

Please cite this paper as follows:

Hekmatshoar Tabari, B., Rahimy, R., & Khodareza, M. R. (2024). A Tailored Curriculum and Students' General English Achievement across Gender. *International Journal of Foreign Language Teaching and Research*, 12 (48), 117-132. <http://doi.org/10.30495/IJFL.2023.707677>.

Research Paper

A Tailored Curriculum and Students' General English Achievement across Gender

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Received: January 07, 2024

Accepted: February 14, 2024

Abstract

The current study attempted to investigate the effect of a newly tailored curriculum on students' general English achievement across gender as compared to the standard curriculum at Iranian tertiary education. The participants were 120 non-native undergraduate students of Pre-requisite General English course majoring in different disciplines at Ayandegan Institute of Higher Education in Tonekabon city. They were assigned into four groups including female control and experimental as well as male control and experimental. The experimental groups received teaching through the tailored curriculum and the control groups through the standard one. All the groups were given pretest and posttest on general English achievement. In order to analyze the data, a Kolmogorov-Smirnov test and an Independent Samples T-test were utilized. The findings of the study indicated female participant's outperformance compared to the male ones, after being treated with tailored curriculum (TC) and standard curriculum (SC). However, the male participants experienced higher degree of progress after receiving TC as compared to SC, while such progress was not seen for the female.

Keywords: Curriculum Development; Curriculum Tailoring; Curriculum Evaluation; English for General Purposes (EGP); Needs Analysis (NA)

برنامه درسی متناسب و پیشرفت عمومی دانش آموزان در زبان انگلیسی

بزرگش حاضر با هدف بررسی تاثیر یک برنامه درسی جدید بر پیشرفت زبان انگلیسی عمومی دانش آموزان از نظر جنسیت در مقایسه با برنامه درسی استاندارد آموزش عالی ایران انجام شد. شرکت کنندگان 120 نفر از دانشجویان غیر بومی دوره پیش نیاز زبان انگلیسی عمومی در رشته های مختلف در مؤسسه آموزش عالی آیدگان شهرستان تکابن بودند. آنها در چهار گروه کنترل زن و آزمائش و کنترل و آزمائش مرد قرار گرفتند. گروه های آزمائشی از طریق برنامه درسی متناسب و گروه های کنترل از طریق برنامه درسی استاندارد تدریس می کردند. برای تمامی گروه ها پیش آزمون و پس آزمون پیشرفت عمومی زبان انگلیسی انجام شد. به منظور تجزیه و تحلیل داده ها از آزمون

کولموگرو- اسمیرنوف و آزمون ت-مستقل استفاده شد. یافته های این مطالعه نشان دهنده عملکرد بهتر شرکت کنندگان زن پس از درمان با برنامه درسی متناسب (TC) و برنامه درسی استاندارد (SC) نسبت به شرکت کنندگان مرد بود. با این حال، شرکت کنندگان مرد پس از دریافت TC در مقایسه با SC درجه پیشرفت بالاتری را تجربه کردند، در حالی که چنین پیشرفتی برای زن مشاهده نشد.

کلیمات کلیدی: اهداف عمومی، تحلیل نیازها، توسعه برنامه درسی، تطبیق برنامه درسی، ارزیابی برنامه درسی

Introduction

In higher education system of Iran, EGP (English for General Purposes) course is one of the major constituents of the university curriculum and an obligatory element in bachelor's degree programs, i.e., all undergraduate students studying in every university major must pass the EGP class as a compulsory course subject. Despite this uniform program, EGP course has not been so much successful in practice. Indeed, bulk of studies at Iranian university level have shown the inefficiency of this course in providing the students with the necessary general language proficiency required to enter ESP (English for specific purposes) course (Hayati, 2008; Khany & Tarlani-Aliabadi, 2016; Soodmand Afshar & Movassagh, 2016). Among different factors, which caused this inefficiency, lack of systematic NA (Needs Analysis) is highlighted (Khansir, 2014; Moiinvarziri, 2014; Soodmand Afshar & Movassagh, 2016; Tavakoli & Tavakol, 2018).

