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English Language Competence of Government School Teachers of Punjab

Abstract

The role of a teacher in current scenario is not concise to deliver knowledge but also, teacher acts as controller, assessor, and facilitator. Effective teaching involves more than just expertise in an academic field but also efficiency to communicate effectively. Specially, the demand for English language competence of teachers is increased in intensity along with the other teaching competencies. The lack of English language competence of subject teachers is the one of the important factors for gradual deterioration of the standard of education. The necessity of the English language communicative competence for the academic teaching staff has been emphasized by various researchers. Therefore, it is quite important to measure the level of English language competence of Mathematics, Science, and Social Science teachers. Therefore, the current study is aimed to examine the level of English language competency of government schoolteachers of Punjab and to study the influence of Educational Qualification on English language competency of schoolteachers. The study adopted a descriptive survey approach. Data was collected through self-developed English language competence assessment test, from randomly selected 120 government school teachers. Majority of teacher were found having the low level of English language competence. In addition to this, educational qualification shows the significant effect on the English language competence of teachers.

Keywords: English language competence, EMI, School teachers, and Teacher Education

English Language Competence of Government School Teachers of Punjab

Society is trending faster towards various advancements. Almost our every field of life has adored the innovations. Education too is no exception to it. Educational advancements have brought several new concepts in the educational field including individualized learning, computer-based learning, computer assisted learning, blended learning, flipped learning and many more. But the centrality of the vital component in education, that is the teacher, has not shifted. A teacher is the sole component that can highly facilitate the learning process. “A classroom full of students with no teacher would probably not learn much”. (Heartel, 2013). The role of a teacher in current scenario is not concise to deliver knowledge but also, he acts as controller, facilitator, and assessor. Effective teaching does not involve more than just expertise in an academic field but also efficiency to communicate effectively. Thus, teachers must have language-specific competencies along with content and pedagogical knowledge. Competence in language is always considered at the forefront, does not matter what their subject area is. Specially the demand for English language competence of teachers is increase in intensity along with the other teaching competencies.

English is a widely spoken language throughout the world. Also, it ranks as the second most spoken language in India, following Hind. Moreover, it is the country’s most widely read and written language. (Vijayalakshmi and Babu, 2014). The British people introduced English to India. During the period of their colonization in India, English was the only language that was used as the language of administration. As Indians were totally unfamiliar with the foreign language, British trained Indians in English so that they can appoint them in their trade. Later, in 1835, Thomas Babington Macaulay, President of the General Committee of Public Instruction, in his minute, justified the English language as medium of instructions by saying “a single shelf of a good European library was worth the whole Indian literature”. English incidentally became the language of communication and gradually it strengthened its roots in culture and education of India. Even though India has 22 official languages and 270 identifiable mother tongues (Census of India, 2011), still English has become the most widely spoken language in the country.

Needs and importance of English in education

English is considered a significant foreign language; Indians are increasingly likely to have observed or experienced the advantages of improving their proficiency in it. English is the primary medium of instruction at the university level, and it is taught as a second language at primary and secondary level of education in majority of Indian states. In recent years, there have been a great push in the country to introduce English as a medium of instruction in school education as soon as possible. As per the Eighth All India School Education, NCERT survey, 15.49% schools at primary stage offers English as medium of instruction, whereas 21.08 % schools were offering English as medium at upper primary level and 33.06% schools had English medium at higher secondary level. (8th AISES, 2009). Due to increasing demand of English medium instructions in urban as well as rural India, the number of schools offering English medium instructions must has increased. Moreover, Adopting a particular language as a medium of instruction in multicultural and multilingual society as in India in a very challenging task. In such situation, providing only English as a medium will be suitable.

English serves as a link language for people moving across regions. It is not only the medium for international communication, rather it also proves helpful in intra-national communication among educated Indians. (Annamalai, 2004). English is the language of acculturation and assimilation with people of other cultures. English is a tool for mobility, economic gains, and social status. The English language has been used as a vehicle by the modern world to communicate its advancements, changes, and innovations. (Khatri, 2019). English is currently the language of the internet. English stands as the most widely used language for web content, with the majority of websites on the internet utilizing it. Consequently, acquiring proficiency in this language grants access to vast amounts of online content that might otherwise remain inaccessible.

