

Debrecen Workshop on Pronouns

**Indefinite pronouns with two indefiniteness markers  
and the semantics of specificity:  
the case of Hill Mari**

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February 25, 2017

# Introduction

Indefinite pronouns: a formal definition (Haspelmath 1997: 22)

*Indefinite pronouns consist of (i) a stem indicating ontological category, and (ii) a formal element shared by all members of an indefinite pronoun series, such as some- and any- in English. <...> This element will be called indefiniteness marker.*

- Sometimes a pronominal stem attaches two different indefiniteness markers, so there are the following indefinite pronoun series:

Marker1 + stem

Marker2 + stem

Marker1 + Marker2 + stem

# Hill Mari

- Finno-Ugric < Uralic
- A minority language of Russia spoken in Western Mari El Republic



# Indefinite pronouns in Hill Mari: Overview

- Indefinite pronouns in Hill Mari are derived from interrogatives
- There are six indefiniteness markers
- There is no unmarked series

# Indefinite pronouns in Hill Mari: Overview

- Four of the indefiniteness markers can be combined: *ta-*, *iktä*, *än'ät*, *gän'ät*
- Only a combination of a prepositive and a postpositive marker is possible in Hill Mari
- In this way, the following combined series exist in Hill Mari:
  - *ta + gän'ät*
  - *ta + än'ät*
  - *iktä + gän'ät*
  - *iktä + än'ät*

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# The indefiniteness marker *ta-*

- The marker *ta-* has been borrowed from Chuvash (Majtinskaya 1964)
- In Chuvash, it comes from a conjunction and can be used in several contexts with the meaning of unknownness to the speaker
- In Hill Mari, *ta*-indefinites are strictly specific

# Indefinite pronouns with *ta-*

SPECIFIC, KNOWN TO THE SPEAKER

(1) *män' tälät ta-ma-m näl-än-äm*

I you.dat indef-what-acc take-prf-1sg

‘I bought something for you’.

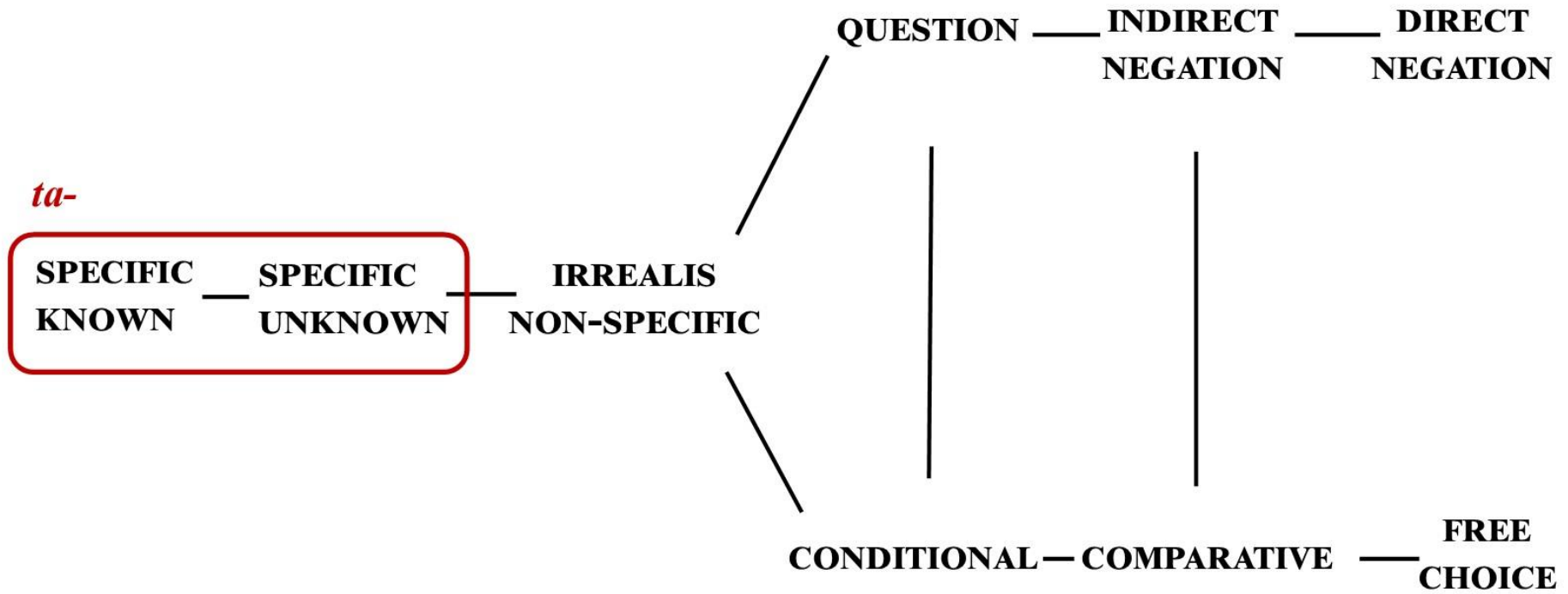
SPECIFIC, UNKNOWN TO THE SPEAKER

(2) *ta-gü okn'a-škâ stuč-a*

INDEF-who window-ill knock-npst.3sg

‘Somebody knocks on the window’.





# Indefinite pronouns with *gän'ät*

- A postpositive conditional marker *gän'* + an additive particle *-ät*
- Occurs also as concessive marker
- Negative polarity item

# Indefinite pronouns with *gän'ät*

## Modal

(3) *kânam gän'-ät tol-ân kerd-e-š*  
when if-add come-cvb can-npst-3sg

‘It is possible that he comes back one day’.

## General question

(4) *kânam gän'-ät moskva-štâ âl-ân-at?*  
when if-add Moscow be-prf-2sg

‘Have you ever been to Moscow?’

