A STUDY OF DIFFICULTIES IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING OF ELEMENTARY SCHOOL STUDENTS OF PUNJAB IN RELATION TO INTELLIGENCE

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Abstract

The aim of the study was to assess English language learning difficulties of elementary school students of Punjab in relation to intelligence. The sample of the study was 176 7th grade students of Punjab state. An English language learning difficulty screening test developed by researcher herself was used for data collection. Raven's: Standard Progressive Matrices (SPM) was used to assess intelligence of elementary school students. The low and high groups of intelligence were formed by applying P_{25} and P_{75} cut points-44 students in each group. High intelligent students as compared to low intelligent students have never faced difficulty in the following areas of: *Learn class material at slow speed; spend more time to study than classmates; To understand written instructions; and poor handwriting as compared to peers*. Low intelligent elementary students as compared to high intelligent elementary students have always faced difficulty in the following areas of: *Pronunciating unfamiliar words correctly while reading; and to understand written instructions*. More number in low intelligent students as compared to lesser number in high intelligent face problems sometimes in the areas of: *To read comprehension; in written expression; poor handwriting as compared to peers; in giving pauses; to grasp ornamental words; and to understand the meaning of almost similar words.*

Keywords: *English Language Learning Difficulty, High and low intelligence, Elementary School Students.*

Introduction

The language learning is the foundation of education that contributes to the holistic development of learners' employment, technological advancement and bringing communities together, especially in a country represented by linguistic-culture, where it can be a common ground for communication. To communicate eloquently, it is crucial to understand basic grammar rules including tenses, punctuations, articles, parts of speech, which are often overlooked at the foundational level, while learning the language. Language is a skill subject. It is a part of human behaviour which involves a set of skills. Proficiency is measured in terms of receptive and expressive language skills, syntax, vocabulary, semantics, and other areas that demonstrate language abilities. There are four domains to language proficiency: reading, writing, speaking, and listening. **Language proficiency** especially English as a foreign language is the ability of an individual to use English language with a level of accuracy that transfers meaning in production and comprehension. English language proficient student is one who comes from a non-English background and "who has sufficient difficulty speaking, reading, writing, or understanding the English language and whose difficulties may deny such an individual the opportunity to learn successfully in classrooms in higher stages of education where the language of instruction is English or to participate fully in our fast-developing global society.

Intelligence has been defined in a number of ways: the capacity for logic, understanding, self-awareness, learning, emotional knowledge, reasoning, planning and effectively employ language to communicate. More generally, it can be described as the ability to perceive or infer information, and to retain it as knowledge to be applied towards adaptive behaviours within an environment or context.

Our vast intelligence also allows us to have language, a system of communication that uses symbols in a regular way to create meaning. Language gives us the ability to communicate our intelligence to others by talking, reading, and writing. As the psychologist Steven Pinker put it, language is the "the jewel in the crown of cognition" Pinker, (1994). Jadie, et.el. (2012). averred that low proficiency in English language has been considered a barrier to learning and academic success at the post-secondary level and this is because English learners often lack the language proficiency necessary to understand the test content and academic work.

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 affirmed that the highest priority of the education system is to achieve **universal foundational literacy and numeracy (FLN)** in

primary school. This initial deadline, originally set for 2025, has been updated with the launch of the **National Initiative for Proficiency in Reading with Understanding and Numeracy (NIPUN Bharat)** Mission, which aims to ensure every child necessarily attains FLN by the **end of Grade 3 by the year 2026-27**. The rest of this Policy will become relevant for students only if this most basic learning requirement (i.e., reading, writing, speaking, and arithmetic at the foundational level) is first achieved. To this end, **teacher education** and the **early grade curriculum** have been thoroughly redesigned to have a renewed emphasis on foundational literacy and numeracy, with interventions like the **NISHTHA-FLN** capacity-building program for teachers and the **'Vidya Pravesh'** three-month, play-based school preparation module for Grade 1 students. A national repository of high-quality resources on foundational literacy and numeracy, including materials developed under NIPUN Bharat, is being made available on the **Digital Infrastructure for Knowledge Sharing (DIKSHA)** platform. Technological interventions, such as the use of digital resources and aids to teachers, continue to be piloted and implemented to help bridge any language barriers. Public and school libraries are being significantly expanded, and **digital libraries** are also being established and strengthened to build a culture of reading across the country.

