

Reporting experiences: (*Gibi*) gel in Turkish

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11-12 April



Introduction

- How do languages report experiences and impressions?
- In this domain, perception and appearance predicates are common:
 - *see, hear, appear, seem, look, feel*
- But motion-related verbs also often express experiential or impression reports.

(1) Dveře mi přišly otevřené/ošklivé.
door.PL DAT.1SG come.PST.PL open.PL/ugly.PL
'The door seemed open/ugly to me.'

(Anna Polomská, p.c.)

- Crosslinguistically, other motion-related forms occur as well:
 - Czech *připadat / připadnout* 'fall'
 - German *vorkommen* (< *kommen* 'come'), *gefallen, schwerfallen, einfallen* (< *fallen* 'fall')
 - Italian *mi viene facile* 'it comes easy to me'

Introduction

- Turkish has a couple of motion related expressions reporting experiences: *hoş-um-a git-ti* 'it went to my liking (I liked it)', *zor-um-a git-ti* 'it went to my offense (it offended me)' and so on.
- In this talk, I will focus on a particular set of data with the verb *gel* 'come' in Turkish, and propose that a better characterization of these reports must involve what I call experiential objects.
- The main architecture that I will propose is applicable to various similar constructions across languages and within Turkish:

Embedded predicates

- *gel* 'come' in Turkish reports outcomes of experiencing and can directly embed adjectives describing gustatory experiences or feelings. Its meaning is underspecified between 'it tastes' and 'it feels':

- (2) a. Yemek ban-a tuzlu gel-di.
food 1.SG-DAT salty come-PST
Lit: 'The food came to me salty.'
(\approx 'The food tasted salty to me.')
- b. Ali ban-a burnu havada gel-di.
Ali 1.SG-DAT nose.his air.LOC come-PST
Lit: 'Ali came to me (as) arrogant.'

Embedded predicates

- But unlike the Czech pattern, Turkish *gel* does not seem able to directly embed situations that are typically accessed through visual experience.

- (3)
- a. #Kapı ban-a açık gel-di.
door 1.SG-DAT open like come-PST
'The door came to me open.'
- b. #Bardak ban-a boş gel-di.
glass 1.SG-DAT empty come-PST
'The glass came to me empty.'
- c. #Kapı ban-a tahta gel-di.
door 1.SG-DAT wooden come-PST
'The door came to me wooden.'
- d. #Kapı ban-a tahta-dan yap-ıl-ma gel-di.
door 1.SG-DAT wooden-ABL make-PASS-NMZ come-PST
'The door came to me made of wood.'

Embedded predicates

- Instead, such experiential/impression reports are achieved with the mediation of *gibi* 'like'.

- (4)
- a. Kapı ban-a açık **gibi** gel-di.
door 1.SG-DAT open like come-PST
'The door came to me like (it was) open.'
- b. Bardak ban-a boş **gibi** gel-di.
glass 1.SG-DAT empty like come-PST
'The glass came to me like (it was) empty.'
- c. Kapı ban-a tahta **gibi** gel-di.
door 1.SG-DAT wooden like come-PST
'The door came to me like it is wooden.'
- d. Kapı ban-a tahta-dan yap-ıl-ma **gibi** gel-di.
door 1.SG-DAT wooden-ABL make-PASS-NMZ like come-PST
'The door came to me like it is made of wood.'

Embedded predicates

- *Gibi* is also required with non-adjectival complements (nouns, tensed clauses). In these cases *gel* conveys an impression report, comparable to English *it seems like*:

- (5) a. Ali ban-a ev-i terk et-ti *(gibi) gel-di.
Ali 1.SG-DAT house-ACC leave do-PST like come-PST
Lit: 'Ali came to me like he left home.'
- b. Ali ban-a doktor *(gibi) gel-di.
Ali 1.SG-DAT doctor like come-PST
Lit: 'Ali came to me like he is a doctor.'

Dative argument

- The dative-marked argument is not the judge of the embedded predicate.
- Rather, it patterns as an experiencer/goal argument of matrix *gel*.

- (6) a. Bu yemek */??ban-a/ben-im için tuzlu.
this food 1.SG-DAT/1.SG-GEN for salty
Intended: 'This food is salty to me.'
- b. Ayşe-ye_i Ali_k on-u_i/*_k çek-e-m-iyor gibi gel-di.
Ayşe-DAT Ali 3.SG-ACC stand-MOD-NEG-IMPF like come-PST
Lit: 'Ali came to Ayşe like he cannot stand her.'
'It seemed to Ayşe that Ali cannot stand her.'
*'It seemed to Ayşe that Ali cannot stand himself.'

Dative argument

- Further diagnostics point in the same direction.

