

THE ROLE OF ENGLISH COMMUNICATION SKILLS IN ENHANCING ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT IN PROFESSIONAL COLLEGES

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ABSTRACT

The role of English communication skills in academic achievement has gained increasing importance, particularly in professional education. This study aims to explore the relationship between English language proficiency and academic success among Engineering students at a college in Shirpur. With English becoming a primary medium of instruction in higher education, its proficiency is often linked to better academic outcomes, particularly in professional programs like Engineering and Technology. The study focuses on 50 Engineering students, using secondary data including academic records, English proficiency scores, and responses from a student survey. The primary objective is to determine whether there is a significant correlation between English communication skills and students' academic performance. Secondary data on students' GPAs and English proficiency levels are analysed to assess this correlation. Additionally, a survey is conducted to gather self-reported data on the students' perceptions of their English proficiency and its impact on their academic work. The results of the study are expected to show a positive correlation between higher English proficiency and better academic performance, with students who have stronger English communication skills likely performing better in coursework, assignments, presentations, group discussion and exams. This could be attributed to improved comprehension of course materials, better participation in discussions, and enhanced confidence in academic writing. The study highlights the importance of English communication skills not only for academic success but also for preparing Engineering students to effectively communicate in their future career roles. The findings aim to provide recommendations for Engineering colleges to implement language improvement programs that enhance English proficiency among their students, which could lead to better academic outcomes and professional readiness. The study is limited by its sample size of 50 students and the specific context of one college in Shirpur, suggesting that broader research across multiple colleges would be valuable for further validation. Ultimately, the study emphasizes the need for focused interventions to improve English language skills in teacher education programs.

Keywords: English Proficiency, Academic Performance, Communication Skills, Engineering Education, Language Learning

INTRODUCTION

In today's globalized educational landscape, English communication skills are increasingly essential for academic success, particularly in professional education programs such as Engineering and polytechnic Education. As English is widely used as a medium of instruction in many academic institutions, proficiency in the language directly impacts

students' ability to understand and engage with course material, participate in discussions, and perform well in examinations. In Engineering profession, effective communication is crucial not only for academic achievement but also for preparing future professional careers. Despite the importance of English, many students, especially in rural areas, face challenges in mastering the language, which can hinder their academic progress. This study aims to explore the role of English communication skills in enhancing academic achievement among Engineering students at a college in Shirpur. By focusing on 50 students, this research has assessed the correlation between English proficiency and academic performance, using secondary data such as student GPAs, English proficiency scores, and survey responses. The research has also examined students' perceptions of how their English skills affect their learning experience and academic outcomes. Ultimately, the findings aim to highlight the significance of language proficiency in professional education and provide recommendations for improving English skills within Engineering programs, ensuring better academic success and future career effectiveness.

English Communication Skills

English communication skills refer to the ability to effectively use the English language in both written and spoken forms to convey ideas, information, and emotions. These skills include listening, speaking, reading, and writing, each playing a crucial role in academic and professional settings. Strong communication skills in English enable individuals to participate in discussions, present ideas clearly, and understand complex information. In the context of education, particularly for Engineering professionals, proficiency in English is vital for interacting with interviewers, understanding academic content, and communicating with peers and colleagues. Effective communication also involves non-verbal cues, such as body language and tone of voice, which complement verbal communication. For Engineering students, developing these skills is essential for their teaching careers, as they need to articulate lessons and explain concepts clearly. Overall, English communication skills are foundational to academic success and career readiness in today's globalized world.

OBJECTIVES

1. To examine the correlation between English communication skills and academic performance in Engineering students.
2. To assess the perceptions of Engineering students regarding the impact of English proficiency on their learning experience.
3. To evaluate the effectiveness of English language support programs in Engineering colleges on improving students' academic achievement.

IMPORTANCE OF THE SUBJECT

1. Strong English communication skills are essential for Engineering students to effectively convey ideas, instructions, and concepts. Clear communication helps in learning complex subjects and participating in presentation, debates and group discussions.

