

Multiple Subject Positions: A Case of Perfect Match between Syntax and Prosody

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1. Introduction

The question of where in the sentence nominative arguments can appear has been well studied within the fields of syntax (e.g. Heycock 1993; Tateishi 1994; Ura 1996 for Japanese) and semantics (e.g. Diesing 1992; Kratzer 1996 for English and German). Most of the debate has centered around the issue of whether a nominative phrase has to be licensed in SpecTP (e.g. Chomsky 1991) or if it may remain in its base position (i.e. internal to vP/VP , Agree model in Chomsky 2000). In particular, it has been suggested, for several languages such as German, Greek, Japanese and Turkish, that, in these languages, certain subjects might be vP/VP -internal, never raising to SpecTP (see e.g. Haider 2005 and Wurmbrand 2006 for German; Alexiadou & Anagnostopoulou 2001 for Greek; Tateishi 1994 for Japanese; Kornfilt 1984 and Öztürk 2004, 2005 for Turkish).

In this paper, we provide, for the first time, prosodic evidence in support of this position: We show, focusing on Turkish, that, in this language, two phonological phrases (PPhs) are created in a simple sentence containing a definite subject and an unaccusative verb, one PPh for the subject and one for the verb (suggesting that definite arguments are in a different syntactic projection than the verb), whereas only one PPh is created in the case of an indefinite subject preceding such a verb (suggesting that indefinite arguments stay within the same projection as the verb, i.e. vP/VP -internal). The latter option is not available when the verb is unergative, while the former is not available for existential constructions (more on this below), providing independent evidence for the way we assume syntax-prosody interface works in Turkish.

The paper is organized in the following way: in Section 2, we make a general introduction to the question of syntactic subject positions, and follow this with a discussion of certain word order effects from Turkish that have implications for determining the syntactic subject positions in this language. In Section 3, we first make a brief introduction to Prosodic Phonology, the theoretical framework we will be adopting here. Then, we follow this with an introduction to Turkish prosody and present a complete picture of how prosodic phrasing works in this language. In particular, we describe, for the first time, the intonational phrase (I) in Turkish, and its interaction with the Phonological Phrase (PPh). Later, in Section 4, we present the current proposal by showing how prosody gives us insight into the issue of syntactic subject positions. We provide independent evidence for this proposal, in Section 5, based on constructions like unergatives and existentials. Finally, we conclude the paper in Section 6.

2. Syntactic Subject Positions and the Case of Turkish

2.1. *Where does a Subject Appear in Syntax?*

There are, in general, two different views in the literature with respect to where a subject (i.e. a nominative phrase) is licensed in syntax. On one view, subjects are licensed in SpecTP (i.e. SpecTP must be filled) (e.g. Chomsky 1981), in which case movement is involved because of the EPP requirement on T (Chomsky 1991, 1995). On another (more recent) view, nominative subjects can stay

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other words, we argue that there are multiple subject positions in Turkish, one for indefinite (possibly SpecVP) and another for definite subjects (possibly SpecTP).

We adopt the view that a clause takes only one specifier and one complement (cf. Fukui & Speas 1986; Kayne 1994); on such a view, the word order contrast observed in (3a) vs. (3b) is not surprising: In (3b), since SpecVP is already occupied by the adverbial,³ and given that multiple specifier positions are not possible, the only other subject position left for the nominative to occupy is SpecTP. And this is a position for definite subjects; therefore, the indefinite interpretation does not obtain. In (3a), on the other hand, SpecVP is available for the subject *adam* to occupy, for the adverbial *dün* can, with this order, occur, for example, in SpecTP, giving us the indefinite interpretation of the subject. Furthermore, since, for adverbials like *dün*, there are more positions available than just the SpecVP or SpecTP,⁴ it is also possible for the subject to occupy SpecTP, even when the adverbial appears in sentence-initial position, thereby giving us the definite interpretation of (3a).

