

ENGLISH LEARNING ABILITY DIFFERENCES BETWEEN BOYS AND GIRLS AT PRIVATE SENIOR HIGH SCHOOLS IN KUPANG

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Abstract

This study aims to know different English learning abilities of boys and girls; and how those differences occur at private senior high schools (SMA) in Kupang. It was conducted using a case study design. It used data collection techniques interviews, observation, documents study and questionnaires (mini survey). In this study also, the researcher involved English teachers who oversee the observed class. The subjects of the study were the tenth grade students of private high schools in the city of Kupang. The selected students from each proportional school were 3 boys and 3 girls of each school to be interviewed while the observations and the questionnaires were conducted and distributed to all students in observed classroom. The results of the study showed that girls were dominant in learning of English where they have higher score (85.26) than boys (82.93). Boys disliked monotonous learning, gave opinion during teaching and learning process, have high-self confidence, lack of discipline in accomplishing homework and other tasks, did the tasks by their own way, felt comfortable doing homework in study group, and preferred to sit in back seats. Girls were interested in English with high motivation, lack of self-confidence, very thorough and focus, attentive, felt comfortable with all teachers of English regardless of gender, had lack of learning difficulties, were easy to remember learning material, disciplined in doing classroom tasks (homework and other assignments), tried to speak using simple English sentences, prepared learning facilities always, preferred to sit in the front, and tried to find out the problems faced by themselves.

Keywords

English Learning, Learning Ability, Private School

1. INTRODUCTION

Education in Indonesia is implemented without discrimination in terms of ethnicity, religion, race, class and sex (act No. 20 of 2003, Article 4: 1). Therefore, in a school there are various students from different backgrounds. by no differentiation between students, there are some significant differences which certainly influence the way of learning and their learning motivation. These differences occur in all subjects including language learning.

Differences in learning outcomes are caused by several factors which are grouped into 2 large groups, namely; internal and external factors (Susilo, 2005). These two factors were then developed by Kumaravadivelu (2006: 30-31) into 6 influential factors, namely: individual factors (age and anxiety), affective (motivation and attitude), tactical factors (learning strategies and communication strategies), knowledge factors (language knowledge and meta-language knowledge), negotiation factors (interaction and meaning), and environmental factors (social context and educational context). Apart from the above factors, there is one factor that escapes but is very important to note, namely gender differences.

Sex differences have an important role in the differences in learning outcomes of students even though indirectly. Both boys and girls have great differences affect learning styles, learning motivation and learning outcomes. These are biological, motor, emotional, behavioral, personality, and motivational.

In motor terms, boys are more dominant than girls. Furthermore, in terms of cognitive, boys' long-term memory is better than boys; but boys have better short-term memory. In addition, girls learn faster to speak with varied words, but spatially boys are more dominant than girls, so they remember the road route faster than girls. Girls are more likely to work on exercises according to the teacher's explanation but boys tend to find other ways to be easier to understand or they are more innovative and creative in terms of logic and mathematics (Gurian, 2004). Another significant difference that is girls have multitasking abilities in which they can do two jobs at the same time.

In addition to the differences above, girls have higher motivation than boys in learning (Kissau, 2006 & Xiong, 2010). It is proved by the number of girls is much more than boys. According to Indonesian Center for Educational Data and Statistics and Culture (2016), the net enrollment rate of schools in East Nusa Tenggara; boys were 52.66% and girls 47.34% at elementary school level, at junior high school level boys reached 49.49% and girls were at 50.51%, while at high school level, boys were at 48.22% and girls were 51.78%.

The data above shows that the higher the level of education, the fewer boys are. This proves that girls have better motivation in learning or further study. Besides that, the reality in schools ranging from elementary to high school is that girls are more enthusiastic in class than boys. But when going to university at Bachelor and Master degree and even Master degree, men are more dominant than women.

Based on the explanations that have been presented above, the researchers want to conduct further studies whether in high school (SMA), boys and girls have different learning outcomes in English specifically. This study will look at what factors are different from the ability to learn English between boys and girls, and to find out how different learning abilities occur.

