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Research Article

THE IMPACT OF IRANIAN EFL LEARNERS' GENDER ON RETENTION OF FEMININE AND MASCULINE WORDS

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ABSTRACT
The main concern of the present study was to probe the probable differences between Iranian EFL female learners and male ones in retention of feminine and masculine words regarding words gender. It was an attempt to investigate whether female and male learners of English differ significantly in retention of feminine and masculine words. To carry out this study, total of 115 female and male subjects (52 females and 63 males) at two schools (Mahdieh girls' school and Nemooneneh Farhangian boys' school in Arak were randomly selected from among two groups of girls and boys from the first grade of high school students. Through administrating the NELSON English language proficiency test series 50 A to 115 students, 91 students were homogenized and invited for the purpose of this study. Statistical analyses including GLMRM, descriptive statistics, pair wise comparison, test of within-subjects revealed the following outcomes: 1- Iranian EFL female learners surpassed their male peers in word retention. 2- No significant difference was observed between masculine words retention and feminine ones retention in male learners.

Keywords: *Vocabulary Learning, Vocabulary Retention, Gender, Feminine Word and Masculine Word*

INTRODUCTION
According to Hu (2012), as everyone knows, among all kinds of creatures on the earth, mankind is the only one who has languages. We can say that it is language that makes mankind totally different from other kinds of creatures on the earth. Since language is a special social phenomenon of human society which formed with the developments of human society and directly reflected human thoughts of the society.

As Aslan (2009) acknowledged, People have spoken at first to meet their basic needs through communication and then express themselves, and also in different parts of the world, different people spoke different languages, and for centuries they did not need to learn other people's languages as they lived, more or less, in enclosed communities. However, as the time passed, communities started to interact more and more and the need for other languages increased. With the introduction of more advanced transportation means it was accelerated even more, but it was not until the beginning of modern times that the knowledge of foreign languages became indispensible.

Cengizhan (2011), for example, states that in learning a language, grammar, listening, reading, writing and vocabulary emerge as the elements that constitute language. It might be crucial to be aware of the significance of these elements especially the role of vocabulary as being the core of communication and language learning.

The degree of proficiency in a language is related with the words you know. The more words you know, the better you can express your ideas and communicate with others. Without words people cannot use the language effectively. The importance of learning vocabulary cannot be neglected at all. Many experienced teachers of English as a second or foreign language have realized that knowing a language means knowing its vocabulary as well. This bring us to an important topic namely, vocabulary which will be studied on closer examination in this paper. According to Oxford (1990), over the last few decades, a gradual but significant shift of attention has taken place within the field of education, resulting in less emphasis on teachers and teaching to greater emphasis on learner and learning. At the same time, a shift of attention has taken place in second language acquisition research from the products of language learning to the processes through which learning takes place (Cited in Gerami & Madani, 2011).

As one of the learners' characteristics "gender" attracted great interest among linguists and psychologists to study its effects on the process of learning and retention. As a matter of fact they wanted to know if learners' gender can result in their success in learning and retention or not. For a long time there was a contradiction between the researchers who believed that as one of learners' characteristics gender impact learning and the others who acknowledged that it doesn't affect learners' learning. Gender differences in academic achievement have long been a topic of discussion among psychologists, educators, and researchers. According to Feingold (1998), childhood training and experience, gender differences in attitudes, parental and teacher expectation and behaviors, biological differences between the sexes may all contribute to gender gap in achievement. Studies conducted by many researchers have shown conflicting patterns of results regarding differences caused by gender in academic achievement. The differences vary according to subjects' age, level of schooling, language, literacy, and others. On the other hand, there are findings revealing that the academic gap between boys and girls is narrower nowadays or no differences are found in the area of academic achievement based on gender (Suet Fin & Ishak, 2012). According to Kaushanskaya *et al.,* (2011), the presence of gender differences on linguistic tasks suggests that the mechanisms of language acquisition may be somewhat distinct for males and females. They also compared women's and men's performance across the immediate and delayed tests in the field of vocabulary acquisition and its retention and revealed that gender differences are comparable during immediate and delayed retrieval. Also Zare pointed out, females use more language strategies than males during the process of vocabulary learning because they compared to male students are more concerned and anxious about their grades (2010). Also words have some features that affect learning and recalling them, few, if any study, have been done to investigate the role of feminine words and masculine ones in the process of word acquisition regarding learners, gender. In this study in addition to vocabulary and gender of learners the masculinity and femininity of words are taking into consideration. As Huddleston and Pullum (2002), cited in Jedyank & Pytlarz (2012), stated "in some languages, gender system is very complex, and in others, it is absent. Gender in the English language as a grammatical category plays a less important role in syntax than in languages such as Polish or German. English gender assignment is a semantic one, and gender is not an inflectional category.

What is Language Learning and Language Learning Strategies?

According to Abedian (2013), "language acquisition is the process by which humans acquire the capacity to perceive and comprehend language, as well as to produce and use words and sentences to communicate. It usually refers to first-language acquisition and is distinguished from second-language acquisition, which deals with the acquisition of additional languages by both children and adults. Second-language acquisition (often abbreviated to SLA) is the process by which people learn a second language; it also refers to the scientific discipline devoted to studying that process. Second language refers to any language learned in addition to a person's first language."

