

T.C. ANADOLU ÜNİVERSİTESİ

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SOSYAL BİLİMLER ENSTİTÜSÜ

THE USE OF THE PRESENT PERFECT TENSE

BY TURKISH STUDENTS

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## ABSTRACT

The present perfect tense is one of the most difficult structures of English for Turkish Students as it has not a corresponding tense in Turkish. Therefore, students come across difficulties in learning this complex construction is either mis-transferred or misunderstood as far as its meaning is concerned.

In this study, it was tried to diagnose if the English Present Perfect Tense is difficult to use for Turkish Students.

The first chapter of this study deals with the present perfect tense and the concepts of Aspect both in English and in Turkish with special emphasis on the perfect aspect. In the same chapter contrastive analysis between English and Turkish on perfectlike constructions is made. The second chapter deals with the research design, this chapter analyzes the results of the tests and third chapter discusses the results of the tests and presents suggestions for further research.

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## CHAPTER I

### 1.1. Background

This study is based on a previous study. During the graduate study within the Psycholinguistics course a project was prepared on the "Affect of IQ on Learning a Foreign Language" .

Since there are individual differences in learning, it was taught that this difference must be in language learning too.

The human organism approaches any new problem, concept or structure with an existing set of cognitive structures, and through insight, logical thinking and various forms of hypothesis testing, calls upon whatever prior experiences he has had and whatever cognitive structures he possesses to attempt a solution (Gagne, 1965). Shortly every individual approaches a problem or learns a set of facts or organizes a combination of feelings from a unique perspective.

The question taken upon that particular study was as follows.

"Is there any correlation between the IQ difference within any one individual and his language

learning capacity"

Here, by language learning, foreign language is meant. That project included two tests respectively IQ and foreign language test i.e. English.

The tests were administered second class students of Süleyman Çakır Secondary School. This school's syllabus is not in English. English is only taught in four lessons in a week.

Subjects were included fifty students in one class. For IO test Cattell's International IQ test was given and in foreign language (English) test the questions has been designed from their syllabus. It was strictly cared to this point not to cause any failure arising from unlearned subjects.

Part of English test included the questions needs to be answered with the Present Perfect Tense. for it was in their syllabus design. The question was asked as below:

"Fill in the blanks by using the present perfect tense" (the verb was given in paranthesis).

Results of English test shawed that 85 per cent of the total population was not able to answer the questions with the present perfect tense. The present perfect

tense students:

The work described above bare the seeds of this thesis.

## 1.2. Introduction

Learning a language involves mastering the sound patterns, morphological patterns, grammatical patterns, and the relationship between them in the target language. The student of a foreign language must even go further than these structural levels. In order to be able to perform in a nativelike manner in the target language, he must have a firm understanding of the meaning and the functions of the structures he has learned. However, this task is quite difficult to perform.

All languages have structures that is unique to them. Therefore, when the foreign language learner faces a construction that does not have a corresponding form in his native language he has come across his first stumbling block. Simply because, in facing these new structures and meaning he is required to master not only new structures but also new concepts.

The Turkish learner of English faces similar problems while trying to master the English language. Among the stumbling blocks the Turkish student faces

in learning English is what is generally known as the Present Perfect Tense.

This particular construction is either mistransferred or misunderstood as far as its meaning is concerned.

### 1.3. The aim

The aim of this study is to find out how Turkish students use this tense while learning the perfect constructions in English. To diagnose the usage contrastive analysis and error analysis have been used. A bilingual translation test and a fill in the blanks test have been given to the four groups of students of Open Faculty with different proficiency levels at Anadolu University in Eskişehir.

The results of the test were later compared within each group, Also the results of each group were compared between each other in order to find out if there are particular differences between the four groups.

The results of research try to answer the following questions:

- i. Is the English Present Perfect Tense structurally difficult for Turkish Students to use?

- ii. Do the Turkish students utilize grammatical clues when they are using the English Present Perfect Tense?
- iii. Are the Turkish students able corelate grammatical clues like -dir, -den beri to English Perfect Tense?
- iv. Is there any relationship between using the present perfect tense correctly and the student's proficiency level.

#### 1.4. Limitations

The term "use" in the questions put above is used in a strictly grammatical sense. The student's ability to put their knowledge of Present Perfect Tense is termed as their "use" of Present Perfect Tense, only in controlled test environment. How they might make use of this knowledge in daily speech is not taken into consideration.

In the tests given, English Perfect Tense has not been contrasted with other tenses in English, and the verbs which cannot be used with present perfect tense have not been given in order not to confuse the students.

The analysis of the test results were calculated on percentages. Some of the statistically significant details

may have been lost the to such analysis.

The first chapter of this study deals with the present perfect tense and the concepts of Aspect both in English and Turkish. With special emphasis on the perfect aspect. In the same chapter contrastive analysis between English and Turkish on perfect like constructions in made. The second chapter deals with the research design, chapter three analyzes the results of the test and also this chapter discusses the results of the tests and presents suggestions for further research.

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

#### 2.1. Notes On English Tenses

While teaching English Grammar, before proceeding with the tenses, a few notes on the presentation of the English verb system might be of help.

The students who have been studying English would already be familiar with the English tenses. It is however unlikely that they have any conception of the tense-scheme as a whole, so these students should be shown its general mechanism as a kind of mini revision. Students should be made aware of this scheme as the various new tenses offer points of comparison with the ones they have already learnt. The students might find it very enlightening before they try to solve the advanced exercises on the use of the tenses.

English has three main time divisions; PAST, PRESENT, and FUTURE expressed by the simple tenses.

While teaching they should be shown by forming three main blocks of tenses, each being subdivided so as to express other aspects within the general time. The present simple tense is used to express eternal

truths; it has the least definite time aspect, as it usually includes past, present, and future, like as follows:

'Man is mortal'

'The sun rises in the east'

'Black Sea Covers North of Turkey'.

The Present Perfect Tense is probably the most common tense in English Language but probably it is the most difficult one to learn for Turkish students, because there is no exact translation of the Tense in Turkish. In teaching this tense the first thing to teach to the students is to let them to grasp the three PERFECT tenses, the present, past and future express the completion of an action, or perfection of an action by a given time, not an act done at given time. In other words, the present perfect expresses the completion of an action by a given time. We can say that the present perfect expresses the completion or perfection of an action by now. But as it might be known NOW is present tense timing, and therefore in strictly speaking, we can say that the Present Perfect Tense is in a way a kind of Present tense why?

× We are not interested in WHEN the action took  
please,

\* We are only interested in the present state of completion, for example its effect now.

## 2.2. Aspect of time and fact

The perfect tense expresses the idea of the completed fact and its relationship to a given general time. In other words, we are not interested in the action itself. For example, when we say "I have bought a new hat" we draw the attention to the present possession of the article not the previous act of buying. But if we add yesterday, last week etc. Then we must say "I bought" because if we mention a past time, then our mind is automatically taken back to the time when the action took place. Then comes the aspect. The form "I have bought" is naturally considered in relation with now. This relation to now may be real, for example when we say "I have read three books since I last saw you? The past moment is actually connected to now by since.

Since is always associated with a present perfect tense when it means length of time up to now. Since denotes from some definite point of period in the past till now. For denotes a length of time till now. For example,

I have not seen you since Monday

I have not seen you for a week.

The past moment is actually connected to now by since, or the present interest in a past action may be emphasized by already, just, not yet, or ever. We may use this form most commonly when we do not want to imply any definite time in the past and are only interested in the completed fact now that we know it, let us have a look at the following examples:

I have read that book (I know what it is all about)  
But if we say 'I read it years ago' (We are interested in the past action)

Have you done your homework? (Is it here now)

Did you do your homework last night? (We are interested in last night activities)

She has eaten all the cream cakes. (And there is not any left for me)

If we say;

She ate all the cream cakes (It might be a scene from someone's description of a party. He is interested in the young lady's gluttonous act as it took place and not in the lack of cakes caused by it.)

I have never seen one

(So I do not know what it looks like)

I saw a pink one in a shop window.

(When we use a definite place it implies a definite past time)

I have already asked you three times for a glass of water.

(And this is the fourth time)

Perhaps the names Before-past, Before-present, and Before-future (Thompson and Martinet, 1984) might be more reasonable names than PERFECT because this name is given to a tense made in the same way as the English PRESENT PERFECT in many other European Languages. But because in most of these languages the distinction between Past Simple and Present Perfect has been lost, so that there is a confusion between the two. As we have already mentioned before, the form of the English PRESENT PERFECT is now commonly used in other languages as a sort of colloquial past which sometimes is like mişli geçmiş zaman in Turkish and it is usually very difficult to stamp out the foreign student's desire to use the English tense in the same way.

Great care must be taken to impress on students that the Present Perfect Tense belongs to PRESENT TIME and may not under any circumstances be used on any

occassion notianally defined or implied as PAST.

### 2.3. Verbs that can not be used in the present

#### perfect

Some verbs are rarely found in the simple present perfect tense because by their very nature they continue into the present. Sometimes an action, beginning indefinitely in the past is still continueing at the present moment. This usually happens with verbs of a static nature, such as stay, want, sit, stand, lie, study, learn, live, rest, etc. Therefore has lain, etc. Is rare; has been lying etc. is common.

