A Case Study in the Syntax - Information Structure Interface: The Sentential Subject Constraint as a Left-Dislocation Constraint

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It has often been claimed that Ross's (1967) Sentential Subject Constraint (SSC) or, in its later, more general incarnation, the Condition on Extraction Domains (CED) of Huang (1982) does not hold in Turkish (and in other head-final languages). In Turkish, relativization out of sentential subjects is freely possible, as long as the "Subject Participle" morpheme -(y)An is chosen (for the majority dialect and the only option in the standard, written variety of the language), rather than the general indicative nominalization marker, otherwise found in all indicative embeddings.

In this talk, I claim that the SSC/CED does hold in Turkish, but in the form of a (Left-) Dislocated SSC/CED. I further claim that this analysis renders Hankamer & Knecht's (1976) Mother Node Principle (MNP) for Turkish relativization superfluous. The MNP dictates that a relativization target triggers the "relativization participle" appropriate for its "mother node". The MNP is stipulative, as it doesn't follow from any general principles otherwise found in languages.

I propose explaining the ungrammaticality of the unmarked nominalization morpheme (with its agreement morphology) for relativizations out of Sentential Subjects as an SSC/CED violation. The grammatical, Agr-less "Subject Participle" morpheme -(y)An for this purpose represents relativization out of a topicalized sentential subject, while the ungrammatical (or marked) relativization out of a sentential subject using the unmarked morpheme (in the sense of being the general indicative nominalization morphology) is an instance of relativization out of a left-dislocated subject. It has been a generally accepted characterization of dislocated domains that they are frozen and therefore do not allow extractions out of them, and Koster's (1978) proposal for better-studied languages like German, Dutch etc. to explain (apparent) SSC/CED effects as attempts to extract out of such frozen left-dislocated sentential subjects is based on this assumption, in effect treating the (apparent) sentential subject as an extraneous adjunct. The extension of such an analysis to the "DIK versus -(y)An dichotomy" in Turkish relativizations out of sentential subjects is not obvious; in this talk, I propose to motivate such an extension.

Time permitting, I shall also address the issue of why extraction out of a topicalized (rather than left-dislocated) domain is possible in these instances. This is problematic in view of some recent work (e.g. Uriagereka 1999 and Nunes & Uriagereka 2000) that claims, based on a phasal approach, that domains which are able to serve as hosts to extractions need to be complements, i.e. need to be low in the phrasal architecture, and that higher constituents have to exhibit freezing effects. Some work on German (e.g. Müller 1997, Bayer 2004, Salzmann & Bayer 2000) has claimed more generally that any larger domain, i.e. even complements, become islands when moved up; the Turkish data suggests that this claim is too strong as a universal claim. I shall also advance some (tentative) arguments showing that in the Turkish constructions at issue, the domain hosting the extraction site is indeed high relative to the VP or vP, and against competing analyses that would place the host into such low positions.