# English Language Learners' Comprehension and Production of Implicatures[*]

# İngilizce Öğrenenlerin Sezdirileri Anlama ve Üretme Becerileri

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**ABSTRACT**: The present study investigated to what extent Turkish-speaking upper-intermediate level second language learners of English can comprehend and produce implicatures. To this end, 90 freshman students completed a multiple-choice test, and responded to 12 situations in a discourse completion task (DCT). The participants had a moderately high level of success in the implicature comprehension test. Although the learners had considerable difficulty in comprehending understated negative criticism items, which flout the maxim of quantity, they were highly competent in comprehending relevance implicatures. The rates of success in quality and manner implicature comprehension were moderate. The participants were more successful in understanding particularized implicatures when compared to generalized implicatures. As for the production data, 70.6% of the responses contained implicatures. The mostly widely flouted maxim was the quality maxim for the purposes of creating sarcasm and achieving face management and politeness. The maxim of quality was flouted when responding to bad news or expressing anger in an unpleasant situation. When trying to express their opinions about the quality of a particular thing/person, participants tended to flout the maxim of quantity in order to avoid expressing their opinions directly, and making the referent disappointed. The participants did not tend to make use of implicatures in the case of requesting. The participants who realized requests via implicatures flouted the quantity maxim mostly. A significant correlation was not documented between participants' pragmatic production and comprehension.
**Keywords:** pragmatic competence, implicatures, second language learning

**ÖZ:** Bu çalışmada orta-üstü düzey İngilizce konuşanların hedef dilde sezdirileri anlama ve üretme becerileri araştırılmıştır. Bir devlet üniversitesinde İngilizce Öğretmenliği birinci sınıf öğrencisi olan 90 katılımcının hedef dilde sezdirileri anlama düzeyleri çoktan-seçmeli bir ölçek aracılığıyla ölçülmüştür. Aynı katılımcı grubuna yazılı bir söylem tamamlama ölçeği verilerek, 12 durum için belirli söz eylemlerini sezdiri yoluyla gerçekleştirmeleri istenmiştir. Sezdirileri anlama ölçeğinde katılımcılar orta düzeyde başarı göstermiştir. Katılımcılar nicelik kuralının ihlal edildiği, olumsuz eleştiri içeren sezdiri çeşitlerini anlamada güçlük çekerken bağıntı kuralının ihlal edildiği sezdirileri anlamada oldukça başarılı olmuştur. Nitelik ve tarz kurallarının ihlalini içeren sezdirilerin anlaşılmasında ise katılımcılar orta düzeyde başarı göstermiştir. Genelleştirilmiş sezdirilerin anlaşılma düzeyinin özelleştirilmiş sezdirilere oranla daha düşük olduğu görülmüştür. Hedef dilde sezdiri üretme ölçeğine verilen yanıtların %70.6'sının sezdiri içerdiği belirlenmiştir. En yaygın üretilen tür, alayla karışık iğneleme içeren nitelik sezdirileri olmuştur. Nitelik kuralı ayrıca istenmeyen durumlarda tepki ve kızgınlığı dile getirme amacıyla ihlal edilmiştir. Katılımcıların eleştiri söz eylemini gerçekleştirirken düşüncelerini doğrudan söyleyerek karşılarındakini kırmamak için özellikle nicelik ilkesini ihlal ettikleri görülmüştür. Rica durumlarında katılımcıların çoğunluğu sezdiri kullanımına gerek duymazken sezdiri kullanan katılımcılar en çok nicelik kuralını ihlal etmiştir. İkinci dilde sezdirileri anlama ve üretme beceri düzeyleri arasında önemli bir ilişkinin olmadığı görülmüştür.
**Anahtar sözcükler:** edimsel edinç, sezdiriler, ikinci dil öğrenimi

## 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1. Pragmatic Development and the Co-operative Principle

The growing emphasis on the learning of English for interactional purposes has shifted the focus of second language (L2) learning on the communicative needs of the learners for more than three decades. Considering the dominance of the written exam skills in the Turkish

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educational institutions, learners need to acquire the oft-ignored communicative skills to put their underlying knowledge into practice in actual situations.

Hymes' (1972) formulation of communicative competence highlighting the social aspects of L2 acquisition was provided as an explanation for the gap between what learners know and how much of this knowledge they can reflect to actual communication. This emphasis on communicative properties in L2 learning and teaching has continued with the development of new communicative competence models by Canale and Swain (1983), Bachman (1990) and Celce-Murcia, Dörnyei and Thurrel (1995). Unlike Canale and Swain's model, Bachman's model represents pragmatic competence independently rather than as a subsection of sociolinguistic competence. Thus, the role of pragmatic ability as a crucial constituent of language ability has been brought into limelight in the communicative competence paradigms.

As Bardovi-Harlig (1996) demonstrates, a learner of high grammatical proficiency will not necessarily have an equal level of pragmatic competence. In line with this, Jianda (2006) reports that "Students with high TOEFL [Test of English as a Foreign Language] scores do not seem to have correspondingly high pragmatic ability" (p.17). The situation is particularly troubling for learners in non-English speaking contexts, where there is a limited amount of authentic input and chance to observe and use the target language in natural contexts (Cenoz, 2007, p. 132). Although the artificiality of the classroom environment is aimed to be compensated for by the help of rich textbooks, the authenticity of the language presented in these materials is questionable, as well (Bardovi-Harlig, 1996; Kasper, 1997; Vellenga, 2004). Considering the development of conversational skills, this seems to be a major drawback for L2 learners. These contextual disadvantages may lead to serious communication problems in learners' future encounters with native and non-native speakers. As Bardovi-Harlig and Dörnyei's (1998) study into metapragmatic awareness indicates native speakers evaluate pragmatic errors more severely compared to grammatical ones. As a matter of fact, they are more likely to recognize pragmatic erroneousness as a sign of rudeness.

Interlanguage pragmatics (ILP), a young subdiscipline of L2 acquisition and pragmatics, has emerged with an aim to analyze such learner experiences. Other concerns of ILP include development of pragmatic competence along with intercultural communicative competence. The majority of the ILP research has focused on the performance of speech acts like requests, apologies, complaints in the L2 and cross-cultural comparison of speech acts (Kasper & Rose, 2001). A small portion of this body of research has been allotted to the investigation of "conversational implicatures", the main issue addressed in this study. Conversational implicature, a central field of inquiry within pragmatics and conversational logic branch of philosophy, refers to the indirect conveying of meaning as distinct from what is said by the speakers for cooperative purposes (Davis, 2005).

In order to understand the concept of implicature more clearly, the distinction between what is said and what is implied (Horn, 2004) should be highlighted. "What is said", in other words, the semantic meaning refers to the truth value of the proposition while "what is implied" refers to the non-traditional meaning intended by the speaker. What the speaker "means" is more diverse than "what s/he says" and is closely related to pragmatic factors (Grice, 1978, p. 162; Thomas, 1995, p. 57). Explaining that pragmatic interpretation is not specifically linguistic as in the case of semantic interpretation, Recanati (2004, p. 451) adds that pragmatic interpretation is involved in the understanding of human action in general. Thus, he points out that a broader mechanism—something deeper than the mechanical interpretation of semantics is at work in pragmatic processes. Although how this mechanism operates has not been enlightened at the moment, as Blakemore (1992) confirms, "Utterance interpretation takes place so fast and so spontaneously that we are not usually aware of how we recover the message we do." (p.10).

