

**KAFKAS UNIVERSITY
INSTITUTE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
THE DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE**

**ERRORS COMMITTED IN THE COMPOSITION PAPERS OF THE STUDENTS
STUDYING IN THE DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND
LITERATURE AT KAFKAS UNIVERSITY**

MASTER THESIS

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KARS-2009

T.C.
KAFKAS ÜNİVERSİTESİ
SOSYAL BİLİMLER ENSTİTÜSÜ MÜDÜRLÜĞÜ'NE

Doğan SALTAŞ'a ait **“Kafkas Üniversitesi İngiliz Dili Ve Edebiyatı Bölümü Öğrencilerinin Kompozisyonlarında Yaptıkları Hatalar”** konulu çalışma, jürimiz tarafından Batı Dilleri ve Edebiyatları Anabilim Dalı, Yüksek Lisans tezi olarak oy birliği ile kabul edilmiştir.

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ABSTRACT

MASTER THESIS

ERRORS COMMITTED IN THE COMPOSITION PAPERS OF THE STUDENTS
STUDYING IN THE DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND
LITERATURE AT KAFKAS UNIVERSITY

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This study's main goal is to seek and classify the grammatical errors in the papers written by the students studying at the Department of English Language and Literature at Kafkas University. Turkish students who are on the process of learning English as a foreign language face some difficulties in acquiring the grammatical rules of English as these two languages are very different from each other. In this study, 280 errors of 33 students were analyzed and classified in details. The results were first classified in categories and after that subcategories. The results show the process of committing errors in learning English as a foreign language. So, this study may help foreign language teachers and the researchers to have a brief information of Error Analysis of students learning English.

Keywords: Error, Error Analysis, Compositions, Students of Kafkas University, Grammatical errors

ÖZET

YÜKSEK LİSANS TEZİ

KAFKAS ÜNİVERSİTESİ İNGİLİZ DİLİ VE EDEBİYATI BÖLÜMÜ ÖĞRENCİLERİNİN KOMPOZİSYONLARINDA YAPTIKLARI HATALAR

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Bu çalışmanın ana amacı Kafkas Üniversitesi İngiliz Dili ve Edebiyatı Bölümü öğrencilerinin yazılı kağıtlarındaki dilbilgisel hataları araştırmak ve sınıflandırmaktır. İngilizceyi yabancı bir dil olarak öğrenme sürecinde olan Türk öğrencileri, her iki dilin kuralları birbirinden çok farklı oldukları için, İngiliz dilinin kurallarını benimsemede bazı zorluklarla karşılaşılıyorlar. Bu çalışmada, 33 öğrencinin 280 tane hatası analiz edildi ve sınıflandırıldı. Sonuçlar ilk başta kategorilere daha sonra alt kategorilere ayrılmıştır. Sonuçlar İngilizceyi yabancı bir dil olarak öğrenme sürecindeki hata yapma sürecini gösteriyor. Bu yüzden, bu çalışma İngilizce öğrenen öğrencilerin hata analizleri hakkında yabancı dil öğretmenlerinin ve araştırmacıların kısa bir bilgiye sahip olmalarına yardımcı olabilir.

Anahtar sözcükler: Hata, Hata analizi, Kompozisyon, Kafkas Üniversitesi öğrencileri, Dilbilgisel hatalar

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am very much indebted to my supervisor Asst.Prof.Dr. Gencer ELKILIÇ who provided help, guidance and advice until the completion of this study. My heartfelt thanks go to my family members for their support, patience and encouragement.

CHAPTER I

1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter of the study gives brief information about the study including background of the study, problems, limitations, assumptions.

1.1. Background of the Study

On the process of learning a foreign language, learners face some difficulties, and consequently, they sometimes commit errors. Until recently, theorists, some assuming the learner as mainly responsible and other theorists give responsibility to teachers depending on their viewpoint. On one hand, teachers have been blamed for causing students to commit errors by careless teaching or planning, on the other hand, students have been accused of their lack of motivation, intelligence or self-confidence. It should be taken into consideration that there is a truth on each side. Moreover, it is certain that even most intelligent and hardworking students commit errors.

In this study, the categorization of students' errors on written papers is made, and those errors are categorized in detail. The use of Contrastive Error Analysis is discussed in categorizing and analyzing the errors of students. It is claimed that Contrastive Analysis has a center point statue in all linguistic researches and also Error Analysis is significant for the insights as it provides in to the language learning process. For that reason, the combination of these two fields is used in this study.

1.2. Purpose of the Study

The major aim of this study is to seek and analyze the grammatical, morphological and lexical errors of the Turkish students' written papers in detail, and then suggest the ways to overcome and correct the errors of them.

