

HOW SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNERS FROM MARS AND VENUS ARE DIFFERENT IN LEXICAL ACQUISITION

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ABSTRACT

Up to the present day the issue of gender and language has been widely studied by numerous researchers not only by linguistics but also practitioners from other fields of study. The amount of research has been done through different methods, instrument and scope. These various approaches have brought contradictory answers of the questions - is there any effect of gender on the language acquisition? If so, to what extent gender demonstrates its influence on language learning? More specifically, does gender difference demonstrate different lexical acquisition of second language learners? Does gender solely affect second language learners lexical acquisition? Burning questions come up along with the various perspectives and paradigm held by practitioners. The complexity brings the impossibility to cover all of questions in one study. Therefore, this study is intended to contribute to sum up studies done in the field of how gender difference demonstrate its effects on second language learners lexical acquisition. By thematical approach, this library research presents a few studies related to gender lexical acquisition that have been available over the last twenty years. The contradictory findings are revealed, that is differences do exist with huge varieties in terms of lexical acquisition, vocabulary, learning strategy and lexical use. Yet, complex measurement of gender effect on lexical acquisition occurs as the effect of the potential existence of other variable factors. Some researchers believe that gender does not solely influence second language learners acquisition. They assume that various findings might be affected by some other variable factors that make male become male and make female become female or make language learners lost their gender identity or home whether they are from Mars or Venus in language acquisition. These variable factors include age, biological, social (context, experience & socialization), psychological, pedagogical (teaching & learning instruction) and linguistical (L1 & L2 relation)

Keywords: second language acquisition, lexical acquisition, gender, SLA factors

1. INTRODUCTION

It is commonly known that language is a part of social phenomena strongly influenced by social and cultural factors such as gender, age, educational level, social level and so forth (Zendedel and Ebrahimi, 2013). Some studies have been conducted to discover relationship existing between these all factors specifically gender on language. Before 1970, the issue of gender and language had not been widely discussed by practitioners. Yet from 1970 to this present-day gender has grabbed big proportion of study in the field of language acquisition specifically language use. Lakoff (1975) formulated the concept of women's language by highlighting the obvious differences between men and women in language use. Some women's language features proposed by Lakoff are hedges or fillers, tag questions,

empty adjective, intensifiers, super polite language, avoidance of swear words and so on. The differences are also found in which men tend to inference and tend to the rules of conversation and straight factual communication (Lakoff, 1975). The differences are not superficially in the circle of verbal language but also in no verbal language where Griffin et al(1999) revealed that women were more comfortable using sensitive communication than verbal communication (eye- contact, gesture and smile). These emergencies have dragged a great attraction of linguistics and language practitioners to study about gender and language acquisition. It might because language production reflects language acquisition. It is proven by an explosion of study that addresses gender and lexical acquisition.

The popular belief is that women are more advanced in language acquisition than men are (Markovic, 2007). However, some studies discovered contradictory findings where men excel women in acquiring second language while some others revealed that gender had non-significant effect on language acquisition. Focusing on the field of lexical acquisition, abundant number of study have addressed gender differences in the various aspect in the field of lexical acquisition. Those studies have examined receptive lexical knowledge, and strategies of learning lexical knowledge.

Similar with popular belief, some studies revealed that women excel men in receptive lexical acquisition, while some others came up with contradictory result where men were superior in acquiring lexical knowledge. Non-significant relationship between gender and lexical acquisition in SLA besides gender. Thus, by doing literature review and library research, it is interesting to explore and summarize the discoveries of how gender differences influence second language learners in acquiring lexical knowledge discovered by language practitioners over the last twenty years and other variable factors that potentially affect lexical acquisition of second language learners besides gender.

GENDER & LEXICAL ACQUISITION

Some researchers explore different discoveries in the circle of the issue of gender and lexical acquisition of second language. These various discoveries might be caused by the research approach, characteristics of the participants, variable factors, scope of study and other affective factors. Without neglecting the consideration of those affective factors, here some findings of research in the field of lexical acquisition are reviewed. Subsets of focus in receptive vocabulary are floored, compared and contrasted including types of lexical items, field, size, growth, complexity and overall. In this context, to avoid the stereotype, the starting point is a null hypothesis that is commonly used stating that there is no significant of gender on lexical acquisition.

