# DEFINING "INCORPORATION" WITH BARE SINGULARS IN ROMANIAN

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**Abstract:** This paper[1] revisits the problem of bare singular count nouns in Romanian (see Tănase-Dogaru 2007, 2008). The vantage point bare singulars are analyzed from in this paper is the framework known in the literature as "incorporation". The paper will try to refine the analysis of incorporation; in so doing, the analysis will clarify issues related to head-movement in current linguistic theory.

**Keywords:** bare singular, incorporation, head-movement

## 1. Introduction

Bare singulars (henceforth BS) in Romanian occupy the following syntactic positions (see Tănase-Dogaru 2009): (i) predicate position, as in (1a); (ii) argument position, as objects of verbs and prepositions, as in (1b,c):

(1) a. Ion e ţăran.
Ion is peasant.
'Ion is a peasant.'
b. Ion are nevastă.
Ion has wife.
'Ion has a wife/John is married.'
c. Ion stă pe scaun.
Ion sits on chair.
'Ion is sitting on the chair.'

Romanian BS are barred in both preverbal and postverbal subject positions (2a, b).

(2) a. Ţăran *(ul) e pe câmp
peasant (the) is on field
'The peasant is on the field.'
b. Vine ţăran *(ul) de la câmp.
comes peasant (the) from field.
'The peasant is coming from the field.'

It is a widely-accepted view in the literature that in Romance (pre-verbal) subject position, BS countables are ruled out (see (4)), in contrast with object positions. The subject position is regarded as restricted to fully referential entities – full DPs of the semantic type <e> – so that a NumP structure could not function in this slot without a determiner or quantifier.

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(4) a. *Copil se juca pe stradă.
child *se* played on street
'The/A child was playing in the street.'
b. *Femeie discuta politică.
woman was discussing politics
'The/A woman was discussing politics.'
c. *Bărbat juca fotbal.
man was playing football.
'The/A man was playing football'

These differences between subject and object positions available for BS have lead to the idea that BS objects have a freer distribution than BS subjects because they are (semantically or lexically) incorporated by the main verb (see van Geenhoven 1998, Farkas and de Swart 2003, Massam 2001, a.o.).

### 1.1 Subject BS

Normative grammars of Romanian consider that bare nominals cannot occur in subject position in Romanian unless they form part of a rather restricted class of constructions, which express either physiological / psychological states or natural phenomena (see *GALR* 2005). Very frequently, BS occurring in subject position are mass terms:

(5) a. Mi- e sete. / Mi- e foame / e iarnă.
1SG.DAT is thirst / 1SG.DAT is hunger / is winter
'I am thirsty / I am hungry / it is winter.'
b. E întuneric / soare / frig.
is dark / sun / cold
'It is dark / sunny / cold.'
(6) Carne se găseşte dar nu ştiu dacă vom găsi peşte.
meat REFL.3SG find but not know whether will find fish.
'One can find meat but I don't know whether we will find fish.'

Moreover, it is emphasized that even in these restricted contexts, the verb is predominantly a verb of existence. As a matter of fact, the existence verb can force the BS countable to appear in subject position:

(7) a. Există secretară în birou?
is secretary in office
'Is there a secretary in the office?'
b. E banană în frigider?
is banana in fridge
'Is there a banana in the fridge?'
c. E copiator pe hol?
is copy-machine on hallway
'Is there a copy-machine in the hallway?'

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Despite the asymmetry between the subject and object positions discussed in the literature on bare nouns, there are some contexts with BS subjects are available:

(8) a. Casă se găseşte foarte greu (Alexandra Cornilescu, p.c.)
house *se* find very difficult
'It is very difficult to find a house.'
b. Bărbat bun se vede foarte rar
man good *se* see very rarely
'You can rarely see a good man.'
c. Viaţă nu există pe alte planete (*GALR* 2005).
life not exists on other planets
'There is no life on other planets.'
d. Limbă străină nu se cere pentru angajare
language foreign not *se* for employment
'We don't ask you to know foreign a language to get hired.'

