

## **LEARNING AND RETENTION OF FEMININE AND MASCULINE WORDS BY IRANIAN EFL LEARNERS**

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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 learning and 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 learning and 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 administering 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 and male learners had no significant difference in female words learning. 2- No significant difference was observed between masculine words retention and feminine ones retention in female learners.

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

### **INTRODUCTION**

Since the time when mankind first appeared on the face of Earth, languages have been spoken. People have spoken at first to meet their basic needs through communication and then express themselves. 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. Only a few people learned other people's languages and as for commoners there was no way of learning a second language, if it was not a neighboring community's language. However, as the time passed, communities started to interact more and more and the need for other languages increased (Aslan, 2009). The importance of learning English which is the language of education, marketing, and other purposes has been improved in recent years.

English is the language which is most commonly used in sciences. Montgomery (2004) points out "English has become the dominant language of science, with an estimated 80 to 90 percent of papers in scientific journals written in English" (p. 1334), even though only half of them came from authors in English-speaking countries. The Internet, the immense source of information that has grown in the past few decades, is also dominated by English. According to statistics, 80 percent of the world's electronically stored information is in English (Cited in Aslan, 2009).

According to some research results the impact of language learners and inevitability their characteristics became more important in the process of learning around 1970s. For example Dilek and Yuruk (2012) argued that in the 1970s a shift of focus from teaching methods, classroom techniques, and instructional materials to the language learner and his/her characteristics took place as a result of disappointing research results, which revealed that no single method, instruction or material could guarantee effectiveness of its own in foreign language learning.

This brings us to an important topic namely, gender which will be studied on closer examination in this paper. There has already been a great interest among linguists and psychologists to study gender and how it affects learning and retention.

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As one of the learners' characteristics "gender" was highlighted as a main variable in some teaching and learning oriented studies. Some literature reported that there are gaps in academic achievement based on gender. Dayolu and Asik (2007), as quoted by Suet & Ishak (2012), found a relationship between gender and academic achievement in a study graduates in Turkey. The findings indicated that there is academic gap between the male and the female graduates.

Nowadays, the majority of researchers acknowledge that the gap in learning process is getting narrower between female learners and male ones. For example Suet & Ishak (2012), declared that "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."

This study also tries to take into consideration the nature of the words regarding femininity and masculinity of English words. 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. The gender classification frequently corresponds to the sex distinction in real world, but originally gender meant "sort" or "kind" of a noun, from Latin 'genus' denoting type of an object, and this is the meaning of gender for contemporary linguists." 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?**

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."

As Hunt & Beglar (2005), quoted in Maghsoudi (2008), stated effective acquisition of second language vocabulary is particularly important for learners of English as a foreign language who frequently acquire impoverished lexicons despite years of formal study. In the early stages of instructed foreign language acquisition, students mainly learn a few thousand high frequency words. Such words occur so frequently in the teaching materials to which they are exposed that many are easily acquired.

#### **What is Vocabulary?**

As Thornbury (2002), quoted by Rahimi *et al.*, (2011), stated, vocabulary is a central component of language teaching and is of great significance to language learners. Words are the building blocks of a language since they label objects, actions, and ideas without which people cannot convey the intended meaning. Nash and Snowling (2006) describe vocabulary as "the knowledge of words and their meanings". While Sheehan (2002) states vocabulary is "the ability to understand and use words to acquire and convey meaning". Vocabulary is an essential element of reading instruction. Clearly, vocabulary and comprehension are closely connected skills. Each skill is imperative to reading achievement, yet one relies heavily on the other.

This intricate relationship has been documented by many researchers. "Vocabulary development is both an outcome of comprehension and a precursor to it, with word meanings making up as much as 70-80% of comprehension" (Bromley, 2002). Harmon (2002) notes, "Many students continue to struggle with comprehension because of limited vocabulary knowledge and ineffective strategies" (Cited in Hansen, 2009). Dilek & Yuruk (2012) stated that "the importance of learning vocabulary in foreign language teaching cannot be neglected at all. The more words you know, the better you can express your ideas and communicate with others. Without words, people cannot use the language effectively." They also emphasized that the degree of proficiency in a language is related with the words we know. The more words we know, the better we 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

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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.

