

## Analysis of the Social Meanings of the Second Person Pronoun SEN in Turkish<sup>1</sup>

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Bu çalışma, üniversite öğrencilerinin ikinci tekil şahıs adlı SEN’i ne zaman ve kime hitap ederken kullandıklarını incelemekte ve kullanılan ikinci şahıs adının araştırmaya katılanlar için hangi toplumsal ve anlatımsal anlamları taşıdığını bulmaya çalışmaktadır. Çalışmada ayrıca, Brown ve Gilman’ın (1960) ortaya koydukları “Güç ve Dayanışma” modelinin Türkçe’de gözlenen SEN kullanım çeşitlerini ve bunların taşıdıkları anlamları açıklayıp açıklayamadığını da araştırmaktadır. Çalışmada kullanılan veriler anket yardımı ile ana dili Türkçe olan, farklı coğrafi bölgelerden ve değişik toplumsal durum ve sınıflara ait 191 (95 Kadın, 96 Erkek) üniversite öğrencisinden toplanmıştır. Araştırma, ikinci tekil şahıs adlı SEN’in Türkçe’de iki işlevinin olduğunu göstermektedir. Birincisi, Brown ve Gilman’ın (1960) ön gördüğü gibi, karşımızdaki bireylere onları kendimize yakın bulduğumuzu ve onlarla dayanışma içinde olduğumuzu göstermek için kullanılmaktadır. İkinci işlevine ise bazı bireyleri kendimizden uzak tutmak istediğimizde başvurulmaktadır. Bunun yanında, sonuçlar ‘Güç ve Dayanışma’ modelinin SEN’in Türkçe’de tüm anlamlarını tam anlamıyla açıklayamadığını göstermektedir.

**Anahtar sözcükler:** *ikinci tekil şahıs adları, SEN, toplumsal ve anlatımsal anlamlar, dayanışma, antagonizm, mesafe ve yakınlık, kan bağı, yaş, konuşulabilirlik*

This study, first, identifies the groups of interlocutors that university students address with the familiar second person pronoun SEN and uncovers the social meanings that are most frequently associated with SEN by this group of subjects. Then, it examines whether or not Brown and Gilman’s (1960) ‘Power and Solidarity’ model is able to explain all of the social meanings associated with the pronoun SEN in Turkish.

Data in this study were collected through a questionnaire from 191 (Female=95, Male=96) METU undergraduate students all of whom were native speakers of Turkish. The informants in the study were from different geographical regions in Turkey and had different social backgrounds.

Results of the study reveal that, the second person pronoun SEN has a double function in Turkish. While on the one hand, as Brown and Gilman (1960) predicted, it is used to refer to interlocutors belonging to our inner circle; on the other hand, it is used to keep some interactants at bay. The findings also show that Brown and Gilman’s (1960) model of ‘Power and

Solidarity' fails to explain all of the social meanings associated with the pronoun SEN in Turkish.

**Key words:** *second person pronouns, SEN, social meaning, solidarity, antagonism, distance and closeness, blood relations, age, conversableness*

## 1. Introduction

Over the last few decades the central issue in the study of human communication has been the examination of the ways in which interlocutors express their understanding of their relationship to one another (Little & Gelles 1975; Mills 1988; Musumeci 1991; Ostermann 2003; Sole 1978). These studies have shown that the social relationships between interlocutors can be identified by examining the use of linguistic variables such as second person pronouns, honorifics, alternative verb inflections, greetings and kin terms (Casson & Özertuğ 1976). That is, 'who the speaker believes he is, who he believes the addressee is, what he thinks their relationship is, and what he thinks he is doing by saying what he is saying' (Parkinson 1985:5) can be uncovered by examining the above-mentioned variables. In this study, we focus on one of these indicators – the second person pronoun *SEN* - and try to uncover its social meaning(s) in Turkish. We also examine whether or not Brown and Gilman's (1960) two dimensional system of power and solidarity is able to explain the ways in which native speakers of Turkish utilise the pronoun *SEN*. Among the range of variables providing entry points to our understanding of social relations, in this study, we concentrate on second person pronouns (SPPs) in Turkish because research has shown that SPPs are 'particularly rich' resources for studying social meaning especially when used in personal address' (Winchatz 2001:338).

