

Miswriting in the Teaching of Turkish as a Foreign Language: The Tunisian Case

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Abstract

This research was undertaken with the aim of evaluating, classifying, and detecting mistakes made by Tunisian students learning Turkish as a foreign language at the A1 level. The study is descriptive and was performed using document and content analysis methods. Forty Tunisian university students participating in the study were asked to write about their emotions, ideas, and plans after being given a topic in the classroom at a specific time. Afterwards, their incidences of miswriting were determined while analyzing the texts. Their mistakes were classified under the headings of spelling mistakes, morphemic mistakes, phonetic mistakes, syntactic mistakes, and semantic mistakes. The writing errors grouped within these categories were subsequently re-evaluated according to their specific features and presented again under more narrow subheadings. It was determined that the students made 206 spelling mistakes, equaling 39.84% of the total, followed by 119 morphemic mistakes equaling 23.01%, 95 phonetic mistakes equaling 18.37%, 52 syntactic mistakes equaling 10.05%, and 45 semantic mistakes equaling 8.70%, for a total of 517 writing errors. The majority of these incidences of miswriting happened due to factors such as negative transfer, the distinctive structure of the Turkish language, and the students' lack of knowledge and experience. It is emphasized that writing-oriented error analysis studies in the teaching of Turkish as a foreign language should be increased and continued at all levels.

Keywords: Teaching Turkish as a Foreign Language, Miswriting, Misspelling

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Introduction

The growth in contemporary communication and education opportunities has allowed individuals to improve themselves in multifaceted ways and makes people more competitive, both locally and internationally, in all fields. People are now more open to collaborating with people from other countries and enriching their accumulated knowledge and experiences by following new trends in technology. Educational processes and conditions expose learners and teachers of all disciplines to new challenges according to the interests, needs, and expectations of the individual (Tutkun, 2010).

Language is the most common and strongest tool for understanding among humans. It not only facilitates communication with other individuals in immediate and distant areas; it is also the most effective way of ensuring more comprehensive, strong, multidimensional, and broader relationships. Due to its effectiveness in communication and its multidimensional structures that allow interaction and the transfer of cultural and national values, education in the native language is a core factor of all countries' educational systems. At the same time, changing global conditions necessitate the ability to communicate in more than one language; in some cases, to satisfy both individual and social needs, it is necessary to learn one or more foreign languages. As millions of people annually leave their homelands for various reasons, whether voluntarily or involuntarily, and begin to live together with people of other nationalities, the necessity of communicating in non-native languages grows, and this requires a re-evaluation of foreign language teaching. While foreign languages used to be taught for commercial and political reasons, changing global conditions now require foreign language teaching to ensure coexistence, understanding, and communication in multilingual and multicultural countries. However, foreign language teaching is a need for not only multilingual and multicultural countries; it is needed in all societies today, because the collaboration globally occurring in different fields such as commerce, politics, science, and art requires communication in different languages (İşcan, 2011).

The richness of language and the use of all its features are perpetuated through literary works, and the elaborateness and rules of language are taught according to appropriate grade levels and ages to students during native language education. The acquisition of the native language may be further improved in line with the student's interests, talents, and expectations based on local educational programs and processes. However, foreign language teaching requires different processes and planning compared to native language teaching based on the student's intended use of the language, exposure to the target language, and level of readiness. Activities and projects prepared for improving different language skills based on only the students' exposure to the foreign language are not sufficient for successful foreign language teaching. An understanding of the target language knowledge and experience of students from different cultures with different native languages is not enough; the similarity of the native language to the target language must also be considered, including

elements like the target language's sentence structure, vocabulary, phonetic features, and etymology in comparison to the native language of the student. Students are affected at various levels by all experiences and knowledge of the native language, whether consciously or unconsciously, while learning a foreign language (Yang, 2019).

