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**When I is not me:  
A preliminary case study of shifted indexicals in Turkish**

The purpose of this paper is to establish that Turkish, of which I am a native speaker, displays a phenomenon called **indexical shifting**, and to make new linguistic data available. Although similar studies have been conducted in Zazaki and Uyghur, the first in geographical and the second in structural proximity to Turkish, and despite the fact that the language is overall well accounted for, this study, as far as I know, is the first of its kind.

Indexicals are a set of words which pick out their referents from the context to which the author of an utterance belongs. This set contains pronominal, locative and temporal expressions such as *I*, *you*, *we*, *here*, *now*, and *today*. In *pro-drop* languages where verbal subjects need not be expressed—Turkish is *pro-drop*—the phonetically null subject *pro* also exhibits indexical properties.

On the basis of this description, for an indexical to “shift” means that it no longer refers to the current context of utterance but to an embedded one. Consider a reported speech situation such as:

(1) The doctor said that I am sick.

Two contexts are involved, the original one, where the doctor has told me “you are sick”, and the actual one where I am reporting his words. As I am the author of this utterance, *I* is expected to refer to none other than me. Now, had *I* shifted, it would have denoted the doctor, the original attitude holder, yielding:

(2) The doctor<sub>i</sub> said that he<sub>i</sub> is sick.

This might be somewhat difficult to imagine since English does not regularly support indexical shifting.<sup>1</sup> The only syntactic environment in which an indexical can, and must, pick out a referent in a context that is not the context of utterance are quotations (we will refer to such instances of shift in *direct discourse* as “pseudo-shift”):

(3) The doctor<sub>i</sub> said: “I<sub>i</sub> am sick”.

In view of the lack of genuine shift in English and other well-known languages, Kaplan (1989) went as far as to claim that indexical shifting simply is not a property of natural languages, i.e. the interpretation of an indexical is fixed once and for all by the context of utterance. This claim appears to be empirically inadequate, though: studies have since evidenced indexical shift in a number of languages.<sup>2</sup> Note that indexical shifting is an indirect discourse phenomenon, so in order to establish that a given language genuinely exhibits it, one must be careful to eliminate a confound created by quotations in disguise and pseudo-shifting.

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<sup>2</sup>Schlenker 2003 on Amharic, Anand 2004 on Zazaki, Sudo 2010 on Uyghur.

This gives an idea of the strategy deployed here. I will show that the sentence types in question here *are not necessarily instances of quotation*. And this will serve as a basis for establishing that Turkish indexicals can shift. The final step is to specify the conditions under which this happens.

### **The Traditional Grammar Hypothesis**

There are many ways of reporting speech in Turkish; we will focus on tensed clauses embedded under the verb *demek* (“to say”) with no complementizer:<sup>3</sup>

- (4) Doktor [hasta-lan- di- m] de-di  
doctor sick- PASS-PST-1SG say-PAST-[3SG]  
The doctor said: “I got sick”. (see below for other readings)

The traditional grammar hypothesis states that such sentences are exclusively quotations. The very examination of indexicals will lead us to level strong objections at this statement of exclusivity.

### **The initial observation**

Sentences like (4) turn out to be ambiguous in Turkish. Either the doctor is sick, or I, the current speaker, am sick. That is, two contexts are relevant for determining the indexical pronoun’s (henceforth “1SG, 2SG, etc.”) reference. But the reading where 1SG refers to the context of utterance is not compatible with quotation. And it is indeed a feature of *indirect* reported speech. The two readings of (4) can be paraphrased as follows:

- (5) The doctor said that I am sick. (**Unshifted**)

- (6) The doctor<sub>i</sub> said that he<sub>i</sub> is sick. (**Shifted**)

We have three hypotheses at hand. **(H1) The traditional grammar hypothesis** claims that our sentences are only compatible with quotation. **(H2) The strong indirect reported speech hypothesis** makes an equally strong, symmetrical claim, namely that clauses embedded under *dedi* are exclusively instances of indirect reported speech. The first step is to demonstrate the falsity of both (H1) and (H2) in order to suggest the likelihood of **the mixed account (H3)**, which holds that both types of clauses are possible.

