

Original Research Article:

“Comprehension and Processing Strategies: A profile of Male and Female Graduate Learner²s in Foreign Language Learning (FLL)”

ABSTRACT

The following paper was designed to focus firstly on how learners' process different communication inputs (Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing) and secondly, how gender differences play a significant role in this process which was reported by the previous studies. However, materials and instruction methods must also affect individual responses to given tasks. A study on these issues will necessitate the development of gender sensitive instructional materials with a special focus on improving individual comprehension strategies. In this paper we report differences between male and female attitudes, beliefs in learning LSRW skills for learning English as Foreign Language (EFL) of the First Year Graduate students with English as compulsory subject of two selected institutions. Listening tests, survey questionnaires (through Google forms) and interview questions were designed. One sample T-test and paired sample test was applied whereas interview question responses were analysed to validate the data. The findings have revealed that average responses regarding the difficulty of listening skills are statistically significant and correlation between male students learning listening skills are better in the collaborative learning environment whereas the female students depicts a positive and moderate correlation for the same. However, it is also found that there is no significant difference between the overall performance of female and male students and the implications have been discussed in the paper.

Keywords: English as Foreign Language (EFL), LSRW skills, Comprehension strategies, Communication competence, Male and Female Graduate students.

Comment [WU1]: This paper is “REJECTED” to be published in JLE due to the following reasons’

1. The issue seems not to be of current readers' interests because most cited references are beyond five years old
2. The paper does not conform to the academic writing standard and APA format
3. The title does not reflect the whole content of the manuscript.
4. There are not any practical and theoretical implications that can be capitalized by respective English instructors and researchers
5. The method is too weak that does not convince readers of its validity and reliability
6. Most literature review are old referred
7. The discussion section does not provide the uniqueness of the findings; how does it differ and similar to previous studies; and no future recommendations for future studies in the field. See comments for more details

Comment [WU2]: The abstract is not well written according to the standard of scientific research or academic English as there are major lexico-grammatical choices in it.

Introduction

The increasing recognition and need to learn English for special and specific purposes made educators conscious in designing materials and courses to meet the requirements of students of various disciplines like STEM, Agriculture, Journalism etc. Further, these specific language learners also evaluate their success for language learning based on how well they can speak English or have improved the spoken language ability in and outside of the classroom. However, a study conducted by Alizadeh (2018) highlighted that the teachers mainly use direct approaches which concentrate on different aspects other than focusing on individual learners' needs in learning English. On the other hand, teachers also take indirect approaches which make the oral interaction of the students through task work, group work and other strategies (Leong, & Ahmadi 2017; Abugohar, et.al. 2019).

This implies that speaking and learning English is quite as important as learning it as a foreign language (EFL). Despite the importance, the speaking has been overlooked in some of the universities and schools due to reasons such as an unfavourable teacher-student proportion or major emphasis on the grammar (Stepp-Greany 2002; Leong, & Ahmadi 2017). It has been critically evaluated by Alizadeh (2018), that the foreign language learning and listening is mainly paramount for the students as many language students have to encounter significant problems in learning and comprehending English. This is mainly due to the fact that schools pay attention to the writing, structure, vocabulary and reading which are mainly improved only by improved 'listening'.

From the discussion presented above, it can be highlighted that teachers should focus on setting high standards for English Learning Skills (EFL) in the classroom by considering various individual differences. Two important areas viz. processing of LSRW skills (whether or not learners' able to process LSRW inputs) and second, to figure out gender differences, if any, in processing LSRW inputs, as reported by EFL researches by Van Der Slik, Van Hout and Schepens (2015) and Quyen and Dan (2018). Also, teachers are required to work on creating the necessary conditions for the learners to reach the desired outcomes and learn the language effectively (Quyen & Dan, 2018; Alizadeh, 2018). This mainly includes LSRW based on Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing skills and this should be integrated in an appropriate and effective manner for the learning of the students. Cultures also play an imperative role in developing skills for listeners as the values taught to them overtime contribute in augmenting individuals' skills. (Angouri, Mattheoudakis, & Zigrika 2010)

Furthermore, listening without any distraction makes it easier for the listener to understand what message the speaker wants to deliver both while speaking and writing (Goh, 2018). The main focus of improvising such skills should meet the standards which should have been set and developed for the communicative competencies. In this purpose, significant efforts have been carried out by the language research studies for identifying the first year English-major students' perception regarding the roles of learning English language, as learning strategies for any language is discovered appropriately while observing groups of students to identify the issues in comprehending the further using the language. Hence the present study identifies how graduate learners comprehend, use of strategies, level of confidence and affective response and address some solutions to overcome the issues and propose a possible pathway for learning English as a foreign language (EFL) with a sample of non-native English speakers studying English as a Foreign Language in reputed private universities of India. The study tries to record the 'gendered' differences and hence 'gender' as a variable for learning 'listening' and 'LSRW skills'.

Comment [WU3]: The introduction section is not written according to the standard of academic English. It also lacks convincing arguments of why gender differences are of paramount importance as a part of the variable being investigated. It should highlight the gap in the current literature, which this section fails to provide

Comment [WU4]: Who evaluate the learners or the instructors. I thought this would be a passive sentence

Comment [WU5]: Incomplete sentence

Comment [WU6]: I cannot see the relevance of this paragraph with the issue as depicted in the title

Comment [WU7]: S+verb agreement

Comment [WU8]: Consider the active voices rather than passive to make it sounds more understandable

Comment [WU9]: It should be made active and justified by relevant studies

Comment [WU10]: There should be a strong arguments for why genders are of importance for investigation

Comment [WU11]: The title indicates comprehension and processing strategies, but this section presents input resulted only from listening

Review of Research

For learning of English as a foreign language, the foundation lies in the learning of four components – Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing. As per the study conducted by Bozorgian (2012), more than three-quarters of the students in their classes learn through listening. This was seconded by the study of Gilbert (2005), which triangulated the prominent role of the listening in learning English as a foreign language. The research found out that between 65% and 90%, learning is achieved through listening. (Dunkel 1991; Rost 2002; Richards 2005; Vandergrift & Goh 2012).

