

Introduction

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This volume comprises a selection of articles that are based on papers presented at the workshop “Funny Indefinites – Different Kinds of Specificity Across Languages”, which took place at The Zentrum für Allgemeine Sprachwissenschaft (ZAS) in Berlin in July 2007. The aim of the workshop was twofold: on the one hand, we wanted to broaden the empirical coverage of the discussion of specificity by taking languages into account in which specificity markers exist whose properties have either not been described at all or not in any detail. In particular, we paid close attention to subtle differences between specificity markers concerning their scopal properties, identification requirements etc. On the other hand, we hoped that by learning more about the variety as well as about common properties among specificity markers, a clearer understanding of what the notion of specificity actually comes down to would emerge. As the reader can verify for herself, we are still a good deal away from an understanding of specificity that encompasses and systematically relates all the dimensions along which specificity markers in and across languages vary. Nevertheless, we think that the papers collected in this volume contain many important observations and theoretical ideas that will bring us closer to such a goal.

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The term *specificity* was originally introduced in the 1960s in order to capture the fact that certain types of indefinites in contrast to others are able to introduce discourse referents which can be taken up by pronouns in opaque contexts (Baker, 1966; Karttunen, 1968, 1969/1976):

- (1) a. Mary wants to own a horse. #? It has shiny black fur and is very beautiful.
- b. Mary wants to own a certain horse. It has shiny black fur and is very beautiful.

Since then the term has been generalized to encompass a variety of properties of indefinites (see von Heusinger, to appear for an overview): (i) the tendency or requirement to take scope over other operators contained in the same sentence, even in cases that constitute scope islands for other quantificational DPs; (ii) referentiality (iii) identifiability by the speaker or some other salient individual, (iv) partitivity, i.e. a tendency or requirement for the syntactic complement of the respective article/specificity marker to denote a set of entities that has already been introduced into the discourse.

This diversity of phenomena corresponds to a diversity of formal tools that have been employed in the literature to account for them. Let us just mention some analyses that have been especially influential and/or are in some form taken up by the papers in this volume. Fodor and Sag (1982) assume that the indefinite article is ambiguous between a quantificational and a referential interpretation, where the latter option is responsible for the “illusion” of (potentially island-violating) widest scope. It was soon observed, however, that there are counterexamples to Fodor and Sag’s claim, which is incompatible with the existence of island-violating intermediate scope readings, i.e. readings where an operator takes scope out of a domain constituting a scope island, but still below some other operator (e.g. Farkas, 1981). One of the most influential analyses that have been proposed in order to account for such island-violating intermediate readings in addition to island-violating widest-scope readings is the *choice function* approach originally proposed by Reinhart (1997) and Winter (1997). This approach also assumes that (at least some) indefinite determiners are ambiguous, albeit in a different way: in addition to their ordinary meaning as quantificational determiners with existential force, they may introduce variables ranging over choice functions, i.e. functions that take a set of individuals as their argument and return one of the individuals contained in that set. Crucially, the choice-function variables are assumed to be bound by covert existential quantifiers that can be inserted not only at the top level, but also at various intermediate sites,

resulting in readings that correspond to the observed widest- or intermediate-scope readings. On mainly empirical grounds, Kratzer (1998) argued for the following variant of this approach: choice-function variables are not bound existentially, but need to be assigned a value on the basis of contextual information. Concerning intermediate exceptional wide scope-readings, she assumes those to come about in the following way: choice functions are allowed to take not only the set denoted by the respective NP as their argument, but also an additional individual variable, where this variable may be bound by a c-commanding quantifier. In other words, she assumes (certain) indefinite determiners to not only introduce choice-function variables, but also Skolem-function variables. As a consequence, the individuals selected from the respective set may vary with the values assigned to the variables bound by the c-commanding quantifier.

A third line of analysis that also aims at capturing the peculiar scope-taking properties of indefinite DPs is the one proposed by Schwarzschild (2002). In contrast to the analyses just mentioned, Schwarzschild does not make any assumptions that set indefinites apart from other quantificational DPs, but rather makes use of a mechanism that is widely assumed to be available to all quantificational determiners: the possibility for the sets of individuals denoted by their syntactic complements to be covertly restricted to a contextually salient subset (see von Stechow, 1994 and Stanley and Szabo, 2000 for details and discussion). Restricting the domain quantified over by an indefinite determiner to a singleton results in a reading that is equivalent to (potentially island-violating) widest scope. In addition to that, allowing a variable bound by a c-commanding quantifier to be part of a covert domain restriction (as argued for on independent grounds by Stanley and Szabo, 2000) that denotes a singleton relative to each value of the respective variable results in readings that are equivalent to (potentially island-violating) intermediate scope readings.

