# THE EFFECT OF TYPOLOGICAL FACTORS ON LEARNING TURKISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

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**Abstract:**

It is known that individuals' first languages might have effects on their second language learning. Accordingly, similarities between languages may ease learning process whereas differences may hinder the process depending on the closeness of two languages. In this respect, it is expected that for Turkic languages which share some linguistic characteristics there may be an effect of positive transfer due the similarities among Turkic languages. However, this may not be the case.

In the scope of this study, the typological and phonological similarities and differences between Turkish and Kazakh languages and their effect on learning Turkish as a foreign language were investigated. As a result of the analysis, it was found out that there were significant differences among students which resulted from the typological similarities and differences between Kazakh and Turkish on students' pronunciation in terms of gender, length of residence and participants' self-assessed Turkish proficiency.

**Key words**: Language Family, Typological Similarity, Turkic Languages, Sister Languages, Glottochronology, Length of Residence.

## INTRODUCTION

People are always interested in learning languages of others throughout the history. As the interaction among societies increased, the need for learning new languages also increased. So, people began to deal with language learning processes more scientifically. Studies on L1 and L2 learning have enabled researchers to conduct cross linguistic studies. One of the pioneers of this field, Lado (1957) stated that first language learning and second language learning require different tasks because of the uniqueness of individual's L1 knowledge and this may cause problems in L2 learning. Moreover, he points out that the

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more similar the parts of target language to L1, the easier it become to yield successful results.

As to Turkic languages, it can be said that they belong to same language category and share many typological similarities. However, these similarities are not enough for Turkic learners of standard Turkish to solve their language learning problems. Most of the learners (except bilinguals) studying at universities in Turkey have accents and experience pronunciation problems. They have succeeded to reach native-like competence in other parts of the language, though.

## 1. LITERATURE REVIEW

Current study aims at investigating the typological and phonological similarities and differences between Turkish and Kazakh language and their effect on foreign language learning. Since these two languages come from the same language family, they geneologically share some phonological characteristics which may facilitate the learning of each language. However, it is also possible that due to some external factors or being a member of a different branch language of the same typology, they gain some differences which may cause problems especially in terms of phonology and learning the language. In short, the similarities and/ or differences between the two languages at hand may have transfer effects, as Selinker (2006, p. 201-210): "Fossilization 'or' does your mind mind?" Afterword: Fossilization 'or' does your mind mind? which may facilitate and/ or hinder the language learning process.

*Language Transfer Matter*

It is a very well-known issue (Larsen-Freeman, 2006, p. 189-200) that variation plays a great role in the acquisition process. That is, due to individual learning differences among the learners (Öz et al., 2015, p. 269-275) no one speaks or learns in the same way. Obviously, first things first, as Moskovsky & Ratcheva, (2014, p.9-17) indicated, foreign language learning is a matter of competence or a performance phenomenon. There are differences not only among individuals but also within an individual. One of the major factors affecting the level of success in L2 is the transfer. Arranz (2005) states that transfer implies the use of old knowledge in new situations and transfer can be bidirectional (p. 116). That is, as Han (2004) states, L1 can have a strong effect on L2 learning or vice versa.

Therefore, it would not be wrong to state that transfer from one language to another has effect on learning processes. Basically, as Odlin (1989) mentions, there are mainly two kinds of transfer – borrowing or substratum (p. 27). The

former means that second language has effect on first language. Borrowing transfer begins at lexical level and phonology and phonetics are less affected. On the other hand, substratum transfer means the effect of first language on second language and is seen more frequently in pronunciation.

In terms of borrowing and substratum transfer types, the focus was on failure. However, Smith (1996) adds that transfer is not limited to incorrect output. Thus, researchers distinguished it further as positive or negative transfer. In positive transfer, similarities between languages may facilitate learning the other language. However, divergences from the norms of the target language can cause negative transfer.

*Transfer Errors*

Transfer errors can be visualized as "fossilization from simplicity to complexity" Han (2003, 2004, 2005) because language learning is not free from errors and some type of errors are transfer errors and when one first started to learn a second language it is more likely he/she produce them. There are two kinds of errors that a learner can do: segmental or suprasegmental. The former includes phonemic, phonetic, allophonic and distributional errors (p. 116).