As research clearly shows that children pick up languages extremely quickly between the ages of 2 and 8 and that multilingualism has great cognitive benefits to young students, children will be exposed to different languages early on. Language-teaching too must be improved to be more experiential and to focus on the ability to converse and interact in the language and not just on the literature, vocabulary, and grammar of the language. Languages must be used more extensively for conversation and for teaching-learning.

Linguistic Intelligence is a part of Howard Gardner's multiple intelligence theory that deals with sensitivity to the spoken and written language, ability to learn languages, and capacity to use language to accomplish certain goals. People with linguistic intelligence have an ability to analyze information and create products involving oral and written language such as speeches, books, and memos such as William Shakespeare and Oprah Winfrey.

The persistence of difficulties in **word reading accuracy, fluency, and reading comprehension** remains a core area of focus, often described under Specific Learning Disorder (SLD). Impairment in written expression, including issues with **spelling and grammatical accuracy**, is also a significant challenge for this age group The **Simple View of Reading** model, which separates reading comprehension into **decoding** and **linguistic comprehension**,

is frequently used to understand and classify the underlying cognitive weaknesses contributing to reading difficulties ((American Psychiatric Association, as cited in Tom et al., 2025).

(Kakhramonov, 2020) found that different types of intelligence correlate with different aspects of language learning. For example, linguistic intelligence is closely related to vocabulary acquisition and language comprehension, while cognitive abilities like abstract reasoning contribute to overall language proficiency.

Flensborg and et al. (2018) included nearly 1,000 people born in Copenhagen between 1959 and 1961, and followed throughout their lives. Results of an IQ test at age 50 were compared with their assessments from childhood. Kids who could name objects/animals in pictures, form a sentence, and share experiences more quickly than other children tended to have a higher IQ in middle age, the study found.

The perusal of previous related research studies reveal that limited efforts have been put forth on learning difficulties in English Language against the Indian background especially in relation to intelligence. Thus, the present study was undertaken to assess English language learning difficulties of elementary school students of Punjab in relation to intelligence.

Objective

1. To investigate English language learning difficulties of elementary school students of Punjab in relation to intelligence.

Hypothesis

1. There will be significant difference among high and low Intelligent English language learners in terms of occurrence of learning difficulties.

Method and Design

Descriptive method of research was used to identify difficulties in English language of Elementary school students with the help of a research tool and selection of sample.

Sample

The sample for the study consisted of 176 7^{th} grade elementary school students of district Barnala of Punjab, selected from 4 elementary schools- 2 each from rural and urban location.

Tool Used

To identify learning difficulties an English language learning difficulty screening test was prepared by enlisting different kinds of difficulties encountered by English Language Learners in terms of its relevance in language learning. On the basis of their opinion,26 items

self-screening tool was developed in which the students were required to identify each learning difficulty in terms of its occurrence (Always, Sometimes, Never). Thematically all the items in the screening test are considered either of the four skills of language proficiency or understanding on the basis of Bloom's taxonomy.

Raven's: Standard Progressive Matrices (SPM) (1938) was used to assess intelligence of elementary school students.

Statistical Techniques of Data

The high and low intelligent groups of Elementary school students were identified on the basis of p/75 and p/25 i.e. highest 75% and lowest 25%. These groups were taken as high and low intelligent groups with n=44 in each group.

The chi-square test was used to find out relationship between occurrence of type of difficulty in English language learning in terms of 'Always-sometimes-Never', vis-a-vis level of intelligence.

Results and Discussion

The occurrence of difficulties in learning of English among students was analysed across high and low intelligent groups to find out differences, if any as explained earlier, the high intelligent group was formed on the basis of P_{75} and low intelligent group on the basis of P_{25} cut points on distribution of intelligence scores.. These differences were studied in terms of percentage occurrence in terms of 'Always-sometimes-Never' and applying chi-square test. (Table 1).

Table 1.1

Occurrence of Difficulties in English Language Learners of 7th grade Elementary School Students across High and Low Intelligent groups

S. No.	Difficulty in Learning	Frequency	Group		χ^2-value
			High Intelligent (N=44)	Low Intelligent (N=44)	
1.	Learn class material at slow speed.	Always	9	13	16.40**
		Sometimes	14	27	
		Never	21	4	
2.	Spend more time to study than classmates	Always	2	9	14.72**
		Sometimes	19	28	
		Never	23	7	
3.	In pronunciating unfamiliar words correctly	Always	15	26	6.80*
		Sometimes	19	15	
		Never	10	3	
4.	To read comprehension.	Always	9	2	7.50**
		Sometimes	10	28	
		Never	25	14	
5.	In written expression.	Always	10	3	18.00**
		Sometimes	11	31	
		Never	23	10	
. 6.	To understand written instructions.	Always	5	28	25.80**
		Sometimes	18	6	
		Never	21	10	
7.	Poor handwriting as compared to peers.	Always	10	3	24.00**
		Sometimes	13	26	
		Never	21	5	
8.	In giving pauses	Always	10	3	13.00**
		Sometimes	16	26	
		Never	18	15	
9.	To grasp the ornamental words.	Always	7	2	17.60**

