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An Investigation of Turkish Higher Education EFL Learners' Linguistic and Lexical Errors

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Abstract

The aim of the current study is to investigate Turkish EFL learners' linguistic and lexical errors and their causes. The participants were 30 second year English Language and Literature level students at Karabuk University, Turkey. The students were asked to write an essay about "The Qualities of a Good Language Teacher" as an ordinary English language exercise in the class. As a next step, the essays were collected and analyzed based on the taxonomy of Wakkad (1980) and Tan (2007). Error analysis indicated that the five most common errors were *articles*, *word choice*, *prepositions*, *word order* and *subject-verb agreement*. The major causes of these errors were attributable to limited *vocabulary*, *poor grammar knowledge* and *interference from first language*. The analysis also revealed the most common cause of the errors as being L1 interference.

Keywords: error analysis, lexical errors, contrastive analysis.



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Introduction

Contrastive analysis was the main paradigm for studying foreign language learning during the 1950s and 1960s. According to the Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis (CAH), L1 interference was the main barrier to second language acquisition (SLA). However, CAH was thought to fall short of accounting for the whole process of L2 learning. As such, *Error Analysis* (EA) was suggested by researchers as a new approach to investigate student errors (Jalali & Shojaei, 2012). EA is based on attributing learner errors to different feasible sources, not only interference from learners' first language (Brown, 2000b, p. 218). Proponents of EA hold the view that errors are vital in describing learners' language development, which is referred to as *interlanguage* by Selinker (1972). The existence of interlanguage indicates that learners have the ability to create and test hypotheses of the L2 grammar, which are defined as the internalization of L2 rules. Therefore, as was indicated by the study of Ellis (1985), analyzing learner errors can be a guide to understand the nature of the learning process.

In general, there are two main error types. The first one is developmental errors which develop gradually over time within the learning process. The second type of errors are called fossilized errors which are more permanent and impervious to change (Richards, 1974). According to Richards (1974), developmental errors reflect a learner's competence at a given state and indicate some of the general characteristics of language acquisition. According to Dulay and Burt (1974), developmental errors are similar to the errors children make as they acquire their first language. As was introduced by Selinker (1972), the term fossilization is "the long term persistence of the non-target-like structures in the interlanguage of non-native speakers" (Selinker & Lakshmanan, 1992, p. 197). Selinker believes that fossilization refers to a point where the process of language learning comes to a halt although continuous input is provided.

In the literature, scholars seem to converge on the point that errors are of significance based on three reasons. In the first place, errors inform teachers how far learning goals have been achieved or how far the student has progressed. Corder (1967) states that they provide important information to the teacher as to "how far towards the goal the learner has progressed and, consequently, what remains for him to learn" (p. 167). Secondly, error analysis provides insight into how second languages are learned and what phases learners go through in SLA. Finally, errors are an inevitable part of the SLA process due to the fact that they are used for testing the hypotheses that students form in the process of language learning.

Considered to be the father of EA, Corder (1967) stated that errors are an indispensable part of L2 learning. According to him, there are two aspects of errors: theoretical aspect and applied aspect. Theoretically speaking, errors are gateways to understanding what and how an L2 is learned. The applied aspect of errors indicate that errors enable practitioners or teachers to adapt their pedagogical approaches based on the findings of error analysis studies. In short, errors analysis can be both diagnostic in the sense that it enables to identify problematic areas and prognostic in the sense that it enables practitioners to modify learning materials (Zawahreh, 2012).

Recently, there has been renewed interest in the functions of error analysis. Firstly, it is indicated that EA serves the dual purpose of finding the proficiency level of students and

obtaining information about common difficulties in language learning. Secondly, Candling (2001) underlined the role of EA in monitoring learner errors and their capacity to underline the potential of EA in determining the crucial steps of L2 learning. Other scholars also emphasize the role of EA in identifying learner progress and drawing conclusions to direct and modify the learning process (Ferris, 2002; Mitchell & Myles, 2004).

