Blood, Shame and Fear
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7 Assertiveness and Sincerity

7.1 Introduction

Establishing a particular, usually a desirable self-image is one of the most important tasks of interpersonal life. People’s desire to create good impressions on others entails managing and manipulating these impressions in different ways. In order to achieve a goal in conversation, a speaker often makes a plan or ponders a course of action designed to realize some goals (McLaughlin et al., 1985). People carry out assertive self-presentation tactics to achieve, maintain and improve a positive image on other people’s mind. (see Chapter 2 and 4 for details). In Schlenker’s (1980:168) terms in the form of assertive self-presentation, “people function as their advertising and public relations firms”.

People can try to make themselves appear in a positive light through some linguistic attempts to gain credibility and create self-confirmation of one’s past or present words, acts, and opinions. Various scholars (BL, 1987; Haviland, 1989; Masagara, 1997, 2001; Abd el-Jawad, 2000; Beeman, 2001) observed that declaration of sincerity and questioning of truthfulness with the doubt of deceit are frequent vehicles in social interactions, where the addressee may feel the need to swear an oath or to employ a sincerity marker or an intensifier to assert sincerity. This speaker-oriented facework emphasizes volitional or “instrumental” (Gu, 1990) politeness where the speaker is not constrained by a sociolinguistic criteria, but rather personal face concerns. BL (1987) identified a class of expressions they called sincerity hedges, which functions to “indicate something about the speaker’s commitment toward what he is saying and in so doing, modify the illocutionary force” (1987: 147). BL include strengtheners (intensifiers), that mainly act as emphatics, and weakeners (hedges in the more narrow sense), that soften or ‘tentativize’ what they modify. In conversational Turkish, valla or vallahi (henceforth valla), an originally Arabic religious oath meaning (roughly) “I swear by God”, and gerçekten (‘really’), a more contemporary, non-religious sincerity marker and intensifier, can be considered as a conventional means of legitimization or self-validation. Gerçekten is perceived as rather formal usage both in oral and written modes of communication, whereas valla tends to occur only in informal spoken contexts. Valla is functionally more complex than gerçekten. While it has
preserved its religious connotation, the literal meaning of the oath has become opaque (see Kansu-Yetkiner forthcoming c).

Both valla and gerçekten express affective meaning regulating and manipulating interpersonal relationships. Valla is functionally more complicated than gerçekten and tends to occur in informal spoken contexts. It is very commonly used in daily interactions and thus has lost its religious resonance in Turkish. It helps speakers increase or strengthen their commitment to the truthfulness of their statements. For that reason, valla can be conceived as a sincerity marker, intensifier, rather than a rigid oath binding for a speaker. In the case of valla, self-presentation is performed by ‘proxy’ as an ultimate authority, God, invoked to defend, to extend, and to promote the speakers’ positive image. Frequent articulation of God’s oath gives the speakers a chance to establish a social image that contributes to their reputation and social adjustment as being religious, decent, honorable and conservative people. Gerçekten is observed as formal usage both in oral and written modes of communication. This word was derived from Turkish stem gerçek (‘real’) and appeared as a result of Turkish language reform to attain Turkification and simplification of vocabulary and grammar for everyday conversational use instead of using Arabic and Persian loan words. Thus, gerçekten can be regarded as a contemporary, nonreligious alternative to valla.

This chapter presents an analysis of the linguistic attempts for positive self-presentation to show that politeness can function both as a strategic device employed to perform linguistic action to attain specific communicative goals, and as social indexing. With this purpose, functions and distribution of the sincerity markers valla and gerçekten will be discussed with respect to their pragmatic and social functions. In the following section, assertiveness and assertive self-presentation in the use of two sincerity markers will be indicated. In section 3, valla and gerçekten will be further discussed in relation to their socio-pragmatic implications. In section 4, a qualitative analysis of valla and gerçekten where six functions of these sincerity markers are defined and discussed with respect to syntactic, semantic and pragmatic characterizations will be given. Use of the two sincerity markers in terms of topic sensitivity and functional distribution will be analyzed in section 5. Section 6 provides conclusions and comments based on the analysis of the data.

