

An Examination of Story Narration by Monolingual and Bilingual Turkish Children

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ABSTRACT

In the present case study, we aimed to explore whether there were any differences between monolingual Turkish and Turkish-Italian bilingual children in terms of their use of language structures in Turkish while narrating a story from a picture book titled “Frog, where are you?” by Mayer (1969). Four monolingual Turkish and three Turkish-Italian bilingual children narrated the story. The data from the recordings indicated some differences in terms of preference for certain language features like tense differences in their story narration. While younger monolinguals reported the events in the story with past tense markers like *-miş* and *-iyor*, bilingual children displayed a marked tendency for the past tense *-miş* marker. The older children in both groups chose to use the *-iyor* marker used by monolingual teenagers and adults. We argued that such differences in preferences might indicate an effect of Italian, or the interlanguage varieties might be responsible for the discrepancies. Explanations as to why these differences might have occurred and some practical suggestions for educators are provided in the study.

Key words: Story Narration, Language Structures, Turkish-Italian Children, Language Acquisition

INTRODUCTION

Monolingualism and bilingualism are central concepts in the study of language and communication. As is commonly known, bilingualism refers to speaking two languages fluently, whereas monolingualism pertains to conversing successfully in one language (Baker, 2011; Grosjean & Li, 2013). An individual’s social, cultural, and economic opportunities are significantly impacted by both of these language abilities in different contexts. A profound understanding of the language acquisition processes in these might be helpful in pedagogical implications in educational settings and early diagnosis of language disorders. Several comparative studies of this nature have been carried out to cater to these requirements. Among those studies, the research on the acquisition of tense and aspect and modality (TAM) gained a prominent space. We shall first start with a definition of tense and aspect. For defining the term tense, Comrie (1985, p. vii) states, “I take tense to be defined as the grammaticalization of location in time”. Therefore, a point of reference is necessary to place the events and occasions in a timeline; generally, the time of the utterance is regarded as the point of reference (Balci, 2004). These events need to be placed in the putative timeline systematically. According to Comrie (1985, p. 6), aspect “refers to the grammaticalization of expression of internal temporal constituency”. Languages from many different language families display different

morphological structures and categories concerning tense and aspect. Therefore, investigating various languages might help understand the processes of first and second language acquisition. An important point here is to describe and depict the existing conditions without exposing monolingual normativity to comparative cases (Rothman et al., 2022).

Many monolingual cases for languages have been investigated for their tense and aspect development features. For example, Pizzuto and Caselli (1992) reported a summary of the acquisition of morphological structures in Italian. The study aimed to investigate the verb, pronoun and article systems of three Italian children’s spoken language production. The findings showed that in the early phases of acquisition, the children tended to produce singular forms of verbs, and their mastery was somehow limited to simple present tense forms. There were not only chronological first emergence differences among but also the acquisition of forms and order of acquisition of morphemes did not follow a similar pattern. Paradis, Rice, Crago and Marquis (2008) investigated the use and knowledge of English tense markers in English as a first language with a rationale of comparing the findings with English as a second language and language-impaired learners. The authors claimed that it takes a very long time to master the use of English tense morphemes properly.

The topic of tense and aspect acquisition during second or foreign language learning has also been investigated in

other languages. Comajoan (2005) explored the acquisition of perfective and imperfective morphology in Catalan as a second language. Ayoun's (2005) focus was the acquisition of tense in French as a second language. Mojahedi Rezaeian et al. (2020) explored the narration skills of Persian-speaking children, while Salabery (2005) compared Spanish as a second and Portuguese as a third language on the transfer of past tense aspect between the two languages. Rocca (2005) introduced the findings of a longitudinal study that aimed to explore the acquisition of past tense forms in Italian as a second language for three English-speaking children and English as a second language for three Italian-speaking children. The investigation mainly focused on *passato prossimo* (perfective –compound past) and *imperfetto* (imperfective). These two tenses were distinguished as “In Italian perfectivity is expressed by *passato remoto* (*preterit*/simple past) and the *passato prossimo* (present perfect/compound past)” Rocca (2005, p. 130) and “The *imperfetto* is a past tense that embodies all the basic semantic components of imperfectivity: Progressiveness, continuousness and habituality” (Rocca, 2005, p. 137). The analysis of these markers revealed that the children tended to produce bare past, compound past and imperfect. The perfective marker was highly used in correlation with the language development of the children. Later, Rocca (2007) explored the bi-directionality of tense and aspect morphology with the same data. In this follow-up study, the researcher indicated that there was a tendency to relate the *imperfetto* to activities and states in children with Italian as a second language.

