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

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February 25, 2017
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, gön'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 + gön'ät
  • ta + än'ät
  • iktä + gön'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’ tölät ta-ma-m näl-ön-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-škô stuč-a

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

‘Somebody knocks on the window’.
Indefinite pronouns with \( g\bar{o}n'\ddot{\ddash}t \)

- A postpositive conditional marker \( g\bar{o}n' + \) an additive particle \( \ddash\ddash\ddash\ell \)
- Occurs also as concessive marker
- Negative polarity item
Indefinite pronouns with gön'ät

Modal
(3) kənam gön'-ät tol-än kerd-e-š
    when if-add come-cvb can-npst-3sg
‘It is possible that he comes back one day’.

General question
(4) kənam gön'-ät moskva-štâ əl-än-at?
    when if-add Moscow be-prf-2sg
‘Have you ever been to Moscow?’
Indefinite pronouns with gön'ät

Conditional protasis

(5) kü gön'-ät tol-e-š gön', jöngörtä
who if-add come-npst-3sg if call.imp
‘If anybody comes, call me’.

Indirect negation

(6) män' a-m än'änä, što maša ma-m gön'-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) vesirgodôm  än'ät  tol-ôn  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-ôn,  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)  - kečvääl  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 gön'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'äť: restrictions

- än'äť-indefinites are possible only in several irrealis contexts

  - Epistemic modality
    (11) prazn'ik-âšt  maša ma-m än'äť mår-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-mô keč-eš kü-m än'äť sögöräl-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-žə-lan ma-m än'ät pu-ne-žə
  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-ðn kerd-e-ʃ
  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. tödä öške jarat-ём mårê-žô logâc maxan'-öm gön'ät måralt-en pu-a
   he refl love-nmz song-poss.3sg from which-acc if-add sing-cvb give-npst.3sg
   ‘He will sing one of his favorite songs’.

b. *tödä öške jarat-ём mårê-žô logâc maxan'-öm än'ät måralt-en pu-a
   he refl love-nmz song-poss.3sg from which-acc maybe sing-cvb give-npst.3sg
Indefinite pronouns marked twice

- ta + gōn'ät
- ta + än'ät
ta + gön'ät

- Specific, unknown to the speaker
- Several non-specific uses
- D-linking requirement
In opposite to *gän'-ät*-indefinites, double marked pronouns can be specific (unknown to the speaker)

(17)a. tā-gū  *gän'-ät* zvon'-en, no mën' trupka-m näl-en šoktā-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. œktā-gū  zvon'-en, <...>

   indef-who call-prf

c. *kü gän'-ät  zvon'-en, <...>

   who if-add call-prf
**ta + gön'ät: several irreal contexts**

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

(18) a. *kol'a ta-ma-m gön'-ät öštö-ne-žö*
   
   Kolya indef-what-acc if-add make-des-3sg

b. *kol'a ma-m gön'-ät öštö-ne-žö*
   
   Kolya indef-acc if-add make-des-3sg

c. *kol'a ta-ma-m öštö-ne-žö*
   
   Kolya indef-what-acc make-des-3sg
   ‘Kolya wants to make something’.
ta + gön'ät: D-linking requirement

• The ta-gön'ät indefinites can occur in some of the functions only when d-linked.
  • Imperative
    (19) ma-m gön'-ät /*ta-ma-m gön'-ät ṭrgâ
        what-acc if-add indef-what-acc if-add sew.imp
        ‘Sew something’.
    (20) madâš-vlā-et logâc ta-ma-m gön'-ät kandâ
        toy-pl-poss.2sg from indef-what-acc if-add bring.imp
        ‘Bring me any of your toys’.
**ta + gön'ät: D-linking requirement**

- The *ta-gön'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-ään'ät indefinites are allowed in the same environment ...

(21) ti lem-eš **ta-ma-m** än'ät / **ma-m** än'ät pištä-mä-kö,
    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-mö-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’.
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-vlā logâc ta-ма-m än'ät / *ма-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 gön'ät / än'ät indefinites do not intersect – ta- indefinites are specific, while indefinite pronouns with the markers gön'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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# Irrealis non-specific: variation

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<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Imperative</th>
<th>Future + Epistemic modality</th>
<th>Deontic modality, Volition, Necessity, Habitual</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>gän'ät</td>
<td>ok</td>
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<td>ok</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ta-gän'ät</td>
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<td>ok</td>
<td>ok</td>
</tr>
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<td>*</td>
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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

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Seems to be OK! But...
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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 outliner 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!’
References