Oxford (1990) defines language learning strategies as "approaches or techniques that learners use to enhance their progress in developing L2 skills" (Cited in Gerami *et al.*, 2011). According to Oxford (1990) Language learning strategies are specific actions taken by the learner to make learning easier, faster, more enjoyable, more self-directed, more effective, and more transferable to new situations (Cited in Zare, 2010). There is no doubt that virtually all second language learners and their teachers are well aware of the fact that learning a second language (L2) involves the learning of large numbers of words (Avila & Sadoski, 1996; Laufer & Hulstijn, 2001), but how to accomplish this task is often of great concern to them. How vocabulary is acquired and what are the most efficient means to promote effective acquisition have been worthwhile lines of unease in the field of second language acquisition (De La Fuente, 2002). In sum, they all place emphasis on the fact that mastery of vocabulary is an essential component of second language acquisition (Cited in Maghsoudi, 2008).

What is Vocabulary?

In order to live in the world we have to name things. Without name the existence of an object, phenomenon, or even people is too difficult to accept. Accordingly, vocabulary is the building block of any communication (Barani *et al.*, 2010).

Vocabulary is generally considered as the basic communication tool, and often labeled as the most problematic area by language teachers (Sozler, 2012). Even though learners master all grammatical areas in the language, the communication stops when they do not know the necessary word (Sozler, 2012). Vocabulary learning is dominant in language acquisition, whether the language is a second or foreign language (Hamzehlou *et al.*, 2012). The degree of proficiency in a language is related with the words you know. The more words you know, the better you can express your ideas and communicate with others. Without words people cannot use the language effectively. The importance of learning vocabulary cannot be neglected at all. Many experienced teachers of English as a second or foreign language have realized that knowing a language means knowing its vocabulary as well. We may assert that learning a foreign language is basically a matter of learning a vocabulary of that language. Not being able to find the word you need to express yourself is the most frustrating experience in speaking another language (Dilek and Yuruk, 2012). Even though learners master all grammatical areas in the language, the communication stops when they do not know the necessary word (Cited in Sozler, 2012).

What is Retention?

As Hornby's (2004), cited in Pishgaman *et al.*, (2010), stated "retention is "the ability to remember things". According to Koksal (2012), "the most important feature that makes human beings superior to other living beings is that they are the best learners and can use the things they have learnt by keeping them in their mind, which is only achieved thanks to memory. That is why memory can be called the depot of the brain or brain library. Not very long ago it was considered that the brain stores knowledge by preserving its original form, but now this way of thinking has changed, and with the birth of information processing theory, a new process in the conceptualization of learning has started. In other words, the processing of information is emphasized in learning." Memory, either short- term or long-term, is essentially about the brain. The students' ability to store information and recall it later can certainly affect their performance in learning. Jensen (2005), cited in Lago & Scepho (2012), states that the "only way" we know that students have learned something is if they demonstrate recall of it. For longest retention, new knowledge must be associated with previous knowledge (Ausubel, 1968). In this regard, McDonough (1981) mentioned the retention can be prompted by several procedures and frequency of occurrence of meaningful practice promotes retention. McDonough further noted that cognitive process and learner strategies are important in retention and recall (Cited in Marzban & Aziz, 2012).

As Oxford (1990), quoted by Zahedi & Abdi (2012), found that "language learners have a serious problem remembering the large amounts of vocabulary necessary to achieve fluency". Therefore, to deal with their vocabulary learning difficulties is a big concern. One of the components to master English as a foreign language is vocabulary mastery. It means that the students have ability in understanding and using the words and meaning. The students know the words and their meaning. It also plays an important role in English language skills. The greater vocabulary students master, the better they perform their language. By having limited vocabulary, the students will find difficulties mastering English skill.

What is Gender?

Gender is a universal term which refers to male and female. Many differences can be found between male and female and one of them is in the aspect of academic achievement. Educational statistics and media have reported the gap in achievement between male students and female students (Wong *et al.*, 2002; Tinklin, 2002; Clark *et al.*, 2008; Rinn *et al.*, 2008; Ismail, 2009; Gibb *et al.*, 2008 Cited in Suet & Ishak, 2012). Gender difference has entered into English language studies as a linguistic variable for a long time. As one of the popular fields in sociolinguistics, explorations on gender difference in English language and other languages as well have experienced a period of gradual development. The relation between language and gender has become one of the major issues in sociolinguistics since early 1970s. Then an explosion of related research in full wings has been carried out in many separate aspects. There is no doubt that researches and studies in this field will do good for men and women to understand each other, providing basis for establishing harmonious interpersonal relationship. Apart from that these researches will facilitate both English learning and teaching as well as cross-cultural communication (Ning *et al.*, 2010).

Gender is supposed to have an important effect on attitude and motivation and learning process. Now a day, the researchers are very much keen to attribute gender related differences to socio-cultural factors that impose on females' role models that foster a positive attitude to second language learning. In different motivation studies conducted on gender differences in foreign language learning context, it has been observed that females are more motivated in learning foreign languages than boys (e.g. Dornyei *et al.*, 2006; Mori & Gobel, 2006; cited in Akram & Ghani, 2013).

Feminine Words and Masculine Words

As Huddleston and Pullum (2002), cited in Jedyank & Pytlarz (2012), stated "gender in English language as a grammatical category plays a less important role in syntax than in languages such as Polish or German. English gender assignment is a semantic one, and gender is not an inflectional category. It is only reflected by personal pronouns he/she/it, and by the relative pronouns who/which that do not refer to the sex of nouns."

There are some words in languages that for most of people they are symbol of female or male. It means that when we hear them we remember one of the sexes. For example: 'doll' is a feminine word and 'gun' is a masculine word.

