

opción

Revista de Antropología, Ciencias de la Comunicación y de la Información, Filosofía,
Linguística y Semiótica, Problemas del Desarrollo, la Ciencia y la Tecnología

Año 35, 2019, Especial N°

23

Revista de Ciencias Humanas y Sociales

ISSN 1012-1587/ ISSNe: 2477-9385

Depósito Legal pp 198402ZU45



Universidad del Zulia
Facultad Experimental de Ciencias
Departamento de Ciencias Humanas
Maracaibo - Venezuela

Gender differences in motivation toward learning EFL skills among international students

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Abstract

This paper aims to examine the effects of the gender differences on learners' motivation in learning the four skills of English as a foreign language as well as to identify the proper types of motivation for males and females via a qualitative semi-structured interview. The findings showed that all the males have extrinsic motivation in all four skills. On the other hand, females differ among themselves in their motivation. In conclusion, it is also the teachers' responsibility to guide and direct their learners to achieve better outcomes in learning the four EFL skills.

Keywords: Gender, Motivation, English as a foreign language (EFL).

Diferencias de género en la motivación hacia el aprendizaje de habilidades EFL entre estudiantes internacionales

Resumen

Este documento tiene como objetivo examinar los efectos de las diferencias de género en la motivación de los alumnos al aprender las cuatro habilidades del inglés como lengua extranjera, así como identificar los tipos adecuados de motivación para hombres y mujeres a través de una entrevista cualitativa semiestructurada. Los resultados mostraron que todos los hombres tienen una motivación extrínseca en las cuatro habilidades. Por otro lado, las mujeres difieren entre ellas en su motivación. En conclusión, también es responsabilidad de los

maestros guiar y dirigir a sus alumnos para lograr mejores resultados en el aprendizaje de las cuatro habilidades EFL.

Palabras clave: Género, Motivación, Inglés como lengua extranjera (EFL).

1. INTRODUCTION

One of the differences between males and females in learning the four skills of English as a foreign language is their motivation. Psychologically, motivation is a process that leads to achieving a certain goal. The differences in motivation can be observed clearly between males and females in a school, university, or in any other place in which they learn English, even there is a variation over the types of motivation used by the learners (IHSAN, 2016). In addition, many previous studies adopted the motivation theories to explain the language learning differences among learners' educational achievements. Therefore, Gender differences play an important role in shaping the motivation to learn a language and it has an explicit impact on the fields of English language learning, sociolinguistics, psychology, and education (GARDNER, 1985).

There is a clear difference and variation in motivation between males and females when they learn English as a second language. Hence, these differences affect males' and females' overall performance in the four skills of English. These differences create a gap between males and females in their learning inside the same classroom. There are several theories related to the motivation types in

learning English as a foreign language, such as DECI & RYAN (1985) theory of motivation where he divided the motivation into two types integrative motivation and instrumental motivation, on the other hand, BOEKESTEIJN (2015) also have their own theory on motivation and they divided motivation into the intrinsic and extrinsic motivation.

There is another important element related to the gender differences in the motivation to learn the foreign language which it is the age and it has been stated as an important factor in many studies such as ASLAN (2009), AWAN & AZEEM (2017) and ALRESHEEDI (2014) Since a long time, the age has been related in many studies with the motivation and with the gender differences. Males and females' learners go through many stages in their lives and these stages are correlated with different types of motivation and interests especially in the process of learning English as a foreign language (DENZIN & LINCOLN, 2000).

Based on the results of this research, English foreign language teachers are the target of this investigation. Teachers of English as a second language can recognize the important relationship between gender and learners' motivation in learning English as a foreign language. Also, teachers will understand the nature of these differences in motivation and learn how to deal with it in their classes. The second purpose of this study is toward the learners of the second language. Based on this investigation, males and females learners can understand the different types of motivation and which type is suitable for them to

enhance the learning of the foreign language (Akram & Ghani, 2013; KHAN ET AL., 2016).

2. METHOD

The qualitative approach brings an important strength to the research questions. First, the qualitative approach provides the concrete and complex illustration of the effects of the gender differences in the types of motivation of the four skills in English foreign language learners (BOERMA et al., 2016). Second, qualitative researchers aim to gather an in-depth understanding of human behavior and the reasons that govern such behavior. The qualitative method investigates the why and how of decision making, not just what, where, and when. These characteristics of a qualitative research methodology successfully contribute to the understanding of the males and females' participants and the types of motivation that have affect their learning of English as a foreign language (MOOSAVINIA & KHARRASI, 2018).

3. RESULTS & FINDINGS

The results showed that all the males (M1, M2, and M3) have Extrinsic motivation in all the four skills reading, writing, speaking, and listening. They were clearly motivated by some extrinsic goals and benefits. Their interviews last between 20 to 30 minutes. On the other

hand, the female students differ among themselves in their motivation. Female 1 interview took 45 minutes long, then the researcher transcribed the interview and analyzed it (GUERRERO, 2015).

