

Romanian Differential Object Marking and Presupposition

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Resumé

The paper focuses on Romanian indefinite DPs marked by means of the differential object marker 'pe' which have been argued in the literature to have a specific interpretation. Based on various data and tests, it is shown that 'pe' is not a specificity trigger, but seems to be a presupposition carrier for covert partitivity. The paper also proposes a DRT analysis of 'pe' marked indefinites. The partitive reading induced by pe is captured in terms of presupposition resolution.

Mots clés : indefinite DPs, differential object marker 'pe', partitivity, specificity, DRT

1. Specific indefinites in Romanian

Romanian indefinites behave similarly to their counterparts in other languages in what concerns the possible readings they may engender in the presence of a quantifier DP (QP). (1) may have an interpretation according to which every employee speaks at least one (possibly different) language, in which the indefinite takes narrow scope relative to the QP. Another possible reading is 'there is (at least) one language such that every employee in the company speaks it', where the indefinite outscopes the universal QP. Finally, (1) may read as 'there is a unique language such that every employee in the company speaks it'. This last option accounts for a specific reading of the indefinite.

- (1) Orice angajat vorbește o limbă străină.
Any employee speaks a language foreign.
'Any employee speaks a foreign language.'

Romanian can induce a specific reading on direct object indefinites by clitic doubling (CD) them and by marking them with *pe*. Romanian linguists do not agree as to which of the two mechanisms is actually responsible for the specific reading with the result that there exist several perspectives on the matter: there is, more specifically, a view in favour of the differential marker *pe*, another one which stresses specificity as an effect of CD and, lastly, there are accounts which lump the two mechanisms together as a complex phenomenon. Thus,

either *pe* or the clitic, or both are taken to be responsible for a certain interpretive effect of the indefinite DP which they mark. No account is given as to the exact division of labour between the two of how this interpretation is compositionally obtained.

In view of new data, we would like to propose that the semantic effect of *pe* marking concerns a *covert partitivity* interpretation and not *specificity* per se. This interpretive effect will be subsequently accounted for within the framework of analysis provided by Discourse Representation Theory.

This paper is organized as follows: 2. will discuss the relation between specificity and *pe* marking, 3. will bring to the fore the partitive effect *pe* seems to induce, 4. contains a DRT analysis of this effect. Finally, 5. provides the conclusions.

2. Specificity with *pe*

Pe-marked indefinites may be specific even in the absence of CD. In (2), the indefinite is understood as epistemically anchored to the speaker. Consider though that the same reading may easily obtain if an unmarked indefinite is used in (2). Should we then say unmarked indefinites are always specific too?

- (2) Am întârziat: trebuie să ajut (*pe*) un elev la teme.
 Have.I late : had.I to help (*pe*) a pupil at homework
 'I am late: I had to help a pupil with his homework.'

To answer this question in the affirmative, one should make sure that all cases of unmarked indefinites have a specific reading. This is not so, however: more suitable examples, such as (3) clearly show that unmarked indefinites have non-specific interpretations quite freely.

- (3) Orice angajat vorbește o limbă străină.
 Any employee speaks a language foreign.
 'Every employee speaks a foreign language.'

By following the same reasoning, it will be shown that simple *pe* indefinites do not always induce specific interpretations. To this end, a number of contexts¹ which disambiguate *pe* DPs towards a non-specific interpretation will be presented. Given that, it will be concluded that one may not establish a clearcut correlation between the use of *pe* and a specific reading.

2.1. The test of '*cel mult (at most)*', '*cel puțin (at least)*'.

Expressions such as *cel mult*, *cel puțin* ensure a non-specific reading:

¹ Due to reasons of space, only three such contexts will be presented in this paper, but see Tigău (to appear) for a more extensive discussion.

- (4) Ion întâlnește (*cel mult/cel puțin*) trei fete în fiecare zi.
 Ion meets (at most/at least) three girls in every day.
 'John meets at most/at least three girls every day.'

