



REFERENCE TO SELF IN TURKISH: IMPLICATIONS FOR COGNITIVE AND CULTURAL LINGUISTICS

Türkçede Benliğe Gönderim: Bilişsel ve Kültürel Dilbilim İçin Çıkarımlar

Şükriye Ruhi¹

Özet: Günümüze kadar incelenmiş olan dillerde benliğin anlatımında çeşitli bilişsel eğretilmeler, sözcükler ve kalıplaşmış deyimlerin kullanıldığı görülmektedir. Bilişsel dilbilimin bedenleştirme paradigmasında, söylem içinde konuşanın kendisine gönderimde bulunurken özne olarak 'ben' ile nesne olarak 'ben' arasında ayırım yaptığı çeşitli dillerde görülmüş ve bu türden olgular kültürel bir şema olarak bölünmüş benlik şeması ile açıklanmıştır (Lakoff, 1997; Kövecses, 2005; Pan, 2005). Bu makalede, Türkçe söylemde konuşanın kendisine gönderiminin bilişsel ad aktarımı ve eğretilme şemaları çeşitli deyimler ve dilsel yapılarda araştırılmaktadır. (örn., *içimden bir ses diyor ki*). Çalışmanın amacı, bölünmüş benlik şemasının benliğin anlatımında Türkçede geçerli olup olmadığını sınamaktır. Araştırmadaki bulgular, benlik özellikleri (İng. self-aspects) ile konuşan arasında mesafe koyma şemasının Türkçe söylemde daha az sıklıkla

¹ Orta Doğu Teknik Üniversitesi, emekli öğretim üyesi; sukruh@metu.edu.tr; sukriyeruhi@gmail.com

rastlandığını göstermiştir. Bu bulgu ölçünlü Türkçede *gönül* kavramının sergilediği bilişsel ad aktarımı çerçevesinde yorumlanmıştır. Yazının sonuç bölümünde bilişsel ve kültürel dilbilim bakış açısı ile Türkçede benliğin kavramlaştırılması konusunda başkaca araştırma soruları önerilmektedir.

Anahtar sözcükler: *Özne ve Benlik, Bölünmüş Benlik Şeması, (parçacıl) Kendine Gönderim, Üstsöylemsel Çerçeveler, Bilişsel Ad Aktarımı, gönül.*

Abstract: Languages studied to date show evidence of conceptual metaphors, lexemes, and semi-formulaic structures for narrativizing self-reference in discourse. Self-reference has been found to distinguish between the self as subject 'I' and the self as 'object' of the discourse in the embodiment paradigm in cognitive linguistics, such that a split-self cultural schema has been proposed for several languages (see Lakoff, 1997; Kövecses, 2005; Pan, 2005). In this paper, we carry out a study on expressions that are related to this category of self-reference (e.g., *içimden bir ses diyor ki*) to unravel the conceptual metonymic and metaphorical schemas of self-reference in Turkish discourse. The purpose of the study is to test whether the split-self schema is applicable to the narrativization of self in Turkish. The findings reveal that distancing between self-aspects is a less prominent schema in Turkish discourse. This finding is interpreted within the conceptual metonymy of *gönül* in standard Turkish. The paper concludes with suggestions for further research in cognitive and cultural linguistics concerning the conceptualization of self in Turkish.

Keywords: *Subject and Self, The Split-self Schema, (partitive) Self-reference, Metadiscursive Frames, Cognitive Metonymy, gönül.*

1. INTRODUCTION²

Languages have grammaticalized reference to self and others in a variety of ways through, for example, pronominal and agreement systems and (fairly formulaic) metaphorical and metonymic

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constructions (e.g., *bendeniz* ‘your slave’, *gönül ister ki* ‘*gönül* wishes that’ in Turkish, ‘he is the brain of the organisation’). Such linguistic resources, which interweave with the narrativization of self and other in discourse, are significant in understanding the way self is conceptualized, the way self presents itself in communication, and the way it manages social relations. Self-referential devices thus allow us to glean the inter-relationships between self-aspects, language and culture.

