
Turkish-American returnees' judgements and production of inflectional morphology in Turkish

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Heritage speakers (HS) exhibit structural variability with inflectional morphology (Polinsky, 2018). Permanence Hypothesis (PH) holds that linguistic knowledge acquired during the critical period, underused or underdeveloped throughout childhood, remains available when reactivated in adulthood (Brenner, 2010; Muāgututi'a, 2018). We test this hypothesis with *returnees*: HS born in an immigration context who returned to their country of origin in later years (Flores, 2020). Thirty-two Turkish-American returnees with varying age of return (AoR) to Turkey (before and after puberty) were compared to 30 Turkish HS in the US and 30 Turkish-speaking adults in Turkey. Judgement and production of two vulnerable structures in Turkish HS were tested using a context-based Acceptability Judgement Task (AJT), a picture description task (PDT) and a story-telling task (STT), namely DOM and evidentiality.

In Turkish, DOM is realized as direct objects with accusative *-(y)I* when they are specific (1a) and unmarked otherwise (1b). Direct and indirect evidentials in Turkish are marked with *-DI* (2a) and *-mİş* (2b), respectively. *-mİş* also has pragmatic functions such as its use in children's narratives.

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| (1) | a. | Ali bir elma yedi. | b. | Ali bir elma-yı yedi. |
| | | 'Ali was eating a certain apple.' | | 'Ali ate a specific apple.' |
| (2) | a. | Ali arı gör-dü. | b. | Ali arı gör-müş. |
| | | '(I saw) Ali saw a bee.' | | '(I heard/inferred) Ali saw a bee.' |

Analysis of the data (binomial logistic regression models) showed that returnees patterned with HS only in their judgements of DOM in AJT and their production of DOM in PDT. In all the other tasks, returnees were monolingual-like, significantly outperforming HS, including their judgments and production of evidentiality as well as the pragmatic use of *-mİş* in narratives. Further correlations between accuracy, AoR to Turkey and length of residence (LoR) in Turkey of returnees were not significant, suggesting that reactivation of inflectional morphology occurs, albeit not fully, after full re-immersion in HL, as compared to other properties already analyzed (passives, relatives, binding) that show complete reactivation. We take these findings to support the PH and suggest that inflectional morphology is still nimble and malleable post-puberty.

References. Brenner, A. (2010). Conditions for second-language nativelikeness in early childhood. BA thesis. Harvard University. • Flores, C. (2020). Attrition and reactivation of a childhood language: the case of returnee heritage speakers. *Language Learning* 70, 85121. • Muāgututi'a, G. T. (2018). Recovering ergativity in heritage Samoan. PhD dissertation. University of Hawai'i at Mānoa. • Polinsky, M. (2018). *Heritage languages and their speakers*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.