

Gender, Achievement, and Language Learning Strategies of Tertiary Students

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| Nina Ruzel T. Paggao¹ | Rischelle G. Aggabao² |

¹Graduate Studies, College of Education Isabela State University, Cabagan, Isabela Philippines

²Faculty, College of Education Isabela State University, Cabagan, Isabela Philippines

¹ninaruzelpaggao@yahoo.com

²rischelle.g.aggabao@isu.edu.ph

ABSTRACT

The paper aimed to determine the predominant strategies in language learning of tertiary students. It also examined the relationships between the students' gender and their language learning strategies, the students' achievement and the language learning strategies used according to their gender, and students' achievement according to their gender. The researchers adopted a questionnaire which was floated to 300 first year students to gather data. The findings showed that students who were bisexuals often used metacognitive and cognitive strategies in learning English. Lesbians, on the other hand, frequently used social and compensation strategies to learn English while gays commonly employed social and meta-cognitive strategies. Male students regularly used social and memory strategies while female students often employed social and meta-cognitive strategies. It also appeared that there was significant relationship between language learning strategies used and students' gender when it came to gay respondents only. Moreover, the study showed that language learning strategies used by the students did not influence their achievement in English. Lastly, findings revealed that the result of the mean grades of the students in their academic achievement was different from each gender. Therefore, students' achievement in English varies according to gender.

KEYWORDS

English language; proficiency; gender; learning strategies; achievement

INTRODUCTION

Being proficient in a target language may take a gradual process until the learner becomes familiar with the sound and meaning of words and be able to master the target language in order to communicate effectively. In studying English, some non-speakers of this language can speak fluently because this language is taught in schools starting from the basic education to tertiary level. Moreover, during the learning process, some learners can learn quickly and some learners have to take an extra mile to absorb what lesson is discussed in the classroom.

Looking back at the classroom setting, students have also problems in acquiring the knowledge and skills necessary for language mastery. Language teachers search for ways to enhance the ability of the learners and determine what learning activities are motivating for both active and passive learners. Teachers may identify language learning strategies that are suitable to learners' needs. However, teachers must have a defined boundary in implementing the methods and techniques in teaching language in order to have a clear direction in attaining the desired learning outcomes. Hence, Learning takes place when

appropriate methods and techniques are materialized in the classroom based on the competency and skills that need to be developed and improved.

Language learning strategies (LLS) are crucial to teachers in teaching English as a second language. LLS describes the concrete learning activities are implemented in the classroom to help learners acquire, retain, retrieve and perform these activities (Riley, 1978). It can be implied that the learners' language performance, mental ability, and emotional state are intertwined in order for them to adapt the learning methods (Wenden, 1987).

This study delved on language learning strategies that are commonly used by the students according to gender in learning English. Moreover, one of the variables of the study was the achievement of the learners. In a study conducted by Uslu et.al. (2016), "there is a positive and meaningful relationship between learning strategies and achievement." Their findings suggested that teachers who take the initiative in implementing techniques in the language learning process may see excellent results from their students. With this at hand, the researchers also investigated the difference between students' achievement and language learning strategies used in the classroom.

This study explored the difference among students' achievement and their gender. In order to improve the learning outcomes of students with different gender, it was important to improve understanding of how they learn. By determining the reasons for differences in student performance, language teachers may consider the first step in designing effective educational policies that would address issues on quality education and equity in receiving quality instruction. Hence, this study attempted to show the most common language learning strategies used by tertiary students according to their gender, difference among students' achievement and language learning strategies used, and difference between students' achievement according to their gender.

Specifically, this paper provides answers to these subsequent queries:

1. What are the predominant language learning strategies used by the learners according to their gender?
2. Is there a relationship between gender and language learning strategies used?
3. Is there a difference among the students' achievement and the language learning strategies used according to their gender?
4. Is there a significant difference among students' achievement according to their gender?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Academic performance is the result of education, while language proficiency is the adeptness of a learner to perform communicative tasks. The latter concept can expound into the degree to which a student, instructor, or educational institution has met their educational objectives.

