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Gender, definiteness and word order in Ulaşğaç Cappadocian

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Of all the Cappadocian dialects, Ulaşğaç Cappadocian is considered the most ‘corrupt’ by Dawkins: “Nowhere is the vocabulary so filled with Turkish words or the syntax so Turkish” (1916: 18). Kesisoglu singles out the following as being characteristic: the loss of grammatical gender distinctions and the resulting neutralisation of nouns, including the generalised use of the neuter article do, pl. da (1951: 4). In the case of transitive cases this results in potential ambiguity, as nominative and accusative noun phrases are not distinguished morphologically. Kesisoglu quotes the following example: *itó do nëka do ándra-t páasen do do xorjó, which could either mean ‘that woman led her husband to the village’ or ‘her husband led that woman to the village’ (1951: 49). To disambiguate such cases, the article is often omitted under the second interpretation according to Kesisoglu: itó do nëka ándra-t páasen do do xorjó. Likewise, itó do peí vavá-t çórsen do ‘its father saw the child’ vs. itó do peí do vavá-t çórsen do ‘that child saw its father’ (ibid.). It is worthy of note that the article is only omitted under the second interpretation, but not under the first: *itó nëka do ándra-t páasen do do xorjó or *itó peí do vavá-t çórsen do. What is even more noteworthy is that Kesisoglu’s examples suggest that word order is not used to mark subject and object. One might be tempted to expect SOV to be the unmarked word order, as in Turkish, in which case itó do nëka do ándra-t páasen do do xorjó would alternate with (do) ándra-t itó do nëka páasen do do xorjó, depending on who is taking the lead. In fact, however, SOV seems to alternate with OSV and, more often, with SVO. In this paper, then, I investigate the word order of transitive clauses with overt S and O in connection with the possible omission of the article in Ulaşğaç Cappadocian.

References
