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Effects of Lexical Items and Construction Types in English and Turkish Character Introductions in Elicited Narrative

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I want to propose that rhetorical style is determined by the relative *accessibility* of various means of expression, such as lexical items and construction types. That is, *ease of processing* is a major factor in giving language-particular shape to narratives. At the same time, cultural practices and preferences reinforce habitual patterns of expression. The picture is complex ... because various options compete or conspire to provide an overall shape to narrative production.

D. I. Slobin (2004, p. 223)

The beginning of a story has serious implications for how it unfolds. This is why I seem to clearly remember my first three encounters with Dan Slobin. My first meeting with him was in the summer of 1988 in Üsküdar, Istanbul, as I was preparing to apply for graduate school in the United States. A friend of my family took me over to his home. Neither he nor I said much that day, except we did talk about me not having taken any linguistics and how hard it is for international students to financially survive in Berkeley. I am not so sure now whether he actually told me these things, but I left his place with such ideas in my mind.

The next time I interacted with Dan was when he called my family home in Teşvikiye, Istanbul, in the spring of 1989. He told me I was accepted to Berkeley. I did not talk much that day either, being exhilarated but really nervous. Dan felt I might have questions, and told me that I could send him an “email” with questions. When I went silent upon hearing this novel word, he rephrased it as “electronic mail.” That exchange was momentous in making me realize that I was going to a world with new wonders and puzzles, having never left my own country, with its own wonders and puzzles. I was right. I was actually embarking on a journey of wonders and puzzles.

The third time was in August of 1989 in Tolman Hall, Berkeley, when the incoming students got together for an orientation meeting. Dan approached with a very friendly smile, and started elucidating some of these wonders and puzzles of the new world. I remember we talked about a various range of topics like how the fog clears up in the afternoons in the Bay Area, conflict in the Middle East, and Turkish morphology. I was struck, then and ever, by the breadth of Dan’s interests and by his unpretentious mastery in approaching issues and problems, whether they are of intellectual or interpersonal nature.

For the next 18 years, Dan would become a beacon of wisdom for me, who would point to interesting directions of intellectual curiosity in a very non-imposing way. The work that we present in the following is an offshoot of many such directions.

INTRODUCTION

The ways speakers set up characters and their relations to one another right from the outset have implications for how their stories later unfold (Berman, 2001; Berman & Katzenberger, 2004). Pictured depiction of a frog in a jar in the bedroom of a little boy could plausibly lead to an interpretation of an enduring belongingness of the frog to the boy or a temporary investigative phase, where the captured frog is being admired by the boy to be soon released back to nature. In this chapter, we will examine the linguistic devices used to enact and interconnect the three main characters in the beginning of narratives produced by English and Turkish narrators of the Frog Story, a picturebook used by several researchers with participants of different ages learning a variety of languages (Bamberg, 1987; Berman & Slobin, 1994; Stromqvist & Verhoeven, 2004).

Several researchers thought that young children have difficulties with linguistic marking of referent identifiability with determiners, but there are some situations in which they use appropriate linguistic forms (e.g., Bamberg, 1987; Bennett-Kastor, 1983; Brown, 1973; Hickmann, Hendriks, Roland, & Liang, 1996; Kail & Hickmann, 1992; Karmiloff-Smith, 1981; Maratsos, 1976; Warden, 1981; Wigglesworth, 1990). These situations might have to do with the linguistic contexts, i.e., “lexical items and construction types,” surrounding referential terms.

Many languages have specialized constructions such as presentational constructions (e.g., *Once upon a time there was an old man and a dog*) for presenting previously unidentified referents into discourse (Du Bois, 1980; Givón, 1995; Lambrecht, 1994; Schiffrin, 1994). Such constructions serve to decrease the informational load while this important function of introducing new referents gets achieved. There are developmental studies of narrative discourse that examine the association between ‘local’ markers such as determiners and ‘global’ or construction-level indications of newness such as word order (Hickman et al., 1996; Kail & Hickmann, 1992; Kail & Sanchez-Lopez, 1997). These studies found that most definite first mentions are in subject roles and most indefinite first mentions are in non-subject roles (Kail & Hickmann 1992; Kail & Sanchez-Lopez, 1997). This suggests that choice of a construction such as the presentative and the assignment of a referent into a non-subject role might predetermine usage of determiners at the level of the noun phrase. These studies, however, found crosslinguistic differences between how speakers mark main and secondary characters with indefinite determiners, suggesting the need for further research.