*Transfer to Somewhere Versus Transfer to Nowhere*

Other issues dealing with transfer are transfer to somewhere and transfer to nowhere. Andersen (1983) claims that when there are typological similarities between two languages, transfer takes place and it is called as transfer to somewhere (pp. 126-131). From this point of view when there are differences between two languages transfer does not take place. The transfer to somewhere, as Anderson (1983) argues, occurs if the L1 element shows compatibility with "natural acquisitional principles" (p. 182) and the L2 input somehow leads to generalization from the L1. The learner's developing knowledge of the L2 has to be considered as a source of language transfer. On the other hand, of Han (1998) states that in typologically distant languages, L1 transfer is implicit and it is characterized by 'transfer to nowhere'.

Transfer resulting from the differences between two languages affects several areas during language learning process. However, Odlin (1989) points out that target language phonetics and phonology is affected from the cross-linguistic differences which affect the acquisition process. Alonso (2005) points out that transfer to somewhere and transfer to nowhere indicate that transfer can be the result of similarity or difference respectively. According to Kellerman (1995) the former refers to acquiring the means of linguistic expression while

the latter is related to the conceptualization leading to the discovery of those means.

### *Turkic Languages as a Family*

The history of Turkic languages dates back to 7th and 8th centuries to the time when Orhon inscriptions were written and today it has over 220 million speakers. Turkic language family includes at least 35 languages from Southeastern Europe and the Mediterranean to Siberia and Western China (Akar, 2013).

### *Classification of Turkic Languages*

There are several methods used to classify Turkic languages. According to Dybo (2007) the large number of its members and being a relatively young language and having a well documented history makes genetic classification of Turkic languages easy. However, Turkic languages are highly similar and mutually intelligible languages and numerous contacts among these cause problems in the classification procedures. A popular way of classifying languages is glottochronology. Demirezen (1981) states that cognate interactions between languages makes it possible to determine when languages separated from the mother language. In this respect, Turkic languages belong to Proto-Bulgaro-Turkic languages.

On the other hand, geographically and linguistically Turkic languages, as Johanson (1998) and Gabain (2007) point out, may be divided into six branches:

1. A Southwestern (SW) branch, Oghuz Turkic
2. A Northwestern (NW) branch, Kipchak Turkic;
3. A Southeastern (SE) branch, Uyghur Turkic;
4. A Northeastern (NE) branch, Siberian Turkic;
5. Chuvash, representing Oghur or Bulghar Turkic;
6. Khalaj, representing Arghu Turkic.

(Gabain, 2007, pp. 307-310)

In this classification Turkish and Azerbaijani belong to West Oguz branch of Southwestern branch whereas Kazakh and Kirghiz belong to South Kipchak (Aralo-Caspian) group of Northwestern branch.

Other Classification Models X

Since Turkic languages belong to same categorization typologically, it is difficult to define them as whether they are different languages or dialects or accents of the same language. Similarly, Karaca (2011) points out the same

problem by stating that the problem is the naming the Turkic languages. This classification problem brings about some transfer problems together with it. Demirezen (1981) states that there are several classification models such as Family Tree Model, Wave Model (p.102), and so on. In this respect, Turkish can be counted as parental language whereas Kazakh, Ozbek, Turkmen and Azerbaijani are as daughter languages. In this model, changes in the parental language should be manifested in daughter languages.

The other model which is the wave model developed in 19th century is seen as a complement to three model and help to understand the dialect change. In this respect, some divergences between Turkish and Azerbaijani or other Turkic languages may be due to areal contact.

*Mutual intelligibility*

How far can Turkic people understand each other? Boeschoten (1998) states that the languages spoken by different Turkic people are genetically related (p. 1). So there should be mutual intelligibility among Turkic languages. According to Lindsay (2010) there should be 90% intelligibility between languages to call a language as dialect. When Turkic languages investigated, as Johanson (1998) states, the mutual intelligibility which is relatively limited within the language family may be high among neighboring groups (p. 88). Similarly, Lindsay (2010) mentions about mutual intelligibility among Turkic languages, too.

