

# The Role of Age and Gender Differences in Language Learning: A Case Study on Kurdish EFL Learners

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**Abstract:** Learning another language, apart from your mother tongue, becomes an influential part of life; however, it will be affected by many non-linguistic factors. Moreover, there is no doubt that language acquisition is a complex process which involves several factors, and that this process is highly influenced due to the plasticity of the brain. Furthermore, the types of memory systems involved in females and males also have a pivotal role that makes the genders distinct. Additionally, age and gender are among the factors that run in parallel with other factors and deeply influence language acquisition process. The study aims to investigate the role of age and gender problems and their influences, as it tries to differentiate between all ages and genders, in learning English as a foreign language. The participants in this research are students at different basic and secondary schools, and English department students at the University of Sulaimani; besides, several teachers were asked too. Mixed methods of data collection were used in this study (questionnaire and interview). The questionnaire section consists of ten questions and five for background information, which all were about age and gender. Moreover, twenty-eight students participated in the questionnaire section; and two teachers and one student participated in the interview section, which was consisted of five questions. The results of this research show the problems according to different ages and genders, and difficulties that faced Kurdish students through learning English; in which, it helps instructors to select their instructional strategies more effectively related to gender and age of students.

**Keywords:** Gender, Age, Language Learning, Critical Period, Foreign Language

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## 1. Introduction

Two of the evident concepts that pose difficulties for Kurdish learners of English are genders and age variations. These problems have not been widely covered by researchers, though it has usually passed unnoticed, leave a tremendous negative impact on the learning process. The research is expected to be of academic and scientific value for teachers involved in teaching English as a foreign language to learners of different ages and genders. The research, also, highlights the positive and negative aspects and factors of such differentiation on learning English in Kurdistan. The paper aims at raising the awareness of various learners of English at universities, schools and language learning centres in Kurdistan region. Besides, it aims at finding out problems and difficulties in learning the English language. Moreover, the study was carried out at four separate educational places to gather enough data concerning

the issue; it was conducted in Department of English (School of Education / University of Sulaimani) in Chamchamal District, Sara High School, Harem Secondary School in Said-Sadiq, and Sarcham Primary School in Dukan. The questionnaires and interviews have all been conducted in those places, in which both teachers and students participated voluntarily. In addition, large amounts of information were collected on the topic through an efficient literature review of previous related works. Later, the collected data underwent argumentation and discussion. In this applied work, each of updated Qualitative and Quantitative data collection method (questionnaire and interview) were used. Finally, the results of the data collection methods were studied and rich conclusions were reached. Additionally, the main research questions that this paper attempts to answer will be:

(1) Whether male or female can acquire the language

better?

- (2) What age is convenient for learning English as a foreign language?

## 2. Literature Review

The purpose of this section is to review the literature, which is related to the current research. The section is about past studies that are done by previous researchers. It starts with the definition of the term "gender". In the general sense, the notions "sex" or/and "gender" are perceived to be synonymous and in some studies, they are used interchangeably. The definition of sex or/and gender in Cobuild's English Dictionary (1995) is as follows: Sex (excluding other meanings) is considered as the groups of male and female, into which people and animals are divided according to the function they achieve in producing young. Moreover, the sex of a person or animal is the characteristic of their being either a male or a female. However, gender is explained as the fact that they are male or female, and one can refer to all male and female people as a particular gender. Additionally, in grammar, the gender of a noun, pronoun or adjective is whether masculine, feminine or neuter. Furthermore, the term "gender" is given to distinguish people by their socio-cultural behaviour and the term "sex" refers to the biological differentiation among male and female (Ford, 1995; Holmes, 2001; and Sunderland, 1994). There are some past studies about gender, that left a trace on learning the English language; as Boyle (1987) performed his study on 490 Chinese university students (257 male and 233 female) in Hong Kong. He found that females have more ability in learning the second language than males. In addition, Burstall (1975) believed that female is better than male in learning English. He proved this through performing a study on (6,000) children in England who studying English in their primary schools. In contrast, there are other studies by Ford et al. (1988), which have largely proven that no important difference exists among male and female in terms of their oral ability. Conversely, Ehrman and Oxford (1995) discovered that female learners use a number of strategies in learning a foreign language; as previously, Oxford and Nyikos (1989) have reached the same conclusion as well; as this could be an obvious reason behind their flexibility toward any new language they are learning. Additionally, Block (2002:53) argued that "in this model, women are perceived to perform their 'women-ness' in an ethnomethodological from as they continually negotiate their position of relative powerlessness *Vis a Vis* men".

