A STUDY OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY LEVEL AMONG THE SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN RELATION TO GENDER AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS

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Abstract:

English has become most important language in the world because the people choose English as the medium of communication. English language is essential to live a better life. Every high level profession needs a good communication skill in English. So the students also are not an exception. In order to excel in educational career, a student must be proficient in English language. In this regard a study has been conducted to know the proficiency level of the secondary school students in relation to their gender and socio-economic status. The objectives of the study were to find out the relationship between proficiency level and the socio-economic status of the students at different levels and also to find out the difference in proficiency level between male and female students. For this purpose a sample of 200 (100 male and 100 female) secondary school students have been selected from different schools of Aligarh Muslim University. Two scales namely- English Language Proficiency Test (E.L.P.T) developed by professor K.S Mishra and Dr. Ruchey Dubey and Socio- economic Status Scale (Rural and Urban) (SESS) developed by Sahu and Kaliya were used. The data were analyzed with the help of Mean, Standard Deviation, and 't' test. The study revealed that there is no relationship of English language proficiency level either with socio-economic status or gender of the students. This study will be helpful for the students, teachers, parent's counselor and administrators to choose vocation and career goal.

Keywords: English Proficiency, Gender, Socio-economic Status, Secondary Students.

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Introduction

English is the link language of the masses. English language gaining popularity by leaps and bounds as it is the language to earn bread and butter. It not only serves the human kind to transmit emotions, thoughts, feelings and son on but also it is the language of trade, science, technology literature, research etc. English language is the window to see the world properly. It is very much essential in order to keep pace with the advancement in different fields and to excel in professional fields. Good command over English language has the power to excel and progress in life. In spite of having much importance and globalised necessity, the average Indian students are not able to communicate in English language in a reasonable level of proficiency and fluency.Thus concern for proficiency in English language has become significant.

Besides, communication purposes it also serves the purpose of teaching and learning. Teaching materials, learning resources, encyclopaedia, books available in ample number in English language only. Official communication is also done in English language. The students, those who desire to study in European country, have to communicate and learn in English language only. In Present era internet has become part and parcel of human kind whose language is English.All kinds of material available in internet or any other source is in English language.

One of the main reasons of English being used as important language is due to its demand in the modern life. Such reasons motivate them to learn and grow with it. It is a language of universities, Institutions, Tour and travel. In most of the jobs and business organizations it is mandatory requirement to know how to speak English. English language is the language of trade between different Countries. It is paramount to know English as it is necessity. It is evident that English is necessity of time and society.

Concept of Language Proficiency

Proficiency in a language is said to be overall excellent performance. Now-a-days proficiency is very essential to become successful in career building particularly in English language because English is considered to be the spectacle to see the world. Communicative part of the language proficiency is much more important in order to develop in life. The Communicative Approach

said to be the product of educators and linguists who had grown dissatisfied with the audio lingual and grammar translation methods of foreign language instruction. They felt that students were not learning enough realistic. They did not know how to communicate using appropriate social languages, gestures, or expressions; in brief, they were at a loss to communicate in culture of the language studied. Authentic language use and classroom exchanges where students engaged in real communication with one another are needed to become a communicator. In the present years, the elementary, middle, secondary, and post- secondary level of education system has adopted numerous steps to develop communication skills among the learner. These programmes are like 'Teaching of Proficiency', Proficiency based instructions', Communicative language Approach and so on. Proficiency in speaking, understanding, reading and writing English does not necessarily mean that students are equipped to study using English at university. This can be the case for students from backgrounds not traditionally associated with university study.

English language proficiency is defined as the degree of a learner's skill with which a learner can use a language, such as how well a learner can read, write, speak or understand a language. In addition, it also refers to a learner's skill in using the English language for a specific purpose e.g.-academic or occupational purpose. English proficiency may be measured through the use of proficiency test such as TOEFL, TOEIC,GRE, and IELTS etc.

