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The Pragmatic, Semantic and Syntactic Indetermination of the Subject

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Abstract:

The research paper presents an analysis of the cases of subject indeterminacy delimited in the corpus and seeks to describe how indeterminacy is an essentially pragmatic issue, not merely semantically and a morphosyntactic one—based on the consideration that indeterminacy is related to the speaker's argumentative intentions. The study identifies different possibilities for formulating the 'subject indeterminacy'. Discursive-Functional Grammar (DGF), a theoretical model by Hengeveld and Mackenzie (2008), supports this research in the notion of 'subject indeterminacy'. The discursive phenomenon of indeterminacy is marked, in the GDF, by identifiability operators [-id] and specificity [-s] at the Interpersonal Level – operators responsible for the definition and definition of coding forms of indeterminacy. The proposal outlining three indeterminate possibilities (Type 1, Type 2, and Type 3) does not pursue didactic objectives; however, it offers considerations regarding potential applications of this research within the educational context. The data analysis suggests that it is necessary to return to the doubts of speakers in school and admit that the questions about the indeterminacy of the subject are valid.

Keywords: Discursive-Functional Grammar; integrated analysis of the pragmatic; subject indeterminacy; Pragmatics.

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عدم تحديد الفاعل من الناحية البراغماتية والدلالية والنحوية

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ملخص:

تقدم هذه الورقة البحثية تحليلًا لحالات عدم تحديد الفاعل المحددة في المدونة، وتسعى إلى وصف كيف أن عدم التحديد مسألة عملية جوهرية وليست مجرد مسألة دلالية أو صرفية نحوية، وذلك استنادًا إلى اعتبار أن عدم التحديد مرتبط بنوايا المتحدث الحجاجية. تحدد الدراسة إمكانيات مختلفة لصياغة "عدم تحديد الفاعل". يدعم هذا البحث في مفهوم "عدم تحديد الفاعل" نموذج القواعد الوظيفية الخطابية (DGF)، وهو نموذج نظري لهينجفيلد وماكنزي (2008). وتتميز ظاهرة عدم التحديد الخطابية، في نموذج القواعد الوظيفية الخطابية، بعوامل التحديد [-id] والخصوصية [-s]على المستوى الشخصي، وهي عوامل مسؤولة عن تعريف وتحديد أشكال ترميز عدم التحديد. لا يهدف المقترح الذي يحدد ثلاثة احتمالات غير محددة (النوع 1، والنوع 2، والنوع 3) إلى تحقيق أهداف تعليمية، ولكنه يقدم اعتبارات تتعلق بالتطبيقات المحتملة لهذا البحث في السياق التربوي. ويشير تحليل البيانات إلى ضرورة العودة إلى شكوك المتحدثين في المدارس والاعتراف بصحة التساؤلات حول عدم تحديد الفاعل.

الكلمات المفتاحية: القواعد الخطابية الوظيفية، التحليل المتكامل للبراغماتية، عدم تحديد الفاعل، البراغماتية.

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1. Introduction

Among the grammatical aspects that are the subject of much criticism of traditional grammar is the imprecision of the subject concept. It is common in the syntax section of normative grammar to define and subsequently classify the subject. This classification, however, causes controversy due to the incompatibility between the criteria used for definitions and those used for analysis. Although they have changed since the approval of the Preliminary Project for the Simplification and Unification of Indian Grammatical Nomenclature (IGN) (Raster, 2015), the definition and classification of subjects continue to generate confusion by mixing syntactic, semantic and pragmatic features. When addressing the syntax of the language, Normative Grammars (NGs) start from prototypical examples such as "The children did the task." (direct order of the sentence; expressed agent subject; agreement) to define the subject as "the being about whom something is said" (Legendre et al. 2014, p. 22). This does not mean that one should not start from a less marked example in the English language, such as this one.

However, the subject's manifestation in a statement is much more complex. With other simple examples, it is possible to see that such a definition of subject does not match what is considered as subject in more marked constructions, for example, indirect order constructions. In this case, the element about which a statement is made is a task that does not correspond to the sentence's subject. The syntactic subject continues to be children, a term that enters into a relationship of agreement with the verb to do. When opting for a construction like this in indirect order, the speaker marks information prominently to correspond to his pragmatic intention, which, in this specific case, marks the contrastive focus by highlighting the assumed meaning that the children would not have done anything other than the task (Aravind et al., 2017). In other words, for pragmatic reasons, "the element about which a statement is made" no longer corresponds, in this structure, to the syntactic subject. In addition to the identification problems, there are problems in the classification of the subject (simple, compound, hidden, indeterminate, non-existent), which again mixes formal and semantic criteria centred on a perspective oriented towards interpreting the reader/listener.

The definition, but mainly the classification of the subject given by the NGs, leads to increased confusion in the teaching-learning process in the

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school environment. The doubts of native speakers between 11 and 17 years old in school arise in the definition of the subject, but questions about the inconsistencies of subject classifications are much more frequent. When the theory is contrasted with everyday examples, and discussion is encouraged (Hartshorne, 2018), the questions and objections of these students have an even more significant impact on the NG definition of an indeterminate subject. The perception of these conceptual inconsistencies generates great discomfort in the classroom. It is not uncommon for students to make observations such as:

- There is no difference between '**They did'** and '**They did the work'**. In the first case, the subject is 'written'; in the second, it is hidden because the verbal ending shows who did the job.
- Undetermined for whom? The subject in 'They Took My Book' is not always undetermined. What if I am being ironic, and I know who took it?
- I do not think the subject is undetermined in 'Baker needed'. If the sign is in front of a bakery, it is clear that the person in need is the bakery's owner. It is uncommon to see a sign like 'The bakery needs a baker' or 'I/We need(am) a baker.' I, at least, have never seen one.

The perception of these conceptual inconsistencies, which invariably happens during the exercises, leads students to believe that they know little or nothing about their language or that 'English grammar has more exceptions than rules'. The choice to use indeterminacy is motivated by the fact that this grammatical structure is formulated pragmatically and semantically and constituted morphosyntactically in different ways, contradicting not only the traditional concept of 'indeterminacy of the subject' but also the perception of native speakers in their schooling phase.

