

AN ANALYSIS OF TURKISH EFL STUDENTS' ERRORS  
IN PRESENT PERFECT TENSES

A THESIS PRESENTED BY  
GÜLÇİN MERGEN

TO THE INSTITUTE OF ECONOMICS AND SOCIAL SCIENCES  
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS  
FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS  
IN TEACHING ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

BILKENT UNIVERSITY

JULY 1999

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## ABSTRACT

Title: An Analysis of Turkish EFL Students' Errors in Present Perfect Tenses

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Grammar is an important aspect of teaching a second language. Since Turkish and English do not have one-to-one correspondence in terms of the present perfect and the present perfect continuous tenses, it creates difficulties for both Turkish teachers and Turkish students in teaching and using these two tenses. This study was conducted to determine the types of errors which Turkish students commit when using the present perfect tenses. It also investigates the sources of these errors and to what extent they are systematic. In addition, it explores the differences in the type of errors depending on the task which the students are required to complete, as well as finding out whether the teachers' opinions reflect the results that are obtained from the students' papers. Finally, suggestions on the materials that would be more suitable to Turkish students are prepared in the light of the teachers' opinions.

The subjects were 120 students and nine teachers from the Department of Basic English at the Middle East Technical University. There are three levels of classes studying during the spring semester at METU: Pre-Intermediate, Intermediate and Upper-Intermediate. From each level, three classes and the teachers of these classes were chosen for the study. There were 42 students from the Pre-Intermediate level, 40 from the Intermediate level, and 38 from the Upper-Intermediate level. The students were given a test devised by the researcher which consisted of five sections, graded from the most form-oriented tasks to the least. The first section was composed of fill-in-the-blank questions; the second section was a sentence completion task; the third section involved the translation of a dialog between a native Turk and an American tourist mediated by an interpreter; the fourth section was a picture description and the last section was a paragraph writing task. While the students were answering the questions, their teachers were given written interviews in which they expressed their opinions about the difficulties that their students face in the present perfect tenses and the effectiveness of the materials that were being used in class to teach these two tenses.

Data analysis involved making a record of students' errors and classifying them into groups, and then, comparing these results with the opinions of the teachers. The results of this study indicated that Turkish students tend to make direct translations from Turkish into English, using the present continuous tense instead of the present perfect continuous tense, and the simple present or the simple past tense instead of the present perfect tense, caused by the differences in the adverb usages and verb types of the two languages. Additionally, the types of errors they committed showed consistency except in the function-oriented tasks, where contextual match was the most common error type.

Finally, the opinions of the teachers reflected the results obtained from the study.

Considering these issues, the researcher suggested that consciousness-raising tasks and interpretation tasks be used along with the class materials and the native language be used to compare and contrast the two languages when necessary.

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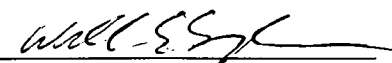
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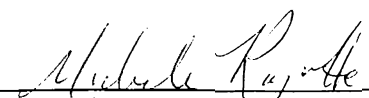
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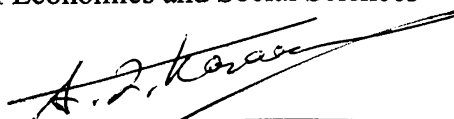


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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

a/p	active/passive voice
AdM	Missing time adverbial
AdW	Wrong time adverbial
AuA	Auxiliary agreement
CA	Contrastive Analysis
Corr.	Correct occurrence
CS	Sentences with complex structures
DBE	The Department of Basic English
Diff.	Differently translated
EA	Error Analysis
ELT	English Language Teaching
f	frequency of occurrence of the error
Fut.	Future Tense
Fut.Prf.	Future Perfect Tense
Inc.	Incomprehensible
Int.,I	Intermediate
Irr.	Irrelevant
METU	The Middle East Technical University
NA	No answer
NU	no usage

P-Int., PI	Pre-Intermediate
Pres.C	Present Continuous Tense
Pres.Prf.	Present Perfect Tense
Pres.Prf.C	Present Perfect Continuous Tense
Pst.C	Past Continuous Tense
Pst.Prf.	Past Perfect Tense
Pst.Prf.C	Past Perfect Continuous Tense
SPres.	Simple Present Tense
SPst.	Simple Past Tense
T	Total
U-Int., UI	Upper-Intermediate
WV	Wrong verb
WVF	Wrong verb form

## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

### Background of the Study

One of the important constituents of ELT is teaching the grammatical rules of English. When learners are trying to reach a target language from their native language, the stage that they go through is called interlanguage (Selinker, 1972/1991), in which they commit errors at various levels in English. These errors can be due to language transfer, or interference, analogy, fossilization, a natural sequence of developmental processes or the learners' personal hypotheses throughout the developmental stages.

Studying the errors that learners commit can reveal important evidence for researchers in several ways. As Corder (1967/1981) states:

A learner's errors, then, provide evidence of the system of the language that he is using (i.e. has learnt) at a particular point in the course (and it must be repeated that he is using some system, although it is not yet the right system). They are significant in three different ways. First to the teacher, in that they tell him, if he undertakes a systematic analysis how far towards the goal the learner has progressed and, consequently, what remains for him to learn. Second, they provide to the researcher evidence of how language is learnt or acquired, what strategies or procedures the learner is employing in his discovery of the language. Thirdly (and in a sense this is their most important aspect) they are indispensable to the learner himself,

because we can regard the making of errors as a device the learner uses in order to learn. (pp. 10-11)

A similar view was taken up by Dulay, Burt and Krashen (1982), who maintain that studying learners' errors serves two major purposes: "(1) it provides data from which inferences about the nature of the language learning process can be made; and (2) it indicates to teachers and curriculum developers which part of the target language students have most difficulty producing correctly and which error types detract most from a learner's ability to communicate effectively." (p. 138)

The topic of this research focuses on the analysis of the errors that are made by Turkish students when they are learning the present perfect tense and the present perfect continuous tense. The reason I have chosen this topic stems from my conviction that teaching these two tenses is one of the most problematic issues for the instructors of English in Turkey. This conviction originates from three sources: i) my personal experience in teaching, ii) my informal and formal contacts with my colleagues, and iii) students' exam papers and opinions. I will elaborate on these points in the following section, but first I wish to take up the systematic presentation of the problem.

### Statement of the Problem

The present perfect tense and present perfect continuous tense are not independent in Turkish, but are expressed in terms of several different tenses. The following figure shows some examples regarding this issue. The left most column contains sentences in Turkish and their word-for-word translations in English, the second column shows their



tenses in Turkish, the third column shows the tenses of the counterparts in English and the last column contains the English counterparts of the sentences in Turkish.

Turkish	Tense in Turkish	Tense in English	English
Uç yıldır bir bankada çalışıyorum.	Present Continuous Tense	Present Perfect Continuous Tense	I have been working at a bank for three years.
Daha John'la konuşmadım.	Simple Past Tense	Present Perfect Tense	I haven't spoken to John yet.

Figure 1. Examples of sentences in Turkish that correspond to the present perfect tenses in English.

The lack of one to one correspondence between Turkish and English in terms of these tenses creates problems of comprehension and explanation for the students and the teachers respectively. Moreover, the same issues persist in materials preparation, and in their presentation in the fixed time allocated. I will elaborate on these in turn.

Throughout my teaching experience I have observed that it is very difficult for Turkish students to grasp the logic behind the present perfect tenses. In their exam

papers I have observed them confuse these tenses with simple past tense, present continuous tense, or avoid using them altogether.

Moreover, it is not only difficult for the students to learn the present perfect tenses, but also for the Turkish instructors to present this material properly, especially for those who have not had much practice in English other than learning to teach in university departments. As for the materials, the issue has two dimensions: i) the course books and supplementary materials, and ii) presenting them.

The course books do not put enough emphasis on these two tenses, and the language of the target culture is not taken into consideration. Moreover, in institutions where the use of native language in class is not encouraged, it becomes very difficult to present the material at the Beginners level. The reason for this is that students do not have enough knowledge of English to understand the material and to grasp the logic behind it, and foreign teachers have no knowledge of Turkish, so they do not know which differences or issues to emphasize or to provide supplementary material on. Furthermore, these two tenses are taught over a short period of time and students cannot internalize them, which leads to a constant confusion in these tenses due to language transfer or an effort to create translational equivalents (Corder, 1971/1981). The reason why these tenses are taught over a short period of time is that in most universities in Turkey the preparatory year consists of two semesters. This adds up to eight months in total for students to learn English in order to carry out their academic studies in their departments which provide education in English. The courses are conducted intensively and fast.

Therefore, it is difficult for teachers to return to this subject to reinforce it during the semester.

### Purpose of the Study

Since interlanguages are systematic and they have their own rules it is important to see whether Turkish students' errors in these two tenses are also systematic.

Therefore, this study aims at:

- (i). identifying the incompatibility between Turkish and English regarding the present perfect tenses
- (ii). determining the types of errors that Turkish students commit when using the present perfect tenses
- (iii). the reasons underlying these errors
- (iv). determining whether or not variation in errors is dependent on the type of the task students are expected to complete.

Minor goals of this study are to find out whether the teachers' opinions on the cause of the students' errors are compatible with grammatical and semantic nature of the revealed errors, and to provide fundamental suggestions for the preparation of relevant materials which will be suitable for Turkish students.

### Significance of the Study

I am confident that this study will be beneficial both to Turkish and foreign instructors teaching English to Turkish students. I assume that it will enable them to predict what types of errors their students are likely to commit and why. Depending on the results of the study, they will be able to see at what stages their students confront the most difficulties and which tenses are mostly confused. Moreover, this study will give foreign teachers who do not know Turkish an idea of its grammar and structure, which will hopefully enable them to see some of the differences between the two languages, and help them in their preparation and presentation.

### Research Questions

This study will address the following research questions:

- (i). What are the most frequent errors committed by Turkish students in learning the present perfect tense and the present perfect continuous tense?
- (ii). Are these errors systematic? What are their sources?
- (iii). Is there a difference in the type of errors committed with respect to the type of the task?
- (iv). Do the opinions of teachers reflect the results obtained from the students' papers?

### Definition of Terms

The following terms constitute the basis of this study: error analysis, contrastive analysis and interlanguage.

Error: The use of a linguistic item (e.g. a word, a grammatical item, a speech act, etc.) in a way which a fluent or native speaker of the language regards as showing faulty or incomplete learning (Richards et al., 1992, p.127). This study takes formal standard British English as a basis to determine errors.

Error Analysis: The study and analysis of the errors made by second language learners in order to identify their causes and the strategies learners use in language learning, or to obtain information on common difficulties in language learning, as an aid to teaching or in the preparation of teaching materials (Richards et. al., 1992, p.127).

Contrastive Analysis: The comparison of the linguistic systems of two languages, for example the sound system or the grammatical system (Richards et. al., 1992, p.83).

Interlanguage: The type of language produced by second and foreign language learners who are in the process of learning a language (Richards et. al., 1992, p.186).



## CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

### Introduction

As stated in Chapter 1, the purpose of this study is to determine the types and causes of the most frequent errors that Turkish students commit in using the present perfect tenses in English. This chapter focuses on selected literature related to the topic of the study. The first section of the literature review looks into the short historical background of contrastive analysis, error analysis and interlanguage, and their interrelationships. The immediately following section overviews the concepts of tense and aspect in English. The third section explains the present perfect tenses in English, the fourth section depicts the corresponding tenses in Turkish to those that were presented in English in the third section, and the last section mentions some related studies carried out in Turkey.

