A contrastive analysis of nominal in English, Persian & Turkish languages based on Generative Grammar

Khodaverdi Alizadeh¹, Hadi Valimohammadi²

¹. Department of English language and linguistics, Ahar branch, Islamic Azad University, Ahar, Iran
². Department of English Language and Linguistics, Ahar branch, Islamic Azad University, Ahar, Iran

Corresponding Author email: Hadi.vm@live.com, khodaverdializadeh@gmail.com, Khodadad13552000@yahoo.com

ABSTRACT: This study aims at determining the similarities and differences of using nominal in three different languages of English, Persian and Turkish. As the structuralism scholars have emphasized, the language is composed of a limited number of rules and we can compose unlimited sentences using this limited set of rules. Regarding their views, nominal is an important part of each sentence in virtually all languages. Nominal can replace nouns, noun phrases and complements in English and as nouns are used in so many languages as an important part of the grammar, and grammatical rules utilize it in various positions such as subjects, objects and prepositional phrases, the researcher intends to get to a comprehensive understanding of the similarities and the differences of using nominal in three languages mentioned above. In this article, the researcher wants to use a contrastive analysis based approach to make conclusions, because it is believed that this method clarifies the similarities and differences of two or more distinct languages better. Also the viewpoints of great scholars such as Chomsky who proposed the idea of generative grammar and developed it until he proved the benefits of this approach in different linguistic fields, will be taken into consideration.

Keywords: nominal, structuralism, contrastive analysis, generative grammar

INTRODUCTION

The search for a universal design of grammar has long motivated research in linguistic theory. Language is both universal among humans and specific to us. Any child can acquire fluent mastery of any of the thousands of human languages, given sufficient exposure, but no animal has this capacity. These simple facts have suggested many linguists that there must be a universal design of grammar, a common organizer structure of all languages that underlies their superficial variations in modes of expression. If this universal grammar is a biologically given form of knowledge, as many linguists assume today, then study of invariants of the structure of human languages may tell us something fundamental about the human mind.

This rationalist, universalist conception of linguistics has a long intellectual tradition, appearing in the works of philosophers and grammarians of the past six centuries. In this century it has been revived by Noam Chomsky. Chomsky's great achievement is to couple the universalist conception of language from the tradition of philosophical grammar with a far more precise model of linguistic structure adapted from the mathematics of formal systems developed in this century. This powerful combination of ideas, called "generative grammar," has revolutionized linguistic theory. In the methodological paradigm of generative grammar, formal representations of linguistic structures are developed and empirically tested against native speakers’ knowledge of their language. Universal grammar limits the space of formal structures.

Generative grammar holds that language cannot be adequately characterized solely in terms of a formal description of its overt constituents, or “surface structure.” A more abstract representation is also needed to represent the implicit linguistic knowledge of speakers. Chomsky has conceived of this abstract representation as a “deep” or initial structure which undergoes sequential serial operations (transformations) to derive the overt perceptible form. It is to explain how these abstract formal structures are acquired by speakers that Chomsky developed his rationalist epistemology: human beings possess an innate faculty specialized for language which enables them to acquire complex human languages despite the poverty of stimulus in their learning environment.
Nominal is an important part of each sentence in virtually all languages. Nominal can replace nouns, noun phrases and complements in English and as nouns are used in so many languages as an important part of the grammar, and grammatical rules utilize it in various positions such as subjects, objects and prepositional phrases, the researcher intends to get to a comprehensive understanding of the similarities and the differences of using nominal in three languages of Turkish, Persian and English.

**Nominal systems regarding number**

This section gives a brief outline of the framework adopted in this work. It does so by analyzing the nominal system of languages such as English, giving particular emphasis on the issues with respect to number. In other words, the denotational properties of nominal and what they encode in terms of singularity and plurality are investigated. After that, based on the framework introduced, a novel account of Turkish and Persian number system that captures the facts in the language will be proposed.

