

## **EXPLORING OPINION EXCHANGE IN SPEAKING LEARNING THROUGH TASK-BASED LANGUAGE TEACHING: A CASE STUDY AT SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*This study aims to explore how Opinion Gap Tasks in the Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) framework facilitate students' speaking skills development through opinion exchange activities and analyze how gender differences influence students' participation, interaction patterns, and performance during these tasks. A qualitative case study design was employed, involving 11th-grade students from a high school in Lembang. Data were collected through classroom observations and semi-structured interviews, and analyzed using Braun and Clarke's (2006) Thematic Analysis and Toulmin's (1958) Argumentation Model. The findings reveal different communication and reasoning patterns between male and female students. Female students were more expressive, emotional, and confident, often relying on experiential reasoning and empathy, while male students were more logical, structured, and cautious in their argumentation. Despite these differences, both genders found Opinion Gap Tasks effective in enhancing fluency, confidence, and critical thinking in speaking English. These tasks also fostered respect for differing opinions, learner autonomy, and reflective awareness in communication. Overall, the study concludes that integrating Opinion Gap Tasks into TBLT effectively promotes inclusive communicative competence and meaningful language learning in the EFL classroom.*

**Keywords:** *Task-Based Language Teaching, Opinion Gap Tasks, Opinion Exchange, Gender, Speaking Skills.*

### **ABSTRAK**

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengeksplorasi bagaimana Tugas Kesenjangan Pendapat dalam kerangka Pengajaran Bahasa Berbasis Tugas (TBLT) memfasilitasi pengembangan keterampilan berbicara siswa melalui kegiatan pertukaran pendapat dan mengkaji bagaimana perbedaan gender memengaruhi partisipasi, pola interaksi, dan kinerja siswa selama tugas-tugas tersebut. Dengan

menggunakan desain studi kasus kualitatif, penelitian ini melibatkan siswa kelas sebelas dari sebuah SMA di Lembang. Data dikumpulkan melalui observasi kelas dan wawancara semi-terstruktur, serta dianalisis menggunakan Analisis Tematik Braun dan Clarke (2006) dan Model Argumentasi Toulmin (1958), yang terdiri dari klaim, dasar, dan bukti. Temuan penelitian menunjukkan pola komunikasi dan penalaran yang berbeda antara siswa laki-laki dan perempuan. Siswa perempuan ekspresif, emosional, dan percaya diri, seringkali mengandalkan penalaran pengalaman dan empati, sementara siswa laki-laki cenderung logis, terstruktur, dan berhati-hati dalam menyampaikan argumen. Terlepas dari perbedaan ini, kedua gender menganggap Tugas Kesenjangan Pendapat efektif dalam meningkatkan kelancaran, kepercayaan diri, dan berpikir kritis mereka dalam berbicara bahasa Inggris. Tugas-tugas tersebut juga menumbuhkan rasa hormat terhadap perbedaan pendapat, otonomi pembelajar, dan kesadaran reflektif dalam berkomunikasi. Secara keseluruhan, penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa mengintegrasikan Tugas Kesenjangan Pendapat ke dalam kerangka kerja TBLT secara efektif mendorong kompetensi komunikatif yang inklusif dan pembelajaran bahasa yang bermakna di kelas EFL.

**Kata kunci:** Pengajaran Bahasa Berbasis Tugas, Tugas Kesenjangan Pendapat, Pertukaran Pendapat, Gender, Keterampilan Berbicara.

### **A. Introduction**

Speaking skills are one of the most important aspects in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning, especially for students in Senior High Schools (SHS). Speaking in English is essential not only for academic purposes but also for facilitating cross-cultural communication, which is increasingly necessary in today's globalized world (Afifah, N., & Devana, 2020). In many countries, including Indonesia, English learning at the SHS level still faces challenges, one of which is the lack of adequate speaking

skills. Many students feel anxious or afraid of making mistakes when speaking English, which hinders their participation in speaking activities in the classroom. This can be seen in the phenomenon within EFL classrooms, where many students prefer listening or writing to speaking, despite having better reading and writing skills (Azizifard, F. M. 2024)

One method that has been widely used to address challenges in speaking learning is Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT). TBLT emphasizes the use of language to complete meaningful tasks that

encourage students to interact authentically. One such task in TBLT is the Opinion Gap Task, which is designed to encourage students to share and express their opinions verbally, thus helping them overcome their fear of speaking and improve their speaking skills. While many studies have shown the effectiveness of TBLT in improving speaking skills, the important role of sociocultural factors, such as gender, in classroom interaction is still underexplored. This research aims to explore how Opinion Gap Tasks within the TBLT framework can improve speaking skills, and how gender differences affect participation, interaction patterns, and performance during these tasks ( Azmy, K., & Nanda, D. W. 2024 ).