While an unmarked indefinite allows both an interpretation according to which Mihai meets the same three girls every day, as well as another one according to which the set of three girls varies from one day to the next, the former reading is no longer possible if *cel mult/cel puțin* is introduced. The context provided by *cel mult/cel puțin* phrases thus disambiguates between the two possible readings in favour of a dependent, narrow scope one. *Pe* indefinites in the context of *cel mult/cel puțin* only get the narrow scope reading. The only possible interpretation for (5) is one according to which the set of teachers differs relative to the pupils.

- (5) Toți elevii trebuie să salute *pe* cel puțin trei profesori în fiecare zi.
 All pupils must greet *pe* at least three teachers in every day.
 'All pupils must greet three teachers every day.'

Apparently, *pe* marked indefinites may be used dependently. This was shown with the aid of contexts disambiguating in favour of non-specificity: *pe* DPs are grammatical in such contexts and have a non-specific interpretation, just like unmarked indefinites.

Before closing this subsection a word of caution is in order about the difference between unmarked indefinites in the context of *cel puțin/cel mult* and their *pe* marked counterparts: a possible difference (though very subtle) has to do with the fact that (3.9) is more suitable in a context in which there is a set of 20 teachers such that the pupils need to greet three (possibly) different teachers every day, while unmarked indefinites fare better in the absence of such a context, as one refers to a sort of general rule regarding all pupils: *pe* seems to engender a covert partitive interpretation i.e., there is a familiar set (not necessarily explicit) such that the referent denoted by the indefinite is understood to be a member of it.

2.2. Interaction with negation and other operators.

When interacting with operators, *pe* indefinites pattern with unmarked indefinites either outscoping them or being interpreted within their scope. This is the case of (6) which may be interpreted as 'there is a teacher such that I did not see him do that' or 'I have seen no teacher behaving like that'². Hence the *pe* variant closely mirrors the two readings assigned to its unmarked counterpart.

- (6) N-am văzut (*pe*) un profesor făcând așa ceva.

² The exact translation would be 'I have seen not even one professor doing something like this'.

Not-have.I seen *pe* a teacher doing something like this
 'I haven't seen a teacher behaving like this.'

The same patterns arise in the context of conditionals or modal operators: *pe* indefinites cluster with their unmarked counterparts in allowing both a reading under the scope of the operator as well as one outside it.

- (7) Dacă aş vrea (pe) un profesor că se comportă așa, aş protesta
 If would.I see (pe) a teacher that behaves like that, would.I protest
 'If I saw a teacher behaving like that, I would protest.'

Apparently, *pe* indefinites are more like their unmarked counterparts and less like their clitic doubled correspondents in interaction with various operators.

2.3. The determiner '*câte*'

The distributive *câte* is shown in Farkas (2001) to induce a non-specific interpretation, as in (8) where the only possible reading for the indefinite is the non-specific one. Single *pe* indefinites are acceptable in the context of *câte*, which indicates that *pe* does not necessarily induce a specific interpretation.

- (8) La alegeri orice alegător votează (pe) câte un candidat de pe listă.
 At elections any voter votes (pe) *câte* a candidate from list
 'On the occasion of elections, any voter votes a candidate on the list'

In view of all the data discussed so far, we may conclude that single *pe* indefinites give up on their specific reading when *câte* is present. *Pe* indefinites thus pattern with unmarked indefinites for which the specific reading is eliminated with *câte*.

2.4. Conclusions

Sub-sections 2.1 -2.3 have shown that single *pe* indefinites are not always specific. In particular, they were shown to lose their specific reading when inserted in various contexts forcing non-specific interpretation. Thus, the specific reading that *pe* marked DPs may acquire is not obligatory.

3. Partitivity

In section 2 attention was drawn to the fact that the occurrence of *pe* indefinites in contexts forcing a non-specific interpretation influences their reading in such a way that a specific interpretation is no longer possible. In this respect, they pattern more with unmarked indefinites, which also lose their specific interpretation in such contexts.

It was, nevertheless suggested that, although similar in what concerns the (non-)availability of a specific interpretation, *pe* indefinites differ from their unmarked counterparts by allowing an interpretation according to which the referent denoted by the marked indefinite is understood as a member of some familiar set. The contribution of *pe* in this respect amounts to inducing a (covert) partitive reading.