Research has emphasized the significance of NA for the EGP course from different important curricular aspects (Dooey, 2010; Gillett & Hammond, 2011), and the crucial role it plays in creating tailor-made programs (Johnson & Johnson, 1999). However, few studies in Iran have been focused on applying needs analysis results (Soodmand Afshar & Movassagh, 2016), and investigating the effectiveness of those results in practice (Tavakoli & Tavakol, 2018). In fact, as well as considering systematic needs analysis, the EGP practice in Iran needs proper evaluation and systematic research needs to be done on the effectiveness of the programs (Atai, 2000; Gooniband, 1988; Tahririan, 1990).

In addition, most studies on EGP curriculum evaluation have been conducted at primary and secondary levels and few are devoted to tertiary (university) level. Furthermore, research has not much been zoomed in on Pre-requisite General English course as a preparatory course for General English course at university and the role it may have on the students' general English achievement which can prepare the students for their ESP courses. "Unfortunately, although General English as a base for ESP is of great importance; studies have repeatedly concentrated on ESP" (Moiinvaziri, 2014, p.58). Even Pre-requisite general English course has been excluded from many university programs in Iran, while this course can have critical part in bridging the proficiency gap freshmen students often have.

Based on the above-mentioned reasons and due to the significance of curriculum evaluation as a crucial complementary factor/step in curriculum development, the present study intended to investigate the effect of a newly tailored curriculum compared to the standard one in terms of students' Pre-requisite general English achievement across gender. To this aim, the following research questions were posed:

RQ1: Is there a difference among all participant groups of the study in terms of general English achievement before being treated with tailored curriculum (TC) and standard curriculum (SC)?

RQ2: Is there any difference between the TC-treated and SC-treated male group of the study?

RQ3: Is there any difference between the TC-treated and SC-treated female group of the study?

RQ4: Will the TC-treated female group of the study show a higher degree of progress as compared to the corresponding male group?

RQ5: Will the SC-treated female group of the study show a higher degree of progress as compared to the corresponding male group?

Based on the above-mentioned research questions, the following hypotheses were proposed:

H1 (Null): There is no difference among all participant groups of the study in terms of general English achievement before being treated with tailored curriculum (TC) and standard curriculum (SC).



H2 (Null): There is no difference between the TC-treated and SC-treated male group of the study.

H3 (Null): There is no difference between the TC-treated and SC-treated female group of the study.

H4 (Null): The TC-treated female group of the study will not show a higher degree of progress as compared to the corresponding male group.

H5 (Null): The SC-treated female group of the study will not show a higher degree of progress as compared to the corresponding male group.

Literature Review

The standard EGP curriculum in Iran

According to the EAP (English for academic purposes) curriculum at tertiary education in Iran, all undergraduate students majoring in any field of study are required to pass a three-credit EGP course. Before passing this course, students with low English proficiencies (based on their entrance exam results on English) are also required to pass a two-to-four credit Basic/ Pre-requisite General English course, in their first university term. After the EGP course, students must take one (or more) two-to-four credit ESP (English for specific purposes) course(s) later in their program. Like any other university course in Iran, teaching of this course usually lasts for 16 weeks and each session once a week.

Unlike General English in school education in Iran, there is not any fixed course book material and syllabus for teaching general English at universities, so most lecturers develop their own syllabus and choose the most relevant teaching material. Some of them select SAMT (the organization in charge of producing educational materials for universities in Iran) publication for English at tertiary level and others choose books published outside Iran. According to Zarrabi and Brown (2015), General English courses at universities in Iran focus chiefly on reading comprehension and put emphasis on grammar and vocabulary with almost no attention to speaking skills and communicative competence. As Mazdayasna and Tahririan (2008) posit, in addition to being reading-based, SAMT textbooks are not designed to address the learning needs, wants and desires of Iranian students. As a result, after completing their degree programs, these text-centered, examination-oriented textbooks cannot equip most students with the foreign language proficiency they are expected to have.

