

LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY IN ENGLISH AND TEACHER EFFECTIVENESS: A STUDY

JAVAID AZIZ BHAT, HUMAIRA KHAN

Abstract: English Language is the most dominant language globally as well as in India. The English language is considered as the most prestigious language and it is at the top of the hierarchy of languages. It dominates the academic circles at all levels, particularly at the higher education level. A teacher without good communication skills in English is considered as a handicap. Keeping in view the importance of the English language as a medium of instruction, the teachers need to be proficient enough in this language of instruction so as to make the teaching/learning process effective. A teacher with good English communication skills is considered as an ideal. The present paper is an attempt to correlate English language proficiency with the teacher effectiveness and teacher-impression. The data for the study was collected from the students in the form of responses to the questions in a questionnaire designed for the purpose. The study reveals that there is a strong correlation between teacher-impression and English language proficiency. The teachers having good communication skills are more impressive. The study also reveals that there is a significant relationship between teacher-effectiveness, calculated from student achievement, and the English language proficiency.

Introduction:

Background to the Study: English is viewed as global language which is spoken as native language by developed countries such as the United States of America, Australia, Britain, Canada, New Zealand and others and it is also considered as a second or a foreign language by other countries like India, Pakistan etc . It is observed that the English language is generally used as lingua franca for communication with native-speakers and non-native-speakers worldwide. The importance of English language, as a language science and technology, has led to the globalization of English language. English is the most widely spoken language, either as a second or a foreign language, by the non-native speakers of English. In most of the non-native territories of English, it has gained the status of the language of education and media.

In the Indian context, English has acquired a very high position in almost all walks of life including education. The overtaking of indigenous Indian languages by the English language has given rise to many issues and problems which are difficult to handle for the language planners. But whatsoever the problems and issues, the replacement of English by other languages, especially in the domain of Education, seems to be an unsought off step. As such the English language has gained a strong foothold and is firmly rooted in the education system of India including Jammu and Kashmir. English language is the medium of instruction at all the three levels of Indian education system. Therefore the proficiency of teachers, in the English language/medium of instruction is a must. The purpose of setting language proficiency levels is to promote effective teaching and enhance the quality of education. Teachers are encouraged to strive for higher levels of language

proficiency for they cannot then teach what they do not know.

Teachers play a central role that fosters student learning. There is ample evidence that effective teachers are most important to student learning in classrooms. Teachers' English proficiency can impact their ability to be responsive and effective in teaching. A teacher's low language proficiency may limit his ability to conduct all classroom functions through the medium of the target language. Faez (2011).

In Jammu and Kashmir, the field for the present study, English language is the most predominant language as it is studied as a subject of study and is the medium of instruction at all levels from elementary to the higher levels. Keeping in view the importance of this language as a medium of instruction, it becomes imperative for a teacher to be proficient enough in this language to make the teaching learning process effective. Since the English language teachers and all other teachers are not native to English language, therefore the levels of proficiency among the teachers vary. This level of proficiency in the medium of instruction becomes one of the important criteria for the students to evaluate their teachers. The present study aims to establish a relationship between the proficiency of teachers in the medium of instruction and their effectiveness as teachers. Furthermore, the study aims to establish a relationship between the impressiveness of the teacher and the proficiency of teachers in English language.

Terminology used in the Study:

Language proficiency: The ability to use an English language accurately and correctly through speaking, reading, listening and writing.

Teacher Effectiveness: These are the intended effects by a teacher on student performance and behavior in the classroom.

Student Achievement: Student achievement is the extent to which a student has achieved his/her short or long-term educational goals.

Research Questions: The study is based on the research questions:

1. Is there a significant correlation between teachers' English language proficiency and student achievement?
2. Does the expression in English language impress the students more than expressing thing in other languages?

Hypotheses: The study was started with the following two hypotheses keeping in mind the current trends in education and the attitude of the students towards English language.

