AN ANALYSIS OF SYNTACTIC ERRORS
IN THE COMPOSITIONS OF STUDENTS TAKING
THE PROFICIENCY EXAM AT AN ELT DEPARTMENT

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Bu tezin tasarımı, hazırlanması, yürütülmesi, araştırılmalarının yapılması ve bulgularının analizlerinde bilimsel etiğe ve akademik kurallara özenle riayet edildiğini; bu çalışmanın doğrudan birincil ürünü olmayan bulguların, verilerin ve materyallerin bilimsel etiğe uygun olarak kaynak gösterildiğini ve alıntı yapılan çalışmalara atfedildiğini beyan ederim.

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ÖZET

İNGİLİZ DİLİ EĞİTİMİ BÖLÜMÜ SEVİYE BELİRLEME SINAVINA KATILAN ÖĞRENCİLERİN KOMPOZİSYONLARINDAKİ SÖZDİZİMSEL HATALARIN İNCELENMESİ

Karahan, Pınar
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İkinci dil edinimi/öğrenimi anadil edinimine kıyasla daha zor bir süreçtir. Anadil ediniminde, kişi kendi dilini kendi sosyal ve kültürel çevresinde öğrenir. Ancak; ikinci bir dil veya yabancı bir dil öğrenirken aynı durum söz konusu değildir, çünkü öğrenilen dil farklı bir sosyal ve kültürel çevreye aittir. Bu nedenle; yabancı dil edinimi/ öğrenimi sürecinde çeşitli hata türleriyle sık sık karşılaşılır.

Bu çalışmanın ilk aşamasında; 2008-2009 Güz Döneminde Pamukkale Üniversitesi Eğitim Fakültesi İngiliz Dili Eğitimi Bölümünü kazanan 65 öğrencinin katıldığı yeterlik sınavında yazmış oldukları kompozisyonlardaki sözdizimsel hatalar nitel ve nicel olarak incelenmiştir. En çok yapılan hatalar konusunda güvenilirlik analizi yapılmıştır. Çalışmanın ikinci bölümünde ise 65 öğrenci içinden Hazırlık Programına katılan 30 öğrencinin 15 tanesi birinci sınıf güz dönemi sonunda rastgele seçilmiş ve bu öğrencilere yeterlik sınavındaki aynı kompozisyon konuları aynı süre ve kelime sınırlamasıyla tekrar verilmiştir. Rastgele seçilmiş olan bu 15 öğrencinin birinci sınıfın güz dönemi sonunda yazdıkları kompozisyonlar ile seviye belirleme sınavında yazmış oldukları kompozisyonlar T-unit analizi ve Tek Yönlü Anova (F-test) kullanılarak öğrencilerin gelişimini ve Hazırlık Programının verimliliğini belirlemek amacıyla karşılaştırılmıştır.

Çalışmanın amacı, farklı seviye gruplarındaki öğrencilerin yaptıkları hataların tür ve sıklığını belirlemektir. Yabancı dil öğrenimi sürecinde, öğrenciler farklı türlerde söz dizimsel hatalar yapma eğilimindedirler. Çalışmanın, öğrencilerin yaptıkları farklı türlerdeki söz dizimsel hata türleri ve sıklıklarını belirleyerek, öğrencilerin mevcut İngilizce seviyelerini geliştirmelerine ve böylece dili daha etkin kullanmalarına katkı sağlaması beklenmektedir. Çalışmanın diğer amaçları ise, öğretim üyesi/elemanlarına, öğrencilerin mevcut İngilizce seviyeleri hakkında fikir vermek ve öğrencilerde sözdizimsel hatalar konusunda farkındalık yaratarak öğrencilerin yazma becerilerini geliştirmelerine katkı sağlamaktır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: İkinci Dil Edinimi, Hata Analizi, Sözdizimsel Hatalar

ABSTRACT

AN ANALYSIS OF SYNTACTIC ERRORS IN THE COMPOSITIONS OF STUDENTS TAKING THE PROFICIENCY EXAM AT AN ELT DEPARTMENT

Karahan, Pınar
M.Sc. Thesis in English Language Teaching
Supervisor: Asst. Prof. Dr. Selami OK

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Second language acquisition/ learning is not an easy process when compared to that of first language acquisition. In first language acquisition, one learns his/her language in its own social and cultural context. However, it's not the same when one is learning a second or a foreign language as that language belongs to a different social and cultural context. For this reason; we often encounter several types of errors in the process of second language acquisition/learning.

In the first stage of this study, the syntactic errors in the compositions of the 65 ELT students taking the proficiency exam in 2008-2009 Fall Term in the Faculty of Education, ELT Department are analyzed qualitatively and quantitatively. Inter-coder Reliability on the Most Commonly Made Error Types was also reached. In the second stage, 15 students out of 30 who attended the preparatory program were randomly selected and asked to write on the same topics within the same time limit and word constraint as before at the end of the first term of their freshman year. The essays of a sample group including 15 students which they wrote as part of the proficiency exam were compared with those they wrote on their freshman year through a t-unit analysis and One Way Anova (F-test) in order to determine the effectiveness of the writing component of the preparatory program and overall progress of the students.

The aim of this study is to identify and determine the error types and the frequencies of these errors that students at students have made. When learning a second or a foreign language, students are inclined to make different types of syntactic errors. By identifying, analyzing and determining their error types and frequencies, this study may contribute to the students' improving their levels of English, and thus using the language more effectively. It aims to give an idea to the instructors about the present English levels of the students and to raise the awareness of the students about their syntactic errors and thus to improve their writing skills.

Keywords: Second language acquisition, Error Analysis, *Syntactic Errors.*

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER TWO
REVIEV OF LITERATURE

CHAPTER THREE
METHODOLGY

CHAPTER FOUR
RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

CHAPTER FIVE
CONCLUSION

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BLT   Behaviourist Learning Theory
CAH   Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis
EA   Error Analys
EFL   English as a Foreign Language
ELT   English Language Teaching
ESL   English as a Second Language
L1   Native Language
L2   Second or Foreign Language
TL   Target Language
SLA   Second Language Acquisition

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background of the Study

Writing effectively in English is becoming an increasingly important issue in our world and good English writing competence is widely recognized as an important skill for a variety of reasons. Writing is a complex process which demands cognitive analysis and linguistic synthesis. It is even harder to learn to write in a foreign language, and it takes considerable time and effort to become a skillful writer in a foreign language. English writing instruction is thus assuming an increasing role in foreign language education.

Writing in a foreign language is not an easy task. Teaching foreign language writing to large classes of unskilled writers is a demanding job. It is not easy to achievsignificant progress within limited time. Enhancing writing proficiency can be possible if teachers understand their students' writing difficulties and offer students effective instructional strategies which integrate reading, writing and grammar skillfull.

Language instructors and researchers have long been interested in the writing errors of EFL learners. Before Corder (1967), errors were regarded as a serious problem that should be eradicated as soon as possible. However, errors are now regarded as a device that learners use and from which they can learn (Corder, 1967). They provide evidence of the learner's level in the target language (Gass and Selinker, 1984); they contain valuable information about the learning strategies of learners (Richards, 1974; Taylor, 1975; AbiSamra, 2003); and they also supply means by which teachers can assess learning and teaching and determine priorities for future effort (Richards and Sampson, 1974).

Therefore, conducting error analysis is one of the best ways to describe and explain errors made by EFL learners. This kind of analysis can reveal the sources of

these errors and the causes of their common occurrence. Once the sources and causes of errors are identified, it will be possible to determine the solution and the sequence of future instructions.

This study seeks to explore the major writing difficulties of learners in an ELT context by analyzing the nature and distribution of their writing errors. Instructional strategies are then suggested so that instructors can adopt a more effective approach to enhance students' writing proficiency.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

Second language acquisition/learning is not an easy process when compared to that of first language acquisition. In first language acquisition, one learns his/her language in its own social and cultural context. However, it's not the same when one is learning a second or a foreign language as that language belongs to a different social and cultural context. For this reason; we often encounter several types of errors in the process of second language acquisition/learning.

It is a commonly observed fact that freshman students at ELT Departments make various types of errors, especially at the sentence level, when they write in English. Although grammatically perfect sentences may not always include original ideas or thoughts, and therefore, may not have a significant effect on the quality of the written product, too many errors at the sentence level make the meaning ambiguous and lead to poor writing.

Freshman students at ELT Departments have difficulty in writing grammatically correct sentences. There are various and numerous types of errors in their writings. They state openly that they have the ideas in mind; however, they find it difficult to express these ideas when it comes to writing. These errors may or may not be only due to the first language interference. Therefore, as a researcher, I believe that studying the compositions of these students with the aim of identifying, analyzing, and classifying their errors will demonstrate the most common types of errors and linguistic difficulties. Additionally, this kind of analysis will help the instructors to come up with some possible solutions.

In this study, the syntactic errors in the compositions of the students taking the proficiency exam in 2008-2009 Fall Term at the ELT Department, Pamukkale University Faculty of Education, are analyzed qualitatively and quantitatively.

1.3. Purpose of the Study

The aim of this study is to identify and determine the error types and the frequencies of these errors that students have made at pre-intermediate, intermediate and upper-intermediate levels. When learning a second or a foreign language, students are inclined to make different types of syntactic errors. By identifying, analyzing and determining their error types and frequencies, this study may contribute to the students' improving their levels of English and thus using the language more effectively. It aims to give an idea to the instructors about the present English levels of the students and to raise the awareness of the students about their syntactic errors and thus to improve their writing skills.

1.4. Method of the Study

This study is a descriptive one and it's a case study. In the first stage of the study, the syntactic errors of the 65 students taking the proficiency exam at an ELT Department are identified, analysed and classified according to their types and frequencies. The data have been evaluated statistically and the results have been presented through tables and graphics.

In the second stage of the study, 15 students out of 30 who attended the prep program were randomly selected and asked to write on the same topics within the same time limit and word constraint as before at the end of the first term of their freshman year. 15 students were reached and this represents half of the population.

The essays of a sample group including 15 students which they wrote as part of the proficiency exam were compared with those they wrote on their freshman year through a t-unit analysis in order to determine the effectiveness of the writing component of the Preparatory Program and overall progress of the students.

The comparison of total, error-free t-units and false number of complete sentences of each student in the proficiency exam and in their freshman year was made and illustrated in a table. The results were analyzed statistically.

In order to add a new dimension to the study, the sentence types in students' essays in the Proficiency Exam and in the Freshman Year was compared and contrasted. Sentence types were classified into three groups as simple, compound and complex sentences. The frequency of each sentence type was calculated and statistically analyzed.

1.5. Research Questions

The study seeks to address the following research questions:

R1: What are the most commonly made syntactic errors of the students and what is the frequency of all these errors?

R2: What is the writing improvement level of students in terms of composition length and the percentages of error?

R3: What are the opinions of the students about their own improvement level in English writing?

1.6. Significance of the Study

The motive for this study stemmed from the need to identify a variety of syntactic errors made by the students at an ELT Department in order to improve their writing skills in English. Therefore, this kind of investigation into the syntactic errors of the ELT Department students with the goal of identifying, analyzing and classifying their errors would highlight the major areas of linguistic difficulties and show the weaknesses in English writing and grammar instruction. The results of this study and the analysis of

syntactic errors are expected to help the instructors to come up with possible solutions and suggestions for coping with these errors. Students will also benefit from the results of this study when they have an awareness of their errors and development over time.

1.7. **Limitations of the Study**

The researcher limited this study to the area of syntax. Writing, especially at the paragraph level is what the freshman ELT students need right from the beginning, since the vast majority of them enter the university without being able to write grammatically and semantically correct sentences. Writing is one of the most difficult skills for Turkish ELT students. Throughout their education at the department, they cannot escape the essential need for writing, such as writing assignments for their courses, and writing in their exams. Many students tend to memorize pieces of compositions, etc in order to avoid the dilemma of writing.

It is important to mention, however, that not all the errors made by the students were in morphological and syntactical categories. Some of the errors might be called surface errors, such as spelling and punctuation errors, which both native speakers and non-native speakers of English also make. Therefore, spelling and punctuation errors were not included in this study among the writing errors. This means that EFL instructors may tolerate these errors, especially the ones in spelling, and regard grammar errors as more serious.

It should also be noted that recognizing and identifying the syntactic errors in this study depends crucially on the way the researcher interprets students' intended meaning of the context. This interpretation may differ according to different raters' knowledge of colloquial English. Thus, different raters' recognition of students' errors might be different. Although the study attempted to identify and analyze syntactic errors in Standard English, there was also a need to account for non-standard, yet still grammatical forms in English.

1.8. Outline of the Study

This study includes 5 chapters.

Chapter 1 *introduces the subject of the thesis, background of the study, statement of the problem, purpose and significance of the study, the research questions, limitations of the study and operational definitions.*

Chapter 2 *consists of the review of the related literature on error analysis. This chapter begins with a historical background to the field of error analysis.*

Chapter 3 *introduces the methodology of the study such as research design, participants, data collection instruments and data analysis.*

Chapter 4 *analyses the results of the data collection instruments; and the interview.*

Chapter 5 *presents an overview of the study, conclusion and the discussion of the findings, implications and suggestions for further study.*

1.9. Operational Definitions

Syntactic Errors: refer to the errors that violate the rules for the formation of grammatical sentences in a language. However; the classified errors in this study are the examples of both syntactic and morphological errors. Morphological errors refer to the errors in the internal structure of words, and of the systematic form-meaning correspondences between words of a language.