In addition, Iranian university EGP curriculum do not seem to have features of a well-designed language curriculum, since as Kleckova and Dalle (2018, p.1) assert, a well-designed language curriculum is a “result of an elaborate process consisting of a needs and situation analysis followed by a careful planning of goals and learning outcomes”. They believe that developing course books based on such a curriculum, leads to an appropriate relationship between the curriculum and the course books, and these ‘local or localized course books can more directly improve learners’ English language. This way the curriculum and the specific needs of the instructional context are supported. Besides, as they state, “It’s also possible that a given curriculum is outdated and/or poorly designed, and well-chosen course books can enhance the language instruction and influence a curricular change” (p.1).

The tailored curriculum

Seedhouse (1995, p.59) believes that compared to ESP courses, EGP courses seem to lack the same concerns of learners’ needs due to “an erroneous belief that it is not possible to specify the needs of general English learners, and partly because of a lack of literature on the practicalities of analyzing needs data in the context of general English”. Seedhouse’s study not only shows that learners in EGP course have a clear understanding of their needs, but also how findings from needs analysis could be useful for EGP course design, classroom implementation and evaluation.



Furthermore, Seedhouse's study also strengthens Nunan's (1988) and Richards's (1990) beliefs about the application of needs analysis research in EGP courses and the fundamental role it has in planning of general language courses. As Johnson and Johnson (1999) assert:

The procedures associated with the analysis of needs offer the course designer a framework for the selection of language content according to the goals of particular learners and therefore the possibility of creating tailor-made programs, rather than starting with a ready-made syllabus that does not of itself discriminate between differing objectives" (Johnson & Johnson 1999, p.228).

Owing to the fundamental role of needs analysis in curriculum development and/or curriculum tailoring in particular, the standard curriculum for Pre-requisite General English course was tailored based on the results of learners' need analysis survey conducted by the researchers at Ayandegan Institute of Higher Education in Tonekabon city of Iran (Hekmatshoar Tabari & Rahimy, 2021). The tailored curriculum had the following features:

1. Emphasis on four language skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing
2. Expansion of teaching time exposure, through:
 - a. extending one three-credit university course (including 16 weeks of three hours) to three university terms.
 - b. replacing one weekly three hours-session with two 1.5 hours-sessions in a week,
3. Application of a communicative, task-based textbook (Four Corner1, by Jack. C. Richards & David Bohlke, 2012) accompanied with a workbook, video book, CDs (audio) and VCDs (audio-visual), and
4. Creation of the opportunity for all students to take the same final exam in one exam session.

Curriculum development and evaluation

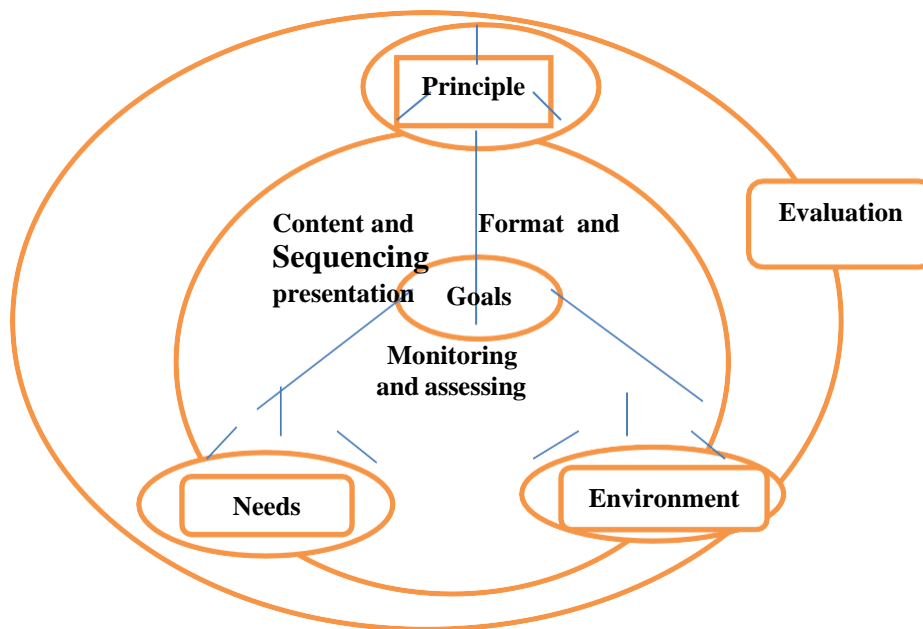
Curriculum development, design or planning, is a multi-level multi-faceted process in which lots of interlocking variables interact in complex ways (Kleckova & Dalle, 2018; Nation & Macalister, 2010; Richards & Schmidt, 2002, etc.) Despite variation and controversy in definition, most scholars consider evaluation as one of the most important constituents or steps of curriculum development/design (Brown 1995; Richards, 1990). For instance, the last constituent in the model of curriculum design process proposed by Nation and Macalister (2010) is evaluation. As it is shown in figure 1, it encloses the whole model. It can provide intricate information about every part of the model and reveal the lacks and necessities, which requires to be improved. However, as Nation and Macalister (2011) assert, this component is generally ignored in curriculum development.

