

INTEGRATING GENDER SENSITIZATION AND GENDER-NEUTRAL LANGUAGE OF ENGLISH BY EMPLOYING CLIL APPROACH TO ENHANCE CRITICAL THINKING

Ravi Prakash Jalli[†]

Spoorthi Boda^{†*}

[†]National Institute of Technology Warangal, Telangana, India

Abstract

This study aims to examine how CLIL approach can be employed for integrating gender sensitization and gender-neutral language of English to enhance critical thinking. CLIL stands for Content and Language Integrated Learning approach which integrates content and language, placing equal focus on both. The study uses a cross-sectional pre-experimental research design, following one group: pre-test, intervention and post-test model. Convenience sampling is employed to select the participants: 105 engineering second-year students attending Gender Sensitization MNC at an NIT. The results of the study were analysed using both inductive and descriptive analyses along with inferential statistics. They conclude that CLIL is an effective approach to integrating gender sensitization and gender-neutral language of English to enhance critical thinking.

Keywords: Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL); Gender Sensitization; English Language Teaching and Learning; Gender-Neutral Language; Critical Thinking.

[†] Doctoral researcher working at the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, National Institute of Technology Warangal (NITW). He has done his Master's in English and holds a Post-Graduate Diploma in the Teaching of English (PGDTE) from the English and Foreign Languages University (EFLU) Hyderabad. Since 2019 he has been involved in teaching English Language to Middle School, High School and Engineering Graduate students. His research interests include Innovation and Technology in English Language Teaching (ELT), Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL), Gender Sensitization, Climate Change and Game-Based Learning. E-mail: jr720121@student.nitw.ac.in. ORCID: 0009-0008-2197-1718.

^{†*} Assistant Professor of English at Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, National Institute of Technology Warangal (NITW). She has a Ph. D in English Language Education (ELE) from the English and Foreign Languages University (EFLU) Hyderabad, and has several years of corporate training experience in improving operations through curriculum development and employee training; driving performance improvement and training logistics. She joined the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences at NIT Warangal as an Assistant Professor of English in April 2018. She teaches B.Tech and Ph.D courses at NIT Warangal. Her research interests include English Language Teaching, Leveraging Technology in Language Learning, Task Based Language Teaching/Training, AI and VR in Education, Virtual Labs and Education 4.0. E-mail: spoorthi.b@nitw.ac.in. ORCID: 0000-0001-6385-5119.



1. Introduction

A nation is considered civilised and developed when every individual, irrespective of their gender identity, can live peacefully without any inhibitions or discrimination (Basak, 2017). A nation can never be considered prospering unless it works towards building a society that is free of social stigma and gender stereotypes. As Sarkar (2017) argued gender parity should be contemplated as one of the criteria to evaluate a country's progress as a safe and healthy society. The social, economic and industrial development of a country is greatly contributed by every individual, regardless of their social and gender identities (Basak, 2017). Discrimination based on gender, religion, caste, creed and ethnicity will significantly stifle the advancement of a country and has the potential to perpetuate centuries-old practices of injustice.

India, as a developing country, is known for its rich cultural diversity and heritage. However, Indian societies are often associated with gender-based discrimination, strict gender roles, stereotypes, stigmas and inequalities (Sarkar, 2017). Even though it is difficult for the people of India to digest this harsh reality, they should accept the truth and work towards inclusivity. Gender inequality has been prevailing in Indian societies since time immemorial (Roy & Sharma, 2021). The outdated and unfair patriarchal beliefs, propagated across the subcontinent by various religions and cultures, have been cherished and preserved by its people (Sinha & Bondestam, 2021). Gender inequality and violence based on gender have been a monstrous social evil reigning over the country for ages. It has a huge impact on various domains of the country including the social, economic, educational and both physical and mental well-being of the citizens (Roy & Sharma, 2021).

2. Conclusions of the Previous Studies

2.1. Gender Inequality in Indian Education

A critical view of S. Sarkar and A. Debsarma (2021) depicts the jarring reality of Indian education. They argued that Indian education, "instead of creating a gender-neutral inclusive academic environment, limits the desired sense of belonging among female and transgender students" (Sarkar & Debsarma, 2021, p. 1). This argument describes the hostility faced by female and gender non-binary students in India. In addition, a study conducted by Sinha and Bondestam (2021) reported that one-third of women students in Indian higher education institutions experienced sexual harassment. In their study, they also cite The Times of India Report (2017) which reveals that there has been a 50% increase in sexual harassment cases at a popular Indian university alone (Sinha & Bondestam, 2021). This report portrays the prevalence of gender-based violence and sexual harassment in Indian educational institutions.

