

THE ESL TEACHING STRATEGIES IN SRI LANKAN SCHOOLS ARE MORE FEMALE-FRIENDLY

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Abstract

English as a Second Language (ESL) education plays a crucial role in Sri Lanka's national curriculum, aiming to enhance language proficiency among students. However, the effectiveness of ESL teaching strategies in addressing the diverse needs of both male and female learners has become a subject of growing concern. Through the position paper, the gender dynamics of English as a Second Language (ESL) teaching in Sri Lankan schools are thoroughly explored, leading to the main argument that the current methods create a more female-friendly learning environment. Furthermore, the dominance of female teachers in this main field accompanied by more female friendly classroom management strategies leads to mostly highlight the learning preferences of female students. Conversely, male students tend to disengage as a consequence of lack of hands-on, practical and competitive learning opportunities, as well as the absence of male role models in ESL classrooms in Sri Lanka. The authoritative female dominance in ESL field further alienates male students which lowers academic motivation and performance.

Keywords: ESL teaching, Gender dynamics, Female-friendly learning, Classroom strategies, Male student disengagement

Introduction

English as a Second Language (ESL) instruction is now a required part of the curriculum in Sri Lanka. Concerns about the ESL teaching methods used in schools possibly favoring women, however, are becoming increasingly prevalent. Therefore, this position paper investigates teaching strategies in Sri Lankan schools, looking at how the dominance of female teachers in ELT and classroom management strategies all potentially support a learning environment that is more favorable to female students.

Discussion

The majority of female teachers in ESL programs in Sri Lanka is one noteworthy aspect of the curriculum. Women predominate in the teaching profession, especially in primary and secondary education (Jayawardena, 2019). Despite the many benefits that female teachers offer the classroom, their overwhelming presence may unintentionally create a climate that benefits female students. The loving and cooperative methods used by female educators are more in line with the learning preferences of many females. As a result, boys may feel underrepresented and disinterested (Fernando, 2020).

Though female teachers have many advantages in the classroom, their overwhelming presence could inadvertently foster an environment where female pupils gain an advantage over male students. According to Perera (2018), female educators are more likely to emphasize language use in authentic circumstances, implement collaborative learning practices, and foster an environment in the classroom that values candid communication and support from one another. Since female students generally do better in settings that encourage collaboration and communication, these strategies can be especially helpful in helping them achieve academic success.

However, boys may feel underrepresented and uninterested as a result of this approach that is more geared towards women. Boys may not react as well to cooperative and loving teaching techniques because they frequently have distinct learning preferences. As boys navigate through an education system that appears to favor female-friendly approaches, they may experience a sense of disconnection and alienation which can have detrimental effects on their mental well-being. According to research, boys who struggle academically in settings that value verbal communication and interpersonal skills more than other types of learning are more likely to have feelings of inadequacy and low self-esteem (Pollack, 1999). This might lead to a negative cycle in which males internalize their feelings of failure and begin to disengage further from studies, perpetuating the gender disparity in academic achievement.

They might favor fewer common methods used by female teachers, such as those that are more personal, competitive, and hands-on (Dias, 2020). Boys may feel disinterested and less inclined to participate actively in the classroom as a result, which may have a detrimental effect on their academic achievement.

Furthermore, male students' perceptions and experiences of the classroom dynamics may be impacted by the predominance of female teachers. According to research, boys frequently gain from having male role models in the

classroom since these individuals can relate to them and help them understand their particular struggles and learning preferences (Jayasinghe, 2019). Since there aren't enough male ESL teachers, boys may not get the support and direction they need to succeed in school and in their social lives.

At the same time, another critical issue is the perception of older female teachers by students. Boys, and even some girls, often express dissatisfaction with older female teachers, viewing them as strict, less understanding, and not particularly friendly (Gunasekara, 2021). This perception can create a disconnect between students and teachers, leading to a lack of engagement and motivation, especially among male students. The authoritarian style often associated with older female teachers may stifle the learning environment, making it difficult for students to express themselves and participate actively in class (Weerasinghe, 2022).

