Varieties of Indefinites

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The paper examines some of the considerable morphological variation within the realm of noun phrases one would classify as indefinites within a language as well as cross-linguistically, and make the following points:

(i)   Distinguishing between choice-functional and non-choice functional indefinites is less useful than it has been claimed. More specifically, it will be argued in some detail that the beavior of "some" in English is not captured by assuming that it is choice-functional in the singular or plural. (The claim that plural "some" is choice-functional has been made in Chierchia 1998.)

(ii)   A more promising line for capturing inter- and intra-linguistic variation is to assume that noun phrases with descriptive content are essentially all choice-functional, the descriptive content providing the set that serves as argument to the choice function, but that variation arises as a result of various languages marking various further constraints on the choice function in question, constraints pertaining to the nature of the function (i.e., whether it is a Skolem function or not), as well as to the nature of its argument.