Moreover, the Listening skill even has a significant effect on the other three, Reading, Writing and Speaking (Goh 2017). Secondly, Reading skill along with the Listening is the receptive skill that maintain the continuum in learning, while Speaking and Writing has always been an integral element in learning of any language with English, which is enriched in grammar, vocabulary and literature, being the foremost (Dunkel 1991; Rost 2002). The skill of Reading not only enables the learner to access information from the written text but the proficiency contributes in self-realisation and personal development (Bozorgian 2012). Further, the skill of writing in language learning is the part of the cognitive process of the student's learning, which requires mechanical attempts made by the students themselves, thus cognitively and physically be prepared to embrace this skill for learning of the English language (O'Malley, & Chamot 1990). Speaking is an integral skill for communication (Hong 2018) and the first barrier to be broken while learning of the language.

EFL outcomes, Strategies and Gender

The difference theory states that boys are fundamentally different from girls in learning language and communication, (Politzer 1983; Boyle 1987; Bacon & Finnemann 1992; Clark 1995; Kruse 1992) and it has also been argued that gender represents two different cultures, making the difference in the learning outcomes and strategies. The previous research studies by various scholars highlight sex as significant predictor in educational, psychological and linguistic research while addressing on the gender specific differences (Oxford, Nyikos & Ehrman 1988; Foster 1999). In contrast to stated theories and explanations; a study conducted by Główska (2014) in Poland found ample evidence that girls have outperformed their counterpart's boys by achieving higher results. With reference to this finding Ellis (2012) has supported that females are more open to the linguistics that enables them to have forms in target language and also helps them to eradicate inter-language forms that could be deviating them from the target language. Bacon (1992) already observed in his study that this ability is readily found in women significantly more than their counterpart's male students.

In addition, Główska (2014) into their empirical study in Poland concluded that opinions of the teachers and student respondents had reflected that there is no difference with the learning ability of the student; and both groups strongly stated that gender has no role in learning English. Furthermore, the implications of study show consistently monitoring the performance of male students and introducing language practices and policies accordingly. Meanwhile, a similar study was conducted in Saudi Arabia, where the English Language Policy (ELP) was investigated and it was found that female staff had more strong beliefs than male employees at university. Therefore, it is evident that not just female students perform better but female language teachers hold stronger beliefs and attitudes towards constructing effective English language policies. Meanwhile, as per the Ozdemir (2013) cognition, views and solving attitudes, thinking and learning ability is being influenced by the beliefs and Ricento (2013) also explained that these strong beliefs could lead to an ideology and creation of a new framework in a particular context.

Comment [WU12]: I don't think this is an important statement because it is even known by commoners

Comment [WU13]: The majority of the reviewed studies should be at least 5 years old

Comment [WU14]: Why?

Comment [WU15]: We now do not see reading and listening as receptive skills because they involve the negotiation of meaning in learners' mind

Comment [WU16]: The majority of the reviewed studies cited in this section are too old that signify the issue is no longer interesting for the current readers and beyond

Similarly, Ali (2016) found that many factors shape the EFL classroom learning and the leading role is being played by gender. It has been one of the most sought areas of language learning throughout the non-English -speaking nations and has been a matter of subject in order to pedagogical purposes. Meanwhile, the study found that gender differences are intact in using language and most considerable elements are psychological condition, social background and student's culture; and another considerable factor was found that usage of language was more frequently and effectively associated with connection of students with the native speakers. In addition, material being taught also has a role in language usage; thus another study Kobayashi (2002) conducted in Japan also concluded that societies that marginalized the women's status affects their ability to learn and changes their positive attitude to English related programmes. Similar to this finding, Van Der Slik, Van Hout and Schepens (2015) found that female students from the developing countries (Afghanistan, India, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka) women have been marginalized and scored less than male students in writing skills.

The main rationale behind carrying out the study is based on the previous approaches to EFL research that were identified in the literature review. There are a lot of contrasting opinions of the researchers regarding English language learning as research-based perspectives on what might lead to more effective L2 language development is also not adequately explained in the studies. However, the efforts have been made by the researchers like Mendelsohn (2001), (2006); Berne (2004), LeLoup & Pontiero (2007) to identify the first year graduate students with English- as a compulsory subject, perceptions of the learning of listening skills among L2 learners with an emphasis to the problems that the male and female students face in their learning listening comprehension and how they deal with the problems. Pandero et. al. (2017) examines the effects of self-assessment interventions in student's learning strategies and its effects on self-efficacy through meta-analysis. Platsidou et al. (2017) identifies (in Japanese learners) International Orientation to L2 students alongside motivational learning environments and mediates intended learning outcomes. Angouri, Mattheoudakis & Zigraka (2010) investigates multiple factors involved in learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL) for second language students as intertwined with many complicated parameters.

