

BILINGUAL ACQUISITION OF TURKISH AND ENGLISH

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1. Introduction

Being exposed to more than one language starting from birth is a common fact. If we also consider second/foreign language learning situations, we can say that many people in the world face the task of processing two or more languages at the same time, sometime in their life. For this reason, research on bilingualism –acquiring two languages from childhood– has always been an important issue. However, there are differing views on the nature of this process as put forward by many scholars. For example, Weinreich (in Cook, 1995: 10) defines bilingualism as “the practice of alternately using two languages”. On the other hand, Bloomfield concentrates on proficiency and specifies bilingualism as “native-like control of two languages” (in Cook, 1995: 10). By contrast, Haugen observes, “bilingualism begins when the speaker of one language can produce complete meaningful utterances in the other language” (in Cook, 1995: 10).

Weinreich further defines bilingualism taking the contexts of languages the speakers are exposed to into consideration (in Romaine, 1995). He calls the situation in which the person learns the languages in separate environments and keeps the words separately as each word having its own meaning (Weinreich, in Romaine, 1995) “coordinate bilingualism”. In compound bilingualism, the person learns the languages in the same context, in which there is a fused representation of the languages in the brain. The compound bilingual would have one set of meaning and two linguistic systems linked with each other (Weinreich, in Romaine, 1995). In sub-coordinate type of bilingualism, “the bilingual interprets words of his weaker language through the

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words of the stronger language. Thus, the dominant language acts as a filter for the other” (Romaine, 1995: 79).

Regarding the number of systems in the minds of the bilingual, Voltera and Taeschner (in Döpke, 1999) claim that simultaneously bilingual children begin with only one system for the two languages and this system gradually is separated from each other during the third year of life, first on the lexical, then on the syntactic level. On the other hand, other researchers such as De Houwer and Meisel (in Döpke, 1999) indicate that a bilingual child develops both languages in the same way similar to monolingual children or with less variation.

In research on representation of two languages in bilinguals, Bialystok & Hakuta (1994) look for the answer to the questions:

Do we have a single conceptual structure attached to two different sets of labels? Do we have two separate systems, each with its own conceptual structure and corresponding labels? Is the second language only indirectly attached to the single conceptual system, through the intermediary of the first language?

(Bialystok & Hakuta, 1994: 11)

They show that the question of how two languages coexist in a single mind is an enduring one and they present the following two alternatives: 1) if two languages share a single representational system, extensive transfer is expected from the first to the second language, 2) in contrast, if the two languages were represented by entirely distinct systems then there would be a mechanism for connecting them (Bialystok & Hakuta, 1994).

Bialystok & Hakuta (1994: 117) point out that “a monolingual speaker has an abstract representation of language and a specific representation attached to it containing specification with the details for the two languages spoken attached to it”. The bilingual mind must have an organisation that clearly discriminates the two languages while letting interaction between them. And bilingual speakers frequently choose a word from one language when speaking in the other because it expresses the idea better than the other. The word easily has a place in the context but it is also clearly marked as belonging to the other linguistic system (Bialystok & Hakuta, 1994). Bialystok & Hakuta (1994) conclude that:

[...] it is possible that the representation that bilingual speakers construct for their two languages may include two components- a common representation that is the record of general linguistic knowledge, and separate representations that record language-specific information.

(Bialystok & Hakuta, 1994: 19)

1.1. Linguistic competence

Another discussion regarding bilingual acquisition is the linguistic competence in the two languages in question. According to O'Grady, Dobrovolsky & Aronoff (1997: 4), linguistic competence is the ability of the speakers of a language to “produce and understand an unlimited number of utterances, including many that are novel and unfamiliar”. And in investigating linguistic competence, many linguists try to focus on the mental system known as ‘grammar’, which let human beings to form and interpret the words and sentences of their language (O'Grady, Dobrovolsky & Aronoff, 1997). Knowledge of a language's grammar involves many components like phonetics, phonology, vocabulary, morphology, syntax, and semantics. In this study, we will limit ourselves with lexical and syntactic competence of both bilingual and monolingual children under the general heading ‘grammatical competence’. The reason why lexical competence is taken as a base for this study is that words are the major component of grammatical competence.