**The Nominal System and Number in English**

Chierchia (1998ab, 2003), in a series of papers, investigates the nominal system and the count-mass distinction of such languages as English and Italian as well as Chinese and argues in favor of a ‘semantic parameter’ in language in terms of what nominal denote cross-linguistically. This model has further been elaborated in the subsequent work by Landman (2006) and Rothstein (2007, 2008), especially for its implications on the count/mass issues in languages. However, the roots of this approach go back as far as Link (1983, 1991) and Gillon (1992, 1999 and 2009) which has also proposed similar ideas with respect to the properties of nominal and the count distinction in languages such as English and Chinese. Basically, Chierchia works on what nominal in languages like English denote and observes that they show differences in terms of their denotational properties. More specifically, Chierchia investigates the count/mass distinctions in languages such as English, Italian and Chinese and proposes that count nouns like spoon, pond and virtue differ from mass nouns like silverware, water and generosity in certain respects. The point here is that what these nominal refer to is quite different from each other. In other words, count nouns in English have a clear lexical distinction between singularity and plurality (1998a:53-54). That is to say, singular count nouns are always singular and plural count nouns are plural, which makes them distinct from each other in terms of number. On the other hand, mass nouns come from the lexicon with plurality already built in. This means that mass nouns should be regarded as lexically plural whereas count nouns are singular at the lexical level and get pluralized by way of the pluralization rule in the language. It is for this reason that mass nouns behave in a way that differs from the behavior of count nouns. This difference mainly manifests itself in the determiner system of the language. It should also be noted here that Chierchia’s proposal includes the assumption in which nouns are considered to denote entities with atomic (i.e. minimal) parts. In other words, mass nouns denote entities with atomic/minimal parts just like count nouns do. Therefore, there is no distinction between count and mass nouns in terms of atomicity. However, Chierchia proposes a formal distinction between count nouns and mass nouns in languages like English by using set-theoretic formalisms to account for the distinction in terms of count/mass. This view suggests that a singular count noun, a plural count noun and a mass noun should have the denotational properties represented in (1).

1. a. A singular count noun denotes a set of singularities (i.e. singular elements/atoms) such as pencil and house.
   b. A plural count noun denotes a set of pluralities of entities like pencils and houses.
   c. A mass noun denotes a set of ordinary individuals plus all the pluralities of such individuals like furniture and hair.

The discussion above indicates that singular count nouns clearly single out the relevant atoms/minimal part and refer to singular entities only. Also, count nouns show a noticeable grammatical difference in terms of number (i.e. singularity vs. plurality) whereas this is not the case for mass nouns. The question that arises at this point is what might be the reason for the apparent difference between count and mass nouns. In order to answer this question, Chierchia proposes a mechanism which he calls vagueness. What the idea of vagueness suggests is that the minimal/atomic parts of what mass nouns denote may be vague or unspecified mostly in their physical form and this might hinder them to be grammatically countable. More specifically, he argues that “…[M]inimal parts of mass entities are vague. …[F]or each mass noun there are minimal objects of that kind, just like for count nouns, even if the size of these minimal parts may be vague” (Chierchia, 1998a:54). That is to say, the set of minimal entities that mass nouns refer to is vague in a way that the set of minimal entities that count nouns denote is not. Chierchia elaborates on the mass nouns in (2) to illustrate this point.

2. a. furniture
   b. water, sand

According to this view, the minimal instances of a mass noun like, say, furniture are rather underspecified. In other words, what counts as a piece of furniture is somewhat vague (Chierchia, 1998a:68) and can be determined out of the context. It is for this reason that mass nouns are inaccessible to grammatical counting.
while count nouns are fully accessible. This line of reasoning also extends to other types of mass nouns as in (2b). In other words, what they refer to is only vaguely specified; therefore, they are not accessible to counting either.

It has been pointed out above that there is a noticeable difference in the nominal system of English with respect to number (i.e. singularity and plurality).

