

Definiteness vs. Indefiniteness in the Turkish language*

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ABSTRACT

Despite the lack of an element comparable to the “definite article” found in major western languages, which is alien to its structure, Turkish is often able to indicate whether a noun phrase is definite or indefinite through morphological, syntactic and suprasegmental resources. This paper examines in detail how an agglutinative synthetic language like Turkish uses these various strategies.

KEYWORDS

Turkish, definiteness, indefiniteness.

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“Definiteness” and ‘indefiniteness’ are the two values of an important grammatical category, which basically allow the distinguishing between entities/referents that are identifiable in a given context and entities/referents that are not. Speakers of western languages like English, French or Italian immediately associate these features with the “(definite/indefinite) article”:

Noun phrases with *the* and *a* and their semantic equivalents (or near-equivalents) in other languages can be thought of as the basic instantiations of definite and indefinite noun phrases, in that the definiteness or indefiniteness stem from the presence of the article, which has its essential semantic function to express this category (Lyons 1999: 2).

Scholars have devoted many studies to this category, which is rather complex and actually results from the overlapping of quantification (totality/partiality) and textual reference (known/unknown). This means that (in)definiteness is necessarily connected to further concepts such as uniqueness, specificity, familiarity, inclusiveness. Since these issues cannot be dealt with here, it is sufficient to mention two classic reference books, Hawkins (1978) and Lyons (1999), where this topic is thoroughly analysed.

This paper focuses on the way in which Turkish expresses this category. As is well known, Turkish is one of the best examples of agglutinative synthetic language and something like our “definite article” is totally alien to its structure. Nevertheless, this language is often able to mark definiteness (and indefiniteness) by using various (morphological, syntactic, suprasegmental) strategies, as will be explained in the following pages. My study aims also to sketch a contrastive analysis between Turkish and English (in certain cases, Italian too).

1. TURKISH MARKING OF INDEFINITENESS

Turkish makes an overt distinction between specific/referential (S/R) indefiniteness and nonspecific/nonreferential (NS/NR) indefiniteness. While S/R indefiniteness is morphologically marked, NS/NR indefiniteness usually remains unmarked (see 2.1.1.2, 2.1.1.2.1, 2.1.1.3, 2.1.1.3.1, 2.1.1.4, 2.1.1.5.1).

1.1 S/R INDEFINITENESS MARKERS

1.1.1 SINGULAR NOUNS

A singular countable noun is marked for S/R indefiniteness by the free morph *bir*, i.e. the Turkish numeral for ‘one’, which means the indefinite determiner if unstressed¹:

- (1) *bir* *adam* *geldi*
one NUM/IND man ABS came PAST-3sg
‘one [stressed]/a [unstressed] man came’.

Note, however, that a noun marked with *bir* can also have a NS/NR indefinite status especially when it indicates a singular object in the absolute case, see (40) b, (41)b, (57)a, (58)a, (59)a.

The position of *bir* in a noun phrase formed by adjective + substantive is different according to its meaning. When it functions as a numeral it must precede the adjective, when it functions as an indefinite determiner it is usually placed between the two elements of the phrase:

- (2) *bir* *güzel* *kız* *geldi*
one NUM/IND beautiful ABS girl ABS came PAST-3sg
‘one beautiful girl came’.
(2)a *güzel* *bir* *kız* *geldi*
beautiful ABS one NUM/IND girl ABS came PAST-3sg
‘a beautiful girl came’.

However, it should be noted that *bir* placed before the adjective can sometimes express the indefinite determiner too. In this case, it has been pointed out that the adjective has a purely qualifying, not distinctive value (Krámský 1972: 111-112, Lewis 2000: 51). A similar distinction is made by a Romance language like Italian, which can place the adjective before or after the noun for this purpose; so the Italian translation of (2) is ‘è venuta una bella ragazza’, that of (2)a would rather be ‘è venuta una ragazza bella’ (as distinct from a less beautiful girl).

1 Examples are mostly quoted from Jansky (1949), Underhill (1976), Dede (1986), Tura (1986), Kornfilt (1997), Lewis (2000), sometimes with adaptations; a few are mine.