According to Richards (2001), once our curriculum is designed, needs analysis is done and the curriculum is actually implemented, the curriculum development is still incomplete, and the whole process needs to be evaluated. Since, as he states, evaluation is a process through which we collect information about different aspects of a curriculum in order to see how successfully the program works by its own and/or in comparison with other examples. Evaluation enables making different kinds of decisions about the program: "whether the program responds to learners' needs, whether further teacher training is required for teachers' working in the program, or whether students are learning sufficiently from it" (p.298). In fact, curriculum evaluation is a systematic process of collecting and analyzing all relevant information for the purpose of judging and assessing effectiveness of a curriculum in order to promote improvement (Brown, 1995; Marsh, 2004; Nichols, et al., 2006; Norris, 2016). As Kiely (2009, p.99) best summarizes, "Program evaluation is a form of enquiry which describes the achievements of a given program,

provides explanations for these, and sets out ways in which further development might be realized”.

Figure 1

A model of the parts of the curriculum design process



Based on the existing literature, most studies on EGP curriculum evaluation have been directed at primary and secondary levels (Alwan, 2006; Burgos, 2012; Harris, 2010; Krekeller, 1993; Powell, 2008; Wang, 1996) and a few have been conducted at tertiary (university) level. Iran is not an exception and the majority of studies are focused on high school level (e.g. Ahmadi & Derakhshan, 2015; Ahmadi Safa, et al., 2017; Asadi, et al., 2016; Atai & Mazlum, 2013; Ghanbari & Ketabi 2011; Jahangard 2007; Nemati 2009; Zohrabi & Sabouri, 2012).

In addition, those studies which were conducted at tertiary level mostly focused on learners and teachers' perceptions as their main objectives (e.g. Arap, 2016; Bayram, 2019; Guo et al, 2016; İnal et al., 2014; Mohamadi, 2013; Nam, (2005); Mukundan, 2011; Tunç, 2010; Üstünlüoğlu, et al., 2012). In fact, they did not study the effectiveness of the curriculum in terms of learners' general English achievement. Though as Mukundan (2006, p.175) states, the major focus of evaluation should be on “the expected language learning outcomes”, thus the present study attempted to evaluate the tailored EGP curriculum in terms of Learners' general English achievement. In addition to evaluating a program's effectiveness in absolute terms, a program can be assessed compared to that of comparable ones (Lynch, 1996), hence this research tried to compare the newly tailored Pre-requisite general English curriculum with the standard one.

