

## The Acquisition of Dative Alternation and Markedness in Second Language Learning

Gülin Zeybek<sup>1</sup>

**Recommended citation:** Zeybek, G. (2018). The Acquisition of Dative Alternation and Markedness in Second Language Learning. *Turkish Online Journal of English Language Teaching (TOJELT)*. 3(2), 26-41.

Received:  
15 Jun. 2017

Accepted:  
2 Dec. 2017

© 2018

All rights reserved.

**Abstract:** The aim of this study is to investigate English dative alternation in terms of markedness theory. In this regard, the markedness of two possible structures of dative alternation, [NP NP] vs. [NP PP], for- and to- dative verbs, and 12 native-origin and 6 nonnative-origin dative verbs are investigated among 50 university students whose L1 is Turkish and L2 is English. In order to collect data, a grammaticality judgement test and a picture-cued production test were used. The results revealed that [NP PP] structure is unmarked for Turkish learners of English. Furthermore, participants used the preposition to instead of for with for-dative verbs in prepositional dative structures in the production test.

**Keywords:** Markedness, Dative alternation, For and To dative verbs.

### Introduction

Levin (1993) states that complex structures are demonstrated by the verbs and their arguments and due to the relationship between their arguments, verbs are quite popular in language research. Verbs have to be considered together with other elements in the sentences (Berk, 1999), since the grammaticality of a sentence is bound to its verb. In order to understand the relations expressed through these complex syntactic structures, it is noteworthy to study verbs requiring or

---

<sup>1</sup>Instr, Süleyman Demirel University, gulin [ulusoy@sdu.edu.tr](mailto:ulusoy@sdu.edu.tr)

allowing different structures. Which form is to be used requires the knowledge of these different structure's grammatical usage by the speakers of that language. Finding out this linguistic competence of speakers is an important issue in learning and teaching languages.

In second language learning UG plays a crucial role (Felix, 1988) and some researchers claim that UG serves in the same way for both L1 and L2 acquisition (White, 1989). Being able to identify the constraints of verbs in second language requires the knowledge of core and peripheral grammar, which constitute the marked and unmarked features of a language (White, 1989). Among these marked and unmarked features, second language learners have to acquire dative alternation which requires them to distinguish between alternating and non-alternating verbs in addition to verbs requiring to- and for-prepositional phrases.

The aim of this present study is to investigate L1 Turkish L2 English second language learners' acquisition of to- and for-dative structures in English. Since dative alternation is considered as a poverty-of-stimulus construction, meaning that second language learners have difficulty in acquiring this structure through input from the environment (Perpiñán & Montrul, 2006, Mazurkewich, 1984), it seems necessary to investigate the difficulty of structures for second language learners by determining which structures are marked and which are unmarked. Therefore, markedness in the following classes of dative alternation will be looked at in this study:

1. To-dative verbs allowing alternation

- Ali sent an e-mail to Ayşe.
- Ali sent Ayşe an e-mail.

2. For-dative verbs allowing alternation

- Ali bought a book for Ayşe.
- Ali bought Ayşe a book.

3. To-dative verbs obligatorily taking prepositional phrase complements

Zeybek (2018)

- Ali explained the problem to Ayşe.
- 4. For-dative verbs obligatorily taking prepositional phrase complements
- Ali captured a butterfly for Ayşe.

This article includes the following sections: the presentation of dative structures in English, markedness theory and dative structures, and previous studies conducted on dative alternation. Next, the present study is described, the findings are reported. Lastly, discussion and conclusion sections are presented.

### **Dative Structures in English**

Datives in English have several alternations in which the direct object changes its position (Fotos & Ellis, 1991). As Wolfe-Quintero (1992b) states, English has two kinds of dative structures, namely, an Indirect Object Dative (IOD) structures having direct and indirect objects (NP PP) and a Double Object Dative (DOD) structures having double objects (NP NP). Prepositions to and for are involved in IOD structures and they are followed by a noun phrase (NP). In these kinds of structures, a recipient thematic role is assigned to the NP following the verb to, and a benefactive thematic role is assigned to the NP which follows the preposition for.

