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Research Article

## Analyzing Mother Tongue Interference in Turkish EFL Students' Written Products: A Lexical and Syntactical Perspective

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### Abstract

Languages exhibit diverse characteristics and undergo constant evolution. The intricate nature of language interaction during Second Language Acquisition intrigues experts. Language learning involves exposure to multifaceted elements, and despite extensive research, the phenomenon of language transfer remains elusive. This study aims to identify errors stemming from the influence of Turkish, the first language, on the written English proficiency of Turkish learners in a formal setting. The objective is to scrutinize the linguistic domains affected by transfer and assess its impact on the educational process. Additionally, the study investigates the potential correlation between error rates and proficiency levels in the target language (L2). Employing qualitative and quantitative data analysis, the research involves 252 participants, excluding 16 non-native Turkish speakers from the initial 268. Results reveal negative transfer in both lexical and syntactical language aspects. Gathered evidence establishes a robust correlation between specific error types and students' proficiency levels. The study concludes with tailored recommendations to enhance Second Language Acquisition (SLA) and acknowledges its limitations.

**Keywords:** Second Language Acquisition, Error, Error Analysis, Language Transfer, Mother Tongue Interference

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## Yabancı Dil Olarak İngilizce Öğrenen Türk Öğrencilerin Yazılı Anlatımlarında Ana Dil Etkisinin Analizi: Sözcüksel ve Sözdizimsel Bir Yaklaşım

### Özet

Diller çeşitli özellikler sergiler ve sürekli evrim geçirir. İkinci Dil Edinimi sırasında dil etkileşiminin karmaşık doğası uzmanların ilgisini çekmektedir. Dil öğrenimi çok yönlü unsurlara maruz kalmayı içerir ve kapsamlı araştırmalara rağmen, dil aktarımı olgusu anlaşılması zor olmaya devam etmektedir. Bu çalışma, resmi bir ortamda yabancı dil olarak İngilizce öğrenen Türk öğrencilerin yazılı İngilizce yeterlilikleri üzerinde ana dilleri olan Türkçenin etkisinden kaynaklanan hataları tespit etmeyi amaçlamaktadır. Amaç, aktarımdan etkilenen dilsel alanları incelemek ve bunun eğitim süreci üzerindeki etkisini değerlendirmektir. Ayrıca, çalışma hata oranları ile hedef dildeki (L2) yeterlilik seviyeleri arasındaki potansiyel ilişkiyi araştırmaktadır. Nitel ve nicel veri analizinin kullanıldığı araştırma, başlangıçta 268 katılımcıdan ana dili Türkçe olmayan 16 kişi hariç bırakılarak toplamda 252 katılımcıyı kapsamaktadır. Sonuçlar hem sözcüksel hem de sözdizimsel dil boyutlarında olumsuz aktarımı ortaya koymaktadır. Elde edilen kanıtlar, belirli hata türleri ile öğrencilerin yeterlilik düzeyleri arasında sağlam bir ilişki olduğunu ortaya koymaktadır. Çalışma, İkinci Dil Edinimini (İDE) geliştirmek için belirli önerilerle sonuçlanmakta ve sınırlılıklarını kabul etmektedir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** İkinci Dil Edinimi, Hata, Hata Analizi, Dil Aktarımı, Anadilin İkinci Dile Etkisi

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## **1. Introduction**

Language learners commonly commit errors when utilizing specific grammatical structures. The errors made by L2 learners can be traced back to two types of transfers. One of these is interlingual transfer, involving the transfer of knowledge from the first language (L1). L1 interference denotes the negative transfer from one's first language (L1) to a second language. The other one is intralingual transfer which pertains to the phenomenon of transferring linguistic elements within the same target language, such as the overgeneralization of syntactic rules discussed by Brown (1980) and Richards (1974). For Turkish students learning English as a second or foreign language, the intricate frameworks of the English language present challenges. This study aims to identify the specific lexical and syntactic factors contributing to transfer errors by learners. Additionally, we seek to establish a correlation between the number of errors and the competency levels of the students.

To set the groundwork for the research, the central inquiries guiding this study will include:

1. What categories of interlingual errors do English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners typically commit in their written compositions?
2. What might be the origins of these errors?
3. In what manner can these errors be categorized?
4. How does mother tongue interference impact the usage of English in terms of lexical and syntactical aspects across different proficiency levels of EFL learners (Pre-intermediate, Intermediate, and Upper-intermediate)?
5. What strategies can be employed to mitigate the impact of mother tongue interference?

### **1.1. Interlanguage**

In 1972, Larry Selinker, an American etymologist, introduced the term "interlanguage" (IL) (Gobbo, 2020). It refers to a distinct linguistic system created by language learners, visibly different from both their native language (NL) and the target language (TL) under study. This framework evolves as students immerse themselves in learning the target language, representing a modified version of the desired language. However, it often incorporates errors

resulting from the improper application of the students' native language during the process of learning the target language.

## **1.2. Errors**

Gass and Selinker (2001) characterized errors as "red flags" that indicate a learner's proficiency in the second language. The term 'error' denotes a departure from precision or accuracy, while a 'mistake' arises from flaws like misjudgment, carelessness, or forgetfulness, resulting in an error manifestation. Individual language users' deviations from conventional language norms in grammar, syntax, pronunciation, and punctuation are commonly labeled as errors (Brown, 1980). In addition to previous studies, Turnuk and Aydin (2020) stated that students' anxiety increases with the number of interlanguage errors they make.

## **1.3. Analysis of Errors**

Error Analysis originated in applied linguistics through the research conducted by P.S. Corder in 1982. This methodology is dedicated to scrutinizing and comprehending the errors made by students during their language learning journey, along with the impact of their interlanguage. Richards, Plott, and Platt (1996:127) note that error analysis enables experts and educators to recognize the strategies utilized by students in language acquisition, pinpoint the causes of their errors, collect data on prevalent challenges in language learning, and contribute to the creation of instructional materials. Similar to Richards, Plott, and Platt (1996), Duygun and Karabacak (2022) examined the causes of errors and asserted that students are unable to identify the proper linguistic use when they are unfamiliar with the correct version of a linguistic term.

### ***Error Analysis Approaches***

Keshavarz (1999) identifies two primary approaches to error analysis in language learning: Contrastive Analysis and Error Analysis. Contrastive Analysis involves comparing the native language and target language to predict errors, while Error Analysis focuses on recognizing and classifying errors made by learners (Keshavarz, 1999, p. 11). However, Keshavarz acknowledges that Contrastive Analysis has limitations and can lead to inaccurate predictions of errors (Keshavarz, 1999, p. 11). This limitation resulted in the emergence of Error Analysis as a more dependable method for studying errors (Brown, 1980). Corder (1967) defines Error

Analysis as the process of collecting samples of learner language, identifying errors, describing and categorizing them, and evaluating their significance.

#### **1.4. Mother Tongue Interference**

Linguistic interference refers to the influence of an individual's first language on the process of learning or using a second language (Pavlenko, 1999). It occurs when two languages overlap, particularly if they share similar word order and syntactic structures (Pavlenko, 1999). Grosjean (1982) defines interference as an unintentional phenomenon distinct from conscious activities like borrowing and code-switching. Bilingualism tends to be more prevalent when languages have similar phonological and morphological characteristics (Kellerman, 1977). Interference can also result from incomplete language acquisition and interactions between mutually spoken languages (Keshavarz, 1999).

