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Edited by
Ayşe Gürel

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Second Language Acquisition of Turkish

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Volume 59

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Introduction

Linguistic aspects of Turkish as a second language

Ayşe Gürel

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This book brings together the findings of current studies on the acquisition of Turkish as a second language (L2). The fact that Turkish is an under-researched language in the context of second language acquisition (SLA), combined with the need to address theoretical issues which have largely been overlooked in studies on Turkish language learning/teaching, have provided the motivation for compiling such a volume. Comprising studies on various domains of L2 grammar (i.e. phonology, morpho-syntax, pragmatics) and their interfaces, this volume also includes studies exploring L2 processing of Turkish morpho-syntax. All studies in this collection involve only adult L2 Turkish learners. Language development in child or adult heritage language speakers, however interesting and revealing, is not covered in the present volume. Although Turkish is generally learned as an additional foreign language *after* a second or third foreign language, either in or outside Turkey, the term 'L2 Turkish' is adopted as an umbrella term in most of the research presented here. Before introducing each study and its theoretical contribution to the field of SLA in general and to L2 Turkish in particular, I would like to present a brief note on the Turkish language, its L2 status, and its linguistic properties as these relate to the issues discussed in this book.

1. Speakers of Turkish around the world

Turkish belongs to the Altaic branch of the Uralic-Altaic language family. This relates Turkish to, for example, Finnish in the Uralic group and to Japanese and Korean in the Altaic group (Kornfilt 2009). Turkish is the largest (in terms of number of speakers) in the Turkic family of languages spoken over a large geographical area in Asia (Kornfilt 2009:519).¹ It is the official and dominant language of the

1. These geographical areas (and the Turkic languages) include the former Soviet Union and Iran: the Caucasus and northwestern Iran (e.g. Azerbaijani), Kazakhstan and southern Siberia

Republic of Turkey, where it is the native language of over 90 percent of the population, which, according to the Turkish Statistical Institute 2014 report, exceeds 77 million.

The largest linguistic minority in Turkey is formed by Kurdish speakers. Other minority language communities include speakers of Arabic and several Caucasian languages (Göksel & Kerslake 2005; Kornfilt 2009). A large number of these minority language speakers are bilingual, a condition conducive to future cross-linguistic research into the acquisition of Turkish in the context of early bilingualism. I hope this book will pioneer further work on both early and late bilingualism, pairing Turkish with other minority languages spoken in Turkey.

Turkish is the language spoken at home in a number of Balkan countries such as Bulgaria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Greece, Macedonia and Romania. In Cyprus (particularly in the North), Turkish is a co-official language alongside Greek. Germany and other European countries as well as the United States of America and Australia have large numbers of Turkish speakers, who constitute the population of 65 million Turkish speakers living outside the Republic of Turkey (Göksel & Kerslake 2005; Kornfilt 2009).

2. The status of Turkish as an L2

Although there are no official statistics revealing the exact number of L2 Turkish learners in and outside Turkey, recent years have witnessed a growing international interest in learning Turkish as an L2. This emerging interest has been officially recognized and encouraged at the governmental level in a number of countries. For example, the U.S. Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs' declaration of Turkish as one of the thirteen critical foreign languages needed for improving social, cultural, and political relations has generated a demand for trained and proficient speakers of the language. Furthermore, through student exchange programs, university students from North America, Europe, Middle East, and the Far East come to Turkey in ever-increasing numbers for at least a semester, and enroll in L2 Turkish courses. In addition, government-funded and internationally-sponsored institutions outside Turkey offer Turkish language courses at various proficiency levels for different learner populations ranging from child and adult heritage learners to adult L2 Turkish learners. It is also significant to note that a number of Turkish universities have opened graduate programs in 'Teaching L2

(e.g. Uzbek, Kazakh, Turkmen, Kirghiz), the Volga (e.g. Tatar), and northern Siberia (e.g. Yakut). There are also large Turkic-speaking communities in northwestern China (especially Uighur, and also Kazakh) (Kornfilt 2009: 519).

Turkish', aiming at the development of prospective L2 Turkish teachers and/or academicians working in this field.

