

# THE ROLE OF GENDER IN VOCABULARY ACQUISITION THROUGH NURSERY RHYMES AMONG YOUNG EFL LEARNERS IN INDONESIA

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**ABSTRACT:** The study aimed at investigating the role of the gender in vocabulary acquisition through nursery rhymes among third grade elementary school students in Indonesia. Some studies on gender differences in language acquisition showed inconsistent results, where some focused on the superiority of males over females, others highlighted on females being better as language learners than males, and some others pointed out that gender is irrelevant in second or foreign language acquisition. Therefore, gender is recognized as a complex and distinctive issue. Studies on the use of nursery rhymes conducted outside Indonesia indicated that nursery rhymes could help to promote oral proficiency skills, listening, thinking skills, interest and motivation towards learning English. Unfortunately, in Indonesia, there are very few studies conducted to evaluate the effects of nursery rhymes in enhancing vocabulary acquisition and phonemic awareness. In this study, nursery rhymes are recommended suitable in teaching vocabulary to young learner because there is no melody to serve as a point of identification, and learning nursery rhymes develops and improves extensive early literacy skills, such as oral skills, phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency, the rhythm of words, and comprehension. This paper is part of a dissertation which was using a quasi-experimental design. The design involved a pre-test & a post-test that were given to two groups, control and experimental group. However, for the purpose of this paper, the researchers only used the results of the post-test on the experimental group. The Experimental Group was exposed to 60 words taken from eight 'Mother Goose' nursery rhymes. The group practiced pronouncing words through nursery rhymes and given worksheets to practice writing and coloring pictures of the vocabulary introduced in every lesson to stimulate long-term memory. Then, at the end of the intervention, both groups were sitting on two post-test. The first post-test was administered on the week tenth, while the second post-test was on the thirteenth week. Although the scope was limited (third grade elementary school students), it appeared that gender has no significant effect on the vocabulary acquisition.

**KEYWORDS:** gender, second language acquisition, young learners, quasi-experimental, vocabulary acquisition.

## I. INTRODUCTION

English has become the most spoken language in the world. In countries where English is not a native language, the students are learning English as second language or foreign language. Thus this knowledge is well-known as second language acquisition. The goal of second language acquisition learning, according to Ellis (1994), is the description and explanation of the learner's linguistic or communicative competence, where the acquisition of a second language feature may be considered to have taken place either when it is used for the first time or only when it can be used to a high level of accuracy (Ellis, 1994, p.15).

Gender is known as one of the most relevant factors used in second language acquisition research to distinguish among learners. Some studies have been devoted to researching in several areas of second language acquisition in regards to gender differences, such as reading comprehension (Brantmeier, 2003; Young & Oxford, 1997), learning strategies (Jiménez, 2003; Young & Oxford, 1997) or error production (Agustín Llach, Fontecha, & Moreno Espinosa, 2006; Jiménez, 1992). The findings of these studies show inconsistent results, where some focused on the superiority of males over females, others highlighted on females being better as language learners than males, and some others pointed out that gender is irrelevant in second or foreign language acquisition.

In the area of vocabulary acquisition, the role of gender occupied a significant position. There are plentiful of studies that focus on gender differences in the several aspects related to lexical acquisition. The findings within this area are inconclusive as well, depending on the aspect investigated. For instance, Boyle (1987) pointed out that, in the comprehension of heard vocabulary, males are superior to females. Similar findings that men performed significantly better than women in a test of academic vocabulary recognition, understanding and use also indicated by Scarcella & Zimmerman (1998). Others, such as Lin & Wu (2003), Lynn, Fergusson, & Horwood, (2005), and Edelenbos & Vinjé (2000), also reported that the males outperformed the females in vocabulary knowledge in the foreign language. Conversely, Researchers such as Nyikos' (1990, as cited in Sunderland, 2000, p. 206), Meara & Fitzpatrick (2000), and Jiménez & Moreno (2004) studies found that women accomplished more than men in a memorization test of German vocabulary and in productive vocabulary in Lex30. In addition, there were highly significant differences found in the mean number of words produced by the females in response to the 15 cues of a lexical availability test (Jiménez & Ojeda, 2009). Jimenez (2010), and Sunderland (2010) stated that the relationships between vocabulary and gender are not stable, but rather influenced by context and test type-specific with other factors such as age, L1, or L2 proficiency. Therefore, gender is recognized as a complex and distinctive issue.

