Mediation in writing skills and teaching Turkish as a foreign language

Gülden Tüm

Department of English Language Teaching, Çukurova University, Adana, Turkey.

ABSTRACT

Writing is the most difficult language skill to be learned and applied by learners of Turkish as a foreign language (TFL) because their native, foreign, and target language(s) might have different linguistic properties and even alphabets. Even they may come from different language families that influence TFL learners to have syntactic, lexical, and morphological problems during their writing process. Descriptor of mediating text regains importance in writing since it is beyond interpreting knowledge and is constructing meaning. In order to shed light on the problems occurring in written texts, this study focuses on mediation and possible mistakes/errors done by TFL learners in terms of alphabet, vocabulary, word order, paragraph and mechanics in addition to their perceptions for Turkish language instructors, teaching materials and assessment. This study draws attention to the importance of mediation for specific needs of TFL learners by exemplifying statements produced in Turkish. The findings reveal that foreign learners could overcome problems in case they are exposed to mediation strategies, mediating text and concepts in addition to morphological guidance at the initial stages.

Keywords: Teaching Turkish as a foreign language, writing skills, mediation.

E-mail: etomakin@hotmail.com.

INTRODUCTION

One of the most applied honorifics after speaking skills, writing serves as a system of human communication by means of conventional, agreed-upon signals that represent language. Scholars define it in several-fold: an art which requires to complete a process of collecting, analyzing and stating knowledge (Martinez, 1998: 99); a meta-cognitive activity to include an individual's particular knowledge, basic skills and competencies of multifaceted systems in a written form (Rivers, 1981); a process and a skill to activate cognitive skills to detect language rules and apply them appropriately in production (Güneş, 2014); a cognitive activity to reveal background knowledge of topic organizing lexical and syntactical parts of language (Tiryaki, 2013); a practice transferring knowledge from short-term to long-term memory and a performance of affective and cognitive aspects (Çakır, 2010); a way of reinforcing academic success (Akdemir and Eyerci, 2016; Tok, 2013; Ungan, 2007), of wording learned, experienced, and/or designed events in order to express oneself and communicate with others (Sever, 2004); a work of statements to have specific ideas written

in order (Göçer, 2010). Briefly, as a productive skill, writing is beyond one explanation and similar as speaking; nevertheless, when compared with spontaneous production of speaking skills, writing is realized through grammatical (morphology, lexicology, syntax, semantics) and mechanical (punctuation) rules (Brown, 2001). Hence, for Turkish scholars (Erol, 2016; Tok, 2013; Kara, 2010) writing skills is considered the most difficult one to improve and apply in teaching and learning Turkish as a foreign language (TFL).

Currently in Turkey, several research in TFL are conducted ranging from spelling to evaluation such as *alphabet* (Akkaya and Polat, 2013), *dictation* (Çetinkaya and Hamzadayı, 2014), *vocabulary* (Tüfekçioğlu, 2016; Kılıçarslan and Bülbül, 2016; Kana and Keskin, 2014; Uzdu-Yıldız, 2013; Özkan, 2013; Tüm, 2013), *syntax* (Şeref and Yılmaz, 2015; Tok, 2013; Temizkan, 2010; Aktaş, 2009), *grammar* (Alyılmaz and Şengül, 2017; Genç, 2017; Güven and Berber-Özmen, 2016; Kurt, 2016; Göçen and Okur, 2013), *punctuation* (Özdemir, 2013), *context* (Yılmaz, 2015), *process*

(Yıldırım and Nurlu, 2016; Fidan, 2013; Kalfa, 2014; Karatay, 2011), *methods* (Karababa and Çalışkan, 2012); *teachers* (Kalfa, 2015; Fidan, 2013; Güzel and Barın, 2013; Çifçi, 2011); *materials* (Çiftçi and Coşkun, 2017; Kılınç and Yenen, 2015; Kınay, 2015; Duman, 2013), and *assessment* (Bağcı and Başar, 2013; Tok, 2013a; Göçer, 2010). Nevertheless, several researchers elucidate that problems still appear unsolved, especially in writing; more research need to be delved into unearthed problems of writing skills. One of the main problems appears teaching of symbolic codes of Turkish letters to TFL learners because their L1 and L2 alphabets might have dissimilar or nonexistent symbols. Thus, learners fail to match them in their cognition during writing process (Kara, 2010). Anthony and Francis (2005) support this debate as phonetic/symbolic awareness has a strong relationship between reading and writing skills. In addition to alphabet, TFL learners face divergent features of languages because of linguistic dissimilarities (Erol, 2014). Even though learners might be familiar with symbols, morphological patterns in their L2, lack of contextualized input and presence of an existing conceptual difference in L1 system let them feel insufficient in full communication (Tüm, 2013). Alyılmaz and Şengül (2017, 44) underline TFL learners are adults who have knowledge and experience of putting their ideas into writing in their L1/L2. Therefore, learners should be exposed on how to utilize lexical items meaningfully rather than how to form a text in the initial stages of writing. In the same vein, Kana and Keskin (2014) prioritize lexicons and word sets whereas Uzdu-Yıldız (2013, 358-359) values existence of knowledge in vocabulary activities and emphasizes the frequency of words should be taught regarding both learning purposes and their appropriateness in society as also strongly suggested in CEFR. To Özkan (2013, 439), it is the frequency of Turkish words because they gain new meanings by derivational and inflectional affixes (i.e. *güzel* 'beautiful', *güzeldi* '**was** beautiful', *güzelsin* '**you are** beautiful', *güzeli* '**the** beautiful', *güzelce* 'beautiful**ly**', *güzellik* 'beau**ty**'). In the same vein, Tüfekcioğlu (2016, 267-286) accentuates insufficient vocabulary teaching in TFL books since they either merely include them through reading skills or give glossary at the end of units. Therefore, TFL learners have insufficient lexical skills and the hardship of using words appropriately in context. In terms of grammar, Kurt (2016, 262) believes components of grammar should be given in a gradual process to support specific knowledge in linguistics patterns considering the learners' level of proficiency, especially in writing skills. To Göçen and Okur (2013: 343), teaching grammar in TFL is different when compared to L1 teaching as Turkish is agglutinative language which is characterized by affixes attached to words to gain new meanings; hence, TFL learners should perceive these rules through constructive methods so that they could produce words effectively in a real environment. Alyılmaz