7.2 Assertiveness and Assertive Speech Act

Rich and Schroder (1976:1082) defined assertiveness as “the skills to seek, maintain or enhance reinforcement in an interpersonal situation through an expression of feelings or wants when such expression risks loss of reinforcement or even punishment”. However there are different definitions of assertiveness with respect to theme and gender. Wilson and Gallous (1993) gathered definitions of assertiveness from popular and academic resources to search for the common themes in the definition of the assertiveness. Assertiveness was found to be the most often defined as involving self-expression. Other common themes were directly and honestly stating one’s views, defending one’s rights, using competent forms of communication, making strong statements and open expression of a contradictory point of view. Wilson and Gallois’s (1993) study revealed the gender
differences in defining assertiveness, where laymen mentioned power and control of others in contrast to laywomen and popular and academic writing. Accordingly, Wilson and Gallois (1993) defined two types of assertive self-presentation by denoting the aggressive approach as “negative assertion” and the one more socially appropriate approach as “positive assertion”. Based on gender stereotypes, where women are considered as submissive, tactful, sneaky, passive, lacking in self-confidence, dependent and unaggressive, people would expect women to employ more positive forms of assertion than men and men to use more negative forms of assertion as compared to women. Carli (1999) indicates that as men more often attain higher leadership positions and have more control over social life than women do, positive assertion is congruent with traditional female gender role and thus corresponds quite closely with prescriptive stereotypes about appropriate behavior for women and girls and gender differences in power. Accordingly, women display higher levels of positive assertion in the form of verbal and nonverbal expressions, supportive and appreciative statements. Hence, results of recent research reveal that both women and men are assertive but they express their assertiveness differently. In truth, “gender differences in assertiveness depend to great extend on the relative power of males and females and vary in accordance with shifts in power” (Carli, 2001:167).

*Valla* and *gerçekten* can not be considered as gender-specific sincerity markers. They are commonly employed both by men and women as an indicator of assertiveness to enhance and to maintain the achieved level of self-esteem, which is a pattern of roles and statuses related to those other people with whom the speakers interact. In other words, it can be regarded as an attempt contributing to their reputation, their level of social satisfaction and adjustment.

Among the five basic categories of speech acts defined by Searle (1979) the category of assertives includes such speech acts as statements, descriptions, explanations, suggestions and hypotheses. Assertives are also distinguished from other speech act types in that they commit the speaker to the truth of the expressed proposition. According to van Belle (1984) “the degree of this commitment can vary considerably: there is clearly a difference between, for instance, ‘putting something forward as hypothesis’ on the other hand and ‘stating’ and ‘swearing’ on the other”. Searle summarizes the commitment to the truth of the expressed proposition through “preparatory condition”: “The speaker must be in a position to provide evidence or reasons for the truth of the expressed positions. Such a conception implies that the conception of truth is intersubjectively determined and that it has to be acceptable for other persons. Another point that should be to bear in mind that the member of the assertive class of speech acts are also distinguished from other classes by the psychological state they express. In other words, they have to fulfill the ‘sincerity condition’ whereby the speaker ‘believes’ the proposition expressed in the utterance.

*Valla* stands for the commissive category of illocutionary acts where the speakers not only commit to their statements but also intend to make the hearer think the way they think and make them believe in their truthfulness. In this respect, the perlocutionary function of *valla* (convincing of one’s sincerity) is the self-presentational goal speakers employ to establish a positive image on others. Furthermore, an oath displays a number of different speech acts. Primarily, it can
put forward a view by making a statement on past, present and even future events. The power of an oath is determined by a second speech act, the act of calling upon God or a divine authority as a guarantor or a witness. Finally, an oath brings into view a conditional curse as a third speech act, regardless of whether the curse is articulated or not. In other words, if an oath is proved to be false, God’s laws are put into effect for enacting the curse.

