

# **Leipzig Spring School on Linguistic Diversity**

**Evening lecture April 2, 2008**

## **Some cross-linguistic and historical observations on Turkic (and other Altaic) relative clauses**

**Jaklin Kornfilt**

**Syracuse University & MPI – EVA**

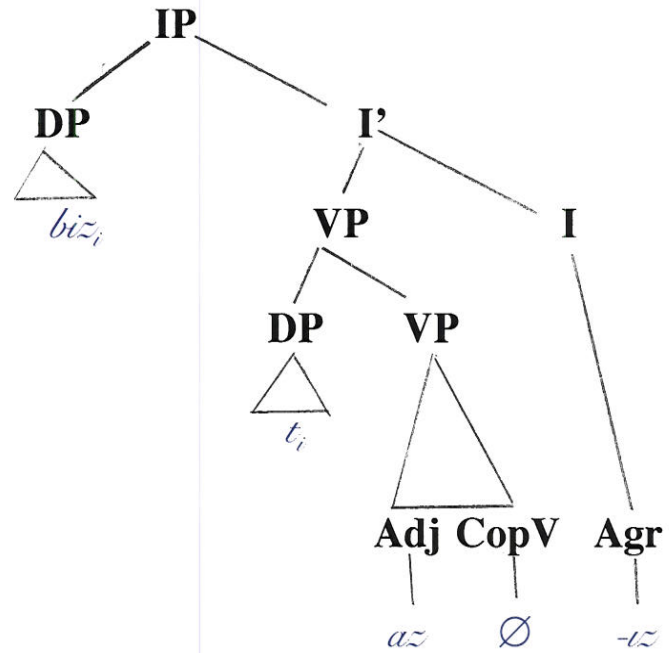
### **Aims and Claims:**

- 1. Turkish syntax has developed away from other Central and East Asian Altaic languages, acquiring some properties of European languages;**
- 2. These changes can be described insightfully by positing development over time of functional projections, such as CP (=complementizer phrase), IP (=inflectional phrase), DP (=determiner phrase), AgrP (=agreement phrase) etc.**
- 3. These projections bring along new syntactic positions in the architecture of the clause and of the phrase,**

**thus offering landing sites for movements — another novelty for Turkic/Altaic.**

- 4. Relative clauses are CPs in Turkish, i.e. full-fledged clauses as in (most? all?) European languages. In Old (and Middle) Turkic, they were not; perhaps not even IPs; possibly just bare VPs. Similar “defectiveness” in contemporary Altaic languages, some of them Turkic.**
- 5. “Defective” clauses are transparent with respect to a number of morpho-syntactic phenomena, such as agreement and binding. Full-fledged clauses are opaque with respect to such phenomena.**
- 6. The syntactic property of having or lacking certain functional projections allows insights into historical as well as synchronic typology.**
- 7. Syntactic “borrowing” or adaptation can be very abstract, without involving lexical items, word order, “finiteness” w.r.t. tense, and other obvious items such as overt complementizers, relative pronouns etc.**

### Example: IP versus VP:

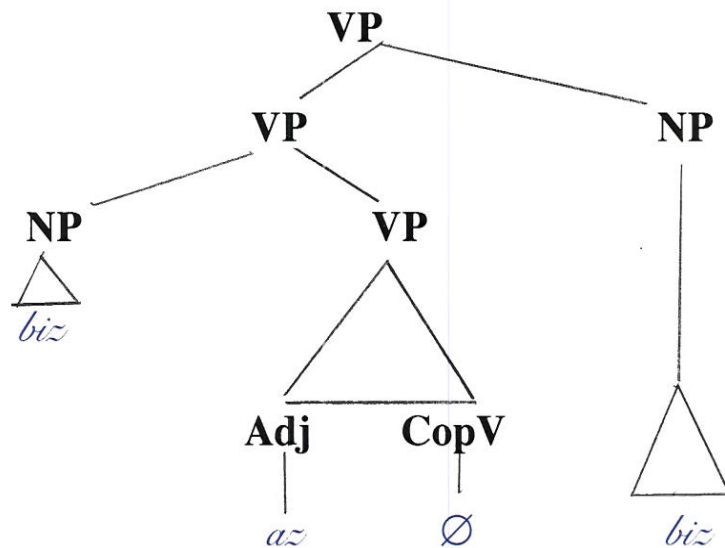


### Mod. Turkish:

(1) biz      az-ız  
we      few-1.PL      'We are few'