1.1.2 PLURAL NOUNS

The status of S/R indefinite in plural nouns is marked by indefinite quantifiers like *bazı*, *kimi* ‘some’:

- (3) *bazı/kimi adamlar geldiler*
some IND men ABS-PL came PAST-3pl
‘some men came’.

1.2 INDEFINITENESS MARKERS FOR MASS NOUNS

NS/NR indefiniteness with mass nouns can be indicated by using expressions like *biraz* ‘a little, some’, *belli bir miktar* ‘a certain amount (of)’:

- (4) *biraz ekmek yetmez*
a little IND bread ABS suffice-not NEG-AOR-3sg
‘a little bread is not enough’.
- (5) *Hasan her zaman yemekte belli bir miktar şarap*
Hasan ABS each DIST time ABS in-meal LOC a certain amount IND wine
ABS
içer
drinks AOR-3sg
‘Hasan always drinks a certain amount of wine at (his) meals’.

The phrase *belli bir* ‘a certain’ is useful to give mass nouns the status of S/R indefinite:

- (6) *lokantada her zaman belli bir şarabı içtim*
at-restaurant LOC each DIST time ABS a certain IND wine ACC drink
AOR-1sg
‘at the restaurant I always drink a certain wine’.

2. TURKISH MARKING OF DEFINITENESS

An element comparable to the “definite article” does not exist in Turkish. Nevertheless, there are various ways of indicating definiteness, namely a) an inflectional case (especially the accusative and the genitive); b) the grammatical function of the nominal; c) modifiers placed before the head noun; d) word order; e) stress. Furthermore, the third-person possessive suffix can sometimes function as definiteness marker.

2.1 CASES AS DEFINITENESS MARKERS

2.1.1 ABSOLUTE

The first case of the Turkish noun inflection, characterised by the suffix -Ø, i.e. by the lack of any morphological mark, is called *yalın durum* ‘simple state’ by modern Turkish grammarians (Korkmaz 2007: 267). Western scholars use different names for indicating this case: some, bound to the Indo-European tradition, call it *nominative*, others *absolute* (name we will use too), others *casus generalis*. The absolute is neutral with respect to the category we are dealing with, namely it can express either definiteness or indefiniteness on the basis of its grammatical function (subject, predicate, object, first member of *izafet/tamlama*) and/or its modifiers.

2.1.1.1 GRAMMATICAL FUNCTIONS OF THE ABSOLUTE CASE

2.1.1.2 SUBJECT

The subject usually has the status of definite when it is topicalized, i.e. in initial position, and is not expressly marked as S/R indefinite:

- (7) adam geldi
man ABS came PAST-3sg
‘the man came’.
- (8) adam Türk değil
man ABS Turk ABS is-not NEG COP
‘the man is not a Turk’.
- (9) güzel kız gitti
beautiful ABS girl ABS went PAST-3sg
‘the beautiful girl went away’.

In some contexts, the subject without modifiers can indicate genericness as well:

- (10) adam ölümlü
man ABS mortal ABS
‘man is mortal’.
- (11) at binicisini tanır
horse ABS its-rider Px3sg-ACC knows AOR-3sg
‘a horse knows its rider’.

The subject of a verbal sentence, though in initial position, sometimes does not function as a topic, but as a simple attributive, with neutral stress on it. In other

words, it is ‘incorporated’ into the verb (Dede 1986: 153). In such cases, it obviously has a NS/NR indefinite status:

- (12) *köpek havlıyor*
 dog ABS is-barking PROGPR-3sg
 ‘a dog/dogs is/are barking’ [the same sentence could mean ‘the dog is barking’ if the stress is shifted on the verb].

