

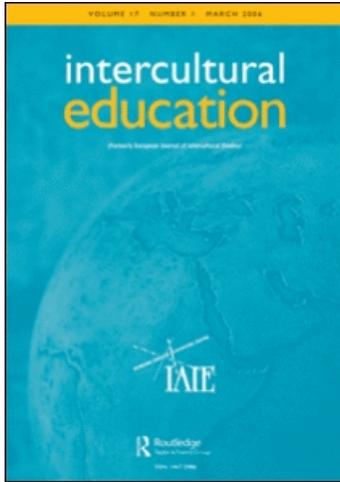
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## Discourse anaphora in Turkish as mother tongue

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## RESEARCH NOTE

### Discourse anaphora in Turkish as mother tongue

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The present paper researches the abilities of Turkish adults from Bulgaria to create narratives. It analyses the narratives of the adults using discourse strategies. The findings show some problems of bilingual adults in creating narratives which are not discussed in the scientific literature. This paper brings some new knowledge to the field of bilingual narrative analysis.

**Keywords:** adult bilingualism; narratives; anaphora; Turkish

#### Introduction

The present study investigates the use of discourse anaphora, or topic continuity, in elicited narratives in Turkish. The data consist of stories told by bilingual Turkish adults from Bulgaria. The main objective was to provide a description of which linguistic devices Turkish adults use in bilingual environments to refer to characters in a story. Turkish has three types of devices at its disposal: Noun Phrases (NP) (indefinite or definite), pronouns and zero anaphors. The paper deals with the following research questions: Which devices do bilingual Turkish speakers use in Turkish when they introduce a character and maintain reference to this character?

#### The study

##### *Materials*

In the present study, narrative productions were elicited with two picture stories: 'Horse Story' and 'Cat Story'. The horse story contains five pictures, and the cat story six pictures. These two picture stories are well known from previous studies by Hickman (1982) and Hendriks (1993).

In the horse story, there are three main characters, and the story is represented at one location only. In the cat story, there are four main protagonists, which enter at different points in the story. The plots of the stories are as follows (Smoczynska 1992, 113)

##### *Horse story*

- *Horse*: The main character of the story and the first animate referent to be introduced. It is there from the very beginning, running in a meadow (and not entering

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the scene). It is the unique active protagonist until the accident in picture 4. It becomes passive in picture 5.

- *Cow*: It appears from picture 2 onwards, but until picture 5 it is passive. It is seen by the horse, who is trying to reach it. Owing to its large size, it is perceptually salient. It becomes active in picture 5.
- *Bird*: It actually appears in picture 2 and, like the cow, continues to be seen in all the following pictures, but it is much less salient than the cow. It becomes active in picture 5, but between pictures 4 and 5 there is a puzzling problem to be solved: where does his first aid kit come from? In order to explain, the existence of a non-depicted episode taking place between pictures 4 and 5 has to be assumed, during which the bird left the scene in order to fetch the kit. It is also possible for the speaker to ignore its (purely decorative) presence in pictures 2–4. In such a case, the bird can be treated as if it (dynamically) appeared in picture 5.

### *Cat story*

- *Mother*: The mother bird is the first character to appear in picture 1, accompanied by her babies. They are a static group that was there before the story began. The mother leaves the nest in picture 2, probably to look for some food for her babies. She returns in picture 5 with the expected food.
- *Babies*: They are present throughout the story. Although they are not perceptually salient, they are created by the story script. Their main characters lack individuation and are totally passive. Even their existence is referred to in relation to the mother. They appear mostly as a global OBJECT (being born, being taken care of, being left alone, being threatened by the cat, being saved by the dog, being fed by the mother) or at best as EXPERIENCER (being hungry, being afraid, feeling relieved) the most active behavior which can be ascribed to them is that of crying.
- *Cat*: The most active and, in a way, the most central character in the story. It appears in picture 2. It is active in pictures 2–4. In the two last pictures, when the dog takes over, it becomes passive. The cat is the unique Swartzcharacter (negative character) in the story.
- *Dog*: It appears in picture 4, coming to the tree, exactly in the way the cat did. Then it takes the leading role, becoming active in pictures 5 and 6. The dog is the ‘good guy’ who saves the baby birds.

### **Procedure**

For the purpose of the study, the subjects were audio recorded in their natural environment. The subjects were given the task to tell the story in the same way that s/he would tell it to a small child. There was mutual knowledge between the subjects and the interviewer of the content of the stories.

After examining the pictures, the subjects had the task of creating a coherent story in their mother tongue – the Bulgarian variety of Turkish, which is different from standard Turkish. The total number of the narratives on which this paper is based is 40. After the recording of the stories, they were transcribed.

## Subjects

The total number of subjects included in the study was 20 bilingual Turkish adults: 10 male and 10 female. All were from north-east Bulgaria, and they were speakers of the northern variety of Bulgarian Turkish.

### *Definiteness and indefiniteness*

Turkish is a non Indo-European language. However, since Turkish has been in contact with Bulgarian (which is an Indo-European language), there has been an impact on the variety of Turkish spoken. The study will not focus here on the changes in Turkish due to Bulgarian influence, but instead will accept the grammatical rules of standard Turkish.

