

ONUR KELEŞ

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PROFILE

PhD researcher at the intersection of computational linguistics and cognitive science, investigating multimodal communication, simultaneity, and iconicity across deaf signers, hearing non-signers, and vision–language models.

EDUCATION

Boğaziçi University

PhD in Linguistics

Jan 2025 - Present

Boğaziçi University

M.A. in Linguistics

Sep 2021 - Jan 2025

GPA: 4.0

Supervisors: Kadir Gökgöz and Nazik Dinçtopal Deniz

Thesis: [Phonetic reduction as a function of referential accessibility: Kinematic evidence from Turkish Sign Language](#)

Boğaziçi University

B.A. in Foreign Language Education

Aug 2017 - July 2021

GPA: 4.0, Summa Cum Laude

RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

Max Planck Institute for Psycholinguistics

Affiliated Researcher

Jun 2024 – Present

- Benchmarking vision–language models on sign iconicity.

Boğaziçi University, Department of Linguistics

Research & Teaching Assistant

Apr 2023 – Present

- Prepared and graded student assignments, held problem sessions, and carried out administrative tasks.

Undergraduate Project Assistant

Jan 2019 – Jan 2022

- Developed a sign language teaching application as part of a TÜBİTAK STAR fellowship.

Boğaziçi University, Deniz Lab

Researcher

Sep 2022 – Present

- Worked on projects on Turkish processing, including the EU COST Action project *MultiEye*, a TÜBİTAK 1001 project on NPI licensing, and the processing of Turkish role reversals in large language models.

Codeswitch Software


Research Intern


Jan 2021 – Aug 2021

- Worked on a sign language teaching application supported by a TÜBİTAK STAR research fellowship.

PUBLICATIONS

Peer-reviewed Journals & Book Chapters

1. Keleş, O., & Dinçtopal Deniz, N. (2025). [Good-enough parsing in Turkish: Task effects in online processing of role-reversals](#). In B. Kırkıcı (Ed.), *Empirical insights into language and cognition* (pp. 137–163). Nobel Akademik Yayıncılık. ISBN 978-625-376-633-7
2. Keleş, O., Atmaca, F., & Gökgöz, K. (2023). [Reference tracking strategies of deaf adult signers in Turkish Sign Language](#). *Journal of Pragmatics* (Q1), 213, 12–35. 

3. Keleş, O. & Gökgöz, K. (2022). [Expression of Aboutness Subject Topic Constructions in Turkish Sign Language \(TİD\) Narratives](#). *Hrvatska revija za rehabilitacijska istraživanja*, 58 (Special Issue), 194–205. <https://doi.org/10.31299/hrri.58.si.10>
4. Keleş, O., Atmaca, F., & Gökgöz, K. (2022). [Effects of age of acquisition and category size on signed verbal fluency](#). *Language Acquisition (Q1)*, 29(4), 361–383. (Winner of the annual prize for the Best Article Contributing to Linguistic Diversity.) <https://doi.org/10.1080/10489223.2021.2023814> 
5. Gökgöz, K. & Keleş, O. (2020). [Pragmatics: 6.4. Information Structure](#). In Meltem Keleş (ed.), *A Grammar of Turkish Sign Language (TİD)*. 1st edn. *SIGN-HUB Sign Language Grammar Series* as part of the SignHub Project, EC, 693349.

Peer-reviewed Conference Proceedings

1. Keleş, O., Özyürek, A., Ortega, G., Gökgöz, K., & Ghaleb, E. (2026). [The Visual Iconicity Challenge: Evaluating Vision–Language Models on Sign Language Form–Meaning Mapping](#). In *Proceedings of the 64th Annual Meeting of the Association for Computational Linguistics (Volume 1: Long Papers)*, pp. 41101–41116, San Diego, California, United States. Association for Computational Linguistics.
2. Keleş, O., & Deniz, N. D. (2025). [When men bite dogs: Testing good-enough parsing in Turkish with humans and large language models](#). In T. Kuribayashi, G. Rambelli, E. Takmaz, P. Wicke, J. Li, & B. D. Oh (Eds.), *Proceedings of the Workshop on Cognitive Modeling and Computational Linguistics* (pp. 219–231).
3. Keleş, O., Günay, B., & Doğan, B. (2025). [Cognate and contact-induced transfer learning for Hamshentsnag: A low-resource and endangered language](#). In S. Truong, R. A. Putri, D. Nguyen, A. Wang, D. Ho, A. Oh, & S. Koyejo (Eds.), *Proceedings of the 1st Workshop on Language Models for Underserved Communities (LM4UC 2025)* (pp. 76–85).
4. Keleş, O. & Bayraklı, Ö. T. (2024). [LLaMA-2-Econ: Enhancing title generation, abstract classification, and academic Q & A in economic research](#). In C.-C. Chen, X. Liu, U. Hahn, A. Nourbakhsh, Z. Ma, C. Smiley, V. Hoste, S. R. Das, M. Li, M. Ghassemi, H.-H. Huang, H. Takamura, & H.-H. Chen (Eds.), *Proceedings of the 4th Workshop on Economics and Natural Language Processing* (pp. 212–218).
5. Keleş, O. & Dinçtopal Deniz, N. (2024). [A comparative study with human data: Do LLMs have superficial language processing?](#). In *2024 32nd Signal Processing and Communications Applications Conference (SIU)* (pp. 1–4). IEEE.
6. Keleş, O., Oksal, C., & Bilgili, E. (2023). [Using Pose Estimation for Reference Tracking in Turkish Sign Language](#). In *31st Signal Processing and Communications Applications Conference (SIU)* (pp. 1–4). IEEE.

