



Impact of Gender and Language Learning In Educational Settings

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Abstract

Given the significant impact of gender and language learning in educational settings, it is critical to understand how students' learning styles and gender contribute to their academic achievement and gender interaction in English language classes, especially in the university context. This research paper highlights the impact of gender differences on English language learning at the university level, especially in the Moroccan tertiary education context. The study aims to provide insight into how students' learning styles and gender perceptions affect their English language learning. Data was collected through an online survey and distributed to 60 master's and doctoral students. The findings revealed a significant link between gender differences and English learning, in particular how male and female students prefer to work with classmates of the same or different gender to improve their language skills.

1. INTRODUCTION

Gender plays a significant role in shaping the personality of individuals, given that gender as a concept is subject to cultural and societal construction. In many studies, gender takes on a more political dimension in women's struggle for their rights and defence against workplace harassment. However, the question of gender and its impact also exists in the field of education in the use of language and communication by students (female and male). (Catalan, 2003), asserted that gender is an important predictor in the educational and linguistic fields. That is why gender is a substantial variable that must be considered when researching language learning topics. Knowledge of the English Language and its proficiency enables the individual to set the language skills for communication, which opens up endless possibilities, for example, education, fellowship training, business, and scientific research; moreover, it helps the individual develop intercultural communication and cooperation efficiency. Due to the importance of the English language and its global use in most fields, and the fact that it has become a prerequisite for individual success in the modern world.

Some studies have shown that certain factors influence English language learning and that the language learning experience may differ from females to males. Al-Batayneh, 2019 showed

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some gender differences in learning the English language. The study stated that male students have different opinions; they support the idea that speaking English is easier than understanding it. A research paper conducted by Dashila et al. (2022) indicated that female students select different learning styles based on emotions and feelings that are different from male students. Both studies supported the conclusion that male and female students have different expectations and motivations for learning the English language.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

It is interesting to discuss the role of universities as an agent of education that has the precise task of supporting learners in developing their personality and learning abilities. König et al.(2016) stated that supporting students in developing fundamental ethical principles, including gender, is part of the educational mandate. Therefore, education must rely on teaching methods that help students (male & female) gain a self-confident attitude toward their gender (Derichsweiler, 2021).

Regarding learning abilities, according to Woolfolk (2014), a study based on a test of specific abilities showed that gender differences exist between males and females through scores. In another study, results revealed a significant connection between gender and language learning and performance in learning English. Females performed better in terms of achievement and use of language learning strategies (Aslan, 2009). Other research on language and gender also has shown differences in the use of language between males and females. The fact that females are more emotional influences their comprehension ability. They are more able to understand a text or speech full of different emotions (Saidi & Al-Mahrooqi, 2012).

Another difference is that female learners are afraid of negative outcomes; for this reason, they tend to work harder than male learners to overcome this intense feeling (Croson & Gneezy, 2009). Sahid et al.(2018) conducted a study on gender differences in students' anxiety in a seminar presentation. Their research showed that male and female students differed in how they felt and behaved. The female student showed anxious feelings; she was worried about her outcome or what might happen, while male students showed uncomfortable behaviour when they could not explain their statements. This study will address the issue of students' learning styles through their perceptions of gender differences in an English class.

3. METHOD

The data for this research paper was collected from 60 students from the Department of English Studies in Morocco. The sample consists of students who have already obtained a bachelor's degree and are currently master's or doctoral students. Their answers were based on their previous experience while learning English at the undergraduate level. The online survey aims to determine whether gender differences can influence students' language learning through their participation in classroom learning activities and their ways of interacting with classmates (both male and female).

Based on the main aim of this investigation, the following research questions were posed:

- How do students engage in learning activities inside the class?
- In an English class, do gender differences prevent students from being active?
- How comfortable are students participating in classroom activities working with classmates of the same sex or different sex?

-Does working with a classmate of the same sex or different sex allow students to develop their English language?

4. FINDINGS

This section presents the online survey discussions that participants responded to regarding their English learning styles as affected by gender differences and their attitude towards working and communicating with classmates of the same sex and different sex.

4.1. Students Engagement in Learning Activities in an English Class

For the first aspect, female and male participants had different preferences in their responses, whether in how they preferred to express their opinions or to be active or silent in an English class. It revealed that more females liked to be active, which was encountered by 63.3% of respondents compared to only 36.7% of male students.

The majority of responses by female students preferred to be active. The reasons behind their answers can be seen in Tables 1 & 2.

Table 1. *Students' Reasons for Expressing Opinion*

Females' reasons to express opinion	Written form: Shyness; Have more time to think; Express myself better in writing, low self-confidence; Avoid language mistakes; I am an Introverted person; feel more comfortable with writing.
	Verbal form: speaking is easier than writing; feeling more comfortable.
Males' reason for expressing an opinion	Written form: It is less stressful; I write better than I speak; I'm introverted; I have low self-confidence.
	Verbal form: I prefer to express my thoughts without thinking of language mistakes; I like to express myself; I like to discuss ideas.