In other words, the singular noun book is true of singular books while the noun 'book's is true of pluralities of books. It was also shown that the count/mass distinction displays itself in the nominal domain of the language and the mass noun furniture is lexically plural in the sense that it is true of single pieces of furniture as well as pluralities thereof. This gives to the question how nominal should be treated in Turkish and Persian. In other words, how nominal fit into the system outlined given that it has been noted in the literature that nominal do not make a distinction in terms of number in their bare form in Turkish and also in Persian. This apparent difference between the two sets of languages (English versus Turkish & Persian) requires an account in which nominal in Turkish and Persian need to be treated differently and formally represented in such a way to capture the facts in a unified manner.

**Nominal and the Number System in Turkish and Persian**

The discussion above illustrates that there is a distinction between nominal like car and cars in English in that the former denotes sets of singularities whereas the latter denotes sets of pluralities. It has also been noted above that bare nominal in Turkish and Persian behave in a way that they do not display any difference in terms of number. In other words, a nominal encodes nothing in its bare form in terms of singularity and plurality in these languages. This indicates that the number system of Turkish and Persian should be different from that of English in certain respects. In other words, as far as bare nominal is concerned, there should not be any difference at the lexical level in terms of number. Schroeder (1999) and Corbett (2000:14), among others, argue that a bare noun like car in Turkish and casa in Persian can mean 'house' or 'houses' in a given structure. On the other hand, its plural from, casa in Turkish and casa in Persian should be interpreted as referring to the pluralities of houses only. This indicates that, all things being equal, a bare noun is always ambiguous between a singular reading and a plural reading in Turkish and Persian. This is exemplified with an example below.

(3) a. داماشگاه گربه (Turkish)

roof-LOC cat exist
There is a cat / are (some) cats on the roof.'

b. رو پشت بام گربه هست (Persian)

LOC-roof cat exist
There is a cat / are (some) cats on the roof.'

c. دون یکم کوچه به پایه گذنی (Turkish)

yesterday our neighborhood-DAT policeman come-EVID
Evidently, a policeman / policemen came to our neighborhood yesterday.'

d. دوره به کوچه ما پایه آمد (Persian)

yesterday-DAT our neighborhood policeman come-EVID
Evidently, a policeman / policemen came to our neighborhood yesterday.'

What is important in (3a) and (3b) is that the sentence is true in those cases in which there is only one cat on the roof. It is also true if there is more than one cat walking on the roof. In other words, the bare nouns داماشگاه 'cat' in Turkish and گربه 'cat' in Persian 'cat' does not encode any information on the number of cats in question. Similarly, the sentence in (3c) and (3d) can be uttered if there is only one policeman or more than one that came to the neighborhood. I argue that this should be taken as evidence showing that bare nouns are number-neutral in Turkish and Persian. In other words, a bare nominal does not encode any properties in terms of singularity and plurality of an entity in question in these two languages.

A bare noun like دیروز پشت بام گربه 'plate' is true of singularities of plates as well as pluralities thereof. Its behavior clearly indicates that bare singulars do not show any difference with respect to singularity and plurality at the lexical level in two languages of Turkish and Persian. On the other hand, a noun like casa in Persian and casa in Turkish 'plate-PL' which is derived from its singular counterpart through plural formation is true of pluralities of plates only. In other words, while bare nominal denote sets of singularities plus sets of pluralities, nouns with plural marking denote only sets of pluralities. This difference is captured in (4) below.

(4) a. میز استوانه ای پشت بام وار (Turkish)

table-LOC plate exist
There is a plate / are plates on the table.'

b. روي میز پشت بام هست (Persian)

LOC-table plate exist
There is a plate / are plates on the table.'

c. میز استوانه ای پشت بام وار (Turkish)
There are plates on the table.

