

# THE AVOIDANCE BEHAVIOUR OF TURKISH EFL LEARNERS IN USING MULTI-WORD VERBS

## İNGİLİZCE ÖĞRENEN TÜRK ÖĞRENCİLERİN ÖBEKSİ EYLEMLERİN KULLANIMINDAN KAÇINMA DAVRANIŞLARI

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<b>Abstract:</b> This study aims to investigate the avoidance behaviour of Turkish EFL learners regarding the proficiency levels of them and frequency levels of multi-word verbs. In this study, 112 participants that are currently enrolled at School of Foreign Languages Department at a state university in Turkey were given a Language History Questionnaire and Multiple-Choice Test. In this test, thirty pairs of Multi-word Verbs in single sentences were administered and the participants were instructed to fill in them choosing one of the items given. These items consisted of the expected multi-word verb, its one word verb equivalent, distractor multi-word verb and its one word verb equivalent. The results obtained from paired sample t-tests show that Turkish EFL learners avoid using multi-word verbs. Another finding of this study is that the avoidance of multi-word verbs increases as English proficiency level gets lower. Additionally, the avoidance of multi-word verbs decreases as frequency level of multi-word verbs gets higher. It can be concluded that proficiency level of learners and frequency level of multi-word verbs affect learners' avoidance of English multi-word verbs. <b>Key Words:</b> <i>Formulaic Language, multi-word verbs, lexical teaching</i>	<b>Özet:</b> Bu çalışma, İngilizce öğrenmekte olan Türk öğrencilerinin yeterlik düzeyleri ve İngilizce öbeksi eylemlerin frekans seviyelerine bağlı olarak bu eylemlerin kullanımından kaçınma davranışlarını araştırmayı amaçlamaktadır. Bu çalışmada, Türkiye'de bir devlet üniversitesinde Yabancı Diller Yüksekokulu'na kayıtlı 112 katılımcıya Dil Geçmişi Anketi ve Çoktan Seçmeli Test verilmiştir. Bu testte, otuz çift öbeksi eylemlerle ilgili olan soru kökleri katılımcılara sunulmuş ve onlardan boşluğa gelecek olan doğru seçeneği işaretlemeleri istenmiştir. Bu seçenekler, bir doğru cevap olan öbeksi eylem, bu öbeksi eylemle eşanlamlı olan tek sözcüklü eylem, bir çeldirici öbeksi eylem ve bu çeldirici öbeksi eylemle eşanlamlı olan tek sözcüklü eylemden oluşmaktadır. Eşleştirilmiş örneklem t-testinden elde edilen sonuçlar, İngilizce öğrenmekte olan Türk öğrencilerinin öbeksi eylemleri kullanmaktan kaçındıklarını göstermektedir. Bu çalışmanın bir diğer bulgusu, katılımcıların İngilizce yeterlik düzeyleri düştükçe, öbeksi eylemleri kullanmaktan kaçınmalarındır. Ayrıca, öbeksi eylemlerin kullanımdan kaçınma, bu eylemlerin frekans seviyesi arttıkça azalmaktadır. Öğrencilerin yeterlilik düzeyi ve öbeksi eylemlerin frekans seviyesinin öğrencilerin İngilizcedeki bu eylemleri kullanmaktan kaçınma durumlarını etkilediği sonucuna varılabilir. <b>Anahtar Sözcükler:</b> <i>Formüsel Dil, öbeksi eylemler, sözcüksel öğretim</i>	

### Introduction

In formulaic language, multi-word lexical units (MWU) (Schmitt & Carter, 2004), have always been called in different names such as lexical phrases (Natinger & DeCarrico, 1992); lexical chunks (Lewis, 1993); ready-made (complex) units (Cowie, 1998), lexicalized sentence stems (Pawley & Syder, 1983). In this study, these terms will be gathered in one umbrella term as 'multi-word verbs (sometimes called phrasal verbs)' and illustrated as MWVs in a contraction form. MWVs unit is a key element of native-like language production and they are commonly seen in foreign language acquisition environment. Since in many cases, their meaning cannot be understood from their parts

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(prepositions, particles, or verbs) individually they should be learnt integrally. At this point, learners realize the difficulty of gathering MWVs especially in spoken language and because of this difficulty, avoidance of them is an inevitable end in language production process. The avoidance, in fact, is a common matter of fact in language acquisition since language users probably prefer simple structures and familiar forms. They may abstain from using complex and sophisticated structures.

Recent years, the research studies on vocabulary, in general, draw attention to the area of morphology, text-linguistics and multiple-word units since these phrases enhance the communicative competence and production. The present study deals with MWVs as a vital foundation of English language acquisition. Despite their highly important emphasis on communication, they are one of the most important factors of breaking down communication, in receptive or productive perspectives. This is the main reason why this avoidance perspective is addressed from different contexts such as China (Liao & Fukuya, 2004), Korea (You, 1999), Israel (Dagut & Laufer, 1985), Malaysia (Kamarudin, 2013), Egypt (El-Dakhs, 2016), Sudan (Minalla, 2017) and so on. In these researches, different samples and similar contexts have been studied and each of them proposed various perspectives to avoidance such as, the complex nature of different languages, frequency of MWVs, proficiency levels of learners, the distinctive nature of verbs. In these respects, this study also will encounter the basic explanation of what MWVs are and why learners avoid using them on the aspect of different proficiency levels and frequency degrees.

### **What is Multi-Word Verbs?**

MWV as important formulaic language units are generally defined as the structures which consist of a verb and a particle which function as a single unit lexically and also syntactically (Darwin & Gray, 1999; Liao & Fukuya, 2004; Quirk et al.1985). In spoken language, they are in regular use since they are an important part of ordinary correspondence. MWVs are said to be used more regularly in spoken than in written language and to be more successive in informal than in formal registers (Minall, 2017). As a rule, the significance of MWVs cannot be reasoned from its components. For instance, a language learner who realizes that *to call* means *to phone* or *consider* may have some difficulties in understanding the sentence *The soccer game was called off because of bad weather*, in which the multi-word verb *to call off* means *to cancel*. As seen, MWVs are structures that consist of two or in some cases three words to give a meaning (Hornby, 2004). The main word is a verb and it is followed by an adverb (die down) or a preposition (draw up) or both (clamp down on).

