A Correlational Study of the Relationships Between Syntactical Accuracy, Lexical Accuracy and the Quality of Turkish EFL Student Writing

Thesis

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to investigate the effects of the frequency of syntactical and lexical errors on the assessment of compositions written by Turkish EFL college students. It attempted to examine a) the most frequent types of syntactical errors and lexical errors in EFL students’ compositions; b) the relationship between the types of writing prompt and the frequency of syntactical and lexical errors; c) the relationship between the frequency of syntactical and lexical errors and the holistic score of the compositions.

The data, 210 compositions, were gathered from 80 Turkish university freshmen enrolled in a Basic English course at Bozok University during the second semester of 2009. The results of randomly selected 150 compositions written by Bozok University freshmen majoring in Electrical and Electronics Engineering, Computer Programming and History revealed that the students had the greatest problem with prepositions in syntactical error category and formal mis-selection of words in lexical error category. The results showed that the type of writing prompt seemed to have an effect on the frequency of occurrence of errors, whether they be syntactical or lexical errors. A low negative correlation was found between the holistic scores and the frequency of syntactical errors. Similarly, a low negative correlation was found between the holistic scores and the
frequency of lexical errors. When it comes to the relationship between the frequencies of syntactical and lexical errors, and the holistic scores, a moderate negative correlation was found.

Overgeneralization, inadequate application of rules, incomplete mastery, ignorance of rule restrictions and particularly negative transfer were found to be possible factors contributing to the occurrences of errors. The results also provided evidence that as the frequency of syntactical and lexical errors decreases the quality of the compositions relatively seems to increase.
Dedicated to my beloved parents,

Çelebi-Pempe Gönülal

My uncle,

H. Bayram Gönülal

And my late namesake,

Talip Gönülal
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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abstract</td>
<td>ii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dedication</td>
<td>iv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgments</td>
<td>v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vita</td>
<td>vi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List of Tables</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List of Figures</td>
<td>xii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1 Background of the Study</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2 Significance of Learner Errors</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3 Statement of the Problem</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.4 Purpose of the Study</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.5 Research Questions</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.6 Significance of the Study</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.7 Limitations of The Study</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.8 Abbreviations and Definitions of Terms</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER 5: RESULTS, DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Results..........................................................................................................................49
  5.1.1 Research Question 1...............................................................................................51
    5.1.1.1 Research Question 1.a.............................................................................53
    5.1.1.2 Research Question 1.b.............................................................................57
  5.1.2 Research Question 2...............................................................................................60
    5.1.2.1 Research Question 2.a.............................................................................62
    5.1.2.2 Research Question 2.b.............................................................................66
  5.1.3 Research Question 3...............................................................................................69
5.2 Discussion......................................................................................................................72
  5.2.1 Research Question 1...............................................................................................72
    5.2.1.1 Research Question 1.a.............................................................................80
    5.2.1.2 Research Question 1.b.............................................................................82
  5.2.2 Research Question 2...............................................................................................83
    5.2.2.1 Research Question 2.a.............................................................................88
    5.2.2.2 Research Question 2.b.............................................................................90
  5.2.3 Research Question 3...............................................................................................91
5.3 Conclusions.....................................................................................................................96
5.4 Pedagogical Implications.............................................................................................99
5.5 Limitations.....................................................................................................................101
5.6 Recommendations for Future Study............................................................................102

REFERENCES....................................................................................................................104
APPENDICES.....................................................................................................................113
  A. Writing Prompts...........................................................................................................113
  B. Holistic Scoring Rubric for Writing............................................................................114
  C. Sample Compositions.................................................................................................116
## LIST OF TABLES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.1 Morphological and Syntactical Error Types</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2 Formal and Semantic Error Types</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1 Syntactical Error Types</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2 Lexical Error Types</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1 Categories, Frequencies, and Percentages of Syntactical Errors</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>for the 150 Compositions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2 Descriptive Statistics of Syntactical Errors for Each Separate</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing Prompt</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.3 Anova</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.4 Tukey HSD test</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.5 Descriptive statistic for the frequency of syntactical errors</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and the holistic scores of the randomly selected 150 writing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>samples</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.6 Correlation between the frequency of syntactical errors and the</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>holistic scores of the randomly selected 150 writing samples</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.7 Categories, Frequencies, and Percentages of Lexical Errors for</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the 150 Compositions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5.8 Descriptive Statistics of Lexical Errors for Each Separate Writing Prompt
5.9 Anova
5.10 Tukey HSD test
5.11 Descriptive statistic for the frequency of lexical errors and the holistic scores of the randomly selected 150 writing samples
5.12 Correlation between frequency of lexical error types and the holistic scores of randomly selected 150 writing samples
5.13 Descriptive statistic for the frequency of syntactical & lexical errors and the holistic scores of the selected 150 writing samples
5.14 Correlation between frequency of syntactical & lexical error and the holistic scores of randomly selected 150 writing samples
5.15 Major Source of Most Frequent Syntactical and Lexical Errors
## LIST OF FIGURES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5.3 Means of syntactical errors for three writing prompts</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.4 Scatterplot illustrating the relationship between the frequency of syntactical errors and the holistic scores of the selected 150 writing samples</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.5 Means of lexical errors for three writing prompts</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.6 Scatterplot illustrating the relationship between the frequency of lexical errors and the holistic scores of the selected 150 writing samples</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.7 Scatterplot illustrating the relationship between the frequency of syntactical &amp; lexical errors and the holistic scores of the selected 150 writing samples</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER 1:
INTRODUCTION

Language learning is a multi-faceted process and usually a challenging experience for second language learners. For many years, researchers and linguists in the area of second language learning and teaching have conducted studies on the performance of second language learners in order to obtain a better picture of how learners process the language. What is obvious in these studies is that in the process of learning a second language, learners more or less make mistakes and commit errors. As the famous proverb ‘to err is human’ stresses, making errors is normal and is treated as an inevitable part of learning (Dulay et al., 1982). Similarly, in his groundbreaking paper, Corder (1981) accentuates that errors are of significance to the process of language learning and student errors should, therefore, be interpreted as evidence that the student is in the process of acquiring the language and provide teachers with a description of the student’s knowledge of the language at any point in its development (p. 8).
1.1 Background of the Study

Corder (1967) states there are two opposing schools of thought in terms of learner errors. First school advocates structuralism in linguistics and behaviorism in psychology. Supporters of this school see the occurrence of errors as only a sign of inadequacy of their teaching techniques and consequently as the first step in forming bad habits. According to the scholars of this school, language learning is mostly a matter of habit formation. Learner should, thus, be instructed to avoid committing errors as much as possible since, for them, errors only create confusion and hinder the language learning process. On the other hand, the second school, advocating transformational-generative linguistics and cognitive psychology, believe that even the world is imperfect; hence, errors are inevitable in language learning. In addition, errors, they believe, are of importance in that they reveal the hypotheses of language learners about the underlying system of the target language. In language learning process, these hypotheses are tested and modified by the learners, and some of them are either abandoned if proved wrong or kept if proved correct.

1.2 Significance of Learner Errors

In the first language acquisition process, it is not expected that a child learning his mother language produces only well-constructed and grammatically correct sentences from the earliest stages. Instead, his incorrect sentences are interpreted as an evidence that he is in the process of acquiring the language. Brown and Frazer (cited in Corder 1967) underlined the best evidence that a child acquires the system is the occurrence of systematic errors stating that the utterances of a correct form cannot be treated as proof
the learner has mastered the rule(s) because he may be merely repeating an utterance that he has just heard. Spolsky (1979) coined the term “language-like behavior” for this phenomenon.

Learner errors are of significance in second language as well. Corder (1967) thoroughly explains the significance of error analysis in his articles. First, for teachers, learner’s errors could tell them how much progress the learner has made towards the desired goal, and ergo what remains for him to learn. Second, for researchers, the errors are very crucial in that they provide them with evidence of how a language is learned or acquired, and what kinds of strategies and techniques the learner is making use of in this learning process.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

Learning writing in an EFL context appears to be a challenging process due to several factors. Second language writing has been at the core of debates concerning how to teach and evaluate L2 writing. However, few well-organized writing curricula in foreign language education field seem to exist. Especially, in English as a foreign language (EFL) contexts such as Turkey, the issue appears to be of utmost importance. Further, due to the fact that learners have little or no opportunity to use English, particularly speaking skill, outside the classroom, writing appears to be a crucial component of second language learning process. For example, writing reveals students’ second language performance from several aspects including grammar, vocabulary, punctuation, and so forth. Unfortunately, the foreign language policy of Turkish Higher Education seems to fail to provide students, especially university-level students, with the
necessary English education they need since many university students have problems with writing L2 academic and non-academic compositions despite the years of English instruction that they receive until they attend a university.

It must be borne in mind that EFL learners inevitably make errors in their attempt to master the writing skill. It is the same for Turkish EFL learners. They generally seem to have difficulty mainly in the production of accurate and acceptable sentences in their writing. Further there is a tendency among some Turkish EFL learners and teachers that argues these written errors play a crucial role in writing assessment in that the percentage of errors may be a predictor of writing quality. The extent of learner’s knowledge of syntax and mastery the L2 lexicon may determine his/her communicative strength in the foreign language. However, possessing the knowledge of grammar and individual words in a foreign language may not guarantee the ability to construct well-formed phrases, sentences or paragraphs. Hence, studies of the relationship between syntactical knowledge and lexical knowledge on the quality of second language writing appears to be significant in that they could shed light on students’ writing better and how to design second language writing courses.

1.4 Purpose of the Study

Foreign language writing studies conducted with Turkish EFL learners are limited, and they tend to focus on either problems related to only one aspect of language, examples include prepositions (Unal, 1989); tense (Aycan, 1990); prepositions and phrasal verbs (Ozaydinli, 1994); prepositions (Alpsoy, 1998); demonstratives (Cokal &
Ruhi, 2006); and agentive verbs (Montrul, 2000), or the errors in general, for instance, semantic, pragmatic and syntactic errors (Sahin, 1993); and all types of errors (Gok, 1996). However, much research is needed focusing on the relationship between the errors and the writing quality. It is, thus, necessary that more foreign language writing studies be carried out so that foreign language teachers can be informed about their L2 students’ writing and how they can teach foreign language writing in relationship to data about L2 student writing.

As an English instructor to Turkish EFL college students, the researcher has witnessed that Turkish students commit various syntactical and lexical errors when they write compositions in English. Under the light of error analysis approach, syntactical and lexical errors made by Turkish EFL college students were investigated in this present study. Furthermore, holistic assessment of writing was employed to analyze and evaluate sample student writings. How significant effects syntactical accuracy and lexical accuracy had on second language writings of Turkish EFL students at Bozok University was examined. The aim of this study was, therefore, three-fold:

1) to identify and examine the most frequent types of syntactical errors in a sample of EFL college student’ writings.

2) to identify and examine the most frequent types of lexical errors in a sample of EFL college student’ writings.
3) to investigate the relationship between lexical and syntactical accuracy and the holistic quality of students’ writing based on a rubric.

1.5 Research Questions

1. What types of syntactical errors were most frequently found in selected compositions written by Turkish EFL University students at Bozok University?

   a. Was there a relationship between the type of writing prompt and the number of syntactical errors?

   b. Was there a relationship between syntactical accuracy and the holistic score on the quality of sample writings?

2. What types of lexical errors were most frequently found in selected compositions written by Turkish EFL University students at Bozok University?

   a. Was there a relationship between the type of writing prompt and the number of lexical errors?

   b. Was there a relationship between lexical choices in written English and holistic score on the quality of sample writings?

3. Was there a relationship between syntactical and lexical accuracy and the holistic quality on sample writings?
1.6 Significance of the Study

In a broader perspective, this study scrutinized the relationships among syntactical accuracy, lexical accuracy and the quality of second language writing. The findings of this study can be of importance to foreign and second language researchers, curricula developers and English teachers and can provide them with crucial proof of how a foreign language is acquired by a specific group of language learners. It can also show that the current state of the L2 students’ knowledge, and their most important problems with syntactical structures and lexical usage in writing in a second language. In a narrower perspective, this study can also shed light on understanding what types of lexical and syntactical errors Turkish EFL students make and in accordance with these common errors, what kind of remedies English instructors can take. The researcher believes that this study may have a pioneering role in the specific field of foreign language writing at university level in the context of Turkey. It may also inspire other researchers to investigate in this topic and perhaps eventually to design more appropriate and efficient writing materials and courses for Turkish learners of English at the university level.

1.7 Limitations of the Study

There are a couple of caveats in this study mainly pertinent to the nature of a correlational-content analysis study. First, the study focused on essays written by a particular group of Turkish EFL college learners in their early stages of learning English. Thus, the findings of this study may not be generalizable to other groups of EFL learners
at different levels other than beginner level or to other settings in other countries. More studies that include writing samples should be carried to perhaps explore how to generalize the findings to a broader population of Turkish and other EFL learners. The second limitation is the subject characteristics, as aforementioned, some students may have had good English education in secondary and high school and, consequently, their writings may be expected to include fewer errors. Due to the convenience sampling, it was hard to know much about the students’ educational backgrounds prior to their writing the 150 compositions.

1.8 Abbreviations and Definitions of Terms

Abbreviations

CA = contrastive analysis
EA = error analysis
EFL = English as a foreign language
ESL = English as a second language
L1 = first/mother language
L2 = second language
IL = interlanguage
SPSS = statistical package for the social sciences
TL = target language
Definitions of Terms

Anova: In statistics, Anova, also known as analysis of variance, is useful in comparing the means of several groups.

Contrastive Analysis: It focuses only on the linguistic differences and similarities in order to predict the learning difficulties. In a more simplistic way, when two languages are similar, positive transfer is likely to occur, whereas when there are some differences between two languages interference occurs.

Error Analysis: It is the observation, analysis and classification of learner errors to reveal the underlying system that the learner uses in learning a language.

Interlanguage: Selinker (1972) defines the term ‘interlanguage’ as temporary but systematic knowledge of a second language learner which is independent of both the learner’s L1 and the target language.

Interference: Dulay et al. (1982) define interference as the automatic transfer of the surface structure of the first language onto that of the target language. In other words, they are the types of errors that can be traced back to the first language.

Lexical Error: A lexical error is a deviation in form and/or meaning of a target language lexical word. In this study, ‘lexical error’ was used as a superordinate term including errors of wrong word choice, errors of literal translation, errors of omission or incompleteness, misspelling, errors of redundancy, errors of collocation and errors of word formation.
**Scatterplot:** It is a graph of plotted points showing the relationship between two variables for a set of data.

**Syntactical Error:** In this study, syntactical error and grammatical error were used interchangeably. Therefore, syntactical errors refer to errors resulting from learner’s unsuccessful attempt to follow the grammar rules of standard written English. Any incomplete application of rules of prepositions, articles, singular/plural nouns, tenses, pronouns, s-v agreement, verb formation, verb omission, extraneous subject/object, subject omission, conjunction, adjective and adverb was treated as syntactical error.

**Writing Prompt:** It is a statement or a question formed to make students deeply think about a topic and motivate them to produce better writing.
CHAPTER 2:

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1 Definition of Error

Many studies have been conducted to investigate English language teaching and learning problems, to investigate errors and, in turn, to identify efficient teaching and learning strategies and to design syllabi for use in classroom settings. Before discussing the importance of error analysis in terms of language teaching and learning, we need to first define what an error is. However, defining error is as hard as defining learning. On the issue of learner error, applied linguists subscribe to different definitions. For example, Dulay et al., 1982, define error as “the flawed side of learner speech or writing. They are those components of conversation or composition which deviate from some selected norm of authentic language performance” (p. 138). Similarly, Corder (1967) describes the learners’ utterances of deviant structures as “erroneous, ill-formed and ungrammatical.” Further, Ellis (1994) defines error as a deviation from the norms of the target language. Corder (1974) mentions three types of learner errors in terms of their possible origins. First type is transfer errors that generally arise from the effect of the native language rules on the target language productions. CAH primarily focuses on such errors caused by first language rules. The second type is analogical errors. They usually occur when the learner
knows the target language rule but fails to apply it at the correct time and place.

