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**The Effect of Proficiency on Multilingualism, Error
Finding, Social Class and Attitude in Multilingual
Pre-University Mysore Students**

Reza Najafdari, Ph.D. Candidate

The Effect of Proficiency on Multilingualism, Error Finding, Social Class and Attitude in Multilingual Pre-University Mysore Students

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Abstract

The research indicated here is a reversed relationship between the proficiency levels and the number of languages the multilingual individuals possess, which is significant ($P < 0/001$) (High proficient students know less number of languages, or the students who know more number of languages score low in proficiency test). The languages under investigation were Kannada, Urdu, Hindi, Telugu, Marathi, English, Tamil and others.

Besides, the paper tries to identify the effect of multilingual proficiency on error finding (spelling, vocabulary, grammar and punctuation. Moreover, the paper identifies the effect of proficiency on the social class and attitude of the students towards learning, which is significant at $P < 0/001$ and $P < 0/05$ respectively.

Keywords: *Proficiency, Multilingualism- Proficiency-Social Class-Attitude-Error finding*

1. Introduction: Bilingualism

Genesee (1978) noted that bilinguals tend to separate two linguistic systems and apply them independently. In this manner, we should consider the phenomenon of two languages in a balanced form. However, Fishman, Cooper, and Ma (1971) commented that balanced bilingualism is meaningless per se. Cummins (1976) stated that most of the research based on the balanced bilinguals indicate a child is not really dominant in both languages. It was implied that each bilingual is dominant in a language in a particular domain which means bilingualism is situation oriented.

Accordingly, some advantages and disadvantages of bilingualism are mentioned by different scholars: Landry (1973) pinpointed that bilinguals are those who study a second language and they are better in diverse thinking skills than monolinguals. Carringer's (1974) research demonstrated the prevalence and the superiority of verbal and non-verbal bilingual performance to the monolinguals. Powers and Lopez (1985) showed that bilinguals are better than monolinguals in the complex and perceptual motor coordination in the brain. Ianco-Worrall (1972) noted that bilinguals show more metalinguistic awareness in terms of language forms and properties.

The research conducted on the children strengthened the notion that bilingual children are better in both verbal and nonverbal evaluations, compared to monolinguals. Moreover, it Language in India www.languageinindia.com

9 : 5 May 2009

Reza Najafdari, Ph.D. Candidate

The Effect of Proficiency ... in Multilingual Pre-University Mysore Students

was shown that bilinguals possessed more cognitive flexibility and concept formation rather than monolinguals (Hakuta, 1987). Balkan's (1970) finding on nonverbal tests bolster the above assumption towards bilinguals.

However, Albert and Obler (1978) implied that cerebral dominance among bilinguals is not clear-cut. Meisses (1990) demonstrated that learning strategy in bilinguals and monolinguals follow the same pattern with no significant difference. But De Houwer (1999) indicated that bilinguality is not parallel with delay or disorderliness in language acquisition.

Bilingualism in Different Domains

Generally speaking, bilinguals are described in terms of their efficiency in competence or lack thereof as well as in terms of reading, writing, speaking and listening skills, and sub skills such as pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar style.

Ben-zee (1972) showed that bilinguals score lower in vocabulary but higher in verbal material. Furthermore, it was shown that high score in verbal is a sign of cognitive development. Doyle, Champagne and Segalwtz (1978) concluded the same result that monolinguals are better in vocabulary knowledge than bilinguals. Petito and Holowka (2002) rejected the assumption that early Lang exposure to different language will lead to delay in Lang acquisition, and they specifically emphasized that the child's semantic concept and image would not be tarnished.

Bain (1975) asserted that bilinguals can take advantage of showing their feelings appropriately due to processing more complex and organized Language system. McLaughlin (1984) stressed that bilingual children are more sensitive to formal aspects of language. The prestige issue is also taken into consideration Claude et al. (1953) demonstrated that higher social class bilinguals can communicate more fluently than the rest social strata. Lambert's (1997) finding confirmed the positive relationship between social class, Prestige and communication in various contexts in bilinguals.

Proficiency, Bilingualism and Multilingualism

Language proficiency may be considered as the competence ranging from monolingualism to multilingualism.

Some advantages and disadvantage the effect of proficiency on bilingualism and multilingualism are proposed, as briefly mentioned above.

