

The Impacts of Erasmus+ on Foreign Language Development

Nazlı ALTINTAŞ^{a*}, Arif SARIÇOBAN^b

Research Article

Received: 9.12.2021

Revised: 22.4.2022

Accepted: 25.4.2022

a Lecturer, Necmettin Erbakan University, <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2533-9994>, *nazliaykan.86@gmail.com

b Prof. Dr., Selçuk University, <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5966-507X>

Abstract

Through a quantitative research model, this paper deals with the improvement of English language skills (listening, reading, vocabulary and grammar) after Erasmus+ programme. The assessment results of OLS (Online Linguistic Support) system which is organized by European Commission [EC] are taken as a source for data collection process. By means of this linguistic support, students are subject to two assessments which are held before-and after-mobility as a mandatory regulation of the programme. 213 Turkish Erasmus+ students who sojourned in different European countries were applied a questionnaire that inquires OLS assessment results. The collected data about the evaluations of aforementioned skills was analyzed via Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test. Results demonstrate that reading, listening, vocabulary and grammatical competences of the participants improved thanks to studying abroad even after one semester. Moreover, the relationship between initial and final results of the assessments were also examined in order to search to what extend initial level of proficiencies effect after mobility language development. According to analysis, it is found that students who were initially at A2 and B1 on CEFR levels progressed more than other students and improved their English language in respect of reading, listening, grammar and vocabulary.

Keywords: Study abroad, Erasmus+, English language development, OLS

Erasmus+'ın Yabancı Dil Gelişimi Üzerine Etkileri Öz

Bu makale, nicel bir araştırma modeli aracılığı ile Erasmus+ programından sonra İngilizce dil becerilerinin (dinleme, okuma, kelime bilgisi ve dilbilgisi) gelişimini ele almaktadır. Veri toplama sürecinde Avrupa Komisyonu tarafından düzenlenen OLS (Online Linguistic Support) sistemi değerlendirme sonuçları kaynak olarak alınmıştır. Bu dil desteği aracılığı ile öğrenciler, programın zorunlu bir uygulaması olarak, faaliyet öncesi ve sonrası olmak üzere iki değerlendirmeye tabi tutulmaktadır. Avrupa'nın farklı ülkelerinde kalan 213 öğrenciye OLS değerlendirme sonuçlarının sorgulandığı bir anket uygulanmıştır. Yukarıda sözü edilen yeterliliklerin değerlendirilmesi ile ilgili toplanan veriler Wilcoxon İşaretli Sıra Testi ile analiz edilmiştir. Sonuçlar, bir sömestr sonrasında bile katılımcıların yurtdışında eğitim sayesinde okuma, dinleme, kelime ve dil bilgisi becerilerinin geliştiğini göstermektedir. Ayrıca, başlangıçtaki yeterlilik düzeylerinin faaliyet sonrası dil gelişimini ne ölçüde etkilediğini araştırmak için başlangıç ve nihai değerlendirme sonuçları arasındaki ilişki de incelenmiştir. Analize göre, CEFR seviyelerine göre başlangıçta A2 ve B1 seviyesinde olan öğrencilerin diğer öğrencilere göre daha fazla ilerleme kaydettikleri ve İngilizce bilgilerini okuma, dinleme, dilbilgisi ve kelime bilgisi açısından geliştirdikleri tespit edilmiştir.

Anahtar kelimeler: Yurt dışında eğitim görmek, Erasmus+, İngilizce dil gelişimi, OLS

To cite this article in APA Style:

Altıntaş, N. & Sarıçoban, A. (2023). The impacts of Erasmus+ on foreign language development. *Bartın University Journal of Faculty of Education*, 12(2), 303-314. <https://doi.org/10.14686/buefad.1034878>

INTRODUCTION

Snowballing of globalization which entails communication among nations, institutions and individuals from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds compels people learning foreign languages. This remarkable development impacts technology and science, making international communication quite vital and inevitable. Consequently, knowing foreign/second languages turns out to be a prerequisite for a quality living and a must for personal development, the main philosophy of the European Union, which aims to preserve diversity in unity (European Commission, 2021).

English, being the lingua franca of today, is the source of all kinds of information, gathering millions for very different purposes such as economics, health, business, sports activities, etc. By reaching a very global dimension, thanks to being the most spoken language in the world, it continues to captivate everyone, either as a foreign or second language. The ability to reach this globalized level has never been the destiny of other languages in history (Björkman, 2013), making it an impressive linguistic phenomenon that influences a momentous amount of the world's population as a native or additional language. Therefore, learning English becomes a purposive, functional and advisable state.

The best technique to learn a foreign language has remained under investigation for years, and numerous studies have been conducted to find answers. Although various factors, such as age, intention, level, learning styles, and strategies of the students, are determinative, learning in natural and real-life contexts, like acquiring a language, is believed to be the most effective and retentive way, like a magic potion (Serrano, 2010; Twombly et al., 2012; Surtees, De Keyser, 2010; Doerr, 2019; Kinginger, 2009). Since this unconscious learning is associated with the immersion technique, studying abroad is a highly favorable action in order to cement language skills (Llanes et al., 2016; Kinginger, 2008; Carroll, 1967). Erasmus+, which is the flagship program of EU, becomes the most preferable action as a qualified and reliable way to study abroad, thanks to many reasons, such as the considerable amount of financial support, flexibility, ease, assurance of recognition, allowance for employability, and assistance for personal and linguistic development (Gonzalez-Baixauli et al., 2018; Aydın, 2012; Teichler, 2015; Cardwell, 2019).

