

FACTORS AFFECTING ENGLISH COMMUNICATION SKILLS AMONG RURAL HIGHER SECONDARY STUDENTS IN DINDIGUL DISTRICT

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Abstract

An investigation of factors that influence the proficiency of students in English in rural areas of Dindigul District, Tamil Nadu, has been undertaken. Factors influencing the English communication skills of higher secondary students in rural areas of Dindigul District, Tamil Nadu. In an increasingly globalized world, proficiency in English is crucial for academic and professional success, yet students in rural contexts often face significant challenges. Employing a descriptive survey method, data were collected through Factors Affecting Communication Skills in English Questionnaire was constructed and developed by investigator from a sample of rural high school students studying in the government, government-aided and private schools in Dindigul district. The findings identify that there is a significant difference in the factors affecting English communication skills with respect to gender. This indicates that male and female students experience different levels of challenges and opportunities in developing English communication. Girls may be more hesitant due to social or cultural factors, while boys may have more exposure to public interaction. Gender-specific strategies may be required to ensure equal language learning opportunities.

Keywords: *Proficiency, Communication, Skills, Gender, Strategies, Challenges, Opportunities.*

Introduction

English competence, particularly speaking ability, is crucial for English majors since it has increasingly crucial, making mastery of speaking skills a primary goal in English language education. Moreover, speaking skills is the one that can fulfill the primary role of a language, which is to communicate; hence, a person who can speak English fluently would find it simple to master English in general. Unfortunately, for people studying English as a second language, speaking is regarded as the most difficult of the four primary English skills, which are speaking, writing, listening, and reading. This study seeks to fill this gap by providing a detailed analysis of the multi-faceted factors affecting English speaking proficiency in this group.

Background of the Study

In today's globalized world, English communication skills are essential for education, employment, and social mobility. However, students from rural areas often face significant challenges in acquiring these skills. Unlike urban students, they have limited exposure to English outside the classroom. Their learning environment, teaching methods, and personal motivation play a crucial role in their ability to develop fluency in English. This study focuses on the factors affecting English communication skills among

rural students in Dindigul District. Many students struggle with speaking and understanding English due to various reasons, which can be categorized into student-related, teacher-related, and classroom-related factors. By identifying these factors, this research aims to suggest possible solutions for improving English communication skills in rural areas.

Need and Significance of the Study

Understanding the challenges they face can help in designing better learning methods. It highlights the role of teachers in improving communication skills. It provides insights that can help in developing policies to improve English education in rural areas. Improving English communication skills can enhance students' confidence, academic performance, and future career opportunities. Therefore, this study will contribute to finding practical solutions for rural students.

Statement of the Problem

English is a global language, and proficiency in it is often linked to better career prospects and higher education opportunities. However, rural students in Tamil Nadu, particularly in Dindigul District, face difficulties in communicating effectively in English. The problem arises due to multiple factors, such as lack of confidence, ineffective teaching methods, and poor classroom resources. The main question this research addresses is: "What are the major factors affecting English communication skills among rural students, and how can they be improved?" This study will examine the major three factors like Students related factor, Teachers related factors and Classroom related factors, in depth and provides recommendations to enhance English learning in rural schools. The research work entitled as "**Factors Affecting Communication Skills in English among Rural Students in Dindigul District**".

Operational Definitions

Factors Affecting Communication Skills in English: The Factors affecting communication skills in English refer to the measurable variables and conditions that influence an individual's ability to effectively express, receive, and interpret messages in the English language. These factors encompass linguistic competence, cognitive abilities, psychological elements, socio-cultural background, educational variables, and environmental conditions that can be systematically observed, assessed, and quantified to determine their impact on English communication proficiency and effectiveness.

Rural Students: Rural high school students are teenagers, typically ages 14-18, who attend secondary schools located in rural areas.

Objectives of the Study

Objectives of the present study are:

- To find out whether there is any significant difference in the Factors affecting communication skills among rural high school students with respect to Gender.

- To find out whether there is any significant difference in the Factors affecting communication skills among rural high school students with respect to Medium.
- To find out whether there is any significant difference in the Factors affecting communication skills among rural high school students with respect to have a separate teacher to teach in English.

Hypotheses of the Study

- There is no significant difference in the Factors affecting communication skills among rural high school students with respect to Gender.
- There is no significant difference in the Factors affecting communication skills among rural high school students with respect to Medium.
- There is no significant difference in the Factors affecting communication skills among rural high school students with respect to have a separate teacher to teach in English.

