The Effect of Context on Iranian EFL Students' Amount of Speech Production of English Language and Their Ways of Using Hedging Devices

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Abstract

Socioculturally and sociolinguisticlly, gender can have a profound effect on learning and teaching English language as a foreign language. Also learning cooperatively in which both female and male students are involved seems to play a constructive role in creating and enhancing students' performance, achievement and competence of a foreign language. This study intends to determine whether male or female students will be more productive and active when co-educationally discussing the same topic together in a mixed-sex context as a bi-gender speech community regarding English as a foreign language or when either male or female students participate in the discussion as a mono-gender speech community. This study also aims at determining whether students of different gender would use different hedging devices and strategies in different contexts or there is no difference regarding the types and amount of hedging uttered by male and female students in three different contexts. One topic familiar to both groups about which both have some background knowledge will be given to all eight participants consisting of 4 male and 4 female students. The whole utterances during the discussion will be taped and video-recorded, and then it will be analyzed. The findings may provide us with some significant implications both for gaining higher production performance ability and higher linguistic competence of English as a foreign language which can be of use in both English teaching and learning processes.

Keywords: Co-education, Gender, mixed-sex context, Sociolinguistics, Speech community

1. Introduction

With the advent of communicative language teaching approach, the research underwent a shift from the mastery of linguistic points and grammatical issues toward attaining a competence of communicative abilities. In this regard, lot of research dealing with communications and conversations were conducted. (McCroskey & Richmond, 1990; McCroskey, 1992; Zakahi & McCroskey, 1989)

Before this, researchers contend that just individual variables are important in speech communities, but MacIntyre, et al. (1998) stated that both individual and contextual variables are important in a communication, refuting the findings by McCroskey & Richmond (1987) stating that just individual variables should be taken into consideration during a communication. From now on, context was considered as a conducive variable playing an important and essential role in speech communities and conversations.

If we consider gender as an individual variable and situation of communication as a contextual variable, we can claim that gender and context are at the heart of communications and conversations. As a matter of paradigm shift in psychology, in shifting from structuralism to functionalism, gender came to be considered as one type of individual difference.

Also a very essential categorization distinguished and survived in all human societies from the beginning of life is gender. Much earlier than any other categorization, it emerges in human life as a source of determining individual as well as social identity. Language and gender can be regarded as an interdisciplinary field of study, covering several different aspects of (written and spoken) language. But we should not forget that Language, gender and social context are so interrelated that cannot be separated easily.

It should be noted that the current study is twofold having two different objectives: First, attempts are made to show the amount of speech production in three different contexts; second, the research seeks to show whether the hedging phrase "you know" is used differently by students of different gender in three various contexts.

Given the importance of context and gender in language learning and teaching, this study is targeted toward finding the possible effect of mixed-sex context in particular and context in general on the EFL students' amount of speech production of English language and also their tentative different ways of using hedging devices and strategies in three different contexts: two single-sex contexts and one mixed-sex context while the main focus is on " you know" as one of the mostly used hedges in English. In fact, we want to know whether Iranian female students use hedges and particularly "you know" in their conversations or the male ones, and also how the frequency of using this kind of speech strategy is different in three various context between girls and boys.

2. Review of literature

Gender-based differences and English language context were found to be factors that may affect students' academic achievements and their performance as well. A major topic in sociolinguistics is the connection, if any, between the structures, vocabularies, amount and ways of using particular languages and the social roles of the men and women who speak these languages. Do the men and women who speak a particular language use it in different ways?

From around the 1970s there has been an increasing interest, in several countries, in gender, context and language use in educational settings.

The idea that women and men use language differently has a long history within 'folk linguistics', a term used by some researchers to refer to sets of popular beliefs about language which most of them have been refuted, for example there is a belief that women are like chatterboxes speaking more than men, but some studies have shown that in mixed-sex context men speak twice women (Kramer 1974; Gass and Varonis, 1986; Pica et al., 1989; Shehade, 1999).

Male speech and female speech have been observed to differ in their form, topic, content, and use. Early writers were largely introspective in their analyses; more recent work has begun to provide empirical evidence. Hass (1979) came to this conclusion that "Men may be more loquacious and directive; they use more nonstandard forms, talk more about sports, money, and business, and more frequently refer to time, space, quantity, destructive action, perceptual attributes, physical movements, and objects. Women are often more supportive, polite, and expressive, talk more about home and family, and use more words implying feeling, evaluation, interpretation, and psychological state". (P. 616)

Early research in the 1970s and 1980s documented patterns of difference and disadvantage in relation to girls' and boys' language behavior in the classroom. Boys were generally observed to have a more competitive speaking style, and girls were more cooperative. Within the classroom, this allowed boys to dominate mixed-gender talk. Boys' interactional dominance was supported by teachers, who often made unnecessary distinctions between girls and boys; accepted certain behavior from boys but not from girls.

Empirical studies of gender and talk have documented several specific features of conversational style that are said to differentiate between female and male speakers. Examples of these are:

Amount of talk: male speakers have been found to talk more than females, particularly in formal or public contexts.

Interruptions: male speakers interrupt female speakers more than vice versa.

Conversational support: female speakers more frequently use features that provide support and encouragement for other speakers, for example 'minimal responses' such as mmh and yeah.

tentativeness: there are claims that female speakers use features that make their speech appear tentative and uncertain, such as 'hedges' that weaken the force of an utterance ('I think maybe . . .', 'sort of', 'you know') and certain types of 'tag questions' (questions tagged on to statements, such as ('It's so hot, isn't it?').

Compliments: a wider range of compliments may be addressed to women than to men, and women also tend to pay more compliments. (adopted from Rajend Mesthrie and et al. (2000),pp.225-226) (For more detailed discussion of this and other evidence from earlier studies, see Coates 1998; Crawford 1995; Graddol and Swann 1989; Holmes 1995.).

Since the study also intends to determine the effects of context on Iranian EFL students' use of hedging devices in three different contexts, it seems logical to review the literature about hedging devices and strategies used by students of different gender in various contexts.

Lakoff (1972) in a salient article named "Hedges: a study of meaning criteria" discussed the problems of vagueness and fuzziness in language and applied the term "hedge" to those words "whose job is to make things fuzzier or less fuzzy" (p. 471).

Hedging has received much attention in casual conversation as a means to facilitate turn-taking, show politeness, mitigate face-threats, but it is also considered as a means to convey vagueness purposely.

In his article, Cabanes (2007) counted three important functions for the hedges as types of discourse modulation devices: First, they can express the authors' wish to show difference and politeness towards their audiences; Secondly, they seem to be in an indication of the authors' need to protect themselves against the negative consequences of being proved wrong; and lastly, there are evidence of the authors' consideration of the required degree of precision in their texts.

In any case, hedging represents an important aspect of language where the appropriate use of hedges reflects efficient social interaction by showing the ability to express degrees of certainty and mastering rhetorical strategies required under certain circumstances.

