

A Study On The Effects Of Content And Gender In Text Comprehension In Second Language Reading

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Abstract: This study aims to identify the relations between gender difference with learners' topic familiarity and learners' second language reading comprehension as well as to investigate the effects of gender-oriented passage content of the L2 text on learners' comprehension. For comparative purposes, five male and five female respondents from the Faculty of Education, Universiti Teknologi Malaysia were selected. To evaluate the respondents' reading comprehension, they were asked to recall and write the main ideas and supporting details of three types of texts which are male oriented, female oriented and neutral in a written recall task. Two sets of questionnaires were distributed to get information on the subjects' topic familiarity and interest towards the topics as well as the difficulty level of the reading texts. The result shows that gender difference influence learners' topic familiarity and therefore affects their L2 reading comprehension. Suggestions for pedagogical implementation and future research were also made.

Abstrak: Kajian ini bertujuan mengenalpasti kaitan antara perbezaan jantina dengan kebiasaan terhadap sesuatu topik dan kefahaman membaca pelajar dalam bahasa kedua serta menyiasat kesan teks dalam bahasa kedua yang berorientasikan jantina ke atas kefahaman pelajar. Bagi tujuan perbandingan, lima orang pelajar lelaki dan lima orang pelajar perempuan dari Fakulti Pendidikan, Universiti Teknologi Malaysia telah dipilih sebagai sampel kajian. Untuk menilai kefahaman membaca mereka, pelajar dikehendaki mengingat semula dan menulis isi penting dan huraian bagi tiga jenis teks yang berorientasikan lelaki, berorientasikan wanita dan neutral. Dua set soal selidik turut diedarkan bagi mendapatkan maklumat tentang kebiasaan pelajar terhadap sesuatu topik, minat mereka terhadap topik tersebut serta aras kesukaran teks yang dibaca. Hasil kajian menunjukkan bahawa perbezaan jantina mempengaruhi kebiasaan pelajar terhadap sesuatu topik dan oleh itu memberi kesan terhadap pemahaman membaca dalam bahasa kedua mereka. Cadangan untuk pelaksanaan pedagogi dan kajian masa hadapan turut diutarakan dalam kajian ini.

Keywords: content, gender, text comprehension

Introduction

Since reading is important in developing language intuition, determining academic success and encouraging readers to extract the important ideas from the text to complete certain task, it is therefore central for learners to acquire the reading skill. Acquiring reading requires one to be able to comprehend the text itself. Reading comprehension determined by the readers' interpretation of the text differs according to the readers' background knowledge. In addition to this, Bettelheim and Zelan (1982) said that both the feelings brought to the text and the ones aroused from the readers' experience affect the meaning of what is read. The different ways in obtaining the text meaning can also be seen by comparing young and adult, low and high proficient or even male and female readers.

Statement of the Problem

Reading is important not only for learners to acquire the language but also to obtain the knowledge. Although there are many readers who can read a text in the second language fluently, there is a possibility

for them to not being able to understand the message being conveyed in the reading. Apart from the readers' lack of proficiency, this problem might also happen because they do not have sufficient cultural or background knowledge of the text. Since all individuals tend to develop different ways of thinking, their background knowledge or schemata might also differ. The dissimilarity is what makes the readers interpret the same reading text differently.

Differences in gender might also affect the text interpretation. According to Gurian and Ballew (2003), brain differences are the prime cause of functional and structural difference in female and male brains as well as gender-different approaches to learning and living. Meanwhile, Shaw (1995) said that in terms of reading, boys and girls do differ in their preference of the sort of reading materials as well as reading fluency, speed and interest. Therefore, this study aims to compare the second language reading comprehension between female and male students when they are given neutral and gender-related texts.

With this purpose, a comparison of students' reading comprehension in second language when reading texts with different topics will be made. The existence of differences in topic familiarity among genders and how the gender-oriented passage content of the L2 reading text affect learners' comprehension will also be explored. It is hoped that through the findings, students will be able to identify the types of reading materials that they prefer to read and ways to understand their comprehension better in becoming more competent readers in the future.