One of the most prominent studies that have investigated the acquisition of Turkish concerning tense and aspect acquisition is a longitudinal study by Aksu-Koç (1998). The study explored an infant's interaction with her mother over eight months. Later, further data from two Turkish children aged 1.9 and 2.6 were included in the analysis. The data from the interaction between the infant and her mother revealed

that the mother's input strongly corresponded to the girl's utterances, e.g., certain inflections used with certain types of verbs. One significant finding was the restricted use of the definite past –*DI* marker with achievement verbs and the use of progressive marker –*Iyor* was limited to activities and statives (Aksu-Koç, 1998, p. 276; Özcan, 2018). To better exemplify the research carried out in Turkish, we will provide a brief summary of the tense and aspect in the Turkish language.

According to Balcı (2004), there are 11 morphemes to mark the tense, aspect and modality in the Turkish language. These markers have been listed as:

“Group I: –*DI*, –*mİş*, –(*I*)*yor*, –(*y*)*AcAK*, –(*I/A*)*r*, –*sA*, –*A*, –*mAlI*, Group II: –(*y*)*DI*, –(*y*)*mİş*, –(*y*)*sA*” Balcı (2004, p. 111).

The second group was provided separately to show that these three markers are preceded by the markers in the first group if two markers from both groups are to be combined. For the purposes of the study, the explanation of the TAM markers will be limited to five major tense markers. Table 1 summarizes the five major TAM markers in Turkish.

The longitudinal nature of Aksu-Koç's (1998) study allowed us to see the emergence and acquisition of tense markers. Aksu-Koç (1998, pp. 263-264) distinguished five stages of tense, aspect and morphology acquisition in Turkish language. The first stage, the pre-morphological stage, did not include any systematic use of verbs. Later in phase I, the definite past tense marker –*DI* emerged and was used in a restricted manner. In stage II, the child used the –*DI* marker quickly, and the progressive –*Iyor* started to be used in a limited fashion. During stage III, the child was more proficient in using –*DI* and –*Iyor*, but the newly appearing –*Ir* (the aorist) and –*mİş* (the indefinite past marker) were used scarcely. At stage IV, the structures and choices by the child showed a pliable use for all four markers.

Table 1. Properties of TAM markers in Turkish

Properties of TAM markers in Turkish		
1) – <i>DI</i>	“The suffix – <i>DI</i> is used to talk about past situations directly experienced or readily assimilated to consciousness and can therefore be asserted to have taken place with certainty” (Aksu-Koç, 1998, p. 260). The marker also includes perfective and perfect aspects related to the current relevance of the past (Balcı, 2004; Göksel & Kerslake, 2011)	e.g., <i>Kadın çay içti.</i> (The woman drank tea).
2) – <i>mİş</i>	The – <i>mİş</i> suffix “presents a past event in terms of its reasoning effects is the form for perfect aspect and inferential past” (Aksu-Koç, 1998, p. 261). The suffix also indicates indirectness. “The meaning involved is second hand and therefore a hearsay” (Balcı, 2004, p. 113).	e.g., <i>Kadın çay içmiş.</i> (The woman “apparently” drank tea).
3) – <i>Iyor</i>	“The suffix – <i>Iyor</i> is the marker for present tense and imperfective aspect” (Aksu-Koç, 1998, p. 260). It can be used to refer to the progression of events. (Göksel & Kerslake, 2011).	e.g., <i>Kadın çay içiyor.</i> (The woman is drinking tea.)
4) – <i>Ir</i>	“The suffix – <i>Ir</i> marks habitual generic aspect but also functions modally to indicate possibility, both deontic and epistemic.” (Aksu-Koç, 1998, p. 260). The general facts or everyday behaviour can be explained by the use of this marker.	e.g., <i>Kadın çay içer.</i> (The woman drinks tea.)
5) –(<i>y</i>) <i>AcAK</i>	“–(<i>y</i>) <i>AcAK</i> is the future marker in Turkish” (Balcı, 2004, p. 118). Future references can be given by using this marker.	e.g., <i>Kadın çay içecek.</i> (The woman will drink tea.)

