Referential form, word order and emotional valence in Turkish pronoun resolution
Duygu Özge, Ebru Evcen, Joshua Hartshorne
duygu@metu.edu.tr

Introduction

Prominence influences the interpretation of the pronoun

Determination of prominence: Topicality [1], givenness [2,3], focushood [3,4,5], parallel roles [6,7], recency [8], syntactic role [9,10,11], verb type [12], information structure [12], coherence relations [13,14,15], verb valence [16,17,18], referential form [19,20]

How do these factors interact?
Shorter referential forms used to encode prominent entity

For Turkish:
– Null pronouns should refer to subject [20]
– Overt pronouns should act as a topic shifter [20]

Causality is influenced by verb valence [16,17,18]

Test Items

SOV, Full/Null Pronoun, Positive/Negative valence:
Bahar Ceren-i öp-üyor/tekmel-iyor çünkü (o) dakmuk.
Bahar-NOM Ceren-ACC kiss/kick-PROG-3SG because (she) dax.
Bahr is kiss/kicking Ceren because she is dax.

Who is dakmuk?
Bahar Ceren

OSV, Full/Null Pronoun, Positive/Negative valence:
Bahr’i Ceren öp-iyor/tekmel-iyor çünkü (o) dakmuk.
Bahr-ACC Ceren-NOM kiss/kick-PROG-3SG because (she) dax.
Ceren is kiss/kicking Bahr because she is dax.

Who is dakmuk?
Bahar Ceren

Predictions

If Turkish null pronouns behave similarly to non-stressed English pronouns:
– Greater subject preference in the null pronoun condition [20]
– Greater object preference in the overt pronoun condition [20]

If topic arguments are taken as more salient:
– Greater subject preference in the SOV order [7,2]
– Greater object preference in the OSV order [1,2]

If focused arguments are taken as more salient:
– Greater object preference in the SOV order [3,4,5]
– Greater subject preference in the OSV order [3,4,5]

If verb valence influences the interpretation:
– Greater subject preference in the negative valence arguments than in positive valence ones [16,17,18].

Results

Discussion

The subjecthood and the focushood have led a combined effect on the entity salience: The entity becomes more salient when it is both in the subject and the focus position, which is revealed in more subject preference in OSV order than in SOV order.

Verb valence does not have a solid effect but interacts with other factors such as information structure and the type of referential expression.

Topic shifting mission of the overt pronoun is not constant in all contexts:
– It shifts the topic from subject to the object in positive valence events.
– It keeps the topic constant in negative valence events.

Conclusion:
Our findings highlight that the general expectation to link the null pronoun to the subject (topic) referent while linking the overt pronoun to the object referent is not an across-the-board situation in Turkish, but it is modulated by multiple factors such as word order, the type of anaphoric expression and the verb valence.