

Gender Differences in the Length of Writing

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Abstract

It is generally accepted that gender relates to language. This study aimed to investigate the relationship between gender and language by finding out the differences in the length of writing between male and female students as well as the factors affecting the length differences. Moreover, this study was designed as a descriptive quantitative study. There were 30 students consisting of 15 male students and 15 female students as the participants wrote a recount text about their bad experiences. The findings showed that there was a significant difference between female and male participants in the number of wording of writing. The female students had a longer size of writing than male students as indicated from the complexity of the sentences. Apart from that, the difference was also due to the development of the writing which includes the description of their feelings and the use of five features namely intensifying, hedging, tag questions, empty adjectives, and adverbs.

Keywords: gender differences, length of writing, writing, recount text

Received:	01 March 2020	Revised (1):	19 May 2020	Revised (2):	-
Accepted:	25 May 2020	Published:	01 June 2020		

INTRODUCTION

Language and gender have become one of the topics discussed in sociolinguistics. In general, gender affects the social roles, language used, anthropology and dialectology (Coates, 2016). The phenomena can be seen from the differences between females and males in using the language. Suandari (2012) states that, males and females have different styles, content, and structure of communication. Females tend to use body language more than males do. They also have different topics in a conversation where females often talk about feelings, relationships, and people while males tend to talk about money, business and sports. In addition, females like to talk in detail while males are straighter to the point.

In spoken language, females tend to use friendlier, sympathetic, respectful and softer language while males are more apathetic, unfriendly and not involving personal feelings (Park, Yaden, Schwartz, Kern, Eichstaedt, Kosinski, et al., 2016). In other words, females

generally speak softer than males. However, the intonation is heard diversely if they talk with the same gender and across gender. As Darani and

Darani (2014) found that males tend to raise their tone of voice when speaking across gender (females), however, they utilize lower intonation to the same gender (males). Meanwhile, females incline to apply lower intonation when talking across gender (males) but speak with higher intonation to the same gender (females).

In the EFL classroom, male students are believed to be more active in delivering their ideas verbally in English class while female students are more likely to not take the chance to speak up. Furthermore, there is a stereotype that males feel more comfortable when it comes to speaking in front of the public (Lenard, 2016). Then, when female students were invited to express their opinion, they only spoke a little. Female students were inclined to be quieter or talk less because of being afraid to speak up in front of the class. It is due to their

nervousness in speaking where they were afraid if they delivered wrong ideas. This phenomenon is in line with the research done by Öztürk and Gürbüz (2012) which found that in speaking English, female students felt more worried than the male students did. Xia (2013) adds that this anxiety was caused by the female tendency to consider others' thoughts about what they will say. Female students tend to let others give thoughts first before they tell what is in their minds. In brief, males have higher speaking mastery than females.

Different phenomena happened regarding writing mastery. Writing and gender have a relationship in second language writing and identity construction (Kamari et. al, 2012). Second language writing research explores gender differences in how men and women write differently in L2 whether in terms of processing or produce writing products (Kubota, 2003). In the context of second and foreign language learning between male and female students, numerous studies have reported that there is a discrepancy between males and females regarding writing skills. Female students were reported to display higher frequencies in written products than the male students (Waskita, 2008). Similarly, female students used more writing strategies than male students (Mutar & Nimehchisalem, 2017). Also, female students tended to have more lexical density than male students (Ginting, 2018). Moreover, a study done by Ng (2010) revealed that female students' attitudes toward learning English writing have higher average scores than boys. It also occurred in elementary school. The female students have imaginative thinking that their English marks are finer than males (Punter & Burchell 1996). In addition, Eriksson, Marschik, Tulviste, Almgren, Pereira, Wehberg, and Gallego (2012) found that females are better in language abilities such as communicative gestures, productive vocabulary, and in combining words than males. Furthermore, Tse, Kwong, Chan, and Li (2002) state that females outperform males in length of utterance average, some sentence types and structures, and syntactic complexity. Besides, Mulac, Seibold, and Farris (2000) that females used longer sentences; whereas males used more