Linguists and language educators have examined the correlation between English language proficiency and academic achievement. It is noted that assessment according to Gottlieb (2006), is one of the ways in which language proficiency can be associated with academic accomplishment. Wille (2006) identified a positive link between English language competency and language aptitude of secondary pupils. In the tertiary level, Sahragard et al. (2011) made use of 151 students respondents to conduct study on the association between language proficiency and academic accomplishment in Iranian college students. They discovered that language competency and academic achievement have a significant positive association.

The study conducted by Addow et.al. (2009) revealed that the ability of the students to communicate in English influence their performance in the classroom. It is implied in the study that if a student is proficient in the second language then there is a possibility that the student can perform well in his academics. This observation recounts the study made by Crossley et al. (2012). Their findings showed that the students' aptitude in English is a predictor of their academic performance. In addition, Zangani and Maleki (2007) stated the correlation between the students' achievement in speaking and writing and their general weighted average. They cited that the students have difficulty using English as a medium of communication considering that English is a foreign language.

Gender may also be a predictor in assessing the students' performance. Attributive factors such as growing years of the learner, attitude towards gender preference, teachers and parents' expectations, choice of career, and biological differences can contribute to gender difference in academic achievement (Feingold, 1988).

Over the past ten years, the growing gender gap in educational achievement has become evident in some developed countries (Weaver-Hightower, 2003). Women's literacy rate is higher than men. Girls have higher tendency to read better than boys (Dincer and Uysal, 2010; Nguyen, Wu and Gillis, 2005; Rothman and McMillan, 2003; Jacob and Lefgren, 2004). Girls and boys do not reach the same level in terms mental and physical development. The fact that girls mature earlier than boys is revealed in the of Aldous (2006). His study implies that the biological characteristics of girls can be attributed to their adaptability to acquire knowledge in English grammar. This can be seen in girls particularly in their early two years.

Language awareness has been emphasized through the use of language learning strategies that serve as a very effective teaching tool (O'Malley, et al., 1985), and contributes to increased efficacy of learners (Oxford, 1994; Rubin, 1981).

Oxford (1990) published the most highlights of language learning strategies that explain the actions to be taken to make learning make learning facilitative, accessible, and focused on learning goals:

1. The primary goal of all language learning systems is communicative competence. Learners must connect with language in meaningful, contextualized ways in order to build communicative competence. Learners can use learning strategies to actively participate in authentic interactions and improve their communicative ability.
2. Language learning methodologies empower learners to require more control of their learning. For the active growth of aptitude in a foreign language, self-direction is required.
3. Language learning methodologies provide the teacher new responsibilities. Teachers can shed their conventional parts as specialist figures and controllers within the classroom thanks to language learning tools. Teachers' new responsibilities include assessing students' learning strategies, providing learning strategy training, and assisting learners in becoming more self-sufficient. Teachers' roles will be strengthened as a result of these changes, which will be more varied and innovative.
4. Problem-solving is a key component of language learning methodologies. They are tools that are used to solve a problem, complete a task, meet an objective, or achieve a goal.
5. Language-learning methodologies are action-oriented. They are particular activities or behaviors that students engage in to help them learn more effectively.
6. Linguistic learning strategies are not limited to cognitive skills such as mental processing and language manipulation. They also encompass emotional, social, and

other processes, as well as metacognitive exercises such as arranging, assessing, and organizing one's own learning.

7. Language learning strategies provide both direct and indirect learning help. Direct learning and application of the subject content are part of certain learning methodologies. Direct strategies are what they're called. Other methods, such as metacognitive, affective, and social strategies, aid learning indirectly. Indirect strategies are what they're called. Both direct and indirect techniques are critical.
8. Language learning strategies are observable to some extent. They aren't always easy to notice. Making mental associations, for example, is an imperative memory approach that cannot be witnessed. Cooperating, on the other hand, is an approach in which the learner collaborates with another person.
9. There are many levels of consciousness in language learning processes. They frequently represent learners' purposeful efforts to take charge of their education. Learning tactics, on the other hand, might become automatic after a given amount of experience and use. Making optimal learning processes automatic is, in fact, a desirable goal.
10. It is possible to educate and adjust language learning strategies. This can be accomplished through strategy preparing, which is an critical component of language learning. Learners who receive strategy training become more aware of how they utilize strategies and more proficient at using the right ones.
11. Language learning strategies are adaptable, in the sense that they do not necessarily follow the same sequences or patterns. Learners choose and use methods in a number of ways, each with its own unique characteristics.