Development of English Language in Indian Education

India is a multicultural, multi-religious, multi-traditional, multi-ethnic, and multi-lingual country where no single element is dominant rather every component is independent and has respect to each other. India has numerous vernacular languages and dialects. English language even has no trace in India before the English people came.

Formally imposition of English language on the Indian people began by the recommendation of Macaulay's minute (1835) in which English language made compulsory for educational instruction by subverting Arabic and Persian language. Woods despatch (1854) asserted that both, Native languages and English language should be accepted as the medium of instruction for primary education. But at higher level English must be the medium of instruction. It clearly stated that "our desire to see the rise and growth of all the schools in India".Sergeant plan (1944)

is in the view to boost Indian education system through English medium instruction as teaching learning materials available only in English language. University Education Commission (1948-49)recommended that only technical education should be imparted in English language.NationalEducation Commission (1964-66) said thatup to secondary level, education should be imparted through vernacular language and higher education can be imparted through English language.

Significance of the Study:

India is witnessing a transition. This evolution spans all facets such as economic, political, socio-cultural and technological field. The globalized and liberal outlook about English language has been adopted in the late 1990s and has further fuelled the growth, but still left more to gain.

A number of policies and provisions have been made to implement English language in the secondary level as the medium of instruction but not implemented properly in the reality. This is a very crucial issue now-a-days in the realm of educational system. Though a large number of works have been already done related to this particular issue but still a lot has to be done and very less number of works took place about English language proficiency and socio-economic status (SES). Therefore the researcher took new dimension of English language proficiency and socio-economic status. The researcher specified his universe in secondary school students of Aligarh Muslim university of Aligarh district, Uttar Pradesh.

Statement of the Problem

"**A study of English Language Proficiency among the Secondary School Students in Relation to Gender and Socio-economic Status**."

Objectives of the Study

For the sake of convenience the researcher formulates some objectives. Objectives of this study are as follows:

1.   To compare the difference between high socio-economic status (HIGH SES) and middle socio-economic status (middle SES) in English language proficiency level of the students.

2.   To compare the difference between middle socio-economic status (MIDDLE SES) and low socio-economic status (LOW SES) in English language proficiency level of the students.

3.   To compare the difference between low socio-economic status (LOW SES) and high socio-economic status (HIGH SES) in English language proficiency level of the students.

4.   To compare the English language proficiency level between male students and female students

Hypotheses of the Study

1.   There is no significant difference between high socio-economic status (high SES) and middle socio-economic status (middle SES) in English language proficiency level.

2.   There is no significant difference between middle socio-economic status (middle SES) and low socio-economic status (low SES) in English language proficiency level.

3.   There is no significant difference between low socio-economic status (low SES) and high socio-economic status (high SES) in English language proficiency level.

4.   There is no significant difference between male students and female students in English language proficiency level.

Research Methodology

Research Methods

The researcher has used survey and descriptive method of the research on the basis of primary data.

Population

Population or universe is the sphere from where the researcher collects sample for study. For the present paper population is delimited to Aligarh Muslim University (AMU) secondary school students.

Sample of the Study

Sample is a small representation of whole population. The present study is an attempt to study the English language proficiency of the secondary level students in relation to their gender, socio-economic status and locality. The sample of the present study has been collected from four schools of A.M.U. Total 200 sample is taken, out of which 50 is from A.M.U. Girls High School,

50 from A.B.K Girls High School, 50 from S.T.S (Minto Circle) High School and remaining 50 from A.B.K. Boys High School.

Tools Used in the Study

To test the hypotheses, data must be gathered in a systematic way. Many different methods and procedures have been developed to aid in the acquisition of data. For collection of Data and for the testing of the hypotheses, the investigator has used two tools namely:

1. English Language Proficiency Test (E.L.P.T)
2. Socio- economic Status Scale (Rural and Urban) (SESS)

Statistical Techniques Used For Data Analysis

In the Present Study the descriptive and inferential statistics used after data collection for analysis and interpretation of results. SPSS package is used for analysis of data with the use of the following statistical technique. They are as follows: mean, standard deviation (S.D) and 't' test.