This study aims to determine the improvement of English proficiency levels of participants after a one-term mobility, given that the development of linguistic proficiency is the primary reason for preference. The assessments' results of the Online Linguistic Support (OLS) system will generate the source of data, and the scrutinized competences will be the ones measured by the system: reading, listening, grammar, and vocabulary competences.

OLS, organized by the EU, provides free online language courses and two compulsory assessments available in all EU languages. The mandatory before-and after- mobility assessments cover only aforementioned competences, which form the frontiers of investigated competences. In addition to scrutinizing how effective Erasmus+ is in improving language skills, another scrutinized feature will be how previous proficiency levels can affect final proficiency levels.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Since its inauguration thirty-four years ago, Erasmus+ has evolved both structurally and conceptually. Conceptual renewals, simplified rules, extended scope and budget, organizational changes are some transitions that have always kept the program on the top of all short-term mobility programs. This means that one of the main reasons why people choose to participate in Erasmus+ is to improve their language skills. (Mızıkacı & Arslan, 2019; Di Pietro, 2015; Botas & Huisman, 2013; Krzaklewska, 2008; Coleman, 1998).

Beyond doubt, enormous exposure to the target language, thanks to the flow of real-life situations and non-stop immersion, cannot be held equal to formal language education or partly language exchanges with native speakers, either face-to-face or online. This is because it forces the capacity of students and prevents them from reverting to their native languages when they feel stuck. Therefore, being away from familiar environment with Erasmus+ provides a golden opportunity for learners to practice English.

The impact of sojourning on the development of foreign/second languages, which is the main point of this study, has been examined by many researchers. On the whole, these numerous studies evince a positive correlation between these two variables by means of enabling both explicit and implicit learning environments in unison (Doerr, 2019; Cojocaru, 2018; Kenne, 2014; Kinginger, 2011; Tanaka & Ellis, 2003; Davie, 1996). For example, the study by Llanes et al. (2016) proves the improvement of overall English proficiency by examining Spanish/Catalan Erasmus outgoing students who spent a term in non-English speaking countries and had to use English as a mediating language.

Additionally, the studies that focus on the improvement of specific language skills outnumber those related to overall linguistic development. The majority of these studies are based on the growth of oral skills (Beattie et al., 2014; Lopez-Serrano, 2010; Juan-Garau & Perez-Vidal, 2007; Segalowitz & Freed, 2004; Lennon, 1990) while the number of studies that focus on writing proficiency (Isabelli-Garcia et al., 2018; Perez-Vidal & Barquin, 2014; Perez-Vidal & Juan-Garau, 2011) and reading proficiency is quite limited (Li, 2015; Taillefer, 2005). A great number of those studies are mostly based on a comparison of study abroad (SA) and at-home (AH) contexts through longitudinal observations and qualitative techniques, while the ones that are grounded in quantitative data are limited.

Development of Vocabulary Knowledge

As vocabulary knowledge forms the foundation of the four main language skills (Brown, 2007), enriching it is crucial to becoming successful in language learning (Schmitt, 2010). Rich vocabulary knowledge is essential to mastering a foreign or second language (Elgort & Nation, 2010; Hu & Nation, 2000; Schmitt, 2008). The oft-cited quotation by Wilkins (1972) makes this importance very clear: “Without grammar very little can be conveyed, without vocabulary nothing can be conveyed” (as cited in Lessard-Clouston, 1994, p. 69). Hence, acquisition of vocabulary after sojourn has been a key focus of many researchers.

The robust results of these studies provide evidence of the positive impact of studying abroad on vocabulary development. One of the oldest investigations, conducted by Milton and Meara (1995), found that initially low-level SA students outperformed AH-context students thanks to the integration of formal classes and real-life input. They found that that vocabulary knowledge developed five times faster. They found that vocabulary knowledge developed five times faster. Ife et al. (2000) supported these findings, but with a difference: more progress was observed among the initially intermediate students. Another relevant study is from Tracy-Ventura (2017), who investigated both lexical development and the use of low-frequency vocabulary of 27 anglophone Spanish learners residing for nine months in a Spanish speaking country, and extrapolated the very development of lexical sophistication.

On the other hand, according to some studies, it is evident that SA may have only minimal or no effects on vocabulary knowledge, vocabulary usage, and vocabulary acquisition compared to formal classroom education AH (Collentine, 2004; O'Donnell, 2004). Regarding Collentine's study, AH learners surpassed SA students in terms of many lexical items, such as producing more adjectives and nouns. Furthermore, in Dewey's (2008) study, there was not a huge discrepancy between the SA and AH learners in terms of vocabulary gain.

Development of Grammatical Competence

Grammar, which is too important to be ignored, plays a crucial role in language development as it enables individuals to produce systematic and effective oral or written expressions. As Batstone (1994) declares, “Without grammar, language would be chaotic; countless words without the indispensable guidelines for how they can be ordered and modified” (p. 4). Despite this awareness, how studying abroad affects grammatical competence remains a relatively less studied area and the scant studies that have been presented reveal conflicting results, with many showing only partial support when compared to at-home group students (Juan- Garau & Perez- Vidal, 2007; Collentine, 2004; O'Donnell, 2004; Walsh, 1994; De Keyser, 1991). For instance, Marques-Pascual (2011) investigated verbal morphology, inversion of subject-verb word order, and after examining 42 students, it was found that at-home students were better at verb agreement morphology, while studying abroad only helped intermediate students to improve subject-verb inversions and subject omissions. Furthermore, SA students were not better than AH students in using the accusative and dative cases according to Arnett's (2013) findings.