Even after the passing of the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act in 2019, they have still not been accepted by society and face discrimination on a regular basis. A report published by Boston Consulting Group (BCG) in collaboration with Pride Circle Foundation and IIM Ahmedabad describes gender insensitivity on Indian campuses. The survey, conducted with 1700 students to study the discrimination and social exclusion faced, reports that 64% of the LGBTQ+ students either faced discrimination or have seen others facing gender-based discrimination (“Fostering Pride in Higher Education: Road to Inclusion”, 2021). The study also reports that 56% of the students are afraid of revealing their gender identity for fear that they would be humiliated and treated differently (“Fostering Pride in Higher Education: Road to Inclusion”, 2021). This ‘first Pan-Indian’ study on LGBTQ+ issues shows how biased the Indian education environment is to the students of non-binary gender.

On top of this, even the primary and secondary school textbooks continue to showcase ‘father’ as the sole provider (superior person) of the family and ‘mother’ as the caregiver (inferior person) of the family (Panday, 2006). By assigning traditional gender roles to men and women, the textbooks are excluding the entire discussion on queer people. A survey carried out by ‘Friends for Education’ found that there are 80-100 illustrations in an approximately 130-page school textbook in India, out of which around 52% of the illustrations represent men or boys as superior beings in stronger roles (Panday, 2006). Even though NCERT, a regulatory body of both primary and secondary education in India, has been trying to bring about changes by making the textbooks gender-neutral, the situation is more or less the same due to the limited knowledge and gender awareness of teachers as well as authors and publishers of the textbooks (Panday, 2006).

Considering the huge number of crimes committed against women and transgender people and the constant discrimination faced by these genders at educational institutions in India, it is relevant to discuss the need for gender sensitization (Roy & Sharma, 2021). As Roy and Sharma (2021) argued, “gender sensitization is the basis for a healthy society” and by teaching gender and gender sensitization, one can affect the unhealthy mindsets of the students and induce in them both compassion and respect for all genders (Roy & Sharma, 2021, p. 9).

2.2. Inadequacy of Gender Sensitization in Indian Education

Gender sensitization is defined as “the process of changing the stereotype concept or idea to the modification of behaviour by raising awareness of gender equality concerns” (Sarkar, 2017, p. 23009). In other words, it refers to the process of changing the biased mindsets of people by generating gender sensitivity and respect for all human beings regardless of gender. As Sarkar (2017) points out “gender sensitization seeks to question and subsequently change the very thought-process of the people” (Sarkar, 2017, p. 23007). It instils empathy, acceptance, and compassion for all genders and eventually creates a fair society, destroying all the

prevalent prejudices. Gender sensitization has enormous potential to guide the nation towards better democratization.

Basak (2017) emphasized that “Reformation in society with special reference to gender differences is possible only through gender sensitization,” (Basak, 2017, p. 44). He also emphasized the need to sensitize people on gender issues. Considering the present scenario of our country, it is significant to envision a nation where its youth destroys the centuries-old shackles of gender inequality (Roy & Sharma, 2021). Education, in this context, is considered the ideal platform through which gender sensitization can be introduced to the people (Sarkar, 2017). Gender sensitization programs in Indian education will certainly influence the students to be more inclusive and support them in building a better and healthier society (Roy & Sharma, 2021).

The widespread gender inequality and violence against women in India made the government adopt a behavioural law named The POSH (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act in 2013 (Sinha & Bondestam, 2021). This moved all the governing bodies of education towards issuing guidelines for the prevention, prohibition and redressal of gender-based discrimination and violence. Since gender stereotypes are “endemic and maybe even intrinsic” to many societies in India, gender-based discrimination is still prevalent across the country, especially in Indian educational institutions, irrespective of the existing laws (Sinha & Bondestam, 2021 p. 470).

Although the developing ages of students are significant in terms of introducing them to gender sensitization, school education in India has looked down on the inclusion of gender sensitization in its curriculum and has always relied on teachers to sensitize students (Pandey, 2006). The teachers in addition to the students are also in need of proper training in gender sensitization techniques (Pandey, 2006). Even the research done on gender sensitization in Indian school education is very limited and scarce. Despite gender sensitization being an important policy towards alleviating gender differences in society, only 21 higher education institutions in India are offering courses on gender sensitization (Roy & Sharma, 2021).

2.3. Emerging Gender Sensitization Policies in Indian Higher Education

Higher education is considered an important level of education when a student goes through a transitional phase to reach greater levels of specialization in their field and also become an empathetic person (Chowdhury, 2022). Roy and Sharma (2021) argued that courses on gender sensitization are necessary at the college level in all fields of education because younger minds are more open to unlearning and adapting to changes. They also have the potential to reconceptualize the existing societal norms and unjust practices (Roy & Sharma, 2021). In addition, a curriculum that includes gender sensitization will eradicate

discrimination based on gender and help us move strongly towards an inclusive society (Chowdhury, 2022).

