Language Interference on English: Transfer on the Vocabulary, Tense and Preposition Use of Freshmen Turkish EFL Learners

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Abstract

In this study, the degree to which Turkish EFL learners make use of L1 transfer was examined in terms of vocabulary use, use of prepositions and the use of Simple Present Tense. The study was conducted by having participants perform a translation task and take a translation test. Results showed that most L1 interference took place in the use of prepositions and vocabulary following it. Participants showed more signs of transfer while they were making guesses on the meaning of given vocabulary items, phrases or sentences. The least rate of L1 transfer was observed in the use of Simple Present Tense.

Key words: L1 transfer, language interference, cross-linguistic influence, errors

Apstrakt

U ovom radu ispitaćemo u kojoj meri turski učenici stranog jezika koriste transfer maternjeg jezika po pitanju upotrebe vokabulara, predloga i sadašnjeg vremena (The Simple Present Tense). Studija je izvedena tako što su učesnici imali prevod kao zadatak i tako što su radili test na kome su imali prevod. Rezultati pokazuju da se većina transfera iz maternjeg jezika dešava pri upotrebi predloga, a zatim pri upotrebi vokabulara. Znaci transfera kod učenika su uočljiviji kada su učesnici pogađali značenja datog vokabulara, fraza i rečenica. Najmanji transfer maternjeg jezika je primećen pri upotrebi sadašnjeg vremena (The Present Simple Tense).

Ključne reči: L1 transfer, transfer jezika, među-lingvistički uticaj, greške

1. Introduction

The nature and extent of the influence of native language (L1) on L2 learning process have been debated in ESL and EFL contexts in the field of Second Language Acquisition (SLA) over the past four decades. Though there have been various discussions related to what "transfer" is or not, one of the most accepted definitions of the term "transfer"

is made by Odlin (Odlin, 1989) since this definition is regarded as broad enough to include different viewpoints related to "transfer". According to Odlin (Odlin, 1989, pg 27): "*transfer is the influence resulting from similarities and differences between the target language and any other language that has been previously (and perhaps imperfectly) acquired*". Transfer is also known as L1 interference, linguistic interference or cross-linguistic influence.

First language "interference" and "transfer" are sometimes used interchangeably and sometimes as two different terms. Interference is the automatic transfer, due to habit, of the surface structure of the first language onto the surface of the target language(Dulay, Burt & Krashen, 1982). Lott (Lott, 1983, p. 256) defines interference as *'errors in the learner's use of the foreign language that can be traced back to the mother tongue'*. As Lott (Lott, 1983) suggests, by analyzing the students' errors, teachers can begin to attribute a cause to an error with some degree of precision and find out whether, for example, mother tongue interference, or teaching techniques, or problems inherent in the target language are the major cause of their students' errors. Additionally, Ellis (Ellis, 1994) refers to interference as 'transfer', which he says is *'the influence that the learner's L1 exerts over the acquisition of an L2'*. He argues that

transfer is governed by learners' perceptions about what is transferable and by their stage of development in L2 learning. In learning a target language, learners construct their own interim rules (Selinker, 1971, Seligar, 1988 and Ellis, 1994) with the use of their L1 knowledge, but only when they believe it will help them in the learning task or when they have become sufficiently proficient in the L2 for transfer to be possible. In fact, the difference between the terms "interference" and "transfer" comes from the similarity or the difference in the structures of the two languages. According to Ellis (Ellis, 1994) two languages having distinct linguistic structures may result in a high frequency of errors in the target language which in turn indicates an interference of L1 on L2.As suggested by Gao (Gao, 2013), the learner who comes in contact with a foreign language may resort to his/her native language features to replace those difficulties in the target language.