Age is considered as another dimension of the research paper; a variable age of the learner is constantly considered in relation to target language; Ellis (1985), Harley (2000), Singleton and Lengyel (1995), and Todd et al. (2000) explained that how age has effect on learning target language. Moreover, Ellis investigated variable of ages into two factors; one is the apparent ease with which variable could be measured as opposed to another variable, and other

is the need to reinforcement that commonly held belief that young learners are better than adults in learning the English language. According to many researchers; however, held belief may not be supported by experimental studies, each of Cook (1986) (1996), Ellis (1985), Mrinova Todd et al. (2000), and Marshal and Snow (2001) illustrated the case. According to some linguists, the advocates of the critical period hypothesis are continual claims that children are better than adults in learning a foreign language (Cook, 1996 and Mrinova Todd et al., 2000).

Recently, Moyer (2004) identified that biological age is one of the most significant approaches to learning language acquisition. Furthermore, biological age should be related to social and psychological elements, which the learners have experienced. Additionally, she obtained this data in her study on the accent of (25) immigrants to Germany. Moreover, Fathman (1975) in his study found that (11-15) years old are better in learning English than (6-10) years old in respect to (pronunciation, morphology, and syntax). By contrast, in their studies, Light Brown and Spada (2006) assert that elder children and youthful ones make more improvements than younger learners. Likewise, Singleton (1978) has some proofs on age effects on learning a second language. Singleton supposed that the elder the child is the more effective s/he will be engaged in learning. On the other hand, Snow et al. (1994) believed that teenagers are generally the best learners. In contrast, after nine months of instructing in French, Ervin-Tripp (1994) found that (7-9) years old are better than (4-6) years old in regard to (comprehension, imitation, and conversation).

In previous studies concerning the issue, it had been concluded that psychological type seems to have a powerful effect on the way the learners use language learning strategies and Nationality also has influences in learning a language (Oxford, 1990). Lately, it had been found out that European students can perform better in learning a language than students of other nationalities, particularly in concern to strategies that relate to vocabulary, reading, interaction with others, and the learner's ambiguity (Griffiths and Parr, 2000). Furthermore, the study had been conducted on (15) European students, their competence toward a new language worked at way higher than students of other nationalities.

## 3. Methodology

Many methods are available to collect data for a research so different researchers use different ways to help them tackle their issues and they have their own reasons for preferring a method over another. The factors behind their choice might contain time, place, cost, and the number of participants who agree to take part in answering the questions and so on. In this paper, two methods of data collection have been used: quantitative method (questionnaire) and qualitative method (interview). The researcher used these two methods to obtain trustworthy information, valid data, and reliable solution. The information that the researcher obtains

in the questionnaire can be limited to an extent which could be one of the weak points of the method. However, interview solved this issue for the researcher (Cohen et al., 2007).

### 3.1. Questionnaire

Questionnaires were given to Sara high school, Sarcham basic school in Dukan, Harem basic students in Said Sadiq, English department students at the University of Sulaimani, and School of Education in Chamchamal (n=28); equally divided by both genders (n=14). All the questions are written by researcher and approved by department staff and the head of school. The questionnaire is divided into two parts. The first part requires background information from the participants such as (gender and age). The second part consists of ten questions, which all ask about related aspects (age and gender problems and difficulties in learning the English language as the foreign language) see appendix (1). All of the questions had four choices that the participants had to tick; which followed "Likert scale" method. The four options were "strongly agree, agree, disagree, and strongly disagree". However, "neutral" could have been put, but it was excluded. Since; some of the participants prefer to stick it than the other options.

### 3.2. Interview

This kind of data collection is known as a qualitative method. Using this type of method is to fill the gaps that the questionnaire might have left empty. Interviews have been collected among English teachers and students (n=3). During the interviews, the response has space and give freedom to the interviewees to answer questions and express their feelings freely. All the questions are written by the researcher and approved by department and school. Moreover, the interview consisted of five questions (see appendix two) the questions were constructed simply and without ambiguity so that the interviewee would not be confused. Following Dornyei's opinion, it was shown how interested the researchers are on their topic. The interviews took (10-15) minutes for each teacher. They were done in a quiet atmosphere and on different genders and age groups.

### 3.3. Sample

In the questionnaire, twenty-eight participants took part; and three participants took part in the interview. The participants were in different levels of education. However, all the participants were from the same educational system and similar cultural background. All the participants were of Kurdish origin.

## 4. Results and Findings: Presentation, Analysis, and Discussion of the Data

This chapter is presented and discussed the gathered information about age and gender problems and difficulties in learning the English language as a foreign language. The

chapter includes the results and findings of the questionnaire, background questions and problem sections, and interview. Lately, comparisons being made with previous studies' findings; the findings will be discussed in relation to each research question. This section contains the analysis of the data collection which was indicated from both questionnaire and interview section. Quantitative data were collected from the questionnaire survey. Furthermore, qualitative data were gathered through the face-to-face interview.

