

Gender Differences, Classroom Participation, and Grouping Preferences in Junior High School English Learning

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ABSTRACT

Gender-related classroom dynamics may influence students' confidence, participation, and interaction in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning. This study investigated male and female junior high school students' willingness to use English, express opinions, and perceive gender-based grouping in classroom activities. This descriptive quantitative study involved 20 seventh-grade students, consisting of 10 male and 10 female students, from SMP Negeri 4 Kota Bengkulu, Indonesia. Data were collected through closed-ended and open-ended questionnaires adapted from previous studies. The closed-ended responses were analyzed using percentages, while the open-ended responses were interpreted descriptively to identify students' reasons and perceptions. The findings showed different response patterns between male and female students. More male students reported reluctance to speak English with female peers, mainly due to fear of making mistakes, lack of confidence, nervousness, and limited vocabulary. Female students more frequently preferred speaking to express opinions, whereas male students more often preferred writing. In group work, many students, especially female students, reported greater comfort and confidence in same-gender groups. The closed-ended responses also indicated generally positive perceptions of gender-based grouping, particularly in supporting comfort, cooperation, participation, and willingness to ask or answer questions. The study suggests that gender-related participation patterns in this context are closely connected to confidence, foreign language anxiety, peer interaction, and classroom comfort. Gender-based grouping may be used flexibly as a classroom strategy to support participation, but it should not be treated as universally effective for all learners.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Gender difference is an influential factor in determining educational experiences, especially in the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms. Nevertheless, the differences between the genders should not be considered as static characteristics of boys and girls. By contrast, current sociolinguistic research argues that the nature of language use and classroom participation are socially

and culturally negotiated and may be different in different contexts, classroom settings, learning tasks, and individual learners (Holmes & Meyerhoff, 2003; Sauntson, 2012). Therefore, it is important to understand how gender affects the students' experiences of EFL classrooms to be able to develop inclusive and effective learning environments.

It is important to examine gender issues in junior high because it is a special context. At this stage there is a great deal of cognitive, social, and emotional growth and development taking place, and students are also developing their identity and peer relations. These developmental changes can affect students' confidence, communication willingness, how they participate, and their choice of communicating with peers of their own gender or gender difference (Lee et al., 2020). Gender related issues, therefore, may be particularly apparent in a language classroom, where communication and interaction are fundamental aspects of learning.

This study is guided by a number of complementary perspectives in theory. First, the sociolinguistic theory of gendered communication states that gendered language use is a reflection of social expectation and gendered norms for interaction, not a result of any difference in the language itself (Holmes & Meyerhoff, 2003; Sauntson, 2012). Secondly, Willingness to Communicate (WTC) implies that contextual and psychological aspects such as confidence and peer relations affect students' preparation to communicate (MacIntyre et al., 1998). Thirdly, Foreign Language Anxiety theory discusses how FLA can be a factor in limiting students' involvement in foreign language learning tasks (Horwitz et al., 1986). Classroom interaction theory and gender sensitive pedagogy highlight the need to provide opportunities for interaction and for equitable participation in instructional practices within the classroom (Walqui, 2006; Banegas, 2020).

There have been conflicting results of previous research on gender and language learning. Several studies revealed that females showed better language learning abilities, better participation, and better communication style in the learning process in comparison to males (Orfan, 2022; Mahmud, 2010). Others, however, argue that age and context of education, more than gender, have a greater impact on the differences in language learning strategies (Ahsanah, 2020). In addition, it has been found that the sociocultural norms can influence communication patterns, as females are likely to communicate through more expressive and cooperative language and males through more direct communication (Afrin & Afrin, 2018). The results suggest that there are more complex and context-sensitive gender differences in language learning than previously thought.

The findings from the studies on group composition have also been inconclusive. Some studies have found that having participants of the same gender together can lead to greater comfort and participation, but others have found that how the instruction is structured and who is assigned what role is more important than the gender composition, in terms of student engagement (Maher, 2010; Quinn et al., 2020). In addition, previous research on the issue of gender grouping is mostly confined to the higher education setting or the achievement results, and very little research has been done on the students' perceptions of gender grouping in EFL classrooms.

While gender differences in EFL learning have been discussed, the study of the students' perception of gender-based grouping and classroom participation in the classroom of Indonesian EFL learners in junior high school is still rare. Many previous studies examined language learning strategies, language styles or academic outcomes, and few studies have studied the relationship between language use, classroom participation and grouping preferences from learners' perspective. The gap is especially observed in the context of Indonesian junior high schools, because social relationships and peers' interaction are significant in language learning.