Coordinated efforts to produce theoretical and empirical work on the acquisition and teaching of L2 Turkish are therefore urgently needed. Accumulating theory-informed research findings on L2 Turkish is a necessary condition towards this aim. To my knowledge, this book will be the first book addressing theoretical issues in adult L2 acquisition of Turkish which is available to international readership.

3. A note on Turkish grammar

As discussed in different chapters in the volume, Turkish has numerous interesting linguistic characteristics that are conducive to the testing of different views/models on the development of interlanguage grammars.

Turkish is generally considered a textbook case of an agglutinative language with rich, regular inflectional and derivational systems based exclusively on suffixation.² Suffixation can create long words that would sometimes correspond to an entire sentence in English. In the nominal domain, nouns can be marked with possessive, plural, and Case morphemes. Turkish has six Cases: nominative, accusative, dative, locative, ablative, and genitive. With the exception of the nominative, all Cases are marked overtly with distinct suffixes. Case is marked on nouns, pronouns, and nominalized verbs. Other nominal inflectional markers include the comitative/instrumental form (see Göksel & Kerslake 2005:67–69 for the complete list). Turkish does not have grammatical gender. In the volume, Case and plural morphology are of relevance to the processing study reported in the Uygun and Gürel article. More information on nominal inflection can be found in their chapter.

Verbs carry tense, aspect, modality, voice, negation, and person markers. The tense morphemes include definite past: *-DI*; reported past: *-mIş*; aorist: *-(A)r*; future: *-(y)AcAK*; present progressive: *-(I)yor* (Kornfilt 2009:528). Each of these forms also has aspectual connotations. A complete discussion on Turkish Tense-Aspect-Modality is presented in the chapter by Kaili, Çeltek, and Papadopolou. Voice suffixes include causative, passive, reflexive, and reciprocal suffixes, which normally come immediately after the verb root, preceding all other suffixes. Two classes of causative verbs (change of state verbs with agentive subjects and

2. Prefixes are limited to reduplication (i.e. reduplication of the first syllable in intensifying adjectives and adverbs; e.g. *beyaz* 'white', *bembeyaz* 'completely white') and there are also a few unproductive prefixes of foreign origin (Göksel & Kerslake 2005; Kornfilt 2009).

psychological change of state verbs with experiencer objects) are discussed in the chapter by Montrul.

The verbal negation marker is *-mA* and it occurs post-verbally. Turkish verbs carry agreement suffixes that show agreement with their subjects in terms of number (singular, plural) and person (first, second, and third). As discussed in the chapter by Aydın, Aygüneş and Demiralp, there are different morphological paradigms used for verbal and nominal agreement. The first of these paradigms (sometimes referred to as the ‘*k*-paradigm’) involves agreement morphemes attaching only to verbs ending with *-DI* and *-sA* affixes. The second paradigm (known as the ‘*z*-paradigm’) has suffixes attaching to the rest of the tense affixes. The third paradigm is used with the imperative, while the fourth involves nominal agreement markers on the nouns of possessive constructions, on the verbs of noun clauses, and on the verbs of relative clauses. Some sources also assume a separate paradigm for optative forms (Yavuz & Balcı 2011).

In terms of nominal agreement, it is important to note that in genitive-possessive constructions such as ‘my car’ (e.g. *ben-im araba-m*: I-GEN car-1SGPOSS), the first NP, marked with the genitive suffix, indicates the possessor while the second NP, marked with the possessive suffix, indicates the possessed. There is person agreement between the possessed NP and the possessor NP (e.g. **ben-im araba-n*: I-GEN car-2SGPOSS). The same agreement morphemes are used in nominalized constructions (e.g. *ben-im gel-me-m*: I-GEN come-NOM-1SGPOSS vs. **ben-im gel-me-n*: I-GEN come-NOM-2SGPOSS). The structural similarity between genitive-possessive constructions and nominalized constructions is an important feature of Turkish which has several syntactic implications (Gürel 2002). A more detailed discussion on these constructions can be found in Mercan’s chapter on structural priming.

