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# How Definite Are The Male And Female Writers?: A Corpus Based Study On The Definite And Indefinite Article Use

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### Abstract

The study was aimed to describe the use of the definite and indefinite articles in the PhD dissertations of the male writers (MWs) of English and the female writers (FWs) of English. This corpus based study was limited to identifying the use of articles in the PhD dissertations written by the male writers (MWs) and the female writers (FWs) in Applied Linguistics in the scope of ELT; between the years of 2010-2019. It was also be limited to the abstract and the conclusion sections of the PhD dissertations regarding the both genders' writing procedures of their PhD dissertations. Furthermore, it was focused on dissertations of 50 MWs and 50 FWs that published in American Universities. In this study, with the help of the Key Word in Context (KWIC) Concordance programme, the use of articles was analyzed according to their frequency per 1,000 words. Besides the frequency analysis, log-likelihood (LL) calculation was also used as a statistical analysis. At the end of the study, it was found out that the LL frequency of the articles indicated an underuse in the two sections for the Ph.D. dissertations of the male writers (MWs) of English and the female writers (FWs) of English, and there was a significant difference in the frequency of the definite and indefinite articles between the dissertations of the MWs of English and the FWs of English. These findings have some implications for researchers, academic writing that can guide scholars in terms of the relationship between gender and language use.

**Keywords:** corpus; gender; articles; dissertation; academic writing

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## 1. Introduction

The language acts as a mirror that reflects the world and people, embodying the whole network of feelings, thoughts and information. Correspondingly, the critical substantiality of language learning is originated from comprehending the world. Therefore, Cenoz (2019) points out that language teaching has an pedagogical significance regarding communication competence in global settings. In this regard, Lai, Rácz and Roberts (2020) state that social variables have an extensive role in language learning and

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use. Consequently, language use in a social context was the main focus of this research in order to provide insights into the language learning, use and academic writing process. The age, ethnicity, social class and gender was some social variables that led scholars to shifted their paradigms in the field of Applied Linguistics considering English Language Teaching to match the new sociolinguistic landscape of the 21st century.

Lakoff (1973) examined the language use in the scope of the gender, the study suggests that the language of the male and female speakers were different regarding grammar and lexicon. From the study of Lakoff to Zarrinabadi et. al. (2021) it could be implied that gender comprised the personality, identity, and culture of the language learners; and it was considered as a variable that effect language use process in terms of word choice and contextual construction of the writing. Fundamentally, gender was examined as a sociolinguistic variable with the intention of analyzing the difference in use of grammar in academic writing between the male and female writers of English.

Arifin and Farida (2020) state that grammar is important to write cohesively. Thus, the definite and indefinite articles were considerably crucial to write the definiteness dimension of a statement or description. On the other hand, the study of Aoyama and Takahashi (2020) reported that the native and non native writers of English language experienced a difficulty to use articles properly in their writings. Moreover, Browne (1994) states that male writers were less successful than female writers in writing. Jones and Myhill (2007) also supported this study by examining male and female writers' success profile in writing. They stated that female writers used less complexly when male writers used more details than female writers. Ishikawa (2015) described male and female writers' some certain differences in terms of selecting variety of grammatical patterns. Ultimately, this research was conducted in the scope of definite (the) and indefinite articles (a, an) in doctoral dissertations, as a written product of both male and female writers.

Corpus Linguistics (CL) was the methodological base of the study with the frequency analysis, and the authenticity oriented research in gender. According to the definition of Kennedy, (2014) corpus linguistics is the computational analysis of naturally occurred language data. In this context, the definite article and indefinite articles use were analyzed in a corpus based methodology; since corpus based study was expected to provide o native English writers' products that include insights about real life use of a grammatical system. The gender variable was also expected to be provided the authenticity of the article use in terms of social reflection of a formal and predetermined writing.

The first limitation of this analysis was to the use of the definite (the) and indefinite (a, an) articles in the scope of ELT between the years 2010 and 2019. ELT topic was expected to be inspired to the Applied Linguistics (such as classroom based research assessment and evaluation, material and curriculum design, and so on). The second limitation was the material that used in the study. The PhD dissertations were selected, because PhD dissertations provided writers to be goal-oriented academic writing that demonstration the definiteness of their statements; and dissertations contain enough data to have more pages than other academic texts. Since America is considered more multicultural by comparison with the other countries, and because American writers have probably have more valid gender role profile considering cultural diversity, the dissertations analyzed in this study were limited to American universities.

### **1.1. Literature review**

There are myriad of relevant scientific research that empowered the perspective of corpus linguistics, gender studies, grammatical analyzes, academic writing and so on. The information were expected to be provided sufficient insights into the functions of corpus which is called crucial research tool, the potential role of gender in use of grammatical patterns, and the reason for using PhD

dissertations as the materials for corpus based studies. First, corpus linguistics has more than one definitions and fields of linguistic research.

