



Introduction

Conditional sentences are commonly used structures with morpho-syntactic and semantic complexity.

Despite of the syntactic differences, semantic properties and cognitive complexities are similar.

Indicatives -> used when the events are very likely to happen.

Subjunctives -> used when the situations are not actual so they require one to imagine what the word would be like (counterfactual reasoning).

Sezer (2001) argues that there are three tense forms in Turkish composed of clitics and inflectional affixes, and they differ in complexity.

- a. Tense1 forms: -DI definite witnessed past; **-sE subjunctive conditional**; -mIs_ı inferen- tial past/present perfect; -Iyor continuous; -yEcEcG future; -Ir/-Er aorist; -yE opt/subj; -mEli necessitative; -mEkte continuous
- b. Tense2 forms: i-DI/- (y)DI definite witnessed past; **i-sE/- (y)sE indicative condition-** al; i-mIs_ı /-(y)mIs_ı inferential.
- c. Tense3 forms: **i-sE/- (y)sE indicative conditional**; i-mIs_ı /-(y)mIs_ı inferential

Tense1 forms are morphologically simpler than Tense2 and Tense3 forms. (Sezer, 2001).

We focus on the morphology of conditional sentences adopting Sezer’s (2001) subjunctive-indicative distinction in Turkish.

Turkish requires differentiating between complex morphemes and morpheme order, whereas English requires the acquisition of if-structure itself and back-shifting in tense.

Predictions

For Turkish, we predict that Turkish speaking children will acquire subjunctives earlier than indicatives due to morphological difficulty.

For English, we expect that indicatives will be acquired earlier than subjunctives since indicatives do not require back-shifting.

However, if we put the morpho-syntactic differences aside, semantic, pragmatic, and cognitive mechanisms are the same. Therefore, the acquisition trajectory should be uniform cross-linguistically.

Research Questions

- What is the number and frequency of indicative and subjunctive conditional types used by Turkish and English-speaking children?
- Is there a difference between the Turkish and English-speaking children’s first production of indicative and subjunctive conditionals?

Methodology

- The data is collected on two samples taken from CHILDES database (MacWhinney, B. 2000). For the Turkish database Aksu-Koç(1972) corpus was analyzed. The corpus consisted of 33 children, with an age-range of 2;00 to 4;8.
- For the English database, we investigated the Brown (1973) and Kuczaj (1973) corpora.
- The Brown (1973) corpus consists of three participants: Adam, Eve and Sarah. For the current study, Adam’s data was analyzed, as his age range was quite close to the age range of Turkish-speaking children.
- The Kuczaj (1973) corpus had one participant: Abe (2;4 to 4;1).
- Data were analyzed utilizing CLAN (Computerized Language Analysis). FREQ program was used to compute the frequency of suffixes and the word «if». To check the context of utterances, we also used the KWAL program.

Results

	Production of Indicative Conditionals	Production of Subjunctive Conditionals
Turkish-speaking Children (n=33)	2;08	3;08
English-speaking Child (Adam, Brown Corpus) (n=1)	3;01	3;10
English-speaking Child (Abe, Kuczaj Corpus) (n=1)	3;02	2;11

Indicative (Aksu-Koç): Ben bir tane daha korkunç hayvan bulursam sana veririm.
(If I find another scary animal, I will give that one to you.)

Subjunctive (Aksu-Koç) Büyük uçağım olsa vız yukarı kalkarım.
(If had a big plane, I would go up.)

Indicative (Brown): If I cry, who take care of me?

Subjunctive (Brown): What may happen if I put two wheels there?

Subjunctive (Kuczaj): I was thinking we should even if it snowed.

Indicative (Kuczaj): If it don't [*] has (a) lot of holes then people won't fit in it.

	Number of Indicative Conditionals	Number of Subjunctive Conditionals	Total Number of Conditional Sentences
Turkish-speaking Children (n=33)	32	6	38
English-speaking Child (Adam, Brown’s Corpus) (n=1)	158	9	167
English-speaking Child (Abe, Kuczaj’s Corpus) (n=1)	245	137	382

Discussion

- Children tend to produce indicative conditionals more frequently than subjunctive ones due to the latter's higher complexity.
- This is observed in both Turkish and English-speaking children, with subjunctive conditionals emerging later. However, findings in Kuczaj’s corpus showed a child using subjunctives earlier than indicatives, suggesting individual differences in language abilities.
- Limited Turkish corpus data and contradictory results from English corpora indicate a need for more experimental research to achieve clearer findings.

References

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