As stated by Vershueren (1999, p.26) the speakers of a language cannot speak explicitly all the time. Speakers of any language commonly utilize less straightforward communicative devices to express their intentions. Nevertheless, the underlying communication mechanism enables the interlocutors to explore meaning in everything conveyed no matter how indirect or irrelevant they may seem. Grice (1975) accounts for this quest for rationality in terms of cooperation between the interlocutors, namely "The Cooperative Principle" (CP). There are also four maxims to be observed in conversation as part of the CP:

1. Quantity

    1a. Make your contribution as informative as is required (for the current purposes of the exchange).

    1b. Do not make your contribution more informative than is required.

2. Quality

    2a. Do not say what you believe to be false.

    2b. Do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence.

3. Relation

    Be relevant.

4. Manner

    4a. Avoid obscurity of expression.

    4b. Avoid ambiguity.

    4c. Be brief (avoid unnecessary prolixity).

    4d. Be orderly.

These maxims can be recognized as tacit assumptions of communicative behavior, although they should not be taken as rules or advice for speech. As Levinson (1983, p. 102) warns, few people follow these guidelines all the time. Grice incorporated implicatures to his account in order to explain such non-conformance to the CP (Lakoff, 1995, p. 191). Even if the maxims are not followed, through paralinguistic, linguistic, or non-linguistic hints the speaker indirectly conveys the intended meaning to the hearer, and expects the hearer to deduce the message with the same hints (Thomas, 1995, p. 58). This does not mean that the hearer is always successful, though. What is implied by the speaker may not correspond to what is inferred by the hearer.

The most direct form of non-observance of the CP is violating one or more maxims, whereby, the violator-speaker aims to mislead or deceive the hearer (Grice, 1975, p. 310; Thomas, 1995, p. 72). Telling a lie is an obvious example of a violation of the maxim of Quality (Cutting, 2002, p. 92; Green, 1989, p. 89). Due to the absence of a communicative effort to send an indirect message to the hearer, this misbehavior does not lead to implicatures (Peccei, 1999, p. 27). As opposed to violating the maxims covertly, a speaker may express his/her unwillingness to comply with the norms of the CP, which is called opting out of a maxim. In order to indicate this to the hearer, the speaker simply states his/her conditions with either implicit or explicit messages such as "I cannot say anymore. My lips are sealed.", "I'm not sure if it's true, but…", "I have no evidence for this, but…" (Green, 1989, Harnish, 1991; Thomas, 1995).

Unintentional failure to observe the CP results in infringement of maxims. The causes of their generation may vary; it might be due to the imperfectness of child speech or foreigner talk; temporary situations like nervousness or drunkenness, a cognitive disorder or the speaker's

incapability (Thomas, 1995). There are also occasions in which the speaker does not have to opt out of observing the maxims but just suspend them. Keenan (1977) reports the Malagasy as a culture whose owners provide less information than required in their exchanges, as opposed to the first sub-maxim of Quantity. Not only in specific cultures but also in specific occasions like funerals or in the texts of telegrams maxims, can be expected to be disobeyed by their nature.

In another form of non-observance, flouting, the speaker deliberately breaches the maxims in order to generate implicatures. In floutings, the speaker gives hints to the hearer that s/he should interpret the utterance as an implicature by some extra processing (Cruse, 2000, p. 360). This 'benign' misuse of maxims or 'exploitations' is the most significant kind of non-observance due to the fact that it gives rise to implicatures.

Another theoretical account of the communication of implied meanings is the Relevance Theory (RT), which collects all the maxims of the CP under one premise: an individual seeks a relation in every cognitive process (Sperber & Wilson, 1986). The most striking difference of this minimalist theory of communication and cognition from Grice's account is that all the maxims are disposed of; instead of them a general cognitive principle—the search for relevance dominates the theory. As in every communicative input, according to the Communication Principle, the hearers understand the contextual factors on the basis of the assumption that what is said is related to the conversation. The hearer calculates an input with the least effort and stops when the relation expectation is satisfied. In contrast to Grice's theory, communication does not need to be in relation to cooperation; in order for communication to be successful, the hearer and speaker should understand and be understood.

RT stands out as a more contemporary theory than Grice's account. Although Grice's theory has also some weaknesses such as the inadequacy in differentiating between the implicature types and processing of implicatures (Cruse, 2000; Thomas, 1995), it still dominates pragmatics studies due to practical reasons. For these reasons, it is thought that Grice's theoretical background will be relevant for investigating pragmatic comprehension and production skills.

## 1.2. The Properties of Conversational Implicatures

Implicatures are classified into two by Grice (1975): conversational and conventional. Conventional implicatures are dependent on the linguistic from whereas conversational implicatures are context-dependent. Conversational implicatures, simply referred to as implicatures are in two types, too: generalized and particularized. The level of context-dependency is the determining factor in distinguishing between the two.

A conventional implicature, as opposed to the mainly non-conventional nature of pragmatics is pragmatic in nature in that it is non-truth conditional (Cruse, 2000). Yet, it is tied to the linguistic form and does not derive from the CP, but from the particular lexical item or expression that it contains. These include some conjunctions and fillers such as "but, even, still, yet, well, therefore, etc." (Grundy, 1995; Levinson, 1983).

In the present study the focus will be on the non-conventionalized implicatures. Conventional implicatures have caused a lot of controversy in the field of pragmatics to the extent that some pragmaticists do not recognize them as implicatures (Bach, 2004). On these grounds, they will be excluded from the focus of the study.

As the conversational maxims derive from the attempt to rationalize conversational behaviour, the steps that a human being follows when processing them are explicable. Although there is some controversy as to the content and sequence of this psychological operation, it is commonly acknowledged that the processing of implicatures exhibits the feature of calculability. Since the conversation area is dynamic and flexible, it could be argued that

implicatures can be canceled explicitly or indirectly (Grice, 1975, p. 310). Cancelability is the key factor in distinguishing conversational implicatures from other implicature types. As in the examples below, a given implicature can be canceled without causing any contradiction or anomaly (Cruse, 2000; Levinson, 1983; Peccei, 1999).

[1] A: What's happened to the shampoo?
   B: I used most of it—actually, I used all of it.

[2] A: Are you coming to the party?
   B: My parents are in town—but I'm coming.

Conversational implicatures derive from speakers' compliance with the CP and can be of two types considering their dependence on the context. Generalized conversational implicatures (GCIs) are dependent on the context of the proposition they arise, though not as dependent as particularized implicatures (PCIs). Even with no special knowledge, people can still calculate them as can be seen in the following example:

[3] Ayşe has **three** children.
+> Ayşe has no more than three children.

Peccei (1999, p.37) illustrates the key feature of the GCIs as follows, "If you heard a tape recording but know nothing about the context you could still draw them."

Within GCIs there is a special class of implicatures in which a scale-based, namely scalar implicature is produced. The choice of one of the values in the scale implicates 'not the higher values' (Peccei, 1999; Grundy, 1995). The scales may be related to frequency (e.g., always, often), quantity (e.g., all, most, none), possibility (e.g., must, may), or evaluation of a situation (e.g., awful, bad, wonderful) (Broersma, 1994).