National Education Policy (2020) of India insists on the curricular integration of essential subjects like gender sensitization, ethics and human values, logical reasoning, critical thinking, problem-solving, communication, etc. (Clauses 4.23 and 4.5, “NEP 2020”, p. 15). Following the POSH (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act 2013 and NEP 2020, the University Grants Commission (UGC), the regulatory body of Indian higher education, recommends the teaching of gender sensitization and the adoption of a gender-neutral approach. It promotes the use of language that is respectful and sensitive to gender (“Curriculum and Credit Framework for Undergraduate Programmes”, 2022, p. 16). Besides, the All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) in their Approval Process Handbook 2021-22, mentions the mandatory implementation of The POSH Act, 2013 by constituting an Internal Complaints Committee (ICC) “with an inbuilt mechanism for gender sensitization against sexual harassment” (p.169). It also envisages organising regular training programmes to sensitize students, faculty and other non-teaching staff. However, all these recommendations, including NEP 2020, have been criticised for the lack of discussion on implementation procedures and monitoring mechanisms (Chowdhury, 2022).

By incorporating the recommendations of NEP 2020, UGC and AICTE, Gender Sensitization is included as a mandatory course in the curriculum at various higher education institutions in India. One of the National Institutes of Technology (NITs) has also started introducing Gender Sensitization as one of the nine Mandatory Non-Credit Courses (MNCs). However, students are required to choose any one of the MNCs, therefore, there is a possibility that they could opt for a different course over Gender Sensitization. This shows the auxiliary position given to Gender Sensitization in Indian higher education institutions, where it has to be given greater significance.

2.4. Gender Sensitization and English Language Teaching (ELT)

ELT is interwoven into a complex network of units of a curriculum which includes the need to educate learners about diversity, inclusivity and social justice (Banegas & Lauze, 2020). Banegas and Lauze (2020) stated that “as part of a wider curriculum, ELT in formal education cannot ignore gender and sexuality issues” (p. 207). Even though there have been multiple studies carried out on how gender impacts English language teaching and learning, very little research has been done on the inclusion of gender-neutral language in ELT (Peters, 2020; Paiz, 2017; Kollberg, 2015; Główka, 2014; Maehara, 2010). Gender-neutral language is also referred to as “gender-inclusive or non-sexist language” (Maehara, 2010). Główka (2014) stated that gender bias in language could be seen as a paramount issue for gender equality.

In most cases, gender-based or gender-specific language is used as the ‘generic default’ in English language, which is typically masculine (Kollberg, 2015). It is

also observed that people tend to overuse the male pronoun 'he' in a generic way. In other words, instead of using neutral words, people use words that refer to the male gender to indicate the people whose gender is unknown (Kollberg, 2015). In this context, Maehara (2010) suggest the use of the singular 'they' or 'their' as a singular pronoun, to replace the generic masculine pronoun 'he'. Considering the gender disparity in English language, there is a dire need for teaching gender-neutral language in ELT. As Maehara (2010) stated, "gender equality needs to be achieved in many areas and this can be done both through language use and through an awareness of the effects of language use" (p. 31).

2.5. CLIL and Gender Sensitization

Incorporation of the aforementioned Bloom's higher-order thinking skills is one of the characteristics of CLIL approach. CLIL stands for Content and Language Integrated Learning Approach. CLIL is defined as an educational approach in which a subject (content) is taught in and through a second language (language) (Ball et al., 2015). The dual-focused nature of CLIL allows us to have the same amount of emphasis on both the subject content as well as the language learning. Do Coyle et al. (2010) describe CLIL as 'an innovative fusion' of both language education and subject education (p. 1). The most significant feature of CLIL is its pedagogical integration of contextualised 4Cs into the teaching and learning process; the 4Cs include content, cognition, communication and culture (Coyle et al., 2010).

A study conducted by Diezmas and Hill (2019) concluded that CLIL methodology helped teachers to alleviate the gender differences in their students, in terms of content achievement. They stated that "CLIL methodology might contribute to levelling gender difference both in language and in content learning" (Diezmas and Hill, 2019, p. 184). Another study on the inclusion of CSE (Comprehensive Sex Education) topics in ELT following CLIL discussed the effects of the integration in state secondary education (Banegas & Lauze, 2020). The study proved that CLIL was an effective approach to implementing the integration of CSE in EFL (English as a Foreign Language) contexts. It also emphasised the need for gender sensitization across the curriculum (Banegas & Lauze, 2020).

2.6. Critical Thinking Skills and Gender Sensitization

Critical thinking, according to Paul and Elder (2006), is defined as "the art of analysing and evaluating thinking with a view of improving it" (p. 4). In other words, critical thinking is the ability to employ a set of cognitive skills, including the ability to apply, analyse, synthesize and evaluate (Alsaleh, 2020). These skills are also considered Bloom's higher-order thinking skills which depict critical thought (Bissell & Lemons, 2006).

Sarkar (2017) asserted that education should instil critical thinking skills in students to make them aware of gender discrimination in society. An integrated approach that amalgamates gender sensitization and critical thinking will also help the students develop their problem-solving abilities and make them more sensible in real-life situations. Even clauses 4.23 and 4.5 of NEP 2020 emphasize the need for the curricular integration of gender sensitization, communication and critical thinking skills.

