

Gender sensitivity in language teaching classes in the 21st century

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the gender sensitivity of English language teachers in terms of five aspects of teaching such as their learning materials, didactics, subject matter, and learning evaluation. This study uses descriptive method and questionnaire as main data gathering instrument. The respondents of the study are all the Language Professors from the College of Education of NEUST. The study found out that language is present on the learning materials, didactics, and subject matter of the language teachers while learning evaluation reveals no bias in gender. It was also found out that there is a significant relationship between the sex of the teachers and their sensitivity in language teaching. The study suggests that teachers must pay attention to gender dynamics in the classroom leads both for better teaching and learning for male and female teachers to avoid gender bias during English language class.

Key words: Gender sensitivity, language, didactics, descriptive method, gender bias, learning evaluation, teaching evaluation.

1. INTRODUCTION

Various scholars speak about the gender problem that underlies various events in the classroom [1]. Among student debates, there is an individual assumption regarding the dominance or subordination of specific genders that often dictates whose thoughts are heard or ignored. Consequently, the stereotypical convent legitimizes ideas of gender characteristics and roles in curricula, books and classroom experiences [2]. As more organizations, publishers, and indeed society strive for gender neutral pronoun usage and

words as opposed to gender specific, the attribute towards the role of gender in language has been one of the progressive changes [3].

It is more probable, though, that he/she, he or she or even the 'they' plural is used. The use of the pronoun is generally associated with having a gender bias [4]. However, it refers to roles, characteristics and principles that describe the actions of women and men and the relationship between them if they define gender. Some functions, characteristics and features are clearly and exclusively ascribed to men and women because of gender. Sensitivity, on the

other hand, is an awareness and understanding, especially of the feelings and needs of other people [5].

Furthermore, gender sensitivity implies the level of awareness and appreciation of the need to maintain a reasonable level of gender differentiation between the male and female as protected [6]. The Magna Carta for Women was introduced to the school in order for the students to become aware that there must have equal treatment among boys and girls. School and schooling are contradictory forces in the socialization of students to gender, as well as to social and racial relations [7]. As agents of society, schools necessarily reinforce gender social definitions, whereas as socializing agents, they are also primary locations for the development of new standards, roles, and attitudes toward gender.

Schools are said to be the learning centres where gender-sensitivity must be practiced otherwise the whole society will continue observing and experiencing mill dominated phenomenon [8]. Gender sensitivity has been defined as the ability to recognize issues/problems in the way society look at gender of learning materials, didactics, subject matter, and learning evaluation. Further, this tried to identify if there is significant

relationship between the sex of the respondents gender sensitivity in language teaching in terms and their gender sensitivity in language teaching.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

2.1. Research design

This is a descriptive research conducted in the College of Education of the Nueva Ecija University of Science and Technology, Philippines. About 197 freshmen students evaluated their teachers on the level of gender sensitivity in terms of learning materials, didactics, subject matter, and learning evaluation. The data were gathered through questionnaire.

The computed value was interpreted using the following scalar interpretation:

Rate	Value	Range
5	Always	4.50 -3.40
4	Often	4.49 5.00
3	Sometimes	2.60 - 3.39
2	Seldom	1.50 - 2.59
1	Never	1.00 - 1.49

To statistically analyze the data, frequency percentage, weighted mean and Pearson Product Moment Correlation were used.

2. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

3.1. Sex Profile of the Respondents

It is apparent on the table that among students, female students' outpaced male students having 172 or 87.3% of the total number of respondents while male are only 25 or 12.7%. It can be concluded that more female students prefer to become teachers than male.

The results of the study is in consonance with Molina (2018) [9] found in his study that feminization of the profession occurred as a convergence of three processes: the demand for teachers caused by the reform, the growth of an urban economy which offered young men with education options that were more attractive

than working as a school teacher. The growing proportion of state pending towards education that synergized with the labour insertion of women into public employment, particularly teaching [10].