Analysis and interpretation of the study

An analysis of data means collecting, organizing, arranging and summarizing the collected data in order to obtain the predetermined aims and objectives of the study, set up by the researcher. In the process of analysis, most of the data has been analysed with the help of software "SPSS" (statistical package for social science, version 16.00).

Objectives No. 1

To compare the difference between high socio-economic status (HIGH SES) and middle socio-economic status (middle SES) in English language proficiency level of the students.

H_{01}. There is no significant difference between high socio-economic status (HIGH SES) and middle socio-economic status (middle SES) in English language proficiency level of the students.

Table 1

Difference between high socio-economic status (HIGH SES) and middle socioeconomic status (middle SES) in English language proficiency level of the students

Group	N	Mean	df	S.D	Calculated 't' value	Tabulated 't' value	L.O.S	Ho
H.SES	100	43.06	168	6.75968	0.058	1.97	0.05	Accepted
M.SES	70	43.00		6.58721				

Interpretation 1:

From the above table it is revealed that the calculated value of 't' is 0.058 and degree of freedom is 168. The calculated value of 't' is 0.058 which is lesser than the tabulated 't' value 1.97. So it is insignificant relationship. Thus our null hypothesis "There is no significant difference between high socio-economic status (HIGH SES) and middle socio-economic status (middle SES) in English language proficiency level of the students" is accepted at 0.05 level of confidence.

Objectives No. 2

To compare the difference between middle socio-economic status (MIDDLE SES) and low socio-economic status (LOW SES) in English language proficiency level of the students.

H_{02}. There is no significant difference between middle socio-economic status (MIDDLE SES) and low socio-economic status (LOW SES) in English language proficiency level of the students.

Table 2

Difference between middle socio-economic status (MIDDLE SES) and low socio-economic status (LOW SES) in English language proficiency level of the students

Group	N	Mean	df	S.D	Calculated 't' value	Tabulated 't' value	L.O.S	Ho
M.SES	70	43.00	98	6.58721	0.961	1.98	0.05	Accepted
L.SES	30	41.60		6.88126				

Interpretation 2:

From the above table it is revealed that the calculated value of 't' is 0.961 and degree of freedom is 98. The calculated value of 't' is 0.961 which is lesser than the tabulated 't' value 1.98. So the relationship is insignificant. Thus our null hypothesis "There is no significant difference between

middle socio-economic status (MIDDLE SES) and low socio-economic status (LOW SES) in English language proficiency level of the students" is accepted at 0.05 level of confidence.

Objectives No. 3

To compare the difference between low socio-economic status (LOW SES) and high socio-economic status (HIGH SES) in English language proficiency level of the students.

H_{03}. There is no significant difference between low socio-economic status (LOW SES) and high socio-economic status (HIGH SES) in English language proficiency level of the students.

Table 3

Difference between low socio-economic status (LOW SES) and high socio-economic status (HIGH SES) in English language proficiency level of the students

Group	N	Mean	df	S.D	Calculated 't' value	Tabulated 't' value	L.O.S	Ho
L.SES	30	41.60	128	6.88126	-1.033	1.98	0.05	Accepted
H.SES	100	43.06		6.75968				

Interpretation 3:

 Above table revealed that the calculated value of 't' is -1.033 and degree of freedom is 128. The calculated value of 't' is -1.033 which is lesser than the tabulated 't' value 1.98. So the relationship is insignificant. Thus our null hypothesis "There is no significant difference between low socio-economic status (LOW SES) and high socio-economic status (HIGH SES) in English language proficiency level of the students" is accepted at 0.05 level of confidence.

Objectives No. 4

To compare the English language proficiency level of male students and female students.

H_{04}. There is no significant difference in English language proficiency level between male students and female students.

Table 4

Showing difference between male students and female students in English language proficiency level.

