

Review Article

BASIC ENGLISH GRAMMAR PROFICIENCY: A PILOT STUDY AMONG THE ENGINEERING COLLEGE STUDENTS

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Abstract

This paper is a report on a preliminary empirical investigation where the objective was to find out the degree of proficiency of basic English grammar among the students of Engineering in one particular college in Andhra Pradesh. It takes some social variables like Gender, Caste, Region of origin (Urban, Semi-Urban, Rural), Religion, Medium of instruction, Frequency of reading English newspapers and Parental educational background.

Keywords: Grammar Proficiency, Social Variable, Region of origin and Parental educational background.

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INTRODUCTION:

The present paper elucidates the effect and impact of the English grammar proficiency among the technical students in the context of rural area of Andhra Pradesh. It also throws a light on the nature of English language competence of the students in India especially in the context of rural background. Since, the current study is concerned with the strategies essential in enhancing proficiency in English Language among the students of Engineering and Technology in A.P.

It examines the difficulties of the learners in learning English with a multi-lingual background. It is limited to the students of a technical discipline in Andhra Pradesh, one of the Southern States of India. Their vernacular language is Telugu. A few of them prefer to pursue their complete education in their native language. But, most of the students realize the significance of English and opt for it compelled by the associated socio-political prospects.

The Status and Importance of the English Language in India:

Among all the languages of the humankind in the world, today English deserves to be considered as the world language. It is the most common means of communication between the people of the globe. In India, English is the Auxiliary official language of the Union. In India, English remains to be the medium of instruction in colleges and Universities. English is considered as an International language, a window to the modern world, the library language, the link language, the unifying force, a language for employment, a language of Technology and sciences and finally the language of administration and law courts.

Aim of the study:

The present study, therefore aims at studying and testing the proficiency of English among the technical students especially of the first year B. Tech. students. It is assumed that whoever has proficiency in English will communicate well. Likewise, whoever doesn't have proficiency in English will fail to communicate well. This is a general phenomenon. Among the technical students in India especially in rural area, they lack

the proficiency in English. This is one of the reasons why they are not able to secure the jobs in engineering sectors.

Main objectives of the study:

- To identify the problems of the technical students in terms of the basic grammar of English.
- To find out if any correlation between the background and the medium of instruction that has direct impact on the achievement of English grammar proficiency.
- To find out if any correlation that exists between the social, religious and gender background of the students that may have direct impact on the achievement of proficiency in English.
- To find out if there is any correlation between the background of the students who habitually read English newspapers/Books that may have direct impact on the achievement of English proficiency.
- To find out if there is any correlation between the Educational background of the parents that may have direct impact on the achievement of proficiency in English grammar.

METHODOLOGY USED FOR THE STUDY:

In the process of investigation and interpretation the researcher has adopted the following methods and techniques in data collection and analysis.

Selection of the college for the study:

For the study, only one engineering college has selected and this college is from rural area of Andhra Pradesh.

Sampling of the informants of the study:

The college selected has both boys and girls students on their roles in all the first year graduation (1st B.Tech). They are actively attending the college and trained in English grammar from their school level till now.

Construction of the tools for data collection and analysis:

The identification of basic grammar proficiency problems faced by the graduate students particularly technical students

while writing English grammatical items were selected as follows:

The questionnaire method is followed to collect the data, in this questionnaire, in first part includes personal details of the students which are gender, medium of instruction, caste, religion, frequency of reading English newspapers, parental educational background, and region of birth place of the student. In the second part, questions regarding English grammatical items are asked to answer them which are articles, plural forms, sentence changes, unusual present participle, verb forms, and finally on tenses. The test was conducted in selected college and collected for the analysis.

Elicitation of the data for the analysis and interpretation:

The present study employs two techniques to analyze classified tables to study the association between student in colleges and parental background in learning English as a subject at graduation in Andhra. To do this systematically to address the problems of rural area graduates, the researcher carefully designed the questionnaire and followed two methods to obtain information. For the purpose schematic representation of the basic grammar proficiency tests was conducted by using the questionnaire method.

