



Role of English Language Proficiency in Shaping Career Success: A Student Perception Study in Mysuru

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ABSTRACT

In today's globalized world, English language proficiency is widely regarded as a key determinant of career success. This study investigates the perception of degree students in Mysuru regarding the role of English language skills in shaping their professional opportunities and future career growth. A sample of 138 students from various degree colleges was surveyed using a structured questionnaire. The findings reveal that a significant majority perceive English proficiency as essential for securing jobs, performing well in interviews, and communicating effectively in the workplace. Students also identified gaps in their language training and expressed the need for more practical exposure. The study concludes with recommendations for integrating English communication training into undergraduate programs to enhance employability. This research aims to provide valuable insights to educators, policymakers, and career guidance professionals in improving language education for career readiness.



Introduction

Background of the Study

In the 21st-century knowledge economy, communication skills—particularly proficiency in the English language—have become vital for academic growth, employment opportunities, and career advancement. As English continues to be the lingua franca in global business, education, science, and technology, it plays a crucial role in shaping the career paths of young graduates, especially in developing nations like India. Students with strong English language skills often find themselves better equipped to face interviews, work in multinational environments, and access a wider range of learning and networking resources.

In India, where English is not the first language for the majority, but is a key medium in higher education and corporate settings, students face unique challenges in acquiring fluency. Despite completing degree programs, many students lack confidence in spoken and written English, which often becomes a barrier to entering competitive job markets. Hence, English proficiency is not just a language skill—it is a strategic tool for empowerment, employability, and upward social mobility.

Importance of English in the Global Job Market

Globally, English is the most widely used language in international business communication, diplomacy, technology, and academia. Most multinational corporations and leading organizations list English fluency as a key requirement for hiring. The rise of outsourcing, freelancing, remote work, and global education opportunities further underscores the need for English proficiency.

A lack of English skills can limit a graduate's career to regional or low-paying roles, while competence in English opens doors to national and international opportunities. Recruiters often assess not only technical knowledge but also communication skills—including clarity, confidence, and command over English—during job interviews. Therefore, English language proficiency is now synonymous with professional competence and personal branding in the modern workforce.

Rationale for Conducting the Study in Mysuru

Mysuru, a heritage city and emerging educational hub in Karnataka, hosts several government and private degree colleges attracting students from both rural and urban areas. While the city is rich in cultural and



academic traditions, students often represent diverse socioeconomic backgrounds with varying exposure to English.

Conducting this study in Mysuru allows for an understanding of student perceptions across a mixed demographic. It also helps to assess how institutional support, medium of instruction, and local environment influence English proficiency and its perceived role in career development. The findings can provide useful insights for local policymakers, college administrators, and placement officers to bridge the language-employability gap.

Objectives of the Study

The study aims to:

1. Assess the level of English language proficiency among degree students in Mysuru.
2. Understand students' perceptions regarding the importance of English in securing and succeeding in careers.
3. Identify key challenges faced by students in learning or using English effectively.
4. Provide recommendations to enhance English communication skills for career readiness.

Research Questions

To achieve the above objectives, the study addresses the following key questions:

1. What is the self-assessed proficiency level of students in English-speaking, reading, writing, and listening?
2. How do students perceive the importance of English in job interviews and workplace communication?
3. What challenges do students face in improving their English language skills?
4. What institutional or external support do students find effective in enhancing their English proficiency?

2. Review of Literature

2.1 The Role of English in Employability and Career Advancement



English language proficiency has long been recognized as a critical factor in enhancing employability, particularly in countries like India where English serves as a second language and a medium of higher education. According to Graddol (2010), English acts as a global currency in the job market, providing individuals with access to cross-border employment and higher positions within organizations. Employers often prioritize candidates with strong communication skills in English, viewing it as a sign of professionalism, adaptability, and competence.

Various studies (e.g., Rao, 2017; Sharma & Jain, 2019) confirm that graduates with better English proficiency tend to perform well in interviews, adapt quickly in multilingual environments, and are more likely to be promoted. With the IT and service sectors being major employment providers in India, fluency in English has become not just an advantage but a necessity.

2.2 Student Perceptions in Similar Regional/National Studies

Multiple research studies have focused on student perceptions of English language skills in relation to their career goals. For example, a study by Joshi (2018) in Gujarat revealed that over 75% of final-year students believed English fluency was crucial for landing jobs in the private sector. Another study by Kamat & Nayak (2020) conducted in coastal Karnataka highlighted that rural students felt significantly underprepared in English, which they viewed as a major barrier to cracking interviews.