Research Objectives

The objectives of this study are to:

1. find out the relations between gender-differences and learners' topic familiarity
2. find out the relations between gender-differences and learners' second language reading comprehension
3. investigate the effect(s) of gender-oriented passage content of the L2 reading text on learners' comprehension

Significance of the Study

Since the reading acquisition is important in mastering English, this comparative study is significant as it helps students to be more aware of their reading comprehension of the L2 texts. Through the findings, both male and female students can understand better the reasons why they interpret certain texts differently from others. This therefore will provide some insights for the learners to seek ways on how to ensure that the message being conveyed by the text author is comprehended correctly without any misconceptions or wrong facts. In terms of developing their reading habits, learners can look at the topic familiarity to help them identify their preferred reading materials.

This study also brings benefits to teachers as it helps them to identify the reasons for the different language performance between male and female students especially when it comes to reading. By knowing this, teachers can plan the teaching of text interpretation techniques to students as well as to suggest to them the types of readings that suit their interest and which they are familiar with.

Scope of the Study

With the purpose of looking at the gender- differences in reading L2 text, this case study involves the participation of five male and five female students from Faculty of Education, Universiti Teknologi Malaysia. All of the respondents, who are between the ages of 20 and 25 years old, were chosen based on their MUET result. Three of the male students got Band 5 while the other two males and five females got

Band 4 for their MUET. Obtaining the minimum of Band 4 is important to ensure that all the respondents have almost the same proficiency level with Band 4 as the indicator that they are all average learners of English. The courses of the respondents vary. The data were collected via questionnaires and reading comprehension test in February 2008.

Methodology

Sample of the Study

Ten students from the Faculty of Education UTM were chosen as the respondents of this case study. Since this research focuses on the gender differences in comprehending L2 text, the number of male and female participants was equal with five female students and five male students. They were selected based on their MUET performance. MUET is the English test sat by those who want to enter Malaysian University. It is designed to test all the four language skills which are speaking, listening, reading and writing. Three of the male respondents got Band 5 while the other seven respondents got Band 4. Having the respondents with the minimum of Band 4 is important to ensure that all of them have at least the same English language proficiency with Band 4 as the indicator of their average command of the language. Meanwhile, the age of the respondents was between 20-25 years old as the researcher did not want age factor to affect the result of the study. The courses of the respondents as well as their year of studies vary.

Research Instruments

In order to collect the data for the research, three instruments were used which were three reading passages (a neutral text and two gender oriented ones), written recall as well as questionnaires. Those instruments are discussed in detail as follow:

1. Questionnaires

Two sets of questionnaires were given to the respondents. The first questionnaire is divided into two sections. Section A requires the respondents to fill in their personal information. Section B, on the other hand is further divided into two parts which are familiarity with the topics (Part I) and interest towards the topics (Part II). In both parts, three questions are asked. The first item requires the respondents to indicate their level of agreement with the statements regarding their familiarity with or interests towards three listed topics while the second one asks them to rank their familiarity with or interest towards the three given topics. Lastly, the third question wants the respondents to state their reason for their answer in the previous ranking question.

Meanwhile, the second questionnaire which was answered after the reading and written recall sessions has only one section about the difficulty of the texts. Involving three questions, the first item asks the respondents to indicate their level of agreement with the text using four likert-scale while the second one wants them to rank the three listed topics based on their difficulty level. Finally, the third item requires the respondents to state their reason for the previous ranking question.

2. Reading Passages

Three reading passages consisting of a neutral text and two gender-oriented texts which are female and male oriented were selected for the purpose of the reading sessions. They were selected based on their topics and types of writing as well as both genders' interest and familiarity.

One of the topics that interests male readers is sports (Baurlein and Stotsky, 2005). Therefore, a passage entitled “Biography of Cristiano Ronaldo” was adapted as the male-oriented text as it centers on the life of a famous Manchester United player. There are eight paragraphs and 573 words in the text.

Meanwhile, female readers generally love and are familiar with the topic involving makeup. Therefore, a passage entitled “Best Face Forward - Creating a Makeup Palette That Works Beautifully” by Elli Rose was adapted as the female-oriented text as it centers on makeup tips and was written by a female author. The text has six paragraphs and 569 words.

