

A Study On The Perceptions Of Teachers Towards Developing Communication Skills In English Among Secondary School Students

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ABSTRACT

English is one of the most widely spoken languages globally, making it a lingua franca for international communication. By mastering English, students can effectively interact with people from diverse cultures and backgrounds, expanding their social and professional networks. Strong English communication skills are essential for academic success. They enable students to excel in subjects like English language and literature, arts and social sciences; and help them perform better in the examinations. Good communication skills help students articulate their thoughts and ideas effectively. In this context, the researchers felt that English teachers should possess right perceptions and positive attitude towards developing communication skills among their students. The present study is an attempt to explore the perceptions of teachers towards developing communication skills in English among their students in secondary schools. The researchers used a well developed and standardized questionnaire as the tool for collection of data from a sample of 120 teachers (60 Headmasters and 60 School Assistants in English) selected from 60 secondary schools located in the rural as well as urban areas in Visakhapatnam District of Andhra Pradesh using Stratified Random Sampling technique. Mean score values, standard deviations and independent t-tests were used for analysis of data. The findings of the study revealed that the demographic variables – Gender, Age and Teaching Experience have no influence on the perceptions of teachers towards developing communication skills in English among secondary school students. The study suggests that the English teachers working in secondary schools should be given in-service training on the techniques and strategies in developing communication skills in English among their students.

Key words: *English Teachers, Perceptions, Communication skills in English, Secondary School Students.*

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I. INTRODUCTION

English plays a very crucial role in the Indian context. It is not simply because of its status as a link language, a language of trade and commerce, administration and management; but because of its association with the life of people. The social, cultural and educational exchanges in every walk of life have been taking place through English language. English is an International language, a library language and a language of scientific advancement. English is a widely spoken language today. It has often been referred to as ‘global language’, the language most often taught as a second language across the globe. It is the world’s most important language having communicative and educative value. Due to the linguistic diversity found within our nation, English acts as an indispensable ‘link’ language. In the professional world, English is often the preferred or required language for many job positions. Students with excellent English communication skills have a competitive advantage when applying for jobs and can pursue various international career opportunities.

II. THE CONCEPT OF ‘COMMUNICATION IN ENGLISH’

Communication in English refers to the process of transmitting information, ideas, feelings, or thoughts between individuals or groups using the English language as the medium of exchange. It is a fundamental aspect of human interaction and plays a crucial role in conveying messages effectively.

Effective communication in English involves not only the use of words but also includes non-verbal cues such as body language, facial expressions, gestures, and tone of voice. It is a two-way process wherein there should be a sender and a receiver to convey the message. Communication can occur through various channels, including face-to-face conversations, phone calls, emails, text messages, video conferences, and more.

To achieve successful communication, several factors such as clarity of expression, active listening, empathy, cultural awareness, and adapting language and tone to suit the context and audience come into play. In professional settings, effective English communication skills are highly valued, as they facilitate collaboration, teamwork, problem-solving, negotiation, and the dissemination of information in a globalized world where English is often used as a lingua franca. Strong communication abilities are essential in various fields, such as business, academia, diplomacy, customer service, and many others.

III. IMPORTANCE OF COMMUNICATION SKILLS IN ENGLISH FOR SCHOOL STUDENTS

Communication skills in English are of paramount importance among school students for various reasons. The following are some key points that highlight the significance of developing strong communication skills in English among school students.

- (i) **Global needs:** English is one of the most widely spoken languages globally, making it a lingua franca for international communication. By mastering English, students can effectively interact with people from diverse cultures and backgrounds, expanding their social and professional networks globally.
- (ii) **Academic Success:** Strong English communication skills are essential for academic success. They enable students to excel in subjects like English language and literature, arts and social sciences; and even in their ability to express themselves clearly in examinations.
- (iii) **Career Opportunities:** In the professional world, English is often the preferred or required language for many job positions. Students with excellent English communication skills have a competitive advantage when applying for jobs and can pursue various international career opportunities.
- (iv) **Clarity in expression:** Good communication skills help students articulate their thoughts and ideas effectively. Whether it's participating in classroom discussions, presenting projects, or debating, being able to convey ideas clearly enhances their academic performance and confidence.
- (v) **Critical thinking:** English communication involves more than just grammar and vocabulary; it requires critical thinking and the ability to analyze information. This process of expressing thoughts logically and coherently helps students develop better reasoning skills.
- (vi) **Access to information:** A vast amount of knowledge and information is available in the English language through books, research papers, and online resources. Proficiency in English allows students to access a broader range of learning materials and stay updated with current affairs.
- (vii) **Cultural understanding:** Learning English exposes students to different cultures and perspectives, fostering a sense of global awareness and empathy. This intercultural understanding is crucial in today's interconnected world.
- (viii) **Building confidence:** Mastery of English language by the students gives them a sense of accomplishment; and boosts their confidence. This confidence spills over into other aspects of their lives, making them more assertive and open to new experiences.
- (ix) **Enhancing problem-solving skills:** Effective communication often involves negotiation and conflict resolution. By developing their English language skills, students can improve their ability to handle interpersonal conflicts and find solutions to problems collaboratively.
- (x) **Future-proofing skills:** In a rapidly transforming world wherein technology and communication play a vital role, strong English communication skills will continue to be in demand. By acquiring these skills, students find an opportunity to better prepare themselves for the challenges of the future.