In this chapter, we investigate how the absence or presence of determiners in nominal constructions might be affected by verbal constructions such as transitive and presentational frames in different age groups speaking English and Turkish. The aim is to examine how speakers of Turkish, a language without a formal article system, compare to English speakers in presenting story characters into discourse. The emphasis will not be merely on the types of nouns used to introduce characters, but also on the types of constructions and argument roles in which these nouns are embedded. The specific questions listed below are all addressed with developmental and crosslinguistic comparisons in mind.

1. What is the order of mention of the three characters in the opening of the story?
2. What types of verbs are used to interrelate the boy and the frog?
3. What is the distribution of indefinite and definite first mentions for the main human character (i.e., the boy) and the secondary animal characters (i.e., the dog and the frog)?
4. In what types of constructions and what types of argument roles do indefinite first mentions prevail?

RELEVANT LINGUISTIC FEATURES: ENGLISH AND TURKISH

English has a formal article system that marks the identifiability of nouns by indefinite and definite articles, independent of the grammatical role that the noun plays in a construction. Turkish, on the other hand, has an indefinite numeral, *bi(r)*, which can be used optionally for indefinite noun phrases, but no definite determiners. However, when nouns fulfill non-subject grammatical roles, they receive casemarking, which implicates definiteness in the absence of the indefinite numeral.

With respect to verbal constructions, both languages have comparable multiple-argument constructions, intransitive constructions, and presentational constructions. Multiple-argument constructions include more than one constituent, such as in actor-patient (e.g., *the boy found a frog*) or comitative constructions (e.g., *kurbağa-sı-yla oynu-yor* 'frog-POSS-COM play-PROG'). Intransitive constructions have one constituent, such as in '*the boy is sitting in his room.*' Presentational constructions can be recognized by a frame as *X var* 'X exists' in Turkish, where X denotes the entity that is introduced into the discourse, generally in the focal preverbal slot (Sansa-Tura, 1986). English also has a presentational construction, involving intransitive verbs like *be* and *come*, the subjects of these verbs as presented elements, and the deictic adverbs *here* or *there* (Lambrecht, 1994).

FROG STORY DATABASES

The Turkish data come from the A. Aksu-Koç corpus (1994), and the A. Küntay corpus (1997). The English data are the T. Renner corpus (1988), and the G. Wigglesworth (1990) corpus, all downloaded from CHILDES. Table 6.1 presents the number of participants in each age and language group.

Mayer's picturebook, *Frog, where are you?* (1969) was used to elicit narratives ("frog stories") individually from each participant. Each participant examined the entire book, and then told the story from the beginning, while looking at the pictures. Except for the Küntay corpus, all the narratives were told to the adult experimenter. A procedure with naïve listeners was used in collecting the Küntay corpus.

A DEVELOPMENTAL AND CROSSLINGUISTIC ANALYSIS OF FIRST MENTIONS

In the following, we will first examine the order in which English and Turkish speakers of different ages initially mention the three main characters of the frog story, i.e., the boy, the dog, and the frog. Then we will show how they relate the boy to the frog, a theme of crucial importance for the remainder of the story. Finally, we will look at the relationship between indefinite nominal constructions and the types of verbal constructions embedding them.

Initial Ordering and Interrelating of Referents

An important initial task in telling the frog story is to interconnect story participants with one another in relation to the global narrative theme of loss and search. To use Berman's (2001) terms, the task

TABLE 6.1 Number of Participants in Each Age and Language Group

	Total	3 and 4 Years	5 and 6 Years	9 and 10 Years	Adults
English	140	38	36	34	32
Turkish	136	41	45	25	25

TABLE 6.2 Order of Mention of Characters in the Opening of the Story

	3 and 4 Years		5 and 6 Years		9 and 10 Years		Adults	
	Boy-First	Other-First	Boy-First	Other-First	Boy-First	Other-First	Boy-First	Other-First
English	10	22	22	11	32	2	32	0
Turkish	7	31	15	29	19	6	23	2

of initial interrelating of referents combines the *presentative* and *motivating* functions of story settings, that is, to introduce the characters in a way to motivate the remainder of the story.

