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Turkish Sentence Stress

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Abstract

One of the suprasegmental elements of a language, stress is one of the basic elements necessary for the correct communication and understanding of a message. According to Coşkun (2010: 204), besides leading to differences in the meanings of words, it makes words and phrases the speaker wants to emphasize and wants the listener to pay a special attention to marked; while it contributes to the correct construction of a message that is relayed by the speakers, it helps the listener to understand the message correctly. Though each word and phrase has its separate stress, in a sentence, stress is only on one word. While it is widely held belief that in Turkish, stress is on the word preceding the verb, the place of the stress may change depending on the emotional state of the speaker and the message to be relayed. The purpose of the current study is to elicit the stress system in Turkish by analyzing speech samples taken from different television programs in terms of their stress patterns. Within the context of the current study employing the descriptive method speeches from different television programs were recorded by means of Adobe Audition 1.0 voice program, and these recordings were analyzed in terms of the basic frequency through Praat 3.8.47 voice analysis program.

Keywords: Stress, Sentence Stress, Stress Analysis

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Introduction

Stress can be defined as pressure, accent put on a specific syllabus or word differently from its counterparts (TDK, 2009). It is a stronger utterance of a syllabus when compared to the others (Ercilasun, 2005: 98). In phonetics, it is the phoneme with the strongest tone (voiced) (Coşkun, 2000: 127).

Stress serves the function of generating differences between words and phrases in a sentence in terms of emotions and thoughts conveyed; it creates semantic differences in words or sentences having the same phoneme sequence; it draws the attention of the listener to the element considered to be important by the speaker and thus makes the dialogue more effective and permanent; in verbal communication, in tandem with intonation, it constitutes melody, harmony and fluency (Çetin, 2013: 31).

It is clear that stress has a very important role to play in the establishment of a healthy communication and expression of emotions and thoughts. In this regard, the skill of perceiving and constructing stress is of great importance in terms of word-meaning and/or phrase-meaning relationships. Given the delineations above, it becomes apparent that great importance should be attached to effective communication of emotions and opinions in speech training. Accordingly, it seems to be necessary to create rich stress maps complying with the standard Turkish in the minds of learners by making them listen to accurate examples of correct stress and intonation.

Sentence stress means uttering a word or a phrase in a sentence in a more voiced manner than the others. While duration can be related to stress, intensity of sound may not always be parallel to the word or phrase most stressed in a sentence. Sentence stress is put on only vowels or tone consonants uttered during the speech. The most voiced sound and its affiliated word or phrase makes the main stress group marked. In other words, the word or phrase receiving the main stress represents the primary emotion and thought construction of a sentence. The main stresses in a sentence usually come into being within the framework of the interlocutors' chief emotions during the speech. These chief emotions may lead to emergence of different impressions and sensations on the part of the listener.

According to Gürzap (2004: 131), sentence stress is the index finger of the given sentence; it indicates the purpose and facilitates the comprehension of what is intended to be told (Cited by Çetin, 2013: 41). According to Coşkun (2010: 204), it makes the words and phrases the speaker wants to emphasize and wants the listener to pay a special attention to marked. Fudge (1984: 1) maintains that sentence stress marks a word or a phrase in a sentence and usually this word or phrase is the element of a sentence to which a special meaning is allocated. Fudge (1984: 1) contends that which word should be selected by the speaker; that is, stressed by the speaker, depends on the context in which the sentence is uttered and the message intended to be conveyed to the listener. Fudge (1984: 1) points out that a sentence can mean different things without changing its syntax by means of different stress patterns.

This is also true for Turkish. Let's consider the following example.

- (1) Sen yarın **geleceksin**.
- (2) Sen **yarın** geleceksin.
- (3) **Sen** yarın geleceksin.

- (1) Sen yarın **geleceksin**.

In this first sentence where “Geleceksin”; that is, the verb is stressed, the speaker intends to convey the meaning that “**I want you to come; you must come.**”

- (2) Sen **yarın** geleceksin.

In the second sentence where “Yarın” is stressed, the speaker intends to convey the meaning “**You will absolutely come tomorrow. No other day is possible.**”

- (3) **Sen** yarın geleceksin.