- (7) a. Ali_k Ayşe-ye_i kendi-ni_k/^{*}_i sev-m-iyor gibi gel-di.
Ali Ayşe-DAT self-ACC like-NEG-IMPF like come-PST
Lit: 'Ali came to Ayşe as not liking himself.'
'It seemed to Ayşe that Ali does not like himself.'
*'It seemed to Ayşe that Ali does not like her.'
- b. Ali kimse-ye Ayşe-yi sev-di gibi gel-m-iyor.
Ali anybody-DAT Ayşe-ACC like-PST like come-NEG-IMPF
Lit: 'Ali does not come to anybody as having liked Ayşe.'
- c. *Ali kimse-ye Ayşe-yi sev-me-di gibi gel-iyor.
Ali anybody-DAT Ayşe-ACC like-NEG-PST like come-IMPF
Lit: 'Ali comes to anybody as not having liked Ayşe.'

Dative argument

- (8) a. [Çorba tuzlu gibi gel-en] benim.
soup salty like come-REL 1.SG
'It is me to whom the soup comes salty.'
- b. [Hediye-si geç gel-en] benim.
gift-POSS late come-REL 1.SG
'It is me whose gift came late.'

- So the dative is syntactically and semantically dependent on matrix *gel*, not on the embedded predicate.
- I therefore take it to be the experiencer/goal of matrix *gel*.

Previous work

- There is actually no particular work on the semantic properties of (*gibi*) *gel* constructions in Turkish.
- Broadly speaking, the distribution of predicates under Turkish *gel* is similar to that of English *find* in its evaluative small-clause use:

(9) a. John found Mary amusing.
 b. John found the cake tasty.
- A first thought, then, is that Turkish *gel* may also be restricted to a special class of predicates.
- Evaluative *find* has been argued to take degree predicates (Hirvonen, 2016), judge-dependent predicates (Laserson, 2005; Stephenson, 2007) or discretionary predicates (Coppock, 2018; Kennedy and Willer, 2022).

Previous work

- However, not every degree expression is directly embeddable under Turkish *gel*.
- Hence, the distribution cannot be reduced to degreehood.

(10) Bardak ban-a tamamen boş *(**gibi**) gel-di.
glass 1.SG-DAT completely empty like come-PST
'The glass came to me like (it was) completely empty.'

Previous work

- With respect to subjectivist accounts (judge-dependent/discretionary predicates), *gel* can embed correctness predicates whose evaluation can be fixed by non-counterstance-contingent facts:

- (11) a. *Context:* Ali makes a mathematical calculation and shows the result to Ayşe. Ayşe takes a quick look at the calculation steps and says:
- b. Sonuç ban-a doğru gel-di.
result 1.SG-DAT correct come-PST
'The result came to me correct.'

- Accordingly, I reject an analysis that reduces the distribution of *gel* to degreehood or to the class of judge-dependent / discretionary predicates.
 - Similar considerations also apply to *find* with small clauses in English (Dikmen, 2026b,a)

Enriching the ontology

- I propose to enrich the ontology with **experiential objects**.
- Experiential objects are **contentful results of experiential episodes**.
- Different experiential episodes yield different kinds of experiential objects:
 - tasting → gustatory objects
 - seeing → visual objects
 - metacognitive assessment → feeling/impression-type objects (e.g. felt plausibility, felt correctness, felt likeness, felt arrogance)

Proposal

- *gel* introduces an experiential object: a content object resulting from an act of experiencing.
- These objects can be evaluated for **accuracy**.
- In direct embedding, *gel* introduces the appropriate experiential object:
 - a taste object in gustatory cases
 - a feeling object in other direct cases
- The experience is accurate iff the embedded clause is true.
- In line with the previous observations, I take the dative-marked argument to belong to matrix *gel*, as the holder/experiencer of the experiential object it introduces.

How to read the system

- I am using object-based truthmaker semantics (Moltmann, 2024; Fine, 2017).
- I will gloss over many formal details for the purposes of illustration.
- o ranges over **experiential objects**.
- s ranges over **truthmaking states**.
- $Sat(o)$ is the set of states that satisfy the experiential object o .
- $\llbracket p \rrbracket$ is the set of states that make the embedded clause p true.
- $trigger(s, o)$ says that s stands in the appropriate first-hand experiential relation to o .
- Crucially, the biconditional

$$s \in Sat(o) \Leftrightarrow (s \in \llbracket p \rrbracket \wedge trigger(s, o))$$

encodes the **accuracy conditions** of the experiential object:

- a state satisfies/makes accurate the experience iff it both makes the embedded clause true and properly triggers that experience
- so the experience is accurate just in case it has as actual satisfier that also verifies the embedded clause.

Bare *gel*

- (12) a. $\llbracket \text{Yemek bana tuzlu geldi} \rrbracket = \exists o \left[\text{taste}(o) \wedge \text{come}(o, I) \wedge \forall s (s \in \text{Sat}(o) \Leftrightarrow (s \in \llbracket \text{salty}(\text{food}) \rrbracket \wedge \text{trigger}(s, o))) \right]$
- b. $\llbracket \text{Ali bana burnu havada geldi} \rrbracket = \exists o \left[\text{feeling}(o) \wedge \text{come}(o, I) \wedge \forall s (s \in \text{Sat}(o) \Leftrightarrow (s \in \llbracket \text{arrogant}(\text{Ali}) \rrbracket \wedge \text{trigger}(s, o))) \right]$

- The biconditional specifies the satisfaction conditions of the experiential object.
- Hence, the taste experience is accurate iff the food is indeed salty.
- The felt-arrogance experience is accurate iff Ali is indeed arrogant.