However, to mention a few, Smith (1931), Thomspson (1952) and Weinreich (1963) implied that multilingualism has a negative effect on performance (e.g., more language knowledge is equivalent to poor performance). Ferguson and Huebner (1989) stated that the impact of bilingualism on learning different fields is negative. Hamers and Blanc

Language in India www.languageinindia.com

9 : 5 May 2009

Reza Najafdari, Ph.D. Candidate

The Effect of Proficiency ... in Multilingual Pre-University Mysore Students

264

(1989) and Baker (1996) as opposed to Bialystok (1991) indicated that bilingualism is parallel with low educational achievement.

Fledge et al. (1999) demonstrated that high proficiency in lexical domains in different languages can be achieved but grammatical understanding will lag behind.

Focus of This Article

In this article, I report on my research which proposed to investigate the following:

H1: No effect of proficiency on multilingualism can be detected.

H2: No effect of Proficiency of finding error is found.

H3: No difference between specific and mixed detected errors can be found at different levels of proficiency.

H4: The effect of Proficiency on two categories of social class and attitude is totally insignificant.

H5: The effects of Proficiency levels on social class are not significant.

H6: The effect of Proficiency on attitude of students towards courses is not meaningful.

Method

Participants

Samples of the research were obtained in two different stages from the newly enrolled Pre-University commerce, aged 17-18 homogeneous male students. The researcher selected 10 male students randomly. In the next stage, 100 students with the same qualifications were included.

Procedure

The newly enrolled Pre-University commerce male students aged 17-18 from Mysore-Karnataka State in India were subjects under this study. In the first stage, the research selected a pilot group comprising 10 male students randomly. All necessary instructions were given appropriately by the researcher to the subjects. A background questionnaire including self-assessment form was presented to the respective group so as to elicit general information about their names, surnames, family background, age, gender (which was exclusive 17-18 and male respectively), the level of language knowledge, social class, and their attitudes towards the course.

Students' attitude towards learning in the class is marked by the individual students as High=3, Moderate=2, and Low=1, their social class as high (the family with stable salary) =3, Moderate (the family with fixed with temporary job and unstable earnings). Besides, the list includes some common languages in Mysore city, namely, Kannada, Tamil, and the other languages that students probably know. In addition, students indicated their

Language in India www.languageinindia.com

9 : 5 May 2009

Reza Najafdari, Ph.D. Candidate

The Effect of Proficiency ... in Multilingual Pre-University Mysore Students

knowledge of the mentioned languages in relation to ‘self’ and the languages they use with others as ‘friends’ ‘Brothers / sisters’, ‘Parents /elderly’ and ‘Neighbors’ with numbers specified as : Excellent=1 Good =2, Weak=3, and Very weak=4. The allocated time for filling the form was 15 minutes. The students were fully informed of the procedures they should follow in filling the form.

In the next step, a proficiency test was presented to the assigned students. The English Proficiency test was taken from Nelson B-400 Proficiency Test book, including four separate parts: Vocabulary, Grammar, Reading Comprehension, and Cloze passage with 50 items in the form of objective multiple choice items. The allocated time was 40 minutes.

In the final stage, two different texts under the title of ‘specific’ and ‘mixed’ with 20 minute allocated time were administered to the same pilot group. The “specific” text included four subsidiary parts. Students were asked to find five errors in each part. It was assumed that the students who detected more errors, possessed more knowledge of the language. The more errors the subjects found, the more scores they received (after the calculation by the researcher).

The next text was the “mixed text”. It was devised on the basis of scrambled errors including spelling, vocabulary, grammar, and punctuation with 5 errors for each category. The total errors of the specific text were 20 and in a similar way 20 for the mixed text. The specific text comprised separate spelling, vocabulary, grammar, and punctuation errors in different parts, but the mixed text comprised mixed errors of spelling, vocabulary, grammar, and punctuation in one part.

The total errors inserted in the specific and mixed texts include 40. Students were fully informed of the procedures that should be performed. The selected texts, both specific and mixed, were adopted from Pre-intermediate level of ‘Language in Use Series’ 2004 by Adrian Doff and Christopher Jones from Cambridge University Press. SPSS result showed Cronbach alpha reliability co-efficiency of .7653 which indicate very reliable texts. Besides, the correlation co efficiency of both specific and mixed was .72 including high relationship.

