

Verbs that 48-72 Months Old Children Use in Narrative Texts

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ABSTRACT The aim of this study is to evaluate the usage of the verbs by twenty two Turkish native speaker children aged between 48-72 months. Children in the subject group were evaluated after being divided into two groups as those in between 48-60 and 60-72 months. The study was carried out by the case study method, which is one of the designs of qualitative research methodology. Research was designed in accordance with nested multi-state design, one of the case study designs. The study is mainly based on direct observation, content analysis and statistical analysis. Subjects watched three cartoons and then were asked to tell the cartoons. Narrative data recordings were transcribed and then all verb types were analysed and categorised as activities and states. Subjects used 2302 verbs totally. It can be said that all the words used by children had been acquired by them. Children use more active verbs than stative verbs. When the differences were considered in terms of text and vocabulary produces between the two groups, it was observed that 60-72 months old children used more words than 48-60 months old ones, thus reaching a richer vocabulary level. The children's age is parallel to the number of events and event diversity.

INTRODUCTION

The question on how and in which hierarchical order children acquire the language has been discussed in literature for a long time. Studies on acquisition of words and concepts give evidences that nouns and verbs are acquired in different ways.

Children between ages 3-6 are very willing to observe what's happening in their environment (Daglioglu and Cakir 2007). They would be acquiring the words when they use them in the right context. The vocabulary items children acquire are indispensable for language acquisition studies. Studies carried out on word acquisition field determine which word types and concepts are primarily acquired and provide observation for acquisition hierarchy. The view that children primarily acquire the name of objects, which was firstly suggested by Gentner (1982), is widely accepted in literature. Gentner (1982) explains his view with Natural Partitions Hypothesis. In accordance with this hypothesis, it is stated that verbs and other predicative words, in contrast to names, have less certain relationship with the

perceptual world. In other words, acquisition of object names is realized before the acquisition of verbs since the objects are tangible and perceivable entities. Choi and Gopnik (1993), on the other hand, suggested that this widely accepted idea that the names are acquired before the verbs can be discussed with regards to languages showing typological differences. In the framework of the results of the studies on the acquisition of languages with different typologies performed by Choi and Gopnik (1993), Gopnik and Choi (1995), Tardif (1996), Gelman and Tardif (1998), they have all come to the point that the common idea, which is names are acquired before the verbs, isn't valid and typological differences in this context are important in language acquisition process (Ketrez and Aksu-Koc 2000).

Clark (1995) stresses that the context is important in children's word acquisition and in language development. The child should be in interaction with that concept in order that she/he can acquire the real meaning. In other words, observation, perception, use and life experience are important factors for language acquisition, word and concept development. As known, the earliest acquired words are the concepts meeting nouns and verbs.

Nouns are static and permanent, whereas actions and changes of state are dynamic and transient. (Tomasello 1992). Therefore there are differences between the acquisition of verbs and acquisition of names in terms of schematization.

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According to Tomasello (1992) there two points showing that verb acquisition is different than noun acquisition:

1. The concepts underlying early verbs are not static and permanent but dynamic and transient. They are events that may be construed either as actions or as changes of state.
2. Children do not always learn their early verbs by mapping them onto ongoing events in their perceptual world intensively (as is often the case with the acquisition of object labels).

Bloom suggests that two information sources necessary for the child are the events that she/he has seen or experienced (experience) and heard talks (audio input). 1-2 years old children understand the events; learns how to associate human with objects and verbs with results. Each additional information such as how the events happened, humans' relation with these events or how can be reached to the simple aims, will continue to fill the content of the child's information store. Language's content covers the meaning (Bernstein and Tiegerman 1991). The child has to classify this content information, words, concepts, their characteristics and his/her experiences about them into folders in the memory just like a computer, and regulate the classification in line with the additional information (Mavis 2007). Acquisition of words continues through a life via this classification.

The language acquisition of the child occurs as a result of a process. The months in which the development levels of children regarding the verb and syntax acquisition are determined approximately, are as follows (Aksu-Koc and Slobin 1985):

Inflections: 15 months
 Morphology: before the age of 2
 Word order: in the age range 2; 4
 Building passive structures: 2; 3-2; 4
 Relative clauses: about 2; 4
 Conjunctions: from about 2; 0 to 2; 6
 Tense, aspect, modality: 1; 9

Periods in the acquisition process may differ depending on the variables such as individual characteristics, environment, and gender. According to Keceli et al. (2011) children around 18 months start using words referring to cognitive states. After age four they progress in their ability to form concepts (Ustun and Akman 2003)

and this ability proceeds with experience. Consequently it is known that a healthy child completely acquires the adult-like linguistic skills with all the characteristics until 60th month in mother language acquisition process (Pinker 1989; James 1990; Steinberg 1993). Pre-school years are the time children develop their social abilities (Altay and Gure 2012) and in which language skills develop correspondingly.