Contrary to these studies, there are some examinations that ascertain some positive impacts. One of those is the study which resulted in a convincing impact of SA on the reduction of some specific types of errors per clause, even after a short-term mobility experience (Llanes and Munoz, 2009). Again, Llanes (2012) elucidated a development in SA participants' accuracy in L2 through a self-reported survey replied to by 21 Erasmus students. In addition to these studies, Duperron (2006) attained a noteworthy development of tense and aspect in France among students staying abroad in the first five months of a year study program in his pre- and post-program design study. Likewise, Möhle and Raupach (1983) discovered some gains in the grammatical competence of SA students, even if just a smidge, through their cross-linguistic project. According to another analysis concerning French learners in German and German learners in France, although French learners did not progress much, German learners' grammar skills changed in a noticeable way, especially in the reduction of formal errors (as cited in Regan et al., 2009).

Development of Listening Comprehension

The numerous studies that examine whether SA enhances listening comprehension skills show relatively consistent results and indicate significant gains (Cubillos et al., 2008; Kinginger, 2008; Saviile-Troike, 2006; Allen & Herron, 2003; Brecht et al., 1995). To achieve more developed aural skills, Davidson (2010) and Allen and Herron (2003) emphasize the effectiveness of longer sojourns abroad. However, there have been studies that advocate that even a short period of residing abroad can have a significant impact on achieving superior listening comprehension (Llanes & Munoz, 2009; Cubillos et al., 2008). Davidson and Shaw (2019) measured the L2 gains of full-year US participants in terms of their speaking, reading, and listening skills. They concluded that advanced students progressed more. Additionally, they achieved a remarkable correlation between pre-listening proficiency level and post-reading and post-speaking skills. The positive impact of SA on the area of listening comprehension, specifically on learners' performance in task-based listening comprehension, was also demonstrated by Kinginger (2008).

Development of Reading Comprehension

Reading comprehension, which occupies an essential position as a receptive skill, is one of the other under-researched areas but creates a general mood of optimism. Although Ilida and Herder (2019) discovered a noteworthy gain in the general reading abilities of twenty-seven English learners, the development was not at the same degree for academic reading abilities. The natural immersion environment, which triggers motivation and confidence, was found to be quite effective in the development of reading comprehension, according to the studies directed by Kraut (2017) and Huebner (1995). In addition to these studies, some researchers emphasized the significance of the time spent on mobility. While even a short period of stay is explored as influential on reading comprehension and fluency (Borras & Llanes, 2020; Khoroshilova et al., 2015), many other studies claim that the longer the sojourns are, the more functional and efficacious they are because of the extra exposure to the host community, its culture, and its language (Issa & Zalbidea, 2018; Fraser, 2002). Savage and Hughes (2014) examined 140 Chinese learners before and after a 20-hour of short-term summer intensive language course covering in China. Numerous natural opportunities and contexts provided by the intensive immersion in a native speaker country definitely improved students' scores, especially in reading and listening skills when pre-and post-test results were compared. However, Fraser (2002) advocated longer sojourns. In his study, he compared a short-term and long-term group of students and concluded that the students who stayed longer improved their reading and writing skills more.

The comprehensive analysis of the data collected by all the researchers mentioned above displays robust, striking, and sometimes puzzling and confusing results for the four measured skills. As a traditional wisdom and general perception, people believe that one cannot acquire a real competence in a foreign or second language without spending time abroad. Mcmanus et al. (2020) carried out a study supporting this belief, in which 56 French and Spanish learners staying abroad for nine months were investigated before, during and after their mobility. The researchers found ongoing development in complexity, accuracy, fluency, and lexis. However, the real mystery here is how to use the target language as frequently as possible. The more engagement in social networks, the more practice in the target language. By means of some designed interventions, such as using a task-based approach, the interaction with the host culture and target language can be maximized, resulting in further appreciation of the experience (Erickson et al., 2020). Undoubtedly, there are some variables that can induce linguistic development of the learners, such as initial proficiency level (Dewey et al., 2014; Mcmanus et al., 2020).

METHOD

As is apparent from the discussions and given data presented so far, this study focuses on the effects of Erasmus+ on the development of participants' foreign language skills, particularly in the areas of reading, listening, grammar, and vocabulary, as well as the relationship between their initial and final proficiency levels in these competences. In order to examine the effectiveness of sojourning, two research questions were formulated:

1. Do the listening, reading, grammar, and vocabulary proficiencies of EFL Erasmus students differ before and after participating in the Erasmus Program?
2. What is the relationship between the students' previous proficiency levels in listening, reading, vocabulary, and grammar and their linguistic competences after their mobility?

To investigate the answers to these questions, 213 Turkish outgoing Erasmus+ students majoring in English as a foreign language were included in this quantitative study. The study investigated the language development after one term of mobility, as part of a four-year degree programme, in a non-anglophone European country. Although Erasmus+ tends to attract more female students, there were more male students (122) than females (91) in this study. The year of attendance and departments of the students varied (See Appendix 1 and Appendix 2).

Data Collection Instrument

Through an online questionnaire, students were asked to provide their OLS pre-and post-assessment results in order to collect data on their development in reading, listening, grammar, and vocabulary competences. These results were also analyzed to understand the relationship between initial and final development of these competences.

