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# The Relation between Reflexive Pronoun and the Subject in Turkish \*

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## Abstract

Although the act in predicate is not reflexive, the possessive forms of *kendi* word which are regarded as reflexive pronoun have been assumed and named *pekiştirilmiş özne* (intensified subject) or *emphatic pronoun*. But as far as qualification arrangement in Turkic structure is concerned, this estimation is inconsistent. While the intensifying function is forwards in Turkish, it is regarded as backwards for reflexive pronoun as the subject. In this article, I intend to argue whether a reflexive pronoun could be subject of a sentence as a glosseme with possessive suffix or not.

## 1. Introduction to reflexive pronouns in Turkish

In references, as a glosseme, pronouns which have functions rather than meanings are usually described as substantive words that are replaced with things or their antecedent; that is, pronouns are words to be replaced with nouns for any kind of things, but not the words which are directly names of these things in language (Crystal 2001: 274; Crystal 2003: 376; Kocasavaş 2004)<sup>1</sup>.

As for reflexive pronouns, according to some references, they are glossems which arise when the subject and the object or the

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<sup>1</sup> After discussing books and articles about pronouns, Yıldız Kocasavaş argues that pronouns are not words that directly substitute for anything like other names of things and they are words that define talking persons, listening persons or third persons, representatively or demonstratively (Kocasavaş 2004:29)

complement of a sentence is the same (Crystal 2001: 286; Crystal 2003: 392). Accordingly, the sentences below are equal to each other in meaning:

Ben *beni* yıkadım. ‘*I washed me.*’  
 = Ben kendimi yıkadım. ‘*I washed myself.*’  
 = Ben yıkandım. ‘*I took a bath.*’

Bu özelliği sen sende görmüyor musun?  
 = ‘*Don’t you see this characteristic on you?*’  
 Bu özelliği sen kendinde görmüyor musun?  
 = ‘*Don’t you see this characteristic on yourself?*’

Ben benimle konuşuyordum artık. ‘*I am now talking to me.*’  
 = Ben kendimle konuşuyordum artık. ‘*I am now talking to myself.*’

According to this definition, it is necessary to answer the question of whether there is a reflexive pronoun in a sentence whose subject and object or complement are not same thing. Because in these sentences, the words, which are regarded as reflexive pronouns, are not the same thing with the subjects of the sentences<sup>2</sup>:

Ben bu konuyla ilgili olarak müdürle görüşüm ve kendisine ereken her şeyi söyledim.  
 ‘*I talked with the manager about this matter and I told him everything necessary.*’  
 Beni sen kendime getirdin.  
 ‘*You helped me come to my senses.*’  
 Ben sizden farklıyım; çünkü ben onun *kendisini* gördüm  
 ‘*I am different from you, because I saw himself*<sup>3</sup>.’

<sup>2</sup> See about the variety in the usages of *kendi* and *kendisi*, and that they are comprehended as the subject: Yazar 2007

<sup>3</sup> Tahir Nejat Gencan says that the sentence of ‘Öğretmenin kendisini gördüm.’ (*I saw himself of teacher*) is not same one of ‘Öğretmeni gördüm.’ (*I saw teacher*) : Gencan 1979: 260

Another question in the definition of reflexive pronouns arises from conflict between their descriptions and general definitions of pronouns. As is mentioned above, while pronouns are depicted as substantive words which are replaced with things or their nouns; reflexive pronouns are only and directly connected with personal pronouns, not with any other thing or nouns<sup>4</sup> and they are used to refer to or emphasize them rather than to replace with them.

## 2. Pronouns and possessive suffixes

Furthermore, pronouns are unlike other nouns on account of having possessive suffixes. The suffixes can be used widely with the nouns. It can be said that the pronouns (which are replaced with nouns temporarily) are not used with the possessive suffixes, except for some references (OT. *sizime*<sup>5</sup> 'to you who are mine') (Kocasavas 2004: 39). It is seen that *bu* or *şu* of demonstrative pronouns is used with the possessive suffixes as *şu-su*, *bu-su* (Kocasavas 2004: 39). Except for these, pronouns don't take possessive suffixes (Ergin 1993: 250; Eraslan 1999: 339). In spite of such characteristic of pronouns, it is conspicuous that the words whose meanings are 'essence, own' have been defined in some references as reflexive pronouns by taking the possessive suffixes (Ergin 1993: 258; Korkmaz 2003: 415). According to this definition, it is necessary to accept that any word with possessive suffix is the same thing with possessor, but this is anomalous in respect of the reasoning of language. Because possessive suffixes are only endings which denote that the thing designated by a noun belongs to person or anything (Ergin 1993: 211; Korkmaz 2003: 259). Indefinite pronouns are like the reflexive pronouns in point of taking possessive suffixes and being regarded that they turned into pronoun, too. For such pronouns, Muharrem Ergin says that the possessive suffixes have transmuted the words with the suffixes, indefinite or interrogative adjectives to the

