

Grammatical Relations and Surface Cases in Turkish

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GRAMMATICAL RELATIONS AND SURFACE CASES

IN TURKISH

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Every NP in a Turkish sentence appears with one of the following case endings:

Nominative (NOM): \emptyset (zero case ending)

Genitive (GEN): $-(n)In$

Accusative (ACC): $-(y)I$

Dative (DAT): $-(y)E$

Locative (LOC): $-DE$

Ablative (ABL): $-DEN$

Traditional grammarians of Turkish have considered these cases as the indicators of grammatical relations of NPs. Thus an NP marked with NOM is identified either as subject (SU) or indefinite direct object (DO). An NP marked with GEN is identified as the definite SU of an embedded sentence. ACC case is considered as the marker of definite DO. All the NPs marked with DAT, LOC, and ABL are identified as complements of the verb, which I will call oblique objects (OBL) following the term proposed by relational grammarians.¹

Traditional grammarians have been led to this confusion by the fact that there is a great deal of correspondence between grammatical relations and surface cases in Turkish. Indeed the SU is always in NOM or GEN case and it also agrees with the verb in person and number. So the identification of the SU offers no problems. However, the identification of the DO only on the basis of ACC and NOM cases is misleading. It is a fact that ACC is always the marker of a DO but this does not mean that an NP marked with another case cannot function as the DO. Thus the purpose of this paper is to show that in Turkish there are NPs with ABL and DAT which behave like NPs with ACC during the process of some relation changing rules.

In most grammar books, on the one hand, DO is defined as the participant which is directly affected by the action expressed in the sentence. On the other hand, the NPs like süt-ten in (1c) below are identified as OBL, while süt and süt-ü are both identified as DOs.

- (1) a. süt iç-ti-m
milk drink-past-1sg
'I drank milk.'
- b. süt-ü iç-ti-m
milk-ACC drink-past-1sg
'I drank the milk.'
- c. süt-ten iç-ti-m
milk-ABL drink-past-1sg
'I drank some of the milk.'

Süt in (1a) is an indefinite DO. The only difference between (1b) and (1c) is that the DO süt-ü is completely affected, while (1c) suggests that the NP here is only partially affected by the activity of drinking. Now consider the following:

- (2) a. Ali çocuğ-u vur-du
child-ACC shoot-past
'Ali shot the child.'
b. Ali çocuğ-a vur-du
child-DAT hit-past
'Ali hit the child.'
- (3) a. fare peynir-i ye-di
mouse cheese-ACC eat-past
'The mouse ate the cheese.'
b. fare peynir-e dokun-du
mouse cheese-DAT touch-past
'The mouse touched the cheese.'

In (2a) and (2b) the two semantic definitions of the polysemic verb vur are revealed by the ACC and DAT cases. In (3a) and (3b) verbs with different semantic definitions are involved but in each the action is transferred to the patient peynir 'cheese' apparently with different degrees of affectedness.

These examples suggest that the identification of grammatical relations only on the basis of surface cases is misleading. They also suggest that surface cases have various functions in the grammar of Turkish. Since surface cases are not just the indicators of grammatical relations but also carry some semantic load, we can predict that they cannot be deleted during the application of any relation changing rule. For example, the Predicate Raising is a rule which involves changes in grammatical relations. During the process of Predicate Raising the SU of an intransitive verb is demoted to DO as in (4b) and is marked with ACC case. The SU of a transitive verb is demoted to IO being marked with DAT as in (5b) and (5d).

- (4) a. çocuk gül-dü
child laugh-past
'The child laughed.'
b. adam çocuğ-u gül-dür-dü²
man child-ACC laugh-caus-past
'The man made the child laugh.'
- (5) a. çocuk süt iç-ti
child milk drink-past
'The child drank milk.'
b. adam çocuğ-a süt iç-ir-di
man child-DAT milk drink-caus-past
'The man made the child drink milk.'

- c. çocuk süt-ü iç-ti
 child milk-ACC drink-past
 'The child drank the milk.'
- d. adam çocuğ-a süt-ü iç-ir-di
 man child-DAT milk-ACC drink-caus-past
 'The man made the child drink the milk.'

This fact supports the Keenan and Comrie Hierarchy (SU>DO>IO>OBL) in relational terms (1977:66). That is, during the process of Predicate Raising the subject of the clause embedded under CAUSE is reassigned a new grammatical relation which is next on the case hierarchy.

Now let us take a sentence with an ABL NP.