Hypotheses

H1: Iranian EFL female learners surpass their male peers in word retention.

H2: Iranian EFL male learners have better retention in masculine words than feminine ones.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Methodology

Subjects

The subjects of this study were students of Mahdieh girls' school and Nemooneh Farhangian boys' school in Arak (one of the industrial cities of Iran). They were selected randomly from the first grade of high school.

Through administrating the NELSON English language test, series 50A to 115 students, 91 students were homogenized and chosen for the purpose of this study.

They were classified into two (41 females and 50 males) groups. They were in age range of 12-14. So, the age and sex variables were controlled.

Instruments

In order to conduct this study, the following instruments were used:

A) A Teacher Made Questionnaire

It was developed by the present researchers and consisted of 40 words (20 feminine and 20 masculine words) and was distributed among 40 subjects (20 females and 20 males). They were asked to determine the feminine and masculine words from their own view.

B) Language Proficiency Test

In order to make sure of the homogeneity of the subjects, NELSON test, series 50A, after being piloted on a similar group of 12 students, was administrated by the present researchers. It included 30 multiple choice items. The time allotted to this phase was 20 minutes.

C) Background Questionnaire

The present researchers developed a background questionnaire in order to elicit some personal information about participants such as: their full name, gender, age, and language status.

In order to prevent any possible misunderstanding or confusion in the part of the participants and to ensure maximum understanding, the background questionnaire was developed in English along with its translation in Persian.

D) Teacher Made Word Test

This test consisted of 30 words (15 feminine and 15 masculine words) along with their pictures. The words were numbered and placed on the half top of the paper and the pictures were randomly arranged on the half down of the paper. The subjects were supposed to insert the number of each word in the space under its relevant picture.

Procedure

In the process of carrying out this study, the present researchers took the following procedures to achieve the objectives of the current study. All the procedures including the development of the teacher made questionnaire, Language proficiency test (Nelson series A 50), background questionnaire, teacher made word test and their administration are explained in details below.

The main objective of this study was to improve and expand the English vocabulary learning and retention of Iranian EFL learners. For this reason a teacher made English words questionnaire consisted of 30 items were divided into feminine and masculine words regarding the nature of the words. Also the subjects' gender was taken into consideration. In order to achieve the mentioned objectives, first the proficiency level of randomly selected subjects was determined by NELSON Language Test series 50A. Among the two groups of female subjects and male ones taking this test, two groups of Elementary boys and girls were identified and those whose scores were between 1 standard deviation above and below the mean score were invited for further study in this project. For further information refer to Table 1.

Table 1: Statistics for the NELSON proficiency test:

Test	Mean	Std. Deviation
NELSON	16.087	1.614

To consider the homogeneity, 91 out of 115 subjects were selected and the rest was excluded.

Before starting the study a word test (developed by the present researchers) consisted of 40 words was distributed among 40 subjects (20 female and 20 male learners). They were asked to determine the feminine and masculine words from their own views. Based on the received feedback, 10 out of 40 words which obtained the minority of concerns as feminine and masculine words were excluded from the test and the reminders (15 feminine words and 15 masculine ones) were selected as the words used in vocabulary test. The time allotted to this phase was 10 minutes.

In the next step a background questionnaire was developed by the present researchers in order to elicit some personal information of subjects such as their full name, age, gender, and language status. In order to prevent any possible misunderstanding or confusion in the part of the participants and to ensure maximum understanding, the background questionnaire was developed in English along with its translation in Persian. The time allotted to this phase was ten minutes.

Then the vocabulary test was administrated in following phases:

Phase 1(pre-test): it was given to the subjects. It is worth mentioning that in order to prevent any misunderstanding on the part of the participants, they were informed about the way of answering the test in their L1 (Persian). The participants were prohibited to use dictionary. The time allotted to this phase was 15 minutes.

Phase 2: The next step was to give the treatment. It was done by the present researchers. Both groups (41 females and 50 males) underwent two weeks of treatment (the classes were hold twice a week and the time allotted for each session was 30 minutes) and during the treatment 15 feminine and 15 masculine words were taught.

Phase 3: After two weeks of treatment, the immediate post-test (post-test 1) took place immediately after last session of treatment. The time allotted to this phase was 15 minutes.

Phase 4: After two weeks interval and the post-test was repeated. The time allotted to this phase was 15 minutes.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Comparison between Female Learners and Male Ones in Feminine Word Retention

H1: Iranian EFL female learners surpass their male peers in word retention.

To compare the performance of female learners and male ones in words retention, because of existence of three dependent variables (pre-test, post-test, and delayed post-test), the General Linear Model of repeated measurements or GLMRM was used. Table 1 is presented in order to report the descriptive statistics such

as the mean scores and the standard deviation of pre/post/delayed post-tests' scores of vocabulary test for female learners and male ones.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics

	Gender	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Pre-test	males	9.3200	3.07352	50
	females	9.9756	5.15018	41
	Total	9.6154	4.12787	91
Post-test	males	17.3800	4.48530	50
	females	19.2683	6.93190	41
	Total	18.2308	5.76209	91
Delayed post-test	males	13.7400	4.36970	50
	Females	16.9268	7.18467	41
	Total	15.1758	5.98998	91

By referring to Table 1 the mean scores and the standard deviation of total pre-test scores for learners (both females and males) are respectively equal to 9.615 and 4.127. Also the mean scores and the standard deviation of total post-test scores for learners (both females and males) are respectively equal to 18.230 and 5.762. Meanwhile the mean and the standard deviation of total delayed post-test scores for learners (both females and males) are respectively equal to 15.175 and 5.989. The mean scores and the standard deviation of 50 male subjects' scores in pre-test are respectively equal to 9.320 and 3.073. Also the mean score and the standard deviation of 50 male subjects' scores in post-test are respectively 17.380 and 4.485. Meanwhile the mean score and the standard deviation of 50 male subjects' scores in delayed post-test are respectively equal to 13.740 and Std. D=4.369. The mean score and the standard deviation of 41 female subjects' scores in pre-test are respectively equal to 9.975 and 5.150. Also the mean score and the standard deviation of 40 female learners' scores in post-test are respectively equal to 19.268 and 6.931. Also the mean score and the standard deviation of 41 female learners' scores in delayed post-test are respectively equal to 16.926 and 7.184.

