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Book Reviews


Reviewed by Selçuk İşsever
Ankara University

Karl Zimmer, Emeritus Professor of Linguistics at the University of California, Berkeley, is one of the most influential figures whose studies have had a great impact on modern studies of Turkish linguistics as well as theoretical linguistics. His studies covering diverse topics on phonology, morphology, and syntax have shed light on different aspects of Turkish. His influence on Turkish linguistics is due to not only his exceptional work on this language but also his being one of the founders of the bi-annual International Conference on Turkish Linguistics (ICTL), which he initiated together with Dan Slobin in 1982 at the University of California, Berkeley. Since then ICTL has gained an institutional identity attracting scholars from all over the world. Reflecting Zimmer’s intellectual interests in linguistics, this book is a collection of articles by outstanding scholars paying tribute to his valuable contributions to the field. It includes fifteen articles, most of which are on different issues on Turkish linguistics, plus three dedi- catory chapters by Eser Erguvanlı Taylan, Larry Hyman, and Doğan Cüceloğlu, Zimmer’s colleagues and friends. The issues addressed in the book are on different aspects of language covering the range of linguistic disciplines such as phonology, syntax, language acquisition, linguistic typology, discourse analysis, sociolinguistics, and the language of poetry.

Chapter summaries

First chapter (“Why they don’t meet face to face? On hiatus-preventing allomorphy in Turkish”, pp. 23–36) by Lars Johanson addresses the very controversial issue of “… why vowels cannot occur next to each other across morpheme boundaries” in Turkish and most Turkic languages (p. 24), i.e. the general rule against adjacent vowels occurring next to each other in stem-final and suffix-initial positions. In this type of languages there are two types of allomorphs discussed in the paper that have the function of hiatus-preventing, namely -(V)C and -(C)V types. In the first type, a suffix-initial vowel can follow a stem-final consonant, but it is not allowed to occur when the stem ends with a vowel, e.g. Turkish ev-im ‘my home’ vs. oda-m ‘my room’ (p. 25). Traditionally, there have been two alternative assumptions in Turcology, according to which the suffix onset was, originally, either a consonant, requiring a “connective” vowel after a stem-final consonant, or a vowel, which needs to be dropped after stem-final vowels. Considering diachronic as well as synchronic facts, Johanson rejects both assumptions and speculates that “[t]he initial part of the suffix morphemes in question may have been -CV, … , with later drop of C in both postconsonantal and postvocalic position” (p. 25). In standard Turkish, he observes that written word-forms such as yatağ-im ‘my bed’ (with the so-called “k/ğ alter-
nation”) may either be pronounced as [jata:m] or [jata:im]/[jata:im]. This shows that either stem-final and suffix-initial vowels merge into a long vowel or the so-called “soft g” (i.e. “ğ”), which is phonologically of non-vocalic nature, functions as a separator between the two vowels.

The second type of allomorphy, namely -(C)V, realizes either as -V after stem-final consonants or as -CV after stem-final vowels. Like the first type of allomorphy, the traditional analysis of this type is that the suffix onset, C, is a hiatus-bridging consonant inserted after a stem-final vowel whereas it is dropped in postconsonantal position. With a serious examination of sub-types of -(C)V, namely -(s)V / -(ş)V, -(n)V, and -(y)V, in Turkish and other Turkic languages, Johanson argues that “[o]perations of this kind are … implausible as actual diachronic processes” (p. 26) and suggests that the suffix-initial consonants have not been inserted as “bridging” or “buffer” consonants to prevent hiatus but rather they represent an earlier uncontracted form. He also derives a more general conclusion that to prevent hiatus vowels in two adjacent morphemes must either keep their distance or merge.