Teaching-induced error is the last type which arises from inadequacy of instruction.

Corder also makes a difference between overt error and covert error in that the former is a deviation of the surface structure of a sentence whereas the latter is related to deep structure and carries a meaning different than what is intended to mean.

Another thorny issue related to error analysis is the difference between ‘mistake’ and ‘error.’ Brown (1994) underlines this distinction by stating the linguistic competence and performance. It can then be inferred that mistake is a performance error while error is a competence error. In accordance with Brown’s distinction, Corder (1981) mentions two main error types; non-systematic and systematic errors. Non-systematic errors, which are also known as errors of performance, are accidental, random performance errors owing to such factors as memory lapses, fatigue, and inattention. Even a native speaker may make such mistakes owing to memory failures or slips of the tongue. However, they are likely to be aware of their mistakes and thus, they can correct them. When it comes to systematic errors or errors of competence, these types of errors show the learner’s underlying knowledge of the language. For this reason, they are highly important and deserve to be analyzed (Corder, 1981, p. 10).

2.2 Historical Background to Analysis of Learner Errors

Several studies regarding second language learner errors (Dagneaux et al., 1998; Pongsiriwet, 2001; Izumi et al., 2005) revealed that grammatical, and specifically syntactic, errors are the most frequent types of learner errors. Dagneaux et al. conducted a
study on providing guidelines for an EFL grammar and style checker particularly
of advanced L2 learner essays and a similar-sized corpus of the compositions written by
intermediate L2 learners. The categories drawn from the data were “formal, grammatical,
lexico-grammatical, lexical, register, word redundant, word missing, word order, and
style.” The findings showed that the most common type of errors was in the category of
grammar (32%). Similarly, Ponsiriwet (2001) conducted a study with Thai EFL college
learners combining the grammatical accuracy with discourse features. The design and the
research questions of his study resemble that of the present study in that both relate one
or two variables to the quality of writing. Further, the researcher divided the grammar
errors into 12 types and found that errors related to subject-verb agreement (14%) were
the most frequent error category followed by verb formation and tense. Izumi et al.
(2005) carried out a similar study on the errors of Japanese learners of English. The
researchers grouped the errors in the categories of morpheme, grammar, lexis, and
discourse. Half of the errors was in the grammar category. In addition, most of the
grammatical errors were local, such as subject-verb disagreement and article errors.

As for the studies administered to Turkish EFL learners, several Turkish
researchers analyzed the written errors of Turkish students at various levels from broad
perspectives to specific aspects (Unal, 1989; Aycan, 1990; Sahin, 1993; Ozaydinli, 1994;
Gok, 1996; Alpsoy, 1998; Montrul, 2000; Cokal & Ruhi, 2006).
Alpsoy (1998) investigated the errors in the use of three English prepositions “at”, “in” and “on” in students’ guided compositions and in their answers to a close test and a translation test. At first, the students were grouped into two groups, the first group with fifty first-year students and second group with fifty third-year students. Not even one student was able to use all the prepositions accurately in all the assignments. Hence, the misuses of prepositions were considered to stem from various reasons such as first language interference and incorrect generalizations about the rules of certain prepositions.

Unal (1989) conducted an error analysis study with Turkish college students learning English as a foreign language. She cautiously analyzed a hundred samples of student essays. Her study revealed that prepositions were the most problematic area for that particular group of Turkish learners, followed by syntactic errors. In a similar but narrower-scope study, Aycan (1990) studied the grammatical errors committed by Turkish students in their writings. She essentially concentrated on the tense-related errors by ignoring the other grammatical items. Her findings showed that Turkish students had many problems in the use of the present perfect tense. Likewise, Ozaydinli (1994) focused on some specific elements of grammar, namely prepositions and phrasal verbs in her study. The results proved that Turkish learners had problems with using the correct form of prepositions and phrasal verbs and she concluded that Turkish students tended to avoid using prepositions because they do not have any equivalence in Turkish. As for the phrasal verbs, she assumed that students treat phrasal verbs as separate constituents instead of a whole unit.
Sahin (1993) and Gok (1996) conducted more comprehensive studies on error analysis. Sahin (1993) examined a remarkable amount of essays and semantic/pragmatic errors were found to have the highest percentage of occurrence (61.39 %), followed by the syntactic errors accounted for 38.60 percent of the total errors. In his study, Gok (1996) grouped the errors detected in the compositions of Turkish students into 39 categories, and later labelled them as either developmental errors or interference errors. The most common type of errors in his study was preposition-related errors accounting for 10 percent of the total errors.

2.3 Error Analysis vs Contrastive Analysis

In the history of language learning and teaching, learner errors were treated differently. In the 1950s and 1960s, the prevailing paradigm for studying second language learning was Contrastive Analysis (also termed as Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis or Contrastive Linguistic Analysis). Contrastive Analysis (CA) is a kind of investigation of errors based on a comparison of the mother language and the target language. Schachter and Celce-Murcia (1977) highlight the importance of CA as stating:

...a systematic comparison of the source language and the target language at all levels of structure will generate predictions about the areas of learning difficulty in the target language for speakers of the source language....consequently, the best teaching materials will emphasize those features of the target language that differ markedly from corresponding features of the source language... (p. 441)
It can be stated that CA seeks to identify the differences between the two languages that can be a main source of a learner’s L2 errors. Once the different areas are discovered, errors can be effectively explained and hence avoided. However, an identification of the differences between the target language and the mother language was not sufficient to explain all the errors committed by the learners. In addition, not all the diagnosed difficulty areas trigger learners to make errors. Furthermore, the majority of errors could not be traced the L1 and some parts of such errors occur because of the learner’s insufficient exposure to the target language (Harshbarger & Gordon, 2003, p. 44). Due to such drawbacks, CA received several criticisms at the end of 1960s. Later, a new paradigm appeared as the motto of the seventies. Error Analysis (EA), as a reaction to Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis, emerged in 1960s to show that learners’ errors are triggered not only by the learner’s mother tongue, but they also clear up some crucial strategies that the learners employ when learning a language. The study of learners’ errors has taken a new importance thanks to some scholars’ cutting-edge studies on errors (Corder, 1967, 1971, 1974, 1981; Duskova 1969; Nemser, 1971; Richards, 1971, 1976; Selinker, 1972; Politzer & Ramirez, 1973; Stenson & Schuman, 1974; Ghadessy, 1980; James, 1998). Dulay and Burt (1974) called it an improved alternative to the restrictive contrastive analysis.

EA adopts a psycholinguistic approach instead of the behaviorist’s habit formation theory of language learning. That is, EA argues that learner errors derive from the learners internal process, and adds that a systematic study of learner errors help researcher, linguists and teachers understand how a learner interact with the language,
how he develops hypotheses about the structure of the target language. Similarly, Schachter & Celce-Murcia (1971) point out that:

...the analysis of production errors shows quite clearly that not all systematic errors produced by the learner can be attributed to interference from the source language. In fact, they claim that such errors provide evidence for a much more complex view of the learning process, one in which the learner is seen as an active participant on the information of and revision of hypotheses regarding the rules of the target language... (p. 442).

EA studies were very popular during the end of 1960s and 1970s; however, in the 1980s it lost its popularity and was criticized due to some weaknesses in error analysis research (e.g., improper classification of identified errors).

2.4 Steps in Error Analysis

Error analysis concerns a broad aspect of language learning process. Hence, there are some steps to be followed in order to effectively analyze errors, and accordingly to organize remedial courses, to create efficient materials and activities, and to avoid the possible problems encountered in previous studies. According to Ellis, analyzing errors consists of the stages of identification, description and explanation of errors (2005, p. 51).

2.4.1 Identification of Errors

Identifying an error is not an easy task since errors may not be easily identified. Corder (1971) points out the distinction between an error and a mistake by defining
mistakes as slips of the tongue. That is, internal and external factors such as fatigue and inattention are responsible for deviant utterances. Likewise, Chomsky (1967) underlines this distinction by attributing mistakes to performance factors whereas errors to competency factors such as the inadequate knowledge of the rule(s) of the target language. Mistakes can be self-corrected if attention is given. Since performance errors occur unsystematically, they are of no importance to the language learning process. However, errors are systematic and reveal the learners’ competency of the language in question. Ellis (1985) mentions two ways of distinguishing an error from a mistake. First, if a learner sometimes uses the correct form and sometimes the wrong one, then it is a mistake. Nonetheless, if the learner always uses it in an incorrect way, it is an error.

Corder (1971) also highlights that utterances can be either deviant of the target language, he calls this category as ‘overtly idiosyncratic’, or non-deviant but they are obviously ungrammatical when the context is considered, he calls this category as ‘covertly idiosyncratic.’ Furthermore, Corder also points out the success of an error analysis depends on an effective interpretation of what the learner intends to say. Thus, a plausible interpretation inferring what the learner might have said should be made.

### 2.4.2 Classification of Errors

A great number of categories have been described to assign a classification to errors. First, Dulay et al., (1982) classify learners’ errors into four groups: (1) linguistic category; (2) surface category; (3) comparative analysis; (4) communicative effect. Corder (1981) also groups errors into four main categories: deletion or omission of some
required element that should be present; addition of some unnecessary items; selection of a deviant item; and mis-ordering of items. He calls such classifications superficial, that is, these classifications are not enough to describe errors. Corder (1971) also adds that there should be a linguistic level in which sub-categories such as morphology, syntax, and lexicon are included. Ellis (1997) notes that classification of errors in such a way can help linguists, researchers, and teachers to diagnose learners’ learning problem at any stage of their development, and to analyze how changes in error patterns occur over time.

In the field of applied linguistics, almost every researcher studying error analysis forms their own linguistic categories. Corder (1981) stresses that the more appropriate linguistic taxonomy, the better the linguistic description of errors will be. Similarly, Sridhar (1981) suggests that precision of labeling of errors depends on the sophistication of linguistic taxonomy.

Burt & Kiparsky (1972) classify linguistic errors into six main categories: (1) skeleton of English (missing and mis-ordered parts); (2) auxiliary system; (3) passive sentences; (4) temporal conjunctions; (5) sentential complements; (6) psychological predicates. Another of the study carried out on error analysis is Politzer & Ramirez’s (1973) study entitled “An error analysis of the spoken English of Mexican-American pupils in a bilingual school and a monolingual school.” In this study, a group of children attending a monolingual school and a bilingual school were asked to tell a story of a silent movie they just watched. Their answers were at the same time recorded and transcribed in order to identify, categorize and count deviations from standard English.
For this reason, Politzer & Ramirez categorized these deviations, or rather errors, into morphology, syntax and vocabulary. The three main categories were further subdivided according to different parts of speech (p. 41). The category they created for morphological and syntactical errors is as follows.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Linguistic Category and Error Type</th>
<th>Example of Learner Error</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>A. Morphology</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Indefinite article incorrect</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- <em>a</em> used for <em>an</em> before vowels</td>
<td><em>an</em> little ant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- <em>an</em> used for <em>a</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Possessive case incorrect</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Omission of ‘*s’</td>
<td><em>the</em> man feet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Third person singular verb incorrect</td>
<td><em>The</em> bird help man</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Failure to attach -<em>s</em></td>
<td><em>The</em> apple fall downs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Wrong attachment of -<em>s</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Simple past tense incorrect</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. Regular past tense</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Omission of -<em>ed</em></td>
<td><em>The</em> bird he save him</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Adding -<em>ed</em> to past already formed</td>
<td><em>He</em> calleded</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2.1: Morphological and Syntactical Error Types (Continued)
Table 2.1: Continued

b. Irregular past tense
   - Regularization by adding *-ed* He putted the cookie here
   - Substitution of simple non-past He fall in the water
   - Substitution of past participle I been near to him
5. Past participle incorrect
   - Omission of *-ed* He was call
6. Comparative adjective/adverb incorrect
   - Use of more + *er* He got up more higher

B. Syntax
1. Noun phrase
   a. Determiners
      - Omission of the article He no go in hole
      - Substitution of definite article for possessive pronoun He fall dawn on the head
      - Use of possessive with the article He put it in the his room
      - Use of wrong possessive The little boy hurt its leg
   b. Nominalization
      - Simple verb used instead of *-ing* by to cook it
      - Preposition *by* omitted The dove helped him putting leaf on the water
   c. Number
      - Substitution of singulars for plurals He got some leaf
      - Substitution of plurals for singulars He stab him in the feet
   d. Use of pronouns
      - Omission of the subject pronoun (He) pinch the man
      - Omission of the dummy pronoun it Is nice to help people
      - Omission of object pronouns I don’t know (it) in English
      - Subject pronoun used as a redundant element My brother he go to Mexico
   e. Use of prepositions
      - Omission of prepositions So he can eat it (referring to apples)
      - Misuse of prepositions Me forget it
      - Use of me as subject He came (to) the water
      - Alternative use of pronouns by number as well as gender He fell down from (for on, into) the water

(Continued)
Table 2.1: Continued

2. Verb Phrase
   a. Omission of verb
      - Omission of main verb  He (fell) in the water
      - Omission of to be   He in the water
   b. Use of progressive tense
      - Omission of be   He going
      - Replacement of -ing by the simple verb form  The bird was shake his head
      - Substitution of the progressive for the simple past  Then the man shooting (shot) with a gun
   c. Agreement of subject and verb
      - Disagreement of subject and verb person  You be friends
      - Disagreement of subject and number  The apples was coming down
      - Disagreement of subject and tense  I didn’t know what it is

3. Verb-and-verb Construction
   - Embedding of a noun-and-verb construction in another noun-and-verb construction  I go to play (I go and I play)
   - Omission of to in identical subject construction  I go play
   - Omission of to in the verb-and-verb construction  I see a bird got the leaf
   - Attachment of the past marker to the dependent verb  He was going to fell

4. Word Order
   - Repetition of the object  The bird (object) he was gonna shoot it
   - Adjectival modifiers placed after noun  He put it inside his house a little round

5. Some Transformations
   a. Negative transformation  He not play anymore
   - Formation of no or not without the auxiliary do  They won’t have no fun
   - Multiple negation

(Continued)
Table 2.1: Continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Transformation Type</th>
<th>Error Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>b. Question transformation</td>
<td>How the story helps?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Omission of auxiliary</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Three transformation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Use of <em>is</em> instead of <em>are</em></td>
<td>There is these hole</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Omission of there</td>
<td>Is one bird</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Use of <em>it</em> was instead of <em>there</em> was</td>
<td>It was round things</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. Subordinate clause transformation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Use of <em>for for so that</em></td>
<td>For the ant could get out</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Use of indicative for conditional</td>
<td>So he don’t kill the bird</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Adapted from Politzer & Ramirez, 1973, p. 42-48)

