
RESEARCH ARTICLE

Gender and Performance: Speaking as an Example

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ABSTRACT

This review article addresses the correlation between gender and speaking performance in language learning, focusing on various factors influencing learning outcomes. By analyzing internal and external factors, including gender, the article highlights the complex interplay between personal attributes and environmental conditions in shaping speaking abilities. Additionally, the review discusses the implications for educators in creating inclusive learning environments and adapting teaching approaches to accommodate gender differences. The results underscore the significance of comprehending gender dynamics to improve language skills and support fair educational methods.

KEYWORDS

Speaking, Speaking Competence, Gender, Performance, language learning, and Gender differences.

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1. Introduction

The relationship between gender and performance in language acquisition, specifically in verbal communication, is an intricate and multi-dimensional subject that has attracted considerable interest in academic studies. This review article discusses how gender affects speaking performance through analyzing different elements that impact language acquisition and how gender disparities can influence speaking skills.

1.1 Research Question

How do gender differences influence speaking performance in language learning, and what are the implications for educators in creating inclusive and effective learning environments?

1.2 Research Objective

The aim of this review is to analyze the correlation between gender and speaking performance in language learning. The goal is to pinpoint the internal and external factors that play a part in these variations and to examine the effects on educators when developing teaching techniques that cater to different learner requirements. The article aims to increase comprehension of language proficiency and achieve fair educational outcomes by emphasizing gender dynamics.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Performance in Language Learning

The importance of performance in language learning lies in its application within real-life situations, rather than simply possessing theoretical knowledge. This section delves into the views of top researchers on this subject. As per Ellis (2008), language learning

performance reflects one's language competence in practical situations. Students need to effectively use language in various communication settings. This viewpoint emphasizes the significance of not only possessing language proficiency, but also utilizing it competently in different situations. Canale and Swain (1980) consider performance to be an essential aspect of communicative competence. Fluency in language, sociolinguistics, and pragmatics is necessary for effective communication. Performance demonstrates how well learners can use language skills in real-life situations, highlighting the significance of applying language abilities in everyday interactions.

Both Ellis and Canale and Swain highlight that performance in language learning represents the practical application of language competence. This means that students must demonstrate fluency and accuracy when using language. Therefore, achieving success in language learning goes beyond simply memorizing vocabulary and grammar principles. This entails having a deeper grasp of the language by considering social and cultural nuances to ensure successful communication.

2.2 Speaking as a key aspect of good performance

Performance requires various language skills such as speaking, writing, listening, and reading. Every skill demonstrates the learner's proficiency in using the language in different situations and environments. Nevertheless, speaking is seen as an especially important element of successful language acquisition. Harmer (2007) defines speaking as the act of creating and sharing significance through both verbal and non-verbal interaction. This explanation stresses the importance of communication and interaction in speech, highlighting their essential role in effectively expressing thoughts and ideas. When students participate in speaking tasks, they are not just producing words; they are actively communicating information, feelings, and intentions.

Brown (2007) emphasizes various components of successful verbal communication, such as linguistic elements, nonverbal cues, fluency, pronunciation, tone, and pragmatics. He stresses how crucial it is to combine these components in order to attain communicative competence, which is the skill of using language effectively and appropriately in authentic scenarios. Brown's research highlights the various aspects of communication and its crucial importance in language skill development. Speaking provides a key illustration of performance in language learning as it necessitates the combination of different abilities and knowledge. Speaking is unlike other language skills because it requires processing and feedback in real-time, which makes it a dynamic and challenging part of learning a language. By speaking, students show how well they can use language in real-time interactions, which is a crucial sign of their overall language skills. In conclusion, while language learning performance includes multiple skills, speaking is central to demonstrating good performance. Its interactive nature and the need for real-time processing make it a critical aspect of language proficiency.

2.3. Internal and external factors that influence speaking

Acquiring proficiency in speaking is commonly viewed as the most essential part of learning a foreign language, but it is also acknowledged as the most difficult skill to master, even more so than listening, reading, and writing (Harmer, 2007). Various reasons can hinder students from effectively speaking a foreign language like English, whether it be in the classroom or in other environments. Rajitha et al. (2020) elaborate on these factors by dividing them into internal and external categories, emphasizing the intricate relationship between individual characteristics and external circumstances in influencing speaking skills.