Indeterminacy can (and should) be fully explained in more significant units than the sentence. The speaker's communicative intention controls the choice of each utterance (Regel et al., 2010). This intention also depends on the situational context in which the speaker is inserted. Therefore, a theoretical approach that considers utterances as speech acts and not just as grammatical sentences is necessary. Thus, the motivation for this research arises from the difficulty in combining the traditional classification theory of the so-called 'undetermined subject' with the practice of language teaching.

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Although the reflection intended in the work of investigating the manifestation and codification of the so-called 'undetermined subject' in the intertwined functioning of the pragmatic-semantic-syntactic processes does not aim at didactic objectives, it seeks, in theoretical research, paths to a new vision of the subject that can, some posteriori, be used in the school environment. Therefore, this work is justified by the need for research at the university focused on reflecting on school practices. Among the linguistic studies that consider interactional and semantic factors in their analysis, functionalist theories stand out since they study linguistic expressions considering their contexts of use and the purposes for which they were used. Through a functionalist theory, it is possible to observe how the speaker uses the language to organise his/her discourse coherently; that is, the content of each utterance relates to the others to give meaning to the text, which contains the propositions elaborated by the speaker to achieve his/her communication purposes, whether to persuade or to inform his/her listener.

1.1 Literature Review

Among the various pedagogical grammars analysed, we selected the one by Zaki et al. (2015) and Youssif et al. (2019) because they are widely used in schools. Although grammars chosen do not represent the academic environment, they discuss what a ‘subject’ is and present an expanded discussion about the so-called ‘undetermined subject’. According to Watson (2015), the subject is the term about which a statement is made, while Volkova (2009) believes “the subject is the unit or nominal syntagm that establishes a predictive relationship with the verbal nucleus to constitute a sentence likewise Rothstein (2004) have seen that the subject is the being of whom something is said; also, Forgie (2008) asserts the subject as the being or that to which the idea contained in the predicate is attributed.

The functional paradigm meets our interest in the communicative effects of indeterminacy. Still, it is the distinctive characteristic of Discursive-Functional Grammar (DFG), its descending architecture, that allows us to support the hypothesis that the notion given by NGs of ‘indeterminacy of the subject’ is a phenomenon that is not resolved in morphosyntax; instead, it is a resource for expressing the speaker’s pragmatic intention, with semantic and morphosyntactic consequences. The inconsistencies in the traditional definitions of the subject constituent become even more evident when we

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contrast them with the notions of the subject in some recent descriptive works, according to Rothstein, Susan. (2004), in a sentence such as "Meat here at home, we make in various ways", the element about which a statement is made is meat, which does not correspond to the subject constituent of the sentence. In this case, the syntactic subject is we, a term that enters into a relationship of agreement with the verb to do, identified based on a morphosyntactic criterion. Based on this example, the authors observe that the conceptualisation of the subject presented by normative grammars (NGs) follows an informational criterion related to discourse organisation. Thus, the definition of the subject in NGs applies to the definition of the topic.

Although varied, the works on the indeterminacy of the subject in English commonly start from criticisms made to Normative Grammar (NG) and then investigate the strategies – in addition to the canonical forms presented by NG – to mark the indeterminacy of the subject in speech and writing, recording and describing resources of indeterminacy (they, we, people, you, the guy, the subject, -if...). In some of the works, notably from a sociolinguistic perspective (John (2021); Atar (2020), the main objective is to show that many more forms of indeterminacy of the subject are in use than prescribed by NG, and therefore, indeterminacy is a process of varied resources constituted by an open inventory of expressions that have the effect of generalising the reference of the subject, from a perspective oriented towards the interpretation of the recipient. Significant work is also being produced – diachronic and synchronic (Held, Gudrun. 2010) – with a common objective to identify and analyse indeterminacy cases.

The works generally analyse more than one form of indeterminacy, but those that aim to comparatively study the traditionally called analytical passive voice and synthetic passive voice (Jodlowiec, 2016) are significant. Descriptive studies by Schaeffer, (2005) and Kashyap, (2014) are added to many other functionalist works that describe English and highlight the importance of discourse in studying linguistic facts. In the specific case of the study undertaken here, we understand that an analysis of the indeterminacy of the subject should not be limited to the level of morphosyntax but should consider semantics and, especially, pragmatics to arrive at a more precise definition, which is why we based our analysis on the foundations of Discursive-Functional Grammar.

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Based on the above discussion, and taking this viewpoint on the so-called 'undetermined subject', in this work, we seek to determine:

i. How do the textual and contextual arrangements interfere with the morphosyntactic coding of the definition of 'undetermined subject'?
ii. How do indeterminate pragmatic and semantic strategies materialise in morphosyntax?

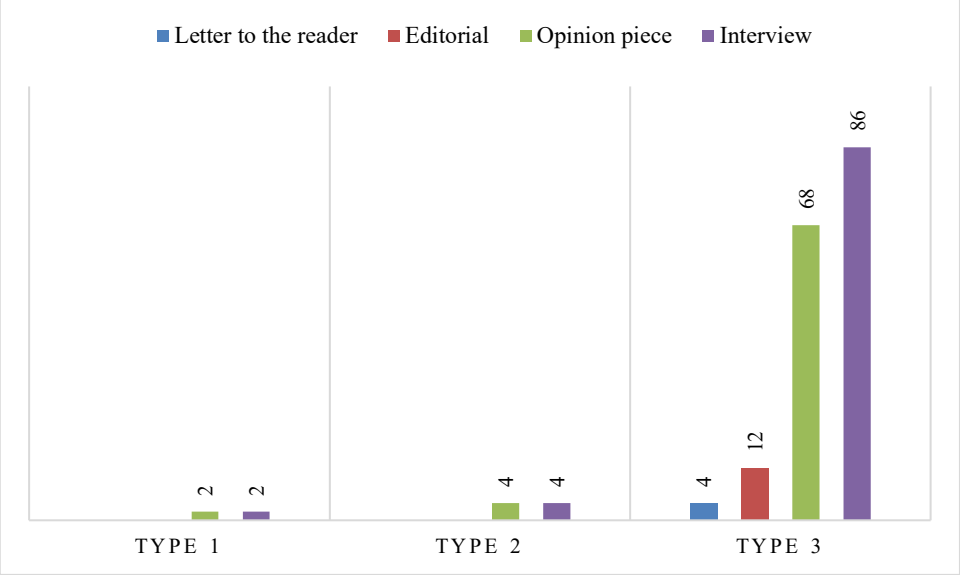
In line with the theoretical approach adopted here, and starting from the notion of 'undetermined subject' – a nomenclature established by the IGN and used in the NG – it will seek to formulate a concept of indeterminacy of the subject constituent that focuses on the pragmatic-semantic-syntactic complexity of the notion of the subject. To develop this concept, the description of the grammatical coding of indeterminacy is based on a corpus formed by different textual genres, with an argumentative basis, of the written modality of the English language since the coding of indeterminacy is closely linked to the communicative situation.