BLT: *Behaviourist Learning Theory is the theory which* describes language learning as habit formation.

CAH: Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis focuses on the interference of L1 on L2 learning

EFL: English as a Foreign Language is the term used when English is taught in a culture where English is not the primary language that is spoken. Usually, EFL refers to teaching English in a foreign country where English is not spoken regularly.

ESL: English as a Second Language is the term which refers to the study of English by nonnative speakers in an English-speaking environment.

Error Analysis: Error Analysis is a research approach in the field of second language acquisition. This procedure involves collecting samples of learner language, identifying the errors in the sample, describing these errors, classifying them according to their hypothesized causes, and evaluating their seriousness (Ellis, 1985).

L1: L1 refers to a person's first language.

L2: L2 refers to a person's second language.

T-unit: T-unit is an independent clause including all subordinate elements, e.g., I know that she is doing her homework in her house right now (Choi, 1988).

CHAPTER TWO
REVIEW OF LITERATURE

In this section, the theoretical background of error analysis and its implementation in the **E**nglish as a **F**oreign **L**anguage (EFL) classroom teaching have been presented. It starts with a systematic review of the concepts. Also, theories concerning **E**rror **A**nalysis (EA) and various reasons causing errors are explored.

2.1. Historical Background of the Field of Error Analysis

In the 1950s, behaviourist learning theory (BLT) described language learning as habit formation and explained why the second language (L2) learners made errors. According to BLT, old habits prevent or facilitate the formation of new habits. Depending on the behaviourism and structuralism, Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis (CAH) focused on the interference of L1 on L2 learning (Brown, 1987).

Contrastive analysis hypothesis claimed that the main obstacle in second language acquisition is the interference of the L1 with the L2, and that a scientific and structural comparison of the two languages would enable people to predict and describe the possible problems. Contrastive Analysis (CA) is based on the roots of behaviorism and structuralism. Behaviouristic theory held the view that human language learning was about changing old habits and building new ones. According to this theory, errors occur when learners cannot respond correctly to a particular stimulus in the second language. Errors may be regarded as a negative stimulus which reinforces "bad habits", so they should not be allowed to occur. Therefore, the advocates of the behaviouristic theory placed more emphasis on mechanical pattern drills and attempted to correct every error or mistake in classroom teaching

Until the late sixties, the popular theory about the issue of second language learning was behaviourism. This theory suggested that learning was mostly a question of acquiring a set of new language habits. Therefore, errors were regarded as being the result of the persistence of existing mother tongue habits in the new language.

Consequently, this idea made the researchers of applied linguistics devote their studies largely to the comparison of the native and the target language in order to make predictions and explanations about errors (contrastive analysis). However, errors that were not explained in this way were underestimated. As a result, all errors, whatever their origins were, necessitated the use of the same technique of further drilling and exercise (Erdogan, 2005).

EA is a branch of applied linguistics and it emerged in the sixties to demonstrate that learner errors were not only due to the learner's L1, but also they reflected some universal learning strategies. This was a reaction to contrastive analysis theory, which considered language transfer as the basic process of second language learning. EA, on the other hand, deals with the learners' performance in terms of the cognitive processes they make use of in recognizing or coding the input they receive from the target language. Therefore, the primary focus of error analysis is on the evidence that learners' errors provide an understanding of the underlying process of second language acquisition (Erdogan, 2005).

In the early 1970s, CA was criticised in terms of empirical, theoretical and practical reasons. Ellis (1985) classified critisims about CA into 3 groups. Firstly, the ability of CA to predict errors was doubtful. These doubts were the result of researchers' examination of learner language in depth. Secondly, the feasibility of comparing 2 languages and the methodology of CA caused a lot of theoretical criticisms. Thirdly, there were doubts about whether CA can offer any thing to language teacher.

In view of the criticisms above, it is lately understood that L2 learning is a creative process of constructing a language system (Brown 1987). In other words, according to the cognitive approach, making errors is an inevitable and necessary part of language learning process. Because of criticisms and new developments in L2 learning, the interest in CA declined and the enthusiasm for EA began to be more popular.

2.2. Theoretical development of error analysis

2.2.1.Contrastive analysis

American linguist Lado examined errors systematically and developed a theory called contrastive analysis in the '50s. This theory stated that the main obstacle to second language acquisition is the interference of the L1 with the L2. According to this theory, a scientific and structural comparison of two languages enables people to predict and describe the possible problems and difficulties in learning a second language. CA is based on behaviorism and structuralism. Behaviouristic approach claims that human language learning means changing old habits and building new ones. Errors occur when learners cannot respond correctly and appropriately to a particular stimulus in the second language. Since an error is regarded as a negative stimulus which reinforces "bad habits", it should not be allowed to occur.

2.2.2. Interlanguage

The shortcomings of contrastive analysis are that it overemphasized the interference of L1 in Second Language Acquisition (SLA) research, and that it totally ignored the language learners. However, interlanguage attempted to explore learning strategies based on learners' errors, and it has become the foundation of error analysis.

Interlanguage is a term that Selinker (1972) adopted from "interlingual". It refers to the separateness of second language learners' system that has a structurally intermediate status between the native and target language learners. A number of terms have been used to describe the legitimacy of learners' L2 system. Some of these terms are listed as follows: Corder (1971) used the term "idiosyncratic dialect" or "language learners' language", whereas Nemser (1971) called it as "approximate system". These terms all claim that second language learners are forming their own independent linguistic systems. This is neither the system of the native language nor the system of the target language, but falls in between the two. The first most important feature of interlanguage is that it has its own legitimate system in which learners are no longer looked on as producers of malformed, imperfect language with mistakes, but as

intelligent and creative beings who proceed creatively through logical and systematic stages of language acquisition. (Fang and Jiang, 2007).

A second important feature is that interlanguage is systematic and dynamic and it keeps changing as learners receive more input each day and revise and test their hypotheses about the L2 system. Interlanguage is independent, that is to say, it is neither the knowledge of L1 nor the L2 system. All L2 learners go through a process of interlanguage. And the third feature is that interlanguage is a linguistic system which reflects the psychological process of foreign language learning.

2.3. The Definition of Error Analysis

There is an Italian proverb "Sbagliando simpara" (We can learn through our errors). This proverb gives the message that making mistakes can be regarded as an essential part of learning. In this sense, Brown (1987) says that language learning, like any other human learning is a process that involves making mistakes, so in order to understand the process of L2 learning, the mistakes a person makes in the process of learning another language should be examined carefully. Here, the definition of EA can be given as a procedure that is based on an analysis of learners' errors.

Corder (1987) explains the significance of learners' errors in three different ways: Firstly, errors tell the teacher, how far the learner has progressed towards the goal and consequently what remains for him to learn. Secondly, they provide evidence of how language is learned or acquired, what strategies or procedures the learner is following in discovering the new language. Thirdly and most importantly, they are indispensable to the learner himself, since errors can be regarded as a tool the learner uses in order to learn. Brown (1987) also states that learners do make errors and that these errors can be observed, analysed and classified to reveal some thing of the system operating within the learner. This led to a surge of study of learners' errors called "*error analysis*".

Keshavarz (1997) defines error analysis in two branches: (i) theoretical, and (ii) applied. Theoretical analysis of errors firstly concerns the process and strategies of language learning and its similarities with first language acquisition. In other words, it tries to investigate what is going on in the minds of learners when learning another

language. Secondly, it tries to explain the strategies that learners use such as overgeneralization and simplification; and thirdly, it also aims to come up with a conclusion that regards the universals of language learning process.

Applied error analysis, on the other hand, concerns organizing remedial courses, and devising appropriate materials and teaching strategies based on the findings of theoretical error analysis. As can be understood from the definitions, the aim of the EA is to suggest suitable and effective teaching-learning strategies and remedial measures to be taken in in the second language learning process. This process is a multi-dimensional one which involves much more than solely analysing the errors of learners. For this reason, EA is distinguished from CA in that it examines all possible sources of errors.

2.4. The uses of Error Analysis

Corder (1973) states that error analysis has the most obvious practical use for the teachers. Learners' errors provide feedback. They tell the teacher how effective his teaching materials and techniques, and demonstrates him what parts of the syllabus, he has been following have been inadequately learned or taught and need further attention.

As can be seen in the explanation above, error analysis can be a very useful tool for a foreign language teaching program. If it is undertaken from the beginning level, error analysis will reveal to the teacher the possible problematic aspects of the language confronting the students. The frequency counts of errors can also be regarded as a helpful tool in establishing teaching priorities. Teaching time and effort can be allocated accordingly so that optimal results can be reached.

2.5. Issues Regarding Error Analysis

2.5.1. Errors vs. Mistakes

The distinction between an error and a mistake is significant. Linguists all over the world pay attention to this distinction, so it is important to make the definition of these two different concepts. The difference betweeen an error and a mistake is given clearly in the *Dictionary of Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics* (1992). A

learner makes a mistake when writing or speaking because of lack of attention, fatigue, carelessness, or some other aspects of performance. Mistakes can be self-corrected when attention is paid. However, an error occurs as the learner does not know what is correct, and thus it cannot be self-corrected.

Ellis (1997) suggests two ways in order to distinguish between an error and a mistake: The first one is to check the consistency of the learner's performance. If he sometimes uses the correct form and sometimes the wrong one, it is a mistake. However, if he always uses it incorrectly, it is then an error. The second way is to ask the learner to try to correct his own incorrect utterance. Where he is unable to, the deviations are errors; where he is successful, they are mistakes.

Errors are the deviances that are due to deficient competence. Since they are due to deficient competence, they tend to be systematic and not self-correctable. Mistakes are usually due to performance deficiencies that arise from lack of attention, slips of memory, anxiety which is possibly caused by pressure of time, and they are not systematic or readily identifiable and self -correctable (Corder 1973).

2.5.2. Description of errors

Error analysis is a comparative process, so we use a special case of contrastive analysis, and we compare synonymous utterances in the learner's dialect and the target language, in other words, we compare "erroneous utterance" and "reconstructed utterance" in order to describe the errors (Corder 1973).

A major distinction is made between "overt" and "covert" errors (Brown, 1987). Overt errors are completely ungrammatical at the sentence level. Covert errors are grammatically well-formed at the sentence level, but are not interpretable within the context. In the case of both overt and covert errors, Corder's model suggests making a plausible interpretation of the sentence, making a reconstruction of the sentence in the target language and comparing the reconstruction with the original idiosyncratic sentence, and finally describing the differences (Brown 1987).

Various categories have been identified in order to describe errors. Corder (1973) classifies the errors in terms of the difference between the learners' utterance and

the reconstructed version. According to Corder, errors can be classified into four categories:

a) *Omission* of some required element;
b) *Addition* of some unnecessary or incorrect element;
c) *Selection* of an incorrect element; and
d) *Misordering* of the elements.

However, Corder himself says that this classification is not enough to describe errors; that is why, he includes the linguistics level of the errors under the sub-areas of morphology, syntax, and lexicon (Corder, 1973).

Ellis (1997) classifies errors in such a way that can help us diagnose learners' difficulties at any stage of their development and to discover how changes in error patterns occur over time. This classification is exemplified in the following:

- *Omission*:
  Morphological omission *A strange thing happen to me yesterday.
  Syntactical omission * Must say also the names?

- *Addition*:
  In morphology * The book**s** is here.
  In syntax * The London
  In lexicon * I stayed there during five years ago.

- *Selection*:
  In morphology * My friend is old**est** than me.
  In syntax * I want that he comes here.

- *Ordering*:
  In pronunciation * 'fignisicant' for 'significant'; *'prulal' for 'plural'
  In morphology * get upping for 'getting up'
  In syntax * He is a dear to me friend.
  In lexicon * key car for 'car key' (Erdoğan, 2005)

An error may vary in its seriousness. It may include a phoneme, a morpheme, a word, a sentence or even a paragraph. For this reason, errors may also be viewed as being either *global* or *local* (Brown, 2000)**.** Global errors hinder communication. They prevent the message from being comprehended as in the example below:

- …being your hometown mean walking readingly because of knowing nearly everywhere.

On the other hand, local errors do not prevent the message from being understood because there is usually a minor violation of one part of a sentence that allows the hearer to predict the intended meaning as follows:

- When I finish my school, I would be an English teacher.

Corder's categorization of *overt* and *covert errors* is significant (1973). Overt errors are unquestionably ungrammatical at the sentence level and covert errors are grammatically well- formed at the sentence level, but are not interpretable within the context of communication. For example, "I'm fine, thanks." is a correct sentence, but if it is given as an answer to the question of "How old are you?" it is a covert error.

2.5.3. Sources of errors

As there are many descriptions for different kinds of errors, it is inevitable to ask for the sources of errors. In order to arrive at effective remedial measures, the researcher must understand fully the mechanism that triggers each type of error (Şanal, 2007).