Clark (in Garton & Pratt, 1998: 79) points the adherence by children to lexical principles in a systematic way. These principles are: “transparency of meaning (to the child); simplicity (of form); and finally, productivity. These principles reflect the child's underlying conceptual organization as applied to the acquisition of syntax...”.

Additionally, the children in this study are in one and two word stages at the time of data collection, thus, we have proof of lexical knowledge. However, due to the difference between the morphological typology of Turkish and English, we may have samples including morphosyntactic features in Turkish even at one word stage. For this reason, we included syntactic investigation and we expect Turkish being used as the matrix language by our bilingual subjects because of agglutinating and pro-drop nature of Turkish. Because of the agglutinating nature of Turkish, its acquisition is also considered relatively easy. For example, Aksu-Koç & Slobin (1985) summarize that due to the transparency of surface forms there is almost one to one mapping between form and meaning of the affixes. These affixes also have limited functions. Thus, children master the rules for forming sentences at early stages.

1.2. Code switching

Code switching is another issue that will be discussed within the frame of bilingualism. In words of Gumperz (in Romaine, 1995: 121), code switching is “ the

juxtaposition within the same speech exchange of passages of speech belonging to two different grammatical systems or subsystems”.

According to Poplack (in Romaine, 1995: 122), there are three types of code switching. The first type ‘tag-switching’, “involves the insertion of a tag in one language into an utterance which is otherwise entirely in the other language”. ‘Intersentential switching’, on the other hand, “involves a switch at a clause or sentence boundary, where each clause or sentence is in one language or another” (Poplack, in Romaine, 1995: 122). The last type of code switching is ‘intrasentential switching’. This type of switching has a greater syntactic risk as different types of switching appears within the same clause or boundary. In this study, we will focus on the issue if Turkish-English bilingual children mix the words of two languages in their utterances and if they do so, what the nature of this code switching is and how it occurs.

2. Methodology

2.1. Subjects

The subjects of this study are four male children who live in Adana; two bilingual children who have been exposed to English and Turkish from birth, two monolingual children who have been exposed to Turkish from birth. The age period studied covers the 1;7 to 3;4.

The two bilingual children were born in Turkey, Adana. One of the bilingual child, Bora (B1, 2;10-3;4), was born of an American mother and a Turkish father. Bora’s mother is a teacher of English at Çağ University in Adana, always addresses him in English and his father who is a doctor addresses him both in English and in Turkish, his five years old brother and his babysitter address him in Turkish. When his mother is away from home, babysitter takes care of him. When the mother comes, she deals with the child and addresses him in English all the time. The father always plays with the children and they watch videos, cartoons in English. He addresses them both in English and in Turkish.

The other bilingual child, Onur (B2, 1;7- 2;4) , was born of an American father and a Turkish mother. Onur’s father is a teacher in a school in Adana, always addresses him in English and his mother who is a housewife, always addresses him in Turkish. His mother looks after him at home but since the last two months he has been going to a

kindergarten with other Turkish children. His mother took care of him all the time before he started to go to a kindergarten. Onur is exposed to Turkish in his environment- his mother, his mother’s relatives, the children in the kindergarten – except his father. Most of his time he watches Turkish television and he plays play-station games with his father in English.

The other two monolingual Turkish children were born in Adana and have been exposed to Turkish from birth. One of the monolingual child’s, Ege (M1, 2;5-2;8), mother works in a bank and his father is a financial manager and he has a brother of seven years old. His mother and father are both working and his grandmother takes care of him at home.

Toygun (M2, 2;6-2;9) is the other monolingual child and his mother is a teacher of English at Çukurova University, his father is a teacher of Turkish at Çukurova University, too. He has a brother of 13 years old. A babysitter takes care of him at home.

Table 1. Bilingual and monolingual children’s daily language environment.