An important feature which makes Turkish different from the Indo-European languages is vowel harmony. Turkish has seven noun cases: nominative (zero marked), accusative, dative, locative, ablative, instrumental and genitive. Accusative and genitive are used only for definite noun phrases. Nominal subjects in Turkish are expressed by zero-marked noun phrases. There are no articles that determine the status of definite versus indefinite nominal subjects. However, the numeral *bir* ('one') can be regarded as an optional marker of indefiniteness (Dede 1986, in Küntay 1997), as shown in the following example:

bir çocuk ev – in – den çık – mIs (Küntay 1997)  
 INDEF child home-GEN-ABL go.out-EVID  
 'A child went out of his house'

The presence of the indefinite numeral *bir* signals that the following entity is newly introduced for the listener. The absence of *bir* leaves the indefiniteness status of the relevant noun unmarked, leaving it to the situational context and/or the listener's inferential system to fill in the information. Erguvanli-Taylan and Zimmer (1994) summarize the following four distinct direct-object constructions that are differentiated in terms of the parameters definiteness and specificity:

- (1) definite direct object, where the head noun of the object NP is marked with the accusative suffix *-(y)I*
- (2) indefinite direct objects with the indefinite article *bir* and with accusative marking on the head noun
- (3) indefinite direct objects with the indefinite article *bir* and no case marking on the head noun
- (4) indefinite direct objects with neither an indefinite article nor any case marking on the head noun.

Küntay (1997, 95) summarizes the definite and indefinite nominal forms in Turkish in Table 1.

## Study results

### *Introducing the protagonists*

The study focused on the introduction of the first referents in the stories, and the author observed the first mentioned devices for the *horse*, *cow* and *bird* in 'Horse

Table 1. Definite and indefinite forms in Turkish.

Grammatical role	Definite	Indefinite
Subject	<i>bare</i> noun	<i>bir</i> noun
Direct object	noun-ACC	<i>bir</i> noun-ACC, <i>bare</i> noun, <i>bir</i> noun
Oblique object	noun-Case	<i>bir</i> noun-Case

Story' and for the *bird*, cat and dog in 'Cat Story'. The author wanted to examine subjects' ability to introduce referents in discourse and to use the appropriate linguistic devices in Turkish. At the same time, the maintain referents to these characters were observed.

### Horse Story

It is clear that in most of the subjects' narratives the first protagonist *horse* was introduced using the indefinite marker *bir* (see Table 2). The subjects used both terms *at* and *beygir* (for horse) in their narratives. Some used the noun *at* and others *baygir* for introducing the first character. For introducing the second character *cow*, the subjects again used the indefinite marker *bir* in 75% of cases. The *bird* was presented as *bare N* in 56% of narratives.

### Cat Story

It seems that the second story elicited more simple narratives from the subjects (see Table 3). All protagonists were introduced in their narratives as *bare N* or *bir N*. In most of the narratives, the first character was introduced with the indefinite marker *bir*. The second protagonist *cat* was presented equally as a *bare N* and *bir N*. And the third protagonist was dominantly presented as a *bare N*.

### Maintenance of the characters

This section describes the subjects' use of nominal and pronominal forms to refer to the protagonists in the stories. Tables 4 and 5 give the numbers and percentages of forms used in Turkish by the subjects.

Table 2. Introduction of the protagonists by the subjects in 'Horse Story' (%).

First mentions	Horse	Cow	Bird
<i>bare N</i>	31	12.5	56
<i>bir N</i>	50	75	38
<i>bir N</i> +DIM	19	–	6
<i>bare N</i> +Case	–	12.5	–

Table 3. Introduction of the protagonists by the subjects in 'Cat Story' (%).

First mentions	Bird	Cat	Dog
<i>bare N</i>	12.5	50	62.5
<i>bir N</i>	87.5	50	37.5

*Horse Story*

Table 4 shows that the subjects preferred nominal forms. The occurrences of zero anaphors is also interesting. In other studies (Aarssen and Bos 1993), where bilingual Turkish children from the Netherlands were investigated, it was found that they preferred pronominal to nominal forms, which is closer to standard Turkish.

*Cat Story*

The same phenomenon was observed in the second story (see Table 5): in both male and female groups there was a preference for nominal forms, as shown in the following examples:

*Bir varmIş, bir yokmuş, bir kuş varmIş. O kuşun'da bir kaç yavrusu varmIş.*

*'Once upon a time there was a bird. And that bird had several babies'*

Then the question is 'Why do bilingual Turkish speakers in the Netherlands use linguistic devices closer to standard Turkish and those in Bulgaria not do this?'

**Conclusions and discussion**

This research paper discusses the results relating to introducing and maintaining the characters. It seems that there are factors in bilingual settings that influence the way in which the maintenance of the characters are presented in a story. It seems that there are no gender differences in creating stories. Both groups used the same linguistic devices when introducing and maintaining the characters. However, what is the reason for 'overusing' the nominal forms in the maintenance of the characters in the stories and for fewer references to pronominal forms? Also, there is a tendency to overuse the zero forms in the stories. It appears that the contract-language Bulgarian influences Turkish, and the Turkish patterns very often follow the Bulgarian ones, whereas, in Bulgarian, the maintenance of the character is presented with the nominal or zero forms.

Table 4. Numbers and percentages of referential devices in Turkish used by the subjects in 'Horse Story'.

Characters	NOM.	PRON.	ZERO
Horse	28 (48%)	3 (6%)	27 (46%)
Cow	25 (92%)	2 (8%)	–
Bird	7 (54%)	–	6 (46%)

Table 5. Numbers and percentages of referential devices in Turkish, used by the subjects in 'Cat Story'.

Characters	NOM.	PRON.	ZERO
Bird	32 (61%)	4 (8%)	16 (31%)
Cat	32 (68%)	3 (5%)	12 (27%)
Dog	13 (61%)	1 (6%)	7 (33%)

### Notes on contributor

Hristo Kyuchukov is an Associate Professor and one of the leading European specialists in Romani Language. He holds a PhD in Linguistics from the University of Amsterdam, the Netherlands, and a PhD in Education from the University of Sofia, Bulgaria. He is a specialist on bilingualism and intercultural studies and has written a number of articles and monographs in these fields.

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