GENDER ISSUES IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING AMONG UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

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Abstract. *Gender equality is an important issue in contemporary higher education, particularly in foreign language teaching, where students' motivation, classroom participation, self-confidence and academic engagement may be influenced by social expectations and gender-related stereotypes. This thesis examines the major gender-related challenges in foreign language education among university students and highlights the importance of gender-sensitive teaching practices. Particular attention is given to gender stereotypes, language-learning motivation, classroom interaction, foreign language anxiety, teaching materials and assessment. The analysis emphasizes that gender should not be considered a direct predictor of language-learning ability. Instead, individual characteristics, educational backgrounds and sociocultural factors should be taken into account when designing inclusive language-learning environments.*

Keywords: *gender issues, foreign language teaching, university students, gender equality, gender stereotypes, learning motivation, classroom participation, inclusive education.*

Introduction. In contemporary higher education, foreign language competence is essential for academic development, international communication and professional advancement. However, successful language learning depends not only on teaching methods and educational resources but also on social and psychological factors affecting students' learning experiences. Gender is one of

these factors. Gender-related issues in foreign language teaching may become visible through differences in classroom participation, motivation, willingness to communicate, self-confidence and perceptions of language-learning abilities. Traditional stereotypes sometimes associate foreign language learning with female students, creating assumptions that women are naturally more successful or interested in languages than men. Nevertheless, language-learning achievement cannot be explained by gender alone. It is influenced by individual motivation, previous educational experience, learning strategies, social environment and access to educational opportunities. The purpose of this study is to analyse gender-related issues in foreign language teaching among university students and identify pedagogical approaches that promote equal participation and inclusive learning.

One of the major challenges in foreign language education is the influence of gender stereotypes on students' attitudes and motivation. In certain sociocultural contexts, language learning is associated with communication and verbal interaction, which may be traditionally perceived as feminine characteristics. Such assumptions can negatively affect students' confidence and engagement. Li, Wang and Shen (2025) found that gender stereotypes may influence university students' language-learning engagement through motivational beliefs and emotional factors. This indicates that teachers should avoid gender-based assumptions and encourage students to develop their linguistic abilities according to their individual interests and learning needs.

Another important issue is classroom participation. Foreign language lessons require active involvement in discussions, presentations, debates and collaborative activities. However, some students may feel less confident when speaking in front of others or expressing their opinions. Teachers should therefore provide equal opportunities for participation through pair work, group discussions, role-playing and structured speaking activities. Rotating classroom responsibilities can also prevent certain students from dominating discussions.

Foreign language anxiety is another factor that deserves attention. Students may experience fear of making mistakes, negative evaluation or inadequate

pronunciation when communicating in a foreign language. These experiences should not be attributed exclusively to gender differences. A supportive classroom atmosphere, constructive feedback and regular speaking practice can help reduce anxiety and improve communicative confidence. Alamri and Qasem (2024) examined speaking anxiety in relation to gender among undergraduate students and reported no statistically significant overall gender difference in their research context.

Teaching materials also play an important role in promoting gender equality. Textbooks and learning resources should represent women and men in diverse academic, professional and social roles. For example, female scientists, male teachers, women in business and men in educational and cultural activities can be included in reading passages and speaking tasks. Balanced representation helps challenge stereotypical perceptions and develops students' awareness of social diversity.

Furthermore, gender-sensitive assessment is essential for ensuring fairness in foreign language education. Students should be evaluated according to transparent criteria such as grammatical accuracy, vocabulary, fluency, coherence and communicative effectiveness. Teachers should avoid assumptions that particular language skills are naturally stronger in one gender.

In the context of Uzbek higher education, gender-sensitive foreign language teaching is particularly relevant because foreign language proficiency creates opportunities for international education, academic mobility and professional development. Universities should ensure that all students have equal access to language-learning resources, international projects, presentations, competitions and extracurricular activities. Teachers should also consider students' individual backgrounds and learning needs rather than relying on generalized gender expectations.

Conclusion. Gender issues represent an important dimension of foreign language teaching among university students. Gender stereotypes, differences in motivation, classroom participation, foreign language anxiety, teaching materials

and assessment practices may influence students' educational experiences. However, gender should not be regarded as a direct determinant of language-learning ability or academic achievement. The analysis demonstrates that gender-sensitive teaching practices can contribute to a more inclusive and supportive educational environment. Equal participation, balanced teaching materials, transparent assessment, collaborative learning and constructive feedback are essential for promoting educational equality. University foreign language teachers should recognize individual differences and provide all students with opportunities to develop their linguistic competence, self-confidence and intercultural communication skills. Ultimately, effective foreign language education should be based on equal opportunities, respect for diversity and the principle that every student can achieve successful language-learning outcomes regardless of gender.

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