Thus, the present study aims to find out whether there is any gender difference in the use of the English language and the role of students in the classroom during their learning of English, and students' perception of gender based grouping. The novelty of the present study is reflected in three ways: (1) the study was conducted in the local context of junior high school EFL classes in Indonesia; (2) the study examined multiple aspects of language use, classroom participation, and group preference; and (3) the study included the perception of grouping preference as a strategy in the

classroom. The results will inform the creation of gender-informed pedagogical approaches to foster confidence, participation, and engagement in English language learning.

Research Questions

1. How do male and female students differ in their willingness to use English and express opinions in EFL classroom interaction?
2. How do students perceive gender-based grouping as a strategy for supporting classroom participation?

2. METHODS

2.1 Research Design

The researcher used a descriptive quantitative approach. According to Creswell (2012), a quantitative descriptive approach is a research method used to systematically describe and analyze numerical data to understand trends, attitudes, or behaviors within a population.

2.2 Research Setting & Participants

This study was carried out in SMP Negeri 4 Kota Bengkulu, Indonesia. The students who were studied are 7th-grade students in two classes VII.3 and VII.4, in the academic year 2024/2025. The school uses English as a compulsory subject and a foreign language of the school, classroom instruction is guided by the principles of foreign language teaching, emphasizing the development of students' listening, speaking, reading, writing ability.

The subjects of the study were 20 7th-grade students who were chosen from class VII.3 and VII.4. The total sample was 10 male and 10 female students. The students selected were used to investigate their perceptions of language use, classroom participation, and the grouping of students based on gender in the learning of English. The participants were also beginning EFL learners who contributed to the understanding of how gender issues might be related to the communication and engagement in the English classroom.

2.3 Sampling Technique

For this study participants were selected through purposive sampling as individuals who could give relevant information about gender differences in English language learning. The sampling technique was adopted because it was specifically needed to obtain the desired data from both male and female students in relation to their perceptions of the use of language, classroom involvement and grouping of genders in the EFL classroom.

The participants were mainly in the seventh grade of school between 12 and 13 years of age. The students were grouped as beginner to lower intermediate EFL learners according to their grade level and experiences of learning English.

Before completing the questionnaire, the students had participated in various classroom activities involving both mixed-gender and same-gender group work as part of their regular English lessons. This previous experience helped them give insightful answers about their gendered preferences of grouping and participation in classroom learning in English.

2.4 Data Collection and Analysis

To collect data, the researcher used a closed-ended questionnaire and an open-ended questionnaire. The closed-ended questionnaire was adopted from Mahmud (2018) and the open-ended questionnaire was adopted from Dashela & Mustika (2022). These instruments were selected because they were designed to investigate gender-related issues in language learning and classroom interaction. The original instruments had been used in previous studies and were considered appropriate for investigating students' perceptions of gender and classroom participation. To determine students' responses regarding the implementation of gender-based grouping in the classroom, the questionnaire consisted of closed-ended statements that required respondents to choose one of four options: Strongly

Agree (SA), Agree (A), Strongly Disagree (SD), or Disagree (D). The results of the questionnaire will be analyzed descriptively using percentages. Furthermore, the findings interpreted and elaborated in relation to gender differences in English language teaching. The students also answered an open-ended questionnaire, to explore students' perceptions of gender differences affecting language use in English language learning.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Findings

Based on the questionnaire responses, the researcher identified a phenomenon related to students' perceptions of strategies for improving English skills in relation to gender differences, which is elaborated as follows :

Table 1. Participants Demographics

Variable	Category	n	%
Gender	Male	10	50
	Female	10	50
Age range	12-13 years	20	100
Grade	VII.3	10	50
	VII.4	10	50

Note. (n) indicates the number of participants, while (%) indicates the percentage of the total sample.

3.1.1 Students' Reluctance to Speak English with Different Gender

The first analysis investigated the students' reluctance to speak English with peers of the opposite gender. The results reveal that there are gender differences in attitudes of students towards communication in English. The majority of male students (70%) more than female students (60%) said that they were unwilling to speak English with peers of a different gender.

