

## Double evidential morphology in Turkish

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**Abstract.** Turkish and Bulgarian both have “double evidential” constructions, which seem to contain reiterated evidential morphemes. This paper, focusing on Turkish data, shows that despite the morphological similarity between the indirect evidential *-mİş* and the “second” *-mİş*, double evidentials are not an instance of reduplication. Instead, I propose based on morphological evidence (separability of suffixes, morphological spell-out of related Turkic languages) and semantic evidence (the “second” *-mİş* introduces a new indexical, the Evaluator) that the second *-mİş* is the spell-out of a distinct syntactic head, which I call Dubitative.

**Keywords.** evidentiality; speaker commitment; dubitative; double evidentials; Turkish; Bulgarian

**1. Introduction.** Turkish is a language with grammatically marked evidentials (Izvorski 1997, Şener 2011, Meriçli 2016). Evidentials encode the source of information (Aikhenvald 2004). The Turkish suffixes in *-mİş* and *-(y)mİş* express that the event was not directly witnessed by the speaker (hence the term ‘indirect evidentials’), rather the speaker heard about it from someone else, or made an inference about it based on some evidence. (1) and (2) offer illustrative examples for such reportative and inferential evidentials.

- (1) I find one of my chickens dead. Later I talk to my neighbor who says that the chicken was killed by a fox.

*Tavuk-lar-dan birin-i tilki boğ-muş.*  
chicken-PL-ABL one-ACC fox strangle-3SG.EVID<sup>1</sup>  
‘A fox killed one of the chickens (I heard).’<sup>2</sup>

✓ *I don’t believe this.*            ✓ *This is not true.*            ✓ *I believe this.*

- (2) Shortly after I find one my chickens dead, I see a fox, so I conclude that my chicken was killed by a fox.

*Tavuk-lar-dan birin-i tilki boğ-muş.*  
chicken-PL-ABL one-ACC fox strangle-3SG.EVID  
‘A fox killed one of the chickens (I infer).’

# *I don’t believe this.*            # *This is not true.*            ✓ *I believe this.*

A core property of indirect evidentials is that they can weaken the speaker’s commitment to the scope proposition, which is ‘the fox killed the chicken’ in (1) (Faller 2002, Murray 2010,

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<sup>1</sup> Glosses: ABL = ablative, ACC = accusative, DAT = dative, DUB = dubitative, EVID = indirect evidential, GEN = genitive, LOC = locative, LV = light verb, PASS = passive, PL = plural, POSS = possessive, PROSP = prospective, PST = past, SG = singular.

<sup>2</sup> The fox-sentences are adapted from Faller 2002.







proposition for which the speaker has indirect evidence. Kazakh, a Kipchak Turkic language spoken mainly in Kazakhstan, also has constructions similar to Turkish double evidentials such as (4). An illustrative example is given in (13), which is quoted from Straughn 2011: 110.

- (13) *Olar-dunı ufag-ı aspan-da bir zer-de zogal-ıw ket-ıptı-mıs.*  
 they-GEN plane-3POSS sky-LOC a place-LOC disappear-IP LV-3EVID-DUB  
 ‘Their plane disappeared somewhere in the sky (I head but I don’t believe it).’  
 (Kazakh, Straughn 2011: 110)

In Kazakh, indirect evidentials (reportatives and inferentials) are marked by the suffix *-(I)p(tI)*.<sup>4</sup> As (13) shows, the lack of speaker commitment is expressed not by repeating *-(I)p(tI)*, but by a completely different suffix *-mıs*, which is etymologically related to Turkish *-miş*.

The fact that in other Turkic languages the lack of speaker commitment is expressed by a suffix other than the indirect evidential, further strengthens the claim that we are dealing with a distinct functional projection.

3.3. SEMANTIC EVIDENCE: INTRODUCING A NEW INDEXICAL. An additional piece of evidence against the reduplication analysis comes from indexical shift. The Evidential Origo (first introduced by Garrett 2001) is the individual who acquired direct or indirect evidence regarding the scope proposition. In assertions, the Evidential Origo is the speaker, while in information-seeking (non-biased) questions it is the addressee, this latter is called evidential flip (Korotkova 2016, for further discussion on non-flip languages see Bhadra 2020). As discussed by Korotkova (2016) and (Meriçli 2016), in Turkish non-biased questions the Evidential Origo must shift to the addressee, as illustrated by (14).

- (14) *Okul ne zaman aç-ıl-acak-mış?*  
 school what time open-PASS-3SG.PROSP-EVID  
 ‘(According to **your** indirect evidence) When is the school getting reopened?’  
 \* ‘(According to **my** indirect evidence) When is the school getting reopened?’

The Evidential Origo shift is summarized in Table 2.

