

Perceiver-oriented reflexives in Turkish: semantics defeats syntax in reflexive resolution

Metehan Oğuz & Elsi Kaiser (University of Southern California)

Form-specific accounts [1,2] claim anaphoric forms can exhibit *asymmetric* sensitivities to linguistic information, e.g. [2] find pronouns are less sensitive to syntax and more sensitive to semantics than reflexives in English picture-NPs—unlike standard accounts which assume different forms have complementary patterns. However, prior work has mostly focused on categorically-distinct anaphors (e.g. pronouns vs reflexives). It is unclear if *two anaphors from the same category* (e.g. two types of reflexives) show form-specific behaviors or pattern together (but see [3,4]). **We test (i)** what factors affect interpretation of two reflexives in Turkish and **(ii)** if the two forms show form-specific patterns regarding the effects of syntax vs semantics.

Turkish has simple (*kendi*) and complex reflexives (*kendi-si*). Both can be bound by a non-local antecedent (ex.1) [e.g.5,6,7], violating Binding Principle A. This has led to contrasting theoretical proposals. Some argue *kendisi* can function as a logophoric reflexive (so can be bound non-locally) and *kendi* is a strict reflexive anaphor [e.g.7]. But others argue that only *kendi*, not *kendisi*, can be a logophoric reflexive [e.g.9]. Another view suggests that *kendisi* can function as a pronoun when used non-locally [10]. These yield **different predictions regarding semantic effects**, because logophoric reflexives are known to prefer antecedents that are *sources of information* [e.g.11], whereas pronouns are known to prefer *perceivers* [e.g.2], and so-called long-distance reflexives can be used non-locally without any special semantic function.

Earlier Turkish studies used sentences with one local and one non-local referent (ex.1). They show that the reflexives can be used non-locally, but do not test whether semantic role matters (as there is only one non-local referent whose role is not systematically manipulated). To fill this gap, we directly test how semantic and syntactic factors affect interpretation of *kendi* and *kendisi*.

Exp.1 ($N_{\text{SUBJ}}=100$, $N_{\text{ITEM}}=24$) used targets (ex.2a) with two plausible antecedents, both non-local nouns in the main clause. We used other-directed verbs (e.g. *scold*) in the embedded clause to ensure the local subject is not a plausible antecedent. We manipulated **(i) semantic roles** (*perceiver/source*) of non-local nouns (within-subjects) and **(ii) anaphor type** (*kendi/kendisi*, between-subjects). The task was to answer questions (ex.3) probing reflexive interpretation.

Predictions/semantic role: If *kendi* and *kendisi* can function as logophors, they should favor *sources*. But if these forms function as pronouns, they should favor *perceivers*. Alternatively, if these form are long-distance reflexives, they should be insensitive to semantics. **Predictions/anaphoric form:** Theoretical work claims *kendi* and *kendisi* differ in anaphoric properties (e.g. logophoric, pronoun, long-distance reflexive, [8,9,10]). This suggests they may differ in sensitivity to semantics, in line with form-specific accounts [2]. But if both *kendi* and *kendisi* are in the same category (e.g. both logophors), they may be equally sensitive to the semantic factors.

Exp1 results (Fig.1) show that both *kendi* and *kendisi* prefer subjects over objects, and perceivers over sources (p 's<0.01). There are no interactions between anaphor form and semantic role ($p>.05$): *kendi/kendisi* are pattern alike in terms of their sensitivity to semantic role.

Exp2 ($N_{\text{SUBJ}}=87$, $N_{\text{ITEM}}=12$) pitted semantic role and syntactic locality against each other. The design and items were as in Exp1, but now the *local referent was also available as an antecedent* (ex. 2b). Embedded verbs were normed to ensure all 3 referents were plausible antecedents.

Predictions/semantics vs syntax: If *syntactic constraints outweigh semantic constraints*, both forms should prefer the local subject. If *semantic constraints are more powerful*, the anaphors should mostly be interpreted non-locally (should prefer the perceiver, given Exp1).

Exp2 Results (Figs.2&3) yield no local-subject preference: Both forms are rarely interpreted locally, though *kendi* (39%) yields more local interpretations than *kendisi* (17%, $p<0.01$). Moreover, both forms marginally prefer **perceiver** DPs ($p=.08$), replicating Exp1's perceiver bias.

Conclusions: We show both reflexives in Turkish show pronoun-like properties when used non-locally (*perceiver-oriented*)—a striking result since theoretical work typically treats them as logophors. This is the first experimental evidence for the dual-function hypothesis [10], though it should be expanded to include *kendi*. Also, our results show forms typically regarded as having the same anaphoric category (reflexives) can show asymmetric sensitivities to linguistic factors.