The above examples illustrate existential sentences. Let us consider a sentence with a verbal element in it, as in (5)

(5) a. أحمد کتاب اوخودو (Turkish)
Ahmad book read-PAST
‘Ahmet read a book / books.’
b. أحمد كتاب خواند
Ahmad book read-PERS (Persian)
‘Ahmet read a book / books.’
c. أحمد کتاب‌های اوخودو (Turkish)
Ahmad book-PL read-PAST
‘Ahmet read books.’
d. أحمد کتاب‌ها خواند (Persian)
Ahmad book-PL read-PAST
‘Ahmet read books.’

Similar to what we have seen in (4a) and (4b), in (5a) and (5b) the number of the books read is not specified in the sentence. The sentence would be true in those cases in which only one book was read. It would also be true if more than one book (i.e. three, four books or more) has been read. In contrast to this, the sentence in (5c) and (5d) is true only in those instances where a plurality of books has been read.

The question that arises at this point is how the ambiguity in terms of number is resolved in these languages. In other words, what kind of mechanism do Turkish and Persian use in order to make a clear-cut distinction with respect to number in a given structure? The answer to this question is that, as observed in different languages, Turkish and Persian refer to the numeral بیر and یک ‘one’ to encode singularity. In other words, a nominal co-occurs with a numeral in order to specify the number of the entity it refers to. This is illustrated in (6).

(6) a. کیفده بیر کتاب وار (Turkish)
bag-LOC one book exist
There is a book in the bag.
b. در کیف یک کتاب هست (Persian)
LOC-bag one book exist
There is a book in the bag.
c. باغدا بیر ایت یاتیب (Turkish)
garden-LOC one dog stand-PROG
A dog is sleeping in the garden.
d. در باغ یک سگ خوابیده (Persian)
LOC-garden one dog stand-PROG
‘A dog is sleeping in the garden.’

The difference between (4a,b) and (6a,b) is that in the latter the noun is not in its bare form and takes a numeral. The presence of the numeral disambiguates the number and the noun is interpreted as singular only. This is also true for the sentences in (6c) and (6d) in which the noun takes a numeral and the only reading available is the singular one. In addition to that, what is also interesting is that when a noun is used with a numeral such as سه or اوچ، پنج or اوچ، چهار or اوچ، پنج or اوچ، یک ‘four’, ‘five’ and ‘four’, ‘five’, ‘four’, ‘five’, ‘one’, ‘ten’, the plural marking does not appear on the noun. As a matter of fact, the co-occurrence of the nominal with the plural suffix leads to ungrammaticality. This contrast is exemplified below.

(7) a. میز اوستونده اوچ/پنج/ده مجله وار (Turkish)
table-LOC three / five / ten magazine lie-PROG
There are three / five / ten magazines lying on the table.
b. روی میز سه/پنج/ده مجله وار (Persian)
LOC-table three / five / ten magazine lie-PROG
There are three / five / ten magazines lying on the table.
c. میز اوستونده اوچ/پنج/ده magazine ل ر وار (Turkish)
table-LOC three / five / ten magazine-PL lie-PROG
There are three / five / ten books lying on the table.
d. روی میز سه/پنج/ده مجله هست (Persian)
LOC-table three / five / ten magazine-PL lie-PROG
There are three / five / ten books lying on the table.
In (7a) and (7b) the noun ‘magazine’ appears with different numerals and the plural marker is not required on the noun. This shows that nominal can freely take numerals denoting more than one entity without the need to use the plural morphology. In fact, the ungrammaticality of the same noun with the plural marker in (7c) and (7d) indicates that the specification of number (i.e. the singular/plural contrast) is realized through other elements in these languages. The presence of a numeral in the structure makes pluralization on the nominal unnecessary.

If we assume that the analysis of Turkish and Persian number system outlined above is on the right track, we can also capture the difference in terms of the category of number in languages like English and Turkish & Persian. For instance, Corbett (2000), among others, argues that there is a difference between singularity and plurality at the lexical level in English. Consider the difference in Table 1.