# Indefinite pronouns with *gän'ät*

## Conditional protasis

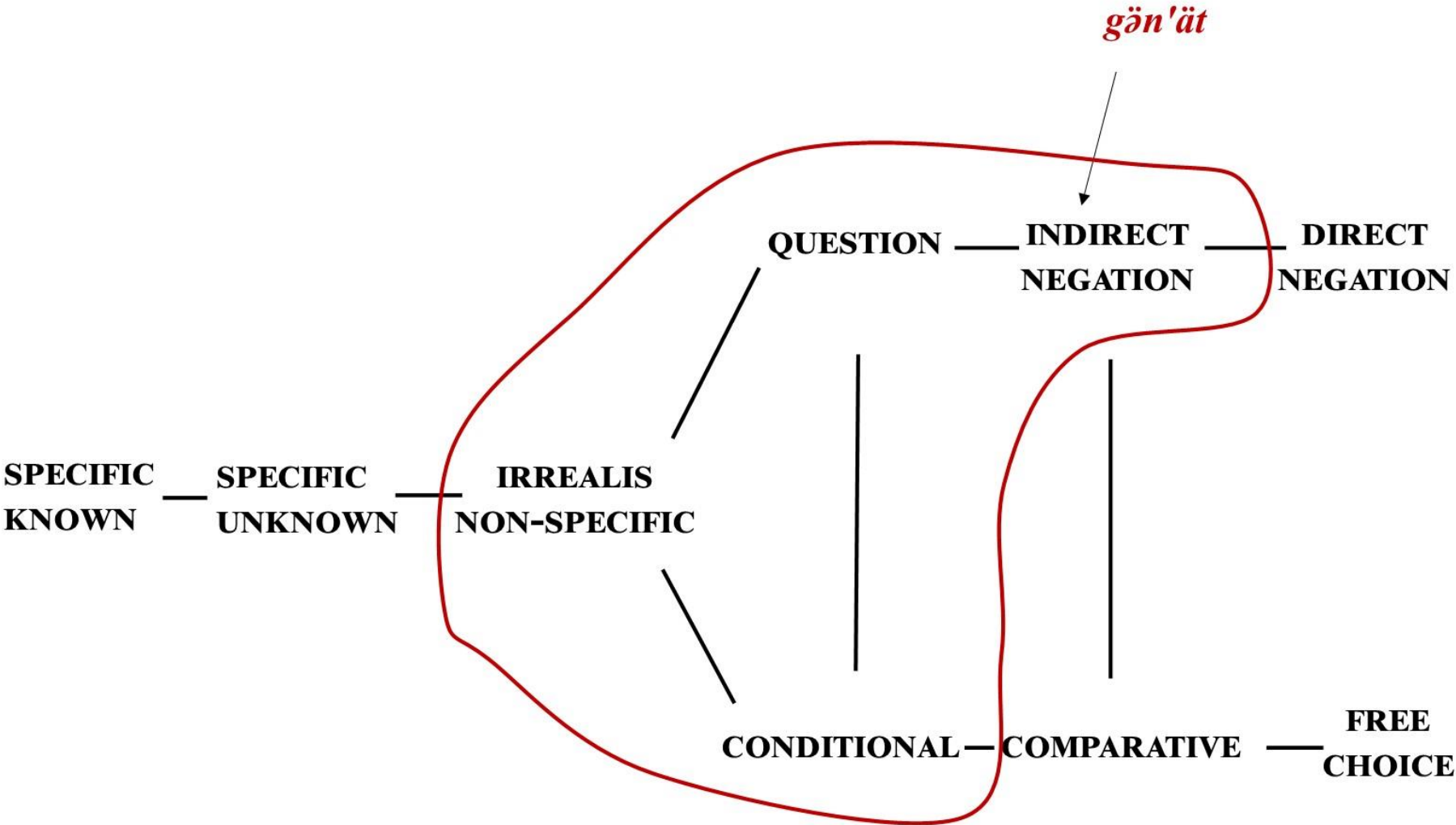
(5) *kü gän'-ät tol-e-š gän',jängärtä*  
who if-add come-npst-3sg if call.imp

‘If anybody comes, call me’.

## Indirect negation

(6) *män' a-m än'än'ä, što maša ma-m gän'-ät r'isuj-en pu-a*  
I neg.npst-1sg think that Masha what-acc if-add draw-cvb give-npst.3sg

‘I don't think that Masha will draw anything’.



# Indefinite pronouns with *än'ät*

- Derived from the Russian dialect particle *an(o)* ‘anyway, however; but’ (Bereczki 2002: 77) + additive particle *-ät*
- This marker is multifunctional in Hill Mari

- Modal particle

(8) *vesirgodâm*            *än'ät*    *tol-ân*            *kerd-ä-m*  
day.after.tomorrow    maybe    come-cvb    can-npst-1sg  
'Maybe I will be able to come the day after tomorrow'.

- Disjunction

(9) *tä-gü*            *tol-ân,*            *än'ät*    *maša,*    *än'ät*    *mar'ina*  
indef-who    come-prf    maybe    Masha    maybe    Marina  
'Somebody came, it is either Masha or Marina'

- Independent uses

(10) - *kečäväl jakte*    *šokt-e-t?*                            - *än'ät*  
lunch    before    be.in.time-npst-2sg    maybe  
'Will you manage with it before the lunch? – Probably yes'.

# Indefinite pronouns with *än'ät*

- As well as *gän'ät*-indefinites, indefinite pronouns with the marker *än'ät* are used in several negative polarity contexts:
  - Conditional protasis
  - General question
- But their semantics is more restricted
  - Not possible under indirect negation
  - Not possible in several irrealis contexts
  - Not possible in d-linked contexts



# Indefinite pronouns with *än'ät*: restrictions

- *Än'ät*-indefinites are possible only in several irrealis contexts

- Epistemic modality

(11) *prazn'ik-âštâ maša ma-m än'ät mâr-en pu-a*  
party-in Masha what-acc maybe sing-cvb give-npst.3sg  
'It is possible that Masha will sing something at the party'.