In the next session, 100 male students were selected from different sections of the class with the same group age (17-18) from the same Pre-University level. The proficiency test was administered and the results were obtained. On the basis of the elicited scores (19-22= Low Score, 23-26= Middle Score, and 27-30=High Score), three levels of proficiency as low, middle and high were selected. Then the background questionnaire was administered to the three appointed Proficiency levels in order to get the researcher informed of the number of the languages, the social status and the attitude of the students. Consequently, two different specific and mixed texts, all similar to what was mentioned beforehand, were presented to the subjects.

Results and Discussion

Language in India www.languageinindia.com

9 : 5 May 2009

Reza Najafdari, Ph.D. Candidate

The Effect of Proficiency ... in Multilingual Pre-University Mysore Students

266

One of the purposes of background questionnaire is to demonstrate the number of languages the students know. The language knowledge is numbered Excellent =1, Good=2, Weak=3, and very weak=4. In other words, the students who possess more languages will select low numbers. Besides, students were selected into three categories as high, moderate, and low on the basis of their proficiency levels. The results demonstrate a reversed relationship between proficiency and multilingualism.

The students who knew more language scored low in proficiency test and vice versa. According to one-way ANOVA (which indicates the main difference) it is seen that the effect of proficiency on multilingualism in Kannada language which is the mother tongue for the subjects is not significant. But in Urdu language, $F=6.453$; $P < 0/01$, Hindi $F=4.841$, Telugu $F=97.961$; $P < 0/01$, Marathi $F=20.127$; $< 0/001$, English $F = 26.482$; $P < 0/001$, Tamil $F=15.108$ $P < 0001$, and others $F = 33.443$; $P < 00/PP1$. The effect of proficiency on multilingualism is significant (Table -1, chart and chart-2) the total $F = 136.545$ which is meaningful $P < 0/001$. Thus the first hypothesis that proficiency level has no effect on multilingualism is rejected. The research revealed a reversed effect of proficiency level on multilingualism.

In the category of error finding, the results taken by ANOVA demonstrate significant differences in finding total errors ($F=43.438$; $P < 0/001$, special errors ($F=40=40.117$; $< . /001$) and mixed errors ($F=19.764$; $P < 001$) Low proficient level students detected less errors, moderate students found moderate number of errors and high proficient level students detected more errors (Table 2-chart -3). The effect of proficiency levels on error finding is positive which rejects the second null hypothesis.

Besides, the results indicated that students can better find the specific errors in specific texts than the mixed errors in a scrambled manner. Hence, the third null hypothesis will be rejected.

On the other hand, difference between specific and mixed error finding is also detected.

Moreover, the fourth hypothesis on the effect of proficiency on social class and attitude is not significant at all (Table-3).

The fifth null hypothesis which indicated no effect of Proficiency on social class is rejected.

The result indicates that the effect of Proficiency is significant at $0/001$. Students belonging to low socioeconomic class scored low, moderate class scored moderate and moderate and high class students with their family earning a fixed salary scored high in proficiency tests (Table 4-, Chart-4). The last null hypothesis is also rejected.

The results indicated the effect proficiency has on the attitude of students towards their course is significant at %5. Students with low attitude towards their courses scored low, and with high attitude they scored high in Proficiency test. However, the similar result is not seen in students with moderate attitude towards their courses.

Conclusion

As data analysis indicated, there is a reverse effect of proficiency on multilingualism.

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Language in India www.languageinindia.com

9 : 5 May 2009

Reza Najafdari, Ph.D. Candidate

The Effect of Proficiency ... in Multilingual Pre-University Mysore Students

268

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Language in India www.languageinindia.com

9 : 5 May 2009

Reza Najafdari, Ph.D. Candidate

The Effect of Proficiency ... in Multilingual Pre-University Mysore Students

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APPENDICES

Tables-1. Proficiency & Multilingualism (Descriptives)

