

## Foreword

This issue of DAD reflects the present day extent and depth of the ongoing research on the structure of Turkish Sign Language (TİD). There are seven articles in the issue focusing on different aspects of the structure of TİD. Each article addresses a different structural property of the three components of its grammar. In his analysis of the syllable structure in TİD, Gökgöz contributes to our understanding of the phonology of TİD. Taşçı and Göksel investigate the internal composition of the compound structure in TİD. Three of the articles address various issues related to the verbal system of TİD. Makaroğlu and İşsever offer a new approach to the verbal system where they propose a new classification of verbs in TİD based on the agreement patterns they exhibit. Makaroğlu et.al. analyze the lexical verbs in TİD within the event structure framework and argue that lexical verbs have the same mechanisms with classifier predicates in terms of event structure constructions. Karabüklü investigates the expression of tense in TİD. She concludes that TİD is a tenseless language where tense is expressed through time adverbials. Kubuş and Nuhbalaoğlu investigate the relation between the syntactic properties of relative clause structures and their discourse functions. The properties of the command construction in TİD are investigated by Özsoy and her colleagues who conclude that the marker of the construction is head tilt in TİD.

In the history of linguistic research, interest in the structure of sign languages does not extend that far in time. It dates back only to 1960 when William Stokoe published his description of American Sign Language (ASL), marking the appearance of the first linguistic analysis of a sign language. Although the first recognition of a sign language as a linguistic system on a par with spoken languages came as early as the 18<sup>th</sup> century when the school for the deaf was founded in Paris by Abbé de l'Épée who used sign language to teach the deaf students, rigorous linguistic research on sign languages did not commence until the second half of the twentieth century.

The initial stages of research on sign languages focused on the similarities between sign and spoken languages. Linguists were interested in finding out whether the linguistic rules, principles and constraints observed in the grammars of the more extensively researched spoken languages also exist in the grammar of sign languages. Given the modality differences between spoken and sign languages, the aim was to determine whether the properties of universal grammar are reflected in the structural properties common to sign languages.

The early studies on sign languages were predominantly on ASL. These studies established that sign languages are natural languages in the same sense

as spoken languages. The psycholinguistic experiments of Klima and Bellugi (1979) established that acquisition of sign languages paralleled the acquisition of spoken languages, thus revealing the biological basis of sign languages. Sign languages were thus shown to be natural languages. They are the native languages of the deaf individuals. Deaf children acquire the sign language of their deaf parents in the same manner hearing children acquire the spoken language of their parents, i.e., without any instruction. A sign language evolves naturally among the members of a deaf community. There is no single, universal sign language; the deaf in each speaking community have their own sign language. Bellugi and Fischer (1972) found cognitive processing to be affected by the speed of the incoming signal in both sign and spoken languages, indicating the cognitive processing in both visual and auditory channels to be similar (Sandler and Lillo-Martin, 2006). It was thus established that the differences between spoken languages and sign languages lie not in the differences in the cognitive systems of the speakers and signers, but in the differences between the communication channels (auditory-spoken vs visual and signed) used by the two languages.

TİD is the native language of the deaf in Turkey. According to the 2017 statistics given by the Ministry of Family and Social Politics (based on 2011 numbers), the deaf (1.1%) and speech-impaired (0.7%) individuals constitute approximately 2% of the population. The earliest court records of the 16<sup>th</sup> century depict sign language in use (Miles, 2000). It is however not possible to set up a direct diachronic link between the sign language in these court records and TİD of the present day. The first school where TİD was used as the medium of instruction was founded in 1889. In 1953, oralism was adopted for the education of the deaf in schools.

Linguistic research on TİD dates to early 2000s. The body of research on the language has been growing steadily since the earliest linguistic analyses of Zeshan (2002, 2003). The work of Kubuř (2008), Sevinç (2006), Açan (2007), Dikyuva (2014) as well as the publications of an increasing number of individual researchers and the compilations by Arık (2013, 2016) have furthered our understanding of the different aspects of the phonology, morphology and syntax of the language. The recently published grammar and the on-line dictionary of TİD by Makarođlu, et.al (2015, 2017) are significant contributions to the field. The nationally as well as internationally funded research projects recently undertaken by research groups at Bođaziçi and Ankara Universities have contributed to the investigations of the properties of TİD.

The contributions to this issue of DAD extend this knowledge.

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