

# Not All Possessors in Turkish Are Anti-Subject Oriented

Deniz Özyıldız

ozyildizz@gmail.com - deniz.fr

École normale supérieure - Institut Jean Nicod

Institut | Nicod

CNRS-EHES-ENS



**Abstract.** Turkish overt pronominal possessors of agreeing object possessives are disjoint in reference with subject coarguments of the possessive. Novel data shows that no such restriction bears upon overt possessors of non-agreeing possessives. I show that neither Principle B nor topic-driven licensing of overt pronouns adequately captures the phenomenon. Pending further research on the internal structure of (non-)agreeing possessives and on other instances of disjoint reference effects in the language, I propose the descriptive generalization that agreement is symptomatic of *pro* licensing and that it is in those positions where *pro* is licensed that overt pronouns acquire their anti-subject orientation.

## 1 Background: Agreement in Turkish possessives

### (1) Agreeing possessives:

(O-nun) araba-sı satılık. (Overt) possessor

3S-GEN car-3S.AGR is.for.sale

His car is for sale.

Agreement morphology displays possessor person features (Kornfilt 1984).

### (2) Colloquial non-agreeing possessives:

O-nun araba satılık. Overt possessor

3S-GEN car is.for.sale

His car is for sale.

Restricted in the types of possessors and possessums it can occur with (Erguvanlı Taylan & Öztürk Başaran 2014).

## 2 The Problem

### (3) Overt agreeing possessors can't corefer with subjects

Sub	IO	Pssr	Pssm-Agr-Case	V
Ali <sub>i</sub>	Ayşe <sub>j</sub> 'ye	o <sub>*i/j</sub> -nun	araba-sı -nı	göstermiş.
Ali	to.Ayşe	3S-GEN	car-3S.AGR-ACC	showed
Ali <sub>i</sub>	showed	{his <sub>i</sub> / her <sub>j</sub> }	car	to Ayşe <sub>j</sub> .
Ali <sub>i</sub>	showed	{*his <sub>i</sub> / her <sub>j</sub> }	car	to Ayşe <sub>j</sub> .

Overt possessors of agreeing possessives are "anti-subject oriented".  
No such restriction for dropped agreeing or overt non-agreeing possessors.

### (4) The bigger picture

a. John<sub>i</sub> fortalte Per<sub>j</sub> om hans<sub>\*i/j</sub> kone. Norwegian

John told Peter about his wife. (Hestvik 1992)

b. Ram-ne<sub>i</sub> Ayesha-ko<sub>j</sub> us-kii<sub>\*i/j</sub> kitaab dikhaai. Hindi

Ram to.Ayesha 3S-GEN book showed (R. Bhatt p.c.)

Ram showed Ayesha {\*his<sub>i</sub> / her<sub>j</sub>} book.

Two previous types of attempts to account for the effect:

1. Subsume it under principle B (Aydın & İşsever 2012),

2. Use various independent principles on top of principle B (Kornfilt 1984, 1991, Sezer 1991, Özsoy 1992).

**Correlation between anti-subject orientation and agreement in Turkish has gone unnoticed.** This motivates a new description of the facts within the language and has cross-linguistic implications.

## 3 Principle B doesn't account for the effect

### (5) Ditransitives: no Subject / IO asymmetry (this is PB)

Fotoğrafta Ali<sub>i</sub> Ayşe<sub>j</sub>'ye o<sub>\*i/j</sub>-nu göstermiş.

on.the.picture Ali to.Ayşe 3S-ACC showed

Intended: Ali<sub>i</sub> showed {himself<sub>i</sub> / herself<sub>j</sub>} to Ayşe<sub>j</sub>.

In essence: (3): ... IO<sub>j</sub> ... possessor<sub>j</sub> ...