Language proficiency of teachers

The demand for proficiency in English in teachers is increasing day by day due to increase in demands of English medium education. Having complete proficiently in English is not necessary specially for subject teachers, but the teachers need certain level of language proficiency so that they can carry out important aspects of classroom instruction fluently

in English when demanded. Rechard, in his article on ‘Competence and Performance in Language Teaching’, suggested the following language-specific competencies that a teacher required to teach efficiently in classroom. (Rechard, 2010)

1. A teacher is expected to comprehend the text correctly. Also, he/she must have fluency in using language orally in the class.
2. He/she should be able to provide instructions and explanations accurately.
3. Moreover, he is required to provide accurate examples of words and concepts.
4. He should be able to access and select learning resources.
5. He must have the ability to monitor his/her own writing and speech for correctness.
6. A teacher should be able to provide appropriate feedback for learners.
7. He must be a model for language enrichment experience for learners.

English Medium instruction in Punjab

The use of English in privately run schools is far higher than all the governments schools throughout India. All the major subjects except languages are taught in English language in private schools. But now, in government schools too, the demand for English medium instructions is growing attraction of parents as well as students. As instructions in English medium is considered as one of important parameters in quality education. English has been offered as an alternative language of instruction in government schools by the Punjab education department. As per the data released by the board, from the 2018-19 session, along with Punjabi, 14,720 government schools now provide English as an optional medium of instruction.

Rationale of the study

Various schools are now offering English medium instruction. Many private schools have now started parallel English medium classes just for the fear of division fall. The rising demand has forced the Punjab school education board to offer English as an optional medium of instruction in public schools. Introducing English seems important for refining the quality of education and

to bridge gap with private schools in the state. Although many factors can contribute to effective implementation of English medium instruction in government schools of Punjab. But a teacher is the sole component that can highly facilitate the learning process. Effective teaching can be possible only if he or she can be able to comprehend and use the language to build reciprocal communication with the students. (Gurefe, 2018). The lack of English language competence of subject teachers can be an important factor for gradual deterioration of the standard of education. The necessity of the English language communicative competence for the academic teaching staff has been emphasized by various researchers. (Jong and Harper, 2005, Rechard, 2010, Ibrahim, 2020 and Antony et. al. 2019). Therefore, it is quite important to measure the level of English language competence of Mathematics, Science, and Social Science teachers. A teacher's qualification can be one of the factors that can affect his language competence. (Ibrahim, 2020; Antony et. al., 2019). Therefore, study also aimed to examine the effect of educational qualification on English language competence of teachers.

Research question

1. What is the level of English language competency of government schoolteachers of Punjab?

Objective

1. To study the significant difference in the mean scores of English language competence of trained postgraduates and trained graduate government schoolteachers.

Hypotheses

1. There is no significant difference in the mean scores of English language competence of trained graduates and trained postgraduate government schoolteachers.

Operational Definitions

English Language Competency: The language competency generally means the ability of person to use a language or understand it with a degree of accuracy that transmit meaning in production and comprehension. In the present study the English language competency will be denoted by the scores obtained by the participants on the English language competency test.

Educational qualification: educational qualifications generally denote to degrees, diplomas, or certificate a person has received from a recognized educational body after the successful completion of an education program. In current study, the educational qualification means the graduation degree and post-graduation degree along with B.Ed. or equivalent teacher training program. The teachers with the above qualifications in current study are referred to as trained graduates or trained postgraduate teachers.

Government School: The schools that are run by the government are government schools. In current study, the government schools denote to those schools that are fully funded and run by the Department of School Education, Government of Punjab.

Teachers: The teachers in current study denote to only those teachers who are teaching mathematics, science, and social science to class 1 to 10 in government schools.

Methodology

Design of study

The study employed a survey type of descriptive research.

Sample

The sample for the study consisted of 120 government School teachers randomly selected through a simple random sampling from two districts of Punjab: Bathinda and Moga.

