

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* ***bir*** *kitap* *oku-du-m.*
yesterday a book read-PST-1SG
'Yesterday I read a book.'
- d. *Dün* ***bir*** *kitab-ı* *oku-du-m.*
yesterday a book-ACC read-PST-1SG
'Yesterday I read a book.'

Both are indefinite; difference in *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) *Kadın-ın doktor-u*
woman-GEN doctor-POSS
'the woman's doctor'

Optional GEN marking: Definiteness

- (3) a. [*Yol-dan araba geç-tiğ-in-*]-i
road-ABL car pass-NOMLZ-POSS ACC
'(I saw) that cars passed by on the road.'
- b. [*Yol-dan araba-nın geç-tiğ-in-*]-i
road-ABL car-GEN pass-NOMLZ-POSS ACC
'(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) c. [*Yol-dan bir araba geç-tiğ-in-*]-i
road-ABL a car pass-NOMLZ-POSS ACC
'(I saw) that a car passed by on the road.'
- d. [*Yol-dan bir araba-nın geç-tiğ-in-*]-i
road-ABL a car-GEN pass-NOMLZ-POSS ACC
'(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. ($\neg\exists$)
b. There was a mistake that Bill didn't see. ($\exists\neg$)
- (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 [−anim], [−def], [−spec]
- SU is typically [+anim], [+def], [+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-*(ı) dün 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-*(ı).*
yesterday read-PST-1SG (a) book-(ACC)
'Yesterday I read it, a/the book.'

Forcing GEN by scrambling

- (8) a. [(*Bir*) *araba*-*(*nın*) *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*-*(*nın*)
(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 overtiness of case (perhaps as a side-effect).
How exactly might this work?

Prohibiting GEN in adjunct clauses

- (9) [*Ali-(*nin) dön-düğ-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 \Rightarrow 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	✓	✓

Licensing GEN by POSS agreement (1/2)

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

(11)

	POSS		no POSS
(GEN)	<i>DIG</i>	<i>mA</i>	
*GEN	<i>DIG</i>		<i>DIG</i>

- 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 n^0 licenses GEN
- POSS raising to Mod^0 doesn't license GEN

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

Licensing GEN by ECM

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) $[_{NP} \uparrow [_{N'} [\text{subject-GEN} \dots \text{verb-} \textit{DIG-POSS}] \emptyset]]$

- where GEN can't be licensed, there is no NP, instead everything is a CP

(13) $[_{CP} [\text{subject-NOM} \dots \text{verb-} \textit{DIG-POSS}] C^0]$

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:

ACC/GEN		NOM
specific object	vs.	non-specific object
specific subject	vs.	non-specific subject
subject of argument clause	vs.	subject of adjunct clause
subject of nominal clause	vs.	subject of verbal clause

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

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Thank you!