PROFICIENCY IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE OF PROSPECTIVE TEACHERS IN TAMIL NADU

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Abstract:

The enthusiasm to learn and be good at communicate in English has not spared anyone in the field of education for personal and social gains. This study investigated the proficiency in English of 1,405 prospective teachers who were the selected samples using simple random technique from the B.Ed. colleges of Education studying in Tirunelveli, Thoothukudi and Kanyakumari districts affiliated to Tamil Nadu Teachers Education University. Proficiency in English Language Test (PELT), a tool constructed and validated by the investigator was used to assess their proficiency. The statistical techniques arithmetic mean, standard deviation, and 't' test were used in the study. The findings of the study were as follows: The level of proficiency in English language of prospective teachers was at the average. There was no significant difference in proficiency in English language of prospective teachers with regard to their gender and type of family. But there was significant difference between the unmarried and the married, and the unmarried prospective teachers were found to be better than the married prospective teachers in their proficiency in English language.

Key Words: Proficiency in English Language & Prospective Teachers

Introduction:

"Education for all" (Uhttp://www.unesco.org) has been the global commitment and mission of all nations. Teacher education is involved in the process of preparing the aspiring prospective teachers. The success of the education system of a country to a large extent depends on the teacher education system. "If you don't have good teachers, there will be no good teaching and there will be no good students" (Gohain, 2017, July 20). Hence "teacher education is a priority in most countries regardless of the development stage of the country" (Danaher & Umar, 2010, p.28).In India, English has been taught as one of the compulsory subject of subject at the school level owing to its historic and utilitarian reasons and hence the prospective teachers in their pre-service training and the working teachers in-service are expected and demanded to be good at English with a reasonable level of proficiency to make their teaching-learning effective.

Significance of the Study:

"Language is, today, an inseparable part of human society. ... It is through language that humanity has come out of the stone-age and has developed science, art and technology in a big way" (Syal & Jindal, 2014, p. 11). Because it is an inseparable part, it becomes obligatory for every member of the society to learn a language. Language is "a device of expression of thoughts or ideas" (Prasad, 2014, p. 2) in written or spoken form. It is a social phenomenon, and needs to follow certain rules and regulations for making it convenient for common communicative needs. Grammar prescribes the rules governing a language. Stressing the importance of grammar Woods (1988) says, "When we say someone understands a language, we mean the person has obtained the ability to produce the target language that can be accepted in grammar". "Ifgrammar rules are too carelessly violated, communication may suffer" (Harmer, 2007, p. 12). The Indian learners learn English as a Second Language (ESL) and they are dependent on teachers' teaching for learning, strengthening and becoming proficient in English. Hence the prospective teachers' proficiency in English language is a matter of concern and significance. The investigator, being a teacher educator, is involved in training the prospective teachers who are doing their Bachelor of Education (B. Ed.). So undertaking a research study on proficiency in English of prospective teachers would throw some sparks of light to teach better aiming at improving their proficiency in English, benefiting the entire population of prospective teachers. Hence is this research.

Research Questions:

"Asking a research question serves to narrow your focus on the topic of interest" (Vanderstoep & Johnston, 2009, p.4) and the raised research questions bring clarity and straightens the research path. The investigator raised the following questions and investigated the proficiency in English of prospective teachers.
- ✓ What is the proficiency level of prospective teachers in English?
- ✓ Is there any significant difference in proficiency in English of prospective teachers with regard to their gender, marital status, and type of family?

Operational Definition of the Key Terms:

The connotative and denotative meanings of words differ according to context. Unless the researcher clearly defines the key terms used in the study, it may lead to misconceptions and misinterpretations. Therefore, it is obligatory from the part of researcher to define the terms used in research.

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- ✓ **Proficiency in English language:** It is the ability to use English language with accuracy and fluency. Accuracy is the using the "correct forms of grammar", without mistakes, and fluency is the using the language "at a normal speed, without hesitation" (Spratt, Pulverness., & Williams, 2010). In this study, proficiency in English language refers to the prospective teachers' ability to use English language and is measured by the scores obtained in the Proficiency in English Language Test (PELT) conducted by the investigator.
- ✓ **Prospective Teachers***: In this study, it refers to the students who are doing Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.) training programme with the aspiration of becoming teachers on successful completion this professional training.

Objectives of the Study:
- ✓ To find out the level of proficiency in English language of prospective teachers
- ✓ To find out whether there is any significant difference in the proficiency in English language of prospective teachers with regard to their (a) gender, (b) marital status, and (c) type of family.