In addition research by Mendelsohn (2001), (2006); Berne (2004), LeLoup & Pontiero (2007) examines how learners process different genres of authentic input and secondly whether the gender differences are reported adequately or not while designing the teaching materials is also the motivation behind carrying out this study. The idea regarding the authentic input and comprehension strategies while learning Listening for L2 learners is probably insufficient. Therefore, an understanding of such issues will aid in the development of the strategies and materials for improving of English Learning. **Here the study considers to look at the previously explained gender-based differences, problems and issues by Kramersch (1993); Byram (1997, 2002) into the self-learning strategies and accomplishment in selected population from two different States (one HEI in Andhra & the other in Tamilnadu) within India and thus tries to suggest possible pedagogical implications useful for effective teaching-learning of EFL.** Further there is a limited or no focus on gender based material development in the countries whose first language is not English (Kobayashi 2002). In addition, no specific study was found that could empirically address the gap of self-learning strategies and self-accomplishment in the case of India which falls under the scope of study. On the other hand, the previous studies by Ali, (2016); Ozdemir (2013); Ricento (2013); Główka (2014); Ellis (2012) ~~have~~ suggested that a minor or significant difference within the performance of the female students and male students exists in developed countries where women have outperformed into the EFL. However, another study by Van Der Slik, Van Hout and Schepens (2015), partially found that developing countries such as Afghanistan, India, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka have marginalized women which made their

Comment [WU17]: I am afraid to convincingly state this, I would better say "to the best of author's knowledge..."

female students to score less than male students. Therefore, this leaves paper with the following hypothesis.

Comment [WU18]: More recent studies should be critically examined in this section. It should also be written in standard academic English.

H₀: There is no association between Gender-in self-learning strategies, pedagogy and accomplishments of learners while learning listening & LSRW skills.

Comment [WU19]: Does it stand for “listening, Speaking, Reading, and writing? Why should be repeated “L for listening?”

H₁: There is an association between Gender-Pedagogical, self-learning strategies, and accomplishments of learners while learning listening & LSRW skills.

Comment [WU20]: See WU17

Theoretical Framework

Comment [WU21]: Revise in terms of lexico grammar

As the survey participants are from a variety of backgrounds, considering their differences in attention, memory and behavioural differences between the genders, self-learning and comprehension strategies are the key foci of the current study. The principle of socio-cultural theory (Vygotsky 1980) is the study of various forms of mental activities under the umbrella of cognition forms the theoretical basis as self-learning strategies are mainly based on memory and retention. Further the variables that were used in this study are closely linked with the current research and mediation of literature on this is not much available though, the process has been proposed in the previous studies. This was primarily established in order to mediate the association from human mental activity that would eventually affect the behaviour of the person. The same is applicable according to students’ dialect collaboration, according to Marsden, Mitchell and Myles, (2013) & Kung (2017) which mediates in learning a new language. In regard to the social interaction (Gass, Susan M. & Evangeline M. Varonis: 1986 & Politzer, Robert L: 1983) an important consideration is the learner’s motives, which tends to play a significant role in the process of reaching the ultimate goal of learning the language, which forms the basis for constructing survey questionnaire. And further Hayes, & Flower (1981) found many distinguished methods of collecting behavioural data in introspection and retrospection research, is the key in constructing all the research tools. Moreover, the theory suggests that the learner's own cognition and the learning tools are vital in the process and the role of the interactive activities promote the learning of the language itself. Matsushashi (1987). Chamot & Lisa Kiipper (1989) & O’Malley, Michael & Chamot (1990) studied the think aloud method by monitoring most effective learners on how they become successful while using their previous knowledge in performing given tasks successfully. Further there is a significant difference between strategies adopted by male and female (Oxford, Nyikos, & Ehrman 1988; Nyikos 1990) in learning and using language is the motivation to look into ‘gender’ as a variable in learning EFL.

Comment [WU22]: I cannot see the strong reasons for why Socio-cultural theory was employed underpinning the research

Research Aim and Questions

The main aim of the following study is focused towards assessing the strategies of using LSRW skills in learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL) and recording the role of gender in self-comprehension. This has been achieved by conducting a survey and test for listening. Students are asked to fill the survey questionnaire using google forms. The test for listening consisted of 25 questions followed by listening to the audios played to test the working memory and attention based performance.

Comment [WU23]: Past tense

Research Questions:

The focus of this research is on the following questions.

1. What is the level of self-comprehension of students’ while learning English as a Foreign Language?

Comment [WU24]: This should be in the method section

Comment [WU25]: The following research questions that guided the whole study were formulated:

2. What are the important issues in participants while learning?
3. Will male and female differ in their perception?
4. What are the other key issues (like self-strategies, level of listening and confidence) among students while learning English as a Foreign Language?

Comment [WU26]: These should be written in the past because the research was conducted in the past

Method

Participants

The first year B. Tech course students of various Engineering streams beyond arts and sciences with a course on learning English as a Foreign Language, as one of the compulsory courses to gain credits were agreed to participate in the study. Out of which 239 have responded to the survey, where 2 values were missing that could not be included in the analysis. The data collected shows majority of the respondents in the survey had belonged to the age group 16 years to 20 years old with portion of 225 (94.1%), and remaining portion of the respondents were in the 21-30 were 10 (4.2%), 31-40 was 1 (.4%) and the remaining age groups had participants 1 (0.4%). All the participants have been learning English very early from under graduation. Most of them are at (pre) intermediate level of language proficiency.

Comment [WU27]: What mixed methods design? Explanatory, exploratory or convergent? It should be made clear, and the role of the quantitative and qualitative method should be given in this section.

Methods

Quantitative and qualitative methods have been chosen as the most adequate technique for analysis in this research and questionnaire has been used as the instrument to collect the required information. Through the use of this tool, the respondents were given the opportunity to select the responses from predetermined answers and chose the most appropriate one. For this purpose, the researchers have formulated a questionnaire on the basis of a 5-point Likert scale. On the other hand, the qualitative method has also been used by the researcher where semi-structured interview questions were formulated so that the interviews can be conducted for the students. For assessing Listening Skills, a questionnaire followed by audio listening was designed to evaluate the comprehension strategies used by boys and girls.

