**Background**

- Languages differentiate between nouns and verbs to a different degree and by different means (Broschart 1991)
- While German is a classical noun-verb-language with a clear-cut distinction, the noun-verb distinction in Turkish is less rigid
- As a consequence, the acquisition of word categories may differ in languages having different structural characteristics

**Aims**

- To describe picture naming abilities of German and Turkish children of different ages
- To compare children’s naming accuracy of nouns and verbs
- To compare children’s naming accuracy of transitive and intransitive verbs
- To compare error patterns in noun and verb naming in German and Turkish

**Differences German-Turkish**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Morphology</th>
<th>German</th>
<th>Turkish</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Inflected</td>
<td>agglutinated</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marking of nouns</td>
<td>case, number, gender</td>
<td>case, (number), no gender</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Articles obligatory</td>
<td>no definite articles</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marking of verbs</td>
<td>person, tense, mode, number, (genus verb)</td>
<td>person, tense, mode, number, negation, aspect, genus verb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verb-second, canonical SOV (in main clause; OVS also possible)</td>
<td>canonical SOV, other word orders possible for pragmatic effects</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subject drop</td>
<td>subject is obligatory</td>
<td>no obligatory subject</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Word formation</td>
<td>derivation, conversion</td>
<td>derivation, conversion, function overlap between nouns and verbs (in predicate position)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noun-Verb Distinction</td>
<td>clear distinction, “noun-friendly”: nouns consistent with articles, verbs appear in various positions</td>
<td>less obvious distinction, “verb-friendly” language: verbs consistent in the salient final position</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Methodology**

- **Subjects**: 210 children, 150 German monolingual and 60 Turkish monolingual
- Equal distribution of boys and girls
- Testing in Germany (Berlin, Potsdam) and Turkey (Ankara)
- 3 age groups: 3:00-3:11 (60 German, 20 Turkish), 4:00-4:11 (60 German, 20 Turkish), 5:00-5:11 (30 German, 20 Turkish)

**Materials**

- 72 pictures, black and white drawings: 36 noun pictures, 36 verb pictures
- Due to name agreement results, 2 nouns and 2 verbs differed in the sets across languages

**Results I**

**Naming Accuracy for nouns and verbs**

1. Nouns vs verbs
   - Nouns were named better than verbs in both languages
   - Noun advantage less pronounced in Turkish
   - Significant noun-verb difference in German in all age groups
   - Noun-verb-difference in Turkish only significant in the first group (3-4 year)

2. Cross-linguistic differences
   - German children are better on naming nouns than Turkish children
   - No significant cross-linguistic differences in verb naming

**Results II**

**Error strategies in noun and verb naming**

1. Nouns vs verbs
   - German and Turkish children use category-specific error patterns in both languages
   - Semantically related substitutions dominate for noun errors
   - Circumlocutions dominate for verb errors

2. Cross-linguistic differences
   - Better strategies in dealing with verb naming problems in Turkish
   - Less changes of word category (nouns instead of verbs) in Turkish
   - Less GAP-verbs in circumlocutions, Turkish children use more specific verbs

**Results III**

**Transitive and intransitive verbs**

- Transitive and intransitive verbs in both languages
- Differences German-Turkish in accuracy of transitive and intransitive verbs
  - German: intransitives better than transitives
  - Turkish: transitives better than intransitives

**Summary**

⇒ Evidence for cross-linguistic similarities and differences:
   - Naming accuracy
     - There is a noun advantage in children’s picture naming for both languages
     - The noun advantage is more striking in German
     - Cross-linguistic differences show a higher accuracy for nouns in German children and a similar accuracy for verbs in both languages
   - Error strategies
     - German and Turkish children choose category-specific error strategies in a naming task
     - Turkish children are more elaborated in verb naming than German children
   - Cross-linguistic differences show different patterns in the accuracy of transitive and intransitive verbs

**Conclusions**

⇒ There are fundamental differences between nouns and verbs. As a consequence, children in both languages show similar category-specific patterns in a naming task.
⇒ The noun advantage in German can be linked to structural properties of German as a “noun-friendly” language.
⇒ The good abilities in Turkish verb naming can be linked to structural properties of Turkish as a “verb-friendly” language.