A COMPARATIVE STUDY ON THE INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION SKILLS AMONG LANGUAGE TEACHERS OF GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS

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ABSTRACT

Interpersonal communication is a face to face communication in which people exchange information, thoughts and feelings. It may be either verbal or non-verbal. Interpersonal communication skills are crucial for every facet of life. These skills are really essential for teachers and especially language teachers to help students achieve the objectives of learning and to impart instruction to them. This research has been undertaken to find out the interpersonal skills of language teachers working in government schools with their students and also compare the interpersonal skills of English and Tamil teachers. 75 schools teachers were selected and were administered the Interpersonal Communication Skills questionnaire prepared by the investigators. The collected data were analyzed using percentage analysis and t-test. The results showed that Tamil language teachers demonstrate better interpersonal skills than the English Teachers. Hence the study recommends the urgent need to contextualize English Language in everyday living. English should not be taught as a subject but as language for communication.

INTRODUCTION

Interpersonal communication skills affect individual experience and improve individual and group outcomes in life and work. On a fundamental level, interpersonal communication plays an important role in fulfilling several basic human needs, like the need to establish a sense of belongingness, need for competence and the need for autonomy. The ability to communicate effectively with others enables a person to work more successfully both formally as in a work place and informally as in social situations. Being able to communicate well with others will make one develop life skills such as decision making and problem solving in both professional and personal lives. Interpersonal communication is the process by which people exchange information, feelings, and meaning through verbal and non-verbal messages: it is face-to-face
communication. Interpersonal Communication is not just about what is actually said -the language used-but how it is said and the non-verbal messages sent through tone of voice, facial expressions, gestures and body language. This study had focused on the interpersonal communication skills of teachers with the students. Teachers are expected to have good interpersonal communication skills with their students which in turn foster a good rapport with the students that is vital for effective learning.

NEED AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Teachers are expected to be the organizer, instructor, speaker, facilitator, guide, entertainer and problem solver. Teachers need to possess a number of skills in the teaching profession such as communication, empathy, positive motivation, effective and positive body language and humor. Teachers need excellent communication skills to succeed in their profession. Strong interpersonal skills, especially communication, are the hallmark of a teacher. Teaching is fifty percent knowledge and the other fifty percent interpersonal skills. The quality of a teacher’s lecture or teaching methods will be enhanced by the quality of their interpersonal skills. Interpersonal skills are those which help a person communicate well. Interpersonal means when the communication takes place between two individuals, then the communication is said to be interpersonal. Communication can take place in any form like verbally, non-verbally, through gestures, through eye movements, different postures and so on. This is a unique study undertaken to find out the interpersonal communication skills of teachers and especially language teachers working in Government Schools. This study also compares the interpersonal skills of both English and Tamil teachers. This study will definitely serve as a link in bridging the gap in the existing body of knowledge regarding the interpersonal skills of teachers.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To find out if there exists any significant difference in the interpersonal communication skills of English and Tamil teachers.
2. To find out if there exists any significant difference in the interpersonal communication skills of English and Tamil teachers based on their gender and educational qualification.
NULL HYPOTHESES OF THE STUDY

1. There is no significant difference between the English and Tamil teachers in their interpersonal communication skills.
2. There is no significant difference between the English and Tamil teachers in their interpersonal communication skills based on their gender and educational qualification.

METHODOLOGY

The investigators prepared an Interpersonal Communication Skills questionnaire adapting the Interpersonal Communication Skills inventory developed by Learning Dynamics 2002. The tool consisted of 23 questions with options always, often, sometimes, rarely and never. The questionnaire was administered on 75 teachers teaching Tamil or English language in government schools. The collected data were analyzed using percentage analysis and t-test.

POPULATION AND SAMPLE

The population for the present study is the teachers working in government schools. The sample for the present study consisted of 75 teachers working in government schools.

DATA ANALYSIS

Null Hypothesis 1

There is no significant difference between the English and Tamil teachers in their interpersonal communication skills.

Table 1

SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCE BETWEEN ENGLISH AND TAMIL TEACHERS IN THEIR INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION SKILLS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language of Teachers</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Calculated t value</th>
<th>Remarks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>96.21</td>
<td>8.44</td>
<td>2.22</td>
<td>Significant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tamil</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>101.50</td>
<td>12.12</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Table t value is 1.96)
Since the calculated t-value (2.22) is greater than the table value (1.96), it is found that there is a significant difference between the English and Tamil teachers in their interpersonal skills. By comparing their mean scores it is clear that the Tamil teachers have more interpersonal communication skills than the English teachers.

**Null Hypothesis 2**

There is no significant difference between the English and Tamil teachers in their interpersonal communication skills based on their gender and educational qualification.