Researchers have predominantly explored how an individual's native language influences their writing proficiency, particularly in terms of writing competence (Demirezen, 2010). For instance, the Thai language may impact the syntactic structure in written communication, showcasing features of syntactic transfer from the speaker's native language (Haryanto, 2007). Bhela (1999) notes that students often rely on structures and patterns from their first language when writing in a second language, resulting in more errors due to linguistic differences. According to Rahayu, Nurfajriah Basri (2021) learners frequently struggle to master a second language due to interference, which is influenced by ingrained habits, popular mother tongues, and bilingual contact in society. Similarly, Tamba (2023) found that mother tongue significantly effects students' academic success. Interference occurs when patterns from one's native language are transferred, leading to inaccuracies in phonology, vocabulary, and syntax (Brown, 1980). The text is unintentional and lacks grammatical precision, deviating from the established conventions of the target language.

#### **1.5. Contrastive Analysis**

The Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis suggests that the probability of transfer from the native language increases when significant differences exist between the first and second languages (Corder, 2000). The purpose of contrastive study is to examine and evaluate the linguistic structures of both the target language and the native language, identifying potential difficulties that students may face (Corder, 1983).

## **2. Methodology**

The research framework of this study is grounded in the field of Second Language Acquisition (SLA), aiming to contribute to our understanding of language transfer phenomena and its implications for language learning. By investigating the errors that arise from the influence of Turkish on the learning of written English, this study sheds light on the intricate processes involved in second language acquisition.

The settings for this study comprise formal educational environments where Turkish learners of English engage in language learning activities. These settings provide the necessary context for observing language transfer and its effects on the educational process.

Participants in this study are 252 Turkish learners of English, carefully selected to ensure the homogeneity of the sample in terms of language background and educational context. The exclusion of non-native Turkish speakers ensures the integrity of the study's focus on Turkish learners and minimizes confounding variables.

Instruments selected for data collection include written language samples from participants, which serve as the primary source of data for identifying errors and patterns of language transfer. Additionally, standardized proficiency assessment tests or institutional language proficiency levels are utilized to measure participants' proficiency in English objectively.

Methodology for data collection involves a systematic approach to collecting written language samples from participants, ensuring representation across proficiency levels and linguistic domains. Ethical considerations are paramount throughout the data collection process, with measures in place to protect participants' confidentiality and privacy.

Data analysis encompasses both qualitative and quantitative approaches, allowing for a comprehensive examination of the errors identified in participants' language samples. Qualitative analysis involves categorizing errors into lexical and syntactical language categories, while quantitative analysis focuses on calculating error rates and exploring correlations with proficiency levels in English.

Overall, this Methodology Chapter outlines the systematic approach adopted in this study to investigate language transfer phenomena among Turkish learners of English. Through rigorous data collection and analysis, the study aims to provide valuable insights into the complexities

of second language acquisition and contribute to the enhancement of language learning pedagogy.

### **2.1. Research Design**

The research design of this study is mixed-methods, incorporating both qualitative and quantitative approaches to address the research questions effectively. As for the qualitative analysis, errors in written English productions were qualitatively analyzed to identify patterns of language transfer. Linguistic domains impacted by transfer were examined. Also, the current study, influenced by Jarvis (2000) and Odlin (2003), uses a comparative approach to examine linguistic forms in learners' native language, second language, and interlanguage (IL). The analysis focuses on IL structures, comparing Turkish and English, to identify instances of mother tongue interference at both lexical and syntactical levels. The study employs the Error Analysis approach to achieve this objective.

With regard to quantitative analysis, error rates were quantitatively analyzed to determine correlations with proficiency levels in English. Statistical methods such as correlation analysis are employed to assess the strength and significance of the relationship between error rates and proficiency levels.

### **2.2. Setting and Participants**

This research was conducted with English Preparatory Students at a private university in Central Anatolia, Turkey, aiming to assess the extent of mother tongue interference at lexical and syntactical levels in English. The study independently analyzes the degree of mother tongue interference based on the learners' English proficiency levels. Twelve classes from a private university, each comprising approximately twenty students at various English proficiency levels, participated in the research. The study encompassed all English Preparatory classes during the 2016-2017 Academic Year, specifically targeting levels such as Elementary, Pre-intermediate, and Intermediate.

After excluding non-native Turkish speakers, the participant counts in the study amounted to 252 out of an initial 268. These individuals were enrolled in a program offered by the English Preparatory School at a private university in Central Anatolia, Turkey. The program entails a minimum of 4 quarters, with each quarter spanning 8 weeks. Participants receive 27 hours of

English instruction weekly, covering all four language skills. Notably, all students in the program use the same coursebook, eliminating the potential risk of mother tongue interference due to material variations.

In this research, the sampling method used is purposive sampling. Purposive sampling involves selecting participants based on specific criteria relevant to the research objectives. The reason for using purposive sampling in this study is to ensure that the selected participants meet certain characteristics essential for addressing the research questions effectively. In this case, the researchers aimed to include Turkish learners of English as a foreign language in a formal educational environment. By employing purposive sampling, the researchers could target participants who fit this criterion, ensuring that the study's findings are applicable to the specific population of interest.

Additionally, the exclusion of non-native Turkish speakers from the sample further refines the participant selection process, maintaining the focus on Turkish learners of English and minimizing potential confounding variables.

To conclude, the use of purposive sampling allows the researchers to gather data from a targeted group of participants who possess the necessary language background and are situated within the context of formal language learning, thus enhancing the relevance and validity of the study's findings.

### **2.3. Data Collection Tools**

Throughout the academic year, students undergo structured instruction in the composition of paragraphs and the exploration of various paragraph structures. This process involves familiarizing students with different paragraph variations and techniques. Subsequently, students' progress to the development of short essays, where they are introduced to diverse essay formats and styles. The instruction provided encompasses a comprehensive approach to writing, covering aspects such as paragraph coherence, cohesion, and organization, as well as essay structure and argumentation.

The pedagogical framework for teaching paragraph and essay writing typically involves several stages. Initially, students are introduced to fundamental concepts such as topic sentences, supporting details, and transitions, which form the building blocks of effective



paragraph construction. They are then guided through exercises and activities aimed at practicing these concepts and refining their paragraph writing skills. As students advance, they are exposed to more complex paragraph structures, such as comparison and contrast, cause and effect, and narrative paragraphs. Additionally, they learn strategies for developing coherent and cohesive paragraphs through the use of rhetorical devices, logical organization, and effective transitions.

In the transition to essay writing, students further develop their writing skills by exploring different types of essays, including descriptive, narrative, expository, and persuasive essays. They learn to formulate clear thesis statements, develop supporting arguments, and organize their ideas logically and persuasively. Emphasis is placed on the development of critical thinking skills, as students analyze and evaluate texts, formulate arguments, and support their claims with evidence and examples.

Throughout this process, students' written performances in both paragraph and essay formats are systematically evaluated to identify errors related to language transfer. These errors are categorized according to lexical and syntactical criteria, including issues such as word choice, verb tense, pluralization, and preposition usage. By analyzing students' written work, educators gain insights into the specific language transfer challenges faced by learners and can tailor instruction to address these challenges effectively.

In summary, the teaching of paragraph and essay writing involves a structured approach that progresses through various stages, from foundational concepts to more advanced skills. By systematically examining students' written performances, educators can identify areas for improvement and provide targeted instruction to support learners' language development.