words. In a similar study, based on research conducted by Nicolau and Sukamto (2016), female students produced longer sentences and more complex sentences than male students. It is because female students have the creativity and strong imagination in writing different plots; thus, they are able to build complex writing. According to a study conducted by Ishikawa (2014), female students use more personal pronouns and certain words related to psychological cognitive processes (e.g., mad, uneasy, remember, nervous). Moreover, female students are likely to try to show their concern about others or the people around them. On the other hand, male students tend to focus on the particular aspects of the things or events, or on the particular time and places where the activities happen.

Similarly, based on the research conducted by Adams and Simmons (2019), it was found that females often construct words more than males in writing. In written English, females and males likewise use language differently. Female has a longer size of writing than male (Berninger, Whitaker, Feng, Swanson, & Abbott, 1996) commonly found in elementary and junior high school (Berninger & Fuller, 1992). Fearington, Parker, Kidder-Ashley, & Gagnon (2014) examined gender differences in written expression in third-grade elementary school students through eighth-grade junior high school students. The result showed that females write longer text and get a higher score than males for writing. Moreover, Önem (2016) agreed that females have longer writing than males do. As what he found in his research on the gender difference in length of writing a request, the results indicated that females tend to provide more detail in their writing in order to prevent losing face and build understanding in requesting while males are more likely to be straight to the point (Önem, 2016). In addition, Amir, Abidin, Darus, and Ismail (2012) stated that females tend to use five features such as intensifying, hedging, tag questions, empty adjectives, and adverbs. Moreover, females have a faster mastery ability of reading and writing rather than males (Camarata & Woodcock, 2005). In the cognitive assessment

system, females outperform males in both planning and attention (Naglieri & Das, 1997).

Irrespective of the conclusive findings on gender differences dealing with the length of writing as shown by those previous studies above, none of them discuss in detail what factors contribute to the differences. This current study, therefore, was conducted to extend those studies, especially the work of Önem (2016) whose findings merely limited to differences of length of writing as shown by differences in word-count. This study was conducted to investigate gender differences in the length of writing and factors potentially contribute to the differences.

Before the main study was conducted, a preliminary study on 9th grade students in SMP Pelangi Dharma Nusantara had been carried out to check the gender differences in writing requests. The result showed that females tend to result in more length of writing than males in writing a request. This suggested that there were gender differences in the length of writing in which it directed this research to focus on investigating them.

Furthermore, this research also had the objective to check whether the length of writing contributes to the quality of the writing involving the complexity and the story development. There were two research questions addressed in this study: (1) Is there any significant difference in length of writing between male and female students?; (2) what factors affect the length of the writing of male and female students?. For the first research question, the null hypothesis is formulated that there is no significant difference in the length of writing between male and female students. Meanwhile, the alternative hypothesis is formulated that there is a significant difference in the length of writing between male and female students.

METHODS

Participants

The participants of this research were the ninth-grade students of SMP Pelangi Dharma Nusantara. They were 16 male students and 17 female students whose age ranged from 15 to 16 years old. However, there were only 30 students, 15 females and 15 males, taking part

as participants in this research due to the absence of three students when the data was collected by the researcher.

Research Design

A quantitative research method was applied as the design of the research to conduct the research. The source of the data retrieved from the result of students' writing which was analyzed quantitatively. Quantitative analysis was focused on the result of the t-test to show the differences in the length of writing between male and female students. Besides, a descriptive method was also applied in this research in order to present the arguments about the factors affecting the length of writing of male and female students' writing. Besides, the method of this research was descriptive quantitative since the data were analyzed quantitatively using statistical analysis and followed by descriptive explanation about the findings.