There are a few reasons why MWVs are vital to learn. First of all, they have been observed to be very frequent in English language. At this point, Gardner and Davies (2007) claim that the students

will encounter one multi-word verb in each 150 expressions of English they are presented to. Biber et al. (1999) appraise that MWVs occur just about 2000 times for every million words. Another important factor is that using MWVs is vital to fluent English and to sounding native-like because MWVs are broadly used in spoken informal discourse and disability to use these verbs is probably make language sound unnatural and non-idiomatic (Schmitt and Redwood, 2011; Siyanova and Schmitt, 2007). In this respect, El-Dakhs (2016) also states that “phrasal verbs are of prime importance to English language learners as they are highly represented in the English language and are known as a peculiar characteristic of Germanic languages” (p.132). However, their syntactic features and the complexity of their usage semantically make them especially hard to learn and lead to avoidance (Dagut & Laufer, 1985; Hulstijn & Marchena, 1989; Laufer & Eliasson, 1993; Schmitt & Redwood, 2011). At this point, phrasal verbs are “linguistic elements that some languages (e.g., Dutch, Swedish, Norwegian, Danish) show similarities to the English language with regard to possessing phrasal verb construction, while some languages (e.g., Turkish, Chinese, Hebrew) differ from English because they do not possess phrasal verb construction” (Yıldız, 2015:125). That is the reason why Turkish learners of English probably tend to underuse or misuse MWVs. In this study, the avoidance of MWVs by Turkish learners will be analysed and investigated.

### **Avoidance of Multi-Word Verbs in English**

The avoidance process in second language learning was first represented by Schachter (1974) and he criticised the significance of clarifying L2 units which are used and avoided by foreign language learners. After this research, many researchers have made it clear and examined again (Dagut & Laufer, 1985; Hulstijn & Marchena, 1989; Kamimoto, Shimura, & Kellerman, 1992; Kleinmann, 1977, 1978). The frequency of avoiding the use of some structures in acquiring foreign languages depends on whether these structures take place in the individual's native language. In his research, Schachter (1974) observed the avoidance process in terms of relative clause structures. He analysed English compositions of Chinese, Japanese, Arabian and Persian native speakers and compared their usage of relative clauses errors. He found that Chinese and Japanese L2 learners had more difficulty in using relative clauses than Persian and Arabian speakers. Finally, he came to a conclusion that “if a student finds a particular construction in the target language difficult to comprehend it is very likely that he will try to avoid producing it” (p. 213). However in his study, there is a limitation on proficiency level of L2 learners and their usage ability of relative clauses. In terms of avoidance perspective, Liao & Fukuya (2004) argued the avoidance aspect on using of phrasal verbs of Chinese speakers. Their study resulted that the factors such as proficiency level,

phrasal verb type and test type affect avoidance of phrasal verbs and they suppose that different native languages and semantic difficulty of phrasal verbs can influence their avoidance.

One of the other studies on avoidance of MWVs in literature is Dagut and Laufer's (1985) study. Their sample consisted of Israeli learners and their usage of MWVs were analysed. In their study, they also searched the frequency of avoidance of phrasal verb types in terms of literal, figurative and completive. According to the results, most of the learners avoided using MWVs. They also concluded that the typological difference between L1 (Hebrew) and L2 (English) resulted in the avoidance. On the other hand, Hulstijn and Marchena (1989) studied on Dutch learners of English in their research. They observed that Dutch learners did not avoid using MWVs because their native language consists of this construction. However, in some respects they avoid using these verbs not because of structurally but semantically. Another study on avoidance in literature is Laufer and Eliasson's (1993) research in which three possibilities of avoidance are identified syntactically and lexically. These are the differences between first and second language, the similarities between them and finally second language complexity. In their study, Swedish learners of English were conducted two types of tests about phrasal verbs: a multiple choice test and a translation test. They concluded that first and second language differences factor is the main cause of avoidance. This learning difficulty and avoidance of usage aspects might be the result of learners' recognizing these verbs as single units and decoding the implications of their individual segments. As Granger (1998) stated, there is a tendency to stick with familiar sequences instead of using formulaic language in English because they feel more confident and safer. At that point, some researchers (Laufer & Eliasson, 1993; Laufer, 2000) have discovered, learners basically avoid using these structures. As seen in literature, avoidance concept which may be conscious or unconscious behaviour probably results from "poor language proficiency, linguistic similarities or differences, individual affect, functional, semantic or pragmatic factors" (Chen & Smakman, 2016:41).

In Turkish EFL environment, there are a few studies on avoidance aspect of MWVs. Karakuş (2017) revealed the fact from preferences using phrasal verbs of synonymous one-word verbs in Turkish EFL context. According to the results, learners avoided using figurative phrasal verbs more than literal ones. She has emphasized that the reason of avoidance behaviour is the semantic complexity of phrasal verbs and added that task type was found to affect the usage of phrasal verbs since appearance frequency of one-word verbs is more than phrasal verbs in translation task. There is also another study on avoidance of English Phrasal verbs in Turkish and Norwegian EFL setting comparatively (Yildiz, 2015). In his study, the concept of whether Turkish and Norwegian EFL learners avoid phrasal verbs is investigated. As a result of the study, the semantic complexity of

phrasal verbs is one of the reason of why Turkish EFL learners avoid using figurative phrasal verbs. Another reason of the avoidance is the proficiency level in such a way that usage of English phrasal verbs increases as English proficiency level gets higher. As the review of the literature states, research studies on avoidance of multi word verbs in the sense of Turkish EFL learners are limited. Thus, the present study aims to analyse and investigate multi word verbs avoidance behaviour and preference of using one-word verbs instead of complex structures in English.

### **Statement of the Problem**

EFL Turkish undergraduates often have difficulties in understanding MWVs and tend to avoid using them. It should be noted that this avoidance behaviour lead to misuse or disuse these verbs. This study investigates the avoidance behaviour systematically and tries to underline whether proficiency level and frequency of MWVs affect this behaviour or not. If the answer is “yes”, various approaches will be tried to be found to restrain avoidance for the further study.