It has been indicated in the first part of the literature review that errors were assumed as being the only result of interference of the first language habits to the learning of second language. However, with the help of error analysis, it has been understood that the nature of errors demonstrates the existence of other reasons for errors to occur. The sources of errors can be categorized into two domains: (i) interlingual transfer, and (ii) intralingual transfer.

2.5.3.1. Interlingual Transfer

Interlingual transfer is significant for language learners. *Dictionary of Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics* (1992) defines interlingual errors as being the result of language transfer, which is caused by the learner's first language. However, this should not be confused with the behaviouristic approach of language transfer. Error analysis does not regard them as the persistence of old habits, but rather as signs that the learner is internalizing and investigating the system of the new language.

Interlingual errors may occur at different levels such as transfer of phonological, morphological, grammatical and lexical-semantic elements of the native language into the target language. These different levels can be explained with some possible errors of Turkish students (Erdogan, 2005).

At phonological level, the sounds that do not occur in Turkish cause the students to mispronounce some sounds. They attempt to pronounce '*th*' of 'thank you' as 't' of 'tea'; or '*th*' of 'they' as 'd' of 'dean'. Since Turkish does not let two consonants together at the beginning of a word, learners tend to place a vowel between them as in the example of *'sitation', instead of 'station'. Train / tıren.

At morphological level, Turkish students tend to omit the plural suffix at the end of the word as Turkish does not put it in adjectival phrases indicating numbers as in the following examples (Erdoğan, 2005):

- ✓ three book
- ✓ Three student is coming. In Turkish it is "Üç öğrenci geliyor."

It is also possible that students transfer some lexical items to the target language. For instance, the verb 'sigara içmek' is expressed in a single word in English: 'smoke'. That is why, students tend to say drink cigarettes, or smoke cigarettes.

If any Turkish speaker learning English may say, "Ahmet Fatma ile evlendi." in his mother tongue, and he may transfer his old habit to the target language. The result would be "Ahmet married with Fatma." which is not acceptable in English (Altunkaya, 1985).

2.5.3.2. Intralingual Transfer and Developmental Errors

Interferences from the students' own language is not the only reason for making errors. Some errors seem to be universal, reflecting learners' attempts to realize the task of learning and using the target language simpler. Use of past tense suffix '-ed' for all verbs is an example of simplification and over-generalization. These errors are common in the speech of second language learners, irrespective of their mother tongue (Ellis,1997).

Intralingual errors result from faulty or partial learning of the target language rather than language transfer. They may be caused by the influence of one target language item upon another. For instance, learners attempt to use two tense markers at the same time in one sentence since they have not mastered the language yet. When they say "He is comes here", it is because the singularity of the third person requires "is" in present continuous, and "-s" at the end of a verb in simple present tense. In short, intralingual errors occur as a result of learners' attempt to build up concepts and hypotheses about the target language from their limited experience with it. Learners may make errors for this reason in many ways as in the following examples:

- He made me **to laugh.**
- I want **studying** literature.
- The bread smells fresh**ly.**
- Mothers always give us invaluable advice**s.**
- I don't know where **did** she go for swimming.

Learners may make mistakes in the target language. Since they have still not mastered the target language very well, they have difficulties in using it correctly. For instance, they may say "womans" instead of saying "women" as the plural form of "woman". In that way, the learner overgeneralizes the use of plural suffixes. Richards (1974) focuses on intralanguage/developmental errors and distinguishes four types of developmental errors. These are listed as in the following:

I. Overgeneralization

Overgeneralization errors refer to the deviant structures created by the learner as a result of his limited exposure to the target language. Learners tend to search for regularities in the TL and as they have incomplete knowledge of structures in the TL, they overgeneralize the rules and fail to recognize exceptions.

Ellis (1982) claims that some errors seem to be universal and they reflect learners' attempts to learn and use the target language in a simpler way. Use of past tense suffix -ed for all verbs is an example of simplification and overgeneralization.

- o He always **try** to help other people.

- o I can't remember when **did** he get married. (Keshavarz , 2001: 107-108)

II. Ignorance of rule restriction

Richards (1970: 12) define the ignorance of rule restrictions as "the application of rules to context they do not fit". Richards claims that learners commit this type of errors due to rote teaching and drilling exercises. In this type of error, the learner fails to realize restrictions of TL structures and extends rules to contexts where they do not apply in the correct TL use. Children are ignorant of rule restrictions when they are acquiring their own language. Similarly, the second language learner is unaware that there are some restrictions on existing structures of the TL.

There were many **fishes** in the lake.

Teachers always give us good **advices.** (Keshavarz, 2001:108)

III. Incomplete application of rule

According to Richards (1970:15), second language learners' incomplete application of rules means "the occurrence of structures whose deviancy represents the degree of development of the rules required to produce acceptable utterances." For instance, although student has been excessively taught the form of a proper question, he still uses the statement form instead of the question form or he just adds the question words at the beginning of the sentence, assuming that he has transferred the statement into a question. In fact, he has not. For example, such questions as below may be produced by second language learners:

"What you often do in the evening?"

"You speak English?"

IV. *False concepts hypothesised*

Richards, (1970:19) define the errors resulting from false concepts hypothesized as "the faulty comprehension of distinction in the target language". Richards states that excessive contrastive-based teaching and pre-mature contrastive presentation lead to these types of errors. Excessive contrastive-based teaching is based on the idea that "presenting items in contrast can lighten the teacher's and the students' work and consequently speed up the learning process" (Ruth, 1978: 118). However, this method of teaching is not always successful. William (1968: 129) argues "a course that concentrate too much on the main trouble spots without due attention to the structure of the foreign language as a whole will leave the learner with a patchwork of unfruitful, partial generalization…"The consequences of this are that students end up with confusion and an inadequate knowledge about the differences between the two languages.

2.6. Issues Regarding Error Analysis: The Uses of Error Analysis in a Second Language Teaching Program

One of the justifications for the study of learners' errors is that a good understanding of the nature of error is necessary before a systematic means of eradicating them could be found (Corder 1973). The errors of performance are known to be unsystematic whereas the errors of competence are systematic; therefore, teachers of English should be aware of the system of errors. It is not sufficient solely to study learners' errors and to classify them into different groups. Only when the teachers of English know why an error has been produced, they can start correcting it in a systematic way. It's usually unacceptable to correct the errors of a foreigner for native speakers unless they have been asked to do so by him. However; it is one of the most important tasks of the teacher in the language classroom to decide when correction is necessary. Correcting the learners' errors helps them to acquire the correct forms of the target language. Teachers should be careful in that language practice must focus on the points of language use that create significant learning problems for learners, as shown by error analysis.

2.7.Studies of Error Analysis

Error Analysis has been conducted by many researchers to find out the cases and the frequency of different types of errors. According to Richards et al. (1996:127), error analysis is conducted to identify strategies which the learners use in language learning, to track the causes of learners' errors, to obtain information on common difficulties in language learning or on how to prepare teaching material.

Duskova (1969) identified a total of 1007 errors based on the writings of 50 Czech learners of English and analyzed them in terms of 9 categories. She discovered that errors in articles (260) were the most frequent, followed by errors in lexis (233) while there were 54 errors in syntax and only 31 in word order.

Willcot (1972) conducted an error analysis study to discover some of the problems that native speakers of Arabic had with the syntax of written English. Willcot's findings demonstrated that the errors in definiteness were the most frequent one. These errors accounted for 55% more than verb problems, 75% more than noun problems, etc.

In another study, Scott and Tucker (1974:186) examined the errorr made by 22 Arab students enrolled in the first semester of a low-intermediate intensive English course at the American University of Beirut. The purpose of the study was to describe the approximative system, and to identify the sources, types and frequencies of the errors of the students. Their results revealed that verbs, prepositions, articles, and relative clauses were the students' most common errors. As for the verbs, for example, they calculated 19% of the finite verbs used in the students' writings were erroneous. Errors in auxiliaries and copula were also very common.

Abbot (1980:127) investigated the errors of Arab students in the category of restrictive relative clauses. The study revealed that 57% of the attempted relative clauses were erroneous. The types of errors made were: repetition of relative pronoun subject, repetition of relative pronoun object, wrong selection of relative pronouns and using redundant prepositions.

Kharma (1981:339) investigated the errors made by his Arab students in the use of the English definite articles. Kharma's results revealed that the majority of errors occurred in the use of "the" instead of "no articles" and vice versa. Some of these errors were attributed to Arabic language interference, others to wrong learning strategies or overgeneralization, etc.

Many error analysis studies are conducted after researchers have noticed that the students make a large number of errors in syntax. For instance, El-Sayed (1982:73) revealed that the subjects of his study made 1140 errors: 640 errors were in verbs and verbals, 159 errors in pronouns, 143 in articles, and the rest were nouns, prepositions, and adjectives. In his discussion of the difference between English and Arabic regarding the definite articles.

Al-Johani (1982:259-260) claims that the common characteristics between the two languages make the concept of the definite articles, and their usages in both languages are very easy and should not cause any serious problems. However, Kharma and Hajjaj (1989:151-152) and Farhat (1994:47) attribute many of the article errors to mother tongue interference.

Abu-Jarad (1983) tested the use of English tenses in the English language performance of 30 Palestinian students and found out that tense shift was a major problem facing the students. Verb formation and copula redundancy were also among the serious errors that needed immediate attention by the teachers.

In another study, Abu-Jarad (1986) analyzed the relative clauses and the verb tense of 32 Palestinian university students. The analysis of the verb phrases in the subjects' interlanguage indicated that the subjects shift of tense was a result of using English tense morphology to express an aspectual system similar to that of the Palestinian Arabic. The subjects of his study also inappropriately selected the English relative pronouns when they wrote in English, or they inserted a resumptive pronoun whenever the predicate of the sentence was an adjective, noun, or prepositional phrase.

Kim (1987) identified a total of 2455 errors in the English compositions of 12th grade Korean EFL learners. The findings demonstrated that the errors in BE and auxiliaries were most common (419), followed by errors in prepositions (287) and that intralingual errors were more than transfer errors. In the following year, Kim (1988)

investigated errors in English verbs with reference to tense, mood, and voice. The 120 subjects were the 11th grade Korean EFL learners who were asked to translate 42 Korean sentences into English. Results revealed that errors in mood were most frequent (903), followed by errors in voice (885) and tense (720), among the total of 2508 errors. With regard to the sources of the errors, overgeneralization (65%) occurred the most while L1 transfer occurred at 22% and simplification at 13%. In the essay writings of 200 10th grade Korean EFL learners, Kim (1998) identified 2122 errors and classified them in terms of 6 main categories and subdivided them into 22 linguistic categories. Her findings revealed that errors in articles were the most common (354) and that there were only 8 errors in word order and 2 in passive voice.

Radwan (1988) examined the types of grammatical and lexical errors in the nominal group. The result of his study showed that the errors made in the use of articles had the highest percentage. This was followed by relative-clause errors, genitive errors, number errors, word class errors, and then other miscellaneous errors.

Kim (1989) conducted EA with 200 10th grade Korean EFL learners, using their English translations of 30 Korean sentences. She identified 1122 errors in which transfer errors resulting from L1 structures were higher (24%) than overgeneralization errors (23%). There are some more studies conducted on spoken errors by Lennon (1991), Kim (1997), and Chin (2001).

Students who are involved in writing tasks are able to become real individuals who participate in social, communicative acts with meaningful, authentic purposes (Peyton, 1988; Reid, 1993; Staton, 1988). However; error analysis research has limitations of providing only a partial picture of learner language. Since EA solely investigates what learners do, it has a substantive nature that does not take into account the avoidance strategy in L2 acquisition. Learners who avoid the certain structures that are difficult due to the differences between their native language and the target language may be viewed to have no difficulty with those structures as Brown (1994) and Ellis (1996) pointed out.

Michaelides (1990:29) found out that the errors made by his students fall into eight categories according to their seriousness and frequency of occurrence respectively: wrong word order, wrong use of tenses, misuse of prepositions, misuse of articles,

omission of indirect object pronouns etc. He claims in his study that the systematic analysis of students' errors can be of great importance to the people concerned, i.e., the teacher, the student, and the researcher. It can offer the teacher a clear and reliable picture of his students' knowledge of the target language.

When the students attempt to correct their own errors, they are encouraged to use their power of reasoning and reformulate new hypotheses in accordance with the facts and nature of the target language.

On the other hand, Dessouky (1990:195) found that similar errors occur in all levels of these subjects, but the difference was in the frequency of their occurrence. The hierarchy of errors made by her students was: spelling, verb tense, and prepositions.

Chiang (1993) examined error types of 160 compositions written by senior high school students in Taiwan. The low proficient group wrote mainly in simple sentences. When it comes to global errors, the three most commonly made errors were conjunctions, run on sentences and subjects-objects-complements. The investigation of learning strategies showed that language transfer accounted for 70.58% of all the errors.

Farhat (1994:47) found the same types of errors made by his Sudanese students but with different order and frequency of occurrence: Article errors constituted 35.9%, tense errors 30.9%. concord errors 24%, pronominal errors 5.1%, copula omission errors 1.5%, adverb positioning errors 1.1% and adjective positioning errors 0.6%.

