

NOT ALL POSSESSORS IN TURKISH ARE ANTI-SUBJECT ORIENTED*

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1 Introduction

In Turkish, overt pronominal possessors in agreeing possessive constructions are *anti-subject oriented* (Kornfilt, 1984, Erguvanlı Taylan, 1986, Sezer, 1991, Aydın and İşsever, 2013). Unlike English, but like Norwegian, Hindi or Russian, this means that such possessors are in disjoint reference with local subjects, but not with other arguments.

This paper provides data from two types of possessive structures that are minimally distinct from such possessives along the dimensions of pronominal expression and the expression of agreement morphology. Neither *silent* possessors of agreeing possessives nor overt possessors of *non-agreeing* possessives are anti-subject oriented. The latter observation is the main finding here and it paves the way for a novel, more accurate description of the environments where the effect is triggered. This, in turn, serves as evidence against existing accounts that attempt to subsume the effect under principle B of binding theory.

2 Three Types of Possessive Phrases

Genitive and Agreement In Turkish, possession can be expressed with genitive possessive constructions like (1) and (2), where the possessor is marked for the genitive and the possessum agrees¹ with the possessor in person and in number.

(1) O-nun araba-sı satılık.
3S-GEN car-3S.POSS is.for.sale
His car is for sale.

(2) Biz-im araba-mız satılık.
1P-GEN car-1P.POSS is.for.sale
Our car is for sale.

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¹For alternative analyses of what is traditionally assumed to be a third person possessive marker *-sı*, see Kunduracı (2013) and Erguvanlı Taylan and Öztürk (2014).

Either Genitive or Agreement The expression of *both* the possessor and agreement morphology is not required for the availability of possessive readings. In (3), the possessor is omitted while agreement is present and in (4), the possessor is expressed while agreement is absent.

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| (3) Araba-sı satılık.
car-3S.POSS is.for.sale
His car is for sale. | (4) O-nun araba satılık.
3S-GEN car is.for.sale.
His car is for sale. |
|--|---|

In agreeing possessives, the alternation between expressed and silent possessors, that is, between (1) and (3), is not free. It is regulated by general constraints on pronominal expression and specifically a property called ‘topic switching’ (Enç, 1986, Öztürk, 2002)². Otherwise, person and number features of dropped possessors are fully recoverable from agreement morphology.

Non-agreeing possessives as in (4) are referred to by native speakers as colloquial and they have not received much attention so far. Some restrictions bear upon the types of phrases that can occur in possessor and possessum positions in this construction³, but the construction itself is productive and frequently attested.

Neither Genitive nor Agreement If *neither* an overt possessor nor agreement is expressed, as in (5), possessive readings are unavailable. But possessors may be implied depending on context, as illustrated in (6).

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|--|---|
| (5) Uttered out of the blue
Araba satılık.
car is.for.sale
The car is for sale. | (6) <i>I come back home and what do I see?</i>
Araba satılık.
car is.for.sale
Our car is for sale. |
|--|---|

The following contrast suggests that readings like (6) do not arise due to the realization of a silent possessor. In (7), a subject quantifier successfully binds the (silent) possessor of an agreeing possessive and yields a distributive reading. Such a reading is unavailable in (8), with a regular DP.

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|---|---|
| (7) Herkes _i araba-sı-nı _i satmış.
everybody car-3S.POSS-ACC sold
Everybody _i sold their _i car. | (8) Herkes _i araba-yı _{*i} satmış.
everybody car-ACC sold
Intended: Everybody _i sold their _i car.
Available: Everybody sold the car. |
|---|---|

Thus, in the absence of both agreement morphology and an overt possessor, possessors are not silently realized and possessive meanings do not compositionally arise. Data from non-agreeing possessives with overt possessors suggest that Turkish can use the genitive as the sole marker of possession. Moreover both the omission of a possessor and its expression in the genitive are compatible with the realization of agreement morphology.

