



| Research Article / Araştırma Makalesi |

## Investigating Syntactic and Morphological Differences in the Written Productions of Turkish Learners Based on the Learning Context

### Türkçe Öğrenenlerin Yazılı Üretimlerindeki Sözdizimsel ve Morfolojik Farklılıkların Öğrenme Ortamına Göre İncelenmesi<sup>1</sup>

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- 1.Turkish language learning
- 2.Written production
- 3.Contextual variables
- 4.Syntactic errors
- 5.Morphological errors

#### Anahtar Kelimeler

- 1.Türkçe öğrenimi
- 2.Yazılı üretim
- 3.Bağlamsal değişkenler
- 4.Sözdizimsel hatalar
- 5.Morfolojik hatalar

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#### Abstract

*Purpose:* The aim of this study is to investigate the potential impact of the learning context on learners' written production. Comparing the syntactic and morphological errors, the study tries to find out whether there are differences between written language productions of learners learning Turkish in Turkey and the ones outside the target community.

*Design/Methodology/Approach:* Following descriptive research method, the study adopted qualitative design through systematic content analysis to analyse the data gathered from 78 learners of Turkish at A2 proficiency level, in Turkey (N=42) and outside of Turkey (N=36). The statistical analyses were then carried out to identify the ratios and the categorical distributions of errors determined through error analysis.

*Findings:* The results reveal that learning a language in the target context impacts writing performances significantly at syntactic and morphological level. Based on the findings, instructional implications are provided to enhance effective language input.

*Highlights:* Writing, an important and functional skill in multiple domains, is one of the most challenging skills to master and requires receive sufficient and meaningful authentic language input. As Turkish possesses distinct characteristics compared to Germanic or Semitic Languages, learners of Turkish have additional challenges at language production level. Learners of Turkish display significant differences in the types of syntactic and morphological errors in their writing depending on their learning contexts. The learning context has impacts on the writing productions of learners. The results suggest that educators and program developers in the field of Turkish Language teaching need to consider the role of the context in learning a foreign language while incorporating the special linguistic characteristics of Turkish in designing their teaching programs, materials and lessons.

#### Öz

*Çalışmanın amacı:* Bu çalışma, öğrenme ortamının öğrencilerin yazılı üretimi üzerindeki potansiyel etkisini araştırmayı amaçlamaktadır. Çalışma, sözdizimsel ve morfolojik hataları karşılaştırarak, Türkiye'de Türkçe öğrenenlerin yazılı dil üretimleri ile Türkiye dışındaki bir ülkede öğrenenler arasında farklılıklar olup olmadığını ortaya koymaya çalışmaktadır.

*Materyal ve Yöntem:* Araştırmada, betimsel araştırma yöntemi benimsenerek, Türkiye'de (N=42) ve Türkiye dışında (N=36) A2 yeterli düzeyindeki 78 Türkçe öğrencisinden toplanan verilerin analizi için sistematik içerik analizi yoluyla nitel tasarım benimsenmiştir. Daha sonra hata analizi ile belirlenen hataların oranlarını ve kategorik dağılımlarını belirlemek için istatistiksel analizler yapılmıştır.

*Bulgular:* Sonuçlar, bir dili hedef bağlamda öğrenmenin sözdizimsel ve morfolojik düzeyde yazma performanslarını önemli ölçüde etkilediğini ortaya koymaktadır. Bulgulara dayanarak, etkili dil girdisini geliştirmek için öğretimsel sonuçlar sağlanmıştır.

*Önemli Vurgular:* Birçok alanda önemli ve işlevsel bir beceri olan yazma, ustalaşılması en zor becerilerden biridir ve yeterli ve anlamlı otantik dil girdisi almayı gerektirir. Türkçe, German veya Sami dillerine kıyasla farklı özelliklere sahip olduğundan, Türkçe öğrenenler dil üretimi düzeyinde ek zorluklarla karşılaşır. Türkçe öğrenenler, Türkçe'yi nerede öğrendiklerine bağlı olarak yazılarındaki sözdizimsel ve morfolojik hata türlerinde önemli farklılıklar gösterirler. Öğrenme ortamının öğrencilerin yazma üretimleri üzerinde etkileri vardır. Sonuçlar, Türkçe öğretimi alanındaki eğitimcilerin ve program geliştiricilerin, öğretim programlarını, materyallerini ve derslerini tasarlarken Türkçenin özel dilbilimsel özelliklerini dahil ederken, yabancı bir dil öğrenmede ortamın rolünü göz önünde bulundurmaları gerektiğini göstermektedir.