According to Rahimi *et al.*, (2011), language experts have focused on teaching vocabulary to help learners increase their communicative competence and performance. Variety of techniques and activities are recommended to be used in teaching vocabulary. The way vocabulary is selected to be included in teaching materials is a significant factor that affects the process of teaching vocabulary and the learning outcome. Teachers of second or foreign language present new vocabulary item during lessons and at this stage there is no problem, what are waiting for them in the later steps includes difficulties in remembering the words taught in previous lessons and related with this problem there are difficulties in producing sentences and lack of communication.

#### **What is Retention?**

Based on Hornby's definition (2004), cited in Pishgaman *et al.*, (2010), retention is "the ability to remember things".

How vocabulary is acquired and what the most efficient tools and methods of promoting effective acquisition are have consistently been important lines of investigation in the field of second language acquisition (SLA). A second area of interest in psycholinguistics and SLA involves how a word is remembered and recalled. Memory is so central to cognitive processes that it influences almost every aspect of any topic in learning.

As the operational definition of this study, retention is "the ability to recall or remember things after an interval of time" (Richards *et al.*, 1985; cited in Rahmani & Nasri, 2012).

According to Koksai (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."

#### **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 Fin & Ishak, 2012).

The development of gender roles often begins as early as infancy. Being at the centre, gender manifests itself in any subtle and trivial aspect of our social life. From the time we are very small, it is ever present in any aspect of our life, in conversation, humor, conflict and so on.

As Hu (2012) declared the reason why some scholars confuse and conflate the terms 'sex' and 'gender' is due to the lack of a precise definition of sex/gender. Generally sex refers to those biological and physiological characteristics that define men and women, whereas gender accounts for those socially constructed roles, behaviors, activities and attributes that a given society considers appropriate for men or women.

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

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nowadays or no differences are found in the area of academic achievement based on gender (Suet & Ishak, 2012).

### ***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 feminine words learning.

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

## **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

### ***Methodology***

#### ***Subjects***

The subjects of this study were students of Mahdiah 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.

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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 word 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 Learning*

**H1:** Iranian EFL female learners surpass their male peers in learning feminine words.

To compare the performance of female learners with that one of their male peers in learning feminine words, because of existence of two dependent variables the scores of vocabulary learning (pre-test and post-test of feminine words for females and males), General Linear Model of Repeated Measurements or GLMRM was used. Table 1 is presented in order to report the descriptive statistics such as mean scores, standard deviation of pre-test and post-test scores of learning feminine words for female learners and male ones.

As Table 2 demonstrates, the mean scores and the standard deviation of total pre-test score (pre-test scores for both female subjects and male ones) are respectively equal to 4.417 and 2.494. Also the mean

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score and the standard deviation of total post-test score (post-test score for both female subjects and male ones) are respectively equal to 8.516 and 3.304. Meanwhile the mean score and the standard deviation of feminine words of 50 male subjects in pre-test are respectively equal to 3.720 and 1.818 and their mean score and standard deviation of feminine words in post-test are respectively equal to 7.840 and 3.304. The mean score and the standard deviation of feminine words for 41 female learners in pre-test are respectively equal to 5.268 and 2.932 and in post test mean score and standard deviation are respectively equal to 9.341 and 3.818. 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. Here the dependant variables only have two levels and consequently, spherical feature of these variables are clear. Now by existence of spherical of dependent variables, Table 2 is used in order to consider the significant effects of within-subjects.

**Table 2: Descriptive Statistics**

	Gender	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Pre-test feminine words	Males	3.7200	1.81872	50
	Females	5.2683	2.93278	41
	Total	4.4176	2.49473	91
Post-test feminine words	Males	7.8400	2.66772	50
	Females	9.3415	3.81844	41
	Total	8.5165	3.30442	91

The results of F test is presented in order to investigate the significance of the main effects of independent variable of within-subjects and its interaction effects with the other independent variable (between-subjects).