The reasons reported by students included fear of making mistakes, lack of confidence, nervousness, shyness, lack of vocabulary, and limited English proficiency. These factors are closely related to Foreign Language Anxiety (Horwitz et al., 1986), which refers to feelings of tension, apprehension, and worry experienced when learning or using a foreign language. Students may be less willing to engage in oral communication activities due to fear of making mistakes or being negatively evaluated.

In addition, these findings can be interpreted through the concept of Willingness to Communicate (WTC) proposed by MacIntyre et al. (1998). There was a correlation between higher self-confidence and greater comfort in interacting with peers, with students' readiness to use English, generally, irrespective of gender. In contrast, students who reported feeling anxious, nervous, or lacking vocabulary tended to have less desire to communicate in English.

Some students, however, noted that gender had no impact upon their communication. These students felt confident to communicate with both male and female students, indicating that willingness to communicate is not only gender dependent, but is also dependent on the confidence of individual students, language skills, and classroom experiences. Their reasons can be seen in the following table :

Table 2. Students' Reason to Feel Reluctance to Speak English with Different Gender

Females' Reasons	Males' Reasons
Shy	Afraid if make any mistakes
Awkward	Not confident
Not confident	Not enthusiastic
Lack of vocabulary	Shy and nervous
Afraid if being wrong	Not good in English

3.1.2 Students' Preferences in Expressing Opinions

Considering the two main productive English skills, writing and speaking as ways to express opinions, male and female respondents showed different preferences. A larger proportion of female students (70%) preferred expressing their opinions through speaking compared to male students (30%). In contrast, 70% of male students preferred writing over speaking, while only 30% of female students chose writing. The reasons behind their choice in expressing their opinions both in speaking and writing are presented in Table 2 and 3.

Table 3. Female Students' Reasons for Expressing Opinion

Females reasons to choose writing	Females reasons to choose speak
Able to think longer	Easier to express opinions
Unable to speak fluently	Improve speaking skill
More confident in writing	Direct to the point

Table 4. Male Students' Reasons for Expressing Opinion

Males reasons to choose writing	Males reasons to choose speak
Afraid of being wrong in speaking	Easier to express opinions and effective
Not good at speaking	Not good at writing
More comfortable in writing	Direct to the point

Referring to Table 2 and Table 3, researcher concludes that female students tend to prefer speaking in English to express their opinions because they find it easier, more direct, and helpful to improve their English skills. Speaking is considered as one of the easiest ways for them to share their ideas. In contrast, more male students preferred writing in English as their preferred way to convey their thoughts.

3.1.3 Students' Preference in Working with Groups

When it comes to group work, male and female students also show different preferences regarding group composition, whether in single-gender or mixed-gender settings. Single-gender groups consist of members of the same gender, such as all-female groups, while mixed-gender groups include both males and females. In this study, 40% of male students preferred working in mixed-gender groups, with the remaining opting for single-gender groups. Meanwhile, most female students (80%) favored single-gender groups, with only 20% choosing mixed-gender ones. Overall, both male and female students showed a stronger preference for working in single-gender groups.

There are various reasons why male students tend to prefer working in mixed-gender groups. They find these groups to be more cooperative and focused, and they believe that peers of the different genders often have a better understanding of the material. In contrast, working with same-gender students can lead to distractions, as they tend to joke around, making it harder to concentrate. On the other hand, female students favor single-gender groups because they feel more comfortable, can work cooperatively, and often share similar ways of thinking. However, some female students also appreciate working with different genders, as it allows them to gain new perspectives and broader insights.

3.1.4 Students' Preference to be Active or Passive in English Class

Many students participate actively in class when learning English because it helps them improve their speaking skills. However, according to the online questionnaire, some students remain passive due to a lack of understanding of the material and low confidence in their abilities. The responses show that 20% of female students prefer to stay quiet in class, compared to 70% of male students. Meanwhile, 80% of female students actively participate and strive to improve their skills, while only 30% of male students are active in class. The reasons behind students' active or passive behavior in English lessons are presented in Table 4 below.

