



**Gender Differences in Errors in Compositions: Selected St. Mary's College
Students in Focus**

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Gender Differences in Errors in Compositions: Selected St. Mary's College Students in Focus

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Abstract

This study investigated gender differences in errors in compositions. To this end, twenty male and twenty female students were selected from St. Mary's College. A questionnaire was designed to control extraneous and other destructive variables. A standard proficiency test was also used to group the subjects in three different categories of their language ability i.e. high scorers, average scorers and low scorers. However, this study focused on average scorers only.

After selecting the subjects, two composition assignments were given to them. Each and every error was counted and analyzed statistically. From the preliminary investigation, it was found out that there was difference between male and female students regarding the mean scores of the first assignment of male and female composition errors. In the second assignment too, the mean scores were still different. The statistics also showed that male students made more errors than female students did. In line with the findings, it is recommended that teachers should know that female students compose with fewer error rates than male students do, and hence, try to adjust their approach in teaching compositions.

1. Introduction

It has been noted by many scholars that the teaching of language in general and English in particular can be influenced by a number of physical and/or psychological factors. In some instances, these factors might have potential effects that could affect learning negatively despite the practitioners' unreserved efforts. This is true by virtue of the fact that factors, namely gender, motivation, attitude, aptitudes, learning style, learning strategy, background knowledge, and personality, etc. of the learner might constrain the desired outcome.

Common sense holds that gender difference is inevitably reflected in different contexts of human experience irrespective of social status. One aspect of the reflection is academic performance, specifically in learning a language. There seems to be a general belief that female students are better in learning language as compared to their male counterparts. Female superiority in linguistic skills and male superiority in spatial skills have been satisfactorily proved (Waterson and Snow 1979). More specifically, “there is a widespread belief that girls are better at verbal skills than boys, learning them earlier and more quickly than boys” (Bardwick 1981:54).

This research attempted to examine differences in errors that male and female students make in their academic writing. The research will also try to compare and contrast the types of errors made

by female students with those of male students. Therefore, the specific objectives of the study are to:

1. determine if there is a difference in the degrees of male and female students' composition errors, and
2. compare and contrast the types of composition errors female students make with the type of errors male students make.

2. Review of Related Literature

2.1 Gender and Sex

For social and psychological researchers, "gender" has been used and referred to "sex" because it has to do with socially constructed individuals that are thought to be a vital factor that could ultimately determine or influence the way individuals do in various contexts. Thus, according to Archer and Llod (1985: 14), "gender refers to the characteristic traits and appropriate behavior for members of each sexual category." The term "sex" is restricted to cases where the distinction is made on the basis of biological criteria. A certain biological criterion is required when reference is made to domestic animals, newborn infants and Olympic athletes. However, when we are introduced to a stranger, certain manipulation of gender is reflected in a variety of bodily and behavioral cues because of which, men and women are usually distinguished in everyday life on the basis of social criteria. These social criteria stretch their adverse effect on creating sensible difference between the two genders in the development of attitude, self concept, self belief, and self confidence and most importantly in self-efficacy beliefs. Tiller (1995) for example posits that male generally showed strong self-efficacy expectations than female.

2.2 Gender and Language

2.2.1 Gender and Language Use

Do men and women who speak a particular language use it in different ways? This is the question on which sociolinguistics generates considerable amount of thoughts and discussion. Hence, to be on the safest side, they have used the word 'gender' to refer to socially constructed individuals which classifies members according to their biological specification of being either male or female. It is believed that it is not brains that make us act so different but it is the society and how we are encouraged to act that causes us to act differently (Wareing 1989).

Wardhaugh (1986) states that men and women have been reported to use languages differently. This has been verified by many scholars who have reached a consensus on the existence of a form of females' language. This implies that there are different ways female and male tend to make use of a particular language system. This is true because in most cases female students are said to make no use of certain words and phrases which men especially young men prefer to use among

them. Underlying this, Wareing (1989) states that women usually invent or produce euphemistic words and phrases.

This language use difference has been analyzed from two angles according to Deborah (1990). The first is that women's language reflects their subordinate position. However, this approach doesn't give room for the value and strength of any language use associated with women. This is to say, all the identified features are seen as markers of submission or as lack of assertion. On top of this, the forms identified as typical women's language are considered "weak" because women use them. This is a fallacy because Atkins (1980) witnesses that hesitation, hedging and other indications of self-doubt were not in fact typical of insecure or powerless speakers of either sex.