### Historical Background

#### Contrastive Analysis

Based on behaviorism as the learning theory and structuralism as its model of language description, contrastive analysis (CA, hereafter) became a prominent branch of applied linguistics in the 1950's and 1960's (James, 1998). Led by Fries and Lado, this model assumed that: "1) a language is a set of habits; 2) old habits (the native language) are hard to break while new ones are hard to acquire (target language); 3) the native language will of necessity interfere with the learning of a second or foreign language; 4) the differences between the native language and the foreign language will be the main

cause of errors; 5) a linguistic CA can make these differences explicit; 6) language teachers and textbook writers must take the linguist's CA into account when preparing teaching materials.” (Celce-Murcia and Hawkins, 1985, pp.60-61)

As mentioned earlier, CA took the position that the native language of a second language learner interfered with his acquisition of that language and became an obstacle in his successful mastery of the target language (Dulay et al., 1982). This interference resulted in *negative transfer*, whereas *positive transfer* resulted in correct performance due to the similarities between the two languages that the learner could automatically use in learning a second language. Since positive transfer did not hinder second language acquisition, researchers believed that studying the differences between two languages would help them predict learner errors by revealing the areas of difficulty. However, many of the predictions based on this notion turned out to be either uninformative (teachers had known about these errors already) or inaccurate (James, 1998). Scholars realized that there were many kinds of errors besides those due to interlingual interference that could neither be predicted nor explained by contrastive analysis.

### Error Analysis

The point of view that interlingual interference was not the only cause of errors in second language learning led to the emergence of error analysis (EA, hereafter). This movement held that although some errors arose only from the interference of the native language, some were due to intralingual errors within the target language, the sociolinguistic context of communication, psycholinguistic or cognitive strategies and

affective variables (Brown, 1994). EA was different from CA in that “ the mother tongue was not supposed to enter the picture. The claim was made that errors could be fully described in terms of the TL (target language), without the need to refer to the L1 of the learners” (James, 1998, p.5).

Moreover, advocates of error analysis believed that teaching materials should not be based on theoretical speculations, but on factual data collected from learners’ errors. The most crucial point was to define what an error was, and explain the differences between errors and mistakes. To clarify this, Corder (1975, p.259) defined a mistake or a lapse as *slips or false starts or confusions of structure* made by native speakers, and errors as *breaches of the code* made by nonnative speakers. Along the same lines, Brown (1994) states that:

A mistake refers to a performance error that is either a random guess or a slip, in that it is a failure to utilize a known system correctly. All people make mistakes, in both native and second language situations. Native speakers are normally capable of recognizing and correcting such lapses or mistakes, which are not the result of a deficiency in competence but the result of some sort of breakdown or imperfection in the process of producing speech. These hesitations, slips of the tongue, random ungrammaticalities, and other performance lapses in native-speaker production also occur in second language speech.

Such mistakes must be carefully distinguished from errors of a second language learner, idiosyncracies in the interlanguage of the learner that are direct manifestations of a system within which a learner is operating at the time. (p.205)

In order to identify errors, Corder (1971/1985) provided a model which distinguished between “overt” and “covert” errors shown in the figure below.

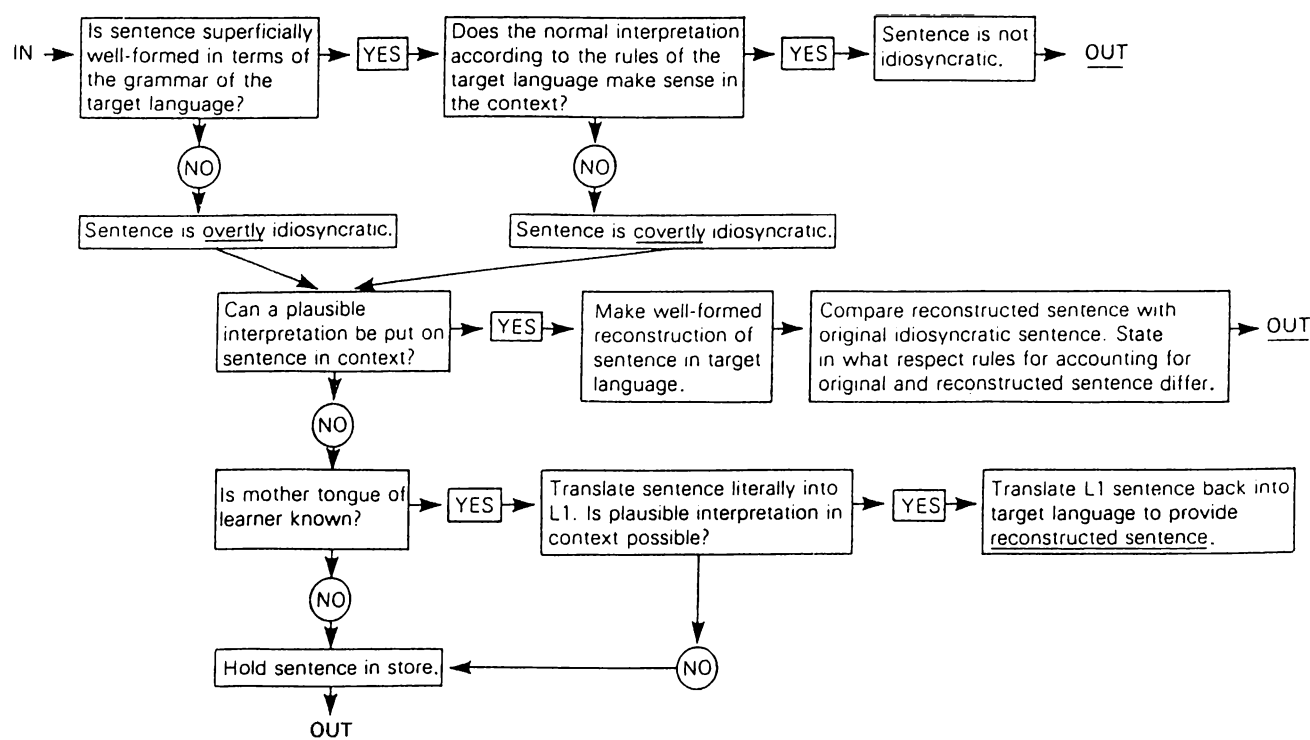


Figure 2. Corder's model for identifying errors. From Error Analysis and Interlanguage (p. 23), by S. P. Corder, 1981, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

In this model, overt errors are those that are already grammatically ill-formed at the sentence level, and covert errors are those that are grammatically well-formed at the sentence level but difficult to interpret in its context. Answers to some Yes/ No questions lead us to a possible reconstruction of learners' idiosyncratic sentences to account for the differences between those sentences and original ones. The importance of this model is that it emphasizes the native language of the learners into account for the explanation of their errors.

Once errors are identified, the next step is to classify them into groups. There have been several views on this issue. Fitikides (1936, cited in James, 1998:100-101), in his book called *Common Mistakes in English* classifies errors into five sections:

1. Misused forms: wrong preposition, misuse of tense, and miscellaneous un-English expressions.
2. Incorrect omission: of prepositions, etc.
3. Unnecessary words. Prepositions, articles, to, etc.
4. Misplaced words: adverbs, etc.
5. Confused words such as borrow/lend.

Richards (1971) introduces intralingual and developmental errors. "Rather than reflecting the learner's inability to separate two languages, intralingual and developmental errors reflect the learner's competence at a particular stage, and illustrate some of the general characteristics of language acquisition (p. 173)." He maintains that

...intralingual errors are those which reflect the general characteristics of rule learning, such as faulty generalization,



incomplete application of rules, and failure to learn conditions under which rules apply. Developmental errors illustrate the learner attempting to build up hypotheses about the English language from his limited experience of it in the classroom or textbook. (p. 174)

He groups errors into four classes:

- 1) over-generalization
- 2) ignorance of rule restrictions
- 3) incomplete application of rules
- 4) false concepts hypothesized

Dulay, Burt and Krashen (1982) suggest four different taxonomies on classification of errors:

- 1) Error types based on linguistic category
- 2) Surface strategy taxonomy
  - a) omission
  - b) additions: i) double markings, ii) regularization, iii) simple addition.
  - c) misformation: i) regularization, ii) archi-forms, iii) alternating forms
  - d) misordering

Later, James (1998) renamed these items and added a new one to form the Target Modification taxonomy, which comprised omission, overinclusion, misselection, misordering and blends.

- 3) Comparative taxonomy
  - a) developmental errors

- b) interlingual errors
- c) ambiguous errors
- d) other errors

4) Communicative effect taxonomy

- a) global errors: wrong order of major constituents; missing, wrong, or misplaced sentence connectors; missing cues to signal obligatory exceptions to pervasive syntactic rules; regularization of pervasive syntactic rules to exceptions.
- b) Local errors
- c) Psychological predicates
- d) Choosing complement types

It should be apparent from the above taxonomies that one of the major drawbacks of EA was its numerous definitions and categories of errors. This has “prevented meaningful cross-study comparisons or validation of results” (Dulay et. al., 1982, p. 197). Another limitation of EA was the unreliability of its statistics. Schachter (1974, cited in Celce-Murcia and Hawkins, 1985) carried out a study among a group of nonnative speakers of English, and reported that fewer errors could also be due to avoidance of using certain structures because the speakers do not feel confident with their accuracy. Moreover, in some cases EA fell short of accounting for errors and became misleading. For example, some errors that EA labeled as intralingual proved to be interlingual, and showed that in some cases CA was very necessary. These limitations and “criticisms leveled at both CA and EA suggested that a richer model for analyzing and explaining the

second language learner's output was necessary, and they thus paved the way for the development of interlanguage analysis". (Celce-Murcia and Hawkins, 1985, p. 64)

### Interlanguage

The term "interlanguage" was introduced by Selinker in 1972. Before that, however, Corder (1971/1985) had considered idiosyncratic dialects and defined the second language learner's language as follows: "It is regular, systematic, meaningful, i.e., it has a grammar, and is, in principle, describable in terms of a set of rules, some sub-set of which is a sub-set of the rules of the target social dialect"(p.17). He illustrated his argument with a diagram which is shown below.

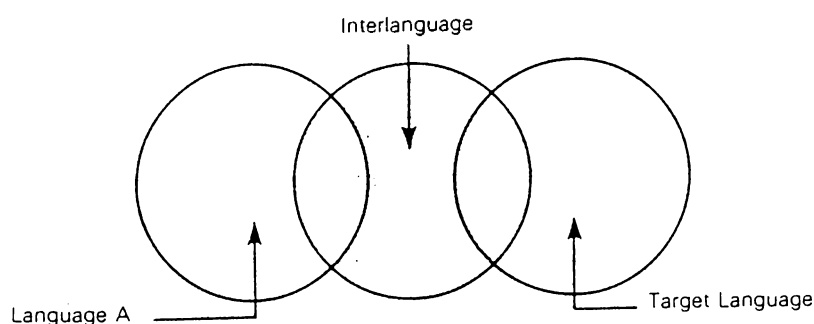


Figure 3. Corder's interlanguage diagram. From Error Analysis and Interlanguage (p. 17), by S. P. Corder, 1981, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

In this diagram, Language A is the native language of the second language learner and the Target Language is the language he is learning. The Interlanguage is in between these two sets sharing rules with both and also maintaining some of its own.

As opposed to structural linguists' behavioristic theory followed in CA, Selinker defined interlanguage from the generative linguists' cognitive point of view, which is more interested in the question "why: what underlying reasons, thinking and circumstances caused a particular event" (Brown, 1994, p.11) rather than only "what", i.e. the description of it:

...for Selinker interlanguage referred to an interim grammar that is a single system composed of rules that have been developed via different cognitive strategies- for example, transfer, overgeneralization, simplification, and the correct understanding of the target language. At any given time, the interlanguage grammar is some combination of these types of rules. (McLaughlin, 1989, pp. 62-63)

Expanding on Selinker's description, Adjemian (1976, cited in McLaughlin, 1989) argued that interlanguage had to be examined linguistically as rule-governed behavior. For him, interlanguage was a natural language. It was not stable but in a state of flux being influenced by the mother tongue and causing the learner to stretch, distort or overgeneralize rules in the target language.

A parallel view was shared by Tarone (1988), but she also maintained that language production showed systematic variability depending on the context and task. In addition to her systematic variability, i.e. variation that can be predicted and explained, in

1985, Ellis proposed non-systematic free variability (Tarone, 1988), i.e. variation that was unpredictable. Pain (1974), on the other hand, named these two kinds of variation systematic and asystematic, while calling slips of the pen or tongue unsystematic.