- Future

(12) *män' šač-mâ keč-eš kü-m än'ät sägäräl-ä-m*  
I be.born-nmz day-lat who-acc maybe invite-npst-1sg  
'I'm going to invite somebody for my birthday party'.

- Any other irrealis functions (the irrealis non-specific according to Haspelmath (1997)) cannot be expressed by means of this series.

- Imperative

(13) \**ma-m*    *än'ät*    *kač*

what-acc maybe eat

Intended: 'Eat something'.

- Volitive contexts

(14) \**kol'a*    *šola-žâ-lan*                      *ma-m*    *än'ät*    *pu-ne-žä*

Kolya    brother-poss.3sg-dat    what-acc maybe    give-des-poss.3sg

Intended: 'Kolya wants to present something to his brother'.

- Deontic modality

(15) *??t'et'a*    *ma-m*    *än'ät*    *kenvact-ân*    *kerd-e-š*

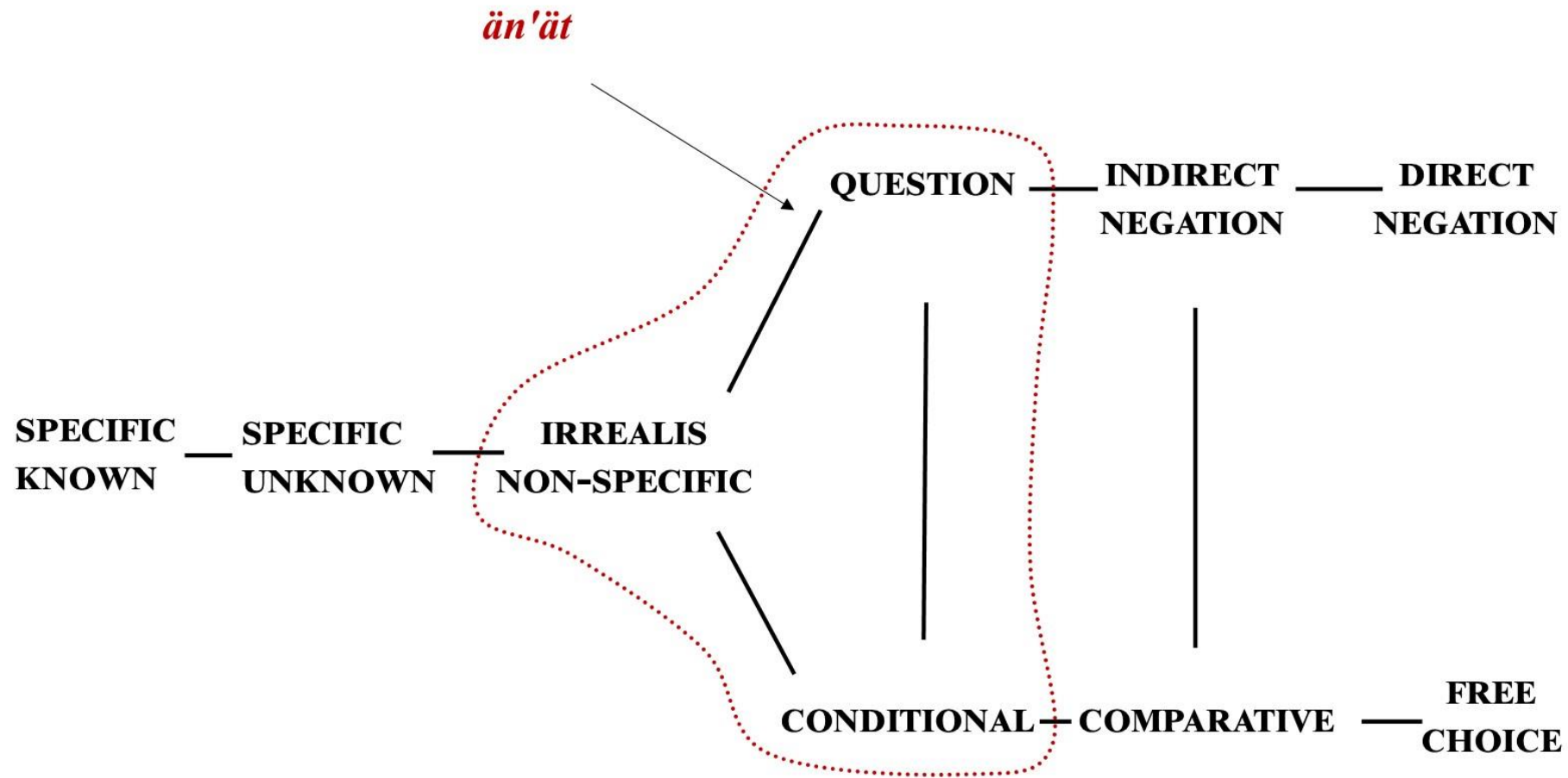
child    what-acc maybe    drop-cvb    can-npst-3sg