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## INTRODUCTION

There has been an upward trend in teaching Turkish as a foreign language in recent years (Akcaoğlu, 2018; Arslanyılmaz, 2013; Atak & Çetin, 2016; Ekmekçi, 2016; Kara, 2010). As the seventh most frequently spoken language in the world, it has been reported that there is also a growing demand for non-Turkish citizens to learn Turkish (Balibey, 2010). Although Turkish is spoken mainly by the Turks in Europe, the fact that the Turkish channels are being watched in many countries in the world enables Turks to maintain their Turkish and is an important factor that also encourages non-Turkish citizens to learn Turkish. Today, Turkish is taught by various public and private institutions, Turcology Centers, and at Turkish Teaching Schools (TTS) at universities in Turkey. Among these institutions, Yunus Emre Institution has over 2,000 Turkish Cultural centers around the globe and is one of the leading institutions that provides pedagogical guidelines, teaching, and evaluation resources for teaching Turkish as a foreign language (Boylu, 2014).

However, research in the field has frequently reported the significant lack of teaching resources in general such as up-to-date and diversified teaching materials, pedagogical guidelines, online resources, or supporting resources for evaluation and assessment (Altinkamiş & Ağırdağ, 2014; Cerci, Derman & Bardakçı, 2016; Göçer, Tabak & Coşkun, 2012; Kara, 2010) as well as the paucity of empirical research in this area that could provide pedagogical implications. In addition, considering that Turkish possesses distinct characteristics compared to Germanic or Semitic Languages, learners of Turkish have been reported to have different challenges at production level, particularly in their writing performances (Genç, 2017; Kara, 2010; Sonkaya, 2019). The present study, in this respect, aims to explore learners' errors in terms of syntax and morphology. In particular, it aims to investigate the potential impact of the learning context on the writing performances of the learners in Turkey (LITR) who could obtain authentic language input outside the educational contexts in their daily lives and in a non-Turkish context (LOOTR) who are to a large extent limited to the language input within the educational contexts. The specific research questions of the study are as follows:

1. What are the most common errors of learners of Turkish in their writing performances?
2. Do the common syntactic and morphological errors of learners differ depending on the context of learning, in Turkey and out of Turkey?

### Main Features of Turkish Language

In terms of source, the main language families in the world are: a) Ural-Altai Language Family (e.g., Hungarian, Finnish, Turkish, Japanese); b) Indo-European (Indo-Germanic) Language Family (e.g., Greek, Armenian, English, German, Russian, Bulgarian, French, Spanish, Persian, Hindi, Latvian); c) Sino-Tibetan Language Family (e.g., Chinese (Mandarin), Vietnamese, Cantonese, Tibetan, Burmese, Thai); d) Hami-Semitic Language Family (e.g., Arabic, Hebrew, Abyssinian, Syriac, Akkadian); and e) Bantu Language Family (e.g., African languages) (Ercilasun, 2013).

Typologically, on the other hand, world languages are divided into three: a) Monosyllabic (isolating / analytic) languages; b) Agglutinating languages; c) Inflectional / fusional languages (Ercilasun, 2013; Özkan & Musa, 2004). Monosyllabic languages do not have inflectional suffixes. Sentences are made up of single syllable words. The meaning is expressed according to the place of the words in the sentence or their relation to each other. The meaning at the articulation level is revealed by the intonation of words and their combination with each other. The most important representative of this group is Chinese. Tibetan, Burmese, Thai, Vietnamese, some African languages, and Basque in Europe are monosyllabic languages (Ercilasun, 2013). In inflected languages, the root of the word is changed with the reproach called ablaut (internal change), or inflection occurs with the vowel change. For example, sing-sang-sung verb conjugation in English or ketaba (wrote), kutibe (written), kitab (book) in Arabic, which can be regarded as the most typical example of inflected languages. Indo-European languages (English, German, French, Persian, Hindi) are also included in this group. As for agglutinative languages, the affixes that are added to the words determine the meaning. They can be added to the beginning (prefix), to the end (suffix), or to the middle (infix) of words. The best example for this group is Turkish along with some other Altaic languages (Mongolian, Manchu-Tungus, Japanese), Uralic languages (Finnish, Hungarian, Samoyed) and some African languages.

