



The Turkish aorist and progressive: Present tense, future tense, or what?

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Abstract

This paper investigates the uses of the aorist and the progressive tenses in spoken Turkish and the extent to which they are used interchangeably. Demo version of Spoken Turkish Corpus was analyzed using EXMARALDA software. The tokens were divided into the categories of uses. Results indicate that there were a total of 206 tokens of the aorist and 628 occurrence of progressive tense. Assumptions and commitments are the most common uses and they account for the 56% of the uses of the aorist. These functions have indefinite future meaning. Three functions of the progressive, namely progressive (event), progressive (state) and repetitive/habitual, on the other hand, account for 96% of all its uses. Of these, repetitive/habitual is used 19.26% of the times. When interchangeable functions are considered, analysis revealed that 76% of them are expressed in the progressive tense. Results have implications for curriculum and materials development and teaching practices.

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1. The Aorist

The Turkish language has five simple tenses, as well as additional compound tenses. As in other languages, similar functions may be realized in different tenses and forms in Turkish. Among these tenses, *geniş zaman* may refer to reference points in the past, present, and future. This tense is usually known as the aorist in English, but some refer to it as present tense (e.g., Underhill, 1976, p. 145) or muzari (e.g., Reichenbach, 1947/2005, p. 73). In Turkish, however, the word *geniş* means “wide” or “broad” and is used to denote that the Turkish aorist transcends the boundaries of a time frame. Nakipoğlu-Demiralp (2002) argues that “the Turkish aorist -Ir, as far as its function is concerned, lies on the boundary of tense, aspect and modality. That is, in addition to functioning as a present tense marker, -Ir takes a habitual aspect and an epistemic modal meaning” (p. 137). Likewise, Yavaş (1979) suggests that “the aorist of Turkish indicates aspect or mood more than tense; thus, any attempt to analyze along the lines of a real time line would lead to an inadequate treatment” (p. 41).

The term aorist, as Lewis (2000) explains, comes from Greek grammar and “means ‘unbounded’ and well describes what the Turks call *geniş zaman* ‘the broad tense’, which denotes continuing activity” (p. 115). In Turkish grammar, the aorist is characterized by -(X)r, which is used in three different ways. After vowel-stems, -r is added (e.g., *oku-* “to read” becomes *okur*). After monosyllabic consonant-stems, the vowels a/e precede -r (e.g., *yap-* “to do” becomes *yapar*), with the exception of 13 verb stems including *al-*, *ol-*, *öl-*, *bil-*, *bul-*, *kal-*, *gel-*, *var-*, *ver-*, *vur-*, *dur-*, *gör-*, *san-* (Lewis, 2000, p. 116). After

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polysyllabic consonant-stems, the vowels i/ı/u/ü precede –r, according to vowel harmony (e.g., *kullan-* “to use” becomes *kullanır*). Regarding the aorist suffix –r and the vowels before it, Tekin (1995) asserts that “the aorist suffix in Turkic was only –r originally” (p. 176) and the vowels before –r in aorist suffix in Old and Middle Turkic are in fact a relic of the lost stem-final vowels in Proto-Turkic. According to his view, stem final vowel in disyllabic stems in Proto-Turkic was initially lost and later reappeared in the aorist suffix. He also maintains that “many monosyllabic OT verbs lost their older and perhaps original aorist forms in {-Ur} in the 11th century and took the new aorist forms in {-Ar}” (Tekin, 1995, p. 173). On this issue, Johanson (1989) says that “in Old West Oghuz Turkic, as we observe it in Old Anatolian Turkish (OAT) texts, the classes of consonant stems seem to have been reduced to two. It is generally assumed that monosyllabic stems take –A(r) ... whereas polysyllabics and a few monosyllabics take –U(r)” (p. 99). He further says that there is a strong similarity with Ancient East Turkic in terms of distribution of vowels with only a small number of verbs taking {-i(r)}. Regarding the development of {-i(r)} class, he says that the class formed as a result of a phonetic centralization creating “phonetic shifts from [u, ü] to [ə]” (Johanson, 1989, p. 100). This centralization phenomenon led to “a tendency towards the modern fourfold harmony system, which manifests itself in the morphophoneme {X}, now written i, ı, u, ü” (Johanson, 1989, p. 101) in Turkish. These linguists’ opinions shed light on the development of aorist suffix in affirmative sentences.