Comment [WU28]: Was the questionnaire adapted from other sources or developed by the researcher? Developing questionnaire takes time, while adapting it should be followed by reasons in terms of validity and reliability of the constructs, for example considering the value of Cronbach alpha and etc.,

Research Design

Nearly 240 First year Graduate students from two Higher Educational Institutes in India agreed to participate in this study. The students were informed about the objective of this research and the selected subjects were motivated learners though not highly proficient English speakers. This particular research data was collected by both survey and personal interviews conducted to the selected subjects. The rationale behind is to increase the efficiency of the research, as the researcher aims to study the individual comprehension strategies of learning, Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing skills both in numeric form in English learning classrooms as well as extract the opinions from the respondents as well. Meanwhile, for the purpose of the listening assessment, a questionnaire with 25 questions (see Appendix I) was used to assess the listening ability of the participants. In this assessment, around 60 Min. authentic audio¹ was played in which people were talking in 8 different situations. Meanwhile, the participants had to listen to the audio and answer the questions that were designed to find out the aural input processing of the students. 130 students have agreed to participate in the listening test.

Comment [WU29]: Past tense

¹ Authentic audio means designed for and by a native speaker.

Further a questionnaire has been used as the instrument to allow the students to naturally comprehend in a non-research context². Through the use of this tool, the respondents were given the opportunity to select the responses from predetermined answers and chose the most appropriate one. For this purpose, the researcher has formulated a questionnaire on the basis of a 5-point Likert scale. On the other hand, the qualitative method has also been used by the researcher where semi-structured interview questions were formulated so that the interviews can be conducted for the students. In the survey conducted using google forms, a total of 239 participants took part, and responses were gathered electronically. Furthermore, for the interviews, a total of 25 motivated students who agreed to participate in the interview have provided their insights regarding learning English as a foreign language (EFL) and their perceived importance of LSRW skills for learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL).

Data Analysis

Data analysis was carried out using ANOVA as it is identified as the most suitable to assess the significance of the relationship between gender and LSRW skills in EFL. The data analysis for this research has been carried out in two different phases. In the first phase, the two questionnaires, one for listening and another survey questionnaire were analysed with the help of one-sample T test and Paired Sample Test for the data which has been collected from the questionnaires. In addition to the quantitative analysis, a simple comparison between the performance of male and female students was also conducted through Mean, Median and results were discussed along with the literature. **On the other hand, for the interviews, thematic analysis has been carried out in which the commonalities in the responses have been generated to evaluate the data. As the participants (n=25) for the interview, common perspectives were analysed and presented the most relevant expressions to the other data analysis, ignoring the repetitions.**

Results

Results from Quantitative Findings

*Gender-Based Differences self-accomplishment*³

Results from Listening Test:

In this assessment participants' listening skill was assessed and 130 students participated and were provided with 25 questions; the questionnaire consists four parts which are meant to assess, note-taking (Dunkel & Patricia 1988; Shitala Mishra & David Berliner: 1989 & Lee 2017); previous learning knowledge (Markham, Paul 1988 & Michael Latham 1987); learning

² For testing 'listening comprehension' four authentic audios were used in three intact classes. The idea units used by the students to write what is heard immediately were taken into account while measuring comprehension strategies. The audio tests were conducted in a regular language lab, (CALL- Computer Assisted Language Lab) not in a specially designed research lab.

³ A number of EFL studies have ignored the potential differences in gender and including it as a variable in their statistical models along with effects of: academic FL learning (Benson, M. J: 1989); note-taking (Dunkel, Patricia A: 1988; Shitala Mishra & David Berliner: 1989 & Lee, O. S. 2017); previous learning knowledge (Markham, Paul L: 1988 & Michael Latham: 1987); learning environments (Chaudron, Craig: 1985); reading (Favreau, Micheline & Norman S. Segalowitz:1982 & Yeldham, M. 2018); listeners' perception (Dahl, D. A: 1981; Yurtbaşı, M. 2015) on the basis of which the questionnaire is divided into four parts.

Comment [WU30]: 1. There should be reasons for why the questionnaire was used (See WU27)
2. I don't think that footnote is used in APA (see APA 7th)

Comment [WU31]: This section needs to be referred to explain why the formula was used

Comment [WU32]: I don't think APA use Footnote

environments (Chaudron & Craig: 1985); reading (Favreau, Micheline & Norman Segalowitz 1982 & Yeldham 2018); listeners' perception (Dahl 1981; Yurtbaşı 2015) each question was for 1 mark. Highest possible marks were 25 marks and lowest marks were 0; where over each correct question participant was given 1 mark and on each wrong 0 marks were awarded to students. Table 1 elucidates that the total number of participants were 130; where 73 participants were male students and 57 participants were female. In this test, the majority of the participants were male participants and their mean scores and standard deviation is provided below.

Table 1
Group Statistics

	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Score	Male	73	11.2192	4.48530	.52497
	Female	57	12.3333	4.33150	.57372

Comment [WU33]: See APA table format

Table:1 shows the average score of male participants was 11.21 [Standard deviation 4.485]; this implies that on average each male participant scored around 11.21 on the questionnaire but this score could also deviate by standard deviation. Therefore, it implies that each participant scored 11.21/25 [44.84%] but this score is also subject to deviate by 17.94%. On the other hand, the average score of female participants was 12.33 with standard deviation of 4.33 by which the mean score may deviate. Hence, it is evident that on average each female participant scored 12.33 out of 25 which is equal to 49.32% and this could also increase or decrease by 17.324%. Meanwhile, comparatively the mean score of the female students is better than male students; and fluctuations into the female student's score is also less than male students. It is evident that though male students haven't outperformed the female students which is against the differences even though male students are prejudged as better performed than female. (Markham 1988). This finding is as per the numerical summary, but to compare it statistically, an independent sample's T-test is being used and results are interpreted as follows in Table-2.