Sincerity markers strongly relate to the Gricean Maxim of Quality which states that the speaker’s contribution in a communication situation should be true and be supported by adequate evidence. It is clear that both valla and gerçeken explicitly indicate that speakers display enough confidence for the truthfulness of their statements. The condition of “appropriate type of evidence” is met by invoking the witness of God in the case of valla. Gerçekten functions as a means for the speakers to inform the hearer of the extent to which they adhere to the cooperative principle and maxims in their linguistic communication.

### 7.2.1 Valla and gerçeken as Socio-Cultural Index

Abd El-Jawad (2000:227) states that conversational swearing “reflects the powerful dominance of religion on the speech behavior of the community. […] Swearing expressions may also provide the hearer with a certain amount of indexical information about the swearer”. Similarly, the use of valla and gerçeken highlights speaker’s as well as society’s perspective in relation to locus of control. Valla reflects a rather religious perspective denoting an external locus of control, which is God in the regulation of relationship and designation of the speaker’s self image, whereas gerçeken reflects internal locus of control, namely the individual’s beliefs that her choice to emphasize her sincerity is guided by her personal decisions and efforts. In this respect, apart from signaling a speaker’s full commitment to what she says, valla functions as a “contextual cue” giving peripheral, more loosely associated and less clearly formulatable information on the speakers’ religious view.

It is interesting to add here that conversational swearing is not confined to religious view and/or external locus of control. It is, at the same time, an ideological index with a wide range of communicative functions.

Turkey officially has been a secular state since 1924. Atatürk viewed attachment to religion as an impediment to modernization and imposed rigorous restrictions on the practice of Islam. However, secularism remained an elite ideology, whereas Islam, the nominal religion of 98 percent of the population, continued to be a strong influence on most of the people, especially in rural areas and lower-class urban neighborhoods. It is possible to see this ideological clash in daily discourse through the choice of vocabulary and expressions. While those holding Islamist views tend to use Arabic words and Arabic expressions such as Selâymın aleykîm, İhsâallah, the secular wing prefers to use Turkish words and avoids any expression indicating religious view. Hence, valla usage suggests that conservatism and religiosity may condition a preference for valla over gerçeken.
7.3 Qualitative Analysis

Data analysis consisted of an iterative, inductive qualitative process. The goal of this procedure was to specify functions of *valla* and *gerçekten* and to identify the patterns of impression management and facework strategies acquired in use of these two items. In order to construct the most accurate frame, *valla* and *gerçekten* cases in data were reviewed a large number of times by the author and obscure cases were submitted into the consideration of Turkish linguists by a short survey. The data analysis process involved two stages:

First, all cases were examined and their functions were determined. Two alternatives of *gerçekten* were included to the analysis: *hakikaten*, a word with an Arabic origin, rather an old alternative of *gerçekten* more commonly used prior to Atatürk’s language reform, and *essahtan* which is the regional dialect version of *gerçekten*. No instances were found of *sahiden*, another Arabic word, used interchangeably with *gerçekten*. The data reveal six different use of *valla* depicting the spectrum of resources available to explain not only overcoming potential suspicion, but also managing face norms, legitimizing one’s sincerity against an attack, managing responsive behavior, conducting responsiveness in conversation, and acquiring conversational organization. *Gerçekten* covers some of these functions such as assertion of sincerity, defense against a face threat, response particle and solidarity device.

7.3.1 Syntactic Categorization

*Valla* and *gerçekten* may occur in five syntactic positions in an ongoing utterance, namely; sentence initial, sentence final, sentence internal, parenthetical position and in the form of independent uses. These usages will be illustrated by the examples from the corpus as follows:

*Sentence Initial Position (with or without prosodic break)*
Sentence initial *valla* and *gerçekten* take place in the form of left-hand discourse brackets, should be located to the left of the sentence specifier. There may exist a distinct intonational break between them and the rest of the sentence so that the following examples become possible. (D=Dilek, N=Nesrin)

(1)  
*D*: *Valla, ne kadar eşit desen de gene de erkek erkektir.*  
*Valla*, although you said men and women are equal, a man is a man.