SELECT PRESENTATIONS

Conferences

1. Keleş, O., Özyürek, A., Ortega, G., Gökgöz, K., & Ghaleb, E. (2025). [Agentive Iconicity in Signs: Visual Context Helps Form-Meaning Mapping in Minds & Machines](#) (Poster presentation). 39th Annual Conference on Human Sentence Processing: Boston, US.
2. Dinçtopal Deniz, N., Erdemir, Z., Keleş, O., Nuh, Stenai, & Sürücü, F. N. (2025). [Tracking predictive and memory-based processes in L2 Turkish NPI licensings](#) (Poster presentation). 39th Annual Conference on Human Sentence Processing: Boston, US.
3. Keleş, O., Bayraklı Keleş, Z. İ. & Deniz, N. D. (September, 2025). [How good-enough is L2 sentence comprehension? Processing of thematic role \(reversal\)s in L2 Turkish](#) (Poster presentation). Architectures and Mechanisms for Language Processing (AMLaP): Prague, Czechia.
4. Keleş, O. & Deniz, N. D. (September, 2025). [Task effects in good-enough parsing in Turkish: Human and LM comprehension of thematic roles](#) (Poster presentation). Architectures and Mechanisms for Language Processing (AMLaP): Prague, Czechia.
5. Keleş, O., Gökgöz, K. & Deniz, N. D. (March, 2025). [Pragmatics predicts phonetic reduction in signed narratives](#) (Poster presentation). 38th Annual Conference on Human Sentence Processing: Maryland, US.

6. **Keleş, O.** & Günay, B. (May, 2024). [Transfer Learning to the Rescue! Cross-Lingual Transfer for POS Tagging in an Endangered Language: Hamshetsnag](#) (On-stage presentation). Turkey Computational Social Sciences Conference (TCSS) 2024: Koç University, İstanbul, Türkiye.
7. Gökgöz, K., **Keleş, O.**, & Bilgili, E. (November, 2023). [Morpho-phonology and Articulatory Energy in Expressing Complex Motion Events in Turkish Sign Language \(TİD\) and Age of Acquisition Effects](#) (On-stage presentation). 47th Boston University Conference on Language Development (BUCLD): Boston, USA.
8. **Keleş, O.**, Atmaca F., & Gökgöz, K. (November, 2020). [Age of Acquisition Effects on Verbal Fluency in Turkish Sign Language](#) (Poster presentation and Paper Alternate). 45th Boston University Conference on Language Development (BUCLD): Boston, USA (Online Conference).

AWARDS & HONORS

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|--------|---|
| 2026 | ACL 2026 Diversity & Inclusion Subsidy recipient; selected as an In-Person Volunteer, 64th Annual Meeting of the ACL (San Diego); 39th HSP Travel Grant (Boston). |
| 2025 | 38th HSP Travel Grant (Maryland). |
| 2024 | AlgoRun Data Science Hackathon, Winner; Akademik Bilişim Conference, Best Paper Award. |
| 2022 | <i>Language Acquisition</i> Best Article Contributing to Linguistic Diversity Award. |
| 2021 | B.A. awarded <i>Summa Cum Laude</i> (GPA 4.0). |
| Grants | TÜBİTAK 2224-A (Scientific Events Abroad, 2024), 2210-A National Graduate Scholarship (2021–2023), 2247-C STAR Researcher Internship (2020–2021). |

TEACHING

Boğaziçi University

Teaching Assistant in the Dept. of Linguistics

Sep 2022 - Present

- LING 202. Morphology, Instructor: Ömer Demirok (2026, Spring). [Syllabus](#).
- LING 313. Phonology & Morphology of Modern Turkish, Instructor: Ceyda Arslan (2025, Fall). [Syllabus](#).
- LING 314. Syntax & Semantics of Modern Turkish, Instructor: Balkız Öztürk (2025, Spring). [Syllabus](#).
- LING 101. Introduction to Linguistics I, Instructor: Kadir Gökgöz (2025 Spring). [Syllabus](#).
- LING 411. Linguistic Methodology with R, Instructor: Ümit Atlamaz (2024, Fall). [Syllabus](#).
- LING 360. Computational Linguistics with Python, Instructor: Ümit Atlamaz (2024, Spring). [Syllabus](#).

Turkish Instructor

Jun 2024 - Present

- Taught Upper Intermediate Turkish as a foreign language for graduate students from the US in the summer.

Robert College

Teacher Intern

Oct 2020 - Jun 2021

- LP and L9 English, Instructor: Melissa Altintas

SKILLS

Programming	Python · R · RMarkdown · L ^A T _E X
ML / NLP	PyTorch · Transformers · LLM · model evaluation & benchmarking · vision–language & multimodal models · low-resource & multilingual NLP · transfer learning · pose estimation
Tools	Git · ELAN · Praat · PsychoPy · PCIBex
Languages	Turkish (native) · English (C2) · Spanish (B1) · Turkish Sign Language (research exp.)
Training	MEDAL Summer School in Experimental Linguistics, Max Planck Institute for Psycholinguistics, Nijmegen (2024) · SocialComquant Workshops on Machine Learning and NLP, Koç University (2023) · 3rd International School on Linguistics, Novi Sad (2023).