

Uygun, S., & Felser, C. (2019). *Constraints on subject-verb agreement in German-Turkish bilingual speakers*. Paper presented at the 12th International Symposium of Biligualism (ISB 12). Edmonton, AB, Canada. 24 - 28 June.

Constraints on subject-verb agreement in German/Turkish bilingual speakers

Subject-verb agreement in Turkish differs from other languages in that 3rd person plural subjects normally appear with verbs that are unmarked for number, rendering these verb forms indistinguishable from the singular form. The plural morpheme *lar/ler* is preferentially omitted from the verb, especially in spoken discourse, so as to avoid repeating the same morpheme that also marks plurality on nouns. Plural suffix omission in Turkish is also affected by semantic factors including the degree of subject animacy (Bamyacı, Häussler & Kabak, 2014).

Following earlier findings which indicate that Turkish heritage speakers accept overt plural marking more readily than non-bilingual native Turkish speakers (Bamyacı, 2016; Lago et al., 2018), the present study investigates to what extent bilingual speakers are sensitive to grammatical, surface-level and semantic constraints on Turkish plural agreement marking. We carried out a scalar acceptability judgement task with 40 non-bilingual Turkish speakers resident in Turkey and 41 early (n=21) or late (n=20) German/Turkish bilinguals resident in Germany. Our experimental stimuli were created by manipulating both subject animacy and subject position, to test the effect of subject-verb distance on the acceptability of overt plural marking on the verb. The judgement task was implemented as a web-based questionnaire, with the bilingual speakers tested under supervision and the non-bilingual controls tested remotely.

Besides confirming the general preference for unmarked verb forms, participants' judgement patterns were affected both by animacy and by subject-verb distance. Significant differences were observed between early bilingual speakers and non-bilingual controls, suggesting that the relatively subtle interplay between different types of constraint on number agreement marking is not always fully acquired under heritage language conditions. We used Gradient Symbolic Computation modelling (Goldrick, Putnam & Schwarz, 2016) to capture between-group differences in the relative weightings of the constraints under investigation.