After contrastive analysis and error analysis, interlanguage analysis acquired substantial emphasis on second language acquisition research. Celce-Murcia and Hawkins (1985) state researchers' opinions as follows:

Researchers believe that the interlanguage of learners has a great capacity for revealing the learner's system of communication, and that it is their task to uncover this system and the processes guiding its development. Concentrating only on learner errors results in a built-in target-language bias that will not reveal the principles underlying what the learner is doing; i.e., it will tell us [only] what he is not doing, but its focus will not tell us much about how his system develops (p.60).

As can be inferred from this passage, studies confined to CA or EA are not sufficient to account for the learner's language. Since this study focuses on the analysis of Turkish students' errors in the present perfect tenses, in my opinion, it is important to utilize all three approaches when necessary, in trying to explain the differences between English and Turkish in terms of these tenses, to analyze the errors committed in these two tenses and detect whether language transfer occurs in the interlanguage of learners.

### Tense and Aspect in English

As this study is on the present perfect tenses in English, it is important to look into the concepts of time and aspect before explaining these tenses. “Time is a universal, non-linguistic concept with three divisions: past, present and future; by tense we understand the correspondence between the form of the verb and our concept of time. Aspect concerns the manner in which the verbal action is experienced or regarded (for example, as completed or in progress)”(Quirk and Greenbaum, 1973, p. 40). Therefore, the two aspects in English are the “perfective” and the “progressive.” The figure below shows examples of tenses and their grammatical aspects.

Tense	Progressive Aspect	Perfective Aspect	Perfect Progressive Aspect
Mary swims	Mary is swimming	Mary has swum	Mary has been swimming
Mary swam	Mary was swimming	Mary had swum	Mary had been swimming

Figure 4. Tenses and their grammatical aspects in English.

In English, the use of the progressive depends on the type of the verb it occurs with. Not all verb types can take on the progressive aspect. Quirk and Greenbaum (1973) divide verbs into two categories: dynamic and stative. Only those verbs which are dynamic can have the progressive aspect. Below are the subdivisions of these two types of verbs:

## (A) DYNAMIC

- 1) Activity verbs: abandon, ask, beg, call, drink, eat, help, learn, listen, look at, play, rain, read, say, slice, throw, whisper, work, write, etc.
- 2) Process verbs: change, deteriorate, grow, mature, slow down, widen, etc. Both activity and process verbs are frequently used in the progressive aspect to indicate incomplete events in progress.
- 3) Verbs of bodily sensation (ache, feel, hurt, itch, etc.) can have either simple or progressive aspect with little difference in meaning.
- 4) Transitional event verbs (arrive, die, fall, land, leave, lose, etc.) occur in the progressive but with a change of meaning compared with simple aspect. The progressive implies inception, i.e. only the approach to the transition.
- 5) Momentary verbs (hit, jump, kick, knock, nod, tap, etc.) have little duration, and thus the progressive aspect powerfully suggests repetition.

## (B) STATIVE

- 1) Verbs of inert perception and cognition: abhor, adore, astonish, believe, desire, detest, dislike, doubt, feel, forgive, guess, hate, hear, imagine, impress, intend, know, like, love, mean, mind, perceive, please, prefer, presuppose, realize, recall, recognize, regard, remember, satisfy, see, smell, suppose, taste, think, understand, want, wish, etc. Some of these verbs may take other than a recipient subject,

in which case they belong with the A1 class. Compare:

I think you are right (B1)

I am thinking of you all the time (A1)

- 2) Relational verbs: apply to (everyone), be, belong to, concern, consist of, contain, cost, depend on, deserve, equal, fit, have, include, involve, lack, matter, need, owe, own, possess, remain, (a bachelor), require, resemble, seem, sound, suffice, tend, etc.”(Quirk and Greenbaum: 46-47)

When lexical aspect is considered, Bardovi-Harlig and Reynolds (1995) follow Vendler’s (1967, cited in Bardovi-Harlig and Reynolds, 1995) framework which divides verbs into four classes each of which can be distinguished by three features as in the table, below, devised by Anderson (1991, cited in Bardovi-Harlig and Reynolds, 1995).

Semantic Features of Aspectual Categories				
Features	Lexical Aspectual Categories			
	States	Activities	Accomplishments	Achievements
punctual	-	-	-	+
telic	-	-	+	+
dynamic	-	+	+	+

Figure 5. Vendler’s framework for verb classes. From “ The Role of Lexical Aspect in the Acquisition of Tense and Aspect,” by K. Bardovi-Harlig and D. W. Reynolds, 1995, TESOL Quarterly, 29 (1), p. 109.



In this table, (-) indicates that the verb category does not bear the aspectual feature and (+) indicates that it does. State verbs persist over time without change (e.g. seem, know, want, be, etc.). Activity verbs have inherent duration in that they involve a span of time (e.g. sleep, snow, rain, play, etc.). Achievement verbs capture the beginning or the end of an action (e.g. begin, end, arrive, leave, notice, etc.). Accomplishment verbs have inherent duration and a goal or an endpoint (e.g. build, paint, read, etc.). As for the features, punctual distinguishes instantaneous predicates from those with duration, telic distinguishes predicates with endpoints (sing a song) from those without (sing), and dynamic distinguishes dynamic verbs from stative ones. (Bardovi-Harlig and Reynolds, 1995). By examining the table it can be understood that those verbs which can take the progressive aspect are those which are (-) punctual and (+) dynamic, i.e. activity and accomplishment verbs.

### Present Perfect Tenses

The present perfect tenses in English consist of the following two tenses: the present perfect and the present perfect continuous tense. The difficulty level of teaching and learning of these two tenses is stated by Walker (1967, p. 17) below:

The simple present perfect and the present perfect continuous are for the non-native speaker of English two of the most troublesome tenses in the English verb system. They are sometimes confused with a present tense and sometimes with a past....He (the learner) is not aware that these

two tenses are neither wholly present nor wholly past, but are paradoxically both present and past. This is a subtle but vital point, and no teacher can really teach these tenses without understanding this fact. It is an easy matter to teach a student how to form the present perfect tense, but quite another matter to teach him when to use them.

The passage just quoted indicates the difference between the structure and usage of the present perfect tenses, emphasizing that it is more difficult to teach learners when to use the present perfect tenses. The reason for this is that these tenses both refer to the past and present in meaning. Therefore, throughout the history of ELT studies, there have been several explanations regarding the meaning and the use of these tenses. One of them belongs to Declerck (1991) on the simple present perfect tense and its meanings. He groups them into four:

- 1) Resultative meaning as in *They have fallen into the river.*
- 2) Habitual meaning as in *He has sung in this choir for five years.*
- 3) Repetitive but not habitual meaning as in *He has written five letters.*
- 4) Generic and omnitemporal meaning as in *Two plus two has always been four.*

As for the present perfect continuous tense, Quirk et al. (1985) suggest two groups with their implications:

- 1) Temporary situation leading up to the present
- 2) Temporary habit leading up to the present
  - a) has duration as in *I have been writing a letter to my nephew.*

- b) has limited duration due to punctual verbs: e.g., we cannot say *He has been falling off the tree.*
- c) continues up to the present or recent past as in *He has been losing a lot of money lately.*
- d) need not be complete as in *They have been repairing the road for months.*
- e) may have effects which are still apparent as in *Have you been crying?*  
(Your eyes are red.)

However, I believe it is also important to include different usages of these two tenses in order to get a clearer idea of how and when they appear in sentences. This is demonstrated in the three sections below. The first section gives information on present perfect tense, the second section gives information on present perfect continuous tense (Azar, 1989; Murphy, 1985; Öztürk, 1996; Swan, 1984; Thomson and Martinet, 1960), and the last section provides a table for the corresponding tenses in Turkish. In the first two sections, next to the items, the time adverbials are provided in parentheses, and next to each example in English, its equivalent is given in Turkish.

### Present Perfect Tense

#### 1) indefinite past action:

- completion of action is important, not the exact time

I have done my homework. = Ödevimi yaptım.

- action that caused the result is important (*yet*)

My car has broken down. (It does not work) = Arabam bozuldu.

I haven't had lunch yet. (I'm hungry) = Henüz öğle yemeği yemedim.

- 2) actions in an incomplete period (*today, this week/year etc., lately, recently, ever, never, several times, often, this is the first/second time*)

I haven't seen him today = Onu bugün görmedim.

- experiences (limited set of adverbs such as *ever, before, etc.*)

Have you ever skied? = Hiç kayak yaptınız mı?/ yapmış mıydınız?

- after superlatives

This is the best book I've read so far = Bu şimdiye kadar okuduğum en iyi kitap.

- since/for

I haven't seen her since Tuesday. = Onu Salı'dan beri görmedim.

I have lived here for a year. = Bir yıldır burada yaşıyorum.

- habitual actions

I have always replied to their letters. = Mektuplarına her zaman cevap yazmışımdır.

- 3) actions lasting through an incomplete period (*always, lately, recently, all week/the time, never, for, since*)

- up to the present

I have lived here all my life. (I still live here) = Hayatım boyunca burada yaşadım./yaşamışımıdır.

- finished recently

They have not cleaned the windows for months. (but we are now) = Aylarca camları silmemişler.

4) recently completed action (*just*)

He has just left. = Henüz çıktı.

5) completed part of an activity (*so far, up till now, since*)

I have read five pages so far. = Şimdiye kadar beş sayfa okudum.

6) with verbs that cannot take the progressive aspect

I have known him for a year. = Onu bir yıldır tanıyorum.

7) generic/omnitemporal

Man has been afraid of wars throughout history. = İnsanoğlu tarih boyunca savaştan korkmuştur.

8) changes

She used to live in Boston. Now she lives in Paris, so she has moved to Paris.  
= Paris'e taşınmış/ taşındı.

9) letters

We have carefully considered your report. = Raporunuzu dikkatle inceledik/  
incelemiş bulunuyoruz.

10) news (usually first sentence)

There has been an accident on the highway. = Otoyolda bir kaza meydana geldi/ gelmiş.

### Present Perfect Continuous Tense

Like most expressions, the Pres.Prf.C tense also carries certain implicational properties in context, implying duration or the act itself. In the examples below, the same sentence has been provided for different types of emphasis in different situations.

- 1) Emphasis on the continuity of the action which is uninterrupted

(He has been studying non-stop.) I have been studying for the past five hours.

= Beş saattir çalışıyorum.

- 2) Emphasis on the action not necessarily completed

I have been studying, but I haven't finished yet. = Çalışıyorum ama daha bitirmedim.

- 3) Emphasis on the action started in the past still continuing or just finished

I have been studying languages for two years. = İki senedir dil üzerine öğrenim görüyorum.

- 4) activity no longer in process but effects can be seen

(His eyes are red.) Have you been studying for hours? = Saatlerdir çalışıyor musun/ çalışıyor muydun?

- 5) emphasis on the duration of the action

I have been studying for five hours/ since the morning. = Beş saattir/ Sabahtan beri çalışıyorum.

### Tenses in Turkish that Correspond to the Present Perfect Tenses

From the examples above, it can be observed that the present perfect tenses in English do not have one to one corresponding tenses in Turkish. Instead, they are expressed in terms of several tenses in Turkish.

English	Turkish
Simple Present Perfect Tense	Simple Past Tense (-dı,-di, du, dü)
Have/has + past participle	Pluperfect (mıştı, -mişti, -muştı, -müştü)
	Predicative combined with narrative past (-mıştır, -miştir, -muştur, -müştür)
	Present Continuous tense (-yor)
	Narrative Past (-mış, -miş, -muş, -müş)

Figure 6. Tenses in Turkish that correspond to the present perfect tenses

### Some Related Studies in Turkey

In this section, I briefly review four previous studies conducted on the problems of learning the present perfect tenses in English by Turkish students.