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<sup>4</sup> Reflexive pronouns are a intensified kind of personal pronouns because they have stronger meaning than personal pronouns' and are making them laminar: Korkmaz 2003: 414

<sup>5</sup> See about that *sizime* is misreading: Tekin 1964: 134.-144.

pronouns by demonstrating and representing the persons, but it is necessary to name as possessive form and not to name them as pronoun. Ergin also says that the nouns, whose possessive forms have been used as interrogative and indefinite adjectives, are used like pronoun (Ergin 1993: 264).

Consequently, it is not possible that such possessive forms which are the modified of possessive phrase are able to take the place of pronouns which are the determinant of the phrase<sup>6</sup>:

bizim evimiz 'our home' ≠ biz 'we'  
 bizim üçümüz 'threesome of us' ≠ biz 'we'  
 sizin çocuğunuz 'your child' ≠ siz (you)  
 sizin ikiniz 'twosome of yours' ≠ siz 'you'  
 bizim kimimiz 'some of us' ≠ biz 'we'  
 sizin hanginiz 'which one of you' ≠ siz 'you'  
 onların hiç birisi 'no one of them' ≠ onlar 'they'

An example for the usage of such pronouns; Orhan Veli Kanik has used these indefinite pronouns with second person plural possessive suffixes and the sentences, in which these pronouns are the subject, have been conjugated for third person singular in his poem named 'Galata Köprüsü':

Dikilir köprü üzerine, / Keyifle seyrederim hepinizi. / Kiminiz kürek  
 çeker, suya suya ; / Kiminiz midye çıkarır dubalardan; / Kiminiz dümen  
 tutar mavnalarda; / Kiminiz çımacıdır halat başında; / Kiminiz kuştur,  
 uçar, şairane; / Kiminiz balıktır, pırlı pırlı; / Kiminiz vapur, kiminiz  
 şamandıra; / Kiminiz bulut, havalarda; / Kiminiz çatanadır, kırdığı gibi  
 bacayı, / Şıp diye geçer köprü'nün altından; / Kiminiz dödüktür, öter; /  
 Kiminiz dumandır, tüter; / Ama hepiniz, hepiniz... / Hepiniz geçim  
 derdinde.

There is a similar usage in the poem named 'İkinizden Hanginiz' of Attila İlhan, as well:

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<sup>6</sup> Gronbech says that *kendü* or *kendi* has not become a pronoun: Gronbech 1995: 29-30

ikinizden hanginizin/ saçları gece laciverdi siyah/ yıldız tozundan ışıltılı/  
ve zengin/ bakır çalığı gözleri/ derin/ yer yer/ eflatuna çalıyor/ ikinizden  
hanginizin/ nemli dudakları fuschia/ kirpikleri kaşlarına dolaşık/ ağzı fena  
halde aşık/ başladığı her öpüşte kalıyor/ ikinizden hanginizin/ neyi  
noksan neyi fazla/ ikinizden hanginize sorsan/ her defasında/ kendisini  
ötekisi sanıyor/ çok fena aldanıyor/ sahi siz/ hanginiz/ hanginizsiniz

In that case, it may be necessary to ask whether the reflexive pronouns, which constitute other possessive forms, can be equal to the personal pronouns which are the determinants of a possessive phrase, and able to join the conjugation depending on their possessors:

(benim) kendim 'myself' = ben 'I'

(bizim) kendimiz 'ourselves' = biz 'we'

(senin) kendin 'yourself' = sen 'you'

(sizin) kendiniz 'yourselves' = siz 'you'

(onun) kendisi 'himself' = o 'he'

