



GENDER INFLUENCE LANGUAGE ACQUISITION AND LEARNING OUTCOMES: A MIXED MEMETHOD

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Abstract

This study examines the impact of gender on the language learning process and overall learning outcomes, utilizing a mixed-method approach to provide a comprehensive analysis. The research combines quantitative data from IELTS annual results with qualitative insights drawn from an experimental word recognition test conducted among middle school students. The IELTS data reflects a consistent pattern over a five-year period, suggesting that female learners tend to achieve slightly higher scores in language proficiency assessments compared to their male counterparts. In parallel, the word recognition experiment revealed that female participants outperformed male students in terms of recall accuracy and task performance. These findings were based on carefully controlled conditions with equal participation from both genders, providing a balanced and comparative framework for analysis. The outcomes from both the standardized testing data and the classroom-based experiment indicate that gender may have a subtle yet noticeable influence on certain aspects of mental processing and language acquisition abilities. This research aims to contribute to the broader understanding of how gender dynamics can shape educational experiences, particularly in the field of second language learning, and highlights the relevance of incorporating gender as a variable in educational assessments and pedagogical strategies.

Introduction

Learning a new language is becoming popular in our modern world. Language acquisition is really complicated and it may be a long journey. Moreover, it can be affected by various aspects, such as age, gender and cognitive abilities. Many



scientists believe that learners' gender plays crucial role when it comes to language learning and using it in real life. Also there are so many researchers who worked on this topic and they wanted to gather some data about gender effects in learning process and outcomes. One of them is Tanned (1990), he introduced term of "genderlect" to the subject.

According to "Gender and language acquisition", language is a significant mode through which gender, a continuing social practice, is ordained or created; gender is an act performed by the individuals, partially with the help of language choices, as compared to an entity that individuals are or have (West and Zimmerman, 1987 cited in Ehrlich, 2004). Wodak and Benke (1997) argue that gender-specific studies are mostly ambiguous, considering the researcher's expectations about sex and gender, the framework, the population etc. They quote Eckert and McConnell (1992) who assert that the language used by females reveal certain aspects about their gender such as a female's linguistic choices has been believed to show their traditionalism, status perception, uncertainty, reverence, nurture, emotional eloquence, compassion for people around and solidarity. Men's language, on the other hand, is considered as demonstrating their roughness which is taken an important factor of masculinity, aggressiveness, freedom, capability, hierarchy and power. Studies make different claims that are often conflicting (Hassan, 2023). This article will focus on some methods which will help to show if the gender really has an impact on language acquisition and learning outcomes and most of the experiments will be conducted with the participation of teenager students , who are mostly middle school students. Furthermore, school teachers' personal experiences and observations during their career will be used to get more concrete conclusions.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Numerous studies have investigated the role of gender in language acquisition and academic performance. According to West and Zimmerman (1987, cited in Ehrlich, 2004), gender is not merely an inherent identity but a social act performed through language. In this regard, language functions as a medium through which gender is constructed and expressed. Wodak and Benke (1997) argue that gender-specific studies are often ambiguous and influenced by the expectations of the researchers, the frameworks they use, and the population being studied. They reference Eckert and McConnell (1992), who highlight how female linguistic choices tend to reflect



traits such as traditionalism, emotional expression, and solidarity, whereas male linguistic expression is associated with masculinity, assertiveness, freedom, and power.

In recent research, Vietnamese scholar Phuong Hoang Yen and colleagues examined the effect of gender on vocabulary acquisition among EFL learners. Their findings suggest that gender plays a role in the strategies used for vocabulary learning. Similarly, Indonesian researcher Sri Wahyuni studied the influence of gender on EFL tertiary students' speaking strategy use. The results revealed that gender significantly affected the selection and application of speaking strategies. These perspectives align with the findings of the current study, which analyzes IELTS results and experimental data from word recognition tasks among middle school students. According to IELTS annual data from 2020 to 2024, female students achieved slightly higher average scores than their male counterparts. Likewise, in a controlled vocabulary recognition task, girls demonstrated better performance, achieving an accuracy rate of 81.25% compared to 72.92% for boys. These findings support the notion that gender may influence language learning outcomes, particularly in proficiency tests and word recall tasks.

METHODOLOGY

In this article, a mixed research approach was used in order to achieve objectives and aims of whether the gender's role important in language learning. Mixed Research Approach (or Mixed-Methods Research) integrates both quantitative and qualitative methods within single research to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the research problem. There are several reasons for using a mixed-methods design: expansion, complementarity, development, completeness, compensation, corroboration/confirmation, and diversity.

