

# A Comparative Study of Boys' and Girls' English Study Differences

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**Abstract**—English learning is influenced by many factors which are directly or indirectly affecting the students' English acquirement. Among these, the learner himself or herself is the most direct and important. This passage emphasizes the point of English educational psychology and from it we can see that the motivation factor, ability factor and intellect factor affect the students' English learning most. Girls' internal motivation is stronger than boys' in the foreign language studying and most of the girls aim at gaining English knowledge. The process of English learning itself can make them contented and basically they will not be interrupted by the external factors.

**Index Terms**—middle school boy, middle school girl, English learning, comparison

## I. INTRODUCTION

During the course of English teaching, it is discovered that schoolgirls' achievement is better than those of schoolboys'. However, most of the teachers have never thought over the problems such as: Where do the schoolgirls do well? How much better? Why better? etc. It also means we only pay attention to the conventional teaching principles such as teaching students in accordance with their aptitude, but turn blind eye to the differences in studying psychology, studying ability and so on between the schoolgirls and schoolboys. It's very necessary to compare the features and differences in language learning between them, and to further explore the questions: What's the difference? How to improve their achievements by making use of the differences?

In the mingled middle school, almost half of the students are schoolgirls. What's more, there is nobody to study the gender differences of English teaching in our country's middle school. We all ignored the gender differences in the teaching process and didn't make systematic analysis and research of the differences between the schoolgirl and the schoolboy, so we didn't fully understand the differences between them in language learning psychology and the language learning ability etc. That is based on the foundation of teaching students in accordance with their aptitude. This research can compensate the blind spot in the English teaching and strive to explore the student's potential energy and improve the practicability of the English teaching.

To our students, English is a foreign language; there are many factors which affect their language studying. Among these, the teachers' factor is the external cause; the student himself or herself is the internal one. Internal cause is the key factor, so I deal with the internal one in details and make a simple analysis about the external causes and explore some related research results, together with my investigations and experiments. From these we can know how much the factors mentioned above can affect the schoolgirls' and schoolboys' English learning.

## II. MOTIVATION DIFFERENCES

Motivation is the internal trend and strength which inspire people to take action (it includes personal will, wish, psychological conflict or intending to reach the goal etc.) It is the psychological state which motive and sustains people's action. Motivation is what moves us from boredom to interest. It is something like the engine and steering wheel of an automobile. The motivation of foreign language learning manifests the desire of language learning and desire for knowledge. It is one of the internal motivations, which directly motivate the foreign language learning. It can be divided into integration, instrumental, intrinsic, extrinsic, long-ranged and short-ranged etc.

In order to know the similarities and differences of the motivations in English learning, I made a questionnaire (name-signing not needed) as to the interesting extent about English and the reasons. Career ideal ect of the middle school students on January twelfth and fifteenth 2005. The questionnaire includes members of 105 girls and 105 boys in the six classes of grade two in Shi Fang Ping. The results are as follows:

Girls 1

The extent of likeness	Students number	Proportion
Like	61	58.1%
General	37	35.2%
Dislike	7	6.7%

Boys 1

The extent of likeness	Students number	Proportion
Like	30	28.6%
General	24	22.9%
Dislike	51	48.5%

Results 1 shows that, compared with the schoolboys', more schoolgirls are fond of English learning, and there are quite a lot of more schoolgirls answer: like or most interested. These show the schoolgirls' internal motivation is stronger than the schoolboys' in the foreign language studying.

Jia Guanjie pointed out in *The Psychology of Education in English*: Internal motivation is the foundation of the English learner's internal himself. In the process of foreign language learning, the aims pursued as: the desire for knowledge, curiosity, interesting fancy or the wish to express him etc. All these factors are called short-ranged motivation.

From the questionnaire we can know among the schoolgirls who like English, some girls study the foreign language, only hoping to gain more knowledge; some are fond of English; some have special feeling about English; some want to improve their abilities, more girls are interested in it. (refer to result 2) The things are different for the boys, most of them are not interested in English. So, we can say that most of the schoolgirls aim at gaining English knowledge. The process of English learning itself can make them contented and basically will not be interrupted by the external factors. This is the first advantage of the schoolgirl in learning English.

Girls 2

The extent of like English	Cause	The number of student	Proportion	Cause	The number of student	proportion
Like	Utility	25	23%	Interested	36	34.3%
General	Less utility	19	18.1%	Less interested	11	10.4%
Dislike	Too difficult	4	3.8%	No interesting	3	2.9%

Note: 1. Give a most direct cause

2. The number of the students who generally like English and the cause having no interest even occupy 6.7%

Boys 2

The extent of like English	Cause	The number of student	Proportion	Cause	The number of student	proportion
Like	Utility	19	18.11%	Interested	11	10.5%
General	Less utility	14	13.41%	Less interested	10	9.5%
Dislike	Too difficult	23	21.9%	No interesting	28	26.69%

The language learners who have integrative motivation aim at being integrated into the second language community and in order to meet and communicate with the members of the second language community. The instrumental motivation emphasizes some practical purposes in foreign language learning. That is, how to do research work by using a foreign language as a tool so as to improve one's social status etc, and especially how to emphasize the practicability of the language.

Integrative motivation and instrumental motivation are also called long-ranged motivation. It is the important factor affecting the foreign language studying. From result 2 we can also know how English is useful, important, and helpful in the personal development. The proportion of the students who want to undertake the work directly or indirectly related to English is quite large, which refers to result 3. However, only a few boys recognize that English is useful to them and they are fond of engaging with the work related to it. They have no career ideal. This is what Jia Guanjia said girls have more integrative motivation and instrumental motivation, which is the second advantage of the girls who study English.