For the neutral text, an article entitled “All About Overcoming Stress” was adapted as both the male and female respondents are familiar with the topic and do face stressful situations in their daily lives sometimes. The text explains several ways that readers can adapt in handling stress. The text has nine paragraphs and 576 words.

The choice of topic and content of the passage is important as it will be the essential variable for this research. By having these two gender-oriented passages (male and female oriented ones) and a neutral text, the differences in comprehending the three different texts can be measured.

3. Written Recall

Brantmeier (2004) defines written recall as a procedure in which readers have to write as much information as possible of what have been read without looking back at the reading passage. Focusing on the quantity of information recalled, this method requires the respondents to recall both main ideas and supporting details written in the text. It was done by the respondents after they finished reading each text.

Pilot Study

To determine the suitability of the texts with the research, two of the texts were piloted to two students from the Faculty of Education UTM. The male-oriented text entitled “Biography of Cristiano Ronaldo” was piloted to a male respondent on Saturday the 9th February 2008 while the female-oriented text entitled “Best Face Forward - Creating a Makeup Palette That Works Beautifully” was piloted to a female respondent on Wednesday the 13th February 2008.

For this pilot study to be conducted, two of the research instruments which were the reading passages and the written recall were administered. For the first task, both the respondents were given one gender-oriented text each for them to read in seven minutes. After finishing the reading, they proceeded with the second task which was the written recall. They recalled as much information as possible related to the texts read and wrote it down in a piece of paper without looking back at the passages in seven minutes.

Pilot Study Results

The text entitled “Biography of Cristiano Ronaldo” has eight main ideas and 25 supporting details while text entitled “Best Face Forward - Creating a Makeup Palette That Works Beautifully” has six main ideas and 21 supporting details. Two marks are given to each correctly recalled main idea while one mark to supporting detail. Since the number of main ideas and supporting details of the two texts is different, the subjects’ scores were converted into percentage.

To calculate the scores of both respondents the marking scheme explained in the data analysis was adapted. The male respondents reading “Biography of Cristiano Ronaldo” managed to recall all 8 main ideas and 19 supporting details with the total score of 35 per 41. His score calculation is illustrated in Table 1.

Table 1: Male Respondent's Score in the Written Recall

	Recalled	Marks allocated	Total marks
Main ideas (out of 8)	8	2	16
Supporting ideas (out of 25)	19	1	19
		Total score	35/41

Meanwhile the female respondent reading “Best Face Forward - Creating a Makeup Palette That Works Beautifully” recalled all 6 main ideas and 15 supporting details with the total score of 27 per 33. Her score calculation is illustrated in Table 2.

Table 2: Female Respondent's Score in the Written Recall

	Recalled	Marks allocated	Total marks
Main ideas (out of 6)	6	2	12
Supporting ideas (out of 21)	15	1	15
		Total score	27/33

Finally, since the total marks of each text are different, both the male and the female's scores were converted into percentage. Table 3 illustrates the calculation:

Table 3: Total Score (in percentage) of both Male and Female Respondents

Gender/ text	Calculation	Total score (in percentage)
Male/ Biography of Cristiano Ronaldo	$35/41 \times 100\%$	85.4
Female/ Best Face Forward - Creating a Makeup Palette That Works Beautifully	$27/33 \times 100\%$	81.8

With the male respondent scored 85.4% and female respondent scores 81.8% in the written recall, the researcher found that both texts piloted were suitable to be used in the real study as they can be comprehended and recalled effectively by the respondents.

Result

Relations between Gender-Difference and Learners' Second Language Reading Comprehension

Three different texts have been administered in order to seek the answer and findings to this research question. The written recall scores for the male oriented text will be first shown, followed by the female oriented one and finally the neutral passage.