This study aims to employ three methods to achieve its objectives :

- a) Yearly assessment of language proficiency certification, IELTS to see how many boys and girls got the higher scores in recent years.
- b) Pair Matching game among students between 13 and 16-year-olds. In this experiment, 16 students participated and boys as well as girls group , the equal 8 students each. Participants were given 12 unfamiliar words with their definitions and 3 minutes were separated to try to remember as many words as possible. After the given time was over, the papers of words were collected and pair matching tasks

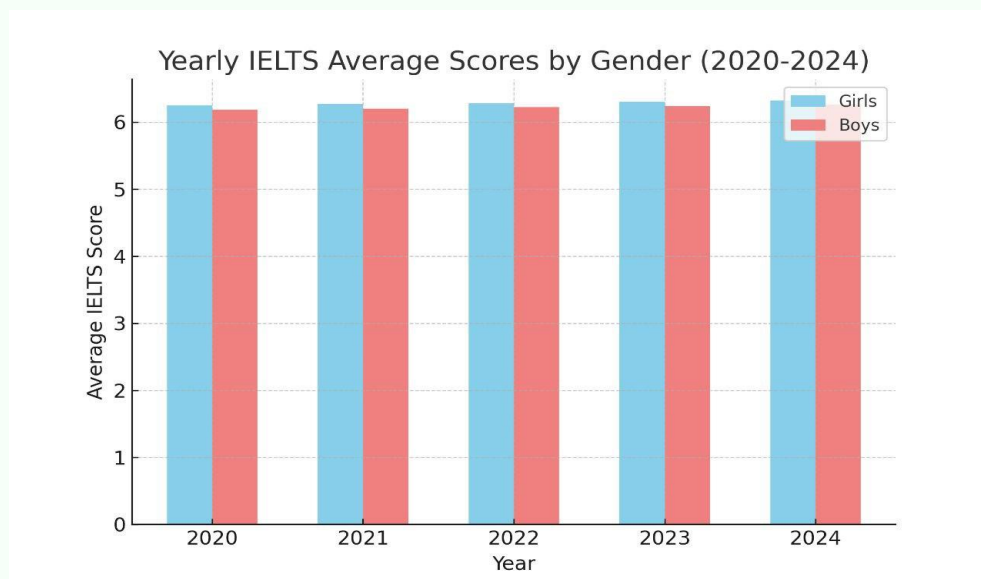
were distributed and participants were supposed to accomplish the task in 5 minutes.

There are the words:

1. Household
2. Backpack
3. Rainbow
4. Mountain
5. Lipstick
6. Telescope
7. Whisper
8. Sunflower
9. Adventure
10. Lighthouse
11. Window-shopping
12. Thunderstorm

RESULTS

There is the chart which shows the annual results of IELTS among female and male test takers on average over the five-year period between 2020-2024. According to British Council website, there is a bar chart indicates the average scores of IELTS by female and male students.

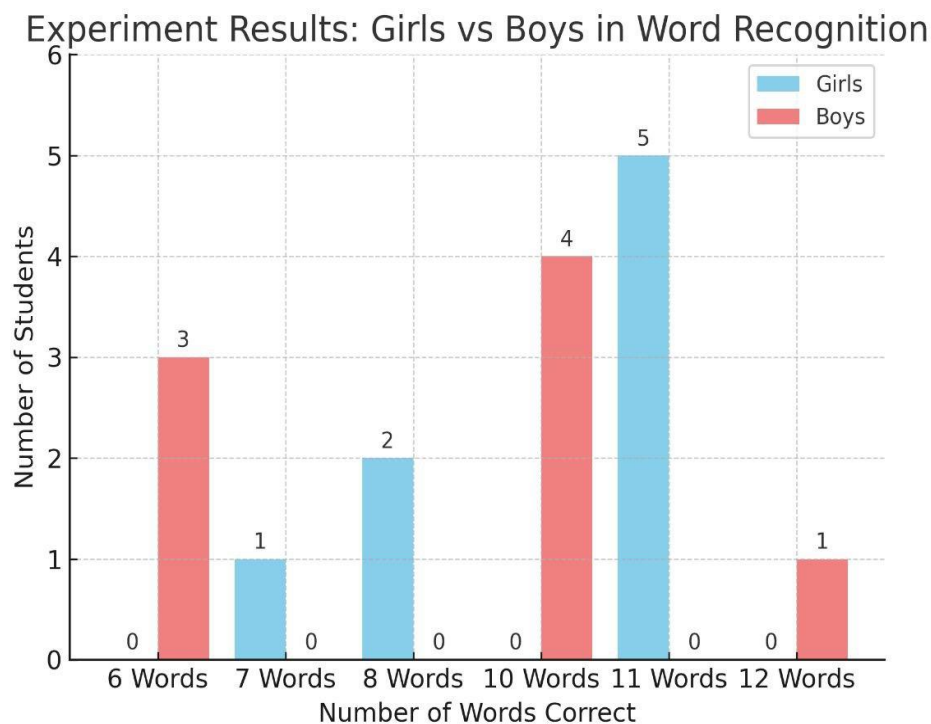


As we can see here, there is a slight difference between overall band scores of girls and boys, by females achieving a bit higher scores than male students.

