THE NULL SUBJECT PARAMETER AND TURKISH

A. Sumru Üzsoy

1. Introduction

1.1. Preliminaries

This paper is concerned with some of the empty categories postulated by the theory of Government and Binding and their coindexing properties. Specifically, the empty category discussed is the non-anaphoric pronominal element "pro" posited in works such as Chomsky (1981), (1982), Rizzi (1982) and Bouchard (1984). The paper basically investigates the binding properties of "pro" and the interaction of Pro-Drop and the Avoid Pronoun Principle in the derivation of sentences with phonologically unrealized subjects in embedded clauses.

It has been suggested that in languages which allow phonologically unrealized subjects in tensed clauses. The Null Subject Parameter specifies COMP as [+Pronoun] and that this null element can receive a personal pronoun reading as well as a "dummy" reading (Rizzi 1982). It has further been noted that languages which have the Null Subject Parameter as part of their grammar share certain properties which are not possessed by languages which do not allow empty categories in the subject position of tensed clauses (Rizzi 1982; Engdahl 1984; Platzack 1985). Turkish is a language of the former type in that it allows phonologically unrealized elements to occur as subjects not only of root sentences, but also of sentential subject and object clauses, of possessive NPs, of relative clauses as well as certain postpositional phrases. In these constructions, "pro" alternates with overt lexical items, NPs and overt pronouns, referring to an antecedent in the higher clause, and hence satisfying the requirements for a pronoun as determined by Condition B of the Binding Theory.

Within the theory of GB, empty categories have been set up in order to explain certain apparent similarities in the syntactic properties of structures that have overt NPs as subject and those that do not. The phonologically unrealized subject in the latter type of constructions has been shown to behave in a manner not unlike the overt pronouns occurring in the same position.

The two pronominal empty elements PR0 and pro pattern with lexical anaphors and pronouns respectively in terms of the Binding Conditions. Chomsky (1982) assigns the features [+pronominal, anaphoric] to PR0, and [+pronominal -anaphoric] to pro. Assuming that the Rule of Pro-Drop role can account for at least some surface structures with gaps in subject position, it is safe to conclude that it interacts crucially with the Null Subject Parameter in determining the distribution of pro as opposed to overt lexical elements, i.e. pronouns. In Turkish, PRO-Drop as well as the Avoid Pronoun Principle interact crucially in creating subject gaps in embedded sentences.
1.2. Pro-Drop in Turkish

Turkish allows Pro-Drop in root sentences as well as in other constructions. The following examples illustrate some of the domains in which Pro-Drop applies in Turkish sentences:

Root sentences:

1) **Ben/Ø gel-di- m.**
   I come-past-lsg
   "I came."

Possessive NPs

2) **Ben [ben-im/ e araba- m- i] kaybet-ti- m**
   I I-1gen car -lposs-acc lose-past- lsg
   "I lost my car"

Postpositional Phrases

3) **O mektup PP [NP[ben-im / e ] taraf- im- dan] yas-ti-di.**
   that letter I-1gen side- lposs-abl write-pass-pt
   "That letter was written by me."

Relative Clauses

4) **NP[ /S sen-in / e konu-su-du- un] çocu- ki di- ?**
   you-2gen speak-part-2possboy who-past
   "Who was the boy (that) you were speaking to?"

Subject Complements

5) **[ S Sen-in/ e çok yorul- du- un] belli.**
   you-2gen very tired-ger-2poss obvious
   "That you are very tired is obvious."

Object Complements

6) **Ayşe [ S ben-im/ e bildiri oku- ma-di- m- ] t-duy-muş**
   I-1gen paper read-neg-ger-lposs-acc hear-past
   "Ayşe has reportedly heard that I did not give a paper."

In each of the above constructions, the content of the missing element is "recovered" through the person and number marking attached to the appropriate constituent of the structure. Furthermore, Pro-Drop in these examples applies optionally, since the structures are also well-formed with the overt pronouns.
2. The Nature of e

2.1. e and the Binding Conditions.

It has been claimed that the element that defines the domain for the application of the Binding Conditions in Turkish is [AGR] (cf. George and Kornfilt 1981, Bredemoeon and Csáti 1986, Özsoy 1986). Assuming that this claim is valid, i.e. that the head of S in Turkish is AGR and not Tense as has been claimed for languages like English, let us determine the nature of "e" that appears in the subject position of the embedded clause in S 7.

(7) Çocuk, i { e_i top oyna-yacağ-men- } i söyle-dığ.
    "The boy said that he would play ball".

