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Choi Han-Woo**

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# New considerations about the Turkish -DIR suffix<sup>1)</sup>

by  
Armin Bassarak  
Berlin

## 1. The aim of the paper

Modern Turkish has two suffixes with the phonological form -Dir, that is -dır/-dir/-dur/-dür/-tır/-tir/-tur/-tür. The first of these two suffixes is well known as the causative suffix which occupies position number 2 in the chain of maximally possible suffixes after a verbal root (cf. BASSARAK 1985, 1997). For an example see (1):

- (1) yap -ış -tır -mak  
'do' -REZ -CAUS -INF  
'to stick' (TRANSITIVE)  
( 'do'+ REZ lexically = 'stick' INTRANSITIVE)

This suffix, however, will not be the subject of this paper.

The second -DIR suffix is well known, too. It occurs very often, e.g., in suffix combinations like

- (2) -mak -ta -dır  
-INF -LOK -EMP  
( '~3SG PRES')

But the fact that it occurs very often does not mean that its morphological or morphosemantic function would be clear anyhow. If we only look at the terminology we will see that there are very different notions used for this suffix. I do not want to make a terminological discussion at this moment. I decided to adopt the term EMPHASIS suffix as used by UNDERHILL (1976:33, 207) for the simple reason that I consider his book to be a good grammar of Turkish. This does not mean that this is the best or the only reasonable term for the suffix nor that all other terms are nonsense. However, the rich terminological variety

observed in connection with the -DIR suffix indicates that there are very big differences in the opinions about the nature of this suffix.

The aim of my present research work is to bring some more light into the question about the nature of this suffix. In this paper I will present some first reflexions on this way.

## 2. What do we know about the -DIR suffix?

The morphosemantic function of this suffix does not seem to be entirely clear. This can be seen if we look in different grammar books of the Turkish language. KISSLING (1960: 73,115,151) e.g. declares -DIR to be the copula of the 3rd person singular, but neither does he explain what he understands by "copula" nor does he remark the contradiction that lies in the fact that this suffix said to be 3rd person is added to 1st and 2nd person forms given as examples by himself. JANSKY (1986:14) even denotes it to be a 3rd person suffix. This is really pure nonsense and I will come back to this question later.

In the american grammatical tradition we can find the notion EMPHASIS suffix as mentioned above. SWIFT designates it "the Predicate-Emphatic suffix". He distinguishes two functions of the suffix, one being to certify "that the item to which it is suffixed is ... a predicate" (1963:153) the other being "to cast doubt upon the reality of the situation predicated" in speech (ibid.).

In the grammar of LEWIS we find again the old and fuzzy use of the term copula. As SWIFT too LEWIS distinguishes between writing and formal speech on the one hand and informal speech on the other hand. As to informal speech he writes that the suffix is used "either for emphasis or ... to indicate a supposition" (1967:97).

UNDERHILL writes that the -DIR suffix is "a complicated element" (1976:32): He also distinguishes between written and spoken use but he does not confuse the function of the suffix with a function of 3rd person. He writes that the suffix is used "most frequently ... with the third person" (1976:207). The word "with" indicates clearly that the suffix itself does not carry the function of 3rd person but that it can be combined with this person but with other persons too. The function of the suffix "is to emphasize the truth of the statement being made" (ibid.)

or "to remove the connotations of doubtfulness" from the narrative past –mİş (1976:108). As to spoken language, "the speaker assumes ... that the statement is true although he does not know it definitely" (ibid.).

Besides of grammar books we have one paper that deals especially with the function of the –DIR suffix (TURA SANSA 1984). Following this paper –DIR "behaves like an 'everywhere' of 'anywhere' operator on the modality scale, shifting between CERTAIN and NONCERTAIN" (TURA SANSA 1984:145).

### 3. Questions to ask about the –DIR suffix

We may now formulate a series of questions that are of interest (not only for the –DIR suffix but) for all post predicate suffixes. The first question is that of which positional regularities and which positional restrictions apply to these suffixes. In the last years I have done some research devoted to this questions, so here I want to give only a brief outline of the positional regularities and restrictions with special regard to the –DIR suffix.