Şahin (1993) conducted a study on the analysis of the errors of tense and aspect in the written English of the Turkish students. His purpose was to identify the most common errors made in the tense-aspect system in the written discourse of first year English students. His subjects were 100 first year volunteer students at Cumhuriyet University. After a pilot study, the researcher chose a data collection instrument and

asked the students to write autobiographical essays following some prompts. In the data analysis stage, he grouped the errors into two as syntactic and semantic/pragmatic errors. He reached the conclusion that 61.39% of the errors were semantic/pragmatic and 71.64% of these were tense errors. In fact, inappropriate use of the present perfect continuous tense (Pres.Prf.C, hereafter) constituted 24.46%, and inappropriate use of the present perfect tense (Pres.Prf., hereafter) constituted 23.02% of the tense errors. When these percentages are taken into consideration, almost half of the tense errors were in the use of Pres.Prf.C and Pres.Prf. tenses. Şahin suggests that students should be actively involved in the learning process of tense and aspect. They should learn it in context, be able to discuss and compare relationships and even prepare their own exercises based on different meanings and forms of tense and aspect.

Another study was carried out by Ayca (1990) in order to analyze the tense errors in the written English of Turkish students. She concentrated on only the simple past, the past perfect and the present perfect. Her subjects were volunteer students from a university, a high school and her colleagues. The subjects were asked to write a free essay on their background in English. In the data analysis section, she used tables and percentages to present T-units and the correct and incorrect use of the tenses. The results indicated that the usage of the simple past did not create a serious issue, while the present perfect tense was a constant problem. Students confused these two tenses and used them wrongly in each other's place. Ayca suggests that Pres.Prf. should be taught contrastively with the simple past, and more meaning oriented exercises should be provided.



A third study was conducted by Kaplan (1989) on the use of the present perfect tense by Turkish students. Her subjects were 109 students at different levels of English at the Open Faculty of Eskişehir Anadolu University. She gave them a bilingual translation test and a fill-in-the-blanks test. An analysis was provided by comparing the different groups. The results indicated that the students were more successful in the fill-in-the-blanks test and they substituted present continuous tense and past tense for the present perfect tense.

Şimşek (1989) carried out a study on the origins of errors that Turkish students commit during their mastery of English. Her subjects were Bilkent University Preparatory school students at level “B”. She randomly collected 75 compositions from mid-terms and assignments, and analyzed them according to morphology, syntax and prepositions. The results were that 77.7% of the errors committed were intralingual, and the rest were interlingual. Her results implied that except for articles, Turkish students had difficulty with controlling the areas of syntax and morphology.

The study I have conducted is different from the other studies in that it does not focus on the percentages of the success of students, but on the types of errors, their underlying reasons and their relation to the five different task types. Moreover, taking the incompatibilities between Turkish and English into consideration, this study seeks to provide fundamental suggestions for the preparation of materials that will lead to better teaching and learning of these two tenses. In addition, the data collected in this study is more comprehensive than in previous studies, which provides additional information to the field for purposes of making generalizations.

## CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

### Introduction

This descriptive study focuses on the errors that Turkish students commit most frequently when using the present perfect tenses in English. It aims at determining the types of these errors and their underlying causes, and whether or not variation in errors are dependent on the type of the task students are expected to complete. Other issues that are addressed in this study are the identification of the incompatibility between Turkish and English regarding the present perfect tenses, and providing fundamental suggestions for the preparation of materials which will be suitable for Turkish students.

Related studies on this topic in Turkey have been mentioned in the second chapter. Three of those studies are on errors in the usage of tenses in general and they all indicate that the present perfect tenses are associated with a high number of errors. Among these studies, Kaplan's (1989) is on the use of the present perfect tenses, focusing on the success of different levels of students in these tenses. It analyzes the errors in only one type of task. The difference in the study I have conducted is that it does not focus on the percentages of the success of students, but on the types of errors and their relation to the task types extensively. It makes use of five types of tasks rated from the most form-oriented to the least, i.e., the most function-oriented. Moreover, taking the incompatibilities between Turkish and English into consideration, this study seeks to provide fundamental suggestions for the preparation of materials that will lead to better teaching and learning of these two tenses. In addition, the data collected in this study is

more comprehensive than the previous studies, which provides additional information to the field for purposes of making generalizations. The following sub-sections, which review subjects, materials, procedure and data analysis, explain how this study was conducted.

### Subjects

The subjects of this study were students and teachers from the Department of Basic English (DBE, hereafter) at the Middle East Technical University (METU, hereafter). METU is an English medium university; many students studying there go through an intensive one-year English language program before they pursue their academic studies at their departments. The English language education at the DBE consists of two semesters, and during the second semester there are three levels of classes: Pre-Intermediate, Intermediate and Upper-Intermediate.

As subjects of this study, I randomly chose three classes from each level and their instructors. Two of the Pre-Intermediate level classes consisted of 16 students, and the third one consisted of 15, however five students in this group were not Turkish, so they were omitted. The number of students in the three Intermediate level classes were 11, 15 and 14. The number of students in the Upper-Intermediate level classes were 13, 14 and 11. The ages of the students ranged from 17 to 22. The teaching experience of the instructors of these classes ranged from five to 20 years. As a result, the number of the subjects of this study totaled 120 students and nine instructors.

### Materials

In order to collect the data for my study, I prepared a test (see Appendix A) for the students and an open-ended questionnaire (see Appendix B) for the instructors. The test comprised five sections, each with a different point of focus in terms of the task type and grammar point. The first section was composed of six fill-in-the-blank questions, which aimed at determining whether students were able to identify the different usages of tenses and verbs depending on the adverbs used in the sentences. Therefore, the answers to these questions required the knowledge of not only how the present perfect and present perfect continuous tenses are used contrastively with each other, but also with other tenses. This section was form oriented.

The second section consisted of six inference questions. Here, the aim was to see whether the students were able to make out conclusions on a given situation. This section was both form and function oriented, with more emphasis on form.

The third section involved translating a dialog held between a Turkish person and an American tourist who did not know each other's language. In this task, I intended to see whether Turkish students were aware that several tenses used in Turkish could correspond to only two in English, which are the present perfect tenses. This section was again form and function oriented, but with more emphasis on the function. The more important thing on the student's part was to understand the message and convey it grammatically and intelligibly.

The fourth section was composed of a picture description. In this task, I wished to see whether students would be able to use the present perfect tenses involving the

recent past where not time but the result is important. It was also important for me to see whether they avoided using these tenses. Since they were only given a picture and were free to write anything related to it, this task was function oriented.

The last section consisted of paragraph writing to see whether students were able to talk about changes using the present perfect tenses. This section was also function oriented.

The open-ended questionnaires that were given to the instructors included two sections. The first section asked for information on the instructor's age, experience in teaching and class size. The second section asked for information on the instructors' opinions on the teaching of these two tenses. The questions were related to their personal opinions on the difficulty level of the present perfect tenses, their opinions on the students' problems, their reasons and solutions, and the effectiveness of the materials being used to teach these two tenses.

### Procedure

In order to collect the data for my study, I obtained permission from the Director of the School of Foreign Languages and the Head of the Department of Basic English at the Middle East Technical University. Then, I informed the coordinators of the Pre-Intermediate, Intermediate, and Upper-Intermediate levels that I would be conducting a research study in three classes at each level. Next, I contacted several instructors from these levels and gave brief description of my study and its purpose, and scheduled a time with those who agreed to give their students this test.

The data were collected on March 25, 1999. The same test was given to all the levels. The Upper-Intermediate level students, who have four hours of lessons in the morning each lasting 50 minutes, took the test during their second hour from 9:40 until 10:30; the Intermediate level students, who have four hours of lessons in the afternoons each lasting 50 minutes, took the test during their second hour from 1:40 p.m. until 2:30 p.m.; and, finally, the Pre-Intermediate level students, who have six hours of lessons three of which are in the morning and the other three in the afternoon, took the test in their last hour in the afternoon from 2:40 p.m. until 3:30 p.m.. While the students were taking the test, their instructors were given the open-ended questionnaires; so the test and the questionnaire for each level were conducted simultaneously.

### Data Analysis

The data were classified according to the results obtained from the students' papers. The number and types of errors they committed in the present perfect tenses were recorded and grouped according to recurring types of errors. Then, the frequency numbers were changed into percentages in order to determine the most frequent errors committed, which were, later, compared among task types. The interviews with teachers were analyzed. Then, their opinions were summarized and compared with the results obtained from the students test papers.

## CHAPTER 4: DATA ANALYSIS

### Overview of the Study

This study investigates the errors Turkish students commit in using the present perfect tenses in English. The focal points of this study are to determine the types of such errors and their underlying causes, and whether or not variation in errors are dependent on the type of the task students are expected to complete. Some other issues that are addressed in this study were the identification of the incompatibility between Turkish and English regarding the present perfect tenses, and providing fundamental suggestions for the preparation of materials which will be suitable for Turkish students.

The participants in the study were 120 students and nine teachers from the Department of Basic English at the Middle East Technical University. Students were given a test comprising five types of tasks and the teachers were given open-ended questionnaires. The tasks that the students were asked to complete were graded from the most form-oriented to the least, and the questionnaires that the teachers were asked to respond to were open-ended.

To analyze the results, for each level the errors were recorded and categorized. Subsequently, their frequency numbers were calculated and changed into percentages in order to enable a comparison among different task types. This will be thoroughly explained in the following sections of this chapter.

### Data Analysis Procedures

Following the collection of the data, the papers of the three classes for each level were grouped together yielding three sets of data: Pre-Intermediates, Intermediates and Upper Intermediates. There were five types of tasks in the test, so each task was assigned a capital letter, each question a number and each item in a question a small letter. Then, for each level, every error in each item was recorded with their frequencies. Next, the errors that were related to present perfect tenses were sorted out from those that were not. In order to determine whether or not an error was related to present perfect tenses, the key point was whether the correction of that error required any explanation to students concerning the tense used in the sentence or question. Therefore, errors related to articles, prepositions or objects were not taken into consideration. Later, the errors were grouped according to the main points below, but with small differences or details based on the type of the task. Finally, the recordings were transformed into tables containing the frequency numbers and their percentages.

#### A) Wrong choice of tense

1. Other tenses for Pres.Prf.
2. Other tenses for Pres.Prf.C
3. Pres.Prf. for other tenses
4. Pres.Prf.C for other tenses

#### B) Correct choice of perfective aspect

1. wrong choice of progressive aspect
  - a. Pres.Prf. for Pres.Prf.C



b. Pres.Prf.C for Pres.Prf.

C) Auxiliary errors

1. active/passive
2. affirmative/negative
3. agreement
4. missing

D) Verbal errors

1. Wrong verb
2. Wrong verb form

E) Contextual grammatical match

1. Adverbs

- a. Wrong
- b. Missing
- c. Misplaced

2. Sentences with complex structures

As for the interviews, since there was a wide range of opinions given by the teachers, similar positions were grouped and reported in a summary.

## Results

### Results of the Tasks

Four tables were constructed for each task. The first three tables were constructed to show the tense errors in each level. The fourth table was constructed to show the auxiliary, verbal and contextual matching errors including all the three levels. In all the tables, the focus was only on the errors in the present perfect tenses, because the intention of the study is not to find out how many students answered the questions on tenses correctly, and what percentage of their errors belong to the present perfect tenses, or which level of students is better at the present perfect tenses than the other ones. As for the comments after each table, out of the percentage rates for each item, the highest two were discussed.

Table 1.

Pre-Intermediate Level Tense Errors in Task A (n = 42)

		Wrong Tense													
Correct Tense	No. of corr														
		Pst.Pr <sup>f</sup> . f %	SPst. f %	Pst.C f %	Pres.Pr <sup>f</sup> . f %	Pres.Pr <sup>f</sup> .C f %	SPres. f %	Pres.C f %	Fut. f %	Fut.Pr <sup>f</sup> . f %	Inc.	T	NA		
Pres.Pr <sup>f</sup> .	11	16 (10.52)	90 (59.21)	--	X	X	4 (2.63)	33 (21.71)	3 (1.97)	3 (1.97)	--	3	152	21	
Pres.Pr <sup>f</sup> .C	2	2 (3.17)	9 (14.28)	--	--	25 (39.68)	X	X	3 (4.76)	24 (38.09)	--	--	63	6	
SPres.	4	--	19 (34.54)	--	--	13 (23.63)	1 (1.81)	X	X	5 (9.09)	14 (25.45)	3 (5.45)	--	55	9
Pres.C	1	--	3 (27.27)	--	--	2 (18.18)	6 (4.54)	--	--	X	X	--	--	11	1
SPst.	6	5 (3.33)	X	X	1 (6.66)	4 (26.66)	2 (13.33)	1 (6.66)	--	--	--	--	1	15	10
Pst.C	1	2 (16.66)	9 (75.00)	X	X	--	--	--	--	1 (8.33)	--	--	--	12	1
Total						44								13	

Note. X = the tense itself; dashes indicate no errors; empty spaces indicate items unexamined; for abbreviations see pp. xii-xiii.