Finally, there is a line of analysis that assumes wide scope readings of indefinites to be due the potential of certain indefinites to function as sentence topics. Cresti (1995) takes (some kind of) familiarity to be a defining criterion of topicality and thus has to assume that topical indefinites are associated with presuppositions that always need to be accommodated (since indefinites are not allowed to pick up given discourse referents). Endriss (2009), in contrast, does not assume topicality to be inherently tied to familiarity. Rather, she follows Reinhart (1981) in defining topicality in terms of aboutness: the topic functions as the logical subject of the predicate provided by the rest of the sentence, where in the case of topical indefinites the original quantifier denotation (i.e. as a set of sets of individuals) is too complex and thus has to be shifted to a set

of individuals – namely to a set that is (a) contained in the original denotation and (b) minimal in the sense of containing no superfluous elements. Since the required typeshift is associated with existential quantification over such minimal witness sets, and since the rest of the respective sentence is interpreted as a predicate whose elements are distributed over the elements of the respective minimal witness set, the resulting reading is, again, truth conditionally equivalent to a reading where the indefinite has widest scope. Note that this proposal differs from the ones mentioned above in terms of empirical predictions concerning the availability of intermediate island-violating scope: while both the choice-function approach and Schwarzschild's (2002) account predict such readings to be always available in principle, Endriss (2009) predicts them to be available only in cases where embedded topic-comment structures are licensed (see Endriss, 2009 and Ebert, Endriss, and Hinterwimmer, 2008 for discussion and empirical support for this prediction).

What all the approaches discussed so far, which concentrate on the scopal properties of indefinites, have in common, is that they do not pay particular attention to the differences among these exceptional wide scope indefinites. While it is often mentioned that the addition of markers such as *certain* in English or *gewiss* and *bestimmt* in German enhances the availability of exceptional wide scope, or that in English indefinite DPs headed by *some* are easier to interpret this way than ones headed by plain *a* (i.e. *a* without *certain*), these differences are not systematically investigated, nor is there an attempt to relate them to the meaning contributions of the respective markers (but see Schwarz, 2001 for a discussion of contexts where *a certain*- and *some*-indefinites behave differently).

In contrast to this, there are some papers that discuss the particular properties of the specificity marker *certain*, which is found in both English and French, in the context of an attempt to classify various indefinites according to both the semantic and the pragmatic constraints they impose on their proper use. These papers focus their attention not on scope, but rather on a different dimension of specificity – namely the issue of identifiability. While the standard assumption concerning the meaning contribution of *certain* was that it forces the indefinite containing it to be interpreted with widest scope (see e.g. Hornstein, 1984), Hintikka (1986) shows that it is well compatible with scope beneath other quantificational DPs, but not with scope beneath intensional operators. Taking this observation as their starting point, Abusch and Rooth (1997), Farkas (2002 a, b) and Jayez and Tovena (2002, 2006) all claim that the crucial property of *certain* is that it requires either the speaker or some other salient agent (the subject of a matrix sentence containing a verb like *know*, *believe*, *say*

etc., for example) to be able to identify the individual introduced by the indefinite determiner in some non-trivial way. For Abusch and Rooth (1997) this means being able to answer an identity question (i.e. a question such as *which X is it?*) regarding the respective individual. For Farkas (2002a,b), who assumes a DRT-framework according to which indefinites are no quantifiers, but rather serve to introduce discourse referents, it means the following: the discourse referent introduced by an *a certain*-indefinite is not identified in the context to which the sentence containing the indefinite is added, but can in principle be identified in the future course of the conversation, where identification means for her that all available assignment functions agree on the value they assign to the respective variable. Finally, Jayez and Tovena (2006) argue for a complex condition that can roughly be described as follows (simplifying considerably): the speaker believes there to be a property *P* that is independent of (i.e. it is neither entailed by nor does it entail) the properties that are ascribed to the respective individual *x* by the overt material in the sentence containing the indefinite introducing *x* such that some agent believes *x* to be the unique bearer of *P*. This roughly amounts to the claim that the individuals introduced by *a certain*-indefinites have to be identified via some additional property by some agent (which may, but need not be the speaker).