The study of hedging has been carried out constantly over the last twenty years. Literature includes various works on the topic where labels such as compromisers (James, 1983), downtoners (Quirk et al. 1972), weakeners (Brown and Levinson, 1987), and softeners (Crystal and Davy, 1975) are used.

Such labels include lexical verbs (e.g.: seem, tend, appear), modals (e.g.: may, might) and some adverbs (probably, perhaps), although condition clauses, passive voices, and impersonal phrases have also been included

However, notwithstanding the importance given to hedging, little is known about the distribution or use in different contexts between the two genders: males and females.

One analysis of how women are presented in a set of cartoons produced some interesting findings [Kramer, 1974; cited in Ronald Wardhaugh (1986)]. The cartoons were taken from thirteen issues of The New Yorker magazine published between February 17 and May 12, 1973. The analysis showed that, when both genders were represented in the cartoon, men spoke twice as much as women. In the cartoons men and women also spoke on different topics, with men holding forth on such topics as business, politics, legal matters, taxes, and sports, and women on social life, books, food and drink, life's troubles, and lifestyle. Women spoke less forcefully than men, and men swore much more than women. Men were also more blunt and to the point in their speaking. There was also some evidence that the use of words like nice and pretty was gender-linked.

While popular conceptualizations of gender and its relation to language are grounded in a fairly clear-cut dichotomy between males and females, decades of scholarship on language and gender has revealed that this is not true anymore.

More recent research on language and gender, in education as in other settings, has tended to reject a strict 'binary' distinction between female and male language users, emphasizing instead different forms of femininity/masculinity and the intersection between these and other factors—'race,' class, etc. Such research also emphasizes performativity: femininity/ masculinity as contextualized practices, rather than fixed attributes.

This movement from simple female–male difference to gender diversity (e.g. Cameron 2005) leads to more focus on differences within traditionally conceived gender groups (i.e. male, female). Girls and boys develop neither at the same biological rate nor at the same cognitive rate. Since girls generally develop earlier than boys, researchers often attribute their superior early reading skills in part to this biological factor (Halpern, 2006).

Wodak (1997b, p. 13) says that gender is 'not . . . a pool of attributes "possessed" by a person, but . . . something a person "does." ' Elsewhere (1997a, p. 4) she adds that 'what it means to be a woman or to be a man [also] changes from one generation to the next and . . . varies between different racialized, ethnic, and religious groups, as well as for members of different social classes.' In such a view, gender must be learned anew in each generation.

Gender is also something we cannot avoid; it is part of the way in which societies are ordered around us, with each society doing that ordering differently. As Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (2003, p. 50) say: 'The force of gender categories in society makes it impossible for us to move through our lives in a nongendered way and impossible not to behave in a way that brings out gendered behavior in others.'

The question of single-sex or mixed-sex context and the effect of gender have been studied and discussed by many researchers. In the past few decades, extensive controversial studies have been carried out on the effects of single-sex and mixed-sex classrooms and schools on students' achievements and performance. But the number of studies examining the effect of these contexts and students' gender, especially mixed-sex context on the amount of speech delivered by the participants is just a few.

Regarding single-sex contexts, Brutsaert and Houtte (2002) demonstrated consistent tendencies for pupils in single-sex classroom to outperform their peers in coeducational classroom. These pupils had greater success in the national School Certificate examinations, higher Burt reading scores and greater school retention.

We can also refer to Sax et al. (2009) collecting data from 6,842 women who graduated from 250 all-girls high schools, and 19,327 women graduated from 2,047 coeducational high schools. The study found that women graduates of single-sex schools exhibited higher academic engagement and were more likely to engage in group study than their coeducational counterparts. They showed higher self-confidence in their academic ability, their speaking, and writing.

As Brutsaert (2001) claims, single-sex school girls show considerably lower levels of stress than their co-educational counterparts. Chambers (2005) reported that male students were less embarrassed in the absence of girls and could talk to each other in the target language "without feeling stupid" (p.50).

One reason can be the absence of opposite sex, in this case there exists a less competitive environment which lowers students' anxiety and consequently raises their self-image and self-confidence.

In a mixed-sex environment, the presence of the other sex creates a kind of peer pressure. Burgess (1990) suggested that achievement, self-esteem and willingness to take an active role are endangered in mixed schools (cited by Robinson & Smithers, 1999).

In the last twenty years, there has been a wide range of interest in the relationship between gender, language use and the context of education. Academic research was dominated by white, well-educated males who were preoccupied with the co-variation of language and social class, age and ethnicity. Their androcentrism sprang from a sense that men and people were the same thing (this is sometimes called the 'male as- norm' approach). In other words, women tended to be invisible in sociolinguistic research. This changed in the 1970s with the publication of an article – later a slim book – Language and Woman's Place (1975) by Robin Lakoff, a female sociolinguist based at the University of California,

Berkeley. Lakoff drew attention to a wide range of gender differences in language use and argued that these differences were directly related to the relative social power of male speakers and relative powerlessness of female speakers.

Extrapolating the findings of MacIntyre and Charos (1996), if foreign language learners lack the opportunity for constant interaction in the L2, they should be less likely to increase their perceived competence, willingness to communicate, and frequency of communication. Gardner (1996) discussed two sets of possible outcomes that result from language learning situations: linguistic and nonlinguistic. Linguistic outcomes are those skills that involve language material. Nonlinguistic outcomes involve such things as satisfaction with the experience, attitudes, motivation, and anxiety (Gardner, 1996, p. 34).

Linguists have approached language and gender from a variety of perspectives. [Jennifer Coates (2004) cited in Carmen Llamas, Louise Mullany and Peter Stockwell (2007)]

These can be labeled the deficit approach, the dominance approach, the difference approach and the social constructionist approach. In fact, at any one time these different approaches could be described as existing in a state of tension with each other. It is probably true to say, though, that most researchers now adopt a social constructionist approach.

The deficit approach was characteristic of the earliest work in the field. Best known is Lakoff 's Language and Woman's Place, which claims to establish something called 'women's language' (WL), which is characterized by linguistic forms such as hedges, 'empty' adjectives like charming, divine, nice, and 'talking in italics' (exaggerated intonation contours). WL is described as weak and unassertive, in other words, as deficient. Implicitly, WL is deficient by comparison with the norm of male language.

The second approach – the dominance approach – sees women as an oppressed group and interprets linguistic differences in women's and men's speech in terms of men's dominance and women's subordination. Researchers using this model are concerned to show how male dominance is enacted through linguistic practice. 'Doing power' is often a way of 'doing gender' too

The third approach – the difference approach – emphasizes the idea that women and men belong to different subcultures. The 'discovery' of distinct male and female subcultures in the 1980s seems to have been a direct result of women's growing resistance to being treated as a subordinate group.

It is worth noting that any differences that do exist in gendered speech surely also must interact with other factors, e.g., social class, race, culture, discourse type, group membership, etc.

