The Unknown Properties and Uses of the Optative Marker –(y)A in Turkish

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Abstract

In standard Turkish, there is an undefined form of the optative mood marker, which is close to being standardized. In this study, I aim to show that this optative mood marker only surfaces in the first person singular and plural forms only contrary to its standard counterpart, and to show that the optative mood marker paired with past markers are both overtly and covertly the alternative forms while facilitating the use of a simple reverse engineering method, based on the linear order of the TAM markers in Turkish. I claim that alternative form behaves exactly like the standard form. Inferring from the results of the reverse engineering method, I also claim that these results further support the assumption that first person singular and plural optative paradigms are not transparent (Kahnemuyipour & Kornfilt, 2006).

Keywords: *Optative mood, Modality markers, Paradigm selection*

1 Introduction

There is a lesser-known form of the optative marker *–(y)A* in existence in Turkish (1). It appears strictly in the cases where it is used in its first person singular or plural forms (henceforth, the alternative form).

(1)   Hadi dondurma yiyek.
        ice cream eat-OPT.-1SG.
        "Let's eat ice cream."

At first glance, this alternative form seems to appear strictly in some dialects in Turkish, but there is no concrete evidence to argue that this use belongs to only one dialect (like Adana dialect, one of the dialects located in Anatolia); it is rather being standardized. However, the existence of the alternative form does not cancel out the existence of the standard form. The irregularity of the standard morphological paradigm for optative mood in Turkish has been mentioned and referred to as 'not transparent' (Kahnemuyipour & Kornfilt, 2006). Inferring from this statement, one would initially argue the need to categorize said lesser-known forms of TAM markers (generally caused by dialectal differences, and language contact), and thus, in this paper I will categorize the said alternative form of the optative mood.

2 Mood types in Turkish

Kornfilt (1997) states that in Turkish, mood is usually marked on the main verb or is expressed via modal verbs, and also that there are number of moods in Turkish and they are as follows: indicative, conditional, imperative, optative, intentional, debitive, potential, degree of certainty, authority for assertion, hortatory (encouraging), monitory (warning), narrative, consecutive, contingent. While some of these forms have their overt morphological markers (like conditional, and optative), some of them do not (like hortatory and monitory). Though most of these morphological markers of said mood types are consistent as in how they surface, some of them do surface differently.

Göksel & Kerslake (2004) take on the concept of modality and present that there are five different kinds of different modalized utterances in Turkish, and they may present a generalization, an assumption or hypothesis, a statement concerning the possibility or necessity of the occurrence of an event or state, a statement based upon knowledge acquired indirectly, and an expression of desire or willingness for an event or state to occur. These modalized utterances are achieved via suffixes that are considered as tense/aspect/modality markers. But it should be noted that some of these suffixes may have modal force in some contexts, whereas in other contexts they may not possess said modal force (Göksel & Kerslake, 2004). A clear and concise example for this is that *-mIş* is grammatically determined, in that it becomes purely a tense/aspect marker when followed by *–(y)DI, -Dir* or *ol-*,

whereas if *-mIş* surfaces just by itself, it acts as a modal indicator, which gives the following meaning: a statement based upon indirectly acquired knowledge.

2.1   *Optative mood in Turkish*   In this paper, unlike Lewis (1975), the optative mood is not referred to as subjunctive mood. The optative mood is used in the scenarios where the speaker proposes an action that they want it to be done (Göksel & Kerslake, 2004). Kornfilt (1997) states that the optative mood has a distinct morphological paradigm (2) as in the morphological relationship between the first person singular and first person plural is not transparent and irregular.

(2)   1SG. –(y)AyIm
         2SG. –(y)AsIn
         3SG. –(y)A
         1PL. –(y)AlIm
         2PL. –(y)AsInIz
         3PL. –(y)AlAr

The actual usage of optative mood can be found in the following illustration (3):

(3)   1SG. otur-ayım   "Let me sit"
         2SG. otur-asın   "You(singular) should sit"
         3SG. otur-sun   "Let him/her sit; he/she/it should sit"
         1PL. otur-alım   "Let us sit"
         2PL. otur-asınız   "You(plural) should read"
         3PL. otur-sunlar   "Let them sit; they should sit"

It should be noted that in (3), third person singular and third person plural forms of the optative forms do not surface with the optative marker, but they rather surface with the markers that are used when expressing imperative mood. Following Kelepir (2001)'s assumptions about TAM markers and agreement markers, it is possible to fit optative marker in the discussed category. Kelepir (2001) categorized the TAM markers according to their first person plural suffixes, which makes it interesting for optative markers, since they were mentioned as problematic in the literature before (Kornfilt, 1997). The first person plural markers of the TAM markers was mentioned as the most striking one according to Kelepir (2001), so they were grouped as *z*-paradigm and *k*-paradigm (4).