		Sometimes	22	40	
		Never	15	2	
10.	To understand the meaning of almost similar words.	Always	12	4	17.40**
		Sometimes	18	37	
		Never	14	3	

**p<0.05; **p<0.01*

The results show that 21 high intelligent elementary school students as compared to 4 of low intelligent students have never found difficulty in *learning of class material at slow speed* against liking, whereas 27 low intelligent students of 14 high intelligent have sometimes face this difficulty. The χ^2-value came out to be 16.40, significant at .01 level.

It is quite clear from the table that 23 high intelligent students as compared to 7 of low intelligent students have never experienced difficulty to spend more time to study than classmates do; but 28 of low intelligent students as compared to 19 0f high intelligent students have sometimes faced this difficulty. The χ^2-value came out to be 14.72, significant at .01 level.

This is observed that 26 of low intelligent students as compared to 15 of high intelligent students have always encountered difficulty in *pronunciating unfamiliar words correctly while reading*, whereas 10 of high intelligent students as compared to 3 of low intelligent students have never faced this difficulty. The χ^2-value came out to be 6.80, significant at .05 level.

It is also noted that 28 of low intelligent students as compared to 10 of high intelligent students have sometimes faced difficulty to *read comprehension*, but 25 of high intelligent students as compared to 14 of low intelligent students have never came across such difficulty. The χ^2-value came out to be 7.50, significant at .01 level.

It is revealed that 10 of high intelligent students as compared to 3 of low intelligent students always experienced difficulty in *giving pauses*, whereas 26 of low intelligent students as compared to 16 of high intelligent students never experienced such difficulty. The χ^2-value came out to be 13.00, significant at .01 level.

It may be seen from the table that 40 of low intelligent students as compared to 22 of high intelligent students sometimes faced difficulty to *grasp the ornamental words*, whereas 15 of high intelligent students as compared to 2 low intelligent students have never faced this difficulty. The χ^2-value came out to be 17.60, significant at .01 level.

The analysis of table reveals that 37 of low intelligent students as compared to 18 of high intelligent students have sometimes faced difficulty *to understand the meaning of almost*

similar words, whereas 14 of high intelligent students as compared to 3 of low intelligent students never faced this difficulty. The χ^2-value came out to be 17.40, significant at .01 level.

On the basis of these results, the null hypothesis "*There will no significant difference among high and low intelligent English language learners in terms occurrence of learning difficulties.*" was rejected.

Conclusion

From the above results it may be concluded that:

1. High intelligent students as compared to low intelligent students have never faced difficulty in the following areas of: *Learn class material at slow speed; spend more time to study than classmates; To understand written instructions; and poor handwriting as compared to peers.*
2. Low intelligent students as compared to high intelligent students have always faced difficulty in the following areas of: *Pronunciatiing unfamiliar words correctly while reading; and to understand written instructions.*
3. More number in low intelligent students as compared to lesser number in high intelligent face problems sometimes in the areas of: *To read comprehension; in written expression; poor handwriting as compared to peers; in giving pauses; to grasp ornamental words; and to understand the meaning of almost similar words.*

Educational Implications

Teachers should provide rich and meaningful classroom experiences for English language learners to solidify their understanding of new academic vocabulary, knowledge and the concepts they learn. Learners need to frequently engage in discussion where they can interact with their friends based on what they read and learn as everything in language learning is based on good listening/social interaction. Teacher should make use of audio-visual aids as linguaphone, gramophone, tape-recorder, radio etc. during the teaching hours. To give exposure of the native speakers. Reception through reading for acquiring knowledge should come much later than reading for expression has been acquired. Teachers who are hoping to help emergent bilingual learners gain reading comprehension proficiency in English can also utilize reading interventions which help them to enhance their recognition vocabulary. Educators should also provide opportunities to write about topics in content they are studying and on simple day-to-day life such as letters to friends and relations, applications, simple notes or invitations. This ability calls for handwriting, spelling, structures etc. Afterwards, should teach them other aspects of writing through guided composition and then free composition.

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