The finding for the earlier “emergence of *-DI* before *-Iyor* in the child’s speech” (Aksu-Koç, 1998, p. 278) was explained by the researcher as the use *-Iyor* being more complex and functional in the Turkish language. She later supported her view with a claim that the referential nature of *-DI* marker lent itself to an earlier acquisition for the children who tend to see concrete events more easily with their existing mental capacities.

Küntay & Slobin’s (1999) exhaustive summary of the acquisition of Turkish as a native language allocated a six-page long summary on the Turkish tense, aspect and modality research. The order of inflections was also reported to be in the: *-DI*, *-Iyor*, *-Ir* and *-mİş* for Turkish.

In addition to the studies reported above, there is another study that has explored the acquisition of tense in Turkish with a special emphasis on the *-DI* and *-mİş* markers. Öztürk and Papafragou (2008) researched the acquisition of the direct evidence marker *-DI* morpheme and the indirect evidence marker *-mİş* marker among 96 monolingual Turkish children aged between 5.2 and 8 with elicitation tasks. It was found that the children were able to produce the evidential morphemes properly, yet they were not mature enough to discover the evidential dimensions of the markers. The direct evidence marker *-DI* was understood before the *-mİş* marker, supporting the findings of Aksu-Koç (1988, 1998).

Among the methods for collecting speech samples, story narration is a commonly used method to elicit information about monolinguals and bilinguals for exploring language acquisition (De Houwer, 2009). One well-known picture story titled “Frog, where are you?” by Mayer (1969) has been used very extensively to investigate language features. It was also mentioned on CHILDES website that the frog storybook and the technique had been used in over 50 languages up to now. There are two volumes written on the studies from various countries and languages. Turkish is also among those languages.

The narration studies in Turkish explored many issues. For example, Akdağ (2008) used the frog story to explore the narration differences between children with or without preschool education. Although no significant differences were found between the two groups, the results showed that children with preschool education narrated more structured stories. The researcher asserted the early schooling of these children could be responsible for more proficient narration skills. Besides, Özcan (2007a) analyzed the use of time adverbials in Turkish narratives told by Turkish children at ages three to 13 through the use of Meyer’s (1969) story and found significant differences among age groups.

Pioneering work on the Turkish Frog story by Aksu-Koç (1994) investigated many aspects of the Turkish language by using narratives such as tense, aspect, modality, voice, word order and so on with 40 Turkish monolingual participants from different age groups. The children’s groups were three, five, and nine years old, respectively, and the adult group consisted of college students aged 20 to 24. The study’s findings indicated that “the three-year-olds, like their peers in other languages, described independent picture frames rather than recounting events organized around a plotline”

Aksu-Koç (1994, p. 330). It was interpreted as a failure to comply with the requirements of narrative storytelling. When the data for the five-year-olds were investigated, it was observed that there were discrepancies among the group members. Half of the group narrated the stories with more complex narration features, whereas the other half showed similarities with the three-year-old group. The nine-year-old group results showed that Turkish children had acquired the necessary structures required by storytelling by this age. Nonetheless, they tended to follow a linear timeline rather than a flexible recursive narration style.

