Theta Role Effect in Nominalizer Selection: Evidence from Turkish

Introduction: In Turkish, nominalization is the unmarked way of subordinate clause formation. These embedded clauses take the form of DP-shelled TPs with Gen(itive) case-marked subjects and Poss(essive) Agr(eement)-bearing predicates. The nominalizers forming the subordinations -{-mA}, {-DIK}, {-(y)AcAK}, and {-(y)Iş}- are selected by different matrix verbs (1-2).

(1) Ali [Ayşe-**nin** git-**tik/-ecek/-iş/*-me-sin**] -i   duy-du.
   Ali-NOM Ayşe-GEN leave-DIK/AcAK/Iş/mA-POSS.3.SG-ACC hear-PST.3.SG
   'Ali heard that Ayşe left/ will leave.'

(2) Ali [Ayşe-nin git-**me/*-tik/*-ecek/*-iş**-in]-i   bekle-di.
   Ali-NOM Ayşe-GEN leave-mA/DIK/AcAK/Iş-POSS.3.SG-ACC wait-PST.3.SG
   'Ali waited Ayşe's leaving.'

So far three nominalizers {-mA}, and {-DIK}/{-(y)AcAK} have been studied and classified as 'action' versus 'factive' nominals by focusing on aspect and factivity of the embedded clause (Erguvanlı-Taylan, 1998) or as 'infinitival' versus 'participial' nominals respectively (Csato 2010, Johanson 2013).

Problem: Firstly, none of the classifications in the literature has identified a conclusive pattern as to how these nominalizations are selected by only certain embedding predicates. Secondly, the forms nominalized by {-DIK} and {-(y)AcAK} cannot be promoted to subject position if the embedded predicate is not intransitive whereas the ones formed by {-(y)Iş} and {-mA} can (3-4).

(3) [Ali-nin git-**tik**/-**ecek**-i]   Ayşe-yi ***üz-dü /**   **doğru**.
   Ali-GEN leave-DIK/AcAK-POSS.3.SG-NOM Ayşe-ACC upset-PST.3.SG true
   'That Ali left/ will leave upset Ayşe / is true.'

(4) [Ali-nin git-**me/-iş**-i]   Ayşe-yi üz-dü.
   Ali-GEN leave-mA/-Iş-POSS.3.SG-NOM Ayşe-ACC upset-PST.3.SG
   'That / the way Ali left upset Ayşe.'

Proposal: This paper presents a novel argument for the selection of the nominalizers. The classification proposed consists of a three-way distinction. In addition to aspect and mood, the theta role assigned to the nominalization is also added to the classification (as summarized in Table 1). This approach both provides us with a clearer picture regarding the selection of the nominalizers and also accounts for the reason why only certain nominalizations can appear in subject position when the embedded predicate is transitive.

Table 1	Prospective Aspect		Non-Prospective Aspect	
	As cause	**As subject matter**	**As cause**	**As subject matter**
Indicative Mood	{-mA}	{-(y)AcAK}	{-mA} "that …"	{-DIK}: "that …"
			{-(y)Iş} "the way …"	{-(y)Iş}: "the way …"
Irrealis Mood	-	{-mA}	{-mA}	-

Pesetsky (1995) divides psych predicates into two groups: obj(ect)-exp(eriencer) predicates with {causer, exp}(5), and subj(ect)-exp predicates with {exp, subject matter} theta-roles (6).

 (5) şaşırt- 'to surprise', üz- 'make sb. sad'… (6) düşün- 'think', gör- 'to see'…

While a causer DP is the cause of the experience denoted in the sentence, subject matter DP is not the causer, but what the experience is about, i.e. its subject. As a diagnosis, obj-exp predicates allow for periphrastic causation while this is not possible with subj-exp predicates.

Pesetsky (1995) puts forward a theta role hierarchy that accounts for why the experiencer is sometimes the subject and other times the object in sentences with psych predicates (Table 2).