*Table 1:* Percentage of Mutual Intelligibility among Some Turkic Languages

| Turkish | South-Azeri | 90% |
|---|---|---|
| Turkish | North-Azeri | 69% |
| South-Azeri | North-Azeri | 98% |
| Kazakh | Kirghiz | 90% |
| Tatar | Bashkir | 90% |
| Uzbek | Uyghur | 65-70% |
| Turkish | Karaim | 65-70% |
| Turkish | Kazakh | 40% |
| Turkish | Yakut/ Sakha | 0% |
| Turkish | Khorasani | 40% |

As it is understood from Table 1, Turkish has high intelligibility with South-Azeri whereas it has medium intelligibility with North-Azeri and Karaim and low intelligibility with Kazakh and Khorasani (p. 2). According to this calculation, Turkish and Kazakh languages are % 40 mutually intelligible.

In another indication ("which languages are mutually intelligible", 2008) the mutual intelligibility among Turkic Languages roughly takes place in varying degrees:

*Table 2:* Mutual intelligibility among Turkic Languages

| Turkish | Azeri | 80 % | Uzbek | Uyghur | 70 % |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Turkish | Kirghiz | 20 % | Turkish | Uzbek | 30 % |
| Turkish | Turkmen | 50 % | Kazakh | Uyghur | 40 % |
| Kazakh | Kirghiz | 70 % | Turkish | Kazakh | 20 % |
| Turkish | Uyghur | 30 % | Kazakh | Turkmen | 30 % |
| Kazakh | Uzbek | 60 % | | | |

As it is seen, Turkish and Kazakh languages are % 20 mutually intelligible.

### Typological Similarities and Differences

Languages that are from the same family have a relationship. In this respect, as Merhan (2012) states when the two languages are relative, generally it is said that learning them is easy. However, it should be noted that some tiny reasons may cause the learning to be difficult. Knowing phonetic together with morphological properties of target language facilitates learning. However, the existence of similar words may sometimes cause confusion and may negatively affect the learning process.

To be able to find typological similarities which may affect learning processes while studying different Turkic languages there are several studies in one of which Johanson (1998) identifies 46 typological characteristics of Turkic languages some of which are directly related to phonology. For example, he states that Turkic languages tend to use mono vowel. In terms of the length of meaning changing long vowels are not typical for most Turkic languages. Moreover, there are consonants which are not typical in Turkic languages such as /f/, /v/, /j/ and /s/. In Turkic languages, typically liquid consonants do not come in the front whereas few number of fricative consonants can come. Especially /l/, /m/, /n/, /r/ and /z/ are not typical. Also, vowel harmony is typical for Turkic languages. Another typical characteristic of Turkic is that in almost all Turkic languages there is a consonant resemblance in neighboring consonants; e.g. at+plural (-lar) = attar (pp. 27-37). In addition, Gabain (1963) adds that what is typical for Turkic languages are the simplicity in sound joining and sound harmonies.

*Turkish and Kazakh Relationship*

When the differences between Turkish and Kazakh are investigated, contrary to the arguments put forward by Johanson (1998) and Lindsay (2010), Tamir (n. d.) points out there are some differences between Kazakh and Turkish which are not big and systematic. The majority of these differences are consisted of phonological differences. Although there are similar lexical items in both languages, phonological differences the most important of which are some consonants separate them. However, when mutual intelligibility figures are taken into consideration his view should be taken with suspicion.

In his article on contemporary spoken Kazakh, its phonology, syntax and semantics, Muhamedowa (2014) states that it is not possible to evaluate spoken Kazakh by ignoring the effects of Russian because there are a lot of borrowed words from Russian such as 'kvartira' daire, 'şkola' okul, 'voobşe' genellikle etc.

