

Is there a focus position in Turkish?

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1. Introduction

The aim of this paper is to investigate the nature of the location that hosts focused phrases (f-phrases) and wh-phrases (both, indicators of non-recoverable information) in the surface syntax of Turkish. We claim that f-phrases and wh-phrases occur in the area which we will call the focus field. We define this area as being situated between the position that bears primary stress and the position that includes the verbal complex. We further claim that syntactic stress and focal stress are distinct in Turkish, and that the immediately preverbal position, which is generally taken to be the position for f-phrases is, instead, the position for sentential stress. The bifurcation of stress will also help explain the behaviour of clitics with respect to stress.

2. Syntactic properties

It has been claimed that the immediately preverbal position is the focus position in Turkish (Ahmet Cevat 1931, Erku 1982, Erguvanlı 1984 and Kennelly 1997). It is indeed the case that any phrase which is focused may occur in the immediately preverbal position, irrespective of its grammatical function. This position also hosts wh-phrases. (Wh-phrases which take stress and f-phrases are indicated by capital letters in the examples):

- | <i>f-phrases</i> | <i>wh-phrases</i> |
|--|--|
| (1)a. Ali-ye yemeğ-i BEN pişir-di-m.
-DAT food-ACC I cook-PAST-1
I cooked the food for Ali. | (2) a. Ali-ye yemeğ-I KİM pişir-di?
-DAT food-ACC who cook-PAST-3
WHO cooked the food for the Ali? |
| b. Ben yemeğ-i ALİ-YE pişir-di-m.
I food-ACC -DAT cook-PAST-1
I cooked the food FOR ALİ. | b. Sen yemeğ-i KİM-E pişir-di-n?
you food-ACC who-DAT cook-PAST-2
FOR WHOM did you cook the food? |
| c. Ali-yle seyahat-e YARIN çık-ıyor-um.
-COM trip-DAT tomorrow go-PROG-1
I am going on a trip with Ali TOMORROW. | c. Seyahat-e NE ZAMAN çık-ıyor-sun?
trip-DAT when go-PROG-2
WHEN are you going on a trip? |

However, it is important to note that the immediately preverbal position is only one of the possible positions for f-phrases and wh-expressions. Wh-phrases (Özsoy 1996), as well as f-phrases may remain in-situ:

- | <i>f-phrases in-situ</i> | <i>wh-phrases in-situ</i> |
|--|---|
| (3)a. BEN Ali-ye yemeğ-i pişir-di-m.
I -DAT food-ACC cook-PAST-1
I cooked the food for Ali. | (4)a. KİM Ali-ye yemeğ-i pişir-di?
who -DAT food-ACC cook-PAST-3
WHO cooked the food for Ali? |
| b. Ben onlar-a BU EV-İ sat-tı-m.
I they-DAT this house-ACC sell-PAST-1
I sold them THIS HOUSE. | b. Sen onlar-a NE-Yİ sat-tı-n?
you they-DAT what-ACC sell-PAST-2
WHAT did you sell them? |

- c. YARIN Ali-yle buluş-uyor-um. c.NE ZAMAN Ali-yle buluş-
uyor-sun?
tomorrow -COM meet-PROG-1 when -COM meet-PROG-2
I am meeting Ali TOMORROW. WHEN are you meeting Ali?

In addition, f-phrases (Kural 1993, Demircan 1996) and wh-phrases can be scrambled:

f-phrases and wh-phrases in scrambled constructions

- (5) a. OYA-NIN RESİMLERİ-Nİ/NE-Yİ o koleksiyoncu bugün satın almış./?
-GEN paintings/what-ACC that collector-NOM today bought
That collector bought OYA'S PAINTINGS/WHAT today./?
b. O koleksiyoncu OYA-NIN RESİMLERİ-Nİ/NE-Yİ 300 milyon-a satın almış./?
that collector-NOM -GEN paintings /what-ACC 300 million-DAT bought
That collector bought OYA'S PAINTINGS/WHAT for 300 million./?
c. Oya-nın resimleri-ni O KOLEKSİYONCU /KİM bugün satın almış./?
-GEN paintings-ACC that collector/who-NOM today bought
THAT COLLECTOR/WHO bought Oya's paintings today./?
d. O KOLEKSİYONCU /KİM Oya-nın resimleri-ni 300 milyona satın almış./?
that collector/who-NOM -GEN paintings-ACC 300 million-DAT bought
THAT COLLECTOR/WHO bought Oya's paintings for 300 million today./?