	Assertions	Questions
Evidential Origo = <b>Speaker</b>	✓	✗
Evidential Origo = <b>Addressee</b>	✗	✓

Table 2. Evidential Origo in assertions and questions

If the sole function of the second *-miş* in double evidential constructions is to reinforce the lack of speaker commitment, the prediction is that the person who is doubtful towards the scope proposition (for ease of exposition I refer to this person as the Evaluator) should always be identical to the person who holds the relevant information (i.e., the Evidential Origo). That is, we would expect the Evaluator to be the speaker in assertions, and the addressee in (non-biased) questions. These predictions are summarized in Table 3.

<sup>4</sup> The sounds in parenthesis are dropped in certain environments. The *(tI)* part of the suffix is dropped if 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> person agreement markers attach to the suffix, but it is retained in 3<sup>rd</sup> person.

	Evidential Origo	Evaluator
<b>Speaker</b> (Murat)	X	X
<b>Addressee</b> (Gökçen)	✓	✓

Table 3. Predictions by the reduplication analysis for non-biased questions

However, this prediction is not borne out. I found that the Evaluator shifts differently from the Evidential Origo in questions. The context in (15) sets up a situation where the addressee (Gökçen) is the Evidential Origo, but the person who doubts the truth of the scope proposition, i.e., the Evaluator, is not the addressee but the speaker (Murat).

- (15) Murat has not been going to school for a couple weeks due to the coronavirus. Murat’s friend, Gökçen is the neighbor of the school principal. Gökçen thinks the principal is reliable, but Murat thinks the principal is unreliable. Murat knows that Gökçen talked to the principal about schools reopening.

Murat (speaker) calls Gökçen (addressee), and asks this:

*Okul ne zaman aç-ıl-acak-mış-mış?*

school what time open-PASS-3SG.PROSP-EVID-DUB

‘(According to **your source** that **I** deem unreliable) When is the school getting reopened?’

In fact, it turns out that the Evaluator can’t shift in questions at all. The context in (16) is set up in a way that the addressee is the Evidential Origo *and* the Evaluator at the same time, but the double evidential question can’t be use felicitously in this context.

- (16) Murat has not been going to school for a couple weeks due to the coronavirus. Murat’s friend, Gökçen is the neighbor of the school principal. Murat knows that Gökçen does not trust the principal. But Murat thinks that the principal is reliable, and believes what he says. Murat knows that Gökçen talked to the principal about schools reopening.

Murat (speaker) calls Gökçen (addressee), and asks this:

# *Okul ne zaman aç-ıl-acak-mış-mış?*

school what time open-PASS-3SG.PROSP-EVID-DUB

‘(According to **your source** that **you** deem unreliable) When is the school getting reopened?’

The attested indexical shift patterns with the Evidential Origo and the Evaluator are given in Table 4.

	Evidential Origo	Evaluator
<b>Speaker</b> (Murat)	X	✓
<b>Addressee</b> (Gökçen)	✓	X

Table 4. Indexical shift in non-biased questions (attested patterns)

As the comparison of the predictions in Table 3 and the attested patterns in Table 4 reveal, the reduplication analysis makes wrong predictions about the Evaluator shift, as the Evaluator does

not shift in questions. This suggests that the second *-mİş* should be treated as a completely different category than the indirect evidential *-mİş*.

**4. Conclusions and Future directions.** The previous section presented morphological and semantic evidence against the reduplication analysis. The presented evidence leads us to conclude that the two *-mİş*-s in Turkish double evidential constructions are distinct. I propose that the second *-mİş* spells out a separate syntactic projection I call Dubitative. Thus the table of Turkish functional projections can be amended the following way:

Stem	Modals, Inner Aspect	Slot 1	Slot 2	Slot 3
<b>verb stem</b>	- <i>(y)Abil-</i> - <i>(y)Akal-</i> - <i>(y)İver-</i>	<b>-<i>mİş</i> (prf/evid)</b> - <i>DI</i> (dir.evid pst/prf) - <i>(I)yor</i> (cont) - <i>(I/A)r</i> (habit) - <i>(y)AcAk</i> (prosp) - <i>mAll</i> (modal) ...	- <i>(y)dI / idi</i> (dir.evid pst) <b>-<i>(y)mİş / imiş</i> (evid)</b>	<b>-<i>mİş</i> (dub)</b>
<b>noun stem</b>	(not possible)			

Table 5. Turkish functional projections (modified based on Göksel & Kerslake (2011: 153))

The detailed semantic analysis of the Turkish Dubitative is left for future work, including the analysis of the new indexical, the Evaluator, introduced by the Dubitative head. Furthermore, Bulgarian is known to have a similar double evidential dubitative construction (see e.g., Sauerland & Schenner 2007). Research underway investigates the similarities and differences of the Bulgarian and Turkish double evidential constructions.

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