Though there are diverse groupings, all of these approaches are tied to each other. Oxford (1990) cited that all of the subcategories in six major categories are linked to one another, and direct and indirect methods support each other. The first main group, direct strategies comprise of memory strategies, cognitive strategies, and compensation strategies. The second main group, indirect strategies, consists of metacognitive strategies, affective strategies, and social strategies (Oxford, 1989).

Language learners who are wide readers and deep thinkers are known to be competent in the English language, hence, this kind of learners adapt well in communicative situations. This observation coincides with the the data presented by Oxford and Nyikos (1989). It is revealed that proficient ESL students made use of various self- management strategies than their peers. Chamot & Kupper (1989) added that the lack of information on the strategies hinder the learners to select appropriate strategies in learning the language. Students who are weak in the language macroskills tend to have low self-awareness while students who are self-aware tend to perform better. Further, successful learners are mindful of techniques that they can use to solve challenging class activities (Mogogwe and Oliver, 2007).

Gender has a impressive impact on the level of strategy utilization, according to a number of empirical studies. Women are more likely than men to adopt learning techniques (Dreyer and Oxford, 1996; Oxford and Burry-stock, 1995). The findings of Oxford et al show that gender has a considerable impact on the frequency with which these strategies are applied in the learning process. According to the data, memory, cognitive, and social techniques are frequently used by women.

Gender influences strategy selection, according to Oxford and Nyikos (1989), who studied the use of learning approaches in a sample of adult language learners. The findings demonstrate that women use all types of methods more frequently than males, which is consistent with earlier studies on the part of sex in outside language learning.

Ehrman and Oxford (1989) conducted a research on 78 respondents. Gender contrasts within the utilize of strategies were recognized, which is consistent with previous research. Female respondents were found to use general learning approaches, authentic methods, strategies for getting and sharing meaning, and self-direction strategies more frequently than male respondents.

Females employ metacognitive methods as planning and monitoring strategies, according to study by Lee and Oxford (2008). In terms of gender variations in the use of learning techniques, some research suggests that the link between strategy use and gender is unclear (Dadour and Robbins, 1996; Oxford, 1996; Park, 1999; Lee and Oxford, 2008).

According to Kaylani (1996), the extent to which male students adopt strategies differs from that of female students. Female students utilize memory, cognition, compensatory, and emotive methods more frequently than male students, according to her research. Gender differences in language proficiency have been established, according to Boinovi and Sindik (2011), using language learning methodologies.

Liu (2004) conducted an enlightening investigation of the relationship between language capability, sex, and strategy utilize. There are measurably critical gender contrasts in memory, full of feeling, and in general strategy utilize, with females beating guys. Agreeing to information, females are superior at overseeing and controlling their feelings than their male partners. Other components, such as ethnic root, social foundation, and environment may have an impact on how men and women use strategies.

RESEARCH METHODS

Research Design

Descriptive survey and correlational design were used in this study. Descriptive survey was utilized to describe the predominant language learning strategies used by the learners according to gender. On the other hand, correlational design was used to get the relationship between two variables given in the study. It determined the relationship between students' gender and language learning strategies used and the difference between language learning strategies used and achievement according to students' gender. Also, this correlational design determined the difference between achievement and student's gender.

Respondents of the Study

Out of 3000 first year students of Isabela State University- Cauayan Campus , 300 or 10% of the first year students were chosen through purposive sampling from School of Arts and Criminology (SAC) with 12% or 37 students, Institute of Teachers' Education (ITE) with 9% or 26 students, College of Business Administration (CBM) with 35% or 104 students, College of Computing and Information Technology (CCIT) with 20% or 60 students, Polytechnic School (PS) with 16% or 48 students and Institute of Agricultural Technology (IAT) with 8% or 25 students.