**Table 3: Tests of Within-Subjects Effects**

Measure: feminine words

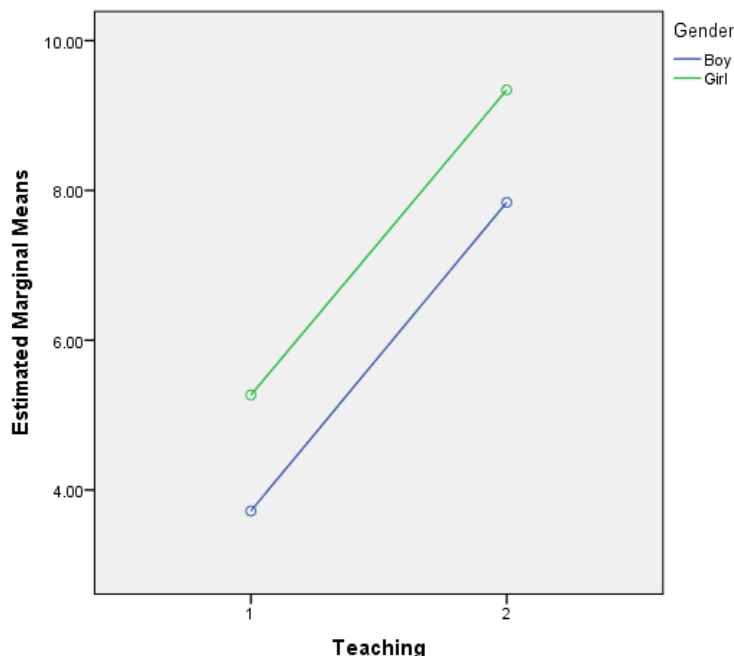
Source		Type IV Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Teaching	Sphericity Assumed	756.113	1	756.113	273.519	.000
Teaching * Gender	Sphericity Assumed	.025	1	.025	.009	.925
Error(Teaching)	Sphericity Assumed	246.030	89	2.764		

As it is indicated in Tables 2 and 3, no significant difference was observed between the mean scores of feminine words of for female learners and male ones since the obtained F value is 0.009 and sig is 0.925 (Sig<0.05). Gender wise comparison based on Table 1 and 2 also revealed no significant difference between female learners and male ones in feminine words learning in each level of error. In other words feminine words learning for female learners and male ones is statistically similar in each level of error. It means that female and male learners performed equally in learning feminine words. The result of this hypothesis is to some extent a support for Feingold’s study in 1998. This study aimed at whether the different role of gender effect language using. This study revealed that, although there are differences between females and males in academic contexts, these differences vary according to subjects' age, level

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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 (Cited in Suet & Ishak, 2012).

In order to make the results of this hypothesis more understandable, figure 1 is presented. It shows the estimated marginal means of pre-test and post-test scores for female learners and male ones.



**Figure 1: Estimated Marginal Means of Feminine Words Teaching**

As it is indicated in figure 1, the estimated marginal means of feminine words learning in pre-test and post-test is shown for female learners and male ones. Regarding the linear graphs position it is inferred that female learners compare to their male peers performed statistically similar. So, the first hypothesis is rejected as there is no significant difference between females and males in feminine words learning.

**Comparison between Female Learners’ Performance in Feminine Words Retention and Masculine Ones Retention**

**H2:** Iranian EFL female learners have better retention in feminine words than masculine ones. To compare the performance of female learners in retention of feminine and masculine words, 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 female learners in both feminine and masculine scores 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 female learners.

**Table 4: Descriptive Statistics**

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Pre-test masculine words	4.7073	2.46215	41
Post-test masculine words	9.9756	3.29004	41
Delayed Post-test masculine words	8.5854	3.47833	41
Pre-test feminine words	5.2683	2.93278	41

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Post-test feminine words	9.3415	3.81844	41
Delayed post -test feminine words	8.3415	3.92817	41

As Table 4 demonstrates the mean scores and the standard deviation of masculine words in pre-test for 41 female learners are respectively equal to 4.70 and 2.46. Also the mean scores and the standard deviation of masculine words in post-test for 41 female learners are respectively equal to 9.97 and 3.29. Mean while the mean scores and the standard deviation of masculine words in delayed post-test for 41 female learners are respectively equal to 8.58 and 3.47.