In southern states like Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh, students have shown a positive attitude toward learning English when linked with employability (Reddy, 2021). However, most students report inadequate speaking practice, lack of confidence, and limited institutional support as key constraints.

2.3 Communication Skills and Professional Success

Effective communication encompasses not only language fluency but also clarity, tone, confidence, and body language—all of which contribute to professional success. According to Verma (2015), English communication skills directly influence how employees interact with clients, team members, and superiors, especially in multinational workspaces.

Research by Bhatnagar & Mehta (2019) concluded that English-speaking employees were more likely to be assigned leadership roles, client-facing tasks, and international projects. Communication skills,



therefore, not only improve the chances of being hired but also help in career progression and networking.

2.4 Gaps in Existing Research

While numerous studies have examined the importance of English in higher education and employment, there is a lack of focused research that captures student perceptions in mid-tier cities like Mysuru, where students from both rural and urban backgrounds converge. Most existing literature tends to generalize findings at a national level, overlooking local variations in exposure, access, and attitudes toward English education.

Furthermore, limited studies have attempted to link students' self-assessed language proficiency with their actual career aspirations or the role of college-level support systems in enhancing English skills. There is also insufficient research on how students leverage digital platforms and informal learning methods (e.g., YouTube, online courses, mobile apps) to improve English proficiency in the absence of formal training.

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This study adopts a **descriptive and survey-based research design** to explore and analyze student perceptions of the role of English language proficiency in career success. The descriptive approach helps in capturing the existing conditions, opinions, and attitudes of students related to English communication skills. A survey method was chosen for its effectiveness in collecting standardized information from a large group of respondents within a short period.

3.2 Population and Sample

The target population of the study consists of undergraduate students enrolled in various degree programs (B.A, B.Com, B.Sc, BBA) in colleges across **Mysuru city**. A total of **138 students** participated in the study, representing a diverse mix of disciplines, years of study, and socio-economic backgrounds.

The selected sample reflects students from both **rural and urban** regions, helping to understand how geographic and educational backgrounds impact their perception of English proficiency.



3.3 Sampling Method

For this study, **convenience sampling** was primarily used due to accessibility and time constraints. However, care was taken to ensure representation from different courses, years of study, and gender groups, making the sample reasonably stratified. Students from at least four degree colleges were approached to complete the questionnaire voluntarily.

3.4 Data Collection Tool

The main instrument used for data collection was a **structured questionnaire**, divided into four sections:

1. **Demographic Details** (gender, course, background, etc.)
2. **Self-assessment of English proficiency** in speaking, listening, reading, and writing (using a 5-point Likert scale)
3. **Perception statements** related to the importance of English in career development (also measured on a 5-point Likert scale)
4. **Open-ended questions** regarding challenges and suggestions

The questionnaire was pilot-tested on a small group of students to ensure clarity and relevance.

3.5 Data Analysis Methods

The collected data were analyzed using **descriptive statistical tools** such as:

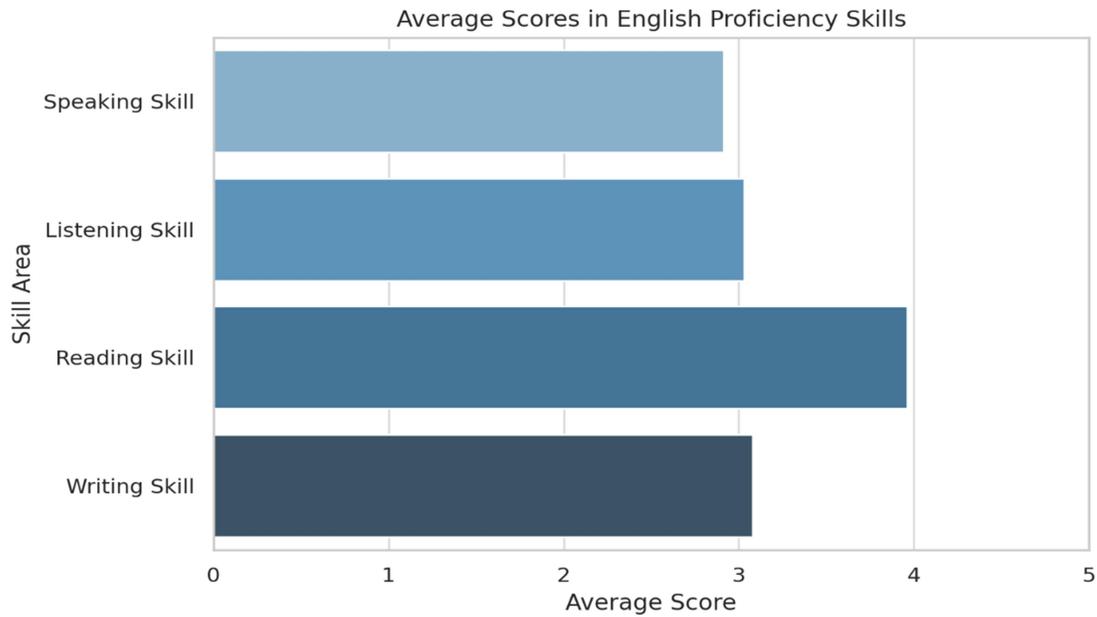
- **Percentages and frequencies** (for demographics and responses)
- **Mean and standard deviation** (to understand central tendency and variation in perceptions and skill ratings)