#### **2.4. Data Collection Procedure**

Data for this study were extracted from the Third Quarter Final Writing Exam of English Preparatory School students at a private university in Central Anatolia. The program, administered by the English Preparatory School, involves a minimum of 8 weeks of instruction for accurate paragraph writing. At advanced levels, students receive at least 8 weeks of training in diverse essay writing techniques to produce clear and high-quality short essays. These instructional components are integral to the curriculum, and the data were obtained through

the regular quarterly final writing exam, following established procedures. No specific instructions were given to students to create data exclusively for the research.

Every pre-intermediate student was required to compose a paragraph of 110-120 words, addressing the instructions and topics provided in their exam paper. Conversely, each intermediate student was tasked with crafting a short essay comprising four paragraphs and totaling 250-270 words, aligning with the instructions and topics in their exam paper. To access copies of the final writing papers from 268 English Preparatory Class students, necessary permission and approval were obtained from the University Research Ethics Committee.

## **2.5. Data Analysis**

Qualitative data underwent content analysis, with participants assigned numerical identifiers and paragraphs denoted as "A" and essays as "B". A meticulous examination was conducted, dissecting each content word by word and sentence by sentence to identify distinctive statements. Once identified, these expressions were scrutinized again to categorize and code the types of errors, employing Corder's algorithm for error recognition. To ensure intra-rater reliability, the data were analyzed and coded twice at different times. Subsequently, another coder, possessing a minimum of ten years' teaching and classroom management experience, assessed the data using the same codes to ensure inter-rater reliability.

In the subsequent stage of the investigation, error types were categorized, and their frequencies were documented. Drawing from the literature (Corder, 1974; Selinker, 1972), errors were classified grammatically, morphologically, lexically, syntactically, and semantically. Assessments of students' written performances can reveal a wide range of these error types. Grammatical classification encompasses errors in auxiliary verbs, tense, pluralization, possessive case, reported speech, relative clause, adjective and adverb usage, articles, prepositions, pronouns, conjunctions, and more.

Affixation errors fall into the morphological category. Morphological errors also encompass those resulting from overgeneralization of rules and language transfer. Spelling errors, eggcorn (oronyms) errors, malformation errors influenced by language transfer, and collocation errors resulting from language transfer and overgeneralization of rules can be categorized as lexical errors.

Concerning syntactic errors, language transfer and overgeneralization of principles are identified as root causes of errors. Ultimately, semantic errors are primarily attributed to language transfer.

Several stages were involved in applying error analysis to assess the collected data. The following steps were based on the framework outlined by Corder, as cited by Ellis (1997: 48). The phases are outlined below:

1. Sample Collection:

Selecting language proficiency tests for analysis and determining the method of gathering them.

2. Error Identification:

Thoroughly examining students' errors to identify and distinguish errors.

3. Error Classification:

Categorizing the identified errors and grouping them based on their types.

4. Explanation of errors:

Establishing the origins of errors and determining the frequency of their occurrence to provide explanations for the identified errors.

Regarding the aforementioned stages of the error analysis concept, the data were examined as outlined below:

**2.5.1. *Identification of errors***

In this step, we scrutinized the collected data and made an effort to identify both lexical and syntactical errors. Our aim was to analyze the information as objectively as possible.

**2.5.2. *Classification of errors***

After pinpointing the errors, we categorized them into the following groups:

- a. word choice errors
- b. verb tense errors
- c. pluralization errors
- d. preposition addition errors
- e. preposition omission errors
- f. preposition misuse errors

### 2.5.3. Calculation of errors

During this stage, we computed the errors to determine the frequency with which Turkish EFL learners made those errors.

### 2.5.4. Tabulating the result

After identifying and categorizing the errors, we presented the results in a table. The purpose of this table was to streamline the depiction of the percentage for each error. Thus, the outcome of the analysis of syntactical and lexical errors in paragraphs and essays written by Turkish EFL learners was visually represented in tabular form.

### 2.5.5. Drawing a conclusion

In the final stage, we had to draw a valid and concise conclusion through an error analysis.

## 3. Results

This segment reveals the outcomes and findings obtained through an error analysis of written materials by Turkish EFL learners. It provides a detailed examination of structures influenced by language transfer. The results are systematically presented, one category at a time, along with the corresponding statistical findings. Six classifications emerged from the collected data, encompassing errors induced by the native language (L1), including tenses, preposition addition, preposition omission, preposition misuse, pluralism, and word choice. Subsequently, the findings will be explained and illustrated for a comprehensive discussion.

### 3.1. Word Choice

This type of interference occurs when a linguistic element in the learner's native language clashes with a corresponding element in the second language. The impact of lexical interference from the mother tongue becomes more apparent when the learner translates idioms, proverbs, and phrasal verbs word-for-word, as illustrated in the following examples:

*I loved my episode at university. (department)*

*I sat per computer. (in front of a computer)*

*The nurse fainted me. (anesthetized)*

*After day, we went to a café. (The next)*

*We rode a car. (drive)*

*I was turning from my school. (return)*

*My friends made a birthday. (had a birthday party)*

**Table 1.**

*One-way Anova Test of Word Choice Errors*

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
<b>Between Groups</b>	89,02	5	17,80	3,82	,002
<b>Within Groups</b>	1143,94	246	4,65		
<b>Total</b>	1232,96	251			

The statistical analysis, conducted through one-way Anova, indicated a significant difference among groups ( $F(5,246) = 3.82, p = .002 < .05$ ) concerning the dependent variable of Word Choice.

**Table 2.**

*Descriptive Statistics of Word Choice Error*

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Minimum	Maximum
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
<b>upperb1</b>	29	3,34	3,41	,63	2,05	4,64	0	13
<b>midb1</b>	46	2,02	2,63	,38	1,24	2,80	0	10
<b>lowerb1</b>	48	1,85	2,42	,35	1,15	2,56	0	10
<b>uppera2</b>	43	1,58	1,59	,24	1,09	2,07	0	7
<b>mida2</b>	44	1,41	1,08	,16	1,08	1,74	0	5
<b>lowera2</b>	42	1,33	1,31	,20	,92	1,74	0	5
<b>Total</b>	252	1,85	2,21	,14	1,57	2,12	0	13

Based on the gathered data, it is evident that each group made Word Choice errors, as indicated in Table 2. The Class Upper B1 showed the highest frequency of Word Choice errors, with a mean of 3.34, while the Class Lower A2 exhibited the fewest Word Choice errors. Table 2 highlights a noteworthy outcome, indicating that higher proficiency levels, such as B1 classes, had higher means, while lower proficiency levels, like A2 classes, had lower means for this type of error. This suggests an increase in error frequency with advancing proficiency levels.

