

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 [3], syntactic role [8], thematic role [9,10,11], verb type [10], information structure [12], coherence relations [13,14,15], verb valence [16,17,18], referential form [3,19]

• How do these factors interact?

Shorter referential forms used to encode prominent entity [12]

• 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.
Bahar is kiss/kicking Ceren because she is dax.

Who is dakmuk?

Bahar Ceren

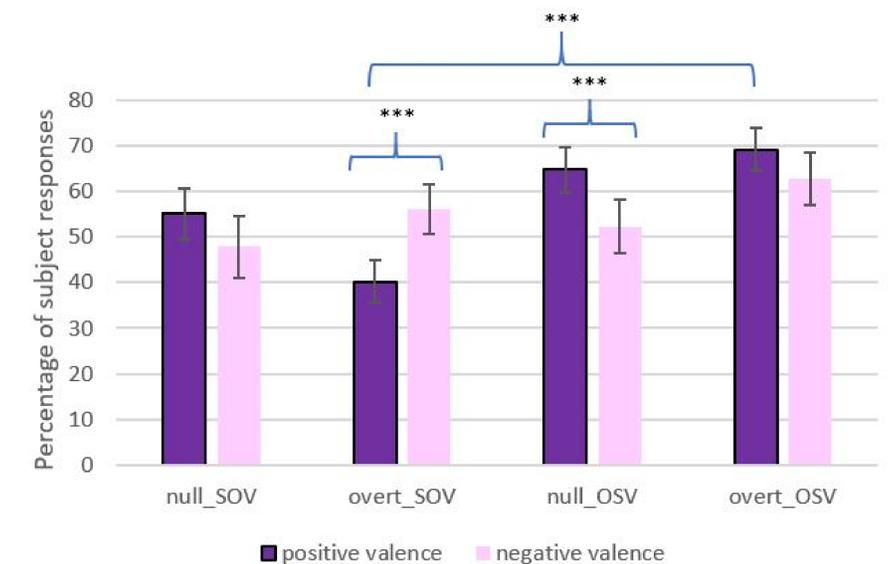
OSV, Full/Null Pronoun, Positive/Negative valence:

Bahar'ı Ceren öp-üyor/tekmel-iyor çünkü (o) dakmuk.
Bahar-ACC Ceren-NOM kiss/kick-PROG-3SG because (she) dax.
Ceren is kiss/kicking Bahar because she is dax.

Who is dakmuk?

Bahar Ceren

Results



Study

Aim:

To systematically test the effect of

- information structure (revealed in SOV versus OSV orders)
- the type of anaphoric expression (zero versus over)
- the verb valence (positive [e.g., kiss] versus negative [e.g., kick])

on the interpretation of ambiguous pronouns in Turkish physical contact action verbs.

Method

- A comprehension study modelled after Hartshorne & Snedeker (2013).
- 138 participants read 24 critical sentences with ambiguous anaphor in two conditions: positive-valence and negative-valence.
- Sentences were conjoined with 'because'.
- The main clause (with SOV/OSV orders) had two referents with [+] human and [+] female features.
- The conjoined clause had an ambiguous anaphor (full-pronoun/null-pronoun).
- The sentences ended with a non-word adjectival predicate (dakmuk/dax).
- Participants were asked to choose the referent of the non-word adjectival predicate.

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 [1,2]
- 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].

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.