Gender influence

Research has shown that female students are more successful at learning second languages than males, and mostly girls outperform boys in general achievement/proficiency tests (e.g., Camarata & Woodcock, 2006; Carr & Pauwels, 2006; Chavez, 2001; Field, 2000; Michonska-Stadnik's 2004, Murphy, 2010); similar results have been also reported about learning English as a foreign language. For example, Glówka (2014) studied the effect of gender on students' achievement in learning English as a foreign language at secondary and higher vocational schools in Poland. The findings indicated that girls achieved significantly better results than boys. Likewise, Becirovic

(2017) who examined the relationship between gender, motivation and achievement in learning English as a foreign language at secondary level reported similar results concerning female students' achievement compared to male students at each group/grade level under investigation.

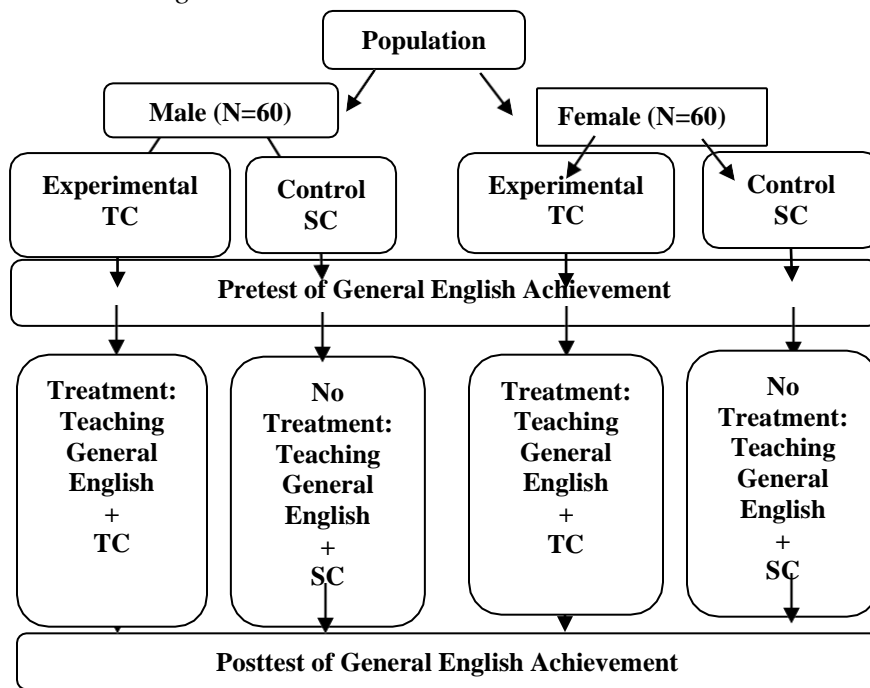
Methodology

Research Design

At the present study, the researchers adopted pretest-posttest intact group design, in which 120 Pre-requisite General English course students who were selected based on their availability, were divided randomly into four groups of 30: two control groups (male control group and female control group) and two experimental groups (male experimental group and female experimental group). The experimental groups received the treatment, i.e., teaching general English through the tailored curriculum (TC) and the control groups received no treatment, i.e. teaching general English through the standard curriculum (SC). Before starting the program, all the four groups were given pretest and at the end, they were given posttest (See figure 2).

Figure 2

Research design



Participants

120 (60 male and 60 female) non-native undergraduate students of the Pre-requisite General English course, who were studying in different majors (including Accounting, Law, Psychology, Architecture, Civil Engineering, Mechanical Engineering, and Electrical Engineering) at Ayandegan Institute of Higher Education in Tonekabon city in Iran, participated in the study.

Materials

Two instructional materials (textbooks) were used in this study: Active Skills for Reading1 (4th edition, by Neil J. Anderson) and Four Corners 1(1st edition, by Jack C. Richards & David Bohlke), both have twelve units. The former which is a reading-based book, was taught to the control groups (female SC and male SC), and the latter, a four-skills-based book which

accompanied by workbook and video book, to the experimental groups (female TC and the male TC). Each unit of the first textbook includes two texts based on the same topic, each of which followed by some comprehension activities plus a section that intends to improve vocabulary skills. On the other hand, each unit of the second book consists of different sections under the same topic based on four language skills followed by activities and tasks focusing on new vocabulary and grammar.

