

On the Distribution of “-mA+sI(n)” Clauses and Control in Turkish

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This work aims to capture the overall distribution of -mA+sI(n) clauses in subject and object positions. While doing so, it motivates its argument around a control-related distributional puzzle which includes ambiguity. The main proposal of this work is that -mA+sI(n) clauses have different syntactic structures although they seem identical in terms of overt morphosyntax and this may possibly lead to the observed ambiguity. This further brings up the idea that control in Turkish may not be a uniformed phenomenon.

Introduction and the Problem: Control refers to a relation between two arguments where the unpronounced argument, the controllee, is dependent on an overtly expressed argument, the controller, in terms of interpretation (Potsdam & Haddad, 2017). Control structures in Turkish have received some attention in the literature. Examples include Oded (2006) focusing on general properties of control in Turkish, Göksu (2018) working on the relationship between logophoricity and NOC, and Słodowicz (2007) investigating complement control structures in detail. The focus of these accounts were -mA clauses, as in (1). Typical control structures in Turkish are built using this infinitival affix -mA, which notably doesn't bear agreement marking and necessitates a co-indexed reading with the matrix subject:

(1) Ben_i [_i yemek yap-ma]-y₁ sev-iyor-um. (Co-indexed reading only)
I food make-INF-ACC like-PROG-1.SG
'I like cooking.'

On the other hand, -mA+sI(n) clauses have what appears to be the third person singular agreement marker, -sI(n). Notably, -mA+sI(n) clauses may allow both no-control and co-indexed readings without any morphosyntactic contrast, as shown in (2).

(2) Ben_i [_{i/j} yemek yap-ma-sın]-₁ sev-iyor-um. (Both no-control and co-indexed readings)
I food make-INF-POSS.3SG-ACC like-PROG-1.SG
'I like cooking.'
'I like her/his cooking.'

Crucially, not every predicate allows this ambiguity as shown in (3), where we only have the no-control reading with the verb “*iste-*”:

(3) Ben_i [_{*i/j} yemek yap-ma-sın]-₁ ist[e]-iyor-um. (No control reading only)
I food make-INF-POSS.3SG-ACC want-PROG-1.SG
'I want her/him to cook.'

In addition, for majority of speakers, some predicates such as “*bil-*” even favor the co-indexed reading only:

(4) Ben_i [_i yemek yap-ma-sın]-₁ bil-iyor-um. (Co-indexed reading only)
I food make-INF-POSS.3SG-ACC know-PROG-1.SG
'I know how to cook.'

It should be emphasized that the same verb which has a co-indexed reading in (1) has the potential to resist the co-indexed reading with -mA+sI(n) complements as shown in (2). This is also the case with the verb “*iste-*” which resists the co-indexed reading in (3), but not in (5).

(5) Ben_i [_i yemek yap-ma]-y₁ ist[e]-iyor-um. (Co-indexed reading only)
I food make-INF-ACC want-PROG-1.SG
'I want to cook.'

Interestingly, we do not observe the same pattern between (6) and (4) with the verb “*bil-*”:

(6) Ben_i [_i yemek yap-ma]-y₁ bil-iyor-um. (Co-indexed reading only)
I food make-INF-ACC know-PROG-1.SG
'I know how to cook.'

Furthermore, -mA+sI(n) clauses have distinct distributional patterns in the subject position, as well. This is summarized in Table 1:

	With nominal predicates	With unaccusative verbs	With adjectival predicates	With deadjectival verbs	With transitive verbs	With ditransitive verbs
Reading(s) retained	Only no-control reading	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Both no-control and arbitrary reading e.g., <i>kal-</i> (be left) ▪ Only no-control reading e.g., <i>yet</i> (suffice) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Both no-control and arbitrary reading e.g., <i>kolay</i> (easy) ▪ Only no-control reading e.g., <i>kesin</i> (certain) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Both no-control and arbitrary reading e.g., <i>kolaylaş-</i> (become easy) ▪ Only no-control reading e.g., <i>kesinleş-</i> (become certain) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Both no-control and co-indexed reading e.g., <i>yor-</i> (tire) ▪ Only no-control reading e.g., <i>rahatsız et-</i> (annoy) 	Both co-indexed and no control reading

Table 1: Summary of the distribution of control readings in -mA+sI(n) clauses as a subject

The current literature on control in Turkish doesn't fully capture these observations. While Słodowicz (2007)'s classification on object control in Turkish explains the no-control-only and co-indexed-only readings in examples (3) and (4), it fails to account for cases as (2) where both no-control and co-indexed readings are possible. Similarly, though Göksu (2018)'s analysis accounts for the distribution of -mA+sI(n) clauses in the subject position with the no control-only-reading, it doesn't explain the cases where we have ambiguity between no-control and arbitrary or no-control and co-indexed readings.

Proposal: I propose that the ambiguity we see may be a result of -mA+sI(n) clauses having distinct syntactic structures. Contrary to Göksu (2018)'s proposal on -mA nominalizations being TPs, I argue that -mA+sI(n) clauses with the arbitrary and co-indexed readings are AspPs. These are evidenced by adverb attachment properties of these clauses. To exemplify, we see that the -mA+sI(n) clause with the arbitrary reading can only be modified by adverbs targeting below Asp_{habitual} in (7a) and (7b):

(7a) [* (Açıkçası / Allah'tan / sözde / büyük ihtimalle / bir zamanlar / belki / muhakkak / bir ihtimal/
frankly / fortunately / allegedly / probably / once / perhaps / necessarily / possibly

/genellikle) yemek yap-ma-sı] eğlenceli değil.
generally food make-INF-POSS.3.SG fun NEG.

'[Cooking frankly/fortunately/allegedly/probably/once/perhaps/necessarily/possibly/generally] isn't fun.'

(7b) [Yeniden / sık sık / bilerek / hızlı yemek yap-ma-sı] eğlenceli değil.
again / often / intentionally / quickly food make-INF-POSS.3.SG fun NEG.

'[Cooking again/ often/intentionally/quickly] is not fun.'

I further argue that some mA+sI(n) clauses having the no-control reading are TPs while the rest are AspPs. In example (8), the adverb "bir zamanlar" that targets T is acceptable in the no-control reading only while both readings prohibit it in example (9):

(8) [*_i/j bir zamanlar hukuk oku-ma-sı] beni-i mutlu ed-iyor.
once law study-INF-POSS.3.SG I-ACC make happy-PROG.3.SG
'[His/her studying law once] makes me happy.'
'[Studying law once] makes me happy.'

(No control reading= Acceptable)
(Co-indexed reading= Not acceptable)

(9) [_arb/j *(bir zamanlar) kitap oku-ma-sı] kolay.
once book read- INF-POSS.3.SG easy
'[His/her reading a book once] is easy.'
'[Reading books once] is easy.'

(No control reading= Not acceptable)
(Arbitrary reading= Not acceptable)

Conclusion: The proposed size difference of -mA+sI(n) clauses suggests that distinct structures may possibly be leading to different compositional paths to control, which is an aspect to be explored in detail. Even though the ambiguity between no-control and co-indexed readings, e.g., with transitive and ditransitive verbs, are explained by this proposal, the remaining cases still need further explanation. Whether there are any semantic differences between these clauses and properties that unify the predicates that permit the ambiguity are also to be further investigated. In those regards, this work is still in progress.