### 4.1. Background Questionnaire Results and Discussion

According to the result of the first question about the effect of fear on learning the English language; roughly two third, (%78.6), of the male participants, believed that fear has an effect, but (%21.4) of them think differently. For the female participants, (%42.9) answered as "yes" and (%7.1) answered as "no". This can be believed that the female participants agreed with the idea more than the male participants (see fig. 10).

Regarding question two, (%14.3) of the male participants thought that "male are shy than female learner", but (%8.5) of the participants thought the opposite. In the case of the female participants, (%42.4) of them thought that female are shy than male (see fig. 10).

Concerning question three, the vast majority of the male participants (%42.9) answered as "yes" to the question that the students' number in the class has an effect on language learning. On the other hand, (%85.7) of the female participants answered as "yes", whilst only (%14.3) replied as "no" (see fig. 10).

Lately, for question four, most of the male participants, (%57.1), thought that mixing male and female genders on the same group has affected the language learning; and almost the other half, (%42.4), thought that there is no side effect. On the hand, (64.3) percent of the female participants answered as "yes" and (35.7) percent answered as "no". As this shows that the most of the participants thought that mixing both genders have an impact on learning a language (see fig. 10).

Finally, the question five is about the easiness of learning a language for children in compare to adults, (%57.1) of the male participants answered as "no"; by contrast, (%42.4) of them answered as "yes". Moreover, the majority of the female participants (%71.4) answered the question as "yes" and only (%28.6) of them replied with "no". It can be said that the majority of the females thought that it is easier for children to learn a language (see fig. 11).

### 4.2. Main Questionnaire Results and Discussion

As previously indicated, the questionnaires have two sections. The first part is background information about the participants; such as age and gender. The second consists of ten questions that asked age and gender problems and difficulties in learning the English language as foreign language. Additionally, all of the participants were at

different levels of education (n=28), as they answered the questions; in which their numbers were equally divided between both genders (n=14).

Regarding the first question, adults learn faster than children in learning the English language as for female gender their answers rated as (%42.9) disagreed, (%28.6) agreed, (%21.4) strongly disagreed, and (%7.1) strongly agreed. On the other hand, male participants strongly agreed and agreed by the range of (%7.1) and (%42.9) on the same point respectively; however, only (%35) disagreed and (%14.3) strongly disagreed with the argument. Moreover, this finding can be supported by the studies of Cook (1996), as he found that children are better than an adult in learning the language (see fig. 2 and fig. 6).

Concerning question two that was asked about pre-puberty age, whether they are better in learning the language than post-puberty or not; most of the female and the male participants (%57.1) agreed and (%35.7) strongly agreed upon the issue. Furthermore, it shows that most of the participants thought that pre-puberty are better than post-puberty. As Fathman (1975) found that (11-15) years old learners are better than (6-10) years old in learning English language (LEL), which means that puberty age is better than pre-puberty in learning a language (see fig. 2 and fig. 6).

The third question was asked about adult learners, whether they will learn the language better than younger; half of the female participants (%50) agreed and (%28.6) disagreed on the discussion that adult learners will learn the language better in LEL, but both of Ellis (1985) and Morinova Tod et al. (2000) supposed that younger learners are better than adult in learning language, as they had the opposite opinion (see fig. 2 and fig. 6).

Regarding the fourth question, whether older learners are more successful than younger in LEL or not. The majority of the female and the male participants (%50) disagreed, (%35.7) strongly disagreed, (%7.1) agreed, and (%7.1) strongly agreed on the idea respectively. So it can be stated that most of the participants disagreed with the idea that the older learners are successful than younger learners (see fig. 2 and fig. 6).

Concerning the fifth question, it was about the barrier of anxiety and its effects on adults in learning a language, more than half of the female participants (%57.1) agreed, but (%35.7) strongly agreed. Additionally, half of the male participants (%50) agreed, (%35.7) strongly agreed, and (%14.3) disagreed respectively. This shows that the majority of participants agreed on the same point (see fig. 3 and fig. 7).

Question six, which was about whether female learners achieve the language better than male learners or not; as for female genders answered as (%35.7), (%35.7), and (%21.4) for each of strongly disagree, disagree and agree prospectively. But, the male participants had the opposite idea; as they answered the question as (%42.9), (%28.6) and (%21.4) for each of agree, disagree and strongly agree respectively (see fig. 3 and fig. 7).

In the seventh question, the participants were asked about that male learners are more instrumentally motivated than female learners, analysing the results made it clear that (%42.9) of the female participants disagreed; in contrast, only (%21.4) agreed. Meanwhile, the male participants (%50) agreed and (%21.4) disagreed. It can be stated that the majority of the male participants agreed with that male learners are motivated more than female learners (see fig. 3 and fig. 7).

Regarding question eight, the researchers were interested in knowing whether society has affected the learning of the language or not; as a majority, (%64.3), of the female participants, agreed with the idea and only (%7.1) disagreed. In addition, the male participants agreed by the range of (%78.6) and strongly agreed by the percentage of (14.3) with the same point (see fig. 3 and fig. 7).