Another syntactic similarity between f-phrases and wh-phrases is that neither can occupy the postverbal position (henceforth, PVP), irrespective of whether the NPs are arguments or adjuncts (Kural 1993, Göksel 1998):

Focus in PVP

- (6)*Ahmet vermiş KİTAB-I / ANNEM-E / BUGÜN / ACELEYLE
gave THE BOOK-ACC / MY MOTHER-DAT / TODAY / IN A HURRY

Wh-phrases in PVP

- (7)*Ahmet vermiş KİM-E / NE-Yİ / NE ZAMAN / NEREDE / NASIL?
gave WHO-DAT / WHAT-ACC / WHEN / WHERE / HOW?

In short, f-phrases and wh-phrases can occur in any preverbal position:

- (8) (F/Wh)....(F/Wh)....(F/Wh)....V.....

These observations lead us to the preliminary conclusion that the focus field, i.e. the area which hosts the elements denoting non-recoverable information, covers all preverbal positions (and the verbal complex), indicated by curved brackets below.

- (9) {XP.....V}.....

However, as will be seen in the next section, the occurrence of f-phrases and wh-phrases in the preverbal area indicates that the description of the focus field is also contingent on stress.

3. The interaction of stress with f-phrases and wh-phrases

In this section we state the ordering restrictions relating to f-phrases and wh-phrases. Not all of the preverbal domain is accessible as a possible sight for these phrases. Stress is the

sole indicator of focus, therefore a focused phrase is necessarily stressed. Both phrase types bear primary stress, and they can co-occur; therefore it is predicted that there should be restrictions on their ordering.

The discussion on the distinction between sentence stress and focal stress will be presented in the final section.

3.1 F-phrases and wh-phrases

A f-phrase cannot be preceded by a wh-phrase. Notice that this is true even if the f-phrase occurs in the immediately preverbal position, the position which is generally assumed to be the focus position, as shown in (10a-c). However, the order where the f-phrase is followed by a wh-phrase is grammatical:

- | <i>wh-phrase + f-phrase</i> | <i>f-phrase + wh-phrase</i> |
|---|---|
| (10)a. *Ne zaman OKUL-A gid-ecek-sin?
when SCHOOL-DAT go-FUT-2 | (11)a. OKUL-A ne zaman gid-ecek-sin?
SCHOOL-DAT when go-FUT-2
When will you go TO SCHOOL? |
| b. *Kim SEN-i sev-iyor?
who YOU-ACC love-PROG -3 | b. SEN-i kim sev-iyor?
YOU-ACC who love-PROG -3
Who loves YOU? |
| c. *Kim-I SINEMA-DA gör-ecek-sin?
who-ACC CINEMA-LOC see-FUT-2 | c. SINEMA-DA kim-i gör-ecek-sin?
CINEMA-LOC who-ACC see-FUT-2
Who will you see AT THE CINEMA? |

3.2 Multiple wh-phrases

If there is more than one wh-phrase in a clause in Turkish the leftmost one has to bear stress irrespective of its grammatical function.

- | | |
|--|--|
| (12)a. *Kim KİM-i sev-iyor-muş?
Who WHO-ACC love-PROG-HS -3 | (13)a. KİM kim-i sev-iyor-muş?
who who-ACC love-PROG-HS-3
WHO loves who? |
| b. *Kim-i KİM sev-iyor-muş?
Who-ACC WHO love-PROG-HS - | b. ?KİM-i kim sev-iyor-muş?
who-ACC who love-PROG-HS-3
Who loves WHO? |

The observations above can be stated as follows:

- (14) *wh....F F.....wh
*wh...WH WH.....wh

These examples indicate that not all of the preverbal domain is accessible as a site for non-recoverable information, and that wh-expressions and f-phrases have to occur in the area including and following sentential/focal stress up to the end of the verbal complex.:

- (15) {XP' V}

Let us reconsider the data under this proposal. (16a-b) are ungrammatical since indicators of non-recoverable information, the wh-phrases *ne zaman* 'when' and *kim* 'who', both fall outside the focus field. In (16a) the stressed element is a f-phrase, and in (16b) it is another wh-phrase.

- (16)a. *Ne zaman OKUL-A gid-ecek-sin? b. *Kim KİM-i sev-iyor-muş?

when SCHOOL-DAT go-FUT-2 who WHO-ACC love-
PROG-HS

(17a-b) are grammatical as the the focus field includes ALL f-phrases and wh-phrases:

(17) a. OKUL-A ne zaman gid-ecek-sin? b. KİM kim-i sev-iyor-muş
SCHOOL-DAT when go-FUT-2 who who-ACC love-PROG-HS
When will you go to school? WHO loves who?