So, if we do not suggest duration from the past the present continuous is used, but as soon as we imply a relation ship between the past and now, the PERFECT CONTINUOUS must be used.

Let's have a look at the following examples:

He is lying on the floor (now)

He has been lying there for three hours (and there he is still)

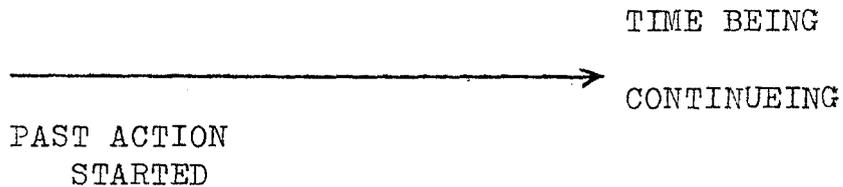
I am writing a letter to my friend (now)

I have written three letters since breakfast (completed up to now)

I have been writing letters all the morning (and I am still writing now)

Present Perfect Tense is used for a period of time that is not yet over. We use this tense with this year, this month, this week etc.

Because the action referred to is automatically brought up to now, since the time passes on into the future.



For example, I have been to the parties twice this week.

You haven't done me a single exercise this month.

Have you had a holiday this year?

What have you been doing today?

But as it might be the case that we unconsciously change the tense with this morning or this afternoon, according to the time of the day when we are spending.

(11.00 a.m.) We have done a lot of work this morning, haven't we?

(8.00 p.m.) We did a lot of work this morning, didn't we?

Although unconscious, a very strong sense of time



is 'present' in English speech, and one of it in this clear-cut distinction PRESENT PERFECT and PAST TENSES.

The Present Perfect, as distinct from the Simple Past Tense, is often described as referring to 'PAST WITH PRESENT RELEVANCE' or PAST INVOLVING THE PRESENT. There is a great truth in this description but on its own it is too difficult to decide exactly when and when not to use the Present Perfect. There are two distinct ways in which a past event may be related to the present by means of the Perfect:

1. It may involve a time period lasting up to the present,

2. It may have results persisting at the present time.

Moreover, there are not just two, but four different senses of the Present Perfect, one of them occurring with the 'state verbs' and three with 'event verbs'.

State up to the Present: Present involvement with state verbs means that the state extends over a period lasting up to the present moment:

We've lived in Eskişehir since 1964. (i.e. Eskişehir is where we are living now)

That house has been empty for ages. (It is still empty)

The period mentioned extends up to the present moment, but since 'state verbs' are of undefined time-span, the state itself may extend into the future: e.g.

We've lived here all our lives, and mean to live here for many years to come.

The past tense would be unacceptable in BE in the first of the two examples above (being incompatible with the preposition since) and, in the other two examples would mean that the period is already complete and in the past: "That house was empty for ages" (.....but now it's been sold and occupied.)

This 'state' use of the Present Perfect is almost compulsorily accompanied by an adverbial of duration: the absence of an adverbial (e.g. We have lived in Eskisehir) usually indicates not a state at all, but an event in the indefinite past. There are exceptions, however, where a period leading up to the present, although not actually mentioned, is implied by context or the meaning of the clause. In "He's lived a good life", duration up to the present is understood because there is an implicit period during his life. In "you've outstayed your welcome",

the word "outstay" in like manner incorporates the durational meaning 'for too long'.

## 2.4. Functions of Present Perfect Tense

### 2.4.1. Indefinite Past

With 'event' verbs', the Present Perfect may refer to some indefinite happening in the Past:

Have you been to America

He is a man who experienced suffering

All my family have had measles.

Often the indefinite meaning is reinforced adverbially, especially by ever, never, or before (now)

By indefiniteness here two things are meant first the number of events is unspecified (it may be one or more than one) secondly the time is also left unspecified. Therefore, to put it more carefully, the meaning of the Present Perfect here is 'at-least-once-before now.' The number of events, it is true, can be "mentioned adverbially: "I've been to America three times; but if there is an adverbial of time-when to specify the exact time, the Present Perfect because in appropriate, and must be replaced by the Simple Past: not I've been to America last year, "but" I went to America last year".(Leech, 1976)

-The indefinite past meaning of the Perfect, like the state up to the present meaning, does not often occur without adverbial reinforcement. On the rare occasions when it does so occur, the verb have tends to be stressed, and the whole clause to imply some kind of reservation: " I have eaten lobster." (with a fall intonation on have and a rise on lobster) ( '..... but "I can't say I enjoyed it"). Or "I have played tennis" ('..... but not very often').

-At first glance, it looks as if there is no element of 'present involvement' in this use of the Present Perfect, any more than there is in the Simple Past. But in fact, a more precise definition of the indefinite past use must indicate that a period of time leading up to the Present is involved here, just as in the state use of the Present Perfect. Once again, the 'indefinite past' definition must be revised and more exactly formulated as: 'at least-once- in a-period-leading-up- to the present: This longer wording, when applied to the preceding examples, adds nothing material to the more concise label 'indefinite past'. But let us consider other examples:

Have you visited the Van Gaugh's exhibition?

(i.e. while it has been on)

The dustman has not called at our house (i.e. today)

The first of these sentences implies that the Van Gaugh's exhibition is still running, whereas the Simple Past (Did You visit .....?) would have made it clear that the exhibition is over. In the same way, the second sentence is spoken with a special time period (probably a day) in mind: it does not mean that the dustman has not called at least once in the past; it means rather that the dustman has not called during a period in which his regular visit is expected. There is a general tendency of self-centredness in human speech, where by unless otherwise specified, we understand a word or phrase to refer to something close at hand rather than distant. It is this principle that is at work in these sentences; and if we recognize that the indefinite past meaning always involves a period leading up to the present, it is easy to see how this period can become reduced, by subjective assumption, from 'always' to 'within the last few days', or even 'within the last few minutes'. In other sentences, the restricted period is made explicit:

Have you heard from the Browns since Christmas?  
The assumption of proximity is noticed in a less determinate way in utterances like "Have you seen my Shirt?" or "The postman has visited our house", If the

adverbs recently and just are respectively added to these sentences, there is scarcely no change of meaning, as this simply makes the 'nearness' of the event explicit.

The sense of 'nearness' is quite common, so that it is worth recognising a sub-category of the indefinite past meaning that of the RECENT INDEFINITE PAST. This is partly separated from the more general indefinite past meaning by its association with the adverbs just, already, recently and yet. Always, never, ever, and before, on the other hand, single out the more general meaning.

#### 2.4.2. Habit in a period leading up to the present

The habitual or iterative use of the Present Perfect with event verbs is illustrated by:

Mr. Jones has worked in this bank for thirty years.

I have always walked to work.

The news has been broadcast at ten o'clock for as long as I can remember.

Since a habit (as that term has been understood here) is a state consisting of repeated events, this use closely resembles the state use of the Present Perfect. As was observed there, the habit or state may continue through the present moment into the future, and an adverbial of

duration is usually required: "Mr. Jones has worked in this bank" without the adverbial phrase becomes an example of the indefinite past meaning. Often, the habit element is emphasized by an adverbial of frequency: "The refrigerator has been serviced every three months since we bought it".

#### 2.4.3. Resultative Past

The Present Perfect is also used in reference to a past event to imply that the result of that event is still operative at the present time. This meaning is clearest with transitional event verbs denoting the switch from one state implied by the Perfect is indicated in brackets in these typical examples:

The taxi has arrived (i.e. The taxi is now here)

He has been given a camera (He now has a camera)

I've recovered from my illness (I'm now well again)

Someone has broken the window (the window is broken now)

In other examples, the resultative inference is still there, even though it is not quite so obvious from the verb's meaning:

I've taken a bath (I'm now clean)

He's cut his hand with a knife (The cut is still

there, i.e. has not yet healed)

The resultative meaning needs so support from adverbials. It is sometimes indistinguishable (or at least difficult to distinguish) from the recent indefinite past use. One may argue, for instance, that the question "Have you seen my skirt?" is really a question about the present consequences of seeing the skirt; i.e. 'Do you know where it is? (Leech, 1976)

#### PRESENT PERFECT AND SIMPLE PAST

Having noted the four principal meanings of the Present Perfect, let us now review the contrasts and points of overlap between these meanings and that of the Simple Past. As a means of referring to the past, the Present Perfect differs from the Simple Past on three counts; continuation up to the present time, present result, and indefinite time.

##### 2.4.4. Continuation up to the present time

This element of meaning is found in the state up to the present, in the habit up to the present, and to a degree in the indefinite past meaning. The contrast of the 'state' Perfect with the Past is evident in:

His sister has been an invalid all her life (i.e.

she is still alive)

His sister was an invalid all her life (She is now dead)

The same contrast can be made with the habitual use in:

For generations, Nepal has produced the world's greatest soldiers. (The nation of Nepal still exists)

"For generations, Sparta produced Greece's greatest warriors". (This permits us to infer that 'The state of Sparta no longer exists:)

Again, here is the same point illustrated with the indefinite past use:

Has Samuel Brown written any novels ? (Brown is still alive)

'Did Disraeli write any novels' ('Disraeli is now dead)

In all these examples, the period in question is assumed rather than named: It is the lifetime of the person or institution denoted by the subject of the sentence.