### **Research Questions**

This study will focus on the avoidance of using MWVs and investigate three research questions as follows:

1. Do Turkish learners of English avoid using MWVs?
2. Does the proficiency level of learners affect the ways of avoidance (if any)?
3. Does the frequency level of MWVs affect the ways of avoidance (if any)?

### **Methodology**

#### **Participants**

Two groups of 112 participants in total, 58 intermediate level (B1) and 54 upper-intermediate level (B2) of Turkish learners of English participated in the present study. All participants attended to the study voluntarily. At the beginning of the semester, their English levels were tested by “Proficiency and Placement Test” applied by School of Foreign Languages. In order to determine Turkish participants’ English proficiency levels, the results of this test in which the participants’ scores were converted to Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) were utilized and determined their levels. The scores taken from this test were equivalent to the score of YDS conducted by National Student Selection and Placement Centre in Turkey (OSYM). In other words, the students who get a score in the internal of 60-74 were treated as B1 level and the score in the internal of 75-94 was treated as B2 level. Since there is one-to-one correspondence between the Proficiency and Placement Test and YDS, the participants’ level was regarded as B1 and B2 in this research. The B1s are International Relations department students, and the B2s are Translation and

Interpreting department students. Both groups are studying at preparatory class in the School of Foreign Languages. After grouping the participants, Language Experience Questionnaire<sup>2</sup> was conducted to them. This questionnaire was developed to provide participants' demographic information such as, their ages to start learning a foreign language and the length of studying on this language. In the second part of this questionnaire, the Likert-scale type self-assessment test was conducted to the participants for the aim of learning the level of their four English skills. The last two questions in the questionnaire aim to find out whether the participant's vocabulary levels are adequate or inadequate for college courses and how many hours they spend on reading to improve their vocabulary knowledge in a week. According to the results, most of the students studied English for a minimum of 4 years at high school and one or two semesters at the university. The mean of starting age of learning a foreign language is 9,36 for B2 and 9,94 for B1 level of students. On the other hand, the results of The Likert-scale type self-assessment test (from 1 point for "very bad" to 10 points for "very good") for their four English skills (reading, writing, speaking and listening) was also analysed and according to the results B2 level of students' self-rating is higher than B1 level of students as seen in Table 1. In the last section, B2s believe that their vocabulary knowledge is more than adequate or adequate for college courses while B1s' answer for the same item is that their vocabulary knowledge is adequate or less adequate for college courses. Finally, the time they spend on weekly reading activity to improve their vocabulary knowledge is almost the same (see also Table 1).

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<sup>2</sup> Language Experience Questionnaire was adapted from Maag's (2007) unpublished doctoral dissertation and then reliability and validity of the new instrument have been analysed by statistics experts (see also Pilot Study).

Table 1.  
*Descriptive Statistics of B1 and C1 Level of Students*

	C1 Level (N=58)				B1 Level (N=54)			
	Min.	Max.	M.	SD	Min.	Max.	M.	SD
Age	17,00	23,00	19,48	1,37	17,00	25,00	19,25	1,77
Starting Age of FLT	6,00	19,00	9,36	2,55	1,00	25,00	9,94	4,03
Reading	7,00	10,00	8,82	,90	1,00	9,00	6,51	1,74
Writing	7,00	10,00	8,53	,90	1,00	9,00	6,22	1,63
Speaking	5,00	10,00	7,70	1,33	1,00	8,00	4,62	1,44
Listening	6,00	10,00	8,29	1,13	1,00	9,00	5,37	1,41
Vocab. know	1,00	3,00	1,72	,69	2,00	3,00	2,57	,49
Hours of reading	1,00	3,00	1,67	,65	1,00	4,00	1,62	,78
Proficiency and Placement Test Scores	77,00	95,00	84,42	4,21	62,00	76,00	67,54	5,23

### Pilot Study

In this research, pilot study with 37 undergraduate preparatory class students was applied to see the instruments' reliability and validity measuring. They were conducted the Language Experience Questionnaire and Multiple Choice Test about Multi-Word verbs. After this study, correlation coefficient was calculated and after some changes in the phrasal verbs lists, the last design has been used in the study. For this purpose, exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses were performed by statistics experts and internal consistency by Cronbach alpha coefficient was calculated. According to the results, correlation coefficient was found (.83) for Multiple Choice Test and (.77) for Language Experience Questionnaire.

### Instruments

Thirty pairs of MWVs were selected from Garnier and Schmitt's (2015) frequency phrasal verbs list (see Appendix B) according to the frequency levels of the phrasal verbs. Since this study also looked at frequency level of MWVs, these pairs were selected equally from low frequent MWVs (15 pairs) and high frequent MWVs (15 pairs) to analyse the third research question of this study. For these verbs, thirty different single sentences were constructed and the same set of these verbs was used for students in both levels. In each sentence, the verb place was left blank and the participants were asked to fill in them choosing one of the items given below. These items consist of the expected multi-word verb, its one word verb equivalent, distractor multi-word verb and its one word verb equivalent. The participants were given 20 minutes to complete the test and needed

instruction was received by the participants before the test began. The multiple-choice test (see Appendix A) is preferred since it can be seen as the most suitable test among multiple choice tests. Additionally, it can be utilized in data collection procedure which is related to the informal use of spoken English but in written contexts (Yildiz, 2015). This study was designed along the lines of Liao and Fukuya's (2004) study on avoidance of MWVs in English, however; this study was different from it in two cases. First of all, in this study different MWVs in different frequency levels (high or low frequency levels of phrasal verbs according to Garnier and Schmitt's (2015) frequency list) are used. Secondly, this study was conducted to Turkish learners of English and finally, multiple-choice test question roots consist of single sentences to prevent the imbalance between different levels of learners. For instance, for the phrasal verb "carry out", the following single sentence "This operation was \_\_\_\_\_ by a well-known doctor" was used (see Appendix A).