All three characters are depicted in the first picture of the frog story. Although any one of the six orderings of these three characters is plausible, adult narrators of both languages tend to start their story with the human character, using a “boy-first” strategy. Once the human character is initialized (MacWhinney & Bates, 1978), then the other two characters are linguistically anchored to it through specialized constructions such as possessive or relative constructions, as shown in Example (1).

- (1) *There’s this little boy and he’s enjoying his pet frog that he has in a bottle. He has a pet dog, too* (English 20L, T. Renner).

Table 6.2 presents the breakdown of the order of mention of story characters during the telling of the first page into “boy-first” and “other-first” strategies: 100% of English-speaking adults and 92% of Turkish-speaking adults introduce the boy to their story as the very first participant. Setting up the boy as the initial character is also a prevalent strategy for 9- and 10-year-olds in both language groups.

However, this tendency does not hold as strongly in preschool age children. In both language groups, 3- and 4-year-old children use one of the animal characters (either the dog or the frog) as their initial participant. 5- and 6-year-olds also tend to set up other characters as their first character, while the trend is stronger for Turkish-speaking participants ($\chi^2(2, N = 77) = 6.76, p < 0.01$). The other-first strategy in the younger age group, and the boy-first strategy in the two older age groups do not exhibit statistically significant crosslinguistic differences. In summary, English-speaking children predominantly start using the human character as their starting point from preschool ages on while Turkish-learning children do not adopt such a strategy before 9 years of age. In both age groups, however, there are significant differences in the extent of using a “boy-first” strategy between 5- and 6-year-olds and 9- and 10-year-olds (for Turkish, $\chi^2(2, N = 69) = 9.59, p < 0.005$; for English, $(\chi^2(2, N = 67) = 6.41, p < 0.01)$. That is, there is a growing tendency to anchor the story around the boy right from the outset in both language groups, although the development is more protracted in the Turkish sample.

The first frame of the picturebook implies that the relationship of the boy and the two animals can be construed to be a pet-ownership one, because of the indoor surroundings and cultural frames associated with the entire setting. The construction of some such relationship between the three main characters has a bearing on the narrative action portrayed in subsequent frames, and therefore is usually explicitly stated by adult narrators of the frog story, through a possessive construction or a verb referring to the inferred means by which the frog was acquired. Below is an example featuring a possessive marking for the dog and a verb of acquisition (*bul* ‘find’) for the frog:

- (2) *küçük bir çocukla bi köpeğ-i varmış bu*
‘there was a little boy and a dog of this (boy)’
ondan sonra bunlar bigün bi kurbaga bul-muşlar
‘and then they found a frog one day’ (Adult G, A. Küntay)

TABLE 6.3 The Linguistic Encoding of the Relationship Between the Boy and the Frog in the First Frame, Adults vs. Preschool Children

	Relation	Turkish	English
Adult	Possessive marker	12 (48%)	17 (50%)
	Verbs of non-evident relation	10 (40%)	13 (38%)
	Verbs of looking	2 (8%)	4 (12%)
	No explicit relation	1 (4%)	—
Preschoolers	Verbs of looking	34 (40%)	10 (14%)
	No mention of frog, boy, or both	19 (22%)	27 (36%)
	No explicit relation	16 (19%)	15 (20%)
	Verbs of non-evident relation	7 (8%)	4 (5%)
	Descriptions of pictorially evident relation	6 (7%)	1 (1%)
	Possessive marker	4 (5%)	17 (23%)

