For an outstanding research paper that examines the cognitive repercussions of obligatory versus optional marking of evidentiality, the linguistic coding of the source of information. In English, evidentiality is conveyed in the lexicon through the use of adverbs. In Turkish, evidentiality is coded in the grammar. In two experiments, it was found that English speakers were equally good at remembering and monitoring the source of firsthand information and the source of non-firsthand information. Turkish speakers were worse at remembering and monitoring non-firsthand information than firsthand information and were worse than English speakers at remembering and monitoring non-firsthand information. The paper, titled ‘Does Obligatory Linguistic Marking of Source of Evidence Influence Source Memory?’ was the basis for Sümayra Tosun’s selection as the recipient of the 2014 Psi Chi/APA Edwin B. Newman Graduate Research Award. Jyotsna Vaid, PhD, served as faculty supervisor.”

Biography
Sümayra Tosun was born in Ankara, the capital of Turkey, the second of five children. In the fourth grade, she moved with her family to Istanbul, the financial capital of Turkey, where East meets West. Living in this city taught her how to look at things from different points of view and how to bring things into harmony. At the end of elementary school, she went to a boarding school to complete her middle-school religious education and Arabic language learning. After living four years apart from her family, she reunited with them for her high school years. These years were not easy because she had to study hard and prepare for the university entrance exam. Passing this exam with a high enough score was the only requirement for entering a university and receiving an undergraduate education. She hammered away at her classes and the exam. While she was studying for the exam, she realized that she liked the chapters about psychology and decided to pursue her undergraduate degree in psychology. Finally, she finished high school as valedictorian and passed the university entrance exam.

Once again she left her family and moved to Mersin, a coastal city in southern Turkey, to start her undergraduate education. Although she had some background and interest in different subfields of psychology, she met Aydan Aydn, who introduced her to experimental and learning psychology. Thus, Tosun discovered the scientific and methodological aspects of psychology. She found experimental psychology was more interesting than the other areas of psychology, and she decided to continue in this division. In her junior year, she also discovered forensic psychology and had another psychology division crush. When she was still looking for a topic to bring together her two favorite fields: experimental and forensic psychology. As an Istanbulite who was highly experienced in ensuring harmony, she found her research area: eyewitness memory and testimony. Thereby she discovered cognitive psychology as well. She asked her favorite professor, Dr. Aydn, to become her thesis chair. Tosun successfully defended her thesis and graduated as department valedictorian.

Aydn advised her to go to Europe or America to continue her graduate education and her research on eyewitness memory. Tosun heeded her advice, and right after graduation she went to New York City to learn English, where people speak very fast. She liked the city because it reminded her of her hometown, a big, crowded melting pot. After she completed her English education and began to understand what subway conductors were announcing in subways, she took her English proficiency test. She passed it and applied to various schools for her master’s degree in psychology. She was accepted by the Department of Forensic Psychology at Prairie View A&M University (PVAMU). She moved to Houston, Texas, and studied again for her Texan accent. She started her new school program and her new job, a research assistantship at the school’s crime prevention center, at the same time. The program offered the chance to study psychological theories, methods of assessment, and different treatment modalities related to psychopathology, the developmental stages of
children and adolescents, and possible factors that may contribute to delinquent behaviors at each stage. Thus, the program was an application of clinical psychology to the justice system, and almost all of the students preferred to follow the externship track to graduate. Tosun, however, selected the thesis track to graduate after two years. She successfully completed and defended her thesis on eyewitness memory and ways to obtain more accurate information from eyewitnesses. She also became a member of the Psi Chi Honor Society at the university. After her experience at PVAMU, she decided to stay in the cognitive area, focusing on research rather than clinical application in the forensic field.

While she was looking for a good place to apply her background in various other subfields of psychology and her life experiences to her research, she met Jyotsna Vaid, a professor of cognitive psychology who was running the Language and Cognition Lab at Texas A&M University. She was studying the influence of many aspects of language, such as reading/writing direction, humor, bilingualism, figurative language, and word recognition, on human cognition and the brain. Moreover, she was open to different ideas on research about language. Tosun was very excited because she had a lot of questions about her experiences speaking different languages. To begin work on her PhD at Texas A&M University, Tosun moved to College Station, Texas.

She was interested in how languages influence individuals’ thinking style. Most of the time when she spoke English she felt something was missing, and finally she realized that in Turkish, when people talked about past events, they had to mention their source for the reported information, that is, whether they received the information firsthand, heard it from someone else, or inferred it from signs around them. This grammar structure is called evidentiality. However, in English there is not such a difference in the grammar, and people just mention their parents’ marriage, for example, as if they were present for it and witnessed the wedding. Thus, when Tosun was speaking English, most of the time she felt like she was lying. She wondered how having this grammar structure in Turkish would influence Turkish speakers’ memory because, unlike English speakers, they encoded the source of the information along with the information itself. Vaid found this idea interesting and together she and Tosun started working on that question for Tosun’s doctoral degree. After a while, Lisa Geraci joined the team as an expert on source memory research.

The team started working on evidentiality and the source memory of Turkish and English monolingual speakers. They found that Turkish speakers were as good as English speakers at recognizing firsthand information and its source. Interestingly though, Turkish speakers were worse than English speakers at recognizing second-hand information and its source. Further, they tested Turkish-English bilingual speakers and found that these bilinguals acted like Turkish monolingual speakers when they were tested in Turkish and like English monolingual speakers when they were tested in English. However, late Turkish-English bilingual speakers kept behaving like Turkish monolingual speakers even when they were tested in English; that is, they recognized second-hand information less accurately than firsthand information. This research, published in the Journal of Memory and Language, was the basis for Tosun’s selection as the winner of the present award.

Tosun also wondered why people tended to forget second-hand information and thought it might involve the issue of trustworthiness. With this idea she conducted another study on evidentiality, titled “Believe Me, I Was There! The Impact of Evidentiality on Trustworthiness.” This project was funded by a Psi Chi Graduate Research Grant. The findings, which suggested that the particular evidential form of a statement had clear psychological repercussions on listeners’ attributions and decisions, were clearly related to her previous research on eyewitness testimony (such as jury verdicts after hearing eyewitness testimonies). Finally, Tosun discovered what she wanted to focus on in an area of research that harmoniously brought together all three of her interests, forensic psychology, cognitive psychology, and linguistics. For her dissertation she investigated how evidentiality influences different language speakers’ judgments. For her dissertation she received the Vision 2020 Liberal Arts Dissertation Enhancement Award from Texas A&M University. She successfully defended her dissertation and received her doctorate in May 2014. While earning her PhD she worked as a research and teaching assistant and as manager of the Language and Cognition Lab for five years. Along with research on evidentiality, she conducted research projects on reading/writing directions, figurative language, and humor production. She also obtained a graduate certificate from the Women’s and Gender Studies Department at Texas A&M University. She finally completed her educational journey by trying several subdivisions of psychology such as clinical, experimental, forensic, and cognitive and enjoying each and every one of them.

Currently, Tosun has moved back to Istanbul and has started working as an assistant professor at Suleyman Sao University, where she continues her research on evidentiality and reading/writing directions as well as eyewitness memory. For all of her accomplishments, she owes an enormous debt of gratitude to her family and friends; to Aydan Aydn, Bonnie Walker, Jyotsna Vaid, and Lisa Geraci; and to the Turkish community in Texas, particularly, the Raindrop Turkish Cultural Center.

**Selected Bibliography**