Despite the large numbers of studies on the relationships between gender, language learning and the context, no general agreement has been reached regarding the effects of different context and students' gender. Some studies favor single-sex context (Barton, 1998; Chambers, 2005; Cheng et al., 1995; Woodward et al., 1999, 2002) while the others advocate mixed-sex one (Marsh, 1989; Price, 1993; West & Hunter, 1993). However, there are a number of studies reporting no difference in achievement of single and mixed context (Miller & Dale, 1974; Rutter et al., 1979).

 Some ended with the findings that female students outperform males in some scientific areas. For example, Le Thi Kieu Van (2000) conducted a research in Vietnam to determine the impact of gender on a student's oral performance and whether girls perform better than boys in learning ESP. The findings were that a majority of males in both classes did not perform as well as females in giving the presentations. The girls also took a more dominant role in classroom conversations. Generally, girls were better in learning language and appreciated language learning believing it would be good for their future career, while boys seemed to underestimate the importance of language skills.

As another article, we can refer to an article conducted by Najwa Al-Mously and her colleagues (2013) in Saudi Arabia to see the impact of gender and English language on the academic performance of students. They found that Saudi female students demonstrated superior academic performance to male students in pre-clinical courses at medical school. Female students significantly outscored their male counterpart in most of the Basic Medical Sciences as well as in English courses for all students in the two cohorts.

Furthermore, in another seminal study about the role of gender and immersion in communication and second language orientations, Susan C. Baker and Peter D. MacIntyre (2000) found that substantial differences exist in the nonlinguistic outcomes between the immersion and the non-immersion students. The immersion students reported lower L2 anxiety, higher L2 communication competence, greater willingness to communicate in the L2, and more frequent L2 communication. They added that among the immersion students, anxiety was strongly correlated with willingness to communicate, but among the non-immersion students, perceived competence was the key factor in predicting willingness to communicate. This suggests that the influences of the variables underlying WTC might change over time as students gain greater experience in the second language.

Also in a recent study carried out in Iran, Taheryan, A. and Ghonsooly, B. (2014) found that Iranian students studying English as a foreign language in a single-sex context are more willing to communicate than their counterparts studying in a mixed-sex context. Also, it was found that Iranian males enjoy higher amount of willingness to communicate than females.

It is worth noting that as Shehadeh (1999) aptly put it some gender differences are socioculturally bound. In other word, it is the society which defines opposite sex relationship meaning that in some cultures males and females can communicate freely, while in others, there may exist some special framework for such relationships. Iran is an Islamic country and since Islam dictates that males and females should remain separate from puberty (Haw, 1994; Osier &

Hussain, 1995; Shaikh & Kelly, 1989), schools are single-sex from primary school to high school and just universities have mixed-sex classes. English is taught in schools as a subject from junior high school with the emphasis on reading skills and structures. Unlike public schools, private language institutes are held both in single-sex and mixed-sex form. Here, we see a fundamental shift in Iranian students' English as foreign language learning from single-sex contexts of public schools to mixed-sex context of private language institutes which may have some profound effects on the students' English language learning, speaking and even on their social behaviors and attitudes as a linkage to Sapir-Whorf theory.

3. Research questions

Does a mixed-sex context have any significant effect on Iranian EFL students' amount of speech production of English language? (On which kind of gender this effect, if any, is more salient?)

What is the effect of context on students' ways of using hedging devices regarding two different sexes? (In which context do the students use more hedgings and this is done by which gender?)

4. Methodology

4.1 Participants and setting

The participants enrolled in the study are selected in a convenience fashion. 8 B.A. English literature students, 4 female and 4 male students with almost the same age and the approximate level of speaking ability whom all have passed six terms of education are chosen. By such selection, the researcher has tried to control and diminish the possible effects of such variables as age, previous English language experience and speaking competence of the students as much as possible. Before data collection stage, the participants were asked to enter a 5-minute interview session in order for the researcher to be able to attain the appropriate and necessary ethnographic information based on which the most appropriate participants would be selected. 8 out of 10 students interviewed had the necessary and predetermined features. The participants were studying at Persian Gulf University of Bushehr at the time of the research and the research was conducted at this university.

All transcribed data are included in the appendix. Students A, B, C and D are male students and students E, F, G, and H are female students.

4.2 Instrumentation and procedure

After receiving a concise report and ethnographic information during the interview, the researcher video- and audiotaped three different sessions.

In order to lessen the Hawthorne effect as much as possible, the researcher asked participants to feel totally free and think as if they are not being video-taped. They were also asked to be relaxed and think that they are attending a real conversation and all of them can take the role of chair-person during the conversation.

In the first session, just the 4 male students were sitting around each other carrying out a 15-minute conversation. The next session was conducted in such a way that in which just the 4 female students were involved in a 15-minute conversation. The topic of conversation for these two sessions was the same: "the relationship before marriage should or should not be restricted". In the third session, all 8 students, both males and females were involved. In this session, students attended the conversation for about 30 minutes. Because the number of students was doubled, the time allocated to the conversation was doubled as well; also the topic here was changed to "the marriage".

In order to help the participants lead the conversations, first of all, they were gives some statements and definitions in their mother tongue, for example the definitions of love and arranged marriage. Then, the students were given some questions related to the topic under discussion, which some of them are put in appendix 2.

In the first two sessions, two single sex contexts, the topic under discussion was kept constant because we wanted to control possible effect of topic on the students' amount of speech and the speech strategies used; also we did not want the topic have any significant impacts the students' ways of speaking. But, in the last session since the ideas and experiences from the previous two sessions might give them some willingness, attitudes and capabilities to communicate more and help them increase their amount of speech during conversations, the researcher changed the topic from 'relationships before marriage' in the first two sessions to 'marriage' in the last session that is mixed-sex context. The two topics are to a great extent related to each other to give this feeling and impression to students that the topic is somehow familiar to them.

It should be reminded that there was also a significant increase in the amount of time allocated to the two first sessions and the final session. In another word, the amount of time was doubled from the 15 minutes in the first two sessions to 30 minutes in the last session. The rationale behind this change in time is that the amount of time would affect the amount of students' speech and increase or decrease of the students' speech could be justified or refuted as a matter of time.

4.3 Data analysis

Data collected from all three sessions were transcribed. Two 15-minute sessions and one 30-minute session were transcribed carefully by the researcher according to the three video- and audio-taped sessions. Then the transcriptions were rotated and analyzed carefully by the researcher, and the differences, similarities and the amount of speech delivered by each student and each three different sessions were compared and contrasted.

Also transcriptions were analyzed using software called Atlas.ti in order to count the total number of words uttered by each student during each session and to classify and to quantify the number of hedges " you know" used in three various sessions by different students, as well . The transcriptions were digitized and stored in Atlas.ti, a software package for qualitative data analysis. This program enables researchers to store, read, code, and variably search large amounts of text in order to discover particular thematic or linguistic patterns, to count the number of tokens of a particular code, or to discover relationships between various codes and various texts or subjects.

The transcribed data of the sessions in which the girls and the boys were involved and video-recorded separately was given to the Atlas software. Then the transcribed data of the last session in which both male and female students involved was given to the software and the amount of speech and the total number of words, the number of "you know" hedges uttered by each student and frequency of each word were determined.

