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# SPECIFICITY AND PARTITIVITY IN SOME ALTAIC LANGUAGES

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## 1. Introduction<sup>\*</sup>

Formal semantic studies as well as typological work have shown the importance of adopting a notion of specificity, in addition to definiteness. The question of the exact nature of specificity has been addressed, among others, by Enç (1991), where the widely accepted claim is made (and defended, in part based on DOM phenomena in Turkish) that specific NP/DPs are subsets of either explicit or implicit partitive expressions, and that partitive subsets have to be specific. The strongest empirical support for this claim was provided by the observation that partitive expressions, headed by the subset expression, must be marked with overt structural case. This observation is important, given that in Turkish, structural cases such as accusative and genitive show up typically on specific DPs but not on non-specific ones (cf., among others, Kornfilt 1984, 1997, and 2003a, and Johanson 1977; for discussion of overt accusative in particular, see Aydemir 2004, Dede 1986, Erguvanlı 1984; for discussion of DOM in general, see Aissen 2003 and Bossong 1985).

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In this paper, we pursue four main objectives: 1. To show, contra Enç, that subset expressions of partitives *can* be non-specific (and thus, in Turkish and some other Turkic languages, can be devoid of overt structural case); 2. To show that overt structural case in Turkish, as well as at least one other marker in related languages which in general indicates semantic specificity lose this function when these markers' presence is required due to formal reasons; they show up despite lack of semantic specificity in those instances; 3. To study the variation within Turkic and Altaic languages with respect to the formal conditions that dictate the distribution of the structural case marker and with respect to the elements in partitives that can occupy the construction's head-noun position; 4. To propose our own account of specificity.

In previous work, we have argued that Turkish provides evidence against a strict interpretation of the partitive-based notion of specificity; there *can* be non-specific subsets in partitive expressions. Furthermore, Differential Case Marking effects (whether exhibited by subjects or objects) as used by Enç are not reliable indicators of semantic specificity in Turkish in those instances when overt structural case is required due to formal reasons. In Turkish, such reasons can be due to the presence of a nominal agreement element, which, due to its pronominal features, requires the presence of overt structural case. Similarly, other markers in related languages such as the "set" or "group" marker in Kirghiz (and possibly Kazakh, which we don't discuss here, due to lack of space) may require overt structural case. In all of these instances, the structural case, otherwise a reliable indicator of semantic specificity, loses its reliability and shows up with possible non-specific semantics. The agreement marker itself often has the semantics of specificity, but not when it is required for formal reasons, e.g. in order to provide a nominal head in an NP/DP, when no lexical noun is available in this function. In Kirghiz, when the "set" or "group" marker fulfils that function instead of agreement, the agreement marker, whose presence is now not necessitated by formal reasons, turns into a reliable specificity marker. In addition to discussing these facts, we also show subtle differences among the Turkic languages with respect to the accusative, a structural case marker, when it functions as a "differential case" marker: in Turkish, it indicates specificity (when its presence is not due to other factors such as agreement), but it is not, by and large, sensitive to the feature [human]. In contrast, in a number of other Turkic languages, some of them very closely related to Turkish both genetically and typologically (e.g. Azerbaijani), the accusative can be sensitive to the feature [human]; in those instances when it does express that feature, once again, it loses its reliability as a specificity marker. This observation goes along well with the recent approach to DOM in de Swart (2007), where the claim is made that animacy, as an *inherent* property of noun phrases, takes priority over a "contextual property" such as definiteness or specificity.

## 2. Turkish

In von Heusinger & Kornfilt (2005), we have shown that for implicit partitives of the type used by Enç (1991), accusative case is (formally) optional and therefore can express referentiality. Here we focus on explicit partitives with ablative or genitive introducing a (larger) set and (i) lexical nouns, (ii) classifiers like *tane* 'item', (iii) numerals and other quantifiers, and (iv) adjectives referring to a subset of the larger set.

## 2.1 Partitives with Lexical Nominal Subset Expressions

We start by illustrating Turkish partitives with examples of ablative partitives, whose superset expression is marked with the ablative. Genitive partitives will be exemplified later on. In (1a) and (1b), the subset of three girls is linked to the larger set of students; the three girls are a subset of the students both with respect to size and with respect to properties (i.e. [+female] is a subset of [+human]). The ablative partitives with inanimates in (2a) and (2b) look similar to [+human] partitives. Here [+apple] is a subset of [+fruit]. (For arguments that the subset and the superset expressions together form a syntactic constituent, see Kornfilt 1984 and 1996.)

- (1) a. öğrenci-ler-den üç kız gör-dü-m  
 student-PL-ABL three girl see-PST-1.SG  
 ‘I saw three girls of the (group of) students’
- b. öğrenci-ler-den üç kız-ı gör-dü-m  
 student-PL-ABL three girl-ACC see-PST-1.SG  
 ‘I saw three (specific) girls of the (group of) students’
- (2) a. meyva-lar-dan üç elma ye-di-m  
 fruit-PL-ABL three apple eat-PST-1.SG  
 ‘I ate three apples of the (set of) fruits’
- b. meyva-lar-dan üç elma-yı ye-di-m  
 fruit-PL-ABL three apple-ACC eat-PST-1.SG  
 ‘I ate three (specific) apples of the (set of) fruits’

Note that (1a) and (2a) show clearly that, contra Enç, partitives can have non-specific subsets, i.e. that specificity can’t be synonymous with partitivity. In both examples, the subset is interpreted as non-specific. Furthermore, there is no accusative marker on the subset expressions of these examples—a marker which is a reliable indicator of specificity (as Enç claims herself) in most instances (with the exception of those instances where its presence is required by formal reasons, as we show later). In contrast, both (1b) and (2b) exhibit accusative marking on the subset expressions, and in both examples, that subset expression is interpreted as specific.

Genitive partitives with lexical nouns as subset expressions (which thus represent properties that are a subset of the larger set’s properties) are ill-formed; this is illustrated by the following pair of examples:

- (3) a. \*meyva-lar-ın üç elma (-sın) (-ı) ye-di-m  
 fruit-PL-GEN three apple 3.SG-ACC eat-PST-1.SG  
 ‘I ate three apples of the (set of) fruits’
- b. \*meyva-lar-ın üç elma-yı ye-di-m  
 fruit-PL-GEN three apple-ACC eat-PST-1.SG  
 ‘I ate three (specific) apples of the (set of) fruits’

As we shall see later, genitive partitives require the presence of an agreement element on the subset expression (which may explain the ungrammaticality of (3b)), and that agreement element itself requires the presence of the accusative, which would explain the ungrammaticality of (3a) in the version with the agreement suffix but without the accusative suffix as indicated above. However, crucially, even in its version with all the required suffixes, (3a) is ill-formed; this is clearly due to the presence of a lexical noun as a subset expression; we shall see well-formed genitive partitives later on, where we illustrate the construction with subset expressions devoid of a lexical noun.