One of the most important changes in second language researches has been the issue of "errors". Traditionally, learners' producing an ill-formed structure in target language was seen negatively and thus the teachers needed to correct such ill-formed structures as soon as possible. Among different methods in second language teaching, behaviorist theory views errors as a part of habit formation and they

should be corrected immediately in order not to be fossilized (Griffiths,2008)**.** However, some recent methods regard errors as an indicator of actual acquisition process in action (Yule, 1996**,** James, 1998**).**According to Harmer (2003), errors are part of the students' interlanguage, which is a developmental area of the learners and changes continuously until the learners become proficient in the language. Historically, in the 1950s and 1960s, it was considered that by comparing and contrasting the structures of L1 and the target language, errors would be easily predicted with the error analysis which saw a reaction in the 1970s claiming that the L2 was learned in the same way as the L1, and independently of it; however currently it is accepted that transfer occurs, but in a more complex way and it is not regarded as the source of errors only (Benson, 2002). As suggested by Benson (Benson, 2002), transfer can be facilitative (positive transfer), or transfer can result in avoidance if the structure of the target language does not exist in L1 and it can lead to different rates of development (p.68). Additionally, another phenomenon regarding L1 influence is the effect of L2 proficiency. The relationship between L2 proficiency and its effect on transfer is listed by Jarvis (Jarvis, 2000, p.246,247) as:

1. L1 influence *decreases* with increasing L2 proficiency.

2. L1 influence *increases* with increasing L2 proficiency.

3. L1 influence *remains constant* with increasing L2 proficiency.

4. L1 influence *ultimately decreases, but nonlinearly.*

5. L1 influence *ultimately increases, but nonlinearly.*

6. L1 influence *ultimately never decreases nor increases, but*

its presence continually fluctuates as L2 proficiency increases.

Arguments related to the term "transfer" mainly focus on "errors"; thus, all these views raised another important question: what is the distinction between errors and mistakes? According to Ellis (Ellis, 1994), an error takes place when the deviation arises as a result of lack of knowledge and he views mistakes as the result of problems that prevent learners from accessing their knowledge of a target language rule and cause them to fall back on some alternative, non-standard rule that they find easier to access. Ellis (Ellis, 1994) also refers to errors as gaps in the knowledge of the learners, which assumes that the learners 'system of knowledge is the source of the errors. Thus, errors are considered systematic and occur repeatedly. On the other hand, according to Corder (1967, cited by Ellis 2008), a

'mistake' is a deviation in learner language that occurs when learners fail to perform their competence. Within this point of view, mistakes as randomly occurring slips, unlike errors, are regarded as an indicator of performance.

It is assumed that the learner's mother tongue (MT) will positively or negatively affect his learning a foreign language in second language acquisition (SLA). When the learner's mother tongue and target language are similar, the native language will actively aid foreign language in learning that is in case of similarities between the native language and target language, the transfer functions positively, while in case of differences, it functions negatively. Considering that Turkish language belongs to the Altaic branch of the Ural-Altaic family of languages and English is a West Germanic language of Indo European family of languages, most learners are assumed to transfer linguistic structures in a negative way because of the distance between these two languages.

Through the language learning process, learners appear to rely on their mother tongue (L1) considering L1 facilitates L2 learning in that both languages have similarities with each other. However, these learners usually make use of at least three domains in terms of linguistic knowledge while acquiring the target language as (1) the L2-input in a natural L2 speaking or classroom based learning environment (2) the structures of their native language (L1); and (3) innate linguistic knowledge 7.

Learners appear to accumulate structural entities of English, but demonstrate difficulty in organizing this knowledge into appropriate, meaningful structures and there seems to be a significant gap between the accumulation and the organization of the knowledge. When writing or speaking in English, the target language (L2), Turkish students seem to rely on their Turkish language (L1) structures to produce written or spoken pieces. Thus, with this aim in mind, based on *the learners' level of English*, this study seeks answer to the following research question:

1- Based on language levels of students in English (elementary, pre-intermediate and intermediate), how does L1 transfer affect the use of English in terms of

    a. Vocabulary

    b. Prepositions

    c. Tense (Present Continuous Tense instead of Simple Present Tense)?

This study aims to investigate the effects of Turkish language on students' production of English; transfer on vocabulary, tense

and preposition use of students at a state university in Turkey.

2. Method

This research study was primarily designed as a descriptive study and therefore adopts a quantitative approach. In line with the approach, survey methodology was used to obtain the opinions of participants.

3. Setting and Participants

This study was conducted at a state university aiming to explore the degree to which L1 transfer was evident in producing vocabulary, tense and prepositional items in English. In the research, the degree of L1 transfer on vocabulary, preposition and tense was evaluated separately depending on the students' level of English. In the study, in order to investigate how L1 transfer was evident in English, 323 participants participated in the study at a state university in Turkey. The participants were randomly selected based on their language levels in English as Elementary, Pre-Intermediate and Intermediate level. The students receive English education in these levels under a program run by School of Foreign Languages and all the students use the same course book within the same framework. It has been an advantage for this study that using the same book in all English levels eliminates the risk of language transfer due to material use provided to students.