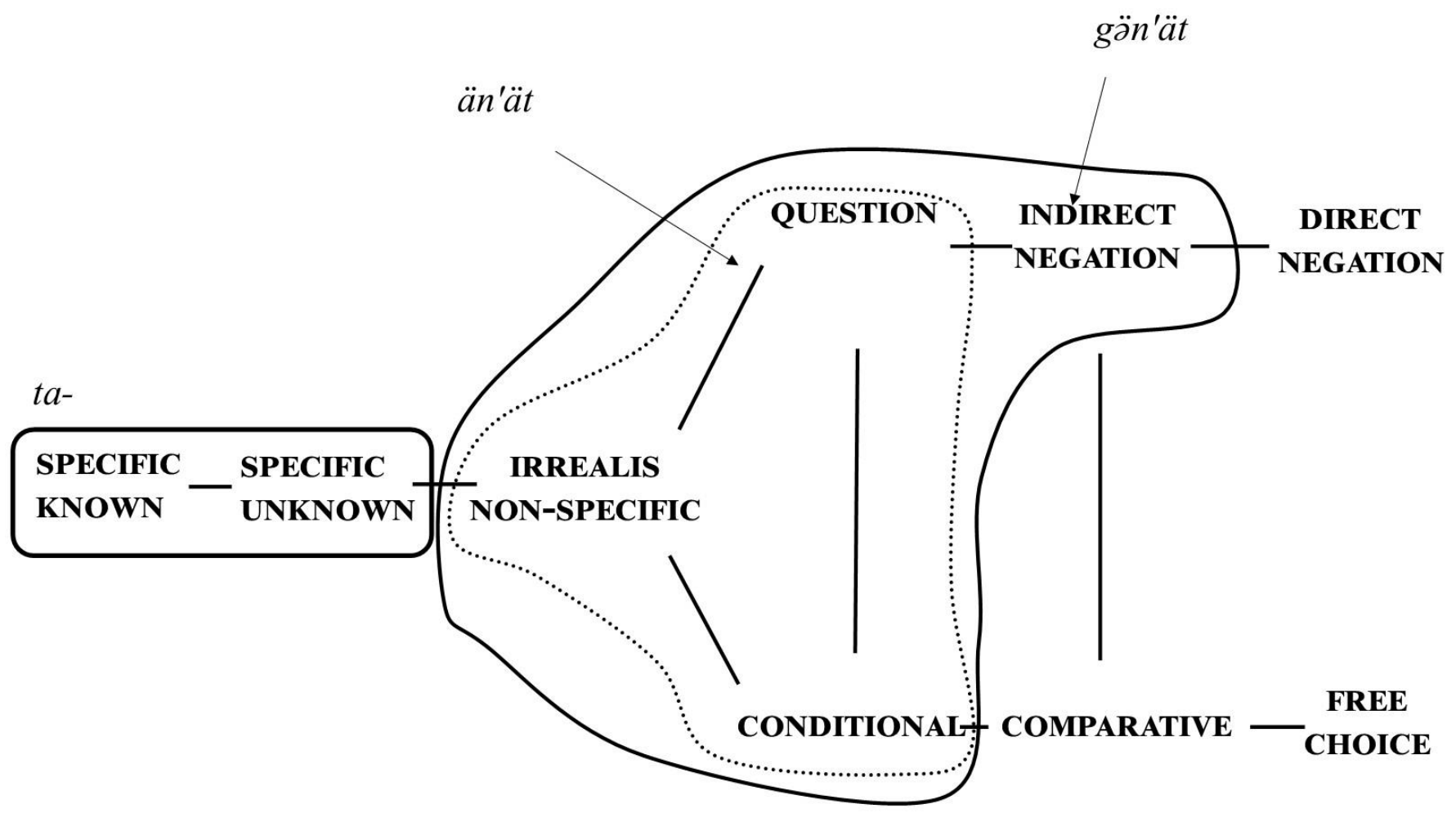
'Children can drop anything'.

# Indefinite pronouns with *än'ät*: restrictions

- Moreover, indefinite pronouns with the marker *än'ät* are impossible in d-linked contexts (in any function).

- (16) a. *tädä äške jarat-âmê mârê-žê logâc maxan'-äm gän'ät mâralt-en pu-a*  
he refl love-nmz song-poss.3sg from which-acc if-add sing-cvb give-npst.3sg
- b. \**tädä äške jarat-âmê mârê-žê logâc maxan'-äm än'ät mâralt-en pu-a*  
he refl love-nmz song-poss.3sg from which-acc maybe sing-cvb give-npst.3sg
- ‘He will sing one of his favorite songs’.





# Indefinite pronouns marked twice

- *ta + gän'ät*
- *ta + än'ät*

## *ta + gän'ät*

- Specific, unknown to the speaker
- Several non-specific uses
- D-linking requirement

# *ta + gän'ät*: specific interpretation

- In opposite to *gän'ät*-indefinites, double marked pronouns can be specific (unknown to the speaker)

(17)a. *tä-gü gän'-ät zvon'-en, no män' trupka-m näl-en šoktâ-de-la-m*  
indef-who if-add call-prf but I phone-acc take-cvb be.in.time-car-pst-1sg  
'Somebody called me, but I did not manage to pick up the phone'.

b. *<sup>Ok</sup>tä-gü zvon'-en, <...>*  
indef-who call-prf

c. *\*kü gän'-ät zvon'-en, <...>*  
who if-add call-prf



## *ta + gän'ät*: several irreal contexts

- In modal / future / habitual contexts the *ta-gän'ät* indefinites can be used without any additional restrictions

- (18) a. *kol'a ta-ma-m gän'-ät äštä-ne-žä*  
Kolya indef-what-acc if-add make-des-3sg
- b. <sup>OK</sup>*kol'a ma-m gän'-ät äštä-ne-žä*  
Kolya indef-acc if-add make-des-3sg
- c. *\*kol'a ta-ma-m äštä-ne-žä*  
Kolya indef-what-acc make-des-3sg  
'Kolya wants to make something'.

# *ta + gän'ät*: D-linking requirement

- The *ta-gän'ät* indefinites can occur in some of the functions only when d-linked.

