

## GENDER DIFFERENCES AND ITS IMPACT ON STUDENTS' PERFORMANCE: A SOCIO-LINGUISTIC ANALYSIS

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### ABSTRACT

*The objective of this paper is to look at the sociolinguistic factors that mostly affect students' performance due to gender differences. For this purpose, we took a sample of 150 students studying at secondary schools in Vehari city. Among these students, 75 were girls and 75 were boys. We developed a questionnaire to record the views of teachers on this issue. The author personally collected data through questionnaires. We analysed students' performance on gender based differences regarding four skills listening, speaking, reading and writing in curricular and co-curricular activities and then compare the results. The finding of our study is that girls performed better than boys in curricular and co-curricular activities. The results of our study is useful both for teachers, policy-makers and heads of educational institutions.*

**Key Words:** Sociolinguistic, gender, listening, speaking, reading and writing.

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## **1-INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Sociolinguistics**

Socio linguistics is the study of how language and social factors such as ‘ethnicity’, ‘social classes’, ‘age’, ‘gender’, and ‘educational level’ are related. For example, the minute you hear a person begin to speak, certain information about that person’s position within the social system is revealed to you. According to George Yule (2013) “Sociolinguistics deals with the inter-relationships between language and society. It has strong connection to anthropology, through the investigation of language and culture, and to sociology through the crucial role that language plays in an organization of social groups and institutions.”

### **1.2 Gender and Sex**

Gender and sex these two words move side by side. Gender culture and communication are interlinked with each other, and they are fastened to the whole universe. ‘Gender refers to how an individual sees himself or herself in terms of masculine and feminine tendencies.’ In many ways, your gender represents an area of potential choice for you, since you can change it more easily than your sex.

### **1.3 What is Language?**

According to Cambridge Dictionaries:

“Language is a system of communication consisting of sounds, words, and grammar, or the system of communication used by people in a particular country or type of work. English is an important contemporary language and to oppose it will amount to depriving the people of a passport to enhanced opportunities for success in life”.

#### **1.4 Role of English as a second Language**

In Pakistan English Language taught like other subjects in a classroom. ‘the teaching of the English in Pakistan is class-based as the country’s education system is programmed and provide different levels of English teaching to people belonging to a different economic status. English was not being taught as a language but rather as a subject, confined to the 40 minutes' class. It is true that in Pakistan English taught like a subject and not like a language that’s why learners are not able to speak and write English even at university level. English taught as a compulsory subject from class one to graduation level.

#### **1.5 Dakar Framework for Action**

The Dakar Framework for action is the refined version of the *World Declaration on Education for all*. It deals that both boys and girls have the right to get education. Its key points and principles include universal access to learning; a focus on equity; emphasis on learning outcomes; broadening the means and the scope of basic education; enhancing the environment for learning; and strengthening partnerships. According to this framework more than 800 million children under six years of age can’t get the education and most of them are girls. 60 percent of girls in the under developed countries can’t get education due to social norms, poverty and lack of awareness. To increase the literacy rate the EFA has conducted 2000 assessments at national, regional and global level, it has showed the positive outcomes that the level of education is increasing in the under developed countries now. Girls are also getting education along the boys.

### **1.6 Lakoff's View**

The difference in the position that representatives of the two sexes assume toward language, which is completed by the differences in styles of speech, is considered a very wide spread phenomenon in the literature of the subject. It is known to specifically all of modern patriarchal (male and female) culture, which monopolizes language norms, while language imitative models specific social behaviour. As Lakoff writes, language uses us just as much as we use language (Lakoff, 1980, p. 239). She believes that the differences in gender-correlated language styles are the effect of learning, socialization, and preparing women and men for specific roles (exercising power, raising children, etc.). The “sexuality” of utterance becomes prominent in every new speech condition; it is “defined” during verbal interaction by the partners of the communication act, which is effected primarily with a view to the conversationalist. Depending on who is speaking and to whom, and on the goal the speaker wants to achieve, they select a specific style of conversation, most often one that is compatible with the binding convention and psychological influences.