For some language learner groups lexical errors are the most frequent category of error. Further, native speakers consider learners’ lexical errors more disruptive and irritating than other types (James, 1998). This situation has thus drawn researchers’ attention and induced them to undertake lexical error analysis. However, studies on lexical errors have also made use of numerous error classifications, most of which include limited number of categories, often lacking any further subcategories. For instance, Duskova (1969) uses only four types of lexical errors: (1) confusion of words on the ground of formal similarity; (2) confusion of words between related words with similar meaning and related phrases; (3) misuse of words due to L1’s having several equivalents in English; and (4) lexical distortions. Likewise, Politzer & Ramirez (1973), along with their morphology and syntax categories, also provide categories for lexical errors. They divide the vocabulary errors into three broad categories: (1) some errors are descended from improper selection of inappropriate words for a grammatical
construction; and (3) a great many are owing to some sort of meaning confusion in which a word similar the required word in meaning is substituted for it. Leech (1974) mentioned in James (1998) identifies seven types of lexical category (conceptual, connotative, social, affective, reflected, collocative, and thematic meaning). Engber (1995) also investigated lexical errors and created nine categories of lexical errors. In an another study conducted on an analysis of lexical errors in the English compositions of Thai learners, Schmitt & Hemchua (2006) use a more comprehensive lexical error taxonomy compiled from large number of sources from previous studies. In this taxonomy, lexical errors are divided into two main groups: formal and semantic features.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lexical Error Category</th>
<th>Example of Learner Error</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>A. Formal Errors</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Formal Mis-selection</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1 The suffix type: same root but different suffixes</td>
<td>consider&lt;able&gt; / consider&lt;ate&gt;, compe&lt;tition&gt; / compe&lt;titiveness&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2 The prefix type: same root but different prefixes</td>
<td>&lt;re&gt;serve / &lt;pre&gt;serve, &lt;con&gt;sumption/ &lt;re&gt;sumption / &lt;as&gt;sumption</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3 The vowel-based type</td>
<td>seat/set, manual/menial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.4 The consonant-based type</td>
<td>save/safe, three/tree, prize/price</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.5 False Friends: caused by divergent polysemy, partial semantic overlap</td>
<td>Can I become (get= German bekommen) a beefsteak?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Mis-formations: words not exist in L2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1 Borrowing: L1 words used in the target language without any change</td>
<td>I shoot him with gun in kopf (In German kopf = head)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2.2: Formal and Semantic Error Types (Continued)
Table 2.2: Continued

2.2 Coinage: Inventing a word from L1
Smoking can be very *nocive* to health (In Portuguese nocivo = harmful)

2.3 Calque: Translation of a word or a phrase from L1 words
goldworthy (precious=German goldwert)

3. Distortions: misapplication of L2 words without L1 interference or misspelling

3.1 Omission
intresting (interesting)

3.2 Over-inclusion
freshermen (freshmen)

3.3 Mis-selection
delitouse (delicious)

3.4 Mis-ordering
littel (little)

3.5 Blending
travell (travel + travelled)
the depths of the ocean (depth+deeps)

B. Semantic Errors

1. Confusion of Sense Relations

1.1 Using a superonym for a hyponym:
A more general term is used where a specific one is needed

The flowers had a special *smell* (scent or perfume)

1.2 Using a hyponym for superonym:
An overly specific term is used

The colonels (officers) live in the castle

1.3 Using inappropriate co-hyponyms

a decision to *exterminate* (eradicate) ...
The city has good *communication* (transportation)

1.4 Using a wrong near synonym

a *regretful* (penitent/contrite) criminal or sinner

2. Collocation Errors

2.1 Semantically determined word selection

The city is *grown* (developed)

(Continued)
Table 2.2: Continued

| 2.2 Statistically weighted preferences | An army has suffered *big losses* (heavy losses is preferred) |
| 2.3 Arbitrary combinations and irreversible binomials | hike-hitch (hitch-hike), chips and fish (fish and chips) |
| 3. Connotation Errors | There are *too* (many) other advantages of living in a big city |
| 4. Stylistic Errors | |
| 4.1 Verbosity | I informed my girlfriend of the party through the medium of telephone |
| 4.2 Underspecification | Although cars in the country are lower (Although there are fewer cars in the country) |

As it is obvious from the previous studies, there is not a clear taxonomy for lexical errors. Put another way, it is possible to group errors simultaneously according to a variety of criteria. Further, using a complex classification does not guarantee to explain every lexical error and contrariwise can result in unclear boundaries and arbitrary definitions. However, some researchers still believe that even if there happens to be some overlaps between types of lexical errors, it provides them with a more comprehensive and precise identification and discussion of error. In order to have a better classification of lexis, Richards (1976) states the necessity of lexical competence which requires having eight types of knowledge (ability) about a word: (1) expanding vocabulary; (2) underlying form of a word and derivations; (3) syntactic behavior associated with that
Some attempts have been made to identify the causes of learner’s error. Selinker (1972) created the term ‘interlanguage’ describing the mid-stage between first language and target language. He believes that the reasons behind learners’ errors are psycholinguistic factors, and explains that there are latent psychological structures in the brain stimulated in the process of learning a second language. For the same phenomenon, Corder (1967) uses ‘idiosyncratic dialects’ and Nemser (1971) prefers ‘approximate systems’ both of which assume that learner’s language reflect features of both native language and target language. Selinker (1972) claims that there are five different factors responsible for learner’s errors. The first one is the transfer of structures or rules from mother language to target language. The second factor concerns the transfer of training which involves fossilized items, rules, and subsystems. The third is related to the strategies that learners employ when learning the target language. Fourth one is the strategies of target communication referring to the methods and strategies applied by learners to communicate with native speakers of the target language, and the last factor is overgeneralization of the structures. Richards (1971) also studied the possible psycholinguistic causes of errors.

He uses the term ‘intralingual or developmental’ errors to describe learners’ errors. Further, he classified the causes of errors into four categories; (1)
overgeneralization; (2) ignorance of rule restrictions; (3) incomplete application of rules or the failure to learn the deep structure; and (4) hypothesized false concepts triggered by faulty understanding of the target language rules. In his another study (1974), he re-categorizes the sources of errors and comes up with a more comprehensive classifications of possible causes of errors; (a) interference; (b) overgeneralization; (c) performance errors; (d) markers of transitional competence; (e) strategies of communication and assimilation; and (f) teacher-induced errors. In a later study of error analysis, Schumann and Stenson (1974) claim there are three primary sources of errors: (1) incomplete acquisition of the target grammar; (2) exigencies of the learning and teaching environment; (3) errors caused by language performance problems. Similarly, Politzer & Ramirez (1973) state that errors may result from several sources such as interlingual transfer, intralingual transfer (misinterpretation of English rules and development errors), and the intrusion of nonstandard English dialects. Likewise, Brown (1994) identifies four factors of errors: (a) interlingual transfer; (b) intralingual transfer; (c) context of learning; and (d) communication strategies.

As there are many different categories for sources of errors, it is necessary to move further and analyze some important terms repeated in those studies. In his ‘Diagnosing Errors’ chapter, James (1998) states four major categories of error sources (interlingual, intralingual, communication strategy, and induced) compiled from previous studies. According to CAH, structures that are similar in the mother language and the target language will be easier to learn than those that are different. From this perspective, it can be said that the former results in positive transfer whereas the latter results in
negative transfer or L1 interference. So, one major source of error is L1 interference. This type of errors is also called interlingual errors. Interlingual errors may occur at any level such as transfer of phonological, morphological, grammatical, and semantic elements of the native language into the target language. Apart from the interferences from the learners’ first language, some errors occur due to faulty or partial learning of the target language. These are common in the output of second language learners regardless of their first language.

James (1998) states that intralingual occur due to learners’ resorting to some strategies to build up concepts and hypotheses about the target language forms. The strategies that learners use to fill the gap can also be source of error. Some of the learning based errors are false analogy (assuming the new item behaves like the old one), misanalysis (setting false hypothesis due to misinterpretation of the target language), incomplete rule application (aka under-generalization), exploiting redundancy, overlooking co-occurrence restrictions, hypercorrection (consistent over-monitoring L2 output), overgeneralization or system simplification (overuse of some specific items/rules and underuse of other similar items). As for communication strategy based errors, James (1998) mentions two crucial strategies that learners employ in learning a second language. Holistic strategies are related to the learners’ assumption that if one can say X in the target language, then he can say Y. When the necessary form is absent, it is acceptable to use another near-equivalent L2 element that learners have acquired. This phenomenon is also called ‘approximation.’ The other strategy is analytic strategy in which the learners identify one or more criterial attributes of the referent and mention
them for referring to the entity in question. Schuman & Stenson (1974) coined the term ‘Induced Errors’ which refer to learner errors deriving more from the classroom environment than from either the students’ imperfect competence in English grammar (intralingual errors) or mother language interference (interlingual errors). Although they may not tell much about the level of the students’ language competence, they are of importance in that they are easy to overlook and may result in inaccurate evaluation of students’ ability. Further, if they are underestimated, they may induce misunderstanding and form a troublesome basis for future learning (p. 256). James (1998) states five sources of induced errors: (1) materials-induced errors; (2) teacher-talk induced errors; (3) exercise-based induced errors; (4) errors induced by pedagogical priorities; (5) look-up errors.

2.5 Writing Assessment Methods

Scoring method is a crucial component of second language writing assessment in that different scoring methods may lead to variations in the scores of writing pieces. The two most commonly-used measurements of writing assessment are ‘holistic assessment’ and ‘analytic assessment.’ A number of studies were conducted on holistic and analytic assessments (Charney, 1984; White, 1985; Hamp-Lyons, 1990). As Myers (1980) states, holistic scoring is based on the assumption that the whole is more valuable than the sum of its parts. Therefore, holistic scoring focuses on an overall impression of the writing piece. Similarly, White (1985) defines holistic scoring as a holistic approach to texts in that a written text is seen as a single entity. Holistic scoring proponents argue that this
approach concentrates on what the writer performs well rather what the writer performs poorly. Holistic scoring method is more efficient than analytic scoring method in saving time and money when large numbers of writings need to be assessed in a short period of time. Even if holistic scoring stresses the overall impression of the writing piece and is easy to conduct, it should not be inferred as a superficial assessment method.

Furthermore, holistic scoring involves all aspects of writing in its evaluation contrariwise analytic scoring examining individual rhetorical and grammatical elements (Wolcott & Legg, 1998). To White (1985) this aspect of holistic scoring is a great benefit. He therefore states:

> Holistic scoring is important for reasons beyond measurement, for reasons that return us to the nature of writing and to the importance of the study of writing itself. It is our writing that we see ourselves thinking, and we ask our students to write so that they can think more clearly, learn more quickly, and develop more fully. Writing, like reading, is an exercise for the whole mind, including its most creative, individual, and imaginative faculties. The rapid growth of holistic scoring in grading reflects this view of reading and writing as activities not describe through an inventory of their parts, and such scoring serves as a direct expression of that view by maintaining that writing must be seen as a whole and that the evaluating of writing cannot be split into sequence of objective activities, holistic scoring reinforces the vision of reading and writing as intensely individual activities involving the full self... (p. 32)

Gottlieb (2006) states four main advantages of using holistic scoring: (a) overall, global indicator of student performance; (b) easy to score against student exemplars; (c)
results readily communicated to general education teachers and parents; and (d) applicable across many tasks, contexts, and setting (p. 121). However, holistic scoring has some potential problems, and has thus received several criticisms. For example, Charney (1984) found out that some superficial factors such as handwriting and spelling can be influential in assigning scores. Likewise, Hamp-Lyons (1995) has interpreted the need for scoring procedures involving more than giving a single score since a single score does not give much information about different aspects of writing, such as organization, grammar, vocabulary range. Further, a single summative score is not enough to make accurate high-stake decisions. Charney (1984) also underlines that time constraints influence raters’ depth of evaluating by stating that a rater may assign a score that only reflects agreement on important but surface features of writing like the quality of the handwriting or the presence of spelling errors (p. 78). Similarly, Gottlieb (2006) states four disadvantages of using holistic scoring: (a) a one-dimensional scale with little diagnostic information; (b) summary scores can be mistakenly confused with grades; (c) broad intervals between levels and lack of precision of measurement; and (d) the need for using it combination with other types of assessment information. For this purpose, the need for developing an analytic system to assess writings appears.

The analytic scoring method, unlike to the holistic scoring method, gives separate scores to various aspects of a single writing piece (Valdez-Pierce, 2003, p. 62). With multiple scores, analytic scoring breaks writing into its components and provides specific feedback as to what the writer’s strengths and weaknesses are. Hamp-Lyons (1990) claims that analytic scoring method is, on the whole, more reliable than holistic scoring
method in that the writers get more than one score in turn multiple scores increase reliability. Further, when it comes to inter-rater reliability, analytic scoring is more effective than holistic in training novice raters. However, there are several disadvantages in suing analytic scoring method. Indeed, the very advantage of analytic scoring method is also the source of its disadvantages. That is, for large-scale assessments, giving a score for each component takes time and effort. Another concern regarding the inter-rater reliability in analytic scoring is that reaching a consensus on scoring is quite challenging. In addition, Wolcott & Legg (1998) states the difficulty of interpreting what categories mean is another problem of analytic scoring method.

2.6 Chapter Summary

As a summary of what was reported in this chapter, error and contrastive analyses are significant enterprises for exploring the high mountains and the deep forests of foreign language learning. The pathways of language teaching and learning research have already been described to the present time. However, studies done thus far concerning syntactical errors, lexical errors and holistic quality of writing have revealed various results and no study about Turkish learners was found in the professional literature that investigated the relationship between two types of measures, syntactical accuracy and lexical accuracy, and the holistic score of the writing quality for a single population of students. It is noteworthy to study them because they are likely to provide insights regarding the relationship between these two aspects of L2 EFL college student writing.
CHAPTER 3:

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Setting

The data for the study came from Bozok University. Bozok University, located in Yozgat, Turkey, was officially founded in 2006; yet it roots back to the 1990s as the Yozgat Campus of Erciyes University. Bozok University currently consists of seven faculties, three institutes, three research centers and four vocational schools with more than 7000 students, 400 academic and administrative staff. The medium of instruction is Turkish. However, some of the faculties have courses in English such as Engineering.

The sample data for this study consisted of 210 in-class compositions of 80 Turkish college students taking a Basic (Foundation) English course during the second semester of 2009. At Bozok University, depending on the major, either two-credit, three-credit or four-credit Basic English course is required for all freshmen. The participants of this study were taking three-credit Basic English course when the data were gathered. A typical three-credit course usually meets twice a week according to the departmental program schedule. During a semester, they receive 40-45 hours of Basic English instruction. In theory, Basic English is a comprehensive yet shallow English course
emphasizing development of the four basic skills in English—listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Since a separate writing course is not offered, writing instruction is integrated in Basic English course goals. Therefore, development of writing skill mostly depends on the quality of the course aims, of the course book activities and of the instructor. Since first-year students are believed to be at the beginning stage of learning English, in-class and out-of-class assignments are still at basic level. After completing this course, in terms of writing skill, students are expected to engage in simple written communication, to construct simple sentences and short paragraphs by demonstrating enough control of essential syntactical features (e.g., producing basic sentences using the correct English word order and punctuation marks).

The course is taught by non-native English speakers who were selected among well-qualified Turkish instructors. The instructors are expected to use a textbook usually selected by the university council and are free to use any supplementary teaching materials. The instructors use English as the means of instruction and the students are usually encouraged to speak English in the classroom. Only as a last resort is Turkish allowed to be used in the classroom.

3.2 Participants

The participants of the present study were 80 freshmen enrolled in Basic English course at Bozok University in Yozgat, Turkey where the researcher formerly worked as an English instructor. These subjects were particularly chosen because the nature of the research questions aimed at examining the issue of syntactical and lexical accuracy in
essays written by Turkish EFL college students and these students were taking a Basic English course at that time. Thus, they were a group of learners whose writings might provide valuable answers to the research questions of the study. Three groups of students participated in this study. The student majors were Electrical and Electronics Engineering (EEE), Computer programming, and History. The participants in this study were all freshmen. Of the 80 students, 45 were male (56%) and 35 were female (44%). The participants ranged in age from 18 to 28. Of the 37 Electrical and Electronics Engineering students, 30 were male (81%) and 7 were female (19%); of the 13 History students, 10 were female (76%) and 3 were male (24%); of the 30 Computer programming students, 12 were male (40%) and 18 were female (60%).