Scholars in cognitive linguistics within the embodied mind paradigm have argued that self-reference distinguishes between self as subject ‘I’ and self as ‘object’ of the discourse, such that a split-self schema has been proposed for several languages (see, for example, Lakoff (1997) and Kövecses (2005) for English, Japanese and Hungarian).

In this paper, I report on qualitative study carried out on formulaic self-referential expressions to unravel their discursive use and to investigate possible underlying conceptualizations of self. The formulae investigated include constructions such as *içimdeki ... diyor ki* ‘the ... in me is saying’ and *içimden bir ses diyor ki* ‘a voice in me is saying’. The purpose of the study is to test whether the split-self schema proposed by Lakoff and Johnson (1999) is applicable to narrativization of self and to investigate distancing phenomena in self-reference in Turkish discourse. The findings reveal that, contrary to the Lakoffian proposal, self can function as an evaluator of thoughts and feelings and that distancing from self-aspects is a less prominent phenomenon in the present data. The findings are interpreted within the conceptual metonymy of *gönül* ‘heart, mind, desire’ in Turkish (Ruhi, 2005, 2006; Ruhi and Işık, 2007), and implications for researching self-conceptualization in cognitive and cultural linguistics are listed.

2. THE SPLIT-SELF SCHEMA

Developing a sense of oneself as separate from others is considered a turning point in the development of the human mind. This view

inherently conceptualizes the person as a unitary entity. However, post-modern thinking describes the person as consisting of multiple selves “in flux” (Ochs and Capps, 1996: 29). In the description of self’s relation to itself and others, we observe that this idea was already present in Mead (1934), where he proposed that the development of a sense of self separate from others relies on thinking about the self as subject and object –a development which, he contends, is fostered through discursive practices.

The conceptualization of self as subject and object has been germane to the study of communication in Goffman’s dramaturgical approach to the self in interaction and in cognitive linguistics (Lakoff and Johnson, 1999). It also lies at the foundation of both narrative studies and sociolinguistic investigations on self-presentation, the co-construction of multiple identities, and the alignments that self projects in discourse (e.g., Schiffrin, 2006). To briefly illustrate this perspective, if I refer to a colleague with her first name during a formal meeting in the Turkish context, I would be projecting intimacy and collegiality. If, however, I shift to *hocam* ‘my teacher’ as an address term within the same discourse, provided I use the appropriate tone of voice, I would be creating distance and indicating respect, whilst depicting her within the frame of her professional identity.

Lakoff (1997) and Lakoff and Johnson (1999) go a step further and propose a split-model of the self –if not of an ontological status, at least of an experiential and linguistic nature. This model, they call the *Subject-Self Metaphor*. According to their formulation, the Subject is the experiencing consciousness and the locus of reason, will, and judgment, which, by nature, exists only in the present. The Self, which may be more than one, is “a locus of physical properties, social roles, real-world actions” (Lakoff 1997: 97). The model thus has a strong foundation in the body-mind dichotomy in Western philosophy, and we observe that the role attributed to the Subject is reminiscent of the Cartesian Subject, as a cognising Subject, which is “unified, centred” and “noncontingent” (Lebra, 2004: 4). The model, therefore, functions more as a way of describing the various ways in which people talk

about and conceptualize self. Lakoff and Johnson (1999: 270-284) identify five distinct metaphors for the self:

The SUBJECT-SELF Metaphor

The PHYSICAL-OBJECT SELF METAPHOR (e.g. He was in the grip of fear)

The LOCATIONAL SELF METAPHOR (e.g. *Kendine gel* ‘Come to yourself’)³

The SOCIAL SELF METAPHOR (e.g. *Kendisiyle savaşıyor* ‘He is fighting with himself’)

The MULTIPLE SELVES METAPHOR (e.g. As a scientist, I would say that)

The ESSENTIAL SELF METAPHOR (e.g. *Kendimi buldum burada* ‘I found myself here’)

Criticizing Lakoff and Johnson (1999), Pang (2005: 2) states that the division between Subject and Self is hard to operationalize and that it does not always fit linguistic phenomena. He notes that in the utterance “I’d hate myself for even thinking that way” both the hating and the thinking are Subject properties and that the Self is missing in the utterance, since hating and thinking are both Subject properties according to the spilt-self model. Instead, Pang conceptualises such self-reference as *partitive-self reference* “on the basis of its focus on a part or parts of the self” (2005: 3).