2. Research Method

This study was conducted at three private senior high schools in Kupang, Indonesia from May to October 2018. It used a case study research design in which its data collection techniques included interviews, observation, documents study and questionnaires (mini survey). In this study also, the researcher involved English teachers who overseen the observed class. The subjects of the study were the tenth grade students of private high schools in the city of Kupang. The selected students from each proportional school were 3 boys and 3 girls of each school to be interviewed while the observations and questionnaires were conducted and distributed to all students in observed class.

Data collecting techniques were carried out by using research instruments in the form of interviews, observation, document studies, and questionnaires. Interviewing technique was used to obtain data from students directly and from teachers related to the learning process and the ability of students to take part in learning English.

Observation aimed to see firsthand the interactions of students in the classroom during the English learning process. In this way, the researcher observed students' motivation, activeness, and ability level. Then, the study of documents was intended to obtain learning outcomes or abilities of students in English subjects through students' semester scores. Next, a questionnaire was distributed to see how the boys and girls respond to English lessons.

3. Findings and Discussion.

The writer conveys students' motivation, activeness, learning abilities and learning outcomes. which obtained from how boys and girls study either at school or at home, and their learning outcomes (Semester score).

3.1. Motivation

Every student has different motivation with others in learning English. The difference might be caused by gender differences as expressed by Worell (2001: 261). Generally, boys and girls like English with different motivations. Yet, they are equally interested in English language learning. Girls were more motivated in joining English lessons compared to boys. The girls acknowledge that English is very important because it is an international language and as one of the requirements to get job in the future particularly in facing the ASEAN Economic Society (AES) era. However, there were some boys say that they dislike English. They reason that English is very difficult to pronounce . It is supported by their mindset that assume that English is a difficult subject to learn.

3.2. Activeness

Boys and girls have a significant different activeness in learning English. Girls were more active than boys. Their activeness was very visible in the learning process in the classroom. They were not only active in the class but also very active in completing their homework or assignments. *"The most striking difference is the presence of apathy from boys. The boys are more indifferent in doing assignments or given homework "*(Teacher Interview, 05/15/18). It indicates that the difference in boys and girls were very different. Girls always actively answer every question from the teacher straightforwardly and actively accomplishing the tasks. There were 85.71% of girls do assignments on time compared to 57.14% of Boys (Table 3.1.). Boys tend to be apathetic compared to girls. The boys' attitude of more apathetic has been proven by Worell (2001: 261), who said that boys did not comply with the rules in the classroom, including in the teaching and learning process compared to girls.

3.3. Learning Ability

By the difference of motivation and activeness between boys and girls, it also impacts to their learning abilities. Both boys and girls have the same learning ability that they are more active in learning at school than at home. When they are at home they just do homework without studying

optimally as in school (Student Interview, 13/05/18). This study habit was caused by the habits of students who were only motivated to obtain score without being knowledge oriented. In other words, this learning habit is also influenced by the low interest of learning by boys and girls as well, (Dimiyati & Mudjiono, 2006: 239).

The differences in learning abilities of boys and girls in private high schools in the city of Kupang found that girls were more dominant than boys at all schools. This finding is in line with the statement of Frederikse (2000: 422) that girls are better using language than boys. In addition, boys and girls have differences regarding English language skills in Private High Schools in Kupang City. The differences are displayed in the following table.