### 1.1.1. Corpus linguistics: The methodological revolution

Technology provides some new scientific methodologies and perspectives. For instance, Römer and Wulff (2010) state that computational corpus provided researchers to conduct studies in numerous areas such as education, criminology, and more; and Gries (2009) explains the use variety of corpus linguistics as the fastly developing and lively features of it (pp. 1-17). Larson, Egbert and Biber (2022) regard corpus linguistics as the documentation of written text or speech for linguistic analysis and description. According to Granger, (2002) making generalizations related to the use and form of grammatical structures is more possible by using corpora. Therefore, this study conducted a corpus based research regarding definite and indefinite articles as the analysis method of use of grammatical structure. Another advantage of corpus study was described by Nelson (2010, p. 53-65) as providing objective empirical data for the linguistic studies. Köroğlu and Tüm (2017) suggest that in learners' language awareness could be supported by the data of a corpus based study. McEnery and Wilson, (1996) also note that corpus studies were objective thanks to the computational analyzes. Biber et al. (1998) supported this view from the point of making quick analyses in structural and grammatical analyses of a language. Similarly, Lawson (2001) suggested that the results of corpus research could presented some perspectives on the language use in particular and different contexts. Reppen (2010) also corpus research provides the analysis of the dimensions of language use, and Conrad (2010) supports the this statement by referring the generalization of the language use by relatively large number of data. After all, this corpus based study analyzed the definite and indefinite articles in order to gain insights from the grammatical pattern in terms of frequency analysis.

### 1.1.2. Articles

According to Birner and Ward (1994), English has an article system to indicate definiteness. In English, the morphological term "the" is used to imply definitiveness. If there is a reference to something that has already been discussed, the definite article "the" must be used. When the definiteness requirement isn't met, a noun phrase is preceded by the indefinite article "a" and "an". When the referent is situated with the definite article "the," according to Liu and Gleason (2002), it indicates that the referent is thought to be culturally, situationally, structurally, or textually known information. According to Dryer (2014), indefinite articles are generally and particularly considered as unpunctuated statement markers in the sense that they point statements although they do not provide myriad semantic ingredient. To give an illustration, two examples demonstrate the contribution of the indefinite a.

“A teacher came to examine her.”

“One doctor came to examine her.”

If there is a word that begins with a vowel sound, the indefinite article before the word should be "an." On the other hand, "a" is used before a word that begins with a consonant sound. For instance, “a man”, “a teacher”, and “an American man is a very talented young teacher” sentences could be clarified the use of the indefinite articles. As the relatively similar corpus based study of Poesio and Vieira (1998), the study was aimed to analyze article use with the difference of both the definite and indefinite articles.

### 1.1.3. PHD dissertation

The statement of Mirhosseini and Kianfar (2019) suggest that studies in writing provide the reflections of writers' language production process thanks to the authentic words from the writers' internalized knowledge. PhD dissertations are similarly analogous to academic research's balance of form-focused writing and self-produced papers. The writers, according to Ansarifard et al. (2018), are active and goal-oriented in their academic writing production. As a result, the map of the study may provide the dynamics of article use based on gender, because being active transmits authenticity, and goal-oriented writing entails employing definite and indefinite words to define and describe things in the context of the "abstract" and "conclusion" sections in the PhD dissertations. The PhD dissertation is a formal, academic and original research on a particular subject; and prepared in partial fulfillment of doctoral requirements (Nelson & Coorough, 1994). Gannon (2006) describes the PhD in the context of USA as the veritable period of postgraduate preparing that incorporates both hypothesis and inquire about, with a more prominent accentuation on course work and the plausibility of turning through distinctive research facilities. According to Durette, Fournier and Lafon, (2014) there are variety of variables that has an influence on students' competencies in writing dissertation; and exploring these factors is important to analyze students' writing.

Abstracts are important, according to Hartley and Betts (2009), since they provide additional information about the research topic. According to Kaya and Yağız (2020) the abstract is the essential section of the sections of a research article regarding the first impression effect on the readers. Since the abstract summary the whole process (Kunghair & Yenphech, 2021) and the quality (Hyland, 2009) of the article or an academic study. The summarize, definitions and explanation about a study requires the usage of articles (a, an, the) in order to clarify the aim, methodology and the findings of the study.

The conclusion section, as considering difficult to write properly by Fayradi, (2018) clarifies the final insights of the research concerns, concludes the significance of the results. In the conclusion, the writers were expected to be clarified how the study contributed to the research field. In other words, the conclusion is required to insight based and outcome oriented statements in the academic research. Accordingly, the definite and indefinite articles might be used frequently in order to conclude statements that has already been discussed and original in terms of new insights. Soled-Monreal (2016) conducted a corpus based study related to the doctoral writers construct their PhD dissertations' conclusion sections, and the findings of the study revealed that some of the most frequently used items in order to organize the conclusion section. Similarly, Bunton (2005) conducted a corpus based study related to the generic structure of the interdisciplinary 45 PhD dissertations' conclusion sections. The results demonstrated that the main focus of the dissertations' conclusions was the study was related to the implications or recommendations for the future studies.

There were myriad of studies that related to the grammar use, lexical and organizational analysis of corpus linguistics. These studies examined different sections of dissertations and the variety of academic texts. Contrarily, this corpus based study was aimed to analyze the definite and indefinite articles use in a sociolinguistic context regarding gender.