and Şengül (2017) reframe this debate changing its direction toward knowledge and competence of Turkish language instructors who teach grammar in L1 and L2; Çifçi (2011) reckons their educational background and claims they should strengthen their own writing skills so that learners could be encouraged toward advanced writing. Moreover, Tiryaki (2013) deduces these problems twofold: a) teachers' competence in writing skills and also b) their competence in communication in multinational or cross-cultural classes. Güzel and Barın (2013: 63-65) concern about the quality and criteria of TFL teachers and describe qualified teachers be reliable, patient, punctual, fair, experienced, intellectual and moderate rather than only lecturing. In the same vein, Kalfa (2015) highlights the quality of pedagogic education to be improved within collaborations of relevant administrations and TFL institutions. Upon consideration of instructional materials in TFL writing, Özdemir (2013) underscores lack of teacher's books in TFL; Kılınç and Yenen (2015) mention the ineffectiveness of visuals in TFL books; Duman (2013) highlights awareness of teachers toward the principles of materials and their appropriate selection. According to Mete and Gürsoy (2013), TFL course books lack learners' ages or needs. Erol (2016) infers that TFL learners regard materials commentated insufficient. For assessment issue, Derman (2013, 538) emphasizes assessment is not merely a tool to grade the written product, yet it requires doing analyses for each item in writing. Bağcı and Başar (2013, 329) deduce anxiety of learners who fail to produce appropriate Turkish sentences and get low grades on the tests. The other concern appears as instructors' not sharing outcomes of achievement tests with TFL learners. Fidan (2014) highlights the lack of studies carried out in TFL classrooms in terms of classroom interaction. Moreover, Çiftçi and Coşkun (2017) conduct an inclusive survey from 1923 to 2017 and accentuate writing still remains under investigation to be delved into. Within all the studies, no research on mediation a text, contexts or communication as suggested in CEFR is encountered in the field. Therefore, this current study aims to provide an insight in this matter comparing some problems observed in written products of learners whose native languages come from different language families and alphabets (Arabic/Latin/Cyrillic/Greek/Hebrew, and so on) and elucidate pedagogical aspects regarding the importance of mediation in discourse.

Theoretical background in TFL

As an analytic effort or attempt in cognitively processing a language, writing contributes to improve problem solving skills (Vygotsky, 1998, 145-146). These efforts of writing in L2 are supported by the development of several theories after the 1970s since they focused on language structures, textual functions, selection of themes/topics,

creative writing, organizing process, genre and content (Hyland, 2003, 2). In this respect, writing in L2 is a much more complicated skill than merely transferring knowledge onto a piece of paper. In other words, the relationship between thoughts and writing becomes important not only as a cognitive aspect, but also awareness and knowledge regarding linguistic and sociolinguistic skills which hide mediation in. Thus, written products of learners involve much more personal thoughts, experiences, and attitudes rather than the plain imitation of others mechanically, but properly controlled and guided writing is still the main task in teaching (Zhuang, 2007, 20). In addition, because of cultural diversities, preferences in writing styles and the restricted knowledge of the L2 code, the L1 writing skills cannot be transferred directly into L2 writing freely (Rivers, 1981, 246). Therefore, in order to stimulate cognitive skills in writing there are several factors to be taken into consideration. Göçer (2010, 179) underlines them, namely, maintaining a purpose, having concrete and rich vocabulary, thinking critically, becoming aware of richness of TL, and organizing events in an appropriate way but lacks mediation. Rivers (1981) mentions the standards of language in writing such as careful constructions, precise and varied vocabulary, correct expression in general, and the slow and reflective nature of the process of writing. Hence, bearing in mind how writing up skills individuals to express themselves effectively in a FL, the existence of distinction in writing between L1 and L2/L3 is inevitable as well. These differences cause problems such as delayed development in writing skills, limited knowledge of the language code, complications in the composition process between two languages, different attitudes toward errors, diverse needs and goals to improve writing skills and culture-based differences (Caudery, 1996, 17). In other words, some divergences always occur between the writer and the reader, the writer and the written works wherein mediation is embedded, respectively. There is no exception for TFL writing as to why it is the most difficult skill to be achieved by TFL learners (Alyılmaz and Şengül, 2017; Erol, 2016; Kurt, 2016; Tok, 2013; Bölükbaş, 2011) so is mediation as cross-cultural and mutual understanding. On the one hand, TFL learners have an acquaintance with different linguistic patterns (lexical, morphological, syntactical, semantic, mechanical forms etc) and their organization in discourse; on the other, genres with their own characteristics and styles help them understand structure and linguistic code while presenting events or thoughts in a logical order. In order to achieve the former target, cognitive processes are centralized as *selecting the theme*; *pre-writing* by collecting data, brain storming, note taking, listing, classifying, drafting etc.; *reordering* by elaborating, adding, deleting, adopting, adapting, and enriching ideas more; *modifying* unclear and ambiguous points; *evaluating the draft and editing* by reviewing ideas

in text and form; *writing* by combining data and thoughts; and *assessment* for targeted progress in writing. For the latter, gathering information about genres, utilizing it in appropriate and accurate structures, and revising the product to create the final form are necessary. Apparently, both goals are achieved through affective and cognitive aspects.