Writing is a difficult language skill to improve as it requires the application of other language skills at high levels during application studies (Klimova, 2014). High-level skills such as critical and creative thinking, research and problem-solving, communication, and the use of information technologies are applied intensively while writing. The skill of writing has a multidimensional structure that includes psychological, cognitive, and grammatical aspects (Eryaman, 2008). At the same time, a learner needs to make a great deal of effort to achieve a successful outcome shaped by previous positive and negative learning experiences while following specific rules, perhaps without any interaction (Genç, 2017).

Texts written by students may be considered from the perspectives of grammar, word choice, syntax, and sentences while writing skills are being evaluated in foreign language teaching (Kepner, 1991). Discussions of the occurrence of miswriting among foreign language learners from the aforementioned perspectives do not occur at the same levels for all languages, but it can be said that there are general similarities. Another point in foreign language teaching is the evaluation of errors made by students while writing, or miswritings, which should be identified so that the necessary feedback can be provided to the student. Undoubtedly, expecting students' outcomes to be faultless while learning new skills or languages would not be the right approach. Nonetheless, care must be taken, because determining mistakes and informing the student may also generate adverse outcomes (Hendrickson, 1980). Therefore, plans should be made for both determining students' miswritings and correcting them. In this process, it would be appropriate to design writing studies by performing error analyses and examining the frequencies of specific types of errors in the process.

It is observed that transfers from the native language are important while examining the sources of various mistakes and features in texts written by students in the target language. Accordingly, various studies have been conducted to explore certain miswritings caused by students' transfers from their native languages and cultural accumulation, and to improve students' articulacy in the target language and determine their miswritings (Jarvis, 2000; Jarvis & Crosslay, 2012; Yang, 2019). Transfers may improve according to skills at different time points and features may change negatively or positively. Particularly, similarities and differences between the target language and the native or other known languages of the student may affect the transfer process positively or negatively. The transfer process is so efficient that it has been stated that the term "acquisition," as used for the native language, can also be used for the transfer process and the learning of second or third languages (Jobeen et al., 2015; Yang, 2019).

The transfer process involves lexical, cognitive, phonological, and pronunciation aspects, and examining it thoroughly will lead to significant outcomes in terms of the improvement of written articulation and other language skills. These transfer elements are realized in every language at different rates and times (2019). For the teaching of English as a foreign language, many studies have addressed this issue, and it has been reported that speakers of different native languages who learn English as a foreign language in different countries transfer their own languages and cultures to English in accordance with their ages and educational backgrounds (Bagherian, 2012; Chan, 2004; Yeon et al., 2017). Discussing and evaluating these transfers in detail may provide guidance in the stages of planning and applying foreign language teaching.

There are numerous studies on writing skills in the field of foreign language teaching around the world. While the studies conducted in Turkey usually evaluate the miswritings of foreign students learning Turkish, studies conducted abroad are intensely focused on the learning of English in multinational groups (Tiryaki, 2013; İşcan, 2015; Genç, 2017; Denizler, 2017; Aşçı, 2019; Ayık, 2019; Azizoğlu et al., 2019; Barış & Ülker, 2019; Şehitoğlu, 2020; Emek, 2021; Leki, 1999; Myles, 2002; Cheng, 2004; Rawson et al., 2005; Wu & Garza, 2014; Talosa & Maguddayao, 2018). In these studies, texts written by students are examined, the determined mistakes are classified, and comments and evaluations are made based on the findings. The studies in the literature generally evaluate types of miswritings and the reasons why they happen as a result of specific negative transfers. However, there is no study of the miswritings of students learning Turkish as a foreign language in Tunisia in the literature to date.

Turkish is used by millions of people as a second language or general foreign language. In addition to institutional Turkish teaching centers like those of the Ministry of National Education of Turkey, the Yunus Emre Institute, and centers operating under the umbrella of various universities that teach Turkish at home and abroad, private corporations also operate in this field (Nurlu, 2019). Tunisia, a North African country, is one of the countries where Turkish is commonly taught at secondary and tertiary levels. All undergraduate and graduate students studying in Tunisia have the opportunity to participate in Turkish lessons at the tertiary level as a result of bilateral agreements that have been in place for many years. Turkish lessons are generally arranged to encompass two or three hours per week during the week or on the weekend. The April 9 Faculty of Human and Social Sciences at Tunis University is one such institution where Turkish lessons are offered for two hours per week, and it is the researcher's place of employment.