Table 6.3 illustrates how adults and preschoolers offer an account of the relationship of the boy and the frog, which is crucial in establishing a motivational background for the search events to follow (Berman, 2001). The coding categories differentiated between picture-dependent and picture-inferable ways of interrelating the frog and the boy. On one hand, the possessive marker and verbs of non-evident relations (such as *yakalamak* ‘to catch,’ *sevmek* ‘to like/admire,’ *bulmak* ‘to find,’ *avlamak* ‘to hunt’) encode relations that go beyond the immediately perceivable situation depicted in the first frame. On the other hand, verbs of looking (such as *bakmak* ‘to look,’ *seyretmek* ‘to watch’), and descriptions of pictorially evident relations (such as *karşısında oturmak* ‘to sit across,’ *yanında* ‘next to’) remain within the boundaries of what is physically depicted in the first picture of the book. As can be seen in Table 6.3, many preschool children (22% in Turkish and 36% in English) fail to mention either the boy, the frog, or both (“No mention of frog, boy, or both”); around one-fifth in both languages do not set up any explicit relation between the two referents.

The adult narrators behave very similarly in the two languages. They either simply use a possessive construction, showing they assume a relationship of ownership between the boy and the frog (~ 50%) or use verbs of non-evident relation to encode their inferences about how the frog came to exist in a jar placed in what looks like the boy’s bedroom (~ 40%). Only a few adults do not go beyond mentioning the frog as an object of the boy’s gaze, leaving out all the inferable connections between the two.

In contrast to adult narrators of English and Turkish, there are crosslinguistic differences in the way the relationship between the boy and the frog is set up for the preschool children. For Turkish children, the predominant way of relating the frog to the boy is through using verbs of looking (40%). English-speaking preschoolers, on the other hand, use more possessive markers. It is likely that young English-speaking children have more cultural access to a pet-ownership schema between a boy and a frog.

A comparison between preschoolers and adults suggests that (a) adults explicitly construct a relationship between the boy and the frog more often and (b) when this relationship is set up, preschoolers’ expressions are more picture-bound. This does not mean that young children cannot draw inferences based on static pictorial representations. However, their lesser tendency to do so, compared to adults, shows that preschoolers undertake a differently constructed task when asked to tell a story by looking at the pictures of a book. It seems that they find it adequate to describe the objectively presented contents of the picture, including the identity and behavior of the participants. The nature of the interrelatedness between different characters does not get indicated beyond how they evidently interact within the boundaries of a particular scene. Such a self-enclosed scene description indicates that the preschoolers, as far as picturebook storytelling is concerned, do not “set the narrative scene” in relation to an understanding of the global story structure (Berman, 2001). As will

be discussed in the next section, differences between younger and older narrators in the stance they take to the task of storytelling might lead to changes in the patterns of referential introductions.

Introductory Constructions

The analysis of first mention devices involves verbal constructions that encase the introductory referential forms and the types of nominal constructions that denote the referent.

The introductory verbal constructions were first classified into three categories: (1) multiple-argument constructions where more than one NP (Noun Phrase) is involved (e.g., *a boy got a new frog*), (2) intransitive constructions where the only NP is the introduced participant and the verb is not a presentative verb (e.g., *şimdi o oturuyor* 'now he sit-PROG'), and (3) presentational constructions where the only NP is the introduced participant and the verb is a presentative verb (e.g., *there's a boy*).

The nominal constructions used to refer to the characters were categorized into (1) indefinite NPs prefaced by the indefinite determiner (i.e., *a/an* in English, *bi/bir* in Turkish), (2) definite NPs (proper nouns, pronouns, nouns prefaced by the definite determiner, *the*, in English), and (3) possessive NPs that are marked by possessive pronouns and/or possessive morphology.

Adult Patterns First we present results from adult narrators displaying the patterns that the younger speakers are working toward. Tables 6.4 and 6.5 present the types of verbal and nominal constructions used for the three characters by adults in English and Turkish stories.