*Table 3:* Similar Words in Turkish and Kazakh with Consonant Changes

| Way of Change | Examples |
| --- | --- |
| /y/ in Turkish becomes /j/ in Kazakh | Yak-jak, yer-jer, yedi-jeti, yoldaş-joldas |
| /ş/ in Turkish becomes /s/ in Kazakh | başla-basqa, taş-tas, kaş-qas, gümüş-kümis |
| /ç/ in Turkish becomes /ş/ in Kazakh | aç-aş, üç-üş, için-üşin, çıkar-şıkar |
| /v/ in Turkish becomes /b/ in Kazakh | ver-ber |
| /g/ in Turkish becomes /k/ in Kazakh | gör-kör, göz-köz, gönül-könil, gel-kel |
| /b/ in Turkish becomes /m/ in Kazakh | bin-min, ben-men, burun-murın, |
| /d/ in Turkish becomes /t/ in Kazakh | doldur-toldır, dil-til, demir-temir, diş-tis |

As can be seen from Table 3 some consonants resemble each other in both languages which may possibly result in positive transfer during language learning.

In the light of information mentioned so far, in this research the effects of typological and phonological differences and similarities between Turkish and Kazakh on Kazakh students' learning standard Turkish language in terms of mutual intelligibility were investigated.

In line with the above literature review and statement of the problem, current study seeks to supply answers to the following research questions:

1. Are there any differences between males and females in terms of their perceptions about the effects of typological differences and similarities between Turkish and Kazakh?
2. Are there any relationships between the time spent in Turkey and participants' perceptions about the typological differences and similarities?
3. Are there any relationship between participants' self-assessed Turkish level and typological differences and similarities?

## 2. METHOD

*Participants*

60 Kazakh university students studying at several universities in Ankara took part in this study. The study aimed to find out the relationships between participants' demographic information (age, gender, length of residence, self-assessed Turkish competence levels and their majors) with typological differences and similarities of Turkic languages and their awareness of the phonological problems. All the participants were in the range of 19-24 in terms of their ages and were living in Turkey for 1-5 years.

The participants took place in this research on purposeful voluntary basis. They expose a heterogeneous (Selinker & Han, 2001) mixture in terms in age of arrival in Turkey, and therefore an empirical longitudinal study was not possible.

76.7% (n = 46) of the participants were male whereas 23.3% (n = 14) were female with one missing data.

When the time participants had spent in Turkey at the time of data collection, that is, their length of residence in Turkey are investigated, it can be seen that there were more people 42.6% (n = 26) who were in Turkey for 2-3 year category than the others. The percentages of participants who were in Turkey for 0-1 year and 4-5 years were the same, 21.3% (n = 13). Finally, only 13.1% (n = 8) of the participants, who were studying on different field of studies, were in Turkey for more than 5 years.

In terms of participants' levels of Turkish according to their self-assessments 47.5% (n = 29) of the participants defined their Turkish level as being intermediate whereas 31.1% (n = 19) were upper-intermediate and 19.7% (n = 12) were at advanced level.

*Instrument*

The effects of typological and phonological differences and similarities between Turkish and Kazakh on participants' pronunciation were the main aim of this study. For this purpose, a 5-point Likert-type questionnaire which was in line with the literature review (Oblin, 1989) was devised by the researchers and was also examined by a committee of 3 experts of foreign language education, and certain refinements were made on the questionnaire in accordance with their evaluation.

The questionnaire included two main parts. The first part included the demographic information which aimed to collect data about participants' genders, ages, departments of study, length of residence in Turkey, other languages they know, and their self-assessed level of Turkish competence. The second part included 20 items which aimed at to find out the participants' thoughts about the role typological differences or similarities play in their process of second language learning in terms of phonology. They were asked to state their beliefs on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (certainly not true) to 5 (certainly true).

Having reviewed the related literature, initially 28 items was formed. Then according to the experts' views, the numbers of items were reduced to 20. Then the questionnaire was shown to three different experts who have expertise on Turkish language teaching, Turkish literature and Turkic languages. According to their suggestions, seven items were adapted, and one item was replaced with a new item. Negatively worded items were reversed before starting the analysis procedure.

Generally, all the items in the questionnaire were aimed at discovering the effects of typological differences and similarities between Turkish and Kazakh in terms of problems or ease they cause and they were grouped under six subscales.