Another study that used the frog storybook to investigate the use of tense and aspect and modality differences among different age groups was carried out by Özcan (2007b), with 112 monolingual Turkish participants aged from 3 to 13 and adults as well. The study revealed that younger monolingual children tended to use the *-mİş* marker but the *-Iyor* marker was preferred as the age level increased. To make comparisons between languages, we chose to study Turkish and Italian. The literature on the comparison or investigation of Turkish and Italian languages is very scarce. For example, Peçenek (2010) sought to investigate the acquisition of Italian as a second language for two Turkish boys living in an immersion setting. The researcher collected longitudinal data for four years. The study mainly focused on the experiences and performances of the two boys. The results showed that the elder boy was able to keep his Turkish while the younger boy had to code-switch to Italian to refer to things around him. Age, exposure, attitudes and cognition were also reported as important factors for acquisition. We, therefore, would like to contribute to the limited literature on these languages.

Based on the current literature review, we have decided that our research question is:

- 1- Are there any differences in the use of tense, aspect and modality in narratives between monolingual Turkish and Turkish-Italian bilingual children?

METHOD

In order to examine the research question, a story narration technique was employed for quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis. The story book, “Frog, where are you? (Mayer, 1969), a 24-page wordless picture book, was presented to the children as part of this narrative task and they were asked to narrate the pictures to the researchers.

Participants

The participants of this study are; three Turkish-Italian bilingual children and four monolingual Turkish children of different ages. Bilingual children live in Istanbul (the largest city in Turkey), and monolingual children live in Bursa (the fourth largest city in Turkey), two neighboring towns. Parents filled in a form about the child’s language development information and daily language exposure. We have received written and oral consent from the parents for the kids to participate in our research.

The Bilingual Group

JA is 4.8 years old. Her mother is Italian, and her father is Turkish. JA was born in Istanbul. Her mother almost always speaks Italian at home and sometimes uses a little Turkish with JA, and her father always speaks Turkish. Parents can both speak English. JA goes to a nursery school five days a week, where she is constantly exposed to Turkish. She started learning English as a third language three months ago. She has 10 hours of English classes at the nursery school.

CM is 5.10 years old. His mother is Turkish, and his father is Italian. CM was born in Istanbul. His mother speaks Turkish mostly and sometimes Italian, but his father only speaks Italian. Parents can both speak English. CM is going to a nursery school for five days a week. The medium of instruction in the school is Turkish. Also, CM has been learning English for the last two years in nursery school.

DN is 4.9 years old. Her mother is Italian, and her father is Turkish. DN was also born in Istanbul. At home, her mother speaks both Italian and Turkish. Her father always speaks Turkish. DN is going to a nursery school for five days a week. People speak Turkish at school, and DN started learning essential English six months ago.

The Monolingual Group

SR is 4.10 years old. Her parents are both Turkish, and she was born in Bursa. Turkish is the daily language of the house. She is not attending a nursery school. She has not been introduced to any foreign language in a formal school setting but learned a few words in English from cable TV and the internet.

SN is 4.7 years old. His parents are both Turkish, and he was born in Bursa. Turkish is the daily language of the house. He is also going to a nursery school five days a week. He was introduced to English 3 months ago by his English teacher at the school who only visits the class 1 hour per week.

EL is 3.7 years old. She was born in Bursa, and her parents are Turkish, but both parents are English language teachers. The parents state that she has only been exposed to a limited number of nouns and adjectives in English. Turkish is the language spoken in the house.

FN is 6.7 years old. His parents are Turkish, and he was born in Bursa. He was exposed to English at the nursery school last year and can name a minimal number of objects

in English. This year, he is also enrolled at a Turkish primary school and is learning to read in Turkish.

Table 2 displays information about the monolingual and bilingual children in the present study.