Table 2.

Intermediate Level Tense Errors in Task A (n = 40)

		Wrong Tense											
Correct Tense	No. of corr.												
		Pst.Prf. f %	SPst. f %	Pst.C f %	Pres.Prf. f %	Pres.Prf.C f %	SPres. f %	Pres.C f %	Fut. f %	Fut.Prf. f %	Inc.	T	NA
Pres.Prf.	11	--	93 (86.11)	--	X	X	2 (1.85)	13 (12.03)	--	1 (0.92)	--	108	6
Pres.Prf.C	2	1 (2.43)	7 (17.07)	2 (4.87)	8 (19.51)	X	1 (2.43)	22 (53.65)	--	--	--	41	--
SPres.	4	1 (2.38)	20 (47.61)	1 (2.38)	2 (4.76)	--	X	13 (30.95)	4 (9.52)	1 (2.38)	--	42	4
Pres.C	1	--	--	--	1 (25.00)	3 (75.00)	--	X	--	--	--	4	1
SPst.	6	1 (2.94)	X	3 (8.82)	15 (44.11)	1 (2.94)	7 (20.58)	6 (17.64)	--	--	1	34	1
Pst.C	1	--	--	X	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	0	--
Total					26	6							

Note. X = the tense itself; dashes indicate no errors; empty spaces indicate items unexamined; for abbreviations see pp. xii-xiii.

Table 3.

Upper-Intermediate Level Tense Errors in Task A (n = 38)

Wrong Tense																								
Correct Tense of corr.	No.	<u>Pst.Prf.</u>		<u>Pst.Prf.C</u>		<u>SPst.</u>		<u>Pst.C</u>		<u>Pres.Prf.</u>		<u>Pres.Prf.C</u>		<u>SPres.</u>		<u>Pres.C</u>		<u>Fut.</u>		<u>Fut.Prf.</u>		Inc.	T	NA
		f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%			
Pres.Prf.	11	6	(5.88)	--	--	72	(70.58)	--	--	X	X	1	(0.98)	18	(17.64)	--	--	5	(4.90)	--	--	--	102	1
Pres.Prf.C	2	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	13	(43.33)	X	X	3	(10.00)	14	(46.66)	--	--	--	--	--	30	2
SPres.	4	--	--	--	--	10	(43.47)	--	--	4	(17.39)	--	--	X	X	7	(30.43)	1	(4.34)	1	(4.34)	--	23	1
Pres.C	1	--	--	--	--	5	(50.00)	--	--	1	(10.00)	4	(40.00)	--	--	X	X	--	--	--	--	--	10	--
SPst.	6	--	--	--	--	X	X	1	(3.12)	16	(50.00)	2	(6.25)	11	(34.37)	1	(3.12)	--	--	--	--	1	32	2
Pst.C	1	--	--	1	(25.0)	3	(75.00)	X	X	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	4	--
Total										34		7												

Note. X = the tense itself, dashes indicate no errors; empty spaces indicate items unexamined; for abbreviations see pp. xii-xiii.

Table 1 shows the tense errors committed in Task A in the Pre-Intermediate group. According to this table, 59.21% of the tenses that are used instead of the Pres.Prf. are the SPst., followed by the SPres. with a percentage of 21.71. Of the total tense errors related to the Pres.Prf.C, 39.68% belongs to the Pres.Prf. and 38.09% belongs to the Pres.C. When the Pres.Prf. is used wrongly for other tenses, the highest percentage belongs to the Pres.Prf.C with 56.81%, followed by the SPres. with a percentage of 29.54; and when the Pres.Prf.C is used wrongly for other tenses, 46.15% of the errors belong to the Pres.C, whereas 30.76% of them belong to the Pres.Prf.. The total number for the confusion of the Pres.Prf. with the Pres.Prf.C is 29, in 86.20% of which the Pres.Prf. is used instead of the Pres.Prf.C. tense.

Table 2 shows the tense errors committed in Task A in the Intermediate group. According to this table, 86.11% of the tenses that are used instead of the Pres.Prf. are the SPst, followed by the SPres. with a percentage of 12.03. Of the total tense errors related to the Pres.Prf.C, 53.65% belong to the Pres.C and 19.51% belong to the Pres.Prf.. When the Pres.Prf. is used wrongly for other tenses, the highest percentage belongs to the SPst with 57.69% followed by the Pres.Prf.C with a percentage of 30.76; and when the Pres.Prf.C is used wrongly for other tenses, 50% of the errors belong to the Pres.C, whereas 33.33% of them belong to the Pres.Prf.. The total number for the confusion of the Pres.Prf. with the Pres.Prf.C is 10, in 80% of which the Pres.Prf. is used instead of the Pres.Prf.C. tense.

Table 3 shows the tense errors committed in Task A in the Upper-Intermediate group. According to this table, 70.58% of the tenses that are used instead of the Pres.Prf.

are the SPst., followed by the SPres. with a percentage of 17.64. Of the total tense errors related to the Pres.Prf.C, 46.66% belong to the Pres.C and 43.33% belong to the Pres.Prf.. When the Pres.Prf. is used wrongly for other tenses, the highest percentage belongs to the SPst. with 47.05% followed by the Pres.Prf.C with a percentage of 38.23; and when the Pres.Prf.C is used wrongly for other tenses, 57.14% of the errors belong to the Pres.C, whereas 28.57% of them belong to the SPst.. The total number for the confusion of the Pres.Prf. with the Pres.Prf.C is 14, in 92.85% of which the Pres.Prf. is used instead of the Pres.Prf.C. tense

In Task A, in all groups, the SPst. and the SPres. are the most frequently used tenses instead of the Pres.Prf., and the Pres.C and the Pres.Prf. are the most frequently used tenses instead of the Pres.Prf.C, respectively. In two groups Pres.Prf. is most frequently used for the SPst. and the Pres.Prf.C, and in all three groups Pres.Prf.C is most frequently used for the Pres.C and the Pres.Prf. Also, in all three groups when the Pres.Prf. and the Pres.Prf.C are used wrongly for each other, most of the time it is the Pres.Prf. that is preferred by the students with a much higher percentage rate.

Table 4.

Other Errors in the Present Perfect Tenses in Task A

Types of Errors	Levels					
	P-INT (n = 42)	%	INT (n = 40)	%	U-INT (n = 38)	%
Auxiliary Errors						
active/passive	14	(31.11)	17	(54.83)	12	(26.66)
affirmative/negative	2	(4.4 )	2	(6.45 )	--	--
agreement	7	(15.55)	3	( 9.67)	15	(33.33)
missing	2	(4.4)	1	(3.22)	1	(2.22)
Verbal Errors						
wrong verb	--	--	--	--	--	--
wrong verb form	19	(42.22)	7	(22.58)	14	(31.11)
Contextual Grammatical Match						
Adverbs						
wrong	--	--	--	--	--	--
missing	1	(2.22)	--	--	1	(2.22)
misplaced	--	--	1	(3.22)	2	(4.44)
sentences with complex structures	--	--	--	--	--	--
Total	45		31		45	

Note. Dashes indicate no errors; for abbreviations see pp. xii-xiii.



Table 4 shows the errors committed that are other than the tense errors in Task A in all three groups. While the first two most frequent errors in the Pre-Intermediate group are the wrong verb forms and the active/ passive voice in the auxiliary, respectively, this order is reverse among the Intermediate level students. The active/passive voice in the auxiliary has the highest error number followed by the wrong verb form. In the Upper-Intermediate group, the highest number of errors is in the auxiliary agreement, which is followed by the wrong verb form. It is clearly seen that wrong verb forms are common in all groups.

Table 5.

Pre-Intermediate Level Tense Errors in Task B (n = 42)

		Wrong Tense													
Correct Tense	No of corr.	<u>Pst.Prf.</u>		<u>SPst.</u>		<u>Pst.C</u>		<u>SPres.</u>		<u>Pres.Prf.</u>		<u>Pres.Prf.C</u>		T	NA
		f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%		
Pres.Prf.	5	6	(18.18)	17	(51.51)	--	--	1	(3.03)	X	X	9	(27.27)	33	6
Pres.Prf.C	1	4	(12.50)	2	(6.25)	1	(3.12)	--	--	25	(78.12)	X	X	32	5

Note. X = the tense itself; dashes indicate no errors; empty spaces indicate items unexamined; for abbreviations see pp. xii-xiii.

Table 5 shows the wrong tenses used instead of the Pres.Prf. and the Pres.Prf.C in Task B in the Pre-Intermediate group. Among the errors committed in the Pres.Prf., the SPst. has the highest percentage rate with 51.51%, and the Pres.Prf.C follows it with

27.27%. Among the errors committed in the Pres.Prf.C, the Pres.Prf. has the highest percentage rate with 78.12%, and the Pst.Prf. follows it with 12.5%. The total number for the confusion of the Pres.Prf. with the Pres.Prf.C is 34, in 73.52% of which the Pres.Prf. is used instead of the Pres.Prf.C tense.

Table 6.

Intermediate Level Tense Errors in Task B (n = 40)

		Wrong Tense													
Correct Tense	No of corr.	<u>Pst.Prf.</u>		<u>SPst.</u>		<u>Pst.C</u>		<u>SPres.</u>		<u>Pres.Prf.</u>		<u>Pres.Prf.C</u>		T	NA
		f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%		
Pres.Prf.	5	--	--	18	(58.06)	--	--	6	(19.35)	X	X	7	(22.58)	31	2
Pres.Prf.C	1	1	(3.57)	9	(32.14)	1	3.57	--	--	17	(60.71)	X	X	28	--

Note. X = the tense itself; dashes indicate no errors; for abbreviations see pp. xii-xiii.

Table 6 shows the wrong tenses used instead of the Pres.Prf. and the Pres.Prf.C in Task B in the Intermediate group. Among the errors committed in the Pres.Prf., the SPst. has the highest percentage rate with 58.06%, and the Pres.Prf.C follows it with 22.58%. Among the errors committed in the Pres.Prf.C, the Pres.Prf. has the highest percentage rate with 60.71%, and the SPst. follows it with 32.14%. The total number for the confusion of the Pres.Prf. with the Pres.Prf.C is 24, in 70.83% of which the Pres.Prf. is used instead of the Pres.Prf.C. tense.

Table 7.

Upper-Intermediate Level Tense Errors in Task B (n = 38)

		Wrong Tense													
Correct Tense	No of corr.	<u>Pst.Prf.</u>		<u>SPst.</u>		<u>Pst.C</u>		<u>SPres.</u>		<u>Pres.Prf.</u>		<u>Pres.Prf.C</u>		T	NA
		f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%		
Pres.Prf.	5	--	--	27 (75.00)	--	--	4 (11.11)	X	X	5 (13.88)	36	--			
Pres.Prf.C	1	--	--	5 (20.83)	--	--	--	--	19 (79.16)	X	X	2	1		

Note. X = the tense itself; dashes indicate no errors; for abbreviations see pp. xii-xiii.

Table 7 shows the wrong tenses used instead of the Pres.Prf. and the Pres.Prf.C in Task B in the Upper-Intermediate group. Among the errors committed in the Pres.Prf., the SPst. has the highest percentage rate with 75%, and the Pres.Prf.C follows it with 13.88%. Among the errors committed in the Pres.Prf.C, the Pres.Prf. has the highest percentage rate with 79.16%, and the remaining errors belong to the SPst. The total number for the confusion of the Pres.Prf. with the Pres.Prf.C is 24, in 79.16% of which the Pres.Prf. is used instead of the Pres.Prf.C. tense.