- (1) Ayşe gave an apple to Ali. (NP PP) (IOD)
- (2) Ayşe baked a cake for Ali. (NP PP) (IOD)

The DOD structures include two noun phrases in which the NP following the verb has the role of either recipient or benefactive. The patient role of the action is expressed by the second noun phrase (Wolfe-Quintero, 1992b).

- (3) Ayşe gave Ali an apple. (NP NP) (DOD)
- (4) Ayşe baked Ali a cake. (NP NP) (DOD)

Mazurkewich and White (1984) presented a classification of verbs which allow alternation and which are non-alternating. As they indicated, verbs allowing alternation have two possible

## The Acquisition of Dative Alternation and Markedness in Second Language Learning

prepositions in [NP PP] complements, *to* and *for*. These prepositions are used with non-alternating verbs as well. These both types of verbs are demonstrated in table 1.

<b>Verbs which alternate (<i>native stems</i>)</b>		
<i>to</i>		<i>for</i>
bring, give, grant, hand, lend, offer, owe, pass, pay, read, rent, sell, send, serve, sing, show, teach, tell, etc.		bake, build, buy, choose, cook, draw, find, get, knit, leave, make, paint, play, save, sew, etc.
<b>Verbs which do not alternate</b>		
Possession not involved <i>Only [NP PP] complements</i>	Linate verbs <i>Only [NP PP] complements</i>	
answer, drive, make, open, owe, paint, prove, solve, stir, wash, etc.	<i>to</i> address, announce, communicate, demonstrate, donate, explain, report, recommend, return, suggest, transfer, etc.	<i>for</i> construct, create, design, photocopy, select, etc.
<b>Prior or inalienable possession <i>Only [NP NP] complements</i></b>		
begrudge, charge, cost, deny, envy, excuse, fine, forgive, give, refuse, spare, wish, etc.		

Table 1. Some alternating and non-alternating verbs (Mazurkewich and White, 1984)

As it can be seen from table 1 that some verb pairs have quite similar meaning such as give and donate, tell and explain, build and construct, buy and purchase. However, while one of these verb pairs allow alternation, the other verb class have only [NP PP] complements. This shows that many verbs in these contrasts allowing alternation have a native stem, as opposed to the many non-alternating verbs, observed as being originally Linate (Green, 1974, Oehrle, 1976, Stowell, 1981). On the other hand, table also includes verbs, which have native origin, but do not allow alternation such as answer, drive, make, open, etc. It is expected that if native origin verbs are the ones allowing alternation, then these verbs should allow it as well. However, there are other constraints than this morphological one which governs this alternation (Mazurkewich and White, 1984).

Goldsmith (1980) states there are also semantic constraints governing dative alternation, and asserts that in double object structures the indirect object plays a crucial role, since its' being animate makes it the prospective possessor of the direct object. In this regard, "only verbs which present dative NP as the prospective possessor of the direct object will be compatible with the double object construction" (see 5a, b, c, d). Below the examples show that, in (5b) the prospective possessor of the direct object is the indirect object, but in (5d) it is ungrammatical.

- (5) a. I owe ten dollars to Ayşe.

Zeybek (2018)

- b. I owe Ayşe ten dollars.
- c. I owe this example to Ayşe.
- d.\* I owe Ayşe this example.

This factor is also true for native origin verbs that take for as preposition and that do not allow dative alternation (see 6a and 6b).

- (6) a. Ahmet solved the problem for Ayşe.
- b. \*Ahmet solved Ayşe the problem.

Even though Ayşe somewhat benefits from the activity stated in the example, she is not the prospective possessor of the direct object. This explains why double object constructions are not applicable in this example. In addition to Goldsmith (1980), the role of an indirect object as a possessor in double object constructions is also highlighted by Stowell (1981). According to him, this role of possessing is an additional role given for the indirect object, which has the role of goal in to-dative constructions and, the role of beneficiary in for-dative structures. In this sense, since both goal and beneficiary roles have the meaning of prospectiveness, Goldsmith (1980)'s term 'prospective' possessor is found to be unnecessary (Mazurkewich and White, 1984).

As seen in table 1, some verbs involve prior possession (e.g. charge, deny, excuse, forgive, give, refuse, wish, etc.) and they can be seen only in [NP NP] constructions, which inalienable possession can be involved as well (see 7a, b and 8a, b).