Question nine asked about which gender has more ability in learning a language; as (35.7%) of the female participants strongly disagreed, (%28.6) disagreed, and (%35.7) agreed. Furthermore, (%7.1) of the male participants strongly disagreed, (%50.0) disagreed, (%35.7) agreed and (%7.1) strongly agreed with the notion. Further evidence can be found in the work of Boyle (1987), as he found that female have more ability in learning a language than male. So, it can be found that the result that researcher found is different to what Boyle found (see fig. 4 and fig. 8); such different ideas could be created due to different education systems and background knowledge of the language. However, different societies and cultures may influence this phenomenon indirectly.

As for question ten, psychological problems of learners have been revealed on learning the language. Almost one-third, (%35.7), of the female participants agreed and (%64.3), strongly agreed. On the other hand, (%7.1) of the female participants strongly agreed, (%50.0) agreed and (%42.9) strongly agreed. This idea can be supported by the work of Oxford (1990) as he said that psychology has a powerful effect on learning the language (see fig. 4 and fig. 8).

### 4.3. Interview Results and Discussions

Three participants were interviewed; all of them were at the University of Sulaimani / College of Education – Chamchamal / English Department. There were five questions, (see appendix two), to be asked. During the interview, the participants felt free to give the opinions. Additionally, the teachers were asked about the necessity of learning cultures to speak in English. Moreover, they were also questioned about the impact of genders in learning the English language. Another question for the teachers was about the gender differences in learning the language sooner. Later, another question was asked to identify whether children are better in learning or not. Finally, the last question was about the parents' motivation toward their daughter(s) or son(s).

The teachers were asked several questions, as it is shown in appendix two. What concluded from the first question was

that all of the participants had the same idea that learning a culture means learning that language. Furthermore, mixing with other cultures is very important to learn the second language, because practising and sharing knowledge and ideas in everyday conversation is not like someone who lives in the native country without any background information of English language. So, mixing with different cultures and learning different cultures have a very important role in learning a language.

As for question two, two of the participants said that gender of the teacher has a side effect on learning. However, it is different from one culture to another and it is still debatable. While, in our country (Iraq), if the teacher is female the message to female students can be conveyed quite easier; and the same with the male genders, because of boundaries between both genders and some psychological issues. However, the interviewee who said gender does not make any difference. What can be concluded from this is that having experience is important.

Regarding the third question, the interviewees had different opinions on gender concerning learning. One of them thought that male is better in expressing ideas wider than female since female had some kind of shyness. And, another interviewee believed that it depends on the IQ of the person whether the person is of any gender. The result is similar to the work of Ford et al. (1988), they said that there

are no differences between male and female genders in learning as it depends on the person's intelligence. Whilst, the third interviewee supported the notion that female is better in achieving and acquiring a language because the female is more social and make more conversation than male; as this could be found in the works of Boyle (1987) and Burstall (1975).

Concerning the fourth question, two of the interviewees thought that children can acquire the language better and faster than any other ages. Since children have strong and sharp memories and they can learn a language subconsciously. Furthermore, the time they hear about a single word, it will automatically be transferred to back a memory. This result is similar to the work of Mrinova Todd et al. (2000). Another interviewee thought that younger is better in achieving a language and this notion is similar to the finding of Marshall and Snow (2000).

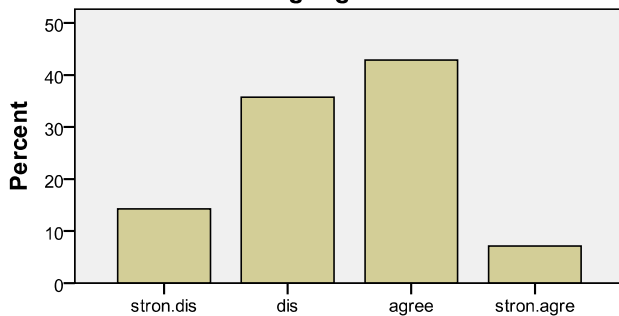
The last question, question five, has been answered with different opinions, as one of them believed that in our country, Iraq, there is a kind of misunderstanding that female genders should speak less in most of the times and another interviewee thought that family has a great role in motivating their children to learn a language. The last interviewee believed that mothers are the one to be supportive persons for their children to succeed and learn a new language.