Table 1. Distribution of participants and their language levels (N=323)

		f	*%*
Age	*17-20*	*255*	*78.9*
	21-25	*68*	*21.1*
	Total	*323*	*100.0*
Gender	*Female*	*216*	*66.9*
	Male	*107*	*33.1*
	Total	*323*	*100.0*
Lang. Level	*Elementary*	*150*	*46.4*
	Pre-intermediate	*89*	*27.6*
	Intermediate	*84*	*26*
	Total	*323*	*100.0*

General characteristics of the participant English preparatory class students were investigated in terms of their age, gender, and their level of English. Of the 323 students 255 (29 %) were between the age of 17-20 and 68 (21,1%) were between the age of 21-25. Additionally, 216 (66,9%) were female and 107 (33,1 %) were male. As for the participants' level of English, nearly half of the participants (46,4 %) were Elementary level students, 27,6 % were pre-intermediate and 26 % were in intermediate level.

4. Data Collection

Initially, before constructing the items in the data collection tool in the form of a knowledge and translation test, a total of 90 students' assignments in their writing course were randomly English and analyzed for each level. The written assignments were collected and analyzed in the second semester to ensure that they all had acceptable knowledge and skills in L2 writing. When the academic year starts, students in preparatory classes are exposed to writing exercises embedded in the core language course in the first three months until the end of first semester. In the second term, writing course starts and they learn writing based on "process approach". During the academic year, the students are taught paragraph writing and paragraph types first, and then essay writing and essay types (Erarslan, 2011). Students' writing assignments both in the paragraph and in essay format were analyzed based on their transfer errors. After the analysis, their transfer errors were categorized and it was seen that three major errors were found to be in the vocabulary, tense and preposition use. Thus, for the actual study, based on their writing assignments, three parts were chosen as vocabulary, tense and preposition use. For the vocabulary and

preposition parts, the items were chosen from the students' writings. Moreover, those which were added for the actual study were chosen based on **"The General Service List (GSL)"**(West, 1953), which contains the most widely useful 2,000 word families in English. West (1953, cited in Fox, 1979) used a variety of criteria to select these words, including frequency, ease of learning, coverage of useful concepts, and stylistic level. In addition, Academic **Word List (AWL),** containing 570 words which appear with high frequency in academic textbooks across a range of disciplines was used as the vocabulary criteria. The AWL was created so that this word list could be used by students to learn the words most needed to study at universities (Coxhead, 2000).

After constructing the test items, to collect data, a form was developed having two parts: a translation part and a test part where the participants were provided 20 vocabulary items, 10 tense items and 10 preposition items in each part. In both parts, students were provided the same vocabulary, tense and preposition items.

All our participants were asked to complete a translation task having 20 vocabulary items, which mainly consisted of phrasal verbs, collocations and

compound words our students find difficult to understand, 10 phrases with prepositions and 10 sentences that require the use of Simple Present Tense. The participants were asked to translate these items into English. In this task another important point was that the participants were provided with two columns. They were asked to write their translations to the column with the heading "I know" if they were definitely certain about their response and they were asked to write their translation to the column with the heading "I guess" if they were not certain about their response but guessed that it should be such. The aim was to find out the rate of transfer occurred in guesses and in definitely known items. Transfer

items in the "I know" column would be interpreted as mistakes; whereas, the ones in the "I guess" column would be interpreted as transfer errors.

Immediately after the transfer task, participants were asked to take a translation test. In this test, the same items in the first part were asked, however, this time participants were provided with a correct translation and a literal translation of the items in the form of multiple choice items. Participants were asked to identify the choice they thought was the correct alternative. The aim of this test was to find out whether input would make any change in the rate of transfer items, if yes, in what way.

5. Procedure

The study was conducted in a state university in Turkey among students who have one year intensive English preparatory education. It was conducted in the first thirty minute of the course and participants were given brief information about what the aim of the study was and what they had to do while doing the tasks. They were specifically asked to write whatever they think as the English equivalents of the provided phrases in Turkish. In order to make the participants feel free in their responses, they were asked not to write their names on any of the tasks given. The study was conducted

in elementary, pre-intermediate and intermediate level classes at the same time.