#### 2.4.5. Present Result

The resultative use of the Present Perfect is shown in contrast to the Simple Past in:

Peter has injured his ankle (His ankle is still bad)

Peter injured his ankle (But now it's better)

The second permits us (and in fact encourages us) to conclude that the result of the injury has disappeared.

On the other hand, the Simple Past is used for definite historical events, even when their results are still there: "This house was built by Mr. Johnson": "Tobacco was brought to England by Sir Walter Raleigh." In AE, for present result as for recent indefinite past, the present Perfect can often be replaced by the Simple Past.

#### 2.4.6. Indefinite Time

Where as the Present Perfect, in its indefinite past tense, does not name a specific point of time, a definite point of orientation in a past is normally required for the appropriate use of the Simple Past Tense. The point of orientation may be specified in one of three ways:

(a) by an adverbial expression of time-when:

I saw him on Tuesday

(b) by a preceding use of a past of perfect tense:

I have seen him already-he came to borrow a hammer.

(c) by implicit definition; i.e. by assumption of

a particular time from the context:

Did you put the dog out? (said between husband and wife who have in mind a particular time when the cat is normally ejected).

## 2.5. Perfect Aspect in English

The traditional grammatical term aspect is used to refer to the length of time an action or state has gone on, and in English this is done by using the auxiliary verbs 'be' and 'have' to represent two different kinds of aspect. Here, we are interested in perfect aspect.

If the auxiliary verb have is followed by a past participle in a VP, its meaning is related to the length of time, or duration, up to the present, of an event, or else with the effects of an action which are still operating. Like many features of English grammar, the details of the uses and meanings of perfect aspect are somewhat complex.

Aspect, has been concerned with different ways of representing the internal temporal constitution of a situation. The perfect is quite different from these aspects, because it tells us nothing directly about the situation in itself but mostly relates some state to a

preceding situation. As a preliminary illustration of this, we may contrast the English sentences "I have lost my key" (perfect) and "I lost my key" (non-perfect). The difference between these two sentences is that with the perfect, there is an implication that the key still lost, whereas with non-perfect there is no such implication. More generally, the perfect indicates the continuing present relevance of a past situation. This difference between the perfect and other aspects has led many linguists to doubt whether the perfect should be considered an aspect at all (Comrie, 1976:52). However, since in traditional terminology perfect is listed as an aspect, we should deal with the perfect bearing in mind continually that it is an aspect rather than different sense from the other aspects.

One point in which the perfect differs from the other aspects is that it expresses a relation between two timepoints, on the one hand the time of the state resulting from a prior situation, and on the other the time of that prior situation. Thus the present perfect, for instance, such as English "I have eaten", partakes of both the present and the past. In some languages this dual role has syntactic morphological repercussions.

Thus, in Ancient Greek, for instance, the perfect, although referring to a past situation, is still treated as a primary (i.e. non-past) tense for the purpose of determining the sequence of tenses; even in Latin, where the so called Perfect covers both Perfect meaning and nonperfect past time referance, there is a distinction in sequence of tense, in that the Perfect with Perfect meaning is usually treated as a primary tense, whereas the perfect with nonperfect past time referance is not. In some languages, the form of the perfect incorporates formal expression of the two times referred to, e.g. present and past in the present perfect (Comrie, 1976:53).

It should be borne in mind that the present perfect (often simply called the perfect) is only one of possible tenses of the perfect aspect, the one that expresses a relation between present state and past situation. In other tenses we find, for instance, a past perfect, e.g. "John had eaten the fish," expressing a relation between a past state and even earlier situation; and a future perfect, e.g. "John will have eaten the fish", expressing a relation between a future state and a situation prior to it, although there is no other

specification of the absolute time of that prior action, which may be past, present, or future (e.g. I don't know if John has eaten the fish yet, but he will have done so by the time you return, where all that is said about the time of John's eating the fish is that it will precede some other future action, namely your returning). (Comrie, 1976)

We may note one diagnostic characteristic of the English Perfect, which will prove useful in discussion. This is that in English, the Perfect may not be used together with specification of the time of the past situation, i.e. one cannot say "I have eaten lunch at twelve o'clock this noon," "because the specific reference to the point of time at twelve o'clock this noon is incompatible with the English Perfect.

#### TYPES OF PERFECT

So far, a general definition of the perfect as the continuing relevance of a previous situation has been given. In this section, some more specific sides of this general property of perfect will be explained. The particular types of perfect discussed below are the perfect of result, the experiential perfect, the perfect of persistent situation, and the perfect of recent past.

### 2.5.1. Perfect of Result

In the perfect of result, a present state is referred to as being the result of some past situation: this is one of the clearest manifestations of the present relevance of a past situation: This one of the possible differences between 'John has arrived' and 'John arrived' is that the former indicates persistence of the result of John's arrival, i.e. that he is still here, whereas the second does not. In answer to the question 'is John here yet?' a perfectly reasonable reply would be 'yes, he has arrived', but not 'yes, he arrived'.

The nature of the perfect of the result can be examined by comparing translation equivalents across languages where the one uses the perfect, (or in the absence of distinct perfect, a past tense) and the other uses the Present of a stative verb (or adjective), i.e. one language expresses this as a (state resulting from a) past action, while the other just expresses it as a present state without any overt mention of how this state came about. Most of the examples seem to concern contrasts where English has a stative adjective or verb, while some other language has a perfect or other past tense, so that it may be that English overall tends towards the use of the stative Present here to a greater

extent than do many other languages.

### 2.5.2. Experiential Perfect

The experiential perfect indicates that a given situation has held at least once during some time in the past leading up to the Present. A useful illustrative example in English is the distinction between be and go in sentences like "Bill has been to the United States" and "Bill has gone to the United States", since English here makes an overt distinction between the experiential perfect and the Perfect of result, and implies that Bill is now in the United States, or on his way there, this being the present result of his past action of going to (setting out for) the United States. In "Bill has been to the United States", however, there is no such implication; This sentence says that on at least one occasion (though possibly on more than one) Bill did in fact go to the United States. In general, however, English does not have a distinct form with experiential perfect meaning (Comrie, 1976).

In the examples of the experiential perfect, it has been the case that the time during which the situation referred to must have held at least once has included the whole of time up to the Present; this "Bill has been to

the United States" places no restriction on when Bill went to the United States, other than that it was sometime before the present. It is possible to restrict the period of time by specifying an earlier limit, in addition to the necessary later limit of the present moment, as in "Bill has been to the United States since the war." which says that Bill has been to the United States at least once in the period between the war (earlier limit) and the Present moment (later limit) (Comrie, 1976:59)

### 2.5.3. Perfect of recent past

In many languages, the perfect may be used where the present relevance of the past situation referred to is simply one of temporal closeness, i.e. the past situation is very recent. In English, for example, the general constraint against combining the Perfect with a specification of time does not hold when the time specification is the adverb recently or one of its close synonyms: "I have recently learned that the match is to be postponed", "Bill has just (this minute) arrived. The perfect does not, of course, in general necessarily imply that the past situation is recent, since present relevance does not necessarily imply recentness: the sentence the second world war ended will be perfectly

acceptable to some one who has been on a desert island, cut off from all sources of news since 1944. However, while present relevance does not imply recentness, recentness may be sufficient condition for present relevance.

The degree of recentness required varies among languages that allow the Perfect to express recent past time reference. For most speakers of English, only the adverb recently and its near synonyms are allowed, while any other specification of past item or period is excluded, i.e. one cannot say "I've been to the doctor this morning".

#### 2.5.4. Perfect of Persistent Situation

One use of the English Perfect, indeed one that seems to be characteristic of English, is the use of the Perfect to describe a situation that started in the past but continues (persists) into the present, as in 'we have lived in Eskişehir for twenty years,' I've shopped there for years, you've been waiting for hours. Many other languages use the present tense here as does Turkish.

(Comrie, 1976)

#### 2.6. How Does Turkish Use The Present Perfect Tense

- The present perfect tense is probably the most common tense in English language but probably it is the most

difficult one to learn For Turkish Students, because there is no exact translation of the Tense in Turkish.

According to the types of perfect Turkish uses them as follows:

#### 2.6.1. Resultative Past

Taksi geldi (The taxi has arrived)

Ali'ye bir fotoğraf makinesi verildi (Ali has been given a camera)

İyileştim. (I have recovered from my illness)

Birisi camı kırdı. (Somebody has broken the window)

Ayşe elini kesti. (Ayşe has cut her hand)

As seen on the examples, Turkish express this function of Present Perfect Tense by '-di'li geçmiş zaman' which corresponds to Simple Past Tense in English.

#### 2.6.2. State Up To The Present

Yirmi senedir Eskişehir'de oturuyoruz. (We have lived in Eskişehir for twenty years)

Şu ev senelerdir boş duruyor. (That house has been empty for ages)

1970'den beri aynı orkestrayı yönetiyor. (He has conducted the same orchestra since 1970)

Above examples indicate that there is a grammatical clue in Turkish like -den beri -dir for this function of Perfect Tense in English. This is the most clear-cut marking of the Perfect Tense in Turkish.

### 2.6.3. Indefinite Past

Hiç Amerika'da bulundun mu? (Have you ever been to America)

Bütün ailem kızamık geçirdi. (All my family have had measles)

Bu filmi gördüm. (I have seen that film)

Also this function of the English Present Perfect Tense translated in Turkish by di'li geçmiş zaman.

