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OVERREGULARIZATIONAL MISTAKES OF SYRIAN IMMIGRANT CHILDREN IN SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION, TURKISH

***Annotation.** This qualitative study explores the morphological development of Syrian immigrant children learning Turkish as a second language, focusing specifically on overregularization errors. Overregularization occurs when learners apply a regular grammatical rule to irregular forms, such as applying standard aorist suffixes to exceptional verbs or misusing vowel harmony rules in an agglutinative context. This study is qualitative one in nature.¹³ Syrian students attending to preschools in the Eastrenn part of Türkiye. After a 5 weeks' longitudinal observation the participants made overregularization in the suffixes that make nouns from nouns, suffixes of interrogations, declaration and cogitation moods, time complements of the sentences in Turkish grammar. Findings suggest that these «logical mistakes» are a natural developmental stage, reflecting the children's active cognitive processing of Turkish linguistic structures. The research emphasizes the need for teachers to view these errors as signs of progress rather than failure in the acquisition process*

***Key words:** learning turkish, overregularization, syrian, longitudinal, suffixes, immigrants.*

***Анотація.** Це якісне дослідження вивчає морфологічний розвиток дітей сирійських іммігрантів, які вивчають турецьку мову як другу, зосереджуючись на помилках надмірної регуляризації. Надмірна регуляризація відбувається, коли учні застосовують регулярне граматичне правило до неправильних форм, наприклад, застосовують стандартні суфікси аориста до виняткових дієслів або неправильно використовують правила гармонії голосних в аглютинативному контексті. Це дослідження має якісний характер. 13 сирійських учнів відвідують дошкільні заклади у східній частині Туреччини. Після 5 тижнів поздовжнього спостереження учасники зробили надмірну регуляризацію суфіксів, що утворюють іменники з іменників, суфіксів питальних форм, оголосних та роздумливих настроїв, часових доповнень речень у турецькій граматиці. Результати дослідження свідчать про те, що ці «логічні помилки» є природним етапом розвитку, що відображає активну когнітивну обробку дітьми турецьких лінгвістичних структур. Дослідження підкреслює необхідність для вчителів розглядати ці помилки як ознаки прогресу, а не невдачі в процесі засвоєння.*

***Ключові слова:** вивчення турецької мови, надмірна регуляризація, сирійська мова, можливість ідентичності, суфікси, іммігранти.*

Introduction. Language plays a significant role in a child's learning. At the heart of a child's language development lies the need to communicate, attract the attention of others, and convey their desires, feelings, and thoughts. Therefore, a child begins learning spoken language from the day they are born. For a child to use language as a means of communication, they need to learn, memorize, and use language symbols when necessary (Aral et al., 2000) [1]. For Syrian immigrant children in Turkey, mastering the Turkish language is a foundational step toward academic achievement and social integration. As these learners transition from the root-based morphology of Arabic to the highly agglutinative, suffix-heavy structure of Turkish, they frequently exhibit **overregularization mistakes** – a process where

a regular grammatical rule is applied to irregular forms (Marcus, et al., 1992) [6]. These errors, such as misapplying the standard aorist suffixes or vowel harmony rules to exceptional cases, are not merely linguistic failures but signify a critical cognitive milestone where the child has internalized a rule and is attempting to apply it systematically. Understanding these patterns is essential for educators to distinguish between developmental stages of second language acquisition and persistent learning difficulties in multicultural classrooms.

Researchers examined theories of language development in children (D. Dağabakan, F. Dağabakan, 2007) [2] and the study of the Turkish language by bilingual Syrian students in Turkey from the perspective of parents (R. Ünal, 2024) [7].

The aim of this paper is to study the morphological development of children of Syrian immigrants learning Turkish as a second language, with a special focus on overregularization errors.

Language, defined in its simplest form as a means of communication, has been described in various ways by many scientists. In his Dictionary of Linguistic Terms, Berke Vardar defines language as «a system of double-articulated vocal signs specific to a particular human community. Language acquisition occurs through coordination. The elements that facilitate this are largely the environment and modern communication and technology tools, such as family, school, television, society, and the internet» (Dağabakan & Dağabakan, 2007) [3]. Therefore, language acquisition occurs without a specific method. Language acquisition is characterized by a slow, internal process and a natural environment (Deniz, 2011) [4]. In unmethodical language acquisition, the learner must always adapt to the target language in the best way possible. This means adapting linguistically to their social environment. According to Klein, there is another scientific aspect to learning through everyday communication: the individual's self-focus and complete adaptation to the language. For the speaker, formal accuracy is not important; rather, it is whether or not they are understood. The speaker reflects this in their speech,

because they have neither participated in language training nor learned the rules of the language (Deniz, 2011) [4]. In second language acquisition without a specific method, the language can be taught by someone else, but even if the learner notices a mistake, no intervention is made because it is not goal-oriented like in language lessons. However, the person can learn the correct way to use the language and correct their mistake by hearing it from someone else.

What is Generalization in Language Acquisition?

Since many languages in the world have irregular usages, internalization is extremely necessary and important for using the language well. Therefore, generalization is the tendency to apply learned rules, including irregular ones, to every situation. It is especially seen from 36 months onwards, where children find it appropriate to apply some grammatical rules they have learned to unrelated situations. In other words, the rules that children have learned are used in all situations, relevant or irrelevant.