The second explanation of their language use difference rests on the idea that an important part of our socialization occurs in single sex peer groups and that male and female groups have different norms of communicative competence, boys being based on competition, girls on co-operation (Sheldon 1990). From the second approach, it is possible to deduce that women's language use is not necessarily viewed negatively as the product of powerlessness. In fact it shows the strength of women's language style and sense of social relation and responsibilities (Wareing 1989).

Therefore, language use differences of female and male seem to be documental in research findings carried out in different settings. There are also speculations as to why the differences come to exist though any such differences have not yet been conclusively pointed out. However, it is believed that their language use difference can be extended and reflected in their ability to compose. That is to say, differences in language use are also expected to be observed in their writing performance as well.

2.2.2 Gender Differences in Language Learning

Unlike language acquisition, language learning is a process of language development that takes place through experience and influence of the environment. This is to say, language learning is a conscious activity in which the learners are actively engaged. Mostly, it is carried out in a school setting in a strictly designed procedure in which teachers and students are the prime elements of the process.

Through the process, girls are said to have better performance than boys in many aspects of the language they are learning. According to Howkins (1981) girls do better than boys and have more positive attitudes towards foreign or second language learning. The fact is that in adolescence, girls mature earlier and tend to develop self-confidence and outward looking attitudes earlier than

boys (Ibid). Stewart (1973) also found out that girls were rated higher than boys in language development by teachers.

Language development encompasses the ability to compose or write in academic writing settings. Stewart's finding suggests that girls outperform male in the development of the ability to write with fewer error compositions. He has also noted that girls have better memory for sentences or words after age seven. Girls' verbal ability is positively correlated with reading and writing skills. It has also been observed that females demonstrate more positive attitudes towards language learning (Wright 1999). Gardner (1985) and Tsarna (1987) have found that girls had more positive attitude in learning language than boys. Having a positive attitude towards the language being learnt might make learners active, productive and creative in the course. Girls' positive attitude might facilitate learning and as a result it will enable them to be better in their language performance in general and in their composing error-free writing ability in particular. Clark and Trafford's (1995) qualitative data suggest that teachers of modern languages perceive girls as more motivated than boys because, as it is stated earlier, girls mature earlier than boys and are consequently more serious about their studies than boys. Being more serious in what they are learning, female can extend their ability, of care and caution, in their composition classes. Gender differences in academic motivation are routinely reported (Wigfield 1996). Generally speaking, as studies show girls outperform their male counterparts in mastering skills and sub skills of the target language.

2.2.3 Gender Differences in Language Learning Strategies

Language learning strategies have won scholars' attention since the late 1970 and of course understanding of them has enhanced the processes learners employ to develop their skills in second and /or foreign languages. According to Reiss (1985), during the past decades, the emphasis on foreign language research has shifted from the teacher to the learner, and educational research has identified a number of factors that account for some of the differences in how students learn.

A lot of attempt has been made to investigate learners' strategies though this has not yet been satisfactorily exploited. The inventory is said to be important for teachers because they will become aware that learners have varieties of strategies to learn different aspects of language skills. For example, no two individuals learn vocabulary of a language in the same way.

However, it seems difficult to understand whether strategies are or can be purposely and deliberately made and arranged by the learner. Thomson (1989) has confirmed that everyone who

has ever learned a language has had a strategy or rather a set of strategies. Besides, most language learners do not have explicit, consciously designed strategies.

These strategies have been technically dichotomized by different scholars differently according to their intuitive behaviors, namely metacognitive, affective, social, memory, cognitive and compensatory (Oxford 1989). According to Oxford, metacognitive strategies involve paying attention, self-evaluating, organizing learning and self- monitoring. Affective strategies include learners' restoring information and recalling it when needed by grouping, imagery and structured review. Lastly, learners overcome knowledge limitations through compensatory strategies by guessing meanings intelligently and using synonyms or other production tricks when the precise expression is unknown.

In line with gender, Oxford (1989) goes further and studies gender differences in language learning strategy use. She found out that girls showed more frequent use of strategies than boys. According to a number of studies (Politzer 1983, Oxford et al 1988, Ehrman and Oxford 1989, Oxford and Nyikos 1989 and others) significant gender differences almost always occurred in a single direction, showing greater use of language learning strategies by female.

Politzer (1983) has reported that female used social learning strategies significantly more than male. Similarly, Ehrman and Oxford (1989) have reported that female use significantly greater language learning strategies in four areas; namely, general study strategies, functional practice strategies, strategies for searching and communication meaning, and self- management strategies.

