

On Definiteness and Specificity in Turkish and Persian*

Nancy Hedberg, Emrah Görgülü, and Morgan Mameni
Simon Fraser University

The purpose of this paper is to examine the languages Turkish and Persian, which encode specificity morphologically, in order to establish that definiteness entails specificity in natural languages, rather than the two distinctions being cross-cutting categories as has been suggested by some researchers. We also provide evidence from both languages, which lack definite articles but have definite interpretations of nominal phrases in certain syntactic positions, that definiteness in a universal sense does not entail familiarity. We further show that Persian has a suffix that marks familiarity morphologically.

After introducing the specificity issue in §1, we review the Givenness Hierarchy of Gundel, Hedberg and Zacharski 1993 in §2, and demonstrate how it predicts that all definites are specific and that definites do not need to be familiar. In §3, we introduce specificity marking in Turkish and Persian, and show that definites in object position are always marked specific. In §4, we show that Persian has a familiarity marker, and illustrate how definites do not need to be familiar in Turkish and Persian and that examples of unfamiliar definite article phrases in English are translated into Persian without the familiarity marker. In §5, we discuss two puzzles involving apparent restrictions on specificity marking in Persian and Turkish. In §6, we briefly conclude.

1. The Relationship between Definiteness and Specificity: Two Views

Partee 1972 suggests that non-specific definites exist. She first points to Donnellan's 1966 distinction between referential and attributive definite NPs. The sentence in (1) is ambiguous between a referential and an attributive reading. On the referential reading, the speaker intends to say that the individual, whom he refers to as "the murderer of Smith" is insane. On the attributive reading, the speaker refers to whoever fits the description, "the murderer of Smith", whether or not he knows who that person is.

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

Partee proposes that the same distinction applies to indefinite NPs like (2), which linguists had referred to as ambiguous between a specific and non-specific indefinite reading.

* The research and presentation of this paper was supported by SSHRC Grant #410-2007-0345 to Nancy Hedberg and Juan Sosa. We are grateful to Donna Gerds, and to the audiences at CLA 2009 and MOSAIC 2009 for helpful questions and comments.

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

She suggests collapsing the two distinctions, so that crucially, attributive definite NPs would be identified as “non-specific”.

More recently, von Heusinger 2002 adopts a similar idea. He says, “I assume that specificity is a ‘referential property’ of NPs. This property cuts across the distinction of definite vs. indefinite, like genericity.” He gives the examples in (3) from Prince 1981.

- (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*.

Note that Prince referred to the example in (3d) as “attributive”. Thus, according to von Heusinger, non-specific definites exist.

A different view is encoded in the Givenness Hierarchy of Gundel, Hedberg and Zacharski 1993 (GHZ). The next section discusses the Givenness Hierarchy and illustrates how definiteness entails specificity on that account.

2. The Givenness Hierarchy

The Givenness Hierarchy is the hierarchy of Cognitive Statuses shown in (4), each of which is associated with a particular form of referring expression that signals the discourse status of the referent in relation to the hearer's expected background knowledge. That is, each form of referring expression instructs the hearer how to cognitively locate or identify the (discourse) referent of the expression.

- (4) FOC > ACT > FAM > UID > REF > TID
 it *this/that/this N* *that N* *the N* indefinite *this N* *a N*

- (5) I couldn't sleep last night. *A dog* kept me awake.
 (6) I couldn't sleep last night. *This dog next door* kept me awake.
 (7) I couldn't sleep last night. *The dog next door* kept me awake.
 (8) I couldn't sleep last night. *That dog next door* kept me awake.