Table 2. *Students' Preferences to be Active or Silent in English Classes*

Male	
Active	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - I am brave to speak up. -Reduce stress. -Back up my confidence. -Depends on the professor.

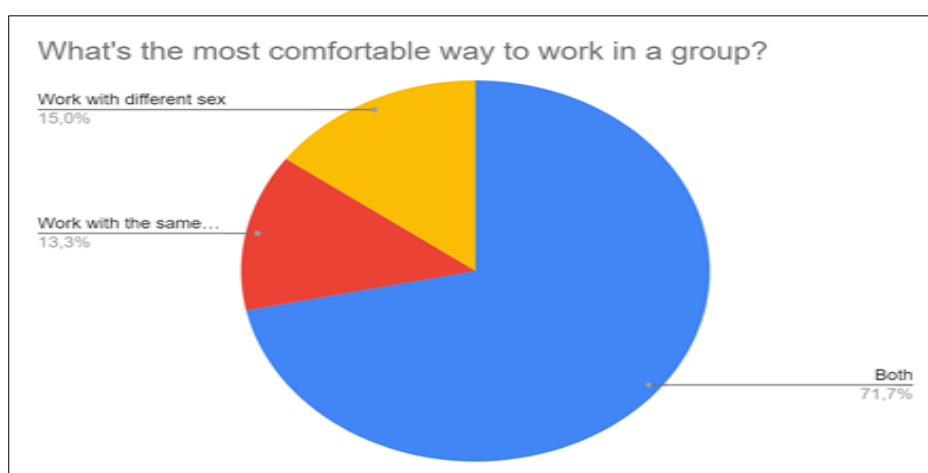
Silent	-I write better. -Depends on the topic. -Lack of confidence. I feel bored.
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Female	
Active	-Express myself. -Depends on the professor. -Subject preference. -Develop my English.
Silent	-Shyness. - Avoid embarrassment. -Depends on topics. -I am Introvert person.

4.2.Students’ Perception Regarding Learning Styles Affected by Gender Differences

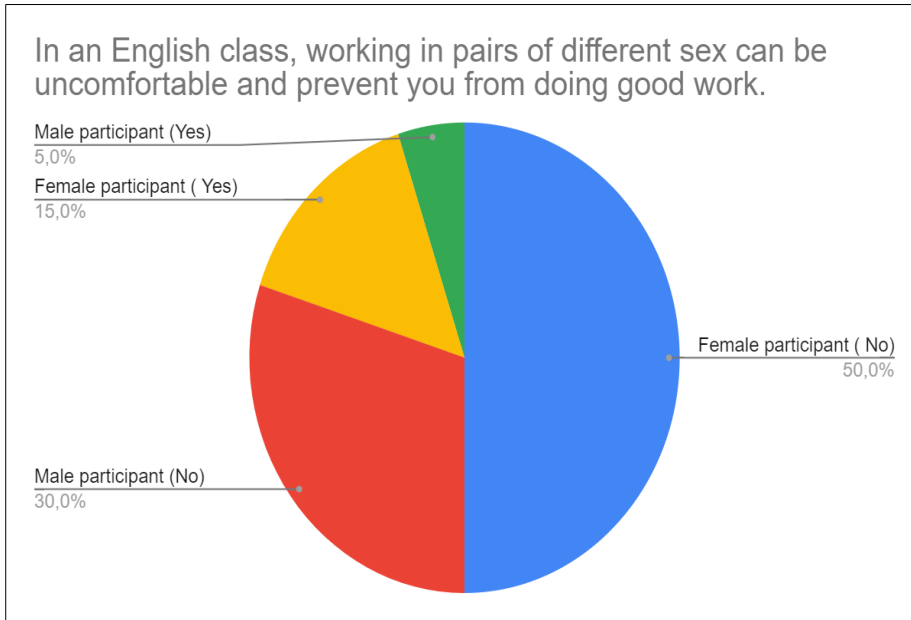
Female and male participants also had different opinions about working in a group, whether it was a single-sex group or a mixed group. The results showed that 71.7% of the participants had no gender preference for working in the group, while 13.3% preferred working with the same-sex group. As shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1



In the same way, participants' answers focused on working in pairs with different sex and its impact on their learning; females and males had no problem working in pairs with a different sex. Detailed results are presented in Figure 2.

Figure 2



4.3. Students' Perception of Learning Strategies to Improve English Dealing with Gender Differences

The students had different perceptions of improving their English language. Most students (male and female) did not feel likely to improve their English if they worked with the same sex. In another question about who is better at communication, 90% said it depended on the individual's skills, and 20% chose men or women. Some of their reasons can be seen in Table 3.