Oxford and Nyikos (1989) found similarly that, female learners used formal rule-related practice strategies, general study strategies and conversational input elicitation strategies more frequently than did male learners. Oxford et al (1993) also found girls showed a number of differences from boys in terms of motivation, achievement and frequency of strategy use on their study.

Generally speaking, employing learning strategies massively and frequently helps female students to grasp important and basic elements of the language being learnt as a result of which females perform language proficiently in general and in writing error-free compositions in particular than their male counterparts.

2.2.4 Gender Differences in Language Learning Styles

Generally speaking, the idea of learning styles is directly brought from psychology. It is agreed among scholars of the field that learning styles refer to the specific ways which individuals use to problem solving. Keefe (1979:36) defines learning styles as:

The cognitive, affective and psychological behaviours that serve as relatively stable indicators of how learners perceive, interact with and respond to the learning environment.

The definition implies that learning styles are individuals' or learners' natural, habitual and preferred way of learning.

Oxford (1990) asserts that male and female students might take different styles when learning a language with male tending to favor objective ways (rules, facts, logic) and female subjective ones (feelings, cultural sensitivity and empathy). Female are sensitive to social context and it is bounded by whatever exists around the situation (ibid). In line with this, Deborah (1990) also states that women may be more cooperative, less competitive and more sociolinguistically sensitive than men in the classroom. They may also be more interested in social and interpersonal aspects of the target culture. In general terms, female are said to be context-sensitive, less competitive and cooperative. This might help them to be careful and take a number of factors into account when they are expected to carry out tasks related to language learning such as writing composition.

2.2.5 Gender Differences in Writing Skill

Writing is the ability either to tell or retell pieces of information in the form of narratives or description, or to transform information into new text, either descriptively or argumentatively (Myles 2002). Needless to say, the ability to write is not a naturally acquired skill because it is usually learned through practice. Omaggio (1993) states that writing is best viewed as a continuum of activities that range from the more mechanical or formal aspects of writing down, on the one hand, to the more complex act of composing, on the other. Precisely speaking, writing is the act of composing, though it creates problems for students especially for those writing in a second language in academic context. This is true because according to Myles (2002) academic writing requires conscious effort and much practice in composing, developing and analyzing ideas. Formulating new ideas can be difficult because it involves transforming or reworking information, which is more complex than writing as telling. By putting together concepts and solving problems, the researcher engages in "a two-way interaction between continuously developing knowledge and continuously developing text," (Bereiler and Scandinavia 1987:12). Owing to this, it is reasonable to say academic writing requires conscious effort and practice in composing, developing and analyzing ideas.

Compared to students writing in their native language, however, students writing in their second language have to also acquire proficiency in the use of the language as well as writing strategies,

techniques and skills. Effective and appropriate strategic use is required together with a sound proficiency in the language. Second language writing is strategically, rhetorically, and linguistically different in many ways from first language writing (Silva 1993). Perceptibly, it is inherently possible to notice differences among individuals in their linguistic ability in general and strategic use for writing in particular. This is so because the ability to compose involves applying psychomotor and various skills in various extents. Myles (2002) also posits that it is incorrect to think individuals perform in the same way while students writing in a second language are faced with many social and cognitive challenges related to second language acquisition. Shen (1989) also emphasizes that language proficiency and competence underlies the ability to write in the second language in a fundamental way. Thus, it is inevitable to have individual differences among the learners in their ability to compose a certain text.

With regard to gender differences, a longitudinal research carried out shows that boys are better in mathematics and in physical sciences whereas girls were better in reading and more significantly in writing (Maccoby and Jackline 1984). This finding was supported by later reviews which used using more sophisticated meta-analyses techniques (Hyde and Linn 1986; Wilder and Powell 1986; Cleary 1992; Willingham and Cole 1997; Willingham and Cole 1997, and Nowell and Hedges 1998). In research findings of gender differences in educational achievement female scored higher than male in writing exercises (Willingham and Cole 1997). Their findings prove that females perform better than male in their ability to write. This might incapacitate them to compose a text in a less error context.

Researchers such as Frank and Valiante (2001) commonly observe that gender differences in motivation and self-belief operate when approaching specific subjects. This is so because differences largely depend on what particular academic disciplines are perceived by male and female students. Researchers notice strong self-belief in girls in language more than there is in boys. This self-belief might help them to perform in language learning more competently than their male counterparts. With regard to writing, research shows that there is a gender difference in motivation and self-beliefs. Wigfield *et al* (1991: 48) state that: "Girls are less anxious when facing writing tasks and have a strong perception of the value of writing, confidence in their ability to write, certainty of the reason they have for actually doing academic work and feeling of self-worth associated with writing." A strong motivation and a high self-belief might help female learners to produce an error-free composition as opposed to their male counterparts.