The purpose of this study is to examine how Opinion Gap Tasks within the TBLT framework facilitate students' speaking skills development through opinion exchange activities, and to analyze how gender differences influence participation, interaction patterns, and students' performance during these tasks. The focus of this research is on SHS students in Lembang, providing insights into gendered interaction dynamics in EFL classroom contexts.

This research will also identify the challenges faced by both male and female students in expressing and defending their opinions during the speaking activities ( Braun, V., & Clarke, V. 2006 ).

The significance of this study is expected to contribute both practically and academically. Practically, it will provide useful information for English teachers on how Opinion Gap Tasks can be effectively implemented within the TBLT framework to promote interactive speaking activities. It will help teachers design classroom tasks that encourage critical thinking, collaboration, and authentic communication. Academically, this research aims to enrich the literature on task-based teaching, particularly TBLT, by offering new insights into the impact of gender on classroom interactions and speaking skill development ( Chalak, A., & Karimi, M. 2022 ).

In conclusion, this study aims to fill the gap in existing research by exploring the relationship between Opinion Gap Tasks, gender, and students' speaking skills, and to provide a deeper understanding of how gender differences can affect participation and performance in

interactive speaking tasks ( Chunliu, X., & Guangsheng, L. 2025).

## **B. Research Methodology**

This study aims to explore how Opinion Gap Tasks within the Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) framework facilitate students' speaking skills development through opinion exchange activities, and to examine how gender differences influence students' participation, interaction patterns, and performance during these tasks. To achieve these objectives, this research adopts a qualitative approach with a case study design. This design was chosen as it allows for in-depth exploration of how students interact, express, and justify their opinions in the context of real-life speaking tasks. The case study approach involves direct observation of speaking activities in class and semi-structured interviews with students, which help to uncover their perceptions and experiences related to the Opinion Gap Tasks.

The qualitative approach enables the researcher to gain detailed and descriptive insights into the phenomenon under study, namely the exchange of opinions in speaking learning. The study employs

classroom observations and interviews as the main data collection methods. Through classroom observation, the researcher can monitor how students engage in speaking activities and how gender influences their interaction patterns. Meanwhile, interviews provide an opportunity to explore students' perceptions of the tasks and how they feel about the impact of these tasks on their speaking skills.

### **A. Method and Research Design**

The qualitative approach enables the researcher to gain detailed insights into the phenomenon being studied, such as opinion exchange in the context of speaking learning. This research employs a case study design, which allows for intensive examination of a group of students in a specific context. This case study involves observing classroom activities and conducting interviews with students, which enables a deeper understanding of how students engage in opinion exchange tasks and how gender influences participation and interaction patterns in these tasks.

Classroom observations and interviews are the two main methods for collecting data in this study. The

classroom observation will focus on students' participation in speaking activities, particularly in tasks that require opinion exchange. The researcher will observe the patterns of interaction, how students express their opinions, and how gender influences their contributions during the tasks. Semi-structured interviews will be conducted with selected students to explore their experiences with the tasks and how they perceive their speaking development through these activities.

#### **B. Participants and Location**

This study will be conducted at a public senior high school in Lembang. The school was chosen based on two main considerations: (1) the school has implemented Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) in its English lessons, making it contextually relevant to the research, and (2) the researcher has prior involvement with the school as a former student and assistant coach for the English Club, which provides a deeper understanding of the school's learning environment and the characteristics of the students.

The participants of this study are 11th-grade students at the selected school. Purposive sampling will be

used to select students who actively participate in speaking activities during classroom observations. While all students will be involved in classroom observations, only a small group of students representing different genders will be selected for interviews. This purposive sampling ensures that the selected students are actively engaged in the speaking tasks, which aligns with the goal of exploring gender differences in opinion exchange tasks.

#### **C. Data Collection Procedures and Learning Design**

This research will be conducted over four class meetings, each designed based on the three phases of TBLT: Pre-Task, Task Cycle, and Language Focus. Each phase aims to support the development of students' speaking skills through opinion exchange activities that are structured and focused on meaningful communication. The design of the learning procedures is intended to encourage active, collaborative, and task-based interaction.

Pre-Task (Meeting 1): In the first meeting, students will be introduced to the concept of expressing opinions in English, as well as the relevant vocabulary needed to prepare for the

speaking task. Students will also learn how to provide reasons to support their opinions and be introduced to various expressions used in discussions.

Task Cycle (Meetings 2 & 3): In the second and third meetings, students will participate in pair or group discussions, where they will be given topics to debate and share their opinions. During this phase, the researcher will act as the facilitator, observing how students express their opinions and noting gender differences in their participation patterns.

Language Focus (Meeting 4): In the final meeting, students will reflect on their speaking experiences and receive feedback from the teacher on their language use and speaking abilities. Students will be encouraged to identify areas for improvement and continue practicing.

