Syntax and Semantics of Turkish Acc and Gen

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Talk outline

1. Semantics of case marking
   - Optional ACC marking
   - Optional GEN marking
   - Quantifier scope
   - An OT analysis of DOM and DSM

2. Syntax of case marking
   - Forcing case by scrambling
   - Prohibiting case in adjunct clauses
     - Licensing GEN by agreement suffixes
     - Licensing GEN by ECM
Interesting properties of Turkish

- The unmarked order of Turkish sentences is SOV.
  Special positions:
  Topic(s) – . . . – Focus – V – Background
- 7 cases: NOM, ACC, GEN, DAT, LOC, ABL, INSTR
- no definite article, indefinite article *bir* ‘one’
- subordinate clauses are nominalized!
  (lit. *I know Peter’s eating the cake.*)
Optional ACC marking: Definiteness

- a.k.a. Differential Object Marking (DOM)
- Direct objects vary between ACC and null marking (=NOM)

(1)  a. Dün kitap oku-du-m.
    yesterday book read-PST-1SG
    ‘Yesterday I read books.’

  b. Dün kitab-ı oku-du-m.
    yesterday book-ACC read-PST-1SG
    ‘Yesterday I read the book.’

(1a) does not denote number or reference.
(1b) is singular and definite.
Optional ACC marking: Specificity

(1) c. \( Dün \quad \text{bir} \quad \text{kitap} \quad \text{oku-du-m.} \)
yesterday a book read-PST-1SG
‘Yesterday I read a book.’

d. \( Dün \quad \text{bir} \quad \text{kitab-ı} \quad \text{oku-du-m.} \)
yesterday a book-ACC read-PST-1SG
‘Yesterday I read a book.’

Both are indefinite; difference in \textit{specificity}:
(1c) refers to any book.
(1d) denotes one particular book that the speaker ‘has in mind’.
Optional GEN marking: Remarks

- a.k.a. Differential Subject Marking (DSM)
- only in nominalized subordinate clauses
- GEN vs null marking
- generally: GEN on the possessor always appears together with possessive agreement on the possessee

(2) \[ \text{Kadin-in} \quad \text{doktor-u} \]
\[ \text{woman-GEN} \quad \text{doctor-POSS} \]
‘the woman’s doctor’
Optional GEN marking: Definiteness

(3)  a.  
\[
\begin{array}{llllllll}
\text{Yol-dan} & \text{araba} & \text{geç-tiğ-in-} & \text{-i} \\
\text{road-ABL} & \text{car} & \text{pass-NOMLZ-POSS} & \text{ACC}
\end{array}
\]
‘(I saw) that cars passed by on the road.’

b.  
\[
\begin{array}{llllllll}
\text{Yol-dan} & \text{araba-\text{\textit{nin}}} & \text{geç-tiğ-in-} & \text{-i} \\
\text{road-ABL} & \text{car-GEN} & \text{pass-NOMLZ-POSS} & \text{ACC}
\end{array}
\]
‘(I saw) that the car passed by on the road.’

Same as direct object:
(3a) does not specify number or reference.
(3b) is singular and definite.
Optional GEN marking: Specificity

(3)

\[
(3c) \quad [ \text{Yol-dan} \quad \text{bir} \quad \text{araba} \quad \text{geç-tiğ-in-} \quad ]-i
\]
\[
\text{road-ABL a car pass-NOMLZ-POSS ACC}
\]
\[
\text{‘(I saw) that a car passed by on the road.’}
\]
\[
(3d) \quad [ \text{Yol-dan} \quad \text{bir} \quad \text{araba-nin} \quad \text{geç-tiğ-in-} \quad ]-i
\]
\[
\text{road-ABL a car-GEN pass-NOMLZ-POSS ACC}
\]
\[
\text{‘(I saw) that a car passed by on the road.’}
\]

Same as direct object:
(3c) is indefinite and non-specific.
(3d) is indefinite and specific.
Quantifier scope and case marking

(4) Bill didn’t see a mistake.
   a. Bill didn’t see any mistakes. (¬∃)
   b. There was a mistake that Bill didn’t see. (∃¬)

(5) Bill bir hata gör-me-di.
   Bill a mistake see-NEG-PST
   a. Bill didn’t see any mistakes.
   b. #There was a mistake that Bill didn’t see.

(6) Bill bir hata-yı gör-me-di.
   Bill a mistake-ACC see-NEG-PST
   a. #Bill didn’t see any mistakes.
   b. There was a mistake that Bill didn’t see.
DOM and DSM as marking untypical features

Aissen (2003):

- DO is typically $[-\text{anim}]$, $[-\text{def}]$, $[-\text{spec}]$
- SU is typically $[+\text{anim}]$, $[+\text{def}]$, $[+\text{spec}]$
- case marks ‘untypicality’ for disambiguation
- feature scales for animacy and definiteness, cut-off points vary
- works for Spanish, Hebrew, Turkish objects, . . .