Table 5. Activeness and Passiveness of Female and Male Students

Gender	Active	Passive
Female Students	• Improve speaking skill • Like English subject • Need discussion • Good score	• Not understand the topic • Lack of vocabulary • Not confident • Likes to listen
Male Students	• Help in learn English • English is fun • Improve speaking skill • Can communicate in English	• More focus in silent • Likes to listen • Not confident

3.1.5 Students' perception of working with same gender or different gender friends can make English skills better

The next aspect was focused on students' perceptions of how working in groups, either with peers of the same gender or mixed gender affects the development of their English skills. The results revealed that a majority of students (70%) believed that participating in group work, regardless of the gender composition, positively contributes to improving their English proficiency. These students expressed that being in a group with peers, especially those who are more proficient or "smarter," provides valuable opportunities for learning. They benefit from peer explanations, collaborative problem-solving, and exposure to different speaking and writing styles, all of which help them strengthen their language abilities.

Moreover, many students indicated that group discussions and tasks encourage them to be more active, practice speaking more frequently, and gain new vocabulary and grammar knowledge through shared input. This collaborative environment not only supports academic learning but also boosts their confidence in using English.

In contrast, 30% of students perceived that group work did not substantially affect their English learning. These students reported feeling more comfortable working alone, where they could focus without distractions and manage their own pace. For them, independent work was seen as a more effective way to understand and internalize the material. This finding highlights that while group work can be beneficial for many learners, individual preferences and learning styles also play a crucial role in how students engage with English language learning tasks.

3.1.6 Students' perception about the implementation of the gender-based grouping in the class

The students were also provided with a close-ended questionnaire to explore their perceptions regarding the use of gender-based grouping in the classroom. The results can be seen in the following table:

Table 6. Questionnaire of Students' perception about the implementation of the gender-based
Note: SA (Strongly Agree); A (Agree); D (Disagree); SD (Strongly Disagree)

Questions	SA	A	D	SD
The sex based grouping encouraged me to study	4 (20%)	14 (70%)	1 (5%)	1 (5%)
The sex based grouping motivated me to gain more achievement	3 (15%)	11 (55%)	6 (30%)	0
The sex based grouping made me easier to understand the concepts, principles, and ideas in English	5 (25%)	12 (60%)	3 (15%)	0
The sex based grouping gave me choices to solve problems	8 (40%)	7 (35%)	5 (25%)	0
The sex based grouping made me brave to ask questions	7 (35%)	10 (50%)	3 (15%)	0
The sex based grouping made me respected when I expressed opinions	9 (45%)	9 (45%)	2 (10%)	0
The sex based grouping made me think critically and creatively	6 (30%)	11 (55%)	3 (15%)	0
The sex based grouping encouraged me to think in the class	6 (30%)	9 (45%)	5 (25%)	0
The sex based grouping is interesting	5 (25%)	12 (60%)	3 (15%)	0
The sex based grouping saved my time in learning	5 (25%)	9 (45%)	6 (30%)	0
The sex based grouping facilitate me to work together with other students	9 (45%)	7 (35%)	4 (20%)	0
The sex based grouping made me easier to respond to the questions	4 (20%)	11 (55%)	5 (25%)	0
The sex based grouping encouraged me to respect others	9 (45%)	5 (25%)	5 (25%)	1 (5%)
The sex based grouping encouraged me to use analysis, ideas, etc	7 (35%)	10 (50%)	3 (15%)	0

Based on the table above, it is evident that the majority of respondents provided positive feedback regarding the implementation of gender-based grouping in the classroom. Most students selected "Agree" (A) and "Strongly Agree" (SA), indicating their support for this grouping strategy. In contrast, only a small portion of the participants responded with "Disagree" (D) or "Strongly Disagree" (SD), suggesting that negative perceptions were minimal.

This overall positive response suggests that many students perceived gender-based grouping as a helpful classroom strategy. It may help create a more comfortable and focused learning environment, promote better collaboration among peers with similar communication styles, and enhance student engagement. The results suggest that students perceived gender-based grouping as supporting comfort, confidence, participation, and collaboration during English learning activities. However, because this study examined students' perceptions rather than actual language achievement, no conclusions can be drawn regarding its effects on language development or academic performance.

3.2 Discussion

The results of this study indicate the gender differences in students' attitudes, preferences and involvement in the learning of English. The findings, however, must not be viewed as universal for

male and female learners. Rather, they reflect the experiences and perceptions of the participants in this particular Indonesian junior high school EFL context and may vary across classrooms, learning activities, and individual students.

