

## **The Impact of gender on language learning**

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### **SUMMARY:**

Viet Nam is reforming its educational policy to ensure support for those who use English for their work and study.

With this in mind, a study into gender and early schooling examined how gender affects students' speech and their language learning.

The research looked at the different attention students received in the classroom.

It was found that male students are often praised by their teachers for speaking out, acting confidently and expressing opinion, whereas females are often praised for being quiet, studious, and polite.

This was attributed to the accepted roles either sex is expected to fulfil: males are often expected to fulfil the traits of masculinity by being aggressive and ambitious, whereas females are expected to play the role of femininity by being supportive and submissive. These traits were evident in the different genders' approach to learning English.

Consequently, gender difference is an important theme in linguistic education because it influences the design of curriculum, teaching methods, and learning processes.

The presentation illustrated how an ESL lesson can make learners aware of sexist language and gave implications for curriculum designers in order to take the gender of teachers, learners and topic learning into consideration as it is a significant factor in determining quantity, quality and the nature of classroom interaction.

In many Asian countries, gender appears to be highly significant because it has been noted that many Asian cultures are viewed as male-dominated societies in which women are treated as the weaker sex.

Studies have revealed that some students' reluctance to ask questions and appear confident is because they don't want to appear confrontational.

These cultural differences are highly significant because gender is viewed as an important issue in language learning as it can have a significant impact on students' foreign language achievements.

Research based on teaching ESP to students in the department mathematics - dominated by boys - and in the chemistry departments - dominated by girls - was conducted to determine the impact of gender on a student's oral performance and whether girls perform better than boys in learning ESP.

The observations were carried out in the maths department where females accounted for 10 per cent of the class and in the chemistry department where females accounted for about 90 per cent of the class.

A total of 83 students participated in all classroom activities, namely giving presentations based on the given text and exercises on the development of grammar.

The findings were that a majority of males in both classes did not perform as well as females in giving the presentations. The girls also took a more dominant role in classroom conversations. Generally, girls were better in learning language and appreciated language learning believing it would be good for their future career, while boys seemed to underestimate the importance of language skills.

## Conclusions:

Teachers should provide opportunities for students to discuss their feelings through carefully planned exercises.

Teachers should be more aware of the signals sent to students via body language and speech.

Teachers should familiarize themselves with information on gender issues and TESOL.

Teachers should avoid the use of sexist and racist language.

These measures will help teachers to be more sensitive in their approach and gain better results in mixed sex classrooms.

Q: what are the next steps in the Vietnamese study?

A: there are many differences in males and females in the sample, so it may be good to have a fuller study. The research is ongoing, and the data is being processed, and the analysis is not yet fully completed.

Q: Did you talk to teachers their expectations for their female/male students' learning the subject?

A: Not directly, but this study focused only on differences between males and females in classes, and only with observations and questionnaires so far. The study addressed how different students were learning between different subject areas- in different departments, so the initial findings are only focusing on students. The research is ongoing.

Q. What notable differences did you notice between male and female student behaviour in the class room from this study?

A. It became apparent that females prefer cooperation and a collective approach to classroom activities, whereas males appeared to prefer competition and individualism. Males are under pressure to conform to the traits of masculinity and this was reflected in their competitive nature.