As for the phonological system, perhaps the most striking property of Turkish is vowel harmony, appearing word internally and externally, displaying two patterns: fronting harmony and rounding harmony. As discussed in Özçelik and Sprouse’s chapter, while the former case involves the assimilation of a vowel to the vowel in the preceding syllable in terms of frontness, the latter involves a high vowel harmonizing in roundness with the vowel in the preceding syllable (Göksel & Kerslake 2005). Turkish has 8 phonemic vowels (i, ü, ı, u, e, ö, a, o), which are categorized according to their [±back], [±high], and [±round] features (Kabak 2011; Kornfilt 2009).

From the perspective of phonology, there are two types of suffixes in Turkish, I-type and A-type. The vowels of the I-type suffixes are high. They get their frontness and roundness features from the preceding vowel. Fronting and rounding harmonies determine whether the vowel in this type of suffix will be ‘i’, ‘ı’, ‘ü’, or ‘u’ when affixed to a particular word. The vowels of A-type suffixes are [–round]

and [-high], but they can be [+back] or [-back]. The choice of the appropriate vowel in an A-type suffix depends on whether the vowel in the syllable preceding it is [+back] or [-back] (Göksel & Kerslake 2005: 22–23).

Besides vowel harmony, Turkish exhibits consonant assimilation, which ensures that the stem consonant and the suffix consonant share the same voicing feature. For example, the past tense suffix *-DI* undergoes both vowel harmony and consonant assimilation (e.g. *kes-ti* ‘cut-PAST’; *sat-tı* ‘sell-PAST’ versus *git-ti* ‘go-PAST’; *uyu-du* ‘sleep-PAST’). Grapheme-phoneme correspondence is regular in Turkish – hence its categorization as an orthographically transparent language (Durgunoğlu & Öney 1999). Predictable alternations (e.g. those due to syllable-final oral stop devoicing) are represented in the spelling system. Other predictable alternations are not signaled. For example, since no special signs exist for the palatal versus velar /k, g and l/, the alternations that these segments undergo remain unexpressed by the orthography (Kornfilt 2009: 524). Sometimes the backness of a suffix vowel is determined by the lateral, rather than by the preceding vowel. As Özçelik and Sprouse show in the volume, in some borrowed words, a back vowel followed by a non-velarized /l/ (e.g. *rol* ‘role’), the suffix vowel harmonizes with the [-back] feature of the lateral, rather than with the [+back] feature of the vowel in the preceding syllable (e.g. *role* ‘to the role’ but not **rola*). In contrast, words that have velarized /ɫ/ (e.g. *yol* /yoɫ/ ‘road’) follow canonical vowel harmony rules in suffixation (e.g. *yola* /yoɫa/ ‘to the road’ but not **yole*). Turkish has, in general, word-final stress. Most suffixes in Turkish are stressable. When a stressable suffix is added to a stressed root, the position of the word stress moves to the new final syllable as in *kitáp* ‘book’, *kitap-lár* ‘books’, *kitaplarım-dá* ‘in my books’ (Göksel & Kerslake 2005: 29). Özçelik’s article provides a discussion of stress patterns in Turkish.

Turkish is a head-final language with free-word order. The unmarked word order is SOV. Scrambling is allowed both preverbally and postverbally. Depending on pragmatic and discourse factors, the canonical order is altered. Topicalized constituents appear sentence-initially; new information or focused constituents are immediately in preverbal position (Erguvanlı-Taylan 1984). As an SOV language, where objects precede the verb, Turkish has postpositions rather than prepositions, and relative clauses that precede their heads. Specific objects (definite and indefinite), including pronouns and proper names, obligatorily bear overt case morphology and scramble freely, while non-specific objects do not have overt case morphology and occur in the immediately preverbal position (Erguvanlı-Taylan 1984; Enç 1991; Kural 1992 among others). Also, as discussed in Ay and Aydın’s chapter, scrambling interacts, in interesting ways, with quantifier scope assignment in Turkish.