This process containing the basis of verbal language skills in pre-school period continues to develop in school period with the acquisition of written language skills.

In this study, verbs which take place in children's verbal language use in pre-school period will be classified under two sub-titles as dynamic and stative verbs. Children can acquire verbs through these ways (Tomasello 1992): She/he hears from an adult. When that verb is realized, they make a relation between done work and the word informing the verb. She/he comprehends the word indicating that verb if there is a completed verb.

It is expected that the earliest produced verbs are concrete verbs thereby dynamic verbs, based on the sensory-motor learning of children. Actions are central in organizing the primarily conceptual system. motions attracts infants' attention. Even if they cannot see details, an object's translation across the visual field can be attended. Whether the bias is due to the immature visual system or has a deeper basis, infants in the first months of life show more advanced discriminations when observing objects in motion or translation than when viewing static or permanent objects (Kellman and Spelke 1983), and many studies of early cognitive development implicate the importance of events in structuring the infant's developing conceptual system (Mandler 2006). This situation shows that children distinguish the observable events and later use them.

Verbs can be defined as syntactic or semantic. A verb is the word that can take an agent or object syntactically; may have different morphological profiles depending on the factors changing from language to language such as person, number. Verbs are the words coding the events in terms of semantics; situations, the conditions of the entities, processes, and acts may be the subject of this coding (Frawley 1992).

There are a number of conceptual differences between acts and states. Stative events are

internally uniform, in marked contrast to actives, which appear to be heterogeneous and internally structured (Smith 1983; Langacker 1987; Frawley 1992). These two different verb types can be exemplified as follows (Frawley 1992):

Acts: lose, fly, run, eat, attack, annoy, drive, sneeze, look at, listen to, destroy, change, buy, prepare, bury, sweeten, paint, etc.

States: have, be, exist, know, understand, receive, seem, weigh, cost, like, inherit, belong, believe, etc.

In general we can say that dynamic verbs are the ones requiring activity and power, and stative verbs are the stative verbs occur in a certain period or range of time. It is observed that while a change occurs in the range in which the dynamic verbs occur depending on the internal structure of the verb, each moment in the range where stative verbs occur is the same and doesn't include any change or variation.

Social, cognitive and linguistic development are shaped in during pre-school period (Veziroglu and Gonen 2012). In this study it is aimed to describe the verb use of 48-72 months children who are in transition process from pre-school period to school period.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

Research Design

The study was carried out by the case study method, which is one of the designs of qualitative research methodology and allows the deeply analysis of one or more special conditions. Research was designed in accordance with nested multi-state design, one of the case study designs.

Population and Paradigm

The population of research is consisted of children in between 48-72 months and who acquire Turkish as their mother language. And the paradigm group is consisted of 22 children selected randomly (cluster sampling method of the probability based sampling methods) from the population.

Collection of Data

In the phase of data collection, 22 children in all, between 48-60 and 60-72 months and con-

tinuing in a nursery, were made to watch three short cartoon films, telling the adventures of Tom and Jerry. Later on, children were asked to answer typical questions such as "What is happening in this cartoon film? /what is going on?" and given answers were recorded by a voice recording device. In the study in which semi-structured interview method was followed, interview form was developed by the researcher and no orientation was provided to the children for the questions directed in line with the context. Data was collected for 12 hours in total, being two hours for each age range for a week.

Analysis of Data

Verbs taking place in verbal language data which was acquired from narrative texts of children, were classified into two sub-connection as stative and active verbs. Children in the subject group were evaluated after being divided into two groups as those in between 48-60 and 60-72 months. For the analysis of data, verbs produced by children were classified via category analysis method by listing in Excel 6.0 program to reach the qualitative and quantitative results, and statistical results were obtained, using frequency analysis method.

RESULTS

Verbs reached in database were classified two way as being stative or active.

Verbs That Children Use

Within the calculation carried out by considering the frequency of the detected verbs in the narrative texts of children, 2302 verbs in total were reached in the database. The percentage of the verbs having an event characteristic is 81% and the percentage of verbs having a stative characteristic is 19% within all the verbs. The frequency values of verbs in question are available in Table 1.