With a slightly different perspective, Morillas (1999: 7) describes the function of self-conceptualization along two dimensions: A cognitive-pragmatic-discursive function, which are “ways of conceptualizing self for pragmatic purposes in the relevant interactive universe of discourse” for the purpose of referring to “oneself rather than to another self”; for identifying self, and for evaluating its attributes; and a cognitive-cultural function, which are “ways of

³ i.e., ‘Come to your senses’. In the translations of the Turkish samples, I have tried to retain the wording in the original as much as possible.

conceptualizing self by means of mental and cultural models in language and thought” in the form of “schematic representations” such as “a space or “a machine”.

In line with Morillas, I propose that the differing linguistic manifestations of self-reference bring into focus different self-aspects and that speakers draw on the linguistic resources and cultural schemas available to effect self-presentations that are in line with the communicative intentions of the speaker. In line with Goffman (1974: 22), I further maintain that the various self-referential expressions function as *frames* for interpreting the propositional content of utterances. In other words, they function as metadiscursive comments on self.

3. METHODOLOGY AND DATA

To investigate whether the split-self schema is applicable to Turkish, searches were conducted on Google, the METU Turkish Corpus (Say et al., 2002) and the archives of two newspapers (*Cumhuriyet* and *Milliyet*) for the following formulaic constructions:

1. *İçimdeki N* ‘The N inside me’

Ama bu iki güzel insanın sohbetleri içimdeki yazarı uyandırdı.

‘But the conversations of these two nice people awoke the writer in me.’

2. *İçimdeki N or ses/his/şeytan(-{E/(y)I}) ...diyor ki/kulak ver-/dinle-/... söyle-*

Şimdi şeytan diyor ki bir daha oku

‘The devil in me now tells me to read [it] again’

3. *İçimden (bir ses) diyor ki/dedi ki/dedim ki*

İçimden bir ses, ‘Gazetenin birinci sayfasının tamamını bu iki genç kıza ayır’ diyor.

‘A voice inside of me says ‘Devote the whole of the first page to

these two young girls”

4. **X söyletti**⁴

Bildiğim şu ki gördüğüm resimler, şarkı söyletti bana

‘What I know is that the pictures I saw made me sing’

5. **(ADJ/N) tarafım (diyor ki/dedi ki)**

acilen kendimi tedavi etmem gereken tarafım bu.

‘That is the side of me that I urgently need to get treated’

The purpose of focusing on these constructions is that they refer to parts of self and, therefore, allow a testing ground for the Subject-Self model in Lakoff and Johnson (1999) and for the contention in Pang (2005) that such expressions distance the speaker from some of his/her attributes.

The majority of the pages returned by Google were from forums, blogs, some online newspapers, and special interest magazines devoted to literature, business, and other fields of specialization. To keep the search manageable, the search was restricted to the first 200 tokens in cases where there were more than that. I do not present a quantitative analysis of the data in this paper, as the search would need to be re-conducted over longer spans in time to achieve statistical reliability.

The nouns in the constructions have been classified into mental, physical, socio-cultural constructs, and socio-cultural roles categories (see Pang, 2005: 8). To Pang’s categories, ‘discursive’ has been added and ‘artefacts functioning as metonyms’ (e.g. *ilaç* ‘medication’) have been excluded since no such nouns were found in the data. Some examples are listed below:

⁴ X may refer to acts/words of self or others (e.g. *Nesne. Bu lafi bana kim söyletti?* ‘Object. Who made me say that word?’).

Table 1. *Sample nouns in the construction.*

Mental	<i>his, ses, duygu, dünya, acı, ikilem, ben</i>
Physical	<i>boşluk, sokaklar, okyanus, sahne, bahçe</i>
Socio-cultural constructs	<i>masum, faşist, trafik canavarı, terazi⁵</i>
Socio-cultural roles	<i>çocuk, erkek, kadın, baba, anne, dost</i>
Discursive	<i>soru, cevap⁶</i>

We need to note that the categories have rather fuzzy boundaries. For example, the noun *boşluk* ‘emptiness’ is physical, but it is used in a metaphorical sense just like several of the other nouns, and reflects a culturally available interpretive schema (in the case of *boşluk*, a sense of isolation or deprivation).