### **1.7 Gender Equality in Education in Pakistan**

Pakistan has been a signatory to almost all international covenants and conventions on education including the most recent i.e. the Dakar Framework for Action 2000. But the net participation rate for 5-9 years' girls and boys is still 66% and 82%. According to the survey of Gender and Education (Govt. of Pakistan, 2003) the primary cycle completion rate is 54% for boys and 45% for girls. According to international assessments, Pakistan is amongst the 25 countries at high risk of not attaining EFA (Education for All) goals.

“The issue of gender disparity in education has long been recognised by the policy makers in Pakistan, and has been addressed in various policies and plans. In fact,

the review shows that the problem was identified and addressed very properly by the National Commission on Education (1959) but the subsequent policies did not develop in the same spirit and this led to a long period of neglect of the issue.”

### **1.8 Gender of language or gender in language**

Feminist linguistics in the 1970s and 1980s quite often, and rather eagerly, hurled accusations at the language system. Arguments were provided by observations of the category of grammatical gender, the most obvious expression of sex differences and one that exists in most languages. This was due to the fact that in languages where grammatical gender corresponds to natural gender, asymmetry in treatment of the sexes opens up the possibility of far-reaching speculation or interpretation. This was perceived as one among many signs of the sexist attitude of language itself, which was for too long governed by men to agree to gender neutrality and forsake the desire for power over the opposite sex. Sexuality was treated as a feature of the language system governing the thinking and world of language. Asked if the attitude toward the sexes is determined by the language system, feminist linguistics of the 1970s and 1980s gives a decidedly affirmative response. This is partly due to the well-known Barthes thesis on the absolute domination of the language system over speech, on the totalitarian nature of the language system (Barthes, 1978). Let us consider whether one can speak about the sexuality of language in a different way, not just metaphorically. Most European languages do not allow gender indefiniteness, nor do they allow emotional or social indefiniteness. Gender in language is usually defined by the relation between natural gender and grammatical gender (Handke, 1994). In older treatises on language and speech, when considerations of grammar were linked as a matter of course with belief in the unequal worth of the sexes, words in language were usually ascribed the gender of the designates, which transferred

the stereotypes of the sexes into the area of linguistic reflection. This practice had its exceptions, though; the differentiation between grammatical and natural gender has been known since the time of Aristotle who based his classification of nouns on it. Naturally, in linguistic reflection, views on gender are linked to cultural judgments on the social role of the sexes and its symbols. The grammatical masculine gender was treated as the equivalent of an active attitude, while the feminine gender was ascribed a passive role (similarly to women). Baron (1986) who analysed English grammars of the 18th century in this context writes that the statements on grammatical gender contained in those systems display a marked relation to valuation of the sexes. Linguistics today considers grammatical gender to be a morphological category subject to the syntax of agreement. In languages originating from proto-Indo-European, grammatical gender is usually based on differentiating between the sexes, but other facets can also be involved (lower-order categories differentiating between meanings, such as being animate or inanimate, personal or impersonal).

### **1.9 The National Commission on Education (1959)**

The Commission analysed the issue from various angles and made a comprehensive set of recommendations to provide equal educational opportunities for both the genders in terms of access and quality. It stated that girls should have the same opportunities in education as boys (P. 145). It further recommended that:

1. Within future expansion of primary education the facilities for girls should be equal both in quantity and quality to those provided for boys (P.189).
2. For purposes of quality the teaching of the early stages of primary education should be entrusted largely to women (P.189).
3. At secondary stage the curriculum should be designed to fit them (girls) more particularly for their further role (P.189). The colleges and universities should

provide more diversified courses of special relevance to their interests, and pursuits should be provided to equip them for their rightful place in society (P. 145). The Commission gave a holistic and detailed vision for achieving gender equality in educational opportunities but the subsequent policies could not build upon this vision.

### **1.10. Research Questions**

This research is conducted on the basis of these research questions.

1. Which gender is performing better in the curricular and co-curricular activities?
2. What strategies teacher should use to enhance the students' performance?
3. What are the factors which are affecting students' performance in co-curricular activities and in curricular activities?

