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The Influence of English Language Proficiency on College Students

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Abstract:

College is a microcosm of society that demands the acquisition of appropriate life skills. Of the recent past, fields of education have focused on the concept of communicative competence – the ability to use language correctly and appropriately. A proficient person has full operational command of the language with appropriate use of diction, accurate vocabulary and fluent with complete understanding. A student should possess an adequate command over English and be able to express himself in it with reasonable care and understand lectures in it. The aim of this research is to study the English Language Proficiency among college students. To carry out this study college students (including male and female) studying in Medicine, Engineering, Education, Arts and Science Colleges were chosen as sample of the study. To assess English Language Proficiency, English Language Proficiency Tool by the Investigator and Dr. S. Devasahayam Selvakumar (2013). The investigator collected 498 samples from various colleges. The investigator used random sampling method as the sampling technique. The data were analyzed using the statistical procedures Percentile Analysis and Differential Analysis. The study concluded that there is a significant difference among college students with respect to Gender and Course of study.

Keywords: English language proficiency, Communicative competency

1. Introduction

Education in the 21st century focuses in the cultivation of an integrated individual with an integrated comprehension of life that enables one to meet ever-increasing complexities of life. English is the most widely spoken language in the world. English has become the channel of communication in the present scenario. The communication at the administrative level and organisational level is being done in English with little emphasis on the regional or local languages. English is playing a significant role in the holistic development of the individual and the society to share knowledge, information, beliefs and feelings.

English Language proficiency or Linguistic Proficiency is defined as the ability of an individual to speak or write in the English language. Learning a Second language is to effect learning the four skills, namely listening, speaking, reading and writing. The four skills are quite distinct from each other. The first two skills are intimately related to each other, though one is a recognition skill and other is a production skill.

2. Emergence of the Problem

A student should possess an adequate command over English and be able to express the ideas with coherence and fluency. Communicating and collaborating with teams of people across cultural, geographic and language boundaries, is a necessity in diverse and multinational workplaces and communities. Students need communication skills to apply their knowledge and employability. These skills are the pathways for better communication. In every workplace, students are required to listen to instructions, speak up for themselves, read texts and comprehend in order to make effective use of texts. English Language Proficiency gives students recognition and helps them develop confidence and employability. This helps them to engage themselves in leadership and professional development which incorporated vibrant opportunities to travel and explore the world of work. So, the researcher decided to undertake the present study in order to enhance the life skills of college students.

3. Statement of the Problem

The problem for the study is stated as follows:

“The Influence of English Language Proficiency on College Students”

4. Objectives of the Study

The following objectives have been set in the present study.

- i. To find out the levels of English Language among College students.
- ii. To study whether there is any significant difference in English language proficiency and its dimension belonging to different groups of students based on
 - a) Gender
 - b) Course of Study

5. Hypotheses of the Study

The following hypotheses have been set in the present study.

- i. The levels of English Language Proficiency and all its dimensions in total among college students are not high in nature.
- ii. There is no significant difference between the male and female college students in their English language proficiency in total and all its dimensions.
- iii. There is no significant difference among the college students studying arts, science, medicos, engineering and education courses in their English language proficiency in total and all its dimensions.

6. Population and Sample of the Study

The population for the present study consists of students of Medicine, Engineering, Education, Arts and Science Colleges. The investigator has randomly selected students from Medical, Engineering, Education, Arts and Science Colleges. The investigator collected 498 samples from various colleges. The investigator used random sampling method as the sampling technique.

7. Tools Selected for the Present Study

The following tools have been used in this study are English Language Proficiency Tool by the Investigator and Dr. S. Devasahayam Selvakumar (2013)

8. Data Collection Procedure

The investigator selected descriptive survey method for the study. The investigator personally visited the selected colleges in Chennai and approached the heads of the respective colleges regarding the data collection which was held from February 2014 to July 2014. After seeking the permission, the researcher explained the tools to the respondents personally. They were requested to answer all the statements in each and every tool and return them promptly to the investigator. The filled-in tools were scored and the data were tabulated for analysis.

9. Statistical Methods Used

The data were analyzed using the statistical procedures Percentile Analysis and Differential Analysis.

10. Analysis of Data

10.1. Hypothesis 1

The levels of English Language Proficiency and all its dimensions in total among college students are not high.

English Language Proficiency and its dimensions	Low		Moderate		High	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Listening Skill	94	18.88	340	68.27	64	12.85
Speaking Skill	78	15.66	338	67.87	82	16.47
Reading Skill	68	13.65	382	76.71	48	9.64
Writing Skill	39	7.83	457	91.77	2	0.40
Total	73	14.66	413	82.93	12	2.41

Table 1: Levels of English Language Proficiency and all its dimensions in Total among College students

From the above table, it is inferred that 14.66% of the college students are low, 82.93% of them are moderate and 2.41% of them are high in their English language proficiency in total. 18.88% of the college students are low, 68.27% of them are moderate and 12.85% of them are high in the listening skill. 15.66% of the college students are low, 67.87% of them are moderate and 16.47% of them are high in the speaking skill. 13.65% of the college students are low, 76.71% of them are moderate and 9.64% of them are high in the reading skill. 7.83% of the college students are low, 91.77% of them are moderate and 0.40% of them are high in the writing skill.