The weakest status is (T)ype-(ID)entifiable, as in (5), where all the hearer needs to do is to associate a *type representation* with the NP. The hearer has to know what a dog is. For (REF)erentiality (or specificity), as in the colloquial indefinite example in (6), the hearer has to be able to associate *a unique representation* with ‘this dog next door’ by the time *the sentence* has been

processed. For (U)nique (ID)entifiability, as in (7), the hearer has to be able to associate *a unique representation* with ‘the dog next door’ by the time *the NP* has been processed. As for the (FAM)iliarity status, an example is given in (8) in which the hearer has to *locate a representation, in memory*, of the dog, perhaps long term memory. For (ACT)ivated, the representation must be in *working memory*. And finally, for in (FOC)us, the representation must be *at the current focus of attention*. By definition, each status entails all statuses to the right.

Because of this entailment relation, a given form is predicted to be possible if any status above or to the left of that form on the hierarchy obtains. The claim is, then, that an indefinite article phrase can be used in some cases even if a higher status obtains. Thus in (9), an indefinite article phrase or a demonstrative phrase can be used to refer to the activated dog and man. Example (10), from Hawkins 1991, shows that the inference that an indefinite article phrase typically refers to a novel entity can be cancelled, suggesting that the novelty condition of Heim 1982, which states that the referent of an indefinite article phrase must be novel, is a conversational implicature rather than an entailment.

- (9) Look. *A man* is hitting *a dog*. / The man is hitting *a dog*. / *A man* is hitting that dog. / That man is hitting *a dog*. [Gundel et al. 2007]
- (10) I met a student before class. *A student* came to see me after class as well—in fact it was the same student I had seen before. [Hawkins 1991]

GHZ propose that the scale of cognitive statuses is subject to manipulation by Grice's Maxim of Quantity, shown in (11).

- (11) Maxim of Quantity (Grice 1975)
- Q1: Make your contribution as informative as required (for the current purposes of the exchange).
- Q2: Do not make your contribution more informative than is required.

Grice's first maxim of quantity results in use of an indefinite article phrase typically implicating that the referent is not familiar. GHZ propose that Grice's second maxim of quantity applies in cases where it is not relevant to signal that a higher status obtains, and thus explains why definite article phrases that only need to be uniquely identifiable are often used to describe entities that are familiar. Familiarity is thus also a conversational implicature of definite phrases, and can be cancelled as in the example from Abbott 2008 in (12):¹

¹ Hawkins 1991 also presents an analysis proposing that uniqueness (or inclusiveness) is a conventional implicature of definite descriptions and that the novelty condition associated with indefinite articles and the familiarity condition associated with definite articles are conversational implicatures. Abbott 2008 looks at definite determiner phrases and argues that uniqueness (or totality) is conventionally associated with them, whereas familiarity is a conversational implicature.

- (12) *The new curling center at MSU*, which you probably haven't heard of, is the first of its kind. [Abbott 2008]

The view that definiteness entails specificity is part of what the Givenness Hierarchy predicts. Crucially, UID entails REF since, if the hearer can associate a unique representation with the entity by the time the NP has been processed, he can associate that representation by the time the sentence has been processed. Every definite is specific, by definition. Also, definiteness does not entail familiarity, since the status FAM is more restrictive than the status UID on the Givenness Hierarchy. In the next two sections, we will show that these predictions are consistent with facts about specificity and familiarity in Turkish and Persian, which are languages that encode such distinctions morphologically.

3. Specificity in Turkish and Persian

In this section, we demonstrate that Turkish and Persian encode specificity almost identically, and show that the attributive noun phrases that Partee and von Stechow analyzed as non-specific are in fact marked specific in Turkish and Persian.

The basic word order in both languages is SOV. Turkish belongs to the Altaic language family, and Persian is an Indo-Iranian language. Turkish marks specific direct objects with accusative case marking. Without accusative marking, objects get a non-specific reading. In (13a) the NP *bir avukatı* 'a lawyer-ACC' gets a specific reading; while in (13b) the NP *bir avukat* 'a lawyer' is interpreted as non-specific.² Likewise, Persian marks specific direct objects with the suffix *-RA*³, as shown in (14).

