İNGİLİZCE'Yİ YABANCI DİL OLARAK ÖĞRENENLERİN KALEM-KAĞIT VE BİLGİSAYAR ÖRNEKLERİNDE YAZMA NİTELİĞİ ÜZERİNDEKİ CİNSİYET ETKİSİ

Gender Effect on The Writing Quality of Pen-Paper and Computer Samples of EFL Learners

Selami Ayd›n

Bal›kesir Üniversitesi, Necatibey Eğitim Fakültesi, İngilizce Eğitimi Bölümü, Yrd. Doç. Dr.

ÖZ

Problem Durumu: Bir değişken olarak cinsiyetin, yabancı dil öğreniminde önemli bir araştırma ve tartışma alanı olmasının yam s›ra bilgisayar da yabanc› dilde yazma derslerinde kullan›lan yayg›n bir araç ve önemli bir araştırma konusudur. Yapılan çalışmalar, kız öğrencilerin bilgisayar ortamında yazmaya karşı olumsuz tutum sergilediklerini ve İngilizce öğrenenlerin bilgisayarda ürettikleri yazma örneklerinin nitelikleri üzerindeki cinsiyet etkisi konusunda uzlaşı ve yeterli bulgu olmadığını göstermektedir.

Araştırmanın Amacı: Bu araştırmada, İngilizce'yi yabancıl dil olarak öğrenenlerin sınıf ve bilgisayar ortam›nda ürettikleri yazma örneklerinin nitelikleri üzerindeki cinsiyet etkisinin bulunmas› amaçlanmıştır.

Yöntem: Yirmi kalem-kağıt ve 20 bilgisayar grubu öğrencisine ait yazma örnekleri, analitik puanlama yöntemi ile puanlandırılmış ve elde edilen puanların istatistik analizi yapılmıştır.

Bulgular ve Sonuçlar: Çalışma sonucunda, cinsiyetin; yazma örneklerindeki sözcük bilgisi, dil bilgisi, organizasyon, yarat›c›l›k, bütünlük, tutarl›l›k, uygunluk, ak›c›l›k, içerik ve dil kontrolü nitelikleri üzerinde anlamlı bir etkiye sahip olduğu, ancak noktalama ve imla üzerinde etkisinin olmadığı bulunmuştur.

Öneriler: İleride yapılacak olan araştırmaların bilgisayar kullanımında kız öğrencilerin taşıdıkları kaygı, ilgi ve tutumlar üzerinde yoğunlaştırılması önerilmektedir.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Cinsiyet, Bilgisayar, Yazma Nitelikleri, Yabancı Dil olarak İngilizce

ABSTRACT

Problem Statement: While gender as a variable is a significant research and discussion area in foreign language learning, computers are not only common tools in EFL writing classes but also a research subject in foreign language learning. Previous research indicates that female learners have negative attitudes on writing on computers and there have not been certain findings and consensus on gender effect on computerized writing samples of EFL learners.

Purpose: This research aimed to investigate the gender effect on writing quality of pen-paper and computerized samples of EFL learners.

Method: Writing samples of 20 pen-paper and 20 computer group students were scored analytically and analyzed statistically.

Findings and Results: It was found that gender had a significant effect on vocabulary, accuracy, organization, originality and creativity, unity and coherence, relevance, fluency, content, and language control of the samples produced on computer while it had no effect on mechanics of the computerized samples.

Recommendations: It is recommended that further research should focus on computer anxiety, interest, and attitudes of female EFL learners.