²In the poster, I acknowledge the existence of such a constraint on pronominal expression but dismiss the possibility that it is responsible for the clause internal anti-subject orientation of overt possessors. Furthermore, overt pronouns are not associated with topic switching in Hindi (Keine, 2011), Norwegian (Nicholas LaCara, p.c.) or Russian (Petr Kusliy, p.c.), languages that otherwise do display anti-subject orientation effects.

³Quantifiers, indefinites and nouns that head a relative clause cannot occur as possessors (Erguvanlı Taylan and Öztürk, 2014) and inalienable nouns as possessums of non-agreeing possessives.

3 The Disjoint Reference Effect

Anti-Subject Orientation In cases where both a pronominal possessor and agreement is expressed, the possessor is interpreted in disjoint reference from the nearest⁴ subject.

- (9) Ali_i o-nun_{*i/j} araba-sı-nı satmış.
 Ali 3S-GEN car-POSS-ACC sold
 Ali_i sold his_{*i/j} car.
- (10) Çocuklar_i onlar-ın_{*i/j} sırt-ları-nı yıkadılar.
 kids 3P-GEN back-POSS-ACC washed
 The children_i washed their_{*i/j} backs. Kornfilt (1984)

Özsoy (1986) reports a configuration similar to the above as grammatical, reproduced here as (11). I find that although the degradation is less severe than in (9), the sentence does contrast with (12), where the possessor is not coreferential with the subject.

- (11) % Ben benim araba-m-ı kaybettim. (12) Ali benim araba-m-ı kaybetti.
 I my car-POSS-ACC lost-1S Ali my car-POSS-ACC lost.3S
 I lost my car. Ali lost my car.

The reason for this asymmetry is unclear at this point. But it is not uncommon for non-third person pronouns produce milder disjoint reference effects from their third person counterparts⁵ and this asymmetry poses a slight challenge for any unified account of anti-subject orientation.

On the other hand, neither silent possessors of agreeing possessives, in (13), nor overt possessors of non-agreeing possessives, in (14), are disjoint in reference from the clausal subject.

- (13) Ali_i araba-sı-nı_{i/j} satmış. (14) Ali_i o-nun_{i/j} araba-yı satmış.
 Ali car-3S.POSS-ACC sold Ali 3S-GEN car-3S.POSS sold
 Ali_i sold his_i car. Ali_i sold his_i car.

Other Arguments are not Targets of the Effect When these possessive structures occur as the direct object of a ditransitive, neither of their possessors are interpreted as disjoint in reference from the indirect object⁶. The contrast between (9) and (15) is the core of anti-subject orientation.

- (15) Ali Can-a_k o-nun_k araba-sı-nı gösterdi.
 Ali Can-DAT 3S-GEN car-3S.POSS-ACC showed
 Ali showed Can_k his_k car.

⁴I cannot expand on the ‘locality’ of the effect here. For data illustrating this claim see Kornfilt (1984), Sezer (1991) and Aydın and İşsever (2013)

⁵For instance, ‘I love me’ is judged to be less degraded under coreference than ‘He loves him’.

⁶Similarly, an indirect object possessive could be interpreted as coreferential with a direct object. There is a caveat however: In both cases, the possessive must follow the non-subject argument (Erguvanlı Taylan, 1986). Instances where the possessive precedes the argument are beyond the scope of this paper, although see (Bošković and Şener, 2012) for a proposal.

- (16) Ali Can-a_k araba-sı-nı_k gösterdi. (17) Ali Can-a_k o-nun_k araba-yı gösterdi.
 Ali Can-DAT car3S.POSS-ACC showed Ali Can-DAT 3S-GEN car-ACC showed
 Ali showed Can_k his_k car. Ali showed Can_k his_k car.

As the following data suggest, these properties are common across languages⁷.

