

## Two approaches to specificity

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The present article discusses two different approaches to the grammatical analysis of 'specificity' and related concepts in Turkish nominals. It is argued that a purely functional analysis of 'specificity' in Turkish has strong limitations, yielding vague expression rules. It is demonstrated how a structural approach in the dimensions of SPECIFICITY-DEFINITENESS-NUMBER establishes language-specific values, also for the bare nominal as the unmarked representative of all relevant oppositions. The conclusion is that the structural approach is indispensable for the analysis of the phenomena concerned.

### 1. Two approaches: Definitions and preliminary remarks

This paper deals with two different approaches to the grammatical analysis of the pragmatically oriented category 'specificity' of nominals. The approaches will be illustrated with examples from Turkish, where a general marker of 'specificity' is lacking, but specific interpretations in certain cases are dependent on accusative and genitive case marking.

The paper is not an overview article that aims at presenting past work on this subject with detailed and balanced references to earlier contributions. Neither is the aim to present new analyses. My intention is to point out and explain certain differences between a structural account of the problem as presented in Johanson (1977) and a possible functional account in frameworks such as, for example, Dik (1989). There is obviously disagreement between these two types of accounts.

I will take a 'functional' approach to be one that departs from general cognitive contents and looks at their implementation in various language-specific grammars. By contrast, a 'structural' approach will be one that defines formally expressed language-specific values and specifies their contextual determination. Though the two approaches may seem to be mutually exclusive, i.e. incompatible in one and the same analytical framework, they are complementary to each other and both necessary for interlingual comparison.

This insight is not new, and there are certainly various interesting attempts in modern linguistics to capture semantic categories via formal means. But the insight has not yet been implemented as far as Turkish 'specificity' is concerned. My own contention is that a structural approach is an indispensable prerequisite for a functional approach.

In functional approaches, the categories investigated are established on the basis of some kind of general grammar, cross-linguistic categories that are potentially universal, assumed to be grammatically relevant for any language, such as 'specificity', 'non-specificity', 'definiteness', 'indefiniteness', 'plurality' and 'singularity'. The starting-point for establishing these cross-linguistic categories is thus the intended cognitive content, the *intentionum*, the way the speaker wants a nominal expression to be understood. Since the *intentionum* is interpreted by the hearer also by means of textual and extratextual information, the functional analysis goes far beyond the morphologically and syntactically coded content. Different language-specific values are not the primary concern of this analysis, but rather the formulation of expression rules for the categories in various contexts.

In system-based structural approaches, any analysis starts with the question whether it is valid for a given language to recognize a certain category. The description is based on an account of which semantic notions get systematic formal expression by morphological or syntactic means. The relevant categories of grammaticalized meaning are established in language-specific oppositions expressed by formal means. The assumption is that languages divide conceptual spaces in idiosyncratic ways and that meaning is shaped differently by overtly coded language-specific values. Not all languages need to have 'specificity' or 'definiteness' as obligatory grammatical categories, though they certainly have devices to express similar notions, e.g. by means of other grammatical categories that acquire secondary meanings of a resembling kind, or by lexical means. According to principles of 'immanent' description, paradigmatic categories of language-specifically structured semantic content are set up, values acquired in oppositions such as 'specific' versus 'non-specific'. The values are invariant meanings established by means of commutation tests in various syntactic positions and on the basis of uses in various contexts and situations. They represent language-specifically delimited meaning types that provide particular reference possibilities. The values are meanings defined in abstraction of what is suggested by determining factors such as the co-text, circumstances of speech and speaker-hearer knowledge. On the other hand, in order to decide how the values may contribute to conveying the speaker's *intentionum*, we must investigate how they are determined in speech by textual and extratextual factors.

Both approaches are justified and necessary. The structural analysis is needed to determine what devices a given language employs to implement the cross-linguistically defined notional categories. The structural analysis distinguishes between what may be communicated by a text and what is overtly signalled in it. Language-specific categories established by means of formally coded grammatical oppositions are necessary to capture the semantic precision, the 'sharpness' of the content expressed (Johanson 1994).

There is no one-to-one correspondence between general and language-specific categories. General categories cannot be treated as *a priori* inherent to individual grammars. A general reference type may be coded in different ways. The reference area demarcated by a language-specific value may cover several general categories, or there may be various kinds of overlapping. Reference types such as 'specificity' are represent-

ed differently across languages; there is no universal system of expressing them. Analogous functions across languages may be found inductively, but they cannot be taken for granted in advance. Equating general categories with language-specific ones will blur the interlingual differences. Concepts that are inaccurate or irrelevant to the individual systems may be introduced—and the grammars will thus be burdened with categories that are not significant for them.

Sometimes language-specific values may appear to correspond reasonably well to general categories. If some English grammatical values often seem to coincide with general categories, the reason may simply be that the English value has served to define the general category, in the same way as categories of Latin were formerly used as standards for linguistic analysis. In the grammar of English, the difference expressed by *a book* and *the book* represents signalled values that seem to be close to the general categories 'indefiniteness' and 'definiteness'. This distinction has no exact counterpart in the grammar of Turkish. Expressions such as *a book* and *bir kitap* [a book] or *the books* and *kitap-lar* [book-PL] may have the same intended referents, but the English and Turkish means of referring are different.

Intended referents must be distinguished from their linguistic conceptualization and representation. Reference types such as 'plurality' and 'repetition' must be distinguished from grammatical values such as [ $\pm$ PLURAL] and [ $\pm$ ITERATIVE]. Languages are rather equal in what their speakers can refer to. Referential 'sameness' thus tells us little about differences and similarities between their specific semantic resources. The intended referents may be 'the same', but the specific means used for reference are not.