- (6) a. çocuk köy-den gel-di
 child village-ABL come-past
 'The child came from the village.'
- b. adam çocuğ-u köy-den get-ir-di³
 man child-ACC village-ABL come-caus-past
 'The man brought the child from the village.'

Since *gel* 'come' is an intransitive verb and *köy-den* 'from the village' is an OBL, the original SU is demoted to DO, which is the next available position on the case hierarchy. Thus the SU *çocuk* 'boy' becomes the surface DO and appears with the ACC case. If we identify grammatical relations on the basis of surface cases and consider all the NPs with the ABL case as OBLs, the original SU of (7a) must become the surface DO when the sentence is embedded in a causative construction. However, the ungrammaticality of (7b) indicates that this is not the case.

- (7) a. çocuk süt-ten iç-ti
 child milk-ABL drink-past
 'The child drank some of the milk.'
- b. *adam çocuğ-u süt-ten iç-ir-di
 *man child-ACC milk-ABL drink-caus-past

The grammatical form of (7b) is

- (7) c. adam çocuğ-a süt-ten iç-ir-di
 man child-DAT milk-ABL drink-caus-past
 'The man made the child drink some of the milk.'

We notice that the SU of (7a) becomes the IO of the causative sentence (7c) just the same way as the SU of the transitive sentence (5a) becomes the IO of the causative sentence (5b), which leads us to the conclusion that IO is the next available position on the case hierarchy, the DO position being already occupied by the NP süt-ten.

Sentences containing objects marked with DAT seem more complicated due to surface case constraints. As seen so far, it is the original SU of the embedded sentence which is demoted to DO or IO depending on the next available position. The original DO or OBL retains its case during the process of Predicate Raising. However, the original DAT DO obligatorily takes the ACC case when the SU is demoted to IO because of the surface constraint which states that if there are two NPs in a causative construction only one of them can be marked DAT.⁴

- (8) a. Hizmetçi çocuğ-a bak-tı
maid child-DAT look after-past
'The maid looked after the child.'
- b. *hizmetçi-ye çocuğ-a bak-tır-dı-k
maid-DAT child-DAT look after-caus-past-1p1
'We made the maid look after the child.'
- c. hizmetçi-ye çocuğ-u bak-tır-dı-k
maid-DAT child-ACC look after-caus-past-1p1
'We made the maid look after the child.'

(8c) presents an evidence that çocuğ-a in (8a) is not an OBL but a DO which obligatorily takes the DAT case. Now consider the following:

- (9) a. herkes kapı-ya bak-tı
everybody door-DAT look at-past
'Everybody looked at the door.'
- b. Herkes-i kapı-ya bak-tır-dı-m
everybody-ACC door-DAT look at-caus-past-1sg
'I made everybody look at the door.'

(9b) indicates that bak meaning 'look at' is an intransitive verb while it is a transitive verb when it means 'look after' as in (8a).

Another verb which obligatorily takes a DAT NP and which can be used either as a transitive verb or as an intransitive verb is başla 'start, begin'. The two uses of this verb are illustrated below:

- (10) a. Anne-m kazağ-a başla-dı
mother-my sweater-DAT begin-past
'My mother began the sweater.'
- b. Anne-m-e kazağ-ı başla-t-tı-m
mother-my-DAT sweater-ACC begin-caus-past-1sg
'I made my mother begin the sweater.'

- (11) a. Çocuk okul-a başla-dı
 child school-DAT start-past
 'The child started the school.'
 b. Çocuğ-u okul-a başla-t-tı-m
 child-ACC school-DAT start-caus-past-1sg
 'I made the child start the school.'

(10a) is an example for the transitive use of başla. Notice that the patient kazak 'sweater' is totally affected by the action of beginning. That is, my mother, using needles, casted on certain stitches and began knitting the sweater. Thus the activity performed by the agent is transferred to the patient. However, in (11a) the action of beginning which is performed by çocuk 'child' is just directed towards okul 'school'. That is, the child began going to school which had already started. Notice that we can say (12a) but not (12b).

- (12) a. Okul başla-dı
 school start-past
 'The school started.'
 b. *kazak başla-dı
 sweater start-past
 '*The sweater started.'

Although the transitive and intransitive uses of başla are not distinguished morphologically in (10a) and (11a), the distinction is revealed by ACC and DAT cases of the NPs kazak 'sweater' and okul 'school' respectively in the corresponding causative constructions.

