

The Role of Syntax in Interpreting the Particle *bile*

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The focus particle *bile* in Turkish (which functions similar to ‘even’ in English) expresses perfective aspectual reading (Taylan, 2001) as well as presuppositional/modal reading (Kornfilt, 1997; Göksel & Kerslake, 2005) as exemplified below:

- (1) Ayşe-Ø bile kitab-ı oku- du- Ø. (presuppositional/modal reading)
Ayşe-NOM even book-ACC read-PERF-3SG
‘Even Ayşe read the book.’
- (2) Ayşe-Ø kitab-ı oku- du- Ø bile. (perfective aspectual reading)
Ayşe-NOM book-ACC read-PERF-3SG even
‘Ayşe has already read the book.’

Taylan (2001) claims that the reason of two different interpretations is that there are two homophonous morphemes *bile* in Turkish. This paper aims to provide a syntactic analysis of this particle to show that there is actually one particle *bile* and its interpretation depends on its syntactic position and the interaction between the particle and the other operators within the structure.

Within the Minimalist Framework (Chomsky, 1995), I argue that the interpretation of this particle is perfective when the particle *c*-commands a perfective operator as in the sentence (2) (cf. Görgülü, 2005). However, if the particle *bile* adjoins a noun phrase or if there is any negation operator which occurs higher than the perfective aspectual operator and prevents *bile* from interacting with perfective aspectual operator within the structure, the particle is interpreted as presuppositional/modal, as exemplified in the sentences (1) and (3), respectively.

- (3) Ayşe-Ø kitab-ı oku- ma- dı-Ø bile. (presuppositional/modal reading)
Ayşe-NOM book-ACC read- NegOP- PERF-3SG even
‘Ayşe even did not read the book.’

Due to the similar interpretation of the particle in the sentence (1) and (3), I claim that the default interpretation of *bile* is modal/presuppositional meaning and when the particle *c*-commands the perfective operator, the interpretation shifts to the perfective aspectual reading as in the sentence (2). Moreover, if there is any negation operator which functions as a barrier and prevents *bile* from interacting with other operators, the interpretation remains as presuppositional/modal reading.

Another important point that this study suggests is that the syntactic phases as well as syntactic position play a crucial role in determining the adjunction process of *bile*.

- (4) Oya, [Ayşe’nin çiçek aldığı] (*bile*) unuttu.
‘Oya (even) forgot that Ayşe bought flowers.’
- (5) Oya, [[Ayşe’nin aldığı] (**bile*)] çiçekleri unuttu.
‘Oya forgot the flowers (even) which Ayşe bought.’

This ungrammaticality of the sentence (5) with *bile* adjunction can be explained in accordance with Phase Impenetrability Condition. That is because the specifier of a DP constitutes an edge for a DP phase (Svenonius, 2004) and *bile* adjunction can take place in this position. We observe a similar restriction in the noun phrases modified by adjectivals.

- (6) * Ayşe-Ø [güzel bile] elbise] al-dı-Ø.
Ayşe-NOM beautiful even dress buy-PERF- 3SG
‘Ayşe bought even a beautiful dress.’

Further evidence supporting this approach comes from the phrases with different internal structures such as possessive constructions. As indicated by Öztürk and Taylan (2016), the specifier position of a DP is occupied by the genitive phrase which can undergo an adjunction process with *bile* as presented below:

- (7) Ayşe’nin bile kuzen-in-in düğün-ün-e git-ti-k.
Ayşe-GEN3SG even cousin-POSS3SG- GEN3SG wedding POSS3SG-DAT go-PERF- 1PL
‘We even went to AYŞE’S cousin’s wedding ceremony.’
- (8) Ayşe’nin kuzen-in-in bile düğün-ün-e git-ti-k.
Ayşe-GEN3SG cousin-POSS3SG- GEN3SG even wedding- POSS3sg-DAT go-PERF- 1pl
‘We even went to the Ayşe’s COUSIN’S wedding.’

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