OLS provides linguistically supportive online courses in all official EU languages and assesses the development of the target language that students are responsible for during their mobility, with two compulsory exams. Preserving the linguistic diversity of the EU is one of the programme's objectives. The assessments are conducted before students depart and after they return home. Grammar, vocabulary, listening, and reading competences are measured in line with the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) (Erasmus+ OLS, 2020). The initial assessment is a prerequisite, and the final assessment measures progress during the sojourning process (Erasmus+ OLS, 2020). In this regard, OLS has both formative and summative roles rather than being only a participant certification programme. Throughout these assessments, students are exposed to 55 questions: 10 questions for listening comprehension, 10 questions for reading comprehension, 20 questions for grammatical competence, and 15 questions for vocabulary knowledge based on multiple-choice and gap-filling activities. Questions do not need to be answered in a single entry and are organized progressively and adaptively to the participants' levels (Erasmus+ OLS, 2020).

FINDINGS

The following table illustrates the normal distribution test conducted on the collected data from OLS listening, reading, grammar, and vocabulary test results, as well as the average points.

Table 1. Tests for Normality

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Grammar Exam	.195	213	.000	.907	213	.000
Vocabulary Exam	.207	213	.000	.900	213	.000
Reading Exam	.203	213	.000	.891	213	.000
Listening Exam	.210	213	.000	.911	213	.000
OLS Exam	.315	213	.000	.849	213	.000

As shown in Table 1, the H_0 hypothesis is rejected for all tests, and the test statistics are significant. Since the data does not follow a normal distribution, Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test is used to analyze the improvement in each related competence.

Research Question 1 seeks whether participants improve their grammar, vocabulary, reading, and listening skills. Table 2 through 6 demonstrate the progress of each skill, as indicated by numerical data.

Table 2. Results of Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test for Pre and Post Grammar Exams

Pre-Grammar and Post-Grammar	N	Mean	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks	Z	Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)
Negative Ranks	13	3.75	56.65	736.50	-9.193	.000*
Positive Ranks	130	4.60	73.53	9559.50		
Ties	70	-	-	-		

* Probability value < 0,05

Table 2 shows that there is a statistically significant difference between the pre- and post-grammar tests ($z = 9.193$, $p < 0.05$). This significant difference is evidence of the development in grammatical competence, as the majority of the students had a positive rank. Specifically, 130 students increased their proficiency level in grammar, while 13 students regressed and 70 of them did not make any progress nor experience regression.

Table 3. Results of Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test for Pre and Post Vocabulary Exams

Pre-Vocabulary and Post-Vocabulary	N	Mean	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks	Z	Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)
Negative Ranks	15	3.92	86.43	1296.50	-8.662	.000*
Positive Ranks	138	4.75	75.97	10484.50		
Ties	60	-	-	-		

* Probability value < 0,05

It can be inferred from the analysis presented in Table 3 that there is a statistically significant difference between the pre- and post-vocabulary tests ($z = -8,662$, $p < 0.05$). This significant difference indicates the development of proficiency levels in vocabulary, as 138 students indicated improvement in their grammar skills

by being in the positive ranks. While proficiency levels of 15 of them worsened, 60 students did not show any change.

Table 4. Results of Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test for Pre and Post Reading Exams

Pre-Reading and Post-Reading	N	Mean	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks	Z	Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)
Negative Ranks	7	3.95	67.00	469.00	-9.602	.000*
Positive Ranks	134	4.88	71.21	9542.00		
Ties	72	-	-	-		

* Probability value < 0,05

A statistically significant difference between the pre- and post-reading tests ($z = -9,602$, $p < 0.05$) is deduced in Table 4. This significant difference indicates the development of reading skills, as the majority of students are in positive ranks. However, the number of students who remained at the same level appears to be relatively high, at 72.

Table 5. Results of Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test for Pre and Post Listening Exams

Pre-Listening and Post-Listening	N	Mean	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks	Z	Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)
Negative Ranks	11	3.87	74.45	819.00	-9.333	.000*
Positive Ranks	139	4.85	75.58	10506.00		
Ties	63	-	-	-		

* Probability value < 0,05

Table 5 shows a statistically significant difference between the pre and post-listening tests ($z = -9,333$, $p < 0.05$), indicating the development of participants' listening comprehension. Out of 213 students, 139 moved to a higher proficiency level, while 11 students obtained lower scores in the post-listening assessment. Based on the pre- and post-test scores, it can be observed that the majority of students achieved positive rank improvements.

Table 6. Results of Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test for General OLS Evaluation

Pre- OLS and Post-OLS	N	Mean	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks	Z	Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)
Negative Ranks	3	3.67	62.50	187.50	-11.875	.000*
Positive Ranks	177	4.84	90.97	16102.50		
Ties	33					

* Probability value < 0,05

The analysis presented in Table 6 reveals a statistically significant difference between the general pre- and post-test results ($z = -11,875$, $p < 0.05$), indicating that a majority of students demonstrated positive improvement in their overall English proficiency. Specifically, out of the 213 students who took the exam, 177 increased their proficiency level in grammar, only 3 experienced a decline in their success, and 33 students maintained their initial level. This data supports the positive impact of the SA program on the development of general English proficiency.