Subjects	B1 Bora (2;10-3;4, male)	B2 Onur (1;7-2;4, male)	M1 Ege (2;5-2;8, male)	M2 Toygun (2;6-2;9, male)
Care-givers	Mother-English Father-English,Turkish Babysitter-Turkish Relatives-Turkish	Mother-Turkish Father-English Relatives-Turkish	Mother-Turkish Father-Turkish Grandmother-Turkish	Mother-Turkish Father-Turkish
Visitors	Turkish	Turkish	Turkish	Turkish
Group situations Play group	Brother-Turkish	Kindergarten-Turkish	Brother-Turkish	Brother-Turkish Kindergarten-Turkish
Media	Television-Turkish VCD(cartoons)-English	Television-Turkish VCD(cartoons)-English	Television-Turkish	Television-Turkish

2.2. Instruments

In this study, the data was collected by observations of spontaneous interaction with the children made by a Panasonic RN-202 portable micro cassette recorder and parental reports.

When data collection started, the children were not aware that their languages are being observed. The recording took place in children's houses, in their room or in the living room. While the spontaneous interaction was recorded, the cassette recorder was placed close to the place where the interaction was taking place. The children were shown storybooks, newspapers and child magazines. Most of the time the children played with the toys with the investigator. The duration of the recordings were one hour and although the aim was to make a recording twice a month, the recording sessions changed due to the family's absence or unexpected events and the sessions were once a month.

Interactions with the bilingual children were recorded while they were looking at the storybook with the investigator and/or with their mother and father. The recordings of the bilingual child, Bora (B1) from 2;10 to 3;4, were made while his mother was addressing him in English and the investigator in Turkish. Rarely, child's father took place in the recordings and addressed the child in English while he was talking about the storybook or cartoon films and in Turkish while he was asking question to him or when he was angry with the child.

Recordings of the other bilingual child, Onur (B2) from 1;7 to 2;4, took place while his father was addressing him in English- talking about the storybook, playing with toys and play-station whereas his mother and the investigator were addressing him in Turkish.

One of the monolingual children, Ege (M1), was recorded from 2;5 to 2;8. The other monolingual child, Toygun (M2), was recorded between the ages of 2;6 to 2;9.

3. Data analysis

3.1. Lexicon in Turkish and English

The data collected from the four children was classified regarding the types of words present in the children's vocabulary. Both bilingual and monolingual children usually produced words from different parts of speech. Among these parts of speech nouns constitute a great proportion of the children's lexicon. However, there was a difference between the number of verbs in Turkish and English. The bilingual children were able to produce at least a few verbs in Turkish, whereas in English they produced no verbs at all (Tables 2 and 3, below).

Table 2. Nouns used by the bilingual and monolingual children.

B1		B2		M1	M2	
English	Turkish	English	Turkish			
Pizza	Kek (cake)	dog	pasta (cake)	bisiklet (bike)	kalem (pen)	maymun (monkey)
burger	at (horse)	car	keci (goat)	anne (mother)	amcauncle)	kardeş (sibling)
hotdog	çorba (soup)	tract	balık (fish)	abi (elder br.)	pasta (cake)	burda (here)
chicken	balık (fish)	or	kopek (dog)	balık (fish)	çanta (bag)	top (ball)
juice	keci (goat)	cow	uçak (plane)	araba (car)	uçak (plane)	ayaba (=araba) (car)
mummy	baba (daddy)	bird	araba (car)	top (ball)	orda (there)	inek (cow)
shoes	uçak (plane)		baba (father)	ağaç (tree)	iki (two)	fil (elephant)
snake	araba (car)		ayı (bear)	bebek (baby)	terlik	otobüs (bus)
turtle	kuş (bird)		kuş (bird)	(slippers)		kuş (bird)
pig	ekmek (bread)		anne (mother)	çorap (socks)	havuz (pool)	tost(toast) tavuk (chicken)
horse	çay (tea)		abi (elderbrother)	çiçek (flowers)	kitap (book)	at (horse)
hat	abi (elderbrother)		iki (two)	teyze (aunt)	otobüs (bus)	bende (me too)
apple				çay (tea)	bardak (glass)	baba (father)
pocket				at (horse)	inek (cow)	süt (milk)
banana				güneş (sun)	tavuk (hen)	anne (mother)
mouse				saat (watch)	kuzu (sheep)	servis (service car)
lion				araba (car)	deniz (sea)	kola (coke)
bear				korna (horn)	tane (item)	çay (tea)
dinosaur				karpuz (watermelon)		klima (air conditioner)
ice cream				gözlük (eyeglasses)		hortum (hose)
				çocuklar (children)		keci (goat)
				abla (elder sister)		sinek (fly)
				kamyon (truck)		üzüm (grape)
						iki (two)
						kahve (coffee)
						yatak (bed)
						köpek (dog)

Table3. Verbs used by the bilingual and monolingual children.