TABLE 6.4 Distribution of Different Nominal Marking in Different Constructions for the Boy in Adult Narratives in English and Turkish

	Multiple-Argument		Intransitive		Presentational	
	Indefinite	Definite	Indefinite	Definite	Indefinite	Definite
Turkish	1 4%	8 35%	3 13%	2 8%	8 35%	1 4%
English	2 6%	5 16%	5 16%	1 3%	16 52%	2 6%

TABLE 6.5 Distribution of Different Nominal Marking in Different Constructions for the Frog and the Dog in Adult Narratives in English and Turkish

		Multiple-Argument			Intransitive			Presentational		
		I	D	P	I	D	P	I	D	P
Frog	Turkish	10 43%	4 17%	1 4%	—	—	1 4%	5 22%	—	2 9%
	English	12 35%	2 6%	5 15%	—	—	1 3%	10 29%	1 3%	3 8%
Dog	Turkish	—	2 10%	5 25%	—	—	4 20%	7 35%	—	2 10%
	English	6 21%	1 3%	12 41%	1 3%	1 3%	2 7%	3 10%	1 3%	2 7%

Note: I = Indefinite; D = Definite; P = Possessive

The proportion of definiteness for the boy is higher in Turkish adult stories (47%) compared to English adult stories (25%). For both language groups, there appears to be a relation between the verbal construction type and (in)definiteness marking in the nominal construction. That is, one-argument presentational and intransitive constructions tend to include an indefinite first mention form for the boy more often than do multiple-argument constructions. The presentational construction, as a specialized device used for introduction of characters, appears more available to English speakers, whereas Turkish speakers more often opt for multiple-argument constructions. As discussed in Dasinger & Toupin (1994), English features postposed-postnominal subordinate clauses, allowing speakers to introduce a referent in a non-subject position through a presentational construction and immediately assert a proposition about it. English-speaking adults often use such constructions, merging the introductory function with provision of background or advancement of plot, as seen in Example 3. Since relative clauses are preposed-prenominal in Turkish, presentational clauses are not amenable to progression of narrative as in English, and therefore less frequently employed by Turkish adults.

(3) *There was once a little boy who had a pet dog and a pet frog who he used to keep in a glass jar in his bedroom* (Adult, Wigglesworth).

For the secondary characters, the dog and the frog, a third option of marking the status of the introductory noun phrase exists, that is, to relate it to a previously mentioned character, i.e., the boy. A common way to achieve this is to indicate a possession relation to the boy, either through nominal morphology (e.g., *his dog*, *köpeğ-i* 'dog-POSS') or a possession construction (e.g., *the boy has a dog*, *köpeğ-i var* 'dog-POSS exists'). The employability of possessive constructions for the dog and the frog, once the boy is introduced, decreases the proportion of inappropriate definite expressions for these characters in both languages. As Table 6.5 shows, only 17% of the Turkish adults use definite expressions for the frog, and 10% for the dog. These ratios are 9% and 6%, respectively, in the English-speaking adults' stories. Both groups of adults use more possessive constructions for the dog than the frog.

When we examine the number of indefinite nominal constructions for the frog and the dog across the two languages, the frequencies are the same (64% in English and 65% in Turkish for the frog, and 34% in English and 35% in Turkish for the dog), although the frog receives more indefinite modifiers than the dog. The frequency of indefinite marking for the frog (65%) is slightly higher than for the boy (52%) in the stories of Turkish adults while this relation is reversed for English adults (64% and 74%, respectively), who provide more indefinite marking for the boy. Although this cross-linguistic reversal might be due to different effects of perceived animacy and centrality of character on nominal constructions, it is plausibly an outcome of the preferred pattern of choice in verbal constructions. Turkish adults, when they use the initial referential expression for the frog in multiple argument constructions, mostly use it in nonsubject positions that require non-nominal casemarking. Since all casemarking implies definiteness in Turkish, adults appear to be counteracting this implication by providing an explicit indefinite numeral or using non-casemarked noun phrases for the frog.

In summary, when introduced in non-subject roles, adults of both languages predominantly use indefinite marking. The major difference between the adult Turkish and English stories is that Turkish speakers often use multiple-argument constructions for the boy, where the linguistic term for the boy in the subject grammatical role is not marked as an indefinite NP. The presentational construction is more available to English speakers than Turkish speakers, who often employ multiple-argument constructions where the boy is the definite subject. For the frog, on the other hand, since both groups use either the indefinite-presentational or indefinite object of multiple argument constructions, crosslinguistic differences are not observed.

