



## **INTERACTIONAL FUNCTIONS OF *şey* IN TURKISH: EVIDENCE FROM SPOKEN TURKISH CORPUS<sup>1</sup>**

### **Türkçede *şey*'in Etkileşim İşlevleri: Sözlü Türkçe Derlemi'nden Bulgular**

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**Özet:** Derleme dayalı olan bu çalışma bir Türkçe söylem belirleyicisi olan *şey*'in etkileşim işlevlerini araştırmaktadır. Çalışmada kullanılan veriler Sözlü Türkçe Derlemi'nin Tanıtım sürümünden elde edilmiştir. Çalışma, *şey*'in Türkçede en sık kullanılan söylem belirleyicilerinden biri olduğunu ve konuşmalarda birden fazla etkileşim işlevine sahip olduğunu göstermektedir. Bu bağlamda, Türkçe konuşmalarda *şey*'in temel olarak konuşmacının kendini düzeltme, yeni bir konu başlatma / tanıtma, konuşma sırasını alma / koruma ve konu değişikliğine işaret etme işlevlerine sahip olduğu görülmektedir. Konuşma sırası planlama işlevlerine ek olarak, *şey* ayrıca sözlü dilde konuşmacıların yüzünü koruma işlevini de yerine getirmektedir. Çalışma, söylem belirleyicisi *şey* üzerine daha önce yapılmış araştırmaların sonuçlarını desteklemekte ve *şey*'in etkileşimi kolaylaştırma, konu değişikliklerini planlama ve bağlaşıklık sağlamada önemli bir role sahip olduğunu vurgulamaktadır.

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**Anahtar sözcükler:** *Şey, Söylem Belirleyicisi, Etkileşim İşlevleri, Sözlü Türkçe Derlemi*

**Abstract:** This corpus-based study investigates the interactional functions of Turkish discourse particle *şey*. The data was obtained from the demo version of the Spoken Turkish Corpus (STC). The study presents that *şey* is one of the most frequent discourse particles used in Turkish and has multiple interactional functions in conversations. In this regard, the main functions of *şey* in Turkish in natural conversations are self-repair, introducing / initiating a new topic, holding the floor and signaling a topic shift. In addition to its conversational turn organization functions, *şey* also functions as a face saving device in spoken language. Supporting the findings of the previous research on the discourse particle, the study further emphasizes that *şey* has a crucial role in natural conversations to smooth the interaction, organizing topic shifts and enabling cohesion.

**Key words:** *Şey, Discourse Particle, Interactional Functions, Spoken Turkish Corpus*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In everyday conversations of English and Turkish, there are a number of lexical items which are mostly used unconsciously yet frequently uttered by the speakers to smooth the interaction and enable cohesion in a conversation. These types of lexical items are called discourse particles or discourse markers (Schiffrin, 1987). With the growing number of research studies conducted on spoken interaction, discourse particles have gained a particular importance in the analysis of everyday conversations. They have a significant role in conversations since they fulfill a number of interactional functions.

Before mentioning the functions of discourse particles in everyday speech, it is useful to define and describe the main characteristics of discourse particles. As Yılmaz (1994) suggests, discourse particles are

“accepted to be devices that help individuals in conversation to achieve coherence.” They are also identified as lexical items which do not belong to any single grammatical category (Schiffrin, 1987), which may have flexible positions (initial, middle, final positions) in the sentence and which do not correspond to any specific meaning as a word (Yılmaz, 2004). The lexical items such as *well, I mean, you know, oh* in English and *yani, işte, şey* in Turkish are examples of discourse particles or discourse markers in English.<sup>3</sup> Generally, discourse particles do not affect the syntax of utterances or do not have a meaning as a lexical item on their own. Therefore, it can be inferred that their pragmatic functions make them significant rather than their syntactic or semantic functions (Yılmaz, 2004).