Causes of errors

In L2 learning, errors may result for a number of reasons. In the first place, according to Brown (2000b), some errors stem from interlingual interference or L1 interference. Brown (1994) states that when beginner L2 learners have not yet learned much about L2; hence, they assume that it “operates like the native language” (p. 65). Bennui (2008) worked on and described aspects of L1 interference in students’ paragraph writing, and found problems with lexicon since students translated words from L1 (Thai) to L2 (English). Problems were also found with word order, subject-verb agreement, verb tense, prepositions, and noun determiners, are all due to L1 syntactic interference. Similarly, Kirkgöz (2010) analyzed beginner students’ essays for punctuation and capitalization and found that their errors were mostly due to L1 (Turkish) interference. Falhasiri, Tavakoli, Hasiri, and Mohammadzadeh (2011) also found that the most frequent errors resulted from L1 (Persian) interference, and the misuse of prepositions as the most frequent errors of interference.

Literature Review

Writing is the most demanding skill for a learner, which is why some kinds of errors are international while learning a foreign language. Hence, before analyzing students’ errors, the related literature was reviewed with regard to error analysis. “Errors can be observed and classified to reveal something of the system operating within the learner” (Brown, 2000b, p. 218). By utilizing the errors, new strategies can be developed in order to help students’ acquisition of a second language. Error analysis was first introduced by Fries (1945) and Lado (1957), who claimed that learners of foreign or second language make errors during their learning process and that these errors could be predicted based on differences between their native language and second language in which they are learning.

Literature on EA indicates that one area of difficulty for non-native speakers is prepositions. In fact, prepositions seem to put a heavy burden on almost all language learners (Mukattash, 1986). According to Pittman (1966) and Zughoul (1979), prepositions are notoriously known for their downright unpredictability. Celce-Murcia and Larsen-Freeman (1999) believed that non-native speakers of English tend to have three types of problems with prepositions: (1) choosing the wrong preposition; (2) omitting a needed preposition; and (3) using a preposition where one is not needed.

Celce-Murcia and Larsen-Freeman (1999) stated that prepositions are mostly problematic for non-native speakers. Takahaski (1996) believes that the greatest problem EFL learners face is the correct usage of prepositions. According to Jalali and Shojaei (2012), for example, most Persian EFL learners are rather more competent in English grammar and vocabulary; nonetheless, they experience serious problems with prepositions. Likewise, there are other studies that found prepositions pose a difficulty on the part of EFL learners (Abushihab, 2014; Delshad, 1980; Erarslan & Hol, 2014; Scott & Tucker, 1974; Yuan, 2014).

Zawahreh (2012) carried out a study on the written English errors of tenth grade students in single-sex female and male schools in Ajloun, Jordan. The main aim of the study was to identify the written errors of English committed by tenth graders, to estimate the predominant and minor errors and to suggest causes leading to these errors. To this end, 350 students were selected randomly from a group of schools in Ajloun and they were asked to write a free essay. The essays were then collected and analyzed based on predetermined error classification. The errors were arranged in five groups, from the most predominant to least: (1) morphological errors of lack of agreement between subject and the main verb; (2) function words errors, insertion of prepositions; (3) syntax errors, omission of the main verb; (4) tenses errors, using present instead of past; and (5) lexical items errors, lexical items wrongly used in place of others.

Omidipour (2014) analyzed the errors of adult Persian learners when writing in English. 40 Persian learners of English were asked to write about two different topics based on their book. First, errors were identified and then the researcher classified them into three major categories as; 1. Orthographic Errors, 2. Syntactico-morphological Errors, and 3. Lexico-semantic Errors. The results of the study showed that errors in foreign language learning can be seen as a natural phenomenon and also how the crucial impact of L1 is inevitable.

