

EXPLORING GENDER PERSPECTIVES IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING AMONG INFORMATICS STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

This study explores gender perspectives in English language learning among informatics students in a vocational higher education context. The research aims to examine how gender influences students' participation, confidence, and use of technology in learning English. A qualitative approach with an exploratory design was employed to gain in-depth insights into students' experiences and perceptions. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, and documentation involving 12 students selected through purposive sampling, consisting of six male and six female participants. The data were analyzed using thematic analysis to identify key patterns and themes. The findings reveal that gender influences students' engagement in English language learning, particularly in classroom participation, confidence in language use, and preferences in utilizing digital learning tools. Female students tend to demonstrate higher participation and confidence in communicative activities, while male students are more likely to experience anxiety and engage less in verbal interaction. In terms of technology use, male students tend to adopt a more instrumental approach, whereas female students prefer interactive and skill-based learning strategies. However, the study also finds that these differences are not absolute, as individual and contextual factors significantly shape students' learning experiences. This study contributes to the literature by providing a qualitative understanding of gender dynamics in a vocational and technology-based educational setting. The findings suggest the importance of adopting inclusive and gender-responsive teaching practices to support diverse learner needs in English language classrooms.

Keywords: *Gender Perspectives, English Language Learning, Informatics Students, Classroom Participation*

Introduction

In the era of globalization and rapid technological advancement, English has become a crucial medium for international communication, academic exchange, and professional collaboration. As the dominant language of science, technology, and digital communication, English enables students to access global knowledge and participate in international academic and professional

communities. In technology-related fields such as informatics and computer science, English proficiency is particularly essential, as most programming documentation, technical manuals, and scholarly publications are produced in English. Consequently, students in these disciplines are increasingly expected to develop adequate English competence to support their academic development and future

careers. Within higher education, particularly in vocational institutions that emphasize practical and industry-oriented competencies, English language learning plays a significant role in preparing students for the global workforce (Crystal, 2013; Graddol, 2006).

Despite its importance, learning English as a foreign language is a complex process influenced by various cognitive, social, and psychological factors. Previous studies have highlighted that students' success in language learning is not solely determined by linguistic ability or instructional design, but also by factors such as motivation, self-efficacy, learning strategies, and classroom interaction. Among these factors, gender has gained increasing attention as a variable that may influence students' learning experiences and engagement in the classroom. Recent studies indicate that gender can affect learners' motivation, participation, and self-regulated learning strategies in foreign language learning contexts (KURT, 2024; Wang et al., 2024). In the Indonesian context, gender has also been found to influence students' English learning performance, including aspects such as writing ability, self-efficacy, and language anxiety (Martina & Afifi, 2024; Masrul, 2024). These findings suggest that gender-related factors play a significant role in

shaping learners' engagement and learning outcomes.

Gender has long been recognized as an important dimension in language education research. In English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts, studies suggest that male and female learners may exhibit different patterns in learning behavior, attitudes, and classroom participation. For example, female learners are often reported to demonstrate higher levels of motivation and employ a wider range of language learning strategies, while male learners may show different patterns in classroom interaction and confidence in language use (Oxford, 2018; Yuliana et al., 2023). In Indonesia, empirical studies have also demonstrated that gender differences can be observed in students' linguistic performance and learning strategies, particularly in writing and reading comprehension (Al-Saadi, 2020; Rianto, 2021).

Furthermore, gender representation in teaching materials has been shown to influence students' perceptions of social roles and identities, indicating that classroom input itself may reinforce or challenge gender norms (Adhitya et al., 2022; Andini et al., 2023; Noor et al., 2024). These findings highlight the importance of understanding gender dynamics in order to create more inclusive

and effective language learning environments.