Turkish, similar to most of the Indo-European languages (e.g., French, German, Italian, Spanish), has two SPPs that are used to refer to a single interlocutor - *SEN* and *SİZ* - and in order to uncover the social meanings that native speakers of Turkish express with *SEN*, we usually need to compare and contrast it to *SİZ*. However, by concentrating on a single linguistic unit (i.e., *SEN*) available to the native speakers of Turkish, we believe that a more thorough, more comprehensive analysis of the informants' interpretations of their communicative choices can be offered. Thus, in this study, while, on the one hand, we try to describe and interpret the variety of nuanced perceptions that Turkish speakers have of the informal SPP *SEN*, on the other hand, we aim to test the adequacy of the widely used Brown and Gilman's (1960) model of social meaning.

Brown and Gilman (1960) published their, now classic, study 'The Pronouns of Power and Solidarity', after examining data coming from 81 speakers of various languages. In their work they propose a two-dimensional system that illustrates the concrete link between social meaning and the use of the familiar (T) and polite (V) SPPs. Brown and Gilman

(1960) argue that this two-dimensional system of social meaning, in which the vertical axis represents POWER and the horizontal axis represents SOLIDARITY, is universal and that all expressions of social meaning can be located in this semantic space.

In Brown and Gilman's (1960:255) model 'the power semantic' is 'nonreciprocal'/asymmetrical. That is, there is always a power difference between the interactants in the 'sense that both cannot have power in the same area of behaviour'. When it comes to use of SPPs the model predicts that the superior will use T and will receive V during the interaction. The probability of this scenario increases with the increase of power difference between the speaker and the listener. When, however, the relationship between interlocutors is closer and more balanced, and the similarities between the speaker and listener are higher, the formal semantic is replaced by the symmetrical solidarity semantic which is usually symbolised by the use of reciprocal formal or reciprocal informal pronouns to each other.

## 2. Studies on Turkish Pronouns of Power and Solidarity

As far as the author is aware, to date, there are only a few studies that have focused on the use of SPPs in Turkish (Balpınar 1996; Bayyurt 1992, 1996; Bayyurt & Bayraktaroğlu 2001; Horasan 1987; König 1990). König (1990) examined how biological, social and psychological factors affect the use of the SPPs in Turkish. The analysis of the ethnographic and elicited data collected in this study showed that biological factors such as age, kinship, generation and gender; social variables such as social class and social status; and psychological factors such as closeness/distance, formality, solidarity/cooperation can affect the choice of SPPs in Turkish. Balpınar (1996) conducted a study in which she distributed questionnaires to 150 native speakers of Turkish with various age, occupation and educational backgrounds. The questionnaire used in Balpınar's (1996) study was used first in 1973 and then in 1990. The question asked in the latter study (i.e., Balpınar's study) was 'Have the factors determining the use of the SPPs *SEN* and *SİZ* in Turkish changed within the 17 year span?' The answer to this question was 'NO'. The parallelism between the results of these two studies was so prominent that Balpınar (1996:288) argued that there might be 'systematic patterns of use of those pronouns in Turkish'. The factors found to be affecting the use of the SPPs in Turkish once again were age, gender of the speaker, gender of addressed, kinship status, group membership, relative position of authority (i.e., rank), emotional solidarity (i.e., the feeling of sympathy or intimacy between two speakers or lack of it) and social context in which the conversation takes place.

In a more recent study Bayyurt and Bayraktaroğlu (2001) examined the use of the SPPs *SEN* and *SİZ* by Turkish males and females in six service encounter settings that differed from each other in terms of economic strength and formality level (i.e., the market place, the kebab kiosk, the local grocer, the local greengrocer, Migros

and Vakko). The results of the study revealed that overall Turkish males ‘project an inclination for close relationship even in first time encounters’ (Bayyurt & Bayraktarođlu 2001:235) while females tend to ‘keep their distance in their dealings with the opposite sex’. That is, during service encounters, Turkish men use the familiar SPP *SEN* much more frequently than Turkish women while women rely more on the formal *SİZ*. In the study men employed *SEN* more frequently than female informants in three of the four settings in which *SEN* was encountered (i.e., males used *SEN* more often in the settings of the open market place, the döner kiosk, the grocery; *SEN* was not used at all by the participants in this study in the service encounters that took place in a supermarket and a department store). Females made use of the familiar SPP *SEN* more than men only in their conversations with the greengrocer. Conversely, women used *SİZ* more than men in all interactions but the one with the greengrocer. Based on these results, Bayyurt & Bayraktarođlu (2001) argue that the usage of the pronoun *SEN* can be seen as an indication of frequent contact and trust between interlocutors, and the economic weakness of the setting in which the conversation takes place. *SİZ*, on the other hand, can be used to point to mistrust, distance, respect and the economically strong surroundings.

