

GENDER DIFFERENCES IN PEDAGOGICAL DISCOURSE

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Abstract. This article investigates the impact of gender on communication styles, roles, and interactions within educational contexts, shaping pedagogical discourse and influencing both teaching and learning processes. It explores the distinctive ways male and female teachers and students communicate, focusing on differences in language use, turn-taking, and interaction dynamics. The study also examines how these variations influence classroom authority, student engagement, and participation. By analyzing gender-specific discourse patterns, the article underscores the importance of inclusive teaching strategies that cater to diverse learning needs and promote equitable participation for all genders. This research sheds light on the social and cultural dimensions of gender in education, highlighting the need for awareness and adaptability in teaching practices.

Keywords: gender, collaborative relationships, conceptual learning, gender roles.

Introduction. The advancement of gender education plays a critical role in fostering a democratic and tolerant society. Despite some progress, significant work remains to be done. Gender is still often conflated with biological sex, and discussions about gender education are frequently mistaken for sex education. Social and cultural influences shape gender differences, which are evident not only in political arenas, where women advocate for their rights, but also in domestic environments, where they confront issues such as household abuse. The discourse

on gender differences also extends to communication, with claims that men and women have distinct conversational styles, prompting calls for differentiated treatment.

The primary goal of gender education, however, is to promote a perspective that supports equal and cooperative relationships, enabling individuals to freely determine their life choices without being constrained by historical or cultural norms. It emphasizes universal moral principles that transcend the interests of specific social groups, such as gender, race, or ethnicity.

A gender-sensitive approach in education seeks to challenge traditional cultural limitations that hinder personal development based on gender. It aims to create an environment where both female and male students can fully explore and express their potential during their educational journey. Interactive teaching methods have proven effective in achieving this goal. This concept has been extensively studied, notably by Lakoff (1976) and Tannen (1990), who introduced the idea of "female language." Their research highlights differences in communication styles between men and women, with specific features characterizing feminine language. These include the frequent use of lexical hedges or fillers (e.g., "you know," "like"), tag questions (e.g., "She's really cute, isn't she?"), rising intonation in statements (e.g., "That's really good"), vague adjectives (e.g., "divine," "charming"), specific color terms (e.g., "aquamarine," "purple"), intensifiers (e.g., "just," "so"), hypercorrect grammar (e.g., consistent standard verb forms), overly polite expressions (e.g., indirect requests, euphemisms), avoidance of strong swear words (e.g., "fudge," "my God"), and emphatic stress.

In English language teaching environments where male and female students interact, differences in gender-based language usage can create challenges. Research highlights a strong connection between gender differences and learning styles. For example, some studies suggest that men often favor abstract, conceptual approaches to learning, while women typically excel in reading comprehension, engage in

reading more frequently, and hold more positive attitudes toward reading and education. These findings indicate that learning styles vary between genders, potentially influenced by linguistic differences.

Data indicates that a higher percentage of women (85%) feel hesitant to speak English with members of the opposite gender, compared to men (50%). Women demonstrated better English performance when communicating with same-gender peers than with the opposite sex. Conversely, men showed no significant difference in English proficiency whether speaking with the same or opposite gender, and they were generally more comfortable interacting with women. This underscores the impact of gender differences on students' willingness to engage in English conversations with the opposite sex. The reluctance of female students to interact with male peers suggests a lack of self-confidence, which can hinder their ability to express themselves effectively in English, perpetuating feelings of inferiority in communication.

Another notable difference between male and female students in learning English is their level of participation during lessons. Active participation is vital in English classes as it significantly improves language skills, particularly in speaking. Research found that a higher percentage of female students (80%) prefer to remain silent compared to male students (15%), while 60% of males tend to actively participate. This illustrates a clear contrast between the passivity of female students and the active involvement of male students in English learning. Male students' active engagement is often driven by their ambition, curiosity, or desire to assert themselves, reflecting a belief that being active aligns with their nature. In contrast, female students' passivity is largely attributed to lower self-confidence, which can be linked to their perception of themselves as women.

In language and gender studies, the distinction between activity and passivity is a significant characteristic of male and female communication styles. The concept of "gender" encompasses the social, cultural, psychological, and other dimensions

of the relationships between sexes, including their roles, statuses, needs, and strategies. Gender is regarded as a "complex socio-cultural construct" that reflects differences in roles, behaviors, and emotional expressions between men and women. It acts as a key marker of social structures and their progress—or lack thereof—within a society.

An introductory exercise called "Stereotypes" invites participants to share their perspectives on stereotypes associated with "male" and "female" professions (Work Stereotypes). Each participant contributes individually to the discussion. Following this, students are given authentic reading materials covering topics such as women taking on traditionally "male" roles like electric train driving, organizational loyalty, candidate selection for job vacancies, and balancing career and family responsibilities. Students then answer questions about the texts, express their views, and participate in discussions.

As part of the assignment, students engage in a role-playing activity that simulates real-life situations. Insights gained from this exercise can help English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers better understand the relationship between the use of learning strategies and success in language acquisition. Teachers can then adapt their instruction to emphasize the strategies employed by the most successful learners. Furthermore, by identifying differences in strategy use between male and female students, teachers can design targeted strategy training to support all students in enhancing their English language proficiency.

Conclusion. Gender differences in classroom discourse reflect broader societal constructs and play a crucial role in shaping educational practices and outcomes. This study reveals that while male and female educators and students often exhibit distinct communication styles in the classroom, these differences are not fixed or universal; instead, they are shaped by cultural, social, and institutional factors. Male communication in teaching settings may often emphasize assertiveness and authority, whereas female communication tends to focus on collaboration and

empathy. Nonetheless, effective teaching transcends these gendered tendencies, relying on flexibility and responsiveness to the diverse needs of students.

To promote equity, educators need to be aware of how gendered discourse can influence classroom dynamics, potentially perpetuating stereotypes or hindering participation. By fostering inclusive communication practices that value both assertiveness and empathy, educators can create a more balanced and supportive learning environment. Further research is needed to examine how intersectional factors such as race, class, and age intersect with gender to shape pedagogical discourse. Ultimately, addressing gender-based differences in classroom communication requires a commitment to reflective teaching practices and systemic reforms to ensure educational spaces are empowering for all participants.

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