Type of lexical is divided into abstract lexicon and concrete lexicon. In this scope of abstract lexicon, it was found that gender had significant effect on the acquisition of abstract lexicon (Grace, 2000). Slightly different, Farley et.al. (forthcoming) discovered that gender did not significantly affect learners' knowledge of abstract lexicon. Contrastively, Pahom, O., et al. (2015) came up by accepting the null hypothesis in which there was no effect of gender on learners' knowledge of abstract lexicon. For concrete lexicon, Grace rejected the null hypothesis and claimed that gender played an obvious role in determining learners' success in acquiring concrete lexicon (Grace, 2000). From another perspective, Yang (2001) discovered that males are better in Geographical context, while female are better in bearing story. Similar finding with (Jimenez & Moreno, 2004; Jiménez & Ojeda, 2009; Rabbah, G., 2013), in the aspect of the quantity of lexicon acquired, it was found that gender played a major role in shaping the quantity of discourse (total words) (Jiménez & Moreno, 2004) and lexical range (variety) (Jimenez & Ojeda, 2009). in which female excelled male

By the year, Jimenez -who previously discovered an obvious difference (see Jiménez & Moreno, 2004) – during his study with Terrazas (2005-2008) pointed out that there was a very slight difference of male and female in terms of the number of lexicon they acquired. It is in line with (Umek, 2016), the size of girls' and boys' vocabularies did not differ significantly at different ages. By contrast, Grace (2000) Llach & Terrazas (2012) and Stolarova, et.al. (2016) noticed that with the same treatment, there was no difference between male and female in the number of lexicon they acquired. More pecifically, Llach & Terrazas (2012) discovered that males and females increased their receptive knowledge of English words across grades. It means that their lexical knowledge grows as their grade goes up but the growth found in this study was not extremely different between male and female.

In terms of lexical complexity, (Kaushnskaya, et.al., 2013; Pahom, et.al, 2015; Stolarova, et.al., 2016) conducted a study which resulted that female and male were different in acquiring complex lexicon. Yet, Pahom, et.al, (2015) came up with extremely contrast result compared to Stolarova, et.al., (2016) and Kaushnskaya et.al., finding that females were better (2013). Pahom, et.al, (2015) argued that boys were superior in comprehension hard language.

Regarding to the role of gender in lexical learning from overall sets, (Lin, 2011; Pahom, et.al 2015; Yan, H, 2009) observed that the the null hypothesis is rejected by claiming that females achieved significantly higher scores of comprehension and vocabulary retention tests than males did. Contrastively, Pahom, et.al (2015) claimed that males outperformed female in lexicon comprehension. Meanwhile, a slight difference had been discovered by (Soleiman, et.al, 2015) by noticing that female seemed to be slightly ahead in the word comprehension and word production than male did.

In short, generally, in the circle of receptive lexical knowledge, based on the formerly reviewed findings discovered by researchers, it can be concluded that the null hypothesis stating that “there is no difference between male and female in acquiring lexical knowledge” is mostly rejected. Simply, it notices that male and female second language learners are different in comprehending lexical knowledge. Yet, debatable question addressed is who better is? Again, based on the review of studies explored, it seems that female exceled male in acquiring lexicon comprehension. It is in line with the common belief that is women are better in acquiring lexical item than men do.

GENDER & LEXICAL LEARNING STRATEGY

As stated by Oxford (1990 in Soleiman, et.al, 2015) learning strategy is fundamental in language learning as a means of learners' autonomy improvement, learners' active and self-directed involvement. Each language learner has his or her own learning strategy in language acquisition specifically in lexical acquisition. The learning strategy has significant role in determining learners' success. Learning strategy in lexical acquisition has been studied to improve and develop the quality of learning strategy that can be employed by language learners. Several researchers have studied about the effect of gender on learners' strategy in acquiring lexical knowledge including the quantity of strategy used (frequency), quality (types of strategy) and overall examination.