English proficiency skill in Asia has steadily improved. According to the results of Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) in 2014, some of the world's strongest education systems are located in Asia, with Hong Kong, Japan, Shanghai, Singapore, South Korea and Taipei occupying the top positions in Reading, Mathematics and Science. However, Singapore is the only one with high English proficiency. While Indonesia, Thailand and Vietnam stood out for their progress as the fastest progress among the Asian countries (National Reading Panel, 2015). In Indonesian context, some studies indicated that despite pedagogical changes, students' results have not improved significantly and there is evidence of unsatisfactory results and the lack of development in students' English Language proficiency and communicative skills (Arzal & Tanipu, 2014; Prihatin, 2012; Seargeant & Erling, 2011).

This indicates that the researchers view second language acquisition as a neglected area in Indonesia. Second language vocabulary acquisition research has come into its own in recent years. Research conducted in Indonesia showed that traditional input does not support the acquisition of vocabulary of high frequency words most needed to be known (Horst, 2014). In certain cases, the students who passed their English examination could not perform well at the communication tasks. Decisions to introduce English at the elementary school level, to engage in international business with a population fluent in English and regarding the future potential of the country were often presented (Enever & Moon, 2010).

Other researchers such as Intani (2012), Lamb & Coleman (2008) and Sari (2008) conducted studies to assess the effect of songs on vocabulary acquisition and language performance outcomes among elementary students in Indonesia. Other studies in the same area have been conducted by Lamb (2009), Sikki, Rahman, Hamra & Noni (2013), and Widyaningrum (2011), focused on the use of songs to promote the oral proficiency skills of young second language learners. Studies on the use of nursery rhymes conducted outside Indonesia indicated that nursery rhymes could help to promote oral proficiency skills, listening, thinking skills, interest and motivation towards learning English (Harper, 2011; Schiller, 2010; Shwetha, 2013; Vidal, 2011). Unfortunately, in Indonesia, there are very few studies conducted to evaluate the effects of nursery rhymes in enhancing vocabulary acquisition and phonemic awareness. This paper is part of a dissertation that investigated the impact of using nursery rhymes in enhancing vocabulary and phonemic awareness, students' interests and the retention of knowledge among young second language learners in Indonesia. However, in this paper the researcher will only discuss the role of gender in vocabulary acquisition through nursery rhymes among young EFL learners in Indonesia.

## **II. VOCABULARY ACQUISITION AND GENDER**

The development of the gender in language studies has revealed that the philosophies underlying the research have shifted overtime. Cameron (1995) is among the researchers who comprehensively brought an account of feminist linguistic approaches and created three models of language and gender: (1) the deficit model, (2) the dominance model, and (3) the cultural difference model. (1) In the deficit model, females are seen as disadvantaged speakers and communicators, while the speech of men is considered as the accepted norm (Aslan, 2009), dominates the talk (Swan, 1989, as cited in Gascoigne, 2002), and men use interaction as a means of gaining and exchanging information, whereas women use it as a way to connect to others (Holmes, 1995, as cited in Gascoigne, 2002, p.83). (2) In the dominance model, Block (2002) argues, "In this model women are perceived to perform their 'woman-ness' in an ethno-methodological frame as they continually negotiate their position of relative powerlessness vis a vis men" (p. 53). (3) According to cultural difference model, men and

women are belong to separate but equal cultures that precede the individuals' development who are socialized into them (Block, 2002). Block (2002) also reported that cultural difference model implements a social position where men and women are equal but different; women's communication styles and speech are not lower to men's; rather the relationship between the two are problematic at least in part because of culture clash.

