

Turkish Accusative Indefinites and Presuppositionality

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Ninth International Tbilisi Symposium on Language, Logic and
Computation
Kutaisi, September 26, 2011

Introduction

- ▶ Discourse Representation Theory (Kamp 1984): Indefinites have two inter-related characteristics:
 - i. They are presuppositionless;
 - ii. they are novel.
- ▶ Heim (1982): definites presuppose their content (familiarity); indefinites assert their content (novelty) .
- ▶ Diesing (1992): Indefinites come in two varieties, presuppositional and non-presuppositional indefinites (based on Milsark's (1977) "strong"/"weak" distinction).
von Fintel's (1998) empirical support for presuppositional indefinites:

- (1) I'm not sure yet whether there are any mistakes at all in this book manuscript, but we can definitely not publish it. . .
- a. if some mistakes are found.
 - b. #if some mistakes are major.

Introduction

- ▶ Enç (1991): In certain languages, at certain positions indefinites are explicitly marked as “specific” or “nonspecific”. Acc vs. \emptyset -marking of immediately pre-verbal direct objects in Turkish is an example.

- (2)
- a. Dün gece bir kitap okudum.
yesterday night a book read.1sg
'Last night I read a book.'
 - b. Dün gece bir kitab-ı okudum.
yesterday night a book-Acc read.1sg
'Last night I read one of the books.'

- ▶ The aim of this talk is to investigate the nature of presuppositionality involved in the interpretation of Turkish Acc-marked indefinites.

Acc-marking and D-linking

- ▶ Enç 1991: There is a bidirectional implication between Acc-marking and “specificity” (= Pesetsky’s (1987) calls D(iscourse)-linking).

 - (3) Odam-a birkaç çocuk girdi.
my-room-dat several child entered
‘Several children entered my room.’

 - (4) a. İki kız-1 tanıyordum.
two girl-**Acc** knew-1sg
‘I knew two girls.’ (D-linked)
 - b. İki kız tanıyordum.
two girl knew-1sg
‘I knew two girls.’ (non-D-linked)
- ▶ Enç (1991) extends her treatment “strong” DPs headed by like *every* and *most*, which obligatorily receive Acc-marking. D-linking is offered as a unified concept underlying the “strong”/“weak” distinction.

Some Empirical Problems

- ▶ There appears two types of empirical problems with Enç's (1991) correlation of Acc-marking with D-linking.
- ▶ The first problem is that there are cases where a \emptyset -marking indefinite introduces a referent related to an already established set in the discourse. An extreme case of this is that ablative partitives—expressions that are D-linked by definition—can go without Acc-marking (von Heusinger and Kornfilt 2005):

- (5) a. Ali kadın-lar-dan iki kişi tanı-yor-du.
Ali woman-PL-ABL two individual know-PROG-PST
'Ali knew two individuals of the women.'
- b. Ali büro-ya çocuk-lar-dan iki kız al-acak.
Ali office-DAT child-PL-ABL two girl take-FUT
'Ali will hire, for the office, two girls of the children.'

Some Empirical Problems cont.

- ▶ The second problem is that there are cases where an Acc-marked indefinite can be uttered out-of-the-blue (Zidani-Eroğlu 1997; Kelepir 2001; İşsever 2003; Özge 2011 among others).
- ▶ Here is an example from a 2010 bank commercial:

(6) Bu kredi kartı reklamın-da ünlü bir yıldız-ı
this credit card commercial-loc famous a star-acc
oynat-abilirdik; ama yapmadık.
give a role-hyp.pst but we didnt
'For this credit card commercial, we could have hired a famous star;
but we didn't.'

- ▶ Such out-of-the-blue indefinites are considered as D-linked to an accommodated discourse antecedent by Zidani-Eroğlu (1997).