Key Words: Gender, Computer, Writing Quality, English as a Foreign Language

Yard. Doç. Dr. Bal›kesir Üniversitesi Necatibey Eğitim Fakültesi İngilizce Eğitimi Bölümü,

saydin@balikesir.edu.tr

INTRODUCTION

Factors that affect language learning are learner characteristics, learning process, social context, learning conditions, and learning outcomes (Conteh-Morgan, 2002). Learner characteristics cover a whole range of social, attitudinal, and personal aspects that include age, gender, previous and current educational experience, learners' proficiency levels in language, technology use, and motivation for learning. Gender as

a personal aspect is an issue with important theoretical and pedagogical implications in foreign language learning (Tercanlioglu, 2004), and an important area of investigation and discussion in L2 learning (Clark and Trafford, 1996). On the other hand, computer is not only a tool used widely in every field of life but also a subject to investigate in academic and educational life since 1970s (Zandvliet and Farragher, 1997). Thus, there has been an explosion interest in computer use in language teaching and learning (Warschauer and Healey, 1998). In sum, computers have become an accepted tool in writing classes, and research on computers and various aspects of the composing process has mushroomed in the last decade (Phinney, 1991).

The results of the studies on the effects of computers on writing quality, defined here in terms of compositions containing vocabulary use, accuracy, organization, originality, creativity, unity, coherence, relevance, mechanics, fluency, content and language control, are mixed and conflicting (Cochran-Smith, 1991; Hawisher, 1989). Hawisher"s (1989) study indicated that that students seemed to have positive attitudes toward writing, had fewer mechanical errors, and produced longer pieces on computer. In another research (King, Bimbaum, and Wageman, 1984), it was seen that the experimental group had significantly higher scores in organization, sentence completeness, and variety than the control group, but they did not make as great a gain as the control group in English grammar and usage improvement. According to the findings in Burley (1994)'s study, computer-composed texts were inferior to hand-composed texts in terms of focus and coherence. In addition, in some other studies (Daiute, 1985; Rhodes and Ives, 1991), there were not overall differences in quality between computer- and hand-composed texts. As a result, it can be said that computers have positive, negative, or neutral effects on writing quality, and there is not a consensus on the influence of computers on writing (Harrington, Shermis and Rollins, 2000). Additionally, little research has appeared on the effects of computers on the writing quality of the samples produced by EFL writers, and the level of research activity on computerized writing in foreign language has not come near the activity in first language writing. Few studies suggested that computer use seemed to have positive effects on foreign language writers' samples (Phinney, 1991).

Studies on gender effect on computer use show that males are more likely to enroll in software use, computer courses, and computer sciences than females (Grignon, 1993). In some other studies, it was found that females have negative attitudes toward computers (Whitely, 1997) while males have more positive attitudes toward computer and computer based instruction (Levin and Gordon, 1989), and are more confident and interested in computers (Siann, Macleod, Glissov, and Durndell, 1990). However, with respect to student demographics, only three studies gave sufficient information (Goldberg, Russell, and Cook, 2003). Limited studies showed

that gender differences exist with respect to computer access, with males having increased access to computers (Taylor,, Kirsch, Eignor, and Jamieson, J., 1999), and male examinees were less likely than female examinees to choose handwriting as the composition medium for their essays (Wolfe and Manola, 2005). However, Hawisher and Fortune (1989) did not find significant differences in writing improvement based on gender. As the review of literature suggests, two significant conclusions can be mentioned: First, male students have more positive attitudes than females on computer use. Second, there is no sufficient information on gender effect on the writing quality of foreign language learners* samples.

The following reasons guided this study:

1. Although many studies on the effect of computers on writing quality have been conducted, there is not a consensus today (Harrington, Shermis and Rollins, 2000). Additionally, little research has appeared on the use of computers with foreign language writers.
2. The studies on gender effect on the writing quality of computerized samples of EFL learners are not sufficient, and there is no certain data on gender effect on the pen-paper and computer versions of the writing samples ofTurkish students as FL learners.

The reasons mentioned above indicate that it is necessary to study gender effect on the writing quality pen-paper and computer samples ofTurkish writers as EFL learners. The study has one research question: What is gender effect on the writing quality of pen-paper and computer samples ofTurkish EFL writers?

1. METHOD

Sample group consisted of 40 second year students of English Language Teaching Department at Education Faculty of Atatürk University. The pen-paper group participants consisted of 13 females and 7 males. The mean of their age was 20.65.