Notice that although indicators of non-recoverable information have to occur in the focus field, not everything that occurs there has to do with non-recoverable information:

(18) NE ZAMAN okul-a gid-ecek-sin?
when school-DAT go-FUT-2
WHEN will you go to school?

In addition, examples such as the ones in (19) are grammatical not because f-phrases and wh-phrases occur in the immediately preverbal position, but because they occur in the focus field which includes the immediately preverbal position:

(19) a. Okul-a NE ZAMAN gid-ecek-sin? b. Okul-a HERGÜN gid-iyor-um.
school-DAT when go-FUT-2 school-DAT everyday go-PROG-1
WHEN will you go to school? I go to school EVERYDAY.

To summarise, stress is the sole indicator of focus in Turkish. Stress can be assigned to any preverbal constituent even if it is scrambled. This indicates that the surface syntax of Turkish does not have a designated focus position. Similar facts hold for wh-phrases. They have to occur in the preverbal area and they are generally stressed.

4. Focus is neither a feature nor a phrasal projection in Turkish

In this section, we would like to consider the implications of our observations for current approaches relating to the syntactic location of focus. One type of analysis employs the strategy of feature assignment. Horvath (1986), for example, treats focus as a feature, on a par with case. She claims that focus is assigned by the verb to its adjacent constituent (i.e. under government to SpecVP) in languages such as Hungarian which have a specific position for focus. Other researchers (cf. Tuller 1992) claim that the focus feature may be assigned by other heads such as C and I to their Spec positions. In languages with focus in situ, the focus feature is assumed to be assigned freely to any phrase.

Let us see whether this strategy could be adopted for Turkish. If focus were a feature, it would have to be assigned freely to any phrase, since f-phrases may remain in-situ, and they may be scrambled. The preverbal position, being one of these positions, would be receiving focus in a de facto manner. However, this strategy would fail to account for the following:

(i) Why the postverbal position cannot host f-phrases. Since scrambling into this position is possible, the assignment of a focus feature to an NP in this position should also be possible. However, only non-focused phrases can occur in the postverbal position.

(ii) Why the immediately preverbal position cannot always host a focused phrase. As noted above (cf. 11a-c), if there is a wh-phrase preceding a f-phrase, the sentence is ungrammatical:

(20) *Ne zaman EV-E gid-iyor-sun?
 when HOME-DAT go-PROG-2

Notice that this is a positional restriction, given that focus and wh-phrases can co-occur. Therefore, the strategy that assigns a focus feature cannot be part of Turkish grammar.

The second strategy for focusing involves an independant phrasal category, a functional phrase FP. FP is either an adjunction structure which takes S as a complement (Kiss 1987), or it is a maximal projection (Brody 1990, Rizzi 1997) which an NP moves into for reasons of interpretation, feature checking or case assignment. If this strategy were adopted for Turkish, an FP would either have to be freely and multiply generated, which is undesirable for obvious reasons, or an adjunct FP (in the sense of Kiss) would be dominating the S. This would of course require multiple movements for the intervening phrases to move to higher adjunction sites, in order for the immediately preverbal position to become the focused element. There would also have to be a mechanism preventing the movement of V into one of these adjunction sites, since this would leave the postverbal position as the location of focus or wh-phrases, which is unattested in Turkish, as mentioned above.

Erteschik-Shir (1997) proposes a level of F-structure which serves as the input to Phonological Form and Semantics. F-structure is a projection of S-structure marked for Topic and Focus. She proposes a phonological rule which states that sentential stress is assigned to the focused constituent. The facts of Turkish, however, indicate that sentential stress is distinct from focal stress, as discussed below.