2. Data analysis

The analysis of the following data is divided into two sections. In the first part, we seek to demonstrate that the morphosyntactic coding of indeterminacy is motivated by its pragmatic formulation, qualitatively analysing the occurrences of each of the three different types of indeterminacy: Type 1 $[+id;\ -s]$; Type 2 $[-id;\ +s]$ and Type 3 $[-id;\ -s]$ and relating the uses with the effects of meaning (continuum of indeterminacy) and the indeterminacy functions in each genre analysed. The second section examines the relationship between pragmatic indeterminacy and semantic indefiniteness of the syntactic function subject.

From the full reading of the texts that make up the corpus, we identified 92 cases between occurrences of indeterminate subjects and indeterminate constructions. The following graph shows the distribution of the cases according to the textual genre in which they were found:

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Graph 1 – Initial number of occurrences

The minimal number of occurrences of indeterminate subject and indeterminate construction in the genre's letters to the reader (2 occurrences of Type 3) and editorial (4 occurrences of Type 3) showed that these genres were not very productive for the study of the coding forms of indeterminate reference, which led us to discard them in the analysis undertaken here. Although the opinion article also did not present a variation in coding forms of indeterminate referential, we found a considerable number of occurrences of indeterminate forms of the subject function (12 occurrences of Type 3), therefore, we kept this textual genre in the final calculation of the data. The textual genre interview proved to be the most fruitful for our analysis since, in addition to a significant number of occurrences, it allowed the analysis of the three different types of indeterminate referential in the same textual genre.

Despite the discarding, the reasons why the genres of letters to the reader and editorial rarely resort to indeterminate referents deserve reflection. Concerning the genre of letters to the editor, little indeterminacy occurs mainly due to the codification (explicit) of the participant Sender (1st person singular and plural) in the syntactic function of the subject, which can be justified by the fact that the inclusion of the voice of the reader in the

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newspaper characterises the letter to the editor. It is also important to remember that in addition to having the newspaper reader as the Recipient, the Sender of the letters that make up this section of the newspaper may, eventually, address the person who wrote a text the day(s) before in the same newspaper, with which his/her text dialogues and, especially in this dialogue, the shared knowledge about the subject causes the determination of the referents between the interlocutors. The Recipient, the newspaper reader, reading the text to which the letter to the editor refers, can also recognise the referents in the discourse. This can be seen in (1):

(1) The attack made by Folha, in an editorial, on the Federal Police is very problematic because a judge (1a) threatens to invalidate the investigations that gave rise to the CPI do Cachoeira. After years of investigations authorised by the courts, which revealed a gigantic scheme of promiscuity between the public and the crime involving a senator, a bookmaker, and the largest construction company in the PAC, a judge (1b) has the nerve to say that there were not sufficient grounds for those involved to be investigated? comments on the editorial 'Applause for all').

In (1a), the Speaker, Tales Ab'Saber*, indicates the referent of the construction of *a judge* as unidentifiable [-id] and unspecific [-s] using the indefinite operator um. Knowing that Paulo Augusto Moreira Lima was, at the time, the rapporteur of the case, widely publicised by the media, it is difficult to imagine that the Speaker, when taking a position on the matter, did not know the identity of the rapporteur. Mainly because the editorial, although it does not mention the name Moreira Lima, refers to him as rapporteur and not as judge, a name given by the reader Ab'Saber. The aim is not to highlight the non-identifiability of the referent but the image of the judge as 'insignificant'. This negative image of the judge/rapporteur is reinforced by the Speaker using the repetition of the form *a judge* (1b) (and not *the judge*), returning to the referent already presented in the text, *a judge* (1a). In the relationship between the Editorial Sender and the Reader's Letter Sender, both occurrences of the syntagm *a judge* mark definition. Such forms indicate, in the discourse, identifiability and specificity [+id, +s] of the

* https://bras-center.com/the-brazilian-psychopolitical-condition-in-tales-absabers-anthropophagic-soldier/

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referent, even if the pragmatic operator is encoded as a form that usually marks referential indeterminacy. At the Representational Level, the genericity of the nominal syntagm as a whole is marked: (x).

Regarding the editorial genre, it is essential to note that, to achieve its communicative purpose of demonstrating the propriety of the defended proposition, this textual genre uses, above all, ways of concealing the semantic function of the agent and not the indeterminacy of the referent.

The example below (2) corresponds to an excerpt from the editorial 'Impeachment de Lugo', which argues in Favor of the deposed president of Paraguay, Fernando Lugo.

(2) Lugo needed to be more competent throughout his term. The procedure initiated in Congress followed the provisions of the Constitution. However, nothing justifies the hasty recourse to impeachment, a device that should be reserved for cases of apparent disrespect for the law on the part of the president. Due to the hurried manner in which the trial was conducted (2a), the defendant was not granted (2b) the right to defend himself appropriately.