### 3. Methodology

#### 3.1 Data Collection and Analysis Procedures

Data in this study were collected using a questionnaire consisting of two sections. In the first section informants were asked to supply background information such as age, gender, permanent place of residence, place of birth, parents’ level of education and the approximate yearly income of the family.

In the second part students were asked to (1) to list five people they would always address with *SEN*, (2) to explain briefly why they would always use *SEN* with the individuals they listed, and (3) to explain what the pronoun *SEN* they used to address the listed individuals meant for them. The explanations provided by the informants were then scrutinized for specific words and phrases that denoted the meanings that the pronoun *SEN* expressed for the participants. The relevant words or phrases that presented the meanings of the pronoun *SEN* for the informants were catalogued in a separate file along with the characteristics of the subject(s) who used the word or phrase. With this type of cataloguing it was possible to cross-check and trace the extracted words and/or phrases at the later stages of the analysis.

In order to be able to compare the results of this research with the findings of the previous studies and to examine the cross-cultural/cross-language validity of the social meanings of the SPPs, we used Winchatz’s (2001) scheme of social meanings created for the German *du* and *Sie* as a basis for the classification of the pronouns *SEN* in Turkish. The analysis of the collected corpora showed that even though there were some parallelisms between the meanings of the German *du* and *Sie* and the Turkish *SEN*

and *SİZ*, there was not a complete overlap between the meanings of these pronouns. Therefore, some new categories were introduced in order to accommodate all of the Turkish data and some of the Winchatz's categories were excluded from the scheme for *SEN* since there were no data related to them in our corpus.

### 3.2 Informants

Data in this study were collected from 191 (Female=95, Male=96) Middle East Technical University (METU) students. The age range of the informants was between 17 and 29 and their areas of study were Education (N=129) and Engineering (N=62). The university students were chosen as subjects for this research as previous studies (e.g., König 1990:177) showed that predominantly individuals with specific level of education differentiate between the informal/familiar *SEN* and the polite *SİZ* in their speech.

If we accept parents' level of education as one of the indicators of social status/ social class in the Turkish society, then it is worth noting that more than half of the informants' fathers were university graduates (108/191, 56,5%), 25,1% (48/191) were lycee graduates and only 18,4% (35/191) were either uneducated or with primary or secondary school education (see Table 1). The examination of the information related to the educational level of the subjects' mothers showed that 57,6% (110/191) were lycee or university graduates, and 42,4% (81/191) were with primary, secondary or no education at all. Although these analyses show that the majority of the informants in this study belong to the so-called 'middle class' in Turkey, the current sample still includes representatives of the other social groups.

**Table 1:** Parents' level of education/educational background

| Level of Education         | Father |      | Mother |      |
|----------------------------|--------|------|--------|------|
|                            | N      | %    | N      | %    |
| Uneducated                 | 2      | 1,1  | 8      | 4,2  |
| Primary School Graduate    | 16     | 8,4  | 32     | 16,7 |
| Secondary School Graduate  | 17     | 8,9  | 41     | 21,5 |
| Lycee/High School Graduate | 48     | 25,1 | 58     | 30,4 |
| University Graduate        | 108    | 56,5 | 52     | 27,2 |
| TOTAL                      | 191    | 100  | 191    | 100  |

The examination of the permanent place of residence of the informants showed that even though the data were gathered at METU, there were representatives from all regions in Turkey (see Table 2).

**Table 2:** Regional distribution of informants

| Regions |                        | N   | %    |
|---------|------------------------|-----|------|
| 1.      | Mediterranean          | 27  | 14,1 |
| 2.      | Eastern Anatolia       | 17  | 8,9  |
| 3.      | Aegean                 | 37  | 19,4 |
| 4.      | South-eastern Anatolia | 9   | 4,7  |
| 5.      | Central Anatolia       | 36  | 18,9 |
| 6.      | Black Sea              | 34  | 17,8 |
| 7.      | Marmara                | 31  | 16,2 |
| TOTAL   |                        | 191 | 100  |

#### 4. Results and Discussions

##### 4.1 Whom Would You Always Address with SEN?

When the 191 informants in this study were asked to list five individuals that they would always address with *SEN*, two of the informants stated that there were no such people in their lives and argued that under some specific circumstances they would address any of their listeners (even their younger siblings) with the formal pronoun *SİZ*. The remaining 189 subjects listed a total of 808 people.<sup>2</sup> The overall analysis of the collected data showed that, for this group of subjects, there were two distinct groups of interlocutors that trigger the use of *SEN*. The first group comprised individuals close to the informants or individuals towards whom informants had positive feelings. Therefore, in this study, we call this first *SEN* '*sympathy SEN*' (henceforth, S-*SEN*). We labelled the second *SEN* '*antagonism SEN*' (henceforth, A-*SEN*) because informants stated that they would use it to address people that they would like to keep at bay and/or people they do not like or are angry at.