## Old Turkic:

(45) biz      az      biz  
          we      few      we      'We are few'



Where ModT has a **licensed structural case** on a specifier, with the **licenser** the **functional head** of the projection, OT has **default case** and no functional element; e.g. possessive phrases:

OT:

(51)a. qaYan it    yıl    onunč ay    alti otuz-ga    uča bardı  
          khan dog year    tenth month six thirty-LOC    died

(BK S 10; in TT, p. 246)

'The Kagan passed away on the twenty-sixth day of the tenth month of the Year of the Dog' (TT, p. 279)

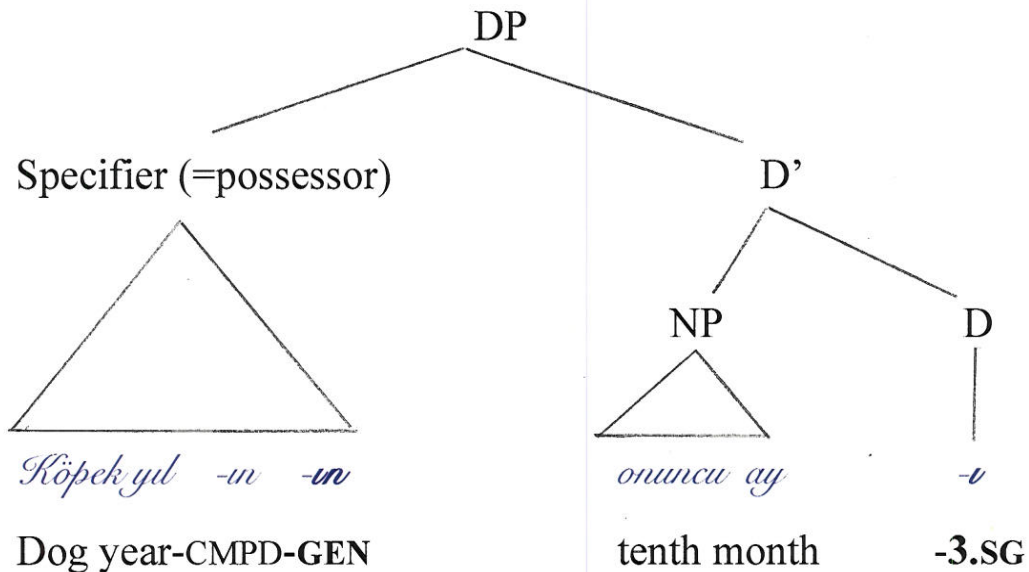
ModT:

(51)b. kağan köpek ("it") yıl-in -in onuncu ay -in -in  
 kagan dog year-3.AGR-GEN tenth month-3.AGR-GEN

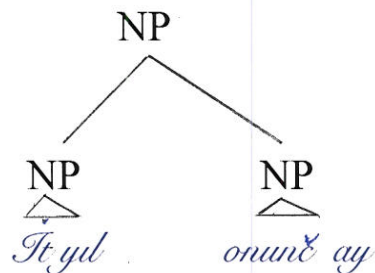
yirmi altı-sın -da öl-dü

26 - 3.AGR-LOC die-PST

'The Kagan died on the twenty sixth of the tenth month of the Year of the Dog'



'The tenth month of the Year of the Dog'

