Specificity and Definiteness: Evidence from Turkish and Persian

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Structure of Talk

1. The relationship between definiteness and specificity: two views.

2. Definiteness and specificity marking in Turkish and Persian.

3. Attributive noun phrases are specific in Turkish and Persian.

4. The intensional context puzzle in Persian.

5. The verbs of creation puzzle in Turkish and Persian.

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1. The Relationship Between Definiteness and Specificity: Two Views

Partee 1972: Nonspecific Definites Exist

- **Donnellan** (1966)

(1) *The murderer of Smith* is insane.

  ➢ Ambiguous between referential and attributive reading

- **Partee** (1972)

(2) John will marry *a girl his parents don't approve of*.

  ➢ Specific = referential
  ➢ Non-specific = attributive

von Heusinger 2002: Nonspecific Definites Exist

- "I assume that specificity is a 'referential property' of NPs. This property cuts across the distinction of definite vs. indefinite, like genericity."

(3) a. Indefinite specific

> *A body* was found in the river yesterday

b. Indefinite non-specific:

> I never saw *a two-headed man*.

c. Definite specific:

> *The body* was found in the river yesterday.

d. Definite non-specific:

> They'll never find *the man that will please them*.
> [Prince 1981: "attributive"]

Givenness Hierarchy (GHZ 1993): Definiteness entails Specificity

FOC > ACT > FAM > **UID** > **REF** > **TID**

it   *this/that/this N*   *that N*   *the N*   indefinite *this N*   *a N*

➢ **Type identifiable**: H can associate a type representation with the dog.

(4) I couldn't sleep last night. *A dog* kept me awake.

➢ **Referential (specific)**: H can associate a unique representation with the dog by the time the S has been processed.

(5) I couldn't sleep last night. *This dog next door* kept me awake.

➢ **Uniquely identifiable**: H can associate a unique representation with the dog by the time the NP has been processed.

(6) I couldn't sleep last night. *The dog next door* kept me awake.

- Von Heusinger and Partee predict that definite non-specific NPs exist.
- The Givenness Hierarchy predicts that all definites will be specific.
- We decided to investigate languages that encode specificity morphologically, and see whether they allow definite non-specific NPs.
- We also wanted to see if specificity behaves the same in the different languages that encode it: Are there universals of specificity?

2. Definiteness and Specificity Marking in Turkish and Persian

Specific/Nonspecific Objects in Turkish and Persian

(7) **Turkish**

   a. Bugün   *bir avukat-ı* gör-üyor-um
     today one lawyer-**ACC** see-PROG-1SG
     'I am seeing a (particular) lawyer today.'

   b. Bugün   *bir avukat* gör-üyor-um
     today   one lawyer see-PROG-1SG
     'I am seeing a lawyer today (some lawyer or other).'

(8) **Persian**

   a. Emruz *ye vakil-(i)-o*   mi-bin-am.
     today one lawyer-I-**RA** PROG-see-1SG
     'I am seeing a (particular) lawyer today

   b. Emruz *ye*   *vakil*   mi-bin-am.
     today   one lawyer PROG-see-1SG
     'I am seeing a lawyer today (some lawyer or other)'

Definiteness & Specificity marking on object NPs in Turkish & Persian

Turkish

- SOV

- Altaic

- Bare Nouns: non-specific

- Acc-Marking: specific
  - ➢ Bare noun: definite
  - ➢ Numeral: indefinite

- Obligatory Acc-marking:
  - ➢ Proper name, demonstrative, pronoun, strong quantifier (e.g. *every*, *most*)

Persian

- SOV

- Indo-Iranian

- Bare Nouns: non-specific

- RA-Marking: specific
  - ➢ Bare noun: definite
  - ➢ Numeral: indefinite

- Obligatory RA-marking:
  - ➢ Proper name, demonstrative, pronoun, strong quantifier (e.g. *every*, *most*)

Obligatory Specifics in Turkish & Persian

(9)

a. Ahmet Ayşe-*(yi)   gör-dü̱.
   Ahmet Ayşe-ACC   see-PAST
   'Ahmet saw Ayşe.'

b. Ahmet bu ev-*(i)   satın al-dı.
   Ahmet this house-ACC buy-PAST
   'Ahmet bought this house.'

c. Ahmet o-*(nu)   gör-dü.
   Ahmet he/she/it.ACC see-PAST
   'Ahmet saw him/her/it.'

d. Ahmet kitab-ı   oku-du.
   Ahmet book-ACC   read-PAST
   'Ahmet read the book.'

e. Ahmet her kitab-*(ı)   oku-du.
   Ahmet every book-ACC read-PAST
   'Ahmet read every book.'