Turkish, which belongs to the Altay branch of the Ural-Altai linguistic family, possesses different linguistic characteristics when compared to the languages spoken in Europe or Asia from other language families. (Barın, 2004; Ercilasun, 2013). Syntactically, among the six different sentence structures in the world languages (i.e., SVO, SOV, VSO, VOS, OVS, OSV), Turkish has the form of SOV, that is, subject-object-verb (Ercilasun 2013). Also, the order of clauses in complex sentences in Turkish is fixed, which is head-final (Özgen & Koşaner, 2020). That is, while the order of dependent and independent clauses may change in some languages, the dependent clause is always at the beginning and the main clause is placed at the end in Turkish (Karaağaç, 2009). Another distinctive feature of Turkish syntax is in the structure of the phrases. While the head of the phrase is at the beginning in Indo-European and Semitic languages (e.g., the man who opened the bottle), Turkish has head-final parameter (e.g., *şişeyi açan adam* [*opened the bottle who the man*]).

Morphologically, Turkish is an agglutinative language, which uses affixes to form morphological structures, specifically suffixes (post-positional). Thus, Turkish word forms have a mathematical structure. In this mathematical system, the root of the word remains constant in all cases, and the inflectional and/or derivational suffixes can be easily distinguished from the root

(Arslanoğlu, 2016). The affixes in Turkish may indicate either the grammatical function of the word or be used to create new words or both. Almost all the grammatical functions embedded in a word in relation to the sentence that it is used in are signalled by affixes: person, tense, case, interrogation, copula 'be', plurality, etc (Göksel & Kerslake, 2000; Yavuz, Balcı & Turan, 2000). The extensive use of affixes can easily yield to extremely long words, e.g., Bayramlaşamadıklarımız (Lewis, 2001, p.287) [*Those with whom we could not exchange greetings for the bairam (religious fest)*].

Furthermore, some phonological characteristics of Turkish language are reflected in its morphological structure. Although Turkish is a phonetic language (i.e., each sound is represented with a single letter; and thus, they are written as they are read), it also has strict phonetic harmony rules. For example, the use of suffixes must follow vowel and consonant harmony rules in Turkish (For more detailed information, check <https://www.tdk.gov.tr/icerik/yazim-kurallari/buyuk-unlu-uyumu/>). These rules require specific changes in the letters of the suffixes or of the root (e.g., kitap-lar [book-s] but ev-ler [house-s]). There are also some special letters in the Turkish alphabet (ç,ş,ğ,ı,ö,ü) that are not found in other languages, which usually have very high frequencies in the spelling errors of learners of Turkish.

## METHOD

The study adopted descriptive research method and followed qualitative design through systematic content analysis to analyse the data gathered from the participant learners of Turkish. As content analysis allows researchers to analyse the data qualitatively as well as to quantify the data (Sandelowski, 2010; Vaismoradi, Turunen, & Bondas, 2013), the statistical analyses were carried out to identify the ratios and the categorical distributions of errors determined through error analysis.

### Participants

The data for the study was gathered from 78 learners of Turkish. Among these, 42 (53.8%) of the learners were learning Turkish in four different cities in Turkey (namely, Amasya, Bilecik, and Balıkesir). While 27 (64.2%) of the LITR group were comprised of female learners, 15 (35.7%) of them were males. As for the learners who were learning Turkish out of Turkey, the number was 36 (46.1%). Residing in four different countries (i.e., Belgium, England, France, and Germany), the LOOTR group of Turkish learners consisted of 27 (75%) females and 9 (25%) male learners. The age of the learners in both groups varied between 17 and 28. All learners were at A2 Turkish proficiency level at the time of the study.

## DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

The data gathered for the study was descriptively analysed following systematic content analysis method, which is broadly defined as "a compiled scientific method where written materials are analysed systematically, and then, grouped based on specific criteria in order to make information obtained available and finally, to provide a ground for future research" (Dinçer, 2018, p.177). Accordingly, the writing performances of the participant learners were first read by the two researchers for systematic coding. The analysis process followed these specific steps: First, all the paragraphs were read separately by the two researchers to identify a) the quantity of the total words used; b) the quantity of the errors made. Secondly, the paragraphs were analysed separately by the two researchers in order to determine error types and quantities. Third, the categories of error types found in the participant learners' performances were set by the two researchers. And finally, the emerging error categories and their frequencies were crosschecked. The results of the analyses by the two researchers were compared for consistency until consensus was reached.

**Table 1. Overview of the Sentences Used in the Participant Learners' Writings\***

	Sentences by LITR Group		Sentences by LOOTR Group		Total	
	F	%	F	%	F	%
<b>Sentences without any errors</b>	337	42.2	324	42.8	661	100
<b>Sentences with errors**</b>	461	57.7	432	57.1	893	100
<b>Total</b>	798	100	756	100	1554	100

\*The number of the sentences were determined based on a) punctuation markers such as full stop, question mark, etc; b) capitalization used for the first letter of the first word. The phrases or word groups that did not have any clear indication were excluded from the sentence count.

\*\*The sentences that had a minimum one error were counted in this group.

As Table 1 shows, the number of sentences used in the paragraphs of the learners in Turkey is higher than the number for the learners out of Turkey (M=798 and 756, respectively). Similarly, the number of the total word count for the learners in Turkey (M=4368 words) was also higher than the word count of the writings from out of Turkey (M= 4032). As for the rates for the total errors, it can be seen that both groups displayed almost the same percentages (57.7% and 57.1%, respectively). Table 2 displays the results for the main categories of the errors identified in both groups.

**Table 2. The Results for the Main Categories of the Errors for Both Groups**

	LITR Group		LOOTR Group		Total	
	F	%	F	%	F	%
<b>Syntax Errors</b>	58	12.5	71	16.4	129	14.4
<b>Morphological Errors</b>	150	32.5	227	52.5	377	42.2
<b>Spelling Errors</b>	253	54.8	134	31	387	43.3
<b>Total</b>	461	100	432	100	893	100

When the total numbers of errors based on the main categories are analysed, it is found that the highest frequency of errors for both groups belong to spelling (43.3 %), which is followed by morphological errors (42.2 %). Errors of syntax were found to have the lowest rates for both groups (12.5 % and 16.4 %, respectively). However, when each group is considered separately, the results indicate that the highest rate for learners in Turkey is spelling errors (54.8 %) whereas the learners out of Turkey has the highest rate for morphological errors (52.5 %). Table 3 presents more detailed information on the syntax errors by both groups.

**Table 3. The Types of the Syntactic Errors by Learners**

	LITR Group		LOOTR Group		Total	
	F	%	F	%	F	%
<b>Sentence Word Order: Simple sentences</b>	31	53.4	71	100	102	79
<b>Sentence Word Order: Compound &amp; Complex sentences</b>	15	25.8	-	-	15	11.6
<b>Noun &amp; Adjective Compounds</b>	12	20.6	-	-	12	9.3
<b>Total</b>	58	100	71	100	129	100

The results for syntactic errors indicate that the most frequent error type was related to the word order in simple sentences for both groups (79 %). However, it is interesting to find out that all the syntax errors made by the LOOTR group were word order errors in simple sentences while LITR group also had word order errors in their complex and compound sentences and in their noun or adjective compounds (25.8 % and 20.6 %, respectively), though less frequent. The reason for this finding is that there were much fewer compound and complex sentences in the writing performances of LOOTR group. They also used noun and adjective compounds much less frequently when compared to LITR group. The following excerpts exemplify erroneous word order use by both groups:

**Table 4. Samples of erroneous use of word order in simple sentences**

	LITR	LOOTR
<b>Excerpts</b>	Ben düşünüyorum Turk vatandaş olmak	Bazen basketbol oynuyorum arkadaşım ile.
<b>Corrected Version</b>	Ben Türk vatandaşı olmayı düşünüyorum. [I am thinking of becoming Turkish citizen.]	Bazen arkadaşım ile basketbol oynuyorum. [I sometimes play basketball with my friend.]
<b>Excerpts</b>	Hafta sonları futbol ve basketbol arkadaşım ile oynuyorum.	Koşuyorum parkta her sabah.
<b>Corrected Version</b>	Hafta sonları arkadaşım ile futbol ve basketbol oynuyorum. [I play football and basketball with my friends at the weekends.]	(Ben) parkta her sabah koşuyorum. [I run in the park every morning.]
<b>Excerpts</b>	Ama ben çok özlüyorum senin yemekler.	Dinliyoruz Türk muzik her zaman.
<b>Corrected Version</b>	Ama ben yemeklerini çok özlüyorum. [But I miss your food a lot.]	(Biz) Her zaman Türk müziği dinliyoruz. [We always listen to Turkish music.]

**Table 5. Samples of erroneous use of word order in compound and complex sentences**

	LITR
<b>Excerpt</b>	Sonra yatağa gidiyorum için sabah erken kalkacağım.
<b>Corrected Version</b>	Sonra sabah erken kalkacağım için yatağa gidiyorum. [Then I go to bed as I am going to get up early.]
<b>Excerpt</b>	Ne zaman mezun olacağım düşünüyorum çünkü istiyorum işe başlamak hemen.
<b>Corrected Version</b>	Ne zaman mezun olacağım diye düşünüyorum çünkü hemen işe başlamak istiyorum. [I think about when I will graduate because I want to start work as soon as possible.]

## LITR

<b>Excerpt</b>	Haftasonu arkadaşlarımla müzeye giderim için iyi vakit geçirmek.
<b>Corrected Version</b>	Haftasonu iyi vakit geçirmek için arkadaşlarımla müzeye giderim. [I go to the museum with my friends at the weekends to have nice time.]

Table 6. Samples of erroneous use of word order in noun and adjective compounds

## LITR

<b>Excerpt</b>	Bu bir Türkiye'deki güzel yemekler.
<b>Corrected Version</b>	Bu, Türkiye'deki güzel yemeklerden biri. [This is one of the delicious meals in Turkey.]
<b>Excerpt</b>	Onlar farklı bir güzel insanlar.
<b>Corrected Version</b>	Onlar farklı güzel insanlar. [They are different nice people.]
<b>Excerpt</b>	Sınıfta öğrenciler ülken Africada.
<b>Corrected Version</b>	Sınıftaki öğrencilerin ülkesi Afrika. [The country of the students in the classroom is Africa.]

Table 7 presents more detailed information on the morphology errors by both groups.

Table 7. The types of the Morphological Errors by two groups of learners

	LITR Group		LOOTR Group		Total	
	F	%	F	%	F	%
<b>Case Markers in Nouns</b>	89	59.3	108	47.5	197	52.2
<b>Subject-Verb Agreement (Person Marker)</b>	22	14.6	53	23.3	75	19.8
<b>Possessives</b>	20	13.3	31	13.6	51	13.5
<b>Plurality in Nouns</b>	19	12.6	-	-	19	5
<b>Interrogation</b>	-	-	24	10.5	24	6.3
<b>Negation</b>	-	-	11	4.8	11	2.9
<b>Total</b>	150	100	227	100	377	100

Considering morphological errors, the results reveal that errors related to case markers had the highest frequencies for both groups (59.3 % for LITR and 47.5 % for LOOTR). For LITR group, the second highest rate belongs to errors in the use of person markers in predicates (14.6 %), which was followed by the errors in the use of possessives and plurality in nouns (13.3 % and 12.6 %, respectively). There were no errors in the use of suffixes for interrogation or negation for LITR group. As for LOOTR group, the second highest rate of errors were also found in the use of person markers in predicates (23.3 %), though slightly higher than that of LITR group's, and in the use of suffixes for possessives (13.6 %). Different from LITR group, LOOTR groups' writing texts displayed errors in the use of suffixes for interrogation and negation (10.5 % and 4.8 %, respectively). Yet, there were no errors found in the use of plurality markers for LOOTR group.