Its negative form is rendered differently, however. Unlike other tenses in Turkish, the negative of the aorist does not use the characteristic of its positive form. Instead, the negative suffix –mA is used for first-person singular and plural, and the suffix –mAz is used for other persons. In negative questions, –mAz is used for all persons. However, there does not appear to be a consensus among linguists, on the construction of the negative form of aorist, as to what constitutes the suffixes in the negative construction. There are two opinions on which morphemes constitute the negative of the aorist -- one which accepts that there is a single morpheme with its variations (i.e. –mA, –mAz), and another which suggests that –mA is the negative suffix and –z is the aorist suffix added for second- and third-person singular and plural constructions (Alyılmaz, 2010, p. 111).

Yavaş (1979) notes that the aorist and the progressive are considered as if they are almost synonymous and she argues against this treatment, asserting that “the aorist has the effect of characterizing the entity in question while the progressive reports certain behavior of the entity” (p. 45). Refer to the examples given below:

Murat geç yatmaz.

[Murat does not go to bed late.]

Murat geç yatmıyor.

[Murat does not go to bed late.]

As mentioned above, the aorist expresses tense, aspect and modality. This is also true for progressive tense. Since lexical aspect of the verb is the same for both sentences (i.e. the verb *yatmak* [to go to bed; lie down] would be in the category of achievement which is non-durative and telic), the distinction in meaning arises from the distinction between the grammatical aspects of the sentences, the former being unbounded and the latter bounded (see Dilaçar (1974) and Benzer (2008) for a discussion and examples of lexical and grammatical aspects in Turkish). While both 1 and 2 above mean that Murat does not go to bed late, the sentence in aorist indicates that Murat is the type of person who does not go to bed late, whereas the sentence in progressive indicates a more habitual behavior of Murat rather than a characteristic of his.

However, the aorist and progressive forms could be considered nearly synonymous, and thus, could be interchangeably used to entail certain meanings:

Tatlı sevmem.

[I do not like desserts.]

Tatlı sevmiyorum.

[I do not like desserts.]

The examples in 3 and 4 do not create a distinction in meaning such as the one between 1 and 2. The lack of distinction in meaning between these sentences is likely because of the lexical aspect of the verb used. Since the verb “to like” expresses state that involves no change rather than other lexical aspects that involve change, both sentences carry the same aspectual meaning. The possibility of interchangeable use, however, is not limited to verbs with this lexical aspect.

For situations where the choice of both the aorist and the progressive tenses is possible, Underhill (1976) observes, “in the spoken language, the progressive –Iyor is in the process of replacing the present in its habitual or ‘aorist’ sense. In letters, conversations, and other informal texts, one normally finds the progressive used” (p. 149). By focusing on this issue of a shift in usage, the current paper aims to investigate the functions of the aorist and the progressive tense in current spoken Turkish, as well as the extent to which progressive tense is chosen over the aorist, in cases where both are possible.

1.1. Functions of the aorist

Aorist has been conceptualized in a variety of ways by linguists. These functions of the form varies from tense and aspect to modality. Göksel and Kerslake (2005) group the functions of the Turkish aorist into two categories, namely, generalizations/hypotheses and volitional utterances. Under the former, they list: (a) statements of permanent or generalized validity, (b) hypothetical and counterfactual situations, and (c) assumptions. Additionally, under the category of “statements of permanent or generalized validity,” they list: (i) scientific or moral axioms, (ii) normative or prescriptive statements, (iii) generic statements about the characteristic qualities or behavior of a class, and (iv) statements about the characteristic qualities or behavior of an individual. The second aorist category, volitional utterances, is further broken down into (a) requests and offers and (b) expression of commitment. As can be seen, these functions include differing functions of tense, aspect and modality (p. 283-316).

However, Lewis (2000) characterizes the functions of aorist as: (a) habitual statements, (b) characteristics of a person, (c) requests, (d) promises, (e) stage directions, (f) proverbs, (g) as a vivid present, and (h) permissions (p. 116-117).

Öztopçu (2009), in his textbook for learners of Turkish as a foreign language, lists the following functions: (a) willingness, intention, or promises to carry out actions; (b) habitual, customary, or repeated actions; (c) predictions, guesses, and doubts; (d) general validity, truths, or proverbs; (e) telling stories or jokes; (f) polite requests, questions, or offers and invitations; and (g) common expressions (p. 71-72).