Instruments

At this study, a researcher-made general English achievement test was used for the purpose of data collection. Both tests (pretest and posttest) consisted of 20 questions, including some multiple choice, fill in the blanks and true/false items. Before starting the program, all the four groups were given pretest and at the end, they were given posttest, which was the same as the pretest. The reliability of the test estimated using Cronbach's alpha ($\alpha = 0.893$). For the purpose of validity, two domain experts and two Pre-requisite general English course teachers reviewed the test and minor revisions were made in order to make it ready for implementation.

Data Collection

At this research, the data were collected through pretest and posttest, which intended to measure students' general English achievement before and after receiving the program. Before starting the program, the researchers distributed the pretests among the Pre-requisite general English course students and then they were collected. After administrating the program, the posttests were given to the students and collected for the purpose of analysis.

Data Analysis

After collecting the data, they were entered into and analyzed by SPSS software (Version 25). First, for the purpose of descriptive analysis, Mean, Standard Deviation and Standard Error of the Mean were calculated for each of the four groups of the study, i.e. the experimental male group, the control male group, the experimental female group and the control female group. Then, Kolmogrove-Smirnov test and Independent Samples T-test were utilized in order to analyze the data inferentially and answer the questions of the study.

Results

Descriptive Analysis of the data

Descriptive results of the data for each four groups of the study are presented at this section in table 1, 2, 3 and 4 respectively. Table 1 shows descriptive results for the experimental (TC) male group of the study.

Table 1

Descriptive results for the experimental (TC) male group

Scores	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Posttest A	13.4667	30	3.78503	0.69105
Pretest A	9.5000	30	3.98921	0.72833

According to the table, the mean score of the pretest (9.5000) was higher than the mean score of the posttest (13.4667) for the experimental (TC) male group. As for the standard deviation and standard error of the mean obtained for the experimental (TC) male group, there sounds to be a considerable progress in the posttest score compared to the pretest. Table 2 indicates descriptive results for the control (SC) male group of the study.

Table 2*Descriptive results for the control (SC) male group*

Scores	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Posttest B	13.5333	30	3.68345	0.67250
Pretest B	12.7000	30	4.44235	0.81106

As shown in the table, the mean score of the pretest (12.7000) and the posttest (13.5333) were close to each other. Due to the obtained standard deviation and standard error of the mean for the control (SC) male group, there seems not to be a significant progress in the posttest score compared to the pretest. Table 3 indicates descriptive results for the experimental (TC) female group of the study.

Table 3*Descriptive results for the experimental (TC) female group*

Scores	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Posttest A	15.7667	30	3.46095	0.63188
Pretest A	14.5333	30	3.60778	0.65869

As the table illustrates, considering the mean score of the pretest (14.5333), the mean score of the posttest (15.7667), the standard deviation and standard error of the mean obtained for the experimental (TC) female group, there sounds not to be a considerable progress in the posttest score compared to the pretest. Table 4 indicates descriptive results for the control (SC) female group of the study.

Table 4*Descriptive results for the control (SC) female group*

Scores	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Posttest B	16.4667	30	3.88395	0.70911
Pretest B	15.3333	30	4.06273	0.74175

As indicated in the table, due to the obtained mean score of the pretest (15.3333), the posttest (16.4667), the standard deviation and standard error of the mean for the control (SC) female group, there seems not to be a considerable progress in the posttest score compared to the pretest.

Inferential Analysis of the Data

This section is focused on the inferential analysis of the data conducted using the SPSS software. In order to provide a clear-cut presentation of the findings, the hypotheses of the study have been tackled one by one in details.

Hypothesis One

For answering the first question of this study (RQ1), a Kolmogrove-Smirnov test was applied. The results are presented in the following table.

As indicated in the table, the level of Asymp. significance (2-tailed since the first hypothesis was a null one.) for all pretests is higher than 0.05, thus the first hypothesis (H1) is supported, that is, there is no significant difference among all participant groups of the study in terms of general English achievement before being treated with tailored curriculum (TC) and standard curriculum (SC).