Discourse particles have a crucial role in conversations in terms of their interactional functions. Although the speakers are not aware of this, they frequently use the various discourse particles in their speech. Discourse particles in everyday conversations enable the speaker to transfer messages in a clearer manner, interact smoothly, organize the order of the turns and turn-takings, direct the topics / messages in the conversation, and manage a coherent ongoing conversation. As Schiffrin emphasizes (1987), discourse particles help speakers locate themselves and their utterances in the ongoing construction of discourse. For this reason, those “small” items, as McCarthy (2003) names them, have “big” and significant impact on the direction, content and organization of a conversation.

Erman (2001) names discourse particles as *pragmatic markers* and identifies pragmatic markers as ‘devices of monitoring discourse and conversation’ and ‘functional in the sense that they contribute nothing to the propositional content of the utterance in question, but occur outside the syntactic structure (cited in Oktar & Cem-Değer, 2004).

<sup>3</sup> The terms ‘discourse marker’ and ‘discourse particle’ are used interchangeably in this study.

In the light of the brief information presented above, this study aims to explore the interactional functions of the discourse particle *şey* in Turkish language in everyday spoken conversations. The idea of analyzing the functions of *şey* emerged from the observations that *şey* as a discourse particle in Turkish has a very frequent usage in the conversations with multiple forms and positions. The following section covers a brief overview of the research on discourse particles and on *şey* in particular. Section 3 presents the procedure of the corpus-based research and the occurrences of *şey* in Spoken Turkish Corpus Demo Version (hereafter STC DEMO) (Ruhi et al., 2010). In Section 4, the interactional functions of *şey* as a discourse particle in conversations are presented and supported with examples extracted from STC DEMO.

## **2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND OF RESEARCH ON DISCOURSE PARTICLES**

### **2.1. PREVIOUS STUDIES ON DISCOURSE PARTICLES**

Although the analysis of everyday natural conversations have been ignored for a long period of time, the study of lexical items and their functions have obtained a remarkable attention in the last few decades (Adolphs, 2006). Today, empirical studies with spoken data are commonly carried out in the field of pragmatics. With the growing attention on spoken conversation, it has been noticed that discourse particles, which always occur in everyday speech, have an important place in the organization and cohesion of conversations. The studies on discourse particles have gained a particular attention since then and the functions of discourse particles have started to be investigated in general or with specific emphasis on one or a number of particles. In Yılmaz's terms, while "some of these studies deal with a whole range of discourse markers, the others concentrate on individual ones; also they are treated within larger discourse analytical frameworks" (1994).

## 2.2. REVIEW OF RESEARCH ON DISCOURSE PARTICLE *ŞEY*

Before sharing the findings of the analysis on the discourse particle *şey*, it is useful to review the previous studies carried out on spoken discourse in Turkish language. Spoken discourse has become an area which has been investigated by Turkish linguists in the last two decades. There are a few research studies conducted on everyday conversations, discourse particles and the functions of some discourse markers/particles in Turkish. One of the most comprehensive and elaborate research on discourse markers has been done by Özbek (1995). In her study, Özbek compared a number of discourse markers including *well* and *şey* in English and in Turkish. She investigated the similarities and differences between the markers in different languages to find out whether the functions of discourse markers are universal or not. Her study is significant since it has revealed that the discourse markers, as she calls them, are one of the language universals and have similarities in their interactional functions. In another study, she investigated the functions of *yani*, *işte* and *şey* as Turkish discourse markers and emphasized that it is possible to use with suffixes and as a free standing marker in various grammatical positions. Similarly, Yılmaz (1994) carried out a research on the functions of discourse particles focusing on *well* and *şey*, which constitutes the core investigation topic in this case as well. Yılmaz investigated the similarities and differences between the usage and functions on two discourse particles mentioned above. Following his study in 1994, Yılmaz (2004) did another research in which he analyzed the three most common discourse particles in Turkish; *işte*, *yani* and *şey*. This study is worthy for its in-depth analyses on those three discourse particles. He concluded that the three particles have multiple functions and *şey* 'marks the speaker's temporary mental effort of extracting the linguistic information from the memory' as well as 'it displays caution and discretion and marks politeness when assessing/asserting something about the self or the other' (Yılmaz, 2004).

