Gender Differences in Academic Performance of English

Thongsy Xuamolee[1], Toulakone Souliya, Ketsalinh Lamphaiphan, Ms Khanthaly Sidavong and Thavone Panmanivong

Depratment of Language Pedagogy, Faculty of Education, Souphanouvong University, Lao PDR

[1]Correspondence: Thongsy Xuamolee, *Depratment of Language Pedagogy, Faculty of Education, Souphanouvong University , Tel: +856 20 28666877, Email:*

thongsy_su.la@yahoo.com

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to examine whether there is any gender difference in students' Academic Performance in English of sixth year students at Artsayyaphoom secondary school, Pieng district Sayaboury province. The participants of this study were the sample group of this study was 79 female (entire female) and 79 male. Thus, the instrument of this study was the questionnaire used to elicit the students' motivation in English learning and first semester students' scores. The researcher used SPSS program to calculate the mean, S.D and percentage. The result showed that female students at Artsayyaphoom Secondary school have motivation in English learning rather than male students (the mean of male students' motivation was 3.7873 with the S.d 1.02875 and the mean of female students' motivation in English learning was 4.4706 with S.D 1.14645). Moreover, it also significantly differences due to the analysis revealed a mean (x) of male students' English for first semester scores was 6.3671 and Standard Deviation (SD) of 1.24218 while the female students' English for first semester scores was 7.9494 and Standard Deviation (SD) of 1.18645. Therefore, the results indicated that there was significant differences exist between genders on academic performance in Artsayyaphoom Secondary school, Pieng district, Sayaboury province.

Keywords: *gender differences, academic performance*

1. Introduction

It was widely claimed that during the course of English teaching in high schools, college or universities in Laos, is discovered that schoolgirls' achievement is better than those of schoolboys'. However, most of the teachers have never thought over the problems such as: Where do the schoolgirls do well? How much better? Why better? etc. It also means we only pay attention to the conventional teaching principles such as teaching students in accordance with their aptitude, but turn blind eye to the differences in studying psychology, studying ability and so on between the schoolgirls and schoolboys (Baharudin, 1998). It's very necessary to compare the features and differences in language learning between them, and to further explore the questions: What's the difference? How to improve their achievements by making use of the differences? In the mingled middle school, almost half of the students are schoolgirls. What's more, there is nobody to study the gender differences of English teaching in our country's middle school. We all ignored

the gender differences in the teaching process and didn't make systematic analysis and research of the differences between the school-girl and the schoolboy, so we didn't fully understand the differences between them in language learning psychology and the language learning ability etc. That is based on the foundation of teaching students in accordance with their aptitude. This research can compensate the blind spot in the English teaching and strive to explore the student's potential energy and improve the practicability of the English teaching.

Academic performance is the quality and quantity of knowledge, skills, techniques and positive attitudes, behavior and philosophy that students achieve or acquire. This achievement is evaluated by the mark or grade that students attain in a term at upper secondary schools. The quality of grades and the number of students that pass in the various grades determine the level of academic performance. There are many factors, which account for the good or poor academic performance in secondary schools or upper secondary schools in Laos like; the quality of students admitted the type of scholastic materials available in the school and home environment, the methods of teaching, the nature of administration and teachers involve-ment in academic matters. However, it seems that the most important factor to the academic performance of students is the impact of sex differences on students; academic matters.

Pillow, (2008) has examined the gender differences among student on their academic performance has reveal that in individuals background characteristic affect his/her cogni-tive and non-cognitive is one of the most significant and influential characteristics in academic performance. Nori, (2002) studies the sex differences and the relationship between creativity and self-concept on academic performance among high school students. In his

study, the students were randomly selected from 68 schools (2,264 students, 38% where boys and 62% were girls). The academic performance of students was assessed using a self-reported achievement in some subject area English, Natural science, Mathematics, and Social science. A canonical correlation analysis found that when operationalized by their grade creativity and self-concept was related to academic achievement for both girls and boys. For girls, elaboration related to two of the academic subject (social science and English language) and fluency related to natural science and mathematics. For boys, flexibility was the pre-dominant factor that related to all four (4) academic subject areas. When Operationalized thinking the Torrance creativity test (TTCT) Abedi-Schumacher creativity test (ACT) and villa and Auzmendi creativity test (VAT) on the other hand, creativity and self-concept was scarcely related to academic achievement. Yet, several other researchers also have attended to the idea that creativity is related to academic performance.