1.3. Problems

In Turkey, the students learning English have only one doubt, the foreign language examination called YDS in Turkey. This exam includes only grammar without other activities such as listening, speaking, and writing. So students focus on only grammar of English to win the YDS examination. They do not pay enough attention to other language activities, because they do not need them to pass the exam and enter a university. Their main concern, as told above, is only the testing and main grammatical rules of testing. In Turkey EFL students face some difficulties when they begin to study at a university. It is observed as normal because all of the students studying EFL in Turkey have the equal conditions. Naturally when they win and enter a university (Departments of English Language and Literature or the similar departments), they are always lack of speaking and writing. They have difficulties in writing a paragraph because they do not have any background. So they commit many errors and mistakes in writing at the beginning. But if they are not given feedback on their errors and mistakes they will naturally continue to commit them. Because most of the students are in the same belief that they will not need such kinds of activities as they will be teachers and they will be teaching grammar as they were taught. This is called cycle. It means that they will have students to pass the same exam as they had in the past. As a result they do not believe that they will need the activities they are taught at the university so they do not pay enough attention and they continue to commit mistakes and errors during learning English academically.

1.4. Limitations

This study includes the following limitations:

- 1.) This study is limited to the students' performance in written English.
- 2.) The group of subjects includes only the preparatory class students of the Department of English Language and Literature at Kafkas University.
- 3.) 33 students' compositions were analyzed in the study.
- 4.) Only the grammatical errors in the compositions were taken into consideration in the study.

1.5. Assumptions

Writing as a productive skill is always considered one of the most difficult and important skills especially at universities. Since conveying ideas through signs by letters on a piece of paper is very complex, it requires some sorts of skills. Reading and writing skills are considered as advanced phases of language learning process. The usual sequence for both first and second language acquisitions is: listening, speaking; reading and writing. So, writing is the productive skill in the written mode. It is also more complicated than it seems at first, and often seems to be the hardest of the skills, even for native speakers of a language, since it involves not just a graphic representation of speech, but the development and presentation of thoughts in a structured way. But, paradoxically, until studying at universities none of the students pays attention to this productive skill, mostly because of the agenda of high school teachers.

The students who begin studying at English Language Department are lack of the knowledge about how to organize a paragraph or rhetorical and discourse features of a written language, also the language tools that the student have been equipped with by the English teachers at high schools fall short. On ground that these lack of abilities, when they begin their academic training they devote great time energy and time to their compositions to produce coherent and grammatically true paragraphs or compositions. During the four-year education at English language department, the academic staffs always require essays, compositions, and an undergraduation thesis in the last year. Throughout the academic year, students have to take notes and have to write on their examination papers at least, so they have to challenge with the problems that they come across while conveying their ideas by composing.

It is assumed that skills of production speaking and writing are ignored before the university education, because these skills are not measured in YDS exam and they commit so many errors in their written productions. It is also assumed that this study will help the students who are on the process of learning English, especially writing, as they lack of the opportunity of learning and teaching the

academic writing. And it must be borne in mind that the students studying English Language and Literature should be aware of the fact that the learning activities will be important in their near future as they are going to be teachers.

CHAPTER II

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This chapter will give information about the definition of the terms; error, mistakes and knowledge about Contrastive and Error Analysis. Moreover, general background of the terms; writing, Error Analysis process and the sources of errors will be given in details.

2.1. Errors and Mistakes

Corder (1981) emphasizes an important distinction between errors and mistakes. Mistakes are deviations due to performance factors such as memory lapses, physical states such as tiredness and psychological conditions such as strong emotion. A distinction is sometimes made between an error, which results from incomplete knowledge, and a mistake made by a learner when writing or speaking and which is caused by lack of attention, fatigue, carelessness, or some other aspect of performance. The learners defend that mistakes are haphazard and easily corrected by the learners when their attention is stimulated to them. Moreover, errors are systematic, consistent deviances which reveal the learners' "transitional competence", that is, their underlying knowledge of the language at a given stage of learning. Sridhar (1980) points to a newer interpretation of "error" in the light of interlanguage studies. He argues that learner's deviations from target language rules should not be regarded as undesirable errors and mistakes; they are inevitable and a necessary part of learning process.

According to Corder (1981) errors are more serious and need more correction than mistakes. Besides, Brown (1987) finds it dangerous to pay too much attention to learners' errors. This is because we, as language teachers, can lose sight of the value of positive reinforcement of clear, free communication (either orally or written) if we bound ourselves with errors.

Errors are sometimes classified according to vocabulary (lexical error), pronunciation (phonological error), grammar (syntactic error), misunderstanding of a speaker's intention or meaning (interpretive error), production of the wrong communicative effect, e.g. through the faulty use of a speech act or one of the rules

of speaking (pragmatic error). In the study of second and foreign language learning, errors have been studied to discover the processes learners make use of in learning and using a language

Shridar evaluates errors from the perspective of 'interlanguage'. Shridar (1980) describes a newer interpretation of 'error' in the light of interlanguage studies. He argues that the learner's deviations from target language rules should not be regarded as undesirable errors or mistakes; they are inevitable and a basic part of the learning process.

In the study of language learning, mistakes are unimportant as they do not give clue related to the learning process. Corder (1981) points out that mistakes have no significance to the process of language learning. However, he says that the problem of determining what a learner's mistake is and what a learner's error is one of some difficulty and involves a much more sophisticated study and analysis of errors than is usually accorded them.

