Clause-combining in heritage Turkish: focus on registers

In this talk, I will present findings on clause-combining in heritage Turkish in Germany and the U.S., with the focus on different registers.

Turkish in Turkey relies mainly on non-finite subordination: complement clauses are expressed with nominalisations, relative clauses are expressed with participles, and adverbial clauses are mostly expressed with converbs. However, strategies of finite subordination are available also in Turkish in Turkey, but they mainly belong to informal settings. As for the contact languages German and English, clause-combining is mostly realized by means of finite subordination.

Clause-combining has been one of the focal points of research on heritage Turkish in Germany. Previous studies have shown that in comparison with the monolingual setting of Turkish in Turkey, finite means of clause combining are more frequent in heritage Turkish in Germany (Bayram 2013), non-finite embeddings in heritage Turkish are of lower complexity (Treffers-Daller et al. 2006, Turan et al. 2020), heritage Turkish speakers acquire non-finite clauses later than monolinguals (Rehbein and Herkenrath 2016). However, apart from Schroeder (2016), who investigated clause-combining in spoken and written texts of heritage speakers in Germany, research on heritage Turkish has not concentrated much on different registers. As for the U.S., there have been no studies on clause-combining in heritage Turkish (to my knowledge).

Thus, in order to be able to answer the question whether the preference for finite means of clause-combining in heritage Turkish is induced by language contact, or is due to the leveling of registers (generalisation of informal patterns) in heritage Turkish, the method 'Language Situations' was used (Wiese 2020). The data were elicited in four communicative situations: informal spoken, informal written, formal spoken, and formal written. Participants are heritage speakers of Turkish of two age groups (15-18 and 23-35), born and raised in the U.S. and Germany, as well as two monolingual groups from Turkey of the same age. I investigate data produced by 64 speakers from each country.

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