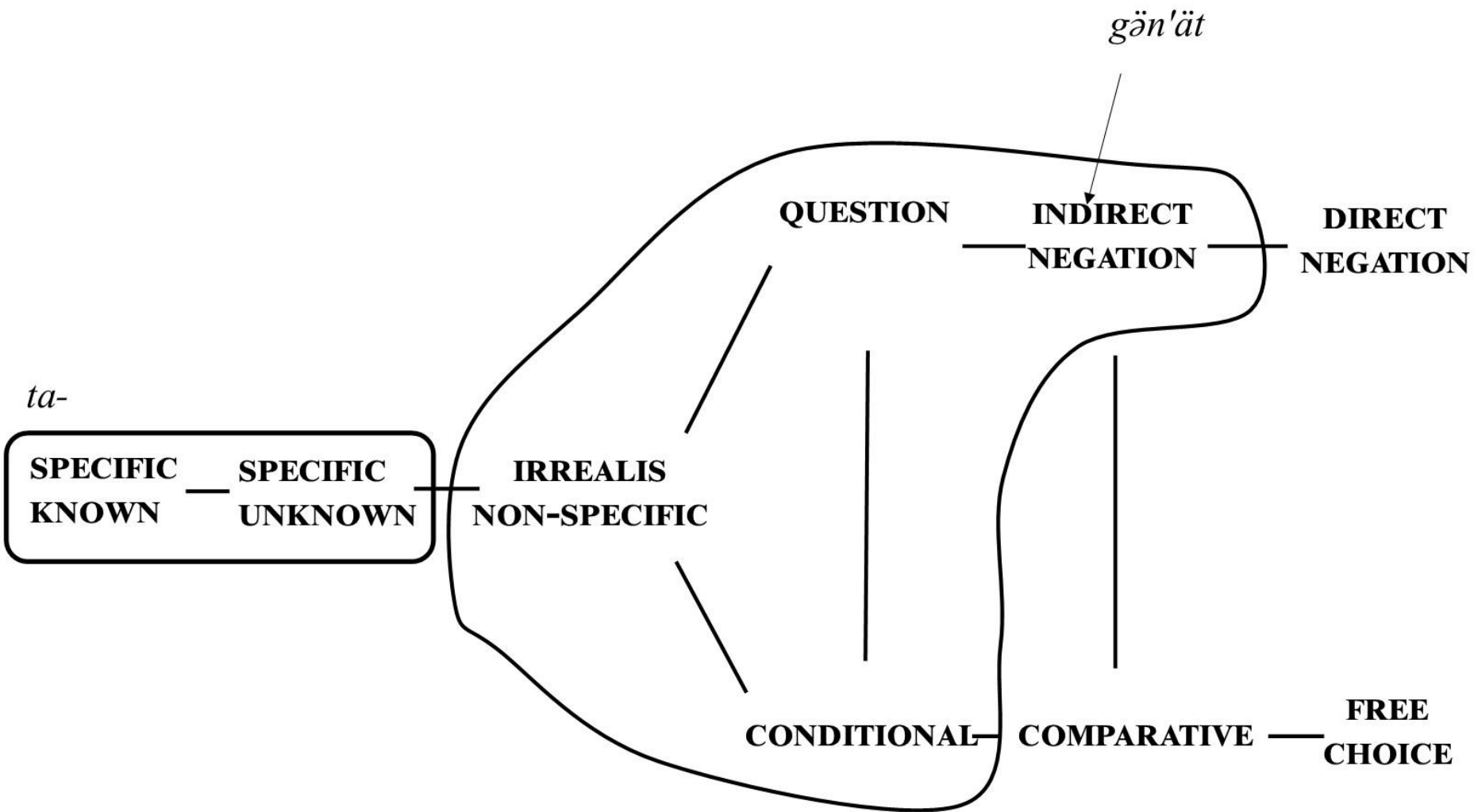
- Imperative

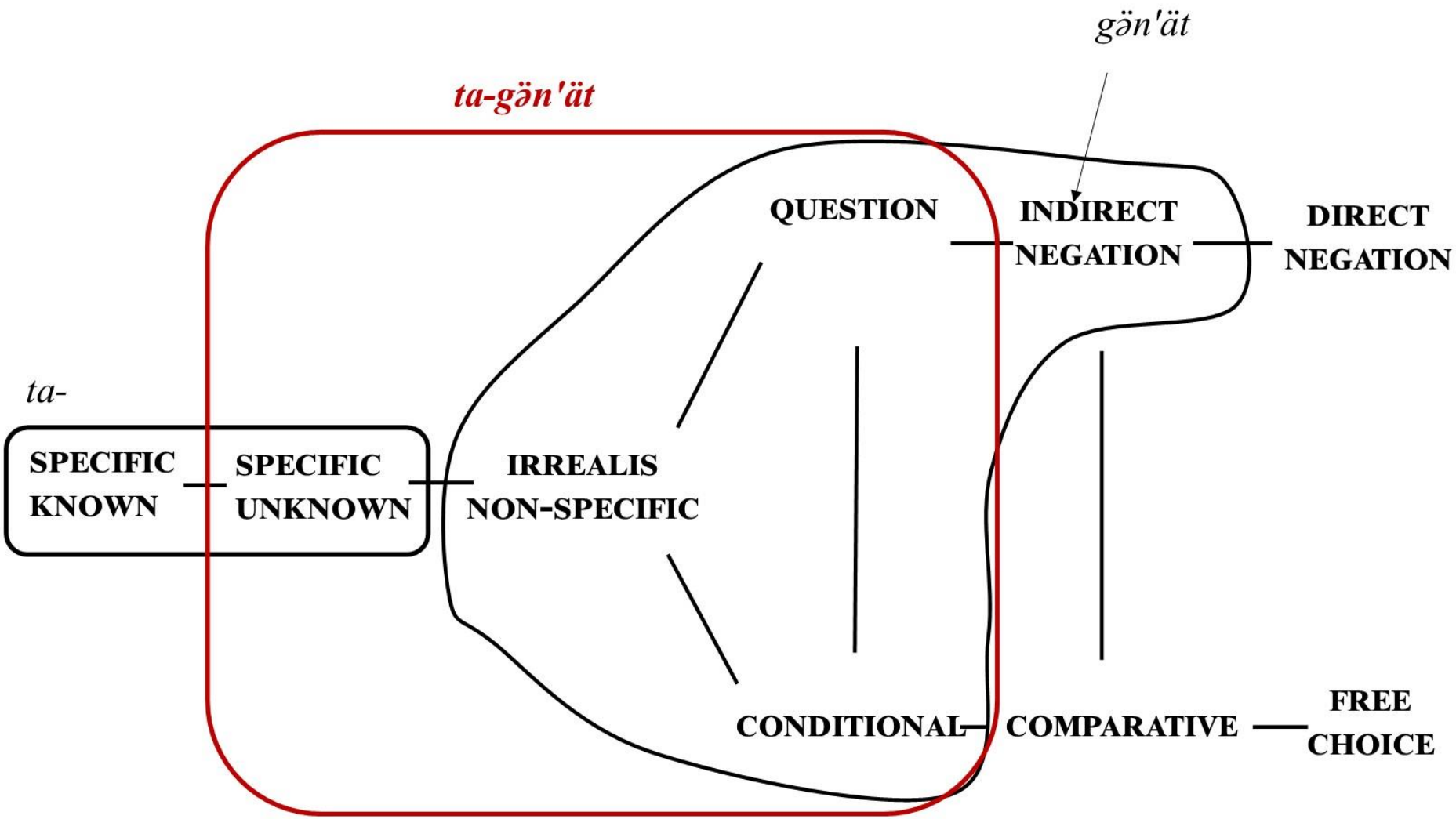
(19) *ma-m gän'-ät / \*ta-ma-m gän'-ät ârgâ*  
what-acc if-add indef-what-acc if-add sew.imp  
'Sew something'.