Table 2: Mauchly's Test of Sphericity

Measure: Vocab Within Subjects Effect	Mauchly's W	Approx. Chi-Square	Df	Sig.	Epsilon Huynh-Feldt
Teaching	.655	37.177	2	.000	.762

Concerning the low value of significant level (Sig: 0.00) in Table 2. It is clear that the assumption of spherical figure for matrices of variance and covariance of dependent variables does not exist. So, Table 3 of statistical results of F test with the alerted degree of freedom was used. It consisted of the tests of the main dependent variable (within-subjects effect) and the interactional effect of that variable with independent variable of between –subjects.

Table 3: Tests of Within-Subjects Effects

Measure: Vocabulary Source		Type IV Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Teaching	Huynh-Feldt	3500.755	1.524	2297.254	333.568	.000
Teaching * Gender	Huynh-Feldt	72.184	1.524	47.368	6.878	.004
Error(Teaching)	Huynh-Feldt	934.043	135.626	6.887		

The important pre assumption of the variance analysis test with its repeated measures is that the matrices figure of variance and covariance of dependent variables should be spherical. The results of Mauchly's test of sphericity of variance-covariance of dependent variables are presented in Table 2.

As it is indicated in Table 3 according to significance column, the significance of each variable (within-subjects) and their interaction is observed. As it is shown in Table 3 the effect of vocabulary teaching on subjects' retention is significant (Sig= 0.00) and because it is lower than Sig=0.05 so, it reached the significance level criterion (Sig<0.05). In other words the differences among the mean scores of pre-test, post-test, and delayed post-test of vocabulary test are significant. It is worth noting that here the gender of the subjects is not taking into the consideration and just the effect of vocabulary teaching on vocabulary retention is concerned.

Table 4: Gender * Teaching

Measure: Vocabulary					
Gender	**Teaching**	**Mean**	**Std. Error**	**95% Confidence Interval**	
				Lower Bound	**Upper Bound**
Males	1	9.320	.585	8.157	10.483
	2	17.380	.808	15.774	18.986
	3	13.740	.821	12.108	15.372
Females	1	9.976	.646	8.692	11.260
	2	19.268	.893	17.495	21.042
	3	16.927	.907	15.125	18.729

Gender wise comparison also revealed a difference between female learners and male ones performance in vocabulary retention. Concerning the value of significant level (Sig:0.004) of F test with alerted degree of freedom in the second row of the Table 4 it is inferred that there is a significant difference between female learners and male ones in vocabulary retention and regarding the mean scores of female learners and male ones in delayed post-test (respectively equal to16.927 and 13.740, it is inferred that female learners excelled their male peers in word retention. So, there is no reason to reject the first hypothesis as there was a significant difference between female learners and male ones in vocabulary retention. In other words female learners surpassed their male peers in word retention.

Table 5 consisted of pair wise comparison between the levels of dependent variable (vocabulary retention) and independent variable (vocabulary teaching).

Table 5: Pairwise Comparisons

Measure: Vocabulary						
(I) Teaching	**(J) Teaching**	**Mean Difference (I-J)**	**Std. Error**	**Sig.**	**95% Confidence Interval for Difference**	
					Lower Bound	**Upper Bound**
1	2	-8.676	.383	.000	-9.612	-7.741
	3	-5.686	.393	.000	-6.644	-4.728
2	1	8.676	.383	.000	7.741	9.612
	3	2.991	.220	.000	2.455	3.527
3	1	5.686	.393	.000	4.728	6.644
	2	-2.991	.220	.000	-3.527	-2.455

Concerning the value of significant level (Sig: 0.000) in table 5, it is clear that in all pair wise comparison among pre-test, post-test, and delayed post-tests are lower than (Sig: 0.05). So, it is inferred that there is a significant difference between the mean scores of dependent variable (vocabulary retention) and independent variable (vocabulary teaching). So, the vocabulary teaching had a significant effect on subjects' retention.

Figure 1 illustrates the estimated marginal means of vocabulary retention estimated from the female learners' and male ones' mean scores of pre-test, post-test, and delayed post- test.