While the relationship between gender and language learning has been widely explored, most existing studies have focused on general education contexts or students majoring in language-related fields. In contrast, relatively limited attention has been given to students in vocational higher education, particularly those enrolled in technology-oriented programs such as informatics and computer science. This context is significant because students in these programs often have different academic backgrounds, learning needs, and classroom characteristics. Moreover, such programs are frequently dominated by male students, which may create unique gender dynamics that influence classroom interaction and learning experiences. Studies in Indonesia also indicate that gender-related issues in English language education are still largely concentrated on textbook analysis and general EFL contexts, with limited exploration of students' lived experiences in specific disciplines (Nurwahyuningsih et al., 2023).

Although previous research has examined gender differences in language learning, much of the existing literature relies heavily on quantitative approaches that focus primarily on statistical comparisons between male and female

learners. While such studies provide valuable insights, they often fail to capture the deeper experiences, perceptions, and perspectives of students regarding gender in language learning. Furthermore, there remains a lack of qualitative studies exploring gender perspectives in English language learning among students in vocational higher education, particularly in technology-oriented programs such as informatics. This gap suggests the need for research that explores how students themselves perceive and experience gender-related aspects in the process of learning English.

In response to this gap, the present study aims to explore gender perspectives in English language learning among informatics students in a vocational higher education context. By employing a qualitative approach, this study seeks to gain deeper insights into how male and female students perceive their learning experiences, classroom interactions, and participation in English language learning. The findings are expected to contribute to the growing body of research on gender and language education, while also providing practical insights for educators in developing more inclusive and gender-responsive teaching practices in vocational English classrooms.

Given the limited qualitative evidence on gender perspectives in English

language learning within vocational and technology-oriented educational settings, this study seeks to explore how male and female informatics students experience and perceive English language learning. Specifically, the study addresses the following research questions:

RQ1. In what ways are gender perspectives reflected in students' participation during English language learning activities? RQ2. How do male and female informatics students perceive confidence and anxiety when using English in classroom interactions? RQ3. How do gender perspectives shape students' use of technology to support their English language learning?

Method

This study employed a qualitative research design with an exploratory approach to investigate students' perspectives on gender in English language learning. A qualitative approach was considered appropriate as it allows for an in-depth exploration of participants' experiences, perceptions, and social interactions within a specific educational context (Creswell & Poth, 2016). Through this approach, the study aimed to capture how gender influences students' engagement, participation, and interaction in English language classrooms,

particularly in a vocational higher education setting.

The research was conducted at a vocational higher education institution, specifically within the Informatics program. The participants of this study consisted of 12 students from the Informatics Management program at a private vocational higher education institution in Indonesia. The participants were selected using purposive sampling based on their experience in attending English language courses, ensuring their relevance to the research focus. The sample included an equal number of male and female students, with six male and six female participants. This balanced composition was intended to provide a more comprehensive understanding of gender perspectives in English language learning. All participants voluntarily agreed to take part in the study and were assured of confidentiality through the use of pseudonyms (P1–P12).

The sample size was determined based on the principle of data saturation commonly employed in qualitative research.

Data collection continued until no substantially new themes or insights emerged from successive interviews. Saturation was assessed during the coding process through ongoing comparison of participant responses. After the tenth interview, no new codes were identified,

and two additional interviews were conducted to confirm thematic redundancy. Therefore, data collection was concluded with twelve participants when thematic saturation was considered achieved. The interviews were conducted by the third author, who is a lecturer in English at the institution where the study was conducted and has experience in qualitative research and English language teaching. Although some participants were enrolled in English courses within the institution, the interviewer was not responsible for assessing participants' academic performance during the period of data collection. To minimize potential power imbalances and response bias, participants were informed that their participation was voluntary, their responses would remain confidential, and their decision to participate or withdraw would not affect their academic standing. Throughout the research process, reflexive notes were maintained to critically examine potential researcher assumptions and their influence on data interpretation.

