

# CURRICULUM VITAE

## RABIA ERGIN

Research Staff Member  
Max Planck Institute for Psycholinguistics  
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### EDUCATION

INSTITUTION:	DEGREE:	DATE:
Tufts University	Ph.D. in Experimental Psychology	May, 2017
Middle East Technical University	M.Sc. in Cognitive Science	July, 2012
Middle East Technical University	B.A. in Foreign Language Education	June, 2005

TITLE OF DOCTORAL DISSERTATION: Central Taurus Sign Language: A Unique Vantage Point into Language Emergence

Ph.D. SUPERVISOR: Ray Jackendoff, Seth Merrin Professor of Philosophy

DISSERTATION COMMITTEE: Ray Jackendoff (chair), Diane Brentari, Ann Senghas, Jan de Ruiter, Ariel Goldberg

### ACADEMIC POSITIONS

Research Staff Member Department of Neurobiology of Language Max Planck Institute for Psycholinguistics, Nijmegen, The Netherlands	2017 Nov.–
Graduate Teaching Assistant Department of Psychology Tufts University, Medford/MA, USA	2012 – 2017
Lecturer in English for Academic Purposes Department of Modern Languages Middle East Technical University, Ankara, Turkey	2009 – 2012
ESL <sup>1</sup> Instructor School of English Language Bilkent University, Ankara, Turkey	2005 – 2009
Research Assistant for METU-Sabancı Turkish Treebank <sup>2</sup> Informatics Institute Middle East Technical University, Ankara, Turkey	2003 – 2004

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<sup>1</sup>English as a second language

<sup>2</sup> <https://ii.metu.edu.tr/metu-corpora-research-group>

### FELLOWSHIPS, GRANTS AND HONORS

- Full scholarship PhD student (tuition and stipend)  
Tufts University, September 2012–July 2017
- Tufts Collaborates research grant (\$16.500)  
Tufts University, May 2014–May 2016
- Research Fellowship by the Department of Psychology (\$3000)  
Tufts University, June 2016
- Research Fellowship by the Department of Psychology (\$3000)  
Tufts University, June 2015
- Greenwald Research Fellowship (\$3000)  
Tufts University, July 2015
- Linguistic Society of America (LSA) Summer Institute Fellowship (tuition = \$2000)  
University of Michigan, July 2013
- Honor MSc student  
Middle East Technical University, September 2009–July 2012
- Honor B.A. student  
Middle East Technical University, September 2001–June 2005
- 65<sup>th</sup> place in the nation-wide university entrance examination in Turkey among approximately 1,5 million test-takers in 2001
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### RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

#### RESEARCH INTERESTS:

My research mainly focuses on theoretical and applied questions in the acquisition and development of natural language in the absence of an accessible conventionalized linguistic system. Typically, children learn language when they hear it in their environment. However, many deaf children who are born into hearing families are geographically, culturally, and/or financially isolated. Deafness along with such isolation inevitably limits their access to language input. Do language-deprived children in these situations create their own linguistic systems? Is it possible, or to what extent is it possible, to create a brand-new linguistic system in the absence of a conventionalized language model? To address these questions I combine psycholinguistic experimentation and linguistic analysis of datasets from sign languages that naturally emerge in isolated micro-communities. This work furthers our understanding of the cognitive underpinning of language acquisition in atypical situations, provides us with a vantage point into the initial stages human language, and helps us gain insight into language emergence and evolution.

#### DISCOVERIES:

- 1) *Central Taurus Sign Language* (CTSL): CTSL is a village sign language that emerged naturally within the last half decade in a linguistically isolated community in Mersin province, Turkey. I am a native member of the CTSL community and I named this language after the mountains in the region.

- 2) *Çukurova Sign Language* (tentatively named by myself): This is a naturally emerging micro-community sign language that I discovered in 2017 in Adana province, Turkey.

#### PUBLICATIONS IN REFEREED JOURNALS AND CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS:

- Ergin, R.**, Meir, I., Ilkbasaran, D., Padden, C., & Jackendoff, R. (2018). Argument Structure of Central Taurus Sign Language. In C. de Vos & V. Nyst (Eds.). *Special Edition on Sign Language Linguistics*, pp. 612-639.
- Ergin R.**, Senghas, A., Jackendoff, R., & Gleitman, L. (2018). Structural cues for symmetry, asymmetry, and non-symmetry in Central Taurus Sign Language. *Proceedings of the 12<sup>th</sup> International Conference of Language Evolution (EVOLANG12)*.
- Ergin, R.** & Brentari, D. (2017). Hand shape preferences for nouns and verbs in Central Taurus Sign Language. *Proceedings of Boston University Conference on Language Development 41 (1)*, pp. 222-235. Cascadilla Press: Medford, MA.
- Hwang, S., Tomita, N., Morgan, H., **Ergin, R.**, Ilkbasaran, D., Seegers, S., Lopic, R. & Padden, C. (2016). Typological unification of sign language lexicons through patterned iconicity. *Language and Cognition*, pp.1-30. doi:10.1017/langcog.2016.28.