BS can appear in pre-verbal subject position as negative polarity items in negative constructions (9) or in topicalization structures (10):

(9) a. Strop de ploaie n- a căzut.
drop of rain not has fallen
'Not a drop of rain has fallen.'
b. Picior de student n- am văzut azi
leg of student not have seen today
'I haven't seen the ghost of a student today.'
(10) a. Nevastă nu va avea cât va trăi.
wife not will have how much will live
'As for a wife, he will not have one as long as he lives.'
b. Prieten bun n- am avut de ani de zile
friend good not have had of years of days
'I haven't had a good friend in years.'

Therefore, there are contexts allowing BS in Romanian to appear in subject and preverbal (object) positions. However, the class of verbs allowing BS in Romanian is rather restricted and related to 'existence'.

### 1.2 Object BS

Object BS are licensed:

(i) under negation:

(11) a. Băiatul n- a adus minge azi.
boy-the not has brought ball today
'The boy didn't bring a ball today.'

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b. Nu -mi doresc maşină.
Not-me wish car
'I don't want a car.'

(ii) with verbs selecting relational nouns, e.g. *a căuta* 'look for', *a găsi* 'find', *a vrea* 'want', *a dori* 'wish' (cf. Laca's 1999 examples for Spanish):

(12) a. Ion caută secretară / nevastă / femeie / professor / bucătar.
Ion searches secretary / wife / woman / teacher / cook
Ion searches for secretary/wife/woman/teacher/cook.'
b. Ion doreşte nevastă tânără.
Ion wants wife young.
'Ion wants a young wife.'

(iii) with light verbs:

(13) a. a avea timp / nevoie / obicei
have time / need / custom
b. a face sport / baie / dragoste / amor / febră / scandal / curăţenie
make sport / bath / love / love / fever / scandal / cleaning
c. a da exemplu
give example

(iv) with verbs belonging to a class associated with 'have', 'make'/'do' or acquisition verbs:

(14) a. Ion are casă / maşină / copil mic / carte de credit / paşaport / bucătăreasă.
Ion has house / car / child little / card of credit / passport / cook
'Ion has a house/a car/a little child/a credit card/a passport/a cook.'
b. Casa asta are lift/grădină
house this has elevator / garden
'This house has an elevator / a garden.'

(v) verbs imposing strong selectional restrictions:

(15) a. Maria poartă pălărie / uniformă / poşetă / cravată / cămaşă / rochie scurtă
Maria wears hat / uniform / purse / tie / shirt / dress short
'Maria wears a hat/a uniform/a tie/a shirt/a short dress.'
b. Ion foloseşte stilou / creion
Ion uses pen / pencil
'Ion uses a pen / a pencil.'
c. Ion conduce camion.
Ion drives truck.
'Ion drives a truck.'

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(vi) proverbs:

(16) a. Cui pe cui se scoate.
nail on nail *SE* pull out
'Fight fire with fire.'
b. Ban la ban trage.
coin to coin drives
'Nothing succeeds like success.'
c. Deal cu deal se întâlneşte, dar om cu om?
hill with hill *SE* meets but man with man
'We are bound to meet again.'

(vii) idioms:

(17) a. Vine glonţ
comes bullet
'He comes and goes like lightning.'
b. Merge strună
works chord
'Everything goes like clockwork.'
c. Se supără foc.
*SE* enrages fire
'He gets inflamed.'

To sum up, BS appear both as subjects and objects, both in pre-verbal and post-verbal positions. However, BS distribution in post-verbal (object) positions is freer than in pre-verbal positions. The next sections will try to clarify why this is so.

## 2. The Incorporation Hypothesis

Incorporation (see Masullo 1992, van Geenhoven 1998, Massam 2001, Farkas and De Swart 2003, a.o.) is, loosely speaking, strict adjacency of the bare noun to the verb or preposition (or a specific location inside the VP, where the noun always appears, often resulting in morphological incorporation), narrow scope of the noun (often associated with property-denotation and/or inability to act as antecedent of anaphoric expressions) and number deficiency or neutrality (relating to the fact that the noun may refer to singular or plural entities or to "general number" in the sense of Corbett 2000).

