

EFFECTIVENESS OF SOCIAL COMPETENCIES ON ENGLISH LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

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Abstract:

The importance of the English language in today's interconnected world cannot be overstated. As the dominant language in international business, education, and technology, English proficiency opens doors to global communication and collaboration. Social competence - the ability to interact effectively, manage emotions, and navigate social situations is vital for secondary school students, influencing academic success, peer relationships, and emotional well-being. During adolescence, key social skills like empathy, active listening, teamwork, and conflict resolution help students build positive relationships and leadership qualities. The present study investigates the effect of social competencies on English language acquisition among 9th-grade students in two schools in Bapatla District using a quasi-experimental pre-test post-test design. Eighty students were divided into an experimental group (n=40), which received social competency based intervention for 40 sessions social competency-based intervention incorporating collaborative learning, and a control group (n=40), which followed traditional English instruction. These findings underscore the value of integrating social competencies - such as active listening, collaboration,—into language instruction, highlighting the effectiveness of interactive, student-centered approaches in enhancing both English fluency and interpersonal skills.

Keywords: Social Competencies, English Language Acquisition, Collaborative Learning, Secondary School Students.

INTRODUCTION

Education plays a vital role in a child's social development by nurturing communication, empathy, and cooperation through peer interaction and collaborative learning. It helps children build emotional intelligence, resolve conflicts, and form positive relationships. With over 1.5 billion speakers, it serves as a common medium for cross-cultural interaction and global collaboration. Its widespread use in media, academia, and digital platforms reinforces its importance for personal and professional advancement. English is also the primary language in many universities and international organizations, making it a vital skill in today's globalized world for bridging cultural divides and enhancing opportunities.

Additionally, education shapes identity and civic responsibility by promoting values like tolerance, equality, and social justice, encouraging active participation in community and leadership roles, and fostering socially responsible and informed citizens.

Social Competence of Secondary School Students

Social competence the ability to interact effectively, manage emotions, and navigate social situations is essential for secondary school students, influencing their academic success, peer relationships, and overall well-being (Gresham & Elliott, 1990). During adolescence, skills like empathy, teamwork, and conflict resolution become vital for personal growth and leadership (Wentzel, 2017; Rubin, Bukowski, & Parker, 2015). Research shows that students with strong social-emotional skills perform better academically, have fewer behavioral issues, and enjoy better mental health outcomes (CASEL, 2020; Durlak et al., 2011). Schools play a key role in fostering these skills through SEL programs, collaborative learning, and structured social activities (Elias et al., 1997), helping students build meaningful relationships and thrive in diverse social settings.

Impact of Social Competence on Language Learning

Social competence plays a key role in language learning by enabling effective communication, collaboration, and social interaction. Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory emphasizes that language develops through social engagement, and learners with strong social skills—such as empathy, active listening, and cooperation—are more confident and motivated to participate in meaningful communication (Swain, 2000; Dörnyei, 2005). These skills

enhance fluency by improving the interpretation of social cues and fostering authentic language use (Mercer & Howe, 2012; Ellis, 2008). Collaborative learning environments and task-based interactions support deeper language processing and retention (Gass & Mackey, 2007; Long, 1996). Additionally, social competence reduces language anxiety and helps learners adapt to diverse cultural contexts (Krashen, 1982), making SEL integration in language instruction crucial for both linguistic and interpersonal development (Zins et al., 2004).

Need and Significance of the Study

Acquiring English as a second or foreign language involves more than grammar and vocabulary; it requires effective communication and adaptability in social contexts. Social competencies like empathy, cooperation, and active listening boost learners' confidence and engagement, promoting real-life language use (Dörnyei, 2005; Mercer & Howe, 2012). However, traditional methods often overlook these aspects. This study addresses that gap by exploring the impact of social competencies on English acquisition and advocating for the integration of social-emotional learning (SEL) into language education. The findings can inform educators and policymakers in developing interactive, collaborative, and culturally responsive teaching strategies that enhance fluency, reduce language anxiety, and support communication across diverse settings.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Research shows a strong link between social competence and language learning. Durlak et al. (2011) found that Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) programs significantly improve students' social skills, behavior, and academic performance, aiding language acquisition. Vygotsky (1978) emphasized that language develops through social interaction, with guided support enhancing learning. Dörnyei (2005) highlighted that socially skilled learners show greater motivation and fluency in second language learning due to reduced anxiety and increased engagement. Swain (2000) supported collaborative learning, noting that producing language in group tasks improves fluency and accuracy. Mercer & Howe (2012) found that students involved in structured social interactions, like discussions and debates, developed stronger academic language, suggesting that integrating social skills into English instruction promotes deeper and lasting learning.

Objectives

1. To examine whether there is a significant difference between the pre - test and post test scores of the control group taught using the traditional method with out social competence intervention in English language acquisition.
2. To assess whether there is a significant difference between the pre- test and post test scores of the experimental group receiving social competence intervention in English language acquisition
- 3.To determine whether there is a significant difference in post test scores between the experimental and control groups in English language acquisition.