In the Turkish context, there seem to be few studies that focus on identifying the errors conducted by L2 learners. Kirkgöz (2010) worked on the types of written errors of Turkish students at the beginner level under two main categories, *interlingual* and *intralingual*. She stated that “the early stages of language learning are characterized by a predominance of interlingual errors.” (p. 4357). The results of her study indicated the important role in proficiency in relation to errors. Another study was conducted by Koban (2011), who focused on grammatical and lexical errors. The study was conducted with Turkish students learning English as a second language abroad. Errors were analyzed in 17 compositions of Turkish students in order to determine them as either interlingual or intralingual errors. According to the results, the errors in morphology, tense, prepositions and verb forms are mostly related to the forms of English; whereas, errors in lexicon and word order are caused by interference from Turkish, and the errors in the article system and syntax are caused by interference from both Turkish and English.

In a similar study, Erkaya (2012) identified errors of Turkish students in lexicon, grammar and syntax in terms of global and local errors. The study stated that most of the lexical errors stemmed from L1 interference. L1 interference was found to be a great obstacle for Turkish learners, especially when trying to use prepositions in their English compositions. It is claimed that spelling is not a significant problem, unlike the previously mentioned Thai students. The Turkish students paid close attention to spelling, but this finding needs to be supported by other studies conducted with learners from the same background.

It is, therefore, significant to conduct a study to discover the types and the rate of grammatical and lexical errors conducted by the Turkish L2 learner. This current study aims to answer the following research questions:

- What is the frequency of grammatical and lexical errors in the essays of higher education Turkish ELL students in terms of function words, grammar and morphology, syntax, and lexical errors?

- What are the predominant errors in the essays of higher education Turkish ELL students?
- What are the sources of the errors in higher education Turkish ELL students' essays?

Methodology

The participants of the current study are 30 second grade English Language and Literature department students enrolled at Karabuk University in Turkey. The participants are thought to be at an advanced level and have had considerable exposure to English. Convenience sampling method was employed in the selection of the subjects. Student assignments that reflected the most errors were selected. In some assignments, there were one or two errors, so these papers were excluded from the analysis.

The study aimed at analyzing the errors of the written production of English essays of high-level EFL students at Karabuk University. An initial total of 50 students were instructed to write an essay on "The qualities of a good teacher." Almost all of the students completed the assignment. However, due to the density of errors and the realization that similar errors recurred, the number of participants' essays was limited to 30 for ease of analysis. As a next step, the essays were collected and analyzed by the researchers. Students were not informed that their writing assignments would be analyzed or not in order to ensure a natural process of data collection.

Data analysis depended on error classifications mainly adopted from Wakkad (1980) and Tan (2007). The following show the kinds of errors that were checked for:

Function Words:

- Confusion of preposition
- Omission of preposition
- Insertion of preposition
- Addition of "the"
- Addition of "a-an"
- Omission of "a-an"
- Omission of "the"
- Confusion of articles

Morphology and Grammar:

- Omission of "s" singular
- Addition of suffixes to infinitive
- Lack of agreement between subject and verb
- Lack of agreement between nouns and pronouns
- Demonstratives
- Singular – Plural nouns
- Irregular verbs
- Modals
- Inappropriate plural ending
- Using other parts of speech than objectives
- Relative clauses
- Wrong use of conditionals

- m) Gerund – Infinitive
- n) Conjunctions

Syntax:

- a) Sequence of tense
- b) Using progressives
- c) Omission of verb to be
- d) Omission of the main verb
- e) Omission of to
- f) Addition of to
- g) Passive voice
- h) Causative
- i) Missing Subject

Word Order:

- a) Sequence of Sentence
- b) Unnecessary Word
- c) Wrong use of word group

Lexical Errors:

- a) Wrong Form of the Word
- b) Collocation
- c) Wrong Word Choice
- d) Typical Turkish constructions
- e) Wrong use of adverb

Results

In this section, Research Questions 1 and 2 are answered at the same time. The results are presented under the following headings:

1. Number of errors of each type: function words, morphology and grammar, syntax, tenses, words order and lexical.
2. Hierarchical typologies of errors according to the main categories.
3. Hierarchical typologies of errors within each category.
4. Total number of errors.
5. Explanation of the sources of errors. Each category is presented in a table showing numbers, examples, and possible causes of errors.

Table 1 presents the results with regards to the frequency of function word errors conducted by ELL learners. Under the category of function words, preposition and articles were studied.