### 2.6.4. Habit In A Period Leading Up To The Present

Seni her zaman en iyi arkadaşım olarak kabul etmişimdir. (I have always considered you as my best friend)

O bana karşı daima nazik olmuştur. (He has always been kind to me)

Hayatı boyunca ondan nefret etti. (He has hated him all his life)

George Orwell'in kitapları birçok dile çevrilmiştir. (George Orwell's books have been translated into

## CHAPTER III

### RESEARCH DESIGN

In the scope of this study, the aims of overall study can be enumerated as follows:

- i. to find out if the English Present Perfect Tense structurally difficult for Turkish Students to use.
- ii. to find out if the Turkish Students utilize grammatical clues when they are using the present perfect tense.
- iii. to find out if the Turkish Students find out that clues like -dir, -den beri correspond English present perfect tense.
- iv. to find out if there are any relationship between student's ability and their proficiency level.

#### 3.1. Procedure

The subjects who were given the exams were prep school students in the Open Faculty of Anadolu University in Eskişehir. One hundred nine subjects including false beginners, lower intermediates, and upper intermediates were native speakers of Turkish between 17-20 years of

age. Subjects were given a placement test at the beginning of the academic year and their English level were determined by the scores obtained from that test. They were all being prepared to attain the same proficiency level at the end of the academic year.

### 3.2. Testing

Language data were elicited with a translation test from Turkish into English and fill in the blanks test in English. The sentences in the test included grammatical clues in order for students to use the correct tense. The students were asked to translate the Turkish passage in forty-five minutes and fill in the blanks test in other forty-five minutes.

The students were not informed about the purpose of the test. They were only told that it was for the teacher to get some information about grammatical problem areas and no marks would be given.

#### 3.2.1. Translation test

A detailed count was performed on the translation test in order to find out if the English Present Perfect Tense is difficult for Turkish students to use, and find out the differences among the Four student groups in

different language levels. Sentences produced by the students were classified as correct answer, error and no answer. A correct answer was either the expected translation or another acceptable response.

In the translation test, students made many errors at verb inflection; auxiliary error, adverbial clause error but all these errors were ignored. Because the aim was to find out if they would find the correct tense. An error was considered both semantically and syntactically.

In the translation test sixteen sentences in Turkish were asked to be translated into English. (See Appendix 1)

In the translation passage there were four sentences which would normally be translated in the Present Perfect Tense since there were grammatical clues for them. These four sentences were the twenty-five percent of the whole text.

### 3.2.2. Fill in the blanks test

In the fill in the blanks test, twenty-four sentences from a text were given and the students were asked to find the correct tense and fill in the blanks. In the test, there were seven sentences which have a grammatical clue like yet, since, etc. that signalled

use of present perfect tense. Grammatical clues were very obvious. Twenty-nine percent of total sentences were given with grammatical clues.

### 3.3. Assumptions about the English level of the subjects

In the scope of this study, it was assumed that as the English level of the students increased, they would be more knowledgeable about English grammar and especially English tenses. For example, we assume that the false beginners will have limited knowledge of the tenses whereas, the upper intermediate students will have covered many tenses and their constructions.

## CHAPTER IV

### 4.1. Data Analysis

The results of two tests (translation and fill in the blanks) were drawn in bar graphs and shown in tables considering the students correct answers, errors, and no answers, also then percentages were analyzed.

The data on all groups of students were compared in order to find out the differences and similarities among the different levels. Bar graphs were used to compare the scores of the students.

All of the tests produced 1199 items to be analyzed. In the translation test, 151 answers out of 436 were correct. This means a success level of 35 %. The total number of erroneous constructions in translation test was 271 which corresponds to 62 %. The number of no answers was 14, 3 % which was very low. Table 4.1 lists the total number and percentages of correct answers, errors and no answers in translation test. See also figure 4.1.

Figure 4.2, 4.3, 4.4, 4.5 show performance of four groups in translation test.

Figure 4.2, 4.3, 4.4, 4.5 show performance of four groups in translation test.

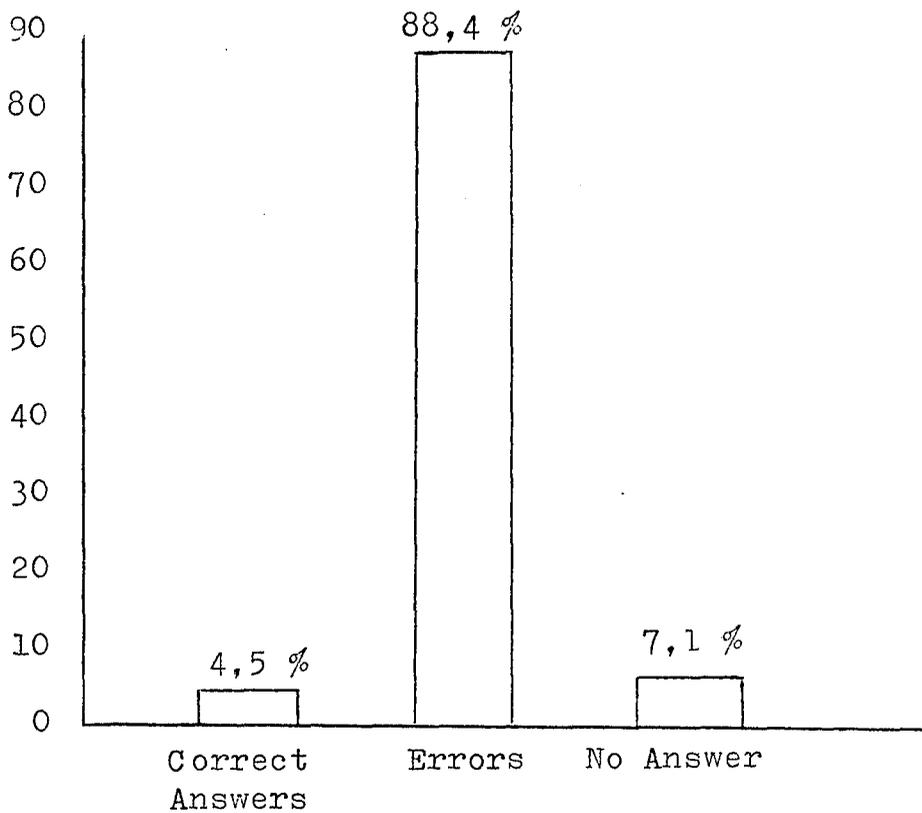


Figure 4.2 Percentages of correct answers, errors and no answers in translation test of GROUP B

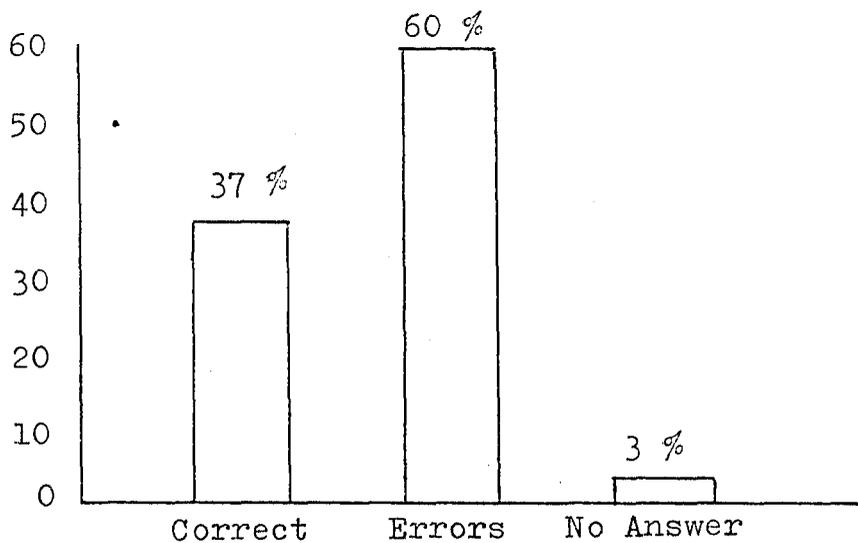


Figure 4.3 Percentages of correct answers, errors and no answers in translation test of GROUP C

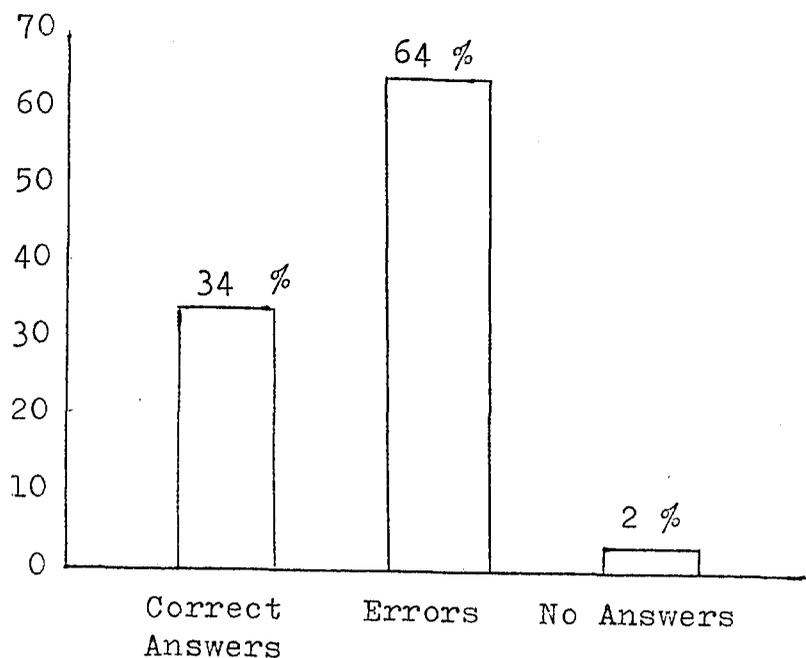


Figure 4.4 Percentages of correct answers, errors and no answers in translation test of GROUP D