The tables reveal that in all three groups in Task B, the SPst. and the Pres.Prf.C are the most frequently used tenses instead of the Pres.Prf., respectively. Again, in all three groups the Pres.Prf. has the highest percentage rate among the wrong tenses used instead of the Pres.Prf.C. Except for the Pre-Intermediate group, which has the Pst.Prf. with the second highest error number for the Pres.Prf.C, both the Intermediate and the

Upper-Intermediate groups have the SPst. with the second highest error number for the Pres.Prf.C. Also, in all three groups, when the Pres.Prf. and the Pres.Prf.C are used wrongly in place of each other, most of the time it is the Pres.Prf. that is preferred by the students with a much higher percentage rate.

Table 8.  
Other Errors in the Present Perfect Tenses in Task B

Types of Errors	Levels					
	P-INT (n = 42)	%	INT (n = 40)	%	U-INT (n = 38)	%
Auxiliary Errors						
active/passive	1	(1.20)	--	--	1	(2.00)
affirmative/negative	4	(4.81)	--	--	--	--
agreement	14	(16.86)	6	(10.52)	9	(18.00)
missing	--	--	--	--	--	--
Verbal Errors						
wrong verb	4	(4.81)	--	--	--	--
wrong verb form	17	(20.48)	15	(26.31)	8	(16.00)
Contextual Grammatical Match						
Adverb						
wrong	16	(19.27)	7	(12.28)	8	(16.00)
missing	24	(28.91)	26	(45.61)	22	(44.00)
misplaced	--	--	--	--	--	--
sentences with complex structures	1	(1.20)	2	(3.50)	2	(4.00)
Irr.	2	(2.40)	1	(1.75)	--	--
Total	83		57		50	

Note. Dashes indicate no errors; for abbreviations see pp. xii-xiii.

Table 8 shows the errors committed that are other than the tense errors in Task A in all three groups. While the highest number of errors in all the groups is the missing adverbs, the second highest error number in the Pre-Intermediate and the Intermediate groups is the wrong verb forms, and the auxiliary agreement in the Upper-Intermediate group. However, it can be observed in the table that the verb form errors are very close in number to the auxiliary agreement errors in the Upper-Intermediate group.

Table 9.

Pre-Intermediate Level Tense Errors in Task C (n = 42)

		Wrong Tense												T	NA		
Correct Tense	No of corr.	<u>Pst.Prf.</u>		<u>SPst.</u>		<u>Pst.C</u>		<u>SPres.</u>		<u>Pres.C</u>		<u>Pres.Prf.</u>		<u>Pres.Prf.C</u>			
		f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%		
Pres.Prf.	5	2	(8.00)	19	(76.00)	--	--	4	(16.00)	--	--	X	X	--	--	25	10
Pres.Prf.C	3	--	--	2	(4.16)	5	(10.41)	2	(4.16)	9	(18.75)	30	(62.50)	X	X	48	13
SPres.		--	--	--	--	--	--	X	X	--	--	--	--	1	(100)	1	

Note. X = the tense itself; dashes indicate no errors; empty spaces indicate items unexamined; for abbreviations see pp. xii-xiii.

Table 9 shows the wrong tenses used instead of the Pres.Prf. and the Pres.Prf.C in Task C in the Pre-Intermediate group. Among the errors committed in the Pres.Prf., the SPst. has the highest percentage rate with 76%, and the SPres. follows it with 16%. Among the errors committed in the Pres.Prf.C, the Pres.Prf. has the highest percentage rate with 62.5%, and the Pres.C follows it with 18.75%. The total number for the

confusion of the Pres.Prf. with the Pres.Prf.C is 30, in all of which the Pres.Prf. is used instead of the Pres.Prf.C.

Table 10.

Intermediate Level Tense Errors in Task C (n = 40)

Wrong Tense																	
Correct Tense	No of corr.	<u>Pst.Prf.</u>		<u>SPst.</u>		<u>Pst.C</u>		<u>SPres.</u>		<u>Pres.C</u>		<u>Pres.Prf.</u>		<u>Pres.Prf.C</u>		T	NA
		f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%		
Pres.Prf.	5	2	(5.55)	30	(83.33)	--	--	4	(11.11)	--	--	X	X	--	--	36	15
Pres.Prf.C	3	--	--	2	(5.12)	11	(28.20)	--	--	8	(20.51)	18	(46.15)	X	X	39	4
SPres.		--	--	--	--	--	--	X	X	--	--	--	--	1	(100)	1	

Note. X = the tense itself; dashes indicate no errors; empty spaces indicate items unexamined; for abbreviations see pp. xii-xiii.

Table 10 shows the wrong tenses used instead of the Pres.Prf. and the Pres.Prf.C in Task C in the Intermediate group. Among the errors committed in the Pres.Prf., the SPst. has the highest percentage rate with 83.33%, and the SPres. follows it with 11.11%. Among the errors committed in the Pres.Prf.C, the Pres.Prf. has the highest percentage rate with 46.15%, and the Pst.C follows it with 28.20%. The total number for the confusion of the Pres.Prf. with the Pres.Prf.C is 18, in all of which the Pres.Prf. is used instead of the Pres.Prf.C tense.

Table 11.

Upper-Intermediate Level Tense Errors in Task C (n = 38)

		Wrong Tense														T	NA
Correct Tense	No of corr.	<u>Pst.Prf.</u>		<u>SPst.</u>		<u>Pst.C</u>		<u>SPres.</u>		<u>Pres.C</u>		<u>Pres.Prf.</u>		<u>Pres.Prf.C</u>			
		f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%		
Pres.Prf.	5	3	(10.34)	22	(75.86)	--	--	4	(13.79)	--	--	X	X	--	--	29	2
Pres.Prf.C	3	--	--	--	--	5	(14.28)	--	--	4	(11.42)	26	(74.28)	X	X	35	1
SPres.	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	1	(100)	1	

Note. X = the tense itself; dashes indicate no errors; empty spaces indicate items unexamined; for abbreviations see pp. xii-xiii.

Table 11 shows the wrong tenses used instead of the Pres.Prf. and the Pres.Prf.C in Task C in the Upper-Intermediate group. Among the errors committed in the Pres.Prf., the SPst. has the highest percentage rate with 75.86%, and the SPres. follows it with 13.79%. Among the errors committed in the Pres.Prf.C, the Pres.Prf. has the highest percentage rate with 74.28%, and the Pst.C follows it with 14.28%. The total number for the confusion of the Pres.Prf. with the Pres.Prf.C is 26, in all of which the Pres.Prf. is used instead of the Pres.Prf.C tense.

The tables reveal that in all three groups in Task C, the SPst. and the SPres. are the most frequently used tenses instead of the Pres.Prf., respectively. Again, in all three groups the Pres.Prf. has the highest percentage rate among the wrong tenses used instead of the Pres.Prf.C. Except for the Pre-Intermediate group, which has the Pres.C with the second highest error number for the Pres.Prf.C, both the Intermediate and the Upper-Intermediate groups have the Pst.C with the second highest error number for the



Pres.Prf.C. Also, in all three groups, when the Pres.Prf. and the Pres.Prf.C are used wrongly for each other, it is always the Pres.Prf. that is preferred by the students.

Table 12.

Other Errors in the Present Perfect Tenses in Task C

Types of Errors	Levels					
	P-INT (n = 42)	%	INT (n = 40)	%	U-INT (n =38)	%
Auxiliary Errors						
active/passive	--	--	--	--	--	--
affirmative/negative	--	--	--	--	--	--
agreement	--	--	--	--	--	--
missing	--	--	--	--	1	(1.33)
Verbal Errors						
wrong verb	29	(35.36)	26	(41.93)	31	(41.33)
wrong verb form	17	(20.73)	3	(4.83)	11	(14.66)
Contextual Grammatical Match						
Adverb						
wrong	18	(21.95)	23	(37.09)	17	(22.66)
missing	2	(2.43)	1	(1.61)	1	(1.33)
misplaced	1	(1.21)	--	--	--	--
sentences with complex structures	2	(2.43)	1	(1.61)	1	(1.33)
Diff.	10	(12.19)	8	(12.90)	11	(14.66)
Inc.	3	(3.65)	--	--	2	(2.66)
Total	82		62		75	

Note. Dashes indicate no errors; for abbreviations see pp. xii-xiii.

Table 12 shows the errors committed that are other than the tense errors in Task C in all three groups. The first two most frequent errors in all these groups are the wrong verb forms and wrong adverbs, respectively. It is important to note that errors related to verb forms and adverb choice are very close in number in the Pre-Intermediate group.

Table 13.

Pre-Intermediate Level Tense Errors in Task D (n = 42)

Correct Tense	Wrong Tense									
	<u>SPst.</u>		<u>Pres.Prf.</u>		<u>SPres.</u>		Total	NA	NU Pres.Prf.	NU Pres.Prf.C
	f	%	f	%	f	%				
Pres.Prf.	7	(87.50)	X	X	1	(12.50)	8	20	4	22
SPst.	X	X	3							
Pst.Prf			1							
Total			4							

Note. X = the tense itself; empty spaces indicate items unexamined; for abbreviations see pp. xii-xiii.

Table 13 shows the tense errors committed which are related to the Pres.Prf. and the Pres.Prf.C in Task D in the Pre-Intermediate group. According to this table, 87.50% of the tenses that are used instead of the Pres.Prf. are the SPst., and the remaining ones are the SPres. . When the Pres.Prf. is used wrongly for other tenses, the highest

percentage belongs to the SPst. with 75%, and the remaining part belongs to the Pst.Prf. tense. There is no usage of Pres.Prf.C in this task in this group.

Table 14.

Intermediate Level Tense Errors in Task D (n = 40)

Correct Tense	Wrong Tense							
	<u>SPst.</u>		<u>Pres.Prf.</u>		Total	NA	NU	NU
	f	%	f	%			Pres.Prf.	Pres.Prf.C
Pres.Prf.	9	100	X	X	9	7	11	33
SPst.	X	X	4					
Pst.Prf.			1					
Total			5					

Note. X = the tense itself; empty spaces indicate items unexamined; for abbreviations see pp. xii-xiii.

Table 14 shows the tense errors committed which are related to the Pres.Prf. and the Pres.Prf.C in Task D in the Intermediate group. According to this table, 100% of the tenses that are used instead of the Pres.Prf. are the SPst. tense. When the Pres.Prf. is used wrongly for other tenses, the highest percentage belongs to the SPst. with 80%, and the remaining percentage belongs to the Pst.Prf. tense. There is no usage of Pres.Prf.C in this task in this group.

Table 15.

Upper-Intermediate Level Tense Errors in Task D (n = 38)

Correct Tense	Wrong Tense									
	<u>SPst.</u>		<u>Pres.Prf.</u>		<u>Pres.Prf.C</u>		<u>SPres.</u>		T	NA
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%		NU Pres.Prf. Pres.Prf.C
Pres.Prf.	7	(87.50)	X	X	--	--	1	(12.50)	8	1
Pres.Prf.C	--	--	3	(100)	X	X	--	--	3	6
SPres.			--		1					34
SPst.			5		--					
PstPrf.			3		--					
Total			1		1					

Note. X = the tense itself; dashes indicate no errors; empty spaces indicate items unexamined; for abbreviations see pp. xii-xiii.

Table 15 shows the tense errors committed which are related to the Pres.Prf. and the Pres.Prf.C in Task D in the Upper-Intermediate group. According to this table, 87.50% of the tenses that are used instead of the Pres.Prf. is the SPst., and the remaining percentage belongs to the SPres. tense. Of the total tense errors related to the Pres.Prf.C, 100% belongs to the Pres.Prf.. When the Pres.Prf. is used wrongly for other tenses, the highest percentage belongs to the SPst. with 45.45% followed by the Pres.Prf.C and the Pst.Prf.T sharing the remaining percentage equally, and the Pres.Prf.C is used wrongly only once instead of the SPres. tense. The total number for the confusion of the Pres.Prf. with the Pres.Prf.C is 3, in all of which Pres.Prf. is used instead of the Pres.Prf.C tense.