Tunis University is one of the most established universities of Tunisia, and the April 9 Faculty of Human and Social Sciences where Turkish lessons are offered is one of the most established tertiary educational foundations, hosting more than 5000 graduate and undergraduate students together with more than 400 academics with a history of more than 60 years. In addition to Turkish,

Spanish, Russian, Persian, Italian, and Latin are also offered as elective language courses (<http://www.fshst.rnu.tn/fr/présentation>). The Turkish lessons offered via this institution have high levels of participation due to the central location and the presence of many other neighboring universities and faculties. It is one of the most significant centers where Turkish as a foreign language is taught in Africa in terms of the number of Turkish learners.

It is predicted that contributions will be made to the teaching of Turkish as a foreign language as a result of this study, which was designed to determine the miswritings of students taking elective Turkish lessons at Tunis University, specify and evaluate the types of mistakes, and offer advice in accordance with the obtained findings. The results of this study are similar to those of many other studies but also entail differences in the types of writing errors identified, as will be explained below in the discussion section.

Method

This study was performed with a qualitative research approach. The document analysis method was applied because the aim was to examine and evaluate written materials (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2013). This method is often preferred in similar studies in the literature, and it has been described as one of the most appropriate methods for examining written materials (Karasar, 2009; Patton, 2014). Thus, the students' miswritings were determined in this study by document analysis, their writing errors were grouped into specific categories, and the findings were evaluated.

Research Group

The research group of the study included 28 female and 12 male students learning Turkish as a foreign language at the A1 level at Tunis University. These students were studying in different universities and departments, and they were all learning Turkish via elective foreign language lessons at the April 9 Faculty of Human and Social Sciences of Tunis University. Students at this institution use Arabic intensively as the official language of Tunisia, French as an official language in many fields, and English. It was observed that the students were eager to participate in the lessons and many of the students were multilingual.

Data Collection and Analysis

Forty students who were taking Turkish lessons at the A1 level at the April 9 Faculty of Human and Social Sciences of Tunis University in the 2020-2021 academic year participated in this study. They were asked to express their emotions, ideas, and plans in writing without consulting any supplementary resources. Students' texts were examined, their miswritings were determined and classified, and these errors were evaluated within the categories of spelling mistakes, morphemic mistakes, phonetic mistakes, syntactic mistakes, and semantic mistakes. These categories were

determined after obtaining expert opinion because they are used in other studies aiming to examine writing errors in the teaching of Turkish as a foreign language and they are useful for the evaluation of such miswritings. Subsequently, the miswritings grouped within these categories were re-evaluated and reviewed again within more specific subcategories.

During the data collection process, students were asked to write about their plans on a specific topic and were given enough time to do so. The topic was presented in class for the first time so that they were unprepared for the topic and could not utilize any external support or academic resources. After the writing process, the texts were collected, counted, and examined. Miswritings in the texts were identified, analyzed, classified, and presented within the following categories:

1. Spelling Mistakes
2. Morphemic Mistakes
3. Phonetic Mistakes
4. Syntactic Mistakes
5. Semantic Mistakes

The students' texts were examined with document analysis and content analysis methods. Examples of their writing errors as used in content analysis are quoted below and the participating students are coded as P1, P2, P3, etc. The students' texts were evaluated by the researcher and a Turkish language lecturer or academic using a form that included the headings listed above. The data collected for those five categories (spelling mistakes, morphemic mistakes, phonetic mistakes, syntactic mistakes, and semantic mistakes) were subjected to frequency and percentage analyses and were then grouped and presented within more specific subcategories.

Results

The findings obtained in the course of this study are presented in tables and discussed below.

General Overview of Turkish Language Miswritings of Tunisian Students

Table 1. Overview of miswritings found in the students' texts.

