

GENDER DISPARITY IN SECOND LANGUAGE ACHIEVEMENT: A CROSS SECTIONAL ANALYSIS

K. Karthigeyan* & Dr. K. Nirmala**

ABSTRACT

This study examines the gender disparity in the academic achievement of secondary school students in English over the past five academic years from 2008 to 2012. The population and participants of the study included 1,28,151 students studied in class X (Boys 65,257; Girls -62,894) in Krishnagiri and Hosur educational districts of Tamilnadu State. The marks attained by students in annual examination conducted by Tamilnadu State Government have been taken as academic achievement scores. Data analysis has been done using descriptive and differential analysis in which results revealed that girls had better performance than their male counterparts and there is a significant gap existing between boys and girls in their second language (English) achievement. Percentage analysis is done for comparing the pass percentage of students in English. It is suggested that parents, teachers, administrators and other officials in the field of education have to take counteractive measures to narrow down the gender disparity in second language achievement.

Key Words: Gender Disparity, Academic Achievement, Second Language (English)

INTRODUCTION

English has become a universal language rather than the language of only the English speaking countries, because the number of the people who use English as a means of communication exceeds much more than the number of the people who speak it as their mother tongue. In the case of English in India, more than two centuries, India has been directly and indirectly had influence of the language, English on all the fields especially in Education. It is learnt and used as a second language and not a foreign language because of its importance. In schools excluding Government schools and higher education it has been the medium of instruction. The goals for a language curriculum is attainment of a basic proficiency, such as is acquired in natural language learning, and the development of language into an instrument for abstract thought and knowledge acquisition. In our educational set up students' achievement score is given much importance. But NCERT (2006), stated that Language evaluation need not be tied to "achievement" with respect to particular syllabi, but must be reoriented to the measurement of language proficiency and

designed not to test the mastery of studied passages, but rather the ability to use the language appropriately in different contexts. Though evaluating proficiency in language education is needed achievement score has been given much importance in our educational process. Academic achievement, which play as a base for a better future of the student reflects the total knowledge, abilities, attitude, behavior and skill of the students. It lays the foundation for higher education. Measuring achievement is a significant part of the education process and informs educators of students' ability and progress toward educational goals and to guide for the advancement of students. In this study attempt has been made to analyse gender disparity in the academic achievement of the students in English at secondary level.

GENDER DISPARITY IN ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT

The gender has been found to play an important role in influencing factor on student's academic achievement. Gender disparity in educational outcomes remains one of the more challenging issues and it has been the subject of

*Research Scholar, Department of Education, Periyar University, Salem, Tamilnadu

**Professor and Head, Department of Education, Periyar University, Salem, Tamilnadu

considerable studies and debates in the educational forums. Traditionally it is affirmed that girls have outperformed their male counterparts in the academic performance specifically in test scores in a variety of school subjects. Educational statistics have indicated that females are outperforming males at all levels of the school system for the past decades. The literature relating to gender differences in educational achievement is vast and highly controversial, and a large number of explanations have been offered but, for the most part, these explanations tend to cluster around three themes: biological factors, gender theory and school factors. Mullis (2003), Alton Lee and Praat (2001), Begum (2001), Vijayalaxmi and Natesan (1992), Agarwal (1983) revealed girls had a higher mean score in academic achievement compared to boys where as Hyde and Linn (2006), Spelke (2005), David Yun (2001), Kaur and Gill (1993) revealed that boys scored higher than girls in achievement tests. Mok Ching (2011), Suneetha and Mayuri (2001) Verma (1996), Wnagoo and Khan (1991) and Annette Lareau (1987) disclosed that gender differences existed in the academic achievement of students in relation with their socio economic status, study habits and the nature of school where they have studied etc. Owwoeye (2012), Sundaram (1989), Ayodele (1988) and Johnson (1998), found that the performance of pupils in urban schools is better than rural school students. The related studies thus revealed the fact that disparity in academic achievement existed between girls and boys which lead the researcher to conduct the present investigation.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To analyse the academic achievement of secondary school students in English from 2008 to 2012.
2. To find out the gender disparity in pass percentage in English.
3. To find out the gender disparity in the academic achievement of secondary school

students in English with respect to the following demographic variables;

4. Academic Year - (2008- 2012)
5. Educational District - (Krishnagiri - Hosur)
6. Board of School - (State - Matriculation)

HYPOTHESES OF THE STUDY

Hypotheses of the present study are framed based on the objectives.

1. The academic achievement of secondary level students in English is high.
2. There exists a significant gender disparity in the pass percentage in English.
3. There is a significant difference between boys and girls in their academic achievement in English with respect to the above mentioned demographic variables.

METHOD OF THE STUDY

In the present study the investigator has preferred Ex-post Facto research method to analyse the gender disparity in the second language achievement. The entire population and participants of the study includes 1,28,151 students studied in class X (Boys 65,257: Girls - 62,894) over the past five academic years (from 2008 to 2012) in Krishnagiri and Hosur educational districts of Tamilnadu State and the marks attained in the annual examination conducted by Tamilnadu State Government have been taken as academic achievement scores. Those who scored 35 and above are considered as pass in the examination. Data were analysed by using the statistical techniques such as descriptive (mean and standard deviation) and differential analysis ('t' test). Percentage analysis is done for comparing the pass percentage of students in English.