In order to find the gender effect of writing samples of the participants, three instruments were used:

1. Keyboarding test: In order to assign time for the pre- and posttest administration in the computer group, a keyboarding test was administered. The results indicated that the males in the computer group typed more words and made more mistakes than the female writers did. However, it was not found a significant correlation between gender and mistakes.
2. Prior writing and computes exam scores: As the difference on writing ability and computer familiarity between the participants seemed significant variables, the final exam scores of writing and computer tests in the previous instruction were used as criteria to assign the groups of equal writing ability and computer familiarity. The scores showed that there is no significant

difference between the groups for both of writing and computer classes.

3. Pre- and posttests: Three topics from the TOEFL practice tests for the pre- and posttests were given to the participants in the pen-paper and computer groups. The findings on the word lengths of the pre- and posttest indicated that the computer group participants produced longer texts than the ones in the pen-paper group. In order to find pre- posttest and inter-rater reliability coefficients of the tests, Alpha (Cronbach), a model of internal consistency, was used. The inter-rater reliability coefficients were 0.88 for the pen-paper and 0.99 for computer group scores. In addition, the test-retest reliability coefficients were 0.61 for the pen-paper and 0.99 for computer group samples. Computer versions of the pre- and posttests were administered to the participants in the computer group in the computer laboratory. Similarly, pen-papers versions of the pretests and posttests were administered to the students in the pen-paper group the classroom environment The duration between the pre- and posttests was one week and the participants did not receive writing instruction during this time. After the administration, the pen-paper and printed computer versions of the tests were delivered to the scorers who were two professional English teachers. They scored the samples in analytic scoring according to a writing proficiency grading table that was ranged between 0 10 for each criterion without seeing the scores given by the other. The criteria for writing quality of the samples were vocabulary, accuracy (grammar and structure), organization, originality and creativity, unity and coherence, relevance, mechanics, fluency, content, and language control. Means, standard deviations of the scores and Pearson correlation coefficients were given for the groups. 2. DATA ANALYSIS

The statistical findings indicated that gender difference was not significant statistically for the pen paper students while gender was a factor that affected considerably vocabulary, accuracy, organization, originality, creativity, unity, coherence, relevance, fluency, content and language control of the samples produced on computer. The scores of male participants in the computer group were higher than those of the females. Means, standard deviations, and standard errors were presented in Table 1. In Table 2, the Pearson correlation coefficients were given. The values showed that gender was a significant factor that affected vocabulary, ($p<.05$), accuracy ($p=.05$), organization ($p<0.05$), originality and creativity ($p<0.05$), unity and coherence ($p<0.05$), relevance ($p<0.05$), fluency ($p<0.05$), content ($p<0.05$), and language control ($p=0.01$) while it had no effect on the mechanics of the samples ($p>.05$).

Table 1. Descriptives for the Writing Quality

		Pen-paper Group (N=20, Female=13, Male=7)			Computer Group (N=20, Female=15, Male=5)		
		Mean	Std. Dev.	Std. Er.	Mean	Std. Dev.	Std. Er.
Vocabulary	Female	5.46	1.20	.33	5.33	1.29	.33
	Male	6.14	1.07	.40	7.00	1.41	.63
Accuracy	Female	5.23	1.17	.32	5.20	1.15	.30
	Male	5.43	0.98	.37	6.40	0.89	.40
Organization	Female	5.38	1.19	.33	5.27	1.22	.32
	Male	6.14	1.07	.40	6.80	1.30	.58
Originality and Creativity	Female	5.23	1.36	.38	5.20	1.15	.30
	Male	6.00	1.00	.38	6.80	1.92	.86
Unity and Coherence	Female	5.62	1.33	.37	5.27	1.16	.30
	Male	5.86	1.07	.40	7.00	1.58	.71
Relevance	Female	5.69	1.32	.36	5.00	1.36	.35
	Male	6.29	0.95	.36	7.00	1.58	.71
Mechanics	Female	5.54	1.33	.37	5.47	1.51	.39
	Male	6.00	1.00	.38	7.00	1.73	.77
Fluency	Female	5.46	1.39	,39	5.27	1.33	.34
	Male	6.14	1.07	.40	7.40	1.82	.81
Content	Female	5.38	1.45	.40	5.00	1.41	.37
	Male	6.14	1.07	.40	6.80	1.92	.86
Language Control	Female	4.92	1.32	.37	5.00	1.07	.28
	Male	5.29	0.95	.36	6.80	1.30	.58

