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Familiarity, Specificity, (In)definiteness and Substitution

Abstract: It has been argued in previous works that 1) familiarity is a prerequisite for definiteness and specificity, and 2) definiteness results from substitution whereas specificity and indefiniteness result from inclusion in the antecedent. In this paper I describe different types of familiarity and point out that specificity and specific indefiniteness emerge exclusively from anaphoric familiarity, whereas any type of familiarity can result in definiteness provided the relevant NP completely substitutes its antecedent.

Key words: *Familiarity, Definiteness, Specificity, Indefiniteness, Substitution*

1. Introduction

In this very short note, we describe different types of familiarity and then claim that a NP definiteness, indefiniteness or specific feature of a NP results from a discourse-internal relation between different NPs (this feature may be checked sentence-internally)

1. **Different types of Familiarity**

Familiarity (or *Identifiability* according to Lyons, 1999) is a prerequisite for definiteness and specificity, whereas novelty is believed to be indispensable for indefiniteness (see Heim 1982, Fiengo 1987). In my view, familiarity results from a knowledge shared by both speaker and hearer about a certain NP, and it can be classified into three different types: i) Deictic, ii) Presuppositional and iii) Anaphoric.

(1) Several girls$_{(i,j)}$ are playing in the classroom$_{(s,t)}$ beside the Director's office$_{(u,x)}$.

(2) Emily$_{(k,l)}$ knows two girls$_{(m,j)}$ among them$_{(i,j)}$.

(3) Suzanne $_{(o,p)}$ knows only the tall ones$_{(q,j)}$.

i) **Deictic**: Deictic familiarity of an NP is derived through confining its referent to a deixis or a spatio-temporal point familiar to both of the speaker and hearer (e.g. Give me *the book* on the table here).[1]

ii) **Presuppositional**: Presuppositional familiarity[2] can again be divided into three different types:

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[1] Jayaseelan & Hariprasad (2001:146) state that "personal pronouns, like all referring nominal expressions, contain place deixis". According to Dasgupta (1992:76) "deixis and deictic features prototypically play the games of pronominality." This explains why pronouns rank higher in the scale of familiarity proposed by Longobardi (1996). However, there are distal (i.e. non-deictic) pronouns in languages like Bengali (see Dasgupta ibid.) or Malayalam (see Jayaseelan & Hariprasad ibid) and their familiarity must have some other (pragmatic) source.

[2] Following Diesing (1992), Bhattacharya (1999) equates specificity with presupposition. Equating specificity with presupposition is not enough in my view to draw a clear line between definiteness and specificity because

a. **Monadic familiarity**: NPs endowed with a unique referent (e.g. *the sun, the moon* or the *Director's office* in (1) has a 'monadic' familiarity;

b. **Relational** (or **dependant**) **familiarity**: the 'dependent' or 'relational' type of familiarity of a noun can be derived from its contextual relation with another NP made familiar through some other means (e.g. 'the classroom beside the Director's office');

c. **Pragmatic familiarity:** there exist many different sources of 'pragmatic' familiarity.[3] *Emily* in (2) and *Suzanne* in (3) are familiar because for some reason or other both speaker and hearer are supposed to know these two persons.[4]

iii) **Anaphoric Familiarity**: Enç (1991) and Campbell (1996) presume that all NPs bear a pair of indices: girl$_{(m,j)}$, Emily$_{(k,l)}$. Enç (1991) mentions that the first index is mono-referential and determines the distinctive existence of the NP whereas the second index is a multi-referential one which contains among others, the first index. Any discourse in my view is a 'collection of sentences' and can presumably be divided into two parts: the 'upstream' and the 'downstream' one (for example, (1-2) constitute the upstream discourse for (3) whereas (2-3) represent the downstream discourse for (1)).When two NPs have at least one common index, the NP in the upstream discourse (e.g. *several girls*$_{(i,j)}$ in (1)) is considered the antecedent of the downstream one (e.g. *the tall ones*$_{(q,j)}$ in (3)), and any NP that has an antecedent is endowed with an anaphoric familiarity.