Since the set of values found in one individual language cannot be compared to others directly, a grid of general conceptual types is needed as a tertium comparationis. In earlier work I have argued for a framework that confronts general cognitive-conceptual analyses with language-specific ones: in the domain of causal junctors (Johanson 1996), in the conceptual space of actionality, aspect and tense (Johanson 2000), etc. These combinations will enable us to find differences and similarities between language-specific categories and show us by virtue of which language-specific values certain reference types may be represented. Thus cross-linguistic types of categories in the respective conceptual spaces may be discovered, e.g. prototypical connections of cognitive categories with language-specific structures. The aim would be to elaborate cross-linguistically valid parameters of variation and a unified typological framework for these categories. For this task, in-depth studies of a large number of individual languages of various types are necessary.

## 2. Specificity in Turkish

Categories such as 'specificity' and 'definiteness' are essentially discourse categories with semantic and pragmatic functions. There is so far little agreement on their definitions, the properties of the linguistic contexts that convey them, their connections

with number, referentiality, topicality, etc., and their grammatical implementation in the respective contexts. The form-function relations are often vague.

'Specificity' as manifested in Turkish is a good example of this situation. It lacks constant morphological or syntactic marking, but accusative and genitive marking plays a certain role for its implementation. Accusative case marking of Turkish nominals has traditionally been claimed to be an indicator for 'definiteness'. It has been assumed that 'definite' direct objects are marked with the accusative suffix, whereas 'indefinite' objects are not (e.g. Underhill 1976: 50). But this rule does not account for cases in which the nominal is in the accusative and at the same time 'indefinite' due to *bir* 'one, a(n)':

- (1) *bir kitab-ı*  
 a book-ACC  
 'a certain book'

In a conference paper written in 1975 and published in 1977, I rejected the common view that accusative marking of a direct object characterizes its referent as 'definite'. It was pointed out that the case marker, given its combinability with the indefinite article, signals 'specificity' rather than 'definiteness'. It was stressed that syntactic problems had to be considered, especially the position of nominals in the sentence. I showed that direct objects outside the position immediately in front of the predicate are normally marked by the accusative without signalling 'specificity' (cf. Dede 1986). This necessitated a tentative analysis of the sentence-perspective organization with respect to topic and comment positions. I compared the accusative-marked direct object with the genitive-marked subject in sentences embedded by means of the marker *-dik* and found similar rules for the genitive vs. nominative contrast as for the accusative vs. nominative contrast (Johanson 1977, cf. 1987, 1991, 1998).<sup>1</sup>

It is now generally accepted that accusative and genitive marking may be used to signal 'specificity' of Turkish direct objects and subjects, respectively. But the form-function relations are not straightforward, the case marking not being restricted to this function. The rule found in modern grammars states that the direct object can carry the accusative suffix except when it is 'non-specific'.

- (2) Examples of 'specific'
- a. *Ali kitab-ı ara-dı.*  
 Ali book-ACC search-PAST3  
 'Ali looked for the book.'
- b. *Ali bir kitab-ı ara-dı.*  
 Ali a book-ACC search-PAST3  
 'Ali looked for a certain book.'
- (3) Examples of 'non-specific'
- a. *Ali kitap ara-dı.*  
 Ali book search-PAST3  
 'Ali looked for a book/books.'

- b. *Ali bir kitap ara-dı.*  
 Ali a book search-PAST3  
 'Ali looked for a book.'

The problems of 'specificity' and/or 'definiteness' have been dealt with by several modern linguists, mostly in some generativist or functionalist framework. References are found in von Heusinger & Kornfilt (2005), which is the most recent contribution to the topic. Partly due to different principles of grammatical analysis, the discussion of this issue has often been rather confusing, and there is still no general agreement on it. As already pointed out, the aim of the following short discussion is not to scrutinize and criticize the valuable contributions made by other linguists. The focus will be on the relations between general categories such as 'specificity' and language-specific values such as [ $\pm$ SPECIFIC], on categories related to them such as number categories, and on related phenomena such as referentiality and topicality.

The following terminological and notational distinctions will be made:

- Cross-linguistic conceptual dimensions, e.g. NUMBER, DEFINITENESS.
- General functional categories, e.g. 'definite', 'specific', 'indefinite', 'generic', 'singular', 'plural'.
- Language-specific structural, i.e. overtly marked, oppositions, e.g. [ $\pm$ SPECIFIC], [ $\pm$ PLURAL].
- Language-specific structural, i.e. overtly marked, values: positive such as [+SPECIFIC], [+PL], and negative-neutral such as [-SPECIFIC], [-PL].
- Morphological markers: accusative {i}, plural {ler}, singular {bir}, zero { $\emptyset$ }.
- Syntactic markers: constituent ordering.
- Types of nominals with respect to marking: { $\sim\emptyset$ }, { $\sim$ ler}, { $\sim$ i}, {bir  $\sim$ }, {bir  $\sim$ i}.

### 3. Functional analysis

'Definiteness' is mostly taken to be a referential property in the sense of 'identifying reference'. It was defined as 'identifying specificity' in Johanson (1977): The intended referent of a 'definite' nominal is presented as identifiable from the linguistic or extralinguistic context, either 'anaphorically' or 'deictically'. Similarly, according to Hawkins (1978: 123–5), a 'definite' description instructs the hearer to locate the referent by association to a previously mentioned nominal or through clues provided by the particular non-linguistic aspects of the speech situation. A definite nominal is thus an invitation to identify a referent which the speaker presumes to be identifiable to the hearer. The entity has been introduced in the preceding discourse (anaphoric reference), or information about it is available in the speech situation (deictic reference). The availability may also be due to other kinds of shared speaker-hearer knowledge, world knowledge or different kinds of inference. 'Definiteness' is normally expressed in English by the definite article.