- (1) Ali₁ [Can-in₂ {*kendi/kendisi*}_{1/2}-ni sev-diğ-i-ni] bil-iyor.
 Ali Can-GEN self-ACC like-NMLZ-3SG-ACC know-PRES
 “Ali₁ knows that Can₂ likes *him*_{1/2}.”
- (2a) Exp 1: Ali₁ Can-{a/dan}₂ [hoca-nın₃ {*kendi/kendisi*}_{1/2/3}-ni azarla-dığı-nı] {*söyle/öğren*}-di.
 Ali Can-DAT/ABL teacher-GEN self-ACC scold-NMLZ-ACC tell/learn-PST
 “Ali₁ told Can₂ that the teacher₃ scolded *self*_{1/2/#3}.”
- (2b) Exp 2: Ali₁ Can-{a/dan}₂ [Ahmet-in₃ {*kendi/kendisi*}_{1/2/3}-ni sev-diğ-i-ni] {*söyle/öğren*}-di.
 Ali Can-DAT/ABL teacher-GEN self-ACC like-NMLZ-ACC tell/learn-PST
 “Ali₁ told Can₂ that Ahmet₃ likes *self*_{1/2/3}.”
- (3) Who did {the teacher/Can} {scold/like}?

Table 1. Conditions	<i>refl</i>	Sub role	PERC = favored by semantics: perceiver, LOCAL = favored by syntax: local
	kendi	perceiver	Ali _{PERC} Candan _{SRC} [Ahmetin _{LOCAL} <i>kendini</i> sevdiğini] öğrendi. Ali _{PERC} learned from Can _{SRC} that Ahmet _{LOCAL} liked self.
	kendi	source	Ali _{SRC} Cana _{PERC} [Ahmetin _{LOCAL} <i>kendini</i> sevdiğini] söyledi. Ali _{SRC} told Can _{PERC} that Ahmet _{LOCAL} liked self.
	kendisi	perceiver	Ali _{PERC} Candan _{SRC} [Ahmetin _{LOCAL} <i>kendisini</i> sevdiğini] öğrendi. Ali _{PERC} learned from Can _{SRC} that Ahmet _{LOCAL} liked self.
	kendisi	source	Ali _{SRC} Cana _{PERC} [Ahmetin _{LOCAL} <i>kendisini</i> sevdiğini] söyledi. Ali _{SRC} told Can _{PERC} that Ahmet _{LOCAL} liked self.

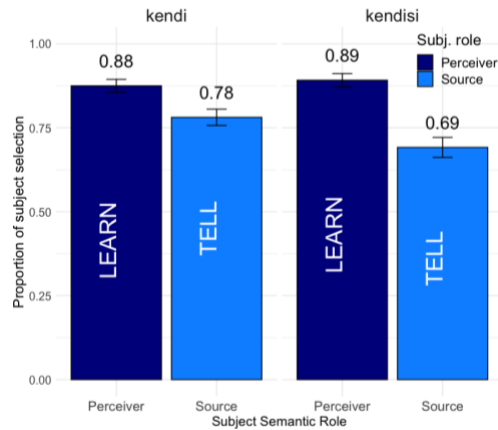


Fig. 1. Exp. 1 Proportion of non-local subject selection

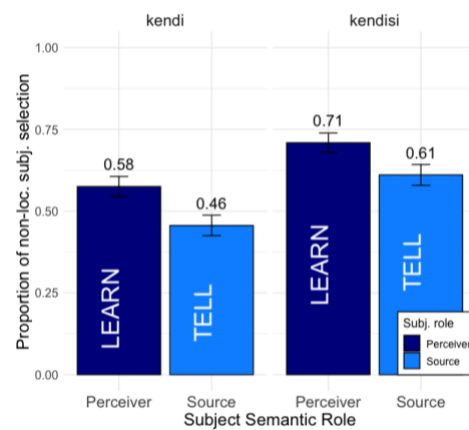


Fig. 2. Exp. 2 Proportion of non-local subject selections

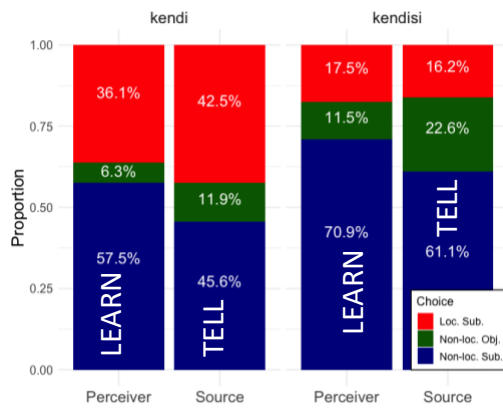


Fig. 3 Exp.2 Distribution of selections

References. [1] Kaiser & Trueswell. 2008 Interpreting pronouns and demonstratives in Finnish. *LCP*. [2] Kaiser et al. 2009. Structural and semantic constraints. *Cogn.* [3] Lyu. 2023. *Syntactic and non-syntactic factors in reflexive pronoun resolution in Mandarin Chinese*. [4] Huang & Liu. 2001. Logophoricity, attitudes, and ziji at the interface. *LDR* [5] Özbek & Kahraman. 2016. Interpretations of Turkish reflexive pronouns *kendi* and *kendisi*... [6] Gračanin-Yüksek et al. 2017. The Interaction of Contextual and Syntactic Information in the Processing of Turkish Anaphors. *JPR*. [7] Bakay & Dillon. 2022. C-command effects in binding third-person reflexives and pronoun in Turkish. [8] İşsever. 2015. Small pro as a defective binder. [9] Sezer, 1980. On reflexivization in Turkish. [10] Kornfilt. 2001. Local and long-distance reflexives in Turkish. *LDR* [11] Sells, 1987. Aspects of Logophoricity. *LI*