Table 8. Samples of erroneous use of case markers

	LITR	LOOTR
<b>Excerpts</b>	Neyi inanıyorsun?	Babam çok seviyorum.
<b>Corrected Version</b>	Neye inanıyorsun? [What do you believe in?]	Babamı çok seviyorum. [I like my father very much.]
<b>Excerpts</b>	Senin ellerinde öpüyorum.	Sınıf çiçek ve bitki yok.
<b>Corrected Version</b>	Senin ellerinden öpüyorum. [I kiss your hands.]	Sınıfta çiçek ve bitki yok. [There are no flowers or plants in the classroom.]
<b>Excerpts</b>	Ben Balıkesir'e çok seviyorum.	Okula kapalı Cumartesi.
<b>Corrected Version</b>	Ben Balıkesir'i çok seviyorum. [I like Balıkesir very much.]	Okul Cumartesi günü(günleri) kapalı. [The school is closed on Saturday(s).]
<b>Excerpts</b>	Benim Samsun gideceğim.	Öğretmen konuşanları kızıyor.
<b>Corrected Version</b>	Ben Samsun'a gideceğim. [I will go to Samsun.]	Öğretmen konuşanlara kızıyor. [The teacher gets angry with students who make noise in (disrupt) the lesson.]

Table 9. Samples of erroneous use of person markers

	LITR	LOOTR
Excerpts	Ben biraz iyi.	Ben burada çok üzgün.
Corrected Version	Ben biraz (daha) iyiyim. [I am fine (better) here.]	Ben burada çok üzgünüm. [I am very sad here.]
Excerpts	Siz biraz kendini anlat.	Sen sınıfta mı?
Corrected Version	Sen biraz kendini anlat. [Talk about yourself a little.]	Sen sınıfta mısın? [Are you in the class?]
Excerpts	Ama biz mont aldınız.	Siz araba kullanıyor
Corrected Version	Ama biz mont aldık. [But we bought a coat.]	Siz araba kullanıyorsunuz. [You are driving a car.]
Excerpts	Kardeşlerimi çok çok özledim ve çok çok seviyorlar.	Yeni evimizin çok hoşuma gidiyoruz.
Corrected Version	Kardeşlerimi çok çok özledim ve onları çok çok seviyorum. [I miss my siblings a lot and I love them very very much.]	Yeni evimiz çok hoşuma gidiyor. [I like our new apartment a lot.]

Table 10. Samples of erroneous use of possessive, plurality, interrogation, and negation markers

	LITR	LOOTR
Excerpts for Possessive	Arkadaş isim Samha.	Ben iki çocuğu var.
Corrected Version	Arkadaşımın ismi Samha. [My friend's name is Samha.]	Benim iki çocuğum var. [I have two children.]
Excerpts for Plurality	Dersimlerim biraz zor.	N/A
Corrected Version	Derslerim biraz zor. [My lessons are a bit hard.]	
Excerpts for Interrogation	N/A	Türk kahvesi seversin mi?
Corrected Version		Türk kahvesi sever misin? [Do you like Turkish coffee?]
Excerpts for Negation	N/A	Hiçbir zaman televizyon izliyorum.
Corrected Version		(Ben) Hiçbir zaman televizyon izlemiyorum. [I never watch TV.]

Although erroneous spelling is not within the scope of the present study, it should be briefly reminded that spelling errors constitute the highest rate of errors as well when the two groups are considered collectively (43.3 %). However, these rates comprise different sizes within each group (LITR=54.8 % and LOOTR=31 %). While spelling errors covered over half of the total errors for LITR group, only one-third of the errors were spelling related for LOOTR group. This implies that learners in LITR group made more spelling errors compared to the ones in LOOTR group. Table 11 displays some examples of the most frequent spelling errors made by both groups.