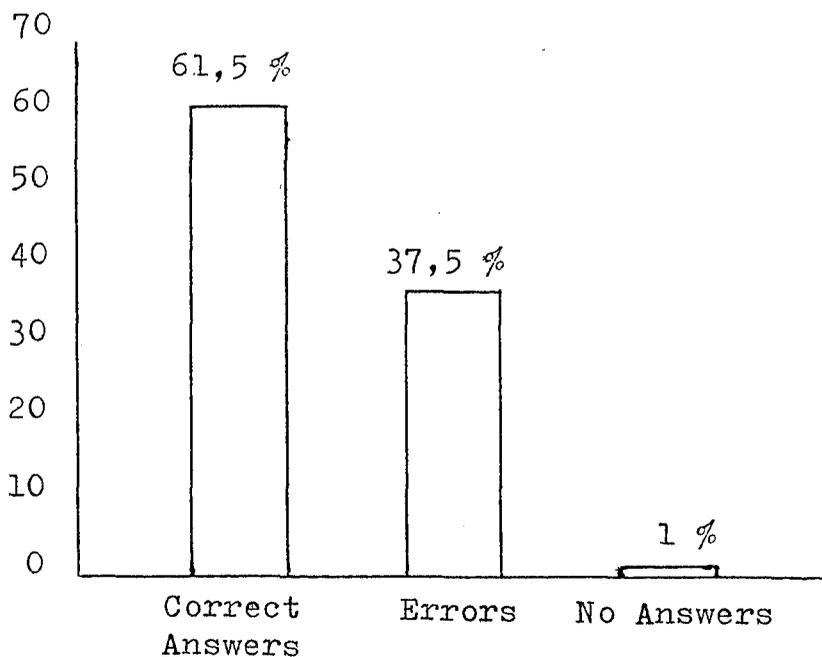


Figure 4.5 Percentages of correct answers, errors and no answers in translation test of GROUP E

Table 4.1. Number and percentages of correct answers errors and no answers in translation test. for the total population.

|           | Correct Answers | Errors | No Answers | Total |
|-----------|-----------------|--------|------------|-------|
| Number of | 151             | 271    | 14         | 436   |
| % of      | 35              | 62     | 3          | 100   |

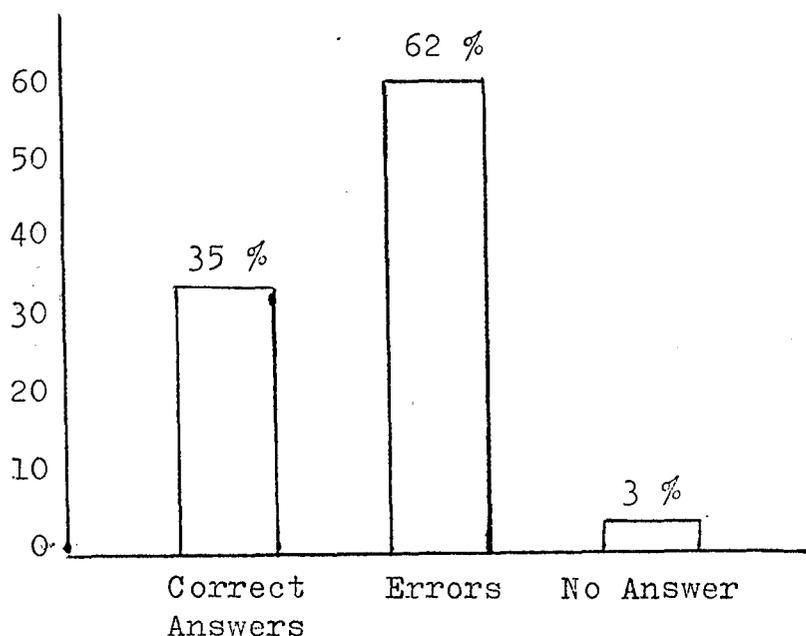


Figure 4.1. Percentages of Correct answers, errors and no answers in translation test for The total population

In fill in the blanks test, the number of correct answers was 389 out of 763 which correspond to a success level of 51 %. There were 374 erroneous answers; this corresponds to 49 %. All the questions were answered in this test. See table 4.2. and Figure 4.6.

Figure 4.7, 4.8, 4.9, 4.10 show performance of four groups in fill in the blanks test.

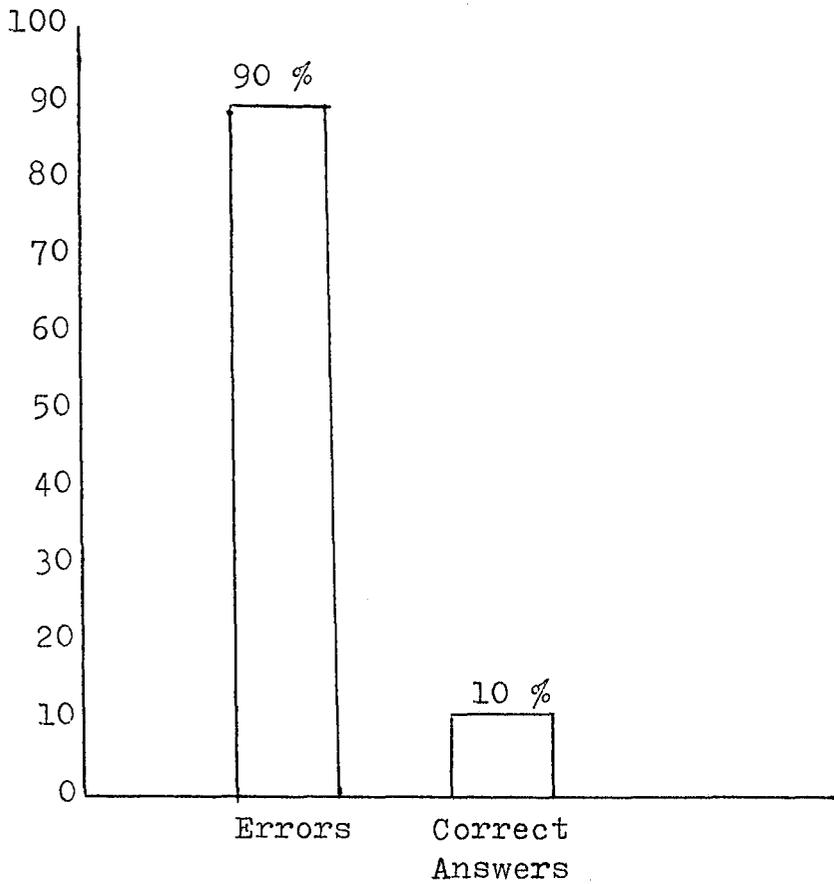


Figure 4.7 Percentages of correct answers, and errors in fill in the blanks test of GROUP B

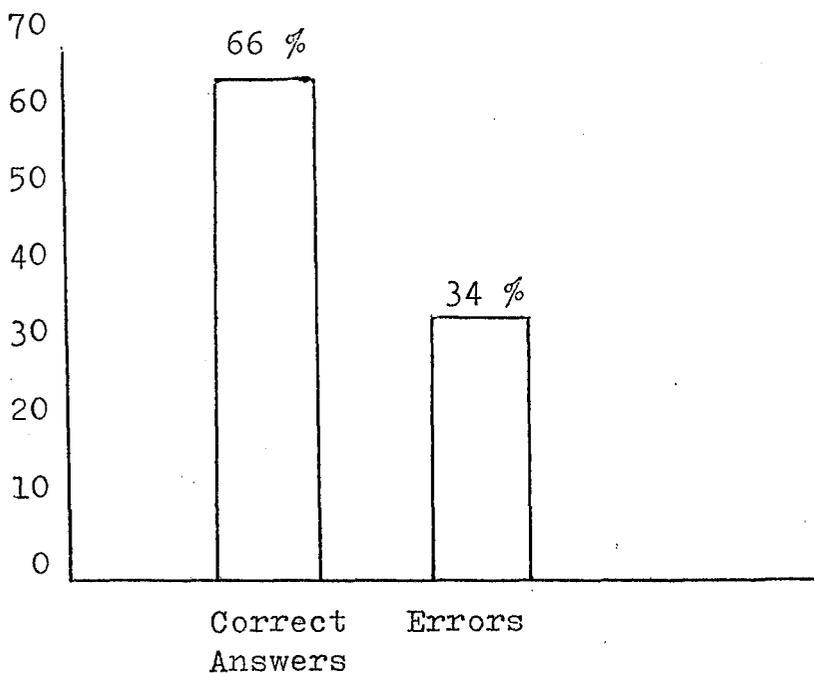


Figure 4.8 Percentages of correct answers, and errors in the fill in the blanks test of GROUP C