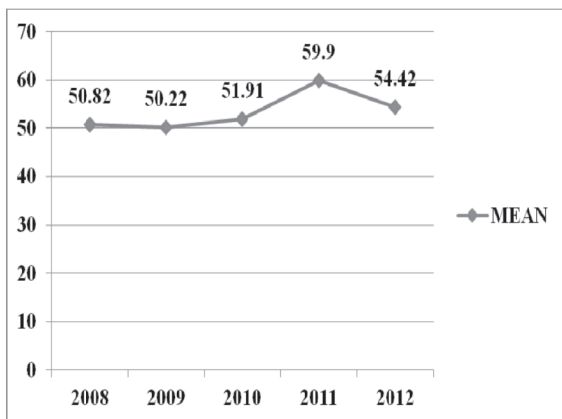
ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA

Table 1

Year-Wise Analysis of Academic Achievement in English (2008-2012)

YEAR	N	MEAN	SD
2008	23317	50.82	19.16
2009	26210	50.22	18.92
2010	26664	51.91	19.40
2011	24967	59.90	18.74
2012	26993	54.42	19.09

Figure 1



The table 1 shows that the academic achievement of secondary school students in their second language (English) over the past five academic years (2008–2012) and it is average. The level of students academic achievement increased slightly from 50.82 (2008) to 54.42 (2012). In the year 2011 it has been increased to 59.90 which is the highest mean score comparing with mean scores in other years. Figure 1 shows the level of achievement growth in English over those years.

Table 2
Gender Disparity in the Pass Percentage in English

Year	Gender	Number of Students Appeared in Exam	Number of Students Passed in Exam	Pass Percentage	Difference in Pass Percentage
2008	Boys	11893	9492	79.81	3.58 %
	Girls	11424	9527	83.39	
2009	Boys	13349	10542	78.97	4.88 %
	Girls	12861	10784	83.85	
2010	Boys	13622	11164	81.95	4.64 %
	Girls	13042	11293	86.59	
2011	Boys	12748	11563	90.70	1.92 %
	Girls	12219	11317	92.62	
2012	Boys	13645	9193	67.37	9.91 %
	Girls	13348	10315	77.28	

Pass Percentage in English

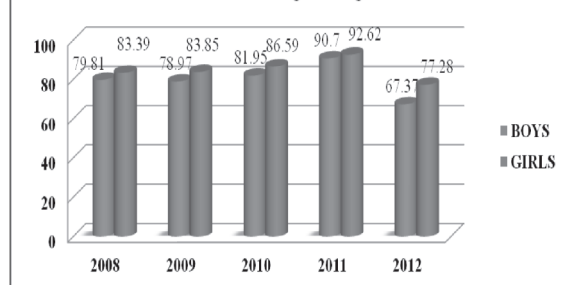


Figure 2 Gender Disparity in the Pass Percentage in English (2008- 2012)

Table 2 and the figure 2 show that gender disparity in the pass percentage of students in English over the past five years. In all the five years pass percentage is above average and of girls is higher than their male counterpart. Pass percentage is increased from the year 2008 to 2011 but in the year 2012 it is decreased suddenly and gender disparity is very high.

Table 3 Year-Wise Analysis of Gender Disparity in English Achievement

YEAR	BOYS			GIRLS			‘t’
	N	MEAN	SD	N	MEAN	SD	
2008	11893	49.54	19.04	11424	52.16	19.18	10.47 _s
2009	13349	48.74	18.94	12861	51.74	18.78	12.88 _s
2010	13622	50.24	19.27	13042	53.65	19.39	14.43 _s
2011	12748	58.60	18.72	12219	61.26	18.67	11.20 _s
2012	13645	53.27	19.43	13348	55.59	18.68	10.02 _s

S = Significance at 0.01 level

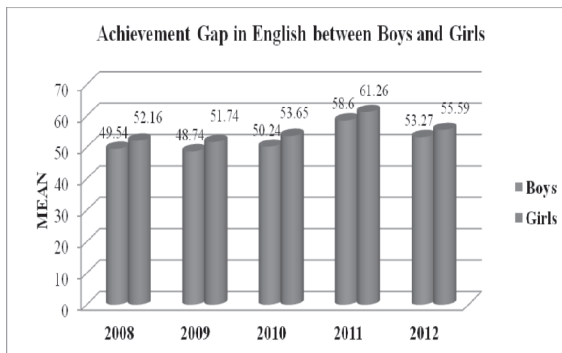


Figure 3 Gender Disparity in English Achievement (2008- 2012)

The table 3 shows that the academic achievement of the both boys and girls in English over these years (2008- 2012) is average and the mean scores of boys has increased slightly from 49.54 (2008) to 53.27 (2012) and girls from 52.16 (2008) to 55.59 (2012). The performance of girls is found to be better than boys in all years which reveal that there is a significant difference between boys and girls in their achievement in English. Figure 3 shows the gap in the mean scores in the second language achievement between boys and girls.

