



ISSN Print: 2394-7500
ISSN Online: 2394-5869
Impact Factor: 5.2
IJAR 2017; 3(11): 152-156
www.allresearchjournal.com
Received: 24-09-2017
Accepted: 25-10-2017

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Learning difficulties in English writing among socially disadvantaged elementary school students in relation to their intelligence

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Abstract

The present study explored the learning difficulties in English writing among socially disadvantaged elementary school students in relation to their intelligence. Researcher conducted this study to explore that which intelligence group i.e. (high or average intelligence group) among elementary school socially disadvantaged students have more learning difficulties in English writing. For this purpose, descriptive survey method was used by researcher. A sample of 1600 socially disadvantaged elementary school students (800 male and 800 female) were randomly selected. On the basis of scores obtained on RSPM students were divided into high and average intelligence group. After, that test to assess the learning difficulties in English writing was administered; t-test was used to find out the significant differences. Results of the study showed that both male and female students with high intelligence were significantly better in English writing as compared to the students with average intelligence. Students with average intelligence have more English writing difficulties as compared to high intelligence students. Further, results of this study didn't present any significant differences in LD's of male and female students in high intelligence group and in average intelligence group.

Keywords: LD - learning difficulties, RSPM - Raven's standard progressive matrices

1. Introduction

Learning brings change in behaviour. In the process of learning, there is an interaction between the instructor, learner and learning material. Elementary education is considered as the foundation stone of entire education system. The significance of this concept was realized even before independence, and thus got due recognition in the constitution since then. As education is the key factor in the development of any nation, the government of India spends a lot in development of elementary education in terms of schools, infrastructure and human resources. Despite the huge investment in terms of amount, time and efforts, Indian schools, in general have not moved towards achieving the goal of learning as expected.

Children with special abilities and disabilities can be found in any normal classroom. One can recognize able children generally as talented or gifted or children with specific abilities. On the other hand, there are children having physical disabilities such as visual impairment, hearing impairment and orthopedically handicapped and children with mental deficiencies or retardation.

Importance of learning English is being realized by almost all the status in time with the teaching of English language has been introduced from class I. English is the 'Most widely used language' of the world. A vital purpose behind considering English as a worldwide dialect is that the world's learning is typically protected in English. It is a cutting edge and in vogue dialect so a great many people utilize it. Along these lines, English is the most favoured dialect even in the areas where the neighbourhood dialect should be as critical as the way of life. The instance of India is the correct illustration. There are numerous different countries in which English will assume monstrously critical part in the general advancement of the nation (Yule, 1990) [32].

The whole world is hierarchically organized and each stratum of this hierarchy is defined by different group or caste of people that constitute it. Poverty, deficit resources, cultural primitiveness, social disadvantages and lack of opportunities for self improvement constitute the lowest stratum of the Indian society. People belonging to lower castes, despite being

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intelligent, hard working and honest, were considered inferior as compared to upper class. Tremendous changes have taken place since independence in India. Children of disadvantaged groups have never gained attention in our country as they are still deprived of many facilities which are provided to children belonging to upper class or unreserved groups.

2. Learning Difficulties in English Writing

Writing is a means of self-expression since traditional times as it involves amalgamation of individual's cognitive, affective and psychomotor domain. Academic studies and papers of students are represented by the means of writing only. Students with good handwriting score good grades as compared to other students. Writing papers in a way provides a feedback to the teachers of how much content students have learnt after being taught by them. As the Indian examination system demands written presentation by the students, the ability to write efficiently at an age-appropriate level therefore becomes a necessity. Due to one or the other reason many children find it difficult to acquire writing skills and hence it affects their academic performance. Written language comprises of three major areas- written expression spelling and handwriting. When students find it difficult to coordinate the visual information and motor skills a handwriting disorder occurs which is termed as Dysgraphia. In such a situation students are unable to write letters, numbers or words correctly (Sharma, 2006) [22].

2.1 Need for Identification of Learning Difficulties in English Writing

In order to move on the path of progress and to compete at secondary level of education, students with learning difficulties need to combat a number of challenges. This task is not an easy one and hence requires proper support of teachers who can identify the learner's problems or difficulties while teaching. Because a teacher deals with a number of students with different intelligence levels he/she can surely identify the learning difficulty among them. According to Smith (1966) [24] some children may have writing difficulties but at the same time may show quite good performance orally in other subjects, and may come across difficulty in gaining literacy or mathematical skills. Such an experience often leads to low self-esteem and lack of confidence among students. Sometimes when a teacher is unable to diagnose the learning difficulty among the students, he/she may feel incompetent. The teacher may at times not recognize why the student is not doing well in the class. In such situations other students in the class may feel avoided which results in their aggrieved behaviour.

