

Cross-linguistic Implementations of Specificity

To appear in: K. Jaszczolt & K. Turner (eds.). *Meaning through Language Contrast*. Vol 2. Amsterdam; Philadelphia: Benjamins, 405-421.
(Pragmatic and Beyond Series)

Klaus von Heusinger, University of Konstanz
klaus.heusinger@uni-konstanz.de

1. Introduction *

The semantic-pragmatic category *specificity*, which was introduced in the late 60ies, has recently received a new interest (e.g., Enç 1991, Abbott 1994, Farkas 1995, Mathewson 1999, Geurts 1999 among others). However, there is no agreement on the range of phenomena that is related to specificity nor on the very subtle judgements of constructions involving specific NPs. For building a feasible theory of specificity we need (i) a better definition of the referential properties of the linguistic contexts that determine specific readings, and (ii) a list of grammatical implementations of specificity in those contexts. In particular, I will show that accusative case in Turkish is a good indicator for specificity. However, we find more instances of accusative case marking in Turkish than it is predicted by the general approach to specificity, which assumes that specific indefinites are "scopeless", i.e. show always widest scope with respect to other operators. I develop a different approach to specificity according to which specificity indicates that the referent is referentially anchored to another expression, which could be the speaker but also some other expression in the sentence itself.

* This article is the revised version of a talk at the *Second International Conference in Contrastive Semantics and Pragmatics* in Cambridge in September 2000. First of all I would like to thank the organizers, Katarzyna M. Jaszczolt and Ken Turner, for the organization and for helpful comments on the paper. I also would like to thank the audience at the conference, as well as the participants of the workshop on *Sentence Type and Specificity* at the Zentrum für Allgemeine Sprachwissenschaft in Berlin for comments, and in particular Barbara Abbott, Nick Asher, Werner Frey, Bart Geurts, Michael Grabski, Jaklin Kornfilt, Manfred Krifka, Albert Ortmann, Kerstin Schwabe, and Carla Umbach for very inspiring discussions; Paul Portner gave very detailed and constructive comments on an earlier version of this paper. All remaining shortcomings are mine. The research was supported by a Heisenberg-Fellowship of the German Science Foundation.

The concept of specificity was introduced in the late 60ties by transferring the *de re-de dicto* distinction of definite NPs to indefinite NPs. The contrast is illustrated by example (1), which can be assigned two readings: the specific reading of *a monk* is motivated by the continuation (1a), while the non-specific reading can be continued by (1b):

- (1) Umberto Eco: "I desired to poison *a monk*."
- (1a) He lived in the famous monastery Bobbio in the year 1347.
- (1b) Therefore, Eco started to write a novel about a monastery.

A specific reading of an indefinite NP is pretheoretically characterized by the "certainty of the speaker about the identity of the referent", "the speaker has the referent in mind", "the speaker can identify the referent", etc. A weaker version of this characterization is that the referent of a specific NP is fixed and that it matters which referent we select out of the set of entities that fulfill the description. It is also generally assumed that specific indefinite are "scopeless" like proper names or demonstratives, i.e. they always show widest scope. Furthermore, the insertion of *a certain* is assumed to indicate specificity.

- (2) *Pretheoretical and informal characterization of specificity*
 - (i) certainty of the speaker about the identity of the referent
 - (ii) the referent is fixed
 - (iii) specific indefinite NPs are "scopeless", i.e. they behave as if they always have widest scope
 - (iv) specific indefinite NPs can be paraphrased by *a certain*

I will show that this characterization captures only certain cases of specific readings. In the course of this paper I argue that specificity is not based on the characterization (2i) and (2iii), but is rather to be characterized as the property of an NP *being referentially anchored*: The characterization (2ii) and (2iv) are vindicated in this view.

There are two goals which are closely interconnected: First, I will show that the range of the phenomena that are related to specificity is far broader than generally assumed. Second, I will sketch a new semantic analysis for specific NPs based on a variety of cross-linguistic data. The general method I employ in this paper differs from the established semantic methodology of testing sentences for possible ambiguities. In this paper, I will fix the referential properties of the background and check how the linguistic expressions mirror these properties. In order to control the referential properties, I use the novel *The Name of the Rose* by Umberto Eco as the background for the sentences under investigations. In comparing the translations of one and the same sentence (in one and the same referential setting), we can illustrate the cross-linguistic implementation of one and the same semantic-pragmatic category (see example (4) below for

illustration). Although using translations may cause other problems such as a more poetic style or deviations from unmarked forms in order to match the original text, they are used here to ensure that the examples from different language have a similar referential background.