For instance, Chukchee, a Paleosiberian language spoken in North Eastern Siberia, provides a wealth of examples. The constructions in (18 a,b) have the same meaning and use the same roots. However, in (18 b) the root *qora* 'reindeer' has been incorporated into the verb:

(18) a. t@ -pelark@n qoran@
1SG-leave reindeer

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b. t@ -qora- pelark@n
1SG reindeer leave
'I'm leaving the reindeer.'

Therefore, strictly speaking, incorporation is a phenomenon by which a word, usually a verb, forms a kind of compound with, for instance, its direct object or adverbial modifier, while retaining its original syntactic function (see Lexicon of Linguistics n.d.)

**2.1 Masullo (1992)**

One account of bare plurals and BS, put forth by Masullo (1992) proposes that they are defective nominal projections (not DPs but NPs) that must incorporate to a verb or preposition in order to satisfy the Visibility Condition. Since there is no overt manifestation of incorporation, these nominals must incorporate at LF. Evidence for his analysis includes the absence of Spanish bare nominals in subject position (as in (19a)), where they are unable to incorporate, and the requirement of strict adjacency between the verb / preposition and the bare nominal that must incorporate to it (as in (19b)).

(19) a. *Ninito no trajo pelota.
child not brought ball
'A child didn't bring a ball.'
b. Llegaron ayer todos los invitados.
arrived yesterday all the guests
'All the guests arrived yesterday'.
c. *Llegaron ayer invitados.
arrived yesterday guests

**2.2 Van Geenhoven (1998)**

Another account of incorporation (van Geenhoven, 1998) presents a list of verbs that are very similar to those that take BS in Romanian: *get*, *buy*, *have*, *look for*, *sell*, and *eat*. Van Geenhoven (1998) discusses incorporating nouns in West Greenlandic, which always have a narrow-scope reading and get incorporated morphologically. Interestingly, verbs that incorporate nouns in West Greenlandic are very similar to those that take BS in Spanish and Romanian.

Incorporating nouns in West Greenlandic are interpreted existentially, may receive narrow scope only and do not allow a partitive interpretation. An incorporating verb requires an object that denotes a property, which prompts van Geenhoven to make the connection between incorporated nouns in West Greenlandic and bare plurals in English, which are argue to have the same semantic representation: properties that are incorporated by the verb. Another similarity between West Greenlandic incorporated nouns and English bare plurals is, in the author's view, that both serve as antecedents of anaphora, which may be taken to indicate that they introduce discourse referents.

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(20) a. Suulut timmisartu-lior -p -u -q.
Soren.ABS airplane made-IND-[-TR]-3SG
suluusa-qar -p -u -q aquute-qar -llu -ni -lu
wing have-IND-[-TR]-3SG rudder-have-INF-3SG.PROX-and
'Soren made an airplane. It has wings and it has a rudder.'
b. Mark was eating potato chips. He bought them at the supermarket.

Some problems of the analysis, as pointed out by Cohen (1999), are that, on the one hand, it is not clear if incorporated nouns in West Greenlandic introduce real discourse referents and, on the other hand, the assumption that some verbs in West Greenlandic have both an incorporating and a non-incorporating version in the lexicon.

Van Geenhoven was to first to use the term "semantic incorporation" as an umbrella term to cover all narrow scope indefinites, independently of their morpho-syntactic characteristics. In her use of the term "incorporation" she differs from Baker's use (1998) of the term, which, in this case, covers only cases in which the incorporated entity is of bar-level zero, i.e. made up of an unmodified noun.

Massam (2001) coins the term "pseudo-incorporation" to cover a special class of nouns in Niuean that may be modified by adjectives and allow coordination, but cannot be preceded by articles, i.e. nominals of category NP.

### 2.3 Farkas and de Swart (2003)

Farkas and de Swart (2003) use the term incorporation to refer to nominals that have special, reduced morpho-syntax that contrasts with that of full-fledged arguments. They claim that the special morpho-syntax correlates with a special, reduced semantic role of incorporated nominals. The semantic contrasts between incorporated and non-incorporated is illustrated by the Hungarian minimal pair in (21a, b):

(21) a. Mari olvas egy verset.
Mari read a poem.ACC
'Mari is reading a poem.'
b. Mari verset olvas.
Mari poem.ACC read
'Mari is reading a poem/poems.'