*Table 1. The Role of Different Ages and Genders in Learning Language.*

Statistics								
			gender	Adults learn faster than children in learning the English language	Pre-puberty is better in learning language than post-puberty	Adult learners are better in learning language than younger	Older learners are more successful than younger in learning the English language	The barrier of anxiety sometimes make the adult less successful in learning language
N	Valid	14	14	14	14	14	14	14
	Missing	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Mean		1.0000	2.4286	3.2143	2.8571	1.8571	3.2143	
Median		1.0000	2.5000	3.0000	3.0000	2.0000	3.0000	
Mode		1.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	2.00	3.00	
Std. Deviation		.00000	.85163	.80178	.94926	.86444	.69929	
Variance		.000	.725	.643	.901	.747	.489	
Minimum		1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	2.00	
Maximum		1.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	

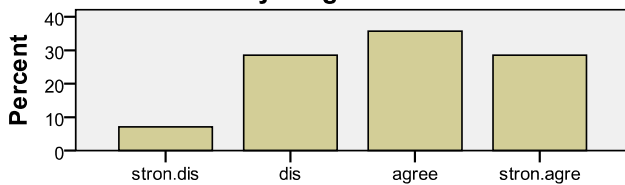
Statistics								
			gender	Female learners achieve the language than male learners	Male learners are more instrumentally motivated than female learners	Society has effected in learning language	Female have more ability in learning the English language than male	Psychology problem of learners has affected on learning language
N	Valid	14	14	14	14	14	14	14
	Missing	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Mean		1.0000	2.3571	3.0714	3.0000	2.4286	3.2857	
Median		1.0000	2.5000	3.0000	3.0000	2.0000	3.0000	
Mode		1.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	2.00	3.00	
Std. Deviation		.00000	.92878	.73005	.67937	.75593	.82542	
Variance		.000	.863	.533	.462	.571	.681	
Minimum		1.00	1.00	2.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	
Maximum		1.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	

### Adults learn faster than children in learning English language



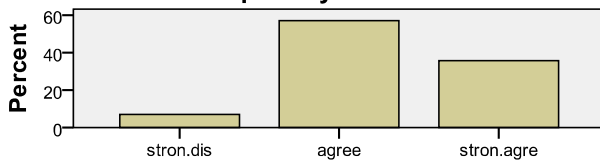
Adults learn faster than children in learning English language

### Adult learners are better in learning language than younger



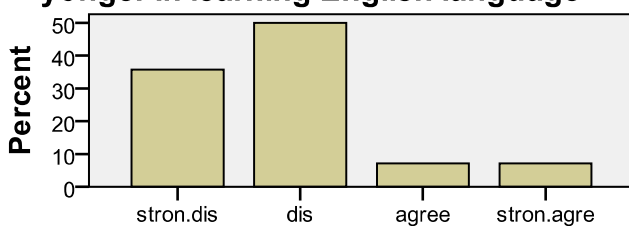
Adult learners are better in learning language than younger

### Pre-puberty is better in learning language than post-puberty



Pre-puberty is better in learning language than post-puberty

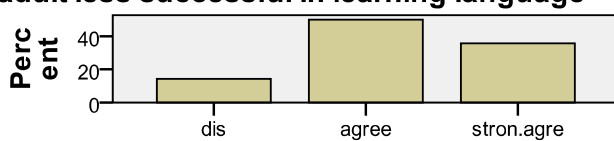
### Older learners are more successful than younger in learning English language



Older learners are more successful than younger in learning English language

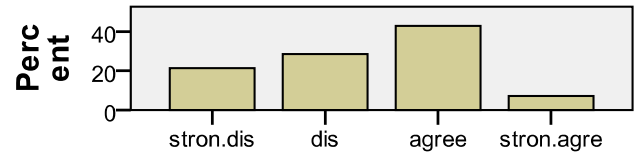
Figure 1. Effect of Age on Learning Process.

### The barrier of anxiety sometimes make the adult less successful in learning language



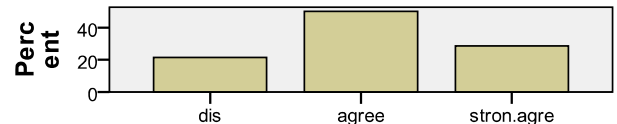
The barrier of anxiety sometimes make the adult less successful in learning language

### Female learners achieve the language than male learners



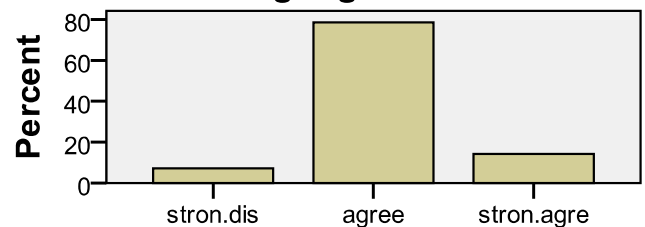
Female learners achieve the language than male learners

### Male learners are more instrumentally motivated than female learners



Male learners are more instrumentally motivated than female learners

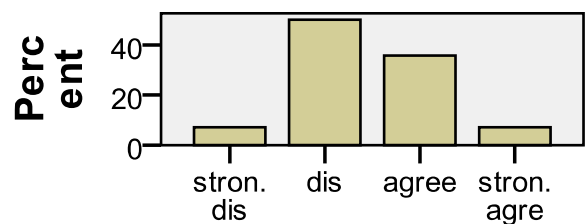
### Society has effected in learning language