All interviews were conducted in Bahasa Indonesia to allow participants to express their views comfortably and to reduce linguistic constraints. The interview recordings were transcribed verbatim in the original language and subsequently translated into English by the researchers for reporting purposes. To enhance

translation accuracy, the translated excerpts were reviewed by an independent lecturer with expertise in English language education. Minor grammatical adjustments were made to improve readability while preserving the original meanings conveyed by participants.

Data were collected through multiple techniques to enhance the richness and credibility of the findings. Semi-structured interviews served as the primary data collection method, as they allow flexibility in exploring participants' perspectives while maintaining a consistent framework across interviews (Kallio et al., 2016). Each interview lasted approximately 20 to 30 minutes and was conducted in a comfortable setting to encourage open and honest responses. In addition to interviews, classroom observations were carried out to examine students' participation, interaction patterns, and engagement during English learning activities. Field notes were used to document relevant behaviors and classroom dynamics, particularly those related to gender interaction. Supporting documents, such as teaching materials and students' reflective notes, were also collected to provide additional context and to support data triangulation.

The collected data were analyzed using thematic analysis, which involves identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns or themes within qualitative data

(Braun & Clarke, 2006). Data were analyzed using Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase thematic analysis. An inductive approach was adopted to allow themes to emerge from participants' experiences rather than being predetermined by existing theories. First, the researchers familiarized themselves with the data through repeated reading of interview transcripts and observation notes. Second, initial codes were generated to identify meaningful features of the data. Third, related codes were collated into potential themes. Fourth, the themes were reviewed against the dataset to ensure internal coherence and distinctiveness. Fifth, the themes were defined and named to clearly represent the underlying patterns identified in the data. Finally, the findings were reported through thematic descriptions supported by representative participant quotations.

Coding was conducted by two researchers independently. The coding results were subsequently compared and discussed until agreement was reached. An audit trail consisting of coding notes, theme development records, and analytic memos was maintained throughout the analysis process to enhance dependability and transparency. NVivo software was not

used; all coding procedures were conducted manually.

To ensure the trustworthiness of the data, several strategies were employed, including credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Team, 2003). Credibility was achieved through data triangulation by combining interviews, observations, and documentation. Transferability was addressed by providing detailed descriptions of the research context and participants. Dependability was ensured by maintaining consistency in the data collection and analysis procedures, while confirmability was established by ensuring that the findings were grounded in participants' responses rather than researcher bias.

Ethical considerations were carefully addressed throughout the research process. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study and their rights as research participants prior to data collection. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, and their identities were kept confidential through the use of pseudonyms. Participation in the study was voluntary, and participants were given the freedom to withdraw at any stage without any negative consequences.

Result

The findings of this study are based on data obtained from 12 participants (six male and six female students), ensuring balanced representation of gender perspectives. The analysis generated three major themes related to students' perspectives on gender in English language learning: (1) gender differences in classroom participation, (2) gender and confidence in language use, and (3) gender perspectives on the use of technology in English learning. Each theme is elaborated with supporting evidence from participants' responses and observational data.

1. Gender Differences in Classroom Participation

This theme reflects how male and female students differ in their engagement and participation during English language learning activities. The findings indicate that female students were generally more active in participating in classroom discussions, asking questions, and engaging in collaborative tasks. This pattern was consistently observed during classroom observations, particularly in speaking activities and group discussions.

Female participants often perceived classroom participation as an opportunity to improve their English skills. They expressed a willingness to take risks in using English, even when their proficiency

was still developing. As one participant explained:

“I like speaking activities because I can practice my English, even if I make mistakes.” (P7, female student)

Similarly, another participant stated:

“If we don't try to speak, we will not improve. So, I try to be active in class.” (P9, female student)

In contrast, male students tended to be less active in verbal participation, particularly in speaking activities. Many male participants reported feeling hesitant to express their ideas in English due to a lack of confidence and fear of making mistakes. This often resulted in more passive classroom behavior, where they preferred to listen rather than actively engage in discussions. One participant noted:

“I usually prefer to stay quiet because I'm not confident with my English. I'm afraid of making mistakes.” (P3, male student)