(2)  
*N*: *Gerçekten, Türkiye gibi çekmezsin.*  
*Look, make a baby, it is really nice here. You will be happy if you have one.*

*N*: *Really, you won’t suffer as you were in Turkey.*
Sentence Final Position (with or without prosodic break)
Sentence final position denotes right-hand discourse brackets and situates at
the very end of the core sentence, which might also be called the “ adjunct position”
(Watts, 1988:23). Some examples are given below: (İ=İmdat, S=Saniye)

(3) İ:  Bi tane baktırdım da olmuy de. Beyini gandır, vallaha! Şimdi
küçüükken tatlı da büyüyince acı zehir onlar.
İ: Just say “I was once examined, so accordingly I can’t have a baby”.
Deceive your husband, vallaha! When they are little they are sweet,
as they grow up, they turn into an acrid poison.

(4) S:  Ondan sonra, ehm oldu o gece. Yalnız canım, çok felaket canım yandı
gerçekten.
S: Then, uhm it happened that night. But it hurt, it hurt incredibly,
really.

Sentence Internal Position
Valla and gerçekten may occur among the sentence constituents as a
modifier, generally in the verb phrase complex. (L=Lerzan,
İ=İmdat,)

(5) L:  Padişah gibi valla karşlandırm.
L: I was welcomed valla like a sultan.

(6) İ:  Spiraylim gerçekten düşmüş. Nasil düştüğünü biz de anlamadık
dediler.
İ: My spiral had really fallen down. We couldn’t understand how it had
fallen down either they said.

However, when gerçekten originates within adjectival phrases, it functions
as an intensifier and it is effective as an adjectival phrase modifier rather than
sentence modifier with respect to sincerity. (L=Lerzan)

(7) L:  Benim annem çok güzel bi kadın, gerçekten çok güzel.
L: My mother was a very beautiful woman, a really very beautiful one.

It seems reasonable to suggest that gerçekten is generated within AdjP in (7)
where the scope of modification for gerçekten must be only in “ really beautiful” as
an intensifier. Intensifiers are often considered as words marking on speakers’
assessments of truth conditions or an indication of sincerity of their words, which is
underline that this original sense may weaken over time and the word can also be
employed to convey emphasis. They highlight the problem for “very” and “really”
in their study on English intensifiers mentioning that as intensifiers are used with
predicative adjectives to convey simple intensification in sub-modifying position,
the original lexical meaning of truth has disappeared. Thus, such uses of gerçekten
in the data are excluded from the analysis.
Parenthetical Expression

*Valla* and *gerçekten* may occur in sentence internal positions, but as a separated form from the syntactic constituents in the left and right hand side of the sentence by clear-cut breaks. Consider the following examples (L=Lerzan, S=Suzan).

(8) L: *Benim kaynanam, valla, hasta oldum da ne dedi biliyo musun?*
   L: My mother in-law, valla, when I got sick, do you know what she said?

(9) S: *Çünkü, gerçekten, ben bi arkadaş gibiyimdir.*
   S: Because, really, I am like a friend.

Independent Uses

In addition to these both *valla* and *gerçekten* can also occur as independent uses with different intonations signifying doubt, insistence of truth, solidarity with the previously said utterance etc. Consider the following extracts from the data. (S=Suzan, İ=İmdat, G=Güler)

(10) S: *Son, doğum yapacak, P doğurmuş dedi. Olur mu canım dedim, daha dün temizlikteydi. Ya, temizlikten alınış da götürmüş dedi.*
    S: Vallaha!

    S: In the last one, you were about to give birth, P had given birth he [speaker’s husband—N.K.Y.] said. How could it be? It was only yesterday when she went for cleaning I said. She had been taken from her work place he said.