The following list summarizes the functions of the aorist, as set forth by the above authors:

Scientific or moral axioms, general validity, truth

Dünya kendi çevresindeki dönüşünü 24 saatte tamamlar.

[The earth completes a revolution around its axis in 24 hours.]

Normative or prescriptive statements

İnşaat sahasına baretsiz girilmez.

[No entry into the construction zone without a helmet.]

Generic statements about the characteristic qualities or habitual, customary, and repeated action or behavior of a class

Japonlar çok çalışır.

[The Japanese work hard.]

Statements about the characteristic qualities or behavior of an individual or habitual, customary, and repeated action of an individual

Sinan araba kullanmaz.

[Sinan does not drive.]

Hypothetical and counterfactual situations

Bunu yapma, pişman olursun.

[Don't do this, you will regret it.]

Assumptions, predictions, guesses, doubts

Derbiyi Fenerbahçe kazanır.

[Fenerbahçe will win the derby.]

Requests, offers, invitations

Su verir misiniz?

[Will you give me water?]

Expression of commitment such as promises or willingness to carry out an action in the future

Seni havaalanına ben bırakırım.

[I will give you a ride to the airport.]

Proverbs

Armut dalının dibine düşer.

[The apple does not fall far from the tree (lit. The pear falls near the base of its branch.)]

Vivid present as in telling stories or jokes

Kapıyı açar, içeri girer.

[He opens the door and gets inside]

Permissions

A: *Akşam maça gitmek istiyorum. Olur mu?*

[I want to go to the game tonight. Is that all right?]

B: *Olur.*

[Fine.]

Common expressions

Teşekkür ederim.

[Thank you.]

In addition to the above functions, the aorist can also have an abilitative meaning. For example, when someone challenges another person's ability to do something, as in the following example, it entails an abilitative meaning:

A: *Buradan atlayamazsın.* [You can't jump from here.]

B: *Atlarım*. [I can jump.]

In this example, the challenge is in the abilitative mood, but the answer is in the aorist. However, it can be argued that this type of usage is, in fact, used to express a characteristic quality or behavior of an individual (function 4 in the summary list), as the above sentence can be interpreted as, “I am the sort of person who can jump (from here).” This function was not seen in the corpus that will be described below. It is, of course, essential to note again that these variations in functions are conceived not only by tense but also aspect and modality as well. Thus, some of the functions above expresses aspect while others express tense or modality.

1.2. The Aorist in the spoken Turkish corpus

The demo version of the Spoken Turkish Corpus (STC) was used for analysis because “there are no large-scale corpora of either Standard Turkish or Turkish dialects, consisting of richly annotated naturally occurring spoken data” (Karadaş & Ruhi, 2009, p. 311). In fact, even the first large-scale written corpus of the Turkish language, i.e., the Turkish National Corpus, comprising about 48 million words, emerged as a demo version only in late 2012 (for more information, see Aksan et. al. 2012). The STC has “44,962 words” (Ruhi, Schmidt, Wörner & Eryılmaz, 2011, p. 204), and when it is completed, it will include “at least one million words” (Karadaş & Ruhi, 2009, p. 312). STC includes transcripts from chats, service encounters, lectures, and television and radio programs (Ruhi, 2010, p. 464). When searching a spoken corpus, the question of how local dialects and accents are annotated is a legitimate concern. In STC, when a linguistic variation is commonly observed in the normal population, it is annotated in standard Turkish. When a feature is observed regionally, it is coded in standard Turkish in one tier and with regional features in the tier below it (Hatipoğlu & Karakaş, 2010, p. 448-453), thus allowing for searches in standard Turkish.

The analysis of the corpus revealed 206 tokens of the aorist suffix distributed across 11 functions of the aorist. In this analysis, only 206 aorist suffixes that appear as simple tenses were used. Aorist suffixes in compound verbs and modal expressions were excluded.