'Indefiniteness' establishes 'constructive reference', inviting the hearer to imagine, i.e. to 'construe' a mental picture of, an intended referent, typically one that has not been previously mentioned in the discourse. 'Indefinite' nominals are thus typically used to introduce a referent into the discourse. Indefinite referents are represented by English indefinite nominals with an indefinite article, e.g. *a flower*, and without an article, e.g. *flowers*. On 'definiteness' and 'indefiniteness', see Dik 1989: 139–43.

'Specificity' is another commonly applied general category. The intended referent of a 'specific' nominal is one or more particular, i.e. non-arbitrary, individual items of the entity designated. The reference is unique if the speaker assumes that the hearer can identify the referent uniquely, not only as belonging to a known class of entities but being identical with it. The intended referent of a 'non-specific' nominal is the entity designated by it, without consideration of any particular item(s). It is a class or a genus, or any arbitrary member(s) of it, as, for instance, in (4):

- (4) *I know a cat.*  
*I know cats.*  
*A cat is clever.*  
*Cats are clever.*

It is a well-known fact that the expression of 'specificity' is not always unequivocal in English. Thus, *I'm looking for a cat* is ambiguous. If *a cat* is meant as 'specific', I am referring to a cat I know. If it is 'non-specific', there is not a specific cat I am referring to, but any cat. Terms such as 'referential' and 'non-referential' for 'specific' and 'non-specific' are inadequate, since any entity about which something can be predicated is referential. 'Specificity' denotes a particular referential property.

In the NUMBER dimension, a first basic distinction can be made, for the purposes of the following discussion, between 'single [token]' (= a set with the extent one) and 'set [of tokens]' for countable entities. A regular expression of 'set' is found in English plural-marked nominals, e.g. *cats*, whereas 'single' is typically expressed by nominals unmarked for plural, e.g. *cat*, *a cat*. Deviating expressions of 'single' are found in collective nominals such as *clothing* instead of *clothes*, individual pieces of clothing.

The categories 'specificity', 'definiteness' and 'indefiniteness' are intertwined in complex ways. Definite nominals are 'specific', but 'specific' nominals are not necessarily 'definite'. 'Indefinite' reference is not tantamount to absence of 'specific' reference. It invites the hearer to construe a referent, but not to identify it, as 'definiteness' does. On the other hand, 'indefinite' nominals may also be 'specific'. English examples of possible combinations with 'specificity':

- (5) 'Specific' + 'definite' + 'single': *I saw the cat.*  
 'Specific' + 'definite' + 'set': *I saw the cats.*  
 'Specific' + 'indefinite' + 'single': *I saw a [certain] cat.*  
 'Specific' + 'indefinite' + 'set': *I saw [certain] cats.*

### 3.1 Expression rules

It is difficult to formulate Turkish expression rules for the overt implementation of these general categories in the dimensions of SPECIFICITY, DEFINITENESS and NUMBER. Turkish texts may contain elements that are more or less regularly interpretable as 'definite', demonstratives and certain classifiers, intrinsically 'definite' proper names, etc. But general markers for 'specificity' and 'definiteness' are lacking. The expression of 'specificity' by means of case-marking is highly restricted. The use of {bir} and {ler} is different from the use of the English indefinite article and plural marker, respectively. Constituent ordering is not a systematic indicator of the categories involved. It is hard to prove that 'specificity' and 'definiteness' behave in systematic ways with respect to other categories or known rules and principles in the grammar of Turkish.

Lack of formal marking makes it difficult to set up criteria and systematic rules for the interpretation. How to establish the speaker's intension without overt signals, perceivable morphological and syntactic distinctions? On what grounds do we decide that a nominal should be interpreted as 'specific', 'definite', 'indefinite', 'plural', etc., if the unmarked nominal in *Mektup gel-di* [letter come-PAST3] can in principle be rendered as 'a letter, the letter, letters'?

Some tentative expression rules might be formulated as follows.

- Accusative-marked direct objects, {-i}, {bir ~i}, refer to 'specific' entities. However, this is only possible in the position immediately in front of the predicate. In other syntactic positions, the direct object must normally be marked with the accusative. Thus the opposition between accusative marking and non-marking is neutralized.
- 'Non-specific' direct objects do not take accusative marking. However, all positions except the one immediately in front of the predicate normally require the accusative ir-respectively of 'specificity'.
- If the referent of the subject is a single token, {-Ø} refers to it as 'definite'. However, {-Ø} may also refer to an 'indefinite' single token:

- (6) *Ali'-den mektup gel-di.*  
 Ali-ABL letter arrive-PAST3  
 'A letter from Ali has arrived.'

- If the referent is a set, {-ler} refers to it as 'specific'. However, {-ler} can also refer to a set as 'non-specific':

- (7) *Ev-de misafir-ler var.*  
 house-LOC guest-PL existing  
 'There are guests in the house.'

- {bir ~} refers to a particular single token:

- (8) *Ali bir kitap ar-tyor.*  
 Ali a book search-PRES3  
 'Ali is looking for a book.'

However, {~Ø} can have the same reference:

- (9) *Ali kitap ar-ıyor.*  
Ali book search-PRES3

• A nominal that does not stand immediately in front of the predicate refers to a 'specific' entity:

- (10) *Para bugün gel-di.*  
money today come-PAST3  
'The money has come today.'

However, it can also refer to a 'non-specific' entity:

- (11) *Bir adam bahçe-de çalış-ıyor.*  
a man garden-LOC work-PRES3  
'A man is working in the garden.'

• A subject nominal standing immediately in front of the predicate refers to a 'non-specific' entity:

- (12) *Vazo-da çiçek var.*  
vase-LOC flower existing  
'There is a flower/are flowers in the vase.'

- (13) *Vazo-da bir çiçek var.*  
vase-LOC a flower existing  
'There is a flower in the vase.'

