Adjacency and (apparent) lack thereof in Turkish DOM*

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SUMMARY

Recent research has shown that the adjacency exhibited by the bare direct object to the verb appears to be not obligatory, as stated in older studies, but rather represents a strong tendency. The present squib offers some examples that illustrate situations of non-adjacency, and ends up proposing that in non-adjacency situations, the bare direct object is base-generated in a left-dislocation position; such objects do not undergo movement from their canonical, verb-adjacent position. The strong tendency for such bare direct objects to show up left-adjacent to the verb is explained via incorporation into the verb.

RÉSUMÉ

Des recherches récentes ont montré que la contiguïté qu'entretient l'objet direct nu vis-à-vis du verbe ne semble pas obligatoire, comme ont soutenu d'anciennes études; elle représente plutôt une tendance forte. Cet article offre quelques exemples qui illustrent des situations de non-contiguïté et finit par proposer que dans de telles situations, l'objet direct nu est généré de base dans une position de déplacement à gauche; de tels objets n'effectuent pas de déplacement de leur position canonique, contiguë au verbe. Cette tendance forte des objets directs nus à apparaître contigus au verbe à sa gauche s'explique par l'incorporation au verbe.

Recent research illustrates reawakening interest in the phenomena of DOM (Differential Object Marking) and DSM (Differential Subject Marking). The present paper is concerned with DOM, whereby the variation in question is between overt accusative marking versus lack of overt morphological marking of the accusative in Turkish.

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The literature on DOM in Turkish has stated in general that (non-specific, non-referential, generic) direct objects which bear overt morphological accusative can scramble freely, direct objects which are bare, i.e. which do not exhibit overt accusative morphology, are confined to the left-adjacent position with respect to the verb (cf. Aydemir 2004, Enç 1991, Erguvanlı 1984, von Heusinger & Kornfilt 2005, Johanson 1977, among others). Kornfilt (2003) follows Lamontagne & Travis (1987) in viewing this observation as an ECP effect: Argument DPs are KPs (case phrases), headed by a K which is either filled by an overt case morpheme, or by a K which is empty. The latter is what is found with bare direct objects. This empty K has to obey the ECP, whereby V is the proper governor which can properly govern the K only under adjacency, thus giving rise to the adjacency effect exhibited by bare direct objects in Turkish.

Since most of the studies mentioned above were published, there have been two types of changes that have taken place in the area of theoretical and typological work on adjacency phenomena: 1. The ECP has been abandoned, and 2. Observations have come to light showing that, under certain conditions, bare direct objects can show up in positions non-adjacent to the verb (cf. Erdal 2007, Gračanin-Yüksek & İşsever (G-Y&İ) 2011, among others), after all. Nonetheless, it is clear that in Turkish, there is a very strong tendency to keep a bare direct object left-adjacent to the verb. Thus, having given up the ECP, a different means has to be found to express this tendency, while the exceptions to that tendency have to be accommodated, as well.

One kind of situation which allows for bare objects to be separated from the verb is "when there is a double contrast of identically denoted non-specific direct objects as topic and of some other pair of NPs as comment" (Erdal 2007:68-69). What is meant here are examples such as the following one:

(1) İki saksı bura-ya, üç saksı (da) ora-ya koy-alım.
two flower pot here-DAT three flower pot PRT there-DAT put-OPT.1.PL
'Let's put two flower pots here and three flower pots there.' (Erdal 2007:69)

Here, the double contrast is between the non-specific, morphologically bare direct objects "two flower pots" and "three flower pots" as the topics, and the dative-marked "here" and "there" as the comments. Note, incidentally, that the comments don't have to be NPs, as in Erdal's generalization; they can also be other categories, such as adverbs:

(2) İki saksı şimdi, üç saksı (da) daha sonra al-alım.
two flower pot now three flower pot PRT more late buy-OPT.1.PL
'Let's buy two flower pots now, and three flower pots later.'

Here, the topics are the bare direct objects "two flower pots" and "three flower pots", and the comments are "now" and "later".