In terms of frequency of strategy, several researchers came up with similar findings where females used greater number of frequency of strategy in learning lexicon than male (Jimenez, 2003; Nikolovska, 2011; Yilmaz, 2017). All of them claimed that gender had great influence on the frequency of strategy used by language learners in learning lexicon. Meanwhile, Xuemei, (2014) observed that there were no significant differences between males and females with respect to the total amount of EFL vocabulary acquisition strategies. In line with Maghsoudi, et.al., (2016), by focusing on the quality of lexicon learning strategy,

they found that there was non-significant effect of gender on the selection of type of lexicon learning strategy used by learners. Whereas, Jimenez (2003), Nikolovska (2011) and Xuemei, (2014), they examined that there was significant effect of gender on the lexicon learning strategy employment. By examining thirteen types of strategy Nikolovska (2011) also discovered that eight of them were mostly employed by female students. For the overall examination, Na (2016) noted that there were distinctive differences in the use of vocabulary learning strategies where boys tended to employ social strategies more often than girls did, while girls tended to employ meta-cognitive and cognitive strategies more frequently than boys did. It is in line with Baldoumi (2016) who found the obvious effect of gender on vocabulary learning. In contrast, Lee (2007) stated that there was no gender effect found on the pattern and frequency of strategy use.

Thus, in the context of gender as the variable factor on the use of vocabulary learning strategy, based on the most dominant findings it can be assumed that the difference does exist. Female learners were claimed that they exceeded male learners quantitatively and qualitatively in using strategies. In addition, female learners used greater number of vocabulary strategy and they used wider range of strategy than males did. The pedagogical impact of this finding is that teachers should be wide awake of the difference between male and female students in terms of the number and type of strategy in order to improve the quality, variety, and quantity of vocabulary learning strategy that can be employed by students to enhance their lexical acquisition. Therefore, the boredom and problems in learning lexical knowledge can be solved both by teachers and students.

GENDER AND LEXICAL USE

There have been great number of study related to the nature and the existence of language defences in use by men and women. It emerges the critical issues in the field of linguistics. As observed by Ha (2008) there have been two major theories disclosing differences in language: Dominance and Difference theory and Social construction theory. The theory of Dominance concerns with the imbalance power across the gender difference. For the theory of Difference, it deals with how different culture probably affects the difference use of language by women and men (Karlsson, 2007). It explains that even though men and women live in the same environment, they construct different relation and intimacy with society as if each of them belongs to a different culture (Nemati & Bayer, 2007). Lastly, based on the theory of social constructionist, language that shapes and is shaped by gender is claimed as a social phenomenon.

Lakoff (1975) states that women's lacks of authority because, in order to become feminine, women must learn to adopt an unassertive style of communication. By this statement, Lakoff stresses that women's language refers to a group of linguistic devices that serve functions including hesitations, intensive adverbs, empty adjectives, tag questions, compound requests and also hedges. These issues become starting point of the explosion of study related to gender and language use. Numerous researchers have observed the relationship between gender and lexical use to examine whether or not the difference exists. The scope of study is limited into several circles involving Size of Lexical Use, Lexicon Production, Complexity and Gender-typed lexicon. Rababáh (2012) discovered that gender played a major role in using the quantity of discourse (total words), lexical range (variety), and linguistic output where female use greater number of words than male.

The extreme difference between male and female in lexical use had been discovered by some scholars (Argamon et al., 2003; Ishikawa, 2015; Jimenez, 1997; Koppel et al., 2003; Newman et al., 2008; Xia, 2003). Jiménez (1997) noticed that women outperformed men in the election of word related to social topic. In accordance with Ishikawa (2015), by

examining language use in essay writing, it was found that boys tended to use more words related to social economic activities to convey information or facts about the given topics, whereas girls were likely to use more pronouns, more intensifiers and modifiers, and words related to psychological cognitive processes so that they might convey their feelings and develop a good relationship with other people. It is in tone with Koppel et al. (2003), who observed indicators of male language that were largely noun specifiers (e.g., determiners, numbers, and modifiers) whereas the female indicators were mostly negation, pronouns, and certain prepositions. Argamon et al. (2003) found women used more pronouns and men used more noun specifiers, including determiners and quantifiers. In the same year, Xia (2003) came up with similar finding in which differences in using language between the two genders existed. Even the result is in line, the difference of this study with the previous researches conducted by (Jiménez, 1997 and Ishikawa, 2015) is that women used more words related to psychological and social processes and more verbs, whereas men discussed current concerns and used more words related to object properties and impersonal topics (Newman et al., 2008). Moreover, in terms of level of word complexity, Lin (2011) found that female tended to use more complex word than male did.