Data Collection Procedure

Data were collected by using Mercer Mayer's (1969) wordless picture book '*Frog, where are you?*'. In the story, a boy and his dog are trying to find their frog. Researchers conducted two piloting studies to elicit the possible limitations. Both piloting studies showed that the child could quickly get bored and distracted by anything around. Therefore, we agreed that the children needed a warm-up session to concentrate on the storytelling task. Data collection sessions took place in children's homes. Parents were at home in the same room during the data collection procedure. Researchers used only Turkish with the children and their families. Sessions lasted about 40 to 50 minutes.

Free-narration task

Researchers asked participants to answer their questions freely. Participants were not oriented by a book or a picture. Some examples are "What do you do at school? How was your birthday party? Can you tell me the games you played?". This task was only designed as a warm-up activity, and no data from this process was added to the analysis. We were cautious in selecting our questions to avoid any over-emphasis on a tense marker.

Storytelling task

The children were asked to go through the storybook and produce a story from the pages open in front of them. Researchers avoided asking (parents were informed about the sensitivity of the issue) questions like "*Sonra ne olmuş?*" (*What happened next?*); "*Nereye gidiyorlar?*" (*Where are they going?*). Instead, they used expressions without tense markers like "*sonra*" (*next*), "*başka*" (*what else*), "*güzel*" (*nice*). The child told the story to their mother, and the researcher relaxedly.

Transcription and Coding

All sessions were audio-recorded for later analysis with permission from the parents. Recordings were transcribed by

Table 2. The features of the monolingual and bilingual children.

Name	Gender	Age	Language of the Parents		Age of Exposure to	
			Mother	Father	Turkish	Italian
JA	Girl	4.8	Italian	Turkish	since birth	since birth
DN	Girl	4.9	Italian	Turkish	since birth	since birth
CM	Boy	5.10	Turkish	Italian	since birth	since birth
EL	Girl	3.7	Turkish	Turkish	since birth	-
SN	Boy	4.7	Turkish	Turkish	since birth	-
SR	Girl	4.10	Turkish	Turkish	since birth	-
FN	Boy	6.7	Turkish	Turkish	since birth	-

the researchers and cross-checked for inter-coder reliability. Researchers counted the TAM markers on the transcribed recordings of each participant. TAM markers used *-mİş*, *-(I)yor*, *-di*, *-ar*, *-yacak*, *-mİştİ*, *-yordu*, *-(I)yormuş* are counted as accepted responses.

A) EL: “*Kurbağa gizlice çıkmış.*” (*The frog sneaked out*).

B) SR: “*Çocuk geriye yatıyor.*” (*The boy lies back*).

While coding and counting, repeated verbs were regarded as one token. For example, one participant repeated the TAM marker more than once, as seen in example C), for a better analysis, researchers regarded the TAM marker as only one token.

C) FN: “*Sonra geyik gidiyor, gidiyor, gidiyor.*”/Later the deer is **going, going, going.** **1**

1

During the storytelling task analysis, only the story-related narratives and sentences were taken into account. In a sentence like the example D), the participant asked questions about the book, and the story. As this TAM marker is not related to the storytelling, the researchers did not include this as an acceptable answer.

D) FN: “*Nereden **başlıyor** bu?*” (*Points the book*) (*Where does it start from?*)

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The data analysis from transcriptions of the audio recordings is reported in percentages. As mentioned above, only the 8 TAM markers were analyzed because, at the beginning of the story narration, all participants started with a picture description and mostly used the existential *-var*. Akdağ (2008, p. 54) depicted similar cases where participants in her study began by describing the existing items and characters in the picture. Therefore, our focus is on the TAM markers mentioned above.

The total number of TAM markers is in Table 3. For ease of examination, monolingual and bilingual children were ordered according to their ages, and the data for the bilingual children were highlighted.