The mean scores and the standard deviation of feminine words in pre-test for 41 female learners are respectively equal to 5.26 and 2.93. Also the mean scores and the standard deviation of feminine words in post-test for 41 female learners are respectively equal to 9.34 and 3.81. Mean while the mean scores and the standard deviation of feminine words in delayed post-test for 41 female learners are respectively equal to 8.34 and 3.92.

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 are presented in following Table.

**Table 5: Mauchly's Test of Sphericity<sup>a</sup>**

Within Subjects Effect	Mauchly's W	Measure: Vocab		
		Approx. Chi-Square	Df	Sig.
Measure	1.000	.000	0	.
Time	.497	27.234	2	.000
Measure * Time	.735	12.006	2	.002

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 5 (Sig=.000 &.002 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 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 6, the table of statistical results of F test with the altered degree of freedom is used.

**Table 6: Tests of Within-Subjects Effects**

Source		Measure: word			
		Type IV Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F
Measure	Sphericity Assumed	.687	1	.687	.235
Error(Measure)	Sphericity Assumed	117.146	40	2.929	
Time	Huynh-Feldt	965.520	1.360	710.166	146.766
Error(Time)	Huynh-Feldt	263.146	54.383	4.839	
Measure * Time	Huynh-Feldt	15.228	1.635	9.312	7.668
Error(Measure*Time)	Huynh-Feldt	79.439	65.409	1.215	



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As it is indicated in Table 6, according to the great value of the reported significant level of F test with the pre assumption of its spherical figure in the first row (Sig=0.63) and because this level of significance is greater than (Sig=0.05), so it did not reach the significance level criterion (Sig<0.05) therefore it is inferred that this effect (the effect of teaching feminine words and masculine ones to female learners) is not significant in each level of error. It means that there is no significant difference between the mean scores of feminine words learning and masculine ones learning for female learners. In other words regarding the value of significant level (Sig=0.631) it is concluded that female learners performed statistically equal in learning of feminine words and masculine ones (Figure 3).

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 6 (Sig=0.000) it is inferred that this effect (time) is significant in each level of error, it means that generally word teaching to female 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).

Also concerning the significant level (Sig=0.002) of F test with alerted degree of freedom in the fifth row Table 4 for considering the interactional effect of feminine words and masculine ones teaching on retention of these words in female learners, it is inferred that this effect in each level of error is significant.

In other words the retention of feminine words and masculine ones in female learners is not statistically equal. It means that female learners performed statistically different in retention of feminine words and masculine ones.

Regarding the reported values of mean scores in Table 2 (Descriptive statistics) because of the greater mean scores in masculine words test than feminine ones test and also the lower standard deviations in masculine words than feminine ones it is inferred that female learners out performed in retention of masculine words than retention of feminine ones (Figure 3).

So, the second hypothesis that “Iranian EFL female learners have better retention in feminine words than masculine ones” is rejected as female learners did not out performed in feminine words retention in masculine ones retention.

Table 7 consisted of pair wise comparison for comparing the mean scores of dependent variables of pre/post/delayed post-tests of female learners.