MOTIVATION FOR THE STUDY:

The researcher is prompted to take up this study of *Basic English Grammar Proficiency: A Pilot Study among the Engineering College Students*, while facing with various types of errors and mistakes in the classroom teaching situations in both written and spoken English and in the evaluation of the answer scripts of the first year B.Tech. students.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY:

The study would be a contribution to the body of the knowledge Second language learning in order to improve the understanding of English language problems faced by the technical students at the undergraduate level in the rural area of Andhra Pradesh. English language competence is crucial in technical education, where such a research is very much appreciated. There are very few studies that have been reported in this area so far. In this connection, a thorough study would provide useful information to the students, teachers, parents, college administrators, and researchers in this field of education. Moreover, the study will identify the factors that influence the students' English language competence problems of first year graduate students to draw upon conclusions on the technical students and to suggest remedial measures for the improvement of the English competence.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY:

For the present study we have selected only the students of Technology and Engineering on the assumption that the students of Humanities and Social Sciences have more awareness of English grammar. It is a known fact that the students of Technology and Engineering pay little attention to English than the students of Humanities and Social sciences, though English competence plays a vital role in their professional career. For this reason we have selected only the students of Technology and Engineering for the study.

ANALYSIS OF THE STUDY:

The researcher employs a major procedure to analyze classified tables to study the association between students in the college and their parental background in learning English as a subject at an Engineering college in Andhra Pradesh. To do this systematically, to address the problems faced by the students of Technology and Engineering related to the proficiency of English language, the researcher carefully designed the questionnaire and administered the questionnaire in obtaining the information.

Composition of the Respondents (Total: 70):

Table-1 Composition Gender-wise:

Sl. No.	Gender of the respondents	No. of respondents
1.	Male	40
2.	Female	30
Total		70

Table-2 Medium of Instruction language-wise:

Sl. No.	Educational level	Language	
		Telugu	English
1.	Classes: 1-5	43	27
2.	Classes: 6-7	33	37
3.	Classes: 8-10	28	42
4.	Intermediate	13	57
total	-	117	163

Table-3 Social variable: Caste-wise:

Sl. No.	Social variable	No. of respondent
1.	SCs	12
2.	BCs	40
3.	OCs	18
Total	all	70

Table-4 Social Variable: Religion-wise:

Sl. No.	Religion	No. of respondents
1.	Christians	03
2.	Muslims	07
3.	Hindus	60
Total	all	70

Table-5 Social variable: Region-wise:

Sl. No.	Region type	No. of respondents
1.	Urban	26
2.	Semi-Urban	05
3.	Rural	39
Total	All	70

Table-6 Newspaper reading- Frequency-wise:

Sl. No.	Frequency of Newspaper reading	No. of respondents
1.	Frequently	20
2.	Often	08
3.	Rarely	38
4.	Seldom	04
Total	All	70

Table-7 Parental education-wise:

Sl. No.	educational level of Parents	No. of Respondents
1.	Illiteracy	30
2.	School education	27
3.	College education	12
4.	University education	01
Total	All	70

DISCUSSION AND INTERPRETATION OF THE RESULTS:

In the following, various scores of the students belonging to different variables will be discussed and the significance of the scores is interpreted accordingly.

Gender-wise proficiency:

For present work, the researcher has taken gender as one of the social variables because it assumes that Female students are very conscious about the use of their language and hence they show more interest in acquiring English compared to the male counterparts.