The incorporated nominal occurs in an immediately preverbal position, which the authors call PredOp, it is number-neutral and less salient, in terms of information structure, than non-incorporated nouns, i.e. full-fledged arguments. Incorporated nouns in Hungarian are shown to be discourse opaque, i.e. cannot serve as antecedents to pronouns in discourse:

(22) a. $\text{Janos}_i$ betegetj vizsgalt a rendeloben.
$\text{Janosi}_i$ patient-$\text{ACC}_j$ examine.PAST the office-in
'Janos patient-examined in the office.'

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b. ?*pro$_i$ Tul sulyosnak talalta ot$_j$ es beutaltatta pro$_j$ a
pro$_i$ too severe.DAT find.PAST he.acc$_j$ and intern.CAUSE.PAST pro$_j$ the
korhazba.
hospital-in
'He found him too sick and sent him to hospital.'

BS always have narrow scope and are interpreted existentially, i.e. similar to "indefinites" which remain in the nuclear scope. As for the syntax of bare arguments, their special semantic characteristics (non-specificity, lack of scopal interactions, see Perez-Leroux and Roeper 1999, and non-assertion of existence, see Glougie 2000) have prompted linguists to view bare arguments not as full DPs, but as minimal nominal projections.

To sum up what has been discussed so far, the notion of incorporation seems to be treated and construed differently by different theoreticians. However, a few characteristics of incorporated nominals emerge in all frameworks: incorporated nominals are number-neutral, i.e. they refer to both singular and plural individuals, and are not good antecedents for discourse anaphora. It will be seen that Romanian BS nouns in object positions are neither number-neutral nor discourse opaque.

## 3. Are Romanian BS incorporated?

The hypothesis that BS are simple NP structures that incorporate to a verb or preposition is borne out by a special case of locative construction in Romanian, in which the noun *casă* 'house' (morphologically) incorporates to the former Latin preposition *ad*: *ad + casam = acasă*:

(23) Ion s- a dus acasă.
Ion *se* has gone home
'Ion went home.'

We can argue that BS nouns objects of prepositions undergo semantic incorporation (sometimes, morphological incorporation, see (23)). The rest of BS nouns in Romanian, however, are problematic for an incorporation analysis, i.e. they are number-specific and discourse-transparent. Also, modification and coordination of BS in possible in Romanian.

In their analysis of Brazilian Portuguese, which allows BS freely in both object and subject positions, Schmitt and Munn (1999, 2000, 2004) argue that such nouns are number-neutral. They can be interpreted as either singular or plural (24a), cannot license the adjective 'different' (24b) and induce durative readings, in contrast to the singular indefinite, which forces a terminative reading (24c). This shows that the BS is not quantized, despite the fact that it is morphologically singular.

(24) a. Eu vi criança na sala. E ela estava / elas estavam ouvindo.
1SG saw child in-the rooma and 3SG.F was / they were listening
'I saw the child in the room. And she was listening.'

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b. *Eles escreveram livro diferente.
3PL.M wrote book different
'They wrote a different book.'
c. *Eu escrevi carta em duas horas / eu escrevi uma carta em duas horas
1SG wrote letter in two hours / 1SG wrote a letter in two hours
'I wrote the/a letter in two hours.'

Romanian BS can only be interpreted as semantically singular (25a), license the adjective 'different' (25b) and induce terminative reading with verbs such as 'build' (25c).

(25) a. Ion şi- a cumpărat maşină. Ea / aceasta este mare.
Ion CL.3SG.DAT has bought car-F.SG it.3SG.F / this-3SG.F is big-SG.F
'Ion bought a car. It is big.'
b. Ion şi- a luat maşină diferită de a lui Gheorghe.
Ion CL.3SG.DAT has taken car different from AL.F of Gheorghe
'Ion bought a different car from Gheorghe's'.
c. Ion şi- a construit casă în doi ani.
Ion CL.3SG.DAT has built house in two years
'Ion built a house in two years.'