Data Collection

Data were collected through the following procedures. First, a preliminary study was conducted to check the existence of gender difference in the length of writing. Second, a recount-text writing task was prepared by the researcher as an instrument for gathering the data of students' writing. Third, the teacher instructed the students to write recount text where they wrote a recount text about their bad experiences in the past. Fourth, the recount text writing task was carried out on 21st November 2019 and completed concurrently in the classroom. Moreover, recount text was already taught before the task was distributed. The task was completed in English, and written on a piece of paper. Furthermore, the participant was given 2 x 40 minutes to accomplish the task.

Data Analysis

The recount texts from the students were then analyzed. Firstly, all the number of words written was calculated manually by the researcher by counting every paper. Secondly, the data gathered was processed and analyzed by using an independent-samples t-test using SPSS 26 in order to check whether or not gender

differences influenced the students' length of writing in SMP Pelangi Dharma Nusantara. Then, the results of data analysis from SPSS 26 were described. In order to answer the second research question, students' writings were analyzed in terms of the potential factors influencing the length of students' writing.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The length of writing

The research is aimed at investigating whether there were any differences in the length of writings between male and female students and the factors affecting it. To find out the difference in length of writing between male and female students, the researcher analyzed the students writing in recount text. The recount text created by students was analyzed by the total words produced by the students as the source data. Afterward, the researcher continued to do an independent-samples t-test to figure out the difference in length of writing. The length of writing analysis is shown in Table 1

Table 1. Female and Male Students' Length of Writing

No.	Male Students	Length of writing	Female students	Length of writing
1	Male 1	141	Female 1	137
2	Male 2	95	Female 2	99
3	Male 3	206	Female 3	168
4	Male 4	147	Female 4	115
5	Male 5	117	Female 5	236
6	Male 6	146	Female 6	115
7	Male 7	160	Female 7	166
8	Male 8	95	Female 8	371
9	Male 9	171	Female 9	152
10	Male 10	53	Female 10	200
11	Male 11	135	Female 11	185
12	Male 12	72	Female 12	157
13	Male 13	63	Female 13	188
14	Male 14	55	Female 14	159
15	Male 15	57	Female 15	97
	TOTAL	1713		2545

Table 1 shows that the total words found in female students' writings were more than those of male students. From 15 male students, it was found that the length of writing was 1713 words. The highest length of writing's numbers of the male students was 206 words, written by Male 3, while the smallest length of writing's numbers was 53 words written by Male 10. However, female students produced more words in their writings. From 15 female

students, 2545 words in total were produced. The largest length of writing's numbers was written by Female 8, whilst the smallest was 97 words written by Female 15. Furthermore, the results of the independent-samples t-test were presented in the form of Group Statistics Analysis and Independent-Sample Test Analysis, which respectively presented in Table 2 and Table 3.

Table 2. Group Statistics Analysis of Students' Length of Writing

Group Statistics

	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Students' writing	Male	15	114.20	48.298	12.471
	Female	15	169.67	67.796	17.505

Based on group statistics output in Table 2, it is known that the sum of data for male’s length of writing is 15 students while the female’s length of writing is 15 students. The Mean of male’s length of writing is 114.20 while the Mean of female’s length of writing is 169.67. It can be seen that the average length of writing of female students was more than male students’. It indicated that the females wrote longer than males did. These results were in line with the study conducted by Berninger,

Whitaker, Feng, Swanson, & Abbott (1996), Fearington, Parker, Kidder-Ashley, & Gagnon (2014), and Önem (2016) in which the results showed that female students produced longer writing than male students did. Furthermore, based on the data, it can be concluded that there was a difference in the average length of writing between males and females. In order to prove whether this difference is significant or not, it is necessary to interpret the output of the following Independent-Samples Test in Table 3

Table 3. Independent-Samples Test Analysis of Students’ Length of Writing

		Independent Samples Test								
		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances			t-test for Equality of Means					
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Students' writing	Equal variances assumed	.044	.836	-2.58	28	.015	-55.467	21.493	-99.492	-11.441
	Equal variances not assumed			-2.58	25	.016	-55.467	21.493	-99.702	-11.222

Based on the Independent-Sample Test output in Table 3, it is known that the value of Sig. Levene’s Test for Equality of Variances is 0.836 > 0.05. It can be interpreted that data variances between male and female are homogeneous or the same. Thus, the interpretation of the independent sample test output in table 3 is based on the values contained in the row of Equal Variances Assumed. Based on Table 3 in the row of Equal Variances Assumed, it is known that Sig. (2-tailed) is 0.015 < 0.05. As the basis for decision making in the independent sample t-test, it can be construed that H0 is rejected and Ha is

accepted. Thus, it can be concluded that there is a significant difference between the length of writings between males and females.