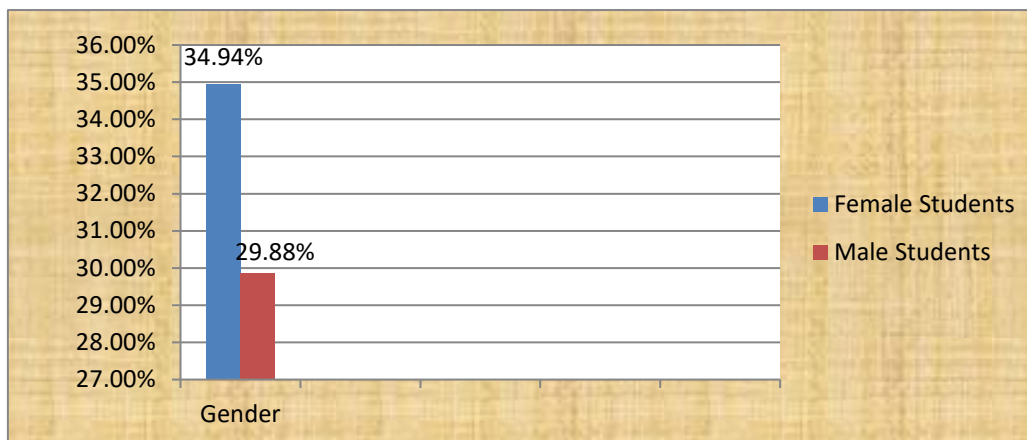


Figure: 1. Marks Distribution Of The Female And Male Students

For the present study, there are seventy students that have participated, among them forty students are male students and 30 are female students. Compared with male students female students have performed well in the test. The figure shows that female students have obtained 34.94% marks and male students have obtained 29.88% marks in the test. Much of the research that compared the proficiencies of and/or achievements in the English as second language shows that females are consistently better.

Medium of instruction of the students:

The researcher has considered medium of instruction of the students as one of the social variables since it assumes that the number of years a student receives education through a given medium of instruction will have considerable impact in his/her proficiency.

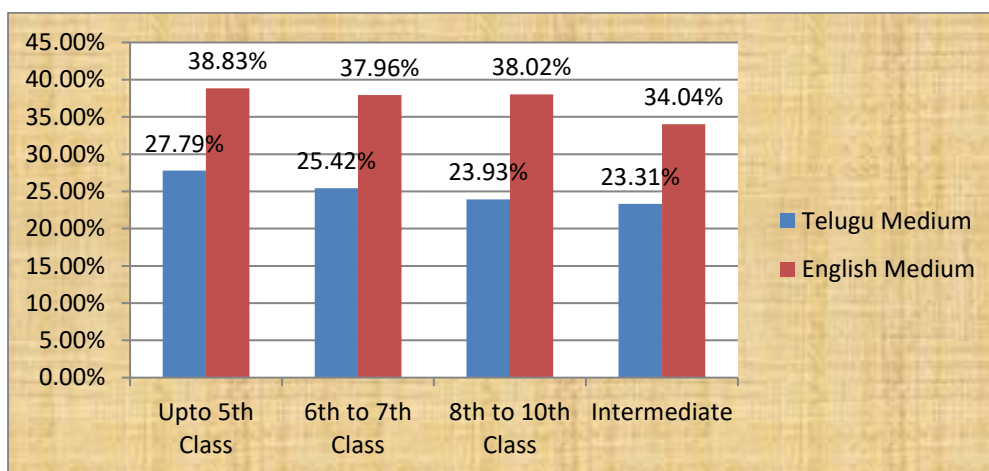


Figure: 2. Distribution of Marks between Telugu and English Medium Students

As observed in the figure that it displays upto 5th class, 6th to 7th class, 8th to 10th class and Intermediate respondents test scores including female and male students in terms of Telugu and English medium. In the figure: 2 displayed above, the scores of the English medium students are higher than those of the Telugu medium students. Upto 5th class who studied English medium scored the percentage of 38.83% whereas Telugu medium students scored only 27.79%, likewise 6th to 7th class the scores of English medium students are 37.96% which is greater than the scores of the Telugu medium students i.e. 25.42%. 8th to 10th class English medium students scored better than the Telugu medium students as 38.02% and 23.93% respectively. Even in Intermediate students of the

English medium scored 34.04% which is much higher than Telugu Medium students scored 23.31%.