Chapter 2 (“Another look at velar deletion in Turkish”, pp. 37–53) by Sharon Inkelas scrutinizes whether velar deletion in Turkish applies in “derived environments”, which is a cross-linguistic pattern “… whereby morphophonemic alternations apply only when their conditioning environment is morphologically or phonologically derived” (p. 37). Turkish velar deletion applying to /k/ and /g/ in examples like [be:bek] ‘baby’ → [be.be.e] ‘baby-Dat’ and [ka.ta.log] ‘catalog’ → [ka.to.lo.a] ‘catalog-Dat’ has been proposed to be relevant only for those environments where /k/ and /ɡ/ occur stem-finally and are rendered intervocalic by suffixation (Lewis 1967, Zimmer & Abbott 1978, Sezer 1981, Göksel & Kerslake 2005). However, by close inspection, Inkelas convincingly shows that there are systematic morphological and phonological exceptions in the application of velar deletion in Turkish. For example, it does not apply to verb roots (e.g. /birik-en/ ‘gather-Rel’ → [bi.ri.ken]/ *[bi.ri.en]; /gerek-cek/ ‘be necessary-Fut’ → [ge.re.ke.dʒek]/ *[ge.re.e.dʒek]), morphologically derived V-KV environments (e.g. /ada-da-ki/ ‘island-Loc-Rel’ ‘the one on the island’ → [a.da.da.ki]/ *[a.da.da.i]), phonologically derived environments where the preceding vowel is long (e.g. /merak/ ‘curiosity’ → [me.ra:ka] ‘merak-Dat’/*[me.ra:a]), and polysyllabic forms with CVC roots (e.g. /kök/ ‘root’ → [kö.ke] ‘root-Dat’/*[kö.e]). It is concluded that while morphologically derived environment condition may be necessary but not sufficient for the rule to apply, phonologically derived environment condition is neither necessary nor sufficient. Inkelas states that the results of her study support the consensus in the literature that ‘derived environment effects’ are not a unitary phenomenon.

Chapter 3 (“Turkish vowel epenthesis”, pp. 55–69) by Jorge Hankamer is about the same problem as Johanson’s paper presents, namely the morphophonological fact of Turkish that prevents stem-final and suffix-initial vowels from occurring next to each other. In this paper, on the other hand, only -(V)C type of allomorphy of Johanson’s is discussed, but differently, Hankamer approaches to the issue from a purely synchronic point of view using generative framework. To account for V-0
alternation, i.e. occurrence or non-occurrence of suffix-initial vowel, in examples like at-im ‘horse-1.sg.Poss’ vs. baba-m ‘father-1.sg.Poss’, Hankamer suggests that the onset of such suffixes is a C, rejecting the classical analysis (Lees 1961) which assumes an underlying suffix-initial V that undergoes deletion after stem-final vowels (V>0). According to this proposal, then, the first person singular possessive suffix, for example, is basically -m, rather than -(l)m, so there is no suffix-initial vowel to be deleted when it follows a stem-final V (e.g. kedi-m ‘may cat’). When this suffix attaches to a stem-final C (e.g. kaz ‘goose’, ip ‘rope’) vowel epenthesis takes place to break up an illegitimate final cluster of consonants (e.g. *kaz-m > kaz-im, *ip-m > ip-im). It is also claimed that the progressive suffix -(l)yor is the only (productive) suffix in Turkish with an initial V so it is not subject to vowel epenthesis. When it attaches to a V-final stem regressive V-deletion (Zimmer 1965) deletes the final V in the stem, accounting for the problems of V-raising and vowel rounding that have already been noted in the literature (Lees 1961, Zimmer 1965, 1970).

In chapter 4 (“Is there evidence for a voicing rule in Turkish?”, pp. 71–92), Eser Erguvanlı Taylan argues for the existence of a voicing rule in Turkish in addition to a well-accepted devoicing rule, first proposed by Lees (1961). According to Lees’ widely accepted analysis, alternating stems like /ce[p]/ ‘pocket’ and /kana[t]/ ‘wing’ are underlyingly voiced (namely, /ce[b]/ and /kana[d]/) and they undergo devoicing by a rule which applies to voiced plosives in word final position (e.g. /ce[b]/ [cep]; /kana[d]/ [kanat]) or when followed by a suffix-initial consonant (e.g. /ce[b]/ [cep-te] ‘pocket-Loc’; /kana[d]/ [kanat-lar] ‘wing-Pl’) (p. 72). On the other hand, considering frequency counts and alternation rates of Nakipoğlu & Üntak (forthcoming), Erguvanlı Taylan claims that word or morpheme-final plosives in multisyllabic forms, with the exception of dental (coronant) plosives in the final position, are underlyingly voiceless and undergo intervocalic voicing. Hence, she suggests that there are both devoicing and voicing rules in Turkish which apply to final plosives in multisyllabic forms. The careful inspection of the case in loanwords provides a strong support for this proposal.