#### WORKING PAPERS:

- “Central Taurus Sign Language: On the edge of conventionalization” (UNDER REVIEW) with Ray Jackendoff (Tufts/MIT), Leyla Kürşat (Tufts) and Ethan Hartzell (Tufts)
- “The Sources of Topic Open-endedness in the Initial Stages of a Natural Language” with Ray Jackendoff (Tufts/MIT).
- “Structural cues for symmetry, asymmetry and non-symmetry in Central Taurus Sign Language” with Ann Senghas (Barnard), Ray Jackendoff (Tufts/MIT) and Lila Gleitman (UPenn)
- “Comparative analysis of the development of phonology and morphology in Central Taurus Sign Language vs. Nicaraguan Sign Language” with Diane Brentari (UChicago), Marie Coppola (UConn) and Ann Senghas (Barnard)
- “Word order preferences in Central Taurus Sign Language in various animacy conditions” with Matthew Hall (UMass, Dartmouth)
- “The processing of complex Turkish words” with Emily Morgan (UC, Davis) and Tim O’Donnell (McGill)

#### INVITED PRESENTATIONS:

##### 2018. “Irit Meir and her legacy: A Tribute”

Talk given at:

- The 3rd International Conference on Sign Language Acquisition, Istanbul, June 2018

##### 2018. “Central Taurus Sign Language: A Unique Vantage Point into Language Emergence”

Colloquium given at:

- General Staff Meeting at the Max Planck Institute for Psycholinguistics, March 2018
- The Department of Communication and Cognition, Tilburg University, April 2018
- VUB Artificial Intelligence Lab, Vrije Universiteit Brussel, July 2018

##### 2018. “The Seeds of Linguistic Structure in a Brand-new System”

Colloquium given at:

- Center for Language Studies, Radboud University, March 2018
- 2018.** “Structural cues for symmetry, asymmetry, and non-symmetry in Central Taurus Sign Language”  
Colloquium given at:
  - Department of Linguistics, Radboud University, March 2018
- 2018.** “The Emergence of Argument Structure in Central Taurus Sign Language”  
Colloquium given at:
  - The Institute for German Sign Language and Deaf Communication, Hamburg University, January 2018
- 2016.** “Word Order Preferences in Central Taurus Sign Language”  
Talk given at:
  - TedLab, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, October 2016.
- 2016.** “From Hand to Hand: Building a Brand-new Language”  
Colloquium given at:
  - Max Planck Institute for Psycholinguistics, July 2016.
  - Department of Linguistics, University of Haifa, June 2016.
- 2016.** “The Realization of Reciprocal and Symmetrical Actions in Central Taurus Sign Language”  
Talk given at :
  - Sign Language Research Lab, University of Haifa, May 2016.
- 2015.** “Central Taurus Sign Language”  
Talk given at:
  - Graduate Student Research Symposium, Tufts University, April 2015.
- 2015.** “Something out of Nothing: A Brand New Language”  
Talk given at:
  - TEDxTufts, Tufts University, April 2015.
- 2015.** “Spontaneous conversations in Central Taurus Sign Language”  
Talk given at:
  - Action and Interaction in Communication: Fieldwork and Laboratory Studies (post-CARTA workshop hosted by Padden Lab). University of California, San Diego, February, 2015.
- 2014.** “The Language in Our Hands”  
Talk given at:
  - Osher Lifelong Learning Institute, Tufts University, October 2014
- 2014.** “Preliminary analysis of the linguistic organization in Central Taurus Sign Language”  
Talk given at:
  - Language and Cognition Seminar Series, Harvard University, April 2014
- 2014.** “Word Order as a Syntactic Strategy in Central Taurus Sign Language”  
Talk given at:
  - Linguistics Seminar, Tufts University, March 2014
- 2013.** Basics of the linguistic organization in Central Taurus Sign Language.  
Talk given at:
  - Seminar on the Biological Foundations of Language, Tufts University, October 2013.

## PEER-REVIEWED CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS:

**Ergin, R.** & Jackendoff, R. (March, 2019). *The Sources of Topic Open-endedness in the Initial Stages of a Natural Language*. Inaugural workshop of the Center for the Interdisciplinary Study of Language Evolution. University of Zurich, Switzerland.

**Ergin, R.**, Senghas, A., Jackendoff, R. & Gleitman, L. (July, 2018). *Structural cues for symmetry, asymmetry, and non-symmetry in Central Taurus Sign Language*. Talk given at the 8th Conference of the International Society for Gestural Studies, Cape Town, South Africa.