The two highlighted occurrences, (2a) and (3b), illustrate one of the most common resources in the editorials analysed: the concealment of the agent using the so-called analytical and synthetic passive voice. As Peter F Dominey (2004) points out, in cases like these, the option for the passive voice has a pragmatic motivation: the Sender seeks to thematise the actions and, therefore, uses a construction initiated by predicates. From a semantic point of view, constructions of this type encode the patient subject and conceal the agent. Morphosyntactically, in both cases, there is a coded postponed patient subject – the trial; the right (The right of [the defendant] to defend himself appropriately was not granted). Although hidden in these two passive structures, the agent responsible for the impeachment of the Paraguayan president can be inferred at the beginning of the text, using the passive agent (Congress initiated the impeachment process) and later, using the locative (The process commenced in Congress).

The GDF has no referential indeterminacy in (2a) and (2b). The Contextual Component points to an agent (3rd person) who made (Lugo's

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judgment) and did not grant (Lugo's right to defence). However, the non-coding of forms (lexical or grammatical) occurs when marking the agent semantic feature. The absence of agent coding is commonly analysed as a form of referential indeterminacy, but what should be understood is that, in these cases, there is no indeterminate coding. What is observed is the concealment (or non-coding) of the agent of the predicate (in this case, do and grant). The Sender can purposely hide the agent, but this concealment does not encode indeterminacy. Such concealment is a discursive and not a grammatical procedure. In this sense, passive constructions attest to an intention of not exposing and not compromising the agent (semantic) – and not the subject (syntactic), which, in these cases, is coded as a patient subject.

Table 1: The 86 occurrences of referent indeterminacy analysed

Types Of Indeterminations	Type-1	Type-2	Type-3	Total by textual genre
Opinion article	NA	NA	12	12-14%
Interview	2	4	68	74-85%
Total by type of uncertainty	2-2.3%	4-4.7%	80-93%	86-100%

Having presented the motivations for the reduced number of indeterminate referents of the discarded textual genres, we present below the distribution of the 86 occurrences of indeterminate subjects that will be analysed.

The analysis of the behaviour of each type of referential indeterminacy is presented below.

4.1 Three Types of Referential Indetermination

4.1.1. Type 1 Indetermination [+id; -s]

Only two cases of Type 1 partial reference indetermination were found in the corpus, both in the interview with the Sri Lankan arrested with cocaine in 2020 in India. Marcos Archer was sentenced to death in 2021 and appealed the sentence but had all appeals denied in court. In 2022, on the verge of being shot, he was interviewed by telephone by a reporter from

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Folha. In occurrence (3), the reporter wants to know how Archer found out about his possible execution:

(3) Folha: Did anyone warn you about the possibility of execution?

Archer: No. No one warned me about anything. I know it was only in the press here.

The analysis of this occurrence identifies, at the Interpersonal Level, a case of partial reference indeterminacy in which the Sender encodes his/her lack of knowledge of the referent by means of the form of someone [+id; -s]. The same operator marks, at the Representational Level, the genericity (g) in unitary quantity (q), a single individual. Still at the Representational Level, the form someone indicates the feature [+human] given by the grammatical form itself. The predicate warned reinforces the semantic feature [+human]. The indeterminacy and genericity, pragmatically and semantically formulated, are encoded in the grammatical word someone, represented below:

(4) NI: R_i $(+id, -s)$

NR: f_1: (h_{π_g})

NM: $G_{whosomeone}$

A representation like (4) specifies the following types of information: at the Interpersonal Level (NI), the Representational Subject (R_i) represents the identifiability and non-specificity of the referent of the form $someone$ (+id, -s); at the Representational Level (NR), argument one is represented by the genericity operator (π) (g) itself, encoded at the Morphosyntactic Level (NM) as a grammatical word (Gw), the indefinite pronoun $someone$.

This representation reflects the same type of reference indeterminacy encoded by the grammatical form who:

(5) Folha: Who can avoid it?

Archer: President Dilma. The only person who can save me is her. I ask her to try at least to help me. From president to president, she may solve it. Who

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knows, she will solve it and manage to reduce my sentence to life imprisonment. I also ask for help from [Indonesian] President Susilo. He is mighty. In this case, the Issuer questions Archer about who could prevent the sentence from being carried out. The *who* form marks the non-identifiability of this referent by the Sender and the presupposition that the Recipient knows this referent. The grammatical word marks genericity at the Representational Level because no particular designation exists for that form. As in (3), the predictor, in this context, reinforces the semantic feature [+human]. From a morphosyntactic point of view, we have the formulation of indeterminacy (pragmatic) and indefiniteness (semantic) encoded in the same grammatical form.

The forms *someone* (3) and *who* (5) are typical interrogatives used in moments of interaction in which the Sender, assuming ignorance of a specific referent, asks the Receiver to provide new information. According to Hengeveld and Mackenzie (2005), the combination [+id, -s] is naturally associated with interrogative illocution. The reduced number of Type 1 referential indeterminacy can be justified by the communicative purpose of searching for information not being the objective of basic argumentative texts.

4.1.2 Type 2 Indeterminacy [-id; +s]

In Type 2 reference indeterminacy, the Sender assumes that the Receiver does not identify the referent. This is what we can review in (6):

(6) *Folha:* There are *who* say that MPB today is much worse than it used to be.

Gil: It's changed a lot. Chico [Buarque] even said that he fears the music will disappear. Because you realise that song as it existed in our time, as an almost sacred form of expression, with that aura of religious prayer to which we committed ourselves enthusiastically, is ceasing to exist.

Here, the Sender questions the Addressee about changes that MPB songs have undergone. Using the form *who*, the Sender assumes that the Addressee cannot identify the referent, even if the Sender himself is. The occurrence (6) indicates partial reference indeterminacy [-id, +s]. It indicates a coding

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intentionally constructed by the Sender to preserve his face and the face of the referent(s) of the form *who*.

This same intentionality of preserving the identifiability of the referent was identified in three other occurrences.

In (5), this type of indeterminacy is marked by a nominal expression with a lexical form marked with the semantic property [+collective].