As opposed to GCIs, PCIs are highly dependent on the context of utterance (Thomas, 1995). Consider the classic example (Levinson, 1983, p.107):

[4] A: Can you tell me what time it is?
   B: Well, the milkman has come.

At first B's remark seems irrelevant to A's utterance. However, if A supposes B to be following the CP, s/he will understand B's implicature that the arrival of the milkman has something to do with the content of the conversation. There must be some shared information about the arrival hour of the milkman and that is most probably that he arrives at the place where A and B are now at a certain time of the day. Here, speaker A must rely on the context to link B's utterance to his/her remark.

PCIs are the most common type of implicatures (Yule, 1999), so the term "implicature" commonly refers to them. Moreover, their use is not limited to conversation, as Chierchia and McGonnel-Ginet (2001) note that even a preceding text might produce a partial but nonetheless particular context. A sentence in the middle of a book might be interpreted quite differently from the same sentence placed near the beginning. On these grounds, implicature processing is significant for L2 learners not only as a conversational skill but also as a reading skill.

### 1.3. Second Language Learners and Conversational Implicatures

Although the CP and RT have universal bases, the context and the culture in which the target language is spoken is of high significance in pragmatic issues. Considering the fact that even native speakers of a language sometimes have difficulty in understanding implicatures (Bouton, 1988), it would not be surprising for L2 learners, who encounter the norms of a totally different language and culture, to experience similar problems. In addition, L2 learners might not be aware of the implicatures in their speech with native speakers of that language (Kasper &

Rose, 2002). As Kasper (1997, p. 3) recounts "Second language learners might focus on the semantic meaning instead of understanding the intended meaning and may neglect making use of the contextual cues". In the same way, Bialystok (2003, p. 54) points out that adult L2 learners might make pragmatic errors not only due to their inability to understand language structures or vocabulary but also due to misinterpretation of what is said. These pragmatic errors might lead to miscommunication.

In order to see whether intercultural differences influence the comprehension of implicatures in L2 English, Devine (1982) conducted a study comparing first language (L1) and L2 speakers in terms of interpretation of implicatures and found out that cross-cultural differences can be potentially problematic in communication in English. While the participants performed nativelike in understanding implicatures flouting the Quality and Manner maxims, they had difficulty in the Quantity and Relevance implicatures. Carrell (1984) continued the quest for exploring the comprehension of indirectly conveyed meanings in a study, which examined the extent to which L2 learners could understand presuppositions and implicatures. The results showed that for L2 learners, understanding of implicatures proved to be less difficult than that of presuppositions. These small-scale studies were followed by Bouton's longitudinal research on the development of L2 learners' pragmatic awareness in understanding implicatures. Bouton (1988) observed a significant difference between L1 and L2 English speakers' comprehension of implicatures. The L1 background also influenced pragmatic inferencing; participants speaking European languages as their L1 were found to be more successful than those who spoke Korean, Japanese, and Chinese. Reassessment of the same L2 speakers after a four-year-long interval indicated a 90 % increase in their comprehension rate despite the fact that they still had difficulty in comprehending certain types of implicature like the Pope question[1], and the floutings of the maxim of Relevance and Quantity in cases of indirect criticism (Bouton, 1992, 1994).

Another important contribution to the field was Omara's (1993) study aiming to explore the reasons behind the possible differences in comprehension of implicatures in the L2 English. The study results were in line with Bouton's findings; L2 learners envisaged implicatures in a different way than native speakers. Among the possible causes including the level of proficiency, motivational and attitudinal factors towards the target culture, length of stay was reported to be the most significant predictor of learner difficulty.

L2 research on implicatures accumulated in the 2000s with cross-cultural comparisons of implicature comprehension. Ergüven's (2001) study on Turkish L2 learners indicated that on the whole, upper-intermediate level learners did not have difficulty interpreting implicatures in their L2 English. Yet, floutings of the maxims of Quantity and Manner proved to be somewhat problematical. Another cross-cultural study conducted with Korean L2 learners of English demonstrated a significant non-native difference in the ability to interpret particularized conversational implicatures, which was not observed in the domain of generalized implicatures (Lee, 2002). The think-aloud procedures administered following the comprehension test suggested that learners' knowledge of culture, personal biases, stereotypes and transfer of knowledge from the native culture can be at work in the process of interpretation.

Studies on Japanese L2 learners' comprehension of implicatures are also noteworthy since there are differences between the culture of English speaking countries and the traditional Japanese culture. One of these, Yamanaka's study (2003) on the pragmatic comprehension of Japanese L2 learners reported the effects of proficiency and length of residence as two major factors in the way of successful communication and pragmatic inferencing ability in English.

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[1] Bouton (1992) coined the name "Pope Question" to refer to the formulaic implicatures such as:
      A: Are you going to accept the job offer?
      B: *Is the Pope Catholic?*   (Pragmatic interpretation: The answer is obvious)

Taguchi (2002) adopted innovative theoretical and methodological procedures in L2 implicature research. Firstly, she constructed a computerized implicature listening test and employed the more contemporary Relevance Theory as the framework for her inquiries. Instead of focusing on the differences between L1 and L2 speakers of English, she compared less and high proficient L1 Japanese L2 English learners not only with regard to their level of implicature comprehension but also with regard to the inferential strategies they make use of during the same process. The results showed that, regardless of proficiency differences, learners commonly preferred para-linguistic cues and the rule of adjacency pair as inferencing strategies. Less proficient learners relied more on background knowledge and key word inferencing, whereas proficient learners identified the speaker's intended purpose of using an implicature more frequently. In a subsequent study which also measured the speed of implicature comprehension (Taguchi, 2005), a significant L2 proficiency influence was indicated on accuracy, but not on comprehension speed. Later, Taguchi (2007) found that L2 learners of English comprehended indirect refusals and requests faster and more easily than indirectly conveyed opinions. This was accounted for on the grounds that the speech acts of refusals and requests have a routinely carried out discourse pattern (e.g., showing a reason for refusal) and the L1 and target language norms are similar. As for indirect opinions (e.g., saying "The package is beautiful" in order to show discontent with the gift), they imposed more processing load as they depended on the pragmatic context more.

As an endeavor to find out the developmental differences in low and high level learners' comprehension of pragmatic meaning as opposed to linguistic meaning, Garcia (2004) administered a listening test assessing both pragmatic and linguistic knowledge. The results of the test indicated developmental differences in the comprehension of pragmatic meaning; the beginner level L2 English learners were less successful in comprehending the implicatures when compared with the more advanced group. Differences between linguistic and pragmatic comprehension and between the comprehension of speech acts and the comprehension of implicatures were also reported. The correlation between understanding speech acts and implicatures was found to be low. Most of the aforementioned studies had analyzed learners' comprehension of implicatures in English by comparing L1 and L2 speakers. However, Işık (2005) questioned whether the Turkish speakers could successfully comprehend implicatures in their native language. After administering both a Turkish and English implicature test to advanced level L2 English learners, Işık discovered only a minor difference between the mean scores of each test. Measuring the comprehension level of implicature and indirect speech acts by means of a listening test, Alagözlü and Büyüköztürk (2009) found that upper-intermediate English learners' pragmatic competences are not in line with their grammatical competences. In the same study a relationship was found between linguistic production skills and pragmatic comprehension skills.

