

# Beyond Topic and Focus: Extraposition in Turkish

Elke Kasimir, Özgür Şahin, Juliane Böhme, with kind help of Manfred Krifka  
SFB 632 / A4 University of Potsdam 2006

## Questions

- interaction with information structure
- licensing conditions
- semantic/pragmatic content

## Example

Onunla gezdik Berlin'i. Sonra Mauerpark'ta oturduk 3-4 saat (from an email)  
[with-her \_ walked] in-Berlin. [Later \_ in-the-Mauerpark we-sat] 3-4 hours.

## Previous accounts

### Erguvanlı 1984:

- neither presupposition, nor de-focusing, after-thought, givenness capture all relevant cases of extraposition.
- "[extraposed material] is material that is 'supplementary' to the communication of a linguistic expression."

### Kılıçaslan 1994:

- extraposed material exhibits a low communicative dynamism (term borrowed from Prague School).

### Generally:

- that extraposition doesn't just express information-structural background is often ignored in the relevant literature.

## Known facts on Turkish

- base word order is SOV.
- focus is phonologically expressed like in English or German.
- subject and objects can be freely deleted if recoverable from context.
- more than one constituent may be extraposed to the end of the matrix sentence.
- extraposition is subject to island constraints.

## Our observations

- extraposition is never contextually enforced.  
The base word order has an equivalent "rhetorical reading" which is however less salient.
- extraposed material is usually de-accented.

### but:

- extraposed material **can** bear an accent in very special cases (see example below)

- extraposition is compatible with:  
question-induced focus: **no!**  
question-induced background: **yes!**  
topic: **not if topicality must be signalled**
- extraposed material need not be associated with the question predicate of an implicit or explicit question, and
- is often not "given" (roughly 50% of our corpus examples).

## Our methods

- collect and analyze 45 authentic instances of extraposition from internethaber.com.
- explorative web-based questionnaire (between 7 and 20 ratings per example).
- still under way: questionnaire-based contrastive investigation of extraposition in Turkish/Basque (with Kepa Joseba Rodriguez, Free University of Berlin).

# Analysis

## H1: Input to Pragmatics:

a devrik cümle (sentence displaying extraposition) presents two utterance meanings in parallel.

[With-her \_ walked] in-Berlin.

UM 1: "I and her had a walk"

UM 2: "I and her had in Berlin a walk"

— has a low "surprise value", is therefore plausibly not the focus, and also not a newly established topic.

➤ **This already derives most observations with regards to information structure!**

## H2: Licensing condition:

the elliptic core sentence already carries the main communicative intention (at some level of interpretation)

## H3: Pitch accent...

... on extraposed phrases indicates contrast.

## Extraposition and "givenness":

*Buradan büyük bir üzüntüye kapılırm ben, siz şuraya bakın: Bunlar bu lafları ettiği zaman biz ne tepki veriyoruz? Ben tekmeliyorum, küfür ediyorum ve kovalıyorum bunlara tepki olarak.*

From that I get into a bad mood, look at this: *What kind of reaction* do we show during their talk? [I kick, swear and run after] as a reaction to them.

(Interview of a famous Turkish singer. The interviewer intends to change the topic with this question:)

Q: *Siz eskiden daha otoriterdiniz, [sizi öyle seyretmişim] televizyonlarda*

Q: "You were quite more authoritarian in the past, [I saw you so] in the television".

- the addition of "given" material often doesn't change the communicative intention. "given" material can therefore be extraposed.

- material need not be given in order to be irrelevant to the communicative intention and can therefore often be extraposed even if not "given".

## Accented extraposed material:

*Ben oturuyorum Berlin'de, o oturuyor New York'ta.*

[I \_ live ] in-Berlin, [she \_ lives] in-New-York.

**bad after:** Where do you two live?

**much better but still degraded:**  
Why did you to break up?

### core sentence paraphrase:

- "I live somewhere, she lives somewhere else."
- contrasted phrases are often indispensable for communicative intention and can therefore not be extraposed.
- This explains why accented extraposed material is such a rare case.

## Compare extraposition to written parentheses:

- *written parentheses*: diverging **hearer**-oriented **relevance criteria** (see right box).
- *extraposition*: strong intuition: diverging **speaker**-oriented criteria.

He made his remarks to (then Secretary of State) Henry Kissinger.

Nunberg 1990:

- addresses the average reader.
- addresses a minority of readers.

## H4: Pragmatic content:

expression of a shift in the speaker's communicative conditions (effort?, salience?)