In addition to the studies of Özbek (1998) and Yılmaz (2004) on discourse markers *yani*, *işte*, *şey* in Turkish, there are other significant studies on several discourse particles in conversations. The functions of

*yani* have been investigated by Ilgın and Büyükkantarcıoğlu (1994). It is revealed in their study that *yani* embodies different interactional functions depending on the specific context it is used in and users' intentions. All of these studies constitute significant cornerstones leading the investigations of spoken Turkish language. Similarly, Ruhi (2009) analyzed the functions of *yani* and concluded that 'parenthetical *yani* serves to constrain the metarepresentation of referents and contributes to the derivation of implied meaning at the intentional level of the discourse, thereby often producing rhetorical, emotive effects.' Oktar and Cem Değer's (2004) study focused on the functions of *işte* as a pragmatic marker. They stated that *işte* is uttered in three domains: textual, social and metalinguistic domains and various functions are assigned to *işte* depending on the particular domain.

The studies of Yılmaz (1994, 2004) and Özbek (1995,1998), which explore the interactional functions of *şey*, have consisted of spoken data recorded and transcribed by the researchers at times when electronic spoken corpora were not available for Turkish. The present research on *şey* is significant since the data has been retrieved from a corpus. The results may have significance in terms of controlling the consistency of functions of *şey* in previous research and comparing the findings of previous studies with the current corpus-based research.

### **3. *şey* IN SPOKEN TURKISH CORPUS**

#### **3.1. LEXICAL MEANING AND FORMS OF *ŞEY* IN CONVERSATIONS**

*şey* is one of the most frequently used discourse particles in Turkish language. According to the word definition given by The Turkish Language Association Dictionary (1998), the main meaning of the word *şey* is *thing* in English. Holding the meaning *thing*, *şey* can be combined with other words to constitute other nouns in Turkish such as; *her şey*: everything, *hiçbir şey*: nothing, *herhangi bir şey*: anything, *bir şey*: something. *şey* is generally used as a noun in the sentence while it carries the meaning of *thing*. Apart from its lexical meaning, *şey* is often used as a discourse particle to continue a

conversation. Indeed, it is difficult to find a Turkish conversation without the discourse particle *şey* in everyday speech. *şey* embodies the basic characteristics and pragmatic functions of discourse particles. As explained with Schiffrin's statements (1987), *şey* does not belong to any particular grammatical category, similar to the other discourse particles:

- (1) ((first name, male)) *abiyle şey yapacaktım/ gönderecektim.*  
(*şey* as a verb)  
'I would do *şey*/ with ((first name, male)) *abi*, send (it).'
- (2) *ne kadar basit şeyler bu istediklerin be oğlum!* (*şey* as a noun)  
'Well son, how simple *şey*s you want!'

*şey*, as a discourse particle, can be placed in various positions in the sentence. It is found in initial, medial and final positions. There are two forms of *şey* in Turkish conversations; single standing *şey* and suffixed *şey*. At this point, it is useful to note that a suffixed discourse particle is unique to Turkish, compared to English. The reason for adding suffixes to a discourse particle, *şey* in our case is based on the structure of the language and the functions it fulfills. Since Turkish is an agglutinative language, sometimes *şey* may have nominal and verbal inflection suffixes in conversations.

### 3.2. *şey* IN STC

In the study, a qualitative research design was employed to investigate the interactional functions of *şey*. Although the token number which will be stated below may seem insignificant for a quantitative corpus-based research, it is useful to remark once more that the main focus of this study is to analyze the pragmatic functions of *şey* in conversations so that a quantitative analysis is not the concern of the study.