Although it has been documented that L2 learners can understand implicatures to a certain extent, Rose (1994, s. 55) argues that comprehension of implicatures in a written or oral questionnaire does not mean that these learners can produce implicatures themselves and these productions are acceptable and appropriate in the target language. Pragmatics research into speech act realization and politeness levels by L2 learners point out that these productions may deviate from the target language norms (Kasper & Rose, 2001; Taguchi, 2006). In order to understand whether similar problems exist in implicature production, Taguchi (2003) gave low and high level L2 learners and a group of native English speakers, eight role-playing situations to produce formal and informal speech acts. It was found that language proficiency level and the L1 background influenced appropriacy levels and even high proficiency English learners' productions were not in line with that of native speakers. The same study also sought to explore the relationship between the comprehension and production dimensions of pragmatic competence. The correlation analysis revealed a significant but not strong relationship between

implicature comprehension and the appropriateness of the productions. Roever (2001) also found a strong relationship between speech act performance and implicature comprehension. Examining the production aspect of maxim floutings, Lachini (2006) provided non-elementary level L2 learners with situations to motivate their implicature production. The study manifested that intermediate and advanced level L2 learners flouted maxims less frequently than did the native speakers no matter how proficient they were. The results were attributed to the L2 learners' lack of exposure to real life language use in an L2 context and also to the ignorance of pragmatic aspects in instruction materials.

Apart from these, intervention studies on implicature have centered on increasing awareness into understanding implicatures. In one of the earliest studies, providing explicit instruction was found to improve implicature comprehension. The more formulaic implicatures like the Pope question were found to be easier to teach and easier for students to grasp. The Relevance implicatures, which are more "idiosyncratically dependent on the relationship between a particular utterance and its specific context", proved to be more difficult to teach and learn (Bouton, 1994, p. 12). In the same way, the classification of implicatures was found to be complicated. Especially in the case of irony, the role of intonation was considered to be of high importance; the role of intonation increased depending on the ambiguity of the implicature. Kuboto (1995) replicated this study with Japanese L2 learners of English and tested two methods of instruction: explicit and consciousness-raising methods. The former created more improvement in the post-test of implicatures although the expected effect of instruction was unsatisfactory. On the other hand, in a longitudinal implicature training study, progress was recorded in beginner level L1 Japanese learners' comprehension and accuracy in implicatures and indirect meanings (Taguchi, 2007, 2008a). The indirectly performed refusal speech acts were comprehended faster and more accurately. Similarly, Taguchi (2008b) examined the implicature development of two groups, one of which lived in an English speaking environment and one lived in an ESL environment. The results revealed that the learning context did not have an influence over improving implicature comprehension. In both contexts, the comprehension of indirectly conveyed opinions was found to be harder and slower than indirect refusals. It was also found that learners' rate of speaking and reading in contexts where English-speaking countries increased the speed of implicature understanding, but had no relationship with accurate comprehension. Though not of direct relevance, there are also studies reporting that living in an English-speaking context contributes to developing other pragmatic skills (Bardovi-Harlig & Dörnyei, 1998; Roever, 2001; Schauer, 2006).

It has been understood that L2 speakers who encounter a new language and cultural associations have difficulty in pragmatic skills at varying levels. The investigation of whether L2 learners from different L1 backgrounds experience similar difficulties is significant in this respect. Furthermore, the examination of L2 learners' implicature productions is noteworthy. Previous research has neglected the production dimension while focusing on the comprehension of implicatures. One reason for this may be the difficulty of measuring the production skills in natural context. For this reason in the present study, not only L2 learners' comprehension but also production will be examined. The research questions investigated are listed below:

1. To what extent can the upper-intermediate level L2 English learners comprehend implicatures in the target language?

　1a. Are there any differences in pragmatic comprehension in terms of implicature types?

　1b. Are there any gender-based differences in terms of comprehending implicatures?

2. Do upper-intermediate level L2 learners produce implicatures?

　2a. What are the characteristics of the implicatures produced by L2 learners?

2b. How appropriate are the production questionnaire responses in terms of native speaker norms?

3. Is the ability to comprehend implicatures in the L2 in line with pragmatic production ability?

4. How are participants' real-life uses of implicatures characterized?

## 2. METHODOLOGY

A descriptive research design was adopted which made use of both qualitative and quantitative data. The purpose was to make descriptive assertions about the implicature comprehension and production characteristics of a specific learner population at a specific level of development. In this respect, the study can be classified as a cross-sectional study, aiming to give a picture of the Turkish upper-intermediate students' pragmatic competence.

### 2.1. Participants

Ninety English Language Education department students (72 female, 18 male) studying at a state university participated in the study. The participants were a homogeneous group in terms of age, university entrance scores (organized by the State Student Selection and Placement Center) and their university's English proficiency score (See Table 1). The participants' university entrance scores and English proficiency levels were also much the same with a mean score of 90 out of 100 in the YDS (University Entrance Exam for Language Degrees). The majority (91.1%) had received one-year intensive English instruction prior to high-school. All of the participants had passed the English proficiency of the university.

**Table 1: Demographic information about the participants (n=90)**

|  | M | SD |
|---|---|---|
| **Age** | 18.7 | 0,6 |
| **Years of English instruction received** | 9 | 0.7 |
| **University entrance language score (maximum = 100)** | 90 | 3.13 |

Despite having high university entrance scores and having passed the university's English proficiency requirement, the participants rated their skills and abilities in English to be lower than the assumed proficiency level as can be seen in Table 2.

**Table 2: Self-reported proficiency in English (% of the participants)**

|  | Unsatisfactory | Intermediate | Upper-intermediate | Advanced |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Listening** | 22.2 | 56.7 | 21.1 | 0 |
| **Speaking** | 28.9 | 48.9 | 22.2 | 0 |
| **Reading** | 0 | 16.7 | 73.3 | 10 |
| **Writing** | 6.7 | 47.8 | 40 | 5.6 |
| **Pronunciation** | 10 | 56.7 | 31.1 | 2.2 |
| **Grammar** | 1.1 | 18.9 | 50 | 30 |
| **Vocabulary** | 1.1 | 48.9 | 52.2 | 4.4 |

None of the students had lived in an English-speaking country. The participants' reported frequency of interaction with native speakers of English was low (See Table 3). Nearly half of the participants reported they that they seldom interacted with native English speakers. Participants' exposure to English through media, e.g. reading books, magazines, watching English channels, etc. was not frequent as well. As can be seen, the participants' use of English tended to be restricted to the classroom.