(4)   1SG. -m
         2SG. -n
         3SG. -Ø
         1PL. -k
         2PL. -nIz
         3PL. -ØlAr

The standard optative mood markers in (2) do not seem to fit perfectly well in the *k*-paradigm category in that they do not agree on the first person plural forms, but they have most of the characteristics according to Kelepir (2001)'s categorization: they do not have an overt third person singular and third person plural agreement marker, and they follow the categorization except the first person plural one. This classification/categorization of the optative mood serves an important factor when the dialectal differences come into play. It should also be mentioned that two of the TAM markers that fit in *k*-paradigm category are past and conditional, in which the latter one in most scenarios acts as the formal version of the optative.

2.2   *Conditional mood*   To give a brief explanation for how conditional mood is achieved in Turkish (for comparison purposes later), it can be said that the conditional marker follows the *k*-paradigm. According to Göksel & Kerslake (2004), the conditional marker *–(y)sA* can attach to the third position of the categorization, in that if TAM markers were to co-occur, they would appear in the 3rd position in the linear order, e.g., after the possibility marker *–(y)Abil*.

(5)   Yap-abil-se-y-di-m
         do-PSB.-COND.-COP.-PAST.-1SG
         "If I could do"

Inferring from Kornfilt (1997)'s statements, unlike optative mood markers, conditional markers can be either positioned before or after the past marker linearly, and with these two different appearances come two different meanings: one meaning entails that there is an unfulfilled condition (6) and the other meaning entails whether the action was done or not in the past (7). This piece of data entails the flexibility of the placement of the conditional mood markers compared to optative mood markers.

(6)   Bu kitabı oku-sa-y-dı-n, adam olurdun.
                    read-COND.-COP.-PAST.-2SG.
          "Had you read this book, you would have become a man."

(7)   Bu kitabı oku-du-y-sa-n, yalan söylüyorsundur.
                    read-PAST.-COP.-COND.-2SG.
          "If you read this book, you are (most likely) lying."

2.2.1 *Conditional mood in comparison with optative mood*   In Turkish, it may be considered acceptable by the speakers if conditionals markers were used instead of optative markers when paired with past suffix, to give the relatively same meaning. Of course, this would result in a change of mood, but one would not be surprised to see that conditionals are used more often that the optative suffixes for the same purpose, strictly in the cases that conditionals are used instead of the optative mood (conditional mood being used instead of the optative mood is not a natural occurrence). While facilitating this change in their daily utterances, the speakers tend to use the conditional mood for the formal contexts, and they tend to use the optative mood for the informal contexts. Since they are similar in that they belong to the same *k*-paradigm category, and they surface in a similar way too, this exchange becomes acceptable. Optative suffixes can be followed by definite and reported past, and this trend can be seen in the conditionals, too (8a, 8b).

(8)   a. Koş-a-y-dı-m
             run-OPT.-COP.-PAST.-1SG
             "Had I run"

          b. Koş-sa-y-dı-m
              run-COND.-COP.-PAST.-1SG
             "If I had run"

Considering the generalization that was made by Göksel & Kerslake (2004), about the order of the conditionals and optatives when TAM markers co-occur, it can be inferred that the co-occurrence of the optative markers and conditional markers is not possible (9).

(9)   Yap-sa-a-m*
          Do-COND.-OPT.-1SG

Unlike the conditional marker, optative marker cannot attach to nominals (10), and cannot occur after and before a person marker that is attached to the perfective marker -*DI* (11a, 11b).

(10)   şoför-e*
           driver-OPT.

(11)   a. bak-tı-m-a*
               look-PERF.-1SG.-OPT.

          b. bak-tı-y-a-m*
               look-PERF.-COP.-OPT.-1SG.