5. Results and discussions

The analysis of the transcribed data of all three sessions, done carefully by the researcher itself, totally confirms the findings of the previous research with men speaking more than women when it comes at mixed- sex context.

Table 1. Single-sex context

Single-sex context Total number of uttered words	
Females	Males
1540	1462

Regarding single-sex context, Atlas.ti software shows that in a single-sex context, when either boys or girls are involved in the conversation, female students show more willingness to communicate and their total number of uttered words is higher than their counterpart gender, male students in the same single-sex context where just male students are involved in a conversation.

Also the output of the software, which I have put them in appendix part, shows that girls' amount of speech is 78 words higher than those of men in single-sex contexts. In other words; in the first two sessions when each gender is participating in a conversation alone, female students take more time to speak and use more words in the conversation when just females are participating in the conversation.

In other words, the total amount of words uttered by males in a single-sex context, where just female students attended a conversation, is about 1462 words, but the total amount of words uttered by males in a single-sex context is about 1540.

Table 2. Total number of hedging device "you know" uttered in single-sex context by either or female students

Single-sex context Total number of hedging device "you know"	
Females alone	Males alone
16	4

Regarding conversational strategies of using of the hedging device "you know", Table 2 shoes that female students in the single-sex context, where just females are involved in the conversation, have produced "you know" 16 times as a hedging device, while male students in the single-sex context, where just males are involved in the conversation, have produced "you know" 4 times as a hedging device, indicating that female students have used hedging device "you know" as a conversational strategy four times more than male ones.

Table 3. Mixed-sex context

Mixed-sex context Total number of uttered words	
Females	Males
1431	1613

The software output also indicated that in a mixed-sex context, men speak more than women, they have more willingness to communicate and their amount of speech production becomes higher and increases when they are participating in a conversation in which female students are also involved.

The total amount of words uttered by males in a mixed-sex context, where both male and female students attended a conversation, is about 1613 words, but the total amount of words uttered by males in a single-sex context is about 1431.

Table 3 indicates that male students have talked more than female ones in a mixed-sex context. Males have uttered about 182 words more than females in a conversation in which both students of both genders are involved.

Table 4. Total number of hedging device "you know" uttered in mixed-sex context by either or female students

Mixed-sex context Total number of hedging device "you know"	
Females	Males
26	6

Regarding the use of hedging device "you know" as a conversational strategy, table 4 indicates that female students have produced "you know" as a conversational strategy 26 times while the male students have produced it 6 times in a mixed-sex context, where both males and females are attending a conversation. Like that of single-context, female students have produced hedging device "you know" more than males in mixed-sex context and females have uttered this kind of conversational strategy almost 4 times higher than males both single- and mixed-contexts.

Going further into the details of the transcribed data, we can refer to the place of the hedging device "you know" regarding the sentence in which such hedges occurred.

Table 5. The position of hedging device "you know" uttered by males in a single-sex context

Total	4
Beginning of sentence	3
Middle of sentence	1
End of sentence	0

As table 5 shows the male participants in a single-sex context have uttered 3 "you knows" at the beginning of sentence, 1 at the middle of sentence and no "you know" at the end of sentence.

Table 6. The position of hedging device "you know" uttered by females in a single-sex context

Total	16
Beginning of sentence	6
Middle of sentence	9
End of sentence	1

As table 6 shows the female participants in a single-sex context have uttered 6 "you knows" at the beginning of sentence, 9 at the middle of sentence and just one "you know" at the end of sentence.

Table 7. The position of hedging device "you know" uttered by females and males in a mixed-sex context

Gender	Females	Males
Total	20	6
Beginning of sentence	10	5
Middle of sentence	9	1
End of sentence	1	0

Generally, the findings show that the amount of words uttered by the girls in a single-sex situation is much more than the amount of words produced by the boys in the same context. In other words, men speak less than women in a situation where there is just one gender in the conversation.

But analyzing the data of the third session, that is, in a mixed-sex conversation, indicates that the amount of words uttered by male students is more than those of female students. Here, the males have more tendencies to speak and continue the communication. Furthermore, Female students have made more use of hedging device "you know" as a conversational strategy than the male students in both types of context.

The findings seems to a great extent to be in line with the findings indicated by Taheryan, A. and Ghonsooly, B. (2014) which is also a study conducted in Iran showing that students studying in single-sex contexts enjoy higher amount of

willingness to communicate and propensity to talk and keep communicating and also males are more willing to communicate than females in the contexts both genders are included.

6. Conclusion

Overall, this study found that women and females speak more than males in a single-sex context in which just females are involved. In contrary, men and males students speak more than females in mixed-sex contexts. In other words, men speak less when they are involved in a conversation which is just comprised of men, but they would speak more than their female counterparts when the opposite sex is also included in the conversation.

Also regarding the use of hedging device "you know" as a conversational strategy, female students' use of such kind of hedging is almost 4 times more than males in both single- and mixed-sex contexts.

The findings of the study totally confirm the results of previous research stating that males tended to have a more competitive speaking style, and girls were more cooperative. Within the classroom and conversions, this gender-specific feature allowed boys to dominate mixed-gender talk.

There are some limitations in the current study. One which worth considering is that the findings of this study are restricted one particular EFL context, that is, our country. In other words, due to the learning situation of Iran (public schools are single-sex); these findings cannot be generalized over other EFL learners outside Iran.

A major limitation of this study is that since the subcultures within the general culture of Iran, also their family status and quality of life may affect the students' way and amount of speech which these factors are difficult to be determined. Another factor which may affect the students' way and amount of speech can be counted as students' previous experience with language, such as attending language institutes which may give them more motivation to talk.

These findings offer a significant contribution to the existing body of knowledge in the field especially with regard to the fact that studies of this kind have not been conducted in Iran as an EFL context and in many other countries. Future research needs to address qualitative aspects of the effect and also consider the effects of students' background knowledge, family status and their culture on their amount of production.

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Appendix 1:

The transcriptions of the three sessions:

Single-Sex Session: 1-First Session

Boys alone

Student A: First of all, marriage is very important and in every country and provinces, people have certain age for getting marriage that is natural. There are many dimensions and criteria when people are getting married. Even in some countries, some boys are still bachelor and some girls are still ... .You know it. But my question is this: before getting married, there are some criteria for boys and girls; it is a total difference quite different. How do you occur to define this relationship between these two different genders, sexes? How are going to define it? They should be free before getting married, we call it love marriage, meaning a person becomes volunteer and goes and marries to his/her favorite consort, without being controlled from his/her father, mother/ parents. And the second one we are going to talk about is later. But the first one, we are going to talk about it. What do you think? How are you going to define it?

Student B: Thank you very much, in deed, for your questions. It is a very good question, I think for our generation we are in it. But I think in this definite moment they pose a factor which we should refer to it. We have a controlled relationship with our girlfriends. O.K.? It is important. If we have a good relationship and we were in the control of our family, it may help us to use them and know how to improve this relationship. But there are other factors which are against them; it is time for one of you having such attitude which we can discuss it.