However, it can also refer to a 'specific' entity:

- (14) *Bahçe-de anne çalış-ıyor.*  
garden-LOC mother work-PRES3  
'In the garden mother is working.' OR 'It is mother who is working in the garden.'

• Subject nominals standing immediately in front of the predicate and referring to a set are not marked for plural {-ler}:

- (15) *Masa-da kitap var.*  
table-LOC book existing  
'There are books on the table.'

However, they can also be marked for plural:

- (16) a. *Bahçe-de çocuk-lar var.*  
garden-LOC child-PL existing  
'There are children in the garden.'

- b. *Ali ne-ler öğren-di?*  
 Ali what-PL learn-PAST3  
 'What (things) did Ali learn?'

• Nominals not standing immediately in front of the predicate and marked with {~ler} refer to a definite set of tokens:

- (17) *Öğrenci-ler bahçe-ye gir-di.*  
 student-PL garden-DAT enter-PAST3  
 'The students entered the garden.'

However, this is just an impression arising from the 'information packaging structure' of the sentence (see 4.4), and *öğrenci-ler* [student-PL] might also be translated as 'students'.

• A nominal standing immediately in front of the predicate and marked for plural {~ler} only refers to specific entities. In reality, however, it can also refer to non-specific entities:

- (18) *Ali bu kitap-tan güzel şiir-ler seç-ti.*  
 Ali this book-ABL beautiful poem-PL choose-PAST3  
 'Ali chose (individual) beautiful poems from this book.'
- (19) *Bahçe-de öğrenci-ler var.*  
 garden-LOC student-PL existing  
 'There are students in the garden.'

• {bir ~i} expresses 'specificity':

- (20) *Ali bir kitap-ı ara-dı.*  
 Ali a book-ACC search-PAST3  
 'Ali looked for a (certain) book.'

However, {bir ~} can refer to a 'specific' entity as well:

- (21) *Ali güzel bir kitap ara-dı.*  
 Ali fine a book search-PAST3  
 'Ali looked for a good book.'

The expression of the relevant categories in the domains of SPECIFICITY-DEFINITENESS-NUMBER and their combinations cannot be captured in a systematic way by vague or trivial rules such as these. Virtually all expressions appear to cover all categories. Thus, {~Ø}, {~i}, {bir ~}, {~ler} and {~leri} may all be interpreted as 'specific', 'non-specific', 'definite' and 'indefinite'.

### 3.2 Limitations

Working with general, potentially universal meaning features has certain limitations. The linguist asks how a given general category is implemented in certain contexts. If a

particular category proves to be irrelevant, other general categories are inspected. This leads to neglect of other possibly relevant meaning features. General categories and language-specific features do not fit into the same functional analysis. In a framework of this kind it is thus often impossible to account for differences between two expressions that cover the same general category. In order to assign referential properties to nominals, the linguist must consider contextual and pragmatic information, deictic reference and extra-linguistic factors such as shared speaker-hearer knowledge, etc. The interpretation of the pragmatic uses of nominals in discourse is often, however, based on intuition and vague criteria. It frequently remains unclear in what ways contextual and extratextual factors contribute to the readings and whether there are actually any grammatical rules and principles that are sensitive to a given supposedly relevant category. The discussions of categories in the dimensions of SPECIFICITY-DEFINITENESS-NUMBER are also often biased by the idiosyncratic uses of articles and plural markers in languages such as English.

The criteria applied for defining the intended referents are frequently characterized by an analytic approach that ignores the distinction between extralinguistic reality and intension. Entities may be conceived of and represented linguistically in different ways, irrespective of their ontological status. The functional analysis must be based on the linguistic representation of the intension. Thus in the NUMBER dimension, a plural and a collective can, as already mentioned, refer to one and the same entity.

A complication arises if the interpretation is also based on the communicative ability of the hearer, e.g. when 'specificity' is taken to involve not only an invitation to referent identification, but the successful identification as well. Identifying reference is not tantamount to actual identifiability. It is irrelevant for the intension whether the referent is actually known to the hearer, and whether the invitation is such that the hearer can select exactly which particular entity is intended.

#### 4. A structural approach

A structural approach in the dimensions of SPECIFICITY-DEFINITENESS-NUMBER as found in Johanson (1977) endeavours to determine the semantic effects of formal marking, establishing language-specific values by means of syntagmatically delimited paradigmatic oppositions and describing their complex interactions. Here I shall make a few comments on language-specific values as coded by means of case-marking and constituent ordering. The terms 'marked' and 'unmarked' will be used to indicate relationships within oppositions (cf. Johanson 1971). The unmarked member covers all the ground that is not covered by the marked member. I will finally comment on bare nominals, minimally specified items representing the unmarked member of all relevant oppositions.

## 4.1 Specificity

Specificity [+SPECIFIC] is a language-specific value signalled by accusative marking in the [ $\pm$ SPECIFIC] oppositions {~i} vs. {~Ø}, {bir ~i} vs. {bir ~}, and {~leri} vs. {~ler}. The accusative marked terms express the value [+SPECIFIC] in the sense of identifying reference, an invitation to identify an entity supposed to be identifiable. The unmarked terms are negative or neutral in relation to this value. The opposition is realized exclusively in the syntagmatic position next to the predicate:

- (22) a. *Ali çiçeğ-i sat-tı.*  
Ali flower-ACC sell-PAST3  
'Ali sold the flower(s).'
- vs.
- b. *Ali çiçek sat-tı.*  
Ali flower sell-PAST3  
'Ali sold a flower/flowers.'

In all other positions, the opposition is neutralized. If speakers of Turkish tend to interpret accusative direct objects as specific even if they are placed far away from the predicate, this is rather an effect of topicality (see 4.4).