The paper is organized in the following way: In section 2, I illustrate the comparative semantic method of the paper using the semantic category of "genericity". Furthermore, it will be shown that (i) referential categories encompass a great variety of semantic phenomena, and (ii) that one and the same referential property can be cross-linguistically expressed by different means. The point will be illustrated by quotations from *The Name of the Rose*. In section 3, I indicate the range of phenomena associated with specificity by mentioning a few examples from different languages. Section 4 gives a summary of the different implementation and illustrates the different grammatical possibilities by comparing translations of a fragment of the novel. In section 5, I sketch the two classical semantic approaches to specificity, the scope theory and the lexical ambiguity theory. The two theories do not cover all the cases of specificity, in particular they cannot describe cases of "relative specificity", which I present in section 6. I develop an indexical theory of specificity which accounts for the various phenomena discussed so far. The basic idea of *being anchored* is elaborated and discussed by illustration of some examples from the novel. In section 7, I give a short summary.

2. Referential properties of noun phrases

NPs can express different referential properties in that they have various ways to refer to their referents. The type of referent can vary in multiple ways. Generally, we may distinguish the following semantic pragmatic categories of the way expressions can refer:

- (3) *Referential contrasts of nouns*
 - (i) singular vs. plural
 - (ii) generic vs. particular vs. predicative
 - (iii) definite vs. indefinite
 - (vi) specific vs. non-specific

Each of these referential properties can be implemented in different ways, and there are considerable contrasts between languages – some of the properties are overtly marked by morphology or syntax, some will only show up in the interaction with other expressions, and others are not marked at all. This will be

illustrated by the referential property of *genericity*¹ in (4) and (5). In (4) the first phrase *ai semplici*, its English translation *the simple-minded*, and the German translation *die Laien* expresses genericity by using definite NPs (in the plural), while the corresponding phrase *un monaco*, *a monk* and *ein Mönch* expresses genericity by using an indefinite expression in the singular.

- (4a) "[...] talora gli ordini dati **ai semplici** vanno rinforzati con qualche minaccia, come il presagio che a chi disubbidisce () possa accadere qualcosa di terribile, e per forza soprannaturale. **Un monaco** invece..." (41)
- (4b) "[...] sometimes orders given **to the simple-minded** have to be reinforced with a threat, a suggestion that something terrible will happen to the disobedient, perforce something supernatural. **A monk**, on the contrary..." (33)
- (4c) "[...] Manchmal müssen Verbote für **die Laien** mit einer gewissen Drohung unterstrichen werden, etwa mit der Voraussage, daß dem Ungehorsamen etwas Schreckliches widerfahren könnte, etwas Übernatürliches selbstverständlich. **Ein Mönch** dagegen..."(50)

Languages also differ from each other in the means to express generic readings, as illustrated in (5). Given the context and background of the story, the phrase *a monk* is to be read generically. This generic reference is implemented in Italian by the definite article in the singular *il monaco* in (5a), in English by the indefinite article in the singular *a monk* in (5b), while German uses the indefinite in the plural *Mönche* in (5c) (note that there is no indefinite article in the plural). We also see similar differences in the implementation of the predicative function: *un uomo* (indefinite article and singular), *human* (no article), and *Menschen* (no article and plural).²

¹ I cannot give an account of the whole phenomena of genericity (see Carlson & Pelletier 1995) or its cross-linguistic implementation (see Gerstner-Link 1995).

² (5) illustrates the method of controlling the referential background via translation and testing the linguistic expression against this background. All three sentences (5a-c) stand in the same referential setting. Even though they refer in the first part by the quite different expressions *il monaco*, *a monk*, and *Mönche*, they continue the second sentence with the same anaphoric plural pronouns *they* and *sie* (the Pro-drop language Italian only shows plural agreement on the verb *sono*). I do not claim that the pronoun *them* expresses a close anaphoric relation based on binding – it seems to be rather a "pragmatic" pronoun which can refer to some pragmatically salient set of individuals. However, the point is that it is the same referential setting which is reflected in the anaphoric link.

- (5a) "Anche **il monaco** è *un uomo*," sentenziò Aymaro. Poi aggiunse: "Ma qui **sono** meno uomini che altrove." (132)
- (5b) "**A monk** is also *human*," Aymaro declared. Then he added, "But here **they** are less human than elsewhere." (125)
- (5c) "Auch **Mönche** sind *Menschen*", sagte Aymarus sentenziös. Dann fügte er hinzu: "Aber hier sind **sie** es weniger als woanders." (167)

In the following example, all three languages start with an indefinite article plus the noun in the singular, expressing some general contrast to the behavior of Benno; but then genericity is implemented by the plural definite in Italian (6a), by a plural indefinite (without an article) in English (6b), and by the singular with an indefinite article in German (6c). Again this differs from the examples in (5).

