On *imiş* in Cypriot Turkish

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The present article aims at illustrating the way the Turkish evidential marker *imiş* functions in the spoken varieties of Northern Cyprus. In addition to its function of indicating evidentiality, i.e. notions of indirectivity, this copula particle in Cypriot dialects has a discourse pragmatic function which is not found in Standard Turkish.

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Introduction

In recent years research on the Turkish varieties of Northern Cyprus has increased. Besides researchers from Turkey, linguists working at universities in Northern Cyprus have published a considerable number of studies on these varieties. In fact, considering the size of the area and the size of the Turkish speaking community, the Cypriot varieties are among the most investigated Turkish dialects. However, dialectal studies in Northern Cyprus are still in their earliest phase. So far, publications dealing with these varieties have concentrated on linguistic differences from Standard Turkish or on how certain distinctive features of Cypriot Turkish are represented in Standard Turkish. Furthermore, lack of profound information about the historical development of Turkish has led to many mistakes. But, since it is not the task of this paper to evaluate the literature that is available at the moment, I will not comment on this issue here.

My aim is to present some facts about the usage of the copula particle *imiş*, derived from the verb **i-* + the suffix *-miş*. A small part of the material investigated consists of examples collected casually in free conversations. The main part, though, includes the results of a project on *imiş* conducted with the graduating class of 2000 of the Polat Paşa Lisesi in Akdoğan. The data obtained here have been revised by speakers of the Cypriot varieties.[1] Since a comprehensive description of the range of use of *imiş* would go beyond the frame of this article, I will only deal with its syntactical and functional properties. In analyzing the former, I will show that in a sentence this form can have various positions other than the post-predicate one. As to

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[1]   I would like to express my gratitude to Nazmiye Çelebi and her students form the Polat Paşa Lisesi for their support in collecting the material.

the latter, the function of *imiş* is to indicate which part of the sentence is considered as important and thus emphasized.

The Cypriot dialects of Turkish

The first study on the Cypriot varieties of Turkish was carried out by Hasan Eren (1963). The data Eren collected during his fieldwork also served as a basis for his studies on the origin of these varieties. According to Eren, demographic movements from the provinces of Konya, Antalya, İçel (Mersin) and Alanya have played a role in the formation of these varieties. This is proved by documents on the settlement of Turks in Cyprus after the conquest of the island (see Halaçoğlu & Erdoğru 2000). Since in another paper I am dealing with the differences between the Cypriot varieties and the other Turkish dialects, I will not discuss this issue here. In later literature, Eren's view has generally been accepted. It should be taken into consideration, though, that many factors have led to a more complex linguistic situation: immigration at various times, language contact with other varieties spoken on the island, the prestige of Standard Turkish on the one hand and that of the dialects on the other and, finally, the fact that these varieties constitute the language of a territory that is recognized by Turkey as an independent state. Eren's approach is certainly correct when it comes to the historical evolution; it is, however, insufficient to account for the present situation. After the military occupation of Northern Cyprus by the Turkish army in 1974, the situation has become even more complex, offering a good basis for interesting investigations.

imiş in Turkish

Before turning to the analysis of the Cypriot material, it seems appropriate to give some information on the element *imiş* in Turkish. This form goes back to the older Turkic copula particle *er-miš*. In modern Turkish can appear as the free form *imiş* and the suffixed form *-(y)mIş*. In contrast to the verbal suffix *-mIş*, which can have high pitch, *imiş* is unaccentable: *açmíş* 'has (evidently) opened : *áçmış* 'is hungry (as s/he told me)', *geçmíş* 'has (apparently) passed' : *géçmiş* 'it (apparently) is late'. Both in verbal phrases as well as in noun phrases it is treated as a part of the predicate, e.g. *yaparmış* 'will (evidently) do (it)' and *güzelmiş* 'is (apparently) beautiful'. Personal suffixes appear after *imiş*: *yaparmışsın* 'you would do (it)' and *güzelmişsin* 'you are beautiful'. It is only in conditional forms that *imiş* can appear after the personal markers, e.g. *yapsammış* 'I am supposed to do it (as I have learned)'. The question particle comes before *imiş*: *yapar mıymış?* 'will s/he do it? (do you know?)', *güzel miymiş?* 'is s/he beautiful? (did you see?)', etc.