When the subject is in non-initial position and therefore non-topicalized, it has to be interpreted as NS/NR indefinite, unless it carries contrastive stress as in (14)b or is marked by defining modifiers as in (17):

- (13)a *para Ali’de*
 money ABS in-Ali LOC
 ‘Ali has the money’.
- (13)b *Ali’de para var*
 in-Ali LOC money ABS existent EXIST
 ‘Ali has money’.
- (14)a *yerde çocuk yatıyordu*
 on-ground LOC child ABS was-lying PROGPAST-3sg
 ‘children were lying on the ground’.
- (14)b *yerde çocuk yatıyordu, annesi değil*
 on-ground LOC child ABS was-lying PROGPAST-3sg his/her-mother ABS-Px3sg
 is-not NEG COP
 ‘it was the child [with contrastive stress] who was lying on the ground, not his/her mother’.

The subject is overtly marked as definite when its modifiers are a) demonstrative pronouns, b) possessive suffixes, c) clauses ending in a participial form:

- (15) *bu ev çok küçük*
 this DEM house ABS very ADV small ABS
 ‘this house is very small’.
- (16) *evim büyük değil*
 my-house ABS-Px1sg large ABS is-not NEG COP
 ‘my house is not large’.
- (17) *seni arkadaşın bekliyor*
 you PERS2sg-ACC your-friend ABS-Px2sg is-waiting PROGPR-3sg
 ‘your friend is waiting for you’.
- (18) *okula giden çocuk kardeşimdir*
 to-school DAT going SBJPART child ABS my-brother-is ABS-Px1sg-COP
 ‘the child who goes/is going to school is my brother’.

- (19) çocuğun gittiği okul uzak
 child's GEN (pertaining-to-)his-going OBJPART-Px3sg school ABS far ABS
 'the school that the child goes/is going to is far-off'.

Modifiers of the (b)-(c) types are also possible with subjects marked as S/R indefinite:

- (20) bir arkadaşım geldi
 one/a NUM/IND my-friend ABS-Px1sg came PAST-3g
 'a friend of mine came'.
- (21) okula giden bir çocuk görüldü
 to-school DAT going SBJPART one/a NUM/IND child ABS was-seen
 PASS-PAST-3sg
 'a child who went/was going to school was seen'.

2.1.1.2.1 PLURAL SUBJECT

A plural subject usually neutralises the opposition definite vs. indefinite:

- (22) adamlar geldiler
 men ABS-PL came PAST-3pl
 'men/the men came'.
- (23) güzel kızlar gittiler
 beautiful ABS girls ABS-PL went PAST-3pl
 'beautiful girls/the beautiful girls went away'.

Word order can distinguish between definiteness and indefiniteness in the same way as for singular nouns:

- (24)a çocuklar yerde yatıyordu
 children ABS-PL on-ground LOC was-lying PROG-PAST-3sg
 'the children were lying on the ground'.
- (24)b yerde çocuklar yatıyordu
 on-ground LOC children ABS-PL was-lying PROG-PAST-3sg
 'there were children lying on the ground'.

According to Underhill (1976: 33) a copular sentence marks the plural subject as generic, while the lack of the copula marks it as definite. This distinction is not pointed out by Tura (1986):

- (25)a atlar tembeldir
 horses ABS-PL lazy-is ABS-COP
 'horses are lazy'.

- (33)a *Mehmet* *kasaptır*
 Mehmet ABS butcher-is ABS-COP
 ‘Mehmet is a [qualitative]/the [equative] butcher’.

The use of the indefinite determiner *bir* gives a S/R indefinite status to the predicate placing more emphasis on the statement:

- (33)b *Mehmet* *bir* *kasaptır*
 Mehmet ABS one/a NUM/IND butcher-is ABS-COP
 ‘Mehmet is (just) a butcher’.

- (34)a *ben* *adamım*
 I PERS1sg man-am ABS-1sg
 ‘I am a man’.

- (34)b *ben* *bir* *adamım*
 I PERS1sg one/a NUM/IND man-am ABS-1sg
 ‘I am a man [and not an animal]’.

However, if the predicate is a noun phrase including an adjective it is normal to place *bir* between adjective and noun to mark indefiniteness:

- (35) *ben* *büyük* *bir* *adamım* ‘
 I PERS1sg big ABS one/a NUM/IND man-am ABS-1sg
 ‘I am a big man’.