Gender issue has become the talk of today's forum, many department and sections in institutes or organizations in Laos, especially in schools, academic performance in schools is a concern of all people who have invested interest in schools. This category may include teachers, parents, administrators, proprietors and the public. Regarding performance discrepancies of boys and girls, Megary (1984) concluded that once out of the primary school environment, Females under achieve in a variety of subjects. The reason why this occurs has to be answered.

Gender disparity in schooling is attempted to observe by several researchers among the younger population, where female school enrollment in basic and secondary education falls behind male children (Tansel, 2002; Ertürk and Dayıolu, 2004). Despite the numerous studies that analyze the disadvantaged position

of women as adults and children, there is almost no work on the educational experiences of women as young adults. The paucity of such work of Laos government sections has been one of the motivations for this study. The other motivation has been our observation that in the undergraduate classes, female students often outperform their male counterparts. This casual observation contradicts with the general experiences of the female population as children and adults. Hence, this study grew out of our curiosity to- examine whether there is any gender difference in students' Academic Performance in English of sixth year students at Artsayyaphoom secondary school, Pieng district Sayaboury province.

2. Materials and Methods

2.1 The population and sample group

The population of this study consist of 106 males and 79 females. These population were entire of the sixth year students who are studying at Artsayyaphoom secondary school, Pieng district Sayaboury province academic year 2019-2020. The sample group of this study, the researcher simplified formula for proportions (Sard William, 2001) who analyzed the differences in academic performance between school girls and school boys. He noted that comparing the differences in academic performance the number of students need to be the same. So, the sample group of this study was 79 female (entire female) and 79 male.

2.2 Research instrument (tool)

The objectives of this study aimed to compare the English learning performance between males and females. Therefore, the instrument of this study will consist of two types; English average score of student on first semester and questionnaire. The English average scores of the students' English achievement test which administered at the first semester will be used to compare in order to see the different English performance between males and females. The other instrument will be

questionnaire; this questionnaire will assess students' in terms of motivation in learning English.

2.3 Data Collection

As mentioned above, the present study aim to compare the English learning performance between males and females at Phornsaard, Pieng district, Xayaboury province. The researcher of this study will ask the local English teachers for English average score of student on first semester in order to compare between males and females. To collect the data to fulfill this study, the questionnaire also need to design to estimate students' motivation in learning English.

The questionnaire will be sent to 158 sixth year students by the English teachers in a normal class on … Before the students response the qeustionnaire, the researchers of this study interpret how to response as well as tell students to be free responding which no correct or incorrect for each response. The questionnaires are expected to be return in 60 minutes.

2.4 Data analysis

SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) version 17.0 will be employed to analyze the data. Firstly, descriptive analysis will be performed to compute the means, and standard deviations to see the mean differences of two groups (males and females). Secondly, Independent-Samples T-Tests will run to compare the differences among different groups (between male and female students) base on the motivation in learning English. This study will aim to investigate if there are females' outperformance rather than that of males in their EFL achievement. The research questions were analyzed by means, standard deviations, independent-samples t-tests, and effect sizes.

2.4.1 Criteria for score ranging

❖ **Formula Score Range:**

0 - 4   failed

5 - 6   fair

6 - 7   moderate

8 - 9   good
10   excellent

3. Results

This chapter presents the results of the data analysis related to the main study. As this study was to explore the gender differences in English performance of sixth year students at Ardsayyaphoom upper secondary school, Pieng district, Xayaboury province in academic year 2019-2020. So both quantitative and qualitative data analysis were used to analyze the question-naire and monthly test scores of the sixth year students. SPSS program version 17 was used to calculate the data. The results of the data ana-lysis were exhibited on the following tables 1.

The results shown in table 1 explored male students' motivation in English learning exhibited that they would like to work with national organization so they study English every day yielded the highest mean (M= 4.2857) and S.D= .75593, this mean that male students prefer to work with national origination rather than others. In addition, male students believes that speaking with foreigners is very smart so they really like to learn English (M= 4.1429) and S.D= 1.06904, and if they can speak English, they would be a tour guide or interpreter (M= 4.1429) and S.D= 1.06904. In contrast, unexpectedly male students believe that even their country is going to join AEC soon, this did not make them want to speak English well (M=3.1429) and S.d=1.06904.