2.1.1. Sources of Errors

2.1.1.1. Interlingual Errors

The beginning stages of learning a second language are characterized by a good deal of interlingual transfer from the native language. In these early stages, before the system of the second language is familiar, the native language is the only linguistic system in previous experience upon which the learner can draw. The errors which are attributable to mother tongue interference are interlingual errors. While it is not always clear that an error is the result of transfer from the native language, many such errors are detectable in learner speech. Fluent knowledge of a learner's native language, of course, aids the teacher in detecting and analyzing such errors; however, even familiarity with the language can be of help in pinpointing this common source (Brown, 1987). The interlingual errors are those caused by the influence of the learner's mother tongue on his production of the target language in presumably those areas where the languages are clearly differ. (Schachter, 1977)

2.1.1.2. Intralingual and Developmental Errors

Intralingual errors reflect the general characteristics of rule learning such as faulty generalization, incomplete application of rules, and failure to learn conditions under which rules apply (Richards, 1985). Richards points out that errors of this nature are frequent, regardless of the learner's language background. Rather than reflecting the learner's inability to separate two languages, intralingual and developmental errors reflect the learner's competence at a particular stage, and illustrate some of the general characteristics of language acquisition.

Developmental errors, according to Richards, illustrate learners attempting to build up hypotheses about the English language from their limited experience in the classroom or textbook. On the other hand, Dulay and Burt (1982) put intralingual and developmental errors into the same category. They claim that developmental errors are errors similar to those made by children learning the target language as their first language. "The omission of the article and the past tense marker may be classified as developmental because those are also found in the speech of children learning English as their first language" (Dulay and Burt, 1982).

In a significant study, Dulay and Burt (1974) present evidence suggesting a high degree of agreement between the order in which ESL learners acquired morphemes and the order observed in native language learners. Following figure displays the comparison of the order of acquired morphemes by ESL learners and native language learners. Richards (1985) presents four main subcategories in terms of the causes of intralingual and developmental errors. These four categories are overgeneralization, ignorance of rule restrictions, incomplete application of rules, and false concepts hypothesized. The following section explains these four categories.

Order of acquired morphemes by ESL and NL learners.

First language learners	Second language learners
1. plural (-s)	1. plural (-s)
2. progressive (-ing)	2. progressive (-ing)
3. past irregular	3. contractible copula
4. articles (a, the)	4. contractible auxiliary

5. contractible copula	5. articles (a, the)
6. possessive ('s)	6. past irregular
7. third person singular (-s)	7. third person sing. (-s)
8. contractible auxiliary	8. possessive ('s)

2.1.1.2.1. Overgeneralization

In accordance with Jacobovit (1970) overgeneralization is the use of previously available strategies in new situations in second language learning. Jacobovits says that in second language learning, some of the strategies will prove helpful in organizing the facts about the second language learning, but others, perhaps due to superficial similarities, will be misleading and inapplicable. Overgeneralization generally involves the creation of one deviant structure in place of two regular structures. It may be the result of the learners reducing their linguistic burden.

“Redundancy reduction” , termed by H. V. George (1972) is a strategy of overgeneralization which results in simplification. Below are some examples of overgeneralization errors produced by the subjects of this study:

- * He don't have breakfast in the morning.
- * He love his new car very much.

2.1.1.2.2. Ignorance of Rule Restrictions

In this case this is very closely related to the generalization of deviant structures, the problem results from the restrictions of existing structures. This type of error may be accounted for in terms of analogy.

Analogy seems to be a major factor in the misuse of prepositions and failure to observe restrictions in article usage. The learners rationalize a deviant usage from their previous experience of English (Richards, 1985). Below is an example of this sort of error:

- * I felt lucky that I didn't go to there.

2.1.1.2.3. Incomplete Application of Rules

Errors under this category result from inapplication of all the steps of a rule to produce a correct sentence. According to Norrish (1983); there are two possible causes of this kind of error. One is the use of questions in the classroom, where the learner is encouraged to repeat the question or part of it in the answer. The other possible cause is the fact that the learner can communicate adequately using deviant forms. Here is an example:

* He doesn't reads book every evening.

2.1.1.2.4. False Concepts Hypothesized

In addition to the wide range of intralingual errors which have to do with faulty rule learning at various levels, there is a class of developmental errors. Errors of this sort derive from faulty comprehension of distinctions in the target language (Richards, 1973) . In the following examples the form of be is often interpreted as a marker of the simple present tense.

* She isn't play tennis talently.

* They are meet with each other every weekend.

An examination of learners' performance, however, reveals that most developmental errors are intralingual (Dulay and Burt, 1982). They also say that these categories overlap and are not clear cut. Therefore, any researcher who attempts to use an error taxonomy to posit sources of errors must make a number of difficult and ultimately arbitrary decisions to attribute a singular source to an error.