The results showed that F1 had a mix of the two types of motivation. She was intrinsically and extrinsically motivated in the reading skills at the same time, also, the same with the writing, speaking and listening skills. However, female's 1 results showed that her intrinsic motivation was higher than her extrinsic motivation in reading and speaking while her extrinsic motivation was higher in writing and listening. This led the researcher to explain and relate this issue with the age factor. Because the other two females (F2 and F3) had clear types of motivation, not mixed, and their age was between 20 to 30 years old like the males, also their interviews last between 20 to 30 minutes.

Language Skills	Males		Females	
	Intrinsic	Extrinsic	Intrinsic	Extrinsic
Reading	/	M1, M2, M3	F1, F2, F3	F1
Writing	/	M1, M2, M3	F1	F1, F2, F3
Speaking	/	M1, M2, M3	F1, F2, F3	F1
Listening	/	M1, M2, M3	F1	F1, F2, F3

Female 2 was intrinsically motivated in the reading skills and the speaking skill, extrinsically motivated in the writing skills and listening skills. Female 3 was also intrinsically motivated in reading and speaking skills, extrinsically motivated in Writing and listening skills. Moreover, Female 3 showed some Tendencies to be a little bet extrinsic in reading skills but the priority was for the intrinsic in the reading skills.

Males showed the type of reading motivation which they possess by clearly setting their goals. Male 1, 2, and 3 showed beyond doubt the extrinsic motivation in reading:

M1: Frankly speaking, it has always been a reward that made me the one who I am today, I am here to do my masters and due to that I am so passionate to do whatever necessary to complete it....

M2: I said before, the main purpose for me is to get a pass in English language Insha'Allah..., ... it is important for me, after finishing the course maybe I get a good job and good salary if I have many skills for reading.

M3: Actually, I want to learn it to pass the test of language and it will help me in my study, just want to pass the exam, I now only want to pass the test.

Male 1,2, and 3 used the extrinsic type of motivation by indicating that they have an external motive moves them toward achieving their goals. They clearly stated their goals and they used these external goals as a motivation for them to learn the reading skills. According to Khan, Sani, and Shaikh-Abdullah, Learners with an instrumental motivation want to learn a second or foreign language because of a practical reason such as getting a salary bonus or getting into college.

On the other hand, females' learners were totally different than males. Their results indicated that all the females 1, 2, and 3 had intrinsic motivation in learning the reading skill.

F1: actually, I try to find an interesting topic that I love. For example, I want to know about some stories happened in the old centuries....

F2: before I get to UUM in my home, I was fond of books and I used to read books..., Hence I love reading myself.

F3: But when the time moved on, I start to be interested when I learn skills in reading, I love learning this skill because I love reading.

Females 1, 2, and 3 clearly showed an intrinsic motivation toward learning the reading skills and they attributed this to the love and enjoyment that they find when they read and learn some reading

skills. Female 1 stated that she loves reading, she always looks for interesting topics to read and she admires the culture and the history of this language. Similarly, female 2 described herself as fond of books, she loves reading and collecting English books. While female 3, she stated that she loves reading in general, when she started learning the reading skills, she just wanted to pass the exam (SZABÓ & RÉVÉSZ, 2018: NNEBEDUM, 2019).

In the writing skills, males used extrinsic motivation once again to achieve their goals. M1, 2, and 3 used the same type of motivation in learning writing:

M1: ...rewards and future plans are the main factors in my motivation.

M2: ... I want to learn writing to get pass the exam and in the future after getting the pass, I want to learn a lot of skills in writing to write reports, articles to publish.

M3: not because I am interested in writing, I want to learn it because I just want to pass the exam, ... and yes to get some rewards in the future.

Extrinsic motivation is obviously used by the males' learners to learn writing skills. They wanted to learn to pass the exam, to have rewards, to be able to write articles and reports, and for some future

plans, all these goals consider as extrinsic intentions that learners use to achieve a particular goal.

In terms of females' motivation in writing, they were similar to males. Females 1, 2, and 3 used the extrinsic type of motivation in learning the writing skill. They showed external stated goals and interests toward learning the writing skill and ignoring all the intrinsic aspects toward learning this skill.

F1: I want to learn a lot of writing skills because I really want to write a very important book, After that this will help me a lot to publish some articles. And this will be good CV when again I want to go the Ph.D.

F2: for now, my master's program is the main motive and the main target., exactly it will be some rewards, because if I write in a good way, my reports will be respected and it about marks and rewards....., I do not like writing but I must improve it so I can do well in my master program.

F3: I want to learn the writing skills because these skills will benefit me in my study in future. Also, these skills contribute to improving myself to complete my life when I write reports and emails and deal with people in the future. And when I write in English to another company in my job.

As mentioned above, females' learners stated their side clearly in writing motivation. Their interviews on the writing motivation indicated that they use extrinsic motivation as a motive to learn writing skills. Female 1 stated that she wants to learn the writing skills because she wants to write a book in the future and this means she used this goal as an external factor to motivate herself to learn the writing skill. Females 2 and 3 were more specific, they used some external factors such as the job, writing reports, assignments, articles, emails, doing master, and so on to motivate themselves to learn the writing skills. GILAKJANI ET AL. (2012) says that females and males do not have important and obvious differences in writing performance but females are more effective, more interested, better, and more self-efficacy in writing. all of these above advantages are reflections of the type of motivation which usually used by females in learning writing skills.