(10)

a. Ali Sârâ-*(ro) did
   Ali Sara-RA   saw-3SG
   'Ali saw Sarah.'

b. Ali in   xuna-*(ro) xarid.
   Ali this house-RA bought-3SG
   'Ali bought this house.'

c. Ali ishun-*(o) did.
   Ali he/she-RA saw-3SG
   'Ali saw him/her.'

d. Ali ketâb-o xund
   Ali book-RA read-3SG
   'Ali read the book.'

e. Ali hame-ye   ketâb-ha-*(ro) xund
    Ali every-EZ book-PL-RA read-3SG
   'Ali read every book.'

3. Attributive Noun Phrases are Specific in Turkish and Persian

Attributive NPs are Specific in Turkish and Persian

- Partee's (1972) extension of Donnellan's distinction that specific=referential & non-specific=attributive, predicts that the definite object in (11) is non-specific.

  ➢ Contrary to this claim, both Turkish & Persian require specificity marking.

(11) a. *katil-*(i)*   bul-malı-yız
        murderer-**ACC**   find-MOD-1PL

    b. bayad   *qatel-(a) -*(ro*)   peyda kon-im
      must   murderer-FAM-**RA** find   do-1PL

'We must find *the murderer* (whoever it is*)'*.

Attributive NPs are Specific in Turkish and Persian

Contrary to von Heusinger's (2002) claim that the definite object NP in (12) is non-specific, both Turkish & Persian require specificity marking:

(12) a. *kendi-ler-i-ni   mutlu ed-ecek   adam-*(ı)*   asla
  self-PL-POSS-ACC   happy make-NMN   man-**ACC** never

  bul-a-ma-yacak-lar
  find-ABIL-NEG-FUT-3PL

  b. *mard-i ke   xoshhâl-eshun kona-*(ro)* hichvaqt peida
   man-I   COMP happy=3PL   do.3SG-**RA**   never   find

  na-xahand-kard
  NEG-FUT.3PL-do

  'They'll never find *the man that will please them*.'

4. The Intensional Context Puzzle in Persian

Intensional Contexts:
de dicto, de re

Intensional context: existence of referent is not entailed.

Turkish: (13) a. bir ***doktor***   ara-dı-m.
            one doctor look for-PAST-1SG
            'I looked for a doctor.' (*de dicto,* a doctor not entailed)

       b. bir ***doktor-u***   ara-dı-m.
            one doctor-ACC look for-PAST-1SG
            'I looked for a doctor.' (*de re,* a doctor entailed)

    (14) a. bir ***doktor*** bekle-di-m.
            one doctor wait for-PAST-1SG
            'I waited for a doctor.' (*de dicto,* a doctor not entailed)

       b. bir ***doktor-u***   bekle-di-m.
            one doctor-ACC wait for-PAST-1SG
            'I waited for a doctor.' (*de re,* a doctor entailed)

In some intensional contexts, RA is not allowed in Persian

- <u>Persian</u>: (15) dombâl-e   *ye doktor-(i)-*ro* raft-am
  search-EZ a   doctor-I-RA   went-1SG
  'I looked for a (specific) doctor.'

  (16) montazer-e   *ye doktor-(i)-*ro* mund-am
  wait-EZ   a   doctor-I   remain-1SG
  'I waited for a (specific) doctor.'

- Effect doesn't seem to be semantic since other intensional contexts allow RA

  (17) *ye   doktor-(i)-*(ro)*   mojassam kard-am
  a   doctor-I-RA   imagine   did-1SG
  'I imagined a (specific) doctor.'