2.1.1.3.1 PLURAL PREDICATE

The distinction between definiteness and indefiniteness is overt in the case of plural predicates without modifiers, as the morphological mark of the plural +*lar* is taken only by predicates with a definite status, which have to show number agreement with the subject:

- (36)a *tanıştığımız* *adamlar* *mühendisler*
 (characterised-by-)our-meeting OBJPART-Px1pl men ABS-PL engineer-were
 ABS-PAST-3pl
 ‘the men whom we met were engineers’.

- (36)b *tanıştığımız* *adamlar* *mühendislerdi*
 (characterised-by-)our-meeting OBJPART-Px1pl men ABS-PL engineers-was
 ABS-PL-PAST-3sg
 ‘the men whom we met were the engineers’.

- (37)a *mahkemeye girenler* *yargıç* *değiller*
 to-court DAT entering(-persons) SBJPART-PL judge ABS are-not NEG COP-
 3pl ‘those entering the court are not judges’.

- (37)b *mahkemeye girenler* yargıçlar *değil*
 to-court DAT entering(-persons) SBJPART-PL judges ABS-PL is-not NEG COP
 ‘those entering the court are not the judges’.

Note however the following sentence (from Jansky 1949: 32) where an indefinite noun phrase functioning as predicate shows number agreement with a plural subject:

- (38) *Ahmet ve Mehmet çalışkan çocuklardır*
 Ahmet ABS and CONJ Mehmet ABS hardworking ABS boys-is ABS-PL-COP
 ‘Ahmet and Mehmet are hardworking boys’.

2.1.1.4 OBJECT

The (direct) object in the absolute case without modifiers marks NS/NR indefiniteness and neutralisation of the opposition singular vs. plural. It is said to be ‘incorporated’ into the verb:

- (39) *kitap okumayı severim*
 book ABS read INF-ACC I-like AOR-1sg
 ‘I like reading a book/books’.

- (40)a *Mehmet mektup yazdı*
 Mehmet ABS letter ABS wrote PAST-3sg
 ‘Mehmet wrote a letter/letters’.

- (41)a *ekmek aldım*
 bread ABS I-bought PAST-1sg
 ‘I bought bread’.

The use of the indefinite determiner *bir* indicates that only one thing is involved:

- (40)b *Mehmet bir mektup yazdı*
 Mehmet ABS one/a NUM/IND letter ABS wrote PAST-3sg
 ‘Mehmet wrote a/one letter’.

- (41)b *bir ekmek aldım*
 one/a NUM/IND bread ABS I-bought PAST-1sg
 ‘I bought a loaf of bread’.

An indefinite quantity greater than a single unit is marked by the plural, preceded or not by quantifiers like *bazı* ‘some’:

- (42) *Mehmet (bazı) mektuplar yazdı*
 Mehmet ABS (some IND) letters ABS-PL wrote PAST-3sg
 ‘Mehmet wrote (some) letters’.

The same rules apply when the object is a noun phrase:

- (43)a *ayeni kitap aldım*
 new ABS book ABS I-bought PAST-1sg
 ‘I bought a new book/new books’.
- (43)b *yeni bir kitap aldım*
 new ABS one/a NUM/IND book ABS I-bought PAST-1sg
 ‘I bought a new book’.
- (43)c *yeni kitaplar aldım*
 new ABS books ABS-PL I-bought PAST-1sg
 ‘I bought new books’.

For the marking of an indefinite object with the accusative see 2.1.2.