The students who participated in the present study speak Turkish as their mother language and study English as a foreign language. On the whole, Turkish students in public schools begin to learn English at the secondary level. However, students in private schools may start as early as the primary and even kindergarten levels. Unfortunately, students’ background knowledge of English usually does not improve until they attend the university because of either teacher-centered methods of teaching English or students’ lack of motivation to use English until that level. That is, students are not required to take an English test in the national university entrance exam. Therefore, their levels of proficiency in English were not high. They were all at beginner level at the time of this study.
3.3 Measurement

The current study was designed to investigate the students’ use of syntactical features and lexicons of English and to evaluate their writing proficiency at a particular time. The researcher, to attain this aim, used the in-class compositions that were the components of the Basic English course in the second semester of 2009. During this 15-week period, 3 different writing prompts were used at different times. The writing prompts (see Appendix A) were as following:

1) Describe yourself and your family briefly?

2) Describe your typical day?

3) What did you do in the summer holiday?

The students were required to write at least 75-100 words in English for each of the writing prompt. Individual writing was highly supported by avoiding them from consulting a friend, a dictionary, or any grammar book during the writing tasks.

3.4 Data Collection Procedures

The students were asked to write an impromptu composition in their regular English classroom after the first unit of the course textbook was completed. The first writing assignment was to write a descriptive composition about themselves and their family briefly. It was given in the second hour of third week-class. This topic was chosen for three reasons: a) it is related to students and their own family, so it was very proper
for beginner level students; b) it provided the researcher with an opportunity to know his students better; c) ‘have/has got’ was taught the previous weeks and this writing prompt was a good way to check their understanding and application of these rules. The second writing prompt was to describe their typical day. It was given towards the middle of the semester, and the aim of the prompt was to check students’ progress in acquiring the classroom teaching contents and applying them in a productive way in writing. Since the second writing prompt was given after the instructor’s explanation of ‘present simple tense’, examples of this tense were expected in the students’ writings. Again, this second writing prompt was used in all classes. What did you do in the summer holiday? was the third writing prompt. It was given towards the end of the semester. Since this writing prompt gave them a chance to reflect on their own experiences, it seemed to be appropriate for this level of students. For each prompt, the students were given 30-45 minutes to write at least 75-100 word long composition. All writing prompts were repeated in each of three classes at similar time-intervals. During all the writing periods, the researcher was present in the classroom and encouraged his students to write on their own and he refused to answer the questions pertinent to syntactical features and word choices, or to make any suggestions or give guidance about the format and organization of the student compositions.

At the end of the semester, the researcher gathered 210 in-class compositions from 80 students in three different majors. From the collection of 210 papers, 150 were randomly selected since it was a fair number representing the students’ syntactical and lexical knowledge, and writing ability. It was also hypothesized that selecting random
samples of the student writings was an appropriate approach that allowed closer analysis
of a set of numbers of student writings. Since the proportion of the compositions gathered
from the three majors was different, 61 papers were randomly selected from engineering
majors (61 papers out of 84 papers), 33 from history majors (33 papers out of 46), and 56
from computer programming majors (56 papers out of 80 papers). As to the different
writing prompts, the same ratio was used for each writing prompt. 70 papers were
randomly selected from first impromptu writing papers (70 papers out of 87), 40 from
second impromptu writing papers (40 papers out of 66), and 40 from third impromptu
writing papers (40 papers out of 57). Then, for data analysis step all these selected
compositions were photocopied.
CHAPTER 4:

DATA ANALYSIS

In order to analyze the data, the researcher initially examined and identified the types of errors committed by Turkish college students. This was accomplished in the following steps: (a) identifications of errors, (b) classification of errors into syntactical and lexical categories; and (c) explanation the possible sources of errors.

4.1 Identification of Errors

As many researchers stated in their studies, detecting an error is a challenging task since errors may not be easily identified. The biggest problem is to identify whether a deviant utterance is a ‘mistake’ or an ‘error’. Corder (1971) points out the distinction between an error and a mistake by defining mistakes as slips of the tongue. That is, internal and external factors such as fatigue and inattention are responsible for mistakes whereas competency factors such as the inadequate knowledge of the rule(s) of the target language are responsible for errors. However, since it was impossible to see how the students thought when they were writing, all deviant utterances detected in the sample
compositions were treated as ‘errors’. The researcher’s familiarity with the participants’ cultural background helped him as to what they were attempting to say in many cases.

4.2 Classification of Errors

Errors were classified into two major types: (1) syntactical errors and (2) lexical errors. For the syntactical errors, each composition was meticulously analyzed for adherence to English syntax system. A guideline suggested by Polio (1997) was applied in this study. Under the light of her guidelines, British usages (e.g. ‘in hospital’, ‘at university’, collective nouns as plural), capitalization problems, the utterances could be produced by native speakers (e.g. between you and I), register differences related to lexical choices (e.g. lots, kids) and uncompleted sentences at the end of the essays were not counted as errors. However, the sentences or phrases that include more than one error type were counted two or more times, once for each type of error. For instance, ‘There was two internet cafes in my town’ could be both concord error (There were two internet cafes in my town) and tense error (There are two internet cafes in my town). The errors were grouped under 14 different categories. The errors that did not fit into any categories were grouped under the heading of miscellaneous. These categories were formed based on the previous studies (Politzer & Ramirez, 1973; Burt & Kiparsky, 1972).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories of Syntactical Errors</th>
<th>Example of Learner Error</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1. Singular / Plural            | - I have got a *sisters*.  
                                  - There was not a lot of historic *place*.  
                                  - After, study my lesson and do *homeworks*. |
| 2. Pronouns                     | - My family and *me* went to the Ankara.  
                                  - *We* are so many place.  
                                  - My brother break my computer and repair *computer*.  
                                  - *It is* name ‘Babam ve Oglmum’ |
| 3. Tense                        | - We are *swim* in Bartin.  
                                  - My room *is* comfortable but it *is* very hot *(was)*.  
                                  - I *was played* football, basketball. |
| 4. Articles                     | - My father bought new car.  
                                  - I meet *a* English girl.  
                                  - I went to *the* Istanbul last summer. |
| 5. Prepositions                 | - I went to Mersin with my family *on* last summer.  
                                  - I went jogging every morning *with* holidays.  
                                  - I visited some towns *with* buses. |
| 6. Adjective                    | - It was *excited* and enjoyable. |
| 7. Adverb                       | - I ran *fastly*. |
                                  - *Because*, I like it very much. |
| 9. Verb Formation               | - I *cryed* a lot.  
                                  - But we *hitted* a car coming to home.  
                                  - I was *stadies* KYK. |
| 10. Verb Omission               | - Even the names of the foods same *(are)*.  
                                  - The hotel crowded *(was)*. |

Table 4.1: Syntactical Error Types (Continued)
Table 4.1: Continued

| 11. Subject Omission | - With my friends, walked around everywhere.  
| | - In my free times went around. |
| 12. Extraneous Subject/Object | - I went to Ankara and with my family.  
| | - The food was very very similar to Turkish foods. |
| 13. S-V Agreement | - He have a breakfast.  
| | - There was very beautiful girls in a hotel. |
| | - ...because free food. |
| 15. Miscellaneous | - I’ll go this summer with my some friends.  
| | - I study lesson and my finish school at 5:00 o’clock. |

All errors were underlined and labeled by the researcher depending on the categories of grammatical errors and the guidelines adopted from Polio’s (1997) research. After this process, a quantitative analysis was done first by counting the occurrence of each grammatical error type. In the next step, the percentage of each error was computed for the total number of written errors made. The most frequent types of error were found based on their frequencies of occurrence and to discuss these error further sample sentences including the targeted errors were given by the researcher.

In order to examine the type and extent of lexical errors in students’ written English compositions, each sample was examined word-by-word. A framework for lexical error classification was formed based on the James’ (1998) and Schmitt &
Hemchua’s (2006) lexical error taxonomies that were compiled from various sources from previous studies. In this framework, lexical errors are classified into two main categories: formal and semantic errors. Formal errors were divided into three sub-categories: a) formal mis-selection, b) misformations and c) distortions (James 1998). Similarly, semantic errors were divided into two sub-categories: a) confusion of sense relations, and b) collocation errors. Apart from these two types of semantic errors, the researcher added one more type called ‘verbosity’ adopted from Leech’s (1974) associative meanings. Turkish language is flexible in terms of treating verbosity as a lexical problem. However, this is not the case in English, verbosity should be therefore included in the category of lexical errors.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories of Lexical Errors</th>
<th>Example of Learner Error</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>A. Formal Errors</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1) Formal Mis-selection</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1 Suffix Type</td>
<td>- It’s too <em>adventure</em> (adventurous).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- I don’t go to my family <em>villager</em> again (village).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2 Prefix Type</td>
<td>- No instance of this error type.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3 Vowel-based Type</td>
<td>- I go to <em>bead</em>...(bed).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- I usually eat a <em>chesee</em> sandwich and a cup of <em>tee</em>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.4 Consonant-based Type</td>
<td>- But only Hamza <em>lifes</em>.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.2: Lexical Error Types (Continued)
Table 4.2: Continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2) Misformations (Interlingual)</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **2.1 Borrowing**             | - I went to the Susurluk and I drank *ayran* (yoghurt drink).
|                               | - I played *plaj* volleyball (beach).
|                               | - In İzmir I went to the *saat kulesi* (watch tower).
| **2.2 Coinage**               | - I made a fire and took a *fphoto* (photo).
| **2.3 Calque**                | - My friends did fire and *cooked egypt* (barbecue corn).
| 3) Distortions               |  |
| **3.1 Omission**              | - My mother had a *surgen* (surgeon).
| **3.2 Over-inclusion**        | - We went to the beach and swamm.
|                               | - It was *boring*.
| **3.3 Mis-selection**         | - I saw some *joogler* there (jogglers).
| **3.4 Mis-ordering**         | - I go to *kitchen* and eat breakfast at 7.30 (kitchen).
| **3.5 Blending**              | - I visited a lot of *cityies*.
| **B. Semantic Errors**       |  |
| **1) Confusion of Sense Relations** |  |
| **1.1 General Term for Specific One** | - The room has a good *smell* (scent).
| **1.2 Overly Specific Term**  | - No instance of this error type.
| **1.3 Inappropriate co-hyponyms** | - I watched a good *cinema* (film).
| **1.4 Near Synonyms**         | - I was afraid (scared).
|                               | - I want to *delete* them (countries) (eradicate).
Table 4.2: Continued

2) Collocation Errors

2.1 Semantic Word Selection - I want to do on a holiday.

2.2 Statistically Weighted Preferences - No instance of this error type.

2.3 Arbitrary Combinations - I played frisbi with my sister and volleyball beach.

3) Verbosity - We went to picnic two days every weekend.

The above error framework was used to obtain a quantitative overview of the lexical errors in students’ compositions. Further, a lexical error guideline sheet was adopted from Schmitt & Hemchua’s (2006) article. That is, multiple errors in a phrase were counted separately and identical errors made by the same student were counted as one error (p. 13).

As the next step, a quantitative analysis was done first by counting the occurrence of each lexical error type. Later, the percentage of occurrence of each error was computed to describe the total number of errors made. The most common types of error were found based on their frequency of occurrence and selected sample sentences including those errors were included. Further, regarding the research questions 1.a and 2.a, the mean scores of syntactical and lexical accuracy were calculated for each writing prompt. Next, a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was carried out to compute mean differences. Later, post hoc tests were calculated using Tukey’s test to analyze the significance of
differences between pairs of means. The results of these analyses are presented in Chapter V.

For research questions (1. b, 2. b and 3) regarding the relationships between syntactical accuracy, lexical accuracy and the holistic quality of the sample compositions, each paper was scored for its overall quality on the basis of a holistic rubric designed by the researcher (See Appendix B). The scores ranged from 5 to 1 and a half score between two points on the scale (e.g, 4.5, 3.5, 2.5, 1.5) was also assigned as needed. A paper with score 5 was a well-formed and well-organized composition that showed competence in English writing, while a paper with score 1 showed a lack of competence in English writing (see Appendix C). After the papers were rated by the researcher for their holistic quality, the mean and standard deviation scores for the 150 sample compositions were calculated. Next, the correlations between syntactical and lexical accuracy and the holistic quality of sample writings based on the study rubric were computed using the Pearson product-moment correlation to find out whether there was a significant relationship between the syntactical and lexical accuracy and the holistic quality of the compositions based on the rubric score.

4.3 Chapter Summary

As a summary of what was presented in this chapter, the three majors steps were followed in the data analysis process. Initially, errors were identified and then, were classified into syntactical and lexical categories by making use of the error categories used in the previous studies (Politzer & Ramirez, 1973; Burt & Kiparsky, 1972; Schmitt
& Hemchua, 2006) and finally the possible sources of errors were discussed. In order to provide a quantitative overview of the errors detected in students’ compositions, the frequency of occurrence of each error type was calculated. A holistic rubric ranging from 1 to 5 was used to rate the quality of the compositions. Afterwards, depending on the results of these two previous steps, an ANOVA and post hoc tests were computed to determine the significance of differences between pairs of means. Finally, a Pearson product-moment correlation was computed to find out whether there was a significant relationship between variables.
CHAPTER 5:

RESULTS, DISCUSSION,

CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Results

This section of the chapter reports the results of the statistical analysis of the data gathered from Turkish university students to answer the three primary research questions presented in Chapter 1. The research questions are as follows:

1. What types of syntactical errors were most frequently found in selected compositions written by Turkish EFL University students at Bozok University?
   
   a. Was there a relationship between the type of writing prompt and the number of syntactical errors?
   
   b. Was there a relationship between syntactical accuracy and the holistic score of the quality of sample writings?

2. What types of lexical errors were most frequently found in selected compositions written by Turkish EFL University students at Bozok University?
a. Was there a relationship between the type of writing prompt and the number of lexical errors?

b. Was there a relationship between lexical choices in written English and holistic score of the quality of sample writings?

3. Was there a relationship between syntactical and lexical accuracy and the holistic score of the quality of sample writings?

Answers to the first question involve categories of syntactical errors identified in the professional literature, their frequency of occurrence, the percentage and rank order of each syntactical error type. The answers to the second and third questions mostly include the means, standard deviations, and holistic scores of the sample writings; and a list of correlations between: a) syntactical accuracy and writing prompts; b) syntactical accuracy and holistic score of the quality of writing; c) lexical accuracy and writing prompts; d) lexical accuracy and a holistic score of the quality of writing; and e) a combination of items b) and d), namely syntactical and lexical accuracy and a holistic score of the quality of writing.
5.1.1 Research Question 1:

What types of syntactical errors were most frequently found in selected compositions written by Turkish EFL University students at Bozok University?

In order to answer this question, 150 compositions were carefully analyzed to locate adherence to the syntactical rules of standard written academic English. Errors were identified and labeled. Afterwards, they were grouped into 15 major types: prepositions, articles, nouns, pronouns, singular/plural nouns, tense, adjectives, adverbs, conjunctions, verb formations, verb omissions, subject omissions, extraneous subjects/objects, subject-verb agreement, fragments and a category labeled miscellaneous. Table 5.1 shows 15 syntactical error categories, frequencies, percentages and rank order of errors detected in 150 sample Turkish college student writings.

