Academic English Language Competency: Abilities and Obstacles at Bamyan University

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Abstract
This study investigates the disparities in English language proficiency among students at Bamyan University, focusing on differences across various faculties. Utilizing a quantitative research methodology, data was collected through a standardized English proficiency test and a questionnaire assessing students' perceptions of their language abilities and challenges. There was a 3,734 population and, 392 a sample size was taken with a robust sampling strategy. The data was analyzed using the SPSS 26 version. Statistical tests, including ANOVA and Tukey tests, revealed significant variations in proficiency levels, with students in the Agriculture and Education faculties outperforming those in the Sharia Law faculty. The findings also highlighted writing skills as the most prominent challenge faced by students, supported by Chi-Square analysis. Conversely, the hypothesis suggesting a correlation between students' age and English proficiency was not supported, indicating that age may not be a significant factor. These results underscore the need for targeted interventions to improve English language skills, particularly in faculties with lower proficiency levels. Recommendations include tailored language programs, peer support initiatives, and faculty-specific workshops to address identified challenges. This study contributes to understanding academic English proficiency at Bamyan University and provides actionable insights for enhancing language education across faculties.
Keywords: English Proficiency, Faculty Differences, Quantitative Analysis, Academic Challenges, Bamyan University.

Introduction

The research paper examines the disparities in English language proficiency among students at Bamyan University, emphasizing differences across various faculties. English proficiency is essential for academic success and professional growth, yet many students at Bamyan encounter significant challenges in mastering the language. The study aims to identify the factors contributing to these disparities, revealing that geoscience students

exhibit particularly low English proficiency, with only 20% reaching a halfway level or higher (Hamdard, 2021).

Students acknowledge the importance of English for academic and professional success but find existing programs inadequate, advocating for more student-centered approaches (Hamdard, 2021). This highlights the urgent need for improvements in English language education in Afghan universities, taking into account students' needs, anxiety levels, and teacher capabilities to enhance academic and professional outcomes.

Additionally, various studies from other regions provide context. For instance, Aizawa et al. (2020) explored linguistic challenges faced by Japanese students in an English medium instruction program, finding that English proficiency significantly impacts academic challenges. Similarly, Al-Mukdad (2019) reported that Middle Eastern students struggle with academic writing due to a lack of foundational knowledge in distinguishing between academic and everyday English. Bo et al. (2022) demonstrated a direct correlation between English proficiency and academic performance among Singaporean college students.

Other studies also reinforce these findings. Graham (1987) discussed the relationship between English proficiency and academic success across institutions, while Susanto et al. (2020) identified various barriers faced by Indonesian students learning English. Hamdard's own study (2021) indicated that the majority of geoscience students at Bamyan University have low English proficiency levels.

Overall, these findings underscore the critical need for tailored language instruction that addresses specific student challenges and enhances their academic performance across different disciplines.

The essential investigation of the problem is to recognize the current capability skills and the obstacles that students at Bamyan University confront in learning and utilizing academic English. This research incorporates understanding how these components shift over distinctive resources and how they relate to the age of the students. Given the increasing importance of English in academia and professional settings, it is crucial to assess the proficiency levels and challenges to enhance educational outcomes.

The objectives are as follows:

1. Assessment of Proficiency Skills and Challenges: To evaluate the current proficiency skills in academic English among students from various faculties at Bamyan University and identify the specific challenges they encounter in mastering these skills.

2. Examination of Age-Related Factors: To analyze the relationship between students' proficiency skills in academic English and their age, determining whether age influences language competency and the associated challenges.

The hypotheses are as follows:

H_1: There is a significant difference in the proficiency of academic English language skills among students of different faculties at Bamyan University.

H_2: The challenges faced in acquiring academic English language skills significantly vary among students of different faculties at Bamyan University.

H_3: A significant relationship exists between students' proficiency skills in academic English and their age at Bamyan University.

Material and Method

Research Design

This study employed a quantitative research method to assess students' English proficiency and the challenges. A standardized English proficiency test was administered to evaluate the student's abilities.

Sampling Technique

A convincing sampling technique was utilized for the survey. The target population consisted of 3,734 students enrolled in the 2024 session at Bamyan University. Using the Yamane finite population formula $n=N/(1+Ne^2)$ a sample size of at least 362 was determined. Ultimately, 392 participants from 22 departments across 7 faculties provided quantitative data for the study. All participants voluntarily consented to participate, ensuring a robust sampling strategy.

Data Collection

A questionnaire was developed to gather information on students' perceptions of their English language abilities, the challenges they encounter, and the relationship between proficiency and age. The questionnaire was designed to measure students' proficiency levels in academic English across different faculties, focusing on the four key areas: Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing.   In addition, Participants were given 15 to 20 minutes to complete the questionnaire, and participation was voluntary. Remarkably, all approached individuals completed the questionnaire.