Moving on to Research Question 2, this inquiry focuses on the relationship between students' initial proficiency levels and final proficiency levels with respect to grammar, vocabulary, reading and listening competences. The Figure I below illustrates the progress made by students in each related skill. CEFR levels are used as descriptors to specify progressive mastery of each skill. The six broad levels are: breakthrough (A1), way through (A2), threshold (B1), vantage (B2), effective operational proficiency (C1), and mastery (C2). These levels correspond to the classical division of elementary, intermediate, and advanced levels (Council of Europe, 2001, p. 21). Additionally, A1- level indicates pre-A1 students.

The progress of each student's initial linguistic competence and final levels are illustrated as figures indicating the net numbers of gains and losses for each competence. The numbers represent the students who moved to a different level from their initially recorded levels.

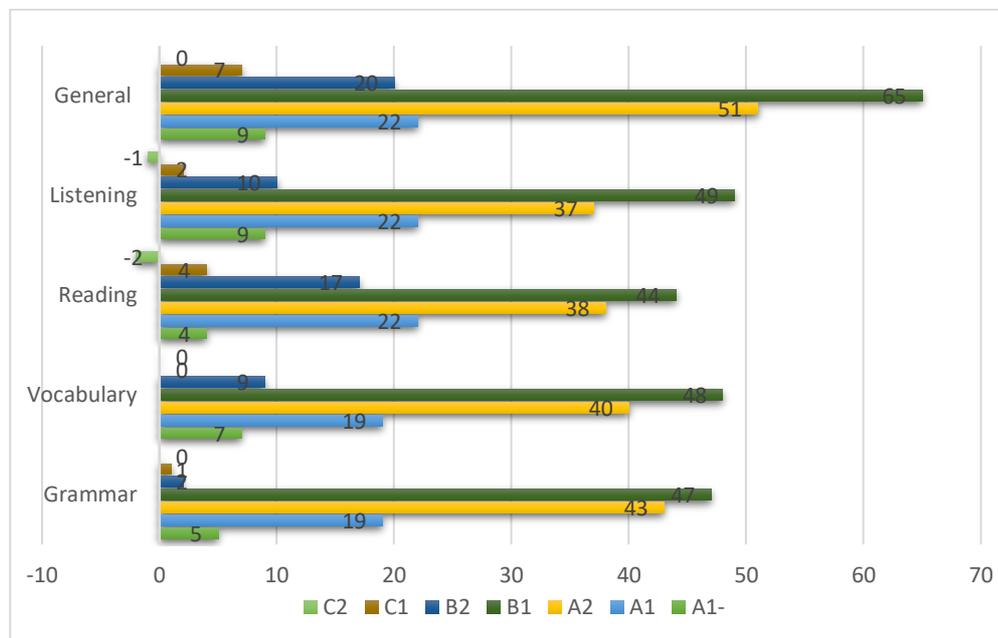


Figure 1. Net number of gain and losses for proficiency levels

Upon close examination of Figure 1, it is evident that previously B1 level students demonstrated more improvement in their language skills than other students, represented by the dark green color. According to the analyzed data, 49 students improved their listening proficiency, 48 students improved their vocabulary competence, and 65 students improved their general linguistic skills. Following B1 level students, the most improved group were the previously A2 level students. The group that demonstrated the least amount of improvement consisted of previously B2 and C1 students. All C2 students are represented by 0, as it is the highest proficiency level in CEFR and there is no possibility to progress further. Another progressing group consisted of students previously at A1- and A1 levels, who improved their capacity in all skills mentioned, although not as much as B1 students. Some students moved to a lower proficiency level, such as three students (1 in listening and 2 in reading) who were previously at the C2 level, but were unable to improve their listening and reading comprehension skills and moved to lower proficiency levels.

DISCUSSION

The current study investigated the linguistic development of Turkish Erasmus+ short-term outgoing students in non-English speaking countries regarding their grammatical, vocabulary, reading and listening competences. To date, there have been a limited number of studies that have investigated the development of English as a foreign language after studying in a non-English speaking country.

Research question one aimed to measure the extend to which learners' knowledge of vocabulary and grammar, and proficiency in reading and listening comprehension, increased after a one-term mobility abroad as measured by the Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test. Results from comparing the pre-and post-tests of OLS established a statistically significant development, valid for each skill separately and overall proficiency. The positive impact of studying abroad on the development of EFL was also supported by Khoroshilova et al. (2015) conducting the research via students' perspectives, and Simonova and Kostolanyova (2020) who indicated the development of English skills after administering two questionnaires before and after mobility to 83 Erasmus+ incoming students at a Czech university. The significance of developing positive attitudes towards foreign language learning, which was also one of the main theories of Gardner (1985), was underlined in their study.

Research question two was designed to understand the relationship between students' initial and final proficiency levels. The majority of the participants who progressed and moved to upper CEFR levels after mobility were initially at B1 and A2 levels. However, the least successful group of students who upgraded their competences was initially at C1, A1, and B2 levels, respectively. This distribution indicates that progressing to higher levels was limited among the lowest and highest group of students, and it is not a coincidence. It is difficult to move further for students who are already advanced or who are at the beginner levels. Therefore, being at B1 or B2 level on CEFR before mobility is a prior condition to attend the Erasmus+ to comprehend the standard input encountered at school and at leisure. Students who are already fluent enough to communicate and understand basic

input during formal education and outside time can practice English more than those who were at A1, which is not a sufficient degree for academic or professional purposes.