2.2 Identification of Individuals with Learning Difficulties in English

Individuals may reveal certain characteristics in one form or the other like:

- Weak oral Language including
- Need to re-ask questions that have already been answered.
- Spelling problems
- Inability to understand cause and effect
- Reading problems
- Unable to respond to explanations given in language

- Unable to catch the main inferences from television shows despite of being given details
- Lack of Arithmetic accuracy
- Delayed speech or language
- Poor concentration-easily distracted or fatigued
- Inability to think in abstract terms
- Weak expressive language
- Weak auditory memory and poor at following directions
- Weak writing skills
- Loses attention quickly in conversation or lectures
- Poor organization of the content
- Impulsiveness
- Difficulty remembering multiplication tables or other rote memory tasks
- Difficulty in making decisions (Smith, 1966) [24].

3. Intelligence

Intelligence is a construct in psychology, which is an internal human process that cannot be measured, observed or touched directly. It can only be inferred from its visible results. Traditionally intelligence is a sense or ability to do well in subject and related activities in a school situation. The dictionary meaning of intelligence is the capacity to apply and acquire the knowledge. Intelligence is a descriptive concept which represents theoretical dimensions, which may vary from very low to very high value. In frequent usage the word intelligence is associated with the general behaviour of an individual so that it becomes synonymous with brilliance and being brainy. Intelligence is the general mental ability of the individual. It refers to an ability to deal with abstractions, to learn and to solve problems. In general, intelligence conveys three messages:

- Ability to adjust
- Ability to learn
- Ability to carry on abstract thinking

Binet (1905) [3] stated that intelligence lies in direction, comprehension and invention censorship.

Stern (1914) [27] defined intelligence as a general capacity of an individual consciously to adjust his/her thinking to new requirements. It is the general mental adaptability to new conditions and problems of life.

Mangal (1990) [15] explains intelligence as a sort of mental energy in the form of mental or cognitive abilities available with an individual to enable him to handle his environment in terms of adaptation and facing problematic situations as effectively as possible.

To Feldman (1997) [11] intelligence is the capacity to think rationally, understand the word and use resources effectively when faced with challenges.

4. Review of Related Literature

Research studies conducted by Spector (1980) [25]; Feagans and McKinney (1986) [10] Slate and Saudargas (1986) [23]; Al-Arfaj (1996) [1]; Ryu (1997) [19]; Ellsasser (2001) [8]; Chao (2003) [4]; Fageeh (2003) [9]; Venugopal (2005) [29]; Viel-Ruma (2008) [30]; Zghyer (2014) [33]; Zhang (2016) [34]; Angel Adaros (2017) [2] and Chen (2017) [5] on learning difficulties in English writing and reading expression, it is quite evident that these difficulties arise due to students' disabilities in learning, low Interest and inattentiveness in the class.

Intelligence is an important factor and has close association with the academic performance of the students. Various

researchers conducted studies on intelligence and its effect on the performance of learner. Research studies conducted by Dunn *et al.* (1995) [7]; Fox *et al.* (1999) [12]; Frank and John (2000) [14]; Salgado *et al.* (2003) [20]; Deary *et al.* (2004) [6]; Frank and John (2004) [13]; Robert *et al.* (2005) [18]; Naderi *et al.* (2008) [16]; Govindan and Visvathan (2009) [31]; Vander Ploeg (2012) [28] and Sesadeba (2014) [21] on intelligence and achievements of elementary and secondary school students, or various other learners with different variables established a positive relationship between the intelligence and variables achievements.

5. Rationale of the Study

There is unanimous agreement among educationist today, that the quality of elementary education in almost all parts of our country is poor. In India, the number of children with learning difficulties in schools is significantly high but very few children are identified. As the difficulty is not conspicuous and some characteristics overlap with other conditions such as borderline intelligence, many a time, the educators and administrators are in a fix to decide whom to include? Though the most popularly used definition gives a comprehensive description of inclusion and exclusion, there is no single test that can clearly differentiate learning difficulty from other conditions. Also there is no definitive answer to the question of when a child qualifies for a diagnosis of learning difficulties

Generally the whole world may be divided into two broad classes- rich and poor, privileged and under privileged, higher and lower classes, socially advantaged and disadvantaged, culturally deprived and non-deprived, higher and lower achiever etc. one may use any term. Though each term suggests somewhat different deficiencies, but it is clear that usually the lower or disadvantaged category faces more hardships to achieve something in present set up.

Research being sparse in both western and Indian settings related to the learning difficulties of socially disadvantaged children. This study would add to understanding of the child's difficulties in achieving in academic success and other parents related attributes. There has been a standing need to the present situation that learning difficulties related to English language writing be investigated and suitable materials be prepared as per the intelligence level of the socially disadvantaged children to meet their particular needs in Indian contexts. Thus, current study therefore is an attempt to study socially disadvantaged children with learning difficulties in English writing and explore its relationship with intelligence.