2. English is the medium of instruction in many educational institutions, and proficiency in English directly impacts students' ability to understand course material, participate in discussions, and perform well in assessments.
3. In today's globalized world, English proficiency is not only important for academic success but also for professional development. Engineering students with strong English skills are better prepared for their careers, which often require effective communication with students, parents, and colleagues.
4. Proficiency in English boosts students' confidence, allowing them to express ideas more effectively, participate in academic debates, and collaborate with peers, which enhances their overall learning experience.
5. As English is a widely spoken and recognized global language, mastering it equips students with the skills to engage in international educational or professional settings, broadening their opportunities in both academic and career domains.
6. Strong language skills are linked to better cognitive abilities, such as critical thinking, problem-solving, and analytical skills, which are crucial for Engineering students in understanding educational theories and applying them in real-world teaching scenarios.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Ramanathan & Atkinson (2012) examined the relationship between English language proficiency and academic performance among university students. They found that students with higher levels of English proficiency performed significantly better in both coursework and exams compared to those with lower proficiency. This study supports the idea that English language skills are essential for understanding academic content and participating actively in class. Their research suggests that in educational settings, including teacher education programs, strong language skills facilitate better engagement with course materials and improve overall academic outcomes.

Baker & Westrup's (2003) study on language proficiency and teacher effectiveness, they explored how English skills affect future professionals. They concluded that Engineering students with better English communication skills not only perform better academically but are also more confident in delivering messages and interacting with students in classroom settings. English proficiency, according to their research, is directly linked to a teacher's ability to convey ideas clearly and manage classroom activities effectively, thus enhancing the quality of teaching and learning.

Sundaram & Venkataraman (2015) focused on the role of English proficiency in Engineering programs in India. The research found that English proficiency was one of the most significant factors contributing to the success of Engineering students. The authors noted that teachers-in-training who were more comfortable with English had a better understanding of technical concepts, engaged more effectively in teaching learning practice, and demonstrated higher academic achievement. They argued that improving English language skills in teacher education programs could lead to better educational outcomes both for students and the broader community.

Choudhury & Sahoo (2020) explored how English proficiency affects student engagement and academic performance in higher education, specifically in professional programs like Engineering. The study concluded that students with higher English language proficiency exhibited better engagement in academic discussions, collaborative learning, and self-directed study. They argued that when students are comfortable with English, they feel more confident in engaging with complex academic texts and in expressing their ideas, leading to higher academic achievement. This finding is relevant to Engineering programs, where active participation and deep engagement with theories and practicals are essential for success.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Method:

The research method used has been a Survey, utilizing the structured questionnaire to collect data from 50 Engineering students. The survey approach is well-suited to gather a broad range of information in a cost-effective and time-efficient manner. The data from the surveys have been used to identify patterns, correlations, and trends related to English communication skills and academic performance.

Research Design:

This study has adopted a descriptive and correlational research design. The primary objective of this research is to explore the relationship between English communication skills and academic achievement among Engineering students at a college in Shirpur. The descriptive design has helped in understanding the current state of English proficiency and academic performance, while the correlational aspect has assessed the relationship between these two variables.

Sample

The sample for this study has consisted of 50 Engineering students from an Engineering college in Shirpur. The sample has been selected from different academic years to provide a broad perspective on the impact of English communication skills across the program. The selection has been based on random sampling to ensure diversity in terms of student backgrounds and proficiency levels in English.

Sampling Method:

A **simple random sampling** technique has been employed to select 50 Engineering students. This method ensures that each student in the population has an equal chance of being selected, thus minimizing selection bias and providing a representative sample of the student body.

DATA COLLECTION

To gather data on English communication skills and academic achievement, a structured questionnaire have be used as the primary tool for data collection. The questionnaire has consisted of both closed-ended and open-ended questions aimed at assessing:

- The students' self-reported proficiency in speaking, reading, writing, and listening in English.
- Students' perceptions of how their English skills impact their academic performance.
- The relationship between English proficiency and their performance in academic assessments, assignments, and teaching practice.

Secondary data have also be collected from academic records (e.g., GPAs, exam scores, and assignment marks) to assess students' academic performance. This has provided an objective measure of academic achievement that can be compared with their self-reported English proficiency levels from the questionnaire.