### **1.11 Hypothesis**

The hypotheses of this current research are;

H0. The girls' performance is better than boys at secondary school level.

H1. The girls' performance is not better than boys at secondary level.

### **1.12 Delimitation**

This study has conducted at secondary school level because in schools the difference between students' performance is much regarding gender based differences. Researcher has conducted this research at her own city Vehari in private sector. Researcher has conducted research on general performance regarding four skills (Reading, Writing, Speaking, and Listening). For co-curricular activities researcher has chosen 'Role Plays' and 'Speech Competition'. For curricular activities researcher has chosen essay writing which students read after writing.

## **2.1 LITERATURE REVIEW**

Many researches have been conducted on gender differences to analyse the performance of both genders. These researches have also shown that girls are performing better than boys in learning L2. According to the survey of Shaheen and Mujahid (2002), when girls get admission in primary schools, most of them stop continuing their studies when fee increment occurred. Government of Pakistan did not focus on proper education set-up in Pakistan. So that most of the girls cannot get the education in the Pakistan and it is the basic role of government to facilitate his nation regarding equality. According to this survey Choudhary and Rehman (2009), Pakistan is one of the countries where gender inequality is very common. People only send their sons to schools for education not girls. They thought girls are only for domestic tasks. Most of the gender inequality in rural areas is due to poverty and lack of awareness. According to the research at Uganda University, the researcher took 5306 students of UCU and out of them he took 357 students of Business Administration, Education Arts, Science and Technology. Researcher took both genders from these disciplines. Only 340 of them performed question paper properly. The students who belong to urban school system whether they are male and female they performed well. According to Madrid and Hughes the students who belong to rural schooling system did not perform well because behind this was typical school atmosphere and there is no use of learning activities to enhance the students' performance in rural schools. In this study concept of modern teachers and their teachings have been discussed. The researchers have taken 459 students and 35 teachers (male and female). They have concluded that students usually like to have friendly environment. Male teachers can control well the boys and female students feel comfort with female teachers. But in demand both genders feel relax with male and female teachers. Male teachers focus on

academics, while female teachers focus towards supportive attitude. Male teachers have traditional teaching environment. Female teachers have supportive and democratic class environment. Both male and female teachers work well to enhance the students' performance. So, teachers' proficiency is good. According to Norma, teachers' behaviour or attitude with the students also affect the performance of the students. Fu.2011 analysed that learners absorb the instruction they receive in relation to effective ways of writing in their L2 environments and are fully capable of adjusting lexical and rhetorical features from L1 norms to L2 norms. The fact that female Japanese students did not generalize the politeness features they used in Japanese to English suggests that student identities are fluid and shift according to the cultural and linguistic context Tannen prescribes her conclusions on gender-correlated speech differences mainly in relation to American culture (or more broadly, Western culture). The research material Tannen explanation comes largely from recorded children's conversations, observation of speech styles that govern in various communities, and her own communication experience. 'Female speech is usually more polite and gentle than male speech. Women use more operators that build a sense of community between the speakers and the person they are addressing.' Tannen generally assures the view that masculine communication styles dominate as speech patterns that are copied and linked with power. She argues that in similar situations, women adopt the male style, and not the other way round. Each of the sexes is able to use the language variation proper for the opposite sex's principles of speech, but the social evaluation of the style used depends mainly on the speaker's actual biological sex and not on the text's stylistic qualities (its, so to say, gender status. According to Yukselturk and Bulut, this study analysed gender differences in learning components, motivational beliefs and achievement in self-regulated online

learning environment. Motivated strategies for learning Questionnaire (MSLQ) has used to access students' motivation and used of learning environment. By this method now major differences have been found between both capabilities. It deals the differences in the way women and men use of language is different and unquestionable; its shows that male and female are observed separately according speech and writing norms. It has concluded that male use informal language while speaking but females use formal language while speaking. Females follow grammatical rules mostly and properly while writing than boys. This survey shows that teachers' behaviour also affect the students' performance. The stereotype environment and teachers also effect on the performance of students, especially on girls. The teacher's attitude in the classroom with respect to boys and girls also appeared to show inequality that favoured boys.