Society has effected in learning language

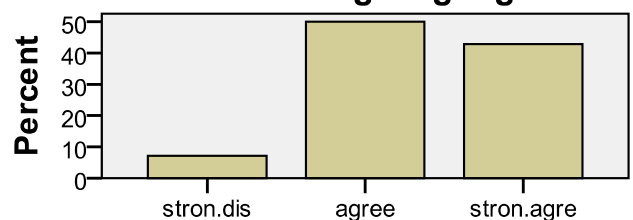
Figure 2. Gender Differences and Social Problems in Learning Language.

### Female have more ability in learning English language than male



Female have more ability in learning English language than male

### Psychology problem of learners has effected on learning language



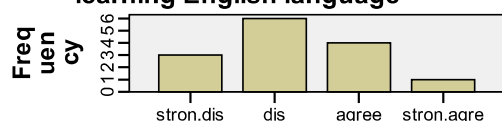
Psychology problem of learners has effected on learning language

Figure 3. Females' Problems in Compare to Males in Acquiring Language.

*Table 2. Gender Frequency (Female) in Language Learning.*

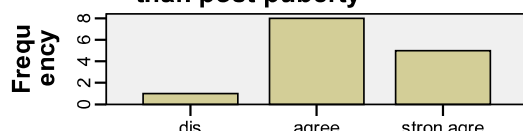
Gender						
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent	
Valid	female	14	100.0	100.0	100.0	
Statistics						
	gender	Adults learn faster than children in learning the English language	Pre-puberty is better in learning language than post-puberty	Adult learners are better in learning language than younger	Older learners are more successful than younger in learning the English language	The barrier of anxiety sometimes make the adult less successful in learning language
Valid	14	14	14	14	14	14
Missing	0	0	0	0	0	0
Mean	2.0000	2.2143	3.2857	2.5000	1.8571	3.2143
Median	2.0000	2.0000	3.0000	3.0000	2.0000	3.0000
Std. Deviation	.00000	.89258	.61125	.85485	.86444	.80178
Statistics						
	gender	Female learners achieve the language than male learners	Male learners are more instrumentally motivated than female learners	Society has effected in learning language	Female have more ability in learning the English language than male	Psychology problem of learners has effected on learning language
Valid	14	14	14	14	14	14
Missing	0	0	0	0	0	0
Mean	2.0000	2.0000	2.2857	3.2143	2.0000	3.6429
Median	2.0000	2.0000	2.0000	3.0000	2.0000	4.0000
Std. Deviation	.00000	.96077	.99449	.57893	.87706	.49725

**Adults learn faster than children in learning English language**



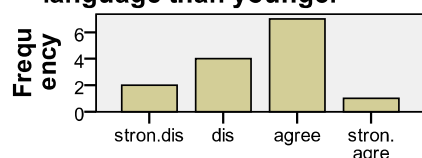
**Adults learn faster than ...**

**Pre-puberty is better in learning language than post-puberty**



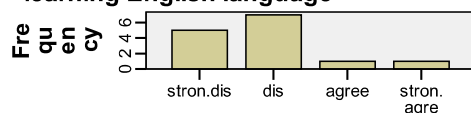
**Pre-puberty is better in learnin...**

**Adult learners are better in learning language than younger**



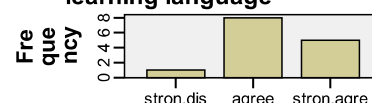
**Adult learners are bett...**

**Older learners are more successful than yonger in learning English language**



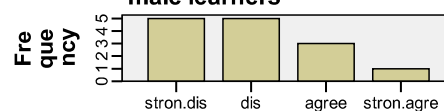
*Figure 4. Effect of Age in Grasping Language.*

