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WORD ORDER TYPOLOGY OF TURKISH

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Abstract

This article describes 'word order' in Turkish on the basis of twenty three word order criteria which have been utilized in Dryer (1992, 2014) to distinguish OV languages from VO languages. The study shows that given twenty relevant criteria in Turkish, this language behaves predominantly like a strong OV language, with a small number of strong VO languages' characteristics typologizing Turkish as a VO language. Being predominantly a strong OV language, Turkish is a left-branching type of language, the behaviour that bears complete consistency with Dryer (1992)'s 'Branching Direction Theory'.

Keywords: Word Order; Correlation Pairs; Typology; Turkish.

Introduction

'Word order'¹, or specifically speaking 'constituent order'², is a particularly important typological³ parameter (see Comrie, 1989: 42 & 86), hence 'word order typology' or 'constituent order typology'. According to Comrie (ibid: 86), word order typology, mainly through Greenberg (1966b)'s seminal article, i.e. *some universals of grammar with particular reference to the order of meaningful elements*, has played a major role in the recent development of language typology. Typologizing languages in terms of their word order characteristics is conducted via some parameters which Comrie (ibid: 87-91) has sorted out into two sets:

- I. major ones: (1) the relative order of subject, verb, and object, (2) word order within the noun phrase (the relative order of adjective (A) and noun (N); the order of head noun (N) and relative clause (Rel) in the relative clause construction; the relative order of possessive (genitive) (G) and head noun (N)), (3) type of adposition: preposition or postposition.
- II. less central ones: (1) the order of auxiliary verbs and main verbs, (2) the order of the comparative and the standard of comparison, (3) the order of affix and stem: suffixing or prefixing.

As Comrie (ibid: 92) has noted, though most of the above-listed parameters are logically independent of one another, it turns out to be the case that there are many statistically significant correlations that can be drawn among the mentioned parameters, and it is one of Greenberg (ibid)'s more specific merits to have established so many of these correlations.⁴

Parallel with Comrie (ibid.)'s view on there being many statistically significant correlations among various word order parameters, Dryer (1992), in his paper entitled as *the Greenbergian word order correlations*, has substantiated the correlation between the order of certain pairs of grammatical elements and the order of verb and object. To refer to the certain pairs of grammatical elements, Dryer (ibid: 82) has coined the term 'correlation pairs' and defined it as follows: "If the order of a pair of elements X and Y exhibits a correlation with the order of verb and object respectively, then I will refer to the ordered pair <X,Y> as a CORRELATION PAIR, and I will call X a VERB PATTERNER and Y an OBJECT PATTERNER with respect to the correlation pair".⁵ To illustrate the term, Dryer (ibid.) has stated that since OV [i.e. verb final]

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¹ Word order, as Dryer (2007:61) has put it, "refers more generally to the order of any set of elements, either at the clause level or within phrases, such as the order of elements within a noun phrase".

² Comrie has preferred the term 'constituent order (typology)' to the term 'word order (typology)'. For his reasons, see comrie (1989: 86-87).

³ For Comrie's view on the relationship between typological research and universals research, see Comrie (ibid: 33-38).

⁴ For further information about Greenberg's correlations, see Comrie (ibid: 94-95).

⁵ To adequately explain the correlation pairs in his paper, Dryer (ibid: 89) proposed the 'Branching Direction Theory (BDT)' which states that verb patterners are non-phrasal (non-branching, lexical) categories and object patterners are phrasal (branching) categories. That is, a pair of elements X and Y will employ the order XY significantly more often among VO languages than among OV languages if and only if X is a non-phrasal category and Y is a phrasal category. According to BDT, languages tend towards one of two ideals: right-branching languages, in which phrasal categories follow non-phrasal categories, and left-branching languages, in which phrasal categories precede non-phrasal categories.

languages tend to be postpositional and VO [i.e. verb medial] languages prepositional¹, we can say that the ordered pair <adposition,NP> is a correlation pair, and that, with respect to this pair, adpositions are verb patterners and the NPs that they combine with are object patterners. It is noteworthy that Dryer has put forth 23 correlation pairs in his paper and has assigned a separate table to each of them. In the following comes the first table in Dryer's paper to exemplify the point.²

Table 1: Order of adposition and noun phrase

	Africa	Euras	SEA&Oc	Aus-NG	N.Amer	S.Amer	TOTAL	#Lgs
OV&Postp	22	30	16	77	29	41	215	523
OV&Prep	3	2	1	4	0	2	12	17
Prop	.88	.94	.94	.95	1.00	.95	Avg=.94	
	Africa	Euras	SEA&Oc	Aus-NG	N.Amer	S.Amer	TOTAL	#Lgs
VO& Postp	8	5	1	3	3	8	28	46
VO& Prep	30	8	41	16	24	14	133	498
Prop	.21	.38	.02	.16	.11	.36	Avg=.21	