The availability of such a reading justifies in part the confusion over the exact division of labour between *pe* and the clitic with respect to their contribution concerning specificity. More specifically, ever since Enç (1991) the issue of partitivity has been connected to specificity. Enç's proposal is espoused in Farkas (1994), which distinguishes among types of specificity and takes partitivity as one such type, although this type of specificity is somehow said to differ, since the values of the discourse referent introduced by the indefinite are not restricted to only one, as it is the case with epistemic specificity and scopal specificity, but to a restricted range of values made available in a familiar, presupposed set³. In the present DRT account where specificity amounts to anchoring which translates into uniqueness of value for the discourse referent introduced by the specific indefinite, specificity does not include partitivity. Consequently, the contribution of *pe*, if at all revolving around partitivity, does not boil down to specificity.

Having clarified that, let us check whether the covert partitive reading that *pe* was shown to trigger in 3.1 is indeed real. One of the contexts that clearly points in this direction is one in which the distributive *câte* is employed⁴. The two examples below were integrated into disambiguating contexts in (3.20): the former context orients the focus on the capacity of the car to only seat four people,

³ von Stechow & Kornfilt (2005) also argue against ranging partitivity with specificity. See also the discussion in section 2 which shows that partitives may be specific as well as non-specific.

⁴ A word of caution is in order here: the difference between the *pe* marked variants and the unmarked ones is very subtle. The examples in this section were informally tested on 12 native speakers with ages ranging from 28 to 35. The result was that 5 established the intended differences between the members in the various sets of sentences from the start (each set contained a *pe* marked and an unmarked variant) and 4 accepted the differences as valid after it was explained to them. Out of the former 5 respondents, 2 were linguists. These data find support in Hill & Tasmowski (2008) :5d, p. 142-143: it is argued that the use of *pe* in ensures the existence of a background set in relation to which the referent denoted by the direct object is to be considered.

(1) Am văzut (pe) mulți colegi pierzându-și capul în momente de criză.
Have.I seen (pe) many colleagues losing head.the in moments of crisis.
'I've seen many colleagues of mine losing their head in moments of crisis.'

hence variant (a) would be more appropriate as it addresses a general characteristic (the term *professors* could be substituted with *passengers*). The latter context, on the other hand, shifts the focus on the set of professors who are to be taken home and for whom the principal's car will not suffice. In this case variant (b) would be more appropriate, as *pe* triggers the presupposition of a set of people to be distributed by three at a time. Note that a substitution of *professors* with *passengers* is no longer that felicitous in this case: people who travel by car bear the name of passengers, so there is no need to use *pe* in this case, as it would induce the idea that there is a specific set of passengers, waiting to be taken home. However, one only acquires the status of *passenger* when one is in the car.

Context 1: The school has just bought a small car which can only seat four people, including the driver. The intention would be to drive home the 20 professors, who form the staff, as the school is quite far away from the town they live in. The principal inquires about the capacity of the car. The answer is:

Context 2: Ten of the school's teachers went out to the theater and the nice principal sent the driver to take them home. The group organizer phones the principal and asks permission to call for two cabs. He will say:

- (9) Șoferul poate duce câte trei profesori o dată.
 Driver.the can drive *câte* three teachers once.
 'The drive can drive home three teachers at a time.'
- (10) Șoferul poate duce pe câte trei profesori o dată
 Driver.the can drive *pe câte* three teachers once.
 'The drive can drive home three teachers at a time.'

Another example which closely mirrors the situation described above (11): the use of an unmarked indefinite stresses on the general rule that one is not allowed to vote for more candidates, while the use of *pe* implies that there is a list of candidates and that one should select one candidate from there.

- (11) La alegeri, fiecare alegător votează (pe) câte un candidat.
 At elections, every voter votes for (pe) *câte* a candidate
 'On the occasion of elections, every voter votes for a candidate.'

In this particular case the context was left out and the respondents were asked to comment upon the differences holding between (9) and (10): the most recurrent distinction made was that between the

existence of a general rule for (9) as opposed to the existence of a list for (10)⁵.

At this point, and also considering the examples in section 2 we conclude that *pe* should be regarded as a trigger for a partitive reading. As such, the referent(s) denoted by *pe* indefinites would be understood as a member of a familiar set. Note that this set needs not be explicitly mentioned: it may be presupposed⁶.