### 1.1.4. Corpus linguistics and sociolinguistics

The sociolinguistics is the one of the sub-fields of linguistic and it centers on linguistic variety and its' social noteworthiness. Jaworska and Themistocleous (2018) state that it has numerous sub-topics which center on the impact of society on social bunches, and sociolinguistics ought to utilize metadata

in arrange to supply authentic data approximately speakers. Hence, corpus methodology is an suitable strategy to assemble modern information from the society.

Friginal and Hardy (2013) suggested that corpus enhanced studies are becoming a methodological and for the sociolinguistic method. Some corpus based sociolinguistic studies use authentic data such as transcriptions from the multimedia files and real life conversations from the society. For instance, Cheshire et al. (2008) conducted a corpus based study, and their analysis revealed that some innovative consonant features and TH- fronting are constrained in the social context. So, the more innovative features were observed in the Cockneys' common dialect, and they were not Anglo speakers.

Meyerhoff (2014) states that people from myriad backgrounds such as cultures, ethnic groups and social classes around the world learn English as their native or non native language. These social variables might effect the language use and learning system of writers of English as sociolinguistics variables. Sociolinguistic variable is a kind of linguistic element that roots from sort of external particular factors in sociological settings. According to Howard (2012), the sociolinguistic variable is the strategies to utilize dialect depending on the current socialized individual setting. On a very basic level, the sociolinguistic factors are considered as social contexts such as gender, age, economic status, social class and so on. In this study, whether the concept of gender as a sociolinguistic variable has an effect on the academic writers' use of grammar will be investigated with the frequency values. To understand the gender and the relationship between language, clarifications were presented below.

## 1.2. Research questions

In this descriptive and quantitative corpus based study, the main focus is to reveal the frequencies, similarities, differences, overuse and underuse of articles a, an, the written in the PhD dissertations by the male writers (MWs) of English and the female writers (FWs) of English. Accordingly, the aim of this study was to analyze the following research questions:

1. What are the differences in the use of definite and indefinite articles of the abstract section in the PhD dissertations written by the native speakers of English in the ELT department between males and females?
2. What are the differences in the use of definite and indefinite articles of the conclusion section in the PhD dissertations written by the native speakers of English in the ELT department between males and females?
3. What are the most frequently used articles in the PhD dissertations written by
  - a) the males in the field of ELT regarding the abstract section?
  - b) the females in the field of ELT regarding the abstract section?
4. What are the most frequently used articles in the PhD dissertations written by
  - a) the males in the field of ELT regarding the conclusion section?
  - b) the females in the field of ELT regarding the conclusion section?

## 2. Gender

Gender is the behavioral, cultural, or psychological elements that are typically associated with one sex (Norri, 2019). According to Chafetz (2006), gender is a sociolinguistic variable, because it both includes the biological element “sex” and the social element “gender” in language use of individuals. In this research, the gender element is investigated as a social concept, and Coates (2015) claims that gender is a socially constructed identity and the form of behaviors. Dong (2014) reminds that gender conveys the social statuses of men and women, and it causes the difference between educational background, daily life and roles of the men and women. So, this situation requires different kind of life styles and effects the two genders’ speeches and writing maps.

The beginning of the sociolinguistic studies on gender started in the early 1970s according to the research of Wodak and Benke (2017). They claim that phonological and speech differences of male and female speakers were the first steps of the gender studies in the scope of sociolinguistics. Lakoff (1975) studied the potential gender construction of the language use, and she found out that there was a real male and female language in terms of grammatical, discursive and lexical use. Consequently, Eagly and Kite (1987) studied gender role in language use; Tannen (1990) investigated gender differences in topical coherence; Dörnyei et. al. (2006) in addition to Mori and Gobel (2006) analyzed gender differences in terms of language learning motivation; the corpus based sociolinguistic study of Xiao and Tao (2007) analyzed gender factor in the use of amplifiers in written text; Heinzman (2009) also examined the relationship between language learning beliefs and learners’ gender; Koçoğlu (2013) described the communication between English speakers in the scope of the gender; Zoghi et. al. (2013) analyzed gender in terms of the academic achievement; Liyanage and Bartlett (2014) studied the language learning strategies and gender; Babanoğlu (2015) word selection of EFL learners and gender; Moyer (2016) revealed the L2 learners’ focuses in phonology such as accuracy, fluency and more scholars have been studied gender in language issues beyond the history. There was always a remarkable and significant difference between males and females in language use. Since gender role theory suggests that genders are culturally constructed behaviors and culture always has an effect on individuals that come from society. Furthermore, there were contemporary studies such as Koppel, Argamon and Shimoni, 2002; Argamon et al., 2003; Newman et al., 2008; Mulugeta, 2019); Azizmohammadi and Barjesteh, 2020 which used a large corpus and studied gender differences in grammar use.