**Table 3:** Individuals addressed with *SEN* by university students

|       |     |   | N   | %    |
|-------|-----|---|-----|------|
| S-SEN | 1.  | Nuclear family members (i.e., parents, siblings and subjects' children)       | 349 | 43,2 |
|       | 2.  | Extended family members (i.e., grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, nephews) | 82  | 10,1 |
|       | 3.  | Friends   | 234 | 29   |
|       | 4.  | Acquaintances   | 2   | 0,2  |
|       | 5.  | Neighbours  | 7   | 0,9  |
|       | 6.  | Girlfriend/Boyfriend/Fiancée/Husband  | 54  | 6,7  |
|       | 7.  | People much younger than me/Children  | 49  | 6,1  |
|       | 8.  | God   | 1   | 0,1  |
|       | 9.  | Pets  | 1   | 0,1  |
|       | 10. | None  | 2   | 0,2  |
| A-SEN | 1.  | People-Negative   | 27  | 3,3  |
| TOTAL |     |   | 808 | 100  |

The examination of the data related to *S-SEN* yielded results parallel to the findings of König's (1990) and Balpınar's (1996) studies. That is, *S-SEN*, first and foremost, was reserved for interlocutors that are close to the informants genealogically. More than half of the individuals listed by the informants in this study were members of their nuclear or extended families (53,3%, 431 out of 808) (see Table 3).

The second group of people that was most frequently mentioned as deserving to be addressed with *S-SEN* is 'Friends'. This is a broad category which includes a wide variety of 'friend types'. The first and the biggest group is 'personal friends' which accounted for 96,2% (i.e., 225 out of 234) of the data in this sub-group. Some informants said that they would use *S-SEN* with all of their 'friends' (*arkadaşlarım*) and 'pals' (*dostlarım*) while others reserved this pronoun for friends with more specific features (e.g., 'my closest/best friends' [*en samimi/iyi arkadaşlarım*], 'my school-/class-/roommates' [*okul/sınıf/oda arkadaşlarım*], 'friends with whom I play billiard' [*bilardodan arkadaşlarım*]). Small number of informants stated that they would use *S-SEN* with their 'close friends' family members' (*yakın arkadaşlarımın aileleri*, 2/234) or with their 'family friends and their children' (*aile dostlarımız ve çocukları*, 3/234). Some other students wrote that they would use *S-SEN* with some of their 'elder siblings' friends' (*abimin/ablamın arkadaşları*, 4/234).

*S-SEN* was also recurrently associated with interlocutors that are close to us emotionally/romantically. Boyfriends and girlfriends, fiancées, husbands and wives were all listed among the people that would always be addressed with *S-SEN* (see Table 3).

The other three groups of recipients that were listed as triggering the use of *S-SEN* were 'people much younger than me/children', 'neighbours' and 'acquaintances'. These three groups formed 7,2% of the collected corpus. Finally, one subject mentioned God and another mentioned his family pet as interlocutors that they would always address with *S-SEN*.

Even though the use of *A-SEN* was much less frequent than that of *S-SEN*, it is important to discuss the interlocutors that subjects in this study thought should be addressed with it in order to see the difference between *S-SEN* and *A-SEN*. The list of interlocutors that 'prompted' the use of *A-SEN* can be divided into two sub-categories. The first of these categories included individuals with whom the informants had unpleasant personal encounters or had negative personal feelings towards. The most frequently mentioned addressees in this sub-group are 'people that I hate/do not like/love' (*nefret ettiğim/hoşlanmadığım/sevmediğim insanlar*), 'people I had a fight with' (*kavga ettiğim insanlar*) and 'unfamiliar persons/strangers that treat me with disrespect' (*tanımadığım ama bana saygısız davranan insanlar*).

The second category comprised groups of people with whom the informants did not have any personal experiences but would like to keep at bay in general. Categories such as 'people I would not like to be close to' (*yakın olmayı istemediğim insanlar*), 'people that do not deserve to be addressed with *SİZ*' (*siz denilmeyi hak etmeyenler*),

'uneducated people' (*eđitimsiz insanlar*), 'worthless people/people poor in quality' (*seviyesiz insanlar*), 'beggars' (*dilenciler*), and 'street peddlers' (*seyyar satıcılar*) were often mentioned by the subjects in this study.