The data used in this study were retrieved from STC DEMO.<sup>4</sup> STC DEMO is comprised of 23 different conversations in family/relative, service encounter and broadcast domains; 18357 tokens and 2,4 hours of spoken language audio recordings in Turkish, together with their written transcriptions. *şey* was searched in STC DEMO with EXAKT concordance tool in EXMARaLDA (Schmidt and Wörner, 2009). 301 tokens were extracted in the search. Nouns formed with *şey* (*her şey*, *hiçbir şey*, *bir şey* etc.), the number of which is 118, were excluded from the data used in the study because they did not fulfill any interactional function in conversations but embodied the lexical meaning of *şey*. Thus, the functions of 116 tokens were included and analyzed. The data retrieved from STC DEMO suggest that single standing *şey* with 116 tokens is the second most frequently used interactional marker after *yani*, the total token number of which is 188. However, with its suffixed and multi-word forms, *şey* outnumbers *yani*, which makes *şey* the most frequent interactional marker in STC DEMO, after non-lexical backchannels (e.g. *hm*, *ha* and *h-h*). Another noteworthy point to be mentioned is that both suffixed and single standing *şey* may be found in initial, middle and final positions in the sentences. The corpus data suggest that the most common place of *şey* in the sentence is the medial position while the least frequent place is the final position.

**Table 1.** Classification of tokens of *şey*

Types	Token samples	Examples	No. of tokens
Single-Standing	<i>şey</i>	(1) Domain: <i>conversation between family members</i>  BUR000030: <i>ondan sonra şey. kısa isim istiyordum ben.</i> 'Then, well. I actually wanted a short name.'	116

<sup>4</sup> The author has contributed recordings and transcriptions to STC. See Ruhi in this issue for details on the Spoken Turkish Corpus, its structure, content and its implementation with EXMARaLDA software suite to construct the corpus, transcribe, and analyze spoken language data.

Suffixed Forms	şeyde, şeyden, şeydi, şeydir, şeye, şeyi, şeyim, şeyimiz, şeyin, şeyler, şeylerden, şeylere, şeyleri, şeylerin, şeyttirirdik	(2) Domain: <i>conversation between family members</i>  ZEY000073: <i>şeyi farkettik. Biz çok ayrı yaşamışız. Birbirimizin dilini bilmiyoruz.</i> 'We noticed <b>this</b> . We lived apart for a long time. We don't understand each other anymore.'	67
Nouns (Single-standing, and suffixed forms)	bişey, bişeye, bişeyi, bişeyim, bişeyini, bişeyle, bişeyler, bişeyse, bişeyisi, hiçbişey, hiçbişeyi, hiçbişeyimi, her şey, bir şey, bi şey	(4) Domain: <i>conversation between family members</i>  NEV000033: <i>neyse bi malzeme mi <b>bişey</b> gelecekmiş.</i> 'Anyway, a material or <b>something</b> will appear.'	118
<b>total number of tokens included</b>			<b>116</b>
<i>raw total</i>			301

#### 4. ANALYSIS OF *şey*: ITS PRAGMATIC FUNCTIONS

In this section, the pragmatic functions of *şey* as a discourse particle are presented under the categories of single standing *şey*, suffixed *şey* and *şey* in the domain of politeness with sample data extracted from STC DEMO.

##### 4.1. INTERACTIONAL FUNCTIONS OF SINGLE-STANDING *şey*

###### 4.1.1. SELF-REPAIRS

One of the main functions of *şey* in a conversation is self-repair. In this type of use, *şey* is uttered as a corrector following the reparamandum. In the first phase, the speaker produces a wrong utterance. Upon realization of the mistake, the speaker edits the error by linking the error and correct form of the lexical item with the use of *şey*. An example indicating the self-repair function of *şey* as a discourse particle has been presented below in a conversation between family members on the trees in their surroundings:

(3) STC 072\_090618\_00005

**PER000040** *peki bu ağaçların hepsi kesilecek mi o zaman?*

**CEV000041** *yok canım! Arabaların ke/şey ağaçların kesilene kesildi artık. Tamam.*

**PER000040** *((0.5)) daha başka kesilmeyecek.*

**PER000040** *will all the trees be cut now?*

**CEV000041** *no way ! ~ The cars/şey the trees have already been cut. It is over.*

**PER000040** *((0.5)) no more trees will be cut.*

In this excerpt, CEV intended to say that the trees were cut. However, he produces the wrong word and utter ‘cars’ first instead of ‘trees’. When he notices that word was not the intended one, he interrupts his utterance and edits the error by using *şey* followed by the correctly uttered lexical item.

In (4), a resident and her service provider in the apartment search the source of the noise occurring at noon, and SED declares that her house is empty at that specific time. In this conversation, *şey* fulfills a similar interactional function. Here, the speaker starts her sentence with the intention of forming a different word. Then, she notices that the word she just uttered is not correct. Following the reparam, she produces the intended word which is ‘five’. Between the wrong utterance and alteration, the speaker uses *şey* to repair her mistake.

(4) STC 114\_090228\_00009

**SED000047** *bizde herkes okulda. ~bi/ yani biz • eve en... ((0.3)) şey beşte filan geliyoruz.*

- APA000050** (*hakkaten*).
- SED000047** everyone is at school. *ıw/ I mean*  
we • come home en... ... ((0.3))  
*şey* at five.
- APA000050** (right)

In both of the examples analyzed above, the speakers stop immediately when they realized the error in their speech. They produce *şey* as a marker stating the repair of the error and utter the intended lexical item. As Yılmaz emphasizes (2004), *şey* both signals an ‘upcoming repair’ in the conversations and indicates that the speakers ‘monitor his/her speech production’ throughout the conversation.

#### 4.1.2. INTRODUCING A TOPIC

Another function of *şey* in naturally occurring spoken language is initiating a new topic or shifting the topic of the conversation. Mostly, the speakers in a conversation start a new topic by using the discourse particle *şey* at first and continue talking about the new topic. The conversation below is among two classmates discussing the arrangements for their vacation and constitutes an example for the function of *şey* as a topic initiator.

(5) STC 117\_090310\_00019

- BAD000036** ((0.1)) *biz/ bizim* ((first name, female)) *hoca haftaya*  
*yokmuş.*  
• *herkes eve gidecek.*
- OZL000072** ((0.2)) *ne güzel.*
- OZG000035** ((0.9)) *şey diyorum* ((first name, female))! ((0.6))  
*biz* ((0.4)) *emm...* ((0.2)) *yani ikimiz ayarlarsak*  
*gidelim*

**BAD000036** ((0.1)) next week, we/our ((first name, female))  
*hoca* is not here. • everyone will go home.

**OZL000072** ((0.2)) how nice.

**OZG000035** ((0.9)) I say *şey* ((first name, female))! ((0.6)) we  
 ((0.4)) emm... I mean we may go together if we  
 can arrange (for it).

In this excerpt, BAD gives information about their professor's absence at school to her friend, OZG. Then, OZG suggests to BAD that they go home together. Here, OZG starts a new conversation topic. While initiating this new topic to BAD, she starts her sentence with *şey*. It enables her to switch to the new topic in a soft manner.

In excerpt (6), a conversation among family members between FAT, the aunt, and TUG, the niece of another family member is presented. FAT welcomes TUG and asks about what she has been doing. Following her answer, TUG changes the topic and starts a new one. By using *şey* at the beginning of her utterance, she gives new information about a person in the family to FAT. In this conversation, *şey* functions as a marker signaling the change of topic. One noteworthy observation is that while introducing or shifting the topic in a conversation, *şey* is mostly used at the initial position in the utterance.

