Beyond Topic and Focus: Extraposition in Turkish

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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)


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

Kasimir 2000:
- 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.
- extraposed material can bear an accent in very special cases (see example below)

H1: Input to Pragmatics:

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

H2: Licensing condition:

extraposition is compatible with:
- question-induced focus: not
- 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).

H3: Pitch accent:

... on extraposed phrases indicates contrast.

Extraposition and "givenness":

Buradan büyük bir üzüntüye kapıldım ben, siz guraya bakın: Bunlar bu lafları ettiği zaman biz ne tepki veriyoruz? Ben tekmeleyorum, küfür ediyorum ve kovalıyorum zaman biz ne tepki veriyoruz? Ben

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.

- 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".

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.

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 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).

Core sentence paraphrase:

(on some level of interpretation)

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

[Later _ in-the-Mauerpark we-sat].

H4: Pragmatic content:

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