Group	N	Mean	Df	S.D	Calculated 't' value	Tabulated 't' value	L.O.S	Ho
Male	100	43.34	198	6.53077	1.098	1.97	0.05	Accepted
Female	100	42.30		6.86596				

Interpretation 4:

From the above table it is clear that the calculated value of 't' is 1.098 and degree of freedom is 198. The calculated value of 't' is 1.098 which is lesser than the tabulated 't' value 1.97. So the relationship is insignificant. Thus our null hypothesis "There is no significant difference in English language proficiency level between male students and female students" is accepted at 0.05 level of confidence.

Findings

The researcher has tried to investigate the English language proficiency level of secondary school students in relation to their socio-economic status and gender. In order to find out the relationship among the aforementioned variables, the researcher has set different objectives, hypothesis and used various statistical techniques.

The findings are as follows:

Finding-1

On the basis of first objective the researcher found that there is no significant difference between high socio-economic status (HIGH SES) and middle socio-economic status (middle SES) in English language proficiency level of the students.

Finding-2

According to the objective 2nd, the researcher has found no significant difference between middle socio-economic status (MIDDLE SES) and low socio-economic status (LOW SES) in English language proficiency level of the students.

Finding-3

The researcher found that there is no significant difference between low socio-economic status (LOW SES) and high socio-economic status (HIGH SES) in English language proficiency level of the students.

Finding-4

The researcher also tried to compare the English language proficiency level between male students and female students and it has been found that there is no significant difference in English language proficiency level between male students and female students.

Suggestions for Further Study

Nothing is absolute in this world and research in any field also is not an exception. No research is complete research and simultaneously it is also true that when a research problem is solved another similar or different problem may arise. The result of any research cannot be static rather it is arbitrary. So it is well known fact that the implication of the result of any research is liable to change in accordance of time period and geographical variation. There is a possibility of many areas needed to be studied in future which have been skipped in this research.

Therefore, further research may be done in related to the study, are as follows:

1.   The present study has been conducted only in A.M.U schools. Same can be studied in the state government schools, central government schools and private schools.

2.   English language proficiency can also be studied in relation to caste, classes and communities.

3.   Further research in this field can find out the correlation between high proficient, average proficient and low proficient students.

4.   The present study has studied the relationship of English language proficiency with socio-economic background, and gender of secondary school students. But it has not taken into account the pedagogy of teaching-learning English which is vital in the efficacy of English language teaching. Thus research into the relationship of English language proficiency with pedagogy employed will help further in addressing policy matters in this direction.

5.   The present study was limited to the secondary school students from four schools of A.M.U. The study can be initiated with a larger sample of school students of different states.

6.   The present study was limited to school students only. Therefore same kind of research can be conducted at college or university level also.

Educational implications:

Research is the heart of educational development so that authentic and genuine fact can give impetus to education system and it should have proper educational implication. Some important points about educational implications of this particular study are as follows:

❖   The present study will be useful to know the proficiency level of the students. According to the proficiency level students can choose their vocation and future course of action.

❖   This study can be very helpful for the parents to make their child more proficient in English language guide their kids accordingly.

❖   The teacher also will come to know about the proficiency level of the students and teach the students according to their proficiency level.

❖   This present study can also be very fruitful for the development of curriculum by keeping their level of proficiency in English language in mind. If the experts have sound knowledge about the proficiency level in English of the Childs then it will be very much easy to frame curriculum and curriculum will be fruitful.

Conclusion

Language is an indispensible vehicle of all human knowledge. The great civilization of the world has prospered by making language as their chief tool of communication. English language works as lingua franca among People living in different geographical areas and speak a large variety of languages. At the conclusion of the study it can be said that, the secondary schools students are enough aware about their English language proficiency and they are enough proficient in English language. The present study reveals that, the proficiency level is not depended on socio-economic status or gender. It was also found that the female students are not less than the male students. This may be because now-a-days girls are also eager to take any kind of challenge. In the ancient era girls were lagging behind due to social constraint and conservativeness of the society. The ancient era was completely patriarchal. Male community was privileged over female community in every field. Female were even not allowed to go out of the house. This wretched condition may be prevailing even in the present modern world. So we should come out of this

social stigma. So lastly we can generalized that English is very crucial for every individual and the secondary school students are having that capacity.

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