(5) Erundina: I have already arranged a meeting with a large group of people who have been somewhat removed from political activity since my term in office.

The Sender, the candidate for vice-mayor of the capital city, talks about how she intends to define her electoral campaign. Erundina states that she will not do it alone but with a large group of people who have already worked with her as mayor of São Paulo. Using the syntagmatic construction of a large group of people, she indicates the Recipient's assumption of non-identifiability [-id] of the referent. Still, she marks the specificity of the referent [+s] for herself through the modifying construction (since) my mandate.

At the Representational Level, we have activated the lexical property that indicates collectively. Collective forms indicate genericity by themselves. However, as we have seen, the negative marking in at least one of the pragmatic operators already activates the positive marking of the semantic operator (g) of genericity. This is because the indefinite form um is the expression of two operators. At the Interpersonal Level, it is an operator of identifiability and specificity; at the Representational Level, it is an operator of genericity. The grammatical word um formulated as [-id, +s] indeterminates the lexical form group and makes the construction as a whole, a group, semantically generic.

The question-answer structure between interviewer and interviewee characterises the interview genre. The objective is to obtain clarifications, evaluations, opinions and, more rarely, specific information. Therefore, the presence of Type 1 reference uncertainty, only in this genre, can be interpreted based on the structure of the genre itself (question-answer). The reduced number of occurrences of Type 1 can be explained by the

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predominance of interrogatives that aim to primarily explore the interviewee's evaluation and opinion on a given fact/subject. This characteristic of the interview genre makes it possible for the interviewee to resort to Type 2, given the convenience of the referent's uncertainty to position himself and protect his face and that of the referent(s).

4.1.3 Type 3 Indeterminacy [-id, -s]

Type 3 was the most common form of referential indeterminacy. In 80 of the cases (93%), the Sender assumes that the Recipient and the Sender themselves are unaware of the identifiability of the referent.

Table 2: Distribution of the 80 occurrences of Type 3 indeterminacy

Type Ident. Three structures	INDETERMINATING CONSTRUCTIONS (CI)			EXPLICIT SUBJECT		Total by gender
Form	Desinential (3rd p.p.)	'–if' index of indeterminacy	Non-finite	Grammatical	Lexical	
Opinion piece	1	1	2	6	2	12-15%
Interview	1	1	2	41	23	68-85%
Total	2-0.25%	2-0.25%	4-0.25%	47-59%	25-31%	80-100%

4.1.3.1 Type 3 Indeterminacy with Indeterminate Construction (IC)

As shown in Table 2 above, there are three forms of IC: Indefinite, Index of indeterminateness –se and Non-finite, which are analysed below.

A) Indefinite: Table 2 shows two cases of total reference indeterminacy coded by ending, marked by the third person plural. Examples (7) and (8) illustrate this type of IC:

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(7) [...] *wanted* (7a) in Rio de Janeiro, a professional photographer decided to photograph this modest scribe in a studio. Not because of my questionable physical attributes but because they *wanted* (7b) my photo in a publication, together with my published texts...

In (7a), the Sender marks the indeterminacy of reference of Type 3 using the form *someone*. Next (7b), the 3rd p.p. desinential marking resumes and reiterates the indeterminacy of reference of the lexical form already explained. Both the coding of the pronominal form *someone* and the desinential coding $-am$ point to a Sender who presupposes both interlocutors' ignorance of the referent. A similar situation occurs in (8):

(8) Paschoal: In academia, *the same person* (8a) who has a libertarian discourse of less intervention of criminal law – for example, in cases of crimes against property, even those involving violence or serious threat, cases of trafficking, and cases of abortion, which they *believe* (8b) should be legalised entirely – has a highly hardening discourse of state intervention in areas other fields could work on.

In 8b, the coding, using a desinencial CI (*they think*), also resumes an explicit indeterminate nominal configuration of the subject function, *the same person* (8a). This resource points to the regularity of a resource of resumption of referential indeterminacy: explicit indeterminate form, resumed by CI form.

At the Interpersonal Level, occurrences (7a) and (8a) have the identifiability and specificity operators marked in Referential Subjects and coded by the grammatical form *someone* and the lexical form *person*. In both cases, when using these forms, the Sender signals the assumption of the Recipient's non-identifiability [-id] of the referent and its non-specificity [-s] by himself. At the Representational Level, these forms indicate genericity (g) and unitary quantity of the Individual category marked as human $(h_x)^g$.

In (7b) and (8b), indeterminacy is not represented at the Interpersonal or Representational levels. Representation occurs only at the Morphosyntactic Level through the 3rd p.p. ending –am. Even though the explicit indeterminate nuclei of the subject function (someone and person) are in the singular, the indeterminate form that returns to the referent already marked as neither

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identifiable nor specifiable [-id, -s] is encoded with plural marking, reinforcing the indeterminacy of the referent(s) through what we will call a 'quantifying semantic strategy'.

B. Index of indeterminacy (the particle '–if')

The two occurrences of the particle '–if', which encodes Type 3 reference indeterminacy, are analysed below:

(9) The text seems cold and cruel, but it conveys the routine of one of the most critical places in the history of São Paulo and others, such as Cathedral Square, Largo São Bento and the area around BM&F Bovespa. Strangely, this is not mentioned.

In this case, the Speaker talks about what he calls the routine of Largo de São Francisco – begging, fights, drug use, food donations at night – and states that "no one in their right mind can think that the homeless situation is normal or acceptable". The Speaker believes that the situation is not discussed and resolved for fear of accusations of prejudice. Through the form –if, the Speaker marks the non-identifiability and non-specificity [-id, -s] of the referent(s), corresponding to the coding of total reference indeterminacy. At the Representational Level, we have represented the predicate *speak* with the semantic feature [+human]. The form –if, coded at the Morphosyntactic Level, refers to a 3rd person referent and may include any individual (or group) not involved in the verbal interaction. Also in (10), the form –if indicates Type 3 reference indeterminacy.

