



Students' Perception in Group Work Based on Gender Stereotypes in EFL Classroom

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Abstract

Working in a group is cooperating with people with a wide range of information, skills, and ideas. The importance of including group work activities in the school curriculum is becoming more widely recognized as a key component of a student-centered classroom. However, concerns about students' perceptions toward choosing their desirable group members are affected by stereotypes of gender, specifically in 3 factors. These factors include communication, cooperation, and academic aspects. This study used a mixed method to explore high school students' perceptions in an EFL classroom in one of the State Senior High Schools in East Java to determine desirable group members based on gender stereotypes. The results from thirty active students' questionnaires and interviews suggested that most students' had a positive reaction towards these three factors of gender stereotypes that were applied in choosing desirable group members. There are possibilities that the factors do not apply to all students since everyone internalized gender stereotypes differently.

Keywords: EFL classroom; gender stereotype; group work; students' perception

Introduction

The teaching method, especially in language teaching and learning, has been shifting from the traditional approach to a student-centered approach. According to Ry (2014), the traditional method of teaching languages, in which the teacher is solely responsible for planning the curriculum, started to lose favor. Instead, the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) method, a part of the student-centered method, was first introduced to English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classes in Cambodia. The CLT technique attempts to improve both the roles of teachers and students in classrooms and learners' communicative abilities (Saputra, 2015). In line with prior research by Ry (2014), who claimed that Cambodian educational institutions had been pressured to employ group work in their classroom learning and

teaching methods. It emphasized how group work can speed up learning and communication skills in the classroom. However, the previous study stated that students encountered several challenges when working in groups, including a lack of competence, difficulties in making judgments, and peer interactions (Kwon, 2014). As a result, one of the most crucial criteria in determining whether a group is productive or not is selecting the appropriate member.

At regular schools, one way or the other, students will have to not only interact but also work together with their opposite genders. On another condition, the school is a mimic of the bigger society where gender stereotypes also happen in the education field, especially in classroom settings. As previously said, Awan and Ameer (2017) defined gender as how a person perceives their own masculine and feminine traits. Gender, according to Morgenroth et al (2021), refers to affiliated roles or self-identity that are influenced by social views. According to the idea, gender identity refers to a person's existence as a girl or a man and their traits when playing the roles they have in society. Depending on the gender role, the individual acts and positions themselves in line with their gender identification (Irianti et al., 2021).

A research by Abdullah et al. (2020) explained that there is a close connection between the individual cognitive, the behavior, and the environmental circumstances. In line with prior research by Bandura (1977) stated that both the individual and the environment have an impact on how people behave in his social learning theory. The idea went on to claim that gender stereotypes against students can be used to determine how well students perform academically. Gender stereotypes played a big part in causing gender discrepancy in education, which affected its manifestation in the classroom. Students' academic success, professional aspirations, and commitment in the classroom all reflect this (Sekhar & Parameswari, 2020). This also refers to the decision-making process of choosing group members could be influenced by gender stereotypes.

When choosing their group members, students have tendencies which are largely influenced by their genders and beliefs. D. Hooks (2020) presented that among the qualities and behaviors that encourage a student to join a group are social abilities, the capacity for sharing ideas, a high level of academic achievement, and a sense of humor. Other indicators that make students feel unwelcome are poor

behavior such as dominance. Those aspects could build a certain stereotype across genders in the classroom based on what they knew from society a long time ago.

Other studies have shown the prevalence of inequalities in participation between men and women in various fields (Tatum et al., 2013; Ballen et al., 2018; Neill et al., 2018) cited from (Aguillon et al., 2020). Men reported that they identified less strongly than women with their gender than men. These reactions imply that stereotype threats or the fear of confirming an unfavorable stereotype about one's social identity group in competitive and evaluative circumstances may affect women more frequently than men (Beasley & Fischer, 2012). The motives, influences, attitudes, and learning outcomes that influence them, as well as the ways of gender disparities in the learning process, particularly while learning English as a Foreign Language, are present.

Gender-based group work is one of the most discussed topics in education. (Yang et al., 2022) stated the importance of group composition in group discussion design, for example, by how group familiarity can increase social connectedness. In computer-supported collaborative learning, Zhan et al. (2015) explored the impact of gender grouping on students' group performances, individual learning achievements, and attitudes. Mahmud's research in 2017 focused on determining if gender-based grouping in ELT will successfully increase student engagement. However, there has been no research found to examine the application of gender stereotypes in choosing group members. Therefore, this study aims to explore students' perceptions toward gender stereotypes in choosing desirable group members in classroom settings. 3 key factors are considered fundamental aspects in choosing group members such as communication, coordination, and academic ability.