Of the 15 types of syntactical errors found, it appeared that the students had the greatest problem with prepositions. These errors were found to be the most frequent error type with 14.6 % occurrence. This can also be seen in the rank order, for which preposition errors ranked first. The second and third most frequent errors were found in articles and singular/plural nouns, both of which included approximately 13.9% and 10.9% errors, respectively. Errors also occurred commonly in the use of tense (10.2%), pronouns (7.5%), and subject-verb agreement (7.2%), and Table 5.1 shows that these errors ranked 4th, 5th, and 6th, respectively. Other types of errors such as verb formation (6.9%), verb omission (6.4%), extraneous subject/object (5.2%), and subject omission (4.5%) ranked 7th, 8th, 9th, and 10th in terms of their frequency of occurrence.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Error Category</th>
<th>Frequency*</th>
<th>Percentage**</th>
<th>Rank Order***</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Prepositions</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>14.6</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Articles</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>13.9</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Singular/Plural Nouns</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>10.9</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Tense</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>10.2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Pronouns</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. S-V Agreement</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Verb Formation</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>6.9</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Verb Omission</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Extraneous Subject/Object</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Subject Omission</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Miscellaneous</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Fragment</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Conjunction</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Adjective</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Adverb</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>829 Errors</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.1: Categories, Frequencies, and Percentages of Errors in 150 Compositions

* Frequency is the number of occurrences of error type

** Percentage is a rate or proportion per hundred error type

*** Rank Order is the sequential arrangement of errors listed from largest to smallest occurrence
It is obvious that the miscellaneous category of syntactical errors is different from others in Table 5.1. Miscellaneous errors had 4.5% and ranked 11th. And only rarely did the students make syntactical errors pertinent to sentences (2.5%) and in the use of conjunction 2.4%). The errors pertinent to adjective and adverb use constituted only 2.2% and 1.1% of total syntactical errors that ranked 14th and 15th in terms of frequency of occurrence.

5.1.1.1 Research Question 1.a:

Was there a relationship between the type of writing prompt and the number of syntactical errors?

The mean scores of the numbers of syntactical errors per composition, as listed in Table 5.2, were calculated for each separate writing prompt, based on three different prompts.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Std. Error</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First Writing Prompt</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>3.51</td>
<td>2.586</td>
<td>0.309</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second Writing Prompt</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>7.40</td>
<td>3.433</td>
<td>0.543</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third Writing Prompt</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>7.18</td>
<td>3.478</td>
<td>0.550</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>5.53</td>
<td>3.595</td>
<td>0.294</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.2: Descriptive Statistics of Syntactical Errors for Each Separate Writing Prompt
The resulting descriptive statistics demonstrated that the mean of syntactical error for the first writing prompt (Describe yourself and your family briefly?) was 3.51 with a 2.586 standard deviation; the mean of syntactical errors for the second writing prompt (Describe your typical day?) was 7.40 with a 3.433 standard deviation; and the mean of syntactical for the third writing prompt (What did you do in the summer holiday?) was 7.18 with a 3.478 standard deviation.

**Figure 5.3: Means of syntactical errors for three writing prompts**
As the scatterplot in Figure 5.3 above shows, the mean score for the first writing prompt (M= 3.51, SD= 2.586) was significantly different from the second and third writing prompt mean scores. However, the mean score for the second writing prompt (M= 7.40, SD= 3.433) did not show a statistically significant difference from the third writing prompt mean score (M= 7.18, SD= 3.478). The scatterplot depicts that Bozok University EFL students committed more syntactical errors in their writings for the second writing prompt than for the third and first writing prompts.

In the next step, a one-way between subjects ANOVA was conducted to compare the effect of different writing prompts on the frequency of certain syntactical errors, as shown in Table 5.3. Based on the findings of ANOVA, there was a significant effect of type of writing prompt on the frequency of syntactical errors at the p<.05 level for the three conditions [ F (2, 147) = 28.101, p =0.000].

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Sum of Squares</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>532.533</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>266.266</td>
<td>28.101</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>1392.861</td>
<td>147</td>
<td>9.475</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1925.393</td>
<td>149</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.3: Anova

After that, post hoc tests were computed using Tukey’s test to analyze the significance of differences between pairs of means, as shown Table 5.4. Post hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test indicated that the mean score for the first writing
prompt (I) was 3.886, a point lower than the mean score for the second writing prompt (J); and the mean score for the first writing prompt (I) was 3.661, a point lower than that of the third writing prompt (J). This finding showed that scores for the second and third writing prompts were higher than that of the first writing prompt. The two differences (-3.886, and -3.661) were statistically significant at the 0.05 significance level. Further, the mean score of the second writing prompt (I) was 0.225 higher than that of the third writing prompt (J), which showed that the score for the second writing prompt was the highest among the three writing prompts. This difference (0.225) was not statistically significant at the 0.05 significance level.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(I) Writing Prompt</th>
<th>(J) Writing Prompt</th>
<th>Mean Difference (I-J)</th>
<th>Std. Error</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First Writing Prompt</td>
<td>Second Writing Prompt</td>
<td>-3.886*</td>
<td>0.610</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Third Writing Prompt</td>
<td>-3.661*</td>
<td>0.610</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second Writing Prompt</td>
<td>First Writing Prompt</td>
<td>3.886*</td>
<td>0.610</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Third Writing Prompt</td>
<td>0.225</td>
<td>0.688</td>
<td>0.943</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third Writing Prompt</td>
<td>First Writing Prompt</td>
<td>3.661*</td>
<td>0.610</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Second Writing Prompt</td>
<td>-0.225</td>
<td>0.688</td>
<td>0.943</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

Table 5.4: Tukey HSD test
A one-way between subjects ANOVA was conducted to compare the effect of different writing prompts on the frequency of syntactical errors occurring. There was a significant effect of type of writing prompt on the frequency of syntactical errors at the p<.05 level for the three writing prompt conditions [ F (2, 147) = 28.101, p =0.000]. Post hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test indicated that the mean score for the first writing prompt (M= 3.51, SD= 2.586) was significantly different from the second and third writing prompt mean scores. However, the mean score for the second writing prompt (M= 7.40, SD= 3.433) did not significantly differ from the third writing prompt mean score (M= 7.18, SD= 3.478). Taken together, these results suggested that the type of writing prompt has an effect on the frequency of occurrence of syntactical errors in the sample writings. Specifically, these results suggested that when students write on the second writing prompt (Describe your typical day?), and the third writing prompt, (What did you do in the summer holiday?), they tend to commit more syntactical errors when compared to the first writing prompt (Describe yourself and your family briefly?) where fewer errors of the type analyzed in this study were found.

5.1.1.2 Research Question 1.b:

Was there a relationship between syntactical accuracy and holistic quality of writing?

150 writing samples were analyzed in terms of the occurrence of syntactical errors and each sample was holistically scored by using a holistic rubric (See Appendix B). The relationship between the holistic scores of 150 writing samples and the frequency of
syntactical errors found per sample composition was examined. In the first step, mean and standard deviation scores of these two variables were calculated using SPSS. As shown in Table 5.5, the mean for syntactical errors was 5.53 (SD= 3.595) and the numbers of syntactical errors ranged from 0 to 15 which indicates that the range of the number of syntactical errors was wide. It is also shown in the table that the mean of holistic scores in the study was 3.120 (SD= 0.7297), and all the holistic scores ranged from 1 to 5.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Frequency of Syntactical Errors</td>
<td>5.53</td>
<td>3.595</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holistic Scores</td>
<td>3.120</td>
<td>0.7297</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.5: Descriptive statistic for the frequency of syntactical errors and the holistic scores of the selected 150 writing samples

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency of Syntactical Errors</th>
<th>Holistic Scores</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Frequency of Syntactical Errors</td>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holistic Scores</td>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>-0.481**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.6: Correlation between the frequency of syntactical errors and the holistic scores of the selected 150 writing samples

**Correlation is significant at the p<0.01 level (2-tailed).
In the next step, a Pearson product-moment correlation was conducted to examine the relationship between the holistic scores of the 150 writing samples and the frequency of syntactical errors found per sample as shown in Table 5.6. There was a negative correlation between the holistic scores and the frequency of syntactical error, \( r = -0.481, p = 0.000 \).

**Figure 5.4: Scatterplot illustrating the relationship between the frequency of syntactical errors and the holistic scores of the selected 150 writing samples**

Further, in order to obtain a clear view of the relationship, a scatterplot was developed as shown in Figure 5.4. The scatterplot shows that there was no linear pattern
in the distribution of occurrence of syntactical errors for each holistic score in the scatterplot. On the basis of a Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient, low negative correlation was found between the holistic scores and the frequency of syntactical errors \( r = -0.481, p = 0.000 \), according to a table for interpreting the size of a correlation coefficient (Hinkle, 2003, p. 109). Increases in holistic scores were not highly correlated with the decreases in committing syntactical errors.

5.1.2 Research Question 2:

What types of lexical errors were most frequently found in selected compositions written by Turkish EFL University students at Bozok University?

To answer this question, 150 compositions were examined sentence-by-sentence to identify any lexical errors. At first, errors were identified and labeled. Then, the lexical errors were classified into 20 subcategories under two main categories: formal and semantic features. Table 5.7 shows 20 lexical error categories, frequencies, percentages and rank order of errors found in 150 sample Turkish college student writings.

Of the 20 types of lexical errors identified, the formal mis-selection of words was the most problematic error category in the data. These errors were found the highest percentage of occurrence (32.8 %). This can be seen in the rank order, for which mis-selection lexical errors ranked first. The second and third most frequent errors were related to near synonyms and borrowing, both of which included approximately 19% and 14.7% errors, respectively. Errors related to calque and vowel-based type also occurred
frequently (6.5% and 5.2%), followed closely by coinage error category (4.3%). Table 5.7 shows that these errors ranked 4th, 5th, and 6th, respectively.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lexical Error Types</th>
<th>Frequency*</th>
<th>Percentage**</th>
<th>Rank Order***</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Mis-selection</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>32.8</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Near Synonyms</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Borrowing</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>14.7</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Calque</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Vowel-based Type</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Coinage</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Over-inclusion</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Consonant-based Type</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Arbitrary Combinations</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Verbosity</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Mis-ordering</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Suffix Type</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Semantic Word Selection</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.9</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Omission</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.4</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Inappropriate co-hyponyms</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.4</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Blending</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.4</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. General Term for Specific One</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.4</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. Prefix Type</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. Overly Specific Term</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. Statistically Weighted Preferences</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>232</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.7: Categories, Frequencies, and Percentages of Lexical Errors for the 150 Compositions

* Frequency is the number of occurrences of error type
** Percentage is a rate or proportion per hundred error type
*** Rank Order is the sequential arrangement of errors listed from largest to smallest occurrence

Other types of errors such as over-inclusion (3.4%), consonant-based (3%), arbitrary combinations (3%), and verbosity (2.6%) ranked 7th, 8th, 8th, and 10th in terms
of their frequency of occurrence. Mis-ordering and suffix type errors had only 1.7% and 1.3%, and ranked 11th and 12th. And only rarely did the students make lexical errors related to semantic word selection (.9%). The other error types such as omission, inappropriate co-hyponyms, blending, and general term for specific one were very rare, only (.4%). The students did not commit lexical errors related to prefix type, overly-specific term and statistically weighted preferences. It indicated that lexical errors were not evenly distributed across the lexical error type spectrum; mis-selection, near synonyms, and borrowing appeared to be particularly problematic.

5.1.2.1 Research Question 2.a:

Was there a relationship between the type of writing prompt and the number of lexical errors?

The mean scores of the numbers of lexical errors per writing prompts, as listed in Table 5.8 below, were calculated for each separate writing prompt.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Std. Error</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First Writing Prompt</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>1.21</td>
<td>1.578</td>
<td>0.189</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second Writing Prompt</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>1.73</td>
<td>1.432</td>
<td>0.226</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third Writing Prompt</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>1.95</td>
<td>2.012</td>
<td>0.318</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>1.55</td>
<td>1.689</td>
<td>0.138</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.8: Descriptive Statistics of Lexical Errors for Each Separate Writing Prompt
The resulting descriptive statistics demonstrated that the mean of lexical error for the first writing prompt (Describe yourself and your family briefly?) was 1.21 with a 1.578 standard deviation; the mean of lexical errors for the second writing prompt (Describe your typical day?) was 1.73 with a 1.432 standard deviation; and the mean of lexical for the third writing prompt (What did you do in the summer holiday?) was 1.95 with a 2.012 standard deviation.

![Figure 5.5: Means of lexical errors for three writing prompts](image)

**Figure 5.5: Means of lexical errors for three writing prompts**

As the scatterplot in Figure 5.5 above shows, the mean score for the first writing prompt (M= 1.21, SD= 1.578) was significantly different from the second and third writing prompt mean scores. Similarly, the mean score for the third writing prompt (M= 1.95, SD= 2.012) was significantly different from the first and second writing prompt mean scores.
1.95, SD= 2.012) represented a statistically significant difference from the second writing prompt mean score (M= 1.73, SD= 1.432). The scatterplot depicts that Bozok University EFL students committed most lexical errors in their writings for the third writing prompt, followed by the second and first writing prompts.

In the next step, a one-way between subjects ANOVA was conducted to compare the effect of different writing prompts on the frequency of lexical errors, as shown in Table 5.9. Based on the findings of ANOVA, there was a significant effect of type of writing prompt on the frequency of lexical errors at the p<.05 level for the three conditions [ F (2, 147) = 2.783, p =0.065].

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total Lexical Errors</th>
<th>Sum of Squares</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>15.513</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7.756</td>
<td>2.783</td>
<td>0.065</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>409.661</td>
<td>147</td>
<td>2.787</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>425.173</td>
<td>149</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.9: Anova

After that, post hoc tests were computed using Tukey’s test to analyze the significance of differences between pairs of means, as shown Table 5.10. Post hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test indicated that the mean score the first writing prompt (I) was .511, a point lower than the mean score for the second writing prompt (J); and the mean score for the first writing prompt (I) was .736, a point lower than that of the third writing prompt (J). This finding showed that scores for the second and third writing prompts were higher than that of the first writing prompt. The two differences (.511, and
-0.736) were statistically significant at the 0.05 significance level. Further, the mean score of the third writing prompt (I) was 0.225 higher than that of the second writing prompt (J), which showed that the score for the third writing prompt was the highest among the three writing prompts. This difference (0.225) was not statistically significant at the 0.05 significance level.

### Table 5.10: Tukey HSD test

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(I) Writing Prompts</th>
<th>(J) Writing Prompts</th>
<th>Mean Difference (I-J)</th>
<th>Std. Error</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First Writing Prompt</td>
<td>Second Writing Prompt</td>
<td>-0.511</td>
<td>0.331</td>
<td>0.274</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Third Writing Prompt</td>
<td>-0.736</td>
<td>0.331</td>
<td>0.071</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second Writing Prompt</td>
<td>First Writing Prompt</td>
<td>0.511</td>
<td>0.331</td>
<td>0.274</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Third Writing Prompt</td>
<td>-0.225</td>
<td>0.373</td>
<td>0.819</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third Writing Prompt</td>
<td>First Writing Prompt</td>
<td>0.736</td>
<td>0.331</td>
<td>0.071</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Second Writing Prompt</td>
<td>0.225</td>
<td>0.373</td>
<td>0.819</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A one-way between subjects ANOVA was conducted to compare the effect of different writing prompts on the frequency of lexical errors occurring. There was a significant effect of type of writing prompt on the frequency of lexical errors at the p<.05 level for the three writing prompt conditions [F (2, 147) = 2.783, p = 0.065]. Post hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test indicated that the mean score for the first writing
prompt (M= 1.21, SD= 1.578) was significantly different from the second and third writing prompt mean scores. Similarly, the mean score for the third writing prompt (M= 1.95, SD= 2.012) represented a statistically significant difference from the second writing prompt mean score (M= 1.73, SD= 1.432). Taken together, these results suggested that the type of writing prompt seems to have an effect on the frequency of occurrence of lexical errors in the sample writings. Specifically, these results suggested that when students write on the second writing prompt (Describe your typical day?), and the third writing prompt, (What did you do in the summer holiday?), they tend to commit lexical errors when compared to the first writing prompt (Describe yourself and your family briefly?) where fewer errors of the type analyzed in this study were found.