Table 1. Distribution of the functions of the aorist

| Functions | Tokens | Percentage |
|---------------------|--------|------------|
| Assumptions | 81 | 39.32 |
| Commitment | 34 | 16.50 |
| Individual behavior | 20 | 9.70 |
| Common expressions | 18 | 8.73 |
| Truth | 14 | 6.79 |
| Requests | 13 | 6.31 |
| Vivid present | 10 | 4.85 |
| Class behavior | 6 | 2.91 |
| Permissions | 5 | 2.42 |
| Hypothetical | 3 | 1.45 |
| Proverbs | 2 | 0.97 |
| Total | 206 | 100 |

As Table 1 shows, two of the functions, namely, assumptions and commitments, account for more than half of the aorist usage in the corpus. Although this form is often paralleled with the simple present tense in English, it is interesting to see that the most common functions of the aorist entail future meaning rather than present, which accounts for 56% of the usage. It is true that the aorist transcends the borders of any time frame, yet it may not be incorrect to approach this tense as more of a future tense, rather than a present one, especially in spoken Turkish. However, it is important to remember that Nakipoğlu-Demiralp (2002, p. 137) asserts that the usage, categorized as assumptions in the current paper, have an epistemic modal meaning, rather than a tense.

2. The progressive tense

Some of the uses of the aorist, as mentioned above, could be interchangeable with the progressive tense in Turkish, although Yavaş (1979, p. 45) argues that there is a difference in meaning between the two tenses while expressing similar meanings, such as the characteristics of an individual. Progressive tense, which Lewis (2000, p. 106) and Göksel and Kerslake (2005, p. 286) refer to as present tense, is called *şimdiki zaman* in Turkish. *Şimdi* means “now” in Turkish, and *şimdiki zaman* could be understood as “the current time.” In Turkish, the suffix for progressive tense is –(I)yor, and this suffix always has a high vowel before –yor. After consonant-stems, a high vowel is added (e.g., *bit-* “to finish” becomes *bitiyor*). When the suffix is attached to verb stems ending in A or E, they are replaced with a high vowel based on vowel harmony (e.g., *dinle-* “to listen” becomes *dinliyor*). Finally, when the progressive-tense suffix is attached to stems ending in other vowels, –yor is directly attached to the stem (e.g., *oku-* “to read” becomes *okuyor*).

2.1. Functions of the progressive tense

Like the aorist, the progressive tense has also been conceptualized in a variety of ways by linguists. In addition to tense, the form conveys aspect as well. In their book, Göksel and Kerslake (2005) describe these functions of the progressive tense: (a) scheduled or fixed future, (b) progressive (event), (c) progressive (state), (d) habitual, and (e) generalizations based on one’s experience. However, Lewis (2000: 107) lists three functions for the progressive tense: (a) actions in progress, (b) actions envisaged, and (c) actions that began in the past and are still ongoing. In contrast, in his book for Turkish-language learners, Öztöpcü (2009: 106-107) says progressive tense can be used to express: (a) actions in progress or about to be performed, (b) actions to take place in the near future, and (c) repetitive or habitual actions (p. 287-297).

The following list summarizes these classifications:

Progressive (event)

Şu an ders çalışıyorum.

[I am studying at the moment.]

Progressive (state)

Bilmiyorum.

[I don’t know.]

Habitual or repetitive actions

Her hafta sonu maç seyrediyorum.

[I watch a game every weekend.]

Planned future events

Yarın geliyorum.

[I am coming tomorrow.]

Generalizations based on experience

Bu ülkede hiçbir şey değişmiyor.

[Nothing changes in this country.]

Actions that began in the past and still going on

Üç yıldır Houston 'da yaşıyorum.

[I have been living in Houston for three years.]

Like in the aorist, these functions of the progressive tense also emerge from tense and aspect. While the first function indicates tense, the second function indicates lexical aspect and the rest convey grammatical aspect.

2.2. Progressive tense in the spoken Turkish corpus

The data in the corpus were grouped into these six categories. A total of 628 tokens of progressive tense were retrieved. As with the aorist, only progressive suffixes in simple tense were used. Compound structures were excluded, as they become a different grammatical form when combined with other verb forms. The distribution of the progressive-tense usage is shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Distribution of the functions of the progressive tense

| Functions | Tokens | Percentage |
|-------------------------|--------|------------|
| Progressive (state) | 270 | 42.99 |
| Progressive (event) | 212 | 33.75 |
| Repetitive/Habitual | 121 | 19.26 |
| Planned and near future | 13 | 2.07 |
| Generalization | 7 | 1.11 |
| Past to present | 5 | 0.79 |
| Total | 628 | 100 |