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

² Turkish also allows a bare NP to appear in the object position where it is pseudo-incorporated into the verb (Öztürk, 2005). Persian allows this too. However, these NPs do not have an argument status, nor are they referential/individuated. In (i) it is possible that the speaker is seeing more than one lawyer.

- (i) Bugün *avukat* gör-üyor-um
 today lawyer see-PROG-1SG
 'I am doing lawyer-seeing today.'

³ In spoken Persian, *-RA* is realized as *-o* following consonants, and *-ro* following (non-high) vowels.

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

(14) Persian:

- a. Emruz ***ye vakil-(i)⁴-o*** mi-bin-am.
 today a/one lawyer-I-RA DUR-see-1SG
 ‘I am seeing a (particular) lawyer today.’
- b. Emruz ***ye vakil*** mi-bin-am.
 today a/one lawyer DUR-see-1SG
 ‘I am seeing a lawyer today (some lawyer or other).’

Note that bare nominals, with or without a numeral, are interpreted as non-specific, whereas –ACC/–RA marked NP’s are always specific. However, –ACC/–RA marked NP’s without numerals are interpreted as definite. Moreover, all definite object NPs such as proper names, demonstrative expressions, pronouns and strong quantifiers require –ACC/–RA marking in both languages, as illustrated for definite and strong quantifiers in (15)–(16).⁵

(15) Turkish:

- Ahmet kitab-*(i)/ her kitab-*(i) oku-du.
 Ahmet book-ACC/every book-ACC read-PAST
 ‘Ahmet read the book/every book.’

(16) Persian:

- Ali ketâb-*(o)/ hame-ye ketâb-ha-*(ro) xund
 Ali book-RA/ every-EZ book-PL-RA read-3SG
 ‘Ali read the book/every book.’

With respect to the issue of the relationship between definiteness and specificity, the critical examples involve definite noun phrases that are attributive in the sense of Donnellan 1966. Partee’s 1972 extension of Donnellan’s distinction, which equates specific NP’s with the referential use and non-specific NP’s with attributive use of definite NP’s, entails that every attributive noun phrase is non-specific. Contrary to this claim, though, Turkish and Persian require specificity marking on attributive NP objects, like those in (17), even when the speaker doesn’t know the identity of the referent.

⁴ Ghomeshi 2003 calls the suffix –I an ‘indefinite’ marker. More accurately, however, –I has a restrictive function whose behavior is more complex than merely marking ‘indefiniteness’. –I generally precedes a relative clause, or else indicates that further description about the referent will be provided further along in the discourse. –I also exhibits NPI (Negative Polarity Item) properties like English *any*. For purpose of our examples, note that while *ye* ‘a/one’ and –I are both optional, one of the two morphemes is necessary if the –RA marked NP is to be interpreted as indefinite.

⁵ For further illustration see e.g. Enç 1991 and Karimi 1996.

(17) Turkish:

- a. ***katil-*(i)*** bul-malı-yüz
 murderer-ACC find-MOD-1PL
 ‘We must find *the murderer* (whoever it is)’.

Persian:

- b. bayad ***qatel-(a) -*(ro)*** peyda kon-im
 must murderer-FAM-RA find do-1PL
 ‘We must find *the murderer* (whoever it is)’.

Von Heusinger’s 2002 claim that the definite object NP mentioned above in (3d) is non-specific is likewise contradicted by the Turkish and Persian equivalents in (18), where the object is obligatorily marked specific, even if the speaker assumes that the sentence is true because such a man does not exist.

(18) Turkish:

- 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
 ‘They’ll never find *the man that will please them*.’

Persian:

- 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*.’