To Ellis (1999, 693), learner's *affective state* is hypothesized to influence the rate of L2 acquisition and the ultimate level of achievement, and influenced by factors such as anxiety and desire to compete; as well as several other socio-affective factors such as attitudes, willingness and motivation (Akdemir, 2016; Kaya and Akdemir, 2016). When L2 has several distinctive features compared to the formerly learned L1 or L3, there might be failure or fear to start learning L2 (Bailey 1983: see Ellis 1999, 472). For instance, *to eat/have soup* in English is expressed in the same way in Russian as 'кушать суп' as they belong to the same language family, whereas it is expressed differently as *çorba içmek* 'to drink soup' in Turkish rather than 'to have/eat soup'. The verb results from the consistency of Turkish soup to be thinner than soup from other cultures and considered as liquid to drink. Thus, it is hard for TFL learners to remember the appropriate verb for *çorba* 'soup' either 'have' or 'drink'. Hence, learners are strongly influenced in their affective state while producing this phrase and also *sigara içmek* 'to smoke cigarettes' means 'to drink cigarettes' in Turkish. There are also examples of phraseologic usages related to cultural or traditional reflections that TFL learners can hardly comprehend. To exemplify, *kurşun dökmek* 'pour lead/bullet' connotes 'to repel the evil eye' in English and 'to reflect evil eye-отражать плохие глаза' in Russian. TFL learners have subtle adjustments with this idiom when deepening intercultural understanding that leads to "bullet or missile" in warfare in mind. Additionally, the phrase, *tavşankanı çay,* 'rabbitblood tea' has the same effect on TFL learners even though it is used to express 'bright red/infused tea' in English and 'strong tea-крепкий чай' in Russian, which retain no connection to blood. This suppresses learners' motivation toward creating appropriate patterns in Turkish.

Regarding complexity and dynamic nature of learners' affective states and their ability to concentrate on learning (Ellis 1999, 479), TFL learners might also have failure in syntax structured as Subject, Verb, and Object (S+V+O) in both English and Russian, whereas it is Subject, Object, and Verb (S+O+V) in Turkish. Thus, it is very challenging to establish any sentence in Turkish for TFL learners whose L1 is English or Russian.

The following sentences (1a-1b) indicate word order of English, Russian, and (1a-1bTr) Turkish:

1a) "Ivan$_s$ smokes$_v$ cigarette$_o$." in English. [S+Ivan, V+smokes, O+cigarette]
1b) "Иван$_s$ курит$_v$ сигарету$_o$" in Russian. [S+ Иван, V+курит, O+ сигарету]

1a-1bTr) "*İvan*$_{-s}$ sigara$_{-o}$ içiyor$_{-v}$", in Turkish [S+İvan, O+sigara, V+içiyor]

Examples 1a and 1b indicate similarity in English and Russian, as they belong to Indo-European language family; English is Germanic, and Russian is Slavic, yet, Example 1a-1bTr) reveal dissimilar order in Turkish (Altaic Language, Western Altaic and Turkic Branch). These examples elucidate that TFL learners' affective states may be influenced when they focus on mediating texts even in simple statements; thus, they must more attentively focus on place of verb written at the end of sentence.

Cognitive aspects, focal point on what learners 'know' not on what they 'do', are explained as the extent to which learner has achieved mastery over the formal and functional properties of language and mental processes involved (Ellis, 1999, 348). Ellis underlines McLaughlin's information processing model, emphasizing that learners are limited in how much information they process by the nature of the task and their own information-processing ability in their language learning process (390). No doubt, this results from the lack of mediating a text, as well. Therefore in TFL, cognitive accounts of writing are probably the most difficult one since it might have different usages between L1 and L2/L3. When there is a conflict in cognition between languages such as Turkish-English or Turkish-Russian, TFL learners face problems to produce sentences [English (2a) and Russian (2b)] as follows:

2a) Ivan$_1$ does$_2$ not$_2$ love$_3$ your$_4$ daughter$_5$.",
2b) Иван$_1$ не$_2$ любит$_3$ твою$_4$ дочь$_5$."
2a-bTr) Ivan$_1$ senin$_4$ kızını$_5$ sev$_3$mi$_2$yor$_2$.

Examples 2a-2b indicate the same order, whereas it is different in Turkish (2a-2bTr). 2a and 2b have the same negation; nonetheless, in Turkish, suffix of negation –me/-ma is attached to stem of verbs rather than appear as an isolated word in verbal sentences. This causes problem for TFL learners to comprehend as they usually write this sentence in Turkish as *Ivan senin kız seviyor değil*. *Değil* means 'not' as negation for nonverbal sentences that TFL learners primarily learn in the initial stages and they use it mistakenly because of over-generalization in their cognition. Moreover, when complex sentences are produced in intermediate levels, learners can get a bit more confused in production as in the sentences (3a; 3b; 3aTr; 3aTr1; and 3a-3bTr) presented below:
Examples (2a-2b) above, can be written in positive and a complex form as follows:

"They$_{-s}$ say$_{-v}$ that$_{-o}$ [Ivan$_{-s}$ loves$_{-v}$ your$_{-o1}$ daughter$_{-o2}$]".
3a) *They say that* is a phrase and means 'diyorlar ki' in Turkish*;*
3a1) *It is said that* is a phrase meaning 'deniyor ki' in

Turkish; however, these two phrases mean almost the same and merely one in Russian,
3a,3a1,3b,) *Говорят,что* (this sentence has two functions, 3a-active and 3a1-passive voice).

