Differential Object Marking and discourse prominence in Spanish and Turkish

Differential Object Marking (DOM) is a cross-linguistically widespread phenomenon that is also attested in Spanish and Turkish, two typologically different languages. DOM refers to the observation that the direct object can be overtly marked or not. In Spanish, DOM is realized by the free morpheme *a* and in Turkish, by the accusative suffix *–(y)I*. We hypothesize that DOM signals discourse prominence of the direct object (H1), and that the discourse prominence effect of DOM is higher in Spanish than in Turkish given the independent status of the functional element (H2). We test these hypotheses for Standard European Spanish and Turkish by means of corpus studies as well as off-line experiments, and discuss the results between the two languages from a contrastive perspective. The main parameters that contribute to the marking of direct objects are ANIMACY, REFERENTIALITY and INFORMATION STRUCTURE (see, among others, Fábregas 2013 for Spanish, and Enç 1991, for Turkish). In our presentation, we argue that discourse prominence (von Heusinger & Schumacher 2019) is an additional parameter, which has not been thoroughly investigated so far (but see Chiriacescu & von Heusinger 2010). We expect that direct objects with DOM are more discourse prominent, so that they are more likely to be picked up in the following discourse.

Our corpus studies were based on *CORPES XXI* (for Spanish, 112 tokens) and *TSCorpus* (for Turkish, 154 tokens), and analyzed sentences such as in (1). We conducted paragraph continuation experiments for both languages (Turkish experiment in progress): we created test items containing a paragraph with three sentences. In the last sentence, we introduced an indefinite direct object with or without DOM [±DOM] (see (2)). We asked participants to provide one continuation sentence. Then we annotated these continuation sentences considering whether the direct object was anaphorically picked up or not. The results are given in Table 1.

As for the corpus study in Spanish, the numbers reveal that there are more referential uptakes of direct objects with DOM than without DOM, an effect that is in line with our expectations. Regarding the paragraph continuation task, for which we recruited 80 participants, we also observe a slight preference for uptakes referring to direct objects with DOM as compared to those without DOM.

The corpus study in Turkish displays an effect of DOM on discourse prominence of direct objects, which contributes initial evidence for our hypothesis. In addition, we present results from an ongoing paragraph continuation task based on a sample of 20 participants, which will be expanded to 80 participants. Against both our hypothesis and the findings from the corpus study, these preliminary results show that direct objects with DOM are less likely to be re-mentioned in the subsequent discourse than those without DOM.

We conclude that our corpus studies in both languages numerically support H1, namely that direct objects with DOM are more often picked up than those without DOM. As for the continuation experiments, the data obtained show a slight discourse prominence effect of DOM for Spanish, but not for the Turkish data analyzed so far. Regarding H2, the evidence from both the corpus studies and the paragraph continuation tasks is not yet conclusive. We will discuss the implications of these results for our understanding of DOM in both Spanish and Turkish arguing that sentence-based prominence influences the discourse prominence of the related discourse referents.

(1) **Context:**
Tal vez **Leonardo$_1$** eligió **a una mujer$_2$** como muchas otras.
*Perhaps **Leonardo$_1$** chose DOM **a woman$_2$** like many others.*

Continuation:
Ella$_2$ no pertenecía a la nobleza, ni era una princesa.
***She$_2$** did not belong to the nobility, nor was she a princess.*

> (Un historiador asegura haber encontrado la tumba de la "Mona Lisa". El país.com, 2007-01-20)

Context:
ø$_1$ Bir keresinde **usta bir yazarı$_2$** görmeye gitmiştim.
*I$_1$ once went to see **a master writer$_2$** DOM.*

Continuation:
[…], kırılgan **bu bayan yazar$_2$**, keskin zekalı ve zevk sahibi biriydi.
*[...], **this fragile lady writer$_2$**, was a sharp-witted and tasteful person.*

> (https://tscorpus.com/corpora/ts-corpus-v2/)

(2) **Context:**
Savcı$_1$ adliyeye vardığında, sabahın erken saatleri olmasına rağmen kendisini çok yorgun hissetti ve günün hemen bitmesini umdu. Senelerdir kapanmamış bir dava dosyasıyla ve kafasında sorularla odasına doğru ilerledi. Adliye koridorunda yürürken **bir avukatı$_2$** gördü.

*'When **the prosecutor$_1$** arrived at the courthouse, although it was early in the morning, he felt exhausted and hoped the day would be over. With a case file that has not been closed for years and questions in his head, he proceeded to his room. While he was walking in the courthouse corridor, he saw **an attorney$_2$** DOM.'*

Continuation:
Avukat$_2$ bir kahve otomatından kahve almak için cebinden bozuklukları çıkardı.
*'**The attorney$_2$** took out coins from his pocket to buy coffee from a coffee vending machine.'*

	Corpus		Paragraph Continuation Task	
	Spanish	Turkish	Spanish	Turkish
DOM	48% (40/83)	75% (58/77)	74% (631/848)	64% (77/120)
NoDOM	38% (11/29)	67% (52/77)	71% (587/823)	70% (84/120)

Table 1: Number of referent uptakes for direct objects in the subsequent discourse

References
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