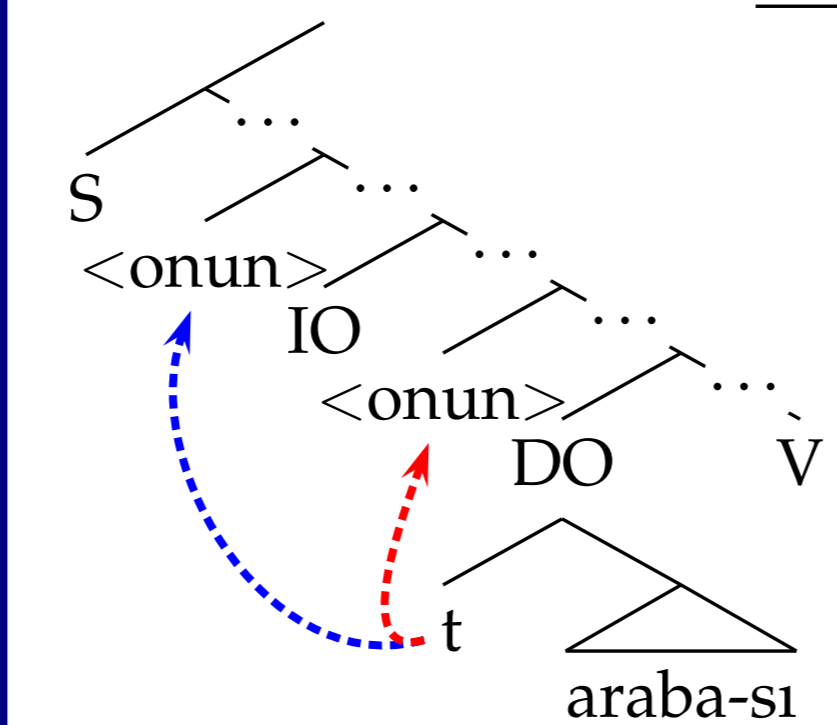
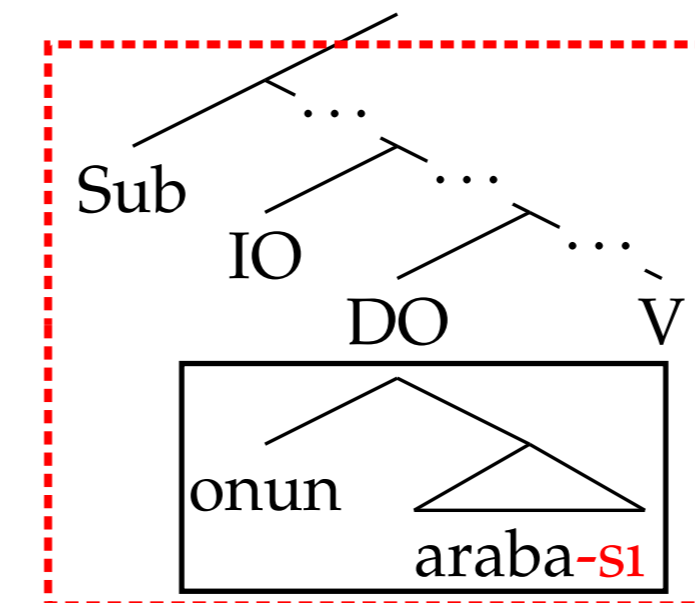
(5): \* ... IO<sub>j</sub> ... pronoun<sub>j</sub> ...

Q1: Do the local domains of agreeing pronominal possessors include the clausal subject?

Wrong prediction: "Pssr disjoint from IO."

Per (5) IO also triggers Principle B,

But per (3) coreference with IO not ruled out.



Q2: Might agreeing possessors covertly raise to the spine?

Wrong predictions: "Pssr disjoint from IO."

Movement 1: IO triggers Principle B.

Movement 2: Possessor triggers Principle C.

Quantifier scope rigidity suggests IO > DO (Kelepir 2001).

## 4 "Topic switching" is a confounding factor

Why suspect something like this?

Overt possessors can't corefer with ongoing topics within or across sentence boundaries (Öztürk 2002) and subjects are good candidates for topics.

### (6) Disjoint reference across a sentence boundary

Ali<sub>i</sub> yeni bir araba aldı. ...

Ali new a car bought

(\*O<sub>i</sub>-nun) araba(-sı) çok güzel.

3S-GEN car-3S.AGR very beautiful

Intended: Ali<sub>i</sub> bought a new car. His<sub>i</sub> car is very beautiful.

Tentative explanation of anti-subject orientation in (3):

The subject is the topic

Overt agreeing possessor switches to a new topic | No coreference

Wrong prediction: "No-Agr. overt Pssr is also anti-subject oriented."

(6): Across clauses, agreement is irrelevant for disjoint reference.

(3): Within the clause, only agreeing possessors are disjoint in reference.

Interim conclusion

Topic switching doesn't account for clause internal anti-subject orientation.

Cross-linguistically anti-subject oriented pronouns are not necessarily topic switchers (e.g. Hindi, Keine 2011, Rajesh Bhatt p.c.).

## 5 Towards a descriptive generalization

Step 1: Null possessors are licensed in agreeing possessives, while non-agreeing possessives don't license any null possessor material.

### (7) Non-agreeing possessors can't be bound

Herkes<sub>i</sub> {pro<sub>i</sub> araba-sın-ı / araba-yı} satmış.

everybody {pro car-3S.AGR-ACC / car-ACC} sold.3S

Everybody<sub>i</sub> sold their<sub>i</sub> car.

Everybody sold the car.

