Evaluation of written expression of A1 level Kyrgyz students learning Turkey's Turkish during the pandemic period

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ABSTRACT

The fundamental skills in language teaching are reading, listening, speaking and writing. It is important to establish links with other language skill areas in the development of writing skills. In this study, it was aimed to analyze the writing skills of Kyrgyz students studying distance learning at A1 level during the pandemic. 28 Kyrgyz students participated in the study. In this context, it was desired to determine the most common mistakes in written expression in order to evaluate the students' habits of using Turkey's Turkish language structures at A1 level. The data in the study were generated by having the students write a self-introductory article. In this framework, descriptive analysis was used in this study designed with qualitative research model. The data were collected through the writings uploaded on the web interface of Kyrgyzstan-Turkey Manas University. The instructor took the data from the E-Course Distance Education Portal tool and analyzed them in order. Based on the writing assignments in the study, errors originating from the students were evaluated and interpreted. These errors were categorized as phonetics, morphology and spelling. As a result of the research, it was determined that students made negative transfers with the influence of their mother tongue. However, it was supported that the instructor should keep the motivation of the student high with the role of a guide in the language teaching process and the materials that attract the student's interest in the distance education process should be more involved in the learning-teaching environment. In this context, it is assumed that the results of the study will contribute to teaching Turkey's Turkish to Kyrgyz.

Keywords: Teaching Turkey's Turkish to Kyrgyz, writing skills, written expression, language structures.

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INTRODUCTION

Writing is a long-term process in which learners have to order many sentences that are related to each other in accordance with the rules of grammar (Ungan, 2007: 462). In the teaching of the target language at A1 level, it can be defined as the ability to write simple and short texts related to daily life based on basic language structures and vocabulary. The student's interests and needs play an important role in the development of this process.

Writing is a skill that students struggle with in language teaching. Some students may experience fear about the writing process due to reasons such as fear of being criticized and feeling of failure. Moreover, a student who is learning Turkish at A1 level may experience insecurity because he/she has not learned the target language sufficiently and may avoid expressing himself/herself in writing. Furthermore, some students may find writing skills boring compared to other reading, listening and speaking skills because they do not like writing in their mother tongue. As Çakır (2010: 166) states, writing skill in foreign language teaching is the most difficult skill for students and teachers. Students are expected to use two of the four basic skills, speaking and writing, in order to see what and how much they have learned and to evaluate this process. Of these two skills, it is a known fact that writing is the skill that students have difficulty with.

While doing so, foreign language learners are required

to systematically express writing, which is a system in which verbal expressions are coded with symbols. Therefore, as Tiryaki (2013: 39) states, writing education has an important place in language learning and teaching skills. It is an issue that needs attention in terms of determining the deficiencies of foreign students in language education in a concrete way and giving them correct feedback. In addition, as Ak Başoğul and Can (2014: 102) state, writing not only enables students to measure their own language level but also enables foreign language instructors to make evaluations. For this reason, the fact that writing is a source of feedback should be accepted and this skill should be given the necessary importance.

Boylu (2014: 338), in his research examining the writing problems of Iranian students at the basic level, emphasized that this skill is neglected both inside and outside the classroom because writing is a difficult process. İnan (2014: 261), in his research in which he analyzed the written expressions of 71 B2 level students learning Turkish as a foreign language in the context of error analysis, stated that the development or improvement of this skill is left to the end for various reasons. He stated that the main reason for this is that speaking competence and listening comprehension are understood as indicators of knowing a foreign language. In addition to these studies, Yağmur Şahin (2013, 446) explained that writing, which means that many disciplines work together, is perhaps the first of the most difficult areas in foreign language teaching.

The grammatical dimension is also a determining factor in the writing process. While the use of language in accordance with grammatical rules is not a determining criterion in speaking, the application of the rules of language in writing is more prominent. The grammatical dimension is interpreted with different criteria in speaking and writing. While grammar is pushed to the background in the act of speaking, which focuses on providing communication, the permanence of writing in writing brings grammar to the fore (Genç, 2017: 34). As Bölükbaş (2011: 1358) states, by comparing the mother tongue and the target language, the difficulties that students may encounter during their learning of the target language can be predicted in advance. Knowing the difficulties that students will face in advance can prevent making mistakes. In addition, as Subaşı (2010: 9) states, mistakes made in any language, regardless of the language, not only show how much the learner has learned but also show the instructor which subjects he/she should emphasize. If the student learns the rules used in the language correctly, he/she can put it into a grammatically meaningful format.