- (7) a. This table costs Ayşe \$100.
- b. \*This table costs \$100 to Ayşe.
- (8) a. This problem gave Ahmet a headache.
- b.\*This problem gave a headache to Ahmet.

In the above examples (7 and 8), the indirect objects are not real goals or recipients, and the sense of transfer cannot be seen as it is in alternating verbs. Therefore, dative alternation is found to be limited when more than one roles are assigned to the indirect object, one of which can be taken by a preposition. When only the possessor role exists, only double object construction is

possible (Mazurkewich and White, 1984). Seeing the complexity of these structures, the investigation of their acquisition in second language learning is quite important. Markedness is one of the aspects that they can be studied. Next section will define and discuss markedness and the markedness of dative structures.

### **Markedness**

The development of a structure in a language is affected by markedness (Wolfe-Quintero, 1992b) and this development includes stages which are organized according to a markedness relationship (Markuzewich, 1984, Wolfe-Quintero, 1992b). As Wolfe-Quintero (1992b) suggests, markedness is approached through four different configurations, namely productivity, universal grammar, learnability and typological criteria. Frequency of the occurrence of the target structures displays the relationship between language acquisition and markedness as productivity criteria puts forward. The productivity perspective of markedness states that marked structures of a language occur less frequently compared to the unmarked structure. Therefore, it is asserted that unmarked structure, more frequently found in the input, are more likely to be acquired easily and quickly than marked structures in both first and second language acquisition processes (White, 1989).

The second configuration of markedness, Universal Grammar (UG), providing the principles of 'core grammar', is a biologic capacity that human beings have to acquire languages (Chomsky, 1981a, 1981b, 1982). There are limited set of principles that determines the core grammar; however, through exposure a child can set parameters of a language which are open to that specific language. In terms of markedness the rules of the core grammar are considered as unmarked, since they are thought to be acquired with little effort which makes them easy to learn. On the other hand, the peripheral rules are assumed to be more difficult to be acquired compared to the rules of core grammar. Therefore, these rules are acknowledged as marked rules and can only be acquired through positive evidence (Markuzewich, 1984, White, 1989).

Learnability aspect of markedness suggests that the acquisition of a language goes from unmarked structures to marked structures according to the input learners receive by identifying the markedness of these structures (Wolfe-Quintero, 1992b). Governed by the subset principle, the most minimal structure is hypostasized first by the learner, then a less limited possibility is

considered (Wolfe-Quintero, 1992b). Lastly, typological angle of markedness proposes that the relationship of markedness is determined by the constraints and idiosyncrasy of the structures in the individual languages. In other words, the relationship, of which structures are more or less constrained and idiosyncratic than other structures, determines markedness (Wolfe-Quintero, 1992b).

As for markedness in dative constructions, it is stated that while [NP PP] structures have an unmarked idiosyncrasy, [NP NP] forms have a marked feature. This is based on the frequency of dative verbs in English most of which have [NP PP] structure (Mazurkewich, 1984). Therefore, the verbs taking [NP NP] complements are assumed to be a subgroup of the verbs taking prepositional phrases as indirect objects, and prepositional phrase complements are predicted to be learned before double object complements (Fischer, 1971, 1976; Stayton; 1972; Roeper et al, 1981). Furthermore, only the occurrence of [NP NP] structures is constraint by morphological and semantic factors, which leaves [NP PP] complements as the unmarked ones; that is, as a morphologic constraint, the monosyllabic and native origin verbs are the ones that allow dative alternation, which are more frequent in English compared to the polysyllabic and non-native/Latinate origin verbs (Mazurkewich, 1984). In addition, as stated before, semantic constraints govern the dative alternation in certain contexts depending on prospective possessors (Goldsmith, 1980).

#### *Previous Studies on the Acquisition of Datives*

Studies conducted in 1970s and 1980s on first language acquisition demonstrated that children at preschool age have difficulty in understanding and imitating English double object datives compared to prepositional datives, and this made people believe that children acquire double object datives after prepositional datives (Fisher, 1971; Cook 1976; Osgood & Zehler, 1981; Roeper et al., 1981). These studies included full NPs for both direct object and indirect object positions and children are expected to imitate and perform these double object and prepositional datives (Pinker, 1984; Gropen et al., 1989). Since it is easier to process prepositional datives when the direct and the indirect objects are full NPs (e.g. 9a and 9b), it is not surprising that Pinker (1984) and Gropen et al. (1989) found it more difficult for children to produce double object dative structures.