Since many languages around the world have irregular usages, domination is extremely necessary and important for using language well. Therefore, doctrine is the tendency to apply learned rules, including irregular ones, to every situation. Particularly observed from 36 months onwards, children find it appropriate to apply some grammatical rules they have learned to unrelated situations. In other words, the rules children have learned are used in all situations, relevant or irrelevant. For example, children saying «I'm thirsty» to express a desire for tea, or «I'm thirsty» to express a desire for cola, is an indication of the logic and power of the native language in word formation and word usage combined with childlike innocence. In addition, the child wants to apply a new word to a group where similar experiences exist. For example, the word «open» can also mean opening a door, peeling a fruit, or untying shoelaces. Similarly, a four- or five-year-old child said, «Turn off the electricity», but instead of «turn on», he used «burn», even though he had never heard the word «burn» before (Kabadayi, 2012) [5].

Method. This section examines the study group, data collection, findings, and interpretation in detail.

Study Group. Thirteen Syrian students aged 8-10 attending preschools in Eastern part of Türkiye were selected using a random sampling method. The study was conducted with the assistance of administrators and teachers working at the school. Eight (60%) of the participants were girls and five (40%) were boys.

Research Results. Data Collection. This study utilized a qualitative research method. Data collection was conducted using observation and question-and-answer techniques. Data recording during observation was carried out by the researcher using participatory observation techniques. The students involved in the study were observed in the classroom during Turkish lessons, in the schoolyard during recess, and in the cafeteria for five weeks. Errors in the application of grammar rules in Turkish were observed by the researcher from a targeted perspective, and the errors made by the students were recorded after the event.

Findings and Interpretation

1. Errors in the application of noun-to-noun derivational suffixes in the Turkish acquisition process of Syrian students

Participants	Examples
H***** (8 years old)	Annem <i>fırincıdan</i> iki ekmek aldı.
Ş***** (10 years old)	<i>İtfaiyeci</i> yangın söndürür.
B***** (8 years old)	<i>Bakkalcıdan</i> çikolata aldım.

The most frequently observed examples of conventionalization generally fall within the group of suffixes that form nouns from nouns. In Turkish, occupational names are derived using the suffixes -cı, -ci, -çı, and -çi. For example, expressions like «şekerci» (confectioner), «simitçi» (bagel seller), «sütçü» (milkman), and

«sucu» (water seller) are occupational names derived from nouns using the -ci suffix, in accordance with the rules in Turkish. However, it can be said that other children, based on these expressions, adapt the -cı and -ci suffixes to general usage, as seen in the table above, and make linguistic errors through conventionalization.

2. Conventionalization Errors in Question Suffixes During the Turkish Acquisition Process of Syrian Children

Participants	Examples
N**** (9 years old) <i>indirir misin?</i>	Amca bana çikolata
M***** (9 years old) <i>oynayabilirim mi?</i>	Arkadaş bende sizle
C***** (8 years old)	Kitap <i>verersen mi?</i>

Children commonly make a rule-forming error by using the question particle, usually after the personal pronoun suffix and at the end of the sentence, due to their limited existing word schemes. Children are rule-forming the imperative mood from «download» and «give» to «download» and «give».

3. Rule-forming errors made by Syrian students in the indicative/subjunctive moods during their Turkish acquisition process

Participants	Examples
D***** (10 yaş)	Okul çıkışı bize <i>geler misin?</i>
H*** (9 yaş)	Çantayı biye <i>verer misin?</i>
H***** (10 yaş)	Evde ödevimi <i>yazaram.</i>

4. Errors in formalizing time concepts among Syrian students during their Turkish language acquisition process.

Participants	Examples
L**** (8 yaş)	Ben yarın okula <i>gelmedim</i> .
T***** (9 yaş)	Dün soruları <i>cevaplıyordum</i> .
N**** (9 yaş)	Yarın ben ders <i>istiyem</i> .
Ş**** (10 yaş)	Ben ödevimi <i>yarın</i> getirdim.
B**** (8 yaş)	<i>Yarın</i> çalışmaya gitmiştim.
H*** (9 yaş)	Sabah uyanıp <i>akşam</i> okula geleceğim.

Students particularly make errors with the concepts of yesterday and tomorrow; since they first learn the concept of «near», they generalize it and apply it to the general. Additionally, the concepts of «before» and «after», and «morning» and «evening» are also among the concepts that are often confused.

Conclusion and Recommendations. This study examined the generalization errors observed in Syrian students aged 8-10 during their acquisition of the Turkish language. It was determined that these students made generalization errors in the concepts of noun-to-noun, question suffixes, indicative-subjunctive moods, and time phrases during the process. Traditionalization errors can naturally occur during the language acquisition process..It can be argued that the rule-making error allows the student to learn grammar rules through experience.

It has been observed that as the student's semantic understanding and vocabulary develop, they abandon the rule-making error.

Based on these results, the following suggestions can be made to teachers:

Since rule-making is a simple language error, it should not be viewed negatively.

The correct form of the word should be taught to the student who makes rule-making errors, but no pressure should be applied in this regard.

The aim should be to indirectly teach the correct form of words that have been rule-made through songs and rhymes given in the school environment.

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