### **Data Analyses**

In this study, quantitative data instruments were used to gather more accurate and valid information about avoidance of MWVs in second language usage. The responses of each participant's to the multiple choice test are analysed and the answers for choosing MWVs or one-word verbs which are synonyms of MWVs are labelled. In data analyses, for the first research question, the participants and the MWVs were analysed as a single group before they were divided into groups in order to find an answer whether the Turkish students avoided using the MWVs. If the answer to the first research question is yes, the researcher investigates the second one about whether this avoidance behaviour is affected by the participants' language levels. In order to reach the answer of this research question, participants were divided into groups as B1 and B2. Each participant group's answers were separated from each other; afterwards, the answers were grouped into four as "correct MWVs answers, incorrect MWVs answers, correct one-word answers, and incorrect one-word answers". Finally, the third research question is to examine whether the factor affecting this avoidance behaviour is frequency levels of MWVs or not. For the analyses of last research question, the MWVs were separated into two as high or low frequency and each answer given for high and low frequent verbs was separated from each other, afterwards; the answers were grouped into four again as "correct MWVs answers, incorrect MWVs answers, correct one-word answers, and incorrect one-word answers" as in the second research question analysis. The analyses were conducted to each MWVs group in different frequency levels (high or low) and paired samples t-test results were obtained.

### **Results**



In this section, the findings of the present study will be presented in line with the research questions of this study.

*1<sup>st</sup> Research Question: Do Turkish learners of English avoid using MWVs?*

In order to find out the answer of the first research question whether Turkish learners of English avoided the use of MWVs, the participants' correct responses for each item in multiple-choice test were examined one by one. Total number of the participants who took the multiple choice test was 112. The total number of verbs answered by total participants in multiple choice test was 3360 (112 participants x 30 test items). In 1685 cases (out of 1685 cases, 1438 of them were correct MWVs, 247 were distractor MWVs) language learners chose the MWVs while in 1675 cases (out of 1675 cases, 1435 of them were correct one-word verbs, 240 of them were distractor one-word verbs), they chose one word verbs (as seen in Table 2.) As seen in the score, there was no significant difference between MWVs or one-word verbs usage ( $t(29)=0,2240$ ,  $p=,825$ ) without separating the groups as B1 or B2 level or dividing the MWVs as high or low frequency levels. Although the results seem to be very close to each other for all participants, the almost equal use rate of one-word verbs indicates that they avoided using MWVs. In other words, in the test, the expected or correct answer for all questions is seen as MWV; however, nearly half of the answer is in line with the usage of the one-word verb synonym of the MWVs.

Table 2.

*All Participants' Answers in Multiple Choice Test*

All participants' Answers			
Multi-Word Verbs	Expected Answers	1438	1685
	Distractors	247	
One-Word Verbs	Expected Answers' Synonyms	1435	1675
	Distractors	240	

Based on the fact that Turkish learners of English avoided using MWVs, the second research question related to their proficiency levels was examined as follows.

*2<sup>nd</sup> Research Question: Does the proficiency levels of learners affect the ways of avoidance (if any)?*

For the aim of answering to the second research question on whether proficiency levels of learners affect the ways of avoidance, the participants' answers were grouped into two as B1 and B2. Paired samples statistics were conducted to investigate the performance of two different groups on MWVs

test and have been presented in Table 2. In this table, means and standard deviations of MWVs usage for two groups have been shown as follows.

Table 3.  
*Paired Samples Statistics (Level of Participants)*

		M	N	SD	C	p
Pair 1	B1-MWVs-Exp.Ans.	14,233	30	4,141	,426	,019
	B2-MWVs- Exp.Ans.	33,666	30	7,126		
Pair 2	B1-MWVs-Total	4,366	30	2,042	,117	,539
	B2-MWVs-Total	3,866	30	2,528		
Pair 3	B1-1WVs-Synonym	31,433	30	3,738	-,082	,668
	B2-1WVs-Synonym	16,400	30	3,747		
Pair 4	B1-1WVs-Total	3,933	30	1,659	,145	,443
	B2-1WVs-Total	4,066	30	2,875		

\*MWVs=Multi-Word Verbs

\*1WVs=One-Word Verbs

\*Exp.Ans = Expected Answer

Table 4.  
*T-test Results (Level of Participants)*

		M	SD	t	df	p
Pair 1	B1-MWVs- Exp.Ans – B2-MWVs- Exp.Ans	-19,433	6,542	-16,269	29	,000
Pair 2	B1-MWVs-Total – B2-MWVs-Total	,500	3,059	,895	29	,378
Pair 3	B1-1WVs-Synonym – B2-1WVs-Synonym	15,033	5,505	14,956	29	,000
Pair 4	B1-1WVs-Total – B2-1WVs-Total	-,133	3,104	-,235	29	,816

The results show that there was a significant difference between these two groups in usage or avoidance of MWVs. The total number of verbs in multiple choice test was 1740 (58 participants x 30 test items) for B2s and 1620 (54 participants x 30 test items) for B1s. The learners in B2 level chose 1010 MWVs (out of 1740) while the learners in B1 level chose 428 MWVs (out of 1620). According to the paired samples t-test results, there is a significant difference between these two groups in using MWVs in multiple choice test ( $t(29) = -16,269$ ,  $p=0.00$ ,  $r=, 426$ ). When analysed one-word verbs usage in different groups, it can be easily seen that there is also significant difference ( $t(29) = -14,956$ ,  $p=0.00$ ,  $r=-, 082$ ) since B1 level of L2 learners avoid using MWVs and they use their one-word verbs equivalents. The statistic results of difference between usages of

incorrect MWVs or one word verbs in terms of two groups are not significant ( $t(29) = -.895$ ,  $p=0.378$ ,  $r=.117$ ); ( $t(29) = -.235$ ,  $p=0.816$ ,  $r=.145$ ), respectively.

It was found that B2s preferred MWVs much more frequently than B1s, in other words; the learners in B2 level do not hesitate using MWVs while the learners in B1 level avoid using them and prefer one-word verbs. It can be claimed that there is a significant relationship between the proficiency level of the participants and their MWVs use (preferences). After analysing the effect of proficiency level on avoidance behaviour, the findings of the third research question will be examined as follows.

*3<sup>rd</sup> Research Question: Does the frequency level of MWVs affect the ways of avoidance (if any)?*

In order to find out whether the frequency levels of the MWVs affect the avoidance behavior of the participants, their answers for two different frequency levels of MWVs (high and low) were analysed and paired samples statistics results have been presented in Table 4.

Table 5.