2.2. Contrastive Analysis

Contrastive linguistic analysis was established by Charles C. Fries as an integral component of the methodology of target language teaching. Fries (1945) asserts that the most effective materials for foreign language teaching are based on a scientific description of the language to be learned carefully compared with a

parallel description of the learner's native language. Besides, Lado (1957) presents the following propositions:

a) In the comparison between native and foreign language lies the key to ease or make it difficult in foreign language learning.

b) The most effective language teaching materials are those that are based on a scientific description of the language learned, carefully compared with a parallel description of the native language of the learner.

c) The teacher who has made a comparison of the foreign language with the native language of the students will know better what the real problems are and can better provide for teaching them. Therefore, it can be said that the origins of Contrastive Analysis are pedagogic.

Ellis (1985) tells that differences between the first and second language create learning difficulty which results in errors. Consequently, errors, according to the behaviorist theory, are considered undesirable because they were evidence of non-learning rather than wrong learning.

2.2.1. The Reason for Contrastive Analysis

Sridhar (1980) states that the main reasons for applying contrastive studies are simply based on the followings;

a) The practical experience of foreign language teachers

b) Studies of language contact in bilingual situations

c) Theory of learning.

He claims that a substantial number of errors made by foreign language learners can be traced to their mother tongue.

One source that supports the CA hypothesis is the learning theory, particularly, the theory of transfer. If the strong and the weak versions of CA hypothesis are examined, we may have a better idea on the meaning of it. According to James

(1986) both the strong and the weak versions are based on the assumption of native tongue interference, however, they differ in their treatment of errors.

2.2.1.1. Strong Version of Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis

The strong version claims that all target language errors can be foreseen by identifying the differences between the target language and the mother tongue. Lee (1968) simply says that the strong version based on several assumptions. These assumptions are as follows;

- 1) The prime cause of difficulty and error in foreign language learning is interference coming from the learner's native language.
- 2) The difficulties are chiefly due to the differences between two languages.
- 3) The greater these differences are, the more acute the learning difficulties will be.
- 4) The results of a comparison between two languages are necessary to predict the difficulties and errors which will occur in learning the foreign language;
- 5) What there is to teach can be best found by comparing the two languages and then subtracting what is common to them.

Moreover, according to Ellis (1985) the strong version of the hypothesis has few favorers today. He claims that the mother tongue is not the sole and not even the main cause of grammatical errors.

2.2.1.2. Weak Version of Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis

The weak version of the CA hypothesis seems to be diagnostic. According to Ellis (1985) a contrastive analysis can be used to see which errors are the result of interference. Thus, as Ellis says, Contrastive Analysis has to be in correlation with Error Analysis.

James (1986) asks the reason to teachers why certain errors are committed. Because the teacher has a role of a monitor, assessor on the learner's performance. So it is teacher that must know the real reason about the errors committed by students. It is on the basis of such diagnostic knowledge that the teacher organizes feedback to the learner and prescribes remedial work.

Wardhaugh (1970) says that the CA hypothesis is only tenable in its weak version since it has a diagnostic function, and not tenable as a predictor of error. He claims that the errors can not be foreseen and for that reason the errors committed by students need a corrective feedback. And the most important thing is that the teacher must be aware of the quality of the errors as they indicate the learning process.

2.3. Error Analysis

Some important claims about CA have been discussed so far. This section is about the principles and methodology of Error Analysis. Sridhar (1980) describes the aims and methodology of traditional error analysis and points to a newer interpretation of error stemming from interlanguage studies: the learner's deviations from target language norms should not be regarded as undesirable errors or mistakes; they are inevitable and necessary part of language learning. The aims of traditional Error Analysis were pragmatic: errors provided information to design pedagogical materials and strategies. Ellis (1985) points out that the prevention of errors, in accordance with behaviorist learning theory, was more important than the identification of errors. Therefore, it caused the decline of Error Analysis. The fields of Error Analysis and interlanguage studies which focus on the psycholinguistic processes of second language acquisition and learner-language systems came into prominence. The data gathered from learners' sentences and utterances in the target language are examined to find out specific language-learning process and strategies. (Richards, 1985)

Contrastive analysis was developed according to behaviorist and structural learning theories which were the prominent theories during 1950s and 1960s. But later there was controversial to contrastive analysis as it couldn't analyze and predict

all the errors committed by the learners. The main criticisms against contrastive analysis come from Rod Ellis (1986) claiming that; first, there were the doubts concerning the ability of contrastive analysis to predict errors. These doubts arose when researchers began to examine language learners' language in depth. Second, there were a number of theoretical criticisms regarding the feasibility of comparing languages and the methodology of contrastive analysis. Third, there were reservations about whether contrastive analysis had anything relevant to offer to language teaching.

As behaviorist approach to the L2 learning was harshly questioned, cognitive process was examined and argued that L2 acquisition might be explained by L1 acquisition by linguist Chomsky. This was called Chomskian Theory. But there isn't any consensus. At the same time, the term interlanguage is suggested by Larry Selinker. Interlanguage is that the learner of L2 is in the process of acquisition of a language between L1 and L2.