### **Refuting (H1)**

The acceptability of readings where indexicals refer to the context of utterance is actually enough to dismiss the traditional grammar hypothesis, but there are strong additional reasons to do so.

A series of tests applied to sentences that do not contain indexicals will demonstrate that the

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<sup>3</sup> The standard means of expressing indirect reported speech situations in Turkish is through nominalized subordinate clauses. These do not license indexical shifting. Finite subordinate clauses discussed here are at least as common in oral communication.

traditional grammar hypothesis cannot hold in its exclusive claim for quotation, and that, at the very least, indirect reported speech undoubtedly occurs. We dwell on the fact that quotation is unavailable to some grammatical manipulations. As Anand (2006) puts it, the principle of grammatical opacity states that quotations *do not permit extraction, quantifying in, or grammatical licensing from outside the quote*.

### Extraction tests

Imagine a situation where Ali has told me that Tunç got sick. (7) reports this:

(7) Ali [Tunç hasta-lan- di] de-di  
 Ali Tunç sick- PASS- PST-[3SG] say-[3SG]

If the principle of grammatical opacity holds, and if the bracketed constituent in (7) is a quotation, then extractions out of this constituent should yield ungrammatical sentences, i.e. one should not be able to ask questions about, or form relative clauses out of it.<sup>4</sup> But this prediction is not borne out, which suggests that (8) and (9) are instances of indirect reported speech. The underscores in English translations mark the base position of the extracted element:

(8) Ali [Tunç nere-de hastalan-di] dedi?  
 Ali Tunç where get.sick-PST-[3SG] say-[3SG]  
 Where did Ali say that Tunç got sick \_\_?

(9) Ali'nin hasta-lan- di de- di- g- i çocuk  
 Ali-GEN sick-PASS-PST-[3SG] say-PST-REL-ACC kid-[NOM]  
 gel- me- di  
 come-NEG-PST-[3SG]  
 The kid who is such that Ali said he got sick did not come.

### Long-distance Neg-item licensing

The second test is based on the observation that Negative Polarity Items (NPIs), i.e. words like “anybody” (*kimse* in Turkish) or “anything”, require the presence of an overt negation to be used grammatically:

(10) \*Kimse-yi gör-dü.  
 Kimse-ACC see-PST-[3SG]  
 Intended: \*He saw anybody.

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<sup>4</sup> Quotations block extraction:  
 (i) \*Who did Ali say: “I saw \_\_”?

- (11) Kimse- yi gör-me-di  
Anybody-ACC see-NEG-PST-[3SG]  
He didn't see anybody.

Grammatical opacity holds that NPIs in quoted material cannot be licensed from outside the quotation. Long distance licensing (13) therefore speaks in favor of indirect discourse:

- (12) Tunç [kimse gel- di] de- me- di.  
Tunç anybody-[NOM] come-PST-[3SG] say-NEG-PST-[3SG]  
Tunç did not say that anybody came.

Moreover, (12) can simply not involve a quotation given that the content of the embedded clause is not, as (10) suggests, in itself grammatical.<sup>5</sup> This assertion further depends on a property of quotation called the “principle of faithful reporting” that captures the intuitive idea that *quotations must report the exact words that a person used* (Anand 2006). Indirect speech does not obey such a strict restriction.

In light of these tests, there indeed are grammatical relations between elements in and out of the embedded clause. This indicates that (H1) does not hold, at least in its clause of exclusivity.

### Refuting (H2)

Seeing how our sentences are compatible with indirect speech situations, one might be tempted to formulate (H2), exclusively assigning our sentence types to situations of indirect reported speech. However, this position doesn't hold either, given that imperatives can be introduced by *dedi*, while they cannot figure in indirect reported speech.

