



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

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

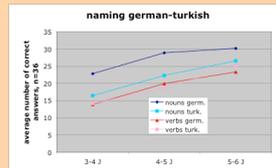
### Materials

- 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**

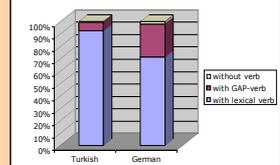
German and Turkish children use category-specific error patterns in both languages

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

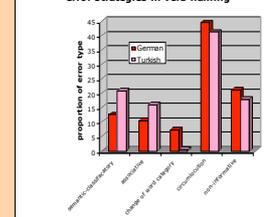
Better strategies in dealing with verb naming problems in Turkish

  - 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.