In a similar vein, Ionin (2006) argues for an analysis of indefinite *this* (i.e. *this* functioning not as a demonstrative, but as an indefinite determiner) according to which it imposes a special constraint on the individuals it introduces into the context where the respective sentence is uttered: the speaker needs to have in mind a *noteworthy* property that applies to the respective individual.

While the papers collected in this volume differ with respect to the property they focus their attention on (interaction with other operators, identifiability, noteworthiness) as well as with respect to the theoretical framework within which the analysis is couched, what they all have in common is the underlying conviction that it is only by paying close attention to the semantic and pragmatic contributions of individual indefinite articles and/or specificity markers and by comparing the constraints they are subject to that any further progress is to be made in our understanding of specificity. The vast majority of the papers (five out of seven) compare the behaviour of two different articles/specificity markers in a number of environments and with respect to one or several of the dimensions of specificity discussed above: Martin compares the two French markers *certain* and *précis*, mostly with respect to the notion of identifiability. Ebert, Endriss and Hinterwimmer compare the two German markers *bestimmt* and *gewiss*, both with respect to identifiability and with

respect to their scope-taking behaviour. Ionin compares the Russian reduced indefinite article *odin* to English indefinite *this*, arguing that while both head referential indefinites in the sense of Fodor and Sag (1982), they differ with respect to the question of which additional felicity condition they impose - identifiability in the case of *odin*, and noteworthiness in the case of *this*. Finally, both the papers of Alonso-Ovalle and Menéndez-Benito and the one of Yanovich compare two indefinite articles/specificity markers within one language (*un* and *algún* in Spanish and *some* and *a certain* in English) with respect to the conditions under which they allow island-violating (intermediate) scope. Alonso-Ovalle and Menéndez-Benito present the results from several experiments on intermediate scope readings and hereby contribute to the recent development of experimental studies on exceptional wide scope readings of indefinites and the nature of intermediate scope readings (see e.g. Martí 2007 or Ionin 2010a,b).

The paper by von Heusinger and Klein also compares two indefinite articles within one language - *bir* and *bitta* in Uzbek. In light of the fact, however, that there is no discussion of indefiniteness in Uzbek in the theoretical literature so far as well as in light of the limited availability of data that would allow more fine grained and subtle distinctions to be drawn, the paper is mainly concerned with a global comparison of the environments in which indefinites headed by the respective determiners are allowed. Finally, the paper by Jayez and Tovena contrasts with the other papers in this volume insofar as it is not concerned with specificity, but rather with anti-specificity: the authors argue for a unified analysis of the contribution of the determiner *quelque* in French in terms of equivalence in the sense that all the members of the set denoted by the NP-complement of *quelque* are conceived of as being equal with respect to some property/along some dimension.

In her paper *Specificity markers and nominal exclamatives in French*, Fabienne Martin argues that the marker *précis* turns an indefinite into a *selective* indefinite in the following sense: firstly, it invites the listener to compare the individual introduced by the respective indefinite to the other elements in the (contextually relevant) set of individuals satisfying the respective NP-predicate, implicating that while they could in principle also satisfy the VP-predicate, they do in fact not satisfy it. Secondly, it implicates that the individual introduced by the indefinite satisfies the VP-predicate in virtue of an additional property which the other members of the set denoted by the NP do not possess. Concerning the specificity marker *certain*, in contrast, Martin adopts the analysis of Jayez and Tovena (2006) sketched above, according to which it indicates the speaker's belief that there is an agent that can identify the individual introduced by the indefinite via an additional (i.e. not overtly given)

property. Since she assumes the two specificity markers to make quite different contributions (selectivity vs. double identification), Martin can account for the fact that both markers are allowed to co-occur (non-redundantly) in French. In the second part of the paper, Martin proposes an explanation of the fact that both indefinites containing *certain* and ones containing *précis* are disallowed in nominal exclamatives in French. Concerning *certain*, she assumes the problem to be the incompatibility with predicatively used indefinite NPs. Concerning *précis*, in contrast, her account rests on the assumption that by using an indefinite in a nominal exclamative, the speaker indicates her surprise regarding the presence of an entity that satisfies the respective NP-predicate. She assumes this to be incompatible with the complex cognitive operations (of choosing from and comparing with alternatives) associated with *précis*.