Table 2 reveals that the progressive form is much more common in spoken Turkish than the aorist form. In fact, it is three times as common. This may confirm Underhill's (1976, p. 149) assertion that the progressive is preferred over the aorist in spoken Turkish. However, to confirm this fully, the usage in written Turkish needs to be investigated to see if distribution of functions differs in written Turkish corpora. Without the analysis of written data, one cannot claim that the progressive form replaces the aorist one in spoken Turkish. Another aspect that is evident at first look is that three of the functions (i.e., progressive [event], progressive [state], repetitive/habitual) account for 96% of the uses of progressive tense. It may be also interesting to note that some of the common uses of progressive tense can best be translated to English using the simple present tense. In fact, 63% of the progressive usages in the corpus would be expressed in simple present tense in English. Those usages fell into several function categories: progressive (state), repetitive/habitual, and generalizations. Again, this tense transcends the boundaries of the time of speaking and can express a "broad" time frame, as well as both past and future.

3. Interchangeable functions in comparison

As mentioned above, some of the functions of the aorist and progressive tenses may be interchangeable. For example, in the aorist, (a) statements about the characteristic qualities or behavior of an individual, (b) generic statements about the characteristic qualities or behavior of a class, and (c) general validity or truth usages can be interchanged with progressive 3statements about (a) habitual actions and (b) generalizations. See the examples below.

| The Aorist | The Progressive |
|--|--|
| 1a) <i>Babam tatlı sevmez.</i> [My father does not like desserts.] | 1b) <i>Babam tatlı sevmiyor.</i> [My father does not like desserts.] |
| 2a) <i>Türkler çok ekmek yer.</i> [Turks eat a lot of bread.] | 2b) <i>Türkler çok ekmek yiyor.</i> [Turks eat a lot of bread.] |
| 3a) <i>Soğuk hava cildi kurutur.</i> [Cold weather dries the skin.] | 3b) <i>Soğuk hava cildi kurutuyor.</i> [Cold weather dries the skin.] |

In the above examples, there is no essential difference in meaning between the statements in the two tenses. However, 2b and 3b may entail specific meaning, conveyed in relation to the context of speaking. When expressed as a generalization, they are close in meaning to 2a and 3a, except that 2b and 3b convey that the generalizations are based on speaker's personal observations, rather than expressing a valid truth. As mentioned earlier, the reason why there is not a distinction in meaning between 1a and 1b is because of the lexical aspect of the verb, which is durative and does not change. Thus, this strong lexical aspect of the verb prevents a distinction in meaning. However, grammatical aspects of the other examples, while still very close, lead to a slight distinction in meaning. However, since they are nearly synonymous, the incidence of these types of usages in the STC are given in Table 3 and Table 4.

Table 3. Interchangeable functions in aorist

| Aorist | | |
|---------------------|--------|--------------------------|
| Functions | Tokens | Percentage within aorist |
| Individual behavior | 20 | 9.70 |
| Truth | 14 | 6.79 |
| Class behavior | 6 | 2.91 |
| Total | 40 | 19.40 |

Table 4. Interchangeable functions in progressive tense

| Progressive Tense | | |
|---------------------|--------|-------------------------------|
| Functions | Tokens | Percentage within progressive |
| Repetitive/Habitual | 121 | 19.26 |
| Generalization | 7 | 1.11 |
| Total | 128 | 20.37 |

In the data, 40 uses for the aorist and 128 uses for the progressive were retrieved. These numbers account for approximately 20% of the uses of both tenses. However, general validity or truth usages in the aorist are more frequent than generalizations in the progressive. Table 5 shows the percentages in relation to each other.

Table 5. Relative percentages of interchangeable uses

| Tense | Tokens | Percentage |
|-------------------|--------|------------|
| Aorist | 40 | 23.80 |
| Progressive tense | 128 | 76.19 |
| Total | 168 | 100% |

Added together, 168 tokens that have interchangeable uses were detected. The numbers indicate that the progressive tense is used much more frequently than the aorist to express repetitive or habitual characteristics of people or groups. This finding is important, as it is the aorist that is normally associated with this function, not the progressive, and it is the aorist that is likened to English simple present tense.