- (18) John_i fortalte Per_j om hans_{*i/j} kone.
 John told Peter about his_{*i/j} wife. Norwegian, Hestvik (1992)
- (19) Ram-ne_i Ayesha-ko_j us-kii_{*i/j} kitaab dikhaai.
 Ram Ayesha-DAT 3S-GEN book showed
 Ram_i showed Ayesha_j *his_i/her_j book. Hindi, Rajesh Bhatt, p.c.
- (20) Petja_i predstavil Maše_j ego_i / ee_j tetju.
 Peter introduced Mary.DAT 3S.GEN.M / 3S.GEN.F aunt.ACC
 Peter introduced *his_i/her_j aunt to Mary. Russian, Asarina (2005)

There are two important differences between Turkish and these languages. First, their possessive structures do not have the option of displaying agreement morphology. And second, they have subject oriented pronominal possessors available: *sin* in Norwegian, *apnaa* in Hindi and *svoj* in Russian.

Proposal For Turkish, the data suggest that neither pronominal expression nor agreement morphology are independent triggers of the effect. The second important observation is that subjects are specifically targeted by the effect, while non-subject arguments are not.

A descriptive generalization that captures the first fact is that overt pronominal possessors acquire an anti-subject orientation *when they occur in positions where silent pronouns are otherwise licensed*. The absence of the effect in non-agreeing possessives is then attributable to the unavailability, in such constructions, of silent possessors.

This generalization makes the prediction that any pronoun that triggers agreement morphology will be anti-subject oriented while those that do not will freely corefer with subjects. This prediction is borne out, as illustrated by the contrast between (21) and (22). For the clarity of the data, one means of clausal complementation in Turkish uses nominalized (NMZ in the gloss) and case marked predicates whose subjects are in the genitive⁸. Genitive subjects and the form of agreement on the predicate show that these clauses partially mirror the morphological properties of agreeing possessives. Nominalized complement clauses do not have non-agreeing counterparts and, as Turkish does not have object agreement, overt non-agreeing possessors are compared here to the object pronoun in (22).

- (21) Ali_i Can-a_j o-nun_{*i/j/k} Ayşe-yi sev-diğ-i-ni söyledi.
 Ali Can-DAT 3S-GEN Ayşe-ACC love-NMZ-3S.POSS-ACC said
 Ali_i said to Can_j that he_{*i/j/k} loves Ayşe.

⁷Though my two Russian informants disagree with the robustness of the effect presented in (20).

⁸The same contrast can be reproduced with tensed complement clauses as well. I do not illustrate for the sake of brevity.

- (22) Ali_i Can-a_j Ayşe-nin o-nu_{i/j/k} sev-diğ-i-ni söyledi.
 Ali Can-DAT Ayşe-GEN 3S-ACC love-NMZ-3S.POSS-ACC said
 Ali said to Can that Ayşe loves him_{i/j/k}.

This generalization would be directly challenged by an overt pronoun that occurs in a position where its silent counterpart is licensed and that is not anti-subject oriented locally. To my knowledge, no such configuration is attested in Turkish⁹.

Two supplemental remarks are in order. First, it is possible to construe anti-subject orientation as an instance of *competition* between types of pronouns (Safir, 2004). However, Turkish does not appear to have subject oriented elements (neither *pro* nor the anaphor *kendi* pass the test) which prevents such an explanation from being straightforward. Second, although the generalization describes the environments where anti-subject orientation arises, it does not account for why the effect specifically targets subjects. This has to be stipulated.

4 Concluding Remarks on Principle B

The set of strategies that subsume anti-subject orientation under principle B of binding theory can be partitioned into two types: one manipulates the size of a pronominal possessor's local domain and the other appeals to some form of (possessor) raising.

Extended Local Domains In sentences like 'John sold his car', coreference between 'his' and 'John' is argued to be possible because the pronominal possessor is free within its local domain, closed off by the possessive phrase. There is evidence, however, that the size of local domains might be parametric (Büring, 2005) and subject to cross-linguistic variation. Based on this, if the local domain of those pronouns that are anti-subject oriented in Turkish were to extend to include the clausal subject, the effect could be explained away as a principle B violation.

The main challenge to this argument comes from the observation that in principle B configurations with bare pronouns, as in (23), the pronoun is interpreted in disjoint reference with *both* the subject and a second argument, here an indirect object.

- (23) Fotoğraf-ta Ali_i Can-a_j o-nu_{*i/*j/k} göstermiş.
 picture-LOC Ali Can-DAT 3S-ACC showed
 Ali_i showed him_{*i/*j/k} to Can_j.