**Table 3. Self-reported frequency of exposure to English outside the class**

| | Never | Rarely | Sometimes | Frequently | Very Frequently |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Self-reported frequency of interaction with NSs of English** | 22.2 | 48.9 | 26.7 | 2.2 | 0 |
| **Self-reported frequency of exposure to English through means of media** | 3.3 | 31.1 | 54.4 | 10 | 1.1 |

### 2.2. Instruments

### 2.2.1 The implicature comprehension instrument (ICI)

The Implicature Comprehension Instrument (ICI) is a multiple-choice discourse completion task (DCT), which is defined by Jianda (2006, p. 4) as follows: "test items where the test taker is required to choose the correct response from the several given options". The rationale behind choosing this specific type of instrument was the concern for practicality. Besides being administered and scored easily, MDCTs are suitable for testing large groups. The MDCT used in the present study is the shortened version of Bouton's instrument (1988, 1994). Before the adoption of the instrument, permission was granted from Lee (2002) who adapted the test. Although Bouton's original test is reported to have high reliability coeffient (i.e., 28 items, α= 0.74) (Bouton, 1994), the shortened version used in the present study yielded a lower reliability coefficient (KR-20 = 0.48), which is a limitation of the study.

The ICI contained fourteen items. The items in ICI represented six different types of implicatures; four relevance, four quantity, a manner and two quality implicatures.

Each question in ICI comprised a description of the situation and a dialog in which an implicature was used (See Table 4 below). The utterance containing the implicature was written in bold letters. These were followed by four options, every one of which displayed a different interpretation of the target utterance. Each correct answer received 1 point while choices of the other options were assigned 0 point.

**Table 4: Sample ICI question**

| Question # 1 (Implicature type: Quantity - Understated negative criticism |
|---|
| Two teachers are talking about a student's term paper<br>Mr. Ranger: Have you finished with Mark's term paper yet?<br>Mr. Smith: Yes, I have. I read it last night.<br>Mr. Ranger: What did you think of it?<br>Mr. Smith: **Well, I thought it was well-typed.**<br><br>Mr. did Mr. Smith like Mark's term paper?<br>a. He liked it. He thought it was good.<br>b. He thought it was important that the paper was well-typed.<br>c. He really did not read it well enough to know.<br>d. He did not like it. |

### 2.2.2 Implicature production instrument

The Implicature Production Instrument (IPI) used in the study was in the format of a written discourse completion task (WDCT), which as defined by Jianda (2006, p. 4) as "a written questionnaire including a number of brief situational descriptions, followed by a short dialog with an empty slot for the speech act under study". They are easy to administer; nevertheless, the scoring of WDCTs is a laborious and time-consuming task since the responses need to be rated for appropriacy or classified according to specified criteria by several raters.

IPI was devised by the researchers in order to assess L2 learners' production of implicatures. Before the generation of the instrument, primary works of pragmatics in the

literature were looked through by the researcher to collect authentic and near authentic samples of implicatures. In the meantime, the formats and questions used in a wide range of ILP studies were examined. The final version of the IPI was a typical WDCT, in which there is a scenario providing the context at the beginning of each item. The hypothetical situation/context is followed by a dialog where the first speaker's utterance is provided (See Table 5). The test takers were required to state how they would respond in the given situation in an indirect way supposing it is necessary to be indirect. If they did not feel the need to be indirect, they could give direct responses. A sample item can be seen in Table 5.

**Table 5: Sample item from the IPI**

| Question |
|---|
| A close friend of yours asks you to read his composition to give your opinion about it. You think the composition is not good at all- it is full of grammar mistakes, it is not interesting, and the message is not clear. You don't want to discourage your friend, but you also don't want to lie about the quality of the composition. |
| Your Friend: What do you think of my composition?<br>You: _____<br>(Sample Response: *I am sure that you can write a better one.*) |

In a separate section following the IPI, four open-ended questions regarding implicature use were given. These questions were presented in Turkish.

### 2.3 Data Collection

The data to be used in the study were collected through pen and paper administration of the research instruments with the freshman undergraduates of an English language education department. The content of the tests was examined by the Educational Sciences Institute in the university and permission was granted to administer the tests to the undergraduate students. Participation in the study was voluntary and written consent was obtained from the students. The instruments were administered in one session, ICI preceding IPI. The students completed the tests in approximately 45 minutes although there was no time limitation.

### 2.4 Data Analysis

The ICI scores of the participants were coded into spreadsheets by the researcher. The descriptive and inferential statistics on the test results were run by SPSS 15.

A total of 1080 responses (90x12) formed the production data. There were some invalid responses and no responses were provided to some of the items. After the exclusion of these, 762 responses containing implicatures were obtained. The Gricean framework (1975) was used to classify the responses. Direct responses which did not include implicatures were put under a separate category. The responses were categorized by the researcher on the basis of the conversational maxims flouted to form implicatures.

The frequency of each type of floutings was calculated and entered into spreadsheets. The descriptive statistics of the floutings were calculated. A scholar competent in the field of pragmatics was consulted to evaluate the consistency and accuracy of the coding process. The codings of the researchers were compared and discussed until a final decision was reached.

Following the categorization, the data were reanalyzed in terms of appropriacy to target language norms. To this end, Jernigan's (2007, p. 78) rating scale was adopted after some small changes (Table 6). The Cronbach's alpha coefficient of this scale was reported as 0.81 (Jernigan, 2007, p. 53). The maximum score to be obtained in the production scale was 48 (12 x 4).

**Table 6: Pragmatic rating rubric (in simplified form)**

| Score | Explanation |
|---|---|
| **(0)** | no response provided |
| **(1)** | response is unacceptable pragmatically given the context |
| **(2)** | response is generally unacceptable pragmatically in this context, though perhaps not in all contexts |
| **(3)** | response is generally appropriate given the context, but contains one or more noticeable pragmatic flaws that affect the intended meaning |
| **(4)** | near perfect close to native responses in content, syntax and lexicon. There is almost no error. |

Two experienced native English speaking instructors were consulted for rating the responses. They were given the rating rubric to assess the acceptability of the data. The interrater reliability coefficient was calculated as 0.74, which is moderately high.

## 3. FINDINGS

### 3.1. Comprehension of Implicatures in the L2

The first research question of the study was to determine L2 learners' comprehension level of implicatures in the L2. The ICI results revealed a moderate level of achievement. The participants' mean score was 8.2 out of 14 (SD = 2.11, min = 2, max = 12).

### 3.1.1. Implicature comprehension in terms of implicature type

In order to understand the differences in the comprehension of implicatures within broader categories, the overall rates of success for the floutings of the four main maxims of conversation were calculated. As can be seen in Table 7, the rate of success was 80% and higher in the Relevance implicatures (5, 8, 13, and 14), while this rate was 40-80% in the others (2, 3, 4, 6, 9, 11, 12) and 40% in two (1, 10).

**Table 7: Implicature comprehension in terms of implicature type**

| Implicature type | Explanation | Success Rate (%) |
|---|---|---|
| **Quantity** | Understated negative criticism | 37.4 |
| | Quantity - Be sufficiently informative | 65 |
| **Relevance** | Be relavant | 85.8 |
| | Irony/Sarcasm | 40 |
| **Quality** | Conventional expression | 50.5 |
| **Manner** | Be orderly | 60 |

Further analysis of the implicatures based on sub-categories revealed that the highest level of achievement was in Relevance implicatures with a rate of 86% (Table 8). This was followed by the Quantity and Manner implicatures. The rate of success in the category of Quality- Set expressions was 50.5%. One of these, the Pope question (Item 4) was understood only by half of the participants. When the same type of implicature was realized through a more universal event (9th question), the rate of success slightly increased (Item 9). Some participants chose the "effort to change the subject" option when interpreting such implicatures. In another category of the Quality implicatures, the rate of sucess dropped to 40%. The highest level of understanding difficulty was recorded in the Quality implicatures, "understated negative criticism" items.