It is understood that communication skills in English are not only essential for academic success but also play a crucial role in shaping students into well-developed individuals, ready to face the global challenges of the 21st century.

IV. REVIEW OF RELATED STUDIES

A review of the related studies carried out in the field by the earlier researchers has been conducted; and a brief summary of the studies is presented below.

Adi F. Mahmud et al. (2023) conducted a study that aims to build students' communication skills in learning English through Lesson Study. It is a descriptive qualitative study conducted at Senior High Schools of 10 Kota Ternate. 100 students were selected through purposive sampling method. Data were collected by applying lesson study activities in 4 cycles through direct observation in learning process using communication skills instruments developed by the Ministry of Education and Culture that focuses on 6 indicators. Data were analysed using a Likert scale. From the analysis and interpretation of data, the study revealed that students' communication skills are improved and developed gradually and linearly. In addition, lesson study has given a positive impact toward students' communication skills in learning English.

Diksha Dashrath Ubale & Dr. Kunal D. Jadhav (2021) conducted a study that aims to identify the key factors that influence the English language learning process; and analyzes them to improve the overall success ratio of English communication skills. The study deals with the school education system in India.

The findings of the study revealed that English language acquisition is somewhat challenging to Indian School students due to a number of factors. These factors include: physical (age, physical and mental fitness); psychological (stress, anxiety, motivation, previous knowledge etc.); social (family, parental support, environment); economic (family income, sources of income, financial stability, spending capacity etc.); technological (devices, techno-sevvyne, exposure, online access and opportunities) etc. Though these challenges exist, it is possible to overcome them through proactive involvement of teachers, practice and preparation of students, extensive support of parents and out-of-the-box thinking by educational institutions. Technology can integrate all of them for better and interactive teaching-learning process of English communication creating win-win situations for all. The study is significant as it will be beneficial to the various stakeholders such as students, teachers, parents and educational institutions to a great extent. The study is significant as it will be beneficial to the various stakeholders such as students, teachers, parents and educational institutions to a great extent.

Jeen Peter & Govindarajan Singaravelu (2019) conducted a study to explore the factors that help or hinder the developmental process in acquiring communication skill in English among high school students. The researchers used survey method for the study. The sample for the study consisting of 300 students of class IX from 6 schools (3 Government and 3 Private) was selected using Random Sampling method. Socio-economic status scale (standardized tool) and English Communication skill Questionnaire (Self made tool) were utilized to collect data from the respondents. Descriptive analysis (Mean and Standard Deviation) and Inferential Analysis (t-test and ANOVA) were used in the present study for analysis of data. The findings of the study revealed that gender, qualification of parents and medium of instruction offered by the school have a positive relationship on the English communication skills of students. However, the socio-economic status and type of school management have no influence on the English communication skills of students. The study suggested that the students should be encouraged to converse in English with their teachers and peers. The students should also be given an opportunity to take part in competitions conducted in English language.

Babyjane Aquino & Joan H. Caag (2019) conducted a study that aims to discover the reasons for pupils' unwillingness to communicate in English and to find ways to overcome the barrier. The study is a qualitative research that requires only a single class. The tool is an Oral Communication Test with Rubrics as the basis and criteria for assessment of 34 (Thirty four) respondents. In order to make this study possible, an action plan was created and was implemented in the classroom through observation and keeping records of Grade 6 pupils' improvement and interaction.

The findings of pre and post intervention phases of thirty-four (34) participants proved that the pupils' oral communication skills have shown a remarkable improvement by giving opportunities to practical oral languages, providing conducive learning environments and using new teaching strategies. The study recommended that the time allocated for teaching oral communication skills must be increased to give students the chance to carry out different speaking activities. Teachers should support their pupils to overcome inhibition problems by being friendly, helpful and co-operative so that they will be able to speak comfortably.

V. NEED FOR THE PRESENT INVESTIGATION

Communication skills in English offer numerous benefits to students in various aspects of their academic and personal lives. They help students articulate their thoughts and ideas effectively. They will be able to converse with others freely and confidently in English. Students with strong English communication skills have a competitive edge in the job market, as they can effectively communicate with colleagues, clients, and partners from different parts of the world. Good communication skills foster better interpersonal relationships. Students who can communicate effectively are more likely to build positive connections with their peers, teachers, and family members, leading to a supportive and nurturing social environment.