Table 4: Respondents' Scores for the Male Oriented Text (Biography of Cristiano Ronaldo)

Subject	MUET Band	Main Ideas(8)	Supporting Details (25)	Score (n /41)	Percentage (%) n/41 x 100%	Average (%)
1 (Adi)	5	7	20	34	82.93	59.51
2 (Irwan)	5	5	13	23	56.10	
3 (Fadhli)	4	6	17	29	70.73	
4 (Amir)	4	3	8	14	34.15	
5(Khairi)	5	6	10	22	53.66	
6 (Atiqah)	4	5	11	21	51.22	48.78
7(Liyana)	4	5	9	19	46.34	
8 (Azie)	4	5	15	25	60.98	
9(Siti)	4	4	10	18	43.90	
10 (Izzati)	4	4	9	17	41.46	

From Table 4, it can be seen that the male respondents obtained higher scores than the female group when they recalled the main ideas and supporting details of the male oriented text of Biography of Cristiano Ronaldo. With the average score of 59.51 percent the highest score attained by individual in the male group is 82.93 percent where seven main ideas and 20 supporting details managed to be recalled. The lowest score obtained is 34.15 percent with three main ideas and eight supporting details recalled. Meanwhile, the average score for the female group is 48.78 percent .The highest score obtained by the individual in the group is 60.98 percent where five main ideas and 15 supporting details managed to be recalled. For the lowest score, four main ideas and nine supporting details were recalled, constituting 41.46 percent.

The next table will show the respondents' scores for the second text which is female oriented.

Table 5: Respondents' Scores for the Female Oriented Text (Best Face Forward-Creating a Makeup Palette That Beautifully Works)

Subject	MUET Band	Main Ideas(6)	Supporting Details (21)	Score (n /33)	Percentage (%) n/33 x 100%	Average (%)
1 (Adi)	5	5	9	19	57.58	41.82
2 (Irwan)	5	4	5	13	39.39	
3 (Fadhli)	4	4	7	15	45.45	
4 (Amir)	4	4	3	11	33.33	
5(Khairi)	5	4	3	11	33.33	
6 (Atiqah)	4	4	3	11	33.33	53.94
7(Liyana)	4	5	11	21	63.63	
8 (Azie)	4	6	12	24	72.73	
9(Siti)	4	6	12	24	72.73	
10 (Izzati)	4	3	3	9	27.27	

Table 5 shows that the female respondents obtained higher scores than the male group when they recalled the main ideas and supporting details of the male oriented text of Best Face Forward- Creating a Makeup Palette That Beautifully Works. With the average score of 53.94 percent, the highest score attained at the individual level in the female group is 72.73 percent where all the six main ideas and 12 out of 21 supporting details managed to be recalled. However, the lowest score obtained is 33.33 percent with only four main ideas and three supporting details recalled. Meanwhile, the average score for the male group is 41.82 percent .The highest score obtained by the individual in the group is 57.58 percent where five main ideas and nine supporting details managed to be recalled. For the lowest score, four main ideas and three supporting details were recalled, making up 33.33 percent.

The next table will present the respondents' scores for the third text, the neutral one.

Table 6: Respondents' Scores for the Neutral Text (All about Overcoming Stress)

Subject	MUET Band	Main Ideas(9)	Supporting Details (21)	Score (n/39)	Percentage (%) n/39 x 100%	Average (%)
1 (Adi)	5	7	13	27	69.23	59.48
2 (Irwan)	5	8	11	27	69.23	
3 (Fadhli)	4	7	11	25	64.10	
4 (Amir)	4	5	5	15	38.46	
5(Khairi)	5	7	8	22	56.41	
6 (Atiqah)	4	5	10	20	51.28	56.41
7(Liyana)	4	6	11	23	58.97	
8 (Azie)	4	7	14	28	71.79	
9(Siti)	4	6	10	22	56.41	
10 (Izzati)	4	6	5	17	43.59	

Based on Table 6, it can be seen that the male respondents obtained higher scores than the female group when they recalled the main ideas and supporting details of the neutral text entitled All about Overcoming Stress. With the average score of 59.48 percent, there are two individuals from the male group who obtained the same highest score of 69.23 percent. While one of them managed to recall seven out of nine main ideas and 13 out of 21 supporting details, the other one managed to recall eight main ideas and 11 supporting details. The lowest score obtained is 38.46 percent with five main ideas and five supporting details recalled. Meanwhile, the average score for the female group is 56.41percent .The highest score achieved by the individual in the group is 71.79 percent where seven main ideas and 14 supporting details managed to be recalled. For the lowest score, six main ideas and five supporting details were recalled, constituting 43.59 percent. The comparison of scores for the three different texts between the male and female group is further visualized in the next graph.