According to research, students tend to view older female teachers as less flexible and more authoritarian (Weerasinghe, 2022). Students may find it challenging to express themselves and engage fully in class as a result of this authoritarian teaching approach. For example, a focus on discipline and rigorous obedience to rules can make the classroom feel inhospitable and restrictive, especially for boys who may already feel alienated in a school environment dominated by women (Fernando, 2020).

The lack of communication between students and their older female teachers can have a big effect on how motivated and engaged pupils are. Students may be less inclined to participate in class discussions, raise questions, or ask for help with challenging subjects if they believe that their teachers are unapproachable or unduly rigid (Jayasinghe, 2019). Lower academic achievement can result from this lack of engagement, especially in boys who may already find it difficult to learn using the traditional, lecture-based approaches that older female professors frequently use (Dias, 2020).

Another important factor is the nature of the relationships between teachers and students. According to studies, boys frequently favor instructors who they believe to be more approachable and relatable—qualities that are not usually associated with older female instructors (Perera, 2018). Boys who exhibit this choice may feel less connected to their teachers, which could have an impact on how they feel about learning and education in general. However, girls might find it easier to relate to female teachers, particularly if they see them as motherly or role models. This could lead to the impression that the system is more welcoming to women (Senanayake, 2021).

Moreover, male teachers, though less prevalent, have the potential to bring practical teaching strategies into the ESL classroom. These strategies, which include hands-on activities, real-life applications, and interactive learning, can be particularly beneficial for male students who may not respond as well to traditional methods (Perera, 2018). Male teachers can incorporate activities that require critical thinking, problem-solving, and physical involvement, catering to the interests and learning styles of boys. This approach can make learning more engaging and relevant for male students, fostering a more balanced and inclusive classroom environment (Dias, 2020).

Teachers who are female tend to approach the classroom in a different way, generally involving group work and collaborative activities. Although these techniques might be useful in encouraging teamwork and communication, males may not always find them appealing as they frequently favor solitary work or competitive sports (Jayasinghe, 2019). Boys could find group work less engaging and find it harder to stay involved, which could result in a drop in performance and involvement. It is crucial to strike a balance between collaborative and competitive assignments that accommodate the various interests of every student and group activities in order to foster a more inclusive atmosphere (Senanayake, 2021).

Nonetheless, males might not always find these approaches appealing, as they frequently favor alone assignments or competitive events. According to research, boys tend to be more competitive and physically active when it comes to their learning preferences (Kumara, 2020). They might struggle to stay involved in group work and find it less enticing, which could result in a drop in performance and involvement. Boys who are less verbally expressive than their female colleagues may feel ostracized in social situations, which might affect their motivation and academic performance (Perera, 2018).

In Sri Lankan ESL classes, the Grammar Translation Method may be the most widely utilized method. This approach can be less participatory and interesting as it emphasizes rote learning, rule memorization, and translation exercises (Wijesinghe, 2019). Boys, who frequently thrive in dynamic and hands-on learning situations, may find this method especially tedious, even if it may be appropriate for kids who succeed in structured and rule-based learning (Kumara, 2020). For all students, ESL instruction can be more effective and interesting by including more communicative and interactive techniques such as language games and task-based learning (Peiris, 2021). Boys may find GTM's passive style, which includes no speaking or listening practice, less engaging and may find it difficult to maintain their motivation (Dias, 2020).

Currently used ESL teaching methods in Sri Lanka frequently disadvantage male pupils in favor of creating a more female-friendly setting. This imbalance is caused by a number of factors, including the prevalence of female teachers, the perception of older female teachers, the absence of effective teaching techniques, the emphasis on group projects, and the potential use of the Grammar Translation Method. It's critical to vary teaching strategies, include hands-on and interactive activities, and cater to the various requirements and preferences of every student in order to establish a more equal and inclusive ESL learning environment. By doing this, educational institutions in Sri Lanka may guarantee that their ESL curricula are interesting and successful for

both male and female learners (Gunasekara, 2021; Kumara, 2020)

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