2.3 Errors and Sources of Errors

In every walk of life, we are willingly or unwillingly subject to making mistakes. Mistakes according to Corder (1973: 256) are not confined to language learners only. More significantly, "mistakes are failures to match the language to the situation." (260) The failures are caused from physiological and psychological or from imperfect knowledge of the linguistic norms of some group.

However, the term "error" tends to be reserved for willful or negligent breaks of a rule which is known, or ought to be known or is taught to be known by the offender (Ibid). That is to say, errors are not physical failures but the sign of an imperfect knowledge of the language codes. Therefore, it is reasonable to refer to errors because people vary in their knowledge of fundamental language rules. In a given study for example, male students made higher error rates than female students error rates (Chen 1996).

2.3.1 Social Factors

Exploration of social factors gives us some idea of why learners differ in rate of second language learning, in proficiency type (for instant, conversational ability versus writing ability), and in ultimate proficiency (Ellis 1994). Research based on direct and indirect measures generally shows that learners with positive attitude, motivation and concrete goals will have these attitudes reinforced if they experience success. In the same way, learners' negative attitudes may be strengthened by lack of success or failure (McGroarty 1996).

Learners' attitudes, motivations, and goals may explain why some second language writers perform better than others. Myles (2002) carried out a research for a long time in order to know whether the learners' enjoyed writing or not. He found that about 92 percent of female students preferred and enjoyed writing in English. If learners perceive writing tasks to be useless, they may approach them in a careless manner, and consequently, it is likely that they will be inattentive to errors (Carson 2001).

2.3.2 Cognitive Factors

According to Myles (2002), academic writing is believed to be cognitively complex. According to cognitive theory, communication, orally or in writing, is an active process of skill development and a gradual elimination of errors as the learners internalize the language.

One model that applies to both speaking and writing in a second language is Anderson's (1985) model of language production, which can be divided into three stages; namely construction, in which the writer plans what he/she is going to write; transformation, in which language rules are applied; and execution which corresponds to the physical process of producing the text.

In the course of the process, language transfer is an important cognitive factor related to writing error (Macloughlin 1988). This is likely because language learners sometimes use their native language when generating ideas.

3. Research Methodology

3.1 The Study Subjects

The subjects of the study were selected from St. Mary's College, a privately owned college in Addis Ababa. The subjects were selected and grouped into three different proficiency levels after they were given a proficiency test. These were identified as high scorers, average scorers and low scorers. However, before they were given the proficiency test, some of the intervening variables namely the subjects' background, social status and their age were controlled. Here, statistics was employed to draw lines between each group. This attempt of making a demarcation between the three types of scorers helped the researcher to ensure that the subjects had similar levels of proficiency. However, for the sake of proper handling, only the average scorers were taken for the study. The number of the subjects was forty, twenty each from both genders.

3.2 Instruments

A questionnaire was administered prior to any kind of instrument in order to select subjects whose age, background-learning experience, social status are relatively similar. Secondly, the researcher examined the subjects' recorded grades in order to be certain about the selected subjects. Thirdly, a carefully designed test whose reliability coefficient is 0.82 was used in order to group the selected subjects according to their scores namely, high scores, average scores and low scores from both gender respectively. Lastly, the researcher used non-gender biased writing tasks from which errors of the subjects were selected for major analysis of the research. Their composition errors were analyzed quantitatively in line with the types of errors they made.

3.3 Data Collection Techniques

After selecting the subjects, the researcher gave them gender-free topics for their level to do at different times. Two different writing assignments were given, which were to be finished in no time gap. Each and every error was classified statistically across the assignments because the means of the two sexes were of great help to indicate the t-test value for independent samples. Again this was done for the two assignments separately. The t-test was made to determine if there was a statistically significant difference between the errors of the two sexes in both assignments.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Results of the Study

As it has been stated in the earlier section, the data were made ready for analysis taking the average scorers of the subjects who were given a Language Proficiency test after they had been filtered from the population. The high scorers and the low scorers were not included in the study to control extraneous considerations.

The selected subjects were given two composition assignments. The first assignment was given to the selected subjects to write on "Advantages of wearing school uniform". After the first assignment was given, the students were assigned to write on "problems of college students." The errors of each assignment were counted and analyzed statistically. Below are the findings.

