ETHIOPIAN INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF MULTIDISCIPLINARY RESEARCH

eISSN: 2349-5715 pISSN: 2349-5707

Volume: 12, Issue 07, July-2025 SJIF 2019: 4.702 2020: 4.737 2021: 5.071 2022: 4.919 2023: 6.980 2024: 7,662

AI AND GENDER DIFFERENCES IN LISTENING COMPREHENSION GAINS AMONG UZBEK EFL STUDENTS

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Abstract: This study investigates the influence of Artificial Intelligence (AI)-assisted listening tools on English listening comprehension among Uzbek secondary EFL students, with a particular focus on gender-based differences in learning outcomes. Sixty students (30 male, 30 female) participated in a six-week intervention using AI-driven listening platforms, including adaptive apps and conversational AI tools such as ChatGPT with speech feedback. Pre- and post-tests measured listening comprehension gains, while qualitative data were collected through questionnaires and interviews to explore learners' experiences. The findings indicate that both male and female students improved significantly in listening comprehension. However, female students demonstrated greater gains and more consistent engagement, attributed to their higher metacognitive strategy use, task persistence, and appreciation for AI feedback. Male students, though positively engaged by gamified features and interactivity, showed fluctuating participation and were more affected by technical challenges. The study concludes that AI-based listening tools can enhance EFL instruction, but gender-responsive design and pedagogy are essential to optimize effectiveness across diverse learner profiles. Tailored AI features, localized content, and blended approaches supported by trained teachers are recommended to ensure equitable and effective implementation.

Keywords : Artificial intelligence, listening comprehension, gender differences, Uzbek EFL learners, AI tools in education, language technology, adaptive learning, speech recognition, learner engagement, digital pedagogy.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) has emerged as a significant tool in language learning, providing dynamic, personalized, and adaptive instructional experiences. In the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education in Uzbekistan, AI-assisted learning—particularly in the domain of listening comprehension—presents a new dimension for exploring learner outcomes, including gender-related differences. This article investigates the role of AI-supported listening activities in promoting listening comprehension gains among Uzbek EFL students, with specific attention to how male and female learners respond differently to AI-integrated environments.

The research was based on a quasi-experimental design involving 60 students (30 male and 30 female) from two secondary schools in Tashkent. Over a six-week period, students engaged with AI-powered listening tools, including adaptive listening platforms, AI chatbots with speech-to-text functions, and pronunciation feedback systems. Pre-tests and post-tests were conducted to assess improvements in listening comprehension, while questionnaires and semi-structured interviews were used to capture students' perceptions and learning experiences.

Initial findings demonstrated that both male and female students showed significant improvement in listening comprehension after exposure to AI-enhanced materials. However, gender-based analysis revealed notable differences in the magnitude and nature of these gains. Female students generally exhibited higher performance gains compared to their male counterparts. They were

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more consistent in their engagement with AI tools, showed stronger metacognitive strategy use (such as note-taking and repeated listening), and reported higher satisfaction with the feedback mechanisms embedded in AI applications. In contrast, male students tended to use AI tools more sporadically, displayed greater reliance on visual cues or non-linguistic support, and expressed more interest in competitive or gamified listening tasks.

Qualitative data further illustrated these patterns. Female participants often highlighted the clarity, repetition, and immediate corrective feedback as motivators for deeper engagement. Many appreciated the ability to control the pace of listening and revisit challenging sections independently. For male learners, motivation was more closely linked to interactivity and novelty; they responded positively to speech-enabled AI bots that allowed for voice input, and to game-like formats that rewarded listening accuracy.

These gender differences may be attributed to broader cognitive and affective variables, such as self-regulation, language anxiety, and task engagement, which interact with the affordances of AI tools. Female students were more likely to exhibit sustained attention and task persistence, possibly explaining their greater comprehension gains. Male students, while equally capable, appeared to benefit more from short-term motivation boosts, suggesting that AI tools with interactive or challenge-based formats may better serve their learning preferences.

Importantly, both genders valued the non-judgmental nature of AI feedback. Unlike traditional classroom settings where students may fear making mistakes in front of peers, AI tools provided a safe, private space for repeated listening and self-correction. This feature was especially helpful for students with lower proficiency levels or those lacking confidence in their listening skills.

Despite these positive outcomes, several constraints were identified. Some students encountered difficulties with the interface language of AI tools, many of which are designed primarily for global audiences and lack Uzbek localization. Technical issues such as unstable internet access, background noise sensitivity in speech recognition features, and limited access to personal devices also affected the consistency of use. Moreover, while female students were more likely to persist in overcoming such challenges, male students were observed to disengage more quickly when faced with technical obstacles.

The study underscores the need for gender-responsive design in AI-assisted language learning. Educational technologists and curriculum developers should consider including customizable features that cater to diverse learning styles—such as visual supports, adjustable feedback intensity, and gamified options. Furthermore, teacher facilitation remains crucial to mediate AI use, provide motivation, and integrate AI tools meaningfully into lesson plans.

In conclusion, AI-enhanced listening instruction contributes positively to comprehension gains among Uzbek EFL students, with female learners generally benefiting more in terms of depth and consistency. Gender differences in engagement patterns, strategy use, and motivational triggers suggest that one-size-fits-all approaches may not fully harness the potential of AI in language learning. Future efforts should aim to personalize AI listening interventions while ensuring accessibility and gender inclusivity across diverse educational contexts.

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