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A CASE STUDY ON THE IMPACT OF GENDER IN THE TBLT CONTEXT

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ABSTRACT

This study is a product of a classroom experiment designed to investigate and explain how students' gender affects their proficiency in English throughout a course using the Task-Based Language Teaching methodology at the secondary school level in Andhra Pradesh. Before diving into the technique and discussing the results and their interpretation, I provide a brief overview of the state of English in India and the TBLT approach. The study found, among other things, that students' gender had no bearing on their English proficiency and that TBLT helped students improve their English.

(*Keywords:* Role of Gender, Teaching Experiment, TBLT, Secondary Level Students, Speaking Skills in English, Zero Influence of Gender, and TBLT is Effective)

Introduction

At present, English has established itself unquestionably as a global language. With its innate flexibility to adopt new ideas, English has successfully adapted to the needs of successive generations and technological advances. Let's call it English 2.0, the unofficial language of the internet, because of the enormous expansion and speed of cross-cultural online contact paired with the rise of global English variations. According to the British Council (2013) (page 6), The standard language rules have been loosened in this new variant. Punctuation and sentence structure are irrelevant. There is a lot of leeway for borrowing terms into the language.

There are approximately 952.1 million people who use the internet in English, or 25.5% of the global total, based on data from *www.internetworldstats.com* (Internet World Stats, 2017). A command of the English language is a "highly regarded technical ability" in today's global economy. It helps with international relations and diplomacy. The ability to speak another language has become a requirement for many jobs and academic programmes that require international experience. It's your ticket to higher-paying positions and faster promotion in your field. In India, speaking English can open doors for you. Once spoken only by a privileged few in India's upper classes, the English language is now widely spoken across the country. Teaching English as a second language has taken on new significance in light of the growing relevance of being able to communicate effectively in that language. Task-based language teaching is one of the Communicative Approaches widely utilised to help ESL students improve their fluency in English.

Theoretical Background in Brief

Since the Situational Language Approach and Audio-Lingual Methods failed to consider the 'functional and communicative potential of language,' the Communicative Approach was developed as a critical response to these methods' shortcomings. The central tenets of this communicative perspective on the language are the following:

- Language is a well-established system for conveying meaning;
- Interaction and communication are the primary functions of the language;
- The structure of language demonstrates its use for functional and communicative purposes.

Apart from the above, varieties of functional and communicative meaning in speech are often viewed as primary units of language, alongside grammatical and structural qualities (Richards & Rodgers, 2006: 161).

In Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT), tasks are the foundation for all lesson preparation and delivery. A central tenet of TBLT is that teaching language in isolated chunks is counterproductive and that students should be placed in situations where they can practise using the language. It questions conventional wisdom in language education (Ellis, 2009: 222). When students use language to try and solve problems, they also pick up new vocabulary and grammatical structures as a bonus. In TBLT, we first determine what information is required. Conversation in the target language is emphasised. It places greater value on fluidity than precision. It is based on actual events or data. It takes the perspective of the student. It confirms the theory that the four linguistic abilities are intertwined and essential for successful language acquisition. It places value on the individual experiences of each learner. It highlights the need to connect classroom language instruction and actual language use. In addition to keeping tabs on student progress and taking corrective action as needed, this method guarantees that educators give relevant input.

Objectives of the Research:

- Investigate the efficacy of Task-Based Language Teaching in enhancing female students' proficiency, especially the Speaking Skill of English.
- To ascertain whether or not gender plays a role in the TBLT setting.

Hypothesis

The following working hypothesis was developed to help achieve the aims of this investigation. It is called a "Null Hypothesis" when the experiment's results do not provide statistical proof of the observed effect. An alternative hypothesis is accepted if the results are statistically significant. The students' Speaking Skills vary widely depending on their gender.

Methodology

At Zilla Parishad High School in Chinamiram, West Godavari District, Andhra Pradesh, a teaching experiment was done to see how gender affects the outcomes for children learning English through TBLT. Since its founding in 2002, enrolment has grown to a robust 456. Thirty ninth-grade students from the English-language track were randomly chosen to participate in the study. As for the gender breakdown, we have 19 girl students and 62 boy students in our sample. Every single one of the students comes from a low-income family. Their parents are either daily wagers or small vendors. Because of this, the pupils do not have a lot of parental involvement in their schooling.

