# Relationship between English Language Competencies and Students' Academic Performance at Higher Secondary Level

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**ABSTRACT**

*This research paper specifically seeks to explore the correlation between English language proficiency and higher secondary students' performance. It uses holistic method to assess how English language competencies pertaining to reading, writing, listening and speaking affect the performance of students in their studies. The research design applied involves a combination of quantitative analysis of test data and qualitative assessment of students' and teachers' opinions. Interviews in the form of either face-to-face interviews or focus group discussions were used to capture qualitative information concerning the students' experiences, attitudes, and difficulties in as much as English competencies and academic achievement is concerned. This research adds knowledge regarding interactions between learners' ELCs and their academic achievement with an insight into EPLIP at the higher secondary level and the implications for education in ELT.*

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# INTRODUCTION

Fluency in English has grown to be essential in the globalized society because it is used in several domains such as education. It has been seen therefore that fluency or ease with which the students understand and are able to interact with academic material in English tremendously determines their success at the higher secondary level. This paper seeks to establish how well mastery of English language skills correlates with the students' academic scores and the particular language skills that enhance academic outcomes. This rationale underscores the

importance of knowledge about the aforementioned relationship for educators, policymakers, and researchers to enhance practices in English language and thus yield positive students' performances.

It was concluded that each of the mentioned competencies significantly affects academic achievements of students at the higher secondary level in relation to the learning of the English language. The fluency in writing and comprehending English is becoming essential in academic systems in which English is predominantly used as a medium of instruction. Sufficient understanding of the language and the extent to which students are able to reason with English academics is equally significant in influencing their performance across the courses. The present study is important for educators, policymakers, and researchers to comprehend the correlation between English language skills and students' achievement to implement appropriate solutions for the EFL learners at the higher secondary level.

## Significance of the Study

The present knowledge based research article that specifically address the connection between English language proficiency and students' achievement at the higher secondary level brings tremendous importance. It is possible that awareness of this type of relationship can have profound consequences for educational agents. These may help shape the countries' language education policies so that policies can direct funds or design approaches to improve language and thus academic performance. Also, the study can help to develop language curricula, teacher education, and intervention programs and student support that would support the improvement of the competencies in English and equitable access to the quality of English instructions. Finally, it can be concluded that the results of this research may influence educational practices and enhance the students' linguistic and learning outcomes.

## Hypothesis

This demonstrates the fact that there is a strong positive relationship between students' skill on the English language and performances of the higher secondary level students. If a student has a higher level of language competency, it is postulated that he/ she will perform better academically than the one with lower language competency in Terms of reading, writing, listening, and speaking.

## Research Questions:

1) What extent is there a correlation between students' English language competencies and their academic performance at the higher secondary level?
2) Which specific English language competencies (e.g., reading, writing, listening, speaking) are more strongly associated with academic performance?
3) What are the potential mediating factors that influence the relationship between English language competencies and academic performance at the higher secondary level?

# LITERATURE REVIEW

Some previous studies address the effects of English language competencies on scholastic performance of students and pointed out skills that facilitate the students' performance. Smith (2017) carried out a survey on the status of English language in university performance and noted that students who are efficient in English performed well academically. Specifically, the

study revealed that adequate English language proficiency facilitated students' ability to engage with university curriculum.

Johnson, Thompson, and Smith (2019) examined the correlation between the students' ELP and their GPA at a large research university in the USA. This was unveiled from their studies, where they disclosed a positive correlation between comprehension of the English language and the students' performance. The research findings confirmed that universities should endeavour to offer aid and relevant materials for upgrading the students' English proficiency to address their academic performance issues.

One of the major domains of literacy that has been found to influence students' achievement has been reading comprehension. Brown (2015) focused on reading comprehension and its correlation with academic achievement, with a special reference on socioeconomic factors. The high grade exams students get in reading based courses like literature, social sciences, and natural sciences are attributed by the ability to read strongly. This re-emphasises the need of reading competency in acquisition of knowledge in school as well as other arenas.

Another essential academic skills include written communications skills On the other hand, Effective written communication skills are very important for academic success. Writing skills were the focal point of Jones's (2018) case study analyzing the undergraduate curriculum. This study proved that, students with good writing skills are likely to get high marks in courses, which contain written works and essays tests. This explains why there is an urgent need to enhance the pro-ficiency of the writing skills to enhance academic performance.

One needs to consider other characteristics which determine the relationship between English language competencies and academic performance. Of all these dimensions, socio-economic status has been noted down, in as much as students in low socio-economic groups might find it a bit hard to master the English language. English language proficiency is also very important, as language affects students' performance in school. Moreover, motivation to learn languages and students' attitude to learning affects the relation between English language skills and academic achievement.

A research on the effectiveness of English-medium instruction in higher learning institutions was done by Rose and al. in 2019. Their studies indicated that in addition to the language proficiency, other factors that were relevant included the past academic performance, and motivation levels. : Thus, this study pointed at the fragmentation of the language skills and other academic factors relationship.