If this is the case, as it indeed seems to be, then a DRT analysis of *pe* indefinites should also account for the presupposed material. This will be the purpose of section 4.

4. Analysing 'pe' indefinites in DRT

The DRT analysis of *pe* indefinites needs to capture the partitive reading discussed in 3.2. The presupposition that there is a set of which the discourse referent introduced by the indefinite is a member will be accounted for by entering as presupposed material in the DRS a group discourse marker, V , together with the condition that the discourse referent introduced by the indefinite, y , be included in V : $V \supseteq \{y\}$ or y is a member of V ⁷.

Presupposition resolution will follow van der Sandt (1992): the presupposed set is either resolved by way of being bound to an appropriate antecedent or through accommodation, if such an antecedent is missing.

Binding presupposes that the presuppositional anaphor may be bound to a pre-established antecedent found along the projection line of the anaphor. In this case, the operation of binding will consist in equating the two discourse referents in question and in transferring the conditions associated with the anaphoric expression to the binding site. Accommodation may take place, if there is no suitable antecedent for the anaphoric expression along its projection line and it will amount to transferring the anaphoric discourse marker together with its conditions to the accommodation site.⁸

In accounting for the contribution of *pe* indefinites it should be remembered that they are presuppositional expressions, which presuppose the existence of an antecedent for the discourse referent introduced by the indefinite and that *pe* is responsible for this. Furthermore, *pe* indefinites have enough descriptive content necessary

⁵ 7 respondents out of 12. Some of the respondents also pointed out that in the case of variant (b) the voter knows the candidate (s)he will be voting for.

⁶ Tigău (to appear) shows that this is indeed a case of presupposition by showing that it projects from various embeddings.

⁷ The referent of the *pe* DP will be considered a subset of the presupposed set

⁸ For an explanation on the level at which accommodation takes place see van der Sandt (1992).

for such an antecedent to be accommodated should it not be explicitly given. Let us analyse an example where such an antecedent is provided explicitly.

- (12) La Maria lucrează cinci muncitori.
At Maria work five workers.
- (13) Ion întâlnește pe un muncitor în fiecare zi.
John meets *pe* a worker in every day.
'Five workers work at Mary's place. John meets a worker every day.'

K_0^9 captures the first sentence:

Y, n, t, e_1		
worker (Y) work (Y) Card (Y)= five n=t $e_1 \subseteq t$ $e_1: [\text{work } Y]$		
<table border="1" style="border-style: dashed; width: 50%; margin: auto;"> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">x</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">Mary(x)</td> </tr> </table>	x	Mary(x)
x		
Mary(x)		

K_0 contains an anaphoric expression setting up an A-structure which needs to be resolved. By going up the projection line of *Mary* in order to check whether there is a suitable antecedent for it, we discover that this is not the case. Consequently, we accommodate the embedded anaphor by adding x to $U(K_0)$ together with the associated condition to $\text{Con}(K_0)$. This operation gives rise to K_0' :

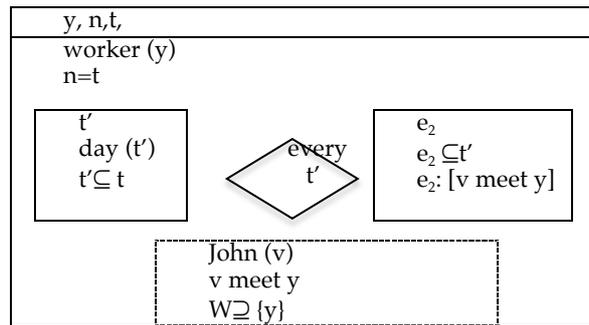
Y, x, n, t, e_1
worker (Y) work (Y) Card (Y)= five n=t $e_1 \subseteq t$ $e_1: [\text{work } Y]$ Mary (x)

Let us now add the second sentence. DRS K_1 is constructed for the second sentence and then merged with the main DRS K_0' . As a result,