(11) İ: *Kırşehir'de yüzde seksen hanımlar sezeryanlı.*
    İ: *Gerçekten?*

    İ: Eighty percent of the women in Kırşehir had the cesarean operation.
    G: It is the same in Aksaray.
    İ: Really?

7.3.2 Semantic and Pragmatic Characterization

Semantically, *valla* is an oath with a religious content. Despite its godly and holy theme, *valla* is very commonly used in daily conversations in Turkish in order to help speakers to make less severe or painful the commitment. The appropriate form of this oath is *vallahi*, however, in colloquial Turkish it may take the form of *valla, vallayi, vallahə* and *vallah*. As *valla* is invoked very frequently in casual
situations, it functions as an indicator of the speakers’ sincerity rather than being a rigid oath carrying potential sanctions. In other words, the primary role of *valla* is not binding for the oath taker, but it is an emphasis of the speaker’s sincerity.

Like *valla*, *gerçekten* is one of the basic techniques of earnestness denoting genuineness, honesty or even truth in the utterances of a speaker in Turkish. In Fraser’s (1990) term, it is a sort of “commentary pragmatic marker”. *Gerçekten* derived from the noun *gerçek* (real).

The function of *valla* in daily conversation does not solely concentrate on the assertion of sincerity or self-validation. Analysis on the different instances of *valla* yielded the following six different use of *valla*. *Gerçekten* reflects some of the functions featured by *valla* ranging from assertion sincerity, defense against a face threat, response particle to solidarity device.

### 7.3.2.1 Assertion of Sincerity

This category covers cases where *valla* or *gerçekten* are used to prevent any likelihood of doubt from the listener and to increase the credibility of what the speaker says.\(^1\)

Context: Preference for male or female doctor. (P=Perinaz, Int=Interviewer)

(12) Int: Böyle bayan doktor erkek doktor diye bi ayrımızm var mı? Doğum sırasında falan?

[...]

P: Benim büyük kızı (doğururken), gözümü açtım, baktım ki dokuz dane erkek varmiş!

<Gülüşmeler>

P: **Vallahi** aklına gelmedi gari ha!

Int: Do you have a preference for a male or female doctor during child delivery etc.?

[...]

P: While I was giving birth to my elder daughter, I opened my eyes and realized that there were nine male doctors around me.

<Laughter>

P: **Vallahi**, I never thought of it!

Speaker P tries to prove the truthfulness and/or sincerity of her words, though there is no sign of attack or inspection for the truthfulness of the propositional content of her utterance. *Valla* helps her to assert her sincerity as she formulates her feelings and emotional state during her child delivery. Similarly, in example (13), the speaker tries to convince the other what she says is truthful and sincere.

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\(^1\) In translating the examples, I have given preference to idiomatic over literal rendering, but opted to leave *valla* and *gerçekten* untranslated (contextually adequate idiomatic translations might suggest translational equivalence where only partial overlap is given).
Context: Flirt. (H=Hilal, M=Melda)

(13)  

H: Türk gezileri için de o esneklik olması lazıım yani hani uhm…
M: Ama kabullenemiyon H. Olmuyo, güzel için gerçekten olmuyo.

H: There should be the same flexibility for the Turkish girls I mean uhm…
M: But you can’t accept it. It can’t be, it gerçekten can’t be for a girl.

7.3.2.2 Defense against a Face-threat

This function occurs in case of a direct threat, tease, or indirect attack, or any 
reaction of other participant through which the speaker thinks that she is not taken 
seriously enough. In example (14), the interviewer’s challenge “are you serious?” 
causes two different speakers to assert the truthfulness of the story using vallahi and 
gerçekten respectively.

Context: Superstitions in pregnancy. (K=Kader, H=Hale, Int=Interviewer).