B1		B2		M1	M2
English	Turkish	English	Turkish		
	Düş (fall)		bak (look)	oku (read)	düş düş (fall)
	yağ (rain)		gel (come)	öğren (learn)	bak (look)
	yap (do)		kay (slide)	yap (do)	koy (put)
	ye (eat)		git (go)	sev (love)	ol- (become)
	bak (look)		yap (do)	yüz (swim)	gel (come)
	gel (come)			sür (drive)	bit (finish)
	bul (find)			düş (fall)	oyna (play)
	çık (go up)			at (throw)	ye (eat)
	git (go)			acı (hurt)	ver (give)
	çal (play)			ol- (become)	aç (open)
	bit (finish)			yat (go to bed)	yat (go to bed)
	ver (give)			git (go)	uyu (sleep)
	yok (there isn't)			gel (come)	var (there is)
				kullan (use)	yok (there isn't)
				bak (look)	iç (drink)
				ye (eat)	git (go)
				büyü (grow)	

The number of adjectives and pronouns used by all children is limited in Turkish. For example, adjectives in Turkish are restricted to demonstratives in bilingual children and one demonstrative and the names of some colors in monolingual children.

As for pronouns, there are only four examples in Turkish: “ben” (I), “bu” (this), “o” (she/he/it) and “onlar” (they) and no examples in English (see Table 4 below).

Table 4. Adjectives used by the bilingual and monolingual children.

B1		B2		M1	M2
English	Turkish	English	Turkish	bu (this) beyaz (white) kırmızı (red) mavi (blue)	Mavi (blue) yeşil (green) büyük (big) bu (this)
Tiny Sharp	bu (this)	naughty	büyük (big) bu (this) şu (that)		

Personal-social words utilized by the children are also few in numbers in Turkish and there is only one example in English “okay”.

Table 5. Personal-social words used by the bilingual and monolingual children.

B1		B2		M1	M2
English	Turkish	English	Turkish	evet (yes)	evet (yes)
Okay	hayır (no) tamam (o.k) evet (yes)	----	tamam (o.k)		

When we consider semantic fields child nouns belong to, we find that they usually refer to objects in the immediate environment of the children, which indicates that they are still in the here-and-now stage (Clark, in Garton & Pratt, 1998). The children in this study talked about things within their reach. For example, the nouns produced by B1 consists of words for food, such as *pizza*, *chicken*, *banana* in English and “kek” (*cake*), “süt” (*milk*) in Turkish; words for animals, such as *bird*, *pig*, *lion*, *bear* in English and “kedi” (*cat*), “balık” (*fish*) in Turkish; words for family relations such as *mummy* in English, and “abi” (*brother*), “baba” (*father*) in Turkish; words for clothing such as *hat*, *shoes* in English; words for vehicles such as “uçak”(plane), “araba”(car) in Turkish.

Table 6. Semantic fields of the nouns that B1 used.

Semantic fields	English	Turkish
Words for food	<i>pizza, burger, hotdog, chicken, ice cream, apple, banana</i>	“kek” (<i>cake</i>), “çorba” (<i>soup</i>), “ekmek” (<i>bread</i>)
Words for animals	<i>snake, turtle, pig, horse, lion, bear, mouse, bird, dinosaur</i>	“at” (<i>horse</i>), “balık” (<i>fish</i>), “kedi” (<i>cat</i>), “kuş” (<i>bird</i>)
Words for family relations	<i>Mummy</i>	“baba”(father), “abi”(brother)
Words for clothing	<i>shoes, hat, pocket</i>	----
Words for vehicles	----	“uçak” (plane), “alaba” (=araba) (car)
Words for drinks	<i>juice, apple juice, orange juice</i>	“çay” (tea)

Table 7. Semantic fields of the nouns that B2 used.

