



Noun and verb naming in German and Turkish: A crosslinguistic study

Christina Kauschke¹ and Alkim Ari²
(1) Universität Potsdam (2) Freie Universität Berlin

Background

- Languages differentiate between nouns and verbs to a different degree and by different means (Broschart 1991)
- While German is a classical noun-verb-language with a clear-cut distinction, the noun-verb distinction in Turkish is less rigid
- As a consequence, the acquisition of word categories may differ in languages having different structural characteristics

Aims

- To describe picture naming abilities of German and Turkish children of different ages
 - To compare children's naming accuracy of nouns and verbs
 - To compare children's naming accuracy of transitive and intransitive verbs
 - To compare error patterns in noun and verb naming in German and Turkish
- Are there differences in the acquisition of nouns and verbs in German and Turkish?*

Differences German-Turkish

	German	Turkish
Morphology	inflected	agglutinated
Marking of nouns	case, number, gender Articles obligatory	case, (number), no gender no definite articles
Marking of verbs	person, tense, mode, number, (genus verbi)	person, tense, mode, number, negation, aspect, genus verbi
Word order	verb-second; canonical SVO (in main clause; OVS also possible) SOV (in subordinate clause)	canonical SOV, other word orders possible for pragmatic effects
Subject drop	subject is obligatory	no obligatory subject
Word formation	derivation, conversion	derivation, conversion, function overlap between nouns and verbs (in predicate position)
Noun-Verb-Distinction	clear distinction, „ noun-friendly “: nouns consistent with articles, verbs appear in various positions	less obvious distinction, „ verb-friendly “ language: verbs consistent in the salient final position

Methodology

Subjects

- 210 children, 150 German monolingual and 60 Turkish monolingual
- Equal distribution of boys and girls
- Testing in Germany (Berlin, Potsdam) and Turkey (Ankara)
- 3 age groups:
 - 3;00-3;11 (60 German, 20 Turkish)
 - 4;00-4;11 (60 German, 20 Turkish)
 - 5;00-5;11 (30 German, 20 Turkish)

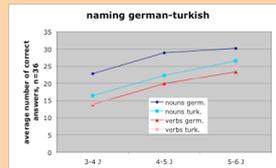
Materials

- 72 pictures, black and white drawings: 36 noun pictures, 36 verb pictures
- Due to name agreement results, 2 nouns and 2 verbs differed in the sets across languages



RESULTS I Naming Accuracy for nouns and verbs

- 1. Nouns vs verbs**
 - Nouns were named better than verbs in both languages
 - Noun advantage less pronounced in Turkish
 - Significant noun-verb difference in German in all age groups
 - Noun-verb-difference in Turkish only significant in the first group (3-4 year)
- 2. Cross-linguistic differences**
 - German children are better on naming nouns than Turkish children
 - No significant cross-linguistic differences in verb naming



RESULTS II Error strategies in noun and verb naming

- 1. Nouns vs verbs**

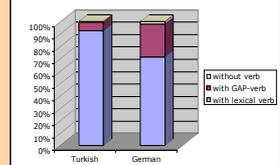
German and Turkish children use category-specific error patterns in both languages

 - Semantically related substitutions dominate for noun errors
 - Circumlocutions dominate for verb errors
- 2. cross-linguistic differences**

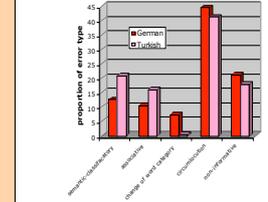
Better strategies in dealing with verb naming problems in Turkish

 - Less changes of word category (nouns instead of verbs) in Turkish
 - Less GAP-verbs in circumlocutions, Turkish children use more specific verbs (GAP-verbs: *haben, machen, sein* and *yapmak, etmek*)

verb quality in circumlocutions



error strategies in verb naming



RESULTS III Transitive and intransitive verbs

- Transitive and intransitive verbs**
There is a cross-linguistic difference in the accuracy of transitive and intransitive verbs:
- German: intransitives better than transitives
 - Turkish: transitives better than intransitives

SUMMARY

⇒ Evidence for cross-linguistic similarities and differences:

Naming accuracy

- There is a noun advantage in children's picture naming for both languages
- The noun advantage is more striking in German
- Cross-linguistic differences show a higher accuracy for nouns in German children and a similar accuracy for verbs in both languages

Error strategies

- German and Turkish children choose category-specific error strategies in a naming task
- Turkish children are more elaborated in verb naming than German children

Subcategories

- Cross-linguistic differences show different patterns in the accuracy of transitive and intransitive verbs

CONCLUSIONS

- ⇒ There are fundamental differences between nouns and verbs. As a consequence, children in both languages show similar category-specific patterns in a naming task.
- ⇒ The noun advantage in German can be linked to structural properties of German as a "noun-friendly"-language.
- ⇒ The good abilities in Turkish verb naming can be linked to structural properties of Turkish as a "verb-friendly"-language.