It should also be noted that there is a rather important generalization that was made by Göksel & Kerslake (2004), which stated that optative marker mostly occurs in the first person singular and plural forms, which contributes to the number of differences that optative and conditional mood have. This generalization can be considered as self-motivated when the nature of a language is the main focal point of the consideration. The nature of the optative mood is about the wishes that the speaker wants to utter to others. It is rather rare to come across an utterance that underlyingly implies the wishes of another hearer. The simplest thing that comes to mind is the truthfulness of

said utterance when the hearer's wishes are considered. It may be the case why optative markers tend to not exist in the third person singular and plural forms and less used in the second person singular and plural forms, but this generalization still stands as an assumption.

3   The alternative optative marker

The best way to present the 'alternative' form is to first decide on whether it possesses the optative mood or not. For this purpose, the comparison between the standard form (12) and the alternative form (13) can be found in following examples:

(12)   Kalk-a-y-ım bari.
          stand-OPT.-COP.-1SG
          "Let me stand up."

(13)   Kalk-a-m bari.
          stand-OPT.-1SG
          "Let me stand up."

While offering the same optative mood, the alternative form seems to have undergone a phonological loss when compared to the standard form (12); the buffer copula is lost in the alternative form. In both forms, speaker clearly states the wish that they want it to be done. Also, the difference in meaning between (12) and (13) is formality. While the standard optative form is closer to being used in the formal contexts, it is clear that the alternative form is only used in informal contexts. It should be noted that this form only surfaces in the first person singular and plural person markers.

3.1   *k-paradigm or m-paradigm?*   It should be mentioned that due to some dialectal differences or the language contact, some phonological changes may happen, e.g., the sound difference in the eastern regions of Turkish when pronouncing words that include the *k* sound in the end position of the said word. This might not be the case in the alternative optative marker, since I argue that it strictly follows the *k*-paradigm introduced by Kelepir (2001). But it should be noted that there is a phonological loss, which I will argue that it is about language economy in the following section of this paper. This strict following is also supported by the alternative form only having been used in the first person singular and plural forms, so it must select paradigms for only those forms. In comparison to the standard from, the alternative form does completely follow the *k-paradigm*, as in it selects the *k* suffix for the first person plural too. The following illustration shows how the alternative form selects the *k-paradigm* (14):

(14)   1SG. –(y)Am
          1PL. –(y)Ak

Inferring from (14), it is apparent that the alternative form closely follows the *k*-paradigm. The next illustration (15) shows the actual usage of the alternative form:

(15)   1SG. Otur-am   "Let me sit"
          1PL. Otur-ak   "Let us sit"

3.2   *Why it only appears on first person singular and plural markers?*   This question remains as an unknown factor, but it could be determined by generalizations such as the nature of optative mood. Also, the standardization of the alternative optative form can be considered as a fact, since almost every dialect of Turkish includes this use nowadays (it should be noted that the occurrence of the alternative form gets gradually higher in the eastern areas of Turkey). But the origin of this alternative form is most likely from eastern regions of Turkey, according to the similarities between how consonants are pronounced in the eastern dialects of Turkish with the alternative form, and how natural this form is pronounced in the said dialects of Turkish. Also, another generalization that could be considered as an answer for this question is that languages generally opt for lesser utterances for giving the intended meaning known as language economy. As it is observed in the previous section of this paper (10, 11), compared to its standard form, the alternative form seems to have undergone a phonological loss, and that is the buffer copula being lost. What can be inferred from this observation is that the users of the alternative form can give the same optative mood while uttering less sounds, which contributes to the answer that it might be the case of language economy.

3.3 *Does the alternative form influence the standard form?*   It has already been discussed the possibility of the alternative form being derived from the standard form of optative mood (check 3.2). But does it have any influence on the standard form? To answer this question, I will argue a basic yet effective way of describing whether the alternative form influenced the standard form or not.

If the existence of the alternative form is disregarded, we would only be left with the two ways describing optative mood in standard Turkish, in which with the conditional and standard optative markers. The difference between these two markers (considering that they were both used for giving the optative mood by the speakers) is formality. Considering the given regulations about the existence of an alternative form, in standard Turkish, say, in a formal way, if one were to express past wishes that remain unfulfilled, they would use the conditional mood (16). If one were to express past wishes that remain unfulfilled in an informal way, they would opt for the standard optative form (17).

(16)   Keşke o kitabı oku-sa-y-dı-m.
                            read-COND.-COP.-PAST.-1SG
          "I wish I had read that book."