*Paired Samples Statistics and T-test Results (Frequency Level)*

		M	N	SD	C	p
Pair 1	Low-MWVs- Exp.Ans.	55,666	15	7,733	-.426	,113
	High-MWVs- Exp.Ans.	40,400	15	3,942		
Pair 2	Low-MWVs-Total	5,200	15	3,277	-.406	,134
	High-MWVs-Total	10,666	15	1,988		
Pair 3	Low-1WVs-Synonym	38,400	15	13,553	-.488	,065
	High-1WVs-Synonym	51,066	15	3,614		
Pair 4	Low-1WVs-Total	6,200	15	3,589	-.110	,697
	High-1WVs-Total	9,800	15	2,426		

Table 6.

*T-test Results (Frequency Level)*

		M	SD	t	df	p
Pair 1	Low-MWVs- Exp.Ans. & High-MWVs- Exp.Ans.	15,266	10,067	5,873	14	,000
Pair 2	Low-MWVs-Total & High-MWVs-Total	-5,466	4,470	-4,737	14	,000
Pair 3	Low-1WVs-Synonym & High-1WVs-Synonym	-12,666	15,637	-3,137	14	,007
Pair 4	Low-1WVs-Total & High-1WVs-Total	-3,600	4,548	-3,066	14	,008

The total number of verbs in multiple choice test was 1680 (112 participants x 15 test items) for high-frequent verbs and again 1680 (112 participants x 15 test items) for low-frequent verbs. In high-frequent verbs category, learners chose 918 MWVs (out of 1680) and 831 of them were correct answers, on the other hand; in low-frequent verbs category learners chose 767 MWVs (out of 1680) and 607 of them were correct. In high-frequent verbs category, learners chose 762 one-word verbs (out of 1680) and 669 answers were correct, however; in low-frequent verbs category learners chose 913 MWVs (out of 1680) and 766 of them were correct. According to the paired samples t-test results, there is a significant difference between these two frequency level verb groups in multiple choice test ( $t(14) = 5,873, p = 0.000, r = -, 426$ ). When analysed one-word verbs usage in different MWVs groups, it can be easily seen that there is also significant difference ( $t(14) = -4,737, p = 0.000, r = -, 406$ ) since L2 learners avoid using low-frequent MWVs and they use their one-word verbs equivalents. The statistic results of difference between usages of incorrect MWVs or one word verbs in terms of two groups are also significant ( $t(14) = -3,137, p = 0.007, r = -, 488$ ), ( $t(14) = -3,066, p = 0.008, r = -, 110$ ) respectively.

As seen in the statistical analysis, participants used high-frequent MWVs more common while they avoid using low-frequent MWVs. In other words, they shifted from low frequent MWVs to high frequent MWVs or one-word verbs. This result may be a support that language users tend to use more familiar or easier words to guarantee their vocabulary knowledge or language acquisition to prevent from language break-down. It can be easily understood that whether their proficiency levels are, they will prefer the verb ‘carry out’ (high-frequent MWV) to ‘build up’ (low-frequent MWV) or ‘increase’ (one-word equivalent).

### Discussion

The results of the present study reveal three main findings. To begin with the first research question, Turkish EFL learners avoided using MWVs to a greater extend. In this respect, the structural differences between two languages and the peculiarity of Germanic languages in terms of using MWVs (Dagut & Laufer, 1985) could be the source of avoidance behaviour. In contrast, Turkish language has nearly no similar structures to MWVs. Some one word items such as ‘küçümsemek (look down on)’ have the same meaning with MWVs in English. Unlike English, the particles in Turkish are inseparable from verbs generally. These verb-particle or verb-preposition combinations may be seen as complicated for especially Turkish learners of English. These findings support the idea that structural differences between two languages lead to avoidance of using unfamiliar structures such as MWVs (Dagut & Laufer, 1985; Laufer & Eliasson, 1993, Liao & Fukuya, 2004).

With respect to the second research question, the results point out that proficiency level had an effect on the preferences of learners in using MWVs. Namely, Turkish EFL learners in B1 level avoided using MWVs to a greater extent when they are compared with B2 level of learners. These findings are in line with Yildiz's (2015) and Kayael's (2007) arguments in their studies. The English learners in advanced level did not exhibit any avoidance behaviour in using MWVs in Kayael's study. Similarly, Yildiz (2015) also found that the English learners in intermediate and upper intermediate proficiency level avoid using phrasal verbs in his study and added proficiency level is the most distinct reason of avoiding behaviour. The results of the present study suggest that the more proficient the participants in the target language, the more they use the MWVs. The reason behind it might stem from the language use experiences of the more advanced language learners.

Finally, as regards to the third research question, the results also revealed that the frequency level of phrasal verbs play an important role in avoidance behaviour of learners. Even though, Turkish learners avoid low-frequent MWVs as a whole, they do not avoid using high frequent MWVs. The increasing frequency level of MWVs is one of the preliminary factors in appearance of avoidance behaviour. The statistically meaningful differences between high and low-frequent MWVs' usage support this implication.

### **Conclusion**

In this study, the main aim is to analyse the avoidance perspective of Turkish EFL learners in using multi-word English verbs. To see the effect of proficiency levels of learners and frequency levels of MWVs on avoidance behaviour are the other aims in the present study. In this study, the difficulty and avoidance process are particularly emphasized since the majority of the participants were not able to use effectively MWVs whether their proficiency level is high or not. In fact, a cross-linguistic difference between two languages (Turkish and English) is another influential factor on avoiding, misusing or disusing these verbs. The other factors (e.g. poor productive language usage, lack of language exposure or the complex nature of MWVs) which affect the avoidance of formulaic language are noted to study further. In conclusion, the present study highlights the differences between two languages syntactically and structurally, ignoring formulaic language and phrases in language teaching or learning and lack of language practice in or outside the classroom. In this research, there is an attempt to release the fact that Turkish EFL learners avoid using MWVs in general, instead of them, they tend to use one-word verbs. In this respect, the study focuses on the challenges of Turkish learners' lack of ability to use these verbs in practice. As can be seen from the results, avoidance in using these verbs is a way to overcome language difficulty. For language learners, formulaic language is one of the most difficult and complex aspects of language learning

process, thus; they even do not attempt to use it. Instead, they prefer using less complex and more understandable key terms.

