This issue contains a selection of the papers presented at the international Workshop “On the Syntax and Interpretation of Specificity”, held on December 5–7, 2013, at the English Department of the University of Bucharest.

The volume opens with Farkas and Brașoveanu’s paper, which provides an excellent introduction to the problem. The authors consider the whole area of noun / determiner phrase (NP/DP) semantics in order to put specificity in historical and conceptual perspective. It is argued that the most relevant parameter in understanding specificity is that of the variation vs. stability of values across alternatives, with specificity determiners being anti-variation ones. This perspective opens up the possibility of understanding the richness of cross-linguistic variation in the area of specificity determiners. The theory proposed by the two authors is illustrated with the analysis of the English singular determiner some.

The next three papers consider topics which extend the discussion on specificity towards more general problems of reference and quantification.

Thus, professor Oltean’s paper focuses on a class of expressions whose referent is by definition specific, namely proper names. The paper provides arguments that strengthen the nondescriptional theories of names. In this interpretation, proper names are unstructured linguistic expressions, with no inherent meaning or sense, whose sole function is to denote an individual directly. Their semantic value lies in their denotation - the unique individual they refer to; they are like constants in the logical form. The author focuses on the difference between canonical and fictional names and proves that, in contrast to canonical names, fictional names function like variables, bound by an existential quantifier, the individuals they denote in the worlds of fiction being identified at the actual world by description.

Isac’s paper deals with the syntactic and semantic properties of the null pronominal DP pro. It is shown that, as long as the interpretation of pro in subjunctive imperative sentences in languages like Greek, Romanian or Spanish, is also taken into account, one cannot claim that pro is featureless, as recently proposed. Rather, the more traditional analysis of a contentfull pro must be maintained, even if in a modified form. Accordingly, it is argued that pro has interpretable, but unvalued φ-features, ultimately valued through agree with the verb that has raised to Mood.

Dobrovie-Sorin’s paper proposes a reinterpretation of Milsark’s (1977) classification of determiners into strong and weak determiners, focusing on strong indefinite determiners, a typical example of this category being the indefinite many. The author acknowledges the connection between most and many, but proves that their semantics differ sharply. It is shown that most is necessarily a quantificational determiner, in the sense of Generalized Quantification theory. In contrast, many, even when it is

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proportional, continues to be a cardinality predicate inside a referential (e-type) DP, which
denotes a plural entity. On the strength of this analysis, the author concludes that strong
indefinites in general are not quantificational, but rather entity-denoting expressions.

The last three papers represent more empirically oriented studies dealing with the
acquisition of the [+specificity] feature by young children, as well as with the realization
and import of this feature in syntax and at discourse level. Two of the papers present novel
contributions to the understanding of differential object marking (DOM) in Romanian.

Avram and Ciovânache’s paper is a language acquisition study on the learning of
differential object marker rā in Persian as L2 by speakers of L1 Romanian. In both Persian
and Romanian, DOM is constrained by specificity, but only in Romanian the animacy
feature plays an important role as well. The results of a grammaticality judgment task with
a group of adult L2 learners show that there is no L1 transfer of the animacy constraint and
that the L2 learning process is guided by the underlying semantic feature of the specificity
scale: referential stability. More generally, the results provide evidence in favour of direct
access to universal semantic features in L2 learning. The observed DOM learning route
indicates that referential stability is central to DOM systems: the learning process is guided
by referential stability at every stage.

Chiriacescu and von Heusinger’s paper, also devoted to DOM, compares the
conditions under which unmodified definite noun phrases are pe-marked, with the
conditions under which indefinite noun phrases are pe-marked on the basis of an
experimental study. Developing the theory of DOM, it is shown that pe-marking does not
only signal the referential property of specificity for indefinites and referentiality for
definites, but that it also signals the discourse-pragmatic property of Discourse Structuring
Potential (DSP). On the basis of this experiment, the authors argue that pe signals the DSP
of the referents it precedes. By virtue of their DSP, both definite and indefinite DPs were
shown to be more recurrent in the following discourse and to be more prone to shift the
topic of the discourse. These properties are not pragmatic, but “built in” or semantic, like
the properties of discourse particles.

Cornilescu and Dinu’s paper (see next RRL issue) starts from the often made claim
that in Romance languages, prenominal adjectives signal a [+specific] reading of the
containing DP and address this problem with respect to Romanian prenominal adjectives.
On the basis of a detailed syntactic and semantic study, several new results are arrived at.
First, the [+specific] reading is actually just one of the possible interpretations of
prenominal adjectives, since there is a well-defined class of prenominal adjectives which
have generic or taxonomic readings. Secondly, the Romanian prenominal space is not
homogeneous, accommodating both generic (taxonomic) readings and specific readings.
Nevertheless, prenominal adjectives represent a unitary class, by virtue of other semantic
properties, such as their mode of semantic combination with the noun, their modal,
quantificational features).