Semantic fields	English	Turkish
Words for food	----	“pasta” (<i>cake</i>)
Words for animals	<i>dog, cow, bird</i>	“kedi” (<i>cat</i>), “balık” (<i>fish</i>), “köpek” (<i>dog</i>), “ayı” (<i>bear</i>), “kuş” (<i>bird</i>)
Words for family relations	----	“baba” (<i>father</i>), “anne” (<i>mother</i>), “abi” (<i>brother</i>)
Words for clothing	----	----
Words for vehicles	<i>car, tractor</i>	“uçak” (<i>plane</i>), “alaba” (= <i>araba</i>) (<i>car</i>)
Words for drinks	----	----

Similar to B1, B2 also uses more Turkish words compared to English words and talks about things within his environment. The nouns he produced consists of words referring to animals such as *dog, cow, bird* in English and “kedi” (*cat*), “balık” (*fish*), “köpek” (*dog*), “ayı” (*bear*), “kuş” (*bird*) in Turkish; words for vehicles such as *car, tractor* in English and “uçak” (*plane*), “alaba” (=araba) (*car*) in Turkish; although he doesn't use English words for food and family relations, he uses Turkish version of them such as word for food “pasta” (*cake*) and words for family relations such as “baba” (*father*), “anne” (*mother*), “abi” (*brother*).

It was noteworthy that B1 produced no verbs in English but a lot of verbs in Turkish.

Additionally, verbs in Turkish are used with suffixes denoting tense and person, which is an indication of the development of inflectional morphology along with base verbs. The bilingual children in our study use these suffixes both in one and two word utterances as can be seen in the following examples. Since Turkish is a pro-drop language these one word utterances also make up grammatically correct sentences due to the existence of suffixes denoting person.

For instance, in Example 1, B1 uses a single word, still he makes use of two morphemes, one of which is the tense marker. In the example from first to fifth he uses progressive and past tenses for the third person singular, in which person is not marked; whereas, in the sixth example he also uses first person singular marker.

Ex.1 *gidiyor* (3;3)
(go-PROGRESSIVE-3SG)
“It's going”

Ex.2 <i>yapıyo</i> (= <i>yapıyor</i>) (make-PROGRESSIVE-3SG) “He is making”	(3;1)
Ex.3 <i>düştü</i> (fall- PAST) “He fell”	(2;10)
Ex.4 <i>çalmıyor</i> (work-PROGRESSIVE-NEGATIVE-3SG) “It is not working”	(3;3)
Ex.5 <i>bitti</i> (finish-PAST-3SG) “It is finished”	(3;4)
Ex.6 <i>buldum</i> (find-PAST-1SG) “I found it”	(3;1)

In B1’s two word utterances we observe that the utterances carry all characteristics of a full sentence. For instance, in Examples 7 to 13 he uses noun phrases functioning as subjects or objects in sentences. He utilizes future tense for the first person singular in Examples 7 and 8 although he drops some sound when he added the future tense suffix to the verb. He also marks past tense for the third person singular in Examples 9-12; and he uses progressive tense for the first person singular in Example 13.

Ex.7 <i>bunu yicem</i> (=yiyeyeğim) (this eat-FUTURE-1SG) “I will eat this”	(3;1)
Ex.8 <i>makarna yapcam</i> (=yapacağım) (macaroni make-FUTURE-1SG) “I will make macaroni”	(3;2)
Ex.9 <i>abi yedi</i> (brother eat-PAST-3SG) “My brother ate it”	(3;1)
Ex.10 <i>baba yaptı</i> (father do-PAST-3SG) “My father did it”	(3;1)
Ex.11 <i>baba geldi</i> (father come-PAST-3SG) “My father came”	(3;1)
Ex.12 <i>sürpriz geldi</i> (surprise come-PAST-3SG) “The surprise came”	(3;2)

- Ex.13 *yemek yapıyom*(=*yapıyorum*) (3;2)
 (food make-PROGRESSIVE-1SG)
 “I’m making the meal”

As can be seen in all these examples, B1 is able to express past, present progressive, and future tenses and is also able to mark third and first person singular.