Table 1: Boys and Girls' Learning Abilities

| No | Components | SMA Kristen 1 | | SMA Citra Bangsa | | SMAK. St. Carolus | | Average | |
|----|---|---------------|-------|------------------|-------|-------------------|-------|---------|-------|
| | | Boys | Girls | Boys | Girls | Boys | Girls | Boys | Girls |
| 1 | Interested in English lesson | 87.5 | 87.5 | 91 | 91 | 90 | 100 | 89.5 | 92.83 |
| 2 | Motivated to ask if the learning material is not understood | 62.5 | 87.5 | 69 | 86 | 70 | 100 | 67.17 | 91.71 |
| 3 | Giving opinion in the discussion | 50 | 50 | 69 | 78 | 50 | 90 | 56.33 | 72.67 |
| 4 | Giving opinion in the teaching and learning process | 50 | 25 | 60 | 60 | 80 | 80 | 63.33 | 55 |
| 5 | Easy to understand teachers' explanation | 50 | 37.5 | 47 | 52 | 60 | 80 | 52.33 | 56.5 |
| 6 | Listening to the teachers' explanation carefully | 25 | 75 | 60 | 69 | 70 | 100 | 51.67 | 81.33 |
| 7 | Having spirit in joining English lesson | 75 | 87.5 | 65 | 82 | 70 | 100 | 70 | 89.83 |
| 8 | Doing and submitting the tasks on time | 37.5 | 62.5 | 60 | 69 | 50 | 80 | 49.17 | 70.5 |
| 9 | Feel comfortable with all teachers of English | 87.5 | 100 | 82 | 100 | 80 | 90 | 83.17 | 96.67 |
| 10 | Having no difficulties in learning English | 37.5 | 37.5 | 26 | 47 | 60 | 60 | 41.17 | 48.17 |
| 11 | Easy to remember the learning material without recording/notes | 0 | 12.5 | 4.3 | 26 | 10 | 10 | 4.76 | 16.17 |
| 12 | Rereading learning material at home before joining English lesson | 25 | 37.5 | 13 | 30 | 50 | 60 | 29.33 | 42.5 |
| 13 | Doing the tasks according to teachers' instruction definitely | 87.5 | 100 | 95 | 100 | 100 | 90 | 94.17 | 96.67 |
| 14 | Doing the tasks using other ways (Own way) | 50 | 12.5 | 34 | 34 | 60 | 20 | 48 | 22.17 |
| 15 | Try to speak using simple English sentences | 62.5 | 62.5 | 60 | 69 | 60 | 90 | 60.83 | 73.83 |
| 16 | Ask other friends if the tasks are difficult | 75 | 75 | 82 | 91 | 100 | 100 | 85.67 | 88.67 |
| 17 | Feel comfortable doing homework in learning group | 100 | 87.5 | 91 | 91 | 90 | 90 | 93.67 | 89.5 |
| 18 | Preparing learning facilities before joining English lesson | 50 | 75 | 69 | 82 | 80 | 90 | 66.33 | 82.33 |

Table 1. shows that the boys and girls' learning abilities have differences even though there is no different approach implemented by the teacher in the learning process. *"There is no specific treatment / approach for both boys and girls in the process of learning English, (Teacher # 3, 10/22/2018).*

The factors that distinguished students' learning abilities in English both at school and at home vary from one school to another but there are very significant differences when viewed as a whole. Boys were more dominant in their interest in English language learning, giving responses, expressing opinions, doing tasks on their own way, and feeling comfortable doing homework in a study group. Whereas girls were more dominant in factors motivated to ask if the material is not understood, listen to the explanation carefully, eager to join English lessons, feel comfortable/happy

with all teachers of English, have no difficulties when learning English, easy to remember material, try to speak simple English sentences, and always prepare learning facilities before taking English lessons.

3.3.1. Boys' Learning Ability

The interest of boys in learning English is not supported by their motivation and activeness in the classroom and learning outcomes. This interest was recognized by boys that English is an international language that they must learn. "... *if we master English as an international language, it is easier for us to travel abroad as well, we are not afraid to stray ...*" (Student, 23/05/18). Boys realize that English is important but not emphasized with high motivation and enthusiasm. Teachers of English from all three private schools explained that girls are more active in the classroom learning process. "*Boys are not as active as girls in class, they are lack of interest if the material is considered difficult ...*", (Teacher 3, 06/26/18).

Boys were more courageous in giving opinions and responses in the process of English teaching and learning (63.33%) compared to girls with score of 55%. This is because of they were not afraid to express their opinions either right or wrong. In contrast with girls who tend to feel embarrassed if they answer wrongly; they were afraid of being laughed by classmates (lack of confidence). Therefore, girls were very thorough and careful in answering or expressing opinions in class. This also agrees with the findings of Malaimakuni (2016) that states that boys are more courageous in giving opinions or responses in classroom.

In doing the tasks, boys tend to do it with their own ways. The boys argued that they do trial and error so they are more creative and more innovative. They do not follow exactly what their teachers instructed because they tended to get bored faster or lack of attention during class. "... *I tried to answer (questions) first, if it is incorrect, it will be also corrected by the teacher.*" (Student Interview, 23/05/18). This statement is in line with Gurian, (2004), that the boys tend to find easier ways to understand or they are more innovative and creative in terms of logic and mathematics.