2.7. Need for an Integrated Approach

Social issues like gender and gender sensitivity are believed to have enormous potential to enrich ELT with contextualised meaningful topics (Banegas & Lauze, 2020). In addition, CLIL emphasizes the application of higher-order thinking skills in the teaching and learning process. This application of higher-order thinking skills can be greatly supported by the topics on gender and gender-neutral language as they involve analysis and evaluation of thinking. As all the aforementioned areas (gender sensitization, gender-neutral language and critical thinking) are interlinked and complementary, there is a need for an integrated and innovative approach like CLIL that can capitalize on the interconnectedness. This study examines the effectiveness of CLIL for integrating gender sensitization and gender-neutral language of English to enhance the critical thinking of engineering students. A comparison of the pre-test and the post-test will be carried out using inductive and descriptive analyses.

3. Methodology

This study incorporates a cross-sectional pre-experimental research design, following one group: pre-test, intervention and post-test model. The pre-test and the post-test included the same set of questions on both content (gender sensitization) and language (gender-neutral language of English). Both the tests were administered online through Google Forms. The purpose of the pre-test is to assess the learners' entry-level knowledge of gender and gender-neutral language. Whereas the post-test strives to examine the conceptual change in the learners. Inductive and descriptive analyses along with inferential statistics were employed to analyse the test results.

3.1. Purpose of the Study

As there is a need to incorporate an innovative approach like CLIL, this study examines the effectiveness of employing CLIL approach for integrating gender sensitization and gender-neutral language of English to improve engineering students' critical thinking.

3.2. Research Questions

The following research questions are investigated in this study:

1. How can CLIL approach be employed to integrate gender sensitization and gender-neutral language of English?
2. What are the implications of using CLIL approach for integrating gender sensitization and gender-neutral language of English to enhance critical thinking?

3.3. Participants

A convenience sampling technique was employed to select the participants. A batch of 105 engineering second-year first-semester students attending Gender Sensitization MNC at a National Institute of Technology was selected for the study. Out of 105, 92 students participated in the pre-test. Therefore, the response rate of the pre-test stands at 87.6%. Whereas 94 students participated in the post-test. Therefore, the response rate of the post-test stands at 89.5%. This discrepancy is because two students failed to take the post-test and four failed to take the pre-test. Consequently, only 90 responses (85.7%) were considered for the analysis. The age group of the students ranges from 18-21 years old. In the pre-test, out of 92, 80 students identified themselves as 'male' and 12 students as female. Whereas in the post-test, out of 95 students, 81 identified themselves as 'male', 11 students as 'female', two students did not reveal their gender (instead they gave their names) and one student identified as 'cisgender'. The students are from different parts of the country and act on different streams of engineering.

3.4. Research Instruments

A pre-test and a post-test were administered to the students online using Google Forms. The pre-test and the post-test were comprised of ten questions (four open-ended and six closed-ended) each. All the open-ended questions are based on different concepts of gender, gender roles, gender stereotypes, and the idea of gender-neutral language. The closed-ended questions are based on examples of the gender-neutral language of English. The post-test included five additional questions to take students' feedback on the session. In addition, classroom observations of the teacher have also been considered.

3.5. Procedure

The study was carried out in three steps: Pre-test (at the beginning of the session), Intervention (Classroom instruction) and Post-test (at the end

of the session). As suggested by Alsaleh (2020), the CLIL lesson designed for intervention, which integrates gender sensitization and gender-neutral language of English, incorporates teaching techniques such as questioning, discussion, self-reflection and revision to enhance critical thinking skills. The objectives of the CLIL lesson are listed below:

Content objectives for the lesson:

1. By the end of the lesson, students will apply the concept of Gender.
2. By the end of the lesson, students will evaluate gender stereotypes
3. By the end of the lesson, students will analyse the use of gender-neutral language

Language objectives for the lesson:

1. By the end of the lesson, students will be able to use gender-neutral nouns
2. By the end of the lesson, students will be able to use the singular 'they'
3. By the end of the lesson, students will assess their language

3.6. Analysis

This study uses inductive analysis to examine the test results. Inductive and descriptive analyses are incorporated as they are based on extensive interaction with the data, contrary to deductive analysis which focuses on analysing data within a particular framework (Kollberg, 2015). The responses of both the pre-test and the post-test were systematically entered into Microsoft Excel for ease of analysis. The data was sorted based on the questions to facilitate the comparison of the responses. The quantitative data was analysed by employing Dependent (Paired) Samples t-test, using SPSS 25.

4. Results and Discussion

Following the suggestions given by Alsaleh (2020), both a pre-test and a post-test were conducted to examine the improvement in the critical thinking skills of the students. The results of the pre-test and the post-test were analysed and compared using inductive analysis and descriptive statistics.

Out of the 92 participants in the pretest, two participants failed to take the post-test and out of 94 participants in the post-test, four failed to take the pre-test. Therefore, only 90 responses were considered for the analysis.

4.1. Conceptual Change

The results of the tests were both qualitatively and quantitatively examined to identify the patterns that indicate a conceptual change in the students. Four open-ended questions were asked in this regard and the responses were analysed both inductively and descriptively.