## 2.2 Partitives with Classifiers as a Subset Expression (with and without Lexical Nominal Head)

We now turn to partitive expressions whose heads don't consist of lexical nouns but of other categories. We first observe classifiers in that function. Perhaps the most widely used classifier in Turkish is *tane* 'item', which historically derives from a word for 'grain'. It is typically used for countable inanimate nouns; however, in colloquial styles, it can also be used with [+human] nouns, as in (4b). This classifier can modify the subset expression in partitives, as in (5):

- (4) a. Dün üç tane elma ye-di-m  
 yesterday three 'item' apple eat-PST-1.SG  
 'Yesterday, I ate three apples'
- b. Dün üç tane öğrenci gör-dü-m  
 yesterday three 'item' student see-PST-1.SG  
 'Yesterday, I saw three students'
- (5) Meyva-lar-dan üç tane elma ye-di-m  
 fruit -PL-ABL three 'item' apple eat-PST-1.SG  
 'I ate three apples out of (the set of) fruits'

More interestingly for our purposes, it is possible to leave out the head noun of the subset expression, thus apparently using the classifier as though it were the head noun instead, as in (6). There are differences between the distribution of the classifier as the head of a partitive subset expression, and the distribution of a regular lexical noun in the same function, as in (7) vs. (2b):

- (6) Meyva-lar-dan üç tane ye-di-m  
 fruit -PL-ABL three 'item' eat-PST-1.SG  
 'I ate three (*unspecified* pieces of) fruit' (lit.: 'Of the fruits, I ate three "items"')
- (7) \*/??Meyva-lar-dan üç tane -yi ye-di-m  
 fruit-PL-ABL three 'item'-ACC eat-PST-1.SG  
 Intended reading: 'I ate three *specific* (pieces of) fruit' (lit.: 'Of the fruits, I ate three *specific* "items"')

Contrast this ill-formed example with (2b), which is fine, due to the lexical noun as the head of the partitive, and with (6), which is well-formed with its classifier head but without the accusative. The ill-formedness of (7) must be due to the presence of the accusative marker on the classifier, which appears to be inherently non-specific.

**Hypothesis:** The classifier can raise to the head-N position<sup>1</sup> (cf. (6)), but it is semantically so bleached as a noun that it is semantically non-specific as a default and can't bear accusative marking.

Interestingly, Turkish offers a second option: The classifier does not raise to head-N position, in which case a nominal “dummy” agreement element with the default features of third person singular occupies the head-N position, due to the requirement (8) below.

- (8) **Requirement:** Nominal phrases (partitives being one type) need to have a nominal head which has to be filled **overtly**.

This requirement can be satisfied, as mentioned above under “hypothesis”, either by raising the classifier to the head-N position, as in (6), or by insertion of a “dummy” agreement marker with the default features of third person singular into the head noun position:

- (9) meyva-lar-dan üç tane **-sin** -i ye -di-m  
 fruit -PL-ABL three ‘item’-3.SG-ACC eat-PST-1.SG  
 ‘I ate three *specific (or non-specific)* (pieces of) fruit’  
 (lit.: ‘Of the fruits, I ate three *specific (or non-specific)* “items” ’)

In contrast with (7), where the accusative follows the raised classifier directly, i.e. without the default agreement, this example is perfectly well-formed. Why can/must the accusative follow the “dummy” agreement (when it functions as the nominal head), given that it can't follow the classifier when it is in head position?

**Hypothesis:** Agreement markers have pronominal features, which make the expression *formally* (not semantically) specific (cf. proposals, e.g. Aissen 2003, placing pronominals high in referential hierarchies for purposes of DOM, i.e. Differential Object Marking).

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<sup>1</sup> It is not obvious that the classifier should be allowed to raise to the head-N position (and, we assume, from there to D, as all nouns would in a specific expression, as opposed to staying in N in non-specific NP/DPs). The clearest obstacle to such raising of the classifier (as well as of adjectives for some speakers, as discussed in the next section) is that the raising would originate in a modifier, i.e. adjunct, position, rather than in a complement position (with respect to the target, i.e. the head N/D), and it is only the complements which are traditionally assumed to allow their heads to undergo their head to raise via head movement. We adopt here the “sideways-movement” approach proposed in Nunes (2004) and related work, where adjunct phrases are adjoined relatively late in the derivation, after a number of Merge operations have applied, involving heads, their complements, and “moved”, i.e. copied, elements. In such derivations, certain parts of adjuncts can be copied and merged with appropriate parts of the already existing tree, as long as this is done before the adjunct itself is merged. (Sideways movement must of course be constrained so as not to overgenerate with respect to the CED—Huang 1982.) While such “movement” via merging and copying out of adjuncts is discussed by Nunes mainly with respect to phrasal movement, heads are also allowed to undergo sideways “movement”, and this is the operation we assume is at work here.

We saw that in colloquial styles, the classifier *tane* can also be used for humans; its usage in this function is similar to its distribution with inanimates when it is functioning as head:

- (10) Öğrenci-ler-den üç tane-**sin** -**i** gör-dü-m  
 student-PL-ABL three item-**3.SG-ACC** see-PST-1.SG  
 ‘I saw three (“units” of) the students’  
 (lit.: ‘Of the students, I saw three “units” ’; colloq.)

(9) and (10) are ambiguous between a specific and a non-specific reading. The accusative marker stops being a reliable indicator of *semantic* specificity in these instances where it shows up due to *formal* specificity (cf. von Heusinger & Kornfilt 2005, Kornfilt 2008).

