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Document Version

Final author's version (accepted by publisher, after peer review)

Publication date:
2021

[Link to publication in University of Groningen/UMCG research database](#)

Citation for published version (APA):

Arslan, S. (2021). *Restructuring in grammatical evidentiality in Turkish as a heritage language and implications for cognitive modulators of contact-induced change*. Abstract from Societas Linguistica Europaea Conference 2021.

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Restructuring in grammatical evidentiality in Turkish as a heritage language and implications for cognitive modulators of contact-induced change

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Keywords: Evidentiality, psycholinguistics, multilingualism, heritage grammars, contact-induced language change

Evidentiality refers to the grammatical category that denotes how a speaker knows information source for his/her statement (see Aikhenvald, 2004; De Haan, 2005). In non-evidential languages, evidentiality is often encoded through lexical adverbs (i.e. seemingly, reportedly). Evidentiality in Turkish, by contrast, constitutes an obligatory category that distinguishes whether the speaker has access to direct firsthand information versus indirect non-firsthand information (see 1-2).

- (1) Didem bir şarkı söyle-di
Didem one song say-DIRECTEVID
'Didem sang a song' [witnessed]
- (2) Didem bir şarkı söyle-miş
Didem one song say-INDIRECTEVID
'Didem sang a song' [reported/inferred]

The overarching aim of this paper is to recapitulate on recent data from evidentiality processing in Turkish heritage speakers in order to draw tenable implications for potential cognitive mechanism modulating contact-induced language change. Turkish spoken as a heritage language presents several documented structural changes (Backus, 2013). Past studies have shown that adult Turkish heritage language speakers have reduced sensitivity to evidentiality marking, as compared to Turkish speakers in Turkey, using eye-movement-monitoring experiments (Arslan et al., 2015), sentence comprehension (Arslan et al., 2017), elicited sentence production (Schmid & Karayayla, 2020), and naturalistic speech production tasks (Arslan & Bastiaanse, 2020; Karayayla, 2020). It seems that Turkish heritage language speakers tend to take the direct evidential form as a default option as they often produce direct evidentials in places where indirect evidentials might be more appropriate (Arslan & Bastiaanse, 2020). In this paper, data from the aforementioned studies will be reviewed to reflect upon potential reasons leading to restructuring of evidentiality system in Turkish as a heritage language. This review circles around three main questions:

- (i) How do Turkish heritage speakers have reduced evidential semantics?
- (ii) How far Turkish heritage speakers' language experience profiles (i.e., age of acquisition, language exposure, and input quality) can be held accountable for restructuring of the evidentiality system?
- (iii) Are Turkish heritage speakers constrained by cognitive resource limitations while processing evidentiality?

Based on the data from available studies, one can clearly arrive at the conclusion that information source meanings marked by the evidential forms have been bleached leading to reanalysis of the Turkish evidentiality system under heritage language conditions. A number of implications can be drawn at this point regarding cognitive mechanisms that bring about structural change in evidentiality marking. It should be noted however further research is needed to determine which precise cognitive mechanisms these are. One possibility is that language experience (i.e. variables including exposure, input, etc.) shapes cognitive/linguistic development influencing maintenance of evidentiality. Several accounts in psycholinguistics would in fact point to this direction. A second possible explanation, as proposed by Polinsky and Scontras (2020), is that maintaining a heritage language is cognitively costly, and hence, heritage speakers restructure ‘cognitively demanding’ structures. A number of pieces are missing from this picture, which will be discussed. A third possibility is that restructuring of evidentiality in heritage grammars may be explained by frequency and cross-linguistic prevalence (Saratsli, Bartell, & Papafragou, 2020), implying that the evidential option marking more cross-linguistically prevalent information source meaning is more likely to be maintained.

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