Why visual predicates fail under bare *gel*

- Lexical items may differ in the kinds of experiential objects they can introduce.
- For example, *see* will plausibly introduce visual objects, while *hear* will introduce auditory ones.
- I argue that Turkish bare *gel* introduces:
 - gustatory experiential objects
 - feeling type experiential objects
- Predicates such as *açık* 'open' or *boş* 'empty' are normally associated with visually based p-states.
- In bare *gel* constructions, they do not provide the right experiential basis for gustatory or feeling-type objects (they cannot act as triggers for such objects).
- They can trigger visual experiential objects.
- But Turkish *gel* does not introduce such objects.

What *gibi* does

- Hence, there is a mismatch between what type of experiential objects the embedded situation can trigger and what type of experiential objects that *gel* can introduce.
- *gibi* repairs the mismatch.
- Syntactically, it shifts the embedded material to the category required by *gel* (adjectival type).
- Semantically, it shifts the target from bare p-content to p-likeness content.
- What is directly experienced is not a visual p-state itself, but a felt assessment that the situation presents as p.

Likeness content

- For each clausal content f_p , assume a likeness measure Lik_p mapping a contextually salient presentation e and a truthmaking state u to a degree of p-likeness:

$$Lik_p : D_{pres} \times S \rightarrow [0, 1]$$

- Define a thresholded likeness predicate:

$$u \in \llbracket Like_p(e) \rrbracket \text{ iff } Lik_p(e, u) \geq \theta_p^{like}$$

- Then the content introduced by *gibi* is:

$$f_{like\ p}(u) = 1 \text{ iff } \exists e [u \in \llbracket Like_p(e) \rrbracket]$$

$$(13) \quad \llbracket \text{Kapı bana açık gibi geldi} \rrbracket = \exists o \left[\text{feeling}(o) \wedge \text{come}(o, I) \wedge \forall s (s \in \text{Sat}(o) \Leftrightarrow s \in \llbracket \text{Like}_{\text{open}}(\text{door})(e_c) \rrbracket \wedge \text{trigger}(s, o)) \right]$$

- In *come like*, the relevant truthmakers are evaluation/likeness facts about presentations rather than bare p-facts.
- The experience tracks whether the situation presents itself as sufficiently p-like.

What the analysis derives

- Bare *gel* is possible with gustatory and feeling predicates:
 - *Yemek bana tuzlu geldi* 'The food came to me salty.'
 - *Ali bana burnu havada geldi* 'Ali came to me arrogant.'
- Visual and other appearance-based cases require *gibi*:
 - *Kapı bana açık gibi geldi* 'The door came to me like open'
 - *Bardak bana boş gibi geldi* 'The glass came to me like empty'
 - *Kapı bana tahta gibi geldi* 'The door came to me like wooden'

Undeniability of the experience

- If bare *gel* reports a first-hand gustatory or feeling-type experience, denying that experience should yield infelicity.
- (14)
- a. Yemek bana tuzlu geldi, #ama tatmadım.
'The food tasted salty to me, #but I did not taste it.'
 - b. Ali bana burnu havada geldi, #ama Ali'ye karşı bir şey hissetmedim.
'Ali struck me as arrogant, #but I did not feel anything toward him.'
- With *gibi*, the embedded content is not tasted, but felt. Therefore, it is possible to deny the taste experience:
- (15) Yemek bana tuzlu gibi geldi, ama tatmadım; sadece öyle hissettim.
'The food seemed salty to me, but I did not taste it; I just had that feeling.'

Accuracy evaluation of the experience

- Since experiential objects come with satisfaction / accuracy conditions, the resulting feeling can be the target of anaphoric reference, and itself be evaluated as correct or mistaken.

- (16)
- a. Ali bana burnu havada geldi.
Ali to.me nose.his air.LOC came
'Ali struck me as arrogant.'
- b. Bence bu yanlış bir his. Ali hiç burnu havada değil.
I.think this wrong a feeling Ali at.all nose.his air.LOC not
'I think this is a mistaken feeling. Ali is not arrogant at all.'

- The initial sentence introduces a feeling-type experiential object.
- The second sentence explicitly evaluates the accuracy of that feeling, and rejects the content of that feeling.

Crosslinguistic extensions

- Similar considerations may apply beyond Turkish.
- In particular, related issues arise with English *find*.
- The relevant crosslinguistic difference may lie in the type of experiential object/result a lexical item can introduce.
 - Turkish *gel*: gustatory + feeling type experiential objects
 - English *find*: also visually based experiential objects
- This may explain why English allows *John found the door open*, whereas Turkish bare *gel* does not.

Thank you!

Acknowledgments: This research has been funded, either in full or in part, by the French National Research Agency (ANR) under project IMAGES ANR-22-FRAL-0005-02.

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