The form investigated here has very often been confused with the evidential marker *-mIş*, which creates finite and non-finite forms from primary stems of lexical verbs. Johanson deals with *imiş* and other markers of indirectivity in his studies on aspect-tense categories in Turkish (see Johanson 2000, 1971: 63-64, 1994: 253). Here, I will confine myself to the fact that *imiş* is not a tense marker and that it indi-

cates indirectivity denoting that the event is perceived in an indirect way, i.e. through hearsay, inference, perception, etc. (see Johanson 1971, 1994, 2000, 2003).

-*miş* in Cypriot Turkish

The postterminal marker -*miş* is rarely used in Cypriot Turkish. Its function is covered by -*DI*. Thus, the Standard Turkish version of the Cypriot Turkish sentence *Adam geldi* can be *Adam geldi* 'The man has arrived' or *Adam gelmiş* 'The man has (obviously/evidently) arrived'.[2] The use of -*miş* in this sense seems, as far as I could observe, to be influenced by Standard Turkish (see below; cf. Brendemoen 1999: 200).

imiş in Cypriot Turkish

As a marker of indirectivity, *imiş* most often occurs in its suffixed form in the Cypriot dialects of Turkish.

> (1) *Okula gidecekmiş de okusunmuş da öğretmen olsun.*
>   'S/he is supposed to go to school and to study and to become a teacher.'

> (2) *Okula istemezmiş gitsin.*
>   'S/he does not want to go to school (as I have heard / learned).'

As can be seen in example (3), suffixation in Cypriot Turkish can go further than in Standard Turkish: the marker can be attached to stems ending in a vowel without the segment of -*y*-:

> (3) *Yoldamış.*
>   'S/he is on the way (as I have heard / learned).'

There is a further characteristic of *imiş* in Cypriot Turkish which is not found in Standard Turkish: while the suffixed forms can only be attached to the predicate in Standard Turkish, in the Cypriot dialects the suffixed form -*miş* can occur other positions. See the following examples where it emphasizes the element it is attached to. (The elements emphasized are underlined in the translations.)

> (4)   *Sonundamış aşkını ilan etdi.*
>   'He <u>finally</u> declared his love to her.'

> (5)   *Sonunda aşkınımış ilan etdi.*
>   'He finally declared <u>his love</u> to her.'

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[2]   For a description of a similar phenomenon in the dialects of the Eastern Black Sea Coast, see Brendemoen (1999).

(6)   *Sonunda aşkını ilanmış etdi.*
      'He finally <u>declared</u> his love to her.'

(7)   *Ahmetmiş okula gitmeyecek yarın.*
      'They say that <u>Ahmet</u> will not go to school tomorrow.'

(8)   *Ahmet okulamış gitmeyecek yarın.*
      'They say that Ahmet will not go <u>to school</u> tomorrow.'

(9)   *Ahmet yarınmış okula gitmeyecek.*
      'They say that Ahmet will not go to school <u>tomorrow</u>.'

The suffix -*miş* is subject to vowel harmony and thus has the following variants: -*mış*, -*miş*, -*muş*, -*müş*.

The free form *miş* can function as a sentence-initial particle:

(10) *Miş sonunda aşkını ilan etdi.*
      (Standard Turkish *Sonunda aşkını ilan etmiş.*)
      'He finally declared his love to her (as I have heard / learned).'

(11) *Mış Ahmet okula gitmeyecek yarın.*
      (Standard Turkish *Ahmet yarın okula gitmeyecekmiş.*)
      'They say that Ahmet will not go to school tomorrow.'

In the sentence-initial position, the marker occurs most frequently as *miş*, the back variant *mış* being used very rarely.

Cypriot Turkish displays considerable deviations from the SOV sentence structure typical for Turkic, which will not be dealt with here. Nevertheless, it should be mentioned that *imiş* does not occur in sentence-final position following a non-predicate element:

(12) **Okula gitmeyecek yarınmış.*
      (intended meaning:) 'As I have heard, will not go to school tomorrow

(13) **Aşık olmadı hiçmiş.*
      (intended meaning:) 'He has never fallen in love (as he told me).'

Further functions of *imiş* in Cypriot Turkish

The most prominent function of *imiş* is to present non-first-hand information—as it also does in Standard Turkish. In sentence-initial position, this is its foremost function:

(14) *Miş gelecek.*
      'S/he is supposed to come.'