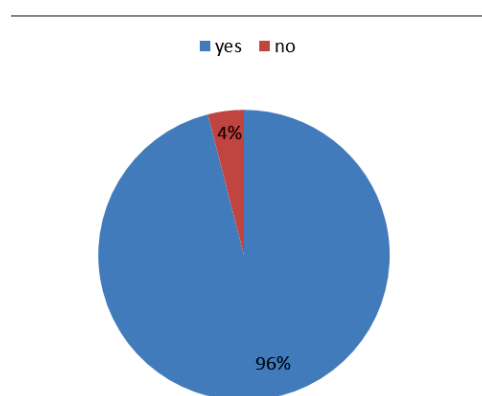
1. There is significant correlation between teachers' English language proficiency and student achievement.
2. There is a significant correlation between teachers' English language proficiency and teacher impression.

Materials and Methods Used for the Study: The study was carried out by framing a questionnaire containing questions for eliciting the responses that would reflect the attitude of the students towards their teachers. The questions were framed in such a way so as to make the students judge the English language proficiency of their teachers. For example, the students were asked to tell about the best attribute of their ideal teachers to know about the teacher impressiveness. Similarly, the students were asked to rate their teachers on the basis of their language proficiency in English language. The teacher effectiveness was ascertained through the student achievement calculated on the basis of grades scored by the students in the previous semesters/exams. The data was analyzed to come to the conclusion about the relationship between the variables under study. For the quantification of the data, random sampling method was used to choose 30 students of the lower secondary schools of the Srinagar city. The data collected from the selected sample was subjected to analyses so as to come to the conclusion about the problem under study.

Data Analysis and Interpretation: The data collected through questionnaire was compiled, codified and analyzed with the help of the MS Excel software. The appropriate graphs are used to analyze the data and prepare the survey report. Based on the analyzed data the interpretations were made. The questions asked to the students the responses gotten thereof are graphically presented in the following sections.

1. Does Your Ideal Teacher Speak Better English Than Other Teachers?

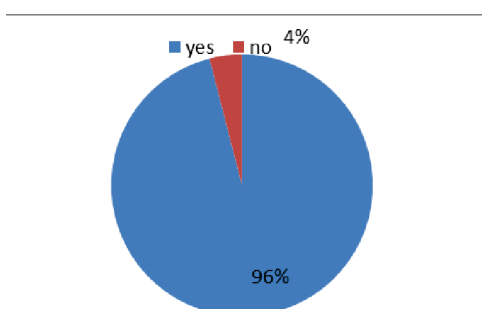
95% of the responses to this question are affirmative. The responses to this question depict that the overwhelming majority of the students are attracted to the teachers having good proficiency in the spoken modality of language. This clearly indicates that English language has higher prestige in the society; therefore people are inclined to learn this language. Anyone having good proficiency in English is seen as someone superior in status. Likewise teachers with high proficiency in English leave a good impression on students.



Pie Chart Showing Student Responses to Q.No.1

2. Does The High Language Proficiency Of Your Ideal Teacher Help You Understand The Content Better?

This yes/no question got 97% of the responses in affirmative. This means that the teachers with high proficiency in the language of instruction are better able to express the content which helps the students learn and understand the content better. There is no denying to the fact that language is the ultimate tool of sharing knowledge, ideas and everything coming in



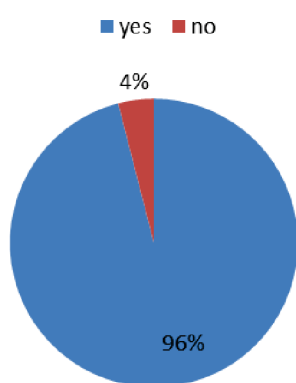
Pie Chart showing the responses to Q.NO.2

the domain of communication. In school settings, especially in the multilingual classroom settings, the teacher is offered a minimal choice in terms of using a particular language. The teacher needs to follow the

code of conduct with respect to the usage of medium of instruction. Therefore, a teacher has to be proficient enough in the language of instruction to make the process of communication successful. Better the proficiency in the language of instruction, better is the delivery of the content matter.

3. Does the low proficiency in the language of any of your teachers create problems in understanding the content?

90 percent of the responses to this question are in affirmative and remaining 10% of the students feel that the low proficiency of a teacher does not create any problem in understanding the content. This again signifies that the proficiency of a teacher in the language of instruction, English in the present case, is very important for delivering the content matter in the desired way.