Table 1. The representation of number in English

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Singular</th>
<th>Plural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>table</td>
<td>table-s</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>car</td>
<td>car-s</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>man</td>
<td>men</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>child</td>
<td>child-ren</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is obvious that the difference between table and tables is number-related. The former is taken to be singular (i.e. being true of singular tables) whereas the latter is plural (i.e. being true of pluralities of tables). In other words, different forms encode the difference in terms of number and capture the singular/plural distinction in the language. Consider the pair below.

(8) a. There is a table in the kitchen.
b. There are tables in the kitchen.

On the other hand, when the number system of Turkish and Persian are considered, a different paradigm is observed. As has been noted above, it appears that the number distinction between singulars and plurals is not so clear-cut in Turkish and Persian. This is illustrated in Table 2.

Table 2. The representation of number in Turkish and Persian

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Turkish</th>
<th>Plural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Singular</td>
<td>Plural</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>میز 'table'</td>
<td>میز 'table'</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>انسان 'human being'</td>
<td>انسان 'human beings'</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>نفر 'cat'</td>
<td>نفر 'cat'</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>نفر 'cat'</td>
<td>نفر 'cat'</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>نفر 'cat'</td>
<td>نفر 'cat'</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persian</td>
<td>Plural</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>انسان 'people'</td>
<td>انسان 'people'</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'people'</td>
<td>'people'</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'people'</td>
<td>'people'</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'people'</td>
<td>'people'</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As has been noted before, a bare noun like انسان 'person' in Turkish and انسان 'people' in Persian is lexically number-neutral in that it does not exclude singularities or pluralities in its extension. As opposed to this, such a plural noun as انسان 'people' in Turkish and انسان 'people' in Persian ‘people’ only denotes pluralities, excluding singularities.

The question that arises at this point is whether this analysis should also be extended to give an account for the issues concerning the count/mass distinction in Turkish and Persian. As was noted above, it has been suggested in the earlier analyses that there is no grammatical count/mass distinction in Turkish and Persian. This is in contrast with what is found in languages like English and Italian. In other words, it is well-known that there is a set of nominal in languages like English that is generally referred to as mass nouns since these nominal show certain morpho-syntactic and semantic differences. As discussed above, mass nouns like footwear, advice and flour cannot take number marking and plural morphology in the syntax. This is the opposite of what is observed in Turkish and Persian where the majority of nominal, if not all, can appear with numerals and the plural morphology without leading to ungrammaticality.

The Relationship between Definiteness and Specificity: Two Views

Partee 1972 suggests that non-specific definites exist. She first points to Donnellan’s 1966 distinction between referential and attributive definite NPs.

The sentence in (9) is ambiguous between a referential and an attributive reading. On the referential reading, the speaker intends to say that the individual, whom he refers to as “the murderer of Smith” is insane. On the attributive reading, the speaker refers to whoever fits the description, “the murderer of Smith”, whether or not he knows who that person is.

(9) The murderer of Smith is insane.

Partee proposes that the same distinction applies to indefinite NPs like
(10), which linguists had referred to as ambiguous between a specific and nonspecific indefinite reading.

(10) John will marry a girl his parents don't approve of.

She suggests collapsing the two distinctions, so that crucially, attributive definite NPs would be identified as "non-specific".

More recently, von Heusinger 2002 adopts a similar idea. He says, "I assume that specificity is a 'referential property' of NPs. This property cuts across the distinction of definite vs. indefinite, like generosity." He gives the examples in (11) from Prince 1981.

(11) a. Indefinite specific:
A body was found in the river yesterday.
b. Indefinite non-specific:
I never saw a two-headed man.
c. Definite specific:
The body was found in the river yesterday.
d. Definite non-specific:
They'll never find the man that will please them.

Note that Prince referred to the example in (11d) as "attributive". Thus, according to von Heusinger, non-specific definites exist.