The data were processed using **Microsoft Excel** for summary statistics and chart visualizations.

4. Data Analysis and Interpretation

4.1 English Proficiency Self-Assessment

The following chart No. 1 shows the **average self-assessed scores** (on a 5-point scale) across four core English skills:

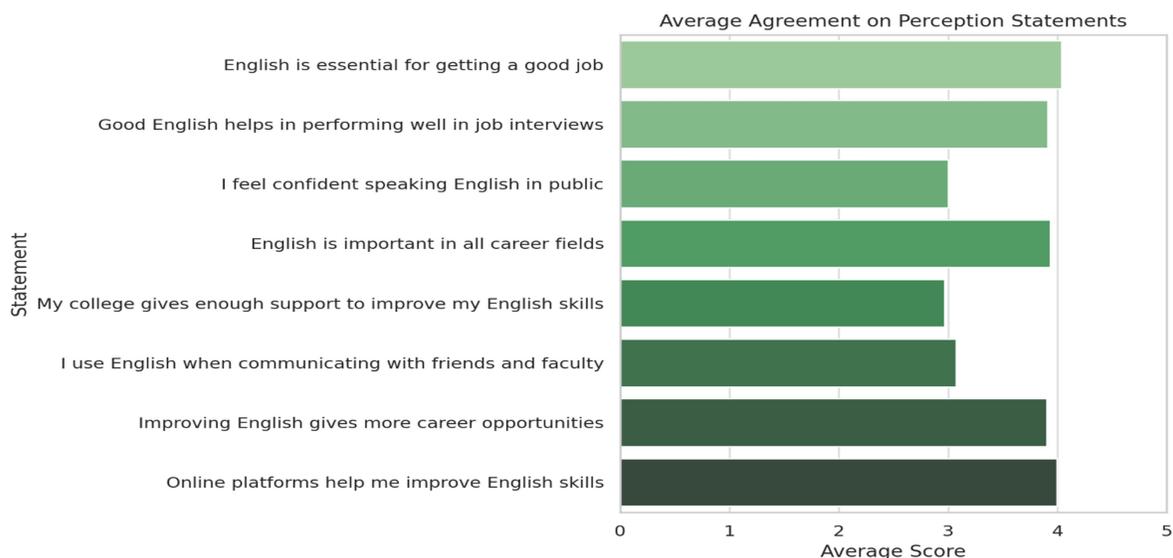


Interpretation:

- **Reading** received the highest average score (≈ 3.96), indicating that students are more confident in understanding written content.
- **Speaking** received the lowest average score (≈ 2.91), highlighting a significant gap in oral communication.
- Both **Listening** (≈ 3.03) and **Writing** (≈ 3.08) scored moderately, suggesting room for improvement in interactive and formal communication.

4.2 Perception of English and Career Success

The chart no. 2 below displays the **average agreement levels** for various perception statements:





Interpretation:

- The strongest agreement was for:
 - “*English is essential for getting a good job*” (≈ 4.04)
 - “*Online platforms help me improve English skills*” (≈ 3.99)
 - “*English is important in all career fields*” (≈ 3.93)
- Lower agreement was seen in:
 - “*I feel confident speaking English in public*” (≈ 3.00)
 - “*My college gives enough support...*” (≈ 2.97)

This suggests that while students **recognize the importance of English**, they **lack speaking confidence** and feel **institutional support is inadequate**.

4.3 Demographic-Based Insights (Summary)

- **Gender:** 77 Female, 61 Male students – allows for gender-based comparisons.
- **Background:** 78 Rural, 60 Urban – rural students may face more exposure challenges.
- **Course Distribution:** BBA (45), B.Com (37), B.A (29), B.Sc (27) – business students likely to prioritize English more.