In their paper *The Interpretation of the German specificity markers “bestimmt” and “gewiss”*, Christian Ebert, Cornelia Ebert and Stefan Hinterwimmer compare the behaviour of *bestimmt*- and *gewiss*-indefinites along the following dimensions: interaction with other operators and identifiability. They show that *bestimmt*-indefinites may in principle take narrow scope with respect to both other quantificational DPs and negation, while concerning modal operators they are required to scope over at least the lowest one in cases where several such operators are present. In addition, the individual introduced by the respective indefinite may be identified either by the speaker or by some other salient individual. *Gewiss*-indefinites, in contrast, always have to take widest scope, and usually require identification by the speaker. The authors argue for an explanation of these facts along the following lines: both markers make the same meaning contribution – they require there to be a salient individual that knows the answer to a question concerning the identity of the individual introduced by the indefinite (cf. the analysis of Abusch and Rooth, 1997 mentioned above) with respect to some salient *conceptual cover* (where *conceptual covers* are sets of individual concepts that exhaustively and exclusively cover a given domain of individuals, i.e. different methods of identification associated with a fixed set of individuals; see Aloni, 2001, 2008). Crucially, however, those contributions are made at different levels: the level of at-issue content in the case of *bestimmt*, and the level of conventional implicatures (in the sense of Potts, 2005) in the case of *gewiss*. Since the level of conventional implicatures, where, for example, appositive relative clauses and sentence adverbs are assumed to be interpreted, is (a) independent of the at-issue level and (b) unambiguously tied to the speaker, both the fact that *gewiss*-indefinites do not interact with other operators and thus have to take widest scope, and the fact that the individuals they introduce need to be identified

by the speaker, are accounted for.

In her paper *Pragmatic variation among specificity markers*, Tania Ionin compares the following two indefinite determiners: English *this* (in its non-demonstrative, indefinite use; see above) and reduced Russian *odin*. She argues that they are both referential in the sense of Fodor and Sag (1982), since they force the indefinite DPs they head to take scope over all operators that are contained in the same sentence, i.e. she assumes a uniform semantics for specificity markers that basically follows the one of Fodor and Sag (1982) sketched above and accordingly assumes DPs containing such markers to denote objects of type *e*. She shows, however, that in spite of this semantic uniformity, the two markers are subject to different felicity conditions, which she assumes to apply at the pragmatic level: while the objects denoted by *this*-indefinites need to have a property that is noteworthy, ones denoted by *odin*-indefinites need to be identifiable in the sense of Abusch and Rooth (1997), i.e. the speaker or the subject of a verb like *say* needs to be able to answer a question such as ‘*Which X is it*’, with *X* being the individual denoted by the respective DP. The paper also discusses the question of whether there is cross-linguistic empirical support for the proposed distinction among specificity markers, concluding that preliminary evidence suggests the connection between the form of the specificity marker and the respective felicity condition to be non-accidental: while markers that have developed from numerals (such as Russian *odin*) tend to impose identifiability, ones that have developed from demonstratives (such as English *this*) tend to impose noteworthiness. Finally, Ionin also discusses the differences between *this* and *odin* with respect to possessive constructions.

In his paper *Certain presuppositions and some intermediate readings, and vice versa*, Igor Yanovich discusses a difference between indefinites headed by *some* and ones headed by *a certain* with respect to a subset of the conditions under which they give rise to intermediate exceptional wide scope, building on observations by Schlenker (1998), Chierchia (2001) and Schwarz (2001, 2004). The crucial facts can be summarized as follows: there are certain types of exceptional intermediate wide-scope readings that can easily be captured by allowing indefinite determiners to introduce contextually retrieved Skolemized choice-function variables in the sense of Kratzer (1998; see above), but not by allowing them to introduce existentially bound choice-function variables, along the lines of Reinhart (1997) and Winter (1997). In contrast to this, there are other readings that can easily be captured if existential quantification in the immediate scope of negation is assumed to apply to the choice-function variable introduced by the respective indefinite, but not if the choice-function variable is assumed to receive a value from the

context. Importantly, while indefinites headed by *some* seem to allow both types of readings, ones headed by *a certain* only receive the latter. Yanovich argues for an account of this contrast in terms of presuppositions, i.e. he proposes that both determiners introduce free choice function variables, but that only in the case of *some* the fact that a value for the variable is presupposed to exist opens up the possibility of local accommodation in the immediate scope of negation.