5.1.2.2 Research Question 2.b:

Was there a relationship between lexical choices in written English and holistic score of the quality of sample writings?

150 writing samples were analyzed in terms of the occurrence of lexical errors and each sample was holistically scored by using a holistic rubric (See Appendix B). The relationship between the holistic scores of 150 writing samples and the frequency of lexical errors found per sample was examined. In the first step, mean and standard deviation scores of these two variables were calculated using SPSS. As shown in Table 5.11, the mean for lexical errors was 1.55 (SD= 1.689) and the numbers of lexical errors ranged from 0 to 10 which indicates that the range of the number of lexical errors was
wide. It is also shown in the table that the mean of holistic scores in the study was 3.120 (SD= 0.7297), and all the holistic scores ranged from 1 to 5.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Frequency of Lexical Errors</td>
<td>1.55</td>
<td>1.689</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holistic Scores</td>
<td>3.120</td>
<td>0.7297</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.11: Descriptive statistic for the frequency of lexical errors and the holistic scores of the selected 150 writing samples

In the next step, a Pearson product-moment correlation was conducted to examine the relationship between the holistic scores of the 150 writing samples and the frequency of lexical errors found per sample as shown in Table 5.12. A negative correlation between the holistic scores and the frequency of lexical error was found (r=-0.383, p=0.000).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency of Lexical Errors</th>
<th>Holistic Scores</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Frequency of Lexical Errors</td>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>-0.383**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holistic Scores</td>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>-0.383**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.12: Correlation between frequency of lexical error types and the holistic scores of randomly selected 150 writing samples

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
Further, in order to obtain a clear view of the relationship, a scatterplot was developed as shown in Figure 5.6. The scatterplot shows that there was no linear pattern in the distribution of occurrence of lexical errors for each holistic score in the scatterplot. On the basis of a Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient, a low negative correlation was found between the holistic scores and the frequency of lexical errors \( (r= -0.383, p= .000) \), according to a table for interpreting the size of a correlation coefficient (Hinkle et al., 2003, p. 109). Increases in holistic scores were not highly correlated with the decreases in committing lexical errors.

![Figure 5.6: Scatterplot illustrating the relationship between the frequency of lexical errors and the holistic scores of the selected 150 writing samples](image)

**Figure 5.6:** Scatterplot illustrating the relationship between the frequency of lexical errors and the holistic scores of the selected 150 writing samples
5.1.3 Research Question 3:

Was there a relationship between syntactical and lexical accuracy and the holistic score of the quality of sample writings?

In the first step, mean and standard deviation scores of these two variables, syntactical & lexical errors and holistic scores, were calculated using SPSS. As shown in Table 5.13, the mean for total errors was 7.07 (SD= 4.351) and the numbers of total errors ranged from 0 to 18 which indicates that the range of the number of total errors was wide. It is also shown in the table that the mean of holistic scores in the study was 3.120 (SD= 0.7297), and that all the holistic scores ranged from 1 to 5.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Syntactical &amp; Lexical Errors</td>
<td>7.07</td>
<td>4.351</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holistic Scores</td>
<td>3.120</td>
<td>0.7297</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.13: Descriptive statistic for the frequency of syntactical & lexical errors and the holistic scores of the selected 150 writing samples

In the next step, a Pearson product-moment correlation was conducted to examine the relationship between the holistic scores of the 150 writing samples and the frequency of syntactical and lexical errors found per sample as shown in Table 5.14. A negative correlation between the holistic scores and the frequency of syntactical and lexical errors was found (r=-0.546, p=0.000).
Further, in order to obtain a clear view of the relationship, a scatterplot was developed as shown in Figure 5.7. The scatterplot shows that there was no linear pattern in the distribution of occurrence of total errors for each holistic score in the scatterplot. On the basis of a Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient, a moderate negative correlation was found between the holistic scores and the frequency of syntactical and lexical errors ($r = -0.546$, $p = 0.000$), according to a table for interpreting the size of a correlation coefficient (Hinkle et al., 2003, p. 109). Increases in holistic scores were not correlated with the decreases in committing errors.
Figure 5.7: Scatterplot illustrating the relationship between the frequency of syntactical & lexical errors and the holistic scores of the selected 150 writing samples
5.2: Discussion

This section of the chapter provides explanations of possible sources of error, relationships between writing prompts and the writing quality based on the results of the statistical analysis of the data presented in results section of this chapter. Further, some crucial statements addressing the possible reasons for the most frequent syntactical and lexical errors and of the relationships among syntactical accuracy, lexical accuracy and the quality of second language writing are italicized. At the end of this section, these italicized statements are listed for further clarification.

5.2.1 Research Question 1:

What types of syntactical errors were most frequently found in selected compositions written by Turkish EFL University students at Bozok University?

15 types of syntactical errors were investigated in this study and the results of the most frequent error types were found to be closely consistent with the previous error analysis studies results. Errors in the use of prepositions, articles, singular/plural nouns, tense, for instance, were also documented in several studies conducted previously (e.g., Duskova, 1969; Politzer & Ramirez, 1973; Chen, 1979; Ghadessy, 1980; Gok, 1996; Yang, 1994; Unal, 1998; Alpsoy, 1998). It can be concluded that the frequent types of syntactical errors investigated in this study seemed to be similar to that of those previous studies focusing problematic areas of ESL or EFL learners.
Of all 829 syntactical errors found in sample compositions in the present study, 121 of them were preposition errors which accounted for 14.6 percent of the total syntactical errors (see Table 5.1, p. 52). Obviously, as stated in the previous studies conducted with Turkish EFL students (Gok, 1996; Alpsoy, 1998; Unal, 1998; and Ozaydinli, 1998), Turkish students had difficulty in using English prepositions efficiently. Most of the preposition errors included omissions, additions, and incorrect selections.

(1) I get up usually 7 o’clock and have breakfast.

(2) I go to in city centre after my classes.

(3) Last day, I ran at the beach after I swam.

The Turkish language does not have prepositions. Further, in English, prepositions, unlike grammar rules, do not have unambiguous rules; the exact preposition to be used may depend on the particular verb in a sentence, for example. Therefore, it requires Turkish students to learn them by heart which, in turn, may require longer time and more practice to master. Therefore, the lack of prepositions in the Turkish language could be considered as a possible source of preposition errors, as seen in example 1 above. However, from the sample sentences 2 and 3, it seems that these errors are intralingual errors. That is, the occurrence of these preposition errors seems to be due to the students’ ignorance or inadequate mastery of English preposition rules which do not exit in the Turkish language. It can be argued that a lack of prepositions in Turkish and incomplete application of English preposition rules makes prepositions onerous for many
Turkish students, according to this study. If the students are provided more examples of the correct use of English prepositions and perhaps more exercises, they can cope with the difficulty of English prepositions.

Another thorny area of English for Turkish EFL students is the correct use of definite and indefinite articles. There were 115 errors in the use of articles representing 13.9 percent of the total syntactical errors found in the present study. The use of articles in Turkish and in English differs in many aspects. In Turkish, there is no definite article (the) and only one equivalent for English indefinite articles, that is ‘bir’ is used for ‘a’, ‘an’ and ‘one’. However, in Turkish a word can be made definitive by adding an object suffix, and this becomes the objective ‘the’ in Turkish, but English does not distinguish between subject ‘the’ and object ‘the’. Here is an example of the objective definitive article:

- Kalem masada. (The pen is on the table)
- Masadaki kalemi bana ver. (Give me the pen which is on the table)

In the above sentences, the object (pen-kalem) was made definitive by the addition of the objective suffix -i. When it comes to articles in English, it is obvious that articles, like prepositions, do not have unambiguous rules which makes them hard to learn for English language learners. Here are some article errors committed by Turkish EFL students in the sample compositions:

(4) *The* Istanbul’s traffic was a complex.
(5) Next summer, I will go to the *a* seaside city, Izmir.

(6) I want to buy *an* unique present for her.

From these sample sentences, *it can be claimed that the lack of definite article in the Turkish language was one of the sources of article errors* because Turkish EFL students tended to use definite article (the) when they were not sure about the rule that governs its use. It is obvious that for Turkish EFL learners, the correct use of ‘the’ was more challenging than the correct use of ‘a’ and ‘an’ because it seems that Turkish students did not have much problem with using ‘a’ and ‘an’ apart from the exceptional usage of indefinite articles, as seen in example 6 above. In addition, it can be argued that *the improper learning of English articles (e.g., overgeneralization of definite article) may be another cause of article errors*. Example 4 seems to be an illustration of overgeneralization and example 5 may have resulted from an incomplete application of the article rule. So, these errors can be considered intralingual errors.

The third most common error type was the use of singular and plural nouns. There were 90 errors of this type found in the compositions in this study, representing 10.9 percent of the total syntactical errors. A few examples of singular/plural noun errors are as follows:

(7) There are a lot of museum and place there.

(8) I brush my *tooths* every morning.
(9) I do my *homeworks*, read books, and watch TV.

From the above examples, it can be concluded that the singular / plural noun errors primarily fall into three categories: (a) the use of the singular instead of the plural or vice versa; (b) irregular nouns; (c) overgeneralization of the plural marker ‘-s’. *One possible reason of singular/plural noun errors may be due to the different views in countability of words between the two languages* (as seen in example 9 above). For instance, for a Turkish student, ‘bread’ is a countable noun whereas it is not in English. Further, Turkish language does not have irregular nouns, except for ‘su’ (water). So, the irregular nouns of English (e.g., tooth-teeth, mouse-mice) can be very problematic for Turkish learners as seen in example 8 above. Another difference between Turkish and English is that when a plural count noun (e.g., many, several, all) is used, the noun following this plural count noun keeps its singular form, but in English that noun should require a plural form. *Therefore, one major reason of singular/plural noun errors might be interlingual differences* (as seen in examples 7, 8 and 9 listed above). *A slip of the pen may be yet another way to account for these types of errors.*

The fourth most common error type in the study was in the use of the English verb tense system. There were 85 tense errors, accounting for 10.2 percent of the total errors. Here are some examples of tense errors found in the sample compositions:

(10) I stayed at a big hotel.....the hotel crowded.

(11) I wake up very early in the morning...and I *will* go to school with a bus
(12) My father is 46 years old and he is working at a school.

The Turkish verb system includes a wide range of tenses. Therefore, many aspects of the English verb system have their equivalents in Turkish, which in turn helps Turkish students learn the English verb tenses with ease. However, there are some slight differences between the verb systems of two languages which might have caused Turkish EFL students to commit tense errors. First, Turkish has no form to express the present perfect tense which perhaps makes students construct present perfect sentences in the same way they do for past simple sentences, and this deviation can be considered to be a negative transfer (Bulut, 2011, p. 225). Second, Turkish lacks a specific word for the ‘be’ verb, and instead it allows Turkish speakers to use adjectives and adverbs as verbs by adding appropriate suffixes. For example, Turkish students may construct a sentence by omitting the auxiliary verb as in example 10 above. Further, Turkish enables speakers to use the present continuous tense with present simple meaning. Turkish students thus tend to misuse the continuous tense in a sentence where the simple present form is required, as in the example 12. The influence of Turkish is obvious in the examples 10 and 12 above. So it can be argued that one possible source of tense errors is negative transfer between Turkish and English. In addition, students’ incomplete mastery of the English verb system (as in the example 11 above) may be another reason for such errors.

Pronoun errors were the fifth most common syntactical error type that students committed with 62 errors, constituting 7.5 percent of the total errors in the compositions in the current study. Here are some sentences that include errors in the use of pronouns:
(13) *It's* name ‘Babam ve Oglm.’

(14) *Their* were very busy.

(15) Ali is a student and *she* is very working (Ali is a male).

From the above sentences, it *can be argued that majority of pronoun errors in the compositions were due to the students’ incomplete mastery of the English rules*. In example 13 above, the student could not distinguish between ‘it’s’, contraction of ‘it is’, and the possessive pronoun ‘its’. *The cause of pronoun errors may be attributed to either fatigue or carelessness*. Similarly, examples 14 and 15 can be considered performance errors. However, the root of the error in the example 15 is also traceable to Turkish language because in Turkish there is only one word (‘o’, ‘onun’) for the equivalent of the third person singular personal and possessive pronouns (‘he/she/it’, ‘his/her/its’, respectively).

Subject-Verb (S-V) Agreement errors ranked sixth, just below those of tense and pronouns. There were 60 S-V agreement errors, accounting for 7.2 percent of the total syntactical errors found in the study. This category of errors dealt with the students’ unsuccessful attempt to apply the syntactical concept of subject-verb agreement and to correctly use auxiliary verbs. The following sentences are excerpted from the sample compositions to illustrate errors of S-V agreement:

(16) We eat our lunch at a cafeteria and *has* dinner with our parents.
(17) There was handsome men in a hotel.

(18) My classes start....and finishes at 1:30.

Contrary to English, Turkish has a more flexible subject-verb agreement system. As Balpinar (2006) stated, the predicate shows agreement with the subject in terms of person and number. Further, whether the subject noun is a person or not, some semantic considerations play a crucial role in Turkish. Below is a list of examples based on the prepositional literature that represent s-v agreement in Turkish (Goksel & Kerskale, 2005, p. 128):

a) If the subject noun is inanimate and singular, a singular verb is required.

   - Bu bilgisayar calismiyor. (This computer does not work)

b) If the subject noun is inanimate and plural, a singular verb is obligatory.

   - Bu bilgisayarlar calismiyor. (These computers do not work)

c) If the subject noun is animate and singular, a singular verb is required.

   - Temsilcimiz her toplantiya katilir (Our representative participates in all meetings)

d) If the subject noun is animate and plural, the verb can be singular or plural

   - Temsilcilerimiz her toplantiya katilir (Our representatives participate in all meetings)

   -- Temsilcilerimiz her toplantiya katilirler (Our representatives participate in all meetings)
With regard to the possible causes of s-v agreement errors, Turkish does not have a strict s-v agreement principle that may be a source of student errors. When the above sample sentences (16, 17, 18) including s-v agreement errors are carefully analyzed, it can be argued that one major cause of s-v agreement errors is connected with interlingual interference, especially the inherently flexible features of the Turkish s-v agreement system. However, it may also be argued that these errors may occur due to intralingual interference. That is, since the English s-v agreement system is not so difficult and to some extent, more clear-cut than the Turkish system, the root of such errors can also be traceable to factors such the language students’ insufficient learning or to their carelessness. However, it can be concluded that it is possible for Turkish students to avoid such errors after mastering the English language rules.

5.2.1.1 Research Question 1.a:

Was there a relationship between the type of writing prompt and the number of syntactical errors?