2.1.1.5 FIRST MEMBER OF IZAFET/TAMLAMA

The word of Arabic origin *izafet*, literally ‘annexation’, was traditionally used by grammarians to indicate the Turkish (possessive) noun phrase. Though this name is still kept in some modern grammars (e. g. Lewis 2000: 40), it has been replaced by the neologism *tamlama* in the current Turkish linguistic terminology (Korkmaz 1992: 145). The *izafet/tamlama* structure is - as a common feature of the Turkic syntax - regressive, namely the determiner always precedes the head noun, which usually takes the third-person possessive suffix. There are basically two types of this structure, the one with the first member, i.e. the determiner, in the absolute case, the other with the determiner in the genitive case. The former marks an exclusively NS/NR indefiniteness of the determiner, which has therefore a merely qualificatory value:

- (44)a *üniversite profesörü seni bekliyor*
 university ABS its-professor ABS-Px3sg you PERS2sg-ACC is-waiting PROGPR-3sg
 ‘the university professor is waiting for you’.
- (45)a *çocuk kitabı aldım*
 child ABS his-book ABS-Px3sg I-bought PAST-1sg
 ‘I bought the children’s book’.
- (46) *açoban kızı koyuna bakar*
 shepherd ABS his-girl ABS-Px3sg to-sheep DAT looks AOR-3sg
 ‘the shepherd-girl minds the sheep’.

Any modifier that precedes a determiner in the absolute case necessarily refers to the head noun:

- (44) *bir üniversite profesörü seni bekliyor*
 one/a NUM/IND university ABS its-professor ABS-Px3sg you PERS2sg-ACC
 is-waiting PROGPR-3sg
 ‘a university professor is waiting for you’.
- (45) *yeni çocuk kitabı aldım*
 new ABS child ABS his-book ABS-Px3sg I-bought PAST-1sg
 ‘I bought the new children’s book’.
- (46) *gördüğüm çoban kızını koyuna bakar*
 (characterised-by-)my-seeing OBJPART-Px1sg shepherd ABS his-girl
 ABS-Px3sg
 to-sheep DAT looks AOR-3sg
 ‘the shepherd-girl whom I see/saw minds the sheep’.

2.1.1.5.1 SUBJECT OF NOMINALIZED CLAUSES

The Turkish subordinate nominalized clauses are constructed like an *izafet/tamlama* group with the determiner acting as subject and the head noun acting as predicate. An important type of nominalized clause is the noun clause, term which Kornfilt 1997: 49 uses as referring to clauses that have the same distribution as regular noun phrases. The subject of a noun clause is put into different cases according to definiteness: the absolute marks it as indefinite, while the genitive marks it as definite:

- (47) *a sulh yapıldığı rivayeti çıktı*
 peace ABS (the-fact-of-)its-being-made PASS-FNOM- Px3g its-rumour
 ABS-Px3sg
 went-out PAST-3sg
 ‘rumour has it that peace has been made’.
- (47) *b vapurun battığı bildiriliyor*
 ship’s GEN (the-fact-of-)its-sinking FNOM-Px3sg is-being-made-known
 CAUS-PASS-PROGPR-3sg
 ‘it has been reported that the ship has sunk’.
- (48) *a çocuğu arı soktuğunu duydum*
 child ACC bee ABS (the fact-of-)its-stinging FNOM-Px3sg-ACC I-heard
 PAST-1sg
 ‘I heard that bees/a bee stung the child’.

- (48)b *çocuğu annin sokuğunu duydu*
 child ACC bee's GEN (the fact-of-)its-stinging FNOM-Px3sg-ACC I-heard
 PAST-1sg
 'I heard that the bee stung the child'.

Another kind of nominalized clause is the 'gerund-equivalent' (as Lewis 2000: 184 calls it), i.e. a clause equivalent in meaning to one of the many adverbial forms of the Turkish verb called 'converbs' by most western scholars and *zarf-fiiler* by Turkish ones. Its subject is always put into the absolute, whether it is definite or not:

- (49)a *soyadı kanunu çıkacağı*
 surname ABS its-law ABS-Px3sg (pertaining-to-)its-future-going-out
 FOBJPART-
zaman ben Avrupa gitmişim
 Px3sg time ABS I PERS1sg to-Europe DAT had-gone PPART-PAST-1sg
 'when the surname law was about to be promulgated, I had gone to Europe'.
- (49)b *insan vasiyetnamesini yazacağı*
 man ABS his-will Px3sg-ACC (pertaining-to-)his-future-writing FOBJ
 PART-Px3sg
zaman avukatını çağırmalı
 time ABS his-lawyer Px3sg-ACC call-must NEC-3sg
 'when a man is about to write his will he should call his lawyer'.