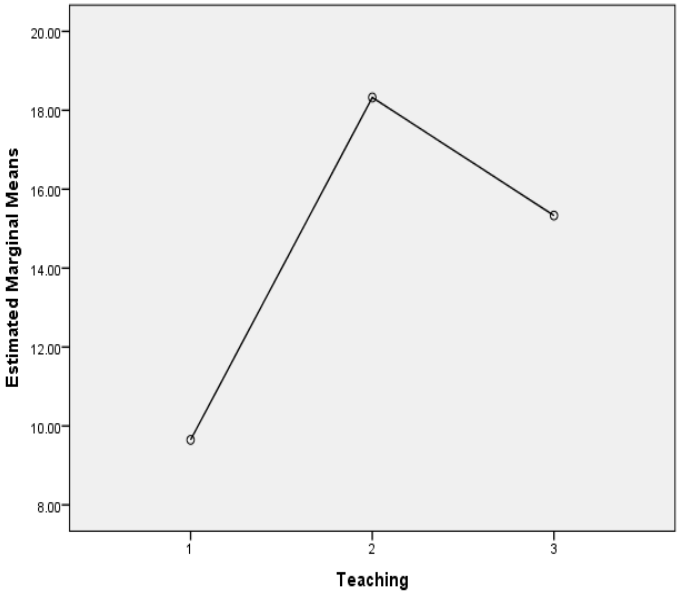

Figure 1: Estimated Marginal Means of Words Learning and Retention

As shown in figure 1 the mean scores of pre-test, post-test, and delayed post-test have statistically significant difference. It means that the vocabulary teaching has affected vocabulary learning and its retention.

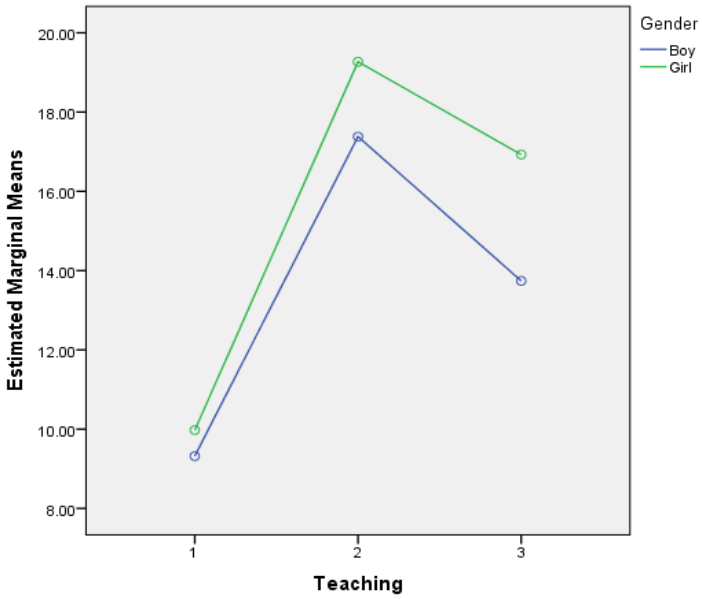

Figure 2: Estimated Marginal Means of Words Learning and Retention

As shown in figure 2, according to the position of the linear diagrams (blue diagram for males and green one for females) it is clear that female subjects and male ones performed differently in vocabulary retention. In other words the effect of vocabulary teaching had different impact on females' and males'

vocabulary retention. It means that female learners excelled their male peers in vocabulary retention. So, hypothesis 1 is accepted as female learners surpass their male peers in vocabulary retention. This hypothesis is to some extent in line with results of studies by some scholars who conducted experiments with more controlled variables. Regarding gender difference, it was found that females performed significantly better than males on meaningful learning approach questionnaire. This result may be related to differences between males' and females' preferences in the areas of motivation, authority orientation, and responsibility. According to Kaushanskaya *et al.*, (2011), "the presence of gender differences on linguistic tasks suggests that the mechanisms of language acquisition may be somewhat distinct for males and females. They also compared women's and men's performance across the immediate and delayed tests in the field of vocabulary acquisition and its retention and revealed that gender differences are comparable during immediate and delayed retrieval. Also Zare pointed out, females use more language strategies than males during the process of vocabulary learning because they compared to male students are more concerned and anxious about their grades (2010). Cavallo (1996) stated that students tend toward using either meaningful or rote approaches in learning concepts and the literature reports mixed results on possible gender differences in the use of orientations. Watkins and Hattie (1981) reported that females were more likely than males to adopt meaningful learning orientation to their work and males were more likely to adopt rote learning orientation which would allow them to scrape through their examinations (Cited in Kilic & Saglam, 2010). Also according to Rahimi *et al.*, (2011), vocabulary learning strategies may help students learn and remember words in learning a foreign language. Further, Zare's (2010) study revealed that females use more language strategies than males because they are more concerned about their grades.

Comparison between Male Learners' Performance in Masculine Words Retention and Feminine Ones Retention

H2: Iranian EFL male learners have better retention in masculine words than feminine ones.

To compare the performance of male learners in retention of feminine words and masculine ones, because of existence of three dependent variables (pre/post/delayed post-tests) for both feminine and masculine words, Two-way General Linear Model of Repeated Measurements (2-way GLMRM) is used and six scores of pre/post/delayed-post tests of male learners in both feminine words and masculine ones were measured. Table 1 is presented in order to report the descriptive statistics such as mean scores, standard deviation of pre/post/delayed-post tests of both feminine and masculine words of male learners.

Table 6: Descriptive Statistics

	Mean	**Std. Deviation**	**N**
Pre-test masculine words	5.6000	1.61624	50
Post-test masculine words	9.5400	2.31420	50
Delayed Post-test masculine words	8.0000	2.20389	50
Pre-test feminine words	3.7200	1.81872	50
Post-test feminine words	7.8400	2.66772	50
Delayed post -test feminine words	5.5400	2.69701	50

As Table 6 demonstrates the mean scores and the standard deviation of masculine words in pre-test for 50 male learners are respectively equal to 5.60 and 1.61. Also the mean scores and the standard deviation of masculine words in post-test for 50 male learners are respectively equal to 9.54 and 2.31. Mean while the mean scores and the standard deviation of masculine words in delayed post-test for 50 male learners are respectively equal to 8.00 and 2.20.

