ABSTRACT

THE EFFECT OF TASK COMPLEXITY AND TASK CONDITION IN WRITTEN LANGUAGE PRODUCTION BY INDONESIAN EFL LEARNERS

By

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This study explores how task complexity and task condition specifically gender-based topic preferences affect the written language production of Indonesian EFL learners, within the framework of Robinson's (2001) Cognition Hypothesis. The objectives of the study were: (1) to identify the topics most and least preferred by male and female students, (2) to examine whether variations in task complexity and topic preference lead to significant differences in learners' written performance, and (3) to determine whether male and female students differ significantly in their writing performance across different task conditions.

An exploratory mixed-method design was employed, involving 60 Indonesian junior high school students. Writing tasks were developed based on resource-directing and resource-dispersing variables and were aligned with students' topic preferences identified through a gender-based survey. Students' written products were analyzed in terms of complexity, accuracy, and fluency using non-parametric statistical tests, as the normality assumption was not met. Specifically, Spearman's rho was used to examine task reliability, the Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test was applied to compare task complexity conditions, and the Mann-Whitney U Test was used to examine gender-based differences.

The results showed that students performed better when writing on gender-preferred topics, with significant interactions between task complexity and gender-based conditions. Complex tasks encouraged greater syntactic complexity, whereas gender-preferred topics enhanced content richness and fluency. These findings highlight the importance of integrating cognitive challenge with personal relevance in task design. The study concludes that incorporating gender-sensitive and interest-based topics in Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) can promote better writing performance and higher learner engagement in EFL classrooms.

Keywords: *CAF measures, cognition hypothesis, students' perception, written Language performance*