Boys were more comfortable doing homework in groups. This phenomenon occurs because they tend not to focus on completing tasks/homework individually. They get bored quickly and give up when they find difficulties in completing tasks. By the group, they can help each other because the solution is not monotonous.

3.3.2. Girls' Learning Ability

Girls were more motivated as shown by their higher fondness to English in contrast to boys who tend to be apathetic. When they did not understand the teacher's explanation, they did not hesitate to immediately ask the teacher. "... *if I don't understand, I immediately ask the teacher ...*", (Student, 05/26/18). This was emphasized that indeed girls pay more attention to each of their teacher's explanations. They felt more upset when they don't understand the teacher's explanation than boys who were indifferent. Therefore, it is not surprising that most girls choose seats in the front compared to boys who were more likely to choose seats in the back. The selection of the seats greatly influences students' attention so it was found in this study that girls were better at paying attention to each teacher's explanation with score of 81.33% compared to 51.67% by boys.

According to Gurian (2004), women have long-term memory which is better than men. Girls were found to be easier to remember English lessons even though they were not recorded compared to boys. They were better at remembering English material with score of 16.17% compared to boys with 4.76.1%. This correlates to girls' attitudes that are more attentive during the learning process in the classroom.

Furthermore, Girls were found to be more enthusiastic in taking English lessons than Boys (89.83% : 70%). Their enthusiasm was characterized by the activeness of students in doing assignments / homework, providing learning facilities (79%: 69.66%) and learning processes that were performed through their activeness in the classroom. In addition, their activeness was marked by the effort to speak using simple English sentences with the teacher, friends and closest people with score of 73.83% compared to boys with 60.83%. The teacher acknowledged that girls were much more active than boys both in class activities or completing assignments outside the classroom. This finding is in line with the statement of Kissau (2006) and Xiong, X (2010) that Girls were more enthusiastic than boys during the lesson.

Girls were more disciplined in doing assignments than boys (70.5%: 49.17%). Most boys are indifferent in completing their assignments/homework so that the teacher intervenes in collecting assignments. This indifference from Boys can be seen from their readiness to prepare their learning facilities at home to come to school. It was very different with girls who prepared their learning facilities including homework (82.33%) compared to boys with 66.33%.

There was 96.67% of girls who felt comfortable/happy with teachers of English without looking at their sex types. They had good interactions with male and female teachers as well. Teachers were also more happy with girls because girls were more disciplined in class. It was

proven that girls have better attention than boys towards teachers' explanations during the learning process. It is in line with Worell (2001: 261) who states that girls were more obedient to the rules and disciplined in classroom compared to the boys.

There were 48.17% of girls acknowledging that they had no difficulty in learning English compared to 41.17% of Boys. It was recognized by the teacher that boys have more difficulty in learning English in the classroom. Boys also recognized that English is difficult because the way of writing and pronunciation was different. Differences in difficulties on learning English are in line with the research of Kissau (2006) which found that girls were more motivated in learning English.

In contrast to the boys who tend to find their own way of doing the tasks, girls were more likely to follow their teachers' instruction definitely. They believed that the way that their teachers recommended was the best because they were afraid to commit mistakes. This was very different with boys who did not care about the mistakes they committed as explained previously.

In addition to the differences above, both boys and girls had almost similar problems in remembering the material and did not reread the material that had been studied where these two aspects not achieved score 50%. The power of memory only reached 16.17 % and relearning material just reached 42.5%. Therefore, it can be stated that the problems faced by boys and girls simultaneously were those related to memory and willingness to relearn the material that has been learned in school. Students recognized that English was difficult to remember because the writing is different with pronunciation. Besides that, to re-learn English material was very difficult because it is a foreign language that is different from other lessons.