Student C: Sorry, I want to ask you a question in order to continue this discussion. What kind of control do you think?

Student B: O.k. the control. Defining the control is, we do our works…… our relationships should be consulted with them. For example, if we want to go out to our Coffee or other places that is…maybe not appropriate for our gender. They should… we should consult it with them. For example, they want…we want to go to for example, the market to buy something o.k.? What should we buy for our girlfriend? And the other factor that our family should refer to it is, for example, our family stage is in a middle class in the society, because terribly in contrast with the animals we cannot live without our relationships. For example, my wife, em… the brother of my wife will be the uncle of my boy. This is important, the family is very important. This should be and could be understood be the other families. This is important.

Student D: You know, nowadays relationship between girl and boy has been totally different from last centuries. Some people in the overseas, in the foreign countries have really liberal relationships so that they will have problems, problems like corruption, and some bad effects on the society and they will get full from each other, they will have no real impression on each other and just want to satisfy their requirements, their sexual requirements just these ones. But when you will have arranged relationships, you will be committed to some points, em ...to some rules.

Student B: Right. Other exceptions should be considered. After these information that we got from the other friends, ok, but before doing that and referring to the factors that you referred to, we need to have right information about our fiancé, for example if we don't have any information about their society or community that we want to talk about it, we cannot get other steps, Ok.?... But I think, according to our …. , You know, this…. It will be considered in Iran, not other countries, we are in Iran and it is important for us, but it is no problem if your attitude is different. Ok? But what I want to refer to is that when we want to talk, for example marriage in Iran the important factor that will affect our relationships is the religion, we cannot ignore it at all.

Student A: But something is very important here, I cannot concord to stated decision, you said that religion is important, isn't it? But could you define a little more, I mean could you clarify it. For example you are going to marry your favorite consort; I think religion here is not that much important, you are gonna consult somebody or you are parents or you are gonna even your consultant to find your way. But here religion ….(Interrupted).

Student B: Here religion is not important for what?

Student A: religion is not that much important. Because I think you bolded it, hyper emphasized it.

Student B: You are right. Out of this it is important. But I just considered my point of view toward it; I said that religion is an important factor. But you (D) said that ….. (Interrupted)

Student A: But you didn't answer my question? For example you are going to get marry a girl, right? You are going to tell your parents, mother, and father that you are going to get marry to whomever. Here, the religion… surely you believe in God, surely you believe in the almighty God, surely you believe in the messenger, in the prophet whoever, I cannot get your points. You are getting married……(Interrupted).

Student D: He wants to say we have to control the whole to the part; you have to consider all aspects of the points.

Student B: Yes, in this case what is important is the election. It is related to the personality, it is related to the person who wants to marry not others. If his information and point of view is in this way, he will satisfy to elect it, choose it. If he had another point of view, he would go to another case. It is related to the person and culture that… and his point of view. For example, when I want a girl and when I want to marry a person that her religious affair is in this way, it means I like it. Ok?

Student D: In my opinion, you have to choose your own wife. You are the person who has to decide for your own future. O.k. let's put the question in another way; does it have negative effects if couple know each other before marriage?

Student A: You, before getting married, how and to what extent they should know each other?

Student C: The first step, at the beginning we can say they meet each other somewhere or someone introduce them to each other, then they will get start to talk to each other, know about each other, their personality…

Student D: But there are some problems in Iran, when we want to have some free relations with a girl, we will be restricted, and we will be arrested.

 Student A: Well, you know…. (Interrupted).

 Student C: Sorry, It also depends on what kind of relation you want to take. If you want to take her hands and go around on streets….

Student D: You have some rights in Iran for your own, you have to be free. For example you have a wife, you go to a park, you want to sit on the bench and talk to your wife, and some people will come to you and says what the relation between you and your wife is.

Student A: You know, what you said is natural in my country, in my province. Yeah? But I wanna ask you Do you think it is good, it is conducive to consult your parents that I like somebody, I want to go out with her/him and I think it will be a little easier for you to go out with somebody, I think it is easier, or if you consult your parents, or either one of them; your mother or father.

Student D: our parents have some traditional beliefs. They have some restricted thoughts.

Student B: Yes, that traditional belief relate to their culture. Right? Can you change your culture?

Student A: Surely the roles of parents are really important and conducive, because their experiences, their more experiences than we have.

Student B: So it is important. Now, we want to draw a conclusion about these factors we considered. The important factor is our parents and their experiences as the backgrounds of the family and religion and their culture. Their experiences are important, so when we use the… when we consult our parents, we use their experiences. Their experiences are important, so the consultant with them is important. What is the effect of culture?

Student D: If you want to have a really restricted relation, if you don't marry it will be better. But I think every body's culture depends on his oneself. Let me add something, we have to consider the whole situation and select the best item.

Student A: As a result, if I want to draw a conclusion, as I told you consult, if you consult with your parents, it will help your life, because they are more experienced than you. It is good and I personally will consult.

Student C: Love marriage is sexual marriage, not a real marriage, and arranged marriage will be a disaster, couple cannot know each other and we are gonna have no choice. But I think restricted marriage with so principles according to our culture, religion and also our beliefs are important. We are gonna consult our parents and others to go out and know more each other.

Student B: Thanks a lot for this conversation. To draw a conclusion, what is important for our future is that if the relations will be in control of our family.

Single-Sex Session: 2- Second Session

Girls alone

Student E: So what do you think, do you think it should be arranged, I mean the marriage. Should we have a relationship between marriage? To be in a loved relationship or to be in no relationship?

Student F: You know, I think that love marriage cannot be acceptable in our society, so I am not going to talk about this, and to some extent I hate the arranged one. What should I say? It is not for today, it is like traditional and old…

Student G: It is absurd, having no meaning. I mean … as you know, we see arranged marriage a lot; it is an important thing in Iran, but most of them have ended in divorce, I've seen them a lot, girls at my age have divorced.

Student H: With a baby, sometimes with a baby, because they think that… ok, now we are a couple, we could have a baby, them everything will be all right.

Student E: They think that a child will bring the happiness, but it is not true.

Student H: I prefer neither the love marriage nor the traditional one. I think according to our culture and religion and especially my family backgrounds, I prefer a relationship which is restricted. This way I prefer the relationship before marriage.

Student E: But I have another idea. An arranged marriage is different from introducing two people together to; for example, they get to know each other for a couple before marriage? Is that different, this definition is better. You know,

I think it is really good to do. Maybe a girl in a place is with no suitor, and you say they are cousin, let them know each other, with the family…(Interrupted).

Student G: The relationship after will be good, it will not be arranged marriage. It will be something like …, and when they got know each other, if we let them know to get to know each other, I think it will be good as same as love marriage. And by the way, about what you said, you did not really agree with the love marriage, if you have, you can actually, what do we mean by love marriage? It means that we should love sb, and know that person then marry that person. It is a really good marriage; it is the best marriage, so you know, as for me I don't want to be restricted, not like family. I don't care about family background, I care about myself, I want my family let me do whatever I want, but I myself should be careful about what I do.