Girls 3

Career ideal	Number of student	Proportion
The career directly related to English such as English teacher, English translator, journalist, cicerone foreign company, diplomat, external trade, go abroad, computer, net ect.	About 36 (most is teacher journalist, translator, foreign company,)	34.3%
The career indirectly related to English such as: manager, finance, doctor, lawyer, customer, nurse, officer designer, etc.	About 30 (most is doctor, lawyer, finance)	28.6%
The career may be unrelated no English, such as clerk, artist, shopkeeper, etc.	About 9	8.6%
Have no ideal career temporary	30	28.6%

Boys 3

Career ideal	Number of student	Proportion
The career directly related to English such as English teacher, English translator, journalist, cicerone foreign company, diplomat, external trade, go abroad, computer net ect.	About 21 (most is foreign company, external computer etc )	20%
The career indirectly related to English such as: manage, finance, doctor, lawyer, customer, nurse, officer, designer, etc.	About 19 (most is doctor, lawyer, financer)	18.1%
The career may be unrelated no English, such as clerk, artist, shopkeeper, etc.	About 25	23.8%
Have no ideal career temporary	40	38.1%

I made the same questionnaire in the four classes in grade one and grade three. These were 102 girls taking part in it. The results are:

The proportion of likeness is 47.68%, the less likeness is 36.23%, and the dislikeness is 16.09%. One class of the grade one, the proportion of likeness is 64.5%, which is the highest and there is only one student who doesn't like English.

The main reason of likeness is that English is practical or the student is interested in it. The students' ideal career mainly is doctor, lawyer, teacher, translator etc, and most of the work needs a good command of English.

From the analysis above, we can conclude that the schoolgirls have stronger motivation than schoolboys in learning English and also have more interest in English.

### III. ABILITY DIFFERENCES

The people who can learn English well generally have a special quality. This quality is the cognition ability, which people need when they learn English. It is the language ability. The language ability especially refers to: The genius of learning English does not include intelligence, studying motivation, interest etc.. Language ability is composed of listening, speaking, reading, and writing abilities. Generally speaking, the genius of language ability is the main reason of the learner's difference in learning English, so knowing the differences of the boys and girls in language study can help us to predict the performance of the learner.

McCormick and Jacqueline figured in *The psychology of the gender difference*: Girls have better language ability than boys which is the chief aspect in the obvious gender difference of boys and girls. In order to specify the differences of the different sex middle school students in English learning ability, I made a comparison with the English study performance conducted in No.6 Middle School in Changde City.

The results are as follows:

(1).Grade one students in the middle school ( 24 boys, 21 girls )

Five excellent students are all girls'. The boys' average mark is 49. The girls' average mark is 61. Boys' pass rate is 41%, while girls' is 76%.

(2). Grade two students in the middle school (23 boys, 18 girls)

Boys' excellent rate is 9% and girls' excellent rate is 17%. Boys' pass rate is 58% and girls' pass rate is 77%. Boys' average mark is 45, and girls' average mark is 51.

The English studying performance above all can speak for that schoolgirls have incomparable advantages than boys in English learning ability.

(1). From physiology, female's pronunciation organ, development and maturation is earlier than male's ,which leads to the schoolgirls good at listening and expressing , so their abilities of expressing and listening are better than boys'. Their English speaking and listening performance is better than boys' on average.

(2). Female students are patient and careful in nature. They are interested in reading and their reading speed is quicker than male students', so there is no wonder that the female's English reading performance especially in the objective part is better than male's on average.

(3).From the ideation, female has better susceptibility, so there is no wonder that female student's ability to express herself is better than male's.

### IV. INTELLIGENCE DIFFERENCES

Intelligence is the ability of the people's cognition. It is the highly summation of one's observation, attention, memory, ideation and imagination. A man's intelligence directly affects his performance in the foreign language learning and it can also predict the extent of a language learner's success.

(1). In the process of English learning, especially in the training of pronunciation, dialogue demonstration, listening in class etc, all need better observation, attention and imitation. Just as Xiong Dan thinks in *The research of teaching in accordance with their aptitude*, the female's observation is more keen, precise and thorough. They are in the process of adolescence and have prominent development in sight and hearing. They are more interested in English and their

motivations in learning English are stronger than boys'.

(2). Memory is the most important factor which affects the English learning. Foreign language learning is closely related to memory. The following practices all need memory, from pronunciation, grammar to vocabulary, from listening speaking to reading and writing. We can safely say: no memory, no foreign language learning; no memory, no rich knowledge of the foreign language and the ability of transmitting knowledge to skills.

(3). Feng Zhongliang said in *The Psychology of Education*, Human's ideation is developed with the age. Many studies demonstrate that female's abstract logic ideation is no less than male and their ability of ideation is better than male's.

From all above, we can see schoolgirls have more advantages in intelligence than boys in the language learning.

All in all, from the comparison of the male and female's motivation factor, ability factor and intelligence factor, they have obvious gender differences and all these factors affect the English learning.

## V. CONCLUSION

There is no one at present that has made a systematic and deep study into the problem of foreign language teaching in accordance with aptitude, about the teaching of foreign language in middle schools. So I strive to study this matter. But there are still many ideas that are not very well investigated and we still have many problems needing to be solved, such as: Does girls have disadvantages in learning foreign language? How can the ways of teaching be more effective?

In the modern education field, teaching in accordance with the aptitude must be put into practical use. However, in the old days we didn't think of the gender differences of the aptitude. There are quite a lot of differences between schoolgirls and schoolboys no matter in personality, psychology or physiological psychology.

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