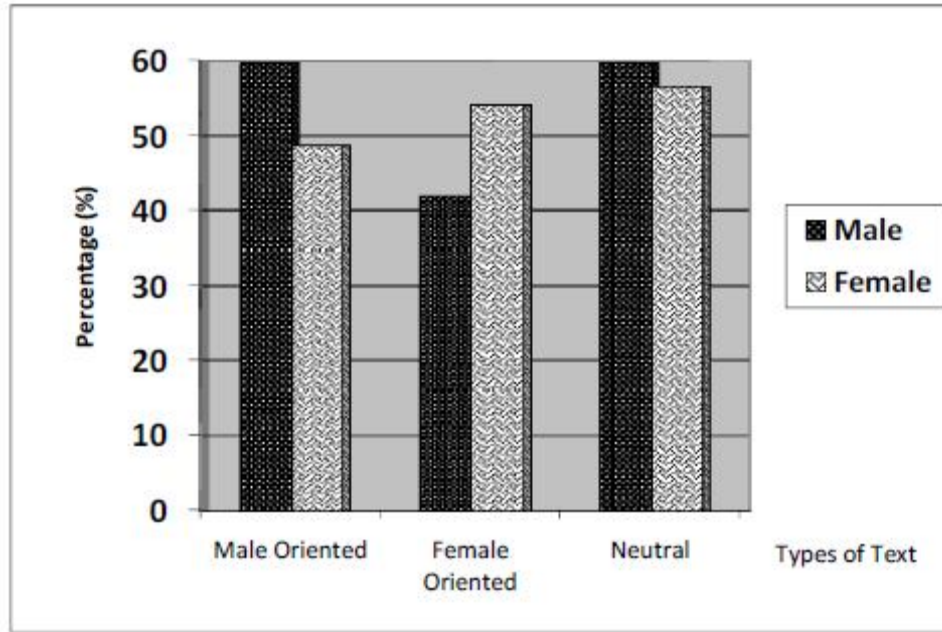


Figure 1: The Score Comparison for Three Types of Texts between Male and Female Respondents

Discussion

From Table 4, it can be seen that on average, the male respondents performed better in the written recall task for the male oriented text entitled Biography of Cristiano Ronaldo compared to the female respondents with a slight difference of 10.73 percent. Although the difference is not really big, it may be caused by the readers' familiarity with the reading text. Previously, it is discussed that the male readers are more familiar with the topic of football player compared to the female readers. Due to their familiarity, the male respondents have developed their background knowledge on the topic before they were given the real text to read. This is in line with the statement by Lapp and Flood (1986) which has been reviewed in chapter two. According to them, there is relation between the existing schemata and reading comprehension in which schemata determines the organization and interpretation of what is read and further resulting in comprehension.

While the male respondents scored better for the male oriented text, the female readers on the other hand averagely scored better in written recall task involving the female oriented text of Best Face Forward-Creating a Makeup Palette That Beautifully Works. As seen in Table 5, with a slight difference of 12.12 percent, the higher score made by the female respondents may be also caused by their familiarity with the topic of makeup tip. As discussed in the previous findings and discussion section, all the female readers agree that they are familiar with the makeup tips topic while the male readers are not familiar with it at all. This familiarity with the topic helps to develop and trigger readers' background knowledge on the reading text and therefore lead to the text comprehension.

Meanwhile, Table 6 shows that averagely, the male group recalled the main ideas and the supporting details of the neutral text entitled All about Overcoming Stress better than the female group although with a very slight score difference of 3.07 percent. This result is due to the fact that overcoming stress is a general and public topic known by almost everyone. Because of that, when reading the third text, both the male and female respondents managed to recall almost the same total of main ideas and supporting details of the text as the content of the text reflects their personal life as individuals who face stressful conditions sometimes in their lives.