Table 11. Samples of erroneous use of spelling

Error Type	Errors by LITR Group	Errors by LOOTR Group
Excerpts for Vowels	Şehir	ayleme
Corrected Version	Şehir [city]	Aileme [to my family]
Excerpts for Vowel harmony	Türkiye'daki	... yapacak musun?
Corrected Version	Türkiye'deki [the one in Turkey]	... yapacak mısın? [Will you do/make?]
Excerpts for Consonants	hakında	anlatım
Corrected Version	Hakkında [about/regarding]	anlattım [I explained/told]
Excerpts for Consonant Harmony	Polisden	O .... ediyor.
Corrected Version	Polisten [from the police]	O .... ediyor. [... is doing/making/having]
Excerpts for Foreign-origin words	Fotbol	Basketboll
Corrected Version	Futbol [football]	Basketbol [basketball]
Excerpts for Special Letters (ç, ş, ğ, l, ü, ö)	Taşınacayız	Açık
Corrected Version	Taşınacağız [We are going to move.]	Açık [open]

Overall, the results indicate that the two groups have similar frequencies for some type of errors while they differ significantly in other error types. Accordingly, the participant learners from both contexts have the highest frequencies in spelling errors. This rate was followed by errors at morphological level and at syntax level, respectively. Nevertheless, a closer analysis of the errors reveals that the groups differ in the frequency of erroneous use in the subcategories. For example, while both groups had similar erroneous use rates for syntax main category, LITR group seem to have more difficulty in terms of sentence structure compared to LOOTR group, who are found to be able to use compound/complex sentences only rarely. Similarly, LITR group performed better than LOOTR group with respect to interrogation and negation markers whereas they had more frequent errors for plurality markers.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The present study has been conducted in order to explore the potential impact of the learning context on the writing productions of learners of Turkish in Turkey, who could obtain authentic language input outside the educational contexts in their daily lives, and on the learners' writing performances learning Turkish in a non-Turkish context, who are to a large extent limited to the language input within the educational contexts. For this purpose, the writing performances of Turkish learners in LITR and LOOTR groups at A2 level were systematically analysed and the data from these groups were compared in terms of erroneous use in terms of syntax and morphology.

Considering the first research question, the results revealed that the groups had similar frequencies in terms of the number of sentences with errors. For both groups, it has been found that spelling errors had the highest rates, though LITR group had higher frequency compared with LOOTR group. Spelling errors among the learners of Turkish has been often reported in previous studies (Büyükkız & Hasırcı, 2013; Çetinkaya, 2015; Ersoy, 1997; İnan, 2014; Yılmaz, 2015). The groups also had significant error rates in the other main categories, namely syntax and morphology. This finding has also been reported by numerous studies (Bölükbaş, 2011; Boylu, 2014; Çetin, 2022; Çetinkaya, 2015; Sonkaya, 2019).

As for the second research question, the analyses revealed differences in the rate of the errors made by the groups. The writing performances of LITR group revealed relatively lower rates of errors in the use of morphological markers while LOOTR group had lower frequencies in spelling and syntax errors. Regarding the errors at morphological level, both LITR and LOOTR groups had highest rates for errors in the use of case, person, and possessive markers. Previous studies have also pointed out to the high rates of errors in the use of such morphological markers (Çangal & Başar, 2018; Demirci & Dinçaslan, 2016; Emiroğlu, 2014; Sarıca & Od, 2015; Tuncel, 2013; Yıldırım, 2011; Yılmaz & Temiz, 2015). Yet, the two groups had significant differences in the subcategories of the morphological markers. While the learners in Turkey did not have any errors in the use of suffixes for interrogation and for negation, the learners out of Turkey had errors in the use of these markers. On the other hand, regarding plurality use in nouns, LOOTR group, contrary to LITR group, had no errors.

