Adjectival Diminutives in Turkish

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Turkish uses two adjectival diminutive morphemes: -CIk only combines with a subset of adjectives that are on the low end of a scale while -CE can combine with any scalar adjective.

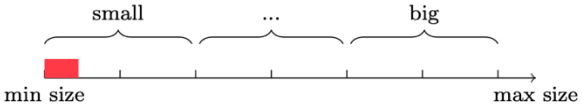
		-CIk	*-CE*
kısa	short	✓	✓
küçük	small	✓	✓
ucuz	cheap	*	✓
yakın	close	*	✓

uzun	long	*	✓
büyük	big	*	✓
pahalı	expensive	*	✓
uzak	far	*	✓

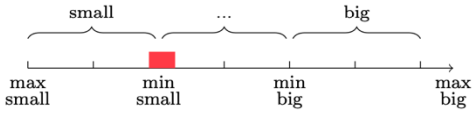
		-CIk	*-CE*

Descriptively, -CIk picks out a vague subinterval at the lowest end of an abstract scale. By contrast, -CE picks out a vague interval at the lowest end of a scalar adjective. Unlike -CIk, it does not operate on the entire scale. Instead, it operates on the subinterval denoted by the adjective.

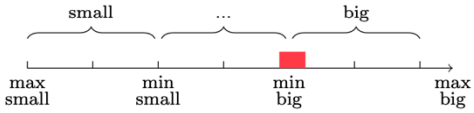
(1) *küçü-cük* "very small"



(2) *küçük-çe* "smallish"

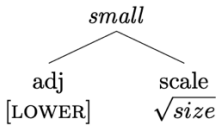


(3) *büyük-çe* "bigish"

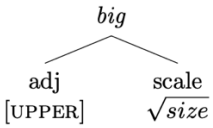


Assuming that gradable adjectives are relations between individuals and degrees on a scale [2,3,4], we propose that -CIk and -CE share the same semantic function DIM, which combines with a scalar element and returns the subset of the lowest intervals on the scale. Adopting DM [1], we assume that some scalar adjectives are constructed in the syntax via a combination of a scalar root and an interval function. This returns a subscale identified by the content of the function as in (4) and (5). The output of the function combining with the scale is also a scale which has its own upper and lower ends. This allows the scalar adjectives to further combine with comparative and superlative operators (and other degree modifiers).

(4)



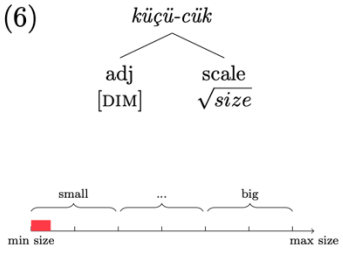
(5)



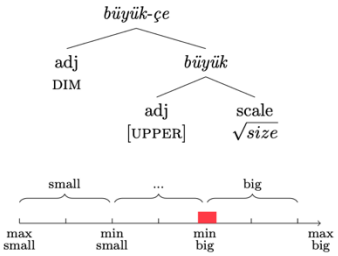
When the DIM function combines directly with the scale root as in (6), it is realized as -CIk and denotes an interval at the lowest end of the scale. When it combines with any other category as in (7) or (8), it is realized as -CE picking out an interval at the lowest end of the subscale denoted

by the gradable expression (AdjP, CompP, etc.).

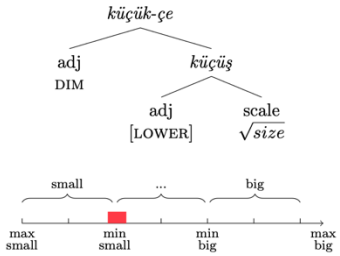
(6)



(7)



(8)



The unified DIM analysis accounts for a range of differences between -CIk and -CE diminutives. First, the fact that -CIk only appears on adjectives that are on the lower end of a scale (e.g. *small*.) follows automatically. -CIk is realized when DIM combines with the scale root which results in an adjective at the lower end of the scale. On the other hand, -CE is realized after a scalar adjective is created, allowing it to combine with adjectives from either end of a scale. Second, the analysis accounts for the root allomorphy observed with -CIk but not -CE. With -CIk DIM is local enough to trigger root allomorphy while -CE always has an intervening head blocking it.

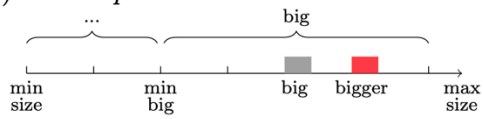
One final set of facts that is accounted for by the proposed analysis comes from comparatives and superlatives. -CIk can appear with superlatives only, whereas -CE can appear with both.

(9) a. en kısa-cık
most short-dim
"the very shortest"
b. *daha kısa-cık
more short-dim
"very shorter"

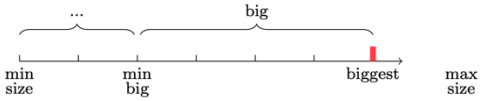
(10) a. en kısa-ca
most short-dim
"the most shortish"
b. daha kısa-ca
more short-dim
"more shortish"

Following standard views of comparatives and scales [2,5], we assume that the comparative operator orders two non-overlapping degree intervals as in (11). Superlative operator combines with an interval and returns the ultimate point at the relevant end of the scale.

(11) *comparative*

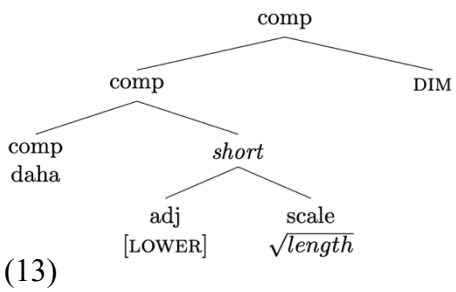


(12) *superlative*



In (9-b), the co-occurrence of -CIk and the comparative morpheme leads to a contradiction as -CIk denotes the lowest possible interval on the scale which cannot be further shifted by a comparative operator while (9-a) is fine as the superlative takes the interval denoted by the output of the DIM function and returns the ultimate point in the lower bound. In (10-a), DIM combines with the scalar adjective kısa "short" and returns its lowest bound. The structure of (10-b) needs a little more attention, though. Intuitively, (10-b) denotes "short-er-ish" but not "short-ish-er". DIM already returns the lower bound of a scale which cannot be further modified by the comparative operator. This is the reason why (9-b) is ungrammatical. Instead, in (10-b) the adjective first combines with the comparative operator, which shifts the interval, and then the DIM combines with this output to return the lowest interval on the new scale. The structure

(13)



of (10-b) is given in (13). While -CIk shows derivational characteristics (root allomorphy, non-productiveness) -CE displays inflectional behavior (no-root allomorphy or productiveness). Following DM literature, we argue that the distinction follows from whether DIM combines directly with a lexical root or a functional category (AdjP, CompP, etc.).

Selected references: [1] Halle, Morris, Alec Marantz. 1993. Distributed morphology and the pieces of inflection. [2] Kennedy, Christopher and Louise McNally. 2005. Scale structure and the semantic typology of gradable predicates. Language 81: 345–381. [3] von Stechow, Arnim. 1984. Comparing semantic theories of comparison. Journal of Semantics 3:1–77. [4] Heim, Irene. 1985. Notes on comparatives and related matters. [5] Schwarzschild, R., & Wilkinson, K. 1999. Interval semantics for scalar predication.