Another rule which involves changes in grammatical relations is the Passive Rule. By the Passive Rule the DO is promoted to SU and the SU is either demoted to an oblique case or does not appear in the sentence at all.

- (13) a. Parti-de bira iç-ti-ler
 party-LOC beer drink-past-3pl
 'They drank beer at the party.'
 b. Parti-de bira iç-il-di
 party-LOC beer drink-pass-past
 'Beer was drunk at the party.'
- (14) a. çocuk-lar süt-ü iç-ti-ler
 child-pl milk-ACC drink-past-3pl
 'The children drank the milk.'
 b. süt iç-il-di
 milk drink-pass-past
 'The milk was drunk.'

- (15) a. Çocuk-lar süt-ten iç-ti-ler
 child-pl milk-ABL drink-past-3pl
 'The children drank some of the milk.'
 b. süt-ten iç-il-di
 milk-ABL drink-pass-past
 'Some of the milk was drunk.'

We notice that the ACC case marker is deleted when the DO is promoted to SU. However, the deletion of the case marker does not apply to the ABL DO süt-ten in (15b) because the deletion of the case will yield a passive sentence which is exactly the same as (14b). That is, the meaning of partial affectedness will be lost. Similarly, the DAT case marker is retained when the Passive Rule applies to (17a) while the ACC case marker gets deleted in (16a).

- (16) a. Birisi çocuğ-u vur-du
 somebody child-ACC shoot-past
 'Somebody shot the child.'
 b. Çocuk vur-ul-du
 child shoot-pass-past
 'The child was shot.'
 (17) a. Birisi çocuğ-a vur-du
 somebody child-DAT hit-past
 'Somebody hit the child.'
 b. çocuğ-a vur-ul-du
 child-DAT hit-pass-past
 'The child was hit.'

The DAT NP retains its case marking in order to preserve the meaning of the verb because if deletion applies, the outcome will be exactly the same as (16b). The reader might be wondering about what happens to the definiteness of the DO in (14b), in which the ACC case marker has been deleted. In Turkish the definiteness of the SU is expressed by word order or stress.⁵ The restriction of deletion only to ACC case is accounted for by the semantic functions of the other cases, which cannot be expressed by any other means such as word order or stress. The constraint about the deletion of surface case markers yields sentences which contain ABL or DAT SUs. Such SUs do not agree with the verb because subject-verb agreement can only be triggered by NOM SUs. In the light of this fact I would suggest that the lack of agreement between the derived ABL or DAT SU and the verb cannot be used as a strong evidence against the subjectness of such NPs.

The discussion presented so far provides some evidence for the existence of DAT and ABL DOs in Turkish. We have seen that the occurrence of DAT or ABL with some verbs can be accounted for on the basis of their semantic load such as partial affectedness. There are also verbs with ABL and DAT NPs which reflect the deep case distinctions of the NPs involved.

- (18) a. sen-den kork-uyor-um
you-ABL fear-pres-1sg
'I am afraid of you.'
- b. sen-den nefret ed-iyor-um
hate -pres-1sg
'I hate you.'
- c. sen-den iğren-iyor-um
be disgusted
'I am disgusted by you.' 'You disgust me.'
- d. sen-den bıktır-ıyor-um
get fed up with
'I am getting fed up with you.'
- e. sen-den şüphelen-iyor-um
suspect
'I suspect you.'
- (19) a. san-a bayıl-ıyor-um
you-DAT be crazy about-pres-1sg
'I am crazy about you.'
- b. san-a yalvar-ıyor-um
beg
'I beg you.'
- c. san-a tap-ıyor-um
worship
'I adore you.'
- d. san-a kız-ıyor-um
be angry
'I am angry with you.'
- e. san-a inan-ıyor-um
believe
'I believe you.'

Obviously the occurrence of ABL and DAT with the verbs in (18) and (19) is not just a coincidence. In all of these sentences the verb expresses some kind of psychological or mental state of the SU. In (18) sen-den stands for the initiator of the feeling expressed by each state verb, while in (19) the feeling conveyed by the verb is directed towards the participant san-a 'to you'. Thus in these two groups of sentences the NPs hold different deep case relations with the verbs involved. It follows that another function of the surface cases in Turkish is to reflect the deep case distinctions. Although there is a great deal of correspondence between surface cases and deep cases, the two must not be confused because NPs with different deep cases can appear with the same surface case.