Acc-marking and Information Structure

- ▶ Claim: The presuppositional/non-presuppositional distinction (and similar distinctions discussed under the notion “specificity”) is a reflection of the information structural status of the indefinite. Topical indefinites are presuppositional (specific), and non-topical ones are non-presuppositional/nonspecific (see e.g. Cresti 1995; Portner and Yabushita 2001; von Stechow 2004).
- ▶ We aim to show that this is not the case for Turkish Acc-indefinites.

(7) Odam-a birkaç çocuk girdi.
my-room-dat several child entered
‘Several children entered my room.’

(8) a. İki kız-1 ↗ tanıyordum.
two girl-**Acc** knew-1sg
‘I knew two girls.’ (D-linked)

b. İki kız tanıyordum.
two girl knew-1sg
‘I knew two girls.’ (non-D-linked)

Acc-marking and Information Structure cont.

- ▶ Enç's (1991) example breaks when we loosen the association between the antecedent set and the linked referent. *child-girl* is replaced with *man-teacher*.

- (9) Odam-a birkaç adam girdi.
my-room-dat several man entered
'Several men entered my room.'
- (10) a. #İki öğretmen-i ↗ *taniyordum*.
two teacher-**Acc** knew-1sg
'I knew two teachers.'
- b. İki öğretmen taniyordum.
a teacher knew-1sg
'I knew two teachers.'

(non-D-linked)

Acc-marking and Information Structure cont.

- ▶ However we can put back the D-linking effect at work, once we adjust the context such that the Acc-marked indefinite is not required to be topical.

- (11) A1 Odama birkaç adam girdi.
‘Several men entered my room.’
- B1 Aralarında tanıdık birileri var mıydı.
‘Did you know any of them?’
- A2 İki *öğretmen-i* tanıyordum.
two teacher-**Acc** knew-1sg
‘I knew two teachers.’ (D-linked)
- A2' İki *öğretmen* tanıyordum.
two teacher knew-1sg
‘I knew two teachers.’ (non-D-linked)

Acc-marking and Information Structure cont.

- ▶ The effect of Acc-marking cannot be reduced to topicality.
- ▶ Topicality requires a stronger relation to the preceding discourse, than needed to license Acc-marking.

Acc-marking and “Weak”/“Strong”

- ▶ It is well established that certain determiners like *each* and *most* presuppose that their domain is given in prior discourse (Abusch and Rooth 2004).
- ▶ We address the question of whether the presuppositional effect of Acc-marking can be subsumed under the category of these “strong” determiners.
- ▶ We compare the behavior of Acc-marked indefinites with NPs headed by “strong” determiners like *most* and *every* with regards to standard presupposition projection tests.
- ▶ We endorse a simplified version of the DRT based Binding Theory of presupposition projection and accommodation (van der Sandt 1992; Geurts 1999).

(12) $[x_1, \dots, x_n : K_1, \dots, K_m]$ with $n, m \geq 0$, where x_i stand for discourse markers and K_i stand for conditions.

Negation and Antecedent of a Conditional

- ▶ We observe parallel behavior in the context of negation and antecedent of a conditional.

- (13) a. John bir hata gör-me-di.
J. a error see-Neg-Past.3sg
'John didn't see any errors.'
- b. John bir hata-yı gör-me-di.
J. a error-Acc see-Neg-Past.3sg
'John didn't see any of the errors. (There were some errors.)'
- (14) $[x : john'x, \neg[y : error'y, see'yx]]$ (\emptyset -marked)
- (15) a. $[x : john'x, \neg[y, \underline{Y} : error'Y, y \in Y, see'yx]]$
b. $[x, Y : john'x, error'Y, \neg[y : y \in Y, see'yx]]$ (Acc-marked)

Negation cont.

(16) John her hatayı gör-me-di.

J. every error-Acc see-Neg-Past.3sg

‘John didn’t see every error.’

(17) a. $[x : john'x,$

$\neg[: [y, \underline{Y} : \underline{error}'Y, y \in Y] \langle \forall y \rangle [see'yx]]]$

b. $[x, Y : john'x, error'Y,$

$\neg[: [y : y \in Y] \langle \forall y \rangle [see'yx]]]$

Modals

- ▶ By manipulating the context, it is possible to force an Acc-indefinite to enjoy non-global presupposition accommodation
- ▶ Suppose that a house has been recently robbed, and the police are at the crime scene. The owner of the house is unusually furious about the burglar. Suppose that the following exchange occurs and speaker B is completely ignorant about the contents of the house.