When the literature is examined, studies examining the written expression of students learning Turkey's Turkish as a foreign language (Genç İlter, 2014; Çetinkaya, 2015; Balcı, 2016; Çerçi, Derman, and Bardakçı (2016); Çetinkaya, Bayat, and Alaca (2016); Boylu, Güney, and Özyalçın 2017; Demiriz and Okur, 2019; Akkaya and Erol, 2019; Çangal, 2020; Emek 2021; İltar, 2021; Çangal and Kıribiş 2021; Arat 2021) were identified. The target audience of most of these studies is in the field of Turkey's Turkish as a foreign language. It is thought that this research, which aims to determine the writing teaching process of Kyrgyz students studying at A1 level during the pandemic process, will contribute to teaching Turkish to Kyrgyz. In this framework, it was aimed to measure the ability of Kyrgyz students studying at the Language Preparatory Department of Kyrgyzstan-Turkey Manas University to use language structures. In this context, the sentences given by the students to the writing instructions were used.

METHOD

In this section, information about the research model, research group, data collection and data analysis is presented.

Research model

In this study, qualitative research was taken as a basis. Qualitative research can be defined as research in which qualitative data collection methods such as observation, interview and document analysis are used and a qualitative process is followed to reveal perceptions and events realistically and holistically in a natural environment (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2021: 37). The research is limited to Kyrgyz students studying at the Language Preparatory Department of Kyrgyzstan-Turkey Manas University.

Population and sample

The participants of the study were twenty-eight Kyrgyz students at A1 level studying at Kyrgyzstan-Turkey Manas University in the fall semester of the 2020-2021 academic year. The research group consists of a total of 28 students, 20 female and 8 male.

Data collection

The data of the study were obtained through a written assignment in order to determine the negative transfers from the mother tongue in the written expressions of Kyrgyz students while learning Turkey's Turkish, and to identify their deficiencies and errors in language structures. The data were collected by uploading the texts on the web interface of Kyrgyzstan-Turkey Manas University. The instructor took the data from the E-Course Distance Education Portal tool and analyzed them in order. In this framework, the students' written expression papers were read, the negative transfers were identified with a red pen and these sentences were transferred to the computer

environment. Coding was performed on the raw data transferred to the computer environment.

Data analysis

Since the research was carried out as a qualitative study, qualitative data analysis was utilized. Content analysis was used to analyze the data obtained from the writing assignments of 28 Kyrgyz students at A1 level studying during the pandemic period. Content analysis requires in-depth analysis of the collected data and allows the emergence of themes and dimensions that were not previously evident (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2021: 243). With the codes determined, negative transfers from the mother tongue in phonetics, morphology and spelling were categorized. The errors present in the writing content have been evaluated within the specified theme headings. The provided codings were matched with the themes, and conclusions were drawn by interpreting the findings. At the end of the research, the study has been supported by including evaluations of similar studies conducted on the subject.

FINDINGS

In this section, explanations of the findings are given.

Phonetic errors

Mistakes about vowel harmony

Kısaca okuldayken *hayatim* güzel geçiyor. (In short, I have a good *life* at school.)
Onları *hatirlamak* güzel bir şey. (It is good to *remember* them.)
Canim annem benim en yakın arkadaşım. (*My dear* mom is my best friend.)
Kyrgyz Turkish and Turkey's Turkish have different alphabets. While Kyrgyz Turkish is written with Cyrillic alphabet, Turkish is written with Latin alphabet. Kyrgyz students are usually introduced to English with the Latin alphabet. For this reason, it may have been transferred from English as *hayatim* instead of *hayatım*, *hatirlamak* instead of *hatırlamak*.
Benim en büyük *hayalım* doktor olmak. Bu *hayalım* için ben öğrenciyim. (My biggest dream is to become a doctor. I am a student for this dream.)