Examples 3a-3a1, indicate the similarity in construction; '*They say that..*' is subordination clause in English and Russian, and easy to construct for learners whose L1 and L2 languages come from the Indo-European language family; yet, it may not always be the case for another language such as Turkish. Structuring Turkish in a written form requires several strategies of clustering words, organizing, categorizing considering functions and meanings, elaborating, and forming as below:

3a) 'They$_1$ say$_2$ that$_3$ Ivan$_4$ loves$_5$ your$_6$ daughter$_7$.', in English (active)
3a1) 'It$_1$ is said$_2$ that$_3$ Ivan$_4$ loves$_5$ your$_6$ daughter$_7$.', in English (passive)
3b) 'Говорят$_{1-2}$,что$_3$ Иван$_4$ любит$_5$ твою$_6$ дочку$_7$.' in Russian (active)
3b1) 'Говорят$_{1-2}$,что$_3$ Иван$_4$ любит$_5$ твою$_6$ дочку$_7$.' in Russian (passive)

The aforementioned statements are translated literally into Turkish as:

3a-Tr)'Diyorlar$_{1-2}$ ki$_3$ İvan$_4$ senin$_6$ kızını$_7$ seviyor(**muş**)$_5$.'
3a1-Tr)'Deniyor$_{1-2}$ ki$_3$ İvan$_4$ senin$_6$ kızını$_7$ seviyor(**muş**)$_5$.'
3a2-Tr) 'Ivan'nın$_4$ senin$_6$ kızını$_7$ sevdi$_5$**ğini**$_3$ söylüyor$_1$-lar$_2$.'
3a3-Tr) 'Ivan'nın$_4$ senin$_6$ kızını$_7$ sevdi$_5$**ği**$_3$ söle**n**iyor$_2$.'

As above-mentioned in Examples 3a-3b (active); 3a1-3b1 (passive), the word order in English and Russian is almost the same; however, in Turkish statement both active and passive forms are separately constructed. For instance, *say* becomes 'demek' or 'söylemek' in Turkish. In English it becomes *say* or *said* and the noun phrase stays the same*;* nonetheless, in Turkish the main verb *diyorlar, deniyor, söylüyor* or *söleniyor* appears either at the beginning or in the end of the sentence. For instance, active (3a-Tr$_{-1-2}$; 3a2Tr$_{1-2}$) and passive (3a1-Tr$_{-1-2}$:3a3-Tr$_{-2}$) forms are done by attaching a suffix in noun clause form **(-ğini/-ği**) to verb stem, which is too challenging and even subtle for TFL learners in nonverbal statements as below:

4a) 'I$_1$ did not$_2$ know$_3$ that$_4$ she$_5$ is$_6$ sick$_{7'}$,
4b) 'Я$_1$ не$_2$ знал$_3$, что$_4$ она$_5$ (Ø)$_6$ больна$_7$.'
4a-4bTr)'(Onun$_5$) Hasta$_7$ oldu$_6$-**ğunu$_4$** bil$_3$miyordu$_2$m$_1$'.

As indicated in Examples 4a-4b, language learners form statements in the same order in English and Russian. Nevertheless, Turkish language structure is constructed through scrambled numbers as in Example 4a-4bTr. In forming noun clauses in Turkish, if subordinate clause is

nonverbal, it is done by the auxiliary verb -*dır* or verb *olmak* 'to be' *(*its alterations) in English and 'быть', in Russian.

4a) 'I$_1$ did not$_2$ know$_3$ that$_4$ she$_5$ **was$_6$** your$_7$ daughter$_8$'.
4b) 'Я$_1$ не$_2$ знал$_3$, что$_4$ она$_5$ **была$_6$** твоя$_7$ дочь$_8$'.
4a-4bTr)'(Onun$_5$)Sizin$_7$ kızınız$_8$ **oldu**$_6$-*ğunu*$_4$
 bil$_3$miyordu$_2$m$_1$'.

Example 4a-4bTr is inappropriately produced as in *Ben$_1$ bil$_3$me$_2$dim$_3$ ki$_4$ o$_5$ sizin$_7$ kız$_8$* by TFL learners who mistakenly transfer from their L1. When 4a-4bTr is exemplified, *kız* 'daughter*'*; *siz* 'formal you', *sizin 'your'*, *siz**in** kız**ınız*** means 'your daughter'. In case, it is articulated in informal usage, *siz* turns into *sen* 'informal you', and *sen**in** kız**ın*** 'your daughter' within the genitive case. Since Turkish is pro-drop language, *o* 'she*',* is dropped in the sentence, whereas it is obliged in English and Russian. In Russian, genitive case also takes suffixes. For cognitive accounts, it is challenging for TFL learners of English to write efficiently in the initial stages since they need linguistic and pragmatic competence to mediate text. Tiryaki (2013) explains reasons for TFL learners to struggle while producing Turkish statements as word order between L1 and Turkish is different; alterations or tense aspects might have no place in L1 or functional aspects appear as participles in Turkish. Thus, they are hardly comprehended at first glance; noun clauses are formed using morphological suffixes rather than isolated words in Turkish; and one statement might be written in various and complex versions. Ellis (1999) amplifies that these reasons cause foreign language learners to fear and feel stressful to mediate texts. Indeed, writing process makes them recognize these crucial morphological parts as subtle intercultural understanding.