In the chain of possible suffixes after a verbal root –DIR occupies position number 13. In positions 1 to 5 we can find stem forming suffixes, position 6 is either a TENSE/MOOD/ASPECT suffix or a suffix changing the category of the whole form (e.g. a nominalising suffix like –DIK). In positions 7, 8, and 9 we have nominal morphology and in the positions 10 to 13 occur post predicate suffixes: These are the question marker (pos. 10), the post predicate enclitics (pos. 11), the personal suffixes (pos. 12) and in position 13 we find our –DIR suffix. cf. example (3) that is very artificial but grammatically correct according to my informants and shows in a somewhat funny manner the ordering in a maximally elaborated chain of suffixes:

(3)

yap -ış -tır -ıl -ma -yabil -dik -ler -in -den mi -ymiş -sınız -dir

root 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13

'do' -REZ -CAUS -PASS -NEG -POSSIB -VNpast -PI -POSS3 -ABL -QU -DUB -2PI -EMP

I avoid giving a translation of this very complex and artificial form.

(2) and (3) look as if the -DIR suffix always occupies the position in the end of a suffix chain. However, the position of -DIR is not the really ultimate position in a hypothetical chain of suffixes since there are some suffixes that have alternative positions. One of them is the plural suffix -lar/-ler (pos. 7) whose alternative position (7A) is after pos. 13:

|      |      |       |      |      |                                     |
|------|------|-------|------|------|-------------------------------------|
| (4)  | yap  | -miş  | -lar | -dir | 'they (are said to) have done (it)' |
| pos. | root | 6     | 7    | 13   |                                     |
|      | do   | -NARR | -PI  | -EMP |                                     |
| (5)  | yap  | -miş  | -tır | -lar |                                     |
|      | root | 6     | 13   | 7A   |                                     |

A second question to ask is how the suffix interacts with purely verbal and with purely nominal morphology and how it interacts with the other post predicate suffixes. At this moment I am dealing only with morphological interaction, not with semantic interaction. The question of semantics or of the function of the suffix will be addressed somewhat later.

As to the interaction with verbal morphology we can take example (4) or (5) without the plural suffix:

|     |                     |       |      |  |
|-----|---------------------|-------|------|--|
| (6) | gel                 | -miş  | -tir |  |
|     | 'come'              | NARR  | EMP  |  |
|     | '(s)he came'        |       |      |  |
| (7) | gel                 | -ecek | -tir |  |
|     | 'come'              | FUT   | EMP  |  |
|     | '(s)he will come'   |       |      |  |
| (8) | gel                 | -meli | -dir |  |
|     | 'come'              | NEZ   | EMP  |  |
|     | '(s)he has to come' |       |      |  |

However, due to semantic factors which are not yet sufficiently investigated –DIR can not be combined freely with all TMA suffixes, cf.

(9)   ?gel        –iyor       –dur  
           come     PRES     EMP

(10)   \*gel        –ir        –dir  
           come    AOR     EMP

(11)   ?gel       –di        –dir  
           come   PAST    EMP

(12)   \*gel       –se        –dir  
           come    IRR     EMP

It is clear that these restrictions are not due to morphological but to semantic factors within the grammatical meaning of PRES, AOR, PAST and IRR. But until now I am not able to give a semantic analysis of these incompatibilities.

As to the interaction with nominal morphology we observe that –DIR occurs after the plural suffix, after the possessive suffixes and after nearly all case suffixes. Combinations of accusative + –DIR are rarely to find but I am not sure that they are grammatically excluded.

What we find very frequently is the combination of the –DIR suffix with the genitive or locative. This is true for the case suffixes after pure substantive stems as well as for the case suffixes after nominalizing suffixes especially the infinitive suffix, cf.:

(13)   okul               –da        –dir  
           school           LOK     EMP  
           '((s)he) is in the school'

(14)   git        –mek   –te        –dir

go      INF      LOK      EMP

'(s)he is going'

Now, what concerns the interaction with the other post predicate suffixes, there are some points of very particular interest. The combination of -DIR with the question marker is possible, cf.

(15)    öğrenci            mi            -dir?

student            QU            EMP

'Is (s)he a student?'

Among the post predicate enclitics only -(y)mis seems to be combinable with -DIR:

(16)    ?gel      -iyor      -muş      -tur

come    PRES      DUB      EMP

'(s)he has been coming'

However, this form that is rejected by some educated speakers of Turkish seems to be an analogy of (6).