Presents descriptive statistics on the female students' motivation in English learning. The higher mean is covered five statements; they believe they would learn to speak very well (M=4.7143) and S.D= .48795. They would also like to learn English so that they can get to know foreigner friends (M= 4.7143) and S.D= .48795. In addition, their country is going to join AEC soon, this make them want to speak English well (M=4.7143) and S.D= .48795. Moreover, female students at Artsayyaphoom

Secondary school believe that English is easier to learn comparing with others and if they can speak English, they would be a tour guide or interpreter (M=4.7143) and S.D= .48795. on the following tables 2.

Presented the comparing male and female students' motivation in English learning. As it has shown on the table, the mean of male students' motivation was 3.7873 with the S.d 1.02875 and the mean of female students' motivation in English learning was 4.4706 with S.D 1.14645, this indicated that female students at Artsayyaphoom Secondary school have motivation in English learning rather than male students. In order to see another evident exhibited on, the results, so the followings presented about the male and female students' first semester scores of their English subject on the following tables 3.

Shows gender differences in students' Academic performance in Artsayyaphoom Secondary school, Pieng district, Sayaboury province. The analysis revealed a mean (x) of male students' English for first semester scores was 6.3671 and Standard Deviation (SD) of 1.24218 while the female students' English for first semester scores was 7.9494 and Standard Deviation (SD) of 1.18645. Therefore, the female students' English for first semester scores was 1.5823 higher than male students. The results indicated that there was significant differences exist between genders on academic performance in Artsayyaphoom Secondary school, Pieng district, Sayaboury province on the following tables 4.

4. Discussion

The results presented above revealed that school girls achieved significantly better results than school boys. Taking into account these gender specific motivation in English language, it is evident that female students also had more motivation than males.This finding is consistent with early research conducted by Gardner and

Lambert (1972), Burstall (1975), Boyle (1987), Spolsky (1989), and Murphy (2010), in which girls achieved higher overall means on second /foreign language proficiency tests than did boys. With regard to more recent studies, the quantitative part of the present study generally corroborates the findings of, for example, Field (2001), Chavez (2001), Carr and Pauwels (2006), Michońska-Stadnik (2006), and Murphy (2010). All of these studies revealed better performance of female students on tests measuring second/foreign language proficiency. The results of this study can be accounted for by evidence coming from sociolinguistics. It should be noted that, although conclusions drawn by sociolinguists were based on first language data, it is justifiable to draw parallels between first language and second/foreign language acquisition patterns as considerable empirical evidence has shown prominent similarities between the ways the two systems are acquired (Ellis, 2012). Upon examining gender-based differences in native-speaker speech, sociolinguists (e.g., Coates, 1986; Labov, 1991; Lakoff, 1975; Tannen, 1996; Trudgill, 1983) concluded that women are more open to new, incoming forms and, at the same time, use a higher frequency of standard or prestigious forms than do men. Adapting these conclusions to foreign language learning, it can be hypothesized that female learners reject interlanguage forms that are different from targetlanguage norms, and incorporate new linguistic forms in the foreign/second language input more readily than do men (Ellis, 2012).

However, the numerical findings were not reflected in the opinions of the student and teacher participants. Both parties held a strong conviction that gender played no major role in learning English. Moreover, they did not differ significantly in their opinions in ranking statement significant social factors in learning the target language. Both groups were of the opinion that language practice abroad was the most important factor, whereas gender was the least important. As mentioned earlier, the discrepancy between the quantitalive and qualitative findings of the study may result from the fact that in the qualitative part (the open questions and the interwievs) the respondents either avoided giving definite answers or, as in the case of teachers, refrained from addressing the question altogether. However, more definite conclusions will only be possible if further research is conducted.

5. Conclusion

This study was to investigate the gender difference in academic performance of English of sixth year students at Artsayyaphoom Secondary School, Pieng district, Sayaboury province. A questionnaire was used to collect the data in the study. Based on the analysis of the collected data, the conclusions can be drawn as follows:

Regarding to the comparetion of male and female students' motivation in English learning. As it has shown on the previous chapter, the mean of male students' motivation was 3.7873 with the S.d 1.02875 and the mean of female students' motivation in English learning was 4.4706 with S.D 1.14645, this indicated that female students at Artsayyaphoom Secondary school have motivation in English learning rather than male students.

Apart from the differences of English learning motivation between male and female students on English learning, academic performance in English of sixth year students at Artsayyaphoom Secondary School, Pieng district, Sayaboury province was also significantly difference due to the analysis revealed a mean (x) of male students' English for first semester scores was 6.3671 and Standard Deviation (SD) of 1.24218 while the female students' English for first semester scores was 7.9494 and Standard Deviation (SD) of 1.18645. Therefore,

the results indicated that there was significant differences exist between genders on academic performance in Artsayyaphoom Secondary school, Pieng district, Sayaboury province.

