

Chapter 3

MINIMIZERS IN TURKISH: A CORPUS ANALYSIS

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INTRODUCTION

This paper is concerned with minimizers as a subclass of negative polarity items (NPIs henceforth) and their distributional and semantic properties in Turkish. Even though various characteristics of NPIs like ‘hiç’ *never/ever*, ‘kimse’ *anyone* and ‘katiyyen’ *in any way* were analyzed by different researchers such as Zidani-Eroğlu (1997ab), Besler (2000), Kelepir (2001), Yanılmaz (2009) and Görgülü (2017), the nature of minimizers as a subtype of NPIs have never been investigated. In this work, based on an online corpus study as well as an online Google and Twitter search, I first present an overview of various groups of minimizers in Turkish. After that, I investigate their distributional properties and compare their behavior to that of other NPIs in the language. The results show that an overwhelming majority of minimizers appear in syntactically and semantically negative contexts. The findings also demonstrate that minimizers can occur in conditional clauses as well. This is an important finding since conditionals are contexts where other NPIs have been claimed in previous work to not actually appear. Another result is that minimizers can also appear in yes/no questions even though this constitutes a very small sample of the data. Finally, it is proposed that these characteristics of minimizers can be accounted for by assuming that minimizers are allowed to appear only in nonveridical contexts (Zwarts, 1995; Giannakidou, 2002, 2007, 2011). These are the contexts where the truth condition of the proposition is not entailed or guaranteed.

The structure of the paper is as follows: the next section is a brief introduction to minimizers across languages. In the section following, I present an overview of different groups of minimizers in Turkish. After that, I analyze their distributional and semantic properties and then provide a unified semantic account. The last section is the conclusion with some suggestions for future work.

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ridical iff whenever Fp is true p is not true. In that sense, antiveridical operators are a proper subset of nonveridicals. Positive operators like past tense adverbials are veridical and do not license NPIs. In contrast, modal verbs, intensional operators, and questions are nonveridical and license NPIs. Antiveridical operators, on the other hand, are negation and *without* that are considered to be prototypical licensers of NPIs across languages (Zwarts, 1995; Giannakidou, 2002, 2011).

Note that minimizers in Turkish occur in (i) negative contexts, (ii) conditionals, and (iii) yes/no questions. These are the contexts where the truth of the proposition is not entailed. Thus if we motivate a semantic account and argue that minimizers are licensed in nonveridical environments, we can capture their distribution in a uniform manner in the language. Note also that the findings that minimizers appear in nonveridical environments indicate that Turkish minimizers pair with their counterparts in English and Azerbaijani and differ from those in Greek, Korean and Japanese.

CONCLUSION

In this paper, I have investigated minimizers as a subtype of NPIs in Turkish. First, I provided an overview of various minimizers by dividing them into different lexical/semantic groups. The findings have shown that minimizers appear in (i) negative contexts including sentential negation, negative predicates and the negative suffix, (ii) conditional sentences and (iii) yes/no questions. I argued that the distribution of minimizers can be uniformly captured if we argue that minimizers are allowed to occur in nonveridical contexts. For future work, it seems necessary to investigate minimizing predicates such as ‘parmağını oynatmamak’ *to not lift one’s finger* and ‘karıncayı bile incitmemek’ *to not even harm an ant* and see whether their distribution is similar to the minimizers in the language.

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