Corder (1981) uses the term idiosyncratic dialect to mean the idea that the learner's language is unique to the particular individual. Selinker (1978) refers to the same phenomenon as interlanguage stressing the separateness of a second language learner's system. Nemser (1978) coins the term "approximative system" to emphasize the successive approximation to the target language. While each of these terms points out a particular aspect, they share the concept that the language learners are forming their own self-contained linguistic system. In this respect, learners' errors provide evidence of the system of the language they use. Corder (1981) says they are significant in three different ways:

- 1) First of all, if a language teacher can regularly analyze the learners' errors, one may find out how far the learner has progressed towards the goal and which part of the target language learners have difficulty with learning and using accurately. Therefore, the teacher can understand which language item should be emphasized during the teaching-learning process.

- 2) It helps the researchers. By carefully analyzing the errors, the researcher can determine how the target language is acquired or learned and the strategies or procedures the learner follows.
- 3) It helps the learners to see how they are building a second language rule system. As Dulay and Burt (1982) claim “people cannot learn language (both L1 and L2) without first systematically committing goofs.”

According to Corder (1981) errors should be analyzed in three stages:

Stage 1. Diagnosis-recognition of idiosyncrasy

To start with, Corder (1981) suggests analyzing all of the sentences of the learners in detail. Simple deviations can be easily seen as shown in the example below:

* She hate cats.

Besides these overt errors, the data for Error Analysis should include the covertly erroneous sentences; that is, sentences that are superficially well-formed. Here is an example of that kind of sentence:

* He goes to school.

Used in a context where “just” or “this morning” is implied, is unacceptable, even though it contains no formal grammatical deviation on the surface.

Stage 2. Description-Accounting for the Learner’s idiosyncratic dialect

A description of the diagnosed errors is attempted at this stage. In the simplest form, this stage involves answering questions such as; “What does the error consist of? Is it an error of spelling or grammatical usage? Or is it an error of wrong choice in terms of meaning, style, and so on?”

In describing the learners’ errors, Corder emphasizes the importance of a correct interpretation of their sentences of the target language and by matching, the erroneous sentence with its equivalent in the learner’s native language.

McKeating (1981) argues that a linguistic classification of the errors can also be done at this stage. This involves categorizing errors as;

Omission: Strombli is small volcanic island.

Addition: She finished to the school

Substitution: He was angry on me.

Stage 3. Explanation

At this stage, one attempts to account for how and why the learner's idiosyncratic dialect is of the nature it is. This process involves identifying the sources of errors.

Various suggestions have been made for the explanation of learner's errors. Richards (1985), for example, groups errors into three classes: interference errors, intralingual and developmental errors. Errors which are caused by native language habits are commonly referred to as "interlingual" errors. Another explanation lies in viewing errors as signs of incorrect hypotheses formed during the process of language learning. For this sort of errors the term "intralingual" is used. The following explains the different sources of errors.

However, the errors that students make during learning must be taken into consideration according to their source. As told in the previous chapters students who are in the process of learning ESL have some difficulties concerning interferences between their mother tongue and the target language. So while treating the errors the teacher should remember that the way he/she will apply in analyzing the errors must be according to the students' cultures, competence and such kinds of qualities that a student is supposed to have.

2.3.1. Aims and Uses of Error Analysis

An error analysis can give us a picture of the type of difficulty our learners are experiencing. For the class teacher an error analysis can give useful information about a new class and indicate problems common to all the students and common to particular groups (Norrish, 1983).

An error analysis may indicate learning items which will require special attention. This is also a major aim of CA. An error analysis may also suggest modification in teaching techniques or order of presentation, if one has reasons for

suspecting that some of the learners' problems may have been caused or added to by the way in which a particular item was presented (McKeating, 1981) .

Norrish (1983) suggests that the teacher can build up a profile of each individual's problems and see how their grasp of target language is improving if two or three surveys are carried out at intervals of time. According to Norrish, teachers can evaluate more objectively how their teaching is helping the students by using error analysis as a monitoring device.

To conclude, interference from the mother tongue is a major source of difficulty in foreign language learning, and CA has proved valuable in determining the areas of mother tongue interference. However, as Richards (1985) also states, many errors are the result of learners' employing strategies during their mastery of a second language, and of the mutual interference of items within the target language. These cannot be accounted for by a CA. If learners are actively constructing a system for the second language, language teachers would not expect all their incorrect notions about it to be a simple result of transferring rules from their mother tongue.

An analysis of the major types of intralingual and developmental errors; overgeneralization, ignorance of rule restrictions, incomplete application of rules, and the building of false concepts, may lead the language teachers and material developers to examine the teaching materials for evidence of the language learning assumptions that underlie them.

2.3.2. Process of Error Analysis

The process of Error Analysis is the most important begin point in analyzing the errors committed by students. This procedure is always the same in analyzing errors as follows. It contains four stages from beginning to the end.

2.3.2.1. Identification of Errors

In this section, the errors committed by students will be identified in some ways. First of all, the total number of 280 errors out of 33 compositions were identified in terms of morphology and syntax. Then, these errors were categorized as

an aid in presenting the data into linguistic error categories. These categories are as follows;

- a) Morphology
- b) Articles
- c) Syntax
- d) Prepositions (Burt and Kiparsky, 1978)

In some categories the subclassification was based on the surface strategy that learners apply, such as addition, omission and misuse.