Table 1: The frequency distribution of verbs used in database

Age range	Active verbs	Stative verbs	Total
48-60 months	666	173	839
60-72 months	1190	273	1463
Total	1856	446	2302

The figures of the verbs acquired only through evaluation as lexeme number without the frequency values of the verbs, are available on Table 2. In the calculation made without considering the frequency of use, 470 were reached in the database. It is seen in Table 2 that not only the frequency but also the lexical variation of active verbs are more than stative verbs.

Table 2: Statistics results acquired by considering the actual variety

Age range	Active verbs	Stative verbs	Total
48-60 months	153	46	199
60-72 months	216	55	271
Total	369	101	470

As seen in both tables, the variety of the used verbs increases in parallel with the increase in age range.

Active and stative verb types that 48-72 months children, constituting the database of this study, use in narrative texts are provided in two different tables according to age groups. All verbs and the most frequently used ones that 48-60 months children use are available in list of the verbs that 48-60 months children use and Table 3 respectively. As understood from list and Table 3, the variety of active verbs that children use in their speaking has a significant difference.

Table 3: The most frequent verbs encountered in 48-60 months old children's narrations

Age range	Active verbs	Stative verbs	Total
to go	38	to finish	46
to do	34	to remember	
17			
to fall	32	to know	15
to eat	30	to be	7
to exit	29	to sleep	7
to laugh	28	to forget	6
to come	26	to stop	4
to say	21	to see	4
to hit	21	to be angry	4
to catch	20	to suppose	4

List of the Verbs That 48-60 Months Children Use

Active verbs that used by 48-60 months children are as follows:

Active Verbs

To open, to cry, to put into your mouth, to enter your mouth, to take, to explain, to seek, to

hang, to throw, to stumble, to tie, to look, to press, to press (on your foot), to start, to sting, to make it sting, to leave, to get on, to get on (ship), to get on (plane), to drown, to tie your neck, to find, to sniff, to magnify, to nail on, to blow (whistle), to whistle, to play (piano), to sing (song), to work, to crash, to crash (to a tree), to pull, to climb, to climb (a tree), to remove, to eject, to say, to strip your skin from your body, to prick thorn, to listen, to break, to remove your tooth, to touch, to pour yourself, to fall, to smash, to realize, to jump, to pass, to come, to bring, to enter, to go, to bury, to be buried, to show, to make a show, to take, to open your eyes, to close your eyes, to laugh, to jump in the air, to give a gift, to bite, to drink, to make to drink, to go down, to make to go down, to watch, to escape, to make, to obsess, to stand up, to close, to fight, to make a fight, to slide, to break, to shut in, to lock, to settle, to speak, to run, to follow, to put, to hang on your ear, to bury in the sand, to vomit, to tie on your tail, to come as a guest, to read, to become, to fall into middle, to play (dough), to play (ball), to die, to kill, to shiver, to be cooked, to go left-right, to hide, to swing, to battle, to make noise, to shelter, to shoot, to compress, to insert, to surf, to tell, to stretch, to decorate, to make a joke, to put in, to be attached, to talk on the phone, to click, to double click, to climb, to hold, to fly, to wake someone up, to make to sleep, to extend, to blow, to give, to shoot, to burn, to catch, to be burned, to make to burn, to do, to make (a hamburger), to make (an ice cream), to cook (meal), to make (food), to help, to lie on the bed, to write, to remove writing, to write a text, to eat, to make food, to have your meal, to demolish, to make to tear, to jump up, to swallow, to roll, to walk, to swim

Stative Verbs that used by 48-60 months children are as follows:

Stative Verbs

to feel bad, to be hungry, to hurt, to be in pain, to come to your mouth, to understand, to look, to know, to finish, to feel like, to stop, to hear, to transform into a mouse, to see, to remember, to stay inside, to want, to stay, to be angry, to be afraid-, to be, to be (a baby), to be (a line), to be (birthday), to be (a monkey), to be (happy), to be (black), to be (tall), to sit, to suppose, to remove number, to be happy, to be surprised, to be fat, to forget, to wake up, to sleep, to be tall, to be mistaken, to live, to be a baby, to remove writing, to be tired, to be to weak

In Table 3, there are 10 verbs for each of the activities and stative verbs that 48-60 months old children use in narrative texts.

The active verbs that 48-60 months old children mostly use can be exemplified as follows:

- A small mouse went.
- The wood came out of it, it entered into Tom, and Jerry surfed with that. /Then he called his wife, made something so so.
- He/she fell on the shark.
- Then Tom ate something. Then...then he/she was eating something... Tom and Jerry were eating something...
- Tom went out of the ship by running.

