

A Comparative Study of Proficiency in English Language of Male and Female Secondary School Students

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Abstract

English was only a library language in the past but it is now viewed as the language of opportunity of acquiring jobs, quest for global identity, and thus prompts efforts of all state government to make the language accessible to all. This has become an important language in our country and is widely used in media, personal life, courts of law and administration. Therefore, it is necessary that students are taught English in proper ways so that they can gain command over it. In spite of immense importance and globalised acceptance of necessity of knowledge of English Language, the average Indian student is not able to either learn English or communicate in English with a reasonable level of proficiency in has become significant. The purpose of this study is to analyse the English Language Proficiency of the male and female students studying at secondary level. The sample consisted of 154 students studying at the secondary level. The tool used for data collection was English Language Proficiency Test developed by K.S. Mishra and Ruchi Dubey. The result of the study revealed that there is no significant difference between the English Language Proficiency of the male and female students studying at the secondary level.

INTRODUCTION

In the present era, English is considered as a global language through which

people all over the world communicate with each other. It is a link language which is used to get knowledge

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in different fields at national and international level. The language barrier is considered as a challenge for the students, especially in establishing themselves and achieving academic goals. Numerous aspects might be considered enabling a student to achieve academic success. English Language Proficiency (ELP) is not an important factor in determining the academic proficiency of students doing undergraduate courses, but also gives them the opportunity to pursue higher education (Kalivadan et al., 2015). The importance of the English proficiency in curriculum cannot be underestimated. It has been found that ELP and academic achievement have a positive relationship between these two variables (Shahragard et al., 2011).

ELP is an important factor in determining the academic performance. The fashion of English has resulted in the growth in English medium schools and colleges. The students studying in English medium school have better promises and visions in the global market. English has gained number of opportunities for Indian students at their homelands as well as in other countries too. A positive attitude towards English as a communication means is essential for the academic performance. English language learning among students is being affected by so many psychological and sociological factors like mental health, intelligence, personality of

the child, home environment, school environment, etc.

English proficiency is the demonstrated ability to speak, write, read and comprehend English to a standard set by the institution. According to Blagojevich, Ruiz and Dunn (2004), "English language proficiency: English language learners' communication information, ideas and concepts necessary for academic success in the content area of social studies." Limited English proficient student is defined as a student whose first language is a language other than English, who is unable to perform ordinary classroom works in English (Driscoll, 2003). In India, English has become the most important factor in an individual's life to get quality in education as well as an opportunity to participate in the national and international life. Shukla H. (2004) finds that lack of proper guidance, lack of exposure to formal environment, family background of the students, lack of educational facilities, economic and social status, lack of confidence are some of the causes for English communication problem. Dua and Sharma (2006) conducted a study on spelling errors of 200 UP board education children of Class XI and found girls made fewer errors than boys. Children belonging to an educated or less educated family committed more spelling errors than those belonging to highly educated family. But family income did not make any difference in performance. K. Karthigeyan and

K. Nirmala (2012) revealed that there exist a gradual growth rate in the academic achievement of secondary level students in English and it also observed that gender difference exists in the academic achievement in English. Girls performed better than boys in English language.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Today, English has become a global language through which people all over the world can communicate and participate at national and international life. ELP is very essential for the students to pursue higher education and get better employment opportunities in future. Therefore, an attempt has been made in this study to assess the ELP of the secondary students so that they can be successful in every sphere of life.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

The objective of this study is to assess the English language proficiency of the male and female students studying at secondary level.

HYPOTHESES

The hypotheses formulated in this study is given below:

H01: There is no significant difference between the English proficiency of the male and female students studying at secondary level.

METHODOLOGY

Participants

For this study, 154 voluntary participants were selected from

secondary school. Seventy-seven of these participants were female students, and seventy-seven of them were male students. All these participants were from twenty-two government and non-government schools of Dehradun district of Uttarakhand state.

Instruments

English Language Proficiency Test (ELPT) of secondary school students developed by K.S. Misra and Ruchi Dubey was used for data collection in the study. The test consists of 56 items. It covers fourteen areas of English language. The test is divided into three sections—A, B and C on the basis of types of items. It was administered to Class X students. Split-half reliability and Kuder-Richardson reliability coefficient of the test has been found to be .85 and .84 respectively. Face validity has been found by asking experts belonging to the field of Education and English. Concurrent validity was found to be 0.50. Scoring was done through manual scoring; a score of 1 was given for every correct response, and 0 for the wrong response.

Research Design

The non-experimental research design having correlational research model is used in this study. The investigator used descriptive cum survey method for data collection.

Research Procedure

The tool was administered in accordance with the instructions laid down in the manual of ELPT.

Before distributing the ELPT, instructions given in the tool were explained in a specified manner to the students. Investigator distributed the questionnaire among the secondary students studying in government and non-government schools. Investigator instructed the students the way to give the answer for the questionnaire. The time limit for ELPT was 30 minutes.

Statistical Analysis

The statistical analysis has been done with the help of Microsoft excel 2010. A t-test was applied to measure the significant difference between male and female students studying at the secondary level.

RESULTS

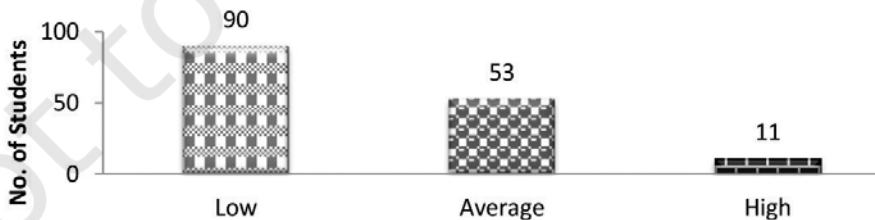
This part deals with the distribution of secondary school students for the total sample (N = 154) on the basis of their proficiency in English. For this, all the secondary school students were categorised into three groups, *viz.*, low, average and high proficiency in English on the basis of their scores on ELPT. As per the guidelines laid in the manual of the tool used, the raw scores were

converted into z-scores, and on the basis of the range of z-scores the students who scored 0.51 and below were termed as “Low” in proficiency, and the students who scored between 0.50 upto +1.25 were termed as “Average” in proficiency while the students scored +1.26 and above were termed as “High” in Proficiency.