Belhaaj (1997:120) investigated the errors that his students made in translation. The results of the study revealed that the grammatical errors made by the students were arranged according to their frequency as follows: verb formed tense errors, relative clause, adjective errors, preposition errors, noun errors, article errors, and miscellaneous.

Liu (1999) conducted a study of lexical and grammatical collocational errors from 127 copies of students' final examination papers and 94 copies of students' compositions. The majority of the errors were due to negative interlingual transfer and four kinds of intralingual transfer, among which ignorance of rule restrictions resulted in more errors than the other three.

Huang (2001) investigated the nature and distribution of different kinds of grammatical errors made by 46 English majors of a Taiwanese university. A total of 1700 errors were found and categorized into 13 error types. The top six common errors were (1) Verb (2) Noun (3) Spelling (4) Article (5) Preposition and (6) Word Choice. Overgeneralization, ignorance of rule restrictions, simplification, incomplete application of rules and L1 transfer were reported as the major causes of EFL learners' errors.

Chan (2004) investigated writing errors made by 710 Hong Kong Chinese ESL learners at different proficiency levels with a focus on 5 error types, namely (a) lack of control of the copula (b) incorrect placement of adverbs (c) inability to use the *there be* structure for expressing the existential or presentative function (d) failure to use the relative clause and (e) confusion in verb transitivity. The results showed confirmatory evidence for syntactic transfer from Chinese to English with regard to the five syntactic patterns selected for experimentation. The extent of syntactic transfer was particularly large among learners of a lower proficiency level for complex target structures.

Huang (2006) made an analysis of 34 Taiwanese English majors' writing errors based on a web-based writing program, which included error categories of grammar, mechanics, style, and usage. The distribution of errors was usage (55%), mechanics (20%), style (16%) and grammar (9%). Huang concluded that most of the EFL students' writing errors were not due to insufficient command of linguistic complexity. On the contrary, they made many basic errors such as the subject-verb agreement or incomplete sentences.

2.8 Treatment of Errors

How to treat errors is a complicated problem. Language teachers need to be equipped with some theoretical foundations regarding error treatment. Principles of optimal affective and cognitive feedback, of reinforcement theory, and of communicative language teaching all combine to form these theoretical foundations(Fang). Keeping these theories in mind, teachers can judge in the classroom whether to treat or ignore the errors, when and how to correct them.

2.8.1 Types of errors that should be corrected

Learners' errors are usually classified in various categories. Burt (1975) made a distinction between "global" and "local" errors.   Global errors hinder communication and they prevent the learner from comprehending some aspects of the message. Local errors only affect a single element of a sentence, but do not prevent a message from being understood. Hendrickson (1980) claims that global errors need not be corrected and they are generally held to be true. The expressions such as "a news", or "an advice" are systematic errors, and they need to be corrected. As for pre-systematic errors, teachers can simply provide the correct usage. For systematic errors, since learners have already had the linguistic competence, they can explain this kind of errors and correct them themselves, so teachers just remind them when they commit such errors. As to what kind of errors should be corrected, it needs teachers' intuition and understanding of errors. At the same time, the teacher should consider the purpose of the analysis and analyze them in a systematic way.

2.8.2. When to correct learners' errors

One of the most controversial issues is when to treat errors: immediately or later. At this point, teachers are confronted with a dilemma: fluency versus accuracy. For communicative purposes, delayed correction is usually preferred. Some advanced students believe that when to correct errors is determined by the type of errors made. For instance, if they are pronunciation or grammatical errors, immediate correction is preferable, as delayed correction will possibly not make learners remember anything. Furthermore, the overall situation in the classroom is also important. When the whole class is familiar with a word, but only one of them is being corrected, he or she would feel awkward, so it can be seen that when to correct errors is a complicated issue. Both the teachers' intuition and the feedback from the students are equally important (Fang & Jiang, 2007).

2.8.3. How to correct learners' errors

James (1998) states that it is sensible to follow three principles in error correction. Firstly, the techniques involved in error correction should aim to enhance the

students' accuracy in expression. Secondly, the students' affective factors should be taken into account. Thirdly, the correction should not be made in a threatening way.

Some scholars believe that teachers' indirect correction is highly appreciated. They either encourage students to do self-correction or present the correct form, so students would not feel embarrassed.

2.9. Error Correction in Connection with Error Analysis

Conducting an error analysis is important for finding answers to many questions regarding the SLA. In general, the teacher's job is to point out when something has gone wrong and see whether the student can correct himself, then, to find out if what the student says or writes is just a mistake, or if it is a global or local error. However, the technique of correction is not simply presenting the data repeatedly and going through the same set of drills and exercises to produce the state of over learning. On the contrary, it requires that the teacher understand the source of the errors so that he can provide appropriate solutions, which will solve the learner's problems and allow him to discover the relevant rules of language use.

Thus, the source of the error is an important clue for the teacher to decide on the type of treatment. Harmer (1998) suggests three steps to be followed by the teacher when errors occur. The teacher first listens to the students, then identifies the problem, and solves it in the most efficient way. Corder (1973) states that knowledge of being wrong is only a starting point. The skill of correcting errors comes with determining the necessary data to present to the learner and what statements, descriptive or comparative, to make about it.

Since no teacher has time to deal with all the errors of the students, a hierarchy should be established for the correction of errors according to the nature and significance of errors. In such a hierarchy, priority should be given to errors which may affect communication and cause misunderstanding. If a teacher knows about all these items, he can direct himself accordingly. For example, Brown (2000) suggests that local errors as in the following example usually need not be corrected as the message is clear and correction might interrupt the learner in the flow of productive communication:

- Mothers protect their children**s**.

On the other hand, global errors need to be treated in some way since the message is not comprehended clearly:

- Other good thing about it, being your hometown mean walking readingly because of knowing nearly everywhere.

Errors in pluralization, use of articles, tenses, etc.are regarded as less important than errors regarding word order, the choice of placement and appropriate connectors in terms of the comprehensibility of the sentence. Therefore, it is implied that priority in error correction should be given to global errors in order to develop the students' communication skills. The knowledge of error analysis enables the teacher to monitor the students' errors in this frame and take precautions when necessary.

Different kinds of tasks may require a different treatment of errors. The reaction of the teacher towards errors and the type of feedback to be given are usually determined by the position of the error in the objective of the task.

Oral works are at crucial point in terms of corrections and feedback time. For oral works, it is usually recommended that students making mistakes during a fluent speech should not be interrupted, but be reminded of the mistakes and talk about the reasons.

When it comes to the type of feedback to be given - form or content should be decided according to the goal of the study. If the goal is to make the students practice a certain grammar point, it may be necessary to give feedback on the syntactic form. If a pronunciation item is being practiced, the teacher should correct the related mistakes without interrupting the learner (Ur, 1996).

For correcting written works, it is accepted that the teacher should not correct the students' mistakes directly but instead, should put marks indicating there is something wrong with that sentence, word, or punctuation. There are symbols that teachers use in order to show the types of mistakes. For example: writing 'sp' for spelling mistake near the wrong word or, writing 'rw' for the sentences that need to be

written once again. Thus, students are able to correct themselves looking for the source of their mistakes.

The existence of errors has been subject to all language-teaching theories as they represent an important aspect of second language learning. There are different opinions of different language teaching approaches about error correction (Ur, 1996).

Corder (1973) summarizes the view of error correction in language teaching as: Language learning is not parrot learning; we do not 'learn' or 'practice' examples. Examples are the data from which we induce the system of the language.

2.10. Objective Measures for Analysing Students' Compositions

Compositions of students can be analyzed in terms of their organization, grammar and vocabulary use, and many other features. Larsen-Freeman (1978) holds the view that "some objective measures can also be used to discriminate among compositions at different levels of proficiency in order to satisfy primarily the criteria of objectivity and reliability" (p. 440).

Hyland (2002) argues that understanding text analysis studies is important as such studies "can help us to understand both the features of effective writing and the influences that contribute to it" (p. 152). He makes a list of questions about student texts, such as:

- What features characterize the texts of specific group of learners?
- Do these features differ from those in texts produced by other writers?
- Can these differences be explained by reference to language proficiency or L1 conventions? (p.153)

Many studies in the literature focus on the syntactic and lexical features of student texts. The main purpose of these studies is to make a comparison of the linguistic features of texts written by L2 writers with those of L1 writers.

Hunt (1965) used a term called T-units to examine the syntactic features of L1

student essays. A T-unit is a composition of a main clause and all of the dependent modifying clauses. For instance, the sentence, "The student, who has taken several writing courses, stil has problems with writing", would be considered as one T-unit. On the other hand, the sentence "The student has taken several writing courses, but he stil has problems with writing", is composed of two T-units. Hunt proposes that the researcher should ignore the student's punctuation and instead cut up the text into "the shortest segments which it would be grammatically allowable to write with a capital letter at one end and a period or a question mark at the other, leaving no fragment as a residue" (p.27).

Gaies (1980) claims that T-unit analysis presents an objective and reliable method of determining the overall syntactic complexity of language samples. Perkins (1983) also states that T-unit is one of the first objective measures to be employed as an instrument in the assessment of writing. Several measures of syntactic maturity have been developed using the T-unit including;

- the number of words per T-unit;
- the number of T-units per sentence;
- the number of clauses per T-unit; and
- the number of words per clause.

When T-unit analysis was applied to L2 student essays, some researchers argued that T-units were not suitable to use with low proficiency students. Hambourg (1984) argued that it is necessary to recognize students' punctuation in segmenting the text. Thus, he defined a sentence "as a string of words with a capital letter at the beginning of the first word and a period or another terminal punctuation mark after the last word" (pp.91-92). T-unit analysis of L2 essays also began to include the concept of error-free T-units, which seemed to discriminate more accurately among various levels of syntactic maturity, namely, grammatical accuracy and complexity.

CHAPTER THREE
METHODOLOGY

This chapter presents the methodological considerations and the research procedures of the study. It provides information about the design of the study, participants of the study, data collection procedures, data collection instruments, and the analysis of the collected data.

In this study, the syntactic errors of the 65 students taking the proficiency exam at an ELT Department are identified, analysed and classified according to their types and frequencies. Inter-coder Reliability on the Most Commonly Made Error Types was also made. Afterwards, 15 students out of 30 who attended the prep program were randomly selected and asked to write on the same topics within the same time limit and word constraint as before at the end of the first term of their freshman year. The essays of a sample group including 15 students which they wrote as part of the proficiency exam were compared with those they wrote on their freshman year through a t-unit analysis and One Way Anova (F-test) in order to determine the effectiveness of the writing component of the Prep Program and overall progress of the students. A comparison of sentence types in students' essays in the Proficiency Exam and in the Freshman Year was also made. Sentence types were classified into three groups as simple, compound and complex sentences. The frequency of each sentence type was calculated and statistically analyzed.

3.1. Research Design

This study uses a descriptive research method and it can be categorized under the deductive approach. Macmillan and Schumacher (1993:35) suggest that "research using a descriptive design describes an existing phenomenon by using numbers to characterise individuals or a group". This study describes and aims to explain phenomena that occur naturally without the intervention of an experimen. Although the research context was controlled to a degree, the data were collected from a naturally occurring group of subjects

This study involves both qualitative and quantitative aspects of research traditions. In qualitative research, things are observed and studied in their natural settings. The subject of the research ascribes to the topic being researched. It involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to its subject matter and gives priority to what the data contribute to important research questions or existing information. In its qualitative aspect, this study has a limited number of participants and written documents of the students are used. Quantitative research, on the other hand, refers to the systematic empirical investigation of quantitative properties and phenomena and their relationships. In its quantitative aspect, this study involves statistical analysis of numerical data.

3.2.Participants

The participants were 65 students taking the proficiency exam in the 2008-2009 Fall Term at the Faculty of Education, ELT Department at Pamukkale University. When they first arrived in the department, they were at different levels of English proficiency. These students were used to the multiple-choice question format which is most frequently used in Turkish education testing system in their high school years.

They were about 17- 18 years old when they first started the department. 32 of them were female and the 23, male.

Within the preparatory class program, in the Fall Term, students take 6 hours of Listening Skills, 4 hours of Speaking Skills, 4 hours of Reading Skills, 4 hours of Writing Skills, and 4 hours of English Grammar. The Spring Term covers the same courses with the same number of credits. The total number of credits is 22 for the both terms. The main aims of the each course offered in the Preparatory Program of the ELT Department are summarized as follows:

The Listening Skills course aims to develop students' listening skills by employing authentic listening materials ranging from daily-life to academic issues. In the Speaking Skills course, a variety of different communicative activities such as discussions, individual presentations and some other interactive tasks are offered to provide an opportunity for students to improve their oral competence. The Reading Skills course aims to offer a variety of different authentic reading texts to the students so that they can develop sub-skills of

reading, such as finding the main idea, making inferences, deductions, definitions, classifications and reading between the lines.

The Writing Skills course aims to develop students' capability of producing different types of essays about various subjects in a unified, coherent and organized way. Finally, the English Grammar course aims to promote students' understanding of the relation between language structures and lexical items and to raise their awareness about using the language structures correctly.