Some words in Turkey's Turkish do not conform to the language structure. The word "dream" is one of these exceptional words. In the sentence above, the student wrote hayalım instead of hayalim. For this reason, it is seen that he/she could not comprehend this exceptional word.

Mistakes related to haplology

Arkadaşlarımla hafta sonları *şehire* gidiyorduk. (My friends and I used to go to the *city* on weekends.)
Bir arkadaşım *şehire* gitti. (A friend of mine went to the *city.*)

In Turkey's Turkish, when a suffix beginning with a vowel is added to some loanwords of Arabic origin, the narrow vowel falls. For example, when +a/+e orientation case suffix is added to the word "şehir", the narrow vowel falls and becomes "şehre". However, such a language structure is not found in Kyrgyz Turkish. The equivalent of the word city in Turkey's Turkish is "şaar" in Kyrgyz Turkish. When the directional case is added to this word, it becomes "şaarga". For this reason, students may write with a wrong habit under the influence of their mother tongue.

Mistakes in morphology

Mistakes related to the use of the plural suffix:

Onun için çok *dilleri* öğreniyorum. (That is why I am learning many *languages.*)
Şimdi çok *planlarım* var. (Now I have many *plans.)*
Burada çok *arkadaşlarla* tanıştım. (I met many *friends* here.)
Çevremizde çok *arkadaşlarımız* vardır. (We have many *friends* around us.)
Gelecekte ise ben çok *ülkelerde* yaşamak istiyorum. (In the future I want to live in many *countries.*)
In Turkey's Turkish, the suffix +lar/+ler is not attached to the noun after the word "çok", which indicates number and quantity. For example, the word "çok" in the first sentence gives the meaning of a large number of languages. For this reason, the word "çok" is sufficient to indicate a number in the sentence. However, some of the students who participated in the study used the word "çok" and the plural suffix together. This is a very common misuse habit. Most of the students use many and plural suffixes together as in the sentences above. In order to reduce this kind of negative transfer, students need to practice. In this context, it is important that the instructor provides appropriate learning opportunities for students to practice the language.

Mistakes related to the complement suffix:

Benin aklıma çok şey geliyordu. (*I* was thinking of so many things.)

In the sentence above, a student participating in the study wrote benin instead of benim. In Turkey's Turkish, ownership is expressed as benim, senin, onun, bizim, sizin, onların. In Kyrgyz Turkish, it is meniŋ, senin, anıŋ, bizdiŋ, sizdiŋ/silerdiŋ, alardıŋ. In order for students to learn

"benim", they can practice by saying things that belong to them.
Hayattın en iyi, en güzel anılarını çocukluğumuzda yaşıyoruz. (We have the best and most beautiful memories *of life* in our childhood.)

In this sentence, the reason why the student writes "hayattın" instead of "hayatın" is the language transfer with the effect of Kyrgyz Turkish phonetics. In Turkey's Turkish, if the complement ends with a consonant, it receives the suffix +ın/+in/+un/+ün, while in Kyrgyz Turkish, if the noun ends with a hard consonant, it receives the suffix +tın/+tin/+tun/+tün. In order to prevent students from making negative transfers in this way, it is necessary to make them aware of common mistakes and to focus on exercises.

Mistakes related to the indicative case:

Ben arkadaşlarımın *hepsisin* seviyorum ve güveniyorum. (I love and trust *all* my friends.)
Öğretmenimiz ORT *sınavın* anlattı. (Our teacher explained the ORT *exam*.)

In the sentences above, two students did not use the indicative suffix in the sentence as required. In Turkey's Turkish, the indicative suffix comes after the pronoun n. For example, in the sentence "Ben onun suyunu içtim." "(I drank his water)" is correctly conjugated as suyunu. In Kyrgyz Turkish, however, there is no suffix of specification after the pronoun n in the third person singular. For this reason, the correct usage of this sentence in Kyrgyz Turkish is "Men anın suusun içtim" "(I drank his water)" Based on these sentences, two students did not bring the indicative suffix by making a negative transfer from their mother tongue. In order to prevent this negative transfer, sample sentences such as "Ablamın yemeğini yiyorum" "(I eat my sister's food.)", "Çocuğun elmasını görüyorum" "(I see the child's apple.)" can be given as examples of how the indicative suffix is used in the 3rd person singular and students can be given the opportunity to construct their sentences.