2.3.2.2. Description of Errors

Errors were variously classified in terms of linguistics. Burt and Kiparsky (1972), in *The Gooficon: A Repair Manual for English*, described errors in relation to skeleton of English classes, the auxiliary systems, passive sentences etc. Also, Politzer and Ramirez (1973) emphasized such taxonomies as morphology, syntax and vocabulary.

The taxonomies stated above aimed at pedagogical applications; however, they are inadequate to explain the process of second language learning. Corder (1974) described errors in terms of their systemization:

1. Pre-systematic errors: They result from the lack of the knowledge of a certain rule in the target language.
2. Systematic errors: Although the learner knows something about a rule, he uses it wrongly.
3. Post-systematic errors: These errors seem to be a mistake rather than an error. The learner is aware of the rule, but he uses it incompatibly.

2.3.2.3. Explanation of Errors

In this section errors, as classified above, will be explained in detail. First of four categories are as follows;

Morphological Errors:

The following items are the errors which were taken into account as morphological errors:

- 1) Incorrect third person singular verb
 - failure to attach –s
 - unnecessary attachment of –s
- 2) Incorrect simple past tense
 - regularization by adding –ed

Errors in the use of Articles :

In this category the errors made in the usage of articles such as unnecessary addition and omission of an article were taken into account.

Errors in Syntax:

This category includes the following:

- Omission of be
- Errors in negation; errors in negation with auxiliaries and multiple negation

Errors in the use of Prepositions:

Unnecessary addition, misuse or omission of a preposition in a sentence was considered as preposition errors.

2.3.2.4. Evaluation of Errors

The last step in analyzing errors is the process of evaluating errors. In evaluating errors, Ellis (1986) suggests that there are three questions in the evaluation of errors.

1. Are some errors judged to be more problematic than others?
2. Are there differences in the evaluation made by native speakers and non-native speakers?
3. What criteria do judges use in evaluating learners' errors?

CHAPTER III

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Introduction

In this chapter, the subjects of the study, the data and the methods in analyzing errors committed by students will be presented briefly.

3.2. Subjects of the Study

The subjects were preferred from the preparatory class students studying at English Language and Literature Department of Kafkas University. Their written productions during the writing course were taken into consideration as mentioned before. The first year students are two types of students normally. One type is the student who passes the Proficiency Exam given to the whole students. The other type includes the failed students mentioned above. The Proficiency Exam includes grammar test, reading comprehension, vocabulary, and also composing on one of the given topics. The results got from this exam are the criteria for the students do determine their need of preparatory class or beginning to study as the first year students. The unsuccessful students have to attend preparatory class till they do well in the exam given at the end of the year. So, in this study the students of the preparatory class form he subject matter.

3.3. Data

Data is consisted of 33 students' written papers from the writing courses. Only the grammatical errors of the written papers are taken in to consideration.

3.4. Method and Procedure

This study covers 280 errors of 33 students on the written exams during the first semester of 2008-2009 academic year at Kafkas University. The students were taught the basic rules of writing and quizzes were made before the exams that the papers got from. In analyzing errors some symbols and abbreviations were used so as to show the students their errors and teach the strategy in analyzing errors. Ferris (2002) uses abbreviations as it is also used in this study as shown in the table below:

Table 1: List of Abbreviations

Error Type	Abbreviation/Code
Article	art
Fragment	frag
Idiom	id
Informal	inf
Noun ending	n
Plural	pl
Pronoun	pr
Punctuation	punc
Run-on	ro
Sentence structure	ss
Spelling	sp
Subject-verb agreement	sv
Verb form	vf
Verb Tense	vt
Word Choice	we
Word form	wf

CHAPTER IV

4. DATA ANALYSIS

4.1. Introduction

This chapter of the study includes the error analysis of students written papers. The errors are presented in details claiming probable reasons and giving percentages for all errors.

4.2. General Analysis of Errors Committed by Students

As told above; the errors committed by the subject students are classified in details and the subcategorization is made in details including different parts of language learning process

4.3 Classification of Errors According to Their Sources

As it was stated in the previous chapter, compositions of 33 different students of the Department of English Language and Literature of Kafkas University were analyzed. At the end of the analysis, a total of 280 grammatical errors were identified in the compositions. Identified errors were classified into 7 main linguistic categories. The number and percentages of these errors are indicated in the table and figure below:

Table 2: The sources of Errors

Type of Error	The number of Errors	The percentage of errors
Articles	56	%20
Prepositions	68	%24,3
Tenses	9	%3,2
Active and Passive voice	8	%2,8
Verbs	23	%8,2
Morphological Errors	35	%12,5
Other errors	81	%29
TOTAL	280	100

4.3.1. Detailed Classification of Errors

The errors, which are shown above into linguistic categories, were classified in tables into linguistic categories a more detailed way. Giving examples from the errors committed in the compositions of the student, the errors are as follow below.