Within the freshman year program, in the Fall Term, students take 3 hours of Contextual Grammar, 3 hours of Advanced Reading and Writing, 3 hours of Listening and Pronunciation, 3 hours of Oral Communication Skills. The Spring Term covers the same courses with the same number of credits. Additionally; students take 3 hours of Lexicology in the second term. The main aims of the each course offered in the Freshman Year of the ELT Department are summarized as follows:

➢ Contextual Grammar course aims to develop an understanding of the analysis of language structures within the framework of a context so that students are able to establish relations between form and text type and produce advanced level texts synthesizing these structures.

➢ Advanced Reading and Writing course aims to promote superior-level sub-skills of reading by processing a variety of different authentic reading texts.

➢ In the Listening and Pronunciation course, students learn to analyze authentic listening materials and speech samples used in different discourses; basic listening skills and strategies with the fundamentals of listening and phonetics.

➢ In the Oral Communication Skills course, students participate in communicative activities such as discussions, individual presentations, interactive tasks with the use of audiovisual aids.

➢ Lexicology course aims to develop an understanding of the relationship between lexical items and structural forms, word formation in both spoken and written language.

3.3. Data Collection Procedures and Data Analysis

3.3.1 First Stage of the Data Collection and Data Analysis

The data collection procedure was carried out in two stages. In the first stage, 65 essays written in the proficiency exam were examined in terms of the syntactic errors. In the writing section of the proficiency exam, the participants were asked to choose and respond to one of the 6 topics and then write a well-developed timed essay (containing an introduction, development and conclusion) within the limit of 300 words. The students were also requested to take into account such points as the topic sentence and supporting ideas; examples, details, facts, etc.

Syntactic errors in the essays were examined and counted manually by the researcher in order to use an objective procedure for the identification of the different errors.Each error type was identified under its relevant category. Examples of each type of error were recorded separately. The total number of errors was counted and their frequencies were calculated. Finally, the total number of errors made by the students was identified and classified in various categories. Error counts and examples of each error type were then reported in a table of descending order.

The data collected for this study were analysed by means of descriptive analysis. Welman and Kruger (1994) suggest that descriptive statistics is concerned with the description of the data obtained for a group of individuals. According to Huysamen (1998) the aim of descriptive statistics is to reduce large amounts of data so that the drawing of conclusions is facilitated.

As part of the validity of the qualitative data, three experts from the department were asked for their opinions on the error types in sample student papers. One of the experts was a native speaker of English. Also, "the content analysis" technique was used in order to identify the error types and to decide into which category the students' errors fall. Content analysis can be defined as the isolation, counting, and interpretation of the concepts, problems, and subjects repeated in collected data (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998; Miles & Huberman, 1994). Two error categories which had the highest percentages in

frequency in students' papers (prepositions %23.43; articles %17.98) were particularly selected for calculating the coder reliability in this study. The errors in each of these two categories were "coded with a name that is closest" to the error type it was describing (Miles & Huberman, 1994), such as "redundant use of definite article "the", "wrong use of articles", "wrong use of preposition", "omission of a preposition", and so on. By coding the errors, 5 sub-categories of article errors and 3 sub-categories of preposition errors were identified. Then, another instructor was asked to check a second copy of the errors for these two main categories in order to check and ensure that they fall into an agreed category and to increase the validity and reliability of the findings. In this sense, Miles & Huberman stress that:

> Definitions become sharper when two researchers code the same data set and discuss their initial difficulties. A disagreement shows that a definition has to be expanded or otherwise amended. …. a common vision of what the codes mean and which blocks of data best fit which code. Check-coding not only aids definitional clarity, but also is a good reliability check. (p.64)

In relation to coding qualitative data, Trumbull (2005, in Tailor, p:121-2) draws attention to the effects of subjective scoring by the researcher, and recommends selecting another coder for the validation of the process, stressing that the coder should be independent of the experiment, but be knowledgeable about the coding procedures. The coding scheme must be described clearly and accurately in order that another coder can use it and arrive at the same conclusions. Furthermore, Trumbull also points out that a percentage agreement between 80-90 % should be strived for. Once this level is met, coder reliability will be established and data will not be considered to be subjective. In this sense, a full description of any disagreements should be given while establishing reliability. The errors on which were disagreed in these two categories were added into other categories which were thought they belonged to.

Table 3.1 Inter-coder Reliability on the Most Commonly Made Error Types

Articles		Prepositions	
Agreements	Disagreements	Agreements	Disagreements
97	15	134	12
Total number of agreements: 231			
Total number of disagreements: 27			
r = .89			

In order to test the inter-coder reliability in this study, the formula

*Reliability = number of agreements /(total number of agreement*s *+ disagreements)*

was used (Miles and Huberman, 1994). This procedure resulted in an inter-coder reliability rate of .89, which is quite in a high and satisfying range (231 agreements vs. 27 disagreements)**.**

3.3.2 Second Stage of the Data Collection and Data Analysis

In the second stage of the data collection, 15 students out of 30 who attended the prep program were randomly selected and asked to write on the same topics within the same time limit and word constraint as before at the end of the first term of their freshman year. 15 students were reached and this represents half of the population.

The essays of a sample group including 15 students which they wrote as part of the proficiency exam were compared with those they wrote on their freshman year through a t-unit analysis in order to determine the effectiveness of the writing component of the Prep Program and overall progress of the students. The term T-unit is defined as a composition of a main clause and all of the dependent modifying clauses. T-unit analysis is regarded as an objective and reliable method of determining the overall syntactic complexity of language samples and it is employed as an instrument in the assessment of writing. When applying the T-unit analysis, the comparison of total, error-free t-units and false number of complete sentences of each student in the proficiency exam and in their freshman year was made and illustrated in a table. The results were analyzed statistically.

In order to add a new dimension to the study, a comparison of sentence types in students' essays in the Proficiency Exam and in the Freshman Year was made. Sentence types were classified into three groups as simple, compound and complex sentences. The frequency of each sentence type was calculated and statistically analyzed.

3.3.2.1 F-test for Analyses of Variance (ANOVA)

F-test is implemented in the second stage of the study in order to determine if there is a meaningful difference between the proficiency exam results and the freshman year results of the 15 students who studied in the Prep Program. An *F-test* is a statistical test in which the test statistic has an F-distribution under the null hypothesis. It is most often used when comparing statistical models that have been fit to a data set, in order to identify the model that best fits the population from which the data were sampled. Exact *F-tests* mainly arise when the models have been fit to the data using least squares (Lomax, 2007).

Examples of F-tests include:

- The hypothesis that the means of several normally distributed populations, all having the same standard deviation, are equal. This is perhaps the best-known F-test, and plays an important role in the analysis of variance (ANOVA).

- The hypothesis that a proposed regression model fits the data well.

One-way analysis of variance (F-test) can be implemented by using various statistical packages such as SPSS, Minitab. In this study, Matlab's description of F-test given below was used.

Syntax

p = anova1(X)

p = anova1(X,group)

[p,table,stats] = anova1(...)

Description

p = anova1(X) performs balanced one-way ANOVA for comparing the means of two or more columns of data in the matrix X, where each column represents an independent sample

containing mutually independent observations. The function returns the p-value under the null hypothesis that all samples in X are drawn from populations with the same mean. If p is near zero, it casts doubt on the null hypothesis and suggests that at least one sample mean is significantly different than the other sample means. Common significance levels are 0.05 or 0.01.

The standard ANOVA table divides the variability of the data into two parts:

- Variability due to the differences among the column means (variability between groups)
- Variability due to the differences between the data in each column and the column mean (variability within groups)

The standard ANOVA table has six columns:
- The source of the variability.
- The sum of squares (SS) due to each source.
- The degrees of freedom (df) associated with each source.
- The mean squares (MS) for each source, which is the ratio SS/df.
- The F-statistic, which is the ratio of the mean squares.
- The p-value, which is derived from the cdf of F.

The box plot of the columns of X suggests the size of the F-statistic and the p-value. Large differences in the center lines of the boxes correspond to large values of F and correspondingly small values of p.

Assumptions

The ANOVA test makes the following assumptions about the data in X:
- All sample populations are normally distributed.
- All sample populations have equal variance.

All observations are mutually independent.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Introduction

The purpose of this study is to identify and describe the types of syntactic errors in the compositions of students taking the proficiency exam at an ELT Department as well as to present the developmental process of ELT students in terms of error analysis through their written work. The findings have been presented based on the collected data using the essays written in the writing component of the proficiency exam and those written by a sample group of students on their freshman year.

4.2. The Types of Syntactic Errors Made by Students in the Writing Component of the Proficiency Exam

Error counts and frequencies of each error type are given in a table of descending order. Examples of each error type are then reported. Syntactic errors in the essays of the 65 ELT students were examined and counted manually by the researchers. Error counts and examples of each error type were then reported in a table of descending order in Table 4.1 below.

As can be seen from Table 4.1, analysis of the students' compositions demonstrates a range of grammatical errors. Preposition, article, plural morpheme "s", S-V agreement, parts of speech, verb form and verb tense are the most common writing errors committed by the ELT students. The category of Other Types of Errors includes the following error types, such as 'there' instead of 'it', 'have got'- 'has got', causative use, and missing object, and they were grouped together in this category as they were few in number.

Table 4.1. Analysis of Error Types

Error Type	Count	Percentage %
Preposition	146	23,43
Article	112	17,98
Plural Morpheme "s"	66	10,59
S-V Agreement	57	9,15
Parts of Speech	43	6,90
Verb Form	42	6,74
Verb Tense	32	5,14
Missing Verb	32	5,14
Gerunds and Infinitives	28	4,49
Word Order	17	2,73
Quantifiers and Intensifiers	15	2,41
Passive Voice	12	1,93
Pronouns and Possessives	7	1,12
Comparatives and Superlatives	6	0,96
Other Types of Errors	8	1,28
	623	100%

While analyzing the writing papers of the students, fourteen different types of errors were identified and described. These error types are prepositions, articles, plural morpheme "s", S-V Agreement, parts of speech, verb form, verb tense, missing verb, gerunds and infinitives, word order, quantifiers and intensifiers, passive voice, pronouns and possessives, comparatives and superlatives, other types of errors. The errors in the use of prepositions and articles were identified as the most commonly made errors (prep %23,43; articles %17,98%). Errors in the use of Plural Morpheme "s" and S-V Agreement are the two other error categories with lower percentages, 10,59% and 9,15% respectively. Each error type has been presented with examples taken from the data below.

4.2.1. Preposition Errors

Preposition errors identified in the students' compositions consist of three different subcategories. These are (1) wrong use of preposition, (2) omission of preposition, and (3)

redundant use of preposition. The error counts and percentages of this category are given in Table 4.2 below.

Table 4.2 Errors in the use of Prepositions

Error Type	Counts	Percentage %
Omission of preposition	77	52,74
Wrong use of preposition	39	26,71
Redundant use of preposition	30	20,55
Total	146	100

As can be seen from Table 4.2 above, errors in the omission of preposition were identified as the most commonly made errors (52.74 %)Wrong use of preposition and redundant use of preposition are the two other categories with lower percentages, 26.71 and 20,55 respectively. Each sub-category is exemplified as below:

4.2.1.1. Wrong use of Preposition

The following examples demonstrate the errors in the wrong use of preposition.

- The most important **from** these, you gain a good future.
- *The most important **of** these…* (Correct Form)

- Ereğli is also famous **with** its strawberry.
- *Famous **for**…* (Correct Form)

- Don't worry **for** me.
- *Worry **about** me.* (Correct Form)

- I want to introduce you **about** this lovely city.
- *Introduce you to.* (Correct Form)

- I'll stay with Derya, my best friend, **in** her home.
- *At her home.* (Correct Form)

4.2.1.2. Omission of Preposition

The following examples demonstrate the errors in the omission of preposition.

- …you can go beach and relax.
- *Go **to** beach.* (Correct Form)
- I'm waiting you.
- ***For** you.* (Correct Form)

- You won't have difficulty pronunciation.
- *Difficulty **in** pronunciation.* (Correct Form)

- I live myself without you and my father.
- ***By** myself.* (Correct Form)

- I am sure that you are always thinking me.
- *Thinking **of/ about** me.* (Correct Form)

4.2.1.3. Redundant use of Preposition

The following examples demonstrate the errors in the redundant use of preposition.

- Going **to** abroad is not easy for everybody.
- *Going abroad…*(Correct Form)

- I have to leave **from** you again.
- *Leave you…*(Correct Form)

- We will go **to** shopping for my new room.
- *Go shopping...*(Correct Form)

- … you have to pass **from** Eskişehir.
- *Pass Eskişehir.* (Correct Form)

- I recommend **to** native and foreign people to go there
- *Recommend native and foreign people* (Correct Form)

4.2.2. Article Errors

In the analysis of the student essays, five different sub-categories of article errors were identified. These are listed as follows:

- ➢ Omission of the definite article 'the'
- ➢ Omission of the indefinite article 'a /an'
- ➢ Redundant use of the definite article
- ➢ Redundant use of the indefinite article
- ➢ Wrong use of articles

The error counts and percentages of this category are given in Table 4.3 below.