Table 1: Assignment One: Mean Scores of Male and Female Students' Errors

<i>Sex of Students</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Std. Deviation</i>	<i>Std. Error Mean</i>
Male	213.8500	20	78.6527	17.5873
Female	160.7000	20	46.5155	10.4012

Table 2: Assignment Two: Mean Scores of Male and Female Students' Errors

<i>Sex of Students</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Std. Deviation</i>	<i>Std. Error Mean</i>
Male	202.2500	20	57.5489	12.8683
Female	125.0500	20	36.4034	8.1400

Table 3: Results of the Paired T-test for Error Scores of the First Assignment

<i>Mean Error Paired Differences</i>	<i>Std. Deviation</i>	<i>Std. Error Mean</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>Sig. (2-tailed)</i>
53.1500	50.7577	11.3498	4.683	19	0.000

Table 4: Results of the Paired T- test for the Scores of the Second Assignment

<i>Mean Error Differences</i>	<i>Std. Deviation</i>	<i>Std. Error Mean</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>Sig. (2-tailed)</i>
77.2000	47.1287	10.5383	7.326	19	0.000

As can be seen from the tables, there is a significant difference between the mean of error rates of female and male students. The tables show that female made fewer errors than their male counterparts in all the three assignments. In the first assignment the t-test value is 4.683, which is significant at 1% level. The second assignment is also found to be significant at 1% level with a t-value of 7.326. The t-test value of the three assignments ascertains that female students consistently had lower error rates than their male counterparts.

Furthermore, an attempt was made to compare the error types within each assignment. About twenty error types were identified. Each error type was calculated and the mean scores of female students were less than the mean scores of male students. However, only three error types were significant.

Table 5 below shows that there is a significant difference between female and male students' error types. Errors on capitalization, punctuation and conjunction were significant. Table 6 shows that these error types were made by male students because the mean scores of male students exceed the mean scores of female student's errors with regard to the three significant error types.

Table 5: Assignment One: Comparison of Mean Difference on the Types of Errors

<i>Types of Errors</i>	<i>Sum of Squares</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>Mean Square</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
Article Errors	5.625	1	5.625	0.355	.555
Capitalization errors	372.100	1	372.100	12.880	0.001
Punctuation errors	44.100	1	44.100	1.622	0.211
Spelling error	144.900	1	144.900	2.500	0.122
Double negative errors	36.100	1	36.100	1.397	0.245
Adjective error	5.625	1	5.625	0.235	0.631
Adverb error	20.225	1	20.225	0.899	0.349
Infinitive errors	46.225	1	46.225	2.738	0.106
Comparison error	19.600	1	19.600	1.022	0.318
Conjunction error	65.025	1	65.025	4.942	0.032
Possessive form error	67.600	1	67.600	3.987	0.053
Agreement error	62.500	1	62.500	2.934	0.095
Pronoun error	38.025	1	38.025	1.784	0.190
Relative pronoun error	21.025	1	21.025	0.911	0.346
Run on error	286.225	1	286.225	1.789	0.189
Verb form error	24.025	1	24.025	1.548	0.221
Present participle error	30.625	1	30.625	1.229	0.275
Past participle error	141.000	1	141.000	4.398	0.343
Preposition error	62.400	1	62.400	5.031	0.631
Incomplete error	55.225	1	55.225	2.759	0.105

Table 6: Assignment One: Mean Difference between Female and Male Students Error Types