6. Data Analysis

In analyzing the collected data, any kind of literal translation, either partial or complete, was accepted as language transfer in the vocabulary section. In the preposition section, any kind of literal translation, absence of preposition where needed, use of unnecessary preposition in order to replace a suffix in Turkish, and finally, any kind of word transformation to replace a suffix in Turkish was accepted as language transfer. In the tense section,

any use of Present Continuous Tense or attempt to use Present Continuous Tense; that is, using auxiliary verb in front of the main verb without adding the –ing or adding –ing without using 'auxiliary' in front of the main verb was accepted as language transfer.

The translation tasks and translation tests were evaluated separately. In the translation task, each transfer item the total number of questions answered in each section was identified. The same procedure was followed in the preposition section, tense section, "I know" section

and "I guess section". So, after each analysis, it was possible to see how many questions were answered by the participant in each section and how many of them were transfer items. The translation test was also checked in the same way. The number of answers given by the participant to each section and the transfer items in each section were carefully marked.

The results obtained from the research have been analyzed separately and calculated according to their percentage of transfer.

7. Results

1) Vocabulary Transfer of Elementary, Intermediate and Intermediate Level Students
a) Vocabulary Transfer of Elementary Level Students

Table 2. Transfer Evident in Vocabulary Items in Elementary Level of English

Average Transfer Rate	Average Test Items Answered	Total Percentage of Transfer
5,69	11,83	35%

At first, the data obtained were analyzed in terms of vocabulary, tense and preposition based on the participants' level of English. Elementary level students' responses in the tests related to vocabulary items analyzed and students answered an average of 11,83 vocabulary items out of 20 questions in translation part. Among vocabulary items answered, the transfer evident in vocabulary was 5,69 in average which was 35 % in total. Table 2 shows that students at university apply their knowledge from Turkish language to English in vocabulary choice which are mostly irrelevant to their English equivalents. Among vocabulary items where Turkish transfer was intensively applied are "Mutfak Robotu" which means "Food

Processor" in English. However, this word was mostly translated as "Kitchen Robot" as a direct translation and "Spor Ayakkabı" meaning "trainers" transferred as "Sports Shoes" by the students. Additionally, it is possible to say that the same case is true for "Köpek Balığı" meaning "Shark" in English. A majority amount of students translated it as "Dog Fish" just focusing on its Turkish equivalent word by word. One possible reason for such negative transfer is that words such as "köpek balığı" and "spor ayakkabı" are compound words in Turkish and students prefer using a compound translation in English. Their limited exposure to English may also be another reason for their incorrect transfer of vocabulary choice as they may still fail in mastery of target language.

b) Vocabulary Transfer of Pre-Intermediate Level Students

Table 3. Transfer Evident in Vocabulary Items among Pre-Intermediate Level Students

Average Transfer Rate	Average Test Items Answered	Total Percentage of Transfer
3,19	14,56	21,90%

When compared to transfer evident in vocabulary items according to Elementary Level of English(*see Table 2*.), transfer in vocabulary items according to Pre-intermediate level of English, students answered an average of 3,19 vocabulary items out of 20 questions in translation part. Among vocabulary items answered, the transfer evident in vocabulary was 14,56 in average which was 21,90 % totally. Table 3 shows that Pre-intermediate level students show less tendency to use Turkish vocabulary knowledge compared to Elementary students. The total amount of vocabulary transfer is 35% according to Elementary Level of English while it is 21,90 % totally according to Pre-intermediate level of English. However, the results here show that vocabulary transfer is still evident in both groups.

c) Vocabulary Transfer of Intermediate Level Students

Table 4. Transfer Evident in Vocabulary Items among Intermediate Level Students

Average Transfer Rate	Average Test Items Answered	Total Percentage of Transfer
4,21	14,86	28,33%

In terms of transfer in vocabulary items according to intermediate level of English, students answered an average of 4,21 vocabulary items out of 20 questions in translation part. Among vocabulary items answered, the transfer evident in vocabulary was 14,86 in average which was 28,33 % totally. Table 4 shows that intermediate students make more use of Turkish vocabulary knowledge than Pre-intermediate level students and less transfer compared to elementary students.

