

Gender Difference of English Learning Motivation Intensity among Higher Vocational Students

Wei Chen^{1,*}

¹*Fuzhou Polytechnic, 8 Lianrong Road, University Town, Fuzhou, Fujian, 350108, China*

**Corresponding author*

Keywords: Gender Difference, English Learning Motivation Intensity, Higher Vocational Students

Abstract: In the motivation research in foreign language acquisition, most scholars focus on the motivation types and triggering factors. The paper will focus on the English learning motivational efforts or intensity through the investigation on English learning behaviours. It is targeted at the gender difference of the intensity among higher vocational students and comparing the situation between 200 EFL undergraduates and 207 EFL higher vocational students. Based on the results, the pedagogical methods are suggested targeted at higher vocational students' English learning.

1. Introduction

In the past two decades, English learning motivation researches have made many progresses in many aspects including categories, models, behaviours and learners. The factors related with learners themselves have gained increasingly focus. Gardner (1985) regarded the foreign language learning motivation as the attitude toward learning language, the desire to learn the language and the motivational intensity or efforts^[1]. It pointed out that language learning motivation consists of the psychological and behavioural parts. The attitude and the desire to language learning tend to be the concepts in learners' brains while the motivational intensity or effort more indicates the behaviours invested in the actual learning practices.

The concept part will be turned into the practices that really help students to achieve their language proficiency. Ma (2005) also indicated that the language learning efforts directly mattered the language achievement.^[2] This is in line with the idea that the motivation without actions is less likely to improve the language achievement^[3]. Therefore, it is important to pay attention to the daily efforts of language learners in order to improve the effects of language learning.

2. Gender difference

Gender influence has been an academic point in the sphere of second language acquisition for a quite long time. In Gardner's (1959) research, the factor of sex difference was listed in the scale.^[4] Reviewing motivation and gender, Meece et al. (2006) indicated that girls' and boys' motivation-related beliefs and behaviours continue to follow gender role stereotypes^[5]. In Janina's research (2019), female learners were found higher than male students in motivational level, communication

interests, future self-vision and self-regulation^[6]. Shi and Huang (2012) pointed out that female students were stronger than male students in the motivation regarding to interests and long-term prospects^[7]. Li (2010) also discovered that female students clung to learn English for the interest while male students for certificate and career.^[8] In the deeper research, Zhou (2015) suggested that there was significant difference between male and female students in behaviour and emotion parts^[9].

However, most of the researches on gender gap investigate its impact on the language learning motivational variables. The gender difference in language learning efforts is less to be discussed. Furthermore, most motivational researches are targeted on the undergraduates or middle school students. Based on the recent development, Chinese higher vocational students as a particular group of students should be attached more focus on.

3. Methodology

This paper aims to investigate the gender influence on motivational efforts among Chinese higher vocational students. Therefore, the following questions will be discussed. First, is there any difference appeared in English learners' daily efforts or the motivation intensity between male and female students. If there is, what the characteristics of the difference is. Second, if there is learning intensity difference brought by gender gap, how the influence on higher vocational students differs from that on undergraduates.

3.1. Participants

In the research, there are 407 students (male 204/ female 203) participating in the investigation. Among these participants, the number of undergraduates is 200 (male 105/female 95) and higher vocational students 207(male 99/female 108). They are randomly chosen from different province through the Internet.

3.2. Instruments

The paper adopts the questionnaire and quantitative analysis to investigate English learners' daily learning efforts. The questionnaire consists of two parts. The first part is the collection of demographic information. The second part with 11 items is borrowed from Gao et al.'s investigating questionnaire without changes and among them there are 5 items reversely counted^[10]. Taking Chinese learning situation into consideration, the questionnaire in Gao's research is more adaptable to the investigation in China. And the 11 items were testified with high validity and reliability. The SPSS 27.0 will be applied to make the difference analysis. The English learning motivational intensity level range from 11 to 55 points and is divided into low (11-33) and high (33-55) level.

3.3. Process

The questionnaire was published online on March 15th. The collected data will be firstly re-coded. The reverse scored items are going to be processed and the total score of English learning efforts or intensity added. Then the reliability will be calculated through the software SPSS. Data comparison is through the independent-samples T test. According to the investigating purposes, the data will be compared on the total level, then among undergraduates and among higher vocational students.