**Table 3.**

*Multiple Comparisons of Word Choice Error*

(I) class	(J) class	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
<b>upperb1</b>	midb1	1,32	,51	,13	-,18	2,82
	lowerb1	1,49*	,50	,04	,00	2,98
	uppera2	1,76*	,51	,01	,24	3,29
	mida2	1,93*	,51	,00	,42	3,45
	lowera2	2,01*	,52	,00	,48	3,54
<b>midb1</b>	upperb1	-1,32	,51	,13	-2,82	,18
	lowerb1	,16	,44	1,00	-1,15	1,48
	uppera2	,44	,45	,99	-,91	1,79
	mida2	,61	,45	,94	-,73	1,96
	lowera2	,68	,46	,88	-,67	2,05
<b>lowerb1</b>	upperb1	-1,49*	,50	,04	-2,98	,00
	midb1	-,16	,44	1,00	-1,48	1,15
	uppera2	,27	,45	1,00	-1,06	1,61
	mida2	,44	,45	,99	-,88	1,77
	lowera2	,52	,45	,98	-,82	1,87
<b>uppera2</b>	upperb1	-1,76*	,51	,01	-3,29	-,24
	midb1	-,44	,45	,99	-1,79	,91
	lowerb1	-,27	,45	1,00	-1,61	1,06
	mida2	,17	,46	1,00	-1,19	1,54
	lowera2	,24	,46	1,00	-1,13	1,63
<b>mida2</b>	upperb1	-1,93*	,51	,00	-3,45	-,42
	midb1	-,61	,45	,94	-1,96	,73
	lowerb1	-,44	,45	,99	-1,77	,88
	uppera2	-,17	,46	1,00	-1,54	1,19
	lowera2	,07	,46	1,00	-1,30	1,45
<b>lowera2</b>	upperb1	-2,01*	,52	,00	-3,54	-,48
	midb1	-,68	,46	,88	-2,05	,67
	lowerb1	-,52	,45	,98	-1,87	,82
	uppera2	-,24	,46	1,00	-1,63	1,13
	mida2	-,07	,46	1,00	-1,45	1,30

\*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

The Gabriel Post Hoc Test indicated a notable distinction between Upper B1 and Lower B1 ( $p=0.04$ ) concerning the dependent variable of word choice errors. Additionally, a significant difference emerged in the comparison between Upper B1 and Upper A2 ( $p=.01 < 0.05$ ). The comparison involving Upper B1, Mid A2, and Lower A2 demonstrated a highly significant difference ( $p=.00$ ). However, when Mid B1 was compared to the other groups, no statistically significant difference was observed.

The participants encountered significant challenges due to word choice errors, leading to issues like misunderstanding and incomprehensibility. At times, we struggled to grasp the intended meaning of the student, although not consistently, given our proficiency as native Turkish speakers. The findings of this study align with Darus and Subramaniam's (2009) research, affirming the learners' struggle with selecting appropriate words.

A similar situation occurred in some of Kırkgöz's (2009) examples extracted from students' written works. The students translated words from Turkish to English, risking misunderstanding, which Kırkgöz, being a native Turkish speaker, was able to avert. This aligns with the findings of Rabab'ah (2005), who, based on his experience in teaching English majors, noted that Jordanian learners "lacked the necessary vocabulary they needed to get their meaning across" (p. 183).

### 3.2. Verb Tense

Another prevalent error in students' essays is related to verb tense. Frequently, they fail to select the appropriate time expression to convey the action and misuse irregular verbs. In this context, learners often employ an incorrect tense, resulting in a failure to effectively communicate a message. The subsequent examples illustrate this error type. The root cause of errors in these instances lies in the difference between English and Turkish, where the present simple tense is used in English, while the present continuous tense is employed in Turkish.

- I am living in Konya for 12 years. (live)*
- How are you feeling? (to ask for opinion) (do you feel)*
- They are loving their children. (love)*
- He is wanting to pass university exam. (wants)*
- I'm coming early in the mornings. (repeated action) (come)*

**Table 4.**

*One-way Anova Test*

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
<b>Between Groups</b>	18,25	5	3,65	4,26	,001
<b>Within Groups</b>	210,42	246	,85		
<b>Total</b>	228,67	251			

An analysis of variance (Anova) revealed a noteworthy difference among groups ( $F(5,246) = 4.26, p = .001 < .05$ ) concerning the dependent variable of Verb Tense.

**Table 5.**

*Descriptive Statistics of Verb Tense Error*

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Minimum	Maximum
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
<b>upperb1</b>	29	,79	1,89	,35	,07	1,51	0	7
<b>midb1</b>	46	,09	,41	,06	-,04	,21	0	2
<b>lowerb1</b>	48	,58	1,16	,16	,25	,92	0	6
<b>uppera2</b>	43	,05	,21	,03	-,02	,11	0	1
<b>mida2</b>	44	,07	,25	,03	-,01	,15	0	1
<b>lowera2</b>	42	,36	,90	,14	,07	,64	0	5
<b>Total</b>	252	,30	,95	,06	,18	,42	0	7

As depicted in Table 5, Verb Tense errors were present in each group. The table indicates that Class Upper B1 exhibited the highest mean for Verb Tense errors (0.79), followed by Class Lower B1 with the second-highest mean (0.58). Conversely, Class Upper A2 showed the lowest mean for this type of error (0.05). Additionally, the table reveals that B1 classes collectively made significantly more errors than A2 classes (B1: 2.27; A2: 0.48).



**Table 6.**

*Multiple Comparisons of Verb Tense Errors*

*Dependent Variable: Verb Tense*

(I) class	(J) class	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
<b>upperb1</b>	midb1	,70*	,21	,02	,06	1,35
	lowerb1	,21	,21	,99	-,43	,85
	uppera2	,74*	,22	,01	,09	1,40
	mida2	,72*	,22	,01	,07	1,38
	lowera2	,43	,22	,53	-,22	1,09
<b>midb1</b>	upperb1	-,70*	,21	,02	-1,35	-,06
	lowerb1	-,49	,19	,13	-1,06	,07
	uppera2	,04	,19	1,00	-,54	,62
	mida2	,01	,19	1,00	-,56	,60
	lowera2	-,27	,19	,93	-,85	,31
<b>lowerb1</b>	upperb1	-,21	,21	,99	-,85	,43
	midb1	,49	,19	,13	-,07	1,06
	uppera2	,53	,19	,08	-,04	1,11
	mida2	,51	,19	,11	-,06	1,09
	lowera2	,22	,19	,98	-,35	,80
<b>uppera2</b>	upperb1	-,74*	,22	,01	-1,40	-,09
	midb1	-,04	,19	1,00	-,62	,54
	lowerb1	-,53	,19	,08	-1,11	,04
	mida2	-,02	,19	1,00	-,61	,56
	lowera2	-,31	,20	,85	-,90	,28
<b>mida2</b>	upperb1	-,72*	,22	,01	-1,38	-,07
	midb1	-,01	,19	1,00	-,60	,56
	lowerb1	-,51	,19	,11	-1,09	,06
	uppera2	,02	,19	1,00	-,56	,61
	lowera2	-,28	,20	,90	-,88	,30
<b>lowera2</b>	upperb1	-,43	,22	,53	-1,09	,22
	midb1	,27	,19	,93	-,31	,85
	lowerb1	-,22	,19	,98	-,80	,35
	uppera2	,31	,20	,85	-,28	,90
	mida2	,28	,20	,90	-,30	,88

\*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

The multiple comparisons test for Verb Tense errors indicated a significant difference between Upper B1 and Mid B1 classes ( $p=.02$ ). Notably, substantial distinctions were observed among Upper B1, Upper A2, and Mid A2 classes ( $p=.01<.05$ ). Additionally, a similarity was observed

between Upper B1 and Lower B1 ( $p=.99$ ). Another noteworthy resemblance was identified between Mid B1, Upper A2, and Mid A2 ( $p=1.00>.05$ ). Furthermore, a significant similarity was found between classes Lower B1 and Lower A2 ( $p=.98$ ).

Verb tense errors were not highly frequent in students' papers. Tenses in Turkish and English are somewhat comparable, yet there are instances where they are not used in the same way in both languages, leading to occasional difficulties. In the Turkish language, verb tenses include present, present progressive, future, definite past, indefinite past, necessity, subjunctive, conditional, and imperative.