As for detecting the reliability of the items, analysis by using Statistical Package for Social Sciences 23 (SPSS 23) was done. Accordingly, the cronbach's alpha value was .658.

*Table 4:* Sub-Categories

|   | Name of sub-category | Items |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | Differences cause pronunciation problems | 1, 2, 7 |
| 2 | Differences cause understanding problems | 3, 6, 9, 10 |
| 3 | Similarities cause learning ease | 13, 14, 15 |
| 4 | Similarities cause pronunciation ease | 17, 19, 20 |
| 5 | Perceptions | 4, 5, 8, 16, 18 |
| 6 | Awareness of differences | 11, 12 |

*Data Collection and Analysis*

Data were collected by the researcher through using Google Docs, which is an online survey instrument. The participants from Ankara received the questionnaire by means of their emails. 61 participants completed the questionnaire and after the deadline given by the researcher, all the data were merged together.

The collected data were analyzed in order to select the most appropriate analysis model; the distribution of the data set was check. Q-Q plots showed that data were normally distributed. Besides, since the number of participants were above 60 it was appropriate to use parametric tests (Pallant, 2007). Therefore, besides descriptive statistics, independent samples t-test and one way ANOVA tests were used.

## 3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The obtained data were analyzed according to the research questions as in the following order:

RQ1: Are there any differences between males and females in terms of their perceptions about the effects of typological differences and similarities between Turkish and Kazakh?

Independent-samples t-test was conducted to compare scores of males and females on the six sub-categories (1. Differences cause pronunciation problems, 2. Differences cause understanding problems, 3. Similarities cause learning ease, 4. Similarities cause pronunciation ease, 5. Perceptions and 6. Awareness of differences).

For sub-categories 3 and 5, there were not any significant differences. However, for sub-category 1, 2, 4 and 6 there was a significant difference between males and females.

*Table 5:* Independent Samples Tests results for sub-categories 1, 2, 4 and 6

| Sub-Category | Gender | M | SD | Mean Difference | t | df | Sig. (2-tailed) | d |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Differences cause pronunciation problems | Male | 3.26 | .67 | -.38 | 2.656 | 58 | <.01 | .99 |
| | Female | 3.64 | .41 | | | | | |
| 2. Differences cause understanding problems | Male | 3.28 | .39 | .31 | 2.663 | 45 | <.05 | .99 |
| | Female | 2.97 | .47 | | | | | |
| 4. Similarities cause pronunciation ease | Male | 4.06 | .33 | .62 | 3.141 | 30 | <.01 | .99 |
| | Female | 3.56 | .76 | | | | | |
| 6. Awareness of differences | Male | 4.06 | .43 | .73 | 3.171 | 43 | <.01 | .99 |
| | Female | 3.67 | .55 | | | | | |

The above analysis showed that there were significant differences between males and females in terms of the effects of typological differences and similarities between Turkish and Kazakh on their pronunciation. Below in Table 4, simplified results for research question 1 can be found. However, due to space restrictions, only data of four sub-categories on which the detailed analysis showed significant differences were given.

When Table 5 is investigated, it could be said that females suffer from the pronunciation problems resulted from typological differences between Turkish and Kazakh whereas males experience more difficulties about understanding what is said. Besides, males find the similarities more facilitative than females and they were also more aware of the effects of typological differences on their language learning processes.

***Table 6:*** The effects of typological differences and similarities in terms of gender

|   |   | Gender | N | Mean | Percentage |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Differences cause pronunciation problems | Male | 36 | 3.26 | 65.2% |
|   |   | Female | 25 | 3.64 | 72.8% |
| 2 | Differences cause understanding problems | Male | 36 | 3.28 | 65.6% |
|   |   | Female | 25 | 2.97 | 59.4% |
| 4 | Similarities cause pronunciation ease | Male | 36 | 4.06 | 81.2% |
|   |   | Female | 25 | 3.56 | 71.2% |
| 6 | Awareness of differences | Male | 36 | 4.05 | 81.0% |
|   |   | Female | 25 | 3.64 | 72.8% |

RQ2: Are there any relationships between the time spent in Turkey and participants' perceptions about the typological differences and similarities?