From the result of the Independent Sample Test, it was known that there was a significant difference in the average length of writing where females produce more words than males. It is in line with the previous research conducted by Önem (2016) that there is a significant difference between males and females where it results in females creating a greater number of words than males do. It is also supported by Fearington, Parker, Kidder-Ashley, & Gagnon (2014) that females tended to

construct longer texts in writing than males do. The results of the Standard Deviation from males and females showed that the sample data varied. It indicates that both males and females have different lengths of writing with each other. That diversity occurred due to several factors which affected their writings.

Factors affecting the length of the writing

Based on the findings, there are two primary factors affecting the number of words or the length of writing recount text between females and males, namely the complexity of the sentences and the story development. The

elucidation of length of writing contribution in the quality of writing is discussed. They are discussed in detail as follows:

The Complexity of the sentences

The complexity of the sentences affected the length of the text, the more complex the sentences, the longer the text. The data of the complexity of the sentences by female and male students were displayed in Table 4.

Table 4. The Number of Complex Sentences Written by Female and Male Students

No.	Male Students	Complex sentence	Female students	Complex sentence
1	Male 1	10	Female 1	8
2	Male 2	4	Female 2	3
3	Male 3	8	Female 3	4
4	Male 4	9	Female 4	7
5	Male 5	4	Female 5	12
6	Male 6	6	Female 6	9
7	Male 7	3	Female 7	8
8	Male 8	2	Female 8	22
9	Male 9	2	Female 9	5
10	Male 10	3	Female 10	8
11	Male 11	7	Female 11	7
12	Male 12	9	Female 12	5
13	Male 13	2	Female 13	21
14	Male 14	1	Female 14	11
15	Male 15	1	Female 15	9
	TOTAL	71		139
	AVERAGE	4.7		9.27

The data showed that female students tended to have more complex sentences in their recount text. It was found that females wrote 9.27 complex sentences on average where the largest number of complex sentences written by a female student was 22 sentences meanwhile the smallest number of complex sentences produced by the female was 3 sentences. On the contrary, male students only produced 4-5 complex sentences in general. A male student wrote 10 complex sentences as the largest number of complex sentences written by male students. Meanwhile, the smallest number was only 1 complex sentence written by 2 male students. These findings were in line with the

study conducted by Nicolau and Sukamto (2016) who found that female students produced longer sentences and more complex sentences than male did. They were also supported by the study conducted by Peterson (2008:313) who stated that females develop longer and more complex constructions.

Furthermore, the complexity of the text was marked by subordinate conjunctions such as *when, while, even though, although* and *because*. As the findings of the study, female students were more likely to use complex sentences in writing recount texts. For example, “**when** I entered the class, I realized that I forgot to bring my homework”. Based on that example,

female students constructed the sentence with 2 independent clauses with dependent clauses. Another example was “**Even though** we were scared, we kept walking”. In addition, the complex sentences were connected by conjunctions such as *and* and *but*. It was presented in female students writing. For instance, “I told my brother to be careful **but** my brother did not listen to me **and** he fell from the motorbike”. The sentence above indicated that female students produced a more complex sentence. In contrast with female students, male students are weak in writing a complex sentence in the text. An example of male students writing was “I was very happy **when** I met my grandmother”. These findings are also similar to what Nicolau and Sukamto found in their research.