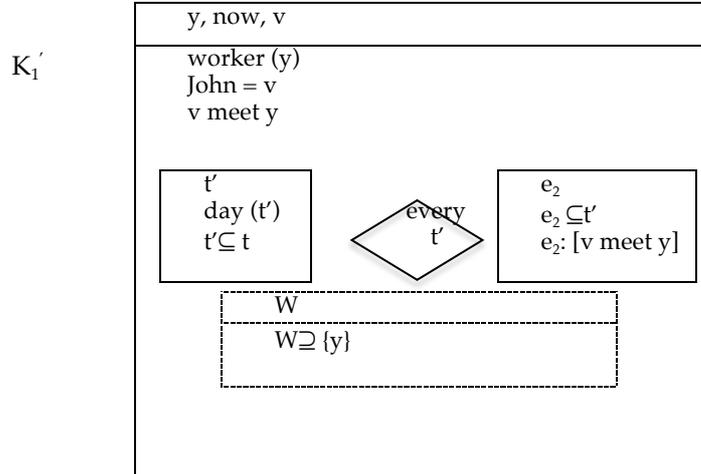
⁹ For reasons of space constraints DRSs only capture tense schematically.

a new DRS obtains, containing the anaphoric structures in need of processing. These structures will be resolved against the content of the new DRS. The result will be an appropriate DRS which may be interpreted relative to model according to the standard embedding conditions:

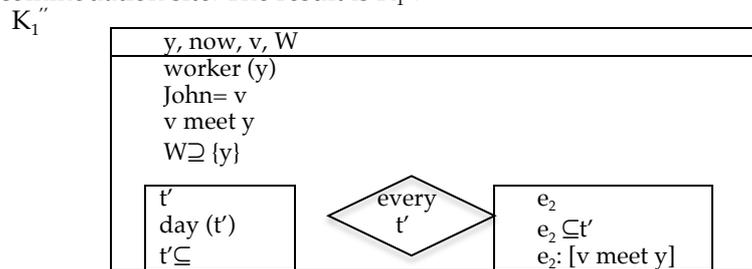
K_1



K_1 contains two anaphoric expressions: the proper name *John* and the presupposition that *pe* carries. Let us imagine what would happen if we tried to resolve this DRS in isolation: We would first attempt to resolve the A-structure set up for the proper name: by going up along its projection line, we discover no suitable antecedent. As usual for proper names, *John* will get accommodated: x is added to $U(K_1)$ together with the two associated conditions which are added to $\text{Con}(K_1)$. This results in K_1' :

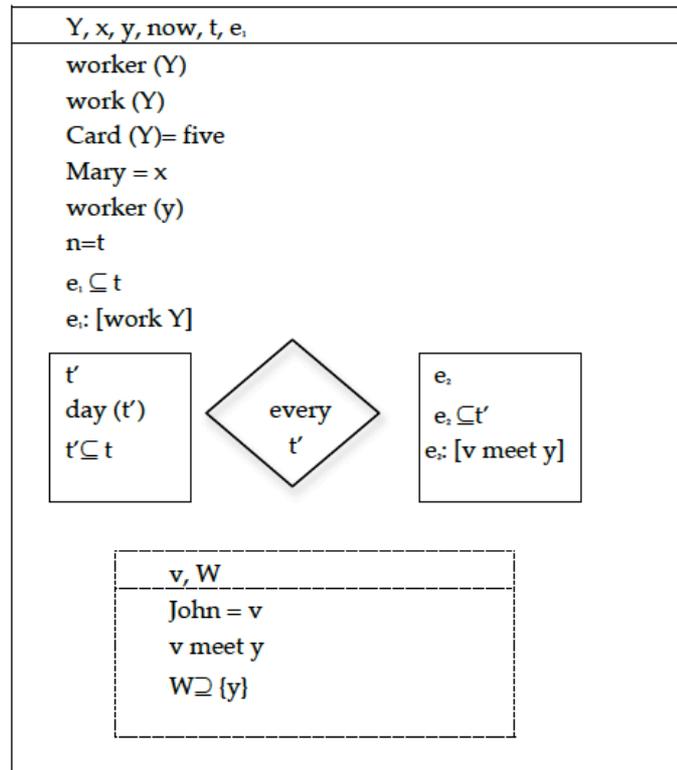


The next step is to resolve the A-structure set up by *pe*: since it does not have an antecedent along its projection line the construction will accommodate such an antecedent. As a result, the discourse marker *W* and the condition holding for it would be transferred to the accommodation site. The result is K_1'' :