It was revealed that MWVs are avoided to a greater extent by B1 level Turkish learners of English. The way of their preference in usage of one-word verbs more than B2 level learners showed the significant effect of proficiency level in avoidance behaviour. Another important consequence of this study is that in addition to the language levels of the participants, the frequency levels of the MWVs also affect the avoidance behaviour. The results of this study are expected to contribute to the growing research area on formulaic language teaching. Since formulaic language and lexical approaches are major components of language, this study will be likely a vital scope in Applied Linguistics area. In this perspective, teaching and learning MWVs, lexical phrases or collocations, may be seen as basic and principal elements in native-like language usage.

### **Suggestions**

In this study, a few teaching and learning implications can be emphasized in terms of language acquisition. The following suggestions put emphasis on teaching formulaic language units in English.

1. Since multi-word verbs have a complex character, their cognitive perspective, different meanings inside, semantic knowledge should be clarified with regard to Turkish learners of English.
2. MWVs should be taught in context and text linguistic aspects should be exemplified before teaching these verbs since contextualized verbs are supposed to be learnt easier and better.
3. Morphological awareness should not be ignored in language teaching process; because analysing the separation of MWVs will allow learners to identify them and use familiar patterns.

### **Limitations**

This research revealed some considerable findings for the avoidance effect of using multi-word verbs. On the other hand, there are some weaknesses and limitations that should be considered and analysed for future research. The main problem was that this study is limited to only one state university in Turkey. The avoidance behaviour gathered from the students may be different in another participant group in different level according to the curriculum or syllabus. The instrument was also limited to only one type of test. The 'avoidance' term was addressed in this study with reference to participants' responses to multiple-choice type questions. Their tendency to avoid these words might be different when they use the language. Finally, future studies should focus on

avoidance term and its analysis in language usage area with more detailed instruments including verbal interaction of the students or writing performance in the classroom, more systematically and effectively. This analysis will help researchers to see whether participants may perform better or worse in productive language skills.

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### Uzun Özet

İngilizce’de formüsel dil, öğretilmesi ve öğrenilmesi en zor alanlardan biridir. Formüsel dilin parçası olan öbeksi eylemler, ikinci dil öğretiminde, tartışmalı bir alan olarak karşımıza çıkmaktadır. Bu eylemlerin kullanımı, anadili İngilizce olan bireyler ve yüksek düzeyli ikinci dil konuşucuları açısından oldukça yaygındır. Bu açıdan, bu eylemler, İngilizce dili öğretiminin ilk basamağından itibaren öğrencilere öğretilmelidir. Özellikle, eylem+ilgeç yapısının neredeyse hiç yer almadığı Türkçe gibi dillerde, bu eylemlerin öğretimi büyük bir ustalık ve beceri gerektirmektedir. Bu nedenle, bu çalışmanın temel amacı, öbeksi eylemleri ve bu eylemlerin kullanımından kaçınma olgusunu tanımlamaktır. İngilizce öğrenmekte olan Türk öğrenciler, öbeksi eylemleri anlama konusunda sıklıkla güçlük çekmektedirler ve bunlardan kaçınmaya eğilimlidir. Bu çalışma, İngilizce öğrenmekte olan Türk öğrencilerinin yeterlik düzeyleri ve İngilizce öbeksi eylemlerin frekans düzeyleri ile ilgili kaçınma davranışlarını araştırmayı amaçlamaktadır. Bu çalışma, Türkiye’de bir devlet üniversitesinde Yabancı Diller Yüksekokulu'na kayıtlı 112 katılımcıyla gerçekleştirilmiştir. B1 düzeyinde 58, B2 düzeyinde 54 katılımcı çalışmaya dahil edilmiştir. Tüm katılımcılar çalışmaya gönüllü olarak katılmıştır. Katılımcıların İngilizce düzeyleri, dönem başında, Yabancı Diller Yüksekokulu tarafından uygulanan "Yeterlik ve Yerleştirme Testi" ile test edilmiştir. Türk katılımcıların İngilizce yeterlik düzeylerini belirlemek için, katılımcıların puanları Avrupa Dilleri Ortak Başvuru Metni bağlamında incelenmiştir. Bu testten alınan puanlar Öğrenci Seçme ve Yerleştirme Merkezi (OSYM) tarafından yapılan YDS puanına eşdeğerdir. Başka bir deyişle, 60-74'ün içinde skora sahip olan öğrenciler B1 düzeyi, 75-94'ün içinde skora sahip olan öğrenciler ise B2 düzeyi olarak değerlendirilmiştir. Yeterlik ve Yerleştirme Testi ile YDS arasında bire bir uyum olduğundan, katılımcıların düzeyi bu araştırmada B1 ve B2 olarak kabul edilmiştir. B1'ler Uluslararası İlişkiler bölümü öğrencileri, B2'ler Mütercim Tercümanlık bölümü öğrencilerinden oluşmaktadır. Çalışmanın başlangıcında, katılımcıların demografik bilgilerine ulaşmak amacıyla onlara Dil Deneyim Anketi sunulmuştur. Bu anket, katılımcıların yabancı dil öğrenmeye başlama yaşları ve bu dilde eğitim süresi gibi demografik bilgileri sağlamak amacıyla geliştirilmiştir. Bu anketin ikinci bölümünde, dört farklı beceri üzerine olan İngilizce düzeylerini öğrenmek amacıyla katılımcılara Likert ölçeğinde kendi kendini değerlendirme testi uygulanmıştır. Anketteki son iki soru, katılımcıların sözcük düzeylerinin üniversite dersleri için yeterli veya yetersiz olup olmadığını ve bir haftada sözcük bilgisini geliştirmek için okumaya kaç saat harcadıklarını öğrenmeyi amaçlamaktadır. Sonuçlara göre, öğrencilerin çoğu lisede en az 4 yıl,

üniversitede bir veya iki yarıyıl boyunca İngilizce eğitimi almıştır. Bir yabancı dili öğrenmeye başlama yaş ortalaması B2 için 9,36 ve B1 öğrencisi için 9,94'tür. Öte yandan, dört İngilizce becerileri (okuma, yazma, konuşma ve dinleme) için Likert ölçeğinde kendi kendine değerlendirme testi ("çok kötü" için 1 puan, "çok iyi" için 10 puan) sonuçları bulunmaktadır. Ayrıca, sonuçlara göre, C1 düzeyindeki öğrencilerin benlik puanlarının, B1 düzeyindeki öğrencilerden yüksek olduğu görülmüştür. Son bölümde, B2 grubu, sözcük bilgisinin üniversite dersleri için yeterli olduğunu, B1 grubu ise yeterli olmadığını belirtmiştir. Son olarak, sözcük bilgilerini geliştirmek amacıyla her iki grubun da haftalık okuma aktivitelerine harcadıkları zaman neredeyse aynıdır.