Table 1. Frequencies of function words errors conducted by ELL learners

Area	Types	Number of Errors	Examples	Causes
Function and Words	Prepositions	18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> They don't enjoy from teaching. 	Turkish interference
	Confusion	18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> They should be aware confidence. 	Incomplete application of rule
	Omission	10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A good teacher is a human to showing care and optimistic. 	Incomplete application of rule
	Insertion	46		
	<i>SUB TOTAL</i>	53		
	Articles	22	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The impressive communication, the learning. You're going to stay professional at the all times. Teacher should possess a love and passion 	Overgeneralization
	Addition of articles			
	Omission of articles			
Confusion	7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teacher and tree are clear from their products. (Instead of a teacher and a tree...) 	Turkish interference	
	82	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If teacher has a good behavior, students take an example them. (If a teacher) On the other hand a student could be miserable in the life. 	Turkish interference / overgeneralization	
	<i>SUBTOTAL</i>			
	TOTAL ERRORS	128		

As can be understood from Table 1, the total number of errors in prepositions is “46” and total number for articles is “82”. These errors could be attributed to two sources: *mother tongue interference* which is the Turkish language, and *intralingual interference*. According to Dulay, Burt, & Krashen (1982), intralingual errors may be an indicator of the general outlook of learning in relation to overgeneralization, incomplete application of the rule and failure to learn conditions under which rules apply. A good example which reflects Turkish interference in learning the English language, as seen in the students’ writings, were sentences like “There are main features at the good teacher”. In this example, the students wrongly used the preposition “at” where they should use “of” instead. This is because it is a literal translation to what it is said in Turkish “iyi öğretilen”. An example of *intralingual errors* would be a sentence like “In the English lesson, teacher can get students to watch an English movie.” It can be noticed that in this example, the article “the” is used wrongly instead of the preposition “an”. This kind of error cannot be attributed to the mother tongue since Turkish does not have a definite article “the”. This type of error could be attributed as being *intralingual*. Interference in the sense reveals that students may be overgeneralizing the use of the preposition “the” to areas where they should not be used.

It can be seen in Table 2 that the total number of errors of morphology and grammar is 130, with variation among the subcategories. The most predominant type of errors within this category are *confusion of verb forms* (n=34), followed by *singular – plural nouns* (n=23) and *conjunctions* (n=23). Examples of confusion of verb forms include sentences like “There can’t established a genuine relationship,” “If this authority doesn’t be enough, learners can extenuate the teacher,” or “Community can be flowed a good language teacher.” It seems that these errors are caused by *incomplete application of the rule* and *overgeneralization*. The fourth most common error types are *lack of agreement between s+v* (n=16) and using *wrong part of speech* (n=16). Examples of lack of s-v agreement are “They writes story with these words” and “The student are able to emulate this.” Other examples of *lack of s-v agreement* include “Teachers draws attention to success in the professional field” or “If the teacher do not know adjectives or adverbs in Turkish.” These types of errors can be attributed to *overgeneralization* where students extend the rules because they do not have sufficient knowledge about these rules so they use “draws” with the subject “teachers” where they should use “draw.” Examples of *wrong part of speech* include “The best teacher is patience.”

Table 2. Frequencies of morphology and grammar errors conducted by ELL learners

Morphology and Grammar	Lack of agreement between s+v	16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ So, he improve himself. ▪ They writes story with these words. ▪ The student are able to emulate this. 	Incomplete application of rule
	Singular – Plural Nouns	23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ If teacher show off to their students with their knowledge... ▪ They provide the student to the fullest of their time. ▪ What are the qualities of a good languages of teacher? ▪ Because of their role model this is their teachers. ▪ There are laboratory, Lots of way, Some topic. 	Incomplete application of rule
	Confusion of verb forms	34	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Community can be flowod a good language teacher. ▪ There can't established a genuine relationship. 	Turkish Interference
	Using wrong part of speech		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ If this authority doesn't be enough, learners can extenuate the teacher. 	Incomplete application of rule
	Gerund & Infinitive		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The best teacher is patience. 	
	Conjunctions	16		
		18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ They are best teachers exhibit a positive attitude. (instead of exhibiting) 	Incomplete application of rule
	23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A good teacher will be discussed in terms of be impartial, be understandable. So, teachers prepare to wordplays, prepare to competitions... ▪ She must give their ideas his/her full consideration. (lack of and) 	Incomplete application of rule	
	TOTAL	130		