We now turn to genitive partitives with classifiers as the subset expression. These are similar to ablative partitives with respect to the classifier: when it is followed by the “dummy” agreement marker instead of a lexical noun, it requires the presence of the accusative, as in (11) and (12). Genitive partitives differ from ablative partitives only with respect to being ill-formed without the agreement marker (and thus also without the accusative), as mentioned earlier.<sup>2</sup>

- (11) Meyva-lar-in üç tane-**sin** -**i** ye-di -m  
 fruit-PL-GEN three item-**3.SG-ACC** eat-PST-1.SG  
 ‘I ate three (“items” of) the fruits (lit. ‘Of the fruits, I ate three “items” ’)
- (12) Öğrenci-ler-in üç tane-**sin** -**i** gör-dü -m  
 student-PL-GEN three item-**3.SG-ACC** see-PST-1.SG  
 ‘I saw three (“units” of) the students’  
 (lit. ‘Of the students, I saw three “units” ’; colloq.)
- (13) \*Meyva-lar-in üç tane ye-di-m  
 fruit-PL-GEN three item eat-PST-1.SG  
 ‘I ate three (“items” of) the fruits (lit. ‘Of the fruits, I ate three “items” ’)
- (14) \*Öğrenci-ler-in üç tane gör-dü-m  
 student-PL-GEN three item see-PST-1.SG  
 Intended reading: ‘I saw three (“units” of) the students’  
 (lit. ‘Of the students, I saw three “units” ’; colloq.)

This is because the genitive requires the presence of a local agreement element in order to be licensed—a requirement that holds not only of partitives, but is a general requirement on the

<sup>2</sup> Genitive partitives further differ from their ablative counterparts in disallowing subset expressions with lexical nouns, even when other formal requirements are satisfied, i.e. when an agreement marker (to license the genitive) and the accusative marker (required by the pronominal features of the agreement) are present; this was illustrated by the examples in (3). Addressing this phenomenon in detail would take us too far afield. We do observe, however, that other Turkic languages such as Kirghiz and Uighur have this constraint on genitive partitives, as well. We further mention that one obvious reason for this constraint is the presence of possessive phrases in all of these languages. In these possessive constructions, the possessor is in the genitive, and the possessee, i.e. the head of the phrase, bears agreement marking with the possessor (its specifier), licensing the genitive (cf. Kornfilt 1984 and 2003b). We hypothesize that this construction blocks genitive partitives with lexical nouns as subsets. Indeed, native informants report that they interpret such genitive partitives as possessives, rather than partitives.

genitive across all constructions, e.g. possessive phrases and nominalized clauses (cf. Kornfilt 1984, 2003b). As we saw previously, ablative partitives have no such requirement:

- (15) Meyva-lar-dan üç tane ye-di -m  
 student-PL-ABL three item eat-PST-1.SG  
 ‘I ate three (“items” of) the fruits (lit. ‘Of the fruits, I ate three “items” ’)
- (16) Öğrenci-ler-den üç tane gör-dü -m  
 student-PL-ABL three item see-PST-1.SG  
 ‘I saw three (“units” of) the students’  
 (lit. ‘Of the students, I saw three “units” ’; colloq.)

### 2.3 Numerals as Subset Expressions

Numerals as well as certain quantifiers are similar to *tane* in their ability to stay in-situ; thus they, too, trigger insertion of agreement into the N-head position of the subset expression in partitives. They are different from *tane*, however, in not being able to raise to N—a second option which *tane* does allow, as we saw earlier. Only the last example, with both dummy agreement and the accusative marker, is well-formed. Other quantifiers like *bazı* ‘some’ behave just as numerals in this respect:

- (17) a. \*meyva-lar-dan altı / bazı-lar ye-di-m  
 fruit-PL-ABL six / some-PL eat-PST-1.SG  
 b. \*meyva-lar-dan altı-yı / bazı-lar-ı ye-di-m  
 fruit-PL-ABL six-ACC / some-PL-ACC eat-PST-1.SG  
 c. \*meyva-lar-dan altı-sı / bazı-lar-ı ye-di-m  
 fruit-PL-ABL six -3.SG / some-PL-3.SG eat-PST-1.SG  
 d. meyva-lar-dan altı-sın-ı / bazı-lar-ın-ı ye-di-m  
 fruit-PL-ABL six-3.SG-ACC / some-PL-3.SG-ACC eat-PST-1.SG  
 ‘I ate six / some of the fruits’

The ill-formedness of the examples in a. is due to the inability of numerals and quantifiers to raise, and also to the condition in (8), which requires the head-N position to be filled overtly; we hypothesize that the b.-examples are ill-formed for the same reasons; the ill-formedness of the examples in c. is due to the requirement that agreement, even when realized as a “dummy” element, needs the presence of the accusative, due to the agreement’s pronominal features.

Genitive partitives with numerals and quantifiers as the subset expression are, again, similar to ablative partitives with respect to numerals and quantifiers as partitive heads, and so are the ill-formed versions. For space reasons, we offer only the equivalent to the well-formed (17d):

- (18) meyva-lar-ın altı-sın -ı / bazı-lar -ın -ı ye-di -m  
 fruit-PL-GEN six-3.SG-ACC / some-PL-3.SG-ACC eat-PST-1.SG  
 ‘I ate six / some of the fruits’

## 2.4 Adjectives as Subset Expressions in Partitives

Similar, if not fully identical, paradigms are exhibited by adjectives in subset expressions of partitives:

- (19) a. \*elma-lar-dan kırmızı ye -di -m  
 apple-PL-ABL red eat-PST-1.SG  
 Intended reading: ‘I ate a (non-specific) red (one) of the apples’
- b. ?elma-lar-dan kırmızı-yı ye -di -m  
 apple-PL-ABL red -ACC eat-PST-1.SG  
 ‘I read the red (one) of the apples’
- c. \*elma-lar-dan kırmızı-sı ye -di -m  
 apple-PL-ABL red -3.SG eat-PST-1.SG  
 Intended reading: ‘I ate the red (one) of the apples’
- d. elma-lar-dan kırmızı-sın -ı ye -di -m  
 apple-PL-ABL red -3.SG-ACC eat-PST-1.SG  
 ‘I ate the red (one) of the apples’

The well-formedness of b. for a number of speakers is due to the ability of adjectives to raise to the N-head position of a nominal phrase—cf. the traditional view that there is no or little distinction in Turkish between nouns and adjectives. (Note that all speakers accept d., with dummy agreement in N-head position, as stellar. In other words, even those speakers who do allow their adjectives to freely raise to N-position accept the insertion of dummy nominal agreement to N-position and may even prefer it.)

As expected on the basis of the previous discussion, the genitive partitive version of adjectives as subsets allows only the combination with the agreement (and, of course, with the overt accusative); again, due to space reasons, we illustrate with the well-formed example only:

- (20) elma-lar-ın kırmızı-sın-ı ye-di-m  
 apple-PL-GEN red -3.SG-ACC eat-PST-1.SG  
 ‘I ate the red (one) of the apples’

## 2.5 Conditions for Accusative Case Marking on Partitives in Turkish

The Turkish data clearly show that differential object marking only expresses a semantic-pragmatic feature (here: specificity) if case is not formally required. In Turkish, case is formally required by the agreement marker. On the other hand, the presence of the agreement marker itself is required by (i) the genitive introducing the larger set or (ii) – as we hypothesize – when the agreement marker functions as a “dummy pronoun” contributing pronominal features to a non-lexical head as the subset expression of a partitive construction. Table 1 summarizes our findings: A superset marked genitive always requires the agreement marker on the subset expression; thus, the structural case suffix (which is the accusative marker in the instances being studied here) is required, as well. Therefore, the case suffix is neutral with respect to specificity.