(14)  

K: Vietnamesl'dan bi çocuk getirdiler, evlatlı aklardar. O çocuk böyle 
boynunu bükerdi, Hollanda'lılar almıştı. Onu böyle var ya çok 
severdim. Bunun annesi yok, babası yok filan, ağlarm bille. Hep onu 
oynatrdım, ben de çocukudum, 16 yasında. Her gün onu oynatrdım. 
S. var ya aynı ona benziyo.
Int: Ciddi mi?
K: Vallahi.
H: Siyah, esmer falan. Gerçekten!

K: They brought a child from Vietnamese people. They adopted the 
child. The child used to be very sorrowful. Dutch people had brought 
him. I loved him a lot. I used to cry saying that this child didn’t have 
his/her parents. I used to play with him/her. I was a child too. I used 
to play with him/her everyday. You know S. (her eldest daughter) she 
takes after that child.
Int: Are you serious?
K: Vallahi.
H: She is black, brunette etc. Gerçekten!

7.3.2.3 Mitigation of a Face-threatening Act [e.g., a disagreement, 
contrast, dispreferred and/or unexpected reaction/answer]

In case of disagreement or refusal, valla can signal and mitigate a 
confrontation such as a diverging or disagreeing assessment or a refusal of a request 
or an offer. There can also be a contrast of opinions during the course of 
conversation where the participants prefer to state their conflicting ideas with valla 
in order to manage the face wants of both themselves and the other participants. I
couldn’t find any examples of gerçekten as a mitigator of a face-threatening act in the data. This might be due to the morphological structure of gerçekten. Being a rather long word with three syllables, it may found too ‘heavy’ for this delicate task.

Context: Sexual life. (L=Lerzan, S=Suzan, B=Belma).

(15)  

L: Yani, ehm ister sen fikren anlaș, ister sen dünyayın en akılı kadını ol, en güzel yemeği yap, ne biliyim ben en iyi numaralı yap, ama yatakta çok iyi olmak zorundasın kocanla  

S: Hiç  

L: O, o bitti mi, o olmadı mı, ben onu gördüm yani  

S: Benim yillardır bit  

B: Gözünden düşersin  

L: Hayatım, he, hayatının bütün muhabbeti şuusu busu bitiyo eşinle.  

S: Valla hiç de üyle bi şey değil. Ben bu konuda çok...ehm ya anlayışı ondan...  

L: I mean uhmm, even though you get along well, just be the most intelligent woman in the world, cook the best meals, how can I say? do your best to attract him, you have to be very good in bed with your husband  

S: Never  

L: If it, it is over, if there isn’t any…I mean, I experienced it like that  

S: Mine has been over for ye  

B: You would lose his credit  

L: In your life, all your affection etc with your husband in your life would be over.  

S: Valla, it isn’t the case at all. In this respect, he is very…uhm probably that is why he is very considerate…

Context: Having many children (Int=Interviewer, B=Belma, S=Suzan)  

(16)  

Int: Peki, ehm şey soruçam artık yaşının geçti ama diylemin ki paranız olsaydı, yeterli imkanınız olsaydı, çok çocuk sahibi olmayı düşünür misiniz? 5-6 tane?  

B: Hiç düşünmezdim.  


Int: All right, uhmm I will ask another one; you are old now, but let’s say you had had enough money and opportunity to have a good life, would you ever have thought of having many children? I mean 5 or 6?  

B: I would have never thought of it.  

S: Valla, I would have had (children N.K.Y.) because I, I mean, I have only one son. He has great difficulties.
Example (16) presents a contrast situation in the conversation where B is in favor of having many children and speaker S is opposed to this idea. *Valla* in S’s sentence functions as a cushion word that softens the confrontation.

### 7.3.2.4 Response Particle

Fishman’s (1983) classic article provides evidence that women display more active conversational support to the listener and they tend to signal more minimal responses to sign that they are listening to what is said. Similarly, *valla*? and *gerçekten*? with question intonation can be used by listeners to search for the validity of speakers’ utterances in case of a doubt or astonishment, or as a backchannel response through which the listener cooperates in the interaction by sending the message “I am listening to you” and/or “I am interested in what you are talking about”. In my data, uses of *gerçekten* as a response particle are very rare compared to the more frequent uses of *valla* in this function.