One of Studies related to L1 (Turkish) transfer to L2 was conducted by Erkaya (Erkaya, 2012) and in her study in which written texts of the participants in terms of errors were analyzed, it was the word choice appeared with the highest percentage as transfer error the students applied using their L1 knowledge. Additionally, according to another study focusing on written essays of the adult beginner Turkish students conducted by Kırkgöz (Kırkgöz, 2010), learners had mainly two types of errors as interlingual and intralingual errors and she suggests that one of major sources of student errors was result of L1 transfer. In her study, the words transferred from Turkish did not prevent the comprehension as Erkaya (Erkaya, 2012) mentions. Similarly, according to Karakas (n.d), Turkish students had serious problems in generating words and combining them into phrases and finally into sentences, which might range from a very simple to highly complex ones.

2) Preposition Transfer of Elementary, Intermediate and Intermediate Level Students
a) Preposition Transfer of Elementary Level Students

Table 5. Transfer Evident in Preposition Items among Elementary Level Students

Average Transfer Rate	Average Test Items Answered	Total Percentage of Transfer
3,19	7,61	41%

The most striking result of the study was in the use of preposition in English. Transfer evident in preposition items according to Elementary Level of English was analyzed and students answered an average of 3,19 preposition items out of 10 questions in translation part. Among preposition items answered, the transfer evident was 7,61 in average which was 41 % totally. Table 5 shows that students in university level apply their knowledge from Turkish language to English in preposition choices which are mostly irrelevant to their English equivalents. This result indicates that preposition use is the most problematic part of students' English learning process. The reason for this may be that the Turkish equivalents of "in, on, at" in English are all "-de, and –da" in Turkish. For example, almost all students answered the question "Ayşe

ile evlenmek" as "marry with Ayşe" in English instead of "marry to Ayşe". The preposition "ile" is "with" in English. As a result, when students come across or have to produce a phrase including "ile" in Turkish translation of an English phrase, they prefer to use it with its Turkish equivalent. On the other hand, the other most commonly transferred preposition item was "eve gelmek" for "come home". In this question, most students again gave its English equivalent referring to its Turkish translation "come to home", as it includes -e, -a suffixes showing direction.

b) Preposition Transfer of Pre-Intermediate Level Students

Table 6. Transfer Evident in Preposition Items among Pre-Intermediate Level Students

Average Transfer Rate	Average Test Items Answered	Total Percentage of Transfer
1,52	7,07	21,49%

Transfer evident in preposition items according to Pre-intermediate level of English was analyzed and students answered an average of 1,52 preposition items out of 10 questions in translation part. Among preposition items answered, the transfer evident was 7,07 in average which was 21,49 % totally. Table 6 indicates that Pre-intermediate students tend to make less transfer in preposition items compared to elementary students. It is quite surprising that while elementary students have the highest amount of transfer in preposition use, the figures related to pre-intermediate students do not make so much difference compared to vocabulary and tense items.

c) Preposition Transfer of Intermediate Level Students

Table 7. Transfer Evident in Preposition Items among Intermediate Level Students

Average Transfer Rate	Average Test Items Answered	Total Percentage of Transfer
1,57	7,36	21,33%

Transfer evident in preposition items among intermediate students was analyzed and students answered an average of 1,57 preposition items out of 10 questions in translation part. Among preposition items answered, the transfer evident was 7,36 in average which was 21,33 % totally. Table 7 shows that intermediate students tend to make transfer in

preposition items equally. However the highest amount of transfer in preposition was seen among elementary students.

Studies on prepositions show that Turkish students also have overgeneralization from L1 when applying prepositional rules to TL 16. Karakas (n.d) mentions that most prepositional errors can be explained as an L1 impact as the translation of the preposition encompasses the meaning of "through" in L1. According to Koban (Koban, 2011), the largest number of errors consisted in the misuse of prepositions and it may be caused by the fact that the learners probably learned a particular preposition with one type of verb and later used the same preposition with similar verbs (p.170).