The abovementioned groups of people were listed by informants as ones triggering the use of either S-SEN or A-SEN; but within these two main categories there are a number of sub-categories and some of them are quite different from each other (e.g., within the S-SEN category there are 'close relatives' and 'acquaintances'). Therefore, the questions that answers are sought for in the following section are: *Do SENs addressed to members of those different subcategories mean the same thing to the subjects in this study?* and *What do the subjects in this study believe to be expressing or telling their interlocutors by using the pronoun SEN instead of the pronoun SİZ?*

Due to space limitations, in the following section we will scrutinise only the six most frequently cited social meanings of S-SEN in Turkish.

## 4.2 Social Meanings of S-SEN in Turkish

### 4.2.1 Distance

*Distance*, or rather lack of it, was the most frequently quoted social meaning of S-SEN in this study. Informants mentioned this meaning 200 times and they stated that in general S-SEN shows the closeness/proximity or the lack of distance between the interlocutors. However, this closeness takes a number of different forms. It could be one-sided closeness on the part of the addressor (e.g., I feel close to them [*Kendimi onlara yakın hissediyorum*]), mutual closeness (e.g., Because we are close [*Yakın olduğumuz için/Yakınız*]), or stated/'neutral' closeness (e.g., Closeness [*Yakınlık*]).

Moreover, some of the informants stated that S-SEN in this context is a tool for keeping the proximity between interlocutors (e.g., Not to put distance in-between us [*Aramıza mesafe girmemesi için*]). Some went even further by saying 'If I use *siz* this might compromise/overshadow the closeness between us' (*Siz diye hitap edersem, aramızdaki yakınlığa gölge düşürmüş olurum*) or 'I am not that distant from him/her to address him with *siz*' (*Ona siz diyecek kadar uzak değilim*).

Another sub-meaning of S-SEN in this category is 'breaking the barriers'. Informants in this study used expressions such as 'As for me addressing my friend with *siz* is/puts a barrier between us' (*Bence arkadaşıma siz diye hitap etmem aramızda bir engel*), 'I would feel as if there was a wall between us if I used *siz*' (*Eđer siz diye hitap edersem aramızda bir duvar varmış gibi hissettiğim için*) and 'There are not mountains between us' (*Aramızda dađlar yok*) to express the importance of S-SEN in this context for keeping the close relationships between the addressor and addressee.

In sum, the social meaning that speakers want to express to their listeners is 'you are important to me, I do not want to put distance between us, therefore, I address you with SEN'.



#### 4.2.2 Closeness

The term *closeness* is used to describe the unity between a group of people ‘due to a basis or feeling of respect, honour, or love’ (Winchatz 2001:349). When asked to explain why they would always use S-SEN with the individuals they listed, informants utilised the words ‘love’ (*sevgi*) and ‘respect’ (*saygı*) either by themselves or in combinations such as ‘I love him/her very much’ (*onu çok seviyorum*), ‘because s/he is one the most loved people in my life’ (*hayatta en sevdiğim insanlardan biri olduğu için*), ‘because of the love/affection between us, they are the most loved people in my life’ (*sevgiden, onlar benim canım ciğerim*), ‘if I use siz, they might think I do not love them’ (*siz dersem onu sevmediğimi düşüneceğinden*) or ‘because my mum/dad is a person that deserves the highest respect’ (*annem/babam en fazla saygıyı hak eden insanlardan biri*). That is, the social meaning of S-SEN in this category is ‘nearest and dearest’. The speaker wants to share his/her love and/or respect with the listener by addressing them with S-SEN. The strong feelings associated with this S-SEN were obvious from the fact that 91% (181 out of 199) of these explanations were found in the corpora related to informants’ parents, grandparents, siblings (both younger and older), children, girl/boy friends, their best friends and their pets. The only other group of people associated with this social meaning of S-SEN was ‘people much younger than me/children’.

#### 4.2.3 Blood Relations

‘Blood is thicker than water’ is a popular proverb in Turkish which presents anecdotal evidence for the importance of kinship relations in our society. When this anecdotal evidence is supported by research results showing that relatedness to family and country are central aspects of Turkish culture (Zeyrek 2001) and that ‘family interdependence’ and ‘a family culture of relatedness’ reign in the society (Kağıtçıbaşı 1996:45), it is not surprising to see that one of the salient social meanings of the pronoun S-SEN is ‘kinship/blood relations’.