- a. The cat sent the mouse to the dog.
- b. The cat sent the dog the mouse.

Although Wilson et al. (1981)'s study supports the above findings, White (1987) found out that children aged between 3 to 5 can imitate both prepositional and double object datives, which made White think that there is not an order in the acquisition of both structures. However, since it is possible for children to imitate sentences which do not exist in their grammar, White (1987)'s results are somewhat found to be problematic. As opposed to White, Gropen et al. (1989) investigated the child corpora (CHILDES) and concluded that neither of these two structures appears earlier than the other. Also, they found out that these structures can be observed in the second year of children's speech. These findings of Gropen et al. (1989) were also found to be problematic due to three reasons (Snyder & Stromswold, 1997). First of all, they counted utterances in which for-datives and to-datives did not exist. Second, the ages of children that were analyzed were not correct. Lastly, the researchers included only 5 children in their study, which makes it hard to generalize the order of acquisition of double object and prepositional datives.

There are fewer studies investigating English dative alternation in second language acquisition and most of them focus on the difference between alternation and non-alternating verbs. Grammaticality judgment tests were used in majority of these studies, most of which found prepositional dative being acquired earlier than double object dative (Öz, 2002; Hawkins, 1987; Le Comgagnon, 1984; Mazurkewich, 1981; 1984; 1985; Tanaka, 1987). Both Mazurkewich (1984) and Le Compagnon (1984) used grammaticality judgment tests in their studies. While Mazurkewich (1984) found out that French learners of English acquired prepositional dative before double object dative, Tanaka (1987)'s study revealed that double object and prepositional datives were used simultaneously, especially with the verb 'give' by Japanese learners of English.

In addition to investigating the acquisition order of these structures, the effect of alternating and non-alternating verbs also attracted researchers' interests (Wolk et al, 2011; Callies & Szczesniak, 2008; Inagaki, 1997; Davies, 1994; Hawkins, 1987). These studies looked at the possible orders that certain verbs allow; i.e. double object datives and prepositional datives. The results of these studies suggested that second language learners were able to distinguish the verb

Zeybek (2018)

categories according to the structures they license (Callies & Szczesniak, 2008; Inagaki, 1997; Mazurkewich, 1984). Moreover, Wolke et al. (2011) found out that while advanced second language learners are better at realizing double object dative verbs which allow both double NP and prepositional constructions, intermediate learners tend notice only prepositional datives.

### **The Present Study**

In order to investigate the markedness in dative structures, both Production and Grammaticality Judgement tests were carried out. Since native speakers of a language are able to judge the grammaticality of the sentences in their language, which shows the linguistic competence of those native speakers (Chomsky, 1965, 1980), it is also expected from second language learners to demonstrate their linguistic competence in a similar way. Although there are disagreements upon the effectiveness and reliability of Grammaticality Judgement Tests claiming that context may affect the grammaticality and interpretability of the sentences (Greenbaum, 1977), many researchers oppose this idea believing that these judgement tests are useful in finding out the linguistic competence of the subjects (Mazurkewich, 1984).

### **Participants**

In total, 50 subjects were recruited among students who were studying at sophomore, junior and senior levels in Foreign Language Education Department at a state university in Turkey. The first language of these participants was Turkish and their foreign language was English. They were learning English approximately for ten years, and as a requirement of the department they had to pass a proficiency exam offered by The School of Foreign Languages or take English preparatory courses for a year in order to be a freshmen student in the department. The aim of these preparatory courses is to enable them to reach at least to B1 proficiency level in English. Therefore, the lowest proficiency level of the participants was assumed as B1.

### **Data Collection Tools and Procedure**

Two types of tests were used in order to collect data; grammaticality judgement and production. Mazurkewich's (1984) Intuitive Judgement Test was used as a grammaticality judgement tool. This test includes *to-* and *for-* dative verbs forming simple declarative sentences.