Subject pronouns can be omitted in the presence of a fully inflected verb (e.g. *Ben İstanbul'a gidiyorum* or *İstanbul'a gidiyorum* 'I am going to Istanbul'). Similarly, in the presence of the person agreement on the head noun, the genitive NP (possessor) can be dropped (*Benim arabam* or *Arabam* 'My car'). Pro-drop can also be observed in embedded constructions. Turkish also allows object-drop in contexts where the discourse or pragmatic factors make the referent clear. Object omission is more limited than subject omission, however (Kornfilt 1997). In terms of question formation, Turkish has various *wh*-question particles. Due to its *wh*-in-situ characteristics, *wh*-phrases stay in their base-generated positions in main and embedded questions (see Akar 1990; Arslan 1999; Özsoy 1996 for different accounts of *wh*-in-situ in Turkish). Yes-no questions in Turkish are formed by suffixing the particle *-mI* to the constituent questioned. As illustrated by Gračanin-Yuksekk and Kırkıcı, the positioning of the *-mI* particle is subject to various grammatical constraints in Turkish.

In the field of Turkish pragmatics, as is the case in many other languages, speech acts have drawn more attention than other areas of pragmatics such as conversational implicature, presupposition, reference, deixis, conversational analysis (see Slabakova 2013 for a review). Although the totality of pragmatic norms in Turkish has not been completely identified, it has been suggested, in the context of suggestions, for instance, that Turkish native speakers make their suggestions rather directly without much attempt to mitigate their message to minimize imposition (Bayraktaroğlu 2001; Bayyurt & Martı 2012). Similarly, in apology formulation, native speakers of Turkish are found to employ explicit expression of apology in most cases. A more detailed discussion of the pragmatic norms involved in suggestion- and apology-giving can be found in Bayyurt and Martı's chapter and in the article by Hatipoğlu.

The above-mentioned characteristics of Turkish are relevant for the studies included in this volume. Each chapter has an in-depth discussion of the relevant linguistic notions. Readers may also wish to consult other sources on Turkish grammar for more comprehensive coverage (Göksel & Kerslake 2005; Kornfilt 1997; Ketrez 2012; Lewis 1967; Özsoy 2001; 2004; Underhill 1976; see also the contributions in Erguvanlı-Taylan 2002).

4. The papers in this volume

The papers in this volume are grouped under four main headings according to the domain of grammar they focus on: L2 phonology, L2 morpho-syntax, L2 discourse/pragmatics, and the L2 processing of morpho-syntax. This organization is based purely on practical considerations; given the obvious interrelatedness of the

different domains of grammar, this division should not be construed as a theoretical claim. Each chapter focuses on a particular linguistic domain, with different sets of research questions and different participants and methodologies to identify a specific aspect of L2 Turkish. A summary of each study is given below.

4.1 The acquisition of L2 phonology

As discussed above, Turkish phonology has particular characteristics that are conducive to a comprehensive exploration of interlanguage phonology. Nevertheless, L2 phonology is a relatively understudied field not only in the context of Turkish but also in other languages. The two papers in this section cover (a) the effects of phonological and phonosyntactic features in the acquisition of Turkish prosody (Özçelik's chapter) and (b) phonological development in comparison to orthographic learning in English-Turkish interlanguage (Özçelik and Sprouse's paper).

In Chapter 1, Özçelik investigates, via two experiments, the acquisition of lower-level (i.e. word-level) prosody, which involves only phonological representations, and higher-level (i.e. phrase- and sentence-level) prosody, which requires knowledge of both phonology and syntax. His first experiment involves a total of 19 first language (L1) English- and L1 French-speaking learners (with beginner, low-intermediate, and advanced proficiency), who were shown pictures of target nouns of various lengths and syllable structures. They were asked to utter the words in isolation and then to repeat them in a carrier sentence. Özçelik's prediction was based on the differences among the three languages: While Turkish and French are both footless languages, English is a foot-requiring language. In his second experiment, interviews were conducted with two L1-English-speaking learners of Turkish with advanced L2 proficiency. Findings suggest that the acquisition of Turkish word-level prosody is challenging, particularly for L1-English speakers. At the sentence-level, however, L1-English speakers were able to use target-like prosodic structures despite L1–L2 differences and misleading instruction that they had received on the sentential stress rule in Turkish. Özçelik suggests that the word-level prosodic system is difficult for learners with a footed L1 (i.e. English) acquiring an L2 without foot structure (i.e. Turkish) because this requires discarding the grammar of a prosodic constituent (i.e. the Foot). Target-like representations in higher-level prosody are accounted for on the basis of the Universal Grammar (UG) constraints available to L2 learners.