The table 1 displays 21.8% of the respondents were English major students. It is followed by the Science major and the Bachelor of Elementary Education which both have 27 or 13.7% of the total number of respondents.

On the other hand, Filipino major students have the least number among the respondents which is only consist of 8 or 4.1% of the respondents.

3.2. Gender Sensitivity in Language Teaching

This part discusses the teachers' gender sensitivity in language teaching in terms of learning materials, didactics, subject matter, learning evaluation, and teaching evaluation.

Sex	Frequency	Percentage
Male	25	12.7
Female	172	87.3
Total	197	100.0

Specialization	Frequency	Percentage
Bachelor of Secondary Education, major in:		
Math	10	5.0
Science	27	13.7
Social Science	12	6.1
English	43	21.8
Filipino	8	4.1
Bachelor of Physical Education (BPED)	25	12.7
Bachelor of Technology and Livelihood Education (BTLE)	23	11.7
Bachelor of Elementary Education (BEED)	27	13.7
Bachelor of Science in Industrial Education (BSIE)	22	11.2
Total	197	100.0

Statements	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation
Spoken and written language uses male forms.	3.23	Sometimes
Male connoted domains appear with more importance.	2.76	Sometimes
Male persons appear in all the learning materials (photos, examples, pictures) of their teacher.	2.69	Sometimes
Male persons are presented in the learning materials (photos, examples, pictures) at the hierarchical levels as male superior to female.	2.7	Sometimes
In the English book used, the language used is dominated by male pronouns.	2.92	Sometimes
The design of instructional material is appropriate for men only.	2.02	Seldom
The powerpoint presentation shows importance on male students.	2.33	Seldom
Visual representations strengthen gender stereotype of men in dominant and higher positions (e.g. showing male boss with female secretary or only men as scientist or only men playing basketball).	2.44	Seldom
The teachers uses male examples currently in media, news stories, advertising, television or film as prompts of discussion	2.8	Sometimes
The textual content reflects for male approach.	2.48	Seldom
There is dominant weightage for male in the selection of content.	2.44	Seldom
The language used by the teacher during the discussion is more in favor of male students.	2.36	Seldom
Video clips used in presenting the topic are more on men stories.	2.44	Seldom
Total Weighted Mean	2.59	Seldom

2.1.1. Learning Materials:

Table 3 shows the results of the evaluation of the students to their English Language teachers in terms of their learning materials. The data reveal that the gender sensitivity of the English language teachers, in terms of their Learning Materials, got a General Weighted Mean of 2.59 with a verbal interpretation of Seldom.

Among the twenty six (26) statements under this variable, statement number 1, “Spoken and written language uses male forms” got the highest weighted mean of 3.26 with a verbal interpretation of Sometimes. It is followed by the statement number 5, “In the English book used, the language used is dominated by male

pronouns” which garnered a weighted mean of 2.92 and a verbal interpretation of Sometimes. Then, the statement number 2, “Male connoted domains appear with more importance” followed with a weighted mean of 2.76 with a verbal interpretation of Sometimes. On the other hand, statement number 6, “The design of instructional material is appropriate for men only,” got the lowest weighted mean 2.02 and a verbal interpretation of Seldom.

The results apparently revealed that gender bias among the Language Teachers indeed exists. The learning materials used in the English language classes favour more male students than the female ones [11].

