Turkic in the LACIM area

Syntax I.

Simple sentences

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Turkic languages are strictly left-branching!

Basic rule: The defining element precedes the defined.

In noun phrases,

- **adjectives** precede their head nouns, as e.g.: *quru torpaɣaː* (< dry ground:DAT) 'on the dry ground'. There is no morphological congruence: Adjectives are not marked for number or case, grammatical gender doesn't exist).

- Likewise, (indefinite, demonstrative or possessive) **pronouns** are placed before the substantive they define, as in *bizɪm bɒbɒlarɨmɨz* (< our forfather:PL.POSS1PL) 'our forfathers'.

- In combinations of **substantive + substantive**, such as (a) 'identity appositions', (b) possessive constructions, or (c) genitive possessive constructions, the defining element precedes the defined, and the possessor precedes the possessum, e.g. *aɣaǧ-ɪn källä-sɪ* (< tree:GEN + top:POSS3SG) 'the top of a/the tree'.

Remember: The defining element is placed in front of the defined.
In syntax, this rule governs the hierarchy of sentence components.

In unmarked word order, the more important elements are placed closer to the end of the sentence.

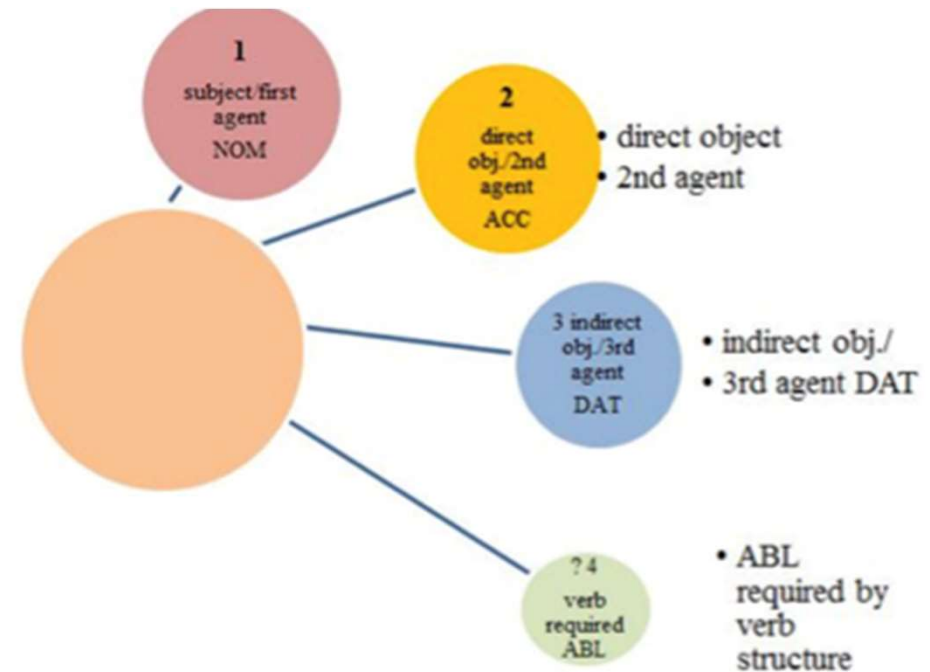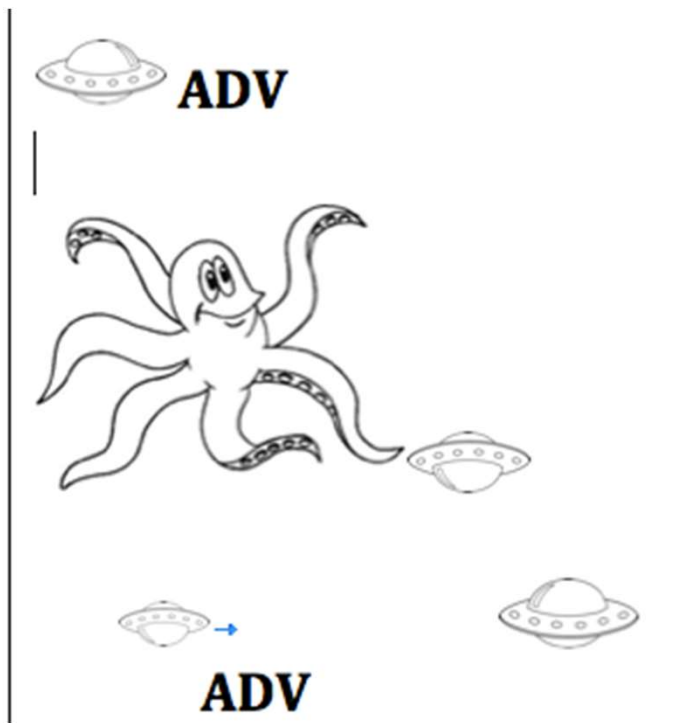**The verb as the central element is at the end of the sentence**

- The **focus pos**ition is the position directly in front of the verb.

- Adverbs have no fixed position in the sentence.

The valency pattern of the verb, or its potential to take arguments, structures the sentence.

- So, for instance, **subject, direct object, indirect object** ('target'), and, in some cases in Turkic also the **ablative** complements (not adjuncts!), depend on the verb.

The verb as the central element of the sentence

The argument structure (agent/actant pattern) of the Turkic verb, and its satellites (adverbs)

(1) Simple Sentences

One *finite* verb = one sentence

Definition: The minimum requirement for a sentence is a finite verb form:

stem + tense/mood/aspect marker + personal suffix (denoting the agent)

Gid-iyor-um. (go: PRS 1SG) 'I go.'

The finite verb may also be more complex, consisting of e.g. verb stem + diathetic marker + negation suffix + tense/mood/aspect marker + personal suffix; remember the example below, from our chapter on morphology (Slide no. 6)

Gör –üş –tür -ebil –ecek –ler mi?

'Will they be able to make them see each other?'

A Turkic sentence may consist of just one single *finite* (= fully conjugated) verb form, as in the examples above.

Word order

Turkic languages are generally classified as SOV

- There is no need to introduce **pronominal subjects**/first agents via a separate 'analytic' personal pronoun, as the agent is unambiguously marked by one of the six personal suffixes -> (S)OV.

- As each argument of the verb is formally marked by **case morphology** for its precise morpho-syntactic function, the order of constituents in simple sentences is quite flexible. (Exception: The unmarked object has to be directly in front of the verb.)

- **Adverbs** ('satellites'), and also **arguments** of the verb, can take any position in the sentence. They can also be placed in **post-verbal position**.

- **Deviations from the unmarked word order** are motivated by information structure/discourse pragmatics, such as topicalization or focusing.

NOTE: In clauses based on **non-finite verb forms** (= subjunctors, see next chapter!), sentence components cannot appear after the subjunctor.

More on syntax:

You will find information on

Complex sentences and alternative strategies of clause combining ('loan syntax')

in the 2nd section on Turkic syntax.

this lecture

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