Table 5
K-S test for the first hypothesis of the study

	Pretest A	Pretest B	Pretest C	Pretest D	
N	30	30	30	30	
Normal Parameters	Mean	9.5000	9.5000	11.9667	15.3333
a,b	Std. Deviation	3.98921	3.98921	4.41380	4.06273
Most Extreme	Absolute	0.117	0.117	0.136	0.178
Differences	Positive	0.117	0.117	0.080	0.139
	Negative	-0.083	-0.083	-0.136	-0.178
Kolmogorov-Smirnov Z		0.640	0.640	0.747	0.972
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)		0.808	0.808	0.633	0.301

a. Test distribution is Normal.

b. Calculated from data.

Hypothesis Two

In order to answer the second question (RQ2), an Independent Samples T-test was used. Below comes the result:

Table 6
Independent t-test results for the male (TC-SC) group

t-test for Equality of Means			
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Equal variances assumed	4.047	58	0.000
Equal variances not assumed	4.047	57.398	0.000
			Critical t=2.000

In line with table 6, the observed t value (t) was 4.047. The degree of freedom was 58. The critical value of t determined at the 2-tailed significance level of 0.05 was 2.000, so the observed t was higher than the critical t. In addition, the indicated level of significance was 0.000 and it was lower than the 2-tailed significance level of 0.05. Thus, the second null hypothesis (H2) is rejected, that is, there is a significant difference between the TC-treated and SC-treated male group of the study.

Hypothesis Three

For answering the third question of the study (RQ3), an Independent Samples T-test was applied. The results are shown as follows:

Table 7
Independent t-test results for the female (TC-SC) group

t-test for Equality of Means			
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Equal variances assumed	0.705	58	0.484
Equal variances not assumed	0.705	57.333	0.484
			Critical t=2.000

Based on table 7, the observed t value (t) was calculated to be 0.705. The degree of freedom was 58. The critical value of t determined based on the 2-tailed significance level of 0.05 was 2.000, so the observed t was lower than the critical t, thus the third null hypothesis was supported. Furthermore, the indicated level of significance was 0.484, and it was higher than the 2-tailed significance level of 0.05. This was another reason by which the third null Hypothesis (H2) was supported. Hence, there is not a significance difference between the TC-treated and SC-treated female group of the study.

Hypothesis Four

In order to answer the fourth question (RQ4), an Independent Samples T-test was used. Table 8 shows the results:

Table 8

Independent t-test results for the TC male/female group

t-test for Equality of Means			
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Equal variances assumed	2.456	58	0.017
Equal variances not assumed	2.456	57.541	0.017
Critical t=2.000			

As depicted in the table, the observed t value (t) was 2.456 and the degree of freedom was 28. The critical value of t determined at the 2-tailed significance level of 0.05 was 2.000, therefore the observed t was higher than the critical t. In addition, the indicated level of significance was 0.017, which was lower than the 2-tailed significance level of 0.05. Moreover, the results of descriptive mean difference revealed that the TC-female group performed better than the TC- male group, which rejects the fourth null hypothesis as presented in table 9 below:

Table 9

Mean difference for the TC male/female group

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error
TC Male	30	13.4667	0.69105
TC Female	30	15.7667	0.63188
Valid N (listwise)	30		3.46095

According to the table, the standard error for the TC-female group is lower than that of the TC-male group. This is another reason for the better performance of the female group.

Hypothesis Five

For the purpose of answering the fifth question of the study (RQ4), an Independent Samples T-test was used. Table 10 shows the results:

Table 10

Independent t-test results for the TC male/female group

t-test for Equality of Means		
	t	df
		Sig. (2-tailed)

Equal variances assumed	3.001	58	0.004
Equal variances not assumed	3.001	57.838	0.004
<u>Critical t=2.000</u>			

Referring to table 10, the observed t value (t) was 3.001 and the degree of freedom was 28. The indicated level of significance (0.004) was much lower than the 2-tailed significance level of 0.05, and the observed t (3.001) was higher than the critical t (2.000) determined at the 2-tailed significance level of 0.05. In addition, based on the amount of the obtained descriptive mean difference shown in table 11, the SC-female group performed better than the SC-male group, thus the fifth null hypothesis is rejected.