4.3.1.1. Articles

The problematic area for the learners is the use of articles. Twenty percent of the total errors are in this category. The subject students mostly omitted the definite and indefinite articles in their writings. The table below shows their error rates in this category in detail:

Table 3: Article Errors

Type of Error	The number of Errors	The percentage of errors
Omission of ‘a/an’	24	%42,9
Redundant use of ‘a/an’	4	%7,1
Omission of ‘the’	18	%32,1
Misuse of articles	3	%5,4
Redundant use of ‘the’	7	%12,5
TOTAL	56	100

As the articles are not used similarly in Turkish as in English learners commit quite a good number of errors in this category. For example, when we say “He is a student” in English we use the indefinite article “a” before the “student”. However, it is not the same in Turkish. In Turkish, the sentence has a structure as “O öğrencidir.” And there is no equivalent of the article “a” in this sentence. In other words, there is not any similarity between the two languages in terms of articles. So, they commit so many errors of articles. Some samples of these errors are as follows:

- * Son of my uncle is very clever.
- * He is most handsome boy I have ever seen.
- * My elder brother likes to play in garden.
- * Kars is cold city.
- * When I entered hall, everybody looked at me.
- * People in my country are very hospitable.
- * Yesterday I saw man begging on street.

As it is easily seen, students do not use articles such as ‘a, an, the’. It is simply because, as it is told above, Turkish Language does not have such kind of usage. The grammatical rules are much more different from the English and students sometimes make mistakes because they try to resemble the rules of two languages to each other.

4.3.1.2. Prepositions

This category contains the most problematic area for the subjects. For, almost all the subject students omitted or misused some prepositions in their sentences. This category is the one that includes the largest number of errors, which are totally 68. Their detailed classification is as given the table below:

Table 4: Preposition Errors

Type of Error	The number of Errors	The percentage of errors
Misuse of prepositions	15	%22
Omission of prepositions	44	%64,7
Redundant use of prepositions	9	%13,3
TOTAL	68	100

Since most English prepositions have some different functions, it is hard to learn to use prepositions correctly for Turkish learners. Another factor that makes this area is that some prepositions in English such as *in, on, at* can be used as suffixes in the same form without any distinction in Turkish. For this reason Turkish learners have difficulty while using prepositions in English. As it is seen in the table above, the most common error in this category is omission of prepositions. Some samples of such errors are as follows:

- *Future is very important (-) us.*
- *Parents want their children to live (-) them.*
- *We always struggle for our future, so it is very important (-) us.*
- *Also they should be economical (-) using water.*

Another most identical error in preposition is the misuse. Since Turkish learners have difficulty in distinguishing some prepositions, and they have poor knowledge they use them wrongly. Here are some samples of these errors:

- ... *in Kafkas university.*
- ... *at the room.*
- ... *at sum up;*

And, the least common error in this category is the addition of prepositions.

- *Education is a way of which teaches us everything.*
- *I want to freedom in which I can live however I want.*

In the last example above, the subject student used the preposition “to” after the verb “want”. When the verb *be* is followed by a verb the preposition “to” is used before the following verb. However, this is not the case when “want” is followed by a noun. Learners are not aware of this distinction, and they sometimes use “to” redundantly after the verb “want”.

4.3.1.3. Tenses

The number of errors in tenses, which covers % 2 of the total errors, is 10. These errors were divided into sub-categories as seen in the chart below:

Table 5: Tense Errors

Type of Error	The number of Errors	The percentage of errors
Present continuous instead of present simple	1	%11,1
Simple present instead of present perfect	2	%22,2
Simple past instead of simple present	1	%11,1
Simple past instead of present perfect	3	%33,3
Past perfect instead of simple past	2	%22,3
TOTAL	9	100

This category constitutes the lowest number of errors among the linguistic categories employed in the study. One of the probable reasons for the minority of the errors in this category is that the students did not use various types of tenses in their writings because of the topics related to their writings. Also, there are some certain rules about the usage of tenses and you do not make so many mistakes once

you learn these rules, this might be another reason for fewer errors in this category. Some of these erroneous utterances are below:

** I just finished writing the task.*

In this sentence, the student used simple past tense instead of present perfect tense. A probable reason for this error may be the lack of equivalent of present perfect tense in Turkish. Inadequate knowledge of this tense may let learners use it incorrectly. Another error for present perfect tense is as follows:

** My brother started to watch TV two hours ago, and he is still watching it.*

Although his sentence refers to the present perfect, he used simple past tense. This error may be a result of Turkish translation of these two tenses. In Turkish, the sentences “he has started and he started” are translated as “başladı” so, this error can be called as an error of interference.

Another sample is the use of present continuous instead of simple present:

I am living in Kars.

As it is easily seen, the student writes his sentences according to the rules of his native language. The expression in English, when translated, is the same in Turkish.

4.3.1.4. Active and Passive Voice

This category comprises % 2,8 of the total errors and the total number in this category is 8. It was seen that the subjects used active voice instead of passive, which is a probable result of carelessness and lack of competence. Below are some samples of these errors:

- The Best cheese in the world make in Sweden.

- My computer broke down by my little sister two weeks ago.