**Context:** First experience of menstruation (Ş=Sengül, T=Tennur).


T: *Ciddi misin? Valla?*

Ş: *I was very young too when I had my menstruation. I was eleven. My elder sister hadn’t had it yet. She was expecting to get it, but I had my period first.*

T1: *Are you serious? Valla?*

In example (17), T finds what Ş says incredible and tries to ascertain the truthfulness of the story. With this purpose, T begs for confirmation and tests if G2 would swear by the truth or not.

### 7.3.2.5 Solidarity Device

In this category, *valla* and *gerçekten* denote the listener’s agreement with or ratification of what the speaker is saying and thus signal mutual understanding and solidarity.

**Context:** Having a son and or a daughter (Int=Interviewer, F=Fadime).


Int: *Ay, napsun, söylüyemediler yani diyosun.*

F: *Valla! Hım, ne söylüyecek ki?*

F: *No, they [my mother-in-law and father-in-law—N.K.Y.] never said so. Our children were born in an order: one boy one girl, one boy and one girl.*

Int: *So, you say they had no reason to complain!*
F: Valla! Yeah! What could they complain about?

Example (19) illustrates this function for *gerçekten*:

Context: Child delivery (T=Tennur, Int=Interviewer).


Int: E çocuk Hollanda’da doğmus.

T: He, gerçekten. Ama bebeği orda napıyolar bilyon mu? Su sıkyolar, bi götüne tohat atyolar, ondan sonra brakıyolar.

T: The child got out, but he wasn’t like a Turkish baby. He just came here (showing her chest), he was lying here and his eyes were moving incessantly.

Int: Well, this child was born in the Netherlands!

T: Yeah, gerçekten. But do you know what do they do to the babies there (in Turkey)? They wash the baby, slap his bottom, then it is over.

In the examples above, F’s *valla* and T’s *gerçekten* display agreement with what the interviewer has said.

7.3.2.6 Delay Device

*Valla* can also be employed as a temporizing or delaying tactic, gaining the speaker time to formulate proper answers; *gerçekten* is not used as a delay device in the TWIST.

Context: Having many children (H=Hilal).

(20) Int: Sen E? İster miydin çok çocuğun olsun?

H: *Valla* ehm yani isterdim. Seviyom, kalabalık aileyi çok seviyom dışardan hoşuma gidiyo ama, içinde olunca yani böyle olacağını tahmin etmiyom.

Int: You, E? Would you like to have many children?

H: *Valla*, umm, I mean I would like to. I like, I like large families very much as an outsider, but if I had a large family, I wouldn’t think so, I guess.

Speaker E apparently is not ready to answer straight away. Her use of *valla* at the beginning of her answer is arguably a signal both of her eagerness and her frankness in giving an answer to the interviewer’s question. *Valla* signals that H wants to hold her turn, she has some sincere opinions to share, but she needs some time to formulate her words.
7.4 Distributional Analysis

The Groningen group produced 70 tokens of valla and 56 of gerçekten in a total of 56733 words. The speakers in the Ankara group used valla 104 times and gerçekten 14 times in a total of 37373 words. The total frequencies of the markers were 2.2 per 1000 words in Groningen, 3.15 in Ankara.

There is considerable variation in how individuals present themselves through valla and gerçekten. Only 38 of the 53 speakers used valla and gerçekten; the maximum number of tokens is 19 for valla and 16 for gerçekten. There were four instances where valla and gerçekten were used twice in the same utterances; two cases included both valla and gerçekten.