- (20) a. Büyük şehir-ler-den hep kork-ar-ım
large city-pl-ABL always fear-pres-1sg
'I am always afraid of large cities.'
- b. öğrenci-ler büyük şehir-ler-den gel-miş-ler
student-pl large city-pl-ABL come-past-3pl
'The students have come from large cities.'

Although büyük şehir-ler-den 'from large cities' appears with the same surface case in both (20a) and (20b), they have different deep semantic roles. As stated earlier, büyük şehir-ler-den can be viewed as the initiator or the indirect cause of the feeling expressed by the state verb kork 'fear', while the same NP reflects the starting point of the activity expressed by the action verb gel 'come'. The difference between the semantic roles is revealed by the fact that we can paraphrase (20a) as in (21a) but not (20b).

- (21) a. büyük şehir-ler hep ben-i kork-ut-ur
 large city-pl always I-ACC fear-caus-pres
 'Large cities always scare me.'
 b. *büyük şehir-ler öğrenci-ler-i ge-tir-miş
 large city-pl student-pl-ACC come-caus-past
 '*Large cities have brought the students.'

The analysis of grammatical relations and surface cases in Turkish suggests that not only these two levels but also surface cases and deep semantic roles should be carefully distinguished. In fact, because of the morphological structure of Turkish, certain semantic phenomena which are disguised in English are overtly expressed in Turkish by means of case markers or other suffixes. To illustrate what I mean I will quote Fillmore (1977:63-64). One of the arguments Fillmore has used to justify specific claims about deep case distinctions is that "we may be dealing with different case relationships whenever we find a single verb collocating with two seemingly disparate cases of nominals in a given grammatical relation, with the nominals from the two classes seeming to exemplify different semantic roles in their sentences." Fillmore states that the argument has seemed particularly weak to a number of European critics, who have suggested that his analysis is based on accidental properties of English words. The Turkish equivalents of Fillmore's examples offer a stronger evidence for the different semantic roles of the nominals involved.

- (22) a. ayağ-ım acı-yor
 foot-my hurt-pres
 'My foot hurts.'
 b. Bu ayakkabı acı-t-ıyor
 this shoe hurt-caus-pres
 'This shoe hurts.'
 c. Bu ayakkabı ayağ-ım-ı acı-t-ıyor
 this shoe foot-my-ACC hurt-caus-pres
 'This shoe hurts my foot.'

Notice that (22a) is embedded in the causative construction (22c). Since the outcome of the Predicate Raising is a simplex sentence, the two NPs cannot have the same semantic role.

In this paper, I have tried to indicate that there are DOs in Turkish which appear with ABL and DAT cases. I have also tried to

account for the occurrence of DAT and ABL DOs with certain verbs referring to the semantic functions of surface cases, such as the meanings of case markers and their relationships with deep semantic roles. As a conclusion, I suggest that grammatical relations, surface cases, and deep semantic roles must be carefully distinguished since all these three levels are needed for a complete linguistic description of a language.

FOOTNOTES

1. The problem of the existence of DAT and ABL DOs has been raised by some grammarians from time to time but a complete study of the problem has never been presented. In most grammar books at present only NOM and ACC NPs are identified as DOs.
2. The Predicate Raising in Turkish requires that the raised predicate be incorporated under the higher V node, resulting in the formation of a single word and a simplex sentence. As the outcome of this incorporation, the causative verb appears with one of the four alternative suffixes -DIR_v-t, -Ir; -It, -Er_vErt depending on various factors irrelevant here.
3. The causative form of gel is ge-tir not gel-dir.
4. Due to this constraint, (2b) cannot normally be embedded in a causative construction.

(2) c. *Ali-ye çocuğ-a vur-dur-du-m
 -DAT child-DAT hit-caus-past-1sg

If the original DAT object takes the ACC case when the SU is demoted to IO as in (8c), the outcome will be the causative form of (2a). That is, the meaning of the verb vur as 'hit' will be lost.

(2) d. Ali-ye çocuğ-u vur-dur-du-m
 -DAT child-ACC shoot-cause-past-1sg
 'I made Ali shoot the child.'

So we express the causative sense of (2b) in other ways such as follows rather than by morphological causative construction.

(2) e. Ali-ye çocuğ-a vur-ma-sı-nı söyle-di-m
 -DAT child-DAT hit-nom-3sg-ACC tell-past-1sg
 'I told Ali to hit the child.'

5. In (13b) and (14b) the indefiniteness and definiteness of the SU is distinguished by means of stress as follows:

(13b) parti-de bîra iç-il-di (indefinite)
 (14b) sût iç-il-dî (definite)

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