(17)   Keşke o kitabı oku-ya-y-dı-m.
                            read-OPT.-COP.-PAST.-1SG
          "I wish I had read that book."

According to the data in (16) and (17), it is inferred that the paradigm selection for the optative mood seems to be accurate as in its present form (18).

(18)   O kitabı oku-ya-y-ım.
                      read-OPT.-COP.-1SG
          "Let me read that book."

The continuous trend with these data is that all of the standard optative mood constructions have been in their first person singular forms. If we were to compare the same sentences but making the verb select first person plural markers, to see that the paradigm selection for the optative mood still seems to give acceptable results, we would end up with the following data (19):

(19)   Keşke o kitabı oku-ya-y-dı-k.
                            read-OPT-COP.-PAST.-1PL
          "I wish we had read that book."

The paradigm for the first person plural marker seems to appear as the *k*-paradigm, yet prior to this, it was mentioned as missing in the paradigm selection for the standard optative mood (it was noted in (4)). This strange behaviour is only observed in optative mood markers paired with past markers. In the next section, I will argue that the informal way of expressing past wishes that remained unfulfilled is done via facilitating the alternative optative mood markers that I propose, not the standard ones.

4   The reverse engineering method

If we facilitate the use of a reverse engineering method, and thus try to capture a pattern between first person singular and plural optative markers, I hypothesize that something rather unexpected happens. The operation is very simple and straightforward, and its main motivation stems from the fact that the linear order of the TAM markers in Turkish reveal a lot about the characteristics of them, as several linguists (Göksel & Kerslake, 2004, Kelepir, 2001) found a way to categorize them by said peculiarity. The reverse engineering operation consists of two elements: adding and subtracting related markers to the verb stem. This was done in an order which reveals and contributes to my claims that the informal way of expressing past wishes that remained unfulfilled is done via facilitating the alternative optative mood markers. Also, another argument that will contribute to the motivation of the reverse engineering method is that it would make the perfect sense to compare the first person singular and plural optative markers according to (Kahnemuyipour & Kornfilt, 2006, Kornfilt, 1997).

4.1 *Applying the reverse engineering method*   Having established the basic requirements of the method, the operation by itself is quite simple; The first step of this method is that the past marker will be deleted (*-dı, -di*) from the verbs paired with optative mood markers, to sort of convert the verb into present optative. Then this step

will be reverted, by doing the exact opposite; the past suffix (*-dı, -di*) will be added to the present optative form, to make the verb past optative (this is done in the forms that alternative form surfaces as). The subtracted markers are shown as the down arrow "↓", and the added markers are shown as the up arrow "↑". This whole method can be described as forcing the verb into choosing paradigms according to the TAM markers that it receives until there is a pattern, or an interesting behaviour that can be observed. In (20) and (21), the first step of the reverse engineering method can be seen applied on the verb *oku*:

(20)   Oku-yá-y-dı↓-m.   →   Oku-ya-y-ím.
         read-OPT-COP.-PAST.-1SG.   read-OPT.-COP.1SG.
         "I wish I had read."   "Let me read"

(21)   Oku-yá-y-dı↓-k.   →   Oku-ya-y-ık*.
         read-OPT-COP.-PAST.-1PL.   read-OPT.-COP.1PL.
         "I wish we had read."   "Let us read."?

As can be observed in the previous examples, while the first person singular form turned out to be grammatically fine, the first person plural form is problematic when the same operation is applied. It should also be mentioned that while doing this method, there is an occurrence of a *stress shift* (Grabe & Warren, 1995), which contributes to the argument that was about the transparency of said markers made by Kahnemuyipour and Kornfilt (2006). Also, for further discussion in Turkish pre-stressing suffixes, check the aforementioned study. In the following illustrations (22, 23) you may find the second step of the method in question:

(22)   Gel-e-y-im.   →   Gel-e-y-di↑-m
         come-OPT.-COP.-1SG.   come-OPT.-COP.-PAST.-1SG.
         "Let me come."   "I wish I had come."

(23)   Gel-e-lim   →   Gel-e-l*-di↑-m*/k*
         come-OPT.-1PL.   come-OPT.-COP.-PAST.-1PL.
         "Let us come."