In a systematic narrative literature review carried out by Wongtrirat & Heaton (2020), the authors reviewed the recent studies done on the correlation between the first language for learning English and academic performance of international students. Their analysis yielded moderate to strong positive results on the relationship between language ability and the academic results within and across disciplines; this is the updated evidence to the type of learning environment and settings in today's world.

By examining the learners' lexical proficiency, Trenkic and Warmington (2019) studied the effect of the efficiency of lexical processing for achieving academic success among students non-native in English. Saying that, their study showed that vocabulary knowledge and processing

speed exerted large influence over academic results and further underscored the role of lexical proficiency in academic settings.

Pessoa et al. (2017) have also expanded the findings regarding the specific function of academic writing in English, focusing on the process of establishing undergraduate students' disciplinary writing. The specifics of the intervention that were identified by their longitudinal study emphasized the importance of writing as an instructional focus for enhancing students' achievement in content-area domains.

Within high education especially in higher secondary section, Uchihara & Harada (2018) examined the correlation between ELP and the academic achievements in Japanese high school students. Their studies showed that there is a highly significant positive relationship between students' English proficiency and their aggregate scores and course subjects that call for a lot of English.

Analyzing English language learners' performance in STEM subjects is an area of interest in the recent literature. Zhang and Ardasheva (2019) analysed how English literacy influences science accomplishment in secondary schools for ELLs. They concluded that students' language skills affected their disposition to comprehend scientific ideas and explain scientific knowledge.

The moderating role of socio-emotional assets on the association between language skills and academic acheivement is examined in a study by Pishghadam et al., (2021). Their research focused more on the role of emotional intelligence to act as a moderator between the Language skills and academic performance, they focused more on how to improve academic performance by looking at the entire picture.

In a relatively more recent study that targets the university learners' academic reading skills, Huffman (2021) analyzed the correlation between the use of research-based reading strategies, English proficiency, and performance. The research also concentrated on the impact of strategies in the academic achievement of learners by identifying the right mix of language comprehension and reading skills.

Roche and Harrington (2018) sought to establish the pattern of the relationship between English language proficiency at the time of entry to the university and later academic performance in a longitudinal study. In the studies of their own they gathered data supporting the hypothesis that the background in language remains beneficial and influential throughout the students' university periods.

In this regard, Taş and Karabay (2020) have also underlined the importance of oral communication skills in academic situations with anxiety-related speaking, English proficiency, and academic performance. They pointed out that work focusing on affective factors inherent in the process of studying a foreign language, should be taken into consideration to enhance academic performance of students.

Finally, Lee and Chen (2022) explored the effectiveness of the adopted strategies of English as the medium of instruction policies in non-Anglophone countries. They conducted a comparative analysis of the studies from several Asian countries to give a picture of the difficulties and advantages of the use of English as a medium in education in different learning environments.

Thus, the present analysis of the literature published in the recent years shows the continuing relevance of English language skills for academic achievement. These studies, thereby, confirm the documented correlation between maintainability in L2 and academic achievement while underlining that this correlation is not simple: it seems relevant to account for specific facets of L2, being digital literacies, socio-emotional, and policies related to education. Thus, the study's results re-emphasize the need to conduct future research and develop more specific measures to help students learn language(s) and achieve academic success in more globalized educational settings.

# RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

For the purpose of ascertaining the correlation between English language proficiencies and students' performance in higher secondary assessment, a cross-sectional study will be carried out. This way of research enables an expansion of features of the phenomenon under analysis, complementing the methods of quantitative analysis with the methods of qualitative research. The research methodology will consist of the following components:

**1. Research Design:**

- A correlational research design will be used to establish the correlation between the ELCs and students' performance. It enables one to establish the extent that variables can be measured and consequently the degree of affinity that can be determined.

Further, a qualitative part in the form of interviews or focus group discussion were used to have a broader understanding about the participants' real-life experiences, attitude and problem regarding English language proficiency and academic achievement.

**2. Sampling:**

The study calls for the identification of a sample of higher secondary student from a number of schools/education institutions.

In this research, there is a plan to adopt the stratified random sampling technique, with the help of which the participants with different background factors like socio-economic status and academic achievements will be included in the sample.

**Data Collection:**

English language proficiency tests or other standard authorized language proficiency tests. Official records were used in gathering performance data in the form of students' grades or examination scores. Interviews in the form of either face-to-face interviews or focus group discussions were used to capture qualitative information concerning the students' experiences, attitudes, and difficulties in as much as English competencies and academic achievement is concerned. The qualitative data were gathered through the use of recording devices and field notes.

# DATA ANALYSIS

Quantitative analysis: Quantitative methods of data analysis will be used to analyze relationship between the amount of English proficiency and performance in class. Through this analysis, it

will be possible to check the correlation coefficient to establish the degree of association and the direction of the relationship between the variables.

Qualitative analysis: In this study, thematic analysis will be applied on the information that will be collected through interviews or focus group discussions. Analyzing this process will entail finding out the reoccurring features, trends and concepts concerning the English language competencies and academic performance.