Student F: Yeah. You mean you have your own rights.

Student G: Yes, they can teach me something, you know, tell me…. You know, they can advise me, but not tell me what to do, I don't like that, I want to choose myself.

Student F: You know, I think important to know how to make a love marriage happen. I know, for example one of my friends is in love for four or five years with a person, you know, he didn't even see her for, I think two years. It is so strange, they were in a university, and they know each other from the university, and now he is in his hometown, and she is in her city. They are far from each other, they just contact with each other through texts, phones, Internet and chats, or something like that, I don't like this one, to have a good love marriage, I think you should be beat that person, you should, you know, go out with him or her, you should, I don't know experience everything, but you should have your experience too. I don't know how to say it… it is a rule-governed relationship that can, you know, help you to know each other by contacting each other face-to-face.

Student H: Actually what you said is completely right, but I am still against being couples free with each other in their relationships before marriage.

Student F: Yeah. I think, right now, that it is accepted in Iran that you can have white marriage, and they let their children, to live with each other and….(Interrupted).

Student E: It is not accepted, you know, there is nothing in the birth certificate, even accepted by the religion, I mean … or whatever, there is nothing in the birth certificate at the point they got married, or they got love married in Iran. But, in the west it is very different, they do not marry…(Interrupted).

Student F: They live with each other in the same house, it is not good. Because, you know,… (Interrupted)

Student H: It is not acceptable in our country, but it is usual in other countries.

Student F: No, it is just line western countries, but the difference is that, O.k. we put our religious beliefs into this marriage, so it is like western countries.

Student E: I think, it is preferable to me the intention of the western culture, that culture that western countries have, they become fiancé…(Interrupted).

Student G: Is that possible? I have not heard of it.

Student H: I heard even in Iran. Actually the problem is that we ignore everything the culture, what people would say, how it would seem, I think if we just consider the consequences which come of the relationship, you will hear it. We hear that in western countries, there are so many single mothers, you should be… (interrupted).

Student G: These are not the consequences that happen only in Iran, but in other countries as well. They live together for marriage, and then they marry. It will be clear.

Student H: There are some rules in Iran; they don't have problems with such kids. My uncle has a kindergarten in France and says that there are so any children who are illegitimate and he takes cares of them. But we cannot accept it in our country.

Student F: We cannot accept that, but you know, it is a thing that happens in Iran too, but you know, it is just the secret one, the secret happening that we cannot hear about that foe example in radio, television or news, but it is accepted in western countries, they say that O.K. I have this illegitimate son or daughter, yeah, it is accepted, but in our country it is secret. But happens, surely happens.

Student E: Not as much as western countries.

Student F: Are you sure about that?

Student E: It is a great number, but not as much as western countries. Who knows?

Student F: I know, because the number of single pregnant girls is increasing in Iran. I cannot say about that…If you have heard about the rate it is much more than western countries.

Student G: Maybe the reason is that they like being mother. I mean it is not that bad, I mean, I know they are not married but are pregnant without being married, without being bad I mean… they can adopt children. They want to bring them up… they do not want them to be like that. Maybe at the moment of getting marriage they have trouble. Is any restriction? Why can't see?

Student F: But girls… pregnant girls in Iran, after that, they will have no place in country. I think society just puts it somewhere and it is not good.

Student G: And children will not have a place…(Interrupted).

Student F: Yeah and children too, so we should be more careful about this kind of marriage. Ok. Now which kind of marriage do you prefer to have? I somehow agree with the Fateme. I just like my parents' advice. Ok? But I don't want to be under their rules… I want to be supported by them, to be friends, if… kind of interesting way for me to talk about my problems in my relationships with my mom and my dad, they help me, they guide me, but not to put me in some kinds of rules that you must leave him or, I don't know we will punish you or…

Student E: You know, there are some families that their daughter, especially daughter, has married like Fateme, but they don't let their daughter go out with her husband, it is so strange. It is religiously, socially, mean everything is accepted. What is…. (Interrupted).

Student G: let's come back to the point, we need to talk about what happens before marriage. Right?

Student H: It depends on their society, their families, their views….

Student E: Ok. Before marriage, what kind of relationship do you prefer?

Student F: The family should know, but without rules.

Student E: Without any restriction. Let me explain. I myself don't believe in love before marriage. I mean there must affection, a kind of like, and no love. And then, you should… I'm that kind of person when I get… I feel better around someone, feel good around someone, this person is surly a good person, it is proved? And i…. (Interrupted).

Student G: But not proved? Are you sure about this?

Student F: For her it is proved.

Student G: Sorry to interrupt you.

Student E: But what I believe, I don't believe in hot love before marriage and the family should know when you met someone whom you think that can you can be in a good relation after marriage and them you can go out together to know each other better, you know, em…. (Interrupted)

Student F: What if your parents don't let you to do that.

Student G: You said that when you are sure that person is a good husband for you, you will tell to your family, right? How can you get sure, before having a relationship with him? You have to have a relationship in order to tell your family.

Student E: You cannot see a person in the street and said that he is a good husband for me. You know it from a place he works, from university, family.

Student G: Suppose that he is your classmate, he is just sitting there, doing nothing, he is just talking with a teacher in a class. You cannot know that.

Student E: You know, when someone is proposing to you, he will talk to you for a few sessions, ok? We can know here.

Student G: O.k. I think it's time for a conclusion. I like love marriage what do you like?

Student F: I like love marriage with the family, which can help me and guide me not to restrict me.

Student H: I think it is not important that two people know each other before marriage; I think they should like each other not love each other.

Student G: Thank you.

Mixed-Sex Session: Third session

Both Boys and girls

Student B: Over across the past decades, there have been a lot of changes in our country. Because as decades come and go new generations enter… new generations emerge in the country, new ways of thinking also come into existence for itself. I think that somehow criteria for getting married during the past decades, past thirty years, I think, have changed drastically. So, I'm in like to… I'd like to focus your attention on the differences between your criteria and your parents' criteria for getting married to somebody that you think you are ready to get married to. What do you think? Do you think that your criteria are of importance or your parents' criteria? Or if there is a pointed conflict between the two? If you chose somebody and based on your own criteria will your parents' criteria will be bad or no will be the same? Or whose criteria will be of more importance in the process.

Student A: Actually I totally agree that… I quite agree that peoples' criteria are different from others. But mine is, I think, a little delectable and deleterious. My first is that the kindness of my becoming consort is important, conducive the kindness. And the second one is, I think, bilateral habit in common is important for me, the third one is appearance. I think that is, em, I mean appearance is priority for most people, but for me, I'm going to put it in third or fourth rank.

Student D: You know, criteria, I mean the criteria between parents and young people are totally different. You know, in our country, usually parents want to decide about person who is totally a religious person. If I want to marry, my mom says that you have to marry a religious girl and not the up-town girl. She has to be a provincial person, because you will

have some different conflicts between up-town and down-town, they will be confronted in the future. Some problems will be confronted.

