



## **HOW GENDER INFLUENCES THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE ACQUISITION**

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***Annotation:*** *This article provides a comprehensive overview of how gender significantly influences the process of learning English as a second language. It delves into the distinct learning strategies employed by female and male learners, with females often favoring social and memory-based techniques while males lean towards cognitive and problem-solving approaches. The analysis extends to communication styles, contrasting the rapport-building language of women with the report-driven communication of men, and how these differences manifest in classroom participation. The article also addresses the experiences of nonbinary learners and their preference for gender-neutral language and inclusive practices. Furthermore, it explores how gender can impact language anxiety, with females sometimes experiencing higher levels, and suggests practical teaching implications for creating a balanced, supportive, and equitable learning environment that caters to the diverse needs of all students. The core argument emphasizes that recognizing and responding to these gender-related differences is crucial for enhancing the effectiveness of English language education.*

***Key words:*** *Gender, Language Learning, English, Learning Strategies, Communication Styles, Classroom Participation, Nonbinary Learners, Gender-Neutral Language, Language Anxiety, Inclusive Environment, Teaching Implications, Female Learners, Male Learners, Pronoun Preferences*

### **Introduction**

Language learning is a complex process influenced by many factors, including age, motivation, learning environment, and gender. Among these factors, gender



plays a unique and powerful role in shaping how learners approach, use, and acquire a second language such as English. Research has shown that males and females may differ in their learning styles, strategies, communication patterns, and classroom participation when learning English (Ellis, 1994). Understanding these gender-based differences is essential for teachers, educators, and learners themselves to create more effective and inclusive language learning environments.

## Gender and Learning Strategies

Learning strategies refer to the specific actions or techniques that learners use to improve their progress in a language. Research has consistently indicated that gender can influence the types of strategies learners prefer. Oxford (1993) points out that female learners are more likely to use social and memory strategies, such as seeking help from others, cooperating in group tasks, and using repetition or visualization techniques to memorize new words.

In contrast, male learners tend to rely more on cognitive and problem-solving strategies. They often prefer independent learning and take more risks in communication, even if they make mistakes (Oxford, 1993). For example, boys might guess unknown words based on context or use non-standard grammar to keep the conversation going, while girls may hesitate until they are sure their response is correct.

Furthermore, Oxford (1993) highlights that female learners usually show higher levels of motivation in learning languages due to their strong social orientation and desire for communication. Male learners, however, are often motivated by competition or goal achievement.

## Gender and Communication Styles

Gender differences are also noticeable in the way learners use language for communication. Holmes (1995) explains that women tend to use more polite, emotional, and supportive language in both native and second language communication. This includes using more hedges (“maybe”, “kind of”), tag questions (“isn’t it?”), and indirect requests (“Could you please...”).



Men, on the other hand, often prefer a more direct, brief, and competitive style of communication (Holmes, 1995). Tannen (1990) describes this as a contrast between “rapport talk” used by women (building relationships and connection) and “report talk” used by men (giving information and showing status).

In English language learning settings, this difference can influence classroom interaction. Female learners may participate more in discussions requiring empathy and cooperation, while male learners may feel more comfortable in debates or competitive tasks. Tannen (1990) also argues that misunderstanding between male and female learners sometimes arises because of these different communication patterns.

### **Gender and Classroom Participation**

Classroom participation is a key element in language acquisition because it provides learners with opportunities to practice speaking, listening, and interacting in English. However, gender can affect participation rates and styles.

According to Sunderland (1994), female learners generally participate more actively in cooperative and discussion-based classroom activities. They are more willing to volunteer answers, ask questions, and engage in pair or group work. Male learners often dominate classroom talk when the activity is competitive or task-oriented but may be less active in cooperative discussions (Sunderland, 1994).

Moreover, classroom dynamics can also be influenced by the teacher’s gender and teaching style. Ellis (1994) suggests that female teachers may create a more supportive and inclusive environment for female learners, while male teachers may unintentionally encourage competitive behavior among male students.

### **Nonbinary and Gender-Inclusive Language Learning**

In recent years, there has been increasing attention to the experiences of nonbinary learners—those who do not identify strictly as male or female. Nonbinary learners may combine both male and female language styles or develop their own unique ways of using English.

According to Godley et al. (2019), nonbinary learners often prefer gender-neutral language and inclusive communication practices. This includes using



pronouns like they/them, avoiding gendered terms like sir or ma'am, and promoting equality in classroom interaction. Teachers should be aware of these preferences and create a supportive environment where all learners feel respected and included.

## Gender and Language Anxiety

Language anxiety refers to the nervousness or fear that learners may feel when using a second language. Studies show that gender can influence levels of language anxiety. Research by Park and French (2013) found that female learners sometimes experience higher levels of language anxiety, especially in speaking activities, due to their concern about making mistakes and being judged.

Male learners, on the other hand, may show less language anxiety in public speaking but can feel pressure in situations requiring emotional expression or politeness (Park & French, 2013). This suggests that different classroom strategies may be needed to support male and female learners effectively.

## Teaching Implications

Understanding how gender influences English learning is essential for teachers. It helps in designing teaching materials, classroom activities, and assessment methods that cater to diverse learner needs.

Teachers can balance both competitive and cooperative activities in the classroom to engage all students. Encouraging risk-taking and reducing fear of mistakes can help female learners, while promoting group discussions and emotional expression can benefit male learners.

Moreover, using inclusive language, respecting students' pronoun preferences, and creating a safe environment for nonbinary learners is becoming increasingly important in modern classrooms (Godley et al., 2019).

## Conclusion

In conclusion, gender significantly influences how learners approach, use, and acquire the English language. While female learners often prefer social, cooperative, and polite language strategies, male learners tend to use direct, competitive, and risk-taking styles. Nonbinary learners bring unique perspectives and often favor inclusive



and respectful communication practices. Teachers who understand these differences can create more supportive and effective learning environments for all students.

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