Another participant expressed a similar concern:

“I want to speak, but sometimes I don't know how to say it in English, so I just stay silent.” (P4, male student)

However, the findings also reveal some variation within the group of male students. A few participants demonstrated active participation and a willingness to engage in classroom activities. For example:

“I try to speak because I think practice is important, even if my English is not perfect.” (P1, male student)

Classroom observations provided additional support for the interview findings regarding students’ participation patterns. During group discussion activities, female students were observed to contribute more frequently by initiating conversations, asking clarification questions, and responding to peers’ opinions. In several observed sessions, female participants voluntarily shared their ideas without direct prompting from the lecturer. By contrast, a number of male students tended to take a more passive role during discussions and were more likely to contribute only after being invited to speak. Similar patterns were observed during speaking practice activities, where female students generally appeared more willing to engage in English interactions, while some male students demonstrated hesitation before responding. These observational findings suggest that differences in participation were reflected not only in students’ perceptions but also in their observable classroom behaviors.

These findings suggest that while female students generally show higher levels of participation, male students’ engagement is often influenced by confidence-related factors. Therefore, gender interacts with

individual psychological variables in shaping classroom participation.

2. Gender and Confidence in Language Use

While the first theme focuses on students’ observable participation during classroom activities, this second theme examines the internal perceptions underlying such participation, particularly confidence and anxiety in using English. Although participation and confidence are closely interconnected, they are analytically distinguished in this study, with participation referring to observable classroom behavior and confidence referring to students’ self-perceived readiness to use English in learning situations.

The findings indicate that students experienced varying levels of confidence and anxiety when using English during classroom activities. Female participants generally described themselves as more comfortable engaging in speaking activities and responding to questions, whereas several male participants reported greater hesitation when communicating in English. Female students were also more likely to view mistakes as a natural part of the learning process, which appeared to encourage their willingness to participate in classroom interactions. For instance:

“I think making mistakes is normal when learning a language, so I am not afraid to try.” (P6, female student)

Another participant added:

“Even if my grammar is not perfect, I still want to speak because it helps me improve.” (P8, female student)

In contrast, male students often reported lower confidence levels when using English, particularly in speaking situations. This lack of confidence was commonly associated with anxiety, fear of negative evaluation, and limited vocabulary. One participant explained:

“Sometimes I understand the material, but I don’t want to speak because I’m worried my friends will laugh at me.” (P2, male student)

Another participant shared:

“I feel nervous when I have to speak English in front of the class.” (P5, male student)

Despite these findings, some participants emphasized that confidence is not solely determined by gender. Instead, it may also be influenced by individual factors such as prior learning experience, exposure to English, and personal motivation. For example:

“I think confidence depends on how often we practice, not just whether we are male or female.” (P10, female student)

The observation data also revealed differences in how students displayed

confidence when using English in classroom activities. Female students generally appeared more comfortable expressing their ideas and responding to questions in English, even when minor grammatical errors occurred. They tended to maintain interaction and continue speaking despite occasional language difficulties. In contrast, several male students showed signs of hesitation, including longer pauses before responding, reduced eye contact, and brief responses when asked to speak in front of the class. In some instances, male students switched to Indonesian when they were unable to express ideas in English. These observations are consistent with participants’ accounts regarding confidence and anxiety in language use.

These results indicate that although female students tend to demonstrate higher confidence, confidence in language use is also shaped by multiple factors beyond gender alone.

3. Gender Perspectives on the Use of Technology in English Learning

The third theme explores how male and female students utilize technology to support their English language learning. The findings show that both groups actively used various digital tools, such as online dictionaries, translation applications, video platforms, and AI-based learning tools.