Table 4.3 Errors in the use of Articles

Error Type	Error counts	Percentage
Omission of the definite article 'the'.	57	50,89
Omission of the indefinite article 'a /an'	38	33,93
Redundant use of the definite article 'the'	9	8,04
Redundant use of the indefinite article 'a, an'.	4	3,57
Wrong use of articles.	4	3,57
Total	112	100

As can be seen from Table 4.3 above, errors in the omission of the definite article 'the' were identified as the most commonly made errors (50.89%). Omission of the indefinite article 'a /an', redundant use of the definite article 'the', redundant use of the indefinite article 'a, an', and wrong use of articles are the 4 other categories with lower percentages, 33.93, 8.04, 3.57 and 3.57 respectively. Each sub-category is exemplified as below:

4.2.2.1. Omission of the definite article *'the'*

Omission of the definite article *'the'* can also be defined as a missing article in the sentence. In Turkish, there is no equivalent for "the". The examples below deal with the omission of definite articles and they demonstrate that definite articles are problematic for L2 learners. This can be due to the fact that there are no similar structures in the students' native

language so Turkish students have difficulty in using articles correctly as they are often confused when applying the rules of using a particular article.

- In the past, the sultans of Ottoman Empire…
- ***The** Ottoman Empire.* (Correct Form)

- In world, everything happens.
- *In **the** world* (Correct Form)

- …when they look themselves in mirror.
- **The** *mirror* (Correct Form)

- In next days…
- *In **the** next days* (Correct Form)

- Clock Tower impresses visitors.
- ***The** Clock Tower…*(Correct Form)

4.2.2.2. Omission of the indefinite article 'a /an'

In Turkish, there is an equivalent for "a/an" but, it is not used in the same way as in English. When "a/an" is used, it is used after the adjective and before the noun, so the sentence would be like "I have blue a car." The translation of this sentence into Turkish would be as : "Benim mavi **bir** arabam var."

- I want to be English teacher.
- ***An** English teacher.* (Correct Form)

- I must study and have good job…
- *…**a** good job.* (Correct Form)

- It is beautiful place for visitors.
- *…**a** beautiful place* (Correct Form)

- It is developed country
- *...**a developed country** (Correct Form)

- Obesity is very common disease recently.
- …***a very common disease.** (Correct Form)

4.2.2.3. Redundant use of the definite article

The following examples demonstrate the errors in the redundant use of the definite article 'the'.

- every kind of difficulty in **the** life.
- *….** in life** (Correct Form)

- Antalya is in the south of **the** Turkey.
- *Turkey.* (Correct Form)

- Ereğli is **the** very important for Turkey.
- *Ereğli is very important…*(Correct Form)

- Obesity is one of **the** today's most common diseases.
- *One of today's...* (Correct Form)

- Since the coming of computer age, **the** obesity has been spread widely.
- *…obesity* (Correct Form)

4.2.2.4. Redundant use of the indefinite article

The following examples demonstrate the examples of the redundant use of the indefinite article "a, an".

- It teachs **a** life.
- *It teaches life.* (Correct Form)

- They can't live like **a** normal people.
- *They can't live like normal people.* (Correct Form)

4.2.2.5. Wrong use of Articles

The English articles **a(n), zero**, and **the** are quite difficult to acquire for ESL/EFL learners. Articles are believed to be a source of difficulty for learners (and teachers) of English as a second/foreign language, especially for those whose native languages do not have articles or do have articles or article-like morphemes which are used in ways that differ from English articles (Celce-Murcia and Larsen-Freeman, 1999). Therefore; articles should be stressed right from the beginning. Otherwise students think they are unimportant and they need to be corrected at upper levels.

- Denizli is **a** industrial city.
- *…an industrial city.* (Correct Form)

- I want to be **a** English teacher.
- *…an English teacher.* (Correct Form)

- I think the most important one is **a** home which M.K.Atatürk stayed.
- *…the home. .* (Correct Form)

- Obesity person have got **a** advantage.
- *…an advantage* (Correct Form)

4.2.3. Wrong or missing use of the Plural Morpheme "s"

The following examples demonstrate the examples of the wrong or missing use of the Plural Morpheme "s".

- Denizli has a lot of cafe, restaurant, dormitory.
- *…a lot of cafes, restaurants, dormitories* (Correct Form)

- We shouldn't consume fastfood**s.**
- *...fast food* (Correct Form)
- Clock Tower impresses every visitor**s.**
- *...every visitor* (Correct Form)

- I have learnt to live myself without your help**s**.
- *...without your help* (Correct Form)

- You can try Turkish foods in those restaurants.
- *...Turkish food* (Correct Form)

4.2.4. Errors in (Concord) Subject-Verb Agreement

The rule of subject-verb agreement is that singular nouns are followed by singular forms of the verb and plural nouns are followed by the plural forms of the verb. Therefore, in the literature, the researchers have classified these types of errors as both tense and S-V agreement errors. The examples below reveal the students' lack of understanding the rules of S-V agreement.

- What **is** the difference**s** between studying abroad and in your home country?
- *What is the difference? or What are the differences?* (Correct Form)

- All of these **is** true.
- *All of these are true.* (Correct Form)

- Children play**s** games everyday for long hours on the computer.
- *Children play games...* (Correct Form)

- They work**s** without stop.
- *they / work* (Correct Form)

- My friends **is** good.
- *My friends / are* (Correct Form)

4.2.5. Errors in Parts of Speech

The following examples demonstrate the errors in parts of speech.

- I never want to be **obesity.**
- *...an obese* (Correct Form)

- ... help obesity people.
- *... help obese people...*(Correct Form)

- It is **demonstrate** of love.
- *....demonstration of love* (Correct Form)

- We try to **achievement** …
- *We try to achieve ...*(Correct Form)

- Being a teacher is my **imagine.**
- *… my imagination.* (Correct Form)

- A native speaker teacher's **pronounce** is always very good.
- *A native speaker teacher's pronunciation...*(Correct Form)

4.2.6. Errors in Verb Form
The following examples demonstrate the errors in verb form..

- You can **began** working as an assistant in this university.
- *...can begin* (Correct Form)

- She **writed** that she wanted to go my hometown.
- *She wrote that...(*Correct Form)

- You are going to **graduated** from university after two months.
- *…going to graduate (*Correct Form)

- Obesity has been **spread** widely.
- *…has been spreading (*Correct Form)

- Until this age I haven't **go** out from my hometown.
- *haven't gone out…(*Correct Form)

4.2.7. Errors in Verb Tense

The following examples demonstrate the errors in verb tense.

- Obesity **is** very common disease recently.
- *Obesity has been a very common disease recently.* (Correct Form)

- For years doctors **are** investigating reasons and results of this illness and they **find** that…
- *…have been investigating, have found that* (Correct Form)

- I **have** met them a few days ago.
- *I met them a few days ago.* (Correct Form)

- When I finish my school, I **would** be an English teacher as my teachers.
- *…I will be an English teacher…*(Correct Form)

- I will read until my eyes **closed.**
- *I will read until my eyes close.* (Correct Form)

4.2.8 Missing Verb

The following examples demonstrate the errors in missing verb.

- Because a university very important for me.
- *...university **is** very important for me.* (Correct Form)

- We always cheese and bread…
- *We always **eat** cheese and bread…*(Correct Form)
- If you hungry or haven't got any money to buy sth.,…
- *If you **are** hungry…*(Correct Form)

- Obese people can tired more quickly than thin people.
- *Obese people can **get** tired…*(Correct Form)

- You don't what they cook, what they eat.
- *You don't **know** what they cook, what they eat.* (Correct Form)

4.2.9. Errors in the use of Gerunds and Infinitives

The following examples demonstrate the errors in the use of gerunds and infinitives.

- I'm trying to **explaining** these differences now.
- *...to explain* (Correct Form)

- Tirebolu is really worth **to see.**
- *…worth seeing* (Correct Form)

- I am looking forward to **see** you again.
- *...looking forward to seeing you again.* (Correct Form)

- **Stand** on your own feet is very different thing.
- *Standing on your own feet…*(Correct Form)

- One reason of obesity is eat much bread.
- *...eating much bread* (Correct Form)

4.2.10. Wrong Word Order

The following examples demonstrate the errors in word order.

- **You know already my thoughts better.**
- *You already know my thoughts better.* (Correct Form)

- **I hope that it will be never …**
- *It will never be…*(Correct Form)

- **They eat meals in big pieces very fast.**
- *They eat meals very fast in big pieces.* (Correct Form)

- **I began to try to be in good mood always in all situation to learn to be happy every time.**
- *I always try to be in good mood…*(Correct Form)

- **You wrote me you would come this year to Turkey.**
- *...you would come to Turkey this year.* (Correct Form)

4.2.11. Errors in use of Quantifiers and Intensifiers
The following examples demonstrate the errors in the use of quantifiers and intensifiers.

- No wonder the number of people who are obesity is **very much.**
- *...so many.* (Correct Form)

- Obese people meet too **much** problems in every day.
- *too many problems…*(Correct Form)

- I learn **very** things about English.
- *many things ...*(Correct Form)

- This is very **much** expensive.
- *very expensive* (Correct Form)

- In university, I will come across **very** people from different towns.
- *many people* (Correct Form)

4.2.12. Errors in the use of Passive Voice

The following examples demonstrate the errors in the use of passive voice.

- It **locates** in the west of Turkey.
- *It is located...*(Correct Form)

- For example, cips, cola, hamburger **don't** let in schools.
- *...are not let in schools*.(Correct Form)

- After the industrial revolution, when machines invented…
- *when machines **were** invented....*(Correct Form)

- I **was** graduated from the Anatolian High School.
- *I graduated from...*(Correct Form)

- It is not only **derive** from eating a lot food but also…
- *It is not only derived from.. ...*(Correct Form)

4.2.13. Errors in the use of Pronouns and Possessives

The following examples demonstrate the errors in the use of pronouns and possessives.

- I like **she.**
- *I like her*. (Correct Form)

- Let **we** help obesity people.
- *Let us help…*(Correct Form)

- Secondly, because of gaining weight, they may depress **theirselves.**
- *depress themselves.* (Correct Form)

- I can do best for them.
- *…my best* (Correct Form)

- I will have a job when **my** finish university
- *…when I finish university* (Correct Form)

4.2.14. Errors in the use of Comparatives and Superlatives

The following examples demonstrate the errors in the use of comparatives and superlatives.

- I feel **more and more strong** day by day.
- *I feel stronger day by day.* (Correct Form)

- Obesity means being **too weighter** than normally…
- *more overweight than normally…*(Correct Form)

- He must know **a few** things **than** a native speaker teacher.
- *…fewer things than…*(Correct Form)

- Studying in the home country is **good than** studying abroad.
- *…better than…*(Correct Form)

4.2.15. Other types of errors

This category includes the following error types:

Errors in the use of 'there' instead of 'it':

If you don't believe me, you can come and see there with your eyes.

If you don't believe me, you can come and see **it** with your eyes. (Correct Form)

You can visit there.

You can visit **it**. (Correct Form)

Errors in the use of 'have got' 'has got':

Obesity is hazardous role in daily life.

Obesity **has got** a hazardous role in daily life. (Correct Form)

Errors in the use of Causatives

Scarcity which is a result of obesity **makes people lost** their lives in young age.

Scarcity which is a result of obesity **makes people lose** their lives in young age. (Correct Form)

Missing Object

When I get used to, I'm sure I will like more.

When I get used to **it** , I'm sure I will like **it** more. (Correct Form)

4.2.16. Examples of Errors in L1 Transfer

Although the main focus of this study is not on L1 transfer, the analysis of the error types in students' compositions demonstrated that there are many errors resulting from L1 transfer. Some of the striking examples of L1 transfer are given below:

- Only four years stayed <u>in my front</u> to be a teacher. (ahead of me)
- When we look the results, they <u>feel themselves</u> sorry and alone.
- I <u>feel myself</u> in my home.

- The most important <u>from these</u>, you gain a good future. (the most important of these)

- You can try Turkish <u>foods</u> in those restaurants. (Turkish food)

- I have to leave <u>from</u> you again.

- <u>Going to abroad</u> is not easy for everybody. (Going abroad)

- I may <u>break up from</u> my husband. (Break up with)

- Don't <u>worry for me</u>. (worry about)

- When you're <u>top of it</u>, you <u>can</u> want to fly.

- I hope she thinks like me <u>for</u> me.

- I'm <u>in a big life exam.</u>

4.3. Results and Discussions Related to the Freshman Year

In the second part of the study, 15 students out of 30 who attended the prep program were asked to write the same essays within the same time limit and word constraint as before at the end of the first term of their freshman year. 15 students out of 30 could be reached and this represents half of the population.

A sample group of 15 students' essays which they wrote as part of the proficiency exam were compared with the essays they wrote on their freshman year through a T-Unit analysis in order to determine the effectiveness of the writing component of the Prep Program and overall progress of the students. The comparison of total, error-free and false number of complete sentences of each student in the proficiency exam and in their freshman year was illustrated in another table. Afterwards, the results were also statistically analyzed.