4. ANALYSIS

The data reveal that the above-mentioned constructions are pragmatically differentiated. The first construction, *içimdeki N*, runs commentaries on attributes of self that the speaker may evaluate positively or negatively, as in excerpt (1) below (In the following analysis, capitals for subject and self are used when referring to the Lakoffian model):

- (1) *Yaptığınız her şey için teşekkür ediyorum. Ama artık büyümek istiyorum. ... yardıma ihtiyacım olduğunda **içimdeki zeki ve düşünceli insanın bana yardım elini uzatmasını istiyorum.***⁷

(www.itiraf.com)

‘I thank you for everything that you have done. But I now want to grow up [...] when I need help I want **the intelligent and considerate person inside of me** to lend a helping hand.’

⁵ *Terazi* refers to the astrological sign ‘libra’.

⁶ For example, *Bilgisizliğim ortaya çıkmasın diye içimdeki soruyu dışa vurmadım* ‘So that my ignorance would not come out into the open, I did not ask the question in me’.

⁷ Spellings in the original texts have not been modified or corrected.

The construction also forms interpretive frames concerning evaluative judgments of others on self's thoughts, feelings, and behaviours (excerpt 2) or expresses commentaries on self- aspects that are in some way affected by external events and the behaviour of self or others, as in the excerpts in (3) and (4):

- (2) *Tüm bunları sevdiğime anlatsam, hemen bile bile bunları neden yaptığımı, [...] aslında olgun biri olmadığımı söyleyecekler. Bunları ben de kendime söylüyorum ama **içimdeki çocuk çok yaramaz, ben ne yapayım?***

(www.itiraf.com)

'If I told all the people I love all of this, straight away, why I knowingly do all this [...] they will say that I am not mature. I say these things to myself too but **the child in me is very naughty**, what can I do?'

- (3) *Mayıs geldi mi doğayla birlikte **içimdeki leylek de uyanıyor.***

(www.candundar.com.tr)

'When May arrives, **the stork in me awakens**, along with nature'

- (4) *ve herşeyden önemlisi **içimdeki o deli çocuğu ortaya çıkarmıştın** [...] kimsenin basaramadığı gülmeyi öğretmiştin bana*

(http:// www.yazarlar.net)

'and more important than all the rest **you brought out the wild child in me** [...] you taught me to laugh, something that no one else had succeeded to do'

What is interesting to note is that, contrary to Lakoff and Johnson's (1999) contention that the Subject is the locus of will, reason, and judgement, the Self, too, can function as both the controlled and the controlee in the narration of self's conceptualisation of itself and its identity. We observe this clearly in excerpt (5), where the author is presenting itself in a dialogical manner and qualifying its unitary identity, not as a product of the actions of the Subject but as the evaluations of an inner SOCIAL SELF:

- (5) [a] *İçimdeki sesi daha çok içimdeki yaşlı kadın yada bilge insan olarak düşünmeyi daha çok seviyorum çünkü sorularımın tüm cevabını orada bulabileceğimi biliyorum.* [b] **İçimdeki ses** bana yavaş yavaş kim olduğumu **öğretti** [...] [c] Kısaca [...] **içimdeki tüm seslerin** kontrolünü **elime aldığımdan** beri hayatımdan tatmin olmayı, [...] mutlu olmayı [...] başarabiliyorum
- ‘[a] I like it more to think of **the voice in me as an old woman or a wise person** inside of me because I know that I can find all the answers to my questions there. [b] **The voice in me taught me** little by little who I am [...] [c] In brief [...] ever since **I have gained control** over **all the voices in me**, I am succeeding in being satisfied with my life [...] and [am capable] of being happy’

In sentence (a), the Subject (controlee) first identifies the Object Self – the inner self – as a wise, old woman, but the roles are reversed in the second clause, with the Self becoming the consultant, as it were. The Subject in the same clause is the part of self that has conscious awareness of the role of the wise woman. The controlee role of the inner self continues in (b). Finally in (c), the Subject gains control over the *Multiple Selves* (see, Lakoff and Johnson (1999: 278) for the MULTIPLE SELVES METAPHOR as a sub-class of the SOCIAL SELF METAPHOR).