‘Kin/blood relations’ (*Kan bağı*), ‘because s/he is my relative/mother/child/sibling’ (*çünkü akrabam/annem/evladım/kardeşim*) or ‘s/he is a member of my family’ (*ailemden biri*) were the expressions that 95 of the informants in this study used to explain the reason for addressing the members of their families with S-SEN. That is, for the subjects in this study the ‘blood relation’ was enough to address somebody with SEN and there was no need for any other meaning to be loaded into the pronoun (e.g., closeness, love, respect). The listed individuals deserved to be addressed with the solidary pronoun S-SEN simply because they were family members/blood.

We called this category ‘blood relations’ because this meaning of S-SEN was used only for those members of the family with whom the subjects had blood relations (i.e., parents, grandparents, siblings, aunts, uncles and cousins). Even though individuals such as ‘sister/aunt-in-law’ (*yenge*) and ‘aunt’s husband, sister’s husband’ (*enişte*) were listed among the people that subjects in the study said would always address with

S-SEN, this meaning of the familiar SPP was not associated with any of the ‘imported’ members of the family.

#### 4.2.4 Age

The social meaning ‘age’ was mentioned 86 times in our corpus. Analysis showed that it has two sub-meanings ‘same age’ and ‘age difference between the speaker and the addressee’. When the speaker is accepted as the point of reference, the receiver of S-SEN is understood to be four things: (1) an individual with the same age as the speaker; (2) a person younger than the speaker; (3) a child; (4) a person slightly older (e.g., a year or two) than the speaker.

Age appears to be a factor that triggers the use of S-SEN in different groups. Informants in this study stated that they would always use S-SEN with their coeval friends (i.e., *benim yařlarımdaki arkadaşlarım*) as well as with relatives who are the same age as themselves (i.e., *yaşıtımlı olan akrabalar/kuzenlerim*). One of the subjects summarised the use of S-SEN between coevals with the following statement, ‘Since there is not any age difference between us I address my friends with sen’ (*Aramızda herhangi bir yař farkı olmadığı için arkadaşlarıma sen derim*). What is more, ‘same age’ is seen as an important variable that blocks the use of the formal pronoun SİZ. Some of the informants commented on the fact that it would be funny/ridiculous to use SİZ with their coeval friends (e.g., I cannot address my coeval friends with SİZ, I do not like it, what is more, it will sound ridiculous [*Kendi yaşımdakilere siz diye hitap edemem, sevmiyorum, ayrıca komik olur*]). Put differently, the social meaning of this S-SEN in one of the subjects’ words is ‘we are all coevals’ (*hepimiz yaşıtımlı*) therefore there is no need for formalities (i.e., no need for SİZ). That is why it looks as if, for this group of informants, ‘same age’ is a characteristic of the interlocutor that helps them to decide which pronoun to choose when facing the dilemma between SEN and SİZ.

The other two groups that are addressed with S-SEN in this category are people/relatives younger than the speaker (i.e., *yaşça benden küçük olan insanlar, yaşça küçük akrabalar*) or children (i.e., *çocuklar veya çocuk yařtaki insanlar*). The message given through the use of S-SEN to interlocutors younger than the speaker is ‘to tell them that they are younger than me and that I am their elder’ (*Amacım küçük oldukları ve benim onlardan büyük olduğumu hissettirmek*). That is, S-SEN in this context is an indirect way of telling the interlocutor ‘I am older than you, keep that in mind’.

The reason for addressing children with S-SEN appears to be different, however. Subjects in this study felt that there is a specific age threshold only above which a person begins to deserve or can be addressed with SİZ. Therefore, they thought that addressing children with SİZ is not appropriate. The point made by one of the participants of this study summarizes these views: ‘It would be awkward to address children with SİZ, they are too young to be addressed with SİZ’ (*Çocuklara siz demek garip olur, siz demek için çok küçükler*). Stated differently, SEN in this scenario means ‘Group of people below

*a particular age*'.

The last group of people that are addressed with S-SEN in this category are individuals that are slightly older than the addressor. These individuals may belong to a wide variety of groups. They might be 'close relatives' (e.g., *abim, ablam, kuzenlerim*), 'close friends', 'classmates' and even 'older siblings' friends' (e.g., *abimin arkadaşları*). The meaning of SEN in this context is '*We belong to the same generation*'. One of the subjects pointed this fact out by writing 'We belong to the same generation with my cousins' (*Kuzenlerim ile aynı kuşaktanız*) while some other subjects broadened this category a bit and wrote 'Even though there is an age difference between me and my older brothers' friends, I address them with sen since they are young people as well' (*Abimin arkadaşları ile aramda yaş farkı olsa da onlar da genç sonuçta*). That is, despite the age difference between the interlocutors the important fact is that they all belong to the same group labelled '*young people*'.