Erdal (2007) points out that the contrast need not be explicit, in which case it can be "situational":

(3) Bir gömlek de Ali-ye al-alım.
a shirt PRT Ali-DAT buy-OPT.1.PL
'Let's buy a shirt for Ali as well.' (Erdal 2007:71)

This would be a well-formed utterance, where a mother would have bought a shirt for her child

(the situational contrast), and tells him/her of her intention to buy a shirt for Ali, too.

It seems, then, that when a bare direct object is contrastively stressed, i.e. when it is a contrastive topic, it can be separated from the verb. Erdal (2007) calls such bare direct objects prosodically independent; such bare direct objects are, then, similar to overtly case-marked DPs in their ability to show up in non-canonical positions—in particular, in sentence-initial position, which is the typical position for topics.[1]

However, there are also instances where a bare direct object is not (or at least not clearly) contrastively stressed, e.g.:

(4) Kitap Ali oku-du.
book Ali read-PST (3.SG)
'Ali read a book/books.' (Sezer 1996, as cited in G-Y&İ 2011)

While (4) could be uttered in a discourse where it would implicitly contrast with a different situation (e.g. where *Oya* read *magazines*), this is not necessary; here, "book" can also be understood as a "regular", i.e. non-contrastive (as well as non-specific), topic.

Gračanin-Yüksek & İşsever (2011) propose the following account for utterances such as (4): Specific direct objects, with their overt case morphology, have to vacate the VP, while non-specific, bare direct objects have to remain within the VP. While the authors do not propose a general principle from which this analysis would follow, it would be reasonable to attribute this claim to a "Diesing-Effect", as proposed in Diesing (1992), whereby non-specific complements must remain within VP, while specific complements are external to the VP.[2] Gračanin-Yüksek & İşsever further propose that the verb in Turkish tensed clauses[3] raises to T, thus vacating the VP. When a non-specific direct object is to be topicalized (for information-structural reasons), it cannot move to a topic position by itself, because it needs to remain within the VP, due to its non-specific nature. Therefore, when moving to such a topic position, it takes the VP along. Due to the fact that the V has vacated the VP at an earlier stage in the derivation, the bare direct object can surface in a position in which it is separated from the verb.

As independent evidence that Turkish does have VP-movement, Gračanin-Yüksek & İşsever offer the following example, which they claim is fully grammatical:

(5) [[Kitab-ı oku-ma-sın]-ı]$_i$ Ali [Ayşe-nin ____$_i$] isti-yor.
book-ACC read-NOM-3.SG-ACC Ali Ayşe-GEN want-PRES.PROG(3.SG)
'Ali wants Ayşe to read the book.' (G-Y&İ 2011:40)

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[1] As also mentioned, in passing, in Erdal (2007), most of such "prosodically independent" bare direct objects show up in clause-initial position and thus function as topics; there are, however, instances where they are preceded by some material; such material is typically short, consists of just one constituent, and is usually the subject; thus, such constituents can be characterized as topics, as well.

[2] Actually, the relevant parameter for Diesing is definiteness rather than specificity, but transposing the former to the latter is fair; it is quite clear that for Turkish and related languages, the relevant parameter is specificity.

[3] The authors further claim that in embedded nominalized clauses, the verb does not undergo such raising, presumably due to either the absence or the defective nature of T in such clauses. However, it is less than clear that this is a valid claim, given that at least morphologically, the verb and the nominalization and agreement markers in embedded clauses result in morpho-phonological words, just as in fully finite clauses, the verb and the tense and agreement markers do. In this squib, I will not address the properties of nominalized clauses, other than to say that DOM-effects are exhibited by them, as well.

The authors further claim that similar examples, but with the direct object lacking overt accusative marking, are grammatical, as well:

(6) [[Kitap oku-ma-sın]-ı]$_i$ Ali [Ayşe-nin ____$_i$] isti-yor.
book read-NOM-3.SG-ACC Ali Ayşe-GEN want-PRES.PROG(3.SG)
'Ali wants Ayşe to read a book/books.' (G-Y&İ 2011:42)

However, it is less than clear that such examples are indeed well-formed. Most native speakers I have consulted reject such examples. The few who accept them as possible utterances do so only if the genitive subject of the embedded clause bears heavy stress.