3) Tense Transfer of Elementary, Intermediate and Intermediate Level Students

a) Tense Transfer of Elementary Level Students

Table 8. Transfer Evident in Tense Items among Elementary Level Students

Average Transfer Rate	Average Test Items Answered	Total Percentage of Transfer
1,66	8,71	19%

Transfer evident in tense items according to Elementary Level of English was analyzed and students answered an average of 1,66 tense items out of 10 questions in translation part. Among tense items answered, the transfer evident in tense items was 8,71 on average which was 19 % totally. Table 8 indicates that university students who have been learning English in Elementary Level tend to rely on Turkish knowledge in the use of tense less when compared to vocabulary items. One of the most challenging items in tense translation was the ambiguity caused by meaningless responses given by the students. Some papers included responses such as "I am work post office" as an equivalent of "I work at the post office".

b) Tense Transfer of Pre-intermediate Level Students

Table 9. Transfer Evident in Tense Items among Pre-Intermediate Level Students

Average Transfer Rate	Average Test Items Answered	Total Percentage of Transfer
1,59	8,00	19,87%

Transfer evident in tense items according to Pre-intermediate level of English was analyzed and students answered an average of 1,59 tense items out of 10 questions in translation part. Among tense items answered, the transfer evident was 8,00 in average which was 19,87 % totally. Table 9 indicates that Pre-intermediate students tend to make transfer in tense items equally with elementary students.

c) Tense Transfer of Intermediate Level Students

Table 10. Transfer Evident in Tense Items among Intermediate Students

Average Transfer Rate	Average Test Items Answered	Total Percentage of Transfer
1,79	8,43	21,23%

Transfer evident in tense items among intermediate was analyzed and students answered an average of 1,79 tense items out of 10 questions in translation part. Among tense items answered, the transfer evident was 8,43 in average which was 21,23 % totally. When compared to previous groups, Table 10shows that intermediate students tend to make transfer in tense items mostly. Though the results are nearly same in two other groups, the highest amount of tense transfer is seen among intermediate students. In theory, it is expected that the more the students have input in learning a second language, the less they make L1 interference.

According to the study of Erkaya (Erkaya, 2012), among the transfer errors, the verb tense errors were not as many as word choice and preposition errors. Similarly, among the errors identified in Koban's (Koban, 2011)study, tense errors were listed as the less frequent ones compared to prepositional and lexical errors, however, Koban (Koban, 2011, p.171) mentions that *"the actual source of most tense errors is interference from the other terms of the English system, and only rarely from the corresponding Turkish form. The influence of Turkish is apparent in the second category in which the verbs are marked with -ing for the progressive aspect"*. In fact, although tense choice of the participants focused only at progressive form and at present form as in our study, as Koban stated (Koban, 2011), the

influence of Turkish on English is apparent in terms of –ing form in tense use, and for this reason instead of focusing on other aspects of tenses, this study only focused on –ing aspect. Similar to our study, Kirkgoz (Kirkgoz, 2010, p. 435) explains based on her study that *"the major source of errors in the tense choice is that for the given situations, simple present tense is used to express in English language, whereas in Turkish present continuous tense is employed"*. It is true that most state verbs are expressed in Present Continuous tense in Turkish language, thus most Turkish students have a tendency to say" I am loving you" instead of "I love you" as the English equivalent.
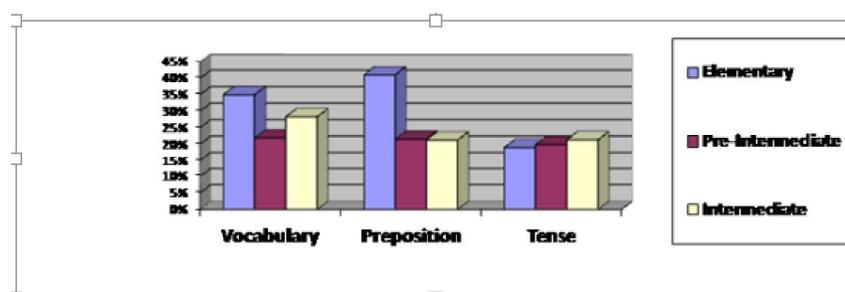

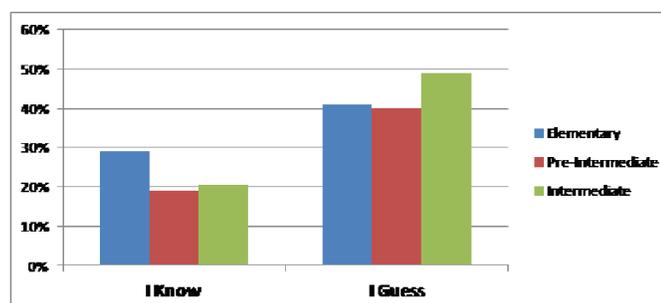**Figure 1. Comparison of Vocabulary, Preposition and Tense Transfer among language levels**