#### D. Data Collection Instruments

##### 1. Classroom Observation

Classroom observations will be conducted over four meetings, with a focus on students' verbal interactions during the opinion exchange tasks. The researcher will use a structured observation checklist to collect data on students' participation frequency, the

types of claims and reasons they present, and their interactions with peers. Gender differences in expression, turn-taking, and disagreement management will also be noted.

##### 2. Interviews

Semi-structured interviews will be conducted with a selected group of students after they participate in the speaking activities. The interviews will focus on exploring students' experiences with the tasks, their perceptions of how the tasks affected their speaking development, and how they felt gender differences influenced their participation. The interview questions will explore the improvements in fluency, confidence, critical thinking, and the challenges students face in expressing their opinions.

#### E. Data Analysis

The data collected from classroom observations and interviews will be analyzed using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) to identify key patterns in students' participation and interaction during the opinion exchange tasks. The findings from the observations and interviews will be coded and grouped into themes that are relevant

to the research questions. This process will involve identifying recurring patterns in gendered opinion expression and reasoning, as well as how these patterns impact students' speaking skills development.

### **C. Findings and Discussion**

#### **A. Findings**

This study aimed to explore how Opinion Gap Tasks within the Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) framework facilitate students' speaking skills development and how gender differences influence participation, interaction patterns, and reasoning during these tasks. Based on thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) of classroom observations and student interviews, two main findings emerged that align with the research questions:

#### **1) Gendered Opinion Expression and Reasoning (RQ1)**

Overall, distinct patterns of opinion expression and reasoning appeared between male students (MS) and female students (FS) in discussions on two topics: K-dramas as (not) a waste of time (Day 3) and Beach vs. Mountain as a holiday destination (Day 4). Male students (MS) tended to have a more cautious, analytical, and structured delivery,

while female students (FS) were more expressive, confident, and experiential. These contrasts were evident not only in content but also in tone, pacing, turn-taking, and responses to disagreement.

a) Male Focus on Risks, Discipline, and Structure  
When discussing K-dramas, MS often framed entertainment in terms of potential costs (time loss, diminished academic focus) and self-regulation. In the holiday debate, they advanced goal-oriented narratives (knowledge, teamwork, challenge), frequently invoking structured reasoning and factual references (e.g., studies on nature and mental health). Their claims were concise and measured, with warrants emphasizing responsibility and practical consequences. Delivery was calm and organized, signaling an orientation to logic, control, and credibility.

b) Female Focus on Cultural Enrichment, Enjoyment, and Social Meaning

FS rejected the notion that K-dramas were a waste, recasting them as resources for language and cultural learning, empathy, and values. In the holiday debate, they framed the beach through sensory and affective lenses

(relaxation, shared moments, aesthetic experience). Their claims were assertive and persuasive, with warrants invoking experiential and social-emotional benefits. Evidence was based on lived examples and reported preferences. Delivery was animated and collaborative, projecting confidence, rapport, and inclusivity.

c) Interactional Style and Handling Disagreement

Turn-taking was generally respectful, with FS being more proactive (volunteering, initiating claims) and MS consistently courteous (acknowledging opposing views, preserving logic and balance). When facing disagreement, FS offered emotionally persuasive rebuttals, while MS tended toward calm acceptance with conditional nuance (e.g., acknowledging enjoyment "if not too much").

Synthesis (RQ1)

The overall findings showed a clear gendered divergence: FS = expressive–experiential–persuasive; MS = logical–structured–cautious. Both groups used the Claim–Warrant–Evidence structure effectively, but with different emphases (experiential vs. factual). These differences enriched the whole-class dialogue,

demonstrating that both approaches to reasoned oral communication were valid.

2) Students' Perceptions of Opinion Gap Tasks for Speaking Development (RQ2)

a) Gains in Confidence and Fluency

Interviews consistently highlighted that Opinion Gap Tasks reduced speaking anxiety and increased willingness to speak, especially for learners who rarely spoke before. The task structure (C-W-E) helped organize ideas, making delivery more fluent and coherent. Repeated practice, group support, and public presentation built courage, turning hesitant speakers into more assured contributors.

b) Growth in Critical Thinking and Argument Organization

Students reported becoming more intentional about claims, filtering reasons, and seeking appropriate support. The Toulmin framework nudged them to justify rather than merely state opinions, motivating them to evaluate perspectives, locate examples, and link evidence to claims. Learners noticed a shift from "random answers" to conceptually grounded arguments.



c) Positive Attitudes toward  
Opinion Exchange

Students enjoyed the activities because they allowed freedom of expression, peer learning, and respectful disagreement. Many described a heightened openness to others' views and a stronger sense of classroom solidarity.

d) Challenges and Learner  
Strategies

Difficulties included grammar–lexis, pronunciation, and distinguishing Claim vs. Warrant vs. Evidence. Students addressed these by peer consultation, teacher feedback, online searching, and rehearsal behaviors signaling rising autonomy and self-regulation.