Student H: My criteria are not different, and separate from my parents' criteria. And the thing which I think is most important for me in marriage is the manner of the man, his social manner, his education and his family. After these, are his appearance, love and his financial condition.

Student F: I think that the generation is always, we can put it in a most …. I don't know the exact word, in an important problem between the girls and their parents. But if you have a close relationship with your parents and if there is a chance to talk about your criteria and know about their criteria, it is good and can be helpful. For example my criteria are like my mom's, there is no deference at all. She is older than me, maybe I can say that, Ok, she's got traditional marriage, but as she told me I can have a love marriage and it is totally different from the traditional one, but our criteria are just the same. I want the guy who can understand me, understand my feelings, one who I can talk to about my manners, my feelings, the one that, you know, I just want someone who understand me. It is all that matters for me, how about you guys?

Student E: Me and my parents have the same idea. I don't know maybe I take a traditional one, because I have a totally different view. For example, I consider mutual respect. No… it doesn't bother me if I saw my future husband in public and university and if for example his name is Naghi, I'll call him Agha Naghi. It shows respect; I think it is a kind of sweet love and I like it. I know it is a traditional one. I just like a balance, someone like me. You know, the definition of the religion affairs are different, I want him to do good things, and take care of what religious actions he likes. And about the feature, I only care about walking straight in the street.

Student A: But yours, I mean what you said is truly important and conducive: mutual respect, if mutual respect is forgotten, noting will remain.

Student B: So, our classmate actually mentioned an interesting point about the concept of religion. I'd like to know what difference is between you and you in terms of your opinion on how religious your future partner you'd like to be. Or, is there any difference between what you think and what your parents think? Is there any difference? And how much of importance do you attach to the concept of religion of whom you want to marry?

Student E: You talked about religion. I have an example: I want a guy who when he is sitting in park, there is a bottle of Champaign in front of him……., it may be funny, but it is a great manner for me. He pours some Champaign; I want him to be in that relief. But I don't want him to be totally free.

Student F: I'm not a religious girl, actually. And I don't care about religion, and I don't… the manner that cares for me is that just his beliefs about everything about humanity, I don't know about politics, about art, about everything, not something that you can, not something changeable, O.K.? I just like the guy that suits me, not the guy that, you know, his imaginations and ideas are too far from mine, it's disgusting; I don't like that. I don't care about religion and prefer the guy that has no religion like me.

Student H: I prefer someone whose religious beliefs are at the same level as me; not more nor less.

Student C: But the matter is not just the one you talked about. There are some criteria we need them, need to know about them before the marriage; culture, the way they….

Student F: the way they look to culture, the way they look at, the way they think, I think is important, not for example, O.K. I'm a religious guy and I pray every day. It's not good, not so important.

Student C: You want to say being religious or not is not important?

Student F: It depends on…em… it…em… it is not important. That is O.K. If they said these words, so, O.k. these are good and you must, they see their acts. How they are in action not just in words.

Student E: You know, religion depends on the environment in my view, but there are people who use this be proud to others. This is so bad, you use your religion and justice to help others and be happy to help others, bring happiness together, in this way.

Student C: And that it is that action speaks louder than words, in deed, that action, the way they act, what kind of path they choose and they aim or their aims. Do they similar to each other or not?

Student E: And you know, the matter of age is important, because of this kind of em…, you know, criteria, for example the one that is twenty years old, their thoughts, or I don't know, their beliefs maybe totally different from the one that is ten years older than her or him, so it is important to choose someone that is not the same age but near each other. I think psychologists said that three is good.

Student A: I think the psychologists look at the public and different criteria, their ideas are different, they say three is good, five is better, seven, I think is extraordinary, eleven is something ….. (Interrupted).

Student G: Something disaster…

Student A: no, something better than extraordinary.

Student E: I have a question. Do you guys will marry a girl who is older than you?

Student C: You know, some people are older than they are, but they'll never seem on it, like me, who one of you believes I'm twenty seven. Some people don't know about it, they sometimes say you are twenty three or at least twenty four.

Student G: So it is the appearance. Is this important?

Student C: appearance and…. (Interrupted).

Student B: She's got to look young no matter how old is she?

Student C: And not only the age, we need em… maybe someone is thirteen but he's a baby; he can't feel the importance of the living.

Student H: I got think that it will make problem when the girl is three years older than the boy, but nowadays I see that it is becoming fragile that there are some girls that are older than boys……. It is so strange for me, I don't know how does…em… how she can be attractive for the boy, the older girl than boy.

Student G: I'd rather to say that not being attractive, I mean not just the figure who can say that the girl who is older than the guy is bad looking or older. I mean, it doesn't matter of the girl being older or younger, it is true; love is more important.

Student A: You know, for example one soccer player of Barcelona football team, I'm sure you can remember him, Peke', has married a very famous singer, Shakira who is so attractive buy she is older than him. It's a pretty good example, I think.

Student F: It's better not to talk about celebrities, O.k.? because they have a very different life than us.

Student B: Of course in our country marriage is a once in a once opportunity, we cannot get marry because the cost is too high and we cannot get divorced, you know as easily as European countries, they get divorced and nothing….(Interrupted)

Student G: But we can but we just don't. Ok? We've established such kinds of ideas, we can remove them.

Student B: The rules do not allow us to…. (Interrupted).

Student G: You are allowed to get divorced and marry again, we just don't, you don't … (interrupted).

Student B: What about Mahrihe, dowry?

Student G: That has solutions. The girl can just get it off, or the boy can divorce or…. (Interrupted).

Student B: It's very idealistic, it doesn't usually occur in our country.

Student G: Well, I would actually get off my dowry, if I couldn't live with my husband. I would do that, you know. I think these kinds of problems should be actually solved before marriage. You should not, you know, agree on a very high dowry or stuff like this, but about divorce, they can but they just don't, because of, I don't know their family reputation, their kids, God-damn-it, why should we have kids.

Student F: They just adapt themselves with the situation, they just say that, O.K. nothing matters and I just live my life. I just raise my children, i just…I don't know, I just live. There is not good relationship, not a feeling. It is not a marriage, ok. It is a life. It's just two persons like, I don't know roommates, they are living in a house, and they are just some, em save things to share, they for example share dinner.

Student A: So, basically you're saying that since such relation, such feeling has got, they get divorced.

Student F: No. You should think about the solutions. O.K.? But if you cannot find any solution, if you think that there is no way, so… (Interrupted).

Student A: But here the person or children are conducive or important, the children think that there is no reason to remain in together anymore and it's better to divorce.

Student B: O.K. let's move on to something else, love marriage versus arranged marriage: You know, in the past, our parents mostly used to get married in an arranged manner. What do you think about the difference between the two and what kinds of marriage would you like to have? Love marriage means to be in a relationship before marriage or no, here just the boy and girl are aware of their relationship, in some cases one another people form the girl's family. Here, the boy and girl will find each other and propose to each other, but in the latter, another person introduces the boy and the girl to each other.