Table 2
Independent Samples Tests

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances					T-test for Equality of Means		95% Confidence interval of the Difference	
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig(2 tailed)	Mean Difference	St. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
Score	Equal Variances assumed	.372	.543	-1.427	128	.156	-1.11416	.78102	-2.65955	.43124
	Equal Variances not assumed			-1.433	122.331	.154	-1.11416	.77765	-2.65356	.42525

Comment [WU34]: This table is not APA formatted

For this test, null hypothesis is formed as follows:

$H_0 =$ Mean difference between the score of female students and male students is equal to 0.

$H_1 =$ Mean difference between the score of female students and male students is not equal to 0

From the above Table: 2, the Levene's test for equality of variances has $f=0.372$ [$p=0.543$] this infers to not reject the null hypothesis of the Levene's test that the variance difference in the score of female students and male students is significantly different. Therefore, results of equal variances not assumed need to be interpreted as per the Levene's test. Meanwhile, the T-value is -1.433 [$p=0.154$] and this suggests to not reject the null hypothesis that the mean difference between the score of female students and male students is equal to 0. Therefore, it is sufficient evidence to state that there is a difference between the mean score of the female students and male students, (Ho, David 1987) but the difference is not statistically significant. The **Male and female have expressed interest and motivation throughout the test. They could refocus and aware to bring back attention (all through 4 parts of the test). Part -1 demands memory, as it was based on people talking in eight different situations, the students could able to understand and concentrate on the text based aspects of Part-2 & 3. The second part requires advance organization of what's been heard, go in a plan and demands a clear mind, to pick up short phrases and words to answer the test. Part-4 was based on self-management, get to use to speed, keeping with the pace of the speaker. The results were favourable to female as they have shown positively greater concentration, understanding and showed good memory retention and gained good scores.** Though the findings of this paper are not consistent with the findings of the previous empirical studies such as Ali, (2016); Ozdemir (2013); Ricento (2013); Głowska (2014); Ellis (2012); which have indicated that female students have outperformed their counterparts' male students. Therefore, it can be evidently claimed that findings in contrast to the differences and potentially interesting gender socialization in EFL have not been reported by many researchers so far Oxford and Nyikos (1989). Similar to Feyten (1991) it is found that FL learning has significant relation with L1 learning. Though there is no statistical significance between male and female, both paid equal attention while performing the tasks. However, as per the summary statistics the difference exists that may increase over time and become significant since the sample size of the data is reasonably good. Meanwhile, this pre-judgemental assumption on male-female is about to prevail and improve over time and could lead to a significant gender difference in performance.

The following 3-5 Tables shows three T-tests used to analyse the survey questionnaire consisting of 32 questions framed to understand mediation of mental activity in learning a foreign language and its relationship with gender. The questionnaire was developed after in-depth study of literature, after conducting interviews and discussing with highly experienced teachers in the both institutes. The One Sample T- test was carried out on the survey questionnaire (N=239) to compare the Means of one distinct group with another (here male and female are two distinct groups). In addition, the one sample T-test is regarded as the statistical procedure which is used for determining whether the sample of the observations can be generated by the process with the specific Mean.

Table 3
One Sample T-test

	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Test Value = 4 Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
					Lower	Upper
1. English – LSRW skills as a foreign language are easy to grasp.	-3.178	231	.002	-.233	-.38	-.09

4. Out of 4 skills listening is difficult for me.	14.331	232	.000	-1.262	-1.44	-1.09
6. English as a Foreign language is not for me.	20.679	230	.000	-1.714	-1.88	-1.55
7. I know some how to listen and hence learning formal/Active listening is easy	-2.861	227	.005	-.189	-.32	-.06
8. I can read faster, because of past experience in reading English	-.852	228	.395	-.061	-.20	.08
10. I have good phonological memory and therefore listening is rather easy for me	-8.437	227	.000	-.610	-.75	-.47
11. I have difficulty in understanding pronunciation and how it can be comprehended and therefore I find listening difficult.	12.880	228	.000	-1.092	-1.26	-.92
15. I prefer vocabulary tools for learning listening.	-2.632	225	.009	-.181	-.32	-.05
17. Collaborative learning environment helps me well in learning listening	-.983	224	.327	-.067	-.20	.07
19. When I am paired with another student, then I can grasp the contents of text well.	-4.210	226	.000	-.317	-.47	-.17

Comment [WU35]: It is not useful presented in a paper

The above Table: 3 shows One Sample T-test for the questions which have been undertaken for the study. It can be observed that for the question as “*LSRW skills as a foreign language is easy to grasp*”, the P-value of the test is depicted as .002 which is lower than the significance level of 0.05 confidence intervals. Therefore, this indicates that the total percentage of the research participants is significantly different from the test value of 40. Moreover, the negative T-score explains that the sample proportion for the following question is less than 40% but the evidence which is based on the P-value is sufficient for concluding the percentage of students in the overall population.