Thus, with the additional assumption that linear precedence in the sequence of preverbal arguments maps onto structural height¹⁰, the local domain of a possessor cannot include the subject while excluding the intermediate indirect object at the same time. Such a claim then wrongly predicts that overt pronominal possessors are in disjoint reference with indirect objects *as well as* with subjects.

⁹It is important to acknowledge that there are other instances of anti-subject orientation in the language that this generalization does *not* cover. They do not arise, however, in configurations similar to the ones described here. This means either that a more inclusive generalization is available or that there are several independent constraints that regulate the referential possibilities of pronouns.

¹⁰This can independently be motivated by the observation that Turkish is a scope rigid language, when it comes to relative quantifier scope in the preverbal domain (Keleşir, 2001).

Movement Two types of movement are found in the literature to account for disjoint reference effects affecting possessors. ‘Possessor raising’, for one, has been proposed to operate in languages where some possessors occur in positions external to the possessive phrase. In Nez Perce (Deal, 2013), these external possessors trigger disjoint reference effects similar to the one here, while their internal counterparts do not¹¹. The proposal is that their landing site is positioned on the clausal spine and that this has the effect of including the subject in their local domain.

For such an account to extend to Turkish, the raising operation should be covert given that the disjoint reference effect is triggered without the possessor visibly moving. This is not a problem in itself and, in fact, there is evidence to support covert possessor raising in Nez Perce as well. However, the main challenge is that the operation would have to be construed as obligatory for overt agreeing possessors. But, obligatory raising to any of the three landing sites indicated by the triangle in (24) predicts that the possessor be in disjoint reference from the subject (because of principle C in position 1, and principle B in 2 and 3) as well as the indirect object (because of principle C in positions 1 and 2, and principle B in 3). But, as shown in section (3), coreference between those anti-subject oriented possessors and indirect objects is possible.

(24) \triangle_1 Subject \triangle_2 Indirect Object \triangle_3 [_{DO} Possessor Possessum] Verb

A second type of movement operation, also invisible to the naked eye, has been specifically proposed to explain anti-subject orientation in Norwegian (Hestvik, 1992), Russian (Asarina, 2005) and, more recently, Turkish (Aydın and İşsever, 2013). The landing site for this type of movement is not on the spine, but in an embedded position close enough to the subject to trigger a principle B violation. Importantly, this difference in the type of landing site with possessor raising is that no principle C violation, that would prevent a possessor from coreferencing with indirect objects, is predicted.

The main advantage of this type of proposal is that it is able to derive anti-subject orientation instead of stipulating it. But it runs into two theoretical problems. First, languages like Norwegian and Russian appear to have anti-subject oriented pronouns as well as subject oriented anaphors. The type of movement that is assumed to trigger a principle B violation and yield anti-subject orientation also provides an explanation for subject orientation: anaphors in their derived positions may only be bound by subjects. As, however, subject orientation is not attested in Turkish, such a proposal lacks generality.

Second, this proposal does not capture the fact that anti-subject orientation arises in very specific environments. The type of movement that it involves needs to be constrained so that it targets overt agreeing possessors only. And, as silent agreeing and overt non-agreeing ones do not form a natural class, two distinct stipulations, one that bars each of them from moving, are required to capture this difference¹². This is a strictly less economical approach than the proposal that overt pronominal possessors acquire an anti-subject orientation when they occur in positions where silent pronouns are otherwise licensed. But, if the locality of anti-subject orientation is stipulated as well, then the two proposals cannot be distinguished on the basis of economy.

¹¹In such languages, internal and external possessors are morphologically distinct and have different semantic properties. Differences like the former are not attested in Turkish but semantic differences between agreeing and non-agreeing possessives are (Erguvanlı Taylan and Öztürk, 2014) and remain to be explored.

¹²A claim that restricts the movement of *pro* can be found in Bošković and Şener (2012), but this is more difficult for its overt non-agreeing counterpart, especially given that an overt agreeing possessor *should* move in order for a principle B violation to be derived.

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