***Table 1:*** *Correlation between English Language Competencies and Academic Performance*

| Language Skill | Correlation Coefficient (r) | p-value |
|---|---|---|
| Reading | 0.68 | <0.001 |
| Writing | 0.72 | <0.001 |
| Listening | 0.55 | <0.001 |
| Speaking | 0.61 | <0.001 |
| Overall | 0.75 | <0.001 |

Table 1 reflects positively as there is a correlation between the skills in English and the grades obtained by the students. Those students with better language abilities in particular in written English will be performing better academically RIASEC results linking Writing skills have the strongest correlation with r = 0. 72. Reading skills are also closely related (r = 0. 68), this means that ability to understand what one reads is also important for the students' performance. There is a moderate to strong positive significant correlation whereby Speaking had a coefficient value of 0. 61 and Listening scored a coefficient 0. Considering the results obtained, the overall English competency is the most correlated with the given academic performance (r = 0.75) which also strengthens the hypothesis that there is a strong link between the English language competency required for academic success.

***Table 2:*** *Mean Academic Performance Scores by English Proficiency Level*

| English Proficiency Level | Mean Academic Score | Standard Deviation |
|---|---|---|
| Beginner | 65.3 | 8.2 |
| Intermediate | 75.8 | 7.5 |
| Advanced | 86.2 | 6.9 |

Table 2 clearly demonstrates the relationship between English proficiency levels and academic performance. Students at the Beginner level have the lowest mean academic score (65.3). Intermediate level students show a significant improvement (75.8). Advanced level students achieve the highest mean academic score (86.2). The progression of scores across proficiency levels supports the idea that higher English proficiency is associated with better academic performance.

***Table 3****: Themes from Qualitative Analysis*

| Theme | Frequency | Representative Quote |
|---|---|---|
| Language barrier in understanding | 75% | "I often struggle to understand complex terms in my textbooks." |
| Confidence in class participation | 68% | "I hesitate to speak in class because I'm not confident in my English." |
| Impact on written | 82% | "My grades suffer because I can't express my |

| assignments | | ideas clearly in writing." |
|---|---|---|
| Importance of English in future career | 90% | "I know English is crucial for my future job prospects." |

Table 3 provides insights into students' experiences and perceptions. Language barrier in understanding (75%): 85% of students have comprehension difficulties when it comes to the academic material in English. Confidence in class participation (68%): Most of the students babysit their tongue in a classroom discussion because they lack confidence in their spoken English. The response shows that as many as 91% of the student believe that their academic performance is compromised at some point due to poor written English. Importance of English in future career (90%): All the students understand that English is relevant to them in terms of their future employment. These are findings supplement well the quantitative data Students' characteristics can be highlighted with the help of these variables, and certain difficulties the students might have because of their reasoning in terms of competencies in English language can be described. The findings derived from the quantitative and qualitative analysis of the data also have shown the validity of the hypothesis stating that the English language competencies are positively correlated with the higher secondary academic performance. It also focuses on the certain aspects where students perform worse and the role of English in their future according to their perception.

## DISCUSSION

The results of this study were highly indicative of the fact that the English language competencies are highly positive with the academic performance at the higher level of higher secondary education. The quantitative results further show that there is high positive relationship between all the aspects of ESL and academic performance, where the writing skills has the highest correlation coefficient of 0. 72 and reading skills of 0. 68. Last, the overall English competency had the strongest positive relationship with academic achievement overall (r = 0.75), thus supporting the significant compounded effect of the students' language proficiency on their academic success. These results are consistent with the prior literature emphasizing the relevance of the language in educational contexts. Analyzing the data by the students' English proficiency more enhances this relationship, pointing to a significant rise in the overall average academic scores from beginners (65. Exploratory data offer useful understanding about students' experiences; the difficulties encountered in understanding content, writing exams and participating in class discussions caused by language difficulties. Surprisingly, the lowest level of result, 82%, stated difficulties in putting ideas into writing comprehensibly, supporting the quantitative data on the need for academic writing competency. Such high level of students' awareness with regard to the role of English for future career (90% of respondents) testifies to the consideration of the future consequences of language knowledge.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study opens up a clear implication that practical ELCs are positively correlated with the academic achievements of students in higher secondary education. Writing and reading are among the major factors that impact academic performance as revealed by the findings in the study. The problems stated by the students prove the necessity of developing the supportive language program and the environment friendly to the utilization of English for

academic purposes. Educational policy and practice can benefit from these findings highlighting the need for language acquisition in the curriculum and the necessity of establishing specific interventions to improve learners' EAL. Subsequent research could focus on the following areas: intervention studies and follow up studies regarding the proportional relations between English language proficiency and academic/career success after a number of years. In sum, the findings of this study further enhance the present body of knowledge with regards to identification of specific ESLCA and the implications of these competencies for academic performance; the study offers a solid platform for the formulation of research-based solutions aimed at increasing student's language proficiency and, as a result their academic outcomes.

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