Table 4 Gender Disparity in English Achievement among Krishnagiri and Hosur Educational District Students

EDUCATIONAL DISTRICT	YEAR	BOYS			GIRLS			t'
		N	MEAN	SD	N	MEAN	SD	
KRISHNAGIRI	2008	6507	50.79	18.25	6237	52.99	18.44	6.75 _s
	2009	7334	51.11	17.69	6816	53.42	17.82	7.73 _s
	2010	7631	51.82	18.64	6913	54.36	18.87	8.16 _s
	2011	6889	60.75	17.57	6423	62.31	17.87	5.08 _s
	2012	7500	55.62	18.96	6994	56.98	18.36	4.42 _s
HOSUR	2008	6358	48.63	20.29	4215	50.97	19.43	5.97 _s
	2009	6015	45.86	19.98	6045	49.86	19.64	11.08 _s
	2010	5991	48.22	19.85	6129	52.85	19.93	12.80 _s
	2011	5859	56.08	19.69	5796	60.10	19.45	11.09 _s
	2012	6145	50.40	19.61	6354	54.06	18.91	10.61 _s

S = Significance at 0.01 level

The data analysis in table 4 reveals that the academic achievement of the students in English is average in both Krishnagiri and Hosur educational District. Over these five years (2008- 2012) gender differences is found to be significantly high and performance of girls is better than boys. From the year 2008 to 2012, mean scores of boys in Krishnagiri educational district has increased from 50.79 to 55.62 and girls from 52.99 to 56.98 likewise mean scores of boys in Hosur educational district has increased from 48.63 to 50.40 and girls from 50.97 to 54.06.

Table 5 Gender Disparity in Academic Achievement of State and Matriculation Board Schools in English

BOARD OF SCHOOL	YEAR	BOYS			GIRLS			t'
		N	MEAN	SD	N	MEAN	SD	
STATE BOARD	2008	10657	47.41	18.46	10384	50.19	18.69	10.87 _s
	2009	11987	46.39	18.24	11748	49.75	18.21	14.21 _s
	2010	12024	47.43	18.26	11716	51.05	18.45	15.20 _s
	2011	10925	55.82	18.21	10793	58.70	18.08	11.70 _s
	2012	10752	47.06	15.65	11336	51.01	15.64	18.75 _s
MATRICULATION BOARD	2008	1237	67.87	13.27	1039	71.76	11.56	7.46 _s
	2009	1362	69.45	10.57	1113	72.79	9.48	8.28 _s
	2010	1598	71.37	12.15	1326	76.61	10.07	12.76 _s
	2011	1823	75.29	11.76	1426	80.64	9.38	14.42 _s
	2012	2893	76.35	13.96	2012	81.43	12.25	13.50 _s

S = Significance at 0.01 level

Table 5 reveals that the academic achievement of the students studied in state board of schools is average in English and high in matriculation board of schools. Over these five years gender differences is found to be significantly high and performance of girls is better than boys in both the state and matriculation boards. There is no improvement in the mean scores of boys and girls in state board schools whereas gradual improvement exists in matriculation board.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

It is revealed from the findings that (table- 1) in all the five years academic achievement of the students in second language (English) is

average and there is a little improvement in the mean scores of the students in their academic performance in English language. Thus, the hypothesis 1, the academic achievement of secondary level students in English is high is not accepted. The analysis (table-2) revealed that pass percentage in English is above average and of girls is higher than their male counterpart. Gender disparity, thus exists in the pass percentage of students in English and so the hypothesis 2 is accepted. It is disclosed from the table 3, 4 and 5 that gender difference exist in the academic achievement high school students in English with respect to Academic Year, Educational District and Board of School. Hence the hypothesis 3 is accepted.

To sum up, the analysis revealed that the academic achievement and pass percentage of girls are higher than boys in all the years. Pass percentage of both boys and girls is above average and increased gradually from the year 2008 to 2011 but in the year 2012 it is decreased suddenly and gender disparity is very high. It may be due to the change of syllabus and initiation of equity education in Tamilnadu state in the academic year 2011- 2012. Based on the new syllabus teachers must adopt new teaching methods in teaching and evaluation procedures to test their English language attainment. Teachers should be given continuous in-service training for their continuous professional improvement to ensure effective and quality teaching. In Tamilnadu, most of the students are from rural areas and state board of schools where they learn and taught by regional language. This may be one of the causes for the under achievement of students in English while comparing with students' achievement in matriculation board of schools. Hence, the students in state board of schools need to be motivated more and given special training to achieve proficiency and better results in English Language. Though school background varied in stipulations of infrastructures, ambiance and human resources, if the students are given with proper care and educational support from their

family, schools and government gender disparity in the academic performance can be eliminated.

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