An interesting result follows in this regard: that students seem to be reluctant to speak English with students of the other gender. More male students (70%) said that they were not comfortable speaking English with female students than female students (60%) said they were not comfortable speaking English with male students. Anxiety, lack of confidence, and fear of making mistakes were suggested as being the main reasons for this reluctance, as shown in the open-ended responses. For instance, one boy said, "Yes, because I felt embarrassed and nervous." (Student 6), and another boy said, "Yes, because my English isn't very good." (Student 5). Likewise, a female student said, "I feel a little awkward talking like that." (Student 13). These answers are similar to Horwitz et al.'s (1986) theory of foreign language anxiety, which states that anxiety about negative evaluation and communication apprehension can diminish students' motivation to speak a foreign language. Meanwhile, some students expressed comfort in communicating, irrespective of gender. "We can speak English with anyone, even if we're different," Student 12 said, indicating that confidence and willingness to communicate can be very different for different people.

Another significant result relates to the preferred modes of expression for students' opinions. The preference for speaking and writing was observed in 70% of female and 70% of male students, respectively, but should not be interpreted as characteristics of each gender. Qualitative responses show that students' preferences were closely related to confidence and perceived effectiveness. Many students who preferred speaking found it to be a useful means of learning the language. For instance, student 19 said, "It's easy to understand when spoken, and I can indirectly practice how to pronounce it." Student 10 added, "We can express our opinions directly." On the other hand, students who were more interested in writing noted that they wished they had more time to think and plan their ideas. Student 13 said "In writing, I can think," and Student 20 explained that "writing allows me to take my time thinking about how to answer it". The results indicate that participation modes are not selected by gender, but also depend upon factors of confidence, learning style, and comfort level.

Concerning group work preferences, most female (80%) students preferred to work in same-gender groups while male students showed more diversified preferences. A large number of student women identified with comfort and confidence in same-gender groups. Student 12 and student 18 mentioned her own feeling of being "more relaxed, open and confident" when talking to girls in class, while student 13 said she found it easier to work with girls than boys as "confident and not awkward". Likewise, student 11 felt that same gender groups were easier for two reasons, students often had "similar thinking" and there was an absence of interest in the opposite gender. However, some male students preferred mixed gender groups as they thought these groups helped them to collaborate or learn better. Student 10 reported that "understand English better than I do" because the female students were more fluent in English than the male students. Student 19 reported that learning was less monotonous when the students were mixed gender because the female students mastered English better than the male students. The results indicated that comfort, confidence and perceived learning benefits are sources of students' preference of grouping.

This was also the case in classroom participation. In this study, female students appeared to be more active than male when participating in English lessons, while many male students preferred more passive roles. This pattern, however, must be viewed carefully and in the light of the study and not as a reflection of any gender difference. Students' explanations showed that participation was related to confidence, motivation and learning preferences. Involved students frequently related participation to learning. This was the case as Student 12 said that she was active because she wanted to "learn English more" and student 14 explained that students became more aware of what was being explained when they were active. In contrast, students who wanted to sit back, quietly, sometimes talked about being less confident or wanted to listen carefully. Student 4 said he didn't speak up because he didn't like commenting things to students of the other gender, and student 20 said that she took her time to think

about English tasks when she was silent. From these responses it is evident that there are a number of factors other than gender that affect the participation in a classroom.

The findings also indicate the correlation between participation pattern of the learners in relation to foreign language anxiety, willingness to communicate (WTC) and self-confidence. A number of students who complained about their lack of interest in speaking English were afraid of mispronouncing words, anxious, lacked vocabulary, and lacked confidence. The answers are similar to those given by Foreign Language Anxiety theory (Horwitz et al., 1986), which assumes that learners can be reluctant to speak in foreign languages when they have the fear of negative evaluation from others. The findings can also be examined by the prism of Willingness to Communicate (MacIntyre et al., 1998). Learners who self-confidently expressed their skills in English and found a sense of belonging to the class expressed higher levels of willingness to engage in oral activities. Students who indicated anxiety and that they were less confident were more likely to prefer to write over talking, be passive in discussions, or not talk to other children of the opposite sex.

These patterns of participation can be influenced as well by the design of the classroom activities and interaction. Speaking activities that involve responding spontaneously in front of other learners might raise the anxiety level of some learners, especially those with less confidence. On the other hand, activities giving time to prepare, feedback from peers and other small group interaction may decrease communication anxiety and increase participation. Thus, it is not only about gender but also the interaction between the person and learning conditions in the classroom that should be considered when looking at students' participation.