A particular variant of [+SPECIFIC] is signalled by {bir ~i} as opposed to {bir ~}:

- (23) a. *Ali bir kitab-ı ara-dı.*  
Ali a book-ACC search-PAST3  
'Ali looked for a certain book.'
- vs.
- b. *Ali bir kitap ara-dı.*  
Ali a book search-PAST3  
'Ali looked for a book.'

This combination has puzzled linguists who have defined {bir ~} as expressing 'indefiniteness' and {~i} as expressing 'definiteness'. The nominal *bir kitab-ı* is in the accusative and at the same time preceded by the so-called indefinite article *bir*. The item could not possibly be 'indefinite' and 'definite' at the same time. In Johanson (1977) it was shown that {bir ~i} signals 'specificity' in the sense of 'particularity'. It marks direct objects as pragmatically specific, indicating that the entity referred to is 'particular', i.e. non-arbitrary. It is now generally accepted that 'indefinite' nominals marked by *bir* may be 'specific' (Enç 1991:24).

The item {bir ~i} signals constructive reference, inviting the hearer to imagine an entity which is not meant to be identifiable from the context or the situation. At the same time, however, it signals that the referent of the object 'though not yet determinable by the hearer, will be of relevance to the ensuing discourse' (Comrie 1981:129). The sentence (24) can thus be read as: 'construe a particular individual referent that is still to be identified'.

- (24) *Ali, bir kız-ı gör-dü.*  
 Ali a girl-ACC see-PAST3  
 'Ali saw a [particular] girl.'

As opposed to {*bir ~i*}, the simple {*bir ~*} represents the value [-SPECIFIC], covering cases that are negative to, or neutral towards, the value [+SPECIFIC]. It introduces entities without indicating whether they will be of relevance to the subsequent discourse. In her discussion of different approaches to describing 'definiteness' in Turkish, Csátó (1990) comments on the features 'specificity' and 'uniqueness', claiming that it is not the notion of 'definiteness', but the notions of 'specificity' and 'uniqueness' that are grammaticalized in Turkish. The author thus questions whether the term 'definiteness' should be employed at all for Turkish. The category of 'definiteness' is not grammaticalized, i.e. does not get systematic formal expression. Csátó claims that any description should be based on an account of what is grammaticalized. Thus, when dealing with 'specificity', she restricts herself to describing overtly signalled meaning elements. The author makes several proposals for the description of the referential properties of nominals modified by certain determiners. She shows that the item {*bir ~i*} is obligatory when the nominal is further qualified by an adjective denoting specific properties; there may be exceptions to this rule. The item {*bir ~*} is unmarked with respect to 'specificity' and expresses non-unique reference, which accounts for some co-occurrence restrictions: It cannot co-occur with *öbür* 'the other', *aynı* 'the same' or demonstrative pronouns, which have unique referential properties.

The situation is similar in Persian. Accusative marking by means of *ra*: has traditionally been taken to signal 'definiteness' of the direct object, but Windfuhr remarks that what is marked by *ra*: is 'not definiteness, but topicalization or specificity' (1987: 534). Turkish (25a) thus corresponds to (25b), whereas (26a) corresponds to (26b).

- (25) a. *Bir ev-i yak-tilar.*  
 a house-ACC burn-PAST3PL  
 'They burned a [particular] house.'
- b. Persian  
*Xa:ne-i-ra: a:teš zad-and.*  
 house-INDEF-ACC fire strike-PAST3PL  
 'They burned a [particular] house.'
- (26) a. *Bir ev yak-tilar.*  
 a house burn-PAST3PL  
 'They burned a house.'
- b. Persian  
*Xa:ne-i a:teš zad-and.*  
 house-INDEF fire strike-PAST3PL  
 'They burned a house.'

An entity introduced into the discourse as the direct object for subsequent reference is usually marked by {bir ~i}. However, Erguvanli (1984) shows that {bir ~} can be referred to via pronouns in subsequent discourse. Schroeder (1999) claims that the 'pragmatic specificity' coded by the accusative marking is essential for the referent to be treated as identifiable in the subsequent discourse.

#### 4.2 Singularity

Singularity [+SINGULAR] is signalled by {bir ~} and {bir ~i} as opposed to {~Ø} and {~i}. It expresses individual singularity ('individuelle Singularität') in the sense of 'single unit' and may be applied to all referents that can be conceived of as units. With count nominals it expresses individualization as 'a token', a distinct singular entity, e.g. *bir balık* 'a fish'. With collective count nominals, it expresses 'a set of tokens'. With mass nominals, [+SINGULAR] gets a different kind of count reading, expressing an individual unit in the sense of 'a portion' or 'a kind', e.g. *bir çay* 'a glass of tea' or 'a kind of tea', *bir para* 'an amount of money'.

The unmarked terms {~Ø} and {~i} signal negation of, or neutrality towards, this number value. Nominals whose referents are more susceptible to individualization tend to prefer [+SINGULAR] marking in (27):

- (27) *Bir yabancı gel-di.*  
 a foreigner come-PAST3  
 'A foreigner came.'

With referents less susceptible to individualization, [+SINGULAR] is often dispensable. Both (28a) and (28b) can be understood as 'Ali bought a book'.

- (28) a. *Ali bir kitap al-di.*  
 Ali a book buy-PAST3  
 'Ali bought a book.'  
 b. *Ali kitap al-di.*  
 Ali book buy-PAST3  
 'Ali bought a book/books.'

'Indefiniteness' is thus not a separate value in this language-specific analysis. If we may take {~Ø} and {bir ~} to express 'indefiniteness', it is only because of their unmarkedness and not because of any signalled value. The unmarked items have the potential to cover a wide referential range including indefinite interpretations.