Research Methodology

The current study used a mixed method to collect primary data from students in 12 MIPA 3 in one of the State Senior High Schools in East Java. This method employed quantitative and qualitative research techniques, either simultaneously or sequentially, to comprehend the topic in detail (Coaxum-Young, 2017). In this study, the use of both data was to increase the study's validity with numerous respondents. Explanatory, exploratory, parallel and nested designs were some types of design categories that were included in mixed methods research (Shorten & Smith, 2017). An

explanatory sequential was used for this study. This particular approach entailed the study of quantitative data first, followed by the gathering and analyzing of qualitative data to clarify the quantitative findings. According to Shorten and Smith (2017), this approach made it possible to see phenomena from several angles and better comprehend them.

During EFL Classes, students were taught using a variety of teaching methods, including group work. To find the unique perceptions, quantitative methods were used to collect data via questionnaires filled out by 30 students. The questionnaires contained a combination of closed and open-ended questions. Later on, the questionnaires were analyzed descriptively. Furthermore, the instrument for the qualitative method is the following interviews conducted to the selected four students; two female students and two male students who agreed or disagreed with the factors. Before the survey and interview, the researchers started by observing two meetings that set the students to interact with group members. The purpose of this research was to find a better group formation to increase students' learning activity in language learning and to spread awareness about gender stereotypes in classroom settings. The researchers initially contacted the class teacher and class captain, with permission from the department and the teacher, to assist in identifying students who had participated in group work activities. The consent form, questionnaires, and interviews were then given to the identified respondents.

Findings and Discussion

Findings

The findings were divided into 3 factors which were communication, coordination, and academic ability. To see students' choices in group work, the researchers asked them to choose their preferred group members based on their preference in pairs or 3 members.

Table 1: Students' group preferences

Sex	Within the same gender	Across gender
Female	14 people	2 people
Male	12 people	2 people

Based on the questionnaires, the groups were separated as shown in Table 1, 13 groups based on the same gender and 2 groups based on across gender. Mostly, students chose their group members of the same gender. Students chose their group members based on identified characteristics such as communication aspect, coordination, and way of thinking or academic ability.

1. Communication

Table 2: Number of students who agree and disagree with choosing group members based on ease of communication

Sex	Agree	Disagree
Female	11 people	2 people
Male	10 people	3 people

Based on the table, female and male students agreed to choose their group members within the same gender because it is easier to communicate with each other. The rest chose a neutral stance. Based on the interview, the results were explained more. 2 female students and 2 male students were interviewed.

Data from first male student:

"In terms of communication, I have no problem working with male or female students. As long as they can reply my messages fast, not leave me on read, especially in group chat. But, to be honest I think I'm not really interested in this lesson so, yeah.. I also can't complain a lot."

Data from second male student:

"I don't really mind who I work with. But, I think it is easier to talk to my male friends rather than female friends. I'm not really sure but I guess because we talk more in the same way, Miss. My male friends usually using less emotion and more chill."

The first male student said he did not have any preference for the gender as long as the member was responsive, but he admitted that he had little interest in English class. The second male student stated that he had no preference but it was easier to communicate with male friends since they tended to be more relaxed and use less emotion than female friends. Based on the male students' interview, even

though they said they had no preference, they still viewed themselves and others in gender stereotypes from the way male students assumed female talk with more emotion due to their nature.

Data from first female student:

"I think I don't mind, deh, Miss. But there are good things and bad things when working with each of them. Usually, my male friends are quick to say their opinion or correct others. Meanwhile, it takes time for my female friends. But they also are not actively participating most of the time. Female students usually lead the conversation."

Data from second female student:

"Of course, I choose female friends, Miss. Because we already know each other at least for how we talk. I mean, we can share our opinion and arguments without burden."

The first female student indicated that she also had no particular preference. She said male friends usually were more bold when they conveyed their opinion and pointed out the flaw, but also tended to not give their ideas which resulted in less communication which contradicted the previous study. Then, the second female student said that she agreed that choosing female friends will be easier since they talked mostly in the same manner such as actively sharing their ideas and sharing the same interest. According to their answers, female students viewed themselves and others in gender stereotypes, such as how female students dominated the conversation in language class and how male students tended to participate less.

2. Coordination

Table 3: Number of students who agree and disagree with choosing group members based on ease of coordination

Sex	Agree	Disagree
Female	12 people	2 people
Male	18 people	4 people

According to the questionnaire, female and male students agreed that they chose their group members within the same gender because it was easier to coordinate with each other. The rest minority students chose neutral stance.

While the questionnaire supported the idea, the interviews had proven otherwise.

Data from first male student:

"From my personal opinion, I think my female friends are better at managing things. I don't need to worry since they are detailed. Since I'm a forgetful person, they usually would remind me if I forget anything"

The first male student said it was better coordinating with female students most of the time since they were more meticulous and could be a reminder. The male student's view was also based on gender stereotypes to female students for taking care of others.