The responses were evaluated by following the assessment model that was introduced by Alsaleh (2020). According to this model, an assessment developed by the teacher to assess critical thinking skills should always try to focus on the aspects of critical thinking that are directly related to subject (content) objectives (Alsaleh, 2020).

Table 1: Conceptual change in the students when their pre-test and post-test responses were compared

Question Number	Students showcased No Change	Students showcased Partial Change	Students showcased Significant Change
1.	42%	26%	32%
2.	49%	29%	22%
3.	60%	28%	12%
4.	49%	33%	18%
Overall Percentage of the Students	50%	29%	21%

Table 1 Alt text: The table describes the Conceptual change in the students when their pre-test and post-test responses were compared. It is divided into four columns: Question Number, Students Showcased No Change, Students Showcased Partial Change, and Students Showcased Significant Change. The last row indicates the Overall Percentage of Students. The average of students who showcased no change in all four questions is 50%, the average of students who showcased a partial change in all four questions is 29%, and The average of students who showcased Significant change in all four questions is 50%

Case 1: Gender

Pre-test: “Sex of the person”

Post-test: “Gender is a social construct or self-generated identity which is independent of the person’s sex”
(Participant 52)

Case 2: Gender Stereotypes

Pre-test: “General customs we see for particular gender”

Post-test: “Basically they are not verified without any actual thought and just we follow because other follow so.”

(Participant 50)

When individual responses of the students in both the pre-test and the post-test were compared according to the questions, as shown in Table 1, it was found that around 21% of the students showed a significant change in their perception of gender and gender-related issues. Around 29% of the students showcased Partial change in their perception. However, 50% of the students did not indicate any change in their perception. This is also because some of the students had already attended a few sessions on gender and therefore, answered appropriately in both the tests. It is significant to consider that a small number of students were not open to changing their conservative notions on gender and hence, did not show any conceptual change.

From the responses mentioned in Case 1 and Case 2, we can observe the change in the thinking of the students which would not have been possible without deploying their critical thinking skills to analyse and evaluate their perception. Even participation in classroom discussions greatly helped the students in this regard. These results are on par with the conclusions drawn by Sarkar (2017) that discuss the significance of imparting critical thinking skills to make students aware of gender issues.

4.2. Improvement in Language Proficiency

Questions starting from five to eight of the tests are based on examples of the gender-neutral language of English. The responses to these questions were both descriptively and statistically analysed and compared.

Table 2: Percentages of correct responses for closed-ended language questions

Question Number	Students Gave Correct Responses in the Pre-test	Students Gave Correct Responses in the Post-test
5	58%	69%
6	63%	91%
7	90%	99%
8	84%	94%
Overall Percentage of the Students	73%	88%

Table 2 Alt text: The table describes the percentages of students who gave correct responses to closed-ended language questions. It is divided into three columns: Question Number, Students Gave Correct Responses in the Pre-test and Students Gave Correct Responses in the Post-test. The last row indicates the Overall Percentage of Students that gave correct responses. The average of students who gave correct responses in all four language questions in the Pre-test

is 73%. The average of students who gave correct responses in all four language questions in the post-test is 88%.

In the pre-test, the overall correct response rate stands at 73% and the overall correct response rate in the post-test is 88% (see Table 2). This shows that the students performed better in the post-test when compared with the pre-test. Therefore, it is proven that the student’s ability to use gender-neutral language has been significantly improved.

In addition, the pre-test and the post-test responses for these four closed-ended questions were analysed using Dependent (Paired) Samples t-test. The data was loaded into SPSS 25 and the results were generated (see Figure 1).

T-Test

Paired Samples Statistics					
		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	Pre-test	2.94	90	.952	.100
	Post-test	3.56	90	.672	.071

Paired Samples Correlations				
		N	Correlation	Sig.
Pair 1	Pre-test & Post-test	90	.347	.001

Figure 1 Caption: The dependent (Paired) samples t-test values of the closed-ended questions.

Figure 1 Alt text: The figure is the results of the dependent (Paired) samples t-test generated using SPSS 25. It shows that the Sig. (2-tailed) value lies at 0.000, along with other measurements.

The results of the dependent (paired) samples t-test show that the Sig. (2-tailed) value, p-value, is at 0.000, which is less than the traditional 5% (0.05) or 1% (0.01) level of significance (See Figure 1) (Gaur et al., 2012). Therefore, it can be said that the students have shown a significant improvement after the intervention.

4.3. Enhancement in Critical Thinking

Question 5 of the test required the students to evaluate the statement “All men are equal” and to give a proper reason for their evaluation. In the pre-test, 58% of the students found the statement problematic. This percentage increased by 10% in the post-test. 68% of the students found the statement contentious in the post-test. These results, along with the reasons the students gave for their evaluation, show a significant improvement in their critical thinking as there is a significant change in their judgment and interpretation (See Case 3).

Case 3: “All men are equal” Do you find anything wrong with the statement?