The mean scores and the standard deviation of feminine words in pre-test for 50 male learners are respectively equal to 3.72 and 1.81. Also the mean scores and the standard deviation of feminine words in

post-test for 50 male learners are respectively equal to 7.84 and 2.66. Mean while the mean scores and the standard deviation of feminine words in delayed post-test for 41 female learners are respectively equal to 5.54 and 2.69.

The important pre assumption of variance analysis test with its repeated measures is that the matrices figure of variance and covariance of dependent variables should be spherical. The result of Mauchly's test of sphericity of variance-covariance of dependent variables is presented in Table 7.

Table 7: Mauchly's Test of Sphericity[a]

Within Subjects Effect	Measure: Vocab Mauchly's W	Approx. Square	Chi-Df	Sig.	Epsilon[b] Huynh-Feldt
Measure	1.000	.000	0	.	1.000
Time	.869	6.743	2	.034	.915
Measure * Time	.847	7.976	2	.019	.896

Concerning the value of significant level of within-subjects effect of word teaching type index (measure) in the first row (.), and because this effect has two levels (levels of feminine words and masculine ones), so the pre assumption of spherical figure of matrices of variance and covariance of dependent variables is axiom (if a variable has two levels, the pre assumption of sphericity is axiom). But concerning the low value of significant level in the second and third rows in Table 7 (Sig=.034 &.019 respectively) it is clear that this pre assumption (the pre assumption of spherical figure) for matrices of variance and covariance of dependent variables for within-subjects effect of time and the interactional effect of time and word index in the error level of 5% does not exist. So, for analyzing, the results of Epsilon correction coefficient such as Huynh-Feldt should be used in order to alter the degree of freedom. In order to consider the significance of each independent variable in the model with the pre assumption of existence of sphericity of Matrices figure of variance-covariance of dependent variables of feminine and masculine words, Table 8, the table of statistical results of F test with the altered degree of freedom is used.

Table 8: Tests of Within-Subjects Effects

Source	Measure: Vocab Type IV Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Measure Sphericity Assumed	304.013	1	304.013	79.384	.000
Error(Measure) Sphericity Assumed	187.653	49	3.830		
Time Huynh-Feldt	812.647	1.830	444.177	191.422	.000
Error(Time) Huynh-Feldt	208.020	89.648	2.320		
Measure * Time Huynh-Feldt	7.887	1.792	4.400	2.657	.082
Error(Measure*Time) Huynh-Feldt	145.447	87.832	1.656		

As it is indicated in Table 8, according to the low value of reported significant level of F test with the pre assumption of its spherical figure in the first row of Table 8 (Sig=0.000) and because this level of significance is lower than Sig=0.05, so it reached the significance level criterion (Sig<0.05). Therefore, it is inferred that this effect is significant in each level of error. In other words there is a difference between the mean scores of male learners in feminine and masculine words learning in each level of error (figure 3). According to Table 6 (Descriptive statistics), the performance of male learners is better in masculine words learning than feminine ones.

But according to the low value of the reported significant level of F test with the altered degree of freedom in the third row of Table 8 (Sig=0.000) it is inferred that this effect (time) is significant in each level of error, it means that generally word teaching to male learners has statistically significant effect on their word retention. In other words, the differences among the mean scores of pre-test, post-test, and

delayed post-test are significant (Figure 4). But in order to find the difference Table 9 (pair wise comparison) is presented.

Also concerning the significant level (Sig=0.082) of F test with alerted degree of freedom in the fifth row Table 8 for considering the interactional effect of feminine words and masculine ones teaching on retention of these words in male learners, it is inferred that this effect is not significant in each level of error. In other words the retention of feminine words and masculine ones in male learners is statistically equal. It means that male learners performed statistically equal in feminine words retention and masculine ones retention (Figure 5). So, hypothesis 2 that "Iranian EFL male learners have better retention in masculine words than feminine ones" is rejected as there is no significant difference between feminine words retention and masculine ones retention in male learners.

Table 9 consisted of pair wise comparison for comparing the mean scores of dependent variables of pre/post/delayed post-tests of male learners.

Table 9: Pairwise Comparisons

Measure: Vocab						
(I) Time	**(J) Time**	**Mean Difference (I-J)**	**Std. Error**	**Sig.[b]**	**95% Confidence Interval for Difference[b]**	
					Lower Bound	**Upper Bound**
1	2	-4.030*	.230	.000	-4.599	-3.461
	3	-2.110*	.217	.000	-2.649	-1.571
2	1	4.030*	.230	.000	3.461	4.599
	3	1.920*	.166	.000	1.510	2.330
3	1	2.110*	.217	.000	1.571	2.649
	2	-1.920*	.166	.000	-2.330	-1.510

Concerning the value of reported significant level (Sig=0.000) in Table 9, it is clear that in all pair wise comparisons among pre-test, post-test, and delayed post-tests are lower than (Sig=0.05). So, it is inferred that there is a significant difference between the mean scores of dependent variable of feminine words and masculine ones in male learners. So, the feminine words and masculine ones teaching had a significant effect on male learners' retention.