As discussed in the literature review chapter, background knowledge is not the only factor contributing to reading comprehension. Cognitive experience, interest, reading purpose, linguistic experience, sociocultural factors and reading rate also help to determine one's reading comprehension (Collins and Cheek (1993). To discuss this, the researcher will compare the scores for the three texts at the individual level instead of the group level.

Table 7: Scores of each Respondent for the Three Types of Text

Subject	MUET Band	Types of Text/ Score (%)			Score Average for the 3 Texts (%)
		Male Oriented	Female Oriented	Neutral	
1 (Adi)	5	82.93	57.58	69.23	69.91
2 (Irwan)	5	56.10	39.39	69.23	54.91
3 (Fadhli)	4	70.73	45.45	64.10	60.09
4 (Amir)	4	34.15	33.33	38.46	35.31
5(Khairi)	5	53.66	33.33	56.41	47.8
6 (Atiqah)	4	51.22	33.33	51.28	45.28
7(Liyana)	4	46.34	63.63	58.97	56.31
8 (Azie)	4	60.98	72.73	71.79	68.5
9(Siti)	4	43.90	72.73	56.41	57.68
10 (Izzati)	4	41.46	27.27	43.59	37.44

From Table 7, it can be seen that among the male respondents, Subject 1 obtained the highest scores for all three types of text. He scored 82.93 percent, for the male oriented text, 57.58 percent for the female oriented text and 69.23 percent for the neutral text, constituting 69.91 percent of the average score. Meanwhile, Subject 4 scored the lowest marks for all the three readings with only 34.15 percent for the text of Cristiano Ronaldo's Biography, 33.33 percent for the text of makeup tips and 38.46 percent for the overcoming stress text. Hence, his average score is only 35.31 percent. Next, among the female respondents, Subject 8 obtained the highest marks for all the texts with 60.98 percent, for the male oriented text, 72.73 percent for the female oriented text and 71.79 percent for the neutral text, constituting 68.5 percent of the average score. Meanwhile, the lowest scores are achieved by Subject 10 with 41.46 percent for the text of Cristiano Ronaldo's Biography, 27.27 percent for the makeup tips text and 43.59 percent for the text about overcoming stress. Her average score is therefore 37.44 percent.

Based on the findings, it is clear that all four individuals highlighted attained consistent scores in the three written recall activities. They either obtained the highest scores or the lowest ones for all three reading texts. Subject 1 consistently got the highest scores due to his proficiency level of English language. Obtaining Band 5 for his MUET, Subject 1 is considered a high proficient English language learner. Proficiency level is the result of linguistic experience. When one has lots of experience dealing with linguistic items, he or she manages to acquire more vocabulary, grammar items and even the four language skills which are reading, speaking, listening and writing. While the rest of the respondents might

have problems processing the three texts, Subject 1 seems to maintain his average scores for the three texts by also getting the highest average score among all the ten respondents.

The second factor contributing to the success of the reading comprehension is the purpose of reading. Although he obtained Band 4 for his MUET like the other six respondents, Subject 4 got the lowest scores for all three texts. This is however exceptional for the female oriented text where there is another female respondent who attained lower score with 27.27 percent. Analyzing Subject 4's performance, it can be seen that he might not have the right purpose of reading. Although the researcher did give clear instruction on what the respondents were supposed to do, Subject 4 might be emotionally or cognitively unprepared to complete the written recall task. He might not understand what to be expected from the task. Besides, he might also have problems regarding reading as he does not know how to differentiate the main ideas and the supporting details as well as not knowing how to take note when reading texts.

Although at the group level, topic familiarity seems to play a role to determine reading comprehension, it does not apply for Subject 4 and 10. These two respondents achieved the lowest scores for all three texts in their respected group. In contrast to the earlier findings, Subject 10 who is a female respondent got higher score than subject 4 who is a male respondent when dealing with the male oriented text of Cristiano Ronaldo's Biography. With the difference of 7.31 percent, it can be said that Subject 10 might be exposed to the biography type of text better than Subject 4. Besides, she might also be exposed to the topic as there are various sources that give information about football sport and its player on television as well as in the radio or the newspapers. Besides, as a big star in the football arena, Cristiano Ronaldo seems to be one of the most famous football players this year. This is a logic reason explaining the better performance of Subject 10 in the first written recall task. Reversely, Subject 4 achieved higher score than Subject 10 for the female oriented text with a slight difference of 6.06 percent. This might be due to the wide exposure given by the media regarding makeup. Programs related to makeup are available in almost many television channels while articles or advertisement related to the topic can be obtained from magazines and newspaper.