2.1.1.2 ACCUSATIVE

The accusative, called *belirtme durumu* (TS 2005: 240) or *yükleme durumu* (Korkmaz 2007: 277) by Turkish grammarians, takes the suffix *-(y)I* as case marker and is tightly bound to the category of definiteness as it usually indicates the definite object:

- (50) *kitabı aldım*
 book ACC I-bought PAST-1sg
 'I bought the book'.
- (51) *yeni evleri gördüm*
 new ABS houses PL-ACC I-saw PAST-1sg
 'I saw the new houses'.

Lexemes that are definite by their nature like proper nouns and pronouns must have accusative marking when they have the function of object:

- (52) *Ankara'yı gezdik*
 Ankara ACC we-toured PAST-1pl
 'we toured Ankara'.

- (53) bunu sevmiyorum
 this ACC I-am-not-liking NEG-PROGPR-1sg
 'I don't like this'.

The object must be accusative-marked also when it is already made definite by some modifier:

- (54) şu kitabı aldım
 that DEM book ACC I-bought PAST-1sg
 'I bought that book'.
- (55) evimizi kiraladı
 our-house Px1pl-ACC he/she-rented PAST-3sg
 'he/she rented our house'.
- (56) okula giden kızları gördük
 to-school DAT going SBJPART girls PL-ACC we-saw PAST-1pl
 'we saw the girls who went/were going to school'.

If *bir* precedes a noun in the accusative it may mean the numeral 'one', but, with different stress, it indicates also S/R indefiniteness, see (58)b, (59)b:

- (57)a bir kitap okudum
 one/a NUM/IND book ABS I-read PAST-1sg
 'I read a book'.
- (57)b *bir* kitabı okudum
 one/a NUM/IND book ACC I-read PAST-1sg
 'I read (only/just) one book'.

An indefinite object can also take the accusative case marker in the following cases:

a) If it expresses S/R indefiniteness:

- (58)a *her* gün bir gazete okuyorum
 every DIST day ABS one/a NUM/IND newspaper ABS I-am-reading
 PROGPR-1sg
 'every day I read a newspaper'.
- (58)b *her* gün bir gazeteyi okuyorum
 every DIST day ABS one/a NUM/IND newspaper ACC I-am-reading
 PROGPR-1sg 'every day I read a (particular) newspaper'.
- (59)a bir öğrenci arıyorum. Bulamıyorum
 one/a NUM/IND student ABS I-am-looking-for PROGPR-1sg I-can-not-find
 ABIL-NEG-PROGPR-1sg
 'I am looking for a student. I can't find one'.

- (59)b bir öğrenciyi arıyorum. Bulamıyorum
 one/a NUM/IND student ACC I-am-looking-for PROGPR-1sg I-can-not-find
 ABIL-NEG-PROGPR-1sg
 ‘I am looking for a student. I can’t find him’.
- (60)a dün Hasanın tavsiye ettiği
 yesterday ADV Hasan’s GEN recommendation ABS (pertaining-to-)his-doing
birkaç kitap okudum
 OBJPART-Px3sg a few IND book ABS I-read PAST-1sg
 ‘yesterday I read some books that Hasan recommended’.
- (60)b dün Hasanın tavsiye ettiği
 yesterday ADV Hasan’s GEN recommendation ABS (pertaining-to-)his-doing
birkaç kitabı okudum
 OBJPART-Px3sg a few IND book ACC I-read PAST-1sg
 ‘yesterday I read some (specific) books that Hasan recommended’.

In (60)a “the speaker does not presume that the hearer knows that Hasan recommended any books at all. Furthermore, it is likely that Hasan recommended more books than the speaker read” (Kornfilt 1997: 278). An Italian translation of this sentence could be ‘Ieri ho letto dei libri che Hasan ha raccomandato’. In (60)b

the speaker read a certain number of books that Hasan recommended; s/he is thinking of specific books and is presuming that the hearer knows that Hasan did recommend certain books, if not the identity of those books. Furthermore, the speaker exhausted the list of books recommended by Hasan (Kornfilt 1997: 278).