Pre-test: “Its not wrong, It just says men are equal.. Doesnt discriminate any person or gender”

Paired Samples Test									
Mean		Paired Differences				t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	
		Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference					
				Lower	Upper				
Pair 1	Pretest - Posttest	-.611	.956	.101	-.811	-.411	-6.063	89	.000

Post-test: “All beings are equal is the correct statement as the above statement specifies only about men”
(Participant 37)

4.4. Students' Evaluation of Language

Both the pre-test and the post-test allow the students to evaluate their native language as well as English Language. This activates in students Bloom's higher-order thinking skills that include analysing and evaluating.

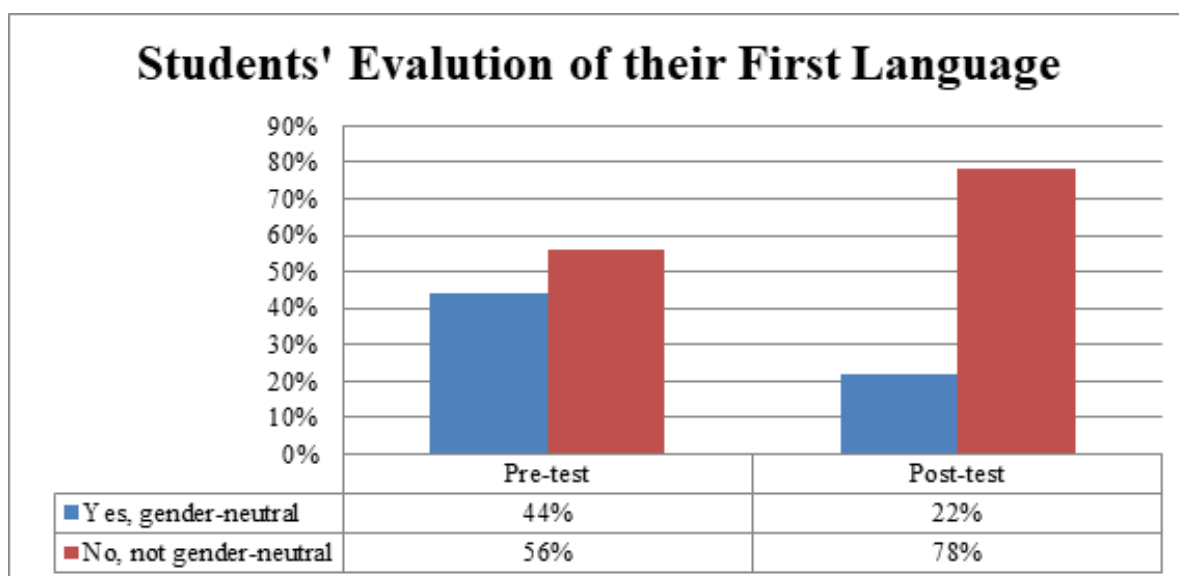


Figure 2 Caption: The Students' Evaluation of their First Language.

Figure 2 Alt text: The figure is a bar graph that describes the students' evaluation of their first language based on its gender neutrality. In the pre-test, 44% of the students opined that their first language is gender-neutral. Whereas, in the post-test, only 22% of the students opined that their first language is gender-neutral.

When students were asked to evaluate their first language in terms of gender neutrality, in the pre-test, 44% of the students opined that their first language is gender-neutral and 56% of the students thought the other way (See Figure

2). Whereas in the post-test, only 22% of the students thought that their first language was gender-neutral. This shows the change in the thought process of the students.