While there are one word utterances in B1’s samples, B2 doesn’t use any one word utterances. This may be due to difference between the ages of the two children. Similar to B1, B2 also uses two word utterances that carry all characteristics of a full sentence. He uses progressive tense for the third person singular in Example 14; and future tense for the third person singular in Examples 15-17. We observed present tense marker for the third person singular in Example 18; and past tense marker for the first person singular in Example 19.

- Ex.14 *bak gelmiyor* (2;1)
 (look come-PROGRESSIVE-NEGATIVE-3SG)
 “Look he is not coming”
- Ex.15 *abi gelmicek* (=gelmiyecek) (2;1)
 (brother come-FUTURE-NEGATIVE-3SG)
 “He will not come”
- Ex.16 *otucak o* (2;4)
 (sit-FUTURE-3SG he)
 “He will sit down”
- Ex.17 *budan da kayıcak* (=burdan da kayacak) (2;4)
 (slip-FUTURE-3SG)
 “He will slip from here too”
- Ex.18 *bak ayı* (2;4)
 (look bear-PRESENT)
 “Look it is a bear”
- Ex.19 *parkta gittim* (=parka gittim) (2;4)
 (park go-PAST-1SG)
 “I went to the park”

Since B2 is able to produce two word utterances, we can investigate the word order, too. Most of his utterances conform to the verb final order in Turkish; however, in Example 16, he produced a verb initial utterance, which is grammatically acceptable. Such conversion is used in Turkish for pragmatic purposes (emphasis, for instance). Aksu-Koç and Slobin state that children who are learning Turkish acquire both the unmarked SOV order and other pragmatically conditioned orders very early (in Crain & Lillo-Martin, 1999).

3.2. Code-switching

As we observed our mixed utterance data from both B1 and B2, we try to classify the utterances according to interlocutor, language dominance, and the nature of code-switching. Regarding language choice of children De Houwer (1990) states that bilingual children address their interlocutors in a language they know, they will understand, and will be able to give answer to it. B1's language choice sometimes depends on the interlocutor. For instance, most of the time while he is talking with his mother, he addresses her in English (20); while he is talking with the investigator he addresses her in Turkish (21).

Ex. 20 M: Can you see animals here?

B1: aminal (= animal)

B1: lion

M: Where is the lion?

M: What is this?

B1: pig

M: Can you see the pen here?

B1: pen

Ex. 21 B1: yemek yapıyorum yemek (*I'm cooking meal*)

D: Yemek mi yapıyorsun? Ne yemeği yapıyorsun? (*Are you cooking? What are you cooking?*)

B1: makarna yapıyorum (*I'm cooking macaroni*)

D: Başka ne var? (*What else are there?*)

But sometimes B1 addresses his mother in Turkish, while he is addressing the investigator in English (22) (23). In examples 22 and 24, while the question is in English, the child answers back in Turkish; on the other hand, he answers back in English to the Turkish question in Example 23. We can see that the language preference according to the interlocutor sometimes doesn't apply.

Ex.22 M: What is this?

B1: çay çay (*tea*)

M: hı hı it's tea.

M: What is that?

B1: top (*ball*)

M: hı hı it's a ball.

Ex.23 D: Ben bundan da içmek istiyorum. (*I want to drink from that too*)

B1: juice içtin mi juice? (*did you drink juice?*)

D: efendim? (*sorry?*)

B1: juice içtin mi? (*did you drink juice?*)

- Ex.24 M: Do you want the juice?
 B1: hayır
 ‘No’
 M: Do you want these tiny things?
 B1: evet
 ‘Yes’
 D: Nedir onlar? (*What are those?*)
 M: What are these?
 B1: tiny

Language dominance also plays an important role. Dodson (in De Houwer, 1990: 97) refers to the fact that “bilinguals feel more at ease using one of their languages for a particular activity rather than the other”. In addition to this psycholinguistic explanation, we can assume that the structure of languages may play a role in the choice of one of the languages as the matrix language rather than embedded language. Naturally, we cannot deny the role of the environment in this choice, either.