Table 1. Frequency and Percentage Distribution of the Respondents according to their Gender in Each College/ Department/ Institute

| DEPARTMENT/ COLLEGE/ INSTITUTE | BISEXUAL | LESBIAN | GAY | MALE | FEMALE | FREQU ENCY | PERCEN TAGE |
|-----------------------------------|----------|---------|-----|------|--------|---------------|----------------|
| PS | 1 | 0 | 0 | 47 | 0 | 48 | 16% |
| IAT | 0 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 22 | 25 | 8% |
| SAC | 8 | 12 | 5 | 6 | 6 | 37 | 12% |
| CBM | 12 | 18 | 13 | 25 | 36 | 104 | 35% |

| | | | | | | | |
|-------|----|----|----|----|----|-----|------|
| ITE | 1 | 0 | 18 | 2 | 5 | 26 | 9% |
| IT | 13 | 10 | 8 | 15 | 14 | 60 | 20% |
| Total | 35 | 43 | 44 | 95 | 83 | 300 | 100% |

Table 1 showed the number of respondents in each department/college/institute. Majority of the respondents came from College of Business Administration (CBM) with 104 students (35%). The least of number of respondents, on the other hand, was the Institute of Agricultural Technology (IAT) consisting of 8% or 37 respondents. There were 35 bisexuals, 43 lesbians, 44 gays, 95 males and 83 females.

Research Instrument Used

The Oxford’s Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL, 1990) was utilized to identify the strategies used by the respondents. The inventory included 50 statements asking for responses. Statements 1-9 under memory strategies, statements 10-23 under cognitive strategies, statements 24-29 under compensation strategies, statements 30- 38 under meta-cognitive strategies, statements 39- 44 under affective strategies and statements 45-50 were under social strategies. Some of revisions were done to make the statements understand by the local learners.

The questionnaire was designed on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from “never or almost never true of me”, “usually not true of me”, “somewhat true of me”, “usually true of me” to “always or almost true of me” with numerical values of 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 assigned to each response respectively.

The validity of the content of the questionnaire was further examined by the pool of experts. Through this, all statements in the original texts with the words “Second Language” were changed to “English”. For instance, in item 1 statement “I think of connections between what I as of now know and unused things I learn in my Moment Language,” this was changed into “I think of connections between what I as of now know and modern things I learn in English.”

Moreover, the analysts too considered proposals with respect to confront legitimacy of the survey which incorporates font sizes, text style styles, work space, quality of the printed fabric and clarity of bearings. Typically to guarantee the suitability and exactness of data to be given by the respondents of the study.

Data Gathering Procedure

Although only 300 students were needed in the study, 600 participants were asked to answer the questionnaire to determine the respondents’ demographical file especially their gender since this study needed students who were bisexuals, gays and lesbians. Out of 600 respondents, the researcher used purposive sampling to identify the 300 students as respondents for the study. Moreover, the questionnaire was used to see the dominant language learning strategies used by the learners according to their gender. After proper instruction and clarification in administering the questionnaire, the researcher assisted the participants in accomplishing the questionnaire to ensure that they understood each item to be answered; thus, guaranteeing appropriate responses. The researcher then proceeded in gathering the duly accomplished questionnaires for tallying purposes and statistical treatment.

On the other hand, the researcher also gathered the grade weighted average (GWA) of the 300 students in their language courses offered during the school year to obtain their achievement in English.

Data Analysis

The responses collected were tabulated by the researcher for statistical treatment using the Statistical Software Program for data analysis.

To interpret the data, the researchers utilized a questionnaire to evaluate the data and determine the most common language learning techniques employed by learners according to gender. The students were asked to check their responses on each item of 1, 2, 3, 4, or 5 when scoring. Then add up each column and write the total on the "SUM" line. To get the average for each column, divide the number under "SUM." This average was rounded to the nearest tenth, resulting in 3.4. It calculated the overall average. To accomplish so, calculate the sum all of the "SUMS" in the different parts of the SILL. After that, divide by 50. The result of dividing the most frequently used language learning techniques may be seen.

Then, the use of different strategies and its relationship with students' gender were computed by using Chi-square test.

After that, achievement and language learning strategies used according to gender were differentiated through one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) to see if there was a significant or no significant difference between each language learning strategy to students' achievement. The relationship between gender and achievement was determined by also using one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) to get the mean grade of all the respondents. After that, p-value was determined to know the relationship between students' gender and achievement.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This part of the study shows the analysis of the data gathered by the researchers. Moreover, researches and literatures reviewed were used to enrich the discussion of the data collected in the study.