In the next chapter (“Non-restrictive pre-nominal relative clauses in a head-final language”, pp. 93–102) Jaklin Kornfilt examines the syntactic nature of pre-nominal non-restrictive relative clauses (RC) in Turkish, the existence of which remains controversial for some linguists. Kornfilt observes that the fact that Turkish pre-nominal non-restrictive RCs fail certain diagnostic tests (Aygen 2003) does not necessarily mean that they are not relative constructions at all. Rather, she argues that this construction is a genuine non-restrictive RC. Following Cinque’s (2008) typology where non-restrictives are classified into “integrated” and “non-integrated” types, she argues that Turkish non-restrictive RCs are of the former type sharing this quality with the Italian che/cui non-restrictives. She claims that, like its Italian counterpart, integrated non-restrictive pre-nominal RC construction in Turkish shows properties of sentence-syntax structure like adjacency with the RC head “… making [its] structure identical to that of restrictive RCs” (p. 95). Although it is a rather
short paper for an in-depth analysis of the structure in question, Kornfilt’s contribution is very insightful and no doubt gives important clues about Turkish non-restrictive RCs, which also provokes further inquiry on the subject.

Chapter 6 (“An exploration of the emergence of adjectives in Turkish”, pp. 103–120) by Ayhan Aksu-Koç investigates the acquisition of adjectives in Turkish by looking at the longitudinal data of a child between 18–34 months. It is shown that the emergence of adjectives follows productivity of basic noun and verb inflections. Of the two functions of adjectives looked at in the study, namely predicative and attributive functions, it is observed that the former enter into syntactic structure at 25 months whereas the first productive instance of the latter occurs at 27 months. The order of emergence of the two functions is suggested to be a result of syntactic complexity of constructing a noun phrase modified by an adjective while it is simpler to use an adjective as a predicate. The other result of the study is that at 27 months adjectives can be used as either modifiers or head nouns, which shows that the child has equal accessibility to both functions. As argued by the author, this result implies that “… ‘adjective’ as a word class in Turkish is specified at the syntactic rather than the lexical level” (p. 103) because equal accessibility indicates that no operation takes place to convert an adjective into a nominal, which would be syntactically more complex.

Chapter 7 (“Training young learners in referential communication: Relative clause constructions”, pp. 121–135), co-authored by Ayşe Sarılar and Aylin C. Küntay, reports the findings of an experimental study on the acquisition of subject RCs in Turkish. The study seeks an answer for the question of whether Turkish young children can make use of RCs “… when a strong need for nominal expansion is experimentally set up” (p. 121). The authors argue that although Turkish RC constructions are hard for Turkish children to learn due to their complex morphosyntactic structure (i.e. their being pre-nominal in contrast to default SOV word order of the language) it is possible to elicit RCs from very young children if they are trained and “… motivated to use them productively in a pragmatically appropriate task” (p. 122). In contrast to the findings of earlier studies such as that of Slobin (1982), who states that it is only later than age 4;8 that Turkish children can have the mastery of RCs, the results of this study points to an interesting fact that children as young as 3 years old can use subject RCs, though not skillfully.

In chapter 8 (“Spelunking’s dangers and Simpson’s paradox: Categorical and gradient in the study of usage”, pp. 137–156) Catherine O’Connor discusses the role of ‘Simpson’s paradox’ in a quantitative study, which is caused by a lurking variable. The article investigates the paradox through a corpus study on possessive alternation in English, namely the alternating structures “X’s Y” vs. “Y of X” (e.g. the teacher’s virtues vs. the virtues of walking). According to the author, there are three factors that have influence on these structures, each of which favors one of the possessive structures in question: (i) animacy of the possessor, (ii) weight, i.e. length, of the possessor phrase, and (iii) information status of the possessor referent (p. 138). Although animacy is found to be statistically the most important factor, it is shown
that all three factors are confounded for a variety of reasons, causing the paradox to occur. Having discussed in detail what is statistically important is not always ‘linguistically’ correct, she suggests that as the field moves further into the use of complex multivariable methods, more traditional tools are also needed for qualitative exploration (p. 153).