The tables reveal that in all three groups in Task D, the SPst. is the most frequently used tense instead of the Pres.Prf.. The Pres.Prf.C usage is very low in this task.

Table 16.

Other Errors in the Present Perfect Tenses in Task D

Types of Errors	Levels					
	P-INT (n =42)	%	INT (n = 40)	%	U-INT (n = 38)	%
Auxiliary Errors						
active/passive	1	( 8.33)	2	(16.66)	--	--
affirmative/negative	--	--	--	--	--	--
agreement	2	(16.66)	--	--	1	(5.00)
missing	--	--	--	--	--	--
Verbal Errors						
wrong verb	1	(8.33)	2	(16.66)	8	(40.00)
wrong verb form	2	(16.66)	1	(8.33)	--	--
Contextual Grammatical Match						
Adverb						
wrong	--	--	--	--	--	--
missing	--	--	--	--	--	--
misplaced	--	--	--	--	--	--
sentences with complex structures	6	(50.00)	7	(58.33)	11	(55.00)
Total	12		12		20	

Note. Dashes indicate no errors; for abbreviations see pp. xii-xiii.

Table 16 shows the errors committed that are other than the tense errors in Task D in all three groups. The most frequent errors in all these groups are in the sentences with complex structures. It is important to note that wrong verb forms also have a high percentage in the Upper-Intermediate group.

Table 17.

Pre-Intermediate Level Tense Errors in Task E (n = 42)

Correct Tense	Wrong Tense									
	<u>SPst.</u>		<u>Pres.Prf.</u>		<u>Pres.Prf.C</u>		<u>SPres.</u>		T	NA
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%		
Pres.Prf.	5	(62.50)	X	X	--	--	3	(37.50)	8	14
Pres.Prf.C	--	--	2	(100)	X	X	--	--	2	1
SPres.			3		--					17
Pres.C			--		2					
SPst.			6		--					
Pst.Prf.			1		--					
Total			12		2					

Note. X = the tense itself; dashes indicate no errors; empty spaces indicate items unexamined; for abbreviations see pp. xii-xiii.

Table 17 shows the tense errors which are related to the Pres.Prf. and the PresS.Prf.C in Task E in the Pre-Intermediate group. According to this table, 62.50% of the tenses that are used instead of the Pres.Prf. is the SPst., and the remaining percentage belongs to the SPres. tense. Of the total tense errors related to the Pres.Prf.C, 100%

belongs to the Pres.Prf.. When the Pres.Prf. is used wrongly for other tenses, the highest percentage belongs to the SPst. with 50% followed by the SPres. with a percentage of 25; and when the Pres.Prf.C is used wrongly for other tenses, it is only the Pres.C that is observed in the table. The total number for the confusion of the Pres.Prf. with the Pres.Prf.C is 2, in all of which the Pres.Prf. is used instead of the Pres.Prf.C tense.

Table 18.

Intermediate Level Tense Errors in Task E (n = 40)

Correct Tense	Wrong Tense									
	SPst.		Pres.Prf.		Pres.Prf.C		SPres.		T	NA
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%		
Pres.Prf.	8	(57.14)	X	X	--	--	6	(42.85)	14	8
Pres.Prf.C	--	--	--	--	X	X	--	--	0	4
Pst.Prf.			1		--					24
SPst.			1		--					
SPres.			1		--					
Total			3		0					

Note. X = the tense itself; dashes indicate no errors; empty spaces indicate items unexamined; for abbreviations see pp. xii-xiii.

Table 18 shows the tense errors committed which are related to the Pres.Prf. and the Pres.Prf.C in Task E in the Intermediate group. According to this table, 57.14% of the tenses that are used instead of the Pres.Prf. is the SPst., and the remaining percentage belongs to the SPres. tense. There are no errors related to the Pres.Prf.C. When the

Pres.Prf. is used wrongly for other tenses, there is no highest percentage among the three tenses, which are the Pst.Prf., the SPst. and the SPres tenses. The total number for the confusion of the Pres.Prf. with the Pres.Prf.C is 0.

Table 19.

Upper-Intermediate Level Tense Errors in Task E (n = 38)

Wrong Tense												
Correct												
Tense	<u>SPst.</u>		<u>Pres.Prf.</u>		<u>Pres.Prf.C</u>		<u>SPres.</u>		T	NA	NU	NU
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%			Pres.Prf.	Pres.Prf.C
Pres.Prf.	14	(93.33)	X	X	--	--	1	(6.66)	15	2	3	26
Pres.Prf.C	--	--	--	--	X	X	--	--	0			
Pst.Prf.			1		--							
SPst.			4		--							
Total			5		0							

Note. X = the tense itself; dashes indicate no errors; empty spaces indicate items unexamined; for abbreviations see pp. xii-xiii.

Table 19 shows the tense errors committed which are related to the Pres.Prf. and the Pres.Prf.C in Task E in the Upper-Intermediate group. According to this table, 93.33% of the tenses that are used instead of the Pres.Prf. is the SPst., and the remaining percentage belongs to the SPres. tense. There are no errors related to the Pres.Prf.C. When the Pres.Prf. is used wrongly for other tenses, the SPst. has the highest percentage rate with 80%. The total number for the confusion of the Pres.Prf. with the Pres.Prf.C is 0.



The tables reveal that in all three groups in Task E, the SPst. and the SPres. are the two tenses used instead of the Pres.Prf.. In the Pre-Intermediate group the Pres.Prf. is used instead of the Pres.Prf.C. The Pres.Prf.C usage in this task is very low.

Table 20.

Other Errors in the Present Perfect Tenses in Task E

Types of Errors	Levels					
	P-INT (n = 42)	%	INT (n = 40)	%	U-INT (n = 38)	%
Auxiliary Errors						
active/passive	--	--	1	(10)	2	(22.22)
affirmative/negative	--	--	--	--	--	--
agreement	--	--	--	--	--	--
missing	--	--	--	--	--	--
Verbal Errors						
wrong verb	6	(54.54)	6	(60)	6	(66.66)
wrong verb form	1	(9.09)	--	--	--	--
Contextual Grammatical Match						
Adverb						
wrong	--	--	--	--	--	--
missing	--	--	--	--	--	--
misplaced	--	--	--	--	--	--
sentences with complex structures	4	(36.36)	3	(30)	1	(11.11)
Total	11		10		9	

Note. Dashes indicate no errors; for abbreviations see pp. xii-xiii.

Table 20 shows the errors committed that are other than the tense errors in Task A in all three groups. In all three groups the most frequent errors are wrong verbs. While the second most frequent error in the Pre-Intermediate and the Intermediate groups is sentences with complex structures, in the Upper-Intermediate group it is the active/passive voice in the auxiliary.

### Results of the Open-Ended Questionnaire

Q1. Difficulty level of the present perfect tenses compared to other tenses in English

All nine teachers agreed that it is difficult, but three said that it is more difficult than the other tenses in English.

Three teachers mentioned that it is difficult to teach these tenses.

Five teachers said that the difficulty arises from the fact that there is no exact equivalent tense in Turkish.

One teacher said that students try to find exact Turkish equivalents, which causes them to confuse Pres.Prf. and Pres.Prf.C. She also mentioned that it takes time to understand duration because its eastern interpretation is different.

Two teachers said that students have difficulties in sorting out when to use SPst. and Pres.Prf., and one of these teachers said that they have a tendency to use the SPst. when they want to talk about changes in the past.

Q2. Students' problems and their causes.

One teacher did not answer this question.

One teacher said that students do not understand the time being covered-past, present or both.

Four teachers said that they have difficulties in distinguishing between Pres.Prf. and Pres.Prf.C. One of these teachers said that trying to translate causes confusions, and another one said that students try to use Pres.Prf.C mainly.

Three teachers said students have difficulties in distinguishing between SPst. and Pres.Prf.. One of these teachers said that this occurs when there are no time expression clues.

One teacher said that they confuse Pres.Prf.C and SPst. and Pres.C.

Three teachers said that they have difficulties in the usage of Pres.Prf.C when the result of an action is emphasized, and one of them also pointed out that students do not understand whether the action is complete or incomplete.

One teacher said that students forget that some verbs change their meanings when they are used in the continuous form.

One teacher said that students have difficulties in distinguishing between which action or state is being referred to because the present perfect tenses in English correspond to several tenses in Turkish and the time expressions used with these tenses can also be used with other tenses.

Q3. Students' problems of wrong usage and their solutions.

Seven out of nine teachers agreed that students cannot use these tenses effectively. Two of these teachers said that students have problems at the production level and another one said that in tests they are effective but not when speaking. One of these teachers also mentioned that students use these tenses automatically with certain clues, so they have problems at the production level.

One teacher said that some students use these tenses effectively and some do not.

One teacher did not mention her ideas about whether students are effective in using these tenses or not.

Five teachers said that more exercises are needed.

One teacher said that SPst. has to be made clear first.

One teacher said that examples of SPst., SPres. and Pres.Prf. should be given and compared.

One teacher said that students need to be reminded of what they have learnt at times.

One teacher said that comparative study of the native language and the target language is needed.

One teacher said that supplementary materials taking into consideration the native language of the learners can be produced.

#### Q4. Materials

One teacher did not answer this question.

Six out of eight teachers said that the native language of the learners are not taken into consideration in the materials; one teacher did not mention her idea and one teacher said that materials should take into consideration the native language of the learners.

Five out of eight teachers said that there is not enough emphasis on or reinforcement of these tenses in the materials; one said that there is enough emphasis; another teacher said that materials are not helpful or useful, and one teacher did not mention her opinion.

One teacher said that teachers make extra explanations and do extra practice to compensate for what the materials lack.

One teacher said that it is better to think of these tenses in terms of English as there are no exact corresponding tenses in Turkish to those in English.

One teacher said that students do not have difficulties in doing exercises because they specifically focus on the present perfect tenses; however, they have problems in writing, so grammar and writing should be integrated.

In this chapter, the data analysis procedures and the results obtained from the data, which consisted of 120 students' answers to five tasks and written interviews with nine teachers, were presented and analyzed. The results indicate that the students errors are systematic, consistent and in relation with their teachers' opinions. Moreover, the errors that are committed change based on the type of the task, which will be dealt with in detail in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

### Introduction

This study investigates the errors committed by Turkish students in using the present perfect tenses in English. Its purposes are to determine the types of these errors and the reasons underlying them, and whether or not variation in errors are dependent on the type of the task students are expected to complete. Some other issues that are focused on in this study are the identification of the incompatibility between Turkish and English regarding the present perfect tenses, and providing fundamental suggestions for the preparation of materials which will be suitable for Turkish students.

The participants in the study were 120 students and nine teachers from the Department of Basic English at the Middle East Technical University. Students were given a test comprising five types of tasks and the teachers were given open-ended questionnaires. The tasks that the students were asked to complete were graded from the most form oriented to the least.

To analyze the results, for each level the errors that were committed were recorded and categorized. Then, their frequency numbers were calculated and changed into percentages to be compared among different task types. The questionnaires reflecting teachers' opinions were reported by grouping similar ideas in a summary.

### General Results

The research questions that are addressed in this study are as follows:

- What are the most frequent errors committed by Turkish students in learning the present perfect and the present perfect continuous tenses?
- Are these errors systematic? What are their sources?
- Is there a difference in the types of errors committed with respect to the type of the task?
- Do the opinions of teachers reflect the results obtained from the students' papers?

In order to be able to interpret the results within the framework of the research questions, I believe it is important to observe all the tasks levels and errors in a table of general results.





Table 21 shows the two most frequent errors committed in each group for each task. The most striking error is the usage of the SPst. instead of the Pres.Prf. throughout all the groups with the highest frequency rate. Except in Task B, which is Pres.Prf.C in all groups, the second highest error number belongs to SPres. tense. As for the Pres.Prf.C, the Pres.Prf. is mostly used instead of this tense.