The teachers play a significant role in developing good communication skills in English among their students. They should possess right perceptions and a positive attitude towards improving the skills of communication among the students. In this context, the researchers thought it relevant to conduct a study on the perceptions of teachers towards developing communication skills in English among secondary school students. The present study is an attempt in this direction.

VI. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The main objective of the present investigation is to study the perceptions of secondary school teachers towards developing communication skills in English among their students.

The study also aims at finding out the influence of Gender, Age and Teaching Experience on the perceptions of teachers towards developing communication skills in English among secondary school students.

VII. HYPOTHESES OF THE STUDY

The following hypotheses have been formulated for the present investigation:

- (i) There is no significant difference in the perceptions of male and female teachers towards developing communication skills in English among secondary school students.
- (ii) There is no significant difference in the perceptions of teachers aged below 40 years and those aged 40 years and above towards developing communication skills in English among secondary school students.
- (iii) There is no significant difference in the perceptions of teachers with an experience of less than 10 years and those with 10 years and above towards developing communication skills in English among secondary school students.

VIII. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study is limited to find out the influence of three demographic variables, viz., gender, age and teaching experience on the perceptions of 120 teachers towards developing communication skills in English among secondary school students in Visakhapatnam district.

IX. METHODOLOGY

(a) Method of Research

Since the present study involves collecting data with the help of survey, the investigators used Descriptive survey method for the present investigation.

(b) Sample

The sample of the study consisting of 120 teachers (60 Headmasters and 60 School Assistants in English) has been selected from 60 secondary schools located in Visakhapatnam district of Andhra Pradesh using Stratified Random Sampling technique. In this method, no significant group is left unrepresented and this gives a greater control over the sample. Here, in addition to randomness, stratification introduces a secondary element of control as a means of increasing precision and representativeness.

(c) Research Tool

The researchers used a well developed questionnaire consisting of 32 items as the tool of research for the present investigation.

(d) Administration of the tool

The tool was initially administered to 20 teachers (10 Headmasters and 10 School Assistants in English) under Pilot study. The measures of reliability, validity and objectivity of the tool have been calculated. Further, the researchers conducted item analysis for the items included in the tool. Out of 32 items selected for the tool, the discriminating power of 30 items has been found positive and is negative in respect of 2 items. The items whose discriminating power is negative have been removed; and the final tool consists of 30 items, which are foolproof in all respects. The final tool has been administered to 120 teachers (60 Headmasters and 60 School Assistants in English) working in 60 Secondary Schools of Visakhapatnam district in Andhra Pradesh.

(e) Analysis and Interpretation of data

The data collected has been analyzed and interpreted using different statistical techniques such as Mean score values, Standard Deviations and t-ratios; and are presented in the following table.

Table showing t-values of different variables relating to the perceptions of teachers towards developing communication skills in English among secondary school students

S. No.	Variable	N	Mean	S.D.	t-ratio	Result
1	Gender	Male 50 Female 70	98.21 101.70	27.37 28.40	0.67*	*Not Significant at 0.05 and 0.01 levels
2	Age	Below 40 yrs 40 yrs. & above 80 40	102.25 102.50	29.36 27.13	0.05*	*Not Significant at 0.05 and 0.01 levels
3	Teaching Experience	Less than 10 yrs 10 yrs. & above 90 30	101.61 101.83	27.06 25.26	0.04*	*Not Significant at 0.05 and 0.01 levels

X. FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

On the basis of the analysis and interpretation of data, the researchers have arrived at the following findings and drawn the conclusions.

1. There is no significant difference in the perceptions of male and female teachers towards developing communication skills in English among secondary school students.
2. There is no significant difference in the perceptions of teachers aged below 40 years and those aged 40 years and above towards developing communication skills in English among secondary school students.
3. There is no significant difference in the perceptions of teachers with an experience of less than 10 years and those with 10 years and above towards developing communication skills in English among secondary school students.

XI. CONCLUSIONS

From the findings of the study, it is concluded that Gender, Age and Teaching Experience have no influence on the perceptions of teachers towards developing communication skills in English among secondary school students.

XII. EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

- (i) The study would help the students realize the need for developing communication skills in English in their academic and personal lives.
- (ii) The study would help the teachers identify the difficulties faced by their students in developing communication skills in English.
- (iii) The present study helps the teachers working in secondary schools to use different strategies and techniques in developing communication skills in English among their students.
- (iv) The study would help the secondary school students converse freely and conveniently in English.
- (v) The study would help the students understand the need for developing communication skills in English in the global context.
- (vi) The study would help the Academic Organizations like SCERTs, IASEs and the State Departments of Education to take necessary steps to provide orientation to the teachers working in secondary schools on various strategies and techniques in developing communication skills in English among their students.
- (vii) The study would make the teachers, parents, students and other stakeholders realize the importance of communication skills in English.

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