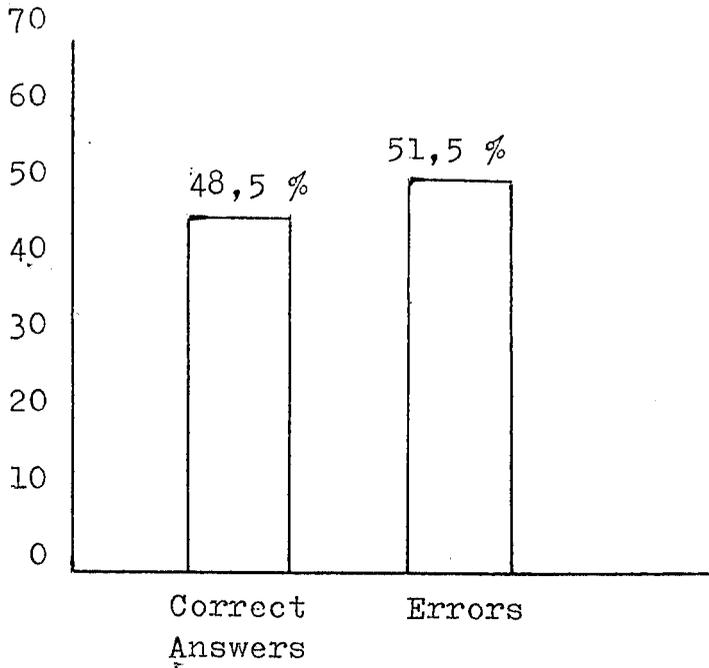


Figure 4.9 Percentages of correct answers and errors in the fill in the blanks test of GROUP D.

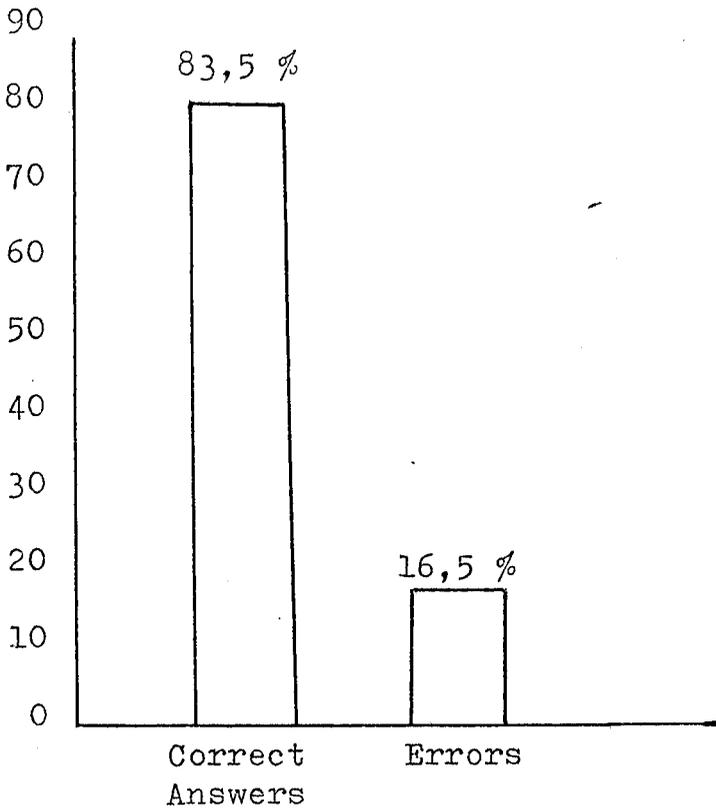


Figure 4.10 Percentages of correct answers and errors in the fill in the blanks test of GROUP E.

|           | Correct Answers | Errors | Total |
|-----------|-----------------|--------|-------|
| number of | 389             | 374    | 763   |
| % of      | 51              | 49     | 100   |

Table 4.2. Number and percentages of correct answers and errors in fill in the blanks test. For the total population.

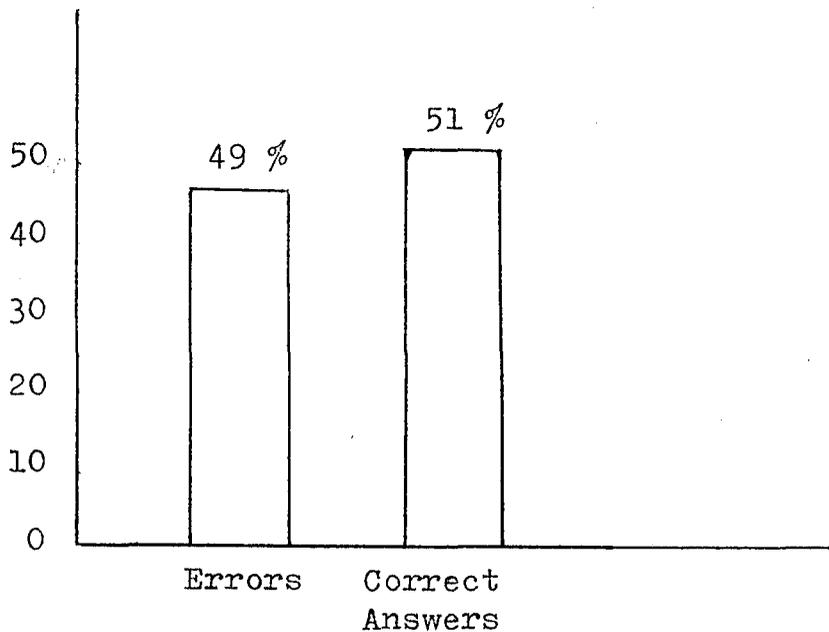


Figure 4.6. Percentages of Errors and correct answers in fill in the blanks test. For the total population.

As the table and figure illustrated above there is a little difference between correct answers and errors in the fill in the blanks test.

In the two tests, total number of correct answers was 540 out of 1199 which amounted to 45 % on the other hand errors were 645, about 54 %. The number of no answers was 14, 1 %.

Table 4.3 and Figure 4.3 show these distinctions in detail:

|           | Correct Answers | Errors | No Answers | Total |
|-----------|-----------------|--------|------------|-------|
| Number of | 540             | 645    | 14         | 1199  |
| % of      | 45              | 54     | 1          | 100   |

Table 4.3. Number and percentages of correct answers, errors and no answers in translation and fill in the blanks tests, for the total population.

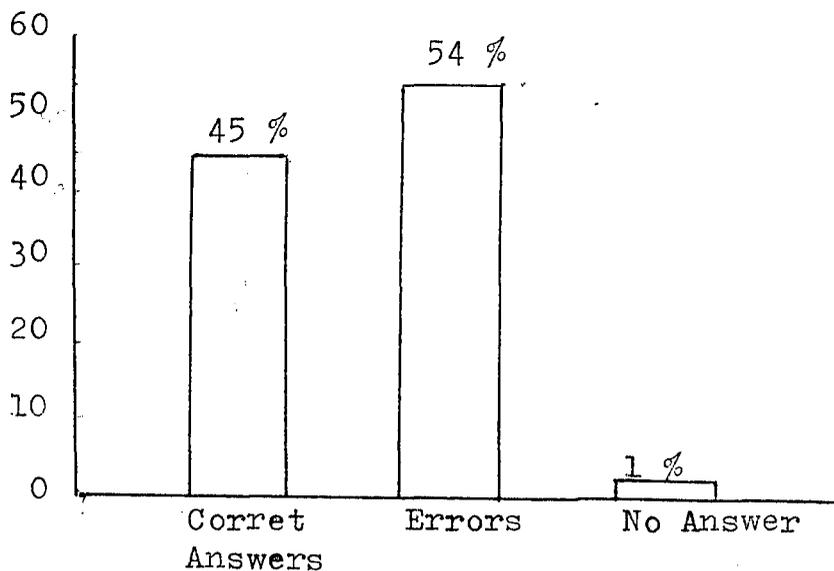


Figure 4.11. Percentages of correct answers, errors and no answers in translation and fill in the blanks test.

In order to compare the number and percentages of correct answers, errors and no answers in terms of differences or similarities among the four different groups of students it would be better to look at Table 4.4 and Figure 4.12.

| TESTS              | Groups | Correct Answer |      | Errors |      | No Answers |     | Total |     |
|--------------------|--------|----------------|------|--------|------|------------|-----|-------|-----|
|                    |        | Num            | %    | Num    | %    | Num        | %   | Num   | %   |
| Translation        | B      | 5              | 4,5  | 99     | 88,4 | 8          | 7,1 | 112   | 100 |
|                    | C      | 37             | 37   | 60     | 60   | 3          | 3   | 100   | 100 |
|                    | D      | 41             | 34   | 77     | 64   | 2          | 2   | 120   | 100 |
|                    | E      | 64             | 61,5 | 39     | 37,5 | 1          | 1   | 104   | 100 |
| Fill in the blanks | B      | 20             | 10   | 176    | 90   |            |     | 196   | 100 |
|                    | C      | 115            | 66   | 60     | 34   |            |     | 175   | 100 |
|                    | D      | 102            | 48,5 | 108    | 51,5 |            |     | 210   | 100 |
|                    | E      | 152            | 83,5 | 30     | 16,5 |            |     | 182   | 100 |

Table 4.4. Number and percentages of correct answers, errors and no answers in terms of differences or similarities among the four different groups of students.