(20) *madâš-vlä-et logâc ta-ma-m gän'-ät kandâ*  
toy-pl-poss.2sg from indef-what-acc if-add bring.imp  
'Bring me any of your toys'.

# *ta + gän'ät*: D-linking requirement

- The *ta-gän'ät* indefinites can occur in some of the functions only when d-linked.
  - General question
  - Conditional protasis





## *ta + än'ät*

- Possible even in d-linked contexts
- For some of the contexts, d-linking is required

# *ta + än'ät*: no D-linking requirement

- *Än'ät*-indefinites in general cannot be d-linked
- The *ta-än'ät* indefinites are allowed in the same environment ...

(21) *ti lem-eš ta-ma-m än'ät / ma-m än'ät pištä-mä-kä,*  
this soup-ill indef-what-acc maybe what-acc maybe put-nmz-ill  
*totlâ-rak li-e-š*  
tasty-cmpr become-npst-3sg  
'If you add anything to this soup, it will taste better'.

# *ta + än'ät*: no D-linking requirement

- *Än'ät*-indefinites in general cannot be d-linked
- The *ta-än'ät* indefinites are allowed in the same environment under D-linking as well

(22) *ti šudâ-vlä logâc ti lem-eš ta-ma-m än'ät / \*ma-m än'ät*  
this herbage-pl from this soup-ill indef-what-acc maybe what-acc maybe

*pištä-mä-kä, totlâ-rak li-e-š*  
put-nmz-ill tasty-cmpr become-npst-3sg

‘If you add any of these species to this soup, it will taste better’.



# *ta + än'ät*: semantics widening under D-linking

- In several irrealis functions the *än'ät*-indefinites are prohibited
- On contrary, the *ta-än'ät* indefinites are possible in those contexts, but only when d-linked