An Italian translation of this sentence could be ‘Ieri ho letto quei libri che Hasan ha raccomandato’.

- b) If the object is removed from its unmarked position - immediately before the verb - for topicalizing or other reasons:

- (61)a sabahları kahve severim
 in-the-morning ADV coffee ABS I-like AOR-1sg
 ‘I like coffee in the morning’.
- (61)b kahveyi sabahları severim
 coffee ACC in-the-morning ADV I-like AOR-1sg
 ‘It is coffee that I like in the morning’.

- c) If the object is generic, its marking through the accusative is optional:

- (62) çocuklar çikolata(yı) sever
 children ABS-PL chocolate ABS - ACC likes AOR-3sg
 ‘children like chocolate’.

However, when the generic object is plural, the accusative case marker is obligatory:

- (63) *bir öğretmen öğrencileri sevmeli*
 one/a NUM/IND teacher ABS students PL-ACC like-must NEC-3sg
 ‘a teacher must like students’.

2.1.3 GENITIVE

The genitive, called *tamlayan durumu* (TS 2005: 1898) or *ilgi durumu* (Korkmaz 2007: 268) by Turkish grammarians, takes the suffix *-(y)In* and, as already mentioned, serves to mark the definite status of the first element of an *izafet/tamlama* group (Lewis 2000: 41):

- (64) *çocuğun kitabı ilginç*
 child’s GEN his/her-book ABS-Px3sg interesting ABS
 ‘the child’s book is interesting’.
- (65) *çocukların kitapları ilginç*
 children’s PL-GEN their-books ABS-Pxpl interesting ABS
 ‘the books of the children are interesting’.

The genitive also marks S/R indefiniteness:

- (66) *bir çocuğun kitabı ilginç*
 one/a NUM/IND child’s GEN his/her-book ABS-Px3sg interesting ABS
 ‘the book of a child [with different stress the noun phrase could mean ‘the book of one child’] is interesting’
- (67) *küçük bir çocuğun kitabı ilginç*
 small ABS one/a NUM/IND child’s GEN his/her-book ABS-Px3sg interesting ABS
 ‘the book of a small child is interesting’.
- (68) *bazı kitapların sayfalarını okudum*
 some IND of-books PL-GEN their-pages ABS-Px3pl-ACC I-read PAST-1sg
 ‘I read the pages of some books’.

The subject of subordinate nominalized clauses, whose predicate is both participles in *-AcAk*, *-dik/-dük* and a verbal noun in *-mA*, always takes the genitive marker when it has a definite or S/R indefinite status except for cases mentioned in 2.1.1.5.1:

- (69) *çocukların oynadıkları park çok büyüktür*
 children’s PL-GEN (pertaining-to-)their-playing OBJPART-Px3pl park ABS very
 ADV large-is ABS-COP
 ‘the park where the children play is very large’.

- (70) bir arkadaşımın geleceğini
 one/a NUM/IND my-friend's Px1sg-GEN (the-fact-of-)his-future-coming
 FFNOM-
 söyledim
 Px3sg-ACC I-said PAST-1sg
 'I said that a friend of mine would come'.
- (71) bu mektubun açılmasını
 this DEM letter's GEN its-(action-of-)being-opened PASS-ANOM-Px3sg-ACC
 istiyorum
 I-am-wanting PROGPR-1sg
 'I want this letter to be opened'.

For other examples see (19), (30), (47)b, (48)b.