As seen in Table 3, the most frequent TAM markers were the progressive marker *-Iyor* and the indirect evidence past marker *-mİş* in the monolingual and bilingual data together. The results confirmed the findings of Aksu-Koç (1994),

where the two most frequent TAM markers were *-Iyor* and *-mİş* among three, five and nine-year-olds and young adults; besides Özcan (2007b) showed that *-mİş* and *-Iyor* markers were also the most frequent markers among his 113 participants that consisted of children from the ages of three to nine and 13-year-old teenagers and adults. Aksu-Koç (1994, p. 335) states that “The present may be preferred for recounting events viewed from inside, i.e., regarded as psychologically relevant to the self, and the narrative *-mİş* may be preferred if a psychologically distant perspective is chosen”. Based on these findings, it can be argued that the default markers for story narration from a picture book in Turkish are usually *-mİş* and *-Iyor*.

It is observed from Figure 1 that the definite past tense marker *-DI* is the third most frequent marker. According to Slobin (1996, p. 74) “You are obliged to choose between two past tense inflections, one for witnessed and one for non-witnessed events.” And the children preferred to use the *-mİş* marker as the events were not witnessed personally. With the exclusion of the existentials (e.g., *var*), Aksu-Koç’s data can be regarded as in line with these data. However, Özcan (2007b) found that *-Iyormuş*, which marks the progression in hearsay, was the third most frequent TAM marker. According to his data, the *-DI* marker followed the *-Iyormuş* marker as the fourth most frequent marker. It is interesting to note that especially five, six and seven-year-olds preferred to use this marker. There was a curved shape of preference style for this marker. A similar fashion with relatively tiny percentages can be observed in Aksu-Koç (1994) as well. The five-year-olds had the highest rate of preference for the use of the *-Iyormuş* marker in comparison to the three-year-olds and the adults.

For the present data, the number of tokens for the future TAM marker *-(y)AcAk* and past progressive *-Iyormuş* were equal. This marker was uttered nine times by two monolinguals aged 4.7 and 4.9 and a bilingual aged 4.9. These findings indicate similarities in the use of *-Iyormuş*, which seems to have a peak point around the age of 5 and later diminishes as the age increases in Turkish story narration. Özcan (2007b) postulates that five-year-olds used this marker to indicate background events. The future marker *-(y)AcAk* was used equally with *-Iyormuş*. This future marker was not included in Aksu-Koç’s (1994) study; nevertheless, the present

Table 3. The total number of TAM used by monolingual and bilingual children

TAM	EL		SN		JA		DN		SR		CM		FN	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
<i>-DI</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	6	11	5	9	2	5	0	0
<i>-mİş</i>	15	38	23	49	38	100	42	79	19	33	10	24	3	5
<i>-Iyor</i>	21	53	22	47	0	0	3	6	23	40	29	71	54	92
<i>-(A)r</i>	2	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<i>-(y)AcAk</i>	2	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	9	0	0	2	3
<i>-mİştİ</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<i>-IyorDI</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<i>-Iyormİş</i>	0	0	2	4	0	0	2	4	5	9	0	0	0	0
Total	40	100	47	100	38	100	53	100	57	100	41	100	59	100

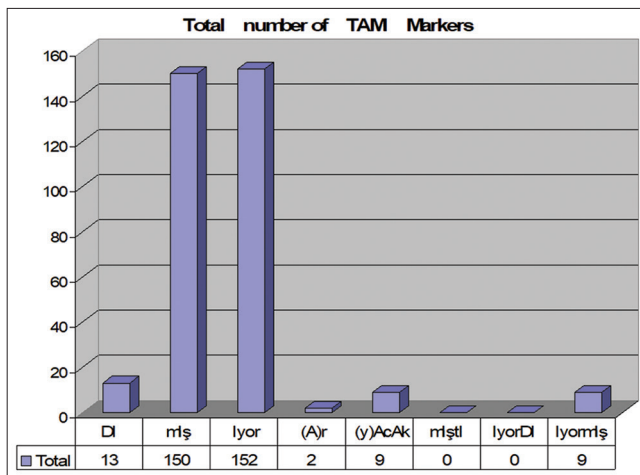


Figure 1. Total number of TAM markers in the data

research findings correlate with Özcan (2007b). He claimed that no significant developmental differences were observed concerning the age of participants. The current study found that the future references were given by three monolinguals aged 3.7, 4.9, and 6.7. The analysis further indicated that the aorist $-(A)r$ was only used twice by the youngest participant in the study. EL 3.7 was, in fact, referring to a general fact while using this marker. The following excerpt illustrates her usage:

“Baba, baykuş var burada.” (Daddy, there is an owl here). “Kuşların kanatları olur” (Birds have wings). “Kuşlar uçar” (Birds fly). “Burada baykuş uçuyor” (Here, the owl is flying).