#### 4.3 Plurality

Plurality [+PL] is signalled by {~ler} and {~leri} as opposed to the non-plural items {~Ø} and {~i}. It expresses individual plurality ('individuelle Vielheit') in the sense of 'set of units'. It marks the extent of sets of distinct units and may be applied to all refer-

ents that can be conceived of as units. With count nominals it expresses a set of distinct entities, e.g. *balık-lar* [fish-PL] 'fishes'. With collective count nominals, it expresses a set of sets, e.g. *aile-ler* [family-PL] 'families'. With mass nominals, which are indifferent to quantification and individualization of this kind, [+PL] expresses 'large amounts' or gets a different kind of count reading, expressing units in the sense of distinct individual portions or kinds of the entity in question, e.g. *çay-lar* [tea-PL] 'kinds/portions of tea', *para-lar* [money-PL] 'amounts of money', *su-lar* [water-PL] 'occurrences of water', 'masses of water'.

Nominals marked for [+PL] can be 'specific' or 'non-specific':

- (29) a. *Birsel güzel yemek-ler-i pişir-di.*  
 Birsel fine food-PL-ACC cook-PAST3  
 'Birsel prepared the fine dishes.'

vs.

- b. *Birsel güzel yemek-ler pişir-di.*  
 Birsel fine food-PL cook-PAST3  
 'Birsel prepared fine dishes.'

Plural nominals used in a generic sense are 'specific' (Tura 1973). Even nominals marked for [+SINGULAR] may be characterized by [+PL], i.e. in the item {bir ~ler}, e.g. *bir ses-ler* [a sound-PL] 'some sounds', 'sounds of some kind', *bir şey-ler* [a thing-PL] 'some things', 'things of some kind', *bir yer-ler* [a place-PL] 'some places', 'places of some kind'. Here the so-called indefinite article co-occurs with plural forms. The item {bir ~} expresses [+SINGULAR] in the sense of 'single unit', whereas {~ler} expresses [+PL] 'kinds'. The meaning of *bir* has been described as similar to that of *bazı* 'certain' (Deny 1921:221) and the whole expression as 'vaguer' than a corresponding singular or plural noun (Lewis 1967:54). According to Csató (1990), the restriction that *bir* cannot co-occur with plural nouns and plural quantifiers holds true in general. The exceptions are rule-governed. There are restrictions with respect to what sort of nouns can occur in {bir ~ler} constructions. One group consists of lexical pro-forms such as *şey* 'thing', *yer* 'place' and *zaman* 'time'. The forms *bir şey*, *bir yer* and *bir zaman* can be regarded as lexicalized in the meanings 'something', 'somewhere' and 'sometime'. The other group contains nouns denoting sensory perception such as *ses* 'sound', *ışık* 'light' and *gürültü* 'noise':

- (30) *Ali bir ses-ler duy-du.*  
 Ali a sound-PL hear-PAST3  
 'Ali heard some sounds.'

The unmarked terms {~Ø} and {~i} signal negation of, or neutrality towards, the number value [+PL]. They may refer to a single token, a set of tokens, a class or a genus:

- (31) a. *Ali balık al-dı.*  
 Ali fish buy-PAST3  
 'Ali bought fish/a fish/fishes.'

- b. *Ali çay iç-ti.*  
 Ali tea drink-PAST3  
 'Ali had tea.'

Unmarked nominals can be rendered by English singular or plural forms, e.g. *çiçek* 'flower', 'flowers'. Count nominals can be recategorized to get mass or collective readings. Count nominals whose referents are more susceptible to individualization, in particular human referents, tend to prefer [+PL] marking:

- (32) *Yabancı-lar gel-di.*  
 foreigner-PL come-PAST3  
 '(The) foreigners have come.'

Referents less sensitive to quantification and individualization are typically referred to by the unmarked terms; see (33) where the unmarked nominal may refer to a set: 'letters'.

- (33) *Mektup gel-di.*  
 letter come-PAST3  
 Possible reading: 'Letters have come.'

The unmarked item {~Ø} is used instead of {~ler} with 'non-specific' direct objects, e.g. (34a) rather than (34b):

- (34) a. *Ali mektup yaz-di.*  
 Ali letter write-PAST3  
 'Ali wrote letters.'  
 b. <sup>??</sup>*Ali mektup-lar yaz-di.*  
 Ali letter-PL write-PAST3  
 Intended meaning: 'Ali wrote letters.'

{~ler} is licensed with non-specific direct objects preceded by determiners, as in (29b) and (30).

The use of plural marking is sensitive to the degree of animacy and the speaker's intention to refer to a quantity of distinct units or not. The unmarked items are neither singulars nor plurals, but just represent the absence of number marking. Even if the referent in the real world is a set with a certain extent, this plurality is not necessarily signalled.

It is possible to regard both [+SINGULAR] and [+PL] as values representing a category 'individuality' in the sense of reference to distinct units, as opposed to 'non-individuality'. In an analysis of the functional kind, however, oppositions such as [±SINGULAR] and [±PLURAL] could hardly be used as parameters, since they are not clear-cut enough and blur the boundaries between the general number categories set up for the analysis.

## 4.4 Constituent ordering

Constituent ordering may be relevant for interpretations in terms of SPECIFICITY, DEFINITENESS and NUMBER. For example, it is often claimed for languages lacking a definite article, e.g. Russian, that 'definiteness' may be expressed by means of constituent ordering. In Turkish, however, the ordering does not determine the interpretations in any systematic way. Still there are certain correlations between constituent order and interpretations in terms of language-specific values. These correlations depend on the functional perspective, the 'information packaging structure' of the sentence.