- (6a) **Un monaco** dovrebbe certo amare i suoi libri con umiltà, volendo il ben loro e non la gloria della propria curiosità: me quello che per **i laici** è la tentazione dell'adulterio e per **gli ecclesiastici** regolari è la brama di ricchezze, questa per **i monaci** è la seduzione della conoscenza.
- (6b) (The day before, Benno had said he would be prepared to sin in order to procure a rare book. He was not lying and not joking.) **A monk** should surely love his books with humility, wishing their good and not the glory of his own curiosity; but what the temptation of adultery is for **laymen** and the yearning for riches is for **secular ecclesiastics**, the seduction of knowledge is for **monks**. (183)
- (6c) Gewiß, **ein Mönch** sollte seine Bücher in Demut lieben, sich lediglich ihrer Erhaltung widmen und nicht der Befriedigung seiner Neugier. Doch was für **den Laien** die Verlockung des Ehebruchs ist und für **den städtischen Priester** der Zauber des Reichtums, das ist für **den Mönch** die Versuchung des Wissens und der Erkenntnis. (241f.)

The preceding examples have illustrated that the encodings of genericity differ from language to language: *il monaco*, *a monk*, and *Mönche* in (5a-c). Moreover, the examples illustrate that a referential category like genericity is implemented in even one language by different grammatical means, such as *un monaco* in (4a), *il monaco* in (5a), and *i monaci* in (6a). This shows that there is no one-to-one correlation between a grammatical contrast and a semantic-pragmatic category that expresses a referential property. Therefore, we must consider the following three aspects in order to understand semantic-pragmatic categories, such as genericity or specificity. First, we need enough contextual background,

second we need a wide range of linguistic observations, and third we must design a feasible theory. The first ingredient for my analysis of specificity is given by the novel. Second, I present cross-linguistic observations that are related to the pretheoretical concept of specificity in the next two sections. Thirdly, I develop a feasible theory of specificity that is based on the observations presented.

3. Cross-linguistic observations

As opposed to definiteness, specificity is not morphologically marked in most Indo-European languages. However, there are other kinds of grammatical contrasts that can be related to the referential property of specificity. There are: (i) quasi-universal contrasts, which can be found in most languages; (ii) common contrasts that can be found in many languages; and (iii) grammatical phenomena that are language specific. In the following I will present an example from each group.

Quasi-universal specificity contrasts include the tendency for an indefinite to be (more) specific as more descriptive material is inserted into it, as illustrated in (7):

- (7) Everything turns on the theft and possession of *a book*, which was concealed in the *Finis Africae*, and which is now there again thanks to *Malachi's intervention*, [...] (446)

Another quasi-universal property of specific indefinites is that they tend to have wide scope, and therefore it is easier to establish anaphoric links to them, while non-specific indefinites depend much more on discourse domains and they interact with the scope of operators like negation. This is illustrated by the (8) where the non-specific indefinite (in the plural) *chickpeas*, *ceci*, *Kirchererbbsen* in the question (i) and in the negated sentence (ii-iii) cannot serve as antecedents. Therefore, the expression has to be repeated in (iv), while in the second sentence of the contribution in (iv-v) they can be referred to by anaphoric pronouns *them*, *li*, *sie*.³

³ Nick Asher and Paul Portner pointed out to me that the anaphoric relation between *chickpeas* in the imperative (iv) and the pronouns *they* in the following declarative sentence is quite complex: While the indefinite *chickpeas* is existential, the pronouns depends on a generic or habitual operator and therefore cannot be (dynamically) bound by the antecedent.

- (8a)i Hai **ceci**?"
 ii La domanda, diretta a me, mi sorprese. "No, non ho **ceci**", dissi
 iii confuso.
 iv "La prossima volta portami dei **ceci**. **Li** tengo in bocca vedi la mia
 v povery bocca senza denti, cinché non si ammolano tutti."
- (8b)i "Do you have any **chickpeas**?"
 ii The question, addressed to me, surprised me. "No, I have no
 iii **chickpeas**," I said, confused.
 iv "Next time, bring me some **chickpeas**. I hold **them** in my mouth -
 v you see my poor toothless mouth? - until **they** are soft."
- (8c)i "Hast du **Kichererbsen**?"
 ii Die Frage galt mir, und ich antwortete verwirrt: "Nein, ehrwürdiger
 iii Vater, ich habe keine **Kichererbsen**."
 iv "Das nächste Mal bring mir **Kichererbsen** mit. Ich nehme **sie** in den
 v Mund, sieh meinen armen zahnlosen Mund, und kaue **sie** weich."