(6) STC 112\_090217\_00001

**FAT000027** *hoş geldin canım. iyiyiz.* ((0.1)) *sen ne yaptın?*

**TUG000026** *hoş bulduk.*

**TUG000026** ((0.4)) *ne yapayım ben de yaa!* ((0.5)) *şey* ((first name)) *sekizde çıkacakmış.*

**FAT000027** welcome dear. we are fine. ((0.1)) how about you?

**TUG000026** thank you.

**TUG000026** ((0.4)) oh nothing special! ((0.5)) **şey** ((first name)) will be out of school at eight.

#### 4.1.3. MARKING HESITATION, HOLDING THE FLOOR, PLANNING THE NEXT UTTERANCE

One of the most significant functions of *şey* is its function of displaying hesitation. When the speaker is hesitant about his/her utterances, s/he uses *şey* to take the time until s/he is sure about her utterances. In this manner, s/he holds the floor. The reason why the three functions are combined under one heading is that the three functions establish the ground for each other. In other words, they are interrelated functions that are better handled together. Showing hesitation in the conversation allows the speaker to hold the floor. To hold the turn, the speaker needs to end the hesitancy, find the intended item or topic and plan for his/her next utterance.

In excerpt (7), BUR explains her ideas on her daughter's name to friends and family members. BUR inhales and uses a phrase including *şey* to hold her floor and plans her next utterance until she becomes sure about her next utterance.

(7) STC 012\_090128\_00002

**BUR000030** *gerçi son zaman ben de sıkılmaya başladım.*  
((0.2)) ((inhales)) *ondan sonra şey... ((0.8)) kısa isim istiyordum ben.*

**BUR000030** actually I was becoming bored. ((0.2)) ((inhales)) then **şey** ... ((0.8)) I wanted a short name.

In excerpts (8) and (9), *şey* has a similar function. In excerpt (8), CEV informs his wife on the new environment planning. In excerpt (9), BUR describes the content of the telephone and its card. Since the speakers are hesitant in the conversations, they appear to be searching for the appropriate lexical items to produce. In the meantime, they use *şey* to hold the floor and show that their turn is not over. At the same

time, they plan their next utterances. *şey* acts as a device giving them time to organize their speech and keep their turns.<sup>5</sup>

(8) STC 072\_090618\_00005

**CEV000041** *o şeyin • yan tarafına/ ((0.1)) şu ee ormanın içine ve karşı tarafa da ((0.5)) kar ee emm s/ ş/ şey... ((0.3)) ne? ((inhales)) ((0.7)) kar yağdırma makinaları kurulacakmış.*

**CEV000041** near that *şey* / ((0.1)) / ee inside the forest and across ((0.5)) snow ee emm s/ ş/ *şey* ... ((0.3)) what? ((inhales)) ((0.7)) snow making machines will be set.

(9) STC 012\_090128\_00002

**BUR000030** *şey ne diyecektim. bak telefonda. bak. ((0.3)) böyle kartında da var.*

**BUR000030** *şey*, what was I going to say. Look, it is on the phone. Look. ((0.3)) It is also on its card.

#### 4.2. *şey* WITH SUFFIXES

As mentioned earlier, the discourse particle *şey* has suffixed forms in conversations. Similar to the single standing *şey*, suffixed *şey* can be placed at initial, medial and final positions in sentences as well. They also perform similar interactional functions in the conversations. The main difference between single standing *şey* and suffixed *şey* is that the latter takes the suffixes of gender, case, number, possession and aspect modal. There is one significant point to mention here and that is that *şey* is the only discourse particle that can have a suffixed form (Yılmaz, 1994). As has been mentioned earlier, unlike the other

<sup>5</sup> Although it is not observed regularly, *şey* follows and is followed by filled pauses and fillers such as *ee*, *emm* when it marks hesitation and signals for planning the next utterance in a number of conversations.

particles such as *işte, yani, falan* etc., *şey* takes suffixes and can hold the place of the nouns, verbs and adjectives, depending on the suffixes that these take in the syntactic structure of the utterance.