(15) *Birsel dedi ki yazdamış alasın çocuları, denizemiş götüresin.*
      (Standard Turkish *Yazda çocukları alıp denize götürecekmişsin.*)
      'Birsel has said that in summer you had to take the children to the sea.'

In the first example, the speaker reports something s/he has learned to a third person. In example (15), the speaker tells repeats what s/he has learned from a third person, i.e. Birsel in this case. It is, however, not necessary to mention the source, e.g.:

(16) *Onbir buçukdaymış arayasınız.*
      'You are supposed to call at half past eleven.'

A further function of *-miş* is to give some additional notions: it might—by means of, e.g., intonation and a certain context—indicate that the given information is considered not very reliable or even wrong. Irony can also be expressed by the use of *-miş*. The use of the preposed particle *ha* can reinforce the intended meaning, e.g.:

(17) *Miş çok zekidir.*
      (Standard Turkish *Çok zekiymiş.*)
      'S/he is said to be very intelligent.'

(18) *Ha mış çok zekidir.*
      (Standard Turkish *Güya çok zekiymiş.*)
      'S/he is said to be very intelligent (but don't believe it).'

The following example displays a third function of *-miş*. The example is taken from a conversation between two persons who are trying to withdraw money from a cash dispenser. One of the persons involved recognizes that s/he has chosen the wrong amount and makes the following statement, where *-miş* is used to express a conclusion.

(19) *Girilen midkarmış hatalıdır.*
      (Standard Turkish *Girilen miktar hatalıymış.*)
      'The given amount is wrong (as I can see).'

The functions of *imiş* presented here are similar to some of its functions found in Standard Turkish. But in Cypriot Turkish the use of *imiş* is not obligatory as can be seen in the following examples:

(20) *Birsel dedi ki yazda alasın çocuları, denize götüresin.*

(21) *Onbir buçukda arayasınız.*

(22) *Girilen mikdar hatalıdır.*

At this point, the question arises whether the fact that *imiş* can occur in several positions has functional reasons. On the basis of the material examined so far, it seems as if *imiş* stresses the information that is considered important in a sentence. See examples (5)-(7) and (9)-(11), (15)-(16) and (19), where *imiş* has both indirective meaning and is attached to the element that carries the important information.

In the following examples, *imiş* has both indirective meaning and focuses on important information:

    (23) *Söyledi banamış geleceydi.*
           (Standard Turkish *Bana geleceğini söylemişti.*)
           'S/he told me (and not to another person) s/he would come (but s/he didn't).'

    (24) *Bu ayın sonundamış gelecek.*
           (Standard Turkish *Bu ayın sonunda gelecekmiş.*)
           'S/he is said to come at the end of this month (and not at another time).'

    (25) *Nazmiye hoca artıkmış bizi istemez.*
           (Standard Turkish *Nazmiye hoca artık bizi istemezmiş.*)
           '(It seems as if) Nazmiye does not want to teach us any more
           (while she did earlier).'

    (26) *Babammış anneme yüzükmüş alsın da barışsın.*
           (Standard Turkish *Babam anneme yüzük alsınmış da barışsınmış.*)
           'It is my father (and nobody else) who is supposed to buy a ring
           (and nothing else) for my mother so that they reconcile.'

Some examples are difficult to interpret:

    (27) *Her zamanmış ona güvenirmiş de yoldamış galmayacakmış.*
           'S/he pretends to always trust her/him, so s/he would never
           cause an accident (by car).'

In this example, indirective meaning is provided in *güvenirmiş* and *galmayacakmış*. At first sight it seems as if the marker that is attached to *her zaman*, i.e. another constituents than the predicate, focuses on what is important in the sentence ('always'). However, it seems more plausible to consider sentences of this kind as a combination of the Standard Turkish use and the use typical for dialects. The reason for this assumption is the fact that these examples were provided by high school students who do not consciously differentiate between Standard Turkish and their dialect. Dialect speakers confirm this interpretation.

Concluding remarks

The examples presented in this paper have shown that *imiş* in Cypriot Turkish can change its position within a sentence. The only restriction is that it cannot be attached to a non-predicate constituent in sentence-final position. In addition to its

function as a marker of indirectivity, it is used as a discourse pragmatic element focusing on what is considered important in a sentence. Both properties are criteria that distinguish the Cypriot dialects from other dialects of Turkish.

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