

Bare direct objects in Turkish: pseudo-incorporated or weak arguments

Data from two acceptability judgments provide new evidence that bare direct objects in Turkish are anaphorically accessible and thus can be antecedents for pronouns. We investigated the anaphoric accessibility and number interpretation of inanimate and animate bare direct objects. The results suggest that bare direct objects in Turkish do not behave like typical incorporated structures: (i) they do not show blocking effects of pronouns by a mismatch of number, and (ii) they are anaphorically accessible, thus not discourse opaque. Furthermore, we also show that the accessibility depends on the affectedness of the bare noun.

Turkish bare nouns in object position have been analyzed as pseudo-incorporated nouns (Öztürk, 2005; Ketrez, 2005; Arslan-Kechriotis, 2009, Kamali, 2015). Such structures are assumed to exhibit the following properties: they (i) evoke a number neutral interpretation, (ii) cannot act as antecedents for anaphoric pronouns and (iii) obligatorily have narrow scope. The properties in (i) and (ii) are variable properties across languages (cf. Hungarian, Persian and Hindi). Obligatory narrow scope is not a sufficient test for pseudo-incorporated constructions as this condition holds also for different types of arguments (cf. regular indefinites).

In this talk we investigate the properties in (i) and (ii) and show that bare nouns in Turkish are in fact not number neutral and can act as antecedents for anaphoric pronouns. With regard to other languages, it has been shown that pseudo-incorporated nouns are less accessible than regular indefinite noun phrases, but under certain conditions can be better accessed. Farkas and de Swart (2003) have shown that pseudo-incorporated nouns in Hungarian have a weak anaphoric potential, i.e. they cannot act as antecedents for overt pronouns, but they can for covert pronouns. Farkas and de Swart (2003) conclude that pseudo-incorporated nouns in Hungarian are number neutral and do not introduce discourse referents. Modarresi (2015) and Krifka and Modarresi (2016) argue that pseudo-incorporated nouns in Persian introduce number neutral discourse referents, which can be referred back to with overt and covert pronouns. They claim that pseudo-incorporated nouns in Persian lack number features, but depending on world knowledge one or more entities are evoked in the discourse and therefore can be referred back to with overt pronouns marked for number. Dayal (2011) shows that pseudo-incorporated nouns in Hindi are discourse translucent and proposes that number neutrality of pseudo-incorporated nouns depends on aspectual specification of the predicate. More precisely, she argues that pseudo-incorporated nouns are not inherently number neutral but rather are semantically singular. Thus, a number neutral interpretation is a result of combining pseudo-incorporated nouns with aspectual operators, such as atelic predicates.

In order to identify the properties of bare direct objects in Turkish we conducted two acceptability judgment experiments to test the number effect and the anaphoric accessibility of animate and inanimate bare nouns.

The design of **Experiment 1** consisted of four conditions organized in a 2x2 factorial design. We manipulated the type of anaphoric expression (pronoun vs. definite description) and the number marking of the anaphoric expression (singular vs. plural). A total of 36 critical items (in addition to 12 fillers) were constructed. Items consisted of a context sentence (cf. (1)) and a target sentence (cf. (a)-(d)).

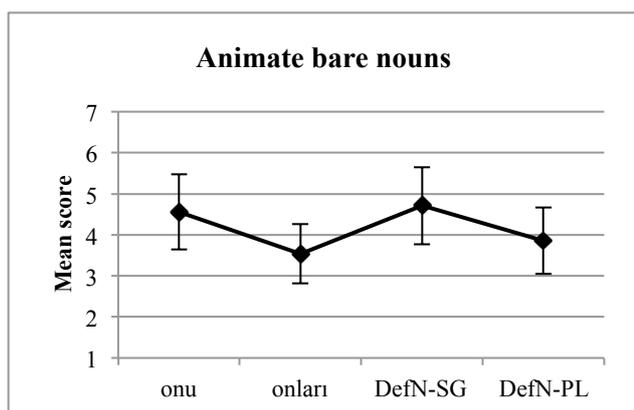


Figure 1. Mean acceptability ratings for animate bare nouns.