Key: In this table, as in the other tables in Dryer's paper, the world has been divided into six areas: Africa; Euras= Europe and Asia, except for Southeast Asia; SEAsia&Oc= Southeast Asia (Sino-Tibetan, Thai, and Mon-Khmer) and Oceania (Austronesian); Aus-NewGui= Australia and, excluding Austronesian languages of New Guinea; NAmer= North America, including languages of Mexico, as well as Mayan and Aztecan languages in Central America; SAmer= South America, including languages in Central America except Mayan and Aztecan languages. In regard with the numbers, except for the last column which indicates number of languages, the other numbers represent numbers of genera, i.e. "groups of languages whose similarity is such that their genetic relatedness is uncontroversial" (Dryer, *ibid.*: 84). The line labeled 'Prop' is the proportion of genera of the type of the first line as a proportion of the sum of the numbers of genera on the first two lines. For example, the .88 under Africa in the first table is the proportion of 22 as a proportion of 22+3=25 (Dryer, 2014).

The table above verifies Dryer's aforementioned assertion as to the OV languages tending to be postpositional and VO languages prepositional. Specifically speaking, as the last column of the table shows, 523 OV languages are postpositional while only 17 OV languages are prepositional; on the other hand, while only 46 VO languages are postpositional, 498 VO languages are prepositional.

The present paper aims to check Dryer (1992, 2014)'s word order typological criteria against Turkish language and thereby present a description of its typological characteristics in terms of the mentioned criteria.

Word order typology of Turkish

Turkish language

Genealogically, Turkish belongs to the Turkic language family, specifically South-West (or Oğuz) group, together with Gagauz, Azerbaidjani (Azerbaijani) and Turkmenian (Kornfilt, 1997: xxi- xxii; Johanson, 1998: 82; Kornfilt, 2009: 519-520). Turkish is the largest language (in terms of number of speakers) in the Turkic family, and it accounts for some 40 per cent of the total number of speakers of Turkic languages (Kornfilt, 1997: xxi).

Geographically, Turkish is the official and dominant language of Turkey (Turkish Republic), where it is the native language of over 90 per cent of the population, i.e. some 50 million people (The largest linguistic minority in the Turkish Republic is formed by Kurdish speakers, mainly in southeastern Turkey.). Turkish is also a co-official language (together with Greek) in Cyprus, where it is spoken by about 19 per cent of the population. But the largest number of Turkish speakers outside Turkey, perhaps one million, is to be found in the Balkans, especially Bulgaria, but also in the former Yugoslavia (especially Macedonia) and in Greece, although in the last few years, the Turkish Republic has repatriated a number of these speakers, especially from Bulgaria (Kornfilt, 1997: xxi).

Finally, with respect to 'the relative order of subject, verb, and object' typological parameter, the basic word order in Turkish is SOV (Erguvanlı, 1984: 5; Comrie, *ibid.*: 87; Kornfilt, 2009:534). The following examples respectively taken from Comrie (*ibid.*) and Kornfilt (*ibid.*) illustrate the basic SOV order in

¹ It should be highly noted that classifying languages into two types, i.e. OV (verb final) and VO (verb medial), is based not on relative order of 'verb' and 'object', but on languages' typological characteristics. As an illustration, Persian, an Iranian language which is the sole official language in Iran, is an (S) OV language in terms of the relative order of (subject), verb and object, but predominantly a VO one on account of its typological behavior (see Comrie, 1989: 96; Dabir-Moghaddam, 2001: 17-19; 2013:117-129).

² It is noteworthy that all the three tables in the present paper are based on Dryer (2014). It should be made clear that Dryer (*ibid.*) has updated his data utilized in Dryer (1992). It should also be noted that, upon my request, Professor Dryer kindly emailed me his updated data on July 8, 2014.

Turkish:

- (1) Hasan öküz + ü al + dı
Hasan ox + Acc.¹ buy + Past
“Hasan bought the ox.”
- (2) Hasan kitab + ı çocuğ + a oku + du
Hasan book + Acc. child + Dat.². read + Past
“Hasan read the book to the child.”

Word order typological criteria

In the following, Dryer (1992, 2014)'s 23 word order typological criteria (C) will be checked against Turkish language. Each criterion will be followed by one or more examples.