(onların) kendileri 'their selves' = onlar 'they'

### 3. *kentü* and *öz* without the suffixes

The word *kentü*, which is regarded as one of the reflexive pronouns, was used without possessive suffix for sentences of second person plural in the historical texts of Turkic; as for *öz*, it occurred as the subject of the sentences which was conjugated for third person singular although it used to be followed by possessive suffixes of first or second person singular in some texts<sup>7</sup>.

küregünün için igidmiş bilge qayanın ertmiş barmış edgü iliñe kentü  
yañıldıγ, yablaq kigürtüg (KTE-23; BKE-19)  
kendü hased qılur-siz bizke kendü uqmaz erürler meger azqına  
(Kuran Tercümesi: 48-15)

<sup>7</sup> See about *kentü* and *öz* in Old Turkic: Erdal 2004: 208-210

kendü Tañrıqa tapunıyl bolıyl şükr qılyanlardın  
(Kuran Tercümesi: 39-66)

monçulayu körüp yene bo montay körmekleringe kentü ilinmezler  
(Altun Yaruk: 2922, 24-25)

kentü özüm bilmedin yazmış yañılmiş ayıy qılınçımını kentü ökünüp erti  
(Altun Yaruk: 92, 11-12)

özüm arzuladı anıy tapıñıa  
tapıñıalı keldim anıy qapıñıa (Kutadgu Bilig: D528)

körüp buştum erse ilendi özün  
serildim saña men tügüldi yüzün (Kutadgu Bilig: D795)

özüg arzu nimet bile semritip  
erej birle avnur özümüz yatıp (Kutadgu Bilig: D5841)

avlalur özüm anıy tuzuña  
emlelür közüm anıy tozıña (DLT-I: 296-3)

kögler qamuy tüzüldi  
ıvrıq idiş tizildi  
sensiz özüm özeldi  
kelgil amul oynalım (DLT, III, 131-22)

qarşımda tolı edim-i sufra men aç  
anı körüben kılur özüm ayş u tarab  
niçük kilüp oturup temâşâ qılsa  
hatun-lar ılı-suvı-nıñ allında ‘azab (Gülistan Tercümesi: 147-4)

oturıanın körüp ayyâr birle yârim-nıñ  
özüm bu çayret otına tiledi kim yana  
külüben ayttı ki min cem’ şem’i men sa’dı  
maña ni qayyu özin küydürse pervâne (Gülistan Tercümesi: 231-10,13)

munda özün zevq iterge tiş biler  
anda hem cennet temâşâsın tiler (Gülistan Tercümesi: 9-4,5)

şiddete düşse özüñ zinhâr ‘âciz bolmayın  
soy tutup düşmen teri-sin dostuñ-nıñ cübbesin  
(Gülistan Tercümesi: 113-8,9)

dîvânelıyım bardur özümde özüm yoqtur  
sözüm barı tanuqtur ‘ayb yapquçımız sin-sin (Şiban Han: 119b-9,10)

yahşı yamandır bu özüm ‘ışqdın yitişti bu sözüm  
hey hey yitilmes ‘ışq sözi men’ itmeñiz anlamayın  
(Şiban Han: 122a-13, 122b-1)

#### 4. Questions about the reflexive pronoun regarded as the subject

Now, being reflexive pronoun in Turkish *kendi* is regarded as the subject of sentences, according to its possessive suffix, and it is named *pekiştirmeli* (Hatipoğlu 1982: 118) or *pekiştirilmiş özne* (intensified subject) (Korkmaz 2003: 174; Zülfikar 1993: 43-51; Delice 1998: 191-208) and *emphatic pronoun* (Kornfilt 1997: 157):

Ben kendim geldim. ‘*I myself came*’  
(<sup>BEN</sup>) Kendim bulurum. ‘*(I) myself find*’  
Sen kendin söylemişsin. ‘*You yourself told*’  
(<sup>SEN</sup>) Kendin gidiyorsun. ‘*(You) yourself are going*’  
Biz kendimiz dolaşırız. ‘*We ourselves walk around*’  
(<sup>BİZ</sup>) Kendimiz gideriz. ‘*(We) ourselves go*’  
Siz kendiniz görürsünüz. ‘*You yourselves see*’  
(<sup>SİZ</sup>) Kendiniz almışsınız. ‘*(You) yourselves had bought*’  
\*