Caste background of the students:

The researcher has taken caste as a variable not because one who believes in caste hierarchy socially, but wanted to study whether it has any correlation with the proficiency in basic English grammar. Our assumption is that caste background of students determines the degree of access to education in general and English medium in particular.

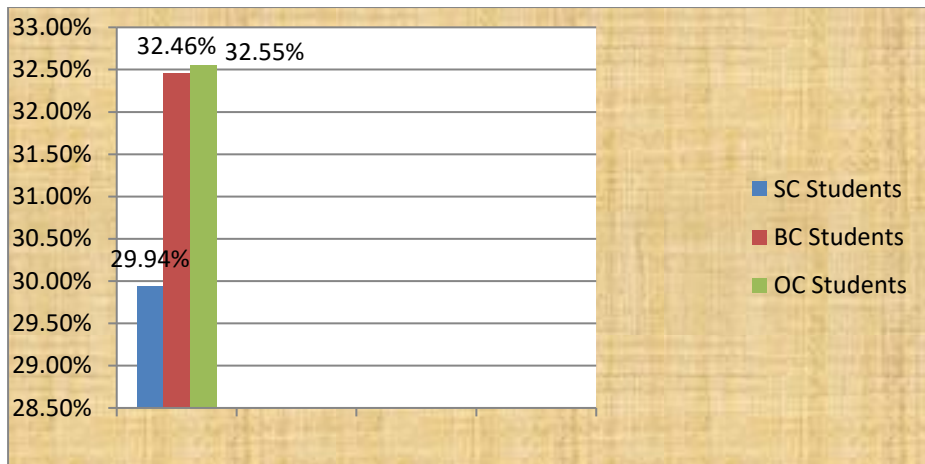


Figure: 3. Caste Background of the students

The above figure describes influence of social background of the students on performance in test results. Among others, students who belong to scheduled caste performed comparatively poorly as against the students of other castes like BCs and OCs. SCs scored 29.94% whereas BCs got 32.46% and OCs gained 32.55%. It may be based on the sociological factors that provide less scope for SCs in their access to the educational system. Most of the parents of SC students are illiterates and they speak only their mother tongue (monolingual) at home. The students have no opportunity to speak in English at home. This is one of the reasons why the SC students couldn't perform well in displaying their competence in English. Based on the above factors SC students performance is poor in their scores in the test. These results

are purely based on the present test, not to be applied to general context.

Religious background of the students:

We thought of enquiring whether religious background plays any role in proficiency in English. We assumed that students from Christian religious background may have more fascination for English language because it was the language of missionaries in the past. We also assumed that non-Christian students may not have so much fascination for English. But the results of the test claim different scores. It seems that religion has no correlatory effect on the learning of English.

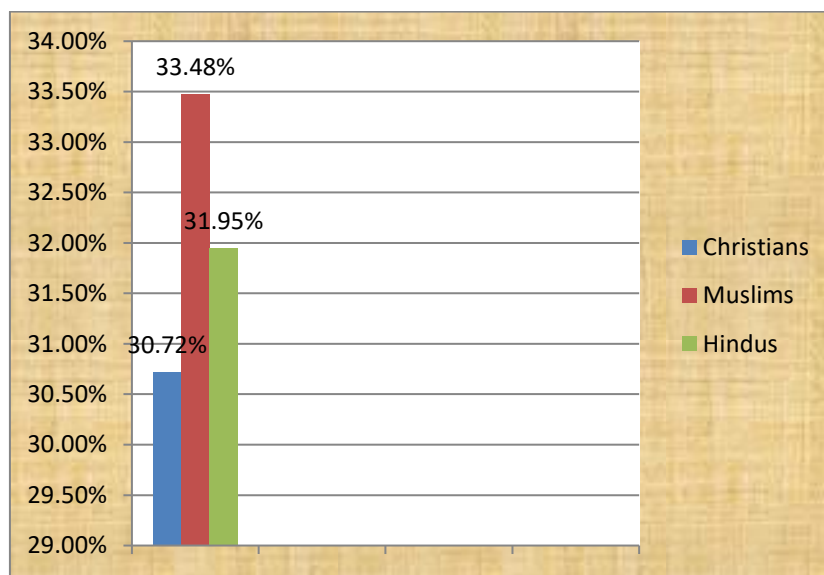


Figure: 4. Religious Background of the Students

Regional background of the students:

By region, we mean the Urban vs. Rural way of life where it was assumed that urban people are more exposed to the usage

of English at least as hearers while it is not the case with rural areas.

