

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

THE EFFECT OF PARENTS' AFFLUENCE ON LEARNER'S ENGLISH SPEAKING SKILLS: A CASE STUDY

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Abstract

This research studies the effect of parents' affluence on a learner's English-speaking skills, a case study based on three higher educational institutions. The prior literature has proved that the parents' affluence significantly impacts learner's language competence, and this research shows the situation with the learners of Advanced Technological Institutions (ATIs). The objective of the study was to examine the relationship between the parents' affluence and the learner's English Language speaking skills. The research population consists of 300 students from ATI Dehiwala, Galle and Kandy, representing five Higher National Diploma courses. A Likert scaled questionnaire and an oral test marks of the students were used to gather data. The data were analyzed using frequency and correlation analysis. The overall results show that the relationship between the parents' affluence and the learner's English Language speaking skills is insignificant, but there is a positive correlation between the two variables.

Keywords: English, affluence, students

1. Introduction

In Sri Lanka, the English language enjoys the role of the second language in schools, colleges and universities. It is also the language of higher education as English is the medium of instruction for higher degree courses today. As the increasing demand for this magical language had also increased the demand for competent learners who are well aware of the English language speaking proficiency. Sri Lanka Institute of Advanced Technological Education (SLIATE) which is established under the Ministry of Higher Education offers Higher National Diplomas throughout nineteen institutions in the country. SLIATE diploma holders have been given a great opportunity to enhance their four language skills as they need to perform individual and group oral presentations often to complete their assignments. Then, the lack of oral competency of the English language was investigated based on irrelevant vocabulary, vague constructions of sentences and the flow of utterances etc. The usage of language for the day to day communication of the diploma holders was varied and the progress of usage in the English language was also unsatisfactory. This situation made the researcher to investigate the prior literature related to factors that focused on lack of speaking competency of English language among adult learners, then, many aspects could be identified which dominate in English language proficiency in developing countries. Then the research focuses on parents' affluence on learner's English-speaking skills as there were few pieces of researches related to the

factor and there were no researches done at the ATIs. Odebumni (2008) and Pishghadam (2011) mentioned the importance of the financial status of parents and its effects on the English Language performance of students. According to Odebumni (2008) finance is the avenue through which the students' bills are paid. If there is a shortage in the student's finance, this will probably affect his/her academic performance adversely. Income tends to be associated with the possibilities of future education, but there are also exceptions and the role of the parents, which is also mentioned in the study by Pishghadam (2011), is crucial to achieve higher education and consequently facilitates the possibility to get a better job and a better social status. In addition, Salameh (2012) examined the connection between parents' financial status and the English language speaking performances in the classroom using the chi-squared test. He pointed out that 'the English language speaking skill was strongly correlated with the effect of being wealthy on one's self-confidence, the effect of being from a well-provided home environment on the student's performance, and the effect of parents' financial wealth on adequate performance in English language' (p.65). Further, the findings show that the majority of the respondents believe that there is a correlation between income and fulfilling basic needs and the effect of money. Therefore, the present study was designed to investigate the effect of parents' affluence on learner's English-speaking skills related to ATI context in Sri Lanka.

2. Methodology

The study was based on qualitative and quantitative methods, and the study sample has consisted of three hundred (300) students from Advanced Technological Institutes, Dehiwala, Galle and Kandy in five higher national diploma courses. The samples were selected randomly from the first-year internal students both male and female. who were following Higher National Diploma in Accountancy (HNDA), HND in Management, HND in Business Administration, HND in Business finance and HND in Information Technology. Those Diploma courses are conducted in English medium, and those students have more opportunities to practice English communication skills. The selected students represent Northern, North Central, North Western, Western, Southern, Central, Sabaragamuwa, Uva and Eastern Provinces in Sri Lanka..Two research instruments were used to collect data. Among them, a five-point Likert scaled questionnaire was given to study the demographic information of the research sample and two Oral assessments were conducted to obtain the marks of the learners. These results of data instruments were imported to Statistical Package for the Social Science (SPSS), and the data were analysed using descriptive analysis and correlation analysis. In the descriptive analysis, the central tendencies like mean median mode and standard deviation were evaluated to describe the set of data, and the correlation analysis was applied to investigate the relationship with parents' affluence on learner's English-speaking skills. These tests were carried out for a five per cent significance level.

3. Data Presentation

3.1 Descriptive Analysis

The descriptive analysis was applied to obtain an overview of the data sample used for the research study. The tables indicate the demographical factors of the research sample. According to table1,

Table 1. Cross Tabulation – Gender-wise

Gender-wise	Male	Female
	40%	60%

60% of students were female in the research sample.

Table 2. Cross Tabulation- Race-wise

Race-wise (%)	Sinhala	Tamil	Muslim
	85%	5.3%	9.7%

Table 2 depicts the research sample in race -wise. Among the students’ population, Sinhala students were enrolled in higher education in ATIs than other two races (85%), and the second-largest population was Muslim, and it was 9.7%.