## **2.2. World Declaration on Education for All 1990:**

Article (3) relating to universal access and promotion of equity states:

*"The most urgent priority is to ensure to, and improve the quality of education for girls and women to remove every obstacle that hampers their active participation. All genders stereotyping education should be eliminated."*

## **2.3 Cognitive gender differences**

1. Sex differences research shows us that it is difficult to separate innate from learned behaviours, or to understand to what extent stereotyping influences individuals' perceptions and behavioural or cognitive sex differences. Research shows that, in general, the range of differences is small compared to the similarities existing between the sexes.

2. Gender-related results from cross-national surveys on performance are able to provide indicators of how a national education policy is working in terms of equity in comparison with others, but usually are not able to provide an analysis of particular causal factors, or what should or could be done to create a more equal gender system.

3. Teachers' perceptions of male- and femaleness are crucial for their relations with pupils and can be an important factor in generating gender equity in schools. Gender stereotypes are also likely to be reinforced or weakened by text books and reading material provided in schools.

#### **2.4 Significance of Research**

Well-conducted research is vital and useful for the global community. This research may help to conclude students' performance on gender basis in curricular and co-curricular activities at school level. We may be able to determine which gender is performing better and which factors are behind their good and bad performance. We may also come to know that what strategies teachers should use to enhance their students' performance.

### **3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 Population and Sample**

Sampling is the process of selecting smaller group from a bigger group. The sampling population become the basis, predicting or estimating about unknown piece of information, situation or problem. A research problem usually relates to the specific population and the population comprehends the total collection of all units of analysis about which researcher wishes to make specific conclusions. Researcher has conducted this research at Secondary Schools, in district Vehari. Population was of 150 students but 120 students, 60 boys and 60 girls were selected randomly. Researcher has also selected 15 teachers of English from three

secondary schools, The Educators, The Country School and The City School, Vehari Campuses.

### **3.2 Research Tools:**

The researcher employed two research tools for the collection of data that are relevant and accurate as well. For this researcher used close ended questionnaire and interviews conducted from teachers and from students. We have used Likert Scale (Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree and Neutral). Data has shown in the percentages using bar graphs and pie charts. We also designed different tests to assess four skills.

### **3.3 Research Design**

The present research is conducted at secondary schools in Vehari. For this purpose, we planned to check the students' performance by writing and reading skills for curricular activities. For co-curricular activities we have planned to perform role play by The Country School and The Educators' students and to conduct speeches by The City School's students. This research has been conducted within a week. We have conducted this research in three private schools and their names are The Country School, The City School and The Educators of District Vehari. We have chosen secondary level (9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup>) in these schools to conduct our research. Four tests are designed to check the students' performance. In which two tests are filled by students for listening and writing skills and other two are filled by the researcher to check the students' listening and speaking skills.

### **3.4 Questionnaire and interview:**

A questionnaire has designed according to Likert scale to know the teachers' views that which gender is performing better in curricular and co-curricular activities. We have filled this questionnaire by all the secondary level teachers who are

teaching these secondary level students English subject. Later we have conducted the interviews by the teachers to know that what types of factors are affecting the students' performance.

#### **4. DATA ANALYSIS**

We have conducted our research on 120 students at secondary level. In these we have taken 60 girls and 60 boys. We also have taken the interviews of 15 English teachers of these secondary schools at Vehari. This chapter is divided into three parts. First part tells about the analysis of students' performance on gender based difference. Second part tells about the analysis of questionnaire which is filled by teachers. Third part tells about the analysis of open ended questions which were asked by teachers and students to know about the factors which can affect the students' performance in the school or out of the school.

##### **4.1 Descriptive analysis**

###### **4.1.1 Curricular Activities**

For this two skills have chosen reading and writing skills. Both boys and girls performed well in this way. In writing skills students has told about the success criteria to write down the essays on random topics. Success criteria for the writing skills was that both genders have to write essays with beginning, middle, expressions, vocabulary and ending according to their topic. Each part has score five and according to this criteria the students will have to get marks. In reading skills a test has designed in which pronunciation, intonation and fluency has been marked by the researcher. Marks for pronunciation were 2, for intonation 1 and for fluency 2.