Student C: In my view none of them, because the love marriage could be the sexual marriage, it can be just for pleasure nothing more and…. (Interrupted)

Student G: Who said that?

Student C: I found it from studying something. I don't know and cannot remember where and what it was.

Student G: So, you think my marriage is sexual marriage?

Student C: No, I didn't mean that. I meant that they can have any relations with each other before marriage.

Student A: He meant that kind of marriage which is totally free, even before marriage and the boy and girl are doing any kinds of relationships without the awareness of their family and parents.

Student F: The definition is different from person to person.

Student G: No, but love marriage always comprises obvious ideas that but em … actually the main idea is that you have a relationship before marriage, a loved relationship, that is those people are in love with each other, they meet each other because they love each other. O.K.? I define love marriage as something like that. Well, we do not live in a free country so I'm not going to discuss like they can live together, they can be sexually open to each other. These are not possible in our country. I'm talking about love marriage in our culture and in our own country. And I'll consider my own marriage a love marriage. Well, in my opinion love marriages are better. Why? because you have to get to know that person.

Student C: You should define freedom in that relationship.

Student G: What do you mean by freedom?

Student C: Before marriage, how can the boy and girl meet, what can they do? The way they should roll up. There should be some limitations and restrictions regarding their relations or not? Or they should be free and do what they like.

Student F: Who can tell us? Parents?

Student C: Yes, I mean what kinds of controls they should have. How far the boy and girl can go in their relationships before marriage?

Student G: Am I not a free person? God's created me as a free person? Can't I choose … (Interrupted).

Student C: I meant what kind of freedom? Should there be any kind of freedom between girl and boy? Should their behavior be supervised by their families?

Student F: I always have problem with this kind of thought. You know, you have your own idea about everything. You know all things about humanity, O.K.? all the things that you care about. So, you know your rules, your own rules. So, you don't need anyone to control your, em, I don't know, to control your relationships with others.

Student G: It's the family that gives children freedom, but children should have their own rules. And wishes, you know, should be you know write over them.

Student C: Exactly, that's what I meant. I'm, myself searching for freedom. I'm not the person who let others control me, or tell me do so and so. Also I don't like to behave like a dictator and be considered as having cruel manner. And according to some meanings, according to some principles that I have in my life, in my culture and something like that, And I believe in them, live with them, so I consider them as bans, I prefer some controls and restrictions to be set on between girl and boy.

Student D: So you mean you are restricted by your culture and religious beliefs and attitudes?

Student C: Yes somehow, something like that. I mean that we should always take cultural and family backgrounds, religious beliefs and attitudes, context and situation we live in and other people are in contact with them into account.

Student B: O.K. guys, I think that's enough about loved marriage. Let's move on another topic. What about arranged marriage? Who is in favor of arranged marriage in contrast to love marriage? As mentioned, in arranged marriage first parents propose to their child, their son. Then they move the girl's house and the marriage.

Student A: And after that they will call the son in, that is first just the parents know the girl and search about her, if good and accepted by the son's parents, the son will also be taken the girl's house.

Student G: Without any kind of relationship before marriage?

Student A: No, maybe after both families actually agreed upon for example a kind of relationship.

Student F: You know, my relative and actually my brother got married in this way, and I'm totally disagreed with this kind of marriage. He got married and thanks God, although they have some problems right now, but I'm totally disagreed with this kind of marriage. You know, em, someone for example told my mom that O.K. this girl is ok for your son and you can go and propose her.

Student B: So, who is in favor and why? Tell us your reasons.

Student E: You know, there are things that i don't think are so bad. No one is forced to get married. When you are going to invite a girl to your family, you know, the parents should first know him or her. I mean families should have also something in common, they should know each other.

Student D: Yes, the parents and families, in general, should become familiar to each other; they should know each other's wishes, beliefs. The families play an important role in getting marriage and not ending that marriage in divorce.

Student B: I'm somehow disagreed. I don't think that the parents should have this permission to do that, for example, first they choose the girl or the boy and then they let their children to go and marry to that person.

Student C: By talking boys and girls together in the proposal ceremony, they may become emotional; they want and they can show each other better than the other one. They want to become familiar to each other, but they can easily lie to each other and they can deceive each other.

Student A: And you guys, the way that, em, when you got married, do think that the marriage will give you freedom? What kind of freedom? I mean boy and girl are restricted in their own life before marriage, but after getting married,

they'll find a new life, they'll find freedom, they think that the system and previous routine of their life have undergone big changes and have altered completely.

Student D: I think the countries that are very cultural and those that are more traditional and very restricted by religion will give them more freedom after marriage, and I think that freedom is given more to the women after getting married.

Student A: Surely, because upon the law, no mother or brother can say you can go abroad if you got married and you need to have permission from your husband, and after that you can go abroad with your husband according to the law.

Student E: You know, for most western countries, South Korea is a very traditional country and it is more developed than us, but the way they live is exactly like us, this arranged marriage happens there too, it's actually popular there. Because the younger have this idea that the older have, em, are more experienced and they ….(interrupted).

Student F: But you are not going to marry according to their experiences.

Student B: O.k. guys, I think it's better to let this conversation come to a clear and comprehensible end; as the concluding remarks what is the characteristic of a good marriage, in your ideas, of a successful marriage? And what do you think will a marriage to end in divorce? What leads to divorce?

Student G: I think the freedom, for its mutual respect and mutual freedom.

Student F: Em…, understanding each other and respect.

Student H: Mutual respect and you know, in some ways reliable feature will be good.

Student E: Couple should know each other very well, so that they don't respond you know, each other after marriage, because they believe something that they didn't like about each other, and that leads to divorce.

Student A: And if I want to draw a conclusion, I think that the mutual, I don't know respect, bilateral respect, mutual kindness and understanding each other are important.

Student C: I think three points are essentially important: Loyalty, mutual right and respecting each other.

Student D: I think some other things are also important like beliefs, wellbeing and their aim of marriage.

Student B: O.K. everybody thank you for your participation in this conversation. Good luck.

Appendix 2:

Questions asked by the researcher before beginning the conversations in order to help students be able to lead the conversations through:

2-1- Some of the questions asked in the single-sex contexts:

- a) To what extent do you think girl and boy should know about each other?
- b) What characteristics do you think they should know first?
- c) In your ideas, what should be the priorities for accepting or rejecting a marriage proposal?
- d) To what extent do you think cultural attitudes, family backgrounds, religious views and prejudices from parents, especially the girls' parents are important?
- e) Do you think having relationship before marriage within a framework will be good or bad? And,
- f) Do you think such relationship should be confined to some principles? What are these principles? Who should make these principles?

2-2- Some of the questions asked in the multiple-sex context:

- a) What are some features that you think are important for the selection of your future spouse?
- b) Do you prefer love marriage or arranged one? Why?
- c) Do you think it is ok to marry somebody of different race and religion?
- d) In your ideas, what issues would lead and contribute to successful marriage?
- e) Do you think marriage means giving up freedom for man and gaining freedom for woman? And,
- f) Do you think people would change after getting married?