		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error
Kannada	Low	42	23.52	1.99	.31
	Moderate	35	24.83	3.24	.55
	High	28	23.46	3.24	.61
	Total	105	23.94	2.85	.28
Urdu	Low	42	65.10	12.45	1.92
	Moderate	35	66.00	8.60	1.45
	High	28	73.36	6.83	1.29
	Total	105	67.60	10.47	1.02
Hindi	Low	42	25.26	3.41	.53
	Moderate	35	27.37	6.03	1.02
	High	28	28.71	4.41	.83
	Total	105	26.89	4.86	.47
Telugu	Low	42	25.14	3.40	.52
	Moderate	35	32.26	4.75	.80
	High	28	37.50	2.38	.45
	Total	105	30.81	6.25	.61
Marathi	Low	42	50.31	8.56	1.32
	Moderate	35	65.29	15.78	2.67
	High	28	64.32	8.79	1.66
	Total	105	59.04	13.48	1.32
English	Low	42	23.62	2.16	.33
	Moderate	35	24.89	3.88	.66
	High	28	30.39	5.69	1.08
	Total	105	25.85	4.80	.47
	Low	42	25.79	3.27	.50

Language in India www.languageinindia.com

9 : 5 May 2009

Reza Najafdari, Ph.D. Candidate

The Effect of Proficiency ... in Multilingual Pre-University Mysore Students

Tamil	Moderate	35	30.00	3.94	.67
	High	28	30.36	4.97	.94
	Total	105	28.41	4.51	.44
Others	Low	42	28.93	3.67	.57
	Moderate	35	32.60	2.43	.41
	High	28	35.21	3.37	.64
	Total	105	31.83	4.11	.40
TOTAL	Low	42	267.67	9.93	1.53
	Moderate	35	303.23	16.93	2.86
	High	28	323.32	16.32	3.08
	Total	105	294.36	27.24	2.66

ANOVA

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Kannada	Between Groups	41.245	2	20.623	2.621	.078
	Within Groups	802.412	102	7.867		
	Total	843.657	104			
Urdu	Between Groups	1281.152	2	640.576	6.453	.002
	Within Groups	10126.048	102	99.275		
	Total	11407.200	104			
Hindi	Between Groups	212.624	2	106.312	4.841	.010
	Within Groups	2240.005	102	21.961		
	Total	2452.629	104			
Telugu	Between Groups	2675.362	2	1337.681	97.961	.000
	Within Groups	1392.829	102	13.655		
	Total	4068.190	104			
Marathi	Between Groups	5347.621	2	2673.811	20.127	.000
	Within Groups	13550.226	102	132.845		
	Total	18897.848	104			
English	Between Groups	819.436	2	409.718	26.482	.000
	Within Groups	1578.126	102	15.472		
	Total	2397.562	104			
Tamil	Between Groups	483.890	2	241.945	15.108	.000
	Within Groups	1633.500	102	16.015		
	Total	2117.390	104			
Others	Between Groups	695.014	2	347.507	33.443	.000
	Within Groups	1059.900	102	10.391		

Language in India www.languageinindia.com

9 : 5 May 2009

Reza Najafdari, Ph.D. Candidate

The Effect of Proficiency ... in Multilingual Pre-University Mysore Students

TOTAL	Total	1754.914	104			
	Between Groups	56164.636	2	28082.318	136.545	.000
	Within Groups	20977.612	102	205.663		
	Total	77142.248	104			

Urdu

Scheffe^{a,b}

Proficiency	N	Subset for alpha = .05	
		1	2
Low	42	65.10	
Moderate	35	66.00	
High	28		73.36
Sig.		.932	1.000

- a. Uses Harmonic Mean Sample Size = 34.054.
b. The group sizes are unequal. The harmonic Mean of the group sizes is used. Type I error Levels are not guaranteed.

Scheffe^{a,b}

Hindi

Proficiency	N	Subset for alpha = .05	
		1	2
Low	42	25.26	
Moderate	35	27.37	27.37
High	28		28.71

- a. Uses Harmonic Mean Sample Size = 34.054.
b. The group sizes are unequal. The harmonic Mean of the group sizes is used. Type I error Levels are not guaranteed.

Scheffe^{a,b}

Telugu

Proficiency	N	Subset for alpha = .05		
		1	2	3
Low	42	25.14		
Moderate	35		32.26	
High	28			37.50

- a. Uses Harmonic Mean Sample Size = 34.054.
b. The group sizes are unequal. The harmonic Mean of the group sizes is used. Type I error Levels are not guaranteed.