• **Writing Skills:**

We had taken 40 students from The Educators and in which 20 were girls and 20 were boys. Total score of boys' and girls' percentage was 2000 and girls scored 1570. So their percentage was 77%. Boys scored 1202 and their percentage was 60%. We had found the results by adding the percentages of both genders which showed that girls are performing better than boys in writing skills. From City Schools 40 students had taken in which 20 were girls and 20 were boys. Boys scored 1404% out of 2000%. Girls scored 1758% out of 2000%. Boys overall percentage was 70 % and girls percentage was 88% in writing skills. We had taken 40 students from The Country School in which 20 were boys and 20 were girls. Girls scored 1700% out of 2000% and boys scored 1430% out of 2000%. So girls' percentage is 85% and boys' percentage is 72% in writing skills.

• **Reading Skills:**

The Educators students' reading skills had been checked in which boys scored 75% and girls scored 84%. Girls were leading. The City School students' reading skills had been checked. In reading skills boys scored 82.5 out of 100 with the percentage of 83%. Girls scored 92.5 out of 100 with the percentage of 93% in reading skills. Girls attitude towards reading skills was very good than boys. Here girls were also leading than boys. The Country School students' reading skills had been checked. In reading skills girls scored 88% and boys scored 73%. Girls were leading in reading skills than boys.

**4.2.12 Co-Curricular Activities:**

Here students' speaking and listening skills have been checked. In speaking skills for The City School students a Performa was designed in which their confidence, expressions and intonation had been checked. Marks for each category were 5. For The Educators and The Country School students a test was designed in which their

confidence, fluency and intonation had been marked by the researcher. Marks for each category was 5. For listening skill, a Performa had been designed in which two questions were asked that “What is the speech about?” and “Write about any two negative and positive aspects of this speech.” Marks for each question were 5.

• **Speaking Skills:**

To check this skill a test has been designed in which their confidence, fluency and intonation have been marked by the researcher. The girls of The City School were divided into four groups and in each group there were 5 students. Each group has chosen their own role play. Group 1 performed role play on Mother’s day theme and scored 90%. Second group performed role play on their history programme like a documentary and scored 80%. Third group performed on News report as news caster and scored 85%. Fourth group performed role play on Kashmir day and scored 95%. The City School boys were also divided in four groups and they also performed role plays on the same topics but with different content. Boys scored also good percentages in these activities. Group one scored 90%, group 2 scored 70%, group C scored 80% and group D scored 85%. Boys’ performance ratio was good in this. And boys were highly motivated in this perspective. In speaking skill. the students of The Educators had conducted the speeches. Both boys and girls performed well but in this test girls overall scored 75% and boys scored 74%. Although the difference was of 1% but still girls were performing well than boys. In speaking skills speeches had conducted by the students of The Country Schools. Girls scored overall 83% and boys scored 78%. Girls were performing well than boys.

• **Listening Skills:**

In students of The City School, we had found that boys scored 1500/2000 with the percentage of 78%. Girls scored 1770/2000 with the percentage of 89%. In

students of The Educators, we had found that girls scored 78% and boys scored 67% in listening skills. Girls scored 1550/2000 and boys scored 1330/2000. The result was found by adding their total students' percentages. Here girls were leading. In students of The Country School, we had found that boys scored 73% in listening skills and girls scored 80% in listening skills. Girls were leading than boys. Girls scored 1600 out of 2000 and boys scored 1450 out of 2000. These scores were found by adding the percentages of both genders.

#### 4.1.3 Questions and their responses

The questions and their responses are given in Table 1.