Table 6. Examples in aorist from concordances tables

| | | |
|--|-----|---|
| o saatte vücut az çok alış | ır. | |
| aynı anda kasılıp gevşe | r. | Antagonist. |
| kaslar zıt çalış | ır | |
| in Luther King günü olarak kutlan | ır. | |
| çok hareketli ol | ur | lar |
| r karar almaktan daha fazla çekin | ir | ler. |
| dinde sorun olanlar çok ee şey ol | ur | ya/ |
| anna bak. _ben paylaşmayı sev | er | im. |
| bişeyi öğrenmeyi sev | er | im. |
| mesela ben iste | r | im benim kullanmadığım |
| e e em hep yapay gel | ir | Biliyor musun bana bu. _biriyle ben biş |
| ben orayı katarak kullan | ır | ım. |
| O da sürekli eniştemin oraya gelip dur | ur | |
| kendi kendime yolda düşün | ür | üm işte. |
| afları kesildiği zaman kan püskür | ür. | filmlerinde de var o. |

Table 7. Examples in progressive tense from concordances tables

| | | |
|--------------------------------------|------|---|
| genelde ((0.8)) yani gişe filmeri ol | uyor | ve iyi de kar (götürüyor). |
| ((0.2)) ((inhalation)) ben de az yat | ıyor | um da öğlen az yatayım diye az yatıyorum. |
| m mı? ((0.5)) onun havlusuyla yüzümü | ıyor | um eğer kendiminkini bulamazsam. ((0.6)) |
| yık(a) | | |

| | | |
|---|------|--|
| run ((0.5)) bende ki bişeye o ihtiyaç duy | uyor | . tabi bende bilgisayar var. ((0.1)) ond |
| ne yap | ıyor | lar mesela anne oğul? ((0.1)) ki/kim ne |
| tamam.  kırk yılda bir ol | uyor | . |
| yani te/telefonlaş | ıyor | uz haftada bir iki. ((inhalas)) sınırlı |
| ela birlikte  arşıya gidip alışveriş yap | ıyor | lar. |
| ha! bazen maç yap | ıyor | lar b y kler. |
| ((0.1)) anne!  hi bişey deęişm(e) | ıyor | ki burda. ((0.6)) hi bişey deęişmiyor. |
| rkiye'de diye. ((0.3)) yani kimse | ıyor | T rkiye'deki eęitime pek herhalde. |
| g venm(e) | | |
| ((0.1)) biz hep yeni kalk | ıyor | uz anam.  kız var artık. |
| ((0.5)) hep ol | uyor | ya b yle televizyonlarda. |
| ((0.2)) b yle lap lap s yl(e) |  yor | um. Sonra ne oluyor? A |
| ((XXX)) ((0.2)) sabah ((0.3)) vakti gi(t) | ıyor | lar. ((0.2)) d rtte beşte geliyorlar. |

3.1. Verbs used in interchangeable functions

The verbs themselves that were used in these functions were also investigated. Seven verbs were used in both tenses in the interchangeable functions. In addition to these 7 that were used in both tenses, 39 other verbs were used only in progressive, and 15 others were used only in the aorist. Of the 39 verbs used in the progressive, only one of them, *g venmek* [to trust], is a verb representing mental states or feelings, while 6 of the 15 verbs used in the aorist are such verbs, namely, *bilmek* [to know], * ekinmek* [to be shy, to abstain], *d ş nmek* [to think], *istemek* [to want], *sevmek* [to love, to like], and *sıkılmak* [to be bored]. It is important to note that the verbs mentioned above do not represent the full corpus, but rather, they are the verbs that were retrieved in the functions that can be used interchangeably between the progressive and aorist. With this limited sample in these functions, and without examining the rest of the corpus, it is not possible to propose that mental-state verbs are more commonly found in the aorist. For example, it may be more common to use mental-state verbs in the progressive (state) function of the progressive tense (e.g. *Bilmiyorum* [I don't know]) than in its repetitive/habitual and generalization functions.

4. Discussion

In conclusion, analyses of the data in the STC showed that the two most common uses of aorist in spoken Turkish are to convey assumptions and commitments, and these functions refer to a point in the future. These uses, which compose about 56% of the aorist uses in the data, are expressed using simple future tense in English (e.g. *Seni hava alanına ben bırakırım*. [I will give you a ride to the airport.]). Interestingly, 63% of progressive uses in the STC are best expressed in simple present tense in English. This finding underscores that direct parallelism between tenses in these two languages is not possible. Looking at the tenses in Turkish through English tenses, as these two tenses show, would be misleading. Any attempt to draw direct parallels would result in misconceptions of the meanings of different tenses in Turkish.