3. THE THIRD-PERSON POSSESSIVE SUFFIX AS 'DEFINITE ARTICLE'

According to the great turcologist K. Grønbech, the third-person possessive suffix of the Turkic languages originally had the function of a veritable definite article:

Im folgenden gebrauche ich für das genannte Suffix [scil. das Possessivsuffix 3. Person] die Benennung Artikel, nicht nur weil die uns an erster Stelle interessierende grammatische Funktion dieser Form sich mit der unseres bestimmten Artikels vielfach deckt, sondern auch deshalb weil ich diese Funktion als die ursprüngliche ansehe; die sonst übliche Benennung, Possessivsuffix, bezieht sich auf eine spezielle, mit der Zeit immer wichtiger gewordene Auswirkung der ursprünglichen und umfassenderen Bedeutung (Grønbech 1936: 92).

This viewpoint has often been criticised by later scholars (see Johanson 1990: 177), but it is a matter of fact that "the possessive significance of the suffix of the 3rd person can completely recede when it defines or determines a noun, or, more often, a pronoun" (Menges 1968: 113) in all Turkic languages. Consequently, this suffix has a substantivizing and defining force in Turkish too, by virtue of which an adjective can become a (definite) noun or pronoun:

- (72) zengini aynı şeyi söylüyor, fakiri
 its-rich ABS-Px3sg same ABS thing ACC says PROGPR-3sg its-poor ABS-Px3sg
 aynı şeyi söylüyor
 same ABS thing ACC is-saying PROGPR-3sg
 'the rich man says the same thing, the poor man says the same thing'.
- (73) sizden akıllısı yok
 (compared-to-)you PERS2pl-ABL its-clever ABS-Px3sg non-existent
 NEGEXIST
 'there is none cleverer than you'.

- (74) *bunu bana birisi verdi*
 this ACC to-me PERS1sg-DAT its-one NUM/IND-Px3sg gave PAST-3sg
 ‘someone gave me this’.
- (75) *bazısı bu gazeteyi sever*
 its-some IND-Px3sg this ABS newspaper ACC likes AOR-3sg
 ‘some people like this newspaper’.
- (76) *kaldır bunu, başkasını getir*
 take-away IMP-2sg this ACC its-other IND-Px3sg-ACC bring IMP-2sg
 ‘take this away, bring another’.
- (77) *hangisi geldi?*
 its-which INT-Px3sg came PAST-3sg
 ‘which of them came?’

The third-person possessive suffix serves as definiteness marker of Turkish nouns in the case of the so-called ‘Janus construction’ (Lewis 2000: 46). This term refers to a third-person linking in one sentence between two related or closely connected people, who are both defined by the suffix in question:

- (78) *oğlu babasına bir mektup yazdı*
 his-son ABS-Px3sg to-his-father Px3sg-DAT one/a NUM/IND letter ABS wrote
 PAST-3sg
 ‘the son wrote a letter to the father’.
- (79) *hastası doktorunu arıyor*
 his-patient ABS-Px3sg his-doctor Px3sg-ACC is-seeking PROGPR-3sg
 ‘the patient is seeking the doctor’.
- (80) *hocası talebesine bakar*
 his-teacher ABS-Px3sg to-his-pupil Px3sg-DAT looks-after AOR-3sg
 ‘the teacher looks after the pupil’.

GRAMMATICAL ABBREVIATIONS

1pl	first person plural
1sg	first person singular
2pl	second person plural
2sg	second person singular
3pl	third person plural
3sg	third person singular
ABIL	abilitative
ABL	ablative
ABS	absolute
ACC	accusative
ADV	adverb
AOR	aorist
ANOM	action nominal
CAUS	causative
CONJ	conjunction
COP	copula
DAT	dative
DEM	demonstrative
DIST	distributive
EXIST	existential
FFNOM	future factive nominal
FNOM	factive nominal
FOBJP	future object participle
GEN	genitive
IMP	imperative
IND	indefinite
INF	infinitive
INT	interrogative
LOC	locative
NEC	necessitative

NEG	negative
NEGCOP	negative copula
NEGEXIST	negative existential
NS/NR	nonspecific/nonreferential
NUM	numeral
OBJPART	object participle
PASS	passive
PAST	past
PERS	personal pronoun
PL	plural
PPART	past participle
PROGPAST	progressive past
PROGPR	progressive present
Px	possessive suffix
SBJPART	subject participle
S/R	specific/referential

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