4. Results

The research firstly finished the reliability analysis on the questionnaire items. The 11 items in the questionnaire have been analysed and the Alpha was 0.946, which indicated that questionnaire items contained relatively high reliability. Then the software SPSS 27.0 was adopted to deal with the data. The gap difference has been found among higher vocational students. Due to the space limitation, the paper will report the significant results in the research.

4.1. Gender Differences in English Learning Motivational Intensity among EFL Students

According to the result, it shows that there was no significant difference between male and female in terms of English learning motivational intensity among 407 EFL students in the research. The English learning motivational intensity level of both male (39.68) and female (41.45) students situated at a high level. Without significant gap, the female students were 1.77-point higher than male students. The only significant difference was found among the detailed learning behaviour named “I learn English for more than 15 hours a week after class” ($t(405)=-2.23, p<0.05$).

4.2. Gender Difference in English Learning Motivational Intensity among Higher Vocational Students

Table 1: Gender Difference of English Learning Motivational Intensity among Higher Vocational Students

Items	Male (n=99)		Female (n=108)		t
	M	SD	M	SD	
1.I read English newspapers and magazines after class initiatively.	3.40	1.35	3.78	1.11	-2.16*
2.I seldom look for and create opportunities to converse in English.	3.34	1.36	3.72	1.21	-2.10*
3.I just muddle through my English class.	3.36	1.40	3.70	1.18	-1.89
4.I learn English for more than 15 hours a week after class.	3.15	1.37	3.72	1.24	-3.15*
5.I pay attention to accumulate English vocabulary.	3.25	1.42	3.71	1.18	-2.52*
6.I make a conscious effort to watch more English movies or videos.	3.24	1.46	3.67	1.17	-2.30*
7.I seldom listen to (or watch) radio (or TV) programs on English channels.	3.48	1.34	3.74	1.19	-1.46
8.I seldom make efforts to figure out what I do not understand about English.	3.38	1.44	3.57	1.33	-0.99
9.I try to understand the cultural connotations of English expressions.	3.35	1.39	3.74	1.23	-2.12*
10.I seldom look for opportunities to take part in extracurricular activities, such as English corner, speech contest and composition contest.	3.27	1.35	3.74	1.16	-2.66
11.All in all, I have made great efforts to learn English well.	3.36	1.41	3.73	1.17	-2.03*
English Learning Motivational Intensity	36.62	12.71	40.83	10.54	-2.59*

As the table 1 shows that male students were significantly different from female students in English learning motivational intensity ($t(191.032)=-2.59, p <0.05$). Inspection of the two group

means indicated that the average English learning motivational intensity among female students (40.83) is significantly higher than the level male students (36.62). The difference between the means is 4.21 points. As for the detailed items, the items of 2, 4, 5, 6, 9, 10 demonstrated significant gender differences.

4.3. Comparison of Gender Difference in English Learning Motivational Intensity between University Students and Higher Vocational Students

Based on the result, though the gender difference of students learning efforts existed among undergraduates, it did not reach the significant level. It indicated that comparing with the obvious gender gap among higher vocational students, both male (42.56) and female (42.16) undergraduates reach the similarly high level of learning efforts. Besides, male undergraduates were 5.94 points higher than male higher vocational students in terms of English learning motivational intensity while the gap of female students was not so large with difference value of 1.33 points.

5. Discussions

5.1. The General Situation of English Learning Motivational Intensity

In the research, no significant different result was found in the comparison between male and female students. It indicated that students in both colleges and universities would take the behavioural efforts of similar level to learn English. The high level of English learning motivational intensity demonstrated that both male and female EFL students are willing to take actions to learn the language in their higher educational phrase. Shi and Huang (2012) also indicated that both male and female learners embrace the relatively strong autonomous learning ability^[7]. All in all, girls are ready to take more actions than boys. This is probably explained by the advantage of female students tending to learn language. Li (2010) mentioned that girls contain the special or intrinsic enthusiasm in English learning while boys tend to take English as the instruments^[8]. Besides, the significantly different item indicated that female students tend to invest more time in English learning behaviours.