Validity and Reliability

The validity and reliability of the test were thoroughly assessed. The data collection instrument was verified for dependability, with a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.877 across four items, indicating excellent reliability for this tool.

Questionnaire Structure

The questionnaire utilized a five-point Likert scale to gauge the requirements for academic English language proficiency. The scale included the following ratings: Excellent, Very Good, Good, Slightly Good, and Poor. Each structural question was crafted to elicit detailed responses regarding students' English proficiency.

Data Analysis

Data analysis was conducted with SPSS version 26. The collected data was normally distributed, and various statistical tests were applied, including Descriptive Statistics, One-way ANOVA, Chi-Square tests, and Pearson's Correlation tests, to interpret the findings effectively. This comprehensive approach ensured a thorough examination of the factors influencing English language proficiency among students at Bamyan University.

Results

The data presented in Table 1 provides descriptive statistics for the age of a group of participants. There are 392 participants in this study. The youngest participant is 18 years old. The oldest participant is 27 years old. The average age of the participants is 21.73 years. This is calculated by summing all the ages and dividing by the number of participants. The standard deviation is 1.85, which indicates the amount of variation or dispersion in the ages of the participants. A lower standard deviation suggests that the ages are closer to the mean, while a higher standard deviation would indicate that the ages are more spread out. Overall, this table summarizes the age distribution of the participants, showing that they are relatively young, with most participants falling between the ages of 18 and 27.

Table 1.Descriptive statistics of participants' age

	n	Min	Max	Mean	SD
Age	392	18	27	21.73	1.85

Table 2 shows the mean English proficiency scores and standard deviations for students from different faculties: Natural Science: Mean = 11.24, Std. Deviation = 3.77, Education: Mean = 12.36, Std. Deviation = 4.27, Sharia Law: Mean = 7.24, Std. Deviation = 3.38 (lowest proficiency), Social Sciences: Mean = 11.43, Std. Deviation = 5.20, Geo Sciences: Mean = 9.65, Std. Deviation = 3.94, Agriculture: Mean = 12.37, Std. Deviation = 4.09 (highest proficiency), Economic: Mean = 11.85, Std. Deviation = 4.48, and Total: Mean = 11.04, Std. Deviation = 4.46. From this table, we can see that students in the Agriculture and Education faculties have the highest mean proficiency scores, while those in Sharia Law have the lowest.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics of English Proficiency (Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing) of participants of different faculties

Faculties	n	Mean	Std. Deviation
Natural Science	63	11.24	3.77
Education	58	12.36	4.27
Sharia Law	41	7.24	3.38
Social Sciences	53	11.43	5.20
Geo Sciences	58	9.65	3.94
Agriculture	59	12.37	4.089
Economic	60	11.85	4.48
Total	392	11.04	4.46

Table 3 presents the results of a one-way ANOVA test, which is used to determine there are statistically significant differences in English proficiency among the different faculties. There are significant differences in English proficiency among the faculties as determined by one-way ANOVA ($F_{(6,385)} = 9.01$, $p < 0.001$). Since the p-value is less than 0.05, we reject the null hypothesis and accept that at least one faculty differs significantly in English proficiency. Furthermore, a Tukey post-hoc test revealed that post-test scores are significantly different.

Table 3. One-way ANOVA of English Proficiency (Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing) within faculties' differences

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	958.308	6	159.718	9.011	.000

Within Groups	6823.955	385	17.725
Total	7782.263	391	

Table 4 The Tukey test is a post-hoc analysis used to determine which specific groups (faculties) differ from each other. The table shows subsets of faculties based on their mean scores. Sharia Law has the lowest mean score (7.24) and is in its own subset. Geo Sciences (9.65) is also in a separate subset. Natural Science (11.24), Social Sciences (11.43), Economic (11.85), Education (12.36), and Agriculture (12.37) are grouped together in higher subsets. The significance values indicate that there are no significant differences between the faculties within the same subset, but there are significant differences between the lower and higher subsets.