The only tense that the Turkish language lacks compared to English is the present perfect tense. The example provided may result in confusion due to differences in tenses or the absence of the mentioned tense in Turkish. This discrepancy leads to variations in expression, where an English native speaker would say, "I have lived in Konya for 12 years," while a Turkish native speaker would express it as, "I am living in Konya for 12 years."

Yet, according to Bennui's (2008) study, students from Thailand asserted that in Thai, there is no direct connection between time and tense. This implies that time signifies the speaker's intention, and the verb form remains unchanged regardless of the time—whether it is present, past, or future. In a similar vein, one of Haryanto's (2007) students expressed, "First, it makes me love (to) read when I was young until future I read books." Bennui (2008) clarified that the learner employed the present simple tense in a sentence that referred to the past. The student also used the future word "to express a future in the past" (p. 85).

### **3.3. Pluralization (Singular-Plural Noun Agreement)**

Pluralization errors have been noted in student essays. In the instances mentioned, it's evident that learners are applying a grammatical structure from their native language to the second language. Specifically, when referring to "four days" or "two hours," pluralization is not applied to the nouns in accordance with Turkish grammar rules. This rule in the Turkish language contradicts the corresponding one in English.

*We stayed four day. (four days)*

*The concert lasted about two hour. (two hours)*

*That days were so great. (Those days)*

*I am young people. (I am a young person.)*

**Table 7.**

*One-way Anova Test*

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
<b>Between Groups</b>	27,06	5	5,41	8,02	,00
<b>Within Groups</b>	165,92	246	,67		
<b>Total</b>	192,98	251			

According to the Table 7, there is a highly significant difference between groups ( $F(5,246) = 8,02$ ,  $p = .00 < .05$ ) considering the Pluralization Errors.

**Table 8.**

*Descriptive Statistics of Pluralization Error*

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Minimum	Maximum
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
<b>upperb1</b>	29	1,24	1,48	,27	,68	1,80	0	6
<b>midb1</b>	46	,76	,92	,13	,49	1,04	0	5
<b>lowerb1</b>	48	,40	,79	,11	,17	,63	0	4
<b>uppera2</b>	43	,33	,60	,09	,14	,51	0	2
<b>mida2</b>	44	,25	,53	,08	,09	,41	0	2
<b>lowera2</b>	42	,21	,47	,07	,07	,36	0	2
<b>Total</b>	252	,49	,87	,05	,38	,60	0	6

As depicted in the above table, every group exhibited pluralization errors. However, the highest mean was observed in Class Upper B1 (1.24). Notably, the means of Mid A2 and Lower A2 are closely aligned (.25; .21). Despite the resemblance between these two groups, the increasing trend in means indicates that learners made more pluralization errors as their proficiency level advanced (Lower A2: .21 < Upper B1: 1.24).

**Table 9.**

*Multiple Comparisons of Pluralization Errors*

(I) class	(J) class	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
<b>upperb1</b>	midb1	,48	,19	,20	-,10	1,06
	lowerb1	,84*	,19	,00	,27	1,42
	uppera2	,91*	,20	,00	,33	1,50
	mida2	,99*	,19	,00	,41	1,58
	lowera2	,97*	,20	,00	,39	1,57
<b>midb1</b>	upperb1	-,48	,19	,20	-1,06	,10
	lowerb1	,36	,17	,40	-,14	,87
	uppera2	,43	,17	,19	-,09	,96
	mida2	,51	,17	,05	-,01	1,03
	lowera2	,49	,17	,07	-,03	1,02
<b>lowerb1</b>	upperb1	-,84*	,19	,00	-1,42	-,27
	midb1	-,36	,17	,40	-,87	,14
	uppera2	,07	,17	1,00	-,45	,59
	mida2	,14	,17	,99	-,37	,66
	lowera2	,13	,17	1,00	-,39	,65
<b>uppera2</b>	upperb1	-,91*	,20	,00	-1,50	-,33
	midb1	-,43	,17	,19	-,96	,09
	lowerb1	-,07	,17	1,00	-,59	,45
	mida2	,07	,17	1,00	-,45	,60
	lowera2	,06	,18	1,00	-,47	,60
<b>mida2</b>	upperb1	-,99*	,19	,00	-1,58	-,41
	midb1	-,51	,17	,05	-1,03	,01
	lowerb1	-,14	,17	,99	-,66	,37
	uppera2	-,07	,17	1,00	-,60	,45
	lowera2	-,01	,18	1,00	-,54	,52
<b>lowera2</b>	upperb1	-,97*	,20	,00	-1,57	-,39
	midb1	-,49	,17	,07	-1,02	,03
	lowerb1	-,13	,17	1,00	-,65	,39
	uppera2	-,06	,18	1,00	-,60	,47
	mida2	,01	,180	1,00	-,52	,54

\*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

A Gabriel Multiple Comparisons Test for Pluralization errors indicated a significant difference between Upper B1 Class and all other groups ( $p=.00<.05$ ), except for Mid B1 ( $p=.20$ ). Furthermore, there was a significant difference between Mid B1 and Mid A2 ( $p=.05$ ). It's noteworthy that there was a substantial similarity between Lower B1 and all the A2 classes.

The errors in singular/plural noun agreement observed in students' essays are clearly influenced by mother tongue interference. In the Turkish language, a noun following expressions/words like "a lot of," "various," "many," and any number exceeding one does not require the plural marker. This linguistic difference explains why learners made numerous errors in pluralization when using the aforementioned expressions/words, as illustrated.

The current study aligns with Kırkgöz's (2009) findings. Being a native speaker of Turkish, she presents instances of the Turkish rule alongside students' errors: "He is drinking three cup of coffee. We have a big garden and three dog. There is two telephone on the table. There is a few apple in the basket."

### 3.4. Prepositional Interference

In this study, participants made prepositional errors falling into three categories: adding the wrong preposition, omitting the preposition, and misusing the preposition.

#### 3.4.1. Preposition Addition (Adding the Wrong Preposition)

The participants made the following examples of preposition addition errors:

*He promised to me.*

*I went to home.*

*We went to in hospital.*

*It's impossible for to forget it.*

*I went to near my house.*

**Table 10.**

*One-way Anova Test*

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
<b>Between Groups</b>	4,998	5	1,00	,95	,44
<b>Within Groups</b>	256,891	246	1,04		
<b>Total</b>	261,889	251			

Based on the results of the One-way Anova test, there were no statistically significant differences among any of the groups regarding the dependent variable of Preposition Addition (Adding the Wrong Preposition) Errors ( $F(5,246) = .95, p = .44 > .05$ ).

**Table 11.**

*Descriptive Statistics of Preposition Addition Errors*

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean			
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound	Minimum	Maximum
<b>upperb1</b>	29	,59	,73	,13	,31	,86	0	2
<b>midb1</b>	46	,43	,83	,12	,19	,68	0	4
<b>lowerb1</b>	48	,63	1,29	,18	,25	1,00	0	7
<b>uppera2</b>	43	,58	,82	,12	,33	,83	0	3
<b>mida2</b>	44	,89	1,26	,19	,50	1,27	0	5
<b>lowera2</b>	42	,55	,91	,14	,26	,83	0	3
<b>Total</b>	252	,61	1,02	,06	,48	,74	0	7

The Descriptive Statistics results indicate that Preposition Addition Errors were present in each group within the study. Class Mid A2 exhibited the highest frequency of this error (.89), while Mid B1 demonstrated the lowest frequency (.43).