#### 4.2.5 Frequency and Length of Contact

Another meaning of S-SEN which was mentioned 39 times by the subjects in this study was 'frequency and length of contact'. That is, the informants in this study chose to address their siblings, parents, some relatives, friends, class and roommates with SEN either because they have been in contact for a long time or/and because they frequently interact with each other at present time, and as a consequence of these their relationship is a close one. The meaning of SEN was 'frequent contact for a long time' when the interlocutors were informants' siblings (e.g., '*Her zaman aynı ortamda yaşayıp yakın bir ilişkimiz olduğu için*', '*Kardeşlerimle her zaman iç içe olduğum için*'), parents (e.g., '*Sürekli birlikte yaşadığım insanlara niye siz diyeyim ki?*') or pals (e.g., '*Her zaman birlikte olduğumuz için, dostluğumuz 11 yaşında. Bu cümle yeterli sanırım*').

When the SPP was used to address current room or classmates the meaning of SEN was usually 'frequent contact' (e.g., '*Bu arkadaşlarla aynı odayı paylaşıyorum ve zamanımın 2/4ünü onlarla geçiriyorum*', '*Sınıf arkadaşlarımla çoğu ile haftanın 4 günü karşılaşıyoruz, siz dersem dalga geçerler*').

When compared with the social meanings of SEN discussed in the previous sections, 'frequency and length of contact' was not found to be as salient as them. One possible explanation for this finding comes from Winchitz (1997), who also found that the 'frequency of contact' was not a prominent feature of the German *du* but was an important social meaning associated with the formal *Sie*. Winchitz (1997) argues that individuals who address each other with *du* do not keep track of/monitor how often they meet because for them this is the predicted and expected outcome of a close relation. However, if, in general, two individuals do not meet frequently, and when they meet they use *Sie*, this becomes an important social meaning associated with the formal SPP.

#### 4.2.6 Conversableness

Examination of the students' comments revealed that one of the meanings of S-SEN in Turkish is the ability to communicate with another person and/or the level and type of conversation that you can have with that person regardless of the context in which you are. One of the subjects in this study stated that she addresses her best friend with SEN because 'She is somebody with whom I am able to discuss every topic, she is also one of the few with whom I do not refrain from sharing any of my thoughts; if I address her with *siz*, I would cast a shadow on our closeness' (*Her konuda rahatça açılabilceğim ve hemen hemen hiçbir konuda çekinmediğim birkaç insandan biri, siz diye hitap etsem, o yakınlığa gölge düşürmüş olurum*). Similarly a male informant supported the use of SEN to his high school friend by writing 'He is so close so that I can even curse in front of him' (*Gerektiğinde yanında küfür bile edebilecek kadar yakın olduğum biri*). That is, the meaning of S-SEN here is 'being able to share everything with your interlocutor in every possible way you like'. In a conversation where you use SEN to address your interlocutor, there is no need for formalities. You do not need to plan your speech or to choose your words carefully, there is not need to change the way you speak either because your interlocutor will understand and accept you as you are (e.g., '*Babam benimle iletişimde empati kuran tek Türk. Nasıl siz derim böcüğüm?*', '*En yakın arkadaşım ile resmi konuşmak istemediğim için*').

The term *conversableness* was chosen to describe this meaning of S-SEN since it refers particularly to 'the activity of speaking and the conversation between interlocutors and not to the context surrounding the interlocutors' (Winchitz 2001:350). Even though it was mentioned only 14 times in our corpus, it is one of the special meanings of S-SEN in our data.

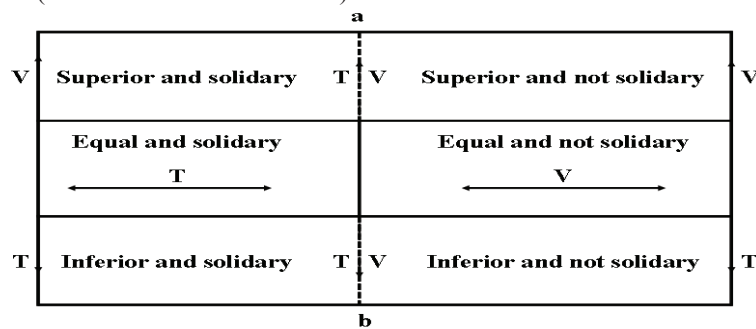
### 5. Adequacy of Brown and Gilman's Model of Social Meaning

When we look at the six meanings of S-SEN discussed in this study we see that the social meanings 'distance', 'closeness', 'frequency and length of contact' and 'blood relations' can be placed on the axis of solidarity. The social meanings 'distance' and 'closeness' are easily placed on the axis of solidarity because they fit neatly into Brown and Gilman's (1960) description of solidarity by meaning 'closeness between the interlocutors' and 'mutual respect and love'. Similarly, 'frequency of contact' is mentioned by Brown and Gilman (1960:258) as one of the factors that can produce the 'T of solidarity'. That is, usually, the more people see each other the closer they become. Finally, the category 'blood relations' fits into another part of the definition of solidarity, i.e., the feeling of unity or communality between people based on the fact that they belong to the same group, come from the same ancestry.