<i>Types f Errors</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Std. Deviation</i>	<i>Std. Error</i>	<i>95% Confidence</i>	<i>Minimum</i>	<i>Maximum</i>
Article Errors	male	20	8.0000	4.3407	.9706	5.9685	.00	16.00
	female	20	7.2500	3.5818	.8009	5.5737	1.00	14.00
	Total	40	7.6250	3.9464	.6240	6.3629	.00	16.00
Capitalization error	male	20	12.0000	6.3412	1.4179	9.0322	.00	21.00
	female	20	5.9000	4.1915	.9372	3.9383	.00	12.00
	Total	40	8.9500	6.1392	.9707	6.9866	.00	21.00
Punctuation error	male	20	10.9000	5.2506	1.1741	8.4427	.00	21.00
	female	20	8.8000	5.1769	1.1576	6.3771	1.00	16.00
	Total	40	9.8500	5.2553	.8309	8.1693	.00	21.00
Spelling error	male	20	17.6500	29.8774	6.6808	3.6669	4.00	143.00
	female	20	6.9500	4.8065	1.0748	4.7005	.00	15.00
	Total	40	12.3000	21.8059	3.4478	5.3261	.00	143.00
Double negative	male	20	7.9500	5.2161	1.1664	5.5088	2.00	18.00
	female	20	6.0500	4.9468	1.1061	3.7348	.00	15.00
	Total	40	7.0000	5.1091	.8078	5.3660	.00	18.00
Adjective error	male	20	8.4000	4.8057	1.0746	6.1509	1.00	18.00
	female	20	7.6500	4.9765	1.1128	5.3209	.00	18.00
	Total	40	8.0250	4.8436	.7658	6.4759	.00	18.00
Adverb error	male	20	48.6000	5.4907	1.2277	6.0303	.00	19.00
	female	20	61.2500	248.286	55.5186	54.9519	.00	1116.0
	Total	40	34.9250	175.385	27.7301	21.1644	.00	1116.0
Infinitive error	male	20	7.2500	4.2658	.9539	5.2535	.00	15.00
	female	20	5.1000	3.9457	.8823	3.2534	1.00	15.00
	Total	40	6.1750	4.1994	.6640	4.8320	.00	15.00
Comparison error	male	20	6.5000	4.8828	1.0918	4.2148	.00	18.00
	female	20	5.1000	3.8100	.8519	3.3169	.00	12.00
	Total	40	5.8000	4.3806	.6926	4.3990	.00	18.00
Conjunction error	male	20	7.2500	3.5522	.7943	5.5875	.00	13.00
	female	20	4.7000	3.7006	.8275	2.9680	.00	13.00
	Total	40	5.9750	3.8061	.6018	4.7577	.00	13.00
Possessive form	male	20	7.7500	4.3755	.9784	5.7022	.00	16.00
	female	20	5.1500	3.8426	.8592	3.3516	.00	12.00
	Total	40	6.4500	4.2725	.6755	5.0836	.00	16.00
Agreement error	male	20	9.8000	4.6971	1.0503	7.6017	2.00	19.00
	female	20	7.3000	4.5318	1.0133	5.1791	.00	16.00
	Total	40	8.5500	4.7283	.7476	7.0378	.00	19.00
Pronoun error	male	20	8.5000	5.1145	1.1436	6.1064	.00	18.00
	female	20	6.5500	4.0585	.9075	4.6506	1.00	13.00
	Total	40	7.5250	4.6629	.7373	6.0337	.00	18.00
Relative pronoun	male	20	7.3000	4.7473	1.0615	5.0782	.00	16.00
	female	20	5.8500	4.8588	1.0865	3.5760	.00	16.00
	Total	40	6.5750	4.7979	.7586	5.0406	.00	16.00
Run-on error	male	20	10.8000	16.8323	3.7638	2.9222	.00	78.00
	female	20	5.4500	6.0478	1.3523	2.6195	.00	19.00
	Total	40	8.1250	12.7745	2.0198	4.0395	.00	78.00
Verb form error	male	20	8.3000	4.1814	.9350	6.3430	2.00	16.00
	female	20	6.7500	3.6832	.8236	5.0262	1.00	13.00
	Total	40	7.5250	3.9677	.6274	6.2561	1.00	16.00
Present participle	male	20	8.2500	4.7337	1.0585	6.0346	.00	17.00
	female	20	6.5000	5.2365	1.1709	4.0492	.00	19.00
	Total	40	7.3750	5.0061	.7915	5.7740	.00	19.00
Past participle error	male	20	8.1000	5.1083	1.1423	5.7092	3.00	19.00
	female	20	5.1000	3.8512	.8611	3.2976	.00	13.00
	Total	40	6.6000	4.7166	.7458	5.0916	.00	19.00
Preposition error	male	20	9.1500	4.9553	1.1080	6.8308	.00	18.00
	female	20	5.9500	4.0194	.8988	4.0689	.00	15.00
	Total	40	7.5500	4.7391	.7493	6.0344	.00	18.00
Incomplete error	male	20	9.3500	4.7047	1.0520	7.1481	.00	17.00
	female	20	7.0000	4.2302	.9459	5.0202	1.00	16.00
	Total	40	8.1750	4.5735	.7231	6.7123	.00	17.00

The table in the previous page illustrates that unlike other error types, the two error types namely errors on capitalization and errors on conjunction were made by male students. Table 7 shows the mean difference of the error scores. But for these error types, the rest of the error types weren't significant despite their differences. In the second assignment, similar error types were observed significantly. However, further error types were also found significant in the second assignment. These error types were preposition errors and past participle errors.