Table 4.4. presents a comparison of students' essays in the Proficiency Exam and their performance in the Freshman Year through T-Unit Analysis

Table 4.4. Comparison of Students' Essays in the Proficiency Exam and Their Performance in the Freshman Year through T-Unit Analysis

| Students | Proficiency Exam Results | | | Freshman Year | | |
| | Sentences | | | Sentences | | |
	Total	**Error-free**	**False**	**Total**	**Error-free**	**False**
1	19	11	8	38	32	6
2	25	16	9	22	14	8
3	18	13	5	21	16	5
4	17	9	8	27	22	5
5	22	16	6	32	24	8
6	22	10	12	33	24	9
7	14	8	6	27	22	5
8	22	7	15	31	25	6
9	30	23	7	28	24	4
10	15	10	5	30	24	6
11	29	12	17	39	32	7
12	20	6	14	35	26	9
13	23	10	13	17	9	8
14	18	8	10	31	26	5
15	26	17	9	23	19	4
Min	14	6	5	17	9	4
Max	30	23	17	39	32	9
Average	21,33	11,73	9,60	28,93	22,60	6,33
Std. Dev.	4,75	4,57	3,79	6,28	6,15	1,72
Improvement rate (%)				35,63	92,61	-34,03

As Table 4.4 demonstrates, according to the proficiency exam results, out of **320** complete sentences, **176** were error-free, **144** were false. However, when we look at the essays that the students wrote at the end of the first term of their freshman year, out of **434** complete sentences, **339** were error-free and **95** were false. This shows that there has been an increase in the total number of sentences students can write. It is also significant that there has

been an increase in the number of error-free sentences and a decrease in the number of false sentences. As illustrated in Table 4.4, there has been a **35,63%** increase in the total number of sentences; on the other hand, a **34,03 %** decrease in the number of false sentences. The increase rate of error-free sentences is **92,61 %**, which is significant. Improvement rates have been calculated using average values. These values show that there has been a significant improvement in the number of error-free sentences. Similar improvement rates can also be observed for the min and max values. In order to add a new dimension to the study, a comparison of sentence types in students' essays in the Proficiency Exam and in the Freshman Year was also made. The sentence types were classified into three groups as simple, compound and complex sentence. The frequency of each sentence type was calculated and statistically analyzed.

Table 4.5. presents the comparison of sentence types in students' essays in the Proficiency Exam and in the Freshman Year.

Table 4.5. Comparison of Sentence Types in Students' Essays in the Proficiency Exam and in the Freshman Year

Students	Proficiency Exam Results			Freshman Year		
	Sentence Types			Sentence Types		
	Simple	Compound	Complex	Simple	Compound	Complex
1	11	4	4	23	6	9
2	14	2	9	6	4	12
3	10	3	5	10	2	9
4	10	0	7	17	4	6
5	14	3	5	17	4	11
6	7	2	13	15	3	15
7	4	3	7	11	2	14
8	14	5	3	18	2	11
9	17	3	10	12	3	13
10	15	0	0	17	3	10
11	19	4	6	20	3	16
12	8	1	11	27	0	8
13	18	0	5	5	1	11
14	15	1	2	18	5	8
15	15	6	5	8	6	9
Min	4	0	0	5	0	6
Max	19	6	13	27	6	16
Average	12,73	2,47	6,13	14,93	3,20	10,80
Std. Dev.	4,27	1,85	3,48	6,23	1,70	2,81
Improvement rate (%)				17,28	29,73	76,09

According to Table 4.5, out of **320** complete sentences students wrote in the proficiency exam, **191 (59 %)** were simple sentences, **37 (12 %)** were compound sentences, **92 (29 %)** were complex sentences. However; when we look at the freshman year results, out of **434** complete sentences, **224 (52 %)** were simple sentences, **48 (11 %)** were compound sentences, **162 (37 %)** were complex sentences. As illustrated in Table 4.5, there has been an increase rate of **17,28 %**, **29,73 %** and **76,09 %** for the simple, compound and complex sentences, respectively. This shows that as students have made progress, they tend to use more compound and complex sentences rather than simple sentences.

4.4. F-test for Analyses of Variance (ANOVA)

Results of F test for the total number of sentences are presented in Figure 4.1 below
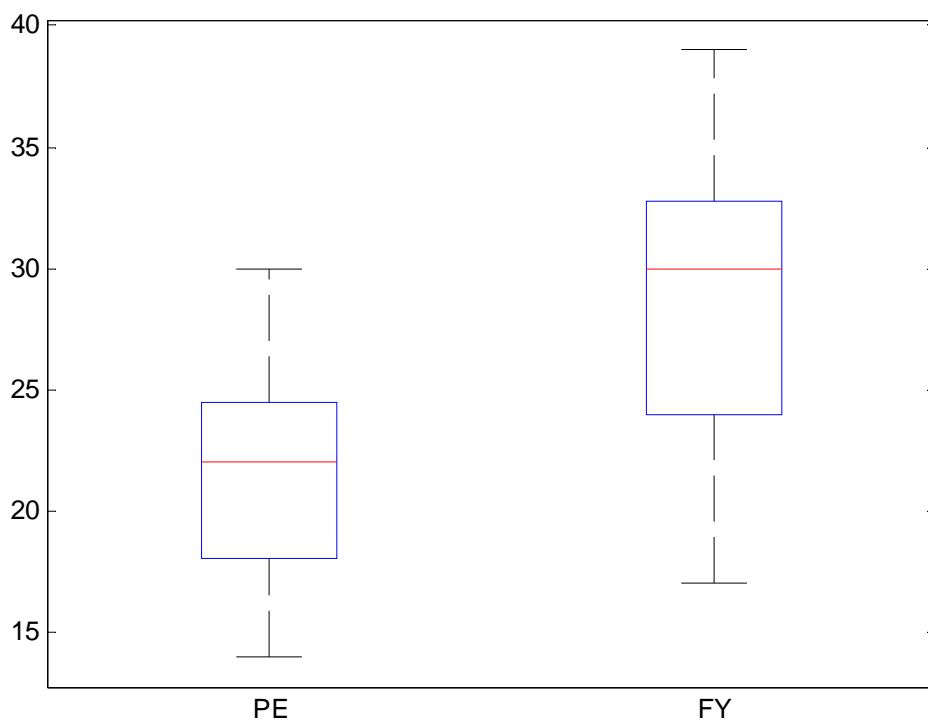
The p value was found as **p** =8.4521e-004

Figure 4.1 Anova test results for the total number of sentences
(PE: Proficiency Exam, FY : Freshman Year)

The p-value (8.4521e-004) indicates that differences between column means are highly significant. The probability of this outcome under the null hypothesis (that samples drawn from the same population would have means differing by the amounts seen in X) is equal to the p-value. As the Anova test results demonstrate above, the total number of sentences students wrote in the Proficiency Exam differ significantly from the ones they wrote in their Freshman Year. There has been a significant increase in the total number of sentences that students wrote in their Freshman Year compared to the ones they wrote in the Proficiency Exam.

Results of F test for error-free number of sentences are presented in Figure 4.2 below.
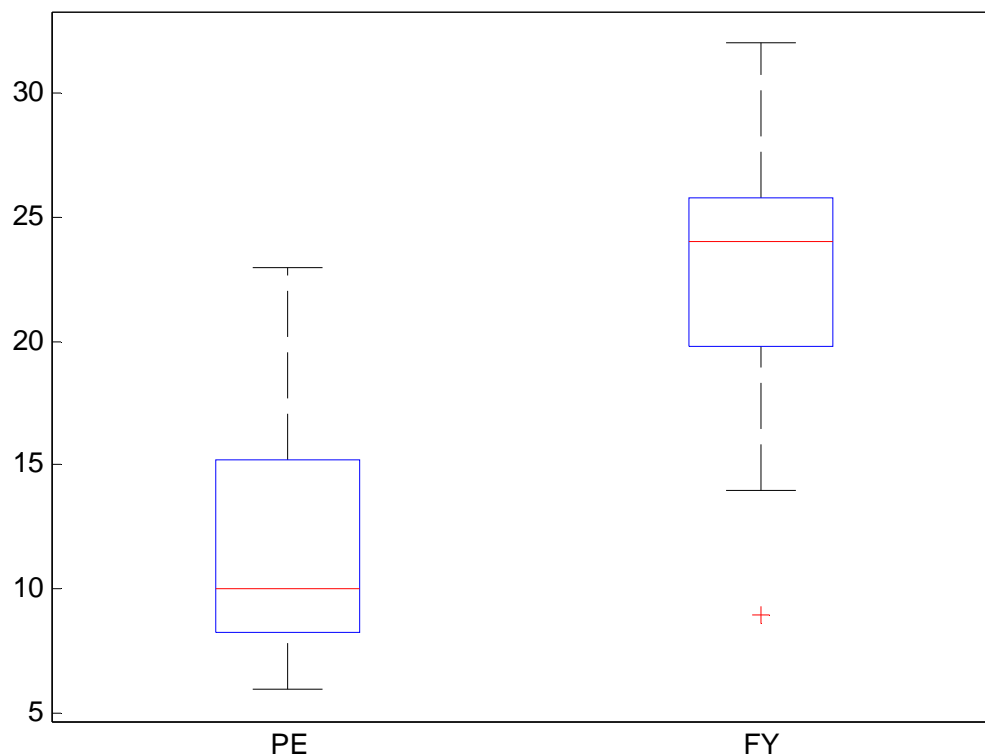
The p value was found as **p** = 7.2654e-006

Figure 4.2 Anova test results for the number of error-free sentences.

(PE: Proficiency Exam, FY : Freshman Year)

The p-value (7.2654e-006) indicates that differences between column means are highly significant. The probability of this outcome under the null hypothesis (that samples drawn from the same population would have means differing by the amounts seen in X) is equal to the p-value. As the Anova test results demonstrate above, the total number of error-free sentences students had written in the Proficiency Exam differ significantly from the ones they wrote in their Freshman Year. There has been a significant increase in the number of error-free sentences that students wrote in their Freshman Year compared to the ones they had written in the Proficiency Exam.

Results of the F test for the number of false sentences are presented in Figure 4.3 below.
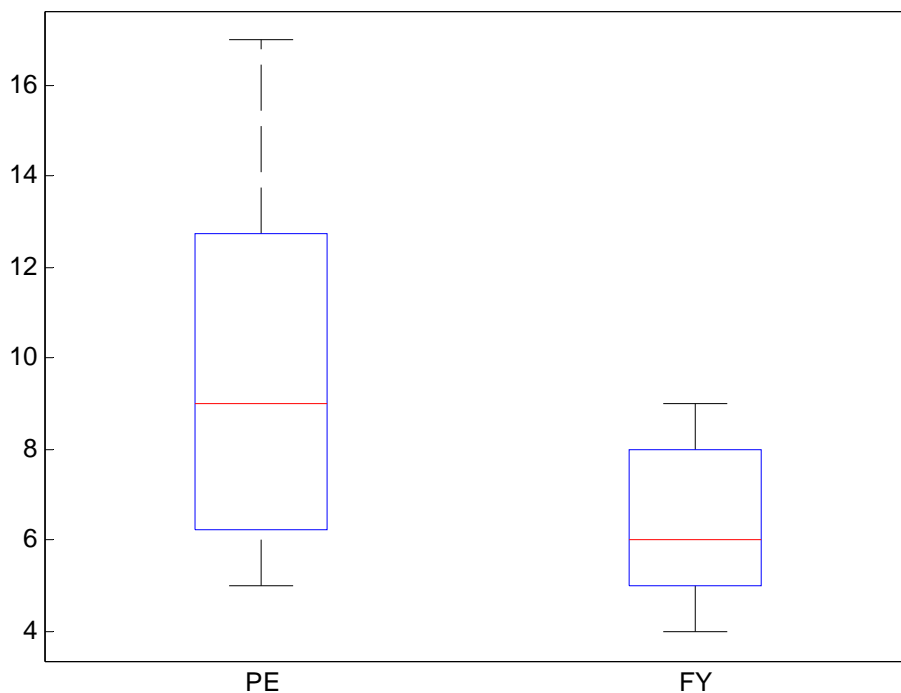
The p value was found as **p** =0.0051

Figure 4.3 Anova test results for false number of sentences
(PE: Proficency Exam, FY : Freshman Year)

The p-value (0.0051) indicates that differences between column means are highly significant. The probability of this outcome under the null hypothesis is equal to the p-value. As the Anova test results demonstrate above, the total number of false sentences students wrote in the Proficiency Exam differ significantly from the ones they wrote in their Freshman Year. There has been a significant decrease in the number of false sentences that students wrote in their Freshman Year compared to the ones they had written in the Proficiency Exam.

4.5. Student Comments on Their Writing in the Freshman Year

       25 students who attended the Prep Program of the ELT Department were asked to share their comments on their progress in their own writing and the evaluation of the effectiveness of the writing course they took in prep class last year.Similar statements were grouped together and 16 categories of statements were determined. The common points of these statements are that students generally think there has been progress in their writing after the Prep Program and they are aware of the improvement in their own writing. The 16 group of statements are given in detail below:

- There has been a great difference and progress in my writing compared to the first time when I came to the department.