- (18) A: Adam hırsıza niye bu kadar kızmış?
'Why the man is so furious about the burglar.'
- B: Değerli bir mücevher-i çalmış olabilir.
precious a jewelry-Acc steal-Nom might be.3sg
'He might have stolen a precious jewelry.'

Modals cont.

- (19) A: Adam hırsıza niye bu kadar kızmış?
'Why the man is so furious about the burglars.'
- B: Değerli bir mücevher-i çalmış olabilir.
precious a jewelry-Acc steal-Nom might be.3sg
'He might have stolen a precious jewelry.'
- (20) a. $[\diamond[x, \underline{X} : \underline{prec-jewel}'X, x \in X, stolen'x]]$ (pre. repr.)
b. $[\diamond[x, X : prec-jewel'X, x \in X, stolen'x]]$ (non-global)
c. $[X : prec-jewel'X, \diamond[x : x \in X, stolen'x]]$ (global)

Modals and “Strong” DPs

- ▶ Question: Is it possible to devise a context such that a presupposition triggered by a strong DP enjoys non-global accommodation within a modal context?

- (21) B2: Değerli her mücevher-i çalmış olabilir.
 precious every jewelry-Acc steal-Nom might be.3sg
 ‘He might have stolen every (piece of) precious jewelry.’
- B3: Değerli çoğu mücevher-i çalmış olabilir.
 precious most jewelry-Acc steal-Nom might be.3sg
 ‘He might have stolen most (of the) precious jewelry.’
- (22) a. $[\diamond [x, \underline{X} : \textit{prec-jewel}'X, x \in X] \langle \forall x \rangle [\textit{stolen}'x]]]$
- b. $[X : \textit{prec-jewel}'X, \diamond [x : x \in X] \langle \forall x \rangle [\textit{stolen}'x]]]$
- c. ? $[\diamond [X : \textit{prec-jewel}'X, [x : x \in X] \langle \forall x \rangle [\textit{stolen}'x]]]$

Another Example

- ▶ For another example consider a context where two people are having a discussion on the possible causes of the recent crash of a space shuttle short after launching. Also assume that there were no known errors in the software that runs the shuttle. One person tells to the other:

(23) Belki de bir yazılım hatası-nı gör-me-diler.
perhaps FocPart a software error-Acc see-Neg-Past.3pl
'Perhaps we didn't see some software error.'

(24) a. $[: \diamond[:$
 $\neg[x, \underline{X} : \underline{error}'X, x \in X, \textit{seen}'x]]]$

b. $[: \diamond[X : \underline{error}'X,$
 $\neg[x : x \in X, \textit{seen}'x]]]$

Example cont.

(25) Belki de çoğu/her yazılım hatası-nı gör-me-diler.
perhaps FocPart most software error-Acc see-Neg-Past.3pl
'Perhaps they didn't see every (most) software error(s).'

- (26) a. $[: \diamond[:$
 $\neg[: [x, \underline{X} : \underline{error}'X, x \in X] \langle \forall x \rangle [seen'x]]]]$
- b. $[X : \underline{error}'X, \diamond[:$
 $\neg[: [x : x \in X] \langle \forall x \rangle [seen'x]]]]$
- c. ? $[: \diamond[X : \underline{error}'X,$
 $\neg[: [x : x \in X] \langle \forall x \rangle [seen'x]]]]$

Qualification: Generic Statements

- ▶ Generic or law-like statements like the following allow for non-global accommodation of “strong” DP domains (see von Stechow 2004:412 for discussion):

(27) All trespassers on this land will be prosecuted.