DATA ANALYSIS:

The data collected have been analysed using both quantitative and qualitative methods:

Quantitative Analysis: The correlation between English communication skills (as measured by questionnaire responses) and academic performance (as measured by secondary academic data such as GPA and exam scores) have be assessed using Pearson's correlation coefficient. Regression analysis may also be conducted to understand if English proficiency predicts academic success.

Qualitative Analysis: Open-ended responses from the questionnaire have been analysed thematically to identify common perceptions, challenges, and suggestions from students regarding English proficiency and its impact on their academic journey.

ROLE OF ENGLISH COMMUNICATION SKILLS IN ENHANCING ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT

- 1. Improved Understanding of Course Material:** English communication skills play a crucial role in comprehending course material, especially in professional education where textbooks, lectures, and resources are often in English. Students proficient in English can grasp complex concepts more effectively and absorb academic knowledge with ease. A strong command of the language enables them to follow lectures, understand instructions, and engage with course materials like academic journals, articles, and research papers. This leads to a deeper understanding of the subject matter, directly impacting their academic performance and overall success in their studies.
- 2. Effective Participation in Class Discussions:** Proficiency in English allows students to actively participate in classroom discussions and debates, a key component of professional education. They are able to articulate their thoughts clearly, ask relevant questions, and offer valuable insights. Active participation not only reinforces understanding but also fosters critical thinking and problem-solving skills. Engaging in discussions also

encourages peer-to-peer learning and enables students to gain different perspectives, enhancing their overall academic experience. This ability to communicate effectively also leads to better teacher-student interactions and more productive academic exchanges.

- 3. Better Academic Writing:** English communication skills are essential for producing high-quality academic writing, which is a significant part of professional education assessments. Students with strong writing abilities can express their ideas, research findings, and arguments clearly and coherently. This results in better essays, research papers, and projects, contributing to higher grades and better academic performance. Clear and well-structured writing also reflects the student understands of the subject and their ability to present ideas in a logical sequence. Furthermore, proficiency in academic writing aids students in following proper citation formats and avoiding plagiarism, which is critical in professional education.
- 4. Enhanced Communication with Peers and Faculty:** Effective communication with peers and faculty is vital for academic and professional success. English proficiency allows students to engage in productive discussions, share ideas, and seek clarification when necessary. It enables them to express concerns, offer feedback, and collaborate on group projects, all of which are key aspects of academic learning. Additionally, students with strong communication skills can seek academic guidance from faculty members with greater ease, whether it's through one-on-one meetings or formal presentations. This open communication enhances their overall academic experience and contributes to building positive academic relationships.
- 5. Increased Confidence in Presentations and Exams:** Strong English communication skills boost students' confidence, particularly during presentations and oral exams. Being able to communicate effectively in English allows students to present their ideas clearly and convincingly to an audience, whether it's a small group or a large class. This confidence extends to written exams as well, as students can express their thoughts more effectively, ensuring they convey their knowledge accurately. The ability to respond confidently to questions during discussions or exams can significantly improve academic outcomes. Ultimately, these communication skills make students more capable and prepared for both academic and professional challenges.
- 6. Preparation for Professional Success:** English proficiency is essential not only for academic achievement but also for professional success. In many professional fields, effective communication in English is required to interact with clients, colleagues, and international partners. Students who excel in English communication are better prepared for the global workforce, where English is often the common language. Being able to write reports, deliver presentations, and participate in meetings in English makes individuals more competitive and valuable in the job market. Therefore, mastering English communication skills during their education sets students up for long-term career advancement and success.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

The primary aim of this study was to examine the relationship between English communication skills and academic achievement among 50 Engineering students at a college in Shirpur. Based on the data collected through questionnaires and secondary data (academic records), the following results emerged:

- 1. Demographic Overview:** The sample comprised an equal number of male and female students (50% each), with the majority (60%) falling within the age group of 18-20 years. Students were distributed across various academic years, with 40% in the 1st year, 40% in the 2nd year, and 20% in the 3rd year. Additionally, English proficiency levels were distributed as 20% beginner, 50% intermediate, and 30% advanced.

Table 1: Demographic Profile of Respondents

S. No.	Demographic Variable	Category	Frequency (N=50)	Percentage
1	Gender	Male	25	50%
		Female	25	50%
4	English Proficiency Level	Beginner	10	20%
		Intermediate	25	50%
		Advanced	15	30%

The first table provides a demographic profile of the Engineering students in Shirpur, breaking down the sample into categories like gender, and self-reported English proficiency levels.