2. Anaphoric familiarity and different types of Substitution

If an anaphorically familiar NP (e.g. *them*$_{i,j}$ in (2)) shares both of its indices with its antecedent, it substitutes the antecedent (several girls$_{i,j}$). But if it shares only the second index (e.g. *the tall ones*$_{q,j}$ in (3) or *two girls*$_{m,j}$ in (2)), the NP shows inclusion in the antecedent (several girls$_{i,j}$). Definiteness is claimed to result from substitution whereas specificity and indefiniteness result from inclusion (see Enç 1991 and Campbell 1996).

Definite (e.g. *them*$_{i,j}$ in (2)), specific (e.g. *the tall ones*$_{q,j}$ in (3)) and indefinite NPs (e.g. *two girls*$_{m,j}$ in (2)) can all have anaphoric familiarity, and both specific and indefinite NPs show inclusion in their antecedent. Therefore, in my view, neither familiarity nor inclusion should

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presupposition and/or familiarity are prerequisites for definiteness, specificity (see Heim 1982, Fiengo 1987, Enç 1991, Campbell 1996) and specific indefiniteness.

[3] For example, according to Longobardi (1996) nominal expressions are lexically ranked along a universal scale of familiarity: pronouns > classical proper nouns (e.g. *Emily* in (1) or *Suzanne* in (2)) > common nouns like Romance *casa* (home), etc. > other common nouns. NPs that stand at the top of the scale are intrinsically more familiar than those located at the bottom. This means, pronouns are the most familiar while common nouns are the least.

[4] Following Jayaseelan & Hariprasad (ibid.:138) who point out that "All R-expression are distal" we claim that Emily in (2) or Suzanne in (3) are not endowed with deictic familiarity.

be claimed to have any distinctive impact on how these three types of NPs can be successfully distinguished in an anaphoric context.

Things are however different with substitution which we presume can be either i) complete or ii) partial.

i) When an NP (e.g. *them*$_{i,j}$ in (2)) shares both of its indices with its antecedent (e.g. *several girls*$_{i,j}$ in (1)), it substitutes its antecedent completely and this complete substitution results in definiteness. Definiteness entails specificity (see Enç ibid.) because a definite NP has to share both its indices (including the second one which is responsible for specificity) with its antecedent.

ii) In a partial type of substitution, the NP substitutes a subset of the antecedent. If an NP (e.g. *the tall ones*$_{q,j}$ in (3)) substitutes a particular subset of its antecedent, the substitution results in specificity. If an NP does not substitute a particular subset but one or more subsets of the antecedent in a sporadic, irregular way (e.g. two girls$_{m,j}$ in (2)), we get specific indefiniteness. On the other hand, if an NP does not have any antecedent in the upstream discourse, it is endowed with non-specific indefiniteness.[5]

3. **Conclusion**

In the present article I have shown that specificity and specific indefiniteness emerge exclusively from anaphoric familiarity whereas any type of familiarity can result in definiteness provided the relevant NP substitutes completely its antecedent (if there is any). Therefore, in an anaphoric context, it is rather the type of substitution that determines definiteness, specificity and two different types of indefiniteness.

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[5] Although Heim (1982) and Fiengo (1987) claim that novelty is indispensable for indefiniteness, (1b) shows that it may not be always the case. If Fiengo (1987) is right to assume that i) specificity functions according to a scale, ii) both definiteness and singularity contribute to specificity and iii) definite singulars are the most specific and the indefinite plurals the least, then indefinite plural NP in (2) has little chance to acquire specificity. However, according to Enç (1991) there are two types of indefiniteness: specific and non-specific. As (1) shows, with no antecedent in the upstream discourse, a non-specific indefinite NP entirely respects the condition of novelty, whereas the specific and definite ones do not respect it at all.

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