In their paper, *Exceptional scope: the case of Spanish*, Luis Alonso-Ovalle and Paula Menéndez-Benito compare the conditions under which the two Spanish indefinite determiners *un* and *algún* allow exceptional wide scope by employing experimental methods. They compare the behaviour of indefinites headed by the respective determiners in two different kinds of syntactic islands: the antecedents of conditionals and relative clauses. Since only *un*, but not *algún* is compatible with an NP that (in the respective context) denotes a singleton, an account along the lines of Schwarzschild (2002; see above) predicts only the former to allow exceptional wide scope. This is not confirmed by the results of the authors' experiments, however. Rather, *un* allows exceptional scope quite easily in relative clauses, and only marginally so in conditionals, while *algún* only confirms the predictions insofar as it does not allow for exceptional wide scope out of conditionals. Concerning relative clauses, however, exceptional wide scope is available to indefinites headed by *algún* to some extent. The authors propose an account of this pattern along the following lines: following Kratzer and Shimoyama's (2002) Hamblin semantics for indefinites, they assume both types of indefinites to introduce sets of individuals that are combined with (the objects denoted by) the other constituents of the respective sentence via pointwise functional application, thus giving rise to propositional alternatives that need to become the arguments of some operator in order for the respective sentence to denote a single proposition. Now, in the case of conditionals, the authors (following Alonso-Ovalle, 2009) assume universal quantification over the alternatives denoted by the antecedent. Consequently, the only way for an indefinite to give rise to a reading that is truth conditionally equivalent to widest scope is for the NP complement of the determiner to denote a singleton set. Since this option is blocked for *algún*-indefinites, the contrast between the two types of indefinites with respect to conditionals is accounted for. Concerning relative clauses, in contrast, the authors assume that they do not block the expansion of alternatives. Consequently, both types of indefinites can in principle give rise to (what seem to be) exceptional wide scope readings. The authors leave open the question of why scoping out of relative clauses is harder for *algún*-indefinites than for *un*-indefinites, offering some speculative

remarks relating this to the ignorance component associated with *algún*.

In their paper *The distribution of two indefinite articles – The case of Uzbek*, Klaus von Heusinger and Udo Klein argue for the existence of two indefinite determiners in Uzbek, *bir* and *bitta*, both of which are derived from forms for the numeral ‘one’. Based on corpus material, they show that the use of *bitta* as an indefinite article is a later development than the use of *bir*, which had reached the last stage of Heine’s evolutionary scale for the development of indefinite articles from numerals by 1920 already, meaning that it can perform basically all functions that the indefinite article is available for in languages such as English and German. Concerning *bitta*, in contrast, the results of a web-based questionnaire show that while it is unacceptable in predicational sentences with animate nouns, it is preferred in modern colloquial Uzbek to *bir* in contexts where a human referent is introduced whose identity is unknown to (or irrelevant for) both speaker and hearer. In all other contexts where a human referent is introduced, it is at least as acceptable as *bir*. Concerning inanimate nouns, in contrast, *bir* is slightly preferred to *bitta* in all contexts except for ones where a topical discourse referent is introduced.

In their paper *Scenarios of equivalence – the case of ‘quelque’*, Jaques Jayez and Lucia M. Tovena argue for a unified analysis of the determiner *quelque* in the various environments where it occurs, and where it gives rise to apparently different semantic and/or pragmatic effects. The authors focus on the use of *quelque* in “unconditionals” (conditional constructions with a vacuous antecedent like “*whether or not Bill comes to the party, John will be there*”), as an NPI and as a determiner with existential force conveying ignorance concerning the identity as well as indirect evidence concerning the existence of an individual that satisfies (the properties denoted by) the two arguments of the existential quantifier. They show that what all these uses have in common is the fact that the members of some set are presented as equivalent with respect to some property or along some dimension, and that two uses of *quelque* which at first sight seem problematic for this view (namely in habituals and with abstract mass nouns) turn out to be compatible with it upon closer inspection. Concerning the fact that (non-NPI-)*quelque* seems to behave like a positive polarity item, the authors argue for an account in terms of a processing interaction between its existential force, which is located on the at-issue level, and the non-identification and indirect-evidence requirements, which are located on the level of conventional implicatures. Finally, they take a look at the diachronic development of *quelque*, arguing that the anti-specificity requirement is already present in early stages.

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