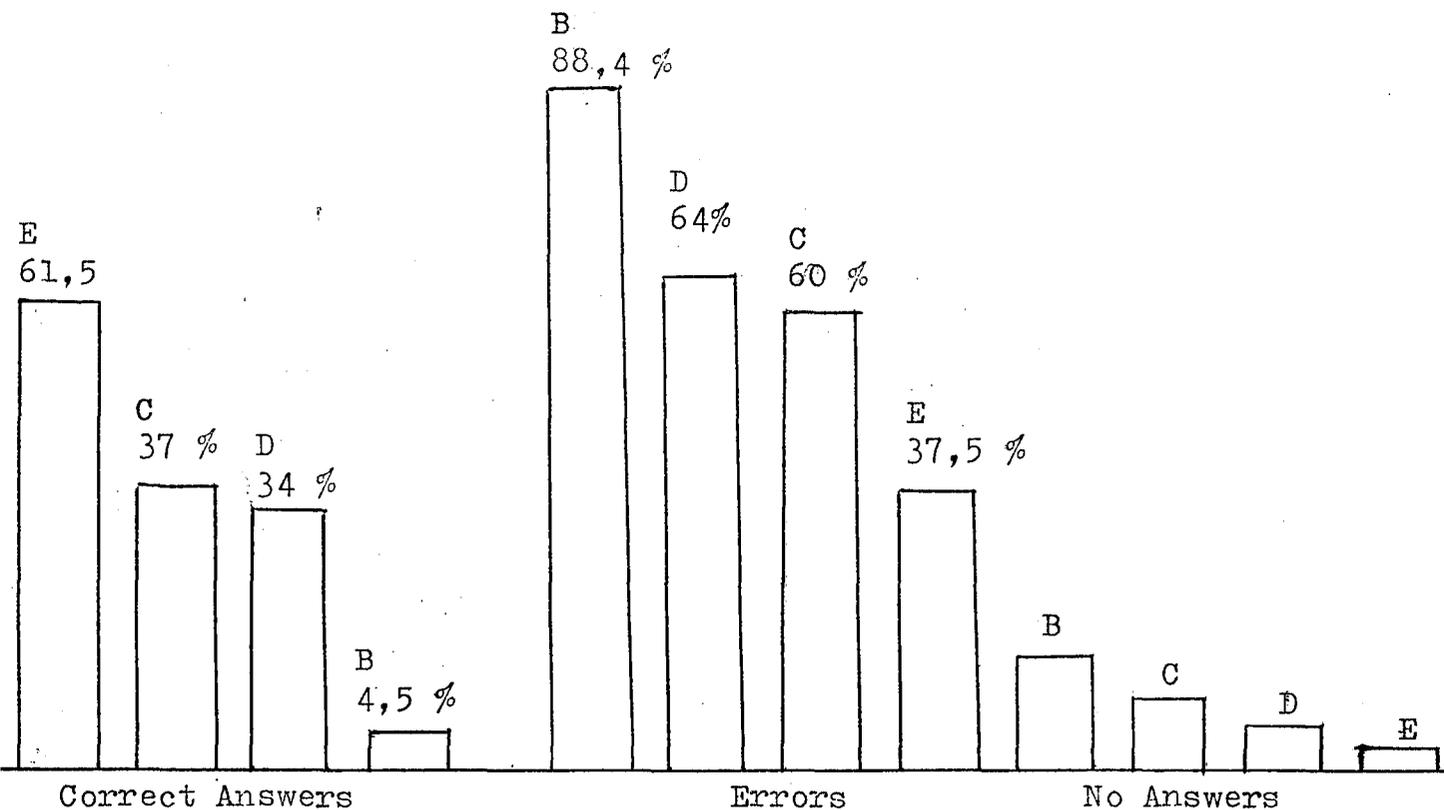


Figure 4.12. Percentages of Correct Answers, errors and no answers in translation test.

As shown in table 4.4. and figure 4.12 the performance of group E has the highest in terms of number and percentages of correct answers in the translation test. And B Group has the lowest rate in performance. But there is a discrepancy between the groups C and D. The discrepancy in the test results of the two intermediate groups can only be speculated. At first glance, the difference in the scores may stem from the facts that:

- a. The C group may have taken the test more seriously than the D Group. That is leaving less room to guess work and earnestly working on the test

- b. The C group may have better language aptitude
- c. They may have had different grammar teacher. Such factors were not tested. Therefore, at this stage it is difficult to evaluate accurately the reasons for this discrepancy.

#### 4.2. Structural Errors

In this study, structural errors among the correct answers were analyzed only in the translation test.

Let us look at the structural errors from the examples.

##### GROUP B:

Tom bir aydır bir gazetede çalışmaktadır.

Translation: Tom has working at the newspaper for one month.

Tam onbeş senedir de kapı komşusudurlar.

Translation: They have neighbours for 15 years.

##### GROUP C:

- Tom has a work where is in the newspaper for one month.
- Tom have been work same newspaper.
- They have neighbouring since fifteen years.
- They have neighbour door for fifteen years.

##### GROUP D:

- Tom have been working in the newspaper for a month.
- They have door\_mate since fifteen years.
- Tom and David both have playing at the same football team since they were children.

- Tom and David have been played in the same team since their childhood.
- Tom has been worked a newspaper for a month.
- They have been played same football team since they were child.
- Tom has been work in a newspaper for a month.
- They have neightbour for 15 years.

GROUP E

- Tom has working on a newspaper for one month.
- Tom and David has been playing football in the same team since from them child.
- Tom and David have been played football same team for their children.
- Tom has been worked a newspaper for a month.
- They have neighbour for younger ages.

As seen from the above examples, all the errors at verb inflection; auxiliary error, adverbial clause error were ignored since the main aim was to find out if they would find the correct tense. 50 per cent of the correct answers in the translation test has these kinds of errors. Hence, it is concluded from all these results that the present perfect tense structurally

difficult to use as it is semantically difficult to grasp. Let us look at the figure 4.13

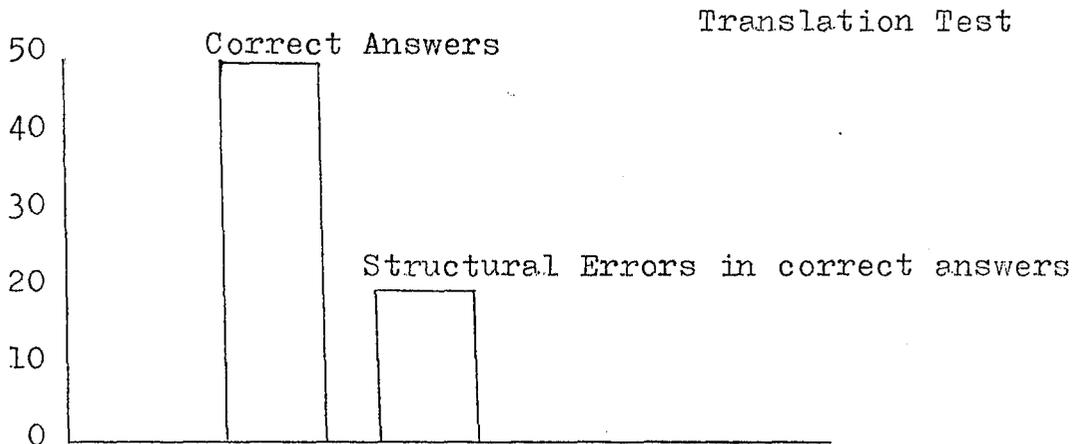


Figure 4.13. Percentages of correct answers and structural errors in correct answers in translation test for the total population.

In the fill in the blanks test, success level is higher than the translation test. Because translation needs more linguistic competence since it measures exact comprehension. Also in the fill in the blanks test 20 per cent of the correct answers include verb inflection and auxiliary errors. Let us look at the figure 4.14.

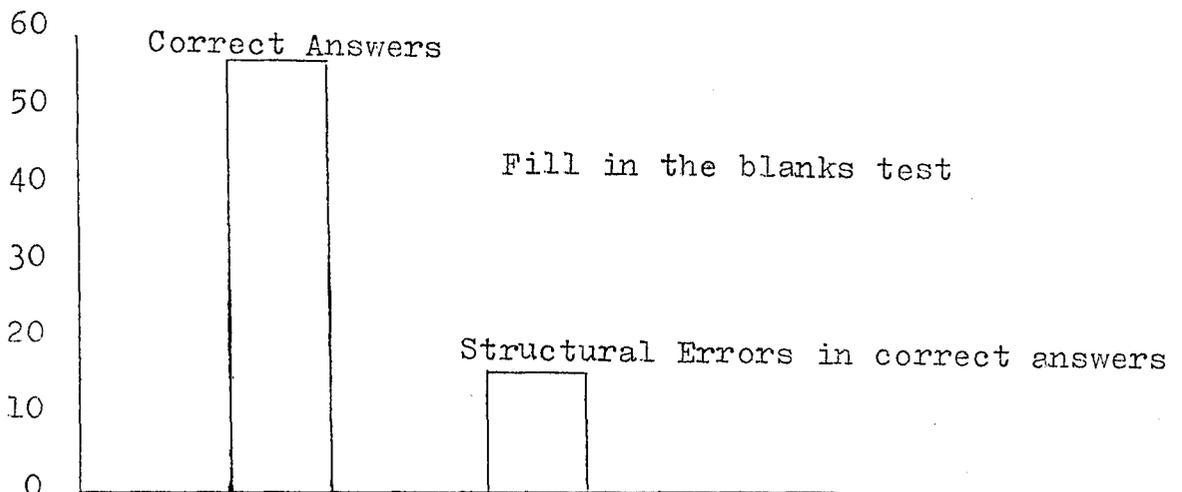


Figure 4.14 Percentages of correct answers and

structural errors in correct answers in fill in the blanks test for the total population.