Bu çalışma bağlamında katılımcılara sunulan testte, otuz çift öbeksi eylemlerle ilgili soru kökleri bulunmaktadır ve onlardan boşluğa gelecek olan doğru seçeneği işaretlemeleri istenmiştir. Bu seçenekler, bir doğru cevap olan öbeksi eylem, bu öbeksi eylemle eşanlamlı olan tek sözcüklü eylem, bir çeldirici öbeksi eylem ve bu çeldirici öbeksi eylemle eşanlamlı olan tek sözcüklü eylemden oluşmaktadır. Eşleştirilmiş örneklem t-testlerinden elde edilen sonuçlar üç ana bulguyu ortaya koymaktadır. İlk araştırma sorusu ile başlamak gerekirse, İngilizce öğrenmekte olan Türk öğrenciler öbeksi eylemleri kullanmaktan kaçınmaktadırlar. Bu bağlamda, iki dil arasındaki yapısal farklılıklar bu kaçınma davranışının kaynağı olabilir. Bu öbeksi eylem parçacıkları özellikle Türk öğrenciler açısından karmaşık görülebilir. Bu bulgular, iki dil arasındaki yapısal farklılıkların öbeksi eylemler gibi yabancı yapıları tanımlayamama ve bu nedenle kullanımından kaçınma fikrini desteklemektedir (Dagut & Laufer, 1985; Laufer & Eliasson, 1993, Liao & Fukuya, 2004). Bu çalışmanın ikinci sonucu, B1 düzeyindeki öğrencilerin kaçınma davranışının, B2 düzeyindeki öğrencilere göre daha fazla olduğudur. İkinci araştırma sorusu ile ilgili sonuçlar, yeterlik düzeyinin öğrencilerin öbeksi eylemleri kullanma konusundaki tercihlerini etkilediğine işaret etmektedir. Bu bulgular, Yıldız (2015) ve Kayael'in (2007) çalışmalarındaki tartışmalar ile uyumlu görünmektedir. İleri düzeyde İngilizce bilgisine sahip öğrenciler, Kayael'in çalışmasında öbeksi eylemleri kullanmada herhangi bir kaçınma davranışı göstermemişlerdir. Benzer şekilde, Yıldız (2015), B1 ve B2 İngilizce yeterlik düzeyindeki öğrencilerin, öbeksi eylemleri kullanmaktan kaçındıklarını belirtmiştir. Bu çalışmanın sonuçlarına göre, yeterlilik düzeyleri arttıkça kaçınma davranışının azalması, yüksek düzeydeki dil öğrencilerinin dil kullanma deneyimlerinden kaynaklanıyor olabilir. Son olarak, üçüncü araştırma sorusu ile ilgili sonuçlar, öbeksi eylemlerin frekans seviyesinin öğrencilerin kaçınma davranışlarında önemli bir rol oynadığını ortaya koymuştur. Öbeksi eylemlerin artan frekans seviyesi, kaçınma davranışının azalmasını etkileyen başlıca faktörlerden biridir. Yüksek ve düşük sıklıktaki öbeksi eylemlerin kullanımı arasında çıkan istatistiksel olarak anlamlı farklar da bu etkiyi desteklemektedir. Özetle, dil öğrencilerinin yeterlilik düzeyi ve öbeksi eylemlerin frekans seviyesi arttıkça, bu eylemleri kullanmaktan kaçınma davranışları da azalmaktadır.

#### Appendix A.

##### *Multi-Word Verbs Multiple Choice Test*

1. Could you please tell me where you have difficulties in understanding before I \_\_\_\_\_ to the next part?

a. go on

b. continue

c. slow down

d. lose

2. The driver \_\_\_\_\_ speed immediately to catch the white car when he realized that the girl was kidnapped by someone.
- a. came up                      b. determined                      c. increased                      d. picked up
3. The murderers have no hope of \_\_\_\_\_ of prison because they are serial-killers.
- a. leaving                      b. turning over                      c. getting out                      d. detecting
4. After she had \_\_\_\_\_ she realized that someone had stolen all her jewellery.
- a. come in                      b. entered                      c. laid out                      d. explore
5. This math problem is more challenging than the other. It can take you some time to \_\_\_\_\_ it despite your efforts.
- a. hold on                      b. forget                      c. understand                      d. figure out
6. The detective doesn't know the truth yet, but soon he needs to \_\_\_\_\_ who did this to her.
- a. pay off                      b. discover sth.                      c. find out                      d. intend
7. She \_\_\_\_\_ out of her chair, put on her coat and left the office angrily.
- a. got back                      b. got up                      c. rose                      d. identified
8. Everything is getting more and more expensive, I don't think prices will \_\_\_\_\_ soon.
- a. go down                      b. end up                      c. invent                      d. decrease
9. We \_\_\_\_\_ the materials we used in the classroom and decided to change and revise them.
- a. reconsidered                      b. accepted                      c. looked back                      d. got out
10. This operation was \_\_\_\_\_ by a well-known doctor.
- a. come on                      b. recognized                      c. carried out                      d. performed
11. If you need more information about our language course you can \_\_\_\_\_ our website.
- a. examine                      b. understand                      c. check out                      d. stand up
12. It was announced that the plane \_\_\_\_\_ at 7a.m. and landed in Istanbul after 3 hours.
- a. destroyed                      b. flew                      c. came down                      d. took off
13. You need to take the urban train and \_\_\_\_\_ at the last stop.
- a. leave                      b. conceal                      c. get off                      d. open up
14. We are away from the war area, however; we could hear bombs \_\_\_\_\_ at a distance.
- a. putting down                      b. ignoring                      c. exploding                      d. going off
15. A black car \_\_\_\_\_ in front of the hotel and everyone was curious about the man inside it.
- a. lost                      b. stopped                      c. pulled up                      d. sent out
16. Every plan is \_\_\_\_\_ in detail in our final report of this project.
- a. made out                      b. laid out                      c. described                      d. neglected
17. They got married last year and after 6 months their marriage \_\_\_\_\_, nobody understood what happened.
- a. broke up                      b. ended                      c. described                      d. brought down
18. Please \_\_\_\_\_ for a minute, I'll get dressed and be ready in a short time.
- a. wait                      b. lay down                      c. determine                      d. hang on
19. "Survivor" is about to finish, there will be final competition today and the tension was \_\_\_\_\_ among competitors.
- a. rulling out                      b. selected                      c. building up                      d. increasing
20. You have found a perfect opportunity to get the job and it will be foolish to \_\_\_\_\_.
- a. establish                      b. fill out                      c. turn down                      d. refuse
21. In Turkey, many attempts were made at \_\_\_\_\_ state buildings for the last two years.
- a. blowing up                      b. exploding                      c. observing                      d. taking down