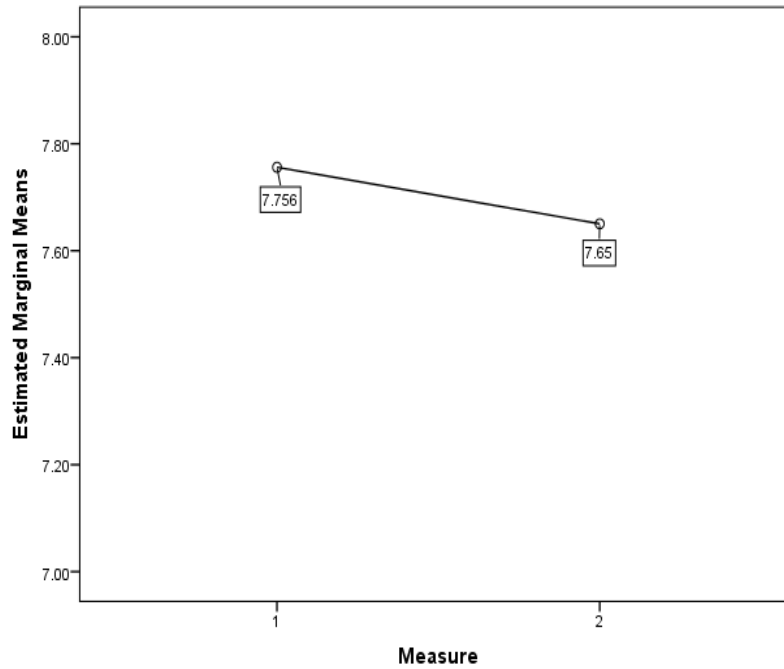
**Table 7: Pairwise Comparisons**

		Measure: Vocab				
(I) Time	(J) Time	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval for Difference	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
1	2	-4.671	.315	.000	-5.457	-3.885
	3	-3.476	.343	.000	-4.332	-2.620
2	1	4.671	.315	.000	3.885	5.457
	3	1.195	.156	.000	.805	1.585
3	1	3.476	.343	.000	2.620	4.332
	2	-1.195	.156	.000	-1.585	-.805

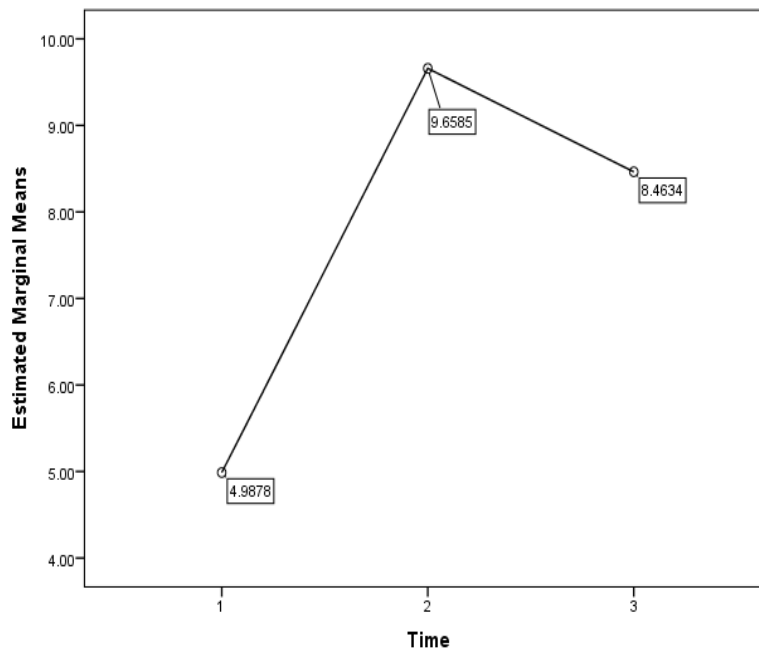
Concerning the value of reported significant level (Sig=0.000) in Table 7, it is clear that in all pair wise comparisons among pre-test, post-test, and delayed post-tests are lower than (Sig=0.05). So, it is inferred that there is a significant difference between the mean scores of dependent variable of feminine words and

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masculine ones in female learners. So, the feminine words and masculine ones teaching had a significant effect on female learners’ retention. In order to make the hypothesis of this study more understandable figures 2, 3, and 4 are presented. Figure 2 illustrates the estimated marginal means of feminine words learning and masculine ones for female learners in post test. The vertical axis is for the mean scores of female learners in post test and the horizontal one is for masculine words learning 1 and feminine words learning 2.