Stative verbs that 48-60 months children mostly use take place in sentences as follows:

- Before ending writings went out, then it ended.
- There was a small mouse; I don't remember the name...
- And then... then I don't know anything else. /I don't know what happened to woman cat. /There was something like groom so I don't know the name, then he tied it.
- Tom was sleeping; his friend next to him woke him up.
- Tom swallowed the surfboard, he became very tall.

List of the Verbs That 60-72 Months Old Children Use

Active verbs that are used by 60-72 months children are as follows:

Active Verbs

To open, to cry, to pop, to escape to your mouth, to put in your mouth, to open your mouth, to take, to understand, to explain, to seek, to look back, to stay in the back, to throw, to fire, to jump, to leave, to shout, to tie, to tie (ribbon), to make peace, to press, to start, to sink, to stick, to stab, to quit, to get on, to finish, to find, to call, to shoot, to play (piano), to study, to hit, to clash, to pull, to exit, to go (in someone's face), to eject, to find a solution, to distribute, to drip, to say, to touch, to continue, to erect, to touch, to ramble, to wander, to pour, to pour out, to turn, to make to turn, to beat, to fight, to fall down, to make to fall down, to bend, to wave, to take in your hand, to come to your hand, to tamper with, to seclude, to smash, to jump, to

throw, to kill, to come, to come back, to go back, to give back, to bring, to wander, to enter, to go, to go (back), to send, to show, to take, to open your eyes, to laugh, to eat away, to make a move, to shoot in the air, to bark, to prepare, to bite, to drink, to take inside, to enter inside, to go inside, to make to drink, to progress, to make to progress, to get off, to tie with a rope, to make a sign, to make to recover, to escape, to go your head, to come to head, to lift the head, to lift, to stand up, to close, to close the door, to come across, to slide, to make to slide, to skateboard, to pull over, to cut, to break, to break (a glass), to be broken, to shut, to lock, to speak, to separate, to pluck, to run, to follow, to put, to take on your lap, to whisper in ear, to use, to throw off, to prepare a table, to come as a guest, to pretend, to read, to be-, to fight, to be (swelling), to be formed (foam), to die, to kill, to make blow up, to be cooked, to come across, to hide, to get hide, to attack, to swing, to swing (flag), to make yourself swing, to stick in, to greet, to make voice, to make noise, to surf, to tell, to drive, to wear a hat, to smack, to be puffed up, to make to be fat, to prepare a plate, to attach, to attach (sth), to be fastened, to carry, to call on the phone, to make click-click, to double click, to climb, to vibrate, to hold, to fall into a trap, to spit, to fly, to wake someone up, to extend, to blow, to make to blow, to climb over, to make to climb over, to lie on, to arrive, to give, to give (a greeting), to hit, to burn, to make (a fire), to catch, to get caught, to come closer, to make to come closer, to make, to make (a sandwich), to make (a war), to stick, to help, to write, to hang a writing, to write a text, to eat, to prepare meal, to give meal, to cook a meal, to fall down, to stick to ground, to go to your place, to punch, to swallow, to walk, to swim.

Stative verbs that are used by 60-72 months children are as follows:

Stative Verbs

To be in pain, to hurt, to understand, to look, to accomplish, to know, to wrinkle, to grow up, to be mad, to stop, to hear, to make waitress, to see, to be seen, to come out, to remember, to stay in the air, to get thinner, to want, to allow, to watch, to stay, to stay (monkey), to stay (thin), to be angry, to smell come, to get smell, to be afraid, to make (a friendship), to become small, to be, to be (a friend), to be (cat), to be (monkey), to be (happy), to be (thinner), to sit, to be scared

stiff, to disturb, to suppose, to be cool, to love, to be angry, to take the shape of, to be fat, to forget, to wake up, to sleep, to be sorry, to lie, to be written, to beat, to be tired

When the frequency values examined, it was found that the most frequent active verbs children used were *to eat, to run, to go, to come, to catch*; while the most frequent stative verbs were *to be, to sleep, to stay, to tire, to finish* and *to suppose*. This is not a surprising finding since there were many events that could be expressed with these verbs in all of the 3 cartoon films children watched.