Furthermore, the difficulty level of the text also helps to determine one's reading comprehension. The next table will show the average score obtained by all ten respondents according to the texts.

Table 8: The Average Score of All Respondents According to the Texts

Types of Texts	Average Score (%)
Male Oriented Text (Biography of Cristiano Ronaldo)	54.17
Female-Oriented Text (Best Face Forward- Creating a Makeup Palette That Beautifully Works)	47.88
Neutral Text (All about Overcoming Stress)	57.95

From Table 8, it can be seen that neutral text is the easiest passage to comprehend and recall, followed by the male oriented text and finally the female oriented text. The distribution of the scores shown is related closely to the difficulty level of the text. The next table will present the ranking of the difficulty level of the three reading texts by all ten respondents.

Table 9: Respondents Ranking of the Difficulty Level of the Three Texts

Rank of Difficulty	Texts and Number/ Percentage of Respondents		
	Male Oriented	Female Oriented	Neutral
Most difficult	1 (10%)	9 (90%)	0
Difficult	4 (40%)	0	6 (60%)
Least Difficult	5 (50%)	1 (10%)	4 (40%)

Based on Table 9, it can be seen that 9 percent of the respondents ranked the text entitled Best Face Forward- Creating a Makeup Palette That Beautifully Works as the most difficult one. The difficulty level of the text entitled Biography of Cristiano Ronaldo is moderate. Meanwhile, All about Overcoming Stress which is the neutral text was ranked as the least difficult. This ranking is consistent with the average scores of all the respondents according to the three texts as shown in Table 5 previously. Mainly, the male respondents considered the makeup text difficult as they have no idea about the techniques discussed in the text. Since they never apply makeup, they feel hard to memorize and recall all the tips and tools used in the passage. In the open-ended question, one of the respondents stated that he felt demotivated when reading the text as he has no knowledge about makeup. This makes him reluctant to continue reading the text. Apart from the existence of background knowledge of the reading passage, the language used also helps to determine the difficulty level of the text. While most of the female respondents stated that they are familiar with the makeup theme, they are not familiar with some of the terms used in the text. Therefore, recalling the name of the makeup products can be problematic. From the male respondents' point of view, language and sentences used in the text are so complicated. Unlike the male oriented and the neutral text, the sentences in female oriented text are beating around the bush and not straight forward. Because of that, many of the male respondents feel that it is tedious to read the text. Organization of the text also helps to determine the difficulty level of the text. The female oriented text involves specific steps to be recalled. Although the female respondents might love reading it, they might have problems recalling as they do not really apply those techniques discussed in the text. Some of the tips might be new to them. One of the female respondents stated that the male oriented text is easier because the ideas are arranged coherently and is in the narrative form. She also stated that the article on stress is the easiest one because it involves many but short paragraphs that help to chunk the ideas she wants to recall.

Summary

Overall, it can be seen that gender does affect learners' topic familiarity and therefore also influence their L2 reading comprehension. This conclusion made mainly based on the overall scores of both groups in recalling the three types of texts. Their reading performance is further complemented by the findings obtained from the questionnaire in which all the ten respondents agreed that they are more familiar and interested with topics reflecting their gender. With this, teachers should consider implementing gender related topics in reading activity to increase students' interest and motivation towards the task as well as using neutral text for examination purposes to avoid gender bias. Besides the suggestions made for classroom practice, recommendations are also made for future research to be replicated based on the discussions on the limitations of this study. Future research might have a larger number of respondents, deal with a sample of subjects of different range of age, employ standardized but different text genres and be implemented in a longer period of time to increase the validity of the findings so that generalization can be made in wider teaching and learning contexts.

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