One important feature of suffixed *şey* is that it mostly replaces or substitutes a lexical item in the utterance due to hesitation and delay. When the speaker does not remember or find the correct lexical item, h/she simply replaces the missing word with suffixed *şey*. Depending on the suffixes of the lexical items that is ‘forgotten’, *şey* takes the suffixes of the substituted lexical item and belongs to the same grammatical category of the substituted lexical item. In some cases, the speaker remembers the intended word right after using *şey* and produces it. In other cases, however, the speaker does not produce the missing lexical item and only substitutes it with *şey*. As long as the message is conveyed between speakers, the lack of a substitution with a lexical item does not cause to a comprehension problem for the speakers.

In excerpt (10), HAL helps her husband choose appropriate clothes. In excerpt (11) NEC talks about a movie he watched to his friends. Both excerpts display that suffixed *şey* replaces nouns and takes the suffixes belonging to those nouns. When the speakers remember the words, they immediately utter the intended word after suffixed *şey*.

(10) STC 024\_091113\_00031

**HAL000098** ((0.6)) *o zaman siyah* ((1.0)) *emm giyeceksin demektir.* ((0.5)) *bence açık maviyle güzel olmaz.* • *bununla daha güzel olur.* ((0.7)) *bi üst üste koysana* ((0.3)) **şeyi/** *ceketi.* ((0.6)) *pantolonun* ((0.2)) *yanına.*

**HAL000098** ((0.6)) then black ((1.0)) emm you are going to wear. ((0.5)) I think light blue does not fit. • it goes better with this one. ((0.7)) put ((0.3)) **şey/** the jacket. ((0.6)) near ((0.2)) the trousers.

(11) STC 052\_090819\_00016

- NEC000064** *ee yani ((0.2)) normalde gerçek hayatta olmayan şeyler ((0.2)) filme çok yakışmış. ıyadırgamıyorsun. ((inhales)) kadın mesela uçağa kılıçla biniyor. ((0.9)) şeyden/ Okinawa'dan*
- NEC000064** *ee I mean ((0.2)) things that normally do not happen in real life ((0.2)) look perfect in this movie. ıyou don't find them odd. ((inhales)) for example, the woman gets on the plane with a sword. ((0.9)) from şey, from Okinawa.*

In contrast to the examples (10) and (11), excerpt (12) indicates a case where *şey* simply substitutes another word which is a noun, yet the intended lexical item after *şey* has not been uttered. It is probably because the interlocutor has already comprehended the word which is substituted by *şey* and the speaker does not need to correct the word in such a situation. As a final comment for single standing *şey* and suffixed *şey*, it can be inferred that both forms of *şey* have significant conversational functions enabling the speech to flow smoothly and conveying the messages in the conversations.

(12) STC 113\_090404\_00004

- DER000038** *tamam. ((2.3)) ben sana şeyi yolladım mı?*
- BAD000036** *((0.7)) bana yollamadın sen hiç şeyleri. ((XXX))*
- DER000038** *ok. ((2.3)) did I send şey to you?*
- BAD000036** *((0.7)) you did not send şeys to me . ((XXX))*

#### 4.3. *şey* AS A MARKER OF POLITENESS

Besides its conversational management functions, *şey* has a crucial role in politeness. As identified by Yılmaz (1994, 2004), *şey* may be

used as a face mitigator in face-threatening situations (Brown & Levinson, 1987).

In excerpt (13), OZG talks about the son of an acquaintance, who is not as tall as his peers. To express the fact that he is not tall, OZG prefers using *şey* instead of the adjective 'short'. Her selection indicates that OZG wants to protect the face of the boy when she mentions a disadvantageous situation about him. Here, *şey* acts as a face mitigator for the speaker too since the speaker does not want to use a negative adjective about her acquaintance. She softens the negative meaning by using *şey*. In this way, she both saves the face of the boy and her own face since using negative words for the boy would damage her image among other people.