CONCLUSION & IMPLICATIONS

Throughout this current study and prior ones examined, it has been found that studying abroad helps students to improve their English skills. Being required to use English both in academic setting and outside the classroom to survive provides opportunities to hear it and use it both orally and in writing. The cultural richness, increased problem-solving abilities, and self-confidence that Erasmus+ enables affect learners' attitudes towards learning a foreign language positively. The more social practice of English, the more progress is made. In this regard, even the effectiveness of short-term mobilities cannot be denied, although longer mobilities are assumed to be more beneficial thanks to breadth and depth of input and output opportunities.

Moreover, it is also obvious that previous levels of language proficiency, which are a multidimensional construct including grammar, vocabulary, semantics, syntax and so on, determine the final proficiency levels. Considering this fact, students need to be triggered to improve their English, and necessary language support should be given to nominees before leaving in order to increase the possibility of progress.

Last but not least, it is important to mention that there is a possibility of reduced skills after mobility. Therefore, mobility students need to be motivated to use their improved English skills after they return their home institutions through activities such as inviting them to Erasmus+ organizations, charging them with responsible for new incoming students, and making them mentors, etc.

Acknowledgment

This study is derived from the dissertation entitled "Erasmus EFL exchange students' beliefs about their linguistic and academic competences before and after mobility", conducted under the supervision of Prof. Dr. Arif Sarıçoban.

REFERENCES

- Allen, H. W., & Herron, C. (2003). A mixed- methodology investigation of the linguistic and affective outcomes of summer study abroad. *Foreign Language Annals*, 36(3), 370-385.
- Arnett, C. (2013). Syntactic gains in short-term study abroad. *Foreign Language Annals*, 46(4), 705-712.
- Aydın, S. (2012). I am not the same after my Erasmus- A qualitative research. *The Qualitative Report*, 17(28), 1-23.
- Batstone, R. (1994). *Grammar*. Oxford University Press.
- Beattie, J., Valls-Ferrer, M., & Perez-Vidal, C. (2014). Listening performance and onset level in formal instruction and study abroad. In C. Pérez-Vidal (Ed.), *Second language acquisition in study abroad and formal instruction contexts* (pp. 195-216). John Benjamins.
- Borras, J. & Llanes, A. (2020). L2 reading and vocabulary development after a short study abroad experience. *Vigo International Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 17(17), 35-55.
- Botas, P. C., & Huisman, J. (2013). A bourdieusian analysis of the participation of polish students in the Erasmus program: Cultural and social capital perspectives. *Higher Education*, 66(6), 741-754.
- Björkman, B. (2013). *English as an academic lingua franca*. Hubert & Co. GmbH & Co. KG.
- Brecht, R. D., Davidson, D. E., & Ginsberg, R. B. (1995). Predictors of foreign language gain during study abroad. In B. F. Freed (Ed.), *Second language acquisition in a study abroad context* (pp. 37-66). John Benjamins.
- Brown, H. D. (2007). *Teaching by principles: An interactive approach to language pedagogy (3rd ed.)*. Pearson.
- Cardwell, P. J. (2019). Does studying abroad help academic achievement? *European Journal of Higher Education*, 10(13), 1-17.
- Carroll, J. (1967). Foreign language proficiency levels attained by language majors near graduation from college. *Foreign Language Annals*, 1, 131-151
- Cojocar, F.-C. (2018). Developing (new) Language skills thorough student mobility- the impact of an Erasmus+ experience. *Journal of Educational Sciences*, 37(1), 53-65.
- Coleman, J. (1998). Language learning and study abroad: The European perspective. *Frontiers: The International Journal of Study Abroad*, 4(1), 167-203.

- Collentine, J. (2004). The effects of learning contexts on morphosyntactic and lexical development. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition*, 26(2), 227-248.
- Council of Europe (2001). *Common European framework of reference for languages: learning, teaching, assessment*. Cambridge University Press.
- Cubillos, J. H., Chieffo, L., & Fan, C. (2008). The impact of short-term study abroad programs on L2 listening comprehension skills. *Foreign Language Annals*, 41(1), 157-186.
- Davidson, D. E., Shaw, J. R. (2019). A cross-linguistic and cross-skill perspective on L2 development in study abroad. In S. M. Gass & P. Winke (Eds.), *Foreign language proficiency in higher education* (pp. 217-244). Springer.
- Davidson, D. (2010). Study abroad: When, how long, and with what results? New data from the Russian front. *Foreign Language Annals*, 43(1), 6–26.
- Davie, J. (1996). Language skills, course development and the year abroad. *The Language Learning Journal*, 13(1), 73-76.
- De Keyser, R. M. (1991). Foreign language development during a semester abroad. In B. F. Freed (Ed.), *Foreign language acquisition research and the classroom* (pp.104-119). D.C. Health and Company.
- De Keyser, R. (2010). Monitoring processes in Spanish as a second language during a study abroad program. *Foreign Language Annals*, 43(1), 80–92.
- Dewey, D. P., Bown, J., Baker, W., Martinsen, R. A., Gold, C., & Eggett, D. (2014). Language use in six study abroad programs: An exploratory analysis of possible predictors. *Language Learning*, 64(1), 36-71.
- Dewey, D. P. (2008). Japanese vocabulary acquisition by learners in three contexts. *Frontiers: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Study Abroad*, 15, 127-48.
- Di Pietro, G. (2015). Do study abroad programs enhance the employability of graduates? *Education Finance and Policy*, 10(2), 223-243.
- Doerr, N. M. (2019). *Transforming study abroad*. Berghahn Books.
- Elgort, I. & Nation, P. (2010). Vocabulary learning in a second language: familiar answers to new questions. In P. Seedhouse, S. Walsh & C. Jenks (Eds.) *Vocabulary learning in a second language: Familiar answers to new questions* (pp. 89-104). Palgrave MacMillan.
- Erasmus+ OLS (2020). Erasmus+ OLS Presentation. Retrieved May 5, 2020, from https://www.dropbox.com/sh/tns5pcd1nf32tp9/AABj18b8Xg7Q4XzOgoUY9nr0a?dl=0&utm_source=Ba ckendBEN.
- Erickson, L., Berka, S., Xiaoyan, H., & Castro, Z. (2020). Enhancing study abroad: Interventions for greater language proficiency and intercultural development. *NECTFL Rewiev*, 86, 9-31.
- European Commission (2021). Unity in diversity. Retrieved June 17, 2021, from <https://cordis.europa.eu/article/id/27389-unity-in-diversity>.
- Fraser, C. C. (2002). Study abroad: An attempt to measure the gains. *German As a Foreign Language*, 3(1), 44-65.
- Gardner, R. C. (1985). *Social psychology and second language learning: The role of attitudes and motivation*. Edward Arnold.
- Gonzalez-Baixauli, C., Montanes-Brunet, E., & Perez-Vazquez, P. (Eds). (2018). Effects of mobility programmes on university students' academic performance. In *Proceedings from 4th International Conference on Higher Education Advances (HEAd'18)* (pp.553-562). Polytechnic University of Valencia.
- Hu, M. & Nation, I.S.P. (2000). Unknown vocabulary density and reading comprehension. *Reading in a Foreign Language*, 13(1), 403- 430.
- Huebner, T. (1995). The effects of overseas language programs: repot on a case study of an intensive Japanese course. In B. Freed (Ed.), *Second language acquisition in a study abroad context* (pp. 171-194). John Benjamins Publishing Company.