Pedagogical aspects in TFL

An effective way of developing successful L2 competence is to ensure learners to have sufficient opportunities to mediate in discourse. If this is not achieved, failure that derives from the lack of comprehensible input or output is inevitable (Ellis 1999, 602). There is no exception for TFL learners. Reasons might be listed as *limits* to produce native like statements in any written style as they refrain memorization of rules that restrict critical thinking (Genç, 2017, 37) on linguistic patterns (lexical, morphological, syntactical, semantic, mechanical forms etc.); *word forming* with unfamiliar letters/symbols in their L1 words, L2/L3 and Turkish (i.e., symbols in the alphabets-Cyrillic vs. Latin); *morphological diversity* between languages; *constructions* such as different word order (S+V+O vs S+O+V). In addition, all components such as *punctuation*, *grammatical rules*, *lexical*, and *phonological rules* of Turkish language make learning hard. Moreover, the *educational, social,* and

personal backgrounds of TFL learners, either abroad or in Turkey should be taken into account by TFL instructors. They should also consider attitudes of TFL learners toward curricula, lectures, methods, instructional materials (Mete and Gürsoy, 2013), which are classified in detail below:

Characteristics of TFL learners

Characteristics of TFL learners in Turkey or abroad have a wide diversity ranging from age, needs, purposes, L1 and other language(s) they know (L2/L3) to their educational and social backgrounds, and individual differences, learning strategies, preferences and so on as follows:

a. In education system in Turkey or abroad, TFL learners can be different-aged in classrooms of institutions wherein they learn Turkish (e.g., refugees in refugee camps, businessmen and the others in big cities in Turkey, drop outs returning to a university education or heritage students-abroad etc.). These have different social, educational and cultural backgrounds (e.g., their experiences, beliefs, L1 proficiency, cognitive development, neurological maturation, expectations and/or differences in their learning environments (Oliver, 2000)).
b. TFL learners might have various needs and purposes while learning Turkish (e.g. to survive, find a job, be enrolled at a Turkish university, or merely communicate with a neighbour or in a business environment, additionally, to write informal/formal letters, research academic articles in Turkish archives, etc.) as recommended by the Common European Framework of References for Languages (CEFR, 2018).
c. TFL learners might have different linguistic backgrounds. Throughout learning Turkish, they might have cognitive, social, and/or affective problems (e.g., some unfamiliar Turkish letters such as /ğ/, /ö/, /ı/, /ü/ etc; different word order in two languages; intrinsic and extrinsic motivation).
d. TFL learners might come from different educational systems in their home countries (e.g., Pedagogical University, Medical University etc). TFL learners can have diversified or cross-disciplinary lectures in the university they were enrolled in (e.g., some courses might be offered by different faculties of different universities in the same province; lectures in their major might be provided in more than one language in their educational system, etc). The curricula in their home institutions might be different among other foreign learners in TFL classroom.
e. TFL learners might have different social backgrounds (e.g., in addressing people in social or academic environments: In western countries, *sen* 'you' [second person pronoun for informal usage] is never used in classrooms; nevertheless, in Turkey most instructors

utter *sen* for the addressee rather than *siz* formal 'you', in salutation or addressing. This inconsistency forms discordance in TFL learners' views since the usage of these salutations in their language is considered rude or degrading. The same situation occurs to address TFL learners *Çocuklar* 'children' or *Arkadaşlar* 'friends' in the learning environment.

f. TFL learners might have different personal backgrounds, attitudes or behaviors according to the countries they come from. This diversity appears in classrooms as their hesitating to do pair work, stepping back for some activities, having prejudices towards different cultures in the same classroom, and so on.

Characteristics of TFL instructors

In Turkey, TFL instructors have cross-national, multicultural and multilingual classes since TFL learners come from different continents and countries. There is a great diversity of learners with different regional, cultural, and religious backgrounds in each class. Hence, TFL instructors are expected to be equipped with a deep knowledge of the World, their native culture and language in addition to professional and pedagogical backgrounds. Moreover, they are expected to have awareness not only towards their foreign learners and their culture but also cross-cultural, multicultural, and multilingual classrooms wherein they teach Turkish as a foreign language (Alyılmaz and Şengül, 2017; Mete and Gürsoy, 2013; Kalfa, 2015; Çifçi, 2011). Nevertheless, teaching Turkish as a foreign language abroad might be twofold: a) monocultural or mononational classrooms for learners who live in that country as citizens, and b) cross-national classrooms for learners of non-citizens. No matter whatever classrooms they teach, TFL instructors have pedagogical and professional responsibilities as follows:

a. The world knowledge of TFL instructors either in cross-national or mono-national classrooms facilitates their learners to feel motivated during learning process. Because experiences of world knowledge foster mutual understanding about native and target culture, it sustains long-lasting learning even situations are delicate to discuss (CEFR, 2018). Hence, TFL instructors mediate concepts in lessons by asking about current events in warm up activity and exclusively including the target culture in lessons (Comics, Nasreddin Hodja, so on) so that learners overcome communication difficulties on linguistic and cultural bases.

b. Competence of TFL instructors on their native culture and language enlightens learners about the target culture (e.g., festivals, religious bairams, official celebrations, regional differences, traditional outfits). Behaviors applied in specific circumstances are explained clearly before they are questioned by learners. In case of exceptions, they should be given in/on time so that TFL learners stimulate logical reasoning when they practice Turkish in real life outside the classroom.

c. Awareness of TFL learners' profiles is vitally important since they come from different cultures. Especially, differences and delicate issues they bring to class is another concern for TFL instructors to construct of coherent lines of thinking in the target culture and also successful communication in and outside the classroom (Mete and Gürsoy, 2013). This can be achieved by asking them to reflect their experiences in compositions comparing and contrasting daily lives in their target and native cultures (e.g., unfamiliar experiences such as taking off shoes while visiting a friend in his house; kissing on cheek when greeting each other etc). A file of these informative written texts could be kept for personal reference for possible usage in the classrooms (Bölükbaş, 2011).

