Movement of Turkish Bare Direct Objects motivated by strong Accusative Case feature

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Syntax

(15-minute presentation talk)

Studies on Turkish bare direct objects (BDOs), objects lacking overt accusative markers, mostly agree that Turkish BDOs are in some relationship with the verb, however, the hypotheses for the type of relationship are inconsistent. In Turkish, underived modifiers like *kötü* "bad" function as adjectives if they precede a noun, and as adverbs if they precede a verb (Taylan, 1984).

(1)   a. Mehmet kötü araba-yı kullanı-yor.
         Mehmet   bad   car-ACC use-PRES
      "Mehmet drives the bad car."
      b. Mehmet kötü araba kullanı-yor.
         Mehmet   bad   car   use-PRES
      "Mehmet drives badly." Or
      "Mehmet drives bad cars."

(1b) shows that *kötü* can function as an adverb. This suggests that BDO *araba* can incorporate into the verb (Kornfilt, 1994; Öztürk, 2005). Kamali (2015) concludes that lack of overt case in BDOs is due to a weak accusative feature, which leads to either pseudo-incorporation or an indefinite reading of BDOs. The strongest evidence for these analyses comes from sentences like (1b).

Karimi (2005) proposes that definite objects in Persian must move higher in VPs to check [+definite] feature — Two-Object-Position Hypothesis (TOPH). Adopting TOPH for Turkish, I suggest that objects with strong-ACC features move higher in VPs (2), while objects with weak-ACC features stay in their original position, between the adverb and the verb (1b), allowing *kötü* function as an adverb.

(2) Mehmet [araba-yı]$_i$ kötü t$_i$ kullanı-yor.
      Mehmet car-ACC   bad   use-PRES
      "Mehmet drives the car badly."

Applying TOPH to Turkish, my paper suggests that sentences in (1) are expected and an incorporation analysis is not conceptually necessary.

Key words: syntax, bare objects, Turkish, Case

Selected references

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