- Ife, A., Boix, G. V., & Meara, P. (2000). The impact of study abroad on the vocabulary development of different proficiency groups. *Spanish Applied Linguistics*, 4(1), 55-84.
- Ilida, T. & Herder, S. (2019). second language development before, during, and after study abroad: A longitudinal study at a Japanese women's university. *JACET Journal*, 63, 27-45.
- Isabelli-Garcia, C., Bown, J., Plews, J. L., & Dewey, D. P. (2018). Language learning and study abroad. *Language Teaching*, 51(4), 439-484.
- Issa, B. & Zalbidea, J. (2018). Proficiency levels in study abroad: Is there an optimal time for sojourning? In C. Sanz & A. Morales-Front (Eds.) *The Routledge handbook of study abroad research and practice* (pp. 453-464). Routledge.
- Juan-Garau, M., & Pérez-Vidal, C. (2007). The effect of context and contact on oral performance in students who go on a stay abroad. *Vigo International Journal of Applied Linguistics*, (4), 117-134.
- Kenne, E. (2014). *Study abroad: An essential part of language acquisition*. Unpublished Honors Program Thesis. University of Northern Iowa.
- Khoroshilova, S., Kostinaa, E., Bezdenezhnykha, L., Vezirovb, T. & Shibaevc, V. (2015). Academic mobility: The impact of short-term language courses abroad on the development of language competences. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 214, 992-999.
- Kinginger, C. (2011). Enhancing language learning in study abroad. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, 31(1), 58-73.
- Kinginger, C. (2009). *Language learning and study abroad*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Kinginger, C. (2008). Language learning in study abroad: Case studies of Americans in France. *The Modern Language Journal*, 92(1), 1-124.
- Kraut, R. E. (2017). The development of L2 reading skills: A case study from an eight-week intensive English program course. *Dialogues*, 1(1), 25-43.
- Krzaklewska, E. (2008). Why study abroad? – An analysis of Erasmus students' motivation. In F. Derwin & M. Byram (Eds.), *Students, staff and academic mobility in higher education* (pp. 82-98). Cambridge Scholars Publishing.
- Lennon, P. (1990). Investigating fluency in EFL: A quantitative approach. *Language Learning*, 40(3), 387-417.
- Lessard-Clouston, M. (1994). Challenging student approaches to ESL vocabulary development. *TESL Canada Journal*, 12(1), 69-80.
- Li, L. (2015). Language proficiency, reading development, and learning context. *2015 The Forum on Education Abroad*, 24(14), 73-92.
- Llanes, A., Mancho-Bares, G & Arno, E. (2016). Erasmus students using English as a lingua franca: does study abroad in a non-English-speaking country improve L2 English? *The Language Learning Journal*, 44(33), 292-303.
- Llanes, A. (2012). The impact of study abroad and age on second language accuracy development. In C. Munoz (Ed.), *Intensive exposure experiences in second language learning* (pp. 193-212). Multilingual Matters.
- Llanes, A., & Munoz, C. (2009). A short stay abroad: Does it make a difference? *System*, 37(3), 353-365.
- Lopez-Serrano, S. (2010). Learning languages in study abroad and at home contexts: A critical review of comparative studies. *Porta Linguarum*, 13(13), 149-163.
- Marques-Pascual, L. (2011). Study abroad, previous language experience, and Spanish L2 development. *Foreign Language Annals*, 44(3), 565-582.
- McManus, K., Mitchell, R., Tracy-Ventura, N. (2020). A longitudinal study of advanced learners' linguistic development before, during, and after study abroad. *Applied Linguistics*, 42(1), 3-29.
- Mızıkacı, F., & Arslan, Z. U. (2019). A European perspective in academic mobility: A case of Erasmus program. *Journal of International Studies*, 9(2), 705-726.