Table 11
Mean difference for the SC male/female group

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error
SC Male	30	13.5333	0.70911
SC Female	30	15.7667	0.67250
Valid N (listwise)	30		

As the table depicts, the standard error for the SC-female group is lower than that of the SC-male group, which is indicative of the better performance of the female group.

Discussion and Conclusion

Regarding the first hypothesis of the study, the findings indicate that there is no difference among all participant groups of the study in terms of general English achievement before being treated with the tailored curriculum (TC) and the standard curriculum (SC). The results of the second hypothesis reveal that there is a significant difference between the TC-treated and the SC-treated male group of the study. Therefore, it seems that teaching Pre-requisite General English course using the tailored curriculum has a significant effect on the male participants in terms of general English achievement. Yet, the findings concerning the third hypothesis do not show a significant difference between the TC-treated and the SC-treated female group of the study. Thus, concerning the female participants, it seems that there is not a significant difference between teaching general English course using the tailored curriculum or the standard one. One probable reason is that female participants are generally more motivated and hardworking than the male ones (Glynn & Koballa; 2006 Kissau, 2006), hence, the effect of tailored curriculum on their general English achievement is not so much different from that of the standard one. Whereas the tailored curriculum provides their male counterparts with necessary motivation in order to experience higher achievement as compared to the standard curriculum. Most studies have shown that females are more successful in second/foreign language learning, since they tend to be more motivated than males (Ahmadi, 2011; Ariane & Pascale, 2012; Dörnyei & Csizér, 2002; Kissau, et al., 2010; Öztürk & Gürbüz 2013; Ryan, 2009; Williams et al., 2002; Sahebkhair, 2020), though a small number of them reported lack of such differences (Henry & Cliffordson, 2013; Sylvén & Thompson, 2015).

The results of the study regarding the fourth hypothesis indicate that the TC-treated female group of the study show a higher degree of progress as compared to the corresponding male group. In other words, the female participants who received teaching through the tailored curriculum experienced a higher degree of progress compared to the corresponding male ones.

This is in line with Becirovic's (2017) study in which female students achieved significantly better results at English as a foreign language compared to the male ones. Glówka (2014) has also reported similar findings regarding better performance of females than males.

The findings regarding the fifth hypothesis reveal that the SC-treated female group of the study experience a higher degree of progress as compared to the corresponding male group, that is, the female participants who received teaching through the standard curriculum experienced a higher degree of progress compared to the corresponding female ones. This finding also shows similar results to Becirovic (2017) and Glówka's (2014) studies in that girls outperformed the boys.

To sum up, although both TC-treated and SC-treated female groups of the study show higher degree of progress as compared to their corresponding male groups, there isn't a significant difference between the TC-treated and SC-treated female groups, while there is a significant difference between TC-treated and SC-treated female groups of the study. Thus, despite the overall outperformance of the female over male, the male experience higher degree of progress than the female under the effect of TC as compared to SC. In fact, it seems that in comparison with the reading-based standard curriculum, the learner-needs-analysis-based tailored curriculum which focuses on listening and speaking skills in a task-based framework has led to better language learning achievement for the male participants by providing adequate motivation and diligence which are not provided through teaching the standard curriculum.

Owing to the fact that the findings of the present study is not generalizable to all the universities in the country, the similar study is suggested to be directed for Pre-requisite General English course in other universities. Such studies can lead to more effective EGP education at universities. Thus, not only more systematic NA-based studies require to be conducted concerning the EGP curriculum development/tailoring, but also more evaluation studies need to be done in order to examine the results of those studies for the purpose of curriculum improvement.

As the final remark, it is suggested that, in addition to investigating the effect of the tailored curriculum on the students' general English achievement, students', teachers' and administrators' perceptions need to be studied in order to make the evaluation more comprehensive.

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