### Embedded imperatives

- (13) Tunç [gel] de- di  
Tunç come-[IMP-2SG] say-PST-[3SG]  
Tunç said: “Come”.  
Compare: \*Tunç said that come.

In sum, quotation is also an option under *dedi*, but it is not the *only* option. A stronger point can be made—let me just give an outline of the argument—if an indexical could be found that does pseudo-shift, while not shifting in an extracted sentence. Then, since it is the natural behavior of quotation to allow pseudo-shift, it could soundly be concluded that there are quotations under *dedi*.

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<sup>5</sup> Consider:

(ii) \*Tunç didn't say: “Anybody came”.

### Accepting the mixed hypothesis

Independently showing that both hypotheses are faulty suggests that the argument must expand on a mixed basis. Now, the only necessary precaution is to make sure that only indirect reported speech instances are manipulated (since indexical shifting is an *indirect* speech phenomenon). All sentences below are displayed in an extracted form, ensuring that they are not quotation in disguise.

#### Temporals

- (14) Geçen salı, Tunç [bugün nere-ye yağmur yağ-acak] de- miş- ti?  
last Tuesday Tunç today where-DAT rain rain-FUT-[3SG] say-DUB-PST-[3SG]  
Where did Tunç say that it would rain \_\_ last Thursday/today?

#### Locatives

- (15) Ali İzmir'de [bura-nın ne- ler-i güzel] de- miş- ti?  
Ali Izmir-LOC here-GEN what-PL-ACC pretty say-DUB-PST-[3SG]  
In Izmir, what did Ali say was pretty there (i.e. in Izmir)/here?

#### Pronominals

Pronouns shift whether expressed or unexpressed. Only the singular pronouns are dealt with here, but analogous data obtain for plural.

#### 1SG

- (16) Doktor [nasıl hasta-lan- di- m (ben)] de- di?  
Doctor how sick- PASS-PST-1SG (1SG-[NOM]) say-PST-[3SG]  
How did the doctor<sub>i</sub> say that I/he<sub>i</sub> got sick \_\_?

- (17) İnan [ben-i nere- ye ata- dı- lar] de- di?  
Inan 1SG-ACC where-DAT appoint-PST-3PL say-PST-[3SG]  
Where did Inan<sub>i</sub> say that they appointed me/him<sub>i</sub> \_\_?

#### 2SG

Uttered in 2012:

- (18) Kahin [\* (Edip'e) kim- i öldür-üp kim- in- le  
Prophet Oedipus-DAT who-ACC kill- COORD who-GEN-with  
evlen-ecek- sin] de- miş- ti?  
marry-FUT-2SG say-DUB-PST-[3SG]  
Who did the prophet say to Oedipus<sub>i</sub> that he<sub>i</sub> would kill and marry \_\_?

There is one condition that needs to be met for 2SG to shift: the original addressee must be

represented linguistically in the sentence.<sup>6</sup> Note that in (19) reference to the current context is not impossible, but dispreferred for reasons of world knowledge. And the case where the original addressee is not explicit and where 2SG would be read as shifted is not an ungrammatical sentence *per se*, such a reading is simply unavailable.

### Optionality

Unlike in Uyghur (Sudo 2010), indexical shifting in Turkish is an optional phenomenon. For a given sentence, if it is possible for an indexical to shift, the sentence will yield two distinct readings. However, this does get in the way of unequivocal communication since pragmatic factors will impair one of the readings, while favoring the other.

- (19) Öğretmen [sınav-dan neden kal-dı- m ben] de- di?  
 teacher exam-ABL why fail-PST-1SG 1SG-[NOM] say-PST-[3SG]  
**Unshifted favored:** Why did the teacher say that I failed the exam \_\_?  
**Shifted impaired:** Why did the teacher<sub>i</sub> say that he<sub>i</sub> failed the exam \_\_?

- (20) Oğlan [sınav-dan neden kal-dı- m ben] de- di?  
 son exam-ABL why fail-PST-1SG 1SG-[NOM] say-PST-[3SG]  
**Unshifted impaired:** Why did our son say that I failed the exam \_\_?  
**Shifted favored:** Why did our son<sub>i</sub> say that he<sub>i</sub> failed the exam \_\_?

