

## THE CATEGORY OF EPISTEMIC SPECIFICITY IN MODERN GEORGIAN

The topic of specificity plays a crucial part in categorizing the different aspects of indefinites in many languages; this topic is widely discussed in the linguistic literature, but a consistent definition of the term is found nowhere. This semantic-pragmatic category was firstly introduced in the late 1960s (von Heusinger 2003: 405) and is often regarded as a semantic (e.g. Farkas 2002) or a pragmatic process; Groenendijk & Stokhof (1980) interpret specificity as a pragmatic condition affecting the identification of the referent. In the present paper, the pragmatic approach is favored, which implies that the identifiability of the referent is crucial for specific predications.

Farkas (1994) argues that there are at least three types of specificity (SCOPAL, PARTITIVE and EPISTEMIC specificity<sup>1</sup>), which are independent of each other and can cross-classify. The latter, epistemic specificity, expresses the contrast between a speaker's knowledge and a speaker's ignorance (or indifference) (von Heusinger 2011: 1028). von Heusinger highlights that further "approaches to epistemic specificity assume that the speaker has particular knowledge of the referent or of the methods to identify the referent. It is crucial that this knowledge is not on common ground. If it were also available to the hearer, the speaker would have used a definite expression" (von Heusinger 2011b: 1046):

a. *A student in Syntax 1 cheated in the exam.*

a'. I know him: It is Jim Miller. → SPEAKER KNOWLEDGE

b. *A student in Syntax 1 cheated in the exam.*

b'. But I do not know who it is. → SPEAKER IGNORANCE/INDIFFERENCE

Geist (2010: 2013) adduces examples from Russian which show that different indefinite pronouns can express speaker identifiability (example [1] and its continuations) or speaker ignorance with referent identifiability (example [2] and its continuations):

- |     |  |  |                  |           |                 |
|-----|--|--|------------------|-----------|-----------------|
| (1) | <i>Koe-kakoj</i>                                 | <i>student</i>                         | <i>špargalil</i> | <i>na</i> | <i>ekzamene</i> |
|     | KOE-which  | student                                | cheat.M.AOR      | on        | exam            |
|     | 'A (known/certain) student cheated on the exam.' |  |                  |           |                 |
|     | (1a)   | I know him, his name is Peter Schmidt. |                  |           |                 |
|     | (1b)   | *I'm trying to find out who that was.  |                  |           |                 |
| (2) | <i>Kakoj-to</i>                                  | <i>student</i>                         | <i>špargalil</i> | <i>na</i> | <i>ekzamene</i> |
|     | Which-TO   | student                                | cheat.M.AOR      | on        | exam            |
|     | 'A(n) (unknown) student cheated on the exam.'    |  |                  |           |                 |

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<sup>1</sup> To see how scopal and partitive specificity are expressed/marked in Georgian, cf. Kamarauli (2022: 97 ff.)

- (2a) \*I know him, his name is Peter Schmidt.  
 (2b) I'm trying to find out who that was.

*koe-*: epistemic specific, *to*: epistemic non-specific

(Geist 2010: 213)

At this point, the terms of specificity and identifiability must be explicitly differentiated from each other. In Georgian, speaker identifiability and speaker ignorance are not expressed only by indefinites but also by the numeral *erti*:

- |      |  |                              |                                |                               |
|------|--|------------------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| (3a) | <i>ert</i><br>one.DAT.SG                   | <i>gogo-s</i><br>girl-DAT.SG | <i>xvdeba</i><br>meet.3Sg.PRES | } <i>speaker identifiable</i> |
|      | '(He) is meeting <b>a (certain) girl</b> ' |                              |                                |                               |
| (3b) | <i>viġac</i><br>someone.DAT.SG             | <i>gogo-s</i><br>girl-DAT.SG | <i>xvdeba</i><br>meet.3Sg.PRES | } <i>speaker ignorance</i>    |
|      | '(He) is meeting <b>a girl</b> '           |                              |                                |                               |

(Kamarauli 2022: 101)

The numeral *erti* 'one (NOM.SG)' in (3a) is used when the speaker knows the identity of the girl, but the hearer does not (at least this is assumed by the speaker); the speaker does not reveal the identity deliberately. In contrast to (3a), *viġac(a)* (*vi(n)* 'who' + *ġa* 'else (selective particle)' + *c(a)* FOC) indicates someone unknown to both the speaker and the hearer (but not necessarily non-specific); so, *viġac gogo* 'some girl (NOM.SG)' in (3b) indicates the speaker's ignorance (and/or his/her unwillingness to identify the person), while *ert-* indicates that the girl is identifiable to the speaker. With verbs from another semantic class, e.g. 'to search', Georgian *viġac(a)* clearly denotes non-specificity (Kamarauli 2022: 101):