For ablative constructions, the case marking on lexical noun heads of partitives expresses specificity, but for numerals, quantifiers and most adjectives as the subset expression, the agreement marker expresses a “formal” specificity, i.e. it “promotes” the phrase, conferring to it the status of a referential phrase, without however expressing semantic specificity. For the classifier *tane* we find a mixed picture: without the accusative case suffix (and the “dummy” agreement marker”), it expresses the semantic feature [-specific], while with the agreement and case marker this feature is neutralized. We will see in the next section some interesting variation from this picture.

superset subset	ablative	genitive (requires overt Agr)
lexical noun	-Acc [-spec] vs. +Acc [+spec]	-- (blocked by possessive reading)
classifier <i>tane</i>	-Acc [-spec] vs +AgrAcc [ $\pm$ spec]	+AgrAcc [ $\pm$ spec]
numerals and quantifiers	+AgrAcc [ $\pm$ spec]	+AgrAcc [ $\pm$ spec]
adjectives	+AgrAcc [ $\pm$ spec] (for most adj.; a few behave like lexical nouns)	+AgrAcc [ $\pm$ spec]

**Table 1: Conditions for case marking in partitives (Turkish)**

### 3. Azerbaijani

For all practical purposes, Azerbaijani is very similar to Turkish with respect to most of the properties we have looked at. However, it shows an interesting difference with respect to partitive constructions with a classifier head. For a complete picture we first show the relevant data for lexical nouns.

#### 3.1 Partitives with Lexical Nominal Subset Expressions

Like in Turkish, lexical nouns referring to the subset of a larger set in a partitive construction can vary with respect to the accusative marking realized on the subset expression. In such instances, the accusative does express semantic specificity. As mentioned earlier, partitive constructions with genitives marking the expression of the larger set and with lexical nouns expressing the subset are blocked.

- (21) *Äli büro-ya uşaq-lar-dan iki qız al-acaq*  
 Ali office-DATchild-PL-ABL two girl hire-FUT  
 ‘Ali will hire for the office two girls of the children’ (any two girls)<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> The information in parentheses was volunteered by our informant, Dr. Vügar Sultanzade.

- (22) Äli büro -ya uşaq-lar-dan iki qız-İ al-acaq  
 Ali office-DAT child-PL-ABL two girl-ACC hire-FUT  
 ‘Ali will hire for the office two girls of the children’ (certain two girls)

(21) with its lexical head as well as its counterparts with the count classifier (examples (23b) and (27) below) offer additional illustration for non-specific partitives. Thus, just as in Turkish, Azerbaijani shows that partitives can be non-specific, contra Enç.

### 3.2 Classifiers as Partitive Heads – the Importance of the [+human] Feature for Case Marking in Azerbaijani

In addition to the preceding considerations, we can show that similarly to Turkish, the corresponding inanimate classifier *dənə* can raise to head-noun position (cf. (23b)) optionally; when it doesn’t, default agreement is inserted (cf. (23a)) and is obligatorily followed by overt accusative (note the contrast between (23a) and (23c)):

- (23) a. kitab-lar-**dan** iki dənə -**sin** -**i** al -dİ -m  
 book-PL-ABL two ‘item’-3.SG-ACC take -PST -1.SG  
 ‘I took two ‘units’ of the books’ (specific or non-specific, depending on context)
- b. kitab-lar-**dan** iki dənə al -dİ -m  
 book-PL-ABL two ‘item’ take -PST -1.SG  
 ‘I took two ‘units’ of the books’ (non-specific)
- c. \*kitab-lar-**dan** iki dənə -**si** al -dİ -m  
 book-PL-ABL two item -3.SG buy -PST -1.SG  
 Intended reading: ‘I bought two ‘units’ of the books’

Also, similarly to Turkish, the genitive partitive is possible only when the agreement marker is present (with the expected further suffixation by the accusative marker), as in (24). Furthermore, just as in Turkish, it is not possible to have the combinations of the classifier followed only by the accusative, and of the classifier followed only by agreement, as in (25) and (26), respectively:

- (24) kitab-lar-**İN** iki dənə-**sin** -**i** al -dİ -m  
 book-PL-GEN two item-3.SG-ACC buy-PST-1.SG  
 ‘I bought two (‘units’) of the books’
- (25) \*kitab-lar-dan iki dənə-**ni** al -dİ -m  
 book-PL-ABL two item-ACC buy-PST-1.SG  
 Intended reading: ‘I bought two ‘units’ of the books’
- (26) \*kitab-lar-dan iki dənə-**si** al -dİ -m  
 book-PL-ABL two item-3.SG buy-PST-1.SG  
 Same intended reading.

Azerbaijani, in addition to all its similarities to Turkish, has an interesting difference: it has a [+human] classifier: *nəfər* 'person'. When this item raises to head-N-position due to lack of a lexical nominal head, it can be followed by the accusative; its inanimate counterpart *dənə* cannot (cf. the earlier (25)):

- (27)    Äli   qadın   -lar-dan   iki   nəfər            çayır-dī  
 Ali   woman -PL-ABL   two   person           call-PST  
 'Ali called two (persons) of the women' (non-specific; compare to the similar, and similarly well-formed, (23b))
- (28)    Äli   qadın   -lar-dan   iki   nəfər -i        çayır-dī  
 Ali   woman -PL-ABL   two   person-ACC   call-PST  
 'Ali called two [specific or non-specific] (persons) of the women' (compare to the ungrammatical (25), where the accusative is precluded on the inanimate classifier head)

The version with the accusative is ambiguous between a specific and a non-specific reading (while the version without the accusative is non-specific, just as in Turkish). The existence of examples such as (27) further shows that in Azerbaijani, just as in Turkish, there clearly are instances of non-specific partitive subsets.

We now need to answer the following questions: 1. Why can (28) also be non-specific (in addition to its specific reading), despite the accusative on its partitive direct object? 2. Why is (28) well-formed (while (25), with its inanimate classifier subset expression, is ill-formed)?