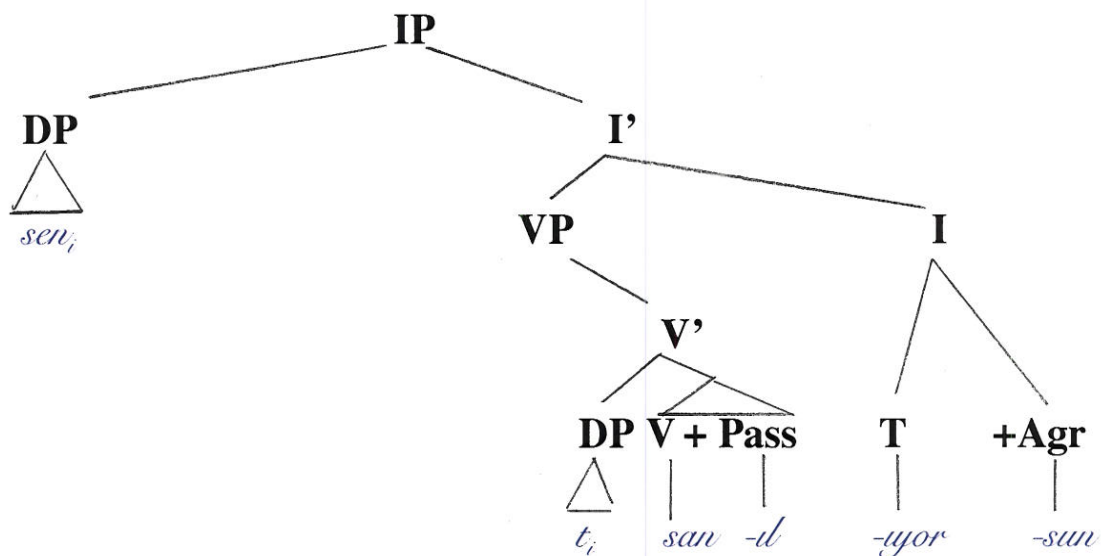


'The tenth month of the Year of the Dog'

In Modern Turkish, it's clear that there is syntactic passive;  
derived subjects can be thematically unrelated to the passive verb:

(2) Ali sen -i<sub>i</sub> [t<sub>i</sub> uyuyakal-d<sub>1</sub>] san -ıy<sub>or</sub>  
 Ali you-ACC fall asleep -PST believe-PRS.PR.G.  
 'Ali believes you to have fallen asleep'

(3) Sen<sub>i</sub> (Ali tarafından) t<sub>i</sub> [t<sub>i</sub> uyuyakal-d<sub>1</sub>] san -ıl-ıy<sub>or</sub> -sun  
 you Ali by fall asleep-PST believe-PASS-PRS.PR.G.-2.SG  
 'You are believed to have fallen asleep by Ali'



you

believe-PASS-PRS.PROG.-2.SG

'You are believed (to be...)'

There are no passives of this sort in OT at all. No wonder: without  
 an IP, there is no specifier of IP, thus no landing site for any  
 movement of this sort.



## Passives and relative clauses:

### OT:

There are no passive predicates in pre-nominal modification, i.e. in constructions corresponding to relative clauses:

(49) [qañimiz äčimiz qazYan-miš ] bodun

our khan our uncle conquer-Perf.Part. people

‘The peoples who were conquered by our father and uncle’ (=‘the peoples whom our father and uncle conquered’) (BK E 22, as in TT, p. 179)

### Corresponding constructions in ModT:

#### With passive:

(50) a. [e<sub>i</sub> kağan-ımız ve amca-mız tarafından yen -il -miş] millet-ler<sub>i</sub>

khan-1.PL and uncle-1.PL by conquer-PASS-Perf.Part people-PL

‘The peoples who were conquered by our khan/father and uncle’

#### Without passive:

(50) b. [kağan-ımız-ın ve amca-mız -ın e<sub>i</sub> yen -diğ-i ] millet-ler<sub>i</sub>

khan-1.PL-GEN and uncle-1.PL-GEN conquer-FN-3. people-PL

‘The peoples whom our khan/father and uncle conquered’

Either way, there is a derived subject in subject position, i.e. in specifier position of a functional projection.

### Summary so far:

In ModT, it is clear whether the target of relativization is a subject or a non-subject; in OT, it is not. It is not, due to the following: **1. There is no real syntactic, movement-based passive; 2. The subject is not marked with any dedicated licensed case, but is in a default case.** 3. There is no relativization morpheme on the predicate that would give any clues.

Properties 1. and 2. explained by the presence of IP in ModT; there is no IP in OT. IP provides a site for the moved DO; it provides a site for the licenser of the Genitive (=subject case), i.e. the agreement under I.

**Property 3?** Yet another functional projection that ModT has, and OT does not: **CP**.

### RCs in ModT: Subj RCs different from non-subject RCs:

A subject as the target of relativization:

(1) a. [[e<sub>i</sub> geçen yaz      ada -da      ben-i      gör-**en** ]      kişi -ler<sub>i</sub>]

last summer island-LOC I -ACC see-(y)**An** person -PL

‘The people who saw me on the island last summer’

(No phi-feature morphology; **special nominalization form on predicate**)



A non-subject as the target of relativization (traditionally so-called “object relativization”):

(1) b. [[*pro* geçen yaz ada -da e<sub>i</sub> gör-**düğ -üm**] kişi -ler<sub>i</sub>]

last summer island-LOC see-FN -1.SG person-PL

‘The people who(m) I saw on the island last summer’

(Phi-feature morphology; **general indicative nominalization form on predicate**)

Factive complement clause:

(2) [öğrenci-ler-**in** ben-i ada -da gör-**dük-lerin**]-i duy-du -m

student -PL-GEN I -ACC island-LOC see-FN -3.PL -ACC hear-PST-1.SG

‘I heard that the students saw me on the island’

**Claim:** The difference between (1a) and (1b) is best analyzed as a version of the “que-to-qui conversion” in French:

**(F1) Embedded indicative complement clause:**

Je sais [<sub>CP</sub> **que** [<sub>TP</sub> le pilote est mort]]

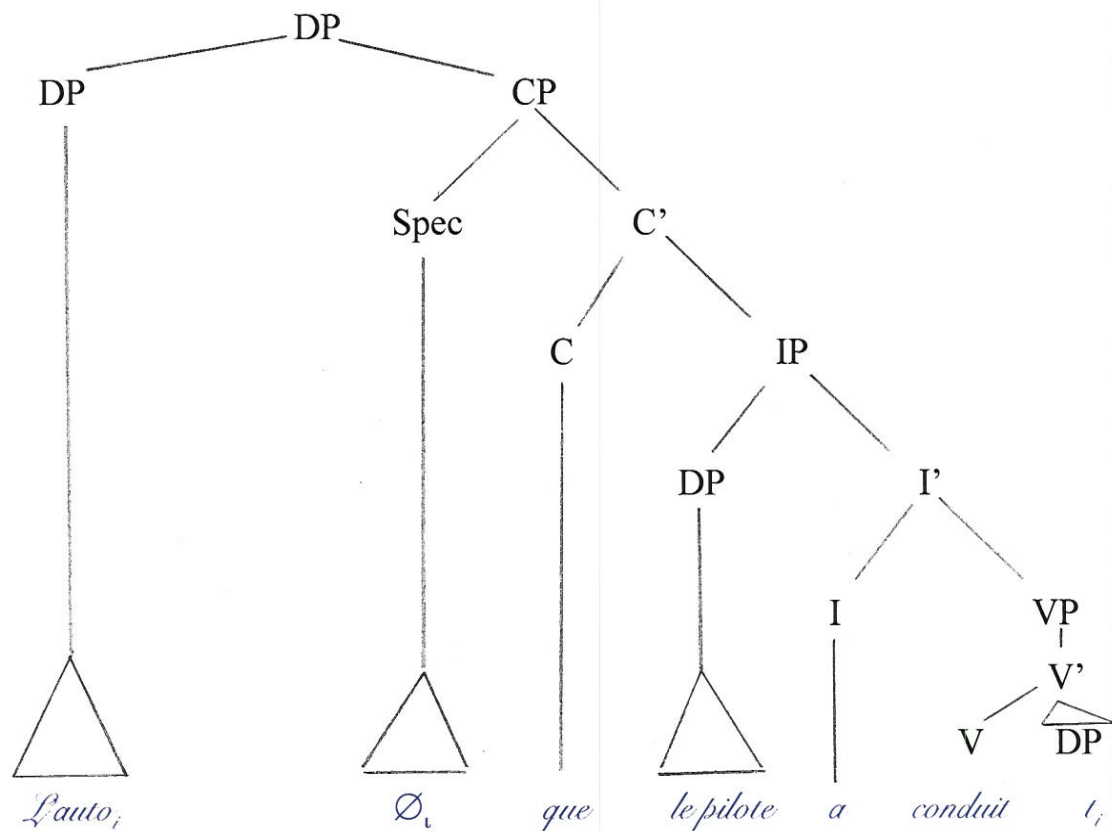
**(F2) Non-subject indicative RC:**

L’auto<sub>i</sub> [<sub>CP</sub> **que**<sub>i</sub> [<sub>TP</sub> le pilote a conduit t<sub>i</sub> ] ]