In this study three different writing prompts were used as part of an English course taught in Turkey for college students. These writing prompts were: (1) Describe yourself and your family briefly? (2) Describe your typical day? and (3) What did you do in the summer holiday? The students were required to write at least 75-100 words in English for each of the writing prompts. In order to identify the relationships between the type of writing prompt and the number of syntactical errors, a Tukey HSD test was calculated (see Table 5.4, p. 56). Post hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test...
revealed that the mean score for the first writing prompt (M= 3.51, SD= 2.586) was significantly different from the second and third writing prompt mean scores. However, the mean score for the second writing prompt (M= 7.40, SD= 3.433) did not significantly differ from the third writing prompt mean score (M= 7.18, SD= 3.478). Taken together, it can be claimed that based on this study, the type of writing prompt had an effect on the frequency of occurrence of certain syntactical errors in the sample writings. Specifically, these results suggested that when students write on the second writing prompt (Describe your typical day?), and the third writing prompt, (What did you do in the summer holiday?), they tended to commit more syntactical errors when compared to the first writing prompt (Describe yourself and your family briefly?) where fewer errors of the type analyzed in this study were found. It is obvious that even though it was the students’ first written product, they performed better in the first writing prompt when compared to second and third writing prompts. That is, they committed less syntactical errors. With regard to the possible causes of this difference, it might be attributed to the idea that the students were highly motivated to write their first composition. Further, the first writing prompt seemed less challenging than the second and the third prompts because it did not require students to use complex sentences, but basic structures with which they were already familiar. In addition, it was observed that in the second and third writing prompts the students seemed to take more risks to make complex sentences. They therefore made more syntactical errors. Furthermore, since the students continued to learn new structures and rules until they wrote their second and third compositions, their errors could be treated as developmental errors. The high instances of syntactical errors in the
second and third compositions may also be connected to students’ decreasing motivation towards the end of the course. That is, since these writing assignments were ungraded, it may have affected students motivation negatively and caused them to make performance errors often due to carelessness, ignorance or fatigue. In a nutshell, the type of writing prompts (e.g., personal, narrative) seems to have an effect on the syntactical accuracy of the written essays. Another study of this outcome is needed.

5.2.1.2 Research Question 1.b:

Was there a relationship between syntactical accuracy and holistic quality of writing?

In Turkey, there is a common belief among English teachers and learners that grammar teaching is an indispensable part of English instruction and that enough exposure to grammar will improve learners’ writing skills. For this reason, many students tend to give priority to mastering syntactical elements with the viewpoint that they can write better. However, does syntactical accuracy necessarily equal better writing? In order to investigate whether syntactical accuracy has an effect on the quality of written essays, a Pearson product-moment correlation was conducted. On the basis of the Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient in this study, a low negative correlation was found between the holistic scores and the frequency of syntactical errors (see Table 5.6, p. 58). The result is consistent with previous studies that explored the relationship between syntactic accuracy and the writing quality (e.g., Nold & Freeman, 1977; Crowhurst, 1980; Adrews et al., 2006; Beers & Naggy, 2009). For instance, Adrews et al., (2006)
found on the basis of the results of their two detailed reviews that the teaching of syntax (as part of a traditional approach to teaching grammar) seems to have little influence on either the accuracy or the quality of written language development for 5-16 years olds in their research.

*Even though the results of the present study point that a decrease in committing syntactical errors not highly correlated with an increase in holistic score, it does not mean that syntactic accuracy is irrelevant or unimportant in the English writing process. It is a crucial component of effective writing but it may not be as good an elixir as some Turkish learners believe.*

5.2.2 Research Question 2:

**What types of lexical errors were most frequently found in selected compositions written by Turkish EFL University students at Bozok University?**

The 20 types of lexical errors were investigated in this study and the results of the most frequent error types were different from the previous error analysis study results. Schmitt & Hemchua (2006) reported that near synonyms, preposition partners, suffix type and calque were the most frequent lexical errors found in the compositions of Thai learners in their study. In another study conducted with Chinese EFL learners, Yang & Xu (2001) documented that inappropriate word selection, errors of transitivity/intransitivity and collocation errors were the most common type of lexical errors found in their study. However, it is obvious that the frequent types of lexical errors investigated in this study
do not seem to be similar to that of those previous studies focusing on the problematic lexical areas of ESL or EFL learners.

Of all the 232 lexical errors found in sample compositions for this study, 76 were mis-selection errors which accounted for 32.8 percent of the total lexical errors (see Table 5.7, p. 61). Most of the errors in this category were related to using distorted words.

(1) My aunt made meatball and it was very dilecous (delicious)

(2) The wether was very bad (weather)

(3) I usually breakfast and diring tea (drink)

It can be claimed from the above sample sentences that the students used some words that also do not exist in English. However, these mis-selection errors may occur due to the incorrect application of certain English words and not the influence of the Turkish language.

(4) I make my homeworks at nights (do)

(5) I like chat with my strange friends on the web (foreign)

(6) Then, I wash my teeth (brush)

The second most common lexical error type was near synonym errors, accounting for 19 percent of the total lexical errors. The analysis of these errors reveals that near synonym errors seem to have several causes. For instance, in example 5 above, it is
obvious that the intended meaning of ‘foreign’ was not clearly expressed by the near synonym ‘strange’. Here the influence of Turkish is very evident; the cause of this error can also be called divergent polysemy. In other words, a single Turkish word ‘yabancı’ corresponds to both ‘strange’ and ‘foreign’. Similarly, the Turkish equivalent of ‘make’ and ‘do’ (in example 4 above) is exactly the same. These examples show that students were obviously thinking in Turkish while writing, and then translating those structures into English. When they were confronted with a choice of lexical items, they tended to choose the ones that make sense to them. The familiar words, the most recently used words, or the easiest words to write and pronounce seemed to be preferred. In example 6 above, the two words (‘wash’ and ‘brush’) are close in meaning but different in usage. Unlike the other two near synonym errors, L1 interference seemed to have a relatively minor influence on this error in example 6 above. The mis-application of the target language or incomplete learning can be argued as a cause of this assumed synonym error.

Another problematic area detected in this study was the direct use of L1 words in target language, which is also known as borrowing errors. There were 34 borrowing errors, representing the 14.7 percent of the total errors. Here are some examples of errors of this type:

(7) One time we went to picnic and eat mangal meat (grilled)

(8) ...Yani, she helped me spoke well (namely or in other words)
(9) We went to Susurluk and I drank ayran (Yoghurt drink)

From the above sentences, it can be claimed that the source of these errors was the students’ first language, namely Turkish. As James (1998) stated, in these examples mother language words were used in the target language with no perception of any need to tailor them to the new host language. In addition, students tended to use the L1 words to fill the expressional vacancy in the L2 that seemed to be caused by cross culture differences. To illustrate, the lack of a specific equivalent word for ‘ayran’ in English seemed to have caused Turkish students to use it directly. Even though the errors in examples 7 and 8 above are considered to be interlingual errors, they can also perhaps be traced to students’ insufficient learning of the target language.

The fourth most common error type in the study was related to the use of calques. There were 15 calque-related errors, accounting for 6.5 percent of the total errors. Here are some examples of these errors:

(10) I looked at the cows, goats, and horses in the summer (take care of)

(11) I swam in the sea and if need to add it was funny (so to speak)

(12) I and my little cousin went to the childpark (playground)

(13) I enter lesson at 8:00 o’clock.... (go to the class)

In the sentences above, the target language words or phrases were created basing on the literal translation of the L2 words or phrases. The creation of calque usually
involves a word-for-word translation. Further, the translation seem to keep both the form and the meaning of the L1 words which is, however, against the L2 forms. It seems evident that the source of the calque errors is the mother language. Thus, they should be considered as interlingual errors.

Vowel-based type errors ranked fifth, just below those of calque in the present study. There were 12 errors of this type, accounting for 5.2 percent of the total lexical errors in the study. This category of errors dealt with the students’ unsuccessful attempt to make a choice of pairs (or triplets) of words that look and sound similar. The following sentences are quoted from the sample compositions to illustrate the errors of vowel-based type:

(14) I enter lesson at 8:00 o’clock and I live the school noon (leave)

(15) I go to bead 23:30...(bed)

(16) I usually eat a chesee sandwich and a cup of tea (tea)

(17) Than, we and my cousins went to the aqua parks (then)

James (1998) referred this type of lexical error as a malapropism type. They share some phonemes or graphemes. Although the words are similar in pronunciation and form, to some extent, they are totally different in meaning. The correct words and their substitutes used in the above sentences are all target language words: leave/live, bed/bead, tea/tee, and then/than. So, the influence of the mother language is not evident here.
Thus, it can be claimed that the students were experiencing a performance problem in selecting the correct target item. This type of error is called intralingual error which may be caused by incomplete learning or misapplication of the students’ language learning.

5.2.2.1 Research Question 2.a:

Was there a relationship between the type of writing prompt and the number of lexical errors?

Post hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test (see Table 5.10, p. 65) showed that the mean score of the lexical errors found in the 150 compositions written for the first writing prompt (Describe yourself and your family briefly?) was lower than those of the second writing prompt (Describe your typical day?) and the third writing prompt (What did you do in the summer holiday?). In other words, the mean scores for the second and third writing prompts were higher than that of the first writing prompt. More importantly, the score for the third writing prompt was the highest among the three writing prompts. Taken together, these results suggested that the type of writing prompt seems to have a significant effect on the frequency of occurrence of lexical errors in the sample writings. Specifically, these results suggested to this researcher that when students wrote on the second writing prompt and the third writing prompt, they committed more lexical errors as compared to the first writing prompt where fewer errors of the type analyzed in this study were found.
It can be concluded, regarding to the possible causes of this difference, that the students were highly motivated to write their first composition. Further, the first writing prompt was less challenging than the second and the third prompts because it did not require students to use complex words or phrases, but basic vocabulary that they were assumed to have mastered. In addition, it was observed that on the second and third writing prompts the students took more risks to make difficult word choices, selecting words that were a little beyond their English level, which in turn, may have forced them to commit more lexical errors. Moreover, due to the fact that the students continued to learn new vocabulary and had time to practice the old terms until they wrote their second and third compositions, they committed more lexical errors most of which were developmental errors such as calques, and perhaps more important, the high occurrences of lexical errors especially in the third composition may also be related to a decrease in students’ motivation to improve their writing skills because these writing assignments were ungraded, in-class activities. Although there are likely to be a variety of factors influencing the frequency of lexical errors, the study provided evidence that the type of writing prompts (e.g., personal, narrative) has an effect on the frequency of lexical errors for this particular student group of Turkish undergraduates.
5.2.2.2 Research Question 2.b:

Was there a relationship between lexical choices in written English and holistic quality of sample writings?

There is a tendency among some Turkish EFL learners and teachers that argues lexical errors play a crucial role in writing assessment in that the percentage of lexical errors may be a predictor of writing quality. Some studies, even though the results are too diverse to generalize, have been conducted that the influence of lexical errors on writing assessment (Linnarud, 1986; Engber, 1995; Llach 2005a, 2007a, 2007b). So, in this study, to investigate whether the percentage of lexical errors is a good indicator of overall quality of Turkish EFL college student composition, a non-directional Pearson product-moment correlation was conducted. On the basis of a Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient, a low negative correlation ($r=-0.383$) was found in the present study between the holistic scores and the frequency of lexical errors (see Table 5.12, p. 67). From this result, it can be concluded that the holistic scores of the quality of the compositions of Turkish EFL college students may be independent from the frequency of lexical errors. Further research is recommended although this result is consistent with the study of Linnarud (1986) whose research revealed a low, non-significant correlation between the lexical error and the quality score. It is also consistent with Engber’s study of lexical density that showed a low significant correlation ($r=-0.43$, $p<.01$) between the percentage of lexical errors and the quality score, whereas the present study differs from
that of Llach (2005a) in that his study only revealed a moderate, significant correlation ($r = -0.78$, $p<.01$).

Although the results of the present study demonstrated a decrease in students committing lexical errors was not correlated with an increase in a holistic score of English compositions, it does not necessarily mean that the percentage of either lexical errors or lexical accuracy has an unimportant role on the quality of student compositions. Further study of this topic is needed.

5.2.3 Research Question 3:

Was there a relationship between syntactical and lexical accuracy and the holistic quality of sample writings?

As anticipated, the correlation between the syntactical and lexical accuracy, and the holistic scores of the quality of Turkish EFL college students’ writings was slightly higher than those of syntactical errors variable and lexical errors variable, separately (see Table 5.14, p. 70). The results provide evidence that as the frequency of syntactical and lexical errors decreases the quality of the compositions seems to increase. As stated previously, a well-written text consists of several factors such as grammar, lexical diversity and mode of writing, length, cohesion and coherence. Each of these elements is of importance. No single item, however significant, can be considered to define the total quality of a piece of writing. For this reason, as revealed by the moderate negative correlation found between the lexical and syntactical accuracy and the holistic scores, the
focus of writing teaching and assessment should also include these elements besides syntax and lexis. Further study of this topic is needed.

Table 5.15 below shows possible sources of the most frequent syntactical errors (prepositions, articles, singular/plural nouns, tenses, pronouns, s-v agreement) and the most frequent lexical errors (mis-selection, near synonym, borrowing, calque, vowel-based) found in this study.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Error Type</th>
<th>Major Source of Error</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Prepositions</td>
<td>Intralingual Error</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Articles</td>
<td>Interlingual Error + Intralingual Error</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Singular/Plural Nouns</td>
<td>Interlingual Error + Intralingual Error</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Tenses</td>
<td>Interlingual Error + Intralingual Error</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Pronouns</td>
<td>Intralingual Error</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Subject-Verb Agreement</td>
<td>Interlingual Error</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Mis-selection</td>
<td>Intralingual Error</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Near Synonym</td>
<td>Intralingual Error + Interlingual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Borrowing</td>
<td>Interlingual Error</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Calque</td>
<td>Interlingual Error</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Vowel-based</td>
<td>Intralingual Error</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.15 Major Source of Most Frequent Syntactical and Lexical Errors
Further, other crucial points previously italicized for research questions 1.a, 1.b, 2.a, 2.b, and 3 are added to this list.

1. The occurrence of these preposition errors seems to be due to the students’ ignorance or inadequate mastery of English preposition rules which do not exit in the Turkish language. Therefore, these errors are mainly interlingual. (Research Question 1)

2. The lack of definite article in the Turkish language was one of the sources of article errors because Turkish EFL students tended to use definite article (the) when they were not sure about the rule that governs its use. In addition, it can be argued that the improper learning of English articles (e.g., overgeneralization of definite article) may be another cause of article errors. So, these article errors can be considered both interlingual and intralingual errors. (Research Question 1)

3. One possible reason of singular/plural noun errors may be due to the different views in countability of words between the two languages. Therefore, one major reason of singular/plural noun errors might be interlingual differences. A slip of the pen may be yet another way to account for these types of errors. (Research Question 1)

4. There are some slight differences between the verb systems of two languages which might have caused Turkish EFL students to commit tense errors. So it can be argued that one possible source of tense errors was negative transfer between Turkish and English. In addition, students’ incomplete mastery of the English verb system might be another reason for such errors. (Research Question 1)
5. Majority of pronoun errors in the compositions were due to the students’ incomplete mastery of the English rules. The cause of pronoun errors may be attributed to either fatigue or carelessness. So, they are mainly intralingual errors.