(10) Folha: What would be the least invasive proposals to avoid criminalizing these acts? Paschoal: In the case of abandoning an animal, fines could exist. There are so many traffic fines...

In (10), the Speaker defends the decriminalisation of acts such as 'animal abandonment' and proposes what he calls 'less invasive penalties' such as paying a fine for cases of this type. As in (9), the indeterminate particle –se indicates non-identifiability and non-specificity of the referent for both interactants [-id, -s]. The predicate fine marks the semantic feature [+human] at the Representational Level. At the Morphosyntactic Level, the form –if is encoded, indicating a 3rd person referent that can include any individual (or group) other than the interactants.

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The form –if indicates total reference indeterminacy [-id, -s]. From the semantic content of the predicate to fine, the possible referent(s) can be inferred: government, guard(s), law. The use of the form –if indicates the indeterminacy and lack of definition of the referent of the predicate to fine. Using the CI with the form –se indicates, discursively, the focus on the action, not the person *who* performs it.

Regarding indeterminacy, we can talk about a continuum of indeterminacy of referents depending on the semantic content of the predicate selected by the Sender in the interlocution. This *continuum*, found only in Type 3 [-id, -s], is characterised by the involvement or not of the interlocutors indicated by the *Sender.* In (9), the form *–if* refers to a 3rd person referent that includes any individual (or group) and excludes the interlocutors of the verbal interaction. In (10), although the same marking also excludes the interlocutors, limits) through the semantic content of the predicate 'fine', the possible referent(s). This limitation seems likely due to the pragmatic information familiar to the interlocutors about the semantic value of the predicate 'fine' triggered by the situational context.

C) Indeterminacy with non-finite verb form

Four codifications of Type 3 reference indeterminacy with non-finite verb form were found in the corpus.

(11) Folha: Did you tell Governor that you thought the action in Crackland, was media-friendly, as you have been saying in the campaign?

Chalita: I told the press and him. I am not against the police in Crackland, but thinking that this will solve the problem is naive or media-friendly. It is necessary *to invest in prevention and recovery, with hospitalisation in therapeutic communities.*

Here, the Speaker takes a position as a candidate for mayor of São Paulo, on the actions of the Alckmin government in relation to Crackland. With a non-finite and impersonal verb, the CI 'invest in preservation and recovery' corresponds to the subject function of the construction 'It is necessary', and the subject function of the CI is empty. This type of CI differs precisely because it does not presuppose the subject's expression. However, the fact that the information is reduced to the action, process or state expressed by the

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verb, without mentioning its arguments, generates a meaning similar to referential indeterminacy.

Three other occurrences with non-finite CI are presented and analysed below:

(12) 'Being' a judge in Brazil has become a risky profession.

(13) 'Turning' a blind eye to dozens of people [the beggars who 'inhabit' the Largo] subject to bad weather, diseases, and violence is what deserves the worst predicates.

(14) I know people who have been sued because they filled in a hole in a square without authorisation or cut down a tree without authorisation. 'Charging' a fine does not take the citizen to criminal justice.

In the first case (12), the Speaker, the author of the opinion article, observes that in 2012, the number of judges threatened with death had risen from 100 to 150, concluding that 'being a magistrate' had become a high-risk profession. As observed in (11), this type of CI does not presuppose the subject's expression. In (12), the information is reduced to the state expressed by the predicate *to be*. In (13) and (14), the information is reduced to the action expressed by the predicates to do and to *demand*.

Although occurrences with non-finite CI do not presuppose a subject, they may present differences in the possibility of filling the gap of the subject, determined by discursive and semantic factors. In the communicative situation in (11), the Speaker points out what should be done by the Alckmin government to solve the problem of crackland. In (12), the Sender, being a judge, assumes the profession's risks for himself and any other judge. In (13), the Sender uses a more generalising indeterminate meaning by excluding himself from the group of people who claim that removing the beggars from Largo de São Francisco is a politically incorrect form of 'hygienism'. In (14), given the semantic content of the predicate "to charge", the possible referents are limited to the government and the law. Although the referents are predictable, using CI with a non-finite form of the predicate points out, as in CIs with the form –if, a *continuum* of indeterminacy. The indication of the involvement or not of the Sender in the action/process/state and the semantic value of the predicate point out different levels of the indeterminate meaning in non-finite CIs.

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4.1.3.2 Type 3 indeterminacy with explicit subject

A) Grammatical words that encode indeterminacy

The pronoun *you* appears as the most recurrent form of Type 3 reference indeterminacy [-id, -s] with the explicit subject, 56% of occurrences, 26 of the 13 grammatical words encode an indeterminate subject. Example (15) illustrates this form of indeterminacy.

(15) Folha: You have said that the city has too many departments. Which ones do you intend to eliminate?

Chalita: There are several departments in the area of employment and management. *You* can reformulate them, merge them, to get to 15 [there are currently 27].

At the Interpersonal Level, the form you marks non-identifiability and non-specificity [-id, -s]. The Sender leaves the referent of the pronoun you open, possibly identifying the referent as the Recipient or any person, including the Sender himself. The genericity operator marks indefiniteness at the Representational Level, reinforcing the referential indeterminacy $(x)_g$. From a pragmatic point of view, the generalising form 'you' involved the Sender and the Recipient in 100% of the cases analysed. Therefore, the other 25 occurrences can also be represented as: NI: [-id, -s]; NR: $(x)^g$; NM: $Gw_{pronoun.}$.

This significant difference in the quantity (26 forms) and the form of coding of the indeterminacy of reference in textual genres (only one occurrence in the opinion article) can be explained in terms of the degree of formality of the Interpersonal Level (Hengeveld; Mackenzie, 2008, p. 118). The opinion article presents a relationship of greater formality [+h(high)] between the Sender and Recipient, adverse to the predominantly face-to-face relationship of the interview genre. While the coding of the form you indicates a formulation that does not distinguish the inclusion or not of the interlocutors, the forms who and $somebody$ indicate the non-involvement of the Sender or the Recipient.