Marathi

Language in India www.languageinindia.com

9 : 5 May 2009

Reza Najafdari, Ph.D. Candidate

The Effect of Proficiency ... in Multilingual Pre-University Mysore Students

Scheffe^{a,b}

Proficiency	N	Subset for alpha = .05	
		1	2
Low	42	50.31	
High	28		64.32
Moderate	35		65.29

- a. Uses Harmonic Mean Sample Size = 34.054.
b. The group sizes are unequal. The harmonic Mean of the group sizes is used. Type I error Levels are not guaranteed.

English

Scheffe^{a,b}

Proficiency	N	Subset for alpha = .05	
		1	2
Low	42	23.62	
Moderate	35	24.89	
High	28		30.39

- a. Uses Harmonic Mean Sample Size = 34.054.
b. The group sizes are unequal. The harmonic Mean of the group sizes is used. Type I error Levels are not guaranteed.

Tamil

Scheffe^{a,b}

Proficiency	N	Subset for alpha = .05	
		1	2
Low	42	25.79	
Moderate	35		30.00
High	28		30.36
Sig.		1.000	.934

- a. Uses Harmonic Mean Sample Size = 34.054.
b. The group sizes are unequal. The harmonic Mean of the group sizes is used. Type I error Levels are not guaranteed.

Others

Scheffe^{a,b}

Proficiency	N	Subset for alpha = .05		
		1	2	3
Low	42	28.93		
Moderate	35		32.60	
High	28			35.21
Sig.		1.000	1.000	1.000

- a. Uses Harmonic Mean Sample Size = 34.054.
 b. The group sizes are unequal. The harmonic Mean of the group sizes is used. Type I error Levels are not guaranteed.

TOTAL

Scheffe^{a,b}

Proficiency	N	Subset for alpha = .05		
		1	2	3
Low	42	267.67		
Moderate	35		303.23	
High	28			323.32
Sig.		1.000	1.000	1.000

- a. Uses Harmonic Mean Sample Size = 34.054.
 b. The group sizes are unequal. The harmonic Mean of the group sizes is used. Type I error Levels are not guaranteed.

Tables-2. Proficiency& Error finding (Descriptives)

		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error
ERRORTOT	Low	42	12.4524	3.6639	.5654
	Moderate	35	15.7714	3.2638	.5517
	High	28	22.4286	6.2742	1.1857
	Total	105	16.2190	5.9307	.5788
ERRORSSP	Low	42	9.2857	3.1645	.4883
	Moderate	35	11.8571	1.7514	.2960
	High	28	15.1071	2.7934	.5279
	Total	105	11.6952	3.5304	.3445
ERRORMIX	Low	42	3.1667	1.8202	.2809
	Moderate	35	3.9143	2.4055	.4066
	High	28	7.3214	4.1549	.7852
	Total	105	4.5238	3.2643	.3186

ANOVA

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig
ERRORTOT	Between Groups	1682.529	2	841.264	43.438	.000
	Within Groups	1975.433	102	19.367		
	Total	3657.962	104			
ERRORSSP	Between Groups	570.712	2	285.356	40.117	.000
	Within Groups	725.536	102	7.113		
	Total	1296.248	104			
ERRORMIX	Between Groups	309.507	2	154.754	19.764	.000
	Within Groups	798.683	102	7.830		
	Total	1108.190	104			

ERROR - TOTAL

Scheffe^{a,b}

Proficiency	N	Subset for alpha = .05		
		1	2	3
Low	42	12.4524		
Moderate	35		15.7714	
High	28			22.4286
Sig.		1.000	1.000	1.000

- a. Uses Harmonic Mean Sample Size = 34.054.
 b. The group sizes are unequal. The harmonic Mean of the group sizes is used. Type I error Levels are not guaranteed.

ERROR - SPECIAL

Scheffe^{a,b}

Proficiency	N	Subset for alpha = .05		
		1	2	3
Low	42	9.2857		
Moderate	35		11.8571	
High	28			15.1071
Sig.		1.000	1.000	1.000

- a. Uses Harmonic Mean Sample Size = 34.054.
 b. The group sizes are unequal. The harmonic Mean of the group sizes is used. Type I error Levels are not guaranteed.

ERROR - MIXED

Scheffe^{a,b}

Proficiency	N	Subset for alpha = .05	
		1	2
Low	42	3.1667	
Moderate	35	3.9143	
High	28		7.3214
Sig.		.547	1.000

a. Uses Harmonic Mean Sample Size = 34.054.

b. The group sizes are unequal. The harmonic Mean of the group sizes is used. Type I error Levels are not guaranteed.