Relating the above explanation, it can be concluded that the differences in learning abilities of both male and Girls are as follows:

Table 2: *The Discriminating factors of Boys and Girls in learning English*

| Boys | Girls |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Get bored quickly. Don't like monotonous learning • Low motivation • Give opinions on the learning process | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High motivation • Lack of confidence • Thorough and focus • Be attentive to the material being taught |

| | |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Less discipline in doing assignments / homework • Do the tasks using their own way • More comfortable doing homework in study group • Prefer sitting on the back • High self-confidence (not afraid of incorrect opinions). | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eager to take lessons • Feel comfortable with all teachers of English • Have no difficulties while studying English • Discipline in doing class assignments (homework / other assignments) • Easy to remember material • Try to speak using simple English sentences • Always prepare learning facilities before taking lessons. • Prefer to choose the front seat • Try to find out their difficulties faced by themselves |
|---|---|

Table 2. shows that the learning abilities of boys and girls have significant differences. The boys and girls were equally interested in English. Conversely, the boys were not followed by good motivation and enthusiasm. Boys disliked monotonous learning because they got bored quickly, expressed opinions during the learning process, did their tasks using their own way, were more comfortable doing homework in groups, had high self-confidence and preferred sitting in the back. Meanwhile, the girls were motivated learning English, lack of confidence, thorough and focused, attentive, feeling comfortable with all teachers of English regardless of gender, not having difficulty while learning, easily remembering material, always trying to speak using simple English sentences, always preparing learning facilities before taking lessons, choosing the front seat, and trying to find out the difficulties faced by themselves.

3.4. Learning outcomes

Students' learning outcomes can be influenced by their motivation and learning ability on subjects. In general, learning outcomes obtained from three private schools showed similarities

where girls were superior to boys. This was supported by the findings of Frederikse (2000: 422) states proves that women were superior in verbal abilities (language learning abilities).

Table 3: *Learning Outcomes Differences between Boys and Girls*

| SMA Kristen | | SMA Citra Bangsa | | SMAK St. Carolus | | Average Score | |
|-------------|-------|------------------|-------|------------------|-------|---------------|-------|
| Boys | Girls | Boys | Girls | Boys | Girls | Boys | Girls |
| 79.7 | 83.6 | 87.74 | 89.25 | 81.37 | 82.93 | 82.93 | 85.26 |

Table 3. shows that girls in SMA Kristen were superior in learning outcomes with 83.6 compared to boys with average score of 79.7. This was positively proportional to the motivation of girls who were better than boys (*see learning ability and motivation*).

The difference of students' learning outcomes at SMA Citra Bangsa shows that girls were higher with average score of 89.25 than boys with 87.74. This has been seen from the dominance of Girls in undergoing good learning skills. This indicated that there was difference between boys in learning English.

SMAK St. Carolus had similar results to SMA Kristen and SMA Citra Bangsa where girls were more dominant. The average score of the girls were 82.93, very thinly different with boys 81.37. This was also supported by positive correlation of the girls' superiority compared to boys starting from the aspect of motivation to the ability to learn in class and at home. The teacher acknowledged that girls dominance was influenced by differences in the motivation and attitudes where the girls were easily to be disciplined; they were more obedient and disciplined during teaching and learning process.

To see the comparison of the learning outcomes of male and girls as a whole, it is necessary to combine the three schools scores (Table 3.). It was found that the girls' learning outcomes were higher than Boys with average score of 85.26 versus 82.93. Thus, girls were better at learning English skills than boys as expressed by Frederikse (2000: 422). The ability of girls was influenced by several distinguishing factors including; have high motivation and enthusiasm, more disciplined, have more motivation, more enthusiastic, did not get bored quickly, thoroughly and focus, attentive, feel comfortable with all teachers of English, easily to remember material, try to practice simple English sentences, choosing a seat at the front, trying to find out their difficulties faced and always preparing learning facilities before starting English lesson.

4. Conclusion

Boys and girls have differences in learning English at home and at school. Their learning outcomes showed that girls were higher with average score 85.26 than boys with 82.93. This results correlated to the learning ability differences that they have.

Boys were interested in English but it was not supported by motivation and enthusiasm. They disliked monotonous learning, gave opinion during teaching and learning process, have high-self confidence, lack of discipline in accomplishing homework and other tasks, did the tasks by own way, felt comfortable doing homework in study group, and prefer to seat in back.

Girls were interested in English lesson then followed by high motivation but they were lack of self- confidence. Besides that, they were very thorough and focus, attentive, felt comfortable with all teachers of English regardless of gender, having lack of learning difficulties, easy to remember learning material, disciplined in doing classroom tasks (homework and other assignments), tried to speak using simple English sentences, providing learning facilities always, preferred to sit in the front, and tried to find out the problems faced by themselves.

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