In the fill in the blanks test, most students used present perfect tense when saw the clues; just, yet, recently, already, never, But 49 per cent of the total population used other tenses. This may arise from having different grammar teacher, since in spite of all the obvious grammatical clues they still used other tenses.

In both tests, students preferred using past tense in the case of interchangeability of past and perfect tenses.

In translation test, students preferred to substitute present continuous and simple present tense for the present perfect tense.

#### 4.3. Analysis of Results

In translation test, 50 per cent of correct answers included verb inflection, auxiliary and adverbial clause errors.

In the fill in the blanks test, success level is

higher than translation test. In this test, 20 per cent of the correct answers include verb inflection and auxiliary errors. This shows that present perfect tense is structurally difficult for Turkish.

As seen from the figures 4.2, 4.3, 4.4 and 4.5 in the upper groups success level is high in translation test. Also in the fill in the blanks test upper groups scored higher. (See Figure 4.7, 4.8, 4.9, 4.10) This indicates that upper groups are able to correlate Turkish grammatical clues -dir, -den beri to English Present Perfect Tense and they are also able to utilize grammatical clues like yet, since, just in using the present perfect tense. As seen from tables and figures there is a relationship between using the present perfect tense correctly and students' proficiency level.

#### 4.4. Summary

Results of the data analysis can be summarized as follows:

1. The performance of students in two test was different. In fill in the blanks test they showed higher percentage of correct answers while the percentage of errors was quite low than that of the translation test.

2. E Group showed the highest success level in both translation and the fill in the blanks test and B showed the lowest success level in both tests. This was the expected result. But there is discrepancy between the group C and D. C group scores are higher than the D group in both tests.

3. In the translation test, students preferred using past tense in the case of interchangeability of past and perfect tenses.

4. In translation test, students preferred to substitute present continuous and simple present tense for the present perfect tense.

5. For the present perfect tense. 50 per cent of correct answers in translation test and 20 per cent of correct answers in fill in the blanks test include verb inflection and auxiliary errors.

CHAPTER V  
CONCLUSION

5.1. Discussion and Conclusion

The subjects showed different performance and success level in both tests.

When compared the results of the two tests, in the fill in the blanks test, the students showed higher performance of correct answers 51 % while in translation test this rate is quite low 35 %. As translation needs exact linguistic knowledge, and grammatical competence in the target language (English) this may have occurred. For English is not their mother tongue, students are less efficient in translating from Turkish into English.

In the fill in the blanks test, all sentences were given in text; just auxiliary and main verb were not given (verb given in present form in brackets). They were asked to fill in the blanks using the correct tense. Their score is higher in this test since it does not need extra linguistic competence.

In both tests, E Group scored the highest point this means that the more familiar the students are to

English the more successful they are in using the present perfect tense. The results indicate that high level of English helps students in using the present perfect tense.

Findings indicated that at low proficiency Turkish Students perceive the English Present Perfect Tense as present continuous when the sentence is given like "Tom bir aydır bir gazetede çalışmaktadır." and also they perceive as simple present tense in the sentence like "Tom ve David çocukluklarından beri aynı futbol takımında oynarlar." since the sentence include -ar which is simple present tense marking in Turkish. Most of the erroneous sentences included this kind of tense errors although grammatical clues like -dir -den beri are given. As a result, Turkish students may be transferring these usages from their mother tongue into English by using the present continuous or simple present tense like the present perfect.

In translation test, 75 per cent of the total sentences were interchangeable with the present perfect and simple past tense. Students preferred using past tense in the case of interchangeability of pas and perfect tenses.

50 per cent of correct answers in translation test and 20 per cent of correct answers in fill in the blanks test include verb inflection, auxiliary and adverbial

clause errors whereas these kind of errors ignored. However these percentages clearly indicate that the present perfect tense is difficult structurally.

After all these discussions, let us try to answer the questions at the beginning of this study:

- i. According to the results of both tests, it can certainly be said that the English Present Perfect Tense is structurally difficult for Turkish Students to use. For 50 per cent of correct answers in translation test (Figure 4.13) and 20 per cent of correct answers in fill in the blanks test (Figure 4.14) include verb inflection, auxiliary and adverbial clause errors.
- ii. Turkish Students utilize grammatical clues when they are using the English Present Perfect Tense but at high proficiency levels, since the upper groups scored higher.
- iii. Turkish Students are un able to correlate grammatical clues like -dir, -den beri to English Present Perfect Tense but only at higher proficiency levels. Because at low proficiency levels, students mostly perceived the perfect

tense as simple present and/or present continuous ignoring the grammatical clues -dir, -den beri.

- iv. There is a relationship between using the present perfect tense correctly and student's proficiency level. Because the more proficient the group the higher their score is.
- a. The C group may have taken the test more seriously than the D Group.
  - b. The C group may have better language aptitude.
  - c. They may have had different grammar teachers.

From all these results it is concluded that the present perfect tense is structurally difficult to use as it is semantically difficult to grasp for Turkish Students as there is not a one-two-one corresponding tense in Turkish.

## 5.2. Suggestions

From this study it was concluded that the English Present Perfect Tense is difficult for Turkish Students to use and only at high proficiency levels students utilize grammatical clues to use this tense.

Therefore it is not useful to teach this tense at low proficiency levels. It should be taught at high proficiency levels since the more students are familiar to English to more successful they are in using this tense.

As it is interchangeably used with the simple past tense in most situations, Turkish students perceive this tense mostly as simple past tense. Not to cause this kind of misunderstanding teachers of English should teach this tense with certain grammatical clues and in context.

When present perfect is presented it should first be thought with its overt grammatical marking like *since* for to make it easy for the students to perceive where they need to use the tense and get accustomed to the grammatical use of the tense form.

### 5.3. Suggestions for Further Research

By changing test type this study can be repeated to have a conclusion if different test types affect the result.

In the tests given, English Perfect Tense has not been contrasted with other tenses in English, and the verbs which cannot be used with present perfect tense

have not been given in order not to confuse the students. The study can be repeated by contrasting English Perfect Tense with other tenses and verbs that cannot be used with present perfect tense can be given to measure students exact present perfect tense knowledge.

## APPENDIX 1

Aşağıdaki parçaları Türkçeden İngilizceye çevirin.

Tom ve David iki iyi arkadaşlardır. Onlar çocukluklarından beri komşudurlar. Onlar birlikte büyümüş ve birlikte okula gitmişlerdir. Tam onbeş senedir de kapı komşusudurlar. Tom bir aydır bir gazetede çalışmaktadır. David ise bir fabrikada mühendistir. Onlar yaz tatillerini de birlikte geçirirler ve her yıl değişik yerlere gitmeyi severler.

Tom ve David çocukluklarından beri aynı futbol takımında oynarlar. Geçen yıl takımları şehir şampiyonu oldu. Takıma şampiyonluğu kazandıran golü Tom attı ve şehirde en iyi futbolcu seçildi. Ne yazık ki Tom takımından ayrılmak zorunda kalacak çünkü başka bir şehirden iş teklifi aldı. Ancak bu ayrılığın Tom ve David'in arkadaşlığını etkilemeyeceğini biliyorum. Onlar daima birbirlerini en iyi arkadaş olarak kabul etmişlerdir.

APPENDIX 2

FILL IN THE BLANKS BY USING THE CORRECT TENSE

Mrs.Clark and her daughter Sarah ..... (be) out shopping, and they ..... just .....(return) home. They ..... (buy) Sarah a new sweater, and she ..... already ..... (put) it on. It ..... (b) so new that they ..... even ..... (remove) the price tag yet.

Mrs.Clark ..... just ..... (open) a letter, and she .....(receive) bad news. She ..... (lose) her job; For the past year she ..... (work) as a private secretary for a rich musician. Now the musician ..... (decide) to stop working, and he ..... (ask) Mrs.Clark to find another job. Mrs.Clark ..... (be) the only money earner in the family, since her husband ..... (be) no longer living.

The letter ..... (upset) Mrs.Clark very much. She ..... (cry). She ..... recently ..... (buy) a new house, a new car, and many new clothes for her job. She ..... (pay) for them yet. Now she ..... (pay) for them, because she ..... (save) much

money.

Sarah ..... (hear) the bad news, but she  
really ..... (understand) much about money. She  
..... more ..... (worry) about her mother.  
Mrs.Clark ..... near ..... (cry) in front  
of her daughter before.

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