Now, what is going on with the combination with personal suffixes? There are some grammarians (e.g. JANSKY 1986) who try to present the -DIR suffix as having a sort of copular function of 3rd person. They try to give the impression to learners that there are paradigms like

(17)    gel-miş-im, gel-miş-sin, gel-miş-tir, gel-miş-iz ...

(I came, you came, (s)he came ...)

A pseudo paradigm like this would rise the impression that -DIR is either a personal suffix of the 3rd person or a kind of copula or both. But in reality it is neither a personal suffix nor a copula.

Arguing against the interpretation of -DIR as a personal suffix is not very difficult. We have just seen that I have ascribed to personal suffixes

position number 12 and to -DIR position number 13. There are good reasons to do so: It can be shown that these two suffix positions really can be combined with each other. This would mean that -DIR can be used in forms with 1st or with 2nd person. This is the case when in position 6 we have the narrative suffix -miş and this combination has a somewhat ironical meaning which is the result of the contrast of the narrative meaning of -miş and the emphatic or judgement meaning of -DIR:

- (18)      (bunu)    söyle      -miş      -sin      -dir  
              (this)      say        NARR      2Sg      EMP  
              'you (are said to) have said (this)'

If in this sentence there is any copula then it is the personal suffix of 2nd person. This shows clearly that -DIR has neither 3rd person nor copular meaning. (Perhaps this holds also when in position 11 we have the DUBitative suffix -(y)mış.)

#### 4. Some empirical data

After having checked morphological aspects of the behaviour of the -DIR suffix I now turn to semantic aspects. The third question is how the suffix is used correctly to reflect the intentions of the speaker. Here we come to the need to find a semantic description of the function of the suffix. In order to make a first step in this direction I made an empirical investigation. My question was to find out whether or in which situations the use of the suffix is obligatory for native speakers. I am very grateful to Gerjan van Schaaik from Boğaziçi University for giving me access to his very rich corpus of Turkish texts transcribed from radio emissions. From this corpus I selected the sentences with one or more occurrences of the -DIR suffix, and from these sentences I selected at random a relatively small group of 536 sentences for not having a too large number of sentences for my informants. From this list I deleted all occurrences of the -DIR suffix in them. Then I gave these 536 sentences with the left-out suffixes to three native speakers and asked them to correct any

grammatical errors in my sentences. Unfortunately there was no time for giving the list to more than three informants. Now see the results:

|                               |      |       |      |
|-------------------------------|------|-------|------|
| (19) Informant                | 1    | 2     | 3    |
| Number of controled sentences | 536  | 536   | 411  |
| Number of added -DIRs         | 7    | 205   | 7    |
| percent                       | 1,31 | 38,25 | 1,70 |

(For lack of time informant number 3 was not able to check all sentences.)

Now it is very interesting to ask for the reason of the big difference between the results of informant 1 and 3 on the one hand and informant number 2 on the other hand. Informant number 2 is working as a teacher of Turkish in a school and she said to me that in checking the sentences she imagined them as to be corrected for a written presentation. But if the sentences were to be regarded as a spoken source than most of the -DIR suffixes added by her were not necessary. The most interesting thing, however, is that even under the aspect of regarding them as being in a written context she did not add any -DIR in 331 sentences, that is in 61,75% of all cases.

The first conclusion to draw is: In the most contexts, -DIR is not grammatically obligatory but rather an indicator of a certain class of texts that are usually written.

Now let us have a look at some of the rare contexts where at least 2 of 3 informants did put the -DIR suffix. I give them under numbers (20) to (24).

(20) Nasıl geçimini temin ediyorsun, bunca seneDiR.

(21) Yirmi yedi seneDiR gemilerdeyim.

(22) Sayın Serap Kuzey sizinle kaç yılDIR birlikte çalışıyoruz Ankara Radyosunda.

(23) TRT repertuar kolundan gemiř bulunan bestelerimden, ... , deęerli dinleyiciler, kısa hayat hikayemle, řarkılarımı dinlediniz, herhalde beni tanımıřřınızDIR.

(24) Kerpi duvar cepheleri ya da tabanların izlendięi hassas kazılarda, kk bir kazma ve mala daha yararlı olacakTIR.