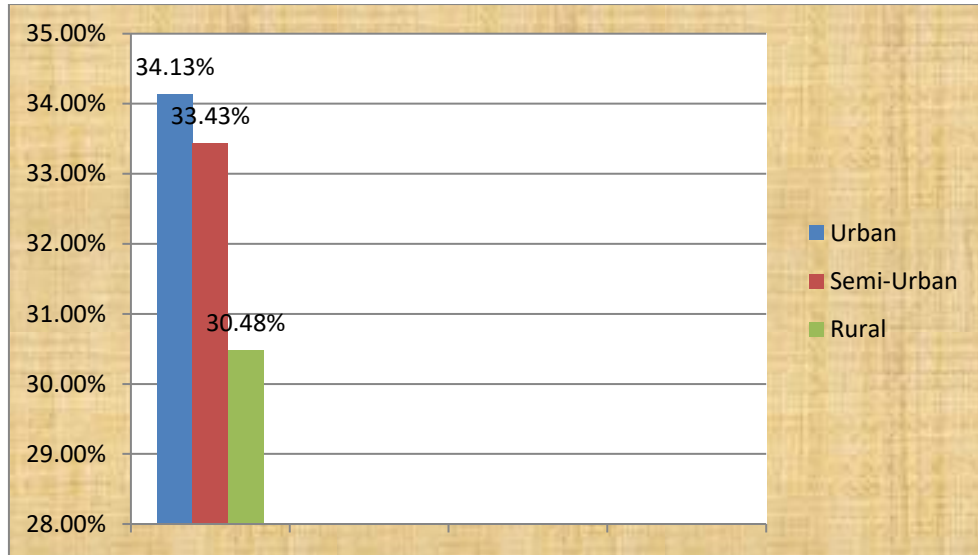


Figure: 5. Region Background of the Students

In the Figure: 5 the scores describe that the students who come from urban area scored high percentage in the test i.e. 34.13% whereas the semi-urban students scored only 33.43%. The rural area students scored only 30.48% in the test when compared with urban and semi-urban students. In overall the

students who come from urban area performed well in the test when compared with the other students.

Frequency of reading English papers/Books:

It was assumed that the more one reads English newspapers and books, the more he/she may acquire proficiency in English grammar.

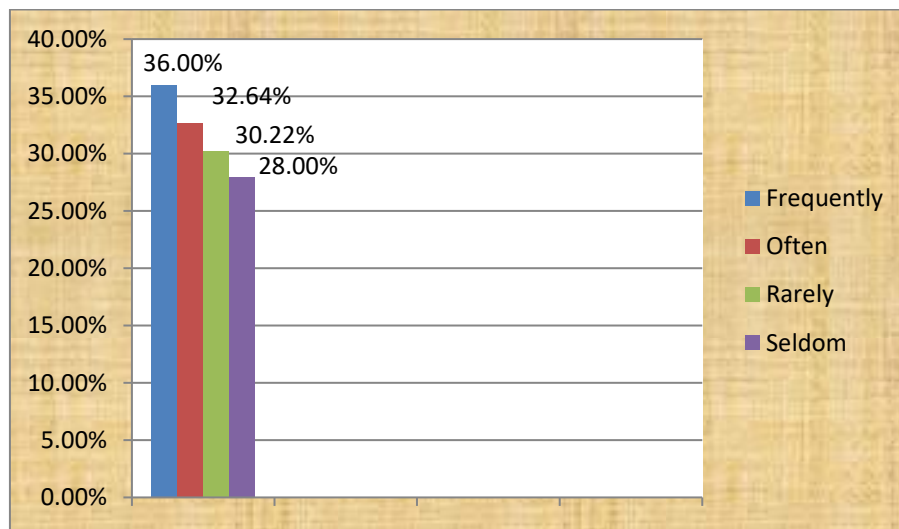


Figure: 6. Frequency of reading English papers/Books

Educational background of the parents:

We assumed that the educational background of the parents influence the attitude of their children towards learning

English language. The higher the educational level, the higher likelihood of their children showing more interest in English.