In second language acquisition area, the concept of gender is diversely described. For instance, Ellis (1994) asserts that gender differences in SLA is not conclusive in achievement, attitudes and strategy used. Accordingly, Ellis (1994) holds:

Sex is, of course, likely to interact with other variables in determining L2 proficiency. It will not always be the case, therefore, that females outperform males. Asian men in Britain generally attain higher levels of proficiency in L2 English than do Asian women for the simple reason that their jobs bring them into contact with the majority English speaking group, while women are often "enclosed" in the home. Sex interacts with such factors as age, ethnicity, and, in particular social class (p. 204).

However, according to Aslan (2009), differences in gender influence the choice of strategy. Similarly, in language acquisition, females and males are observed to use different strategies. Other studies in the same area such as Ehrman and Oxford (1990) came to a conclusion that gender differences made a profound influence on the strategies used by 1200 university students, and Gascoigne (2002), found that males tend to use interruptions, directives, and sentence-initial conjunctions as linguistic devices, while females rely more heavily upon questions, justifiers, intensive adverbs, personal pronouns and word-initial adverbs (p. 83).

Kimura (2006 as cited in Piasecka, 2010) discusses the differences between females and males in terms of various abilities: in regard to motor abilities, men do better at tasks such as throwing things at a target (e.g. a game of darts) or catching objects (e.g. ball games), while women have subtle motor activities (e.g. performing movement sequences using fingers, like in weaving, knitting or sewing). Regarding the materials that were learned at school, females are better at calculations and tests than males. Concerning verbal abilities, females start speaking earlier than males; they use longer sentences, grammar are more correct, have a richer vocabulary, and they are better at spelling, reading and tests in which they have to generate words according to a certain rule (e.g. words that start with a certain letter) (Kimura, 2006, as cited in Piasecka, 2010, pp.146-149).

Jimenez-Catalan (2010) conducted a study on the effect of gender on vocabulary performance and revealed that the females and males students show common patterns of behaviour as proved by their similar scores. In other words, gender differences do not appear when male and female students increase receptive vocabulary level. However, differences occurred in their results in the composition and in the cue word test. The female students outperformed the male students in the composition and in the cue word test: "in each they produce a significantly higher number of word types than their male counterparts. This indicates higher lexical richness in the productive vocabulary of females compared to males" (Jimenez-Catalan, 2010, p. 130). Similar finding proposed by Agustin Llach & Gallego (2012) where the difference between males and females learners in their vocabulary learning is non-existence. Although female learners showed higher vocabulary performance than male learners in the first three intervals, this tendency inversed and male learners were found to be incorporated more new words than their female peers.

In Indonesian context, Intani (2012), Lamb & Coleman (2008) and Sari (2008) have conducted studies to assess the effect of songs on vocabulary acquisition and other second language performance outcomes. Other studies conducted by Lamb (2009); Sikki et al. (2013) and Widyaningrum (2011) relate the use of songs to promote oral proficiency among young second language learners. Yet these studies seldom provide empirical evidence of the effects of nursery rhymes specifically on vocabulary acquisition and phonemic awareness among children in elementary schools. Nursery rhymes are recommended suitable in teaching vocabulary to young learner because there is no melody to serve as a point of identification (Fauziati, 2015). The children are also familiar with nursery rhymes since it was taught since the nursery schools in the form of traditional song or poem. Learning nursery rhymes encourages the development of vocabulary and basic counting skills. It also makes the children interested in learning a foreign language (Sari, 2008). Fauziati (2015) described nursery rhymes as a way of using simple, repetitive poems with a young child which is fun and enjoyable adult-child activity. Furthermore, nursery rhymes help students to read and learn quickly. Children would hear new words and make sentences by remembering a series of events. Children learn many words that have the same rhyming sounds. This helps a child to learn to spell easily. In short, learning nursery rhymes develops and improves extensive early literacy

skills, such as oral skills, phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency, the rhythm of words, and comprehension (Maclean et al. 1987).

**III. METHODOLOGY**

This paper is part of a dissertation which was using a quasi-experimental design. The design involved a pre-test & a post-test that were given to two groups, control and experimental group. However, for the purpose of this paper, the researchers only used the results of the post-test on the experimental group to investigate whether gender has effects on the vocabulary acquisition of young EFL learners in Indonesia.