In summary, the Turkish and Persian examples furnish evidence in support of the claim implicit in the Givenness Hierarchy that every definite noun phrase is specific. We showed that specificity marking is indeed required in the two languages with the attributive use of the definite NP, a claim contrary to Partee and von Heusinger’s prediction that attributive noun phrases are non-specific.⁶

4. Familiarity and Unique Identifiability in Persian and Turkish

In this section, we examine support from Persian and Turkish for the claim encoded in the Givenness Hierarchy that definiteness does not entail familiarity. Persian has a nominal suffix that indicates that the referent of the noun phrase is familiar in the sense of Gundel, Hedberg and Zacharski 1993—that is, the hearer

⁶ Von Heusinger and Kornfilt 2005 present an example of a Turkish –ACC-marked attributive phrase (referring to a presumed existing object: ‘Hasan is looking for *the Dean*—whoever the Dean may be’) in their footnote 6. They say that such “non-referential terms” are marked with –ACC because there is no other way to mark definiteness. We claim to the contrary that attributive definites are actually specific.

can locate a representation of the referent in short- or long-term memory. The suffix –E is optionally used when the referent is familiar as in example (19a); whereas the suffix –I is optionally used when the referent is unfamiliar, as in (19b).

- (19) a. *pesar-(a)-ro* did-am.
 boy-E-RA saw-1SG
 'I saw the boy.' (familiar to hearer)
- b. *ye pesar-(i)-ro* did-am
 a-boy-I-RA saw-1SG
 'I saw a (specific) boy.' (unfamiliar to hearer)

The suffix –I is usually glossed in the Persian literature as 'indefinite' and the suffix –E is considered to be an optional definiteness marker (Ghomeshi, 2003). Persian –I is also used to indicate that there is an upcoming relative clause and can be used whether the referent of the complex NP is familiar or unfamiliar, as in (20a). –E can replace –I, however, when and only when the referent of the complex NP is familiar, so it is not grammatical in example (20b).

- (20) a. *un ketâb-i/a-ro ke bâham tu chapterz did-im*
 that book-I/E-RA that together at Chapters saw-1PL
 xarid-am
 bought-1SG
 'I bought *that book that we saw together at Chapters.*' (Familiar to H)
- b. *ye ketâb-i/*a-ro ke tu chapterz did-am* xarid-am
 a book-I/*E-RA that at Chapters saw-1SG bought-1SG
 'I bought *a book that I saw at Chapters.*' (Unfamiliar to H)

We suggest that –E, unlike the definite article in English, really does require familiarity. In support of this analysis, example (21) shows that Persian –E seems to have a demonstrative function. Note that a demonstrative rather than a definite article would have to be used in English in this context because the president in question is not unique.

- (21) [Speaker and hearer are watching a group of presidents of various countries answering questions on television. Speaker says the following to the hearer.]

Reisjomhur-a-ro negâ! Be-nazar nârâhat mi-a-d.
 president-E-RA look to-appearance upset DUR-come-3SG
 'Look at that president! He looks upset.'

Note also, that unlike the English definite article, –E cannot be used for definite noun phrases that are unfamiliar to the hearer.

- (22) a. tu sahr-e mâ, **bimârestân-o** âtish zad-an
 in town-ez us hospital-RA fire hit-3PL
 'In our town, they set fire to *the hospital*.'
- b. # Tu sahr-e mâ, bimârestân-**a**-ro âtish zad-an
 in town-ez us hospital-**E**-RA fire hit-3PL
- c. bimârestân-**a**-ro âtish zad-an
 hospital-E-RA fire hit-3PL
 'They set fire to the hospital.'

In (22), (a) but not (b) is acceptable. (21b) could work if the hospital was familiar. However, that's an unexpected reading with the modification 'in our town' (i.e. had the hospital been familiar, there'd be no need to restrict its domain explicitly). In (22c), the hospital would be familiar to the hearer. We conclude, then, that –E cannot mark 'unfamiliar definites'; rather, –E is a marker of 'familiarity.'

Below are further examples that show that definites in English, Turkish and Persian do not need to be familiar. Examples (23) and (24) show translations of the unfamiliar 'the dog next door' example into Turkish and Persian. Note that only –I rather than –E is appropriate in Persian to introduce the relative clauses since the referent is not familiar.

