An OT-DM Approach to N+N Compounds and Possessive Constructions in Turkish

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The Turkish suffix -*(s)I(n)* has been a topic of much debate in the study of Turkish syntax and morphology. This is due to the fact that this particular suffix shows irregular behavior in certain environments. This paper will focus on the irregularities that this suffix gives rise to in Noun+Noun compounds and possessive constructions. Examples of this phenomenon are provided below:

1   a.   [deniz [[harp okul]   -*u]   -su]   (N+N Compound)
             [naval [[military academy]-(s)I(n)] *-(s)I(n)]]
             'Naval military academy'
      b.   [benim [[sokak kedi]-*si]   -m]   (Possessive Construction)
             [my   [[stray cat] *-(s)I(n)]-1SG.POSS]
             'My stray cat'

In (1a), when a non-head (*deniz*) is added to an existing compound (*harp okul-u*), the initial - *(s)I(n)*, which links the two nouns in the first compound, is omitted. Similarly, in (1b), the initial - *(s)I(n)* is omitted when the first-person possessive marker -*(I)m* is attached to the compound (*sokak kedi-si*). This irregular behavior has given rise to differing views on the nature of -*(s)I(n)*. While some researchers have proposed that -*(s)I(n)* has a single function (Yükseker 1998, Tat 2013, Özturk and Taylan 2016), others have argued that this suffix has two functions and acts differently in compounds and possessive constructions (Göksel 2009, Kharytonava 2011, Kunduracı 2013). In line with the latter approach, I will argue that -*(s)I(n)* has multiple functions and that it is omitted only when it is not informative. Moreover, I will demonstrate that both a purely syntactic approach and a purely morphological approach are problematic in accounting for the behavior of -*(s)I(n)*. Thus, I will follow Tat (2013) and Kharytonava (2011) and make use of Distributed Morphology (DM) (Halle & Marantz 1993) to incorporate both domains. I will discuss the strengths and weaknesses of both models and offer an alternative DM model.

Moreover, I will argue that DM alone does not suffice to yield the desired outcome and will introduce a new tool. Grounding my claim on Siddiqi's (2009) criticism of DM that states this architecture is lacking a constraint which reflects the tension in language to be both maximally contrastive and maximally efficient at the same time, I will propose that the necessary additional mechanism is Optimality Theory (OT) (Prince & Smolensky 1993). I will demonstrate that DM feeds into OT in order to produce a balance of both contrastiveness and efficiency. To do so, I will make use of three constraints: SPEECHPART, MINEXPO, and MORPHDIS. The first of these requires the exponence of first- and second-person agreement markers, the second ensures that only one morpheme among multiple morphemes with similar features surfaces, and the final constraint requires that all morphemes have distinct contents. The last two in particular reflect the tension described above.

To sum up, I will argue that -*(s)I(n)* has multiple functions, which explains why it appears in different constructions. I will show that its exponence is based on whether it is the sole morpheme that carries person/valency features. Lastly, I will demonstrate that the irregular behavior of this suffix is best accounted for though a hybrid model that determines the structure of an utterance in DM and filters out redundant morphemes in OT.

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