Furthermore, it is crucial for the account of Gračanin-Yüksek & İşsever (2011) that, while examples such as (6) are fully well-formed, examples such as (7) are ungrammatical:

(7) [Kitap]$_i$ Ali [Ayşe-nin ___$_i$ oku-ma-sın]-ı isti-yor.
book Ali Ayşe-GEN read-NOM-3.SG-ACC want-PRES.PROG(3.SG)
'Ali wants Ayşe to read a book/books.' (G-Y&İ 2011:43)

The (supposed) ill-formedness of examples such as (7) is important for Gračanin-Yüksek & İşsever's account, because they claim that in nominalized embedded clauses, the verb remains within the VP; the bare direct object in such examples can therefore not be claimed to have pied-piped the VP along with it, as it scrambled to a topic position in the matrix clause, as opposed to (6), where it would have done so.

However, other native speakers of Turkish I have consulted do not notice a clear-cut difference in acceptability between (6) and (7); for both types of examples, the material at the beginning of the matrix clause has to be followed by a pause, and the genitive subject of the embedded clause has to be heavily stressed, in order for the utterances to be accepted at all. It is true that (6) is favored slightly over (7); however, this is a general preference for a bare direct object to be left-adjacent to the verb, and it is a preference which is reported for any and all instances of bare direct object—even those in root clauses which are quite acceptable, as in the earlier examples offered earlier in this paper.

Furthermore, similar facts obtain in clauses which are not nominalized, and where Gračanin-Yüksek & İşsever would have to claim that the verb has risen to a higher functional head, thus vacating the VP:

(8) [Kitap]$_I$ Ali [Ayşe ___$_i$ oku-sun] isti-yor.
book Al Ayşe read-OPT want-PRES.PROG(3.SG)
'Ali wants for Ayşe to read a book/books.'

According to Gračanin-Yüksek & İşsever's account, (8) should be considerably better than (7), given that the verb would have risen to a higher position (here, a modal functional head), vacating the VP, and thus making it possible for the VP with the bare direct object to "scramble" to a clause-initial position. However, (8) is judged on a par with (7), i.e. speakers who accept (7) as borderline do so for (8), as well, and those who reject (7) reject (8), too. Thus, no difference can be drawn between nominalized versus fully tensed clauses with respect to verb raising, and the possibility (versus lack thereof) of separating bare direct objects from the verb cannot be

attributed to verb raising—at least not in the way proposed by G-Y&İ.

The preference we just mentioned, i.e. the general preference for a bare direct object to be left-adjacent to the verb, is reported in Erdal (2007) as well; an illustrative example follows:

(9) Öğretmen bul-du-m dün oğl-um-a
teacher find-PST-1.SG yesterday son-1.SG-DAT
'I found a teacher/teachers for my son yesterday.'

Here, the bare direct object, "teacher", is either a contrastive topic, or, as Erdal refers to it, a "left-periphery focus"; under the first reading, the verb would bear stress; under the second, the bare direct object would. What is interesting is that Erdal claims that this moved bare direct object "obligatorily attracts the verb governing it into second place" (Erdal 2007:75). Note that this is an analysis rather akin to the G-Y&İ analysis, i.e. it is based on the idea that the bare direct object and the verb have to remain together.

However, just like the Gračanin-Yüksek & İşsever proposal, Erdal's analysis is problematic, unless his generalization is limited to instances where the bare direct object is not (contrastively) stressed, given the well-formed examples of bare direct objects separated from the verb as discussed earlier. Thus, according to Erdal's own observations and generalizations, examples such as the following are fine, despite the fact that the bare direct object is separated from the verb:

(10) ÖĞRETMEN dün oğl-um-a, ANTRENÖR de kız-ım-a
teacher yesterday son-1.SG-DAT trainer and daughter-1.SG-DAT
bul-du-m.
find-PST-1.SG
'I found yesterday a teacher/teachers for my son, and a trainer/trainers for my daughter.'

Furthermore, given that the "double contrast" which was said to be important for the acceptability of such instances (where the bare direct object is separated from the verb) can also be *implied* rather than explicit, the following is acceptable, as well—of course in situations where that implicit contrast is a given:

(11) ÖĞRETMEN dün OĞL-UM-A bul-du-m.
teacher yesterday son-1.SG-DAT find-PST-1.SG
'I found yesterday a teacher/teachers for my son.'