BUT: Turkish DSM marks typical subjects!!
Outlook: Syntactic constraints on structural case

Forcing ACC and GEN (i.e. [−def] etc. but marked)

- scrambling to the right or left of focus position
- possessive suffixes (not discussed here)
- greater scope than surface scope

Prohibiting GEN (i.e. [+def] etc. but unmarked)

- in certain types of subordinate clauses

ACC cannot be prohibited.
Forcing ACC by scrambling

Optional only in immediately preverbal position (focus position): for both objects (7) and subjects (8).

(7)  
a. (Bir) kitab-* (i) dü n oku-du-m.  
   (a) book-(ACC) yesterday read-PST-1SG  
   ‘I read books/a book/the book yesterday.’

b. Dün oku-du-m (bir) kitab-* (i).  
   yesterday read-PST-1SG (a) book-(ACC)  
   ‘Yesterday I read it, a/the book.’
Forcing GEN by scrambling

(8) a. \[(Bir) \ araba-*(nîn) \ yol-dan\]
   \[\] (a) \ car-(GEN) \ road-ABL
   \[geç-tiğ-in- \ ]-i \ gör-dü-m.
   pass-NOMLZ-POSS \ ACC see-PST-1SG
   ‘I saw that a/the car passed down on the road.’

b. \[Yol-dan \ geç-tiğ-in-\]
   \[\] -i \ gördüm
   road-ABL pass-NOMLZ-POSS \ ACC see-PST-1SG
   \[(bir) \ araba-*(nîn)\]
   \[\] (a) \ car-(GEN)
   ‘I saw that it passed down on the road, a/the car.’
Ideas for explanations for scrambling

- Non-referential indefinites don’t make sense in topic position (initial) or as given information (after verb).
  BUT: there are contexts where non-specific meaning can be retained

- The syntactic status of an unmarked constituent out of base-position is ambiguous.
  BUT: (7) and (8) are not ambiguous, yet case is obligatory.

- Syntactic process of scrambling triggers overtness of case (perhaps as a side-effect).
  How exactly might this work?
Prohibiting GEN in adjunct clauses

(9) [ Ali-(*nin) dön-düg-ü için ] ev-e
    Ali-(GEN) return-NOMLZ-POSS for home-DAT
    koş-tu-m.
    run-PST-1SG
    ‘I ran home because Ali (had) arrived.’

Also for: when, after, before, while, although, since (causal), assuming that, without, . . .

Some of these conjunctions can appear as heads of RCs or as free RCs with postposition ⇒ then the subject can have GEN
Nominalizers

Two main nominalizers in Turkish:
- *DIG* (‘factive’, present, past)
- *mA* (‘subjunctive’, no time indication)

Four types of subordinate clauses, only three attested:

(10)  | POSS  | no POSS
-----|-------|------
(GEN) | ✓     | *    
*GEN  | ✓     | ✓    

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Licensing GEN by POSS agreement (1/2)

Kornfilt (2008) observes the following distribution of -DIG and -mA:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>POSS</th>
<th>no POSS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(GEN)</td>
<td>DIG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*GEN</td>
<td>DIG</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- in adjunct clauses, -mA always appears with POSS and always licenses GEN
- in adjunct clauses, -DIG can license GEN but often does not
- in argument clauses, -mA and -DIG always appear with POSS and license GEN
Licensing GEN by POSS agreement (2/2)

Kornfilt argues:

- **DIG** can head two phrases: an nP (argument clauses) and a ModP (adjunct clauses)
- **mA** always heads an nP (in argument and adjunct clauses)
- POSS raising to n⁰ licenses GEN
- POSS raising to Mod⁰ doesn’t license GEN

This works BUT **mA** doesn’t always license GEN in adjunct clauses (*rağmen* ‘although’, Ersen-Rasch 2012: 313)
Aygen (2007) argues:

- GEN is licensed by ECM: subject covertly raises to NP above the subordinate clause.
- This high NP is empty for argument clauses.

(12) \[
\left[\text{NP} \uparrow \left[ \text{N'} \left[ \text{subject-GEN} \ldots \text{verb-DIG-POSS} \right] \emptyset \right] \right]
\]

- Where GEN can’t be licensed, there is no NP, instead everything is a CP.

(13) \[
\left[\text{CP} \left[ \text{subject-NOM} \ldots \text{verb-DIG-POSS} \right] \text{C}^0 \right]
\]

BUT: Some of the ‘conjunctions’ that she takes as C^0, also occur as postpositions and assign case to a TP with nominal agreement?
Summary

Distinctive functions of DOM/DSM:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ACC/GEN</th>
<th>NOM</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>specific object</td>
<td>non-specific object</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>specific subject</td>
<td>non-specific subject</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>subject of argument clause</td>
<td>subject of adjunct clause</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>subject of nominal clause</td>
<td>subject of verbal clause</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Open questions:

- Why are ACC and GEN so similar w.r.t. to their semantic features?
- Why are they similar w.r.t. scrambling?
- What’s the structural difference between adjunct clauses and argument clauses that determines GEN licensing?
References


Thank you!