Tool

As the study is intended to measure the English language competence of schoolteachers. The researcher has developed the English language competence tool which consisted of total 30 items concerning spelling, tense, comprehension passage, subject terminology, and question framing. The internal consistency of the test, after being administered to 186 secondary school teachers, revealed value .819, which is considered a high value of Spearman-Brown split-half.

Analysis of result

Research question 1. What is the level of English language competency of government school teachers of Punjab?

To study the level of English language competency of government school teachers of Punjab, three levels (Low, moderate, and high) were made based upon the percentile scores on English language competence test. The result is drawn by calculating the number of teachers and percentage of teachers fall under the above-mentioned three levels. The result of the analysis is shown in table 1.1.

Table 1.1

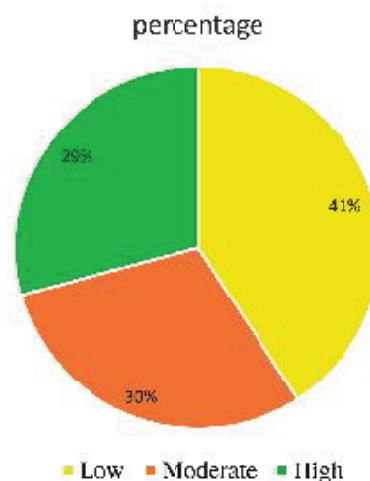
Number of government school teachers with low, moderate, and high levels of English language competence

Levels of English Language competence	Low	Moderate	High	Total
Number of teachers	49	36	35	120

From the table 1.1, it is inferred that, 49 teachers out of 120, have low level of English language competence. Whereas 36 teachers fall under the moderate level. 35 teachers out of 120, are found having high level of English Language competence. The percentage wise distribution of levels of English Language Competence is shown in figure 1.1.

Figure 1.1

Percentage wise distribution of teachers for three levels of English language competence



From the above figure it can be inferred that majority of teachers are found having the low level of English language competence. The percentage of teachers that fall under low level of English language competence is 41 percent. Whereas 30 percent of teachers are having moderate English language competence. On the other hand, only 29 percent teachers fall under the high level of English language competence.

Objective 1. To study the significant difference in the mean scores of English language competence of trained postgraduates and trained graduate government schoolteachers

The objective was to study the significant difference in the mean scores of English language competence of trained postgraduates and trained graduate government schoolteachers. The Researcher had selected t-test for analysis but before proceeding further, the basic assumptions of parametric tests, i.e., Normality is analyzed with the help of Kolmogorov-Smirnov test of Normality and homogeneity is tested with Levene's test of homogeneity of variance. The result is shown in tables 1.1 and 1.2.

Table 1.1

Result for test of normality

Kolmogorov-Smirnov				
English language Competence	Groups	Statistic	df	Sig.
	graduates	.082	60	.200
	postgraduates	.091	60	.200

It is observed from the table 1.1 that for the distribution of scores of trained graduate government school teachers for English language competence, the statistic value is .082 with df 60, for which the p-value .200, which is greater than 0.05. Therefore, it is not significant. Hence the null hypothesis "The scores of trained graduate government school teachers for English language competence are distributed normally" is not rejected. Therefore, it can be concluded that the scores of trained graduate government school teachers for English language competence are distributed normally.

Moreover, for the distribution of scores of trained postgraduate government school teachers for English language competence, the statistic value is .091 with df 60, for which the p-value .200, which is also greater than 0.05.

Therefore, it is not significant. Hence the null hypothesis “The scores of trained postgraduate government school teachers for English language competence are distributed normally” is not rejected. Therefore, it can be concluded that the scores of trained postgraduate government school teachers for English language competence are distributed normally.

As the distribution of scores of English language competence of trained graduates and postgraduate government teachers are distributed normally, the basic assumptions of parametric tests that the scores should be distributed, is not violated.

