

Turkish Non-canonical Objects

In this paper, we document and analyze examples of hitherto undescribed Turkish DOM that go beyond the well-known specificity alternation (Enç 1991, von Heusinger and Kornfilt 2005) illustrated in (1a) and (1b), whereby the accusative in Turkish signals a specific object (note that Turkish is a pro-drop language and generally drops the subject). We document the types of semantically based case alternations we have been able to identify so far and then discuss their appropriate analysis from the perspective of developing a computational grammar for Turkish as part of the ParGram project (Butt et al. 1999).

- (1)
- | | |
|---|--|
| <p>a. <i>su içtim</i>
water.NOM drink.PAST.1SG
'I drank water.'</p> <p>b. <i>suyu içtim</i>
water.ACC drink.PAST.1SG
'I drank the water.'</p> | <p>c. <i>sudan içtim</i>
water.ABL drink.PAST.1SG
'I drank some of the water.'</p> |
|---|--|

As shown in (1c), one additional DOM pattern can be found with verbs of consumption, where the ablative case is used to indicate that only a part of the object is consumed (usually the consumed part is less than the remaining part). Other alternations involve a dative vs. instrumental causee that is familiar from Romance and South Asian languages (cf. (Alsina and Joshi 1991)), but that has not been described as yet for Turkish, a dative vs. accusative alternation with some causatives (cf. (Knecht 1986):112), and the alternation in (2). All of these alternations can be analyzed as involving some degree of affectedness or boundedness in the case of (2), as argued for for similar Finnish examples by Kiparsky (1998).

- (2)
- | | |
|---|--|
| <p>a. <i>beni vurdu</i>
I.ACC shoot.PAST.3SG
's/he shot me'</p> | <p>b. <i>bana vurdu</i>
I.DAT hit.PAST.3SG
's/he hit me'</p> |
|---|--|

Beyond identifying the underlying semantic parameters that govern the DOM in Turkish, our interest lies in analyzing the syntax of these constructions in terms of the ParGram grammar. The analysis is not quite straightforward, as we illustrate with respect to the partitivity/specificity pattern in (1). As shown in (3), this DOM pattern remains stable under causativization (as would be expected).

- (3)
- | |
|---|
| <p>a. <i>annem bana su içirdi</i>
mother.P1SG I.DAT water.NOM drink.CAUS.PAST.3SG
'My mother made me drink water.'</p> <p>b. <i>annem bana suyu içirdi</i>
mother.P1SG I.DAT water.ACC drink.CAUS.PAST.3SG
'My mother made me drink the water.'</p> <p>c. <i>annem bana sudan içirdi</i>
mother.P1SG I.DAT water.ABL drink.CAUS.PAST.3SG
'My mother made me drink some of the water.'</p> |
|---|

However, as illustrated in (4), with respect to passivization, the ablative is preserved, while the accusative disappears (this also holds for the data in (2)). This raises the following questions: 1) do the ablative and the accusative argument in (1) have the same status (i.e., are they both OBJ?); 2) is the ablative argument really a subject in (4b)? Kornfilt (1997) proposes that examples as in (4b) are to be analyzed as subject-less impersonals. However, the only subjecthood criteria she applies are those of nominative case marking and agreement, criteria which have been shown not to be universally applicable (Keenan 1976, Mohanan 1994) and therefore may be regarded with suspicion with respect to Turkish as well.

- (4)
- | | |
|---|--|
| <p>a. <i>su içildi</i>
water.NOM drink.PASS.PAST.3SG
'Water is drunk'</p> | <p>b. <i>sudan içildi</i>
water.ABL drink.PASS.PAST.3SG
'some of the water is drunk'</p> |
|---|--|

Similar questions arise with Turkish verbs that subcategorize for arguments with cases other than accusative case. For instance, *kork* ‘fear’ requires an ablative second argument, whereas *bin* ‘ride’ requires a dative second argument. While there is no DOM involved, the behavior with respect to causativization and passivization (shown in (5) for ‘fear’) is similar to the ablative in the DOM pattern in that the case marking is preserved under causativization as well as passivization.

- (5)
- | | |
|-------------------------|---------------------------|
| a. <i>benden korktu</i> | b. <i>benden korkuldu</i> |
| I.ABL fear.PAST.3SG | I.ABL fear.PASS.PAST.3SG |
| ‘s/he feared me’ | ‘I was feared’ |

We revisit the question whether the ablative and dative arguments in examples such as (5b) and (4b) are subjects by: 1) establishing more subject tests for Turkish; 2) examining what kinds of generalizations are elegantly stateable in terms of the computational implementation and which are not. Given these empirical and implementational considerations, we conclude that cases of DOM and special subcategorizations (e.g., ‘fear’ and ‘ride’) involving dative and ablative arguments should not be analyzed as straightforward objects (OBJ), but as semantically-restricted objects, namely OBJ_{θ} . The passivization rule for Turkish can then be formulated just as the simple statement that under passivization OBJs (but not other grammatical functions like OBJ_{θ}) become SUBJ (and the original SUBJ is demoted). This allows for a simple and elegant implementation while also allowing for DOM phenomena and differing verb classes which select for non-canonical arguments.

To summarize, in this paper we document the existence of wide-spread DOM phenomena in Turkish that go beyond the well-known specificity alternation. We identify the semantic factors governing the alternations and take these into account in our implementation. Indeed, correctly identifying DOM phenomena and the parallel behavior of additional verb classes which require non-canonical case marking ends up facilitating the implementation. In turn, an examination of what kinds of generalizations can most elegantly be stated in terms of the implementation informs the linguistic analysis, and indeed, has led to an identification of phenomena that have hitherto remained undescribed in the literature.

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