Binding Conditions require a pronoun to be free in its governing category and be able to refer to its antecedent in the higher clause, as is indeed the case in S 7. Similarly, S 8 in which the phonologically empty subject of the embedded clause is coreferential with the object of the matrix clause provides evidence for the pronominal nature of "e":

(8) Çocuk kitas-qi { e_i top oyna-ma-sın- } i söyle-dığ.
    "The boy told the girl to play ball".

Both Ss 7 and 8 satisfy the requirements of Conditions B of the Binding Theory for pronouns; that is, "e", the subject of the embedded clause, is free in its governing category in both of the examples and refers to an antecedent in the higher clause. Within the theory of GB, the empty category that satisfies the binding condition for pronouns is pro. Therefore, evidence presented by the examples in Ss 7 and 8 is taken as an argument for the pronominal nature of the empty category in subject position of these sentences; hence, e is pro, the non-anaphoric pronominal empty category of GB.

Note. that e in the above examples cannot be PRO, the anaphoric un-governed pronominal of GB. (1) In Turkish, PRO occurs as the subject of the infinitival clauses.

(9) Ayşe [ PRO_1 Ankara-ya git-me ] ist-tyor.
    "Ayşe wants to go to Ankara".

(10) Berna [ PRO_1 danse et-mey ] i çok sev-iyor.
    "Berna loves to dance."

Infinitival clauses in Turkish are un governecl. The subject position is a position of control, as in the examples illustrated above, or one of arbitrary interpretation, as in S11.
(11) [PRO derçalıg-mak] çok sıkıcı-dir.
    lesson study-inf very boring-pred
    "To study is very boring".

PRO also occurs as the subject of verbal gerunds in Turkish (2).

    run-part
    "Aylın came running in".

    laught-part play-part
    "Zeynep played laughingly".

Note that the verbal gerunds, which function as adjuncts in the sentences above, are not governed by [AGR]. The subject position is bound by the matrix subject, and since there is no governor, the Case filter is satisfied.

A further distinction between the subject gap of the examples in Ss 7 and 8 and those in Ss 9 - 13 is that while the former can alternate with overt elements PRO never can. Observe:

(14)a. Çocuk [on-unj/*] top oyna-yacaq-in-jı söyle-di.
    he-3gen

b. Çocuk[kendist-nınj/*] top oyna-yacaq-in-jı söyle-di.
    self-3gen

(15)a. Çocuk kıs-a [on-unj/*] top oyna-ma-sın-jı söyle-di.
    s/he

b. Çocuk kıs-a [kendist-nınj/*] top oyna-ma-sın-jı söyle-di
    self-3gen

    she/self "dat go-inf want-prog
    "Ayşe wants (she/self to go to Ankara)."

    she/self
    "*Berna likes she/self to dance very much".

What is further significant about the examples in Ss 14 and 15 is the patterning of the coindexing features exhibited by the two overt pronominal elements, and the subject gap in the corresponding sentences in 7 and 8. Note that in Ss 14a and 15a "o" is obligatorily marked as disjunct in reference from its antecedent, thus violating Conditions B of the Binding Theory. Binding Conditions outlaw this sentence. When we consider the b counterparts of these sentences, however, i.e. those in which kendı(st) occurs in the subject position of the embedded sentences, we note that there is at least one reading available in which kendı(st) is interpreted...
to be coreferential with its antecedent. In terms of the Binding Conditions then, Condition B is satisfied under the analysis which considers * Kendi(st)* to be a pronoun (3). This sentence is then sanctioned by the Binding Condition; hence the grammaticality of SS 14b and 15b. The disjoint reference of the overt pronominal element in these sentences is accounted for by the Avoid Pronoun Principle.

3. Exceptions

There are, however, at least two contexts in which "pro" does not behave in accordance with the predictions of the Binding Theory or Pro-Drop. Consider the following:

(18) a. *Berna* [ pro /i/ orgū òr-me-sin-]i gör-müş.
   "Berna has seen her knit".
   knit-nom-3poss-acc see-rep

b. *Berna* [ pro /i/ orgū òr-me-sin-]den bük-miş.
   "Berna is tired of her knitting".
   tired-rep

c. *Berna* [ pro /i/ orgū òr-me-sin-]i ist-iyor
   "Berna wants her to knit".
   want-prog

(19) a. *Berna* [ pro /j/ orgū òr-me-sin-]i bil-iyor.
   "Berna knows how to knit".
   know-prog

b. *Berna* [ pro /j/ orgū òr-me-sin-]i unut-muş.
   "Berna has forgotten her knitting".
   forget-rep

In SS 18a-c, "pro" is disjoint in reference from its antecedent, the subject of the matrix clause, thus violating the Binding Conditions, In SS 19 a-b, on the other hand, although "pro" behaves like a regular pronoun, it nevertheless cannot alternate with the overt pronominal * Kendi(st)*. The only alternant possible in this context is the disjoint reference pronoun "o". That is, in these sentences, Pro-Drop seems to have applied obligatorily.