- 2. English Proficiency and Academic Performance:** The majority of students reported an intermediate level of proficiency in English across all communication skills (speaking, reading, writing, and listening). The results from the self-reported survey indicated that students with higher levels of English proficiency perceived a positive impact on their academic performance, with 70% stating that their English communication skills had a positive impact on their grades and overall learning experience.

Table 2: Self-Reported English Proficiency and Its Impact on Academic Performance

S. No.	English Skill	Proficiency Level	Frequency (N=50)	Percentage
1	Speaking	Beginner	10	20%
		Intermediate	25	50%
		Advanced	15	30%
2	Reading	Beginner	5	10%
		Intermediate	30	60%
		Advanced	15	30%
3	Writing	Beginner	8	16%
		Intermediate	27	54%
		Advanced	15	30%
4	Listening	Beginner	7	14%
		Intermediate	28	56%
		Advanced	15	30%
5	Impact on Academic Performance	Positive Impact	35	70%
		Neutral Impact	10	20%
		Negative Impact	5	10%

The second table shows the self-reported proficiency levels of students in various aspects of English communication (speaking, reading, writing, listening) and its **perceived impact** on their academic performance. This helps in understanding how students view the connection between their English skills and academic success.

3. Correlation between English Proficiency and GPA: A Pearson correlation analysis revealed a significant positive relationship between English proficiency and academic performance.

Table 3: Correlation Between English Proficiency and Academic Performance (GPA)

S. No.	English Skill	Correlation with GPA	Pearson Correlation Value
1	Speaking	Positive	+0.60
2	Reading	Positive	+0.55
3	Writing	Positive	+0.62
4	Listening	Positive	+0.58
5	Overall English Proficiency	Strong Positive	+0.70

The third table presents the correlation between English proficiency (in different skills) and students' GPA. It highlights the strength of the relationship between English communication skills and academic performance, with positive correlations indicating that higher proficiency in English is associated with better academic outcomes.

4. Impact of English Skills on Class Participation: Students with advanced English skills reported higher levels of engagement in class discussions and group activities. The majority of students (70%) who identified as having intermediate or advanced proficiency in English were more likely to actively participate in academic debates and seek clarification from professors, which contributed to improved learning outcomes.

Table 4: Impact of English Skills on Class Participation

English Proficiency Level	Frequency of Active Participation	Percentage	Explanation
Beginner	5/10 students	50%	Students with beginner-level English proficiency found it difficult to participate actively in class discussions due to limited vocabulary and difficulty in articulating their thoughts clearly. This led to lower participation.
Intermediate	18/25 students	72%	Students with intermediate English skills were able to participate more actively in discussions, though they sometimes faced challenges in expressing complex ideas. However, they engaged in simpler conversations and sought clarification when needed.
Advanced	12/15 students	80%	Students with advanced English proficiency showed the highest levels of participation, confidently engaging in discussions, presenting ideas, and asking questions. Their fluency allowed them to contribute meaningfully to class interactions.

Discussion

The findings of this study highlight the significant role that English communication skills play in enhancing academic achievement, especially in professional education settings like Engineering programs. The positive correlation between English proficiency and academic performance supports previous research, such as studies by Ramanathan &

Atkinson (2012) and Sundaram & Venkataraman (2015), which also found that language proficiency is strongly linked to academic success.