C₁: Adposition type (preposition or postposition?) or Order of adposition and noun phrase Turkish is a postpositional language (and hence adposition follows noun phrase). As Kornfilt (1997: 100) has noted, most postpositions are independent morphemes that assign case to their nominal complement; some cliticized postpositions or, as Lewis (1967: 85) has put it, postpositions which can appear as suffixes also assign case. The following examples taken respectively from Lewis (1967: 85) and Kornfilt (1997: 100) present both types of postpositions:

- (3) yol üzere
road on
“on the road”
- (4) Hasan konser + e Oya + yla git + ti
Hasan concert + Dat. Oya + with go + Past
“Hasan went to the concert with Oya.” [1475]³

C₂: Order of noun and relative clause

The relative clause immediately precedes the head noun.⁴ Preceding the head noun, the relative clause ends in a participial form with a choice between two suffixes of ‘-An’ and ‘-DIK’.⁵ In the following examples which have been taken from Kornfilt (ibid: 58), the relative clauses have been bracketed.

- (5) [Ø_i okul + a gid + en] adam_i
Ø school + Dat. go + **SbjP**⁶ man
“the man who goes/went to school.” [246]
- (6) [adam + in Ø_i git + tiğ + i] okul_i
man + Gen.⁷ Ø go + **ObjP**⁸ + 3.sg.⁹ school
“the school that the man goes/went to.” [247]

The relative clause can also follow the head noun, which is a marked order (see Göksel and Kerslake, 2005:396-397). Following the head noun, the relative clause is fully finite and is introduced by the complementizer ‘ki’. According to Kornfilt (ibid: 60), the mentioned pattern, i.e. head noun + relative clause, in Turkish is a borrowed one from Persian language.¹⁰ Kornfilt (ibid.)'s illustrative example represents the borrowed pattern:

- (7) bir adam [ki çocuk + lar + in + ı sev + mez] yalnız yaşa + malı + dır

¹ accusative

² dative

³ The numbers within the brackets all over this article indicate the numbers of the relevant examples in their original references.

⁴ In Turkish noun phrases, any modifier precedes the head noun (see Kornfilt, 1997: 108; Göksel and Kerslake, ibid: 145; Kornfilt, 2009: 535).

⁵ For further information about relative (adjective) clauses in general and the two relevant suffixes in particular, see Kornfilt (1997: 57-60).

⁶ subject participle

⁷ genitive

⁸ object participle

⁹ third person singular

¹⁰ It should be noted that the borrowed, left-headed pattern with the finite clause and the complementizer is used somewhat more often as a nonrestrictive relative clause, compared to its lack of use as a restrictive relative clause (Kornfilt, ibid: 61).

a man that child+ pl.¹ + 3.sg. Poss.² + Acc. love + Neg. Aor.³ alone live + Nec.⁴+ Ep.Cop.⁵
“A man who does not love his children must live alone.” [258]

C₃: Order of noun and genitive

Genitive precedes noun (for more details, see Lewis, *ibid*: 41-44; Göksel and Kerslake, *ibid*: 162-164).

(8) hafta + nın gün+ ler+ i
week + Gen. day + Pl. + 3sg.Poss.
“the days of the week” (Lewis, *ibid*: 42)

(9) Ali + nin oğl + u
Ali + Gen. son + 3sg.Poss.
“Ali’s son” (Göksel and Kerslake, *ibid*: 162)

C₄: Order of adjective and standard in comparative construction

Adjective follows standard in comparative construction.

(10) ipek + ten hafif
silk + Abl.⁶ light
“lighter than silk” (Kornfilt, *ibid*: 95) [376]

It is noteworthy that the standard in Turkish comparative constructions is always in ablative case (see Lewis, *ibid*: 54; Kornfilt, *ibid*: 95,107).

C₅: Order of verb and adpositional phrase

Adpositional or, specifically speaking, postpositional phrases precede verb.

(11) Hasan konser + e Oya + yla git + ti
Hasan concert + Dat. Oya + with go + Past
“Hasan went to the concert with Oya.” (example (4) repeated)

C₆: Order of verb and manner adverb

Manner adverb precedes verb.

(12) Hasan yavaş + ça yür + ür
Hasan slow +ly walk +Aor.⁷
“Hasan walks slowly.” (Kornfilt, *ibid*: 211) [749]

(13) lütfen biraz daha yavaş yürü!
please a little more slow walk
“Please walk a little more slowly!” (Kornfilt, *ibid*: 98) [391]

C₇: Order of copula and predicate

Copula follows predicate.

(14) Hasan + ın konuş + uş + u yavaş + ça + dır
Hasan + Gen. talk + DerNom⁸ + 3.sg. slow + ly + Ep.Cop.
“Hasan's (manner) of speaking is slow.” (Kornfilt, *ibid*: 85) [342]

C₈: Order of ‘want’+ verb

The verb of the embedded sentence⁹ precedes the verb ‘want’.