- Effect doesn't at first appear to be syntactic since other sentences with *dombâl-e* allow RA:

  (18) dombâl-e   *ye doktor-(i)-*(ro)* gereft-am
  search-EZ a   doctor-I-RA   got-1SG
  'I followed a (specific) doctor'

raftan 'to go' light verb constructions never allow -RA

(19) a. dombâl-e ye doktor-(i)-(*o) **raft**-am
　　　　search-EZ a doctor-I-RA　　went-1SG
　　　　'I looked for a doctor.'　　　　　　　　　(intensional)

　　b. sorâq-e ye doktor-(i)-(*o) r**aft**-am
　　　　call-EZ　a　doctor-I-RA　　went-1SG
　　　　'I called on a doctor.'　　　　　　　　　(extensional)

(20) a. dombâl-e　ye doktor-(i)-*(o) **gereft**-am
　　　　search-EZ　a　doctor-I-RA　　got-1SG
　　　　'I followed a doctor.'　　　　　　　　　(extensional)

　　b. sorâq-e ye doktor-(i)-*(o) **gereft**-am
　　　　call-EZ　a　doctor-I-RA　　got-1SG
　　　　'I asked about a doctor'　　　　　　　　(extensional)

➢ Prohibition of -RA is not due to intensionality

raftan light verb construction objects are indirect and allow a preposition *be*

(21) a. **be** dombâl-e ye doktor-i **raft**-am
      to search-EZ a doctor-I went-1SG
      'I looked for a doctor.'

    b. **be** sorâq-e ye doktor-i r**aft**-am
      to   call-EZ a doctor-I went-1SG
      'I called on a doctor.'

(22) a. *****be** dombâl-e ye doktor-i **gereft**-am
      to search-EZ a doctor-I got-1SG
      ('I followed a doctor')

    b. *****be** sorâq-e ye doktor-i **gereft**-am
      to   call-EZ a doctor-I got-1SG
      ('I asked about a doctor')

➢ *ye doctor* is not the direct object of *dombâl raftan*
➢ We currently have no explanation for 'waiting for' contexts.

5. The Verbs of Creation Puzzle in Turkish and Persian

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Nontopical indefinite objects of creation verbs can't be marked specific (Kelepir 2001)

Turkish (23) a. Mary bir kek-(*i)   yap-tı.
                  Mary one cake-ACC make-PAST
                  'Mary baked a cake.'

        b. Mary bir erkek bebek-(*i)   doğ-ur-du.
              Mary one boy baby-ACC bear-CAUS-PAST
              'Mary gave birth to a baby boy.'

Persian (24) a. Maryam ye kek-(*o)   poxt
                 Mary   a cake-RA baked-3SG
                 'Mary baked a cake.'

        b. Maryam ye pesar-(*o) zâid.
            Mary   a boy-RA begot-3SG
            'Mary gave birth to a baby-boy.'

Definite object of creation verb requires specificity marking

- <u>Turkish</u>

(25) bu fotoğraf-ta ***Mary-nin yap-tığ-ı***   ***kek-*(i)*** gör-ebil-ir-siniz.
  this picture-LOC Mary-GEN make-NMN-POSS cake-**ACC** see-MOD-AOR-2PL
  'You can see the cake that Mary baked in this photo.'

- <u>Persian</u>

(26) ***kek-i-*(o)ke maryam poxte*** bûd, tu in aks   mi-tun-i   be-bin-i.
  cake-I-**RA** that Mary   baked-3SG was in this photo cont-can-2SG SUB-see-2SG
  'You can see the cake that Mary baked in this photo.'

Semantics of Verbs of Creation

- Kelepir (2001) proposes that specific indefinites in Turkish are 'presuppositional' and that an indefinite object of creation verbs didn't previously exist and thus cannot be marked as presupposed.

- Consistent with Kelepir's observation, we suggest that the restriction on specificity-marked indefinite NP's is not particular to the grammars of Turkish and Persian, rather the restriction follows from the semantics of verbs of creation:

(27) a. Mary bought a cake.
    b. Mary baked a cake.

(28) a. Mary found a cake and bought it.
    b. #Mary found a cake and baked it.

Our Solution: Domain Restriction and Choice Function

- In our MOSAIC paper, we will adopt a formal semantic approach to specific indefinites inspired by Gillon (2006).

  E.g. for a non-creation verb sentence:

    (29) Mary bought a (specific) cake.

    ∃f [Mary bought f(λx[cake'(x) ∧ C(x)])]

    There exists a function from the set of contextually relevant cakes to a particular cake (the one the speaker has in mind) such that Mary bought that cake.

- With 'Mary baked a cake', at the time of utterance, the cake is not present in the set of contextually relevant cakes, so specificity marking is not allowed.

- Since the referents of definite noun phrases are necessarily included in the context, they must be marked specific.

6. Conclusion

Conclusions

- Definiteness and specificity are not cross-cutting categories: attributive definites are specific.

- Definiteness entails specificity.

- Turkish and Persian behave identically in terms of specificity and definiteness.

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