It is quite common that modality may co-occur with specificity: For example, the subjunctive or conjunctive of an embedded clause strongly suggests that an indefinite is to be understood as non-specific. This is illustrated in example (9):

- (9a) Peraltro parlava sempre di cose così buone e sagge che era come se
un monaco ci *leggese* le vite dei santi. (35)
 (9b) For that matter, he spoke always of things so good and wise that it
 was as if **a monk** *were reading* to us the lives of the saints. (27)
 (9c) Doch er [William] sprach stets so klug und erbaulich, daß es war,
 als *läse ein Mönch* aus den Viten der Heiligen vor. (41)

A language specific implementation of specificity is found in Turkish (Kornfilt 1997, 219ff). Turkish does not have a definite article, while it has the indefinite article *bir*, which is derived from the numeral *bir*, but which differs in distribution. The direct object can be realized by the absolut(ive) without case endings or by the accusative with the case ending *-I*. The schematic translation for a direct object with a case marker, like *kitabı* in (10a), is a definite NP in English, while a direct object without the case marker and with the indefinite article is translated as in indefinite NP, as in (10b). This means that the case marker by its own marks specificity, rather than definiteness (otherwise it could not be combined with the indefinite article).⁴

⁴ Albert Ortmann (p.c.) pointed out that it is not the "double articulation" (Plank to appear), i.e. the combination of the indefinite article with the case marker, that expresses specificity, but the case marker by its own. See Dede (1976) for further conditions on the use of the accusative case marker. In particular, she shows that any direct object must be marked by the accusative case if it is moved out of its preverbal base position.

- (10a) (ben) *kitab-ı* oku-du-m
 I book-Acc read-Past-1sg.
 "I read **the** book."
- (10b) (ben) *bir kitap* oku-du-m
 I a book read-Past-1sg
 "I read **a** book."
- (10c) (ben) *bir kitab-ı* oku-du-m
 I a book-Acc read-Past-1sg
 "I read **a certain** book."

A similar contrast exists for the subject of embedded sentences. The predicate of an embedded sentence in Turkish is a nominalized form that shows agreement with the subject, realized by the possessive marker *-ı*. The subject is realized either as a genitive with the case ending *-ın* (for a specific reading), or as the absolutive (for a non-specific reading). (Kornfilt 1997, 219ff, ex. (762)=(11a)). Note that the non-specific subject tends to be closer to the predicate, while the specific one stands rather at the first position in the sentence.

- (11a) [köy-ü haydut bas-tığ-ın]-ı duy-du-m
 [village-Acc robber raid-Nom-Poss.3sg]-Acc hear-Past-1sg
 "I heard that **robbers** raided the village"
- (11b) [**bir** haydut-un köy-ü bas-tığ-ın]-ı duy-du-m
 [a robber-Gen village-Acc raid-Nom-Poss.3sg]-Acc hear-Past-1sg
 "I heard that **a certain robber** raided the village"

4 Grammatical means of marking specificity

In the last section I have given examples of quasi-universal, common and language-particular grammatical means of marking specificity. There are many more ways to indicate specificity, which cannot be listed here for reasons of space. For the time being, we can summarize the observations as follows:⁵

⁵ Fodor & Sag (1982, 358ff) list a "a number of factors which favor either a quantificational [= non-specific, KvH] or a referential [= specific, KvH] understanding of an indefinite". Among other they mention the following:

- (i) The content of a noun phrase: the more content the more referential. (ii) Topicalization and Left Dislocation strongly favor the referential reading. (iii) The use of non demonstrative *this* strongly, perhaps uniquely, favors referential reading. (iv) There-insertion favors existential readings. (v) Relative clauses add material, thus induce a referential reading; this holds even more for non-restrictive relative clauses. (vi) *A certain* favors referential reading (but the semantics of a certain is "completely obscure").

(i) quasi-universal contrasts

Specific indefinites contain more descriptive material (see (7)), they are assumed to be "scopeless", i.e. they behave as if they had widest scope (see discussion below in section 5 for a different view); due to their scope behavior it is easier link anaphoric pronouns to them⁶ (see (1) and (12biii)), they can be lexically marked by indefinite pronouns (*a certain, certi, ein bestimmter*) as in (12bv).

(ii) common contrasts

Specific indefinite are more often found in assertive sentences, while non-specific ones can be found in interrogative or imperative ones (see (8)). Modality is also related to specificity (see (9)). A subjunctive in a relative clause promotes a non-specific reading of its indefinite head in Italian (and other Romance languages), while the indicative motivates a specific reading, as in (12ai+ii). Specific indefinites are more often found with past than with future tense.

(iii) grammatical phenomena that are language specific

German shows a contrast in negating indefinite NPs: *nicht+ein* vs. *kein*. The latter can approximately be used if the indefinite is non-specific. Some languages show case marking (such as Turkish, see (10) and (11), also Persian), or a combination of two articles (Plank to appear). Givón (1978) reports on two indefinite articles in Bemba (Bantu) expressing the contrast between specific and non-specific.