In Chapter 2, Özçelik and Sprouse examine the role of L2 orthography in the development of L2 phonology. The investigation extends beyond the relatively standard relationship between orthography and the typical phonological rules of

vowel harmony in Turkish. It involves special cases of word-external (i.e. suffix) harmony where the vowel of the suffix is not determined by the vowel of the root (as would be the case in regular vowel harmony processes), but instead by an exceptional consonant whose backness feature is not marked orthographically. The crucial issue here is that the application of the usually-taught vowel harmony rules would yield target language-deviant results because the backness of the consonant is not spelled out in any way in Turkish. By comparing trials with both orthographic and auditory stimuli against trials with auditory stimuli alone, the study attempts to differentiate L1 English learners' reliance on orthography in the computation of Turkish vowel harmony rules. In addition to 8 native speakers of Turkish, 16 L2 learners at beginner ($n = 6$), intermediate ($n = 5$), and advanced ($n = 5$) levels of L2 proficiency were presented with a Turkish word or pseudo-word (i.e. the root) and asked to choose the correct variant of a suffix from among two or four options (because a given suffix may be subject to either two-way or four-way vowel harmony). As predicted by the Decreasing Dependence on Orthography Hypothesis, the results suggest that L2 learners gradually rely less on orthographic stimuli and more on auditory stimuli.

4.2 The acquisition of L2 morpho-syntax

This section features four studies exploring the acquisition of Turkish morpho-syntax. The first is a study by Kaili, Çeltekin and Papadopoulou in Chapter 3 that addresses the acquisition of verbal morphology. They examine the acquisition of tense, aspect and modality (TAM) in Turkish by L1 Greek speakers. A total of 15 participants with intermediate and advanced L2 Turkish proficiency were given a fill-in-the-blank test and an elicited oral imitation task. The TAM morphemes investigated were *-(I)yor* (progressive aspect and present tense marker), *-A/Ir* (aorist suffix expressing imperfective aspect and generic meaning), *-(y)AcAK* (marker of future), *-DI* (past tense and perfective aspect marker) and *-mİş* (past tense and perfective aspect marker). The researchers attempted to identify the most problematic morphology within TAM. They assumed that since TAM markers are encoded in different ways cross-linguistically, L2 learners would have difficulty attaining language-specific properties. One-to-many mapping between TAM markers and their uses is believed to add to this difficulty. The results revealed that L2 learners experience more problems with modality than with tense or aspect. L2 learners' use of tense markers, *-DI* and *-(y)AcAK* was found to be native-like. Similarly, their performance with *-(I)yor* and the aspectual meanings of *-(A/I)r* was relatively high. Nevertheless, learners exhibited problems with *-(A/I)r* and *-mİş*, which express mainly modal uses in Turkish. The authors consider the

inherent functional characteristics (i.e. multifunctionality) of these two suffixes and L1 Greek influence as potential factors leading to these results.

In Chapter 4, Montrul examines the acquisition of causative/inchoative morphology in L2 Turkish. This particular paper is a shorter version of her 2001 publication in *Second Language Research* and it reports only on the Turkish study, reinterpreting the L2 Turkish data under the Feature Reassembly Hypothesis (FRH) of Lardiere (2009). The issue under investigation is whether and how the relationship between the morphological characteristics (e.g. morphological typology and richness) of the L1 and the L2 might contribute to a learning problem during interlanguage development. Three L2 groups (L1-Spanish, $n = 24$; L1-English, $n = 18$; and L1-Japanese, $n = 9$), all with intermediate or high-intermediate Turkish proficiency, were tested and the results were compared with those of 18 native speakers of Turkish. Following the FRH, it was hypothesized that surface morphological errors would be constrained by the way the abstract features associated with (anti)causative morphology are phonologically spelled out in the L1; if the L1 has zero and the L2 has overt morphology to express these features, then L2 learners will assume that those features receive no phonological content in the L2, either. In the reverse case (i.e. overt morphology in the L1 and zero in the L2), then L2 learners will map these features onto morphophonological forms specific to the L2. A judgment task involving pictures and pairs of sentences with causative/inchoative and psych verbs revealed L1 effects, as L2 learners' judgments were found to be constrained by the morphological patterns found in their respective L1s, as predicted by Lardiere's FRH.