**Hypothesis:** The feature [+human] is related to accusative marking in Azerbaijani (in contrast to Turkish). Accusative as an expression of the [+human] feature takes priority over expression of specificity, *at least with respect to classifiers that raise to N*. Similar observations have been made elsewhere in the literature, too: "... in differential object marking animacy as an inherent property of noun phrases takes priority over a contextual property like definiteness/specificity." (de Swart 2007: 135) Note that: 1. de Swart's generalization has to be weakened with respect to Azerbaijani and made optional; otherwise, (27), lacking accusative marking, would have been ill-formed; 2. de Swart's generalization can't extend over regular nouns (even in its weakened form); otherwise, accusative-marked regular nouns with the [+human] feature would always be ambiguous (at least potentially) between a [+specific] and a [-specific] reading, and they are not, according to our native informant; they are [+specific].

This hypothesis addresses both questions. The ill-formedness of (25) is also explained, along similar lines as its counterpart in Turkish: Even where the (inanimate) classifier raises to head-noun position, it is bleached semantically to such an extent that it cannot be [+specific] on its own and therefore cannot be followed by the accusative marker directly. The claim that in Azerbaijani, the feature [+human] is related to accusative marking (at least with respect to classifiers that have risen to N) is based on the following observations: *nəfər*, just like *dənə*, is a genuine classifier in a regular DP. (29) is fine, just as are (30a) and (30b) with *nəfər*:

- (29) iki dənə kitab  
two item book  
'two books'
- (30) a. iki nəfər telebe                      b. iki nəfər qadın  
two person student                      two person woman  
'two students'                              'two women'

Our informant as well as textbooks state that both *dənə* and *nəfər* are classifiers, with *dənə* for inanimates, and *nəfər* for humans. Our last examples thus further support this traditional classification.

Note that in this respect, *nəfər* is different from *kişi* in Turkish, which is a regular lexical noun and as such can be followed by the accusative when it functions as a partitive head, despite the fact that it is rather bleached semantically, and whose use as classifier is ill-formed:

- (31) a. \*iki kişi kadın  
two person woman  
Intended reading: 'two women'
- b. kadın-lar -dan iki kişi -yi gör -dü -m  
woman-PL -ABL two person -ACC see -PST -1.SG  
'I saw two (persons) of the women'

### 3.3 Adjectives and Numerals as Subset Expressions

The condition stated in (8) for Turkish, imposing an overtly filled nominal lexical head in partitives (as well as possessives) exists in Azerbaijani, too, and it plays a similar role: In the absence of a lexical nominal head, usually a dummy agreement element (likewise with the default values of third person singular) is inserted into the head position, and that element makes the presence of overt accusative obligatory. Furthermore, just as in Turkish in general, adjectives can't raise to N-head position. Only the form with *both* the dummy agreement and the accusative is well-formed.

- (32) a. \*Maşin-lar-dan ən yeni al-dı-m  
car-PL-ABL most new buy-PST-1.SG
- b. \*Maşin-lar-dan ən yeni-ni al-dı-m  
car-PL-ABL most new-ACC buy-PST-1.SG
- c. \*Maşin-lar-dan ən yeni-si al-dı-m  
car-PL-ABL most new-3.SG buy-PST-1.SG
- d. Maşin-lar-dan ən yeni-sin -i al-dı-m  
car-PL-ABL most new-3.SG-ACC buy-PST-1.SG  
'I bought the newest one of the cars'

The situation is similar with numerals, i.e. they can't raise to head-N-position, either; a dummy agreement element is needed to fill that position, due to the condition in (8), which applies in these instances, as well. Just as in Turkish, this agreement element is followed by an obligatory accusative marker. Given that this accusative marker's presence is motivated by formal reasons, i.e. by the pronominal features of agreement, the morphological accusative can't function as an expression of specificity, and the relevant examples are thus (potentially) ambiguous between a specific and non-specific reading:

- (33) (Baxmadan) kitab-lar-dan iki-**sin** -i al -di-m  
 without looking book-PL-ABL two-**3.SG-ACC** buy -PST-1.SG  
 '(Without looking), I bought two of the books' (specific or non-specific, with the primary reading of non-specific, due to the manner adverbial *baxmadan* 'without looking')

### 3.4 More on Overt Accusative not Expressing Specificity, just as in Turkish

Thus, where the presence of the accusative marker is enforced due to formal reasons such as the presence of overt agreement, the accusative does not express specificity. This generalization, as well as generalizations similar to the ones just made concerning adjectives and numerals, are valid for the non-specific pronoun *biri* 'somebody, someone' (also just as in Turkish—cf. von Heusinger & Kornfilt 2005). This pronoun is morphologically complex, as in (34). Presumably, the reason for the complexity is that the numeral by itself cannot be an N and therefore needs a dummy agreement element, as we just saw for numerals in general. This agreement element makes the accusative obligatory, just as it does elsewhere, e.g. (35):

- (34) bir-i(n)  
 one-3.SG
- (35) Bu xüsusiyyət -lər -ə malik ol-an bir-**in** -i axtar -ir -am  
 this characteristic-PL-DAT owner be-RELPART one-**3.SG-ACC** search-AOR-1.SG  
 'I am looking for someone who has these properties'

This example could be part of a job ad. The speaker or writer is looking for *anybody* who has a particular set of characteristics; the primary reading is non-specific, despite the accusative. The accusative shows up not due to semantic specificity, but due to the agreement marker. The fact that the direct object in (35) with its accusative marker is not specific in its primary reading is made clear by its discourse-functional synonymy with (36), whose direct object bears no accusative, and is clearly interpreted as non-specific. Just as (35), this can be a job ad. Only the properties of any individual to fill the job are important, and no particular person is referred to. With a lexical noun (as in (36)) instead of the pronominal with the dummy agreement (as in (35)), no accusative shows up. (37) differs only in having overt accusative on the direct object. Here, the speaker is looking for a *specific* person/librarian.