Table 2 shows the predominant language learning strategies used by the learners according to gender. The students were categorized according to gender i.e. lesbian, gay, bisexual, male and female (LGBMF). Students who are bisexuals often used metacognitive and cognitive strategies in learning English. Lesbians, on the other hand, frequently used social and compensation strategies to learn English while gays commonly employed social and meta-cognitive strategies. Male students regularly used social and memory strategies while female students often employed social and meta-cognitive strategies.

Table 2. The Predominant Language Learning Strategies Used by the Learners according to Gender and the Relationship between Language Learning Strategies Used and Students' Gender

| Gender | Language Learning Strategies Used | | | | | | X ² | P-value |
|----------|-----------------------------------|-----------|--------------|---------------|-----------|--------|----------------|----------|
| | Memory | Cognitive | Compensation | Metacognitive | Affective | Social | | |
| Bisexual | 7 | 9 | 1 | 10 | 5 | 7 | 7.92 | 0.1605ns |
| Lesbian | 5 | 4 | 11 | 9 | 9 | 15 | 9.19 | 0.1019ns |
| Gay | 2 | 5 | 9 | 12 | 7 | 17 | 16.44 | 0.0057s |
| Male | 24 | 19 | 21 | 24 | 20 | 26 | 1.67 | 0.8924ns |
| Female | 14 | 6 | 13 | 20 | 15 | 22 | 10.67 | 0.0584ns |

s- significant ns- not significant

The table also indicates the relationship between language learning strategies used and students' gender. It shows that there is a significant relationship between language learning

strategies used and students' gender when it comes to gay respondents with a p-value of 0.0057. Hence, the hypothesis "there is a relationship between language learning strategies used and students' gender" is accepted only to gay respondents of the study. Other genders, on the other hand, have no significant relationship with the language learning strategies they use.

Table 3 below reveals that language learning strategies used and the achievement of students who are bisexuals have no significant difference with a p-value of 0.080. Therefore, the alternative hypothesis "there is a big difference between the language learning strategy used and the student's grades" is rejected.

The use of language learning strategies by bisexual students has no relationship whether they have low or high grade in their achievement in English in the present study.

Table 3. The Relationship between Language Learning Strategies Used and Achievement of Bisexual Students

| Strategy employed | Mean | N | Std. Deviation | F-value | P-value |
|-------------------|------|----|----------------|---------|---------|
| Memory | 2.20 | 5 | 0.38 | | |
| Cognitive | 2.18 | 9 | 0.29 | | |
| Compensation | 2.63 | 1 | | 2.26 | 0.080ns |
| Meta-cognitive | 2.21 | 7 | 0.34 | | |
| Affective | 3.19 | 2 | 1.15 | | |
| Social | 2.54 | 7 | 0.55 | | |
| Total | 2.35 | 31 | 0.49 | | |

s- significant ns- not significant

Table 4 indicates that there is no big difference between the language learning strategy used and the student's grades particularly among lesbian respondents of the study. Thus, the hypothesis is rejected.

It denotes that whether lesbian students use many or few language learning strategies still it does not affect nor has no relationship with their achievement in English.

Table 4. The Relationship between Language Learning Strategies Used and Achievement of Lesbian Students

| Strategy Employed | Mean | N | Std. Deviation | F-value | P-value |
|-------------------|------|----|----------------|---------|---------|
| Memory | 2.66 | 4 | 0.39 | | |
| Cognitive | 2.41 | 4 | 0.31 | | |
| Compensation | 2.19 | 6 | 0.28 | 2.397 | 0.062ns |
| Meta-cognitive | 2.31 | 6 | 0.27 | | |
| Affective | 3.19 | 6 | 0.58 | | |
| Social | 2.75 | 9 | 0.89 | | |
| Total | 2.60 | 35 | 0.63 | | |

s- significant ns- not significant

This table also shows which language learning strategies are being used by lesbian students do not affect their achievement in English.

Table 5. The Relationship between Language Learning Strategies Used and Achievement of Gay Students

| Strategy Employed | Mean | N | Std. Deviation | F-value | P-value |
|-------------------|------|----|----------------|---------|---------|
| Memory | 2.38 | 1 | | | |
| Cognitive | 2.20 | 5 | 0.42 | | |
| Compensation | 2.41 | 8 | 0.38 | 0.559 | 0.731ns |
| Meta-cognitive | 2.25 | 7 | 0.38 | | |
| Affective | 2.06 | 4 | 0.33 | | |
| Social | 2.26 | 12 | 0.31 | | |
| Total | 2.26 | 37 | 0.35 | | |

s- significant ns- not significant

Table 5 presents that there is no significant difference between language learning strategies employed and the achievement of gay students in the study. Therefore, using language learning strategies do not affect their performance in English because of the p-value of 0.731 that shows no significant difference.