**Table 12.**

*Multiple Comparisons Preposition Addition*

(I) class	(J) class	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
<b>upperb1</b>	midb1	,15	,24	1,00	-,56	,86
	lowerb1	-,03	,24	1,00	-,74	,67
	uppera2	,00	,24	1,00	-,72	,73
	mida2	-,30	,24	,97	-1,02	,42
	lowera2	,03	,24	1,00	-,69	,76
<b>midb1</b>	upperb1	-,15	,24	1,00	-,86	,56
	lowerb1	-,19	,21	,99	-,81	,43
	uppera2	-,14	,21	1,00	-,79	,49
	mida2	-,45	,21	,42	-1,09	,19
	lowera2	-,11	,21	1,00	-,76	,53
<b>lowerb1</b>	upperb1	,03	,24	1,00	-,67	,74
	midb1	,19	,21	,99	-,43	,81
	uppera2	,04	,21	1,00	-,59	,68
	mida2	-,26	,21	,97	-,89	,37
	lowera2	,07	,21	1,00	-,56	,72
<b>uppera2</b>	upperb1	-,00	,24	1,00	-,73	,72
	midb1	,14	,21	1,00	-,49	,79
	lowerb1	-,04	,21	1,00	-,68	,59
	mida2	-,30	,21	,93	-,95	,34
	lowera2	,03	,22	1,00	-,62	,69
<b>mida2</b>	upperb1	,30	,24	,97	-,42	1,02
	midb1	,45	,21	,42	-,19	1,09
	lowerb1	,26	,21	,97	-,37	,89
	uppera2	,30	,21	,93	-,34	,95
	lowera2	,33	,22	,86	-,31	,99
<b>lowera2</b>	upperb1	-,03	,24	1,00	-,76	,69
	midb1	,11	,21	1,00	-,53	,76
	lowerb1	-,07	,21	1,00	-,72	,56
	uppera2	-,03	,22	1,00	-,69	,62
	mida2	-,33	,22	,86	-,99	,31

A Gabriel Post Hoc Test uncovered a resemblance among individual groups from distinct proficiency levels. The table above indicates that all groups exhibited this error type, with no significant difference in the mean numbers to identify the specific group causing the variation.

### 3.4.2. Preposition Omission

The participants produced the following instances of preposition omission errors:

- He smiled me. (smiled at me)*
- I looked the results. (looked at the results)*
- Some people waited the concert. (waited for the concert)*
- I listened Metallica song. (listen to Metallica song)*
- He shared it the social media. (shared on the social media)*

**Table 13.**

*One-way Anova Test*

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
<b>Between Groups</b>	2,93	5	,58	,33	,88
<b>Within Groups</b>	425,96	246	1,73		
<b>Total</b>	428,90	251			

The statistical analysis conducted through One-way Anova revealed no significant difference among groups ( $F(5,246) = .33, p = .88 > .05$ ) regarding Preposition Omission Errors.

**Table 14.**

*Descriptive Statistics of Preposition Omission Errors*

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Minimum	Maximum
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
<b>upperb1</b>	29	1,10	1,93	,35	,37	1,84	0	10
<b>midb1</b>	46	,98	1,35	,20	,58	1,38	0	5
<b>lowerb1</b>	48	,92	1,44	,20	,50	1,34	0	8
<b>uppera2</b>	43	,91	,99	,15	,60	1,21	0	5
<b>mida2</b>	44	,89	1,08	,16	,56	1,22	0	3
<b>lowera2</b>	42	,71	1,08	,16	,38	1,05	0	4
<b>Total</b>	252	,91	1,30	,08	,75	1,07	0	10

Descriptive statistics indicate that every group in the study exhibited Preposition Omission Errors. Mean differences were distributed in alignment with proficiency levels. Specifically, Class Upper B1 had the highest mean (1.10), while this error occurred least frequently in Lower A2 (.71). Thus, it is evident that mean differences increase with advancing proficiency levels, signifying that higher proficiency levels result in more errors.



**Table 15.**

*Multiple Comparisons of Preposition Omission Errors*

(I) class	(J) class	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
upperb1	midb1	,12	,31	1,00	-,79	1,04
	lowerb1	,18	,30	1,00	-,72	1,09
	uppera2	,19	,31	1,00	-,73	1,13
	mida2	,21	,31	1,00	-,71	1,14
	lowera2	,38	,31	,97	-,55	1,32
midb1	upperb1	-,12	,31	1,00	-1,04	,79
	lowerb1	,06	,27	1,00	-,74	,86
	uppera2	,07	,27	1,00	-,75	,90
	mida2	,09	,27	1,00	-,73	,91
	lowera2	,26	,28	,99	-,57	1,09
lowerb1	upperb1	-,18	,30	1,00	-1,09	,72
	midb1	-,06	,27	1,00	-,86	,74
	uppera2	,01	,27	1,00	-,81	,83
	mida2	,03	,27	1,00	-,78	,84
	lowera2	,20	,27	1,00	-,62	1,02
uppera2	upperb1	-,19	,31	1,00	-1,13	,73
	midb1	-,07	,27	1,00	-,90	,75
	lowerb1	-,01	,27	1,00	-,83	,81
	mida2	,02	,28	1,00	-,81	,85
	lowera2	,19	,28	1,00	-,65	1,04
mida2	upperb1	-,21	,31	1,00	-1,14	,71
	midb1	-,09	,27	1,00	-,91	,73
	lowerb1	-,03	,27	1,00	-,84	,78
	uppera2	-,02	,28	1,00	-,85	,81
	lowera2	,17	,28	1,00	-,67	1,01
lowera2	upperb1	-,38	,31	,97	-1,32	,55
	midb1	-,26	,28	,99	-1,09	,57
	lowerb1	-,20	,27	1,00	-1,02	,62
	uppera2	-,19	,28	1,00	-1,04	,65
	mida2	-,17	,28	1,00	-1,01	,67

The multiple comparisons test for Preposition Omission indicated that there were no significant differences among groups. As per the table, this error type was observed in all groups, but none of them emerged as significantly distinct within the participant components.

### 3.4.3. Preposition Misuse

The examples of prepositional misuse consist of the instances below:

I started university at Ankara. (in)

I fell in love to her. (with)

She was dead in 8th April. (on)

**Table 16.**

*One-way Anova Test*

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	16,63	5	3,32	2,43	,03
Within Groups	336,63	246	1,36		
Total	353,27	251			

The One-way Anova Test asserted a significant difference among groups ( $F(5,246) = 2.43, p = .03 < .05$ ) concerning the dependent variable of Preposition Misuse Errors.

**Table 17.**

*Descriptive Statistics of Preposition Misuse Errors*

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Minimum	Maximum
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
<b>upperb1</b>	29	1,10	1,291	,240	,61	1,59	0	4
<b>midb1</b>	46	,78	1,073	,158	,46	1,10	0	3
<b>lowerb1</b>	48	,75	1,896	,274	,20	1,30	0	11
<b>uppera2</b>	43	,70	,860	,131	,43	,96	0	3
<b>mida2</b>	44	,48	,792	,119	,24	,72	0	3
<b>lowera2</b>	42	,21	,520	,080	,05	,38	0	2
<b>Total</b>	252	,65	1,186	,075	,50	,80	0	11

As indicated in the above table, preposition misuse errors were present in every group. The mean differences for Preposition Misuse Errors were systematically distributed based on proficiency levels. Upper B1 exhibited the highest frequency of this error (1.10), and the mean difference gradually decreased to Lower A2 (.21). Once again, it is evident that the number of means increases with advancing proficiency levels.