Tables-3. Proficiency-Social class-Attitude

Proficiency				ATTITUDE			Total
				Low	mod	High	
Low	SES	Low	Count % within ATTITUDE	15 51.7%	4 40.0%	3 100.0%	22 52.4%
		mod	Count % within ATTITUDE	11 37.9%	2 20.0%		13 31.0%
		High	Count % within ATTITUDE	3 10.3%	4 40.0%		7 16.7%
	Total		Count % within ATTITUDE	29 100.0%	10 100.0%	3 100.0%	42 100.0%
Moderate	SES	Low	Count % within ATTITUDE	8 38.1%	1 11.1%		9 25.7%
		mod	Count % within ATTITUDE	6 28.6%	6 66.7%	4 80.0%	16 45.7%
		High	Count % within ATTITUDE	7 33.3%	2 22.2%	1 20.0%	10 28.6%
	Total		Count % within ATTITUDE	21 100.0%	9 100.0%	5 100.0%	35 100.0%
High	SES	Low	Count % within ATTITUDE			2 18.2%	2 7.1%
		mod	Count % within ATTITUDE	1 14.3%	5 50.0%	5 45.5%	11 39.3%

	High	Count % within ATTITUDE	6 85.7%	5 50.0%	4 36.4%	15 53.6%
Total		Count % within ATTITUDE	7 100.0%	10 100.0%	11 100.0%	28 100.0%

Symmetric Measures

Proficiency		Value	Approx. Sig.	
Low	Nominal by Nominal	Contingency Coefficient	.396	.098
	N of Valid Cases	42		
Moderate	Nominal by Nominal	Contingency Coefficient	.413	.125
	N of Valid Cases	35		
High	Nominal by Nominal	Contingency Coefficient	.436	.160
	N of Valid Cases	28		

Tables-4. Proficiency & Social class

			Proficiency			Total
			Low	Moderate	High	
SES	Low	Count	22	9	2	33
		% within SES	66.7%	27.3%	6.1%	100.0%
	mod	Count	13	16	11	40
		% within SES	32.5%	40.0%	27.5%	100.0%
	High	Count	7	10	15	32
		% within SES	21.9%	31.3%	46.9%	100.0%
Total		Count	42	35	28	105
		% within SES	40.0%	33.3%	26.7%	100.0%

Symmetric Measures

	Value	Approx. Sig.	
Nominal by Nominal	Contingency Coefficient	.401	.000
N of Valid Cases		105	

Tables-5. Proficiency & Attitude

		Proficiency			Total	
		Low	Moderate	High		
ATTITUDE	Low	Count	29	21	7	57
		% within ATTITUDE	50.9%	36.8%	12.3%	100.0%

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9 : 5 May 2009

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The Effect of Proficiency ... in Multilingual Pre-University Mysore Students

	mod	Count	10	9	10	29
		% within ATTITUDE	34.5%	31.0%	34.5%	100.0%
	High	Count	3	5	11	19
		% within ATTITUDE	15.8%	26.3%	57.9%	100.0%
Total		Count	42	35	28	105
		% within ATTITUDE	40.0%	33.3%	26.7%	100.0%

Symmetric Measures

	Value	Approx. Sig.	
Nominal by Nominal	Contingency Coefficient	.376	.002
N of Valid Cases	105		

Chart. 1. Proficiency & Multilingualism-It should be interpreted in a reversed manner