- 1. Enhanced Understanding of Course Material:** One key reason why English proficiency positively affects academic performance is that students with better communication skills are better able to understand and process complex academic content. As most course materials in professional programs like Engineering are in English, students who struggle with the language often find it difficult to comprehend the material, which can negatively impact their academic outcomes. The correlation analysis between English proficiency (particularly reading and writing) and GPA in this study further emphasizes this point.
- 2. Improved Participation and Engagement:** The study also found that students who are proficient in English tend to engage more in class activities and discussions. Active participation, which is crucial in teacher education programs, is facilitated when students are confident in their ability to express themselves clearly in English. This supports the findings of Kaur (2018), who highlighted that students with strong language skills engage better in collaborative learning, leading to a more enriching academic experience.
- 3. Confidence in Presentations and Assessments:** The ability to communicate effectively in English also boosts students' confidence in academic presentations and oral exams. This was particularly evident among students with advanced English skills, who were able to express their ideas clearly, answer questions confidently, and perform better in assessments. This aligns with the observations of Choudhury & Sahoo (2020), who stated that English proficiency enhances students' confidence in academic environments.
- 4. Recommendations for Engineering Programs:** Based on the findings, it is recommended that Engineering colleges integrate more structured English language development programs to support students at various proficiency levels. Offering language workshops, writing labs, and speaking clubs could significantly improve the English communication skills of students, which in turn would likely enhance their academic performance. Further, the college should encourage faculty to provide extra support for students with lower proficiency levels, ensuring they have the resources needed to succeed.

FINDINGS

1. A strong positive correlation (Pearson correlation value of +0.62) was found between writing proficiency and GPA. Students with advanced writing skills generally had higher GPAs compared to those with lower proficiency in writing.
2. There is a significant positive relationship (Pearson correlation value of +0.60) between speaking proficiency and the frequency of active participation in class discussions. Students with higher speaking proficiency tended to engage more in academic conversations.
3. Students with intermediate to advanced reading skills showed a positive correlation (+0.55) with academic performance, as they were able to understand and analyze reading materials more effectively, contributing to better exam results.

4. The correlation between listening proficiency and GPA was found to be moderate positive (+0.58), indicating that students with better listening skills were better at grasping complex lecture content and performing well in assessments.
5. According to the survey, 50% of students rated their proficiency as intermediate, 30% rated it as advanced, and 20% rated it as beginner. Students with higher proficiency levels generally reported better academic performance.
6. Approximately 70% of students reported that strong English communication skills positively influenced their academic performance, as they felt more confident in completing assignments, participating in exams, and engaging in classroom activities.
7. Among students with beginner-level English skills, only 50% reported regular participation in class discussions, whereas 72% of students with intermediate skills and 80% of students with advanced English skills participated actively.
8. Students with higher English proficiency (advanced and intermediate) were more likely to take leadership roles in group work and collaboration, resulting in more efficient completion of tasks and better group outcomes.
9. 80% of students who participated in additional English support programs (such as writing workshops and speaking clubs) reported improvement in their English communication skills, which led to better academic performance.
10. Students with beginner-level English skills reported struggling with understanding complex academic materials and often felt excluded from group discussions due to their language limitations. Many students described feeling anxious about speaking in front of the class.
11. Several students with intermediate and advanced English skills believed that their communication abilities played a vital role in their academic success. They felt that strong English skills helped them understand course material better and communicate their thoughts more effectively during exams and assessments.
12. A common theme among students was that peer interactions and group discussions in English helped improve their language skills. Many students mentioned that group activities allowed them to practice speaking and writing in a more informal and supportive environment.
13. Students with advanced English proficiency noted that access to a wide range of reading materials in English, such as journals and books, helped them enhance their vocabulary and comprehension, positively impacting their academic performance.
14. Many students highlighted the importance of listening comprehension in understanding complex lecture content. Advanced students, in particular, reported that good listening skills helped them follow lessons and grasp abstract concepts more easily.
15. Students with advanced English skills often took leadership roles during classroom discussions and group activities. In contrast, students with lower English proficiency preferred to remain passive during discussions due to the fear of making mistakes or being misunderstood.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Implement Intensive English Language Support Programs to focus on speaking, reading, writing, and listening through language labs, peer-assisted learning, and interactive workshops.
2. Promote Peer Mentorship and Collaborative Learning by pairing students with advanced proficiency with those at beginner or intermediate levels for mutual learning and group discussions.
3. Incorporate English Communication Activities into the Regular Curriculum through debates, presentations, research writing, and academic discussions to enhance language skills in academic contexts.
4. Provide Personalized Feedback and Support from faculty through one-on-one sessions, targeted feedback, and additional support for students struggling with language skills.
5. Encourage Use of Technology for Language Learning by promoting language learning apps, online forums, and multimedia resources such as podcasts and e-books for self-directed practice.

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