### Shift together

When there are two or more indexicals, a constraint called “Shift Together” (Anand 2006, Sudo 2010) affects their behavior in the languages hitherto examined for shifting: one indexical shifts if and only if the other shifts, i.e. different contexts cannot simultaneously serve as a basis for respectively computing different indexicals’ reference. So, where we would expect four possible readings with optional shift, we only get two. Consider (21) as an illustration (using English words):

- (21) Mary said to Peter that [I] love [you].  
 Mary<sub>i</sub> said to Peter<sub>j</sub> that she<sub>i</sub> loved him<sub>j</sub>.  
 Mary said to Peter that I love you.  
 \*Mary<sub>i</sub> said to Peter that she<sub>i</sub> loves you.  
 \*Mary said to Peter<sub>j</sub> that I love him<sub>j</sub>.

What makes *Shift Together* important is that whether it holds or not gives us an idea of what type of rules we need in explaining indexicals’ behavior.

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<sup>6</sup> Or, in fact, be a salient feature of the current context. But for the sake of simplicity contextual salience will be left aside here.

It is generally accepted that each indexical comes with certain parameters to be fixed in order to be correctly interpreted, for instance *who* is speaking, *where*, and *when*. From this point, Schlenker suggested—on the basis of data from Amharic—that for languages that do not feature shifting, these parameters do not vary, they are indexed to the current auctorial context. However, for those that do, the proposal goes, the parameters are instead variables that can pick out their denotation from whichever context is available. The analysis runs at an individual level: indexicals behave independently from one another. But actual data show that *Shift Together* is observed in all shifting languages<sup>7</sup> and an unmodified version of Schlenker’s model fails to predict such a restriction.

An account of *Shift Together*, based on Sudo and Anand, states that the lexicons of shift-supporting languages feature an unpronounced operator that has the property of changing the context relative to which indexicals falling under its scope are interpreted: so the phenomenon is not regarded as an individual process but as happening within a range. It is argued that the operator occupies a fixed position relative to which other constituents, particularly indexicals, are distributed. Those falling below shift, those falling above do not: this allows for mismatch readings, which are indeed observed in Uyghur; but when two indexicals are forced to be interpreted *in concert* above or below the operator (e.g. by placing them within the same DP), they pattern together (*Local Shift Together*).

Back to Turkish. First of all, we expect that if the explicit addressee constraint also holds when multiple indexicals are involved, there should be a difference in the number of possible readings between (22) and (23):

- (22) Tunç [sen- i nere- ye götür- eceğ- im] de -miş?  
 Tunç 2SG-ACC where-DAT take- FUT-1SG say-DUB-[3SG]  
 Where did Tunç<sub>i</sub> say that he<sub>i</sub> would take you \_\_?  
 Where did Tunç say that I would take you \_\_?  
 \*Where did Tunç<sub>i</sub> say that I/he<sub>i</sub> would take his<sub>i</sub> addressee \_\_?

- (23) Tunç Ayşe’ ye [sen- i nere- ye götür- eceğ- im] de-miş?  
 Tunç Ayşe-DAT 2SG-ACC where-DAT take- FUT-1SG say-DUB-[3SG]  
 Where did Tunç say to Ayse that I would take you \_\_?  
 Where did Tunç<sub>i</sub> say to Ayse<sub>j</sub> that he<sub>i</sub> would take her<sub>j</sub> \_\_?  
 Where did Tunç<sub>i</sub> say to Ayse that he<sub>i</sub> would take you \_\_? (mismatch)  
 ?? Where did Tunç say to Ayse<sub>j</sub> that I would take her<sub>j</sub> \_\_?