Because of the relevance to the story, we agreed to keep these examples of $-(A)r$. Both Aksu-Koç (1994) and Özcan (2007b) data show that the usage of the aorist $-(A)r$ was restricted to two single cases. Throughout the story narration task, no single case of the use of definite past perfect $-mlştI$ and past progressive $-Iyordu$ was encountered in children’s speech. These complex TAM markers were also not preferred by the participants in Aksu-Koç (1994) except very few times. Özcan’s (2007b) data, on the contrary, displayed significant differences.

TAM Marker Usage in Monolingual Children

Figure 2 shows monolingual Turkish children’s frequency of TAM marker usage.

A careful investigation of the graph reveals that $-Iyor$ was the most frequent TAM marker used among monolingual Turkish children. The indefinite $-mlş$, which was preferred at almost fifty per cent less, was the second TAM marker. It was followed by the future marker $(y)AcAk$ and $-Iyormuş$, respectively. The definite past marker $-DI$, and habitual aorist $-(A)r$ are the least frequent TAM markers. FN, aged 6.7, is responsible for the high percentage of the $-Iyor$ marker because of his 92% TAM preference for progressive marker use. Aksu-Koç (1994) reported that six out of ten of the nine-year-old participants did not prefer to change the tense they used throughout the narration. The stories narrated by the five-year-old group included switches between tenses that

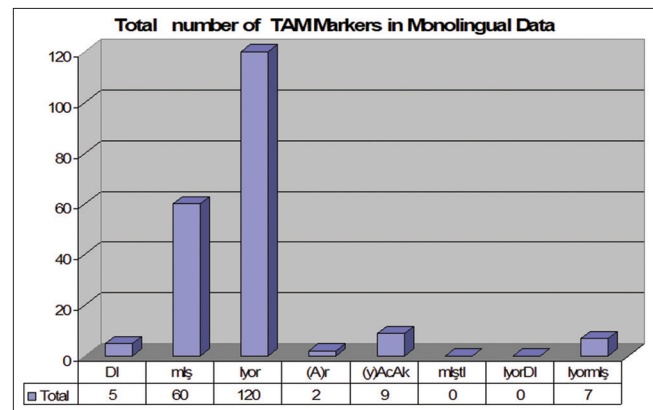


Figure 2. Total number of TAM Marker Usage in Monolingual Data

were caused by shifts between the picture description and storytelling. Moreover, a majority of the three-year-old narrators were found to use mixed tenses that are proposed to be initiated by the activity types in the pictures.

For EL and SR the $-Iyor$ marker percentages were slightly higher than the $-mlş$ marker. For SN, the percentages for the $-mlş$ marker and the $-Iyor$ marker were almost equal, $-mlş$ marker being 2% higher. If the similar use of these markers is systematic, it may be argued that the children shift between the two choices. According to Aksu-Koç (1994, p. 336), “Tense shifting allows the speaker to make grounding distinctions between events and to move between narrative and discourse time for digressions, asides, and evaluations”.

The analysis of the monolingual data showed that only SR and SN used the complex TAM markers. Except for the $-Iyormuş$, no single account of complex markers was encountered. There was no anchoring tense usage preference among the monolinguals but FN’s. FN being the oldest child in the group narrated the story almost merely with the $-Iyor$ marker. The number types of TAM markers used in the monolingual narrations that are in the scope of this study were respectively three, four and five.