In addition to the explanation of the results, it can also be asserted that for the following statement that “*Out of 4 skills listening is difficult for me*”⁴ the One Sample T-test statistics is estimated at -14.331 where the p-value is evaluated at .000 which is less than the confidence interval of 0.005. This indicates that the average responses regarding the difficulty of listening skills are statistically significant. The 95% confidence interval estimate for the difference between the population mean skills difficulty and sample mean is (-1.44, -1.09). Further to the interpretation of the table, one of the questions which was being asked from the respondents is “*I can read faster, because of past experience in reading English*”⁵, the one sample T-test statistics

⁴ Listening, many a times is least considered while designing the curriculum and evaluation based on introspection and retrospection have still many controversies, researchers like Fujita, J. N: 1984; O Malley, Michael & Anna Uhl Chamot:1990 & Kurita, T. 2012 examined by combining both qualitative and quantitative methods in their longitudinal studies conducted for four years.

⁵ Previous knowledge on reading ability is an important variable in assessing LSRW in EFL learning, the observations in this research on this will be described in a paper in preparation.

is estimated at $-.852$ where the p-value is evaluated at $.359$ which is more than the confidence interval of 0.05 . (Ericsson & Simon: 1987). This designates that the average responses regarding the readability of English based on the past experience are not statistically significant. The 95% confidence interval estimate for the difference between the population mean focused on the readability of English and sample mean is $(-.20, .08)$. **Through these responses it is evident that students know what helped them in understanding English language and they were able to evaluate their comprehension capacities: 'this is difficult', 'this is easier'. It also shows that both male and female were able to relate to their previous knowledge and were able to transfer their previous linguistic and discourse knowledge too.**

**Table 4
Paired Sample Correlations**

		N	Correlation	Sig.
Pair 1	21. Male students learn English Listening skills better through visual environments & 26. Female students learn listening better through visual environments.	222	.345	.000
Pair 2	22. Male students learn listening skills better through collaborative learning environments & 27. Female students learn listening better through collaborative learning environments	224	.419	.000

Comment [WU36]: See WU33

To understand the 'gendered behaviour' a paired sample correlation test was used to analyse the responses recorded. Table: 4 presented above shows that the correlation between male students learning English listening skills better through visual environments and the female students learning through visual environment has positive and weak correlation as it is estimated at $.345$. Moreover, the p-value also shows significant results as the sig value is estimated at 0.000 which is below the confidence interval of 0.05 . Moreover, the pair 2 which is focused on the correlation between male students learning listening skills better in the collaborative learning environment and the female students depicts a positive and moderate correlation. (Benson 1989 & de Sousa & Ivanova 2019). The estimated value of the correlation between the variables is valued at $.419$. Moreover, the p-value also shows significant results as the sig value is estimated at 0.000 which is below the confidence interval of 0.05 . **Through this it is evident that female students are better capable of learning in collaboration, which implies they know the significance of interaction with reference to learning English language.**

**Table 5
Paired Samples T-Test**

		Mean	Std. Deviation	Paired Differences Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence interval of the Difference		t	df	Sig.(2-tailed)
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	21. Male students learn English Listening skills better through visual environments – 26. Female students learn listening skills better through visual environments.	-.068	1.443	.097	-.258	.123	-.698	221	.486

Pair 2	22. Male students learn listening skills better through collaborative learning environments	-.031	1.331	.089	-.206	.144	-.352	223	.726
	27. Female students learn listening better through collaborative learning environments								

Comment [WU37]: See WU 33

Above Table: 5 shows the paired sample T-test which is also called the dependent sample t-test which is a statistical process applied for assessing the mean difference between two sets of observations which is zero. Moreover, the subject to be studied is measured twice in pairs for calculating the observations. The table presented above depicts there was no average difference between the statements in Pair 1 as the estimated t value is -6.98 and where the sig value is greater than 0.05 which is estimated at .486 ($t_{221} = -6.98, p > 0.05$). Similarly, for the Pair 2 which is focused towards Male and Female students learn listening skills better through the collaborative learning environment explains that the T-value is estimated at -3.52 and the sig value is much greater than the confidence interval levels 0.05 estimated at .726 ($t_{223} = -3.52, p > 0.05$). **This throws light on level of confidence and motivation to learning the foreign language in shared groups, which encourages the participants to express more, seek for help, confirm from each other and reassure themselves, 'I'm ok, 'It's alright', and provides an opportunity to summarise what's been learnt on day to day basis.**

Results from the Interviews:

The interviews were conducted face to face with 25 male and female students to know their insights and issues in learning EFL. This helped us to understand their perceived attitudes towards learning foreign languages. The questions posed were:

1. Can you tell the significance of learning LSRW skills in an EFL context?
2. What skill do you feel is the most difficult to learn as an EFL?
3. What are your difficulties in learning Listening skills?
4. Can you tell how you make sense of what is heard?
5. How do you feel when you listen to a native speaker?

Comment [WU38]: Better to place these in Appendix

The answers derived from the interviews are grouped based on the commonalities in responses. Based on the interview findings, most of the students were aware of learning English as a foreign language and its importance. A common perspective which was observed among most of the interview participants (n=25) that,

Ans:1 *"Listening, speaking, reading and writing skills are equally important for the students to learn because it helps in developing other language skills".*

However, the participants were mainly focused on the skills which are essential for learning English as a foreign language. A few Students highlighted that,

Ans: 2 *"The most difficult part of learning a language is the reading and listening skills as it is related to more of the comprehension skills which is difficult for the students to learn."*

Ans: 3 *“Listening without any distraction makes it easier for the listener to understand what message the speaker wants to deliver. The thinking of the listener focuses the interaction of the mental processes that makes the individuals enable to connect the dots with what the individual hears”*

The above mentioned responses highlighted the significance of learning English as the foreign language because it is necessary for the majority of students to learn because of their academics (Benson 1989). In addition, there has been a lot of significance regarding the learning of English language as it is concerned with the preference for different students, teachers and universities. According to the study conducted by Alizadeh (2018), it was evaluated that the language learners sometimes evaluate their success based on their learning as how well they have improved their spoken abilities. In this regard, the textbooks and teachers are mainly confined to results, meeting syllabus deadlines rather than advancing themselves process oriented and use direct approaches and introspect the short term and long term memories in processing the information.