Type of Miswriting	Frequency <i>f</i>	Percentage %
Spelling Mistakes	206	39.8%
Morphemic Mistakes	119	23%
Phonetic Mistakes	95	18.3%
Syntactic Mistakes	52	10%
Semantic Mistakes	45	8.7%
Total	517	100%

As seen in Table 1, the students made 206 spelling mistakes, equaling 39.84% of the total mistakes. This was followed by 119 morphemic mistakes equaling 23.01%, 95 phonetic mistakes equaling 18.37%, 52 syntactic mistakes equaling 10.05%, and 45 semantic mistakes equaling 8.70%, for a total of 517 miswritings.

The majority of the miswritings were thus spelling, morphemic, and phonetic mistakes, which is related to the non-internalization of rules and usage as the participating students were at the A1 level and made certain mistakes caused by the combination of native and foreign languages belonging to different language families. They made fewer mistakes in terms of syntax and semantics, as they were less likely to attempt to use structures and words that they did not know well.

Findings on the Spelling Mistakes of Tunisian Students

Table 2. Spelling mistakes.

Type of Miswriting	Frequency <i>f</i>	Percentage %
Misspelling words	68	33%
Miswriting tense suffixes	58	28%
Misusing uppercase and lowercase letters	50	24.2%
Misusing punctuation marks	45	21.8%
Writing words without spaces needed	5	2.4%
Total	206	100%

As can be seen in Table 2, the students made 68 errors of misspelling words, equaling 33% of all spelling mistakes. This was followed by 58 miswritings of tense suffixes equaling 28.05%, 50 misusages of uppercase and lowercase letters equaling 24.27%, 45 misusages of punctuation marks equaling 21.84%, and 5 words written without the necessary spaces equaling 2.42%, for a total of 206 spelling mistakes.

It was furthermore observed that the words and grammatical structures that these A1 students were capable of using were limited, which meant that they avoided more complicated and diverse writing errors. At the same time, they could not repeat the words and grammatical structures that they had learned often enough, which led to mistakes.

Each type of spelling mistake is presented below with an example.

Misspelling words:

P2: *Ayrıca yaz tatilinde siyahat çok istiyorum.* (seyahat)

Miswriting tense suffixes:

P1: *Çay içicam, mis hava koklicam...* (Çay içeceğim, mis hava koklayacağım.)

Misusing uppercase and lowercase letters:

P23: *Sonunda tunusa dondugunler.* (Sonunda Tunus'a döndüler.)

Misusing punctuation marks:

P5: *Bütüin İstanbula...* (İstanbul'u)

Writing words without the needed spaces:

P7: *Önce hergün parkta ve denize gideceğim.* (her gün)

It was found that the writing errors in this category were caused not by negative transfers but rather by students not knowing the target language's spelling and punctuation rules.

Findings on the Morphemic Mistakes of Tunisian Students

Table 3. Morphemic mistakes.

Type of Miswriting	Frequency <i>f</i>	Percentage %
Misusing dative case suffixes	37	31%
Misusing accusative case suffixes	22	18.4%
Misusing other suffixes	15	12.6%
Misusing possessive suffixes	13	10.9%
Misusing plural suffixes	10	8.4%
Misusing locative case suffixes	9	7.5%
Misusing verbals	7	5.8%
Other miswritings	6	5%
Total	119	100%

As can be seen in Table 3, the students made 37 errors that involved the misuse of dative case suffixes, equaling 31.09% of the errors in this category. This was followed by 22 misuses of accusative case suffixes equaling 18.48%, 15 misuses of other suffixes equaling 12.60%, 13 misuses of possessive suffixes equaling 10.92%, 10 misuses of plural suffixes equaling 8.40%, 9 misuses of locative case suffixes equaling 7.56%, 7 misuses of verbals equaling 5.88%, and 6 other miswritings equaling 5.04%, for a total of 119 morphemic mistakes.

Each type of morphemic mistake is presented below with an example.