Methodology

The present study adopts the descriptive survey method as its research approach. Three hundred rural high school students were selected by simple random sampling technique. Mean, Standard Deviation and t-test used to analyze the data.

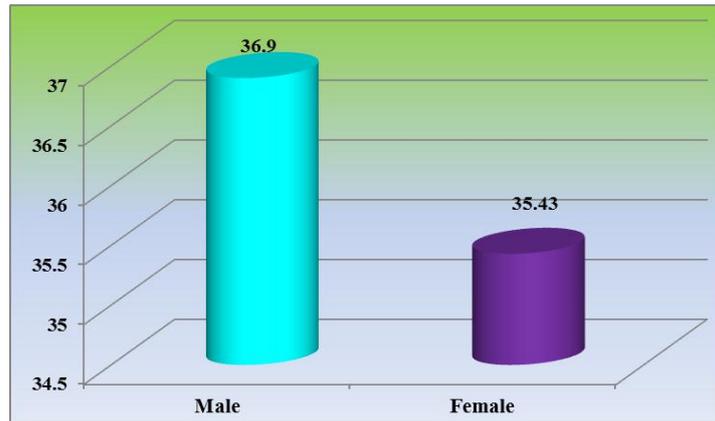
Analysis

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant difference in the Factors affecting communication skills among rural high school students with respect to Gender.

Table 1 Table shows the significant difference in the Factors affecting communication skills in English among rural high school students with respect to Gender

Gender	N	Mean	SD	't' Value	L.S
Male	100	36.90	4.435	2.945	S
Female	200	35.43	3.906		

Figure 1 Figure shows the significant difference between in the Factors affecting communication skills in English among rural high school students with respect to Gender

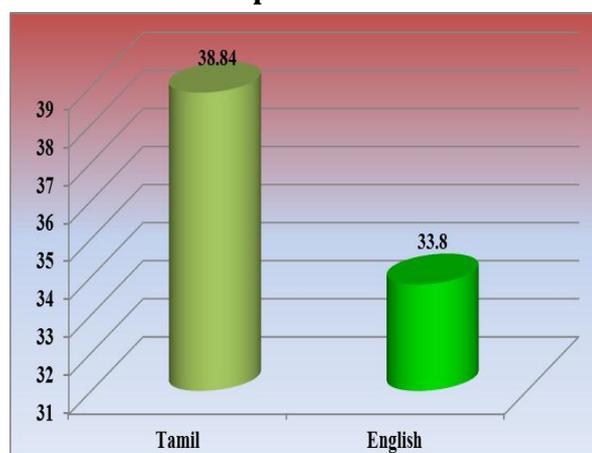


Hypothesis 2: There is no significant difference in the Factors affecting communication skills among rural high school students with respect to Medium.

Table 2 Table shows the significant difference in the Factors affecting communication skills in English among rural high school students with respect to Medium

Medium	N	Mean	SD	't' Value	L.S
Tamil	126	38.84	4.435	13.011	S
English	174	33.80	3.906		

Figure 2 Figure shows the significant difference in the Factors affecting communication skills in English among rural high school students with respect to medium

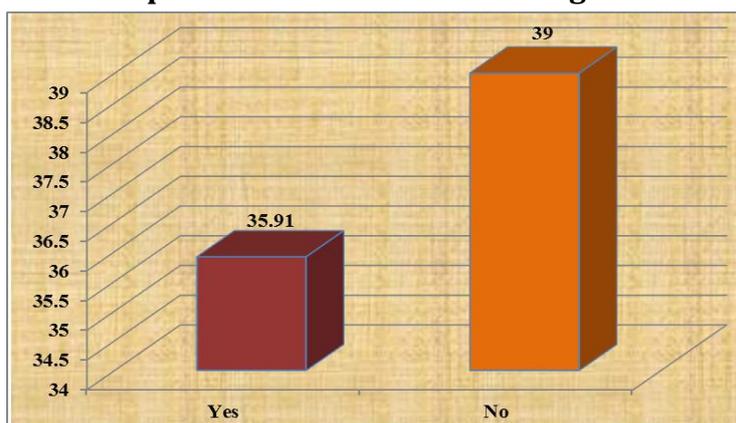


Hypothesis 3: There is no significant difference in the Factors affecting communication skills among rural high school students with respect to have a separate teacher to teach in English.