In the International English Language Testing System (IELTS), gender-based performance differences have been observed. According to available data, female test takers generally achieve slightly higher average scores than their male counterparts. For instance, in the Academic IELTS module, female candidates had an average score of 6.28, while male candidates scored 6.22. Similarly, in 2018, female test takers achieved an average score of 6.08, compared to 5.97 for males. These differences, though modest, suggest a slight edge for female candidates in IELTS performance.

According to research, girls generally tend to achieve slightly better results in IELTS compared to boys; studies show that girls may outperform boys in English proficiency, particularly when looking at test takers between 16-19 years old across various countries.

When it comes to the results of the experiment among students, there is the result.





As we can see, there was a comparison between girls' and boys' results, such as girls' accuracy was 81,25% while boys' accuracy was 72,92 %. Overall, in this experiment females performed better, with a higher percentage of correct answers than male students. This suggests that in this particular research, girls had better-developed word recognition skills.

DISCUSSION

The results of this study suggest that gender may indeed have an influence on language acquisition and learning outcomes, although this effect is relatively subtle. The data drawn from the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) scores and the experimental word recognition task consistently point to a slight advantage for female learners in language proficiency. This finding aligns with the existing literature, which has long highlighted gender-based differences in educational performance, particularly in language learning contexts.

In the IELTS results, female students consistently outperformed male students, with a marginal yet significant difference in average band scores over a period of five years. For instance, the average score for female candidates was 6.28, compared to 6.22 for males. While the difference is small, it suggests that, on average, female learners may possess certain advantages when it comes to language proficiency tests. This outcome is consistent with global trends where studies have shown that girls often perform better than boys in language-related assessments. Several factors could contribute to this trend, including differences in study habits, motivation, or cognitive processing strategies between genders. It is important to note, however, that the performance gap is not drastic, suggesting that while gender plays a role, other factors such as individual learning strategies and environmental influences may also be at play.

The results from the experimental word recognition task further support the notion that gender may impact specific cognitive skills related to language acquisition. In this experiment, which involved a group of middle school students, female participants demonstrated superior performance in recalling and matching unfamiliar words, achieving an accuracy rate of 81.25% compared to 72.92% for male participants. This finding suggests that, at least in this particular task, girls may possess better-developed word recognition skills or may utilize more effective memory retrieval strategies. The experiment's design, with its equal participation



of male and female students and controlled conditions, ensured that the observed differences could be attributed to gender rather than other extraneous variables.

These results also echo the findings of other researchers who have explored the relationship between gender and language acquisition. Phuong Hoang Yen and colleagues, for instance, found that gender influenced vocabulary acquisition strategies in Vietnamese EFL learners. Similarly, Sri Wahyuni's study on Indonesian EFL students highlighted that gender affected the strategies used for speaking skills. The consistency of these findings across different educational contexts and language skills suggests that gender may play a role in shaping how learners approach language learning tasks.

Moreover, the discussion on the theoretical aspects of language acquisition provided in the literature review adds depth to these findings. The concept of "genderlect," introduced by Tannen (1990), points to the idea that language reflects social gender roles. Female learners are often found to prioritize communication strategies that emphasize emotional connection, social cohesion, and nurturance, while male learners may focus on assertiveness, competition, and autonomy in their language use. This theory suggests that such gendered differences in communication styles could also extend to language learning behaviors, potentially explaining the observed performance gaps between male and female learners.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study has provided valuable insights into the potential influence of gender on language acquisition and learning outcomes. Through both quantitative and experimental data, it has been demonstrated that female learners tend to outperform their male counterparts in language proficiency assessments, including the IELTS exam and word recognition tasks. While the differences are modest, they are consistent and suggest that gender may play a role in shaping language learning outcomes.

The study's results support the notion that gender differences in language acquisition may be linked to cognitive abilities, learning strategies, and possibly even societal expectations related to gender roles. Female learners may exhibit greater word recognition accuracy and slightly better performance on standardized language proficiency tests, which could be attributed to various cognitive and social factors. However, it is important to emphasize that these gender differences



should not be viewed in isolation, as individual learner characteristics, environmental factors, and the learning context also contribute to language acquisition outcomes.

The findings of this study also align with previous research on the subject. Studies by Phuong Hoang Yen, Sri Wahyuni, and other scholars have found similar patterns in which gender influences the selection of learning strategies and overall academic performance, particularly in language-related tasks. The current study adds to this body of research by providing further evidence of gender-based differences in language learning, specifically in the context of middle school learners.

Overall, while the gender gap in language acquisition and performance may not be large, it highlights the importance of considering gender as a factor in language education. Future research could delve deeper into the specific cognitive and social mechanisms that underlie these differences and explore ways to tailor educational approaches to address the diverse needs of male and female learners. Educators may consider gender-specific strategies to enhance language learning outcomes for all students, ensuring that both male and female learners can achieve their full potential in acquiring new languages.

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