Thus, to approach to the reflexive pronoun as the subject is arising various questions in accordance with the structure of Turkic:

*Question 1.* How is it possible that a noun with possessive suffix is able to be equal to its own possessor and join the conjugation so?<sup>8</sup>

<sup>8</sup> We could not find any clear disapproval about such subjects in references. But, a short discussion arose during the academic meeting in 1993 and an opinion like ours was asserted by Ayşe İlker (TGS-I: 50-51).

benim kendim (*myself*)  $\stackrel{?}{=}$  ben (I)

*Question 2.* Are there more subjects than only one at the same time and for same person, in a sentence conjugated for singular first or second person?

Sen (ve) sen gidebilirsin. '*You (and) you can go*'  
 Sen kendin gidebilirsin. '*You yourself can go*'  
 Ben (ve) ben yaparım. '*I (and) I do*'  
 Ben kendim yaparım. '*I myself do*'

*Question 3.* Although reflexive pronouns have been regarded as the subjects of the sentences, being used together with personal pronouns at the same time, reflexive pronouns with possessive suffixes always have followed those pronouns which are the subjects and it can not found that reflexive pronouns have been before. Is this case not conflict for the characteristic which the parts of speech are able to move, in Turkish?

men özüm qağan olurtuquma yir sayu barmış bodun ölü yitü yadağın  
 yalığın yana kelti (KTE, 27-28)

bilge Tonyuquq ben özüm Tabyaç ilinge qıldım (T-1W, 1)<sup>9</sup>  
 qağanım [ben] özüm Bilge Tonyuquq ötüntük ötünçümün eşidü birti  
 (T-1S, 8)

Türk bodunuy Ötüken yirke ben özüm Bilge Tonyuquq Ötüken yirig  
 qonmış tiyin eşidip biriyeki bodun qırıyaqı yırıyaqı öngreki bodun kelti  
 (T-1S, 10)

ay edgülerim men özüm teñleser men bo emgekimdin idi ozğum  
 qurtulğum yoq turur (Altun Yaruk, 10, 12-14)

lav-ı leşker himmetidin uşbu sedni bayladıñ  
 sin özünğalyuz turup hırşıña sed bayla yana (Şiban Han, 10b-5,6)

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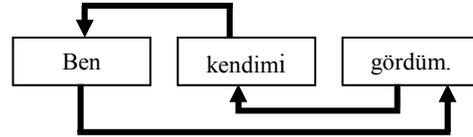
<sup>9</sup> See about the different interpretation of this statement: Sertkaya 1995.

*Question 4.* While the auxiliary element is the first and the main element is the second in qualification arrangement of Turkic, how is auxiliary element following the main one able to accomplish the intensifying function (*pekiştirme*) for the cases where the reflexive pronoun is regarded as the subject?

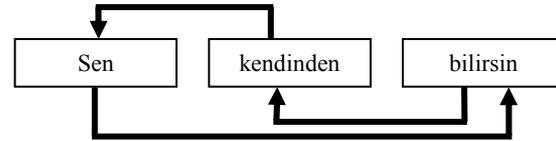
**aux. element**                      **main element**  
 kırmızı 'red' ⇒⇒⇒⇒⇒ kalem 'pencil'  
 yıkılmış 'broken' ⇒⇒⇒⇒⇒ ev 'house'  
 kapının 'of the door' ⇒⇒⇒ kolu 'handle'

**main element**                      **aux. element**  
 sen 'you' ●●●● kendin bilirsin 'yourself know'.

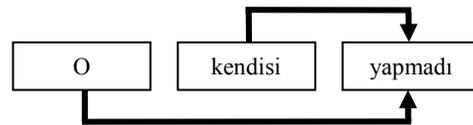
*Question 5.* Reflexive pronoun verifies reflexivity between personal pronoun, which is the subject (*o*), and the object or the complement of a sentence when it is used as the object (*kendisini*) or the complement (*kendisine*, *kendisinde*, *kendisinden*, *kendisiyle*). But if it can be the subject, how is it able to verify the reflexivity?



