

## Chapter 2

# Linguistic Errors Across Languages: A Case Study of Turkish Students

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### **ABSTRACT**

*Pedagogically, the issue of linguistic errors in writing is highly significant. Therefore, this study aims at exploring the gender differences in committing linguistic errors by Turkish students in English and Arabic at Karabuk University in Turkey. The sampling included selecting purposefully 80 essays written in English and Arabic. The 40 English essays belong to 20 male and 20 female students from the Department of English Language and Literature at the university. Similarly, the 40 Arabic essays belong to 20 male and 20 female students from the Department of Arabic Language at the same university. The findings showed that male and female Turkish students are similar in using 'concord' with the highest frequencies of errors in English, but the frequency of using other errors is different. In contrast, male and female Turkish students are varied in the errors in Arabic. The findings also revealed that male and female Turkish students in both Arabic and English languages showed a similarity in the types of errors, namely substitution and omission as the most frequent ones.*

### **INTRODUCTION**

In the field of sociolinguistics, many studies have adopted Lakoff's (1973, 1975) study, which postulated that 'women's speech' is distinct from men. In recent decades, several studies have been conducted on the possible difference between males and females in cognitive abilities. (Siochrú, 2018; Stumpf, 1995; Wai, Cacchio, Putallaz, & Makel, 2010). On the one hand, some arguments of theorists have been against any meaningful linguistic differences related to gender (e.g., Bradley, 1981; Weatherall, 2002).

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## ***Linguistic Errors Across Languages***

This argument is supported by Hyde's (2005) gender similarities hypothesis (GSH), which claims that males and females "are similar on most, but not all, psychological variables. That is, men and women, as well as boys and girls, are more alike than they are different" (p. 581). This hypothesis implies that most gender differences are small. Although general consensus suggests no differences between males and females in the general intelligence (Halpern, 2000), specific cognitive abilities (Voyer, Voyer, & Bryden, 1995) as well as language (Miller & Halpern, 2014) clearly show the gender differences. In this regard, a growing body of literature has revealed differences between males and females in their writing abilities (Camarata & Woodcock, 2006; Reynolds, Scheiber, Hajovsky, Schwartz, & Kaufman, 2015; Scheiber, Reynolds, Hajovsky, & Kaufman, 2015). For example, in some studies, women's speech was characterized by a lack of assertion, but it contained hedges, qualifiers, intensifiers, and other linguistic means that mitigate the force of assertions and strong statements (Lakoff, 1975). However, based on Reilly, Neumann, and Andrews (2019) and Reynolds et al. (2015), limited studies have addressed the gender differences in writing skills. Therefore, by following the recommendation of Reilly, Neumann, and Andrews (2016; 2019) to identify the precise nature of gender differences in writing, this study aims at exploring the linguistic errors by male and female Turkish students in two foreign languages (English and Arabic).

The process of writing, as stated by Murray and Moore (2006), is not "a single, homogenous, linear achievement towards which you strive and at which you one day arrive" (p.5). Rather, writing is what individuals manifest of their learning journey and a progressive procedure that entails continuous development, improvement, reflection, and fulfilment of varied types with different processes and stages (Murray & Moore, 2006, p.5). In this regard, Hartley (2008) argues that writing is distinguished as "a hierarchically organized, goal-directed, problem-solving process" (p.10). This implies that writing is a complicated procedure (Hartley, 2008; Murray & Moore, 2006). In other words, the writing skill is the last skill acquired by native speakers since it implies having enough vocabulary and a good level of knowledge in grammar. Therefore, non-native speakers of English could be faced by challenges in writing at the different stages of learning and studying (Jomaa & Bidin, 2017).

In order to highlight these obstacles, studies have focused on the linguistic errors of writing in the second language. For instance, Erlangga, Suarnajaya, and Juniarta (2019) studied the types of errors as well as the causes of errors using a document analysis and interviews. The results showed five types of errors, namely omission, addition, misformation, misordering, and spelling due to carelessness (40.67%), first language interference (53.42%), and translation (5.91%). As for translation, the authors commented that the cause of error occurs when students translate their native language sentences (Indonesian sentences) into foreign language sentences (English) word by word. A similar finding related to the concept of formulating the structure originally in their mother tongue (Arabic) and writing it in English was found by Jomaa and Bidin (2017). Based on the findings of Erlangga, Suarnajaya, and Juniarta (2019), Omission occupied the first position, followed by Addition, Misformation, Misordering, and Spelling. In another context, Al-Shujairi and Tan (2017) explored the grammatical errors in the written discourse of 112 Iraqi high school students as well as conducted interviews. Corder's (1967) error analysis model and James's (1998) framework of grammatical errors were adopted for the analysis. Furthermore, Brown's (2000) taxonomy was adopted to classify the types of errors. The results showed that verb tenses, articles, and prepositions were the most challenging aspects. Moreover, Omission and Addition were the most frequent errors, whereby the intralanguage was found to be the dominant source of errors.

According to Brown (2000), the common causes of errors in writing can be divided into two categories, namely interlingual and intralingual. The interlingual errors occur when learners are still influenced by

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