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4.2 Coding of Indetermination of Reference

As initially presented, the motivation for this work arose from the observation that native Brazilian (2022) speakers commonly point out inconsistencies between the facts of the language shown in the classroom and their knowledge of the use of the language itself. To map the reasons for this inconsistency, these speakers' notions about situational context and the indeterminacy of reference as an argumentation strategy of the Sender – exemplified in the introduction of this work –are already sufficient to, in addition to the description of the varieties of forms that indeterminacy assumes in discourse, proceed to an analysis of the pragmatic and semantic functioning of these indeterminate possibilities.

Therefore, the indeterminacy of reference assumes several functions in discourse. Based on Table 3 below, a more general view of the pragmatic and semantic functioning of each of these expressions of forms (undetermined subjects) and coding structures (ICs) of reference indeterminacy, seeking to show that the analysis of the form and structure can never do without the analysis of its pragmatic and semantic functionality. Table 3, below shows all the coding forms found in the corpus:

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Table 3: Coding forms found in the 86 occurrences of indeterminacy

Forms and structures for coding reference indetermination		Type-1	Type-2	Type-3
Pronominal 59.3%	Who (interrogative pronoun)	√		
	Who (relative/indefinite pronoun)		√	√
	Someone (indefinite pronoun)	√		√
	You (pronoun of address)		√	√
	They (personal pronoun)			√
Lexical 29%	Lexical (with indefinite article)			√
	Generalising lexical			√
Indeterminate constructions 11.7%	CI desinential (3rd person plural)		√	√
	CI –if (index of indeterminacy)			√
	CI non-finite			√

Of the 86 occurrences of indeterminacy analysed, 76 correspond to explicit coding forms, 51 of which are grammatical forms (59.3%) and 25 lexical forms (29%). ICs represent 11.7% of the total occurrences.

The forms of coding indeterminacy are varied, but beyond the quantity and diversity of these forms, it is noteworthy that the same indeterminate form or construction encodes different types of indeterminacy. In occurrences of coding with an explicit subject, the form *who*, for example, indicates the indeterminacy of the three types of indeterminacy in different textual genres. In 98.75% of the cases analysed, the indeterminate referents do not have a specific semantic designation. In common, the discursively indeterminate referents present the semantic trait of the human-individual of the 3rd person.

The coding of indeterminacy through the grammatical form *you* and the generalising lexical forms (so-and-so, subject, person...) corresponds to more

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than half of the occurrences of Type 3 (51 of the 80 occurrences). Together, these coding forms correspond to 63.75% of the cases analysed. The number of occurrences of these two coding possibilities is significantly higher in the interview genre. In the opinion article, a single occurrence of the form *you* and two cases with lexical forms (person, people) were found, corresponding to less than 4% (3 out of 80) of occurrences of Type 3 of indeterminacy.

As noted, Type 1 of indeterminacy is coded through typical interrogative forms. In this type of indeterminacy, the Sender assumes ignorance of a referent and asks the Recipient to provide new information. Considering that the communicative purpose that favours this type of indeterminacy is the search for information and that the corpus for this research was composed of textual genres with an argumentative basis, it is possible to infer that the condition of restriction to the occurrences of this type of indeterminacy is precisely the communicative purpose of the delimited genres: to argue based on facts/subjects that assume prior common knowledge among the interactants. The analysis of Type 1 demonstrates how the textual arrangement interferes in the morphosyntactic coding of the subject's indeterminacy. The coding forms of Type 2 also occurred only in the interview genre. The search for the interviewee's positioning provides the coding of Type 2 to the extent that indeterminacy is convenient for the interactants in the communicative situation. In this case, the Sender does not simply indicate the non-identifiability of the referent by the Recipient and its specificity for him/herself [-id, +s], but the intentionality of not declaring a specific referent.The analysis of the occurrences of Type 3 indeterminacy points not only to a more common type of indeterminacy, 93% of the 80 cases analysed, but also to subtypes of Type 3 indeterminacy: pronominal, lexical and CIs.

Explicit pronominal forms indicate third-person referents. The exception is the coding by the pronoun (you), which, depending on the communicative situation, can also create the possibility of the referent being identified as the Recipient or any other person, including the Sender himself, that is, the pronoun (you), as a coding form of indeterminacy, can discursively indicate the involvement of the participants in a communicative situation.

Lexical forms only indicate Type 3 indeterminacy. In these cases, genericity is inherent in the designation of these forms. In other words, the interpersonal

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level formulates indeterminacy, and the representational level is indefiniteness. Both formulations are encoded in generalising lexical forms such as person, so-and-so, subject, personal or citizen – whose indefiniteness can also be delimited by the semantic value of the predicate of a sentence. This delimitation is possible due to the pragmatic information familiar to interlocutors about the semantic value of predicates triggered by the situational context (Hengeveld; Mackenzie, 2008). Generalising lexical forms can also be restricted by relative sentences to a limited subset (Camacho, to leave). Finally, it is essential to highlight that generalising lexical words are coding forms of indeterminacy even when delimited or restricted. Type 3 indeterminacy also appears encoded in ICs.

The Issuer encodes, in the desinencial IC, the identifiability [±id] and the specificity [±s] in the 3rd person plural marking of the verb. In this case, the empty nucleus of the subject function can be expanded by a pronominal or lexically realised form. Just like the desinencial IC, the IC with index –if can refer to any 3rd person referent, singular or plural. In this case, the indeterminacy is encoded through the form –if.

Unlike the desinencial IC and the IC with index–if, the IC with infinity does not indicate any form of encoding the subject function. The absence of a coding form of the subject function and the lack of person marking in the verb generate a meaning similar to the indeterminacy of the subject. This construction points to the possibility of filling the subject function, which, unlike the other coding forms of indeterminacy, can refer to any of the three persons of the discourse.

Discussion

Analysing the three proposed indeterminate possibilities (Type 1, Type 2 and Type 3) leads us to present some final considerations that point the way towards a new vision of this concept. Such considerations also aim to present, more succinctly, the results of the data analysis that led us to the idea of indeterminacy and to the assertion that indeterminacy appears to be an argumentation strategy of the Sender.