Turkish gives us better diagnostics for specificity than English, Italian or German, since specificity is morphologically marked by case endings. These diagnostics will be used to show that the assumed referential properties (given by the background) do show up in the grammatical implementation. This is illustrated by the following example (12). The context of the novel is that one monk indicates to William of Baskerville (the medieval Sherlock Holms) that he knows something (specific!), but that he is not ready to disclose it: "[...] But in the abbey there are rumors, ... strange rumors ..." – "Of what sort?"

⁶ Werner Frey (p.c.) pointed out to me that anaphoricity is *no* indicator for specificity, contrary to what some people believe. The point I wanted to make here is that specific indefinites behave differently with respect to negation, conditionals and other domain creating operators. This is reflected in their potential to act as antecedents for anaphoric pronouns.

- (12a)i "Strane. Diciamo, di **un monaco** che nottetempo *ha voluto* avventurarsi in
 ii biblioteca, per cercare **qualcosa** che Malachia non *aveva voluto* dargli, e ha
 iii visto serpenti, uomini senza testa, e uomini con due teste.
- (12b)i "Strange. Let us say, rumors about **a monk** who decided to venture into the
 ii library during the night, to look for **something** Malachi had refused to give
 iii him, and he saw serpents, headless men, and men with two heads. **He** was nearly
 iv crazy when he emerged from the labyrinth..."
 v [...] And besides, if it is evil to handle **certain books**, why would the Devil
 vi distract **a monk** from committing evil?" (89)
- (12c)i "Garip söylenti-ler örneğ*in*, [**bir rahib-in** geceyarısı, [[M'nin kendine
 strange rumor-Pl for example, [a monk-Gen midnight [[M.-Gen himself-Dat
 ii ver-mek iste-me-diğ*i*] **bir kitab-ı** bul-mak için] gizlice
 give-Inf want-Neg-Nom-Poss.3sg] a book-Acc find-Inf to] secretly
 iii kitapl*ı*-a girmey-e kalkı*ş*-tığ*ı*-ı] (...) dair söylenti-ler
 library-Dat enter-to venture-Nom-Poss.3sg] about rumor-Pl

A somewhat "literal" translation would be: "There are strange rumors, for example rumors about [a monk midnights secretly into the library venturing [to find a book [that Malachi did not want to give him]]]"

In the English translation the anaphoric pronoun *he* in (12biii) shows that the indefinite NP *a monk* is at least not embedded under the NP *rumors*, but allows anaphoric linkage. This indicates that it has a specific reading. In the Italian original the indicative mood of the relative clause (*ha voluto*) indicates that the head noun *un monaco* is specific. This is confirmed by the Turkish translation, where the subject *bir rahib-in* of the embedded sentence that ends in *kalkı*ş*-tığ*ı*-ı* shows case marking.

We can further note that the Turkish translation *bir kitabı* for the Italian *qualcosa* or English *something* in line (ii) is marked as specific. The specificity of this NP is confirmed by the setting of the novel: Malachi (the librarian) can only refuse to give something to the monk if the monk had asked for a specific thing. In Italian, the predicate *aveva voluto* in the relative clause is in the indicative, and thus indicating that the head noun *qualcosa* is specific. In English, the relative clause modifying *something* contains the proper name *Malachi*, which again is a good indication that the indefinite pronouns is linked to the referent of that proper name. In comparing the three languages, it is obvious that Turkish marks specificity obviously, while we have to look for subtle indicators in English or Italian.

5. Reconstructing specificity by constructing theories

The classical reconstruction of the contrast between specific and non-specific indefinite NPs was formulated in terms of a scope interaction between the indefinite NP and other operators. In this view, the two readings of (1), repeated as (13), are paraphrased as (13a) where the existential quantifier has scope over *desire*, yielding the specific reading; and as (13b) with narrow scope for the indefinite yielding the non-specific reading:

- (13) Umberto Eco: "I desired to poison *a monk*"
 (13a) **There is a monk** and Umberto Eco desires to poison him.[spec]
 (13b) Umberto Eco **desires** that **there is a monk** such that he poisons him. [non-spec]

In the following I present two of the problems with this configurational analysis of specificity: The first observation concerns island restrictions for quantifier raising, and the second the independence of scope and specificity. Quantifiers in an embedded sentence cannot take scope over a definite NP in the matrix clause. (14) has only the reading (14a) that there is one rumor such that each student had been called before the dean, but the reading (14b) "for each student there is a rumor such that ..." is not available. This is explained by the assumption that quantifiers cannot be raised out of islands like the embedded sentence in (14). However, Fodor & Sag (1982) observe that indefinite NPs can leave such islands, as illustrated in (15). Example 15) can receive a reading (15a) with wide scope of *rumor*, but also a reading (15b), in which the indefinite takes scope over *the rumor*.