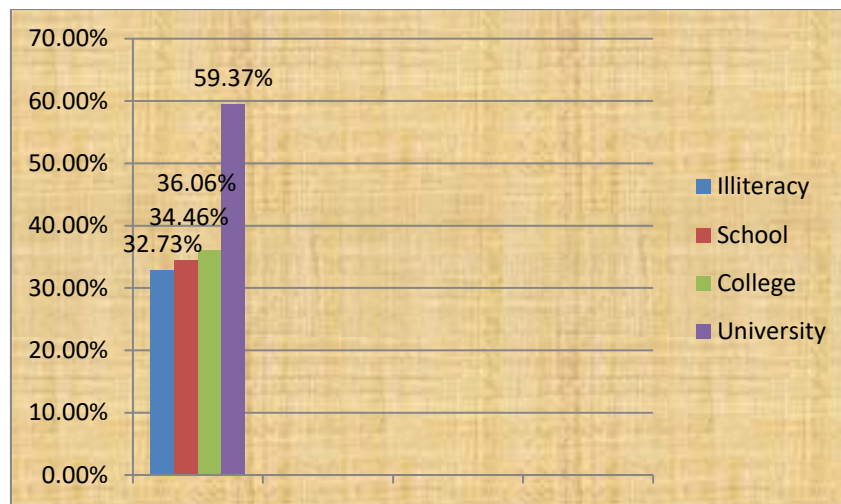


Figure: 7. Educational background of the parents

In the above Figure-7 demonstrates that those parents studied at the university scored well i.e. 59.37%. Those students whose parents studied in college level they scored 36.06%, while those students whose parents studied in school level scored 34.46% and finally those students whose parents are illiterate scored very low percentage i.e. 32.73%. Through this study, we may say that parents who studied higher education usually concentrate on their children's language learning as stated by Gardner (1977).

CONCLUSIONS:

The above results are computed based on the data collected from the point of a number of social variables viz., urban, semi-urban and rural, female and male students etc. and their performance is shown in the tables based on the data findings. The study is based on the questionnaire specially designed to be used for this purpose.

The study is conducted to cover 70 students in the district of Prakasam in Andhra Pradesh. During the study, different variables i.e., Urban, Semi-Urban and Rural, Gender, Religion, Caste, Medium of instruction and Parental Education background wise performance have been examined to investigate English Language competence among the students of technology and Engineering in the context of rural area of Andhra Pradesh.

The study reveals that performance of the English medium students is higher than the Telugu medium students. The research comparing proficiency and/or achievement in a second language shows that female students are consistently performed better than the male students. Among the others, students of the scheduled caste performed poorly when compared with the other castes viz. BCs and OCs. The reason for their poor performance is due to their socially disadvantaged position in accessing education. In the case of the students who read English newspapers or books frequently performed well in the test when compared to other students. Through this study, we claim that students whose parents with the background of higher education significantly performed better in the English language learning.

The students of Technology and Engineering (B. Tech) pay little attention to the English examination. They do not often realize the need for the English language learning. Most of them have no knowledge of the importance and necessity of English language proficiency in their future life. They take the passing of the English examination as a necessary burden that they are forced to learning English. This mode of the mindset must be changed to gain English language competence. After the graduation they have to face the interviews for job where often they fail for the lack of effective and efficient English language performance.

As long as the social and language-related inequalities exist among the people in terms of Gender, medium of education, caste, parental education, religion, urban-rural divide etc, significant differences in the proficiency of English will remain.

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