Synthesis (RQ2)

Learners valued Opinion Gap Tasks as effective vehicles for boosting fluency, confidence, critical thinking, and collaboration. The structured yet open format balanced language form and meaningful communication, fostering supportive norms and reflective habits.

## **B. Discussion**

The findings of this study are discussed in the context of Sociocultural Theory, Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT),

Toulmin's Argumentation Model, and gendered communication perspectives.

Participation and Gender: The early-session participation pattern, where female students (FS) readily volunteered while male students (MS) often required teacher prompts, aligns with Vygotsky's (1980) sociocultural view that participation expands through scaffolding, peer mediation, and guided interaction. As scaffolds accumulated across meetings (clear task goals, modeled expressions, formative feedback), both groups progressively widened their Zones of Proximal Development, echoing research on affective barriers and willingness to communicate in EFL speaking (e.g., anxiety and fear of negative evaluation; Milon et al., 2023).

Impact of TBLT on Fluency and Argument Organization: In the context of CLT (Littlewood, 1981) and TBLT (Willis, 1996), meaningful tasks are essential for functional language use. The data show that Opinion Gap Tasks not only increased fluency but also discursive organization, with the Claim–Warrant–Evidence (C-W-E) framework providing a cognitive scaffold for coherent talk. This dual impact aligns with contemporary TBLT findings that tasks can promote accuracy/complexity alongside communicative engagement (Yu et al., 2024).

Toulmin's Triad: The Toulmin triad (Claim, Warrant, Evidence) served both as an analytical lens and a pedagogic blueprint (Toulmin, 1958). Pedagogically, it provided students with an intuitive sequence (state a stance, justify with reasons, anchor with examples or data). Analytically, it

highlighted gendered differences in reasoning: FS often grounded their reasoning in experiential, aesthetic, and social meaning, whereas MS favored practical, disciplinary, and factual warrants. Both approaches were effective in communication, and their coexistence enriched classroom dialogue rather than creating division.

**Gendered Discourse:** The findings also resonate with classical distinctions in gendered discourse, rapport talk versus report talk, where women's speech tends to build connection and affect, while men prioritize information and logic (Tannen, 1990; Lakoff, 1973). However, this study also documents a shift: FS were not passive but assertive leaders of discussion, and MS were not dominating but polite, balanced, and non-confrontational. This challenges traditional binaries and suggests that task-based norms can soften categorical gender tendencies by rewarding collaboration, respect, and clarity.

The results contribute to filling a gap in the TBLT literature, as noted by Mulyani et al. (2023), where much research focuses on the effectiveness of tasks while under-theorizing gendered participation. This classroom-based evidence shows that gender influences entry points to argumentation (experiential vs. factual), turn-taking, and disagreement management without impeding overall learning gains. The findings imply the value of gender-aware task design, which primes the Toulmin framework through brief modeling, mini-rubrics, and calibrated cognitive-affective load.

By integrating Vygotskian mediation, TBLT task authenticity, Toulmin's

argumentative structure, and gendered discourse, this study demonstrates that Opinion Gap Tasks can simultaneously enhance fluency, reasoned organization, and inclusive interactional norms. Learners' distinct gendered orientations enrich rather than fragment classroom talk; with supportive task design, both expressive-experiential and logical-factual routes lead to communicative competence.

## **E. Conclusion**

Based on the findings of this study, it can be concluded that Opinion Gap Tasks within the framework of Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) have proven effective in enhancing students' speaking skills. These tasks not only help students improve fluency and confidence in speaking but also foster critical thinking and the organization of arguments. The study reveals that female students (FS) and male students (MS) exhibit different argumentative styles, with FS being more expressive and experiential, while MS are more logical and fact-based. Despite these gender differences in how students express opinions and handle disagreement, both approaches complement each other and enrich classroom discussion dynamics.

The Opinion Gap Tasks also help students overcome speaking anxiety, increase their willingness to speak, and develop more meaningful speaking skills in English. Overall, this study reinforces the notion that gender-aware task design, which considers differences in how students express opinions, can facilitate more inclusive interactions and enrich language learning.

### **Suggestions:**

Based on the findings, it is recommended that English teachers consider using Opinion Gap Tasks in EFL classrooms to improve students' speaking skills. Teachers should also adopt task designs that are more sensitive to gender differences, providing constructive feedback and encouraging active participation from all students. Future research could further explore the influence of gender in various types of speaking tasks in different contexts, and apply this research in higher education settings to examine interaction dynamics between university students.

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