Hassani & Farahani (2014) by analysing student's writing, they found that men made use of more hedges than women. It is known that hedge is used to show the objectivity of language user and also to avoid the certainty and the arrogance in exploring the research findings. The result rejects the Lakoff's theory stating that hedge is one of women language features (1975). The proof of the existence of gender influence on lexical use was also discovered by Xia (2003) finding that Women tended to use colour words, adjectives, adverbs, diminutives, first person plural pronoun, while men tended to use swear word and expletives, first person singular pronoun. Additionally, Umek (2016) examined boys' vocabularies included more masculine-typed words than feminine-typed words, girls' vocabularies are more feminine-typed words than masculine-typed words. The differences in the number of feminine- and masculine-typed words in boys' and girls' vocabularies were not statistically significant. it is strengthened by Nemati & Bayer (2007) resulted that there was no significant difference between males and females with regard to the use of tag questions, hedges and quantifiers.

Thus, although men and women, from a given social class, belong to the same speech community, they may use different linguistic forms. The linguistic forms used by women and men contrast to some extent in all speech communities. Less dramatic are communities where men and women speak the same language, but some distinct linguistic features occur in the speech of women and men.

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This article is a qualitative study reviewing several studies on multimodal pragmatics. The data were in the form of empirical and library research articles published in scientific journals and proceedings. To strengthen the review, this study also referred to the theory or concepts proposed by some scholars in their published books. The relevant data sources were collected and selected based on the topic of this study. All data were read, reviewed, coded, and presented. The data were coded and presented thematically based on the following themes: 1) Gender and lexical use; 2) gender and lexical learning strategy; 3) gender and lexical acquisition; and 4) Factors affecting lexical acquisition

3. RESEARCH ANALYSIS AND FINDING

As stated before, gender does not solely affect the lexical knowledge. It can be viewed from several perspectives including age, biological, social, motivation, and instruction.

Age

There is a common belief that the younger the learners are, the better they are in acquiring second language. As stated by some practitioners, younger children learn L2 easily and quickly in comparison to older children (Ellis, 2008; Larsen-Freeman, 2008). This notion strongly bounds up with what is called as Critical Period Hypothesis (CPH). This factor is strongly related to biological aspect where younger learners generally have an advantage in their brain plasticity. This period is defined as the period during which a child can acquire language easily, rapidly, accurately, and even without instruction. If young learners are better in acquiring some aspect of language learning such as in construction better pronunciation, yet, adult learners actually have their own superiority where it is believed that they have higher level of problem solving in language learning (Lightbown and Spada, 2008). It means that each level of age has its own prominent in acquiring second language.

Biological

One of branches of linguistic is psycholinguistics, a study discusses how language is processed and produced based on biological evidences related to human brains which is later on called as neurolinguistics. As proved by Witelson & Pallie (1973, in Markovic, 2007), females have obviously larger left-hemisphere structure than right hemisphere, while males have no significant difference between their left hemisphere and right hemisphere. It is known that left-hemisphere is for language specialization. This biological aspect might cause females' more superior in language development for certain period (Kagan, 1971, in Kaushanskaya, et.al. 2013). Buffery & Gray (1972) also argued that an innate neural mechanism for speech is more developed in the female brain than male brain indicating that women' linguistic development skill is more accelerated than man. Due to female advantage on long-term memory system, they excel male language learners in memorising lexicon (Kramer, et al, 1997, in Kaushanskaya, et.al. 2013).