Following chapter ("How typologically coherent is Turkish?", pp. 157–168) by Orhan Orgun introduces the notion of typological coherence which “... is a technique developed by the author with the aim of estimating the internal coherence of a language with respect to a multitude of its typological features” (p. 157). To illustrate the technique, typological coherences of Turkish, English, and Japanese are calculated with respect to a set of ten morphological features (like case syncretism, inflectional synthesis of the verb, locus of marking, prefixing vs. suffixing etc.) listed in the World Atlas of Linguistic Structures (WALS). To calculate the typological coherence of a given language, each feature of the language is given a value which is then used to calculate its typological coherence score by comparing it to other languages in the comparison set. As for the typological coherences of Turkish, English, and Japanese with respect to morphological properties, the results show that Japanese is the most coherent one, followed by Turkish and English, respectively. It is suggested that this is a useful technique to measure the conformity of a given language to its typological class. The notion of typological coherence, then, appears to be of great interest for those who are interested in linguistic typology.

Chapter 10 ("A typological coincidence: Word order properties in Trakai Karaim biblical translations", pp. 169–186) by Éva A. Csató investigates the foreign language influence on word order properties of Trakai Karaim, a Turkic language spoken in Lithuania, which is basically observed in biblical translations but which has also penetrated into spoken language through these translations. In the literature, it has been observed that biblical Karaim has various non-Turkic syntactic properties such as VO order, the N+Genitive order, and the use of the demonstrative pronoun ol as a definite article. According to the widely accepted view, these properties developed under the strong influence of biblical Hebrew. However, arguing against this view, the author suggests that biblical Hebrew is not the only source for the typological changes in Karaim. She claims that it is rather the influence of contact languages in the area which led Karaim to acquire the non-Turkic word order properties in question, several of which are also accidentally shared by Hebrew biblical texts.

Chapter 11 ("Impersonalization and agency: The linguistic strategies of distancing the self from traumas", pp. 187–199) by Didar Akar focuses on the issue of identity construction in the narratives of female victims of domestic violence, who stay in a women’s shelter in Istanbul, Turkey. Data collected from 12 women exhibit the fact that they prefer to use various linguistic forms which have the function of distancing themselves from the traumas they experienced as well as their abusers. It is shown that they commonly use an impersonalization strategy by using impersonal passives, nominalizations, and deletion of obligatory possessor marker on kinship terms in reference to the abuser. Another linguistic finding of the study is that tran-
positive structures and future tense forms are used as linguistic tools by the victims to assign themselves agency, hence power.

In the next chapter (“What’s in a name? Trends in first name selection in Turkey”, pp. 201–212) Bengisu Rona looks at name selection trends in Turkey, summarizing changing trends in different phases in the history of the country, and examining the issue in recent times. It is shown that there have been different trends in first name selection by parents such as choosing names with Arabic or Persian origin as well as pure Turkish or, recently, Kurdish names, giving names of prominent political figures and their family members, selecting words with religious, mostly Islamic, reference or directly taken from Qur’an. Although there have been different trends, we can conclude from this short survey that name selection trends in Turkey mostly reflect the social and political changes that the country has undergone.

The subject of the next three chapters is poetry and some of its linguistic aspects. In chapter 13 (“Turkish across borders: Translating Turkish poetry into German, English, and French”, pp. 213–226) Dan I. Slobin explores morphosyntactic issues such as agglutinative morphology, verb-final typology, repetition, duplication, gender and definiteness marking and so on in translating Turkish poetry into German, English, and French as target languages, especially focusing on the difficulties in reflecting the original rhythm in translation. Chapter 14 (“Notes on a 14th century Anatolian Turkish Poem”, pp. 227–234) by Bill Hickman deals with a part of the Destan-i Yusuf (Story of Joseph), a 14th century Anatolian Turkish poem, with the aim of exploring its narrative details rarely discussed in the literature, although the discussion is almost completely about its non-linguistic aspects. Finally, in chapter 15 (“Vasko Papa and the Stargazer’s legacy”, pp. 235–246) Ronelle Alexander examines the linguistic structure of a Serbian poem, The Star-Gazer’s Legacy by Vasko Papa, revealing its underlying patterns by showing interesting details of its syntactic, morphological, lexical and phonological properties.