This study targeted the population of young learners of English at Grade Three in elementary public schools in Yogyakarta Indonesia. The subjects used were assigned in classroom, and not randomly chosen as suggested by Isaac and Michael (1990). The choice of participants of 80 (eighty) students from grade three, which then divided into two groups, 40 students in the experimental group and 40 students in the control group. Each group aged 8-9 years, and had similarities in terms of characteristics such as academic grade point average, gender and the prior abilities in English.

The study incorporated eight nursery rhymes and eight thematic vocabulary lists. Both groups were assessed on vocabulary acquisition by their ability to match English words with related pictures and meanings given in the learners’ first language and completing sentences using the optional words given. The nursery rhymes were introduced to the students in the Experimental Group which employed the student-centred learning approach of teaching while the thematic vocabulary list was introduced to the students in the Control Group, which applied the conventional method or teacher-centred learning approach. The Experimental Group was exposed to 60 words taken from eight ‘Mother Goose’ nursery rhymes. The group practised pronouncing words through nursery rhymes and given worksheets to practise writing and colouring pictures of the vocabulary introduced in every lesson to stimulate long-term memory. Group A (Control Group) practised pronouncing words through nursery rhymes whereas Group B (Experimental Group) heard the same words in the form of a list. Students were able to view the words of the nursery rhymes and words in the vocabulary lists during class time. Students in the nursery rhymes group were given worksheets to practise writing and colouring pictures of the vocabulary introduced in every lesson to stimulate long-term memory. The students introduced to the vocabulary lists had the option of speaking out aloud, while the nursery rhymes group had the option of singing the rhymes.

**3.1 The Materials**

**3.1.1 Nursery Rhymes and Lesson Plan**

The eight nursery rhymes used in this study were downloaded from the internet, at <http://bussongs.com/counting-songs.php>. The lesson plans were prepared for a period of 70 minutes during each class session. The example of outline of the lesson plan is presented in the following table.

**Table 1. Outline of Nursery Rhymes Lesson Plan (70 minutes/period)**

Step of Activity	Time	Activity of Teaching & Learning
1: Induction	5	➤ The teacher introduces the rhyme and briefs the students on the story or the themes in the nursery rhymes. ➤ The students pay attention.
2: Opening	10	➤ The teacher gives examples, reads or sings the rhyme, points to the main vocabulary introduced and relates them to the class environment and culture. ➤ The students follow the activity.
3: Class Activity & Performance	20	➤ The teacher, with all the students in the class, sings the rhymes or performs the rhymes using the TPR approach; creating social interaction within the class.
4: Group & Individual Performance	20	➤ The teacher divides the class into 4 groups and each group performs the rhyme with action in front of the class. ➤ The teacher asks 2 students to come forward; one student sings the nursery rhyme and the other performs the actions mentioned in that nursery rhyme. ➤ The class follows the activity.
5: Reflection	10	➤ The teacher reviews, evaluates and focuses on the vocabulary items of that day’s session, followed by the class.

& Evaluation		➤ Students practise writing the vocabulary items learned on the Students’ Work Sheets.
6: Closure	5	➤ The teacher delivers pictures of the vocabulary items and the theme of the nursery rhymes to be coloured by the students as a take-home practice. ➤ The teacher introduces the next theme. ➤ Teacher and class close the lesson by singing the day’s nursery rhyme.

**3.1.2 Thematic Vocabulary List and Lesson Plan**

A total of eight thematic vocabulary lists were prepared with the lesson plans to be used in this study. The thematic vocabulary list was created by the researcher to match the vocabulary items taken from the nursery rhymes. The lesson plans were prepared based on the outline given by the teacher for a period of 70 minutes of the class session. A sample of outline of the lesson plan is presented in the following table.