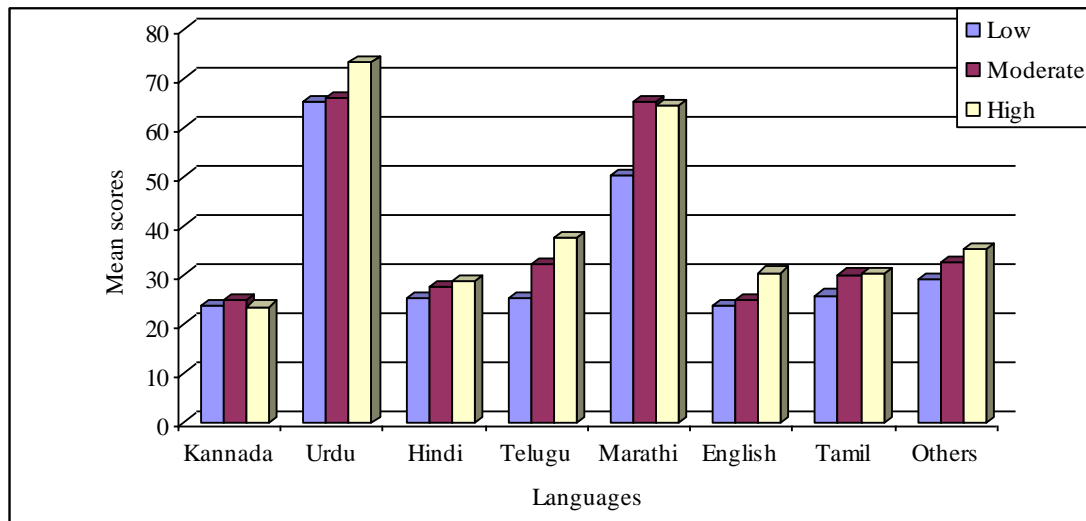


Chart. 2. Proficiency & Multilingualism-It should be interpreted in a reversed manner

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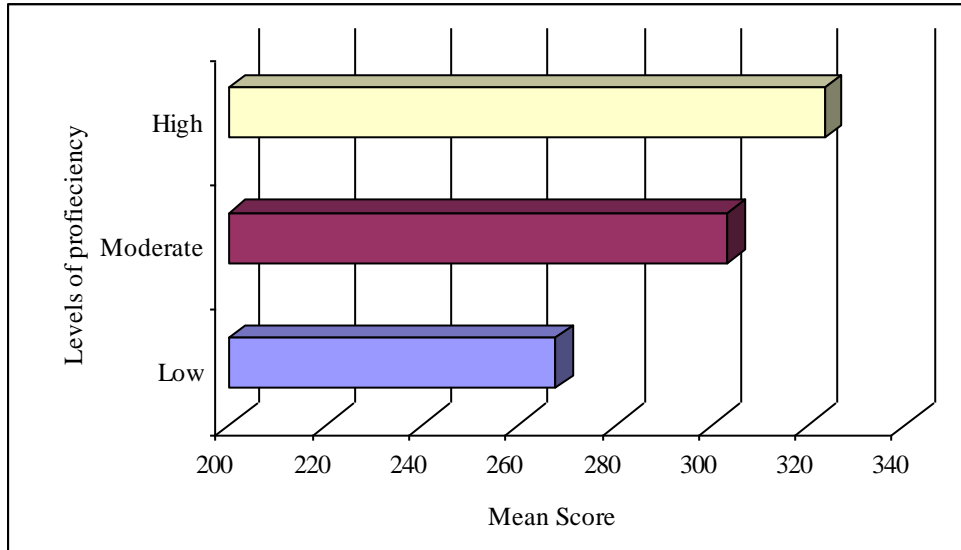