Now, if we look at these sentences, we see that in 3 of them the -DIR suffix seems to be obligatory in the context with time expressions like yıl or sene (in the meaning of 'year'). And we may add that this is true also for other time expressions like ay ('month'), hafta ('week') or gn ('day') even if there were not examples with these expressions found in the given corpus.

In (23) we have the context with NARR and a 2nd person suffix about which I have spoken at above. Here, too, we may feel the somewhat ironic nuance in the meaning of the whole form. It is very interesting that in this sentence the -DIR suffix was added by all of my informants.

Last but not least, in (24) we have neither a context with a time expression nor with NARR and a personal suffix giving an ironical meaning. What we have here seems to be the very common case of -DIR as a kind of judgement operator used in official, scientific or other written texts but not necessarily in spontaneously spoken sentences. That is why only 2 of my 3 informants added the -DIR suffix in this sentence.

## 5. Conclusion

Very often if we state that a suffix occurs in some area of the language but not obligatorily in another area we may suppose that there is a grammaticalization process going on. In case of the -DIR suffix, however, it is impossible to suppose the suffix to be a new one. I found

the suffix even in some poems of Yunus Emre who used the Turkish language spoken in the 13th century. See example (25):

- (25) Dervişlik baştadır tacda değildir  
Kızdırmak oddadır sacda değildir  
Eğer bir mü'minin kalbin yıkarsan  
Hakka eylediğin secde değildir  
Hakkı arar isen kalbinde ara  
Kudüs'de Mekke'de Hac'da değildir (Yunus Emre)

(German by Annemarie Schimmel:

Derwischtum ist nur im Kopf, in der Mütze nicht;  
Das Erhitzen kommt vom Holz, doch vom Bratrost nicht!  
Hattest eines Frommen Herz kränkend du zerstört –  
Das Gebet, das du vollziehst, gilt vor Gott dann nicht!  
Wenn du Gott, den Wahren, suchst, such im Herzen Ihn:  
Nicht ist in Jerusalem Er, in Mekka nicht...)

If, on the other hand, we look at the thousands of occurrences of the petrified –MAKTADIR forms in newspaper articles we get the impression that the suffix is losing its meaning of an autonomous judgement operator. So we are perhaps at the beginning of a degrammaticalization process of this suffix, and some generations later contexts like temporal expressions or NARR + personal suffixes may remain the last fields of the use of this suffix. This is more probable since we know that in general language changes start with changes in the grammar of the spoken language and the written use follows later.

List of suffixes cited in this paper

| abbrev. | name | form | position <sup>2)</sup> |
|---------|------|------|------------------------|
|---------|------|------|------------------------|

|        |                                     |                      |        |
|--------|-------------------------------------|----------------------|--------|
| REZ    | reciprocal                          | -(i)ş                | 1      |
| CAUS   | causative                           | -tır/-(i)r/-ar/-(i)t | 2      |
| PASS   | passive                             | -ıl/-(i)n            | 3      |
| NEG    | negation                            | -ma                  | 4      |
| POSSIB | possibilitive                       | -(y)abil             | 5      |
| PRES   | present                             | -(i)yor              | 6      |
| AOR    | aorist                              | -(a/i)r/-z           | 6      |
| PAST   | past                                | -dı                  | 6      |
| NARR   | narrative                           | -mış                 | 6      |
| FUT    | future                              | -(y)acak             | 6      |
| IRR    | irrealis                            | -sa                  | 6      |
| NEZ    | necessitative                       | -malı                | 6      |
| OPT    | optative                            | -a                   | 6      |
| INF    | infinitive                          | -mak                 | 6      |
| VNPAST | verbal noun of anteriority          | -dır                 | 6      |
| Pl     | plural                              | -lar                 | 7,7A   |
| POSS3  | possessive 3rd person               | -(s)ı                | 8      |
| ABL    | ablative (case)                     | -dan                 | 9      |
| LOK    | locative (case)                     | -da                  | 9      |
| QU     | question marker                     | mı                   | 10,10A |
| DUB    | dubitative                          | -(y)mış              | 11     |
| 2Sg    | personal suffix 2nd person singular | -sın/n               | 12     |
| EMP    | emphasis suffix                     | -dır                 | 13     |

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