**Table 2**

**SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCE BETWEEN ENGLISH AND TAMIL TEACHERS IN THEIR INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION SKILLS BASED ON THEIR GENDER AND EDUCATIONAL QUALIFICATION**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Language of Teachers</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Calculated t value</th>
<th>Remark</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>101.67</td>
<td>9.45</td>
<td>0.24</td>
<td>Not Significant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Tamil</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>101.50</td>
<td>14.4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>95.74</td>
<td>8.34</td>
<td>2.32</td>
<td>Significant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Tamil</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>101.50</td>
<td>11.30</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational</td>
<td>UG</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>96.25</td>
<td>7.27</td>
<td>0.43</td>
<td>Not Significant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qualification</td>
<td></td>
<td>Tamil</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>98.30</td>
<td>13.72</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>PG</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>96.21</td>
<td>8.67</td>
<td>2.89</td>
<td>Significant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Tamil</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>103.58</td>
<td>10.72</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table t value is 1.96*

Since the calculated t-values (2.32, 2.98) are greater than the table value (1.96) it is found that there is significant difference in the interpersonal communication skills of English and Tamil female teachers and the postgraduate teachers. The calculated t values (0.24, 0.43) is less than the table value, indicates that there is no significant difference in the interpersonal skills of male teachers and also among the undergraduate teachers.

**FINDINGS**

1. There is a significant difference between the English and Tamil teachers in their interpersonal communication skills.
2. There is a significant difference in the interpersonal communication skills of English and Tamil female teachers.

3. There is no significant difference in the interpersonal communication skills of English and Tamil male teachers.

4. There is no significant difference in the interpersonal communication skills of English and Tamil undergraduate teachers.

5. There is a significant difference in the interpersonal communication skills of English and Tamil postgraduate teachers.

DISCUSSION

From the analysis it is found that there is a significant difference between the English and Tamil teachers in their interpersonal communication skills. By comparing their mean scores it is clear that the Tamil teachers have more interpersonal communication skills.

The analysis reveals a significant difference in the interpersonal communication skills of female language teachers. The mean scores reveal that the female Tamil teachers have more interpersonal communication skills than the female English teachers. It is also found that there exists a significant difference in the interpersonal communication skills of postgraduate language teachers in which again the Tamil teachers excel.

By analyzing the significant differences in all cases it is clear that the Tamil teachers have developed better interpersonal communication skills with the students than the English teachers. Tamil being the mother tongue of both teachers and students may be the reason for the significant difference. English being a second language may be a major limitation for the development of interpersonal skills among the English teachers and Tamil being the mother tongue may have increased the interpersonal communication skills of the Tamil teachers with their students. Communication through mother tongue is effortless and natural. Conversations in English are not comprehended clearly by the listener due to which there is a greater chance for unsuccessful communication. Though English teachers are excellent in teaching their subject, they may lack interpersonal communication skills since they use a second language as a medium of instruction. Also the teachers working in government schools themselves are not that much proficient in the usage of oral English language.
RECOMMENDATIONS

This study has found that the Tamil teachers have better interpersonal communication skills with the students than the English teachers. Tamil being the mother tongue of both the teachers and the students, Tamil teachers have developed a better interpersonal skills with the students. Unless otherwise the communication skill in English is improved the interpersonal skills of English teachers with their students cannot be developed. Hence the study recommends an urgent need to improve the English communication skill of students as well as the teachers. Communication skills in English can be developed by contextualizing English Language in everyday living. English should not be looked as a subject restricted to the 40 minutes class sessions but it should be taught as a language which could be used for communication right from the childhood. Rather than focusing more on the academic subjects and pedagogical practices, the in-service training programmes conducted for teachers should focus more on enhancing the interpersonal communication skills of teachers with students. Many are of the strong belief that an English teacher at any cost should avoid using mother tongue in their classroom teaching. Such beliefs could be altered and English teachers can use mother tongue to help students in learning new vocabulary and explaining complex ideas and grammar rules so that they could comprehend the language better. This does not necessarily mean that English must be taught through mother tongue. But Mother tongue can be used to explain difficult concepts to aid students’ understanding. Contextualizing the language can be done in classrooms through the use of visuals to enable the students understand the concept by the display of photographs or drawings. Government should take the initiatives to design subject books in such a way that the technical terms involved should also be mentioned in English. There is a need to differentiate between words which are commonly used (in the mother tongue) and terms which require explanation. Evaluations should be designed in such a way that students are encouraged to learn both the vernacular and their English translations simultaneously by which contextualization of the language can easily be achieved. These measures could definitely improve the communication skills of students as well as the teachers which in turn may contribute to the development of interpersonal communication skills of English teachers with their students.

CONCLUSION
Apart from being competent in the subject they teach, the teachers should have excellent interpersonal communication skills. Interpersonal communication skills are highly essential for teachers to communicate the message, make the concept clear and to keep the class lively. This study concludes that it is high time to develop the interpersonal communication skills among teachers and especially language teachers through in-service training programmes. Language should be seen as a medium of communication rather than a subject with concepts.

REFERENCE