d. Professional knowledge of TFL instructors fulfills TFL learners' demand to learn about the target culture and language. This is achieved by a action oriented approach that motivates learners as social agents to write in different genres so that they increase their knowledge and accomplish their needs in accordance with real life circumstances (critics, summaries, reports, etc) (Yıldırım and Nurlu, 2016; Temizkan, 2010; Aktaş, 2009).

e. Pedagogical knowledge of TFL instructors encourages TFL learners who come from different cultures and countries (Mete, 2012). A student-oriented atmosphere is created to let them feel free to choose their own topics and mediate their texts for classmates. Any task chosen and assigned in a content-based, task-based or intercultural communication approach is cautiously applied as well as action oriented approach. Assignments are checked and feedbacks are given regarding individual differences in multilingual and multicultural environments to remove learning barriers (Kalfa, 2014).

f. Assessment for written products requires TFL instructors to have more responsibility in cross-national classrooms, allow them to overview their exam papers. No matter how tests are graded (holistically or analytically) should be shared with learners so that they also do self-assessment on their own (Bağcı and Başar, 2013).

CHARACTERISTIC PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED IN TFL

There are several problems encountered in TFL writing as classified below:

a) *Alphabet*: Diversity of symbols in L1 and L2 result in time loss, failing to remember, false transference of interlanguages and cognitive incapacity during production (Şengül, 2014; Kara, 2010).

b) *Phonology*: Different phonetics of identical symbols in L1 and L2 may cause misspelling (e.g., H in Turkish and Russian is pronounced differently. H is /h/ in Turkish as in "half" whereas it is /n/ as in "none" in Russian *(e.g., не*

бɪло). During writing, learners hear their inner voice and produce different letters respectively (e.g., *He oldu.* 'Yeah, happened' in slang in Turkish instead of *Ne oldu?* 'What happened?').* Accidentally, the Russian learner produces a slang sentence (Erol, 2016).

c) *Morphology*: Application of derivational and inflectional affixes within words/noun compounds causes problems to TFL learners (e.g., *kredi kart₁lar₂ım₃*, '*my₃ credit card₁s₂*' can be mistyped as *kredi kart₁ım₃lar₂*, [₁noun, ₂plural, ₃possessive pronoun-1st singular person]) (Tüm, 2015; Şengül, 2014).

d) *Syntax*: Scrambled word order in languages can cause TFL learners to produce malstructured sentences (e.g., *Bilmiyorum.* 'I don't know.' might be written as *Biliyorum değil*, which is inappropriate usage of negation for 'değil' used in nonverbal statements. *Biliyorum değil* briefly literally refers to 'I know not', (Kınay, 2015; Kara, 2010)).

e) *Lexicology*: Unfamiliar words complicate learning, and lead to time loss while recalling and categorizing them in cognitive process (Gökdayı, 2016).

f) *Punctuation*: Difference in punctuation marks among languages may cause cognitive problems (Genç, 2017; Tiryaki, 2013). (e.g., In Turkish, a dot is used to separate thousands '2.000' or comma in decimal digits '2,7'; in English, a comma is used to separate thousands 2,000; a dot is used for decimal digits '2.7')

g) *Learning environment*: Any discomfort such as crowd, light or sound in classroom setting affects writing (Güzel and Barın, 2013).

h) *Materials*: TFL course books that ignore users' profiles and lack to meet learners' needs can create learning difficulties (Erol, 2016; Duman, 2013; Özdemir, 2013).

i) *Genre*: Differences of genres in L1 and L2 cause TFL learners to lose self-confidence in choosing an appropriate form of text as they have their own characteristics and styles according to their purposes.

j) *Methods and techniques*: Multi-national learners have different individual learning strategies while learning any language. Utilizing one specific method, such as just giving a topic to write, not guiding cooperative learning, can cause miscommunication (Güzel and Barın, 2013; Kara, 2011).

k) *Language instructors*: Multi-national learners have different perceptions towards language instructors. This may result in misunderstanding and having lack of motivation to write (Mete and Gürsoy, 2013).

l) *Institutions*: Multi-national learners have expectations for institutions to have standard principles and objectives that may lack in TFL teaching.

m) *Curriculum*: TFL Curriculum is still under progress and no standard available for curriculum utilized in Turkey may be problem for writing.

Writing processes in TFL

Teaching the Alphabet: Teaching alphabet requires becoming aware of symbols which may be identical,

similar, and dissimilar in two languages (Er, Biçer and Bozkırlı, 2012). If they are identical, learners produce them without having problems such as 'D' is 'D' in both languages (Turkish-English). However, upper and lowercase letters might have different symbols between two languages such as 'Д', which is 'D' capital letter in Russian, yet, written as 'g' in lowercase; hence, alphabetical characters TFL learners write in Turkish texts might be misleading (i.e, **d***ün 'yesterday'* vs. **g***ün 'day'*. Missing letters are common for learners to skip as in silent 'Ğ', 'ğ' in Turkish in the initial stages as in Examples (a, b) written by English and (a1, b1) by Russian learner of Turkish:

(a) *a***ğ***aç* [tree in English] is written as *aç* 'open'
(b) *u***ğ***ur* [luck in English] articulated as *ur* 'tumour' by learners of English
(a1) ya**ğ** [oil/масло in Russian] is written as 'yak'
(b1) yak [to burn/fire-сжечь in Russian] as 'yak' by learners of Russian.
Sentence: *Ya***k** *ver bana*. '**Burn**/light it, and give it to me.' [Подожги мне.]
Intended statement: *Ya***ğ** *ver bana*. 'Give me the **oil**' [Дай мне масло.];

Examples (a, b, a1, b1) indicate that TFL learners skip 'ğ' in their writing by turning into another meaning. In Example a) *aç 'open'*, the learner is expected to write tree (b) *uğur* 'luck' in his composition, but the letter /ğ/ is omitted in the word. In Russian examples, (a1) another mistake appears in the word *yağ*, which is misspelled by the TFL learner. Apparently, same problems occur in relative pronouns written including 'ğ'.