- (23) Turkish:
komsu-m-a **ait** **ol-an** **köpek** ben-i
 neighbor-1SG-DAT belong be-NMN dog I-ACC
 uyu-t-ma-dı
 sleep-CAUS-NEG-PAST
 'The dog (UNFAM) that belongs to my neighbor kept me awake.'

- (24) Persian:
sag-i/#e **ke** **maal-e** **hamsay-am-e**
 dog-I/#E REL belonging-EZ neighbor-POSS:1SG-BE:3SG
 man-o bidâr negah dâst.
 PRO:1SG-RA awake keep held:3SG
 'The dog (UNFAM) that belongs to my neighbor kept me awake'

Examples (25) and (26) show an unfamiliar superlative example in Turkish and Persian. Again only –I is appropriate in Persian.

- (25) Turkish (Görgülü 2009):
 okutman *bul-abil-diği en zor alıştırma-yı* ver-di
 instructor find-MOD-NMN most hard exercise-ACC give-PAST
 'The instructor assigned *the most difficult exercise he could find*.'
- (26) Persian:
 ostad *saxt-tarin tamrin-(i)-(ro) ke tun-est*
 instructor difficult-SUP exercise-I-RA REL can-PAST-3SG
peyda kon-e daad.
 find do-3SG give:PAST-3SG
 'The instructor assigned *the most difficult exercise he could find*.'

Examples (27) and (28) show a similar ordinal example in Turkish and Persian, where again –I not –E is appropriate in Persian since the referent is most likely unfamiliar.

- (27) Turkish (Görgülü 2009):
 Cem *ilk gör-düğü araba-yı* beğen-di
 John first see-NMN car-ACC like-PAST
 'John liked *the first car that he saw*.'
- (28) Persian:
 Jân *avval-in mâshin-(i)-ro ke did* az-ash xosh-esh
 John first-DEF car-I-RA that saw from=CL:3SG good=CL:3SG
 umad
 came-3SG
 'John liked *the first car that he saw*.'

All of these examples then show that definiteness does not entail familiarity, and the Givenness Hierarchy is justified in distinguishing the status UID from FAM.⁷

5. Restrictions on Specificity

There are two puzzles with regard to specificity that we would like to address here. The first one is an apparent 'intensionality puzzle' in Persian, which we discuss in §5.1. We show that what appears at first to be a restriction against specific direct objects of some intensional verbs must in fact be a syntactic problem. In §5.2 we will discuss a specificity restriction on indefinite objects of creation verbs in both Turkish and Persian, and suggest that this restriction falls out from the semantics of creation verbs.

⁷ It should be noted that Persian also cannot use –E in the example given above in (12), which was Abbott's illustration that the familiarity implicature can be cancelled.

5.1 The Intensionality Puzzle in Persian

The optionality of ACC-marking on indefinites in Turkish allows the distinction between *de re/de dicto* readings in intensional contexts to be encoded morphologically. Examples (29) and (30) illustrate that ACC-marked indefinite objects of intensional transitive verbs in Turkish necessarily receive a *de re* (specific) interpretation, whereas bare nominals are necessarily *de dicto* (non-specific). That is, in the (b) sentences, the referent of ‘a doctor’ is entailed, whereas no such entailment is necessary in the (a) sentences.