Table 3. Syntactic errors of ELL learners

Syntax	Sequence of tense / tense confusion / incorrect use of progressives	15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ They will do the same mistake if anybody didn't correct. ▪ The teacher is responsible for teaching grammar and while she was teaching the rules... ▪ When these students became a teacher, they will do the same. ▪ A teacher who is not teaching competence cannot be a good teacher. ▪ If a teacher has not teaching competence, the students don't understand. 	Incomplete application of rule
	Omission of the main verb or verb to be	29	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The most important quality that every teacher should know their.... 	Incomplete application of rule
	Omission or addition of "to"	18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A good language teacher has to some qualities. 	Incomplete application of rule
	Passive voice	20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The teacher must be chose willingly his/her profession. ▪ We can be defined an ideal teacher. ▪ And also listening makes us getting accustomed. 	Incomplete application of rule
	Missing Subject	8		Incomplete application of rule
	<i>TOTAL</i>	90		

Table 3 indicates that the total number of errors in the syntax category is 90. Within the nine subcategories, the most frequent error type is *omission of the main verb and verb to be* (n=29). Most of the students forget using the verb "be" especially when there is another modal other auxiliary verb in the sentence. For example, "They should patient, honest...." The second most common error type under the category of syntax is related to passive voice (n=20). Examples of passive voice errors include, "The teacher must be chose willingly his/her profession." The third most common errors stem from *omission or addition of "to"*

(n=18). Errors in passive were also found to be prevalent in other studies. Khansir and Ilkhani's study (2016) revealed that 29% of the errors in general were in passive voice.

Table 4. Word order errors of ELL learners

Word Order	Unnecessary words	13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Firstly, you have to listen, articulate that what you listen. ▪ Students will realize that whether they're using the pronunciation correctly or not. 	Incomplete application of rule
	Wrong use of word group	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Not only this action is not limited. ▪ Because as one gets older the less one can wish to teach. (instead of the older she gets) ▪ The teacher should approach optimistic the problem. ▪ S/He must be in the best communication with the students. (instead of good at) 	Incomplete application of rule
	Sequence of sentence	31	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Therefore, he could point the way his student ideally. ▪ The more children have fun, the more they can learn easily. 	Turkish interference
	<i>TOTAL</i>	48		

As can be understood from Table 4, the total number of word order errors was 48. The most frequent error group in this category is *sequence of sentence* (n=31). Examples of such errors include, "Therefore, he could point the way his student ideally." These errors are caused by Turkish Interference. Syntax of Turkish sentences is different from syntax of English; hence, students have problems while translating Turkish into English. Another example was the sentence, "They should know very well their subjects." In this example, the student uses an adverb before the object which is the form of a Turkish sentence. While writing an essay, the students use the sequence of their mother tongue in the sentences which is a major barrier to their writing. The second most common type of error was *unnecessary words* (n=13). Examples of such errors include "Firstly, you have to listen,

articulate that what you listen.” or “Students will realize that whether they’re using the pronunciation correctly or not.” In these sentences, students added the word “that” before another noun clause.