When the errors made at syntax level are considered, the groups showed similar results in terms of word order errors in simple sentences, which was found to be the highest frequent error type for both groups. A similar result has been reported in previous research (Ak Başıoğlu & Can, 2014; Akçaoğlu, 2018). Based on the high rates of grammar errors among the participant learners, Cetin (2022) emphasizes the need for developing and implementing methods and materials in order to better engage learners in the acquisition of grammatical features of Turkish along with their functions. In the present study, on the other hand, the group LOOTR showed significantly higher percentage of syntax errors in simple sentence word order compared to the group LITR. Although LOOTR group had no errors of word order in compound and complex sentences and in the use of noun and adjective compounds, in contrast with LITR group, this is likely due to restraining from or not trying to use compound/complex sentences as there were only two compound sentences and four noun/adjective compounds used accurately in the writings from LOOTR group.

As an important and functional skill in multiple domains, writing is considered to be one of the most challenging skills for learners to master as they need to receive sufficient and meaningful authentic language input while trying to comply with multiple linguistic features of the target language (McCutchen & Stull, 2015). The results of the present study, in this respect, may provide some implications for assisting learners of Turkish to improve their writing performances. Firstly, although it is necessary to follow the developments and recent pedagogical implications in contemporary methods and approaches in teaching other languages, it is also crucial to tailor them according to the specific conditions of Turkish language classrooms. Educators and program developers in the field of Turkish Language teaching may need to consider special linguistic characteristics of Turkish in designing their teaching programs, materials, and lessons, particularly with respect to syntactic and morphological features of Turkish. The fact that explicit grammar teaching is a highly debated issue and that it is almost completely discredited in contemporary language teaching approaches does not necessarily mean to overlook the operativeness of grammar in language. Whether implicit or explicit instruction of grammar is preferred, learners, particularly adult learners, are capable of acquiring grammatical features and functions through repeated exposures to authentic language input (Krashen, 2008). As communication-based approaches to grammar instruction highlight, grammar could be presented implicitly embedded in learning tasks and activities without necessarily focusing on form isolatedly (Batstone & Ellis, 2009; Nassaji & Fotos, 2011) or creating metalinguistic awareness (Ellis, 2009; Schmidt, 2001). For Spada and Lightbrown (1999), on the other hand, advance learners may even benefit from metalinguistic explanations and awareness of the functions of the grammatical items through their learning process.

Another important implication of the findings of the study is the role of the context in learning a foreign language. The differences found in the common errors in the writing performances of the learners learning Turkish in and out of the target language's context point out to the differing needs of the learners. Learners who learn Turkish in Turkey have better writing performance levels in using compound and complex sentences, noun and adjective compounds as well as interrogation and negation morphological forms. However, they have relatively poorer performance in the use of plurality forms and spelling. As for the learners who learn Turkish in a foreign context, it has been observed that they are better in using plurality forms and spelling. Nevertheless, they have slightly higher syntax errors and use much fewer compound/complex sentences and noun/adjective compounds in their sentences. They also have more frequent errors in the use of interrogation and negation markers. These findings may suggest that the context of learning (i.e., in or out of the target language's community) should be considered as an important variable when planning and designing language lessons based on learners' needs. As learners in the target community's context have plenty opportunities for daily language input outside of the formal learning environment, they may require more focus on accuracy in spelling, sentence structure and morphological structures. Learners outside the target community, however, may need more opportunities for authentic language input and practice. Research in the field of Turkish language teaching has also frequently reported the lack of integrating daily language use and the need for more opportunities for practice and for adopting communicative teaching methods and techniques (Çetin, 2022; Genç, 2017; Gürler, 2019). Finally, Turkish language, as any other language does, reflects a rich and comprehensive cultural presence within words, expressions, and other language items (Çetin, 2022; Genç, 2017; Uygur, 2005; Yiğit & Arslan, 2014), thus, Turkish cultural elements have to be incorporated to a great extent in the language teaching and learning programs, materials, instructions as well as tasks and activities.

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### Statements of publication ethics

We hereby declare that the study has not unethical issues and that research and publication ethics have been observed carefully. We also confirm that this work is original and has not been published elsewhere, nor is it currently under consideration for publication elsewhere.

### Researchers' contribution rate

The study was conducted and reported with equal collaboration of the researchers.

### Ethics Committee Approval Information

An application was submitted to the Amasya University Social Sciences Ethics Committee regarding the current research, and confirmation received that it was deemed ethically appropriate (decision dated 16/12/2022 and numbered 108.01-107690).

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