Misusing dative case suffixes:

P3: *Deniz gitmek çok istiyorum.* (Denize)

Misusing accusative case suffixes:

P6: *Aslında yaz çok seviyorum.* (yazı)

Misusing plural suffixes:

P15: *Ben çok kitaplar okuyacağım.* (çok kitap)

Misusing locative case suffixes:

P9: *Benim ile ailem bir büyük otel kalacağız.* (otelde)

Misusing verbals:

P11: *Doğum günü kutlamak ondan devam edeceğiz.* (kutladıktan)

Other miswritings:

P34: *Bu neden dışarı çıkmayacağım.* (nedenle: incomplete postposition)

P34: *Sonra evde çıktık.* (evden)

Turkish is an agglutinative language and the native and foreign languages that these students knew had very different structures; this was a significant factor for their writing errors. The fact that the structural features of the Turkish language were not fully comprehended by the students was more influential here than negative transfer. Arabic, as their native language, is not an agglutinative language like Turkish, which they know as a foreign language, so this particular type of miswriting was common.

Findings on Phonetic Mistakes of Tunisian Students

Table 4. Phonetic mistakes.

Type of Miswriting	Frequency <i>f</i>	Percentage %
Using the letter “i” instead of “ı”	51	53.6%
Using the letter “e” instead of “i”	13	13.6%
Using the letter “u” instead of “ü”	9	9.4%
Using the letter “d” instead of “t”	5	5.2%
Using the letter “t” instead of “d”	4	4.2%
Other miswritings	13	13.6%
Total	95	100%

As can be seen in Table 4, the students made 51 writings errors that involved using the letter “i” instead of “ı,” equaling 53.68% of all phonetic mistakes. This was followed by 13 erroneous usages of the letter “e” instead of “i” equaling 13.68%, 9 usages of “u” instead of “ü” equaling 9.46%, 5 usages of “d” instead of “t” equaling 5.26%, 4 usages of “t” instead of “d” equaling 4.21%, and 13 other miswritings equaling 13.68%, for a total of 95 phonetic mistakes.

The fact that the letters “ı” and “ü” do not exist in the native and other foreign languages of these students and the fact that they did not fully comprehend the alternation rules for “t” and “d” had a dramatic influence on repetitions of phonetic mistakes.

Each type of phonetic mistake is presented below with an example.

Using the letter “ı” instead of “i”:

P27: *Ve ben de yaz da doğdun için sıcak olduğuna rağmen o nu çok seviyorum.* (sıcak)

Using the letter “e” instead of “i”:

P4: *Lokantaya gediceğiz.* (gideceğiz)

Using the letter “u” instead of “ü”:

P19: *Benim ailem buyuktur.* (büyüktür)

Using the letter “d” instead of “t”:

P36: *Sokakda sohbet edicağiz.* (sokakta)

Using the letter “t” instead of “d”:

Ö8: *Akşamda parka giteceğim.* (gideceğim)

Other miswritings:

P16: *Balık tutiyoruz.* (tutuyoruz: u-i)

P32: *Saat sekiz sahilde köpekimle yürüyorum.* (köpeğimle: ğ-k)

P22: *Çök planlar yapmayacağiz.* (çok: o-ö)

These phonetic mistakes occurred because the students had negative transfers from the languages they used as native and other foreign languages, and they did not know the rules of the target language. The letters (ı, ö, ü, ğ) and sounds (/u/, /ø/, /y/, /u/) that exist in the Latin-based Turkish alphabet but not in the other languages known by these students were often miswritten, and they were also pronounced incorrectly in speaking practices. It was determined that the students made mistakes more frequently when they were confronted with new letters and sounds for the first time.

Findings on Syntactic Mistakes of Tunisian Students

Table 5. Syntactic mistakes.

Type of Miswriting	Frequency <i>f</i>	Percentage %
Mistakes in words' locations	19	36.5%
Compound mistakes	19	36.5%
Non-canonical sentence structure	8	15.3%
Subject-verb disagreement	6	11.5%
Total	52	100%

As presented in Table 5, the students made 19 mistakes involving the incorrect location of words in sentences, equaling 36.53% of all syntactic mistakes. This was followed by 19 compound mistakes equaling 36.53%, 8 usages of non-canonical sentence structure equaling 15.38%, and 6 cases of subject-verb disagreement equaling 11.53%, for a total of 52 syntactic mistakes. It can be concluded that students generally used language(s) with syntax considerably different from that of Turkish, and this increased their numbers of syntactic mistakes.