Examples (25a, b) show that Romanian BS are quantized objects and have singular reference. (25a) shows that the BS 'maşină' introduces a discourse-transparent object, which can be referred to by anaphora. (26a, b) show that Romanian BS may appear modified by adjectives and relative clauses. In addition, such nouns may appear in coordinated structures (26c) (see Dayal 2003, who argues that incorporated bare singulars cannot be conjoined or modified):

(26) a. Ion vrea nevastă tânără (şi frumoasă).
Ion wants wife young (and beautiful).
'Ion wants a young and beautiful wife.'
b. Ion doreşte nevastă care nu fumează / care dansează
Ion wishes wife that not smokes / care dances
'Ion wants a wife who shouldn't smoke/who dances'
c. Ion vrea nevastă şi copil / Ion foloseşte cuţit şi furculiţă.
Ion wants wife and child / Ion uses knife and fork.
'Ion wants a wife and a child / Ion uses a knife and a fork.'

The "strict adjacency rule" of incorporation is not observed by Romanian BS:

(27) a. Ion are şi casă şi maşină.
Ion has and house and car
'Ion has both a house and a car.'

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b. Ion nu are încă casă.
Ion not has yet house
'Ion doesn't have a house yet.'
c. Ion are deja maşină.
Ion has already car
'Ion already has a car'
d. Ion va avea de mâine paşaport
Ion will have of tomorrow passport.
'As of tomorrow, Ion will have a passport.'

One attempt at remedying the situation is the formulation of a Lexical Incorporation rule by Dobrovie-Sorin and Bleam (2005). In the authors' view, Lexical Incorporation combines lexical items (e.g. wife, good, walk, etc.) bearing syntactic categorial labels (N, Adj, V, respectively) and yields a complex lexical item bearing a phrasal categorial label (e.g. NP or VP). The complex lexical element thus obtained is inserted into a syntactic position that bears the same syntactic category:

(27) a. Pick up an array of lexical items:
[Vcaută] 'seek, look for', [Nnevastă] 'wife', [Adjtânără] 'young'
b. Lexical Incorporation:
(i) [Nnevastă] + [Adjtânără] => [NPnevastă tânără]
(ii) [Vcaută] + [NPnevastă tânără] => [VPcaută nevastă tânără]

The semantic analysis associated with the rule of Lexical Incorporation of BS involves predicate modification, and from this point of view, the authors' proposal is comparable to Dayal's (2003) rule of Pseudo-incorporation and to Farkas and de Swart's (2003) rule of Theta-Unification. The accounts differ from insofar as they do not assume that the incorporation of BS pertains to the Lexicon. The authors assume Dayal's implementation, according to which transitive verbs can be represented as "incorporating predicates".

## 4. Bare singulars and head-movement

Romanian BS have been shown to pose several problems for a theory of incorporation: they are always number-specific, may appear conjoined or modified, may appear at a distance from the verb and introduce discourse transparent entities.

The semantic features that escape the confines of the incorporation hypothesis are discourse-transparency and non-number-neutrality.

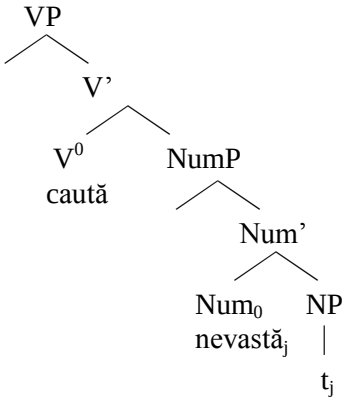
The syntactic features that cannot be accounted for by the incorporation hypothesis are modification and coordination. In addition, BS appear at quite a distance from the main verb in Romanian. This contradicts the tenets of the incorporation hypothesis, which heavily rely on "closeness" between the verb and the incorporated nominal.

In previous work, (Tănase-Dogaru 2007) I assumed, following Deprez (2005) that a singular noun in a +Pl language projects Number syntactically. Romanian BS are,

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therefore, NumPs, with an empty $Num^0$ head, i.e. without overt morphological material. When a BS is merged in an object position in Romanian, N moves to Num.

(28)




The basic claim is that N-to-Num movement allows the noun to be merged in argument position, paralleling the manner in which proper names move to $D^0$. N-to-Num movement allows the noun to be merged in object position; the subject position needs the D level.