## 3. Method

Tognini-Bonelli (2010) suggested that corpus linguistics is an appropriate method in the sociolinguistic studies, since the data is collected the society authentically (p. 11). This corpus-based study investigated the definite and indefinite articles in the abstract and conclusion sections of the PhD dissertations in the field of ELT written by the male writers (MWs) of English and the female writers (FWs) of English. The articles in the above mentioned sections were analyzed in terms of their frequency, overuse and underuse values by means of comparing the data groups.

### 3.1. Research Design

This study was conducted as a descriptive and quantitative research design in order to describe the frequency of definite and indefinite articles in the PhD dissertations written by the male writers (MWs) of English and the female writers (FWs) of English in the field of ELT and applied linguistics. Comparisons had been made between male and female corpora coming in two forms; overuse and underuse. To detect the similarities and differences of the frequency calculation observed in the study, descriptive analysis was used.

In order to describe the presentation of linguistic features in academic writing, corpus based analysis is a convenient implementation. In this study, in order to gain more authentic and real results, the academic product produced by male and female writers between the years 2010-2019 were analyzed using a descriptive and quantitative method in a corpus based study.

### **3.2. Instrument(s)**

The quantitative analysis programs provide researchers to gain enough linguistic data. Thus, the data were analyzed with the data collection tools Key Word In Context (KWIC) Concordance Programme and Log-likelihood (LL) calculator. Log-likelihood calculator is an online tool in order to calculate log-likelihood (LL) values. In order to test the results whether they are significant or not, corpus researchers are expected to use them (Kennedy & Miceli, 2010).

The Key Word in Context (KWIC) Concordance is functioning as a concordance, collocation tables and word lists using plane text files for corpus studies. In the present study, the KWIC Concordance programme was used for creating wordlists in order to analyze the frequencies of articles. Rayson and Garside (2000) consider a concordance program the simplest and the most widely used tool for corpus-based research.

In order to detect the statistical significance, a test called Log-likelihood (LL) used, generally in corpus analysis regarding example for collocation, keyword or frequency analysis and so on. Two different corpora were used in LL test in terms of word frequencies and it measures higher or lower frequencies than expected. Dunning (1993) notes that LL is fundamentally provides helpful statistical results for text analysis and similar problems.

### **3.3. Data collection procedures**

The beginning of the procedure started with the selection of the written papers product randomly. The PhD dissertation was selected as a material, because dissertations include enough definitive and descriptive statements and necessary data. The selection of the texts for the comparison corpora has been guided by the following principles; the texts samples consisting of PhD dissertations written by males and females between a specific time period, 2010-2019. These selected PhD dissertations were also published in the U.S.A universities.

In this study, randomly selected 100 PhD dissertations from the U.S universities and written by 50 male and 50 female writers were analyzed between the years 2010 and 2019. The present study focused on the analysis of the types of definite (the) and indefinite (a, an) articles. That is to say, a computer-assisted corpus-based methodology was applied in this study.

First of all, the PhD dissertations were in PDF format, but they were conveyed to Microsoft Word documents and converted to plain text. In this study, Key Word in Context (KWIC) programme was used in order to analyze the definite (the) and indefinite (a, an) articles. Furthermore, definite and indefinite articles were analysed according to their frequency per 1,000 words. The data, processed in the present study were limited to analyze two different articles; definite articles (the), and indefinite articles (a, an) which displayed in frequency order. With this data, the frequent use of a variety of article elements revealed the differences of cohesive devices written in the PhD dissertations of English by different genders, males and females.

### **3.4. Data analysis**

The first phase of data analysis included the extraction of the two abstract and and conclusion sections of the dissertations and the exclusion of the other sections from the data. Then, they were saved

as text files. The saved data were uploaded to the “KWIC Concordance” programme. Next, “Log-likelihood (LL)” calculation was also used in order to conduct a statistical analysis regarding the overuse and underuse. The research questions were analyzed considering the created tables and statistical calculations. This study analyzed both the male writers (MWs) of English and female writers (FWs) of English.

#### 4. Results and Discussion

The data were analyzed to demonstrate the differences in terms of the definite and indefinite articles and determine the frequency of articles. In this study, MWA refers to the abstract section and MWC refers to the conclusion section of the dissertations written by the male writers. In the present study, the articles were analyzed according to their recurrence per 1,000 words, which could indicate a more explicit opinion of possible differences in each group’s total article frequency. Table 1 demonstrates the overall frequency and the LL analysis of the articles of the PhD dissertations in the field of ELT written by the MWs of English and the FWs of English.

