

On The Acquisition of L2 Turkish Evidentiality

This study was conducted to examine the use and internalization of Turkish evidential past tense marker -mİş in contrast to regular past tense marker -dİ. Both markers indicate completed events. However, the two forms differ as “variable witnessed vs. non-witnessed process in simple past uses”.(Aksu-Koç, 1988) –dİ is used to mark events that can be perceived directly “personally witnessed by the speaker”(Underhill, 1976:169) or “positively known to the speaker”(Lewis, 1967:128) whereas “–mİş indicates the informational perspective of an indirect experiencer.”(Aksu-Koç, 1988)

To observe L2 Turkish learners’ acquisition of two different past tense markers which indicate events that are observed personally and events that are based on hearsay and inference, we conducted a survey with 68 online participants and 18 students from Turkish for Foreigners classes at BOUN. Having collected demographic and general relevant data, three prompted production tasks with certain scenarios were given. The aim was prompting participants to answer in regular past tense and/or evidential past tense forms of Turkish.

<i>One of the tasks that were given in the survey (Task3):</i>	
Amy and Rory are talking in a room. Melody walks by the room at that time and she hears Rory proposing to Amy.	
Question 1	
Melody meets with The Doctor later and tells him about the proposal.	She says “Rory, Amy’e evlilik teklif” (etmek)
Question 2	
Next day The Doctor meets with River and tells her about Rory’s proposal to Amy.	He says “Rory, Amy’e evlilik teklif” (etmek)

When we look at similar cross-linguistic data, Çeltek and Kaili(2012) refer that “speakers of a language which lacks grammatical evidentiality find it hard to adjust to the notion of stating the source of information when learning a language with obligatory grammatical evidentials”.

Results indicate that online participants tended to overgeneralize -dİ in -mİş context. However, participants did not overgeneralize when both cases are given at the same scenario, which might be due to the awareness that have resulted from seeing the two past tense contexts consecutively. Unlike the online participants, participants from BOUN did not show any overgeneralization of -dİ in -mİş context. Formal instruction might have a role in this

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because “there is growing evidence to indicate that grammar instruction does work.”(Ellis, 1994)

There might be several possible causes of learners’ overgeneralization of -DI in -mİş context. One is the notion of markedness; simple and common linguistic structures are argued to be unmarked while complex and less common structures are said to be marked (Archibald, 2010) and evidentiality is a marked structure.(Aikhenvald&Dixon,2003) The reason why it is harder for learners to acquire -mİş might be this. Also, according to Aksu-Koç, in L1 -DI is acquired first, then -mİş follows it. Although further analysis is needed for this claim, L2 learners of Turkish might acquire -dİ before -mİş as well; there might be a parallelism in between L1 and L2 acquisition order of these inflections.

L2acquisition, Turkish, markedness, evidentiality, overgeneralization

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