Data from first female student:

"I don't think I have tendency to choose between two genders. But, my female friends are easier to work with. They are willing to help and offer help first. Shortly, even for the worst, I still can count on them to do their work when I can't really have hope for my male friends. They can throw excuses like sorry I play outside, I didn't see the group or else."

Data from second female student:

"It is more comfortable working with fellow female friends. My male friends usually didn't do the job as expected even when we already divided the part, usually in general aja sih, Miss, but it is a bit more inconvenient in English class."

From the female students' side, they subconsciously also have the perspective of gender stereotypes to themselves and male students. They viewed that male students were bound to laziness and freeriding especially in language class.

3. Academic ability

Table 4: Number of students who agree and disagree with choosing group members based on good academic ability

Sex	Agree	Disagree
Female	5 people	3 people
Male	8 people	5 people

In the questionnaire, most female students had a neutral stance about choosing their group members within the same gender in terms of having the same way of thinking. Meanwhile, most male students chose their group members because they had the same way of thinking. The results varied in the interview as explained below.

Data from first male student:

"Oh, my female friends are usually smarter in English class, Miss. Especially grammar. I often ask them to re-explain the material if I still don't understand. If it's about preference, maybe I'll choose female in English or language class, but if it is in physic or math, I usually choose my male friends."

Data from second male student:

"I think female students usually have better understanding during this class (English class). But, I think I'll work with anyone that I feel close to if it didn't determined by my teacher."

Data from second female student:

"I choose female friends, because I usually work and be friends with female friends. And else, male friends often awkward in language class group work."

The first male student uttered that he thought female students are better than male students in English, especially about grammar. He preferred to work with female students because he thought that it would help to excel his grade. The second male student stated that female students are usually smarter in language class, but he did not have any significant preference. However, he still viewed female students from a gender stereotyped perspective by assuming females are smarter in language areas. Meanwhile, the second female student said that it was better to work with female students since male students tend to be more awkward in language class. The gender stereotypes also happened on the female side by thinking that males were less fluent and enjoyed language class.

Discussion

1. Communication

In the communication aspect, the questionnaire answers are supported by the interview, but the results are more varied. Based on the first male student's data he admitted that he had little interest in English class. The communication issue might arise due to his interest in lessons or feedback in communication. Previous study by

Ress (2009) stated that among the qualities and actions that encouraged a student to join the group were friendliness, the capacity to exchange ideas, significant academic success, and a good sense of humor. Therefore, regardless of gender, students want to participate when they can get the feedback they need. On the other hand, the second male student thinks that female students think and react differently from them. Tannen (1990) cited in (Khosravizadeh & Pakzadian, 2013) portrayed females sharing their emotions, thoughts, and supporting others. Wahyuningsih (2018) stated the difference between female and male communication. Men typically looked for solutions directly when they encountered issues. Women, on the other hand, often displayed their concern by making frantic words and distressing gestures. Those indicate that female and male students are talking in different ways. The first female student utters that male friends are usually bolder when stating their opinion but seldom participate which contradicts the previous study. It stated that men had no trouble expressing their ideas, even though their responses were direct and switched to Indonesian (Jamiah et al., 2016). Pica et al. in 1989 (as cited in Al-Shibel, 2021) came to the conclusion that in mixed groups, men tend to speak more and interrupt more often than women, who usually support the speaker by paying attention. Then, the second female student's view about closeness with fellow female students is also supported by Al-Shibel in 2021. As it was shown that females were less likely to take risks than males, this could be the reason for their higher level of peer interaction compared to males. It could be either asking a friend for help to re-explain something or making a comment or asking for help about a question that they could not answer.

According to the interview, even though students said they had no preference, they viewed other students with the perspective of gender stereotypes. Female students tend to take the bigger part in the communication aspect due to the different ways of communicating. It is aligned with previous research, the disparities in language use support Rasekh and Saeb's (2015) statements that linguistic differences between men and women also exist. It is supported by the notion of gender stereotypes that already exist. The gap interaction and free riding are results of the sectioned lesson by the stereotypes that make male students have less interest in English class. Previous research, such as Burstall (1975), stated women may be better at learning L2 than men because they may have a more positive attitude toward the

target language (cited in Ellis, 2008). These views are current problems that need to be solved in order to change students' perspectives, and teachers should guide them by practicing non-gender bias activities in the classrooms.