**Table 1.** Frequency and LL Analysis of the Articles for the Abstract Section in the PhD

Dissertations Written by the MWs of English and the FWs of English

|               | MWs       | FWs       | LL Value       |
|---------------|-----------|-----------|----------------|
| corpus size   | 2.205.307 | 1,809,205 |                |
| art. (n)      | 1249      | 1421      |                |
| n per 1,000   | 1         | 1         | <b>-71.26*</b> |
| frequency (%) | 0.01      | 0.01      |                |

n= raw frequency of articles

frequency= percentage of articles in total of words in groups

+ indicated overuse of articles in MWs of English relative to FWs of English

- indicated underuse of articles in MWs of English relative to FWs of English

Table 1 portrayed the frequency and LL frequency analysis of definite and indefinite articles used in the abstract section of the PhD dissertations. In Table 1, the article usage was less for the MWs of English (1249) than the FWs of English (1421) in the abstract section of their PhD dissertations. Additionally, MWs of English (1) have similar frequency results with FWs of English (1) by means of frequency per 1,000 words. Furthermore, both the MWs (0.01) of English and the FWs (0.01) of English used the same amount of definite and indefinite articles in every 100 words in their abstract section of the PhD dissertations. Log-likelihood calculation was applied in order to determine the difference between frequencies of the MWs of English and the FWs of English, and the significant values of overuse or underuse in terms of genders. The LL frequency indicated an underuse in the articles of the MWs’ dissertations’ abstract section with an -71.26 LL value and there was a significant difference in the articles between the two genders’ dissertations.

The male writers (MWs) of English had used the articles less frequently than the FWs of English in their PhD dissertations’ abstract section. The articles such as a and the had been used in the sentences of the FWs which might be an explanation of the high rate of article usage in the dissertations of the FWs when compared to the MWs. In the next section, the frequency analysis of the articles for the conclusion section of both genders’ PhD dissertations was presented. The sample sentences below were taken from the MWs and the FWs. MWA refers to the abstract section of the PhD dissertations written by the MWs, and FWA refers to the abstract section of the PhD dissertations written by the FWs.



### Example 1

[This study also examined **the** validity and reliability of **the** newly-created motivational constructs via **the** Motivation in College Foreign Language Courses (MCFLC) questionnaire designed for the purposes of this study.]

Extracted from <MWA-10>

[I drew upon learner-produced written English from **a** large-scale English exam, **the** Certificate of English Language Competency (CEFR B2-level certification).]

Extracted from <FWA-47>

**Table 2.** Frequency and LL Analysis of the Articles for the Conclusion Section in the PhD

Dissertations Written by the MWs of English and the FWs of English

|               | MWs       | FWs       | LL Value        |
|---------------|-----------|-----------|-----------------|
| corpus size   | 2,205,307 | 1,809,205 |                 |
| art. (n)      | 32879     | 31017     |                 |
| n per 1,000   | 15        | 17        | <b>-310.72*</b> |
| Frequency (%) | 0.15      | 0.17      |                 |

n= raw frequency of articles

frequency= percentage of articles in total of words in groups

+ indicated overuse of articles in MWs of English relative to FWs of English

- indicated underuse of articles in MWs of English relative to FWs of English

Table 2 portrayed the frequency and LL frequency analysis of definite and indefinite articles used in the conclusion section of the PhD dissertations. In Table 2, both the corpora size and article use were higher for the MWs of English than the FWs of English in the conclusion section of their PhD dissertations. On the other hand, by means of frequency per 1,000 words, slightly similar frequency results were observed between the MWs (15) and the FWs (17). In addition, the MWs (0.15) of English used less amount of articles in every 100 words than the FWs (0.17) of English in their conclusion section of the PhD dissertations.

To illustrate the difference between the frequencies of the MWs of English and the FWs of English, and the significant values of overuse or underuse in between the genders, LL calculation was applied. The LL frequency indicated an underuse in the articles of the MWs' dissertations' conclusion section with an -310.72 LL value and there was a significant difference in the frequency of the articles between the two groups' dissertations in the conclusion section.

In the next, the LL frequency of the articles used in the two sections; including the abstract, and the conclusion sections of the PhD dissertations among the MWs of English and the FWs of English were illustrated in Table 3. The sample sentences below were taken from the MWs and the FWs. MWC refers to the conclusion section of the PhD dissertations written by the MWs, and FWC refers to the conclusion section of the PhD dissertations written by the FWs.

### Example 2

[One may observe **a** sterility of taxonomies and hierarchies that are common throughout research today.]

Extracted from &lt;MWC-22&gt;

[The study inferred a list of recommended components of a course syllabus from the literature and developed two models which could be used to analyze and evaluate the completeness of course syllabi in terms of the components of a syllabus and the components of a learning-centered syllabus.]

Extracted from &lt;FWC-3&gt;

**Table 3.** LL Frequency of the Articles in the PhD Dissertations' Three Sections Among the MWs of English and FWs of English

| Sections   | LL Frequency | Overused / Underused |
|------------|--------------|----------------------|
| abstract   | -71.26*      | Underused in MWs     |
| conclusion | -310.72*     | Underused in MWs     |

n= raw frequency of articles

frequency= percentage of articles in total of words in groups

+ indicated overuse of articles in MWs of English relative to FWs of English

- indicated underuse of articles in MWs of English relative to FWs of English

As observed from Table 3, there was a significant underuse in the articles of the PhD dissertations' abstract (-71.26%) and the conclusion (-310.72%) sections of the MWs of English. In addition, the MWs of English results displayed the highest underuse of articles in the conclusion section of the PhD dissertations. Moreover, the MWs of English underused the articles statistically more significant in the conclusion section than the abstract section of the PhD dissertations. In the next section, the most frequently used articles in the abstract and the conclusion sections of the PhD dissertations written by the MWs of English and the FWs of English were presented.