**Table 18.**

*Multiple Comparisons of Preposition Misuse Errors*

(I) class	(J) class	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
<b>upperb1</b>	midb1	,32	,27	,98	-,49	1,14
	lowerb1	,33	,27	,96	-,45	1,16
	uppera2	,40	,28	,90	-,42	1,23
	mida2	,62	,28	,31	-,20	1,45
	lowera2	,88*	,28	,02	,06	1,72
<b>midb1</b>	upperb1	-,32	,27	,98	-1,14	,49
	lowerb1	,03	,24	1,00	-,68	,75
	uppera2	,08	,24	1,00	-,65	,82
	mida2	,30	,24	,97	-,42	1,03
	lowera2	,56	,25	,29	-,17	1,31
<b>lowerb1</b>	upperb1	-,35	,27	,96	-1,16	,45
	midb1	-,03	,24	1,00	-,75	,68
	uppera2	,05	,24	1,00	-,67	,78
	mida2	,27	,24	,98	-,45	,99
	lowera2	,53	,24	,37	-,19	1,27
<b>uppera2</b>	upperb1	-,40	,28	,90	-1,23	,42
	midb1	-,08	,24	1,00	-,82	,65
	lowerb1	-,05	,24	1,00	-,78	,67
	mida2	,22	,25	,99	-,52	,96
	lowera2	,48	,25	,58	-,27	1,23
<b>mida2</b>	upperb1	-,62	,28	,31	-1,45	,20
	midb1	-,30	,24	,97	-1,03	,42
	lowerb1	-,27	,24	,98	-,99	,45
	uppera2	-,22	,25	,99	-,96	,52
	lowera2	,26	,25	,99	-,48	1,01
<b>lowera2</b>	upperb1	-,88*	,28	,02	-1,72	-,06
	midb1	-,56	,25	,29	-1,31	,17
	lowerb1	-,53	,24	,37	-1,27	,19
	uppera2	-,48	,25	,58	-1,23	,27
	mida2	-,26	,25	,99	-1,01	,48

\*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

The multiple comparisons test indicated that only Upper B1 and Lower A2 classes displayed a statistically significant difference ( $p=.02<.05$ ) regarding Preposition Misuse Errors. The remaining classes exhibited similar means. Notably, there was a high resemblance in the

comparison of Mid B1, Lower B1, and Upper A2 (1.00). In essence, these results demonstrate a rational distribution among groups, highlighting a distinction between the highest and least proficient proficiency levels.

For many second language (L2) students, learning prepositions can be challenging. In Turkish, there is a suffix that is equivalent to the English prepositions at, in, and on. This specific preposition is spelled differently in various contexts to match the sound that precedes the addition. For example, ev (house/home) and evde (in the house or at home); araba (car) and arabada (in the car); mutfak (kitchen) and mutfakta (in the kitchen); tuvalet (bathroom) and tuvalette (in the bathroom) (Erkaya, 2012).

Henceforth, when Turkish speakers are learning English prepositions such as at, in, and on, they often become confused and struggle to determine when to use them. In the current study, participants either omitted prepositions entirely or used incorrect ones.

#### **4. Findings**

In response to the query, "What categories of interlingual errors do English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners typically commit in their written compositions?", it can be stated that students often make errors in word choice, verb tense, pluralization, as well as in preposition addition, omission, and misuse. Among various types of errors in the written materials of 252 students, word choice errors exhibit the highest frequency, totaling 531 instances. Following this, preposition omission errors occur 241 times, while preposition addition errors account for 154 occurrences. Additionally, there are 152 cases of preposition misuse, resulting in a total of 547 prepositional errors. In terms of grammatical errors, there are 126 instances of pluralization errors and 75 occurrences of verb tense errors, making up a total of 201 grammatical errors. Analyzing the overall error distribution, word choice errors constitute 41.51% of the total, emphasizing their significant prevalence and serving as the primary focus of the study. Preposition omission comprises 18.84%, preposition addition represents 12.08%, preposition misuse accounts for 11.88%, pluralization forms 9.85%, and verb tense errors present only 5.86% of the total number of errors.

Regarding the second question concerning the sources of errors, it can be asserted that the primary origin of the errors detected in students' writings is interlingual errors. While there are some intralingual errors, the primary emphasis is on interlingual transfer effects in students'

written works. The predominant majority of errors result from mother tongue interference. Out of the 1279 errors of various types, all were attributed to interlingual transfer, underscoring the need for continued exposure to the second language under the guidance of knowledgeable instructors to mitigate these errors.

As for the third question, "In what manner can these errors be categorized?" a systematic procedure was devised to meet the study's requirements. An Error Code List was compiled based on these studies, and subsequently, each of the 252 written pieces was meticulously analyzed, with errors identified and marked using a predetermined color code. Following this extensive and meticulous preparation phase, errors were categorized into three primary classifications: grammatical, lexical, and prepositional errors. Grammatical errors encompass subdivisions such as pluralization and verb tense. Prepositional errors include preposition addition, preposition omission, and preposition misuse.

Addressing the fourth question regarding the influence of mother tongue interference on English usage among EFL learners at various proficiency levels (Pre-intermediate, Intermediate, and Upper-intermediate), a prevalent notion suggests that heightened exposure to the second language diminishes interlingual transfer errors while amplifying intralingual errors. However, this study challenges this belief, indicating that such a trend is not consistently evident across all error types and proficiency levels.

In seeking to address the fifth research question "What strategies can be employed to mitigate the impact of mother tongue interference?", researchers' experiences and relevant literature may provide valuable insights into practical solutions for this discourse.

Considering that learners face challenges in various aspects of sentence structure, it is vital to reassess language instruction methods and the teacher's focus on enhancing students' awareness to generate accurate and effectively communicated written pieces. Educators commonly recognize that motivation is a potent asset, regardless of the availability of excellent resources and texts. Students can acquire knowledge only when sufficiently motivated to do so. Achieving this involves creating engaging and stimulating activities that tap into and encourage the students' inherent motivation. A needs analysis remains consistently crucial in the instructional process to identify the appropriate remedy and the suitable tactics and approaches to be applied.

Instructors should implement a systematic approach to error methodology. Simply recognizing common student difficulties is inadequate; it is vital to assess these challenges for targeted emphasis in remedial instruction. Without this, issues will persist, hindering learners from producing written pieces free of numerous grammatical errors. Hence, prioritizing error repair and offering substantial feedback is crucial. Redirecting students' attention to distinguish between Turkish and English is essential, and they should face more challenges in the target language. Specifically, increased practice exercises focusing on essential structures can familiarize them, enabling appropriate use in their written outputs.

Noted for his extensive contributions to the study of mother tongue interference, Corder (1982:1) outlines two key justifications for investigating students' errors. The first, a pedagogical justification, emphasizes the necessity of a thorough understanding of error nature before implementing an effective strategy for error elimination. The second, a theoretical justification, posits that analyzing students' errors is integral to a comprehensive study of their language, crucial for understanding the language acquisition process. This information is essential for shaping informed recommendations to enhance language education materials and methodologies.

Acknowledging the structural and communicative differences between the first and second languages is paramount when constructing sentences in a second language, as emphasized by Odlin (1989:177). This recognition significantly contributes to the process of learning and acquiring a second language.

Given the aforementioned arguments, it is recognized that the outcomes of this study can be advantageous for the education and learning process. Consequently, this research aims to offer valuable suggestions derived from the sample data findings to enhance the acquisition of the target language.