2. Coordination

While the questionnaire supported the idea that students choose their group members within the same gender because it is easier, the interview answers prove otherwise. The first male student prefers working with female students since they are more meticulous. The previous study stated that female students had higher non-cognitive skills such as attention management, self-discipline, and commitment (Gu & Jean Yeung, 2021). The results also supported a research by Al-Shibel, A. G. (2021) reported female students are more excellent in producing and understanding. They were adept at managing their learning process as a result. The male students, on the other hand, enjoyed reviewing their progress and looking for practice chances in front of the class, but they struggled to prepare for the lesson. Moreover, female students mentioned it is more lenient to work with female students. Additionally, in 2008, Green and Cillessen (as cited in Zhang et al., 2015) discovered that male groups had more observers whereas female groups had more collaborators indicating low viewing and low helping from male side. According to Sopka et al. (2013), male students in male-only groups felt substantially more uneasy and bothered by their groups than male students in mixed-gender groups did. In contrast, female students felt more at ease in groups than just females. Previous study of Zhan et al. (2015) male students in mixed-gender groups were considerably more confident than those in single-gender groups. The lack of male students' participation may arise because of the effect of gender stereotypes that believe females naturally more bearing than male. According to (Wang & Degol, 2013), females were seen as nurturing, loving, and physically weak. In another way, gender stereotypes could drive students to do their work as much as their real capabilities. Many literatures stated that male students have less confidence in their abilities to study a second language at the same time than female students do (Syed Md Golam Faruk & Rajib Saha, 2016). As a result, male students' low self-esteem has an impact on how they interact with others in the classroom.

The results show that gender stereotypes happen in this aspect too. Both students agree that female students are more capable of handling chores and organizing their work, which also makes this trait an issue. Even though one female

student said she had no preference, she viewed male traits during grouping in gender stereotypes. Hence, the help of teachers to reduce gender stereotypes by giving the same traits to female and male students despite the natural traits being divided by stereotypes is necessary.

3. Academic Ability

The interview's answers tend to be the opposite of male side from the questionnaires. Both male students agreed that they thought female students are better in English class. It was further corroborated by Torpra's findings that women comprehended abstract language more quickly whereas men required some sensory reinforcement (as cited in Jamiah et al., 2016) . In a study on the correlation between gender identity and proficiency in learning English as a foreign language, Becirovic (2017) discovered that female students had higher performance than male students. On another hand, the second female student states that it is better to work with female friends. These significant findings resonated with Al-Shibel (2021) who believed that female students perceived their ways of thinking are similar to each other. The better achievement acquired by female students might be due to the nature of their learning style and classroom activity. Teachers who believe in and practice gender stereotypes may reinforce female students' ability more than male students in language class.

The results confirmed that gender stereotypes happen between female and male students to each other. Female students believe that male students are more unnatural around language lessons than others. Meanwhile, male students think that they are not good in English class either and agree that female students are smarter. (Colley, 1998) In her view, gender stereotypes played a part in why female and male students lean toward different academic fields. It was also supported by more recent research by van der Vleuten et al. (2016) that gender ideology has an impact on academic decisions by influencing preferred academic subjects. For instance, male students find physical science more appealing while female students prefer to study English, modern languages, and the arts. Also, female students received greater teacher engagement than male students in classes like language arts and art because these were viewed as "feminine" subjects. Furthermore, according to several studies, female students typically outperformed male students in language learning,

which may be because traits typically associated with females, such as social skills, can help female students learn the language more quickly (Komlosi-Ferdinand, 2019).

There were a small number of students that were not bothered by gender in choosing their group members as long as they could easily communicate and coordinate. However, gender disparity is still identified in classroom activities. Sekhar and Parameswari (2021) stated gender stereotypes played a big part in causing gender discrepancy in education, which led to the development of gender inequality. Students' academic success, professional aspirations, and commitment in the classroom all reflected this. Female and male students were pressured to pursue particular careers in school because of the stereotypes that befell them. Thus, children's confidence in their ability to complete a task was dependent less on their actual skills than it was on the gender appropriateness of the work that they had learned from society. Some students also find it hard to explain that they practice gender stereotyping. That may be due to students' lack of information that what they do is gender stereotypes. As it aligned with Islam & Asadullah's study (2018), the female occupation represented in the textbook was housewife, and the traits represented were passive and introverted. The textbook that is widely used by the students imprints their ideas. Thus, the importance of this research is to support gender equality in classroom settings where students must do their best ability in group work and not only take the best traits one gender has.

Conclusion and Suggestion

To sum up, the study aimed to explore students' perceptions in choosing group members based on gender stereotypes. This research can conclude that students have shown positive responses to gender stereotypes in choosing their desirable group members. However, alongside the responses, a problem also has arisen. Indonesian students tend to be unaware of their state in practicing gender bias, which needs the help of Indonesian teachers to fight the issue by creating gender-balanced educational settings.

Based on the results, this study allows further researchers to give more in-depth explanations of students' reasons for unconsciously practicing gender stereotypes. For future studies, researchers should conduct more in-depth interviews with both students

and teachers in the practice of gender stereotypes and gender bias, especially with high school students and those with lower educational levels.

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