Evaluation

Bringing together exceptional work written by prominent scholars, Puzzles of Language is no doubt a noteworthy contribution to linguistics in general, especially to Turkish linguistics. The topics discussed throughout the book cover a wide range of sub-disciplines from theoretical to applied linguistics, each representing elaborate research. Especially, it is impressive to see how the first four articles play around with similar issues on the morphophonology of Turkish. For example, papers by both Johanson and Hankamer explore why stem-final and suffix-initial vowels are not allowed to occur next to each other. Interestingly, they approach to the problem from quite different angles and suggest very different, almost contrary, answers. Likewise, Inkelas’ paper on velar deletion has also interesting intersections with both Hankamer’s and Erguvanlı Taylan’s. It is so exciting to have all these intersecting papers in the same volume and, I think, these are among the outstanding chapters of the book. Others, to name a few, are papers by Kornfilt, Aksu-Koç, Sarılar & Küntay, and O’Connor, each having intriguing discussions with striking
results. Kornfilt’s contribution, regrettably a short one, shed light on the typology of RCs in Turkish, posing new questions on this structure. The paper on the acquisition of adjectives by Aksu-Koç, on the other hand, is a great example of how an acquisition study can feed grammatical research. Sarılar & Küntay’s paper, the second one on language acquisition in this volume, also examines RCs and their findings, namely that children as young as 3 years old can employ bits and pieces of these constructions, strikingly show that although these constructions are fully acquired at age 4;8 (Slobin 1982), their acquisition period starts much earlier. This result indicates that even complex structures can be employed in the early years of acquisition, evoking reevaluation of earlier findings on the acquisition of complex structures. We also find another high standard discussion in O’Connor’s paper where it is remarkably shown that statistical methods used in quantitative studies are not sufficient enough by themselves to give an accurate insight into the generative power of the grammar. Her conclusion that more traditional tools of linguistic inquiry are also needed for qualitative exploration is, I believe, what most linguists, especially studying on formal aspects of language, would all agree. On the other hand, it is a pity that her figures on pages 139, 140, 144, and 148 lack the bars supposed to give the statistical results. Fortunately, in spite of this seemingly editorial oversight, the reader can easily follow O’Connor’s discussion concerning these figures.

I would like to note that giving special emphasis on these papers reflects only my personal taste. My intention is not to underestimate remaining papers, which surely do have precious contributions to their field of study. These are all remarkable papers, in which interested reader will find careful research on exciting topics.

To conclude, this book has much to offer to scholars studying in various sub-disciplines of linguistics, especially to those who are interested in Turkish. Despite minor infelicities such as a few typos and missing parts of some figures as I mentioned above, this book demonstrates the hard work of both the editors and contributors. Thus, including quality papers on diverse topics, it is truly a notable addition to the library of linguistics.

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Reviewed by Christian Stadel
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Tamar Zewi, known for her insightful studies on Biblical Hebrew syntax, has added yet another monograph to her list of publications, entitled Parenthesis in Biblical Hebrew. As the term ‘parenthesis’ is used in different fields of research not always in exactly the same sense, the “Introduction” sets out to give an overview of this rather vague term. Scrutinized are its uses in general linguistics, in general discourse studies as well as in those dealing explicitly with the Hebrew Bible, in textual philology and in literary approaches. With the set aim of incorporating these different approaches into the analysis and utilizing not only one but all of them to explain instances of parenthesis, few formal criteria for the identification of parenthetical units remain: “(1) parenthetical units are relatively independent syntactically, and (2) they frequently enjoy flexible positioning in a sentence” (p. 8). These criteria deriving from the field of linguistics are accompanied by a third “functional-pragmatic” one to account for contextual considerations. The criteria are mirrored by the working definition of a ‘parenthetical unit’ as “any peripheral information, expressed by a single word, phrase, or clause, which in terms of content is external to a sentence” (p. 2), and is not dependent syntactically on, or is a complement of, any sentence part or the sentence as a whole, the sentence being grammatically complete without it. The discussed study then aims at the identification, classification, description, and analysis of parenthetical means and expressions in Classical Biblical Hebrew as employed in the Pentateuch, the Early Prophets, the book of Ruth, and prose parts of the books of Isaiah and Jeremiah. The study falls into two parts, the first devoted to parenthetical clauses, and the second to parenthetical words and phrases. These parts are subdivided according to the content of the parentheses discussed, and the linguistic means used. Every example features introductory remarks determining whether the parenthetical unit has a syntactical relation to its host clause, whether it adds information or comments on part of the sentence or the whole of it, whether it pre-