Qualification: Modal Subordination

- ▶ When informants try to devise contexts that would facilitate non-global accommodation of “strong” DPs possible, they usually come up with exchanges like the following:

- (28)
- a. Partide neden az kadın vardı.
‘Why were there so few women in the party.’
 - b. Belki de çoğu kadını görmedik.
‘Perhaps we didn’t see most (of the) women.’

- ▶ This type of examples are different from the Acc-indefinite cases we discussed above in a crucial way.
- ▶ The second utterance can be analyzed as implicitly denying the assertion that the set of women in the party was small, thereby activating a larger set of women.
- ▶ This larger set of women will be available to the modally subordinate statement that most women from *this* larger set was not seen by the conversational parties.

Devising Context–Expression Pairs

Suppose that A is an observation that motivates a modal expression as an explanation. The task is to find a sentence of the form $\diamond Q[P]$, where Q involves a “strong” DP with the presupposition P . Then we have two constraints while forcing P to get bound (accommodated) non-globally:

- (29)
- a. A (by being true in the discourse) must not provide an antecedent for P .
 - b. There must be no R established in the discourse such that the denial of R provides an antecedent for P , and R gets denied by the speech act involving $\diamond Q[P]$.

Discussion

- ▶ We observed some differences between the projection behaviors of the two classes. Namely that Acc-indefinites are more susceptible to non-global accommodation in comparison to “strongly” determined DPs, which tend to require global accommodation.
- ▶ The Acc-marker may still be taken to have a uniform contribution across these classes.
- ▶ However if we assume that the source of the presuppositions are identical in “strong” DPs and Acc-indefinites, we need to account for the differences in what happens to these presuppositions after they are triggered.

Discussion cont.

- ▶ At an intuitive level quantified expressions are more “complex” as compared to indefinites.
- ▶ Where sentences involving Acc-indefinites can appear as discourse initiators, this is hardly so for those involving “strong” DPs:

- (30)
- a. John bir işadamı-nı kaçır-mış.
J. a businessman-Acc kidnapped
'John has kidnapped a businessman'
 - b. #John çoğu işadamı-nı kaçır-mış.
J. most businessman-Acc kidnapped
'John has kidnapped most businessmen'

- ▶ A “strong” (or quantificational) DP has too much information to be handled (and taken for granted) in a single “information unit”.

Discussion cont.

- ▶ An observation that suggests a parallelism between being unable to fit in an all-focus sentence and resisting non-global accommodation is the following.
- ▶ Acc-indefinites that are observed to enjoy non-global accommodation can no longer do so when they are topic marked:

- (31) A: Adam hırsıza niye bu kadar kızmış?
'Why the man is so furious about the burglar.'
- B: #Değerli bir mücevher-i ↗ çalmış olabilir.
precious a jewelry-Acc steal-Nom might be.3sg
'He might have stolen a precious jewelry.'

Conclusion

- ▶ We argued that the interpretative behavior of Acc-indefinites in Turkish cannot be reduced to a directly topic-focus related effect.
- ▶ Acc-indefinites differ from “strong” DPs in their ability to enjoy non-global accommodation in modal contexts.
- ▶ Topical expressions and expressions headed by determiners like *every* and *most* require a stronger anchoring to the previous discourse than required by Acc-indefinites.
- ▶ D-linking may not be an appropriate term to characterize Turkish Acc-marker, since whether it necessitates a discourse level linking, or allows for a non-global sentence-level antecedent to be accommodated depends on the particular determiner that it goes with.

Thank you for listening!

I gratefully acknowledge the feedback I received from Varol Akman, Cem Bozşahin, Jin Cui, Cornelia Ebert, Chiara Gianollo, Aslı Göksel, Klaus von Heusinger, Yiğit Karahanoğulları, Cem Keskin, Paul Kiparsky, Jaklin Kornfilt, Duygu Özge, Maribel Romero, Ceyhan Temürcü, Ümit Turan, and Deniz Zeyrek, and the material support of Project C2 “Case and Referential Context” under Sonderforschungsbereich 732 “Incremental Specification in Context” of University of Stuttgart.

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