Hypotheses:
- ✓ There is no significant difference in proficiency in English language of prospective teachers with respect to gender.
- ✓ There is no significant difference in proficiency in English language of prospective teachers with respect to marital status.
- ✓ There is no significant difference in proficiency in English language of prospective teachers with respect to type of family

Methodology:
"The procedural design of the research should be carefully planned to yield results that are as objective as possible" (Pandey & Pandey, 2015, p. 17)."Surveys are particularly useful to find small amounts of information from a wider selection of people in the hopes of making a general claim" (Driscoll, D. L., 2011, P. 163).The investigator used survey method to investigate the proficiency in English Language of Prospective Teachers for describing the phenomenon as it exists at the time of study, and suggests recommendations based on the inferred findings.

Population and Sample:
"Population is that which is represented by the actual participants in the research" (Howitt & Cramer, 2011, P. 61).It is the larger group of beneficiaries of research. The population for the present study comprises all the prospective teachers who are doing B.Ed. degree course in the colleges of Education in Tirunelveli, Thoothukudi and Kanyakumari districts of Tamil Nadu. A sample is the representative of the population or universe. It is the chosen group of participants in the study. The investigator selected a sample of 1,405 B.Ed. students from the selected three districts using simple random sampling technique.

Tool Used:
Keeping the objectives of the study in mind, Proficiency in English Language Test (PELT) was constructed and validated by the investigator and the guide (2016).

Statistical Techniques Used:
The investigator used mean, standard deviation, and 't' test to analyse the collected data.

Analysis of Data:

Descriptive Analysis:

Objective 1: To find out the level of proficiency in English language of prospective teachers

Table 1: Level of Proficiency in English Language of Prospective Teachers

Variable	Low		Moderate		High	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Proficiency in English Language	343	24.4	741	52.7	321	22.8

It is inferred from the above table that 24.4% of prospective teachers have low, 52.7% of them have moderate and 22.8% of them have high level of proficiency in English language. This is shown in Figure 1.
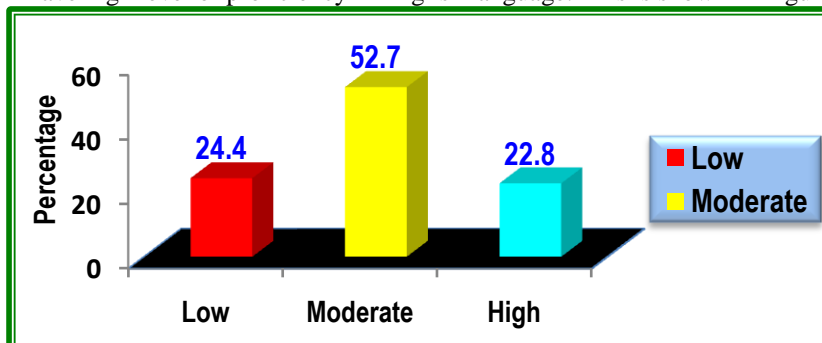

Figure 1: Level of proficiency in English language of prospective teachers

Differential Analysis:

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant difference between the male and the female prospective teachers in their proficiency in English language.

Table 2: Difference between the Male and the Female Prospective Teachers in their Proficiency in English Language

Variable	Gender	N	Mean	S.D	Calculated 't' value	Table value	Remark
Proficiency in English Language	Male	317	35.92	9.793	0.96	1.96	Not Significant at 0.05 level
	Female	1,088	37.73	9.501			

It is inferred from the above table that the calculated 't' value (0.96) is less than the table value (1.96) at 0.05 level of significance. Hence the respective null hypothesis is accepted. Thus, the result shows that there is no significant difference between the male and the female prospective teachers in their proficiency in English language.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant difference between the unmarried and the married prospective teachers in their proficiency in English language.