Yet, Girls are mature earlier than boys. In this stage, male can catch up and outperform female in acquiring lexical knowledge. When girls in puberty, boys can excel them as puberty leads girls to have a labile emotional, moody and so on. This situation will affect their motivation and enthusiasm to learn and acquire language. Thus, both male and female can be better in acquiring language specifically lexicon in certain period because they have their own stage where they can optimize their biological potential to acquire language. That is why it is reasonable to consider longitudinal study to discover how their language develop along with their biological development.

Social

Troike (2003) states that there are social context and social experience that affect second language learners' success in acquiring language. How wide the space given by speech community to use or practice language or even to get language input is truly influential. In this context, the role of society is extremely fundamental. In terms of gender, it was found that society especially family shows language treatment to boys and girls including in doing communication where it can facilitate them to get language input (Markovic, 2007). In family context, Markovic also emphasized that parents' speech is

sexed-typed and children will imitate and use it. It was also found that mother tended to speak longer to her daughter than to son meaning so that girls would get greater number of lexicon than boys. Parental expectations as well as gender-related cultural beliefs are considered to play a powerful role in determining the motivation and learning achievement of male and female students (Kaylani 1996: 80 in Nikolovska, 2011). Although social interaction is dynamic, complex and problematic thing to measure and to control, the frequency and quality of social interaction is also believed as one of variable factors that influence learners' success in acquiring language. The greater number of interaction one has, the more spacious space provided to have language interaction -where language input exists-, and the more quality of the interaction she or he achieves.

Motivation

Motivation is defined as what makes one do movement in language acquisition. Two types of motivation are claimed contribute to learners' success in acquiring language namely integrative and instrumental motivation. Integrative motivation is identical with internal factor where the stimuli come from the learner itself in order to meet their interest or their self-sustaining pleasurable while instrumental motivation is defined as stimuli to learn language as the instrument to gain qualification, to get a job or so on. Nikolovska, (2011) argues that females more than males, demonstrate integrative motivation, while instrumental motivation is more typical to male. This result is in line with Oxford, Nyikos and Ehrman 1988, in Nikolovska, 2011). It shows that, both sexes have their or superiority in terms of motivation.

Instruction

In formal context of language learning, the quality of instruction clearly makes difference. Yet, no one best method fits all situation or language learning context. Language learners come to the classroom with their huge diversity and background (learning style, linguistical background, characteristics, learning strategy, motivation and gender) that should be considered by language instructor. Teacher in this respect is to find out how male and female learners learn most effectively and support them in maximizing their learning potential (Nikolovska, 2011). The data related to students' characteristics specifically gender difference that affect learning strategy or language acquisition should be considered by teachers in order to adjust teaching and learning method that can optimally accommodate students in learning language. Supported by Llach & Terrazas (2012), both male and female learners' receptive vocabulary size at different stages of instruction can show how realistic the expectations of a given lexical syllabus are, or what would constitute an optimal syllabus for each gender group. To be strengthened, Bacon and Finnemann (1992) stated that L2 instruction should account for and capitalize on potential differences rather than ignore them. Thus, it can be stated that gender and language instruction in formal classroom context are intertwined in influencing learners' success in acquiring second language specifically lexical acquisition.

4. CONCLUSION

By the consideration of literature review, it can be concluded that gender has roles in lexical acquisition. It can be in acquiring receptive lexicon, in terms of size and growth of the lexical knowledge, the strategies used in lexical acquisition, and the use of lexicon itself. Yet, gender does not solely influence the lexical acquisition. There are some other variable factors including age, biological, social, motivation and learning method or language instruction. To be successful learners in acquiring lexical knowledge in the

atmosphere of teaching and learning classroom, it is suggested to consider students gender and those other variable factors so that learning process can be optimized. Since we cannot claim we already acquire language specifically lexical items without using in in appropriate, for speech community, it is strongly recommended to provide spacious space for language learners to be able to get language input and use it as maximal as possible. context and understandable. For smaller context, family should also facilitate children to acquire language by keep providing the space and support for the children to acquire and develop their second language acquisition. For further research, this study can be used as one of consideration to give the limitation of scope of study and to control the variable factors that probably affect the result of the study or even awfully affect the validity of the result of the study.

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