(13)<sup>6</sup> STC 117 090310\_00019

<b>OZG000035</b>	<i>ha-ha</i> '((laughs))'
<b>BAD000036</b>	((01.)) <i>kısa mı?</i>
<b>OZG000035</b>	((0.3)) <i>ha-ha' e hafif böyle...</i>
<b>OZG000035</b>	((1.0)) ((short laugh))' he is of the same height as ((first name, male)). • my dear says • we are of the same height, how nice this is. and ((first name, male)) is a little ((0.3)) <i>şey</i> ...
<b>IND000002</b>	((laughs))'
<b>AYS000071</b>	tih ((0.3)) is he short?
<b>OZG000035</b>	<i>ha-ha</i> '((laughs))'
<b>BAD000036</b>	((01.)) is he short?
<b>OZG000035</b>	((0.3)) <i>ha-ha</i> ' a little...

Similar to example (13), excerpt (14) is also an obvious example to the face saving function of *şey*. AYS talks about a teacher who is

<sup>6</sup> *uh*: utterance initializer; *ha-ha*: non-lexical backchannels and filled pauses are not translated in the excerpts.

inexperienced in his field. Rather than using the adjective inexperienced, the speaker utters the word *şey*. As explicitly calling a teacher 'inexperienced' would be a threat to the face of the teacher, the speaker prefers to use a discourse particle, which softens the expression. At this point, *şey* acts as a mitigator against a face-threatening situation in the conversation. The speaker also saves his own face by avoiding uttering negative expressions for this teacher. Brown and Levinson put a particular focus on saving the faces of the hearer or the third person with the help of discourse markers (1987). However, excerpts (13) and (14) enable us to comprehend that *şey* allows the speakers to save their own faces as well as the other participants or third person.

(14) STC 117\_090310\_00019

- AYS000071** ee iki yıllık bir/ birisini de almışlar mesela.  
o da böyle *şey*/ hani çok ((0.7)) tecrübesi  
olan bi insan değil ama ((0.8)) almışlar.
- AYS000071** ee they also hired a person with two years  
of experience. and he is *şey*/ I mean ((0.7))  
not very experienced but ((0.8)) they  
hired him anyway

## 5. CONCLUSION

This study mainly discussed the functions of *şey* in spoken discourse. Upon the analysis of *şey*, it has become clear that it is one of the most common and frequently used discourse particles in spoken Turkish. It is used both as a single lexical item and with the addition of suffixes to the particle. It fulfills multiple conversational functions in spoken discourse. First, the single standing *şey* functions as a self-repair device. The speaker corrects the previously 'mis-uttered' items by using *şey*. Another function is initiating or switching to a new topic in the conversation. With the use of *şey* in especially the initial position in the utterance, the speaker can start or shift to another topic more smoothly. Speakers also use *şey* to hold their turn in the speech and to

plan for their next utterance. As a hesitation marker, *şey* signals that the speaker needs time to produce the item and organize the speech.

In addition to the functions of single standing *şey*, suffixed *şey* has an important place in naturally occurring conversations. It mainly enables smooth flow of speech by replacing and substituting the missing items in the conversation. In the cases of hesitation, forgetting or remembering the items later than expected, *şey* acts as a key item, providing the speaker with continuation in the speech while holding the floor at the same time. It is also worth noting that suffixed *şey* copies the morphological structure of the lexical item that it replaces or substitutes.

The research supports the earlier studies (Yılmaz, 1994, 2004; Özbek, 1995, 1998) on *şey* as a discourse particle and contributes to the literature by putting particular emphasis on the interpersonal role of *şey* within the domain of politeness besides its conversational management functions. At the end of the research, it turned out that *şey* has a vital role in decreasing the face-threatening effect of the speech for both the speakers' own face and for the others' face. *şey* acts as a softener to save the faces of the participants and/or non-participants in conversations in Turkish. *Şey* is used as a marker of caution and discreetness in delicate topics of conversations.

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