Table 3: Difference between the Unmarried and the Married Prospective Teachers in their Proficiency in English Language

Variable	Marital Status	N	Mean	S.D.	Calculated 't' value	Table Value	Remark
Proficiency in English Language	Unmarried	1,194	37.57	9.562	2.33	1.96	Significant at 0.05 level
	Married	211	35.90	9.676			

It is inferred from the above table that the calculated 't' value (2.33) is greater than the table value (1.96) at 0.05 level of significance. Hence the respective null hypothesis is rejected. Thus, the result shows that there is significant difference between the unmarried and the married prospective teachers in their proficiency in English language. While comparing the mean scores of the unmarried (Mean=37.57) and the married prospective teachers (Mean=35.90), the unmarried prospective teachers are better than the married prospective teachers in their proficiency in English language. This is shown in Figure 2.
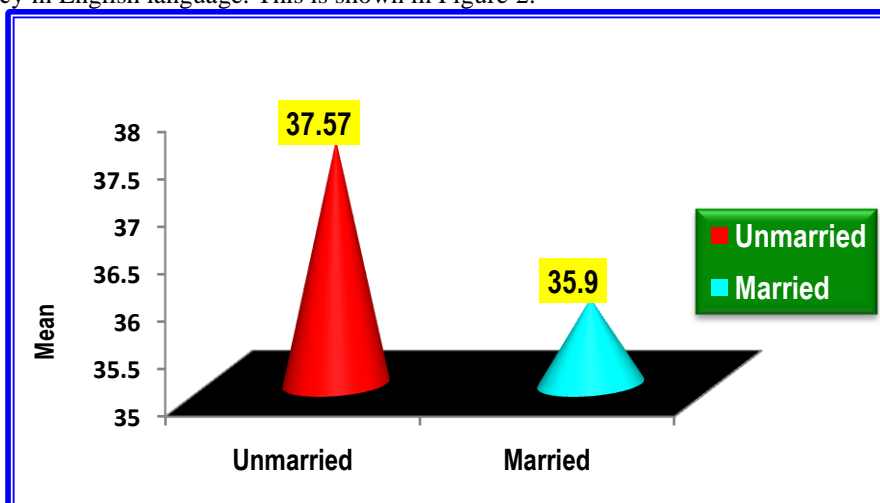

Figure 2: Difference between the unmarried and the married prospective teachers in their proficiency in English language

Hypothesis 3: There is no significant difference between the nuclear family and the joint family prospective teachers in their proficiency in English language.

Table 4: Difference between the Nuclear Family and the Joint Family Prospective Teachers in their Proficiency in English Language

Variable	Type of Family	N	Mean	S.D.	Calculated 't' value	Table Value	Remark
Proficiency in English Language	Nuclear	1296	37.44	9.558	1.61	1.96	Not Significant at 0.05 level
	Joint	109	35.90	9.943			

It is inferred from the above table that the calculated 't' value (1.61) is less than the table value (1.96) at 0.05 level of significance. Hence the respective null hypothesis is accepted. Thus, the result shows that there is no significant difference between the nuclear and the joint family prospective teachers in their proficiency in English language.

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Findings:
- ✓ On analyzing the proficiency in English language of prospective teachers, it is found out that 24.4% of them have low, 52.7% of them have moderate and 22.8% of them have high level of proficiency in English language.
- ✓ There is no significant difference between the male and the female prospective teachers in their proficiency in English language.
- ✓ There is significant difference between the unmarried and the married prospective teachers in their proficiency in English language. While comparing the mean scores of the unmarried (Mean=37.57) and the married prospective teachers (Mean=35.90), the unmarried prospective teachers are better than the married prospective teachers in their proficiency in English language.
- ✓ There is no significant difference between the nuclear and the joint family prospective teachers in their proficiency in English language.

Recommendations:
- ✓ The percentage analysis reveals that the proficiency in English language of majority of the prospective teachers is found to be at an average level. In the context of globalization and internationalization of education, the moderate level is not satisfactory. So efforts should be made from the part of the government and the administrators to improve and raise the level of proficiency in English. The prospective teachers also should take personal interest to improve their standard of English realizing their future responsibility.
- ✓ The study reveals that the married prospective teachers' proficiency in English is lower than the unmarried and so to improve the proficiency level among the married prospective teachers special efforts like conducting intensive crash course may be arranged.

Conclusion:

Successful teachers need to be good at subject content knowledge and instructional language. All teachers need to be fairly good at English for making their students successful in education and in life. "School-leavers who are not adequately trained in English language are always at a handicap in the world of higher education" (NKC: Report to the nation, 2009, P. 27), and if so the teachers who are teaching at present and the prospective teachers who would be teaching should have to be all the more proficient in the use of English. This systematic research work exposes the fact that there is a need to improve the proficiency level of prospective teachers, and moving ahead with an action-driven plan in this direction would be a blessing for the present and future generations of both teachers and students.

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