Table 2	Causer	>	Experiencer	>	Subject Matter
Obj-Exp	DP$_1$ *Subject*		DP$_2$ *Object*		–
Subj-Exp	–		DP$_1$ *Subject*		DP$_2$ *Object*

This argument realization hierarchy applied to Turkish accounts for i) the selection of nominalizers, and ii) why the forms nominalized by {-DIK} or {-(y)AcAK} cannot be promoted to subject position. Given the theta-role hierarchy, the two DP arguments of a transitive predicate are assigned either the {causer, exp} or the {exp, subject matter} theta-roles in the given order, depending on the predicate type. Consequently, for a nominalization to appear in subject position it needs to be selected by an obj-exp predicate. However, {-DIK} or {-(y)AcAK} subordinations are never selected by these predicates. Thus, they are never promoted to subject position. When {-mA} or {-(y)Iş} forms are assigned the causer role and thus, they are promoted to subject position, the two subordinations still have different denotations; {-(y)Iş} adds a 'manner' reading (7-8).

    (7) [Ali-nin git-**me**-si]   Ayşe-yi şaşırt-tı.
        Ali-GEN leave-mA-POSS.3.SG-NOM Ayşe-ACC surprise-PST.3.SG
        'That Ali left surprised Ayşe.'
    (8) [Ali-nin gid-**iş**-i]   Ayşe-yi şaşırt-tı.
        Ali-GEN leave-Iş-POSS.3.SG-NOM Ayşe-ACC surprise-PST.3.SG
        'The way Ali left surprised Ayşe.'

This also applies to cases where {-DIK} and {-(y)Iş}can both bear the subj-matter role (9-10).

    (9) Ayşe   [Ali-nin   git-**tiğ**-in]-i   gör-dü.
        Ayşe-NOM Ali-GEN leave-DIK-POSS.3.SG-ACC see-PST.3.SG
        'Ayşe saw that Ali left.'
    (10) Ayşe   [Ali-nin   gid-**iş**-in]-i   gör-dü.
        Ayşe-NOM Ali-GEN leave-Iş-POSS.3.SG-ACC see-PST.3SG
        'Ayşe saw the way Ali left.'

Receiving the same theta-role, i.e. subj-matter, in the object position, {-DIK} and {-(y)AcAK} forms differ in terms of their aspectual properties. {-(yAcAK} nominalizations are compatible only with prospective aspect (11-12).

    (11) Ayşe   [Ali-nin dün/ bugün   git-**tiğ**-in]-i   bil-iyor.
        Ayşe-NOM Ali-GEN yesterday/today leave-DIK-POSS.3.SG-ACC know-IMPERF
        'Ayşe knows that Ali left yesterday / is leaving today.'
    (12) Ayşe   [Ali-nin *dün/ yarın   gid-**eceğ**-in]-i   bil-iyor.
        Ayşe-NOM Ali-GEN yesterday/tomorrow leave-AcAK-POSS.3.SG-ACC know-IMP
        'Ayşe knows that Ali will leave tomorrow.'

Lastly, {-(y)Iş} subordinations give their place to {-mA} forms as subj-matter objects only when it is necessary that the embedded event is not realized or completed when the matrix predicate is experienced (13); that is, when the embedded event is in irrealis mood.

    (13) Ben   [Ali-nin git-**me/*-iş**-in]-i   bekle-di-m.
        I-NOM Ali-GEN leave-mA/-Iş/POSS.3.SG-ACC wait-PST.1.SG
        'I waited for Ali to leave.'

Conclusion: The nominalization pattern observed in Turkish seems to challenge the typologies on subordination ignoring theta-role assignment. The data show how finer-grained the subordination systems can be and underscore the theta-role hierarchy put forward by Pesetsky (1995).

Selected References: Erguvanlı-Taylan, E. (1998) What determines the choice of nominalizer in Turkish nominalized complement clauses? In *Proceedings of the XVIth International Congress of Linguists*. Oxford: Pergamon. **Pesetsky**, D. (1995) *Zero Syntax*. Cambridge: MIT Press.