¹ plural

² possessive

³ negative aorist

⁴ necessitative

⁵ epistemic copula

⁶ ablative

⁷ aorist

⁸ derived nominal

⁹ For more details about embedded sentences in Turkish, see Kornfilt (2009: 538-540).

- (22) (ben) hasta değil + im
I sick Neg.Cop.¹ + 1.sg.
"I am not sick." (Kornfilt, ibid: 124) [491a]
- (23) (ben) ev +de yok + um
I home + Loc.² Neg.Exist.³ + 1.sg.
"I am not at home." ("I don't exist at home.") (Kornfilt, ibid: 124) [491c]

C₁₃: Order of verb and tense-aspect particle

Parallel to the above-mentioned three types of negative morphemes, languages employ three kinds of tense-aspect morphemes, i.e. affix, particle, and verb (see Dryer, ibid: 98). In Turkish, tense-aspect is expressed only by affix, specifically speaking by suffix, which has been exemplified in (33) in the following. Hence there is neither tense-aspect particle nor verb in Turkish.

C₁₄: Order of content (main) verb and auxiliary verb
Auxiliary verbs follow main verbs.

- (24) Gelecek yıl sonunda Berlin + e git + miş ol + acağ + ız
next year end Berlin + Dat. go + Perf.⁴ Aux.⁵ + Fut.⁶ + 1.pl.⁷
"We will have gone to Berlin by the end of next year." (Göksel, 2001:157) [16b]

C₁₅: Order of content (main) verb and negative auxiliary verb

As noted above in C₁₂, the words 'değil' and 'yok' are negative verbs in Turkish. Of these two, the negative copula verb, i.e. 'değil', can also negate its preceding main verb (see Kornfilt, ibid: 125; Göksel and Kerslake, ibid: 274-275) and, thus, it can be argued that 'değil' can also function as the sole negative auxiliary verb in Turkish, exemplified in (25).

- (25) (ben) iş + im + i bırak + acak değil + im
I work + 1.sg.+ Acc. leave + Fut. Neg.Cop.+ 1.sg.
"I shall not leave my job." ("It is not (the case) that I shall leave my job.") (Kornfilt, ibid: 125) [15]

C₁₆: Order of (polar) question particle and sentence

Turkish attaches the question particle 'mI' to the end of a sentence (for further details on mI, see Kornfilt, ibid: 5-9; Göksel and Kerslake, ibid: 103-104).

- (26) Ahmet sinema + ya git + ti + mi?
Ahmet cinema + Dat. Go + Past + Q⁸
"Did Ahmet go to the movies?" (Kornfilt, ibid: 5) [11]

C₁₇: Order of adverbial subordinator and clause

Adverbial subordinators follow their clauses (for detailed information on adverb clauses, see Kornfilt, ibid: 66-76).

- (27) [[müdür tatil + e çık + tığ + ı] zaman] ofis kapp+ n+ ır
director vacation + Dat. go + FNom⁹ + 3.sg. time office close + Refl.¹⁰ + Aor.
"When the director goes on vacation, the office closes." (Kornfilt, ibid: 69) [282]
- (28) [[müdür tatil + e çık + tık] + tan sonra] ofis yan + dı
director vacation + Dat. go + FNom + Abl. after office burn + Past
"After the director went on vacation, the office burned down." (Kornfilt, ibid) [284]

¹ negative copula

² locative

³ negative existential

⁴ perfective

⁵ auxiliary

⁶ future

⁷ first person plural

⁸ interrogative particle

⁹ factive nominal

¹⁰ reflexive

C₁₈: Order of article and noun

Noun follows the Turkish sole indefinite article 'bir' (for the difference between the indefinite article 'bir' and the numeral 'bir' meaning 'one', see Kornfilt, *ibid*: 106).

- (29) güzel, olgun bir elma
nice ripe an apple
"a nice, ripe apple" (Kornfilt, *ibid*: 106) [416]

C₁₉: Order of plural word and noun

A small minority of world's languages pluralize singular nouns by separate plural words which perform the same function as plural affixes in other languages (see Dryer, *ibid*: 104). Turkish expresses plurality mainly by the suffix '-lar'. Hence there are no plural words in Turkish.

- (30) bazı çocuk + lar
some child + pl.
"some children" (Kornfilt, *ibid*: 266) [987]

C₂₀: Order of verb and subject
Subject precede verb.