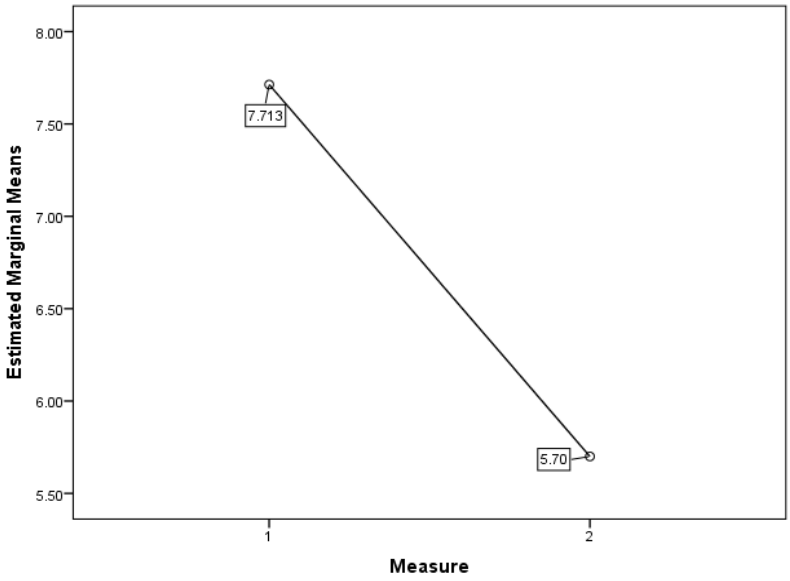

Figure 3: Estimated marginal means of male learners in masculine words test (1) and feminine ones test (2)

In order to make the hypothesis of this study more understandable figures 3, 4, and 5 are presented. Figure 3 illustrates the estimated marginal means of male learners in feminine words and masculine ones. The vertical axis is for the mean scores of female learners in post test and the horizontal one is for masculine words 1 and feminine words 2. Regarding the position of linear graph in figure 3, it is clear that there is a difference between mean scores of male learners in feminine words test and masculine words test. It means that male learner's performance is different in feminine words test and masculine ones test. According to figure 1 male learners excelled in masculine words test than feminine ones test. Figure 4 illustrates the estimated marginal means of male learners in pre-test (1), post test (2), and delayed post-test (3).

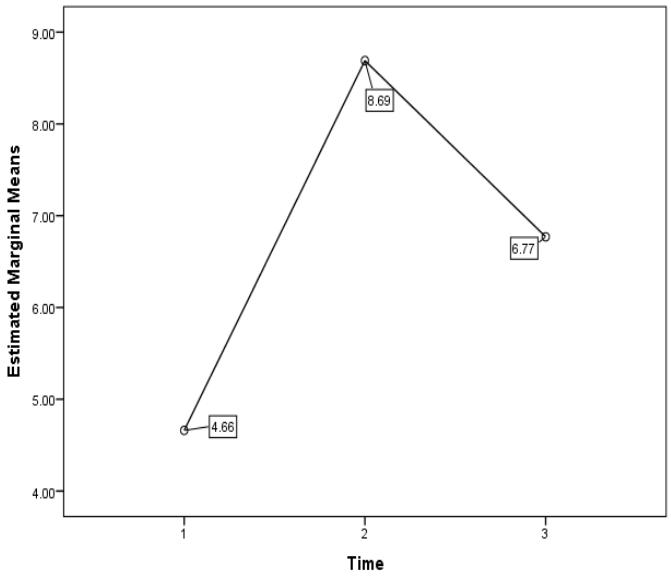

Figure 4: Estimated marginal means of male learners in pre-test (1), post-test (2), and delayed post-test (3)

According to linear graph in figure 4, it is clear that there are differences among the pre-test (1), post-test (2), and delayed post-test of male learners in feminine words and masculine ones. In other words male learners' performance is not equal in pre-test, post-test, and delayed post-test. It means that word teaching is effective in male learners.

Figure 5 illustrates the estimated marginal means of male learners' mean scores of masculine words (-) and feminine ones (….) in pre-test, post-test, and delayed post-test.

Regarding the position of these linear graphs, it is clear that male learners have no different performance in masculine words retention and feminine ones retention. It means that male learners performed statistically equal in masculine words retention and feminine words retention.

So, hypothesis 2 that "Iranian EFL male learners have better retention in masculine words than feminine ones" is rejected as there is no significant difference between feminine words retention and masculine ones retention in male learners.

The result of this hypothesis is to some extent a support for Zaini *et al.'s* study in 2012. This study aimed at whether the different role of gender affects language using. To carry out this study subjects from two groups of boy bloggers and girl bloggers were selected. Statistical analyses revealed that although there are some differences in language use between males and females, in today's world, gender roles are fast changing where stereotyping of men to masculine and women to feminine are no longer prominent. Women are adapting to masculine roles and jobs while men seem to be adopting feminine characteristics in their life. More and more language and gender stereotypes are becoming inapplicable to today's men and women. In general, men and women are known to use language differently, but sometimes they may

unintentionally exhibit feminine or masculine speech characteristics respectively when they talk (Zaini *et al.*, 2012).