Again, the first person singular form seems to have survived this operation, whereas the first person plural form still has failed to do so. It not only needs to change its buffer marker (which is a relatively easy operation for Turkish), it also needs to pick a different person agreement marker accordingly. The pattern in the first person plural form is easy to see as it appears overtly compared to the first person singular form.

4.2   *The proper appearances according to the reverse engineering method*   From now on, I would like to continue with the prior examples that I have given, in order to create a less distracting and more concise further explanations. In order to fix said markers and the irregularities in the paradigm selections, I argue the need of the alternative form of optative mood markers. As it can be seen in the further examples, the existence of an alternative form inherently answers the prior problems that were created in the absence of it. Until now, the first person singular form have been rather consistent, compared to the first person plural form. So, in the following illustrations (24, 25), you may find how the ungrammaticality that was caused by the absence of an alternative form in the first person plural form is eliminated, and that is, of course, by introducing the alternative optative mood marker:

(24)   Gel-e-y-ím.   →   Gel-é-y-di↑-m.   = -(y)Am
         come-OPT.-COP.-1SG.   come-OPT.-COP.-PAST.-1SG.
         "Let me come."   "I wish I had come."

(25)   Gel-e-lím.   →   Gel-é-y-di↑-k.   = -(y)Ak
         come-OPT.-1PL.   come-OPT.-COP.-PAST.-1PL.
         "Let us come."   "I wish we had come."

If we treat the present optative markers as the alternative ones, both first person singular and plural markers ultimately turn out to be grammatically fine, and their paradigm selections are no more problematic. In (25), it is apparent that the alternative optative markers are relatively more suitable to the generalization that was made by Kelepir (2001), which was the *k*-paradigm. Also, it should be noted that the stress shift pattern continues here, but now in a correct way since the first person plural form is 'fixed'. In order to fix the examples with the verb *oku*, I have given the following illustrations (26, 27). This carries a rather different importance to (24) and (25) in that

this is the initial forms that the reverse engineering method was applied, e.g., the standard optative mood markers paired with past. This is how they must appear:

(26)	Oku-ya-y-dı↓-m.	→	Oku-ya-m.	= -(y)Am
	read-OPT-COP.-PAST.-1SG.		read-OPT.-1SG.	
	"I wish I had read."		"Let me read"	
(27)	Oku-ya-y-dı↓-k.	→	Oku-ya-k	= -(y)Ak
	read-OPT-COP.-PAST.-1PL.		read-OPT.-1PL.	
	"I wish we had read."		"Let us read."	

Again, after the subtraction part is applied, the verbs have ended up choosing the right paradigms, and they are grammatically fine. Inferring from these results, I argue that the example in (17), where we see optative is paired with a first person singular marker, is **covertly** the alternative optative mood marker, and the example in (19), where we see optative is paired with a first person plural marker, is **overtly** the alternative optative mood marker. The differing factor in whether being overtly or covertly the alternative mood marker stems from the fact that the reverse engineering method's results are indicative of this statement. When applying the steps of the reverse engineering method, one would realize how consistent the first person singular marker tends to choose a paradigm and stick to it. However, the same generalization cannot be made for the first person plural marker, due to the fact that it showed some grammatical inconsistencies, and said inconsistencies were pretty apparent. That is the main motivation that I argued a differing factor between these person agreement markers.

5   Conclusion & Discussion

I argue that the results in the section 4.2 further support the assumption that the first person singular and plural optative paradigms are not transparent (Kahnemuyipour & Kornfilt, 2006). And they also prove that there is a different form for first person singular and plural forms in existence. I would like to mention that these forms are being used only for informal cases in standard Turkish. Since it is being standardized and used more and more in daily utterances in standard Turkish, it would not be right to accept this use under a fitting dialect, say, in Adana dialect of Turkish. That would be an under specification of the actual alternative form of the optative mood marker *–(y)A*. Also, for further studies, the apparent stress shift given in the (20, 21, 24, 25) might reveal some different features of the optative mood marker, and maybe even more about the general stress shift in Turkish.

If this use were to be accepted under a fitting dialect, the purpose of the alternative optative mood marker's existence would be to fill the void when needed in standard Turkish, e.g., to be used in the contexts where the speaker wants to express past wishes that remained unfulfilled in an informal way. As it stands, I have showed why this approach would yield results that ultimately depict a wrong statement about the standardization of the alternative optative mood marker.

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