Table 3. Cross Tabulation – Province-wise

Province-wise (%)	Western	North-central	Southern	Northwest	Sabaragan	Central	Any Other
Percentage	33%	3.3 %	23.7%	7.5%	16.5 %	8%	8%

Table 3 illustrates the province where each student home towns belong to. According to the table, 33% of students from the Western province have been enrolled in Higher education at ATIs, and the Southern province was the second largest where students were enrolled in education, and 16.5% students were from Sabaragamuwa province which was the third largest.

Table 4, the level of monthly income was ranged with consideration to the statistics of Household Income and Expenditure Survey – 2016 by the Department of Census and Statistics in Sri Lanka.

Table 4. Cross Tabulation – Parents’ Monthly Income Level

Financial status (Monthly income)	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Below Rs.20,000	95%	31.7 %
Between20000-30000	116%	38.7 %
Between 30000-50000	67%	22.3%
Above 50000	22	7.3 %
Total	300%	100.0 %

It was investigated from the descriptive statistics that the majority of the parents have received a monthly income between Rs. 20 000 –Rs.30 000, and the percentage is 38.7% and 31.7% have received their monthly income below 20,000 per month. It was also noted that 7.3% have received monthly income over 50,000 rupees.

The oral marks of the research sample were ranged into four categories. It was shown that more than 50% scored marks between 41% -60% marks, and 1.7% of students received marks above 81%. Besides 4% of students have received marks below 40%. These statistics illustrated an idea about the expansion of income among the learner families, and an overview of the data sample used for the research.

Table 5. Cross Tabulation of Marks of In Class Oral Test

Level of Marks	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Between 21-40	12	4.0
Between 41-60	153	50.8
Between 61-80	130	43.2
Above 81	5	1.7
Total	300	99.7

3.2 Correlation Analysis.

The correlation analysis was used to investigate the effect and correlation between parents' affluence and learner's English-speaking skills. The results given below show the mean value and the standard deviation of the parents' monthly income. The significance level was tested at a five per cent significance level.)

Table 6. Cross Tabulation of Correlation and significance level of Variables.

Dependent variable	Correlation	Parent financial status)
Speaking skills	Pearson Correlation	.016
Speaking skills	Sig. (2-tailed)	.79
	Mean	3.6313
	Standard Deviation	.47459

The table illustrates the correlation of the independent variable parents' affluence (financial) status with the dependent variable, English language speaking ability. When looking into the oral test score of the sample population given in the t-test, the mean value and the standard deviation of the parent's financial status and the English-speaking skills were 3.6 and .47 correspondingly. The Pearson correlation between parents' financial status and in-class oral test scores was .016. So, these two variables were positively correlated, but according to the results, the significant value was .79.

4. Results and Discussions

In the descriptive analysis, the monthly income of the parents of the selected sample was assessed. The results illustrated that the majority of students of the selected sample have come from middle-class families whose monthly income rates were moderately at a low level. It was clearly illustrated that more than 60% of families have received a monthly income below Rs.30,000. In the correlation analysis, the results showed that speaking ability is strongly correlated with the effect of income on fulfilling basic needs. In the research, the correlation was .016, as it was less than the significant level. This indicates that there was a relationship between these two variables. It was found out from the research as the majority of the respondents believe that there was a correlation between the financial status of parents when fulfilling their basic needs and the effect of monetary support to enhance the speaking ability. Meanwhile, the impact of parents' financial status on Students English was non-significant according to the research. It was .79, and it is drastically greater than the significant level. These findings highlighted that there was a negative impact on parents' financial position on speaking English. In the literature review, parents' financial status has been highlighted as a significant factor by Odebumni (2008), Pishghadam (2011) and Salameh (2012). They mentioned

that the parents' financial status strongly correlated with their speaking ability. In the study, the majority of students (57% of the total population) believed that there was a correlation between income and fulfilling basic needs and the effect of money on their English language competency, as the parents were wealthy enough, and they were able to find some modern devices, soft wares and more online learning facilities to improve their listening and speaking skills. Salameh (2012) further stated that coming from a wealthy family allows them to invest more energy into an adequate performance in English. This indicates that role of money in enhancing and improving the level and performance in English of students is great. However, these views specified that there was a significantly positive correlation between the parents' affluence and English-speaking ability. The findings of the present study and the previous literature accept that there is a correlation between two variables even though the impact is non-significant in the present study, and the previous literature, it assumed a significantly positive correlation between the two variables.

5. Conclusion

The study proved that there was a correlation between parents' affluence based on the monthly income of the parents on students' English-Speaking skills. Although the parents' affluence was insignificant according to the responses of the students' questionnaire, the variables were perfectly correlated. The previous literature showed that there was a positive significant impact or relationship between the parent's financial status and students' English speaking. This highlights that there are some contradictory views between the two variables. Nevertheless, the overall result of the present study related to the previous literature is that there is an insignificant impact on parents' financial status and students' English-speaking ability. The reasons for the insignificant impact may be related to different reasons. Those reasons were identified from the demographical factors of the students as the student sample was varied from gender wise, race wise province wise and course wise.

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