Spelling mistakes

Mistakes related to the use of punctuation marks

Benim Hayattaki Yerim. (My Place in Life.)
Yaz Tatili. (Summer vacation.)

The sentences above are examples of two students' titles in their written expression. Two students put a full stop at the end of the title. The fact that these two students put a full stop at the end of the title may be due to a language transfer error. Students can put a full stop at the end of the

title in the writing assignment in Turkish teaching with the influence of their mother tongue. If the instructor teaches correct title writing by showing example titles, this may reduce the negative transfer. For this reason, it is very useful to give feedback after checking the composition assignments given to the students.

25. Temmuz'da ben annemle pazara gittim. (On *July 25th*, I went to the market with my mother.)
Beni annem *9. ağustosta* doğurdu. (My mother gave birth to me on *August 9th*.)

In the sentences above, two students put a full stop after the numbers while writing the date. In Kyrgyz Turkish, this full stop after the numbers carries the meaning of the suffix +(I)ncI. For this reason, two students applied the punctuation habit in Kyrgyz Turkish in Turkey's Turkish under the influence of their mother tongue.

"Evet hatırladım. Böyle değildim, farklıydım." diye heyecanla anlatıyoruz. ("Yes, I remember, I wasn't like this, I was different." We tell excitedly.)
Herkes *"Sen iyi çiziyorsun."* diyor. (Everyone says, "You draw well.")

While double quotation marks are used in the two sentences above, the first one is used below. The reason for this may be that the two students transfer their knowledge from their past learning process to Turkey's Turkish. The instructor can help the students to make correct quotations by making them practice quoting.
Ben *Kırgızistanda* doğdum. (I was born in *Kyrgyzstan*)

Mistakes related to the use of ordinal numbers

Ödevleri *birinçi* gün benim evimde yapıyoruz.
(We do homework at my house on the *first* day.)
Birinci sınıftan *beşinçi* sınıfa kadar birlikte okuyorduk.
(We were studying in one class from first to *fifth* grade.)

In Turkey's Turkish, the suffix (+I)ncI is attached to number names, while in Kyrgyz Turkish it is (+I)nçI. For this reason, the student wrote "birinçi" instead of "birinci" in the sentence for the word ranking. In addition, while in Turkey's Turkish it meets the suffix ".".(+I)ncI, in Kyrgyz Turkish it meets the suffix "-"(+I)nçI. It will facilitate the teaching if the instructor shows both the usage and pronunciation of the order words in Turkey's Turkish.

Mistakes related to misspelling of words

Biri birimizi çok iyi anlıyoruz.(We understand *each other* very well)

A student used the pronoun "birbiri", which is taught at B1

level in Turkish teaching, in his sentence. The reason for this may be the similarities between Kyrgyz Turkish and Turkey's Turkish. However, the equivalent of each other pronoun in Kyrgyz Turkish is biri-biri. In this context, it can be said that the student transferred his Kyrgyz Turkish habit to Turkey's Turkish with the influence of his mother tongue. In this context, the instructor showing the correct spelling in Turkey Turkish and giving feedback to the student will reinforce the correct spelling.

Bir az tembelim ama başarılara ulaşmak için çok çalışırım. (I am *a bit* lazy but I work hard to achieve success.)

The reason why the student writes the word "biraz" as a "bir az" is again language transfer. The Kyrgyz equivalent of the word "biraz" in Turkey's Turkish is "bir az" in Kyrgyz Turkish.

Sadece ben değil, *herkez* bunu ister. (Not just me, *everyone* wants that.)

In the sentence above, the word is misspelled. If the instructor gives students more practice on common vocabulary words, it will reinforce the student's learning of the word more easily.

Mistakes related to the spelling of capital letters

Onlar *türk, özbek ve kırgızlardır.* (They are *Turks, Uzbeks and Kyrgyz.*)

In the sentence above, the student wrote the names of nationalities in lowercase. In Kyrgyz Turkish, nationality names are not capitalized. For this reason, the student made a negative transfer with the influence of his mother tongue. After teaching the nationality names with the help of visuals, the instructor can ask the students to write these names. What should be considered here is that the instructor should guide the students during the process and remind them of these usages regularly and consciously.