We find similar pragmatic functions involved in the fifth construction, (ADJ/N) *tarafım*. Observe excerpts (6) and (7):

- (6) *Ama benim saf istismara çok açık bir tarafım var.*
(<http://www.vatanim.com.tr>)
‘But I have a **naïve side of me, which is very open to exploitation.**
- (7) *Zaten iletişim fakültesi mezunuyum hep bir televizyon tarafım olmuştur.*
‘As it is, I’m a graduate of communications studies, I’ve always had a thing for the television.

(<http://www.sabah.com.tr>; Last accessed 30 June 2006)

The difference between the two constructions is that (ADJ/N) *tarafım* describes an attribute explicitly, while the first construction occurs in co-texts that may remain more implicit regarding what attributes the noun in the construction connotes. These attributes may be fairly easily accessible in the cultural context, such as ‘the desire to travel’, owing to the use of ‘stork’ in excerpt (3). The attribute(s), however, may remain fairly vague, as in (4), where only the subsequent clause clarifies one of the features that constitute the concept of being a ‘wild child’. *İçimdeki* N is also prevalent in contexts where the author is describing self as undergoing a change, as is evident in samples (3) through (4).

The second and third constructions, ‘*içimdeki* N *diyor ki/dinle/-söyle*’ or ‘*içimdeki ses/his/şeytan*’ and ‘*içimden (bir ses) diyor ki/dinle/-söyle-*,’ occur most frequently in the present data with *ses* and *şeytan*. They appear to be pragmatically restricted to commentaries of the speaker on self’s or other’s actions or to contexts where the speaker either explains a course of action taken or contemplates on it. They are used particularly in contexts where there may be a conflict between what the self knows or thinks of self’s or other’s thoughts and/or behaviour.

Samples (8)-(10) illustrate such contexts. As observed in the case of the construction *içimdeki* N we find that the evaluative and reasoning faculties of the speaker may be voiced as an inner Self (see, clauses (a) and (b) in excerpt 8):

- (8) (a) *Birini hayatına sokmak için acele ediyorsun Fatih **diyor içimdeki ses**.* (b) *O biri değil ki, Zeynep diyorum.* (c) *Zeynep kim sorusunun cevabı yok oysa **içimde***

‘(a) **The voice in me is saying** you’re rushing [a bit] to let someone into your life, Fatih. (b) I respond, [“]she’s not just anyone, she’s Zeynep[“]. (c) But there is no answer **in me** to the question who Zeynep is’

- (9) *İlk yarılar bitince yeniden, “televizyonu kapatıp yatayım” diye düşündüm. Sonra **içimdeki taraftar dedi ki**, “acele etme, ikinci yarılar da böyle bittiğinde neler kaçıracağını biliyor musun?”*

‘When the first halves were over, I thought “[I’d better] turn off the television and go to sleep” again. [But] then **the fan in me said** “Don’t hurry, when the first halves end like this, do you know what you’re going to miss?”

(www.netyorum.com)

- (10) *Şimdi **şeytan diyor ki** bir daha oku. Aynı tadı alabilir miyim?*

(www.arkitera.com)

‘Now, **the devil is saying**, “Read it again”. Can I get the same pleasure out of it?’

According to Lakoff and Johnson’s (1999) model, the constructions with *ses* and *his* correspond to the ESSENTIAL SELF metaphor. The construction, *içimdeki şeytan (diyor ki)*, occurs in contexts where an imagined or realized action of the speaker is framed within a cultural metaphor that is negatively evaluative. It allows the speaker to present self in a socially acceptable manner by maintaining a distance between that part of self controlled by the devil and another part. In this respect, it is an instantiation of the SOCIAL SELF METAPHOR. What the construction achieves, though, is actually an acceptable way of expressing what may be self’s actual thoughts, feelings and intentions. The construction resonates with the frequently used formulae *içimden dedim ki* ‘I said to myself’, *içimden (şöyle) demek geldi* ‘I felt like saying’, and *insanın (içinden şöyle) diyəsi geliyor* ‘One feels like saying’, which are frequently employed by columnists in newspapers in evaluative comments on public figures and reactions to issues.