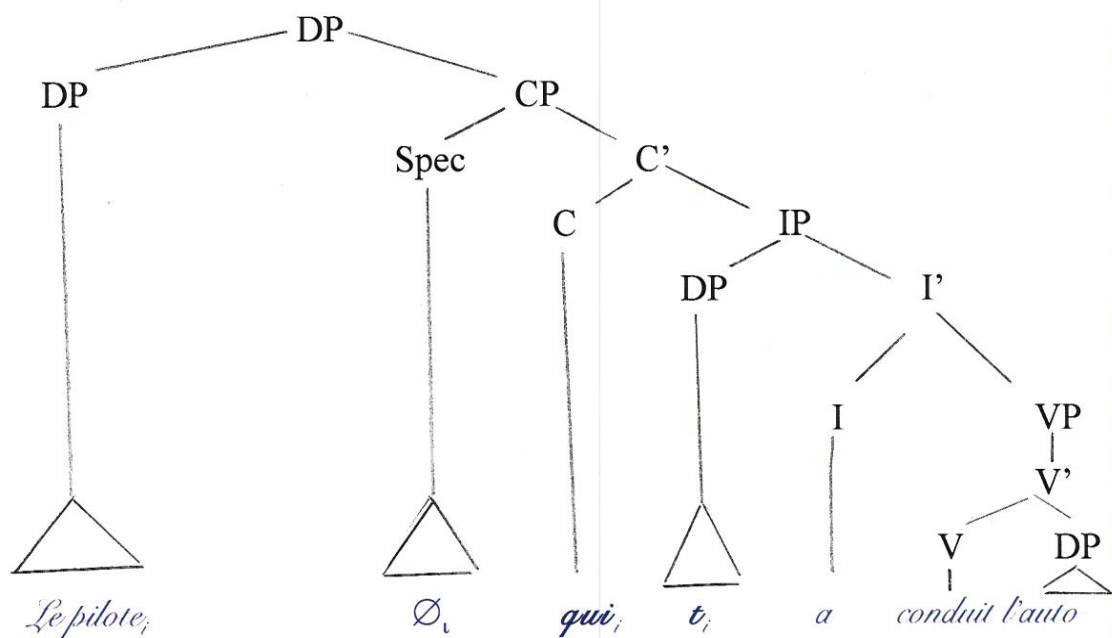
**(F3) Subject indicative RC:**

Le pilote<sub>i</sub> [<sub>CP</sub> **qui**<sub>i</sub> (\*que) [<sub>TP</sub> t<sub>i</sub> a conduit l’auto] ]

### Phrase structure for F2: Non-subject RC:



### Phrase structure for F3: Subject RC:



**Assumption:** A silent subject needs special licensing. The complementizer *que* can be such a licenser; but it needs to be co-indexed with the subject. It gets the index of its specifier, i.e. the empty moved subject relative pronoun.

**The indexed *que* is realized as *qui*.** (cf. Pesetsky 1981/82.)

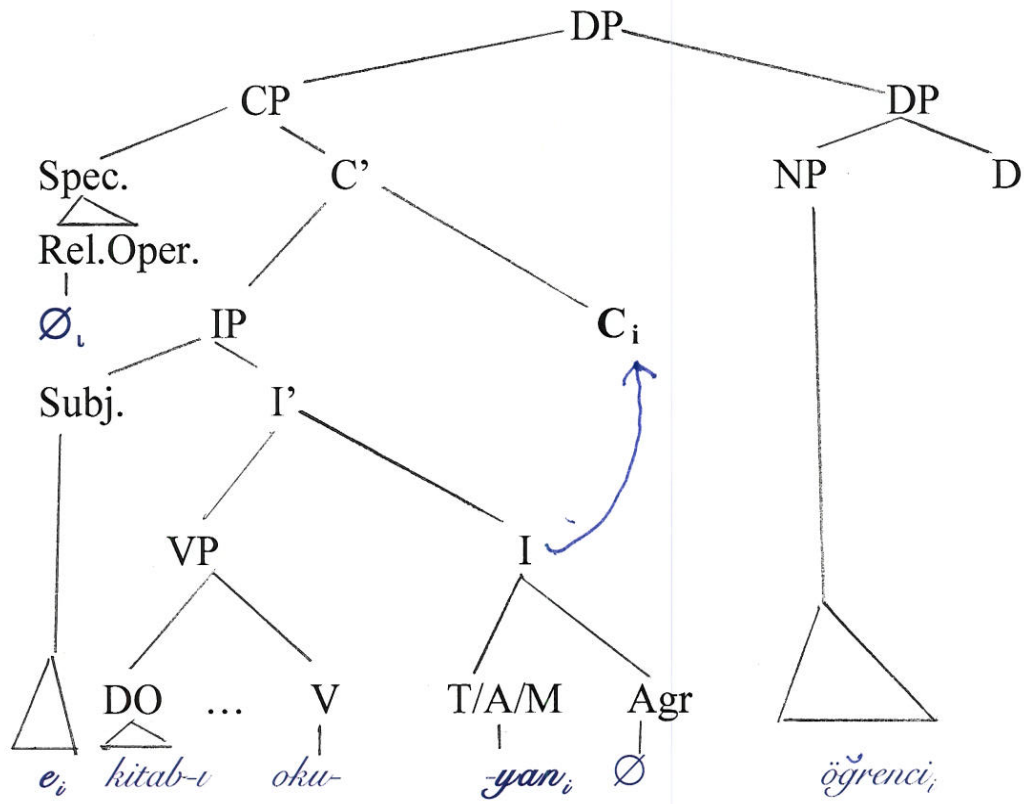
This is a special case of a bunch of phenomena referred to as “**complementizer agreement effects**”. Those all refer to the complementizer agreeing with the subject in some way, and **they all take place within the functional projection of CP.**