The Story Development

The story development also affected the length of the recount text. The more writers could develop their writings, the longer the results of the writings. In this case, female students tended to develop the scenes in the story by telling about what they felt at that time. It contributed to the length of the text. It was shown when the female students expressed their feelings in almost all parts of the text. Moreover, it was in contrast to male students who mostly only told a series of events and only gave less development about their feelings. Here, male students tended to be more to the point in telling the story. The analysis of sentences that represented the male and female students’ feelings in the writings were presented in Table 5.

Table 5. The Number of Sentences about Feeling Written by Female and Male Students

No.	Male Students	Sentence about Feeling	Female students	Sentence about Feeling
1	Male 1	0	Female 1	2
2	Male 2	1	Female 2	0
3	Male 3	2	Female 3	1
4	Male 4	1	Female 4	2
5	Male 5	1	Female 5	3
6	Male 6	3	Female 6	3
7	Male 7	6	Female 7	2
8	Male 8	3	Female 8	9
9	Male 9	0	Female 9	2
10	Male 10	1	Female 10	3
11	Male 11	0	Female 11	2
12	Male 12	1	Female 12	5
13	Male 13	1	Female 13	1
14	Male 14	0	Female 14	1
15	Male 15	1	Female 15	4
	TOTAL	21		40
	AVERAGE	1.4		2.5

Table 5 showed that on average, female students expressed 2.5 sentences for telling about their feelings whereas male students told about their feelings in only 1.4 sentences on average. The largest number of sentences about feeling produced by a female student was 9 sentences. However, 1 student did not write any sentences about feelings. The female students often used the adjective to express their feeling

about their experience in the text such as bad, sad, angry, disappointment, terrible, hate, shame, scared, frightened, and painful. Some examples of the female students' sentences which conveyed feelings were such as (1) “*It was very painful and terrible for me*”; (2) “*The experience was very frightening to me*”; and (3) “*It was shameful day for me*”. On the other hand, the largest number of sentences about

feeling written by the male student was 6 sentences. There were 2 students whose recount text consisted of 3 sentences of feeling. However, 4 students did not write any sentences about their feelings. They were more likely to use words such as bad, disappointed, and embarrassed to express their feeling in writing a recount text. It was shown in the sentence of the males' writing. For instance, "*It was my bad experience*".

From the data, it can be argued that female students produced more sentences about feeling compared to male students. This is in accordance with Suandari (2012) who asserted that females like to talk about feelings, relationships, and people. Moreover, it is also supported by the study investigated by Juniana (2011) who stated that females inserted feelings in writing to keep connecting relationships to others. In addition, it is connected with the study conducted by Ishikawa (2014), female students used more certain words related to

psychological cognitive processes such as mad, uneasy, remember, nervous, etc. However, males like to talk about money, business, and sports. Besides, females give the detail in her talk while males are often straight to the point. Additionally, the words conveying these feelings included happy, sad, disappointed, and afraid. Furthermore, according to Lakoff's theory (1975), females use intensifiers, hedges, tag questions, empty adjectives, and adverbs (Rubin & Greene, 1995) more than males. It is supported with the result of the study by Amir et al. (2012), female students more often used five features such as intensifying, hedging, tag questions, empty adjectives, and adverbs. These features create the impression that the users are expressive in describing something. Therefore, the use of those features can increase the length of writing.

The data of the features by female and male students were presented in Table 6.

Table 6. The Use of Five Features in Students' Writing

Features	Males		Females	
	Total frequency	Average	Total frequency	Average
Intensifying	12	0.8	37	2.3
Hedging	9	0.6	25	1.6
Tag Questions	0	0	3	0.2
Empty adjective	16	1.1	27	1.7
Adverbs	18	1.2	25	1.6

The data showed that female students were more likely to use intensifying, hedging, tag questions, empty adjectives, and adverbs in their recount-text writing. Firstly, it was found that females wrote 2.3 intensifying on average where the largest number of intensifying written by a female student was 6. However, 3 students did not write any words about intensifying. Some intensifiers used by female students were as follows: (1) it was *very* bad things; (2) we ran *so* fast; (3) I *came too* late. Meanwhile, male students produced 0.8 intensifying as an average number of intensifying used in their recount texts. They wrote 4 as the largest number of

intensifying while the smallest number was 0. It was due to the fact that 8 male students did not use any intensifying in writing recount text. An example of intensifying written by male students was "*my friend's bicycle looked very good*". This finding is in line with the study investigated by Sardabi and Afghari (2015) who stated that females produced more intensifying than males.