Turkish:

- (29) a. ***bir doktor*** ara-dı-m.
 one doctor look for-PAST-1SG
 ‘I looked for a doctor.’ (*de dicto*)
- b. ***bir doktor-u*** ara-dı-m.
 one doctor-ACC look for-PAST-1SG
 ‘I looked for a doctor.’ (*de re*)
- (30) a. ***bir doktor*** bekle-di-m.
 one doctor wait for-PAST-1SG
 ‘I waited for a doctor.’ (*de dicto*)
- b. ***bir doktor-u*** bekle-di-m.
 one doctor-ACC wait for-PAST-1SG
 ‘I waited for a doctor.’ (*de re*)

In Persian however, –RA marking seems at first glance to be prohibited in these environments. It appears from examples in (31) and (32) below that ‘looking for a doctor’ and ‘waiting for a doctor’ do not permit the morphological *de re/de dicto* distinction illustrated above for Turkish. That is, as in English, the Persian examples in (31) and (32) are ambiguous between a *de re/de dicto* reading, since –RA marking is not permitted.

Persian:

- (31) dombâl-e ***ye doktor-(i)-(*ro)*** raft-am
 search-EZ a doctor-I went-1SG
 ‘I looked for a doctor.’ (*de re/de dicto*)
- (32) montazer-e ***ye doktor-(i)-(*ro)*** mund-am
 wait-EZ a doctor-I remain-1SG
 ‘I waited for a doctor.’ (*de re/de dicto*)

An apparent piece of support for restricting the specificity distinction on the basis of intensionality in Persian is the non-intensional example in (33), which has a parallel syntactic construction to (31). On a specific reading, (33)

requires –RA marking. Take note of the light-verb constructions in (31) and (33), which apparently have the same surface structure, consisting of the ‘head-word’ *dombâl*, followed by the linking morpheme –*e* (called *ezafe*)⁸, object noun, and finally the inflected light verb.

- (33) *dombâl-e ye doktor-(i)-*(ro)* gereft-am
 search-EZ a doctor-I got-1SG
 ‘I followed a doctor’ (specific)

If the syntactic environment of *ye doktor*, ‘a doctor’ is the same in (31) and (33), then one might attribute the restriction on –RA marking in (31) to the semantic notion of intensionality, since the object in (31) occurs in an intensional context, but that in (33) does not.

However, the effect doesn’t seem to be semantic, since there are other intensional contexts, such as that in (34), which allow –RA marking and thus distinguish between the two readings.

- (34) a. *Jân mixâd ye doxtar* be-bus-e.
 John wants a girl SUB-kiss-3SG
 ‘John wants to kiss a girl.’ (*de dicto*)
 b. *Jân mixâd ye doxtar-o* be-bus-e
 John wants a girl-RA SUB-kiss-3SG
 ‘John wants to kiss a girl.’ (*de re*)

We can conclude at this stage that the restriction on –RA marking cannot be due to intensionality. In fact, we can learn from examples like (35) and (36) that the restriction appears rather to be due to the valence of the light-verb itself. The intransitive light-verb *raftan* ‘to go’ prohibits –RA marking, whereas the transitive light-verb *gereftan* ‘to get’ requires –RA marking.

- (35) a. *dombâl-e ye doktor-(i)-*(o) raft*-am
 search-EZ a doctor-I-RA went-1SG
 ‘I looked for a doctor.’
 b. *sorâq-e ye doktor-(i)-*(o) raft*-am
 call-EZ a doctor-I-RA went-1SG
 ‘I called on a doctor.’
 (36) a. *dombâl-e ye doktor-(i)-*(o) gereft*-am
 search-EZ a doctor-I-RA got-1SG
 ‘I followed a doctor.’

⁸ *Ezafe* links the head of NP’s and PP’s to their dependents.

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

A further piece of evidence that light-verb constructions with *raftan* only take indirect objects is that these constructions are permitted with the preposition *be* ‘to’, as shown in (37). Light-verb constructions with *gereftan*, which require –RA marking, do not allow a prepositional construction, as shown in (38).