**Table 2. Outline of Thematic Vocabulary Item Lesson Plan (70 minutes/period)**

Step of Activity	Time	Activity of Teaching & Learning
1: Induction	5	➤ The teacher introduces the story related to the thematic vocabulary items. ➤ The students pay attention.
2: Opening	10	➤ The teacher reads, gives examples and relates the main vocabulary items introduced to the class. ➤ The students follow the activity.
3: Class Activity & Performance	20	➤ The teacher together with all students (class) reads aloud the vocabulary items on the list. ➤ The teacher gives instruction using flashcards and the class reads aloud the word on the flashcard of a certain vocabulary item in English
4: Group & Individual Performance	20	➤ The teacher divides the class into 4 groups and each group performs the act of reading aloud in front of the class. ➤ The teacher asks 2 students to come forward, one student reads and the other gives the meaning of the word. ➤ The class follows the activity.
5: Reflection & Evaluation	10	➤ The teacher reviews, evaluates and mentions the vocabulary items of that day’s session, followed by the class. ➤ Students practise writing the vocabulary items learned on the Students’ Work Sheet.
6: Closure	5	➤ The teacher delivers plain pictures of the vocabulary items and the theme of the nursery rhymes to be coloured by the students as a take home practice. ➤ The teacher introduces the next theme. ➤ Teacher and class close the lesson by reading aloud “the thematic vocabulary item” list of that day.

**3.1.3 Students’ Worksheet**

This worksheet was used to evaluate students’ mastery of the vocabulary items learnt during the session. The lesson was planned to make the students understand the meanings of the words, its pronunciation and their written forms.

**3.2 Instruments**

**3.2.1 The Pre-test**

The pre-test in this study referred to sets of tests comprising vocabulary tests:

**3.2.2 Vocabulary Test**

The vocabulary test was designed to measure both first language and second language learners’ receptive vocabulary size in English (Nation & Beglar, 2007). The test measured the knowledge of written word form,

form-meaning connection and to a smaller degree concept of knowledge. In this study the three types of vocabulary test were designed in which vocabulary test Part A was (Vocabulary Noticing Process) Test (Nation, 2004), comprising of 20 item tests in the form of word-pictures matching. Vocabulary test Part B (Vocabulary Retrieval) Test, using Read and Chapelle’s (2001) bilingual test framework, comprising of 20 English words to be found with its related meanings in the Indonesian language. Vocabulary test Part C (Generative Process) Test, comprising 20 items of filling in blanks with the correct words chosen from the options given. This test was administered to the students in both the Experimental Group and Control Groups before any intervention was done. This pre-test was to determine that both groups were of similar ability in their vocabulary acquisition.

**3.2.3 Post-Test One**

The Post-test One used in this study comprised the same items used in the pre-test. Post-test One was administered to determine whether the interventions significantly affect both groups in Vocabulary Acquisition and Phonemic Awareness. The same Vocabulary and Phonemic Awareness Tests used in the pre-test were used in Post-Test One. These tests were administered to both the Experimental and Control groups directly after the intervention.

**3.2.4 Post-Test Two (The Retention-Test)**

The Post-Test Two (Retention-Test) was administered to study the ability to remember the elements of noticing words, remembering meanings and understanding their use, which the subjects learned during the eight week intervention/treatment. This test was given to measure the difference in scores obtained in Post-Test One given during the tenth week. The same vocabulary acquisition and phonemic awareness tests used in the pre-test and post-test One were used in this Post- Test Two (Retention-test) which was conducted during week thirteen, two weeks after the intervention/treatment. These tests were administered to both the Experimental and Control Groups two weeks after the intervention.

**3.3 Data Collection and Data Analysis**

There was one pre-test administered to all participants in the designated Elementary Schools. The pre-test was administered on an individual basis by the researcher, with the help of the class teacher and the research assistants. The pre-test was scored, and following the pre-test the treatments were started and continued for the duration of eight weeks with a seventy minute session every week, to the Experimental and Control groups. Upon completion of the treatment, the participants in both the Experimental and the Control Groups were individually administered the Post-Test One by the researcher. At the end of the treatment, The Post-Test One data was recorded by the researcher. Finally, two weeks after Post-Test One, Post Test Two (Retention Test) was conducted by the researcher for both the Experimental Group and the Control Group. The details of this Data Collection Procedures are given in Table 3.