**Ergin, R.**, Meir, I., Ilkbasaran, D., Padden, C., & Jackendoff, R. (June, 2018). *Development of Argument Structure in Central Taurus Sign Language*. Talk given at the 3rd International Conference on Sign Language Acquisition, Istanbul, Turkey.

**Ergin, R.**, Senghas, A., Jackendoff, R. & Gleitman, L. (April, 2018). *Structural cues for symmetry, asymmetry, and non-symmetry in Central Taurus Sign Language*. Talk given at the 12<sup>th</sup> International Conference on Language Evolution (EVOLANG12), Torun, Poland.

**Ergin, R.**, Meir, I., Ilkbasaran, D., Padden, C., & Jackendoff, R. (April, 2018). *Development of Argument Structure in Central Taurus Sign Language*. Talk given at the Word Order Workshop, Torun, Poland.

<sup>3</sup>**Ergin, R.**, Senghas, A., Jackendoff, R. & Gleitman, L. (January, 2017). *Reciprocal and symmetrical predicates in an emerging sign language*. Talk given at the 91<sup>st</sup> Annual Meeting of the Linguistic Society of America. Austin, USA.

**Ergin, R.** & Brentari, D. (November, 2016). *Hand shape preferences for nouns and verbs in Central Taurus Sign Language*. Poster presentation at the 41<sup>st</sup> Annual Boston University Conference on Language Development. Boston, USA.

**Ergin, R.**, Meir, I., Ilkbasaran, D., Padden, C., Caselli, N., Goldberg-Cohen, A., Jackendoff, R. (July, 2016). *Development of Structural Cues in Central Taurus Sign Language*. Poster presentation at the 7th Conference of the International Society for Gestural Studies, Paris, France.

Caselli, N., **Ergin, R.**, Goldberg-Cohen, A. & Jackendoff, R. (July, 2016). *Iconicity, phonology, and the creation of a lexicon*. Talk given at the 7th Conference of the International Society for Gesture Studies. Paris, France.

Hwang, S.-O., Tomita, N., Morgan, H., **Ergin, R.**, Ilkbasaran, D., Lopic, R., & Padden, C. (January, 2016). *Convergence and divergence in the typology of sign language lexicons: an analysis through patterned iconicity*. Talk given at Theoretical Issues in Sign Language Research (TISLR) 12 Conference, La Trobe University, Melbourne, Australia

**Ergin, R.** (July, 2015). *Development of Structural Cues in Central Taurus Sign Language*. Poster presentation at the Linguistics Society of America, Summer Institute, University of Chicago, USA.

**Ergin, R.** (May, 2015). *Where does meaning come from?* Talk given at Emerging Sign Languages and the Big Picture, Tufts University, Medford, MA.

Caselli, N., **Ergin, R.**, Jackendoff, R. & Golberg-Cohen, A. (2015, May). *Iconicity and phonological structure in language emergence*. Talk given at Emerging Sign Languages and the Big Picture, Tufts University, Medford, MA.

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<sup>3</sup> Finalist for 5-minute Linguist Plenary Event at Linguistic Society of America Annual Meeting

- Ergin, R.**, Caselli, N., Padden, C., Ilkbasaran, D., Meir, I., Cohen-Goldberg, A., Jackendoff, R. (June, 2014). *Argument structure in a newly documented village sign language*. Talk given at the Linguistics and Language Conference, Istanbul, Turkey
- Ergin, R.**, Caselli, N., Ilkbasaran, D., Meir, I., Cohen-Goldberg, A., Jackendoff, R. (July, 2014). *Argument structure in a newly documented village sign language*. Talk given at the 6th Conference of the International Society for Gestural Studies, UC San Diego, USA.
- Hwang, S.-O., Seegers, S., Lepic, R., Hodgdon, E., Tomita, N., Ilkbasaran, D., **Ergin, R.**, & Padden, C. (July, 2014). *Organizing a lexicon with patterned iconicity*. Talk given at the International Society for Gesture Studies Conference, UC San Diego, USA.
- Ergin, R.**, Jackendoff, R., Goldberg-Cohen, A. (September, 2014). *The processing of multimorphemic words in Turkish: Evidence for a dual-route*. Poster presented at 8th International Conference on the Mental Lexicon, Montreal, CA.
- Caselli, N., **Ergin, R.**, Jackendoff, R., Cohen-Goldberg, A. (May, 2014). *The emergence of phonological structure in Central Taurus Sign Language*. Talk given at From Sound to Gesture, Padua, Italy