Table 4. Tukey test for English proficiency (listening, Speaking, Reading, Writing)

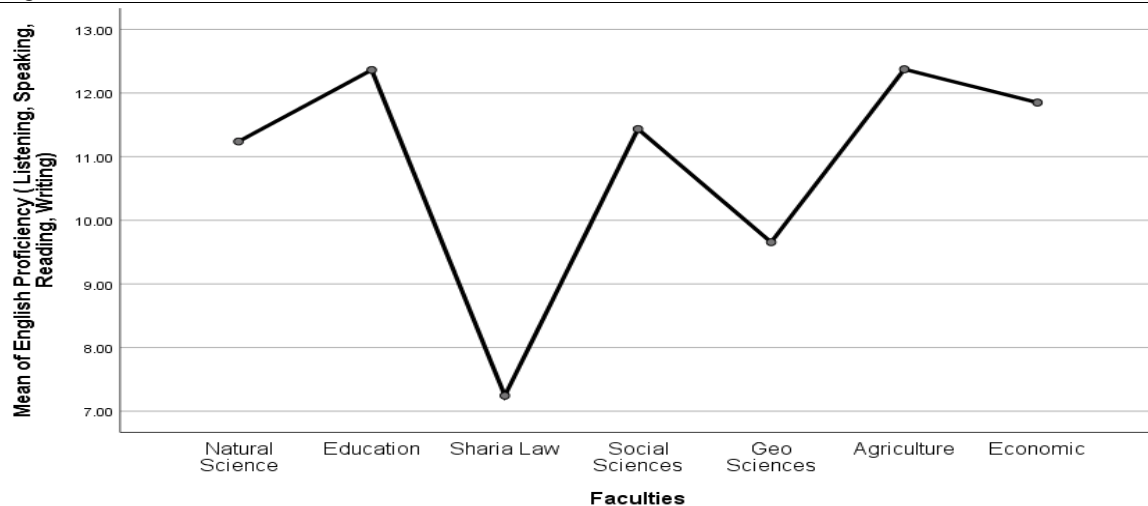|		Subset for alpha = 0.05		
Faculties	n	1	2	3
Sharia Law	41	7.24		
Geo Sciences	58		9.65	
Natural Science	63		11.24	11.24
Social Sciences	53		11.43	11.43
Economic	60		11.85	11.85
Education	58			12.36
Agriculture	59			12.37
Sig.		1.000	.093	.794

Figure 1: English Proficiency of students of different faculties

Figure 1 illustrates the mean English proficiency scores (in Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing) for students across different faculties at Bamyan University. Agriculture and Education faculties show the highest mean proficiency scores, around 12.37 and 12.36, respectively. Sharia Law has the lowest mean score at 7.24, indicating significantly lower proficiency compared to other faculties. The graph shows fluctuations in proficiency levels among the faculties. After Sharia Law, there is a noticeable increase in proficiency scores for Social Sciences and Natural Science, which hover around the 11-12 range. Geo Sciences has a mean score of 9.65, which is lower than the faculties above it but higher than Sharia Law. The data suggests that students in faculties like Agriculture and Education are better equipped in English language skills compared to those in Sharia Law. The significant dips and peaks in the graph indicate that the proficiency levels are not uniform across faculties, supporting the hypothesis that there are differences in English proficiency. The graph

visually reinforces the findings from the statistical analysis (ANOVA and Tukey test) that there are significant differences in English proficiency among students from different faculties. The clear distinction in mean scores, particularly the low score for Sharia Law, highlights the need for targeted interventions to improve English language skills in that faculty. Overall, the data supports the hypothesis (H_1) that proficiency varies significantly across faculties at Bamyan University. Overall, the data supports the hypothesis (H_1) that there is a significant difference in the proficiency of academic English language skills among students of different faculties at Bamyan University. The ANOVA results confirm significant differences, and the Tukey test helps identify which faculties have differing levels of proficiency.

Pearson Chi-Square Test in Table 5 is used to determine whether there is a significant association between categorical variables—in this case, the challenges faced by students in different faculties regarding their academic English language skills. The table lists several challenges that students may face in acquiring English language skills. Each challenge has an associated Chi-Square value, which indicates the strength of the association between the challenge and the faculties. We observed that there is a significant association between the faculties' students and Vocabulary challenge X^2 (6) = 32.537, p<0.001. There is a significant association between the faculty students and Grammar challenge X^2 (6) = 28.474, p<0.001, which is the lowest challenge. There is a significant association between the faculties' students and Pronunciation challenge X^2 (6) = 44.93, p<0.001. There is a significant association between the faculties' students and Listening comprehension challenge X^2 (6) = 36.395, p<0.001. There is a significant association between the faculties' students and Reading comprehension challenge X^2 (6) = 48.887, p<0.001. There is a significant association between the faculty students and Writing skills challenge X^2 (6) = 75.66, p<0.001, which is the highest challenge. There is a significant association between the faculty students and Speaking skills challenge X^2 (6) = 46.767, p<0.001, which is the highest challenge. The significance values (p-values) for all challenges are less than 0.001, indicating that the results are statistically significant. This means that there is a very low probability that the observed associations occurred by chance. The varying Chi-Square values suggest that some challenges are more pronounced than others. For instance, writing skills (75.660) have the highest Chi-Square value, indicating that this challenge is particularly significant among students, while Grammar (28.47) has the lowest value but is still significant.