As Lambrecht (1994) suggests, many languages have a grammatical constraint against indefinite NPs in subject position, since subjects are often the "given/topic" part of constructions. Although indefinite NPs are allowed as subjects in both English and Turkish, adults in both languages seem

TABLE 6.6 Distribution of Nominal Forms With Indefiniteness and Definiteness Marking in All Age Groups for Both Language Samples

	3 and 4 Years		5 and 6 Years		9 and 10 Years		Adults	
	Indefinite	Definite	Indefinite	Definite	Indefinite	Definite	Indefinite	Definite
English	10 43%	13 57%	13 45%	16 55%	16 52%	15 48%	23 74%	8 26%
Turkish	5 17%	25 83%	7 22%	35 78%	16 70%	7 30%	12 52%	11 48%

to entertain such a constraint. In other words, they tend not to employ an indefinite noun phrase for the boy in subject position in multiple-argument constructions.

Developmental Patterns In what follows, we will present how the frequency of (in)definiteness marking interacts with the type of verbal construction in the character introductions of English and Turkish speakers of different ages.

Table 6.6 shows the number and percentage of nouns marked for indefiniteness and definiteness used for first mention of the boy in all age groups. These data exclude cases where there were no mentions of the boy in the introductory page, but include verbless labelings such as ‘a boy.’

The proportion of indefinite marking for the boy is higher in English-speaking narrators than Turkish-speaking narrators at preschool ages ($\chi^2(2, N = 71) = 6.72, p < 0.01$ for 5- to 6-year-olds; $\chi^2(2, N = 53) = 4.61, p < 0.05$ for 3- to 4-year-olds). From 9 to 10 years of age on, there are no crosslinguistic differences in the patterns of distribution of indefinite and definite nouns. In other words, the two older groups of narrators in the two languages preface the nominal for the boy with an indefinite determiner at comparable levels. The relative optionality of the indefinite determiner in Turkish as compared to English leads to less likelihood of its usage in preschool ages in Turkish. However, this difference diminishes for school-age children and adults, where more formulaic and conventional character introductions start to prevail.

Table 6.7 shows the number of different construction types that encase definite and indefinite noun phrases for the boy. These data, as opposed to Table 6.6, exclude verbless labelings where characters are introduced by nominal phrases. However, the data about verbless labelings are interesting in the sense that they are only used by the youngest age, 3- and 4-year-olds: In English, there were 7 such introductions for the boy, of which 5 had an indefinite pronoun. This age group also has 9 verbless labelings for the dog, and 8 for the frog, and most include an indefinite marker (6 out of 9 for the dog and 6 out of 8 for the frog). Considering the scarcity of indefinite constructions used in

TABLE 6.7 Number of Different Construction Frames for Indefinite and Definite First Mentions for the Boy by Different Age Groups in English and Turkish

	Construction	3 and 4 Years		5 and 6 Years		9 and 10 Years		Adults	
		I	D	I	D	I	D	I	D
English	Multiple-argument	—	8	—	15	3	12	2	5
	Intransitive	—	3	—	1	1	3	5	1
	Presentational	4		13	1	14	—	16	1
Turkish	Multiple-argument	—	15	2	19	5	5	1	8
	Intransitive	2	7	1	11	1	1	3	2
	Presentational	2	2	6	2	10	1	8	1

Note: I = Indefinite; D = Definite

TABLE 6.8 Distribution of Indefinite, Definite, and Possessive NPs Used for the Dog and the Frog by Different Age Groups in the Two Languages

		3 and 4 Years			5 and 6 Years			9 and 10 Years			Adults		
		I	D	P	I	D	P	I	D	P	I	D	P
Dog	English	4 29%	10 71%	—	12 40%	15 50%	3 10%	11 44%	7 28%	7 28%	10 36%	—	18 64%
	Turkish	5 14%	29 83%	1 3%	8 19%	31 74%	3 7%	7 39%	7 39%	4 22%	7 29%	2 8%	15 63%
Frog	English	9 50%	8 44%	1 6%	13 42%	12 39%	6 19%	25 74%	2 6%	7 21%	21 66%	3 9%	8 25%
	Turkish	9 29%	22 71%	—	13 32%	27 66%	1 2%	19 76%	5 20%	1 4%	14 61%	3 13%	6 26%

Note: I = Indefinite; D = Definite; P = Possessive

fuller constructions at this age, the fact that many are verbless constructions is revealing. In Turkish, verbless labelings are often definite.