#### MEDIA COVERAGE:

- “A Window on How Language Develops”  
Article published in TuftsNow, Spring 2014  
<http://now.tufts.edu/articles/window-how-language-develops>
- “Something Out of Nothing: A Brand-new Language”  
Talk given at TEDxTufts, Independently organized TED event by Tufts University, Spring 2015  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RO1cXxEQm-w>
- “The Origins of Language: From Nothing to Something”  
Het Talige Brein  
Scientific news blog of the Neurobiology of Language Department at the Max Planck Institute for Psycholinguistics  
<https://taalenhersen.nl/wordpress.com/2018/06/22/the-origins-of-language-from-nothing-to-something-en/>

#### PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITIES:

- Organizing committee member for the 3rd International Conference on Sign Language Acquisition, Koc University, June 2018
- Conference organizer for “Emerging Sign Languages and the Big Picture”, Tufts University, May 2015, <http://tuftsemergingsignlanguages.weebly.com/>
- Coordinator for Tufts Linguistics Seminar for 2014-2015 academic year

### TEACHING EXPERIENCE

#### COURSES TAUGHT:

- at Tufts University  
Teaching assistant for:  
Introduction to Cognitive Science Spring 2013

Statistics for Behavioral Sciences	Spring 2014
Semantics	Fall 2014
Introduction to Linguistics	Fall 2012, Fall 2013, Spring 2015
Syntactic Theory	Fall 2015
Experimental Psychology	Spring 2016
Morphological Theory	Fall 2016
- at Middle East Technical University	
Course instructor for:	
ENG 101 – English for Academic Purposes I	Fall 2009, Fall 2010, Fall 2011
ENG 102 – English for Academic Purposes II	Spring 2010, Spring 2011, Spring 2012
- at Bilkent University	
Course instructor for:	
Elementary Level English	Fall 2008
Pre-Intermediate Level English	Fall 2005, Fall 2006, Fall 2007, Spring 2008
Intermediate Level English	Fall 2005, Fall 2006, Fall 2007, Spring 2008, Spring 2009
Upper-intermediate Level English	Spring 2006, Spring 2007, Spring 2008, Fall 2008, Spring 2009
Advanced Level English	Spring 2006, Summer 2006, Spring 2007, Summer 2007, Fall 2008

#### MENTORING AND RESEARCH ADVISING:

Leyla Kürşat, (Tufts undergrad majoring in CBS)	2015-2018
Ethan Hartzell (Tufts undergrad majoring in CBS)	2015-2018
Hande Güven (Tufts undergrad majoring in COMP)	Fall 2016
Elif Olmez (Tufts undergrad majoring in COMP)	Fall 2016
Rebecca Nardulli (Tufts undergrad majoring in CBS)	Spring 2016
Walter Rweyemamu, (Tufts undergrad majoring in CBS)	Spring 2014
Jennifer Seidel, (Tufts undergrad majoring in CBS)	Fall 2014

#### THESES SUPERVISED

- “Emergence of Regularities in Central Taurus Sign Language” by Leyla Kürşat (co-supervised with Prof. Ray Jackendoff).
- “Lexical Variation in Central Taurus Sign Language” by Ethan Hartzell (co-supervised with Prof. Ray Jackendoff).

## LANGUAGE PROFICIENCIES

TURKISH: Native language

ENGLISH: Native-like proficiency

CENTRAL TAURUS SIGN LANGUAGE: Fluent late-signer

AMERICAN SIGN LANGUAGE: Conversational fluency

## COMPUTER SKILLS

Proficient in ELAN, Superlab, SPSS, Adobe Premiere/Photoshop

Familiar with R, R Studio, SASS, C++, ACT-R, Prologue

## REFERENCES

- 1) Ray Jackendoff, Ph.D.  
Seth Merrin Professor of Philosophy, Department of Philosophy, Tufts University, USA  
Research Associate, Department of Cognitive and Brain Sciences, MIT, USA  
E-MAIL: Ray.Jackendoff@tufts.edu
- 2) Peter Hagoort, Ph.D.  
Director of the Max Planck Institute for Psycholinguistics, founding director of the  
Donders Institute, and Professor of Cognitive Neuroscience  
Radboud University, The Netherlands  
E-MAIL: Peter.Hagoort@mpi.nl
- 3) Carol Padden, Ph.D.  
Professor of Communication and the dean of the Division of Social Sciences  
University of California, San Diego, USA  
E-MAIL: cpadden@ucsd.edu
- 4) Diane Brentari, Ph.D.  
Mary K. Werkman Professor of Linguistics  
Department of Linguistics, University of Chicago, USA  
E-MAIL: dbrentari@uchicago.edu
- 5) Ann Senghas, Ph.D.  
Professor and Chair of the Department of Psychology  
Department of Psychology, Barnard College, USA  
E-MAIL: asenghas@barnard.edu