10.2. Hypothesis 2

There is no significant difference between the male and female college students in their English language proficiency in total and all its dimensions.

English Language Proficiency and its dimensions	Gender	N	Mean	SD	Calculated 't' Value	LS
Listening Skill	Male	254	21.52	3.12	0.10	NS
	Female	244	21.55	3.36		
Speaking Skill	Male	254	20.25	3.51	2.56	S
	Female	244	22.43	3.72		
Reading Skill	Male	254	21.83	2.97	0.30	NS
	Female	244	21.91	2.99		
Writing Skill	Male	254	20.95	2.67	6.57	S
	Female	244	23.57	5.66		
Total	Male	254	84.54	10.91	2.84	S
	Female	244	89.46	13.32		

Table 2: Difference in the English Language Proficiency of College Students in Total and all its Dimensions with regard to Gender (Table value is 1.96 for 496 degrees of freedom at 5% level of significance)

From the above table, it is inferred that the calculated 't' values are greater than the table value, the null hypothesis is rejected, with regard to English language proficiency in total and its dimensions – speaking and writing skills. Hence, “There is significant difference between the male and female college students in their English language proficiency in total and its dimensions – speaking and writing skills”. While comparing the mean scores, the female students are found better in their English language proficiency in total and its dimensions – speaking and writing skills.

It is inferred that the calculated 't' values are lesser than the table value, the null hypothesis is accepted with regard to listening and reading skills. Hence, “There is no significant difference between the male and female college students in their listening and reading skills”.

10.3. Hypothesis 3

There is no significant difference among the college students studying arts, science, medicos, engineering and education courses in their English language proficiency in total and all its dimensions.

English Language Proficiency and its dimensions	Course of Study	Mean	SSb	SSw	Calculated 'F' Value	Remark
Listening Skill	Arts	21.54	235.43	5162.62	2.85	S
	Science	21.19				
	Medicos	23.94				
	Engineering	21.69				
	Education	21.27				
Speaking Skill	Arts	22.28	275.45	6407.87	3.45	S
	Science	19.94				
	Medicos	20.82				
	Engineering	20.73				
	Education	19.75				
Reading Skill	Arts	21.80	252.80	4355.71	3.49	S
	Science	21.47				
	Medicos	22.28				
	Engineering	24.21				
	Education	21.57				
Writing Skill	Arts	21.13	239.52	9497.09	3.81	S
	Science	20.83				
	Medicos	22.18				
	Engineering	21.50				
	Education	22.45				
Total	Arts	84.75	2086.42	72245.55	3.85	S
	Science	83.44				
	Medicos	90.23				
	Engineering	86.13				
	Education	83.04				

Table 3: Difference in the English Language Proficiency of College Students in Total and all its Dimensions with regard to Course of Study (Table value is 2.39 for 4, 493 degrees of freedom at 5% level of significance)

From the above table, it is inferred that the calculated 'F' values are greater than the table value, the null hypothesis is rejected, with regard to English language proficiency in total and all its dimensions. Hence, "There is significant difference among the college students studying arts, science, medicos, engineering and education courses in their English language proficiency in total and all its dimensions". While comparing the mean scores, the medicos are found better in their English language proficiency in total and all its dimensions.

11. Findings of the Study

1. The levels of English Language Proficiency and all its dimensions in total among college students are moderate in nature.
2. The female college students are found better in their English language proficiency in total and its dimensions – speaking and writing skills. It is quite clear that the female students are reported to be better in their English language proficiency in total and in the dimensions - speaking and writing skills. It may be attributed to the general tendency with which the school population after the completion of the higher secondary course embarks on such professional course of study.
3. The medicos are found better in their English language proficiency in total and all its dimensions. The aspiring students do concentrate on the subject, which seem to be crucial for entry into medical colleges. In a way, the undermining of the importance of English, which starts at the school level, seems to continue even after joining a professional course.

12. Educational Implications

Colleges should encourage students to improve their oral and written communication skill as it stands the criteria of any interview for employability. Since, English language is the gateway to educational advancement or professional etiquette, it is essential to assert the students' competency in the language. Stakeholders in education should ensure that oral discourse is enhanced through practical, innovative ideas for teaching English like Applied theatre, Role – play, Hot seating, Language games, Scaffolding, solve word puzzles collaboratively. New strategies to promote English Language Proficiency in the Language Laboratory should be adapted to hone the communicative skills of the students. Seminars, debates and Group discussions which provide more opportunities for students to express them should be accessed.

13. Limitations of the Study

The study has the following limitations.

- i. This study was limited to the under graduates only.
- ii. The sample was restricted to 498 students only.

14. Suggestions for Further Studies

The investigator would like to suggest the following research topics for further investigation.

- i. A comparable study can be conducted in a true experimental environment.
- ii. The same study can be conducted on the other districts of Tamil Nadu.
- iii. The study on the selected variables like 'English Language Proficiency' may be attempted with other variables of research.

15. Conclusion

The proficiency in English language is required for all students in science and humanities education. Students need communication skills to apply their knowledge and employability. These skills are the pathways for better communication. In every workplace, students are required to listen to instructions, speak up for themselves, read texts and comprehend in order to make effective use of texts. English Language Proficiency gives students recognition and helps them develop confidence and employability.

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