In order to answer research question two, one-way ANOVA was conducted and the effect of participants' length of residence, classified under four groups 0-1, 2-3, 4-5 and 5+, on each sub-category was compared.

When Levene tests for homogeneity were obtained, it was found out that for sub-categories 1, 2, 5 and 6 the groups were homogeny. So one-way ANOVA was continued to see whether there were any significant differences among groups. For sub-category 1, the result showed that the effect of length of residence on pronunciation problems caused by typological differences was not significant, $F(3, 56) = 1.388$, $p > .05$. For sub-category 2, the results were not significant as well, $F(3, 56) = .135$, $p > .05$. Similarly, for sub-category 5, which included items related to perception, the effect of time spent in Turkey on participants' perceptions was not significant, $F(3, 56) = .871$, $p > .05$. Finally, for sub-category 6, the results were not significant, $F(3, 56) = 1.788$, $p > .05$. As a result, there was no need to conduct post-hoc test.

However, for sub-categories 3 and 4, according to Levene test the homogeneity of variances were violated ($p < .05$). Therefore, Welch and Brown-Forsythe tests which are more robust in these situations were conducted for these sub-categories. The results showed that the effect of length of residence on participants' learning and pronunciation were significant ($p < .05$). Post-Hoc comparison using Games-Howell tests indicated that the mean scores for the groups were not significantly different. On the other hand, in terms of the pronunciation ease resulted from the typological similarities between Turkish and Kazakh, tests indicated that mean score for 5+ year group ($M = 4.45$, $SD = .5993$) was significantly different than 0-1 year group ($M = 3.92$, $SD = .3089$) and 2-3 year group ($M = 3.55$, $SD = .7238$). In addition, the mean score of 4-5

year (M = 4.02, SD = .0924) group was significantly different than 2-3 year group (M = 3.55, SD = .7238).

As a result of the detailed analysis, it would not be wrong to say that the longer an individual stay in Turkey, the easier it gets to benefit from the typological similarities between languages which results in easier pronunciation and less problems in phonology.

RQ3: Are there any relationship between participants' self-assessed Turkish level and typological differences and similarities?

Participants had been grouped under three categories according to their responses: Intermediate, Upper-Intermediate and Advanced. In order to find out whether participants' level of Turkish competence according to their self-assessment have effect on their perceptions, awareness, pronunciation, understanding and learning the language in terms of typological phonological similarities and differences between Turkish and Kazakh, one-way ANOVA was conducted. The results showed that the effect of self-assessed Turkish level on pronunciation problems (sub-category 1), F (2, 57) = 1.007, p > .05; on participants' perceptions about typological differences (sub-category 5), F (2, 57) = 1.185, p > .05; and on participants' awareness (sub-category 6), F (2, 57) = 2.348, p > .05 were not significant. However, the effect of self-assessed Turkish level on understanding problem (sub-category 2) resulted from typological differences was significant, F (2, 57) = 5.990, p < .05. Post-Hoc comparisons using LSD test indicated that the mean scores of Advanced group (M = 3.34, SD = .4549) and Upper-Intermediate group (M = 3.33, SD = .4082) were significantly higher than the mean score of Intermediate group (M = 2.96, SD = .3822).

*Table 7:* The effect of self-assessed Turkish level on understanding problems

|                    | N  | Mean | Percentage |
|--------------------|----|------|------------|
| Intermediate       | 29 | 2.96 | 59.20%     |
| Upper Intermediate | 19 | 3.33 | 66.00%     |
| Advanced           | 12 | 3.34 | 66.80%     |
| Total              | 60 | 3.15 |            |

According to Table 6, it could be said that as the participants' self-assessed level of Turkish increase, so may their awareness of understanding problems resulted from typological phonological differences.

