The (non)effects of the age of acquisition in TİD:
evidence from classifiers and argument expression

This study aims to investigate differences in the production of clauses with classifiers by native and non-native TİD signers to reveal any age sensitive morpho-syntactic aspects of TİD. Based on Benedicto and Brentari's (2004) analysis where morphological handshapes map to thematic roles, I question whether we observe such a thematic role–morphological marking regularity in TİD. Furthermore, considering the difficulties in the acquisition of these structures, I investigate whether the morpho-syntactic expression of the classifiers shows any differences between native and non-native signers. Results in Table 1 show that TİD behaves as predicted by Benedicto and Brentari (2004). Moreover, there is no difference between signer groups with respect to this mapping, i.e. it is not age sensitive in TİD.

Table 1: Morphological Handshape – Theta Role Correspondence in Native and Non-native Signers

	Body_Part_Classifiers		Whole_Entity_Classifiers		Handling_Classifiers	
	Agent	Theme	Agent	Theme	Agent	Theme
Native_1	13	-	-	13	45	45
Native_2	14	-	-	15	49	49
Non-native_1	11	-	-	11	49	49
Non-native_2	9	-	-	10	50	50

The second research question is about the *expression of arguments* in clauses with classifier predicates. Previous research shows that in addition to case marking on an argument, the overt expression of arguments based on their theta roles can indicate the alignment of a language (Durie, 1988). Therefore, I questioned if TİD display any differences in expressing arguments with different theta roles. Results show that native signers differentiate theta roles of the arguments by expression rates.

Table 2: Argument Expression Rates in Intransitive and Transitive Sentences

	Unergative_Structures		Unaccusative_Structure		Transitive_Structure		
	% of SV	% of V	% of SV	% of V	% of SOV	% of OV	% of Other
Native_1	25	75	73,3	26,7	12,24	42,85	44,91
Native_2	43,75	56,25	88,23	11,77	22	22	56
Non-native_1	73,3	26,7	73,3	26,7	46	0,6	53,4
Non-native_2	86,6	13,4	84,61	15,39	61	0,2	38,8

The argument expression pattern of native signers indicates an active system while non-native signers seem to use a nominative-accusative system. Thus, alignment of TİD as indicated by argument expression rates seems to be age-sensitive.

References

Benedicto, E., & Brentari, D. (2004). Where did all the arguments go? Argument-changing properties of classifiers in ASL. *Natural Language & Linguistic Theory*, *22*(4), 743-810.

Durie, M. (1988). Preferred argument structure in an active language: Arguments against the category 'intransitive subject'. *Lingua*, 74(1), 1-25.