- (36) Bu xüsusiyyət -lər-ə malik ol-an bir insan / bir kitabxanaçı axtar-ir-am  
 This characteristic-PL-DAT owner be-RelPart a person/a librarian search-AOR-1.SG  
 ‘I am looking for a person/a librarian who has these characteristics’
- (37) Bu xüsusiyyətlərə malik olan bir insan-ı / bir kitabxanaçı-nı axtarıram  
 This ... a person-ACC/ a librarian-ACC

The pair (38) and (39) makes a similar point. This pair illustrates the observation that agreement (here, a “dummy”) requires presence of accusative; (38) is therefore ill-formed. Also, because of this, the well-formed (39) is ambiguous between a specific and a non-specific reading

- (38) \*Äli qadın-lar-dan iki-si çağır-dı  
 Ali woman-PL-ABL two-3.SG call-PST  
 Intended reading: ‘Ali called two of the women’
- (39) Äli qadın-lar-dan iki-sin -i çağır-dı  
 Ali woman-PL-ABL two-3.SG-ACC call-PST  
 ‘Ali called two of the women’

#### 4. More Altaic Variation

In the previous section, we illustrated an interesting difference between Turkish and Azerbaijani with respect to the morpho-syntactic relevance of the feature [human] in Azerbaijani in the context of human classifiers which, when in nominal head position, make overt accusative possible. Thus, we concluded that the feature [human] overrides the feature [specific]; when the overt accusative shows up due to the feature [human], specificity is not expressed at all. In contrast, perhaps due to the absence of a dedicated human classifier in Turkish, we don’t find any interaction of the feature [human] with the feature [specific] in corresponding examples—in fact, we have not found any syntactic phenomena determined by the feature [human] in Turkish partitives.

In the following subsections, we shall discuss additional variation concerning another Turkic language<sup>4</sup>: Kirghiz is interesting in exhibiting a special morpheme for ‘group, set’, which requires the presence of overt accusative when placed in head-noun position, a placement motivated by the condition in (8). The agreement marker, whose presence is thus not required by that condition, is now free to express specificity.

<sup>4</sup> Due to space limitations, we have had to cut out discussion of Uzbek, a Turkic language, and of Khalkha Mongolian, another Altaic language. In both languages, partitive expressions clearly do allow non-specific subset expressions. For a detailed description of Uzbek, see Bodrogligeti (2003), and for DOM effects in Khalkha Mongolian, see Guntsetseg (2008).

## 4.1 Kirghiz

Properties and questions similar to those discussed with respect to Turkish and Azerbaijani are presented by Kirghiz, as well; e.g. in partitives, the superset in the genitive always requires agreement, but the superset in the ablative does not, as in (41) and (40), respectively. The genitive partitive in (41a) is ill-formed, because there is no agreement element on the subset expression (just as in Turkish and Azerbaijani). The accusative marker is not enough to save the utterance. The ablative partitive is well-formed without the agreement element. The informant, Kenjegül Kalieva, offers the following expression for a genitive partitive, to express the same meaning, as in (42):

- (40) Ali ofis-ke bal-dar-**dan** eki kiši-ni algana žatat  
 Ali office-DAT child-PL-ABL two person-ACC take-will  
 ‘Ali will hire two of the children for the office’
- (41) a. \*Ali ofis-ke bal-dar-**din** eki kiši -ni algana žatat  
 Ali office-DAT child-PL-GEN two person-ACC take-will  
 Intended reading: ‘Ali will hire two of the children for the office’
- b. \*Ali ofis-ke bal-dar-**din** eki kiši -si -ni algana žatat  
 Ali office-DAT child-PL-GEN two person-3.SG -ACC take-will  
 Intended reading: ‘Ali will hire two of the children for the office’
- (42) Ali ofis-ke bal-dar-din ekö-ö -sü-n(ü) algana žatat.  
 Ali office-DAT child-PL-GEN two-set-3.SG-ACC take-will

It appears that (41) can be saved only by using a numeral and a dummy agreement as the subset expression of the partitive. The reason for the ill-formedness of (41b), with its lexical nominal head, the dummy agreement, and the accusative, must be due to the blocking effects of possessive phrases (with their genitive possessors), plus to the properties of *kiši*: Although this item has a certain resemblance with a classifier, it is a lexical noun, albeit semantically rather bleached (but still [+human]). No agreement marker can be inserted into the N-head position after *kiši*, because that position is occupied by *kiši* itself. If, instead, the agreement is inserted into a higher functional head position, the construction turns into a possessive phrase, whose possessive interpretation blocks any partitive interpretation. (Similar facts hold with respect to the cognate *kişi* in Turkish genitive partitives, as well).

The following pair illustrated in (43) and (44) is particularly interesting. Our Kirghiz informant, Kenjegül Kalieva, stresses that here, the speaker took/bought *any* two books, i.e. that the subset is not specific. For a specific reading, the utterance must be changed as follows:

- (43) karabastan kitep-ter-den ekö-ö -nü al -dī-m  
 without looking book-PL-ABL two-set-ACC buy-PST-1.SG  
 ‘I bought (a set of) two books out of the (set of) books, without looking’

- (44) karabastan kitep-ter-den ekö-ö -sü-nü al -di-m  
 without looking book-PL-ABL two-set-3.SG-ACC buy-PST-1.SG  
 'I bought (a set of) two [specific] books out of the (set of) books, without looking'

Our native informant stresses that in this example, the speaker took a set of two specific books.

**Observation:** The only overt difference between (43) and (44) is the agreement in (44), lacking in (43).

We see that in (43), the subset expression is non-specific, despite the accusative. Furthermore, we observe that a subset expression can be non-specific, even though it is a partitive. Finally, we see that the accusative does not express specificity here (although it does so in general, with regular lexical nouns). What could the reason be? Note that here, the numeral has not risen to N. Thus, the non-specific reading must be due to a different reason.

**Hypothesis:** The “set” suffix *-ö* (the morpheme expressing “set”) is in head-N-position, due to its nominal features; this placement is motivated by the condition in (8). This morpheme, when placed in the head position, requires overt accusative, just as agreement does in other Turkic languages. The meaning of this morpheme as ‘set’ gives it formally specific features, which require the accusative. (We assume that the insertion of an element with nominal features into an empty nominal head position takes place as early in the derivation as possible; given that in Kirghiz, the set morpheme precedes the agreement morpheme, it is the former that gets inserted into the head position; the agreement morpheme is placed into a higher functional projection.) Again, this is an instance where the presence of the accusative suffix is enforced by formal requirements rather than semantic ones, and thus we have lack of specificity. Semantic specificity is enforced here by the agreement morpheme; since its presence is *not* formally required (because another morpheme, i.e. the set morpheme, fulfills the function of occupying the head-N position), agreement can have a semantic function here, i.e. its pronominal features are not just formally, but also semantically specific.