**Second assumption:** Morphologically rich languages such as the Turkic languages mark their “complete constituents”, i.e. full clauses or full nominal phrases. In Turkish, the relative clause is a “full” clause, i.e. is a CP; this is signaled by the agreement morpheme on the predicate.

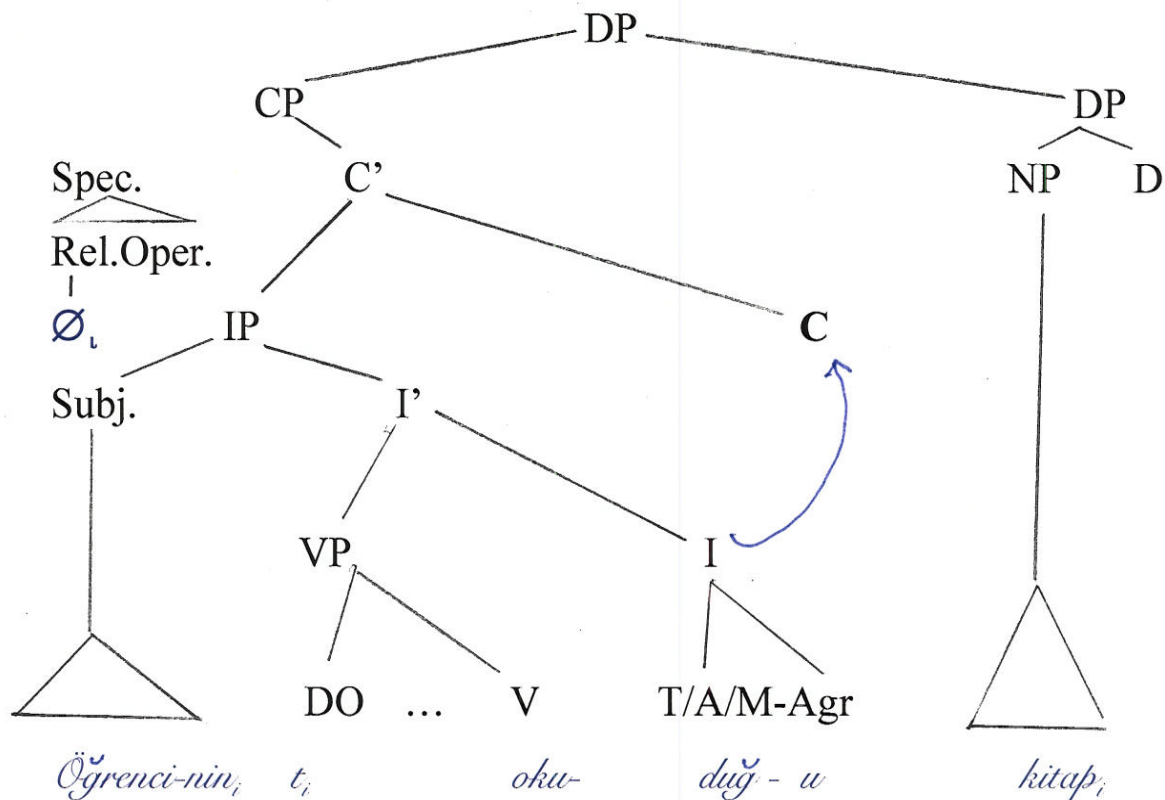
**Consequences:** In Turkish, the placement of the agreement on the predicate, and the special nominalization morpheme for subject RCs go hand in hand. Both are consequences of the CP-status of the clause.

In a number of other Turkic languages, there is no special nominalization marker for subject RCs: the target of the RC does not determine the shape of the clause’s subject. Nor is the agreement morpheme placed on the clause.