Statements	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation
The teacher addresses only male students with stimulating questions.	2.45	Seldom
The teacher considers only the contributions of male students only.	2.17	Seldom
The teacher gives incentives and constructive feedback to male students only.	2.23	Seldom
In group tasks, only male students take various and stereotypic roles and functions.	2.1	Seldom
The teacher reinforces stereotypic behavior of male students.	2.34	Seldom
The development of male stereotypic competence is among the learning objectives.	2.36	Seldom
Masculinity is explicitly presented as principle of teaching.	2.42	Seldom
The teacher allows making male students as a spokesperson for his gender.	2.56	Seldom
Male students are given adequate support to participate	2.93	Sometimes
The teacher ensures that the class setting is supportive towards male students.	2.61	Sometimes
When discussing the topic, teacher makes eye contact with male students only.	2.11	Seldom
The teacher gives tremendous influence on ideas about the significance or role of men in the class discussion.	2.42	Seldom
Total Weighted Mean	2.39	Seldom

The result compared with previous studies reviewed ESL and EFL text published around the world and found out that many foreign and second language textbooks continue to reproduce materials with gender biases [12-15].

2.1.2. Didactics

Table 4 shows the result of the evaluation of the respondents according to their perception that is based upon the following statements. The data show that the English language teachers, in terms of their teaching strategies, got a general weighted mean of 2.39 with a verbal interpretation of Seldom.

Among the statements, item number 9, "Male students are given adequate support to participate," got the highest weighted mean 2.93

with a verbal interpretation of Sometimes. It is followed by item number 10, "The teacher ensures that the class setting is supportive towards male students" with a weighted mean of 2.61 and a verbal interpretation of Sometimes. Then, by item number 8, "The teacher allows making male students as a spokesperson for his gender" with a weighted mean of 2.56 and a verbal interpretation of Seldom. Conversely, item number 4, "In group tasks, only male students take various and stereotypic roles and functions" got the lowest weighted mean of 2.1 and a verbal interpretation of Seldom.

It can therefore be gleaned that the English language teachers in the College have gender biases when it comes to their teaching strategy which favours more the male students than the

Statements	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation
The relation between teaching content and the male dimension (gender theory, stereotypes, inequalities, etc.) is showcased.	2.6	Sometimes
Students reflect about male-related structural dependencies/constraints with their domain, work environment, and job market.	2.62	Sometimes
The teacher uses male pronouns (e.g. he, him, and his) in his/her examples.	2.84	Sometimes
The teacher knows and raises some male related dimension to the subject and recognizes and integrates gender aspects put forward by the participants.	2.62	Sometimes
The teaching content covers perspective of men only in all its themes and subthemes.	2.28	Seldom
The teaching content focuses in giving explicit examples only for men experience.	2.37	Seldom
The teaching content promotes inherent gender biased nouns like 'chairman,' 'salesman,' 'mankind,' etc.	2.72	Sometimes
The teaching content promotes any cultural or religious references or statements that reinforce stereotypical roles of men (e.g. men of xyz culture are husband only', men are powerful than women, 'in xyz religion, men's life is meant for serving their housewives and children' etc.)	2.28	Seldom
The teaching content reinforces male students to become active in the class discussion.	2.85	Sometimes
All the topics that are being discussed promote men empowerment.	2.39	Seldom
Total Weighted Mean	2.56	Seldom

female students; even the classroom tasks and setting favor more the male students than the female students.

Similar finding suggest in their comprehensive review on gender and language, highlight various studies which have linked gender with different aspects of second language teaching and learning [12]. Difference views women-as-a-group and men-as-group as speakers of difference in same gender peer groups, while dominance views women-as-a-group as linguistically oppressed and dominated by men-as-a-group.

2.1.3. Subject Matter

Table 5 shows the result of the evaluation of the respondents to their English language professors. It is observed on the table that the respondents' evaluation to their English language professors, in terms of subject matter, garnered a general weighed mean of 2.56 with a verbal interpretation of Seldom.