In Chapter 5, Ay and Aydın explore the acquisition of quantifier scope in third language (L3) Turkish acquisition by native speakers of Japanese ($n = 14$) whose L2 was English. The study also included 14 Turkish native speakers. The authors emphasize the status of Turkish as the L3 because they focus on the transfer effects of L1 and L2 in L3 acquisition. A canonical SOV sentence such as '*Biri (someone) her kedi-yi (every cat-ACC) okşuyor (petting)*' has only surface scope reading, where a single person is petting all the cats. But the scrambled OSV version is ambiguous between the reading in which a single person is petting all the cats, and the reading in which every cat is petted by a different person. In both Japanese and Turkish, the inverse scope reading is possible only in OSV sentences (not in SOV sentences). The corresponding sentence in English ('Someone is petting every cat') is ambiguous between surface and inverse scope readings. Learners with intermediate-level proficiency were given a judgment task involving pictures and scope sentences. Similar to native speakers, the L3 group accepted subject-wide interpretations more than object-wide interpretations in SOV sentences. In OSV sentences, both groups correctly allowed both surface and inverse scope interpretations. However, the L3 group, unlike native speakers, showed a tendency to accept subject-wide

scope over object-wide scope. This cannot be due to L1 Japanese effects because Japanese equally allows surface and inverse scope interpretations in OSV sentences. Similarly, L2 English influence is not relevant because L3 learners do not treat canonical sentences as ambiguous between surface and inverse scope interpretations. Thus, the findings reveal no particular L1 or L2 effects on L3 acquisition.

In Chapter 6, Gračanin-Yukseş and Kırkıcı address the syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic aspects of yes/no question formation in L2 Turkish. They discuss the intricate relationship and possible dissociation among different levels of grammatical representation in the L2 development of yes/no questions. The design of the study is based on the fact that a syntactically well-formed yes/no question in Turkish may take a number of different forms, depending on the placement of the question particle *mi*. Nevertheless, there are positions in which *mi* cannot appear, and learners need to acquire these syntactic constraints. Furthermore, different placements of *mi* in a sentence correspond to different semantic interpretations of the question: while some allow for a wide scope interpretation, others yield only the narrow scope reading. Gračanin-Yukseş and Kırkıcı suggest that L2 learners can be said to have acquired the semantics of yes/no questions only if they can correctly match the syntactic representation of a particular yes/no question with a correct interpretation or interpretations. Additionally, appropriate usage of yes/no questions is governed by pragmatic principles. Pragmatic competence involves knowing how to use the structure in a felicitous discourse. Eighty-nine participants (34 native speakers of Turkish and 55 L2 Turkish learners with various L1 backgrounds with elementary, intermediate, upper-intermediate L2 proficiency) were tested via three paper-and-pencil tasks involving grammaticality, semantic similarity rating and felicitousness judgment. L2 proficiency-dependent improvement occurred in the performance of all participants, but L2 learners' pragmatic competence seemed to lag behind their syntactic and semantic competence.

4.3 The acquisition of L2 discourse/pragmatics

This section includes two papers on the acquisition of speech acts. In Chapter 7, Bayyurt and Martı investigate the use of suggestion formulas in L2 Turkish by L1 English speakers. The data comes from an assigned essay (in the form of a letter to a friend) and a discourse completion task (DCT) using 10 different contexts. Participants were advanced L2 learners ($n = 15$) and native Turkish speakers ($n = 30$). L2 learners differed from native speakers in their formulation of suggestions in both tasks. In terms of the use of suggestion strategies, L2 Turkish learners, despite their high level of proficiency, were found to be less sensitive to social context than native speakers of Turkish, and they tended to use imperatives to make suggestions. However, direct suggestion-giving in the form of imperatives is not