Chart. 3. Proficiency & Error finding

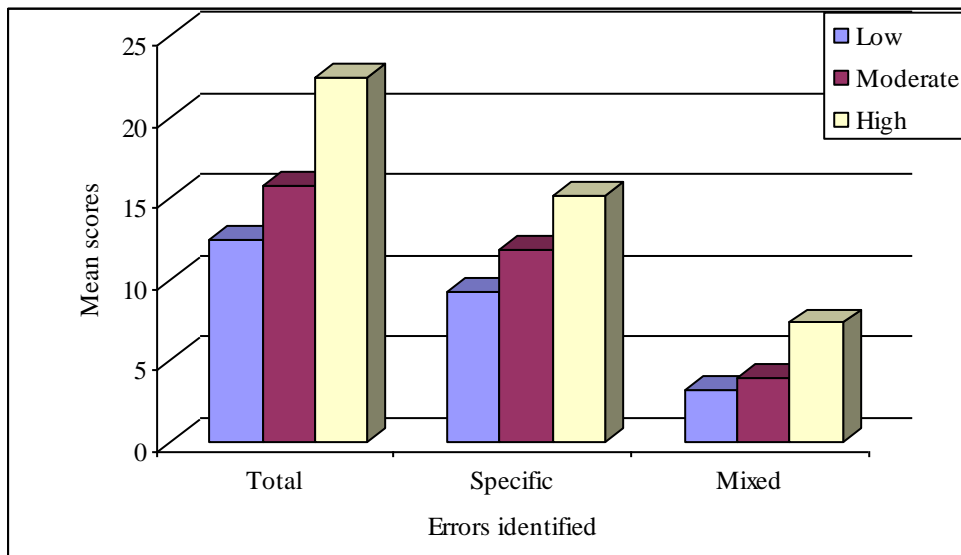


Chart. 4. Proficiency-Attitude-Social class

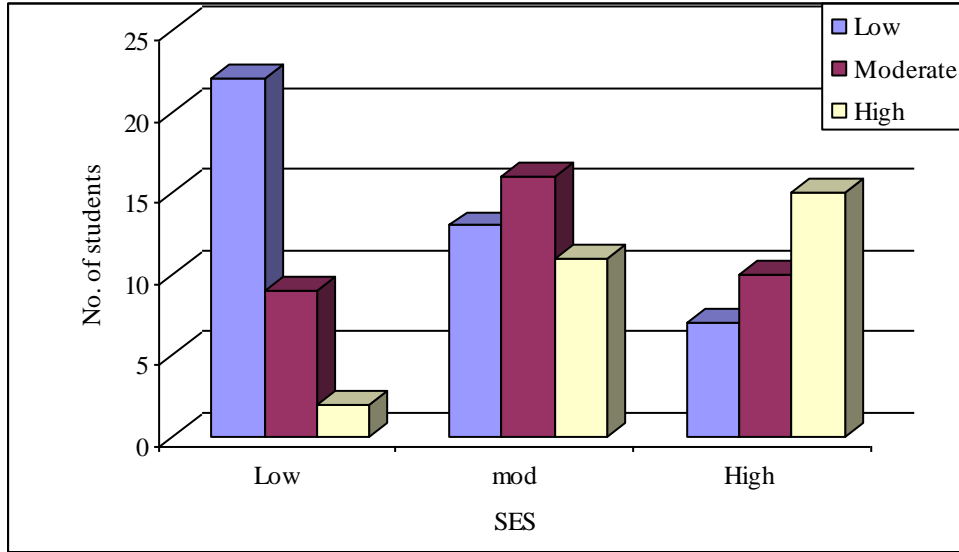
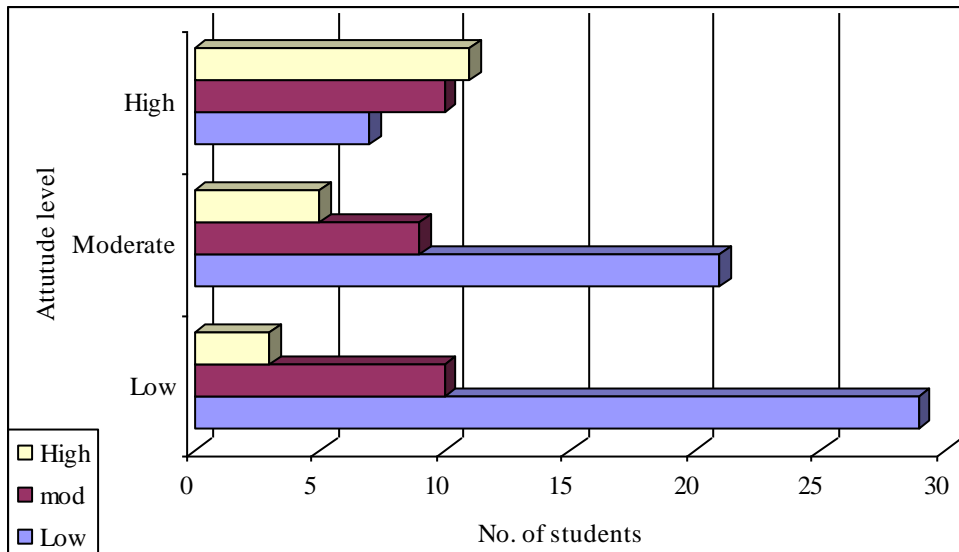


Chart.5. Proficiency & Attitude



Colophon

I am thankful to Dr.Keudustso Kapfo who helped me in this project with several suggestions.

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The Effect of Proficiency ... in Multilingual Pre-University Mysore Students

281