5. Focus field and stress assignment: evidence from clitics

We take stress to be the indicator of the leftmost boundary of the focus field. A phrase which denotes non-recoverable information has to occur in the focus field, whether it be directly under the stressed position or anywhere to the right of this position, as long as it is preverbal. The evidence for this comes from our observation that when two elements compete for stress, it is the leftmost one that bears it. This is true of a wh-element and a f-phrase, and multiple wh-expressions, as we have seen above. It is also true for constructions with a clitic and a f-phrase or wh-phrase, as well as for constructions with multiple clitics. As is well known, clitics in Turkish cannot bear stress themselves, but they assign it to the constituent that precedes them:

f-phrase and (negative) clitic

- (21)a. Okul-a GİT-me-di-n.
 school-DAT go-NEG-PAST-2
 You did not go to school.
- b. *OKUL-A GİT-me-di-n.
 SCHOOL-DAT go-NEG-PAST-2

Wh-phrase and (negative) clitic

- (22) a. NERE-YE git-me-di-n?
 where-DAT go-NEG-PAST -2
 WHERE did n't you go to?
- b. *Nere-ye GİT-me-d-in?
 where-DAT go-NEG-PAST -2

(Negative) clitic and (interrogative) clitic

- (23) a. Okul-a GİT-me-di-n mi?
 school-DAT go NEG-PAST -2 int
 Didn't you go to school?
- b. OKUL-A mi git-me-di-n?
 school-DAT int go- NEG-PAST -2
 Didn't you go to school?
- c. *Okul-a git-me-Dİ-n mi?
 school-DAT go- NEG-PAST -2 int
- d. *Okul-a mi GİT-me-di-n?
 school-DAT int go- NEG-PAST -2

In (21a) the negative clitic determines that stress falls on the phrase which precedes it. However, when there is an element taking focal stress to the left of it, this same syllable cannot be stressed, as the ungrammaticality of (21b) indicates. In (22a) the *wh*-phrase takes stress because, among the stress requiring elements, it is the leftmost one. The ungrammaticality of (22b) shows that the stress assignment property of the negative clitic has been overruled. Similarly, when there are two clitics, the element preceding the leftmost one takes stress, as can be observed in (23). An important conclusion that can be drawn is that the stress assigning properties of clitics are subsidiary to their positions in the focus field.

6. The distinction between sentential and focal stress

The following data present evidence that a distinction needs to be made between sentence stress and focal stress in Turkish. Since there is one primary stress per sentence, this distinction can be blurred. We claim that the position for sentential stress is the immediately preverbal position. This is a plausible assumption, given the fact that all phrases are stressed on their leftbranching nodes, VP being no exception, and sentential stress is most probably a projection of VP stress. However, the immediately preverbal position may also bear focal stress just as any preverbal position can. In short, the preverbal position is the site for two different types of stress. To show that these two are distinct, consider the following:

- (24)a. Ev-e GİT-me-di-m. b. EV-E git-me-di-m. c. EV-E git-ti-m.
 home-DAT go-NEG-PAST-1 home-DAT go-NEG-PAST-1 home-DAT go-past-1
 I diidn't go home. I didn't go HOME. I went HOME/home.

In (24a), the whole proposition is negated. (24b), being a sentence with contrastive focus, has a different set of presuppositions, namely that the speaker has gone somewhere (but not home). (24a) further indicates that the negative clitic in Turkish is not only a stress assigner but that it, in fact, attracts stress. This explains why (24b) can only be interpreted as having focal stress. Since the immediately preverbal position is the position of sentential stress, there is no explanation as to why (24b) should not have a non-focal reading. However, this

sentence is ungrammatical under a sentential stress reading, i.e. its presuppositions are different from those of (24a). It is now easier to see the ambiguity of (24c), which is both a neutral sentence with sentential stress, AND a sentence which has focal stress. This ambiguity may be phonetically resolved by the relative degree of stress. Under our analysis, the ambiguity is a natural result of the existence of two types of stress.

This means that the immediately preverbal position is NOT the focus position in Turkish, but the position for sentential stress. However, an element with focal stress can also appear in this place by virtue of the fact that it is within the focus field as we defined it. Its presence in the immediately preverbal position is a de facto result of the nature of the focus field.

Conclusion

To reiterate the main claim of this paper, the area between the constituent that takes focal stress and the position that includes the complex verb is the domain that hosts elements designating non-recoverable information. This explains the distributional constraints on wh-expressions and focus phrases. Among two elements that compete for stress, the leftmost one wins out. So it is not necessarily the case that a clitic imposes stress on the syllable preceding it. Further, the observation that the leftmost element requires stress provides evidence that focal stress and sentential stress are distinct.

Whether (or how) the representation of the focus field is derived from a syntactic level of representation is not clear at this stage. However, there are indications that this might be the case. Not everything in any order can be focused at every position. For example f-phrases which are indirect objects are less acceptable sentence initially. In order to have a fuller understanding of the domains we propose, the effects of gaps and the interpretation of anaphoric expressions in pre and post-verbal positions have to be investigated.

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