(23) a. \**ma-m än'ät kačk*

what-acc maybe eat.imp

b. \**ta-ma-m än'ät kačk*

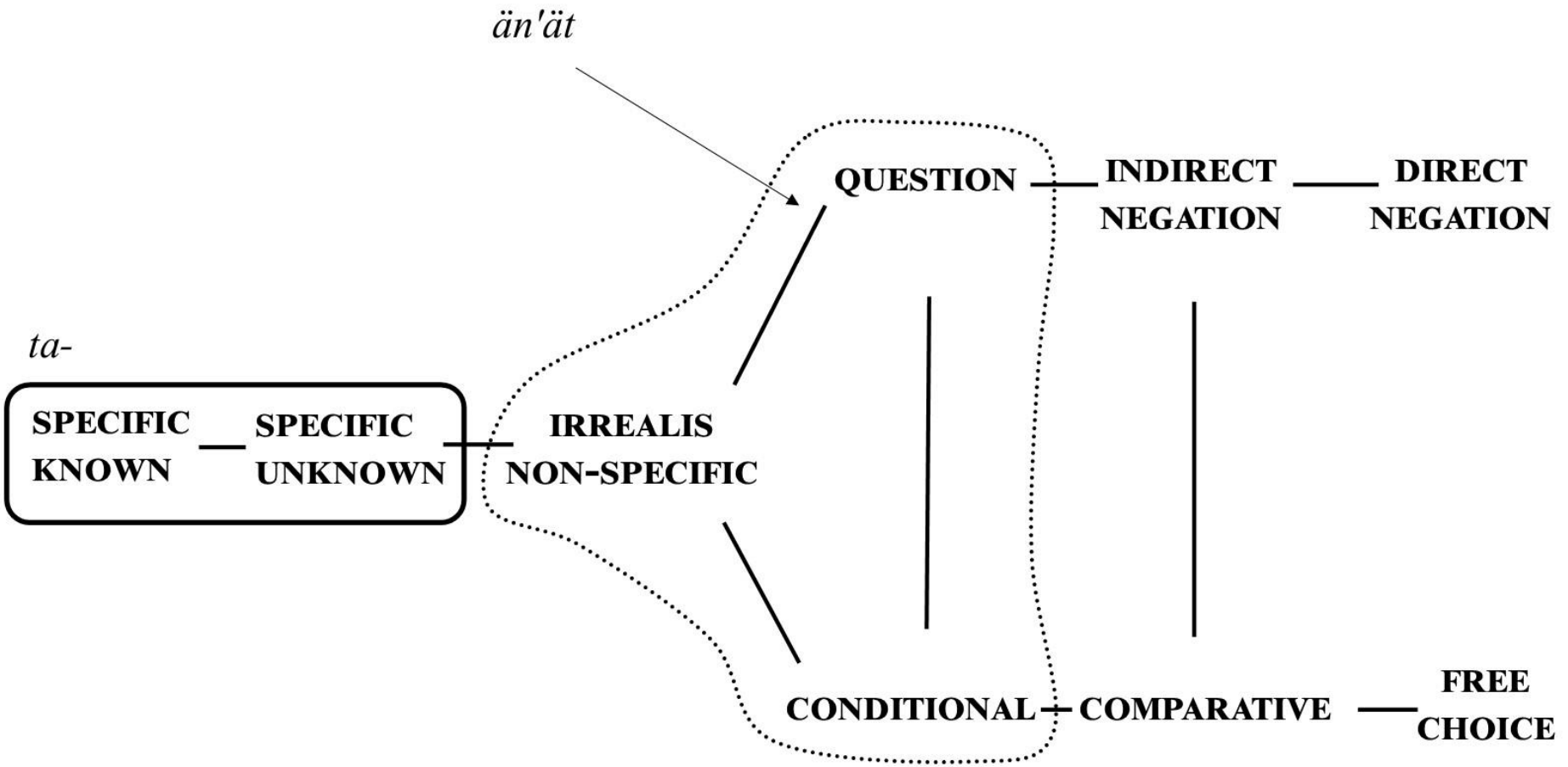
indef-what-acc maybe eat.imp

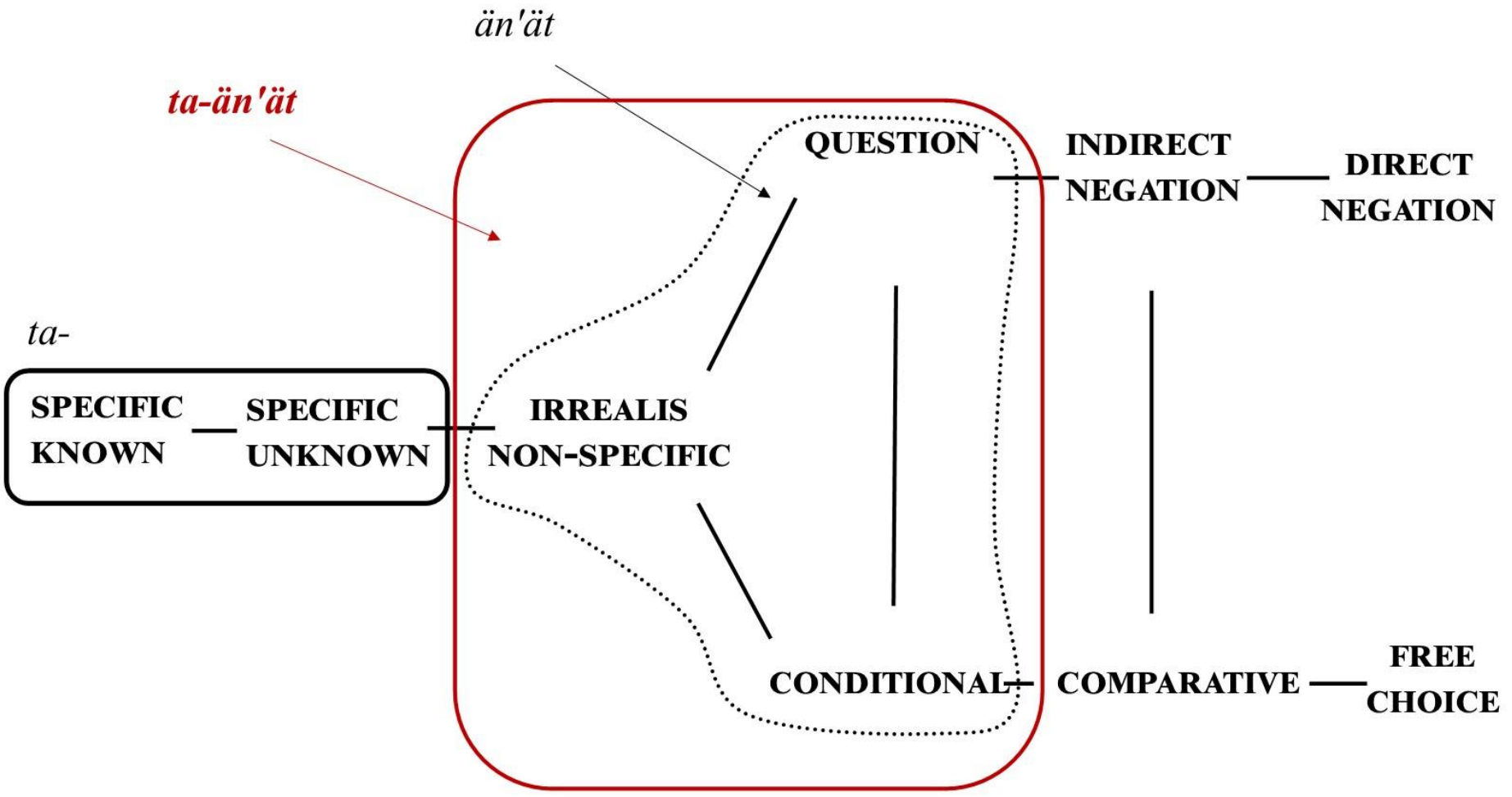
(You look so tired and pale, when you come home, please...) 'Eat anything'.

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- In several irrealis functions the *än'ät*-indefinites are prohibited
- On contrary, the *ta-än'ät* indefinites are possible in those contexts, but only when d-linked

(24) *ti müän-vlä logâc ta-ma-m än'ät / \*ma-m än'ät kačk*  
this sweet-pl from indef-what-acc maybe what-acc maybe eat.imp  
'Eat any of these sweets'.