The sentences are presented in a mixed order in the test. The verbs used in these sentences are presented in the following table:

<b>To-dative verbs allowing alternation</b>	<b>For-dative verbs allowing alternation</b>
give, lend, read, send, throw	bake, buy, choose, make, save
<b>To-dative verbs obligatorily taking prepositional phrase complements</b>	<b>For-dative verbs obligatorily taking prepositional phrase complements</b>
explain, report, suggest	capture, create design

Table 2. Verbs used in grammaticality judgement test

This grammaticality judgement test also included distractor sentences which did not contain any dative verbs. These verbs were take, walk, rescue, chase and annoy. The sentences used in this test were categorized into five types. These types are presented in table 3.

<b>Type-1</b> Dative verbs allowing alternation with the dative NP in PP	<b>E.g.</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Peter threw a ball <i>to Philip</i>.</li> <li>• Diane baked a cake <i>for Nicole</i>.</li> </ul>
<b>Type-2</b> Dative verbs allowing alternation with the dative NP as the first NP of a double-NP construction	<b>E.g.</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Peter throw <i>Philip</i> a football.</li> <li>• Diane baked <i>Nicole</i> a cake.</li> </ul>
<b>Type-3</b> Dative verbs not allowing alternation with dative NP in PP	<b>E.g.</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• David suggested the trip <i>to Ruth</i>.</li> <li>• Anne created a costume <i>for Sarah</i>.</li> </ul>
<b>Type-4</b> Dative verbs not allowing alternation but with the dative NP as the first NP of a double-NP construction	<b>E.g.</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• *David suggested <i>Ruth</i> the trip.</li> <li>• *Anne created <i>Sarah</i> a costume.</li> </ul>
<b>Type-5</b> Distractors with no dative verbs.	<b>E.g.</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dennis <i>annoyed</i> Karen yesterday.</li> </ul>

Table 3. The types of sentences in GJT

The verbs that allow alternation were chosen among monosyllabic native origin verbs, while non-alternating verbs were polysyllabic with nonnative origin. Full NPs were used in all sentences and pronouns were not preferred since sometimes people may find a sentence grammatical when the indirect object is a pronoun and when replaced with a full NP they find it ungrammatical (see 10a and b).

a. Ayşe repeated Ali the answer.

b. ?Ayşe repeated him the answer.

The participants were asked to read the sentences and write true (t) if they find the sentence grammatically correct and write false (f) if they find the sentence grammatically incorrect. The students were not given a time limitation during the application of the test. A copy of this grammaticality judgement test is presented in the Appendix.

A picture-cued production test was prepared by the researcher with the same 16 verbs used in grammaticality judgement test. Sixteen pictures were constructed according to the verbs. The order of these verbs were randomized. The aim was to elicit sentences from the participants and analyze their first preferences for dative constructions. They were asked to describe the actions in the pictures with the verb given under each picture. They were also given the subject of the sentences, and asked to write active sentences. They were allowed to use any tense they would like to use without changing the given verb with another one. This picture-cued production test was given before the grammaticality judgement test so that the participants were not influenced by the sentences from it. In order to enhance validity, the test was evaluated by another researcher from the field. A copy of the picture-cued production test was also given in the Appendix.

## Results

The participants' answers to both picture-cued production test and grammaticality judgement test were analyzed through counts and percentages. The sentences that they formed in the production test were counted and classified according to the dative structures they used. The ungrammatical and wrong constructions, in which the participants either had a grammatical mistake or another preposition other than *to* and *for* affecting the meaning of the whole sentence, were counted out. The percentages are presented in Table 4.

Verbs	NP-PP Construction		NP-NP Construction		Wrong Preposition Use (to-for)		Ungrammatical/ Wrong Constructions	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
lend	43	86%	6	12%	-	-	1	2%
read	39	78%	3	6%	7	14%	1	2%
give	45	90%	5	10%	-	-	-	-
throw	45	90%	3	6%	-	-	2	4%
send	44	88%	3	6%	2	4%	1	2%
make	35	70%	3	6%	11	22%	1	2%
bake	36	72%	2	4%	10	20%	2	4%
save	39	78%	-	-	9	18%	2	4%

## The Acquisition of Dative Alternation and Markedness in Second Language Learning

buy	24	48%	1	2%	22	44%	3	6%
choose	40	80%	-	-	5	10%	5	10%
	NP-PP Construction		*NP-NP Construction		Wrong Preposition Use (to-for)		Ungrammatical/ Wrong Constructions	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
report	37	74%	1	2%	-	-	12	24%
suggest	39	78%	3	6%	6	12%	2	4%
explain	44	88%	2	4%	4	8%	-	-
design	39	78%	2	4%	9	18%	-	-
create	37	74%	1	2%	12	24%	-	-
capture	33	66%	-	-	5	10%	12	24%