**The barrier of anxiety sometimes make the adult less successful in learning language**



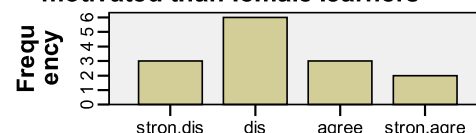
**The barrier of anxi...**

**Female learners achieve the language than male learners**



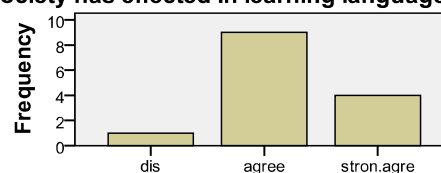
**Female learners achieve t...**

**Male learners are more instrumentally motivated than female learners**



**Male learners are more ...**

**Society has effected in learning language**



**Society has effected in learning language**

*Figure 5. Anxiety and Language Learning.*

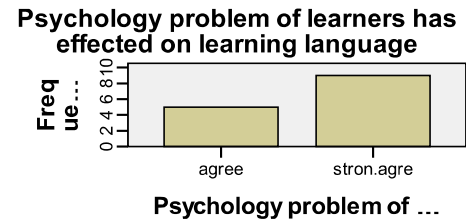
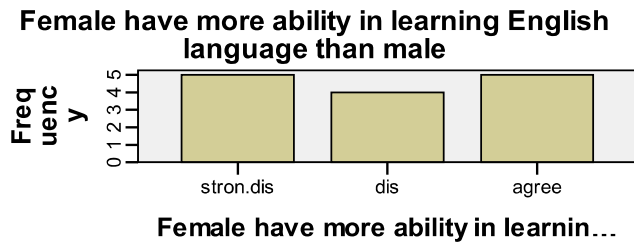


Figure 6. Psychological Factor in Language Learning.

Table 3. Psychological Barriers in Acquiring English Adequately for both Genders.

Gender		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	male	14	100.0	100.0	100.0

Statistics		gender	Has fear affected of learning the English language?	Which type of gender feels shyness more than the other in the learning process?	Has the student's number in the class affected by learning the language?	Are mixing male and female gender affected of learning the English language?	Is it easier for children than adults to learn a foreign language?
N	Valid	14	14	14	14	14	14
	Missing	0	0	0	0	0	0
Mean		1.0000	1.2143	1.8571	1.0714	1.4286	1.5714
Median		1.0000	1.0000	2.0000	1.0000	1.0000	2.0000
Std. Deviation		.00000	.42582	.36314	.26726	.51355	.51355
Variance		.000	.181	.132	.071	.264	.264
Minimum		1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
Maximum		1.00	2.00	2.00	2.00	2.00	2.00

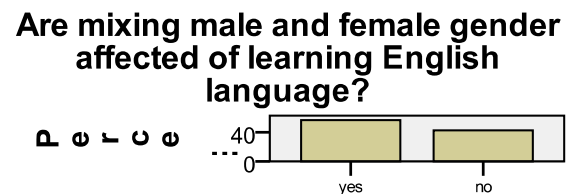
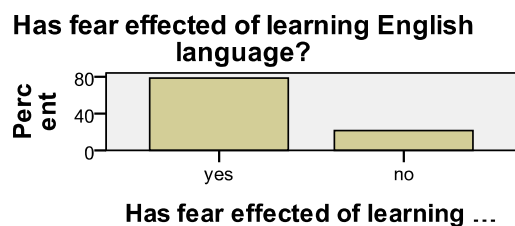
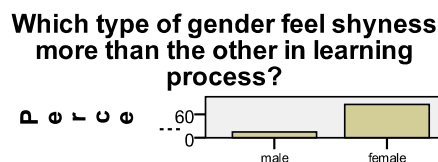
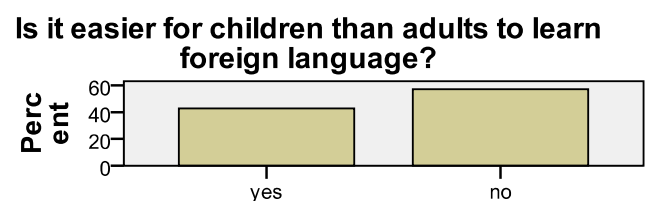
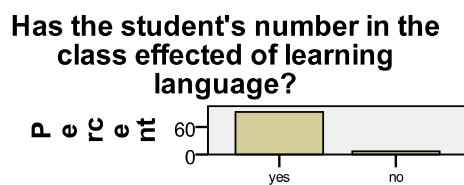


Figure 7. Fear and Language Barriers.



Is it easier for children than adults t...

Figure 8. Age Differences in Grasping Language.

Table 4. Female and Language Barriers.

Gender		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	female	14	100.0	100.0	100.0



Statistics							
	gender		Has fear affected of learning the English language?	Which type of gender feels shyness more than the other in the learning process?	Has the student's number in the class affected by learning the language?	Are mixing male and female gender affected of learning the English language?	Is it easier for children than adults to learn a foreign language?
N	Valid	14	14	14	14	14	14
	Missing	0	0	0	0	0	0
Mean		2.0000	1.0714	1.9286	1.1429	1.6429	1.2857
Median		2.0000	1.0000	2.0000	1.0000	2.0000	1.0000
Std. Deviation		.00000	.26726	.26726	.36314	.49725	.46881
Minimum		2.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
Maximum		2.00	2.00	2.00	2.00	2.00	2.00

## 5. Research Questions` Discussions

This section will explain the main answers to the research questions; precisely, through the questionnaire data and interview section`s main findings the answer to each research question is reached.