**Table 3 Procedures of Data Collection**

Week	Activity	
	Control Group	Experimental Group
1 <sup>st</sup> week	✓ Pre-test on Vocabulary & Phonemic Awareness ✓ Questionnaire	✓ Pre-test on Vocabulary & Phonemic Awareness ✓ Questionnaire
2 <sup>nd</sup> – 9 <sup>th</sup> week	Intervention using Eight Thematic & Vocabulary Lists and Conventional Method in Control Group	Intervention using eight Nursery Rhymes & Student Centred Learning in Experimental Group
10 <sup>th</sup> week	✓ Post-test 1 on Vocabulary and Phonemic Awareness ✓ Questionnaire & Interviews	✓ Post-test 1 on Vocabulary and Phonemic Awareness ✓ Questionnaire & Interviews
11 <sup>th</sup> - 12 <sup>th</sup> week	No Intervention	No Intervention
13 <sup>th</sup> week	✓ Post-test 2 on Vocabulary and Phonemic awareness ✓ Questionnaire	✓ Post-test 2 on Vocabulary and Phonemic awareness ✓ Questionnaire

The collected data then analyzed using SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) 22.0. In order to investigate whether gender has effect on vocabulary acquisition, an independent samples *t*-test was applied to the data set containing the post-test one and post-test two averages and genders of the students. In this particular

analysis, along with all other statistical analyses carried out throughout the study, the statistical significance level was accepted to be  $\alpha < .05$  for all the independent sample findings.

**IV. FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS**

This paper is aimed at investigating whether gender has effect on vocabulary acquisition among young learners at third grade elementary school in Indonesia. As seen in Table 4 below, the mean values of VPostOne B for male (14.66) is slightly higher than the female students (14.44). However, after two weeks without intervention, the condition is reversed, the mean of VPostTwoB for female students (15.10) is significantly higher than the male students (13.56).

**Table 4 Group Statistic of Male and Female students**

Group Statistics					
	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
VPostOneB	Male	41	14.66	4.531	.708
	Female	39	14.44	4.983	.798
VPostTwoB	Male	41	13.56	4.920	.768
	Female	39	15.10	2.981	.477

However, using this only does not indicate that there is a statistically significant difference between the result of post-tests one and two of males and females. There is a need to execute *Levene's Test for Equality of Variances* in order to reveal whether the variances are different enough to cause concern. According to Field (2005), "*Levene's Test for Equality of Variances* is the same with a *t*-test, where it tests the hypotheses that the variances into two groups are equal. If the Levene's Test is significant at  $p < .05$ , it can be inferred that the variances are significantly different. Therefore, the assumption of homogeneity of variances has been violated. If, the Levene's test is non-significant (i.e.  $p > .05$ ), it can be implied that there is zero difference between the variances. The variances are roughly equal and the assumption is tenable" (p.301). To examine the difference between two groups and the significance level, it is necessary to consult the result of Independent Samples Tests, which is presented in Table 5 below.

**Table 5 Independent Sample t-Test**

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
VPostOne B	Equal variances assumed	.624	.432	.209	78	.835	.223	1.064	-1.896	2.341
	Equal variances not assumed			.209	76.389	.835	.223	1.067	-1.901	2.347
VPostTwo B	Equal variances assumed	13.921	.000	-1.685	78	.096	-1.542	.915	-3.364	.280
	Equal variances not assumed			-1.704	66.417	.093	-1.542	.904	-3.347	.264

The interpretation of the independent *t*-test is done in two steps. Initially, the homogeneity of the variance between the male and female participants was determined using *Levene's Test for Equality of Variances*. In the current analysis, the Sig. value for VPostOneB was .432, which was greater than .05. Therefore, variances were assumed to be equal. This provided the *t* value ( $t=.208$ ) and the degrees of freedom ( $df=78$ ). However, in VPostTwoB, the Sig. value was .000, which was lower than .05, indicate that the variances was significant, with *t* value ( $t=-1.685$ ) and the degree of freedom ( $df=78$ ). It is also observed that the significance values were .835 for VPostOneB and .096 for VPostTwoB, which were higher than .05. As a result, it can be concluded that gender has no significant effect in vocabulary acquisition.