A different view is encoded in the Givenness Hierarchy of Gundel, Hedberg and Zacharski 1993 (GHZ). The next section discusses the Givenness Hierarchy and illustrates how definiteness entails specificity on that account.

The Givenness Hierarchy

The Givenness Hierarchy is the hierarchy of Cognitive Statuses shown in (12), each of which is associated with a particular form of referring expression that signals the discourse status of the referent in relation to the hearer’s expected background knowledge. That is, each form of referring expression instructs the hearer how to cognitively locate or identify the (discourse) referent of the expression.

(12) FOC > ACT > FAM > UID > REF > TID

it this/that/this N that N the N indefinite this N a N

(13) I couldn’t sleep last night. A dog kept me awake.
(14) I couldn’t sleep last night. This dog next door kept me awake.
(15) I couldn’t sleep last night. The dog next door kept me awake.
(16) I couldn’t sleep last night. That dog next door kept me awake.

The weakest status is (T)ype-(ID)entifiable, as in (13), where all the hearer needs to do is to associate a type representation with the NP. The hearer has to know what a dog is. For (REF)erentiability (or specificity), as in the colloquial indefinite example in (14), the hearer has to be able to associate a unique representation with ‘this dog next door’ by the time the sentence has been processed. For (U)njeral (ID)entifiability, as in (15), the hearer has to be able to associate a unique representation with ‘the dog next door’ by the time the NP has been processed. As for the (FAM)iliarity status, an example is given in (16) in which the hearer has to locate a representation, in memory, of the dog, perhaps long term memory. For (ACT)ivated, the representation must be in working memory. And finally, for in (FOC)us, the representation must be at the current focus of attention. By definition, each status entails all statuses to the right. Because of this entailment relation, a given form is predicted to be possible if any status above or to the left of that form on the hierarchy obtains.

The claim is, then, that an indefinite article phrase can be used in some cases even if a higher status obtains. Thus in (17), an indefinite article phrase or a demonstrative phrase can be used to refer to the activated dog and man. Example (18), from Hawkins 1991, shows that the inference that an indefinite article phrase typically refers to a novel entity can be cancelled, suggesting that the novelty condition of Heim 1982, which states that the referent of an indefinite article phrase must be novel, is a conversational implicature rather than an entailment.

(17) Look. A man is hitting a dog. / The man is hitting a dog. / A man is hitting that dog. / That man is hitting a dog. [Gundel et al. 2007]
(18) I met a student before class. A student came to see me after class as well—in fact it was the same student I had seen before. [Hawkins 1991]

GHZ propose that the scale of cognitive statuses is subject to manipulation by Grice’s Maxim of Quantity, shown in (19).

(19) Maxim of Quantity (Grice 1975)
Q1: Make your contribution as informative as required (for the current purposes of the exchange).
Q2: Do not make your contribution more informative than is required.

Grice’s first maxim of quantity results in use of an indefinite article phrase typically implicating that the referent is not familiar. GHZ proposes that Grice’s second maxim of quantity applies in cases where it is not relevant to signal that a higher status obtains, and thus explains why definite article phrases that only need to
be uniquely identifiable are often used to describe entities that are familiar. Familiarity is thus also a conversational implicature of definite phrases, and can be cancelled as in the example from Abbott 2008 in (20):

(20) The new curling center at MSU, which you probably haven’t heard of, is the first of its kind. [Abbott 2008]

The view that definiteness entails specificity is part of what the Givenness Hierarchy predicts. Crucially, UID entails REF since, if the hearer can associate a unique representation with the entity by the time the NP has been processed, he can associate that representation by the time the sentence has been processed. Every definite is specific, by definition. Also, definiteness does not entail familiarity, since the status FAM is more restrictive than the status UID on the Givenness Hierarchy. In the following section, we will show that these predictions are consistent with facts about specificity and familiarity in Turkish and Persian, which are languages that encode such distinctions morphologically.