2.3.1 Internal Factors

Internal factors originate within the learner and can significantly impact their speaking abilities. For example, Gender; studies indicate that language learning styles and preferences may be influenced by gender, which could impact speaking ability. In language acquisition, a learner's motivation is crucial. Students who are very motivated are more inclined to participate in speaking tasks and consistently practice. Having a positive attitude and being willing to communicate are crucial for improving speaking skills in language learning. Personality; traits like extroversion or introversion can impact how comfortable a learner feels and how much they participate in speaking activities. Learning Style; the way in which individuals learn, whether it is visual, auditory, or kinesthetic can impact how they approach speaking assignments and their overall success.

2.3.2 External Factors

External factors exist outside the learner and can also affect their speaking performance. For example, cultural norms and values play a significant role in shaping language use and perceptions, affecting both the willingness of learners to speak and their communicative skills. The language environment in one's home and neighborhood can either facilitate or hinder the practice of speaking skills. A supportive environment encourages more frequent and effective language use.

According to Teh et al. (2009), factors like proficiency, age, economic status, and learning duration have been shown through research to affect language learning outcomes. Comprehending both internal and external factors is essential for educators and students, as it enables the development of specific strategies to address speaking challenges and improve language skills.

2.4. Gender as an example of External factors

This section emphasizes that gender is only one of many factors affecting speaking. Examining how gender influences language development shows how societal expectations and personal views can affect the way individuals learn. As per Elliott et al. (2000), the distinction between gender and sex is based on their definitions: "Gender pertains to the psychological and social attributes linked to being male or female, whereas sex refers to the biological characteristics of being male or female." Recognizing the significance of gender differentiation is necessary to understand how it influences behavior and learning. Unlike biological sex, "gender" encompasses traits and behaviors expected by society based on perceived masculinity or femininity (Ning, 2010).

These expectations are not fixed; they change with social changes and can differ greatly among various cultures. Gender roles are acquired through socialization and can be shaped by various factors like education and economics. The roles vary greatly within the same culture and differ significantly across different cultures. While a person's biological sex stays the same, gender roles are created by society and can evolve. Gender can influence speaking skills differently based on societal factors and personal backgrounds due to its fluid nature. For instance, societal expectations might encourage or discourage speaking assertively or publicly based on gender, affecting an individual's confidence and opportunities to practice speaking. Understanding the influence of gender as an internal factor in speaking is essential for educators and researchers. It highlights the need for a nuanced approach that considers the complex interplay of societal expectations and individual identity in shaping speaking proficiency and communication styles.

3. Methodology

This review article synthesizes findings from a range of academic studies and literature on gender differences in language learning, particularly in speaking performance. The method involved a comprehensive analysis of existing research, including empirical studies, theoretical frameworks, and case studies. Key sources were selected based on their relevance and contribution to the understanding of gender dynamics in language learning. The review aims to provide an integrative perspective on how gender influences speaking proficiency and the implications for educational practices.

4. Results and Discussion

Research has extensively explored the relationship between gender and language learning, particularly in the area of speaking performance. Some studies suggest notable gender differences, with females often exhibiting stronger verbal abilities and males excelling in spatial tasks. However, other findings indicate that gender may not be a significant factor in predicting academic performance. This section will examine the complex and sometimes contradictory evidence surrounding the correlation between gender and speaking proficiency.

4.1. Gender Differences in Language Learning Strategies.

Ehrman and Oxford (1989) took a distinct approach by investigating and comparing the learning methods used by males and females in learning second or foreign languages. Their research provides valuable insights into how gender influences language learning strategies, particularly in the context of speaking. Ehrman and Oxford found that females tend to use a wider variety of strategies to learn and practice languages compared to males. More specifically, females are more inclined to communicate and interact with others in the language they are studying outside of the educational setting. This indicates that females might be more engaged in utilizing the language in practical scenarios outside of school, improving their speaking skills. The findings from Elliott et al. (2000) further support this, indicating that females tend to excel in verbal skills from an early age and maintain this advantage over time. This superiority in verbal tasks, such as reading comprehension, vocabulary, grammar, and communication, contrasts with males, who often face more difficulties in language-related tasks but demonstrate strengths in spatial tasks, such as playing with building blocks, solving puzzles, or engaging in art projects.

4.2. Gender Differences in language Use

Studies have consistently pointed out disparities in language use between genders, uncovering unique communication patterns in males and females. Ning's research from 2010 offers understanding of these variations, specifically within the English language usage. The research discovered that males are more likely to incorporate taboo words and slang language into their daily conversations than females, despite having similar educational backgrounds. This disparity underscores noticeable variations in vocabulary usage between genders within the English language context.

Research by Lakoff (1976) and Tannen (1990) further asserts that there are distinct differences in language usage between males and females. Female language is often characterized by :

- Lexical Hedges and Fillers : Women tend to use words like "sort of," "kind of," and "you know" to soften statements.
- Question Tags : Females frequently add tags like "isn't it ?" or "Don't you think ?" to seek confirmation or agreement.