**Figure 2: Estimated marginal means of feminine and masculine words learning for female learners**



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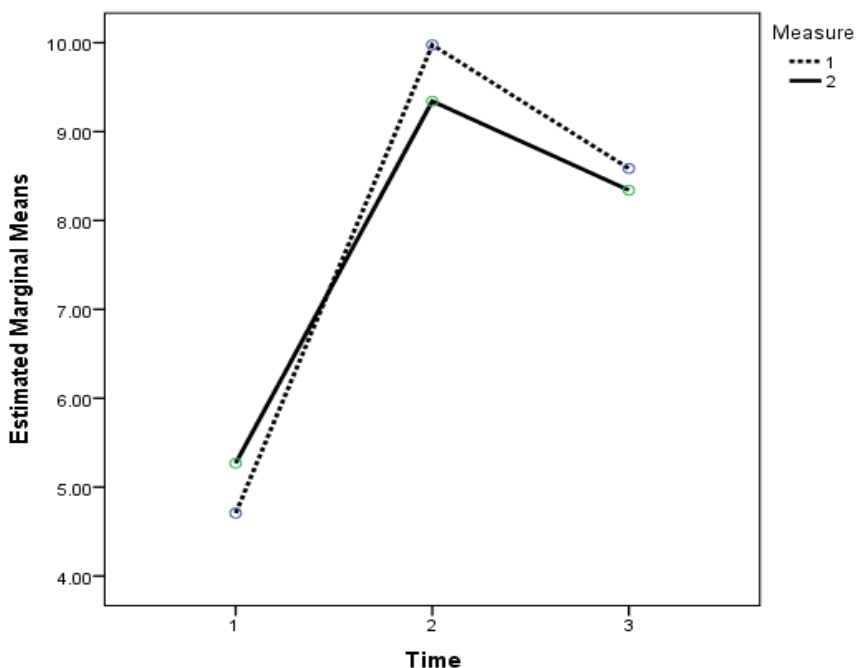
**Figure 3: Estimated marginal means of female learners in pre-test 1, post-test 2, and delayed post-test 3**

As shown in figure 1 there is no significant difference between feminine words learning and masculine ones learning for female learners and female learners performed statistically equal in both tests (feminine words test and masculine ones test). It means that teaching had no different effect on feminine words learning and masculine ones learning in female learners.

Figure 3 illustrates the estimated marginal means of female learners in pre-test, post-test, and delayed post-test.

As shown in figure 3, the mean scores of pre-test, post-test, and delayed post-test have significant difference and female learners did not performed equally in these three tests. It means that feminine words and masculine words teaching have affected female learners.

Figure 4 illustrates the estimated marginal mean scores of feminine words and masculine words retention in female learners.



**Figure 4: Estimated marginal means of feminine words(-) and masculine(...) ones of female learners in pre-test, post-test, and delayed post-test**

As shown in Figure 4, according to the position of the linear diagrams (line diagram for feminine words and dots one for masculine ones) it is clear that female learners performed differently in feminine words retention and masculine ones retention. As shown in Figure 4 female learners out performed in retention of masculine words than retention of feminine words. So, the second hypothesis that “Iranian EFL female learners have better retention in feminine words than masculine ones” is rejected as female learners did not out performed in feminine words retention in masculine ones retention.

The result of this hypothesis is to some extent a support for Zaini *et al.*, (2012). This study aimed at whether the different role of gender effect 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

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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.

### **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 learning and 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 rejected, indicating that female learners and male ones did not differ in feminine word learning. The General Linear Model of repeated Measurements showed no significant difference between female subjects and their male peers in feminine word learning.

The result of this hypothesis is to some extent a support for Feingold's study in 1998. This study aimed at whether the different role of gender effect language using. This study revealed that, although there are differences between females and males in academic contexts, these 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 (Cited in Suet & Ishak, 2012).

The second hypothesis was rejected, showing that no significant differences were observed between the performance of female 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). According to Zaini *et al.*, (2012), "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". Also as cited in Suet & Ishak (2012), 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. According to what was said so far, it is believed that there is a pressing need for a fresh approach to foreign language teaching. Instead of

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emphasizing on the role of learners' gender in language learning, it is recommended to language teachers to use language learning strategies to improve learners' retention.

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