According to the data analysed:

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a) The Sender, when assuming the non-identifiability and non-specificity of an explicitly marked referent, resorts, in 90% of cases, to generalising grammatical forms (59% - you, who, someone) and lexical forms (30% - the subject, the person(s), the so-and-so...) which do not present a designation. These 89% of indeterminate forms refer exclusively to Type 3 of indeterminacy;
b) A single occurrence indicates the indeterminacy in a specific lexical form (1% - a proxy), characterising it as a Type 2 indeterminacy. In this case, the indefinite form um is the expression of two operators. At the Interpersonal Level, it is an operator of identifiability and specificity; at the Representational Level, it is an operator of genericity. Although unique in the corpus, the marking of a specific lexical form accompanied by an indefinite operator is a shared resource among Arabic speakers to encode Type 2 of indeterminacy: "A teacher of mine published the photos of the confusion on the internet"; "A neighbour said that the robbery happened late in the afternoon";
c) The CIs correspond to 10% of occurrences of indeterminacy, encoded in the configuration of the predicate: 3rd p.p. ending and index -*if* with 3rd p.s.; and uncoded: non-finite form. The data presented in a), b) and now in c) lead us to understand that the forms of subject indeterminacy advocated by traditional grammars correspond to the possibilities of subject ICs.
d) The analysis of the ICs revealed different discursive strategies of indeterminacy. One of them was the exclusion of the Sender in the discourse. This strategy was more productive in ICs with a non-finite form that, because it does not presuppose the codification of the subject, may present a difference in the possibility of filling the subject gap. A similar strategy occurs in cases with the pronominal form "you". The Sender leaves the referent of the pronoun *you* open, possibly identifying the referent as the Recipient or any person, including the Sender himself. The inclusion of the interactants through the form *you* occurred in 100% of the cases. The ICs, however, may indicate the exclusion of only the Sender;
e) Through the semantic content of the predicate, the Issuer can limit, restricting the indefiniteness of a referent as found in ICs with index -*if* and in ICs with non-finite form. Another strategy is the indication

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of a semantic quantity different from the amount encoded in the indeterminate form. In the same discursive act, the same indeterminate referent may be encoded using different indeterminate forms with unequal markings of number or gender; f) The corpus formed by different textual genres, with an argumentative basis, made it possible to expand the correlation established between the coding of indeterminacy and situational context. Among the selected argumentative texts, the interview was the only textual genre in which the three types of subject indeterminacy could be seen. Characterised by the question-answer structure between interviewer and interviewee, the objective of the interview is to obtain clarifications, evaluations, opinions and, more rarely, specific information. When the Sender needs particular information, he resorts to Type 1 indeterminacy. Suppose the Sender intends to explore the interviewee's assessment and opinion on a given fact/subject. In that case, he resorts to Type 2, which provides him with the convenience of indeterminacy to position himself and preserve his face and that of the undetermined referent(s). Type 3 of indeterminacy, whose codification can occur in a significant number of forms and structures, provides a clearer view of pragmatic and semantic strategies linked to indeterminacy (inclusion/exclusion of the Sender among the undetermined referent(s); semantic restriction of the referent(s) and the non-biunivocal relationship between the number and gender of the same undetermined referent(s);

f) In the occurrences analysed, the [+human] feature is marked in the explicit codings in the grammatical form itself (someone, who, you) and lexical form (person, so-and-so, subject). In the CIs, this feature is inferred from the predicate itself (to speak, to advocate, to want). However, the [+human] feature does not constitute the subject's indeterminacy. Occurrences such as “Things are worse” or “Some problem seems to torment him” can demonstrate that the coding of indeterminacy can also present the [-human] feature.

Conclusion

The possibilities of combining with negative marking the pragmatic operators of identifiability and specificity allow us to propose three different types of indeterminacy: Type 1, Type 2 and Type 3, encoded in other

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structures (indeterminate constructions: indexical –if and non-finite) and indeterminate grammatical and lexical forms. In summary, considering the theoretical framework of the GDF, the indeterminacy of the grammatical function 'subject' presents the following characteristics :

1. it is a discursive phenomenon which depends on the power/will of the Sender;
2. it corresponds, at the Interpersonal Level, to the lack of reference indicated by the negative marking of at least one of the discursive operators of identifiability and specificity;
3. when marked at the Representational Level, it corresponds to genericity, marked only in explicit grammatical and lexical forms;
4. it can be encoded using indeterminate constructions and explicit grammatical and lexical forms.

Many points in this work still deserve to be developed, and one of them concerns indeterminacy as a discursive phenomenon of the English language. It is a fact that 'referential indeterminacy' is a broader phenomenon affecting the syntactic object and not just the subject. However, in this work, we propose to study reference indeterminacy marking using syntactic strategies involving the subject constituent. The results found throughout the exercise of analysing the lack of reference of the subject constituent allow us to propose, finally, a concept of indeterminacy that focuses on the pragmatic-semantic-syntactic complexity of the notion of subject:

Indeterminacy, formulated by the Sender as an argumentative strategy, is defined as the lack of reference (pragmatic) and, sometimes, of designation (semantic) of a third-person linguistic form in the syntactic function of the subject (morphosyntactic). In the case of this research, the choice of the functional paradigm, which recognises the importance of contextualising the language in the social situation in which the interaction takes place, proved to be of great importance in understanding how the motivations for using the language are external to its linguistic form. More objectively, the theoretical knowledge of the GDF, with its rigorous descending architecture of formulation and codification levels, allowed us to operate in our analyses with a subjacent understanding of the coding forms of subject indeterminacy.

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As is known, the GDF is a typologically oriented grammar model and, therefore, does not address the specificities of the English language, even though it does consider them. The perception of this systematicity gives the speaker, in this specific case, the student, a feeling of competence in using his/her language. The conceptualisation, centred on the pragmatic-semantic-syntactic complexity of the notion of what has been defined as an 'undetermined subject', now goes in the same direction as the speaker's intuition and is, therefore, more easily understood by the student.

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