Before the instructional intervention was presented, a pre-test was given to the pupils. Seven lessons from the prescribed English textbook, *Our World through English*, were chosen for the instructional intervention. To enhance the student's ability to communicate in English, the researcher selected ten (10) lessons and based the design and development of ten tasks on the framework of Willis' task cycle (1996: 56-57). The duration of the educational programme was 45 days. Finally, a post-test was given to the students to confirm that their English-speaking abilities had indeed improved due to TBLT.

There are eight different forms of communication included in both the pre-and post-tests. Each respondent was given five minutes for performing each task, two minutes for preparation and three minutes for presentation. The students were assigned various communication tasks and provided with supporting resources as needed. Tasks can receive a maximum of five points for each criterion. The pupils' oral responses were recorded and transcribed during the whole pre- and post-testing procedure. The researcher listened to the audio

recordings multiple times and carefully read through the transcriptions to make an assessment based on the evaluation criteria taken from Cambridge English. A2 is one of the CEFR levels described by the Council of Europe and pertains to evaluating oral communication skills. In the end, the quantified data was used in the statistical analysis.

Analysis and Interpretation

For quantitative analysis, the pre-and post-test scores of both the boys' and girls' groups were collated for each of the eight tasks (8x5=40). Means, Variance, and Standard Deviation were computed individually and across all criteria. Using the derived data, the Z test was used for statistical analysis. The effectiveness of TBLT on these secondary school children was initially confirmed. Results from the pre-and post-tests on the speaking portion of the evaluation were compared and discussed.

Table 1: Statistical Analysis of Pre-test & Post-test Means of Boys Group

Assessment criterion	X_1	1	X_2	2	Comparison	Result
Grammar and Vocabulary	9.54	3.5	26.9	2.98	$ z = 12.525 \geq Z_c = 1.96$	S.
Pronunciation	10	3.94	20.9	3.44	$ z = 6.912 \geq Z_c = 1.96$	S.
Interactive Communication	8.8	3.84	24.72	3.0	$ z = 10.835 \geq Z_c = 1.96$	S.
Overall performance	28.36	10.93	72.54	8.66	$ z = 10.508 \geq Z_c = 1.96$	S.

(S. = Significant)

Table 1 displays the results of statistical analysis between the means of the pre-and post-tests for the boys' group; the Z calculated values for all three criteria and overall performance are more significant than the Z critical value, indicating a statistically significant improvement in their speaking performance after the intervention. The results of this trial show that the boys whose English was taught using the TBLT method showed substantial improvement in their ability to speak the language.

Table 2: Statistical Analysis of Pre-test & Post-test Means of Girls Group

Assessment criterion	X_1	1	X_2	2	Comparison	Result
Grammar and Vocabulary	9.84	2.14	26.42	3.23	$ z = 18.652 \geq Z_c = 1.96$	S.
Pronunciation	9.73	2.0	19.47	3.56	$ z = 10.397 \geq Z_c = 1.96$	S.
Interactive Communication	10.52	2.56	24.42	2.91	$ z = 15.633 \geq Z_c = 1.96$	S.
Overall performance	30.1	6.0	70.31	8.5	$ z = 16.846 \geq Z_c = 1.96$	S.

(S. = Significant)

Table 2 displays the results of statistical analysis between the girls' pre- and post-test means, revealing that the calculated values for all three criteria and the overall performance are more significant than the Z critical value, indicating a statistically significant improvement in their speaking performance after the intervention. Therefore, the present investigation confirms the favourable influence of TBLT on secondary-level students, as the girls who were taught using the TBLT technique also improved their speaking skills in English. Having determined that TBLT positively affects secondary school students' English-speaking abilities, we examined how students' genders affected their outcomes. The means, standard deviations, and Z tests for differential analysis of the speaking performance of the boys and girls groups on the pre-test were calculated.

Table 3: Statistical Analysis of Pre-test Means of Boys & Girls Groups

Assessment criterion	X_1	1	X_2	2	Comparison	Result
Grammar and Vocabulary	9.54	3.5	9.84	2.14	$ z = 0.258 \leq Z_c = 1.96$	N.S.
Pronunciation	10	3.94	9.73	2.0	$ z = 0.212 \leq Z_c = 1.96$	N.S.
Interactive Communication	8.8	3.84	10.52	2.56	$ z = 1.325 \leq Z_c = 1.96$	N.S.
Overall performance	28.36	10.93	30.1	6.0	$ z = 0.487 \leq Z_c = 1.96$	N.S.