- (37) 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 **raft**-am
 to call-EZ a doctor-I went-1SG
 ‘I called on a doctor.’
 (38) a. * **be** dombâl-e ye doktor-i **gereft**-am
 to search-EZ a doctor-I got-1SG
 b. * **be** sorâq-e ye doktor-i **gereft**-am
 to call-EZ a doctor-I got-1SG

While this explanation works to account for the lack of specificity marking in the Persian ‘looking for a doctor’ example in (31), example (39b) shows that the prepositional construction is impossible with the ‘waiting for a doctor’ example in (32). Thus, prepositional object status cannot explain the restriction on Persian specificity marking in examples across the board.

- (39) a. montazer-e **ye doktor-(i)-(*ro)** mund-am
 wait-EZ a doctor-I remain-1SG
 ‘I waited for a doctor.’
 b. * **be/az** montazer-e **ye doktor-(i)-(*ro)** mund-am
 to/of wait-EZ a doctor-I remain-1SG
 c. montazer-e **ye doktor-(i)-(*ro)** neshest-am
 wait-EZ a doctor-I sat-1SG
 ‘I waited for a doctor.’

However, as we can see in (39a) and its semantic equivalent in (39c), the light-verbs *mândan* ‘to remain’ and *neshastan* ‘to sit’ are both intransitive. We will conclude this section by noting that the apparent restriction on –RA marking in Persian intensional contexts is in fact conditioned by the syntax. We will leave

the question of whether all intransitive light verbs prohibit –RA marking for future research.

5.2 The Creation Verbs Puzzle in Turkish and Persian.

The second puzzle involves a restriction on specificity marking on indefinite objects of creation verbs in both Turkish and Persian. Examples (40) and (41) show that indefinite objects of verbs of creation cannot be –ACC-marked or RA-marked⁹. However, examples (42) and (43) illustrate that there is no such restriction on definite objects of creation verbs. We need to explain: (i) why there is a specificity restriction on indefinite objects of creation verbs; and (ii) why this restriction does not apply to definite NPs.

(40) Turkish:

- 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.'

(41) Persian:

- 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.'

(42) Turkish:

- Mary kek-i yap-tı.
Mary cake-ACC make-PAST
'Mary baked the cake.'

(43) Persian:

- Maryam kek-o poxt
Mary cake-RA baked-3SG
'Mary baked the cake.'

Following Diesing 1992, Kelepir 2001 proposes that specific indefinites in Turkish are 'presuppositional' and thus cannot occur as objects of creation

⁹ Kelepir 2001 shows that specific indefinite objects are possible when the resulting phrase is topical.

verbs, since creation verbs preclude preexisting objects. Consistent with Diesing's and Kelepir's observations, we suggest that the restriction on specificity-marked indefinite NP's is not particular to the grammars of Turkish and Persian, but rather that the restriction follows from the semantics of verbs of creation. Note, in particular, the anomaly that arises in (45b).

- (44) a. Mary bought a cake.
 b. Mary baked a cake.
- (45) a. Mary found a cake and bought it.
 b. #Mary found a cake and baked it.

We believe that the Givenness Hierarchy can be refined model-theoretically, adapting the approach of Gillon 2006 to specific indefinites, in order to handle creation verbs. Informally, let us say that REF makes reference to a set of entities, such that the speaker has one of those entities in mind (e.g. by means of a choice function).

For example, the specific 'a cake' in (44a) is selected from the set of cakes. This set, however, would have to be contextually available to both speaker and hearer. Presumably, with creation verbs, the indefinite object is a new entity that is not an element of the contextually available set at utterance time, since it is not included in the set of cakes available to the hearer. That is, the referent of the indefinite object of a creation verb in (44b) is not available for selection from the set, since it is not a member of it. Conceptualizing the problem this way allows us to explain why definite objects of creation verbs require specificity marking, since definite objects are necessarily included in the contextually available set.