- (14) John overheard the rumor [that *each student of mine* had been called before the dean].
 (14a) the rumor ... each student
 (14b) *each student ... the rumor
- (15) John overheard the rumor [that *a student of mine* had been called before the dean].
 (15a) the rumor ... there is a student ...
 (15b) a certain student ... the rumor ...

Fodor & Sag (1982) come to the conclusion that indefinite NPs can receive two different readings via two indefinite articles with the same surface form: an existential or non-specific article a_e , and a referential or specific article a_r . The referential article applied to the common noun forms a referential indefinite NP, which is "scopeless" like proper names or deictic expressions. Such expression behave as if they have always widest scope. The existential article is represented

as the existential quantifier, which can be raised like the universal quantifier. The existential reading, however, does not allow for quantifier raising out of islands, providing only the narrow scope reading (15a).

Fodor & Sag's lexical ambiguity theory of indefinites makes a clear prediction about cases with more than one operator besides an indefinite that is embedded in a scope island, as in (16). (16) is predicted to have only two readings: the reading (16a), where the indefinite takes scope over the two other operators since it receives a referential or specific reading, and the reading (16b) with narrow scope with respect to both other operators licensed by the existential article. However, there should be no reading like (16c), the so called "intermediate" reading, since it would be neither specific ("only widest scope") nor existential (since the indefinite cannot leave the island). The prediction is borne out by the intuition to example (16):

- (16) Each teacher overheard the rumor that *a student of mine* had been called before the dean.
- (16a) a student ... each teacher ... the rumor (= spec/referential reading)
- (16b) each teacher ... the rumor ... a student (= non-spec/existent. reading)
- (16c) *each teacher ... a student ... the rumor ("intermediate reading")

Contrary to this observation, Farkas (1981) and later others (e.g., Abusch 1994, Geurts 1999) have observed that there are examples with the same structure as (16) that allows for an intermediate reading, as in (17). The indefinite NP *some condition* can take scope over *three arguments* and under *each student*. That is, the sentence has a reading where for each student, there is some condition such that the student should find three arguments against this condition. Thus the lexical ambiguity theory of specificity faces serious obstacles, which are not easy to overcome.⁷

- (17) Each student has to come up with three arguments that show that *some condition* proposed by Chomsky is wrong.
- (17a) each student some condition ... three arguments ("intermediate reading")

⁷ Recently Kratzer (1998) has revived the lexical ambiguity theory by using choice functions for the referential article, and the existential quantifier for the existential article of Fodor & Sag. See also von Heusinger (2000) for a short discussion and criticism of that approach.

6. Relative specificity

The second problem for the scope (as well as the lexical ambiguity) theory of specificity are cases in which the specificity seems not to relate to the speaker or the context of utterance, but to some other element in the sentence. Higginbotham (1987, 64) illustrates this by the examples (18) and (19) "In typical cases specific uses are said to involve a referent that the speaker 'has in mind.' But this condition seems much too strong. Suppose my friend George says to me, 'I met with a certain student of mine today.' Then I can report the encounter to a third party by saying, 'George said that he met with a certain student of his today,' and the 'specificity' effect is felt, although I am in no position to say which student George met with."

(18) George: "I met a certain student of mine"

(19) James: "George met a certain student of his."

Hintikka (1986) had made a similar observation in his discussion of the expression *a certain*. He shows in (20) that the specific indefinite *a certain woman* can receive narrow scope with respect to the universal quantifier and still be specific: it is a specific woman for each man. Hintikka suggest that the specific indefinite NP is to be represented by a Skolem-function that assigns to each man the woman who is his mother. With Farkas (1997) we can describe the dependency of the specific NP *a certain woman* from the universal quantifier *every man* by the concept of "co-variation:" The referent for the specific indefinite covaries with the referent for *man*. In other words, once the reference for *man* is fixed (during the process of interpreting the universal quantifier), the reference for the specific indefinite is simultaneously fixed.

(20) According to Freud, every man unconsciously wants to marry a certain woman – his mother. (Hintikka 1986)

These observations motivate a revision of the pre-theoretical description of specificity as the "certainty of the speaker about the referent". It was shown that a specific indefinite NP need not depend on the speaker or the context of utterance, it can also depend on other linguistic entities like the universal quantifier *every man* in (20) or on the proper name *George* in (19). In the following I assume that specificity marks that the specific expression is *referentially anchored* to another expression, rather than "absolutely" related to the speaker. With this view, we can now go back to some of the earlier examples and account for their specificity in terms of *referential anchoring*.

