

Specificity: Related to, but independent from partitivity

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Abstract

Enç (1991) explains specificity in terms of partitivity and argues that the Accusative case marker indicates a partitive construction (or at least an implied partitive relation), and thus marks a specific direct object. We show here that Enç's definition of specificity in terms of partitivity must be modified for semantic as well as morphological reasons. We give evidence, based on the detailed analysis of the morphological conditions for partitives, which shows that partitives are not necessarily specific. We then develop a more flexible notion of specificity in terms of referentially anchored indefinite NPs. In conclusion, we show that the accusative case marker can indicate the referential property of the direct object (such as specificity) in clearly defined morphological environments in a reliable fashion; in other contexts, it is not a reliable indicator of properties like specificity.