	-spec	±spec	+spec
Turkish ( <i>iki</i> )	--	+AgrAcc	--
Kirghiz ( <i>ekö</i> )	+SetAcc	--	+SetAgrAcc

**Table 2: partitive construction with ablative for larger set and numeral and quantifiers for subset**

## 4.2 Summary of the Variation

The comparison between this small set of Altaic languages shows that (i) they all have ablative and genitive partitive constructions, (ii) in all of these languages, the genitive for the larger set requires an agreement marker in the subset expression, (iii) these languages show a range of different nominal subset expressions in ablative constructions (the parameters ranging from whether lexical noun heads are possible, and what categories can occupy the head position when a lexical noun is absent in this function); (iv) in all languages the agreement marker enforces



morphological structural case (in our examples, the accusative). This is true even in Mongolian, where the case suffix precedes the agreement suffix. The agreement marker is used either in genitive partitive constructions, or for introducing pronominal features to a partitive construction that lacks a nominal head

The languages we have studied here differ with respect to classifiers—in particular, with respect to whether they have [+human] classifiers or not. In addition, one language (Kirghiz) substitutes the agreement marker in its function as a filler of the partitive's nominal head by a different marker: a morpheme expressing a set. Here, the agreement marker is used to express specificity, given that its presence is not required for formal reasons. In all of these languages, subset expressions of partitives *can* be non-specific.

## 5. Semantic Representation

The findings clearly show that partitivity has to be distinguished from specificity (at least in the sense of epistemic specificity) and that the accusative case marker expresses specificity, rather than partitivity as claimed by Enç. In this section we like to hint at some consequences for a semantic treatment of different referential categories, including definiteness, partitivity and specificity. We first give a informal overview of different referential categories, sketch a formal reconstruction in terms of Heim's (1982) file change semantics, and we then try find out whether certain semantic operations are morpho-syntactically represented and discuss the semantic contribution of the accusative case marker in Turkic languages.

### 5.1 Referential Categories

For our discussion we only have to distinguish between definiteness, partitivity and specificity. We assume here with Heim (1982), Kamp (1981) and others that definiteness can be explained with familiarity, i.e. an expression is definite if the associated discourse referent is already established (or presupposed as established) in the discourse. This view assumes that a definite expression is co-referent to another already used expression. The alternative view of definiteness is the uniqueness theory according to which an expression is definite if it uniquely refers to its referent in the singular case and if it refers to all referents that fall under that description in the plural case (*the first man on the moon, the students in my class*). The uniqueness theory goes back to Russell (1905) and is the standard view of definiteness in philosophy and many linguistic approaches. The controversy between the two theories is as old as the formal reconstruction of definiteness. Most occurrences of definite noun phrases can be explained by both theories, but there are some subsets of definite nouns phrases that can only be explained by one and not the other theory (see Heim (to appear) for a comprehensive overview). Görgülü (2008) has given some examples that hint towards a uniqueness theory or a theory in terms of identifiability. We can leave this discussion open since we are not dealing with definite noun phrases in this paper.

Partitivity describes constructions in which a noun phrase refers to discourse referents that constitute a (true) subset of an already introduced set. This differs from definiteness since the referred set is smaller than the established set. If they were identical it would be a case of definiteness (... *students... one of them* vs. ... *students ... the students*). This means that partitive

noun phrases are generally an instance of indefinite noun phrases that behave, however, similar to definite expressions, as they have wide scope and they are presuppositional.

Specificity is a concept that describes indefinite noun phrases that are more like definite noun phrases; they are referential and express wide scope. The literature distinguishes between different types of specific indefinites (see Farkas 2002, von Heusinger 2002): wide scope specific indefinites, epistemic specific indefinites, relative specific indefinites and partitives. In von Heusinger & Kornfilt (2005) we have argued that the first three types can be summarized under a view that a specific indefinite is “anchored to” another referential term (see below), while partitivity is an independent type of referential category (contra Enç and others). A simple example shows that partitivity is independent from definiteness and specificity: Assume that one introduces a set (*a school class goes to a museum*), one can then refer to members of this set by a definite expression (*the teacher, the girls*), or else one can refer by using indefinite expressions (*two boys, some boys, a boy*). Again we can also refer to some specific element of the set (*a girl brought her pet rat as she always does*). We therefore assume that both definiteness and specificity are basic semantic operations while partitivity is a composite semantic operation consisting of a subset operation (referring to a given set) and a selecting operation (definite or indefinite, specific or non-specific). We therefore suggest three main semantic operations for these categories.

## 5.2 Semantic Operations

We formalize the informal conception of the three referential categories discussed in the last subsection in a discourse pragmatic semantics based on Heim’s (1982) familiarity approach to discourse structure. Heim defines definiteness in terms of familiarity, or more formally, in terms of identity of the indices of filecards (denotation) for NPs, as defined in (45), and illustrated by (46)-(47):

- (45) Heim’s Familiarity Condition  
 An NP<sub>*i*</sub> in a sentence  $\phi$  with respect to a file  $F$  and the Domain of filenames  $\text{Dom}(F)$  is
- (i) [+definite] if  $i \in \text{Dom}(F)$ , and it is
  - (ii) [-definite] if  $i \notin \text{Dom}(F)$

Heim (1982) reconstructs definiteness with respect to the already established discourse. Every NP comes with an index  $i$ , which represents the discourse referent (or Heim’s “file card”) associated with that NP. If the discourse referent  $i$  is already introduced in the discourse—or more formally if the index  $i$  is an element of the set of all established discourse referents  $\text{Dom}(F)$ , then the NP must be definite; if, however, the discourse referent  $i$  is not among the already established discourse referents, i.e. if  $i \notin \text{Dom}(F)$ , then the NP must be indefinite. Definiteness signals the familiarity of the discourse referent associated with the NP.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> As said before, cases of “novel definites”, i.e. definite noun phrases that do not refer to an already introduced item can be accounted for by assuming accommodation, i.e. the assumption that the hearers can add referents to their discourse domain even though they are not explicitly uttered.

- (46) a. A man<sub>1</sub> meets a woman<sub>2</sub>.      Dom(F) = {1,2}  
       b. The man<sub>1</sub> talks to her<sub>2</sub>.        1, 2 ∈ Dom(F)
- (47) a. A man<sub>1</sub> meets a woman<sub>2</sub>.      Dom(F) = {1,2}  
       b. A man<sub>3</sub> talks to a woman<sub>4</sub>.    3,4 ∉ Dom(F)

Enç modifies the familiarity condition of definite vs. indefinite NP to the partitivity condition for the contrast between partitive vs. non-partitive indefinite NPs (for her identical with specific vs. non-specific indefinite noun phrases). Like definite NPs, specific NPs signal that the associated discourse referent is linked to the already established discourse. Other than with definites, this link is not direct (expressing a coreferential relation) but the *part of* relation or the partitive relation. Here she has to distinguish between the plural case (i) and the singular (ii). In the plural case (*several children ... two of the girls*) the formal reconstruction (i) says that the partitivity is licensed by the fact that the index *i* (standing for a group of entities, such as *two of the girls*) is part of (— subset relation  $\subseteq$  —) an index *j* that stands for an already established group of entities (*several children*). In the singular case (ii), the partitivity of the NP is licensed by the fact that the group consisting of that one discourse referent (therefore a set with just one index: {*i*}) is part of the already established group *j*.