Male students tended to use technology primarily for independent and task-oriented learning. They often used digital tools to understand technical vocabulary, access programming-related materials in English, and complete academic assignments. One participant stated:

“I usually use Google Translate or YouTube to understand English materials, especially for programming.” (P1, male student)

Another participant explained:

“I use English websites to learn coding, so I have to understand English.” (P4, male student)

On the other hand, female students were more likely to use technology for interactive and structured language learning activities. They reported using language learning applications, watching English learning videos, and practicing speaking and listening through digital platforms. For instance:

“I prefer using apps to practice speaking and listening because it helps me improve step by step.” (P6, female student)

Another participant added:

“I like watching English videos with subtitles because it helps me understand better.” (P7, female student)

Despite these differences, both male and female students recognized the importance of technology in supporting their English learning. They agreed that digital tools

provide flexibility and accessibility, allowing them to learn English beyond the classroom.

Observational data further indicated differences in how students utilized digital resources during learning activities. Male students were frequently observed accessing online technical materials, programming documentation, and translation tools to support task completion. Female students, meanwhile, more often engaged with language-learning applications, instructional videos, and multimedia resources designed to improve speaking and listening skills. Although both groups actively incorporated technology into their learning processes, the observed patterns suggest differences in learning orientations and preferred uses of digital tools within the English learning context.

These findings suggest that while both groups benefit from technology, their approaches to using digital tools differ. Male students tend to focus on instrumental and academic purposes, whereas female students are more inclined toward interactive and skill-based learning.

Summary of Findings

To provide a clearer overview of the results, the main themes and key findings are summarized in Table 1.

Theme	Key Findings
Classroom Participation	Female students more active; male students less active in speaking
Confidence in Language Use	Female students show higher confidence; male students report more anxiety
Use of Technology	Male students focus on independent learning; female students prefer interactive tools

Discussion

The findings of this study reveal that gender influences students' engagement in English language learning; however, this influence operates through a complex interaction of psychological, social, and contextual factors rather than as a standalone determinant. From a scientific perspective, the observed differences in classroom participation can be explained through the interaction between gender and affective variables, particularly anxiety and willingness to communicate. The findings suggest that gender may be associated with differences in students' classroom engagement; however, these patterns should be interpreted within the specific context of the study. The higher participation reported by several female participants may be understood through the lens of social and affective learning strategies, which have been associated with greater interaction and communication in language learning contexts (Oxford, 2018).

At the same time, some male participants described feelings of hesitation and concern about making mistakes, which may have influenced their participation during classroom activities. Rather than indicating fixed gender characteristics, these findings point to the interaction of individual, social, and contextual factors in shaping students' learning experiences. This finding supports the argument that participation in language learning is strongly influenced by affective filters, where anxiety can significantly reduce learners' engagement (Wang et al., 2024).

The trend observed in this study, where female students are more active in communicative contexts, can also be interpreted through sociocultural perspectives. Language classrooms function as social spaces where interaction is shaped by norms, expectations, and identities (Lantolf, 2006). In this context, female students may feel more socially encouraged to engage in communicative and collaborative activities, while male students may experience different social expectations that influence their participation patterns. Similar findings have been reported in Indonesian EFL contexts, where female learners tend to dominate verbal interaction, while male learners are more reserved in speaking activities (Almusharraf et al., 2023; Demalata et al., 2024). However, it is important to

emphasize that this pattern is not universal, as individual variation remains evident, indicating that gender interacts with other factors such as classroom environment and prior learning experience.

Furthermore, the differences in confidence observed in this study can be scientifically explained through the concept of self-efficacy. Self-efficacy refers to learners' beliefs in their ability to perform specific tasks, which directly influences their motivation and performance (Bandura, 1997). The differences in confidence reported by participants may also be interpreted through the perspective of self-efficacy theory (Bandura, 1997). Self-efficacy refers to individuals' beliefs about their ability to perform specific tasks and has been widely associated with motivation and learning engagement. Although self-efficacy was not directly measured in this study, participants' descriptions of confidence, hesitation, and willingness to participate appear broadly consistent with this theoretical perspective. Therefore, self-efficacy is used here as a possible interpretative lens rather than as an empirically verified construct within the present study.. This finding is consistent with previous research in Indonesia showing that gender differences in language anxiety and self-efficacy significantly affect students' participation and performance (Asnur et al., 2025; Kutuk

et al., 2022). However, the present study extends these findings by demonstrating that confidence is not solely determined by gender, but also influenced by exposure, practice, and individual learning trajectories.