Speaking skills are very important for learners because it guides them toward correct spelling, sentence structuring, clear conversation, and so on. Usually, learners focus on this skill in order to communicate properly with native speakers of English language. Learners of the English language have different goals and interests in leaning the speaking skills. Some of them learn the speaking skills due to the love, admire, enjoyment which they have toward the English language and the people who use this language. Others learn the speaking skills for some specific intentions such as enhance their careers, achieve some job or education requirements, and so on. According to the results of this study, all the males showed extrinsic motivation toward learning speaking skills:

M1: actually, I would say yes, I dream of a good opportunity in the future to get a good position; that is why I need to work on myself and on my speaking abilities to achieve the goal

M2: without speaking I cannot do anything, I cannot get a career and job, and I cannot achieve Ph.D., I cannot pass in the exam. So, it is very important, how I can do anything without speaking in foreign countries, now I am in Malaysia, how I can discuss it with anyone. The language is important

M3: for two reasons, the first reason is passing the exam and the second is to know how to deal with people and communicate with them.

M1, 2, and 3 showed clear intrinsic goals and intentions toward learning speaking skills. These goals were to pass the exam, having a good job opportunity, achieving Ph.D., and other future plans. These goals indicate that the males used the intrinsic motivation in learning the speaking skills of English.

Females again differed with males in the type of motivation used to learn speaking skills. All females used the intrinsic type of motivation to learn speaking skills. Females 1, 2, and 3 showed interest and willingness to speak the English language as well as to learn speaking skills in order to communicate appropriately with other people around them, also, to learn about the different English accents and dialects.

F1: because you know the language is the way to communicate with others. So, I should learn how to speak. And I love to speak with native speakers of this language.

F2: because I like to learn new languages, when I was little I wished that I can speak six languages, and I only know 3 and I like to learn more about languages., I used to reward myself and also I love it, so I keen on learning it.

F3: I am interested in speaking skills. And when I learn new words and when I speak them I learn and use them in future. I have a love for it.

First, important skill toward learning any language is by listening to the people who speak this language and understand them. Due to this, listening is skills are very important for both males and females in learning English as a foreign language. Learners usually put different goals to motivate themselves toward learning listening skills:

M1: I never had the interest to gain listening skills, but the need is what makes me look for it

M2: ... When I finish my Ph.D. here and get back to my country and teach in the university, I want to meet doctors there and they want to discuss with me in the English language and if I cannot understand what they say how I can answer them.

M3: I want to pass the exam as I will keep improving it as I will have different goals, just to pass the exam.

All the males obviously showed an intrinsic motivation toward learning the listening skills and they usually put some instrumental goals to motivate themselves in learning this skill. Males 1,2, and 3 clearly showed no interest in learning the listening skill. However, they attributed this to some different stated goals such as the exam requirement, future career, and so on. Nguyen claimed that listening motivation is an important skill that determines whether the learner starts on the process of learning or not and the suitable motivation type for each learner is the key to be excellent as a listener.

As males appeared to use the extrinsic motivation, females also used the extrinsic motivation toward learning listening skills. The results showed that females used some particular external factors to motivate themselves in learning listening skills.

F1: I want to be a good listener because that is helping me to be good at my job.

F2: I usually do not think about it, but what I do to improve myself to be prepared for the test, I only practice to pass tests, I am not motivated to gain listening skills, just to pass the exam.

F3: sure, to pass the exam, but the main cause for me is to understand the people when they speak with me. Also, to get benefits in future when I communicate.

All the females in this study showed the extrinsic type of motivation toward learning listening skills. They stated that their main reasons for learning this skill are to pass the exam, future career, better communications, better job opportunities, and so on. Listening skill consider as an important skill because it determines whether the learner has started the process of learning the language or not. A good ability to listen helps the learners to respond and communicate and also enhance the reading and writing skills at the same time. The females and males showed no interest in learning this skill except for some goals that they state.

4. CONCLUSION

One important contribution of this study is identifying the proper type of motivation used to form males and females in each EFL skill. The analysis of the data indicated that males' learners tended to use the extrinsic type of motivation as their motive toward learning each EFL skill. Females' learners were a bit different, they were intrinsically motivated in reading and speaking and extrinsically motivated in speaking and listening. This contributes to set the suitable choice of motivation type for both learners and teachers.

Learners need to check on their intentions and desires toward each skill separately by stating their goals, then identify which type of motivation is appropriate for them usually with the advice and help of their teachers. Hence, learners can enhance and boost their process of learning each skill of English as a foreign language. Learners will score higher marks and results because they used their motivation consistently with their desires and goals. On the other hand, it is also the teachers' responsibility to guide and direct their learners to achieve better outcomes in learning the four EFL skills.

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**UNIVERSIDAD
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opción

Revista de Ciencias Humanas y Sociales
Año 35, Especial No. 23 (2019)

Esta revista fue editada en formato digital por el personal de la
Oficina de Publicaciones Científicas de la Facultad Experimental de
Ciencias, Universidad del Zulia.
Maracaibo - Venezuela

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