(N.S. = Not Significant)

The statistical analysis results demonstrate that there is no statistically significant difference in the speaking performance of the two groups on the pre-test, as the Z computed values for all three criteria and the overall performance is below the Z critical value. Both groups were at the same level of English proficiency before receiving TBLT instruction. Both groups performed nearly identically on the individual criterion. It was therefore determined that the students in the sample group had a similar level of English ability. Two groups'

post-test performance in speaking was compared using the Z test for statistical differentiation after the pedagogical intervention.

Table 4: Statistical Analysis of Post-test Means of Boys & Girls Groups

Assessment criterion	X_1	1	X_2	2	Comparison	Result
Grammar and Vocabulary	26.9	2.98	26.42	3.23	$ z = 0.412 \leq Z_c = 1.96$	N.S.
Pronunciation	20.9	3.44	19.47	3.56	$ z = 1.083 \leq Z_c = 1.96$	N.S.
Interactive Communication	24.72	3.0	24.42	2.91	$ z = 0.267 \leq Z_c = 1.96$	N.S.
Overall performance	72.54	8.66	70.31	8.5	$ z = 0.684 \leq Z_c = 1.96$	N.S.

(N.S. = Not Significant)

Table 4 displays the statistical analysis results, which show no statistically significant difference in post-test speaking performance between the two groups. This is because the Z-calculated values for each of the three criteria and overall performance are less than the Z-critical value. The results demonstrate that after receiving the TBLT intervention, both groups improved in a close range in their command of the English language. Both groups performed nearly identically on the individual criterion. As a result, the lack of an appreciable difference between the sexes was confirmed. When taught with TBLT to improve English proficiency, boys and girls showed equivalent gains.

Therefore, the Null Hypothesis is accepted because there is insufficient statistical evidence to support the Statement of the Hypothesis that Gender has a significant impact in determining the Students' Speaking Performance.

The post-test speaking performance of the two groups is displayed graphically in Figure 1 for immediate comprehension of the fact that the influence of TBLT is practically similar on both boys and girls, and gender plays no role.

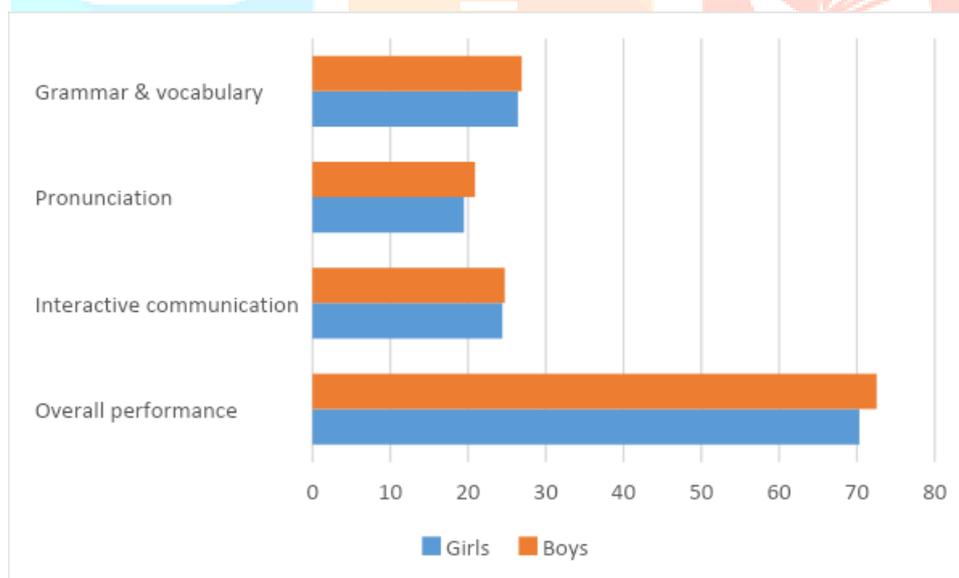


Figure: Comparison between Boys' and Girls' Performances

Findings

- Secondary school students can benefit from the TBLT method by improving their English language abilities.
- When using the TBLT method, there is no discernible difference in how male and female students perform in public speaking.
- Secondary school students in public high schools can also benefit from TBLT's implementation.
- For students from low-income backgrounds, such as those attending Government Schools, TBLT has proven to be an effective instructional method for enhancing their English language command.
- Students who don't have a lot of academic help at home can learn English with TBLT.

Conclusion

A brief history of English and Task-Based Language Learning was presented to set the stage for the rest of the paper. Analysis and interpretation of the data took place after the study's methodology, which detailed the study's objectives and hypotheses. The findings of this study specify that using TBLT to teach English as a second language to secondary school students has no significant effect on gender differences in English speaking skills but has a positive impact on students' English proficiency.

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