

**What can agglutinative morphology tell us about inflectional variability in the L2: Evidence from
Turkish**
Ayşe Gürel
Boğaziçi University
agurel@bogazici.edu.tr

Second language (L2) acquisition of inflectional morphology has long been associated with persistent variability among adult L2 learners. Variable morpheme use, which mostly occurs in the form of omission, has been observed even among learners who are long-term residents in an L2 country and who have attained high levels of L2 proficiency. First language (L1) transfer effects have been reported as one of the main sources of variability observed in both nominal and verbal morphology. Previous L2 studies in this line of research have largely focused on L2 English and other Germanic and/or Romance languages. Naturally, most theoretical accounts of L2 morphology have primarily been developed on the basis of data from these non-agglutinative languages.

In this talk, I will discuss data obtained from adult L2 learners of Turkish, a morphologically rich and agglutinative language characterized by a highly regular and transparent inflectional system in which grammatical features such as tense, aspect, modality, agreement, and case are expressed through productive bound morphemes that are suffixed to nominal and verbal stems. As an agglutinative language, Turkish exhibits considerable syntagmatic richness, with the average number of morphemes per word estimated to be approximately four times higher than in English.

Given these morphological characteristics, the L2 acquisition of Turkish is expected to cause greater variability than that observed in inflectionally limited L2s. In order to examine whether this prediction is borne out, I will discuss production (spoken and written), judgment, and processing data from L2 Turkish learners with a variety of typologically different L1s showing varying degrees of morphological complexity. Based on the data, I suggest that extending the empirical foundation of L2 morphology research to include agglutinative languages can contribute to a more typologically informed understanding of the variability issue by enabling the investigation of fine-grained morphological factors that impact the L2 acquisition of inflection.

About the speaker: Ayşe Gürel holds a Ph.D. in Linguistics from McGill University, Canada. She is a full professor at the Department of Foreign Language Education at Boğaziçi University, where she teaches courses on theories of second language acquisition, child and adult bilingualism. Her research interests include first language attrition and second language acquisition of morpho-syntactic features in English and Turkish as well as neuro- and psycho-linguistic aspects of language acquisition and language loss in children and adults. She has publications in international journals and books in her fields of interest and she has been serving in the editorial board of Second Language Research and Linguistic Approaches to Bilingualism. Among her work is an edited volume on Second Language Acquisition of Turkish published by John Benjamins in 2016. Previously, she had a visiting scholar position at the Department of Linguistics, the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and a DAAD-funded guest professorship position hosted by the Center for Language, Variation and Migration and the Potsdam Research Institute for Multilingualism.