In addition to the above, the comparison of these two tenses showed that habitual meaning is expressed much more frequently in the progressive tense, rather than in the aorist, contrary to what one might expect as habitual aspect is considered to be a feature of the aorist. The analyses showed that there is fluidity in the uses of these tenses in spoken Turkish because most of the functions of these tenses express grammatical aspect rather than tense. Thus, one may raise the questions, “Is the general assumption that the aorist is a present tense misleading?” or “Should we focus more on the functions of the aorist that refer to future as evident in the corpus?” Likewise, “is progressive tense the same as a simple present tense?” is another question to raise because the meaning grammatical aspect induces has reference to different times other than the primary assumptions about the meanings of these tenses, at least in spoken Turkish as evidenced from STC data outlined above. However, categorizing these two tenses as such is likely not possible. What is important in this situation is not to redefine the tenses in Turkish, but rather, to gain a clearer understanding of how the tenses are actually used by native speakers of the language. This new knowledge will help guide publishers, textbook authors, curriculum developers, and language teachers in a productive direction, toward providing learner materials that model authentic and natural use of the language. For example, knowing that a solid function of the aorist is to convey the indefinite future, and that expressing it with another tense is not possible, language teachers can expand their lesson plans when covering future tense to include both the future (*gelecek zaman*) and aorist (*geniş zaman*). In light of the current findings, the teaching of future tense would not be complete without referring to the functions of the aorist. It is because the future tense (*gelecek zaman*) only expresses definite future. Likewise, knowing that the progressive tense is used much more frequently to convey habit than previously supposed will help guide teachers of the Turkish language to expose their students to more examples of this particular function of the progressive tense.

However, the current analyses only reveal spoken aspects of the Turkish language using a small corpus. Making stronger global judgments will only be possible after analyzing larger corpora. In addition, analyzing written corpora in the future is also important as the distributions may look very different from the spoken corpora. If Underhill’s (1976, p. 149) assumption is true, that progressive tense may replace the aorist in spoken Turkish, we may expect more frequent usage of the aorist to express habitual or repetitive actions and generalizations in written Turkish. Thus, this study is only a preliminary attempt to describe the uses of two tenses, as a few of them can be interchangeably used, with certain meanings. Also, deep analysis or elaboration of categories of verbs in terms of tense, aspect and modality has not been made since the purpose of this study is to determine different functions or uses of these tenses in actual use in spoken Turkish. Nevertheless, in spite of these limitations, this study allows insight into the usage of the aorist and progressive verb tenses in naturally-occurring speech and suggests that our conceptions of grammatical functions need to be revisited, with their actual usage in mind.

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Türkçede geniş ve şimdiki zaman: Şimdi mi, gelecek mi ya da ne?

Öz

Bu çalışmada Türkçe konuşma dilinde geniş ve şimdiki zamanın kullanımlarını araştırmak amaçlanmıştır. Bu amaçla, Sözlü Türkçe Derlemi deneme sürümü, EXMARaLDA programı kullanılarak, incelenmiştir. Toplamda geniş zaman 206 kez ve şimdiki zaman da 628 kez kullanılmıştır. Geniş zamanın en yaygın ilk iki kullanımı varsayımlar ve sözler kullanımların %56'sını oluşturur ve bu iki kullanımın anlam olarak gelecek zamanı ifade eder. Şimdiki zamanın %96'sını da üç işlev oluşturur. Bunlar, sürekli (olay), sürekli (durum) ve alışkanlıklar ifade eden kullanımlardır. Bunlardan, alışkanlıklar, şimdiki zaman kullanımlarının %16,26'sını oluşturur. Bu iki zamanın birbirlerinin yerine kullanılabilirdikleri durumlarda ise bu tür kullanımların %76'sının şimdiki zamanda olduğu görülmüştür. İlk bakışta düşünülebilenin aksine, bu tür anlatımlar geniş zamandan çok şimdiki zamanda kullanılmıştır ve geniş zaman da en çok geleceğe gönderim yapan anlamlarda kullanılmıştır. Sözlü Türkçe ile ilgili bu bulgular önemlidir ancak kullanımlar yazılı Türkçede farklılık gösterebilir. Sonuçlar, müfredat ve materyal geliştirmeyle öğretim uygulamaları açısından önemlidir.

Anahtar sözcükler: Türkçe, geniş zaman, şimdiki zaman, derlem araştırmaları, sözlü Türkçe derlemi

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