Table 3. Results of the Production Task

As it can be seen from the table, participants had a higher tendency in forming [NP PP] structures compared to [NP NP] ones with both *to*- and *for*- dative verbs. This finding coincides with the results of previous studies done in second language learning research (Öz, 2002; Hawkins, 1987; Le Compagnon, 1984; Mazurkewich, 1981; 1984; 1985; Tanaka, 1987). As these studies suggest, the double-NP structure was found to be marked and prepositional dative structure was unmarked. Therefore, while Turkish second language learners of English have problems in forming [NP NP] structures, it is much easier for them to construct prepositional dative forms.

When *to*-and *for*-dative verbs were compared, even though participants preferred prepositional structures over double-NP ones, there is a slight difference between their percentages. It is noteworthy to highlight that with *for*-dative verbs, participants used *to*-preposition, while with *to*-dative verbs they had very low percentage of wrong preposition use. In other words, these participants used the preposition *to* instead of *for* in prepositional dative structures. The study conducted on French and Inuktitut (Eskimo) native speakers whose second language was English revealed a similar result, indicating that the accuracy of *for*- dative structures lagged behind *to*-dative ones (Mazurkewich, 1984). Furthermore, research on first language acquisition also demonstrates the difficulty in the process of *for*-datives for children, which may be the result of a difficulty in acquiring the semantic notion of benefactiveness compared to the notion of goal (Fischer, 1971). Therefore, the participants' tendency to use *to* with the *for*-dative prepositional structures may be the result of their order of acquisition of the semantic notions of benefactiveness and goal.

Lastly, Table 4 demonstrates that with polysyllabic non-native origin verbs which do not allow alternation, participants mostly produced correct sentences with [NP PP] structures. Although some participants formed double-NP structures with these verbs, majority of them constructed the correct form. However, some of them used wrong prepositions again with the verbs taking the preposition *for*. This can also be explained by the acquisition of the order of semantic notions, *goal* being acquired before *benefactiveness*. Furthermore, participants' having little incorrect sentence formation may be the result of the marked and unmarked features of dative structures. In other words, since these students preferred the unmarked [NP PP] structure and very few of them used the marked structure [NP NP] with the verbs allowing alternation, they may not have the knowledge that these polysyllabic verbs do not allow alternation, but instead may be affected by their preference in unmarked structures.

The participants' judgements to the sentences in grammaticality judgement test were counted and classified according to the sentence types that stated in table 2. They were also categorized according to the prepositions they take. The results of the grammaticality judgement test are presented in table 4.

To-Dative	K	Percent	Mean	SD	For-Dative	K	Percent	Mean	SD
<b>Type-1:</b> <i>Peter threw a football to Philip.</i>	5	97.8%	4.89	.51	<b>Type-1:</b> <i>Dianne baked a cake for Nicole.</i>	5	99.2%	4.96	.28
<b>Type-2:</b> <i>Peter threw Philip a football.</i>	5	31.6%	1.58	1.8	<b>Type-2:</b> <i>Diane baked Nicole a cake.</i>	5	25.6%	1.28	1.8
<b>Type-3:</b> <i>David suggested a trip to Ruth.</i>	3	98.6%	2.96	.19	<b>Type-3:</b> <i>Anne created a costume for Sarah.</i>	3	96.6%	2.90	.36
<b>Type-4:</b> <i>*David suggested Ruth a trip.</i>	3	78%	2.34	.98	<b>Type-4:</b> <i>*Anne created Sarah a costume.</i>	3	82%	2.46	.93

Table 4. Results of the Grammaticality Judgement Test

The results in table 4 support the findings of the picture-cued production test, as with both *to-* and *for-* dative verbs allowing alternation, participants judged type-1 sentences as correct with a quite high percentage, and majority of them found type-2 sentences grammatically incorrect. Therefore, as other studies (Öz, 2002; Hawkins, 1987; Le Compagnon, 1984; Mazurkewich, 1981; 1984; 1985; Tanaka, 1987) suggest, for these participants the [NP NP] structure was found to be

marked and the [NP PP] structure was found to be unmarked allowing them to use it more extensively than double-NP forms. When the judgements for type-1 *for*- and *to*- dative sentences compared, no big difference was found between these two prepositions in terms of correct judgements.