In the third sentence where “Sen” is stressed, the speaker intends to mean “The others may come, but you will certainly come.”

While it is widely held belief that in Turkish, stress in on the word preceding the verb, the place of the stress may change depending on the emotional state of the speaker and the message to be relayed.

Purpose of the Study: To elicit the stress system in Turkish by analyzing speech samples taken from different television programs in terms of their stress patterns.

Research Method: The current study employed the content analysis, one of the qualitative research methods.

Sampling: The sampling of the study consists of 50 sentences taken from natural conversations in Turkish films and various television programs. In the tables below, one can see the films and televisions programs investigated and the number of sentences taken from these programs and analyzed.

Table 1. Television Programs

Name Of Film/Program	The Number of Sentences Investigated
BAŞARININ FORMÜLÜ, TRT GAP, 11.06.2009	12
REÇETE, TRT GAP, 22 May 2014	7
2014 Türkiye İnovasyon Haftası-İstanbul, YOUTUBE	6
BAŞARININ FORMÜLÜ, TRT GAP, 14 March 2012	5

Name of Film/Program	The Number of Sentences Investigated
AİLE ŞEREFİ (film)	4
FUTBOL BİR AŞK, NTV Spor, 08.05.2015	3
CEVİZ KABUĞU, Karadeniz TV, 30.03.2012	2
TGRT HABER, 08.11 2014	2
Vapurda Çay, Simit, Sohbet, TRT Türk, 06.04.2013	2
Sultan (film)	2
TARİHİN ARKA ODASI, TRT Haber Türk Channel, 31.01.2015	1
HAYATIN RENKLERİ , TRT Anadolu, 30.05.2013	1
GECE KAHVESİ, TRT Müzik, 19.08.2014	1
Yalancı Yarım (film)	1
Kelebeğin Rüyası	1

In the natural conversations, inverted, incomprehensible sentences and sentences that are not clear due to background noise were excluded and thus totally 50 sentences were selected and the sampling was constituted.

Data Analysis: The sentences making up the sampling were analyzed in terms of basic frequency by using PRAAT 3.8.47 voice analysis program and the stressed elements of the sentences were detected. Sample analysis images are presented below:

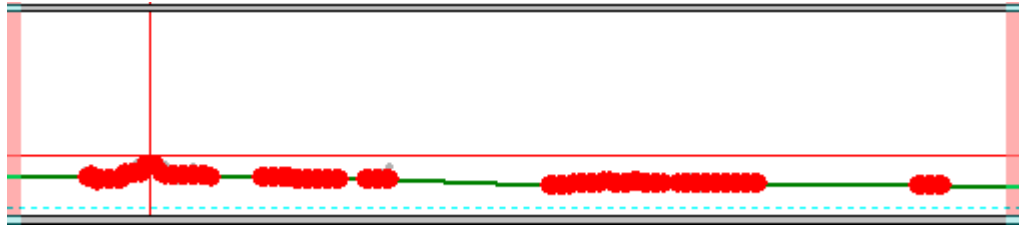


Figure 1. Fahri Hoca, / senelerce / Edebiyat Fakültesine / hizmet etti.



Figure 2. Yarın / Ankara'da / önemli kutlamalar / yapılacak.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The findings obtained through the stress analysis are as follows:

Table 2. Sentence Distribution According to the Number of Elements

NUMBER OF ELEMENTS	NUMBER OF SENTENCES
4	25
5	19
6	4
7	1
8	1
TOTAL	50

Table 3. Distribution of Sentence Stress According to Proximity to Verb

PROXIMITY	NUMBER OF SENTENCES
Stress distant from the verb	45
Stress on the element immediately preceding the verb	2
Stress on the verb	3
TOTAL	50

As a result of the analysis conducted, it was found that; ,

Stress was put on the verb in 3 sentences;

Stress was put on the word immediately preceding the verb in 2 sentences;

And stress was put on the elements distant from the verb in 45 sentences.

In light of these findings, it can be argued that in spoken discourse, the element stressed is not always the one preceding the word; on the contrary, it only accounts for 4% of all the stressed elements.