**Table 8: Correct response rates per item in ICI**

| # Question | Implicature Type | Success Rate (%) |
|---|---|---|
| 8 | Relevance | 95.6 |
| 13 | Relevance | 85.6 |
| 14 | Relevance | 81.1 |
| 5 | Relevance | 80 |
| 12 | Quantity - Be sufficiently informative | 78.9 |
| 7 | Manner - Be orderly | 62.2 |
| 9 | Quality- Set conventional expressions | 51 |
| 2 | Quality - Irony/sarcasm | 48.9 |
| 4 | Quality- Set conventional expressions | 48.9 |
| 6 | Quantity - Be sufficiently informative | 48.9 |
| 3 | Quantity- Understated Negative Criticism | 42.2 |
| 11 | Quantity - Understated Negative Criticism | 42.2 |
| 10 | Quality - Irony/sarcasm | 30 |
| 1 | Quantity- Understated Negative Criticism | 26.7 |

Another criterion to compare the scores of the participants was their success rates in understanding highly context-dependent and context independent implicatures, namely, particularized and generalized implicatures. As Table 9 demonstrates, participants were more successful in comprehending particularized implicatures when compared to generalized implicatures.

**Table 9: Correct responses in terms of being generalized/ particularized**

| Implicature type | Success Rate (%) |
|---|---|
| Generalized (Item # 1, 3, 11, 4, 7, 10,12) | 41.5 |
| Particularized (Item # 5, 13,14, 2, 6, 8, 9) | 61.8 |

### 3.1.2. Gender-based comparison of implicature comprehension

A comparison of implicature comprehension levels on the basis of gender revealed that male participants had a slightly higher mean (M = 8.5, SD = 2.2) than that of female participants (M = 8.2, SD = 1.7). The independent samples t-test performed in order to assess whether this difference is significant did not point to any between-group differences $t(88)$ =.618, p = .54.

A comparison of the two groups with regard to generalization of the implicatures demonstrated that both groups were more successful in comprehending particularized implicatures (see Table 10). However, male participants' rate of success in this implicature type was slightly higher than that of the female participants.

**Table 10: Differences between girls' and boys' success rates on subsections**

| Gender | Implicature type | |
|---|---|---|
| | Particularized | Generalized |
| Female | 68.7 % | 48.2 % |
| Male | 78.2 % | 46.5 % |

Item-based comparison of the responses demonstrated that in understated negative criticism questions, female participants had a slightly higher level of success (45.07%) than male participants (31.5%), while male participants had a higher success rate in Relevance implicatures (89.4%) than female participants (77.4%).

### 3.2 Production of Implicatures in the L2

Some responses flouted two maxims at the same time, especially in the case of Quantity and Manner implicatures. In such conditions, the maxim that was the most evidently flouted or

the one that had more contributions to the implied meaning was taken into consideration in the categorization.

### 3.2.1. Types of implicature produced

As can be seen in Table 11, 11.7% of the questions were not answered. Of the given responses, 19.73% did not contain any implicatures. In these questions the participants preferred to give direct responses. The responses containing implicatures were coded on the basis of implicature types. The most frequently produced implicature was found to be Quality implicatures.

**Table 11: Questions in the Implicature Production Instrument**

| Response Type | f | % |
|---|---|---|
| Quality | 324 | 33.47 |
| Quantity | 310 | 32.02 |
| Direct Response | 191 | 19.73 |
| No Response | 112 | 11.57 |
| Relevance | 75 | 7.74 |
| Manner | 53 | 5.47 |
| Removed from Analysis | 15 | 1.54 |

A sample response can be seen in Table 12.

**Table 12. Sample responses to situtation 1**

Question 1. A friend of yours and you took his/her father's car without permission and had an accident. Your friend calls you to inform what he/she has done about the repair. You are not pleased with what you learn, and you want to express your frustration about the situation.
*Your Friend:* I just talked to the mechanic. He says the automobile won't be finished until Sunday. The cost of the repair will be far more than we expected and I learnt that the car had no insurance. My father is going to kill us.
*You: _____.*

*"Well, this is the best news I have heard today."* Quality- Irony implicature
*"I think we should go away and change our surnames."* Quality-Irony implicature
*"What about new car prices?"* Relevance Implicature
Examples of L1 transfer
*"I want my grave with sea sight."*
*"Drink one glass of cold water."*

### 3.2.2. Appropriacy of the pragmatic production responses

The maximum score to be achieved in the ICI was 48, and the mean appropriacy level in the test was found to be 28.33. Therefore, it could be argued that a medium of level of appropriacy was obtained. The success rates for each question were different. In the appropriacy evaluation, where the maximum appropriacy value is 4, the mean appropriacy rates varied between 2.05- 2.7. Some grammar, vocabulary and pragmatic errors were noted. Though it is not of direct significance to the research, instances of direct L1 transfer were frequent. The reason underlying the low appropriacy levels of the productions may be this L1 effect.

### 3.3 Correlation Between Pragmatic Comprehension and Production

Although the mean scores of the two instruments were similar, no significant relationship was found between participants' implicature comprehension and production, $r(90) = .066$, $p > .05$.

### 3.4 Participants' Use of Implicatures in Daily Life

When asked to indicate their level of exposure to implicatures in the target language, more than half of the participants chose the option "sometimes" (Table 13). On the basis of this, it could be speculated that participants may not be aware of the implicatures they encounter in the L2. In line with this finding, the majority (54.4%) stated that they rarely used implicatures in the L2. In response to the question interrogating the situations where they used implicatures in

the L2, most participants (47.7%) selected the "criticism" option. Complaints were also frequently selected (42.2%). A portion of the participants reported that they used implicatures in refusals (10%). The "request" speech act was mentioned by none of the participants as an area of implicature use. Finally, when interrogated about their implicature use in the L1, 52.2% of the participants selected the option "generally". It was understood that implicature use is more common in their native language in contrast to their L2.

**Table 13. Information related to implicature use (%)**

|  | Never | Rarely | Sometimes | Often | Frequently |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Exposure to implicatures in the L2** | 5.6 | 23.3 | 51.1 | 17.8 | 2.2 |
| **Frequency of implicature use in the L2** | 12.2 | 54.4 | 31.1 | 2.2 | 0 |
| **Rate of implicature use in the L1** | 0 | 1.1 | 17.8 | 52.2 | 28.9 |

## 4. DISCUSSION and CONCLUSION

The findings have revealed that participants' implicature comprehension skills are moderately high. However, the success rate was higher or lower in terms of specific implicature types. The results are in line with previous research carried out on intermediate and upper-intermediate learners of English (Ergüven, 2001; Lee, 2002). The thesis that upper-intermediate level English learners' pragmatic comprehension skills may not be in line with their general proficiency level has been supported (Alagözlü & Büyüköztürk, 2009; Bialystok, 2003; Garcia, 2004).