Ben *rusça biliyorum.* (I know *Russian.*)

Language names, like nationality names, are not capitalized in Kyrgyz Turkish. For this reason, the student has made a negative transfer from his mother tongue.

Mistakes in the spelling of the /k/ sound

Şimdi de orada biyoloji bölümünde *окuyorum.* (Now I am *studying* biology there.)
İkiyüzlü insanları sevmem ve alıngan değilim. (I don't like *hypocritical* people and I am not touchy.)
Benim hobim yabancı dil *öğrenmeкtir.* (My hobby is *learning* foreign languages.)

In the sentences above, two students wrote the sound /k/ as in the Cyrillic alphabet. While the vertical line of the /k/ sound in the Latin alphabet is long, the vertical line of the /к/ sound in the Cyrillic alphabet is short. In this framework, the instructor's practicing correct writing and giving feedback to the student instantly will prevent the student from making a negative transfer.

Mistakes in the spelling of the /y/ sound

Уeni insanlarla tanışırken çok utangaç oluyorum. (I am very shy when meeting *new* people.)
Уeni şeyleri çabuk öğreniyorum. (I learn *new things* quickly.)

In the sentence above, two students wrote the sound /y/ as /У/ at the beginning of the sentence. The reason for this can be shown as the big У sound in the Cyrillic alphabet. Thus, it can be said that the student made a negative transfer from past language experiences. In this context, it is vital that the teacher conducts the process with understanding in order to give students confidence in writing correctly.

The conclusion reached in line with the findings of the study is shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Distribution of written expression mistakes.

		Number of incorrect
Phonetics	Mistakes about vowel harmony	4
	Mistakes about haplology	2
Morphology	Mistakes about the use of the plural suffix	5
	Mistakes about the complement suffix	2
	Mistakes about the indicative case	2
Spelling	Mistakes in the use of punctuation marks	7
	Mistakes related to the use of ordinal numbers	2
	Mistakes related to misspelling of words	3
	Mistakes about the spelling of capital letters	2
	Mistakes in the spelling of the /k/ sound	3
	Mistakes in the spelling of the /y/ sound	2
Total		34

When Table 1 is examined, 34 mistakes in total, 6 in phonology, 9 in morphology and 19 in spelling, were identified based on the data obtained from the written expressions of Kyrgyz students learning Turkish at A1 level. Students made the most mistakes in spelling. For this reason, the instructor should give more feedback on writing activities. The instructor can show the correct spelling through sample writings. In addition, since language teaching is a whole, speaking activities can be done to improve language skills. Büyükikiz and Hasırcı (2013) identified a total of 1282 mistakes in the written expression of foreign students learning Turkish. They concluded that the most mistakes were spelling and punctuation mistakes with a rate of 44.4% (570). In this direction, it is seen that the results of Büyükikiz and Hasırcı's (2013) study overlap with the results of this study.

DISCUSSION

In this study, the written expressions of Kyrgyz students studying at A1 level were analyzed in the categories of phonetics, morphology and spelling. It is observed that some studies in the literature have similar results to the results obtained in the research. In Ak Başoğul and Can's (2014) study, spelling mistakes were frequently encountered in the papers of Balkan students. It was determined that there was confusion in the spelling of the /y/ sound in sound-based spelling errors. Similarly, Boylu (2014) stated in his study that some students had difficulty because Turkish and Persian have different alphabets. Bawer (2022), in his study conducted with 14 Uzbek participants of Afghanistan origin, determined that misspelling of words was the most common among student mistakes. The results of Ak Başoğul and Can (2014), Boylu (2014) and Bawer (2022) overlap with the results of this study. Bölükbaş (2011), on the other hand, analyzed the written expression of Arab students and found that most of the mistakes were made in spelling (54.58%) and concluded that 62.2% of these mistakes were caused by negative transfer.