Each type of syntactic mistake is presented below with an example.

Mistakes in words' locations:

P7: *Djerba'da çok harika deniz.* (Djarbe'de deniz çok harika.)

Compound mistakes:

P9: *Çünkü deniz sulu çok temiz.* (Çünkü denizin suyu çok temiz.)

Non-canonical sentence structure:

P11: *Birinci deniz gitticem arkadaşlerim birlikte.* (Arkadaşlarımla birlikte denize gideceğim.)

Subject-verb disagreement:

P35: *Annem yemek çok güzel yaptık.* (Annem çok güzel yemek yaptı.)

Findings on Semantic Mistakes of Tunisian Students

Table 6. Semantic mistakes.

Type of Miswriting	Frequency <i>f</i>	Percentage %
Usage of incorrect words	34	75.5%
Incomplete expression	5	11.1%
Usage of meaningless words	4	8.8%
Word repetition	2	4.4%
Total	45	100%

As presented in Table 6, the students made 34 mistakes that involved the usage of incorrect words, equaling 75.55% of all semantic mistakes. This was followed by 5 mistakes of incomplete expression equaling 11.11%, 4 mistakes of the usage of meaningless words equaling 8.88%, and 2 mistakes of word repetition equaling 4.44%, for a total of 45 semantic mistakes. Semantic mistakes originating from the use of incorrect words reflect the inadequacy of students' vocabularies at this level.

Each type of semantic mistake is presented below with an example.

Usage of incorrect words:

P23: *Hafta sonu sahilde yüziyorum.* (yürüyorum)

Incomplete expression:

P17: *Sonuncu ben çok mutlu.* (mutlu olacağım)

Usage of meaningless words

P2: *Çünkü ben pençine çok seviyorum.* ("pençine" does not mean anything)

Word repetition:

P8: *Türkiye'ye gidecektim, ama çünkü korona var.* (ama, çünkü: repeated conjunctions)

Discussion

Writing is a skill that is difficult and slow to improve in contrast to the ease of determining mistakes made in writing. Focusing on writing skills in foreign language teaching is not only closely associated with detecting mistakes easily; it also requires high-level thinking and the application of writing skills together with other skills. After determining the shortcomings and mistakes of students with writing exercises, the researcher or instructor will be able to not only evaluate that group but can also make preparations and arrangements for other similar groups. It will generally be found that students with the same native language, culture, or historical background have similar difficulties and make similar mistakes.

Improving writing skills and detecting mistakes are among the important points emphasized in teaching Turkish as a foreign language. Research similar to that presented here has been conducted in various countries at different levels for Turkish language learners (Büyükkiz & Hasırcı, 2013; Boylu, 2014; Tiryaki, 2017; Yağcı, 2017; Demiriz & Okur, 2019; Fidan, 2019; Hoşca, 2020; Şehitoğlu, 2020; Emek, 2021). In previous works, when the students' texts were examined in terms of

phonetics, misspellings, punctuation, syntax, and morphemic mistakes, results similar to those of the present study were obtained.

It was previously observed that mistakes are made in writing uppercase or lowercase letters, writing proper nouns and suffixes, and misspelling words, similar to the findings of the present study (Fidan, 2019; Arslan and Klicic, 2015). It was also determined that not enough attention is paid to the usage of apostrophes and commas in Turkish. Generally speaking, beginning students make many mistakes in writing words, and while they usually write frequently used punctuation marks like periods and commas correctly, there are more mistakes with apostrophes, semicolons, and hyphens at the beginner level.