# Intermediate conclusion

- The range of interpretations of indefinite pronouns with the marker *ta-* and one of the *gän'ät / än'ät* indefinites do not intersect – *ta-* indefinites are specific, while indefinite pronouns with the markers *gän'ät / än'ät* are non-specific
- The interaction of these markers evokes D-linking effects, since D-linking is related to specificity (Enç 1991; von Heusinger, Kornfilt 2005)

# Intermediate conclusion: problems

- A huge variation within the irrealis non-specific function
  - Deontic vs. epistemic modality (Aloni, Port 2011)
  - Future vs. imperative vs. habitual (Tretjakova 2009)

# Irrealis non-specific: variation

- We distinguish the following 'subfunctions' within the Haspelmath's irrealis non-specific function:
  - Imperative
  - Future
  - Modality
    - Epistemic modality (participant-internal)
    - Deontic modality (permission)
    - Volition
    - Necessity
  - Habitual

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    - Volition
    - Necessity
  - **Habitual**



# Irrealis non-specific: variation

	Imperative	Future + Epistemic modality	Deontic modality, Volition, Necessity, Habitual
<i>gän'ät</i>	ok	ok	ok
<i>ta-gän'ät</i>	ok (DL)	ok	ok
<i>än'ät</i>	*	ok (*DL)	*
<i>ta-än'ät</i>	ok (DL)	ok	*

ok = possible disregarding D-linking

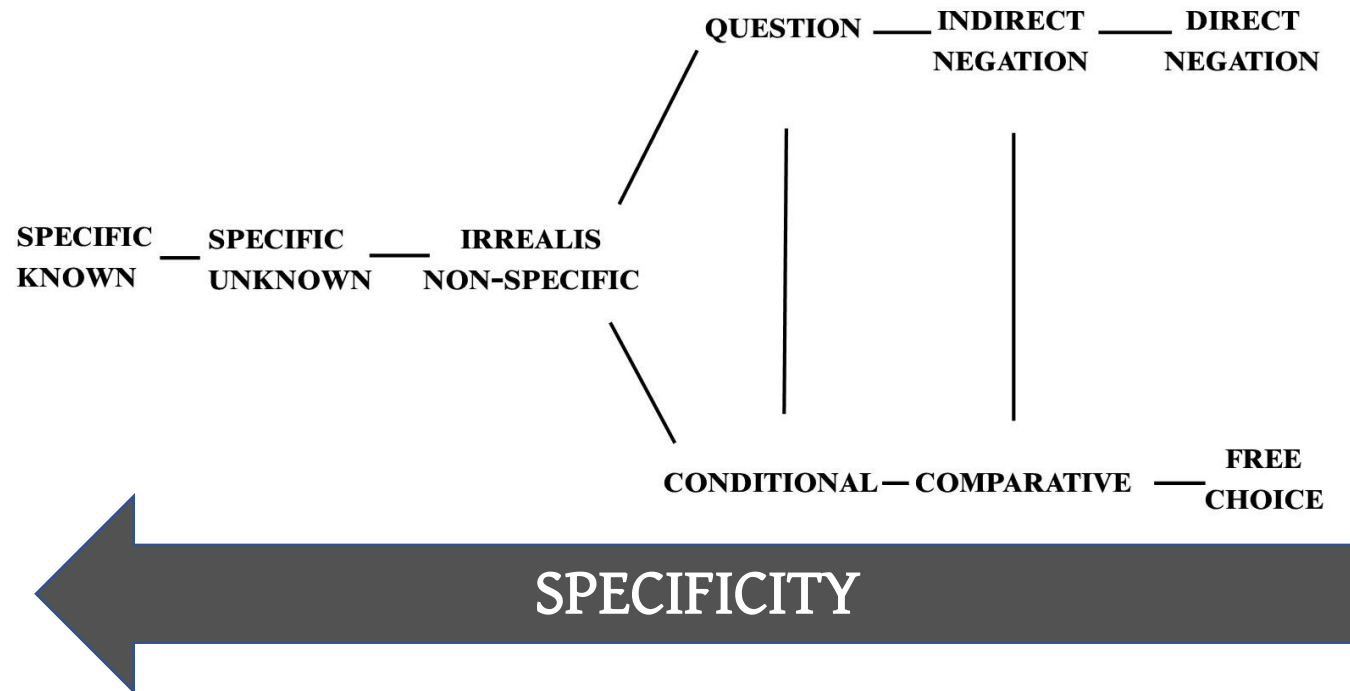
ok (DL) = possible under D-linking only

ok (\*DL) = possible only when non-d-linked

\* = prohibited

# Why so?..

- The mutual arrangement of the functions on the semantic map reflects (non-)specificity: specificity increases to the left of the map



# Why so?..

- Let's suggest that the 'subfunctions' can also be ranked as more or less specific

# Irrealis non-specific: variation

	Specific unknown	Future + Epistemic modality	Other modality types	Imperative	General question, conditional
<i>gän'ät</i>	ok	ok	ok	ok	ok
<i>ta-gän'ät</i>	ok	ok	ok	ok (DL)	ok (DL)



Seems to be OK! But...

# Irrealis non-specific: variation

	Specific unknown	Future + Epistemic modality	Other modality types	Imperative	General question, conditional
<i>än'ät</i>	*	ok(*DL)	*	*	ok(*DL)
<i>ta-än'ät</i>	*	ok	*	ok(DL)	ok

# Why so?..

- Remember that *än'ät* has multiple functions in Hill Mari
- One can suggest that it is not well established as indefiniteness marker yet
  - e.g., some of the speakers can place *än'ät* before the pronominal stem (dialect variation?); double indefiniteness marking in such a case is little to impossible

# Why so?..

- The restrictions on the use of the *än'ät*-indefinites come from the semantics of the particle *än'ät* and not from their (non-)specificity
- The external marking of *än'ät*-indefinites by the *ta*- marker increases their specificity

# The problem of imperative

- The outlier behaviour of imperative: why is this function possible for the *ta-än'ät*-indefinites, while it cannot be expressed neither by means of the *ta*-indefinites nor by the *än'ät*-indefinites?
  - Irrealis can sometimes be treated as realis (due to the context) (Mithun 1995)
  - And usually imperatives are incompatible with specific NPs (Portner 2004), with exception to conditional imperatives and several imperative-like constructions



# The problem of imperative

- Haspelmath (1997) claims that indefinite pronouns cannot cover less than three functions in the middle part of the map
- Maybe this middle part should be rearranged?

*peš*      *kogo*      *tau*  
very      big      thanks

**‘Thank you very much!’**

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