The accuracy of the judgements for type-3 sentences were quite high along with the ones for type-4 sentences that are ill formed. This means that most of the participants did not make any mistake in judging type-4 sentences as incorrect. It seems quite possible that these students may have the knowledge of non-alternating dative verbs by looking at table 4. However, their little use of double-NP form for alternating verbs in table 3 throws suspicion on the acquisition of non-alternating verbs. Therefore, the widely usage of prepositional datives as unmarked forms may have affected their choices in grammaticality judgement test resulting in the correct judgement for type-4 sentences. Here, again there is not difference between *to*- and *for*- preposition types in students' judgements.

### **Conclusion and Implications**

The aim of this study was to investigate native and non-native origin dative verbs and the markedness of the verbs allowing alternation among second language learners of English whose native language was Turkish. The results of both picture-cued production test and grammaticality judgement tests revealed that [NP PP] structures of alternating dative verbs were unmarked and [NP NP] forms were marked for these learners. The input these learners receive from the environment is different from the ones in first language acquisition, and teacher correction and peer learning may have an effect on second language learners by providing them with negative evidence (Mazurkewich, 1984). Also, when learnability aspect of markedness is taken into account, language teachers should keep in mind the order of acquisition of these forms and design their syllabus accordingly.

Apart from the markedness of double-NP and prepositional datives, this study also looked at the preposition choices of the participants in both tests. While there was not a big difference between these two prepositional structures among the judgments of the participants, it was found

that they have a tendency to use *to* instead of *for* in prepositional datives and most of their mistakes depended on this wrong preposition use in the production test. As previous research in the field suggest, the difference in the semantic notions of benefactiveness and goal can be taught to second language learners as they may have set an order for these two notions in their learning process. Furthermore, these two notions have difference in their markedness, benefactiveness being the marked one and goal as the unmarked. However, in order to decide upon this issue of markedness between two preposition further studies must be needed.

### References

- Berk, L. M. (1999). *English syntax: From word to discourse*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Callies, M. & Szczesniak, K. (2008). Argument Realisation, information Status and Syntactic weight – A learner-corpus study of the dative alternation. In M. Walter & P. Grommes (Eds.), *Fortgeschrittene Lernervarietäten Korpuslinguistik und Zweitsprachenerwerbsforschung* (pp. 165–187). Tübingen: Niemeyer.
- Chomsky, N. (1965). *Aspects of the Theory of Syntax*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press
- Chomsky, N. (1980). Rules and representations. *Behavioral and brain sciences*, 3(01), 1-15.
- Chomsky, N. (1981a). *Markedness and core grammar*. In Theory of Markedness in Generative Grammar, eds. A. Belletti, L. Brandi, and L. Rizzi. Pisa: Scuola Normale Superiore.
- Chomsky, N. (1981b). *Lectures on Government and Binding*. Dordrecht: Foris Publications.
- Chomsky, N. (1982). *Some concepts and consequences of the theory of government and binding* (Vol. 6). MIT press.
- Cook, V. J. (1976). A note on indirect objects. *Journal of Child Language*, 3(03), 435-437.
- Davies, W. D. (1994). English Dative Alternation and Evidence for a Thematic Strategy in Adult SLA. *Issues in Applied Linguistics*, 5.1, 59-82.
- Felix, S. W. (1988). UG-generated knowledge in adult second language acquisition. In *Linguistic theory in second language acquisition* (pp. 277-294). Springer Netherlands.
- Fischer, S. D. (1972). *The acquisition of verb-particle and dative constructions* (Doctoral dissertation, Massachusetts Institute of Technology).
- Fischer, S. (1976). Child language as a predictor of language change. *Working Papers in Linguistics*, 8(1).
- Fotos, S. S. (1994). Integrating grammar instruction and communicative language use through grammar consciousness-raising tasks. *TESOL quarterly*, 28(2), 323-351.
- Goldsmith, J. (1980). Meaning and mechanism in grammar. *Harvard studies in syntax and semantics*, 3, 423-449.
- Green, G. M. (1974). *Semantics and syntactic regularity*. Indiana University Press.
- Greenbaum, S. (Ed.). (1977). Acceptability in language (Vol. 17). *Walter de Gruyter GmbH & Co KG*.
- Gropen, J., Pinker, S., Hollander, M., Goldberg, R., & Wilson, R. (1989). The learnability and acquisition of the dative alternation in English. *Language*, 203-257.
- Inagaki, S. (1987). Japanese and Chinese learners' acquisition of the narrow range rules for the dative alternation in English. *Language Learning*, 47, 637–669.
- Le Compagnon, B. (1984). Interference and overgeneralization in second language learning: the acquisition of English dative verbs by native speakers of French. *Language Learning*, 34, 39-67.
- Levin, B. (1993). *English verb classes and alternations*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Mazurkewich, I., & White, L. (1984). The acquisition of the dative alternation: Unlearning overgeneralizations. *Cognition*, 16(3), 261-283.
- Oehrle, R. T. (1976). *The grammatical status of the dative alternation in English* (Doctoral dissertation, Doctoral dissertation, MIT).
- Roeper, T., Lapointe, S., Bing, J., & Tavakolian, S. (1981). A lexical approach to language acquisition. *Language acquisition and linguistic theory*, 35-58.