Hypotheses

1. There would be no significant difference between the pre test and post test scores of control group taught using the traditional method with out social competence intervention in English language.
2. There would be no significant difference between pre test and post test scores of the experimental group receiving social competence intervention in English language acquisition.
3. There would be no significant difference in post-test scores between the experimental and control groups in English language acquisition

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

For The present study two group pre test post test quasi experimental design was used to find out the impact of social competences on English language fluency. A total of 80 secondary school students were considered as a sample and divided into two equal groups the experimental group (n=40), which received a social competency-based intervention, and the control group (n=40), which followed traditional English instruction. The experimental group engaged in collaborative learning strategies, including peer discussions, role-plays, and debates, and received social competency training in skills like active listening, empathy and communication. text book based methods, grammar drills and reading comprehension were also used in intervention.

To measure social competencies and English fluency, with a Social Competency Scale assessing interpersonal skills. Classroom observations, track interaction patterns, focus group discussions and interviews with students and teacher provided qualitative insights.

T test was used to find out the significant difference between pre-test and post-test scores within and between control and experimental groups determining the significance of the social competency-based intervention in enhancing English language fluency.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION:

Table 1. Effect of Traditional method on English Language acquisition in pre and post-test of control group C.

N	Pre-test	Post-test	df	t-value	Result
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40	Mean	S.D	Mean	S.D	39	1.58	Not Significant
	35.82	2.17	36.32	2.32			

Interpretation

A paired-samples t-test was conducted to examine the effect of the traditional method on English language acquisition in the control group (C) by comparing pre-test and post-test scores. The results indicated a statistically no significant improvement in the post-test scores ($M = 36.32$, $SD = 2.32$) compared to the pre-test scores ($M = 35.82$, $SD = 2.17$), $t=1.58$. This suggests that the traditional method had no significant impact on English language acquisition among students in the control group. However, further comparison with the experimental group is required to determine the relative effectiveness of social competence-based interventions. Hence, the formulated hypothesis “There would be no significant difference between the pre-test and post-test scores of the control group taught using the traditional method without social competence intervention in English language acquisition” is accepted.

Table 2. impact of Social competence on English Language acquisition in pre and post-test of Experimental group.

N	Pre-test		Post-test		df	t-value	Result
40	Mean	S.D	Mean	S.D	39	24.295	Significant at 0.01 level
	27.82	2.63	44.2	2.38			

Interpretation

A paired-samples t-test was conducted to evaluate the impact of social competence intervention on English language acquisition in the experimental group by comparing pre-test and post-test scores. The results showed a statistically significant improvement in post-test scores ($M = 44.2$, $SD = 2.38$) compared to pre-test scores ($M = 27.82$, $SD = 2.63$), $t(39) = 24.295$, $p < .01$. This indicates that the social competence-based intervention had a substantial positive impact on English language acquisition, leading to significantly higher language proficiency in the experimental group. Hence the formulated hypothesis “There would be no significant difference between the pre-test and post-test scores of the experimental group receiving social competence intervention in English language acquisition” is rejected.

Table 3: Comparison of Post-Test Scores Between the Experimental and Control Groups in English Language Acquisition

Groups	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t - value	Result
Control group	40	36.32	2.324	14.944	Significant at 0.01 level
Experimental group	40	44.20	2.388		

Interpretation

An independent-samples t-test was conducted to compare the post-test scores of the experimental group (received social competence intervention) and the control group (taught using the traditional method) in English language acquisition. The results revealed a statistically significant difference in post-test scores between the two groups, $t = 14.944$, $p < .01$, with the experimental group ($M = 44.20$, $SD = 2.388$) scoring significantly higher than the control group ($M = 36.32$, $SD = 2.324$). This indicates that the social competence-based intervention had a substantial positive impact on English language acquisition, leading to greater language proficiency compared to traditional instructional methods. Hence the formulated hypothesis “There would be no significant difference in post-test scores between the experimental and control groups in English language acquisition” is rejected.

DISCUSSION

The results demonstrated that the social competence-based intervention significantly enhanced English language acquisition among students in the experimental group. The notable increase in post-test scores suggests that integrating collaborative learning, empathy, and interactive communication exercises played a crucial role in improving fluency and proficiency. The comparison between the experimental and control groups indicates a statistically significant difference in post-test scores, with the experimental group achieving higher proficiency in English language acquisition. This suggests that social competencies, such as active listening, collaboration, empathy, and real-world communication, enhanced language learning more effectively than conventional instructional approaches. These results align with Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory and are further supported by studies emphasizing the role of collaborative learning and peer engagement in fostering meaningful language practice (Swain, 2000; Mercer & Howe, 2012). The significant improvement in the experimental group highlights the importance of integrating social competence training into language education. This suggests that

communicative and interactive learning environments contribute to better language acquisition outcomes compared to traditional, textbook-based methods.

CONCLUSION

The social competencies, such as active listening, collaboration, empathy, and real-world communication, enhanced language learning more effectively than conventional instructional approaches. These results align with Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory and are further supported by studies emphasizing the role of collaborative learning and peer engagement in fostering meaningful language practice. The significant improvement in the experimental group highlights the importance of integrating social competence training into language education. This suggests that communicative and interactive learning environments contribute to better language acquisition outcomes compared to traditional, textbook-based methods.

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