Thus, we would have here a situation where, in Erdal's terms, the bare direct object would *not* have "attracted" its "governing verb" to "second place".

Of course, another problematic aspect of Erdal's analysis for examples such as (9) is the fact that such utterances can also be analyzed as instances of rightward movement of the adverb and of the dative object to post-verbal positions, rather than leftward movement of the bare direct object, with either simultaneous or immediately following movement of the verb.

Thus, if both Erdal's and Gračanin-Yüksek & İşsever's accounts of bare direct objects are problematic for instances where such objects are separated from the verb, what else can we propose?

My proposal is to analyze such bare direct objects as left-dislocated constituents, which are

base-generated, rather than moved from their canonical position. I had made such a suggestion in Kornfilt (2003: 189, footnote 4), albeit only for colloquial styles. Under such a proposal, now generalized to more formal styles, any contrastive topic or focus can be base-generated to the left of the clause; crucially, such a left-dislocated constituent can also be a bare direct object, which could thus be able to show up non-adjacent to the verb. While it would be expected for such a left-dislocated constituent to have an "associate", i.e. a pronoun, in its canonical position within the clause, this is not found. However, this is not problematic for the proposal; non-specific, bare direct objects cannot be represented by pronouns, at least not locally. Such co-referential pronouns can show up in independent sentences that follow in the discourse; e.g. we can find, based on example (10):

(12) ÖĞRETMEN dün oğl-um-a, ANTRENÖR (de) kız-ım-a
teacher yesterday son-1.SG-DAT trainer and daughter-1.SG-DAT
bul-du-m. *Onlar-la /kendileri-yle* yarın tanış-acak-sın.
find-PST-1.SG they-with/themselves-with tomorrow meet-FUT-2.SG
'I found a teacher/teachers for my son, and a trainer/trainers for my daughter. You will meet them tomorrow.' (Here, the pronoun in the second clause can refer to the bare directs objects in the first clause, i.e. to the constituents I claim are left-dislocated.)

The fact that more often than not, a double contrast accompanies such left-dislocated elements is not surprising; the expression of a constituent in such a non-canonical, clause-external position is obviously marked, and requires the assignment of some particular prominence to another constituent in discourse; in (10) and (12), this is the dative indirect object. Both of these non-canonical, discourse-marked assignments of prominence are perceived as most natural, if they contrast with corresponding constituents of similar prominence.

What are we to make, then, of the "strong tendency" of bare direct objects to show up left-adjacent to the verb? Under the approach I am proposing here, such direct objects do not move away from the verb at all; they remain in their "canonical position" to the left of the verb. Given that syntactic theory has given up on the ECP, as mentioned at the beginning of this squib, we need another formal account.

I suggest that the answer is head-incorporation, as proposed also in Kornfilt (2003). While there has been some criticism of this proposal (cf. G-Y&İ 2011 for some arguments as well as some references), the arguments offered can be countered fairly easily. For example, the fact that bare direct objects can show up as separated from the verb is, as suggested here, only apparent; such direct objects are base-generated clause-externally (and do not require Case in that clause-external position); they do not undergo movement away from the verb. The fact that in some contexts, these bare direct objects can be shown to consist of a (reduced) phrase rather than being just a head is not problematic, either: it is the head of the phrase that incorporates into the verb, and the remainder of the phrase can move away, as argued in Kornfilt (2003). The fact that such bare direct objects can be separated from the verb by certain particles is not problematic for the incorporation account, either, as argued in Kornfilt (2003), as well.

This sketch of the adjacency phenomenon as observed between bare direct objects and verbs in Turkish has covered the main properties of the phenomenon, and has done so based on a proposal that still follows Lamontagne & Travis's original insight that what is adjacent has to remain adjacent; apparent separation is, I have suggested here, due to base-generation (via Left Dislocation) away from the verb, without involving movement away from the verb. While there

are certain details which still need to be addressed (e.g. the fact that the bare direct object can also show up to the right of the verb, but still adjacent to it), and while the phonological component of the linguistic/syntactic model will need to be called upon, I am confident that the current sketch will not be seriously challenged; it will only need to be expanded.

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