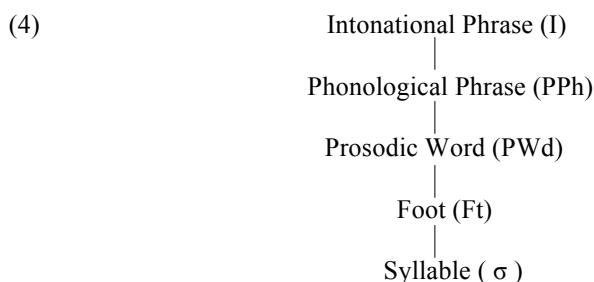
In sum, our proposal is that there are multiple subject positions in Turkish; indefinite subjects stay in SpecVP, whereas definite subjects must raise to SpecTP. In addition to the word order facts outlined in this section, we provide independent prosodic evidence for this approach in the following sections.

3. Prosodic Phonology and Turkish Prosody

Before moving on to a prosodic account of the facts outlined above, we make an initial attempt in this section at showing how prosodic phrasing and the syntax-prosody interface work in Turkish. We start with some background on Prosodic Phonology (see e.g. Selkirk 1984, 1986; Nespor & Vogel 1986), the phonological framework we adopt in this paper.

3.1. Prosodic Phonology

Prosodic constituents are typically assumed to be organized into a hierarchy as in (4) below:



Sounds are organized into syllables, syllables into feet, feet into prosodic words (PWds), PWds into phonological phrases (PPhs), and PPhs into intonational phrases (Is). Each constituent has a head, either the rightmost constituent it dominates, or the leftmost. For example, the head of a PPh is either the rightmost or the leftmost PWd depending on the language. Languages tend to respect the “strict layering” of these constituents (Selkirk 1984, 1986), though this is violated under certain well-defined circumstances (e.g. the organization of certain functional material, see e.g. Selkirk 1995).

In this paper, we focus on higher-level prosodic constituents, i.e. the PWd, PPh and I, which are underrepresented in previous research on Turkish prosody, especially the I, as we will show in the next section.

³ As with Kayne (1994), we do not make a distinction between specifiers and adjuncts. We further assume that subjects of certain unaccusatives are base-generated in SpecVP in Turkish, not in the complement position (see Nagai 2010 for more on this).

⁴ This is not, of course, possible for every adverbial; it wouldn't, for example, hold true for low adverbials.

3.2. Turkish Prosody

In Turkish, phrase level stress/prominence is assigned to the leftmost prosodic word (PWd) level stress (Kabak & Vogel 2001) (i.e. **PPh head = leftmost PWd**) (indicated with boldface in (5)):⁵

- (5) a. [**ó** adám]PPh b. [ó]PPh⁶ c. [**adám**]PPh
 that man that man
 “that man” “that” “man”

If this is the only utterance in context, then, I-level stress/prominence will also naturally fall on the head of this PPh, which is underlined below (as well as bolded since this is also the head of a PPh):

- (6) a. [[**ó** adám]PPh]I b. [[ó]PPh]I c. [[**adám**]PPh]I
 that man that man
 “that man” “that” “man”

The crucial case though is when there is more than one PPh in an utterance. Which PPh would then be the head of the I-phrase? This question has, so far, been left unanswered in the literature. In fact, the domain of the Turkish I-phrase has never been defined before, with researchers sometimes treating even full sentences as a PPh (see e.g. Kabak & Vogel 2001), which is unable to capture certain data (see below; see also Inkelas & Orgun 2003). Now, given that the PPh in Turkish corresponds roughly to a syntactic phrase, as with most languages, the domain of the Turkish I-phrase can be determined by looking at constructions that have more than one syntactic phrase. Examine, for example, (7), where there are two syntactic projections (i.e. maximal projections except for TP): In this construction, there are two PPhs which both bear their own PPh-level stress, creating two stressed elements in a sentence like (7a), where it is not the leftmost, but rather the rightmost element that is most prominent in the sentence. That is, the rightmost PPh is chosen for main I-level stress. The head of an I in Turkish is, thus, the rightmost PPh (i.e. **I-head = rightmost PPh**):

- | | |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p><u>Prosodic representation:</u></p> <p>(7) a. [[ó]PPh [adám]PPh]I
 that man
 “That is a man.”</p> | <p><u>Syntactic representation:</u></p> <p>b. [TP [DP O]_T T [DP/NP adam]]
 that man-Cop
 “That is a man.”</p> |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

Note that (5a) and (7a), which differ in prosody, look alike on the surface, except that (7) probably ends in a null copula (Kornfilt 1997).