Table 2. Gender Effect on the Writing Quality

		Pen-paper Group (N=20)	Computer Group (N*20
Vocabulary	Pearson Co.	.28	.50-
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.23	.02
Accuracy	Pearson Co.	.09	.45-
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.71	.05
Organization	Pearson Co.	.31	.49'
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.18	.03
Originality and Creativity	Pearson Co.	.29	.47*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.21	.03
Unity and Coherence	Pearson Co.	.10	.53'
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.68	.02
Relevance	Pearson Co.	.24	.54-
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.31	.01
Mechanics	Pearson Co.	.19	.41
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.43	.07
Fluency	Pearson Co.	.26	.56'
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.28	.01
Content	Pearson Co.	.28	.47'
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.24	.04
Language Control	Pearson Co.	.15	.59"
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.53	.01
" Correlation is significant at the .05 level. ** Correlation is significant at the			

3.CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

The main result of the study was that gender had a significant effect on vocabulary, accuracy, organization, originality and creativity, unity and coherence, relevance, fluency, content and language control of the samples produced on computer while it had no effect on mechanics. In other words, female learners had lower scores than males in the computer group when the writing elements mentioned above were considered. To sum up, two considerable results were reached: First, gender was a significant variable that affected the writing quality of computer samples of EFL learners. Second, computer use had a negative effect on the writing quality of the female students' samples.

According to the related literature, attitudes towards computer use, confidence, and interest in computer, computer anxiety, and equality of computer access opportunities are significant factors that affect the writing quality of female EFL learners (Levin and Gordon, 1989; Whitely, 1997; Siann, Macleod, Glissov, and Durndell, 1990; Keogh, Barnes, Joiner, and Littleton, 2000). Thus, in order to lower the negative effects of the computer use on the writing samples of female learners, some considerable dispositions are required. First, female learners need to have equality of computer access opportunities. It is possible to say that the places for computer use such as school laboratories and internet cafes are male dominated environments in our society. Thus, computer ownership at homes seems a solution for female learners. However, this is related closely and directly to the economic conditions of individuals in our country. Second, in order to reduce computer anxiety, computer instruction should be widened at school in the aspects of years and hours a week. It is clear that computer familiarity and knowledge will increase the confidence and interest in computer use.

Finally, the study is limited to 40 EFL writers, free writing approach, the scale presented above, the TOEFL topics, and analytic scoring. Considering the study is limited to gender effect on the writing quality of the samples produced by EFL writers, further research should focus on the effects of attitudes toward computers, computer anxiety, confidence, and interest in computer on writing quality of FL writing.

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Selam› AYDIN

Selami Ayd›n (PhD, **2004,** Atatürk University, Erzurum, Turkey) is an assistant professor at English Language Teaching Department at Bal›kesir University. His research has mainly been in language testing, EFL writing, individual differences and technology in EFL learning. His articles have appeared in some national and international scientific journals.

Selami Ayd›n (Doktora, 2004, Atatürk Üniversitesi, Erzurum) Balıkesir Üniversitesi, Necatibey Eğitim Fakültesi, İngilizce Öğretmenliği Bölümünde yardımcı doçent olarak görev yapmaktadır. Araştırma konulan, İngilizce öğretiminde ölçme ve değerlendirme, yazma becerileri, dil öğreniminde bireysel farklılıklar ve teknoloji kullanımı üzerinde yoğunlaşmaktadır. Çalışmaları, bazı ulusal ve uluslararası bilimse dergilerde yayımlanmıştır.