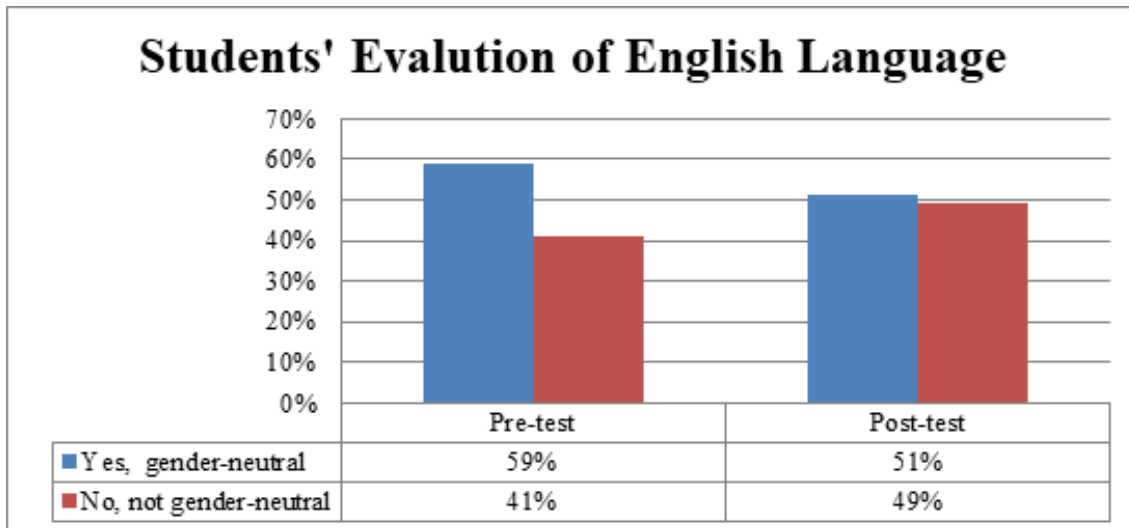


Figure 3 Caption: The Students’ Evaluation of English Language

Figure 3 Alt text: The figure is a bar graph that describes the students’ evaluation of English Language based on its gender neutrality. In the pre-test, 59% of the students opined that English Language is gender-neutral. Whereas, in the post-test, only 51% of the students opined that English Language is gender-neutral.

The last question of the test is focused on the students’ evaluation of English language. As shown in Figure 2, 59% of the students thought that English was a gender-neutral language during the pre-test. However, during the post-test, this has come down to 51%. From these results, it is imperative that the students were able to improve their evaluation during the lesson.

4.5. *Triangulation of the Results*

Sections 4.1, 4.2, and 4.3 showed the development of the students in three different areas: content knowledge, language proficiency and critical thinking. It can be said that the content (subject) knowledge of the students increased since there was a significant change in their perceptions of gender (refer to section 3.1). As discussed in section 4.2, an improvement in students’ language proficiency, in terms of the gender-neutral language of English, was also identified. Case 3 and the results mentioned in section 4.3 depict enhancement in the students’ critical thinking. The synthesis of these results shows us how CLIL can be used as an effective approach to teach both content (gender sensitization) and language (the gender-neutral language of English) and to bring about positive changes (in terms of critical thinking) in students.

4.6. Students' Feedback

The last section of the post-test seeks to identify the behavioural change in the students and to receive feedback on the session from them. Around 70% of the students stated that they had not been using gender-neutral language while communicating in English. However, 92% of the students showcased their willingness to incorporate gender-neutral language.

When asked for feedback on the session, a student suggested the use of real-life case studies to make the discussions more effective and empathetic. Another student criticised the teacher's reliance on YouTube videos. This criticism is in contrast with the results of the studies done on the impact of technology in CLIL lessons (Concezzi, 2017; Pérez & Malagón, 2017; Bozdoğan, 2015). Even a study conducted by Banegas (2015), in which around 39 CLIL lesson plans developed by CLIL teachers were analysed, showed that around 70% of the total instructional material used in a CLIL lesson is audio-visual. Considering the criticism of the student, despite the benefits of incorporating technology into CLIL lessons, CLIL teachers must start being critical about the excessive use of technology in a face-to-face classroom.

5. Conclusions

This study examined the implementation of an innovative approach called CLIL which integrates gender sensitization and gender-neutral language of English to enhance critical thinking. The results of the pre-test and the post-test showed the effectiveness of CLIL approach in integrating gender sensitization and gender-neutral language of English. They also reported a significant improvement in students' critical thinking abilities. These results are similar to the results of the study carried out by Banegas & Lauze (2020) who integrated Comprehensive Sex Education (CSE) in ELT using CLIL approach. This also shows the potential of CLIL as an innovative approach to both content and language education and encourages further implementation of CLIL in the Indian Context.

NEP 2020 recommends the curricular integration of different subject areas and skills to ensure the overall development of students. However, there is also a notable ambiguity around the lack of implementation and monitoring mechanisms for these recommendations. In a situation like this, CLIL would be an ideal approach to teaching and learning in India which has enormous potential to bring about positive changes.

Implications and Limitations

In the context of integrating gender sensitization and gender-neutral language of English, CLIL approach has been proved to be effective for teaching a subject and a language simultaneously. CLIL approach serves as a great tool for both subject teachers and language teachers to better contextualize the teaching and

learning process. This contextualization would further help teachers in yielding enhanced learning outcomes. The approach could, as well, significantly improve learner autonomy and engagement. Since the content is relevant and relatable, the learning would be more authentic and engaging. CLIL approach does not just emphasize content and communicative aspects of learning, but also cognitive and cultural domains. This multifaceted feature of CLIL, if utilized fully, could enrich the overall learning experience and motivate learners to become not merely good citizens, but informed changemakers.

Now coming to the limitations of the study, it is difficult to generalize the conclusions as the sample size is limited and belongs to one single setting. Similar studies in different settings and samples could give us a more comprehensive understanding of the approach. The study uses a specific set of data collection methods, procedures and analysis techniques. Using other methods, procedures and analysis techniques could enrich future studies. In addition, this study investigates only the integration of gender sensitization and gender-neutral language of English. Studies on the integration of various subjects and languages would significantly contribute to the current knowledge of CLIL.

