



## Orthographic Errors in English Abstracts Written by Turkish Researchers\*

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### ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the orthographic errors in English abstracts written by Turkish authors. As foreign language learners, Turkish authors write the abstracts of their articles in English. The majority of journals make writing English abstracts obligatory, even for Turkish articles, and authors' academic writing competence is demonstrated through these abstracts. Half of the authors in this study are female, and half are male. This study's findings are partly based on a master's thesis, according to which foreign language users make different types of errors in their academic writing. The current study only evaluates the orthographic errors, which include spelling errors, consonant and vowel combination errors, and the misuse of articles and prepositions.

**Keywords:** Abstract, academic writing, error analysis, foreign language, orthographic errors



## Introduction

Errors regarding various aspects of language learning and communication can have profound effects on comprehension, accuracy, and overall understanding. When considering the realm of language learning, errors can occur in diverse forms, such as phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics, and pragmatics, reflecting systematic deviations from the target language or community norms. Recognizing errors is instrumental for effective language teaching and learning strategies by aiding learners in their pursuit of proficiency (Corder, 1971).

Within the domain of foreign language learning, errors serve multiple purposes (Corder, 1967; He, 2016). They offer insights into learners' progress, highlight gaps in their understanding, provide researchers with valuable information on language acquisition, and furnish learners with a tool for gaining deeper linguistic insights. While mistakes and errors are an integral part of the language learning process, distinguishing between them and categorizing errors remains a complex endeavor, necessitating meticulous analysis for consistent correction.

The distinction between errors and mistakes in second language acquisition (SLA), as introduced by Corder (1967) has profoundly impacted the field. This differentiation spotlights competence errors and has prompted researchers to delve into the origins of these errors. Interference errors arising from native language influence, intralingual errors rooted in the faulty application of language rules, and developmental errors stemming from evolving language hypotheses have all been scrutinized in an effort to unravel the intricate mechanisms of second language learning.

When addressing error correction, a delicate balance must be struck. Direct and indirect correction techniques each have their merits, with direct correction explicitly addressing errors and indirect methods guiding learners to discover mistakes themselves. Individualization and a positive learning environment play pivotal roles, as learners' preferences for correction methods vary. Constructive feedback, positive reinforcement for correct language use, and contextual appropriateness all contribute to effective error correction (Woods, 1989).

Errors' impact on reading is equally significant. Both reader-based errors stemming from decoding, comprehension, and attention difficulties as well as text-based errors originating from the content itself influence the reading experience. These errors impede comprehension, slow down reading speed, and diminish engagement with the material. Addressing reading errors involves error analysis, targeted exercises to improve specific skills, and consistent practice to enhance fluency and comprehension.

In the realm of professional communication, errors can have far-reaching consequences. Inaccuracies in scientific papers can lead to misinterpretation of research findings and undermine credibility. Errors in proofreading articles or emails can compromise clarity and coherence, diminishing the intended message's effectiveness. Error-free reading is indispensable for maintaining professional integrity and facilitating accurate communication.

In essence, the intricate interplay of errors, their origins, and their effects traverses language learning, scientific research, and professional communication. By recognizing, analyzing, and addressing errors, learners, researchers, and professionals alike can navigate language complexities with greater proficiency, precision, and success.

Spelling and writing habits in foreign language writing often lead to frequent orthographic errors. These errors occur because native language users may encounter challenges due to distinct spelling rules and conventions in the target language.

The errors foreign language learners make in their writing reflect the development level of their language skills and cognitive processes. Spelling mistakes can arise from a lack of familiarity with the orthographic rules of the target language or from interference caused by the spelling patterns of their native language. Additionally, grammatical errors in writing frequently highlight the difficulties learners face in correctly using grammatical structures, including issues related to verb agreement, articles, prepositions, and word order.

### **Orthographic Errors**

Orthographic errors in foreign language writing are a common challenge faced by learners as they grapple with the complexities of a new linguistic system. These errors primarily manifest as spelling mistakes and deviations from the writing conventions specific to the target language. A significant factor contributing to these errors is the learners' unfamiliarity with the intricate spelling rules, pronunciation guides, and exceptions inherent in the foreign language. This lack of familiarity can lead to errors that range from basic misspellings to subtler issues with diacritics and accent marks. Additionally, a learner's native language often plays a role, as interference from their mother tongue can lead them to inadvertently apply their native language's spelling patterns to the foreign language (Kazazoğlu, 2020). As words that sound or are spelt the same but have different meanings, homophones and homographs further compound the challenge (Drury, 1969). Phonetic confusion also comes into play, as learners may struggle with unfamiliar sounds and letter combinations, leading to phonetically accurate but orthographically incorrect spellings. Even typographical errors and overreliance on auto-correction software can introduce inaccuracies in their writing. However, recognizing that these orthographic errors are a natural part of the language learning journey is essential, and exposure to written texts and explicit instruction, learners through practice tend to improve their spelling proficiency over time.

Orthographic transparency can vary widely among languages in terms of both degree and features. Nonetheless, morphophonological awareness, letter identification, and quick letter-sound correspondence are among the fundamental reading abilities shared by all languages (Caravolas & Samara, 2015). The relative importance of these fundamental abilities varies among languages and is contingent upon the language's position on the orthographic transparency scale (Ziegler et al., 2010). Given that English and Turkish have the same basic literacy requirements, one can reasonably assume that the mental processes that result in spelling mistakes are comparable in both languages.