Table 1
Distribution of Secondary School Students on the basis of their Proficiency in English

Level of Proficiency	No. of Students
Low	90 (58.44%)
Average	53 (34.42%)
High	11 (7.14%)
Total	154 (100%)

From the above table it has been concluded that 58.44 per cent of the students studying in secondary classes have low proficiency in English, and 34.42 per cent of the students have an average proficiency in English, and the remaining 7.14 per cent shows high proficiency in English.



Graph 1: Level of Proficiency

This part deals with the number and percentage of the students for the total sample (N = 154) on the basis of their level of proficiency.

per cent female students studying at secondary level have low proficiency in English, and 19.48 per cent have an average proficiency while the

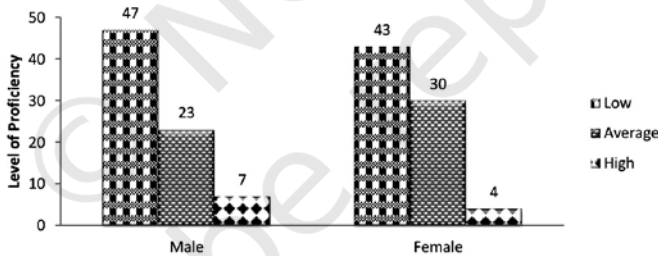
Table 2
Distribution of Male and Female Secondary School Students on the basis of their Proficiency in English

Sex	Level of Proficiency			
	Low	Average	High	Total
Male	47 (30.52%)	23 (14.94%)	7 (4.55%)	77 (50%)
Female	43 (27.92%)	30 (19.48%)	4 (2.60%)	77 (50%)
G. Total	90 (58.44%)	53 (34.42%)	11 (7.14%)	154 (100%)

From Table 2 it has been concluded that 30.52 per cent of the male students studying at secondary level have low proficiency in English, and 14.94 per cent have an average proficiency while 4.55 per cent have high proficiency in English. In the same way, 27.92

remaining 2.60 per cent have high proficiency in English.

This part deals with number and percentage of the students for the total sample (N = 154) on the basis of their proficiency in English. For these, two groups were formed on the basis of their gender.



Graph 2: Male and Female students on the basis of their proficiency in English

Table 3
Comparison of Male and Female Secondary School Students on the basis of their Proficiency in English

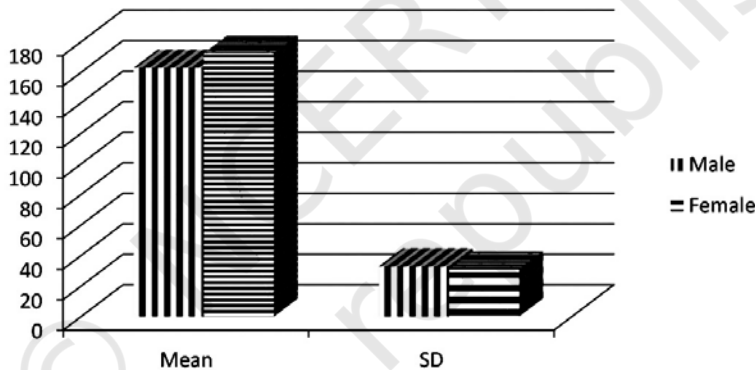
S.No.	Sex	Proficiency in English			Level of Significance
		M	SD	t-value	
1.	Male N =77	162.97	32.90	1.28	p>0.05
2.	Female N=77	172.45	30.97		

Observation of Table 3 shows the proficiency in English of the male and female secondary school students in the form of Mean and SD. The difference between the means of the Proficiency in English of the male and female students studying at secondary level were compared using 't' test. The 't' value was found to be 1.28 which is statistically not significant at 0.05 level of significance. Therefore, it can be inferred that there is no significant difference between the English Proficiency of the male and female students studying at secondary level.

at the school level to improve the English proficiency among the students. But no gender difference exists in English proficiency of the students studying at the secondary level.

CONCLUSION

It is very essential for the upcoming generation to have a good command and proficiency in English, in order to have the power to excel and progress as English becomes an international mode of communication. As per the statistical analyses and



Graph 3: Proficiency in English of the Male and Female Students in the Form of Mean and SD

On the basis of above data presentation, we can conclude that there is no difference between male and female students as far as proficiency in English is concerned.

FINDINGS

The findings of the study revealed that majority of the students studying at secondary level have low proficiency in English. Hence, efforts should be made

interpretation of data, we can conclude that there is no significant difference between male and female students as far as proficiency in English is concerned. If we observe the data closely, we may infer that the proficiency of females is little bit better than males. It is evident from the data that 27.92 per cent of females show low proficiency as compared to 30.52 per cent of

the males. Similarly, 19.48 per cent of the females fall under the category of average proficiency as compared to 14.94 per cent of the males. Thus, it may be inferred that female secondary students have low proficiency in English as compared to male secondary students, but their average proficiency in English

language is slightly better than male secondary students. Hence, it is good to advise teachers that they should motivate their students to develop good proficiency level in English, which could enable them to communicate effectively and efficiently using international mode of communication.

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