As mentioned previously, the comprehension success in implicatures varied depending on the implicature type. An analysis of implicature comprehension based on specific types revealed that comprehension of Relevance implicatures was quite successful. The finding that Manner, Quality and Quantity implicatures which included formulaic expressions (e.g., the Pope question) were understood by only half of the participants replicated the results of previous studies (Bouton, 1992; Taguchi, 2005). It could be argued that knowledge of cultural values of the target language might be effective in the comprehension of formulaic implicatures. Previous research had highlighted that these implicature types are the most difficult ones to be learnt on the basis of pure exposure (Bouton, 1992, Kubota, 1995). In the same way, the comprehension level of Quality-Irony implicatures was not found to be satisfactory. In this implicature type, the learners might have a tendency to opt for the real meaning of the utterances. This further supports the hypothesis that grammatical proficiency might not be in line with pragmatic skills (Garcia, 2004).

The most difficult implicatures to grasp were those that included understated negative criticism. The reason underlying this difficulty may be the different norms for realizing the speech act of negative criticism in Turkish. These implicatures are generally performed in a highly subtle and implicit manner so as not to threaten the hearer's face. In American English, negative criticism might be performed more indirectly than in Turkish. The findings related to the comprehension of understated negative criticism are similar to those found in earlier pragmatics studies (Bouton, 1988; Ergüven, 2001; Lee, 2002; Roever, 2001). Some studies have reported that even native speakers might be less successful in terms of understanding implicatures which contain negative criticism (Bouton, 1988; Lee, 2002). This common difficulty for both native and non-native speakers might stem from the written nature of the implicature questionnaire. As was also pointed out by Lee (2002), being unable to make use of intonation, pitch and gestures might have complicated implicature comprehension. For this reason, it would be a good idea to create instruments which have video dialogs instead of written dialogs in future studies.

In contrast to previous research which documented that particularized implicatures are harder to understand than generalized implicatures (Lee, 2002; Taguchi, 2005), in the present study it was found that comprehension of particularized implicatures is more difficult than generalized implicatures. This might have from stemmed from the fact that generalized implicatures tested in the present instrument were based on some formula and were more culture-specific. It should also be taken into consideration that the native languages of the participants tested in the previous studies were Korean and Japanese. The participants in the present study might have calculated the particularized implicatures on the basis of their world knowledge or might have more knowledge of the culture in which the L2 is spoken.

Although gender did not lead to any differences in implicature comprehension levels, there were some differences in specific types. Female participants had more success understanding Quantity implicatures of understated negative criticism while male participants had a higher success rate in Relevance implicatures. On the basis of these, it could be speculated that men might be more context-dependent and holistic, whereas women might be more detail-oriented in pragmatic reasoning.

With regard to implicature production, considering the fact that the majority of the responses contained implicature, it could be argued that upper-intermediate learners can convey their intentions through implicatures in the L2. On the other hand, the acceptability of the responses in terms of native speaker norms was not satisfactory. The responses mostly included Quality and Quantity floutings. Implicatures were not generally exploited in the speech acts of request. In situations where anger, disturbance should be expressed, mostly Quality implicatures were used. In these cases, participants mostly enriched their messages by means of rhetorical questions, metaphors, and irony. In the case of criticism mostly Quantity implicatures were produced. Though there were grammatical, lexical and pragmatic mistakes, they were not frequent. Direct L1 transfer was frequent. These mirror the finding of L1 influence over pragmatic comprehension (Lee, 2002).

In an earlier production study, Lachini (2006) had reported that L2 English speakers use implicatures to a smaller extent than native speakers of English. The participants in the current study also mentioned that they use implicatures more frequently in their native language. The fact that they used implicatures in the target language less might be related to their reduced exposure to natural English speaking environments. Considering the self-rating of their linguistic capabilities, they might not have expressed themselves well in the production task. The fact that they did not generally use implicatures in the speech act of requests might be related to their use of set expressions in this type. In addition, the results point out to the tendency that the participants have associated implicatures with negative situations.

The lack of a relationship between implicature comprehension and production are in line with some of the previous research (Taguchi, 2003) and contradict some others (Roever, 2001). This might be related to the relatively high proficiency level of participants and can be regarded as evidence for the independence of the two skills.

The findings might be useful for L2 teachers, curriculum developers, coursebook writers and thus learners. As is seen, grammatical competence may not be in line with communicative competence. Understanding culture-specific implicature types might be especially difficult. The finding that implicatures can be produced but their appropriacy is not satisfactory in terms of the target language norms points to the need for giving pragmatic skills more place in L2 learning. Since explicitness is not always possible in communication, L2 learners should be aware of pragmatic cues. Although they might not be taught explicitly, awareness into pragmatic skills might be increased (Kubota, 1995). Pragmatic interpretation must not be regarded as a default skill in the L2. Although a portion of the previous research indicated that living in an English-speaking country is important for pragmatic development (Bardovi-Harlig & Dörnyei, 1998;

Schauer, 2006), recent research has demonstrated that presence abroad is not sufficient in itself (Bouton, 1994; Roever, 2001; Taguchi, 2008). Regardless of the learning environment, providing more interaction opportunities is more significant for developing pragmatic competence.

The written nature of the used instruments has prevented us from measuring natural speaking. Lack of the opportunity to use intonation and gestures are weaknesses of the written instruments. Future studies should take this limitation into consideration and endeavor to analyze implicature production in more natural environments. In addition, the number of items in the implicature comprehension test could be increased in order to maintain higher scale reliability. The influence of L1 in implicature production can also be investigated in more depth in further studies. A final suggestion would be to investigate the effectiveness of the techniques used in implicature instruction in L2 classes.

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## Uzun Özet

Edimbilim araştırmaları ikinci dil öğrenenlerin, yüksek bir dil yetkinlik seviyesi olsa dahi bunu iletişim becerilerine aktaramadıklarını ortaya koymuştur (Bardovi-Harlig & Dörnyei, 1998; Jianda, 2006). Bunun yanısıra ikinci dil konuşanlarının zaman zaman söylenenlerin sadece semantik anlamına odaklanıp, bağlamın özelliklerine dikkat etmeyerek ima edilen edimsel anlamları yorumlayamadıkları da bildirilmiştir (Kasper, 1997, s. 3). Bu durumdan kaynaklanan edimsel hatalar yanlış anlaşılmalara yol açabilmektedir. Ayrıca, ana dili konuşanları ikinci dil konuşanlarının edimsel hatalarını kabalık olarak algılayabilmektedir (Bardovi-Harlig & Dörnyei, 1998).

İkinci dil öğrenenlerin çeşitli söz eylemlerini nasıl anladıkları ve gerçekleştirdikleri konusunda çok fazla çalışma bulunmasına rağmen (Bardovi-Harlig & Dörnyei, 1998; Kasper, 1997; Kasper & Rose, 2001), konuşma sezdirileri konusunda nispeten daha az çalışma bulunmaktadır (Bouton, 1988; Lee, 2002; Taguchi, 2005). Son yıllarda sezdirileri anlama konusuna olan ilgi artmış olsa da, ilgili çalışmalar sezdirilerin üretimi boyutuna yeterince önem vermemiştir.