4.3.1.5. Verbs

This category contains the misuse, omission and addition of the verb “be” and other verbs in sentences. The table below shows the rates of a detailed classification of these errors:

Table 6: Verb Errors

Type of Error	The number of Errors	The percentage of errors
Addition of the verb 'be'	7	%30,4
Omission of other verbs	2	%8,7
Misuse of the verb 'be'	2	%8,7
Omission of the verb 'be'	8	%34,8
Misuse of other verbs	4	%17,4
TOTAL	23	100

The most problematic items in this category are the use of verb "be". The subjects omitted or added the verb "be" in their utterances. The samples of this category are as follows:

- *Be careful! My dog may be bite you.*
- *I will be have a wonderful holiday this time next year.*
- *Air pollution a difficult problem for human beings*
- *The European countries want to the best friend with Turkey.*

The examples above have common characteristics. The possible reason for the errors in the examples is probably the distinction in the use of the verb "be" in Turkish and English. The translation of a sentence with the verb "be" in English may seem to have no verb in Turkish. When the learners simply translate the sentence into English without applying the rules of the target language the result may be erroneous as in these examples. Besides, there are quite a good number of errors in terms of the addition of the verb "be".

- *Without you the classroom can be finish.*

4.3.1.6. Morphology

The sub-categorization of this category is as in the table below:

Table 7: Morphological Errors

Type of Error	The number of Errors	The percentage of errors
Omission of plural ending 's'	4	%11,4
Misuse of other and another	3	%8,6
Misuse of possessive 's'	2	%5,7
Wrong word form	16	%45,7
Incorrect use of comparative adjectives	2	%5,7
Misuse and addition of the plural ending 's'	7	%20
Misuse of 'like and as'	1	%2,9
TOTAL	35	100

This category constitutes % 12,5 of the total errors. The table indicates that the most problematic sub-category in this taxonomy is the wrong word form. The subject students used wrong form of the words, such as adjectives instead of

adverbs, nouns instead of verbs or gerund instead of infinitive. The possible reason for so many errors in this category is that the area is very comprehensive. Besides, they may result from poor competence of the subjects. As the subjects do not have adequate knowledge of different forms of these words, they probably produced so many erroneous utterances. Some samples of this sub-category are as follows:

My doctor adviced me to go on a diet.

In the sentence above, the subject student used the noun form of the verb ‘advise’.

My last visiting to my grandmother made her very happy.

In this sentence the student made the verb ‘visit’ noun by adding –ing. Because she may have thought that it is much more better to use the verb form and she naturally creates her own rules to make a verb noun by adding –ing suffix to the word.

4.3.1.7. Other Errors

The sub-categorization of this category is as in the table below:

Table 8: Other Errors

Type of Error	The number of Errors	The percentage of errors
Lack of subject verb agreement	22	%27,1
Misuse of conditionals	8	%9,9
Disagreement between determiners, demonstratives, quantifiers and nouns	26	%32,1
Wrong order	16	%19,7
Omission of modals	2	%2,5
Misuse of modals	7	%8,7
TOTAL	81	100

As it is clearly understood from the table above, the most common and problematic areas are wrong order, lack of subject and verb agreement and disagreement between determiners and nouns. One of the most common errors in this category is in the word order in the sentences. Since the word order in English and Turkish are different from each other, the subjects used the items in the sentences in wrong orders. Some samples are as follows:

** He asked Ahmet where he is.*

** My little brother plays guitar always.*

** I am thinking it will be good for you.*

** I bought ten egg and two bottle of milk.*

In Turkish, quantifiers are not usually followed by plural nouns; for example, the phrase “on yumurta” in Turkish is correct grammatically and structurally; however when we directly apply this structure to the target language the result will be erroneous (ten egg). Also, the case is similar in demonstratives. Singular demonstratives are used before nouns no matter they are singular or plural. For example, in “bu öğrenciler” bu is a singular demonstrative and öğrenciler is a plural noun, and the English equivalent of this phrase is “this students”, which is accepted as erroneous in English.

CHAPTER V

5. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

5.1. Results

As mentioned in the first section, the aim of this study is to explore the errors that Turkish learners make during their undergraduate education of English. By conducting an error analysis on a set of student compositions, the problematic areas were examined. The errors committed by students in their written samples were accounted as “interlingual” and “intralingual” according to their sources. It can be concluded from the percentage of the errors that intralingual errors are much more higher than the interlingual errors. This finding seems to support the other findings made by Duskova. Duskova (1969) found the proportion of interlingual errors to be % 24,9. As it also supports this view, the background of Turkish EFL is mainly consisted of their mother tongue. Naturally, when they begin to learn a foreign language, they make mistakes and if it is not corrected by teachers, they become in to errors. The main problem of the Turkish EFL students is to resemble two languages with each other, and this leads to some problems in learning a foreign language.

5.2. Discussion

This study aimed to determine the most frequent grammatical errors that Turkish learners of English commit in their writings. The compositions written by learners were examined and the errors found were classified to certain linguistic categories. Another aim of this study was to reveal EA as a pedagogical tool both for diagnosis and explanation of problematic areas in the target language. As a result of the diagnosis of errors, some suggestions for teachers, syllabus designers and test developers were made in order to have better results and fewer errors in language teaching. Thus, this study can be described as a case study as it focused on a single stage in the learners’ learning process.

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