It was determined that students learning Turkish as a foreign language generally have problems in correctly using certain letters, such as choosing between *ı-i*, *u-ü*, *o-ö*, *a-e*, *ş-ç*, or *d-t* in terms of phonetics. Furthermore, vowel and consonant harmonies are not fully understood or sufficiently applied as important rules by these students (Yağcı, 2017; Emek, 2021; Hoşça, 2020). Likewise, in the present study, it was determined that the letters *ı-i*, *u-ü*, *o-ö*, and *d-t* were often miswritten while the letters *ş-ç* and *a-e* were miswritten less often.

It was observed that students made morphemic mistakes in writing and using suffixes. Using noun case suffixes instead of others, using no suffixes, and inappropriately using plural suffixes after plural adjectives have been reported as common mistakes by other researchers (Büyükkiz & Hasırcı, 2013; Boylu, 2014; Tiryaki, 2017). Similarly, it was seen that students miswrote noun cases, plurals, and verbal suffixes generally as a result of negative transfers from their native or other foreign languages.

The students made mistakes in subject-verb agreement, formed compounds with incorrect suffixes, and used words' locations incorrectly in syntax, which are problems reported to be encountered frequently (Demiriz & Okur, 2019; Fidan, 2019; Şehitoğlu, 2020; Emek, 2021). It was observed that mistakes in misusing words' locations and writing and forming compounds incorrectly were encountered more frequently than problems with subject-verb agreement and non-canonical sentence formation.

Semantic mistakes have not usually been discussed within an independent category in examinations of students' writings errors; rather, the emphasis has generally been on the use of incorrect words, and this type of writing error is typically presented within the categories of syntax, misspellings, or others (Büyükkiz & Hasırcı, 2013; Boylu, 2014; Şehitoğlu, 2020; Emek, 2021). However, as presented in Table 6, students' correct usages of meaningful sentences or words that complete sentences meaningfully cannot be evaluated as examples of spelling or syntactic mistakes.

Accordingly, Demiriz and Okur (2019) chose to present semantic mistakes within a separate category. The semantic mistakes in the present study were presented among the subcategories of the usage of incorrect words, incomplete expression, word repetition, and the usage of meaningless words.

Previous research has been conducted about writing errors in the categories of spelling and punctuation, morphemic mistakes, syntactic mistakes, and phonetic mistakes among learners of Turkish as a foreign language. However, it cannot be said that there is a standard approach to such evaluations even if some categories are commonly used in evaluating students' texts. Therefore, there is not yet a common view of these aforementioned types of mistakes and experiences. Long-term and wide-scale studies must be pursued to support the necessary program arrangements, the training of students, the preparation of resources, and the planning of classroom instruction considering national, regional, cultural, and historical discrepancies in the teaching of Turkish as a foreign language.

Conclusions and Suggestions

The findings obtained after examining the writing errors of 40 learners of Turkish as a foreign language at the A1 level can be summarized as follows.

When miswritings in Tunisian students' Turkish texts were evaluated in general, it was determined that the students made 206 spelling mistakes, equaling 39.84% of the total. This was respectively followed by 119 morphemic mistakes equaling 23.01%, 95 phonetic mistakes equaling 18.37%, 52 syntactic mistakes equaling 10.05%, and 45 semantic mistakes equaling 8.70%, for a total of 517 writing errors.

The students made 68 spelling errors equaling 33% of all spelling-related errors. This was followed by 58 misusages of tense suffixes equaling 28.05%, 50 misusages of uppercase and lowercase letters equaling 24.27%, 45 misusages of punctuation marks equaling 21.84%, and 5 words written without necessary spaces equaling 2.42%, for a total of 206 spelling mistakes.

The students made 37 errors involving the misuse of dative case suffixes equaling 31.09% of all morphemic mistakes. This was followed by 22 misusages of accusative case suffixes equaling 18.48%, 15 misusages of other suffixes equaling 12.60%, 13 misusages of possessive suffixes equaling 10.92%, 10 misusages of plural suffixes equaling 8.40%, 9 misusages of locative case suffixes equaling 7.56%, 7 misusages of verbals equaling 5.88%, and 6 other writing errors equaling 5.04%, for a total of 119 morphemic mistakes.