5.2. Gender Difference among Higher Vocational Students

In the research, among higher vocational students, female students are obviously higher than male students in English learning motivational intensity. Girls are willing to pay more behavioural efforts than boys in foreign language learning. Zhou (2015) also pointed that significant difference existed in of English learning efforts^[9]. The main different behaviours existed in the input process of English learning including the vocabulary accumulation, investing time and the cultural connotation understanding. Significant difference existed in conversation in English could probably be explained by the nature that girls tend to talk with others than boys. Both male and female students pay the similar efforts in the output of language learning. This is closely related with the learning environment. In Chinese higher vocational colleges, there is no enough condition for students to use their English. Therefore, students in a certain way may pay not enough attention to speak English initiatively.

5.3. Comparison between Undergraduates and Higher Vocational Students in English Learning Motivational Intensity

No gender difference among undergraduates suggested that both male and female students would

like to spend their efforts in learning English if they enter into four-year universities. Compared with higher vocational students, they embrace more solid language foundation and higher learning autonomy. Furthermore, combined with the characteristics of different genders, the behavioural effort gap is larger between undergraduates and higher vocational students among male students. However, girls have the similar English learning motivational level. Though the English foundation gap also exists among female learners, their language learning nature probably bridge the gap in a certain way.

6. Conclusion

In the paper, female students are found to be more hard working in actual behaviours in learning English. The paper found that the obvious gender influence in learning actions existed among higher vocational students. Furthermore, most gender gap displayed in the input behaviours in learning among higher vocational students. Meanwhile, male undergraduates are more arduous than male higher vocational students and female students are similar in the learning efforts in both four-year universities and three-year higher vocational colleges.

These suggested that both male and female higher vocational students should pay attention to their learning end of output and teachers can guide students to increase their behaviours of outputting what they learn. Since gender gap were found among higher vocational students, it requires teachers should trigger the male and female students in a targeted way. Teachers should also pay attention to the input of male students' learning and help them to amplify the learning behaviours. Besides, teachers should not teach English to higher vocational EFL learners following the undergraduate pattern, especially to male students.

Though the paper discovered some gender differences in learning behaviours existing among higher vocational students, how the cognitive motivation of different genders to produce the different learning behaviours were not discussed in the paper. Besides, the paper focused on the quantitative methodology. In the future research, both the observation dairy and interview can be added into the study to dive into the reasons of gender differences in English learning motivational efforts.

References

- [1] Gardner R. C. (1985). *Social Psychology and Second Language Learning: The Role of Attitudes and Motivation*. Edward Arnold.
- [2] Guanghui M. (2005). *The Effects of Motivation and Effort on Foreign Language Achievement*. *Journal of PLA University of Foreign Languages*, 28(4), 5.
- [3] Jidong G. (2009). *A Study on the Relationship between Motivation and Achievement and Gender of Graduates' English Learning*. *Foreign Language World* (5), 8.
- [4] Gardner R. C., & Lambert W. E. (1959). *Motivational variables in second-language acquisition*. *Canadian Journal of Psychology / Revue canadienne de psychologie*, 13(4), 266–272.
- [5] Meece J. L., Glienke B., & Burg S.S. (2006). *Gender and motivation*. *Journal of School Psychology*, 44, 351-373.
- [6] Iwaniec J. (2019). *Language learning motivation and gender: the case of Poland*. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics*.
- [7] Xiaoyan S. & Yifei H. (2012). *A Study on Gender Difference of Undergraduates' English Learning Motivation*. *Journal of Fujian Medical University (Social Science Edition)*, 13(4), 4.
- [8] Peipei L. (2010). *Gender Influence on English Learning Motivation*. *Journal of Huanggang Normal University*, 30(1), 2.
- [9] Yun Z. (2015). *A Survey on the Influence of Gender Difference on Undergraduates' English Learning Engagement*. *Journal of Kaifeng Institute of Education*, 35(5), 2.
- [10] Yihong G., Ying C., Yuan Z., & Yan Z. (2003). *The Relationship between Types of English Learning Motivation and Intensity—A Quantitative Investigation on Chinese College Undergraduates*. *Foreign Languages Research*, (1), 5.