7.4.1 Distribution of the Functions

The detailed distribution of all functions of valla and gerçekten is presented in Figure 1. All functions concern the affective use of language to convey feelings and regulate and maneuver social relationships. While the functions of “assertion of sincerity” and “defense against a threat” are active, but not aggressive efforts to build a positive “self-image”, employment of valla and gerçekten as mitigators and solidarity devices appears to be a positive politeness action concerning face wants of other people. Using valla and gerçekten as delay devices relates to the organizational aspect of communication. They function as regulators of adjacency pairs rather than investments in facework.

Both groups used valla and gerçekten primarily for the assertion of sincerity. In the Ankara group, valla served mainly for the assertion of sincerity and less often for the purpose of mitigation, defense, delay, response and solidarity. Gerçekten was even more exclusively used for the assertion of sincerity, having only one other
function (defense). Similar to the Ankara group, the speakers in the Groningen group used *valla* primarily for the assertion of sincerity. *Valla* was also utilized for mitigation, defense and delay. In contrast to this diverse usage of *valla*, the almost equally frequent marker *gerçekten* was used mainly for the assertion of sincerity.

The difference between the Ankara and Groningen groups can be shown more clearly by focusing only on the face-related uses of *valla* and *gerçekten*. Figure 2 shows that the overall use of the two markers for speaker and hearer-oriented facework displays the same distribution in both groups. The Ankara group, however, used only *valla* for hearer-related facework and mostly *valla* to establish a positive self-image, while the Groningen group used *gerçekten* about as often as *valla* for both functions.

![Figure 2. Distribution of valla and gerçekten usage with respect to face concerns](image)

### 7.4.2 Use in Sensitive and Innocuous Topics

*Valla* and *gerçekten* occurred more often in sensitive topics than within innocuous topics in both groups (see Figure 3). There is a tendency to display topic sensitivity in *valla* and *gerçekten* usage, but it is not statistically significant. In order to show that consistency of the pattern is still present in the data, I looked at the corpus and I realized that *valla* and *gerçekten* provide some interpersonal differences. This is especially the case when I take into account the fact that some speakers dominate the whole session whereas others use neither of the markers.
As it is illustrated in Fig.4, \textit{valla} occurs on average 2.5 cases per 1000 words and \textit{gerçekten} is used on average 0.4 cases per 1000 words in the Ankara group. In other words, the Ankara group used five times as many \textit{valla} cases than the Groningen group.
7.5 Conclusions

This chapter has illustrated how language provides a source for the display of positive self and identity. Sincerity markers can be considered as a move both in communicative and self-presentation strategy. The functional analysis of *valla* and *gerçekten* has shown that speakers mainly resort to sincerity markers to assert their points and sometimes to impose these points on the interlocutors, namely for the assertion of sincerity (at least in TWIST). However, they also serve a variety of other expressive, relational, and interactional functions. While the functions of “assertion of sincerity” and “defense against a threat” can be seen as efforts to build a positive self-image, uses of *valla* and *gerçekten* as mitigators or solidarity devices should be seen as positive politeness concerning other’s face wants. Using *valla* and *gerçekten* as delay devices relates to the organizational aspect of communication. They function as regulators of turn taking rather than investment in facework.

The distributional analysis showed a striking difference between the Ankara and Groningen groups in the choice between the sincerity markers *valla* and *gerçekten*. I take the use of *valla* and *gerçekten* as another proof for the consideration of normative values, social rules and assumed gendered face concerns. The use of both *valla* and *gerçekten* with almost equal frequency in the Groningen group may imply that respondents in this group are more interested in individualistic concerns and with maximizing benefits to the self and their face in more liberal Dutch cultural context. Furthermore, *valla* and *gerçekten* function as a socio-cultural and ideological index providing some evidence of the speakers’ reflection of self-image in relation to locus of control and world view.

In conclusion, this chapter has demonstrated that *valla* and *gerçekten* occur within the domain of subjective claims of truthfulness and sincerity, where the needs and feelings in the subjective world of an individual prompt him/her to make statements satisfying his/her face wants. All these attempts are subjective claims that associate with an individual’s need to establish a desired self-presentation.