**Table 1 Descriptive statistics**

English is an important part of the school curriculum.	S.A 100%	A	S.D	D	N
Boys are more confident than girls in speaking, reading, writing and listening English language.	S.A	A 40%	S.D	D 60%	N
Girls are more confident than boys in speaking, reading, writing and listening English language.	S.A	A 70%	S.D	D 30%	N
Do you think parents are giving equal importance to both genders in provision of educational facilities?	S.A 100%	A	S.D	D	N
Girls feel more convenient with female teachers.	S.A	A 80%	S.D	D 20%	N
Boys can be controlled better by male teachers than female teachers.	S.A	A 80%	S.D	D 20%	N
Girls follow the grammatical rules properly while writing English essays.	S.A	A 75%	S.D	D 25%	N
Boys follow the grammatical rules properly while writing English essays.	S.A	A 57%	S.D	D 43%	N
Boys do spelling mistakes more than girls.	S.A 70%	A	S.D	D 30%	N

Girls do spelling mistakes more than boys.	S.A	A 20%	S.D 80%	D	N
Girls choose more appropriate words for creative writing than boys.	S.A 70%	A	S.D	D 30%	N
Boys choose more appropriate words for creative writing than girls.	S.A	A 45%	S.D	D 55%	N
Girls hesitate more to speak the English language than boys.	S.A	A 35%	S.D 65%	D	N
Boys hesitate more to speak the English language than girls.	S.A	A 57%	S.D 43%	D	N
Girls score good marks in the English tests or paper than boys.	S.A	A 85%	S.D	D 15%	N
Boys score good marks in the English tests or paper than girls.	S.A	A 67%	S.D	D 33%	N
Boys enjoy the English period more than girls.	S.A	A 67%	S.D	D 43%	N
Girls enjoy the English period more than boys.	S.A11 00%	A	S.D	D 19%	N
Teachers' active role plays vital role to enhance the students' performance.	S.A 100%	A	S.D	D	N
Teachers' must use different strategies to make the lecture interesting for the students.	S.A 100%	A	S.D	D	N
Some other factors like background, classroom environment and school environment also effect on the students' performance.	S.A 50%	A 35%	S.D	D 15%	N

This questionnaire was filled by the 15 teachers, in which both male and female teachers were. The above filled questionnaire is showing that teachers' responses were also in the favour of girls that girls perform better than boys.

#### 4.1.4Interviews

Researcher had conducted interviews of teachers to know that what sort of factors

can effect on the students' performance. Most of the teachers appreciated the students' performance and they admitted that there were still many factors which were influencing the female students' performance but still girls were performing well. Male and Female teachers mostly gave reasons in the favour of female students' performance that they performed well in curricular and co- curricular activities more than boys. But there were many factors which were affecting students' performance these were discipline issues in boys' classes, background problems of female students', male students' also had some rural background and for them school is a place to just come and play, boys usually show non-serious attitude in female teachers' periods.

- 70% discipline issues in boys' class.
- 15% issues of background.
- 15% percent cultural norms play their roles.
- 80% of teachers and parents' role play vital role on performance of students. Teachers motivation and parents feed forwarding is essential to enhance the students' performance.

#### **4.CONCLUSIONS**

Researcher had concluded from this research that girls are performing better than boys in all four skills of English Language. As it is known Pakistani learners feel difficulty in learning English as L2 but still girls are performing better than boys. Pakistan is a developing country there are many factors which are affecting the students' performance but still girls are doing well in this way. Gender is only one of the factors that affect achievement in various subject fields. Socioeconomic status is a very strong factor; thus it is important to consider family background alongside gender when supporting children who are under-achieving. Teachers'

role also plays an active role to enhance the students' performance. Teachers should need to adopt useful strategies and they need to give the vocabulary list to the students. Teachers need to adopt some energetic strategies by which L2 learners can learn English well regarding four skills. Pakistani students' native language is Urdu so they need competent L2 teachers who can enhance their performances well.

## **5. RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. Teachers training must be held in schools that how they can teach English Language to the students and by this students' performance would be enhanced.
2. Discipline problems must be controlled which are basically affecting the performance of boys.
3. Dictionaries must be used in the class so that students may have the rich vocabulary.
4. Teachers need to use smart strategies for those students who belong to rural backgrounds and for them English is very tough to learn.
5. Use of Audio Visual aids must be in the classes to enhance the students' four skills.
6. Teachers should arrange the students' centred classes so that students may avoid cramming and could use his or her own ideas in words.

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