

Chapter 3

Measuring Phonological and Orthographic Similarity: The Case of Loanwords in Turkish and English

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ABSTRACT

Marked and unmarked language forms can be distinguished with the level of simplicity or complexity denotations of the forms. Unmarked target language forms may create little or no difficulty, even if they do not exist in the native language of the learner, while marked forms can be relatively difficult for language learners. In addition to the notions of markedness/unmarkedness, there has also been an emphasis on similarity and dissimilarity between the items of first (L1) and second languages (L2). Along with similarity or dissimilarity of L1 and L2 forms, the level of difficulty may vary enormously in different language-specific procedures. In this chapter, therefore, it is intended to build an understanding of the recognized pronunciation and orthographic problems of similar loanwords in both Turkish (L1 of the participants) and English (L2).

INTRODUCTION

Knowing two languages means recognizing two ways of speaking, writing, listening, and reading in both L1 and L2. The syntactic, lexical, semantic, or phonetic similarities of two languages, predominantly phonetic similarity, may make language

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-5225-4009-0.ch003

learners be familiar with the linguistic information of the target language skills easily. It may also be presumed that phonetic similarity between languages can promote the pace of learning or acquiring the target language; however, contrary to intuitive expectations, phonetic similarity may raise difficulty in discovering and appreciating the identical sounds in both native language and target language (Gass, 2013). Additionally, orthographic similarity between two languages may also be both promoting and obstructing for L2 learners. In both cases, difficulty may arise from the potential resemblance causing interference from L1 representation, namely cross-linguistic influence.

Considering the similarities and dissimilarities of L1 and L2, this chapter primarily highlights the case of loanwords in Turkish as L1 and English as L2 by taking the Markedness Differential Hypothesis –MDH- and Speech Learning Model–SLM- as references to interpret the issue. For depicting the probable troubles and facilities of loanwords, the outputs of the advanced level language learners of English have been examined. Some sets of the loanwords gathered and evaluated in terms of pronunciation and orthographic rules have been classified and presented in the chapter. The purpose of focusing on the mentioned issue is to raise the awareness of foreign language –FL- practitioners and FL learners.

BACKGROUND

The impact of L1 on L2 and the notion of interference while learning a foreign language have been one of the chief concerns of the scholars in the field of L2 language education. The remarkable views have been the core of discussions, and the field courses to train L2 learners have been designed by taking these views into account. Among such views, cross-linguistic influence (CLI), for illustration, insists that using data from L1 or L2 has a considerable influence on L2 learning. CLI was used by Kellerman and Sharwood (1986) to refer to the phenomena such as language transfer- positive and negative transfer-, interference, and borrowing. Positive transfer is the experience which makes learning easier and may occur when both L1 and L2 have the identical form, whereas negative transfer, known as interference, is the use of L1 pattern or rule which leads to an error or inappropriate form in L2 (Richards & Schmidt, 2002). CLI can be noticed at all linguistic levels, whether phonological, lexical, syntactical, or semantic. By comparing groups of learners with different L1 backgrounds learning English as L2 and by clarifying more complex ways beyond simply formal similarities among individual items, Ringbom (2006) distinguished between different types of cross-linguistic similarity relations which refer to items and systems, form and meaning, L1 and L2 transfers, and perceived or assumed similarities. Depending on such distinguished points,

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