## **5. Discussion**

The current research corroborates the findings of Darus and Subramaniam's (2009) study. Kırkgöz (2009) also identified errors in the use of prepositions in students' essays, and the errors were of the same type as those found by the researchers in the present paper: addition of a preposition, omission of a preposition, and misuse of a preposition. Kırkgöz's (2009) example was as follows: "Suzanne is on downstairs." Since in Turkish a suffix is added to the word

"downstairs," which becomes "aşağıda" (with "da" being the suffix equivalent to at, in, and on), the students may have thought in their native language and translated into English, resulting in the omission of the preposition.

Masangya and Lozada's (2009) findings are further substantiated by the current research. The researchers affirmed the difficulty students faced in learning second language (L2) prepositions. They observed that the highest number of errors committed by their participants was in the use of prepositions, which accounted for a significant portion of the entire study. Thus, Masangya and Lozada (2009) attributed students' confusion to the abundance of prepositions in English.

Moreover, the findings of this research accord with those of Rocha Erkaya (2012) in that word choice was overwhelmingly the most common and significant error, leading to frequent misunderstandings. She addressed both local and global errors and their impact on the flow of communication, along with L1 interference arising from cross-semantic differences.

The study findings align with those of Alhaysony (2012) regarding prepositional errors, where errors occurred due to both L1 interference (interlingual) and L2 features (intralingual), with omission errors constituting a significant part of the error data.

Nevertheless, the research findings also reveal differences with some prior studies, such as Mahmoodzadeh (2012), where the subjects in question made errors related to misusing and repetition of prepositions more frequently than errors associated with the omission of prepositions when translating from Persian into English. This study identified preposition errors as a common type of error.

This research's findings also differ from those of Mungungu (2010), where spelling and tense errors were identified as the most common errors in the three languages under investigation. However, in this study, Verb Tense was observed to have a low frequency and occurrence.

Corder (1982:8) contends that achieving complete mastery of a target language is highly likely if learners are sufficiently motivated. In this context, participants are expected to have the necessary motivation as they must attain a specified level of language proficiency to continue their education. These interference errors can be viewed as a significant step in language acquisition that is subject to modification and improvement. Explicitly teaching the language

plays a vital role in enhancing students' awareness of specific areas, as indicated by interference research. However, the prevailing approach in foreign language teaching is Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), which prioritizes interaction and considers conveying meaning as the primary goal in acquiring a foreign language. This emphasis on message conveyance may lead to structure-related errors influenced by the learner's first language (L1).

Corder (1982: 99) asserts that when a student is compelled to communicate, they will draw upon their existing knowledge of etymology to enhance successful communication. If they lack sufficient knowledge of the second language (L2) for effective communication, they may resort to using their first language (L1) or any other known language to compensate, borrowing or adapting linguistic elements. This practice may lead to a lack of emphasis on the grammatical and syntactic aspects of the second language. Considering the detrimental effects of current testing practices, it becomes imperative to enhance students' understanding of second language structures to mitigate interference errors impacting Turkish language grammar. In addition to explicit instruction, developing "meta-phonetic mindfulness," which involves a conscious awareness of L2 structures (Tat, 2013), is also crucial.

As per Jarvis (2009), meta-semantic mindfulness empowers students to discern distinctions between languages, enabling them to identify the features of a second language (L2) through their understanding of their first language (L1). This practice aids in fostering the capacity to deduce meanings of unfamiliar words, thereby refining language skills and minimizing the chances of errors related to transfer.

Apart from its impact on grammar and syntax, explicit instruction is also deemed advantageous for vocabulary learning. In line with Stenson (1983), when students grasp the similarities and distinctions between two languages concerning phonology, cognates, false friends, and other facets, their awareness can be heightened. Consequently, the potential for negative transfer occurring can be reduced.

Moreover, it is essential to furnish students with authentic materials that immerse them in the genuine language, promoting the implicit acquisition of L2 vocabulary and other linguistic structures. Identifying students with effective strategies, like thinking in the target language rather than relying on translation, is crucial (Brown, 1994:27). This approach is expected to eliminate errors induced by transfer.



Bhela (1999:29) asserts that employing a tailored learning program for each learner proves advantageous in facilitating the learning and instructional process. This approach permits focused attention on specific areas and facilitates the customization of teaching methods and materials to cater to individual student needs. According to Odlin (1989:162), course books tailored for a particular group of learners should be structured to include explicit explanations that compare the two languages.

Yet, crafting such books may pose difficulties when classes include students with varied L1 backgrounds. In such cases, Odlin (1989) recommends employing bilingual dictionaries alongside the assistance of a teacher well-versed in cross-linguistic awareness and the associated challenges.

In conclusion, having a deep understanding of interference and employing effective strategies to counter its impact empowers educators to anticipate and prevent undesirable transfer more effectively. Therefore, instructors must undergo proper training to efficiently assist students in acquiring the target language, as previously highlighted.

## **6. Conclusion**

The study aimed to identify common errors in written compositions by learners, focusing on word choice, verb tense, pluralization, and preposition errors. It found that word choice errors were widespread across all proficiency levels, with higher proficiency classes exhibiting higher frequencies. This suggests a potential inverse relationship between word choice errors and proficiency levels. The study speculated that time constraints and the pressure to meet word count targets may contribute to these errors, as learners prioritize quantity over accuracy.

Verb tense errors were present in all groups, with higher proficiency classes showing more instances. This could be attributed to the complexity of tense usage in longer essays, where higher proficiency learners need to navigate a broader spectrum of verb tense forms. Pluralization errors also increased with proficiency level, indicating a pattern of learners making more errors as their English proficiency improves, possibly due to interlingual transfer from their native language.

Preposition errors were observed in all groups, with higher proficiency classes exhibiting more instances. This could be influenced by the learners' reliance on their native language's

preposition usage. The study emphasized the importance of formal instruction in reducing transfer errors and highlighted the challenges faced by Turkish learners due to differences between Turkish and English grammar and syntax.

The study involved a specific number of participants and was conducted within a limited scope. While the findings offer valuable insights into error patterns among Turkish-speaking students, the generalizability of the results may be limited due to the relatively small sample size and narrow focus.

As for the limitations of the study, the examination duration for each class varied, potentially influencing the students' ability to review and correct errors. For instance, the shorter duration allotted to B1 classes may have hindered students' capacity to contemplate accurate English equivalents, leading to a higher frequency of errors.

The requirement for essays to fall within specific word count ranges could have impacted students' priorities during composition. Students may have focused on meeting the word range rather than prioritizing error correction and structural perfection, potentially skewing the error frequencies observed.

The study acknowledges the influence of learners' native language, particularly in instances of negative transfer. However, the depth of exploration into the specific mechanisms of interlingual transfer and its impact on error occurrence may be limited.

While the study identified common error types such as word choice, verb tense, pluralization, and preposition errors, it may not have comprehensively examined all potential error categories present in learners' compositions.

The study was conducted as a one-time analysis, providing a snapshot of error frequencies among learners at specific proficiency levels. Longitudinal data tracking the progression of error patterns over time could offer deeper insights into learners' language development and error correction strategies.

The study suggests avenues for future research, including the exploration of specific error categories and the effectiveness of formal instruction in reducing transfer errors. However, additional research is warranted to address these areas comprehensively.

To conclude, while the study provides valuable insights into error patterns among Turkish-speaking learners, it is essential to acknowledge these limitations when interpreting the findings and to consider them as avenues for future research endeavors.

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