**Turkish-type subject RC:**



### Turkish-type non-subject RC:



(Additional assumption, independently motivated: T+Agr raises to C)

**Sakha (Yakut)** as a representative of **another type of Turkic** languages: Resembles OT; nominative (not Genitive!) subjects; no difference between predicate morphology in subject and non-subject RCs (i.e. there are no complementizer-agreement phenomena). Like ModT in having subject agreement in (only) non-subject RCs, but agreement placed on head, not on clause:

(7) a. [it e<sub>i</sub> ih -iex -teex] üüt -e<sub>i</sub>

dog(NOM) drink-FUT-MOOD milk -3.SG

'the milk the dog should drink' (Kornfilt & Vinokurova 2001)

(7) c. [e<sub>i</sub> üüt ih -iex -teex] it<sub>i</sub>

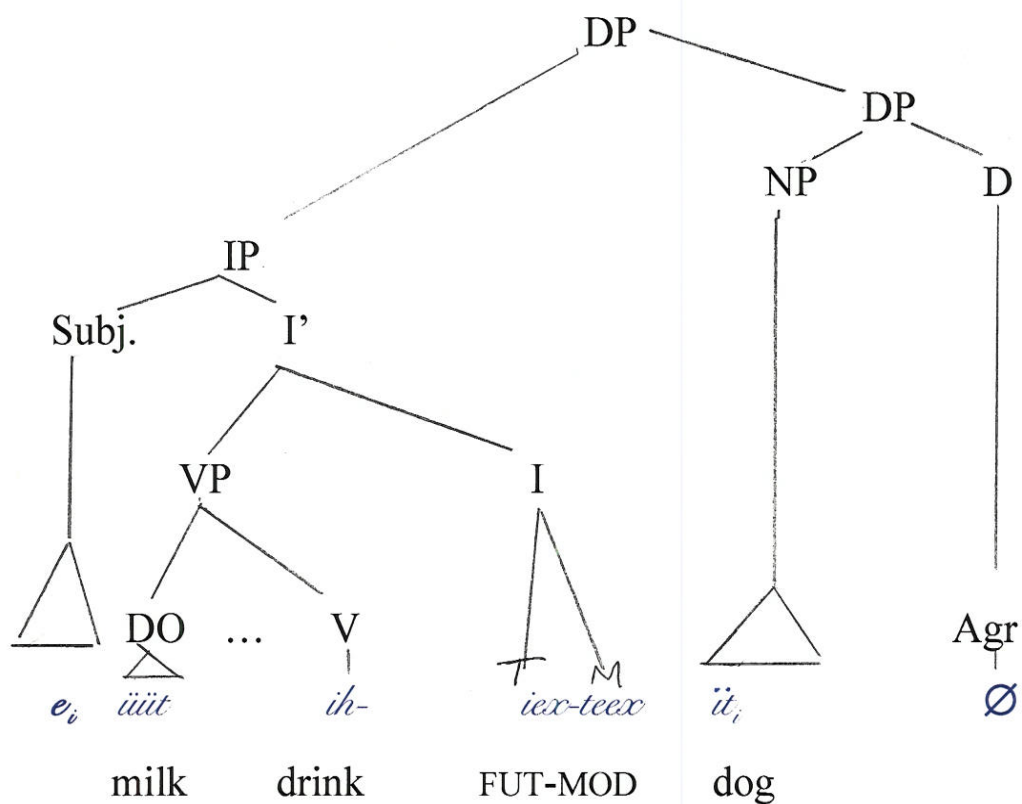
milk drink-FUT-MOD dog

'The dog which should drink the milk'

**Claim:** the relative clause in Sakha (and other languages with the same type of “long-distance” placement of subject agreement) is not a full-fledged clause, i.e. it is not a CP, but is a bare Tense/Aspect/Mood phrase. This is why agreement isn't placed on the predicate, but on the higher full-fledged domain, i.e. on the DP. This is also why the agreement relationship between the subject and the clause-external head can cross the clause-boundary: that boundary is transparent to such relationships.