### 5.1. Whether Male or Female can Acquire the Language Better?

As the data were illustrated adequately previously; hence, male gender can do better in learning the English language than female. The result of this research question may differ and will alter from one society to another. Regardless, in most of the Middle Eastern countries, the similar data can be found since they share almost the same or similar backgrounds and educational systems. The consequence of this result may relate to different gender`s phenomenon in the following countries, as complete freedom of speech and idea release have given to male rather than female. As a result, females will shy to utter what they have even in their own language, and such depression will let them to not utter what they think of not losing face.

### 5.2. What Age is Convenient for Learning English as a Foreign Language?

Regarding second research question and under the light of previous data the result showed that children are better than any other age groups in learning the language. Education system may have an indirect effect on this issue; since the classes are more teachers oriented and centred then fewer opportunities are given to students to share their knowledge and utter what they have learned in the classes. Moreover, they have no opportunity to practice their language outside the class and Kurdish is the only language which is spoken by them. In contrast, children have a fresher mind and they speak without any hesitation and without caring about the mistakes they will make. Such phenomenon of not afraid of losing face will help them to speak much more natural; in addition, due to their age, the teacher will not be furious once they did a mistake and they will be corrected.

## 6. Conclusion

This research studied the age and gender problems and difficulties in learning a language as a foreign language. Lately, how each of age and gender has impacts on LL (Language Learning). The findings of this study answered the research questions, as this research intended to find out the problems and difficulties; and some solutions and recommendations were given. The answer to the first research questions, "Which gender is better in acquiring the language?", the result of the questionnaire shows that male learners are better than female. As for the second question, "What age is convenient for learning English as a foreign language?"; the result of the questionnaire found that children are better as they have more ability in learning the English language than adults.

What is recommended for future researchers, to take care about, is the purpose behind each individual`s learning of a language? Whether they want to learn just to pass exams and achieve a degree, they want to communicate with that language, or they want to learn it for a particular business. Moreover, psychological and social barriers should be taken into consideration in foreign language classes for a better result. And finally, individual differences should be accounted and should be respected, as each thinks differently.

It is highly recommended that these kinds of studies should be conducted in other Middle Eastern countries and especially on mixed gender classes. Moreover, different ways and methods of teaching should be developed to remove the barriers between students in the field of learning. Besides, further workshops and seminars should be done to help students psychologically and avoid that archaic thinking which female should speak less. At last but not least, it is very important to work on parents` role to follow-up and evaluate the level of their children in English.

Any research has its own limitations; concerning the current paper, some limitations for the study has been coming across. First, the number of the participants for the study and mainly the interview section is really limited, since the time to conduct the paper was really limited, and the time and today`s situation in Kurdistan were the main issue and obstacle behind the limitation. A number of places to conduct the study are considered as another limitation as the researcher was really

limited in regard of time and place due to economic and political obstacles. The further limitation can be described as the use of further researches and further studies and journals for the paper. Moreover, the lack of Kurdish and neighbouring countries' resources on the issue was not helpful and was a resistance to mention several Middle Eastern studies on the problem. The researcher hopes that these limitations will be studied on and for future works and these limitations will be worked on to provide readers with much more data and precise numbers all around Iraq, Iran, Turkey and neighbouring Arabian countries as they share similar obstacles and educational properties.

## Appendices

### Appendix 1

Dear participant:

The researcher is going to conduct a research about age and gender problems and difficulties in learning the English language as their foreign language under the title of "The Role of Age and Gender differences in Language Learning: A Case Study on Kurdish EFL Learners". The researcher will be grateful if you would fill in the questionnaire voluntarily. The result of this questionnaire will only be used for the academic purposes and will not be disclosed to any other parties.

*Table A1. Background of the Age Group.*

Gender:		Age:				
Male:	Female:	10-12	12-15	15-18	18-22	22-above

*Table A2. Questionnaire Sample and Questions.*

No.	Questions	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
1-	Adult learners learn faster than children in learning English.				
2-	The pre-puberty learner is better in learning a language than post-puberty.				
3-	Adult learners are better in learning a language than younger.				
4-	Older learners are more successful than younger in learning the English language.				
5-	The barrier of anxiety sometimes makes the adult less successful in learning the language.				
6-	Female learners achieve the language easier than male learners.				
7-	Male learners are more instrumentally motivated to learn a language than the female learner.				
8-	Society has effect in learning the language.				
9-	Female have more ability in learning the English language than male.				
10-	Psychological problem of learner has an effect on learning the language.				

### Appendix 2

Interview questions about "The Role of Age and Gender differences in Language Learning: A Case Study on Kurdish EFL Learners":

- (1) Is it necessary to learn about English cultures to speak English?
- (2) Does gender of the teacher have an effect on learning the English language? If so how?
- (3) Which type of gender is better in learning the English language? And why?
- (4) Do you believe that children are better in learning the English language? And why?
- (5) Do parents motivate their daughter(s) or son(s) to learn the English language?

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