Bu çalışmanın amacı orta-üstü İngilizce öğrenenlerin hedef dilde sezdirileri anlama ve üretme düzeylerini incelemektir. Bu amaçla 90 katılımcıya 14 soruluk çoktan seçmeli bir sezdiri yorumlama ölçeğinin yanısıra 12 durumdan oluşan söylem tamamlama ölçeği verilmiştir. Araştırma, dört soruya odaklanmıştır:

Araştırma sorusu 1. Ortaüstü İngilizce öğrenenlerin hedef dilde sezdirileri anlama düzeyleri nedir? Sonuçlar katılımcıların orta düzey bir başarı gösterdiğini ortaya koymuştur. Anlama ölçeğinde başarı oranı %58.57olarak kaydedilmiştir. Ancak, bazı sezdiri türlerinde bu oran artma veya azalma

göstermiştir. Bulgular orta ve orta üstü seviye İngilizce öğrenenlerin sezdiri anlamaları üzerine yapılan çalışma bulgularıyla aynı doğrultudadır (Ergüven, 2001; Lee, 2002).

En yüksek başarı düzeyi Bağıntı sezdirilerinde kaydedilmiştir (%85.8). Tarz, Nitelik- kalıplaşmış ifadeler ve Nicelik- en az gereksinim kuralına dayalı sezdiriler katılımcıların ancak yarısı tarafından doğru anlaşılmıştır. Bazı katılımcılar bu tür sezdirileri konuyu değiştirme çabası olarak yorumlamıştır. Kalıplaşmış ifade içeren Nicelik sezdirilerinde anlama oranı düşük bulunmuştur (%48.9). Bu da belirli sezdiri türlerini anlamada kültürel bilgilerin önemine dikkat çekmektedir.

Aynı şekilde, Nitelik- ironi sezdirilerinde başarı oranı düşük bulunmuştur (%40). İroniye dayalı sezdilerde katılımcıların çoğu anlatımların gerçek anlamına odaklanmıştır. Bu da dilbilgisel ve edimsel anlamanın birbirinden farklı olabileceğine dair bir kanıt sunmaktadır. En zor anlaşılan sezdiri türü ise Nitelik- dolaylı olumsuz eleştiri içeren sezdiriler olmuştur (%37.4). Bu tür sezdiriler olabildiğince örtük biçimde gerçekleştirilirken dinleyicinin yüzünü koruma ve hakaretten kaçınma çabası içermeleri bakımından oldukça örtük biçimde gerçekleştirilmişti. Bouton'un (1988) çalışmasında ana dili İngilizce olanların bile bu tür dolaylı eleştirileri anlamada bazen güçlük çektikleri düşünülürse bu durum anlaşılır kabul edilebilir. Sonuçlar, ayrıca Ergüven'in (2001) orta-üstü İngilizce öğrenenlerle yaptığı araştırma sonuçlarıyla örtüşmektedir; bu çalışmada da en büyük anlama güçlüğü Nicelik ve Tarz sezdririlerinde kaydedilmişti.

Bir diğer incelemede ise sezdirileri anlama başarısı genelleştirilmiş ve özelleştirilmiş sezdiriler temelinde incelenmiştir. Katılımcıların çoğu genelleştirilmiş olanlara göre özelleştirilmiş sezdirileri anlamada daha başarılı olmuştur. Bu sonuç bazı araştırma sonuçlarıyla çelişmektedir. Önceki araştırmalarda yüksek ikinci dil seviyesine sahip katılımcıların İngilizce'de genelleştirilmiş sezdirileri anlamada daha büyük başarı elde ettiği gösterilmişti (Lee, 2002; Taguchi, 2005). Bu durum, katılımcıların genel kültür bilgilerini kullanarak özelleştirilmiş sezdirileri hesaplamış olabildiklerini düşündürmektedir. Ayrıca, önceki çalışmalardaki katılımcıların ana dillerinin Korece ve Japonca olması da elde edilen sonuçlar arasındaki farklılığın nedeni olabilir.

Araştırma sorusu 2. İkinci dil olarak İngilizce öğrenenler hedef dilde sezdiri üretebilmekte midir? Katılımcıların çoğu sezdiri aracılığıyla niyetlerini anlatabilmiştir (yanıtların %70.6'sı sezdiri içermiştir). Fakat katılımcıların geri kalanı ya hiç yanıt vermemiş, ya da doğrudan yanıt vermeyi tercih etmiştir.

Nitelik ve nicelik sezdirileri yanıtlara hakim olmuştur. Rica etme durumlarında katılımcıların çoğu dolaylı olma gereği duymamıştır. Kızgınlık veya rahatsızlık ifade etme durumlarında en çok Nitelik sezdirileri üretilmiştir. Katılımcılar olumsuz duygularını cevabı belli sorular, benzetmeler ve ironiyle ifade etmiştir. Dolaylı eleştiri durumlarında en çok Nicelik sezdirileri kullanılmıştır.

Hedef dile uygunluk değerlendirmeleri üretilen sezdirilerin orta derecede kabul edilebilir olduğunu göstermiştir. Dilbilgisi, kelime ve edimsel hatalar çok olmasa da bulunmuştur. Yanıtlarda büyük ölçüde birinci dil etkisi hissedilmiştir. Birinci dilde kullanılan kalıplaşmış ifade ve deyimlerin sıklıkla doğrudan İngilizce'ye çevrildiği görülmüştür. Bu sonuç, ikinci dil seviyesinin edimsel üretimin hedef dile uygunluk seviyesiyle her zaman örtüşmeyebileceğini göstermiştir. Sonuçlar, bu açıdan önceki araştırmaları destekler niteliktedir (Bardovi-Harlig & Dörnyei, 1998; Jianda, 2006).

Araştırma sorusu 3. İkinci dilde sezdirileri anlama ve üretme arasında bir ilişki var mıdır? Korelasyon analizleri iki test sonuçları arasında bir ilişkiye işaret etmemiştir. Sonuçlar edimsel üretim ve anlama arasında önemli ama güçlü olmayan bir ilişkinin bulunduğu Taguchi'nin (2003) sonuçlarıyla benzerdir. Ancak, sonuçlar ikinci dilde çeşitli söz eylemlerini üretme ve sezdirileri anlama arasında bir ilişkiye işaret eden çalışmalarla (Roever, 2001) aynı doğrultuda değildir.

Araştırma sorusu 4. Katılımcıların günlük hayatta sezdirileri kullanımları nasıl şekillenmektedir?

Katılımcılar hedef dilde arada sırada sezdiri kullandıklarını belirtmiştir. Çoğunluk İngilizce'de sezdirileri nadiren kullandığını ifade ederken, sezdiri kullanımının en çok eleştiri durumlarında olduğu anlaşılmıştır. Buna karşın, katılımcılar Türkçe'de sıklıkla sezdiri ürettiklerini belirtmişlerdir.

Bulguların ikinci dil konuşanları, öğretmenleri, müfredat ve ders kitabı geliştirenler için yararlı olabileceği düşünülmektedir. Görüldüğü gibi dilbilgisi yeterlilikleri iletişimsel yeterlilikleriyle aynı doğrultuda olmayabilmektedir. Edimsel yorumlama kendiliğinden gelişen bir beceri olarak

görülmemelidir; sezdiri yorumlama doğrudan anlatım veya bilinci artırma gibi eğitsel etkinliklerle desteklenmelidir.