In sum, higher level prosodic phrasing in Turkish could be summarized in two points as in (8), the first following from the previous literature (i.e. Kabak & Vogel 2001), the second proposed here:

- (8) a. The head of a PPh in Turkish is the leftmost PWd (indicated in boldface in this paper).
 b. The head of an I-phrase in Turkish is the rightmost PPh (underlined in this paper).

Given (8), certain facts of Turkish prosody and syntax are no more a mystery. The reason why in some constructions stress falls on the leftmost word (e.g. (5a)) and sometimes the rightmost (e.g. (7b)) follows directly from (8) and its interaction with syntax.

⁵ PWd-level stress is indicated with an acute accent in this paper, and falls almost always on the final syllable of PWds. There are exceptions however; see Inkelas & Orgun 1998, Kabak & Vogel 2001, Özçelik 2009, and van der Hulst & van de Weijer 1991 for different accounts of regular and exceptional word-level stress in Turkish.

⁶ A single (C)V syllable can be prosodified in Turkish. So Turkish does not seem to have a Minimal Word requirement. This is likely because most words in Turkish, including content words, do not have foot structure (see Özçelik 2009 for more on this and for the argument that a PWd directly dominates a σ in Turkish).

4. Current Proposal: A Prosodic Account at the Syntax-Prosody Interface

In this section, we present prosodic evidence in support of our proposal that indefinite subjects in Turkish must stay in situ whereas definite subjects have to raise up to SpecTP. First, note that bare nouns in Turkish are ambiguous between a definite and an indefinite interpretation (Kornfilt 1997; Göksel & Kerslake 2005). A sentence like *Man arrived* could, thus, have two different readings:

- (9) a. Adam gel-di.
man arrive-PAST
“The man arrived.”
- b. Adam gel-di.
man arrive-PAST
“A man arrived.”

Notice that (9a) and (9b) look exactly the same on the surface. If, however, the observation in (8) is right, and if, as discussed in Section 2, Turkish definite and indefinite subjects occupy different positions in syntax, then the two sentences could be expected to differ in prosody. In fact, this prediction is borne out; examine (10a) vs. (10b):

- (10) a. [[Adám]PPh [gel-dí]PPh]I
man arrive-PAST
“The man arrived.”
- b. [[Adám gel-dí]PPh]I
man arrive-PAST
“A man arrived.”

Whereas (10a) has a prosodic structure that is composed of *two* phonological phrases, (10b) differs in that it only has one phonological phrase. In (10a), both the subject and the predicate are stressed, for both PWds are, at the same time, heads of PPhs. The predicate, in this example, bears slightly more stress than the subject, for this PPh is also the head of the I, since, in Turkish, the rightmost PPh is the head of an I, as stated in (8b) above. In (10b), on the other hand, only the subject is stressed, for there is only one PPh, and the subject is the head of this PPh, since it is the leftmost PWd within the PPh (see (8a)). Moreover, since this is the only PPh within I, it is also the head of that I; after all, it is both the rightmost and the leftmost PPh within that I. Therefore, the subject in this example gets both PPh- and I-level stress. Prosodic trees for these two constructions are provided in (11) below:

- (11) a.
- ```

 I
 / \
 PPh PPh
 | |
 PWd PWd
 | |
 adam geldi

```
- b.
- ```

      I
      |
     PPh
    /  \
   PWd  PWd
    |    |
  adam  geldi
  
```

We argue, based on these facts, that the definite *adam* ‘man’ in (9a) (or (10a)) is external to the root-VP in syntax (thus creating its own phonological phrasal domain (see (11a)) whereas the indefinite *adam* ‘man’ in (9b) (or (10b)) remains within the same projection as the verb (and thus sharing the same phonological phrase with it (see (11b)).