Table 5. Lexical errors of ELL learners

Lexical Errors	Wrong form of the word	27	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ They will be developed their self. ▪ Close to them with empathy. 	Turkish interference
	Collocation	8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The learning can grow difficult (instead of get/become) ▪ Good qualities language teacher. (instead of qualified language teacher) ▪ If teachers doesn't prepare, he or she will force in class. ▪ Teachers should able to reach students psychology. ▪ It is very difficult to gather attention 	Turkish interference / Incomplete application of rule
	Wrong word choice	62	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Attention teacher trying to make leaving interesting as well as creative. ▪ It is in students' hand to develop him/herself. ▪ Teachers should able to reach students psychology. 	Turkish interference
	Typical Turkish constructions	6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Before everything, the teacher must be chose willingly his/her profession. (instead of first of all) ▪ The teacher can't be effectively and efficiently. 	Turkish interference
	Wrong use of adverb	6		
	TOTAL	110		

We can see in Table 5 that the number of lexical errors is 110. Within the six subcategories, the most predominant was *wrong word usage* (n=62), followed by *wrong form of the word* (n=27). Wrong word usage errors are mostly caused by Turkish Interference. "A good language teacher does not study lesson long time." In this example, the student wants to give the meaning of "continue to the lesson" which is used as "ders işlemek" in Turkish. The student's word choice in L2 is shaped by L1. Using the wrong form of a word is another basic category in lexical errors. "A good language teacher must be sure from correctness of his/her information." "The teacher is different from other jobs." Word form errors are generally caused by the wrong usage of prefix-suffix. Learners have difficulty in choosing the right form of the word in a sentence because of Incomplete Application of Rules. The least predominant groups in lexical error category are "Wrong Use of Adverb" and "Typical Turkish Constructions" with six errors per group. The errors of adverbs are caused by Incomplete Application of Rules. "Students can relax and listen careful." In this example, the student uses an adjective after the verb which shows the incomplete application in the use of an adjective-adverb. Typical Turkish constructions are the most prominent group of Turkish interference found in the error analysis. "The teacher of human love unthinkable separate from love of the profession." This sentence has many types of error such as syntax, fragment and typical Turkish construction which are attributed to Turkish Interference to using L2 in writing.

Table 6. Analysis of Error Types (Tan, 2007)

<i>Error Type</i>	<i>Count</i>	<i>Examples</i>
Article	82	Teaching is easy profession; The impressive communication is an indispensable skill.
Word choice	62	If teachers doesn't prepare, he or she will force in class
Preposition	46	You can't be teacher to reading the slide.
Word order	31	Students can relax and listen more carefully to teacher.
Parts of speech	27	Teacher is a good job, they use fluency language.
S-V agreement	23	When a student ask a question, a student don't understand a topic.
Passive voice	20	He or she have already deemed as a loser. All of us affected by a teacher.
Missing verb	16	You should human. If a teacher good turn.
Verb tense	13	When these students became a teacher, they will do the same
Missing object	12	Students adopt as an idol. This situation can provide to learn more information.
Verb form	8	Will discussed, haven't a good communication,
Missing subject	8	Monitors student's work and progress.
Spelling	6	Nigth, Teachrts, Forexample, In my opinion
Total number of errors	354	

From Table 6, it can be understood that there are 354 common errors in total within 13 error types. These types are; (1) article, (2) word choice, (3) preposition, (4) word order,

(5) parts of speech, (6) s-v agreement, (7) passive voice, (8) missing verb, (9) verb tense, (10) missing object, (11) verb form, (12) missing subject, and (13) spelling. The most common errors are *article errors* (n=82). The second most common errors are *word choice errors* (n=62) and the third most common errors are *preposition errors* (n=46). The fourth most common errors are related to *word order errors* (n=31), and the fifth most common error category is *parts of speech* (27). Another interesting finding is that ELL students confuse active and passive forms. The number of errors in the category of passive voice is 20. At this level, it would not be expected to see that many passive voice errors.

Table 7. Hierarchy of errors within function words

Area	No	Type of Errors	No. of Errors
Function Words	01	Addition of "the"	34
	02	Omission of "a-an"	19
	03	Confusion of prepositions	18
	04	Omission of prepositions	18
	05	Omission of "the"	13
	06	Insertion of prepositions	10
	07	Addition of "a-an"	9
	08	Confusion of articles	7
<i>Total number of errors</i>			128

Table 7 lists errors in the category of function words, the total number of which is 128. The most common errors are *addition of the* (n=34). The second most common errors are *omission of a-an* (19), which is followed by *confusion of prepositions* (n=18) and *omission of prepositions* (n=18). The fundamental reason for the prevalence of article errors like these may be the absence of definite article in the students' mother tongue. The literature supports the fact that article and preposition errors are the most common among L2 learners.