Nominals may exhibit looser or tighter junction with the predicate and thus possess different status with respect to their semantic/referential dependence on it. They may display less or more semantic cohesion with the predicate, higher or lower referential status, more or less prominence with respect to the informational value, etc. In the formulas used below, N designates a nominal, S a subject nominal, O a direct object nominal, P a predicate, X a constituent intervening between the nominal and the predicate. A looser junction will be denoted with N//P, a tighter junction as N/P.

A nominal standing immediately in front of the predicate—possibly separated from it by the particles *de* 'also', *bile* 'even' and *mi* (yes/no question marker)—can be interpreted in different ways.

- (35) *Misafir gel-di.*  
 guest come-PAST3  
 'There came guests/a guest.' OR 'The guest arrived.'

(35) may be interpreted as athetic utterance with *misafir* as athetic subject: 'There came guests/a guest' (N/P), answering the question 'What is the matter, what happened?'. It may also be interpreted as a categorial statement about *misafir*: 'The guest arrived' (N//P), answering the question 'What happened to the guest?'. The distinction may be overtly marked by means of accentuation or sentence intonation, but not by other devices. This position is used to establish [ $\pm$ SPECIFIC] oppositions for direct objects since it offers a choice between the accusative and the nominative. This leads to the interpretation of (36a) as [+SPECIFIC] and of (36b) as [-SPECIFIC]:

- (36) a. *Ali resm-i çek-ti.*  
 Ali picture-ACC take-PAST3  
 'Ali took the picture.'  
 b. *Ali resim çek-ti.*  
 Ali picture take-PAST3  
 'Ali took a picture/pictures.'

Similarly (37a) vs. (37b) and (38a) vs. (38b):

- (37) a. *Ali çay-ı iç-ti.*  
 Ali tea-ACC drink-PAST3  
 'Ali drank the tea.'

- b. *Ali çay iç-ti.*  
 Ali tea drink-PAST3  
 'Ali drank tea.'
- (38) a. *Ali para-yı al-dı.*  
 Ali money-ACC take-PAST3  
 'Ali received the money.'
- b. *Ali para al-dı.*  
 Ali money take-PAST3  
 'Ali received money.'

If the nominal is detached from the predicate by an intervening constituent, the junction is looser. (39) is a categorial statement about some soldier(s):

- (39) *Asker buraya gel-di.*  
 soldier here come-PAST3 (= N//XP)  
 'A soldier/the soldier/soldiers/the soldiers came here.'

Since a direct object in this opposition is regularly accusative-marked, there is no ground for the [ $\pm$ SPECIFIC] oppositions {~i} vs. {~Ø}, {bir ~i} vs. {bir ~}, and {~leri} vs. {~ler}. In (40), *para* cannot be substituted for *para-yı* [money-ACC].

- (40) *Ali para-yı bugün al-dı.*  
 Ali money-ACC today get-PAST3 (= O//P)  
 'Ali received (the) money today.'

However, certain speakers of Turkish seem to accept this substitution under particular pragmatic circumstances.

These order phenomena are closely related to the functional sentence perspective. The subject nominal in a categorial S//P utterance such as *Misafir gel-di* [guest come-PAST3] is the topic that the predicate comments on: 'The guest has arrived', answering the question 'What is said about the guest?'. Nominals detached from the predicate are typically used as topic constituents. There are multiple topic-comment structures, in which each constituent is the topic of the rest of the sentence and each topic has a higher prominence with respect to information packaging than the following ones. In the SXOP sentence (42a) and the SOXP sentence (41b) the subject is the most prominent constituent and the leading topic: 'What is said about Ali?'

- (41) a. *Ali Emine'-ye çiçeğ-i ver-di.*  
 Ali Emine-DAT flower-ACC give-PAST3  
 'Ali gave Emine the flower.'
- b. *Ali çiçeğ-i Emine'-ye ver-di.*  
 Ali flower-ACC Emine-DATIVE give-PAST3  
 'Ali gave the flower to Emine.'

The SXOP sequence tells us what Ali did to Emine, the SOXP sequence what Ali did to the flower. The information structures are thus (S(O(XP))) and S(X(OP)), respectively, each nominal being a topic about which the rest provides information. On topicalization ('Thematisierung'), see Johanson (1977).

Topic and comment have pragmatic properties definable in terms of 'givenness' and 'newness'. Topic constituents of the type N//P tend to suggest 'specific' interpretations, because they typically contain 'given' information. If the S//P subject in (42a) or the O//P object in (42b) suggests 'specific' readings, this cannot, however, be due to any contrast with 'non-specific' nominals.

- (42) a. *Öğrenci kapı-da bekle-di.*  
 student gate-LOC wait-PAST3  
 'The student waited at the gate.'
- b. *Resm-i Ali çek-ti.*  
 picture-ACC Ali take-PAST3  
 'It was Ali who took the picture.'

Not even the object *resm-i* [picture-ACC] can signal [+SPECIFIC] in this position. The nominals may suggest known information, but they are in principle open to both 'specific' and 'non-specific' interpretations. Similarly, constituents in the position immediately in front of the predicate may tend to suggest 'non-specific' interpretations, because they typically convey new information or give focus to the relatively most important information. This position is the least prominent one with respect to known information. Thus the S//P subject in (43) may suggest a 'non-specific' reading.

- (43) *Masa-da çiçek dur-uyor.*  
 table-LOC flower stand-PRES3  
 'There is a flower/are flowers on the table.'

However, neither type signals [+SPECIFIC] or [-SPECIFIC].

The respective 'definiteness' and 'indefiniteness' readings are only inferred from properties regarding the information package structure and thus lack semantic 'sharpness'. The relation of 'specificity' to topicality in Turkish is still rather unclear. In some functional frameworks it might be possible to define 'definiteness' as implied by 'givenness' and to claim that topics are 'definite' in Turkish, but this is impossible in an analysis based on values signalled by virtue of a [ $\pm$ SPECIFIC] opposition.