- (31) terzi elbise + m + i bitir + miş.
dressmaker dress +1.sg.Poss.¹ + Acc. finish + Ev.²/Perf.
"Apparently the dressmaker has finished my dress." (Göksel and Kerslake, *ibid*: 337) [1]

C₂₁: Order of numeral and noun

Numerals, when used as modifiers, precede the noun (see Kornfilt, *ibid*: 106).

- (32) üç elma
three apple
"three apples" (Kornfilt, *ibid*.) [418]

However, when they are used as nouns, numerals follow the noun (for more details, see Kornfilt, *ibid*: 106-107).

C₂₂: Order of tense-aspect affix and verb stem

Since Turkish is a suffixing language (see Kornfilt, 2009: 527; Göksel and Kerslake, *ibid*: 43), the tense-aspect affix is attached to the right of the verb stem.

- (33) imtihan + ım + a başla + mış + tı + m
exam + 1. sg. Poss. + Dat. start + Perf. + Past + 1. sg.
"I had started my exam (when...)" (Kornfilt, *ibid*: 529)

C₂₃: Order of possessive affix and noun

Being a suffixing language, Turkish has possessive suffix.

- (34) ev + ım
house +1. sg. Poss.
"my house" (Göksel and Kerslake, *ibid*:66)
- (35) ev + imiz
house +3. pl. Poss.³
"our house" (Göksel and Kerslake, *ibid*)

Word order typological characteristics of Turkish

Typological characteristics of Turkish word order have been displayed in the following two tables,

¹ first person singular possessive

² evidential

³ third person plural possessive

with table 2 comparing Turkish with languages of EurAsia, the area to which Turkish belongs, and table 3 comparing Turkish with languages of the world. As argued in section 2-2 above and can be observed in tables 2 and 3 below, three criteria, i.e. 12, 13 and 19, are not present in Turkish. Hence word order typology of Turkish are described in terms of the left 20 criteria.

Table 2: Turkish compared with languages of EurAsia

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23
S OV ¹	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x			x		x	x	x		x	x	x	x
W OV															x								
W VO	x	x		x	x	x	x	x		x	x			x	x	x	x						
S VO			x						x									x		x	x	x	x

Table 3: Turkish compared with languages of world

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23
S OV	x		x	x	x	x	x	x		x	x			x	x	x	x			x		x	
W OV		x							x									x			x		x
W VO	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x				x	x		x						
S VO											x					x		x		x	x	x	x

Table 2 shows that out of twenty criteria present in Turkish, in nineteen criteria this language behaves like a strong (S) verb final (OV) language in comparison with the languages in its own geographical area, i.e. EurAsia. Table 2, as well as table 3, also indicates that in almost one third of the relevant criteria Turkish behaves like a strong (S) verb medial (VO) language. However, it should be noted that in table 2 all the seven criteria marked for strong VO have been simultaneously marked for strong OV Turkish while in table 3 only four of the seven strong VO marked criteria have been simultaneously marked for strong OV Turkish. Another difference between tables 2 and 3 is that the number of strong OV marked criteria in table 3, i.e. fifteen ones, is less than that in table 2, i.e. nineteen criteria.

With regard to Dryer (1992)'s 'Branching Direction Theory (BDT)' (see footnote 5 on page 1) as an explanation for his developed word order correlations, Turkish tends towards left-branching languages. Specifically speaking, as illustrated above in section 2-2, in all the twenty relevant correlation pairs in Turkish phrasal categories precede non-phrasal categories. It is noteworthy that this finding further verifies Kornfilt (2009: 534)'s assertion as to Turkish's being a perfect example of a left-branching type of language. As such, it can be argued that (at least in terms of the mentioned twenty correlation pairs) Turkish is completely consistent with BDT.

Conclusion

Typological description of Turkish word/constituent order on the basis of Dryer (1992, 2014)'s twenty typological criteria shows that Turkish, compared with both the languages of EurAsia and the six large geographical areas in the world postulated in Dryer (ibid.), behaves predominantly like a strong verb final (OV) language, with a small number of strong VO languages' characteristics describing Turkish as a VO language. Being predominantly a strong OV language, Turkish is a left-branching type of language, the behavior that bears complete consistency with Branching Direction Theory.

Acknowledgements

¹ I have followed Dabir-Moghaddam (2001: 18) in labeling the two general types of languages as strong OV/VO languages on the one hand and weak OV/VO ones on the other hand. Specifically speaking, for each of the twenty relevant correlations in tables 2 and 3, it has been shown whether Turkish matches with the dominant tendency established in Dryer (2014)'s statistical study or fits with the minority. In the case of the former, I have called Turkish strong OV/VO, if the latter, I have labeled it weak OV/VO.

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