*'I saw myself'*



*'You know from yourself'*



*'He himself did not do'*

Ben beni gördüm *'I saw me'*  
 = Ben kendimi gördüm. *'I saw myself'*  
 Sen senden bilirsin *'You know from you'*  
 = Sen kendinden bilirsin. *'You know from yourself'*  
 O o yapmadı *'He he did not do' ?* O (onun) kendisi yapmadı.  
*'He himself did not do'*

*Question 6.* How does reflexive pronoun verify the reflexivity for sentences whom predicates are reflexive verbs?

Sen kendin yıkanabilirsin. *'You can wash yourself'*  
 Ben bu ipe kendim dolandım. *'I myself have been wrapped to this string'*  
 O kendisi yanıldı. *'He himself was wrong'*  
 Biz kendimiz üzülmüşüz. *'We, not others, have been worried'*

*Question 7.* How were the reflexive pronouns in historical texts of Turkic perceived as third person although they were for first or second person?

özüm arzuladı anıñ tapıynga  
 tapınyalı keldim anıñ qapıynga (Kutadgu Bilig, D528)

*Question 8.* Why do the modified elements of phrases whose determinants are with possessive suffixes take the endings of third person?

Sen kendin-in doktor-u olmuşsun.  
*'You have become the doctor of yourself'*  
 Hangimiz-in suç-u yok?  
*'Which one of us doesn't have a fault?'*  
 Benim kendim-in konuştuğ-u-nu farz edelim.<sup>10</sup>  
*'Let us assume that myself is speaking'*

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<sup>10</sup> This sentence was stated by Prof. Dr. Ahmet Bican Ercilasun during the discussion in a meeting of grammar problems: see TGS-II: 374.

*Question 9.* Is the determinant still a pronoun when the reflexive pronoun without possessive suffix is used before a noun with possessive suffix?<sup>11</sup>

(benim) kendi kitabım ‘*my own book*’  
(senin) kendi sorunun ‘*your own problem*’

### 5. Answers for solution

These answers may be given to all of these questions

*Answer 1.* In Turkic, a noun with possessive suffix is not equal to or the same as its possessor. For this reason, while they have been used ‘*similar to pronoun*’, possessive forms have appeared as third person in spite of the person of possessor. In this wise, the usages like given examples here, have been constituted.

özüm arzuladı anıñ tapıñga  
tapıñyalı keldim anıñ qapıñga  
munda özüñ zevq iterge tiş biler  
anda hem cennet temâşâsın tiler

dîvâneliğim bardur özümde özüm yoqtur  
sözüm barı tanuqtur ‘ayb yapquçımız sin-sin

*Answer 2.* The reflexive pronouns verify the reflexivity when the subjects of acts in the predicates are equal to or the same as its objects or complements. In the conditions that the pronouns are regarded as the subject, there is a intensifying function. But this function is not backwards, that is, not toward the subject; forwards, that is, toward the act in the predicate and so as to emphasize the person of the act, more and more. This may be regarded as a kind of complements of the act.

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<sup>11</sup> For such cases, Jean Deny says that *kendi* word was also used as adjective, frequently; at that time it was before a noun with possessive suffix and has emphasized the meaning of the noun (Deny 1941: 202). Furthermore, Samim Sinanoğlu expresses the same opinion as well (Sinanoğlu 1967: 206).

This situation clarifies the inconsistency about subjects which may exist more than one for same person in a sentence.

Sen kendin bilirsin. ‘*You yourself know*’  
O kendisi yapar. ‘*She herself does*’

*Answer 3.* This characteristic has been found for *öz* word as with possessive suffix, for *kentü~kendü* word as with or without possessive suffix in historical texts of Turkic. These words completed or intensified the meaning of predicates as ‘in person’, ‘personally’, ‘as oneself’<sup>12</sup>. For this reason, they could not be used before the subject anytime and they have always come after the subject and before the verb. Therefore, these pronouns are adverb or adverbial phrase in languages of which conjugation has occurred with personal pronouns, not with personal suffixes. This situation makes valid the usage of reflexive pronouns in reflexivity construction.

anda kisre teñri bilig birtük üçün *özüm* ök qıldım (T-1W, 6)  
‘*thereafter I rendered qayan personally / in person / as myself because God had given wisdom*’  
*kentü* yañıldıı  
‘*You have got wrong personally / in person / as yourself*’  
*kendü* hased qılır-siz  
‘*You become envious personally / in person / as yourselves*’  
ben *özüm* Tabıaç ilinge qıldım  
‘*I was born in Tabıaç country personally / in person / as yourselves*’  
bu ipe *kendim* dolandıım  
‘*I have been wrapped to this string personally / in person / as myself*’