When these two tenses are wrongly used instead of other tenses, the Pres.Prf. is mostly used instead of the SPst. and the Pres.Prf.C is mostly used instead of the Pres.C tense. When Pres.Prf. and Pres.Prf.C are confused, it is always the Pres.Prf. that is preferred instead of the Pres.Prf.C in all groups. Among the other types of errors, mainly wrong verb forms, wrong verbs, missing adverbs, wrong adverbs, complex sentences seem to be the problematic issues in the use of the present perfect tenses.

The types of the errors indicate that they are systematic. The major reason behind them is the incompatibility between the tenses of the two languages due to their adverb usage. Adding a certain time adverbial to a sentence in the Pres.Prf., which would change it into SPst. in English, does not change the tense of that sentence in Turkish. The adverb carries the perfective aspect meaning. In this study, formal British standard usage has been taken as a basis in order to determine errors as in the examples below:

E.g.: O filmi zaten gördüm. = I have already seen that movie.

O filmi dün gördüm. = I saw that movie yesterday.

Therefore, when students commit errors in the Pres.Prf., they prefer to use the SPst. by translating directly from Turkish into English.

The same applies to the usage of the SPres. or the Pres.C instead of the Pres.Prf. or Pres.Prf.C. Adding a certain time adverbial to a sentence in the SPres. or Pres.C, which would change it into Pres.Prf. or Pres.Prf.C in English, does not change the tense of that sentence in Turkish. Again, the adverb carries the perfective aspect meaning.

E.g.: Evdeyim. = I am home.

Bir saattir evdeyim. = I have been home for an hour.

Çalışıyorum. = I am working.

Sabahtan beri çalışıyorum. = I have been working since the morning.

One of the most common errors in the sentence completion task (see Task B in Appendix A) was answers such as “he hasn’t been finding a job since January” and “he hasn’t found a job since January”, which are direct translations of “Ocak’tan beri iş bulamıyor” and “Ocak’tan beri iş bulamadı.” in the progressive aspect. Both of these sentences are correct in Turkish, but not in English because of the distinction in the types of verbs. “Find” is a dynamic transitional event verb (see pg. 19 ). It does not take the progressive aspect unless with some difference in meaning.

E.g.: 1. I had lost my key, but now, I have found it.

2. I have been finding socks under your bed.

In Example 1, the person wants to find his key or looks for it, resulting in the finding action of the keys. However, in the second example there is not such a purpose and the action is continuous. In the question in Task B, the person wants

to find a job after having been fired. Therefore, this sentence cannot be constructed in the Pres.Prf.C tense. When it is constructed in the Pres.Prf. tense as “He hasn’t found a job since January”, it is still incorrect due to the time adverbial putting emphasis on the duration. In order to add that duration meaning to the verb, it is usually changed into “hasn’t been able to” or the time adverbial is changed into “yet”. This is another incompatibility between Turkish and English causing difficulties for students.

When students’ wrong choices of verbs are examined, as mentioned in the previous paragraph, it is usually different verb types that cause problems, which implies that students have difficulties with the resultative meaning of the Pres.Prf. tense.

E.g.: Be vs. become

“ I have been a university student.” instead of “ I have become a university student.”

Have vs. make

“ I have had many friends.” instead of “ I have made many friends.”

Know vs. meet

“ I have known many people” instead of “ I have met many people.”

Another issue was the usage of the Pres.Prf. and Pres.Prf.C in places of each other. The usage of Pres.Prf.C is very low or it is not used at all, especially in the writing tasks, and when used, it replaces PresC tense. This might be due to a shift

in which instead of Pres.C, Pres.Prf.C is used and instead of Pres.Prf.C, Pres.Prf. is used.

The errors showed consistency based on the task types, however, in the writing tasks, which were function-oriented, contextual match errors were foregrounded especially in sentences with “when”, “while” and “that” where students tried to combine SPst. and Pres.Prf.

Teachers’ opinions reflected the results obtained from the students’ papers. As the teachers pointed out, students have difficulties in understanding the concept of duration in these tenses, they try to translate directly from Turkish into English, they mostly confuse SPst. with Pres.Prf. and they have difficulty in grasping that some verbs change in meaning in the continuous form. In addition, they become confused as to whether their sentences imply action or state and they use some structures automatically as in the translation task (see Appendix A). In that task, when translating the sentence “Türk yemeklerini tattınız mı?” into “Have you tasted Turkish food?”, most of the students added “ever” and constructed a question about experiences in life because this is the main structure they have learned and they cannot think beyond that context, because they do not have enough practice with these tenses.

Among the teachers’ opinions, one was in contrast with the results that were obtained from the students’ papers. That teacher said that students use Pres.Prf.C mainly. The results, however, show that they use Pres.Prf. mainly in most cases.

### Limitations

One of the limitations of this study is that it was carried out at the Middle East Technical University, which accepts students with very high scores on the university exam. The students are usually very hard working and intelligent as most of them will be attending engineering departments. The results of the study might change according to the type of the university and its students. Another limitation might be that not all perfect tenses were included in the study. Results in a study in which past perfect tenses and modals are included may be different than this study.

### Implications

#### Pedagogical Implications

In the light of the reasons behind the students' errors in the present perfect tenses and teachers' opinions, it is important to take the native language of the students into consideration when teaching these two tenses. This can only be achieved by making use of the native language in the classroom contrary to official policies at many institutions. Since the present perfect tenses do not exist in the Turkish language there is a need to compare the concepts such as duration, completeness, etc. in English with those in Turkish and make the differences clear. Apart from that, two types of tasks, interpretation and consciousness-raising tasks can be used along with the materials assigned.

Ellis (1995) suggests that interpretation tasks are useful devices in teaching grammar. He defines the interpretation process in language learning as "... the

process by which learners endeavor to comprehend input and in so doing pay attention to specific linguistic features and their meanings. It involves noticing and cognitive comparison and results in intake”(p.90). In such tasks, learners first comprehend meaning, then notice the form and function and then identify errors in such problematic structures, which “... can be determined by examining samples of the learners’ output in order to determine (a) which grammatical structures are not yet being used (i.e., the forms have not been acquired) and, also, more crucially, (b) the forms that are being used but incorrectly because their target function(s) has not yet been acquired..... The best candidates for interpretation tasks, therefore, may be structures for which the form is known but the meaning(s) realized by the form is not” (p.95), which, in this case, are the present perfect tenses.

Ellis (1991) also suggests that consciousness-raising tasks are very useful in teaching the grammar of a foreign language. Such tasks usually require the students to discover rules, solve problems and do exercises related to explicit knowledge of the grammar of that language. As grammar becomes the discussion topic in these tasks, it may be more suitable to use them with Intermediate or Upper-Intermediate levels.

### Further Research

In the context of the pedagogical implications mentioned above, further research can be carried out to find out the effectiveness of interpretation tasks in the teaching of the present perfect tenses to Turkish students. Additionally, another research study can

be conducted on the differences of errors only between the present perfect and the present perfect continuous tenses.

In the present study, Turkish students' errors in the present perfect tenses are displayed and their underlying reasons are examined. It is evident from the study that employing contrastive analysis and error analysis jointly in order to explain the interlanguage of second language learners is useful both for the teachers and learners of that language. Moreover, it provides better guidance for the preparation of materials which take the native language of the students into consideration and focus on the problematic issues that might arise due to incompatibilities between the two languages.

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## APPENDIX A

Dear participants,

I'm an MA TEFL student at Bilkent University. I'm conducting a study on the present perfect tenses. I would be thankful if you completed the tasks below. Thank you for your cooperation.

A. Fill in the blanks with the suitable form of the verbs in brackets.

- 1.) Since the beginning of the semester, John \_\_\_\_\_ (read) three novels. He \_\_\_\_\_ (read) "A Farewell to Arms" right now. He \_\_\_\_\_ (read) that novel for the past two days. He \_\_\_\_\_ (intend) to finish it next week. In his lifetime, he \_\_\_\_\_ (read) many novels, but this is the first Hemingway novel he \_\_\_\_\_ (read, ever). (Azar, 1989, p.57)
- 2.) Alison \_\_\_\_\_ (be) a manager for four years now. She usually \_\_\_\_\_ (travel) a lot. She \_\_\_\_\_ (visit) at least 30 countries over the past few years. However, the company that she \_\_\_\_\_ (work) in \_\_\_\_\_ (change) their import-export policy recently. Although she \_\_\_\_\_ (attend) five meetings in different countries last year, she \_\_\_\_\_ (be, not) abroad so far this year.
- 3.) Newsreader: "Mona Lisa's painting \_\_\_\_\_ (steal) from the museum. When the robbers \_\_\_\_\_ (break into) the building last night, the watchman \_\_\_\_\_ (sleep)."
- 4.) It \_\_\_\_\_ (be) only 2:00p.m. and we \_\_\_\_\_ (already, accomplish) so much for our party today! We \_\_\_\_\_ (send) all the invitations and \_\_\_\_\_ (decorate) the room! Moreover, I \_\_\_\_\_ (go) shopping yesterday and \_\_\_\_\_ (buy) a lot of food. The phone \_\_\_\_\_ (ring) many times in the morning. Our friends \_\_\_\_\_ (keep) calling to offer help. It \_\_\_\_\_ (ring) for a minute now, too! Won't somebody answer it?

B. Complete the sentences using the suitable form of the verbs in brackets.

- 1.) I first met him a year ago; therefore, I can say that \_\_\_\_\_ (know).
- 2.) He was fired in January and he is still unemployed, so he \_\_\_\_\_ (find).
- 3.) He bought a yacht in 1992, so he \_\_\_\_\_ (have).
- 4.) She used to own two cars. Now, she has only one car, so \_\_\_\_\_ (sell).
- 5.) The boy's clothes are wet. It's possible that he \_\_\_\_\_ (fall),  
or maybe he \_\_\_\_\_ (walk).

C. Please translate the dialog that is held between a Turkish person and an American tourist who do not know each other's language.

A: Türkiye'ye yeni mi geldiniz?

\_\_\_\_\_?

B: No, its been two weeks.

\_\_\_\_\_.

A: Geldiğinizden beri Ankara'da mı kalıyorsunuz?

\_\_\_\_\_?

B: No, I came here on Saturday.

\_\_\_\_\_.

A: O zaman sadece üç gündür buradasınız. Ankara'da başka nereleri gördünüz?

\_\_\_\_\_?

B: Istanbul and Izmir.

\_\_\_\_\_.

A: Türk yemeklerini tattınız mı?

\_\_\_\_\_?

B: Yes, they are delicious. I have always liked spicy food.

\_\_\_\_\_.

A: Elinizde paketler var. Alışveriş mi yapıyordunuz?

\_\_\_\_\_?

B: Yes, but I haven't finished yet.

\_\_\_\_\_.

A: Yorgun görünüyorsunuz. Uzun zamandır mı dolaşıyorsunuz?

\_\_\_\_\_?

B: Yes, since this morning .

\_\_\_\_\_.

A: Türk yemekleri kitabı almışsınız. Yemek yapmayı seviyor musunuz?

\_\_\_\_\_?

B: Yes, actually, I'm a cook.

\_\_\_\_\_.

A: Gerçekten mi? Kaç senedir aşçılık yapıyorsunuz?

\_\_\_\_\_?

B: This is my fifth year. Oh! My tour guide has arrived. I think we're leaving.

\_\_\_\_\_.

A: Sizinle tanışmaktan mutluluk duydum. Hoşçakalın.

\_\_\_\_\_.

B: Bye.

\_\_\_\_\_.

D. Look at the picture below and describe what you see.



E. Write a paragraph about the changes that have happened in your life after starting METU.

APPENDIX B  
Open-ended Questionnaire

A. General Information

Level:

Class size:

Experience in teaching:

B. Interview Questions

- 1.) What is your opinion on the difficulty level of the present perfect tenses when compared to other tenses in English?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 2.) Where do Turkish students seem to face the most difficulties when learning the present perfect and present perfect continuous tenses? Why ?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 3.) Can they use these two tenses effectively? If not, what do you think can be done?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 4.) What is your opinion on the materials that teach the present perfect tenses? Do you think they take into consideration the native language of the target culture? Is there enough emphasis and reinforcement on these two tenses?