This is in line with the word order facts illustrated in (12) (repeated from (3)):

- (12) a. Dün adam gel-di.
yesterday man arrive-past
“Yesterday, **a man/the man** arrived.”
- b. Adam dün gel-di.
man yesterday arrive-past
“Yesterday, **the man/*a man** arrived.”

The prosodic structures for (12a) - on both indefinite (see (13a)) and definite (see (13b)) interpretations - are given below:

- (13) (=12a) a. [[Dún]PPh [adám gel-dí]PPh]I
yesterday man arrive-PAST
“Yesterday, **a man** arrived.”
- b. a. [[Dún]PPh [adám]PPh [gel-dí]PPh]I
yesterday man arrive-PAST
“Yesterday, **the man** arrived.”

structure with a single PPh (one in which the verb and the subject share the same PPh) is not possible. The fact that unergatives behave differently in this respect from unaccusatives (see e.g (10)) suggests that the issue clearly lies right at the syntax-prosody interface.

5.2. Existential Construction

In existential constructions, we see the mirror image of what is happening with unergatives: Because of the Definiteness Effect (DE) (Milsark 1977), subjects of existentials cannot have a *definite* interpretation, and the prosodic representation with two PPhs is ungrammatical, too, for this would imply, for Turkish, that the subject would have to raise to SpecTP, i.e. the position for definite subjects.⁷ Examine (19):

- (19) a. *[Adám]PPh [vár]PPh I b. [[Adám vár]PPh]I
 man exist(ent) man exist(ent)
 ‘‘There is the man.’’ ‘‘There is a man.’’

Creating two PPhs is, therefore, ungrammatical. As with unergatives, notice again that if there was no syntactic motivation for the prosodic structures we have proposed here, there would be no reason why (19a) is ungrammatical, just like there would then be no reason for (17b) (or (18b)) to be ungrammatical. Prosody by itself is not enough to explain the presence of definite vs. indefinite interpretations; the issue lies at the syntax-prosody interface.

This is also supported by word order facts: Whereas the locative-nominative-existential order is grammatical (see (20a)), nominative-locative-existential order is not (see (20b)), for the latter would mean that the nominative has to raise to SpecTP (again assuming that multiple specifiers are prohibited), and thus gain a definite interpretation since the SpecVP position in this example is already occupied by the locative:

- (20) a. Ev-de adam var.
 home-at man exist(ent)
 ‘‘There is a man at home.’’
 b. *Adam ev-de var.
 man home-at exist(ent)
 ‘‘There is the man at home.’’

Compare these facts with the English data in (21): In English, too, subjects of existentials cannot be definite, though there are no accompanying prosodic effects:

- (21) a. There is a man at home. b. *There is the man at home.

On the other hand, the DE is not observed in English under certain circumstances. For example, under the list reading, existentials could have definite subjects (see White et al. 2009 for more on such contexts). An example is provided in (22) below:

- (22) √ There is the man, his wife and also his son.

In Turkish, too, there are cases when the DE is not observed. One such case is when the nominative is focused. In these contexts, definite nominatives *can* occur in existentials. Nevertheless, we do not see, in these cases, the prosody that is associated with definite nominals. That is, existentials with focused definites do not have the prosodic structure in (19a), but rather have the one in (19b). This could be because the focus position in Turkish is SpecVP, the very position where indefinite subjects occur. This is reasonable especially given that Turkish (narrow) focus position is usually assumed to be the pre-verbal position. Further evidence for this is provided by the ungrammaticality of sentences like (20b): this sentence is ungrammatical even under the focused interpretation of the subject, for the subject in this sentence can not escape the DE by simply being in the focus position since this position (assuming that it is SpecVP) is already occupied by the locative.