Qualitative findings of the study reveal that students make negative transfers due to the influence of their mother tongue. Similarly, Subaşı (2010) found in his study that Arab students' errors in their compositions were largely the result of the student's use of the language structure of their mother tongue in the target language. Boylu and Başar (2015) also state that Iranian Turks should be given feedback by instantly correcting the errors that occur as a result of translation from the mother tongue during expression. Similarly, Arslan and Klıcıc (2015) researched the writing skills of 15 students learning Turkish in Bosnia and Herzegovina. As a result of the research, it was concluded that the students could not translate Turkish sentences and expressions into Turkish correctly because they thought with the logic of their mother tongue. In addition, Çangal (2021) pointed out in

his study, in which 30 Algerian students were sampled, that students learning Turkish are prone to adapt their habits in their mother tongue to the target language. Aytan and Güney (2015) emphasized the importance of the relationship between students' mother tongue and the second language they are trying to learn. While the similarities between the first language and the second language have a positive effect on the language learning process (translation), the differences between the first language and the second language have a negative effect (interference). Fidan (2019) also analyzed the written expression texts of foreign students learning Turkish in terms of spelling and punctuation. As a result of the analysis, he made the following findings: "Mother tongue is actively involved in all cognitive and emotional learning processes of individuals. The individual thinks, decides and feels in his/her mother tongue. This situation also shows its effect when learning a foreign language. This emotional and cognitive effect causes the individual to directly transfer the rules of his/her mother tongue to the new language learning process while learning a new language. It is expected that students will make mistakes in this respect at the beginning of their language-learning process. The important thing is that the individual can express himself/herself correctly and effectively." In this context, when the related research are analyzed, it is seen that the results of this research overlap with many researches.

According to the findings, three students used the sound /i/ instead of the sound /ı/ in the Turkish alphabet. For example, the sentence "Canim annem benim en yakın arkadaşım." "(My dear mom is my best friend.)" can be given as an example. The reason for this may be that the students were introduced to the Latin alphabet for the first time in English. Therefore, they may have used the /i/ sound instead of the /ı/ sound with the habit brought by the knowledge of past learning while learning Turkish. Şengül (2014) examined the alphabet problem experienced by 45 students learning Turkish as a foreign language and concluded that foreign students using the Arabic alphabet sometimes used vowels interchangeably and sometimes did not use them at all, and that foreign students in the study group could not understand the sounds of ö, ü, ş, ç, ı, ğ, which are specific to the Turkish alphabet and had difficulty in using them. It is seen that the findings of similar studies in the literature and the use of /i/ sound instead of /ı/ sound in this study support each other. In addition, Yılmaz (2015), in his study examining the spelling mistakes of 27 Turkish as a foreign language learners, found that students generally tended not to put full stops on dotted letters and to put full stops on non-dotted letters. In this framework, it is understood that such difficulties are common and that the instructor should pay attention when teaching correct spelling rules.

When the sentences of the students participating in the study are analyzed in terms of phonics, it is seen that the mistakes are realized as vowel harmony and vowel drop.

These findings coincide with the findings in Emiroğlu's (2014) study.

When the sentences of the students participating in the study were analyzed in terms of morphology, it was determined that mistakes were made in the use of the plural suffix, the complement suffix and the indicative case suffix. The reasons for this were shown as the students' negative transfer due to their mother tongue and previous knowledge. According to the results of Duman (2013), phonetic and morphological differences between Kyrgyz Turkish and the target language cause students to make negative transfers. In this context, when the results are evaluated, it is noteworthy that the findings obtained overlap with other important research on writing skills.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In this study conducted at Kyrgyzstan-Turkey Manas University to determine language structures that are incorrectly transferred from the native language to the target language in written narratives of Kyrgyz students learning Turkish at the A1 level, and to identify deficiencies and errors in language structures, it was found that negative transfers from the native language have an impact on students' learning of the target language.

Based on the results obtained from the research, the following suggestions can be made:

• It is usual for students to make such mistakes at A1 level. For this reason, it is extremely important to have students practice regularly. When a student makes a mistake, the instructor should correct it, show the correct way and vocalize it. In this way, the student can reduce the transfer from his/her mother tongue.
• Writing activities can be organized in groups to improve students' writing skills. For this, it is important that the instructor provides students with the opportunity to practice after showing the relevant topic.
• The instructor can organize writing competitions with colored paper and pencils. This can make the writing process more interesting for students.
• Language structures can be balanced with the traditions and customs specific to Turkish culture.

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