**Table 4.** Most Frequently Used Articles in the Abstract Section in the PhD Dissertations of the MWs of English and FWs of English

| Articles | MWs |      |           | FWs |      |           | Overuse/underuse |
|----------|-----|------|-----------|-----|------|-----------|------------------|
|          | n   | %    | n / 1,000 | n   | %    | n / 1,000 |                  |
| a        | 392 | 31.3 | 0.2       | 539 | 37.9 | 0.3       | -0.1             |
| an       | 127 | 10.1 | 0.1       | 245 | 17.2 | 0.1       | +0.0             |
| the      | 730 | 58.4 | 0.3       | 637 | 44.8 | 0.4       | -0.1             |

n= frequency of articles

%= percentage of articles in total of words in groups

n/1,000= frequency of articles per 1,000 words

(- / +)= difference between relevant value and value in MWs of English articles per 1,000 words

+ indicated overuse of articles in MWs of English relative to FWs of English

- indicated underuse of articles in MWs of English relative to FWs of English

As demonstrated in Table 4, the most frequently used article in the abstract section of the PhD dissertations written by the MWs of English was the definite article the with 730 frequency and constituted the 58.4% of all the articles. In addition, the MWs had the highest percentage (58.4%) in

between the articles in their dissertations' abstract section. Similarly, the most frequently used article by the FWs of English was also the definite article *the* (637). Moreover, the three articles for both the MWs and the FWs' dissertations were slightly similar in number per 1,000 words in the abstract section. The results illustrated that indefinite article *a* and definite article *the* were underused by the MWs of English while the indefinite article *an* was overused by the MWs of English. The sample sentences below were taken from the MWs and the FWs. MWA refers to the abstract section of the PhD dissertations written by the MWs, and FWA refers to the abstract section of the PhD dissertations written by the FWs.

### Example 3

[**The** remaining sections of this chapter will be devoted to **a** thorough examination of each of **the** study's four factors.]

Extracted from <MWA-1>

[Again, as is **the** case with **the** highest ranking concourse items for factor three, individual/affective, cultural/situational, and institutional barriers each are represented among **the** group's lowest ranking items.]

Extracted from <FWA-18>

In the abstract section, both male writers (MWs) and female writers (FWs) of English used the definite article more frequently than the indefinite articles. The possible reason for the two genders' salient use of the article might be because of the introductory and illustrative functions of the abstract section. The abstract section introduces and summarizes the academic research (such as thesis, article, dissertation, etc.) and the definite article might help the male and female writers to introduce the study and illustrate the process, findings and so on. On the other hand, contrary results were observed in the corpus based sociolinguistic study of the researchers Gabrielatos et al. (2010). They revealed that there are overused definite articles and indefinite articles underused in the scope of the sociolinguistic elements in the London corpus. The results could be interpreted that the use and functions of indefinite articles could be dynamic when definite article could be more stable according to the sociolinguistics variables that are considered in the organization of written products.

In order to confirm the overuse / underuse revealed from differences of frequency per 1,000 words, LL calculation was applied. The LL frequency of articles in the abstract section of the PhD dissertations written by the MWs of English and the FWs of English was illustrated in Table 5.

**Table 5.** LL Frequency of Definite and Indefinite Articles for the Abstract Section in the PhD Dissertations Written by the MWs of English and the FWs of English

| Articles | MWs | FWs | LL Frequency |
|----------|-----|-----|--------------|
| an       | 392 | 539 | -61.52*      |
| an       | 127 | 245 | -65.09*      |
| the      | 730 | 637 | -1.29*       |

n= frequency of articles

+ indicated overuse of articles in MWs of English relative to FWs of English

- indicated underuse of articles in MWs of English relative to FWs of English

As illustrated in Table 5, the LL values of the articles used by the MWs of English had indicated an underuse and a significant difference in the indefinite articles *a* and *an*, and the definite article *the*. The highest underuse in the articles was in indefinite article *an* with -65.9 LL value. The least underuse difference was in the definite article *the* with -1.29 LL value. In indefinite article *a*, the LL frequency revealed an underuse with -61.52 LL value and a significant difference in the PhD dissertations' abstract section by the MWs of English.

The frequency of article usage varies depending on whether the article is definite or not. In other words, MWs are more tendentious to use definite article *the* while FWs used indefinite articles in their sentences. In the next section, the most frequently used articles in the conclusion section in the PhD dissertations of the male writers of English and female writers of English in the field of ELT was compared.