6. Conflict of Interest

We certify that there is no conflict of interest with any financial organization regarding the material discussed in the manuscript.

7. References

Ary, D., Jacob, L. C., & Razavieh, A. (1979). *Introduction to Research in Education:* Sydney Holt Rinehart Winston.

Baharudin, R. & Luster, T. L. (1998). *Factors related to the quality of the home environment and children's achievement :* Journal of Family Issues, 19 (4), 375-403.

Bamidele, S.O., Seweje, R.O., & Alonge, M.F. (2002). *Educational research; A Comprehensive approach*. Ado-Ekiti: Green line Publishers.

Cohen, B. & Halliday, R. (1996). *Adolescent development and adjustment*: New York McGraw–Hill Book Company, Coolican, N. (2004). *The credential society*: New York Academic Press

Devaw, T. (1996). *The relationship between anxiety, creativity, gender, academic achievement and socialprestige among secondary school*. Malaysia. University of Shiraz.

Erikson, E. (1987). *Childhood and society (2nded.)* New York: Norton

Kerlinger, F. W. Lee, B. H. (2000). *Foundation of Behavioural Research (4th Edition) Philadelphia*: Harcourt College Publishers

Krejcie, R. & Morgan, D. W. (1970). *Determining sample size for Research Activities*: Educational and Psychological Measurement 30-31

Krejcie, R. & Morgan, D. W. (2006). *Determining sample size for Research Activities:* Educational and Psychological Measurement. Obtained from http//www.fns.usda.govaccess on 13/08/2010.

Nori, Z. (2002). *Gender differences creativity, academic achievement (mathematics, sciences and language of literature among high school in City of Shiraz*, Iran: University of Shiraz, Shiraz.

Nuthanap, G. (2007). *Gender analyses of academic achievement among high school students Unpublished M.Ed.* Dissertation, University of Agriculture Dharwad.

Morrison, C. & Machintyre, W.P. (1993). *Aspiration, motivation and achievement: Perspective in Education*, 3 (2), 102-110

Ministry of Higher Education (2014). *Total number of students registered to study Nigerian Certificate of Education*. Borno state Nigeria

Pillow, B. (2008). *A comparison of academic performance in A- level economics between two years*: International Review of Economics Education, 2 (1), 8-24.

Pindar, J. (1996). *The relative effectiveness of client centred and rational emotive group counselling model on low achieving NCE students in Kashim Ibrahim College of Education Maiduguri,* Unpublished Ph.D. Theses, University of Maiduguri

Verma, D. (1990). *Administration of technical vocational education*. Poland Sterling Pvt. Ltd.

Xixia, A. I. (1999). "*Creativity and Academic Achievement": An Investigation of Gender Differences:* Creativity Research Journal, 12 (4), 329-337.

Table 1. Male students' motivation in English learning

No.	Statement	N	Mean	S.D
1	I believe I will learn to speak very well	79	4.0000	1.00000
2	In my school, I like learning English more than others subjects	79	3.7143	1.11270
3	People in my country feel that it is important to speak English	79	3.2857	.75593
4	I would like to learn English so that I can get to know foreigner friends	79	4.0000	.57735
5	If I learn to speak English very well I will have better job opportunity	79	3.7143	1.11270
6	I dream to be an English teacher, when I graduate from university	79	4.0000	.57735
7	I would like to work with national organization so I study English every day	79	4.2857	.75593
8	Speaking with foreigners is very smart so I really like to learn English	79	4.1429	1.06904
9	I want to study high degree in abroad so I like learning English	79	3.5714	.78680
10	Our country is going to join AEC soon, this make me want to speak English well	79	3.1429	1.06904
11	I believe that know more English will help me search information from internet easier	79	3.5714	.78680
12	English can help me be professional work	79	3.8571	.89974
13	If I have chance studying in extra classes, I prefer to study English more than mathematics and chemistry or physics	79	3.7143	1.11270
14	English is easier to learn comparing with others	79	3.7143	.95119
15	If I can speak English , I would be a tour guide or interpreter	79	4.1429	1.06904

Table 2. Comparing male and female students' motivation in English learning

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
male	79	3.7873	1.02875	.11276
female	79	4.4706	1.14645	.12449

Table 3. Comparing male and female students' English for first semester scores

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
male	79	6.3671	1.24218	.13976
female	79	7.9494	1.18645	.13349