The distribution of the indefinite forms into different types of constructions suggests that most indefinites for the boy occur in presentational constructions at all ages and for both languages. The connection between presentational constructions and the indefinite article appears especially strong in English. After 9 and 10 years, the strength of this connection weakens, leading to a few indefinite subjects of multiple-argument and intransitive frames. In Turkish, more than 50% of indefinites are attested in presentational constructions at all ages, although NPs in other kinds of constructions occasionally receive indefinite marking, at earlier ages than observed for English-speaking children. On the whole, however, definite nominal constructions used for the boy tend to be the subjects in intransitive or multiple-argument constructions, more often in the latter.

Turning our attention to the secondary characters, Table 6.8 presents the distribution of indefinite, definite, and possessive NPs used for the dog and the frog by different age groups in the two languages.

The crosslinguistic differences observed in the introductory devices of the younger groups for the boy are not observed for the secondary characters. In other words, at all ages studied, the distributions of different nominal constructions used for the dog and the frog are not statistically different across English and Turkish speakers.

In both languages, the amount of definite expressions used for both of the characters gradually disappears across ages. Although possessive constructions are few at preschool ages, they gain prevalence, especially for the dog, with age in both languages. The use of the possessive construction for the frog is less frequent overall in Turkish, and also employed less frequently by Turkish children than by English-speaking children.

Table 6.9 shows the number of different construction types that include the different types of nominal constructions for the dog and the frog. Preliminary analysis indicated that the grammatical role that the referent fulfills in a multiple-argument construction might play a role in the (in)definiteness marking it receives.

Although the dog tends to be introduced as subject, the frog mostly occupies a non-subject grammatical role in both languages. For the dog and the frog, there are some introductions in non-subject positions that are expressed in indefinite form by 5- to 6-year-olds and older narrators in English. The youngest narrators only use presentational constructions to embody the indefinite numeral. In Turkish, the dog mostly receives definite marking in subject positions, although the amount of indefiniteness for the frog gains prevalence from 5 to 6 years of age on.

Even though the number of definite nominals exceeds that of indefinite ones in the preschool ages, we see that the indefiniteness indicator is used more frequently for the frog than for the boy. There might be two partially related reasons for this: As previous research indicated (Bamberg, 1986,

TABLE 6.9 Distribution of Different Nominal Marking in Different Constructions for the Frog and the Dog Across Ages in English and Turkish

		3 and 4 Years			5 and 6 Years			9 and 10 Years			Adults		
Construction		I	D	P	I	D	P	I	D	P	I	D	P
English	Multi-argument	—	8	—	9	14	3	7	6	4	7	—	12
	Intransitive	—	2	—	1	—	—	—	1	1	—	—	4
	Presentational	4	—	—	2	1	—	4	—	2	3	—	2
Dog Turkish	Multi-argument	3	26	1	1	26	3	2	7	3	—	2	7
	Intransitive	—	1	—	1	4	—	—	—	—	—	—	3
	Presentational	2	2	—	6	1	—	5	—	1	7	—	4
English	Multi-argument	2	3	1	9	8	5	21	2	5	19	2	6
	Intransitive	—	5	—	—	4	—	1	—	—	—	—	1
	Presentational	7	—	—	4	—	1	3	—	2	2	1	1
Frog Turkish	Multi-argument	3	13	—	5	16	1	10	3	—	9	3	3
	Intransitive	4	5	—	1	6	—	1	1	—	—	—	1
	Presentational	2	4	—	7	5	—	8	1	1	5	—	2

Note: I = Indefinite; D = Definite; P = Possessive

1987; Hickmann, 2003; Hickmann et al., 1996; Kail & Hickmann, 1992; Küntay, 2002; McGann & Schwartz, 1988; Wigglesworth, 1990), narrators use less indefinite and more presupposing forms for main characters than for secondary characters. Also, in both languages, there seems to be an association between usage of indefinite marker and non-subject grammatical roles, in which the frog gets introduced.