5. Findings and Discussion

5.1 Key Findings

1. English Proficiency Levels

- The self-assessment scores indicate that students are **most confident in reading (avg. 3.96)**, followed by **writing (3.08)** and **listening (3.03)**.
- **Speaking skill** received the **lowest average score (2.91)**, suggesting that most students feel underprepared or hesitant to speak in English.

2. Perceptions about English and Career Success

- A large majority of students **strongly agreed** that English is essential for:
 - **Getting a job (4.04 average score)**



- **Succeeding in interviews (3.91)**
- **Enhancing career opportunities (3.90)**
- Students acknowledged the role of **online platforms (3.99)** in improving their English, showing a shift toward digital learning outside the classroom.

3. Barriers and Institutional Support

- Students showed **low agreement** on feeling confident speaking English in public (3.00), which aligns with the low speaking skill score.
- The statement “*My college gives enough support to improve English skills*” scored **below neutral (2.97)**, indicating a perceived lack of structured support or resources within the institution.

4. Demographic Observations

- A substantial portion of students come from **rural backgrounds (56%)**, which may contribute to reduced English exposure.
- **Business and commerce students (BBA and B.Com)** showed slightly higher proficiency levels and positive perceptions, possibly due to career demands in corporate sectors.

5.2 Discussion

The findings reinforce the idea that **English language skills are closely linked with career aspirations**, as echoed in studies by Rao (2017) and Joshi (2018). Students clearly understand the importance of English for professional growth, especially in urban centers like Mysuru that are evolving into educational and service industry hubs.

However, the **gap between awareness and confidence** is evident. Despite recognizing the value of English, students—particularly from rural or non-English medium backgrounds—struggle with fluency, especially in speaking. This observation supports the findings of Kamat & Nayak (2020), who noted similar challenges among rural degree students in Karnataka.

Interestingly, students increasingly rely on **online platforms** (YouTube, mobile apps, MOOCs) for language development. This indicates a shift toward **self-driven digital learning**, which can be tapped into through institutional support and blended learning models.



The perception that **colleges do not provide enough practical training** in communication reveals a significant **gap in curriculum delivery**. While English may be taught as a subject, it is not necessarily taught as a **skill**, and this is where students feel underprepared for real-world scenarios like interviews and presentations.

6. Recommendations

Based on the findings and analysis, the following actionable recommendations are proposed to enhance English language proficiency and bridge the employability gap among degree students in Mysuru:

6.1 For Educational Institutions

- **Introduce practical English communication labs** that emphasize spoken English, group discussions, presentations, and mock interviews.
- Integrate **industry-oriented communication modules** in all degree programs to prepare students for real-world workplace situations.
- Organize **English-speaking clubs, debate forums, and theatre activities** to build confidence in public speaking.
- Provide access to **language learning software and mobile apps** through digital libraries or partnerships.
- Conduct regular **career-readiness workshops** in collaboration with placement cells, focusing on resume writing, email etiquette, and professional interaction.

6.2 For Faculty and Curriculum Developers

- Shift the focus from grammar-heavy instruction to **skill-based learning** that encourages usage and fluency.
- Use **task-based language teaching (TBLT)** and **blended learning** approaches that combine classroom learning with digital tools.
- Encourage **peer-learning strategies**, where students with better proficiency support others through informal sessions.

6.3 For Students

- Engage in **self-learning** using platforms like YouTube, Coursera, and Duolingo to improve listening and speaking.
- Practice **daily spoken English** with peers or through mobile apps.



- Watch English news, documentaries, and movies with subtitles to improve both comprehension and pronunciation.

6.4 For Policymakers and Placement Officers

- Frame policies to ensure **language skill-building is a core part of employability training** in degree colleges.
- Support **teacher training programs** to equip faculty with modern, communicative teaching methodologies.
- Encourage **industry-academia collaboration** to bridge expectations between employers and educational institutions.

7. Conclusion

This study highlights the critical role English language proficiency plays in shaping the career prospects of undergraduate students in Mysuru. The results indicate that students are well aware of the significance of English for job opportunities, career progression, and workplace communication. However, gaps in institutional support, low confidence in spoken English, and a lack of practical training hinder their readiness for the competitive job market.

While students show eagerness to learn and often turn to online platforms for self-improvement, there is a strong need for structured, skill-oriented English education at the college level. With coordinated efforts from educators, administrators, and students themselves, the English proficiency barrier can be effectively addressed—thereby empowering students with the communication skills they need for success in a globalized world.

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