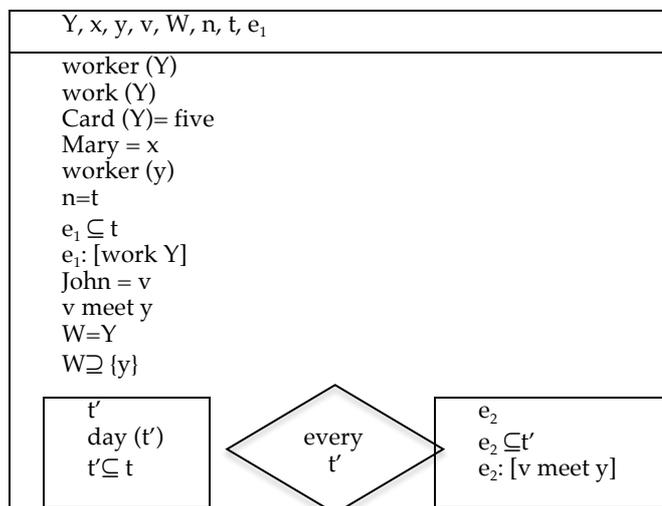


Note that K_1'' obtains when the second sentence in (3.33) is analysed independently. In other words, this is the result when the presupposed set induced by *pe* does not have an accessible antecedent. To account for (3.33) DRS K_1 should, however, be interpreted against the main DRS K_0' . This implies merging the two DRSs first. Merging amounts to a union operation involving the universes of discourse of the two DRSs as well as their conditions and A-structures.

Step 1: Merging K_1 and K_0 :



Step 2: resolving A-structures: the discourse referent introduced by the proper name together with its condition will be accommodated as already shown. The next step would be to resolve the A-structure set up by *pe*: by going up along its projection line, we discover a suitable antecedent, Y, for the presupposed discourse referent W which may thus be equated with it ($Y=W$). Furthermore, the associated condition ($Y=W$) is transferred to the binding site. The antecedent Y will thus inherit the descriptive information associated with the presuppositional anaphor ($W=Y$):



Thus, the presuppositional anaphor set up by *pe* may be bound to a pre-established antecedent: this implies identification of the presuppositional anaphor to the antecedent and transfer of the associated condition to the binding site. When there is no discourse old antecedent available for the presuppositional anaphor set up by *pe*, the derivation proceeds as shown in the demonstration before merging the two DRSs K_1 and K_0' . More specifically, instead of being bound, the presuppositional anaphor set up by *pe* will be accommodated.

5. Conclusions

The aim of this section was to establish the *pe* is not a specificity trigger as argued in the literature, but a trigger for partitivity.

Indeed, simple *pe* indefinites need not be necessarily specific: besides the preferred specific interpretation that *pe* marking renders available, there is also a way for one to interpret the respective DP as non-specific. Even more, there are various contexts which disambiguate between the two readings just mentioned by forcing the non-specific one.

Pe DPs lose their specific reading in such contexts, just like their unmarked counterparts. Would we then say that *pe* indefinites are just like their unmarked correspondents (given the similarity between the two with respect to the disambiguating contexts)? Actually, the non-specific readings that the two types of indefinites give rise to when in such contexts are quite different: in the case of *pe* marked indefinites

the referent denoted by the DP is understood as a member of a larger familiar set. This reading is not immediately available for unmarked indefinites read non-specifically. The contribution of *pe* rather has to be linked to partitivity.

The last subsection of section 3 provided a DRT analysis of *pe* indefinites. The partitive reading triggered by *pe* is accounted for in terms of the mechanism of presupposition resolution by entering as presupposed material in the DRS a group discourse marker, *V*, together with the condition that the discourse referent introduced by the indefinite, *y*, be included in *V*: $V \supseteq \{y\}$ ¹⁰. The presupposed set is then either resolved by way of being bound to an appropriate antecedent or through accommodation if such an antecedent is missing.

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¹⁰ The relation holding between *V* and *y* may either amount to a set-membership one if the *pe* marked indefinite is in the singular, or to a set-subset relation in case the indefinite denotes a group referent.