Table 8. Hierarchy of errors within morphology category

Area	No	Type of Errors	No of Errors
Morphology	01	Lack of agreement between s + v	23
	02	Singular / Plural nouns	22
	03	Omission of plural "s"	14
	04	Inappropriate plural ending	11
	05	Using other parts of speech than adjective	3
	06	Addition of suffixes to infinitive	2
	07	Lack of agreement between nouns and pronouns	1
	08	Irregular verbs	1
	09	Demonstrative	1
<i>Total number of errors</i>			78

Table 8 shows that the total number of errors under the category of *morphology* is 78. Errors related to lack of agreement between subject and verb are ranked at the top of the table (n=23). The reason for this type of error is incomplete application of the rule. The

second most common error type is *singular / plural nouns* (n=22). Students have difficulties with discrimination of singular and plural pronouns and their auxiliary verbs in Simple Present Tense. They prefer adding “-s” to verbs after all subject pronouns or using the first singular pronoun “I” with the auxiliary verb “are” as an example of overgeneralization of the rules. The third most common category of errors is *omission of plural “s”* (n=14).

Table 9. Hierarchy of errors in syntax category

Area	No	Type of Error	No of Errors
Syntax	01	Word order	31
	02	Omission of “verb to be”	27
	03	Omission of the main verb	16
	04	Missing subject	8
	05	Addition of “to”	6
	06	Omission of “to”	2
	07	Sequence of tense	2
	08	Using progressive	1
<i>Total number of errors</i>			93

According to Table 9, the total number of errors in the category of syntax is 93. The most common error type is problems in *word order* in general (n=31). It is hypothesized that the reason for this error is Turkish interference. The second most common type of errors is *omission of the verb “to be”* (n=27). The third most common error type under the category of syntax is *omission of the main verb* (n=16).

Table 10. Hierarchy of grammatical errors

Area	No	Type of Error	No. of Errors
Grammar	01	Passive voice	20
	02	Gerund – Infinitive	18
	03	Confusion of tenses	13
	04	Modals	13
	05	Conjunctions	12
	06	Relative clauses	9
	07	Wrong use of adverb	6
	08	Causatives	4
	09	Conditionals	2
<i>Total number of errors</i>			97

Table 10 shows that the number of errors under the category of Grammar is 97. Errors related with *passive voice* are the most common error types (n=20). The students Could not decide to use active or passive form in their sentences. The second most common error type is *gerund – infinitive* (n=18), followed by *confusion of tenses* (n=13). They have a lack of information about grammar rules both in their mother tongue and the target language.

Table 11. Hierarchy of Lexical Errors

Area	No	Type of Error	No. of Errors
Lexical Errors	01	Wrong word choice	62
	02	Wrong form of the word	27
	03	Unnecessary words	13
	04	Collocation	8
	05	Typical Turkish construction	6
	06	Wrong use of word group	4
Total number of errors			120

From Table 11, it can be seen that the total number of errors under the category of Lexical Errors is 120. The most common errors are *wrong word choice* (n=62), and the second most common errors are *wrong form of the word* (n=27). The third most common error is *unnecessary words* (n=13). The students have difficulty in choosing correct or appropriate words to express their ideas clearly. Some sentences are totally ambiguous because of incorrect word usage. They sometimes use word-for-word translation from Turkish to English which causes obscurity in meaning.

Conclusions and Discussion

The current study analyzed the errors made by Turkish ELL learners, with a secondary aim being to identify the sources of these errors. In line with the related literature, it was found that most of the errors focused on *incomplete application of rules*, *Turkish interference (L1 interference)*, and *overgeneralization*. There is ample evidence in the literature that endorses the role of L1 in L2 lexical acquisition (Ard & Homburg, 1992; Jarvis & Odlin, 2000; Zughoul, 1991). The current study also came up with a number of lexical items that are influenced by students' L1 (for example, "Teachers should able to *reach* students psychology"). Likewise, a study conducted by Bennui (2008) found L1 interference to be influential in the writing process of students. Similar to the findings of this current study, Bennui (2008) also found problems with word order, subject-verb agreement, verb tense, prepositions, and noun determiners that were all due to L1 syntactic interference.