**Specificity in Turkish and Persian**

In this section, we demonstrate that Turkish and Persian encode specificity almost identically, and show that the attributive noun phrases that Partee and von Heusinger analyzed as non-specific are in fact marked specific in Turkish and Persian.

The basic word order in both languages is SOV. Turkish belongs to the Altaic language family, and Persian is an Indo-Iranian language. Turkish marks specific direct objects with accusative case marking. Without accusative marking, objects get a non-specific reading. In (21a) the NP 'a lawyer-ACC' gets a specific reading; while in (21b) the NP 'a lawyer' is interpreted as non-specific. Likewise, Persian marks specific direct objects with the suffix -را, as shown in (14).

(21) Turkish:

a. بویون بیر وکیلی گوره جاغام
   today one lawyer-ACC see-PROG-1SG
   'I am seeing a (particular) lawyer today.'

b. بویون بیر وکیل گوره جاغام
   today one lawyer see-PROG-1SG
   'I am seeing a lawyer today (some lawyer or other).'

(22) Persian:

a. امروز یه وکیلی رو می بینم
   today a/one lawyer-ACC see-PROG-1SG
   'I am seeing a (particular) lawyer today.'

b. امروز یه وکیل می بینم
   today a/one lawyer DUR see-PROG-1SG
   'I am seeing a lawyer today (some lawyer or other)'

Note that bare nominal, with or without a numeral, is interpreted as non-specific, whereas -ACC/-را marked NP’s are always specific. However, -ACC/-را marked NP’s without numerals are interpreted as definite. Moreover, all definite object NPs such as proper names, demonstrative expressions, pronouns and strong quantifiers require -ACC/-را marking in both languages, as illustrated for definite and strong quantifiers in (23)–(24).

(23) Turkish:

أحمد کتابی */ هر کتابی * اخودو
Ahmet book-ACC/every book-ACC read-PAST
'Ahmet read the book/every book.'

(24) Persian:

علي كتاب */ همه كتابها رو* خواند
'Ali read the book/every book.'

With respect to the issue of the relationship between definiteness and specificity, the critical examples involve definite noun phrases that are attributive in the sense of Donnellan 1966. Partee’s 1972 extension of Donnellan’s distinction, which equates specific NP’s with the referential use and non-specific NP’s with attributive use of definite NP’s, entails that every attributive noun phrase is non-specific. Contrary to this claim, though, Turkish and Persian require specificity marking on attributive NP objects, like those in (25), even when the speaker doesn’t know the identity of the referent.

(25) Turkish:

a. قاتل ي* گره ناباق
   murderer-ACC find-MOD-1PL
   'We must find the murderer (whoever it is).'

Persian:
b. باید قاتل را پیدا کنیم.  
must murderer-FAM-RA find do-1PL
'We must find the murderer (whoever it is).

In summary, the Turkish and Persian examples furnish evidence in support of the claim implicit in the Givenness Hierarchy that every definite noun phrase is specific. We showed that specificity marking is indeed required in the two languages with the attributive use of the definite NP, a claim contrary to Partee and von Heusinger’s prediction that attributive noun phrases are non-specific.

CONCLUSION

It has been argued in this paper that bare nominal in Turkish and Persian is number neutral in the sense that it does not display any difference in terms of number. In other words, a bare noun does not give any reference to singularity or plurality of the entity it denotes in these two languages on the contrary to English. This idea is in agreement with the earlier proposals and the analysis here has used formal tools to account for the facts with respect to nominal and the number system in the language and also it should be reinforced here that nominal are inseparable parts of all languages with slight differences and they are included in Universal Grammar definitely.

Also, we reviewed the Turkish and Persian nominal systems with respect to specificity, and established that definiteness entails specificity in both languages, a consequence encoded in the Givenness Hierarchy. We concluded that Turkish and Persian behave identically with respect to specificity marking although English is different from these two languages in this characteristic, too.

REFERENCES