Myers-Scotton (1993: 3) defines code switching as “ the selection by bilinguals or multilinguals of forms from an embedded variety (or varieties) in utterances of a matrix variety during the same conversation”. One of the languages, involved in code switching utterances plays a more important role, is labelled as the Matrix Language and its grammar builds the morphosyntactic frame in sentences showing intrasentential code switching (Myers-Scotton, 1993). In all the following examples, as expected, the matrix language is Turkish and the embedded language is English (Examples 25-31).

- Ex.25 M: Can you see the pen?
 B1: a pen
 M: Where is the pen?
 B1: şu da pen (=Şurda pen)
 ‘There is pen’
 M: Does he have some paint?
 B1: evet
 ‘Yes’
 M: Where is it?
 B1: outside yapıyo.
 ‘Outside making’
 ‘He is making outside’
- Ex.26 M: Where is the chicken?
 B1: chicken yok
 ‘Chicken no’
 ‘There is no chicken’

- Ex.27 M: Do you remember what happened? You have a shot.
B1: bu shot yaptı
'This shot made'
- Ex.28 B1: haircut yapıyo(=yapıyor)
'Haircut making'
'He is having a haircut'
M: What's this?
B1: barber
- Ex.29 M: Who is here?
B1: car
M: Who's riding the car?
B1: car gidiyor
'Car going'
'The car is going'
- Ex.30 D: Ne yok burda? (*What's not there?*)
B1: fire yok
Fire no'
'There is no fire'
- Ex.31 M: Can you show me the birdcage?
B1: bak birdcage
'Look birdcage'

For instance, in Example 29 in the sentence “car gidiyor” (the car is going) the verb phrase is in Turkish, whereas the subject noun-phrase is in English. Similarly, in Example 23, the verb-phrase and the question marker following it “...içtin mi...” (did you drink...) are in Turkish as opposed to the object noun-phrase in English.

Similar to B1's utterances, B2 uses Turkish as the matrix language and the embedded language is English as in examples 32 and 33. The only difference between the data of the two children is the interlocutor; the father is talking with B2 in English instead of the mother. The child answers the question in Turkish while his father is asking in English; on the other hand when the investigator asks a question in Turkish he gives the answer in English (Ex.34).

- Ex.32 F: Where is the car,show daddy?
B2: car burda
'Car is here'
- Ex.33 F: What's this?
B2: at
F: What's this?
B2: bu cow
This cow
'This is cow'

- B2: bu da cow
 This too cow
 ‘This is also a cow’
- Ex.34 D: Nedir o? (*What’s that?*)
 B2: girl
 D: Nedir o? (*What’s that?*)
 B2: ball

When we look at the words used in mixed utterances, we observe that the English words embedded in matrix sentences are mostly nouns parallel to the list of vocabulary of bilingual children. This finding is also in line with De Houwer’s (1990: 106) comment that “more than any other word class, it is single nouns that account for the very occurrence of mixed utterances. This implies that there is a saliency about nouns which makes more moveable than any other linguistic element”.

4. Conclusion

In this study, we tried to describe the linguistic development of two bilingual children acquiring Turkish and English simultaneously starting from birth. We proposed that, in addition to social factors linguistic factors would play a role in the acquisition process. In order to obtain comparative data we also used speech samples of two monolingual children speaking Turkish.

The results show that Turkish, the language of the immediate environment, is the dominant language of the bilingual children. Although they are exposed to the two languages from birth, they acquired Turkish morphosyntactic features earlier than they acquired any syntactic features in English. The reason for the dominance of Turkish might be both social and linguistic. Since Turkish is a highly agglutinating language even one-word utterances of the children contained syntactic features such as tense, person, and question markers. Our findings also supported Aksu-Koç and Slobin’s results that Turkish is relatively easy to acquire. Thus, we can say that different typology of languages in question may influence the nature of bilingual acquisition.

Bearing the age of the children and their production in mind, we are led to think that these children might have formed a single system conforming the rules of Turkish and inserted English lexical items into this system. However, their comprehension in English is quite high, thus, we assume that they might be in the process of adapting the already present system to fit the English data in.

In order to come to a conclusion regarding the nature of the system or systems in the bilingual children's minds, we need to investigate the same children at later ages when their English data becomes more productive.

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