

## Discourse prominence: The interaction of grammatical function and semantic role

Turkish allows both null subject pronouns and overt subject pronouns. Previous research has argued that the accessibility of discourse referents in Turkish depends on grammatical function. It is widely accepted that the non-overt pronoun *pro* typically refers to the subject referent and the personal pronoun *o* typically acts as a topic-shifter (Enç, 1986; Erguvanlı-Taylan, 1986; Turan, 1996; Öztürk, 2001). However, previous assumptions have mainly focused on contexts in which the subject referent is at the same time the agent referent so that it is unclear whether grammatical function (subject > object), semantic role (agent > patient) or both determine referent accessibility in Turkish. Based on recent empirical findings from German (Schumacher et al. 2016), we assume that both grammatical function and semantic role have an effect on discourse prominence in Turkish, taking discourse prominence as a cover term for anaphoricity (choice of referential expression) and accessibility (type of anaphoric expression). To test this hypothesis, we conducted two experiments including psych verbs: Experiment 1 (antecedent selection task) focused on the question of which factors determine referent accessibility in Turkish, Experiment 2 (sentence continuation task) focused on speakers choice of referential expression and choice of anaphoric expression.

In Experiment 1, we manipulated verb type (subject-experiencer verb vs. object-experiencer verb) and pronoun type (*pro* vs. personal pronoun *o* ‘she/he’). A total of 16 test items and 20 filler items were constructed. Test items consisted of a context sentence containing a psych verb (see 1a/2a) and a target sentence containing an ambiguous subject pronoun, i.e. *pro* or the personal pronoun *o* (see 1b/2b). To control for implicit causality (Özge, Hartshorne & Snedeker, in prep.), we added causal adjuncts establishing the reason for the psychological state. Filler items contained verbs of transfer and the subject pronoun, i.e. *pro* or the personal pronoun *o* was resolved to the goal referent through world knowledge. Test items were distributed over two lists such that each item was in one condition from each list. Items were presented in pseudo-randomized order. 60 monolingual native speakers of Turkish were asked to read both sentences and to determine the subject of the target sentence. Results only revealed a reliable effect of verb type,  $\beta = -2.20$ ,  $SE = 0.54$ ,  $z = -4.1$ ,  $p = 0.001$ . In constructions with subject-experiencer verbs, pronouns were interpreted as referring to the subject referent much more often than referring to the object referent. In constructions with object-experiencer verbs, both referents were roughly equally often selected as antecedents. However, there was no difference between *pro* and the personal pronoun *o*.

In Experiment 2, items were presented as in (1a) and (2a), without the second sentence. 90 monolingual native speakers of Turkish were asked to read the psych verb sentences and to write one continuation sentence. Preliminary results of simple sentences without embedded clauses show an object bias and an experiencer bias, cf. Table 1. Object referents were more likely to be mentioned again in subsequent discourse than the subject referent. This bias was stronger in the object-experiencer condition. Inspection of the type of anaphoric expressions (of first mentioned referent) reveals that there is a clear subject bias for *pro* and an object bias for proper names, but there were only very few uses of personal pronouns, cf. Table 2. Taking this together, we think we have provided original evidence that the discourse prominence of discourse referents is determined by grammatical function and semantic role. The choice of the next referent (anaphoricity) is clearly biased towards the object and the experiencer,

while the form of the anaphoric expression (accessibility) primarily depends on grammatical function.

- (1) a. [Gökhan]<sub>Exp</sub> çünkü kahvaltı daveti sonrasında [Naz'ı]<sub>Stim</sub> büyüleyici gülüşünden dolayı gün boyunca **düşledi**.  
 b. {pro, o} sekizde mail attı.  
 'After yesterday's breakfast invitation, Gökhan dreamed of Naz all the time because of her charming smile. {Ø, She/he} wrote an e-mail at 8 p.m.'
- (2) a. [Mete]<sub>Stim</sub> uyumsuz davranışlarıyla [Seher'i]<sub>Exp</sub> geçen haftaki grup çalışmasında çok **kızdırdı**.  
 b. {pro, o} birden gruptan ayrıldı.  
 'During last week's group work, Mete angered Seher through his rude behaviour. {Ø, She/he} left suddenly the group.'

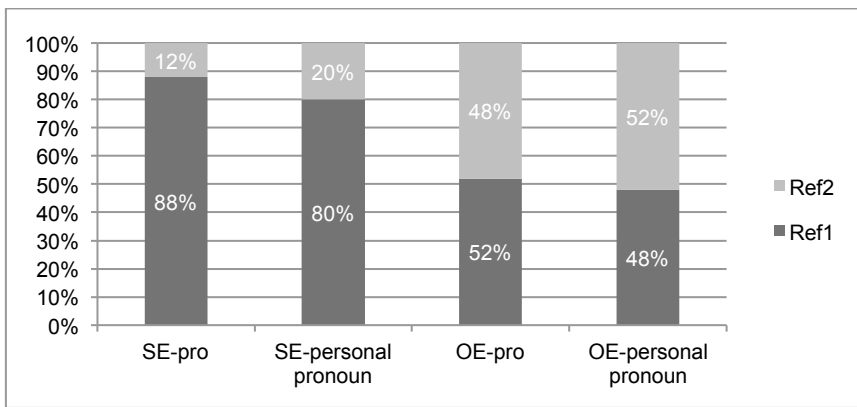


Fig. 1 Results antecedent selection (Experiment 1)

	Ref1 (= subject)	Ref2 (= object)	Total
SE	52% (110)	48% (100)	100% (210)
OE	32% (69)	68% (144)	100% (213)
Sum	42% (179)	58% (244)	100% (423)

Tab. 1 Results first mention (Experiment 2, simplex)

	Full NP	PN	PersPron	pro	Total
First mention Ref1	1% (1)	<b>22% (39)</b>	7% (12)	<b>70% (127)</b>	100% (179)
First mention Ref2	1% (1)	<b>90% (220)</b>	1% (3)	<b>8% (20)</b>	100% (244)

Tab. 2 Results type of anaphoric expression (Experiment 2, simplex)

## References

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