sup>

62. a. a tall one; an important one; few important ones; many wonderful ones.  
       b. the tall one; the important one; that wonderful one; etc.

More importantly, the behavior of *uno-Adj* contrasts with that of the genuine *Adj-pro* cases in (63), (and see also (53) above), where both articles and cardinals are possible:

63. los importantes; tres importantes  
       the.pl important(s); three important(s)

In (63) and (53), the highest functional head (presumably D) is filled by the relevant determiners (*los, las, una, tres*). We suggest that these are appropriate licensors for the null form *pro* (see discussion above). As noted, licensing, both in Spanish and in Hebrew, requires overt morphology, lacking in singular masculine forms in Spanish, hence the ungrammaticality of *un Adj-pro* constructions.<sup>22</sup> On the other hand *uno-Adj* constructions do not include a *pro* altogether. Rather, they contain an overt pronominal, *uno*, generated in N and moving to Num<sup>0</sup>. The underspecified nature of the indefinite masculine singular article *un* is thus irrelevant in the licensing of *uno-Adj* constructions. The movement of *uno* to Num<sup>0</sup> not only makes the occurrence of such an article unnecessary, it also makes it impossible.<sup>23</sup>

Consider now the properties of constructions which include feminine and plural instantiations of *uno*: *una, unos, and unas*. In these cases, the presumed overt indefinite pronoun is homophonous with the indefinite article which *does* carry overt inflection. We excluded *Adj-*

<sup>21</sup> While the difference between Spanish and English follows directly from our assumption that English *one* does not move, we have no explanation at the present time for this asymmetry, short of noting that overt movement in English is highly restricted both in verbal and nominal contexts.

<sup>22</sup> But we do note that gender marking on third person verbs in Hebrew is specified, but not sufficient to license *pro* in the subject position. We leave this matter aside, pending a better understanding of the relations between feature specification and null pronominal licensing in general.

<sup>23</sup> We make the prediction that *tres importantes* can only be strong, and must, thus, be excluded from weak contexts. Although such *Adj-pros* are accepted in existential constructions (*Hay tres rojos sobre la mesa* ‘there are three red ones on the table’), native speakers report that they only have a list reading (e.g. talking about pens, three red ones are sitting on the table, two blue ones on the floor, and a yellow one near the window). If this is correct, it confirms our claim that *Adj-pros* are always strong. Note, in this respect, that Spanish contrasts with French, for instance, which never allows *trois rouges* in weak contexts, even with a pair list reading. We leave a more detailed investigation of these cases to future research.

*pro* constructions in Spanish for singular masculine in the absence of an appropriate article, but note now that such an exclusion does not extend to feminine and plural indefinite articles. As a result, we expect a parallel derivation for expressions which include an inflected article and an adjective. On one derivation, they will parallel that of singular masculine *uno*, as in (64). On that derivation, they may have a weak reading. On the other derivation, they will follow the analysis for *Adj-pro* in French, with the article licensing *pro*, and will be restricted to strong contexts, as in (65) (a prediction, note, that cannot be checked due to the existence of a ‘weak’ derivation):

64. a. [uno [Adj [~~uno~~]]] (indefinite pronominal)  
       b. [una [Adj [~~una~~]]] (indefinite pronominal)  
       c. [unos [Adj [~~unos~~]]] (indefinite pronominal)  
       d. [unas [Adj [~~unas~~]]] (indefinite pronominal)
65. a. \*[un [Adj [*pro*]]]  
       b. [una [Adj [*pro*]]] (article licensing a definite *pro*)  
       c. [unos [Adj [*pro*]]] (article licensing a definite *pro*)  
       d. [unas [Adj [*pro*]]] (article licensing a definite *pro*)

To conclude, the identification of *pro* in Spanish is subject to the same principles as in French, Hebrew and English. Spanish licenses "bare adjectival" nominals with a large variety of interpretations because it has sufficient information on both the article and the adjective. All articles except *un* license *pro* successfully. The particular behavior of *un*, and the appearance of *un/uno* alternation in the case of bare adjectives, relates, we suggested, to the fact that it is underspecified for gender and number. It therefore follows that in Spanish, true *Adj-pro* can never be indefinite singular masculine. Quite independently, Spanish has an indefinite *overt* form, occurring in both genders, and as both singular and plural. Although, the surface appearance of that form coincides with that of *Adj-pro*, a closer investigation revealed them to be different constructions. As in English, French and Hebrew, the null pronoun found in *Adj-pro* forms in Spanish (e.g. in (65)) is a null definite *pro*, which must be licensed through an overt and sufficiently specific D. The other cases are *Adj-pro*forms which do not involve a null proform, but rather, an indefinite overt pronoun which does not need a licenser; and as a result need not be strong either. As *Adj-pro* must occur in strong environments, it can never surface as a bare plural in Spanish (and see fn. 19 for some comments). When we combine these factors with the fact that the proform *uno* (in contrast with the numeral) may occur in weak contexts, it emerges that the contrast between *Adj-pro* and Nom(A) in Spanish can only be illustrated in indefinite, weak plural contexts, as in (47).

## 6. Conclusion

We have shown in this paper that nominal expressions which are homophonous with adjectives belong to two distinct classes. One class (our Nom(A)) consists of true nouns that happen to be homophonous with adjectives, but whose meaning, when compared to that of the corresponding adjectives, is either considerably restricted or idiosyncratic. Across the languages that we examined, the set of Noms(A) is relatively small and restricted. The large and productive class of nominal expressions which are homophonous with adjectives, we suggest, truly are attribute adjectives which modify a pronominal null N (our *Adj-pro*). In contrast with

Nom(A), whose distribution is identical to that of a regular noun, *Adj-pro* is restricted to strong contexts. We suggested that while the *pro* in *Adj-pro* is, like non-bound pronouns, definite, it nevertheless is subject to licensing constraints, which amount to its occurrence only being licit in the context of an overt D. The result is that it is barred in contexts which do not allow a strong reading. We further suggested that all definite pronouns may be N-pronouns, and that so-called D-pronouns are derived through the movement of a *pro* form (overt or covert) to D, and that it may very well turn out that across the board, indefinite pronouns are never covert.

Finally, as is usual, we attribute cross-linguistic differences between *Adj-pro* forms to the overt vs. covert nature of inflectional and functional material, leading to a different application of licensing conditions on null pronominals in various languages. Specifically, we note that the existence of overt articles, adjective agreement and verbal agreement in some languages or paradigms vs. its absence in others turns out to account for the distinct (but at times overlapping) distribution of *pro* in English, Hebrew, French and Spanish.

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