Another important finding concerns the differences in how students utilize technology for learning English. The observed tendency of male students to use technology for instrumental and task-oriented purposes can be explained by their alignment with disciplinary needs, particularly in informatics, where English is often used as a tool for accessing technical knowledge. This reflects an instrumental motivation, where language learning is driven by practical and goal-oriented purposes. On the other hand, female students' preference for interactive and skill-based use of technology suggests a more integrative approach to language learning, where the focus is on improving communicative competence. This distinction aligns with previous studies indicating that learners' use of technology is shaped by both their academic needs and learning orientations (Hashemi et al., 2022; Lestari, 2025). From a sociocultural perspective, these patterns highlight how learning tools are appropriated differently by learners based on their social experiences and learning goals.

Importantly, the findings of this study challenge the assumption that gender differences in language learning are fixed or deterministic. Instead, the results demonstrate that gender operates as a dynamic and context-dependent variable. This supports contemporary gender theories which view gender as socially constructed and continuously negotiated within specific contexts (Sunderland, 2000). The presence of variation within both male and female groups further reinforces this perspective, indicating that individual differences cannot be overlooked. Therefore, rather than attributing learning behavior solely to gender, it is more appropriate to consider the interplay between gender, psychological factors, and learning environments.

In comparison with previous studies, this research provides a more nuanced understanding of gender in language learning by employing a qualitative approach that captures students' lived experiences. While many earlier studies have focused on identifying statistical differences between male and female learners, this study reveals the underlying mechanisms that explain why such differences occur. By situating gender within a vocational and technology-oriented context, the study also extends existing literature, which has largely

focused on general EFL settings. This contextual contribution is significant, as it highlights how disciplinary background influences language learning behavior.

Overall, the scientific findings of this study indicate that gender influences English language learning through its interaction with affective, cognitive, and sociocultural factors. These findings suggest that effective language teaching should not rely on generalized assumptions about gender, but rather adopt a more inclusive and flexible approach that considers individual differences. Creating supportive classroom environments, reducing language anxiety, and integrating technology in diverse ways may help accommodate different learning needs and promote more equitable participation among students.

Conclusions

This study set out to explore gender perspectives in English language learning among informatics students in a vocational higher education context. The findings indicate that gender plays a meaningful role in shaping students' engagement in English learning; however, this influence is mediated by a combination of affective, cognitive, and sociocultural factors. Rather than functioning as a fixed determinant, gender interacts dynamically with variables such as self-confidence, learning experience, and classroom environment in

influencing students' participation, language use, and learning strategies.

The study also demonstrates that differences in students' learning behaviors are closely related to their orientations toward language learning and their disciplinary context. In particular, the vocational and technology-based setting contributes to shaping how students engage with English, especially in relation to the use of digital tools and communicative practices. These findings highlight the importance of understanding language learning as a socially situated process, where individual differences and contextual factors must be considered alongside gender.

From a theoretical perspective, this study contributes to the growing body of research on gender and language education by providing qualitative insights into how gender is experienced and negotiated in a specific educational context. It moves beyond binary comparisons by emphasizing the complexity and variability of learners' experiences. Practically, the findings suggest the need for more inclusive and adaptive teaching approaches that support diverse learner characteristics and promote equitable participation in English language classrooms.

Future research may extend this study by exploring gender perspectives in different disciplinary contexts or by

integrating longitudinal approaches to examine how students' perceptions and experiences evolve over time. Additionally, further studies may investigate how instructional interventions can effectively address gender-related differences in language learning to enhance student engagement and learning outcomes.

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