⁷ Things are different for negative existentials, where the DE is not observed in Turkish (see White, Belikova, Hagstrom, Kupisch, & Özçelik 2009)

5.3. Indefinite ‘bir’ vs. numeral ‘bir’

Though, as illustrated in (9), Turkish does not have a definite article, nor does it require the usage of an indefinite article, it arguably has an optional indefinite article, unstressed *bir* (see e.g. Göksel & Kerslake 2005; Kornfilt 1997). When *bir* is used as an indefinite article, a single PPh is created, similar to (9b) above, in simple sentences containing an NP and a predicate. Stressing the verb in such a construction is, again, ungrammatical (unless the subject is topicalized):

- (23) a. [[Bir **adám** gel-dí]PPh] I
 a man arrive-PAST
 “A man arrived.”
- b. *[[Bir **adám**]PPh [gel-dí]PPh] I
 a man arrive-PAST
 “A man arrived.”

The fact that *adam*, rather than the indefinite article *bir*, bears the PPh-level stress in (23a) should not confuse the reader. This is because the indefinite *bir* is cliticized/adjoined to the PWd in Turkish (see e.g. Goad & White 2004, 2007); that is, it cannot create its own PWd, as with articles in most languages (see Selkirk 1995 for a general review). So it is not the first PWd in a PPh. That is, the rule outlined in (8a) still holds true: the first PWd is stressed in a PPh in Turkish.

This is confirmed by an analysis of the numeral *bir*, which is distinguished from the indefinite *bir* on the basis of the fact that it is stressed (see e.g. Erguvanli 1984; Kornfilt 1997; Öztürk 2005).

- (24) a. [[**Bir** adám gel-dí]PPh] I
 one man arrive-PAST
 “One man arrived.”
- b. *[[**Bir** adám]PPh [gel-dí]PPh] I
 one man arrive-PAST
 “One man arrived.”

When the numeral (stressed) *bir* is used, it can create its own PWd (see also Goad & White 2004), and can, therefore, be the first PWd in a PPh, and thus head it. Prosodic trees with indefinite and numeral *bir* are provided below in (25a) and (25b) respectively:

- (25) a.
-
- ```

 I
 |
 PPh
 / \
 PWd PWd
 / \ |
bir PWd geldi
 |
 adam

```
- b.
- 
- ```

  I
  |
  PPh
  /  |  \
 PWd PWd PWd
 |   |   |
bir  adam geldi
  
```

Note that this is similar to existentials (see e.g. (19)) in that only one PPh could be created, and is different from unergatives (see e.g. (17)), where two PPhs had to be created. This is not surprising since both nominals with an indefinite article and nominals modified by numerals, like nominatives in existentials, are crosslinguistically indefinite, and thus the prosodic representation that is observed with definite subjects is not allowed, making a construction like (24b) ungrammatical.

6. Conclusion

In this paper, we have presented prosodic evidence showing that nominative subjects in Turkish are not necessarily licensed in SpecTP, but that they sometimes stay in situ. We have demonstrated that this is the case when the subject is indefinite. We have argued, on the other hand, that definite subjects, unlike their indefinite counterparts, must raise to SpecTP. The evidence for this comes from the fact that only one PPh is created in a simple sentence composed of an indefinite subject and a predicate, whereas two PPhs are created when the subject of such a sentence is definite. The former fact, we argued, suggests that both the subject and the predicate are within the same syntactic projection, i.e. ν P/VP, while the latter suggests that the subject has moved out of the ν P/VP, up to

SpecTP, thereby creating its own PPh.

We have also made an initial attempt at creating a general picture of prosodic phrasing in Turkish, whose status was not previously clear, especially with respect to the intonational phrase (I). We have shown, in this paper, that the head of an I-phrase in Turkish is the rightmost PPh.

In sum, this paper presents a case from Turkish that lies right at the syntax-phonology interface: The syntactic conclusions we made in this paper were possible thanks to a consideration of prosody. Likewise, some of the prosodic facts we presented could be achieved thanks to a consideration of syntax.

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