- |      |   |                              |                                  |
|------|---|------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| (3c) | <i>viġac</i><br>someone.DAT.SG                | <i>gogo-s</i><br>girl-DAT.SG | <i>ezebs</i><br>search.S3SG.PRES |
|      | '(He) is searching for <b>a girl</b> ' (M.K.) |                              |                                  |

(Kamarauli 2022: 101)

The indefinite pronouns *viġaca* 'someone, anyone (NOM.SG)' and *raġaca* 'something, anything (NOM.SG)' have indefinite but specific counterparts, namely *rame* 'something (NOM.SG)' and *vinme* 'someone (NOM.SG)' (Kamarauli 2022: 101):

- |     |   |                                 |  |
|-----|---|---------------------------------|--|
| (4) | <i>Ŗegcivdebat,</i><br>feeling cold.S2PL.FUT  | <i>rame</i><br>something.NOM.SG | <i>ĉamoixuret.</i><br>put on.S2PL.IMPV |
|     | 'You'll get cold, put on <b>something!</b> ' ( <i>Data TutuxŖia</i> , Ŗabua AmireŖibi, 383) |                                 |  |

- |     |  |                                     |   |                    |
|-----|--|-------------------------------------|---|--------------------|
| (5) | <i>ĉven</i><br>we.NOM.SG   | <i>vezebdit</i><br>search.S1PL.IMPV | <i>nacnobebs</i><br>acquaintances.DAT.SG  | <i>rom</i><br>that |
|     | <i>ikneb</i><br>maybe  | <i>vinme</i><br>someone.NOM.SG      | <i>dagvxnareboda</i><br>help.S1SG.PLUPERF |                    |
|     | 'We were searching for acquaintances, so that maybe <b>someone</b> could help us.' (Journal <i>Axali taoba</i> , 2001) |                                     |   |                    |

The indefinite pronouns *rame* and *vinme* denote someone/something as indefinite but specific to the speaker and the hearer: in (4), *rame* indicates a piece of clothing out of the clothes the hearer is wearing (e.g. a jacket with a hood, which the hearer can put on his/her head), but it is not clear which piece of clothing it actually is. The same applies to (5): the context of

searching the acquaintances is reintroduced by the indefinite pronoun *vinme*, so that the identity of the helping person is indefinite but specific (a person from the speaker’s acquaintances) (Kamarauli 2022: 102).

Concerning the assertion of von Heusinger (2011: 1049) that “if it [the knowledge] were also available to the hearer, the speaker would have used a definite expression”, we have to consider, first of all, that the Modern Georgian language does not possess definite articles. Other elements such as demonstratives can be used to express definiteness but this would lead to a deictic and referential reading in Modern Georgian:

- |   |                          |                              |                                |   |                            |
|---|--------------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------------|---|----------------------------|
| (6)                                       | <i>im</i><br>that.DAT.SG | <i>gogo-s</i><br>girl-DAT.SG | <i>xvdeba</i><br>meet.3Sg.PRES | } | <i>deictic referential</i> |
| ‘(He) is meeting <b>that</b> girl’ (M.K.) |                          |                              |                                |   | (Kamarauli 2022: 102)      |

In summary, I can propose the following scale for epistemic specificity in Modern Georgian:

| DEFINITE, SPECIFIC             | > | INDEFINITE, SPECIFIC   | > | INDEFINITE, NON-SPECIFIC  |
|--------------------------------|---|--|---|---|
| demonstratives,<br>possessives |   | indefinite specific pronouns<br><i>vinme</i> , <i>rame</i> and indefinite<br>article / numeral <i>erti</i> |   | indefinite non-specific<br>pronouns <i>viġaca</i> and <i>raġaca</i> |

(Kamarauli 2022: 102)

Demonstratives and possessives express definiteness and thus can function as specific expressions; indefinite pronouns *vinme*, *rame* and the indefinite article<sup>2</sup>/numeral *erti* express specificity; and the pronouns *viġaca* and *raġaca* can be indefinite and non-specific and indicates someone/something unknown to both the speaker and the hearer (but not necessarily non-specific) – for an absolute indefinite and non-specific notion, these pronouns need e.g. verbs from certain semantic class.

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<sup>2</sup> In “The Nominal Domain in Georgian. A Diachronic Analysis”, I argue that “the Georgian language has no “real” category of definiteness in the form of definite articles while indefinites exist (originating from the numeral *erti* ‘one (NOM.SG)’), and with them, the category of indefiniteness. This category overlaps with that of specificity, which can be divided into seven sub-categories of specificity” (Kamarauli 2022: 167).