Figure 2. The Transfer Evident Based on "I Know" and "I Guess" section

Figure 2 shows the amount of transfer items in vocabulary, tense and preposition sections according to language levels. The table shows the amount of the transferred items based on participants' choices "I know" or "I guess" indicating that whether they know the English equivalents of the test items or they guess them. In the 'I know' column, Elementary students' rate of transfer was 29%, Pre-intermediate level was 18, 87%, and the rate of transfer among intermediate students was 20, 35%.

In the 'I guess' column, the amount of the transfer in the Elementary group was 41%, Pre-intermediate level was 40%, and the rate of transfer among intermediate students was 49%.

Table 11. Transfer Evident in Vocabulary in Both Translation and Test Item

	Vocabulary	Preposition	Tense
Translation Part	31%	33%	19%
Test Part	40%	46,98%	24%

Table 11shows the percentages of items based on transfer in two parts of the data collection instrument as "Translation task" and "test item". The rate of all the item types asked in the study showed an increase in Test item part. Interestingly, the aim of providing input in the test item part of the study was to see if the students could find the true equivalents of the items asked in Turkish. Contrary to the expectations, students used their knowledge of Turkish in a greater extent in Test item part though they were given the right answer in the options. Transfer on vocabulary increases by 9% in test item part, the rate of increase was 5% in tense and transfer on preposition increased by 13, 98% in test item part.

8. Conclusion

The major concern of this study has been to investigate Turkish language interference, or transfer, on English in vocabulary, tense and preposition use. The learners have used some L1 structures to produce appropriate responses in L2, producing acceptable equivalents of the Turkish phrases. However, the learners have also used L1 structures interchangeably with L2 structures, producing inappropriate L2 responses, indicating an interference of L1 on L2. In both translation and test item phases, the responses which the students gave reflect failure in producing appropriate use of the target language among the provided items. In using L1 structures, the learners have taken some risks that include guessing of a more or less informed kind. They have attempted to use invented or borrowed items, producing meaningless items in English.

Most linguists agree that transfer is mostly seen in beginner levels and in less proficient learners. Studies have shown that less proficient learners have been reported to transfer more elements from their first language than learners who present higher levels of proficiency (Cenoz, Hufeisen and Jessner, 2001). Jiang and Kuehn (Jiang and Kuehn, 2001)

conducted a study on immigrant students from different language backgrounds. They found out that beginner to intermediate level students made use of transfer strategies while advanced students made use of cognitive strategies. Major (Major, 1986) and Wenk (Wenk, 1986) have also found out that beginner level students were more likely to make transfer errors than more advanced ones. On the other hand, linguists such as Kellerman (Kellerman, 1983) see the errors of beginner level learners as developmental errors and claim that, in order to be able to make transfer errors learners should have developed awareness in the language (cited in Ellis, 1994). Our study also shows similar results in that the elementary level students made use of L1 transfer more than the advanced ones. Additionally, Ringbom (Ringbom, 2007) views transfer as lexical borrowing. Similarly, Odlin (Odlin, 1989) states that lexical level transfer in the early stage is seen in the form of borrowing as is seen in our study.

When the learners fail to recognize the appropriate items in English and interpret them out of their actual use, they adjust the form of their L2 written responses by using items which are part of their L1. The analysis of the learners 'translation and test item tasks revealed the extent to which their L2 responses are affected by their L1, the procedures aimed to express the phrases which included vocabulary, tense and preposition items and to see the extent to which and the manner in which L1 knowledge interferes with L2. The L2 errors made are traceable to the learners' L1 and we can conclude that there is definite interference of L1 on L2.

In the process of attempting to relate L1 to L2, they consider about the similarity or difference between L2 and L1. The result is that the students rely heavily on their L1 knowledge and respond to items of L2 under known categories in L1, hence a translation process has taken place. It is seen in this study that the second language learners have adopted their L1 structures to help them in their L2 translations and option choices.

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