**Table 6.** Most Frequently Used Articles in the Conclusion Section in the PhD Dissertations of the MWs of English and FWs of English

| Articles   | MWs   |      |           | FWs   |      |           | Overuse/underuse |
|------------|-------|------|-----------|-------|------|-----------|------------------|
|            | n     | %    | n / 1,000 | n     | %    | n / 1,000 |                  |
| <i>a</i>   | 4557  | 13.8 | 2.1       | 8085  | 26.0 | 4.5       | -2.4             |
| <i>an</i>  | 441   | 1.3  | 0.2       | 2205  | 7.1  | 1         | -0.8             |
| <i>the</i> | 27881 | 84.7 | 13        | 20727 | 66.8 | 11.5      | +1.5             |

n= frequency of articles

%= percentage of articles in total of words in groups

n/1,000= frequency of articles per 1,000 words

(- / +)= difference between relevant value and value in MWs of English articles per 1,000 words

+ indicated overuse of articles in MWs of English relative to FWs of English

- indicated underuse of articles in MWs of English relative to FWs of English

As demonstrated in Table 6, the most frequently used article in the conclusion section of the PhD dissertations written by the male writers (MWs) of English was the definite article *the* with 27881 frequency and constituted the 84.7% of all the articles. Moreover, the MWs had the highest percentage (84.7%) in between the articles in their dissertations' conclusion section. Similarly, the most frequently used article by the FWs of English was also the definite article *the* (20727). Moreover, the three articles for both the MWs and the FWs' dissertations were slightly similar in number per 1,000 words in the conclusion section. The results demonstrated that indefinite articles *a* and *an* were underused by the MWs of English. Contrarily, the definite article *the* was overused by the FWs of English.

The LL frequency of articles in the conclusion section of the PhD dissertations written by the MWs of English and the FWs of English was illustrated in Table 7. Firstly, the sample sentences below were taken from the MWs and the FWs. MWC refers to the conclusion section of the PhD dissertations written by the MWs, and FWC refers to the conclusion section of the PhD dissertations written by the FWs.

#### Example 4

[For example, if **a** student having **a** conversational argument used **a** direct quote or made **a** connection between sources, **a** student would put **a** teal colored card on **the** table.]

Extracted from <MW-10>

[I think [transforming teaching] is a giant undertaking.]

Extracted from <FW-29>

**Table 7.** LL Frequency of Definite and Indefinite Articles for the Conclusion Section in the PhD Dissertations Written by the MWs of English and the FWs of English

| Articles | MWs   | FWs   | LL Frequency |
|----------|-------|-------|--------------|
| a        | 4557  | 8085  | -1819.90*    |
| an       | 441   | 2205  | -1658.89*    |
| the      | 27881 | 20727 | +115.2393*   |

n= frequency of articles

+ indicated overuse of articles in MWs of English relative to FWs of English

- indicated underuse of articles in MWs of English relative to FWs of English

As illustrated in Table 7, the Log Likelihood (LL) values of the articles used by the MWs of English had demonstrated an underuse and a significant difference in the indefinite articles *a* and *an*, but it indicated an overuse. There was also a significant difference in the definite article *the*. The highest underuse in the articles was in indefinite article *a* with -1819.90 Log Likelihood (LL) value. The least underused article was the indefinite article *an* with -1658.89 LL value. On the other hand, in definite article *the*, the LL frequency presented an overuse as +115.93 LL value. In the PhD dissertations' conclusion section by the MWs of English there was a significant difference. The articles could be observed in the following examples extracted from the MWs and the FWs. MWC points the conclusion section of the PhD dissertations written by the MWs, and FWC is related to the conclusion section of the PhD dissertations written by the FWs.

Considering the findings given in the tables, it is possible to state that the definite article *the* in the PhD dissertations in two sections were frequently used by the MWs of English and the FWs of English. On the other hand, the indefinite article *an* in the PhD dissertations in two sections (specifically *an*) were least frequently used by both the MWs of English and the FWs of English.

The articles that both are considerably important to refer thoughts and statements in writing are classified as the definite and indefinite articles. Regarding the results on these articles taken part in the last parts in the PhDs' written by the male writers (MWs) of English Language and the female writers (FWs) of English Language, it was observed that indefinite articles were significantly underused by MWs. Contrarily, the definite article was overused by MWs in contrast with the indefinite articles. This result points to the gender difference in using different kinds of articles in their conclusion part. It could be interpreted that the MWs overuse the definite article in order to present their conclusion in a certain way instead of using skeptical statements. In other words, MWs might conclude their research in order to present the knowledge rather than presenting new questions for further research.

### Example 5

[Student achievement data collection with the intent of focusing on student learning through improved teacher instruction **could be a** focus in PLC conversations that could also impact teacher PCK.]

Extracted from <FWC-30>

The other example that was extracted from FWC-30 could be interpreted as the FWs overuse the indefinite articles to conclude their research. It demonstrated that female writers used indefinite articles in order to make connections between general insights that is known by the reader and the potential new knowledge. The FWs could enhance the new research by using indefinite articles instead of defining the new insights directly. Similarly, Indefinite articles are "unmarked" argument markers, according to Le Bruyn (2010), and "an indefinite article does not allow for bare singular arguments" (p. 1).

The definite and indefinite article usage in the PhD dissertations' conclusion section written by the MWs of English included the highest underuse rate among the speakers which might be a reflection of the FWs use of more definitive and descriptive writing style in English. Some sample sentences including the definite and indefinite articles in the dissertations written by both the MWs and FWs used these articles highly frequently; but the male writers used the definite article the in order to conclude their findings and statements while the female writers concluded their statements by using more indefinite articles.