Table 1.2

Test of homogeneity of variance

Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
.238	1	118	.626

Table 1.2 shows the Levene’s statistic to be .238 (with df 1, 118) and significance (p) value to be .626 which is greater than .05. This means Levene’s F is not significant at 0.05 level of significance. Thus, the null hypothesis that ‘the variances of English language competence scores of trained graduates and trained post graduate government school teachers is homogenous’ is not rejected. Therefore, the assumption of homogeneity of variance is also not violated.

As the basic assumptions of parametric tests e.g., Data should be normally distributed and homogeneity of variances, are not violated, the researcher applied independent ‘t’- test, the result is shown in table 1.3.

Table 1.3

The result of independent t-test for English language competence

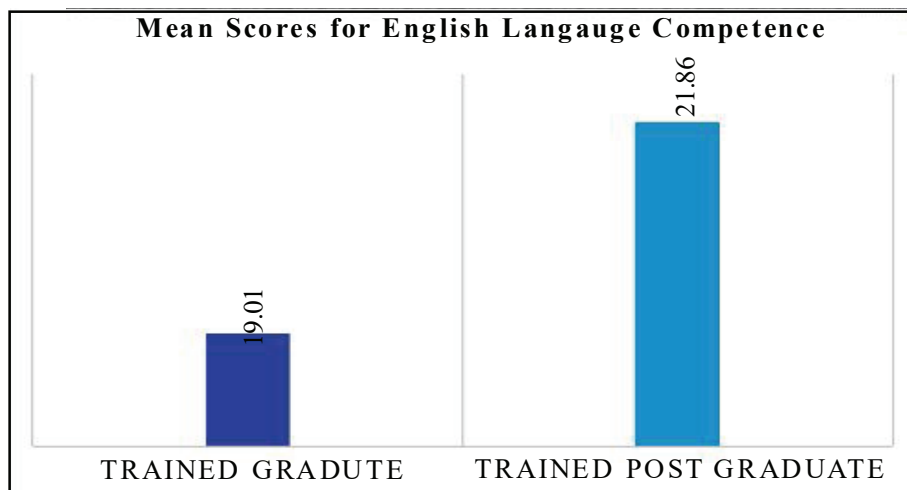
t-test for equality of means		
t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
-5.081	118	.000

As table 1.3 shows that the value of t is -5.081 with df = 118, whose two-tailed p value is .000 which is less than 0.01, therefore significant at 0.01 level of significance. Thus, the null hypothesis, ‘there is no significant difference in the mean scores of English language competence of trained graduate and trained

post graduate government schoolteachers' is rejected. It means there is a significance difference in mean scores of English language competence of trained graduate and trained post graduate government schoolteachers. The mean scores of English language competence of trained graduate and trained post graduate teachers are shown in figure 1.1.

Figure 1.1

Mean scores for the English language competence of trained graduate and trained post graduate teachers



From figure 1.1 it is noted that the mean score of English language competence of trained post graduate government school teachers (21.86) is significantly higher than mean score of English language competence of trained graduate government school teachers (19.01). hence, trained post-graduate teachers possess significant higher English language competence. The result is in line with the study of Ibrahim (2020) and Antony et. al. (2019). These studies also agree with the view that higher education increases the language efficiency of individuals.

Effect Size

The researcher has calculated effect size through Cohen's 'd'. Cohen's $d = \frac{(M_1 - M_2)}{\sigma_{\text{pooled}}}$, where M_1 is mean score of first group and M_2 is mean score of second group. Also, σ_{pooled} is equal to $\frac{\sigma_1^2 + \sigma_2^2}{2}$. As per the formula, $d =$

0.928. As per the guidelines for interpretation of Cohen's d , it has a large effect. (Cohen, 1988). It means there is a large effect of educational qualification on English language competence of teachers.

Discussions

The introduction of English medium in government school may be a novel phenomenon for many government schoolteachers of Punjab. Teachers can only efficiently implement it if they have required language competence. The current study aimed to examine the level of English language competence of government schoolteacher and the influence of their educational qualification on English language competence. From the above results it can be interpreted that teachers are struggling hard to implement English medium instructions in government schools. The result indicated that majority of the teachers are lacking in English language competence assessment test. Most of the teacher have low and moderate level of English language competence. Teachers' lack of basic English language competence may be due to lack of exposure to the English language in their education as well as in their early teaching carrier.

