

Two Types of Free Relatives in Turkish, or is One Type a Correlative in Disguise?

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Constructions usually called Free Relatives (FRs) or headless relative clauses in Turkish exhibit modifying clauses nominalized in the same way as regular headed relative clauses (RCs), thus justifying their analysis as RCs which are DPs; e.g. a subject targeting FR:

(1) Ada -ya gid -en -ler -i gör -dü
-m
island -DAT go -sbj.Rel.Nom. -PL -ACC seeF PST
-1.SG
'I saw (those) who went/were going to the island'

These constructions, while clearly RCs, are unusual typologically in terms of Free Relatives: 1. They don't exhibit Matching Effects (cf. van Riemsdijk 2000), as illustrated in (1), where the target is in some subject Case (nominative or genitive), while the entire DP is in the accusative; 2. Their semantics: The (apparent) FR refers to definite entities (at least in the primary reading), rather than to quantified or variable ones, as their English (or German) counterparts:

(1) 'I saw *whoever/whomever* went to the island

These non-typical properties of Turkish FRs such as (1) motivate their analysis in Kornfilt (2005) (see also Citko 1999) as "Light-Headed RCs", rather than genuinely non-headed FRs, i.e. RCs with a (silent) pronominal head. In my talk, I shall address additional properties of this construction, and some constraints on those properties.

Turning to what appears to be a second type of Turkish FRs, we see that those correspond more closely to their English (and German) counterparts:

(3) *Kim* ada -ya gid-er -se (onlar-ı) pencere -m
-den
who island-DAT go-AOR-Cond. they-ACC window -
1.SG -ABL
gör -ür - üm
see -AOR -1.SG

'I see from my window who(m)ever goes to the island'

This Turkish construction hasn't been studied extensively so far and is noteworthy in exhibiting clause-internal *wh*- "targets" (while otherwise not having relative pronouns; *wh*-elements are otherwise question elements) and conditional morphology on their predicate.

This study proposes to analyze such "unusual" FRs as a special case of a correlative construction, itself little-studied in Turkish:

- (4) Ada -ya *hangi öğrenci* -ler gid -er -se
 island -DAT which student -PL go -AOR -Cond
 (onlar -ı) pencere -m -den gör -ür -üm
 they-ACC window -1.SG -ABL see -AOR -1.SG
 ‘I see from my window which ever students go to the island’
 (=‘Whichever students go to the island, I see (them)’)

I propose base-generating these “false conditionals” in both FRs and in correlatives in a position adjoined to the matrix clause, rather than adjoined to a (silent or overt) resumptive pronoun in the main clause, as has been proposed for correlatives in some literature (e.g. Bhatt 2003 for Hindi). Turkish lacks the constituency diagnostics, showing that the modifying clause and the pronoun form a single constituent, that Hindi correlatives have. Instead, I posit a predication-type coindexation between the “false conditional” and the resumptive pronoun. Base generation of “false conditionals” as adjunct to the clause (rather than to a Nominal head) is further motivated by non-FR concessives, also bearing conditional morphology:

- (5) Ada -ya *ne kadar sık* gid -er -se -n git,
 island -DAT what much often go -AOR -Cond. -2.SG go
 (Imper.)

yine de ada -lı say -ıl -ma -z -sin
 still and island-with consider-PASS -Neg-neg.AOR-2.sg.

‘However often you go to the island, you are still not considered a (true) islander’

The “variable”, quantificational semantics of these “false conditional” FRs and correlatives is accounted for by the wh-“targets”; the conditional morphology is analyzed as akin to English “comparative conditionals” (cf. McCawley 1998, Culicover & Jackendoff 1999).

Selected References:

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