- Though there has been progress, I stil have a lot to do to improve myself and I should read more books and articles in English in my free time in order to have a much better command of English.

- Though we stil make grammatical mistakes in our writing, there will be improvement in time.

- Although the writing course contributed a lot to our progress, more writing practice should be done as we still experience difficulties when it comes to writing.

- I couldn't express and transfer my ideas and thoughts and thus couldn't write well in the beginning as I was too concerned about finding the correct words for a context and writing in good grammar but now I feel much more comfortable when writing.

- Being comfortable and calm is of great significance when writing. When I first came to the department and took the proficiency exam, I was feeling stressed and felt nervous when writing and I now think that this might be the reason why I could not write well at that time.

- I don't think that I'm capable of writing either in Turkish or in English.

- I plan in advance what I'm going to write; however, when it comes to writing, I fail.

- The Writing course has raised my awareness about my errors.

- I think there has to be a writing component not only in the prep and freshman years but also in every level of the ELT Program; otherwise, students cannot find the opportunity to practice their writing.

- Reading and Writing Skills course in the freshman year should be separate as reading and writing alone; because instructors focus more on reading rather than writing.

- The writing techniques, new vocabulary and some useful expressions we learned last year in the prep class contributed a lot to our progress in writing.

- Compared to last year, I notice an improvement in my English but I cannot show this when writing an essay. I personally think that this is not because my English is not so good but that I don't read much. I cannot even write in Turkish.

- I think the only way to have success in writing is to promote motivation so that the student will be willing to write something.

- Writing courses were considered unimportant when we were in high school.

- There should be more emphasis on writing courses. My suggestion is that a web site should be set up to this end so that the students can write their essays on that web site.

CHAPTER FIVE
CONCLUSION

5.1. Introduction

This chapter presents a brief summary of the study with its aims and findings. Then, the pedagogical implications of the study are discussed. Finally, a set of suggestions have been presented for further research.

5.2. Overview of the Study

This study aimed to identify and describe the types of syntactic errors of ELT Department students taking the proficiency exam at the Faculty of Education, Pamukkale University. Another aim of the study is to present the developmental process of language learners through error analysis of their written work. Therefore, writing parts of the proficiency exam papers of sixty-five students were used in the analysis. The study has concluded that errors are inevitable in the second language learning process.

The first reason for conducting this research was to contribute to a better understanding of the phenomenon of error analysis especially at an ELT context. Another reason was to pay attention to common problematic areas in the written use of English of the ELT Department students. For this reason, this study is expected to help instructors or lecturers about the needs of ELT learners so that they can easily guide students in the correction of their writing errors. Corder (1974), claims that the study of learners' errors provides us with a picture of the linguistic development of a learner and also gives us some hints about the learning process. Gass and Selinker (1994) see errors as "red flags" that give evidence about the learner's knowledge of the second language.

The participants of this study were sixty-five students at the ELT Department, Faculty of Education, Pamukkale University. The study is based on the syntactic errors in the writing parts of the proficiency exam. The writing papers of these students were collected and analyzed. First of all, error types were identified, and then the frequency of each error type has been determined through counting each error type.

The evidence of errors states that errors are inevitable in a foreign language learning environment. Corder (1974) states that different types of written materials might produce different distribution of errors or a different set of error types. In addition, the recognition of errors depends mainly on the researcher's correct interpretation of the student's intended meaning in a context. Moreover, students often appear inconsistent in their production of errors. Keeping in mind the small number of students and the limited number of written samples, the conclusions of this study need to be used only within the limits of this study.

Analysis of the students' compositions demonstrates a range of grammatical errors. In the first stage of this study, it has been diagnosed that the preposition, article, plural morpheme "s", S-V agreement, parts of speech, verb form and verb tense are the top common writing errors committed by the ELT students at Pamukkale University. The errors of preposition and article are the two most commonly made error types by the ELT students taking the proficiency exam. In the subcategories of each error type, omission errors are the most commonly made ones. This may be due to the fact that students focus more on meaning rather than form when they write in the target language, and they tend to omit prepositions and articles.

In the second stage, the T-unit analysis and one-way Anova (F-test) have demonstrated that there has been an increase in the number of total and error-free sentences and a decrease in the number of false sentences. This shows that there has been a significant improvement in students' English levels compared to the first time they arrived in the department. As for the simple, compound and complex sentences, it can be stated that as students have made progress, they tend to use more compound and complex sentences rather than simple sentences.

Student comments on their own writing in the freshman year have also demonstrated that students are aware of the improvement in their own writing.

5.3. Implications of the Study

The implications of this study may be listed in some categories such as grammar instruction, reading, error correction and providing feedback, L1 interference, motivation to write, having a lot of practice in writing, and the use of process approach in writing.

5.3.1. Grammar Instruction

It is very difficult to write a clear, logical and fluent paragraph if a writer is unable to write acceptable simple sentences and does not have the knowledge of complex sentence structure. Results of this study indicate a need to upgrade students' basic linguistic competence. Explicit teaching on some of the significant grammar points like syntax, prepositions, articles, verb forms and commonly used verb tenses is recommended. However; error-free sentence production should not be the primary goal of the writing course, but it should be the means which one can use to convey ideas and thoughts better.

Grammar should successfully be integrated into the process of writing. Different grammar points should be integrated into writing activities in accordance with the students' needs and the demands of writing tasks. In this way, grammar can be used as an aid to write more effectively. For this reason, various writing activities in which grammar points are integrated might be included in the syllabus. Since the results indicated that the errors in verbs, prepositions and articles were the most frequent, writing instructors should spend more time on explaining these errors.

5.3.2. Reading

Teaching grammar in class may be insufficient to bridge the gap due to limited class time. It is widely recognized that the act of reading contributes to students' writing performance a lot as students pick up many important features of language like syntax, prepositions and articles from regular reading. Free voluntary reading should therefore be supported within the ELT Department to help students increase their knowledge of the written language. The implications of the results of this study suggest that free-reading should be emphasized to develop the writing ability of students.

5.3.3. Error Correction and Providing Feedback

Error correction in second language writing has always been a controversial issue. Comprehensive error feedback may be an exhausting and a time-consuming task. This might also inhibit teachers' motivation to assign creative writing tasks. Therefore, selective error correction is more practical and useful. There is no need to correct every single grammatical mistake as this might de-motivate the students. Group or peer-editing can also be an alternative so that the students can edit and revise the sample sentences selected by the teacher in groups or in pairs. After that, the teacher can make further explanation to clarify the confusing points of language.

5.3.4. L1 Interference

The switch between first and second language is recognized as one of the important features of L2 learning. Cases of direct translation were also observed in this study as in the example 'Only four years stayed in my front to be a teacher.' It seems that the students also fail to use certain constructions due to L1 interference.

Teachers can help students become aware of interlingual errors by highlighting the differences between Turkish and English. Consciousness-raising activities can also help students correct their errors.

5.3.5. Motivation to write in the target language

It is possible to encourage the students to write through reading. Pre-writing activities are crucial to this end. Relevant reading passages should also be introduced before starting a writing activity. However, reading materials should only serve as sources for stimulating ideas rather than as models to copy. Students should be able to generate their own ideas and construct their own sentences. When students learn that writing is a process through which they can explore and discover their own ideas and thoughts, their product will most probably improve as well.

5.3.6. Practice

Writing is a skill acquired only through practice. It is, like dance and sport, an activity that can be improved through practice (Andrews, 1999), and through "exposure to written texts in a natural process of communication rather than grammatical and rhetorical rules on writing" (Leki, 1992:17)

5.3.7. Use of Process Approach in Writing

The recent research on process approach to EFL/ESL writing is very important for instructors in order to make a shift in the definition of writing and errors. When writing instructors follow the process approach, students will probably enjoy the interaction throughout the writing activities. Unfortunately, many EFL instructors simply ignore this kind of interaction when it comes to writing. However, when students interact through writing activities, they benefit from each other through peer response or peer editing groups with the guidance of their instructors.

Recent research shows that formal grammar instructions and error correction have little effect on students' writing quality and on their ability to reduce the number of errors in their writing (Leki, 1992; Hartwell, 1999). In addition, it is believed that when students are exposed to more L2 and practice more EFL writing, many of their errors will naturally disappear.

Many other implications can be elicited for both instructors and students through this study. To sum up, instructors should be aware of the fact that students' errors are inevitable in foreign language learning process. For this reason, instructors should tolerate their students' errors and provide more input for them so that they can correct their errors on their own. Instructors may make use of various error types which have been identified in this study and aim to raise students' consciousness towards those errors in different levels.

Students should be given feedback about their error types and they should be aware of their problems in writing. They should also be encouraged to write in English despite their errors. Students should understand that errors are part of the learning process so they should not feel embarrassed or discouraged.

5.4. The Importance of Error Analysis for the English Teacher

We can say that the teachers of English can conduct an error analysis of their learners' English. The results will be highly rewarding. The advantages of conducting an error analysis can be listed as follows:

a. Teacher will be able to identify the areas of English where his/her students have difficulties due to various reasons.

b. Teachers will have a better insight into the various mechanisms that cause errors in his/her learners' English. For instance, he will have a better and more systematic understanding of how the learners' native-language system interferes with their learning of the target language.

c. Teachers will be able to realise the learning problems of individual students. The teacher will then be equipped much better to devise remedial measures to make his teaching and students' learning much more rapid and effective. Time spent on error analysis will thus be fruitfully utilised.

5.5. Educational Implications of Error Analysis

Studies about errors are carried out in order to identify strategies which learners use in language teaching, to identify the causes of learner errors, and to obtain information on common difficulties in language learning as an aid to teaching or in development of teaching materials (Richards et al, 1992). Thus, it can be inferred that language teaching cannot stand away from the findings of error analysis. Students' errors have always been of interest and significance to teachers, syllabus designers and test developers. This may lead educators to devise appropriate materials and effective teaching techniques, and constructing tests suitable for different levels and in accordance with the needs of learners. Thus, the implication of error analysis to language teaching can be viewed from the aspect of language teachers and syllabus designers.

5.5.1 Implications for Teachers

Teachers benefit from the findings of error analysis in many ways. Errors tell the teacher how far the learner has progressed towards the goal and what remains for him to learn (Corder, 1987). Following the student's progress, the teacher is able to continue his studies in accordance with what the learner needs to know and what part of the teaching strategy to change or reconstruct. Errors are a means of feedback for the teacher reflecting how effective he is in his teaching style and what changes he has to make to get higher performance from his students. Moreover, errors indicate to the teacher the points that needs further attention. Additionally, error treatment will be most efficient when the sources are identified correctly.

5.5.2 Implications for Syllabus Designers

Syllabus design in English Language Teaching is a very important component of teaching-learning process. There are many factors to be considered in order to decide on what to teach to what level and what age group. At this point, errors are significant data for syllabus designers as they show which items are important to be included or which items need to be recycled in the syllabus. Keshavarz (1997) maintains that an error-based analysis can give reliable results upon which remedial materials can be constructed. In other words, analysis of second language learners' errors can help identify learners' linguistic difficulties and needs at a particular stage of language learning.

5.6. Advantages and shortcomings of error analysis in second language teaching and learning

Teachers will acquire overall knowledge of students' errors with the help of error analysis. Firstly, foreign language learning is a process of forming hypotheses about the new language and in such a process making errors is inevitable, so the teacher should learn to tolerate some errors, especially some local errors. Secondly, errors can tell the teacher how far towards the goal the learner has progressed, and consequently, what remains for him or her to learn. Students' errors are valuable feedbacks.

Teachers can do remedial teaching based on their errors. Thirdly, errors are indispensable to the learners themselves, since making mistakes can be regarded as a significant tool that the learner uses in order to learn.

On the other hand, some errors need to be handled carefully, otherwise, they will be fossilized. The theory of error analysis together with some other theories have contributed a lot to the second language learning theory since learning involves a process in which success comes by benefiting from mistakes and by using them to obtain feedback. As a result, the learner makes new attempts to progress with the feedback.

Error analysis is certainly significant, however, it also has some limitations according to Fang and Jiang (2007) . Firstly, too much attention to learners' errors can be dangerous when the teacher tends to become so focused on learners' errors that the correct utterances in the second language are not noticed. While the diminishing of errors is an important criterion for increasing language proficiency, the ultimate goal of second language learning is the attainment of communicative fluency in a language.

A second disadvantage of error analysis is that it overemphasizes the production data. Language comprehension should be regarded as important as production. It usually happens that production lends itself to analysis and thus becomes the prey of researchers, but the comprehension data is equally important in developing an understanding of the process of language acquisition. Thirdly, error analysis fails to account for the strategy of avoidance. A learner who for one reason or another avoids a particular sound, word, structure or discourse category may be assumed incorrectly to have no difficulty therewith. The absence of error therefore does not necessarily reflect native-like competence since learners may be avoiding some structures that pose difficulty for them.

5.7. Suggestions for Further Research

The data of this study were collected at a specific ELT Department. Similar studies can be conducted with a wider range of participants in different contexts. Furthermore, this study can be replicated in a longer time frame in order to observe students' development over time. Data for further studies can also be collected from two different ELT Departments and results can be compared and contrasted

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