Agreeing

Non-agreeing

### (8) Non-agreeing possessives don't license "elided" possessors.

Ben Ali'nin araba-yı sattım, Ayşe'ye bisiklet-i.

1S Ali.GEN car-ACC sold as.for.Ayşe bike-ACC

Intended: I sold Ali's car, while Ayşe sold his<sub>i</sub> bike.

Available: I sold Ali's car, while Ayşe sold the bike.

Step 2: Agreeing null possessor positions obligatorily host pronominals.

(9) is an elision test adapted from Şener & Takahashi (2010). The second of two stacked possessives is null. The lack of a sloppy reading suggests that the null possessor is not a copy that can be bound within. Rather, it is a null pronoun coreferential with the overt possessor of the first conjunct.

### (9) Possessor positions are not elision sites

Ali<sub>i</sub> [pro<sub>i</sub> köpeğ-i-nin]<sub>j</sub> tasma-sı-nı kaybetmiş,

Ali pro dog-3S.AGR-GEN leash-3S.AGR-ACC lost

Ali<sub>i</sub> lost his<sub>i</sub> dog's leash,

Ayşe'ye e<sub>j</sub> kemiğ-i-ni atmış.

as.for.Ayşe e bone-3S.AGR-ACC threw.away

Strict available: and Ayşe threw away its<sub>j</sub> bone.

Sloppy unavailable: and Ayşe<sub>k</sub> threw away her<sub>k</sub> dog's bone.

### Generalization:

Overt pronouns in positions where *pro* is licensed are in disjoint reference with the closest c-commanding subject.

## 6 Concluding remarks

Pending further research on the internal structure of (non-)agreeing possessives and other disjoint reference effects in Turkish, this generalization describes a filter, operating where Principle B makes the wrong prediction.

Turkish possessives suggest that ASO is a syntactic phenomenon.

- Being a pronoun, being expressed or triggering agreement are not, by themselves, sufficient conditions for being anti-subject oriented.
- ASO affects overt agreeing pronouns and the effect holds (locally) between two positions triggering agreement.
- Agreement is a symptom of *pro* licensing.
- Extending the analysis to languages without null possessors? Are there two distinct ASO mechanisms across languages?

**Selected References:** • Aydın, Ö. & İşsever, S. (2012). Anti-Subject Orientation in Turkish. 40. Yıl Yazıları 1972-2012 (pp. 42-63). Hacettepe University, Ankara. • Erguvanlı Taylan, E. (1986). Pronominal versus zero representation of anaphora in Turkish. *Studies in Turkish linguistics*, 8, 209-229. • Erguvanlı Taylan, E. & Öztürk Başaran, B. (2014). Possessive Constructions in Turkish: PPs in Disguise. *GLOW 37 Conference Presentation*. • Hestvik, A. (1992). LF movement of pronouns and antisubject orientation. *Linguistic Inquiry*, 557-594. • Keine, S. (2011). Linearity-Based Restrictions on Reference. (Ms. UMass Amherst). • Kelepir, M. (2001). Topics in Turkish syntax: Clausal structure and scope. (Doctoral dissertation, MIT). • Kornfilt, J. (1984). Case Marking, Agreement, and Empty Categories in Turkish. (Doctoral Dissertation, Harvard). • Kornfilt, J. (1991). Some current issues in Turkish syntax. *Turkish linguistics today*, 60-92. • Özsoy, S. (1987). Null subject parameter and Turkish. *Studies on Modern Turkish*, 105-120. • Özsoy, S. (1992). Türkçe'de Esgönderge Örüntüsü. *Dilbilim Araştırmaları*, 77-85. • Öztürk, B. (2002). Turkish as a non-pro-drop language. *The verb in Turkish*. • Sezer, F. E. (1991). Issues in Turkish syntax (Doctoral dissertation, Harvard). • Şener, S. & Takahashi, D. (2010). Ellipsis of arguments in Japanese and Turkish. *Nanzan Linguistics*, 6, 79-99. • Turan, Ü. (1995). Null vs. overt subjects in Turkish: A centering approach. (Doctoral dissertation, UPenn).

**Acknowledgments:** This work couldn't even exist without V. Homer's time and patience. I would also like to thank R. Bhatt for his thoughts on ASO and valuable data from Hindi-Urdu, and H. Koopman, P. Schlenker, T. Stowell and D. Sportiche, for meetings and discussion. Ma gratitude est ineffable. **Funding:** The research leading to these results received funding from the European Research Council under the European Union's Seventh Framework Programme (FP/2007-2013) / ERC Grant Agreement N°324115-FRONTSEM (PI: Schlenker). Research was conducted at Institut d'Études Cognitives (ENS), which is supported by grants ANR-10-IDEX-0001-02 PSL\* and ANR-10-LABX-0087 IEC.