(c) *ald***ığı** kitap [**the** book **that** s/he bought]
(c1) ... *aldı kitabı* [(s/he) **bought** the book.]

Same words having different meanings such as *Cam* in Turkish and Сам in Russian might be written transferring from L1/L2/L3 language(s) as below:

(d) *cam* [glass in English] is written as *Cam ver bana* in Turkish.
(d1) *сам* [yourself in Russian] is written as *Kendin ver bana*. 'Give it to me yourself.' by learners of Russian.

As above-mentioned (a, b, a1, b1, c, c1, d, d1), TFL learners might write words incorrectly since they transfer from their mental lexicon. In Example (d1), the learner transfers a word from his L1 (*сам-cam)*, both of which seem correctly written, yet 'a reflexive pronoun' in Russian, 'glass' in Turkish. In brief, the occurrence of dissimilar or missing letters in both languages causes problems during the writing process (Uzdu-Yıldız, 2013).
Teaching Vocabulary: Gökdayı (2016) underlines TFL learners suffer with producing lexis (idioms, proverbs, formulaic expressions and other set phrases) in their writing skills. The following examples in Turkish (f, f1, g,

g1) indicate difficulty at misspellings and how transferring is done:

(f) *öldü* 'died' in English
(f1) *oldu* 'became/occurred/happened/arrived'
Sentence: *İki saat sonra köyde öldüm*. 'I died in the village two hours later.
Intended statement *İki saat sonra köyde oldum*. 'I arrived at the village in two hours.'
(g) *durak* 'station' in English
(g1) дурак 'idiot/stupid' in Russian
Sentence: *Sen durakta mısın?* Or *Sen durak mısın?*
Literally meaning: 'Are you at the (bus)station?' or 'Are you stupid?'
Intended statement: *Sen durakta mısın?* Or *Sen aptal mısın?* [Are you stupid?]

These examples accentuate why vocabulary teaching should be emphasized more in TFL classrooms. Even though words make text understandable as given above, in some texts it might never clearly distinguishable since it is not only a lexical but also a morphological problem that makes understanding impossible. In order to teach Turkish words efficiently, TFL language instructors should embrace constructive methods utilizing visuals, realia, connotations and word sets during the teaching process (Erol, 2016; Karababa and Çalışkan, 2012; Mete and Gürsoy, 2013) in addition to frequency of word list (Özkan, 2013; Barın, 2003).
Teaching Sentences: Syntax constructed differently in languages elucidates structuring sentence awareness is vitally important (i.e., it is S+V+O in English or Russian, yet, S+O+V in Turkish). In TFL teaching, Tiryaki (2013, 41) underlines this problem in threefold:

1) fragments rather than meaningful sentences
that cause ambiguity in statements;
2) repetition of structures or words in statements
 and inappropriate word preference; and
3) misused punctuation.

To cope with these problems, syntactic awareness should be emphasized at initial stages by exposing learners to various statements; otherwise, mistakes are inevitable as in Example h and intended statement below:

(h) Sentence: **Ne zaman$_1$ sen$_2$ geldin?$_3$** *ben$_4$ artık$_5$ uyudum$_6$.* written by a TFL learner.
Literally meaning: When$_1$ you$_2$ came$_3$, I$_4$ had$_6$ already$_5$ slept$_6$.
Literally meaning: Когда$_1$ ты$_2$ приехал$_3$, я$_4$ уже$_5$ спала$_6$.
Intended statement: **Geldi$_3$ğin$_2$ zaman$_1$** *(ben)$_4$ uyumuş$_6$tu$_6$m$_4$.*

Teaching Paragraphs: TFL learners generally struggle not only in constructing sentences but also writing paragraphs wherein (ı) transitions/conjunctions or coordinators appear as well. One of the main problems is

the wrong usage of those within sentences since they are also formulated differently in Turkish (ı1) when compared to Russian and English. The paragraph below encompasses all the morphological, lexical and syntactic problems encountered by foreign learners of Turkish.

"…çok kötü oldu. Birçok nedenler için var: **İlkinci:** *İnsanlar otel'de değildi çünkü onlar yüzde gülüş yoktu.* **İkinci***:Her Akşam otel barında otudum çünkü ben yeni arkadaşlar tanışmak istedim. Ama hiç arkadaşlar görmedim. Otelde ben yalnız oldum.* **Üçüncü:** *Akşamları sadece içiçek alkol ile içbildim. Ama ben sıcak balle süt iç istedim.* **Dördüncü:** *Banyomda tuvalet yoktu. Sadece bir aralık vardı.* **Bu yüzden,** *benim tatil korkunç oldu. Para istiyorum geri.* **Aksi,** *ben çok fena."*

Literally meaning: "The name of the hotel is Yıldız Hotel. It is in Bodrum and a very bad one. There are several reasons: **firstly**, there were no people at the hotel because the staff had no smile on their faces. **Secondly**, I sat at the hotel bar every evening because I wanted to meet new people. But I saw nobody there. I was alone in the hotel. **Thirdly**, I drank only alcoholic beverages in the evenings. But I wanted to drink milk with honey. **Lastly**, there was no toilet in my bathroom. There was only a hole (traditional Turkish restroom). **Therefore**, my holiday was horrible. I want my money back. **Otherwise** I will be very angry.