**V. DISCUSSION**

In this paper, the researchers were intended to investigate the effect of gender in vocabulary acquisition among the third grade elementary school in Indonesia. Although the scope was limited (third grade elementary school students), it appeared that gender has no significant effect on the vocabulary acquisition, in which the significance values were .835 for VPostOneB and .096 for VPostTwoB, which were higher than .05 (see Table 5). However, the mean values of VPostOne B for male (14.66) is slightly higher than the female students (14.44). Hence, the result demonstrates that, gender significantly moderate the difference. After two weeks without intervention, the condition is reversed, the mean of VPostTwoB for female students (15.10) is significantly higher than the male students (13.56) (see Table 4).

The similar significance values obtained by female and male students in the two post-tests indicate that both groups may have reached a similar level regarding

vocabulary knowledge acquisition. The findings in the present study was consistent with former studies such as Ellis, 1994; Jimenez-Catalan, 2010; Agustin Llach & Gallego, 2012; in which they concluded that gender difference has no apparent effect on the acquisition of vocabulary knowledge among the female and male students. The participants in the present study made up from a homogeneous sample of students regarding their age and level of English. The findings of the present study confirmed Sunderland's (2010) claim that the in foreign language context, where the foreign language is just another school subject, and identity issues are not prominent, will dilute any possible gender differences.

On the contrary, the mean values of post-tests one and two showed different thing. At the post-test one, the mean value of the male students showed slightly higher than the female students. However, at the post-test two, the condition was reversed; the mean value of the female students was significantly higher than their counterpart. The gender difference may have been associated with females are better in both linguistic and academic, in regard to social orientation, verbal skills, and compliance to norms, (Oxford, 1989). Other studies also suggested that females are better than males in second language acquisition studies and first language acquisition (Larsen-Freeman & Long, 1991; Maccoby & Jacklin, 1974; Slavin, 1997).

Although the analysis in the present study do not conclude that female students have a larger productive vocabulary than male students, but considering that males and females were given the same amount of time for accomplishing the tests, and that females achieving a significantly higher score in the post-test two than males, Jimenez-Catalan (2010) believe that the female students may have higher levels in the scale of vocabulary knowledge than boys because of their higher motivation towards the English language. Similarly, other studies (Agreda, 2006; Fontecha, 2010; Ehrman & Oxford, 1989; Oxford & Niykos, 1989; Bacon, 1992; and Graham, 1997) also claimed that the female students are more motivated than the male students and that the females utilized a significantly greater number of language learning strategies than their male counterparts.

## VI. CONCLUSIONS

Gender is known as one of the most relevant factors used in second language acquisition research to distinguish among learners. In the area of vocabulary acquisition, the role of gender occupied a significant position. There are plentiful of studies that focus on gender differences in the several aspects related to vocabulary acquisition. Some studies show inconsistent results, where some focused on the superiority of males over females, others highlighted on females being better as language learners than males, and some others pointed out that gender is irrelevant in second or foreign language acquisition. Jimenez (2010), and Sunderland (2010) stated that the relationships between vocabulary and gender are not stable, but rather influenced by context and test type-specific with other factors such as age, L1, or L2 proficiency. Therefore, gender is recognized as a complex and distinctive issue. The aim of this paper is to investigate whether gender has effect on vocabulary acquisition through nursery rhymes among third grade elementary students in Indonesia. Studies on the use of nursery rhymes conducted outside Indonesia indicated that nursery rhymes could help to promote oral proficiency skills, listening, thinking skills, interest and motivation towards learning English (Harper, 2011; Schiller, 2010; Shwetha, 2013; Vidal, 2011). Unfortunately, in Indonesia, there are very few studies conducted to evaluate the effects of nursery rhymes in enhancing vocabulary acquisition and phonemic awareness. Nursery rhymes are recommended suitable in teaching vocabulary to young learner because there is no melody to serve as a point of identification (Fauziati, 2015), and learning nursery rhymes develops and improves extensive early literacy skills, such as oral skills, phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency, the rhythm of words, and comprehension (Maclean et al. 1987). Although the scope was limited (third grade elementary school students), it appeared that gender has no significant effect on the vocabulary acquisition.

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