As for *interlingual errors*, Kirkgöz' study found that *overgeneralization* was one of the most common types of intralingual errors. By overgeneralization, she meant "negative transfer of language items and grammatical rules in the target language, incomplete application of the rule" (2010, p. 4356). The current study also found a high percentage of overgeneralization errors. This is interesting because the participants of the current study were English Language and Literature students at university level. The prevalence of such errors indicates that L1 interference is here to stay.

In relation to errors, it was found that certain kinds of errors were made more frequently by the students. Without separating the groups, the most predominant error types were *wrong word choice*, *addition of "the"* and *word order*. Categorical analysis concluded that in the first place, the most prevalent errors among second grade students in Karabuk University within Function Words were errors of "addition of the," followed by "confusion of prepositions," and the least prevalent were "confusion of articles." Second, the most predominant errors were "lack of agreement between subject and main verb" and

the least were the “irregular verb” in the category of Morphology and Grammar. Third, the most predominant errors under the category of Lexical Items were errors of “wrong word choice” and the least were the “typical Turkish construction.” Fourth, the most predominant errors within syntax were errors of “omission of verb to be” and the least were “using progressive.” Fifth, the most predominant errors among second grade students in Karabuk University within Word Order were errors of “sequence of sentence” and the least were wrong use of word group. Sixth, the most predominant errors were in the category of Confusion of Tenses. Errors were attributed to Turkish Interference and Interlingual Interference (Overgeneralization). The large number of overgeneralization errors may suggest a link with “natural language development” and these errors can be seen as a part of learners’ interlanguage development.

In the current study, the results indicated that the number of prepositions errors was 46 out of 128 function word errors. Prominent researchers such as Celce-Murcia and Larsen-Freeman (1999) in the area of SLA stated that the use of prepositions pose a challenge on the part of students. In a similar vein, Takahashi (1996) also believes that the correct use of prepositions is the greatest problem for EFL learners despite their proficiency in grammar and other language areas. The findings of the current study also seem to support these views.

Pedagogically speaking, the findings of this current study have some pedagogical implications. In the first place, errors made by EFL learners provide valuable insights into the language learning progress of L2 learners. In addition, they shed light on the real-world problems learners face in their writing. These errors can be utilized to improve learners’ writing performance. It is seen that even at higher levels learners’ first language plays a vital role in their language errors. In this case, teachers can be more sensitive to differences and similarities between learners’ L1 and L2. The findings of the current study also indicate that knowledge of grammar and vocabulary of the target language is needed for a comprehensible piece of writing. Therefore, students’ deficiency in the target language knowledge seems to be a major source which hinders students’ effectiveness in writing in English. As such, properly-prepared grammar and vocabulary lessons based on frequently found errors could be effective in improving students’ writing.

Another important finding of the current study in terms of causes of errors was that *overgeneralization errors* and thus L1 interference errors are prevalent. Given the academic level of the participants, which is from B2 to C1, this finding is interesting. It shows that more attention must be paid to L1 influence.

Recommendations

Out of the results, it is possible to draw some recommendations which can be useful for both teachers and students to improve the writing abilities of students. Teachers should develop an error correction strategy and find remedial programs to help students avoid committing such errors. Moreover, organizing a new curriculum with the help of inference from such analyses could contribute to improving students’ writing ability in English. Errors can also be studied from the viewpoint of learners themselves.

Limitations

Due to time limitations, in the current study the potential causes of L2 errors were not studied from the viewpoint of students. In a future study, learner views can be taken into consideration which may provide more in-depth insight into the issue. Secondly, the current study did not focus on L2 errors across proficiency levels. All of the students in the current study were B2 level or A1 level. A future study could focus on an analysis of errors across proficiency levels.

Notes

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