Observe:

(20) a. *Berna* [on-un]/*kendisi-nin* orgū òr-me-sin-]i bil-iyor.
   3sg-gen/self-gen

b. *Berna* [on-un]/*kendisi-nin* orgū òr-me-sin-]i unut-muş.

With respect to the first set of facts, note that one possible account would be to consider these contexts as contexts of obligatory disjoint
reference. Indeed, in these contexts too the coreferential pronounal kendatl is banned:

(21) *Berna.. [kendisi-nin orgu or-me-sin-]i gor-du.
*Berna.. [kendisi-nin orgu or-me-sin]-den bik-mi6.
*Berna.. [kendisi-nin orgu or-me-sin]-i istiyor.

Other examples of similar nature are as follows:

(22)a. Berna.. [ proj or-un, *kendisi-nin orgu or-me-sin-)i
    sev-mi6.
      like-rep
      "Berna reportedly has liked pro-/her/self knitting".

b. Berna.. [ proj or-un, *kendisi-nin orgu or-me-sin-)den
    sikil-mi6.
      "Berna is bored of her knitting".

That the contexts above might well be contexts of disjoint reference can also be supported by the fact that, at least for some of the verbs above, there is an alternate embedded construction which is marked [-AGR]. The subject gap in these constructions can be bound by the matrix subject.

(23)a. Berna.. [ PRO orgu or-mek-)ten bik-mi6.


c. Berna.. [ PRO orgu or-mek-)i sev-mi6.

This, however, still does not explain why Ss 18a and 19a should be contexts of disjoint reference, as there is no alternative similar to the ones in Ss 23a-c available to gor.

In those contexts in which "e" does not alternate with an overt pronoun sharing the same binding properties (cf. Ss 19a-b), but obeys the Binding Conditions and refers to an antecedent in the matrix clause, "e" behaves like the anaphoric pronoun PRO. Note also the following construction in which "e" has arbitrary reference:

(24) [ e kum-da dans et-me-si] sor-dur.
    sand-loc dance-nom-3poss difficult-pred
    "It is difficult to dance on sand".

It is also possible to have the infinitival construction in place of S 24.
S 25 is a straightforward case of the anaphoric pronominal empty category PRO with arbitrary reference.

The non-pronominal nature of "e" in the subject position of the embedded clauses in examples Ss 18-19 can be uniformly accounted for if the clause that is headed by [AGR] is regarded not as a fully defined governing category for "e", but only partially defined. Since in these examples, the [AGR] element is only partially expressed as the [Poss] marker on the embedded verb, that is, since in many of these contexts an overt pronominal is not possible even in a contrastive, emphatic usage, [GEN] cannot be attached to any form, the delimiting nature of [AGR] in specifying an environment as a governing category is only partially fulfilled. Consequently, "e" in examples S 18 chooses the whole sentence as its governing category, hence the assignment of obligatory disjoint reference in these examples. Similarly, "e" can be marked as coreferential with the matrix subject or can be assigned a non-coreferential reading in S19, since the embedded clause can function as a governing category only in a rather restricted manner.

Notes

1. There is of course an alternative analysis of sentential complements in Turkish offered by the view that would challenge the claim that [AGR] is the element that defines governing categories in Turkish. Kornfält (1984) presents a number of arguments which would give problems to such a view.

2. The analysis of verbal gerunds adopted here is that proposed by Bouchard (1984). Bouchard proposes that the adjunct is attached to S, and therefore the subject of the matrix clause can bind the PRO subject of the adjunct.

3. See Özsoy (1986) for a discussion to this effect.

4. Sentential object complements in Turkish have the following surface structures:
a. Action Nominalization.

Ayşe [pocuğ-un dans et-me-sin-jî] seyret-tî.
boy-3gen dance-nom-3poss-acc watch-past
"Ayşe watched the boy dance".

b. Factive Nominalization.

-dat go-part-3poss-acc know
"Ayşe knows that the boy went to Ankara".

c. Raising" Complements.

Ayşe [ben /Ankara-yâ git-ti-m] san-mîs.
I -dat go-past-1sg think-rep
"Ayşe thought I had gone to Ankara".

5. There are contexts in which "o" is not necessarily disjoint in reference from its antecedent.

he-3gen come-ger-3poss-acc see-ger-3 poss-acc say-past
"Alev told Ali that she had seen him come".

The depth of embedding seems to be a factor in the interpretation of "o" (cf. Kornfilt 1984).

References