22. I do not want to retire from my job; I can \_\_\_\_\_ working for the next 5 years.  
a. sit back                      b. carry on                      c. continue                      d. introduce
23. You should immediately accept this job offer because such an opportunity \_\_\_\_\_ only once in a lifetime.  
a. follows                      b. appears                      c. comes off                      d. comes along
24. The last film of Russell Crowe was \_\_\_\_\_ all across the country.  
a. played out                      b. built                      c. happened                      d. given in
25. A fire \_\_\_\_\_ suddenly at home and the fire fighters tried to extinguish during 3 hours.  
a. started suddenly                      b. leaded                      c. broke out                      d. put in
26. This is your application form, sir. You need to \_\_\_\_\_ it and send it in by Friday to our company.  
a. set about                      b. propose                      c. complete                      d. fill out
27. The terrorists tried to \_\_\_\_\_ the official buildings last week however; they couldn't do it because of precautions taken from police.  
a. analyze                      b. take down                      c. destroy                      d. come around
28. Since the president has just come back from international meeting in Iraq, he \_\_\_\_\_ poorly in TV programme.  
a. got off                      b. appeared                      c. came off                      d. requested
29. She is about to \_\_\_\_\_ exercising because she says everyone seems much fitter than her.  
a. put off                      b. delay                      c. introduce                      d. take off
30. I was very surprised that he didn't \_\_\_\_\_ at the meeting.  
a. turn around                      b. show up                      c. attempt                      d. appear

## Appendix B.

*Multi-Word Verbs in Frequency Ranking Order*

<b>1. Go on</b>	51. Put out	101. Set off
<b>2. Pick up</b>	52. Look around	102. Keep on
3. Come back	53. Catch up	103. Run out
4. Come up	54. Go in	104. Make out
5. Go back	55. Break down	105. Shut up
<b>6. Find out</b>	<b>56. Get off</b>	106. Turn off
7. Come out	57. Keep up	107. Bring about
8. Go out	58. Put down	108. Step back
9. Point out	59. Reach out	109. Lay down
10. Grow up	<b>60. Go off</b>	110. Bring down
11. Set up	61. Cut off	111. Stand out
12. Turn out	62. Turn back	<b>112. Come along</b>
<b>13. Get out</b>	<b>63. Pull up</b>	<b>113. Play out</b>
<b>14. Come in</b>	64. Set out	<b>114. Break out</b>
15. Take on	65. Clean up	115. Go around
16. Give up	66. Shut down	116. Walk out
17. Make up	67. Turn over	117. Get through
18. End up	68. Slow down	118. Hold back
19. Get back	69. Wind up	119. Write down
20. Look up	70. Turn up	120. Move back
<b>21. Figure out</b>	71. Line up	<b>121. Fill out</b>
22. Sit down	72. Take back	122. Sit back

23. <b>Get up</b>	73. <b>Lay out</b>	123. Rule out
24. Take out	74. Go over	124. Move up
25. Come on	75. Hang up	125. Pick out
26. <b>Go down</b>	76. Go through	<b>126. Take down</b>
27. <b>Show up</b>	77. Hold on	127. Get on
28. <b>Take off</b>	78. Pay off	128. Give back
29. Work out	79. Hold out	129. Hand over
30. Stand up	<b>80. Break up</b>	130. Sum up
31. Come down	81. Bring out	131. Move out
32. Go ahead	82. Pull back	<b>132. Come off</b>
33. Go up	<b>83. Hang on</b>	133. Pass on
34. <b>Look back</b>	<b>84. Build up</b>	134. Take in
35. Wake up	85. Throw out	135. Set down
36. <b>Carry out</b>	86. Hang out	136. Sort out
37. Take over	87. Put on	137. Follow up
38. Hold up	88. Get down	138. Come through
39. Pull out	89. Come over	139. Settle down
40. Turn around	90. Move in	140. Come around
41. Take up	91. Start out	141. Fill in
42. Look down	92. Call out	142. Give out
43. Put up	93. Sit up	143. Give in
44. Bring back	<b>94. Turn down</b>	144. Go along
45. Bring up	95. Back up	145. Break off
46. Look out	96. Put back	<b>146. Put off</b>
47. Bring in	97. Send out	147. Come about
48. Open up	98. Get in	148. Close down
49. <b>Check out</b>	<b>99. Blow up</b>	149. Put in
50. Move on	<b>100. Carry on</b>	150. Set about

## Appendix C.

*Multi-Word Verbs and Equivalents*

MULTI-WORD VERBS	EQUIVALENTS	MULTI-WORD VERBS	EQUIVALENTS
go on	continue	lay out	describe
pick up	increase	break up	end
get out	leave	hang on	wait
come in	enter	build up	increase
figure out	understand	turn down	refuse
find out	discover	blow up	explode
get up	rise	carry on	continue
go down	decrease	come along	appear
look back	reconsider	play out	happen
carry out	perform	break out	start suddenly
check out	examine	fill out	complete
take off	fly	take down	destroy
get off	leave	come off	appear
go off	explode	put off	delay
pull up	stop	show up	appear