The most frequent active verbs 60-72 months old children used appeared in these sentences (Table 4):

Table 4: The most frequent verbs encountered in 60-72 months old children's narrations

Age range	Active verbs	Stative verbs	Total
to go	81	to see	25
to leave	70	to remember	23
to come	69	to finish	19
to eat	62	to know	18
to take	54	to sleep	18
to do	48	to look	17
to work	37	to be angry	16
to say	32	to want	15
to enter	29	to forget	15
to hit	29	to stay	10

- He took the surfing board, and then went that way. / went into the sand.
- He hit his head while getting out. / Then a cat came out of the pie.
- "Would you come to dinner?" he said.
- The mouse was eating something.
- The mouse saw him surfing, took it.

The most frequent stative verbs 60-72 months old children used appeared in these sentences (Table 4):

- Tom and Jerry saw the surfing man.
- After he blew, I don't know how it happened, he spilled it all over himself.
- Then he rescued his baby, and it finished.
- First, well... there were two dogs sleeping.
- "I knew my baby was inside." he said.

Concerning verb frequency, when Table 3 and 4 is compared it is seen that 7 of the active verbs (to go, to leave, to come, to eat, to do, to say, to hit) and 8 of the stative verbs (to see, to remember, to finish, to know, to sleep, to be angry, to forget, to stay) are used by children belonging to both age groups.

DISCUSSION

Use of multimedia aids such as TV, video is effective on the development of communicative abilities (Ulusoy and Demirbilek 2013). It is also known that visuals of animals positively effect social, cognitive and linguistic development of children (Topcuoglu 2013). The children in this study were able verbally describe the fable cartoon they have watched.

Turkay (2009) states that children acquire Turkish similarly to other children acquiring other languages, and she notes the importance of linguistic input provided by the caretakers in their first years of development. Yet, studies of later years of development are limited, and to our knowledge there are not any studies reporting the types of verbs used by children of later ages. However, in a similar study Gokmen (2007) has conducted a similar study in which the words were sought to be described via natural observation. In Gokmen's (2007) study the action verbs frequently used by children around age 6;0 years are *to make, to say, to look, to come, to eat, to go, to take, to give and to play*. Frequently used action verbs in this study shared with Gokmen (2007) are *to go, to come, to eat, to take, to do and to say*. The most frequent stative verbs noted in Gokmen (2007) are *to be, to see, to sit, to want, to love, to hurt, to stop, to know, to stop, to spill and to finish*. Again, the stative verbs shared with Gokmen (2007) in this study are *to be, to see, to finish, to know, to want and to stop*. Two reasons could be put forward: first these words are relatively shorter structurally and they represent the core vocabulary of adult language. That the verb *to say* was used frequently in both of the studies is due to the fact that 60-72 months old children can use indirect speech skillfully.

It's also observed in other studies that children of different age groups describe the same observation with structurally different sentences and different vocabulary (for example, Casenhiser and Goldberg 2005). This is explicable with individual differences in cognitive development.

Children learn to use action verbs for different purposes in early ages (Clark 2009). In this study, children used action verbs more frequently than stative verbs.

It is observed that the verbs used by the age groups in this study were similar, since there is not a subtle difference between vocabularies of children of similar ages (Yildirim et al. 2010)

Ekmekci (1990) emphasizes the importance of experience in language development and states it is through experience that new meanings are attributed to acquired words. Acquisition of words is achieved only when they are used in context. The word in question has to be happening at the moment if it is a verb, or it has to be present in the environment if it is a noun. As seen in the examples above, all the active verbs used by children are in correct context. Within the frame of what Ekmekci (1990) states, it is possible to say that these children have acquired these action verbs.

As understood from the results achieved above, children usually use the active verbs during their speaking. This observation has parallelism with the results reached by Gokmen (2005) on that children in the younger age group use verbs having an action characteristic more often.

CONCLUSION

This study aimed to evaluate the verbs used by twenty two Turkish native speaker children, aged between 48-72 months, to narrate the cartoon films they watched. The verbs were divided into two sub-categories as active and stative verbs, and the conclusion below was reached after quantitative and qualitative observations:

Children use more active verbs than stative verbs. The reason for this can be explained as children acquire active verbs earlier, and also these sorts of verbs appear frequently in cartoons. Considering previous studies and their conclusions on Turkish language, it is clearly seen active verbs are more frequent than stative verbs, thus the former are acquired and used earlier than the latter, along with verbs that express habits and especially abstract verbs. This can be seen as a direct reflection of cognitive development on language development.

When the differences were considered in terms of text and vocabulary produces between the two groups, it was observed that 60-72 months old children used more words than 48-60 months old ones, thus reaching a richer vocabulary level. This parallelism based on age difference was an expected result.

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