It should be noted that the results of this research are to be understood in the context of the students involved in this study and in no way as universal gender traits. Numerous contextual factors such as foreign language anxiety, self-confidence, peer relationships, classroom culture and others are reported to contribute to the differences between male and female students. Students who feel anxious while using a foreign language tend to avoid speaking situations because they fear to make mistakes or be negatively evaluated, as Horwitz et al. (1986) propose. Likewise, the way students participate in class can be influenced by prior learning experiences, classmate relations, and how students feel about the classroom as supportive and non-threatening. The result reveals that the participation of the students in communication through English is not based on gender only. Instead, gender is combined with social and psychological issues that affect students' comfort level in expressing themselves in English. So the patterns found in this study should be considered context specific and possibly varied within schools, classrooms, learning activities and individual students.

The results also indicate students' perceptions about grouping as a learning strategy based on gender. The majority of participants felt that group work helped them learn English as it allowed for peer support, idea sharing and error correction. Student 3 added that classmates could "correcting" if he made a mistake in his English words, and Student 10 said that classmates could introduce him to new words. However, several students indicated that the composition of the group was not as important as that of individual effort in determining learning outcomes. "It all depends on each individual," said student 11, and "each person's intention" was student 15's answer for the need for language improvement. Based on these responses, it can be concluded that gender based grouping is not a good practice in all situations, but it is a flexible approach in teaching. Some learners may feel more comfortable and confident in same gender grouping, especially in speaking, while others may feel more comfortable in mixed gender grouping, where they will experience more interaction and exposure to other viewpoints. Thus, teachers need to choose the grouping strategy based on teaching objectives, task design and the students' needs.

The overall positive attitudes towards gender based grouping may also be associated with its role in minimizing communication anxiety. Some students said they felt more relaxed, less embarrassed, and more confident when they interacted with other boys or girls. From a WTC standpoint, higher levels of comfort and familiarity can foster conditions that can be conducive to more active involvement in classroom interactions. The results, however, indicated that no one group or mode of organization

was equally effective for all students because some students liked mixed gender groups and some students liked individual work. Rather, grouping strategies seem to be effective depending on the nature of the tasks, classroom atmosphere, and student preferences.

Some pedagogical implications are derived from this study. First, teachers should take flexible grouping arrangements, changing the same-gender group and mixed-gender group according to the learning task's objectives. Same-gender grouping might be appropriate for activities that need to build confidence and encourage active engagement, while mixed-gender grouping might help to promote wider engagement and communication.

Second, teachers need to prepare low-anxiety speaking activities, like pair work, small-group discussion, role play, and collaborative game, so that the students do not have a fear of making mistakes when speaking. Thirdly, the rotation of roles in groups may help to make sure that all students have opportunities to contribute and that certain students will not take up passive roles on a regular basis.

Fourth, giving students preparation time prior to the speaking task can help them arrange their thoughts to be more effective and confident in their oral expression. Fifth, the error should be accepted as an essential part of the language learning process and students should not be afraid to make errors. Last but not least, teachers should promote gender equality in the classroom by fostering a comfortable environment for all students to share their thoughts and communicate in English.

4. CONCLUSION

This study investigated gender differences in students' willingness to use English and express opinions in EFL classroom interaction, as well as their perceptions of gender-based grouping as a strategy to enhance participation. Based on students' self-reported questionnaire responses, the findings show that male and female students demonstrated different participation patterns. Male students were more likely to report reluctance to speak English with female peers due to low confidence, fear of mistakes, and embarrassment, while female students generally showed greater willingness to participate in speaking activities and discussions. Female students tended to prefer expressing opinions orally, whereas many male students preferred written expression. The findings also indicate that students generally viewed gender-based grouping positively, particularly because same-gender groups increased comfort, confidence, and participation for some learners, although others preferred mixed-gender groups for collaboration and diverse perspectives.

Theoretically, this study contributes to EFL classroom interaction research by showing that gender may shape students' perceived participation, communication preferences, and comfort in group work. Practically, it suggests that gender-based grouping can be used flexibly as one classroom strategy, depending on learning objectives, task type, and students' interactional needs. However, because the study relied on self-reported perceptions rather than classroom observation or language achievement data, the findings should not be generalized as direct evidence of actual participation or proficiency development. Future research should involve larger samples, classroom observations, interviews, and achievement measures to provide a more comprehensive understanding of gender dynamics in EFL classroom participation.

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