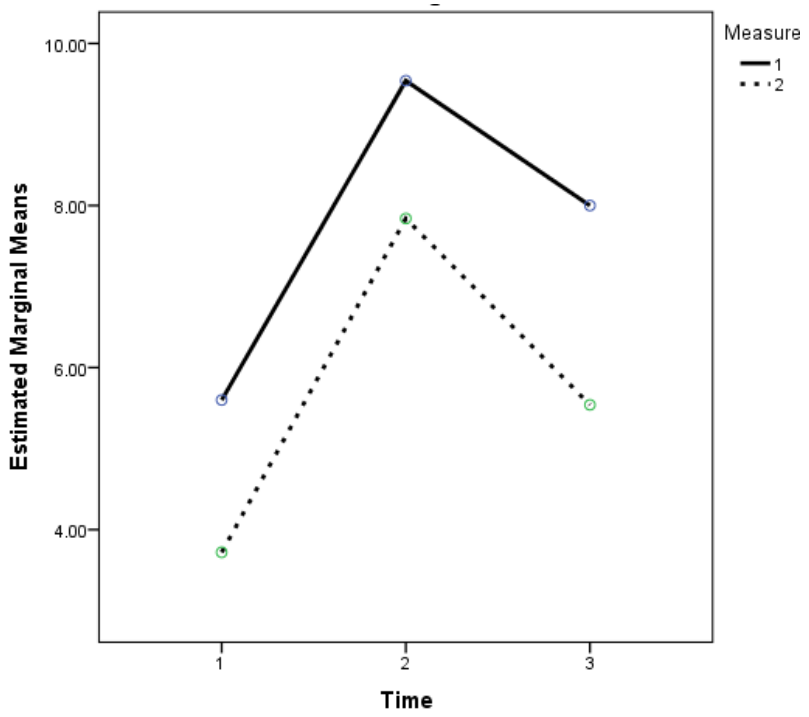

Figure 5: Estimated marginal means of male learners' mean scores of masculine words (-) and feminine ones (….) in pre-test, post-test, and delayed post-test

Conclusion and Implications

Since there was an experimental group and treatment, this study applied True-experimental design.

This study has tried to investigate the impact of Iranian EFL learners' gender on feminine and masculine words retention regarding words gender. A total of 91 female and male subjects (41 females and 50 males) at two high school centers in Arak, Iran were randomly from among of two groups of females and males. A general English proficiency test, back ground questionnaire, and teacher made word test consisted of feminine words and masculine ones were administered to both groups. Statistical analyses including GLMRM, pre-test, post-test, delayed post-test, SPSS, and descriptive analyses revealed there were sometimes significant and sometimes non-significant differences in the performance of the two learner groups, that is female and male participants, the results and findings of the statistical analyses may summarized as follows:

The first hypothesis was accepted, indicating that female learners outperformed male ones in word retention. The General Linear Model of repeated Measurements showed a significant difference between female subjects and their male peers in word retention. The finding of this hypothesis was to some extent in line with results of studies by some scholars who conducted experiments with more controlled variables. Regarding gender difference, it was found that females performed significantly better than males on meaningful learning approach questionnaire. This result may be related to differences between males' and females' preferences in the areas of motivation, authority orientation, and responsibility. Cavallo (1996) stated that students tend toward using either meaningful or rote approaches in learning concepts and the literature reports mixed results on possible gender differences in the use of orientations. Watkins and Hattie (1981) reported that females were more likely than males to adopt meaningful learning orientation to their work and males were more likely to adopt rote learning orientation which would allow them to scrape through their examinations (Cited in Kilic & Saglam, 2010). Also according

to Rahimi *et al.,* (2012), vocabulary learning strategies may help students learn and remember words in learning a foreign language. Further, Zare's (2010) study revealed that females use more language strategies than males because they are more concerned about their grades. The second hypothesis was rejected, showing that no significant differences were observed between the performance of male learners in feminine words retention and masculine ones. The result of this hypothesis is to some extent a support for Zaini *et al.'s* study in 2012. This study aimed at whether the different role of gender affects language using. To carry out this study subjects from two groups of boy bloggers and girl bloggers were selected. Statistical analyses revealed that although there are some differences in language use between males and females, in today's world, gender roles are fast changing where stereotyping of men to masculine and women to feminine are no longer prominent. Women are adapting to masculine roles and jobs while men seem to be adopting feminine characteristics in their life. More and more language and gender stereotypes are becoming inapplicable to today's men and women. In general, men and women are known to use language differently, but sometimes they may unintentionally exhibit feminine or masculine speech characteristics respectively when they talk (Zaini *et al.,* 2012).

Implications

Assuming that vocabulary knowledge is an important factor in language learning as cited in Maghsoudi (2008) there is no doubt that virtually all second language learners and their teachers are well aware of the fact that learning a second language (L2) involves the learning of large numbers of words (Avila & Sadoski, 1996; Laufer & Hulstijn, 2001). Gender roles are an important variable because they provide a better designation of one's sexual identity and they better describe attitudes and behaviors. Gender is one of the personal variables that have been related to differences found in motivational functioning and in self-regulated learning. Different research has demonstrated the existence of different attribution patterns in boys and girls (Hilke & Conway, 1994 cited in Ghazvini & Khajehpour, 2011). Regarding the role of learner's gender in the process of language learning this study has the following pedagogical implications. Watkins and Hattie (1981) reported that females were more likely than males to adopt meaningful learning orientation to their work and males were more likely to adopt rote learning orientation which would allow them to scrape through their examinations. Also some researchers reported no gender differences with respect to learning orientations (Cavallo, 1994; Wilson *et al.,* 1996; cited in Kilic & Saglam, 2010). Also according to Rahimi *et al.,* (2012), vocabulary learning strategies may help students learn and remember words in learning a foreign language. Further, Zare's (2010) study revealed that females use more language strategies than males because they are more concerned about their grades. So, while teaching vocabulary to language learners, language instructors should teach them how to use vocabulary learning strategies and also should encourage the language learners especially the male ones to adopt meaningful learning orientation to their work in order to get better vocabulary retention.

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