(22) and (23) indeed suggest that the explicit addressee constraint should be generalized to multiple indexicals. But the third reading of (23)—a cross-contextual one—should not obtain if *Shift Together* held for Turkish. Now, three possible explanations are available. Either *pro* (1SG at least) constitutes an exception to *Shift Together*, the constraint does not apply to Turkish, or the conditions that govern *Shift Together* have unintentionally been left unsatisfied. One path to follow is to see what

<sup>7</sup> For some issues and their resolution see Anand (2006).



happens when 1SG is expressed:

- (24) Tunç Ayşe'ye [ben sen-i nere- ye götür- eceğ- im] de-miş?  
Tunç Ayşe-DAT 1SG-[NOM] 2SG-ACC where-DAT take- FUT-1SG say-DUB-[3SG]  
Where did Tunç say to Ayşe that I would take you \_\_\_?  
Where did Tunç<sub>i</sub> say to Ayşe<sub>j</sub> that he<sub>i</sub> would take her<sub>j</sub> \_\_\_?  
Where did Tunç<sub>i</sub> say to Ayşe that he<sub>i</sub> would take you \_\_\_?  
?? Where did Tunç say to Ayşe<sub>j</sub> that I would take her<sub>j</sub> \_\_\_?

Expressing 1SG does not rule out the rogue reading. But (24) and (25) both yield the same acceptable and difficultly acceptable cross-contextual readings. We think, based on (25)

- (25) Tunç Ayşe'ye [sen ben- i nere- ye götür- ecek-sin] de-miş?  
Tunç Ayşe-DAT 2SG-[NOM] 1SG-ACC where-DAT take- FUT-2SG say-DUB-[3SG]  
?? Where did Tunç<sub>i</sub> say to Ayşe that you would take him<sub>i</sub> \_\_\_?  
Where did Tunç say to Ayşe<sub>j</sub> that she<sub>i</sub> would take me \_\_\_?  
(match readings also available)

that the following general description might be tested in further research: the object of the verb might escape the scope of the context changing operator.

Although this still remains speculative, what allows mismatch readings in previous sentences might be that constituents covertly move within the structure of the sentence. When we use grammatical coordination to force them to occupy the same position,<sup>8</sup> *Local Shift Together* holds; again two conditions where the expressed addressee constraint is and is not satisfied must both be tested.

- (26) Inan [seninle beni nereye atayacaklar] demis ?  
Inan you-GEN-with I-ACC where appoint-3PL say-3SG  
Where did Inan say that you and I would be appointed \_\_\_ ?  
(No other readings)
- (27) Inan Ayşe'ye [seninle beni nereye atayacaklar] demis ?  
Inan Ayşe-DAT you-GEN-with I-ACC where appoint-3PL say-3SG  
Where did Inan<sub>i</sub> say to Ayşe<sub>j</sub> that he<sub>i</sub> and her<sub>j</sub> would be appointed \_\_\_?  
Where did Inan say to Ayşe that you and I would be appointed \_\_\_?

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<sup>8</sup> Consider:

John ate salmon and cooked kale.

One cannot extract one element without the other:

(iii) \*What did John eat salmon and cook \_\_\_ ?

(iv) What did John eat \_\_\_ and cook \_\_\_ ?

(No other readings)

(26) shows that an unsatisfied condition ensuring one indexical shift indeed blocks the other, and (27) that when nothing blocks the shift, both indexicals must pattern together.

### **Conclusion**

After having established that embedded clauses introduced by *demek* are compatible with indirect speech, I have shown that indexicals under this verb shift optionally in Turkish, although pragmatic factors somewhat favor or impair the phenomenon. Two generalizations can be advanced, *viz.* the explicit addressee for 2SG and the subject priority for multiple indexicals constraints. Now, with the data at hand it is still unsafe to draw conclusions on whether Turkish respects *Shift Together*. When indexicals are trapped into occupying the same syntactic position the constraint holds indeed, but in the general case, mismatch readings are not altogether banned. These do not in themselves falsify the hypothesis that a context-shifting operator might be at play; in other words cross-contextual readings are compatible with localized *Shift Together* provided that covert movements of indexicals might be distributing them in and out of the operator's range.

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