Tiago Augusto Duarte / Haydar Batuhan Yıldız / Marco García García / Klaus von Heusinger

Differential Object Marking and discourse prominence in Spanish

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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 we analyzed sentences such as in (1) and (2), respectively. We conducted paragraph continuation experiments for both languages: we created test items containing a three-sentence small paragraph, in which the last sentence introduces a human indefinite direct object with or without DOM [±DOM]. 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 a numerical effect of DOM on DISCOURSE PROMINENCE of human direct objects, which contributes initial evidence for our hypothesis. The paragraph continuation task based on a sample of 80 participants (*N* = 960) shows no contrast between the conditions, i.e., DOM has no effect on DISCOURSE PROMINENCE of the direct object.

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. The evidence from both the corpus studies and the paragraph continuation tasks seems to be insufficient to support H2. We will discuss the implications of these results for our understanding of DOM in both Spanish and Turkish from a contrastive perspective.

(1) Spanish

Context:

Tal vez **Leonardo$_1$** *eligi-ó* **a una mujer$_2$** *como muchas otras.*
perhaps Leonardo choose-3SG.PAST DOM a.FEM woman like many others.FEM
'Perhaps **Leonardo$_1$** chose DOM **a woman$_2$** like many others.'

Continuation:

Ella$_2$ *no pertenecí-a a la nobleza, ni era una princesa.*
she NEG belong-3SG.PAST to the.FEM nobility nor be.3SG.PAST a.FEM princess
'**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)

(2) Turkish

Context:

ø$_1$ *Bir keresinde* **usta bir yazar-ı$_2$** *görme-ye git-miş-ti-m*
at.one.point master a author-ACC see-DAT go-EV/PF-PST-1SG
'**I$_1$** once went to see **a master writer$_2$** DOM.'

Continuation:

[…], *kırılgan* **bu bayan yazar$_2$** *keskin zekalı ve zevk sahibi biri-ydi.*
fragile this female author very.intelligent and tasteful somebody-PST
'[...], **this fragile lady writer$_2$**, was a sharp-witted and tasteful person.'

(TSCorpus, from a blog writing, no access to the source)

	Corpus		Paragraph Continuation Task	
	Spanish	**Turkish**	**Spanish**	**Turkish**
DOM	48% (40/83)	75% (58/77)	74% (631/848)	72% (347/480)
NoDOM	38% (11/29)	67% (52/77)	71% (587/823)	73% (349/480)

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

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Contact information

Tiago Augusto Duarte

University of Cologne

tiago.duarte@uni-koeln.de

Haydar Batuhan Yıldız

University of Cologne

haydar.batuhan.yildiz@uni-koeln.de

Marco García García

University of Cologne

marco.garcia@uni-koeln.de

Klaus von Heusinger

University of Cologne

klaus.vonheusinger@uni-koeln.de