It also denotes that the hypothesis “there is a significant difference between language learning strategies used and students’ achievement” is rejected.

Table 6. The Relationship between Language Learning Strategies Used and Achievement of Female Students

| Strategy Employed | Mean | N | Std. Deviation | F-value | P-value |
|-------------------|------|----|----------------|---------|---------|
| Memory | 2.69 | 13 | 0.48 | | |
| Cognitive | 2.50 | 5 | 0.13 | | |
| Compensation | 2.56 | 10 | 0.30 | 0.691 | 0.632ns |
| Meta-cognitive | 2.44 | 18 | 0.63 | | |
| Affective | 2.59 | 11 | 0.59 | | |
| Social | 2.42 | 19 | 0.27 | | |
| Total | 2.52 | 76 | 0.46 | | |

s- significant ns- not significant

Table 6 shows the contrast between language learning strategies used by female respondents of the study and their achievement. The result shows that there is no significant difference between language learning strategies employed by female students to their achievement. This finding is contrary to the study of Aslan (2009) which showed that female students who employed language learning strategies had significant difference in their achievement.

Table 7. The Relationship between Language Learning Strategies Used and Achievement of Male Students

| Strategy Employed | Mean | N | Std. Deviation | F-value | P-value |
|-------------------|------|----|----------------|---------|---------|
| Memory | 2.72 | 16 | 0.53 | | |
| Cognitive | 2.48 | 12 | 0.53 | | |
| Compensation | 2.55 | 10 | 0.56 | 0.294 | 0.915ns |

| | | | |
|----------------|------|----|------|
| Meta-cognitive | 2.54 | 15 | 0.76 |
| Affective | 2.54 | 9 | 0.65 |
| Social | 2.66 | 12 | 0.55 |
| Total | 2.59 | 74 | 0.59 |

s- significant ns- not significant

Table 7 shows no significant difference between language learning strategies employed by male students with regard to their achievement. It has a p-value of 0.915 which means not significant. This finding is contradictory to previous study by Jhaish (2010) that there is a significant correlation between achievement and all language learning strategies when it comes to male students or respondents.

Table 8. The Relationship between Students’ Gender and Achievement

| Gender | Mean (Achievement) | N | Std. Deviation | F-value | P-value | |
|----------|--------------------|-----|----------------|---------|---------|----|
| Bisexual | 2.35 | 35 | 0.46 | | | s- |
| Lesbian | 2.59 | 43 | 0.58 | | | |
| Gay | 2.27 | 44 | 0.35 | 3.949 | 0.004s | |
| Female | 2.58 | 95 | 0.55 | | | |
| Male | 2.50 | 83 | 0.45 | | | |
| Total | 2.49 | 300 | 0.50 | | | |

significant ns- not significant

Table 8 reveals that the result of the mean grades of students in their academic achievement is different from each gender. Therefore, the hypothesis “there is a significant difference between students’ gender and achievement” is accepted. It has a p- value of 0.004 that denotes significant difference between students’ gender and achievement. The findings of the present study supported by the findings of the previous studies by Feingold (1988) and Weaver-Hightower (2003) that gender of the students affects their achievement in English.

CONCLUSION

The researchers found out that each gender has specific strategy used in learning English. Gay respondents are more active in learning English. Further, the use of language learning strategies has no effect in the student achievement according to gender. Thus, students’ achievement in language learning varies according to gender. It is recommended that teachers should provide self-directed methods in language acquisition of the students. They should inform the students on the effectiveness of language learning strategies. In addition, researchers should explore how students are able to use various language learning strategies. The curriculum developers and planners should design various materials in promoting language learning strategies at all school levels. Administrators are responsible for organizing and managing the administration, support systems, and program of activities that will enable an educational institution to function effectively. The school administrators should also organize and facilitate educational or social activities that cater to the learning needs according to gender of the students. Future researchers/ teachers may conduct a longitudinal research study to validate the consistency of the results of this research.

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