Also, the table displays that the item number 9, "The teaching content reinforces male students to become active in the class discussion" got the highest weighted mean of 2.85 and a verbal interpretation of Sometimes. It is followed by the statement number 3, "The teacher uses male pronouns (e.g. he, him, and his) in his/her examples" with a weighted mean of 2.84 and a

Table 6. Learning Evaluation		
Statements	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation
Male students perform well in learning outcomes measures.	3.13	Sometimes
Objectives criteria used in the evaluation of student performance are more on men empowerment.	2.75	Sometimes
Male pronouns and representation are criteria for learning evaluation.	2.76	Sometimes
The learning evaluation also contains assessment of male competence.	2.51	Seldom
Feedback and learning evaluation methods are reflected to ensure that prejudice and stereotypes of men are adopted.	2.53	Seldom
The teacher gives more prominent praise to male students rather than female students.	2.32	Seldom
The teacher tends to be in favor of male students.	2.31	Seldom
There is an emphasis in the participation of boys in every activity.	2.61	Sometimes
There are democratic values and freedom existing with boys in classroom setting.	2.66	Sometimes
Total Weighted Mean	2.62	Sometimes

Table 7. Relationship between the sex of the teachers and their gender sensitivity in language teaching as evaluated				
Variables	Sex	Interpretation	Decision	
Sensitivity	r-value	.215**	weak positive correlation	There is a significant relationship between sex and sensitivity level.
	P-value	0.000		

verbal interpretation of Sometimes. On the other hand, the items 5, “The teaching content covers perspective of men only in all its themes and subthemes” and item 8, “The teaching content promotes any cultural or religious references or statements that reinforce stereotypical roles of men (e.g. men of xyz culture are husband only’, men are powerful than women, ‘in xyz religion, men’s life is meant for serving their housewives and children’ etc.)” both got the lowest weighted mean of 2.28 with a verbal interpretation of Seldom.

The data revealed that the English language professors’ subject matter includes gender bias wherein it stresses more male students than the female ones. Yet, it can also be deduced that

there were instances that the faculty members avoid the biases in terms of gender since they do not give much importance of male perspective but also to females.

The findings of the study in relation to previous works found in his study where he emphasized that there has been a traditional assumption that competitive tendencies are much rewarded in the school context [16]. The female students’ and male students’ classroom participation is not equal, especially the male students are more likely to dominate.

2.1.4. Learning Evaluation

Table 6 presents the results of the evaluation of the respondents to their English Language

professors in terms of their learning evaluation. It shows that respondents' evaluation to their English Language professors, in terms of their learning evaluation, garnered a general weighted mean of 2.62 with a verbal interpretation of Sometimes. Also, it can be observed on the table that the statement number 1, "Male students perform well in learning outcomes measures." got the highest weighted mean of 3.13 and a verbal interpretation of Sometimes. On the other hand, statement number 7, "The teacher tends to be in favor of male students." garnered the lowest weighted mean of 2.31 and a verbal interpretation of Seldom.

It can be gleaned on the data gathered that gender bias is not present in terms of learning evaluation. It can be attributed to the fact that the respondents seldom agree that the assessment and praise do not solely focus on singular gender, rather distributed to all genders. Further, this may be due to the fact that the faculty members of the College do not look at the gender when it comes to the learning evaluation; rather, on the students who perform the assigned tasks.

3.3. Significant relationship between the sex of the teachers and their gender sensitivity in language teaching as evaluated

It can be observed on the table the correlations between sensitivity level and sex of the respondents. The interpretation on sensitivity level and sex has weak positive correlation which means that there is a significant relationship between sex and sensitivity level.

3. CONCLUSION

On the light of the findings, the researcher concluded the following:

1. Most of the respondents are female and are English major students.
2. In terms of learning materials, the results apparently revealed that gender bias among the Language Teachers indeed exists. The learning materials used in the English language classes favor more male students than the female ones.
3. Also, in terms of didactic, it was found out that the English language teachers in the College have gender biases when it comes to their teaching strategy which favors more the male students than the female students; even the classroom tasks and setting favor more the male students than the female students.
4. The data also revealed that the English language professors' subject matter includes gender bias wherein it stresses more male students than the female ones while in terms of learning evaluation, language bias is not present.

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NA

5. CONFLICT OF INTEREST

NA

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