## 5. Conclusion

The substantial point of this corpus based study was the frequency and the definite and indefinite article basis in both male and female writers' academic studies. Correspondingly, this significant study regarding frequency might provide insights into the gender in the language learning use, specifically for academic writing. This present study, results in the scope of the most frequent articles used in the PhDs written by the male writers (MWs) of English Language and the female writers (FWs) of English Language were discussed. The study revealed that LL frequency of the articles indicated an underuse in the two sections for the Ph.D. dissertations of the male writers (MWs) of English and the female writers (FWs) of English, and there was a significant difference in the frequency of the definite and indefinite articles between the dissertations of the MWs of English and the FWs of English. The remarkable difference in uses of articles could be interpreted as the potential proof of the gender role in language use. This study was relatively contemporary regarding examined dissertations (published in between 2010-2019) and it could be understood that gender is still has been a variable that effects the English language use since the early gender studies.

This frequent analysis in terms of significance could contributed to the field of both the Applied and Theoretical Linguistics, because this gender analysis may give an idea about how the male writers (MWs) of English and the female writers (FWs) of English researchers in the linguistics field use articles. The present study guides teachers and material developers, since the results of the study give an idea about how frequently native speakers use the articles in their writings. So EFL teachers might use articles in textbook, in other teaching materials and in the language classrooms. In addition, teachers can conclude which article types are more significant for the academic writing of learners. For instance, some activities can be provided for male and female students separately in order to appeal to the attention of them. The "article" grammar structure is generally a complex and boring course topic; and a gender-specified materials and curriculum tend to be more familiar with the learners' individual worlds. The teacher or the mentor of the classroom might conduct an (corpus based) error analysis to observe the classroom regarding the two genders' needs and improvement in usage of articles. Gender and other possible variants affect not only the learning of grammatical structure but also the usage process. Thus, the language learning process should be examined at every stage and necessary analyzes, materials and teaching methods should be applied.

This study implicitly examines the role of gender in academic texts. Thus, this study presented insightful findings about gender differences in using definite and indefinite articles. However, writers organize their writing according to the aim and the framework of the study. So, academic texts such as

MA theses, and academic articles could also be analyzed in terms of definite and indefinite article usage. Furthermore, other words structures could be analyzed in the scope of gender. Another point to remember that this study a quantitative research; to better consolidate the implications of the quantitative findings, a qualitative study could be conducted with English language learners of both genders in order to understand their language learning process in terms of their emotions, motivations and the effects of their gender in the language classroom.

The current studies about gender roles can change dynamically according to the language background of the learners. The dissertations which were analyzed in the current study were produced in the American universities. Could the further studies reveal the same or similar results in terms of corpus based analysis of gender from other language backgrounds such as China, Turkey and so on? Consequently, this study was expected to be provided some insights into the gender variable in language use and future studies regarding theoretical and applied linguistics.

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**Kadın ve erkek yazarlar ne kadar belirli?: Belirli ve belirsiz tanım edatı  
kullanımı üzerine derlem tabanlı bir çalışma**

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**Özet**

Çalışma, ana dili İngilizce erkek yazarların ve ana dili İngilizce kadın yazarların doktora tezlerinde belirli ve belirsiz tanım edatlarının kullanımını tanımlamayı amaçlamıştır. Derlem tabanlı bu çalışma, İngiliz Dili Eğitimi kapsamında Uygulamalı Dilbilim alanında erkek yazarlar ve kadın yazarlar tarafından yazılan doktora tezlerindeki tanım edatlarının kullanımını belirlemekle sınırlandırılmıştır; 2010-2019 yılları arasında. Ayrıca, her iki cinsiyetin de doktora tezlerini yazma prosedürlerine ilişkin doktora tezlerinin öz ve sonuç bölümleri ile sınırlandırılmıştır. Ayrıca, Amerikan Üniversitelerinde yayınlanan 50 erkek yazarlı ve 50 kadın yazarlı tezlere odaklanılmıştır. Bu çalışmada, Key Word in Context (KWIC) dizin programı yardımıyla tanım edatlarının 1000 kelimedeki sıklıklarına göre kullanımları analiz edilmiştir. İstatistiksel analiz olarak frekans analizinin yanı sıra log-likelihood (LL) hesaplaması da kullanılmıştır. Çalışmanın sonunda, tanım edatlarının LL sıklığının, doktora için iki bölümde yetersiz kullanıldığını gösterdiği tespit edildi. Ana dili İngilizce erkek yazarlarının ve ana dili İngilizce kadın yazarların tezleri arasında ve ana dili İngilizce erkek yazarların tezleri ile ana dili İngilizce kadın yazarların arasında belirli ve belirsiz tanım edatlarının sıklığında önemli bir fark vardı. Bu bulguların araştırmacılar için, cinsiyet ve dil kullanımı arasındaki ilişki açısından bilim insanlarına rehberlik edebilecek akademik yazılar için bazı çıkarımları vardır..

Anahtar sözcükler: derlem; toplumsal cinsiyet; tanım edatları; doktora tezi; akademik yazma

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