

The interaction of syntax and pragmatics in word order: Data from Turkish

Abstract for Student Session - Summer School 2002, "Formal and Functional Linguistics", Düsseldorf

This paper will attempt to show that an adequate account of word order variation in Turkish necessitates a reference to a level of pragmatic relations distinct from the level of formal-syntactic relations. It will evaluate empirical data primarily concerning quantifier scope and binding to show that certain word order alternations at the clause level are exclusively discourse-sensitive.

Although it is commonly acknowledged that alternative constituent orders in a language reflect alternative discursive distributions, functionally- and formally-oriented frameworks have different assumptions about how central discourse is to the grammatical system, and about whether it is necessary to posit a level of pragmatic relations distinct from the level of formal-syntactic (or, semantic) relations. Functionalist studies explicitly recognize discursive aspects of word order variation. Various frameworks make use of structured representations of discourse entities, commonly termed as 'information structures', which are taken to be relevant to the linear order of sentence constituents (e.g. Prince, 1981; Vallduvi, 1992; Lambrecht, 1994). Within the generativist tradition, discourse functions such as 'topic' or 'focus' are frequently relegated to extra-syntactic modules and regarded as being external to the 'core grammar,' although it has sometimes been acknowledged that they may have a role in the determination of the surface forms by inducing 'stylistic movements' or 'PF-movements' (e.g. Ross, 1967; Koike, 1997; Kidwai, 1999). Nevertheless, the dominant practice in generativist research has been to associate linear order with formal syntax, either explicitly or implicitly. Kayne (1994) takes the strong position and, without essential reference to discursive factors, maintains that the hierarchical structure completely determines the surface order of constituents. A similar trend, the discourse-configurational approach, associates discourse functions with specific positions in the hierarchical structure (e.g. Rizzi, 1997; Kiss, 1998).

Some recent studies have pointed out that certain grammatical phenomena are not eligible to be analyzed within a strictly formal-syntactic framework, and that surface forms can best be analyzed as resulting from the interaction of syntax and pragmatics. Park (1995), from within the Role and Reference Grammar framework, argues that pragmatic case (as opposed to semantic case) in Korean is motivated by information structure. Alexopoulou (1999) presents empirical data that challenge the isomorphic view of syntax and discourse. Clamons et al. (1999) maintain that topic agreement in Oromo cannot be accounted for by a formal-syntactic analysis without unmotivated modifications to the theory. Choi (2001) points to the problems of A- vs. A'-movement approaches to German scrambling and proposes an optimality-theoretic analysis that introduces the competition between discourse and syntax.

This paper will advocate a similar view by arguing that it is necessary to postulate two distinct but interacting levels of representation in order to accommodate word order variation in Turkish: a "phrase structure" (PS) at the formal-syntactic level and an "information structure" (IS) at the pragmatic level. Using empirical data primarily from quantifier scope and binding, the paper will argue that the SOV-OSV alternation (object fronting) has a pragmatic as well as a formal-syntactic import, whereas the SOV-OVS alternation (postposing of the subject) is only pragmatically motivated. Object fronting will further be analyzed from a minimalist perspective (Chomsky, 1993; 1995), as the movement of the object to the specifier of a functional projection high above AgrSP, the trigger of the movement being the attraction of a [D] feature (EPP-feature) on the object. The movement will also be shown to display most characteristics of prototypical A-movements. Postposing, on the other hand, will be maintained to be best analyzed as an exclusively IS-driven alternation, which ought not be linked to any operation within the syntactic component. It will be argued that analyzing postposing as a formal-syntactic movement operation is both theoretically ungrounded and empirically problematic.

The paper will then outline a model of grammar that incorporates the PS and the IS levels, and point to two alternative ways in which such a model can be used to account for both formal-syntactic and discursive aspects of alternative surface forms: One which incorporates an optimality-theoretic analysis, and one which refers to the minimalist notion of 'interpretability' at the interface levels.

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