In example (12), repeated as (21), we had the impression that the indefinite pronoun *something* is specific, which was confirmed by the accusative case marker in the Turkish translation. At that stage of description, we had no means

to account for this, and the generally given description of specificity did not allow for this since the referent is not "known by the speaker" or "identified by the speaker" (if we take the writer of the book as the speaker). However, in the new approach we can referentially anchor the indefinite pronoun to the expression *a monk*. The Turkish translation (21b) marks the specific indefinite *bir kitabı* by the accusative case. Example (22) shows that the anchor *bir rahip* for the specific indefinite *bir kitabı* can be itself non-specific, as is indicated by the conditional form of the verb *isterse*.

- (21a) "(Strange. Let us say, rumors about **a monk** who decided to venture into the library during the night), [to look for **something** [Malachi had refused to give him]]
- (21b) [[ver-mek iste-me-diğ-i] **bir kitab-ı** bul-mak için] (...)
[[give-Inf want-Neg-Nom-Poss.3sg] a book-Acc find-Inf to] (...)
- (22) bir rahip **bir kitabı** al-mak isterse
a monk a book-Acc take-Inf want-Cond
"If a monk wants to take a book [spec]"⁸

Specificity expresses the dependency of the reference of one term on the referent of another term. This view generalizes the pre-theoretical idea of "the certainty of the speaker towards the referent" in at least two dimensions: first it is not only the speaker who can act as anchor for a specific expression, and second the relation between the anchor and the specific expression is not described by any mental relation like "certainty" or "ability to identify" etc. I assume that these notions are not part of linguistic description or theory proper. The anchoring relation rather expresses that the reference of the specific expression is determined by the reference of another expression. One instance was example (20), where the referent of the specific *a woman* covaries with the referent of *man*. In (17), repeated as (23), the referent of the specific indefinite *some condition* can either be anchored to the speaker yielding wide scope, or to the student yielding intermediate scope, or to *three argument* yielding narrow scope.

- (23) Each student has to come up with three arguments that show that *some condition*_i proposed by Chomsky is wrong.
- (a) i = speaker widest scope
(b) i = student intermediate scope
(c) i = three arguments narrow scope

⁸ Jaklin Kornfilt (p.c.) pointed out to me that she thinks that (22) is an ungrammatical, or at least very marked, Turkish sentence.

Often the speaker is the anchor for a specific expression. In that case the specific NP receives the same scope as the speaker, namely widest scope with respect to any other operator, which is equivalent to the pre-theoretical view. However, in cases like (20)-(22) the specific expression depends on a different expressions, but not on the speaker, and therefore it does not have widest scope. For example, on one reading the specific indefinite *bir kitabı* in (22) is specific with respect to the monk, but does not receive scope over the conditional.

Example (24)⁹ involves several possible anchors: The speaker William, the hearer Jorge, the person they talk about, Malachi, and the two persons mentioned in the sentence. Thus, in principle the indefinite *a book from the Finis Africae* could be anchored to each of them. However, the setting of the novel strongly suggests that Malachi had not known the identity of the book for most of the time. So it seems more likely that the specific indefinite is anchored to Berengar (or Severin).

- (24) [William to Jorge de Burgos about Malachi:] You probably told him Berengar had been intimate with Severin, and as a reward Severin had given him **a book from the Finis Africae**.

We reconstruct the anchoring by assuming that any NP introduces an anchor and that an indefinite NP receives an additional index that must be linked to an accessible anchor. Now we can represent sentence (24) as (24a). (24b) shows one way of linking the indefinite to an anchor, here: Berengar (for a more detailed reconstruction of specificity, see von Heusinger (to appear)):

- (24a) <William, Jorge>[You probably told him [= Malachi]
<Malachi>[Berengar had been intimate with Severin, and as a reward
<Berengar, Severin>[Severin had given him [**a book from the Finis Africae**]_i]]

⁹ The sentence is uttered during the show-down at the end of the novel (night of the seventh day). The two main protagonists, William of Baskerville and Jorge de Burgos, are meeting in the secret room of the library, the famous "Finis Africae", and William gets a hold of the book the story is about. The two men report to each other their reconstruction of the events in the monastery and try to show that each of them was intellectually ahead of the other. In this context they utter the sentence (i) which I simplified to (24):

- (i) [William to Jorge de Burgos about Malachi]: "You probably told him Berengar had been intimate with Severin, and as a reward Severin had given him a book from the Finis Africae." (465)

- (24b) <William, Jorge>[You probably told him [= Malachi]
 <Malachi>[Berengar had been intimate with Severin, and as a
 reward
 <Berengar, Severin>[Severin had given him [**a book from the Finis
 Africae**]Berengar]]]