In addition to this, the result indicated that educational qualification of teachers has significant effect on the language competence of teachers. The significant higher mean scores of post graduate teachers comparatively graduate teachers show their better English language competence than the graduate teachers. A two-years master's degree or a postgraduate academic degree demonstrating mastery or a high-order overview of a specific field of study or area of professional practice, provides additional exposure to the deeper subject content as well as English language. A master's degree in a specified subjects (mathematics and Science) which is generally in English proves useful for teachers to be more familiar with the subject terminologies in English.

Recommendations

Teaching in a language a teacher is not familiar with is not a pedagogical adaptation that a teacher can easily incorporate. Rather a teacher requires specific training and practice to mount instructional strategies and language competence for a diverse classroom. Currently, explicit attention to linguistic and cultural needs of learners is lacking in most teacher preparation programs. The theory and practices done in teacher training programs, without bilingual preparations or English as a second language courses, seems insufficient to meet the required linguistic needs of learners as well society. Therefore,

educational planners should make effective set up so that language competence can be developed at the preservice educational programs. In-service training programs should aim to promote the use of flexible approaches in teaching and learning, such as translanguaging and student-centered teaching, by offering adequate theoretical understanding and practical strategies for adapting them to varied educational settings. (Garcia & Lin, 2017; Creese & Blackledge, 2010).

Higher degree programs provide opportunities for teachers to enhance their professional knowledge and abilities, which they can employ in their teaching to enhance students' success. Various researchers have also identified that teacher qualifications as an important component leading to stronger teaching competence, and student achievement. (Antony et. al. ,2019); (Owolabi & Adedayo, 2012). Teachers frequently encounter some subject-specific terminologies in students' queries or in expository writings across science, mathematics, and social studies content areas. Many teachers, as in English language competence assessment test, fail to comprehend the meaning of subject terminologies in English. A master's degree in their specific subjects proves helpful for teachers to enhance their content knowledge as well as subject specific terminologies. Currently, the required basic qualification to be a teacher is, graduation along with a bachelor's degree in education or any equivalent degree. But as the results show, the teachers with the higher level of qualifications are more competent in English language. Therefore, teachers with higher level of educational qualifications should be appointed in schools so the English medium instruction can be implemented effectively.

Without a doubt, teachers who were not exposed to English as a teaching language throughout their early education may encounter difficulties. The passion, commitment, and hard effort they put in to stabilize and maintain their knowledge, abilities, and disposition to become good teachers, however, may help them overcome these issues. Language learning can be significantly impacted by language anxiety. (Hashemi, 2011). Therefore, a teacher must recognize it and tackle the discomfort and feeling of unease with regular language practice and self-study.

Moreover, creating a productive and nourishing environment in school premises can be very effective in language development of teachers as well as students. To considerably aid in language development, school administration must create a warm and trustworthy environment. By using language in interpersonal interactions, nonjudgmental conversations, reflections, and engagement

techniques, they must create a welcoming learning environment in the classroom where teachers feel appreciated and at ease. They should be given the chance to participate in training, seminars, and workshops by the concerned authority.

Conclusion

To achieve meaningful headway in adopting English medium instruction in public schools, radical changes are needed in the way how teachers are trained and supported, to serve in diverse classrooms. As majority of teachers have low English language competence, educational planners should make effective set up so that language competence can be developed at the preservice educational programs. In-service training programs should aim to promote the use of flexible approaches in teaching and learning. Teachers should be encouraged so that they can improve themselves at an individual level. Educational qualification of teacher has significant effect on their English language competence. Therefore, in-service teachers should be encouraged to pursue higher degrees in their respective subjects.

Delimitations

1. The study has been conducted on 120 government secondary school teachers, and hence the findings may lack generalizability.
2. The study has conducted in only those schools in which English is offered as optional medium of instruction.
3. The study is confined to those teachers who are teaching Mathematics, Science and Social Science.

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