6. One major cause of s-v agreement errors might be connected with interlingual interference, especially the inherently flexible features of the Turkish s-v agreement system. (Research Question 1)

7. The mis-selection errors may have occurred due to the incorrect application of certain English words and not the influence of the Turkish language. (Research Question 2)

8. Near synonym errors seem to have several causes. The influence of Turkish was evident in some compositions. Those students were obviously thinking in Turkish while writing, and then translating those structures into English. Further, the mis-application of the target language words or incomplete learning can be argued as a cause of this assumed synonym error. Thus, these errors can be both interlingual and intralingual. (Research Question 2)

9. The source of the borrowing errors was the students’ first language, namely Turkish. The students tended to use the L1 words to fill the expressional vacancy in the L2 that seemed to be caused by cross culture differences. (Research Question 2)

10. The source of the calque errors is the mother language. Thus, they should be considered as interlingual errors. (Research Question 2)
11. The influence of the mother language is not evident in vowel-based errors. Thus, it can be claimed that the students were experiencing a performance problem in selecting the correct target item. (Research Question 2)

12. The type of writing prompt had an effect on the frequency of occurrence of certain syntactical errors in the sample writings. Similarly, the type of writing prompt seemed to have a significant effect on the frequency of occurrence of lexical errors in the sample writings. With regard to the possible causes of this difference, it might be attributed to the idea that the students were highly motivated to write their first composition. Further, the first writing prompt seemed less challenging than the second and the third prompts because it did not require students to use complex sentences, but basic structures and words with which they were already familiar. In addition, it was observed that in the second and third writing prompts the students seemed to take more risks to make complex sentences. Further, since these writing assignments were ungraded, it may have affected students motivation negatively and caused them to make performance errors often due to carelessness, ignorance or fatigue. (Research Questions 1.a & 2.a)

13. Even though the results of the present study point to a decrease in committing syntactical errors not highly correlated with an increase in holistic score, it does not mean that syntactic accuracy is irrelevant or unimportant in the English writing process. It is a crucial component of effective writing but it may not be as good an elixir as some Turkish learners believe. (Research Question 1.b)
14. The holistic scores of the quality of the compositions of Turkish EFL college students may be independent from the frequency lexical errors. Although the results of the present study demonstrated a decrease in students committing lexical errors was not correlated with an increase in a holistic score of English compositions, it does not necessarily mean that the percentage of either lexical errors or lexical accuracy has an unimportant role on the quality of student compositions. (Research Question 2.b)

15. The results provide evidence that as the frequency of syntactical and lexical errors decreases the quality of the compositions seems to increase. (Research Question 3)

5.3: Conclusions

The aims of the present study were to identify and describe the syntactical and lexical errors that beginner level Turkish college students frequently committed in their course compositions, to explain possible sources of those errors, to investigate the relationships between the type of writing prompt and the frequency of lexical and syntactical errors, and to investigate the relationships between the frequency of those errors and the holistic scores assigned to these students’ compositions.

As a result of syntactical analysis, errors of prepositions were found to be the most frequent error type among 15 syntactical error types, followed by article, singular/plural noun, tense, pronoun, and s-v agreement errors, respectively. It was found that an important cause of such errors was negative transfer, in which the influence of the Turkish language was relatively high. In the present study, it was also found that
overgeneralization, inadequate application of rules, incomplete mastery and ignorance of rule restrictions seemed to be other possible factors contributing to the occurrences of such errors.

Of the 20 types of lexical errors identified in the present study, the formal mis-selection of words was the most problematic error category, closely followed by near synonym, borrowing, calque and vowel-based type. It was found that unlike the syntactical errors, the lexical errors detected in this study seem to have a number of characteristics. First, their occurrence seemed to be less frequent than that of syntactical errors. Second, most of them did not seem to bear traces of first language structures but intralingual errors. That is, a large amount of lexical errors were due to the inadequate application of English rules, incomplete mastery, and/or carelessness. However, in some types of errors such as borrowing and calque, the main source of error was negative transfer, in which the influence of Turkish seemed to be relatively high.

Apart from the descriptive analysis of syntactical and lexical errors, a statistical analysis was conducted to study the direction and the strength of the relationship between the type of writing prompt and the number of syntactical and lexical errors. The results showed that the type of writing prompt, whether it was personal, descriptive or narrative, seemed to have had an effect on the frequency of occurrence of syntactical and lexical errors in the sample writings. Apparently, the degree of difficulty and familiarity with the writing prompts played an important role in helping the students to write better, even sometimes error free, compositions.
With regard to the correlation between syntactical accuracy and holistic quality of sample writings, a low negative correlation was found between the holistic scores and the frequency of syntactical errors. Considering this, it can be claimed that the holistic scores of the quality of the compositions of these Turkish EFL college students were independent from the frequency of syntactical errors. Similarly, the holistic scores were found not to be associated with the frequency of lexical errors, as suggested by the low negative correlation. According to these results, making less lexical errors did not seem to correlate with getting high writing scores on these compositions. As anticipated, when these two error types, syntactical and lexical, were examined together, the correlation was found to be slightly higher than those of syntactical errors variable and lexical errors variable, separately. This result underlines that as the frequency of syntactical and lexical errors decreased, the quality of the compositions seem to have increased. Although the correlation findings of the current study do not allow causal conclusions about the relationship between the frequency of errors, whether they be syntactical, lexical or the two categories together, and the writing quality, it can be concluded that they contribute to an understanding about forming well-structured sentences and using proper vocabulary is very important.
5.4: Pedagogical Implications

The present study has several pedagogical implications for teaching EFL writing courses, particularly in the Turkish EFL context. Some major implications are as follows:

1. Even though the Turkish college students in the present study had been studying English for many years since secondary school, they still had problems with forming simple, error-free paragraphs and sentences. Most of the essays written by these particular students included numerous syntactical errors. As the results of this study showed, the root of the syntactical errors may be primarily traceable to the Turkish language. Therefore, EFL teachers should realize that beginner-level students may tend to rely on their mother tongue when attempting to internalize the newly-learned structures. In turn, they may transfer habits from their first language into the target language. EFL teachers should be aware of the similarities and differences between Turkish and English which, in turn, ultimately will help facilitate learning by providing students with more appropriate activities.

More specifically, prepositions, articles, singular/plural nouns, tenses, pronouns and s-v agreement were found to be problematic for Turkish students in these written compositions. Teachers therefore should initially design and implement activities which particularly focus on these problematic areas of the English language. For instance, teachers may make use of an ‘error hunter’ activity in which students are divided into pairs or small groups and given a list of sentences including errors committed by the
students themselves. Then, they could be required to identify errors and then correct them. In this way, error correction can turn into an interesting activity which includes all the students in the class, and it also gives the students the chance to learn from their own errors as well as from those of their peers.

2. The present study also showed that the Turkish EFL college students seemed to have had difficulty in spelling of the words and choosing correct lexical item among a set of synonyms. For example, most of the mis-selection errors occurred due to the failure of the students to realize the corresponding patterns between sounds and letters in English, and also perhaps because of a lack of experience by the students with reading and writing words in English. Thus, EFL teachers should pay attention to spelling problems. They might ask their students to read newspapers, short stories, and short novels as to acquire familiarity with the English word structures. As a solution to near-synonym problems, teachers may ask their students use monolingual dictionaries of synonyms and may also encourage them to use corpora to raise students awareness of collocations. It might even be useful for students to recite and read aloud in English the most common collocations and phrasal verbs in order to get accustomed to the words pairs that they usually go together in English. Furthermore, EFL instructors might teach lexical items in context with numerous examples and try to warn the student not to transfer culturally-related concepts from their native language into target language or vice versa.

3. Along with helping students improve English spelling, EFL teachers should also be careful in selecting the types and the degree of difficulty of the writing activities as the
results suggested that the type of writing prompts (e.g., personal, narrative) may have an effect on the frequency of errors. Compatible with Krashen’s ‘comprehensible input hypothesis’ and Gardner’s ‘multiple intelligence theory’, the order of the activities should be from easy to difficult which should enable students to improve their threshold knowledge to gradually, in a linear way, write compositions. EFL teachers might utilize description and narration for initial writing activities which should also be followed by exposition, evaluation and argumentation activities.

4. EFL teachers should also realize that focusing on syntactical features and lexical items alone will not guarantee an improvement of English language writing quality. For this reason, writing instruction should perhaps address broader areas including organization, development of ideas, voice and style, and written conventions. Students might also be taught to gain awareness of the possible differences between first language writing patterns (e.g., the organization of the ideas) and target language writing patterns.

5.5: Limitations

There are several caveats in this study mainly related to the nature of a correlational analysis study. The first major limitation concerns the sample. All of the compositions in the present study were collected from students of same nation (Turkey) and same instructional level (college/university). Thus, the findings of this study may not be generalizable to other groups of EFL learners at different levels other than beginner level or in other settings in other countries.
The second limitation was that only two variables, syntactical and lexical errors, were investigated to examine the relationships between these two error types and holistic scoring of Turkish EFL student writing. Furthermore, the study included only one rater to judge the quality of compositions written by these Turkish students. Thus, the present study might have involved some subjective judgment in identifying and describing errors in the compositions. The present study also used only one assessment instrument to judge the quality of the sample compositions. It is likely that using multiple assessment methods could have generated different results.

5.6: Recommendations for Future Study

Based on the findings of this study, future research should focus on the following areas.

1. This study could be improved upon by being replicated with students of different levels and also with a more diverse composition sample. A study with different levels of writing proficiency may support the claims of the present study and might give a broader picture of the influence of errors on the quality of Turkish EFL student writing.

2. This study investigated the quality of writing in terms of only two variables, syntactical and lexical errors. It would be interesting to add other variables to this type of research. Therefore, future studies are needed to research how other elements of writing, such as coherence, cohesion, planning, organization might also play a role in the quality of EFL students’ essays.
3. It would be beneficial to employ multiple raters in a similar study because a larger number of raters would increase the reliability of the research. In addition, raters who participate in the study need to be trained in the assessment method(s) to determine what constitutes an error, what category it belongs to, and also to discuss the possible sources of that particular error. Different raters may assign different scores to the same essay, if they are not previously trained and are not experienced enough. Further, this research problem worsens when error analysis is carried without the inclusion a native speaker of English. Therefore, native speaker raters should also be definitely involved in future research for this type.

4. Using another assessment instrument in addition to a holistic scale, such as an analytic scale, may also result in different descriptions of the relationships between syntactical errors, lexical errors, and the overall analytic score of the quality of the compositions. This use of multiple rating scales could strengthen the conclusions to be drawn in further research.

5. Considering these four points, multiple raters, different variables, diverse sample and multiple rating scales (holistic and analytic scales), a new study investigating the use of English corpus in second language classroom can be carried out. For example, Turkish college students’ perspectives on toward the use of English corpus as a tool to decrease the frequency of composition errors might be examined in future research.
REFERENCES


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Appendix A

Writing Prompts

Writing Prompt 1: Describe yourself and your family briefly?

Please write a composition describing yourself and your family (e.g., how many brothers or sisters do you have? where do they live? what do they look like? what type of work do they do?) Your compositions should be at least 75-100 words in length!

Writing Prompt 2: Describe your typical day?

Please write a composition describing your typical day starting from morning until night (e.g., when do you usually get up? what do you have for breakfast? when do you go to school? when do you get home? what do you do after school? when do you go to bed?) Your compositions should be at least 75-100 words in length!

Writing Prompt 3: What did you do in the summer holiday?

Please write a composition about your last summer holiday (e.g., where did you go? what did you do there? did you enjoy it?) Do not forget to use the past tense. Your compositions should be at least 75-100 words in length!
Appendix B

Holistic Scoring Rubric for Writing

Score 5:
• Addresses the prompt thoroughly
• Ideas are expressed in a clear and organized way
• Uses transitional words/phrases effectively
• Sentences length, structure and complexity is varied
• Uses a variety of vocabulary appropriate for the prompt
• Has few if any errors (1-2 errors) in grammar or spelling

Score 4:
• Addresses the prompt properly
• Ideas are expressed in a clear manner, but organization needs some work
• Sentences are mostly complete and well-constructed
• Uses appropriate vocabulary for the prompt
• Has a few errors (3-4 errors) in grammar or spelling

Score 3:
• Addresses the prompt but may contain few unrelated details
• Ideas are generally organized, but are not very clear
• Some sentences are not complete and well-constructed (few fragments or run-ons)
• Word choice is appropriate but sometimes limited
• Has some errors (5-6 errors) in grammar or spelling
Score 2:
• Addresses the prompt but may contain some unrelated details
• Some sentences are fragmented, run-on or confusing
• Structures are limited in variety
• Some words/phrases are overused
• Has many errors (7-8 errors) in grammar or spelling

Score 1:
• Sentences are mostly fragments or run-ons
• Words and structures are repetitive and are usually copied from a model
• May use native language
• Has persistent and many errors (more than 8 errors) in grammar or spelling
Appendix C
Sample Compositions

Sample compositions of students. One composition per writing prompt is given below to give readers a rough idea of how students write for each prompt. To maintain their originality, no editing is done.

A paper with a score of 5

My name is YYY. I have got a small family. My parents live in Ankara. My father’s name is XXX. He is 44 years old. He has got short straight black hair. He has got brown eyes. His birthday is on the 21th of August.

My mother’s name is YYY. She is a housewife. She has got long curly dark hair and black eyes. She is 42 years old. My mother’s birthday is on the second of February.

I have got a sister and a brother. They are both students. My sister is 19 years old. My sister’s birthday is on the fourth of April. She has got blue eyes and long wavy fair blonde hair. She is tall and slim. She has got a lot of bracelets. My brother is 14 years old. My brother’s birthday is on the twenty first of August. He is pretty tall and very slim. He has got short straight black hair and big hazel eyes.
I’m YYY. This summer, I went to Antalya with my friends. We stayed in a big hotel. The hotel was wonderful. There were a lot of tourists in Antalya. We stayed three days, but enjoyed it very well. First day, we went to the beach. The sun was shining brightly, the beach was beautiful, and the sea was great. The weather was very hot, so I swam a lot. I played beach volleyball with my friends. And then, I did jet-ski. It was very exciting and enjoyable. After we tripped to Antalya bazaar. There were beautiful jewelleries in there. I bought gifts for my friends. We went back to the hotel and had dinner and then went to disco. I could dance and karaoke with my friends. One day later, we visited historical places like Olympus. We took a lot of photos with tourists and I met a friend. Last day, I ran on the beach after I swam. I had a beautiful memory of my friends in Antalya. I love Antalya. Maybe, I can come here again.

I get up at seven o’clock every day. I don’t usually eat much in the morning. I have a little breakfast, some coffee, bread and cheese. I leave home at 8:00 and catch the school bus. It is usually too crowded in the mornings. School starts at 8:30. One lesson lasts 45 minutes and then we talk 10 minutes break. I have 2 courses each day except Friday. I have only one course. We finish school at 2:00. I have lunch in school canteen.

After lunch, I sometimes have a rest at an empty class for 20 minutes. At home, I start doing something for next day’s school. I do my homework and prepare the next day
assignments. Sometimes after lessons, I watch TV news, but I sometimes play computer games and listen to music. I generally go to the bed at about 1:00.

A paper with a score of 1

I half past six get up early. I dress on self jeans and t-shirt. I start to depart at 6.30 get washed. have breakfast me 07.20. Usually drink tea. I to do hair. We have goto school bus together at 7.40 and my friends for school. Lessons starting at 8.00 and until five. I have lunch at 11.30 o’clock. I eat at a cofeteria with my friends. I have dinner together with my family. Than, I travels my car evening. I sleeping half past eleven o’clock.

A paper with a score of 1

I have got a small family my father, my mother, my sister an, my family live in XXX. My father name XXX. My mother name YYY. My father short and weak. My mother very good cook. My father 43 years old. My mother 35 years old.

I have got 4 brothers and a sister. My father fermer. My fathers job is a butcher. He has got green eyes. She has got black eyes. His brothday is June. She housewife. She middle age. She brothday is September.
My friend is working on Paris. Than I visited him last summer. We are so many place see in there. Especially Eiffel tower. Eiffel tower is very big and very dangerous looking. But the tower is very safety. France people are don’t be insult. They are really argu. And they don’t help us, if we didn’t speak French. However, I’m enjoying all time in France. Watch France in the window on plane. The country looking good. Their foods, I don’t like it but delicious smells.