As to sub-categories 3 and 4, according to the Levene test, the homogeneity of variances was violated (p < .05). Thus, for these sub-categories

Welsh and Brown-Forsythe tests were conducted and as a result it was found out that there were significant differences between groups on both sub-categories, p < .05. For sub-category 3 which includes items related to typological phonological similarities causing learning ease, post-hoc comparisons using Games-Howell test indicated that the mean scores of advanced learners (M = 4.25, SD = .5341) was significantly different from both Upper-Intermediate learners (M = 3.71, SD = .299) and Intermediate learners (M = 3.49, SD = .6017). For sub-category 4 which includes items related to typological phonological similarities causing pronunciation ease, post-hoc comparisons using Games-Howell test indicated that the mean scores of Advanced learners (M = 4.36, SD = .4133) was significantly different from the mean scores of Upper-Intermediate learners (M = 3.98, SD = .2070), which is also significantly different from Intermediate learners, and Intermediate learners (M = 3.56, SD = .6732).

As a result of the detailed analysis it could be said that participants' level of Turkish may have a role on their learning the phonology of the language and pronunciation. The more proficient an individual gets, the less problems they may have in pronunciation and it may be easier for them to learn the language more.

## 4. CONCLUSION

In the scope of this study, it was aimed to find out whether typological differences and similarities between Turkish and Kazakh facilitate or hinder learning Turkish as a foreign language. For this purpose, a questionnaire was developed and applied to 60 Kazakh university students studying several universities in Ankara. Obtained data was analyzed with SPSS 23 software First descriptive statistics were calculated and then by using independent sample t-test and one-way ANOVA detailed analysis were conducted.

As a result of the analysis it was found out that there were significant differences between males and females in terms of the effects of typological differences and similarities between Turkish and Kazakh on their pronunciation. In terms of the effect of typological differences, while females (M = 3.64) suffered from pronunciation problems more than males (M = 3.26), males (M = 3.28) experienced understanding problems more than females (M = 2.97). As to the effects of typological similarities males (M = 4.06) stated that they helped them learn and speak the language more than females (M = 3.56).

In addition, findings supported the general idea that length of residence in the country where the target language is dominant has a facilitative role in the

development of phonologic knowledge. As the time of stay increases, the problems an individual may experience may decrease participants who have stayed more than 5+ years (M = 4.45) stated they experienced less problems than 0-1 year group (M = 3.92) and 2-3 year group (M = 3.55).

Also, it could be said that there is a relationship between the participants' self-assessed level of Turkish and their awareness of understanding problems resulted from typological phonological differences. As the former increases, the latter increases, too. Moreover, it would not be wrong to assume that higher Turkish competence result in easier language learning in terms of phonology.

Finally, according to the results of the analysis, there may be a relationship between participants' departments and the effect of typological and phonological differences. Students attending social sciences yielded higher scores which means they benefited more from the typological similarities than medicine students.

All in all, it would not wrong to say that although there are typological similarities between Kazakh and Turkish, there are broad differences which may lead negative substratum transfer (Odlin, 1989) for Kazakh students while learning Turkish as a foreign language. These transfer effects have impacts on Kazakh students' fluency and accuracy in terms of their speaking skills and cause them diverge from near native-like attainment of Turkish which may affect their success rate as well. Identifying the problematic parts may help Kazakh students to be aware of where the problems are, find proper training schemes focusing on these parts and improve their language abilities starting from the smallest elements of Turkish. Otherwise, their interlanguage (Han, 2009:137-162) may include fossilized elements depending on their length of residence, gender, field of study and level of Turkish. In this respect, this study may shed light on the effect of typological differences and similarities between Turkish and Kazakh and provide a questionnaire in this respect.

The mutual intelligibility between Turkish and Kazakh roughly ranges form % 40 to % 20. Still, it can be deduced that languages that come from the same typology will positively affect ultimate attainment of the language learners (Birdsong, 2004: 82-105). The same typology of languages again apparently seems to facilitate the *foundations of bilingual education and bilingualism* (Baker, 2011).

### Recommendations

For further studies, it would be appropriate to apply the same instrument in Kazakhstan in Kazakh and conduct interviews with the participants. Also,

applying it to other Turkic languages will contribute the current situation. Moreover, the study should be carried out with more people. In this way, a factor analysis could be carried out and more robust factors could be obtained.

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