

The Functions of Modality Markers in the Construction of Novelistic Hybrids in Turkish

The aim of this paper is twofold: a) to investigate the two opposing linguistic functions of the tense-aspect-modality (TAM) morphemes: –mİş and –DI in Turkish in a fictional text, which do not have exact parallels in English. b) to describe different behaviors of these TAM morphemes in the hybrid constructions of the speech patterns of fictional characters. We are using the term “hybrid construction” in the sense defined by Bakhtin: “an utterance that belongs, by its grammatical (syntactic) and compositional markers, to a single speaker, but actually contains mixed within it two utterances, two speech manners, two styles, two “languages,” two semantic and axiological belief systems” (Bakhtin 1981).

The morpheme -mİş stands for the 3 categories of tense aspect and modality in Turkish. On the other hand, the morpheme –DI is mainly a past tense marker, and it is more often used in the narration of a story than –mİş, although the latter is also used to indicate past tense. In the modal sense, –mİş acts as a non-committative mood marker (Yavas 1980, Slobin & Aksu 1982, Johanson 2000) which involves

- a) the reporting of events
Ada’nın dediğine göre Deniz eve gelmiş.
“Ada told me that Deniz has come home.”
In its reportative use –mİş should be analyzed along the lines of “X said P and I believe P is true.”
- b) making inferences
Upon seeing Deniz’s car in front her home the speaker utters the following sentence:
Deniz eve gelmiş.
“Deniz has come home.”
- c) expressing perceptions and sensations
John da buradaymış!
“John, too, is here!”
In this sense, mİş indicates a sudden realization on the part of the speaker regarding the occurrence of an event which had taken place in his/her mental/psychological or physical absence. In other words, mİş can express a psychological as well as a physical distance between the event/state and the speaker.

The text we chose to focus on, Orhan Pamuk’s¹ *White Castle*, delineates the opposition and final confluence of eastern and western patterns of thinking within the main character’s consciousness through the constant shifts between these two morphemes in the hybrid constructions in novelistic language. The main character, an Italian narrating the story of his captivity in the custody of an Ottoman courtier (Hodja), is critical of almost everything he relates about his life in the beginning of the story, and he puts a psychological and mental distance between himself and everything Eastern. In his memoirs belonging to this period in his life, he prefers to use the linguistic patterns constructed with –mİş alongside with those constructed with -DI:

¹ Orhan Pamuk is the author of six novels, and the recipient of major Turkish and international literary awards. He is one of Europe's most prominent novelists, and his work has been translated into more than twenty languages.

Biraz cesarete kapılarak, dinimi değiştiremeyeceğimi söyleyince, Paşa şaşırdı biraz, sonra, aptal olduğumu söyledi. Dinimi değiştirdim diye yüzüne bakamayacağım kimse *yokmuş* ki çevremde (29).

In a sudden moment of courage, I said I would not change my religion, and the pasha surprised, called me a fool. *After all*, there was no one around me whom I would be ashamed to tell I had become a Muslim (29).

Here, -mİş instills a sense of psychological distance between the Italian slave and Muslims, which adds an ironic tone to his speech in the Turkish quote. On the other hand, the adverbial “after all” in the English version fails to carry this underspecified ironic sense of disbelief and detachment implicated by the use of -mİş in Turkish.

[In a dinner party when Hodja discusses the resemblance between his slave and himself with an Ottoman Pasha]

Sofrada başkaları da varmış, insanların çift yaratıldığı konusunda bir **gevezeliktir** başlamış, bu konuda **abartılmış örnekler** hatırlanmış, annelerinin birbirine ikiz kardeşlerden, birbirlerini görünce korkan, ama büyülenmiş gibi birbirlerinden bir daha ayıramayan benzerlerden ... *sözetmişler* (38).

There had been at table, **a prattling** began on the subject of how human beings were created in pairs, **hyperbolic examples** on this theme *were recalled*, twins whose mothers could not tell them apart, look-alikes who were frightened at the sight of one another but were unable, as if bewitched, ever again to part ... (37).

In this extract, mİş performs its reportative function in what Bakhtin calls a novelistic hybrid. Although on a superficial level the slave seems to reflect his master’s point of view, this utterance is “half someone else’s.” It is not clear whether the judgmental expressions like “prattling,” “hyperbolic examples” belong to Hodja, his slave or Pasha himself.

To sum up, this paper illustrates how linguistic observations can be used to analyze the construction of novelistic language. A study of the different uses of -mİş and -DI in Turkish in relation to Bakhtin’s theory on novelistic hybrids reveals language-specific occurrences and their affects on the creation of fictional meaning.

References

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