Ans: 4 *“Listening and speaking are the core parts of interaction and they facilitate language acquisition. During listening, it is necessary to understand what the speaker senses at that moment which eventually contributes to better outcomes. When listening, the listeners must understand what the speaker is feeling about and how the speaker wants to discuss a specific plan.”*

In this essence, the students highlighted in the interview that,
“I believe that the top most problems associated with listening are the rapidity of the speaker while communicating as this may lower the competence of the listener to comprehend what is being verbally communicated.”

Ans: 5 *“I face a lot of difficulty when I talk to someone whose native language is English⁶. However, I also think that the speed and difficulty contribute towards problems in listening comprehension, where lower reception and understanding is core to such problems. Or you can say that face to face communication may consist of lesser problems, the difficulties may be higher when external mediums are being used to communicate a message.”*

Based on the responses gathered from the interviews, it can be highlighted that different individuals face difficulties in listening to any sort of message that is being delivered through varied mediums (Hamouda 2013; Gilakjani and Sabouri 2016). However, listening is regarded as the most important skill among the rest of the language learning skills because the learners bypass English and focus on concepts of target language.

Discussion

The present study was focused towards assessing the LSRW skills and Listening in EFL context considering ‘gender’ as a variable. It has been understood that learning language is imperative for students and it requires ample aspects to be taken into consideration. First, the study observed that LSRW skills learning in EFL context depends on various individual and group cognitive strategies. In the ‘Listening test’ which was designed in four sections, the

Comment [WU39]: Although this section presents the comparison between the findings of this study with that of previous studies, it fails to signify the uniqueness of the findings. Secondly, the author does not address the weaknesses of the study that may become a starting points for future studies to be carried out. The quality of writing of the paper does not conform to the academic standard of English and to APA reference guidelines.

⁶ While conducting the ‘listening test’ the students were instructed about the procedure of the test; 1. Audio will be played twice, 2. First time without stopping and second time by pausing wherever they wanted to, in order to discuss what and how they understood it and thinking that this would allow students to have control on what they were listening to.

participants might have responded based on the difficulty level of what's been heard. This finding (from the listening test alone) suggests there's a gendered difference in perception and application of what's heard. The note-taking and previous learning knowledge certainly have played a key role in self-comprehension strategies used by both male and females. The participants' confidence and behaviour in learning environments also showed a significant difference between the both. The Mean (=49.32) of the both male and female parties was higher. Though male were more consistent in the 'listening test', the female, in contrast, showed reasonably higher performance than their counterparts (M=12.33). All the participants have reported positive responses upon the completion of the test. The listening test had a significantly greater effect on the female level of confidence than male. It is evident that both the boys and girls participating in this study have adjusted their comprehension strategies according to the tasks without knowing the effectiveness of it. The students' background, previous knowledge and individual focus also differentiates the levels of difficulty in order to be more flexible in proportioning the use of strategies. Hence it suggests that instruction is to be more explicit including many cognitive and meta-cognitive (pre, ongoing and post) tasks for making students more exposed to low-difficult levels of learning. It has been understood that with less focus being given on the listening exercises, students in the under graduation (UG Courses) face difficulties in their listening comprehension. It is also observed that the individuals learning the language also face equal difficulties in grasping the new language and understanding and it has been identified to initially be of immense concern and problem to the students to familiarise with native colloquial tongue. It is understood to (not to ignore) consider the aspect of foreign language anxiety (Young 1991) as a major concern for individuals who are functioning in an environment where the native language is different from them.

Second, the findings of this paper suggests though the statistical evidence is not significant in evaluating the gender differences whether perceived or real, it implies that despite the difference in the Mean score, due to inconsiderable difference it can only be stated that the difference between the scores could have improved over the time. The current research supports the previous studies on gender research of Marsh, Byrne & Shavelson, (1988) found women have low self-esteem when compared with their counterparts in Mathematics. Van Der Slik, Van Hout and Schepens (2015) and Quyen and Dan (2018) had found that male/boys dominate the female/girls students in English learning. It has been identified that many students face difficulties and concerns in listening comprehension and one of the major reasons behind this has been identified to be lesser focus being given on listening as a language learning component. Traditionally, most of the institutes have been putting more attention and focus on aspects such as reading, vocabulary, structure and not giving due importance to the factor of listening. As stated by Peelle (2018) in order to implement listening exercises as the main tool and technique for teaching language, the teacher needs to be given adequate training first. With a higher inclination towards listening development skills, institutes have been involved with different methods and approaches that could all lead to infer better results on the whole.

Through survey questionnaire results it can be observed that most of the students felt 'listening' as the difficult task and previous learning knowledge would benefit to process what's heard and it affected their performance as well. This also made clear that the participants were well aware that not all four skills require equal use of strategies that can be evaluated for its effectiveness. The results for 'learning through visual environments', 'collaborative environments' are significant in the context of growing use of online resources and technological aided teaching materials. Both male and female responded positively that a collaborative learning environment would certainly affect the learner's behaviour and thus performance. The results of Memory, previous knowledge, learning in pairs, comprehending the listening, learning English as a Foreign language, showed that learners' tended to approach learning English with predefined procedures. It is obvious that each individual is different in their confidence, feelings

and interactions, this certainly affects an individual's behaviour in collaborative learning of a foreign language, and they may tend to become shy. Individuals have been identified to be petrified by the language barrier and inability to communicate with others. In this regard, it has also been identified that there are various variables and factors that augment such anxiety in individuals and makes the situation even worse for them. The tutors and teachers have been regarded as imperative stakeholders that play a vital role in the overall process of learning English as a Foreign language. At this juncture, it is the need of the hour to tailor the material based on individual learning levels, thus pave a way for accomplishing the language goals faster by bringing flexible learning and evaluation methods into teaching foreign languages, but not simply fitting it with regular syllabi and teaching for credits.