*Answer 4.* As in some references (Erdal 2004: 208), if it is accepted that the words used like reflexive pronoun are adjectives before the

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<sup>12</sup> Samim Sinanoğlu says that *kendi* word has been used as definite personal pronouns (*belirtili şahıs zamirleri*) with possessive forms which have got possessive suffixes of every singular or plural person (Sinanoğlu 1967: 206).

nouns with possessive suffixes<sup>13</sup>, it can be clarified that they are adverbs of acts.

kentü bodunum  
 kentü yañıldıy  
 kentü kentü köñülleri (Altun Yaruk, 120, 8)  
 barça kentü kentü öz öz orunların tın örü tutup...(Altun Yaruk, 396, 22)<sup>14</sup>

*Answer 5.* *kendi* word is used usually as an answer to ‘how’ questions, not to ‘who’ in Turkish and one usage of it is also *kendiliğinden* as an adverb, as well. The reason of these must be the characteristic of *kendi* whom we tried to explain.

– Peki, nasıl geldin buralara kadar? ‘Well, how did you come here?’  
 – Ne var canım, kendim geldim. ‘Why not, I by myself came.’

– Çok güzel bir resim, kim yaptı bunu?  
 ‘Very beautiful picture. Who did paint this?’  
 – Ben yaptım, hem de kendim.  
 ‘I painted it, even myself.’

Ben arayıp çağırılmayı düşünüyordum ki o kendiliğinden geldi.  
 ‘When I was thinking to call and invite him, he came by himself’  
 Ben arayıp çağırılmayı düşünüyordum ki o kendi geldi.  
 ‘When I was thinking to call and invite him, he himself came’

## 6. Conclusion

Today, the words, which are like pronouns and used out of reflexivity function, have begun to take possessive suffixes along the progress of Turkic language. Owing to the suffixes, they could take place in the sentences conjugated for same person who is possessor.

<sup>13</sup> In the historical texts, only once, it have been found the use of *kentü* word before a noun without possessive suffix: ‘...qamağ biş ajun tınlıyları çasurtaçı bulğadaçı kentü köñülüg buşurtaçı emgetdeçi...’ (Altun Yaruk: 164).

<sup>14</sup> These repetitions in Altun Yaruk verify that these words are adjectives.

kendi yanıldın > kendim/özüm yanıldı > kendin/özün yanıldın

This situation is same for words which are used like indefinite pronouns and like *zâtîli-niz* ‘thou’, *cenabîli-niz* ‘your Honor, Excellency’, *bende-niz* ‘your servant’ in formal or protocol expressions

(sizin) *Zâtîli-niz* bu fikirde değil galiba. > (siz) *Zâtîli-niz* böyle düşünmüyorsunuz galiba.  
‘*Thou are not in this agreement, probably*’ ‘*You are not thinking so, probably*’

*Bende-niz* de dahil olabilir mi? > *Ben-deniz* de katılabilir miyim?  
‘*Can your servant also join?*’ ‘*Can I also join?*’

Therefore, these pronouns have been regarded as the subject in nominative case when they have not been in genitive, accusative, dative, locative or ablative cases. However, the situation, which is like that the modification occurred when *kendi* and *öz* words without possessive suffixes have been used before nouns with possessive suffixes, has developed when these pronouns have been used before verbs with possessive suffixes. And their intensifying functions toward verb have been thought toward the subject because of their suffixes. It has given rise to estimate a kind of the subject intensified *pekiştirmeli* or *pekiştirilmiş özne* and *emphatic pronoun*. In that case, we may ask a question: Is the reflexive pronoun able to be the subject in Turkish or not?

#### The abbreviations and references

- Altun Yaruk: KAYA, Ceval, *Uygurca Altun Yaruk-Giriş, Metin ve Dizin*, Ankara, 1994.  
 1BKE: Bilge Kagan-East: ERGİN, Muharrem (1970) *Orhun Abideleri*, İstanbul; TEKİN, Talat, *Orhon Yazıtları*, Ankara, 1988.  
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