- (48) Partitivity Condition (adapted version Enç's (1991, 7 ex. (22)))  
 An NP<sub>*i*</sub> in a sentence  $\phi$  with respect to a file F and the Domain of filenames Dom(F) is  
 (i) for NP<sub>*i*</sub> plural: [+specific] if there is a *j* such that  $i \subseteq j$  and  $j \in \text{Dom}(F)$  or  
 (ii) for NP<sub>*i*</sub> singular: [+specific] if there is a *j* such that  $\{i\} \subseteq j$  and  $j \in \text{Dom}(F)$

Sentence (49a) introduces a new index (or discourse item), a set of several children. The (implicit) partitive *two girl(s)* in (56b) is related to this set by the subset relation. This means that the index or discourse item *1*, i.e. a set of two girls, is a subset of index *3* standing for the set of several girls already established. Since this set of two girls is new it is indefinite, but because of its relation to an already established set it is partitive (and specific – according to Enç). It is also obvious that the partitive has wider scope with respect to other operators in the sentence, since it is related to an established set.

- (49) a. Several children<sub>1</sub> entered my room<sub>2</sub>.  
       Dom(F) = {1,2} (with 1 denoting a set)  
       b. I knew two girls<sub>3</sub>.     $3 \subseteq 1$  and  $1 \in \text{Dom}(F)$

As argued above, we assume that specificity is different from partitivity. It expresses a functional dependency of the indefinite expression from another referential expression (and not the subset relation). The formal reconstruction of this view of specificity states that a specific NP<sub>*i*</sub> signals that the associated index *i* is linked by a salient function (or relation) to another index *j* from the very sentence  $\phi$ . One can instantiate this salient function in different ways: For epistemic specific indefinite the function is to be translated into “*j* has cognitive contact with *i*” or “*j* knows / can identify *i*”.

## (50) Specificity Condition

An NP<sub>i</sub> in a sentence  $\phi$  with respect to a file F and the Domain of filenames  $\text{Dom}(\phi)$  is [+ specific] if there is a contextual salient function  $f$  such that  $i = f(j)$  and  $j \in \text{Dom}(\phi)$

Sentence (51) (=1)) shows that partitivity has to be interpreted independently of specificity. Partitivity is expressed by the construction, while specificity is encoded in the accusative case. So the difference between the two sentences is that in (51a) the three girls are not known by some agent, while in (51b) there is a group of three girls that is known by some agent or discourse referent.

- (51) a. Öğrenci-ler-den üç kız gör-dü-m  
 student-PL-ABL three girl see-PST-1.SG  
 ‘I saw three girls of the (group of) students’  
 b. Öğrenci-ler-den üç kız-ı gör-dü-m  
 student-PL-ABL three girl-ACC see-PST-1.SG  
 ‘I saw three (specific) girls of the (group of) students’

- (52) a.  $d$  students<sub>1</sub> three girls<sub>j</sub>  $i \subseteq j$   
 b.  $d$  students<sub>1</sub> three girls<sub>j</sub>  $i \subseteq j$  and  $f(i)=d$  ( $d$  knows  $i$ )  
 and  $d$  is some discourse referent or some referent at the utterance situation  
 (speaker / hearer)

### 5.3 Formal Means to Express Semantic Operations

The comparative analysis in the first part of the paper has shown that the languages in our small sample behave quite similar with respect to the discussed referential categories. There is no simple word or morpheme expressing definiteness (but see Guntsetseg 2008 for Mongolian). Specificity in most of the languages under scrutiny can be expressed by the accusative case suffix if its presence is not due to some formal licensing reasons, such as the presence of pronominal features housed in an agreement marker. In the latter case the case suffix is neutral with respect to the referential category of specificity. Kirghiz, however, allows the agreement marker to take up the function of distinguishing between specific and non-specific noun phrases, since the function of promoting a phrase to a referential one (which is the function in the other languages) is taken up by a different suffix, which normally marks a “set” reading. There is no special suffix or “partitive article” for a partitive noun phrase. Partitivity is rather expressed by a construction consisting of an ablative (or a genitive) DP for the larger set and a noun phrase for the subset. These findings hold for all languages in our sample.

## 6. Summary

The main goal of this paper has been to show that partitivity is not an instance of specificity, but is an independent operation. Certain semantic observations have been used to test this claim, but their support has not always been as strong as needed. We have therefore offered here a comparative study of some Altaic languages (three Turkic languages, while also mentioning briefly a fourth Turkic language and Standard Mongolian), which all exhibit Differential Object Marking. Facts based on DOM were used previously in the literature to support the claim that partitivity is an instance of specificity, or even a stronger claim, namely that specificity equals partitivity. Our own comparative Altaic data, largely based on our own fieldwork, showed that the case suffix for accusative is sensitive to specificity, however only as long as it is not triggered by formal reasons. We have seen clear instances of partitive constructions with non-specific subset expressions. These were of two types: 1. Direct object partitives without accusative marking, interpreted as non-specific; 2. Direct object partitives without lexical head nouns and with agreement (or other) markers in need of overt accusative; those *could* be, as we saw, interpreted as non-specific—a reading made stronger via the addition of certain adverbials. Overall, the data show that the case suffix expresses specificity, and not partitivity. We further saw that the agreement marker, in addition to indicating phi-feature agreement between a head and its specifier, can also function as a nominal head of a nominal phrase, when a lexical noun is absent to fill the head position. We characterized the latter instance semantically as promoting non-nominal phrases to the status of referential ones.

Recapitulating our typological findings, we have shown that a number of Altaic languages have both ablative and genitive partitive constructions, and that in all of these languages, the genitive for the larger set requires an agreement marker in the subset expression. We have further shown that these languages exhibit a range of possibilities for nominal subset expressions, such as lexical nouns (absent in genitive partitives), classifiers, adjectives, numerals and other quantifiers. We saw that under absence of lexical nouns as partitive heads, an agreement marker with default phi-feature values shows up, providing the needed nominal category features.

The languages we have studied here differ with respect to classifiers—in particular, with respect to whether they have [+human] classifiers or not. In addition, one language (Kirghiz) substitutes the agreement marker in its function as a filler of the partitive's nominal head by a different marker: a morpheme expressing a set. Here, the agreement marker is used to express specificity, given that its presence is not required for formal reasons.

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