Conclusion

Among the different components of learning, listening has been regarded as the most critical and essential aspect. Through effective listening, an individual may be given ample opportunity through which he/she can understand the new language and depict improvement in the overall learning procedure. For non-native language learners, listening and speaking skills enable them to analyse sounds that match with their own sounds and interpret what is heard. There is a need for empirical research to find these learners' issues in gender and EFL context to understand the colloquial tongue of a native speaker while listening for meaning and language. This study also brings forth the possibility of considering 'gender' while preparing teaching materials for learning English as a foreign Language. This is also an attempt to show the need to tailor the materials by grouping the students based on their exposure to the different levels from time to time. Furthermore, listening skills also help individuals to grasp the pronunciation of words and phrases and are able to create links.

The above findings have also revealed that listening, reading and writing skills are important for the individuals to learn new languages because when a new language is learned by a person, he/she tries to listen, read and write it so that he becomes more fluent in it. Also, the results of thematic analysis have revealed that listening should be done without any distraction so that the individual can concentrate more on the phrases and words. Listening is given paramount importance in any cultural context. But the materials and methods that equip graduate students are very meagre and it is very important to address them and also assist them in order to overcome shyness in learning a foreign language in collaborative environments..

Finally, this is on a group of motivated EFL learners based in India and further research on other students would clear issues involved in perceiving and interpretation, flexible use of strategies and responses of EFL learners.

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Comment [WU40]: Better use Mendelay as recommended by the JLE

Comment [WU41]: Most cited references here do not conform to APA format.

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Appendix I

PART 1

You will hear people talking in eight different situations. For questions 1 – 8, choose the best answer (A, B or C).

-
1. **You hear a message on a telephone answering machine.** ()
Why is the speaker calling?
A to confirm some arrangements
B to issue an invitation
C to persuade someone to do something
 2. **You hear two people talking about a water-sports centre.** ()
The man says the centre should
A pay more attention to safety.
B offer activities for small children.
C provide all the equipment needed.
 3. **You hear a professional tennis player talking about her career.** ()
What annoys her most about interviewers?
A their belief that she leads a glamorous life
B their assumption that she's motivated by money
C their tendency to disturb her while she's travelling
 4. **You hear a poet talking about his work.** ()
What is he doing?
A giving his reasons for starting to visit schools
B justifying the childlike nature of some of his recent poems
C explaining that his poems appeal to people of different ages
 5. **You hear two people talking about a programme they saw on TV.** ()
The woman thinks the programme was
A irritating.
B sad.
C uninformative.
 6. **You hear two people talking about an ice-hockey game they've just seen.** ()
How does the girl feel about it?
A pleased to have had the experience
B relieved that she'd dressed appropriately
C impressed by the performance of the team

7. You overhear two friends talking about a restaurant. ()

What do they both like about it?

- A the presentation of the food
- B the atmosphere of the place
- C the originality of the cooking

8. You hear a man talking on the radio. ()

What type of information is he giving?

- A a travel announcement
- B a weather forecast
- C an accident report

PART-2

You will hear a woman called Angela Thomas, who works for a wildlife organization, talking about the spectacled bear. For questions 9 – 18, complete the sentences with a word or short phrase.

Spectacled Bears

Angela says that it was the (9) _____ of the spectacled bear that first interested her.

Angela mentions that the bear's markings can be found on its (10) _____ as well as its eyes and cheeks.

Angela is pleased by evidence that spectacled bears have been seen in (11) _____ areas of Argentina.

Angela says the bears usually live in (12) _____, though they can also be found in other places.

Spectacled bears behave differently from other types of bear during (13) _____, which Angela finds surprising.

Angela is upset that (14) _____ are the biggest danger to spectacled bears.

Angela says that spectacled bears usually eat (15) _____ and tree bark.

Bears climb trees and make a (16) _____, which fascinated

Angela. When bears eat meat, they much prefer (17) _____ although they do eat other creatures. One man has produced an amusing (18) _____ about the time he spent studying the bears.

PART 3

You will hear five short extracts in which people are talking about their visit to a city. For questions 19 – 23, choose from the list (A – H) what each speaker liked most about the city they visited. Use the letters only once. There are three extra letters which you do not need to use.

- A. the efficiency of the public transport system
- B. the natural beauty of the scenery

	1
9	

C. the variety of goods in the markets

Speaker 1

	0	2
--	---	---

Speaker 2

	1	2
--	---	---

D. the style of the architecture

Speaker 3

	2	2
--	---	---

E. the well-designed plan of the city

Speaker 4

	3	2
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F. the helpfulness of the people

Speaker 5

G. the range of leisure opportunities

H. the standard of the accommodation

PART 4

You will hear part of a radio interview with a woman called Rachel Reed, who works in a commercial art gallery, a shop which sells works of art. For questions 24 – 25, choose the best answer (A, B or C).

24. What does Rachel say about her job title?

()

- A It makes her feel more important than she is.
- B It gives people the wrong idea about her work.
- C It is appropriate for most of the work she does.

25. What is the most common reason for the gallery not exhibiting an artist's work? ()

- A The subject matter is unsuitable.
- B It is not of a high enough quality.
- C The gallery manager doesn't like it.