- High Intonation in Declarative Statements : Females often use rising intonation at the end of declarative sentences, which can make statements sound like questions.
- Hypercorrect Grammar: females are more inclined to strictly follow grammatical rules.

Extremely Polite expressions: females often use more formal language, like "Would you be able to...?" or "Is it possible for you to...?"

- Females tend to steer clear of using harsh or offensive language.
- Tentative Language : Females often use language that is less assertive, reflecting a more tentative style of communication.

In contrast, male language use is often more assertive. Males are more likely to :

- Use Direct Language : Males tend to be more straightforward and assertive in their speech.
- Employ Slang and Taboo Words : As noted in Ning's study, men frequently incorporate slang and taboo language into their everyday conversations.
- Assertiveness : Males often use language to assert dominance or control in conversations.

In summary, they highlighted differences in language styles, with females often using more tentative language and males engaging in more assertive speech.

4.3. Gender Differences in Classroom Participation

Research has identified notable gender differences in classroom participation, particularly in language-related activities. These differences can influence how males and females engage with language learning and express their ideas. As an example, Mahmud (2010) highlights that several traits commonly associated with females, such as shyness, nervousness, and uncertainty, can impact their language skills, particularly in speaking. To navigate these challenges, females may often turn to writing as a means to articulate their thoughts and ideas. This preference for written communication can serve as an alternative outlet for expression when verbal participation feels daunting.

In contrast, males often maintain their assertiveness by opting for spoken communication to express their ideas, even in tasks related to reading and writing. This tendency contributes to a notable gender gap in reading achievement, where males may dominate verbal interactions. The study by Collis and Williams (1987) compared males and females on verbal ability and found that males predominate in class discussions, often participating more actively and frequently than their female counterparts. Gall and Gall (1976, 1982) support this view, noting that males are generally more actively involved in the classroom. They tend to interact more often and make more valuable and influential contributions than females. This active participation can enhance their speaking skills and reinforce their confidence in verbal communication.

4.4. Gender and Verbal Ability

Research on gender differences in language learning, particularly regarding verbal ability, has produced inconsistent and inconclusive results. Despite the interest in this area, it remains relatively unexplored, with findings often varying across studies. Some studies suggest that gender may not be a significant factor in determining language learning outcomes. The varying achievements of male and female students indicate that the gender variable might not have a noticeable impact or could even be considered irrelevant in certain contexts. These findings challenge the notion that gender inherently influences verbal ability.

One study that supports this perspective is the research conducted by Hennessy and Merrifield (1978). Their study indicates that overall verbal skills are not significantly affected by the learner's gender. Based on their analysis, the authors inferred that gender does not play a decisive role in predicting performance in verbal aspects of language learning.

5. Implications for Educators

In summary, these academic studies collectively underscore the significance of acknowledging gender differences in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning environments. They highlight gender as one of the main factors influencing performance, emphasizing that neglecting its impact could lead to the development of inadequate learning environments and materials for both male and female learners.

Exploring the correlation between gender and performance enables educators to tailor their teaching approaches effectively. Educators can use successful strategies by understanding how gender affects learning and by facilitating appropriate classroom activities (Meece, Glienke, & Burg, 2006). This method guarantees that teaching techniques are inclusive and adaptable to the various requirements of every student, fostering equitable learning results. Understanding gender differences in language

acquisition is essential for educators in order to establish supportive and successful learning environments. Educators can enhance support for all learners by factoring in gender during curriculum design and instructional strategies. Ongoing study and focus on gender dynamics in the classroom will help guarantee that educational strategies are fair and inclusive, ultimately positively impacting all students.

In conclusion, it is essential to recognize and address gender differences in EFL classrooms in order to develop effective teaching techniques and foster a varied educational environment. Educators are advised to keep themselves informed about the latest research and adapt their teaching strategies to meet the diverse needs of their students.

6. Conclusion

To sum up, this review article emphasizes the important impact of gender on speaking proficiency in language acquisition.

While some studies suggest notable differences in verbal abilities between males and females, others indicate that gender may not be a decisive factor. The importance of taking into account internal and external factors like motivation, cultural background, and societal expectations is highlighted in the review, which influences speaking abilities. It is important for educators to comprehend these dynamics in order to create successful teaching techniques that assist all students. Educators can assist students in reaching their maximum language proficiency by creating an educational environment that is inclusive and responsive. Ongoing research in this field is crucial to continue investigating the intricate connection of factors affecting language learning results.

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