TAM Marker Usage in Monolingual Children

Figure 3 illustrates the frequency of TAM marker usage by bilingual Turkish Italian children. The graph indicates that in contrast to the monolingual children, the most preferred TAM marker among bilinguals was the indefinite $-mlş$. This is just the opposite of monolingual preference. The second most frequent marker, which is the progressive $-Iyor$ can only reach one-third of the high usage of $-mlş$. Slobin and Aksu (1982, p. 198) postulated that events marked by the $-mlş$ marker appeared to be “psychologically distant” than the ones marked by the $-DI$. The definite marker $-DI$ follows these two markers.

The findings show that there would not be any case of complex TAM marker usage in the bilingual data except for DN’s case. She has provided the two occurrences of the complex $-Iyormuş$ markers. The number of types of TAM markers used by JA, DN and CM was one, four and three,

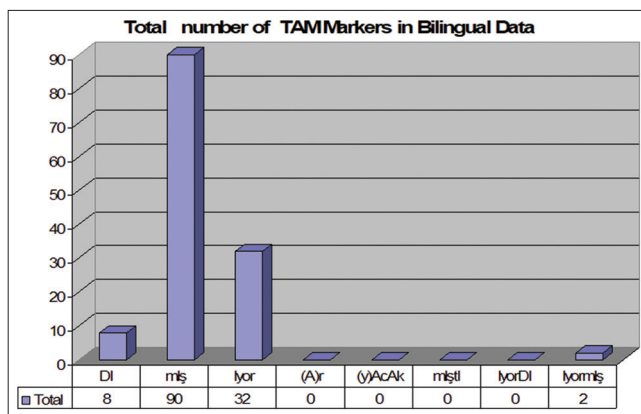


Figure 3. Total number of TAM Marker Usage in Bilingual Data

respectively. JA, who is 4.8 years old, did not prefer any TAM markers other than the *-miş* marker that marks the indefinite past, which has not been experienced by the speaker. Slobin and Aksu (1982) state that the use of *-miş* marker is constantly used in folk tales and myths, and this causes a distancing effect for the speaker concerning their psychological stance. If this child had been heavily exposed to Turkish narratives, it might explain this situation. However, the overuse of this hearsay might also be caused by a cross-linguistic transfer. The two past tense markers in Italian can be investigated for this account.

As Pizzuto and Caselli (1994, p.144) claim, “Thus, we could expect that in Italian the acquisition of mood/time/aspect inflections be less precocious than it could be, for example, in a language of the agglutinative type such as Turkish,...”. The unique and distinct morphosyntactic features of these two languages may cause differences in marker selection preferences. Nevertheless, the absence of research on bilingual individuals’ choice for *-miş* in Turkish might be a limitation to support those claims.

CONCLUSION

In this case study, we aimed to explore whether there were differences between monolingual Turkish and Turkish-Italian bilingual children in terms of their uses of tense aspect and modality in their language structures in Turkish while narrating a story from a picture book. We believe the limited number of participants makes it impossible to generalize our findings to larger audiences. Nevertheless, based on our case study data, we revealed some differences in terms of preference for TAM markers. Younger Turkish monolinguals preferred to report the events equally with *-miş* and *-Iyor* markers, whereas two bilingual children showed a strong tendency to use the *-miş* marker. The older children in both groups chose to use the *-Iyor* marker mentioned in the literature as a tendency of older children and adults. We argued that such differences in preferences might indicate an effect that the L2 or the interlanguage varieties might encounter for these discrepancies. Nevertheless, a sophisticated linguistic analysis of the Italian language literature would be beneficial in accounting for these findings. Further data and research

are needed to support the results of our case study limited to only seven children.

The results from similar studies can help us better understand and appreciate the linguistic and cultural diversity within our own educational and social settings. These studies can help educators better understand the language skills and needs of their multilingual students to design more effective language learning programs and strategies and can further inform policymakers about the best ways to support bilingual education in schools. Our increasingly globalized world calls for more effective communication, learning, and collaboration with people from different linguistic backgrounds; thus, a deeper understanding of bilingualism is essential.

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