The fourth construction, *X söyledi*, is very rare in the present data. It is different from the others in that it explicitly comments on the source of the speaker’s utterance. The most frequently occurring N in the construction is Allah ‘God’. In terms of evaluating self’s utterances, the construction is closest to the formulae “That/This was/is my N speaking/talking” in English (Pang 2005). Compared to the data in

Pang (2005), though, we find very few that refer to a self-aspect which is described as generating the utterance. Sample (11) illustrates one such usage in the title of a news item:

- (11) *'Futbol aşkı' pilota yalan söyledi*
 'Love of football' made the pilot lie'

5. DISCUSSION

The analysis in the foregoing section indicates that self may be a source of reason, will and judgment. Rather than conceptualising the self as split, partitive-self-reference (Pang, 2005) captures the nature of self-presentation in discourse, where the speaker may pick up a culturally available metaphor that best metaphorizes the self-aspect relevant to the context.

Different from the study carried out by Pang (2005) on English, we observe that the vast majority of instances of partitive-self-reference involve commentaries on the inner self rather than the presentation of a self-aspect as the cause of the speaker's behaviour, thoughts or feelings. Also, excluding the construction *X söyledi*, utterances of speakers are rarely attributed to a self-aspect. Instead, what we observe is that partitive-self-reference is frequently employed to describe changes that self has experienced, changes that it is undergoing due to self's actions or due to the external context. In this respect, the constructions function either to distance the speaker from a self-aspect or to empathize with a certain self-aspect, but more so as a frame that contextualises self's acts/words without necessarily distancing itself from them.

Given the fact that the most frequently employed construction is *içimden bir ses*, I posit that this patterning results from the cultural importance given to the inner self in Turkish, which is best reflected in the conceptual metonym, *gönül* (Ruhi 2005, 2006; Ruhi and Işık, 2007). In support of this proposal, we find that Turkish has several

formulae which indicate the importance of authenticity toward self and the sharing of the *real self* in discourse (i.e., the ESSENTIAL SELF METAPHOR in the Lakoffian model). This key self-conceptualisation also overlaps with the cultural schema of *içtenlik* (inside-ABLATIVE-DERIVATIONAL MORPHEME) ‘sincerity’ in Turkish.

Some examples of these formulae are *gönül ister ki*, lit. ‘*gönül* wishes that’, *herşey gönlünce olsun* ‘may everything be as your *gönül* wishes’, and *gönül dostu* ‘a dear friend of *gönül*’. Viewed from this perspective, the idealized cognitive model of self in Turkish discourse corresponds to the ESSENTIAL SELF METAPHOR. This might explain why, in spite of the existence of partitive-self-reference that distances a self-aspect from the speaker, there are more samples that do not imply a distancing event.

Having said that, the data do present self as being influenced by the context. While this point requires further investigation, I would posit that the fairly collectivist nature of Turkish culture (Hofstede 2001), which fosters sensitivities to external conditions and norms of behavior, might be involved in the patterning of the data. Another explanation could be that the post-modern notion of multiple selves, occupying interweaving places in social interaction, is a relatively new discursive phenomenon in the Turkish context.

6. CONCLUDING REMARKS

Self-conceptualization needs to be investigated in a cross-cultural perspective in cognitive and cultural linguistics, focusing especially on grammaticalization of partitive-self reference and narratives of self so as to further understand the cognitive and cultural dimensions of self-representation. Studies carried out on the construal of self in other cultures show different conceptualizations and prominences in commenting on the self (see Kövecses, 2005). The present study, for instance, has not investigated the cultural significance of the nouns

employed in the constructions. It is to be expected that an analysis of the frequently occurring nouns in such constructions across languages would open a window on what metaphorical meanings they have in their context of usage. I would suggest that a starting point for such an investigation in Turkish is the concepts, *çocuk* ‘child’ and *ses* ‘voice’ – the former due to its reference to self-aspects that are unconstrained by social conditions, and the latter because of its close relation to self-identity and cognizing about self-identity.

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