Introduction. Learning a morphological process requires generalizing which words undergo the process and what form these words take. Emphatic reduplication in Turkish (henceforth TER) is unproductively applied to a small set of adjectives. Despite its unproductiveness, Turkish speakers have been shown to learn the form that adjectives that undergo TER take (Demircan 1987; Wedel 1999). This project investigates whether Turkish speakers learn which adjectives can undergo reduplication based on semantic regularities across TER adjectives.

The productiveness of morphological processes has been shown to interact with semantic class (Gagliardi 2012; Culbertson & Wilson manuscript) and to be gradiently applied to lexemes (Albright & Hayes 2002, 2003; Pierrehumbert 2006). Speakers of Turkish are shown here to learn both semantic and phonotactic regularities within an unproductive process, suggesting that these forms cannot simply be memorized.

TER targets a fixed set of around 130 gradable adjectives. The reduplicant (emphatic morpheme) copies the first syllable of the base and overwrites the last consonant of the syllable (coda) with one of four fixed segments [p], [s], [m], [r]:

(1) a. up-uzun ‘quite long’
    b. yus-yuvarlak ‘very round’
    c. bem-beyaz ‘snow white’
    d. ser-sefîl ‘very miserable.’

The experiment presented here will show that native Turkish speakers generalize over semantic classes when learning the process of reduplication.

Experiment. 49 native speakers of Turkish were asked to rate reduplicated forms of nonce adjectives. A rating of 0 indicated strong preference for TER form and a rating of 7 for çok ‘very’ form. The nonce adjectives were contextualized in one of four ways to ensure that the subject believed the nonce word belonged to one of four semantic classes. The semantic classes are either observed in TER (color, dimension), or unobserved (texture, mental state adjective).

Results and discussion. Results show a preference for reduplicating one of the two observed TER adjective classes (preference for color, mean rating 2.02, over dimension, mean rating 3.63), and no preference whatsoever for the unobserved TER adjective classes (texture, mean rating 3.27, mental state, mean rating 3.56). In the non-color conditions (dimension, mental state, texture), the ratings were bimodal across subjects, meaning that an equal number of subjects strongly preferred the TER form or strongly preferred the compositional form. The color condition shows no bimodality, indicating a qualitative difference in preference for color adjectives. As both color and dimension adjectives undergo TER, the rating difference between them suggests that speakers generalize over attested classes unequally. The present study leaves open how much of this is due to the semantics of color terms and how much to the semantics of TER itself, but it does demonstrate that semantic class regularities across TER adjectives are partially learned by speakers of Turkish. Even within an unproductive morphological process, Turkish speakers form generalizations over semantic class, suggesting that Turkish speakers actively infer which words undergo TER as well as what forms they take.