Secondly, the hedging in the text was more frequently used by female students. It was seen the average number of hedging used in recount text by female students was 1.6 hedging with the largest number was 4 and the smallest number was 0 as 4 students did not write any

hedging. Some examples of hedging in the text were (1) I *would* not enter the ghost house again; (2) I *thought* my brother there. In contrast, the largest number of hedging written by the male student was 2. For instance, "I hope I *would* not do that again". However, there were 9 students who did not write any hedging in the recount text.

Thirdly, tag questions were more often written by female students than male students in writing a recount text. It clearly seen in the average number of tag questions used in recount text by female students was 0.2 tag questions with the largest number was 1. Some examples of tag questions used by female students such as (1) "It was a bad day, *wasn't it?*" ;(2) "There was a problem, *wasn't it?*". Meanwhile, male students did not write any tag questions in their writing.

Furthermore, the female students mostly wrote empty adjectives in their writing with the highest total number 27 compared to male students' number of empty adjectives was 16. The largest number of empty adjectives written by female students was 3. For example, "It was a *bad* experience". Meanwhile, 2 students did not write any empty adjectives. On the other hand, male students wrote 3 empty adjectives as the largest number and 5 students did not write any empty adjectives. An example of an empty adjective written by male students was "that was my *worst* day".

Finally, female students tended to use adverbs than males did. It was proven that the average number of adverbs used by female students was 1.6 with the highest total frequency was 25. The figure is still relatively high despite the fact that there were 3 students who did not use any adverbs in their writings. An example of adverbs in the sentence written by female students was "*Suddenly*, I woke up". Otherwise, male students' average number of adverbs was 1.6 with a total frequency of 18. However, there were 5 students who did not use any adverb in their writings. An example of adverbs used in the sentence written by male students was "*Finally*, we returned to Denpasar". These findings were in line with the study conducted by Amir, Abidin, Darus, and Ismail (2012) who stated that intensifying,

hedging, tag questions, empty adjectives, and adverbs are used more by female students than male students.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

The findings of this study showed that there was a significant difference between male students and the female students in the length of writing recount text. The female students wrote longer recount text than male students. They used complex sentences in writing recount text about the theme 'their bad experience'. They tended to write a recount text more detail than students which clearly seen in the number of the complex sentence and the story development including the description of students' feelings when the event happened and the use of five features (intensifying, hedging, empty adjectives, tag questions, and adverbs). Those were factors that affected the length of students' writing.

Female students produced more complex sentences than male students which influenced the length of their writing whilst male students used more simple sentences than the female students. Females students also tended to describe their feelings in their writing that made the writing more vivid. Meanwhile, male students were straighter to the point. They focused on the events and only told about what happened without including much about their feelings which made their writing shorter than females'. In terms of five features of writing (intensifying, hedging, tag questions, empty adjectives, and adverbs), the data showed that female students produce the five features more than the male did.

The present research indicated that the length of writing contributed to the quality of the writing. It is evidenced by the complexity and the story development influenced the quality of the writing. The students' shorter lengths writing production seems to have lower quality than those who create the longer. The five features in students' writing such as Intensifying, hedging, tag questions, empty adjective, and adverbs often influence the length of writing. Therefore, the length of writing should be concerned as the attempt of developing better

teaching and learning writing in the EFL context, especially in Indonesia.

Apart from the findings, this study was not without a limitation. The limitations on the number of participants have arisen because the school has only one class for 9th grade. Therefore, it is recommended for further research to involve more participants so the results of the study can be more valid and reliable.

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