## The Acquisition of Dative Alternation and Markedness in Second Language Learning

- Hawkins, R. (1987). Markedness and the acquisition of the English dative alternation by L2 speakers. *Second Language Research*, 29, 20-55.
- Mazurkewich, I. (1981). *Second language acquisition of the dative alternation and markedness: the best theory* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). Université de Montréal.
- Mazurkewich, I. (1984). The acquisition of the dative alternation by second language learners and linguistic theory and linguistic theory. *Language Learning*, 34, 91-109.
- Mazurkewich, I. (1985). Syntactic markedness and language acquisition. *Studies in second language acquisition*, 7, 15-36.
- Osgood, C. E., & Zehler, A. M. (1981). Acquisition of bi-transitive sentences: pre-linguistic determinants of language acquisition. *Journal of Child Language*, 8(02), 367-383.
- Öz, Y. (2002). *Markedness Theory in the Acquisition Order of Dative Alternation, by Turkish Adult Learners of English* (Unpublished Master's Thesis). Anadolu University.
- Perpiñan, S. & Montrul, S. (2006). On binding asymmetries in dative alternation construction in L2 Spanish. In C. A. Klee & T. L. Face (Eds.), *Selected Proceedings of the 7th Conference on the Acquisition of Spanish and Portuguese as First and Second Languages* (pp. 135-148). Somerville, MA: Cascadilla Proceedings Project.
- Pinker, S. (1984). Visual cognition: An introduction. *Cognition*, 18(1), 1-63.
- Snyder, W., & Stromswold, K. (1997). The structure and acquisition of English dative constructions. *Linguistic Inquiry*, 281-317.
- Stayton, B. (1972). The acquisition of direct and indirect objects in English. *Unpublished manuscript, University of Kansas*.
- Stowell, T. A. (1981). *Origins of phrase structure* (Doctoral dissertation, Massachusetts Institute of Technology).
- Tanaka, S. (1987). The selective use of specific exemplars in second-language performance: The case of the dative alternation. *Language Learning*, 37, 63-88.
- White, L. (1989). *Universal grammar and second language acquisition* (Vol. 1). John Benjamins Publishing.
- Wilson, R., Pinker, S., Zaenen, A., & Lebeaux, D. S. (1981, October). Productivity and the dative alternation. In *6th Annual Boston University Conference on Language Development, October* (pp. 9-11).
- Wolfe-Quintero, K. E. (1992). *The representation and acquisition of the lexical structure of English dative verbs: Experimental studies of native English speakers and Japanese and Chinese adult learners of English* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Hawaii, Graduate Division).
- Wolk, C., Wolfer, S., Baumann, P., Hemforth, B. & Konieczny, L. (2011). Acquiring English dative verbs: Proficiency effect in German L2 learners. In L. Carlson, C. Hölscher & T. Shipley (Eds.), *Proceedings of the 33rd annual conference of the Cognitive Science Society, 2401-2406*, Austin, TX: Cognitive Science Society.