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Agglutinative Information
A Study
of Turkish Incomplete Sentences

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Preface

This book is the result of our attempt to explain some aspects of agglutinative languages in a simple and psychologically convincing manner.

The present research started with studying certain types of sentences which are variably referred to as ‘elliptical sentences’ (Turkish *eksiltili cümleler*), ‘incomplete sentences’ (Uzbek *to‘liqsiz gaplar*, Tajik *jumlahoi nopurra*), ‘cut-off sentences’ (Turkish *kesik cümleler*), etc. in grammars of the languages dealt with in this book.

Such sentences, which we call collectively ‘incomplete sentences’ here, are analysed by the authors of the grammars into a number of disparate phenomena such as pro-drop and null subjects, deletion, etc., for each of which an elaborated syntactic or semantic analysis existed.

After a study of existing analyses of such sentences, analyses that make little reference to one another, we began to think of the possibility of an integrated account for these apparently diverse phenomena. This led us to a somewhat unconventional approach to incomplete sentences – we started to examine them from a morphological point of view.

It seemed to us that such phenomena which have been analysed in terms of syntax or semantics could be given simpler accounts if the distribution of morphemes in sentences in which the phenomena take place was examined closely. For any analysis, simplicity is a positive attribute – we therefore embarked on setting up a simple system of analysis that can handle a variety of phenomena yielding incomplete sentences in an integrated manner.

As the reader will immediately notice, simplicity and general accessibility are the key concepts in this system. Particular attention was paid to make the system conceptually tractable and independent of theoretical complications. The parsimonious nature of the system is obvious from the fact that a very limited number of principles have been posited. For example, all the linguistic data that this book contains are analysed in terms of the operation of only two principles.

The importance attached to simplicity is due partly to the fact that the accounts derived from the simple system seemed to comply with the psychological reality of many of our informants as well as ourselves. It is also due to another purpose of the present study, namely to devise a system of analysis that is accessible to individuals whose areas of specialty are not within linguistics, e.g. researchers in area studies, language teachers, etc.

We see the main contribution of this book as being not so much in the area of theoretical linguistics, in spite of some reference to discourse analysis in the literature review and the employment of the term ‘information structure’, but more within the tradition of descriptive linguistics.

The system which has emerged from our analysis of the data was not constructed to fit any particular established theoretical framework. However, it benefits a great deal from previous linguistic work on information structure and we believe that it will be as much of interest to general linguists as it will be to grammarians and researchers in agglutinative languages.