- (1) Samet dün Taksim meydanında **hırsız**
Samet yesterday Taksim Square thief
yakaladı.
caught
'Samet caught did **thief-catching** at the Taksim
Square yesterday.'
- (a) **Onu** rezil etti.
(b) **Onları** rezil etti.
(c) **Hırsızı** rezil etti.
(d) **Hırsızları** rezil etti.
'He embarrassed **him/them/the thief/the thieves.**'

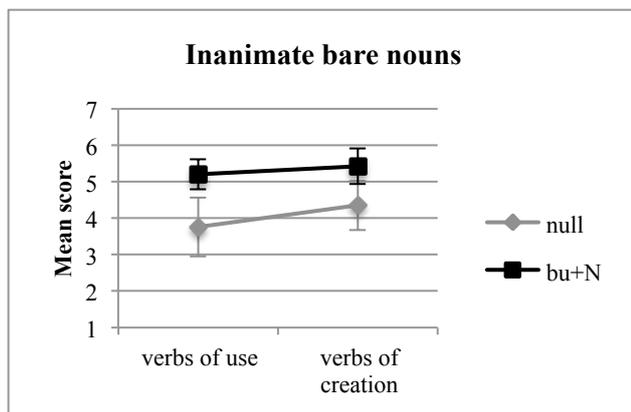
Turkish native speakers were asked to rate how naturally the thought the context and target sentences were linked to each other on a scale from 1 (“not natural at all”) to 7 (“completely natural”).

Figure 1 presents results of acceptability judgments from 80 monolingual Turkish speakers.

Results reveal a significant main effect of number marking, $b=-0.94$, $SE=0.22$, $t=4.32$, and a main effect of anaphoric expression, $b=0.23$, $SE=0.10$, $t=2.22$. Together, our data indicate that bare direct objects can act as antecedents of pronouns: They show that continuations with singular anaphors are more acceptable than continuations with plural anaphors, regardless of pronouns type.

The design of **Experiment 2** consisted of four conditions, organized in a 2x2 factorial design. We manipulated the presence (*bu* ‘this’ + N) vs. absence (null pronoun) of an anaphoric expression as well as verb type, comparing *verbs of use* (cf. (2)) and *verbs of creation* (cf. (3)). We constructed 48 critical items (in addition to 24 fillers). Each item again consisted of a context sentence (cf. (2) and (3)) and a target sentence (cf. (a) and (b)). The task was the same as in Experiment 1.

Figure 2 shows the overall mean ratings of 160 monolingual speakers of Turkish. Results show a significant main effect of verb type, $b=1.26$, $SE=0.18$, $t=6.86$, and a reliable main effect of anaphoric expression, $b=0.40$, $SE=0.13$, $t=2.51$. We take these as evidence (i) that anaphoric reference to the bare object is more acceptable in contexts with creation verbs than in contexts with verbs of use and (ii) that the anaphoric link created by the definite description *bu+N* is more acceptable than the anaphoric link by the null pronoun.



(2) Gönül geçen gün ofiste **mektup okudu**.

Gönül last day office letter read
‘Gönül did **letter-reading** at the office yesterday.’

(3) Sami geçen gün çalışma odasında **mektup yazdı**.

Sami last day work room letter wrote
‘Sami did **letter-writing** at the office yesterday.’

(a) *pro* Üç sayfalıydı.

‘**It** was three pages long.’

(b) **Bu mektup** üç sayfalıydı.

‘**This letter** was three pages long.’

Figure 2. Mean acceptability ratings for inanimate bare nouns.

In sum, our results suggest that, first bare nouns in Turkish are anaphorically accessible (Exp. 1 and 2), and second, the accessibility of inanimate bare nouns in Turkish is dependent on the verb type, thus is associated with a degree of affectedness (Exp. 2). Third, both animate bare nouns (Exp.1) and inanimate bare nouns (Exp. 2) trigger singular interpretations. In addition, the studies show that continuations with object pronouns and definite descriptions are more acceptable than continuations with subject pronouns. The findings of the study contribute to the literature of the discourse properties of bare nouns in two points: At the methodological level, we present the first empirical study investigating the discourse properties of Turkish bare nouns. At the theoretical level, our findings reveal that Turkish bare nouns are not discourse opaque. They rather show properties of discourse transparency and should therefore be analyzed as weak indefinites rather than pseudo-incorporated nominals.

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