### 4.1 Head-movement – a problematic phenomenon?

Chomsky's (2001) argues for the exclusion of head-movement from narrow-syntax and considering it as falling within the phonological component. The semantic effects of head-movement are "slight or non-existent", while the semantic effects of XP-movement are "substantial and systematic", (e.g. verbs are not interpreted differently in English vs. Romance, Mainland Scandinavian vs. Icelandic, embedded vs. root structures whether they remain in situ or raise to T). Another argument is that inflectional categories are phonetically affixal, triggering V-to-T, T-to-C and N-to-D in the phonological component. Chomsky (2001) concludes that the head-raising rule differs from core rules of narrow syntax, in that it is an adjunction rule, it is countercyclic, the raised head does not c-command its trace (it violates the Inclusiveness Condition and the Extension Condition).

#### 4.1.1 Pro head-movement: Matushansky (2006)

According to Matushansky (2006), head-movement may be seen as part of narrow syntax and "perfectly compliant with properties of grammar". In the author's view, head-movement is a combination of two operations, a syntactic one (movement) and a morphological one (m-merger). Head-movement and phrasal movement are instances of the same phenomenon (feature valuation followed by Merge); while head-movement is triggered by c-select, phrasal movement is triggered by Agree.

The main claim in Matushansky (2006) is that there is no theoretical difference between head-movement and phrasal movement; there is only one type of movement, i.e. feature valuation followed by Merge.

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In support of her analysis, she claims that head movement and phrasal movement seem to be in complementary distribution. C-selection – which shows the same kind of locality as head-movement – is required independently of the theory (nouns appear with determiners, adjectives cannot, though both categories are one-place predicates). The same applies to lexical selection. The logical conclusion is that head-movement is based on c-selection, just as phrasal movement is based on Agree.

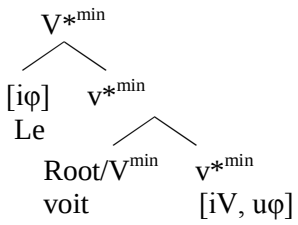
As for M-merger, it is defined as an operation of the morphological component, which collapses two heads in an adjunction configuration. M-merger is seen as an independently justified morphological operation, which takes two feature bundles and returns one. The inner structure of a head is syntactically opaque, by the Transparence Condition.

### 4.1.2 Pro head-movement: Roberts (2010)

Roberts (2010) argues that head-movement is part of narrow syntax, because it applies where the Goal of an Agree relation is defective. Minimal categories can, under restricted conditions, adjoin to the left edge of other minimal categories. There are three types of phenomena that can best be viewed as head-movement phenomena: cliticisation, verb-movement and noun-incorporation.

Romance clitics are φPs ($\varphi^{min/max}$) rather than DPs ($D^{min/max}$); they can be thought of as nominal categories lacking the lexical nP layer. Since the label of (active, transitive) v* contains φ-features (unvalued versions of the φ-features that make up the clitic), the clitic's label is not distinct from v*'s, so the clitic can adjoin to v* and form a derived minimal head.

(29)




When referring to noun incorporation, Baker (1996, 1998, 2003) claims that noun-incorporation is a local process, it only applies to complements and what is incorporated is a root. Starting from these assumptions, Roberts (2010) likens noun-incorporation to Romance cliticisation. His claim is that, just as clitics might lack the lexical nP phase, a nominal may lack the inflectional D superstructure. Arguments may be nPs rather than DPs (as in Chierchia 1998). N may be able to escape nP by moving to n; the n-N complex then may raise to v.

## 5. Conclusions

In view of what has been shown so far, there is sufficient evidence to consider that head-movement is part of the narrow syntax. I will capitalize on Roberts' (2010)

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suggestion that, while clitics might lack the lexical nP phase, a nominal may lack the inflectional D superstructure and consider Romanian bare singulars nouns as "defective" in this respect. They undergo N-movement to the head of the Number Phrase, which can be considered a type of m-merger, in the sense of Matushansky (2006). The need for resorting to a theory of incorporation is overridden in this way, at least to a great extent.

Further research is needed to account for the special semantic features of bare singulars in Romanian, especially narrow scope phenomena.

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