Table 7: Assignment two: Comparison of Mean on the Error Types

<i>Error Types</i>	<i>Sum of Squares</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>Mean Square</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
Article Errors	.400	1	.400	.034	.855
Capitalization error	65.025	1	65.025	8.845	.005
Punctuation errors	44.100	1	44.100	1.622	.211
Spelling error	1144.900	1	1144.900	2.500	.122
Double negative errors	36.100	1	36.100	1.397	.245
Adjective error	5.625	1	5.625	.235	.631
Adverb error	20.225	1	20.225	.899	.349
Infinitive error	46.225	1	46.225	2.738	.106
Comparison error	19.600	1	19.600	1.022	.318
Conjunction error	65.025	1	65.025	4.942	.032
Possessive form error	67.600	1	67.600	3.987	.053
Agreement error	62.500	1	62.500	2.934	.095
Pronoun error	38.025	1	38.025	1.784	.190
Relative pronoun error	21.025	1	21.025	.911	.346
Run-on error	286.225	1	286.225	1.789	.189
Verb form error	24.025	1	24.025	1.548	.221
Present participle error	30.625	1	30.625	1.229	.275
Past participle error	90.000	1	90.000	4.398	.043
Preposition error	102.400	1	102.400	5.031	.031
Incomplete error	55.225	1	55.225	2.759	.105

The above table shows not only the error types found significant in the first assignment but also other error types. Errors of preposition and past participle were found to be significant in the second assignment. All error types found significant in the second assignment were made by male students as it is shown on Table 8.

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Table8: Mean Difference on the Types of Errors for Assignment Two

<i>Types of Errors</i>	<i>Sex</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Std. Deviation</i>	<i>Std. Error</i>	<i>95% Confidence Interval</i>	<i>Minimum</i>	<i>Maximum</i>
Article Errors	Male	20	10.7500	4.3875	.9811	8.6966	2.00	18.00
	Female	20	10.5500	2.0894	.4672	9.5721	6.00	14.00
	Total	40	10.6500	3.3934	.5365	9.5647	2.00	18.00
Capitalization errors	Male	20	14.4000	3.4550	.7726	12.7830	9.00	21.00
	Female	20	11.8500	1.6631	.3719	11.0717	9.00	15.00
	Total	40	13.1250	2.9716	.4698	12.1747	9.00	21.00
Punctuation errors	Male	20	10.9000	5.2506	1.1741	8.4427	.00	21.00
	Female	20	8.8000	5.1769	1.1576	6.3771	1.00	16.00
	Total	40	9.8500	5.2553	.8309	8.1693	.00	21.00
Spelling error	Male	20	17.6500	29.8774	6.6808	3.6669	4.00	143.00
	Female	20	6.9500	4.8065	1.0748	4.7005	.00	15.00
	Total	40	12.3000	21.8059	3.4478	5.3261	.00	143.00
Double negative errors	Male	20	7.9500	5.2161	1.1664	5.5088	2.00	18.00
	Female	20	6.0500	4.9468	1.1061	3.7348	.00	15.00
	Total	40	7.0000	5.1091	.8078	5.3660	.00	18.00
Adjective error	Male	20	8.4000	4.8057	1.0746	6.1509	1.00	18.00
	Female	20	7.6500	4.9765	1.1128	5.3209	.00	18.00
	Total	40	8.0250	4.8436	.7658	6.4759	.00	18.00
Adverb error	Male	20	8.6000	5.4907	1.2277	6.0303	.00	19.00
	Female	20	61.2500	248.2869	55.5186	-54.9519	.00	1116.00
	Total	40	34.9250	175.3805	27.7301	-21.1644	.00	1116.00
Infinitive error	Male	20	7.2500	4.2658	.9539	5.2535	.00	15.00
	Female	20	5.1000	3.9457	.8823	3.2534	1.00	15.00
	Total	40	6.1750	4.1994	.6640	4.8320	.00	15.00
Comparison error	Male	20	6.5000	4.8828	1.0918	4.2148	.00	18.00
	Female	20	5.1000	3.8100	.8519	3.3169	.00	12.00
	Total	40	5.8000	4.3806	.6926	4.3990	.00	18.00
Conjunction error	Male	20	7.2500	3.5522	.7943	5.5875	.00	13.00
	Female	20	4.7000	3.7006	.8275	2.9680	.00	13.00
	Total	40	5.9750	3.8061	.6018	4.7577	.00	13.00
Possessive form error	Male	20	7.7500	4.3755	.9784	5.7022	.00	16.00
	female	20	5.1500	3.8426	.8592	3.3516	.00	12.00
	Total	40	6.4500	4.2725	.6755	5.0836	.00	16.00
Agreement error	male	20	9.8000	4.6971	1.0503	7.6017	2.00	19.00
	female	20	7.3000	4.5318	1.0133	5.1791	.00	16.00
	Total	40	8.5500	4.7283	.7476	7.0378	.00	19.00
Pronoun error	male	20	8.5000	5.1145	1.1436	6.1064	.00	18.00
	Female	20	6.5500	4.0585	.9075	4.6506	1.00	13.00
	Total	40	7.5250	4.6629	.7373	6.0337	.00	18.00
Relative pronoun error	Male	20	7.3000	4.7473	1.0615	5.0782	.00	16.00
	Female	20	5.8500	4.8588	1.0865	3.5760	.00	16.00
	Total	40	6.5750	4.7979	.7586	5.0406	.00	16.00
Run on error	Male	20	10.8000	16.8323	3.7638	2.9222	.00	78.00
	Female	20	5.4500	6.0478	1.3523	2.6195	.00	19.00
	Total	40	8.1250	12.7745	2.0198	4.0395	.00	78.00
Verb form error	Male	20	8.3000	4.1814	.9350	6.3430	2.00	16.00
	Female	20	6.7500	3.6832	.8236	5.0262	1.00	13.00
	Total	40	7.5250	3.9677	.6274	6.2561	1.00	16.00
Present participle error	Male	20	8.2500	4.7337	1.0585	6.0346	.00	17.00
	Female	20	6.5000	5.2365	1.1709	4.0492	.00	19.00
	Total	40	7.3750	5.0061	.7915	5.7740	.00	19.00
Past participle error	Male	20	8.1000	5.1083	1.1423	5.7092	3.00	19.00
	Female	20	5.1000	3.8512	.8611	3.2976	.00	13.00
	Total	40	6.6000	4.7166	.7458	5.0916	.00	19.00
Preposition error	Male	20	9.1500	4.9553	1.1080	6.8308	.00	18.00
	Female	20	5.9500	4.0194	.8988	4.0689	.00	15.00
	Total	40	7.5500	4.7391	.7493	6.0344	.00	18.00
Incomplete error	Male	20	9.3500	4.7047	1.0520	7.1481	.00	17.00
	Female	20	7.0000	4.2302	.9459	5.0202	1.00	16.00
	Total	40	8.1750	4.5735	.7231	6.7123	.00	17.00