#### 4.5 Accusative and genitive marking

Accusative marking thus plays a rather limited role for the expression of [+SPECIFIC] in Turkish. It does not serve the opposition [ $\pm$ SPECIFIC] if the direct object is separated from the predicate by another constituent. The accusative functions as a segment divider marking a potential gap into which other constituents can be inserted. It breaks a chain of constituents which might otherwise be interpreted as belonging closer together.

The gap may also be indicated by suprasegmental means such as sentence intonation. The constituents separated from the predicate have a considerable syntactic mobility. These facts may suggest that the primary task of accusative marking has been to signal topicalization and that the 'specificity' opposition is the result of secondary development. This is also suggested by the use of accusative marking in certain other Turkic languages. The Persian accusative marker *ra*: is used for topicalization in similar ways.

The rules for accusative marking of direct objects closely parallel those for genitive marking with subjects of complement clauses marked with *-dik*. (Other markers of this kind are *-ma* and *-(y)iş*.) The choice between the marked and unmarked term permits analogous distinctions (Johanson 1977). When (44) competes with (45) in front of the predicate, the genitive subject signals [+SPECIFIC]: 'that the water flows' vs. 'that water flows'.

(44) *suy-un ak-tığı*  
water-GEN flow-INF  
'that the water flows'

(45) *su ak-tığı*  
water flow-INF  
'that water flows'

A subject separated from the predicate is regularly genitive-marked. Thus (46) can be read in both ways: 'that water flows here' or 'that the water flows here'.

(46) *suy-un bura-dan ak-tığı*  
water-GEN here-ABL flow-INF  
'that (the) water flows here'

In (47) the subject can be understood as 'money' or 'the money':

(47) *para-nın bugün gel-diği*  
money-GEN today come-INF  
'that (the) money has come today'

This use has a strong affinity to topic function and may, by virtue of this affinity, suggest 'unsharp' readings of 'specificity' in various contexts.

The functions of accusative and genitive marking can thus be characterized as follows: Where an opposition is possible, accusative and genitive signal [+SPECIFIC]. In positions where such an opposition is not possible, they are just topic markers.

#### 4.6 Bare nominals

The structural analysis suggested so far has an important consequence with respect to bare nominals, {~Ø} items such as *kitap* 'book', *çiçek* 'flower', *kedi* 'cat', *misafir* 'guest'. These items represent the unmarked member of three relevant language-specific oppo-

sitions and thus signal the values [-SPECIFIC], [-SINGULAR], [-PL]. They are minimally specified items, covering all referents that do not need explicitly signalled individualization, quantification or specification. The fact that they do not carry positive values in the dimensions of SPECIFICITY and NUMBER does not, however, mean that the entities they refer to have no relation to the concepts in these dimensions.

The position in front of the predicate has a special status with respect to the interpretation of {~Ø} nominals. Corresponding to the syntactic closeness to the predicate, they often exhibit a high degree of semantic dependence, a low degree of topicality and weak referentiality, i.e. a low status in terms of distinctness, constructive reference and identifying reference. {~Ø} nominals can be used here in a merely characterizing sense, referring to a category or class, the consideration of specific individual referents being irrelevant or impossible. This interpretation has been generalized, and thus exaggerated, in traditional descriptions (e.g. Grönbech 1936: 70, 150-1). The semantic closeness of {~Ø} object nominals to a following verbal predicate has been claimed to be so strong that the nominals are incorporated into the verb, forming an expanded predicate, a compound, with it, thus losing its status as syntactic arguments or clause constituents. In traditional literature constructions such as *balık tut-* [fish catch] are taken to be compounds analogous to the type *balık kuyruğu* [fish tail-POSSESSIVE], the {~Ø} direct object nominal just specifying the activity of 'catching', i.e. 'to fishcatch'. According to this idea, (48a) would mean 'Ali book-read', and (48b) 'Ali flower-gave to the girl'.

- (48) a. *Ali kitap oku-du.*  
 Ali book read-PAST3  
 'Ali read a book/books.'  
 b. *Ali kız-a çiçek ver-di.*  
 Ali girl-DAT flower give-PAST3  
 'Ali gave a flower/flowers to the girl.'

The pre-predicate position is, however, a multi-functional position, allowing for lower or higher degrees of cohesion with the predicate and thus for N//P as well as N/P readings. In Johanson (1977) it was stressed that the accusative marks a separation of the object nominal from its predicate, thus preventing an interpretation of semantic coalescence of object and predicate. But this does not mean that all cases of non-marked object + predicate must be interpreted as instances of coalescence. The strong semantic coalescence typical of incorporation is not the only option. The reference is not necessarily restricted to 'class' or 'category' readings. {~Ø} nominals are minimally specified and thus open to various interpretations with regard to referential properties. The fact that the bare {~Ø} nominal in front of the predicate is unspecified for [±SPECIFIC], [±PLURAL] and [±SINGULAR] does not mean that the entity referred to must be indifferent to distinctions in these dimensions. It can still be an identifiable entity with clear properties with respect to distinctness and number extent. It is possible to refer to such entities without highlighting their properties by signalling any of the three positive val-

of SPECIFICITY–DEFINITENESS–NUMBER establishes language-specific values, also for the bare nominal as the unmarked representative of all relevant oppositions. The conclusion is that the structural approach is indispensable for the analysis of the phenomena concerned.

### Abbreviations

ABL ablative, ACC accusative, DAT dative, FUT future, GEN genitive, INDEF indefinite, INF infinitivizer, LOC locative, PL plural, PRES present.

### Notes

1. An anonymous reviewer informs me that this had already been suggested in a manuscript which has never been published: E. Sezer (1972): 'Some observations on the role of genitive phrases in Turkish nominalizations', Harvard University.

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# Case, Valency and Transitivity

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