The data from Table 5 supports the second hypothesis (H_2) that the challenges faced in acquiring academic English language skills are significant and vary among students of different faculties at Bamyan University. The statistical significance of the results indicates that interventions may need to be tailored to address the specific challenges faced by students in different faculties.

Table 5. Pearson Chi-Square Test of Challenges faced by different faculty students

Challenges	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)	min expected count
Vocabulary	32.53	6	.000	17.15
Grammar	28.47	6	.000	11.09
Pronunciation	44.93	6	.000	18.41
Listening comprehension	36.39	6	.000	19.98
Reading comprehension	48.88	6	.000	19.98
Writing skills	75.66	6	.000	18.72

Speaking skills	46.76	6	.000	13.91

The data presented in Table 6 posits that a significant relationship exists between students' proficiency skills in academic English and their age at Bamyan University. The mean age of participants is 21.73 years with a standard deviation of 1.85, indicating that the ages of the participants are relatively close to the mean. The mean English proficiency score is 11.04 with a standard deviation of 4.46, suggesting variability in proficiency levels among the participants. There are 392 participants in this analysis, which provides a robust sample for examining the relationship between age and English proficiency. However, the correlation coefficient between age and English proficiency is reported as 0.081. This value indicates a very weak positive correlation, suggesting that as age increases, English proficiency may slightly increase, but the relationship is not strong. The significance value (p-value) is 0.11, which is greater than the conventional alpha level of 0.05. This indicates that the correlation is not statistically significant. The correlation coefficient of 0.081 suggests that there is a very weak positive relationship between age and English proficiency. This means that age does not have a strong influence on the proficiency skills in academic English among the participants. The p-value of 0.11 indicates that the observed correlation is not statistically significant. Therefore, we fail to reject the null hypothesis, which suggests that there is no significant relationship between students' age and their proficiency in academic English at Bamyan University.

The data from Table 6 does not support the third hypothesis (H$_3$) that a significant relationship exists between students' proficiency skills in academic English and their age at Bamyan University. The weak correlation and lack of statistical significance suggest that age may not be a determining factor in English proficiency among the students.

Table 6. Pearson Correlation of Age and English Proficiency of the Participants high tendency to practice

	Mean	SD	n	age	English Proficiency	Sig.
Age	21.73	1.85	392	--		
English Proficiency	11.04	4.46	392	0.081	--	0.11

Discussion

Our result proved that there are statistically significant differences in English proficiency among the different faculties. Similarly, Hamdard (2021) revealed that undergraduate students have very low English language proficiency before they join the university. Moreover, it is proved that some challenges are more pronounced than others. For instance, writing skills is the biggest problematic issue for most of the students. In addition, there are other challenges such as grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, listening comprehension, reading comprehension speaking skills. Similarly, Hellekjær (2009) found that students have serious difficulties in reading English, and their main problem was identified as unfamiliar vocabulary and slow reading. However, Graham (1987) focused on a few of the challenges related to deciding this relationship and summarizes past examinations of the issue. Moreover, Susanto et al. (2020) identified that English must be learned from junior high school to the undergraduate level. They consider points to investigate the obstacles confronted by students in learning English and its causal components within the environment of Karimun College. In addition, this research showed that there is a weak correlation and no statistically significant correlation between age and English proficiency

among the students. Similarly, Xu (1991) recognized that Self-reported English Capability was the preeminent essential marker of the seen level of academic inconvenience. In extension, the Length of Prior English arrangement and Age were as well basic pointers, and the TOEFL score was found to be a non-significant pointer of students' insightful inconvenience.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study has illuminated the significant disparities in English language proficiency among students at Bamyan University, revealing that faculty affiliation plays a crucial role in these differences. The findings indicate that students from the Agriculture and Education faculties demonstrate higher proficiency levels compared to their peers in the Sharia Law faculty, with writing skills identified as the most pressing challenge across all disciplines. This underscores the necessity for targeted interventions aimed at enhancing English language instruction tailored to the specific needs of each faculty. By implementing strategies such as specialized language programs, peer support initiatives, and faculty-specific workshops, Bamyan University can better equip its students with the necessary skills to succeed academically and professionally. Ultimately, this research contributes valuable insights into the academic landscape of Bamyan University and emphasizes the importance of addressing language proficiency as a critical factor in educational success.

Acknowledgment

Data Availability Statement:

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

Conflicts of Interest:

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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