The students made 51 errors that involved using the letter "i" instead of "ı," equaling 53.68% of all phonetic mistakes. This was followed by 13 cases of using the letter "e" instead of "i" equaling 13.68%, 9 cases of using the letter "u" instead of "ü" equaling 9.46%, 5 cases of using the letter "d"

instead of “t” equaling 5.26%, 4 cases of using the letter “t” instead of “d” equaling 4.21%, and 13 other errors equaling 13.68%, for a total of 95 phonetic errors.

The students made 19 mistakes of using words in the wrong locations, equaling 36.53% of all syntactic mistakes. This was followed by 19 compound mistakes equaling 36.53%, 8 non-canonical sentence structures equaling 15.38%, and 6 incidences of subject-verb disagreement equaling 11.53%, for a total of 52 syntactic mistakes.

The students made 34 mistakes that involved using incorrect words, equaling 75.55% of all semantic mistakes. This was followed by 5 mistakes of incomplete expression equaling 11.11%, 4 cases of using meaningless words equaling 8.88%, and 2 cases of erroneous word repetition equaling 4.44%, for a total of 45 semantic mistakes.

According to the data obtained from the analysis of texts written by Turkish language learners at the A1 level in the April 9 Faculty of Human and Social Sciences of Tunis University, Tunisian students, as native speakers of Arabic who also regularly use French, English, German, or Spanish have difficulties in using the letters “ı,” “i,” “u,” “ü,” “o,” “ö,” “t,” and “d” in Turkish. Their learning is impacted by negative transfers from their previously known languages, and the influence of English and French can particularly be observed.

The students were not familiar with Turkish, an agglutinative language in which suffixes are used intensely; as a result, they had difficulties in forming sentences or word groups and using suffixes correctly. Learning Turkish, which has a different language structure compared to Arabic and French, is challenging in terms of negative transfers and morphemic mistakes. Negative transfers occur in forming compounds and canonical sentences.

It is normal for students at both the A1 and C1 levels to make mistakes while writing; native speakers also make mistakes while writing. However, the mistakes seen among non-native speakers may become permanent if they are not addressed in classroom settings. Furthermore, it is difficult to detect and correct such errors for beginning students. More detailed research on the shortcomings and mistakes identified in students’ writing samples would be of significant value in improving the outcomes of foreign language learners.

Written texts are unique individual products, although written mistakes can be generalized according to specific nationalities, regions, and societies. This is confirmed by both the present study and the relevant literature. Accordingly, it would be helpful to evaluate and examine studies on writing errors while planning the teaching of Turkish as a foreign language; in this process, both learners and teachers would benefit. Determining the mistakes that might occur more often for students from particular geographical, cultural, and language backgrounds would also help in

determining the educational processes, lesson plans, and resources as teachers prepare, deliver, and evaluate their courses with these differences in mind.

Suggestions

Based on the collection and evaluation of data in the present research, the following suggestions can be made:

Standardization should be ensured by developing criteria for detecting miswritings in the teaching of Turkish as a foreign language.

Teaching should be carried out while evaluating spelling errors in terms of letters, words, sentences, and text dimensions in line with the needs of the students.

Many more activities and studies should be undertaken to reinforce the correct usage of frequently miswritten vowels such as *ı, i, u, ü, o,* and *ö* and consonants *d, t, ç,* and *ş*.

The understanding of Turkish syntax should be supported with sentences of different lengths and difficulties, especially among beginning students.

Research on writing errors and error analyses in teaching Turkish as a foreign language should be carried out at all levels.

Studies conducted among different cultures, languages, and countries should be grouped in an effort to understand which mistakes arise most often from which populations.

Programs, materials, and processes should always be regulated according to the country, region, language, and culture by evaluating practical student data.

Materials prepared for the audiences with the careful evaluation of previous mistakes should be reviewed again or redesigned as needed.

Teachers should participate in all stages of language learning, from detecting basic mistakes to arranging further educational processes. Such efforts will dramatically increase the success of both students and teachers.

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