However, as explained earlier, the social meaning 'age' has two sub-meanings for the informants in this study: '*same age*' and '*age difference between the speaker and the*

*addressee*. There are no problems in placing the first sub-meaning on the solidarity axis as same age means power equality between addressor and addressee. Nevertheless, the sub-meaning *‘age difference between the speaker and the addressee’* seems problematic at first glance since age (i.e., *‘older than’*) is listed as one of the bases for power by Brown and Gilman (1960:255) and the question that comes to mind is ‘Do we have a meaning spreading/spilling over both of the dimensions in the model?’ What solves our problem and explains how it is possible to use SEN between two interactants with different age is the reality that the dimension of solidarity can potentially be extended to all addressees. Brown and Gilman (1960:258) state that power superiors as well as power inferiors may be ‘solidary’ or ‘not solidary’. The extension of the solidarity dimension to those with less or more power, in turn, leads to the creation of not two but six categories of solidary persons (see Figure 1). The prediction made by the model then is that the informal/familiar pronoun T may be used not only between (1) ‘Equal and solidary’ interactants but also between (2) ‘Superior and solidary’, (3) ‘Inferior and solidary’ and (4) ‘Inferior and not solidary’ interlocutors. This explains why the informants in this study listed interlocutors both younger and older than themselves as deserving to be addressed with S-SEN and how and why we can fit the social meaning ‘age’ on the solidarity axis as well.

**Figure 1:** The two-dimensional semantic: (a) in equilibrium and (b) under tension (Brown & Gilman 1960:259)



It seems as if among the six social meanings associated with SEN ‘conversableness’ is the most problematic one. ‘Conversableness’ for the informants in this study meant ‘the ability to converse with your interlocutor, the freedom to discuss every topic without predetermined rules and regulations’. Where does that meaning of SEN stand in Brown and Gilman’s (1960) model? People might call their psychologist SEN and might discuss all their problems with him/her but, usually, there is not a feeling of commonality and sameness during these discussions. On the other hand, can we say that being able to discuss every topic with our friends makes them more powerful than us? When we consider these points it looks as if the social meaning ‘conversableness’

stands outside the power and solidarity dimensions described by Brown and Gilman (1960). Perhaps the problem stems from the fact that the definitions of these two dimensions are too general and do not accommodate narrower social meanings such as ‘conversableness’. Therefore, as Brown (1965:73) himself points out there is a need for a scheme able to classify ‘relations more narrowly, a scheme that will help us to see regularities and to understand them’.

## **6. Conclusions**

The aim of this study was twofold, first, to identify the groups of interlocutors addressed with the familiar SPP SEN by university students and, second, to uncover the social meanings most frequently associated with SEN in Turkish. The findings of the study show that SEN has a double function in Turkish. On one hand it is intended to maintain the close relationships between the speakers and the interlocutors that we accepted into our inner circle. While on the other hand, it is used to keep some listeners at bay.

The analysis of the collected corpus showed that the most popular six meanings of the solidary SEN in Turkish are ‘distance’, ‘closeness’, ‘blood relations’, ‘age’, ‘frequency and length of contact’ and ‘conversableness’. The findings of the study indicated that Brown and Gilman’s (1960) model of ‘power and solidarity’ can be used to classify and explain the more general social meanings of the pronoun SEN in Turkish but it fails to accommodate some of the more specific meanings of this pronoun used by native speakers of Turkish. Therefore, a more refined, a more detailed model able to represent all of the speakers’ communicative choices is needed.

The study also demonstrates the importance of the detailed analysis of single communicative acts. It shows that only by examining each unit thoroughly it is possible to uncover the various nuances attributed to seemingly simple and widely used units such as the second person pronouns in a language.

## **Notes**

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<sup>2</sup> Even though the informants were asked to list a maximum of five people they would always address with SEN, some of the 189 informants listed less than five people, therefore the number of the listed individuals (i.e., 806) is smaller than the expected number of 945 (i.e.,  $189 \times 5 = 945$ ) interlocutors.

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