Pie chart showing the responses to the Q.No.3

About The Academic Achievement of Students:

Academic achievement is commonly measured through examinations or assessments but there is no general agreement on how it is best evaluated or which aspects are most important — procedural knowledge such as skills or declarative knowledge such as facts. Furthermore, there are inconclusive results over which individual factors successfully predict academic performance, elements such as test anxiety, environment, motivation, and emotions require consideration when developing models of school achievement.

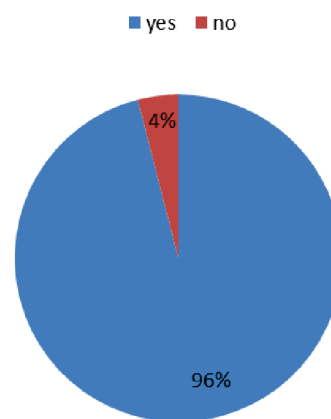
For the present study, the questions about the academic achievement of students were direct yes/no type. The students were required to answer if their academic achievement in the subjects taught by the

References:

1. Butler, Y. G. (2004). What Level of English Proficiency Do Elementary School Teachers Need to Attain to Teach EFL? Case Studies from Korea,

teachers with high English language proficiency was higher. An overwhelming majority of 96 percent students answered with 'yes' to this question.

4. In the previous semester/examination, did you get higher grades in the subjects taught by teachers having higher proficiency in English language?



Pie Chart Showing The Responses to the Q.No.4

Major Findings:

1. 95 percent of the students, through their responses, reveal that the proficiency in English language attracts them very much towards their teachers and the proficient teachers become the ideal of the students. This indicates that there is a very strong correlation between the English language proficiency of the teachers and teacher impressiveness or teacher impression. This has a direct relationship with language prestige. Since English language has a lot of prestige associated with it, therefore the students at all levels aspire to be proficient language speakers so as to make their name in the society and gain prestige for their happy living.
2. The study also reveals that the achievement of the students calculated on the basis of their achieved grades in the subjects taught by teachers with higher English language proficiency was higher. For majority of the students, the highest grades were found to be scored in the subjects taught by the ideal teachers having higher proficiency in English language.

Taiwan and Japan. TESOL Quarterly, 38(2), 245-278.

2. Chacón, C. T. (2005). Teachers' perceived efficacy among English as a foreign language teachers in middle schools in Venezuela. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 21, 257-272.
3. Peddineni Parvathi, Dr. G. Mohanacharyulu, 'Survival Struggle Of Women In The Verge Of Penury' In Namita Gokhale's 'Gods, Graves And Grandmother'; *English Studies International Research Journal* : Volume 3 Issue 2 (2015) Issn 2347-3479, Pg 230-233
4. Kamhi-Stein, L. & Mahboob, A. (2005). Language Proficiency and NNES Professionals. Paper presented at the 39th Annual TESOL Convention, San Antonio, Texas.
5. Kim, J. (2001). The effects of elementary English teacher training. *Primary English Education*, 7(1), 103-132.
6. K. Pavan Kumar, Dr.G. Mohanacharyulu, Debatable Affinities On Pedagogical Implications: A Study On Ltr In Promoting Interdisciplinary Approach; *English Studies International Research Journal* : Volume 3 Issue 2 (2015) Issn 2347-3479, Pg 234-236
7. Shim, J.-W. (2003). Teacher efficacy beliefs and language skills of preservice elementary teachers of English. *Yeongeoyoengmunhak [Studies on English Language and Literature]*, 29, 231-244.
8. Rajita Thakur, Dr. K V Divya, Symbolism And The Dystopian Tradition In Ray Bradbury's Fahrenheit 451. ; *English Studies International Research Journal* : Volume 3 Issue 2 (2015) Issn 2347-3479, Pg 237-241

Javaid Aziz Bhat
Senior Research Fellow, University of Kashmir
Humaira Khan,
Research Associate, University of Kashmir