CONCLUSIONS

As Slobin points out, "... habitual patterns of language use are shaped by ease of accessibility of linguistic forms—to producer and receiver, as well as by the dynamics of cultural and aesthetic values and the perspectives and communicative aims of the speaker" (Slobin, 2004, p. 253). This study shows that patterns of usage of (in)definite nominal constructions depend on ease of accessibility of certain constructions in addition to the stance the participant assumes in relation to the task. Availability of a formal article system leads English speakers of younger ages to use more indefinite articles for the boy than their Turkish counterparts. However, from 9 years of age on, the effect disappears, probably because older speakers opt for more formulaic devices for opening stories than at younger ages. Another factor is the status of the character being introduced. No crosslinguistic differences are found in the (in)definiteness status of the introductory devices for the dog and the frog in any of the age groups. A decisive factor that might explain crosslinguistic differences for the boy at young ages and similarities for the other two characters is the type of construction or lexical form chosen to introduce characters. In both languages, a very high percentage of presentational constructions attract the indefinite marker. Hickmann et al. (1996) reports a similar association of predicate types with the usage of indefinite marking found in the four languages they studied (English, French, German, and Mandarin), with presentational constructions 'attracting' local markings of indefiniteness in all languages. We can confirm that the distribution of indefinite marking is related to the choice of construction.

The choice of construction, in turn, has to do with the stance narrators display in beginning their story. It is also interesting to note that one preschool-age child in the Turkish data who prefaced his introduction of the boy with an indefinite article started out by asking the following question to the experimenter:

- (4) *burda ... yani böyle masalı mı anlaticam yoksa burda neler var onu mu söyleyicem?*
 'here ... I wonder, shall I tell the story or talk about what there is here [= in this picture]?'
 Adult: *masalı anlaticaksın evet*
 'you're going to tell the story, right'

peki 'ok'

bir çocuk ... bir çocuk yerde oturuyo

'a child ... a child is sitting on the floor' (4-year-old, A. Küntay)

It might well be that the child opted to use an indefinite numeral to preface the first character introduced in a conventional way, because he actively constructed the task as a storytelling task as opposed to a picture-description. M. Gopnik (1989) has found that, in English-speaking young children's (4- to 6-year-olds) stories, most indefinite articles occur in stories with formal beginnings. She hypothesized that "the non-occurrence of a formal beginning is an indicator that the child has not adopted a story stance" (p. 236). The meta-textual question posed by the Turkish preschooler in Example 4 shows that there could be multiple stances to this task of picture-based storytelling.

A picture-description rather than a storytelling stance also leads to a random ordering of the mention of the three characters and interconnections of characters that encode merely visually available information. Such strategies can adequately describe the contents of the first picture, but might fall short of situating the rest of the narrative around a boy who has a dog and a frog. With age, narrators in both languages order the boy as the first character, anchoring the dog and the frog around it with possessive marking and/or verbs of non-evident relations.

Expressing the discourse function of introducing new characters in a story involves a choice between different constructions. The choice of an indefinite nominal construction appears to depend on the type of verbal construction used. That might be why, although preschoolers might use determiners appropriately in some contexts (Maratsos, 1976), their skills are fragile. Warden (1981) proposes that when preschool-age children are asked to produce full constructions, as in his experiments in comparison to Maratsos (1976), who prompted for simple noun phrases, they do not divert enough attention to producing appropriate indefinite articles. To explain the inconsistency in the adult-like usage of determiners, Warden proposes that "it is quite possible that the children were intermittently able to divert attention from syntax construction and the selection of content words to consider the rules of article use" (p. 93). This study shows that certain constructions are more amenable to provision of indefinite marking on the noun phrase than others, both for children and for older speakers, and in very different languages such as English and Turkish. Our findings are consistent with the suggestions of Pine and Lieven (1997) that the development of an adultlike determiner usage involves the progressive increase of the range of frames in which determiners appear.

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