6. Conclusion

In this paper, we reviewed the Turkish and Persian nominal systems with respect to specificity, and established that definiteness entails specificity in both languages, a consequence encoded in the Givenness Hierarchy. We also gathered further morphological evidence from Persian in support of the Givenness Hierarchy claim that definiteness does not entail familiarity. We showed that the Persian suffix –E can only mark definite NPs that are familiar to the hearer, unlike the definite article in English, which asserts unique identifiability of the referent without entailing familiarity. We concluded that Turkish and Persian behave identically with respect to specificity marking. We illustrated this similarity in behavior across such complex constructions as intensional contexts and objects of creation verbs.

In future work, we will investigate differences between the two languages with respect to specificity marking. For example, while Persian –RA can mark temporal adverbs, this function is unavailable for –ACC in Turkish. Such behavior in Persian makes it possible for more than one RA-marked phrase to occur in a sentence; while only one –ACC-marked phrase can occur in Turkish

sentences. We will also examine the interaction between specificity and information structure with respect to syntactic scrambling. Finally, we will pursue an integration of the Givenness Hierarchy approach to specificity and definiteness with formal semantic/pragmatic approaches.

References

- Abbott, Barbara. 2008. Issues in the semantics and pragmatics of definite descriptions in English. In *Reference: Interdisciplinary Perspectives*, eds. Jeanette K. Gundel and Nancy Hedberg, 61-72. Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press.
- Diesing, Molly. 1992. *Indefinites*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Donnellan, Keith. 1966. Reference and Definite Descriptions. *Philosophical Review* 75:281-304.
- Enç, Murvet. 1991. Semantics of specificity. *Linguistic Inquiry* 22:1-25.
- Ghomeshi, Jila. 2003. Plural marking, indefiniteness and the noun phrase. *Studia Linguistica* 57:47-74.
- Gillon, Carrie. 2006. The semantics of determiners: Domain restriction in *Skwxwu7mesh*. Doctoral dissertation, University of British Columbia.
- Görgülü, Emrah. 2009. On definiteness and specificity in Turkish." In *MIT Working Papers in Linguistics 58. Proceedings of the 5th Workshop on Formal Altaic Linguistics*, eds. R. Shibagaki and R. Vermeulen.
- Grice, H. Paul. 1975. Logic and Conversation. In *Speech Acts*, eds. Peter Cole and Jerry Morgan, 41-58. New York: Academic Press.
- Gundel, Jeanette K., Nancy Hedberg and Ron Zacharski. 1993. Cognitive status and the form of referring expressions in discourse." *Language* 69:274-307.
- Gundel, Jeanette K., Dimitris Ntiletos and Melinda Kowalski. 2007. Children's use of referring expressions: Some implications for theory of mind." *ZAS Papers in Linguistics* 48:1-21.
- Hawkins, John A. 1991. On (in)definite articles: Implicatures and (un)grammaticality predictors." *Journal of Linguistics* 27:405-442.
- Heim, Irene. 1982. The semantics of definite and indefinite noun phrases. Doctoral Dissertation, University of Massachusetts.
- von Heusinger, Klaus. 2002. Specificity and definites in sentence and discourse structure." *Journal of Semantics* 19:245-276.
- von Heusinger, Klaus, and Kornfilt, Jaklin 2005. The case of the direct object in Turkish: Semantics, syntax and morphology. *Turkic Languages* 9:3-44.
- Karimi, Simin. 1996. Case and specificity: Persian *râ* revisited. *Linguistic Analysis* 26:174-194.
- Kelepir, Meltem. 2001. Topics in Turkish syntax: Clausal structure and scope. Doctoral dissertation, Massachusetts Institute of Technology.
- Öztürk, Balkız. 2005. *Case, referentiality and phrase structure*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing.
- Partee, Barbara H. 1972. Opacity, coreference, and pronouns." In *Semantics of Natural Language*, eds. Donald Davidson and Gilbert Harman, 415-441. Dordrecht: Reidel.
- Prince, Ellen F. 1981. On the inferencing of indefinite-*this* NPs". In *Elements of Discourse Understanding*, eds. Aravind Joshi, Bonnie Webber and Ivan Sag, 231-250. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.