Table 4. Distribution of Stress According to the Elements of a Sentence

	STRESSED ELEMENTS	NUMBER	FREQUENCY
1.	Adverb	35	% 70
2.	Indirect object	6	% 12
3.	Subject	5	% 10
4.	Object	2	% 4
4.	Verb	2	% 4
TOTAL		50	

From the table, it is clear that the most frequently stressed element in a sentence is the adverb by 70%, it is followed by the indirect object by 12%, the subject by 10% and the object and the verb by 4% each.

In the table below, stresses put on different elements of a sentence can be seen:

Table 5. Sample Sentences

Name of Film /Program	Person	Sentence	Number Of Elements	Order to The Stressed Element	Stressed Element
TRT HABER TÜRK KANALI Tarihin Arka Odası (31 January 2015)	Erhan Afyoncu	Fahri Hoca, / senelerce / Edebiyat Fakültesine / hizmet etti.	4	1.	SUBJECT

Name of Film /Program	Person	Sentence	Number Of Elements	Order to The Stressed Element	Stressed Element
TGRT HABER (8 December 2014)	Dr. İbrahim Pazan	Onun kabrinin böyle olmaması gerektiğini / inanın / o geçen on sene zarfında / 2004'ten 2014'e kadar / hep / hissettim.	5	1.	OBJECT
KARADENİZ TV Ceviz Kabuğu (30 March 2012)	Hulki Cevizoğlu	Yarın / Ankara'da / önemli kutlamalar / yapılacak.	4	1.	ADVERB (time)
Sultan		Zaten / senin su aldığın yerden / ben / tenezzül edip / de/ su falan / almam.	6	2	INDIRECT OBJECT
TRT GAP Başarının Formülü (July, 2009)	Ufuk Tarhan	Aslında / geleceği / hepimiz / birlikte / sekillendiriyoruz.	5	5.	VERB

Results and Suggestion

Though it is widely believed that in Turkish, usually the element preceding the verb is stressed, this seems to be not always correct given the scientific phonetic findings. In the current study, out of 50 sentences, only in two sentences, the element immediately preceding the verb was found to be stressed. Moreover, freedom to put stress on any element of a sentence is an indication of how sophisticated the language is. In this connection, the statement included in grammar and text books “Stressed word or phrase comes immediately before the verb” should be replaced by this statement “Stressed word or phrase can occupy any place in a sentence.”

Reserving the position before the verb for the stressed word or phrase as stated in many grammar and text books can only serve the function of limiting the creativity of Turkish language. This also reduces the verbal expression power of a language. In written discourse; on the other hand, on the basis of the whole pattern of a sentence, the reader can understand and detect the element on which stress is put. The conception that stress should be put on the elements coming before the verb only restricts the affective, intellectual and perceptive word of an individual. Moreover, in Turkish sentence syntax, though the position of the verb is fixed on the final position, the positions of other elements may change. It is even possible for the verb to change its place. This shows that flexibilities in Turkish syntax are quite possible.

In spoken discourse, proximity of the element to be emphasized to the verb and putting stress on the same word may lead to emergence of compounded stress. However, it is not necessary to put the main stress on a word or phrase only because it is next to the verb. In Turkey, it is clear that there is a paucity of research on stress. Because of this paucity, not much emphasis is put on teaching of stress in educational institutions and easy way is adopted by telling that stress is put on the element coming before the verb.

Correct inculcation of the skill of stressing in students can be made possible through the proper instruction given in particularly elementary schools and educational institutions in general. Therefore, first, teachers of Turkish language should be sufficiently trained about the topic of stress in Turkish language.

Speaking and listening activities to enhance the skills of students to perceive and use stress within word-meaning and phrase-meaning relationships, to express their emotions and thoughts effectively and to carry out effective and fluent conversations need to be incorporated into Turkish language courses.

Today, computer programs are available to make suprasegmental elements visible to the eye and audible to the ear. Given that almost every class in educational institutions is equipped with technological devices such as computer, projector and smart board, such programs can be used in classrooms. If pre-service Turkish language teachers educated in education faculties are provided with sound technology-assisted stress instruction, and if they are provided with the required technological infrastructure in their prospective institutions, then the skill of correct perception and production of stress can be imparted to students.

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