6. Objectives of the Study

1. To compare the learning difficulties in English writing among socially disadvantaged male elementary school students with high and average intelligence.
2. To compare the learning difficulties in English writing among socially disadvantaged female elementary school students with high and average intelligence.
3. To compare the learning difficulties in English writing among socially disadvantaged male and female elementary school students with high intelligence.
4. To compare the learning difficulties in English writing among socially disadvantaged male and female elementary school students with average intelligence.

7. Hypothesis of the Study

1. There exists no significant difference in the learning difficulties in English writing among socially disadvantaged male elementary school students with high and average intelligence.
2. There exists no significant difference in the learning difficulties in English writing among socially disadvantaged female elementary school students with high and average intelligence.
3. There exists no significant difference in the learning difficulties in English writing among socially disadvantaged male and female elementary school students with high intelligence.
4. There exists no significant difference in the learning difficulties in English writing among socially disadvantaged male and female elementary school students with average intelligence.

8. Methodological Procedure

8.1 Sample

The population of the study consisted both boys and girls, students of 8th class, hailing from socially disadvantaged section, studying in Government elementary schools of Punjab. Multi-stage random sampling technique will be used to select the sample. At the first stage four districts out of 22 districts of Punjab were selected randomly. At the second stage 40 elementary schools were selected randomly, 10 schools from each district. And finally at the third stage students of 8th class were selected randomly. A sample of 1600 elementary school students (800 male and 800 females) was drawn; selecting 40 students (20 male and 20 female) from each selected school.

8.2 Tools

Raven's Progressive Matrices (Raven, Raven & Court, 2004) [17], was used to divide the students into high and average intelligence group. To test the writing difficulties in English language of the students of 8th grade, investigator constructed and standardized an achievement test in English.

8.3 Procedure of the Data Collection

A descriptive survey approach was followed to conduct the present study. The accessible population of the study consisted of elementary school students studying in the Government Schools of Punjab. At first stage RSPM was administered to classify students into high and average intelligence group. At second stage achievement test in LD's in English writing was administered to the selected students.

9. Analysis and Interpretation of Results

The data obtained has been subjected to descriptive as well as to suitable inferential statistical techniques. Obtained data was processed, analyzed to meet the objectives and hypotheses of the study.

Table 1: Comparison of Learning Difficulties in English writing among socially disadvantaged male elementary school students with high and average intelligence

Statistics	High	Average	t-ratio
Mean	34.89	30.42	8.90*
S.D.	7.30	6.90	

*Significant at .01 level

Table 1 indicates significant difference in the mean achievement scores of the male high and average intelligence group. This difference was found to be significant ($t_{798}=8.90$; $p<.01$). Results indicated that high intelligence male students were significantly better in English writing as compared to the average intelligence male students.

Table 2: Comparison of Learning Difficulties in English writing among socially disadvantaged female elementary school students with high and average intelligence

Statistics	High	Average	t-ratio
Mean	34.56	31.21	3.30*
S.D.	7.16	19.05	

*Significant at .01 level

Table 2 indicates significant difference in the mean achievement scores of the female high and average intelligence group. This difference was found to be significant ($t_{798}=3.30$; $p<.01$). Results indicated that high intelligence female students were significantly better in English writing as compared to the average intelligence students.

Table 3: Comparison of Learning Difficulties in English writing among socially disadvantaged male and female elementary school students with high intelligence

Statistics	Male	Female	t-ratio
Mean	34.89	34.56	0.66
S.D.	7.30	7.17	

Table 3 indicates no significant difference in the mean achievement scores of the male and female students in high intelligence group. This difference was found to be non-significant ($t_{798}=0.66$; $p>.05$). Results indicated no significant difference in the mean achievement scores between the male and female students in high intelligence group.

Table 4: Comparison of Learning Difficulties in English writing among socially disadvantaged male and female elementary school students with average intelligence

Statistics	Male	Female	t-ratio
Mean	30.42	31.21	0.78
S.D.	6.90	19.05	

Table 4 indicates no significant difference in the mean achievement scores of the male and female students in average intelligence group. This difference was found to be non-significant ($t_{798}=0.78$; $p>.05$). Results indicated no significant difference in the mean achievement scores between the male and female students in average intelligence group.

10. Conclusion

While measuring learning difficulties in English writing among socially disadvantaged elementary school students, both male and female students with high intelligence were significantly better in English writing as compared to the students with average intelligence. So, the students with average intelligence have more English writing difficulties as compared to students with high intelligence. Further, from the results of this study it is clear that there exist no

significant differences in LD's of male and female students in high intelligence group and in average intelligence group.

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