7 Summary

I argued that the pretheoretical characterization of specificity as (i) certainty of the speaker about the identity of the referent, (ii) the referent is fixed, (iii) specific indefinite NP is "scopeless", and (iv) specific indefinite NPs can be paraphrased by *a certain*, can only describe a restricted set of specific expressions. I presented cross-linguistic implementations of specificity that clearly extended the range described by the mentioned characterization. In particular, the Turkish accusative case ending marking specificity is used in a broader way. In explaining this use and by accounting for the scope behavior of specific indefinites, the so-called cases of "relative specificity", I developed a new theory of specificity. Specificity expresses a referential relationship between two referential expressions: The reference of a specific expression depends on the "anchor" expression. Once the reference for the anchored is determined, the reference for the specific term is also determined. Thus the scope behavior of specific expression can explained on this line.

References

- Abbott, Barbara 1994. Referentiality, Specificity, Strength, & Individual Concepts. In: E. Duncan & D. Farkas & P. Spaelti (eds.). The Proceedings of the Twelfth West Coast Conference on Formal Linguistics. Stanford: CSLI, 473-484.
- Carlson, Gregory & Pelletier, Francis 1995. The Generic Book. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Dede, Müserref 1986. Definiteness and Referentiality in Turkish Verbal Sentences. In: D. Slobin & K. Zimmer (eds.). Studies in Turkish Linguistics. Amsterdam: Benjamins, 147-164.
- Eco, Umberto 1980. Il nome della rosa. Milano: Bompiani.
- Eco, Umberto 1994. The name of the rose. With a postscript by the author. Translated from the Italian by William Weaver. San Diego; New York; London: Harcourt Brace & Company.
- Eco, Umberto 1986. Der Name der Rose. Translated by Burkhart Kroeber. München: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag.

- Eco, Umberto 1986. *Gulun Adi. Turkcesi*: Sadan Karadeniz. Istanbul: Can Yayinlari.
- Enç, Mürvet 1991. The Semantics of Specificity. *Linguistic Inquiry* 22, 1-25.
- Farkas, Donka [1981] 1985. *Intensional Description and the Romance Subjunctive Mood*. New York: Garland.
- Farkas, Donka 1995. *Specificity and Scope*. Linguistic Research Center. UC Santa Cruz. LRC-95-01.
- Farkas, Donka 1997. *Dependent Indefinites*. In: F. Corblin & D. Godard & J.-M. Maradin (eds.). *Empirical Issues in Formal Syntax and Semantics. Selected Papers from the Colloque de Syntax et de Sémantique de Paris (CSSP 1995)*. Bern: Lang, 242-267.
- Fodor, Janet & Sag, Ivan 1982. *Referential and Quantificational Indefinites*. *Linguistics and Philosophy* 5, 355-398.
- Gerstner-Link, Claudia 1995. *Über Generizität. Generische Nominalausdrücke in singulären und generellen Aussagen*. München: Fink.
- Geurts, Bart 1999. *Specifics*. In: B. Geurts & M. Krifka & R. van der Sandt (eds.), *Focus and Presupposition in Multi-Speaker Discourse*. ESSLI 99, Utrecht, 99-129.
- Givón, Talmy 1978. *Definiteness and Referentiality*. In: J. Greenberg & C. Ferguson & E. Moravcsik (eds.). *Universals of Human Language*. 4 vols. Stanford: Stanford University Press. Vol. 4, 291-330.
- von Heusinger, Klaus 2000. *The Reference of Indefinites*. In: K. von Heusinger & U. Egli (eds.). *Reference and Anaphoric Relations*. Dordrecht: Kluwer, 247-265.
- von Heusinger, Klaus (to appear). *Specificity and Definiteness in Sentence and Discourse Structure*. To appear in *Theoretical Linguistics*.
- Higginbotham, James 1987. *Indefinites and Predication*. In: E. Reuland & A. ter Meulen (eds.). *The Representation of (In)definiteness*. Cambridge/Mass.: MIT Press, 43-70.
- Hintikka, Jaakko 1986. *The Semantics of 'a certain'*. *Linguistic Inquiry* 17, 331-336.
- Kornfilt, Jaklin 1997. *Turkish*. Routledge: London. (Descriptive Grammars Series)
- Kratzer, Angelika 1998. *Scope or Pseudoscope? Are there Wide-Scope Indefinites*. In: S. Rothstein (ed.). *Events and Grammar*. Dordrecht: Kluwer, 163-196.
- Matthewson, Lisa 1999. *On the Interpretation of Wide-Scope Indefinites*. *Natural Language Semantics* 7, 79-134.
- Plank, Frans (to appear). *Double Articulation*. In: F. Plank (ed.). *Noun Phrase Structure in the Languages of Europe*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.