Table 3 Table shows the significant difference between the Factors affecting communication skills in English among rural high school students with respect to Separate teacher to teach in English

Separate English Teacher	N	Mean	SD	't' Value	L.S
Yes	299	35.91	4.145	-.745	NS
No	1	39.00	0.701		

Figure 3 Figure shows the significant difference between the Factors affecting communication skills in English among rural high school students with respect to Separate teacher to teach in English



Major Findings of the Study

- It is found that there is a significant difference in the factors affecting English communication skills with respect to gender. This indicates that male and female students experience different levels of challenges and opportunities in developing English communication. Girls may be more hesitant due to social or cultural factors, while boys may have more exposure to public interaction. Gender-specific strategies may be required to ensure equal language learning opportunities.
- It is found that there is a significant difference in the factors affecting communication skills based on medium of instruction. Students studying in Tamil medium schools face more challenges in using English confidently compared to English medium students. This is likely due to limited exposure, fewer opportunities to speak in English, and translation dependency. Bridging strategies are necessary to support Tamil medium students, including bilingual materials and remedial English sessions.
- It is found that there is a significant difference in the factors affecting English communication skills among students with respect to the presence of a separate English teacher in school. Students studying in schools where a dedicated English teacher is present showed better development in communication skills compared to those where English is taught by non-specialists or shared subject teachers. A separate English teacher provides focused instruction, consistent language

exposure, and uses appropriate pedagogical strategies suited for language learning. On the other hand, students without such support may receive less structured and less effective language instruction. This finding strongly supports the importance of appointing qualified English teachers in every school, especially in rural areas, to enhance communication skill development in English.

Educational Implications of the Study

- The study's finding that dedicated English teachers significantly improve student communication skills highlights the urgent need for specialized teacher deployment in rural schools. Educational systems should prioritize appointing qualified English language teachers rather than relying on non-specialists or shared subject teachers. This requires comprehensive teacher training programs that focus on English language pedagogy, communication skill development, and age-appropriate teaching methodologies. Additionally, continuous professional development programs should be established to keep English teachers updated with modern language teaching techniques and resources.
- The significant gender differences observed in English communication skill development necessitate the implementation of gender-responsive teaching strategies. Educational programs should address the cultural and social factors that may inhibit girls' participation in English communication activities. This includes creating safe, supportive classroom environments that encourage female students to speak confidently, implementing group activities that promote equal participation, and developing awareness programs that challenge gender stereotypes related to language learning. Teachers should be trained to recognize and address gender-specific barriers to English communication.
- The significant challenges faced by Tamil medium students in developing English communication skills call for a more nuanced approach to bilingual education. Educational policies should support the development of transitional bilingual programs that gradually build English proficiency while maintaining mother tongue competency. This includes creating bilingual learning materials, implementing code-switching strategies in the classroom, and establishing remedial English programs specifically designed for Tamil medium students. Teacher training should emphasize multilingual pedagogical approaches that leverage students' native language skills to enhance English learning.
- Educational policymakers should develop specific guidelines and standards for English communication skill development in rural contexts. This includes establishing minimum requirements for English teacher qualifications, creating standardized assessment tools for communication skills, and implementing regular monitoring and evaluation systems to track student progress.
- The study's findings suggest the need for comprehensive assessment frameworks that evaluate not only academic English skills but also practical communication

abilities. Educational systems should develop assessment tools that measure speaking, listening, and interactive communication skills, moving beyond traditional written examinations. Regular assessment should inform instructional decisions and help identify students who need additional support in developing English communication skills.

Conclusion

The present study investigated the various factors affecting English communication skills among rural high school students in Dindigul District. Based on the statistical analysis conducted several significant findings emerged. The study revealed that gender had a considerable influence on students' communication skills, indicating that male and female students differ in their ability and confidence to communicate in English. The medium of instruction was found to be another key factor, with Tamil medium students facing more challenges in English communication compared to English medium students, suggesting the need for additional support for students from regional language backgrounds. The type of school was also found to significantly affect students' communication skills. Students studying in private schools performed better than those in government and aided schools, possibly due to better exposure, infrastructure, and English-speaking environments in private institutions. Parental educational qualifications played an important role, as students whose parents especially fathers and mothers had higher education levels showed better development in English communication. This suggests that an educated family environment contributes positively to language acquisition.

Furthermore, the occupation of the father had a significant effect on the communication skills of students. Children of fathers engaged in jobs that involved communication or urban exposure tended to perform better, likely due to greater encouragement and awareness at home. These findings collectively indicate that students' language development is influenced not only by school-related factors but also by home environment and socio-economic conditions. The results emphasize the importance of teacher awareness, school support systems, and parental involvement in improving communication skills among rural learners.

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