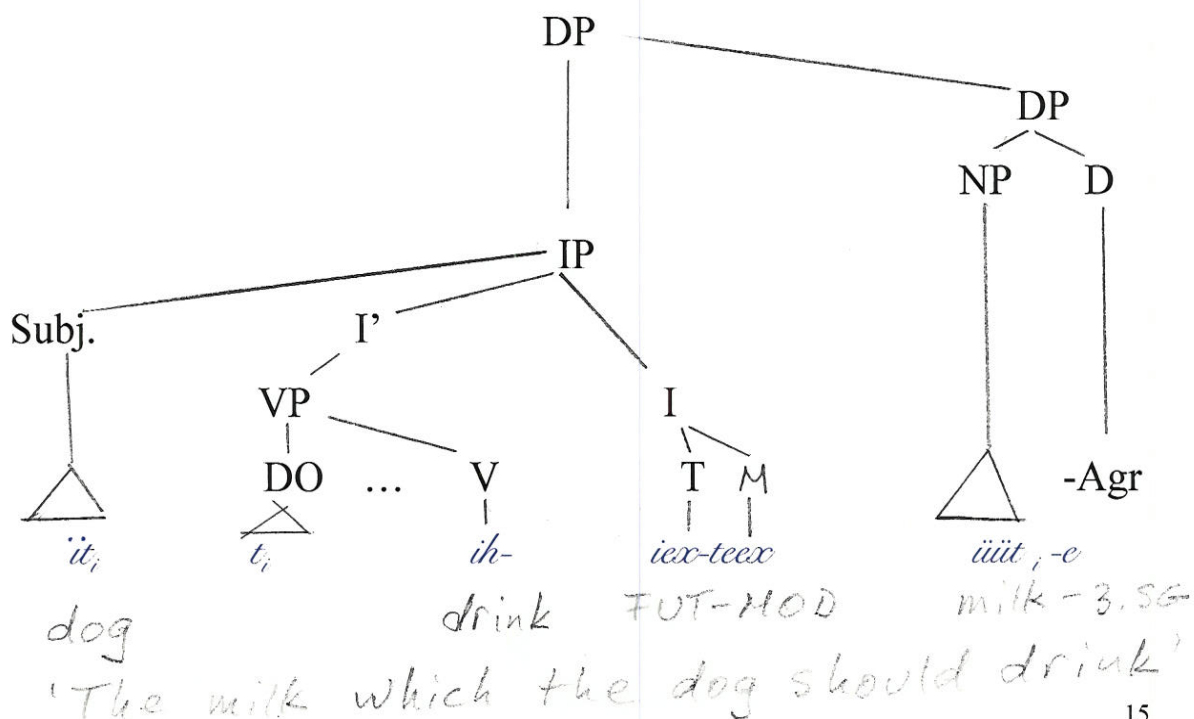


### Non-Turkish-type subject RC:



'The dog which should drink the milk'

### Non-Turkish-type non-subject RC:



### Rival account and counter-arguments:

In (7a), perhaps the subject has risen to the specifier position of the head, i.e. agreement on the head is not with the subject in its original position, but with the subject risen to “possessor” position.

There are a number of counterarguments; just one presented here:

- (12) [[aqa -n ] öl -ör -büt] (min) oquh-**um**  
father-2.SG(NOM) die -CAUS-P (I[NOM]) ox -**1.SG**  
‘My ox which your father killed’ (Kornfilt & Vinokurova 2001)

- (13) [min öl -ör -büt] (kini) oquh-**a**  
I(NOM) die -CAUS-P he(NOM) ox -**3.SG**  
‘His ox which I killed’ (Kornfilt & Vinokurova 2001)

The potential target of raising is already occupied by the possessor of the head; the possessor has different features from those of the subject. The subject therefore cannot rise to the higher position; it must still be *in-situ*.

### Conclusion for Sakha RCs:

The placement of agreement as well as (12) + (13) show that the modifying clause has a very weak boundary, i.e. it cannot be a CP.

This goes along with the fact that Sakha RCs do not exhibit complementizer agreement phenomena; if there is no CP, there is no complementizer, and there cannot be any complementizer agreement phenomena, either.

Sakha (and a number of other Turkic languages) have RCs with properties that are more similar to those of OT than to those of ModT. They lack complementizer agreement phenomena, i.e. the target of the RC does not determine any different predicate forms. They resemble each other in exhibiting “long-distance agreement” between the head and the subject, further showing that their clause boundaries are weak.

Nonetheless, they do have genuine (non-clitic) agreement, and they do exhibit local agreement within DPs, i.e. between possessor and possessee. They seem to have developed some functional projections, but not others; i.e. they have developed Agr-Ps, and T/A/M-Ps. However, they haven’t gone as far as Turkish (and, e.g., Azeri) in developing CPs.

Their properties are probably determined both by their genetic background and the areal features of their location (cf. Korean, Japanese). The same is probably true of Turkish, i.e. its development certainly possible given its genetic inheritance, but facilitated by its ultimate geographic location and the syntactic properties of its European neighbors.