Intended statement: *Otelin adı 'Yıldız Oteli'. Bu otel Bodrum'da ve çok kötü. Bunun birçok nedeni var:* **birincisi,** *personelin yüzü çok asık ve bu yüzden otelde müşteri yok.* **İkincisi,** *her akşam otelin barında oturdum, arkadaş edinmek istedim ama hiç kimse yoktu. Kimseyi görmedim. Otelde yalnızdım.* **Üçüncüsü,** *akşamları sadece alkollü içecek içebildim. Ama ben ballı sıcak süt içmek istedim.* **Dördüncüsü,** *banyomda tuvalet yoktu sadece bir delik vardı(alaturka).* **Bu yüzden,** *tatilim çok kötü geçti. Paramı geri istiyorum.* **Aksi takdirde,** *çok kızacağım.]*

These examples reveal that teaching writing skills is component of several aspects as it is not merely introducing vocab but also introducing several items combined together to make full meaning, ended in mediating text, concepts and communication (Erol, 2016; Özkan, 2013; Barın, 2003).

Teaching Mechanics: Punctuation and spelling are two crucial elements for grasping the meaning in writing. Therefore, the teaching of punctuation and spelling should be given priority in the initial stages of TFL writing so that learners can express their emotions, thoughts and knowledge clearly. The problems TFL learners generally struggle with in punctuation seem to come from a transference of their mechanical knowledge from their native/foreign languages as shown in three languages (Turkish produced sentence, literally Russian, literally

English and intended meaning by TFL Learners) below:

(i) Sentence: *Merhaba, Yuliya. Bize sizinle buşmak lazım, fakat biz siz ulaşamıyoruz.*
Literally meaning: Здравствуйте, Юлия. Нам нужно с вами встретится, но мы не можем до вас дозвониться.
Literally meaning: Hello Yulia. We need to meet you but we cannot reach you.
Intended statement: *Merhaba Yuliya. Bizim sizinle buluşmamız lazım fakat (biz) size ulaşamıyoruz.*

The statements amplify the importance of punctuation or mechanics to that TFL instructors catch the intended meaning produced by foreign learners since any missing or overusing punctuations blocks mediating text, concepts and communication (Erol, 2016; Özkan, 2013; Barın, 2003).

CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

The findings of the research reveal that TFL learners struggle with several different issues in writing Turkish language. No doubt, overcoming these problems requires several steps such as giving writing activities at regular schedules in order to cope with vocab for spelling, wording, creating paragraphs; providing different genres to expose linguistic features and word choices; reforming language activities in textbooks; using authentic materials to detect cultural and linguistic patterns accompanied by CEFR standards, and giving feedback including characteristic features and richness of Turkish language so that TFL learners produce efficient statements in their writing process.

In order to solve problems arising from vocab, utilizing them in context and making statements at regular schedule in or out of the classrooms seem to be vital. Nevertheless, what is neglected in vocabulary teaching in TFL is the frequency of word list and there is still no 'the first two thousand words' according to all levels. Urgently, the determination of frequently encountered words in TFL should be published and accessible to any foreign learner for successful outcomes in education. This is how TFL learners solve their demotivation in writing texts. TFL textbooks should include more lexical activities to expose learners with variety of words/word-sets/formulaic language, activating their vocabulary repertoire. Regular dictation should be provided to TFL learners in the classrooms at frequent intervals and inserted in the curriculum as well.

To achieve writing confirmed texts, numerous genres of writing should be inserted in teaching materials as substitutes or workbooks since they make writing activities more productive and painless for TFL learners. Providing several expressive ways introduced within materials such as negotiations, diplomacy, written communication, criticism, justifying, and argumentation helps learners achieve their goals for communicating with their readers. The instructions of the writing sections in textbooks should include explicit information for learners to do brainstorming and start background knowledge.

To strengthen learning language, activities that include mediating texts such as relaying specific information in writing, processing text, analysis and criticism of texts should be introduced in their natural form as genres and provided within a gradual selection of levels at the initial stages accompanying with curriculum. When these texts are carefully selected regarding learners' attentive and cognitive skills, learners absolutely dive into the writing activity by being inspired rather than carry out tasks given in controlled forms. Unless materials are produced specifically for learners' age, needs and purposes (business, education, medicine, etc.), these problems appear dramatically to continue for several decades. Therefore, in addition to mediating text, there should be mediating concepts and communication in writing. To get maximum benefit on mediation, training of Turkish language instructors and principles of Turkish teaching institutions are to be taken seriously into account by Ministry of National Education so that TFL learners may not suffer in realizing or fulfilling their purposes in learning environments.

To motivate learners, assessments should be reformed again by language instructors via mediation strategies they apply in their classrooms. This could be achieved by constructing, adapting meaning through streamlining or amplifying texts that TFL learners are exposed to. Then, analytic grading should be applied on overall composition rather than dynamics of linguistic features; however, in case each item in writing is evaluated separately, grading will be more objective. In addition, self-assessment is the other important factor to motivate and evaluate TFL learners on their own. In case there is spelling or holographic problems, TFL learners are requested to send their assignments via e-mails. This kind of guidance relieves teachers load and makes feedback easier. Self-assessment should also be included within teaching processes during all the terms. Self-assessment increases motivation throughout the writing processes as long as TFL learners get benefits from this type of assessment if approved by their language instructors.
To let TFL learners become aware of their gains, using mediation strategies is crucial for encouraging and consolidating learning regularly as a key element for learners' growing auto-control over composing skills.

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