As it is shown in the above table, about four error types were found to be significant. The mean scores of these error types prove that male students made composition errors more than female students.

4.2 Discussion of the Results

The results show that female students make less error than their male counterparts across the two assignments. It also has come up with findings that support the hypothesis which states that female students are believed to be endowed with a potential to learn language faster than male students.

The results suggested that female students are better in performing writing tasks than male students. Researchers agree that female students learn language faster than their male counterparts. Pajaras and Valiante (2001) and Howkins (1981) also posit that female students do better than boys and have more positive attitudes towards foreign or second language learning. As it is known, language learning encompasses the ability to compose or write in academic writing settings. That the female students wrote with fewer errors than the male is consistent with theories and research in the area. For example, Maccoby and Jacklin (1984) found out in a longitudinal research that female students were better in reading and more significantly in writing indicating that they had fewer writing errors.

Girls seem to make fewer errors than male students may be because of their learning strategies. According to Oxford (1989), female showed more frequent use of strategies than boys. Thus, employing language-learning strategies might have helped female students to write compositions more competently than male students. Furthermore female make less error rates than their male counterparts may be because their learning styles are more effective than the styles male students employ. Thus, female students were found to be more cooperative, less competitive and more socioinguistically sensitive than male counterparts. Female students being cooperative and less competitive might have helped them to concentrate on important elements of the target language and consequently perform better in different language related tasks such as composition.

Regarding different error types, errors on capitalization and conjunction were observed significantly across the two assignments. Despite the fact that the textbooks in different levels have provided the learners with topics that emphasize appropriate uses of capitalization, and conjunction. They were consistently observed in both assignments because they were not satisfactorily internalized. Surprisingly, these error types were made more by male students. Though research is recommended, male students might not give appropriate focus to it or they might underestimate them. Very likely, the male students might have assumed that they have had enough input concerning these language elements.

It is, therefore, recommended that language teachers must adjust or revise their approach in teaching compositions at different levels. Besides, they should give credit when credit is due.

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