- Milton, J., & Meara, P. (1995). How periods abroad affect vocabulary growth in a foreign language. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 107(8), 17-34.
- Möhle, D., & Raupach, M. (1983). *Planen in der Fremdsprache [Approaches in second language acquisition]*. Peter Lang.
- O'Donnell, K. (2004). *Student perceptions of language learning in two contexts: At home and study abroad*. Unpublished doctoral thesis. Pittsburgh.
- Perez-Vidal, C., & Barquin, E. (2014). Comparing progress in academic writing after formal instruction and study abroad. In C. Perez-Vidal (Ed.), *Language acquisition in study abroad and formal instruction contexts* (pp. 217-234). John Benjamins.
- Perez-Vidal, C., & Juan-Garau, M. (2011). The effect of context and input conditions on oral and written development: A study abroad perspective. *International Review of Applied Linguistics in Language Teaching*, 49(2), 157-185.
- Regan, V., Howard, M., & Lemee, I. (2009). *The acquisition of sociolinguistic competence in a study abroad context*. Short Run Press.
- Savage, B. L. & Hughes, Z. H. (2014). How does short-term foreign language immersion stimulate language learning? *Frontiers: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Study Abroad*, 24(2), 103-120.
- Saville-Troike, M. (2006). *Introducing second language acquisition*. Cambridge University Press.
- Schmitt, M. (2008). Review article: Instructed second language vocabulary learning. *Language Teaching Research*, 12(3), 329-363.
- Schmitt, N. (2010). *Researching vocabulary: A vocabulary research manual*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Segalowitz, N., & Freed, B. F. (2004). Context, contact, and cognition in oral fluency acquisition: Learning Spanish in at home and study abroad contexts. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition*, 26(2), 173-199.
- Simonova, I., Kostolanyova, K. (2020). English language development via Erasmus+: Students' feedback. 2020 *International Symposium on Educational Technology (ISET)*.
- Taillefer, G. F. (2005). Foreign language reading and study abroad: Cross-cultural and cross- linguistic questions. *The Modern Language Journal*, 89(4), 503-528.
- Tanaka, K., Ellis, R. (2003). Study-abroad, language proficiency, and learner beliefs about language learning. *JALT Journal*, 25(1), 63-85.
- Teichler, U. (2015). The impact of temporary study abroad. In Mitchell, R., Tracy-Ventura, N., Mcmanus, K. (Eds.), *Social interaction, identity and language learning during residence abroad* (pp. 15-32). Eurosla Monograph Series 4.
- Tracy-Ventura, N. (2017). Combining corpora and experimental data to investigate language learning during residence abroad: A study of lexical sophistication. *System*, 71, 35-45.
- Twombly, S., Salisbury, M., Tumanut, S., & Klute, P. (2012). *Study abroad in a new global century: Renewing the promise, refining the purpose*. Wiley.
- Walsh, R. (1994). The year abroad—a linguistic challenge. *TEANGA: The Irish Book of Applied Linguistics*, 14, 48-57.
- Wilkins, D. A. (1972). *Linguistics in language teaching*. Arnold.

APPENDIX 1

Portrays of the Respondents' Academic Year of Attendance

Academic Year	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
2015-16	26	12.2	12.2	12.2
2016-17	38	17.8	17.8	30.0
2017-18	42	19.7	19.7	49.8
2018-19	45	21.1	21.1	70.9
2019-20	62	29.1	29.1	100.0
Total	213	100.0	100.0	

APPENDIX 2

Portrays of the Respondents' Fields of Study

Fields of Study	<i>f</i>	<i>p</i>	Fields of Study	<i>f</i>	<i>p</i>
Archaeology	1	0.5	Chemical Engineering	3	1.4
Horticulture	1	0.5	Mechanical Engineering	13	6.1
Computer Engineering	10	4.7	Metallurgical and Materials Engineering	2	0.9
Environmental Engineering	1	0.5	Landscape Architecture	3	1.4
Electrical and Electronic Engineering	2	0.9	Psychology	2	0.9
Industrial Engineering	6	2.8	Radio, TV and Cinema	3	1.4
Agricultural Economics	1	0.5	Advertising	1	0.5
French Language and Literature	3	1.4	Health Care Management	1	0.5
Journalism	6	2.8	Primary School Teaching	2	0.9
Genetics and Bioengineering	3	1.4	Political Sciences	6	2.8
Food Engineering	3	1.4	Social Service	1	0.5
Public Relations and Publicity	3	1.4	Sociology	1	0.5
Geomatic Engineering	1	0.5	Town and Country Planning	1	0.5
Nursing	7	3.3	History	2	0.9
Law	3	1.4	Textile	1	0.5
English Language and Literature	9	4.2	Medicine	5	2.3
Biosystem Engineering	1	0.5	Soil Science and Plant Nutrition	1	0.5
Business	14	6.6	Tourist Guiding	1	0.5
Economics	5	2.3	Tourism	6	2.8
Theology	1	0.5	Turkish Language and Literature	1	0.5
ELT	1	0.5	International Relations	33	15.5
Civil Engineering	8	3.8	International Trade and Logistics	1	0.5
Statistics	1	0.5	Veterinary Medicine	4	1.9
Public Administration	9	4.2	Animal Science	1	0.5
Total	213	100			

Note: *f* = frequency, *p* = percentage