Figure 3

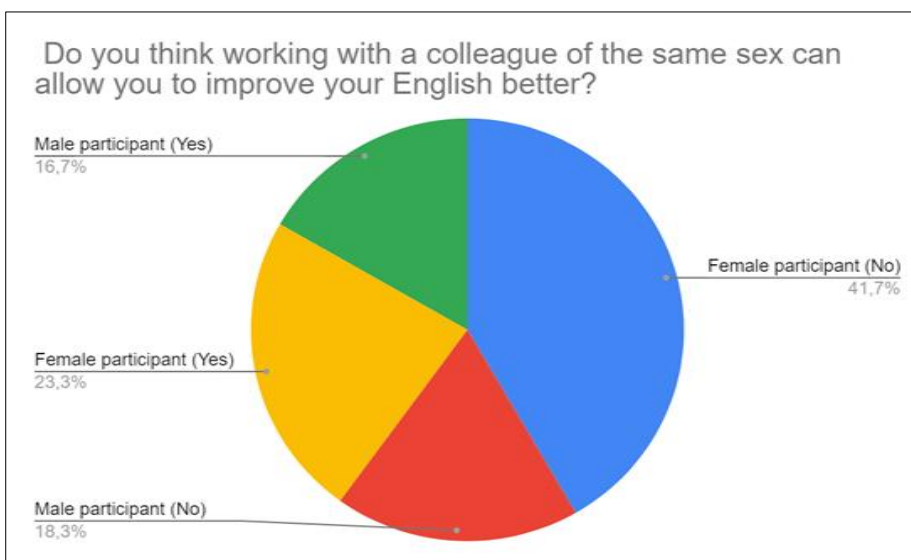


Table 3. *Students' Reasons About Who Is Better At Communication*

Male Students	Female Students
Most males are courageous.	Women tend to use non-verbal communication.
Men use verbal communication more.	Women care more about language and accent.

5. DISCUSSION

Male and female students had different preferences in terms of productive skills as a way to express their opinions and learn the English language, as shown in Tables 1 & 2. The data indicated that female students preferred writing to express their opinion in English to avoid language errors and barriers such as shyness and low self-confidence (30 % of females compared to 16.7% of males), for speaking (31.7% of females compared to 21.7% of males) preferred the verbal form for various reasons. The findings showed the effects of gender differences on the learning style chosen by female and male students to express their opinions. Females tended to choose to write or speak based on their emotions and concern about their outcome; illustrated by patterns as an example; low self-confidence; avoiding language errors, and feeling more comfortable.

These results supported the argument that female students tended to work harder for their outcomes (Rachel & Uri, 2009). Male students viewed the verbal form as a way to express themselves and their thoughts; therefore, they could express themselves as men.

Another fact distinguishing male and female students in English learning is their tendency to be active or silent in English class, which will contribute to their fluency in English, especially speaking. The findings indicated that female students outnumbered male students who liked to be silent (31.7% compared to 20%).

Conversely, male students 16.7% preferred to be active in class compared to 31.7% of female students. This result shows the activeness of females in learning English. Female students can be active and silent for different reasons, influenced by their feelings to express themselves and develop their English language, Shyness, and avoid Embarrassment. Conversely, the passivity of the male students was influenced by their lack of confidence and their preferences regarding the subject.

The results of this study showed at the level of the learning styles of the students in an English class that the majority of the students, male or female, have a neutral opinion concerning group work, whether it is of the same sex or different sex. The response was that 71.7% preferred to work with both (Figure 1).

As shown in Figure 2. 15% of female and 5% of male students felt uncomfortable working in pairs with a colleague of the opposite gender.

Despite the low percentage of those who find it uncomfortable to work with a colleague of a different sex, this indicates that there is a category whose learning style is influenced by gender differences.

Another significant finding was their perception of learning strategies to improve their English language when dealing with gender differences. It revealed that 41.7% of females and 18.3% of male students expressed their perception that working with a colleague of the same sex could not improve their English; on the other hand, 23.3% of females and 16.7% of males agreed that working with a same-sex colleague allows them to improve their English.

6. CONCLUSION

This article has discussed student learning styles as they are affected by gender differences in a tertiary-level English classroom. It revealed that male and female students had different perceptions regarding English language learning in the class. Thus, females and males had different ways of expressing their opinions and the extent of their activeness in class. Another difference manifests in students' strategies for learning English through their preferences in various learning activities such as same-sex and different-sex group work and pair work. This study demonstrated that females were more worried about their outcome, which is evident in most of the reasons given by participants.

As advocated (Croson & Gneezy, 2009), females are affected by emotions and worry about negative outcomes. Conversely, males were influenced more by their need to maintain their presence and personality as men.

There is a significant relationship between gender differences and English language learning based on female and male students' preferences to improve their language by working with the same sex or different sex. The percentage may vary regarding the impact of gender on language learning and students' communication with each other; however, a category showed through answers that gender has a role in the learning styles within the English class. Consequently, it is suggested to have a more intense observation of students' learning styles to figure out if there are different models in their English learning and achievement. In addition, more intense work is necessary to find other contributory factors that affect these differences.

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