## Error Types

Richard's 1971 study titled "A Non-Contrastive Approach to Error Analysis" investigated the origins of competence errors. He categorized these errors under three main types. The first are interference errors, and these occur when learners transfer elements from their native language (L1) to the target language (L2), resulting in interference and potentially leading to incorrect structures or usage patterns in the learning process. The second are intralingual errors stem from learners' faulty application of language rules within the target language itself. This may involve over-generalization or an incomplete understanding of the rules, leading to inaccuracies in language production (Murtiala, 2019). The third are developmental errors that arise during the learning process. Developmental errors occur as learners construct hypotheses about the L2. Some of these hypotheses may lead to errors initially, but they are gradually corrected over time as the learners refine their understanding (Richards, 1979).

## Methodology

### Research Design

This study uses a qualitative descriptive data analysis with the aim of identifying the orthographic errors made or committed in English abstracts written by Turkish authors.

*Qualitative research contributes to an understanding of the human condition in different contexts and of a perceived situation. All qualitative research deals with some interpretation. However, the interpretations vary in depth and level of abstraction, depending on the method of analysis and on the researcher's ability to distance him/herself.* (Bengtsson, p. 8)

### Sampling

The abstracts have been collected from the articles of 50 different authors in the field of linguistics. Of the authors, 25 are female, and 25 are male. To ensure reliability in the study, single-author studies were selected using the random sampling method.

### Data Analysis

This research has conducted a qualitative descriptive data analysis. Table 1 describes the errors and shows the recommended corrections. The corrections were offered based on the grammar rules of the English language and through the writing assistance tool *Grammarly* for better spelling and grammar use.

## Findings

Abstract Code	Error	Corrected Version
1F	In the learning process	In learning,
3F, 5F, 15F, 1M, 4M, 7M, 20M, 24M	Key Words	Keywords
4F	makes mistakes and	makes mistakes, and
4F	to what extend	to what extent
4F	reserach	research
4F	what kind of mistakes, they make	what kinds of mistakes they make
4F	teories	theories
5F	attempts	attempts
6F	foreing	foreign
7F	conjunction	conjunction
8F	thebeginning	the beginning
8F	education, but had to return	education but had to return
8F	west	West
9F	beginner level language speakers	beginner-level language speakers
10F	literary Works	literary works
13F	Abstact	Abstract
13F	allomorpes	allomorphs
13F	Rooth	root
14F	intermediate level grammar books	intermediate-level grammar books
16F	drama teaching students	drama-teaching students
17F	reading-comprehension	reading comprehension
18F	onmeasuring	on measuring
20F	and attitudes especially	and attitudes, especially
21F	whicheach	which each
23F	sharin	sharing
1M	...,language training...	, language training
4M	not only in literature, but also every field of life	not only in literature but also in every field of life
4M	text-book	textbook
5M	making this challenging process more enjoyable and productive, and ensuring permanent learning	making this challenging process more enjoyable and productive and ensuring permanent learning
6M	interpreting in general is	interpreting, in general, is

6M	haw	how
6M	for these problems..	for these problems.
7M	one material to another just like translation	one material to another, just like translation
7M	texte	text
7M	from a perspective of translation studies, and to describe	from the perspective of translation studies and to describe
8M	“The Search for the Origin of Language” and animal communication is	“The Search for the Origin of Language”, and animal communication is
8M	in its relation to the the concept of proto-language	in relation to the concept of proto-languages
8M	cognitive capacitiesof animals	the cognitive capacities of animals
8M	hypotheses which take animal studies to the center are introduced	hypotheses, which take animal studies to the center, are introduced
9M	have been compiled and opposing theories	have been compiled, and opposing theories
9M	the issue is quite complex and complex in its own way and concrete evidence	the issue is quite complex and dense in its own way, and concrete evidence
11M	approach	approach
11F	societies’own languages	societies’ own languages
12M	determined and it has been	determined, and it has been
13M	structure, syntactic structure and lexical structure	structure, syntactic structure, and lexical structure
14M	In the first part of the study in which document analysis technique was used	In the first part of the study, in which the document analysis technique was used
16M	A 40-item questionnaire based on Sardegna and Kusey (2014) and Seyedabadi et al., (2014) was	A 40-item questionnaire based on Sardegna and Kusey (2014) and Seyedabadi et al. (2014) was
18M	everincreasing	ever-increasing
24M	In educational research the data are mostly collected	In educational research, the data are mostly collected

One common error within the autographical areas involves spelling mistakes. Words such as sharing, research, and approach were misspelled in these English abstracts. These types of errors could be an indicator that spelling tools are not commonly used, and possibly, revision or proofreading stages did not take place. The majority of errors shown in the table are due to the effect of the first language. A language element that does not exist in the first language is difficult to transfer to use in the second language (e.g., the use of articles, the misuse of prepositions, and consonant combinations). Turkish words do not have more than two back-to-back consonants, and Turkish words do not take separate articles or prepositions. Therefore, the structural and syntactical differences between Turkish and English affect the number of errors in foreign language writing. For this reason, some translation mistakes, negative transfers, or typing errors may occur.

## Discussion and Conclusion

The reasons linguistic errors in speaking and writing are made depend on different variables. The errors can occur with regard to the language users' written or spoken phrases. Both native language users and foreign language users can make such errors. However, the level, type, and frequency of errors depend on the user's proficiency level with the language and competence with using the academic register in both the first and second language.

For such kinds of research, identifying authors' language levels is impossible. However, for an academician to write an article in a foreign language, they should at least have a B2-level of proficiency in that language according to the proficiency descriptions given by the Common European Framework.

Articles written in a second language need to be proofread by an expert in the field who is a proficient language user. Article abstracts give the first impression of an article, as well as a general overview of the contents and aim of the study. An abstract with many errors may demotivate readers from continuing to read the article.

Further studies can be conducted using empirical methods. The academic language proficiency of language users can be tested with regard to four language skills (i.e., reading, speaking, writing, listening) through different academic tasks. Furthermore, changing the language pair could provide different results.

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