**MORPHO-SYNTACTIC PROCESSING AND PRIMING IN TURKISH: Noun Phrases vs. Noun Clauses**

The present study aims to contribute to the understanding of the role that morpho-syntax plays in sentence processing in Turkish. We investigate the processing of a pair of genitive-possessive constructions with nouns and verbs. These constructions are potentially suitable for further structural priming studies.

In Turkish possessive noun phrases, the possessor is in genitive and the head agrees with the possessor (Kornfilt, 1997):

(1) Biz [Ali-nin kitab-i] -nı oku-du-k
   We Ali-GEN book-3sg-ACC read-Past-1pl
   “We read Ali’s book”.

Turkish noun clauses, on the other hand, are clausal NPs subordinated in larger constructions. In non-finite NCs, the verb of the embedded clause is nominalized by attaching a subordinating suffix (-DIK) to the predicate (Göksel & Kerslake, 2005):

(2) Biz [Ali-nin ayrıl-diğ-i] -nı duy-du-k
    We Ali-GEN leave-VN-3sg-ACC hear-Past-1pl
    “We heard that Ali left.”

Remarkably, the NC has the overall structure of a genitive-possessive construction. Therefore, a sentence fragment like (3) can be filled in with either a noun like gözler-i-ni (eyes-3sg-ACC) or a nominalized-verb: gel-diğ-i-ni (come-VN-3sg-ACC).

(3) Korsan prense-i-nin …………… hatırla-dı
    Pirate princess-GEN remember-Past3sg
    “The pirate remembered the princess’s… (eyes:N)/that the princess… (came:V-DIK)”

To investigate the frequencies of native speakers’ preferences of nouns/verbs in such contexts, a written sentence completion task with fragments such as (3) with 14 target matrix verbs was administered. A profile for each target verb was derived. Verbs fell into one of the three categories: noun-biased, balanced or verb-biased. For 13 verbs, participants provided both nouns and nominalized-verbs. The results show that the choice of word-class is rather secondary as long as the overall morpho-syntactic structure of the genitive-possessive construction is well-formed.
The balanced verbs serve as stimuli in an ongoing structural priming study. A written sentence-completion task is currently being carried out to understand whether there is priming between a fragment with a matrix verb that can take either a noun (“wash”-4a) or a verb and another with a matrix verb allowing both (“think”-4b). If participants insert nominalized-verbs in (4b) in addition to the already expected nouns, this will imply that there is structural priming across word-classes due to morpho-syntactic similarity. The amount of priming will be compared with that among verbs taking the same type of objects.

(4a) Adam kadın-ın .............. yıklıyor (PRIME, N)
    Man woman-GEN   wash-Pres3sg

(4b) Adam kadın-ın .............. düşün-üyor (TARGET, N or V)
    Man woman-GEN   think-Pres3sg

In further confederate-scripting and visual-world eye-movement experiments investigating priming “between” production and comprehension, the prime will be a complete sentence with either a possessive-NP or a NC; and the target, a fragment including only a subject NP and a GEN-noun. Participants will be asked to complete the fragment while looking at a visual stimulus depicting an event that can be described with both forms. Priming will be measured as in the previous study. The results are expected to shed some light on the level of representation syntactic priming taps that is possibly shared between comprehension and production (Branigan, Pickering & Cleland, 2000).

REFERENCES