References

- All India Council for Technical Education. (n.d.). *Approval Process Handbook 2021-22*.
- Alsaleh, N. J. (2020). Teaching Critical Thinking Skills: Literature Review. *TOJET: The Turkish Online Journal of Educational Technology*, 19(1), 21–39.
- Banegas, D. (2015). Sharing views of Clil Lesson Planning in language teacher education. *Latin American Journal of Content and Language Integrated Learning*, 8(2), 104–130. <https://doi.org/10.5294/laclil.2015.8.2.3>
- Banegas, D. L., & Lauze, C. (2020). Clil and Comprehensive Sexual Education: A case of innovation from Argentina. *Profile: Issues in Teachers' Professional Development*, 22(2), 199–209. <https://doi.org/10.15446/profile.v22n2.80528>
- Basak, S. (2017). EMPOWERING WOMEN THROUGH GENDER SENSITIZATION. *North Asian International Research Journal of Social Science & Humanities*, 3(10), 44–50.
- BISSELL, A. H. R. A. S. H. N., & LEMONS, P. A. U. L. A. P. (2006). A new method for assessing critical thinking in the classroom. *BioScience*, 56(1), 66. [https://doi.org/10.1641/0006-3568\(2006\)056\[0066:anmfac\]2.0.co;2](https://doi.org/10.1641/0006-3568(2006)056[0066:anmfac]2.0.co;2)
- Bozdoğan, D. (2015). Technology-enhanced CLIL classrooms. *CLIL in Foreign Language Education: e-Textbook for Foreign Language Teachers*, 164–175. <https://doi.org/10.17846/clil.2015.164-175>
- Chowdhury, D. (2022). Visions and Voices from the Indian Education System. In T. Hinton-Smith, A. C. Miller, F. Haeri Mazanderani, & N. Samuel (Eds.), *Leading Change in Gender and Diversity in Higher Education from Margins to Mainstream* (1st ed.). essay, Routledge.
- Concezzi, M. (2017). CLIL Teaching in Physics: Methodologies and Technological Innovations. *New Perspectives in Science Education 6th Edition 2017*, 6.
- Coyle, D., Hood, P., & Marsh, D. (2010). Clil. <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009024549>

- Diezmas, E. N. M. de, & Hill, T. M. (2019). SOCIAL SCIENCE LEARNING AND GENDER-BASED DIFFERENCES IN CLIL. A PRELIMINARY STUDY. *ELIA*, 19, 177–204. <https://doi.org/http://dx.doi.org/10.12795/elia.2019.i19.08>
- Fostering Pride in Higher Education: The Road to Inclusion. (2021). *Boston Consulting Group | Pride Circle Foundation | IIM Ahmedabad*.
- Gaur, A. S., & Gaur, S. S. (2012). Statistical methods for practice and research: A guide to data analysis using SPSS. Response Business Books from SAGE.
- Główka, D. (2014). The impact of gender on attainment in learning English as a foreign language. *Studies in Second Language Learning and Teaching*, 4(4), 617. <https://doi.org/10.14746/ssllt.2014.4.4.3>
- Kollberg, J. (2015). *Gender Equality in the Efl Classroom: A Qualitative Study of Swedish Efl Teachers' Perceptions of Gender Equality in Language and its Implementation in the Classroom* (dissertation). Stockholms universitet, 106 91, Stockholm.
- Maehara, Y. (2010). Learner's perceptions of gender-neutral language in an EFL textbook. *The Journal and Proceedings of GALE*, 3, 18–32.
- Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India. (2020). (rep.). *National education policy* (pp. 1–65).
- Paiz, J. M. (2017). Queering ESL teaching: Pedagogical and Materials Creation Issues. *TESOL Journal*, 9(2), 348–367. <https://doi.org/10.1002/tesj.329>
- Pandey, K. (2006). Eighth International Conference on Learning and Educational Media. In *Caught in the Web or Lost in the Textbook?* (pp. 201–206).
- Paul, R., & Elder, L. (2006). The Miniature Guide to Critical Thinking Concepts and Tools. *Foundation for Critical Thinking*.
- Pérez, M. L., & Malagón, C. G. (2017). Creating materials with ICT for Clil Lessons: A didactic proposal. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 237, 633–637. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2017.02.029>
- Roy, S., & Sharma, S. (2021). Gender Sensitization through Higher Education: A Move towards Creating Egalitarian and Equanimous Society. *UNIVERSITY NEWS*, 59(10), 9–14.
- Sarkar, S. (2017). Gender Sensitization and Gender Parity: Role of Education as a Vital Tool. *IJESC*, 7(2), 23007–23010.
- Sarkar, S., & Debsarma, A. (2021). A Reflection on the Scope of Feminist Pedagogy in Indian Tertiary Education. *Feminist Pedagogy*, 1(1).
- Sinha, A., & Bondestam, F. (2021). Moving beyond bureaucratic grey zones. managing sexual harassment in Indian Higher Education. *Higher Education*, 84(3), 469–485. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-021-00779-4>
- University Grants Commission. (2022). *Curriculum and Credit Framework for Undergraduate Programmes*.

Submission date: 17/08/2024

Acceptance date: 18/12/2024